

Saturday, February 03, 2018

His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios Geron of America  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America  
8-10 East 79th Street  
New York, New York 10075

Your Eminence,

Having served our Holy Church for over fifty years in various capacities at the Parish, Metropolis and Archdiocesan levels, I have refrained from speaking publicly to defend myself from grossly unfair and unjust allegations regarding my service to our Holy Archdiocese of America. I did so in the hope that the present difficulties would be addressed and overcome, restoring peace and trust in our Church which are far more important to me than my reputation.

Yet having read the letter addressed to Your Eminence by Mr. Dimitriou, the former Executive Director of Administration who served by Your Eminence's side for seventeen years, and the immediate reaction of the Archdiocese to this letter, I feel I must stand with this honorable man and servant of our Archdiocese who is now unjustly attacked even as was I. I share his fear and disappointment. It would appear that, rather than "justice and truth" which Your Eminence has recently wrote on in another context, the leadership of our Archdiocese is now concerned about self-protection and shielding less honorable persons from any accountability.

Scapegoating is not ever honorable, and Mr. Dimitriou and I have been blamed in the press for financial problems at our Archdiocese that far exceeded our immediate control—indeed, I was not ever personally involved in the daily financial operations of the Archdiocese and have never been a signatory on any Archdiocesan financial accounts. This was not the function of the Finance Committee of which I served to the best of my ability as Chair for the Archdiocesan Council. Furthermore, in the functions for which I was responsible, credit is due to the many committee members who worked long and valiantly to establish a fair, transparent and equitable system for our Total Commitment program which arguably has accounted for a substantial growth in contributions to our National Ministries from our Parishes.

Certainly, my fellow committee members and myself volunteered our time and even financial resources to serve. Without the means of some of our great and generous benefactors, many of us were incapable of personally meeting the monetary costs to make our National Stewardship system effective. We travelled extensively over the course of several years to every Metropolis and to numerous parishes to promote and explain the new system. Meetings were and are held with representatives throughout the Archdiocese coming together to ensure fair and accurate participation—a necessary aspect of the equitable and transparent system we designed.

Such travel and meetings required financial investment, and the returns on this investment have been tremendously successful. It is to the credit of Your Eminence that such a program

was developed and implemented, for it was long overdue. For the first time, under this program, every Metropolis finally met in full the financial obligations of our Total Commitment program. Previously this was consistently achieved only by the Metropolis of Chicago—which has never failed to be fully compliant under my Vice Chairmanship of the Metropolis Council under the leadership of His Eminence Metropolitan Iakovos of blessed memory.

However, it is hurtful that following my own efforts and that of numerous others, Your Eminence has allowed baseless allegations against me to go unanswered. I have never denied being reimbursed for expenses incurred for my travel on behalf of our Committee's work, nor have I denied being reimbursed for the expenses related to meetings where I arranged and personally "fronted" the monies necessary to hold large meetings, make travel and accommodation arrangements for committee members and Archdiocesan staff, including Your Eminence. I did so gladly with the agreement of the Archdiocese to reimburse me, as I frankly could not afford to provide all these things from my own resources. If I was in a position to do so, I would gladly have done so for the welfare of my Church. Proper records and documentation for all reimbursements and expenditures were submitted, and I retain such documentation to this day.

It is easy for Archdiocesan leaders now to debate whether those expenses should have been approved by the Archdiocesan leaders of the past. It is legitimate and necessary to debate whether such expenses and manner of operating should continue into the future considering our present financial crisis.

It is not legitimate to impugn the integrity of the volunteers and staff who worked diligently for the welfare and prosperity of our Holy Archdiocese with the blessings of Your Eminence.

It is quite disappointing that baseless allegations of "profiting" from my position have been met only with silence by Your Eminence and those leaders of our Church I have served faithfully for so long.

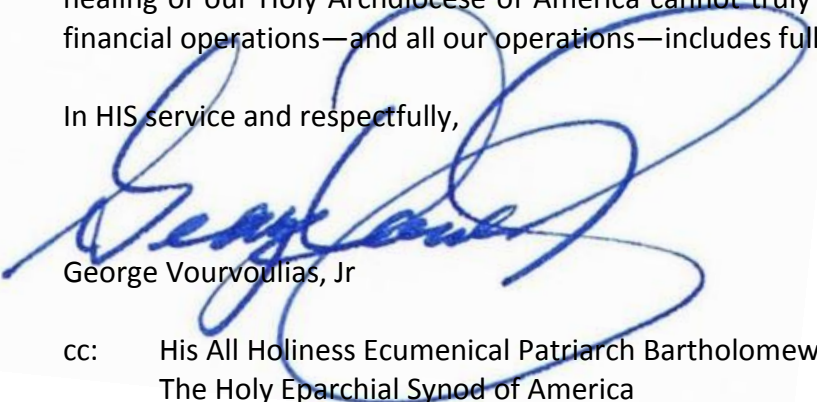
It is unseemly for the disappointment and legitimate concerns of a man who worked for our Church for more than three decades to be answered by implied threats in press releases which only exacerbate the misgivings of our faithful and the insidious gossip about our Holy Church and her leaders since they, apparently, choose to engage in the very unseemly "politics" of personal attacks and innuendo.

It is discouraging that the members of the Eparchial Synod claim ignorance of the financial situation of the Archdiocese which they govern, an ignorance that is either voluntary or demonstrative of incompetence, unless the Office of the Archbishop misled them.

Ultimately, our Archbishop of America is to be accountable, and while others have been blamed, rightly or wrongly, the Archbishop has not claimed remorse for the dereliction of responsibility. That is certainly contrary to "justice and truth."

It is this avoidance of justice and truth that fosters my own disappointment and pain, for the healing of our Holy Archdiocese of America cannot truly begin unless the transparency of our financial operations—and all our operations—includes full transparency at the very top.

In HIS service and respectfully,



George Vourvoulis, Jr

cc: His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew  
The Holy Eparchial Synod of America