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June 28, 2017

**His All Holiness Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople and Ecumenical Patriarch,**  
**Members of the Holy Synod; His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in America and Chairman of the Holy Eparchial Synod; Members of the Holy Eparchial Synod; Members of the Archdiocesan Council of the Archdiocese of America,**

Your All Holiness, Your Eminences and beloved sisters and brothers in Christ:

The recently “widowed” see of the Metropolis of Chicago requires those who are responsible for its future to come to grips with the reality that they are confronting a Church in Crisis. An increasing number of parishes in the Metropolis are experiencing financial difficulties. Stewardship numbers are decreasing, both in terms of people who are leaving and in terms of giving. The rise in fundamentalism throughout the Orthodox World, including some of those who opposed the work of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the decisions of the Holy and Great Council last year in Crete, is a serious issue. In the Metropolis of Chicago, the influence of the Elder Ephraim’s monasteries in parishes and among an increasing number of clergy will be the most critical issue that the new Metropolitan will have to confront.

In the coming days, the Eparchial Synod of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America will meet and agree upon three names among those eligible to fill the position of Metropolitan of the Metropolis of Chicago. Under the procedures of the Archdiocese, a committee of the Archdiocesan Council will have some input in the selection of the three names. Following the Synod’s decision, these names will be forwarded to the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, in Istanbul, Turkey, with an indication of which of the three received the most support of the members of the Eparchial Synod. The final decision rests with the Holy Synod in Istanbul.

Much has already been written, and no doubt more will be written about the attributes the successor to the position of Metropolitan of Chicago should possess. Those qualities and attributes are well known. We will add to the top of those lists what we consider to be of the utmost importance: the Metropolis of Chicago desperately needs a Metropolitan who has not been compromised by the followers of the Elder Ephraim. OCL has called upon the Metropolitans of the Eparchial Synod to enforce the Archdiocese’s Regulations regarding the monasteries under their jurisdictions. The new Metropolitan of Chicago must be both able and willing to confront this issue vigorously and decisively.

When the new Metropolitan is liturgically called “*theobroletos*” (singled out by God) in his *pheme*, we pray that by his actions, he will prove to be worthy of that designation.

Yours in Christ,

*GEORGE D. KARCAZES*  
President, Orthodox Christian Laity

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