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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: June 7, 2021 7:53 PM
To: office@goarchdiocese.ca
Subject: Constitutional Challenge to Worship Limitations in our Churches

Your Eminence,

Χριστος Ανεστη.

I write to you humbly and as a struggling Greek Orthodox Christian member of the All Saints Parish.

In the last three years, due to a major personal struggle, I re-discovered our faith and began attending Sunday service (and service on major feast days) regularly.

I cannot emphasize enough how [REDACTED] and many other members welcomed me into the Church and the parish. It has been my solace as I try to stay on an Orthodox path for the rest of my life.

As such, I was crushed emotionally during the first lockdown and the subsequent ones. I have attended Church when I was permitted but, when the 10-person limit was instituted, I did not feel right reserving a spot because there are many elders in our parish who should get priority. Instead, I suffered silently trying to partake of the Divine Liturgy "virtually".

And, to date, I have remained silent - publicly - waiting to see whether and how our Archdiocese would mount a constitutional challenge to the limits imposed on our constitutionally guaranteed freedom of religion.

The Catholics went to court for their Easter and got a temporary reprieve from these limits and, as you know, there is a group of police officers (among other officials) who are challenging these limits.

I realize that, by the time these cases make their way to the Supreme Court of Canada, the limits will have been lifted. However, the challenge itself is important with respect to limiting future governmental action (ie future lockdowns).

I am concerned that our Archdiocese has not (a) commenced its own action, or (b) joined any of the current actions.

If we do not act now to preserve our freedom of religion in Canada for our Greek Orthodox faith, we will be subject to the vagaries of whatever secular party is in power at the time when the next pandemic arises.

Respectfully, Your Eminence, my questions are as follows:

1. Why didn't we (ie the Greek Archdiocese of Canada) launch a constitutional challenge to the limits imposed by the Ford Gov on worship in our Churches?
2. Alternatively, why didn't we join one of the challenges already launched?

In my respectful belief, our Greek Orthodox voice must be part of the constitutional challenges now - because there are imminent threats at our door from other "causes".

For example, it is only a question of time before the LGBTQ community targets our Church as "backwards" or "homophobic" or whatever other "issue du jour" is en vogue to use against our 2000+ year old faith and shut us down or boycott us (and our benefactors). I can see a time when this group will use their political power to oust anyone of the Greek Orthodox faith from any prominent positions in business or Government.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I would gladly volunteer my time to assist the litigators selected by our Archdiocese to have our voice involved in the constitutional challenges. I am quite certain that, across Canada, there are Greek Orthodox litigators who would donate their time to this cause.

Given your national platform and voice, I was wondering, Your Eminence, if you have considered the foregoing?

If so and you have decided against it, I would be very interested in understanding why.

In fact, I sincerely believe that my questions are on many parishioners minds across Canada and perhaps it is an issue you could address in one of your Orthodox Voice talks.

In closing, I would like to thank you for your time and make it clear that I have submitted this e-mail to you after many months of struggling to understand why we - as a community - have remained silent.

I understand that, as Christians, we are commanded to turn the other cheek but, in all of the books I have read on the lives of our Saints, all of them stood up to threats against our faith and spoke up to the authorities.

I am worried that if we don't stand up now, we will be regarded as a faith that can be further trampled on in the future.

Yours with the deepest respect,

[REDACTED]
