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

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**Remarks by Archbishop Spyridon
at the presentation of "*The Lonely Path of Integrity*" in Montreal**

Reverend Fathers, devoted Orthodox Christians and Greek compatriots,

I greet you all in the name of the Lord.
Rejoice in the Lord always.

I am deeply touched by the fact that we have all gathered on the sacred premises of the Hellenic Community of Montreal, a renowned center of Hellenism and Orthodoxy. My joy is immense for, at last, I have the opportunity to meet the wonderful Hellenes of Montreal who have achieved so much in this Canadian land while preserving their Greek Orthodox identity.

How can I not feel a shiver of nostalgia when I see friends from my years in the United States here before me; precious collaborators, men loyal to Orthodox traditions and Hellenic ideals, well-known and less-known laborers of the Gospel with whom I shared so many struggles and so much anxiety in the blessed Church of America?

It is a blessing to be with all of you this evening in this hospitable Community hall.

I greet you, my loyal friends, who have come from afar and you Greek-Canadians, who have come here in such great numbers. I greet you all without distinction. I greet you cordially, respectfully and with genuine love.

I am profoundly indebted to you for your warmth and affection.

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It gives me great joy that a common denominator has brought us together: our common roots, our common religious and cultural heritage.

We are all children of God endowed with one and the same faith. For us, Orthodoxy was never a matter of social or other considerations, but a vital and most sacred issue. Our faith must not be relativized, reformulated, or adapted in the name of new vague, blurred and turbid realities. Its value is absolute.

This is why we have never been convinced that the future of Greek Orthodoxy in North America - a continent characterized by a religious competitiveness unparalleled in history - must not rely exclusively on habit and family tradition.

It is evident that, in a society such as the American one that has the tendency to absorb all dissimilarities and that is subject to the tremendous distractions of its multicultural plurality, Orthodoxy can hope to survive only if it is strengthened by convinced Orthodox... those who are consciously Orthodox. Clearly, the socioeconomic framework of a given structure or system cannot guarantee the future of the Greek Orthodox Church in the North American melting pot.

Our treasure is our faith. We can no longer afford to guard this faith jealously and keep it only to ourselves. Now, we must transmit it to those around us: to those near and far. Otherwise, I'm afraid, Orthodoxy will resemble that idle servant of the Gospel who, instead of multiplying the talents entrusted to him, dug in the ground and hid his master's money. We insist that our Orthodox faith has a primary role to play in forming American social structures and developments.

We hold a similar view with respect to the cultural identity we share. We firmly believe that our cultural heritage, Hellenism, is in no way superfluous in the advancement and progress of our Greek-American people on this blessed North American soil. On the contrary, as bearers of a splendid cultural heritage unique in the history of man, we are called to project the riches of the Greek spirit, and to convey them to our fellow citizens in our new homelands, thus contributing to the edification of contemporary American society.

This is the sole axis around which the preservation and perpetuation of our Orthodox and Hellenic traditions can revolve in a land that tends to swallow up whole traditions and cultures.

We as Hellenes are a people proud of our religious beliefs and our cultural heritage. That is why we believe it is imperative to preserve Hellenism in America through the channels of Greek education. There is a growing concern for the survival of our faith and our cultural heritage during these difficult times in which all things are considered to be of the same level of importance in our new homelands.

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All these thoughts came back today while making a symbolic visit to the Hellenic School, Socrates, where we could read in the children's dark eyes the promise: "We will be much better!"

I know that in this city, a vibrant center of Hellenism, there are three other affiliates of the Socrates day school: Demosthenes, Plato and Aristotle, and so on ...

Therefore, you can easily understand how deeply moved I am this evening.

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Today my joy is complete, for I know that you will remain loyal to the traditions passed down to you by our forefathers after untold toil and sacrifice.

Remain loyal to Orthodoxy and its genuine forms; not those distorted or adapted to transient social forms, but to ever-present Orthodoxy able to address man's contemporary anxiety.

Preserve Hellenism. Keep it productive, alive and flourishing.

Remain loyal to the idea and the centuries-old noble tradition of our Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Holy Mother Church of Constantinople.

And God will be with you, now and always. Amen.

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