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OPEN LETTER TO THE ORTHODOX FAITHFUL FROM THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN LAITY Sunday of Orthodoxy, March 1, 2015

**“... move beyond words to actions...
putting our theology into practice...
moving beyond what is mine and yours, to what is ours.”**

This important message was conveyed by His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to the Assembly of Orthodox Bishops at their fifth official meeting which was held in Dallas, Texas on September 15-19, 2014. Unfortunately, the various proposals that were presented by the bishops defer the establishment of an autocephalous Orthodox Christian Church in the United States of America for at least another ten years.

The Orthodox Christian Laity (OCL) movement has been an outspoken advocate of Orthodox Christian Unity in the United States for more than 25 years. OCL understands that the present existence of multiple, overlapping “jurisdictions” with multiple Bishops presiding over the same territories is contrary to the Orthodox Church Canons. OCL has repeatedly called for the administrative union of the 14 Orthodox “jurisdictions” in the United States under a single Synod of canonical bishops which would elect its own presiding hierarchy.

The Orthodox Church meets the criteria required for an autocephalous church in the United States. There are three theological schools, more than 70 monastic communities, approximately 2,300 parishes, 58 canonical bishops and an estimated three million Orthodox faithful.

The OCL, therefore, respectfully calls upon the Mother Churches and the Assembly of Bishops to hasten their deliberations and seriously consider adopting the following measures:

- Declare that all of the Orthodox parishes in the United States of America are part of an Autocephalous Orthodox Church in the United States of America.
- Declare that the Assembly of Bishops is the Synod of the autocephalous Orthodox Church in the United States of America.
- Convene an Orthodox Assembly of representatives from all canonical Orthodox parishes in the United States of America to debate, modify and adopt measures proposed by the Synod of Bishops for the structure and regulation of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church in the United States of America.
- Submit a proposed structure and regulations adopted by the Orthodox Assembly to each Orthodox parish in the United States of America for review and adoption at a parish assembly held specifically for that purpose.

The OCL Board of Directors commends the Mother Churches who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to call for the convening of Assemblies of Bishops around the world. We pray that our bishops **vigorously** heed the exhortation of His Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew to move beyond what is “mine and yours, to what is ours.” **We encourage the laity to contact their bishops and urge the bishops to adopt these measures.**

Yours in Christ,

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George Pontikes, President

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