

November 3, 2012

The Holy Martyrs Acepshimas, Joseph, and Aithalas

Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, Reverend Deacons, Esteemed Members of the Diocesan and Parish Councils and Faithful of the Diocese of the Midwest,

Christ is in our midst!

On August 24, 2012 a written complaint was filed with the Orthodox Church in America alleging violation of the Policies, Standards and Procedures of the Orthodox Church in America on Sexual Misconduct by His Grace, Bishop MATTHIAS, in the form of text and email messages written to the complainant. This complaint triggered the formation of a Response Team by the Holy Synod of Bishops to investigate the matter. The complaint also resulted in the placing of His Grace on Administrative Leave of Absence.

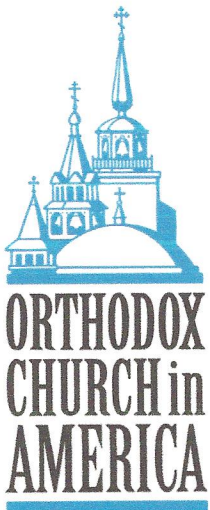
On October 19, 2012, the Response Team provided the members of the Lesser Synod with its confidential Final Report concerning this matter. The Lesser Synod reviewed the recommendations of the Response Team and then forwarded those recommendations to the other members of the Holy Synod along with the Report.

On October 29, 2012, the members of the Holy Synod accepted the findings of the Response Team that the verbal and electronic messages communicated by Bishop Matthias to the complainant, as described in the complaint, did constitute sexual misconduct as defined by the Policies, Standards and Procedures of the Orthodox Church in America on Sexual Misconduct.

Therefore, the Holy Synod, in consideration of the recommendations of the Response Team has requested, and His Grace has agreed in writing to, the following rehabilitative measures. His Grace will continue to be on Administrative Leave of Absence until these measures are accomplished.

- 1) His Grace will directly ask the forgiveness of the complainant.
- 2) His Grace will enter a residential therapeutic program, designed specifically for clergy, to identify, address, and provide concrete direction in the healing of the emotional and spiritual issues that led to these incidences of misconduct. At the completion of this therapeutic program, the Holy Synod will receive a report from a therapist or other professional involved in the program providing a summary of the treatment and a recommendation concerning restoration to his position.
- 3) His Grace will undergo a focused period of time under the guidance of a peer bishop to examine, articulate, and provide concrete direction in managing the expectations and accompanying spiritual, emotional, and interpersonal challenges of exercising the office of the bishop. The peer bishop will submit a report to the Holy Synod assessing the success of the mentorship and offering a recommendation concerning the restoration of His Grace to his position.

Beloved in the Lord: We the members of the Holy Synod of Bishops offer these measures in the fervent hope that they will help bring about healing for our brother, Bishop Matthias – and that their fulfillment will demonstrate visible, active repentance on His Grace's part. That is his, and our, duty before you, the clergy and faithful of the Diocese of the Midwest.



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The Gospel of our Lord is, among other things, the journey of repentance to forgiveness. It begins with the very first words Christ preaches – a call to repentance. It culminates in the dramatic words of the Son of Man from the Cross – a prayer of forgiveness. In between, our Savior admonishes us in the Gospel of Luke: "Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him." (Luke 17:3-4).

It is our hope that, once these steps are accomplished, having accepted full responsibility, and having demonstrated sincere repentance, for these failings, His Grace will be blessed by all of you with the same forgiveness and experience the same healing that each one of us desires when we approach the Lord in Holy Confession and when we approach one another asking forgiveness for our own sins.

Our God is the God of second chances. Let us extend to His Grace, Bishop Matthias, that same second chance that we each seek – that we each *need* – to receive from our Lord, time and time again, as we strive to be made worthy of the Kingdom of Heaven. Let His Grace's confession receive from us the same mercy that we ourselves hope to receive from our Lord and Savior, when we each are called to account for our own sins before Him on the fearful Day of His Judgment. "Forgive us our trespasses," we daily beseech our Heavenly Father, "as we forgive those who trespass against us."

The Holy Synod prays for our daughter in Christ, the complainant, that the Lord will work healing in her life. We pray for our brother, Bishop Matthias, that the Lord will direct his journey of restoration. And we pray for all our spiritual children, the clergy and faithful of our beloved Church, as we all continue to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling.

Offering my archpastoral blessings on behalf of the Holy Synod and with gratitude for your prayerful attention,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "+Nathaniel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

+Nathaniel
Archbishop of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate
Locum Tenens of the Metropolitan See
Orthodox Church in America