

February 2, 2016
Feast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple

Dear OTSA Members and All Interested Orthodox Scholars,

With the Great and Holy Council now set to take place this June 16-27 at the Orthodox Academy in Crete, and with preconciliar documents becoming available, OTSA (the Orthodox Theological Society in America) in partnership with the Orthodox Christian Studies Center at Fordham University is launching an immediate project to facilitate theological reflection and exchange on the issues pertinent to the agenda items of the Council.

All OTSA members should note that this is a separate but related endeavor to our annual OTSA meeting, about which news and call for papers will be forthcoming soon.

With respect to the immediate project, there are seven preconciliar documents, available in various languages. Although English versions of the documents have been emerging, OTSA will be using a standardized set of English-language documents to be made available in the coming days. The agenda items treated in the respective documents are (1) The Mission of the Orthodox Church in the Contemporary World; (2) the Orthodox Diaspora; (3) Autonomy and its Manner of Proclamation; (4) the Sacrament of Marriage and its Impediments; (5) the Significance of Fasting and its Application Today; (6) Relations of the Orthodox Church to the Rest of the Christian World. A further document (7) concerns Organization and Working Procedures of the Council.

OTSA invites proposals from members and others who would be interested in forming **working groups of 4-6 people** to submit proposals of **250 words** or less **focused on the content of one of the seven preconciliar documents**. In addition to describing the particular point(s) or question(s) to be explored, each proposal should state the names of the 4-6 individuals to comprise the working group. Not all individuals need be OTSA members nor reside in North America. Because of the imminence of the Council, proposals for working groups on the preconciliar documents are **due by 5PM EST on Monday, February 15th**.

Promising proposals from working groups of less than 4-6 people may be accepted. An individual may participate in more than one working group. Also, an individual willing to be part of a working group but yet to have put one together may express his or her interest by submitting a proposal indicating this. OTSA officers will review all proposals and possibly suggest combinations or reconfigurations of some groups for purposes of consolidation or balance. By the end of the day Monday, February 22, OTSA will notify the author/sender of each proposal as to its acceptance.

Each working group will then decide its own method of proceeding: some may engage in discussion by email or phone/video conference on the way to producing a single text reflecting the consensus of the group; others may produce individual papers to be exchanged within the group for feedback and revision. Once completed, each group's single consensus paper or cluster of individual papers should be submitted to the OTSA Secretary, Dr. Edith Humphrey, at ehumphrey@pts.edu.

The “Public Orthodoxy” blog of Fordham’s Orthodox Christian Studies Center will peer-review all papers issued by the working groups for purposes of publication on its site. We envision the first papers from working groups being posted on the “Public Orthodoxy” website by mid-March, possibly even earlier. In addition, avenues are being explored to issue the working papers in a subsequent print publication also prior to the Council. All working groups should be finished with their text or texts and submit them to the OTSA Secretary no later than April 8 to be considered for electronic publication.

All papers should be 1000 words or less. This concision will help to make it possible for multiple texts to be read by as wide an English-speaking readership as possible on the “Public Orthodoxy” site and through other media so as to facilitate broad discussion among members of the Orthodox Church and other interested observers.

In our current significant moment in Orthodoxy’s history, we strongly encourage your participation in this unique (though certainly not exclusive) forum for theological dialogue now initiated by OTSA together with Fordham’s Orthodox Christian Studies Center.

With festal greetings,

OTSA Officers
(Gayle Woloschak, President)
(Will Cohen, Vice President)
(Edith Humphrey, Secretary)
(Teva Regule, Treasurer)