



NEWS

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DATE: February 3, 1977

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ORTHODOX BISHOPS CONGRATULATED ON THEIR BICENTENNIAL ENCYCLICAL

WASHINGTON--The president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops has congratulated the Orthodox Bishops in the Americas for their recent encyclical on the U.S. bicentennial observance.

"It is singularly appropriate," said Archbishop Joseph L. Bernardin of Cincinnati, "that your encyclical puts into sharp focus the contributions made to our beloved country by the first Orthodox settlers and their present day descendants. These heroic people, priests and laity alike, came to this land seeking new opportunities and found an opportunity to shape the American experience through a rich spiritual heritage and through lives which reflect a profound faith in Christ our Saviour."

Archbishop Bernardin's message was sent to Archbishop Iakovos, Chairman, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North and South America.

The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas issued its first Pan-Orthodox Encyclical on Christmas Day in celebration of the Two Hundredth Anniversary of the founding of the United States of America. Addressed to the Bishops, priests and faithful of the Orthodox Churches who are represented

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2/Bicentennial Encyclical

by the Standing Conference, the Encyclical recounted the story of the Orthodox pioneers and missionaries who brought their faith to the American shores.

It expressed gratitude to God for the foundation of this "sanctuary of freedom" and the hope that "our United States will be continually sustained and judged by the Christian heritage that brought her forth and that finds its completion in the Orthodox faith."

The Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops was established in 1960 to develop cooperative programs among the Orthodox Church jurisdictions in the United States and Canada and to improve relations with other Christian Churches.

Following is the full text of Archbishop Bernardin's message:

I wish to congratulate the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas for the eloquent and moving Pan-Orthodox Encyclical issued on the occasion of this nation's bicentennial observance. It is singularly appropriate that your encyclical puts into sharp focus the contributions made to our beloved country by the first Orthodox settlers and their present day descendants. These heroic people, priests and laity alike, came to this land seeking new opportunities, and found an opportunity to shape the American experience through a rich spiritual heritage and through lives which reflect a profound faith in Christ our Saviour. It is my prayer that God whose blessings have enriched this nation and its Orthodox community will cause the light of your witness to burn ever more brightly until it illuminates every corner of our land and every facet of our common tradition.

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