

March 21, 2015

To the Clergy, Monastics and Faithful of the Diocese of the South,

Christ is in our midst!

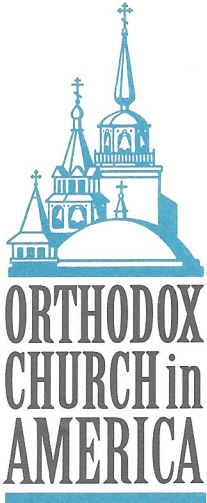
The Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America, at its most recent meeting held March 17-20, 2015, received the report of His Eminence, Archbishop Nikon, concerning the Special Assembly of the Diocese of the South held on February 16, 2015, at Christ the Saviour Orthodox Cathedral, Miami Lakes, Florida.

His Eminence presented the name of Archimandrite Gerasim (Eliel) for consideration as the sole candidate for canonical election to the see of Dallas, which has remained vacant since the time of the retirement and repose of the Diocese's founder and beloved archpastor, Archbishop Dmitri of blessed memory.

After careful reflection and prayerful discussion, including extensive dialogue with Archimandrite Gerasim, the Holy Synod decided that, rather than proceeding immediately to a canonical election, it would appoint Archimandrite Gerasim Administrator of the Diocese of the South. This action will be reviewed at the next Holy Synod Meeting in October 2015. The Holy Synod has identified the need to provide all candidates for the episcopacy with a limited period of administrative experience prior to canonical election and is following the precedent established recently in the Diocese of Alaska and the Diocese of the Midwest, where the candidates were asked to serve as Administrator prior to canonical election.

In conjunction with this decision, the Holy Synod thanked His Eminence, Archbishop Nikon for his sacrificial and devoted service as *Locum Tenens*, both in pastorally overseeing the Diocese during some of the difficult years following the retirement and repose of Archbishop Dmitri and in bringing to a conclusion the process that led to the recent special nominating assembly. The Holy Synod has decided that I should assume the *Locum Tenency* of the Diocese of the South.

I have been, and will continue to be in direct communication with Archimandrite Gerasim and have already established a clear understanding of his responsibilities as Administrator and my role as overseer. While I will reserve for myself all actions that require a bishop (ordinations, clergy transfers outside the diocese, presiding at Diocesan Assemblies, etc.), I am delegating to Archimandrite Gerasim full authority in most other areas (pastoral visits to parishes and celebrations of



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anniversaries, pastoral guidance to the clergy, communications on all levels, presiding at Diocesan Council and Deanery meetings, coordination of clergy transfers within the diocese, oversight of education and outreach programs, exercising pastoral action and discipline in reference to diocesan clergy and laity, and encouraging the establishment of building programs and growth of missions).

I have full confidence in the ability of Archimandrite Gerasim to guide the Diocese in a pastoral and God-pleasing manner and I ask all the clergy and faithful of the diocese to pray for him and support him as he continues to build upon the good work of the ever memorable Archbishop Dmitri, His Eminence Archbishop Nikon and all the good and faithful clergy, men and women who have worked so tirelessly to share the light of Orthodoxy throughout the South.

I also offer to you and to him my full support as *Locum Tenens*. While giving Archimandrite Gerasim broad latitude in his authority, I also look forward to the opportunity to make pastoral visits to the diocese and I will be in dialogue with him and your Chancellor, Archpriest Marcus Burch, concerning these possibilities.

On behalf of the entire Holy Synod, I thank you for your patience and your faithfulness to Christ and His Holy Church. May the Cross of Christ, lifted up during this middle point of the Great Fast continue to strengthen us and fill us with joyful expectation of the coming Resurrection.

Sincerely Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a cross symbol followed by the name 'Tikhon' in a cursive script.

+TIKHON
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada
Locum Tenens of the Diocese of the South