

**Words of His Eminence, Metropolitan Demetrios
at the Enthronement Ceremony of His Grace,
Bishop Auxentios of Etna and Portland**

13 April 2015 (Old Style)

Your Grace, dear Brother and concelebrant, Bishop Auxentios,
Your Eminences, Metropolitan Moses and Metropolitan Chrysostomos,
Your Grace, Bishop Sergios, beloved clergy and faithful,

Christ is risen!

Your Grace, congratulations on this joyous occasion of your enthronement as ruling Bishop of the Diocese of Etna and Portland! On this day, two venerable dioceses—that of Etna and that of Portland—come together to form a new and stronger presence of genuine Orthodoxy on the West Coast. This festive day is the fruit of the union of the Genuine Orthodox Christians in both Greece and America, and it is a sign of the increasing strength and prosperity of our Church in the New World. Only a few years ago, we were divided; but now, as the Church chants in her hymns, “The Grace of the Holy Spirit hath brought us together!” And a sure proof that the establishment of this diocese is the work of the Holy Spirit is the fact that the Sacred Synod elected you to be its shepherd and guide. Now that I have had the honor of knowing you personally, I see that the reports fall short of the truth, for you are a man of both piety and wisdom: a combination very rare in our times. For this, I give glory to God, and I also thank your spiritual mentor, Metropolitan Chrysostomos, who with diligence and love trained you in the monastic life and formed you spiritually and intellectually.

God has established you to be a beacon of light shining in the West. “The days are evil,” as the Apostle says, and the task that lies before you is daunting. We live in a culture of atheism and unrepentant immorality, and even those who call themselves Orthodox Christians seek to subvert the Gospel of Christ and betray the traditions handed down from the Holy Apostles. The enemies of God are found on every side; in the words of the Psalmist, “They compassed me about together like unto bees about a honeycomb.” But you, my brother, will apply the rest of the verse, and in the name of the Lord you will ward them off. This is the task which God has appointed for you; this is the task for which He has prepared you through the many talents and graces He has given unto you.

Beloved brother, all of us, especially those of us who are called to be shepherds of the Church, will have friends and enemies. There will be those who hate us, and those who love us. But let us remember that our task is not to convince people to like us, but to bring them to *love God*. In this we are distinguished as true pastors. Of course, you are well aware of this because, among the many edifying publications which your monastery has produced for us, you have handed down to us the translation of the *Evergetinos*, a book replete with profound teachings guiding Christians, and particularly monastics, to union with God. In that work, we are taught how to love our enemies and to accept slander as a spiritual cauterization. In this vein, there was a Serbian Bishop who reposed in this country. His name was Bishop Nikolai Velimirović. He wrote a profoundly edifying poem, calling upon the Most High God to bless his enemies, “for,” he said, “they are my best friends.”

Amid the cares and trials which I must endure as Metropolitan of America, it eases my heart to know that the West is in good hands. All eyes are upon you. We have high expectations of your leadership and great hopes for the future of this diocese. Therefore, we commend you to the Grace of the All-Holy Spirit. May He guide you in the path of wisdom; may He strengthen you to endure every temptation; and may He grant you the joy of seeing your spiritual children, the Orthodox Christians of this diocese, grow in the Faith and attain unto the salvation for which we all long!

All my love and best wishes are with you, my brother. May the Grace of our Lord, and God, and Savior, Jesus Christ, be with you! Amen.