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**The Lonely Path of Integrity
Spyridon, Archbishop of America (1996-1999)**

by Justine Frangouli -Argyris

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**Archdiocese of America
Emerging from the Crisis**

by Justine Frangouli

The count-down towards an emergence from the crisis in the Archdiocese of America has already begun with Patriarch Bartholomew's invitation to both Archbishop Spyridon of America and the Eparchial Synod's five Metropolitans to attend a joint meeting with Patriarchate Holy Synod members on January 12 at the Phanar. The meeting will be dedicated to a thorough analysis of the US situation. Nevertheless, various rumors are rife about the final outcome of the whole matter.

It will be remembered that the five Metropolitans, objecting to the fact that the Archdiocese, without their approval, filed a lawsuit against the church pressure group known as GOAL, addressed two strongly-worded letters to the Archbishop last October. They accused him directly of behaving in a high-handed manner, contrary to the Charter. They criticized him for having excluded them from the Archdiocese's joint administration and having entrusted such duties to a nine-member Archdiocesan Council Executive Committee, composed of laymen.

In their second letter, the five Metropolitans claimed that "the Charter is clear as to who has supreme administrative responsibility in the Archdiocese: the Archbishop together with the Synod of Bishops ..." They also noted that "the exclusion of synodical bishops from the supreme administration of the Archdiocese is in contrast with the Charter and leads the Archdiocese back to the years of dictatorship and populist rule."

The Patriarch's three options

Next week, in the presence of Archbishop Spyridon of America and the five "rebel" Metropolitans, the Patriarch and the Synod will be called upon to make some very bold decisions. They will have three options:

1. To openly take sides with the five Metropolitans, to not reproach nor reprimand them (which is what they have done so far leaving the Archbishop uncovered), in which case Spyridon will be driven to a pre-planned resignation.
2. To openly support the Archbishop and his policy by virtue of the letter of the 1977 Charter, thus making up for their two months' silence over the controversy and giving Spyridon the green light to continue his task.
3. To attempt to reach a compromise by increasing the Metropolitans' powers and placing them at the same administrative level as the Archbishop. In this way the role of the Primate of the Church in America will be weakened. This will also allay the Patriarch's fears, those same fears that had led to Iakovos' ousting and to the fragmentation of the Archdiocese of North and South America.

The historic compromise

The first solution -forcing the Archbishop to resign- does not seem to prevail, because replacing

Spyridon would be a more painful experience for the Patriarch and the Church in America than keeping him in office. The two factions opposed to Spyridon have differing views with regard to his successor. The so-called "Patriarchal friends" are campaigning for Metropolitan Michael of Austria who doesn't even speak English and will be easy to keep under control. The other party would like to see one of the five Metropolitans on the Archbishop's throne, because, as they maintain, these are already involved in Archdiocesan matters and are aware of the administrative and ecclesiastical particularities of the Archdiocese. As three groups will be taking shape after Archbishop Spyridon's departure (his own supporters could be added as a third group), the conflict that will arise between them could shatter the Greek Orthodox Church of America for good this time.

The second option is also unlikely, because if the Patriarch believed that the Archbishop is carrying out his duties properly, he would have backed him against the five rebels a long time ago.

And so, the most likely and most logical solution seems to be the third one -that of compromise, which suits everyone. The Patriarch will share out the Archbishop's powers among the Metropolitans, thus weakening his archiepiscopal role and putting him under tighter control. The Metropolitans will be directly involved in the Archdiocese's administration and, therefore, satisfied as their initial goal will have been achieved. Spyridon, with his wings clipped, will be able to hold on to his chair, divided into five now, and with the Phanar keeping a close eye on him. Though he will be somehow humiliated by being forced to give up what he had been unwilling to concede to his Metropolitans, he will at least hold on to his post ... And he will finally disappoint the Cassandras who want his head on a plate. The landscape is already becoming clearer...

[Translated from Greek]

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