

2011

God parent / Chubbie
{ Unofficial Translation }

**✠BARTHOLOMEW, by the mercy of God, Archbishop of
Constantinople-New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch**

Prot. No. 7

To the Most Reverend Archbishop Gabriel of Komana, Patriarchal Exarch of the Ecumenical Throne for the Orthodox Communities of the Russian Tradition in Western Europe, our beloved brother and concelebrant in the Holy Spirit: Grace be to Your Excellency and peace from God.

Inasmuch as certain Most Reverend Hierarchs have appealed to the Mother Church for a canonical resolution to a query regarding the possibility of marriage contracted between two persons with no blood relation who nevertheless have the same godparent, it was decided synodally that an in-depth canonical and historical study of the issue should occur. This comprehensive and detailed study found no Sacred Canon preventing the marriage of two persons otherwise unrelated, but sharing the same godparent. Wherever there exists any prohibition of such a union, it is clearly due to misinterpretation of Canon 53 of the holy Quinisext Ecumenical Council in Trullo, which explicitly forbids only marriage between a godfather and the widowed mother of his godchild and, by inference, between a godmother and the widowed father of her godchild. This misinterpretation has created confusing popular opinions that have imposed unwarranted burdens on the conscience of the faithful. Moreover, in accordance with the long-standing ecclesiastical practice, such erroneous beliefs and unfounded traditions in no way either constitute traditional validity or can bind the compassionate procedure of the Church.

A long succession of Ecumenical Patriarchs, including also our late predecessors Dionysios II, Metrophanes III, Jeremiah II the Illustrious, Neophytos II, Kallinikos II and Gabriel III, expressly decided – both personally and synodally – that marriages between persons with the same godparent are categorically permissible, while Metrophanes III even characteristically resolved in this regard that “we are obliged to observe whatever is explicitly written and formulated by the holy fathers; but we are not to cause anguish among our people with various speculations, burdening the conscience of Christians.” (M. Gedeon, *Canonical Regulations*, vol. 2, Constantinople, 1889, p. 381) This resolution is applied to this day without interruption by many of the holy local Orthodox Churches.

Therefore, having deliberated with the most reverend and very honorable Metropolitans comprising the Holy and Sacred Synod, and having considered the above, not desiring “to cause anguish among our people and burden the conscience of Christians” with prohibitions based neither on canonical observance nor on the history and authentic tradition of the Church, we too hereby resolve through the Holy Synod and decree in the Holy Spirit that marriages between a couple unrelated by blood, who share the same godparent, are henceforth unreservedly permissible and unhindered. At the same time, the significance of the above-mentioned 53rd sacred Canon of the Quinisext

Ecumenical Council in Trullo remains inviolable with regard to its explicit decree, while the vertical spiritual relation between godparents and godchildren to this day continues to constitute an unassailable impediment for marriage.

In announcing the above for your information, we encourage and entreat that this will henceforth serve as the guideline in this regard for ecclesiastical practice in all of the sacred Eparchies of our most holy Apostolic and Patriarchal Ecumenical Throne.

May the grace and boundless mercy of God be with Your beloved Excellency.

January 12, 2011

Your beloved brother in Christ,

(Signature)

✠ **BARTHOLOMEW**
Archbishop of Constantinople