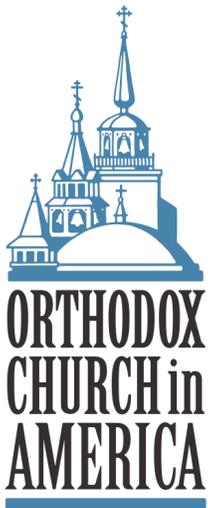


To the Venerable Pastors, God-loving Monastics and Devout Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America:

I greet all of you as we mark one year before the opening of the 18th All-American Council, slated to convene in Atlanta, Georgia from July 20-24, 2015. The Council, which will provide an opportunity for the entire Church to gather in worship, fellowship and discipleship, is one of the most inspiring events in the life of our Orthodox Church in America. And the task of the 18th All-American Council appears to be all the more uplifting inasmuch as it has as its theme "How to Expand the Mission" - the very theme that Saint Tikhon pursued at the First All-American Sobor that gathered in Mayfield, Pennsylvania in 1907.



During this year, in which we mark the 220th Anniversary of the arrival of the first Orthodox Christian missionaries in Kodiak, Alaska, I ask that we dedicate ourselves to reflecting on the mission of Orthodox Christianity in North America and that we embrace the communal and personal challenges the Council theme places before us: How can we - as the Orthodox Church in America, as dioceses and deaneries and parishes, and as members of the Body of Christ - expand the Church's ministry and witness on this continent? How can we, collectively and individually, continue the vision of Saints Herman and Innocent - and all those, known and unknown, who have struggled and sacrificed to make Christ's Church on this continent a vibrant expression of "the life of the world to come"?

As we prepare to gather in Council, our task will be to witness our unity in Jesus Christ, our thirst for His Will to be done within our communities, and our ability to discern, through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, how we might continue the work of Saint Tikhon, who challenged his flock to "expand the Mission." Hence, I encourage every member of the Orthodox Church in America - those who will be attending the Council as well as those who will follow its proceedings from afar - to consider not only where we have been during these past 220 years, but where we are going in the immediate future and beyond. Only by coming together to discern our call to discipleship will we truly discover and reveal the strength and power of the Body and Bride of Christ, the Church.

P.O. BOX 675
SYOSSET, NY 11791-0675
TEL: 516-922-0550
FAX: 516-922-0954
WEBSITE: WWW.OCA.ORG

I encourage you to visit regularly the official All-American Council web site - 18aac.oca.org - for important updates, documents and Council-related resources during the coming year, that "with one mind we may confess Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the Trinity one in essence and undivided."

With love in Christ,

† TIKHON
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada