

# “GOOD NEWS”

*Special Edition*

## Holy Resurrection Orthodox Church

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I am the Resurrection and the Life.  
Whoever believes in me shall not die,  
but shall have life everlasting.

~ John 11:25

Volume V- Special Fall Edition  
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## President's Message

Welcome to the Special Fall Edition of "The Good News". It is a "Special Edition" because it takes a slightly different format. We thought we'd offer personal testimonials and insight into the recent All American Council of the Orthodox Church in North America in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Please read the personal reflections of Fr. Cyprian Hutcheon, Fr. Dan Guenther, Lorraine and David Grier and myself. We hope you will feel the power of our Lord and the work of the Holy Spirit in His Holy Church as we who were in attendance felt. We all want to thank all in our parish who allowed us the wonderful blessing of being present to witness the power of Jesus Christ in our midst.

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

Most Humbly Yours in Christ  
Greg Rychlo, Parish Council President

**FOR YOUR INFORMATION:** If you wish to read any of the reports or articles referred to in this Special Edition of "The Good News", please visit [oca.org](http://oca.org) for various items, as listed below:

- ⇒ news on the AAC, photos, and podcasts visit the home page of The Orthodox Church in America <http://www.oca.org/>.
- ⇒ the Special Investigative Committee [SIC] Report at the bottom of the home page under the heading News Related to Accountability and Best Practises.
- ⇒ Under the heading 15<sup>th</sup> All American Council, go to its home page to see reports of each member of the Chancery Staff, the Delegate Handbook, and Study Papers.
- ⇒ For podcast you may go directly to Ancient Faith Radio <http://ancientfaith.com/specials/oca15aac>
  - Bishop Jonah Addresses Questions and Concerns: Newly consecrated Bishop Jonah is the Bishop of Fort Worth and Chancellor of the Diocese of Dallas and the South.
  - AFR Interviews New Metropolitan! In his first media interview as the newly elected Metropolitan of the Orthodox Church in America, His Beatitude Metropolitan Jonah gives his reaction to and vision for his new assignment.
  - A Vision for the Future - Metropolitan Jonah In a stirring conclusion to the banquet, the newly elected Metropolitan Jonah encouraged the faithful with his vision for the future.

*“How Good and Pleasant It is When Brethren Dwell Together  
in Unity” (Ps. 133:1):*

Reflections on the 15<sup>th</sup> All-American Council [AAC]  
of The Orthodox Church in America [OCA]

~ Fr. Cyprian Hutcheon

With my whole soul, I was dreading the upcoming AAC, slated to take place in November, 2008 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In fact, had my *not* attending been a real alternative for me, I would have selected that as my option. For months, I had been watching in dismay while the OCA that I loved and had embraced through choice appeared bent on self-destruction. New and unprecedented scandals were being exposed nearly every week, accusations and counter-accusations were being levelled, trusted and heretofore revered church leaders were revealed as being either complicit or impotent. An ever-widening gulf seemed to be opening up between the church’s hierarchs on the one hand and its parish clergy and lay-people on the other. Under the circumstances the AAC, touted by some as a potential unifying solution to our disarray, seemed just as likely to erupt into factiousness and quarrelling, and – worst of all – risked leaving the Church still embroiled in conflict and paralyzed by indecision.

Setting off for Pittsburgh via Air Canada on Monday, November 10<sup>th</sup> together with Fr. Dan Guenther and Greg Rychlo, I was briefly able to set aside my forebodings by enjoying the company of brothers in Christ. Arriving at Pittsburgh’s Hilton Hotel, the site chosen over the protests of many as the AAC’s venue, I began to recognize and greet old OCA friends from years gone by. But, compared to the three AACs I had previously attended, the general mood was subdued and, it seemed to me, fraught with an unmistakable air of uncertainty tinged with apprehension.

