

# Crisis in the Russian Orthodox Church: Who Will Take Over the Former Western European Exarchate of the Ecumenical Patriarchate?

By [Sophia Iliadi](#)

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Region: [Europe](#), [Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [History](#)

*After the decision made by the Holy and Sacred Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate on November 27, the parishes of the Archdiocese of Russian Orthodox churches in Western Europe are in a brown study on their future. However, they have no choice, really. The resolution of the Synod clearly obliges them to be distributed among the local dioceses of the Patriarchate of Constantinople. If they join any other ecclesiastical jurisdiction, it is most likely that the Phanar will break off canonical relations with them. And the unilateral proclamation of independence will lead them in schism and cause losing of recognition in the Orthodox world.*

The governing bodies of the Archdiocese are located in Paris, France. Most parishes and monasteries are also located in this country. Thus, if they decide to comply with the resolution of the Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, they will be headed by the Metropolitan of France, Emmanuel Adamakis. Will it contribute to the integration of believers of the Russian tradition into the structures of the Ecumenical Patriarchate? Most likely it won't.

And the problem is not just in the arrogant attitude of the Ecumenical Patriarchate hierarchs to non-Greek believers, resulting in the existence of parallel national jurisdictions under the rule of Constantinople in territories that already have their Greek bishops of the Ecumenical Patriarchate (for example, the Ukrainian Orthodox Churches in the USA and Canada overlapping with the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America).

There is one more significant factor: even the Greek believers themselves are not enthusiastic about the reign of Metropolitan Emmanuel. For example, His Eminence has been [criticized](#) for promoting unworthy hierarchs, covering frauds and intrigues that ensured their career success. He is also accused of ignoring the immorality and sexual misconduct of the subordinate clergy. For example, police has documented a case of sexual harassment of a parishioner by Fr. Nicholas Kakavelakis. However, Metropolitan Emmanuel did nothing in response.

As a director of the Office of the Orthodox Church under the auspices of the European Union, and then Vice-President of the Council of European Churches, Metropolitan Emmanuel regularly meets with politicians and leaders of various non-governmental organizations whose liberal positions greatly contradict the teaching of the Church. At the same time, he does not communicate concerns of the Orthodox believers about this clearly. Did he express the worries of his flock about the legalization of same-sex marriage by President [Hollande](#) in 2013? Did he bring attention to the anti-Christian tendencies in Western society during his

meetings with representatives of other churches? Absolutely not.

On the contrary, Metropolitan Emmanuel is a regular guest at the [annual galas](#) of the Representative Council of French Jewish Institutions (Conseil Représentatif des Institutions juives de France, CRIF) – an organization that maintains [friendly contacts](#) with the French Jewish LGBT group Beit Haverim!

Moreover, there are loud rumors about himself being an alleged sodomite. For example, during his vacation in Lesbos, he was [seen](#) in the company of a young man and their relationships were very suspicious. It seems that it was too embarrassing for eyewitnesses to describe what they unwittingly heard from the Orthodox bishop. Therefore, they criticized the least serious violation of the canons, namely, they condemned Met. Emmanuel for beard shaving and wearing frivolous secular clothes.

Thus, although the majority in the former archdiocese of the Russian churches in Europe has become quite indifferent to the Russian tradition and has been largely “Europeanized”, they are still too conservative to accept such behavior and are not willing to have such a Metropolitan as their Primate.

At the same time, the rumors that Metropolitan Emmanuel is the main candidate for Archbishopric Throne of America become more and more widespread. If this is true and European Orthodox will in turn receive a more conservative shepherd, everyone will be satisfied and there will be no serious conflicts.

The difficulty is that the Western European Exarchate has already been dissolved but the Archbishop Demetrios of America is still in full power. Reportedly, His Eminence will not leave at least [until next Easter](#). And an Extraordinary General Assembly of the Diocesan Governing Union of Russian Orthodox Associations in Western Europe (a meeting of clergy and laity) is [scheduled](#) for February 23 next year.

Thus, even if the Phanar had a plan to quietly reshuffle the Primates, something must have gone wrong and all their cards were mixed up. As a result, at least for a while, the execution of the resolution of the Synod of Constantinople will mean for Russian parishes in Europe a transition under the authority of Metropolitan Emmanuel of France. And this, despite the fact that the latter has ties to the leadership of the Archdiocese, will not be easy.

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