

THE HISTORY FO THE AMERICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH as Recorded in the Archives of this Jurisdiction

The American Orthodox Church is not new jurisdiction adding to the already multitude of Orthodox jurisdictions in the One, Holy, Orthodox, Catholic, Christian Church today, but rather an expression of the ancient faith established by the successors to the Apostle Andrew through the Apostolic See at Constantinople and the Apostle Peter through the Apostolic See at Antioch which celebrates according to both Eastern and Western Traditions.

The American Orthodox Church and those with her, have perfect continuity and Apostolic Lines of Succession from Jesus Christ and the Apostles, from the birthday of the Church at Pentecost. We have maintained the true Succession of Apostolic Truth as well as the valid tactile Succession from the Apostles by the laying on of hands, anointing of oils and other spiritual and material traditions.

Through our celebrations of the Eastern and Western Rites we recognize the different expression of the faith held by our ancestors from Europe, Asia and Africa. There is only one Holy Orthodox and Catholic Church which is larger than any one nationality, culture or tradition. There is only one Holy Orthodox and Catholic Church identified by those having valid tactile Succession from the Apostles through the laying on of hands, true succession of Apostolic truth (Oral and Written) and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit which binds us all in love to God and to each other.

ORTHODOX COMMUNION is not the same as UNION

We cannot and do not define Orthodoxy in terms of subjugation to any one Patriarch. All who hold the Faith (Life and Teachings of Jesus Christ, as given to the Holy Apostles, Patristic Fathers, the Seven Ecumenical Councils of ancient time) are all in communion each with the other.

Some jurisdictions, such as this jurisdiction (AMERICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH and all other jurisdictions who are members of her Holy Synod) having been given "Autocephalous" status by the Moscow Patriarch in times past, are valid jurisdictions in conformity to the ancient Seven Ecumenical Councils, faith and praxis of the Orthodox Church East and West. We recognize that "Lines of Succession" alone does not make a jurisdiction or their bishops as VALID jurisdictions alone. Such validity must be the expression of all who are her clergy, to abide by the spiritual implications that are not necessarily able to be expressed in or through just written words like a document or financial flow-chart mentality.

ORTHODOX UNION is not the same as COMMUNION

Union with a Patriarch is not the litmus test for Orthodox Catholicism. The beginnings of our American experience is the story of Father Ivan Wolansky, a Ukrainian Catholic Priest who came to America in December of 1884. He came here with high hopes, great expectations and a wife. Father did not expect to have any problem with the Latin (Roman) Rite Catholic Bishops

and Priests in the United States, however, they rejected him as not being a Catholic because he was married and not of the "Roman" Catholic Church.

Father Ivan went to visit the Latin (Roman) Rite Archbishop, +Patrick Ryan, in Philadelphia. He never was able to receive an audience with His Eminence because as soon as it was discovered he was married the doors were closed. After several attempts to build a bridge of cooperation and fraternal Christian charity he was told that the Latin (Roman) Rite Bishop did not even consider Father to be a Catholic because he was "Orthodox" and not "Roman Catholic". There was no objection to Father, other than he was married.

The Latin (Roman) Rite Bishop viewed Father Ivan as competition. The man-made regulations of the West were seen as definitive of who is and who is not a Catholic because the "Roman" Church believed then, as it often does today, that it holds exclusive rights to the use of the term and word "Catholic" which is heretical in and of itself as such divides the faith of the true church. It was the arrogance of western Catholicism being the Roman Catholic Church that was expressed and also the ignorance of the local Bishops regarding Eastern Rite (Orthodox) Catholics. It is important to remember, all these men were in full union with Rome and when they rejected Father Ivan they rejected another Priest in full communion with Rome as not being a Catholic on the basis of his marital status.

In 1880, the Roman Catholic Church's Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith issued a decree requiring all Priests who came to America to have faculties from the local Latin (Roman) Rite Ordinary. It further mandated celibacy for all clergy. This obviously was a concerted effort to exclude Eastern Catholics (Orthodox) and a denouncement of all Eastern (Orthodox) clergy who elected to come to America. It also relegated all Eastern (Orthodox) Catholics to a position of second-class status. *Orientalium Dignitas* issued in 1894 by His All Holiness Leo XIII, Bishop at Rome and Patriarch of the West, required subordination of Eastern Rite (Orthodox) Catholics to Latin Rite authority but allowed the use of the Eastern Rite.

In 1889, Father Ivan established a parish church named Protection of Our Lady. Father Alexius Toth (Later St. Alexius Toth) became the administrator shortly thereafter. Father Toth presented his credentials to the Latin (Roman) Rite Bishop, +John Ireland. When it was discovered that Father Alexius was a widower Bishop Ireland told him he also was not Catholic and even added that the Greek Catholic Bishop of Presov, +Ivan Valia, (also in union with Rome) was not Catholic either (So much for fraternal charity and the brotherhood of clergy). Not content to be personally insulting, Bishop Ireland further demonstrated his arrogance and unholy purpose by declaring that no Priests were to associate with Father Toth and issued a mandate to be read in all parishes that none were to attend Mass or receive the Sacraments from Father Toth. As a Professor of Canon Law, Father knew his rights under terms of the Unia and rejected the unlawful declaration of +John Ireland.

Father responded by gathering eight other Eastern (Orthodox) Catholic Priests. They found that the Eastern Rite (Orthodox) Catholic Bishops were no more disposed to help than the Latin (Roman) Rite Bishops, so much did they fear the Latin Rite Bishops and Rome. Father Toth and

his congregation, guided by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, made the decision to return to Holy Orthodoxy, which was the religion of their ancestors and existed prior to the schism of the Western Church (Roman Catholic) from the "Catholic Christian Church".

In 1891, the last year of his Episcopal service, His Eminence + Vladimir Sokolovsky Russian Orthodox Bishop of the Aleutians and Alaska received Father Toth, Mr. Paul Podany the parish Warden, and the congregation into Holy Orthodoxy. The people were the impetus for this glorious event, with no pressure or force from the Priests or others outside. In addition, the Holy Spirit led 304 local Greek Catholics who also embraced the true religion of their ancestors and were received into Holy Orthodoxy. The parish church established by Father Ivan Wolansky, Protection of Our Lady in Minneapolis, transferred into Holy Orthodoxy and became the center for the true light of truth and the blessings of the Holy Spirit in the area. So powerful was the working of the Holy Spirit, that in a short time, thousands were compelled by the truth of Holy Orthodoxy to embrace the ancient faith of the Apostles and were received into the Holy Orthodox Church. This was nothing short of another Pentecost.

Many of the Eastern (Orthodox) Catholic Priests also embraced Holy Mother Church and were received into Holy Orthodoxy. Among the many Priests received into the Orthodox Church were Father Alexander Stephanovich Dzubay who would later be consecrated to the Holy Episcopacy on 7 August 1917 by Archbishop +Evdokim (Basil Mikhailovich Meschersky) and Bishop +Alexander (Alexandrovich Nemolovsky). Bishop +Stephen (Dzubay) served as Bishop of the Vicariate of the Aleutian Diocese from 1916-1917. So much were Orthodox hated by the Latin Bishops, they called Orthodox Priests "Vykroplenci" which was a derogatory term meaning pseudo priests".

On May 13, 1917 (O.S.) Archbishop +Evdokim (Basil Mikahailovich Meschersky), (Russian Orthodox) assisted by Bishop +Alexander (Nemolovsky) and Bishop +Alexander Stephanovich Dzubay of Pittsburgh, consecrated Father Aftimios Ofiesch in St. Nicholas Russian Orthodox Church in New York City. Bishop +Aftimios was consecrated for Brooklyn, New York. In 1922, Metropolitan Platon (Rozhdestvensky) assumed leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church in North America having received the appointment by Patriarch (Saint) Tikhon of Moscow and all Russia. In 1923, Metropolitan Platon, with the approval of Patriarch Tikhon elevated Bishop +Aftimios to the position of Archbishop.

