

**Report of the Episcopal Secretary to the  
Archdiocesan Assembly of the Archdiocese of Canada (Orthodox  
Church in America)  
Ottawa, ON, August 21-24, 2013**

Your Beatitude, Your Eminences, Your Graces, Reverend Fathers, all delegates and guests for the Assembly 2013:

With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop Irénée, I have the honour to present to this God-fearing Archdiocesan Assembly the report of my activities as the Episcopal Secretary and the Secretary of the Archdiocese of Canada. To begin with, I would like to thank Vladyka Irénée for his continual trust, support and a lot of patience; Archimandrite Alexander (Pihach) for his constant care and help, during our work together before his new appointment as OCA representative to the Patriarchate in Moscow; Archpriest Anatoly Melnyk, our new Chancellor, for his help and support; all provincial deans and lay members of the Archdiocesan Council for their selfless work and continual support; Priest Gregory Scratch and Subdeacon Jeremy Scratch for their work as STAS representatives; our Treasurer, Nikita Lopoukhine for his greatly-needed help and assistance in the office, as well as his personal support; other persons who do not wish to be named; and all of you, who constantly help, support and encourage me as I attempt to fulfill my obligations in the Archdiocese. Last but not least, I would like to thank Mary-Ann Lopoukhine and the 2013 Assembly organizing committee for the organization of this Assembly.

As all of you may know, I was reappointed to the positions of Episcopal Secretary and the Secretary of the Archdiocese of Canada during the 2010 Archdiocesan Assembly in July of 2010, by His Eminence, Archbishop Seraphim. My task was to organize the Archdiocesan Office and to assist Vladyka in his day-to-day responsibilities. Shortly after the 2010 Assembly, the situation in the Archdiocese suddenly changed. As a result of these circumstances, my responsibilities changed as well, and the focus of my work had to be reevaluated and adjusted to the new reality within the Archdiocese.

### **Archdiocesan Office**

The majority of my regular office hours have been dedicated to the daily correspondence and regular operation of the Archdiocesan Office. Also, I fulfill my various obediences and responsibilities in Ottawa and across Canada. Organization of the Archdiocesan Office is progressing. The filing system and the general office procedures have been changed in accordance with accepted ecclesiastical office practice and the blessing of the hierarch. During the last

Assembly I reported that “I was hoping by this Assembly to have given it an absolutely new face, but it is a much bigger job than I perceived.” This time I can report that the situation of the Archdiocesan Office has improved beyond any of my expectations and not due to my efforts.

At the beginning of October 2010, we were forced to speed up the relocation of our office from Spencerville, first to the Archdiocesan Cathedral, and then by God’s will and help to the new office location (which had to be purchased) next to the Annunciation-St. Nicholas Archdiocesan Cathedral, which became the new home and face for the Archdiocese of Canada’s Administrative Centre. The office procedures had to be adjusted to the new reality as well. With the blessing of His Grace, Bishop Irénée, the Clergy Synaxis 2012 was partially dedicated to the new Office and to some of the issues our Archdiocese is presently facing. The role of the regional deans in the diocese was reevaluated. This position was redefined in accordance to the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America.

The clergy files have been revised and all missing information has been collected in order to fulfill the mandate of the Holy Synod adopted on April 2, 2003, as a minimum mandatory requirement concerning the Policies, Standards and Procedures of The Orthodox Church in America on Sexual Misconduct and our new Archdiocesan insurance carrier. At this point of time, clergy files have been completely revised and about 99% completed. A parish reporting system was reintroduced, and information has been received from the new Parish Report Forms. I hope to complete this work very soon. The annual Parish Report Forms to the Bishop are sent to the parishes annually and the Parish Compliance Forms for Sexual Misconduct Guidelines are mailed at the beginning of each year as well. A special effort to translate both documents into French to better accommodate our Francophone community was made. “The Guidelines on Clergy Sexual Misconduct” document was also translated into French and is available for use. A great effort has been made to promote the importance of the proper treatment of allegations of sexual misconduct, and to correctly define the term “sexual misconduct”.

