



ORTHODOX AUTOCEPHALOUS CHURCH OF ALBANIA

To His Grace Bishop Nikon
Albanian Archdiocese, USA

My beloved Brother in Christ, Your Grace Bishop Nikon,

I was very delighted to be present with you, His Grace Bishop Ilia of Philomelion and Very Rev Fr Arthur, together with the Albanian community back on March 9th for the beginning of the festivities for the centennial of the Albanian Orthodox Apostolate in North America. It seemed most appropriate that we began these celebrations on the Sunday of Forgiveness at the beginning of Great Lent, as a sign of the divine reconciliation to which our Lord calls all of us. I thank you for the warm hospitality you showed me at that time.

This year marks a significant occasion for the Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America. Facing many trials and struggles at the beginning of last century, the young priest Theophan Stylian Noli, later a hierarch of multifarious talents and gifts, offered the necessary and appropriate leadership to establish the first Albanian Orthodox parish in America. This Boston parish became the impetus for a larger Albanian Archdiocese. Bishop Theophan, though, did not limit his extraordinary contributions to the Orthodox in America, but his literary, intellectual and diverse offerings greatly affected the Albanian Orthodox in his homeland. He was a personality who lived with the anxieties of his time, very sensitive for the concerns of the world, for social justice, with high interest for the people in need; a dynamic person with open horizons, creative ideas and bold initiatives, for the progress of the people.

As Orthodox, we remember our forbearers not only in an historical way, but we realize that in God, they are present and in communion with us even here and now. Thus, it is our turn to nourish and pass on this understanding and treasure of faith to the new generations of faithful believers. On this auspicious occasion, my pastoral prayer and wishes is for our Triune God to guide and direct all the Albanian Orthodox of America in unity and love, faithfully prospering and growing in your combined witness to the world around you.

Tirana, September 17, 2008

With deep love in Christ,
Photarasiq

Archbishop of Tirana, Durrës and all Albania