

[http://www.orthodoxnews.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=editorialsopinion.one&content\\_id=18288&CFID=43201658&CFTOKEN=66113017](http://www.orthodoxnews.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=editorialsopinion.one&content_id=18288&CFID=43201658&CFTOKEN=66113017)

Give us your property!!! - **The National Herald**

---

*December 11, 2009*

The demand - for that is what it is, in essence - by the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to our Metropolitans, presented in a letter signed by him, to transfer ownership of at least one building from each one of them to the Patriarchate, is a terrible idea and the request should be withdrawn immediately.

If it is not withdrawn, then the metropolitans ought to make it clear to Bartholomew that for the sake of maintaining the unity of the church, and the ties to the Patriarchate, they will refuse to obey or even discuss it with the laity. If there should be a metropolitan who, acting to serve his narrow self interest, tries to pressure the parishioners into transferring a property of their community or the diocese to the Patriarchate, then the people should deny him his request and hold him in low esteem.

Because, should this outrageous demand be obeyed, it could lead to the breaking up into pieces of our Church, and to its being controlled by forces in Turkey, which would work toward its neutralization, if not its dissolution as an ethnic group.

We wish there was a nicer way to say it, but this demand by Bartholomew has crossed the line. It is so unacceptable and offensive, but also so revealing of his designs on our Church and its assets, that it raises many questions about his relationship to this community.

This newspaper - as well as our Greek language sister publication - has been very sensitive and supportive of the Patriarchate as a religious institution, with its long and important history. We have also been supportive of its continuing ecclesiastical authority over our Greek American Church.

However, we hold nothing more dear than the interests of our community.

It is to the community that we owe our total dedication and alliance.

The Patriarchate's letter to the metropolitans does not serve its interests. It sounds innocent: Transfer ownership of "at least" one building to us from each metropolis so that we can, somehow - even if it is not very clear how - save the Patriarchate. It is hard to believe that a Patriarch would attach his signature to such a proposal.

Still, if all it took to save the Patriarchate from the reach of the Turks was transferring a number of buildings to it, we would probably be the first ones to support the plan. But of course it is not a transparent solution.

Thus, what Bartholomew is demanding is totally unacceptable, and raises a number of issues and troubling questions:

First of all, our people work too hard to come up with the money needed to buy the properties that belong to the communities and to the metropolises to give them away.

Second, the Ecumenical Patriarchate is - by political necessity - a Turkish institution subject to the interference, if not the control, of the Turkish state.

Even if the transfer of properties were to be hidden in a web of international corporations, at the end of the day, ownership would be traced back to where it would belong, to the Turkish State.

Third, by taking over at least one building in each metropolis - and one wonders why so many buildings are needed - the Patriarchate would establish direct ownership authority at a local level. In due time, they might ask for a second building and so on, thus moving towards controlling the finances as well of each metropolis and through them, the

parishes.

Fourth, sending this kind of letter was made possible after breaking up our archdiocese into Metropolises, thus weakening its administrative cohesiveness and the office of the Archbishop.

Fifth, should a building be transferred to new owners, who would collect any income it might have or pay for its maintenance?

Finally, Bartholomew should learn to trust and communicate openly with our people. In our system and way of life, our leaders consult with the people, explain their proposals and ask for their approval. They do not use others to manipulate them.

The argument that Bartholomew uses to appeal to the metropolitans to do his bidding troubles us greatly: he appeals to the sense of indebtedness the metropolitans might feel toward him. "We do not doubt at all," he writes, "that your Eminence too, in its known love and devotion to the Mother Church that fed you and made you what you are, that you will act, according to the above ecclesiastical decision as soon as possible, and inform us in writing, attaching all the signed related documents and title of ownership of a property or titles of ownership of properties so that we can file them in the proper place."

How naive do they think we are?