

My Beloved Ones,

I am writing to you during a very active time in the life of our Metropolis. I have just returned from Detroit, where I was blessed to be a part of the 7th Annual Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops, which includes all Orthodox Bishops from across the United States, whether they are Greek, Russian, Antiochian, what have you. Over the course of the past six years we come up with ideas to “unify” our churches. I use the word unify in quotations for you to understand that I am speaking from a legal, or a layman’s perspective. Ecclesiastically, we are all united through the Common Cup.

There can sometimes be a tendency though, whether we are Greek, Romanian or Russian, to put a great emphasis on culture and language. For this reason, to have almost 50 different bishops—some born in America, some born in Bulgaria or Romania, or even Greece, you can understand how difficulties might arise. In order for us to overcome these difficulties, we have to open a dialogue.

However, it is not enough to have a dialogue. Another necessary element is spiritual: we pray. However, our prayers alone are not enough; we need the prayers of you the layman, for the unity of the Orthodox in America to go forward together. For in many respects, the different churches are dividing themselves: the Russians have an educational institution, as do the Antiochians, and so do the Greeks. And while St. Vladimir’s St. Stephen’s and Holy Cross are all marvelous, in many ways I see this as a path in which more is really less: why should there be three institutes of higher theological learning, when we could unite under one spiritually awesome institute?

As we gathered to discuss ways in which to grow together, I also look ahead to next week’s Eparchial Synod of our own Greek Orthodox Bishops in New York, to reflect on the life of our Church. This meeting will be the first gathering since the Synod was restructured at Clergy-Laity. Following these important meetings, the end of the week shall see the installation of the new Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on Saturday, and then on Sunday we shall gather together at the magnificent Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity to pray together as Hierarchs and Brothers in the Lord.

I sincerely ask you to pray for me, and for all the Orthodox Hierarchs in America, regardless of culture or language. While we in this Metropolis should absolutely be proud of our Greek culture and heritage, we should not allow it to risk separating ourselves from anyone, especially from our fellow brothers and sisters who hold different traditions; for we are all one in Jesus Christ

+ALEXIOS
Metropolitan of Atlanta

