

July 26, 2012 Feast of Saint Jacob of Alaska

To the Worthy Clergy, Pious Faithful and Monastics:

“Most Holy Birthgiver of God Save Us!”

Dearly Beloved in Christ, we are at the outset of the Fast of the Falling-Asleep of the Holy Birthgiver of God. At the end of the prescribed time of fasting and reflection, we shall joyfully celebrate the translation of the Theotokos to the heights of heaven. She is our constant intercessor with her Divine Son, our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our Orthodox tradition is: first the fast and then the feast! So, the Church in North America is also in a time of fasting and reflection in anticipation of the Descent of the Holy Spirit on our special All-American Electoral Council.

I am Nathaniel, Archbishop of the Romanian Episcopate of the Orthodox Church in America. Inasmuch as I am the oldest in date of ordination into the Holy Episcopacy (1980), I was appointed by the Holy Synod, according to the Statute, to be the *Locum Tenens* of our Church until the election of a new Metropolitan. My role is temporary; to oversee, together with the Holy Synod, an orderly transition from the present status and to prepare the Church for the special All-American Electoral Council. His Grace, Bishop Michael of New York and New Jersey was appointed by the Holy Synod to be the Temporary Administrator of our Church. He has a “hands-on” obligation.

The Holy Synod is in constant contact among members, acting according to the Statute to prepare for the election. In addition to daily communications, the Holy Synod will meet in a special session on August 13, just before the conclusion of the Fast and in anticipation of the celebration of the Feast of the Holy Virgin. Our agenda is to decide on what is necessary to move forward with a decision on the time and place of the Council. For this, we ask your prayers. Other matters, of course, will be taken up.

Dearly beloved, the Church in this period of fasting and spiritual reflection is preparing for the Electoral Council at which we shall elect a new Metropolitan. The Holy Synod is fasting and praying for guidance even as you are fasting and praying for the “peace for the Holy Church of God.” The Holy Synod, knows that some in the Church are saddened and wondering what will be taking place; we are aware of this sadness and are laboring to change that into joy. After the election, “we shall rejoice in the Lord.”

Each hierarch in his own diocese is going about his apostolic labor as shepherd of his flock and, as a member of the Holy Synod, working together serving our Holy Church in North America. Each clergyman, each lay person, each monastic is exhorted to continue “to serve the Lord in fear and trembling” during this opportune period of fasting in anticipation of the joy which will come at the celebration of the Most Holy Virgin, and in due time, the resolution of the office of Metropolitan.

Across North America – Canada, Mexico, and the United States – let us all beseech the Holy Virgin to intercede for us and call upon all the Saints of North America the founders and benefactors, the martyrs and teachers, the pioneers who brought the faith to be with us in the days ahead so that our fasting and prayers may be pleasing to God and a good preparation for the work which lies ahead of us, *“that is the salvation of our souls” (1 Peter 1:9).*

The Lord bless!

+ Nathaniel, Archbishop of Detroit and the Romanian Episcopate
Locum Tenens of the Orthodox Church in America