CLERGY LAITY ASSEMBLY 2024
Contemplate. Reconcile. Unify.

March 4 – 5, 2024

Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center –Dunlap, CA

Minutes

Monday, March 4, 2024

Convening of Assembly — **His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos**

Opening Prayer Service at 1:45 PM — **His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros**

Archpastoral Message — **His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros**

Archbishop Elpidophoros expresses his joy to be with us in person for the Assembly at Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center, the visionary initiative of Metropolitan Anthony of blessed memory.

The theme for this Assembly - Contemplate, Reconcile, and Unify – addresses our preparation for Holy and Great Lent. Contemplation is not passive but is *theoria* - the active beholding of the mystery of God, His magnitude and magnanimity. Reconciliation, or *katalagi*, also involves an active meaning, one of exchange and personal encounter whereby God reconciled the world to Himself by Christ and planted in us the message of reconciliation, calling on us to be emissaries on behalf of Christ. *Cf.* II Cor. 5:19-20. It is a high calling that we can fulfill by the intentions we bring and the dispositions we maintain in our everyday lives. Finally, Unity is exemplified by our Lord Jesus Christ and his Crucifixion. For the orientation of the Cross is not only vertical, rising to Heaven but also horizontal, stretching from the thief who denied him to the thief who confessed him. His love for us creates Church unity and is a measure of our love. Without love, there can be no Church. Love for God and one another brings us together. *Cf.* 1 John 4:20.

Archbishop Elpidophoros encourages us to pursue the virtuous activities of contemplation, reconciliation and unification to gain immeasurably God's gifts. He looks forward to our work during this Assembly in preparation for the coming National Clergy Laity Congress of our Archdiocese this July in San Diego.

Keynote Address — **His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos**

Metropolitan Gerasimos expresses his gratefulness to all attendees of the Clergy-Laity Assembly for arranging schedules and taking the opportunity to reconnect with one another to strengthen our bonds of unity and to grow our Church and parishes. He welcomes Archbishop Elpidophoros who makes history with his presence for the first time at this Assembly. He welcomes Fr. Nicholas Louh from St. John the Divine Church in Jacksonville, Florida. Fr. Louh will address the spiritual battle of division in the world today and the practical ways of strengthening our relationship with God and one another.

The Church is a prophetic voice of the kingdom of God, of peace and goodwill among all people. Yet, over the last few years, love has waned in public discourse which has become a more dangerous place. The message of the

Church often becomes the target of those who disagree. Most of this discord happens on social media where there is a negative trend in the Church these days, leading to black and white thinking, social polarization and divisions among people as citizens and Church members. Our time together at this Assembly is meant to take steps to address and overcome this obstacle.

The theme of Contemplate, Reconcile, and Unify is inspired by St. Paul's words in his letter to the Colossians, 1:19-20, and St. Basil's homily 16:10 on this passage. After peace, seek then a release from the troubles of this world. Possess a calm mind, a tranquil and unconfused state of soul, which is neither agitated by the passions nor drawn aside by false doctrines. Reconciliation to God and one another through Christ is an event, an ongoing process in our sacramental life. Yet, reconciliation and unity do not require uniformity or conformity. Rather, dialogue and reconciliation are directives and commandments that must lead to constructive development among our parish ministries with the support and direction of the Metropolis ministries. With the Archbishop's presence, we can learn from one another at all levels and walk as one body in Christ.

Ministries of each parish and each Metropolis create the ecosystem in which each member can learn how to live as an Orthodox Christian. And each parish and Metropolis customizes its ministries to meet the local needs and concerns of its families. For example, thanks to the efforts of Fr. John Bakas, Mr. Nick Kossaras donated the land many years ago for a youth camp which became the Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center. And we must always cope with the vast geography of our Metropolis. Twenty years ago when he began his service as our Metropolitan, His Eminence identified three areas of ministry to emphasize and develop: Family Wellness, Continuing Clergy Education, and Developing the skills of lay leadership in our parishes. The Metropolis also has revitalized the Missions and Evangelism Ministry. Clergy and faithful had identified these areas as having the most pressing needs. Family Wellness has developed a grogram of clergy couple retreats with shared resources between the Metropolis and the Archdiocese Center for Family Care as well as programs for non-clergy couples and families including podcasts, webinars, regional workshops and town hall meetings. Continuing Clergy Education has utilized the model of small regional koinonia groups, workshops and presentations. This Missions and Evangelism Ministry not only helps organize new parishes but helps parishes become more welcoming, outreaching, receptive and service oriented to new people.

