RESOLUTION ON ORTHODOX UNITY

As the 21st century begins, there are many signs that the desire for Orthodox unity is growing among Orthodox Christians in North America. This yearning is based on Orthodox tradition and faith and on Orthodox experience in America. Orthodox tradition and faith clearly and unambiguously require canonical unity. According to the Orthodox theological and canonical tradition, in each place there must be only one Orthodox bishop, and in each country or region there must be one fully united Orthodox Church, with one hierarchy in one Holy Synod. Orthodox experience in America shows that Orthodox mission, to be fully credible and effective, requires unity.

Orthodox witness in North America and Orthodox unity in North America have a direct bearing on the witness of Orthodox Churches in Europe and the Middle East. Orthodox Christians in North America bear witness to the Orthodox faith in the context of western democratic society and in the context of western secular culture. Since the historic centers of the Orthodox Church are in Europe and the Middle East, the Orthodox faith is often perceived as a faith, which is limited to regional cultural boundaries. The vitality and unity of Orthodoxy in America show that Orthodoxy is not limited by cultural or historical or linguistic boundaries, that Orthodoxy is a universal faith, which welcomes all peoples and cultures.

The autocephaly of the Orthodox Church in America, a precious gift received in 1970 from the Church of Russia, was never intended to be an end in itself. The Orthodox Church in America, in its autocephaly, received the mandate and challenge to seek full Orthodox unity in America. The 13th All-American Council hereby reaffirms the commitment of the Orthodox Church in America to Orthodox unity.

We welcome and affirm the work of all co-operative inter-Orthodox agencies established at the initiative of the Standing Conference of Orthodox Canonical Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA).

We are grateful for the witness to unity made by the Orthodox hierarchs of America when they met in a bishops' conference convened by the SCOBA in Washington, DC, in May 2001.

We welcome the blessing given by the Holy Synod of Antioch to the desire of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America to be granted autonomy.

We welcome the commitment of the Church of Romania to the autonomy of its Archdiocese in America, expressed most recently in the canonical process for the election and consecration of a new Archbishop of this Archdiocese, and we welcome the participation of Metropolitan Theodosius, Archbishop Nathaniel, and Bishop Seraphim in the consecration of Archbishop Nicolae, at which Patriarch Teoctist presided.

We affirm each and every initiative which strengthens Orthodox unity and Orthodox mission in America.

We are nevertheless aware that much remains to be accomplished. We affirm the leadership of the Primate and Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America. We affirm the initiatives and goodwill of the hierarchs of the SCOBA. We appeal to the Orthodox patriarchs and primates to give leadership and guidance to the movement towards Orthodox unity in America. A credible response to the challenge of Orthodox unity in America will re-affirm the catholicity of the Orthodox Church and will manifest the vitality of the Orthodox faith.

RESOLUTION ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

WHEREAS the peoples of North America suffered unprecedented injury at the hands of evil men who brought down catastrophe and death upon thousands of unarmed civilians and great devastation upon our cities on September 11, 2001; and

WHEREAS, all acts of terror and violence, whether committed by nations or individuals, are to be deplored and condemned; and

WHEREAS, brave and good people stepped forward to help and save others under attack, even at the cost of their own lives, fulfilling the Gospel of love; and

WHEREAS, we are deeply affected by the pain and grief of all who suffer violence and war, and look for healing to Christ, Who is our peace; and

WHEREAS, we are called by our Lord, Jesus Christ, to return good for evil, to forgive and love our enemies, to pray for those who hate us and do us harm, and to acknowledge and repent our own sins; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED by this 13th All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America:

that we honor the memory of the victims and heroes who died in the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001;

that we continue to show our compassion and loving support to survivors of those attacks, and to all victims of terror and violence everywhere;

that we condemn and reject all forms of violence and terrorism;

that we forgive and love our enemies and pray for them;

that we strive to make peace, as children of God;

and that we seek the peace of Christ for all mankind.

RESOLUTION ON THE MIDDLE EAST

The violent conflict in the Middle East continues to inflict death, suffering, and destruction on Israelis and Palestinians alike. Jews, Christians, and Muslims - all of whom regard Jerusalem as a Holy City - are caught up in a cycle of violence, which appears to have no end, making it a mockery to speak of the "peace of Jerusalem." Every day innocent and peaceful people die alongside people of violence. Again and again, small signs of potential negotiation and comprise are buried in the rubble of explosions and drowned in the blood of the dead and wounded. As President George W. Bush observed many weeks ago, we see "the death of the future" when we witness the violent deaths of young Palestinians and young Israelis.

The 13th All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America, with the blessing of the hierarchs of the Holy Synod, asks all members of the Orthodox Church in America to offer fervent prayers for peace with justice in the Middle East, for the suffering Palestinians and Israelis, and for all those who are fearful and without hope.

We appeal to governments and international organizations to engage fully in efforts towards a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We appeal for an end to the Israeli policy of settlements and for an end to the Israeli policy of massive retaliation, often against innocent people.

We appeal for an end to the Palestinian terrorist bombings against all innocent Israeli civilians.

Finally, we note with deep concern the prevailing perception that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict affects and involves only Jewish and Muslim religious communities. Even Christian pilgrims to the Holy Land have centered their attention only on the Holy Places, and have ignored the living and indigenous Christian communities. As a result, Christians in the Middle East are increasingly rendered invisible. Christian emigration from the region is constant. This especially affects the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

We appeal to the government of Israel to grant its official recognition to His Beatitude, Irenaios, as Patriarch of Jerusalem.

We support every effort of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem to offer a stronger response to the pastoral and human needs of its Palestinian Orthodox Christian faithful.

We appeal to governments, international organizations, and media to be attentive to all the historical and religious dimensions of the Middle East, and thus give due recognition to the integrity, viability, and legitimate interests and concerns of the Christian communities in the region.

RESOLUTION ON SEXUAL ABUSE

WHEREAS the scandal of sexual abuse by clergy, recently reported so extensively in the media, has highlighted the devastation of human lives which sexual abuse causes, particularly when this has been accompanied by a policy of secretiveness and concealment; and

WHEREAS the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America in 1994 acted promptly, publicly, and forcefully in publishing appropriate guidelines and directives in this area, with the major focus on crimes involving minors; and

WHEREAS the Orthodox Church in America at all levels - Holy Synod, diocese, parish - is fully committed to timely, compassionate, just, and effective response to all allegations of sexual abuse; and

WHEREAS the response of the Orthodox Church in America must continue to be sober and just, in conformity with divine and civil law, avoiding both secretiveness and sensationalism;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Orthodox Church in America, while responding to allegations of sexual abuse, address the broader concerns of sin and of the impact of an increasingly licentious culture, especially on youth.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that constant vigilance be maintained to assure that the guidelines and directives already issued continue to be studied and implemented by all the faithful, particularly those involved in any way with our youth.

RESOLUTION CONCERNING ISSUES RAISED BY CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN BIOMEDICAL TECHNOLOGY

WHEREAS the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America has formally expressed its unqualified respect for the sacredness and sanctity of human life from its inception; and

WHEREAS the Holy Synod of Bishops has already published official statements condemning embryonic stem cell research and the cloning of human embryos; and

WHEREAS certain advances in medical technology are increasingly threatening the sanctity of human life at its beginning (anomalous reproductive techniques including cloning) and at its end (physician-assisted suicide, euthanasia);

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the 13th All-American Council of the Orthodox Church in America urge the following:

- 1. that educational resources be developed to inform our faithful of the moral implication of these new technologies;
- 2. that qualified Orthodox Christians speak out in the public forum through the media, by contacting legislators, and by all other appropriate means - in order to make known the position of the Orthodox Church with regard to these biomedical issues;
- 3. that the Medical-Ethics Committee of the Orthodox Church in America be expanded to include qualified medical professionals who can assess these developments and provide information concerning their moral implications; and
- 4. that the Holy Synod of Bishops continue to publish statements and related information expressing the moral concern of the Orthodox Church regarding the unacceptable manipulation of human life from its inception through death.

RESOLUTION ON MENTORING NEWLY ORDAINED PRIESTS

WHEREAS the seminarian summer internship program which was initiated and funded in a Church-wide initiative at the 12th All-American Council has proved to be an outstanding success; and

WHEREAS the program has immeasurably benefited not only many seminarians but also the sponsoring parishes and mentoring priests; and

WHEREAS the model of practical pastoral formation achieved between a newly ordained priest and an experienced mentoring priest extends through the entire history of our Church, complementing other forms of theological and pastoral training;

BE IT RESOLVED that, between this 13th All-American Council and the 14th All-American Council, the Metropolitan Council and church administration, in consultation with the seminaries, and building upon the success of the existing seminarian summer internship program, explore ways to support newly ordained priests in a structured internship program of practical pastoral mentoring for an extended period of time following completion of formal theological studies.

RESOLUTION CONCERNING THE RETIREMENT OF METROPOLITAN THEODOSIUS

WHEREAS we the hierarchs, priests, deacons, monastics and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America have received an abundance of blessings through the ministry of God's servant, our beloved Metropolitan THEO-DOSIUS.

BE IT RESOLVED that the 13th All-American Council express its deepest gratitude and appreciation to His Beatitude, Metropolitan THEODOSIUS on the occasion of his retirement from his primatial duties, assuring him of the continued love, fervent prayers and abiding respect of all the clergy and faithful of the Orthodox Church in America.

RESOLUTION ON THE QUEEN'S JUBILEE

WHEREAS Canada is a part of the canonical territory of the Orthodox Church in America; and

WHEREAS this year of the Lord 2002 marks the golden jubilee of Her Majesty Elizabeth II;

BE IT RESOLVED that the 13th All-American Council that we offer on behalf of the Orthodox Church in America best wishes to Her Majesty for many blessed years.