At the Council’s first plenary session, on the Monday evening of our arrival, we were seated in the ballroom-meeting hall at round tables accommodating 8-10 persons each. After the Council’s opening formalities, we were asked to put our heads together at each table, and come up with two questions that we would like to have answered by the Holy Synod of Bishops. People obviously saw this as a challenge, and set to work with evident enthusiasm. After half an hour or so, the questions were gathered up, to be collated and tabulated for presentation to the Bishops who, through the person of Bishop Benjamin of San Francisco, tried to formulate provisional responses to a number of the questions that had been posed. It was obvious to all that more time and reflection would be necessary

before a really satisfactory attempt could be made at addressing some of the assembly's most pressing concerns.

At around 9:30 PM, we adjourned for a late evening Compline Service that was supposed to include a rite of repentance. I had hoped, given the circumstances under which we were about to worship, that the Liturgical Commission of the OCA might have been asked to prepare a special situation-specific, appropriate Service of Repentance. You cannot imagine my disappointment when what came to my unbelieving ears were the stereotyped words of a very traditional monastic 'Canon of Repentance' that totally failed to address the urgent, heart-felt yearnings of so many for an expression of genuine contrition and resolve to redirect our common life in Christ. I was beginning to suspect that this Council might well amount to nothing more than a pathetic expression of "business as usual."

On Tuesday, November 11<sup>th</sup>, our 'Remembrance Day' began bright and early with a Divine Liturgy followed by Memorial Prayers for those who gave their lives in the service of their countries and for all departed veterans. After a hasty continental breakfast, the Council reconvened in plenary session to hear a number of reports. Truthfully, I cannot recall much from memory about what went on that day but, by evening, my fear that the Council would fail to come to grips in any meaningful fashion with the church's terrible problems was growing stronger by the minute. Somewhat ominously, there had been no further mention of the anxiously awaited response by the Holy Synod to the questions which had been solicited and submitted the previous evening.

At this juncture, sometime late on Tuesday, Fr. John Jillions – the Dean of our Ottawa Cathedral and a member of the Pre-Conciliar Commission [PCC] that had planned the AAC – rose on a point of order to inquire when the Synod might be expected to begin addressing the assembly's questions. He explained that the members of the PCC had stayed up much of the previous night vetting the submitted questions, and putting them into some kind of order. When, asked Fr. John, might the Council expect to hear some response from the Synod? The following day, we were scheduled to nominate a new Metropolitan. Surely it was urgent, argued Fr. John, that we have the questions addressed *before* proceeding to the weighty matter of the selection of a new Primate. A round of applause indicated that the Council shared Fr. John's concerns.

The Bishops appeared caught off guard by the timing and insistence of the request for answers to pressing matters. There were some thinly-veiled attempts at ducking the matter, but finally – much to the surprise of many – there appeared at the microphone the Synod's 'new kid on the block' – Bishop Jonah [Paffhausen] who only 10 days earlier had been consecrated Bishop of Fort Worth

(Texas) and auxiliary to Archbishop Dimitri of Dallas. Vladyka Jonah began to address the Council; what followed was truly remarkable.

I could hardly believe my eyes – or my ears. There stood before us an obviously humble man who spoke gently, yet forcefully, and who was talking *with* us and not *at* us. Our church's basic problems in recent years stemmed from a lack of an adequate theological foundation for its life and work, suggested Bishop Jonah. In other words, what we were facing was not really a problem of finances or morals, but rather one of *ecclesiology*, of how we live our life together as the church. According to our dual inheritance from Byzantium and Russia, continued the bishop, "hierarchy has been completely confused with imperial aristocracy . . . but that form of leadership is over." Rather we needed to remind ourselves that "our leadership is leadership from *within*" and that "obedience is cooperation out of love and respect. . . . [Our] whole life in the Church together is a life of *synergy*, a life of voluntary cooperation, a life of obedience to Jesus Christ and the gospel." Only in this spirit will our church be able to work out its disagreements. A "culture of intimidation alien to Christ" had prevailed in the OCA, and represented a "demon [that] needs to be exorcized." The use of power as an instrument of governance in the church needed to be renounced, and replaced by a spirit of powerlessness so that "in our weakness . . . we can allow ourselves to become vessels for Jesus Christ."

