

THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND DIOCESE OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

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27th October 2025

Resolution of the Twenty-First Diocesan Assembly of the Australian-New Zealand Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia

We, the clergy, monastics, and lay delegates to the Twenty-First Diocesan Assembly of the Australian-New Zealand Diocese of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR), give thanks to God for the opportunity to gather together at Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral in Sydney, Australia, to review the life and achievements of our Diocese over the past three years. We have also considered the challenges that our Diocese faces and the work that it must do in the years ahead.

Over the past three years our Diocese has celebrated important jubilees. In 2023, clergy and people from across Australia and New Zealand gathered in Brisbane to celebrate the centenary of Saint Nicholas Cathedral, the first Russian Orthodox church in our Diocese. That same year we also celebrated the seventy-fifth anniversary of the foundation of our Diocese. These significant anniversaries bear witness to the deep roots our Church has put down in this region, far from the historical centres of our faith.

In 2024 we welcomed Metropolitan Nicholas on his first visit to our Diocese as ROCOR's First Hierarchy. He brought with him the wonderworking "Kursk-Root" Icon of the Mother of God, our beloved "Directress". We also received that year a visit from the myrrh-streaming "Hawaiian-Iveron" Icon of the Mother of God. These visits were a joy and a consolation not only to the faithful of our own Diocese, but also to Orthodox Christians of other jurisdictions.

During his visit Metropolitan Nicholas elevated Bishop George to the rank of Archbishop. We rejoice in this honour bestowed upon our Ruling Bishop by the ROCOR Synod and give thanks to God for his archpastoral service amongst us in difficult times.

Amidst these joys there have been sorrows. Our Diocese was shocked and saddened to learn of the sudden repose in June this year of Archpriest John Weir, the Assistant Priest at Saint Nicholas Cathedral in Brisbane and a much-loved priest of the Northern Deanery. Father John had served as a clergyman for over twenty years and will be remembered for his sincere love for the Lord and for his patience, kindness, integrity and humility.

Particularly grievous for our Diocese was the trial and criminal conviction this year of a senior priest in relation to the sexual abuse of children. With one voice we commend Archbishop George for his clear and unambiguous statements of 27 June and 21 August 2025 and for the steps taken since to discipline the perpetrator, assist his victims, and safeguard the vulnerable.

We also thank the members of the Ecclesiastical Court for their diligent work on this case, undertaken selflessly and in often difficult circumstances.

We heard moving presentations from our legal counsel concerning the National Redress Scheme, an initiative of the Australian Government to support those who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse, and Kooyoora, an independent organisation engaged by the Diocesan Council to help it uphold professional standards and provide safeguarding services. We recognise the importance of these initiatives and overwhelmingly endorse the steps taken to engage with them.

People who have converted to Orthodoxy form an increasing part of the clergy and faithful of our Diocese. At no previous time in our history have we had such a large number of people coming to the Russian Orthodox Church. This is changing our parishes and our Diocese liturgically, pastorally, and socially. The need for resources to assist in the education and formation of those who come to us seeking Christ is evident, as is the need for clergy and other pastoral workers to minister to them.

We give thanks to God for the ordination of seven men to the diaconate between December 2022 and September 2025, two of whom have since been ordained to the priesthood. Two further ordinations to the priesthood have also taken place. These men are much-needed labourers in Christ's vineyard.

In his opening address, Archbishop George called for yet more men to undertake theological study and accept ordination to the ranks of the clergy of our Diocese. Offering our support to this call, we nevertheless emphasise the need to select candidates for ordination carefully, ensure their sound formation, and to guide and support them throughout their ministry.

As we consider the future of our Diocese, our thoughts naturally turn to our youth. We value the many and varied steps taken over the past three years to better educate and engage our youth, to help them form vital connections, and to involve them in Diocesan life. A continued focus on this important work is essential.

The financial and administrative reports presented by Diocesan officials stressed the necessity of compliance with civil law and church policy. The need for wise stewardship of our limited resources was also clear. We thank the Diocesan Council and those who labour in its administration for their hard work, their patience, and their support.

We turn now to the wider world. Distant though we may be geographically from the conflicts troubling the world, we have not been indifferent. In all of our parishes, monasteries and missions, prayers have been offered for peace in the much-suffering Holy Land and between Russia and Ukraine. We continue to entreat our merciful God that He will extinguish every strife and division and pacify the malice of adversaries, both in those places and throughout the world.

In 2025 our ROCOR honoured the memory of two great hierarchs who reposed 100 years ago this year: Saint Tikhon, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, and Saint Jonah, Bishop of Hankow. They were kind and loving archpastors who served in the Russian diaspora and who endured great suffering for their Orthodox faith. Both stand before us as bright examples of the rich inheritance that we all have as faithful children of the Russian Orthodox Church.

This year the fullness of the Orthodox Church prayerfully commemorated the 1700th anniversary of the First Ecumenical Council, that momentous gathering of great luminaries of the faith who formulated the Nicene Creed and established the rules for the celebration of Pascha that we faithfully observe to this day. In his *Epistle* to mark the occasion, His Holiness Patriarch Kirill asked that God might “mercifully look upon His Church and grant to her faithful children strength and wisdom, courage and steadfastness to remain *the salt of the earth and the light of the world* (Matt. 5:13-14), to be *His bold witnesses even to the ends of the earth* (Acts 1:8), until Christ comes.” Gathered together, we commit ourselves and our Diocese to these things.