



December 11, 2022

Christ is in our midst!

At the 2022 All-American Council, [His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon](#), graciously gave me the blessing to make a presentation on behalf of the good Orthodox native peoples of Alaska. I spoke at length about their heroic and often heart-breaking struggles to be faithful to the Orthodox faith in the face of physical and emotional abuse from heterodox missionaries and a government not supportive of their culture and “foreign” religion, our common Orthodox faith. I referred to the difficulties of the faithful remaining Orthodox in communities who not only have no priest to serve the liturgy or hear their confessions, but who also face pressures from protestant pastors who prey on our native peoples and disparage their faith. I also spoke about the conditions of my clergy whose salaries are \$26,000 below the poverty line for a family of four in Alaska. And about these conditions, I seek your help.

Through the generosity of your parish and your parishioners, we can begin to change this situation by your assistance in establishing the Alaskan Native Rural Clergy Stipend Endowment. By conservative estimates, we can provide our Alaskan rural priests with an additional \$80/month from the interest of a one-million-dollar endowment. That may not seem like a very large increase, but for a priest with a \$7,200/year stipend, it is a 13% increase, raising his stipend to \$8,160/year. This is more than tithing, a tithe that your parish can offer to America’s “poor Saints in Jerusalem,” to the land through which Orthodox sanctity first reached our shores.

If every parish and community in the Orthodox Church in America would pledge \$100/month for two years, we will be able to establish the Clergy Stipend Endowment. Alternatively, it can be established if each parish could simply locate twelve donors to offer a one-hundred-dollar donation once a year for two years. His Beatitude has already personally pledged \$10,000 a year to help this fund be established. In practical terms, this supplement will enable your parish to provide a warm coat for a child, a little more heating fuel for a warm home in below freezing weather, or just some store-bought food on the table. I was told that a Yupik parent told his child who expressed the desire to be a priest, “Son, you’ll be poor, your entire life. I don’t want to see you destitute.” Establishing this fund is a response, a clear response, that our Church strives to take care of her own.

I ask that you share this information with your parish and your parish council. If you have parishioners who desire to give alms for themselves or their loved ones, please share it with them

as well. Please help these your brothers and these your sisters, living lives that would be hard for many of us to imagine. Their parishioners offer what they can, but most villagers are unemployed and struggle themselves with poverty. Help and they will be sincerely grateful. Help and their children will be grateful for milk on the table. Our Lord is asking your help in the persons of these priests and our Lord will bless you accordingly for helping Him feed and clothe those in need.

I am [enclosing the brochure](#) that was handed out at the All-American Council in Baltimore, a brochure that outlines additional ways that you can assist the work of America's first and mother diocese. In this communication, though, I am asking for your help with the Clergy Stipend Endowment. If your parish is willing to pledge to the Clergy Endowment Fund for rural Alaskan native clergy and has not yet done so, please respond to this email. If your parish has already done so, be assured of our gratitude for the bond of love with which your gift now binds your parish to the first peoples of Alaska.

May God bless you richly for your kindness and generosity to those in need.

For your convenience, this is the link to our website: odosa.org/current-fund-raisers. You may also donate by clicking the button below and using the drop down list, or mail your gift to the address below.

Gratefully Yours in Christ,

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Bishop of Sitka and Alaska