

**The Diocese of the South  
The Orthodox Church in America**

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Sunday, October 14, 2007

*Commemoration of the Holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council*

To the Venerable Clergy, Monastics, and Faithful of the Diocese of the South:

As many of you know, the fall session of the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America will take place on October 16<sup>th</sup> through October 18.

Never in the history of our Church, either as the Russian Metropolia or as the autocephalous Orthodox Church in America, has she been beset by so many internal difficulties as she is now. As the central administration of our Church has grown, the problems have increased, and we have reached a point in which that organ is in real turmoil. This will be the principal concern of the sessions of the Holy Synod and hard choices need to be considered.

When our Lord Jesus Christ was being crucified, the soldiers who were carrying out the governor's orders divided His clothes among them, except for one thing: His tunic, described by the Evangelist as woven from the top throughout, a seamless garment. For the holy Fathers, this garment symbolizes the oneness or unity of the Body of Christ, the Church.

The unity which is essential is that of faith and love, not simply organizational unity. But, the devil has been at work from the very time of the Lord's death and resurrection to rend that garment. Divisions, schisms, heretical groups have been the product of his work. The Orthodox Church, in her faith, has preserved the garment intact; on the other hand, she has faced crises of organization, enmity among the brethren. We of the Orthodox Church in America now face such a crisis. The number of proposed solutions to our problems is matched by the number of accusations and recriminations.

As we hierarchs meet to face these difficulties, and face them we must, we must do so in the prayerful hope of finding a solution to them, we not only remind our fellow-hierarchs but also all our people, that the Lord Himself has given us the formula for resolving the aberrations contrived by the devil. We must ask as once did the disciples, "Why could we not cast him out?" The Lord's answer to us must be the same: "this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." (Matthew 17:19-20).

I am, therefore, asking the clergy, monastics, and faithful of the Diocese of the South to join in a day of prayer and fasting (on Tuesday, October 16th), so that the devil, whom we have permitted by our sinful weakness to produce the current turmoil we now face, may be cast out. As hierarchs, and for all those who will gather this coming week in Syosset, we must face up to the hard choices that must be made for the good of our beloved Orthodox Church in America.

I ask that you pray for me and for all those who will gather this week. Pray that we will have the courage to face our own weakness and sinfulness so that we may be guided only by the Holy Spirit. Pray that none of us may be led to confusion. Pray that the seamless garment of faith and love that is the Church, can be restored and that trust and integrity can be rekindled. Pray that none of us view our position of responsibility in the Church as a “right” but as a sacred privilege, and if that sacred privilege has been abused by anyone that we repent and forgive so that a new start for the Orthodox Church in America can begin.

There is too much work for us, in bringing the fullness of the Gospel to the people in the southland and the entire Orthodox Church in America, for us to fail to “redeem the time, for the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:6).

With love in Christ,

*+Dmitri*

**+DMITRI**

Archbishop of Dallas and the South