

20th All American Council (AAC) of the Orthodox Church in America

During the week of July 17th – 22nd, 2022 over 700 Bishops, clergy and faithful from our churches throughout North America gathered in Baltimore, MD to participate in the statutorily required triennial administrative assembly of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA).

The theme for this year's AAC was "Becoming Vessels of Grace". Metropolitan Tikhon, Primate of the OCA and Locum Tenens (Acting Bishop) of the Diocese of New England, defined our vocation as Christians and what it means to bear the name of Christ.

Reports by our Chancellor, Secretary, Treasurer and Department leaders highlighted major developments since our last AAC four years ago. Restructuring of the Chancery staff, relocation of His Beatitude and Chancery offices to the Washington D.C. area and the listing of the Syosset property for sale were initiated. While COVID has required changes and interruptions in our parish life, worship and practice, we have welcomed many seekers during the past two years.

The Office of Pastoral Life continues to direct the effort to strengthen the spiritual, emotional, psychological and physical health of our clergy and clergy families. Reports on the status of the OCA Clergy Pension Plan indicate that the plan is underfunded and has been in decline. A consensus determined that action is required to ensure better communication between the Metropolitan Council and the Pension Board.

Metropolitan Tikhon underscored two most critical needs in our North American Church. Average annual clergy compensation in Alaska (our oldest Diocese) is only \$7,200. In addition, the Diocese of Mexico desperately needs support to train missionary priests. His Beatitude exemplified "returning God's love for us" by personally pledging \$10,000 per year for the next 10 years to the newly established Alaskan Clergy Endowment Fund as well as to the St. Basil's Pastoral Academy building project in Mexico. We all now have the opportunity to follow Metropolitan's leadership.

Each day was launched with an inspirational Divine Liturgy. The Dioceses of Alaska, Mexico and the ethnic dioceses lead celebrants at three of these respectively. A full program of youth activities was enjoyed by the more than 100 children participating. In spite of COVID and declining membership in many of our Dioceses, the OCA and all dioceses except Alaska and Mexico maintain adequate financial health.

Please feel free to share any questions or comments with me or Fr. Steven.

Yours in Christ,

Reader John