PILLAR 1
Vision and Identity

For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit.
(1 Cor 12:12-13)

Introduction

We are this year celebrating the 35th anniversary of the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church in America. The euphoria that accompanied this event has long since waned, and, one might argue, so has our enthusiasm and vision for a visibly united Orthodoxy in America. What has changed? Is that vision less correct today than it was in the early 1970's, when we believed that we were on the threshold of accomplishing that goal? Or are we satisfied with the status quo, with divisions not only among the various Orthodox jurisdictions in North America, but also internally within the Orthodox Church in America?

All-American Councils provide us with the opportunity and the challenge to reflect together on these issues, to hear one another, to build up one another and the Body of Christ, the Church. Are we able to regain the vision and enthusiasm that characterized the early days of autocephaly, or indeed, the missionary zeal of St. Innocent or the vision of St. Tikhon? These questions were posed to a number of people in our Church – bishops, priests, and lay persons.

What follows is their response, their views of who we are and where we are (or should be) headed. The answers are diverse, and no attempt has been made here to homogenize them. Before we can even think about coming to a common mind, we all need to hear one another, to see the different perspectives from all quarters of the Church. We need to be patient with one another and to bear one another's burdens. We need to establish a sense of trust, which is possible only when we stop judging those with whom we may disagree.

Yet, if we are to carry on in the spirit of St Innocent, St. Tikhon, and the countless Orthodox faithful who have gone before us, we must come to a common understanding of whom we are and of the nature of the task that lies before us. To this end, this section of the Pre-Conciliar Papers offers various perspectives of our past, our present, and our future.

The Early Years

Orthodoxy came to North America in 1794 when Russian Orthodox monks arrived in Alaska. Their mission was to evangelize the native peoples of the vast territory. Thus, the Gospel of Christ first came to Alaska through the labors of Orthodox missionaries. The foundation of Orthodoxy in America was a missionary foundation.

During the last decades of the 19th century, immigrants began to arrive in the United States and Canada from Eastern Europe, the Balkans, and the Middle East. In the immigrant streams, some were Orthodox Christians. Others were Greek Catholics (then called Uniates – meaning "in union with Rome"), who, upon arriving in America, found their way back to the Orthodox Church. Orthodox parishes were among the very first community institutions created by the immigrants.

In the 19th century, the Russian Orthodox bishop for America had his seat first in Sitka, Alaska, and then, after the sale of Alaska to the United States, in San Francisco, California. In the early 20th century, the diocesan seat was moved to New York.

By the early 20th century, the Orthodox population was becoming diverse in culture, language, and ethnicity, with native peoples in Alaska, and in other regions Arabs, Greeks, Romanians, Russians, Serbs, and others. The records of Holy Trinity Cathedral parish in San Francisco show that services were being conducted in Church Slavonic (for Russians and Serbs), Greek, Arabic, and English. The use of English indicated the presence of some converts, and also illustrated the openness of the Orthodox Church to the society in which it had its ministry.

Archbishop Tikhon of America (the future Patriarch of Moscow, 1917-1925, and glorified saint), described his vision and understanding of Orthodoxy in America in a report he wrote in 1905-1906. He saw the Orthodox Church in North America as a diverse yet united body, ministering to a multi-cultural Orthodox population. He foresaw an autonomous, self-governing Orthodox Church – possibly even an autocephalous one. St. Tikhon, in his entire American ministry, demonstrated also an openness to America and a sense of missionary responsibility.

After the Communist revolution in Russia, the ties of the Diocese in America with Russia were severed as the Church of Russia was subjected to violent persecution. This meant the loss of administrative links and the loss of financial assistance from the Church of Russia. In response to this crisis, what was now becoming the Russian "Metropolia" in America, at a Council in 1924, declared its

"temporary autonomy," until such time as the Church of Russia would be free.

At the same time, jurisdictional pluralism increasingly became the norm. Eventually the existence of Greek, Antiochian, Serbian, Romanian, Bulgarian, and Albanian jurisdictions, alongside the Metropolia, created a mosaic of Orthodox presence in America. When the Moscow Patriarchate rejected the canonicity of the autonomy of the Russian Metropolia, a diocese or exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church was created. Finally, some of the Russian Orthodox in America chose to associate themselves with the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, whose centers were first in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, then in Munich, Germany, and finally in New York.

Though there were initiatives towards coordinating the various parts of the "Russian diaspora" in the Balkans, Western Europe, China, and North America (with centers in Belgrade, Paris, Harbin, and New York) the Russian Metropolia in America had a much stronger sense of being a "Church in America" than a part of the Russian immigrant diaspora.

In the period after World War II, the Metropolia followed two complementary ways. The first was the way of parish, diocesan, and institutional development. It is especially noteworthy that a Metropolia which had been, in practice, one diocese with an archbishop/metropolitan and several bishops acting as auxiliary bishops, became a church with a real diocesan structure. The archbishop/metropolitan now was the primate at the head of a Holy Synod of Bishops. Theological education was developed in two seminaries, St. Vladimir's in New York and St. Tikhon's in South Canaan, Pennsylvania. Finally, the structure of church life envisioned by the Church Council of 1917-1918 in Moscow was fully implemented only in America. (Such implementation was impossible in the Church of Russia due to persecution under Communist rule.) In the Metropolia, All-American Councils bringing together in one body the hierarchs, clergy and lay delegates were regularly convened. The Church's highest canonical authority was the Holy Synod of Bishops. Church administration was guided by the Metropolitan Council, chaired by the archbishop/metropolitan, with clergy and lay members representing dioceses and also elected by the All-American Councils.

The second way followed by the Metropolia was the way of Orthodox cooperation. The jurisdictional pluralism, with divisiveness an implicit reality, obviously needed healing. Over the decades several models of jurisdictional cooperation were attempted by common action of the several Orthodox jurisdictions. The most lasting of these, the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the

Americas (SCOBA), still exists. Though SCOBA is not a solution to jurisdictional pluralism, it allows dimensions of the Orthodox presence and mission in America to be expressed "as if" unity has been accomplished. Thus, such agencies as the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), and a variety of commissions (for example, Religious Education and Scouting) are empowered to do their work by SCOBA.

The autocephaly granted to the American Metropolia by the Moscow Patriarchate in 1970 confirmed the self-government of the Metropolia in its internal life and affirmed the commitment to Orthodox unity in America. The reality of self-government and the movement towards Orthodox unity equip the Orthodox Church in America, in co-operation with the other Orthodox Churches, to engage American and Canadian societies by witnessing to the Orthodox faith.

1970-2005

At the time of the sale of Russian Alaska to the United States in 1867, St. Innocent Veniaminov, then Metropolitan of Moscow, perceived this transaction as an act of divine providence. By 1970, the vision and labors of St. Innocent and the many other missionaries to America who followed him culminated in the granting of autocephaly. Divine providence had reached a turning point in which a local Church in America would be responsible for meeting the needs and challenges of a much diversified society and culture.

In comparison to the other local Orthodox Churches, we are a very young Church. Nevertheless, we have been endowed with the same Holy Spirit to live and work in North America with apostolic zeal and wisdom. We have been mandated by the Lord himself to continue his saving ministry here and now.

The early years of our autocephaly saw a bright and warm spring. During this time the Church worked hard to discern how to address the ecclesial anomalies resulting from North American pluralism. For most of the twentieth century, Orthodox Christianity was riddled with jurisdictional pluralism that compromised the Church's ***unity and catholicity.*** The ***status quo*** of ethnic divisions, which saw more than one bishop shepherding one city, could no longer be ignored or considered normal. American pluralism could no longer be the veil covering Orthodoxy's uncanonical way of life. It was recognized – sometimes reluctantly – by bishops, priests, and laity, that in order for the Church to be faithful to its own identity, changes would have to be made. Tremendous energy and talent focused on moving the Church beyond the ethnic ghetto. As the Church slowly moved into mainstream America, new parishes, deliberately open to all Americans, were established. Catechesis preparing converts for

entering the Church became an important component of parish education programs. Slowly but steadily the Church was recovering its missionary soul.

During the spring of autocephaly, courageous and prophetic voices reminded us that the Church ***in*** America had to struggle to avoid becoming the Church ***of*** America. The complexity of American secularism and its deep inroads into the Church were being exposed and confronted. The transfiguring event of Pentecost was experienced as taking place in the present. The creative work of the Holy Spirit guided the Church towards liturgical renewal that had as its primary focus the rediscovery of eucharistic fellowship and life. Nurtured and led by the Spirit, the Church developed a presence within ecumenical circles. Within these venues the Church's voice of Truth and Love was heard, respected, and at times even accepted. While the spring unfolded, the Church began to recognize the need to address the moral and social issues of the day. This was done by appealing to the Gospel and drawing the audience into the dynamic of repentance, forgiveness, and transfiguration.

It must be stressed that the spring of autocephaly, inaugurated by the Holy Spirit, was bound to the Church's theology, i.e., to its liturgical, biblical and patristic sources. The return to the sources – the return to ***theological integrity*** – impacted ecclesial life not only in America but also throughout the world. Theological integrity was the basis for spiritual soundness and social responsibility. Theology was the catalyst for liturgical renewal, missionary outreach, ecclesial unity and ecumenical dialogue.

