

## **The Resolution of the Fall 2019 Clergy Retreat of the Diocese of Chicago and Mid-America**

We the clergy of the Diocese of Chicago and Mid-America met at Holy Virgin Protection Cathedral from October 13-15 to celebrate the parish's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary and its 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a cathedral. In addition to the approximately 50 diocesan clergy and guests from other jurisdictions, we were honored to welcome Archimandrite Dosifei of the Kiev Theological Academy. We express our heartfelt congratulations to the newly ordained readers and subdeacons, as well as to the new priest Fr. Benjamin Naasko and Fr. Hierodeacon Alexei, who will both be serving at Sts. Sergius and Herman of Valaam in Houghton, MI. We wish many years to the new clergy in their service to the Church.

This was the first diocesan clergy gathering since the blessed falling asleep of Archbishop Alyphy, who reposed on Pascha. May the Lord grant our departed archpastor the heavenly kingdom!

The assembled clergy noted with sorrow the absence of cathedral dean Archpriest Andre Papkov and we ask prayers from the entire diocese for his speedy recovery.

Archbishop Peter led a discussion about the various matters, both administrative and pastoral, in the diocese. We note with sorrow that we recently passed the one-year anniversary of the break in Eucharistic communion between the Churches of Moscow and Constantinople, in the wake of the latter's intrusion into the life of the Church in Ukraine. We wish to express our continued support for Metropolitan Onuphry and the canonical Church in Ukraine, as well as for the stance of our Russian Church on this issue.

In our times we have many people who are calling for dialogues on issues related to gender and sexuality. We believe that the living tradition of the Church has a positive and authoritative contribution to make in the lives of people who struggle with identity. Our faith is often cast as oppressive and reactionary and many would suggest that the terms "bigot" and "Christian" are synonymous. However, the focus of the tradition of the Church is to liberate the believer from the bondage of the passions. We do not become human by validating fallen human nature, but rather by bringing it to Christ for transformation. There are those that attempt to undermine the moral positions of the Church and imply that its teachings are up for debate. The Christian faith is a revealed faith with a divine origin and it is not rooted in academic or Gnostic speculation, which are human in origin. We encourage the faithful to seek guidance from their priest if they have questions about the teachings of the Church, rather than turning solely to various sources on the internet that claim to speak with authority. The upcoming St. Herman's conference in Cincinnati, titled "Who am I? Orthodoxy and Identity", is an additional resource to address and educate the youth of our diocese on these issues. At our next clergy retreat we will have presentations and discussions designed to aid the clergy in ministering to our faithful on issues of identity.

In light of the rising political tensions in the United States, we wish to remind our flock not to be drawn into temptations arising from political discourse and polemics. Christ has already achieved the ultimate victory in establishing His Kingdom, and we remind the faithful to "lay

aside all earthly cares” and be the witnesses of that Kingdom that He calls us to be. May God grant peace to our American land and to His Church.