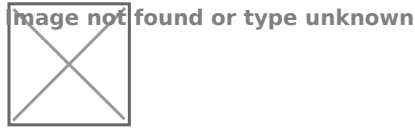


Joint Communiqué: Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America



Assembly of Bishops

NEW YORK – With gratitude to our Risen Lord Jesus Christ, the Hierarchs of the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches and of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America gathered in fraternal love and prayer on Friday, April 25, 2025, at Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine at Ground Zero in New York City.

This sacred occasion, which began with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, for the Feast of the Life-Giving Spring of the Theotokos (Zoodochos Peghe), marked a renewed commitment between the Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches to walk together on the path of reconciliation and unity. This spirit of unity was eloquently captured in the homily of Archbishop Titus Yeldho, who affirmed, “We are continuously asked by our faithful so many questions to which the Holy Church needs to provide convincing answers. Hence it is our duty to support each other in providing the pastoral care that our members need. I humbly hope and pray that today’s service be another step in the direction of a full communion among all the Orthodox Churches.” This renewed ecumenical commitment was further deepened by the shared celebration of Pascha/Easter this year, offering a powerful hope and witness to the saving sacrifice and resurrection of Christ. As Saint Paul wrote: “The truth is that Christ has been raised from death, as the guarantee that those who sleep in death will also be raised” (1 Corinthians 15:20).

Following the opening prayer and a word of welcome by Protopresbyter Andreas Vithoulkas, Archbishop Elpidophoros of America offered opening remarks, declaring, “Hence, the importance of our meeting today – especially in the Bright Week that glorifies the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Coming together in solidarity, to listen to one another and hear each other’s concerns, conveys a

fortitude to us that we do not have on our own... Between our communities, there is virtually identity of faith and even most practices, but we are called to cultivate even deeper relationships that are based in brotherly love and mutual support.” He was followed by Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, who stated, “Unity is a gift from God. Let us not misinterpret it. Let us get united.”

After listening to a report from Archbishop Dionysios John Kawak on updates and recent developments, the hierarchs also heard a presentation from Dr. Gary Vachicouras regarding the current state of the International Dialogue. Then, they turned their attention to the pressing challenges faced by young people and society at large. They discussed opportunities for deeper collaboration in youth ministry and theological education, affirming the value of sharing resources, faculty, and best practices across seminaries, youth programs, and parishes.

In order to foster a continued conversation, the hierarchs welcomed presentations by Dr. Christopher Krampe of the Orthodox Youth and Young Adult Ministry, and Rev. Anastasi St. Antony of the Coptic Orthodox Diocese of New York and New England, who shared insights on youth-related initiatives.

While acknowledging that formal theological dialogue between the Churches has reached its conclusion, the hierarchs reaffirmed their commitment to cultivating an ethos of reconciliation and solidarity on a pastoral level.

The discussion on theological education included contributions from:

Abraham Azmy, Dean, Holy Sophia Coptic Orthodox Theological Seminary

Mardiros Chevian, Dean, St. Nersess Armenian Seminary

Demetrios Katos, President, Hellenic College–Holy Cross

John Parker, Dean, St. Tikhon’s Orthodox Theological Seminary

Rev. Fadi Rabbat, Dean, Antiochian House of Studies

The hierarchs approved the establishment of a joint taskforce to identify potential areas for deeper collaboration and invited the theological schools to explore new ways and opportunities to strengthen their relationships.

The hierarchs also lifted fervent prayers for peace and justice in the Middle East, in Artsakh (Nagorno-Karabakh), in Ukraine, the Horn of Africa, the Sundanese region and in all places afflicted by violence, persecution, and war. Their gathering came just one day after the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, in which over a million Armenians—alongside Syriacs and Greeks—were martyred for their faith and heritage.

The meeting concluded with joyful anticipation of the 1700th anniversary of the

First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea (325). The hierarchs recognized this historic milestone as a providential opportunity to reaffirm the Nicene faith, which forms the shared foundation of both Oriental and Eastern Orthodox Churches, and to bear collective witness to the light of the risen Christ in today's world.

The hierarchs participating in the meeting were:

Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches:

Archbishop Dionysios John Kawak, Patriarchal Exarch, Syriac Orthodox Archdiocese of the Eastern United States

Archbishop Titus Yeldho, Malankara Archdiocese of the Syrian Orthodox Church in North America

Archbishop Silvanos Ayub, Malankara-Syriac Knanaya Archdiocese of America, Canada, and Europe

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, Diocese of the Armenian Church of America

Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church in America (Eastern)

Archbishop Petros, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, Archdiocese of New York and its Affiliated Regions

Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Churches of the USA

Archbishop Elpidophoros, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Metropolitan Saba, Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

Bishop Irinej, Serbian Orthodox Church-Diocese of Eastern America

Metropolitan Tikhon, Orthodox Church in America

Archbishop Michael, Orthodox Church in America (Treasurer)

Christ is Risen! Truly, He is Risen!

Photo: Orthodox Observer/Dimitrios Panagos.

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