

PRESS RELEASE

[ROEA Chancery, 4 October 2010] – The 78th Congress of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America was held October 1-2 at St Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, Ohio.

The first portion of plenary discussion was given to reviewing and acceptance of reports presented by the administration, departments, commissions, hierarchs, etc., financial statements and adoption of budgets for the coming year, etc.

A great deal of time was then given to discussing the reports of the Legal and Financial Due Diligence committees called for by the 2008 Congress. At that time Congress recognized the “Proposal to Establish the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitanate in North America” as an acceptable *basis* to continue talks toward a possible union of the two existing Romanian eparchies, separated for decades. The Proposal was the product of the long-standing Joint Dialogue Commissions, established with the blessing of the hierarchs and endorsement of their respective congresses after the fall of communism. It defines in ecclesiological terms acceptable to both sides, a Metropolitanate with a unique status of “maximal autonomy” in communion with the Church of Romania but not subject to its administrative jurisdiction. The due diligence studies were thus seen as integral to any *decision* regarding such a future unity. However, hearing that the committees were not yet able to give a positive report, and wishing to encourage progress, *Congress respectfully urged that the necessary information be gathered by the end of the year, so that the committee’s findings, essential to the process, would be completed in as timely a manner as possible.*

There had also been lengthy discussion of the Proposal and Due Diligence in the Clergy Conference, and the Episcopate Council which subsequently passed its recommendation to Congress. In each instance, the Archbishop gave a very pastoral and practical overview of the current movement of the world-wide Church to correct canonical anomalies, and to establish administrative order and unity to the Church in areas of the world referred to (by some) as the “diaspora”. This, he emphasized, has direct bearing on our Episcopate, the Orthodox Church in America (i.e. its autocephalous status), and the overall life of the Church in North America.

A final Proposal, a refinement of the 2008 text, was presented by the two dialogue commissions in October, 2009, and annotations were agreed to and presented in June of this year. These notes explain the common vision and commitment both sides have toward working for the administrative union of all Orthodox jurisdictions in North America, in line with the current reasoning of the universal Church, and the commissions’ agreed understanding of each proposal point. The Episcopate Council recommended *the 2010 Proposal and its Annotations to Congress as being the final text, “acceptable as a preliminary step and good theological basis for establishment of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitanate in North America”*. (Note: The changing of one word was stipulated.)

Due to the significance of the Proposal and Council’s recommendation, a special evening session was convened. After discussion, the Archbishop offered words of pastoral wisdom and insight that touched the hearts of many. He concluded by reminding all to act with love and without fear, trusting, as we had heard at the beginning of the day, the Lord will strengthen us his people and bless us with peace. (Psalm 29:11) The vote was taken and the recommendation passed overwhelmingly. Thus, the text of the historic Proposal was accepted, and the due diligence studies remain to be completed before a unity can come about.