The 6th Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA concludes in Chicago

September 15-17, 2015 – The 6th Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA, who carry out their pastoral service in that region, took place in Chicago, Illinois. It was attended by 45 hierarchs representing the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Antioch, Moscow, Georgia, Serbia, Romania, Bulgaria, and the Orthodox Church in America.

The assembly considered a plan of possible canonical order of Orthodox jurisdictions in the USA. It was prepared by the Committee for Canonical Regional Planning. Representatives of all the jurisdictions and administrative entities within the Local Orthodox Churches had an opportunity for voicing their position on the matter. After a discussion, archpastors expressed the wish that the Committee for Canonical Regional Planning continued searching for possible forms of canonical order in the United States of America, taking into account the opinions expressed by participants in the Assembly. The hierarchs also supported the idea of convening a Pan-Orthodox Council in 2016.

In their final document, the archpastors denounced the continued conflict in the Middle East and spoke for the protection of Christians and other minorities in the ancient lands of Syria, Iraq, and Palestine. They also expressed the unanimous wish that peace and stability may be established in Ukraine where Orthodox Christians suffer in the continued civic confrontation. The archpastors called ecclesial and secular leaders to exert every effort to resolve the conflict situation as soon as possible.

The representatives of Orthodox Churches reiterated their commitment to the Gospel's teaching that marriage is a union of a man and a woman. They disagreed with the US Supreme Court ruling of June 26, 2015, which legalized same-sex union.

The Russian Orthodox Church was represented by Bishop Ioann of Naro-Fominsk, administrator of the Patriarch Parishes in the USA, who presented the Moscow Patriarchate's position on these issues and expressed in particular the commitment to the principle of consensus in decision-making at inter-Orthodox meetings. He also touched upon the problem of canonical relations in Ukraine as people who come from it are members of the Russian Orthodox Church, including in the USA.

Among the attendees were also hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia. They were led by their First Hierarch, Metropolitan Hilarion of Eastern America and New York, the website of the Russian Orthodox Church in the USA reports.

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