

## Opening Statement for a Press Conference

Ladies and gentlemen of the press, I have a brief opening statement and then I will take your questions.

The situation we Orthodox Christians in Alaska face today is sad, not fatal, and one for which The Church has long since been prepared... but make no mistake, this situation represents a mortal threat to Orthodoxy itself.

For the first time in the history of The Church in North America, a Lesser Synod has attempted to effectively depose a Bishop and to place an Administrator in authority over an entire Diocese. This non-canonical innovation is not only a mortal threat to The Church in Alaska, it is a mortal threat to The Orthodox Church throughout North America. The threat to The Church is this: will The Orthodox Church in America decide important issues according to Holy Scripture and The Canons (or laws) of The Church, or will these issues be resolved as a result of public opinion and innovations that are appropriate for corporate board rooms and churches characterized by congregational rule?

If the call for me to vacate my office had been the result of a decent and orderly process based on Holy Scripture and The Canons of The Church, I would have exited Alaska immediately. It was not and I will not because I refuse to abandon the faithful of this Diocese to the inevitable heresies that will result from substituting anything for The Holy Scriptures and Canons of The Church as the supreme authority of The Church.

I am not, and those who have studied the history of The Church are not, surprised by the problems we face. Slander, unsubstantiated allegations, and the attempt to decide Church practice by politics and public opinion have been problems The Church has defeated throughout its history. That is precisely why The Church Fathers established church law/The Canon and why God Himself gave us The Holy Scriptures, especially and including Matthew 18 and 1 Timothy 5.

Finally, let me offer the counsel of more than two thousand years of Church history:

**To the Orthodox Clergy of Alaska:** consult Holy Scripture, the Canons of The Church, and pray. Then do what Holy Scripture and the Canons of The Church tell you to do.

**To Orthodox lay people in Alaska:** go to your priest, ask him to show you what Holy Scripture and the Church Canons say an Orthodox person should do in a situation like this. Do what Holy Scripture and the Canons tell you to do.

These are as relevant today as they have been over the last two centuries.

**For those of you who are not Orthodox Christians,** I have this to say: we Orthodox Christians, like you, are imperfect people. It is also true that we Orthodox Christians have more than two thousand years of experience living our faith despite persecution, poor leadership, gossip, and terrible in-fighting... and we have grown and thrived because, in the end, we submitted to the clear directives of Holy Scripture and Church Canons... and, by God's grace, we will continue to do so in Alaska.

Now I will take your questions.