As the spring of autocephaly progressed, an organic vision for the life and work of the Church in America was being forged. But, while the Church was coming to grips with both the challenges and advantages of American life, there were undercurrents based on fear or ignorance that could not accept the reality of an Orthodox Church in America. Jurisdictional pluralism, with its corresponding ethnicities, was and remains the ***norm*** in spite of all the rhetoric advocating for ecclesial, and therefore hierarchical, unity. Given that an increasing number of American converts is filling these jurisdictions today helps to confirm that the need for one local Church is for many not a priority.

As a vision for Church life was being forged, there were opposing ideologies and theologies that gradually gave rise to a ***spiritual and psychological insecurity*** regarding the Church's mission in and for America. Ironically, these ideologies and theologies came both from without and within our autocephalous Church. The bright and promising spring of autocephaly began to wane. Bishops, priests, and laity identified themselves as belonging to the Church in America,

while their ***perception*** of a Church in America conformed to ecclesial models of pre-revolutionary Russia and Byzantium. While the spring waned, nostalgia for the never-existing golden age(s) of the Church helped to undermine our autocephaly. Insecurity began to weaken autocephaly, keeping it from standing on its own.

Insecurity has helped to generate visions and dynamics for church life in America that resemble those pre-dating autocephaly. Rather than being a local Church, we are behaving more and more as an ethnic jurisdiction. New waves of immigrants have given rise to ethnic parishes, which in turn continue to justify the existence of ethnic dioceses. Theologies allying with political agendas have begun to polarize the Church. These polarizations make it difficult for the Church to maintain an authentic continuity with its past while recognizing and addressing the ***new and complex issues*** peculiar to 21st century American life.

The Orthodox Church in America's approach to liturgical life, once known and admired throughout the world, is regressing to a formalism that has historically bred indifference and superstition. The pros and cons of ecumenism, along with the Church's understanding and approach to moral issues, are not only becoming intertwined with American politics but are also becoming dependent on the practices and mentalities of sister Churches abroad. Insecurity is creating a mentality in our Church which seeks the approval and acceptance of other Churches, even though they too need to sort through and re-evaluate their own lives ***vis à vis*** Holy Tradition. Hence, the voice and vision of the Church in America lack the vitality and clarity necessary for proclaiming the changeless Gospel in an ever-changing environment.

American autocephaly is a gift offered to us by God. It is our responsibility to ensure that this gift is not squandered because of fear and ignorance. It is our responsibility to acquire from God himself the conviction that drives us towards the goal of offering ***here and now*** the Gospel in truth and love.

The Alaskan Experience

While most Orthodox in the New World are award that their faith first entered the Western Hemisphere when Russian speaking frontiersmen began venturing across the Bering Straits into Alaska in the middle of the 18th century, few are aware of the principles of evangelization that the clergy embraced as the first organized mission arrived in 1794, nor the theological vision that inspired this effort for over a hundred years more. St. Herman, St. Innocent, St. Jacob Netsvetov and St. Tikhon all advanced the work of "Nasha Missiya," as Metropolitan Leonty

continued to call the Church 150 years later. The Orthodox Church in America was founded as and continues to be a mission to America.

The laymen who explored, settled, and intermarried with the indigenous peoples of southwestern Alaska presented the Christian Faith in outline to their friends and families, baptized their wives and children, and welcomed the first priests. This lay effort should never be overlooked. The laity have always been at the forefront of missionary work in America, organizing communities, founding and furnishing chapels, recruiting and supporting clergy, funding the effort, and doing much of the essential groundwork. When Hieromonk Makarii first visited the Aleutian Islands late in the 1790's, he found most of the population converted, baptized, and praying in village churches they had constructed themselves. It was his task to confirm and strengthen them in their faith.

Here we can discern the first principle of this missionary outreach: the Church has relied on lay effort and enthusiasm as well as spiritual and financial support from the very beginning. Both in Alaska and throughout the "lower 48," parishes have historically been organized and supported at the local level; communities have been founded by committed, pious laity across the entire continent over the past 210 years.

The monastic volunteers from Valaam and Konovets monasteries on Lake Ladoga were recruited to bring Orthodoxy to Alaska, and specifically to Native Americans. Their focus, from the very first day of their arrival, was to learn about and identify with the Aleuts of Kodiak and later the Aleutian Chain, and study their customs and beliefs, specifically looking for points of convergence, areas of agreement. Rather than attempting to catalog the ways in which Alaskan beliefs, customs or practices differed from traditional Orthodoxy, the missionaries sought instead to identify those points of agreement on which a new foundation might be laid. The Orthodox Faith came as fulfillment, not as condemnation, for the Son of Man came to forgive, to seek and to save, not to judge or condemn.

A second principle that arises from the Alaskan experience, therefore, is the need to accept, to embrace, indeed to love, the land and people to which the mission is sent. The Orthodox Faith must be presented as the fulfillment of all that is best in the ancient culture into which it is being introduced.

Considering the stone-age cultural level of the Native Alaskans, this openness appears even more extraordinary. But the mission specifically renounced any form of cultural imperialism, summarizing its philosophy 100 years later, in the *Russian-American Orthodox*

Messenger, saying that European "civilization" was not as deeply Christian as many Europeans supposed. In fact, the article pointed out, western culture is at heart diametrically opposed to the Gospel, since Christ teaches humility and poverty, while capitalism seeks glory and riches. The Mission never espoused any political, social or cultural agenda. Indeed, it renounced these and sought to bring Orthodoxy to the New World without imposing any alien customs or practices not mandated by Holy Tradition.

Each missionary began by learning the local tribal language and instructing converts in the faith in the native tongue. By 1804, over a hundred Alutiiq Aleut children were studying catechism and singing at liturgy in their local language in Kodiak. In the mid-1820's, Unangan Aleuts were studying the Gospel of Matthew and learning to read their language in schools founded by St. Innocent and St. Jacob Netsvetov. Father Jacob continued this work for another fourteen years among the Yup'ik Eskimo on the mainland, and preached successfully among Athabaskan Indians along the Yukon River as well. The Faith had to be planted in American soil using American languages! In 1868, St. Innocent Veniaminov recommended to the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church that the headquarters of the mission be transferred to San Francisco, an English speaking Bishop appointed, and service books prepared in English so that the Faith might more easily spread among the citizens of the United States. Enculturation was always seen as essential to the success of the mission.

St. Herman is remembered today primarily as a pious, holy elder, who lived a traditional, ascetic life in the Alaskan wilderness, but he was venerated by the local Aleut faithful primarily for his heroic stand against their oppressors, the administrators of the Russian American fur trading monopoly. Not only did the mission not seek to impose Russian language or culture on the Native Alaskans, it actively and courageously defended them against the company's illegal abuses. This resulted in Herman's house arrest, violent denunciations, and several assassination attempts. This was the price of standing up for one's flock in old Kodiak. The Mission identified totally with the well-being of its flock.

St. Tikhon, the future Patriarch of Moscow, resisted the pressure from certain clergy to impose a uniform style of liturgical practice, insisting instead that America be free to evolve and adapt its own liturgical usage from the variety of Orthodox traditions that were gathering in North America. Even a century after the arrival of the Valaam monks, St. Tikhon was well aware that the life and vitality of "Nasha Missiya" depended on faithfulness to the principles on which it was founded.

What was the attitude of the early Orthodox missionaries toward the native peoples of Alaska? Was it different from the attitudes of other (non-Orthodox) missionaries you may have read or heard about? How can the Orthodox missionaries' attitude be a model for us as we encounter people outside the Church?

Openness, a desire to identify with this place and these people, a willingness to find and build upon the positive aspects of the local culture, using its language and finding new ways of conveying the eternal Truth of Orthodoxy in creative, new ways faithful to the ancient vision and practice of the Church, and ultimately faith and courage to pursue these ideals: all these were there "in the beginning," when the seeds of Orthodoxy were planted on American soil. This is the legacy and the challenge Alaska offers the Church in the New World and the Old today.

The Vision Today

We believe without exception in "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church." We affirm that Church to be the Orthodox Church, and we affirm it as united in doctrine, understanding of sacred scriptures, worship, and Tradition. We are one in those fundamental expressions of our faith. These truths unite us. Those seekers who go hopping and shopping from one religious community to another soon discover that the Orthodox Church stands intransigent in matters of theology. Salvation is too precious and serious a matter to allow for wiggle room. Those who approach with their own agenda will convert, literally 'repent,' or go elsewhere. Like St. Paul, we 'hold these truths in earthen vessels'; nevertheless, we unite behind those convictions.

If we diverge, it is in the vision of who we are and where we are in the Body of Christ. Our parishes and houses or worship are quite disparate. Between a converted former Protestant chapel made up of recent immigrants seeking to preserve their national heritage as an ethnic island in an archipelago of English-speaking aliens, and a storefront assembly of recent converts who read their way into the Orthodox Church and are struggling to find ways to assimilate into what they understand to be the essentials of Orthodoxy, we find a variety of expressions of the faith in between. Parishes in the former coal mining and steel manufacturing regions are comprised mostly of retirees struggling to keep their priest from leaving and their church from closing. In suburban parishes of mixed backgrounds, the nostalgia for the language and ethos of a distant childhood has all but faded into a legend to relate to grandchildren.

Where the understanding of self-identity is blurred, one can find the cause to be the loss of perspective and purpose. Fr. John Meyendorff wrote: "*The church that is not practicing mission is not a church.*" The beginning of Orthodoxy in America was the continuation of Russia's mission eastward. Mission defined the Orthodox Church ever since; however, many understand North America to be a spiritual no-man's land where all Orthodox Churches can exist without bonding in an ecclesiastical union with one another. This is a canonical anomaly,

yet one that many even within the Orthodox Church in America not only can live with, but prefer. This spirit of colonialism defies the work of mission. Either America will continue the canonical and traditional initiative begun two centuries ago in Alaska, or it will comply with the non-canonical but prevalent understanding of the Orthodox Church as a conglomeration of outposts of Old-World patriarchates. If we choose the latter, then local parishes will simply be expressions of the ethos and religious traditions from across the ocean. Visitors and seekers will not be sought, and they will be discouraged from attendance and membership, because each person from beyond the ethnic group dilates the 'purity' of the ethnic community. Those who marry into the faith will either assimilate themselves into the group, or remain on the fringe, much like the 'seekers' in synagogues in apostolic times who were fodder for the early Christian church.

Imagine that your parish embraced the statement of Fr. John Meyendorff: "The church that is not practicing mission is not a church." What action plan would you create to implement a mission program? Consider all aspects of your parish life and parish's physical facilities. What changes could and should be made to insure a hospitable atmosphere for newcomers whether from outside of Orthodoxy, new immigrants or fallen Orthodox. What list of items would you ask of the Orthodox Church in America?

With the heavenly blessing of the collapse of Communism in the lands of our fathers, the vigor of the renewal of Orthodoxy across the ocean impacted the Orthodox Church in America. The loss of effective communication with the mother churches was like the death of parents, causing the children to mature rapidly. The renewed relationships with the Old World patriarchates has created a temptation among our clergy, and even a part of our laity, to emulate them and refashion the Orthodox Church in America to conform to the life styles and faith expressions of those foreign churches. Our clergy, even those with no ethnic backgrounds, could be taken for immigrants. Worship all in English no longer becomes a priority. Certainly we must welcome and accommodate newcomers to our land and our parishes, but as hosts, not as fellow foreigners. If the Church is to be a mission, then it cannot be at the same time an outpost of other world characteristics.

Worship has various expressions in the Orthodox Church in America. One part of the Church would endorse the rubrics as obligatory for the parish, observing all the rules and rituals as completely as though it were a monastery. There can be no consideration given to the distances between homes and church, work or school schedules, or conditions that may make times and length of services difficult. The attitude of the pastor is: If it's too hard, then stay away. And many do so.

The other extreme is to forsake the prescribed order of services. Reduce the church services to Sunday morning, and hold that to an hour's time. Disregard the cycles: no vespers or matins, no weekday holy liturgies, ignore the traditional order and excuse it by claiming that we are living in a new era where people cannot deal with many and lengthy services.

Another loss of vision detrimental to the mission and growth of the Church is a de facto denominationalism. When the local parish is considered in effect the frame and boundary of the Church, several spiritual diseases occur:

1. The parish becomes a closed entity. The community loses all vision of outreach to the community, its light is hidden from the outside world, and it cannot understand why the media treats it more as an ethnic oddity than as a viable Christian fellowship. It is not interested in seeking to evangelize the non-Orthodox, only in having an ample supply of dues-paying members to offset the cost of operating the church and meeting the bills.

2. Americans are a mobile nation. Once, only the pastor was transient; now, the average young person will move five times in a lifetime. Provided our young people remain active and faithful within the home parish, when they go off to college or to accept a position elsewhere, they may make an effort to find a parish compatible with the church of their upbringing. But Orthodox churches on the continent are not that numerous, and Orthodox Church in America parishes are even less so. Thus they often find it hard to find what they had left behind, and the tendency to exclusivism and at times even hostility to outsiders common in so many parishes repulses the seekers. As a result, sectarians of all persuasions reach out with alluring promises, eager to take in the Orthodox Christians that so many of our churches are unconcerned to accept.

3. Upon relocating to a new community, a person or family looking for an Orthodox church often receives little help from the former parish, which secretly hopes that they will retain ties with them even at a distance. Looking in the Yellow Pages to find a listing of parishes calling themselves usually "Eastern Orthodox," the average lay person has little idea where to go or what will be found at any listed parish. Despite claiming to be of one and the same faith expressed in a common liturgy, the first-time visitor may walk into either an Orthros (matins) or a Divine Liturgy. The service will begin at a time different from what he/she may be accustomed to. Sunday School may be taking place simultaneous with the Divine Liturgy; the worship may be in English or a foreign tongue, more likely a hybrid of two languages; he/she may or may not hear a homily, which may be pronounced after the reading of the gospels or just before the veneration of the cross. Nobody seems to think it odd that we have as yet been unable to make at least our Sunday worship somehow uniform.

Recalling the examples of St. Herman, St. Innocent and St. Patriarch Tikhon, how can we best offer the Orthodox faith in our highly mobile, technologically driven and impersonal culture?

What Does It Mean To Be the Local Church?

Our sense of identity as the Orthodox Church in America, together with all the blessings it brings, and the concerns and frustrations, is grounded in the momentous developments of the mid-twentieth century, especially the 1960's and the journey to autocephaly. This history is well known, and there is no need to repeat it here. What is necessary, at this juncture, is to stand back a little, to take a broader look at the wider historical movements and theological reflection that accompanied this process.

Two inseparable features of the movement to autocephaly in particular need to be noted:

First, it was the mass immigration of Orthodox Christians to these lands during the twentieth century that provided the basis for autocephaly; although Orthodox Christianity had arrived on this continent many years before, it was the sheer numbers of Orthodox Christians who arrived during the past century that supplied the body needed to constitute an autocephalous church. The Christianity they brought with them was that which they had inherited in their Orthodox homelands – not only its piety, ethos, liturgy and theology, but equally important, and perhaps even more so for us now, its ecclesial structures and organization. In whatever ways these had changed and developed in the preceding centuries (one thinks especially of the complex history of the organization of the Russian Church from the time of Peter the Great to the All-Russian Church Council of 1917), the structure and organization of the Church that they brought with them was an expression of her existence in a country that identified itself as Orthodox.

This first point provides the context for the second, that the theological principles for autocephaly were clearly developed out of concern for the proper canonical existence of the Church as it had been lived in their homelands. Much hard theological reflection by great theologians and historians of the Orthodox Church contributed to this. And they treated it with the utmost seriousness; it is not by accident that Fr Alexander Schmemann's diagnosis of the "Problems of Orthodoxy in America" began with "The Canonical Problem" (*St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly,* 1964). Before addressing liturgical issues or the spiritual crisis, it was necessary to tackle the canonical situation, or rather the "canonical problem" – meaning the existence of multiple jurisdictions in any given geographical area. It was affirmed, absolutely, that jurisdictional unity is an abiding, universal, canonical principle; that the fullness of the Church – the people gathered around one bishop in the celebration of the one Eucharist at the one altar – exists only in specific local churches, such that the presence of other

churches, or other jurisdictions, in the same geographical area, rends the Body of Christ apart; and that the continuity in faith, doctrine and life lies in the apostolic succession of the single episcopate in each area, by virtue of which each local church manifests and maintains her unity with and identity as the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

The lack of correspondence between "theology" and "reality" forty or fifty years ago provoked much discussion about "the canonical problem" and much debate about the meaningfulness of the term "diaspora" (for we must never forget that all Christians are "sojourners" in this world, with, as the *Letter to Diognetus* put it in the second century, "every foreign country as their fatherland, and every fatherland as a foreign country"), and inspired and guided the journey to autocephaly. Yet, if there was a lack of correspondence then, that has only increased in the intervening decades: the number of canonical Orthodox bishops in many places has increased, and Orthodox Church in America faithful now find themselves driving past many other Orthodox churches to attend the Divine Liturgy on Sunday morning. This increasing discrepancy is in large measure the cause of an increasing sense of frustration.

In light of this, it is worth asking whether the canonical principles articulated so clearly during the twentieth century (especially the identity of a local Church the whole given geographical area gathered around a single bishop) are in fact eternal principles always expressive of the being of the Church, or rather reflective of the being of the Church as she existed in a country that identified itself as Orthodox, or perhaps even a way of envisioning Orthodox Church life based on other models altogether. It is striking, for instance, that Byzantine cities were not divided up into territorial parishes, each with its own church, to which all were expected to go, as they were, for example, in England; it is estimated that up to half of the churches in Constantinople were "private" churches, on private estates, monasteries, and so on. Nevertheless, it might be pointed out that there was only one bishop of Constantinople. However, even this idea of "one city – one bishop" is not the only way that the Church has existed over the centuries. There was, most notably, no single bishop of Rome until the end of the second century, or perhaps as late as the third decade of the third century! There were instead a number of churches, each being led by its own bishop or presbyter (for these terms were used interchangeably at this time). Some of these churches seem to have gathered along ethnic lines (especially the Christians from Asia Minor who resided in Rome), others along perceived intellectual or spiritual affinity. In other words, it looked a lot like the way New York City, or any other large metropolitan area, looks today!

