

# 51ST ASSEMBLY OF THE DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

Broadview Heights, Ohio

12 November 2012

## PLENARY SESSION I

### I. OPENING.

The Assembly opened with the Invocation of the Holy Spirit and prayer at 9:22 a.m., after which His Eminence, Archbishop Nikon called the Assembly to order.

### II. CREDENTIALS.

One Archbishop, 60 clergy delegates, 59 lay delegates, and 12 observers, for a total of 132 participants.

### III. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS, APPOINTMENTS.

After introductory remarks, Archbishop Nikon turned the podium over to Archpriest John Zdinak, Chancellor, who recommended minor revisions to the agenda, adding that the Diocesan Council had requested that he chair the meeting. He moved, on behalf of the Diocesan Council, that Archpriests John Matusiak and Mark Hodges and Mrs. Ann Marie Mecera serve as the secretariat, and that Archpriest John Adamcio, Priest Nicholas Finley, and Ms. Kitty Mabus serve on the nominating committee. [Since Ms. Mabus was in hospital, Archpriest Thomas Mueller was asked to take her place.] He further moved that Archpriest Christopher Wojcik, Priest Stephen Hrycyniak and Doris Weissman serve on the resolutions committee. All deacons in attendance will serve as tellers.

### IV. DEANERY REPORTS.

The reports of the Chicago, Cleveland, Columbus, and Minneapolis deaneries were accepted as presented. Archpriest Timothy Sawchak, Dean of the Kansas City Deanery, added to his report that Deacon Joel Wilson, who is attached to Saint Thomas Church, Springfield, MO, is planting a mission in Rolla, MO. Archpriest Andrew Yavornitzky, Dean of the Michigan Deanery, added to his report that His Grace, Bishop Mark of Baltimore, presided at the consecration of Saint Mark Church, Rochester, MI. He also added that the faithful of Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral, Detroit, continue to make every effort to maintain an active presence, and that they will be hosting their second annual Thanksgiving dinner for neighborhood residents. They also are working closely with Orthodox Outreach Detroit-FOCUS.

### V. MONASTERY REPORTS.

The reports of Saint John Monastery, Hiram, OH, and the Presentation of the Virgin Mary Monastery, Marshfield, MO, were accepted as presented.

### VI. DIACONAL VOCATIONS PROGRAM REPORT.

The report was accepted as presented, with no additions.

### VII. PARISH HEALTH FACILITATOR REPORT.

Mr. Joseph Kormos, Parish Health Facilitator, stated that he had nothing to add to his written report, but thanked everyone for the opportunity to head the ministry for the past six years. Participants offered their applause.

### VIII. METROPOLITAN COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES' REPORT.

The report stands as presented, with no additions.

### IX. TREASURER'S AND AUDITORS' REPORTS.

Father Hrycyniak and Mr. Sam D'Fantis, Finance Committee members, reviewed the reports in the absence of Mr. Robert Koncel, Treasurer.

In response to enquires concerning the deficit and salary increases, Mr. D'Fantis stated that the latter were included in response to the request of His Grace, Bishop Matthias, adding that the Finance Committee is willing to entertain motions to modify the budget. Father Zdinak added that 2011 overages were incurred as a result of unbudgeted expenses related to the Bishop's consecration and salary and unforeseen expenses with regard to maintenance and repairs at the Diocesan Center. He affirmed that the 2013 budget is balanced and based on the most recent census numbers.

*Upon motion by Mrs. Linda Livosky, seconded by Matushka Gina Mueller, it was decided to table discussion on the budget until the afternoon session. Motion carried with 51 in favor, 46 against.*

The Auditors' Report was accepted as presented *upon motion by Archpriest Nicholas Wyslutsky, seconded by Mr. Dennis Garlick.*

### X. CHANCELLOR'S REPORT AND SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSION.

Father Zdinak offered a comprehensive and objective report/timeline with regard to issues related to Bishop Matthias.