Archon Steve Tibbs, coordinator of the Metropolis' Orthodox Parish Leadership Ministry, will present the latest developments for parish health, growth and revitalization with the new "2 by 2 program," offering mentoring to two individuals from each parish in the Metropolis. Dedicated ministry leaders will offer tangible resources available to us and our parishes at this evening's Ministry Pavilion in the Alex and Faye Spanos Faith and Heritage Center. We will review the Metropolis finances and approve the 2024 Metropolis Budget. Our Metropolis is honored to host the 47th Biennial Clergy Laity Congress this summer in San Diego, chaired by Archon Isidoros and Maria Garifalakis and Archon Gerry and Jeannie Ranglas and coordinated by Kristen Bruskas with our Metropolis staff.

Metropolitan Gerasimos encourages us not to allow ourselves to fall prey to the divisiveness of this age. Where there is discord, we must work to find reconciliation and unity. He expresses his gratitude to everyone for coming to the Assembly.

Designation of Presiding Officer and Secretary — **His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos**

His Eminence appoints Archdeacon Justin Bosl to serve as the Presiding Officer of the Assembly and Honorable Connie Contes (ret.) to serve as the Secretary of the Assembly.

Introduction of Metropolis Council, Archdiocesan Council, and Audit Committee Candidates — **His Grace Bishop Ioannis**

His Grace welcomes His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros to the Assembly and notes that the Archbishop has joined us in the Metropolis eight times in the last year. His Grace introduces all candidates for Metropolis Council, Archdiocesan Council and Audit Committee.

Break until 3:00 PM

Featured Presentation: Contemplate. Reconcile. Unify. ***(Part 1)*** **Rev. Dr. Nicholas Louh**

God loves us all. It is difficult to grasp God's love for humanity. We are God's masterpiece, created anew in Christ Jesus. He has a vision for our life, family, Church and World. And He gave us Free Will to make choices.

The Devil is real, has power, and has been sowing seeds of division since creation. In the 3600 years of recorded history, only 286 years without war. More than 3.6 billion people have died because of wars. He offers many examples of how our country and churches are divided. The Devil rejoices when families are divided, when we are remembering offenses against one another, and when the Church is divided.

We must make every effort at complete unity, to keep the unity of the Holy Spirit through the bond of peace with one another. Where there is division, God does not dwell. Yet, we cannot show or give unity to others unless and until we are connected to God. We must crown God as the priority in our lives. Yet, he offers many examples of what we are crowning as our god instead of God. In today's lifestyle, many people are chasing a phantom, filled with stressfulness which separates us from our faith and Church, from one another and from God's true purpose for our lives. There is a desire to acquire material things. People are more tired. And when we are tired, we sin more, are emotionally inconsistent and cannot hear God's voice. Although the Devil cannot make us sin, he can make us BUSY (Bound Under Satan's Yoke).

We must focus on slowing the pace of our lives, on the concept of "less is more," on what matters most, on stillness and intentional quiet time each day. We must establish it and then guard it. We must practice the Rule of 15 – pray 5 minutes daily, read the Bible 5 minutes daily, and live your faith for 5 minutes (e.g. read a daily devotional, listen to Christian Music, control yourself). You cannot have a relationship with someone you are not speaking with, including God. The greatest distance to travel is 22 inches, from the knees to the floor to kneel. Where there is no prayer and fasting, there are the demons. Be active in the Church. You cannot delegate this responsibility to anyone else.

Orthodox Parish Leadership Ministry **Archon Steve Tibbs**

Fundamental reason for this ministry is to assist parishes in bringing people to Christ. We want our parishes' eyes to be on Christ rather than on the budget. We can do this by providing tools, materials and consulting. Survey of clergy a few years ago revealed a preference for a PC of committed Christians rather than people really skilled in business. If we have 12-15 warriors for Christ, we can figure out and train the business issues such as strategic planning, leadership development, capital campaigns and feasibility studies.

Archon Tibbs presents the latest developments for parish health, growth and revitalization with the new "2 by 2 program," offering mentoring to two individuals from each parish in the Metropolis. He welcomes the expanded team of new ministry members with varied skill sets and best practices experience, and he discusses the expanded number of offerings and emerging programs including new resources for planned giving. He introduces Melpomeni Murdakes who is the new Director of Planned Giving for the Archdiocese.

Great Vespers at the Monastery of the Theotokos the Life-Giving Spring

7:00 p.m. **Dinner**

8:00 p.m. **Elections, Ministry Pavilion and Dessert Reception** **Spanos Faith and Heritage Center**

Conclusion of Day 1

Tuesday, March 5, 2024

8:00 a.m. **Hierarchical Divine Liturgy** **Monastery of the Theotokos the Life-Giving Spring**
Twenty-Year Memorial for
+His Eminence Metropolitan Anthony

10:30 a.m. **Brunch**

11:15 a.m. **Group Photo**

11:30 a.m. **Continuation of Assembly**

Metropolis Philoptochos Report **President Jeannie Ranglas**

The Mission of Metropolis Philoptochos is deeply rooted in the principles of love, compassion and service. It is a sacred commitment to aid and uplift those in need within our communities and beyond, offering helping hands with a touch of kindness.

President Ranglas' report briefly reviews the good works projects of Metropolis Philoptochos:

-Kids N' Cancer and Camp Agape – transforming the environment for children afflicted with cancer and their families.

-Bishop Anthony Student Aid Endowment Fund – our Metropolis Philoptochos initiated this ministry to offer assistance to seminarians with the foresight of Metropolitan Anthony of blessed memory. Money is raised through the Light the Path Luncheon and different chapters, which has allowed offering over $170,000 to our seminarians. Philoptochos presidents from all Metropolises will be attending the HCHC graduation this year

-Diakonia projects – partners in service with YAL and FDF helping the homeless, feeding the hungry and supporting veterans. Partners with youth to build 25 bikes and helmets for youth.

-More projects reflected in the report.

President Ranglas expresses her gratitude to His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos and the clergy for their unwavering dedication and commitment in guiding us with leadership, wisdom and compassion.

Approval of Minutes from the 2023 Assembly

Motion passed, made by Fr. Peter Salmas and seconded by Archon Paul Sogotis, to approve the minutes of the 2023 Clergy Laity Assembly.

Report of Metropolis Council **Vice President Archon Isidoros Garifalakis**

Metropolis Council serves the Church as the voice of the Assembly delegates. The Council meets quarterly, and its executive committee meets monthly. The Council has worked hard to prepare the 2024 budget and is committed to developing and enhancing Metropolis ministries as well as assessing effectiveness and best practices for the benefit of the parishes. The Council met Sunday evening before the opening of the Assembly with His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos who challenged each of us to answer what is the biggest opportunity and the biggest challenge we face as a Metropolis. We look forward to summarizing and sharing the answers and ideas put forth by the Council members.

Faith Forward Stewardship Program – these donations support the operating budget of the Metropolis to advance its good works. He encourages everyone to consider becoming a steward of the Metropolis and to visit the website for further information and online donations. He urges the delegates to review the online reports of the Metropolis committees, ministries and staff, provided for this Assembly.

Vice President Archon Garifalakis is always available to listen to questions and provide answers.

Archdiocese Finance Committee Update **Archon George Psefteas**

Archdiocesan financials highlights:

