

Diocesan Council Meeting  
Diocese of the West  
Tuesday, December 16, 2008  
Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, California

His Grace, the Right Reverend BENJAMIN, Bishop of San Francisco and the West, convened the Diocesan Council of the Diocese of the West at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, California, at 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, December 16, 2008, with the singing of "O Heavenly King."

**Diocesan Council Members Present:** Bishop BENJAMIN; Archpriest Ian MacKinnon, Chancellor; Mary Caetta, Diocesan Treasurer; Archpriest David Brum; Archpriest Anthony Karbo; Archpriest Lawrence Margitich; Priest Michael Anderson; Priest John Strickland; Priest Christopher Swanson; Subdeacon Johann Morse; Subdeacon Dmitri Solodow; and Dorothy Nowik. **Deans Present:** Archpriest Joseph Hirsch; Archpriest John Pierce; Archpriest Basil Rhodes; Archpriest Lawrence Russell; and Archpriest Matthew Tate. **Guests:** Archpriest David Lowell, Barry Migyanko.

**Minutes of the October 7 and October 9, 2008 Meetings** were accepted with corrections, noting that Archpriest Joseph Hirsch and Subdeacon Dmitri Solodow had been appointed Clergy and Lay Vice-Chairs of the 2008 Diocesan Assembly.

**Report of His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN**

Bishop BENJAMIN noted that his schedule has recently included a lot of traveling for several parish visitations as well as the travel demanded by his current service as Administrator of the Diocese of Alaska. His Grace also commented that he hopes to curtail his travel a bit toward the end of January.

His Grace reported that his move into the residence at Holy Trinity Cathedral is complete and that he is deeply appreciative of the presence and assistance of Barry Migyanko and Elias Mukasa. Some office arrangements still need to be made and files from Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral, Los Angeles, remain to be transferred to the diocesan office in San Francisco.

Bishop BENJAMIN commented on the recent election of His Beatitude, Metropolitan JONAH, who is well known to all within the Diocese of the West. With the election of Metropolitan JONAH, a new "West Coast" perspective has been brought to the Office of the Metropolitan. His Grace also reminded those present that the Diocese of the West has much to contribute to the life and mission of The Orthodox Church in America.

Commenting on this period of transition for our Church, the Bishop stated that there is still much that needs to be done, both within the Church and in its relationship to its Sister Churches.

His Grace will be participating in the Enthronement of the new Primate which will take place in Washington, DC, December 27-28 as well as the meeting of the Holy Synod scheduled for December 29. He will also participate in the Enthronement of His Grace, Bishop ALEJO, which will take place January 18, in Mexico City.

The Bishop concluded his report by welcoming the newly-elected members of the Diocesan Council.

### **Report of the Treasurer**

Mary Caetta, Diocesan Treasurer, presented highlights of the previously-distributed Treasurer's Report. She noted that the YTD report (12/11) reflects an "in the black" balance of \$76,500.00. This reflects that the Diocese exercises conscientious stewardship in its care of the monies entrusted to it for the work of the Diocese. Concerning the monies received from the sale of the property in Point Reyes, Mary reported that the funds are presently divided between eleven CD's and cash funds with Mesirow Finance. Other funds from the sale (703K) are presently in a savings account at Wells Fargo. The funds from savings will soon be utilized. She reported that we will know by April if the current budget will require any adjustments.

Mary reported that Barry Migyanko, Diocesan Administrative Assistant, now receives and deposits all assessment payments and that communication between the two of them is very good. Carole Shumaik is now working as Diocesan Fundraising Chairperson and is doing well in that position.

In light of the strong financial health of the Diocese, discussion concerning the possibility of providing parishes with a "rebate" of assessments followed the Treasurer's report. Various suggestions were offered as to how the Diocese could show good faith to the parishes by providing possible rebates. Archpriest Joseph Hirsch noted that this would be a concrete way of reflecting the new accountability present in the administration of The Orthodox Church in America. After a discussion of several possible ways to do this, Bishop BENJAMIN suggested that it would be preferable to wait another twelve months and then, should the Diocese have a surplus of funds, a percentage of the surplus could be remitted to the parishes.

**Motion:** Subdeacon Dmitri Solodow - If, at the end of FY2009, the Diocese of the West has a surplus of funds greater than its expenses, a determined percentage will be remitted to the parishes, with a letter of explanation. **Second:** Priest Michael Anderson. **Motion passed.**

### **Old Business**

#### *Construction of Monastery Chapel (Point Reyes Funds)*

His Grace reported that the Monastery of Saint John of San Francisco and Shanghai, Manton, CA, needs approximately \$60,000.00 in additional funds to complete the \$118,000.00 chapel project. Once the plans are approved, building on the chapel can begin. The Bishop has informed the monks that they are responsible for raising \$40,000.00 of the \$60,000.00. Discussion concerning the project followed.

