

November 1, 2012  
Ss Cosmas and Damian

Clergy of the Carolinas Deanery gathered recently to prayerfully discuss the various issues and “reported scandals” that plague our church. We, the undersigned, offer to those interested the following reflections.

In the 1700 years since St. Constantine’s conversion (commemorated Oct 27) scholars have documented the transformation of the ecclesial structure of the church from a balanced hierarchical/conciliar model of church governance as seen in seed form in the Acts of the Apostles, to a despotic model of a legalized state and/or imperial model. We acknowledge that the latter has historically proved to be a tragedy for the Church and a hindrance to the Gospel.

Since autocephaly, the Metropolitans of the Orthodox Church in America have demonstrated various forms of primacy, and the change from primate to primate has left a persistent vacuum leading to a crisis of self-identity. We are indebted to Metropolitan Jonah for his explication of “Primacy” in his early archpastoral statements and written articles. We profoundly regret his inability to incarnate a balanced vision of primacy during his tenure. At present, we must take him at his own word with respect to his resignation and his stated reasons for it. We thank Vladyka Jonah for his humble witness in so doing.

We now await with some trepidation the election of a new Metropolitan in Parma, Ohio. We pray that the Synod will have the wisdom to choose one with whom to clarify our Church’s identity and en flesh the Apostolic vision of Church governance and our Lord’s Kingdom come. We concur with many voices that the Orthodox Church in America is at a precarious point; a new Metropolitan ought not be offered up as a sacrificial correction for the past. We must instead seek God’s will for our Church so that we might identify and repent of exactly how we have missed the mark. We feel that our failure to do so might prove disastrous for our church.

We thank Archbishop Nikon for his assurance of the Synod’s work in this arena, and emphatically support the Synodal encyclicals [On Marriage](#), [On Spiritual Life in the Church](#), and [On Autocephaly](#), as well as the Synod’s unfailing affirmation that marriage is a sacramental union between one man and one woman united in God for their mutual salvation. We are likewise grateful to the treasurer of the OCA and those who work with her, for their fruitful and remarkable labors in normalizing and properly ordering our church’s finances.

To further our own pastoral efforts and remain faithful to the Gospel, we have committed to one another to reject unsubstantiated rumors and anonymous or pseudonymous information of any sort, pertaining to our Church. We recall the witness of the holy martyrs who offered not simply their names, but their very lives, for the sake of the Gospel. We also lament the great amounts of time, talent, and treasure which are often squandered by those of us who engage in Internet gossip and unsubstantiated rumor-mongering, to the perpetual neglect of personal repentance, external evangelization, and the love of others. We are repeatedly convicted by our Lord’s urging to remove the plank in our own eye without concern for the speck in our brother’s.

With St Paul, we continue to charge ourselves to give no opportunity for scandal to the world, save the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Finally, we offer our filial love and support to the Holy Synod as we re-affirm our desire for the Synod’s continuing affirmation of these Apostolic, and therefore unchanging, basics of Christian faith and love.

The VRev Fr Marcus Burch  
The VRev Fr Thomas Moore  
The VRev Fr Jacob Kulp  
The Rev Fr Edward Rommen  
The Rev Fr John Parker  
The Rev Fr Christopher Foley

The Rev Peter Robichau  
The Rev Fr Paul Coats  
The Rev Fr Thaddaeus Werner  
The Rev Fr James Bozeman  
The Rev Fr Timothy Yates  
The Rev Dn Mark Barna

The Rev Dn George Hattle