

October 19, 2012, Feast of the Prophet Joel

To the Hierarchs of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Masters, Bless!

We know that sometimes during stressful times things can be said that can be read otherwise than intended, be unintentionally inaccurate or incomplete, or inadequately supported. This can especially be harmful when the Church speaks publicly to the world through her hierarchs, and when the result leads to what is interpreted (rightly or wrongly) as a case of bearing false witness. The effect on the Church at a number of levels can be harmful, whether the cause lies in the authors or the audience, or both.

In light of these concerns, as faithful members of the OCA, and as scholars, we would respectfully ask you to correct or clarify statements earlier this year that led national news media to report that our then-First Hierarch, Metropolitan Jonah, knowingly shielded a rapist priest. Those statements have gone unsupported for months, while the news reports, uncorrected, have become part of His Eminence Jonah's public reputation, and have divided members of our Church as a result.

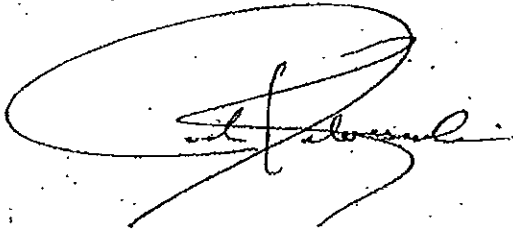
The news reports appear to be inaccurate in light of information that has since become widely available. However, we realize that there may be other important information behind the Holy Synod's public statement, which has not yet been publicly released. If so, this is a fact that badly needs to be explained and clarified.

We respectfully and humbly look to you as leaders of our Church and shepherds of the flock to provide further clarity. Doing so will strengthen our Church at a time of both internal strife and ongoing challenge from the secular culture, a challenge with which as academics we are all too familiar. In such times it is all the more important that the Church speak in a way that reflects the love and fraternal charity that unites us all as Orthodox Christians.

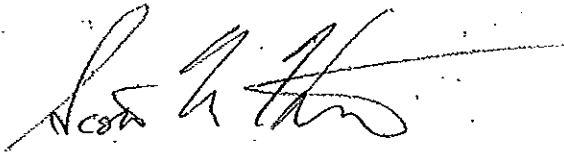
Kissing your right hands,

*David Bradshaw*

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*cc: Archbishop Nathaniel, Archbishop Alejo, Archbishop Benjamin, Archbishop Nikon, Archbishop Tikhon, Bishop Alexander, Bishop Matthias, Bishop Melchisedek, Bishop Michael, and all signers. Note: A paper copy of this letter will be delivered to the Holy Synod via the OCA Secretary.*