- Net increase in assets (equity) estimated at ~$928k (without restriction)
- L100 grants suspended for 2024 but fully paid for 2023 commitments; when resumed, Archdiocese has requested that grants be given first to HCHC ($1MM) and Metropolis Camping Ministries ($30k per Metropolis)
- Archdiocesan Camping Ministries Fundraising provides ~$400k for camping Ministries:
    - $100k earmarked for Ionian Village, spots open for IV 2024
    - $20k earmarked for each Metropolis only for local Metropolis camps, needs based
- Orthodox Health Plan review underway; expecting positive changes in 2024-2025
- Archdiocesan 501(c)(3) IRS Letter of Determination covers all participating parishes; submit parish information through Metropolis Chancellor's office.
- 403(b) Defined Contribution Plan proceeding as envisioned; intent is to provide a pension vehicle for those ineligible to participate in the Archdiocesan Pension Benefits Plan (e.g., parish employees). Plan is non-contributory; parishes may contribute towards employees' retirement funds if they choose.
    - Summary Plan Descriptions expected in March 2024
    - Administration at parish level; more information forthcoming.
- Metropolis of SF 2024 TC prepay (1% reduction): 7 parishes for $230,000+; 80 parishes in Archdiocese for $2M.
- Metropolis of SF 2024 PBF prepay: 11 parishes for $127,690 (highest $$ and second highest # of parishes after Atlanta
- Clergy Pension Defined Benefits Plan is healthy and current obligations are fully funded; overall underfunding gap is being closed by additional contributions; subject to market returns and interest rates.
- 2025 TC Program being developed for distribution to parishes.
    - Parishes must submit complete financials; on average, only 65% submitted balance sheets last year; SF led with 85% submission.
    - Parish zoom calls, similar to last year, will be set for later this year to answer questions and dispel myths for parish reps filling out forms.
- Updated Archdiocesan Regulations
    - Clarifying requirements for Parish and Metropolis Audit Committees
    - Parish Council members participation

    - Internal audits to cover pastoral discretionary funds under control of the priest.
- Archdiocesan 2025-2026 Budget being developed for proposal and ratification at 2024 CLC in San Diego.

Archon George Psefteas responds to questions from members of the Assembly including Fr. Chris Flesoras and Fr. Photios Dumont.

Metropolis 2023 Financial Report **Michael Syrengelas, Treasurer**

Actual/Budget Report:

- Total revenues were 7% higher that budget due to Archdiocesan Total Commitment sharing and Employment Retention Credit (ERC) allocation to the Metropolis, partially offset by lower Faith Forward donation revenue (75% of target objectives) in a year where our faithful also supported our Gala event.
- Overall Operating & Administrative Expenses exceeded the 2023 budget by ~$39k due to "gifts" line, unbudgeted funding of the Clergy Family Initiative for $50,000, and payroll and insurance expenses.
- Spending from all ministries and programs (without restriction) below budget by $229,817 due to lower YAL Conference ministry expenses and lower Youth Office expenses.
- Overall in 2023, the Metropolis had a net increase in net assets from operations of $65,676.

Statement of Financial Activities:

- Key message for 2023 is that the Metropolis experienced a net increase in net assets of $268,087 due to both the net Gala receipts and Faith Forward donations in 2023 as well as the Archdiocesan Total Commitment and Employment Retention Credit sharing, despite the increased expenses mentioned above.

Statement of Financial Position:

- Total Assets have increased by approximately $355k since the beginning of 2023 due to Gala income, both cash receipts and pledges receivable, and a large receivable from the Ranch.
- Ranch receivable increased by an additional $40k to just over $321k, which then was reduced to $305k by partially offsetting third and fourth quarter Ranch support against the overall receivable.
- The Archdiocese received confirmation of approval of the ERC claims, allowing the Metropolis to record a receivable of $66,815 in December as 2023 revenue for its allocation from the Archdiocese once funds are received from the IRS.

Statement of Cash Flows:

- Reflective of above highlights, Metropolis cash balances have decreased by $57,017 since the beginning of 2023, largely due to higher receivables from the Ranch and Gala pledges in addition to cash payments for general operations. Despite raising more than $1,000,000 between Faith Forward and the Gala, $536,980 of Metropolis cash is currently tied-up in receivables from Faith Forward, Gala, and Ranch payroll receivables.
- Cash on hand of $1.7 million.

Michael Syrengelas and Archon George Psefteas respond to questions from members of the Assembly.

Metropolis Audit/Engagement Status **Archon George Psefteas**

- Metropolis of SF decided upon a review engagement; slightly less onerous than an audit; any discovered shortcomings easier to address.
- Ongoing review engagement continues for 2019 and 2020 financials; necessitated addressing 5 years of financial history prior to 2019 and consolidation of ministries.

- Once completed, review engagement of 2021, 2022 and 2023 financials will be done; then Metropolis will proceed with a full audit.
- Using non-profit format as is the Archdiocese and so should the parishes, rather than net income or profit.

