

Resolution of the Pastoral Retreat of the Clergy of the Diocese of Chicago & Mid-America

Beloved Flock in Christ,

Having gathered in the God-protected city of Des Plaines at our Diocesan Cathedral for our Lenten Retreat, we give thanks to Almighty God for granting us this time of fellowship and spiritual renewal. We are grateful for our retreat speaker, Fr. Joseph Honeycutt, for his uplifting contribution in discussing the fall of man, the passions, how to overcome sin and attain the virtues, as well as practical pastoral application for Confession. We were able to share our concerns, many of which have been communicated to us by our parishioners throughout the Diocese. We remind the faithful that the Church is the Ark of Salvation, and although we live in troubled times, God protects the Church, which has weathered many storms. We remember that all things happen by God's Providence, and that the Holy Spirit guides the Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against her. To this end, we resolve the following:

Our prayers and support continue to be with Metropolitan Onufry of Kiev and All Ukraine and Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro and their God-saved flocks. We bow low before their perseverance amid persecution, and honor their example of long-suffering and endurance by striving to uphold the traditions and duties of the Church.

With regard to the current Coronavirus pandemic, we call to mind the words of St. Anthony of Optina, regarding the epidemic of the more deadly disease of cholera:

“You should not be afraid of cholera, but of serious sins, for the scythe of death mows a person down like grass even without cholera. Therefore, place all your hope in the Lord God, without Whose will even the birds do not die, much less a person.”

Additionally, we encourage the faithful, as good members of society, to abide by the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

With respect to the deep disputes and divisions in society which often come to a head during an election cycle, we commend the faithful to remain in peace and concord with one another, to maintain love for their neighbor, and to avoid extreme partisanship of the sort that might lead to the breaking of fellowship, since our citizenship is ultimately in Heaven.

In closing, we suggest as a prayerful remedy to the current state of worry and divisions in our society and the world, that the faithful be mindful of the Prayer of the Optina Elders and add it to their morning prayer rule:

O Lord, grant me that with spiritual tranquility I may meet all that this coming day shall bring. Grant me to fully dedicate myself to Thy holy Will. At every hour of this day, direct and support me in all things. Whatsoever news I may receive during the day, teach me to accept with a calm soul, in the firm conviction that all is subject to Thy holy Will. Govern my thoughts and feelings in all my words and actions. In all unforeseen occurrences, let me not forget that all is sent down from Thee. Teach me to behave sincerely and rationally with every member of my family, neither embarrassing nor saddening anyone. O Lord, grant me the strength to endure the fatigue of the coming day, and all the events taking place during it. Govern my will and teach me to pray, to believe, to hope, to be patient, to forgive, and to love. Amen.

February 27/March 11, 2020

Venerable Procopius the Confessor of Decapolis