

# MINUTES OF THE THIRTY-FIRST DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY OF THE DIOCESE OF EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA

The 31st Annual Assembly of the Diocese of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania of the Orthodox Church in America was convened on Saturday, October 8, 1994 at St. Michael Orthodox Church, Old Forge, Pennsylvania.

His Eminence, Archbishop HERMAN, Archbishop of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania, concelebrated the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy and Molieben with clergy representing the three deaneries.

## *ASSEMBLY SESSION*

The Assembly was opened with prayer and the blessing of Archbishop HERMAN at 11:25 a.m. in St. Michael's Auditorium. Fr. John Kowalczyk announced that the Deans would act as the nominating committee for elections to the Diocesan Council. He presented the Agenda. Fr. John Mason moved to accept the Agenda, seconded by Fr. John Udics. The Agenda was approved with no changes.

## *Credentials*

Fr. John Onofrey presented the report of the credentials committee:

Hierarch	1
Clergy	30
Laity	27
Diocesan Council	4
Alternates	5
Observers	2

## *Election of Assembly Officers*

Fr. Kowalczyk submitted the following clergy and laity for Assembly Officers:

Clergy Vice-Chairman -- Fr. Joseph Martin

Fr. Vladimir Petorak moved to close nominations, seconded by Fr. Michael Hatrak. Motion carried.

Lay Vice-Chairman -- Mr. Theodore Sovyrda

Fr. Vladimir Fetcho moved to close nominations, seconded by Fr. Dimitri Voytilla. Motion carried.

Clergy Secretary -- Fr. David Shewczyk

Lay Secretary -- Marie Proch

Fr. David Mahaffey moved to close nominations, seconded by Fr. John Maxwell. Motion carried.



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### *Minutes of the 1993 Assembly*

Fr. John Mason moved to accept the minutes of the 30th Assembly as presented, seconded by Sarah Jubinsky. Motion Carried.

### *Diocesan Archbishop's Report*

His Eminence Archbishop HERMAN conveyed the Blessing of His Beatitude Metropolitan THEODOSIUS upon the Assembly and he reported that His Beatitude was now in excellent health following his surgery. Metropolitan THEODOSIUS is visiting St. Tikhon's Monastery/Seminary and he will attend the Annual Founder's Day Dinner.

His Eminence apologized for the change of the Assembly date due to his heavy schedule of events connected with the Bicentennial of Orthodoxy in North America. He will leave on Tuesday for Alaska to participate in the Canonization of Fr. Yakov (Netsvetov). The Bicentennial will officially come to an end with the Canonization.

Archbishop HERMAN noted the active role of the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania in the Bicentennial both on the Deanery and Diocesan levels. The Canonization of St. Alexis (Toth) during the Memorial Day Pilgrimage was well-attended even by those of other Jurisdictions. It was the largest celebration ever at St. Tikhon's Monastery/Seminary. Many people in attendance expressed being spiritually moved by the Canonization. An Akathist to St. Alexis has been written by a monk of St. Tikhon's Monastery. The text will be given to Metropolitan THEODOSIUS for his approval.

The FROC Convention was convened in Harrisburg and was well-attended. A resolution was adopted by the convention for the FROC to become a part of the Church. There are pros and cons to the resolution but, everyone is deeply concerned about the youth and the growth of the Church. His Eminence asked for the complete and total cooperation from all in this matter for the building up of the Church. This matter requires the dedication and attention of the Bishop, Clergy and the Faithful. Information will be shared with each parish.

The Bicentennial Celebration in Washington, D.C. involved every Jurisdiction as all were invited to participate. In this way, the seed of unity was planted, nourished and some growth was experienced. There will not always be good results but pleasure was expressed over the fact that at the Washington Celebration just about all Jurisdictions were represented but one. In this case the Bishop was out of the Country. It is time to give serious thought to unity. The talents of all can then be used to build up the Church. It is not known how quickly this can come about but, the celebration of the Bicentennial brings this closer. SCOBA will gather at the Antiochian Village for several days to talk about unity. This meeting is the reason why the topic of unity was chosen for the Annual Seminary Lecture Series. The time has come for all to see what all Jurisdictions together can do to build the Church. Building unity requires the support of all people; the process is slow.

The Canonization of Fr. Yakov (Netsvetov) will take place on October 15th and 16th in Alaska. Fr. Alexander Hotovitsky and Fr. John Kochurov will be Canonized in Russia on December 3rd and 4th. A delegation from our Church will attend.

Archbishop HERMAN represented His Beatitude Metropolitan THEODOSIUS in Poland for the Canonization of Fr. Maksym Sandovich. The Services were beautiful and well-attended. A delegation of about 150 people attended from America and this pleased the Church of Poland. The Orthodox Church in Poland is suffering much from the interference of the Roman Catholic



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and Uniate Churches. There was no interference from outside during the Canonization and no one attended from the Roman Catholic Church. His Eminence visited the area where Archbishop KIPRIAN came from. Archbishop HERMAN was allowed to enter the now Roman Catholic Church and was received by one of the local Bishop's secretaries. His Eminence prayed for Archbishop KIPRIAN and those who came to America from this area.

Archbishop HERMAN offered his thanks and gratitude to the Bicentennial Choir under the direction of Fr. Daniel Kovalak. The choir did much to spread the Faith here and outside the Diocese. The choir was well received by all who heard them.

His Eminence thanked the Department of Religious Education for their work during the Youth Rally. The Department needs the support from the clergy and all parishes.

The Wilkes Barre and Frackville Deaneries now have hospitalization plans with Blue Cross and Blue Shield. Any problems with the plans are to be resolved between Blue Cross and Blue Shield and the individuals covered.

The Pension Plan is being well taken care of. There is over \$8 million dollars in the plan. The Plan is well invested and cared for.

A Stewardship and Leadership Program of the Orthodox Church in America is now underway. The first session was poorly attended due to the late announcement of the program and the date coinciding with the Feast of the Protection of the Theotokos. Other dates have been announced. His Eminence encouraged support of this program by all.

October is Vocations Month in the Orthodox Church in America. Archbishop HERMAN reported that enrollments are up for all schools. He asked parishes to encourage young men in the priestly vocation. Over 20 new students are enrolled at St. Tikhon's; two-thirds are converts. Some of these converts have a different outlook on the Church and some have been Orthodox for just a short time. They want to serve the Lord. It is our obligation to give them the teachings of the Church even though these teachings are not always accepted at first. His Eminence called upon the parishes to begin to prepare our youth of 8, 10 and 12 years old to serve the Church. It may take five to ten years to produce a Seminarian from a parish. Fewer and fewer Orthodox men are coming to the Seminary to study. The personal touch of the priest is needed to encourage our young men to enter the Seminary. There is no current shortage of priests for our Diocese but, shortages could occur when priests reach retirement age. Replacements are needed.

The Metropolitan PLATON Chapel at St. Tikhon's Monastery Cemetery has been razed because of deterioration. It was taken down with the idea of it being replaced. Parishes will be contacted to offer support for its rebuilding. Hopefully, the Chapel will be rebuilt by Memorial Day 1995, the celebration of the 90th Anniversary of the Monastery. A new Bell Tower and Museum for Icons is being built. The Museum is being paid for by Mr. John Guzey and the Bell Tower will be paid for by other donations from the faithful.

The 11th All-American Council will be held in July 1995. It is the obligation of every parish to participate in the life of the Church. A good price has been secured for the hotel rooms. However, rooms will be at a premium due to other conventions in Chicago. Parishes should not hesitate in making room reservations. The Assessment for the Orthodox Church in America has been raised for 1995. The priest and parish council should work together on the study packet which will be sent to all parishes. The concern is for the spiritual growth of the Clergy, Parishes and growth of the Church. Our Diocese is no different than others. We hope to see an increase in membership.

New churches are being built in Stroudsburg (Holy Trinity) and in Media (St. Herman's).



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Fr. Peter Dubinin has been assigned to All Saints Church, Olyphant.

Archbishop HERMAN concluded his report by saying that our Diocese is very active in many things. There is much more to be accomplished but, we are trying. He offered his prayer that God will continue to enlighten us and give us wisdom to work together for the building up of the parishes and the Diocese.

#### ***Report of the Diocesan Council Secretary***

The report of Fr. Eugene Vansuch was included in the Assembly packet of reports. John Zoranski moved to accept the report, seconded by Fr. Neal Carrigan. Motion carried.

#### ***Report of the Diocesan Council Treasurer***

Fr. John Kowalczyk referred to his report in the separate blue folder which contained the report of the Certified Public Accountant, the Diocesan United Appeal Report and the Auditor's Report. He also referred to the letter sent to all parishes by Fr. Paul Kucynda, Treasurer of the Orthodox Church in America concerning the Census and Assessment for 1995. Our parishes are not to send the census to Fr. Paul but, we should carry on as usual since our Diocese has its own Census report. Parishes will begin to receive the Diocesan Census shortly. Fr. Vladimir Fetcho moved to accept the report, seconded by Fr. Paul Borick. Motion Carried.

#### ***Report of the Diocesan Auditors***

Fr. Paul Borick reported that the auditors met with Stanley Stoy at Holy Resurrection Cathedral on October 4th. He read the auditors report found in the blue folder. Fr. Michael Hatrak moved to accept the report, seconded by Fr. Gregory Horton. Motion carried.

#### ***Proposed Budget for 1995***

The proposed budget for 1995 was included in the Assembly packet. Fr. Eugene Vansuch offered a point of information on the budget. He noted that the Diocese is responsible for a \$1,000 assessment for the 11th All-American Council. Each Diocese is being assessed for the All-American Council as well as each parish. Fr. John Maxwell moved to accept the proposed budget, seconded by Ann Marie Macijowsky. Motion Carried.

#### ***Diocesan Deanery Reports***

The reports of the Diocesan Deaneries were printed in the Assembly packet. John Zoranski moved to accept the reports as given, seconded by Fr. John Perich. Motion Carried.

#### ***Metropolitan Council Report***

Fr. John Mason reported that there was no Spring Session of the Metropolitan Council. The report, therefore, only includes the Fall Session. The Metropolitan Council will meet November 8th and 9th of this year. Fr. Vladimir Petorak moved to accept the report, seconded by Fr. Leo Poore. Motion carried.



***Diocesan Department Reports:***

All Diocesan Department reports were printed in the Assembly packet.

***Department of Religious Education***

A change of date for the Altar Boy seminar was noted. The Altar Boy seminar will be held on Saturday, December 10, 1994 at Holy Resurrection Cathedral, Wilkes Barre.

The education conference will now be scheduled after Pascha due to the probability of bad weather in January. With the Blessing of Archbishop HERMAN, the Winter Youth Encounter has been revitalized and is gaining momentum. The youth of our diocese and neighboring dioceses have participated in the program. Some parishes are paying for the registration of their youth for the entire weekend and are commended for doing so. Thanks were offered to Archbishop HERMAN for his support in providing a place and the resources for the Encounter.

***Department of Missions***

Archbishop HERMAN reported on the possibility of new missions being formed in the Lancaster and Milford, Pennsylvania areas. There is a growing number of Orthodox people in these areas especially due to the recent Russian immigration.

***Department of Publications and Public Relations***

Fr. John Kowalczyk referred to his report printed in the Assembly packet. He noted that the report gives the highlights of Archbishop HERMAN'S itinerary over the past year. He noted the great amount of activity of His Eminence reflected in the report. He offered his prayer that the Lord would give strength to His Eminence that he may continue his active work for the building up of the Church.

***Bicentennial Choir***

Fr. Daniel Kovalak stated that although a report of the choir's activities was not required, it was a fitting addition to the Assembly reports in light of the Bicentennial. The report reflects two years of activity. The choir collected over \$10,000 for the Church in that period. The expenses of the choir included the production and manufacture of a cassette and compact disc. A concert was given for the benefit of the Century Club of St. Tikhon's Seminary in Ansonia, Connecticut.

***Department of Youth***

Archbishop HERMAN encouraged the parishes to reward the youth and encourage them to participate in functions by paying for the youth's participation. He stated that a youth choir may be formed upon the approval of Metropolitan THEODOSIUS. The youth choir would rehearse and make a recording at St. Tikhon's and possibly participate in the next All-American Council. His Eminence also noted that the good cooperation of clergy and their wives at last year's summer camp had a great influence upon the youth. These efforts made the youth feel appreciated. Many of the youth said that they felt ignored by the pastor and church council.



