

**Report of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon  
Presented to the 21<sup>st</sup> All-American Council**

*July 15, 2025*

**Introduction**

Today, as we meet in council, we come together as those “gathered together by Christ.” We do not come together as free agents, as it were: there is one who called us here. He has purchased us at the price of his own Blood, and we are gathered together, not to pursue our own agendas and our own ends, but to do his will. Our Church is not ours: it is his. The building up of the Church is not our project to carry out in our own ways: it is his project from before the beginning of worlds. I paraphrase one beautiful way in which the story has been told:

*A father said to his son, “Son, I want you to marry. Your wife will be unfaithful; she will go after other men; she will abuse your trust; she will take your love for granted. But no matter how outrageous her misdeeds, I want you to be faithful to her and love her to the end.” The son said: “Father, thy will be done.” And the father said: “Let there be light.”*

In this world, we often perceive the Church as described here: a wavering and unfaithful bride, a harlot-bride like Gomer. But, in the age to come, when the defeat of sin, death, and the devil – a defeat already enacted by Christ on the Cross – has been perfectly revealed and realized, then the Church will appear as she truly is, who she always has been since before the ages: the immaculate Bride of the supremely innocent Son of God. As St. John the Theologian writes, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.”

This eschatological vision is not a pretty extra, icing on top of the cake of our “real” business. This is who we are, who we really desire to be: the very people of God, the true Israel, the Spouse of the Lamb. This is a reality more real than all the fleeting appearances and processes we experience in this world of becoming.

Therefore, when we gather in council, our practice of conciliarity should not just be a question of procedure. Rather, conciliarity is a manifestation of the eternal character of

the Church as the Bride of Christ. Conciliarity, therefore, is always Christ-focused, Christocentric: we are gathered together to do his will. We are gathered together in obedience to him. We are clay, and he is the potter. Thus, as St. Sophrony says, “Without the culture of obedience, we cannot comprehend the mystery of conciliarity.” Conciliar harmony is not the clamoring and jockeying of democracy: it is the mystery we experience when we authentically seek the will of God together.

In this respect, we would do well to remember that God’s will is not something abstract and covert: it is revealed in the Scriptures, in the holy Tradition, in the canons, in the Fathers, in the lives of the saints. As our Lord says, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.” And as Saint Paul says, “Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.” And again: “Be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” The will of God is not the product of our fallen imagination and opinion: it is what we discover when our mind is renewed through obedience, struggle, humility, and sanctifying grace.

In connection with this, before proceeding to the main areas of my report, I would like to comment on my overall approach to my primatial ministry. I am known for taking my time in making decisions. However, what may appear from the outside to be delay or indecision is, in fact, the fruit of careful reflection.

The same uncle I mentioned in my address last night has likened the bishop to a mountain guide: the bishop, he said, leads people up and down the mountain. I view my duty as Primate in this way: I strive to lead the people up toward the light of Tabor, as I discussed last night. But it is also part of my work to lead the Church down, down to reach out to the suffering world, just as Christ, coming down from the mountain with his disciples, encountered the epileptic boy in his father. We must practice stewardship, but not without prayer: just as Christ descended in the Nativity and ascended the Cross and descended to hell and ascended to heaven, so our life in him is fulfilled in a pattern of ascent and descent, going up and down the mountain.

Ultimately, I strive, in conciliar fashion, to lead the Orthodox Church of America to fulfilling the will of God, in unity—not uniformity, but deep unity—with all the faithful, both living and departed. Primacy, like conciliarity, requires a spirit of

obedience. This is what I aim for, through reflection and prayer, and with the support of the prayers of the whole Body of the Church.

Over the course of the past three years, the Orthodox Church in America has made a number of major strides as part of fulfilling our core mission of preaching the Gospel and sharing the fullness of the Orthodox Faith with the people of North America. In this report, I will focus on three areas of my primatial ministry during the past triennium. First, I will discuss the canonization of Saint Olga. Second, I will discuss the external affairs of our Church, especially as they relate to our own autocephaly. Third, I will discuss internal matters, specifically, the stavropegial institutions and Chancery, responsibility for which are entrusted to me as the Primate.

### **Canonization of Saint Olga**

Our righteous mother Olga of Kwethluk, wonderworker, Matushka of All Alaska, is the first saint canonized by the Orthodox Church in America in over two decades; our last canonization was Saint Raphael of Brooklyn in 2000. The excitement surrounding her glorification was undoubtedly due, first and foremost, to the deep and wide veneration for Matushka Olga on the part of the faithful throughout Alaska, the entire Orthodox Church in America, and the whole world. However, it is unquestionable that the novelty of the event also generated a special excitement: after two decades, the Orthodox Church in America asserted the privileges of her autocephaly and recognized the manifest will of the Holy Spirit in glorifying Matushka Olga, whom God had already long glorified with miracles and widespread reverence among believers.

The glorification was a lengthy and at times challenging process. The Holy Synod issued the act of glorification on November 8, 2023, but due to logistical concerns, the rite of glorification could not take place until this June. The events in Kwethluk and Anchorage were the product of careful planning on the part of many in Alaska, in the central administration of the Orthodox Church in America, and beyond. This planning included everything from the preparation of liturgical texts to coordinating boat rides. In the end, the events were reverent, joyful, and inspiring. This Wednesday and Thursday, we will provide a capstone to these celebrations with the service of All-Night Vigil and Divine Liturgy in honor of the newly-canonized saint.

The canonization of Saint Olga is itself a landmark event; the first female North American saint and a rare canonized clergy wife. But this canonization also possesses a broader significance: it is a reminder of the very mission of the Church in the world, of the end for which our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ died. He came in the flesh and suffered his Passion and rose on the third day so that there could be saints: he desired to fashion a people holy unto God. When we canonize a saint, we recognize the core identity of the Church as God's holy and elect people. We are reminded that the goal of our own existence is sanctity.

Therefore, it is my hope that St. Olga's canonization serves as a new beginning. Canonizations should not be rarities that occur every quarter-century: the making of saints, in every sense of the phrase, is at the center of the Church's activity in this world. Therefore, as the Orthodox Church in America continues to grow and mature as an autocephalous Church, with all the privileges, duties, and priorities common to the Orthodox Churches throughout the world, we cannot but pray and strive so that the glorification of saints becomes a cornerstone of our life as the local Church in the lands of North America.

### **External Affairs**

Our local Church exists, of course, in communion with and in relation to the other holy Orthodox Churches, and, as such, external affairs is a major part of my primatial duties. As our statute states, the Metropolitan's competence includes the duty to "represent the Church in its relations with other Orthodox Churches." Assisting the Metropolitan in this capacity are his Chancellor, his brother bishops, and others as he may see fit.

Throughout the past triennium, the travel of myself and the Church's officers has been extensive. Early last summer, accompanied by a delegation including my former Chancellor, Archpriest Alexander Rentel, I traveled to Ukraine, Romania, and Istanbul, concelebrating with His Beatitude Metropolitan Onufriy of Kyiv and meeting with His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, among others.

This February, our new Chancellor—then Acting Chancellor—Archpriest Alessandro Margheritino represented me in an important -visit to the Balkans. In Bulgaria he met with His Holiness Patriarch Daniil, and in Serbia with His Holiness Patriarch Porfirije. Notably, the latter meetings resulted in our receipt of a letter from the Serbian

Orthodox Church asking that we, the Orthodox Church in America, recognize the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric as granted by the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Accordingly, the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America decided, effective immediately, to recognize the canonicity of the Macedonian Orthodox Church and to affirm our full communion with its hierarchs, clergy, and faithful. Currently, my Office is coordinating and planning a fraternal concelebration between myself and His Beatitude Archbishop Stefan of Ohrid and Macedonia, which will take place at my cathedral of St. Nicholas in Washington, D.C. God willing, we will crown this concelebration with a formal recognition of the autocephaly of the Macedonian Orthodox Church, which takes its place alongside the Orthodox Church in America as a fully autocephalous local Orthodox Church.

Overall, my priority remains, in this era of ecclesiastical polarization and political division, to maintain communion with all the local autocephalous Churches, seeking greater unity in Christ while preserving our sacred autocephaly.

Though the work of external relations has been in the past overshadowed by urgent internal needs, it is my aim that the coming triennium will see more extensive work building our relationship with the autocephalous Churches throughout the world.

### **Internal Matters**

Internally, the work of the Chancery and the stavropegial institutions under my primatial omophorion continues unabated despite considerable changes in the central administration. At the end of 2024, my former Chancellor, Archpriest Alexander Rentel, left his position at the Chancery to return to St. Vladimir's Seminary as its Chief Operating Officer and as Rector of Three Hierarchs Chapel. I offer my sincere gratitude to Father Alexander for the sacrificial service he offered to me personally, to my office, and to the Orthodox Church in America.

With his departure, after a half-year period of transition and discernment, I nominated Archpriest Alessandro Margheritino, then the Acting Chancellor and Secretary, for the permanent position of Chancellor of the Orthodox Church in America, a nomination then confirmed by Holy Synod with the endorsement of the Metropolitan Council.

Currently, Fr. Alessandro still carries out the duties of the Secretary as Chancellor and Acting Secretary; effective September 1<sup>st</sup>, at my nomination, with the Metropolitan Council's endorsement and the Holy Synod's confirmation, Priest David Bozeman will assume the duties of Secretary of the Orthodox Church in America.

I am grateful to Fr. Alessandro and Fr. David for answering the call to serve, and especially to Fr. Alessandro who has helped me to lead the Chancery through this time of transition while carrying out the duty of two Church Officers. I also would like to recognize the Church's third Officer, Andrew Smith, our Treasurer, who has continued his steady, unimpeachable service throughout this period. I look forward to continuing my primatial work of church governance with the assistance and counsel of Fr. Alessandro, Fr. David, and Andrew.

