

The Superior Court of Massachusetts in Favor of Fr. Nicholas Kastanas

By Theodore Kalmoukos

BOSTON – Judge Peter B. Krupp of Massachusetts Superior Court with his decision of December 16 dismissed the counterclaims of the Metropolis of Boston and St. Athanasius parish of Arlington, MA against Fr. Nicholas Kastanas.

The decision Number 17-2312-L2 is comprised of 13 pages and says among other things the following: “After defendant Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston, Inc.’s (“Metropolis”) removed plaintiff Rev. Fr. Nicholas Kastanas (“Father Kastanas”) from his parish in 2017, Father Kastanas filed this case to recover his personal property that he alleged the Metropolis was holding. The Metropolis counterclaimed, alleging that Father Kastanas had failed to return property belonging to it and/or the parish. As it relates to the motion before me, the operative document is the First Amended Counterclaim (Docket #17). Father Kastanas has moved to dismiss the counterclaim. After hearing, and consideration of the parties’ briefs, including those submitted after the hearing, the motion is ALLOWED.”

It is reminded here that Fr. Kastanas was dismissed on July 27 by Metropolitan Methodios of Boston after 28 years of successful ministry at the St. Athanasius Greek Orthodox parish in Arlington.

Methodios had left the letter of Fr. Kastanas’ dismissal with his chancellor Rev. Theodoros Barbas and left for Greece on vacation.

Also Metropolitan Methodios suspended Kastanas of all Liturgical activities because the latter filed an injunction – a temporary restraining order with a High Court in Massachusetts – requesting the court to prohibit the Metropolis of Boston from returning his private computer and personal documents that were taken from his office by members of the parish council as directed by the Metropolis.

On page 2 of the decision the following is stated: “Before July 27, 2017, Father Kastanas was the parish priest at St. Athanasius Greek Orthodox Church in Arlington (the Parish). In 2014, the Metropolis Finance Committee (MFC) began reviewing the Parish’s finances. During its review, MFC discovered an account named ‘St. Athanasius Greek Orthodox Church Homeless & Needy Fund’ (the Fund), which had not appeared in the Parish’s annual audits. The Fund was a passbook account controlled by Father Kastanas, who refused to provide MFC with records relating to the Fund. In March 2017, an audit committee of the Parish, which was formed at MFC’s direction, issued a report finding that the Fund ‘was improperly handled, did not contain sufficient records and there is no accounting for the use of the funds.’

“The Metropolis removed Father Kastanas from his position as the Parish’s priest on July 27,



Fr. Nicholas Kastanas delivers his last sermon on Sunday, July 30, 2017 at St. Athanasios Greek Orthodox parish.

2017.

Procedural History
“On August 1, 2017, Father Kastanas filed this action, asserting that the Metropolis was wrongfully retaining his personal property. On November 13, 2017, the Metropolis filed an answer and counterclaim. The Metropolis asserted claims against Father Kastanas for replevin, conversion, and an equitable accounting of the Fund. After Father Kastanas moved to dismiss the counterclaims and before the court heard the motion, the Metropolis filed its First Amended Counterclaim (Jan. 24, 2018). The First Amended Counterclaim asserts the same three counts averred in the initial counterclaim, but also pur-

ports to add the Parish as a third-party plaintiff or alternative party to assert those claims.

“On March 2, 2018, Father Kastanas moved to dismiss the First Amended Counterclaim. Because of the parties’ attempts at mediation, among other things, that motion is only now before the Court. In his motion, Father Kastanas argues that the Metropolis does not have standing to bring the First Amended Counterclaim on its own behalf, that it fails to state claims upon which relief can be granted, and that the Parish is not properly before the court. I consider the standing and procedural arguments below after addressing a threshold jurisdictional matter raised by the Metropolis after

the hearing. Because I conclude the Metropolis lacks standing, I do not consider the argument that the counterclaim fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.”

On page 13 it concluded as follows:

“ORDER

Plaintiffs Motion to Dismiss the First Amended Counterclaim of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Boston, Inc. (Docket #21) is ALLOWED.

Dated: December 16, 2019.”

As The National Herald reported on October 23, 2019, Metropolitan Methodios intends to send Fr. Kastanas to Spiritual Court. The chronic issues of Fr. Kastanas and his long-running suspension, and the St. Athanasius parish will rise again; it will be phase two and will generate even more negative publicity, in light of the upcoming visit of His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to Boston on May 7, 2020.

It has become known that Fr. Kastanas has filed for ‘eklition’ (supreme final appeal) to Archbishop Elpidophoros as the First Ecclesiastical Authority of our Church in America, a process analogous to the ekliton the hierarchs can initiate with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who renders the final decision on a specific dispute.

It is noted here that it is against the Canon Law of the Church for the suspension of Fr.

Kastanas to continue for so long.

It is also noted that Fr. Kastanas does not receive a salary from anywhere, he does not have medical insurance, and he was not permitted to bless the wedding of his son a few months ago, nor attend the baptism of his grandchild.

