

BISHOP DANIEL OF SANTA ROSA
LOCUM TENENS OF THE DIOCESE OF CHICAGO AND THE MIDWEST
ADDRESS TO THE DIOCESAN ASSEMBLY
MONDAY, JULY 18, 2022 – BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

Very Reverend and Reverend Fathers, Honorable Deacons, Venerable Monastics,
Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

GLORY TO JESUS CHRIST!

I am pleased to greet you as we convene the 61st annual Diocesan Assembly of the Diocese of Chicago and the Midwest. After these past few months, with their unforeseen special tests and challenges, it is a particular blessing to be able to gather together in person as a diocesan family for the first time after the Paschal repose and Bright Week funeral services of His Eminence Archbishop Paul. May his memory be eternal!

Our time together this afternoon has as its main purpose the fulfillment of statutory requirements for the work of the Diocese to continue. It is essentially a business meeting, but also so much more than that. The presentation of reports, the election of some to various roles of service, the review of stewardship and discussion of material concerns—everything is aimed at one thing, everything has one purpose: to enable the preaching of the Gospel, to proceed in good and proper order, to advance the work of the Church within the Diocese of the Midwest, and to equip the saints, for the preaching of the Gospel, the Good News of Salvation.

Coming together for this year’s annual assembly provides the blessed opportunity for us to manifest ourselves as an icon of the Church: clergy, monastics, and faithful gathered together and expressing the fullness of the local diocesan Church. We recognize that this will be fully expressed when we gather at the All American Council for Divine Liturgy with our Primate, bishops, clergy and faithful from across our North American Church.

ARCHBISHOP PAUL (of blessed memory)

As we begin this diocesan assembly, I want to first acknowledge what we are all feeling after the already-mentioned difficult months and special challenges that the Diocese has faced since the unexpected illness and repose of His Eminence Archbishop PAUL. Each one of you has your own memories of Archbishop Paul and of his ministry and service and of his passing from this life. I ask you to value and cherish those memories. Your lives were touched by his life, his archpastoral service, his illness and repose in many different ways, so it is throughout the Diocese. This Diocesan Assembly and the All American Council provide us with the blessed opportunity to be together and to share memories of Archbishop Paul and to recall his love and dedication to the Diocese, and to express gratitude to God for the archpastoral ministry that His Eminence exercised throughout the seven years of his episcopacy. It also serves as a time to look ahead and continue the work of the Church as he would want us to do.

I also wish to convey the gratitude of His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon and the Holy Synod to everyone within the Diocese of the Midwest -- Father Paul Jannakos, the diocesan administration, clergy, monastics, and faithful. The Bishops of the Church, who mourn the loss of a brother, thank you for your love, prayers, and the support you showered upon His Eminence during the difficult days of his illness, and then followed by his repose in the early morning hours of Holy Pascha. Thank you for everything you have continued to do in order to carry out the shared ministry of preaching, teaching, and living the Gospel, the good news of our salvation. This takes place through each one of you, in various roles and capacities throughout eleven states, in some of the largest American cities and also within the rural heartland of this nation. There are seventy-five communities that comprise this diocese, but one united faith and one united diocese.

MY ROLE WITHIN THE DIOCESE

I remember first hearing of the Archbishop's illness and beginning to pray for his health and recovery, as well as for the clergy and faithful of the Diocese. I also very clearly remember the phone call that I received from His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon in early March. His Beatitude informed me that Archbishop Paul's condition was worse than was expected and his diagnosis was certainly not that for which we had hoped. His Beatitude also informed me that the Archbishop had asked for a temporary administrator to be appointed to care for the diocese; that is when he

asked me to be that temporary administrator. To be of assistance to His Eminence and the Diocese, I accepted His Beatitude's request and then made immediate contact with Father Paul Jannakos who then quickly arranged a meeting with members of the diocesan administrative team. And so this began my pastoral relationship with you, the clergy and faithful of the Diocese of the Midwest, first as temporary administrator, then as administrator, and following the repose of Archbishop Paul, as Locum tenens of the Diocese.

Shortly after being appointed administrator, I traveled to Chicago to visit the archbishop in the hospital and to pray with him and for him. From that day, I began to learn how well loved the Archbishop was. And I learned how attentive so many of you were to him in his time of need. Clergy and faithful alike, particularly those in the Chicago area who, through their attention and care, represented all the rest of you from throughout the Diocese by visiting, praying with His Eminence, sending cards, and, most especially, keeping round-the-clock watch with him during his last days. During that last week, which we refer to as Great and Holy, he was never alone. Clergy and faithful alike kept vigil with him as he went to his own personal Golgotha and, eventually, the gates of Paradise were opened to him in the early hours of Pasch. This is a great and beautiful thing that is worthy of note. That he allowed you to enter into the most intimate moments of his life is a great tribute to his love for you. And that you accompanied him in his most needful of moments is also a great tribute to your love for him.

