The Resolution of the Fall Clergy Retreat of the Diocese of Chicago and Mid-America (ROCOR)

Gathered together in the God-protected city of Des Plaines, IL for the annual Fall Clergy Retreat, the Clergy of the Diocese of Chicago and Mid-America greet the faithful in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ! We were blessed to once again conclude our fellowship meeting by celebrating the patronal feast of the diocesan Holy Virgin Protection Cathedral.

In reflecting upon the many blessings bestowed upon the diocese by our merciful God, we begin by thanking Archbishop Alypy for his 42 years of service to the Church and congratulate him on his recent retirement. We also congratulate His Eminence Archbishop Peter on his elevation to ruling hierarch of the Diocese of Chicago and Mid-America. May God grant them both health and salvation!

In light of recent events in the Orthodox world, we gratefully acknowledge and support the decision of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church and His Holiness Patriarch Kyrill to not participate in the recent Council in Crete. As noted in a statement of the Synod of ROCOR issued prior to the council, some of the documents presented at the council contained elements that were troubling or confusing from both a dogmatic and canonical standpoint. As several local Churches were not present and did not assent to the proceedings and decisions of the council, the approved documents and final statement of the council have manifestly not been accepted by the whole Church and cannot be considered binding upon all.

Special thanks is due to our guest speakers at the retreat:

- Dr. John Michet, a local Orthodox therapist and counselor, gave a thoughtful, multi-faceted overview of contemporary pastoral realities faced by priests, the wounded healers. The presentation was helpful and inspiring, teaching principles of active listening, compassionate understanding, and the priest-penitent alliance necessary for the co-labor of salvation. He challenged all of us to consider whether we are spiritually sleepwalking or truly alive in Christ, and to continually renew our minds and hearts in relation to ourselves, to God, and to others around us.

- Archpriest John Baker of Christ the Savior Church (OCA) gave a small group presentation on Missionary Parishes, describing the challenges faced by his parish in the growth process, lessons learned along the way, and the ongoing blessing of their labors by God. We urge the faithful to maintain a missionary outlook toward friends, family, and neighbors who are outside the Church, drawing them to the Faith by living as true witnesses and icons of Christ.

- David Batrich of the Serbian Church gave a presentation on Stewardship, in which he taught a model of parish stewardship that involves each member contributing their time, talents, and treasure for the good of the church and for their own salvation. This view of stewardship is a holistic approach to parish support and participation that can be practiced by every member with any means. We encourage the faithful of the diocese to be active stewards. Special attention should be given to building up the St. John Kochurov Society on these foundational principles.

As His Eminence Archbishop Peter reiterated by instructional letter to the assembled clergy: "Our clergymen and monastics are not to engage in political speech. ... [P]olitical speech is inappropriate for a clergyman/monastic. Apostle Paul instructed us that we should pray for our civil authorities and armed forces, as we do at each of our Divine Services, and trust that the Lord will guide them in their duties." While the Church thus separates itself from politics, it is not beholden to or fearful of the political process, and it continues to support and affirm the traditional moral values of the Faith which endure for all ages and are not effected or overturned by political parties and platforms, or by popular electoral outcomes.

We ask our faithful to continue in their spiritual and material support for the suffering faithful in Ukraine and the Middle East, beseeching God to bring an end to the suffering and bloodshed, and to restore peace to His people.