What second-century Rome had that is lacking in modern metropolitan areas, however, was a forum or council where the leaders of all the churches met to express their unity and fellowship, and to work together. The reality of their unity as the one body of Christ in Rome was further expressed by the *fermentum*, the distribution of the eucharistic gifts, which originally seems to have been a mutual exchange amongst these churches, subsequently becoming, with the establishment of a single bishop in Rome, the distribution from the papal eucharist to the presbyters in the parish churches. Clearly, even in this early phase, the unity of diverse Christian assemblies, manifest in this fraternal manner (and not yet under the headship of a single bishop), was regarded as the necessary corollary to the ecclesial nature of each assembly. The Church (in the singular) of Rome was embodied in the ecclesial assemblies – each gathered around its presbyter/bishop at the one altar celebrating the one eucharist – in communion with all the other assemblies each gathered in the unity of the same faith. The Church did not exist apart from these communities (in some chair or abstract "office," or un-embodied faith), and the particular assemblies were not churches apart from this communion, any more than an individual believer is a Christian ("a single Christian is not a Christian," as the old saying puts it). There can only be one Church in each place, but, and this is the important point (which, it has to be acknowledged is at odds with much modern ecclesiology), this did not mean that there had to be only one bishop in each place, or perhaps, more precisely, the role of the bishop had not yet become what it subsequently would – in Rome, at least, for in small towns with only one Christian congregation the question does not even arise.

But we are not in second-century Rome, and there can be no attempt to relive the past. Yet the situations are analogous: what were particular ecclesial assemblies, each with its own culture or flavor, are now particular "jurisdictions" coexisting within any geographical area. It might be argued that the ecclesial structures of the Church, and the role of the episcopate, in the early centuries was a transitory phase on its way to a more perfect expression, achieved in the fourth century and beyond; but it might also be said that the ecclesial structures of Byzantium and elsewhere were themselves also transitory phases in the continual "sojourn" of the Church in this world, and that history, whether we like it or not, has moved on. However we interpret it, it remains a stubborn fact that the organization of the Church was at one time structured differently, and that St Irenaeus could write all that he had to say about tradition, the apostolic succession of the episcopate, and the catholicity of the Church, in this situation – what he wrote did not depend on (or even know of) the principle of "one city – one bishop." As such, is it necessary, for us now, to maintain the principle "one city – one bishop"? Or has the "territory" overseen by a bishop, and his corresponding role, changed through the ineluctable movement

of history: now, no longer a particular Christian assembly amongst others, as it was in the second century, nor a "territory" coextensive with a geographical region, as it was in later centuries, but rather a "territory" comprised of those particular Christian assemblies under his pastoral oversight? If this is the case, what has become of the Church in any given region, as described above? Who, what or where is the Church of New York?

Here one can only lament the continuing tendency which Schmemann decried as "canonical subordinationism" – the tendency to describe Christians in North America as being "diaspora" churches, who gain their "canonical" status by their maintenance of (and subordination to) the "canonically" established patriarchates abroad, which, it is held, alone express the unity of the Church. If, as is suggested above, the Church in any given place is constituted by the communion of the Christian assemblies in that place – not just a tacit acknowledgement of the presence of others, but a concrete, visible and tangible (and even edible) fellowship – then (SCOBA notwithstanding) the lack of this today is scandalous. However, its resolution need not necessarily mean applying the patterns of ecclesial organization which developed during the years of Imperial Christianity and which might no longer "fit." Is it possible, today, to envision territorial unity without territorial primacy? Could there be (as there indeed are) many "bishops" in a given geographical area, yet without there being one "bishop" of that geographical area? This could only be done by a mutual recognition of all the Orthodox Christians of a given area, each acknowledging both that they are only the Church of that area together – in their particular ecclesial assemblies, led by their own pastors and overseen by their own bishops, each in communion with each other – and that their "canonical" status resides in this, manifesting together the Body of Christ in a given area, rather than in ties, as important as they might be, to churches overseas.

Is it possible then that, as the Orthodox Church in America, our increasing frustration at the "canonical problem" might be misplaced? We certainly cannot force others to accept our "canonical" status, especially if by this we mean a legitimacy conferred in the framework of a "canonical subordinationism"; we can only protest that without each other we are both incomplete, lacking the fullness described above. We cannot force others to espouse our understanding of ecclesiology; we can only present it, in a persuasive and theologically argued manner, as an invitation. But we will not be able to do even this, if our own ecclesiology remains tied to a geographically defined territory and the primacy of one bishop in each such area – "one city – one bishop" – for such an invitation is not to fellowship but to incorporation, and implicitly regards others as being the obstacle to our fully being what we claim. What are the implications of this for

our own understanding of our autocephaly? Might it be that we will have to learn to dissociate our understanding of our autocephaly from the historical forms that autocephaly has taken in the past, tied as they have been to vanished Christendom and Christian nation-states? These are large and important questions, which can only be answered by much prayerful theological reflection.

Our Vision and Identity – A Bishop Speaks

Who Are We?

When wrestling with issues of identity, human beings, especially the young, ask the question: Who am I? And for us, the local Church, I believe the answer is to be found in the 12th chapter of Apostle Paul's first letter to the local Church of Corinth. We, the Orthodox Church in America, as was that ancient Christian community, are members of the Body of Christ. We are a part of something larger, greater than ourselves. And it is Christ Himself Who provides us with our identity. We are, in a sense, what He is. We are a part of Him.

When clergy give sermons on this particular theme, the message more often than not is cast in terms of the various and varied individuals who make up any given local parish community. And, indeed, every parish has a variety of persons, each with his or her gifts, bumps and bruises. Called out of the world, these men, women and children are mystically transformed by the Holy Spirit into something larger and greater than themselves: the Body of Christ, the Church. Their diversity is channeled, shaped and given direction by Christ Who is the Head of that Body (Eph 5:23).

Understanding that we are part of the Body of Christ, we must also have an understanding of ourselves. We must be truly who we are. We cannot have a relationship with the living God if we pretend to be someone or something we are not, if we are acting, or playing a role. The same is true of our human relationships. A healthy marriage, a good friendship, and effective parenting all require openness and the laying aside of pretense. This very same principle applies to us as members of the Body of Christ.

Every human being is different, has his or her own combination of strengths and weaknesses, gifts and talents. This is, of course, true of the various members of the Church.

> But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles,

> to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the some Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills. For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. (1Cor 12:7-12)

Again, St. Paul is speaking here of the local community, the Church in Corinth. But, we may apply the same wisdom to the members of our territorial Church, to the dioceses and parishes of the Orthodox Church in America. We have a common **identity**, Christ, but we are not, and will never be, **identical**. Each community, each parish, is unique, as different as a heart is different from a kidney. A heart is not a kidney; it does not perform the same function in the body. Each has the same set of genes as the other, but that common genetic code is realized in a different manner. And, both the heart and kidney are necessary for the body as a whole to function in a healthy way. It is as much a mistake to force uniformity on the various members of the Body of Christ as it would be to attempt to force the heart to function as a kidney.

We might liken the shared genetic code of a human body to those elements in church life that bind us together: our common liturgical life, the Holy Scriptures, the saints, our hierarchical structure. No matter where we find ourselves in the Orthodox Church in America, no matter what parish, what diocese, what our ethnic makeup may be, we share this same "genetic code," the same Holy Tradition. Nevertheless, the expression of that genetic code, of what it means to be the Church, will be particular. There will be diversity, but unity in diversity guaranteed by Christ through His Holy Spirit.

The Diocese of Alaska has a unique history, mission, and membership. The same is true of the Diocese of the South, the Romanian Episcopate, indeed of each diocese which makes up the Orthodox Church in America. Each diocese, like an organ of the body, is different, occupying a unique geographical place, having its own particular membership and history. Further, every parish community within each diocese is particular and unique. The history, composition, needs, and mission of a Yup'ik Eskimo parish will be very different from that of a parish in Florida. It would be a mistake and even silly for Floridians to dress and act like Alaskans. They would be role-playing and not be what or who they really are. The Church can never be contrived or artificial in that sense.

One of the temptations of our time, the age of microwaves and airplanes, lies in our familiarity with change. We are accustomed to developments in technology and improvements of one sort or another

in almost every aspect of our lives at a pace never before experienced in human history. We are creatures of change in modern North America. But, it is helpful to remember, our Orthodox Church, while not a dead and lifeless fossil, moves at a pace and manner that reflects her having one foot firmly planted in the timeless realm of the Kingdom of Heaven and the other firmly planted in time. It is the Holy Spirit who must inspire and guide us, as Fr. Alexander Schmemann once so accurately put it, we "change to remain the same."

As the Orthodox Church in America "changes to remain the same" (Fr. Alexander Schmemann) how do we distinguish between "imitating" vs. "upholding"? What can be let go vs. what must be upheld without change? Many of our grandparents and parents willingly accepted the English language so that their children and grandchildren would embrace the church. Are there other things that could be sacrificed to help the church be able to proclaim the True Faith?

Therefore, even though we find ourselves in Alaska or Florida, in the 6th century or the 21st, we will not lose our way. No community or even territorial church will ever be identical to another. Each member of this living, dynamic organism, the Church of Christ, will reflect its own membership, history, location, etc.

What are we called to do?

Having come to an understanding of who we are as members of the Body of Christ, of our having a common identity without being identical, we come to the issue of our "vision" as a local Church. What are we called to do both in the present and in the future?

As we enter the community of the Church through the sacrament of Holy Baptism, we hear the following passage from the Gospel according to St. Matthew:

> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Mt 28:19-20)

The "vision" Christ gave the Church from the very beginning, the "vision" that brought a group of monks from Valaam to Kodiak in 1794, the "vision" of St. Patriarch Tikhon, must be our "vision" as the local Church in North America. It is the mission Christ gave His disciples after His Resurrection from the dead. Our purpose, our past, our present and our future lie in making disciples of all nations, in bringing the Good News to others.

We are called out of the world to bring the Kingdom to those around us. For us to do this, many of the very same principles connected with our "identity" come into play as well.

