



## SYNODAL AFFIRMATION OF AUTOCEPHALY

**B**Y THE Grace of God, the Holy Synod of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America (HOCNA) affirms the following:

Having received the grace of apostolic succession from the True Orthodox Church of Greece under the presidency of the ever-memorable Archbishop Auxentius of Athens, the Holy Orthodox Church in North America has functioned as a canonical, self-administering ecclesial body for over a quarter-century.

A review of several milestones in the history of our Church will make evident this canonical independence.

- In 1988, Archbishop Auxentius and the bishops with him consecrated Hieromonk Ephraim suffragan bishop for the flock in North America, granting him a self-governing, autonomous status, with some supervision over ordinations.
- In 1990, His Beatitude granted Bishop Ephraim permission to act independently in this and all other matters.
- In 1991, Hieromonk Makarios was consecrated suffragan bishop of Toronto.
- In 1993, the Holy Synod of Archbishop Auxentius appointed these hierarchs ruling bishops, elevated them to the rank of Metropolitan, and blessed them to organize church life in North America in full independence.
- Following the repose of Archbishop Auxentius in 1994, the Holy Orthodox Church in North America continued to function independently by electing and consecrating several more hierarchs, thus further solidifying its canonical self-governance.
- In 2013, the Holy Orthodox Church in North America, then headed by Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston, entered into full Communion as Sister Churches with another autocephalous ecclesial body, that of the True Orthodox Church of Greece under Archbishop Makarios of Athens.
- In 2015, the Holy Synod of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America accepted the retirement of Metropolitan Ephraim of Boston and unanimously elected Bishop Gregory of Brookline as First Hierarchy and President of the Holy Synod, elevating his title to that of Metropolitan of Boston.

It is therefore evident that the Holy Orthodox Church in North America has exercised the following prerogatives over the past two decades: its bishops have regularly met in synod; its hierarchy has elected and consecrated its own bishops; it has entered into Communion with other Orthodox Churches; it has elected its own First Hierarch. Throughout this entire time, it has functioned as a de facto autocephalous Church, independent and self-governing, without the need for appeal to any higher canonical authority.

The unprecedented historical circumstances in which we now live – one in which the sees that once constituted the Orthodox Church have fallen into the heresy of ecumenism and in which the political structures assumed by many of the Holy Canons have disappeared – have necessitated a return to the earliest canonical practices of the Church. The great twelfth-century canonist Theodore Balsamon, in his commentary on Canon 2 of the Second Ecumenical Council (381), states that “formerly all the metropolitans of eparchies were autocephalous and were ordained by their own synods.” In order to define our canonical prerogatives as the Holy Orthodox Church in North America, a territory not canonically dependent upon any other Church, it is to this original understanding of autocephaly that we must return.

Bearing all this in mind, and acknowledging that autocephaly is the canonical norm of church organization, we, the Holy Synod of the Holy Orthodox Church in North America, do hereby explicitly affirm that we constitute a fully autocephalous Locally-Established Church (*κατά τόπον Ἐκκλησίαν*). As such, we reaffirm that, like any other autocephalous Church, the Holy Orthodox Church in North America possesses, among others, the following rights, many of which it has been exercising for decades:

- To elect our own First Hierarch who, in accordance with our local tradition, shall hold the title of Metropolitan of Boston (a position equivalent in rank to that of Archbishop in modern Greek practice and to that of Metropolitan in Russian practice) who retains all privileges accorded to the Primate of a Locally-Established Church;
- To elect and consecrate our own bishops;
- To settle our own doctrinal, canonical, moral, liturgical, administrative, and disciplinary affairs;
- To consecrate our own Chrism;
- To glorify our own saints;
- To be included among the diptychs as an autocephalous Church.

In conclusion, we raise our hearts in thankfulness to our Saviour for the great blessing and calling of tending the vineyard entrusted to us and, re-

peating the words we speak each time we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, we pray: "Lord, O Lord, look down from Heaven and behold and visit this vine, and perfect that which Thy right hand hath planted." Amen.

Signed in the city of Boston  
on the Sunday After the Exaltation of the Cross,  
September 19 / October 2, 2016.

*+ Gregory, Metropolitan of Boston*

+ Gregory, Metropolitan of Boston, President of the Holy Synod

*+ Makarios Metropolitan of Toronto*

+ Makarios, Metropolitan of Toronto

*+ Ignatius Metropolitan of Seattle*

+ Ignatius, Metropolitan of Seattle

*+ Ephraim, retired Metropolitan of Boston*

+ Ephraim, Retired Metropolitan of Boston

*+ Andrew, Bishop of Markham*

+ Andrew, Bishop of Markham

*+ Chrysostomos, Bishop of Lanham*

+ Chrysostomos, Bishop of Lanham