



*The Orthodox Church in America*  
*DIOCESE OF PHILADELPHIA AND EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA*  
*The Most Rev. Mark, Archbishop of Philadelphia*

December 3, 2021  
The Holy Prophet Zephaniah

Dear Rev. Frs., esteemed members of the parish councils and faithful,

Christ is in our midst! I pray you are having a Blessed Nativity Fast and drawing closer to Christ. At our Diocesan Council meeting of September 28, 2021 held at the Diocesan Chancery we discussed the upcoming All American Council in 2022. The Diocese was billed \$27,022 which historically is billed proportionately to each parish to cover the costs of the All American Council. Given the difficulties of the past year and a half, lower attendance at services and uncertainty of parish membership, the Diocesan Council unanimously decided the Diocese would absorb the cost for the 2022 All American Council.

The Diocesan Council met again on November 30<sup>th</sup> at the Chancery in Bath, PA. The Proposed Agenda for the Diocesan Assembly for January 27-28<sup>th</sup> at Holy Trinity, Wilkes Barre was unanimously approved. While each parish is required to cover the cost of their clergy and delegate for hotel and registration, the Diocesan Council voted to waive the registration fee this year. The registration fee normally covers costs associated with the Assembly, such as printing costs, meals, snacks and guest speaker. The parishes will still need to cover the cost of those requiring a hotel room. Specific information will be sent separately.

Finally, the Diocesan Council discussed extensively the exceptional and tireless efforts of our clergy to re-open our parishes and keep them open. We have lost a few clergy this year and have several clergy of retirement age. The past year and a half have been quite taxing for all of us, but especially those providing for the care of the faithful. All agreed we need to take better care of our clergy. The Diocesan Council members proposed a bonus as an expression of gratitude to our clergy for their tireless efforts. As part of that discussion, we also recognized that our clergy are already underpaid as the median income figures for the last few years were based upon old data. While that aspect was corrected for the parishes to address this coming year, the laity and deacons of the Diocesan Council voted to give each active priest \$1,000 as an expression of gratitude and an acknowledgement for the many difficulties of returning to a more normative parish life. The clergy of the Diocesan Council abstained to avoid any conflict of interest.

As we continue to move forward, let us be mindful that everyone has struggles whether known or unknown to us. Let us put aside all anger, malice, grumbling and gossip as it does not serve to build up one another and the Body of Christ. Let us be patient, loving and kind with one another, forgiving one another just as the Lord freely offers forgiveness to us..

Yours in Christ,

+ Mark

+ MARK, Archbishop of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania



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"Thou hast made us for Thyself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it finds its rest in Thee." Augustine