**Motion:** Subdeacon Dmitri Solodow – Moved that the Diocesan Council provide \$40,000.00 from the proceeds of the sale of the Point Reyes Project to the Monastery of Saint John for use in completing the Saint Eugene Chapel project. **Second:** Subdeacon Johann Morse. **Motion passed.**

*Bishop's Housing*

As mentioned in the Bishop's report, His Grace is now moved into the residence at Holy Trinity Cathedral and Archpriest John Takahashi and his wife have moved into the property on Duboce Street. His Grace reported that the title of the property on Duboce still needs to be changed and that he will follow up on this. Also, the remodeling of the rental unit has been completed. Johann Morse is to investigate the question of the hot water heater(s).

*Synaxis of the Theotokos Corporation*

His Grace reported that some legal work still needs to be done concerning the title on the Duboce Street property. The Board will follow up on this. The Corporation still exists and has broken even financially.

*Diocesan Communications*

His Grace has appointed Subdeacon Dmitri Solodow as Chairman of the diocesan Department of Communications. *The Vision* may now take on a newsletter format. In the near future Priest John Schroedel (Kona Mission, HI) will redesign the format of the diocesan website. As discussed on several previous occasions, parish clergy are a crucial link in assuring that parish life and activities are regularly reported to the Department of Communications.

*Raphael House, San Francisco*

Archpriest David Lowell, Director of Raphael House, San Francisco, was present to report on the work of Raphael House. Father David noted that he hopes to retire from his position in 2011. He related that there is a need to amend the Raphael House By-laws so that the Diocesan Bishop of the Diocese of the West appoints two members to the Board of Directors. Father David observed that Raphael House certainly has a future, even if its present model of service changes (e.g., in the future there may not be a live-in director). That being said, there is a need to preserve the institutional memory and Raphael House's tradition of Orthodox Christian witness and service. Father David also reminded the Council that the primary role of Raphael House is to accommodate the needs of those it serves while, hopefully, also striving to retain an Orthodox presence. He recommended that one of the ways in which this can be done is through the presence of Orthodox Christians on the Raphael House Board of Directors.

**Motion:** Mary Caetta – That Raphael House continue the practice whereby the Diocesan Bishop of the Diocese of the West appoints two members to the Board of Directors. **Second:** Archpriest Ian MacKinnon. **Motion carried.**

*Raphael House, Portland*

Archpriest Matthew Tate reported on the present status and work of Raphael House, Portland, Oregon and on its need to amend its by-laws to reflect that the Board of Directors includes two members appointed by the Diocesan Bishop. The members appointed by the Bishop would have reserved powers. Executive Directors can be neither hired nor fired without their vote. No changes in the by-laws can be made without their vote of approval. Should Raphael House close, all assets would devolve to the Diocese of the West. A question was raised concerning diocesan liability. Father Matthew noted that liabilities are covered under the diocesan liability policy, up to five million dollars.

**Motion:** Mary Caetta – That the Diocesan Bishop of the Diocese of the West appoint two members to the Raphael House, Portland, Board of Directors and to accept the changes in the Raphael House By-laws that reflect the role of the Diocesan Bishop. **Second:** Priest Christopher Swanson. **Motion carried.**

*Parish Screening Procedures*

His Grace noted that all parishes are now in compliance and that the Diocese will now proceed to the screening process for clergy.

*Diocesan Loan Program*

Bishop BENJAMIN reported that John Della Monica and Peter Schwalbenberg have been working with the attorney and that by-laws are being prepared. The Loan Program will function as a separate diocesan corporation whose Officers and Board will be appointed by the Bishop. The Program will be able to accept deposits from any person or institution; however, loans will be made only to diocesan institutions.

*Saint Mary Magdalene Mission, Merced*

Archpriest Matthew Tate, Dean of the Mission Deanery, reported on the status of the Merced Mission. A letter from Priest David Thatcher to the Diocesan Council was also distributed. Father Matthew reported that significant questions concerning Merced have been resolved and that a settlement has been reached between the lien holder and the mission, namely that the lien holder has given an 18-month grace period for the outstanding loan, in the amount of approximately \$270,000.00, to be satisfied. Father Matthew suggested that a loan be given by the Diocese to the mission, at an interest rate of 8-9%. Discussion concerning the interest rate and the terms of the loan took place.

**Motion:** Subdeacon Dmitri Solodow – That the Diocese of the West loan Saint Mary Magdalene Mission, Merced, California, \$265- 280,000.00 at a 9% interest rate, so that its outstanding loan may be satisfied. This loan is made with the stipulation that, should the mission fall into arrears in its repayment of the loan or in its diocesan assessment payments, the Diocesan Council will recommend to the Bishop that the mission be closed and the Diocese will have first place in receiving the mission's assets. **Second:** Subdeacon Johann Morse. **Motion carried.**

His Grace noted that Father David Thatcher, his family, and members of the mission community are conscientious in their care of the mission and that this motion will assist in alleviating the stressful burden under which they have been laboring.

*Life-Giving Spring Retreat Center*

Bishop BENJAMIN reported that monthly expenses for the maintenance of the diocesan retreat center in Boulder City, NV, are approximately \$3,000.00. This does not include the costs of payments on the mortgage. His Grace proposed that the Diocesan Council consider the possibility of being appointed as the Board of Directors of the retreat center and assume responsibility for its management until the property is sold. The option of the Diocese paying off the mortgage and then selling the property was also raised. Discussion concerning this matter followed. His Grace appointed a committee consisting of Archpriest Ian MacKinnon, Archpriest David Brum, Mary Caetta, and Subdeacon Johann Morse to visit the facility and prepare a report to be presented at the next meeting of the Diocesan Council. At that time a further recommendation will be made.

*Metropolitan Council Report*

Subdeacon Dmitri Solodow, diocesan lay delegate to the Metropolitan Council, presented a report on the 15<sup>th</sup> All-American Council. He noted that a certain anxiety and uncertainty existed at the beginning of the Council but that this was greatly lightened with the election of the new Metropolitan. He commented on the recommendations of the Special Investigative Commission and its finding that systemic difficulties led the Church to the situation in which it found itself. It is now hoped that under the leadership of the Holy Synod and with the strategic planning process that will soon be implemented that a long-term vision will be expressed and that everything will then come into its rightful place. Dmitri also reported that the Holy Synod is going to meet on December 29, in conjunction with the enthronement celebration in Washington, in order to begin the strategic planning process. His Beatitude will appoint those who will prepare a first draft of a strategic plan. It is hoped that a possible strategic planning summit will be discussed at the next joint meeting of the Holy Synod and Metropolitan Council. Bishop BENJAMIN commented that a buy-in by the dioceses will be necessary for the success of any plan. This “buy-in” will provide for better vision, a more fruitful outcome, and a stronger sense of ownership. His Grace also noted that there will not be a re-defining of ecclesial structures. Discussion followed. It was noted by Father Matthew Tate that strategic planning should not be entrusted to paid staff. Discussion concerning funding also took place, with Father Matthew reminding the Council that the OCA assessment was approved at \$105.00 per person, but that the budget was approved at a \$90.00 per person level. This will allow for payment of expenditures relating to the enthronement of the new Metropolitan. Comment was also made concerning the role and responsibility of non-territorial dioceses in supporting the work of The Orthodox Church in America.

**Motion:** Subdeacon Dmitri Solodow – The Diocesan Council of the Diocese of the West strongly recommends to the Holy Synod that, in the development of the strategic plan for the OCA, a process is used which provides for: the most broad-based clergy and laity input; frequent, open communication of progress; the involvement of both content and process experts; and the development of

understanding, participation, and ownership throughout the Church. **Second:** Mary Caetta. **Motion carried.**

## **New Business**

### *Deanery Reports*

His Grace invited the Deans to provide brief reports on life within the Deaneries. Archpriest Joseph Hirsch, Rocky Mountain Deanery; Archpriest John Pierce, Pacific Northwest Deanery; Archpriest Basil Rhodes, Pacific Central Deanery; Archpriest Lawrence Russell, Pacific Southwest Deanery; and Archpriest Matthew Tate, Mission Deanery presented updates on the life of the parishes and clergy within their respective deanery. It was noted that life is generally stable and that, while some parishes face special challenges, generally life within the parishes in the Diocese of the West is healthy and stable.

### *Diocesan Attorney*

Archpriest Ian MacKinnon, Diocesan Chancellor, noted the need for the Diocese of the West to retain legal counsel for possible legal questions that normally arise in the life of any diocese. He reported that Timothy McFadden is being considered for appointment by the Bishop as diocesan attorney

### *Specific Parish Issues*

Bishop BENJAMIN noted that Saint Nicholas Church, San Diego, has faced some difficulties during the past year and that there are still some issues concerning full implementation of the diocesan sexual misconduct policy. Saint John the Baptist Church, Berkeley has had some difficulties with the choir director. The Parish Council of Holy Myrrhbearers, West Sacramento, has faced some challenges regarding finances in light of its decision to provide financial assistance to Matushka Szrynski following the repose of Father Gregory. His Grace also commented on issues concerning Priest George Elliott, Saint Paul Church, Las Vegas.

### *Charities and Appeals*

Mary Caetta noted that income is beginning to be realized from the recent diocesan appeal. The Diocesan Council commends Carole Shumaik for her fine work. The next diocesan appeal will take place prior to Pascha.

### *2009 Diocesan Assembly*

Following discussion, it was decided that the 2009 Diocesan Assembly will be held at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, in conjunction with the celebration and leading into the centennial of the “new” Cathedral’s consecration, October 15-17. The Centennial Celebration itself will be held October 17-18.

### *Upcoming Retreats and Workshops*

The next Mission Deanery Retreat will be held in Las Vegas the week after the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee. His Grace reported that a Deacons’ Workshop will be scheduled sometime in the near future. There was also discussion concerning

coordinating with the Greeks and Antiochians in providing a regional clergy wives' retreat.

*Audit Committee Recommendations*

Archpriest David Brum, diocesan audit coordinator, reported that he will present a draft of audit procedures and recommendations to His Grace, the Treasurer, and the Audit Committee before the next meeting of the Diocesan Council.

**Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting of the Diocesan Council will be convened at Holy Trinity Cathedral, San Francisco, on Tuesday, March 10, 2009.

His Grace, Bishop BENJAMIN adjourned this meeting of the Diocesan Council at 2:45 p.m. with the singing of "It is Truly Meet."