

Resolution of the Pastoral Retreat of the Diocese of Chicago & Detroit
9/22 March, 2006
Holy 40 Martyrs of Sebaste

Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given me, that they may be one as We are. John 17:11

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit!

We, the clergy of the Diocese of Chicago and Detroit, having gathered at the Holy Virgin Protection cathedral church for the feast of the Holy Forty Martyrs of Sebaste, have held our pastoral conference, and we thank Christ, the Chief Shepherd, for His great mercy which He has poured out upon His Holy Church, and upon our Diocese of Chicago and Detroit.

Having offered up our prayers before the Throne of the Lord of Glory, for “the good order of our Church”, and having asked God for “the Spirit of wisdom and reason... the Spirit of the fear of God... the Spirit of zeal for the glory of Thy Holy Name... for the edification of the Holy Church”, with fear and trembling we recognize the great responsibility that has been laid upon us, and especially on the 4th All-Diaspora Sobor along with the Sobor of Bishops to follow it. The All-Diaspora Sobor will examine the matters put before it, and reaching definite conclusions, will then present them for the consideration and final resolution of the Sobor of Bishops – this process is according to Church Tradition and the Holy Canons. The fruits of the Sobor will bring our flock either the common joy of reconciliation and healing, or the sorrow of alienation from our brethren in the Russian land and the withering away from the true vine of the Orthodox Church. This realization brings us a deeper sense of responsibility before God and His Church, and moves us to more diligent prayer.

We give thanks to God for His great mercy, manifested in recent years to the Russian Church, which has suffered so greatly. That mercy has affected both her outward and her inner spiritual order. Outwardly, this has been expressed in the opening and building of tens of thousands of churches and hundreds of monasteries, as well as in teaching and publishing activity and the rebirth of church art. The spiritual fruits are seen in the appearance of myrrh-streaming icons, in the abundance of young people striving in monastic life, and filling the monasteries and churches of Russia, in the presence of grace-filled, visionary elders who carry on the golden chain of holiness in Rus. These manifestations of piety in the People of God have a beneficial effect on the general development of church life in Russia. With joy, we observe the disappearance of those three obstacles to communion with the Church in Russia which were noted by our hierarchy in the past. 1) The choir of the New Martyrs and Confessors, headed by the Martyred Tsar was solemnly glorified by the Moscow Patriarchate. 2) A turning-away from Sergianism has been demonstrated by the document on the Social Concept, which was adopted by the Sobor of Bishops of the Patriarchate in the year 2000. His Holiness Patriarch Alexey has openly repented on several occasions for the actions of the Moscow Patriarchate during the times of the Godless Soviet Regime. 3) The issue of Ecumenism

also loses its edge in view of the obvious decrease in Moscow Patriarchate activity in the World Council of Churches. Common prayer with the heterodox has been stopped, and contacts take place only on the level of theological discussions and church diplomacy. None of these contacts have any influence on the faithful in Russia.

It is impossible in good conscience to deny the good changes that now are taking place in Russia, and in the heart of the Russian Church (for which our Russian Church Abroad has prayed since its inception). Failure to respond positively would mean deliberate denial of the truth. May this not come to pass with us!

Therefore, in the presence of God's Truth and as our pastoral conscience commands us, we, the clergy of the Diocese of Chicago and Detroit express our full and unconditional support of our deeply respected First Hierarch, Metropolitan Laurus, and the archpastors who are of one mind and wise in God, in their labors towards healing the wounds in the body of the Russian Church. At the same time, we grieve and pray for those of our brethren who in the light of current events are troubled, and for that reason suffer spiritually. Let us remember that the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad has always confessed herself to be an inseparable part of the Local Church of Russia, and for 80 years has offered up prayers, and still does today, that the Lord grant "peace and tranquility, love and steadfastness, and a swift reconciliation to His people... that united in one heart and mind, and in constant love" they might glorify the Lord. So be it, so be it!

Once more we call upon the flock of the Chicago and Detroit Diocese to increase their holy prayers for our Church, for our archpastors and for those who will labor on behalf of the Church at the May All-Diaspora and Bishops' Sobors. We wish that all may keep the fast of Great Lent, and joyously meet the coming, great feast of the Bright Resurrection of Christ.

Accepted Unanimously by the Assembled Clergy of the Diocese