My next trip to the Diocese was on Bright Monday to assist with the preparation and details surrounding His Eminence's funeral. As for many of you, the days following the Archbishop's repose, I experienced the reality of Pascha in a new, vibrant, faith-filled, and more personal way. As we sang His Eminence from this life to the life of the Kingdom, the Church was at its finest. Mourning, yes. But mourning with Christian hope and with faith in the victory of Christ over death itself. The words of the sermons and eulogies that were delivered were deeply felt tributes to the Shepherd who led his flock so faithfully for as long as the Lord allowed him. And they provided us with encouragement and with the hope that comes to us from being baptized into the Lord's death and resurrection.

After the week of the funeral, I returned to Phoenix and continued to remain in regular, often daily, contact with Father Paul and members of the diocesan

administration. I returned again to Chicago for the 40th day observance and prayers which fell on the Feast of the Lord's Ascension. The Liturgy and Panikhida served that day were another beautiful tribute to the Archbishop. This trip also gave me a chance to learn more about the Diocese and to perform a broad range of administrative duties.

I was in Chicago again for the joyful celebration of the 130th anniversary of the Diocesan Cathedral. This trip provided the opportunity for me to meet the wider group of diocesan leadership, the diocesan deans and the diocesan council. Yes, the Diocese had lost its Shepherd and Father in Christ. But it was clear to me that the work of the Diocese, the work of the Church had never ceased. Priests have continued to minister and serve, to celebrate the Divine Services, to preach and to teach, parishes have continued their outreach, their educational programs, their works of charity. The life and work and mission of the Church in the Diocese has never ceased.

THE DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

Throughout these past few months, I have learned much about the Diocese of the Midwest. I have been involved on a daily basis in its workings, learning of its vision, coming to know of the various diocesan-wide and parish initiatives, ministries, and projects. Many of the clergy have reached out to me for various reasons, to provide me with information about their parishes or special ministries, to ask for counsel or various blessings on their pastoral work, etc. I have heard from our diocesan seminarians and am encouraged by their enthusiasm. As I continue to learn more, I have been particularly impressed by the various initiatives which have as an overall theme – “equipping the saints.”

I have come to know much about the Diocese during these past few months. And what I have come to know about the workings of the Diocese speaks of the highly valued work of all of the clergy and faithful of the Diocese, as well as the reality that the work of the Gospel has continued and will continue in the States of the Midwest because of the dedicated members of this Diocese.

On June 13, 2022, I sent a letter to His Beatitude concerning a Special Assembly for the nomination of an episcopal candidate (a letter which many of you have already seen and read), I wrote, among other things:

Your Beatitude, By your appointment, I have served as Administrator and then as locum tenens of the Diocese of Chicago and the Midwest since March 15, 2022. After these months of archpastoral and administrative responsibility, I am able to report to Your Beatitude that the Diocese is in good order on all levels of diocesan life. This is a credit to our brother and concelebrant, Archbishop Paul of blessed memory, as well as to the dedication of those who assisted him in carrying out his Archpastoral duties.”

I believe this wholeheartedly. Therefore, I can also report to this Annual Diocesan Assembly, that the Diocese of Chicago and the Midwest is in good order on all levels of diocesan life; in diocesan administration, in parish life, and in the various programs, projects, and initiatives that presently exist within the Diocese. We will have a chance to observe this in the various reports presented at this Assembly.

But this does not mean that our job is finished. There is still much to be done. And I believe the best way to honor Archbishop Paul and his predecessors and all the clergy and faithful who have gone before us in this Diocese is to continue what they began and to build upon what has been successful – and to re-vision the work of the Diocese: together. We do this by embracing the theme he had chosen for the various initiatives: *“Equipping the Saints – Uniting the Faithful of the Diocese of the Midwest to discover, live, and share the life in Christ.”* This theme is taken from the fourth chapter of Saint Paul’s epistle to the Church in Ephesus, verses 11-13. After exhorting the Ephesians to “walk worthy of their calling” and to “bear with one another in love” and to “maintain the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace,” he continues:

“And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-13).

I am grateful to be a witness to the good work already rooted into the life and mission of the Diocese of Chicago and the Midwest. I am grateful to Father Paul Jannakos, to the Deans and Diocesan Council, to the members of the diocesan administrative team, and to the clergy and faithful with whom I have had contact for their generous assistance and warm welcome.

SPECIAL ASSEMBLY

As you all know, immediately following this Diocesan Assembly, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon will convene a Special Assembly which will have one sole agenda item: the nomination of a candidate for the office of the Bishop of the Diocese of Chicago and the Midwest. The name of the nominee will then be presented to the Holy Synod for canonical election. Without being presumptuous, I want to say that, should the Holy Synod elect me to this role of service, you can be assured that I will serve and love you with my whole mind, heart, and soul... and with my entire life. I am not perfect, certainly. I am a sinner who struggles as anyone does. Therefore, I ask your prayers and assure you of mine as we move forward together.

As we begin this annual diocesan assembly, let us give thanks to Almighty God-Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the Triune God, for all the blessings we have received as a Diocese. Let us approach the Lord armed with this gratitude and join it with humility, asking His continued mercy upon us, upon our parish community, and upon all our dear and loved ones. And let us be eager for what is to come! May the year ahead truly be a year that is filled with grace and blessings from on high!

I will close with words from the Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Colossians (Colossians 3:12-16), words that should be for us a handbook for Church life, in our work within the Diocese of the Midwest, and for our personal, daily lives as well:

“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

Glory to Jesus Christ!