



The HOLY SYNOD
of the
ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

April 3, 2015

To the Clergy, Monastics and Faithful of the Orthodox Church in America:

At its most recent session, the Holy Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America heard a report from the Statute Revision Task Force and an update on the progress of the ongoing Church-wide review of the revisions initiated on February 20, 2015.

At the request of the Task Force, the Holy Synod considered several specific items and made decisions within its competency related to the title of the Metropolitan, the title of the Metropolitan's diocese and the requirements for election to the Primatial Office. These decisions are reflected in the revised document which is being posted in conjunction with this present letter and are explained in more detail in a letter from the Task Force.

The Holy Synod also carefully considered suggestions that the time allotted for Church-wide review is insufficient. While the Holy Synod carefully weighed the legitimate concerns presented, it nevertheless confirmed:

- That the current review and amendment process would continue, leading to the consideration of the Revised Statute by the All American Council in Atlanta.
- That the consideration of the adoption of the Revised Statute will appear and remain on the agenda of that All American Council.
- That the Revised Statute in its form after the current review and amendment process will be mailed out and posted online in advance of the 60-day requirement of Article XIII of the current Statute.
- That the Revised Statute, as previously stated, will be considered by the All-American Council as whole through an "up and down" vote and not *seriatim* (article by article or section by section), this in accordance with the requirements of the existing Statute of the Orthodox Church in America.
- That no amendment to the proposed Revised Statute in the form which it may take at the conclusion of the current review and amendment process will be permitted to be made by any delegate to the All-American Council from the floor, this in accordance with the requirements of the existing Statute of the Orthodox Church in America.

Several important principles were taken into consideration in the Holy Synod's decision to continue the process in the above manner.

- The current Statute of the Orthodox Church in America is the result of an evolutionary process that stretches back to the first *Sobor* of the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church in America in 1907. Since that time, the Church has adopted a provisional constitution (at the First All-American Council on October 20-22, 1970), the First Statute (at the special All-American Council held October 19-21, 1971) and periodic amendments at numerous All-American Councils.
- While the 1970 All-American Council did face the daunting task of building its Statute “from scratch,” this is not the situation that faces us today. Every institutional body and member of the Church has had, and continues to have, the opportunity to consider and propose further amendments to the Statute. The present Revision represents little more than a good faith effort to bring the Statute of the Church into line with the actual practice of Church governance as we know it today.
- While the consideration of the proposed Revision as an “up and down” proposal may not be palatable to some, it is the procedure mandated by Article XIII of our existing Statute and is likewise supported by parliamentary law.
- There is nothing in the proposed Revised Statute that excludes the consideration of further and future amendments, perhaps of an even more substantive character, at future All-American Councils.

The Statute Revision Task force has completed its work and the Holy Synod offers its profound thanks to Archbishop Nathaniel and the entire team for their work. Now it falls to the Commission on Statutes and Canons to continue this good work and to further review the various comments and suggestions that have been received to date. There is still some time to offer input on the current Statute Revision as well as opportunity for all to reflect on any further amendments that might be considered at future All American Councils.

The Holy Synod feels very strongly that the upcoming 18th All-American Council in July 2015 will be a turning point in the life of the Orthodox Church in America. Many of our recent Councils have been held in the context of crisis. It seems clear to us that we have now entered a period of relative stability in which the Church as a whole has the opportunity to focus on the practical and real ways in which we may “expand the mission,” that is, undertake the missionary, educational and spiritual work that is our calling as Orthodox Christians.

This apostolic work cannot be delayed and is by no means dependent on the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America. However, the Statute provides a crucial framework within which our work can proceed and we strongly urge our dioceses, parishes and institutions to continue to reflect upon the proposed Statute Revision in light of their local mission and ministries.

May the Holy Spirit continue to guide us in discerning His will for the Church now and in the days and years to come.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



†Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada