

Message of the Episcopal Assembly Of the Canonical Orthodox Hierarchs of North and Central America, May 26-28, 2010



We glorify the name of the Triune God for gathering us at this first Episcopal Assembly of this region in New York City on May 26–28, 2010 in response to the decisions of the Fourth Pre–Conciliar Pan–Orthodox Conference held at the Orthodox Center of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Chambésy, Switzerland, from June 6–12, 2009, at the invitation of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew.

Gathered together in the joy of the Feast of Pentecost, we humbly recognize our calling, in our unworthiness, to serve as instruments and disciples of the Paraclete, who “holds together the whole institution of the Church” (Hymn of Vespers of Pentecost).

We honor and express gratitude to the Primates and Representatives of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches who assembled at the Ecumenical Patriarchate from October 10–12, 2008 to affirm their “unswerving position and obligation to safeguard the unity of the Orthodox Church” (Chambésy Rules of Operation, Article 5.1a) and emphasized their will and “desire for the swift healing of every canonical anomaly that has arisen from historical circumstances and pastoral requirements” (Message of the Primates 13.1–2)

We call to mind those who envisioned this unity in this region and strove to transcend the canonical irregularities resulting for many reasons, including geographically overlapping jurisdictions. For, just as the Lord in the Divine Eucharist is “broken and distributed, but not divided” (Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom), so also His Body comprises many members, while constituting His One Church.

We are grateful for the gift of the doctrinal and liturgical unity that we already share, and we are inspired by our leaders, the Heads of all the Orthodox Churches throughout the world, who proposed that which we painfully yearn for in this region, i.e., the “swift healing of every canonical anomaly” (Message of the Primates 13.2). We are also grateful that they established a fundamental process toward a canonical direction and resolution.

We are thankful to almighty God for the growth of Orthodoxy, for the preservation of our traditions, and for the influence of our communities in this region. This is indeed a miracle and a mystery.

During our gathering, and in accordance with the rules of operation of Episcopal Assemblies promulgated by the Fourth Pan-Orthodox Pre-Conciliar Conference, we established:

1. A registry of canonical bishops (Article 6.1)
2. A committee to determine the canonical status of local communities in the region that have no reference to the Most Holy Autocephalous Churches (Article 6.2)
3. A registry of canonical clergy (Article 6.3)
4. Committees to undertake the work of the Assembly, among others including liturgical, pastoral, financial, educational, ecumenical, and legal issues (Articles 11 and 12)
5. A committee to plan for the organization of the Orthodox of the region on a canonical basis (Article 5.1).

In addition to the above, we agreed that a directory would be created and maintained by the Assembly of all canonical congregations in our region.

We as Episcopal Assembly understand ourselves as being the successors of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA), assuming its agencies, dialogues, and other ministries.

Moreover, at the formal request of the Hierarchs who have jurisdiction in Canada, the Assembly will submit to the Ecumenical Patriarch, in accordance with the rules of operation (Article 13), a request to partition the present region of North and Central America into two distinct regions of the United States and Canada. Additionally, at the request of the Hierarchs who have jurisdiction in Mexico and Central America, the Assembly will likewise request to merge Mexico and Central America with the Assembly of South America.

As Orthodox Hierarchs in this blessed region, we express our resolve to adhere to and adopt the regulations proposed by the Pan-Orthodox Conferences and approved by the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, and to do everything in our power by the grace of God to advance actions that facilitate canonical order in our region.

We confess our fidelity to the Apostolic Orthodox faith and pledge to promote “common action to address the pastoral needs of Orthodox living in our region” (Chambésy, Decision 2c). We call upon our clergy and faithful to join us in these efforts “to safeguard and contribute to the unity of the Orthodox Church of the region in its theological, ecclesiological, canonical, spiritual, philanthropic, educational and missionary obligations” (Article 5.1) as we eagerly anticipate the Holy and Great Council.

The Assembly concluded with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy on Friday, May 28, 2010 at the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Cathedral in New York City. During the Liturgy prayers were offered for the repose of the eleven victims of the current ecological disaster in the Gulf Coast, for the consolation of their families, for all those adversely affected by this catastrophe, as well as for all people living under conditions of war, persecution, violence, and oppression.

Of the sixty-six Hierarchs in the region, the following 55 were present at this Assembly:

Archbishop Demetrios, Chairman

Metropolitan Philip, Vice Chairman

Archbishop Justinian, Vice Chairman

Bishop Basil, Secretary

Archbishop Antony, Treasurer

Metropolitan Iakovos

Metropolitan Constantine

Metropolitan Athenagoras

Metropolitan Methodios

Metropolitan Isaiah

Metropolitan Nicholas

Metropolitan Alexios

Metropolitan Nikitas

Metropolitan Nicholas

Metropolitan Gerasimos

Metropolitan Evangelos

Metropolitan Paisios

Archbishop Yurij

Bishop Christopher

Bishop Vikentios

Bishop Savas

Bishop Andonios

Bishop Ilia

Bishop Ilarion

Bishop Andriy

Bishop Demetrios

Bishop Daniel

Bishop Antoun

Bishop Joseph

Bishop Thomas

Bishop Mark

Bishop Alexander

Metropolitan Hilarion

Bishop Iov

Bishop Gabriel

Bishop Peter

Bishop Theodosius

Bishop George

Bishop Ieronim

Metropolitan Christopher

Bishop Maxim

Archbishop Nicolae

Bishop Ioan Casian

Metropolitan Joseph

Metropolitan Jonah

Archbishop Nathaniel

Archbishop Seraphim

Bishop Nikon

Bishop Tikhon

Bishop Benjamin

Bishop Melchisedek

Bishop Alejo

Bishop Irineu

Bishop Irinee

Bishop Michael