



ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST
OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

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Martyr Paul
No. 164

To the Participants of the Diocese of the Midwest Urban Parish Summit:

Glory to Jesus Christ!

I am thankful to all of you who have taken time out of your busy summer schedules to gather during these days here in Cleveland for this workshop dealing with mission and parish health in urban environments. I pray that this workshop will be an excellent opportunity for you to explore and share the challenges and joys of the unique ministry of preaching the Gospel of Christ and leading a community in an urban context.

The profile of our urban parishes has dramatically shifted over the past 100 years. Throughout the last three or more decades urban plight and suburban sprawl have caused many of our faithful to relocate from urban neighborhoods to the suburbs. In cities strapped by economic and social changes, some of our older parishes lack the drive, vision and experience to carry out ministries, or develop a vibrant, healthy parish life. Faced with rising costs to maintain large and aging parish buildings, these communities often become insular, devoted to self-preservation and the status quo.

Many of these parishes exist in neighborhoods that have seen recent rebirth and gentrification while a few remain in neighborhoods with continuing economic and safety concerns. But regardless of the present state of these neighborhoods, the mission of necessity remains the same - that all Americans need to hear the Gospel and feel the love of Jesus Christ more than ever before. We need to be prepared to share the light of Christ with all who are willing to hear.

I have invited your parish representation to this important workshop so that together we can find ways to best respond to Our Lord's call in Galilee just after His Resurrection to, "...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" *Matthew 28:19* It is by revitalizing our spiritual life and by finding creative methods to implement Our Lord's commission that we continue on the critical path of growing Orthodoxy in America.

Our agenda is filled with opportunities to address issues and work-out possible solutions. Through invited speakers, roundtable sessions, fellowship opportunities and relevant workshops, we hope you will take home valuable insights, material for further exploration, and possible solutions to share with your parish.

I pray that this workshop will serve not only to give us new ideas and methods but that it will also increase in each of us the great missionary spirit of our Holy Orthodox Church. Invoking God's Blessing upon all of you and with every good wish, I remain

Faithfully yours in Christ,

†Job
Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest