



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL
ORTHODOX BISHOPS
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

MESSAGE

To our beloved Orthodox Christian faithful throughout the United States of America:

[Let us] maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4.3)

Beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord,

We, the members of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America, gathered in Dallas, Texas, for our fifth annual meeting on September 16-18, 2014, greet you with paternal love, as we offer glory and thanks to our Triune God.

Thirty-eight bishops convened in the unity of our holy Orthodox faith, mindful of our responsibility to each other and to the whole Church as the Body of Christ. We opened our Assembly with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy and the sharing of the Holy Eucharist at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Dallas TX as guests of our host, Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver. Even as our Church honors the holy and precious Cross, we celebrate the universal and definitive victory of God over evil, sin and death.

We express our deep gratitude to all those who labored for this fifth annual Assembly Meeting. We recognize the new First Vice-Chairman of the Assembly, Metropolitan Joseph, Primate of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, recently elected to succeed Metropolitan Philip of blessed memory. May our Lord Jesus Christ grant eternal repose to our brother and concelebrant Metropolitan Philip. The Assembly also welcomes its Second Vice-Chairman, newly consecrated Bishop John of Naro-Fominsk, Administrator of the Patriarchate of Moscow's parishes in America, and expresses its thanks to Archbishop Justinian,

who has returned to Russia. Finally, we greet the latest member of our Assembly, Bishop Saba, representing the parishes of the Patriarchate of Georgia in the USA.

In the opening session, our chairman Archbishop Demetrios underlined our responsibility as bishops in witnessing to the Gospel and manifesting God's love in our world. Therefore, in our conversations carried out in a spirit of mutual trust and fraternity, we focused on issues related to the role of our Church in society, such as the advancement of religious education and relations with other churches and religions. We heard reports from the directors of the Assembly's seven agencies, with an overview of their history and current activities. The agencies include the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), Orthodox Christian Network (OCN), Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF), Orthodox Christian Education Commission (OCEC), Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM), and Eastern Orthodox Committee on Scouting (EOCS).

In particular, we recognized our responsibility to address primarily domestic but also, by extension, global issues as the Orthodox Christian community of a nation that plays a decisive role in our world. We are cognizant of this vocation and obligation, especially as we await the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches scheduled for the Spring of 2016 in Istanbul. Over the next months, we shall have the opportunity to submit specific recommendations and proposals for consideration by the Synod, through its special Pan-Orthodox Preparatory Committee, with a view to overcoming existing canonical anomalies in the United States. We reaffirm our commitment to the decisions of the Primate of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches and the Pan-Orthodox Preconciliar Conferences. In this regard, we engaged in constructive deliberation on the vision of our Church in the United States in light of Orthodox ecclesiology and canon law, but also in view of recent immigration developments and trends.

In declaring our common faith and professing our pastoral witness, we pray for the families of our faithful, who face unprecedented and unfathomable challenges from diverse contemporary societal trends, especially as a result of the increasing eclipse of the Christian family and its traditional values. Therefore, we

emphasize the primacy and priority of the family in Christian life, remembering that the first man and woman created in the image and likeness of God constituted a family, that the Incarnate Word was born into a family, and that the crucified Lord was concerned about His family on the precious and life-giving Cross.

Finally, we agreed on the following resolutions:

1) We unanimously agreed on our fervent support for the convocation of the Holy and Great Council in 2016 and entreat all those responsible for its realization to work in a spirit of unity and harmony in order to bring this blessed occasion to fruition without any delay or hindrance.

2) We deplore the ongoing violence and extreme bloodshed throughout the world. In the Middle East, hostility and brutality are occurring among members of different religions, sometimes supposedly in the name of religion. We pray for peace and justice in this region, for protection of Christian and other minorities in the ancient lands of Syria, Iraq, and Palestine, as well as for the cessation of racial discrimination, partisan extremism, and religious fanaticism. We especially decry the violence of the so-called Islamic State, commending our brothers and sisters in the region to work as apostles of peace.

3) In Ukraine, we have watched for months with mounting dismay and grief the armed conflict and unjustifiable bloodshed among our own brothers and sisters. We appeal to a humanitarian response to the innocent victims of this conflict. We call upon all parties to deepen the present truce; may church and government leaders in the region be a force of restraint and reconciliation. We pray for dialogue and understanding in this land, whose Christian roots date to over one thousand years ago. May God bring unity and peace to the church and people in Ukraine.

4) We fervently appeal once again for the release of our brother bishops in Syria, the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Paul Yazigi (brother of His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch) and the Syriac Orthodox Archbishop John Ibrahim, as well as of all kidnapped persons.

5) Moreover, we regret that our brother Archbishop Jovan of Ohrid remains imprisoned in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and we implore the authorities in FYROM for a prompt and fair resolution to this issue.

6) We are deeply concerned about the reported dramatic rise of those who label themselves as religiously indifferent, agnostic or atheist. We commit ourselves to raising greater awareness and striving to more ardent preaching of the Christian gospel, while calling upon our faithful to increase their vigilance and continue growing in their understanding of our Church's teaching and tradition.

In conclusion, we ask for the prayers of our precious and beloved Orthodox faithful, as we continue the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *went about all Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom, and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people* (Matt. 4.23). May the abundant blessings of our merciful God be with you all.

Archbishop Demetrios, Chairman	Archbishop Kyrill
Metropolitan Joseph, 1 st Vice Chairman	Bishop Peter
Bishop John, 2 nd Vice Chairman	Bishop Theodosy
Bishop Basil, Secretary	Bishop Nicholas
Metropolitan Antony, Treasurer	Bishop Longin
Metropolitan Iakovos	Bishop Mitrophan
Metropolitan Isaiah	Bishop Maxim
Metropolitan Alexios	Archbishop Nicolae
Metropolitan Nikitas	Bishop Saba
Metropolitan Nicholas	Bishop Daniil
Metropolitan Savas	Metropolitan Tikhon
Bishop Daniel	Archbishop Nathaniel
Bishop Sevastianos	Archbishop Nikon
Bishop Gregory	Archbishop Benjamin
Bishop Thomas	Archbishop Melchisedek
Bishop John	Bishop Mark
Bishop Anthony	Bishop Michael
Bishop Nicholas	Bishop Alexander
Metropolitan Hilarion	Bishop David