

ROMANIAN ORTHODOXY IN AMERICA



Failed Dialogue, the Conflict with ROEA,
and the Return to the Mother Church

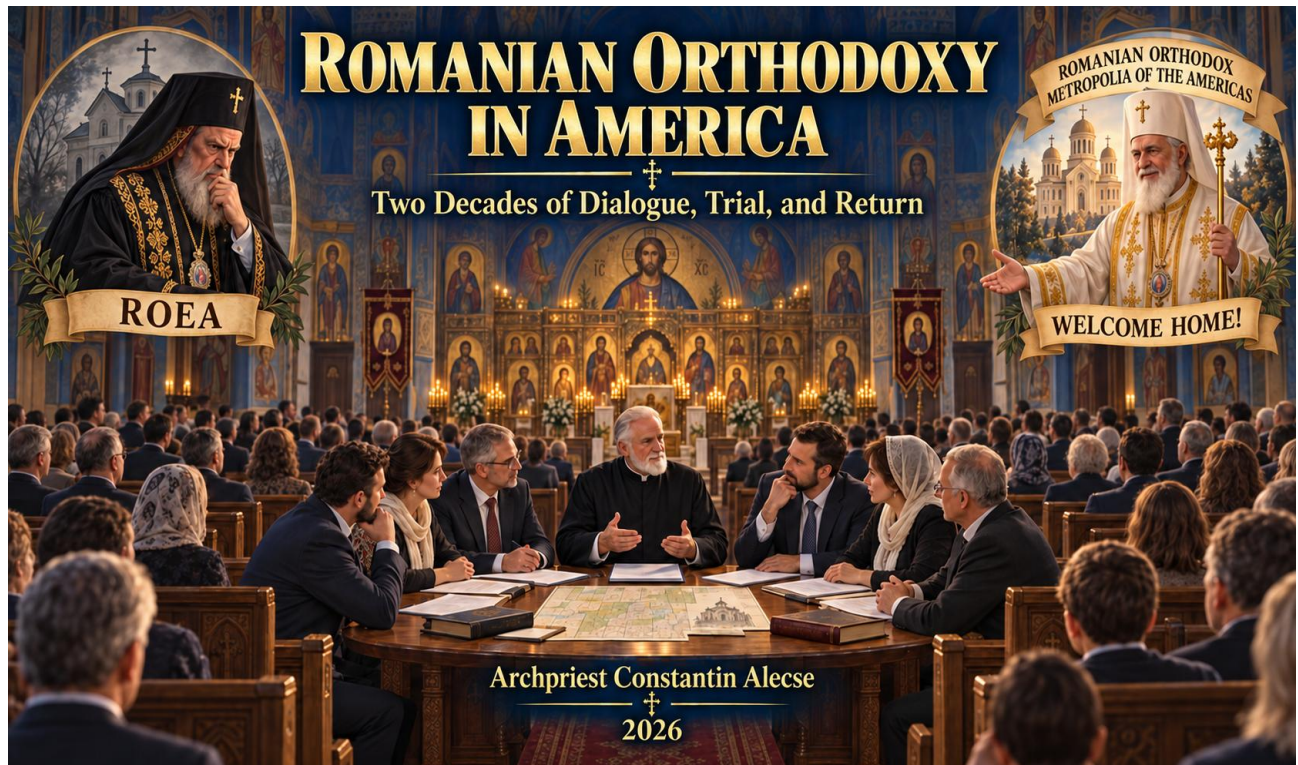
Protopresbyter Constantin Alecse

— 2026 Edition —

Romanian Orthodoxy in America

A Romanian Documentary

(Dossier 1991–2026)



ROMANIAN ORTHODOXY IN AMERICA

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FOREWORD

This book, Romanian Orthodoxy in America 1991–2026, is more than a sequence of dates, documents, and administrative circumstances. It bears witness to a particularly important period for Romanian Orthodox Christians in America and, especially, for the community of Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church in Los Angeles. As a member of the community and a person involved in its administrative life, I have seen the sacrifice, patience, prayer, and responsibility required to preserve our ecclesial and Romanian identity. In these pages, institutional life is viewed through the people who served, gave, and kept the community alive.

Chapter I is devoted to the two decades of dialogue between ROEA and the Mother Church in Romania, presents the hopes, efforts, and difficulties surrounding the desired reunification. It is the story of a natural aspiration: that Romanian Orthodox Christians in America might rediscover and preserve their living connection with their spiritual, historical, and national roots. The dialogue is placed in the context of responsibility toward faith, tradition, and the spiritual unity of Romanians in the diaspora.

Chapter II follows the history of the Sunland property and the vision of a new church or community center suitable for the parish's development. Beyond figures, approvals, technical difficulties, and unrealized projects, this chapter speaks of the generosity and desire of the faithful to leave a lasting inheritance to future generations. It also recalls the perseverance of those who supported the project, even when material conditions made its fulfillment difficult.

Chapter III shows how the Sunland matter gradually became the beginning of a broader confrontation. It helps the reader understand that many misunderstandings arise not only from documents or administrative interpretations, but also from a lack of dialogue, from suspicions, and from the manner in which certain circumstances are presented publicly. The reader can therefore follow more clearly how a concrete issue came to affect trust between institutions and the community.

Chapter IV examines the development of relations between ROEA and Holy Trinity Parish during the period from June 2021 to June 2022. It presents requests, responses, meetings, and efforts at clarification during a time when tension increased and mutual trust weakened. The documents of this period are presented in order to offer a chronological and as balanced as possible picture of the stages that were passed through.

Chapter V describes the parish deliberation and the change of jurisdiction. For the faithful of Holy Trinity Church, this was neither an easy decision nor one made in haste, but the result of consultation, statutory resolutions, and the desire to find an ecclesial path through which the community could continue in peace and dignity. At the center of this deliberation remained the continuity of parish life, the peace of the community, and the freedom to follow its ecclesial conscience.

Chapter VI addresses the course from legal demand to the withdrawal of the civil action. This chapter highlights the importance of documents, legal responsibility, and the defense of a parish patrimony built through the sacrifice of several generations of faithful. It also shows that justice may be pursued firmly without losing respect for truth and the law.

The account highlights the role of legal counsel and of the decisions taken to protect the assets entrusted to the parish.

Chapter VII is devoted to the canonical confrontation and to questions concerning jurisdiction, procedure, and the right of defense. Without turning the work into a polemic, the author makes available to the reader a chronology and documents that permit an understanding of the parish's position and that of Father Constantin Alecse, its parish priest. The reader may thus distinguish among the administrative, legal, and canonical aspects of a complex situation.

Chapter VIII brings together the personal and community dimensions: fifty years of priestly service, pastoral activity, cultural work, and the defense of a community in times of trial. It is a chapter about steadfastness, vocation, and a priest's duty to remain on the side of his faithful. The witness of this chapter speaks of ministry as faithfulness to God and to the people entrusted to pastoral care.

Chapter IX presents the chronology of the life and trials of Bishop Irineu, a subject that completes the broader picture of tensions within Romanian Orthodoxy in America. The reader is invited to consider the facts with care, sensitivity, and discernment, especially when dealing with the suffering of a Hierarch and the consequences of institutional conflicts. The presentation does not seek to judge persons, but to understand a history that has left deep marks on church life.

Chapter X gathers, in conclusion, the meaning of this work: the memory of a community must not be lost, and its documents must be preserved and made known. A parish is not merely a building or an organization, but a family of faithful, a history of prayer, sacrifice, and hope passed on to future generations. This shared memory has value both for those who lived through these events and for the generations that will study them.

Chapter XI expresses gratitude to all those whose prayers, work, courage, and loyalty sustained Holy Trinity Parish during the trials of 2021–2026.

Chapter XII provides a collection of digital documents, archives, photographs, and links that support the book's historical, canonical, and legal research.

This Book was written from the sincere desire to make the truth known, as it emerges from the documents, letters, decisions, and testimonies preserved in the parish archive. It is not intended to foster hostility, but to offer readers the opportunity to understand the facts, the context, and the path traveled by our community. Only through knowledge of the truth, responsibility, and faith can we look peacefully toward the future. For this reason, the author invites a careful reading, in a spirit of responsibility, respect, and the desire for peace.

Reggie Dissanayake

Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church
Los Angeles, California, 2026

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CHAPTER I

THE DIALOGUE FOR THE REUNIFICATION OF ROMANIAN ORTHODOXY IN AMERICA, 1991–2011

The road toward unity

The history of the two Romanian Orthodox jurisdictions in the United States and Canada after the fall of communism is, above all, the history of a long desire for ecclesial unity. It is a story of hope, patience, institutional effort, and disappointment. For nearly two decades, clergy and laity on both sides of an inherited division asked whether Romanian Orthodox Christians in North America could once again find a common canonical home without sacrificing their spiritual inheritance, their communities, or the legitimate concerns that had developed over many decades.

The political changes of 1989 altered the entire horizon of this question. With the collapse of the communist regime in Romania, one of the principal historical causes of estrangement between the Romanian Orthodox Church and portions of the Romanian Orthodox diaspora no longer existed. The old division had been shaped by dramatic twentieth-century circumstances: exile, the fear of political control over church life in Romania, the need to preserve religious freedom abroad, and competing understandings of canonical responsibility. Those circumstances could not simply be forgotten. Yet, after 1989, they could be examined anew.

At that time, Romanian Orthodox life in North America was organized principally in two distinct structures. The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America (ROEA), centered at Vatra Românească in Michigan, functioned within the Orthodox Church in America. Alongside it stood the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in the Americas and Canada (ROAA), canonically connected directly to the Romanian Orthodox Church. Both served Romanian faithful, preserved Romanian liturgical and cultural traditions, and carried the memory of a common origin. Their separation, however, had endured for decades.

The central question was therefore both simple and difficult: could the unity of Romanian Orthodox Christians in North America be restored in a single ecclesial structure while preserving the identity, tradition, patrimony, and legitimate canonical concerns of both communities? The answer could not be supplied by sentiment alone. It required dialogue, institutional authorization, canonical reflection, legal analysis, financial transparency, and patience. It also required the courage to acknowledge wounds that had not disappeared merely because the political world had changed.

This chapter follows the principal documentary stages of that effort from 1991 through the impasse that became evident in 2011. It distinguishes, as carefully as possible, between official documents, contemporary testimony, and later interpretation. The purpose is not to assign a simplified verdict, but to show that the desire for unity was real, sustained, and repeatedly assumed at institutional levels. It is also to explain why a process that came remarkably close to a concrete framework nevertheless did not produce the final reunion for which many clergy and faithful had hoped.

1991 — Renewed contact with the Mother Church

The year 1991 marks an important documentary beginning. On May 8, 1991, Patriarch Teoctist of Romania addressed a letter to Bishop +Nathaniel. Preserved in the official archive of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in America, the letter confirms the existence of a direct channel of communication between the Romanian Patriarchate and the Episcopate at Vatra Românească during a period of post-communist normalization.

This correspondence should be placed in its proper historical context. The end of communist rule did not erase the anxieties of the diaspora, nor did it resolve all questions concerning church administration. It did, however, make possible a new kind of contact: one no longer defined primarily by the political conditions that had made communication difficult or suspect. Archbishop +Nathaniel's official biography likewise refers to the resumption of relations with the Romanian Church after 1989 and to efforts to cultivate a better understanding between the Episcopate and the Romanian Orthodox Church.

For many Romanian faithful in North America, this renewed contact possessed more than diplomatic significance. Romania could again be contemplated not only as the homeland of parents and grandparents, but also as the Mother Church from which the diaspora had historically sprung. The recovery of this spiritual relationship did not prejudice the final juridical form of unity. It did, however, create the moral and ecclesial atmosphere in which that question could be asked openly.

1992–1993 — From private initiatives to official dialogue

In the early 1990s, a group of clergy increasingly pressed for a more deliberate approach to reunification. Among the voices advocating this cause were the twelve priests associated with the Initiative Committee for the establishment of a Romanian Metropolis in America; five of them served as deans within the ROEA Episcopate. Their concern was that the Romanian Orthodox presence in North America should not remain permanently divided when the historical circumstances that had helped create the separation had fundamentally changed.

According to the recollections preserved in this research, the advocacy of these clergy initially encountered resistance. They were described as having been warned that persistent insistence on reunification could bring disciplinary consequences. Such recollections should be read as testimony about the climate of the period rather than as a substitute for a complete record of every private discussion.

Their historical importance lies in showing that the question of unity was not merely a later institutional project; it had already become a matter of conscience for priests who believed that the Romanian Orthodox diaspora required a coherent, canonical future.

By 1992–1993, the subject had moved beyond informal initiatives. Archbishop +Nathaniel agreed to contact the Romanian Missionary Archdiocese in order to begin an official discussion concerning possible reunification.

From these contacts emerged the first organized form of a Joint Dialogue Committee. Its task was

not simply to express goodwill. It was to explore a canonical and administrative formula capable of healing a separation that had affected Romanian Orthodox life in America for more than sixty years.

For those who supported the initiative, the preferred horizon was the formation of a Romanian Metropolia in America. Such a structure would unite the Romanian dioceses in a common metropolitan framework, preserve their pastoral life and local heritage, and restore an explicit institutional relationship with the Romanian Orthodox Church. The envisioned hierarchs would participate in the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, thereby connecting the North American Romanian communities organically to the Mother Church.

Official ROEA documents later confirmed that 1993 was the reliable institutional starting point of the dialogue. In an official clarification signed by Archbishop +Nathaniel on October 18, 2010, the Episcopate stated that the dialogue with the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of the Two Americas had been initiated in 1993 by the Diocesan Congress, rather than merely by the Diocesan Council. This distinction matters. The process was not the private undertaking of a bishop or a small circle of clergy; it was a dialogue repeatedly authorized by the highest deliberative body of the Episcopate.

The 2008 document entitled *Proposal to Establish a Romanian Orthodox Metropolitanate of North America* made the same point in direct terms, stating that the two dioceses had been in dialogue since 1993 in an effort to heal a separation of more than sixty years. From this perspective, the beginning of the official dialogue is not an inference. It is an institutional fact acknowledged in the documents of the process itself.

1994–1995 — Visits to Romania and the renewal of personal ties

The years 1994 and 1995 gave the dialogue a more personal and visible dimension. Official documents of the ROEA and the Orthodox Church in America confirm that Archbishop +Nathaniel made a pilgrimage to Romania in 1994, visiting regions associated with the homeland of his parents and with the wider life of the Romanian Church.

Archpriest Constantin Alecse, then an archpriest of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in America and a participant in the delegation, records that between May 7 and May 22, 1994 he traveled with Archbishop +Nathaniel, five other priests—Archpriest Roman Braga and Fathers Lazar, Pavel, Tofan, and Grabowski—and two lay representatives, the Cruga Family.

The delegation traveled at the invitation of Patriarch Teoctist. A contemporary report published in *Calendarul Solia* for 1995, pages 155–196, documented the visit with photographs.

According to Archpriest Alecse's direct testimony, the journey was not limited to pilgrimage and protocol. It also provided an opportunity for conversations with hierarchs of the Romanian Patriarchate concerning the framework in which the reunification of the two Romanian dioceses in North America might be pursued. This statement is presented as the testimony of a participant, not as a claim that every informal discussion constituted an official decision of the delegation. The distinction is essential. Personal testimony has historical value, especially when it comes from someone present at the event, but it must be identified honestly as testimony.

One particularly significant moment occurred during the weekend of May 14–15, 1994, when the ROEA delegation was received at Brâncoveanu Monastery in Sâmbăta de Sus. At that time, Archimandrite Irineu Duvlea was abbot of the monastery. On the eve of the Divine Liturgy at the Metropolitan Cathedral of Sibiu, Archbishop +Nathaniel, after consultation with Archpriest Constantin Alecse, resolved to invite Archimandrite Irineu to America as a close collaborator and prospective bishop-vicar of the ROEA Episcopate. The decision reflected pastoral, monastic, and institutional considerations and would later be realized through Archimandrite Irineu's arrival in America and his election as bishop-vicar.

In 1995, Archbishop +Nathaniel again visited the Romanian Patriarchate at the invitation of Patriarch Teoctist, on the occasion of the 110th anniversary of Romanian autocephaly and the seventieth anniversary of the elevation of the Romanian Church to the rank of Patriarchate. The repeated invitations and visits show that the relationship was neither isolated nor merely symbolic. Contacts continued, and the possibility of a renewed ecclesial relationship remained part of the wider conversation.

The decade from the early 1990s to the beginning of the 2000s should not, however, be portrayed as a straight line toward union. There were visits, personal relationships, and moments of approach, but no final institutional settlement. Time was needed to clarify the past, rebuild trust, identify canonical possibilities, examine statutes, protect property, and find a formula that both dioceses could accept without abandoning their core responsibilities.



2002–2005 — Bishop Irineu and the wider diaspora context

In 2002, Archimandrite Irineu Duvlea was elected and consecrated Bishop of Dearborn Heights and bishop-vicar of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in America. From that point onward, Bishop Irineu became an important episcopal figure in the life of the Diocese of Vatra Românească and in the Romanian Orthodox community of the Detroit area. His title linked him directly to the cathedral and community in that region, a connection visible in the visits and photographic records of the period.

The year 2003 is significant because it documents an ecclesial context in which Archbishop +Nathaniel, Bishop Irineu, and Archbishop Nicolae were already associated. The participation of Archbishop Nicolae of the Romanian Archdiocese of America and Canada in events related to Bishop Irineu's consecration demonstrates that contacts among the three hierarchs predated the most intensive phase of the reunification negotiations.

This observation does not establish that all later developments were planned in advance or that every aspect of the relationship between the hierarchs is fully documented. It establishes a narrower and more reliable conclusion: their contact did not begin only in 2008–2010.

Chronology matters because it protects historical interpretation from the temptation to begin the story wherever a later narrative finds it convenient. The evidence places these hierarchs in a shared ecclesial setting by 2003, and that fact should be recognized.

In April 2004, Romanian hierarchs serving in Western Europe and North America met in a gathering of broad diaspora significance.

The agenda went beyond the situation of the two North American dioceses. It concerned the pastoral organization of the diaspora, preservation of Romanian Orthodox identity, transmission of faith to younger generations, the Church's relationship with Romanian communities abroad, and ecclesiological and canonical questions arising from diaspora life.

Among the hierarchs associated with this initiative were Metropolitan Serafim Joantă; Metropolitan Iosif Pop; Archbishop Nicolae Condrea; Archbishop +Nathaniel Popp; Bishop Sofian Brașoveanul; Bishop Siluan Șpan; and Bishop Irineu Duvlea.

The joint presence of Bishops Nicolae, +Nathaniel, and Irineu has particular relevance for the history of the two American jurisdictions. It illustrates that the question of their relationship was being considered within a broader Romanian Orthodox concern for the diaspora.

The same period also revealed that cooperation was possible in practice even when administrative separation continued. In 2004, communities connected to both the ROEA Episcopate and the Romanian Archdiocese participated in humanitarian initiatives for Romania. Such collaboration did not solve jurisdictional questions, but it showed that institutional boundaries did not eliminate the capacity for common service, solidarity, and pastoral concern.

In May 2005, a second meeting of Romanian diaspora hierarchs took place in America, with

Michigan and the Assumption of the Virgin Mary Monastery at Rives Junction as important points of reference. The documented itinerary included Vatra Românească, the Detroit/Dearborn Heights cathedral area, the monastery, and other Romanian Orthodox communities.

These visits should not be confused with formal meetings of the Joint Dialogue Commission. The available documents do not establish that each stop on the itinerary was a commission session. Nevertheless, they reveal a growing awareness among Romanian hierarchs of the pastoral reality in North America and provide the wider setting in which the conversation about unity developed.

The importance of these encounters is often understated because they did not themselves produce a signed act of union. Their value was preparatory.

A reunification project cannot be sustained only by texts exchanged between offices. It also depends upon familiarity: hierarchs, clergy, and representatives of communities must be able to see the places, institutions, traditions, and pastoral needs for which they are asked to assume responsibility. The meetings of 2004 and 2005 helped create this wider human and ecclesial familiarity.

They also placed the North American question inside the larger challenges of the Romanian diaspora. The same questions were emerging wherever Romanian Orthodox communities were growing outside Romania: how to preserve language and liturgical tradition; how to serve families formed in a new cultural environment; how to transmit the faith to children who might not speak Romanian fluently; and how to retain a real connection with the Mother Church without weakening local pastoral responsibility.

The possible union of the two American jurisdictions was therefore not simply an internal administrative matter. It was part of a larger reflection on the future of Romanian Orthodoxy beyond the borders of Romania.

2006–2007 — Suspension and renewed efforts

The dialogue did not proceed without interruption. In 2006, the process between the two Romanian Orthodox dioceses in America and Canada was suspended by Archbishop +Nathaniel through an Easter letter addressed to his clergy. According to the account preserved in this chapter, the members of the Joint Dialogue Commission and Archbishop Nicolae had not been informed in advance of the decision. The unilateral character of the announcement made the interruption particularly striking.

The suspension came after a period in which there had been reason for cautious optimism. In June 2005, the three hierarchs and members of the Dialogue Commission had agreed upon a draft plan for achieving unity. The plan was expected to be presented to the Diocesan Congresses and then discussed with the Romanian Patriarchate and the Orthodox Church in America. Thus, the dialogue appeared to have reached a stage of substantive convergence before it was interrupted.

Members of the Archdiocesan commission who continued to favor unity responded by reaffirming their willingness to resume the work. In their understanding, unity was not a mere administrative preference. It was a canonical and ecclesial responsibility, because the enduring division of

Romanian Orthodox Christians in North America could not be treated as a normal or desirable permanent condition. They sought to avoid public polemic and maintained that difficult historical matters should be clarified through documents rather than transformed into obstacles to dialogue.

The interruption was painful precisely because it followed many years of effort. Yet the ideal was not abandoned. The commission members continued to express hope that the process could be relaunched through patience, mutual respect, and a freely assumed consensus. The years 2007 and 2008 would demonstrate that the suspension of 2006 was not the final word.

By 2007, the dialogue was entering a more concrete phase. The question was no longer whether the two jurisdictions should become closer. It was how they might be united in a form that could be canonically recognized, pastorally workable, and legally secure. This shift—from general aspiration to institutional design—is one of the most important transitions in the entire history of the dialogue.

2008 — Reconciliation with the Patriarchate and the metropolitan proposal

The meeting held in Bucharest from February 25 to 27, 2008 was one of the decisive documentary landmarks of the process. After decades of estrangement, a delegation of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America led by Archbishop +Nathaniel met with representatives of the Romanian Patriarchate. Their Joint Declaration sought to clarify the historical causes of the rupture and to open a path toward reconciliation.

The declaration recognized that the break between the Romanian Episcopate in America and the Romanian Patriarchate had arisen in the dramatic context created by the communist regime in Romania. ROEA stated that its separation did not constitute a rejection of the Mother Church, but a measure believed necessary to protect faith, identity, and continuity within the Romanian community in America while church life in Romania was subject to political control.

The document also acknowledged the sufferings endured by both sides. Bishops Policarp Morușca and Archbishop Valerian Trifa were mentioned as confessors of the faith who suffered persecution and marginalization in the conflict between the Church and the communist regime. This shared recognition of suffering was not a minor ceremonial gesture. It made possible a different moral language: one based not on the perpetuation of accusation, but on an honest recognition of the wounds that history had inflicted.

The declaration further recorded that, after the fall of communism, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church had recognized in 1991 the canonicity of the Romanian Episcopate in America and the apostolic succession of its hierarchs. The relationship between the Romanian Patriarchate and the ROEA was thus no longer to be understood only through the rupture of the past. It was to be viewed through a new process of dialogue, forgiveness, and cooperation.

A deeply symbolic part of the declaration was the mutual request for forgiveness for past errors and actions that had contributed to division. More importantly, the document looked toward the future and expressed the desire to achieve the unity of all Romanian Orthodox Christians on the American continent in a canonical relationship with the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Union no longer appeared as a private project advanced by a few clergy or faithful. It had become an objective recognized within the dialogue between the ROEA and the Romanian Patriarchate.

At the same time, the ROEA made clear that no such decision could simply be imposed from outside. It would have to follow the Episcopate's internal procedures and receive the consent of its Congress. The dialogue commissions were therefore asked to continue examining a viable path to unity. This reservation did not invalidate the aspiration toward union; it defined the procedural conditions under which such union could receive legitimacy.

In June 2008, the Joint Commissions produced a landmark text: *Proposal to Establish a Romanian Orthodox Metropolitanate of North America*. The proposal began by acknowledging that the two dioceses had been engaged in dialogue since 1993 in an attempt to heal a separation lasting more than sixty years. It proposed a Romanian Orthodox Metropolia composed of two existing dioceses and enjoying the greatest possible degree of autonomy within the Romanian Orthodox Church.

The proposed structure was not merely an administrative merger. It envisioned a common metropolitan organization, a territory extending across North and South America, an internal synod and governance structure, preservation of Romanian spiritual tradition, and cooperation with other Orthodox jurisdictions in the wider effort toward Orthodox unity in North America. It was, in other words, an ecclesiological project for the future of Romanian Orthodoxy in the Americas.

During the summer of 2008, the proposal came before the governing bodies of the two dioceses. The ROEA Congress accepted it as an acceptable basis for continuing the work toward a final text to be presented to the Romanian Orthodox Church. It also requested legal and financial due-diligence studies. This is an important point: the Congress did not treat the proposal as a completed union, but neither did it reject it. It recognized it as a serious, workable foundation that required careful verification.

On August 12, 2008, the Joint Dialogue Commission met at St. George Cathedral in Southfield, Michigan. The meeting was held with the blessing of the hierarchs and pursuant to the mandate received from the congresses of both dioceses. By this time, the process had clearly become structured, documented, and institutional.

An OCA document dated August 20, 2008 also has significance for the canonical setting. It did not record a completed administrative separation of the ROEA from the OCA. Rather, it expressed the OCA's readiness to permit such a separation should the ROEA Congress vote to return to the Romanian Orthodox Church, subject to the completion of appropriate internal procedures. The document therefore recognized a possible canonical path; it did not itself accomplish the transition.

The sequence of these 2008 events is important because it corrects two opposite misunderstandings. The first would be to describe the project as an already completed reunion. It was not.

The required acts of reception, reorganization, legal integration, and internal approval had not been completed. The second would be to treat the project as an informal or marginal aspiration. That also would be inaccurate. The proposal had been drafted by the joint commissions, received by the diocesan congresses, discussed with the Romanian Patriarchate, and examined in relation to the

ROEA's canonical bond with the OCA.

This dual character—advanced yet incomplete—explains both the enthusiasm of those years and the fragility of the process. The dialogue had crossed a threshold: it possessed a proposed institutional model. But every feature of that model still required consent, clarification, and lawful implementation. The closer the process came to a real decision, the more sharply every unresolved issue came into focus.

2009–2010 — Concrete negotiation and due diligence

On March 21, 2009, representatives of the two Romanian dioceses met at St. Mary Cathedral in Cleveland. The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, led by Archbishop +Nathaniel, and the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of America and Canada, led by Archbishop Nicolae, gathered in a common setting to discuss the possibility of union. The metropolitan proposal prepared by the Joint Commission formed the basis of the conversation.

This meeting was one of the high points of the process because it demonstrated that unity was being examined not only in broad theological terms but through the participation of the dioceses' institutional representatives. The dialogue had moved beyond an abstract ideal. It was now concerned with the detailed architecture of a future common structure.

During 2009, the proposal was revised. By October, a finalized form had been received by the Council of the Diocese of Vatra Românească, and work began on an annotated version explaining the meaning of its provisions and the shared vision of the two sides. The discussions included the status of the future Metropolia; the nature and limits of its authority; its relationship to the Romanian Patriarchate; the election and role of hierarchs; administration of patrimony; legal identity; finances; and the relationship of the two existing jurisdictions to the proposed common structure.

In June 2010, the annotated version was presented to the Diocesan Council. At the same time, legal and financial due diligence continued. This work was indispensable. A proposed ecclesial union necessarily had civil and legal consequences: property had to be identified, title arrangements understood, liabilities verified, obligations disclosed, and the legal status of each entity examined. A spiritual aspiration could not responsibly become a juridical reality without this foundation.

On October 1, 2010, the Congress of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in America described the Joint Commission's proposal and annotations as a preliminary step and a good theological basis for the establishment of a Romanian Orthodox Metropolia in North America. The decision also referred to the importance of a Patriarchal Grammata or corresponding act of recognition for the future structure. In practical terms, this was perhaps the most advanced point reached by the negotiations.

At this stage, Bishop Irineu remained Bishop of Dearborn Heights and bishop-vicar of the ROEA Episcopate. He belonged to the episcopal generation that witnessed the project at its closest point to concrete institutional realization. His later biography cannot be separated from this wider history of hopeful, difficult, and ultimately unfinished reunification.

From November 22 to 27, 2010, Archbishop +Nathaniel and Bishop Irineu participated in Rome in the third meeting of Romanian hierarchs from the Western diaspora and North America. The theme was “Conscience and Canonical Orthodox Ecclesiology.” The gathering included Romanian hierarchs from Western Europe, Germany, Central and Northern Europe, and North America, and included a Divine Liturgy in the Catacombs of Saint Callistus.

This Roman meeting was not a formal session of the ROEA–ROAA Joint Dialogue Commission. It belonged to the broader framework of diaspora episcopal meetings. Yet the timing is striking: during the same year in which the two American dioceses had reached an almost final document concerning unity, Romanian hierarchs were reflecting together on conscience, ecclesiology, canonical order, identity, and mission. The wider diaspora conversation and the North American dialogue cannot be equated, but they illuminate one another.

The legal and financial work of this period deserves special attention because it is easy to confuse it with a lack of spiritual commitment. In reality, careful due diligence is an expression of responsibility. Church institutions receive gifts, property, and charitable resources entrusted by generations of faithful. The leaders of any prospective union have an obligation to know precisely what is being administered, what restrictions apply, and what consequences would follow from reorganization. A process that neglected those questions would have risked creating conflict after union rather than peace through union.

The same is true of governance. A metropolitan structure would have required a clear and accepted account of authority. How would the common synod function? Which matters would remain within each diocese? What procedures would govern the election of bishops, the reception of parishes, or the administration of common ministries? How would the future Metropolia relate to the Romanian Patriarchate and to the broader Orthodox environment in North America? These were not technical distractions from the dialogue, a practical form that any authentic unity would have to take.

2011 — Enthusiasm, impasse, and unresolved questions

In 2011, Bishop Irineu attended the Congress of the Missionary Archdiocese at a time when the atmosphere surrounding possible reunification was unusually hopeful. Many participants felt that the long separation was finally nearing its end. According to contemporary recollections, faithful and clergy greeted one another warmly, embraced, and spoke as if God had already granted the desired unity. Such responses should not be dismissed as mere emotion.

They reveal that the process had created a genuine pastoral expectation among people who had lived with the division for many years. The joy of that moment had real foundations. It rested on nearly two decades of contact, on official commissions, on the 2008 declaration in Bucharest, on the metropolitan proposal, on congressional action, and on the increasingly detailed work of 2009–2010. Yet, in retrospect, the second half of 2011 marked the beginning of an impasse.

The documents of the ROEA indicate that contacts did not cease completely. Commission members continued to communicate by telephone and electronic correspondence. What changed was the movement of the process. Discussions no longer produced the institutional progress that had seemed possible in the preceding years. The transition from enthusiasm to stagnation was particularly

difficult because personal and pastoral closeness was no longer being matched by corresponding advances in legal, canonical, and administrative arrangements.

This was one of the central contradictions of the period: in many places, people had become closer to one another than the institutions that represented them. Personal goodwill and shared religious identity were powerful, but they could not by themselves answer every question involved in the creation of a new legal and ecclesial entity.



No single decision, meeting, or person can responsibly be identified as the sole cause of the impasse without a complete documentary record. The unresolved issues were substantial. They included the relationship of the two jurisdictions to their mother churches; the exact canonical status of the future structure; the status of hierarchs, clergy, and parishes; governing authority; property; legal identity; finances; and the future administration of common assets. Such questions cannot be resolved by goodwill alone, however necessary goodwill may be.

The distinction between *de facto* closeness and *de jure* union is therefore essential. In 2011, the two communities may have experienced genuine human and pastoral reconciliation. But the institutional process had not completed the steps required for a final, recognized union. The joy was not false; it was simply not enough to create the legal and canonical reality for which it hoped.

The absence of a complete final public report by the Joint Commission remains consequential. An ideal record would have stated clearly which points had been resolved, which remained in disagreement, what documentation was exchanged, what conditions were placed before each party, and why the process could not proceed to completion.

In the absence of such a comprehensive public account, later interpretation has often depended on

fragments: individual documents, personal testimony, recollections, and competing assumptions.

It has sometimes been suggested that the final obstacle concerned finances, patrimony, or incomplete transparency. These suggestions should not be converted into established fact unless supported by the complete documentary record. They remain perceptions and interpretations that must be tested against evidence. The responsible historical task is neither to suppress such questions nor to present them as proven conclusions without proof.

There is a methodological lesson here. When a long dialogue fails to reach its expected conclusion, memory can quickly turn uncertainty into certainty. Each community may preserve the documents that support its own reading and lose sight of the fact that the other side experienced the same process differently.

This chapter avoids claiming more than the available record permits. It identifies the documentary steps that can be established and describes the unanswered questions as unanswered. Such restraint is not weakness; it is a condition of trustworthy historical writing.

It is also necessary to distinguish the failure of a particular institutional process from the failure of the ideal itself. The process that had accelerated between 2008 and 2010 entered an impasse after 2011. Yet the Christian aspiration to reconciliation does not expire with one failed negotiation. It continues to call for truth, patience, repentance where necessary, and a willingness to reopen dialogue when circumstances permit. The history of 1991–2011 is therefore unfinished in its moral meaning even if the institutional sequence described here reached a pause.

Patrimony and due diligence: a necessary condition of unity

The financial and patrimonial dimension of the dialogue was not secondary. Any proposed union of ecclesial institutions requires a full and reciprocal understanding of property, liabilities, governing documents, revenue, obligations, title, and legal authority. This is not an expression of distrust alone. It is an ordinary requirement of responsible stewardship.

The due-diligence process was therefore intended to clarify the assets, obligations, property titles, legal status, financial structures, and administrative responsibilities of the two dioceses. The Romanian Archdiocese maintained that it had met the requirements placed before it by the due-diligence committee. In a process resembling the preparation of a joint institutional undertaking, reciprocity required that equivalent standards of verification be applied to both parties.

It was not sufficient simply to state that documents existed. The parties needed to be able to determine who held legal title to property, what governing rules applied, what liabilities or encumbrances existed, which rights might belong to third parties, and how each asset could lawfully be transferred, retained, or integrated into a common structure. The same analysis was necessary for debts, expenses, administrative obligations, and any financial commitments that could affect the future Metropolia.

The situation of St. Andrew House/Study Center was one example cited as raising questions that required clear legal answers: ownership, acquisition, authority to administer, and the legal

consequences of any institutional reorganization. The purpose of identifying such issues was not to create scandal. It was to ensure that a future union would rest on documentary clarity rather than uncertainty.

An effective reunification could not be only a proclamation of spiritual desire. It required a clear answer to practical questions: what patrimony existed; to whom it belonged; under what titles it was held; who administered it; what obligations burdened it; and what legal regime would apply after union. Without a uniform and verifiable picture of the assets and liabilities involved, neither side could responsibly assume the obligations of a new common entity.

For that reason, the question “Who said no?” cannot be reduced to a slogan. Was the impasse caused by canonical disagreement, jurisdictional concern, property, clerical status, personal tensions, or the absence of sufficient ecclesial will? The most prudent answer may be that several factors converged. An official dialogue deserves an official explanation when it reaches a standstill. If it was abandoned, the reasons should be stated. If it was suspended, the conditions for resumption should be made clear. If responsibility was shared, it should be acknowledged with honesty.

There is a broader principle at stake. Transparency is not the enemy of communion. When exercised with discretion and respect, it is one of the means by which communion becomes durable. Clear records protect the faithful, prevent later misunderstandings, and allow bishops and councils to make decisions with a full awareness of their consequences. Conversely, a lack of clarity can make even an honorable proposal vulnerable to suspicion. The careful documentation requested in the due-diligence process should therefore be understood as a safeguard for both dioceses and for the future common structure they hoped to create.

The historical importance of the patrimonial question must not obscure its human dimension. Church property is not an abstraction. It represents the sacrifices of parishioners, the labor of clergy, the generosity of donors, and the memory of communities that built churches, schools, monasteries, homes, and charitable institutions. Any proposal affecting those assets must account not only for legal title but also for pastoral trust. That is why the questions surrounding property had to be answered with rigor before a union could be responsibly completed.

After the impasse: the Metropolia of the Two Americas

The dialogue that began in 1993 did not culminate in the incorporation of the ROEA into a single common structure. Nevertheless, the ideal of Romanian Orthodox unity in America did not disappear. In 2016, the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas and the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of Canada were established through a sequence of canonical acts.

The eightieth Congress of the Archdiocese, meeting in Hamilton, Ontario, from July 1 to 3, 2016, approved the establishment of the Diocese of Canada, centered at Saint-Hubert/Montreal, and nominated Bishop Ioan Casian Tunaru.

The Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, by Decision no. 9138 of October 28–29, 2016, approved the Metropolitanate, composed of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of the United States of America and the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of Canada, and elevated Archbishop

Nicolae Condrea to the rank of Metropolitan.

Patriarchal Letter no. 1/2016 of Patriarch Daniel confirmed the elevation of Archbishop Nicolae to the dignity of Metropolitan. The organization of the Canadian Episcopate and the election and installation of Bishop Ioan Casian were also confirmed through the relevant metropolitan acts. Together, these documents established and canonically confirmed the two dioceses as suffragan dioceses of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas within the Romanian Orthodox Church.



From the perspective advanced in this chapter, the establishment of the Metropolia did not have to signify a permanently closed door for the ROEA. The 2008 declaration continued to stand as an important expression of reconciliation, mutual forgiveness, and the desire for unity.

The new metropolitan structure could be understood as a canonical home capable of receiving the ROEA should it freely choose, through its own proper procedures, to enter that common structure.

Such an eventual integration should not be described as one side's capitulation to another. Its proper theological meaning would be the fulfillment of a shared ecclesial aspiration: the unity of Romanian Orthodox Christians in the Americas within a recognized relationship to the Romanian Orthodox Church.

The formation of the Metropolia also demonstrates that canonical development remained possible even after the 2011 impasse. It offered a stable framework for the Archdiocese and the new Canadian Episcopate and preserved the larger vision of a Romanian Orthodox presence in the Americas organized in communion with the Mother Church.

At the same time, it changed the institutional landscape. Any future reunification discussion would

have to take account of the existence, statutes, pastoral responsibilities, and canonical identity of this metropolitan structure.

That development does not diminish the significance of the earlier dialogue. On the contrary, the 1993–2011 process supplies much of the historical background against which the 2016 organization must be read. It shows how long the desire for a metropolitan structure had existed, how carefully it was debated, and how strongly many clergy and faithful associated it with the healing of an old division.

Archpriest Constantin Alecse: witness, participant, and chronicler

Archpriest Constantin Alecse occupies a particular place in this history. He is not presented merely as a later commentator, but as a participant and witness who attended meetings, supported initiatives, and knew many of the people and circumstances involved. His testimony is part of the evidentiary landscape of this chapter, while remaining distinct from institutional documents.

For Archpriest Alecse, unity was never a convenient ecclesiastical slogan. It was a conviction linked to the continuity of Romanian Orthodox identity, the healing of historical division, and the obligation to speak candidly about matters affecting the community. His involvement in the reunification movement and his support for Bishop Irineu were followed, in his own account, by the deterioration of his relationship with the leadership of the ROEA, a process that deepened after approximately 2010 and culminated in his departure from that jurisdiction in 2022.

The author's perspective is that Bishop Irineu and other clergy who supported difficult questions of truth, unity, and institutional responsibility suffered serious personal consequences. Such claims belong to the author's testimony and interpretation and should be examined together with the documents, correspondence, ecclesiastical actions, and records to which the book refers.

The present chapter does not ask the reader to replace documentary evaluation with personal loyalty; it asks that personal testimony not be excluded from the historical record merely because it is inconvenient. The subsequent continuation of Archpriest Alecse's ministry under the omophorion of Metropolitan Nicolae within the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas forms an important epilogue. His separation from the ROEA did not mean separation from the Orthodox Church, the priesthood, or the Romanian mission. His pastoral service continued in a canonical setting, and his accumulated experience became part of the living memory of a process that has not ceased to matter for Romanian Orthodox Christians in North America.

The role of a witness in a historical work is not to claim infallibility. It is to preserve what he saw, heard, and understood, while allowing readers to compare that testimony with the surviving documents. For this reason, the author's first-hand statements should be retained, clearly identified, and examined fairly. A history written only from formal resolutions can miss the pastoral atmosphere in which decisions were received. A history written only from memory can lose the precision of documentary chronology. This chapter seeks to hold both forms of evidence in conversation.

The personal cost described by the author also belongs to the history of the period. Institutional

conflicts are never experienced only by institutions. They are experienced by priests, families, parish councils, and faithful people whose loyalties and consciences are tested. Recognizing that human dimension does not predetermine every disputed question. It does, however, prevent the narrative from becoming an impersonal account of minutes, titles, and resolutions.

Concluding reflection

This chapter is offered *sine ira et studio*—without anger and without partisan passion. Its purpose is neither to denigrate persons nor to revive conflict for its own sake. It rests on an extensive body of materials: official documents, correspondence, decisions, photographs, audio and video recordings, public records, and the testimony of participants. Some materials are public; others are preserved in church archives. Each must be assessed according to its nature and evidentiary weight.

The history of the dialogue for reunification teaches that unity cannot be built on fear, silence, selective memory, or the suppression of difficult questions. Durable reconciliation requires truthfulness, transparency, reciprocal accountability, and respect for the conscience of those who serve the Church. It also requires a complete memory—one that includes gestures of brotherhood, moments of progress, institutional hesitation, errors, suffering, and the real costs borne by individuals.

The fact that the process did not reach a final union in 2011 does not erase the decades of sincere effort that preceded it. Nor does the later existence of the Metropolia of the Two Americas eliminate the importance of the questions left unresolved. The documentary record shows that, for many years, unity was not an abstract dream. It was a concrete project studied by commissions, discussed by congresses, addressed with the Romanian Patriarchate, received with hope by clergy and faithful.

An authentic future reconciliation, if it is ever achieved, will not require the erasure of this past. It will require its honest understanding. Where documents speak, they should be heard. Where testimony is offered, its status should be clearly identified. Where interpretation remains uncertain, uncertainty should be acknowledged rather than concealed.

The truth is not harmed by research, by the comparison of sources, or by the memory of those who were present. For this reason, the story of the 1991–2011 dialogue deserves to be preserved. It records a genuine longing for the unity of Romanian Orthodoxy in America, the serious work undertaken to make that unity possible, and the unresolved issues that prevented a final settlement. In the words of the Gospel, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).



CHAPTER II

HOLY TRINITY AND THE SUNLAND PROJECT, 1982–2021

“Sunland”: between the dream of building and the trials of time

Adapted and expanded from the report presented by Archpriest Constantin Alecse to the Episcopal Council of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America on May 13, 2021, at the request of the Episcopal Chancellery.



The history of the Sunland project is inseparable from the history of Holy Trinity Romanian Orthodox Church in Los Angeles. It is the history of a parish that sought to preserve faith, language, tradition, and Romanian Orthodox identity while serving a changing immigrant community in Southern California. It is also a history of extraordinary hope, sustained sacrifice, difficult administrative realities, financial risk, and the humility required when a cherished plan cannot be completed within one generation. For many parishioners, Sunland was never only a parcel of land. It represented a vision: a larger Romanian Orthodox church, a social and cultural center, and a place from which future generations could continue the life of the community. The project was born at a time of demographic growth and genuine optimism. It was tested by rising costs, demanding municipal requirements, the dispersal of the Romanian population, the passing of its early supporters, and a series of financial pressures that gradually changed the meaning of the undertaking.

This chapter presents the principal stages of that history. It does not attempt to obscure its

disappointments, nor does it judge earlier decisions without reference to the circumstances in which they were made. Its purpose is to show why the parish undertook the project, how the obstacles accumulated, and what the experience teaches about stewardship, responsibility, and faithfulness to a community's long-term mission.

The pastoral setting and the history of Holy Trinity

Holy Trinity Romanian Orthodox Church in Los Angeles is more than a building or a legal corporation. It is a living community formed by successive generations of Romanian Orthodox Christians who carried their faith to California and labored to preserve it in a new society.

The parish was formally incorporated in 1940. Over time, the community acquired a former Episcopal church and later added a parish hall and parish house. These buildings became the setting for worship, family life, cultural events, charitable work, and the transmission of Romanian Orthodox tradition.

The parish's pastoral history includes the service of Rev. Martin Ionescu, from 1939 to 1947; Rev. Grigore Coste, from 1948 to 1957; Rev. Victor Bărbulescu, from 1957 to 1969; Rev. Anchidim Ușeriu during the period recorded in parish history; and Rev. Richard Grabowski, from 1971 to 1982. In 1982, Father Constantin Alecse was appointed parish priest by Bishop Valerian.

He served Holy Trinity under the jurisdiction of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America until the parish's 2022 reception into the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas, then he continued to serve for another 5 years under the jurisdiction of the Mother Church.

Father Alecse's own pastoral formation provides important context for the project. Born and educated in Romania, he began his priestly ministry in Europe.

From 1976 to 1980, he served the Romanian Orthodox Church of Saint George in London, then the only Romanian Orthodox parish in England under the jurisdiction of the Romanian Patriarchate.

In 1980, he was received into the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in America and served Saint Mary Church in Saint Paul, Minnesota, from 1980 to 1982. After his appointment to Los Angeles in 1982, he became responsible not only for the spiritual life of Holy Trinity but also for the broader pastoral challenges of a rapidly changing Romanian community.

From 1985 through 2014, Archbishop +Nathaniel also entrusted him with the administration of the West Coast Deanery of the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of America. This wider ministry gave him direct knowledge of the growth, mobility, and changing needs of Romanian communities across the western United States.

The Sunland project should therefore be understood as part of a larger pastoral vision: not simply expanding a local property, but preparing a strong institutional home for the Romanian Orthodox presence in Southern California.

A growing community and the decision to build

When Father Alecse arrived in Los Angeles in 1982, there were only two Romanian Orthodox parishes in Southern California: Holy Trinity, under the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, and Holy Archangels Church in Torrance, connected to the Romanian Patriarchate.

In the years that followed, immigration from Romania increased significantly. Many newcomers had left for political, economic, or family reasons and arrived in Southern California looking both for work and for a spiritual community.

The existing Holy Trinity facilities soon proved inadequate for the growing pastoral, cultural, and social life of the parish. The church and associated buildings were old; they could not easily accommodate the larger assemblies, youth activities, dinners, educational work, and community events that a growing parish required. Between 1982 and 1987, the question of a larger church and community center appeared repeatedly in the annual General Assemblies.

The parish did not rush into the project without discussion. During 1986 and 1987, the Parish Council considered several possibilities for enlargement. The eventual conclusion was that the most practical long-term answer was not merely to modify the existing property, but to purchase land on which a purpose-built Romanian Orthodox complex could be developed.

A Special General Assembly was prepared on February 14, 1987, and on June 14, 1987, it approved the construction of a new church and social center. On February 14, 1988, a Construction Commission was established and given broad responsibility to study financing, design, permits, and construction.

On October 14, 1987, the parish purchased vacant land in the Sunland area of Los Angeles County for approximately \$230,000. The purchase gave the dream a concrete location. The intended complex was to include not merely a sanctuary, but an institutional center capable of serving the pastoral and social needs of a Romanian Orthodox community for decades to come.

The first obstacles: utilities, permits, and cost

The apparent simplicity of owning vacant land quickly gave way to the realities of development. The Sunland property lacked the utilities needed for construction. By 1988, the estimated cost of utility connections alone exceeded \$360,000. The total cost of the envisioned project was estimated at approximately \$6–7 million, a formidable sum for a parish whose members were giving generously but whose resources could not match the scale of the proposal.

Obtaining municipal approval proved equally demanding. The parish sought a Conditional Use Permit and passed through four public hearings between December 4, 1987 and July 26, 1988.

The project was subjected to twenty-one conditions. Many were not unreasonable in themselves, but their cumulative cost and technical demands created a serious burden. Before any actual church building could begin, the parish had to invest in design work, civil engineering, architectural plans, studies, and efforts to satisfy the conditions imposed by public authorities. Fundraising was pursued

with determination. Parishioners organized monthly meals, picnics, bingo evenings, and other community events. These activities demonstrated commitment and solidarity; they also had unavoidable limits.

The newer immigrants were working to establish homes, careers, and families in America. The older generation continued to give, but many were advancing in age. The funds raised, though meaningful, could not by themselves close the gap between a local parish's ordinary income and a multi-million-dollar construction project.

The Sunland project thus entered the difficult territory in which a sound spiritual vision confronts the scale of material reality. The parish had a legitimate need, an approved direction, land, and devoted people. What it did not yet possess was the financial capacity to transform the project into a completed complex.

Changes in the Romanian diaspora and seventeen years of waiting

The fall of communism in 1989 changed the Romanian world, including the diaspora in Southern California. The opening of Romania's borders allowed some people who had settled in the United States to return home. Others moved to Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Arizona, and other western states. New Romanian communities and parishes appeared, each becoming a local center for worship, fellowship, and the preservation of Romanian identity. This development was a blessing for Romanian Orthodoxy in the West, but it also changed the demographic assumptions behind the Sunland project. The Romanian population in Southern California became more numerous yet less concentrated around a single parish. Holy Trinity no longer occupied the same regional position it had held when it was one of only two Romanian Orthodox churches in the area. The larger community was growing, but it was also becoming geographically dispersed and institutionally diversified.

By 1990, the construction project had entered a prolonged waiting period. From 1990 to 2007, it was not formally abandoned, but it did not advance to the construction of infrastructure, much less to the building of the proposed church complex. The 1994 Northridge earthquake and the changing circumstances of parish life added to the burdens of the period.

The original Construction Commission also diminished over time. The community lost dedicated supporters: Mircea Popa died in 1995, Traian Pincu in 1999, and Nicolae Olar in 2007. Joe Oros withdrew after the death of his wife Betty. Miron Bonca moved to Orange County, while Maria Pincu, Grigore Birtoc, and Dorian and Agripina Șerban gradually ceased active involvement, though they remained members of the community. Efforts were made to reorganize and recruit new people, but the original momentum could not easily be recreated.

During these years, parish resources had already been committed to the preparatory work required for the project. The land was still there, the plans and much of the authorization work existed, but the passage of time had made the original financial assumptions increasingly unrealistic.



Even in 2006, despite the work of civil engineer George Boghossian and legal assistance from Attorney Steven Saper, significant municipal obstacles remained. The prospect of beginning construction was still distant.

The Pecker–PAESI proposal – A New Hope

In 2005–2006, the parish encountered a new opportunity that appeared capable of changing the financial prospects of Sunland. **Christian Vahab, a parishioner**, inventor, scientist, businessman, president of the Viitorul Român Society, and financial adviser to the Parish Council, presented an innovative clean-energy project. His proposal involved a generator or battery based on thorium technology.

The parish was not asked to become the technical developer of the invention. It was to act as a partner and prospective beneficiary. The church would provide a setting for installation and testing of a prototype, which, if successful, might later be commercialized and extended to other parishes. The hoped-for revenue could provide a financial foundation that conventional fundraising had never been able to supply.

In connection with this collaboration, the parish received 500,000 shares in PAESI, a company owned by Christian Vahab. Based on the intellectual property and patents associated with the project, their potential value was then estimated at approximately \$5-6 million. At the time, the prospect was understandably attractive. If the technology succeeded and the shares could be realized at the anticipated value, the parish might obtain the resources necessary to build the

Sunland complex.

The broader Pecker project also became associated with the possible privatization of the Romanian company Electroputere. In 2006, the acquisition of that company was viewed as a possible industrial platform for manufacturing and distributing the technology.

Father Constantin sought to help Christian Vahab explore potential assistance and contacts in Romania, including persons he knew there. The effort did not succeed; the Electroputere contract was awarded to another investor. The project nevertheless continued to be presented as a potentially significant investment.

In 2007, the Construction Commission approved a short-term loan secured by the Sunland property to support a seed investment in the project. Later, discussions also involved an investment company from the Middle East represented by Dr. Salah A. Rustum, a diplomat and engineer specializing in aerodynamics. The hope was that development and commercial exploitation of the technology would generate resources for the parish's construction plans.

Father Alecse's later account is candid about the limits of his own expertise. He did not have the technical background to evaluate the viability of the technology independently.

At the time, however, the presentations, patents, and projected financial benefits seemed persuasive. In a parish faced with a \$6–7 million building need and without ordinary means of obtaining that sum, the possibility of a transformative investment carried great weight.

Financial crisis, refinancing, and growing exposure

The global financial crisis of 2007–2009 changed the financial environment dramatically. Short-term loans came due at a time when banks were increasingly cautious and reluctant to refinance risky projects. To sustain the investment and meet the obligations associated with the Sunland property, other sources of capital had to be sought, including private financing and short-term loans on more costly terms.

The loan history illustrates the growing burden. After Resolution no. 04 of May 27, 1998 concerning the management and investment of funds intended for construction, and following the issuance of the 500,000 Pecker shares on February 14, 2007, the parish obtained a \$350,000 loan from Gaffken & Barriger Fund, LLC, on February 16, 2007. On February 2, 2008, that obligation was refinanced at \$440,000 through Marshall Gumbiner. On February 25, 2009, hard-money financing of \$850,000 was obtained through Rick O'Hara and Associates, bringing the higher interest, points, and costs commonly associated with that form of lending. The burden continued. On March 30, 2014, the Building Trust Fund Committee negotiated a further hard-money financing, implemented through an \$850,000 promissory note dated April 3, 2014 and due April 1, 2016.

The obligation was extended on March 22, 2016 to April 1, 2018; the documentation cited \$137,239.49 in extension and finance costs. Taken together, the successive refinancings, interest, points, fees, and extensions substantially increased the financial cost of preserving the project.

During 2009, development of the Peeker prototype was reported to have progressed, but the technology was not yet ready for commercial use. The prototype was expected to undergo tests later that year, yet it had to be returned to its Arizona manufacturer for technical corrections. Further testing, certification, and regulatory requirements emerged, requiring specialized work in California and lengthening the timeline.

By 2012, after two prototype tests had not produced the expected results according to company documents, the device was returned again for modifications.

The situation was presented to the Construction Committee in June 2012, and the need for a more realistic assessment became increasingly apparent. The parish had invested hope, time, and money in a technology whose anticipated commercial benefits had not materialized.

Reassessment of the property and the 2015 sale

Nearly twenty-five years after the Sunland purchase, the parish still had not begun construction. It possessed land, plans, and much of the approval history, but it also faced financial obligations, property taxes, insurance, operating expenses, and the consequences of loans connected with the Peeker investment. Maintaining an undeveloped property without a clear prospect of construction was becoming a serious burden.

In September 2013, the Construction Committee recommended that the 2014 General Assembly make a concrete decision about the property's future.

Several alternatives were discussed: partial development and construction of social facilities that could produce rental income; subdivision of a portion of the land for one or two homes; a possible partnership with the Armenian Diocese; or, as a final alternative, sale.

The central question had changed. The parish was no longer asking only how to finance a new complex. It was asking how to preserve the value of the property, reduce financial pressure, and act responsibly toward the community.

Civil engineer George Boghossian, who knew the Sunland project and its long history intimately, was asked to reassess the situation. His conclusion was that the parish did not then have the money or time necessary to continue under the existing conditions. He offered to buy the property and retain it without immediate development, allowing the parish time to stabilize its finances and potentially repurchase the land if the Peeker project generated the resources originally hoped for.

The proposed arrangement contemplated an initial waiting period of approximately three years, followed by roughly two additional years during which the parish might repurchase the land, with the purchaser recovering reasonable costs incurred to inspect and prepare the property. The 2015 General Assembly approved the approach and sale to George Boghossian. Christian Vahab was authorized to sign the documents on behalf of the parish, and the transaction closed on 04-30-2015.

For the leadership of the parish, the sale was not viewed as a final repudiation of the dream of Sunland. It was understood as a protective and temporary strategy designed to preserve the

possibility of a future return. The land was transferred to an entity whose name retained the connection to the church and the original project, reflecting the hope that the earlier authorizations and institutional continuity might still have value. If the parish could eventually stabilize its finances and obtain the estimated \$6–7 million required for the complete complex, it could seek to buy back the property and resume the project.

2016–2021: loss, uncertainty, and the final report

The hoped-for recovery became more difficult after the death of Christian Vahab in 2016. Available documents indicate that General Dynamics in San Diego was then conducting final tests on the Peeker–PAESI system. Yet Vahab’s death altered the project’s prospects profoundly.

He had been the central figure around whom the companies, professional relations, and technological vision were organized. Without a clear administrative and legal succession, the status of the companies, their intellectual property, and the parish’s possible rights became increasingly difficult to establish.

There was also the possibility that rights associated with particular patents or technologies had been transferred or assumed by entities connected with existing contractual relationships. In the absence of a clear, functioning legal structure continuing Vahab’s work, the parish could not identify a definite entity from which recovery of invested sums could realistically be sought. The prospect of recovering the investment became extremely limited.

On May 9, 2021, at the request of the ROEA Chancellery, Father Constantin Alecse submitted an eleven-page report to the Episcopal Council explaining the history of Sunland and the situation of the former parish property. More than six years had passed since the 2015 transfer.

The land remained undeveloped, and the sign—“The Future Romanian Orthodox Church of the Holy Trinity”—still stood as a visible reminder of the original purpose for which the community had purchased and preserved the property for almost three decades.

The report described the continuing uncertainty surrounding the future of the land and the practical difficulty of returning to the 2015 arrangement. The death of George Boghossian in 2022 added a further complication: both individuals most directly associated with the prior arrangements were no longer living. Any later examination of intentions, obligations, or potential options would therefore require careful reliance on the documentary record rather than assumptions.

By 2022, the parish itself had entered a new ecclesiastical and administrative context when it left the ROEA and was received into the Romanian Orthodox Metropolis of the Two Americas. This change required a broader reconsideration of the parish’s priorities and future projects.

The former Sunland property could no longer be evaluated only through the plans and assumptions of 2015. Any future initiative would need to reflect the parish’s present needs, available resources, pastoral direction, and current legal circumstances.

Christian Vahab - Inventor, Parishioner, and Visionary

Christian Vahab (February 15, 1951–August 20, 2016) is remembered by the author not only as an engineer, inventor, and businessman, but as a man of ideals who was deeply attached to the Orthodox faith and the Romanian community. A graduate of the Polytechnic Institute of Bucharest, he later continued his engineering formation in the United States, served in the U.S. Air Force, and worked in research and advanced technology. He became an entrepreneur and inventor and devoted his later years to energy technologies that he believed could benefit society.

Within the Holy Trinity community, he was seen as a generous parishioner who hoped the success of his inventions might support churches, elderly persons, young people, and those in need. His death left many expectations unfulfilled, including the hope that the technology associated with the Peeker–PAESI project might secure the resources required for Sunland.

The lesson of this episode is not that vision or innovation should be treated with cynicism. Rather, it is that charitable and ecclesial institutions must combine hope with careful technical, legal, and financial evaluation. The parish's experience shows how strongly a community can be drawn toward a proposal that appears to offer an answer to a pressing need—and how painful the consequences can be when that answer does not materialize.

What was not built, and what was preserved

The Sunland church complex was not built. That fact should be acknowledged without minimizing the grief felt by those who dedicated years of prayer, labor, fundraising, and personal sacrifice to the project. Many of its original supporters are no longer alive. Their generosity nonetheless remains part of the moral foundation of Holy Trinity Parish. The history also records what was preserved. Through decades of difficulty, Holy Trinity remained a functioning Orthodox parish.

The Divine Liturgy continued to be celebrated; families were baptized, married, and buried; children learned the faith; Romanian traditions were maintained; and the community endured. Buildings and projects matter, but they are not the whole Church. The Church is also the people who pray, give, forgive, and remain faithful through circumstances they did not choose.

The author's final reflection is therefore not one of despair. One generation may be called to conceive a project, acquire land, secure permits, and preserve a community through hard years; another may be given different resources, different opportunities, and a different path.

The work of the earlier generation is not meaningless simply because it did not see the final building completed. If, one day, a new Holy Trinity church rises somewhere in Southern California and its bells call future generations to prayer, it will carry within it the memory of those who dreamed before them: priests, founders, parish council members, benefactors, families, and parishioners who loved their Church and gave a part of themselves to its future. The Sunland project remains, above all, a witness to that enduring faith.



CHAPTER III

THE SUNLAND CASE AND THE BEGINNING OF THE CONFRONTATION, MAY–AUGUST 2021

From a parish vision to a jurisdictional dispute

The conflict that emerged in 2021 between Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church in Los Angeles and the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America did not arise from a single letter or a single meeting. Its immediate occasion was the long history of the Sunland property, but its background was much broader: decades of pastoral service, differences concerning diocesan authority and parish administration, the public defense of Bishop Irineu Duvlea, the question of priestly retirement and succession, and the parish's growing desire to renew its relationship with the Romanian Orthodox Church.

For this reason, the Sunland matter must be understood in context. The property had been purchased in 1987 with the knowledge and approval of the diocesan structure, in pursuit of an ambitious parish project. Over more than three decades, the project was affected by permits, costs, changes in immigration patterns, financing difficulties, and ultimately a transaction intended to protect the parish from further financial pressure. By 2021, however, this familiar history was revisited not simply as an unfinished construction plan, but as a question concerning title, administrative authority, and the responsibility of the parish priest and Parish Council.

This chapter reconstructs the events from May through August 2021. It distinguishes where possible between documented facts, the parish's interpretation of those facts, and the author's personal testimony. The purpose is not to convert a contested history into an unqualified conclusion. It is to show why the parish leadership came to believe that a limited inquiry regarding Sunland was becoming a broader administrative action affecting the future, patrimony, and pastoral continuity of Holy Trinity.

The original Sunland vision

When Father Constantin Alecse arrived in Los Angeles in 1982 as parish priest of Holy Trinity, the parish was growing. Romanian families continued to settle in Southern California, seeking work, stability, worship, and community after leaving Romania for political, economic, or family reasons. For them, the church was not only a place for the Divine Liturgy. It was a spiritual home, a center of Romanian language and tradition, a gathering place, and a living bridge between generations.

The existing facilities could no longer meet all of these pastoral, social, and cultural needs. Father Constantin and the parish envisaged a larger Romanian Orthodox center: a spacious church, a community hall, classrooms for Sunday school and cultural education, and eventually a setting capable of serving elderly members of the community. This was not merely a building plan. It was a pastoral vision for the long-term future of Romanian Orthodoxy in Southern California.

In 1987, the vision took tangible form. A Special General Assembly of the parish, convened with

the approval of the ROEA Chancellery, resolved to purchase vacant land in Sunland, in northern Los Angeles. The parish paid approximately \$230,000 for the property. The project that followed contemplated a new church, parish hall, school facilities, cultural space, and a possible home for the elderly. Its anticipated total cost—approximately \$6–7 million—reflected the scale of the community’s aspirations.

The property lacked adequate infrastructure. Four public hearings were required between December 1987 and July 1988, and the relevant authorities imposed twenty-one development conditions. Some conditions carried substantial costs. The community nevertheless continued to work: dinners, picnics, celebrations, programs, and fundraising events were organized; parishioners gave money, labor, time, and encouragement. Yet the financial requirements of the project exceeded what ordinary fundraising could produce.

In the early 1990s, progress slowed. The 1994 Northridge earthquake changed the lives and priorities of many local families. Key supporters of the original plan died or moved away: Mircea Popa in 1995, Traian Pincu in 1999, and Nicolae Olar in 2007. Others retired, reLOCated, or could no longer participate as they had before. The land remained, but the generation that had first carried the project began to diminish. The loss was not only financial or organizational; it was personal and spiritual.

The Sunland project was therefore never a secret initiative or a sudden departure from the parish’s ordinary life. It was a known diocesan matter, reported over the years through parish processes and connected to the pastoral future of Holy Trinity. Its eventual difficulties were the product of real circumstances—cost, permits, demography, financing, and the passage of time—not of a simple failure of desire or effort.

Father Constantin’s diocesan service and the wider ecclesial context

For approximately three decades, Father Constantin served as Dean of the ROEA Pacific Coast Deanery. He knew closely the parishes, clergy, and pastoral concerns of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in the western United States. Alongside his parish work, he supported the long-discussed hope that the Romanian Orthodox structures in America might one day achieve a form of unity connected to the Mother Church.

In 2002, Irineu Duvlea was elected bishop-vicar of the ROEA. Father Constantin and Bishop Irineu developed a close working relationship. As dean, Father Constantin was involved in parish and diocesan concerns, while Bishop Irineu also became involved in Sunland-related matters as a representative of Archbishop +Nathaniel. In the parish’s understanding, this direct involvement confirmed that the diocesan leadership was informed about the project and its evolution.

When relations later deteriorated between Bishop Irineu and the leadership of ROEA/OCA, Father Constantin publicly defended him. He did so because he believed that Bishop Irineu was being treated unjustly. This was, for Father Constantin, a matter of priestly conscience. His public solidarity with Bishop Irineu had consequences for his own relationship with the leadership of the Episcopate. He gradually withdrew from diocesan administration and, in 2014, resigned his

deanship after approximately thirty years of service.

This resignation did not represent a withdrawal from the priesthood or from Holy Trinity Parish. On the contrary, it allowed Father Constantin to focus more fully on the altar, the faithful, and the future of the Los Angeles community he had served since 1982. His concern was increasingly directed toward what would remain after him: pastoral continuity, parish identity, and the community's ability to protect the legacy built by generations of parishioners.

The creation in 2016 of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas renewed an older hope within Holy Trinity. The parish's connection to the ideal of reunification was not recent. In 1975, the parish had been received into the ROEA in a historical context that included the hope of future reconciliation with the Mother Church. The broader American Orthodox ideal of unity, voiced at Ligonier in 1994, reinforced this aspiration.

In 2017, while still formally within the ROEA, Father Constantin sent a Holy Trinity delegation to the installation of the first Metropolitan of the new Metropolia. The gesture expressed more than courtesy. It signaled openness to a church reality that he and many parishioners viewed as consistent with the community's historical longing for closer communion with the Romanian Orthodox Church. What was still only an aspiration in 2016–2017 became, after later events, a concrete reality: on October 30, 2022, the Holy Trinity General Assembly voted unanimously to enter the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas, and on November 21, 2022, the parish received the Antimension from Metropolitan Nicolae.

This later development should not be read back simplistically into every disagreement of 2021. It does, however, explain the setting in which those events were experienced. By 2021, questions about diocesan oversight, parish property, Father Constantin's retirement, and the future of the community were not abstract questions. They were increasingly tied to the parish's consideration of its identity and canonical future.

The reappearance of Sunland as an administrative issue

As the parish consolidated its administrative and financial life, differences with the ROEA became increasingly focused on property and control. From the parish leadership's perspective, the issue was no longer limited to personal disagreement, past ecclesiastical conflicts, or administrative misunderstanding. It concerned the extent of diocesan authority over parish assets and the legal rights of a California religious corporation to administer property acquired and maintained through the contributions of its own faithful.

The Sunland project became the point through which these larger questions were raised. The ROEA position, as understood by the parish, was that certain property decisions, transactions, and agreements had been undertaken without first obtaining the blessing or approval of Archbishop +Nathaniel. The parish's response was that the project had never been unknown to the diocese: its history had unfolded over decades within a continuing administrative relationship with the Episcopate, and Bishop Irineu had served as a direct link between the parish, the Archbishop, and the Chancellery on important Sunland matters.

The ordinary administrative practice of the ROEA is also relevant. Parishes prepared annual administrative and financial reports for their General Assemblies. After review and approval by parish members, the reports and meeting materials were submitted to the diocesan Chancellery. In addition, proposed agendas for parish assemblies were ordinarily submitted beforehand for diocesan review, observations, and approval. In the parish's view, this meant that the Sunland project, its challenges, and the relevant parish decisions were disclosed within an ongoing pattern of diocesan oversight.

The dispute therefore turned on different interpretations of authority and responsibility. How far did diocesan authority extend over local parish property? What approvals were required under church rules, corporate law, and past practice? To what extent could a long series of parish decisions, known to the diocese over decades, later be treated as unauthorized? These questions became central not only to Sunland but to the parish's understanding of its own future.

May 2021: the Episcopal Council summons and the eleven-page report

On May 4, 2021, Father Constantin received an official email from the ROEA Chancellery summoning him to participate by Zoom in a meeting of the Episcopal Council scheduled for May 13, 2021, at 8:30 p.m. Eastern Time. He was asked to provide explanations and information concerning the "Sunland Property," to clarify questions regarding ownership and legal title, and to assist the Council in deciding how the matter should be addressed.

The summons brought the old project formally before the Episcopal Council. Father Constantin did not avoid the inquiry. He confirmed that he would participate and informed the Chancellery that, because the history was long and complex, he would prepare a written report. His aim was that the Council members receive the timeline in advance and be able to review the circumstances of the project, the decisions taken by the parish, and the parish's explanation regarding the property.

He prepared an eleven-page report. The report reconstructed the history beginning with the 1987 purchase, the intention to build a new church and parish center, the difficulties of obtaining permits, the financial pressures that prevented construction, the changing circumstances of the community, and the transactions and agreements that later affected the property. It also emphasized that the project had been known by the diocesan leadership throughout its existence and that Bishop Irineu had played a direct role in the relationship between Holy Trinity, Archbishop +Nathaniel, and the ROEA Chancellery.

At the May 13 meeting, Father Constantin presented the parish's position and answered questions from Archbishop +Nathaniel, the investigator Father Ian Pac-Urar, and other members of the Council. The meeting gave the diocesan leadership an opportunity to request explanations and gave Father Constantin an opportunity to place the events in chronological context. For him, this was not merely a question of a land title; it was an attempt to explain more than thirty years of parish history.

The conclusion of the meeting was especially important in the parish's later understanding. Archbishop +Nathaniel thanked Father Constantin for the presentation and reportedly used the expression "to put it to rest" regarding the Sunland matter. Father Constantin understood those

words to mean that the relevant explanations had been supplied and that the subject was considered closed. He had been specially summoned; he had distributed a detailed report before the meeting; and he had responded openly to the questions asked.

No aspect of the meeting, in his view, suggested that it would be followed by an expansive investigation into the parish's entire administration, financial records, governance, and pastoral life. This expectation would soon be challenged.



June 2021: from the Sunland inquiry to a broad records demand

On June 9, 2021, the ROEA Chancellery sent Holy Trinity a new official request. The letter was four pages long and required documents in fifteen separate categories. It did not remain focused on Sunland. It requested registers, minutes, financial and accounting records, bank documents, governance decisions, correspondence, and other administrative materials extending back to 1989.

The practical consequence was considerable. The parish was asked, by June 30, to identify, retrieve, verify, and organize thousands of documents accumulated over more than three decades. The request arrived while Father Constantin and the Parish Council were preparing for the parish's feast day. From the parish's standpoint, it was not a limited document request but a demand for a substantial historical archive on very short notice. The available record does not establish the intention behind the deadline. It would not be responsible to state as fact that the timetable was designed to make compliance impossible. Yet the sequence is relevant: a very broad request, a short period for production, and later allegations of non-cooperation or disobedience based in part on the parish's response. The parish therefore saw the June 9 letter as an expansion of the Sunland inquiry into a much wider administrative intervention.

The broader setting increased the parish's concern. At the same time, Holy Trinity had become the beneficiary of an important testamentary gift, commonly referred to as the Fanous Estate, involving assets and properties in Beverly Hills. The emergence of substantial patrimonial resources gave heightened significance to any request for control over parish documents or administration. From the parish's perspective, a legitimate question arose: was the Chancellery seeking only to clarify a historical property issue, or was Sunland becoming the entry point for a larger action affecting the patrimony and future governance of Holy Trinity?

Contemporary ROEA cases and the parish's concerns

Before Holy Trinity's requested documents had been produced and examined, the ROEA's official *Solia* publication placed the "Sunland Property" alongside two other contemporary disputes: the Ascension monastic community in Clinton, Michigan, associated with **Bishop Irineu Duvlea**, and **Saint Nicholas Parish in Troy**, Michigan. The cases were not identical. The Clinton and Troy matters had entered civil court proceedings; in the Troy case, the Diocese recorded the acquisition of title and control over the property on September 3, 2021. The Sunland matter, by contrast, was still at an internal stage, with Holy Trinity's requested records not yet supplied or evaluated.

The parish strongly objected to how these events were presented together by ROEA. They believed that describing the Sunland transfer as "unauthorized, illegal, fraudulent and void ab initio" publicly framed them as guilty before the diocesan inquiry had finished and prior to any judicial ruling. While the exact intent behind this phrasing and timing cannot be definitively proven, it understandably intensified the parish's fear that its case had already been prejudged.

During the November 2019 Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America (ROEA) clergy conference in Detroit, Father Constantin's concerns were deeply intensified by how leadership addressed the Troy church precedent. While attending the event, which coincided with the election of Father Dan Hoarște as the sole candidate for ROEA vicar bishop, Father Constantin became troubled by the Chancery representatives' explicit **focus on maintaining "control of parishes."** His apprehension grew after hearing Archbishop +Nathaniel make highly disparaging remarks about Father Gheorghe Cârstea, the founder and construction coordinator of the Troy parish who was actively leading the church's disassociation from the ROEA. According to Father Constantin's direct testimony of the event, the Archbishop told the clergy about one of his hospital visits to the ailing Father Cârstea, claiming he had to read the Prayers of Saint Basil because "demons were growling" inside him. Father Constantin interpreted these hostile comments as a direct attack on a priest defending his community amidst an ongoing dispute. Rather than reflecting an official transcript, this account serves as Father Constantin's personal witness to what he perceived as a deeply hostile and derogatory environment cultivated by the ROEA hierarchy.

The Anaheim case provided another layer of anxiety. In the summer of 2021, Father Cornel Avramescu, who founded the Assumption of the Virgin Mary Parish in Anaheim, was retired after over 30 years of service and replaced by Father Alin Munteanu. Within a few months, a severe conflict erupted involving the new priest, Father Avramescu, the Parish Council, and factions of the congregation. This led to an extended closure of the church, public protests by parishioners, and civil litigation in Orange County in 2022.

To the leadership at Holy Trinity, the Anaheim situation demonstrated the real-world fallout of a

poorly handled priestly retirement and succession. This worry extended beyond Father Constantin personally; it represented a collective fear within the community that a parish guided by a single priest for decades could be completely destabilized if leadership transitions were executed without trust, open dialogue, and broad parish consensus.

The later Palm Springs case involving Father Iustin Capsa was also viewed by the parish as a warning, although it developed over a different period and involved distinct facts. Father Capsa, a former assistant at Holy Trinity, was appointed to the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel Parish in Palm Springs in 2019–2020. After contributing personal resources and helping build the foundation of a new church community, his relationship with ROEA authorities deteriorated. The matter culminated, according to the documentation referenced by the author, in his removal from parish leadership and resignation from the priesthood in 2025 after he had earlier been directed to a period of monastic penance.

Other cases—Saint Mary in New York during the pastorate of Father Casian Fetea, Saint Andrew House/Center for Orthodox Studies in Detroit, and additional parish disputes—had their own facts and should not be collapsed into a single claimed policy without evidence. But their cumulative effect was real. To Holy Trinity, they created a pattern of institutional conflict involving clergy, parish leadership, jurisdiction, and property. The parish did not claim that every case had the same cause. It did conclude that the precedents made it necessary to think carefully about its own future.



The parish's position: authority, responsibility, and continuity

The concern of Holy Trinity was not based on a rejection of Orthodox episcopal authority. The parish recognized the diocese's responsibility for canonical order, discipline, and pastoral oversight. The question was how that authority should be exercised when a local community, its Council, and

a long-serving priest believed that the community's patrimony and continuity were at risk.

For Father Constantin and the Parish Council, the issue was larger than his own retirement and larger than Sunland. It concerned the altar at which he had served for decades, the faithful he had baptized, married, and buried, the families who had sustained the parish, and the resources that generations had contributed for future ministry. In their view, the community was seeking a balance: respect for episcopal authority together with recognition of the responsibilities of a parish incorporated and organized under California law.

The accumulation of contemporary disputes made the Parish Council fear that an administrative review might become a confrontation concerning leadership, succession, and property. That concern is best understood as a perspective shaped by circumstances, not as a legal determination of intent. The available documents record broad requests, tense correspondence, and later ecclesiastical conflict. They do not by themselves prove every motive attributed to diocesan officials. Yet they explain why the parish believed that an inquiry that began with a thirty-year-old development project could affect the whole future of Holy Trinity.

Legal assistance and the calm before the storm

The June 9 letter prompted the Parish Council to act. At an emergency meeting on June 13, 2021, the Council unanimously resolved to retain legal counsel to protect the interests of the parish. It engaged the Santa Monica law firm of Roger J. Diamond. After reviewing the ROEA request, the firm considered the scope of the demand excessive in relation to the time allowed for response.

Attorney Diamond did not initially propose escalation. In an effort to avoid confrontation, he invited the ROEA Chancellery to a direct and friendly meeting to clarify the matter amicably. His communication expressed concern about what he regarded as an abusive and confrontational treatment of Father Constantin. The ROEA did not respond to the proposed meeting, and it did not take place.

Almost two months of relative silence followed. After the intense meetings and document demands of May and June, the silence could have suggested that the issue was being de-escalated. In retrospect, the parish came to see it differently: it was not a resolution, but a pause before a more difficult stage of the conflict. By August 2021, tensions would reappear, and the relationship between the ROEA and Holy Trinity would move into a new phase.

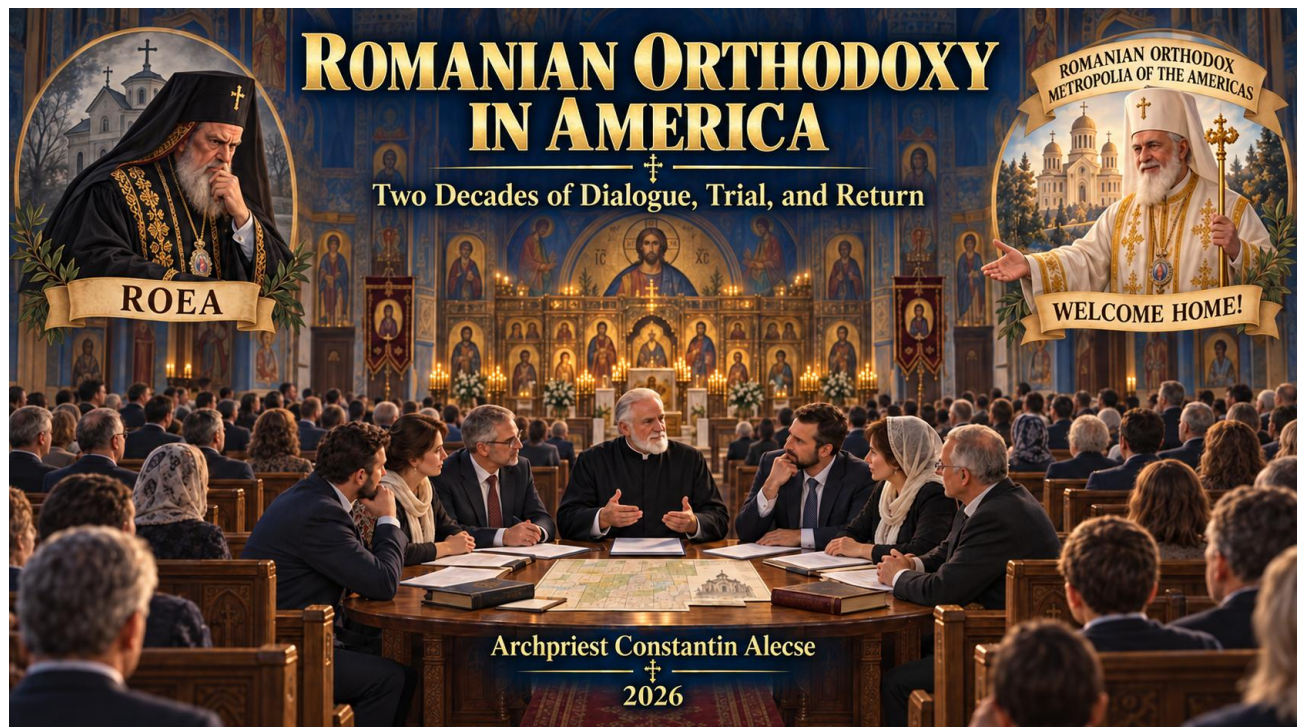
Concluding observation

The events of May–August 2021 transformed the meaning of the Sunland property in the life of Holy Trinity. For decades, it had symbolized a hoped-for church and Romanian community center. By 2021, it had become the subject of an inquiry that, in the parish's view, quickly extended into a challenge to its administration, patrimony, and pastoral future.

The chapter does not assert that every administrative request was illegitimate, nor that every concern of the diocese lacked a basis. It records, rather, why the chronology led the parish to perceive an escalation: a formal summons, an eleven-page report and Council meeting understood

to have resolved the matter, a broad archival demand with a short deadline, public association with other disputed cases, and a series of contemporary precedents involving clergy, parishes, and property.

From that point forward, the issue for Holy Trinity was no longer solely what had happened to a parcel of land in Sunland. It was whether the parish could maintain the continuity of its ministry, its property, its internal life, and its relationship to the wider Church without entering a conflict that would divide the community it had spent generations building.



CHAPTER IV

THE EVOLUTION OF RELATIONS BETWEEN ROEA AND HOLY TRINITY PARISH, JUNE 2021–JUNE 2022

From the Sunland inquiry to a crisis of trust

During the summer of 2021, the administrative disagreement between the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America (ROEA) and Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church in Los Angeles entered a new and more difficult phase. What had begun as a request for explanations concerning the historic Sunland property gradually expanded into disputes about documents, legal expenses, priestly retirement, pastoral succession, parish governance, and the proper relationship between diocesan authority and the local community. The parish did not initially seek confrontation. Its decision to consult Attorney Roger J. Diamond was intended as a protective and mediating measure. Counsel's first approach was not a threat of litigation but an invitation to meet "on a friendly basis," clarify misunderstandings, and seek an amicable solution. The proposed meeting did not occur, and the period of silence that followed was later understood by the parish not as a final resolution but as an interval before renewed pressure.

This chapter follows the principal events from August 2021 to the summer of 2022. It is based on the author's account, parish records, correspondence, and the contemporaneous chronology. Where private conversations are described, they are presented as Father Constantin's testimony and interpretation rather than as independently adjudicated findings. The central question is how a dispute about an old development project came to be associated with the retirement of a long-serving priest and the jurisdictional future of the parish.

August 12, 2021: the meeting in San Diego

On August 12, 2021, Father Constantin attended the funeral of Presvytera Maria Parău in San Diego. During the visit, he held a private conversation of more than one hour with Bishop-Vicar Andrei. According to Father Constantin's account, Bishop Andrei told him that he would need to accept retirement and that, if he did so, "the Sunland case will be closed."

The conversation also included criticism of Father Constantin's long ministry in Los Angeles. He was told that, after nearly four decades, he had not accomplished enough for the parish and that he might have built a cathedral comparable to those constructed by other Orthodox communities. Father Constantin received the tone and substance of this discussion as an effort to diminish confidence in his pastoral work and to encourage an unconditional retirement.

For him, the significance of the conversation lay in the direct connection it seemed to make between retirement and the closure of the Sunland inquiry. The property matter no longer appeared simply to be a historical question requiring administrative clarification. It came to be perceived as pressure connected with a change in parish leadership, pastoral succession, governance, and ultimately the community's patrimony.

This is an interpretation arising from Father Constantin's testimony, not a judicial conclusion regarding the intent of ROEA officials. Nonetheless, it shaped the parish's understanding of all later correspondence. The August 12 meeting did not formally close the Sunland case. It did, however, convince Father Constantin that the issue could not be viewed in isolation from his proposed retirement and the future of Holy Trinity.



January 30, 2022: the parish assembly under unusual supervision

The annual General Assembly of Holy Trinity on January 30, 2022 was held in circumstances the parish regarded as unprecedented. For the first time, a bishop attended its annual meeting. Bishop-Vicar Andrei's presence had not been requested by the parish and was announced only by telephone the day before, when he was already in Los Angeles.

The Parish Council had sent the proposed agenda to the Diocese for approval. Approximately one week before the meeting, the usual item "Proposals and Discussions" was removed. In the parish's view, this restricted the possibility of open discussion concerning a potential departure from ROEA.

The Assembly was chaired by Father Constantin in accordance with the parish's established rules. Bishop Andrei sat in the episcopal place and recorded the entire meeting without obtaining express permission from the parish.

Officially, Bishop Andrei explained that he wished to serve for the feast of the Three Holy Hierarchs and observe Father Constantin's experience in conducting an annual parish meeting.

The parish found this explanation difficult to reconcile with the Bishop's own substantial experience as a parish priest before becoming a hierarch. The removal of the open-discussion item,

the late notice of episcopal attendance, and the complete recording of the meeting were seen collectively as signs of intensified diocesan supervision.

The Assembly itself proceeded without incident. Yet the event deepened the parish's concern that the dispute was expanding beyond Sunland. It was no longer simply a question of past transactions. It involved the freedom of the parish to deliberate about its own present circumstances and future direction.



February 23, 2022: the Phoenix meeting and the hope of reconciliation

At the conclusion of the January visit, Bishop Andrei encouraged Father Constantin to attend the ROEA Clergy Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, from February 21 to 24. He was invited to speak directly with Archbishop +Nathaniel and Bishop Andrei concerning the conflict between the Diocese and Holy Trinity. Father Constantin accepted because he still hoped that the matter could be resolved in an ecclesial manner through dialogue, goodwill, and mutual understanding.

The private meeting took place on February 23 and lasted nearly two hours. Before returning to Sunland, Father Constantin recalled his long relationship with Archbishop +Nathaniel: almost three decades of collaboration while serving as dean of the Pacific Coast; diocesan visits; parishes and missions supported together; difficult situations addressed with Bishop Irineu; and the shared work of maintaining the spiritual and administrative life of Romanian Orthodox communities in the western United States. According to his account, the conversation became emotionally charged

because a relationship built over many years now appeared to be dominated by suspicion, inquiry, and pressure.

Father Constantin did not come to Phoenix as an adversary. He again explained the history of the Sunland property and the parish's position, believing that there was little of substance left to clarify. During this discussion, September 15, 2022 was first presented as a definite retirement date. Though retirement had been mentioned earlier, it now took the form of a specific deadline.

Father Constantin indicated that he was prepared to accept retirement if doing so would bring peace and definitively close the Sunland matter. After nearly forty years at the altar of Holy Trinity, this was not a minor concession. Nevertheless, he was willing to make it if it protected the parish from continued conflict and allowed a peaceful transition.

April–May 2022: renewed demands and the search for a written settlement

The hoped-for closing document did not follow the Phoenix meeting. On April 13, 2022, Archbishop +Nathaniel sent a further letter restating earlier demands and requesting payment of \$25,684.97 in diocesan legal expenses. For Father Constantin and the Parish Council, the new request was difficult to reconcile with the conciliatory spirit they believed had characterized the Phoenix conversation.

