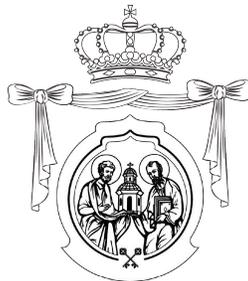


His Eminence  
The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and  
Metropolitan of  
All North America

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE  
OF NORTH AMERICA**

Statement of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North  
America to the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the United  
States Regarding the Draft Proposal of the Committee on Canonical  
Regional Planning

Presented at the Meeting of the Assembly of Bishops Convened in  
Chicago, IL  
September 15-17, 2015

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America has always prayed for and been committed to unity and cooperation of all of the Orthodox Christians in North America. The unity that we seek is true Orthodox unity based on mutual respect, love and cooperation with all of the Orthodox in America without subjugation or domination of any. Unity must allow for the continued work and support of each of the jurisdictions for their people and continued unity with the respective mother churches.

There is no doubt that the Christian Fellowship and work of the Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops in America as well as that of the Assembly of Bishops has been very valuable. We have come to know each other and have discovered how we can even better cooperate and support each other. We can enhance the ministries of each other as well as promulgate corporate ministries. Our relationships provide even more effective ministries. We are grateful for the candid and honest exchanges of the bishops at the meetings. We are committed to continuing this process of building up our relationships and working together in every area possible.

*"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26)*

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America continues to be committed the unity of the Antiochian Archdiocese and the Antiochian Patriarchate. The Church of Antioch, even while under persecution, stands firm as a witness to the incarnation of Christ and the history of the Savior in this world. By maintaining our unity with Antioch we provide a subtle witness to the world that Jesus Christ is the incarnate God who lived in the Holy Lands among us and is one with us. Each of our bishops at our first confession of faith committed “myself to the preservation of the peace of the Church and ... (to) obey and follow the directives of His Beatitude, the Patriarch of Antioch and all the East; and (to) uphold and protect the honor of the Patriarch of Antioch all the days of my life.” The Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Antioch and her Patriarch JOHN X remains committed to the unity of the Patriarchate with all of Antiochian faithful wherever they are. The Antiochian Metropolitan and bishops of North America remain committed to our consecration pledge.

We suggest that the Assembly of Bishops in the United States work as a voluntary Assembly of all the Canonical Bishops in the United States to accomplish the mission of the Assembly as articulated in the founding documents: “The mission of the Bishops’ Assemblies is the proclamation and promotion of the unity of the Orthodox Church, the common pastoral ministry of the Orthodox faithful of the region, as well as their common witness to the world.” We also agree that decisions should be made on the basis of the principle of unanimity of the Orthodox which are represented therein by bishops. In order to show filial love and respect, we would like all of the officers to be elected by the local assembly and to sit by order of the diptychs. We encourage the bishops in each geographical area to meet regularly and cooperate in ministry. We also support the continued work with inter-jurisdictional agencies and Orthodox theological groups. In this day of easy travel and communication, bishops can effectively serve their parishes in America without restructuring present geographical boundaries. Our churches are not yet homogenous and there are jurisdictional needs within our parishes.

*“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)*