It is as necessary for us to know and understand those to whom the Gospel is being brought as it is for us to know who we are. If the Holy Spirit brings, let us say, a large number of new immigrants into our local parish who speak a different language, have different customs,

or, perhaps, have a different experience of the Church, we must be prepared and willing to reach out to them where they are.

> …I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you. (1 Cor 9:22-23)

Our vision must be broad enough and vast enough to include everyone. It must be the very same vision that existed in North America under St. Patriarch Tikhon. On the very same day that, one hundred years ago, Archbishop Tikhon, an ethnic Russian, was turning the earth over in Calhan, CO to inaugurate the building of a new temple for Slovak ranchers, St. Raphael, an ethnic Arab, was breaking ground in South Canaan, PA for the first monastery in the "Lower 48." Is our vision that great? Is our vision that inclusive? Are we able not only to tolerate, but even to embrace, the traditions of the "one, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church" held by our brothers and sisters, even if they may be slightly different from those to which we are accustomed? Is there room for both Byzantine chant and Bakhmetev? If we live in countries that are ethnically diverse, will not our local Church necessarily be ethnically diverse as well?

To have vision, to have a sense of what we are called to do, takes courage. It requires a grasp of all that has gone before us in the Church and a knowledge of ourselves. It will require great love and a generous heart. The vision of the Orthodox Church in America must encompass and be great enough to embrace who and what we are as well as those to whom we are commanded to bring the Gospel.

Where Are We Heading?

The granting of our autocephaly by the Moscow Patriarchate surely stands as the most significant event in the past fifty years for Orthodoxy in North America. In the thirty-five years since this determinative event, our Church has continued the evangelical work of preaching the Gospel to North America that was begun by the great saints of our lands, St. Herman, St. Innocent, and St. Tikhon. At the same time, the Church has grown considerably and developed rapidly. Since the granting of our autocephaly, we have faithfully striven to administer Church life in accordance with the principles of the 1917-1918 All-Russian Council. As such, we, as an autocephalous Church, have gathered together in All-American Councils thirteen times. During these councils, we bishops, presbyters, deacons, and lay men and women have passed statutes, attended to the administration of the Church, deliberated on our common future, and funded church-wide initiatives. We have on our own elected and installed two chief shepherds without the intervention of another Church. As another sign of our autocephaly, our Holy Synod of Bishops meets twice a year and

takes under careful consideration matters concerning the life of the Church in North America. The Holy Synod also elects new bishops, sets standards for Church life, issues encyclicals, and sees to the canonical good order of our Church. This hierarchical, conciliar approach to the administration of the Church is reflected at all levels of our Church, with regularly held diocesan assemblies and councils, deanery meetings, and parish councils and meetings.

In the thirty five years of being an autocephalous Church, we have seen much change in the Orthodox world. The fall of communist regimes in Eastern Europe, which once seemed so invincible and which had persecuted the Church so violently, surely is the most striking event. By the grace of God, the Churches that had been under communist dominion now live without threat or harassment from atheistic governments. The opening of these societies has also allowed for increased contacts between the Orthodox Church in America and the Churches in Eastern Europe. These contacts have borne great fruit. Regular official delegations of our Church now travel to the former communist countries, to Russia, Ukraine, Poland, or even to the other ancient patriarchates of the East, and celebrate the Divine Liturgy with our Orthodox brothers and sisters. During these travels, our Church makes contacts, we cooperate with other Orthodox Churches, we align ourselves to the common purpose of proclaiming Christ in all corners of the world. Such inter-Orthodox work was unthinkable prior to autocephaly and is in fact made possible not only because of the fall of communism, but because of our autocephaly. Hence, we take our proper place in world Orthodoxy and witness to our growing maturity as a young Church in America. Official delegations are not alone – along with them our own pious faithful also travel throughout the world and attend services, unite their prayers, take communion with Greek, Arab, Bulgarian, Serbian, Palestinian, and Albanian Orthodox. In all instances, official and unofficial, communion between the Orthodox Churches is manifested, and our unity with one another is shown. In such moments, we see that we belong not only to a local parish, but are members of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Orthodox Church.

Alongside our growing presence within world Orthodoxy, many marvelous things have happened in our ecclesiastical life in North America. We have gathered as Church and canonized saints who have become beacons of light for our North American Church. One could count our contributions in the establishment and work of pan-Orthodox charitable or missionary organizations among the significant achievements of recent years. Additionally, the ready availability of high quality Orthodox books and other forms of new media created by Orthodox Christians in America can also be regarded as a positive development. An exciting development in our Church life that speaks

to our evangelical task as Church is the growing outreach that many of our established parishes are making towards their local inner-city neighborhoods. Soup kitchens, clothing drives, and food pantries are fast becoming a regular feature of our parish life and point to a serious commitment to our communities.

Further, the seeds for the growth of Orthodox Christianity have already been sown. Mission Churches have sprung up throughout the United States and Canada and, just as long-established parishes, have as members both cradle Orthodox and innumerable converts to the faith. Some mission parishes are still in their infancy, but many of our most vibrant parishes today have only recently become full parishes. Their continued missionary zeal testifies to their memory of the long years they labored as mission churches. Our seminaries are full of devoted, eager, intelligent students. Their theological education meets rigorous nationwide standards. The faculties of these seminaries constantly seek new and better ways to educate the future leaders of the Church. Thus our seminarians are receiving excellent educations.

Finally, and perhaps most importantly, the essential work of the Church continues throughout our lands. This work began with the missionary journeys of the great saints of these lands, St. Herman and St. Innocent. The work of these great saints did not end with their earthly repose, but were carried on by countless men and women who labored tirelessly in North America. To this very day, children are baptized and chrismated. The great mystery of the Divine Liturgy is regularly accomplished. Couples are married. The dead are buried and remembered. Sermons are preached. Charitable donations are made. Prayers are said by the faithful in all piety. The sick are prayed for. Consolation is given to those in need. In all this, the Lord's death, burial, and resurrection is proclaimed and His return is expected.

Unfortunately, not everything in our Church's North American sojourn has been positive. Numerous disturbing trends can also be seen alongside so many signs of a vibrant ecclesiastical life. Although much has happened to open the great treasure that is Orthodox Christianity to this continent, many aspects of our church life are still impoverished. We hear that our churches are declining in membership. And in the face of this, our churches need additional human and material resources in order to fight the exhausting battle we wage with a culture that is at once so alluring, so captivating, but also so inimically opposed to much of the Gospel of Christ. But, rather than feeling the blessed exhaustion that comes from proclaiming Christ, we struggle to raise and manage our limited resources. Digging deeper in our church life, one can see that the same parochialism, the same sectarianism that so plagued our churches in the days of the Metropolia, continues to rear its ugly head. At our Church gatherings

or even in private conversation – times when Christian fellowship should be the rule – one regularly hears a deep-seated mistrust of one another expressed quite openly without any reflection as to the harm that this does to the bonds of love that are to hold our Church together. Scurrilous and sometimes even slanderous rumors are spread about our church leaders with a constant suspicion of their motives. This happens without the slightest thought as to how members of Christ's body are to conduct themselves. Equally reckless is the malicious gossip and idle rumors that are spread so casually along the digital highway, but which are cancerous and eat away at the very tissue that hold us together as one Church. None of these things reflect the mutual love that we are to have for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. Rather they cast us as mere strangers or enemies to one another. What this has bred and will breed is a growing isolation from one another and a rise of more and more sectarian behavior. Signs of our alienation from one another are evident, and one hears and reads careless words of intolerance over different liturgical practices or slightly different ways of church life. Such words have simply ignored the fact that the Orthodox Church in America is made up of diverse groups who have faithfully kept the practices that were handed down to them. Evidence of sectarianism within the Church is not hard to find. In one community, so-called "reforms" have been made unilaterally without careful consideration of the tradition of the Church; in another, a fundamentalist attitude has taken over, one that sees life in only the starkest terms of black and white simplifications.

The internal problems that the Church in North America faces are disturbing. External problems, however, also pose extraordinary challenges. For example, as communism fell, ethnicism and ethnic tensions have renewed their assaults on the Church. They pressure the Church with great force to conform herself to a particular culture, or even reduce the Church into this or that imagined reconstruction of the Church. Love of the Church and her venerable traditions is lost, as is the sense that the Church merely sojourns in this earth. Our true homeland is the Kingdom of Heaven. Finally, even completely beyond the limits of the Church, we face a more dire threat in a society that is increasingly un-Christian and even anti-Christian.

In the face of such challenges, what is to be done? What is our future? As the great saints who have shone forth in our lands knew, as the countless men and women who worked to build up the Church in North America knew, our future is simply Christ. There can be no future, no vision, no identity other than Him. For us as Orthodox Christians, our common Orthodox faith in Him can be the only source of our unity. Ultimately, leadership, vision, identity, future, or anything is for naught without belief in Jesus Christ, Him crucified, buried, raised from the dead, all according to the scriptures. This world

will pass away, with all its institutions, care, concerns, temptations, with all of its allure and seductions. This world will pass away, but our Lord will not. He will remain the same and will provide us the necessary means to transform the world. Faith in Jesus Christ is not something abstract, out-of-touch-with-reality, but is the reason for all that is and has been good and true and authentic in our Church. Conversely, its absence is the reason for so much of the malaise that characterizes our life. In the end, our faith is eminently practical, because without the awareness of what the source of our unity is, the members of the Church fall prey to suspicion, accusations, divisions, and rivalry.

The first step that we should take together as the Orthodox Church in North America towards our common future is the renewal of and recommitment to our faith in Jesus Christ. The consequent step is to be aware of our unity in Him and in nothing else. If we do this, we remove the man-made barriers of intolerance, mistrust, jealousy, sectarianism, etc., that we have placed in front of ourselves. And we can then work together in our journey to the life in the heavenly kingdom that Christ has promised, which is the work of all faithful Orthodox Christians. This Orthodox faith in Jesus Christ and this work towards Him go back to the original apostolic preaching. Now, in twenty-first century North America, our common future is to stand firmly on the foundations of faith laid down by the apostles, given over to the fathers, and lived out by countless saintly men and women.

Furthermore, our faith in Jesus Christ implies a calling to a holy manner of life as members of the body of Christ. In this, we are to emulate the life lived by the Lord's own mother and the lives of all the saints who from the beginning of the world have been well-pleasing to the Lord. In other words our holiness here will be worked out according to the well-established traditions of the Church, and the unique needs of Christians sojourning in North America. In other words, the traditions of the entire Orthodox Church are at our disposal for the working out of our salvation. At home, our continued task as Church is urgent. We have been called out by God, marked by the sign of his cross. We are to be witnesses to our faith in both life and deeds. To a North America culture that chases after nihilism and death, we should let our lives be transparent to Christ and proclaim hope and life in him. We should let the voice of our lowly Savior, which resounds with words of love, patience, kindness, compassion, and consolation, speak through us to a culture more concerned with aggressive capitalism, "me first," and material success.

Finally, for the Church in North America, our calling is to be members of the one, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, the bulwark of God's truth. The Church extends from end to end of the universe and

embraces all Orthodox Christians everywhere. It is not reducible to any one time or place. As we take our rightful place among our sister Orthodox Churches and offer our traditions to world Orthodoxy, we too must be ready to embrace them, to consider them all as our brothers and sisters, and so journey with them into the heavenly kingdom.

The Orthodox Church in America in 2015

Barring unforeseen events, especially of catastrophic character, the North American world ten years from now will most likely be as it is today, only more so. Organic communities will be further disintegrated. Families will be further disconnected. Technologies will have advanced. Bio-ethical issues will have multiplied. Sexual license will have proliferated. Public education will be more secularized. Cultural life will be more debased. Mental and emotional health will be worse. Spiritual life will be more confused. Non-Orthodox Christians will have more dramatically departed from the true faith. The only good side to these expected developments is that if Orthodoxy can hold its own, many serious people may find it to be their only option for living a faithful Christian life.

In 2015, we can expect the Orthodox Church in America to be smaller and poorer than it now is, though our seminaries and monasteries, with their neophyte converts and people from the old countries, may be fuller; and parishes with large numbers of Orthodox immigrants from abroad may have more people. Many church members will want to be priests, monastics, missionaries, musicians, iconographers, writers and church workers; but there will be significantly fewer "regular believers" to be served. Greater interaction will occur between Orthodox people in North America and in the old countries. People of less competence and responsibility will write and speak more, and be more active in church life. More such people will find themselves in influential positions. And, at the same time, the Church will be more urgently pressed to present its teachings and practices to serious seekers.

If other Orthodox "jurisdictions" in North America find themselves in similar conditions as the Orthodox Church in America ten years from now (which they should), greater cooperation, and perhaps even some formal unifications, may occur among some of them, perhaps including the Orthodox Church in America. This will not be because church people, especially church leaders, will want it. It will rather be because demographic and financial conditions will demand it. Greater competition among the Orthodox "jurisdictions" (and dioceses, parishes and people within "jurisdictions") may also occur, even if there is some structural merging. And there are likely to be even more

virulent debates than we now have among church "activists" about what is "truly Orthodox" and what is not.

God's Glory and People's Good

Whatever the demographic and financial conditions of the Orthodox Church in America in 2015, our goal must be the same as it has always been. The Orthodox Church in America must be Christ's one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church, faithful in every respect to its scriptures, liturgies, councils, canons and saints through the ages. This will mean that we would have only two interests: 1) to give glory to God by keeping His commandments and doing His will in all things and 2) to serve all people, whoever they are, for the sake of their salvation. Thus we would be the Church led by men and women who consider themselves as "slaves of all" who are willing to give up "their own" and to "become all things to all people so that by all means at least some may be saved (1 Cor 9:19-23).

Six Areas of Concern

The Orthodox Church in America's faithfulness to Orthodox Christianity in 2015, as always, will have to include the following six areas: worship, education, pastoral care, mission, philanthropy and administration.

1. **Worship.** Our main challenge here will be to avoid adopting inaccurate and harmful old world teachings, practices and customs, as well as wrong and dangerous "American" practices originating outside Orthodoxy. The goal will be to adopt and implement what is good and effective, whatever its source. This will be especially difficult to do because the effects of the fall of communism and the opening of Eastern Europe, with the significant emergence of monasticism, will most likely be even more influential in Orthodox life in North America in 2015 than it now is; and imitations of "American" experiments, especially in view of increasing the church's membership, will be more tempting.

2. **Education.** The main challenge here will be to secure competent teachers with suitable pedagogical resources for all levels of education in the church, from the highest theological schools to the most modest educational efforts in parishes and homes. A great challenge will also be to help believers distinguish between well-trained dependable teachers who teach "sound doctrine" and those who promote incomplete and/or inaccurate teachings (not to speak of subjective personal

opinions) without authority, authorization or competence.

3. **Pastoral Care.** Here the challenge will be to find, train and support people for pastoral service and counseling ministries who will have a deep and true experience of both Orthodox Christian life and North American ways of living and acting.

4. **Mission.** Here the main challenge will be to produce clergy and lay people who can convey the Orthodox faith to others in a manner that will persuade them to give Christ's Gospel serious attention and consideration. It will also be crucial that missionary efforts be directed to people according to the conditions of their everyday lives, which by 2015 will be even more difficult and complex than they now are. Care will have to be taken that Orthodoxy would not appeal solely to high-powered spiritual seekers or religious adventurers.

5. **Philanthropy.** Here the great challenge will be for the Orthodox Church in America, as an institution and through its parishes and individual members, to reach out to those in need, especially people who are not members of the Orthodox Church, in concrete acts of sacrificial assistance, however humble.

6. **Administration.** Here the challenge before all others will be to nurture and train suitable candidates to be the church's bishops. It will also be crucial to have administrations on all levels of church life that are honest, sober and transparent in all their activities, with wise use of funds and human resources.

Five Most Important Tasks

For the Orthodox Church in America to meet the challenges listed above, the five most important tasks to be accomplished appear to be the following:

1. We must develop ways to explain our policies and actions to our membership and to convince them that it is acting wisely and honestly in everything it does. Church leaders must be meticulously truthful about numbers, funds, resources, projects and policies. The Orthodox Church in America must also find ways for its membership to be more generous and sacrificial in supporting the church's life and mission.
2. The Orthodox Church in America must direct itself solely according to the traditional criteria of Orthodox Christianity and the Orthodox Church. It must not allow itself to imitate Orthodoxy in other places. Still less can it permit other

Orthodox churches to set the standards for its self-understanding and mission. And, of course, it must not fall prey to imitating unacceptable practices of other American religious groups.

3. The Orthodox Church in America must resist the temptation to cater to newcomers from abroad. Immigrants to America, as well as visitors, must be made to understand and accept the Orthodox Church in America's calling and mission. If this does not happen, the great majority of the newcomers' children will to be lost to the Church, together with the children of the people already here. Past history proves this. Except for scriptural readings, sermons, confessions, personal pastoral services and certain familiar parts of the liturgy (like frequently repeated hymns), all regular church services and meetings should be conducted only in English and be directed exclusively to Christian life in North America.

4. The Orthodox Church in America must develop and maintain a strict plan for training its bishops, priests and church workers. Newly-ordained priests must be put under the direction of older pastors with the right to examine their work. Obligatory "on the job" training and testing must be provided. A special training program of at least one full year must be developed for every candidate for the episcopate. This program would be rooted in the careful reexamination of the Bible, particularly the New Testament, conciliar decrees and canons, and selected writings of saints and contemporary authors. Ascetical practices, such as liturgical and personal prayer, extended periods of silence, and frequent confession with a review of one's whole life (especially one's childhood and family of origin), would be obligatory. And formal discussions would be conducted about issues facing Orthodoxy in North America and the world. The candidate would pass examinations in all these areas before being consecrated as a bishop.

5. The Orthodox Church in America must develop a program by which every communicant between 16 and 30 would be obliged (or at least strongly encouraged) to participate in "on the ground" and "hands on" Christian missionary and/or philanthropic service. Liturgical worship, educational programs, spiritual counsel and social activities without a concrete experience of personal sacrificial Christian work have proved themselves incapable of producing seriously committed and responsible church leaders.

Canada and the Future of the Orthodox Church in America – A Bishop's Perspective

A person cannot contemplate possible characteristics of the future without considering the past. The two, with the present, are intimately connected one with another.

