

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
CIVIL DIVISION

ASIDESACH DEBEBE,

Plaintiff,

Case No. 2025-CAB-5826

Hon. Leslie A. Meek

Next Event: Dec. 19, 2025,

Scheduling Conference

THE WASHINGTON DC AND ITS
SURROUNDING DIOCESE OF THE
ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX
TEWAHEDO CHURCH, etal.,

Defendant

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**DEFENDANT THE WASHINGTON DC AND ITS SURROUNDING DIOCESE OF THE
ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH'S MOTION TO EXTEND TIME TO
FILE GROUNDS FOR DEFENSE PLEADING TO COMPLAINT, & IN OPPOSITION
TO PLAINTIFF'S REQUEST FOR ENTRY OF DEFAULT**

Pursuant to SCR-Civil Rule 55(a)(3)(A), Defendant, THE WASHINGTON DC AND ITS SURROUNDING DIOCESE OF THE ETHIOPIAN ORTHODOX TEWAHEDO CHURCH, ("Archdiocese" or "The diocese"), moves to extend the time in which to file a responsive pleading to the Complaint.

Plaintiff Asidesach Debebe, a disgruntled member of the St. Michael congregation, sues the ARCHDIOCESE to challenge the operational activities and the relationship the diocese has with the churches in its jurisdiction. Pursuant to SCR-Civil Rule "Extension of Time to Plead or Otherwise Defend. Before an order of default is issued, the time to plead or otherwise defend may be extended by one of the following: (A) an order granting a motion, which shows good cause" Accordingly here by the Archdiocese cordially requests for extension to file response for the claims filed for the following reasons.

The diocese has profound reason for not responding to the claim within the specified period. It is well known that the Ethiopian Orthodox Church globally celebrates the finding of the holly cross towards end of September every year, this celebration arrangement and executions fall

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under each Archdiocese of the church around the globe and it is the Archdiocese responsibility in leading and ensuring the preparation and implementation of the plans according to the church's doctrine and canon. This holiday is a global Orthodox Church holiday and needs a lot of preparation that takes quite a great deal of time and resources. It is the responsibility of the archdiocese to oversight over fifty churches in its jurisdiction, (in the state of Maryland, Commonwealth of Virginia, Delaware, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia). Because there are only a few priests and archbishops working in the archdiocese, reviewing cases and responding quickly has been difficult given the limited resources. It is the responsibility of the archdiocese to oversight the dogmatic and canonical application and review the prayers in these gatherings at the local churches. While the plaintiff filed a motion for Temporary restraining order (TRO) the archdiocese representative appeared contrary to the limited amount of time and responded accordingly.

Another reason is that the plaintiff has failed to clearly describe how the archdiocese's actions have directly impacted him or specify the judgment he wants the court to deliver. The Plaintiff is not a known direct volunteer or employee of the archdiocese nor have any hierarchical empowerment to oversight the performance of the archdiocese, and it is not clear how the Archdiocese is pulled into this legal case. Per the understanding of the diocese, the plaintiff is a member of St, Michael church and worships there, this church is known and registered under the archdiocese. The plaintiff is bound by the rules and regulations set in the bylaws of the specific church. His disqualification and exclusion from election for the parish committee has no correlation with the diocese. The diocese has an advisory and oversight role over the appropriate teaching, and application, of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahido Church doctrine and proper implementation of its canons, it does not have any administrative role in the church, at all.

Plaintiff requests for the implementation of the "Qale awadi". The "Qale awadi is the Ethiopian Orthodox Church governing law in Ethiopia and developed based in a way that does not contradict with the Ethiopian Constitution and environment. Since local churches were formed in different ways and have varying by-laws, the archdiocese cannot require them to comply with its directives till a final one is produced. However, the church Archdiocese is currently working with the churches to create similarity in administrative operation among the churches. The "Qale awadi" issued by the Patriarchate office from Addis Ababa, lacks certain compliance to the country and the environment the archdiocese is operating and cannot be executed as is. It needs significant modification to align with the local laws. For that reason, The Archdiocese currently refining and working with a group of professionals to review the "Qale wadi" and make it in consistent with the US Federal and state law and environment. The archdiocese representative explained this position during the TRO hearing held on September 4 and 5 where a judgement was made against the plaintiff.

Currently, the Archdiocese has not established any governing laws for the churches to follow; instead, each church is operating under its own self-developed by-laws. As the Archdiocese does not have any role in the election process in any of the church at this moment it

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is the duty and responsibility of the governance of the church to handle its daily activities by its own developed by laws.

Under Rule 55(a)(3)(A) (“Extension of Time to Plead or Otherwise Defend”), “Before an order of default is issued, the time to plead or otherwise defend may be extended by one of the following: (A) an order granting a motion, which shows good cause for the extension[.]” “By the express terms of Rule 55(a), the default ha[s] not yet taken effect, and the court [is] authorized to extend the time to plead on a showing of good cause.” Luna v. A.E. Engineering Servs., LLC, 938 A.2d 744, 747 (D.C. 2007). Any default judgement will negatively impact the global church. Here, The Archdiocese filed its Motion to Dismiss before entry of any default. Defendant’s appearance at the TRO hearing to contest the motion, and the explanations above; the Court has good cause to extend the period and accept the Motion to Dismiss and deny Plaintiff’s request for entry of default.

Hence, for this reason we inquire into the court to allow extension of time to respond to the complaint filed by the plaintiff.

Respectfully Submitted,

Fr. Mulugeta Wondimu

Washington DC and Its Surrounding Dioceses

of the Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church

2735 31st NE, Washington, DC 20018

Certificate of Service

I certify that on October 06, 2025, I served the foregoing via electronic case filing and email on: Asidesach Debebe 8915 Georgia Ave. Silver Spring, MD 20910 master@tibebsstudio.com Pro Se /s/ Mulugeta Wondimu.