



HELLENISM: PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE

Posted on July 1, 2021 by Father Ioannis Fortomas



When we commemorate the Metropolitan in the Liturgy, we do so out of submission to his authority. The commemoration of the local Metropolitan does not necessarily signify our prayers for his health or longevity, rather it is a token of our canonical subordination as a parish and Eucharistic community to a certain bishop. Greek Orthodox Christians must reflect carefully on this fact. Will they continue to subordinate themselves to shepherds whose only interest is the dissolution of Hellenism and Orthodoxy with the substitution of what St. Kosmas termed the "ψευτο ρωμαϊκό" that is, a false Orthodoxy, a false Christianity, a false Hellenism?

Now, two hundred years after the glorious Greek Revolution, again, we are called to muster our defense of everything sacred: Our Christianity, our Hellenism. We do this by arming ourselves with the weapons of faith. Unlike in 1821, these are not literal weapons. They are the weapons of piety, of conviction, of knowledge, of evangelical truth. We have allowed the Constantinople Patriarchate to create a false "Orthodoxy" in Ukraine to the detriment of the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church led by the saintly Metropolitan Onouphry. One of the false "bishops" acknowledged by Constantinople recently declared that the faithful of the canonical church should be "marked on the ear" as we "mark stray dogs."

This "bishop", Adrian (Kulik) of Shepitivsky, who made this statement on Facebook, had a rather circuitous path to the [OCU](#). He was born March 25, 1972 in Kkmelnitsky province. He studied for two years in the Moscow theological seminary, from 1991 to 1993, but continued his studies in the Lvov theological seminary of the Ukrainian autocephalous Orthodox church—a self-consecrated schismatic organization. He served in Kiev as a deacon, and then in 1993 moved to the US, where he was received into the jurisdiction of the Orthodox Church of America (OCA), in which jurisdiction he was ordained a priest. In 2001 he officially left the OCA by reason of his return to the Ukraine. In 2002, he joined the Ukrainian autocephalous church of North and South America and the diaspora, where after his tonsure as a ryassaphore monk with the name Bogdan, he was consecrated a bishop in New York by bishops of the Ukrainian autocephalous church of North and South America. In 2004 he returned to the schismatic Ukrainian autocephalous church, and was received into that church in Kiev, then appointed bishop of the Cherkassy and Kirovograd diocese. He continued to serve as bishop in that church in other dioceses. Due to a conflict of opinions between two lines of the Ukrainian autocephalous church, he was tonsured a stavrophore monk, which he received with the name Adrian, and re-consecrated bishop on the same day. In 2013 he switched churches again, this time to the Kiev Patriarchate, and was assigned as rector of the church of St. George in the city of Khmelnytsky.

The glorious generation of 1821 such as [Kolokotronis](#), such as [Makriyiannis](#), such as [Papaflessas](#) would in no way tolerate such ridicule and stain as a matter of principal. We have allowed the Constantinople Patriarchy and its affiliates to subsist off of our work and labors and to create a plutocracy off of the labors of our fathers and grandfathers which has not benefited Hellenism in the least. It is my sincere conviction that now, Greek Orthodox Christians must vote with their feet. Complacency with the agenda of the [Patriarchate at Constantinople](#) means one thing only: Hellenic Orthodoxy won't live to see a 300th year anniversary of the Greek Revolution.

In essence, the patriarchate of Constantinople, despite its claims at persecution by the Turkish state authorities, has enjoyed the relative tolerance of Turkey as of late. In fact it praises the Turkish government often and is often used by the Turkish government as a propaganda platform. The vast majority of the Patriarchate's flock (and thus income) are Greeks of the USA, Australia, Canada, Germany, and the UK (Greek Cypriots in the case of the latter). In the last one hundred years, the Patriarchate of Constantinople has, in general, aided western allied (American, British) interests—since the Allied Occupation of Constantinople until our present day. In return, the Patriarchate is “guaranteed” its existence in Turkey i.e. the western powers apply the proper pressure on the Turkish authorities which do not do what they did in 1955 (search for “Istanbul pogroms” on Wikipedia) to the rest of Constantinople's Hellenism, to the 2000 or so remaining Romoioi of the City: decimate and expel them.

As is well documented—and has been generously commented on as of late—the Patriarchate of Constantinople mistakes its interests with those of the West. Certainly, western powers such as America have declared common cause with Constantinople and the evidence of their co operation, especially as concerns the birth of the schismatic false “church” in Ukraine is ample. In fact, this information is confirmed by the western powers themselves. One need look not further than the former Secretary of State's (Pompeo's) statement: “Took action on lots of fronts with Russia, including religious freedom. I made sure the U.S. supported international recognition of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, helped the Metropolitan escape Russian influence,” which was posted on Twitter.

Western powers historically attempted a “containment” of Russia, using every means possible to this achievement. Napoleon did so and Hitler did so. Communism is no doubt a supreme evil and ought to have been contained and stopped. Yet, for the duration of my lifetime Communism has ceased to exist in Russia. The USSR collapsed some 31 years ago. The world should understand the first victims of Communism were the Russian people themselves, and the Russian church itself. Communism: the supreme evil to which the Russian Church fell victim as is testified by the New Martyrs and Confessors

of Russia whose memory we recently celebrated. The Russian Church and the Russian Orthodox faithful earned "top of the list priority" in the persecutions driven by the Soviet regime. As the West continues its traditional assault on Russia, it seems the Constantinople Patriarchy has confused its interests both political and ecclesiastical with those of the Western powers, and thus its "war" on the canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church by the establishment of a false "autocephalous" "church" in Ukraine.

What does the survival of Orthodoxy and Hellenism, in particular, Hellenic or Greek Orthodoxy have to do with these events? It is clear that the shepherds of Hellenic Orthodoxy and the political authorities that rule Greece—i.e. the Mitsotákis government—are taking us for a shipwreck of the finest caliber. This is quite fitting, it is quite "Byzantine" of them. Similar courses of action were followed in other times by the Patriarchate of Constantinople co-operating with the Byzantine empire—read the life of St. Simeon the New Theologian and find out how the illustrious ecclesiastical authorities of the time buried icons of St. Simeon's spiritual father to extinguish his veneration which they considered blasphemy. St. Simeon was finally exiled for speaking eternal truths to the Constantinople Patriarchy.

Prior to this, many know well that St. John Chrysostom himself died as a disgraced former bishop of what is today the Greek Orthodox Church, which promogulated his exile, ultimately causing his death. Thus, St. Simeon the New Theologian wrote of the bishops of the Constantinople Patriarchate (as if Christ was speaking to them): They (the bishops) unworthily handle My Body and seek avidly to dominate the masses... They are seen to appear as brilliant and pure, but their souls are worse than mud and dirt, worse even than any kind of deadly poison, these evil and perverse men! (Hymn 58)

How is the Russian Patriarchy different, you ask? Never did the Russian Patriarchy claim any rights and prerogatives not its own. Never did it begin teaching that it is "first among unequals" - Constantinople has done so. Meanwhile, the Russian Orthodox Church freely has apologized for its historic errors. The persecution of Old Believers, the imprisonment of St. Maxim the Greek are examples. The Russian Church historically has also stood up to the Russian state. The death (execution) of Metropolitan Philip II of Moscow is a testimony to this. The suspicious death (likely poisoning) of Patriarch Tikhon is also testimony of this. And what has Constantinople ever apologized for? How has Constantinople or the Church of Greece ever stood up to the State's interests when their end result is the destruction of Christianity and the family unit? Archbishops Seraphim and Christodoulos of Athens are exceptions. The later resisted the intrigues of the Constantinople Patriarchy to the point where they struck his (Christodoulos') name from the diptychs.

Since Constantinople is leading Hellenic Orthodoxy, I as a Greek Orthodox priest -though now under from within the Russian Orthodox Church—will never stop proclaiming that it is leading Orthodoxy and Hellenism to a cliff and to destruction and to ultimate demise. There is certainly no contempt within me for the See itself. There is only righteous disdain for the decisions of the men who occupy the See. Invoking the intercession of such Fathers, such as, [St. John Chrysostom](#) and [St. Maximus the Confessor](#) and [St. Symeon the New Theologian](#) I bring to mind the ancestors of today's Greeks who fought their way out of Turkish slavery and into the light of freedom. Look around yourselves and at least in the secrecy of your own interior thoughts and life be honest with yourselves: is this the Hellenism and Orthodoxy they were shot, burned alive, or roasted over open, coal-fires for?

The word “Hellenism” conveyed different concepts at different times throughout Christian history. Consistently in the first millennium it meant “paganism.” [St. Basil](#) uses the word “Hellenic” meaning “idolater.” This was a time when identity was based primarily on faith. As the Eastern Roman Empire disintegrated, the final Emperors added to their title the phrase “of the Hellenes”—in addition to “of the Romans.” [Gemistus Pletho](#), a late Byzantine (pagan) philosopher who died around 1453, was among the first to “revive” the idea of a modern Greek cultural group/nation as we would come to understand the Greeks today. Yet, he rejected Christianity by adopting a neo-pagan identity; prior to this, to be Greek (as we understand Hellenic identity) meant to be: a Roman citizen, an Orthodox Christian, and one who spoke Greek, in addition to one’s native language (Armenian, Turkic, Bulgarian, etc.).

With the advent of the Ottoman Empire, the Emperors of which retained within their title the phrase “of the Romans”, the “[millet](#)” system—the classification of society into various religious groups that constituted the pillar of their identity—was established. In the Orthodox Christian part of the “Roman” *millet* were Greeks, Serbs, Bulgarians etc., and they referred to themselves and were in turn referred to by the Turks as “Romans”. Conversion from Orthodox Christianity to Islam meant adoption of a Turkish identity and—for our modern intents and purposes—amalgamation into the Turkish nation. This is exactly why today, in Western Turkey, most Turks look (and act) European, i.e. Greek, as they descend from Greeks who at various historical stages adopted Islam. There were also “middle” groups, such as the “Crypto Christians”, who outwardly practiced Islam yet maintained an “underground” Orthodox Christianity in secret churches with secret clergy. Other “*millets*” were the Jewish Millet, and the Armenian Millet—for Armenian Monophysite Christians.

Language, in this religious context, was secondary. There existed Turkish speaking Greek Orthodox villages in Anatolia well into the 20th century wherein Turkish was written in Greek characters and scripture readings at the services were read in their dialect of Turkish, Karamalidika. And later, there existed Greek-speaking Muslims in places like Thrace and Crete. These were formerly Greek Orthodox Christians who embraced Islam for the status, wealth, and influence that came with conversion. The fact that language did not immediately translate into national identity is not an Eastern phenomenon: the French of Lorraine spoke German, and the Irish to this day speak English. In Asia, Japanese is written in Chinese characters. We will return to the issue of language as one of the primary sources of identity (the other being Faith) below.

During the nationalist movements beginning in the eighteenth century, the various Balkan ethnic groups conspired against the Ottoman Empire. Revolutionaries, such as, [Rigas Ferraios](#) envisioned a “re-birth” of the Roman Empire: an Orthodox Christian Federation stretching from Moldova across to the Dalmatian Coast and down the Balkan Peninsula to Greece and east to Anatolia, including Syria, Egypt and the Holy Land—the capital of which would be Constantinople. This would be a “multi-cultural” and “multi-ethnic” empire wherein many would co-exist as they did in Byzantium, with the common factors of faith, citizenship, and language.

Various uprisings had occurred against the Turks, such as the Orlov Revolt and the First Serbian Uprising. Success came when nationalistic tendencies were left aside. Though what we term today as the “Greek Revolution of 1821” began in Iasi, Romania, as the “start” of a pan-Balkan revolt, the end result was that only those living in what became modern Greece revolted. When falling back on their insular tendencies, on jealousy, intrigue and selfishness, the Greeks quickly descended into factions and proceeded to a series of civil wars that were fought consecutively in the decade after the Revolution of 1821 and before Greece became a sovereign entity in 1831. Consequently, only the intervention of the Great Powers, in the end, enabled the establishment of a Greek Kingdom, and its freedom and protection against the Ottoman Empire was guaranteed. Guaranteed by who? By the great Christian Monarchies of the time: Russia, the United Kingdom, Austria, and France.

Not all the Greek revolutionaries spoke Greek; many spoke Arvanitika—such as, [Markos Botsaris](#)—or Vlach, or even Turkish. Knowledge of Greek or lack thereof did not imply non-inclusion into the body of those we know today as the Greeks. The Greek government in the early twentieth century engaged in a massive “re-education” campaign that resulted in the near extinction of [Arvanitika](#) in places like Kranidi (where I was ordained), Hydra, Aegina, and Thebes.

The end result of this campaign, however, was a uniformity in terms of identity according to the nationalistic European model, which is: To be x means to speak x. This concept that identity flows solely from language, naturally, is foreign to the Eastern Roman (and later Ottoman) concept of identity wherein identity is based primarily on common faith.

[Aléxandros Papadiamántis](#), "the saint of Greek letters", within his short stories, records the last vestiges of such a society. Evidence of this is, within the predominantly Greek context, the appearance of Arvanites, or converted Turks or Slavs, who with their dialects, sayings, and customs enrich the Hellenic world. Such influence, which runs multiple ways, is seen in persons such as the philhellene Bavarian Doctor, [Wilhelm Wild](#) (†1899), who "adopted" the "strange ways of the Greeks," living amongst them on Skiathos for over fifty years, having come from the Kingdom of Bavaria to Greece as a young man to fight in the later phase of the Revolutionary War.

The Eastern Roman concept of identity passed well on to the Russians who, during the time of the Russian Empire, converted and amalgamated many tribes and peoples—Finnic, Turkic and others—into the Russian Empire through missionary activity. Besides the adoption and perseverance of Byzantine state symbols (doubled headed eagle) and titles (Tsar) this effort to unite an empire on the basis of faith is the Eastern Roman legacy that lived on within the Russian Empire. It was for this reason that Patriarch [Nikon of Moscow](#) said, "Though I am a Russian and son of a Russian, my faith and my religion are Greek."

Hellenism is Ecumenicity in the sense that many peoples can be grafted onto the body. This is the Roman identity, the Orthodox identity, which we find alive and exemplified in such authors such as the above-mentioned Papadiamantis. And yet Papadiamántis stands firmly within what may be termed the "European Christian tradition" along with other writers such as Chekhov, Dickens, Dostoyevsky, and Chesterton. In its originality, therefore, Hellenism is not insular, it is outward looking, and confident in its contact with other cultures and civilizations. And yet, it preserves and maintains Tradition as it has been transmitted through the generations.

We conclude our present thoughts ahead of a series of questions, however, which inevitably arise: In what condition is Hellenism today? What is the supposed "guardian" of the Hellenic Christian identity (i.e. the Greek Orthodox Church, the Constantinople Patriarchate) doing to preserve and transmit the Eastern Roman legacy? And, is it the proper vehicle to conduct this transmittance? What has it truly given the Greeks in the past one hundred years? These questions will be answered shortly...

"Two Hundred Years After the Greek Revolution": We arrive at the topic of Hellenism today, Hellenism in the modern world and specifically, Hellenism outside the modern day nation-state of Greece. What is the state of Hellenism and Orthodoxy amidst the Hellenism of the diaspora?

During the Turkish oppression of 400 years, the Church was the guardian of what might be termed, "the Eastern Roman conscious identity" of the Greeks. Later, after the Revolution of 1821, the state naturally participated in this effort of ethnic cohesion. Greeks were travelers and explorers from the times of the ancients to our own era. The urge to go forth and explore, colonize, and create new worlds is hymned and lauded in Greek literature from the sixteenth-century [Erotokritos](#) to the works of Papadiamántis in the nineteenth century to the songs of our own modern [Savvópoulos](#). Exile. Colonization. These are among the defining characteristics of Hellenism's essence. Until the time of Nasar and the nationalists in Egypt, Alexandria had a thriving Greek community. My own great-great grandfather made a fortune laying marble in Alexandria. One of my distant ancestors, [Photius](#), became Patriarch of Alexandria in the early twentieth century (where, by the way, he opposed the introduction of the new calendar), and until 1955, when perhaps one in four citizens of Constantinople were Greeks.

Segments of the Greeks began to immigrate abroad—at first to far-off America, Australia and Panama (to build the canal)—but also to places like Italian Ethiopia, Eritrea, Uganda and the Congo in Africa at the turn of the twentieth century. During these decades, a Greek family on average had one quarter of its relations abroad. After the Second World War, the Greeks immigrated to Western Europe—mainly Germany, the Cypriots, to the UK—and Canada, and (once again) to the USA, and yet other far-off places. After the economic crisis of the 2000's, an unexpected wave of immigration, helped by common EU citizenship, made its way to places—some of them quite unexpected—like Hungary, Czechia, and Poland—countries whose citizens themselves had, during the Communist era, immigrated to Greece as a stepping-stone leading to the wealthier European nations. Now roles were reversed, and, once again, Germany and Austria saw an influx of new Greeks.

The direction taken by the Greek ecclesiastical authorities—the guardians of Hellenic identity in the lands abroad among the diaspora—historically, in the new world, sought maintenance of an ethnic ghetto. There is nothing inherently negative about self-preservation... except to say that, historically, Hellenism has sought to "conquer by influence". Contact with other civilizations is a sought-after affair, and exchange is encouraged. Hellenism seeks to "graft" others to its world by conversion to Orthodoxy

and adoption of its habits, its thinking, and its world-view by other civilizations.

