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

by Justine Frangouli -Argyris

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Cyprus Dooms Spyridon

by Justine Frangouli

The ministry of Archbishop Spyridon of America seems to have an expiration date before the anniversary of Turkey's invasion of Cyprus. He was summoned to Constantinople today, Sunday July 12, to be briefed on the Patriarchate's resolutions concerning the future of the Church in America as well as his own ministry henceforward.

Greek-American circles estimate that the Patriarch's haste in calling on Spyridon to travel to the Phanar immediately is due to Bartholomew's profound concern about the Archbishop's intense efforts to advance the Cyprus issue. Such action will result in rigid demands made to President Clinton in a letter to be signed by the entire Greek-American lobby.

Archdiocesan Council President John Catsimatidis who has sought to play an advisory role on archdiocesan matters, was upon his own request granted an audience with the Patriarch for next Tuesday. Many regard this fact as an indication that Archbishop Spyridon may be given longer time on certain conditions.

Meanwhile, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs, at a meeting held late on Friday evening, decided not to involve itself in the question of whether Archbishop Spyridon should stay or go, and not to veto any successor proposed by the Phanar, as long as the successor can guarantee the unity of the Greek American community and cooperate with the Greek government on Greek National issues. Thus, the Greek government, in giving the Patriarchate a free hand, avoids shouldering the responsibility for any consequences that the removal of Archbishop Spyridon might have. In spite of all this, such ousting is not yet considered certain.

But while speculation over Archbishop Spyridon's replacement rages, the scenario for a succession entails certain problems, given that the Patriarch has a limited choice. The successor would have to meet with the approval of the five US Metropolitans and of certain influential Greek American magnates controlled by Fr Alex Karloutsos, Spyridon's adversary and a friend of the Phanar.

While Metropolitan Dimitrios of Vresthena was offered the post of "locum tenens" of the Archdiocese of America and he declined it, recent press articles back Stylianos, Archbishop of Australia, for Spyridon's successor. Although highly-educated and with administrative experience, Archbishop Stylianos has for the last two and a half years been at odds with the Phanar. Equally, it is felt that in spite of his long tenure he has not succeeded in bridging the gap between Archdiocese of Australia and the local Old Calendarist communities. Furthermore, he has called down upon himself the wrath of the Greek Foreign Ministry's diplomats, as he has come at times into open conflict with many of them.

Other names mentioned are those of Michael, Metropolitan of Austria, inexperienced in American church affairs, and Nikitas, Metropolitan of Hong Kong, whose appointment seems, at present, to be opposed by the five US Metropolitans.

US Church circles believe that the only solution that could satisfy all groups -the Metropolitans and the environment of Fr Karloutsos, without concurrently causing strong reactions from

Archbishop Spyridon's supporters - would be Metropolitan Maximos of Pittsburgh. Metropolitan Maximos is a graduate of the Halki Theological School, is acceptable to the other four Metropolitans, and is acquainted with America's ecclesiastical affairs.

Nevertheless, the Phanar artfully suppresses all mention of his name, unwilling to let its sole candidate get a bad press, given that Metropolitan Maximos had recently committed a theological faux-pas by signing a joint Orthodox-Catholic document that recognized the validity of Catholic baptism. In fact, the theological text placed Catholic and Orthodox baptisms on an equal footing and, furthermore, proposed that the Ecumenical Patriarchate should annul the patriarchal decree of 1755 that refused recognition to Catholic baptism.

In any case, no one rules out the possibility that Archbishop Spyridon patches things up with the Patriarch, as long as he promises to work with Fr Alex Karloutsos. Patriarch Bartholomew, held responsible for Archbishop Iakovos' ousting, is aware that the dismissal of two Archbishops in the span of three years (it is considered certain that Archbishop Spyridon will refuse to tender his resignation) will be detrimental to the prestige of both, the Patriarchate and the Archdiocese, since all will realize that any solution to the issue is only temporary and reversible.

[Translated from Greek]

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