

February 19, 2013

To the Chancellor and Treasurers of the Dioceses of the Our Church,

Christ is in our midst!

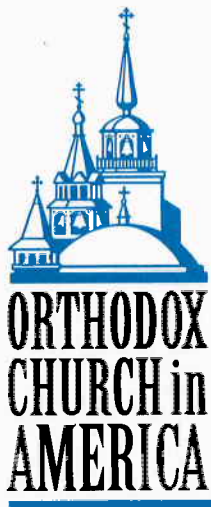
I was very much looking forward to today's meeting of the Chancellors and Treasurers and to joining all of you for what I consider to be one of the most urgent discussions we need to have within the Orthodox Church in America. Unfortunately, I am presently in Chicago in order to address some urgent pastoral concerns in the Diocese of the Midwest, of which all of you are aware.

The overlap of pastoral and financial concerns is something that is familiar to all who are charged with leadership positions in the Church: priests, deacons, chancellors, treasurers, diocesan council members, parish council presidents and other officers. All of us desire to focus on the pastoral, missionary, educational and outreach work of the Holy Gospel, but we often find ourselves restricted by financial constraints, whether this is on the level of our dioceses, our parishes or the central administration.

Your discussions today are crucial because we need to pick up speed in our efforts to resolve the challenge that was presented to us by the All American Council in Seattle: to discern a better way to fund the Church. I would like to stress that this question is most crucial in the context of the broadest understanding of the Church. Too often the discussion is framed in categories: how much belongs to the dioceses? How much to the parishes? How much to the central administration? How much to the various departments?

The latter approach tends to increase our passions and cause more division among ourselves, to the point that we forget that we are all one, united in the body of Christ, His Holy Church. I am confident that, as the OCA enters a period of calm and rest from its several years of turmoil, we can now address the crucial issues that face us with the honesty and love of a family facing its own problems and dealing with them in a way that is beneficial for all its members.

So I am grateful for all those who have gathered today in order to continue the discussions begun at last year's meeting of the Chancellors and Treasurers. Your experience of life in your respective dioceses, both on the parochial and diocesan level, is invaluable to this discussion.



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The Holy Synod and the Metropolitan Council are also considering all of these matters, but those considerations become merely academic and theoretical without the concrete information and practical ideas provided by those of you in your respective administrative roles that know the pulse of your dioceses.

I thank all of you for taking time (another valuable resource that we all seem to have less of these days) out of your busy schedules in order to gather together as brothers and sisters in Christ and to work with one another, with the officers of the Chancery and with the Holy Synod in finding ways to fund the Church in a fair and productive manner.

Finally, I would like to encourage you to speak very forthrightly about more controversial issues, such as the level of participation of the non-territorial dioceses in any new method of funding and the necessity for all parishes to be open and transparent about their own financial situations. We should not be limited in our choice of solutions by any diocese, parish or individual who may hold an inflexible opinion on matters that rightly should be resolved by the entire body. All of you gathered here today are members of that body and I pray that your deliberations and conversations will be both honest and fruitful.

May the Lord bless and strengthen all of you in this work.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a cross symbol followed by a stylized, cursive name that appears to be 'Tikhon'.

+Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada