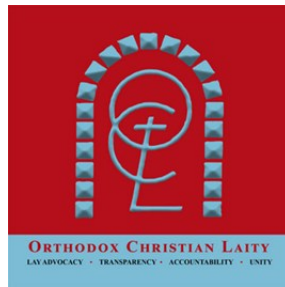


**A Possible Scenario
"The Celebration of the First
Anniversary of the Autocephaly
of the Orthodox Church of the
United States of America"**

By His Eminence,
Archbishop Nathaniel



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*[Text of a presentation delivered by His Eminence,
Archbishop Nathaniel at the Orthodox Christian Laity
Conference, October 20, 2001. Updated May 5, 2025.]*

It has been one year since the recognition of the autocephaly of "The Orthodox Church of The United States of America." The Church now has a unified voice in the person of His Holiness, the Patriarch, and a common forum for action, the Holy Synod of The Orthodox Church of The United States of America and the National Assembly of The Orthodox Church of the United States of America.

In English, Greek, many Slavic tongues, Arabic, Albanian, Romanian, and native languages, chanting of the Service of Thanksgiving as mandated by His Holiness, the Patriarch, in conjunction with the Holy Synod of 51 archbishops and bishops, has been offered up to God without interruption since the signing of the Tomos of Autocephaly.

After over 200 years of presence in the U.S., The Orthodox Church in the United States of America is now united administratively. Although she was, more or less, united in a spiritual union throughout the decades, there is now full sacramental unity, as there

is no division between the sacramental and the administrative aspects as the Holy Canons provide.

With the blessing of the Mother Churches, each ethnic jurisdiction became an autonomous body ("pre-autocephalic" was the name given to this unique state of existence of multi-jurisdictions in the USA), and when all had received this blessing, His Holiness, the Ecumenical Patriarch, in the name of the Church recognized the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of The United States of America.

For more than two hundred years, there had been a gradual coming together of all Orthodox Christians in the United States, working together in public activities such as the Conference of Eastern Orthodox Youth Leaders of America (CEOYLA) and the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of America (SCOBA). Later, International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC), and the Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) were formed. More recently, the Orthodox Youth of The United States of America (OYOUSA), with its various age divisions, and Orthodox Christian Women of The United States of America (OCWOUSA), one of the most active groups, also came into being.

After the proclamation, in each city with a determined number of parishes, a City Council of Orthodox Christian Clergy and Laity (CCOCCL) was established to coordinate common activities and public relations. These form a unit within each State or

Commonwealth, the State Council of Orthodox Christian Clergy and Laity (SCOCCL), with appropriate representation. Its purpose is principally to gather information about the general activities of the City Councils and to propose actions that affect the Church in each State or Commonwealth.

Providing witness and support to the growing unity of the Church were numerous associations, including those of Orthodox physicians, dentists, psychologists, lawyers, politicians, public servants, engineers, architects, physicists, and scientists.

There is a vast network of university professors from all disciplines, elementary and secondary school administrators, and teachers participating in forming our national network of Orthodox Christian Schools.

The clergy associations and clergy wives have regional and national organizations, and even their children have a network between them.

The Church has established its own insurance company, and health and life insurance is available to all Orthodox Christians.

Today, His Holiness has come from Washington, D.C., to dedicate the 100th Senior Citizens Facility. Apartments and Condominiums are being established across the land. Last month, His Holiness and the Permanent Synod dedicated the 51st Orthodox

Hospice for those who have no family support in their final days of life.

The United Orthodox University and College Students Association has been active in our education facilities nationwide. The National Board of Regents, whose honorary head is the Patriarch, comprises outstanding Orthodox Christian laity prominent in national education.

The inauguration of another television network, the sixth since autocephaly, will occur next month. Radio stations, which have also been broadcasting for some time, present unbiased news covering events of importance to Orthodoxy and the world. The Church maintains a broad system of internet connections and rapid forms of communication.

The websites relating to the Church have proliferated with links to every diocese, parish, and monastery, further knitting the Orthodox community closer together. Instructional and educational programs are available, and hundreds of thousands of visits to these websites have occurred since the Tomos.

Special audio and video programs on the sacraments, marriage counseling, preparing to be a Godparent, preparing for death, and many more are available through the City Council. Of course, the chat rooms are incredibly active. It seems that there are sites for everyone. There is a special one for "I used to be an Orthodox Christian" and for those who have left the

Church because of perceived and actual problems. Another is for those who are confused or doubtful about life.

It has been a substantial period of growth for lay catechists, both women and men, who teach courses in all areas of Orthodox Faith and Practice. The Church has blossomed with Orthodox who have renewed their faith, individuals coming into the faith, and those who have been confused and found the true faith. City-wide catechetical programs are established with various clergy and lay presenters under the guidance of the diocesan hierarchy.

Orphanages and homes for children and teens near diocesan centers have begun to bear fruit. A toll-free 800 number serves as an emergency number nationwide and has numerous operations and professional respondents. There is the "Unplanned Parenthood Line," which walks pregnant moms and worried fathers through a process that saves the lives of the unborn and also gives support to these parents. There is the "My Life is Precious to Me" for teens.

"Saint Basil's Workers," established years ago, has taken on new life. In this volunteer association, lay people are trained to visit the sick in hospitals, rehabilitation homes, and at home. In addition to visiting the sick and elderly, they hold vespers at least once a week wherever facilities are made available.

As part of the recognition process and in receiving the blessing from the Church as large, the various pre-autocephalic churches pledged not to neglect the immigrant members of the Church in the United States. For the present, each ethnic jurisdiction has retained its administration while participating in all activities of the entire Church. Administrative unity is principally expressed through the unity of all hierarchs in one Holy Synod.

The National Conference has been held annually for three consecutive years but will likely occur every three years thereafter. Between those three-year intervals, regional conferences are being considered. All things being equal, these matters will be determined over the coming years by the entire Church meeting at various times and on different levels of participation.

All the hierarchs meet together twice a year, as the canons require. The various Metropolitanates, the name given to the former Patriarchal jurisdictions, meet twice a year, at times different from those of the Holy Synod. There is also a Permanent Synod, which meets as required, and the Patriarchal Council, comprised of hierarchs, elected clergy, and laity, meets twice a year, just before the Holy Synod. Currently, this Council is comprised of equal representation from all Metropolitanates.

Although the Metropolitan (jurisdictions) administrations are still in place, there is cooperation

between every parish in towns and cities. Clergy and lay associations meet to supervise the schools, institutions, and general activities of the Church in their area. These clergy-lay associations form regional associations that meet annually and convene in a general council every three years.

This year, our Nation's President will address the assembly and participate in the closing ceremony. At the inauguration of the President last January, His Holiness, the Patriarch, offered the invocation. It was noted in the press that the presence of an Orthodox Christian Patriarch at this ceremony was a first. Even more significant is that the presence of the Patriarch of the United States, the spokesman for millions of American citizens, made a profound impression.

Although the metropolitan administrations continued, another administrative system was established as a normal response to the Tomos of Autocephaly. These are the territorial districts system into which all parishes are included, in addition to being part of their present metropolitan administrations. As new English-speaking missions are established and grow, hierarchs will be ordained to pastor to their needs. In this way, neither the immigrant nor the American-born is neglected. The Church has wisely recognized that to be the Orthodox Church of the United States of America does not mean the suppression of existing ethnic parishes, administrations, and expressions but to sustain what is useful and to create what is essential for the good order of the Church.

The seats of these territorial districts/dioceses will be determined by need. It was decided that the ethnic dioceses would continue with their particular seats. In time, there will be a territorial archbishop with ethnic bishops within his jurisdiction. Where, at this time, there is more than one hierarch in a city, the ethnic dioceses will continue as long as there is an active presence of that ethnic group.

Since the Tomos, there has been a noted increase in people embracing the monastic life. New sketes and monasteries are planned, each within the jurisdiction of the Territorial Districts. There are groups of laity living a form of communal life and who serve the Church in the inner cities, responding to the Beatitudes of our Lord.

The Church/Sunday School System has been revamped because of the steady establishment of new elementary and secondary schools. Instead of each parish having a separate religious school program with its expenses and duplications, city-wide programs have been established. Those who attend public schools have an opportunity to grow in their faith with centralized programs. Thus, the financial and human resource burden has been lifted from each parish and is shouldered by the entire local/city church.

In addition to Orthodox teachings, the rich cultural heritage is maintained by programs established by the Metropolitanates. Wherever requested and sustained, foreign languages are taught, and activities that are

not contrary to the dignity of the Church and which add to the enrichment of our American Orthodox Culture are promoted.

Continuous education programs for the clergy and laity are being established. A central publishing office with regional offices and plants prints many new works. The staff of translators is kept busy translating from many languages into English and vice versa.

The various musical traditions are respected, and schools for directors and cantors provide appropriate training in English and other languages. The publishing of liturgical books is constantly reviewed to keep the liturgical language understandable but also literary and proper to the praise of the Holy Trinity.

Considering the wealth of experience in business and the economic sections, several committees have been formed to give direction to the finances of the Church. There is a network of these committees advising all levels of the structure of the Church. Another benefit of unity is the existence of central purchasing agencies, which can be used to find and make available all kinds of equipment and material needs at a better price.

An Orthodox "Think Tank" has existed almost since day one of the Tomos. The Orthodox Christian understanding of transfiguration allows the Think Tank to research and develop ideas on any topic.

Due to the wealth of experience of our Orthodox Community, the Church is called upon to participate in numerous political, social, and religious dialogues. Many segments of society seek our presence because we have vast experience in multi-cultural living. Our hierarchs are being called upon to be more involved in the general life of the nation. The idea that a bishop is responsible only for his particular ethnic group is being replaced by a new sense of responsibility to all peoples within his diocese.

Our children, meeting at social events, have found joy in knowing they are not a minority or unappreciated. They invite their friends to these events, allowing others to appreciate Orthodox Christianity's values.

As part of the first-year celebration, each diocese that does not already have one will establish Food Kitchens for the poor and open shelter places for those without a bed. The laity has taken the lead in this area and is planning, organizing, staffing, and supporting these hand-outs-from-Christ projects.

Missionary efforts within and outside the country are beginning to expand. Numerous "retirees" have discovered within themselves a burning desire to reach out to others with the Orthodox way of life. They are missionaries around the world.

We have not forgotten our roots and offer the Sister Churches numerous gifts of goods and services, but only if they have a need and request. On the other

hand, the tradition of the Church in America, from long before the Tomos, was one of sharing the many blessings with which we have been blessed, and we must do the same now in the name of Christ.

His Holiness has expressed appreciation to those communities that have initiated "Centers for Orthodox Christian Studies." The centers are a kind of amalgamation of ministries for charity, religious renewal and restoration, and education. The entire local Orthodox population supports them, and they are known throughout the cities as representing the unity of the Orthodox Church.

The Church initiated a national central library six months ago. Some discussions have mentioned establishing one seminary to educate our clergy in the same spirit. Similar to the university style in Europe, the Church plans to establish a central school with various ethnic colleges so that universal theological training will knit the clergy together and ensure that particular needs for ethnic immigration are properly insured.

There is a new board reviewing the lives of American Orthodox to ascertain if we are not already venerating some whose lives are worthy to be recognized as holy.

The cornerstone for our National Cathedral will be laid during this next year. His Holiness has asked us to pray and fast for that day so that God will accept this new temple as a sign of our humility before him and

not a sign of pride. It will be in the Greater Washington area. Thus, the celebration of the first anniversary of our Autocephaly and the establishment of the Patriarchate is being commemorated.

A note to the reader: This "Possible Scenario" does not point out the spiritual blessings that the faithful will reap from establishing the Autocephaly of the Orthodox Church in The United States. We intended to focus on the practical blessings that would result and to offer some possible ways by which the structure of the Church might be considered, in the hope that those who say that it is not time for autocephaly or there is no structure will consider that communication will be foremost in finding solutions to a real scenario.



His Eminence, Archbishop Nathaniel

**Ruling Hierarch of
The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America**

Advisor, friend, and advocate of OCL for 25 years

**What would an administratively unified,
self-governing Orthodox Church of
America accomplish?**

- Unite the current administratively-fragmented, ethnically-divided Church, which violates the sacred canons of Orthodox Christianity.
- Curb the exodus of Orthodox Christians and their children, who leave because of widespread cultural and social problems that the Church is unwilling or unable to address.
- Help meet the challenge of the Church's Apostolic mission in America to live out and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ within the context of Orthodoxy and to teach and baptize.
- Reduce the wasteful duplication of time, talent and financial resources needed to maintain separate institutions, theological schools, administrative structures and outreach programs.
- Allow several million Orthodox Christians to speak with one voice in America, addressing social, political, religious and ethical issues.

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