Canada's Orthodox history is much shorter than that of the United States, and has a much different character. This is partly the result of the history of immigration to this country, and partly the formation that the country brings to those who arrive in it. Immigration of Orthodox peoples to Canada did not begin until almost a century after it did in the USA, and it was this immigration, not a missionary foundation, that introduced the Orthodox Faith to Canada. This is the case, even if one were to accept a theory that the first Orthodox believers could have arrived among the Vikings in Newfoundland a thousand years ago! Even at that time, people came to Canada either to find a better economic life, or to escape some painful local situation, such as persecution. So it was, in the second half of the nineteenth century, that immigrants from the Middle East, from Syria and Lebanon, arrived in eastern Canada, in the Eastern Townships of Québec, in Prince Edward Island, and in Nova Scotia. As witness to this, there is, at Bishop's University near Sherbrooke, Québec, a Gospel Book, dated to about 1875, given by Tsar Nicholas I in gratitude for their allowing Orthodox believers to use the university chapel. These believers received the services of a priest sent to them from New York by the Russian Mission. By 1890, the first Slavs from the then Austro-Hungarian Empire arrived, soon to be followed by Romanians, and then others. These came principally from the areas of Ukraine and Romania called Galicia, Bukhovina, Kyiv, and Volyn, which includes Pochaev. The Slavs settled primarily in the western prairies, although many settled also in Québec and Nova Scotia, and later in Ontario. Another wave came subsequently to far western Canada from Shanghai and Manchuria in China.

The Russian Mission began from 1898 to send priests to western Canada to serve this large number of immigrants, and later also to eastern Canada. There was the constant struggle to meet the needs of so many immigrants with very limited resources. Missionary motives as such were not in the forefront of the minds of many, except in the case of a few exceptional lay-persons and priests, who were responsible for the conversion of many to the Orthodox Faith. Most simply sought to live their Orthodox Christian lives, just as they had in their homelands. In many cases, these pioneer homesteaders lived in sod houses, and before building a "better" home for their families, they first banded together to build a church. The prairie provinces are dotted with such beautiful temples to the Lord, built of logs and/or

sawn timber, dating to as early as 1894. To an extent, this sense of priority and importance of the worship of the Lord has remained a constant until today. But the seventy years following the communist revolution in Russia wrought havoc in Canada, in our diocese, almost destroying our life in its various effects. As a result, there was all-round neglect, and sometimes oppression, both of clergy and parishioners, often because of a complete lack of resources, and sometimes from sinful temptation. But the Lord, in His mercy, kept all alive, and enabled a renaissance and blossoming of active church life, beginning with the last years of the active service of Archbishop Sylvester of blessed memory.

The problems that arise from Canada's being a different and independent country from the USA, and yet an integral part of the Orthodox Church in America, are much the same as they were a hundred years ago, and even more difficult. A century ago, Archbishop Tikhon, because he was a foreigner, was unable to make a Canadian federal corporation of the bishop. He was able to manage the church only on a local, western, level — and that after considerable difficulty. People rightly marvel at the energy, wisdom, insight, and future vision of this godly and God-given man. Today, the Canadian government strictly regulates the activities of registered Crown Charities and limits the foreign outflow of monies from them. And almost all our parishes, and indeed the Archdiocese of Canada itself, are registered as Crown Charities. At this moment, only one of our American institutions is registered in such a way as to receive Canadian contributions and qualify for tax credit. Many who participate in the 14th Council will notice differences between Canada, Canadians, the United States, and Americans only in a small way. But the differences are nevertheless real: a republican country founded in revolution, and a modified monarchy founded in peaceful, gradual, and free independence; two countries whose principal language is English, but with quite different ways of speaking and spelling; two countries consisting of many different cultures, but also two very different ways of including them; one country founded only in the English language, the other founded first in French, then adding English, and in time incorporating them both equally; one highly-developed country in many aspects, and the other that is popularly said always to be thirty years behind. In both countries, the Orthodox Church is broken up into nationalistic administrations, and in both countries, the bishops are trying to work together, despite the administrative division.

Regardless of the differences, we are all part of the North American Church, and we have a similar foundation in faith and perspective. And we are, taking into consideration our differences, moving in the same direction, even though in different contexts, with different resources, and with different mentalities. Even if our cultures are

somewhat different, and if our founding and present constituent parts are somewhat different, the Canadian and American parts of the Orthodox Church in America (and this probably applies also to Mexico), both understand themselves to be the local Church in and for North America. We have a double missionary work to do. On the one hand, we have the responsibility to reach out to, be visible to, and accessible to the people of the culture in which we live — American or Canadian. And in each, there are many subdivisions. On the other hand, there are periodically large immigrations of peoples from traditional Orthodox homelands, to whom we must also be accessible. Often, although certainly not always, the education in the Orthodox Faith of the newly-arrived persons begins at a more fundamental level than that of a North American potential convert. And in order for it to be effective, it must be offered first in the native language of the immigrant. If this be the case in the United States, it is much more the case in Canada; since in Canada, it is the official policy of the federal government to enable the retention of the ancestral languages and cultures for as long as possible. It has been the experience of our communities, time and again, that various programs will be formulated by the faithful, with a view to being more visible, more inviting, more accessible to those in the environment of our communities. All of this is undertaken with a sense of responsibility and seriousness. Sometimes there is a little fruit from these outreach efforts, and few people come. But it is far more often the case that real growth in a community results either from the patient, prayerful, loving, serving, witness of the believing faithful themselves, which produces a positive response in the hearts and lives of those touched personally; or, it results from the Lord's having touched the heart of a seeker, who then finds the community through his/her own research, and simply arrives. And when the sheep arrive, from whatever motivation, the sheep need to be fed. The foundation of this food is love, in the context of the love of Christ. In addition, following the example of the Apostle Paul, the food has to be presented in a form that is perceived as edible by the sheep. Those who are doing the welcoming have to be prayerfully sensitive to the needs of these arriving sheep, all with their different needs, and try to feed them accordingly. In Canada in particular, this has already meant the need for a multicultural and multilingual approach. If we were ever to be approachable by the aboriginals of Canada, it would require our understanding them and their cultures much more than we do, following the example of St. Innocent. But it is the likes of St. Innocent, and also of St. Nicholas of Japan, who serve us best in our desire to be approachable for the sake of Christ.

Regardless of the content of our outreach and in whatever direction, it is necessary for us all, in our respective countries, to accept the responsibility we have been given by God. This is to live our lives in loving service of our Savior Jesus Christ, and in imitation of Him and

of His way of life. Always, it seems to be this personal witness that is most attractive to others, and that produces the most fruit for building up the Church in the long run. It is not we who bring or make converts to Christ; it is the Holy Spirit who does this, who moves the hearts of people. Our work is to be ourselves sensitive to the Holy Spirit in our own lives, and to learn, in the spirit of Sts. Innocent, Herman, Nicholas, and the others, how to live our lives here and now, remembering how the Orthodox Way has been lived in other times, places, and cultures, and taking this guidance for the development of this Way in the various North American cultures. The manner in which we live the Way need not imitate exactly any other particular Orthodox culture, but must develop by the Grace of the Holy Spirit in the same way they developed historically, becoming the Orthodox Church living here in North America, with various flavors, according to the various situations. Our becoming truly the Orthodox Church in North America will be achieved in time when we will know ourselves to be faithful to the Tradition of Christ in the Orthodox Church, living in the context of the various local cultures, and no longer trying simply to transplant and impose a different culture. After all, the cultures of traditional Orthodox lands are all now as they are because of how the Orthodox Faith and Way transformed these cultures under the influence of the Gospel by the Grace of the Holy Spirit. This can, again, only be accomplished in North America by our living our lives faithfully, and in a natural dialogue with these local cultures. It is the Lord Himself who will accomplish all the rest, according to His will.

The Feast in the Wilderness: Steps toward the further Development of the Archdiocese of Canada – a Priest's Perspective

Some years ago I attended a lecture by Bishop Jonah of Uganda and Kenya. He movingly described the missionary life in his diocese and made a plea for support of his people's efforts to deepen the roots of the Faith in the region. The Church in Uganda, he said, was a true mission, in that it was reaching out to the unchurched and unbaptized as well as having a significant impact in the day to day life of those people who had been touched by it. He then gave an inventory of sorts of the missions, theological schools, monasteries, and churches in his diocese. It was then that I realized with some surprise that in fact his diocese was much more developed than that of my country, Canada. Although Uganda and Kenya could be considered a true missionary diocese in the common sense, in that it was far away and a totally foreign culture, it nevertheless had more Orthodox infrastructure on the ground than Canada, and it had more members. This is when I realized that all my romantic dreams of being a missionary in the classic western perspective – going to a distant and hostile land to preach the Gospel – had to be shifted to being a missionary to my own

country, which, strangely, had as great a need as Uganda! Canada is as much in need of missionary work as any tribe or distant country, but without the romance of travel, other languages, or new customs.

Canada, however, is a formidable mission field. The size of this country itself is daunting, and always has been. We are a people profoundly affected by our geography. Consider for instance that most of Canada is uninhabitable, that travel is nearly always east to west and is always expensive, that there are only a handful of major metropolitan centers, with the rest of our population spread thin in between (we have only about 35 million people – half the population of Britain – in the second largest country in the world). Our poetry, art, and history are really dominated by our relationship to the geography of our country. Daunting as well is that we are not a people unified by a common vision (such as the "American Dream") or a strongly defined self-identity (we had no nation-making revolution, for instance). Canada is a mosaic of cultures, each of which is encouraged (by national policy even) to maintain its distinctness. The only conformity we expect is that each new or old Canadian would uphold the classic Canadian values: peace, order, and good government. This means that there is no national identity and mythology to plug into, to hang our preaching on. Thus anything we uphold as individuals or as a group is dampened by being relegated to just another piece in the Canadian mosaic. My whole country is an altar "To the Unknown God" (Acts 17:23).

