

February 1, 2020  
St George Cathedral, Southfield, MI

Your Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon,  
Your Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel  
Your Eminences, Your Graces,  
My dear parents,  
Reverend clergy, Pious Monastics, Dear friends and Beloved Faithful,

Blessed and glorified be our God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, who in his great mercy and bountiful grace heals all that is infirm and completes all that is lacking, strengthens our weaknesses and fears! I must confess to you that I entered the church this morning with great fear and trembling in my heart in anticipation of the bestowing of the Divine Grace knowing what great ministry awaits me and how weak I am as a human being in front of the greatness of God. The words of the psalmist more than and give me comfort and I can only say from the bottom of my heart *“have mercy on me O Lord, for I am weak!”*

The Lord has called me through the voice of the Church, clergy and people, and through the lay-on of hands of the most venerable hierarchs here present, to this highest service of the Church. God is good indeed, because I have not done anything good upon this earth, but rather all is accomplished because the great mercy of the Lord! I am young and I am in much need of guidance myself, but today the Holy Spirit through the hands and prayers of the hierarchs has placed me in the Church to be the mouth to speak, the eyes to see, the ears to hear, the hands to do and feet to walk ever more fervently for the proclamation of the eternal truth and labor for the salvation of the people of God.

With sincere trembling of heart, but also with youthful hope, I begin this ministry of the Church knowing that the Lord desires that all man should be saved and come to the knowledge of Truth.

A truth which we all know, for we are here in the Church and partook of him - the great mystery of the Eucharist, Christ's body and blood. We all heard it, over and over again, that Christ is Our Lord and in Him we find salvation. The Lord calls us to know Him truly and love him fully.

What will our answer be to the divine question “who do you say that I am?” Both clergy and laity, we must give witness to the world and tell who Christ is. We are here today, because of Him, because we know Him, because we love Him, because we want and have the desire to confess Him and are marveled at His works.

The recitation of the creed in the Church is one voice united in confession to proclaim the message of his love and truth to the world. Let us not stop only at just such proclamation of the divine and eternal truth here in church. We cannot stop our constant nurturing of this confession of the truth. Through the strength of prayer, fasting, good deeds, and sharing the God given gifts, we can tune ourselves to hear and follow God’s lifegiving commandments more than our own ways. At home and in church, let us give Christ the key to open hearts and allow him to dwell therein. How, with examples of love, compassion, patience, endurance and courage which are in great need in this world, both in the family life, community and society. Let us allow Christ to shine more brightly his light in our hearts so we can proclaim him with our lives more fully and yes proclaim the glory of God for He is good and His mercy endures forever.

What are we going to answer to the Lord, when he will ask “Who do you say that I am” ... and just like the Holy Apostle Thomas “you are my Lord and my God” ... that is you, Oh Lord are my beginning and my end, my life, my breath, my all in all and for all!

No matter where we are geographically and what we do in life, no matter age or status, the question remains the same. The Church is the loving Mother to help us find this answer and works tirelessly at giving us the living experience of the Truth. “Come and see!” Do not be afraid! Don’t fear the Mother who is here to embrace and love, to guide and correct, to nurture and encourage, to strengthen and protect, to unite and safeguard.

To the young people especially, I say with all my heart, do not fear the Mother - our Church, do not have fear of asking and inquiring in your quest to know the Truth! Turn to the Church for wisdom, for guidance, for protection, for love and compassion... No one does it better than Christ our Lord in His Church! Do not be afraid of this world for God is with us. I am young as well! We all have fears! But let us walk together and as the words of prophet Micah show us clearly: *The Lord has shown you what is good. He has told you what he requires of you: You must act with justice. You must love to show mercy. And you must be humble as you live in the sight of your God* (Micah 6:8).

As I begin this sacred ministry of the episcopacy, I pray that we all allow the grace of the Spirit to “enlarge our hearts to make room for Christ.” Make space in our hearts for Him who is good and merciful and “may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope (Romans 15:13). Let us taste how good the Lord is!

The Lord has been good to me! Glory be to Him forever! I am grateful to Him for my loving parents, Mariana and Florin and my sister Iuliana, who have always been a patient support and loving refuge for me. Thank you, mom and dad! Only the Lord knew why, we left Romania 23 years ago and came to an unknown world, here in the United States. The Church, through the parish of Sts Peter and Paul in Dearborn Heights, Fr Romey and Preoteasa Mary Ellen, received us lovingly here and helped us establish our new home. The courage and perseverance of my parents, along with the prayers and support of my grandparents Eugenia and Augustin and of aunts, uncles, cousins and the rest family from Europe, made difficulties a bit easier to bear and gave us hope when hope seemed to be lost in the new world. I entrust myself to the prayers of the priests and monastics of my family, my great grandfather, priest Nicolae Opris and great-aunt, the Abbess Arsenia Opris, may they be my guidance and inspiration in the episcopal ministry.

My gratitude goes to my teachers and mentors over the years, the professors and clergy, the dedicated faculty of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Boston where I have learned the ways of the Lord, the joys of knowledge and the beauty of service, and to the faculty of the Pontifical Oriental Institute for pushing me to study theology with even greater passion and conviction and to all those who supported me with resources and invested in my abilities.

I bring words of thanks to pious monastics, who today offer to the Church, one of their own to serve. May your examples be my courage and your prayers my strength. To all my friends from near and far who came here to pray for me, and my classmates and their families, here represented in a good number, clergy of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, for whom I have great admiration and brotherly love... Thank you!

My affection and love go to our clergy and faithful of this God-protected Diocese who serve lovingly the Lord. I look forward to serve you all with all my being!

I turn now to the venerable hierarchs. I intentionally left this mention to the end because – all that which up until now formed me and nurtured me, my family, my teachers, my

mentors, my friends and clergy and faithful – each in their own way and capacity ... now, today ... all of them have offered me and put me forward as a servant leader into the loving care of the sacred brotherhood of Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America. I thank all the members of the Holy Synod, who have come from all the corners of this blessed land, for their paternal love, kindness and guidance and words of precious wisdom, Your Eminences and Your Graces, may the Lord grant you many years of service in the Holy Church and may we work together for the glory of God and our salvation. I am grateful to His Eminence Metropolitan Gregory, my classmate, and to His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae for blessing me with their prayers and brotherly love.

Your Beatitude, as the chief shepherd of the Synod and our Church, I am humbled and touched by your kindness and care which you have showed me. Your sincere and loving guidance, gives me courage in this new ministry and I look forward to your continuous paternal support in the episcopal service which you entrusted to me with, through the lay-on of hands. Many years!

Your Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel - you have showed me a path of servant leadership, unique and genuine, a true and rare gift. Your Eminence has guided me from early to be actively involved in the life of the Episcopate to later on attend schools where you sent me to study and blessed patiently my academic labors and then called me to serve the Diocese and assist as Youth Director, and Vicar. You have shared with me your great hierarchal wisdom and vision which are of great value to me in my service. I look forward to continue to learn from you and be your assistance in obedience and respect.

And finally, to all of you, today you witnessed the work of the might hand of the Lord, I entrust myself to your prayers from now on! I take shelter under the protection of the Holy Mother of God, the protection of my patrons, St Andrew the Apostle and Holy Hierarchs Andrei Saguna and Venerable Mother Parascheva of Iasi, St Herman of Alaska and all the Saints who have shown forth in this blessed land with whom I will walk the walk of Truth, the path of grace and journey of hope and righteousness to the glory of the Almighty God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit!