

# **Metropolitan Paul of Aleppo to all the Orthodox Hierarchs: “My chains, the bond of our unity” (Paul, Metropolitan of Aleppo)**

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Buenos Aires, June 24, 2016

An open letter from  
**METROPOLITAN PAUL of ALEPPO**  
addressed to all the Hierarchs of the Orthodox Church  
on the Feast of the Holy Spirit

## **My chains, the bond of our unity**

“Short time or long—I pray to God that not only you...  
may become what I am, except for these chains”  
(Acts 26:29)

*Your Holinesses, Your Beatitudes, Your Eminences and Your Graces,  
Hierarchs of the Orthodox Church,  
My Fathers and brothers in the grace of the episcopate,  
“Apostles of Christ” and “Servants” of the people of God in all the oikoumene,*

This year, an inexpressible joy flooded my heart on the Feast of Pentecost, because of the Holy Spirit who unites us, in a visible and invisible way, in the apostolic ministry that the Lord bestowed on us.

First, I would like to thank each of you, and through your distinguished person, the churches that you minister to, because you have not ceased to pray for me, especially during the past three years, since the Lord entrusted me with this peculiar “ecclesiastic mission”, i.e. since I was abducted[1]. This prayer has united

us, a unity which was, and shall remain, the liveliest “accompaniment” (a walk together – “sinodos”) and a full expression of the “catholicity” of our Orthodox Church, although this experience has my humble person, as a reason, and my salvation, as an aim. I have no doubt that my name is dwelling in your heart, while we find ourselves in the midst of the catastrophe par excellence of this millennium, a disaster that my Church is experiencing “in the flesh”, to which I am still ministering to from the remote “cell” where I reside.



I feel that what mostly unites us these days, are the chains that I am bearing now. They did not afflict me at all, because *“I fill up in my physical body—for the sake of his body, the church—what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ”* (Col 1:24), completing the suffering experienced by an entire people, devastating an entire

region, and upsetting the whole world. Without doubt, and without any need to advertise it, *“we have become a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to people”* (1 Cor 4:9)

The unity that these chains created between us, is an experience that my Church has lived along with many other Orthodox Churches during the past century and the previous ones, an experience that challenged all of them in a hardly and painful way. It is true that this unity surmounts time and overlaps the convocation or not of any Synods, surpasses any expression or event, due to what characterizes you, along with the suffering people of God entrusted to your pastoral care. I mean your prayers for one another, our brotherly solidarity, your sacrificial ministry, bearing one another's burdens in order to fulfil the law of Christ, according to the exhortation of the Apostle Paul (Gal 6:2). I have no doubt that this unity shapes your self-consciousness and model your daily experience, both in prayer and in your apostolic ministry.

Needless to say that I am with you wherever you are these days, either in Crete or elsewhere, not because my name is written in minutes or figures in statements – something that expresses your compassion with me and with my Church – but because my chains have become a bond of our unity. I place these chains in front of you, for they are my blessing and yours too; as they are my chains, therefore they became yours too, in order *“to build up the body of Christ”* (Ef 4:12), and to serve our “neighbour”, especially the “little” brothers that the Lord entrusted them to us, – how numerous they are! –, those who are today under the ruins, on the roads of immigration, on the sea of death, on the bed of disease, and are exposed to shelling, to exploitation and to all kinds of adversities.

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Since we celebrate today the Feast of the Holy Spirit[2], in whom we share in the passion of Christ and that of His flock, and since we will be celebrating soon the Feast of the coryphes of the Apostles, Saints Peter and Paul, the founders of our Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East, I present you a commitment that my church held from the beginning, for God's name: to endure persecutions and chains, to stand faithful in the love of Christ, to show compassion to the suffering, and to continue to pray for all the brothers. In fact, our Church is bound by the "chains" of love, in response to the commandment of the Lord to love one another as He loved us. In this perspective, I kindly ask you to accept my chains as a guarantee of our fidelity and commitment to you all. So, rejoice in my chains, for they are the bond of our unity, since they let us partake in the glory of the Church, of which we are members and servants.

Having in mind the following exhortation of Saint Paul, - *"Do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner (or of my Church). Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God"* (2 Tim 1:8) -, I pay my respects and my reverence to all the choir of the successors of the Holy Apostles that you, altogether, conform.

Asking for Your prayers and apostolic blessing, and having expressed my gratitude and love in the Lord, I remain.

**† Metropolitan Paul of Aleppo**

**By the hand of my secretary,**

**† Silouan**

**Metropolitan of Buenos Aires and all Argentina**

[1] The kidnapping of Metropolitan Paul of Aleppo occurred on Monday, April 22, 2013, along with the Jacobite Syrian hierarch of Aleppo, Youhanna Ibrahim.

[2] This letter was first written in Arabic, on Monday of the Holy Spirit, June 20, 2016.