

**Resolution of the Clergy Retreat of the Diocese of Chicago & Mid-America  
Wheaton, IL  
October 12-14, 2009**

We the clergy of the Diocese of Chicago & Mid-America, gathered together in Wheaton, IL, at the parish of St. Innocent of Moscow, for prayer and discussion of current pastoral concerns.

With thanks to almighty God for His many mercies bestowed upon our Church in the past year, we rejoice in the historic visit of the miraculous Kursk Icon of the Mother of God to Russia, and the outpouring of piety that greeted it throughout its sojourn there. In turn, we greeted with joy the Icon of the Mother of God Softener of Evil Hearts, which is presently visiting America from Russia.

We noted the positive responses received to our appeal to women who are interested in the establishment of an English language convent in our diocese, and noted the progress made towards the accomplishment of that goal.

We welcomed the warm relations that have developed between our parishes and those of the Orthodox Church in America. We prayed for the repose of King Alexander of Serbia, who gave refuge to many Russians after the Bolshevik Revolution, including our own Synod of Bishops, on the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his assassination. We received with gratitude His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion's endorsement of our diocesan Pastoral School.

We also wish to thank Fr. Peter Spiro of the Chicago Metropolis of the Greek Archdiocese who gave a presentation on ministering to those in law enforcement and other emergency responders.

The need to educate our flock was once again emphasized, and concrete proposals for promoting liturgical education were specifically discussed.

As part of our pastoral discussions we talked about the need for parishioners to confess as a rule to their own parish priests, and only with a specific blessing to confess to other priests. This is especially important given the propensity for some clerics outside the Russian Church to employ the canons as a cold rule of law rather than as a pastoral guideline applied with love. This has led in some instances to parishioners being given lengthy penances of excommunication for sins that have been confessed previously with little or no penance from their own parish priest. Further, we strongly call upon our flock to confess on Saturday evenings or eves of feasts, and only to confess on Sunday mornings or feast days before the Divine Liturgy in extreme circumstances.

We received the report of Fr. Michael Carney on the establishment of the St. John Kuchurov Stewardship Society, and the good news that the society will begin receiving new members beginning with the feast of St. John on November 13 n.s.

Recognizing our current economic troubles, we nevertheless call upon all our parishioners to be faithful stewards of that which God has given them, and to support the work of the Church, knowing that those who sow sparingly will also reap sparingly, but that those who sow bountifully will reap bountifully.

May the God of peace be with us all. Amen.

*Accepted unanimously by the gathered clergy of the diocese.*