February 1, 2017
*Forefeast of the Meeting of the Lord in the Temple*

Reverend clergy of the Holy and God-Protected Metropolis of Pittsburgh,

*Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2 Tim 2:15)*

Through our previous conversations and directives we have set a standard for those who are able to be tonsured as readers within the Metropolis – young men who are old enough and capable of reading the Epistle (and other scriptural pericopes appropriate for the non-clergyman) within the Church in a way that said readings can be heard and comprehended by the people.

However, we have not addressed the more simple beginning step of blessing young men to serve in the altar. This has been accomplished for some via the tonsure as a reader; for others, some young men have served for years before they were tonsured. The blessing to serve is not an *offikion* and, therefore, does not need to wait for my visitation to the parish to take place. It is not good to have these servers (a) serve for months or years, and then come ask me for a blessing to serve, or (b) for you to go on for months or years having the young men not serve because they await the tonsure from their hierarch.

Therefore, you have my blessing within your parishes to pray the following over your new servers (and any that have not received the blessing beforehand but have been serving up to this point). It is a simple blessing, not an *offikion*, and therefore is not to be conducted with any fanfare, and is not to receive a reply of “*Axies.*”

**Deacon:** Bow your heads to the Lord. Let us pray to the Lord.

**Servers:** Lord, have mercy.

**Priest:** O Lord our God, You do not dwell in handmade temples, nor are you in need of the service offered by human hands, for You are the One who gives the breath of life to all and sustains all of creation. Nevertheless, O Lord, accept this (these) your servant(s) [NAME], who is (are) prepared to serve your Holy Church and the place where Your glory abides. Enable him (them) to serve you in an irreproachable and blameless manner, in purity of life and heart, and make him (them) worthy to
receive the reward of those who love the beauty of Your Church. For You, our God, are Holy and to You we offer up glory, to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

This blessing can be conducted before the Liturgy, at the end of the Liturgy, or in another service, but cannot be done during the Liturgy between “Blessed is the Kingdom” and the singing of “Blessed be the name of the Lord…”

If you have any questions about this matter, please contact Fr. George.

With Archpastoral blessings and love in the Lord,

+ SAVAS
Metropolitan of Pittsburgh