His Grace, having outlined his underlying principles, now proceeded to a closer examination of some of the matters that had been raised in the questions submitted the previous evening. The report of the Special Investigating Committee [SIC] basically revealed that "the last two metropolitans were corrupt [and] that they had abrogated their responsibility of leadership on all levels." The upshot of this state of affairs was that "the Synod [of Bishops], being leaderless, could not function as well as it should. . . . Because of that absolute vacuum of leadership in a sick dysfunctional situation, the church was looted." Moments later, continuing in the same vein but accompanied now by words of reassurance, Bishop Jonah became even more explicit. "Yes, we were betrayed. Yes, we were raped. [But] it's over. Let it be in the past so that we can heal."

Looking towards our common future in Christ, Vladyka reminded us that needed healing can only come about by attention to the "essence of the gospel [which] is repentance and forgiveness." But "by forgiving we are not excusing the action. We are not saying that Kondratich was right to loot the church. We are not saying that Metropolitan Theodosius was right to abdicate all of his responsibility. . . . What we are saying is, 'My reaction [to this scandal] is destroying me, and I need to stop it if I value Jesus Christ and the gospel and communion with God. I need to stop it and move on.'" Drawing his remarks to

their powerful conclusion, Bishop Jonah asked rhetorically: "How do we re-establish trust?" And answering his own question, he replied: "There is only one way. It is to choose to love. There is no other way."

Upon hearing the completion of this address, delivered totally off the cuff but obviously from the heart by His Grace, the delegates sprang to their feet and delivered an extended standing ovation. It was crystal clear that there had been a dramatic change in the whole tone of the Council. The next morning Bishop Jonah presided at the Divine Liturgy. At the plenary session immediately following the Liturgy, he was elected as Metropolitan of the OCA, receiving the most votes for a single candidate on the first ballot, and a substantially higher number of votes on the second ballot.

One of my most beloved scripture verses is the declaration spoken by the Risen Christ to John the Seer in the Book of Revelation: "Behold! I make *all things new*" (Rev 21:5). I must confess that, in the context of the terrible scandals that have wracked our church, I had come to doubt the validity of these wonderful words of Christ. May He forgive me for my mistrust, and may He grant to his servant Metropolitan Jonah the grace and strength to persevere in the days, months and years ahead.

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## **The All American Council**

~ Fr. Daniel Guenther

Knowing that others will give an account of the proceedings which all attended, I shall give a (short) account, O Reader, of the things which I alone saw and heard. As an alumnus of SVS, I was privileged to witness the exchange of greetings between the newly elected Metropolitan Bishop Jonah and the Academic Dean of the St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, just prior to the AAC banquet. Metropolitan Jonah addressed the Dean and assembled alumni first. He admitted that the responsibility that he had anticipated more than anything else about the prospect of being elected the new Metropolitan (and then laughed, acknowledging that the thought had indeed crossed his mind as a 'what if'), was the opportunity to provide support for SVS and the other seminaries of the OCA, as well as the other institutions, including monasteries and ministries. He talked about the important role that SVS had played in his orthodox Christian formation while attending as an MDiv student some 20 years previous. He declared that

SVS is the premiere Orthodox theological institution in the world, and as such needed the support of the Holy Synod to continue to serve the Orthodox Christian world as the premiere theological institution, for the preparation of students for the ministry of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Metropolitan Jonah confessed again, as he had on the occasion of accepting his election earlier that day, that it would take some getting used to the role of the Metropolitan, and that he counted upon the support and prayers of the Seminary and its faculty and staff, in the enormity of the task that lies ahead for the OCA, a task which cannot be done in our own strength, but only in the power of the Holy Spirit.

For his part, the Dean of the Seminary, Fr. John Behr, provided a wonderful response of encouragement to Metropolitan Jonah, assuring him that he could count on the prayers and support of the Seminary and its faculty and staff, especially as he takes on the mantle of responsibility. Fr. John expressed the great joy felt by himself and all the faculty and staff in his election. He acknowledged before the Metropolitan that the task of the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ our Lord entrusted to us, and particularly to him as the Metropolitan Bishop, is indeed greater than any one person or persons can accomplish, except by the grace and strength of God, guided by the Holy Spirit. But he also encouraged him that though the task greater than any, he should be confident that God would provide the strength and wisdom he would need, as the Apostle Paul said when confessing his own weakness, in the words of encouragement of the Lord Jesus to him, "my strength is made perfect in weakness."

Following his address, which was full of great joy, the entire assembly of faculty and students sang "Many Years" with a fervor and great joy such as I have never witnessed before, even in a much larger assembly. It was truly an occasion of mutual joy and celebration, leavened with the knowledge of the great task that lies ahead, not only for the Metropolitan, but for all of us together as we dedicate ourselves anew to the witness of the wonderful Good News of our Lord Jesus Christ, as God gifts and enables each of us.

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**An Angel or Not?...You Decide**  
The Personal Comments Of Greg Rychlo  
on His Attendance to The 15<sup>th</sup> All American Council of The OCA

It was with much trepidation that I attended my first All American Council with my travel mates Fr. Cyprian and Fr. Dan. I felt like a wide eyed kid going to meet the Queen or something. The only thing I knew was this was much greater and with respect to recent wrong doings in the OCA, could possibly be tragic.

Upon entering the large auditorium that staged the event, one could feel the tension and perhaps the evil that was trying to enter the large room. The holiness of the Divine Liturgy held earlier had quickly disappeared. Finger pointing, accusations, lame justifications, bitterness, punitive revenge seemed to be the order of the day. My worst fears were coming true....could this be the end of my beloved church? I went to bed that night, screaming the Jesus Prayer in my head and asking Him to have mercy on us! Thanks to God for Fr. Dan who was my room mate, who helped keep things in perspective for me and became my sounding board offering comfort to my worries and fears. Thanks Fr. Dan.

The next day began with Divine Liturgy and after it I went back to my room for some reason. I don't recall why. I noticed a commotion about four doors down from our room. A lady was standing outside of the room speaking on a cell phone. She seemed distraught. I heard her say, "Father's gone. He had a heart attack and went quickly." Looking into the open door of the room I saw on the floor, covered with a sheet the body of one of the priests who was in attendance at the council that morning. Making sign of the Cross, I kept walking. I wondered what next. An ominous feeling came over me. It took some time for the news of the priest's untimely death to reach the assembly floor. When it did there was general shock and foreboding felt by many. Later a friend and fellow presbyter of the deceased priest addressed the Assembly saying when Father attended the Communion Cup that morning, he was weeping. He indicated he was emotionally crushed by the state of our church. He said Father died of a broken heart. Everyone there was silent in soul searching thought....He was only sixty three.

The Father's untimely death did not quell the bitterness and harsh words that became the norm at the Assembly. Many times I prayed in silence asking the Lord for His mercy on us. I knew that only His intervention would heal the hurt that was felt by many. Finally a young Bishop unknown to many stood up and

spoke. His voice was shaking. I'm not sure if it was from nervousness or anger. Regardless he spoke with power and authority getting everyone's attention. The words, "**This is enough!**" rang though out the auditorium. All were silent. After he was done speaking, everyone stood and applauded in appreciation that someone finally brought all to their senses and a renewed positive spirit was felt through out the room. That Bishop was Bishop Jonah.

That evening thoughts and discussions turned to the upcoming election of the new Metropolitan. Many names were floated about the assembly but I didn't know much about any of them except our very much loved Archbishop Seraphim. The Archbishop called all the Canadian delegates to his suite for a small social after the day's events and it was during this time the Archbishop made a plea not to vote for him for Metropolitan. I thought in some obscure way that him not wanting the job was exactly the reason why he should have it. But I felt uneasy about what I was trying to talk myself into. Others around me felt Bishop Job was right for the position. He had the courage to stand outside the status quo during the crisis the church was going through. Since my knowledge was limited, I considered following their lead and voting for Bishop Job. But again, something just didn't feel right.

Try as I might, I just couldn't sleep that night. My mind was spinning as I prayed for guidance in the very important event I was about to take part in the next day. I decided I needed to take my mind off things for awhile and at 12:30 am I went to the exercise room in the hotel to lift some weights. I figured that this might clear my mind and help me think. The exercise room was a locked room in the corner of the hotel that one can only access using one's room key. I entered and started my workout. About 20 minutes into my routine, I heard the door open. I thought to myself, who is crazy enough to use the exercise room at this hour besides me!! In walked a tall, slim, young looking man, carrying a small satchel on his back. I said hello and he returned the pleasantries. He indicated that he just wanted to see what kind of equipment there was in the room. I noticed he wore a delegate tag. I told him that I also was one of the delegates and introduced myself, he doing the same. I told him I needed to expend some energy and clear my mind due to the intensity of the first few days of the Assembly. He asked me about my thoughts on who I felt would make a good Metropolitan. I told him that I was leaning toward Archbishop Seraphim since he has been a good Shepherd to us in Canada. I also indicated many are talking about Bishop Job as well, feeling my insecurity about my decisions were obvious. Gently he said, "Have you thought about Bishop Jonah" and went on to tell me in

detail about this wonderful humble man as I listened in fascination. After he left I wondered why I hadn't given this Bishop consideration before. All I knew about him was that he was a Convert from the Episcopalian church, a monastic and a rookie Bishop and that he was the one who turned the Assembly around.....**Yes! Through Christ, He was the one that turned the Assembly around and through Christ he's the one that would turn the church around!** Why hadn't I seen it before? I wanted to run down the hall and give this young man a hug. What a blessing it was! For some reason, some how I knew that this young Bishop was going to be our Metropolitan! There was no doubt about it! I finally went to bed that night and slept soundly.

The next morning I awoke, ready to meet the very exciting day. I knew on this day, as revealed to me the night before, Bishop Jonah would become our new Metropolitan. I went to liturgy and spoke to no one about my decision. After the Divine Liturgy Service and a quick breakfast we began to assemble in the auditorium. As I entered I met the young man I had spoke to the night before in the exercise room. He was dressed in the same clothes carrying the same satchel on his back. We noticed each other and he said to me, "Hello Gregory, how was your night?" I said, "Very good, thank you" thinking that no one usually calls me Gregory, especially when I introduced myself as "Greg". I told him what a blessing it was for me to have spoken to him the night before and thanked him for that. He indicated it was the same for him. We were hurried into the room before more could be said.

Before the vote started, I sat at my chair and I penned the name, Bishop Jonah on the inside of a service pamphlet that was on our table. I slid it over to Fr. Dan. He looked at it, seemed slightly surprised, smiled and slid the pamphlet back. I knew at the end of the day Metropolitan Jonah would be addressing the Assembly. The voting started and a lockdown of the room was implemented. (I wished I had gone to the bathroom!) About an hour passed and first ballot came back. Although Bishop Jonah had the most votes, he did not have the 2/3rds required to be considered by the Holy Synod. The voting began again, this time requiring two names had to be written on the ballot. My confidence wavered slightly but I took solace in having faith in what I believe had been revealed to me the night before. Another hour of hymn singing and waiting had passed. The votes were again counted and Bishop Jonah had received the number required to be considered by his Equals. At that point, I remembered some of the stories Fr. Cyprian had told me from previous Assemblies. How although Bishops in the past were elected by majority by the delegates assembled, the Holy Synod rejected

the name forwarded. One of the reasons given was because the candidate was not a cradle Orthodox Christian of which Bishop Jonah was not. Although Bishop Jonah received the most votes there was still the precedence of the past that could jeopardize his appointment. The Bishops proceeded behind the curtains in the front of the auditorium where they were seated. After a few minutes they returned. Bishop Dimitri spoke on behalf of the Bishops and announced the joyful news that our new Metropolitan is Bishop Jonah. The room exploded! Axios, Axios (He is worthy) resounded through out the room! Was I surprised? No. Was I overjoyed? You bet I was! Does the Lord work in mysterious ways? I think you know the answer to that one. And finally, do I believe in Angels? Silly question..... I met one! (By the way, I tried to track the young man down again..... He just seemed to have disappeared!)

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory Forever!