For this reason, and in order to act in accordance with the requirements of the Holy Synod of Bishops concerning clergy continuing education, and with the blessing of His Grace Irénée, the Clergy Synaxis 2013 has been dedicated to this subject. In addition, I would like to inform you that during the last year I used every occasion to explain to parish executives the importance of this concern and to stress the necessity of cooperation with the Archdiocesan Administration in this matter.

All office documentation is properly filed and organized, and Vladyka's correspondence is properly filed and organized and answered in a timely fashion.

Binders of incoming and outgoing mail are sorted, and the documents are accordingly sorted either into the working file or into the archives. All of this in the long run will allow us to have current and accurate information about our clergy and parish documentation, and will give us the opportunity for the better working of the Archdiocesan Office.

On average, I am working six days a week at the Archdiocesan Office.

Telephone calls are redirected to my mobile phone all the time in case I am not in the office at the time of the call. The new Administrative reality, to say the least, has not and is still not received by everyone with enthusiasm. Nevertheless, we continue our work and strive to be an effective tool to successfully continue our Orthodox mission in Canada.

### **Mail, E-Mail and Correspondence**

Mail and e-mail are checked on a regular basis, and presented to His Grace. Upon His Grace's blessing and approval, the content of all responses to letters are mailed out in a timely fashion. All Vladyka's correspondence is recorded in catalogues and properly filed.

### **New Web-site**

Since Lent 2013, a new and improved web-site ([www.archdiocese.ca](http://www.archdiocese.ca)) was launched. A great deal of information has been revised and transferred from the old web-site by the Webmaster, Alexander Ovodov. Mother Seraphima (Lavoie) is doing a great deal of work on the French section. In due time, and human resources permitting, it is expected that the French and English sections will be identical, or nearly so. We strongly request that deaneries, local parishes, clergy and parish members submit news items to be shared with other parishes as soon as possible after an event. With the new operating system, there are now available to everyone on the new web-site simple online forms for making these contributions. We are counting on help from our archdiocesan deans and any interested volunteers to facilitate this. I would like to mention that both Alexander and Mother Seraphima are volunteers. With the help of several other individuals and despite many difficulties, they are able to deliver news to the faithful. Please remember them in your prayers.

## **Organizing Bishop Irénée's Travelling, and Travelling with Vladyka**

With only a few exceptions, I have been taking care of Vladyka Irénée's travelling preparations and agenda. I try to book trips in such a way that Vladyka can visit many parishes during the same trip. Even if this approach is not the easiest, it gives Vladyka an opportunity to visit all our parishes during the year with minimal time on the road. It also helps the parishes to share the burden of travel expenses. During these visits, meetings with parish executives and parishioners are conducted, especially in rural areas, with the specific goal of helping our parishioners understand that cooperating and working together with the Archdiocesan Administration is a part of normal parish life. A special effort is made to try to raise the level of parish financial contributions to the Archdiocese. Another goal is to explain how and why it is important to provide the Archdiocesan Office with all the requested documentation, such as copies of insurance policies, parish by-laws, corporate status information, property titles and so on.

I also accompanied Vladyka for approximately 90% of his travelling, during which I assisted His Grace in different capacities.

The most important events of the last few years have been the 2010 visit of the Holy Relics of Great Prince Vladimir to Canada, and the 2011 and 2012 All-American Councils. I was assigned to accompany His Grace, Bishop Alexander of Toledo and Archpriest Leonid Kishkovsky to Ukraine as part of The Orthodox Church in America's delegation for the celebration in Kyiv of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Kharkiv Sobor. Also in June 2013, I was blessed to accompany the Chancellor of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, Archpriest Chad Hadfield, on his visit to Kyiv, Ukraine to sign an Agreement of Cooperation between St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary and the Kyiv Theological Seminary and Academy.

