

Report of a Metropolitan Council Representative

July 2007 – Archdiocesan Assembly in Ottawa

Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent. (The Tractatus)

This aphorism of Ludwig Wittgenstein (the Viennese-born British thinker) aptly expresses the apophatic character of Orthodox theology that we so often laud, and so rarely practice. For proof of this, one need only call to mind all the hot air and cold ink and endless pixels that have been expended these last few years over the “scandal” in the Central Administration of the Orthodox Church in America.

Earlier this year a summary of my prediction regarding the outcome of this still-ongoing process was printed in our diocesan newsletter (reproduced below). I cannot add to the main thrust of my earlier statement, and so will not do so here. (The reason the Lord God permitted the Internet to come into being is so more of us than are willing to confess can “lurk” in the knowledge of good and evil, even when this regards the financial and moral misdeeds that continue to plague us.)

The four main blessings that have emerged from all of this, in my opinion, still hold true. The “latest” events such as the Day of Prayer and Fasting in the OCA Diocese of the Midwest, the earlier open letter of a cleric from there, the “benchmarks” set by that diocese for the OCA and Holy Synod to meet... all of these are the necessary components of a solution to this, in Christ. I believe that the Lord God will grant us to see the End of all this – let’s pray that this will be given to us all in the OCA !

"Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death. If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present."

The Beginning of the End

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We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:28)

The finance-related woes that have befallen us in the Central Administration of the Orthodox Church in America in the early years of this century have certainly put us all on the world map. More so than many expensive “public relations” extravaganzas, this “scandal” has been reported in more media than we’re accustomed to seeing ourselves. The wire-services (both commercial and home-grown) have spawned discussions of our plight not only in the USA and Canada, but in places as far away as Russia, Japan, Greece and even Iraq.

Now while it is easy to bemoan this notoriety, we are also called to “make of it” something more “according to his purpose.” And, strangely enough, some good things have come out of this predicament in which we find ourselves:

- > We have been humbled and reminded that sin is not a phenomenon that afflicts only others. Painful though it may be, it is much better to see ourselves as we really are – rather than to put up false fronts and delight in delusions.
- > We are being led into a re-examining our modes of acting and of thinking. Since these troubles surfaced, various levels of the church have been chastised: the episcopate and other clergy, the laity and various institutions we have taken for granted.
- > We are being watched by other Orthodox Churches (both in the “old countries” such as those mentioned above, and in the “newer ones” such as England, Finland and others in the so-called Diaspora) to see how we act and react when challenged by adversity and calamity of our own doing.
- > But to my mind, perhaps the greatest boon of all is this: we are inwardly not quite as quick to permit ourselves a “holier than thou” attitude in relation to others: other people, other segments of society, and even other confessions and denominations.

Taught as we are in Scripture that all creation and everything in it is finite – what has a beginning is also blessed by God to have an end – this is the blessing that was given me and many others at the recent joint sessions of the Holy Synod and Metropolitan Council in early December of last year. Read the statements pointed out on the OCA’s official website (and indulge yourself by admitting that you’ve read the competition’s counterpoint “OCANews.org” site). Both of these OCA organisms have now openly and publicly – some would say, finally – acknowledged that we have been remiss in our stewardship of God’s Body, the Church. Now that is a hard, but not at all bad, admission to make – and one that we Orthodox, as I said, are not very adept or comfortable at expressing both to ourselves but especially to others.

The beginning of the end is now at least visible to all the gossip and recrimination to which we have subjected ourselves the past few years.

While many details and fine points of this admission have still to be worked on, in broad strokes the very fact doing so is rejuvenating. It’s good to be so forcefully reminded (especially during Great Lent and Pascha) that all of us are capable of and in need of, repentance and confession. Clergy of all ranks, laity of various professions and persuasions, all united before and in the Lord God. And to once again know how refreshing this is.

“Lord, it is good for us to be here!”

Archpriest John Tkachuk
Archdiocese of Canada
 Representative to the Metropolitan Council