



ASSEMBLY OF CANONICAL  
ORTHODOX BISHOPS  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

June 27, 2022

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America  
10 East 79<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York, NY 10075

Your Eminence, Beloved Brother in Christ,

We greet you with our prayers and best wishes in anticipation of the Feast of the holy Chiefs of the Apostles, Peter and Paul.

We, presiding hierarchs of member jurisdictions of our Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the United States of America, write to you, as Chairman of the Assembly, to express our grave concern for the precious unity of the Holy Orthodox Church in this land. It was with pain of heart and great dismay that we learned from Your Eminence of the decision to proceed with the episcopal consecration of Alexander Belya, a former cleric of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, whose canonical discipline and ultimate deposition is accepted and recognized as a canonical action by us all. In addition to our canonical concerns, we have serious questions about his character based on past direct and indirect interactions with him and his family. We feel duty bound as your brothers and concelebrants at the Holy Altar to plead with you and your Patriarchate to reconsider this decision for the sake of our common devotion to Orthodox unity and canonical order.

While we wholeheartedly respect and uphold Your Eminence's right, as the Archbishop of the Greek Archdiocese, to make decisions about the internal order of your jurisdiction, and we fully appreciate the role of the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in choosing candidates whom they deem appropriate for the episcopacy, we ask Your Eminence to consider the wider effect this action will have on the rest of Orthodoxy in the United States. The reality of our overlapping jurisdictions (which is only exacerbated by the proliferation of ethnic vicariates in your Archdiocese) necessarily means that we are all living in the same proverbial pond, and when we make decisions such as these, there are ripple effects that go well beyond our perceived boundaries. Moreover, this action threatens to further erode our Assembly of Bishops and its blessed mission "to safeguard and contribute to the unity of the Orthodox Church" in this land, as expressed in the Article 5.1a of the Rules of the Episcopal Assemblies in the Orthodox Diaspora. As one with a unique responsibility to bring this body together and facilitate its mission, you must feel the weight and seriousness of this threat most acutely.

All of us are concerned about the deterioration in relations between the Most Holy Patriarchates of Constantinople and Moscow that has led to a break in canonical communion and a suspension of the participation of the Moscow Patriarchal Parishes and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia in the work of the Assembly. We must refrain from creating even greater impediments

to the return of our Russian brothers to the Assembly. Moreover, we must flee from any action that risks the broader Pan-Orthodox unity that exists among all of us. As is well known to Your Eminence, many of us officially protested the creation of the so-called Slavic Vicariate precisely because of its consequences for our Orthodox unity and the questions raised about the canonical status of Alexander Belya. There are those of us who have explained to you that we find it impossible to concelebrate with him and the vicariate. Naturally, then, we cannot continue participating in the Assembly itself if this man is elevated to the episcopacy and thereby becomes an Assembly member. With great sorrow, we must question our ability to continue our in-person meetings and precious concelebrations.

Your Eminence, beloved brother in Christ, we worked so hard to increase our unified witness during the days of the pandemic, and because we do not want to take a step back from this, we are compelled to express our unanimous concerns regarding this intended consecration. As we approach the Feast of the Holy Apostles, having celebrated the bestowal of the Holy Spirit—the Paraclete that calls us to unity—we respectfully entreat you and the Ecumenical Patriarchate to reconsider this decision, which imperils the unity for which we yearn.

Asking your prayers for us, we remain with esteem and love,

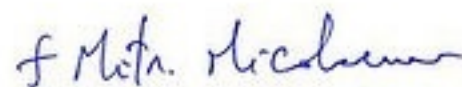
Your brothers and concelebrants,



**Metropolitan Joseph, Vice Chairman**  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America



**Bishop Longin**  
Serbian Orthodox Church in North,  
Central and South America



**Metropolitan Nicolae**  
Romanian Orthodox Metropolia  
of the Americas



**Metropolitan Joseph**  
Bulgarian Eastern Orthodox Diocese  
of the USA, Canada, and Australia



**Metropolitan Tikhon**  
Orthodox Church in America

CC: His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew  
Members of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the USA