

---

# Opening Homily

*Delivered by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius on July 21, 2002,  
at the Divine Liturgy opening the Thirteenth All-American Council.*

## **Fourth Sunday After Pentecost Romans 6:18-23; Matthew 8:5-13**

Dearly Beloved in the Lord:

Glory to Jesus Christ!

***"But thanks be to God, you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness" (Romans 6:17-18).***

These introductory verses to this morning's reading from Saint Paul's letter to the Romans help to provide a foundation as well as a focus for the All-American Council which will convene tomorrow.

Gathering as a Council, we manifest the local Church which is energized and healed at this Banquet of Immortality. Gathering as Council, we come to do the work of the of the Church so that Christ's ministry may continue here and now.

But, for these affirmations to be true we must identify ourselves personally and ecclesially as a people who "have been set free from sin" and have been transformed into "slaves of righteousness." Indeed, if we are to evaluate and ultimately build up the Church each of us must be willing to submit "from the heart to the standard of teaching" which has changed us and formed us into the living body of Christ. Thus, our coming together as a Council presupposes that our minds and hearts are open to the Grace of the Holy Spirit who imparts to us the Gospel of new and eternal life. Our convening as a Council presupposes a love for the Gospel—a love for the active and saving Word of God.

The work accomplished in the context of this Council can neither be perceived nor implemented in a confined or restrained manner. Our work here, as it impacts the life of the parish—as it impacts our life in Christ—is for the life of the world and its salvation. There is nothing exclusive or provincial about our work. For this reason we cannot lose sight of the missionary and evangelical thrust our work is to have. As the autocephalous Orthodox Church in America we are commissioned by Christ himself to free the society in which we live from the slavery of sin and to lead IT into the new life of righteousness. We are commissioned by Christ himself to interact with a complex culture that is still unfamiliar with the creative and liberating power of the Gospel.

Being slaves of righteousness and therefore faithful disciples of the crucified and risen Savior there can be no room within this Council for seeking selfish goals. Personal and even partisan motivation must be transcended by a humble yet zealous desire to build up the Body of Christ. All that we say and do within the context of this Council is to express our obedience to and love for the "standard of teaching" which never ceases to touch and transform our minds and hearts. Our words and actions cannot be motivated by a desire to divide nor can they be used as veils to deceive and mislead. If we are truly obedient to the teaching which has given us life then all will be said and done in love and truth. As slaves of Christ's righteousness we will not succumb to

standards that are less than or opposed to the way of the Gospel. “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:20). Being a people who seek to discern and do the will of God, we are to embrace one another out of love for Christ. We are to love one another for God loved us first. As a gathering of the Church our work at this Council is to be inspired and sealed by the Holy Spirit. For it is the Spirit who guides and renews a repentant mind and heart. It is the Spirit who enables us to walk upon the path of righteousness enabling us to become less so that Christ can become more.

Saint Paul teaches us that if we live by the Spirit we will walk by the Spirit. Following the way of the Spirit - the way of righteousness - “let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another” so that this Council may truly manifest the living Christ who, as our great High Priest, offers up every one and every thing to the Almighty Father. *Amen.*

## Homily

*Delivered by His Beatitude, Metropolitan Theodosius, on July 22, 2002, at his final Divine Liturgy as Primate of the Orthodox Church in America.*

### **Holy Myrrhbearer and Equal to the Apostles Mary Magdalene Romans 12:4-5,15-21; Matthew 12:9-13**

Dearly Beloved in the Lord:

Glory to Jesus Christ!

***"We, though many, are one body in Christ,  
and each of us a member of one another" (Romans 12:5)***

Today I stand before you for the last time as Primate of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church in America. At this moment many strong emotions stir within me. Yet, I am well aware that emotion should not form the foundation for a homily. And so, putting all emotions aside, I seek to use this homily as a way to stress that the election of my successor will be the most important act of this All-American Council.

The election of the Primate is essential for the very life and existence of an autocephalous Church. According to the sacred canons, it is the Primate-always acting in union and communion with his brother hierarchs of the Holy Synod-who bears the responsibility of overseeing-of supervising-the entire life of the Church. It is the Primate who calls the ruling diocesan bishops to meet in Council so that, as they work in oneness of mind and heart, the Church of Christ may be properly pastored by its shepherds. And it is the Primate who convenes this Council so that the people of God-bishops, priests, monastics, and all the faithful-may discern, obey, and implement the Will of God.

In the context of this eucharistic celebration, each of us must remember that the concept of an ecclesial election cannot be equated with the democratic process. On the contrary, the act of election must be perceived-must be understood-as the means by which the will of God is revealed. For this reason our minds and hearts must be purified, our minds and hearts must be opened to the Holy Spirit through whom the will of God is known and sustained. As I mentioned in my homily yesterday, personal and partisan motivations are to be transcended by a humble yet zealous desire to build up the living Body of Christ.

The election of the Primate impacts the entire life of the Orthodox Church sojourning in America. Therefore, as we prepare to discern and manifest the will of God we are to function as one body formed by the Holy Spirit. Not one of us stands alone or apart from the other. Not only are we dependant upon one another, but we are also responsible for one another. If the Holy Spirit is to act and if we are to function as the one Body of Christ, we must submit to one another out of reverence for the Lord who has died and risen for us. To achieve this ideal is by no means easy. But let me also stress that this ideal cannot be abandoned even for an instant. For when this ideal is abandoned, discerning and manifesting the will of God are replaced by concerns and motives that have nothing to do with the work of Christ no matter how often his name is mentioned or the Gospel is quoted.