### **Episcopal Vestry**

At the present time, the Episcopal Vestry is located in the sacristy of the Cathedral and Archdiocesan Centre. We should understand that the Vestry is not a personal requirement or property of the bishop. It is, however, a requirement of the Archdiocese that the bishop be properly vested to serve on their behalf before the Lord, and therefore to provide for this. It can be said, too, that we need some spare sets for times when we receive visitors. Therefore, as I said in 2010, I recommend that it is time to create a line in the archdiocesan budget and to allocate funds for the renewal of the hierarchical Vestry of the Archdiocese. We would be really thankful to any present and future donors for their help with this.

## **Fair Haven**

Since the 2010 Assembly, when the Archdiocesan Office was moved to Ottawa, the Spencerville property is functioning as the residence (unofficial) of Archbishop Seraphim, and of the now incorporated Monastery of St. Silouan. I stop by occasionally to check on the property, and to pick up necessary documentation. In the summer of 2012, the 2800 Newman Road property's septic tank system was not functioning properly because of its great age, and it was condemned by the health department. The cost to repair the system would have been about \$20,000.00. The Archdiocesan Council made a decision to sell this property, "as is." The original listing was at \$79,000 upon the advice of our agent. With the approval of the Archdiocesan Council via telephone conference, we lowered the price to \$69,000 and then to \$59,000. We were able to sell this property for \$57,000 in April 2013. The buildings at 2801 Newman Road were partially renovated to accommodate Vladyka Seraphim and the two other monks who then occupied the renovated areas. Another monk and two persons already were living in the main building in three other existing rooms.

## **Insurance**

In 2012, we changed carriers (due to an increase in fees) in order to extend clergy benefits. With the new carrier, we agreed to take on all the administration of the plan. This placed a huge responsibility on the Archdiocesan Administration. Our insurance plan now has 20 members. I would like to thank Archpriest Phillip Eriksson and our Treasurer Nikita Lopoukhine, for their assistance and help. In order to increase efficiency, Father Phillip and I joined forces as official administrators of the plan. I will continue to manage all day-to-day aspects of the plan, and Father Phillip will be able to provide consultation on the plan details.

The topic of clergy health insurance was a part of the discussion at the Conference of Canadian Orthodox Bishops. We hope one day that we will be able to unite the efforts of all the Orthodox Churches in Canada. The need to establish an archdiocesan clergy pension plan must be emphasized. With the help of Father Phillip, I hope that we will be able to examine our options and come up with a proposal in the near future.

We, as Christians should not overlook the fact that we too get caught in the circumstances of life, that our clergy are not immune to this either. As a diocese we have an obligation to build up resources and implement programs to address these needs. We have a very small number of clergy on our extended health clergy insurance plan. Why, you may ask? Sadly, some of our parishes' full-time priests' incomes have to be supplemented by employment outside the church or

by their spouses; therefore, these clergy become ineligible for the plan. It is important for us to take care of our clergy. It is our Christian responsibility to provide for our clergy the financial means for them to do their work, rather than putting them in the position of finding ways to make ends meet.

## Property & Liability Insurance

In October 2010, we were faced with the issue of completely losing our Directors' insurance coverage. For more than 6 months the Archdiocesan Directors and Council Members were working without any insurance coverage. A new insurance carrier placed upon us new expectations and demands. We had to focus our attention on a recurring problem dealing with physical and sexual abuse liability. I would like to bring to your attention the words from the report delivered by our insurance representative at our last Assembly: "It appears that the parishes and some clergy were not aware of the guidelines put into place in 2003 by the OCA (and some even refused to cooperate). The guideline sets out a framework and instructions on protocol, screening and reporting. It is important that clergy and parish councils be aware and apply these guidelines when choosing volunteers or hiring people. Proper screening must be done and the protocols of our guidelines must be followed in order to prevent the harsh consequences of liability, should there be any litigation. The consequences of being at fault in court can result in a payout of liability, which can break a parish financially and not only lead to loss of parish property, but also to loss of personal property if you hold a position in the administration of the parish. **You will not be covered by your insurance if you have not followed the guidelines.** A church is a large risk with respect to these liabilities, so please be aware of this danger. Claiming ignorance will not protect us in court. This will not stop someone necessarily from committing this crime, but it will protect us in court, if it happens."