Father Constantin repeatedly attempted to speak with Bishop Andrei to obtain clarification before the next Parish Council meeting. After eleven calls without a response, the Council concluded that further legal advice was necessary. On May 8, Father Constantin presented the April 13 letter and the failed attempts to obtain direction. The Council decided to reconnect with Attorney Roger J. Diamond, whom it had consulted during the previous summer.

This was not a change to an offensive legal strategy. The parish continued to seek a defensible and mutually acceptable way to close the dispute. Its leadership believed that, after nearly a year of uncertainty, any settlement should be recorded in writing rather than left to oral assurances. A clear written agreement would protect both sides and make it possible to prepare a pastoral transition without leaving unresolved claims behind.

On the evening of May 11, Bishop Andrei spoke with Father Constantin for more than an hour. According to Father Constantin, the prospect of an amicable solution reappeared. The Diocese wished to “close the case,” but the formal initiative was to come from Father Constantin through his response to the April 13 letter.

Using notes from the conversation and assistance from someone with legal training, Father Constantin prepared a preliminary outline for possible negotiation and intended to have it reviewed by Attorney Diamond. It was not an executed settlement, but it briefly renewed the hope that a negotiated solution remained possible.

The situation changed again on May 25. In another extended telephone conversation, Bishop Andrei conveyed a more definite message on behalf of Archbishop +Nathaniel: Father Constantin was to submit a letter of retirement or resignation, effective September 15, 2022. He was also asked to

obtain a letter from the Parish Council admitting that, in the Sunland matter, the parish had acted wrongly toward ROEA.

Father Constantin's response was not a rejection of retirement as such. He was willing to retire if that was the decision of the hierarchs. He could not, however, ask the Parish Council to confess a fault which he and the Council believed had not been established. His proposed order was therefore clear: the Diocese should first state in writing that the Sunland case was finally closed and would not result in further claims; afterward, he would submit his retirement letter.

The parish viewed this as a protection against an unresolved or open-ended dispute, not as disobedience. The Council's concern was that retirement should not leave the parish with an admission of guilt it regarded as unjust, continued legal exposure, or new administrative demands.

In the weeks that followed, the dispute increasingly combined retirement, parish governance, and Sunland. In a conversation with the Parish Council president, Bishop Andrei reportedly used the expression, "Children do not tell their parents what to do," emphasizing the Council's duty to follow episcopal direction. In the parish's reading, the message had become categorical: Father Constantin would be retired on September 15, and the Council was expected to comply with diocesan directives, with possible dismissal if it did not.

July 2, 2022: the proposed compromise and the retirement letter

On July 2, 2022, Father Constantin met informally with Bishop Andrei for approximately three hours. At the meeting, he was handed the ROEA letter concerning his retirement effective September 15, 2022. The letter was dated June 30, 2022.

Father Constantin came seeking a solution. He emphasized his dual responsibility: as a priest subject to hierarchical authority and as the parish priest responsible to his congregation for stability, administration, and the future of the community. He stated that neither he nor the parish wished to fight the Diocese. Their desire was for the continuation of church life in peace and cooperation.

After consulting parish counsel, Father Constantin explained that retirement could not be fully separated from the unresolved Sunland matter. If the controversy became formal litigation, the parish would need first to protect its interests and clarify its legal relationship with ROEA. The appointment of a new priest, the convening of a special General Assembly, and the structure of succession could then be affected by the unresolved dispute.

The legal issues identified by counsel included ROEA's request for roughly \$26,000 in legal fees; the status of the sale of a condominium associated with the Fanous Estate, including the consequences of withdrawing the property from sale after Archbishop +Nathaniel had not approved it; and historical questions concerning the \$50,000 loan connected with Saint Andrew House/Center for Orthodox Christian Studies in Detroit.

Counsel also considered the possible recovery of parish legal expenses and a public response to the *Solia* statements of summer 2021, which the parish regarded as inaccurate and damaging.

These were not presented as immediate claims or threats. They were potential consequences the parish would need to consider should a public civil dispute develop. The legal position discussed was that the Sunland matter might involve civil and contractual questions between two nonprofit religious corporations—one in California and one in Michigan.

The parish's holding of civil title, in this view, had to be distinguished from any canonical or contractual obligations connected with membership in ROEA. This was the legal assessment of parish counsel, not an issue resolved by a court.

Father Constantin also explained that, if litigation occurred, the parish would have to present its own documentary account of the facts. It had considered preparing material that would place Sunland within the broader history of ROEA disputes and controversies.

Again, this was framed as a possible defense and information measure should the controversy become public, not as an immediate attempt to coerce the Diocese.

To avoid this outcome, Father Constantin proposed a specific compromise. ROEA would issue a clear written statement that the Sunland investigation was closed and that it did not intend to pursue legal action against the parish or its representatives concerning the matter.

In return, Father Constantin would accept retirement and Holy Trinity would cooperate in preparing an orderly pastoral transition.

The proposal contemplated a gradual process. Once relations were normalized, the intention to retire could be communicated appropriately to the parish.

The Diocese and the parish would cooperate in introducing a successor to the Romanian community in California, potentially during the second half of 2023, with the final transition completed through the parish's 2024 General Assembly. The purpose was not delay for its own sake, but an orderly, transparent succession that preserved the peace of the community.

The proposed compromise was not accepted. The retirement letter was delivered, but the requested written confirmation that the Sunland case was closed was not issued in the form sought by the parish. Thus, the two matters remained linked but unresolved: ROEA maintained the retirement decision, while Holy Trinity lacked the assurance it regarded as necessary to proceed safely with succession.

The phrase “children do not tell their parents what to do” captures the difference in approach. From the diocesan perspective, it emphasized the traditional relationship of ecclesiastical authority. From the parish perspective, it did not answer the practical request for certainty that, once Father Constantin retired, the old Sunland controversy would truly be at an end.

The parish believed that its proposal would have allowed no one to be a winner or a loser: ROEA would receive an orderly transition, Father Constantin would retire, and the parish would receive a final closure of the case.



From attempted reconciliation to a jurisdictional crossroads

The period from the Sunland inquiry in 2021 through the July 2, 2022 meeting marks the transformation of an administrative disagreement into a wider crisis of trust. The historical property inquiry was followed by broad documentary demands, legal consultation, direct meetings with the hierarchs, a request for legal expenses, and increasingly explicit pressure concerning retirement and succession.

Throughout this period, Father Constantin and the Parish Council continued to explore a solution within ROEA. The July 2 proposal was the culminating expression of that effort: final written closure of Sunland in exchange for retirement and cooperation in an orderly pastoral transition. Its

rejection was decisive because it convinced the parish that dialogue had not produced the security it believed necessary for the community's future.

After July 2, the center of discussion moved from private conversations between Father Constantin and the hierarchy to the governing bodies of the parish. The Council unanimously reiterated on July 24 its request for written confirmation concerning Sunland, regarding it as necessary before proceeding with the installation of a successor. A ROEA letter of July 27 and plans for a special General Assembly on August 28—intended in part to determine salary and benefits for a future priest—made the divergence clearer.

For ROEA, the immediate priority was retirement on September 15 and the organization of succession. For the Parish Council, the priority was closure of the issue that had initiated the conflict. The Council did not accept the proposed August 28 Assembly in that form. It believed that such decisions required proper consultation with parish bodies and that succession could not responsibly proceed while the Sunland file remained open. The decision was unanimous. By the close of summer 2022, the dispute was no longer only about land or only about the retirement of a priest. It concerned trust between diocesan authority and the parish's governing bodies; the community's fiduciary responsibility for its patrimony; the manner in which pastoral succession should be prepared; and the conditions under which the relationship between Holy Trinity and ROEA could continue.

The next stage would no longer be resolved through a single private meeting. It would require collective deliberation by the Parish Council and the General Assembly. During the autumn of 2022, the community would consider its canonical options and decide where, and within what ecclesiastical framework, Holy Trinity would continue its mission.



CHAPTER V

PAROCHIAL DELIBERATION AND CHANGE OF JURISDICTION, JULY 2022–JANUARY 2026

Introduction and documentary scope

This chapter examines the decisive stage in the conflict between the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America (ROEA) and Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church in Los Angeles. It begins with the impasse following the July 2, 2022 meeting between Father Constantin Alecse and Bishop-Vicar Andrei Hoarște and follows the events through the parish's October 30, 2022 jurisdictional vote, the separate reception of the parish and Father Constantin into the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas, subsequent ecclesiastical proceedings, and the conclusion of the civil lawsuit in January 2026.

The narrative rests on convocations, minutes, resolutions, correspondence, legal notices, pleadings, and procedural records. The documents contain competing positions. Accordingly, references to the claims of ROEA, the parish, or counsel are presented as the positions of those parties. This chapter does not purport to substitute for a court judgment or to resolve every canonical issue independently. Its purpose is to preserve the chronology, explain the steps taken by the parish, and identify the procedural effect of the later civil litigation.

The central development is clear. The community moved from attempting to secure a final written resolution of the Sunland issue to deliberating about its own pastoral, administrative, and canonical future. The Parish Council began an internal process; the General Assembly of October 30, 2022 voted unanimously for a change of jurisdiction; and the parish and Father Constantin were received, by separate acts, into the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas. ROEA disputed the validity and consequences of those steps, first through disciplinary proceedings and later through civil litigation. The lawsuit was voluntarily dismissed without prejudice on December 30, 2025.

I. The point of departure: the impasse after July 2, 2022

Until the summer of 2022, the Parish Council had continued to seek a solution within ROEA. At the July 2 meeting with Bishop Andrei, the parish proposed a practical settlement: ROEA would provide written confirmation that the Sunland matter was permanently closed and would not be used as the basis for claims against the parish or its representatives; in return, Father Constantin would cooperate in preparing an orderly pastoral succession. The parish maintains that the requested confirmation was not issued. Instead, Father Constantin was handed a retirement letter dated June 30, 2022 and made effective September 15, 2022.

From that point, the priorities of the parties diverged. ROEA concentrated on retirement and the arrangements for a successor. The Parish Council continued to focus on the unresolved matter that had produced the conflict. It believed that a transition could not responsibly proceed while the original property issue remained open and the possibility of further action was unclear.

The correspondence of June 30 and July 15, followed by the July 27 call for a special meeting on August 28, increasingly directed the matter to the Parish Council and parish membership. In the parish's account, Father Constantin's administrative role became more restricted and communications were increasingly addressed to the parish president and Council. The parish thus began to treat the question as one involving not only succession but also its fiduciary duties, patrimony, and the ecclesiastical framework in which it could continue its mission.

II. The ROEA convocation for August 28 and the Council's response

On July 27, 2022, the ROEA Chancellery called a Special Parish Assembly for August 28. The letter was sent to parishioners without the prior approval of the Parish Council, and the meeting was to be chaired by Father Remus Grama. The Council considered both the proposed agenda and the fact that the central disagreement had not been resolved.

On August 5, Bishop Andrei telephoned Parish Council President Edvart Rastian after an immediate response to the ROEA letter had not been received. Parish records describe this intervention as increasing the sense of institutional tension.

At its August 14 meeting, the Parish Council adopted a written response to ROEA and placed, under "Proposals and Discussions," the possibility of disassociating Holy Trinity from ROEA. This was not yet a final jurisdictional act. It was the formal recognition that the community needed to examine its relationship with the Diocese after more than a year of records demands, correspondence, unsuccessful attempts at compromise, and uncertainty regarding Sunland and succession.

The Council's choice must be viewed in light of the General Assembly held on January 30, 2022. According to parish records, the traditional agenda item "Proposals and Discussions" had been removed from the agenda approved through the ROEA Chancellery. Council members believed this experience demonstrated that a meeting controlled exclusively from outside might prevent the parish from discussing an issue it considered fundamental. For that reason, the Council sought to establish a deliberative procedure with an express agenda, notice, minutes, and a later community vote.

III. Why the August 28 meeting did not occur

Holy Trinity did not accept the August 28 meeting in the form called by ROEA. The parish did not describe this as a refusal to discuss the future of the community. Its stated reason was that the proposed agenda would not permit the reading and examination of the August 14 Council decision, including the passage concerning possible disassociation.

The parish believed the jurisdictional question could not be removed from community deliberation by an agenda imposed by the authority from which the parish might seek separation. On August 28, Father Remus Grama came to Los Angeles and concelebrated with Father Constantin, but the Special Assembly itself did not take place.

This distinction mattered to the parish. Liturgical life continued, but the parish did not consider that

continuation equivalent to accepting a disputed administrative procedure. The Council chose instead to proceed through its own corporate and deliberative mechanisms, culminating in a later special meeting in which members could receive information, debate, and vote.

The parish's position was that it was not realistic to seek prior ROEA approval merely to place disassociation on an agenda: its experience in January 2022 suggested that such a topic might not be permitted. This position does not itself resolve the competing constitutional or canonical arguments. It explains the route chosen by the parish: direct consultation of voting members through an internal procedure, while communicating its position to ROEA through counsel.

IV. September 2022: preparation for a community decision

During September, communications continued between ROEA and the Parish Council. The September 13 letter from Archbishop +Nathaniel was interpreted by the parish as adopting a more conciliatory tone regarding Sunland and as an acknowledgment that the relationship between Diocese and parish needed to be calmed. On September 15, another ROEA communication named Father Constantin *pro tempore*.

These transitional communications did not eliminate the parish's concerns. The Council prepared a September 25 meeting with an express agenda so that the administrative life of the parish could continue. At that meeting, the Council reiterated the August 14 position and adopted a resolution addressing disassociation in place of the Special Assembly that had not occurred on August 28.

The Council then prepared a Special Parish Assembly for October 30. The sequence demonstrates that the decision was not spontaneous. Between August 14 and October 30 there were internal meetings, repeated consideration, resolutions, notices, and parish information. The Council understood itself to have a duty to put the question before the membership rather than deciding it permanently by itself.

Holy Trinity is a California religious corporation with governing bodies and fiduciary obligations. The Council's position was that it could not give an external authority the power to prohibit the community even from discussing its future. At the same time, it did not treat the Council's own resolution as a substitute for a vote by parish members. The Special Assembly was called precisely so the decision would be collective.

V. The October 30 Special Assembly

The notice and agenda for the October 30 Special Parish Assembly were issued on October 15. They created the formal framework for presentation, debate, and voting. On October 25, Attorney Anthony C. Grossman sent a letter to ROEA communicating the parish's position concerning disassociation. The parish did not conceal its course of action or reduce it to an informal conversation; it used a formal convocation, written agenda, corporate procedure, and counsel's communication. The parish distinguished between informing ROEA and seeking ROEA's prior consent. It believed that its members' right to discuss and vote on the future of their own parish could not depend on authorization from the authority whose jurisdiction was itself in question. The parish pointed to the earlier agenda experience as an explanation for this procedural choice and

communicated its actions to ROEA through counsel.

On October 30, the Special General Assembly voted to leave the jurisdiction of ROEA and enter the Romanian Orthodox Metropolis of the Two Americas. According to the minutes provided by the parish, more than sixty voting members were present. The resolution passed unanimously, with no votes against and no abstentions.



The significance of the vote is that it was a corporate and community act, not a decision made by Father Constantin alone or by a small group. It expressed the choice of the members who attended a specially convened meeting after the preceding months of Council action, correspondence, and discussion.

VI. Separate petitions and reception into the Metropolis

The parish's application and Father Constantin's application were distinct. Father Constantin, who had been retired by ROEA effective September 15, submitted his personal petition for reception into the Metropolis on September 30, 2022. The parish corporation made its own decision and petition after the October 30 Assembly. The difference is important: a cleric and a parish corporation are not the same canonical or legal person, and their respective acts were separate even though they arose from a common pastoral direction.

On November 11, 2022, the Metropolitan Council approved the reception of both Holy Trinity Parish and Father Constantin. The letters communicating the decisions were dated November 21,

2022, when the Antimension was sent to the parish. A careful chronology must preserve both dates: approval on November 11; formal communication on November 21.

For Holy Trinity, this completed a process of community vote, petition, and reception into a Romanian Orthodox jurisdiction connected directly with the Romanian Orthodox Church. The parish viewed the action as consistent with the historical aspiration toward reunion with the Mother Church expressed at the time of its 1975 acceptance into ROEA. ROEA viewed the separation differently and continued to assert that its own canonical and administrative authority remained applicable. The same events were therefore described in different terms: a completed jurisdictional change for the parish; a contested and sanctionable departure for ROEA.



VII. Objection to the Assembly and the parish response

After the October 30 vote, ROEA questioned the meeting through an intervention attributed to Liviu Constantinescu. The material cited by the parish states that he had not attended the Assembly and communicated his objection more than a month after the vote, together with opposition attributed to other family members.

Ion Anton, a parishioner, responded in writing that the objection did not satisfy the procedural requirements of the parish's governing framework. The parish relied on provisions requiring that an objection be raised during the meeting, supported by at least two members present, and communicated to the ROEA Chancellery within ten days. Under that reading, an objection made later by a person who had not participated in the deliberation could not automatically be treated as a

valid statutory challenge. This dispute illustrates the tension between the unanimous vote of participating members and a later objection from nonparticipants. It does not eliminate the broader dispute over jurisdiction. It does show that the parish regarded the October 30 procedure as complete and valid under its understanding of its own rules.

VIII. The 2023 Consistory proceedings and jurisdictional dispute

In 2023, ROEA directed a series of summonses to Father Constantin to appear before the Spiritual Consistory. The first summons was received on January 24. The defense raised lack of jurisdiction as a threshold issue. Its chronology was straightforward: Father Constantin had been retired effective September 15, 2022; he had petitioned personally for reception into the Metropolia on September 30; and the Metropolitan Council had approved his reception on November 11.

On February 3, 2023, Attorney Matthew Oster wrote to ROEA on behalf of Father Constantin and the parish, demanding that what his clients considered harassment and intimidation cease. Further summonses followed in August, and a third summons was sent on August 17 for a September 8 hearing in Washington State. The defense continued to contest the Consistory's jurisdiction while responding to the allegations in the alternative.

On September 1, Attorney Oster wrote to Metropolitan Tikhon of the Orthodox Church in America requesting clarification of the OCA's position and intervention concerning ROEA. The letter referred to Father Constantin's reception under Metropolitan Nicolae. No response is reported in the available materials. The absence of a response should not be treated as acceptance of the defense's arguments. It does, however, record that a requested institutional clarification did not end the conflict.

ROEA's suspension letter was dated November 4, 2022 and was received by email on November 10. It announced an immediate suspension from priestly, sacramental, and administrative functions pending resolution by the appropriate church authorities and referred, among other things, to an alleged "Declaration and Act of Loyalty." The defense disputed both the existence and legal effects of that document and challenged the coherence of a suspension announced after the retirement and petition chronology on which it relied.

The dispute was therefore not merely factual but jurisdictional. ROEA continued to claim disciplinary competence. Father Constantin and his counsel maintained that he was no longer subject to ROEA after retirement and reception into the Metropolia. The chapter records the conflict without declaring either canonical position definitively resolved.

IX. From ecclesiastical controversy to civil litigation

On April 1, 2024, ROEA sent a formal notice and demand through counsel seeking transfer of parish assets to the Diocese. On April 25, Attorney Matthew Oster responded for Holy Trinity, denying that ROEA had a legal right to obtain the parish's assets.

On June 14, 2024, ROEA filed suit in the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, Case No. 24STCV14954. The verified complaint sought, among other remedies, quiet title,

declaratory relief, an accounting, and a constructive trust. The dispute had now entered a civil forum and concerned parish property, funds, governance, and corporate relationships.

Holy Trinity disputed the claims. Its defense referred to the parish's corporate history, its 1940 articles of incorporation, its relationship with ROEA, and its historical connection with the Romanian Orthodox Church. The parish's responsive pleading was filed on November 11, 2024. The filing of a complaint, of course, is not a judicial finding. The documents record the parties' competing claims and defenses, to be addressed under civil principles rather than as a decision concerning doctrine or worship.

After mediation on December 23, 2025, ROEA voluntarily dismissed the action without prejudice on December 30–31. A Notice of Entry was filed on January 2, 2026. Attorney Oster described the result to the parish as a practical victory. In procedural terms, the action was closed without a judgment on the merits. A dismissal without prejudice does not itself settle every issue or necessarily prevent a later action subject to applicable law. It does mean that the 2024 case did not produce an adverse judgment against Holy Trinity and was withdrawn by the plaintiff.

X. Documentary conclusions

Several conclusions follow from the record.

First, the parish's decision developed gradually. The documents of July, August, and September 2022 show a sequence: continued concern over Sunland; a dispute over the August 28 agenda; Council discussion and resolutions; a special convocation; and finally the October 30 vote. The Assembly was not the beginning of the conflict but the point at which a question that had matured over months was put into formal community deliberation.

Second, the Parish Council and General Assembly had distinct roles. The Council analyzed the situation, corresponded with ROEA, adopted preliminary resolutions, and called the Special Assembly. The voting members made the final collective choice. The unanimous October 30 result therefore represents the will of the participants at that Assembly, not merely the preference of Council members.

Third, the parish's choice not to seek prior ROEA approval to debate disassociation was a documented procedural position. It did not independently resolve the constitutional or canonical dispute, but it was explained by the parish's prior experience with agenda control. The parish chose notice, counsel's communication, an express agenda, and a recorded vote rather than a hidden or instantaneous decision.

Fourth, the separate nature of Father Constantin's petition and the parish's petition is essential. Each followed its own route and received a separate letter of reception. This distinction prevents the simplification of treating the parish as merely an extension of the priest or the priest as merely an officer of the corporation.

Fifth, the 2023 Consistory dispute focused on jurisdiction. The defense asserted that Father Constantin's ROEA relationship had ended before the summonses. ROEA proceeded on the

opposite view. The documents preserve both positions; they do not authorize this chapter to decide them conclusively.

Sixth, the 2024 lawsuit shifted the controversy into civil law, where the questions concerned property, administration, and corporate relations. The later voluntary dismissal is procedurally significant but must be described accurately: it was a withdrawal without prejudice, not a final merits judgment resolving all rights of the parties.

Overall, the documentary record supports the conclusion that Holy Trinity first sought to resolve the dispute through dialogue, then followed a parish procedure through its Council and voting membership, and finally requested reception into a Romanian Orthodox framework it considered consistent with its history. ROEA rejected that interpretation and continued to contest the consequences. The sequence of events, however, is identifiable: deliberation, vote, separate reception of parish and priest, ecclesiastical contestation, civil litigation, and the procedural closure of that case at the beginning of 2026.



CHAPTER VI

CIVIL LITIGATION: ROEA VS. HOLY TRINITY (2024–2026)

From demand to dismissal

By the beginning of 2024, almost three years had passed since the Sunland controversy first became an acute conflict between Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church in Los Angeles and the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America (ROEA). Nearly two years had also passed since the parish's 2022 decision to enter the Romanian Orthodox Metropolis of the Two Americas. Direct dialogue between the parish and the ROEA Chancellery had largely broken down, while the dispute concerning Father Constantin Alecse continued separately through ROEA's ecclesiastical disciplinary procedures.

In 2024, the controversy acquired an explicit civil and patrimonial dimension. The principal procedural steps were as follows: ROEA's pre-litigation demand of April 1, 2024; Holy Trinity's legal response of April 25; ROEA's verified complaint filed on June 14; the parish's answer filed on November 11; ROEA's motion for summary adjudication on July 3, 2025; the court's ruling of October 27, 2025; mediation in December 2025; and ROEA's voluntary dismissal, filed on December 30–31, 2025, with a Notice of Entry of Dismissal issued on January 2, 2026.

This chapter distinguishes between the parties' allegations and legal theories, which are not judicial findings, and the rulings actually issued by the Superior Court. The central legal result is narrow but important: the specific action brought by ROEA was voluntarily dismissed without prejudice; ROEA did not obtain the early court ruling it sought on jurisdictional validity or title to parish property.

I. ROEA's April 1, 2024 demand for parish assets

On April 1, 2024, ROEA's counsel, Paul E. Gaspari, sent Holy Trinity and Father Constantin an official demand for transfer of the parish's patrimony to the Episcopate. ROEA's position was that Holy Trinity's separation from its jurisdiction in 2022 activated provisions that required parish assets to be turned over to ROEA.

The demand addressed the Verdugo Road real estate, parish accounting and bank records from August 2022 onward, an inventory of movable property, and information concerning assets or funds transferred after the separation. In substance, ROEA claimed an interest in the institutional and material resources of Holy Trinity.

The letter was a pre-litigation legal demand, not a court order. It asserted ROEA's interpretation of the governing documents and property relationship; it did not establish a right of ownership or create a judicial obligation to transfer assets.

II. Holy Trinity's April 25 response

On April 25, 2024, Attorney Matthew Oster of Wolf, Rifkin, Shapiro, Schulman & Rabkin LLP responded for Holy Trinity. The parish did not agree to transfer its patrimony. Instead, counsel challenged the factual and legal basis of the ROEA claim and requested the documents on which ROEA relied.

The response questioned whether ROEA could produce evidence that Holy Trinity had been subject to ROEA authority from 1940 onward. It also challenged reliance on the statutes of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) as a basis for a property claim, stating that the parish had no record of adopting those statutes or of being legally bound by them.

Counsel requested production of the relevant OCA materials and evidence establishing their alleged applicability, expressly reserving all rights. This exchange marked the beginning of the civil dispute in practical terms. The parties had moved beyond disagreement about ecclesiastical membership and were now asserting conflicting positions about property, corporate governance, and the legal effects of the parish's change of jurisdiction.

III. The verified complaint filed on June 14, 2024

On June 14, 2024, ROEA filed a Verified Complaint in the Superior Court of California, County of Los Angeles, Case No. 24STCV14954. The action sought declaratory relief, quiet title, an accounting, and a constructive trust. The filing brought the dispute into a civil court forum.

ROEA challenged the legal effect of Holy Trinity's 2022 separation and maintained that parish assets were held for the benefit of the Diocese. Its eight causes of action sought remedies involving the Verdugo Road real estate, funds and accounts, personal property, parish records, and the administration of the parish's patrimony.

The complaint was a statement of ROEA's claims, not a determination of their validity. That distinction is essential. The court had not yet found that ROEA owned parish property, that Holy Trinity's jurisdictional change was invalid, or that the assets were impressed with a trust. The complaint simply initiated litigation in which those issues would be contested.

IV. Holy Trinity's answer and its nineteen affirmative defenses

On November 11, 2024, Holy Trinity filed its Answer to the Verified Complaint through counsel. The parish admitted certain historical and corporate matters that were not disputed but denied that ROEA retained jurisdictional authority over it or possessed rights to its property.

Holy Trinity relied on the 2022 parish decisions, the subsequent affiliation with the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas, and the position that property claims should be evaluated under neutral principles of civil law. It contested each of ROEA's eight causes of action and asserted nineteen affirmative defenses.

The prayer for relief requested that ROEA take nothing by its complaint, that Holy Trinity recover

its costs, and that the court grant such other legal or equitable relief as might be appropriate. The defense thus framed the case as a property and corporate dispute to be decided by documents, deeds, statutes, bylaws, and California law—not by the court resolving theological doctrine or church discipline.



V. ROEA's motion for summary adjudication

On July 3, 2025, ROEA filed a Motion for Summary Adjudication. It sought an early ruling without a full trial on the first two causes of action: declaratory relief and quiet title. ROEA argued that there was no genuine dispute of material fact and that it was entitled to judgment as a matter of law.

ROEA's theory was that Holy Trinity was part of a hierarchical church structure and remained subject to the ROEA Constitution and Bylaws and to OCA rules. On this reasoning, the parish's 2022 vote to disassociate and to affiliate with the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas could not have legal effect because it allegedly violated governing ecclesiastical rules. ROEA also relied on the decision of its Episcopal Council dated November 17, 2022 and on its 2024 demand letter.

ROEA argued that civil courts should defer to the competent ecclesiastical authority on matters of doctrine, discipline, government, and jurisdiction. It cited *Serbian Orthodox Diocese v. Milivojevic* and related California authorities to support the proposition that a civil court could not independently reconsider a hierarchical church's determination.

For the Verdugo Road properties, ROEA sought quiet title and transfer of the parish's legal interest. Although title deeds were in the name of Holy Trinity, ROEA argued that the property was subject to a trust in favor of the higher church structure. It relied upon its reading of OCA materials, the

ROEA Constitution and Bylaws, and restrictions on the alienation of church property.

The motion advanced two alternative legal paths. Under the first—the principle of hierarchical government—ROEA maintained that an ecclesiastical decision controlling the dispute should be respected by the court. Under the second—neutral principles of law—it argued that deeds, corporate documents, church rules, and California law established a trust in ROEA’s favor. These were litigating positions advanced by ROEA, not conclusions adopted by the court.

VI. Holy Trinity’s opposition

Holy Trinity opposed the motion and argued that the dispute was one of property and corporate rights capable of analysis under neutral principles of law. The parish relied on title records for the campus at 3301 and 3313 Verdugo Road, acquired during the 1950s and 1960s. It cited a February 16, 2007 grant deed recording the property in the name of the California religious corporation and a February 26, 2024 corporation grant deed reflecting the parish’s change of name to Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church without any change of legal title.

