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Resolution on Autonomy

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Resolution on Autonomy

June 11, 2001

TO BE READ FROM THE PULPIT AND PUBLISHED IN THE CHURCH BULLETIN

Venerable Hierarchs, Esteemed Members of the Board of Trustees of the Archdiocese, Beloved Clergy, Parish Council and Faithful of our Archdiocese:

"Now, when the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord, in one place. And suddenly, there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house, where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...." (Acts 2:1-4)

God continues to work in His Church. On Saturday, June 2, 2001, the day before we celebrated the birthday of Christ's Holy Church and the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Archdiocesan Board of Trustees met in Englewood, New Jersey, and unanimously and joyously recommended to the General Assembly of the Archdiocese, when it meets in July in Los Angeles, to request the Holy Synod of Antioch to grant autonomy to our Archdiocese.

This would not sever our ties with Antioch, but would allow the Archdiocese to be self-governing except that the Holy Synod of Antioch would retain certain authority with respect to the validity of the election of the Primate of the Archdiocese. The details of the autonomous Church would be worked out in consultation with the Patriarchate. The Resolution makes clear that the proposed autonomous Archdiocese desires to maintain close ties with the Patriarchate of Antioch and its institutions and that the people of the Archdiocese will not forget their roots.

Enclosed is the Resolution which will be placed before the General Assembly. We believe the Holy Spirit has blessed this attempt to insure the future stability and flourishing of our Archdiocese, to allow our people to select their bishops, and to lay a groundwork for a unified church in the United States and Canada sometime in the future, while maintaining close ties with the Patriarchate of Antioch. It is our fervent hope that the General Assembly will unanimously pass the resolution. We would then consult with the Holy Synod of Antioch to work out the details. We have just learned that the Reverend Clergy of the Southwest Region, at their convention in Wichita, voted unanimously for autonomy.

So that we might be orderly, the procedure with respect to the resolution shall be to comment primarily by parish delegation, only through one representative. Proposed changes to the Resolution will only be considered if received by my office prior to July 15, 2001. Anyone desiring to see the text or understand the procedure, please contact the Parish Priest and/or Parish Council Chairperson. Please read the Resolution carefully and come to Los Angeles prepared to vote on it.

We ask that you keep the welfare of our God-protected Archdiocese in your prayers always, especially in these next five or six months, as we hopefully work with the Holy Synod of Antioch for the glory of Christ's Church on this continent.

Your Father in Christ,

Metropolitan PHILIP
Primate
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
of North America

PROPOSED RESOLUTION TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

WHEREAS, the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America ("Archdiocese") has grown from a small mission, directed chiefly to immigrants from the Near East, into a vast archdiocese of approximately 230 parishes and missions, over 350 clergy and approximately 500,000 faithful, whose ethnic diversity increasingly approximates the rich ethnic diversity of North America itself;

WHEREAS, among other things the growth of the Archdiocese has been accompanied by an increase in the number of bishops serving in it, from a single Metropolitan to a Metropolitan and four auxiliary bishops;

WHEREAS, the Archdiocese has developed its own internal structures and institutions, which respond effectively to the particular cultural and political conditions in North America, while at the same time reflecting the Orthodox Church's perennial norms for the well-ordered life of an autonomous local church;

WHEREAS, the granting of the status of autonomy to the Archdiocese by the Holy Synod of Antioch at this time would confirm and strengthen the Archdiocese's capacity for effective self-governance, and thus help to ensure the stability of the Archdiocese and its continued flourishing in the future;

WHEREAS, such autonomy would safeguard the canonical principle that local matters should be handled locally, among other things allowing the selection of bishops for the Archdiocese whose life and work is known to the faithful here and who are familiar with the situation of the Church in the United States and Canada;

WHEREAS, such autonomy would allow greater flexibility to the Archdiocese as it works with other Orthodox jurisdictions towards the establishment of an administratively united Orthodox Church in North America, which would more fully embody the ecclesiology and canonical norms of Orthodoxy and advance the mission and witness of Orthodoxy on this continent;

WHEREAS, the autonomous Archdiocese would continue to maintain close ties with the Mother Church of Antioch, with its institutions and faithful, always mindful of its spiritual roots;

WHEREAS, His Beatitude, Patriarch Ignatius, and His Eminence, Metropolitan Philip, will be meeting to discuss this resolution;

THEREFORE, the General Assembly of this 45th Convention of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese does hereby beseech the Patriarch and the Holy Synod of Antioch to grant the Archdiocese autonomy, the details of which would be worked out, in consultation with the Patriarch.

(Revised form, passed by the General Assembly July 27, 2001)

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