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## **Reflections on the 15<sup>th</sup> All American Council**

– by David Grier

My experience at the 15<sup>th</sup> All American Council (AAC) started late Monday afternoon, November 10, 2008 with the Metropolitan Council (MC) meeting that was held just prior to the beginning of the opening of the AAC. My understanding that my term as the Canadian Archdiocesan lay representative to the MC was to begin at the end of the AAC was overturned when they made me vote on rather dicey and hotly contested matter – the expulsion of a MC member because she hadn't lived up to the ethics agreement she and the others had developed and signed. The way this person had not lived up to the agreement was by refusing to be interviewed by the Special Investigating Committee (SIC). The MC had actually proposed and passed this motion at their September meeting and since the Holy Synod (HS) had not accepted or rejected on this decision (the HS has to approve or not all MC decisions), the MC felt the need to reaffirm the decision. This experience revealed the combativeness of the MC, how they operate (or don't operate) through the use of Robert's Rules of Order, and the indecisiveness of the HS. It was not an uplifting experience.

One good outcome was that I was “upgraded” from observer to delegate status giving all five the Saskatoon contingent votes on the decisions of the AAC including the especially important decision of electing the new Metropolitan. Another was that I met Fr. Andrew Jarmus, the OCA’s Director of Ministries and Communications and founder of the mission Mary attends in Winnipeg. He said he has a special place in his heart for our parish because Oksana is his Godmother. He knows she is up there praying for him.

We went immediately from this meeting to the opening session of the AAC. The main activity of this session was led by Bishop Nikon and consisted of reporting on the Pre-councilor Commission’s activity of holding Town Hall meetings in 15 locations to give people opportunity to express what they wanted see happen at the AAC. Although this session was marred by some of the same Robert’s Rules stuff I had just seen at the MC, it ended with an activity at which the people at each table composed two questions for the HS to answer. This proved to play a key part in what was to happen 24 hours later. Since so much time was wasted with the combative style of debate there wasn’t time for the bishops to address any questions.

Both Tuesday’s morning and the afternoon sessions were devoted entirely to the SIC report led by Bp Benjamin, the chairman of this activity. I was impressed that so much time was devoted to elaborating on and delving into what I thought was already very clear in print. I wouldn’t say anything new came out of this, but people had opportunity to express their anger and to ask tough questions that they felt were needed to be aired. One tough question that was not handled well was “do you, the HS, really think retiring Metropolitan Herman and limiting Metropolitan Theodosius to the vicinity of his home parish was sufficient penalty in light of the magnitude of their wrong doing?” Actually, to say HS didn’t handle the question well is an understatement. They instructed the chairperson to not allow the question sparking one of the members of the SIC committee to go to the mic and say their behavior was despicable and it looks like the HS culture hasn’t changed.

The evening session consisted of three rather long presentations by the Chancellor, the Secretary, and Director of Ministry and Communications. Although everything that was said was already in the pre-council material, it was important for everyone to realize that the administration has been working very hard and had effectively put in place practices to prevent the kinds of things uncovered in the SIC report from happening again. It was already late in the evening when Fr. John Jillions, member of the Pre-councilor Commission and

rector of our Ottawa cathedral, came to the mic and said the ACC had been promised that the HS would respond to the questions posed on the first evening and in light of the election of the new Metropolitan being the first thing on the agenda the next day, that response needed to happen before the session ended. The HS clearly didn't want to do this saying they preferred to provide written responses at a later date. Then as Lorraine and I learned later from the session chairperson, a bishop way down the table of Bishops caught his eye. It was the newly consecrated Bp Jonah. He came to the microphone and proceeded to say everything that I know I, and I believe everyone else, wanted to hear.

It was electrifying! I am getting choked up all over again just writing this. He said the last two metropolitans were corrupt. The HS was sick. The MC was dysfunctional. The church was betrayed, it was raped, it was pilfered. This is not who Christ wants us to be. And if we don't want to be Christ-like and spread the gospel, then what is the point of being a member of the Church? He said so much more, so much better than I can write. You will just have to go to OCA website and listen for yourself. He was calm, peaceful, honest, and straightforward. Everything he said about what went wrong and what needs to be done was Christ-centered. From the moment he was two sentences into his 20+ minute talk, even though I had no idea who he was, I knew he was the man. The next morning started at 7:00am with a hierarchical liturgy. Guess who was the celebrant was? It was the same Bp Jonah. He had only been a bishop for 12 days and he served like he had been doing it for years. He gave the sermon, speaking on the gospel of the day, just as calm, collected and Christ centered as he had been the night before, all from his heart.