Yet preservation of our faith and culture—while influencing the surrounding culture—were never hallmarks of Constantinopolitan policy. The end results of the policy promoted by the Greek ecclesiastical authorities under Constantinople are: decades of food festivals and dance associations, which promoted what may be termed a “distorted” Hellenism. These have nearly ensured the extinction of Hellenism proper in the New World. The focus on Orthodox Christianity was absent; “Americanization” in such a context was the key. How can we look and act more “normal”? How can we rid our church of things like Byzantine music, vigils, and monasticism and cassock-wearing priests, and fill in with European-style choirs with organs, beardless priests in suits, pews, and hymnals? And today, how exactly do we become more “woke” so as not to offend the militant left? How do we promote moral inclusivity and neo-Marxist movements? How do we dilute everything sacred in our worship—even the age-old practices concerning the Holy Mysteries? Admittedly, certain elements of traditionalism—such as the clergy wearing cassocks and beards—made a comeback. These cannot save the irreparable damage done. These are just musicians playing as the Titanic sinks.

Undoubtedly, the fault also lies with our parents and grandparents, many of whom silently allowed this corruption to occur, and others who even affirmed and promoted it for their own gain and for their own purposes (“respected” positions on parish councils, etc.). While I grew up, for example, traditional Greek Christmas carols were ignored; instead, Christmas carols translated into Greek from English (most of which are originally German) were sung. There’s nothing inherently wrong with western Christian carols. But western messages and values permeated my young being, not the messages and eternal truths of our Orthodoxy heralded in the eternal Byzantine carols of the Greeks. The question became: Why this mania of forsaking anything that strikes as Byzantine? Papadiamantis, [Seferis](#), [Elytis](#)—these authors—perhaps the most profound Greeks of the past one hundred years—were never mentioned to us as children. No one ever told us of the *Erotokritos* or [Diogenis Akritas](#).

I had a question as a child that nagged internally at me: each Saturday I was dragged by my blessed mother to Greek School where I was absolutely forbidden to speak English in class. Yet, on Sunday, perhaps half the Liturgy was celebrated in English. Our priest dressed like a Roman Catholic in a suit. Any sense of traditionalism was scoffed at. My young mind did not understand the contradiction, and, without perhaps the proper articulation on an internal or external level, I asked myself a basic question: “Why is our Greek Orthodox Church not really Greek and not really Orthodox?”

As more information on Orthodoxy in the traditional Orthodox nations readily became available with the advent of the internet in my early teens, this question only deepened. This question would lead me, at around fifteen years or age, to the respected and ever-memorable Fr. Mikhail Lubochinsky—a man who became a formative father in Christ. He introduced me to authentic Orthodoxy. Later in my life, as I read and translated Papadiamántis many years after Fr. Mikhail's unexpected repose in 2014, I began to see in this simple Russian priest living in twentieth century Canada an example of a nineteenth-century Greek priest.

What does this mean? Elegant and yet simple, charitable and sacrificial to all his parishioners, faithful in his celebration of the Divine services and the Holy Liturgy, with an unwavering, other-worldly purpose, the ever memorable Fr. Mikhail sought to initiate his spiritual children into the inner mystery which is the true Christian life. Irrespective of their particular background or ethnic identity, all—Poles, Georgians, Greeks and average Canadians alike—were made to feel as equal children under his pastoral care, with no distinctions, no exceptions. Would our ancestors account such a man as not being a Greek? [Fr. Georges Florovsky](#), the eminent theologian (and by coincidence godfather of the aforementioned Fr. Mikhail from whom I was told stories of Fr. Georges' little-known asceticism and fasting) said: *"If a theologian starts thinking that 'the Greek categories' are archaic, he automatically will lose the rhythm of Catholicity. We must be more Greek to be truly Catholic, to be truly Orthodox."* Broadly speaking, the "Greek" referenced by Fr. Georges is defined as the Hellenism born from the early Church Fathers, such as the Cappadocians, who reconciled Ancient Greek philosophy with Christianity. This has nothing to do with genetics and DNA and who is descended from who—these categories are absolutely irrelevant. As a flower, one could say, or as an organism, Hellenism blossomed then, and is growing still.

Would our ancestors account the modern day Greek bishops as true Greeks? The question—"What would the ancestors say?"—is the fundamental question. Recently, Metropolitan Sotirios of Toronto stated: "Let us work together for the glory of God and for our Holy Orthodox Faith in Christ! Only then will we live in peace, unity and love. In doing so, Greeks in Canada will accomplish even greater things! This is what we deserve! This is what we need. Let us all advance as one. Let no one remain behind or forgotten." And yet, the policy of assimilation within the West promoted by the official Greek Orthodox Church in the past fifty years has failed the Greeks. This policy has ensured that scores—that thousands of Greeks—have become totally Anglicized, and finally, foreigners to the Orthodox Church.

