

## CHAPTER TWO: AN INITIAL UNITY — WITH A VISION (1900 - 1918)

In 1900, at the request of Bishop Tikhon and with the approval of the Holy Governing Synod, the name of the Diocese was changed from "the Aleutian Islands and Alaska" to "the Aleutian Islands and North America." There was a major reorganization of the church administration in 1904 when two additional bishops were consecrated. When Bishop Nicholas had first arrived, Archimandrite Raphael (Halaweeny), an Arab by birth, began organizing Syro-Arab parishes in the United States and by 1904 by decision of the Holy Synod, he was raised to the episcopate and put in charge of these parishes with the title of "Bishop of Brooklyn." Bishop Raphael was also made Vicar to Archbishop Tikhon. Also in 1904, at the request of the Ruling Archbishop and with the consent of the Holy Synod, Archimandrite Innocent (Pustinsky) was consecrated with the title of "Bishop of Alaska."

In 1905 a new phase of Orthodox Church life in America begins when with the express consent of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, the official See of the Ruling Archbishop was transferred from San Francisco to New York City. Fortunately since 1900 the pastor of St. Nicholas Church in New York City, Father Alexander Hotovitsky, had been building a new structure for the Russian Orthodox faithful in New York and even went to Russia in 1902 and collected funds for the new temple (including a substantial donation from Tsar Nicholas II.<sup>1</sup> So that St. Nicholas Church in New York was fully worthy of being raised in rank to that of Cathedral by official Ukaz of the Holy Synod (together with the Church of St. Michael the Archangel in Sitka). An event of equal importance also took place in 1905 when the North American Seminary opened in Minneapolis, Minnesota so that Orthodox students born in America who wanted to be priests would not find it necessary to travel to Russia for a theological education. The existence of the Seminary in Minneapolis was a great achievement of Archbishop Tikhon and the Seminary played an important role in producing priests for the Church in America in the years ahead.

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<sup>1</sup> See St. Nicholas Cathedral of New York History and Legacy by M. Pokrovsky, New York, 1968.

In March of 1906 Archbishop Tikhon made public, in an abbreviated form his "vision" of the future Orthodox Church in America which he had previously submitted in 1905 as a report to the Pre-Sobor Commission in Moscow which dealt with missionary activity in the Russian Orthodox Church. It is of such vital importance in terms of the later history of the Church and since it speaks eloquently for itself, it is reproduced here in the main body of the text (rather than in the Appendix) and certainly shows the sagacity of Archbishop Tikhon and his ability to foresee what was necessary in the special circumstances which the Orthodox Church found herself in America:

"As to the See of North America it ought to be made into an Exarchate of the Russian Church. The fact is that this See is composed not only of different nationalities, but also of different Orthodox Churches, which though one in faith with each other have their own peculiarities in the canonical order, the office ritual and the parish life. These peculiarities are dear to them and altogether tolerable from the general Orthodox point of view. This is why we do not consider that we have the right to interfere with the national character of the churches in this country, and on the contrary, try to preserve it, giving each a chance to be governed directly by chiefs of the same nationality.

Thus the Orthodox Syrian Church in this country was given its own Bishop (the Right Reverend Raphael of Brooklyn), who nominally is the second vicar of the Archbishop of the Aleutians See but who, in his own field of activity, is almost independent. The Bishop of Alaska is similarly situated. The Serbian parishes are directly subject to a separate chief, who at present is an Archimandrite, but may be consecrated a Bishop in the near future. The Greeks of this country also wish to have their own Bishop and have entered into communication with the Synod of Athens on the subject. In short, it is possible that there will be formed in America an entire Exarchate of national Orthodox Churches with their own Bishops, whose Exarch is to be the Russian Archbishop.

In his own field of work each of these Bishops is to be independent, but the affairs which concern the American Church in general are to be decided by a General Council, presided over by the Russian Archbishop. Through him will be preserved the connection of the Orthodox Church of America with the Church of All the Russias and a degree of dependence of the former on the latter. Also we must keep in view that, compared with life in the old country, life in America has its peculiarities, with which the local Orthodox Church is obliged to take notice of, and that consequently it ought to be allowed to be more autonomous than other Metropolitan Districts of Russia. The future Exarchate of North America may be composed as follows:

- 1) the Archbishopric of New York, with all the dependent Russian churches in the United States and Canada;
- 2) the Bishopric of Alaska, which is to embrace all the churches of the