

ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

The Most Reverend Metropolitan Ireney, Primate

59 East Second Street
New York, N.Y. 10003

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AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE AUTOCEPHALOUS ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA AND THE ALBANIAN ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE IN AMERICA, INC.

Agreement made this 14th day of October 1971, between the Orthodox Church in America, formerly known as the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of America, acting through its plenipotentiary, His Beatitude Metropolitan Primate IRENEY and the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc., acting through its plenipotentiary, His Grace, Bishop Stephen.

PREAMBLE

Whereas, the Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church of America was legally and canonically granted autocephalous status and thus has become the Orthodox Church in America; and

Whereas, this historic event is considered the most constructive step towards the establishment of a unified Orthodox Church in America; and

Whereas, the clergy and lay delegates of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. in their annual Convention held on July 4, 1971, at Boston, Massachusetts, have confirmed their determination to support the movement towards the establishment and consolidation of the unity of the Orthodox Church on the North American Continent; and authorized by resolution the execution of the within agreement; and

Whereas, the Orthodox Church in America recognizes as its task to unite all the Orthodox Christians of America into One Church; and

Whereas, the Orthodox Church in America believes that the unity of Orthodox Churches in America in conformity with the canonical order of the Church is possible only by free consent; and

Whereas, the Orthodox Church in America recognizes that canonical unity does not mean suppression of particular national traditions and is not based on the predominance of one national tradition, but on the cooperation of all in love for the good of the One Church;

NOW, THEREFORE, the parties hereto, in consideration of the premises and the mutual covenants hereinafter set forth, do hereby agree as follows:

ARTICLE I

The Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. acknowledges and accepts the Orthodox Church in America as the sole Autocephalous Orthodox Church in America.

ARTICLE II

1. The parties hereto agree that the canonical jurisdiction of the Autocephalous Orthodox Church in America includes the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. and its parishes.
2. It is further mutually agreed that the canonical jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church in America over the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. manifests itself as follows:
 - a. The Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. will receive the Holy Chrism and the Holy Relics from the Primate;
 - b. The name of the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America will be elevated during the Divine Services by the Bishop of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc.;
 - c. The Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America is the highest spiritual authority in all canonical matters;
 - d. The Primate upon canonical confirmation by the Synod of Bishops as provided on Article III, par. b, will consecrate the Bishop-elect of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc.;
 - e. The Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America in its judicial session will act as the Court of Final Appeals in all cases originating in the Diocesan Court of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc.;
 - f. All complaints against the persons of the Bishops of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. are within the competence of the Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America.

ARTICLE III

Regarding the administration of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. the Orthodox Church in America agrees to the following conditions:

- a. The Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. shall be governed as a distinct administrative unit in accordance with its own Constitution and By-Laws, customs and traditions;
- b. The Bishops of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. are elected from among the nominees canonically approved by the Synod of Bishops by the Annual/Special Convention of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. in accordance with its own By-Laws and practices;
- c. The parishes under the jurisdiction of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. are and shall remain under the direct jurisdiction of the Bishop of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc.;
- d. The Annual Convention of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. is the sole legislative body of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. having the right to approve and amend the Constitution and By-Laws of the Archdiocese, provided that such amendments do not contradict any of the terms of this agreement;

- e. The Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. may have and/or maintain its own official organ and its own diocesan publications;
- f. The Orthodox Church in America further agrees that it will not, directly or indirectly, at any time or in any way assert any claim to any right, title or interest in any of the properties of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc., its parishes and its affiliated institutions.

ARTICLE IV

The Orthodox Church in America and the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. mutually agree that:

- a. The Bishop or Bishops of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. are ex-officio members of the Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America;
- b. There shall be no intermediary administrative authority between the Primate and the Synod and the head of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc.;
- c. For the purpose of electing the Primate of the Orthodox Church in America, the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. shall have the right to participate in the All-American Assembly with delegates in the same proportionate number as any other participating Diocese;
- d. The external and ecumenical relations of the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. shall be conducted through active participation in the Central Department of External Affairs of the Orthodox Church in America;
- e. The Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. shall fully participate through official appointees of its governing bodies in the works of all departments and commissions established by the Orthodox Church in America for the general welfare, progress and mission of the Church;
- f. The financial contribution to the Central Administration of the Orthodox Church in America by the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America, Inc. shall be proportional to its participation in the workings of the Departments and Commissions of the Church as will be mutually determined from time to time by both parties.

ARTICLE V

The ratification of this Agreement will be subject to the following procedural steps:

1. The Agreement shall be executed in duplicate by His Beatitude Metropolitan IRENEY of the Orthodox Church in America, and His Grace, Bishop Stephen;

2. After execution, the executed copies will be submitted for ratification to the Synod of Bishops of the Orthodox Church in America.

+ Metropolitan Ireny

+ Stephen

+ IRENEY,
Archbishop of New York,
Metropolitan of All America
and Canada

+ STEPHEN,
Bishop of the Albanian Orthodox
Orthodox Archdiocese in
America, Inc.