

Metropolitan Council Representative's Report

Subsequent to Mark Stokoe being "unblessed" by Bishop Matthias to hold posts on the Metropolitan (MC) and Diocesan Council, Mr. Sam D'Fantis was tapped as alternate to fill the lay Diocesan representative's position. Mr. D'Fantis was unable to attend the last MC meetings in September due to his brother's serious illness and repose. We offer our condolences to Sam with prayers for his brother Dennis.

A summary of the fall MC meetings has been available on the web site of the OCA along with another summary available on OCAnews. Both sources report the content of meetings and the atmosphere surrounding them. Since this information is readily available for examination at these web sites, I'd simply make some personal observations:

First, as a novice representative of the Diocese to the MC, I have attended only two sessions of the Council over the space of five months. However, even this brief exposure prompts me to say that I am profoundly impressed by the professionalism and expertise that members of the MC bring to the table. Our OCA is blessed to have these people of good will who freely offer their time and talents to serve Christ and His Church. It is an honor to serve with them.

At the September meetings, members of the Council heard reports from the OCA's officers, and the chairs of the various MC committees. The officers and Council members alike are working hard to fulfill their fiduciary responsibilities. However, difficulties outlined in the Midwest MC representatives' June 7, 2011 report (available on www.domoca.org as part of the minutes of the Diocesan Council's meeting) continue. This report mentions "failures, concerns, and complaints" which are not the "result of the actions or inaction of the Synod, officers, MC or Committees of the Church...These failures have one thing in common: Metropolitan Jonah."

Having attended only two sets of meetings it has become very clear that Metropolitan Jonah's actions have made it very difficult to address both routine and serious concerns of the Church. Far too much time at the September meetings was spent dealing with legal and other issues that were made more complex because of the Metropolitan's actions. As it is not within the competence of the MC to do anything about this situation, it remains for the Holy Synod of Bishops to take responsibility and to act. The concluding words of our report of June 7th are as true today as they were then: "The actions and behavior of the Metropolitan must be addressed by the Holy Synod of Bishops before the OCA is further damaged, financially, pastorally and administratively--perhaps irreparably."

Second, the core work of the 16th All American Council (AAC) will be to deal with the Strategic Plan for the Church: an action plan for the next decade. Clergy and lay delegates need to be conversant with the working paper and prepared to participate in the various working groups they have chosen to participate in so that any established strategy might be implemented. Work accomplished by these groups will serve as the foundation of committees/ministries that will continue in the next triennium and beyond.

Third, financial (budget) information was given to the MC for our examination at the September meetings. At this AAC, we will need to approve an assessment level to fund the OCA's budget for

the next three years. This decision will determine the direction of our Church. There were three budgets presented for the MC's evaluation, two of which took the Diocese of New York/New Jersey's resolution to adopt a \$50.00 per capita assessment into account. There's little doubt that from the parish perspective it would be tempting to vote to lower the OCA's assessment as these funds going out greatly impact our parish budgets. However, the adoption of the NY/NJ \$50.00 per capita resolution would effectively "gut" the OCA, incapacitating us as an autocephalous Orthodox Church. It would be irresponsible to reduce the OCA assessment at this time.

Maintaining the present \$105.00 level for the next three years is already represents a reduction in real dollars collected to fund the Church. At the very least we need to continue current funding levels so that debts incurred to replace misused/stolen 9/11 donations and to repay internal loans of more than \$400,000 allocated from restricted funds to meet past operating expenses can be repaid. The MC and Chancery hope to structure finances so that these internal loans can be eliminated over a period of five years and also so that we can build a surplus of funds equal to six months of operating costs. Our chancery is not bloated with employees and there are no "slush funds" that we can tap. If people want to have a realistic discussion about alternative funding, tithing, etc., then please have it--but do it before reducing funding levels! A \$50.00 per capita assessment level will not magically lead to alternative funding sources or promote tithing. It will simply create an artificial crisis and paralyze the Church. I encourage delegates from our diocesan parishes to reject the NY/NJ resolution and at the very least to support the present level funding with the OCA's \$105.00 assessment.

At the September meeting a motion was made to thank two MC members who left the Council, Mark Stokoe and Faith Skordinski. I also offer Mark my thanks for stepping up to take this position in 2008. He did much hard work during his tenure, and it is obvious that he was a well-respected and valued member of the MC.

Respectfully submitted,

Fr. Alexander Kuchta