

MEETING OF THE DIOCESAN COUNCIL OF THE DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

Broadview Heights, Ohio

11 November 2012

I. OPENING.

The meeting opened with the singing of “O Heavenly King” led by His Eminence, Archbishop Nikon, at 7:56 p.m.

II. ATTENDANCE.

Present were Archbishop Nikon; Archpriests John Adamcio, Andrew Clements, Joseph Gibson, Alexander Kuchta, John Matusiak, Basil Stoyka, Paul Wesche, Christopher Wojcik, Andrew Yavornitzky, and John Zdinak; Priests John Baker, Stephen Hrycyniak, Herman Kincaid, and Nathan Kroll; and Mr. Sam D’Fantis, Mr. Michael Herzak Jr., Ms. Kitty Mabus, and Mrs. Ann Marie Mecera.

Others present included Archpriest John Jillions, OCA Chancellor; Philip Sokolov.

III. INTRODUCTORY REMARKS, APPOINTMENTS.

A. After introductory remarks, Archbishop Nikon turned over the chair to Archpriest John Zdinak, Chancellor.

B. Father Zdinak moved that Archpriests John Matusiak and Mark Hodges and Mrs. Ann Marie Mecera serve as the Assembly secretariat, and that Archpriest John Adamcio, Priest Nicholas Finley, and Ms. Kitty Mabus serve on the nominating committee. 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, with the senior deacon serving as head teller.

C. Father Zdinak moved that the Finance Committee will present the proposed 2013 budget, and that they be empowered to adjust in light of many uncertainties; seconded by Father Hrycyniak. Passed.

IV. CHANCELLOR’S REPORT.

A. Father Zdinak reported that, on August 24, 2012, the Holy Synod received a accusation of violation of the OCA’s sexual misconduct policy on the part of Bishop Matthias. A copy was sent to him and to Father John Jillions, OCA Chancellor. The matter immediately left our jurisdiction as a diocese to deal with the situation, because it was our ruling hierarch. Father Jillions and the Holy Synod dealt with it directly. We had no involvement with the response team since that time. The bishops were already dealing with other dioceses, so they asked me to act as Administrator. Eventually, everyone received the letters and the adjudication from the Synod, as well as the letter of apology from Bishop Matthias, which raised a considerable number of questions, emails, etc.

Father Zdinak also clarified that a web site, which supposedly contained all of the the accusations, alleged that he had verified the accusations. He denied this. He also noted that an e-mail alleged that he had publicly asked for the resignation of Bishop Matthias. He affirmed, “I never publicly said that.” The adjudication has come down from the Holy Synod, which in turn sent His Eminence, Archbishop Nikon, to our meetings. He added that he had invited Father Jillions to be with us to hear us and to give us a way to express ourselves on these issues, and he invited him to explain the process.

B. Father Jillions thanked the Council, stating that he was grateful to meet. He reported that he had been involved at the very beginning of the process, as noted by Father Zdinak. When the initial complaint was received, an initial interview with Bishop Matthias took place. It had been determined that the matter was serious enough to gather a response team, which took some time. The team consisted of three individuals, all Orthodox Christians: a female lawyer, a Serbian Orthodox Christian, who was very familiar with sexual misconduct issues; Dr. Albert Rossi; and Protodeacon Michael Myers (Bulgarian Diocese), who had a mental health background and was familiar with the Metropolitan Council. Team members interviewed the complainant, others, and Bishop Matthias. Subsequently, they filed a 100-page report with the Holy Synod, the members of which reviewed the findings and wrote the letter that had been distributed. He suggested that Archbishop Nikon relate this internal process.

C. Archbishop Nikon confirmed that the Lesser Synod received the response team’s report. It then was shared with the full Holy Synod, the members of which agreed with the response team’s recommendations. It was felt that a letter needed to be sent to the diocese. He noted that, while the letter had been perceived in a negative manner, it should not have been, as everything had been done according to the procedures. Central is the expectation that Bishop Matthias would participate in a program of psychological counseling for an extended period. He added that some had incorrectly concluded that Bishop Matthias would automatically be returned to his post, but this was not the intent of the letter, which was purely a matter of information.

In response to the above, a lengthy discussion ensued. At its conclusion, Father Zdinak noted that there is no consensus, and that the division that is occurring is painful. Further discussion will be taken up during the Assembly plenary session.

V. ADJOURNMENT.

There being no further business, and upon motion by Father Adamcio, seconded by Father Hrycyniak, the meeting adjourned at 10:40 p.m. with the singing of the Hymn to the Mother of God.

*Respectfully submitted,
Archpriest John Matusiak, Secretary*