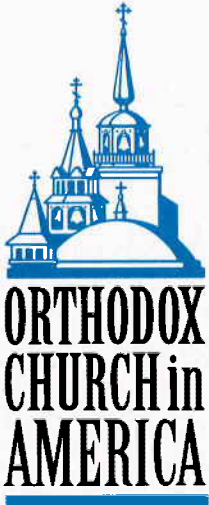


Metropolitan Tikhon, Primate

March 14, 2013

His Holiness Pope Francis
Apostolic Palace
Vatican City State, 00120
Italy



Your Holiness:

It is with joy that I convey to You the congratulations of the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church in America on the occasion of Your election as Pope.

You enter Your ministry at a time of many challenges to the Christian faith and the Christian vision of life. In North America we are confronted by these challenges daily. We have in America a close relationship with the Catholic Church, offering witness to the Gospel of Christ in the face of the erosion of Christian values in society.

Your example as Archbishop of Buenos Aires has told the world that Your commitment is to the Gospel of Christ, its truth and its love. Your witness during Your first steps as Pope confirms this commitment strongly and without reservation.

We pray for Your Holiness, for Your ministry and mission. May the blessings of holiness and prayer strengthen You as You guide the Catholic Church in its pilgrimage.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Tikhon
Archbishop of Washington
Metropolitan of All America and Canada

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