



January 17, 2022

Chancellor's Report

This past year has seen the continued return to usual parish and diocesan life with each parish continuing to find its own way with the encouragement of the diocesan administration. This year's Assembly will be one in which we come together as the Church in flesh and blood, as is meet and right.

There is no doubt that the past two years have provided each parish with the opportunity to learn our strengths and weaknesses in situations of intense stress demanding coordinated response. As we continue to move forward it is essential that each of us respond to what we have learned and assess how we can best fix or improve our infrastructure, our communications, and our communities of talent and ability. While many have commented on the alienation felt at not being able to attend church at will, it is hoped that as service schedules return to their usual rhythm that we all would take advantage of the opportunity to assemble as the Church, not only for matters of administration, but even more so for worship and service to the Lord and to the world around us. Hopefully we have learned not to take any of this for granted. Empty churches at Holy Week and Pascha is not something any priest wants to relive, but it was also good to see more present at Vespers and Vigil services when there were limits on the number of attendants. Hopefully, many have renewed or discovered aspects of our life of liturgical prayer that will continue to be part of their lives in the coming years.

Much gratitude is owed to our lay leadership on parish councils and in choirs and in the efforts of so many others in our parishes to preserve and enrich the lives of the faithful under adverse circumstances. This Assembly is a testimony to those efforts along with the leadership



and pastoral ministry of our diocesan clergy and hierarch. Yet we know this has taken a toll above and beyond those who have had Covid or sadly succumbed due to Covid. Anxiety, depression, substance abuse, domestic violence in addition to financial stresses due to business closures or loss of employment are significantly greater than before, putting greater demands on our parishes and the clergy, seeking to care for their flocks. Clergy too are subject to the same trials and tribulations and they take their toll on us too. Fortunately we have prioritized clergy health in the diocese under Archbishop Mark's leadership, continuing what had begun when Met. Tikhon was our hierarch. I can personally attest that the Clergy Peer Learning Program has been a great help to me during this time. However it is a voluntary program and no program is capable of doing everything or in some cases the most important things. Nevertheless, it is a resource available to all the clergy and I strongly encourage those not involved to contact Fr. Nicholas Solak if you are interested. If the shepherd is to be effective, he must be healthy, in mind and heart.

In addition to retirements we have had departures of clergy from our diocese for different reasons, some of which have been quite painful. What they confirm is the essential role the priest plays in the community. Without the priest there is no parish in the truest sense, a local expression of the Body of Christ. Compelling data exists to demonstrate that the single greatest factor in parish health and growth is a spiritually healthy, active priest. In the coming years there will be fewer priests as we look at a significant number of clergy at or above retirement age and fewer seminarians ordained. Parishes financially unable to support full time clergy¹ and/or parishes with insufficient membership to maintain an active life other than weekly Vespers and Divine Liturgy must do the difficult task of self-assessment, discernment and decision. Who will maintain the buildings? Who will order the supplies? Who will lead the singing? Basic but vital questions that every parish must ask and answer. The diocese is doing its best to provide some liturgical services thanks to the retired clergy of the diocese. We have also had cooperation from other

¹ Currently seven of our parishes are unable to compensate full time clergy according to O.C.A. guidelines.

jurisdictions in providing ad hoc coverage where that was possible and we are grateful to them for their assistance. But from this perspective consolidation of smaller parishes of limited human and other resources is both the prudent and Christian thing to do. Pooling of resources, human and material, can give communities a new beginning and better equip them to serve and grow.

As we look forward to the coming year we have our next All American Council scheduled to meet in Baltimore in July. All parishes should be represented and should make every effort to be present. This past October there was a joint meeting of the Holy Synod and the Metropolitan Council to which His Beatitude invited Diocesan Chancellors. Together we spent a day and a half in breakout groups discussing certain areas of church life, reporting back to the entire gathering specific suggestions for the Holy Synod to consider in each area. I facilitated the one on vocation, in which Mark Linnehan was a participant also, the only lay member in the group. There was a consensus as to the present challenges of cultivating and growing vocations to ordained service in the church, particularly the priesthood. We will see what is prepared for the Council and participate in the deliberations. It is a time to recommit ourselves to Christ's vision of the Church and discern how best in the time and place we live, we may equip ourselves and engage in the mission of preaching the Gospel to all and making disciples of all nations.

Current Age Demographic for Priests

Parish w/o Priest	Under 30	30-40	40-50	51-55	56-61	61-65	66-70	71+
5	1	1	6	4	3	4	5	1



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“Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee.” Augustine