- A. On 24 August 2012, a complaint alleging sexual misconduct on the part of Bishop Matthias was sent to the Holy Synod of Bishops.
- B. Concurrently, a copy of the complaint was sent to Father Zdinak and Archpriest John Jillions, as chancellors of the Diocese of the Midwest and the Orthodox Church in America respectively.
- C. The matter was immediately referred to the Holy Synod, inasmuch as it involved a hierarch. The Holy Synod acted in accordance with the OCA Policy and Procedures and placed Bishop Matthias on administrative leave.
- D. Because at the time most bishops had been assigned to oversee other dioceses, in addition to their own, the Holy

Synod appointed Father Zdinak to serve as Administrator of the Diocese of the Midwest.

- E. From the beginning, Bishop Matthias abided by, and continues to abide by, the guidelines fully. He was not to make any decisions. He was permitted to receive the Eucharist at Chicago's Holy Trinity Cathedral and Christ the Savior Church and Saint Gregory of Nyssa Church, Columbus, OH.
- F. The Diocese was neither involved in the adjudication and investigation process, nor in any other aspect of the case, until Friday, 9 November 2012, at which time His Eminence, Archbishop Tikhon informed Father Zdinak that letters from the Holy Synod and Bishop Matthias would be released on Saturday, 10 November.
- G. Father Zdinak received numerous enquiries after the release of the aforementioned letters. He noted that he wanted to make it "clear" that internet reports alleging that he had verified certain statements were not true, that he "had not verified anything," and that he had never called for Bishop Matthias to resign publicly. The final decision is exclusively the prerogative of the Holy Synod. Consequently, no "resolution" will be permitted from the assembly.
- H. Father Zdinak thanked Archbishop Nikon for chairing the 51st Assembly. He further thanked Archpriest John Jillions for his presence, and invited him to comment.

Father Jillions offered comments and observations.

- I. While there is a lot of pain being experienced, a lot of life is evident in diocesan parishes. And while members of the Diocesan Council expressed differences of opinion at their meeting on the eve of the assembly, Father Jillions stated that he was struck "by the civility [and] the sincere pastoral Christian approach to the issues."
- J. He confirmed that the complaint had been received on 24 August 2012. Upon receipt of the complaint, and in line with normal procedures, it was assessed as quickly as possible. A response team was appointed to conduct a formal enquiry into the allegations.
- K. Father Jillions and a licensed psychologist met with Bishop Matthias on 26 August. A report of the meeting was sent to the Office of Review of Sexual Allegations. On that basis, a three-member response team was established. This "took some time," inasmuch as it was crucial that the three response team members bore no conflicts of interest, real or perceived, in the matter.
- L. Their report was given to the members of the Lesser Synod of Bishops, who read the team's findings and recommendations and shared them with the Holy Synod, which issued the aforementioned letter, released on Saturday, 10 November.

Archbishop Nikon confirmed the aforementioned information offered by Fathers Zdinak and Jillions. In addition, he noted that

- M. upon receipt of the initial allegations, the Holy Synod affirmed that established policies must be followed, as in any other situation. Policies were followed "to the letter," with "no favoritism [and] no change in the policies."
- N. the members of the Holy Synod agreed that it was necessary to send a message to the Diocese of the Midwest, especially since they acknowledged that Bishop Matthias was "hurting," as was the diocese.
- O. the negative reaction to the letter came as a surprise, since it clearly outlined the policies.
- P. Bishop Matthias accepted the decision of the Holy Synod and expressed his willingness to participate in an extended program, employed by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, aimed at offering a healthy perception acceptable and unacceptable boundaries.
- Q. no further decisions have been made by the Holy Synod; further decisions hinge on the outcome of the aforementioned program. Consequently, the matter has yet to be fully resolved for Bishop Matthias, the Holy Synod, or the diocese.
- R. while the members of the Holy Synod are well aware of what appears on the internet, it would be best for those who have "something to say to the diocesan leaders to say it directly."
- S. while we as Church have endured crises for the past decade, we have not stopped being the Church, and the diocese cannot stop being the Church.

