

SCOBA hierarchs issue Orthodox Sunday message

Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA)

February 21, 2010

*Now to Him Who by the power at work within us is able
to do far more abundantly than all that we can ask or think,
to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever.
Amen. (Eph. 3:20-21).*

February 21, 2010 The Feast of the Sunday of Orthodoxy

The Hierarchs of the Standing Conference
of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas

To all the Clergy and the Laity of the Holy Orthodox Churches in the Americas

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We, the Hierarchs of the Standing Conference of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas, greet you on the Feast of the Sunday of Orthodoxy with words of the Holy Apostle Paul that were selected by the Primate of the worldwide Orthodox Church to close their Message proclaimed on October 12, 2008. Indeed, we glory in our God whose love for us exceeds every thought or imagining that could enter our minds or hearts. As the Apostle Paul says in another place: *Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him (I Cor. 2:9).*

In the historic Synaxis and in the Message that was declared by it, the Primate of worldwide Orthodox Christianity proclaimed the following with one voice and one heart:

As the Primate and the Representatives of the Most Holy Orthodox Churches, fully aware of the gravity of the aforementioned problems, and laboring to confront them directly as "servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries" (1 Cor. 4:1), we proclaim from this See of the First-throne among the Churches and we re-affirm: ... our desire for the swift healing of every canonical anomaly that has arisen from historical circumstances and pastoral requirements, such as in the so-called Orthodox Diaspora, with a view to overcoming every possible influence that is foreign to Orthodox ecclesiology. In this respect we welcome the proposal by the Ecumenical Patriarchate to convene Pan-Orthodox Consultations within the coming year 2009 on this subject, as well as for the continuation of preparations for the Holy and Great Council. In

accordance with the standing order and practice of the Pan-Orthodox Consultations in Rhodes (beginning in 1960), all Autocephalous Churches will be invited.

With this common declaration, and the subsequent consensus achieved at the Pan-Orthodox Consultations that took place last year in June and December in Chambésy, Switzerland, the way forward to Orthodox canonical order and unity in the Western Hemisphere has been mapped out in a substantive way. This should be a cause for joy among all the faithful, as it demonstrates the kind of progress that SCOBA has always looked for, but by itself, never could achieve. SCOBA has had great accomplishments in its fifty-year history, and the growth of Pan-Orthodox Agencies and ministries shows the willingness and the need to work together. Nevertheless, SCOBA has always been an organization without the mechanism and authority to forge a comprehensive way forward.

Now we have arrived at a truly watershed moment in the life of the Church in the Western Hemisphere. In the week in which we celebrate the Descent of the Holy Spirit on the glorious Feast of Pentecost, the canonical Orthodox Bishops who live in North and Central America will gather in order to proceed with the roadmap that has been agreed to by world-wide Orthodox Christianity (see material at <http://www.scoba.us/chambesy.html>). The issues are many and complex, but SCOBA is fully committed to the process that will form a successor body, an Assembly of Bishops of the Holy Orthodox Church in the Americas that will have both the authority and methodology to effectuate real progress in the establishment of canonical Church order in the Americas.

This Sunday of Orthodoxy, as we gather throughout our communities and parishes, let us with fervent prayer entreat the Lord of all to grant us His grace and His wisdom. Let us pray for this coming Assembly of Orthodox Christian Bishops, that it will bring forth the fruits of unity and Orthodox faithfulness. Let us pray for the pious and Orthodox Christians everywhere, and for our unity in Christ, *power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we can ask or think, to Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen.*

With paternal blessings and love in Christ,

+Archbishop DEMETRIOS, Chairman
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

+Metropolitan PHILIP, Vice Chairman
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

+Metropolitan CHRISTOPHER, Secretary
Serbian Orthodox Church in North and South America

+Metropolitan NICHOLAS of Amissos, Treasurer
American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese in the USA

+Archbishop NICOLAE
Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas

+Metropolitan JOSEPH
Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Church

+Metropolitan JONAH
Orthodox Church in America

+Metropolitan CONSTANTINE
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA

+Archpriest Alexander Abramov
Acting Representative of the Moscow Patriarchate in the USA

+Bishop ILIA of Philomelion
Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America