This past triennium has also seen the departure of Judge Ray Lanier from his long tenure as General Counsel to the Orthodox Church in America. After a thorough search process, I made the decision to hire Mark C. Hamilton as the General Counsel of the Orthodox Church in America, a position Mark has served in admirably since 2023. I am grateful for Judge Lanier's service and also pleased that we have an extraordinary new General Counsel in Mark Hamilton.

Though I leave it to my Chancellor to address most details related to the Chancery staff and its operations, I would like to highlight the imminent retirement of Alexis Liberovsky from his position as the Archivist of the Orthodox Church in America. Alex has served as Archivist since 1988, working to document, safeguard, and share the history of the Orthodox Church in America for nearly four decades. During this time, he has also served in many other capacities, including as Secretary for the Canonization Commission. He has been tireless in carrying out research into the history of the Church, sharing his findings with the hierarchy, the central administration, and the public. He has always been eager to assist other researchers, both professional and amateur. In recognition of his service, he was granted the Medal of the Order of St. Innocent (Bronze) in 2002. Alex's love for our Church and its history, his zeal for our saints, our institutions, and our traditions—all of this is palpable in his work, and I hope that these qualities of Alex continue to inspire us and future generations as those to whom the care of our history and heritage is now entrusted.

In terms of stavropegia: though we will hear separate reports from the stavropegial monasteries and from both stavropegial seminaries, there are a few notes I would like to make here.

First, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary has undergone a significant leadership transition with the retirement of Archpriest Chad Hatfield at the end of May 2024. The past year has seen the restoration of the seminary's traditional administrative structure, according to which it is headed by a dean under my primatial presidency. During the interim of this past year, Dr. Ionuț-Alexandru Tudorie carried out the responsibilities of seminary president and then dean, and, after a thorough search, he was named permanent dean of the Seminary by the seminary's Board early this year. He officially assumed this position at the beginning of this month.

I note that the seminary's once-planned relocation has been put on indefinite hold. As we all work to ensure that St. Vladimir's will continue to carry out its unique function and mission as part of the Orthodox Church in America for times and seasons to come, I have asked Dr. Alex and the seminary administration, with my primatial oversight and guidance, to focus on operational concerns and the core educational mission of the seminary. To this end, the seminary has initiated a focused strategic planning process.

Second, St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary was recently granted a full ten years of accreditation by the Association of Theological Schools, or ATS. The seminary continues to flourish under the deanship of Archpriest John Parker. Among other exciting recent developments, the seminary will soon have new and extensive housing for its married students.

Third, I note that both seminaries marked their 85<sup>th</sup> anniversaries in 2023: both institutions were founded in 1938, and I am confident that they will both continue their good and holy work as institutions of the Orthodox Church in America for many years to come. I remind the delegates gathered here of the resolution adopted by the 16<sup>th</sup> All-American Council in Seattle calling for parishes to allocate 1% of their budget toward the support of our seminaries.

Finally, at the intersection of stavropegia and external affairs, I would like to note with gratitude the continued work of Archpriest Daniel Andrejuk as Rector of the Church of St. Catherine of the Fields, the representation church of the Orthodox Church in

America to our Mother and Sister, the Russian Orthodox Church. Despite present difficulties, Fr. Daniel continues to facilitate communication between our Churches and admirably to represent the Orthodox Church in America both in Russia and beyond.

### **Conclusion**

In sum, I am grateful to God for the successes of this past triennium. The glorification of St. Olga has galvanized our local Church with a renewed zeal for our saints and our entire common life as the local Orthodox Church in North America. As such, I expect that this event will provide momentum for other blessed works and projects in the life of the Orthodox Church in America during the next triennium. Additionally, we are blessed, as one of the local autocephalous Orthodox Churches, to participate in recognizing the Macedonian Orthodox Church-Ohrid Archbishopric and welcoming them into the sisterhood of local Orthodox Churches as the youngest autocephalous Church. By manifesting the unity of the Orthodox Churches in this way, we build up our Church as well; indeed, we strengthen the whole Body of Christ. Though our central administration is still in a period of transition and we have yet to find a permanent Chancery location to succeed the Westwood property, I am confident that the leadership team of Church Officers that I have assembled is well-placed to assist me in my work as Primate in the coming months and years.

Though I speak of my work, I conclude by returning to that fundamental truth of the Church: it is not my project, and it is not our project. The Church is the project of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ. With courage and tenacity, discernment and vigor, humility and prayer, we seek to live out the mystery of conciliarity through obedience to the will of God, striving to remain faithful to the apostolic tradition and to preach the Gospel with joy in the lands of North America. May he who gathered us together, Christ our true God, also help us to remain faithful and to teach us in all things the way that we should go, unto the everlasting glory of his holy Name.