

ADDRESS OF THE RIGHT REVEREND DANIEL, BISHOP OF SANTA ROSA, TO THE
2017 DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY OF THE DIOCESE OF THE WEST

SAINT NICHOLAS CHURCH, PORTLAND OREGON

OCTOBER 10-12, 2017

Your Eminence, Archbishop BENJAMIN

Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, Honorable Deacons, Venerable Monastics,
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST!

I am pleased to offer a few words on the occasion of the 2017 annual Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of the West. It is both a duty and an honor to be able to begin these brief words by extending the thanks and gratitude of the entire Diocese of the West, its clergy, monastics, and faithful to our Archpastor, His Eminence, Archbishop BENJAMIN, who, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ, High Priest and Good Shepherd, has been entrusted with the oversight of this Christ-loving Flock within this God-protected Diocese. I wish to thank you, Your Eminence, for the guidance and care which you give to all of us, dispersed throughout a large territory but always close in faith and service to Christ and, wherever we live and in whatever temple we gather for worship, are united in worship of the Triune God whenever we gather before the One Throne of God. But, Your Eminence, on behalf of all the clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Diocese, I would also like to express our gratitude to God for your personal concern for all of us, for your commitment to the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the Diocese, for the special spirit of concern which you bring to the episcopal ministry. Every parish and monastery, all the clergy and so many of the faithful in this Diocese have experienced your personal support and encouragement in so many ways and on so many levels - as well as the challenge you place before us to grow in our service to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church and to expand the work of evangelizing throughout this corner of the Lord's vineyard. Your Eminence's commitment to the Diocese- and to all of us- is even more greatly appreciated in light of your many other duties and responsibilities: your commitment, as one called to exercise the fullness of the apostolic charism, to the wellbeing of the entirety of Christ's Holy Orthodox Church, and your service to our Orthodox Church in America, as a member of the Holy Synod of Bishops. May the Lord grant you many more blessed years as Shepherd and Archpastor of our beloved Diocese of the West!

At last year's Diocesan Assembly, I expressed just how truly blessed I am to serve in the capacity of auxiliary bishop to His Eminence and for this diocese. As is well known, although blessed with the title "Bishop of Santa Rosa," I also continue in my role as rector of Saints Peter and Paul Church in Phoenix, Arizona; and I am grateful to

continue in that role, serving the faithful of Saints Peter and Paul Church as parish rector.

In my day-to-day life, I also continue to care for the faithful of Saints Peter and Paul Church, a sixty-six year-old parish in the northern part of the Sonoran desert, which includes the Phoenix metropolitan area, a metropolitan area that has a population of over five million. All of our parish priests as well as those in parish leadership certainly know what such duties might entail, so there is no need to rehearse them here. I am grateful to have the assistance of Priest David Balmer, a retired priest attached to our church, who is able to fill in for me on those occasions when I need to be away from Phoenix. Last year at this time we were mourning the very recent repose of the ever-memorable Protodeacon Alexis Washington- Memory Eternal! But, by God's Providence, at that very time we received a new deacon, Deacon Andrew Maxwell, who transferred to the Orthodox Church in America, to our Diocese, and was attached to our church in Phoenix. His presence has been a great support and assistance to me and to the parish in general.

Throughout this past year, since the last meeting of the Diocesan Assembly, His Eminence has asked me to represent him at various parish feasts and for pastoral visits to some of the parishes in our Diocese. And I can repeat what I reported to the Diocesan Assembly last year about these visits. I quote from last year's report: "1) I fully understand why His Eminence enjoys these visits so very much. They provide opportunities to offer support and encouragement to the clergy as well as to the local parish leadership as well as the opportunity to better understand the life of each individual parish. And to witness the "good stuff" (credits to Father Ian MacKinnon) of the Diocese firsthand. 2) In visiting the various parishes, one can see that each community is unique unto itself. At the same time, however, each parish and community within our diocese- whether old or young- has an energy to it that reflects the energy of the Diocese as a whole. And by "energy" I mean dedication to the life and mission of the Church, whether that community is old and established or new and just putting down roots. In these visits, I've been blessed to see the enthusiasm – sometimes expressed even in the midst of local challenges and trials—and the love for and dedication to the Orthodox Faith. What a blessing and joys these visits have been to me and I thank His Eminence for allowing me to share in the unique perspective which these visits provide. Without sounding too much like a cheerleader... our diocese is blessed in so many ways. And I hope that, whatever challenges any priest or parish might be experiencing, you may all see the bigger picture of what we are accomplishing in preaching the fullness of the Gospel in the territory that is the Diocese of the West. While each parish is unique and has its own blessings and challenges, so it is with our Diocese. And, suffice it to say, I am glad I'm here..." We are blessed, indeed.

Orthodox ecclesiology, our self-understanding based upon theological reflection, teaches us that each diocese, each local Church headed by a bishop in communion with the Synod of Bishops, contains within itself everything necessary for the work of the

Church and provides for the fullness of Church life to be experienced and lived. With all the uniqueness and special gifts or characteristics any given diocese might possess, no diocese lives on its own or in isolation. As I have already noted, His Eminence, as a bishop of the Church and as a member of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America, exercises duties and responsibilities that are above and beyond his very focused duties as the Ruling Bishop of the Diocese of the West. So it is for me, as well. Although I am an auxiliary bishop serving in this Diocese, and very pleased to serve in this capacity, in addition to specific service within the Diocese of the West, I am occasionally called upon to offer assistance to His Beatitude the Metropolitan, to the Holy Synod and to individual bishops as well, particularly in the area of canon law. I also serve in the capacity of His Beatitude, Metropolitan TIKHON's liaison to the military chaplains, assisting the Department of Military Chaplains in ministering to military personnel and their families. Of late, I have also been engaged in the area of external church relations, with most of my focus in this area involving the relationship of the Orthodox Church in America with the Russian Orthodox Church and our presence in Moscow at Saint Catherine the Great Martyr Church.

I am pleased to offer this is a brief summary of my responsibilities and ministry as the auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of the West. Allow me to conclude by repeating that I am grateful for the ability to serve with and for His Eminence, Archbishop BENJAMIN and the clergy, monastics, and faithful of the God-protected Diocese of the West