Then came the election of the Metropolitan. On the first ballot we were instructed to write only one name on the ballot. Of the 645 registered to vote, Bp Jonah led with 233 followed closely by ABp Job with 212. Bp Benjamin was a distant 3<sup>rd</sup> at 75. I was rather taken aback. I thought after his talk the night before he would easily get the 2/3 majority needed to put his name alone to the HS for their decision. I guess many people were respecting Bp Job because he was the only one that stood up to the former Metropolitan. On the second ballot we were instructed to write two names. The order of the results remained the same – Jonah first with 473, then Job with 364, and Benjamin with 140. The names of Bp Jonah and ABp Job were submitted the HS. Minutes later the HS came out of the altar area and ABp Dimitri announced "that it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to elect Bp Jonah". There was such a peaceful spirit of

agreement in the room. It felt so right. Saying Axios was not a ritual – people said it from their hearts.

Later I speculated that perhaps the reason that ABp Job did so well was that it forced the HS to make a decision – between the old or the new. This was the third Metropolitan election in a row where the HS was presented with a situation where a convert representing new ways of doing things and perhaps more in tune with North American culture had more support than the candidate with the stronger ties to the mother church and its culture. In the two previous times, the HS choose the old world. It was like the Holy Spirit was giving them the third chance to choose between the old and the new. We learned later from Yvonne's friend, Fr. Andrew Moore who is in ABp Job's diocese that they didn't even vote. ABp Job said "I'm not the guy, he is" and they all agreed. The new day has come! This moment was at the centre of our time in Pittsburg and lots more happened, but it all felt so anti-climatic. The Treasurer gave a very detailed report, both on the financials and on the controls that have been put in place. He thanked many people for their cooperation including Protodeacon Eric Wheeler (the treasurer that brought the problems to light and Mark Stokoe for his website that gave him – a priestly accountant – the encouragement that he needed to take the job. Metropolitan spoke several more times formally as well as in response to discussion in the meeting. It was always the same way – peaceful, organized, and with Godly direction. One example was in the financial discussion where the AAC was discussing the level of the "head tax", Metropolitan Jonah stated that we have to get away from this head tax and go to the approach where the member tithes to his parish, the parish to the diocese and the diocese to the central administration. Another was in the MC meeting after the close of the AAC where he told us not to let the white hat get in the way of having open and frank discussions.

There is much for everyone to do to get the church back on the track of fulfilling the "great commission" of Matthew 28. However, as we move forward from this momentous occasion, I for one, am convinced we have the man God wants at the helm.

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## November 2008 ~ All American Council, and the election of the new Metropolitan, Jonah

~ Lorraine Grier

In preparation for the All American Council [AAC], and especially regarding the nomination of a new Metropolitan, my heart was troubled. The scandal of the OAC left heaviness. Following my election as delegate I earnestly sought counsel, asking God for guidance, peace and the wisdom which I lack. In the early part of September I had finally read several recommended reflections on the Orthodox Christians for Accountability website. There I found wisdom and Scripture presented and was provided with encouragement. I also read most of the Special Investigative Committee Report. The Committee had attempted to reconstruct the accounting practices and events of the OCA administration over the past years. It raised many concerns, and also provided constructive recommendations.

Thus while travelling to the AAC in Pittsburgh I was tentative in my optimism, prepared for tension and intense discussion. I prayed and read most materials offered for consideration. I was concerned that some persons with the American temperament, being more demonstrative and contentious, could erupt during session of the council.

Having attended two AAC's in the past I also found myself anticipating the positive aspects of the council: the opportunity to reconnect with friends and acquaintances, to share insights into the proceedings, to worship, pray and sing with brothers and sisters in Christ who had travelled from as far away as Alaska and Mexico.

