

Opening Remarks of the Metropolitan Special Metropolitan Council Meeting

May 11, 2021

Via Zoom

Due to the ongoing public health crisis, this meeting is being convened electronically via Zoom. It has been scheduled to consider a limited agenda.

- 1. Welcome.* Christ is risen! I greet the members of the Metropolitan Council with the Paschal joy of the feast of feasts. I trust that each of you is enjoying the grace of the Resurrection in abundance, especially since more of us were able to participate in the liturgical celebrations of Holy Week and Pascha more fully than we were last year, and to do so in person. As you may recall, last year I spent Holy Week and all of the Paschal season at St. Tikhon's Monastery, and had directed my diocesan parishes to observe rather severe restrictions at the outset of the pandemic. After a very difficult year, I thought that it would be fitting this year to spend all of Holy Week and Bright Week making pastoral visitations to my parishes and missions in the Archdiocese of Washington. I have shared with others that my own experience of the entire Lenten and Holy Week cycle has given me a renewed and perhaps even fuller appreciation of both our Lenten struggles and our Paschal rejoicing. I am sure that I am not alone in anticipating a continued increase in the life of our communities as the global health crisis continues to recede.
- 2. Archbishop Antonio Perdomo.* Though we celebrate our Lord's overthrowing of death, we know that all of us must still pass through the moment of bodily death; and we certainly mourn all those whom we have lost during the pandemic, both clergy and faithful. Most recently, we were saddened by the falling asleep of our fellow Metropolitan Council member, Archbishop Antonio Perdomo. He was an active participant in this body but also a faithful parish priest and a strong advocate for mission work in the Spanish-speaking world. Fr. Antonio was a liaison to the Diocese of Mexico and personally assisted me on all of my visits to the Diocese over the years. He will certainly be missed by all of us, and I think it would be important

for us, as the Metropolitan Council, to express our gratitude to Matushka Elizabeth and the family for Fr. Antonio's service to the Metropolitan Council and to the Orthodox Church in America. I also think it would be fitting for us to affirm, in some concrete manner and at some appropriate moment, the necessity of continuing the excellent work that Fr. Antonio initiated in the area of Spanish-speaking outreach. Today is the Day of Rejoicing, the Tuesday after Thomas Sunday when we commemorate the departed from all ages, so I will intone "Memory Eternal" for the repose of all, but for Fr. Antonio in particular. I will also add the names of Metropolitan Theodosius and Protopresbyter Daniel Hubiak. For ease of liturgical singing, I will ask that Fr. Timothy Hojnicky alone sing the response.

Grant rest eternal in blessed repose, O Lord, to the souls of Thy servants, the ever-memorable Metropolitan Theodosius, Protopresbyter Daniel, and the newly-departed Archpriest Antonio, together with the departed Orthodox bishops, clergy, monastics, and faithful from all ages who have reposed in faith and in the hope of the resurrection, and make their memories to be eternal.

3. *Archpriest David Rucker.* Fr. Antonio was an at-large member of the Metropolitan Council, elected by the All-American Council, which also elects alternates for such circumstances. Archpriest David Rucker is one of the elected alternates, and so I am pleased to welcome him to the Metropolitan Council and to his first meeting. Fr. David is known to many of us for his work in the missionary field and his dedication to the mission of the Orthodox Church in America. So, Fr. David, we welcome you and look forward to your contributions to the work of this body.
4. *Our Agenda.* We have a very limited agenda of four items for the Council to consider this evening: a) the endorsement of Priest Alessandro Margheritino to the position of Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America, b) the appointment of an internal auditor, c) the consideration of a resolution from the Property Committee, and d) the appointment of a pension plan subcommittee. These are all important

topics, but I don't believe that any of them should be too time-consuming, so I hope that we can complete our work within the hour.

5. *Priest Alessandro Margheritino*. The first item is to consider the candidate for the position of Secretary, so I would ask Fr. Alexander to place Fr. Alessandro in the waiting room. I am happy to present Priest Alessandro Margheritino as my choice to fill the position of Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America. Fr. Alessandro is known to all of you already since he has been serving as Acting Secretary since January 1st of this year, and had previously joined the Chancery staff in September of 2020 as Executive Assistant. He is originally from Palermo in Italy. His wife, Anna, is originally from Moscow, Russia, and she presently works as a Graphic Designer at St. Vladimir's Seminary. They have two boys, Luka and Nicholas. Fr. Alessandro has served since 2014 as rector of St. Innocent Church in Olmsted Falls, Ohio, within the Diocese of the Midwest, and has served in several pan-Orthodox capacities, including 3 years as president of the Greater Cleveland Council of Orthodox Clergy and spiritual advisor for Zoe for Life! He is a graduate of St. Vladimir's Seminary; while there, he served twice as a short-term OCMC missionary to Albania and Kenya, and as an IOCC mission team member to New Orleans. He is currently pursuing a Doctor of Ministry at St. Vladimir's Seminary. Aside from these very impressive credentials, I can add that the addition of Fr. Alessandro to the Chancery team has provided a tremendous enhancement to the functioning of my office. Even from his remote location, he works in close collaboration with Fr. Alexander and the rest of the Chancery staff. He has travelled to the Chancery on several occasions for a full week and is in the process of moving to the Syosset area at the beginning of June. He has received a blessing from His Eminence Archbishop Paul to accept this position and transfer out of the Diocese of the Midwest. I am very willing to receive him and am anticipating a continued increase in the productivity and work that is already taking place at the Chancery under Fr. Alexander's leadership. We have been operating for quite some time without a full-time Secretary and I am confident in filling the position now with Fr. Alessandro. So I would now ask the members of the Metropolitan Council

to formally endorse Fr. Alessandro so that I might present him next week to the Holy Synod for confirmation.

6. *Concluding Remarks.* Thank you for a very productive meeting. As concluding remarks, I will simply call your attention to the dates of the Fall Meeting of the Metropolitan Council. As we had mentioned previously, we are moving ahead with our plans for our Fall Meeting to include a joint meeting with the Holy Synod. This meeting will take place in person in Cleveland, Ohio, from Monday, October 18 to Wednesday, October 20, 2021. The overall structure of the week would consist of a meeting of the Metropolitan Council on Monday, October 18 and Tuesday, October 19, and an all-day joint meeting with the Holy Synod and the Metropolitan Council on Wednesday, October 20; the Holy Synod would then finish out the week by conducting its Fall Session on Thursday, October 21 and Friday, October 22. For the joint meeting on Wednesday, it is our intention to include other leaders of the Church so that we might hold some constructive discussions on topics that are important for the life of the Church. The intention would then be for these discussions to lead to further work and discussion leading up to the All-American Council in July of 2022. While many of the details of the meeting are yet to be worked out, we have secured a hotel at the Cleveland airport through the good work of Deacon Peter Ilchuk. We will send out more concrete information, including the topics for discussion at the joint meeting. In the meantime, I would ask you to place on your calendar the dates of October 18–20 as the dates for the next meeting of the Metropolitan Council.