

**His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon's Introduction to
Of What Life Do We Speak:
*Four Pillars for the Fulfillment of the Apostolic Work of the Church***

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

This year, we celebrate the 225th anniversary of the arrival of the Valaam missionaries to Alaska. Next year will mark the 50th anniversary of the glorification of St. Herman, one of the very first acts of the Orthodox Church in America, which was granted the prophetic gift of autocephaly in 1970.

Over these 225 years, the seeds for a local Church in North America have been planted and watered by the prayers and labors of many saints and faithful Christians. It is a great treasure that we have inherited and we should give thanks to God for this. But we should also be mindful of our responsibility as the guardians of this gift and our calling to nurture and increase what has been handed down to us.

At last year's All-American Council in Saint Louis, I offered a broad outline of a vision by which we, as the Orthodox Church in America, might accomplish this, through my small booklet, *Of What Life Do We Speak: Four Pillars for the Fulfillment of the Apostolic Work of the Church*. My intention in publishing this work was to provide, not a comprehensive handbook, but a tool for the interactive involvement of all members of the Church, whether on the diocesan, institutional, parish, or individual level.

To help with this, we have prepared a study guide for the Four Pillars which you may find posted on our website. I know of several parishes that have already begun to explore the Four Pillars in their parish educational programs and I hope that this Study Guide can assist more to do the same. Broader programs, such as a symposium in May of this year, are also being planned.

I would invite all of you, individually or collectively, to reflect upon the vision and the enduring goals that are proposed in the four pillars, to make use of the study guide that has been prepared, or to establish your own creative approach to the questions and challenges that confront us today as the Church in North America.

As we look towards the future, we must also be sure to incorporate and build upon the experience of our beloved saints and forebears, examining ourselves honestly with respect to both the successes and challenges of the past. The coming season of Great Lent is the perfect opportunity to both enter into this self-examination and to be spiritually strengthened and enlightened for the work that lies ahead.

May the intercessions of our Venerable Father Herman comfort and strengthen us on our Lenten journey and on our path together as the local Orthodox Church in North America.



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