



To His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios of Boston and His Excellency Archbishop Joseph W. Tobin, C. Ss. R., of Indianapolis, co-chairmen, and the esteemed members of the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, our beloved in the Lord: Grace be unto you and peace from God.

With great joy and thanksgiving to our Lord, we join with you in recognizing the fiftieth anniversary of the Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation in North America. You will celebrate this event during your meeting on October 22-24, 2015, at St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Worcester, Massachusetts.

Under the leadership of His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos and His Excellency Catholic Bishop Bernard Flanagan, two hierarchs deeply committed to Christian unity, the first meeting took place in Worcester on September 9, 1965. This was an historic and unprecedented gathering.

From the beginning, this unique Consultation was jointly sponsored by the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops, now the Assembly of Orthodox Bishops in the United States, and the Catholic Conference of Bishops, now the United States Catholic Conference of Bishops. The scope of the Conference was increased when the Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops became a co-sponsor in 1997. The fruitful work of the Consultation provided a basis for the establishment in 1981 of the Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops in North America. Moreover, since 1978, the Joint International Commission for Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church has benefited from the theological studies of your Consultation.

The first meeting of the Consultation occurred after the historic meeting of Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras in Jerusalem in 1964, and prior to the Lifting of the Anathemas of 1054 by Rome and Constantinople in 1965. The Consultation was blessed by Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras.

We are thankful that the Consultation has brought together eminent hierarchs and theologians who are committed to the restoration of full communion through agreement on the Apostolic Faith and expressed in the celebration of the Holy Eucharist. With scholarly insight, pastoral sensitivity and fervent prayer, you have examined and addressed the critical issues which have estranged our Churches. You have advanced the relationship between our Churches and our common witness in the world in the name of Christ. You have responded faithfully to the prayer of the Lord for the unity of his followers (John 17:21).

Truly, the fruits of the Consultation are found in its twenty-eight Agreed Statements. For five decades, these Statements and related studies have contributed greatly to mutual understanding, theological renewal, and the resolution of our historic differences.

We extend our Patriarchal blessings to the members of the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation. We pray that you continue your faithful service to Christ our Lord as well as your contribution to the sacred goal of the restoration of full communion between our Sister Churches in accordance with the Apostolic Faith.

At the Ecumenical Patriarchate, October 1st, 2015

Fraternally yours,

✠ BARTHOLOMEW

Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome  
and Ecumenical Patriarch