

April 26, 2009
Thomas Sunday

To: The Reverend Clergy and Members of the Orthodox Church in America

Dear Reverend Fathers and Dearly Beloved,

CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

Truly we have tasted the sweetness of following God's commandments in this Paschal season! Having heard the Gospel, we cannot be silent. Having beheld the Resurrection, we cannot be still. No, we must guard this holy light by our zealous love for God and by works of mercy and compassion for our neighbor.

While many of us live in relative comfort, the reality is that many in our country and even in some of our parishes are facing desperation. One in fifty children in the US are homeless, evicted families are living in tents, millions are jobless, and even more feel hopeless. It is for this reason that I make this appeal to you to support a new ministry called **FOCUS North America**.

FOCUS stands for **Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve** and is *entirely* dedicated to ministering to those most in need here at home. Taking its mission from the Gospel of the Sunday of Last Judgment (Matt. 25:35-6), FOCUS North America expresses Christ's love for those who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, sick or in prison by providing Food, Occupation, Clothing, Understanding and Shelter.

When you donate to FOCUS North America your gift will be put to work immediately to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, and care for those hurting in North America through Orthodox Christian social action ministries of every jurisdiction. Ongoing work will include **educating** the faithful, **supporting** existing domestic Orthodox social action ministries, **initiating** new Orthodox ministries of compassion and **collaborating** with volunteers nation-wide to transforming lives in Christ. To learn more I encourage you to visit the internet website: www.FocusNorthAmerica.org

I ask you to be generous in helping this new Orthodox Christian ministry. I know that you are already supporting your parish and other worthy causes, but I hope that, out of the abundance that the Lord has given you and according to your means, you will also support this important initiative.

May the Lord reward your generosity and may He bless the ministry of FOCUS North America, so that we too will someday hear the longed-for words: "Come, you blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world, ... Inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to me" (*Matthew 25.34,40*).

With love in the Risen Lord,



✠ JONAH

Archbishop of Washington and New York,
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