Those who have a conscience know and understand that the official Greek Orthodox Church has absolutely nothing to offer them. It is void of any spirituality, any authenticity, any hint of originality. It

has become a parody wherein once a year a food festival occurs, the main goal and focus being the collection of funds—with no absolute existential goal, no ultimate purpose or end beyond the exchange of funds, soulless numbers within a system. We could say it has morphed into a bank with the guise of faith. And reading these words, the Greeks know this message to be true as they see their children apostatizing from Orthodoxy and not speaking Greek, not feeling any particular “tie” to their ancestral homeland—the same homeland Metropolitan Sotirios appeals to to provide Hellenism with “ethical” support. This is not to say anything of the ties the Greeks no longer have with their Byzantine ancestors and the Eastern Roman legacy of Byzantium championed by Fr. Georges Florovsky!

Here is a fact we must all reckon with: The fact that ninety percent of those who identify as Greek Americans are not Orthodox Christians—a fact that the Greek Archdiocese of America ignores. It's time that we find a new mode of ecclesial existence in order to preserve our faith and identity as Greeks.

Adherence to the Patriarchate of Constantinople in the New World has seen a ninety percent apostasy.² I ask: why should the Greeks continue to adhere to Constantinople? Since when was adherence to the Greek Archdiocese of America or Constantinople the defining characteristic of Hellenism? Are the Greeks who adhere to the other Patriarchates, such as Alexandria or Jerusalem, any less Greek? Are the Antiocheans, who still term themselves and their Patriarchate, “Greek Orthodox”, though today they are all Arabic-speaking, less Greek? If so, then Kottas Hristou who died for Greece while screaming “Long live Greece!” in Bulgarian as he was hung by the Ottoman authorities also isn't Greek. When nineteenth-century Orthodox Slavic immigrants to the new world termed their parishes “Greek Catholic”, what did they reference? The Unia? Obviously not.

They were referencing the Ecumenical Hellenism we mentioned, the distinct combination of Orthodoxy and Hellenism on which our common ancestors, the Eastern Romans, built a mighty empire. Whether we are Greeks or Serbs or Romanians or Russians, this legacy is our legacy. We are all co-inheritors of this legacy. We all share in the common duty of preserving it and influencing modern culture with it. In these uncertain times we live in, in this truly “novel” age of history that has dawned, little stability is left in western society. We must look into the past, to the Faith of our ancestors who intercede on our behalf, and we must seek new historical (though not physical) destinations and solutions to the seemingly insolvable problems we face. Despite the fallen men and women of Byzantium, it was a society wherein Christianity and Christ came first. This is what the common goal should be: that the Kingdom of God is reflected within our own earthly kingdom. Do all men and women not share in this goal as common children of the Father? Is our Eastern Orthodox Christianity not the basis of unity for

all?

Here in the West, since the Russian Church has given us the opportunity to live the faith purely, there is no “loss of Hellenism” in doing so from within the Russian Church. After all, what is the difference in being a Greek under the Russian Church or a Greek under the Patriarchate of Jerusalem? How does an Orthodox jurisdiction—a representative of the Eastern Roman Church—“prove” its Hellenism? Were the Greek Bishops who served the Russian Church historically, such as, [Evgenios Voulgaris](#) and [Nikephoros Theotokis](#), both of Kerkyra, not Greeks?

Here, in the New World, for us Greeks, the preservation of our language, our customs, and our traditions—but primarily our Orthodox Christianity—can only occur under the freedom provided by the Russian Orthodox Church, since the Greek Archdioceses long ago rejected their true vocation. The Greek Archdiocese claimed that Russians can live their faith within it in the so-called “Slavic” Vicariate, composed of defrocked and disgraced Russian clergy who were unfaithful sons. History will prove that I, and those who follow this example, are the faithful children of the Eastern Roman legacy. We invite those who care about the preservation of Orthodoxy and Hellenism—while ensuring their transmittance to the peoples of this land—to come and work with us.

Father Ioannis Fortomas, originally from Canada, now serves as Orthodox priest in the Peloponnese (Greece). His work is regularly featured in [Pravoslavie](#).

The [featured image](#) shows Christ as Pantocrator, a mosaic from the Pammakaristos Church, Constantinople (Turkey), 11th-12th century.

