



Orthodox Church in America
DIOCESE OF THE MIDWEST

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Martyr Sozon of Cilicia
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ARCHPASTORAL MESSAGE OF THE MOST REVEREND DANIEL,
ARCHBISHOP OF CHICAGO AND THE MIDWEST,
FOR THE ANNUAL SEMINARIAN APPEAL 2023

“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep.”
(John 10:11)

Beloved Sons and Daughters in Christ,

In the well-known Gospel verse cited above, the Lord Jesus likens His relationship to His people to that of a shepherd to his sheep. He reveals himself as the Good and True Shepherd sent from God to care for the Flock, to protect and guide us in such a way that we are confident in His care. Because the Lord is our Shepherd, we have nothing to fear: as the Anaphora of Saint John Chrysostom reminds us, this Shepherd was not “given up ... [but] rather, gave Himself up for the life of the world.” He is the Good Shepherd who knows His own sheep, and lays His life down for them (cf. John 10:14-15).

Christ has continued His work as the Shepherd of our souls from one generation to the next. He guides us with His voice as He speaks to us in the Holy Gospels. As our Good Shepherd, He gathers us so that we can be nourished with the sacred nourishment of His most Pure Body and Precious Blood. He protects us as we turn to Him in our time of need. He leads us and calls us to follow Him into the Kingdom He has prepared for us. Yet to guide, gather, nourish, and protect us, the Lord calls others to continue His work of caring for and pasturing His Flock. These faithful shepherds, called to minister in the Name of Christ, are recognizable on the local level in the bishop together with his priests and deacons.

The Diocese of the Midwest has a long and blessed history of episcopal and priestly service. Throughout the past century and more, the Lord has provided faithful clergy to shepherd the faithful flock of God in our Diocese and across the vast expanse of the American Midwest. Some of these servant-shepherds are now listed among the saints: Saint Tikhon of Moscow, Saint John of Chicago, Saint Alexis of Minneapolis, Saint Raphael of Brooklyn, Saint Madarije of Libertyville, Saint Varnava the New Confessor, and Saint Nikolai of Žiča.

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In addition to these saints, we can add a long list of other holy bishops, priests, and deacons who have served the Lord and His Church faithfully, sacrificially, and with honor and dignity. Their efforts have borne fruit: they shepherded the flock to Christ the Door, through Whom the sheep have found salvation and green pastures (cf. John 10:9).

As we reflect upon the past service of clergy in our Diocese, we should also acknowledge the present. In our own day, the Lord continues to care for His flock in the faithful clergy who are now serving in our parishes and mission communities. And He also continues to provide for the future by calling individuals from our parishes to prepare themselves for ordained ministry. I am grateful to God for the eleven men who are now enrolled in the seminaries of the Orthodox Church in America: Saint Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary and Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. These seminarians are men from our own parish communities. They have heard the voice of the Shepherd to follow Him and to prepare themselves, through prayer, study, and service, to take their place as servant-shepherds caring for the flock of Christ.

These men, and others who will follow them, are to be educated in Orthodox Theology and formed in the image of the Good Shepherd so that, God willing, they will one day take their place in the history of the ordained ministry in the Diocese of the Midwest. They sacrifice and make special efforts to that end: most of them are married family men, and their wives and children sacrifice along with them. Just as each one of us needs the support of the clergy now serving in our parishes, so too we need to support our seminarians, so that they may one day stand at the Holy Altar, preach the Gospel, and offer pastoral care to us, our families, and our parishes. They need our fervent prayers, certainly, but they and their families also need our equally sacrificial financial support.

To that end, each September, our Diocese of the Midwest promotes a project known simply as "Support our Seminarians." During this month, I ask of all our clergy to increase our common liturgical prayers asking the Good Shepherd to raise among us more servant-shepherds to participate in His work of caring for the flock. I also invite each community and every individual not only to join in these prayers to Christ, the Door of the Sheep (cf. John 10:7), but to give generously to our Seminarians' Fund, as we seek to show our appreciation and support for our diocesan seminarians—present and future.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "D".

DANIEL

Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest