

*A Joint Letter on the Meeting of
Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew in Jerusalem*

May 21, 2014

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

We give thanks to our Lord for the coming meeting of Pope Francis and Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew which will take place on May 25-26, in the holy city of Jerusalem. We pray that this meeting in the sacred place of our Lord's Death and Resurrection will contribute to the restoration of full communion in faith and sacrament between our churches, and the salvation of the world.

This meeting marks the 50th anniversary since the historic encounter between Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras in 1964 in Jerusalem which opened a new period in the relationship between our churches. We began a process of reconciliation through prayer, theological dialogue and common witness. Since that time, Popes and Patriarchs have met together regularly. Our churches have established formal theological consultations in this country in 1965 and internationally in 1979. These dialogues have been nurtured by the prayers of the faithful and countless acts of mutual respect. As Popes and Patriarchs have affirmed, we have come to see ourselves as 'sister churches' who are responsible together for affirming the faith of the Apostles.

The flourishing relationship between clergy and laity of the Archdiocese of Boston and the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston has contributed to the process of reunion. As clergy and laity, we have prayed together, undertaken pilgrimages to Rome and Constantinople and have addressed critical issues facing our society. The brotherhood which has grown here is a treasured gift from above. As Ecumenical Patriarch Athenagoras said fifty years ago, "Having found one another again, we meet the Lord together."

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston and the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston will sponsor a conference on September 25 to mark the 50th anniversary of the historic encounter of 1964.

We thank God for the work He has begun between us and trust firmly in Him for its completion. In fidelity, we commit ourselves to continue working for His will.

In the words of Pope Paul IV, we call our faithful to "a love which, learning from the past, is ready to forgive, tends to believe more willingly in good than in evil, and is above all concerned to follow the pattern of its Divine Master and to allow itself to be drawn to Him and transformed by Him."

We ask our clergy and laity to continue to pray for the unity of the Church and the witness of the Gospel in our world.

Cardinal Seán Patrick O'Malley, O.F.M. Cap.

Metropolitan Methodios of Boston