In discussion, it was stated that every parish in the diocese should carry public liability insurance. If there is a claim and the parish has no insurance then the Archdiocese and even the officers of that parish can be held liable. All parishes need to be insured, as there is a risk for the archdiocese. All parishes are obligated to submit a record of their insurance policy to the Archdiocesan Office.

Some parishes have been inquiring about the insurance coverage that the Archdiocese of Canada (OCA) requires that they have. Therefore the Archdiocesan Administration has prepared the guidelines for your consideration along with the recommendations and requirements of the Archdiocesan Administration. It was mailed to all parishes and can be found on the Archdiocesan web-site.

## **Liturgical Celebrations**

From July 2010 until now, I was blessed to concelebrate in the following services approximately: 185 Divine Liturgies, 105 Vigils, 57 Vespers, and 74 Akathists, Molebens and other Divine Services.

## **Theological Education Committee and Diaconal Training**

As the Protodeacon of the Diocesan Bishop, I assumed the obedience and responsibility of the first deacon, the one responsible for the training of newly ordained deacons and subdeacons. The main task was to try to standardize diaconal serving according to the general practice as blessed by the Archdiocesan hierarch. With the blessing of His Grace Irénée and the assistance of the St. Arseny Orthodox Theological Institute, we organized the first Summer Diaconal Practicum in the summer of 2012. This practicum was held in Winnipeg at Holy Trinity Sobor in conjunction with 2012 Clergy Synaxis. All participants not only had a chance to listen to the lecture on the order of the Hierarchal Service but also and more importantly, everyone had a chance to concelebrate the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy several times during the course of the program itself and during the Clergy Synaxis. I hope this kind of opportunity will be provided to our deacons in the future at least once a year.

The Holy Synod of Bishops established the Department of Continuing Education at its meeting of January 28, 2013 to provide for the ongoing development of clergy and lay leaders. At the same time, the Holy Synod of Bishops directed that all bishops, priests and deacons follow a **mandatory program** of continuing education consisting of twenty hours annually. The Department of Continuing Education has been given the responsibility of supervising the program. This responsibility includes coordinating the program with each diocesan bishop.

In order to fulfill the mandate of the Holy Synod, with the blessing of His Grace, Bishop Irénée, we dedicated the 2013 Clergy Synaxis to the issue of "Healthy Boundaries and Relations with the Faithful in a contemporary Context". This topic will be presented to us by Archpriest Ion Pac-Urar of the Romanian Episcopate. All clergy who participate in this will be credited 5 hours towards the 20 hour requirement.

The 2012 Clergy Synaxis was dedicated principally to the liturgical aspect of our mission, and was presented by His Grace Bishop Irénée and Father Bohdan Hladio of Ukrainian Orthodox Church in Canada.

We also had several discussions with different Orthodox educational institutions such as the Greek Orthodox Theological Academy in Toronto and St. Andrew's College in Winnipeg in order to address the issue of the preparation of a new generation of clergy. Our own St. Arseny Orthodox Theological Institute has been attempting to provide new avenues to make Orthodox theological training more feasible and productive. Archpriest Chad Hadfield is also preparing a proposal about how to make studying at Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary more economically possible for Canadian students as well.

## **AVAC**

The Archdiocesan Vocation Assessment Committee has had many meetings during this three-year term. We interviewed several possible candidates to the ranks of the clergy of the Archdiocese of Canada. All the reports from this committee were submitted to His Grace, Bishop Irénée and some of the candidates have been ordained to the Holy Diaconate and the Holy Priesthood, and given ecclesiastical placement. We thank Drs. John Hadjinicolaou and Evangelia Amirali for their work and all the volunteers who took the time to assist in the discussions.

## **External contacts**

I hope to share the vision of Orthodox Church in America as being the Church which unites all Orthodox Christians, regardless of their ethnic background. I hope that the Church can be the home where Greeks, Serbs, French, English, Russians, Ukrainians or representatives of any other nation who have made their home in Canada are united into one body. The Orthodox Church in Canada is able to provide all of these individuals with spiritual care, love and help. Our task is to become known to people as the place where everyone, regardless of their ethnic background, can pray and work together peacefully.

During the last three years, the focus of my work was mostly concentrated on internal issues. We had to reorganize the Archdiocesan Centre. Nevertheless, the following projects were accomplished:

1. Monastics from Byelorussia are coming to Canada every year. The nuns not only bring some Orthodox items for sale, but they also share their Orthodox culture with us.
2. As a result of our friendly relationship with the offices of the external relations of other Churches our "Clergy Reserve Bank" (specifically for our Slavonic parishes) is growing. We have clergy on loan from other jurisdictions helping in our parishes.



3. The Holy Relics of Great Prince Vladimir visited Canada and the USA in the fall of 2010.
4. A pilgrimage to the Holy Sites of Ukraine took place in 2011.
5. The Archdiocese assisted with organizing a concert of the Iveron Mother of God Monastery Choir in 2012.
6. We have a close relationship with the Georgian Orthodox community in Toronto.

## **Metropolitan Council**

In Victoria, I was elected as a lay representative to the Metropolitan Council in 2010. In accordance with our present By-Laws, I attended my first meeting only in the fall of 2011 during the All American Council in Seattle. Due to health reasons I was not able to attend the working sessions of the Metropolitan Council until the spring of 2013. Father Alexander (Pihach) was representing us at these meetings. As you may read from official and unofficial media postings from 2011 to 2013, the Metropolitan Council had to deal with a lot of painful issues. By the time I attended my first meeting in the spring of this year, I found the council working very productively under the new leadership of His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon.

The issues discussed at the Metropolitan Council are not that different (only larger) from what we have to deal with on the Archdiocesan Council level:

- a. Youth, mission and education
- b. Clergy educational programs
- c. Fundraising and stewardship
- d. Human resources
- e. Legal matters
- f. Property management
- g. External relations

As a first-time participant, I wanted to speak less and learn more before actually taking an active part in the conversation, but as a representative of the Archdiocese of Canada I had an obligation to bring to the attention of the Council several small, but very important suggestions.

- a. The legal systems in the USA and Canada and even within Canada itself are much different. So every document that carries any legal ramifications

to the Archdiocese of Canada has to be adjusted after consultation with the Canadian legal team.

- b. In order for the Archdiocese of Canada to participate in the fundraising efforts of the Central Church Administration, the OCA has to be registered as an official charity in Canada.

In general, I can comment that participation in this session was very beneficial to me as an officer of the Archdiocesan Administration, because it gave me first-hand information from the Central Administration. I was able to learn from the experience of the Central Office and other dioceses within the OCA, and at the same time I was able to share with them our Canadian concerns, plans and vision.

### **Other Archdiocesan Matters**

The Archdiocesan Office is also dealing with the following issues at the present time:

1. During its deliberations in October 2011, the Archdiocesan Council made a decision to purchase a house located at 31 LeBreton St. N., Ottawa, next to our Archdiocesan Annunciation Cathedral. This house has become our new Archdiocesan Centre. After much searching and with much difficulty, we were able to get the best possible mortgage proposition. Not from a private lender as had been anticipated, but from the Bank of Nova Scotia. This loan (which was approved at the 2011 October meeting of the Archdiocesan Council) was used as a down payment and we were able to purchase the property at 31 LeBreton St. N. in Ottawa, ON. In the process of legalizing this purchase, it was discovered that the titles for the rest of the properties owned by the Archdiocese were incorrectly registered. This was corrected. The house on 31 LeBreton St. N. required some renovations. Most of them have been completed and the Archdiocesan Centre was moved from the Cathedral to the new location before Pascha 2012. Most of the renovations were done with minimal expense. Generous donors also donated most of the supplies. The archdiocese had to pay only for installation.

Our present task is to make sure that this purchase is financially underwritten by the Archdiocese. Several fundraising appeals were written and distributed to the parishes and the faithful. We published these appeals on our Archdiocesan website and in our *Canadian Orthodox Messenger*. During visits to the parishes, I take the opportunity to meet and talk with the members of the parish executive committee, and I try to persuade them to increase their contribution to the Archdiocese, be it for a specific cause or just for the regular, annual contribution. As before, I also talk to individuals in our parishes that are in a position to offer additional contributions. Such efforts are bringing results.

2. Again I would like to draw your attention to our Archdiocesan By-Laws and to the Statute of the OCA and their description of the role of council members. It is our responsibility to encourage others, but first of all, it is necessary for us to be leaders in helping to provide financial resources, and finding new financial resources for the work of the Archdiocesan Administration and its mission.

We see that the results are good, and we are thankful for this, but we can still do much better. We still have parishes that have not yet participated in our fundraising efforts and I am not talking about small missions. Most importantly, however, we would like to encourage our parishes to increase their regular contribution to the Archdiocese. We would like to encourage parishes that do not yet contribute to make a beginning of doing their part in supporting the diocese.

3. In the last three years the Archdiocese was faced with some legal issues (not related to Archbishop Seraphim). We should be very thankful to God for providing for us a new member, Mr. Matthew Estabrooks, who represented us on these issues by setting up a pro-bono account for the Archdiocese in the law firm he is working for. I strongly believe that it would be very timely for us to consider the formation of a legal committee with a permanent representation at the Archdiocesan Council, following the example of the Metropolitan Council of the OCA.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, as you can see these past three years have been very busy. Many issues that we raised in Victoria had to be placed on the back burner, and many new issues that no-one had anticipated three years ago had to be addressed. I would like to say, however, that I am very thankful to God for everything, as in His wisdom and mercy He never gives us a bigger cross than we can carry. Everything that is given to us is given to us for our benefit.

I am thankful to my family for supporting me in my service, and to all of you for your prayers and support. Together we can do great things; scripture teaches us to carry each other's burdens and to help each other. Sometimes in our human weakness, we have a tendency to criticize each other without a full understanding of the whole situation.

Even from this brief report you can see that the Church Administration is dealing with many issues previously unknown to us or not understood by us, but it does not mean that these issues are not important. All of us work for the same cause, trying to the best of our ability to fulfill the Gospel teaching in our life, and spreading the Word of God in Canada. This year my older son graduated from a Catholic high school, and at the graduation ceremony one of the presenters addressed the graduates with these words: "Do not be afraid; dream big; think

big and do big, but do it with prayer and God will help you to do it.” My spiritual father always reminds me that God loves courageous people. We have to dream, think and do big because we are not doing this for ourselves; we are not doing it for some business interest, but we are building God’s Church in Canada. We are fighting the good fight and let us be courageous; let us work together so that we can with an honest heart give an account of our work before the almighty throne of God and before the people entrusted to us, who trust us to be good stewards of the Canadian Orthodox Church. At the last meeting of the Metropolitan Council, Metropolitan Tikhon said that every aspect of Church administration is described in the Scriptures, and we should not be afraid or ashamed of asking people for help, as it is for the mission of God’s Church.

I am also doing other things that occupy my working time. There are many other events in which I participate as Episcopal Secretary or as Secretary of the Archdiocese that I did not include in this report. I only hope to fulfill the obedience given to me. If anyone is interested in knowing more details about my day-to-day work, I can meet with you during our breaks or after the meeting. I ask for your continued prayers that God will guide me in the service of our Canadian Orthodox Church.

May God grant you all many blessed years in the service of His Holy Orthodox Church.

Respectfully,

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