

Closing Remarks

Delivered by His Beatitude, Metropolitan HERMAN, at the closing Plenary Session of the 14th All-American Council, July 22, 2005

Once again on behalf of my brothers on the Holy Synod of Bishops, I want to express our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to all those on the Preconciliar Commission, and all the clergy and the faithful who have participated in this All-American Council.

The deliberations themselves have come to an end. However, our work is just beginning. As to whether or not it is going to be successful, that will be proven once we come for review again at the next All-American Council. There is no question that many good things have been discussed and many good suggestions have been made by clergy and laity alike. These are the things that need to be put into action. Nothing comes about unless we are all interested in making sure that it is going to take place. Just as there was that concern with regard to unity, be assured that for as long as I have been a member of the Holy Synod, that has always been the greatest concern of the Holy Synod – Unity in North America. However, sometimes we learn quickly that this requires a great deal of patience, and we need to endure much as we continue in that process.

I know from personal experience, and I am sure that Fr. Leonid Kishkovsky can attest to this also, that in our desire for unity, and in our desire to make contact, locally, with the local Orthodox hierarchs of other jurisdictions, as well as my contacts abroad, in which I have met representatives of every Patriarchate, you can only imagine what we go through when you are standing there in the midst of 50 or 100 hierarchs, and all of a sudden you see confusion in one corner, because someone, some representative, has said, “If Metropolitan Herman is serving, we are not serving.” Now we could get upset, we could run away and say we never want to participate in such a thing again, but we don’t. We continue in those conversations, and sooner or later, not in our time, but in God’s time, it is going to take place.

Last night, standing as we were preparing to go into the banquet, I had a conversation with the representative from the Church Abroad. Both of us stood in amazement. Father Vladimir Malchenko expressed it so nicely when he said, “Who would ever think that I would be able to be here at this All-American Council, at the banquet.” And I agreed with him. And yet, conversations have been going on for a long time. My first conversation with the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia was the year that I was elected as a bishop. But we don’t give up. There is disappointment on our side; there is disappointment on their side. But we will continue to work in that direction knowing that the Lord witnesses to all that is taking place. He blesses our good intentions and sooner or later He is going to resolve it in such a manner that it will be pleasing for all of us and most importantly it will be pleasing for His Church.

I know that there has been conversation that the bishops have not “participated.” Maybe vocally they did not. But be assured that the bishops are well aware of everything that has taken place. We have heard. And really it is a compliment to all of you that we have not stood up because, rest assured, if you would have been doing the wrong thing, every bishop would be standing up and then all of a sudden all of you would be standing up and saying, “When can we, the clergy and laity, express ourselves?”

We have heard everything that you have expressed. Perhaps we did not all care for some of those things. But everything will be discussed by all of us at our very next meeting. We have already

discussed some of those things and be assured that all of us support every good intention that all of you have, regardless of what it is. It is our desire to do whatever is possible to build up Christ's Holy Church and especially to have unity of all the Churches. I must tell you, that there is no question that the local hierarchs of the different jurisdictions in North America – they all want it. But their hands are tied. They cannot be the ones who are going to make the decision. They must be obedient just like we ask all of you to be obedient to your hierarch. They must also be obedient to their First Hierarch. And it is not going to be until they are all convinced that the Church in America is ready to be one autocephalous Church.

During my last conversation - and on more than one occasions - with Patriarch Aleksy, even though a Greek Metropolitan from Constantinople was present, the Patriarch said, "Don't worry whether or not you are acknowledged by all the Churches. Continue to do your own good work. Let them see all that is taking place and in the right time, in God's time, it will take place." And I believe in this very much. I think that all of us need to work in that direction even though there is disappointment, even though we would like to have more gatherings such as we had at Ligonier. But sometimes you cannot call such a gathering because it may turn out for the worst and not the better. So, sometimes you have to move very slowly.

Again, we thank all of you for all of your good endeavors not only here, but that you take back to your parishes all those things you have witnessed here, share them with all the people you come in contact with in your parish so that we can continue to do the work of the Lord.

In closing, I would ask that you all stand as we sing "Memory Eternal" on the anniversary of the repose of the late Protopresbyter John Meyendorff.