The results of Methodios’ decision to oust Fr. Kastanas in July 2017 from St. Athanasius, the way it was done, the accusations that were used, and the reverberations in the parish and its congregants have created an open wound.

A massive exodus of many families occurred from the parish which was considered one of the most vibrant and most populous not only in the Metropolis of Boston but in the entire Archdiocese of America. The parish had the potential to house a Greek Day School since it has the necessary building and facilities, but in the meantime dozens of parents took their children from the existing Greek Afternoon School of St. Athanasius in protest of Methodios’ action towards their parish. They have established their own school in a rental facility in a neighboring town with great success.

When the news broke in July 2017 there was wide press coverage by the major media outlets of Boston while Metropolitan Methodios was the subject of protests and demonstrations by St. Athanasius’ parishioners.

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew Speaks from His Heart

Continued from page 1

TNH: As the Archbishop par excellence, the Father of the local Church in America and our Patriarch, which areas of church life in America do you think require special attention and priority?

Ecumenical Patriarch: The mission of the Church has immovable pillars. These include the proclamation of the Gospel, the sanctification of the faithful, the liturgical life, the ministry of our neighbor, the experience and preservation of the noble spiritual values of Orthodox culture and Orthodox identity, as well as the witness of freedom in Christ in the contemporary world. More particularly, with regard to church life in America, we feel that special attention should be focused on cultivating and living the genuine liturgical tradition of the Church in parish life and community ethos. Professor Yannaras, an Archon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, once wrote that “proper worship in and of itself was a cultural explosion.” The same applies to the pastoral concern for our youth, to theological education, and education in general. Of course, through all these, it is also vital to promote the relationship of the institutions and expressions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate as well as its flock with the Sacred Center of Orthodoxy, which for centuries preserved and to this day expresses the authenticity of Orthodox self-consciousness as the tradition of the Saints and Martyrs of faith, as the Church that leads through suffering, and as the guardian of our People’s sacred values.

TNH: After 28 years on the



Former Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Antonis Diamataris with His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew at the Thronal Feast of the Church of Constantinople.

Ecumenical Throne, what is your greatest concern and worry regarding the direction of the Orthodox Church today, of the world more broadly, and of Christianity, in general?

Ecumenical Patriarch: From the outset of our Patriarchal tenure, our foremost concern was the unity of Orthodox and the common witness of the Orthodox Churches in the contemporary world. We consider this unity to be a necessary requirement both for dialogue with the rest of the Christian world and other religions, but also with the civilization of our age. The witness of the Church is always given within a specific historical and cultural context. Today, this is characterized and

defined by immense changes and developments in the field of science and technology, social relations and social structures, as well as politics and economy. We are living an inversion and devaluation of values, an idolization of individual rights, cultural conflicts and mass migration of populations, an eruption of religious fundamentalism, public and domestic violence, the destruction of the natural environment along with its attendant climate change. It is in this context that we are called to be Orthodox Christians, to offer an account “for the hope that lies within us.” It is abundantly clear that introversion and indifference toward the world are not the proper atti-

tude for the Church. The Ecumenical Patriarchate never ignored its charitable witness, service and solidarity with the world in the name of its liturgical life and spiritual mission. It has over the centuries been “a servant Church.” The Orthodox Church is also called to represent today the same culture of love, justice and peace, always in reference to the eternal destiny of humankind.

TNH: What do you believe about the Greek community in America? What are we for you?

Ecumenical Patriarch: We nurture great hopes for the future of the Greek community in America, which are also dynamically nurtured in the present. We regard it supremely impor-

tant for you to preserve the Orthodox identity, to cultivate a sense of the value and definitive contribution of the Greek language as well as the indissoluble connection with the Mother Church of Constantinople. For us, you are the dearly beloved spiritual children, of whom we are proud and for whose spiritual progress we pray to the Giver of every good thing. As His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros said immediately after his election, “the Archdiocese of America is the pride of the Ecumenical Patriarchate.” We already anticipate the joy of our visit among you next May.

TNH: Do you have any comment on the tenure of Mr. Antonis Diamataris as Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for matters pertaining to Greeks Abroad and Churches in the Diaspora? What has been your experience from your cooperation over the last months?

Ecumenical Patriarch: Mr. Diamataris is no stranger to us personally or, of course, to the Greeks abroad. He [spent years living and working] in the Greek Diaspora; he knows its problems and perspectives; and he has worked long and efficiently in this capacity. As Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs for matters pertaining to Greeks Abroad, he visited the Phanar and we had a very interesting exchange of opinions and excellent collaboration. Wherever he has traveled during his tenure, he has left positive impressions among the Greeks, manifesting a vivid interest in matters that concern them. We are certain that he will continue to offer his invaluable services to the Greek community through his knowledge and experience.

Bartholomew Supports Organ Donation

TNH Staff

CONSTANTINOPLE – His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, in a letter-greeting for the presentation of the book by former Minister Dimitris Stratoulis, noted that he favors organ donation. The Patriarch wrote among other things that organ donation “saves lives and is an expression and act of solidarity.”

