

TOMOS

Of the Establishment of the Archdiocese in North and South America

The canonical ordinances and the centuries-old practice of the Church ascribe (Gk. *anagráphō*) the Orthodox communities which are found to be outside the canonical boundaries of the individual Holy Churches of God under the pastoral governance of the Most Holy, Apostolic, Patriarchal, Ecumenical Throne.

Because the Orthodox communities throughout North and South America are disorganized and tumultuous, wherever they continue to be in deviation from the canonical order handed down by the Fathers, they are deemed to be lacking in ecclesiastical and regulative provision, leading to “all things being done decently and in good order,” in accordance with the injunction of the blessed Paul, our Modesty, together with the Most Reverend and Right Honorable Metropolitans, our beloved brothers and co-celebrants in the Holy Spirit, having discussed this need in Synod, we have formed the judgement that these Orthodox parishes should be brought together into one Ecclesiastical Province (Eparchy), bearing the title “Archdiocese,” and they should continue under supervisory jurisdiction, and in regular dependence upon the Most Holy, Apostolic, and Patriarchal Ecumenical Throne as one of Its Metropolises.

For this reason and taking our decision in Synod by the Holy Spirit, we define that from now on all Orthodox communities found in North and South America, and whatever Orthodox ecclesiastical bodies which exist now, or henceforth shall be founded, are to be known as members of one body, namely, the “Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America.”

This Archdiocese, being one of the Metropolises of the Most Holy, Apostolic, and Patriarchal Throne of Constantinople, holding the fifteenth place in the Ordering [of Metropolises], is founded upon the dogmas and the Holy Apostolic and Synodal Canons of the One, Holy, Orthodox, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, and maintains a close bond with the Ecumenical Throne, as do the rest of Its Metropolises, harmoniously joined to It as a living member to the head of a living body.

Due to the need for a more complete pastoral care for the chosen people and a more adequate local ecclesiastical administration, the entire Ecclesiastical Eparchy, that is to say the region of the entire Archdiocese, is subdivided into episcopal jurisdictions, each of which has its own Bishop; thus we recommend four for the present time, namely an Archbishop as one of the bishops considered, necessarily having the cities of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Washington, the seat of the Government of the United States; after that the Dioceses of Chicago, Boston and California.

The Archbishop together with the Bishops, comprise an Eparchial Synod, necessarily meeting twice a year, before Pascha and during the Fall, in accordance with the order of the relevant canons, wherever the Archbishop determines. And this Synod has all the powers and responsibilities that the Holy Canons record for a Synod of an Eparchy, accountable to the Patriarchal Synod of the Metropolitans of the Ecumenical Throne. Among its rights and duties are the election of the Archbishop and the Bishops in the case of widowhood [vacancy] of their thrones [Sees], subsequent to the clear appointment of the first canonical pastors by decision of our Holy Synod, and they submit the vote for approval by the Patriarch, and he ordains the Archbishop, and he issues permission for the ordination of Bishops. For the vote of the Synod [Eparchial], the candidates for the vacant throne are put forward by the permanent Assembly of the vacant

Episcopate consisting of clergy and laity, taken from the list of those electable to the Hierarchy, pre-approved by the Patriarchal Holy Synod. And even after the first filling of [election to] the Episcopal thrones by the decision of our Holy Synod, it happens that there are less than three Bishops, the canonical votes for the election of a Bishop shall be cast in our Patriarchal Synod, voting with the Bishops in America.

Each of the Bishops who shepherds his own community possesses the powers and responsibilities, which the divine and sacred canons and the long-term practice of the Church ascribe to the episcopal office after installation in the Sacred Synthronon [i.e., enthronement]. More specifically, let it be remembered that the rights and duties of each Bishop are to sanctify and establish worship in temples and chapels, to establish in them liturgizing and chanting priests, deacons and other clerics, to care for their common good and governance in all of them with decorum and order, to issue licenses to perform the sacrament of marriage and divorce letters for such that are duly proclaimed as dissolvable, [and] to distribute to the priests the Myrrh of the Holy Chrism received through the Archbishop rather from the Ecumenical Patriarch.

Let there be a Spiritual Court for each Episcopate consisting of two full-ranking priests and that Bishop or his legal deputy, constituted as a court of first instance for all canonical misdeeds of the clergy and the people, including those occurring in the dissolution of marriage bonds according to reasons for divorce that are valid in the Ecumenical Patriarchate. The decisions of the Courts of First Instance may be appealed to a Spiritual Appellate Court, i.e., Archiepiscopal Synod of the Eparch, and from the same to the Patriarchal Synod of the Metropolitans for Nullification.

The priests and deacons must be commemorate their Bishop in the mysteries and services, the Bishops must commemorate the Archbishop, and the Archbishop must commemorate the Patriarch, through whom [the Patriarch] [there is] communion with every Bishop of the Orthodox who rightly divide the word of Christ's truth.

Preserving these ordinances as unshakeable foundations, the Archbishop and the Bishops together with the clergy and the people, have the freedom to incorporate the Orthodox Church in America according to the requirements of the laws of each of the States, under the necessary condition that no provision of the political regulations is antithetical to the teaching or the holy canons of the Holy Orthodox Church, as interpreted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and no parish regulation is valid if it does not bear the approval of the competent Bishop or the Eparchial Synod, and no regulation of the Diocese or of the entire Archdiocese comes into force if it is not first sanctioned by a Synod under the Patriarch.

In a paternal way, we enjoin both the clergy and laity to honor their Bishops and as leaders and spiritual fathers, so they will give an account of their souls, "dutiful and obedient" in accordance with the Apostle's command (Hebrews 13:17), so that they may joyfully carry out the work of the ministry without undue stress.

These things being thus determined and decided, they were synodically ratified as permanent, and as a safeguard of them, this Patriarchal and Synodical Tomos is issued, recorded also in the Codex of our Holy Great Church of Christ.

At the Patriarchate, on the 17th of May 1922.

The Patriarch of Constantinople MELETIOS declares

(the signatures of the Holy Synodical Hierarchs are attached)