This leads to the even more daunting fact facing Canadian missionaries. We are not a people who make decisions easily or quickly. In some cases, especially in the lotus-land of the West, there is such great apathy that a phrase from Michael Ende's book, *The Neverending Story*, often comes to mind: "We don't even care whether we care or don't care." However, those people who do care about the Gospel and then encounter the Orthodox Church do not rush into their decision. Waiting and not rushing is one of our few national virtues. I have had more than a few people in my mission tell me that the fact that I did not try to rush their decisions was the single greatest factor in their conversion. We are individually very conservative and cautious people, and changing our faith is something rarely done and only after great consideration and testing. The other side of the coin is that those who do convert generally don't leave. This means that growth in the Archdiocese of Canada, although slow, is secure. In other words, although we are deeply suspicious of change, we are also loyal. Loyalty is another of our few identifiable national virtues. A person will know the fullness and truth in the Orthodox Church, but hold out simply from loyalty to his friends. For the missionary in Canada, this means that he has to bleed for every convert.

With all this said, I am fearlessly optimistic about the future of the Archdiocese of Canada, and not without reason. Recently, I was at a college and youth retreat in Alberta, and while there I saw firsthand the kind of people taking up the mantle of the church in Canada. They became for me kind of a metaphor for the whole Archdiocese. Some of the youth were ethnically Orthodox, some were born in the Church, but through parents who had converted, and some had just converted – yet all of them were talented and driven. One young man was fresh from graduate work in a Protestant seminary and was on the verge of conversion. He was a talented biblical scholar, an experienced missionary, and a deeply pious person, and he was not atypical. Think what in his lifetime he will accomplish in the Church. It just takes one person to start a mission, to found a monastery, to open a school, to start a Sunday school, to form a church camp. I met almost 70 youth that weekend who had the drive and talent to do so. In my own church, I am humbled by my people's drive and gifts, and they are eager to use them for building the church. I only multiply the people in my small mission, the youth at the retreat, by the number of missions and parishes and monasteries, and I get a formidable army to reach out to a formidable mission field. Of course, this army is not formidable in size; it is so in ability and desire. I am convinced that the Archdiocese of Canada is only now catching its stride, after the great effort and success of the hierarchs and people of this country to overcome the initial difficulties faced by Orthodox Christians throughout the continent. The next decade will find a growing membership of the Church deepening their commitment and finding ways to use their gifts. As they do so, more and more people will find their way into Orthodoxy or back to Orthodoxy, as the case may be. Three things, however, need to be emphasized to keep and maintain our momentum.

Outreach

The Archdiocese must always choose between two modes of being. It can be maintenance-minded, meaning that it can seek to keep what we have the way we have it. This mode of being will suppress growth, not through direct opposition, but through a policy of conservation and financial stability. Our customs are our customs, our people are our people, the way it has been done is the way it will be, and let no one touch the savings account. Implicit in this mode of being is self-service and self-maintenance, and therefore no outward vision at all. There is often a good bit of territorialism here as well. But underlying all of this is a far more serious problem: fear. Such a mode of being is fearful of "going under," of new people stirring things up, of slippery slopes to perdition once established ways are challenged, of spending too much, of losing control. All such fear is mere superstition, seeking to control and maintain the established order because to let go will surely bring on disaster. As such it is baseless in the face of the Gospel we are

commanded to understand. God is in control, whether we think or don't think we are. Being poor in spirit, such as we are commanded to be, demands letting go of all fear except the fear of God, which is the true fear which inspires love.

The other mode of being is being mission minded. This is the only mode of being that the Church in her nature knows. Archbishop Anastasios of Albania once remarked that being a mission, being a sent people, is part of the very DNA of the Church, and that to work against this is to work against our very nature, which can only bring sickness to our church. Christianity works, it really works, when it is missionary minded.

The Canadian Archdiocese must continue to remind itself that it is a missionary diocese, and not to lose sight of this fact. This will mean taking chances, sometimes against all odds, encouraging even barely-established parishes to support less established ones, and allowing new missions to take root in viable population centers throughout Canada. In short, this means being fearless (although not irresponsible) in reaching out with the Gospel. I know one new church, sadly not Orthodox, whose first service generated $900 in the collection. They used $5 to set up a bank account and sent the other $895 to another newly established mission. The Baptist church near the university where I am a chaplain has an annual budget (I know firsthand) of about one million dollars (there are only 270 families), and $400,000 of that budget is funneled to other Baptist missions. Orthodox communities should be similarly (even if not identically) fearless in their work and in their budgets. What are we afraid will happen to us if we step forward to support or to become a mission? This is exactly what God has commanded us to do, and surely this is the lesson we learn from Peter being told to go out and catch fish after an exhausting night having caught nothing. The command is to charge ahead (armed with good planning and prudence, but still to charge ahead). To shrink back is to dishonor the commander and to doubt the assured victory. The task is to be undertaken on several fronts: budgets, service schedules, mission stations, education, social programs (feeding hungry, clothing homeless, visiting prisoners, caring for widows and orphans, etc.). Established parishes must be every bit as missionary-minded missions, and both will have to be so in practice, not just in theory.

"Inreach"

An equal emphasis in archdiocesan activity must also be placed inward, and this is first of all an emphasis on education both on a national and a parish level. No outreach is possible without equipping the saints for such work. Every Orthodox Christian should be able to defend the faith articulately and knowledgeably and should always be

seeking to improve his knowledge and deepen his faith. The priesthood and hierarchy must take leadership in teaching and defending the faith, but it is not their ministry alone. Biblical and doctrinal literacy should be the norm among all Orthodox Christians, even though some will be more gifted in this area than others. Children and adults need teaching about their faith, and we can hardly ignore this need without peril. A lack of education at a parish level only inspires apathy. Nothing warms my heart as much as hearing a member of my parish answering the questions of a parish guest with competence and confidence. This is a great witness to the guest, since they see that Orthodox Christians believe and know why they believe. Such an education needs extensive catechesis for new members (in some parishes a full revival of the catechumenate), and ongoing educational opportunities for the members. It is true that adult education classes are often poorly attended (in some places), but this is hardly a reason to stop them or not have them at all. I know that in my parish, more than a few people have "discovered" the classes and take them up with great gusto once they have done so. I remember pointing out to one such person that I had been announcing the classes for some time. She said she had heard the announcements but never paid much attention to them until one day she felt an inner calling to try attending, and she was so glad she did. It may be disappointing for the priest or the lay teacher when few people attend their classes, but success here cannot be gauged in numbers, and without such classes there would be no opportunities at all for people to discover their faith.

The other aspect of "inreach" must be fostering a national emphasis on education. This certainly means diocesan encouragement and even sponsoring of camps, retreats, youth events, and symposia in parishes and universities. We cannot overestimate the importance of such events. Through them we are knit together, mutually encouraged, and collectively educated. What is more, we are allowed an opportunity to pool talents and strategize. The vastness of our country demands that we have such opportunities, since otherwise we are left in our far-flung solitudes. For this reason, diocesan support also cannot be overestimated. When parishes realize that the diocese supports such activities, and even, as far as this diocese is able to do so, financially underwrite some of these gatherings, it is more incentive for them to participate.

Lastly, the Archdiocese of Canada has been blessed with the foundation of a new theological seminary, The St Arseny Theological Institute in Winnipeg. With the foundation of this theological school many opportunities have arisen for dialogue, study, and clerical training. While the foundation is sound, a tremendous amount of work needs to be done, demanding the efforts of the whole archdiocese. Once again, this involves a certain amount of fearlessness and forward

thinking. The diocese will need to continue to raise consciousness about this Institution, and stress its importance to the future of the archdiocese.

Ecological Awareness

For some, this phrase is totally out of the blue. For many millions of Canadians, however, ecological awareness is a moral obligation. They would be comforted to see and not just hear that for the Orthodox Church such awareness is part of what it means to be "in Christ." A church that is ecologically aware is not in any way making a political statement, or leaning to the left, or being flaky, or espousing social activism. Such a church is only doing what is good and right before the Lord. How is it wrong or difficult to buy local candles made with real beeswax, to make our own wines or use local vintners, to hire local artists to make crosses or church store items, to use fairly-traded coffee during coffee hour, and to recycle the paper and materials used in the church throughout the year?

Such awareness leads to an even more important aspect in the life of the Church: beauty. We all love the idea of handmade and beautiful things, but the practicality of such an idea seems to overwhelm us, and soon any mass produced item will do as a replacement. The problem is that nothing replaces the beauty of handmade works of art by competent artists, and the problem with being Orthodox in this culture is that the Church has always used beauty as an aid in preaching and teaching the Gospel. When our churches have real icons (better real ones than prints), when they are built with quality construction, according to classical lines and designs, when they are filled (and not over-filled) with hand-blown glass, hand-painted signs, hand-carved furniture, all done by quality craftsman and artists, they are magnets for people in this throw-away and industrial world. They become a true expression of beauty in themselves, and therefore a word of God to the culture around us. Doing such things deepens ties in the community around the church, contributes to the local economy, and tramples less heavily the environment we are commanded to care for. And, the things I have just mentioned are not expensive and do not demand much time. In Canada, such ecological awareness (done faithfully and quietly) in churches will be a great witness to the world around us and will have the added benefit of actually modeling this type of stewardship to the people in our parishes, instead of merely giving it lip service.

Having read the section on Vision and Identity, what do you think is the major priority for the Orthodox Church in America in the next 10 years in this area?