Initially, as reports were presented by the new staff members, the experience was a tedious one – I had access to the internet and had read about the new administrative structure, compared it with what was known about the former administration, agonized over the inferiority of all records [i.e. no records] so the presentations were in essence, nothing new. This process did provide an impression of the individuals now hired to work at Syosset. It was a good experience to see the new Chancery staff, to hear how they expressed and conducted themselves. They each appeared to be very dedicated and hard working, each working many hours to assemble information, to set up new systems, to learn to work in tandem, all the while either despite or without a Metropolitan at the helm.

As questions from the floor were only answered by the 'new people' it seemed the bishops wanted to remain silent as they had during past councils. This was not too encouraging, considering their lengthy reluctance to pursue the

truth, to respond to the faithful whose questions were not to be silenced. In his presentation on the SIC Report, Bishop Benjamin had assured us that the Holy Synod of Bishops now related to one another openly, in brotherly love. In the past he had dreaded attending meetings of the Holy Synod. Now he looked forward to them, despite the volume of work they faced. Therefore, this silence hardly seemed an example of working *together*. So, as I pondered the council's theme, Members of One Another in Christ, I became increasingly cynical.

The Pre-Conciliar Commission requested that delegates of the AAC prepare two questions per table to be presented in writing to the Bishops, and to be answered the next day [Tuesday]. Tuesday came: morning Liturgy, sessions, lunch break, sessions, dinner break, session but no time for response. Close to 9:30 p.m. a member of the Pre-Conciliar Commission, Fr. John Jillions, reported the committee had met to sort the questions received and compile them for the Holy Synod. He then asked that the questions be answered; pointing out that it had bearing on the next task of the AAC, the nomination of the next metropolitan. The chair of the Pre-Conciliar Commission, Bishop Nikhon scolded the committee for meeting without him on Monday night – the nerve – *he* should have called such a meeting, or at least confirmed the intention of the bishops, not publically scolded Fr. John. I admit that my cynicism increased a few notches.

The chair, John Kozey, urged the bishops to respond verbally, during this session – to take the opportunity to respond. The people needed reassurance of the reality of the Holy Synod's change in attitude/relationship before nominations for Metropolitan happened on Wednesday morning. He noticed movement at the far end of the table of Bishops. The recently consecrated Auxiliary Bishop Jonah, made eye contact and got up to approach the mic. I later learned in an interview on Ancient Faith Radio that the Holy Synod had asked him to prepare to answer with a teaching so he had given it some thought. It seemed to me, that he spoke from his heart, which he'd emptied, to receive Christ. He allowed God to use him and he spoke directly and truthfully, 'calling a spade a spade'.

About twenty minutes into his answer, he said that the past two metropolitans were corrupt and the church has been leaderless for the past thirty-eight years. In that dysfunctional climate, is it a surprise that things are a mess? "Yes, we were raped, yes, we were abused but it is over now. It is over. We can begin to heal. Let it go." I now knew hope and rejoiced.

The tone of the proceedings changed as the Holy Spirit moved among us. We were convicted of our own approach to our lives in Christ. All through the night, each time I awoke I thanked God for Bishop Jonah's words. And yet, I was cautious. Should the nominations the next morning show Jonah to be the choice

of the delegates by a two third majority, would the Holy Synod have the courage to elect him metropolitan?

I saw this as a test. The Holy Synod claimed to have become very open with one another. They offered assurances about their improved relationships, their mutual respect, trust and brotherly love. Would they show the courage, follow the prompting of the Holy Spirit and elect the youngest and newest bishop as metropolitan?

I believe that they did so. Jonah is our new Metropolitan. My heart was dancing for days afterward, rejoicing with hope. As we move forward from here I recall another opportunity to hear Metropolitan Jonah – at a luncheon meeting for the Metropolitan Council and Pre-Conciliar Commission which was held immediately following the adjournment of the AAC. He said that he sees the church as friends working together to spread the Gospel. And, as His Eminence Archbishop Seraphim has so often said to me: [I do so] by your prayers.

Let us continue to pray for them both.

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