He also praises every effort that is made to raise public awareness on this major issue of transplants while also responding indirectly to circles within the Church that oppose organ donation.

The Patriarch emphasized that “scientific research is a God-given gift to man” and pointed out that “the Church cannot and will not remain on the sidelines of discussing modern developments and great anthropological and moral issues,” restating the positions of the Pan-Orthodox Synod of Crete.

The basis on which the Church and the Orthodox tradition move, Patriarch Bartholomew recalls, is “unhypocritical and sacrificial love” but also “the transcendence of our individual right for the sake of our neighbor, our brother.”

Ordination of Bishop Joachim of Amisos at St. Sophia Cathedral

By Theodore Kalmoukos

WASHINGTON, DC – The ordination of Bishop Joachim of Amisos took place on December 22, known as Sunday before the birth of Christ, at St. Sophia’s Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Washington, DC. His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America officiated, assisted by Metropolitan of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Savas of Pittsburgh and Nathanael of Chicago. Also Metropolitan Melchizedek of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) as well as Bishop Apostolos of Medeia and Bishop Thomas of the Diocese of Oakland, Charleston and the Mid-Atlantic of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese.

Twelve priests participated, four deacons, and also Rev. Dr. George Dragas representing the faculty of Holy Cross Theological School.

Addressing Bishop-elect Joachim prior the ordination Archbishop Elpidophoros made reference to “the asceticism of scholarship” and said among other things that “there is another kind of spiritual discipline—the asceticism of scholarship. A life of study, a life spent advancing knowledge—this is its own form of self-denial. It is also form of spiritual

guidance. True scholarship requires solitude and sacrifice; it requires total commitment and a sense of service to others. It requires a dedication to the highest standards of excellence.

Αιέν ἀριστεύειν—“Ever to excel.”

The Archbishop also said that “this idea inspired the heroes of ancient Greece, as it also inspired the heroes of the Christian faith. It is one of the timeless values of Hellenism that the Church adopted for Herself down through the ages. It is an ideal that has shaped you: as a son of the Greek Orthodox Church, as a scholar, and as a clergyman. You have shown the utmost commitment to the visual expressions of our Faith. This lifelong labor—a labor of love, indeed—has made you a world-class expert and art historian. Your love for books and your achievements in the field of Library Science have also blessed our students at Hellenic College and Holy Cross.”

The Archbishop added that “because you exemplify genuine scholarship and academic excellence, the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate elected you to be raised to the Episcopacy. As the resident bishop at our theological School, you will be both a living icon of Christ and a dynamic model of scholarly excellence.

“This is a high calling. It is a calling to a quiet kind of heroism that is often in short supply. It is a calling to self-denial and self-sacrifice. It is a calling to total commitment to the well-being of the Church.”

His Grace Bishop Joachim in his reply stated, among other things, that “I humbly stand here before you about to enter into the high calling of the episcopacy of the Holy Orthodox Church, upon the election of His All-Holiness Bartholomew, Archbishop of Constantinople and Ecumenical Patriarch, and the most venerable members of the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Great Church of Christ. This is a great blessing for which, of course, I have done nothing deserving nor am I worthy of such a great gift, a gift bestowed from on high and as a sign of Your Eminence’s paternal love.”

He added that “I come before you today as one in the autumnal stage of life and from the margins, or as Saint Paul says, as one born out of due time (I Cor. 15:8). Yet, although I may be out of time and place, I do, however, begin this new diakonia within a context, and that context is this sacred temple of Hagia Sophia of Washington, DC, or as it is fondly referred to here among the faithful, Saint Sophia.

“It is here, Your Eminence, that I was first nurtured and



PHOTO PROVIDED BY ARCHIMANDRITE ATHENAGORAS ZILIAKOPOULOS
The newly ordained Bishop Joachim of Amisos standing at the right of His Eminence Elpidophoros of America.

raised in the Faith, by my devout and most righteous parents, Alexander and Demetra, and along with my dear brother Chris, all of whom have gone to their rest before me. May their memory be eternal! And may they rejoice with me today as those enjoying eternal life within the Church.

It is here in Saint Sophia that I received catechism as a child, served as an altar boy and later was a member of the Orthodox Christian Fellowship as an undergraduate at the nearby University of Maryland.

“Your Eminence, as I stand at the threshold of the episcopal office, I fervently pray to the Lord to make me a most worthy image of His High priesthood, most significantly at this holy season in which we joyfully anticipate the celebration of His Saving Birth in our world. At this moment, I also fervently seek the intercessions of my homonymous saintly patrons, John the Baptist and Joachim, along with those of the beloved Holy Hierarchs Nicholas and Nektarios the Wonderworkers, but most of all I turn my prayers to the Virgin Mother of God, the Theotokos, so that one day, I, too, as my beloved cousin the late Metropolitan Nikolaos of Latiotia, may be remembered as Theotokophilos-beloved of the Theotokos.”