

February 25, 2022  
VIA EMAIL AND USPS

Dear Your Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros:

I am writing this letter with great love, respect, and appreciation, and I am humbled that you have taken a moment of your time to read my correspondence. I have been a member of Saint Catherine Greek Orthodox Church of West Palm Beach, FL for nearly forty (40) years. For the last twenty-eight (28) years, Father Andrew Maginas has been the Parish Priest of our wonderful, loving and thriving community. Father Andrew is loved and adored by so many. As many will attest, he has married many of us, baptized our children, buried our loved ones, and nurtured and guided our friends and loved ones who were ill and in need. Saint Catherine Greek Orthodox Church has thriving ministries – Sunday School, GOYA, HDF, Heart of Greece Dance Group, Greek School, Youth Choir, Mommy & Me, Philoptochos and Choir – all under the umbrella of Father Andrew. Therefore, the community was deeply saddened to learn that Father Andrew was suddenly asked to transfer to another parish. Knowing that a transfer would cause a divide and turmoil throughout our Parish, we reached out in writing to His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta, Very Rev. Fr. George Tsahakis, and Bishop Sevastianos seeking reconsideration of this decision. I attach this correspondence addressed to His Eminence, along with over two hundred forty (240) signatures of parishioners (twenty-three (23) pages of signatures) requesting that Father Andrew remain our Parish Priest of Saint Catherine until Father Andrew desires to retire. These signatures were gathered over just a five-day period, and we would have gathered more if time were not of the essence.

While we did receive a written response from the Chancellor yesterday, a letter dated February 17, 2022, it was disappointing that the Chancellor appears unwilling to compromise and come to a resolution which will allow Father Andrew to retire with dignity at our Parish in a few years as opposed to transferring to another parish (which we believe is set to happen sooner than later). His Eminence did not reach out to our Parish Council or the Parish to seek out what the needs of our community are or seek the contribution of the diverse perspectives of others on this issue; instead, this decision seems to have been made unilaterally by His Eminence and the Chancellor. This is not the conciliar and synergistic way of life of the Orthodox Church which should be expressed “at every level throughout the relationships of the leaders, including between bishops and their presbyters, between clergy and the laity whom they serve, and in the interaction of the members of the laity among themselves.”

Unfortunately, the Chancellor’s letter attached, particularly paragraph three, contains language which is harsh and negative towards Father Andrew and contains misstatements about his character. While it is true that Father Andrew visited the Metropolis office to meet with His Grace Bishop Sevastianos and the Chancellor in Atlanta, Father Andrew, as requested by the Chancellor, did not speak publicly about this meeting or the change His Eminence seeks to make to anyone. In fact, numerous parishioners were already aware that Father Andrew was visiting the Metropolis office, were aware that he was being asked to transfer to another parish, and they disclosed this information to others, which then spread throughout the community. Therefore, it is unfair and unjust that the Chancellor chastised Father Andrew publicly for allegedly breaking his promise to the Chancellor and Bishop Sevastianos, which he did not do. This was hurtful, divisive and the Chancellor’s response, which was condescending towards our entire Parish, should not have been distributed to our community, which has caused and continues to cause further disappointment and turmoil.

Over the last several years our community has seen an increase and improvement in stewardship, our youth ministries have grown, and new families have joined our Parish. In fact, we have never had so many children in our Sunday School and GOYA and so much parent engagement. Truly, so many great things are happening in our community, and therefore, we do not understand why a change is needed right now. If this change takes place as proposed by His Eminence and the Chancellor, it will have a great negative impact on our community which we are already witnessing, it will further divide us and could, very well, set us back for years.

Therefore, I graciously ask you to please review the attached correspondence and signatures and reconsider His Eminence’s decision to transfer Father Andrew to another parish at this time. Our Parish has a strong and loving bond with Father Andrew and care for him and Presbyteria deeply, and we request only that when he does retire, you provide him and our community with several years to prepare for this transition.

I can be reached at 561.351.6980 or via email at [lesopakis@gmail.com](mailto:lesopakis@gmail.com) at any time.

Sincerely,

Pantelis (Lee) Esopakis  
Youth Committee Chair  
Co-Director Hellenic Dance Festival Team  
Outgoing Secretary of Parish Council

Enclosures