



1,000 Orthodox Scholars Urge the Council to be Held in June 2016

June 12, 2016

Feast of the Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council

An Open Letter of the Orthodox Scholars around the World To the most venerable Primates of the Autocephalous Orthodox Churches

Your All-Holiness and Your Beatitudes,

We, the undersigned international group of Orthodox scholars, address this letter to the leadership of the Orthodox Church, to all Orthodox Christians around the world, and to all people of good will. We write out of profound concern for our Church, whose unity makes the new life in Christ visible to all humanity. We pray that the impending Council, so much anticipated and so long prepared, will bear forth the fruits of the Spirit, the first among them being the Pan-Orthodox unity. Hence, we support the agreement of the Orthodox leaders, publicly announced at the Pan-Orthodox Synaxis in January 2016, to gather together for the Holy and Great Council in Crete in mid-June 2016.

We believe that there are no insurmountable difficulties to beginning the Council in June, despite the significant questions that have been raised regarding the drafts of the conciliar documents and conciliar proceedings. We acknowledge the legitimacy of some questions, such as the request to reopen the discussion of the drafts of the conciliar documents. We also concur that there are many other issues dealing with the Church in the twenty-first century that would require future Pan-Orthodox attention. Nevertheless, we are convinced that the best venue for settling significant disputes today, as in the times of old, is the Council itself. To postpone the Council once again, is to fail to live up to the principle of conciliarity on a global level.

Nobody can expect the Council to settle all important questions and to heal all jurisdictional disputes in ten days. But we hope that this Council will be a beginning of the healing process and that it will usher in a new era of global conciliarity and unity. The representatives of the local Churches that wish to jeopardize the work of the Council by further delays should not intimidate the rest of the Orthodox leaders that wish to carry out the commitment to have the Council on this year's Feast of Pentecost. In the last century, the Orthodox Church has witnessed to the world through a rich theological legacy and the blood of new martyrs. The Holy and Great Council occasions an opportunity to commence a new phase of Orthodox witness. As the eyes of the whole world are upon the Orthodox Church, we beseech all of our leaders to hear the Spirit's call to conciliar unity.

Respectfully submitted and signed:

1. Rev. Dr. Nicholas Denysenko, Loyola Marymount University (Orthodox Church in America)
2. Dr. Paul L. Gavrilyuk, University of St. Thomas (Orthodox Church in America)
3. Dr. Brandon Gallaher, University of Exeter (Ecumenical Patriarchate)
4. Dr. Gayle Woloschak, Northwestern University (Ecumenical Patriarchate)



5. Dr. Thomas Arentzen, University of Oslo (Paris Exarchate, Ecumenical Patriarchate)
6. Dr. Antoine Arjakovsky, Archdiocese of Russian Orthodox Churches in Western Europe (Ecumenical Patriarchate)
7. Sergei Chapnin, Arthos Fellowship (Russian Orthodox Church)
8. Anastasia Pamela Barksdale, Resurrection Theological Academy (Church of Albania)
9. V. Rev. Dr. John Behr, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary (Orthodox Church in America)
10. Prof. David Bradshaw, University of Kentucky (Ecumenical Patriarchate)
11. Rev. Dr. Bogdan G. Bucur, Duquesne University (Antiochian Archdiocese)
12. Dr. Peter Bouteneff, St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary (Orthodox Church in America)
13. Julian Chryssavgis, St. Andrews University (Ecumenical Patriarchate)
14. Dr. Will Cohen, University of Scranton (Orthodox Church in America)
15. Dr. George Demacopoulos, Fordham University (Ecumenical Patriarchate)
16. V. Rev. Andriy Dudchenko, Independent Scholar (Ukrainian Orthodox Church, Moscow Patriarchate)
17. Dr. Davor Džalto, The American University of Rome (Serbian Orthodox Church)
18. V. Rev. Dr. John H. Erickson, St. Vladimir's Seminary (Orthodox Church in America)
19. Rev. Dr. Michel Evdokimov, Collège des Bernardins (Ecumenical Patriarchate)
20. Dr. Carrie Frederick Frost, Saint Sophia Orthodox Seminary (Antiochian Archdiocese)
21. Dr. Tamara Grdzeldze, Ambassador to the Holy See (Patriarchate of Georgia)
22. Rev. Dr. Perry Hamalis, North Central College (Korea, Ecumenical Patriarchate)
23. Dr. Susan Harvey, Brown University (Antiochian Archdiocese of America)
24. Rev. Dr. Cyril Hovorun, Columbia University (Moscow Patriarchate)
25. Dr. Edith Mary Humphrey, Pittsburg Theological Seminary (Antiochian Archdiocese)
26. Dr. Philip Kariatlis, St Andrew's Greek Orthodox Theological College, Australia (Ecumenical Patriarchate)
27. Dr. Scott Kenworthy, Miami University (Orthodox Church in America)
28. Dr. Paul Ladouceur, University of Toronto (Archdiocese of Canada, Orthodox Church in America)
29. Dr. Alexander Lingas, City University London (Ecumenical Patriarchate)
30. Dr. Daniel Lossky, Institut Orthodoxe de Bruxelles (Ecumenical Patriarchate)
31. Rev. Dr. Andrew Louth, Durham University (Moscow Patriarchate)
32. V. Rev. Dr. John Panteleimon Manoussakis, College of the Holy Cross (Ecumenical Patriarchate)
33. Dr. Smilen Markov, University of Tyrnovo (Bulgarian Orthodox Church)
34. Prof. Georgios Martzelos, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Church of Greece)
35. Rev. Dr. John A. McGuckin, Columbia University (Romanian Episcopate, Orthodox Church in America)
36. Dr. Sotiris Mitralaxis, University of Winchester/City University of Istanbul Church of Greece)
37. Prof. Nikolaos Nikolakopoulos, Munich University (Ecumenical Patriarchate)
38. Dr. Aristotle Papanikolaou, Fordham University (Ecumenical Patriarchate)
39. Dr. Peter Petkoff, Oxford University (Patriarchate of Bulgaria)
40. Dr. Walter Ray, Southern Illinois University Carbondale (Orthodox Church in America)
41. Dr. Svet Ribolov, Sofia University (Bulgarian Orthodox Church)
42. Rev. Dr. Gabriel Rochelle, New Mexico State University (Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA)
43. Dr. Vera Shevzov, Smith College (Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia)
44. Dr. Stephen J. Shoemaker, University of Oregon (Ecumenical Patriarchate)



45. Dr. James Skedros, Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (Ecumenical Patriarchate)
46. Prof. Helen Theodoropoulos, Loyola University (Ecumenical Patriarchate)
47. Rev. Dr. Vasileios Thermos, Independent Scholar (Church of Greece)
48. Dr. Petros Vassiliadis, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Church of Greece)
49. Dr. Anton C. Vrame (Ecumenical Patriarchate)
50. Dr. John Yiannias, University of Virginia (Ecumenical Patriarchate)

[And approximately 950 others who signed their names to the Petition](#)