When Archbishop Evdokim of the Russian Orthodox Church arrived in the North American Diocese in 1915, he set out to make the vision of Abp. Tikhon for a uniquely American Orthodox Church a reality. Father Aftimios (Ofiesch) was consecrated by Abp. Evdokim in early months of 1917 to serve as Bishop of Brooklyn and head of the Syro-Arab Mission as successor to Bishop Raphael (Hawaweeny), who had died in 1915. For this same work Bishop Aftimios was elevated to archbishop by Metropolitan Platon in 1923. He was later given responsibility for the growing English-language mission.

On February 2, 1927, a solemn act was signed by Russian Orthodox Church officials, charging Abp. Aftimios with the full responsibility and duty of caring and providing for American Orthodoxy in the special sense of Orthodox Catholic People born in America and

primarily of whatever nationality or linguistic character or derivation not satisfactorily provided with proper canonical Orthodox Catholic care... or who may wish to attach themselves by the properly and legally provided means to an autonomous, independent, American Orthodox Church.

This first attempt at an American Orthodox Church met with opposition from various autocephalous Orthodox Churches, with little to no support from other ethnic churches in America. Sadly, the Ethnic Orthodox in America, continue to resist an American expression of the ancient Orthodox and Catholic faith. They believe Orthodoxy must be presented in Eastern terms, in Eastern Liturgy and Eastern Tradition. This belief is called the heresy of Cultural Paradosis. Sadly, a similarity to the treatment given to Father Ivan after he arrived in 1884 by the Roman Catholic Church in America. (NB: There are, in these present times, those of another jurisdiction who feel that they are the only ones who have the right, by operation of civil law within a geographical areas of a particular state of the U.S.A. where they were able by dint or din, to obtain control of the name AMERICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH "AOC" and believe that they are the only ones who have the right to use such jurisdictional nomenclature, going so far as to take civil action against others or by using the internet to conduct what is opined as "internet terrorism" upon clergy high and low as an attempt to force others not to use either the name "AOC" or any derivative of the name. They further believe they are the only ones who have legitimate rights by way of their also having the same or similar "lines of succession". This is not true Orthodox Spirituality in action, but an action by men who have failed or refused to abide by the Faith and spiritual teachings in a manner whereby man's politics is separated from the spiritual life and teachings. Their actions to control others is much the same as the politics that run amuck in the "curia" of the Roman Jurisdiction of the Catholic Church which ORTHODOXY and those who are truly Orthodox strugglers out of pain of heart for the faith, avoid and reject which aids in understanding the difference of who are truly Catholic Christian versus those who are "Christian" in name only).

A second call for an American Orthodox Church and even for the establishment of a Patriarchate was made by Metropolitan Theophanios (Fan S. Noli) of the Albanian Church. As a priest serving in the United States from 1908 until the 1920's he was a loud voice calling for a united American Orthodox Church and for the liturgical use of English.

While he was elected bishop of the Albanian Orthodox Church in America in 1919, the Albanian political climate (the Balkan Wars and the independence of Albania) prevented his consecration until 1923. To represent his nation, Met. Theophanios served in the Albanian Parliament, and was Prime Minister of Albania in 1924. He was forced to leave Albania that same year but was unable to re-enter the United States until 1932.

Before his death in 1965, Metropolitan Theophanios published eight liturgical books in English, many of which are still being used today. He also participated in the consecration of additional bishops, which, when combined with those consecrated by Abp. Aftimios, establish the mission and the apostolic succession for our American Orthodox Church. While there are other "American Orthodox Church" institutions in other states (geographical areas) of the U.S.A, they maintained themselves more as "parish" and not as a fully active and functioning "Jurisdiction"

with an active Holy Synod of Bishops, clergy, monastic, parishes of faithful.