Delegates were invited to share their views on the aforementioned issues. Comments, heard through the conclusion of the morning session and into the afternoon session, appear as an Addendum to these minutes and are made a part thereof.

## PLENARY SESSION II

### XI. OPENING.

After a break for lunch, the session opened at 1:10 p.m.

### XII. CREDENTIALS.

One Archbishop, 62 clergy delegates, 55 lay delegates, and 13 observers, for a total of 131 participants.

### XIII. CONTINUATION OF DISCUSSION.

Father Zdinak continued to field comments from the floor. At the conclusion of the discussion, he stated that Archbishop Nikon and Father Jillions had heard everything that had been shared and will take what they have experienced into consideration in further actions.

### XIV. 2013 BUDGET.

Upon motion by Mr. D'Fantis, seconded by Archpriest James Dank, discussion of the 2013 budget was reopened.

After moderate discussion concerning a proposed salary increase for Bishop Matthias, in light of future uncertainties, Father Christopher Wojcik, seconded by Priest William John Neumann, moved to remove the increase from the budget. Motion carried.

After additional discussion, Father Zdinak, seconded by Priest Elijah Mueller, moved to adopt the budget as amended. Motion carried.

Father Hrycyniak, seconded by Father Dank, further moved to grant authority to the Diocesan Council to adjust items in the budget for 2013 alone in light of the fact that Bishop Matthias' future status is unknown at this time. Motion carried.

**XV. ELECTIONS.**

Priest Nicholas Finley was elected clergy representative to the Metropolitan Council. Priest Elijah Mueller will serve as alternate.

Elected as lay members of the Diocesan Council were Messers. Michael Herzak and Dennis Garlick and Mrs. Mecera. Mrs. Doris Wiseman will serve as alternate.

Mr. Frank Tkacz was elected to serve as auditor by acclamation.

**XVI. OTHER BUSINESS.**

**A.** Father Zdinak reported that, in June 2012, it was learned that the Diocese of the Midwest was to receive a rebate from the 16th All-American Council, held in October/November 2011. Consideration had been given to using the rebate to fund a seminary scholarship fund in memory of His Eminence, the late Archbishop Job. Upon learning that the 17th All-American Council would convene, he had to make an executive decision, namely that the Diocese of the Midwest would assess parishes for the 17th All-American Council while still creating the aforementioned scholarship fund. Upon motion by Father Zdinak, seconded by Father Finley, it was decided to create the seminary scholarship fund.

**B.** A resolution calling for a no confidence vote in Bishop Matthias was ruled out of order.

**C.** A resolution calling for a no confidence vote in the Holy Synod of Bishops was ruled out of order.

**D.** In response to a lengthy discussion on adopting an alternative to the current per capita assessment, by which parishes would be asked to remit 12% of their unrestricted income, Mr. Michael Herzak, Sr. moved, seconded by Father Hrycyniak, that the Diocesan Council establish a committee to discern firm standards and guidelines and ways to gather information on the financial support of the diocese and report their findings at the 2013 Diocesan Assembly, at which time action with regard to implementation, may be taken. Motion carried.

**E.** Mrs. Trudy Ellmore, who serves as webmaster of the diocesan web site, was introduced and thanked for her good work on behalf of all.

**F.** On behalf of all participants, Father Zdinak offered gratitude to Archpriest John Memorich and the faithful of Archangel Michael Church for their gracious hospitality in hosting the Assembly.

**XVII. ADJOURNMENT AND INSTALLATION.**

There being no further business, and upon motion by Father Adamcio, seconded by Archpriest Joseph Gibson, the Assembly adjourned at 3:30 p.m. with a Service of Thanksgiving and the installation of elected officers.

*Respectfully submitted by the Secretariat,  
Archpriest John Matusiak  
Archpriest Mark Hodges  
Mrs. Ann Marie Mecera*

*With Mr. Philip Sokolov*