

## Protocol Number 152/2015

Your Eminence Demetrios, Archbishop of America, most honorable Exarch of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans, beloved brother in the Holy Spirit and co-celebrant of our Modesty; Grace be with Your Eminence and peace from God.

The content of the letter of your beloved Eminence dated November 18 of the year in the Lord 2014, which poses the question "if it's proper to conduct a trisagion and memorial service without koliva" in the cases where Orthodox faithful elect to be cremated, was personally examined in detail by our own Modesty but also by competent Committees on matters of Theological Studies and Divine Worship, which considered thoroughly the established practice that has been followed by the Ecumenical Patriarchate and other sister Churches. These committees submitted in a detailed report their own opinions and considerations with specific recommendations.

This report was examined in a session of our Holy and Sacred Synod and was unanimously decided, pursuant to relevant decisions of the Ecumenical Patriarchate made from time to time according to the tradition and teaching of our Eastern Orthodox Church, that the proper practice to be followed in cases where there is an expressed desire for cremation of an Orthodox faithful, must be limited to the conducting of a trisagion service but not of a Sacred Memorial service or the usage of koliva, by taking into account that the conduct of a Sacred Memorial service presupposes the conduct of a Funeral Service while the koliva refer to the symbolic similarities of the sowed wheat in the earth to

the body that's being buried in it (cf. John 12:24 and 1 Cor. 15:35-38), which shall be resurrected in the last day according to the teaching of the Fathers of the Church, as John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople declares by writing: *As you have no doubt about the resurrection seeing there the grain being rotten and dissolved... so also with the body. If the body is not resurrected the man is not resurrected. From the beginning this was the will and opinion of God and with this decision God erected the first man* (About the resurrection of the dead, P.G. 50,429-430), and St. Basil adds that *the body which is destroyed in the tombs will be resurrected and the soul which has been excluded by death will again dwell in the body* (In famine and drought, P.G. 31,328C).

This decision of the Ecumenical Patriarchate based on the Orthodox Tradition and Theology we announce to your Eminence and urge you to inform of this their Eminences Metropolitans and Graces Bishops of the Holy Archdiocese of America and the clergy and people thereof by way of an encyclical, and ask them to follow it in specific situations, and invoke on your beloved Eminence and everybody else the Grace and infinite Mercy of God.