A third and very successful attempt at establishing an American Orthodox Church jurisdiction with an active and functioning Holy Synod of Bishops, monastic Holy Orders, Clergy, Parishes of faithful, was made by Archbishop David Baxter in 1973. Archbishop Joachim Souris with Bishop Stanislaus De Witow consecrated Archbishop Walter Propheta for the American Orthodox Church as all participants held the Aftimios lines of succession holding to and maintaining, according to their nature and degree of ability, Orthodox spirituality. Archbishop Walter Propheta consecrated Archbishop David Baxter on October 12, 1969 for the Orthodox Church of America. In 1973, Archbishop David Baxter consecrated Bishop David M. Johnson, passing on to him the mandate from +Aftimios (Ofiesh) and canonically established our American Orthodox Church jurisdiction, charging Bishop David Johnson with the responsibility of establishing a Western Rite American Orthodox Church. It is known that there were problems between +Baxter and +Johnson which were on and off again disagreements. In all their problems, repentance and forgiveness were the modus operandi, and given the seriousness of +Johnson's health issues, which were severe, he was able to maintain a small jurisdictional impact and operated with the help of another priest, Don Cheadle, not a "paper church" from Long Beach, California, contrary to some opinions.

In 1980, with the mandate having been issued, Archbishop David M. Johnson, due to matters of health, in front of several witnesses (American Legion Hellenic Post) and parishioners of both the San Francisco Greek Orthodox Church and the American Orthodox Church, signed over the rights, title and interest of our American Orthodox Church jurisdiction to His Eminence, +Joseph Thaddeus (Stanford) who has been its primate ever since his consecration in 1981 for this expressed purpose which began on +Thaddeus's initial operation of the Catholic Christian Church.

On August 14, 1921, Patriarch Gregory of Antioch wrote to Patriarch Tikhon of Moscow, submitting a proposal to establish his Antiochian jurisdiction in America. The Russian Patriarch (who had served as Archbishop of America prior to the Russian Revolution) stated in his reply dated January 17, 1922, "the 'Russy -- Antaki' conflict must be resolved with the approval of the Russian authorities in the New World and their supporter Aftimios Ofiesh". The Patriarch of Antioch must first obtain permission of the Russian Orthodox Bishops in North America including Bishop Aftimios before the 'Antiochians' could establish their jurisdictions.

In 1922, Metropolitan Platon (Rozhdestvensky) assumed leadership over the Russian Orthodox Church in North America. Metropolitan Platon was appointed by Patriarch (Saint) Tikhon of Moscow and All Russia. In 1923, Metropolitan Platon, with the approval of Patriarch Tikhon, elevated Bishop Aftimios (Ofiesh) to Archbishop.

It is important to remember, the Russian Orthodox Church declared itself independent of Constantinople without approval of Constantinople and for over 140 years Moscow was "independent" by its own initiative. It was only after Moscow became rich in the things of the world that Constantinople was forced by political realities to recognize them as an independent

Church and Patriarchate.

When in 1922 the Russian Orthodox Church found herself subject to cruel persecution by the atheistic State, Patriarch Meletios of Constantinople, deviating from the majority of the world's church leaders did not support the imprisoned Patriarch Tikhon and expressed support and endorsement for the Bolsheviks and the Bolshevik inspired Renovationist Schism.

In 1922, Patriarch Meletios Metaxasis of Constantinople wanted to have the entire Church in what he called the "Diaspora" of Europe and America submit to his authority. His successor, Patriarch Gregory VII, through his Moscow representative Archmandrite Basil Dimopoulo expressed his wish that Patriarch Tikhon divest himself of the Office of Patriarch and that the Patriarchate itself be abolished and Russia submit to Constantinople. On June 6th, 1924 Patriarch Tikhon wrote to Patriarch Gregory VII Of Constantinople as follows:

"In no small measure we were shocked and surprised that the Head of the Church of Constantinople without any prior consultation with us, the legitimate representative and Head of the Russian Orthodox Church, would interfere in the internal affairs of the Autocephalous Russian Church. The Holy Councils recognized the primacy of honor alone as the prerogative of the Patriarch of Constantinople and did not and do not recognize any primacy of authority."

On April 4, 1951, Archbishop +Michael in his official capacity as Exarch to the Ecumenical Patriarch recognized our Apostolic Succession and the validity of our Priests and Bishops. On June 29th, 1973 The Patriarch of Alexandria joined with Archbishop +Michael and the Ecumenical Patriarch in recognizing us as true Orthodox Priests and Bishops. In April 1976, Metropolitan Ireney, Archbishop of New York and ALL-America and Canada for the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) joined his voice to recognize us as brothers in the Episcopacy.

Archbishop +Aftimios (Ofiesch) assisted by Bishop +Emmanuel (Abo-Hatab) Bishop of Montreal and Archbishop +Elias of Tyre and Sidon consecrated Bishop +Sophronios (Bashira) on May 26th, 1928 as Bishop of Los Angeles, California. Archbishop +Aftimios (Ofiesch) assisted by Bishop +Sophronios (Bashira) consecrated Bishop +Joseph Zuk as the first American born Bishop for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church on February 7, 1932.

With the consecration of Bishop +Joseph Zuk, the return to Orthodoxy was complete. Ukrainians who came under the secular control of the Roman Catholic Polish Kingdom were isolated from both Moscow and Constantinople and found themselves oppressed financially and legally. In order to preserve their Church in Polish lands, the Ukrainians proposed a treaty between Kiev and Rome, as between two Sister Churches by which the Ukrainians would recognize the primacy (not Supremacy) of Rome and Rome would allow the Ukrainians to maintain their own Hierarchy, Liturgy, Theology and customs (Treaty of Brest 1596). Two years later in 1598, Rome had a change of heart and rescinded the Treaty of Brest issuing the Papal Bull, Magnus Dominum which nullified the Treaty (so much for written agreements and guarantees) and said that the Church at Rome and the Church of Christ are co-terminous and because the Church at Rome is the ONLY true Church and ALONE is the Ark of Salvation, those who desire membership

cannot make preconditions but must make absolute submission. The Ukrainians had burned their bridges behind them and had no place to go, hence they submitted to the yoke of Rome. They were told they were repentant schismatics who were allowed to function according to their own Rites by dispensation and not by any inherent right of their own.

Archbishop +Sophronius (Bashira) of the Greek Diocese of Los Angeles with Albanian Metropolitan +Theophanias (Noli) of Boston consecrated Archbishop +Christopher (Contogeorge) on February 10, 1934 at the Church of Sts. Constantine and Helen in New York City. He was Consecrated Bishop of Philadelphia. In 1947 he became Metropolitan of Pentapolis and Exarch for the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, Egypt and all Africa in the U.S.A.

Archbishop +Christopher (Contogeorge) with Albanian Metropolitan +Theophanias (Noli) on August 25, 1934 at the Church of St. John the Baptist in New York City consecrated Archbishop +Arsenius (Saltas). In 1954, he was made Exarch of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, Egypt and all Africa in the U.S.A. Archbishop +Christopher (Contogeorge) with Bishop +Ambrosius of Aman, Jordan, in accordance with orders from the Holy Synod of Moscow, on November 3, 1935 consecrated Archbishop +Nicholas (Kedroffsky) as Archbishop of North America and the Aleutian Islands. The Consecration took place at the Russian Cathedral of St. Nicholas in New York City.

Archbishop +Nicholas (Kedroffsky) with Archbishop +Arsenius (Saltas) and Archbishop +Benjamin (Fedchenkoff) of the Moscow Patriarchate in 1935 at the Russian Orthodox Cathedral of St. Nicholas in New York City consecrated Bishop +Joseph (Klymowycz) of Springfield, Massachusetts for the Russian Jurisdiction.

