



МИТРОПОЛИТЪ ВОСТОЧНО-АМЕРИКАНСКИЙ И НЬЮ-ЙОРКСКИЙ  
ПЕРВОИЕРАРХЪ РУССКОЙ ПРАВОСЛАВНОЙ ЦЕРКВИ ЗАГРАНИЦЕЙ  
METROPOLITAN OF EASTERN AMERICA AND NEW YORK  
FIRST HIERARCH OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH OUTSIDE OF RUSSIA

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November 21, 2025

During these recent days I was able with the help of God to visit our nation's capital and in the company of fellow clergy and laity from some of our sister Orthodox churches (Antiochian, Serbian, and OCA) to speak with representatives of our government regarding the question of religious freedom in Ukraine. Congresswoman Anna Paulina Luna, Congressman Darrell Issa, Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy Sarah Rogers, and former Congressman Mark Walker, Trump nominee for Ambassador At-Large for International Religious Freedom, received our inter-Orthodox delegation. Part of the delegation was able to meet with Congressman Raja Krishnamoorthi. It is a pity that our visits coincided with a media article that so misrepresented all our Churches, attempting to cast Orthodoxy in a negative light; but we were grateful that the actual reception we had by our political leaders in Washington was warm, filled with a desire for understanding and an awareness of our shared wish to work together for peace. The freedom to pray and to act in accordance with God's commandments is something we highly prize as citizens of the world's pre-eminent democracy and it is a gift that we believe the whole world should share. My own parents and grandparents fled the oppression of the Soviet Union and ultimately immigrated to the United States, where I was born. I treasure the gift of liberty that we enjoy as Americans.

Naturally, as Orthodox Christians it is our particular responsibility to advocate for those who are members of our own household of Faith. We therefore seek to ease the pressures and hostile actions being directed against our brothers and sisters in Christ who belong to the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, including the forced closure of their churches and violence directed against their clergy and people. The government of Ukraine, as it defends itself from external aggression, brings harm to itself by permitting such acts contrary to the free practice of religion and in doing so weakens itself.

As the First Hierarch of ROCOR I know that our Church is not wealthy in the riches of this World and has many struggles. It has been ever thus since our forebears first fled the Communist dictatorship that became the Soviet Union: But in our material poverty we were providentially reminded of the riches of God's grace and that our enemy is sin, that separates us from God's love, and can only be defeated with the weapons of prayer and fasting, enlivened by Grace. In our material weakness and lack of political standing, I am truly grateful for the freedom that America gives us to offer a voice for the Ukrainian Orthodox Church who otherwise might not be heard amid all the clamor of war in Ukraine and the resulting death and destruction this is bringing to the peoples of that country irrespective of their own beliefs or actions.

I am also thankful for the Act of Canonical Communion that was signed in 2007 and restored our eucharistic communion with various parts of the Orthodox world, including our long suffering brethren of the Russian Orthodox Church within Russia, with whom we are of course grateful to be able to share the



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sacraments while fully retaining our own independence. Despite ROCOR being the smaller party of the two signatories, this agreement left us free to manage the affairs of our Church independently, drawing upon our own pastoral experience of the West and our history of more than a century in these lands. In all things I am grateful for the guidance provided by our own local ROCOR Council of Bishops, which is the highest authority in our Church. As we approach the holiday of Thanksgiving, may God help us all to cherish the freedom that is the heritage of all Americans and to see this more and more widely embraced throughout the world.

Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York  
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