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

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**A Statement by Archbishop Spyridon
on the restructuring of the Patriarchal Synod**

The totally unexpected initiative taken by the Ecumenical Patriarchate to modify the composition of its Synod, while being a positive step toward restoring the "apostolic traditions as these are incarnated by the Holy Canons," cannot but intrigue all interested in church matters.

It remains puzzling how the Turkish prohibitive decrees regarding the citizenship and provenance of members of the Standing Patriarchal Synod, in force for decades, suddenly ceased to apply overnight. Has anything changed in Turkey's stance vis-à-vis the Patriarchate? Or is this modification yet another hasty move so that "all arrows in the quiver" are in place for a new round in the disastrous conflict over the "New Lands" dioceses?

Be that as it may, for a full re-establishment of the synodical institution, as it applied for centuries at the Patriarchate and still applies today in all other Orthodox Churches, many further steps will be needed in order to overcome:

- the "invitation" extended selectively to hierarchs from abroad to participate "periodically" in Synodical proceedings;
- the distinction between hierarchs from Turkey and hierarchs from abroad;
- the inequality as to the percentage of participation (50%) by each category (the hierarchs from abroad make up 95% of the entire Patriarchate hierarchy, whereas the hierarchs of Turkey a mere 5%);
- the unorthodox inclusion of hierarchs without a flock, retired or not (who, in essence, are "titular" metropolitans and, as such, in compliance to the sacred Canons, cannot be members of a synod).

The entire hierarchy of the Ecumenical Throne as well the whole Pan-Orthodox family are eager to see the restoration process completed as soon as possible to the benefit of the Church which bears increased responsibilities and has an amplified role to play in this age of consumerism and globalization.

I personally wish to believe that the current amplification of the standing Patriarchal Synod signals a new era for the Phanar, an era in which there will no longer be decisions such as those that have shaken the Patriarchate's credibility and inflamed public opinion in recent years. However, the intent to restore a traditional form of synodical proceedings, whatever the true aim of such an initiative may be, must not be considered a panacea for the chronic and intractable problems caused by the conflicting policies followed by the Ecumenical Throne over the past fifteen years.

[Translated from Greek]

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