



## **Assembly Faces Temporary Withdrawal of Participation by Hierarchs of Patriarchate of Antioch**

Archbishop Demetrios of America, Chairman of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America, has issued the following statement in response to the temporary withdrawal of the Hierarchs of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America from their participation in the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America. The Synod of the Patriarchate of Antioch, in October 2013, decided to temporarily withdraw from all Assemblies of Canonical Orthodox Bishops around the world because of a jurisdictional issue in the Middle East.

The statement of Archbishop Demetrios is as follows:

“We are deeply grieved that this temporary withdrawal has occurred, and we pray for a swift resolution. We hope that the Antiochian faithful who are participating in the many good works under the aegis of the Assembly—the philanthropic activities of IOCC, the prison ministries of OCPM, the college work of OCF, the missionary efforts of OCMC and the work of other Assembly Agencies—will be encouraged to stay involved. While it is true that from time to time throughout the Church’s history jurisdictional issues have caused unintended consequences, we pray that the particulars of this matter, which have nothing to do with the situation here in North and Central America or in other global regions with Assemblies of Bishops, will quickly be resolved. Until such time, the Assembly, as established by a unanimous consent of all the Autocephalous Churches, will continue to serve the faithful and its mission to foster *the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (Ephesians 4:3), and we continue to pray that the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, will guide the work of the Assembly and inspire unfeigned brotherly love among all Orthodox Christians.”

As this action has precipitated the temporary absence of the Secretary, the Chairman of the Assembly has named an interim Secretary, the Very Rev. Archimandrite Nathanael Symeonides, to ensure that the work of the Assembly continues uninterrupted.