



**The Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese**  
OF NORTH AMERICA

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TO BE READ FROM PULPITS AND PUBLISHED IN BULLETINS

Dear Clergy and Faithful of our God-Protected Archdiocese,

Greetings and blessings in the name of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ in the midst of this Holy Advent season.

It is with great sadness that we have received the news of the abduction of our beloved nuns and orphans from the Convent of St. Thekla, Maaloula, Syria. It is inexcusable for such peaceful, God-loving, and defenseless people of God to be abducted and displaced from their place of residence and worship, after having suffered so much anguish for the past three months. St. Thekla Convent, through the intercessions of its patron Saint and the prayers of all its nuns, has been since its inception in the first century a beacon of light for peace, miracles, and the spreading of our Lord's message of love for all. It is unfathomable to hear that peaceful servants of Christ are being treated in such barbaric manner, as have Metropolitan Boulos and Archbishop Youhanna been treated.

As we intensify our diplomatic efforts with politicians here at home and abroad, we call on all those who are decision-makers in the United States, Western Europe, and the Middle East to intervene to end this senseless war and release all abductees including our nuns, orphans, and bishops. We also ask our Lord Jesus Christ to inspire all civil leaders to end this bloodshed and return normal life to our treasured Syria.

I ask all the clergy and the faithful to include in their personal prayers a petition for the release of our nuns, orphans, and bishops until they are liberated, and I further direct all Pastors of our God-protected Archdiocese to add the following petition to the Great Ektenia during every Divine Liturgy and every (Great) Vespers:

Right before praying for the President of the United States or the Queen of the Commonwealth, please insert:

*For Metropolitan Boulos, Archbishop Youhanna, Mother Pelagia and her nuns and orphans and for their quick release from captivity and safe return, let us pray to the Lord.*

I further direct all Pastors to keep this petition in the services until our beloved bishops, nuns, and orphans are freed.

Wishing you a blessed Advent season as we pray to the child of the manger to keep all our brethren in Syria safe.

Your Father in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Philip', written in a cursive style.

†Metropolitan PHILIP, Primate

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

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Cc: Archbishop JOSEPH, Bishop ANTOUN, Bishop BASIL, Bishop THOMAS,  
Bishop ALEXANDER, Bishop JOHN, Bishop ANTHONY, Bishop NICHOLAS