Review and Approval of 2024 Metropolis Budget **Archon George Psefteas, Finance Committee Chair**

- Three sections in operating budget: Operating and Administrative for day-to-day office expenses, payroll, utilities; Ministries that are board designated; and Ministries that are not board designated.
- Some ministries have pass-through budgets; other ministries are funded by the Metropolis.
- True operating budget for the Metropolis is $1.5M; for non-board designated ministries is $512,875; for Metropolis designated ministries (actually pass-through) is $1.792M.
- Of the $1.5M operating budget, $1M is funded by Archdiocese to cover payroll and insurance. Metropolis fundraising through Faith Forward is $450k which covers most of the remaining expenses. Unbudgeted fundraising contributes about $9k.
- Ministries are either self-funded or targeted ministries.
- Details:
    - Allotment from the Archdiocese is essentially flat
    - Total Commitment – all parishes are expected to pay 100%, which means additional sharing portion will come back from Archdiocese.
    - Faith Forward target is $450k.
    - 2024 budget projects $1.5M in revenue to cover $1.5M in operating costs.
- Increases in operating expenses
    - Expansion of ministries is important and helpful, which is where increases will go.
    - Need/want surveys about effectiveness of Metropolis ministries. His Eminence wants the Metropolis ministries to be examined to ensure that they meet the needs of the parishes. The Youth Office is being expanded to two positions, retaining Johanna's vision and increasing the offerings of available resources at the regional and parish levels. Expect a refresh of summer camp programs and increased direct interaction with clergy, lay leadership, youth workers and parents.
    - Administrative needs of Chancellor's office demand additional resources, requiring additional funding in the Metropolis budget.
- Summary: zero based budget; funding for administrative component is the actual decision.
- Robust conversation ensues discussing budgeted priorities, the needed emphasis on religious education including Oratorical Festival and curriculum development, resources for youth programs, and support for seminarians. Clarification that funding raised by Faith Forward does not support self-funded Metropolis ministries such as FDF.
- **Motion passes**, made by Fr. Michael Tervo and seconded by Fr. John Bakas, approving the 2024 Metropolis budget

New Business

Fr. Chris Flesoras with Saint Anna Greek Orthodox Church in Roseville, CA puts forth a resolution to modify the laborious Total Commitment process based upon parish expenses to a simple flat calculation of 10% of income/revenue of each parish. Discussion ensues about the resolution and whether it is procedurally proper given that it was not raised and passed at a parish General Assembly.

The proposed resolution is ruled out-of-order by the Chair, Archdeacon Bosl.

National Clergy-Laity Congress **Archon Isidoros Garifalakis**
Jeannie Ranglas
Kristen Bruskas

Archon Garifalakis recalls that the Metropolis of San Francisco last hosted the Archdiocese Clergy-Laity Congress in 2012. He and his wife Maria are honored to serve as co-chairs with Gerry and Jeannie Ranglas. See flier in packet. Hotel reservations are now open online. This event will be successful because of the blessings by God, the hard work of many people serving on committees, and the theme of In Christ We are One. He thanks those who are already involved and encourages everyone to get involved, support the Congress and work together to grow our Orthodox faith. He recommends that people go to the Congress website to give individual and parish sponsorships. He is hopeful for the best and most successful Congress for our Archdiocese.

Jeannie Ranglas recounts Archon Garifalakis' historical and excellent efforts to raise funds for the Metropolis. While he asks many people to contribute, he is always the first to donate. There will be more workshops and activities than ever before. The National Philoptochos convention will be held at the same time and place along with the Clergy-Laity Congress. Philoptochos also will work with the National YAL conference on a national Diakonia project. The Agape awards breakfast will honor chapters as a way to inspire creativity and dedication to all chapters. Philoptochos is celebrating its 93rd anniversary this year. The impact of the ministry is difficult to measure, but its effects extend broadly and deeply. The National convection is important because it provides a roadmap for what can be accomplished and how to expand efforts while learning from each other.

Kristen Bruskas is introduced as the Metropolis' Congress coordinator. She is proud to work with the co-chairs to plan what will be a beautiful and inspirational event. One new event this year is the first-ever Monastic Synaxis that will coincide with other events. One highlight of the Congress will be the "Moonlight on the Midway." All delegates will be transported to the historic USS Midway. Additional outreach opportunities at the Congress will include a blood drive, a testing to be a match for bone marrow and stem cell transplants and feeding the homeless in San Diego. At the conclusion of the Grand Banquet, the delegates will enjoy the largest fireworks display in California – Big Bay Boom. The Congress will offer many thought-provoking ministry panels, provide tangible resources and concrete insights for use at parishes for the benefit of the faithful. The goal for the Congress is to showcase the philoxenia of our Metropolis.

Contemplate. Reconcile. Unify. ***(Part 2)*** **Rev. Dr. Nicholas Louh**

- We can ascertain the value of something by what someone is willing to pay for it.
- Our God died for us. He did not wait for us to be good to come to Earth to help us.
- Romans 5:8. God demonstrates his own love for us. While we were still sinners, Christ dies for us.
- On the darkest day of His life, Christ was thinking of us. He experienced the worst of Earth so that we can experience the best: Heaven itself.
- God took on poverty of flesh so that we could receive the riches of divinity.
- Psalm 133:1 – Unity: how good it is to dwell together in unity.
- Universal Letter of John 3:9-22.
- Church can be divided. The Enemy wants to divide the faith and pit the Churches against one another.
- How can we reconcile and unify? Lead, Listen, Learn, Lament, Love.
- Lead – people place a priority on it. Jesus said, "Forgive them for they know not what they do." Parable of the Turkana monkeys that will not let go of what is not beneficial for them. What are we holding onto?
- Listen – We must forgive and listen to one another. Unforgiveness is terrible; akin to setting yourself on fire and expecting the other person to die of smoke inhalation. We must forgive to save ourselves
- Learn/Lament – Galatians 6:2: we must bear one another's burdens.

    - We must understand the struggles of others.
- Love – we judge others' mistakes, and we are always ready to defend our own mistakes. Yet we know that he who is without sin shall cast the first stone. We should aim to love too much rather than judge others too harshly. We need to be prepared for judgment and second life.
- Everyone matters to God.
- Berlin wall parable: we must tear down the walls that should not stand and needs to be removed.
- Ultimate message we are called to answer: What are you doing with my Son?

Concluding Remarks

Metropolitan Gerasimos

So many pearls of wisdom to take with us. Such an apt and critical theme of contemplate, reconcile and unify. Fr. Nicholas Louh gave us lessons that will serve us well as we enter Great Lent. We need to let go of being too critical.
For nearly 45 years, Saint Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center has been the cornerstone of Metropolis ministries.
Archbishop Elpidophoros noted that we have so many young people as clergy and laity. It is a positive sign for our Metropolis.
His Eminence commends the founders and the future of St. Nicholas Ranch. He recognizes two people who personify the history and future of the Ranch:
Fr. John Bakas who has been a catalyst for making the Ranch and the Monastery what they are.
Dio Stephanopoulos who is the future of the Ranch, following in the footsteps of his father Tom Stephanopoulos who gave his life for many decades to the Ranch. Now Dio is answering the same call.
Ranch exemplifies philoxenia. Hospitality is unparalleled. Grateful for Michael Pappas and his staff. Ranch began with a focus on youth summer camp. It has proven time and again to be a transformational experience for youth. Now, second and third generations are coming to the ranch for spiritual guidance.
Blessing and honor to have Archbishop Elpidophoros. We know that summer camp ministry is close to the Archbishop's heart. Last November, the Archdiocese launched its Summer Camp Scholarship Fund, to which the Metropolis gave a $5,000 gift for this ministry.

Archbishop Elpidophoros

Inspiring to follow discussions. Fr. Nicholas Louh was a highlight. He has been blessed by God with a gift. His Eminence is so proud of what Fr. Louh and his Presvytera have accomplished.
The Archbishop has a special connection with clergy in the San Francisco Metropolis. Metropolitan Gerasimos is the chief who inspires through his wonderful leadership.
His Eminence expresses his great confidence for the Congress based upon how well this Metropolis Clergy-Laity event has gone.
Every voice deserves to be heard. Some points to remember:
-we are not as homogenous a community as in the past.
-literally tens of thousands of people have adopted our Faith who were not raised in the Faith.
-these faithful bring diversity of gifts to the Church.
-there also is wide divergence of political and cultural priorities. This is not a cause of division but rather of substantive and deep conversations that focus on our Faith. We remain united.

Please travel through Great Lent with good intentions and spiritual focus so we arrive with joy and assurance at the Lord's resurrection.

CLERGY RETREAT BEGINS FOLLOWING VESPERS AND DINNER.