Archbishop +Christopher (Contogeorge) with Archbishop +Arsenius (Saltas) consecrated Archbishop +Konstantin (Jaroshevich) in 1949 for the Patriarchate of Alexandria. Metropolitan +Joseph (Klymowycz) with Archbishop +Konstantin (Jaroshevich) on October 14, 1950 at Springfield, Massachusetts consecrated Ukrainian Metropolitan Nicholas (Bohatyretz) for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

Metropolitan +Joseph (Klymowycz) with Archbishop +Konstantin (Jaroshevich) and Ukrainian Orthodox Metropolitan Nicholas (Bohatyretz) and Metropolitan +Joseph (Zielonka) and Metropolitan +Peter Williamowich on October 15, 1950 at Sts. Peter and Paul Russian Orthodox Church in Springfield, Massachusetts consecrated Bishop +Peter Andreas (Zhurawetzky).

Archbishop +Peter (Zhurawetsky) issued a mandate for the establishment of the AMERICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH, as he had also received it, passing it on to +David Baxter, after being consecrated and at a later time, who then passed it on to +David Mark Johnson as shown toward the end of this article.

In 1978, Archbishop +Peter (Zhurawetsky) assisted by Greek Archbishop +Joachim (Souris) and Greek Bishop +Lavrentios (Maniatakis) consecrated Metropolitan +Nicholas (Llnyckyj) for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. May 13, 1989, Metropolitan +Nicholas (Llnyckyj) assisted by

Bishop +Christopher (Jones) and Bishop +David (Quilliams) consecrated Metropolitan +Yuri (Spaeth) for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church. On January 17, 1999 Metropolitan Archbishop +Yuri (Spaeth) assisted by Archbishop +Matthew (McCarthy) consecrated Archbishop +Michael Damian-Benedict (Palladino) for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church - Western Rite Metropolia which has since become known as the Athontie Benedictine Fathers of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church.

On June, 2003, Metropolitan Archbishop +Michael Damian-Benedict (Palladino) assisted by Bishop +Thomas (Tindall) consecrated Metropolitan Archbishop +Roger Alan Joseph Daningburg-Harris Stanford (+Thaddeus, SSJT.) for the American Orthodox Church in Ekonomia, recognizing previous consecrations, except one.

The mandate through Archbishop +Peter (Zhurawetsky) for the creation of the AMERICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH was more completely established in 1971-1972 by Archbishop +David Mark Johnson (reposed) legitimately and canonically passing the jurisdiction to Metropolitan Archbishop +Joseph Thaddeus (Stanford). This was confirmed by the now reposed Metropolitan Archbishop +Jerome Joachim and several other bishops who had known the personal, documented and undocumented, history between +David Baxter and +David Mark Johnson, in 1981. This jurisdiction is the "Mother Church" from which many have come and who reside in many other states of the United States today as "Independent" while some errantly claim themselves as being the "Mother Church" from which they have sprung.

On 16 August 2014, Metropolitan-Primate +Joseph Thaddeus (Stanford) appointed Archbishop +George Michael (Jachimczyk) as the co-adjutor to the Metropolitan with right of succession. In November of 2016, Metropolitan-Primate +Joseph Thaddeus made the difficult decision to resign from his office due to many challenges to his health and living conditions. On 20 November 2016, the Holy Synod formally accepted the accession of Archbishop +George Michael to the office Metropolitan-Primate of the American Orthodox Church.

It was then decided by the Holy Synod to consolidate the many corporations and the Texas Corporation was filed for the AMERICAN ORTHODOX CHURCH with the Metropolitan Province of North America under the protection of St. Nicholas of Myra and the Metropolitan Province of South America under the protection of St. John Chrysostom. This was done to better reflect in nature of the AOC as an Orthodox Church of the Americas which includes North, Central and South America.

Additional history will be added to this page shortly.