We are one body in Christ. This Eucharist is a manifestation of that fundamental reality. Consequently, because we are one in Christ we are also members of one another. I am in you and you are in me. Together

we are in Christ who has commissioned us to be his Church in North America. By electing a new Primate we act as a people who, above all else, desire to be faithful to this sacred commission. By electing a new Metropolitan we embrace the missionary imperative of the Gospel which compels and challenges us to be the Church of Christ in this land.

Today a chapter in the history of our still-young Church is nearly completed. Today, by the Grace of the Holy Spirit, we will turn to a new page and begin writing a new chapter. Together, with our new Metropolitan, we will rededicate ourselves to the missionary legacy that is ours. Together, with our new Metropolitan, we will labor to overcome all the impediments that stifle the Orthodox presence on this continent: jurisdictional pluralism, sectarianism, ethnicism, and an intellectualism that is unable to understand and embrace the ascetical life of the Church. By electing a new Primate we will look to him as one to embrace us and to carry us. But we will also look to him as one to embrace and carry so that "no one will be overcome by evil but that evil will be overcome by God" (Romans 12:21).

At this Liturgy, as we enter into the important work of this Council, and in all our future common efforts on behalf of Christ's Holy Church, let us "commend ourselves and each other and all our life unto Christ our God" confident that the Lord who has begun this good work in us will bring it to completion on the day of Christ Jesus. *Amen.*

## **“HOLY CONVERSATION”**

*Archpriest Sergei Glagolev delivered this sermon at Sunday evening's Vesper Service, July 21, 2002, on this day, his 50th Anniversary to the priesthood.*

Glory be to Jesus Christ! In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

We are on the Eve of the 13th All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America. After 25 years, we are on the Eve of Metropolitan Theodosius' last Primatial Liturgy. We are on the Eve of Metropolitan Theodosius' retirement, and the Eve of the Election of a new Primate.

Part of the preparation that has brought us to this sacred thresh-hold tonight were the prayers we have added to the Litany of Frevant Supplication these many weeks up to now. We should sum up these prayers as we prepare for Holy Eucharist tomorrow. for the opening of the 13th All-American Council and the election of the new Metropolitan.

We greet one another with the festal shout: “Christ is in our midst!” - and indeed, He truly is and always shall be - according to Christ's unshakable promise; for our Lord most assuredly proclaimed, “where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there I am in the midst of them” (MT 18.20). Above all else, it is this promise of Christ's PRESENCE that must be realized, in our worship, in our elections, in our relationship to each other, in our deliberations. For our Lord also said: “Without Me, you can do nothing...”

“The Grace of the Holy Spirit has assembled us today!” This Verse of the Feast of our Lord's Entry into Jerusalem is the rallying cry of every assemble of Orthodox Faithful, and you will hear it again and yet again over the next few days. LISTEN! did not choose to come here; you were chose (JN 15.16). What, then, is expected of those who have received such a chosen, holy, and high calling? To begin with, “HOLY CONVERSATION” (as the preparatory prayers put it). What is this “holy conversation:” like? Child-like, without being childish - and through repentance, a return to innocence. Truthful, without being judgemental. Knowing, without being cunning - in a word, “conversation without guile”.

Let the Holy Spirit Who assembled us in the first place guide our hopes and dreams and deliberations with faith, and with the knowledge of His will for us.

In the Anaphora of St. Basil the Great - in the Eucharistic recital of our Salvation History, St. Basil thanks God - “eucharisto” - eucharist - that in every generation our loving God send us leaders, teachers, prophets, apostles and saints to unite us one to another and lead us to the knowledge of God's truth in this world, and in the world to come, life everlasting.

In our elections and deliberations, let there be no lack of docility to the Holy Spirit Who brought us here. “Docility:” that which is fitting; teachable, easily led and managed toward truth.

We must be spiritually aware that God is in this place, that the Spirit of God would guide our minds and hearts - so that what we do here this week may seem good to the Holy Spirit, and to us (Acts 15.28); and God, Who knows the heart, would acknowledge us here, giving us the Holy Spirit just as He did at hte first Council in Jerusalem, in the Book of Acts.

Ultimately, the Christian life is lived as a joyous Hymn of Thanksgiving. Glory to Thee, our God, for all things! Those of us who are “seniors” among you, gathered in Montreal 25 years ago, and that Council received the Most Blessed Theodosius as our Metropolitan. I didn't know it then, but I know it now (I'm older now) - that the Finger of God moved the direction of that election. Twenty-five years later, I thank God for Metropolitan Theodosius, and for the humility that would allow him to subject himself to the humility of this most blessed, holiest and highest Office of Metropolitan.

Beloved Metropolitan Theodosius! We will not forget you - for we are taught that to love is to remember. So to love and remember you is to trust that Lord our God will call forth for His flock - yet again - a true shepherd of wisdom and strength, to care for, to unite, to lead in loving service, to witness in America. We are not memorializing an end. We are celebrating a new beginning. For, in the end, our Lord proclaims, “ Behold, I am making all things new!” (Rev 21.5)

Truly, Christ is in our midst!