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They would like to be active members of the parish. Parents also need to be educated. More activities will get parents more involved. Money is not the answer but, sharing love and talents is most important. He asked the delegates to not wait to be asked to help but to volunteer time and talent. This will in turn help the people in the Department to know that there is interest.

**Lunch - 12:30**

**Afternoon Session**

#### ***Election of Diocesan Council Members***

The following were nominated for election to the Diocesan Council:

Frackville Deanery	--	Clergy: Fr. Michael Hatrak, Minersville Laity: Doug Rudenko, Coaldale
Wilkes Barre Deanery	--	Clergy: Fr. Andrew Shuga, Berwick Laity: John Zoranski, Wilkes Barre
Philadelphia Deanery	--	Clergy: Fr. Eugene Vansuch, Bethlehem Laity: Christopher Rowe, Catasaqua
At Large	--	Clergy: Fr. Stephen Karaffa, Nanticoke Laity: Marie Proch, Simpson
Auditors	--	Clergy: Fr. Paul Borick, Coaldale Laity: Gene Haverlak, Alden Station Ted Sovyrda, Wilkes Barre
Ex Officio		Deans of the three Deaneries: Fr. Joseph Martin, McAdoo Fr. Vladimir Fetcho, Olyphant Fr. John Udics, Philadelphia

Fr. John Udics moved to accept nominations, seconded by Fr. John Maxwell. Motion carried.

#### **Other Matters**

Fr. John Udics moved that the Diocese go on record to support the effort of the restoration of Metropolitan PLATON'S tomb and make a donation of \$5,000 to the Restoration Fund. The motion was seconded by Fr. Gregory Horton. Motion carried.

Fr. John Onofrey called for the support of the clergy of future youth activities. He encouraged the delegates to take the idea back to the parishes to make a real effort to get people to help at Diocesan events.

Ted Stout spoke on the possible mission to the Lancaster area. He emphasized the need to have a mission established in the area. He affirmed and applauded the Church's move in this direction. Archbishop HERMAN responded by saying that he is working with other jurisdictions and SCOPA for cooperation in establishing a mission. He noted that many Russian immigrants are moving into the Lancaster area. He spoke of the possibility of missions in other areas of the Diocese to meet the spiritual needs of the recent Russian immigration. He encouraged the Diocesan parishes to give hospitality to those who come from abroad.

Archbishop HERMAN said that a Clergy and Laity Conference is not in the immediate future but, will be discussed at the next Diocesan Council Meeting.



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Fr. Eugène Vansuch encouraged the delegates to take this opportunity in this Assembly to discuss pressing issues in the Diocese as reflected by the Demographic Study and other areas.

Michael Cuttic asked about the Scholarships within the Diocese and about the proper time for Church School. Archbishop HERMAN responded by stating that the Scholarships were for Seminarians. He said that education in the parish should go on continuously even if the number of those in attendance is small.

Martin Paluch reported that the youth who attended the youth encounters were asked how things were going in the parishes in general. He noted many positive comments from the youth on the work of the clergy and council to work with the youth.

Fr. Vladimir moved to adjourn the Assembly, seconded by Fr. John Perich. Motion carried.

Before adjourning, Archbishop HERMAN thanked the delegates for their participation in the Assembly. He told the delegates to not be afraid to ask questions. He is available even during the week to schedule time to meet with the faithful. He noted that the time for Annual Meetings is approaching. The agendas should not just include business but, should include the spiritual life of the parish. Good ideas can be supported by the priest and council. We should ask what can be done to bring people back into the parishes.

His Eminence again thanked everyone for their attendance and support and not to seek personal glory but thanks from the Lord.

The Diocesan Assembly was adjourned with prayer and the Blessing of Archbishop HERMAN at 2:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

*Priest David Shewczyk*  
Priest David Shewczyk

*Marie Proch*  
Marie Proch

Approved by

*+ Archbishop Herman*

His Eminence, Archbishop HERMAN