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

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New Problems for the Archdiocese of America

by Justine Frangouli

The Archdiocese of America seems to have entered a new phase of crisis following the election of three new bishops to serve in the Atlanta, New Jersey and Detroit dioceses. Such elections by the Patriarchate's Holy Synod are actually an encouragement to the five Metropolitans and only increase Archbishop Spyridon's isolation within the Eparchial Synod of America.

Alexios, Bishop of Troas, appointed to the Atlanta diocese, is known to be a supporter of Archbishop Spyridon, while George, Bishop of Komana, appointed in New Jersey, has repeatedly voiced his disagreement with Archbishop Spyridon in a strong and public manner.

Archimandrite Nicholas Pisari, appointed in Detroit, although appearing at the moment to be neutral, nevertheless is known for his close attachment to Metropolitan Maximos of Pittsburgh whom he served as chancellor for a number of years.

Thus, within the Eparchial Synod which now counts nine members (five Metropolitans, three newly-appointed Bishops and the Archbishop), the balance swings towards the Metropolitans who have expressed their strong opposition to the Primate of the Church. In fact, in two letters published in October, they went as far as to seek the removal of Spyridon from the Archiepiscopal throne.

While the Patriarchate, in its attempt to restore order in the Church of America, reconfirmed Spyridon as America's Archbishop on January 12. Saturday's episcopal elections essentially isolated him, since he will remain alone again within the Eparchial Synod disposing of his own vote and perhaps that of Bishop Alexios of Troas.

What are the reasons for the Patriarchate's turnaround? While a few weeks before it had reconfirmed the current Archbishop (leaving his critics speechless), why would it now basically weaken his position within an Eparchial Synod whose seven (out of nine) members oppose him?

Some speak of the Patriarch's fear for the latest scenarios that portray the Church of America as moving towards autocephaly with the five Metropolitans as leaders. The criticism leveled at the Patriarch personally by circles in favor of Spyridon's removal is particularly severe following the decision taken by the Patriarchate on January 12. Hence, to accommodate the Metropolitans, Bartholomew selected, for two out of the three vacant diocesan sees, Bishops close to them. (It should be noted that the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate elected each new Bishop on the basis of a three-person ballot prepared by the Eparchial Synod in the United States).

Others again estimate that the Patriarch's selections were weighed heavily by the fact that he now intends to be the arbiter of all goings-on within the Archdiocese of America. In this way, by isolating the Archbishop with only one friendly Bishop in the Synod, he can control the situation better and safer.

In any case, on vital issues of the Archdiocese that will emerge in the process and while several communities are already moving towards revolt (i.e. refusing to pay their contributions to the

Archdiocese), the Eparchial Synod will side against the Primate of the Church in America. The crisis will no longer be promoted by GOAL's few members (Greek Orthodox American Leaders), as the Archbishop persists on claiming, but through the determinative vote of his seven opponents who will not leave him nor the Church of America rest.

This new phase is the most alarming in the whole spectrum of problems already encountered by the Church of America.

[Translated from Greek]

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