The parish also relied on Article IX, section 4(a) of the ROEA Bylaws, which states that each parish “shall own and control its personal and real property.” It cited related provisions concerning Parish Council management and Parish Assembly decisions involving the purchase, sale, lease, mortgage, or encumbrance of property. Holy Trinity argued that the controlling documents contained no express trust clause in favor of ROEA.

The defense further relied on the 1970 agreement between ROEA and OCA, arguing that ROEA remained a distinct administrative unit governed by its own Constitution and Bylaws even while under OCA’s canonical jurisdiction. Holy Trinity maintained that the agreement did not grant OCA an interest in the property of ROEA parishes and institutions, and that Holy Trinity’s own articles of incorporation contained no administrative subordination to OCA or its bylaws.

On declaratory relief, Holy Trinity presented a legal alternative. If the controversy could be determined using neutral principles, it argued that ROEA had not eliminated material factual disputes. If, however, validity of the jurisdictional change depended upon doctrine or ecclesiastical law, then the civil court lacked authority to adjudicate it. On either analysis, the parish contended that summary adjudication should be denied.





VII. The court's October 27, 2025 ruling

Following a hearing on October 17, 2025, Judge Maurice A. Leiter of Department 54 issued a Minute Order/Ruling on Submitted Matter on October 27, 2025. The result was direct: “Plaintiff’s Motion for Summary Adjudication is denied.”

With respect to declaratory relief, ROEA had asked the court to declare that Holy Trinity’s attempt to disassociate violated OCA and ROEA governing documents and was therefore invalid. The court declined the premise that an internal ecclesiastical determination could be converted into the civil judgment ROEA sought. The court stated that it could neither affirm nor disturb an ecclesiastical decision. ROEA therefore had not established entitlement to judgment as a matter of law on that cause of action.

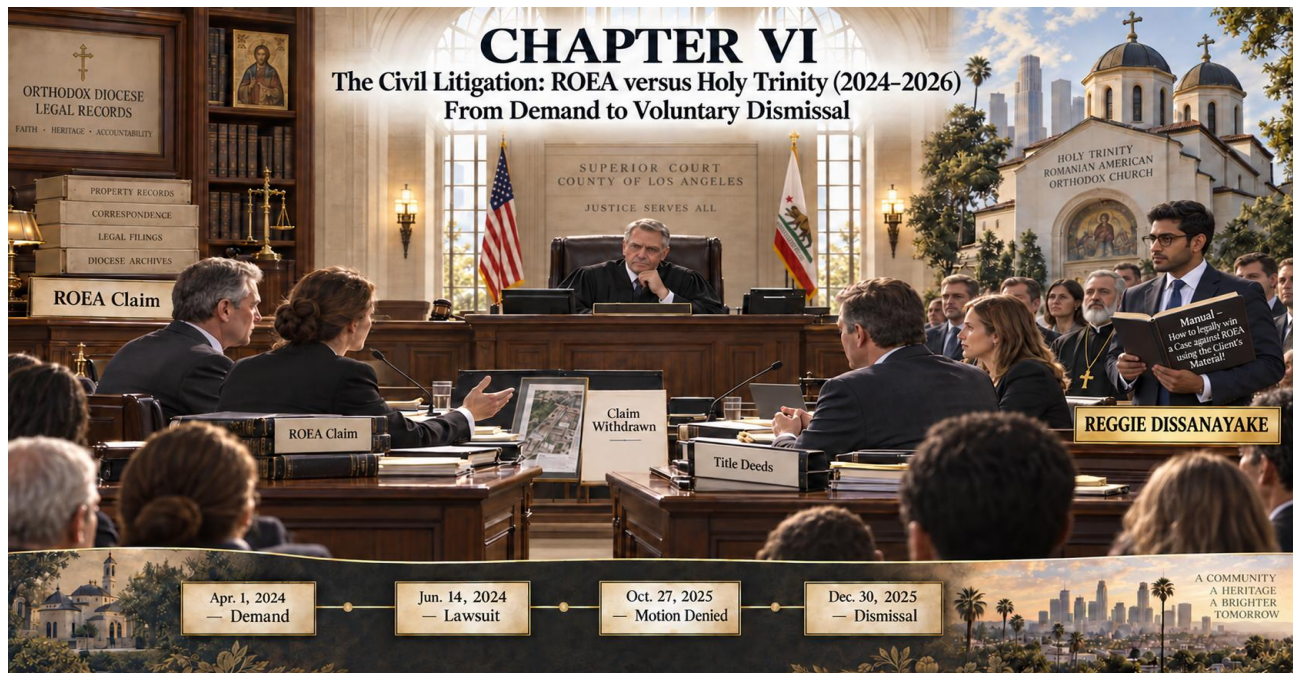
The court did not affirm the validity of Holy Trinity’s disassociation. Nor did it invalidate the disassociation as ROEA requested. The ruling was procedural: it denied ROEA’s requested early determination. With respect to quiet title, the court rejected ROEA’s request to establish ownership through a claimed trust. It held that the property dispute could be examined under neutral principles of law by considering deeds, corporate and administrative documents, and relevant secular law.

The court considered significant the ROEA Bylaws language stating that each parish “shall own and control its personal and real property.” The evidence also presented distinctions between canonical and administrative jurisdiction: Holy Trinity was described as canonically and administratively under ROEA; ROEA as canonically, but not administratively, under OCA; and the relevant constituent and administrative documents as lacking an express trust clause. On that record, the court found at least a triable issue of fact regarding the property. That was sufficient to defeat summary adjudication.

The legal limits of the ruling should be stated precisely. It was not a final quiet-title judgment in Holy Trinity's favor, and it did not finally determine the validity of the parish's jurisdictional change. It established that ROEA had failed to show, at the summary-adjudication stage, that it was entitled to the requested remedies as a matter of law.

VIII. Notice of Entry of Voluntary Dismissal

On December 30, 2025, ROEA, through counsel Paul E. Gaspari and Audrey A. Millemann, filed a Request for Dismissal of the entire action and all causes of action without prejudice. On January 2, 2026, the court issued a Notice of Entry of Dismissal and Proof of Service confirming the filing. Dismissal without prejudice has a defined procedural meaning. It ends the particular case without a final judgment on the merits and does not necessarily preclude a later action within the limits of applicable law. It does mean that the complaint filed on June 14, 2024 was closed and that ROEA did not obtain, in that litigation, the declaration, quiet-title ruling, accounting, or constructive trust it had sought.



IX. Behind the Scenes of ROEA - An Unpaid Loan and the St. Andrew's House Case

The author of this book believes that the ROEA's Request for Voluntary Dismissal of the entire action and all causes of action without prejudice, filed on December 30, 2025, was also influenced by the highly complex and urgent issue of the unpaid loan to the church and the St. Andrew's House case. This specific matter, which centers on an outstanding debt and the overall situation of the St. Andrew's Center, was formally brought to the ROEA's attention during a meeting Fr Constantin Alecse had with Fr. Remus Grama on August 28, 2022. Therefore, at this juncture, introducing

further clarifying facts regarding this dispute is vital. To fill this gap, this subchapter details the chronological progression of the finances, the parish loan, and the fundraising campaigns tied to St. Andrew's House – Center for Orthodox Christian Studies (Detroit, Michigan), a non-profit organization overseen by Archbishop Nathaniel Popp as its president and founder.

According to the documents presented, the center's operations apparently constituted a deceptive financial scheme designed to misrepresent facts and harvest funds from Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America (ROEA) parishes, missions, and individual donors. The evidences lead to suspicions of double-funding and financial misconduct: while St. Andrew's House has being formally sold to its own resident monastery (Holy Ascension Monastery) for \$1,000,000 USD—an institution that was already the beneficial recipient of a \$1,000,000 USD donation from Dr. Michael Ronett—Archbishop Nathaniel authorized a parallel public donation drive. This drive was intended to extract even more money from the faithful under the guise of buying the property, while the \$50,000 USD mature loan owed to Holy Trinity Church was entirely bypassed.

Complete Chronological Timeline of Events

* December 19, 1999: The Parish Council of Holy Trinity Romanian Orthodox Church in Los Angeles, California, approves an interest-free \$50,000.00 USD loan to the "Center for Orthodox Christian Studies" (St. Andrew House, Detroit, MI) for one year. The loan is subsequently ratified by the Parish Assembly.

* December 28, 1999: The Parish sends the formal commitment letter and a Cashier's Check for the full \$50,000.00 USD. "Combined with \$25,000.00 in private donations, according to Archbishop +Nathaniel's letter, this loan serves as the downpayment for the Center to purchase the building from the Roman Catholic Fathers". Appraised at \$8.5 million, the building was acquired for a discounted price of \$375,000.00 with interest-free annual installments of \$75,000.00, according to that same document.

* January 11, 2001: Archbishop Nathaniel writes an official letter to V. Rev. Fr. Constantin Alecse and the Parish Council requesting the first loan extension. He blames "legal entanglements" for temporarily freezing substantial financial support promised to the Center.

* February 2001: Holy Ascension Monastery is established inside the St. Andrew's House building with the blessing of Archbishop Nathaniel. Archimandrite Irineu (Duvlea) and nine monks move into the building as caretakers to offset cash outflows.

* January 22, 2002: Archbishop Nathaniel formally requests a second loan extension. He notes that the promised support is only coming in increments and that a third \$75,000.00 payment to the Catholic Fathers is due in April 2002. He highlights that St. Raphael Parish (also housed in the building) has contributed over \$50,000.

* 2002 – 2003: The Archbishop secures consecutive annual extensions (covering 2002 and 2003) to stall the repayment to Holy Trinity Church.

* February 8, 2004: The General Assembly of Holy Trinity Church in Los Angeles formally votes

that the loan has reached absolute maturity and must be collected.

* June 11, 2004: Holy Trinity Church issues a formal invoice (Invoice No. 101/06112004) sent directly to the ROEA headquarters in Jackson, Michigan, demanding the \$50,000.00 USD repayment on or before December 31, 2004. Following this maturity deadline, the Archbishop and the Center stop requesting official extensions.

* Year 2005 (The Dual Transactions & Abbot Michael's Appeal):

* The Board of Directors of St. Andrew's House formally agrees to sell the building and the entire property to its own resident monastery (Holy Ascension Monastery) for the inflated price of \$1,000,000.00 USD. The deal is set up in installments from 2005 to 2010, with an immediate upfront downpayment of \$300,000.00 USD being received.

* Crucially, the monastery was already the beneficial recipient of a \$1,000,000 USD historic donation from Dr. Michael Ronett.

* Despite this massive influx of cash, a parallel fundraising drive is launched. In direct coordination with and under the blessing of Archbishop Nathaniel, the new abbot of the monastery, Archimandrite Dr. Mihail Filimon, issues a written circular appeal (marked "Apr. 2005") addressed directly to Fr. Constantin Alecse and others.

* Claiming a "unique opportunity to purchase the property," Abbot Michael appeals to all Romanians in the United States and Canada to send tax-deductible financial donations to buy the building.

* Point of Suspicion: This campaign solicited public donations for a property that the Center had initially bought for only \$375,000, and for which the monastery already held Dr. Ronett's funds. Despite handling hundreds of thousands of dollars in cash fluidly across these overlapping entities in 2005, the \$50,000 due to Holy Trinity Parish was completely bypassed and withheld.

* 2005 – 2022: A 17-year period of total silence ensues. The debt is left defaulted and unaddressed for nearly two decades.

* September 5, 2022 (at 1:22 PM): Facing sustained legal pressure and formal demands from the parish and Father Constantin Alecse, Archbishop Nathaniel sends a clarifying email response, explicitly stating that he checked with the former Board of Directors of St. Andrew's House, who unambiguously admitted that the loan was never paid back.

* However, attempting a legal maneuver to shield the episcopate, the Archbishop asserts that the loan was made to the Center, which he claims is "not associated per se with the ROEA," signaling a refusal to settle the debt either using funds from St. Andrew's House or ROEA's central funds, the archbishop being the Chairman of both organizations.



Conclusion

The legal path of Case No. 24STCV14954 is documented and clear. ROEA began with an April 1, 2024 demand for Holy Trinity's patrimony. Holy Trinity disputed the legal and documentary basis of the demand. ROEA then filed suit, seeking declaratory relief, quiet title, accounting, and a constructive trust. Holy Trinity answered, raised nineteen affirmative defenses, and urged application of neutral principles of law.

ROEA's 2025 attempt to obtain early resolution of the central questions failed. On October 27, 2025, the court denied its Motion for Summary Adjudication, declined to convert an ecclesiastical determination into the requested civil judgment, and found that the property dispute could be assessed under neutral principles of law, with at least a triable issue of fact.

After mediation in December 2025, ROEA voluntarily dismissed the entire action without prejudice. The Notice of Entry was issued January 2, 2026. The accurate conclusion is therefore twofold: the specific lawsuit was closed without an adverse judgment against Holy Trinity, and the dismissal did not itself constitute a final merits decision resolving every historical, canonical, or property question between the parties.

This chapter is a legal-documentary account. It preserves the difference between allegations, legal theories, and evidence offered by litigants on the one hand, and actual court rulings on the other. That precision strengthens the historical record and allows the reader to understand both the practical significance and the legal limits of the case's conclusion.



CHAPTER VII

THE JURISDICTIONAL CONFLICT BETWEEN ROEA AND FATHER CONSTANTIN ALECSE

Scope and method - A documented juridical-canonical chronology, 2022–2026

This chapter reconstructs the 2022–2026 jurisdictional dispute involving the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America (ROEA), Archpriest Constantin Alecse, and Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church in Los Angeles. It follows the parish’s deliberations, Father Constantin’s request for reception into the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas, the ROEA suspension notice, the Consistory summonses issued in 2023, the four charges asserted by ROEA, and the defense’s legal and canonical objections.

The purpose is documentary. It distinguishes verifiable acts—letters, petitions, minutes, notices, and summonses—from the competing interpretations placed upon them. ROEA’s allegations are described as allegations; the defense’s arguments are described as arguments. Neither position is presented as a final judgment by a civil court or an independent ecclesiastical authority. The question running through the chapter is whether ROEA retained disciplinary jurisdiction over Father Constantin after his retirement and subsequent reception into another Romanian Orthodox jurisdiction.

I. The beginnings of the jurisdictional break

The August 2022 parish process

In the summer of 2022, tensions between Holy Trinity and the ROEA Chancellery reached a critical point. On July 27, ROEA called a Special Parish Assembly for August 28, to be chaired by Father Remus Grama. In the meantime, at its August 14 meeting, the Parish Council considered the proposed agenda and the lack of a settlement on the matters that had arisen from the Sunland dispute. The Council placed, under “Proposals and Discussions,” the possibility of disassociating the parish from ROEA.

The Council’s resolution was intended for presentation and consideration at the August 28 Assembly. Parish representatives asked that the minutes of the August 14 Council meeting, including the resolution, be placed first on the Assembly agenda in accordance with their understanding of ordinary parish procedure. According to the parish documents, Archbishop +Nathaniel directed his delegate to cancel the Assembly if the Council insisted on including that item. The Assembly was not held, and the Council continued the parish’s internal administration while consulting legal counsel.

The importance of this episode lies in procedure rather than rhetoric. The parish concluded that it could not reliably place before its members a question about its jurisdictional future through an agenda controlled by the authority from which it might seek separation. This conclusion shaped the later decision to use a separate, expressly convened parish process.

Retirement and the separate petitions of September 30

In his personal petition for reception under Metropolitan Nicolae, Father Constantin stated that his position as parish priest within ROEA ended on September 15, 2022. From that date, he maintained, a new contractual relationship existed between him and Holy Trinity Parish. This was his factual and legal position; ROEA disputed its canonical consequences.

On September 30, two distinct petitions were submitted to the Metropolia. Father Constantin submitted a personal request for reception as a cleric. Holy Trinity, through its own governing bodies, submitted a separate request for reception of the parish community. The distinction is fundamental. The priest and parish corporation were related pastorally but were not identical canonical or legal persons, and the petitions addressed different forms of membership.

The October 30 parish vote and the November suspension notice

On October 30, 2022, the Holy Trinity General Assembly unanimously voted to leave ROEA and seek reception into the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas. The parish's action followed Father Constantin's September 30 personal petition and was a separate community act.

ROEA later communicated a suspension notice dated November 4, 2022. Father Constantin received it electronically on November 9, followed by mail. The defense questioned the timing and effect of the suspension because it was communicated after the retirement date and after Father Constantin's petition for reception. The difference between the date printed on the letter and the date of email delivery raised questions for the defense; absent conclusive evidence, any assertion that the letter was backdated remains an inference rather than an established fact.

The suspension letter asserted that Father Constantin was immediately suspended from priestly, sacramental, and administrative functions pending disposition by appropriate ecclesiastical authorities. It referred, among other matters, to an alleged "Declaration and Act of Loyalty." The defense contested the existence, production, and legal relevance of that document.

Request for release and legal correspondence

On November 6, 2022, Father Constantin requested Canonical Release from ROEA. When the suspension notice was received, Attorney Anthony C. Grossman wrote to Archbishop +Nathaniel, challenging what his client regarded as abusive measures and disputing ROEA's continued authority over a retired cleric who had sought reception elsewhere.

These communications marked the transition from an internal disagreement to a formal legal and canonical contest. ROEA maintained that it retained authority. Father Constantin and his representatives maintained that the relevant relationship had already ended and that his reception into the Metropolia was the proper canonical path.

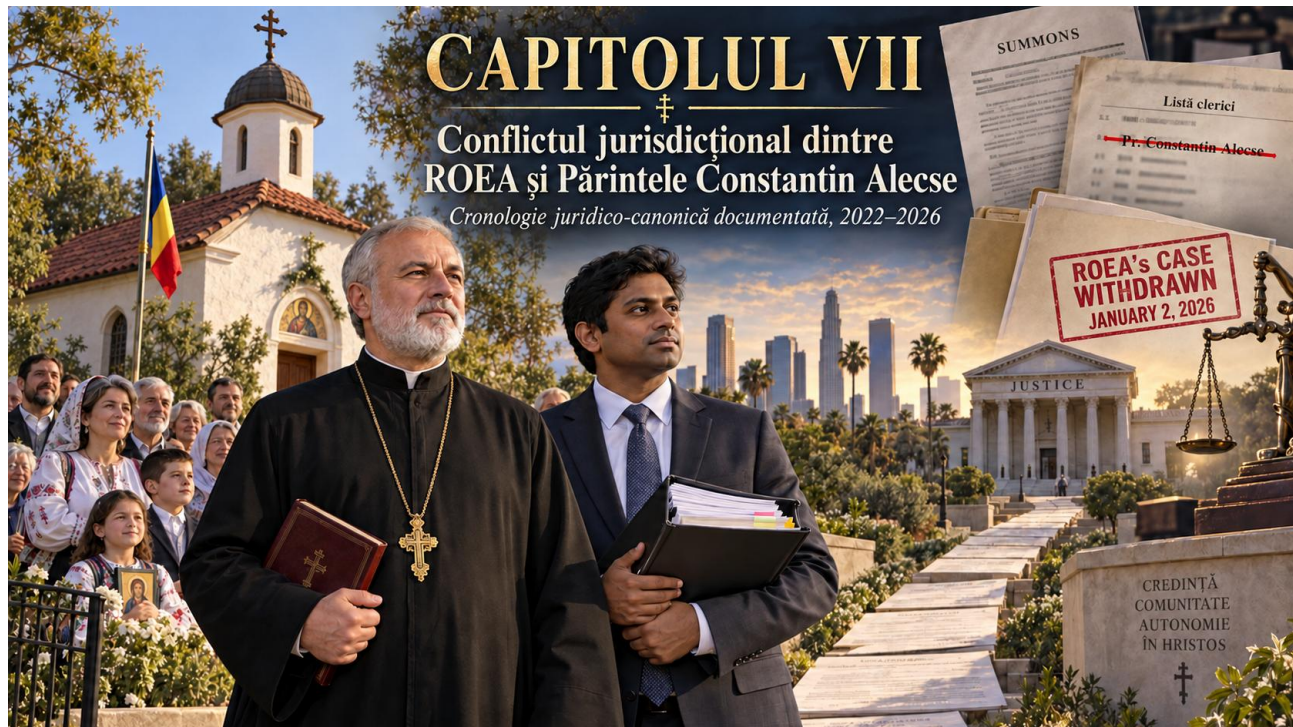
Reception into the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas

On November 11, 2022, the Metropolitan Council considered separately the petitions of Father

Constantin and Holy Trinity Parish. The official letters of November 21 state that, after examining the documentation and hearing explanations from Father Constantin and the parish representative, the Council approved both requests. On the same date, Metropolitan Nicolae sent the Antimension of the Metropolia to Holy Trinity.

On January 11, 2023, Metropolitan Nicolae requested from Archbishop +Nathaniel the Canonical Release of Father Constantin, who had already been received under the omophorion of the Metropolia. No response to that request is reported in the materials referenced here.

By early 2023, two incompatible legal-canonical positions had emerged. ROEA held that suspension and disciplinary proceedings remained effective because it retained jurisdiction. Father Constantin, Holy Trinity, and their counsel maintained that retirement effective September 15, his petition of September 30, and the November 11 reception barred any subsequent ROEA disciplinary competence. The material facts of the chronology are documented; their legal and canonical consequences were disputed.



II. The ROEA Consistory proceedings in 2023

The first summons and the defense's initial objection

On January 24, 2023, Father Constantin received the first ROEA summons to appear before the Spiritual Consistory concerning asserted canonical complaints. The defense immediately raised lack of jurisdiction as a threshold objection. Its reasoning was chronological: retirement had ended the ROEA relationship, and official reception into the Metropolia had placed Father Constantin under another hierarchy.

On February 3, Attorney Matthew Oster of Wolf, Rifkin, Shapiro, Schulman & Rabkin LLP wrote to the ROEA Chancellery for Father Constantin and the parish. The letter demanded cessation of what the clients considered harassing and intimidating measures. Further correspondence in February repeated the defense's position concerning the unproduced "Declaration and Act of Loyalty" and the Consistory's asserted lack of jurisdiction.

The defense advised Father Constantin not to appear. It did not portray nonappearance as mere procedural defiance; it was an express and reasoned rejection of the Consistory's authority. The author's criticism of the Consistory's impartiality and reference to earlier proceedings involving Bishop Irineu and Father Gheorghe Cârstea represent the defense's perspective and should be understood as such, not as an independent ruling on those bodies or cases.

The second summons and the four charges

On July 17, 2023, Father Ioan Bogdan, secretary of the Spiritual Consistory, sent a new summons requiring Father Constantin to appear at Vatra Românească in Jackson, Michigan, on August 17. The notice stated that complaints and evidence had been reviewed, that an investigation had been conducted, and that the matter had been sent for trial. It warned that proceedings could continue in the absence of the person summoned.

ROEA identified four accusations:

- bad-faith administration of Holy Trinity property;
- insubordination and conspiracy against Archbishop +Nathaniel;
- unlawful transfer to another diocese; and
- performance of religious services during the period in which ROEA considered Father Constantin suspended.

These accusations are recorded as ROEA's allegations. Their repetition did not resolve the jurisdictional objection raised by the defense.

The August objection and the defense on the merits

Before the August 17 date, Attorney Oster sent a formal objection to Archbishop +Nathaniel. The letter again rejected ROEA jurisdiction and asked that statements and measures viewed by the defense as defamatory or harassing cease. The defense also addressed the allegations in the alternative.

On jurisdiction, it relied on the September 15, 2022 retirement, the personal request for reception, Father Constantin's nonacceptance of a proposed temporary role, and his reception under Metropolitan Nicolae, therefore ROEA could no longer exercise disciplinary authority.

On the material scope of the Consistory, the defense invoked Article XV, section 6 of the ROEA Statute, arguing that the Consistory's competence concerned dogmatic and canonical questions. It contended that property management, asserted conspiracy, and institutional matters related to a

jurisdictional transfer were not automatically spiritual offenses within that competence.

On property administration, the defense cited Article IX, section 6, assigning management to the Parish Council, and section 12, concerning Parish Assembly authority over the purchase, sale, lease, mortgage, or encumbrance of property. It argued that collective patrimonial decisions could not be charged solely to the parish priest.

On insubordination and conspiracy, the defense requested specific identification of the acts, persons, evidence, and canonical or statutory provisions supposedly violated. It questioned whether the allegation was, in substance, a reaction to the parish's decision to leave ROEA and its reception into the Metropolis.

On the asserted unlawful transfer, the defense characterized the matter as an inter-jurisdictional issue. Father Constantin had requested Reception into ROMA and Canonical Release from ROEA. Reception was approved on November 11. In the defense's view, any unresolved canonical documentation should have been addressed by dialogue between the relevant jurisdictions, rather than by discipline of the cleric requesting transfer.

On the charge of serving while suspended, the defense referred to ROEA's proposed *pro tempore* appointment after September 15 and to Father Constantin's service under Metropolitan Nicolae after reception. It argued that the description of his ministry as simply unauthorized did not reflect the full chronology. These were defenses offered in the alternative and did not waive the central jurisdictional objection.

Appeals to the OCA and the third summons

Because ROEA continued the proceedings, the defense wrote to the Orthodox Church in America, the church body with which ROEA was affiliated, seeking clarification and intervention. Metropolitan Nicolae was also informed that Father Constantin had been received, that Holy Trinity had received the Antimension, and that Canonical Release had been requested from Archbishop +Nathaniel.

On August 16, 2023, the defense sent a Complaint to the OCA concerning the ROEA Consistory procedure. The complaint was not itself a resolution by the OCA; it documented that the dispute had been formally raised at a higher institutional level.

On August 17, Father Constantin received a third summons for a September 8 proceeding in Washington State, again repeating the four accusations. He instructed Attorney s Matthew Oster and Anthony Grossman to pursue the matter with the OCA Chancellery. On September 1, Attorney Oster sent Metropolitan Tikhon a further letter, titled "Further Complaint of Harassment of Father Constantin Alecse by the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America," with extensive supporting material. The letter repeated the request for an official OCA position and intervention and stated that Father Constantin was already under Metropolitan Nicolae's omophorion. No reply from either OCA or ROEA is reported in the materials reviewed.

III. Documented facts and interpretive limits

The following core acts are documented in the materials underlying this chapter:

- the distinct petitions of Father Constantin and Holy Trinity for reception into the Metropolia;
- the October 30, 2022 parish vote to leave ROEA;
- the ROEA suspension letter dated November 4 and received electronically in November;
- Father Constantin's request for Canonical Release and the accompanying legal correspondence;
- Metropolitan Council approval on November 11 and acceptance letters of November 21;
- the ROEA Consistory summonses issued in January, July/August, and August/September 2023;
- the four ROEA allegations; and
- the defense's repeated jurisdictional objections and appeals to OCA.

The records establish that these documents and communications existed. They do not, by their mere existence, adjudicate the canonical status asserted by either side. They show an unresolved clash between ROEA's claim of continuing disciplinary authority and Father Constantin's claim that retirement and reception into a different jurisdiction ended that authority.

Conclusion

The governing issue in 2023 was jurisdictional competence. ROEA continued the disciplinary process and summoned Father Constantin before the Spiritual Consistory. Father Constantin, Holy Trinity, and their counsel denied that ROEA retained authority after retirement and reception into the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas.

The defense strategy was not confined to contesting the substance of the four allegations. It first and repeatedly contested the Consistory's power to investigate or judge Father Constantin. In the alternative, it provided statutory, administrative, and canonical responses to each charge.

By the end of 2023, the jurisdictional division remained unresolved. ROEA continued to assert competence; Father Constantin and his representatives refused to recognize it. During this period, Father Constantin continued to serve Christ and the faithful of Holy Trinity in Los Angeles, the community he had shepherded for decades.

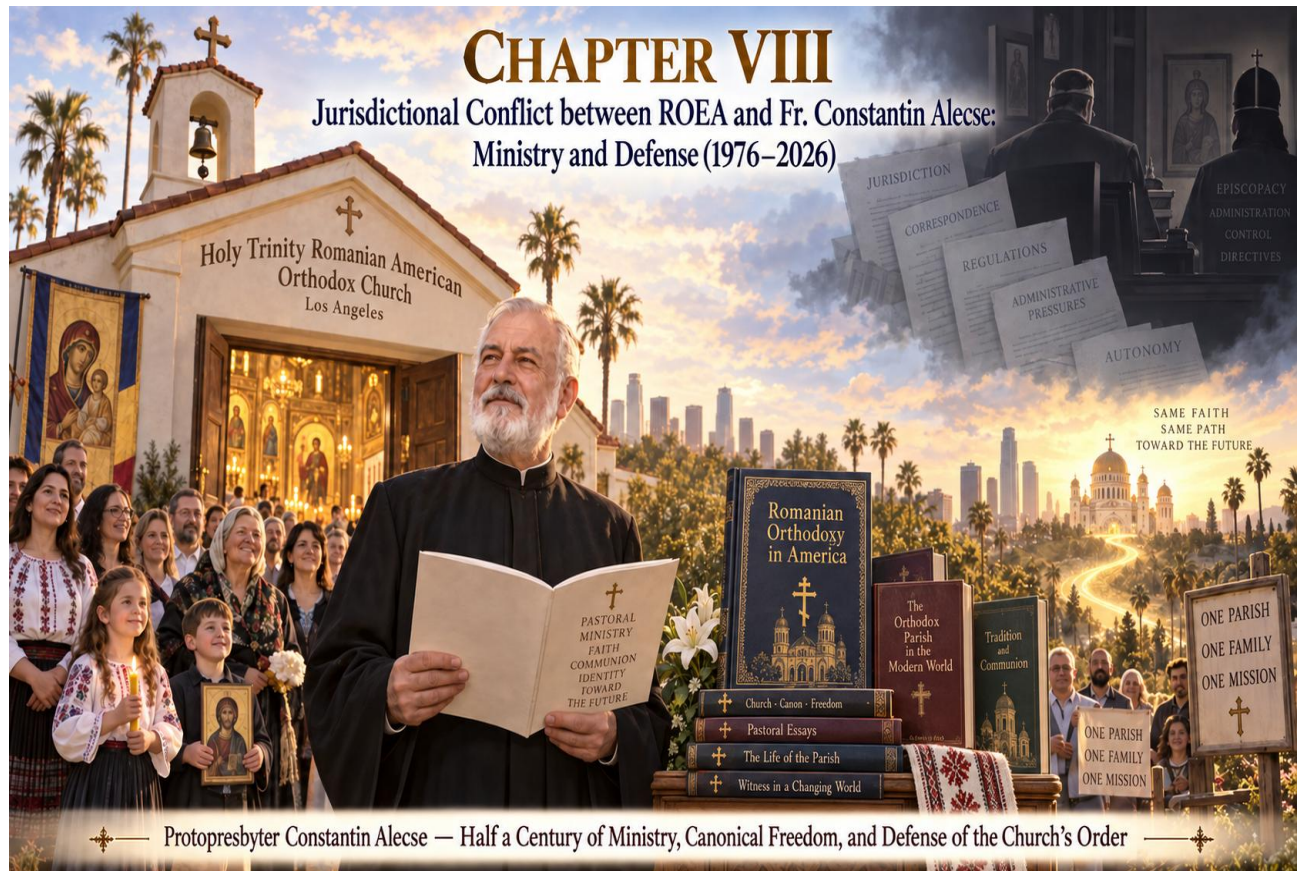


CHAPTER VIII

ARCHPRIEST CONSTANTIN ALECSE: FIFTY YEARS OF SERVICE, CANONICAL CONTINUITY, AND THE DEFENSE OF CHURCH ORDER 1976–2026

A priestly life from London to America

The life of Archpriest Constantin Alecse is a record of nearly five decades of priestly ministry devoted to the Orthodox Church and to Romanian communities in the diaspora. He was ordained deacon in London on November 29, 1976, and priest on December 25, 1976. His early ministry was at Saint George Romanian Orthodox Church in London, where he served from 1976 to 1980. He then served Saint Mary Church in Saint Paul, Minnesota, from 1980 to 1982.



In September 1982, Archbishop Valerian of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America appointed Father Constantin parish priest of Holy Trinity in Los Angeles. The appointment began a ministry in California that would endure for more than four decades. During those years, Holy Trinity developed not only as a worshipping community but also as a center of Romanian Orthodox pastoral, cultural, and community life.

For approximately thirty years, Father Constantin also served as Dean of the ROEA Pacific Coast Deanery. This work placed him in close contact with the clergy, parishes, missions, and pastoral challenges of Romanian Orthodoxy in the western United States. In December 2026, he marks fifty years of priestly service. His ministry has been accompanied by ecclesiastical recognition at various stages. Among the earlier distinctions are Holy Crosses received during the patriarchates of Justinian, Iustin, and Teoctist. These, together with later awards, form part of the documentary record of a life dedicated to pastoral service.

The ideal of unity after 1989

The fall of communism in Romania in 1989 opened a new possibility for relations between Romanian Orthodox Christians in North America and the Romanian Orthodox Church. Father Constantin became actively involved in promoting reunion and closer relations among the Romanian ecclesiastical structures in America.

In 1994, he participated in Archbishop +Nathaniel's delegation to Romania. The visit included pilgrimage, meetings, and informal discussions with Romanian hierarchs. His participation is important because it places his concern for Romanian Orthodox unity well before the jurisdictional conflict of 2022. In his own understanding, reunion with the Mother Church was not a late political response to conflict but a consistent pastoral and ecclesial conviction formed after 1989.

This background helps explain why the formation of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas and the later reception of Holy Trinity into that Metropolia had such significance for him. The events of 2022 were connected, in his view, to a long-standing desire for unity rather than to a merely immediate disagreement.

Retirement and reception into the Metropolia in 2022

In 2022, after almost forty-six years of priesthood and approximately forty years of service in California, Father Constantin was retired by ROEA effective September 15. For him, retirement marked the end of an administrative and pastoral stage within ROEA. It did not mean abandoning the priesthood, withdrawing from the Church, or surrendering his canonical identity.

Later in 2022, Father Constantin was received under the omophorion of Metropolitan Nicolae within the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas. His position is that he thereby continued his priestly life as a canonical cleric of that jurisdiction. The question is central to all subsequent disagreement: he does not claim to have remained an ROEA cleric after 2022; he claims that his ministry continued in another canonical Romanian Orthodox jurisdiction.

Holy Trinity Parish likewise made its own jurisdictional decision in 2022. The parish vote and its application for reception were separate from Father Constantin's personal request. He regards the parish's choice as a decision of the community, not as a basis for punitive action against the priest who had served it. The distinct petitions, separate reception letters, and separate legal identities of cleric and parish are important elements of the chronology.

Continued recognition in the Romanian Orthodox Church

After entering the Metropolia, Father Constantin continued to serve and received further distinctions. In 2025, at the eighty-fifth anniversary of Holy Trinity Parish, he was awarded the Metropolitan Order of Saints Constantine and Helen and the Metropolitan Cross. These recognitions were presented as an acknowledgment of his long priestly service and ongoing ministry within the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas.

Also in 2025, during the centenary year of the Romanian Patriarchate, he received the Diploma of the Centenary of the Romanian Patriarchate and the Holy Trinity Centenary Medallion from Patriarch Daniel. In 2026, at the Archdiocesan Congress and in recognition of fifty years of priesthood, Metropolitan Nicolae awarded him the Diploma of Merit.

For Father Constantin, the succession of recognitions—earlier crosses and distinctions, the Metropolitan Order and Cross, the Patriarchal centenary awards, and the 2026 diploma—shows that his priesthood continued to be acknowledged by the Romanian Orthodox authorities under whose omophorion he serves. He considers this recognition a significant answer to descriptions of his status that appear in records of his former jurisdiction.

The disputed status in ROEA records

Father Constantin observes that ROEA records described him as “suspended from all priestly offices” from 2022 through 2025 and as “deposed” in 2026.

He disputes those descriptions and their jurisdictional basis. His position is that, after retirement and reception into the Metropolia, ROEA no longer had authority to exercise discipline over him.

This disagreement is the subject of the jurisdictional conflict described in Chapter VII. ROEA asserted continuing disciplinary authority; Father Constantin, the parish, and their counsel rejected that claim. This chapter does not independently decide the canonical controversy. It records that the descriptions in ROEA materials and the status recognized by the Metropolia stand in direct tension.

Father Constantin also notes that, while some ROEA material described him as deposed, his name continued to appear in an ROEA clergy listing.

In his view, it is internally inconsistent for a former jurisdiction both to characterize a priest as removed and to maintain his name in its roster years after he ceased to serve within that jurisdiction. Whether this inconsistency reflects delayed updating, an administrative practice, or a substantive position would require clarification from ROEA.

He further observes that the ROEA website indicated that his photograph was unavailable despite a long public, pastoral, and administrative presence in the Diocese and the existence of many archival photographs from more than four decades of service.

Father Constantin considers this omission part of a larger problem of how his ministry and contribution are represented. His concern should be understood as a request for a complete and

accurate historical record, not as proof of a particular motive without further evidence.



The canonical book and the request for Canonical Release

The canonical book is a primary document in the history of Father Constantin's ordination and ministry. It was issued by the Romanian Patriarchate in 1976 at the time of his ordination and remained in the Patriarchate's custody until 1980. After completing his London ministry and arriving in the United States to serve Saint Mary Parish in Saint Paul, Father Constantin requested the document in writing from the Romanian Patriarchate.

The canonical book was sent to the United States through Father Dănuț Suciu, who was then in America for studies. Father Constantin confirmed receipt to the Romanian Patriarchate and later personally handed the original document to Archbishop Valerian at Vatra Românească, who had become his hierarch within ROEA. In 1982, Archbishop Valerian transferred him from Minnesota to Holy Trinity in Los Angeles.

This document has both historical and canonical significance. It establishes the origin of Father Constantin's 1976 ordination by a hierarch of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church. It also provides a continuous documentary point from which to trace his movement from London, to ROEA service in Minnesota and California, and later to the Metropolia.

According to Father Constantin's archive, Metropolitan Nicolae formally requested Canonical Release documentation from Archbishop +Nathaniel in January 2023. Father Constantin reports that no clear official response was received indicating whether the document would be released, when it would be released, or the specific canonical and administrative reasons for a refusal.

Father Constantin considers a clear response important both for his personal records and for the

relationship between jurisdictions. The request does not seek to reopen past conflicts. It seeks completion of the documentary chain linking an ordination, a long diaspora ministry, retirement, and reception into a different Romanian Orthodox jurisdiction.

An analogy can be drawn with sacramental records. A baptized person who needs confirmation of baptism may obtain it from the parish or archive where the sacrament was recorded. In the same way, canonical documents make possible the orderly confirmation of a cleric's status and ministerial history. In Father Constantin's view, a request for such documentary clarity should be met with a clear answer—whether favorable or unfavorable—and with reasons that can be examined responsibly.

Conscience, criticism, and the defense of Bishop Irineu

Father Constantin states that his criticism of Archbishop +Nathaniel and certain ROEA decisions did not arise from resentment or personal interest. In his own account, it arose from priestly conscience and from the belief that obedience to a bishop does not require a priest to abandon truth, justice, or moral responsibility when he believes an injustice has occurred.

An important part of this position was his public defense of Bishop Irineu Duvlea. Father Constantin believes that Bishop Irineu's removal from ministry within ROEA/OCA was not the result of an impartial procedure but was shaped by conflicts of authority and jurisdictional interests. This is the author's assessment of a disputed historical matter, not a finding made by this chapter.

Father Constantin's public support included the publication of a preface to Bishop Irineu's biography and documentary material on related websites. He maintains that defending a hierarchy whom he believed to have been treated unjustly, criticizing administrative decisions, and supporting the parish's jurisdictional choice should not themselves erase or invalidate his priestly status. The later conflict, in his view, must be understood against the combined background of his retirement, reception into the Metropolia, Holy Trinity's decision, his criticism of ROEA administration, and his defense of Bishop Irineu.

Two competing descriptions of the same clerical reality

Father Constantin sees two descriptions of his status that cannot easily be reconciled without official clarification. ROEA materials have described him as suspended and later deposed, while the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas recognizes him as a priest serving under Metropolitan Nicolae. The differences do not erase the documented fact of his ordination or the long record of his ministry. They demonstrate an unresolved dispute about jurisdiction, authority, and the canonical effect of transfer.

For Father Constantin, the current reality is the one reflected by the jurisdiction in which he is serving and by the Romanian Orthodox authorities who have received and honored him. The narrative of his ministry is not exhausted by a disputed designation on a former jurisdiction's website. It includes ordination in 1976, service in London and Saint Paul, more than four decades in Los Angeles, roughly thirty years of wider deanery service, and continued recognition within the

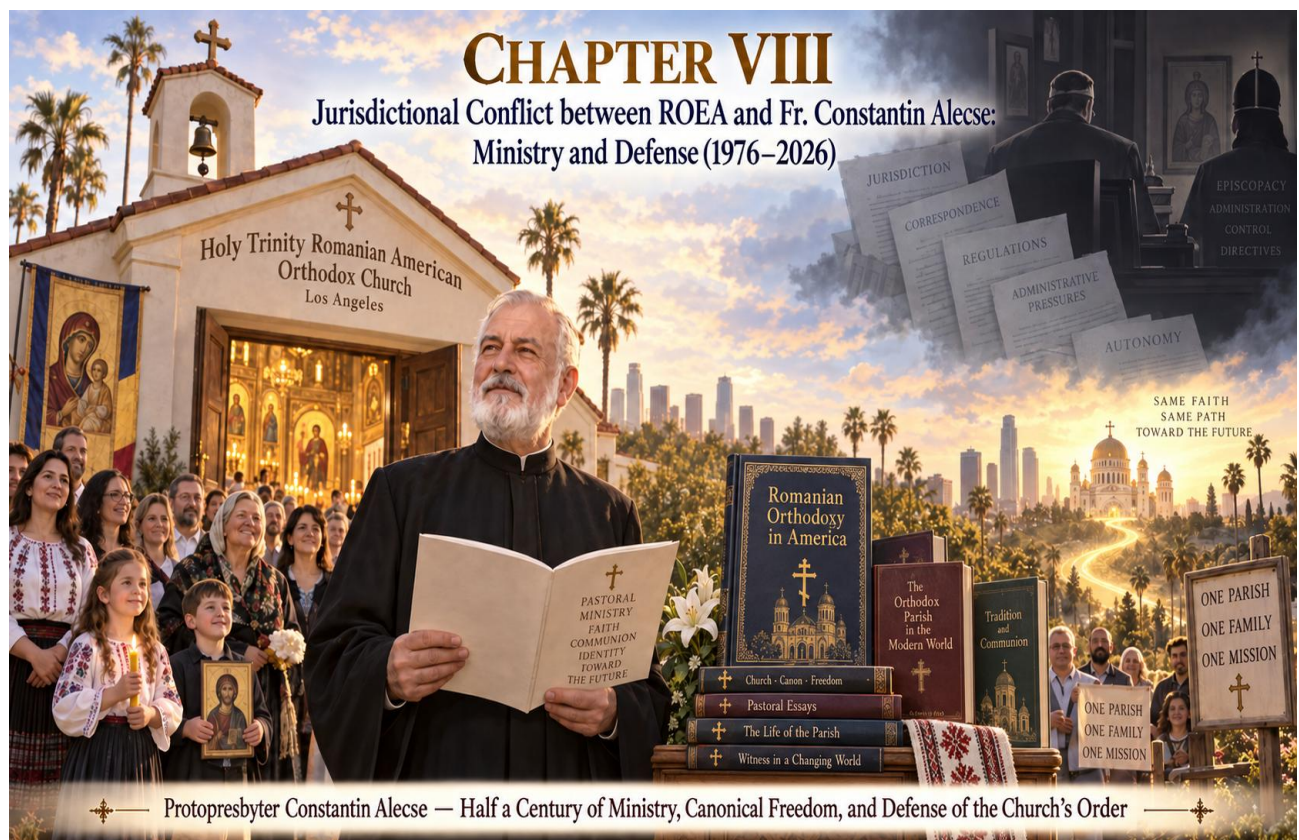
Metropolia and Romanian Orthodox Church.

Conclusion: service and documentary truth

Fifty years of priesthood cannot be reduced to a single controversy. The record includes pastoral work, community building, involvement in Romanian Orthodox unity, decades of service to Holy Trinity and the Pacific Coast Deanery, and the continued ministry acknowledged by the Metropolia of the Two Americas.

The disagreement with ROEA remains a matter of competing ecclesiastical interpretations. Father Constantin's position is that retirement and subsequent reception into the Metropolia ended ROEA's disciplinary authority over him; ROEA took the opposite position. The responsible historical approach is to preserve both the chronology and the distinction between claims and determinations.

Whatever resolution future canonical dialogue may provide, the documentary record of Father Constantin Alecse's ordination, service, and distinctions remains clear. His ministry began in 1976 and continued through the many communities and responsibilities entrusted to him. That continuity, preserved in church documents and the memory of the faithful, is the enduring subject of this chapter.



CHAPTER IX

BISHOP IRINEU DUVLEA: CHRONOLOGY, ECCLESIASTICAL CONTEXT, AND PUBLIC MEMORY, 1962–2026

Introduction and source framework

This chapter follows the principal stages in the life and ministry of Bishop Irineu Duvlea, together with the institutional controversies that marked his North American mission. It draws upon the documentary collections published at episcopirineu.us, bishopirineu.us, and AADC, as well as the linked correspondence, public statements, photographs, recordings, court materials, and editorial summaries.

The sources have an evident point of view: they defend Bishop Irineu's innocence and challenge the fairness of the ROEA/OCA procedures that culminated in the 2017 decision removing him from episcopal rank within the OCA. Terms such as "directed procedure," "contested testimony," or "lack of impartiality" must therefore be read as the claims of Bishop Irineu, his counsel, or his supporters—not as independent verdicts of this chapter.

The institutional chronology must also be recognized. ROEA initiated internal disciplinary proceedings; the matter reached the structures of the Orthodox Church in America; and in June 2017, the OCA Holy Synod directed Bishop Irineu's return to monastic status. The subsequent scope and inter-jurisdictional recognition of that action remain matters of canonical interpretation and public disagreement.

I. Romanian roots and monastic formation, 1962–2000

According to the biographical materials, Irineu Duvlea was born on April 19, 1962, in Alba Iulia. His theological formation took place in Cluj-Napoca and Sibiu before he entered monastic life. The sources emphasize a spiritual profile shaped by liturgical discipline, patristic study, obedience, prayer, and responsibility toward community life.

Brâncoveanu Monastery at Sâmbăta de Sus occupies a central place in this account. There, the future hierarch received monastic formation under clerics whom the cited sources regard as important spiritual guides. His progression through monastic responsibilities—leading eventually to the rank of archimandrite and the service of abbot—is presented as evidence of pastoral and organizational confidence, not simply of administrative advancement.

Father Constantin Alecse's personal testimony connects this Romanian formation to the later American mission. He first met Archimandrite Irineu in the United States in 1991, at the ordination of a colleague. A second encounter occurred in 1994 at Sâmbăta de Sus during a ROEA delegation led by Bishop +Nathaniel. Father Alecse recalls being asked whether Archimandrite Irineu might be suited for mission in America and responding affirmatively on the basis of his theological formation, spiritual life, and character.

These early contacts help explain why the eventual American mission is described not as a chance

event but as a development prepared through personal relationships, a blessing from the Romanian Patriarchate as reported by the sources, and the increasing need for monastic and episcopal presence within the diaspora.

II. Arrival in America and the Ascension Monastery, 2001

The date February 23, 2001 marks the beginning of Archimandrite Irineu's North American mission. According to the published materials, he arrived in the United States with monks from Romania and, with the blessing of Archbishop +Nathaniel, was assigned to found and lead the Ascension Monastery community in Detroit.

The initial center was Saint Andrew House in Detroit, a building described as having been intended for theological studies and diocesan activities. The monastic community gave the space a regular life of services, prayer, hospitality, liturgical formation, and the reception of pilgrims. The sources present this transformation as a significant moment for Romanians in Michigan and the Midwest, who found in the community a place of spiritual support and Romanian Orthodox identity.

The monastery also welcomed believers from other Orthodox traditions—Greek, Serbian, Russian, and American converts. This wider reception is important to the supporters' narrative:

The Holy Ascension Monastery was not regarded only as an ethnic institution, but as a center of pan-Orthodox prayer and hospitality. The first years involved the difficulty of creating a stable monastic community in a new environment. The sources describe Bishop Irineu as combining fidelity to Romanian monastic tradition with pastoral openness to an American setting. Whatever later controversies may have been, the early Detroit years show a period of cooperation between the archimandrite and the leadership of ROEA.

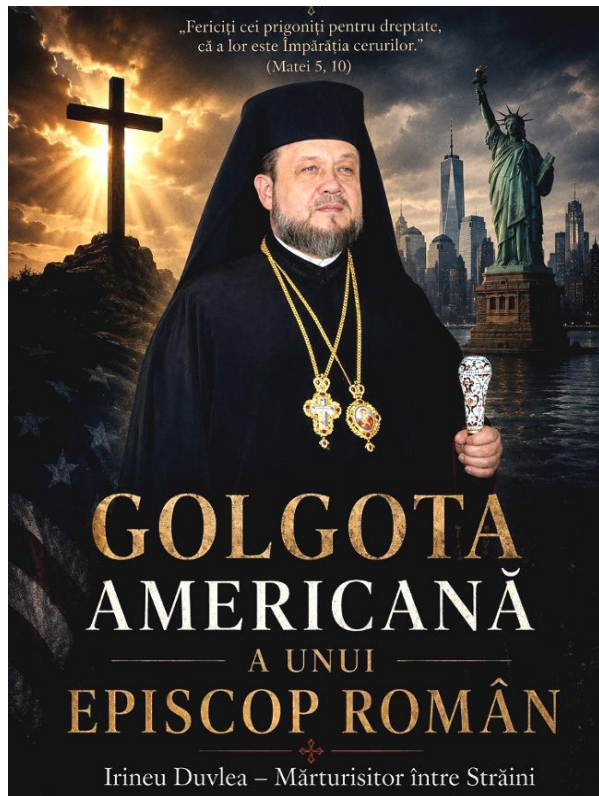
III. Election and ordination as bishop-vicar, 2002

On June 28, 2002, at a special session of the Congress of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate in America, Archimandrite Irineu Duvlea was elected auxiliary bishop, or bishop-vicar, with the title Bishop of Dearborn Heights. The election occurred in the context of growing Romanian Orthodox communities in the United States and Canada and a perceived need for a more active episcopal presence across the Diocese.

On July 24, 2002, the OCA Holy Synod confirmed the election. Episcopal consecration followed on November 2, 2002, at Saint George Cathedral in Southfield, Michigan. The biographical materials describe a large concelebration including Metropolitan Herman, Archbishop +Nathaniel, Archbishop Nicolae of the Romanian jurisdiction connected to the Romanian Patriarchate, and hierarchs of other Orthodox jurisdictions.

The ordination established Irineu as Bishop of Dearborn Heights and bishop-vicar of ROEA. For many Romanian faithful, the event had symbolic importance: a hierarch formed in Romanian monasticism now served within the North American Romanian Orthodox setting. The sources describe the years that followed as a period of intensive pastoral travel, parish visits, support for

missions, and attention to communities separated by great distances.



Bishop +Irineu Duvlea



With HB +Bartholomew, Ecumenical Patriarch

IV. Pastoral and administrative work, 2003–2011

The available chronology describes a broad pastoral ministry between 2003 and 2010. Bishop Irineu participated in dedications, consecrations, services, parish gatherings, and youth events. For a diaspora church spread across a large territory, episcopal visits have practical importance: they strengthen clergy, preserve liturgical continuity, and connect distant local communities to the wider Church.

Supporters emphasize his closeness to young families and new immigrants, his concern for Romanian language and tradition in worship, and his support for emerging parishes. These are favorable assessments, but they help explain the trust and affection he is said to have enjoyed among clergy and faithful.

During this period, Ascension Monastery was also consolidated as a center of worship, hospitality, education, and community life. Individuals close to the community, including Father Sebastian Dumitrașcu, are identified in later accounts as collaborators in its liturgical and administrative work. In the community's memory, these years are associated with construction, cohesion, and pastoral energy.

V. Detroit, Clinton, and property questions, 2005–2014

The later conflict cannot be understood without the institutional history of the monastic properties. The cited materials state that, after Bishop Irineu's election as bishop-vicar, Archimandrite Mihail Filimon became abbot of Ascension Monastery. Steps were then taken to acquire a Detroit building associated with the Center for Orthodox Christian Studies and Saint Andrew House.

The sources refer to a one-million-dollar donation by Dr. Michael Ronett and to an August 25, 2005 purchase agreement involving a building on West Davison Avenue in Detroit. They describe a board structure chaired by Archbishop +Nathaniel and distinct from the ROEA Diocese. The financing was reportedly intended to be paid in installments until 2010, after which the building would become monastery property. These points require careful reading against deeds, corporate records, financing documents, and decisions of the relevant entities. Chronology itself should not be mistaken for a conclusive legal interpretation.

On September 26, 2011, the monastic community reportedly signed an eviction letter for the Detroit property and moved on October 1 to 15141 Sheridan Street in Clinton, Michigan, a property described as donated by Adrian and Mariana Lupu Leca. For Bishop Irineu's supporters, the reLOcAtion was a painful institutional rupture. Clinton nevertheless became the new center of Ascension Monastery and a place from which its liturgical and pastoral life continued. The move also shifted future disputes. After 2014, both Bishop Irineu's ministry and the property controversies that later reached civil court became closely associated with the Clinton community.

VI. From collaboration to institutional conflict, 2014–2017

The materials describe a gradual deterioration in the relationship between Bishop Irineu and Archbishop +Nathaniel after 2014. The initial relationship had been one of episcopal subordination and collaboration within ROEA. Later accounts describe growing disagreement over the exercise of authority, the role and autonomy of the bishop-vicar, diocesan administration, and the centralization of decision-making.

Supporters frequently connect Bishop Irineu's pastoral visibility and popularity with the later conflict. These claims form part of testimony and defense argument; they are not adjudicated facts. The firmly documented chronological point is that the disagreement moved from administrative tension to disciplinary procedure between 2014 and 2017.

ROEA initiated an internal process, and the case was examined through the Diocese's Spiritual Consistory and then by OCA authorities. ROEA's position was that issues of administration and canonical discipline required action. Bishop Irineu and his supporters maintained that the process was oriented from the beginning toward his removal and did not provide the safeguards of impartial adjudication.

VII. The ROEA/OCA procedure and the 2017 decision

The institutional record shows that the procedure concluded with OCA action. On June 27, 2017, the OCA Holy Synod adopted a decision returning Bishop Irineu to monastic status, following the

process originating within ROEA. This decision formally altered his status within OCA and ROEA structures. A responsible account cannot omit it, even when its fairness and broader canonical effect are disputed.

Bishop Irineu and his defenders categorically challenged the procedure. Attorney Daniel P. Dalton, who represented him during the process, asserted in letters and statements that the defense had restricted access to evidence, insufficient time, difficulty presenting defense witnesses, and inadequate opportunity to confront persons making accusations. Additional objections included alleged refusal of recusals, lack of an independent stenographer, and restrictions on defense audio-video recording. These are serious procedural objections made by the defense. They are not, without more, external judicial findings. Their importance is that they explain why Bishop Irineu and those who support him continue to view the result as unjust and predetermined. The contrast between a formal institutional decision and a persistent procedural challenge is at the heart of the public controversy.

The sources also describe Bishop Irineu's response in spiritual terms: a confession of innocence combined with prayer, patience, and appeal to God's judgment rather than a search for public scandal. This testimony belongs to the religious and pastoral register, not to legal proof. It nevertheless explains the tone of the archive created by his supporters.

VIII. Jurisdiction, OCA autocephaly, and contested canonical effect

The dispute has also been interpreted through the legal-canonical history of OCA and ROEA. OCA received autocephaly from the Moscow Patriarchate in 1970. That same year, an agreement regulated the relationship between OCA and ROEA. The cited materials emphasize ROEA's distinct administrative character and the historical possibility of renewed communion with the Romanian Mother Church after the fall of communism.

The sources further observe that OCA autocephaly is not universally recognized in the same manner by all autocephalous Orthodox Churches. From this, supporters develop the argument that the 2017 decision was effective within the OCA but did not necessarily dictate its canonical effect in every Orthodox jurisdiction. This is a disputed canonical interpretation, not an official conclusion binding upon all Orthodox Churches.

The case must be read on two levels. On the administrative level, ROEA and OCA followed their procedures and issued a formal result. On the level of challenge, Bishop Irineu and his supporters identify procedural, evidentiary, and jurisdictional objections. A documentary chronology does not remove either level. It preserves them so that later readers may understand why the decision exists and why its legitimacy remains contested in a substantial public record.

IX. Community memory and the Clinton litigation, 2017–2020

After 2017, the controversy divided opinion in Romanian Orthodox communities across the United States and Canada. Some understood the decision as the exercise of church discipline; others understood it as the unjust removal of a respected hierarchy. The cited materials also speak of fear of repercussions and the silence of clergy or faithful who may have sympathized with Bishop Irineu.

Such accounts are testimony concerning the atmosphere of the period, not a substitute for documents. The internet became an important archive. Letters, recordings, photographs, court materials, and commentary circulated between America and Romania. The websites dedicated to Bishop Irineu preserve an argued version of this history, with the stated purpose of countering what their authors consider official silence or distortion. Their value lies partly in preservation: defense documents, institutional statements, and personal correspondence can be compared, dated, and placed in context rather than left to hearsay.

In 2020, the Clinton property dispute reached a civil stage. The cited materials refer to ROEA v. Bishop Irineu and to Washtenaw County court decisions dated September 23, 2020. This chapter does not independently state the complete legal effect of those decisions; that requires direct reading of the court record. The historical significance is that an ecclesiastical dispute also became visibly patrimonial and civil.

For the community associated with Bishop Irineu, Clinton remained a symbol of continuity after the Detroit displacement. Its loss or legal vulnerability intensified the sense of a long conflict affecting not only a hierarch's status but also a monastic community and the faithful who supported it.

X. Ministry and public testimony, 2020–2026



The Bishop Irineu chronologies and the memory of those close to him state that he continued to serve and pastor at Holy Trinity Monastery in Clinton after 2020. Supporters see this continuity as decisive: they do not view him as a hierarch removed from ecclesial life but as a monk and pastor who maintained his vocation despite contested decisions.

In 2026, episcopirineu.us and bishopirineu.us function as archive and testimony projects. They collect hundreds of images, numerous videos, ROEA/OCA documents, and material connected with the Clinton timeline. Planned books, including *The American Golgotha of a Romanian Bishop* and *The Sufferings of Bishop Irineu*, seek to turn dispersed records into a coherent documentary work.

The dominant spiritual language of these materials is one of forgiveness, prayer, patience, and discernment. Supporters sometimes compare Bishop Irineu's experience with the suffering of persecuted church figures in history. Such comparisons express solidarity and devotion; they should not be treated as historical equivalence or as a claim of canonization.

The wider history of Christianity and Orthodoxy does show that internal conflict, exile, and later reassessment have occurred in the lives of major church figures. Examples frequently cited include

Saint John Chrysostom, Saint Maximus the Confessor, Saint Nectarius of Aegina, Saint Tikhon of Moscow, Saint Veniamin of Petrograd, and Saint Luke of Crimea. These examples encourage humility in judging contested lives, but they do not predetermine the historical or canonical assessment of any present person.

Conclusion

The history of Bishop Irineu Duvlea has three principal dimensions: a monastic vOCAtion formed in Romania; a pastoral mission built in the American diaspora; and an institutional conflict that culminated in the 2017 OCA decision and later property disputes.

Each dimension has different kinds of evidence. Biography is preserved through testimony and photographs; pastoral activity through community memory and ecclesiastical documents; and conflict through decisions, correspondence, legal positions, and public statements. A responsible conclusion cannot erase the controversy in a single sentence. There is an institutional OCA decision and its application within ROEA. There is also a persistent challenge framed in terms of procedural fairness, the right of defense, and the limits of canonical recognition.

Preserving the documents does not predetermine the verdict of history. It ensures that neither institutional decision nor defense testimony is forgotten, simplified, or reduced to slogans. A future full study can compare ROEA/OCA archives, court documents, correspondence, witness accounts, and Romanian Patriarchate sources, producing a more complete account of a crisis that marked Romanian Orthodox diaspora life.

The final word offered by Bishop Irineu, as quoted in the source materials, expresses the spiritual aspiration of this archive: “Let us leave everyone in peace and stop judging them, for righteous judgment belongs to the Lord, and He will reward each according to his deeds.”



CHAPTER X

TWO DECADES OF DIALOGUE AND HOMECOMING (1991–2026)

This book has followed, across thirty-five years, a path on which the hope of unity among Romanian Orthodox Christians in North America met the demanding realities of institutions, parish administration, community projects, pastoral responsibility, and conflict. It is a history marked by names, dates, correspondence, resolutions, proceedings, and difficult decisions. Yet its deepest thread is the continuity of a living community: Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church in Los Angeles, the faithful who have sustained it, and the priestly ministry carried out in its midst.

These concluding pages are not intended to replace the documents presented in the preceding chapters. Nor do they seek to impose a single interpretation on every disputed event. Their purpose is more modest and, in another sense, more demanding: to place the record in perspective, to identify the principal lines that connect the chapters, and to preserve the distinction between documented facts, the assertions of parties, legal and canonical interpretations, and personal testimony. History in the Church must be written with reverence for truth, with respect for persons, and with care for the memory entrusted to future generations.

The years 1991–2026 cannot fairly be reduced to litigation or to a dispute over jurisdiction. They begin with renewed hope that Romanian Orthodox Christians in the United States and Canada—separated by the painful circumstances of the twentieth century—might rediscover a path toward reconciliation and unity. They conclude at a moment when Holy Trinity Parish continues its liturgical, pastoral, cultural, and charitable life within the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas, after years of trial that tested the patience, cohesion, and responsibility of its members.

A History That Must Be Read as a Whole

The ten chapters of this work are not isolated episodes. The conversations concerning reunification, the Sunland project, the correspondence of 2021–2022, parish deliberations, canonical proceedings, civil litigation, and the biographical accounts of the persons involved all belong to one broader history. Detached from one another, they can easily be misunderstood. Read together, they reveal the relationship between the ideal of ecclesial unity, the autonomy and responsibility of a local community, the care of inherited property, and the freedom of clerical conscience.

During the first years considered here, relations with the Mother Church and the prospect of a unified Romanian Orthodox organization in North America were discussed principally in the language of reconciliation. The documents record meetings, letters, proposals, and declarations intended to keep open the possibility of rapprochement. Although that dialogue did not ultimately produce the durable settlement hoped for by many, it remains an important chapter in the history of the Romanian diaspora. It demonstrates that unity was not merely a ceremonial expression or an abstract aspiration. It was a serious concern shared by clergy and faithful within both Romanian ecclesial structures.

For the author, this history was lived as well as researched. Father Constantin's ministry in Los Angeles began in 1982, and his involvement in efforts toward rapprochement gave him a direct view of many of the events described. Personal testimony, however, has both value and limits. It should be read alongside the record, not treated as a substitute for it. For that reason, this work repeatedly returns to dated correspondence, minutes, corporate records, canonical documents, legal filings, and identifiable witness accounts. The documentary record does not remove every disagreement, but it gives later readers a basis on which to examine the events responsibly.

An honest account must also acknowledge that historical memory is never assembled from documents alone. A letter may establish that something was said; minutes may establish that a meeting was held and a vote recorded; a court filing may establish that a claim was made. But no single document can fully convey the atmosphere of an anxious meeting, the strain placed on families, or the pastoral burden felt by a parish when its future appears uncertain. Written records and trustworthy testimony therefore have complementary roles. Each must remain within its proper limits.

Holy Trinity Parish and the Vocation of Continuity

Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church is not simply the corporate party named in a recent controversy. It is a community founded in 1926 and incorporated in 1940, strengthened over generations by believers, priests, Romanian families, benefactors, volunteers, and friends of the parish. Its church on Verdugo Road, its worship, its cultural life, and the charitable and educational initiatives formed around it bear witness to a long labor of faith.

The parish's history shows what a local Orthodox community can accomplish when faith, Romanian identity, and civic responsibility reinforce one another. A parish is more than a building, a board, or a set of legal records. It is a eucharistic community in which children are baptized, young people are taught, marriages are blessed, the sick are remembered, the departed are buried, and generations learn to pray in the faith of their ancestors. At the same time, a parish must act responsibly in the civil order: it must keep records, administer property, meet financial obligations, comply with lawful requirements, and protect the gifts entrusted to it by earlier generations.

This double character—sacramental and civic—helps explain why questions concerning parish administration can become so consequential. The church property is not merely an asset on a balance sheet. It represents sacrifices, donations, volunteer labor, memorial gifts, and the hopes of people who believed that the Orthodox faith and Romanian spiritual inheritance should endure in Los Angeles. Those who administer such a patrimony hold it in trust. Their responsibility is not personal possession, but stewardship for the religious and community purpose for which it was given.

The Sunland Project in Context

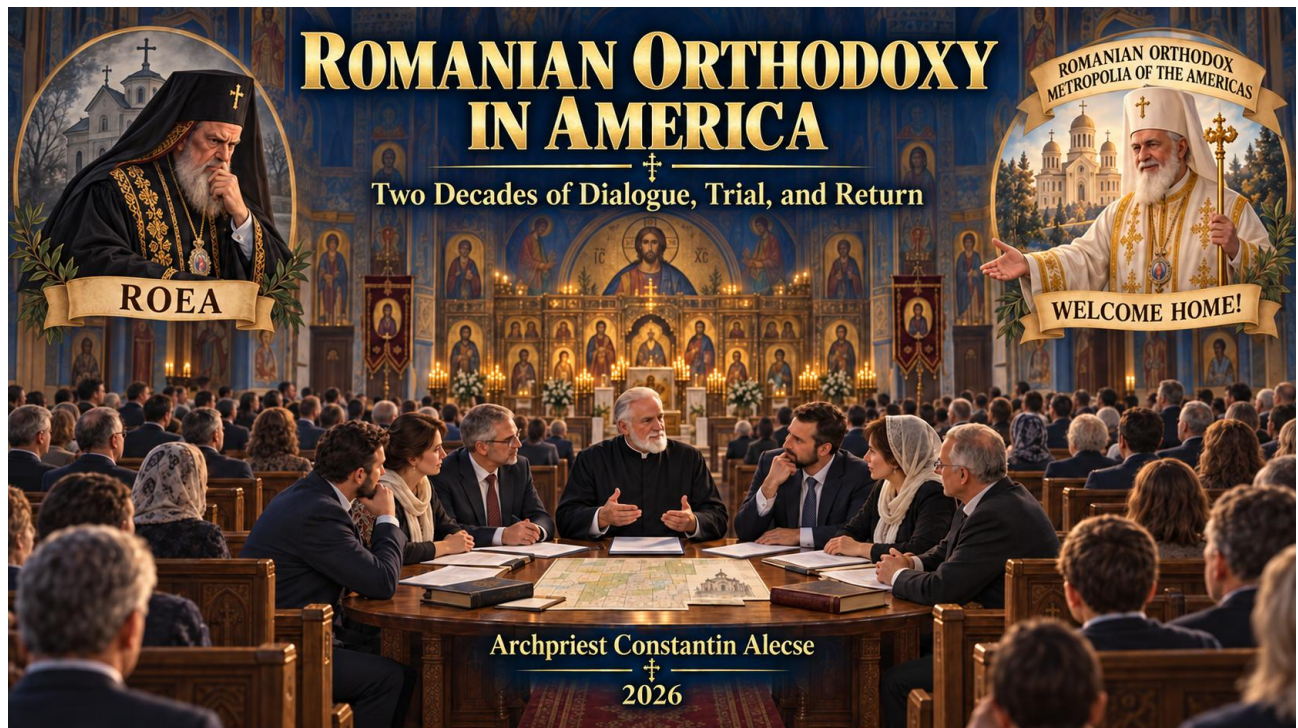
The Sunland project must be understood against this larger background. For many, it represented the legitimate hope for a new church home and social center capable of serving a growing community. It was conceived as a pastoral and communal undertaking: a place that might provide room for worship, fellowship, education, and the continued life of the parish. In later years, it also

became the subject of administrative questions and controversy.

The documents reviewed in the chapters devoted to Sunland describe a more complex reality than a simple success-or-failure narrative allows. They concern the acquisition of land, the pursuit of permits and authorizations, conditions imposed by public authorities, fundraising efforts, shifts in demographic circumstances, and the eventual inability to transform the project into the construction originally envisioned. These elements must be considered together if the project is to be evaluated fairly.

An unrealized project is not, by itself, evidence of bad faith or wrongdoing. Parishes, like all communities, sometimes undertake initiatives that encounter financial limitations, regulatory barriers, changes in local conditions, or historical circumstances beyond the control of those who began them. Such undertakings should be assessed within their own chronology and in good faith. Viewed in that context, Sunland appears not as an episode detached from parish life, but as the expression of a pastoral hope that could not be completed under the conditions that later prevailed.

This does not mean that questions about administration, planning, or documentation should be ignored. Responsible stewardship requires that such questions be asked and answered with records, dates, and applicable standards. It does mean, however, that criticism should not turn an unfulfilled aspiration into a presumption of guilt. The enduring value of the record is that it allows the reader to see both the parish's intention and the circumstances that limited the project's realization.



From Dialogue to Confrontation

The years 2021–2022 changed the tone of the relationship between the Romanian Orthodox

Episcopate of America (ROEA) and Holy Trinity Parish. Requests for documents, exchanges of letters, meetings, and proposals for clarification generated an increasingly tense atmosphere. According to the materials presented in this work, the Parish maintained that it had provided explanations, pursued dialogue, and offered proposals for compromise. ROEA, for its part, expressed administrative and disciplinary positions it regarded as necessary.

A balanced historical conclusion must not confuse these positions, nor convert the assertions of either party into a final judgment against the other. It is nevertheless clear that efforts at resolution did not produce the confidence required for a lasting agreement. The meeting in Phoenix on February 23, 2022, subsequent conversations and correspondence, and the discussions surrounding July 2, 2022, mark a period in which a negotiated solution still appeared possible.

From the perspective set out in this book, Father Constantin accepted in principle the prospect of retirement, while seeking a written and final resolution concerning the Sunland matter and an orderly pastoral transition for the parish. That formula was not accepted by ROEA in the form sought by the Parish. What followed was not merely an administrative disagreement. It became a crisis of confidence, and eventually a rupture over jurisdiction.

In circumstances such as these, language matters. A responsible history must distinguish among acts that are documented, interpretations that are contested, canonical or legal convictions held by the parties, and the genuine suffering experienced by people on all sides of a dispute. Not every institutional act, standing alone, proves that the resulting solution was just or pastorally wise. The more enduring question is whether dialogue was pursued fully enough: whether the relevant documents, the concrete circumstances of the community, and the conscience of those called upon to decide were heard with sufficient seriousness.

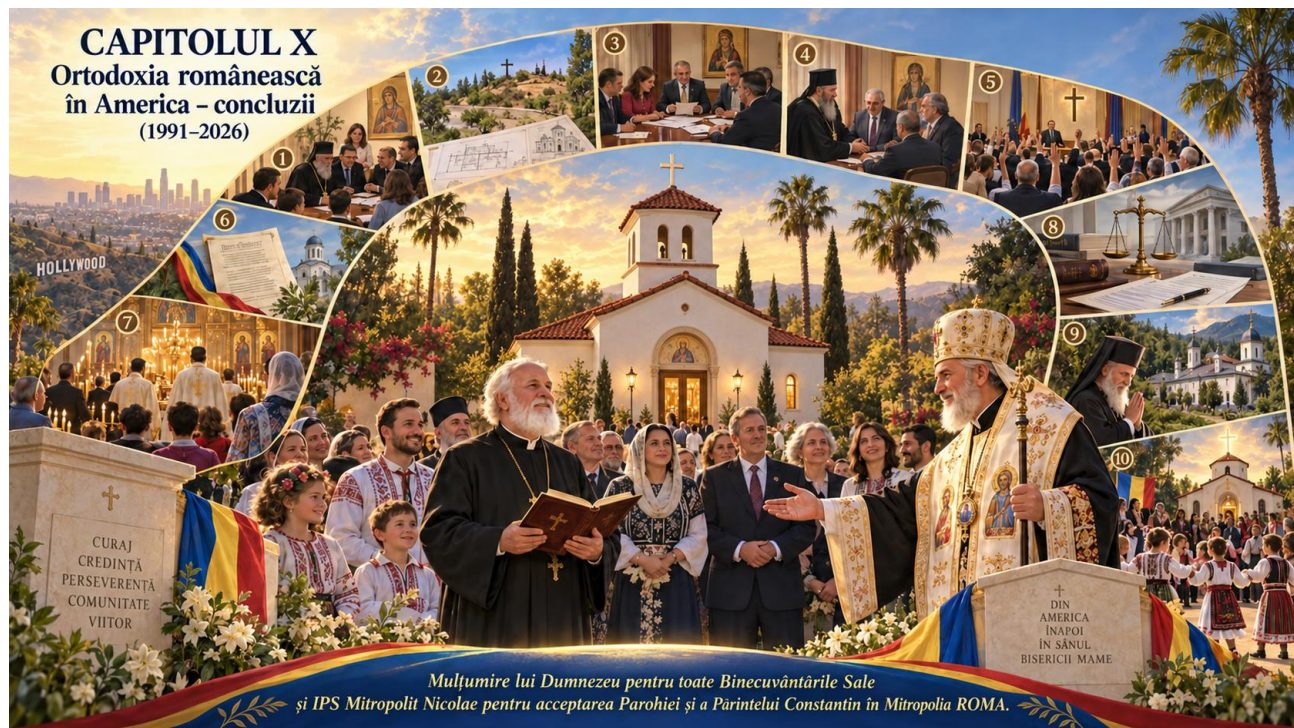
Parish Deliberation and the Change of Jurisdiction

The decisions made in the autumn of 2022 must first be understood as acts of a parish community. The minutes, convocations, agendas, and resolutions examined in this work describe a sequence of deliberation: discussions within the Parish Council, consultation with legal counsel, preparation for a special meeting, a vote, and the communication of the resulting decision.

Accordingly, the decision to leave the jurisdiction of ROEA and request reception into the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas is presented here not as the individual act of a single cleric, but as the outcome of a parish process undertaken by those who attended and voted. The October 30, 2022 vote carries special significance in this narrative. It expressed the conviction of the majority of participating voters that the future of the community should continue within the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas.

Subsequent objections should also be recorded, so that the reader understands that unanimity among those present and voting did not prevent objections from being raised later. Yet the existence of a later objection does not erase the process, the vote, or the documents accompanying the decision. A fair account must make room for dissent without allowing dissent to dissolve the evidence of collective action.

The reception of the Parish and Father Constantin into the Metropolia, confirmed in the documents of November 2022, provided liturgical and pastoral continuity for the community. In the understanding presented in this work, it did not represent separation from the Church, but settlement within another Romanian Orthodox jurisdiction under the omophorion of Metropolitan Nicolae. This clarification is essential. Whatever disagreements existed over competence or procedure, the parish's liturgical life continued. The community continued to pray, baptize, crown, bury the departed, teach, assist those in need, and carry forward its missionary work.



Canonical Proceedings and the Question of Jurisdiction

The chapter dealing with the convocations issued in 2023 records a controversy that should not be treated superficially. ROEA continued to assert disciplinary jurisdiction over Father Constantin and issued summonses before its Spiritual Consistory. Father Constantin's defense raised an exception of lack of jurisdiction, arguing that his relationship with ROEA had ended on September 15, 2022, and that, after his reception into the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas, the ROEA Consistory no longer possessed jurisdiction over him.

This is a question of canon law and institutional interpretation, not a matter to be resolved by labels or personal accusations. The book preserves the parties' stated positions and the documents each communicated. It does not substitute itself for a competent canonical tribunal, nor does it claim to deliver a universal judgment. It can, however, make clear that, from the defense perspective, the failure to appear in response to the summonses was not understood as simple disobedience. It was presented as the consequence of a repeatedly stated juridical and canonical objection, supported by

the chronology, documents of reception, and legal correspondence.

That distinction is important for the memory of the community. A complete history must record both that ROEA issued its documents and asserted jurisdiction, and that Father Constantin, his defenders, and the Parish challenged that jurisdiction. Without this twofold record, readers would receive an incomplete narrative and would lack the means to evaluate the documents for themselves.

Civil Litigation and the Value of Documents

The movement of the conflict into civil court, through ROEA's action against Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church, introduced a serious additional dimension. The summons served on April 1, 2024; the Parish's legal response of April 25, 2024; the complaint filed in June 2024; the responsive pleadings; the mediation in December 2025; and the voluntary dismissal at the end of that year are verifiable landmarks in a proceeding that raised questions about property, corporate records, and the institutional identity of the Parish.

The voluntary dismissal should be described carefully. It was not a judgment on the merits, nor did it finally resolve every historical disagreement between the parties. It remains, however, a procedurally significant fact: the case did not proceed to a trial on the merits, and the court did not enter a decision transferring parish assets or confirming ROEA's claims. A dismissal without prejudice is not a factual vindication of either side; it leaves the merits undecided. Its significance lies in what the court did not adjudicate, not in a conclusion that it did adjudicate.

The civil court also rejected the position that the dispute was exclusively ecclesiastical and therefore beyond civil review. By allowing the matter to continue, the court recognized that claims involving property and legal relations could be examined under neutral principles of civil law without deciding questions of faith, worship, or church discipline. This distinction is important. Civil courts are not called upon to pronounce theological truth; they may, within the limits of the law, examine corporate documents, deeds, statutes, contracts, and other neutral sources relevant to civil rights and obligations.

In matters of church property, rigorous language is particularly necessary. Patrimony is more than a collection of assets. It embodies generations of sacrifice, donations, labor, and faithful administration. Therefore, claims concerning it should be evaluated through deeds, titles, governing instruments, corporate decisions, and applicable law—not by historical assertion alone, and not by assumptions about what earlier generations may have intended. The protection of parish property is ultimately inseparable from the protection of the parish's religious and communal purpose.

Bishop Irineu and the Duty of Memory

The inclusion of Bishop Irineu Duvlea in this work is intentional. His biography and the dispute surrounding his case influenced the conscience of many Romanian Orthodox Christians in America. For the author, they became a point of reference in considering questions of procedure, authority, the right to defense, and the preservation of community memory.

The materials reviewed in this book include institutional documents from ROEA and the Orthodox Church in America, together with appeals, testimony, and defense materials published in connection with the case. A responsible conclusion should avoid two opposing errors: turning a complex dispute into a simplistic verdict, or allowing it to disappear into silence. Institutional decisions exist and should be named. At the same time, Bishop Irineu, his defenders, and his supporters repeatedly raised concerns about procedure, evidence, impartiality, and the extent of jurisdiction. Keeping these planes distinct does not weaken the pursuit of truth. It makes the historical record more intelligible and more open to serious future research.

The Reverend Father Irineu contributed prayer, moral encouragement, and documentation from his own archive to this work. These contributions helped preserve material that controversy, time, and fragmented sources can otherwise obscure. Prayer and archival documentation do not perform the same task, but both may serve truth: prayer sustains the soul in trial, while the archive gives the researcher the ability to verify, compare, and understand.

The Method of This Work

This book has relied upon a substantial body of material: letters, minutes, judgments, corporate records, legal and canonical documents, diaries, electronic correspondence, audio and video recordings, photographs, published materials, and oral testimony. Wherever possible, sources that were identifiable, serious, and capable of verification were consulted. When direct testimony was relevant, it was placed within context and identified as personal experience or eyewitness recollection rather than treated as documentary proof of every conclusion.

The testimony of honest persons who have no apparent personal interest in distorting the facts can be valuable. Such testimony is not offered to demand an act of faith from the reader. Rather, it can supplement written records when those records cannot convey the full atmosphere of a conversation, meeting, or period of tension. A trustworthy witness does not replace the document; within the limits of personal perception, the witness may illuminate, explain, or corroborate it.

No study of contemporary ecclesial conflict is free of sensitivity. That is why this work has attempted, as far as possible, to distinguish among attested facts, claims advanced by the parties, legal or canonical interpretations, and personal judgments. Instead of using absolute language where the record remains contested, it prefers formulations that identify the source of a statement: “according to the document,” “from the defense perspective,” “in ROEA’s position,” “according to the minutes,” or “in the related testimony.” This discipline is not a weakness. It is a form of respect for the truth and for readers who should be allowed to examine the evidence with discernment.

The record remains open. If further documents appear, they should be dated, preserved, and placed in dialogue with those already available. Historical truth does not fear additional evidence. A well-kept archive permits errors to be corrected, interpretations to be refined, and memory to remain more than rumor or propaganda.

Five Years of Trial and Parish Unity

For the faithful of Holy Trinity Parish, the years 2021–2026 were years of trial, step by step. They

brought anxiety, difficult meetings, urgent correspondence, legal costs, uncertainty about the future, and at times the painful feeling that the history of the community itself was being questioned. Yet those years also revealed something essential: a parish is not only a legal entity, nor only the building in which services are held. It is a communion of believers who share responsibility for the altar, the inheritance of the past, the formation of children, care for the elderly, and the memory of those who built before them.

The Parish Council, led by its president, Mr. Edvart Rastian, faced an especially demanding task. Its members were required to study documents, deliberate carefully, balance pastoral concerns with administrative obligations, consult legal counsel, and make decisions whose consequences could endure for many years. Their work should not be measured solely by the final outcome. It should also be understood through their effort to proceed in an organized way, maintain minutes, consult the community, and submit significant decisions to the appropriate parish mechanisms.

Gratitude is also due to Mr. Reggie Dissanayake, who served as legal liaison between the Parish and the Church's Attorney s. In a conflict involving numerous documents, deadlines, and practical consequences, coordination is rarely dramatic, but it is indispensable. Such work requires patience, order, discretion, and the ability to communicate a community's needs clearly to its legal defenders.

Above all, this period demonstrated the unity of the parishioners. Those who remained close to the Church, attended meetings, supported parish life, contributed financially, volunteered their time, and prayed made continuity possible. They were not spectators while others made history. Through their presence and responsibility, they participated directly in the parish decisions of 2021–2026 and helped preserve the life of the community during a demanding season.

Lessons for Church Life

The first lesson of this history is that church unity cannot be reduced to an administrative formula. Unity requires truth, mutual listening, respect for conscience, and genuine pastoral care for local communities. A structure that cannot receive questions, hear legitimate concerns, or offer credible avenues for resolving disagreement risks becoming only a declaration. Unity patiently pursued, by contrast, can preserve the diversity of lived experience and transform wounded memory into an occasion for closer communion.

The second lesson concerns procedure. In an Orthodox community, proper procedure is not empty formalism. Fair convocations, clear agendas, accurate minutes, meaningful consultation, and careful record keeping protect both the peace and the freedom of those who participate. The more difficult the decision, the greater the need for transparency. The parish documents of 2021–2026, together with earlier records, therefore have value beyond the moment in which they were created. They preserve what was discussed, who decided, and under what conditions.

The third lesson concerns the relationship between civil law and the life of the Church. A parish is simultaneously a sacramental community and an organization carrying civil responsibilities: property, accounts, contracts, employees, insurance, and obligations to public authorities. Caring for these responsibilities with legal diligence is not a lack of faith. On the contrary, careful stewardship may protect the community from loss and safeguard the gifts of earlier generations. In the case of

Holy Trinity Parish, consultation with lawyers and the preservation of documents formed part of the duty to protect the patrimony entrusted to the community.

Finally, this history reminds us that church authority becomes more persuasive when it is accompanied by pastoral dialogue. Authority is not diminished by explanation, patience, or willingness to reconsider a procedure that has created distress. It gains credibility through them. For later generations, perhaps the most important question will not be only who was correct in a particular disagreement, but whether everyone involved did all that could reasonably be done to preserve peace without sacrificing truth.

Responsibility to the Archives and to Future Generations

This book is also an appeal to preserve the archive. Parish memory can disappear quickly. A letter can remain forgotten in an office, a recording can fail, an email can become inaccessible, and a generation that witnessed an event can pass away. Without an organized archive, later generations inherit only fragments.

Letters, minutes, legal documents, photographs, parish bulletins, recordings, and other records should therefore be preserved carefully, dated, and described. This responsibility does not belong only to the priest, the parish president, or legal counsel. It belongs to the whole community. Every family that retains a parish program, an old photograph, a letter, or a verifiable recollection may contribute to the history of the Church.

At the same time, the selection and publication of archival material must be guided by discernment. Privacy should be protected where appropriate. Unverified claims should not be presented as established fact. Commentary should remain distinguishable from the documents on which it relies. Such discipline is not an obstacle to truth; it is what makes a record trustworthy.

For the young people of Holy Trinity Parish, the years 1991–2026 may seem distant. Yet this history helps explain why their church exists in its present form, why certain names recur in the memories of parents and grandparents, why inherited property must be managed responsibly, and why community life requires participation. To know this history is not to become captive to the past. It is to receive an inheritance intelligently and to avoid repeating, unknowingly, the mistakes that caused suffering.

Future generations also have the right to investigate this period freely. They may consult the documents, compare interpretations, and ask questions that were not previously asked. The author does not demand that his own reading become the only possible reading. He asks that the documents not be lost and that the experience of the community not be reduced to a single official voice. Historical truth is strengthened, not threatened, when it can withstand scrutiny.

Hope for the Unity of Romanian Orthodox Christians

Despite the conflicts recorded in these pages, the hope for unity among Romanian Orthodox Christians in America should not be abandoned. Authentic unity does not require the erasure of local identity or the silencing of legitimate questions. It begins with the recognition that all who are

baptized into Christ are called to peace, service, and responsibility.

Canonical structures may differ, and the past may remain contested. The common mission, however, remains: to transmit the Orthodox faith, Romanian language and culture, and love for the Church to younger generations. That mission is larger than any particular conflict. For that reason, the door to dialogue should not be closed. If a new dialogue is to take place, it should be more attentive to the documentary record, less shaped by pressure, and more respectful of the rights and duties of each community. It cannot be built by denying wounds or demanding that they be forgotten. Healing begins when people are able to speak openly, without humiliation and without fear, about what has happened.

Holy Trinity Parish can serve this hope most convincingly not through continued controversy, but through the steady continuation of healthy church life: dignified worship, religious education, philanthropy, Romanian cultural activity, and hospitality. A community that preserves peace and responsibility gives a stronger testimony than any dispute. This may be the best way to honor those who labored for unity before us.

A Ministry That Continues

A book that records conflict would remain incomplete if it did not also remember the work that continued while the conflict unfolded. Throughout the decades of this ministry, Holy Liturgies were celebrated; baptisms, weddings, and funerals were served; catechesis, cultural activities, and charitable works were carried forward. Families were supported, newcomers were welcomed, the Romanian language was preserved, and prayers were raised for the living and the departed. This daily and often quiet life is, in the end, the true measure of a parish.

The year 2026 marks a personal threshold as well: fifty years of priesthood for Father Constantin, whose ordination to the priesthood took place on Christmas Day, December 25, 1976. A ministry of such duration includes joy and burden, fulfillment and disappointment, people who remain and people who leave. It does not belong only to the ordained priest; it also belongs to his family, the faithful who received his service, and the hierarchs under whose blessing he served. In that sense, the history of Father Constantin Alecse cannot be separated from the history of Holy Trinity Church in Los Angeles. The pastoral transition anticipated for the period ahead should be received with hope. A mature community honors its past without making it a burden, and prepares for its future without forgetting the sacrifice of its ancestors. The faithful, the Parish Council, and the next generation of clergy are called to preserve the unity, canonical settlement, patrimony, and Romanian character of this community. In 1976 I was ordained a priest in England, and after coming to America I kept my eyes fixed on HOME—on the Mother Church. Since then, I have worked with all my strength so that, after half a century, I might finally be at home with the Los Angeles parish that I lovingly shepherded for forty-five years. Magnified be the Lord!

Closing Words and Acknowledgments

I conclude this work with the conviction that history should not be written from resentment or fear. It should be written with documents before us, respect for those who have suffered, and the freedom to name facts without abandoning measure or charity. If this book helps even one reader understand

more clearly the path of Romanian Orthodoxy in America, the trials of Holy Trinity Parish, and the cost of a conscience that does not wish to remain silent, then it will have fulfilled its purpose.

I offer my sincere thanks to the Parish Council of Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church, led by Mr. Edvart Rastian, for its responsibility and steadfastness, and for the way in which it carried, together with the whole community, the weight of decisions made during difficult years. I thank Mr. Reggie Dissanayake, legal liaison between the Parish and the Church's Attorneys, for his careful work, patience, and support at times when the rigor of documents and deadlines was indispensable.

I thank the Most Reverend Bishop Irineu for his prayers, moral support, and the documentation made available from his personal archive. I thank all parishioners of Holy Trinity Church who remained united through these five years of trial: those who attended meetings responsibly, those who asked questions in good faith, and those who supported the parish through labor, presence, generosity, and prayer. Their faithfulness ensured that the community's suffering was not in vain.

I express particular gratitude to His Eminence Metropolitan Nicolae and to the Metropolitan Council for receiving Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Parish of Los Angeles, together with the undersigned, under His Eminence's omophorion in the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Two Americas. This reception provided the community, in the understanding of the parish, with canonical continuity, the peace necessary for its ministry, and confidence that its path could continue in full connection with the Mother Church, the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Above all, I give thanks to the good God, who permitted the trials but also granted strength to endure them. To Him I entrust all that is written here, praying that truth may be served with humility and that justice may be joined to forgiveness. I thank my family—my wife Elena, our children, and all those close to me—for the patience, sacrifice, understanding, and love with which they supported a ministry that often demanded more than could be seen from the outside.

With gratitude for the past, responsibility toward the present, and hope in God's providence, I close these pages. May the Holy Trinity guard His Church, strengthen all who serve faithfully, and guide Romanian Orthodox Christians in America toward peace, truth, and unity.



CHAPTER XI

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, THANKS AND GRATITUDE

The years 2021–2026 were not ordinary years for Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church in Los Angeles. After more than eight decades of parish life, our community passed through a period of trial in which faith, discernment, and a sense of responsibility were called to work together.

With deep gratitude and sincere appreciation, Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church offers this note of thanks to all who—whether parish members or close friends of the parish—remained beside this holy place of worship, its ministry, and the future of the community.

In days of uncertainty, when relations with ROEA were marked by tensions, pressures, and administrative, legal, and pastoral difficulties, our faithful did not choose resignation. They called for truth, justice, respect for the will of the community, and the defense of the dignity of Holy Trinity Parish.

This page of history does not belong to one person or to a small group. It was written through prayer, patience, courage, and responsibility by a community that understood that love for the Church may require sacrifice, steadfastness, and prudent judgment. Every vote, every signature, every word of counsel, every discreet act of assistance, and every presence at services and parish activities became a stone laid at the foundation of this new chapter.

A particularly important moment was the emergency meeting of the Parish Council on June 13, 2021, convened under the leadership of President Marian Șerban, with Dora Șerban and Antoaneta Rastian serving as secretaries in the administrative work of the community. At that time, the Council decided to retain attorney Roger J. Diamond for legal consultation and for the defense of the Parish's interests. This decision expressed the desire to proceed in an organized manner, within the limits of the law, and with care for the Church's spiritual, moral, and civil patrimony.

The Special Assembly of October 30, 2022

Special gratitude is due to the Parish Council elected in 2022 and to the leadership that prepared the Special Parish General Assembly of October 30, 2022. The minutes of that Assembly record the presence of 62 voting members and the unanimous adoption of the resolutions concerning the Parish's disassociation from ROEA and its reception into the Romanian Orthodox Metropolis of the Americas. More than 200 parishioners had signed the disassociation lists.

President Edvart (Edward) Rastian, who chaired the Assembly of October 30, 2022, and was re-elected for the 2023–2024 and 2025–2026 terms, rightly said that the members of this community “made history.” Indeed, the history of these years was shaped by people who remained united, read the documents, considered the situation responsibly, freely expressed their will, and defended the Church they love.

With respect and gratitude, the following are remembered among those whose roles are recorded in the minutes of the Special Assembly of October 30, 2022:

- Edvart (Edward) Rastian — Parish Assembly President; signatory of the minutes.
- Fr. Constantin Alecse — Parish Priest, who offered the invocation prayer.
- Presvytera Elena Alecse — the Pastor's wife and a steadfast supporter of the Parish.
- Claudia Dana Pugna — Assembly Secretary and Validation Committee, and the minutes.
- Reggie Dissanayake — Legal liaison and responsible for documentary archiving.
- Antoaneta Rastian — Controller and President of the HORA Society.
- Mary Comboianu — President of the Ladies' Society.
- Ion Anton — former Parish Council President and a longtime veteran of the community.
- Victoria Razmeritsa — Treasurer and Vice President of the Ladies' Society.
- Gabriel Cătălin Trifu — Sergeant-at-Arms.
- Filofteea Turlacu and Gabriel Szekely — Vote Counters.
- Cristian Călugărița — participating member and President of the *Viitorul Român* Society.
- Sabina Popescu, Mariana Cadia, Elena Calmuș, Chirata Stavrositu, Maria Sălăjan, Vasile Luca, Adrian Thomas, Gina and Floarea Cataloiu, Andreea and Alex Drăgoi, Viorica Hrimiuc, Getta Jercan, and Marynela Nițuteasa — participants who introduced or supported motions during the Assembly.
- Anatol Razmeritsa, Viorica Scopu and other faithful who supported the work of the Parish.

Service and Community Solidarity

Between 2021 and 2026, the members of Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church demonstrated remarkable service and solidarity. Parish Council members, the Ladies' Society, committees, and working teams gave freely of their time, patience, care, and abilities, helping the parish carry its spiritual, pastoral, cultural, social, and administrative responsibilities during demanding years.

With sincere appreciation, we recognize the leadership and members of the HORA Society and the Aromanian Community of California. Their friendship, participation, cultural support, practical assistance, and sacrifices strengthened the parish and showed how a community flourishes when people place their gifts and goodwill in service of the common good.

We also thank the more than 200 signatories of the disassociation lists, the 62 voting members present at the Special Assembly, and all parishioners who offered prayer, counsel, presence, and practical help. Through visible and quiet acts alike, they helped preserve the peace, unity, and future of the parish. May God reward every person for their faith, courage, generosity, and love, and keep Holy Trinity Church united and blessed for generations to come.



CHAPTER XII

DIGITAL RESOURCES

- [AADC – The American Archival Documentation Center](#)
- [Agenda Censored “Proposals and discussions” banned 2022-01-30 meeting](#)
- [Agreement between OCA ROEA 12 17 1970](#)
- [American Archive of the Christian Diaspora \(AADC\)](#)
- [Antimesion return letter to Arch +Nathaniel 2022 11 09](#)
- [Archpriest Constantin Alecse - Biographical page](#)
- [Archpriest Constantin Alecse - Personal website](#)
- [Attorney Grossman - Disassociation letter to ROEA 10-25-2022](#)
- [Attorney Grossman to Arch +Nathaniel - Stop abuse against Fr. Alecse 2022-11-09](#)
- [Attorney Roger Diamond to ROEA June, 29 2021 - Stop harrasment](#)
- [Bishop Irineu - Historical archive](#)
- [Canonical Reception of Fr. Constantin Alecse into the Romanian Metropolia](#)
- [Canonical Release request to ROEA by Mitropolitan +Nicolae](#)
- [Christian Vahab – IMO – Fr Constantin’s memoires](#)
- [Communique ROEA – ROAA \(English 08 20 2008\)](#)
- [Convocation and Agenda for the Special General Assembly \(October 30, 2022\)](#)
- [Dialogue with the Patriarchate \(Solia Mar Apr 2008\)](#)
- [Documentary Photograph from the Bishop Irineu Archive \(no. 505\)](#)
- [Documentary Photograph from the Bishop Irineu Archive \(no. 508\)](#)
- [Documentary Photograph from the Bishop Irineu Archive \(no. 509\)](#)
- [Documentary Photograph from the Bishop Irineu Archive \(no. 510\)](#)
- [Documentary Photograph from the Bishop Irineu Archive \(no. 513\)](#)
- [Documentary Photograph from the Bishop Irineu Archive \(no. 514\)](#)
- [Documentary Photograph from the Bishop Irineu Archive \(no. 519\)](#)
- [Documentary Photograph from the Bishop Irineu Archive \(no. 520\)](#)
- [Documentary Photograph from the Bishop Irineu Archive \(no. 526\)](#)
- [Documentary Photograph from the Bishop Irineu Archive \(no. 544\)](#)
- [Documentary Photograph from the Bishop Irineu Archive \(no. 550\)](#)
- [Fr. Constantin Alecse: Accept in Mitropolie](#)
- [Fr. Constantin Alecse: Attorney’s Letter Consistory ROEA](#)
- [Fr. Constantin Alecse: Attorney’s Letter ROEA’s Attorney](#)
- [Fr. Constantin Alecse: Canonical Release Request by FRCA](#)
- [Fr. Constantin Alecse Archive: Council Letter of Appreciation FRCA Retirement](#)
- [Fr. Constantin Alecse Archive: Patriarhs’ Cross distinctions](#)
- [Fr. Constantin Alecse Archive: “FRCA on ROEA’ site: photo coming soon”](#)
- [Fr. Constantin Alecse Archive: Gratama to FRCA by +Irineu](#)
- [Fr. Constantin Alecse Archive: HTRAOC Mitropolia Acceptance](#)
- [Fr. Constantin Alecse Archive: Mitrop Nicolae - Diploma Ordin “Sf. Imparati”](#)
- [Fr. Constantin Alecse Archive: Mitropolit Nicolae on FRCA 50th Service Anniversary](#)
- [Fr. Constantin Alecse Archive: Mitrop. +Nicolae – offers the “Crucea Mitropolitana”](#)
- [Fr. Constantin Alecse Archive: Letter of Appointment as Dean 1985](#)
- [Fr. Constantin Alecse Archive: OCA – Gramata to FRCA as archpriest, Church Anniversary](#)
- [Fr. Constantin Alecse Archive: Patriarh Daniel: Centenial Diplom to FRCA](#)

- Fr. Constantin Alecse Archive: Patriarch Daniel - Centenar Medalion
- Fr. Constantin Alecse Archive: Fr. Daniel Stefan Dragoi – FRCA - The granite Plaque
- Fr. Constantin Alecse Archive: Retirement Letter 15 Sept 2022
- Fr. Constantin Alecse's Request for Canonical Reception into Metropolia (09 30,2022)
- Fr. Constantin Alecse's Request to ROEA for Canonical Release (November 6, 2022)
- Holy Trinity Parish - Agenda Sedinta 2022-08-14, # 9 - Proposal dezasociere de ROEA
- Holy Trinity Parish in lieu of Special Assembly Meeting Council Resolution (sept 25 2022)
- Holy Trinity Parish Minutes extract from Council Resolution of 2022-08-14 sent to ROEA
- Holy Trinity Parish Minutes of the Council Meeting - Aug 14, 2022
- Holy Trinity Parish, at the 85th Anniversary, 2025
- Parish Resolution to Disassociate 14-08-2022 for Aug 28 2022 Assembly Approval
- Holy Trinity Parish Sept 25 2022 Meeting Convocation
- Holy Trinity Parish Sept 25 Council Meeting Minutes
- JDC ROEA Annual Report, 2011 pg33-34
- Jurisdictional Reception of Holy Trinity Parish into the Romanian Metropolia
- Letter Receiving Fr. Constantin Alecse into the Romanian Metropolia (November 21, 2022)
- Letter Receiving the Parish into the Romanian Metropolia (November 21, 2022)
- Metropolitan Charter – The Foundation of the Metropolia in America
- Metropolitan Nicolae's Request to ROEA for Fr. Constantin Alecse's Canonical Release
- OCA about ROEA reunification developments tentative approval
- Metropolia ROMA – Holy Trinity in Los Angeles - A parish of the Metropolia, 2022
- ++Nathaniel on JCD ROEA-ROMA, 2008
- OCA si farsa cazul irineu 2014 2017, cap 10
- OCA Notice Regarding the Suspension of Fr. Constantin Alecse (November 2022)
- Patriarch Teoctist - About OCA Autocephaly, 1991 * Patriarch Daniel letter to ROEA 2012
- PAESI letter to Patriarch Daniel, 16 sept 2007
- Parish Council Request for Reception into the Romanian Metropolia (September 30, 2022)
- Patriarchal Charter No. 1/2016 – Establishment of Mitropolia ROMA
- Patriarchal Tomos for the Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas
- Peekers Atomic – The Church shares 500k, offered by PAESI
- Pilgrimage to Romania: ROEA Delegation, 1994
- Policarp Morusca – An unbiased Biography
- Pr. Constantin Alecse - Member of Deans Bishop Irineu Consecration Committee
- Pr. Constantin Alecse - A CV on the AADC archives website
- Pr. Constantin Alecse - Attorney Complaint to OCA-ROEA Consistory 08 16 2023
- Pr. Constantin Alecse - Attorney Complaint to OCA ROEA Consistory 09 01 2023
- Pr. Constantin Alecse - Attorney request to +Nathaniel Stop harassment 2023.08.16
- Pr. Constantin Alecse - Attorney request to ROEA Attorney Stop harassment 2023.02.03
- Pr. Constantin Alecse - Attorney request to ROEA Attorney Stop harassment 2023.02.21
- Pr. Constantin Alecse - Canonical Release request 2022 11 06
- Pr. Constantin Alecse - ROEA's declaration: Deposed
- Pr. Constantin Alecse - Invitation for a Pro temp Service by ROEA
- Pr. Constantin Alecse - ROEA Attorney answer to matt 2023 02 03 letter on 2023 02 13
- Pr. Constantin Alecse - ROEA pro temp letter 2022 09 25
- Pr. Constantin Alecse - suspendat de ROEA 4-nov-2022
- ROEA-ROAA Dialogue Commission on the Proposal for Metropolitanate (june 08)
- ROEA - Recorded in Michigan its Charter, 1943

- ROEA - Episcopal Leadership
- ROEA - Congress - The 3 Romanian Hierarchs
- ROEA - Congress 3 Rom Hierarchs - 2011 (www.aadc.us – site)
- ROEA - Consistory 01 2023 ; Consistory 02 letter 07 17 2023
- ROEA - Consistory manipulation sample Fr Gheorghe Carstea
- ROEA - Convocation 2022-07-27 for 2022-08-28 Meeting, presided by Fr Grama
- ROEA - Ion Anton response to Liviu Constantinescu 2022-12-11
- ROEA - Letter 2022 July 15 to council convocation special assembly
- ROEA - Letter 06-30-2022 to Parish Council notifying Fr Alecse's retirement
- ROEA - Letter Regarding Fr. Constantin Alecse's Retirement
- ROEA - ROAA Letter 07-05-08 (between Hierarchs +Nathaniel to +Nicolae)
- ROEA - Sept 13, 2022 – Archb. +Nathaniel s letter apology (Sunland Case Closed)
- ROEA v. Bishop Irineu and the Clinton Monastery (2020)
- ROEA v. Fr. Constantin Alecse: Summoned by the Diocese He already Left (2023)
- ROEA v. Holy Trinity: From Demand to Withdrawal of the Action
- ROEA v. St. Nicholas Parish, Troy, Michigan (2022)
- ROEA – 2026 Congress Annual Report (see: p.#9 'church' & p.#28 'FRCA')
- ROEA - ROMA Dialogue Suspension 2006-05-31
- ROMA - The Holy Antimension from the Metropolia Image
- ROMA - Romanian Orthodox Metropolia of the Americas - official website
- Solia Q2 2026
- Solia Q3 2021 (referred in the book)
- Special General Assembly Minutes: Departure from ROEA (October 30, 2022)
- Sunland Property Sign 9 May 2021
- Sunland: Between the Building Dream and the Trials of Time
- St Andrews House – general presentation
- St Andrews House for sale 1 Mil USD – Abbot Michael donation's appeal
- The \$50,000 Loan and St. Andrew Center docs (1999-2022)
- The \$50,000 Loan and St. Andrew Center
- The Case of Bishop Irineu Duvlea
- The Path to ROEA-ROMA Reunification (1991-2011)
- ROEA Delegation Pilgrimage to the Holy Places of Romania, 22 mai 1994
- +Valerian, The book, by Traian Lascu, 1984





Disclaimer:

* **Historical Context and Intent:** This book offers a transparent look into a complex and defining period for our community, spanning from 1991 to 2026. Built upon a foundation of more than 150 historical documents, correspondence, and archival records, this work seeks to reconstruct the truth of a journey marked by dialogue, confrontation, and eventual return to the Mother Church. It is written not out of a desire to foster past divisions, but with a sincere intent to understand the historical context and the path traveled by our parish. By presenting these primary sources, the author invites readers into a responsible, respectful exploration of our shared history, believing that a peaceful future can only be built upon truth and faith.

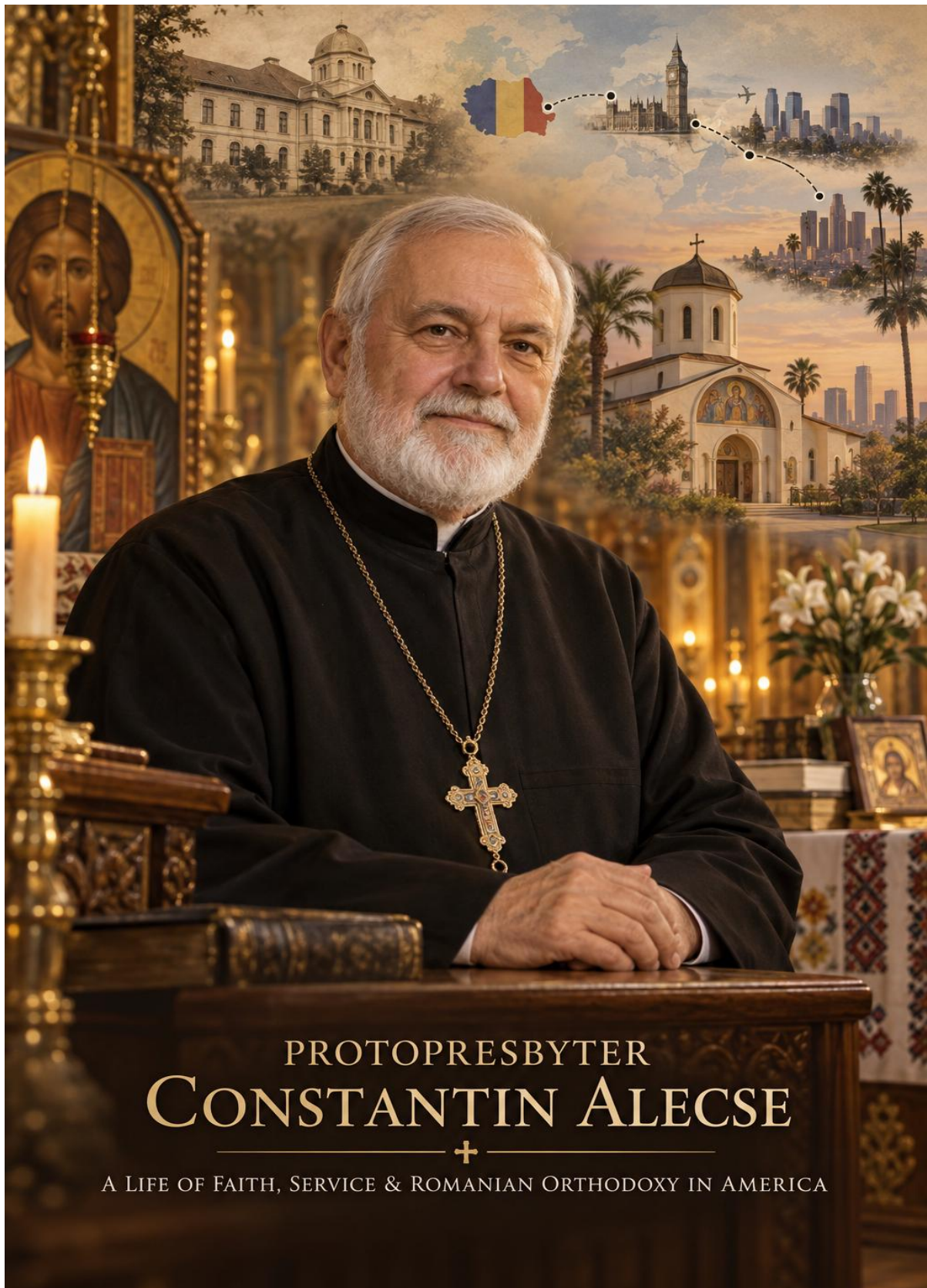
* **Authorship and Affiliation:** Both versions of this book—English and Romanian—are the sole work of Fr. Constantin Alecse based on archive documents. It does not reflect the legal opinions or official positions of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolis in America, the Holy Trinity Church in Los Angeles, or their leadership.

* **Source Material:** The content relies exclusively on official church archive documents, correspondence, decrees, and legal or ecclesiastical decisions in their original form.

* **Illustrations:** All photographs in the book are AI-generated for illustrative and satirical purposes; they are not real documentary images.

* **ORSMA File Accessibility:** The OCA's ORSMA file against Bishop Irineu is private but was thoroughly examined. It remains available for study at the AADC upon a formal research request.

* **Scope:** General books on Romanian immigration are excluded from this references section because this work has a highly specific, defined scope as stated in its title.



PROTOPRESBYTER CONSTANTIN ALECSE * CURRICULUM VITAE

Protopresbyter Constantin Alecse is a Romanian Orthodox priest, pastor, editor, author, and community builder whose ministry has united pastoral service, theological study, Romanian cultural preservation, and publishing across Europe and North America.

Born on 21 February 1951 in Dâmbroca, Buzău County, Romania, he completed elementary education in his native village, then studied at the Orthodox Theological Seminary “Kesarie Episcopul” in Buzău (1965–1970). He graduated from the Justinian Marina Theological Institute in Bucharest in 1974, with a licentiate thesis on Holy Scripture, Tradition, and the Church in Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic theology. He subsequently pursued doctoral studies in Bucharest under Fr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae and later undertook doctoral work in theology at the University of London.

Father Constantin was ordained deacon on 29 November 1976 and priest on 25 December 1976 by Bishop Lucian Florea Făgărășanu. From 1976 to 1980, he served Holy George Romanian Orthodox Parish in London, where he was also the Romanian Patriarchate’s representative to the Archbishop of Canterbury and, from 1977, Honorary Chaplain of the Diocese of Southwark. Alongside pastoral work, he founded or helped organize Romanian Orthodox missions in Birmingham, Leicester, and Nottingham.

After immigrating to the United States in 1980, he served Saint Mary Romanian Orthodox Parish in St. Paul, Minnesota (1980–1982). In September 1982 he became pastor of Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church in Los Angeles, California, a ministry that has been marked by pastoral care, parish development, catechetical work, Romanian cultural activity, and extensive written and digital outreach. From 1984 to 2014 he served as Dean of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America’s Pacific Coast Deanery and later as chairman of its Missions Department.

His enduring contribution as a writer and editor is inseparable from his pastoral vocation. Through books, parish periodicals, articles, historical studies, reports, and online collections, he has documented Orthodox faith, Romanian-American church life, and the experience of the Romanian diaspora.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR – BOOKS AND MAJOR WORKS

- *Printre Îngeri și Demoni* [Among Angels and Demons], Vol. I of an autobiographical series: childhood, theological formation, family life, the Communist-atheist period in Romania, and ministry in England (1951–1980).
- *Misionarul* [The Missionary], Vol. II of the autobiographical series: priestly service in North America, pastoral mission, parish growth, charitable priorities, and church stewardship.
- *Culisele Vieții Pastorale* [Behind the Scenes of Pastoral Life], Vol. III of the autobiographical series: encounters, reflections, social and educational themes, from his pastoral life.
- *Cugetări Creștine* [Christian Meditations], with Eng. Mircea Iordache: a collection of axioms, biblical quotations, and spiritually instructive narratives.
- *Aforisme și Istorioare Ecclesilogice* [Ecclesiological Aphorisms and Stories], with Mircea Iordache (2017): a work combining a survey of Romanian Orthodox Church history with

scriptural and patristic themes.

- Dâmbroca—Rainbow Across Time: Monographic Landmarks, with Eng. Mircea Iordache
- *Săgeata – Zbor printre Vremuri: Pagini Monografice* [Săgeata—Flight Through the Ages: Monographic Pages], in preparation: editorial collaboration and virtual edition.

Editorial and periodical work in England (1976–1980)

- Editor-in-chief and chairman of the publications committee for *Altarul / The Altar*, the annual almanac and quarterly journal of Saint George Romanian Orthodox Church, London.
- Editor of *Viața în Hristos* [Life in Christ], serving Romanian Orthodox communities in Birmingham, Leicester, and Nottingham.
- Editor or contributor to the “Orizonturi Românești” [Romanian Horizons] collection and related issues, including *Popas Istoric*, *Poezii – Oda Pământului Străbun*, *Colecție de Colinde Românești*, *Din Istoria Strămoșilor*, *Dedicație Marii Uniri 1859–1918* (1979), and *Dacia sub Burebista, 70–44 BC* (1980).

Publications and editorial leadership in America

- Parish weekly bulletin of Saint Mary Church, St. Paul, Minnesota (1980–1982).
- Monthly bulletin of Holy Trinity Romanian Orthodox Church, Los Angeles (1982–1989).
- *Viața Creștină* [Christian Life], begun in 1989 as a parish supplement and developed as a bilingual Orthodox spirituality and church-information periodical.
- A detailed report on the 1994 ROEA delegation pilgrimage to Romania, published in the 1995 *Solia* Calendar, pp. 155–196.

Articles, reports, and documentary contributions

Father Constantin Alecse has contributed articles, theological reflections, historical reports, and documentary materials to Romanian Orthodox and Romanian-language publications in North America and abroad, including *Solia / The Herald*, *Cuvântul Românesc* (Canada), *Meridianul Românesc*, *Revista Clipa*, *Revista Maria* (Spain), *Universul*, and other Romanian community publications. He also authored a weekly “Tableta Credinței” [Tablet of Faith] column for *Universul* during 1986–1989.

His written and editorial work has been referenced in scholarly and cultural publications, including Domnița Dumitrescu’s study of Romanian, English, and Spanish language contact in the United States (1998), Emanuel Tanjala and Dan Cristian Turturică’s *România, de la New York la Los Angeles* (1997), and Norine Dresser’s *Multicultural Manners* (1996).

Digital publishing and archives

Father Alecse has also promoted Orthodox theological, pastoral, and cultural resources through online projects, including *Biserica.org*, *ViațaCreștină.com*, and the virtual archive associated with *Viața Creștină*. These initiatives have made articles, prayers, church-history resources, liturgical material, and Romanian cultural content accessible to a wider public.

PROTO-PRESBYTER CONSTANTIN ALECSE

Curriculum Vitae

Born: February 21, 1951

Studies: Buzău Theological Seminary (1965–1970) • Bucharest Theological Institute (1970–1974) • Doctoral Studies, London (1977–1978)

Ordained Deacon: November 29, 1976 • **Priest:** December 25, 1976

Pastoral Ministry: London (1976–1980) • St. Paul, Minnesota (1980–1982)
• Los Angeles (1982–present)

Pastor of Holy Trinity Romanian American Orthodox Church, Los Angeles

50 Years of Priesthood • 1976–2026

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Proto-Presbyter Constantin Alecse

Publications and Contributions

The Power of Destiny — TV series, 13 episodes (2016)

My Roots • Existential Questions • Where Are You, My Childhood? • The Light of Seminary • Memories of the Heart

The Imposing Face of the Theological Institute • Life Experiences and Incidents • Founding a Family • England Awaits Me • Life in England

The Break with the Romanian Patriarchate • History of Romanian Emigration to America • The Romanian Vatra Episcopate • Aromanians in America

From New York to Minnesota • History of the Romanian Community of Minnesota • Priestly Adaptation

The Romanian Vatra and Its Congresses • Description of the State of California • Romanians in California

Romanian Societies and Organizations in Southern California • Macedonian Romanians/Aromanians in California

Orthodoxy on American Soil • Pacific Coast Deanery • History of Holy Trinity Parish

Pillars and Benefactors of the Church • Pilgrimage to the Holy Places of Romania

75th Anniversary of Holy Trinity Church • Holy Relics at Holy Trinity Church

Nicolae Iorga in California • King Michael I of Romania in Los Angeles • Fr. Dumitru I. Vâlcu

Dobre Rizea — the Martyr Colleague • President Emil Constantinescu

Memories from Forty Years of Priestly Ministry • Quotations from the Saints of the Prisons • Quotations from the Holy Fathers

Faith and Apocalypse • Photo Albums • Video Clips

Faith • Ministry • Community