

# THE Word

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September 2014



His Eminence the  
Most Reverend  
Metropolitan JOSEPH

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His Eminence the Most Reverend Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend Bishop ANTOUN

The Right Reverend Bishop BASIL

The Right Reverend Bishop THOMAS

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The Right Reverend Bishop ANTHONY

The Right Reverend Bishop NICHOLAS

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From Uncertainty to Confidence

The last time I sat down to write to you for *The WORD* it was May. In that June editorial I shared with you my faith in the Holy Spirit to guide us through our period of transition. Since that time we traveled together through meetings with our Patriarchal Vicar SILOUAN, local meetings of our bishops and trustees, a nominating process including a gathering of our parish clergy and delegates in Chicago, two trips to Lebanon to meet with our Father in Christ, Patriarch JOHN X, our International Antiochian Unity Conference at the Balamand University, the Meeting of the Holy Synod of Antioch, gathering together at the Antiochian Village around our new Metropolitan JOSEPH for our Clergy Symposium and then again for our Archdiocese level meetings of our Antiochian Women, Fellowship of St. John, and SOYO. As I promised, the Holy Spirit has not let us down, and God has blessed us with a Spirit-filled, self-disciplined, experienced and loving Metropolitan to lead the Antiochian Orthodox Church of North America. Indeed, this man Archbishop JOSEPH who is chosen by God is ready and willing to lead us and is the answer to our prayers.

During the week and weekend of the Prophet Elias, Metropolitan JOSEPH spoke prophetically of his vision for the Archdiocese. He is challenging us to tend to our souls and hopes to meet our needs by building up a monastic witness in America as well as promoting regular gatherings in all of the regions of the Archdiocese to retreat, be inspired, learn better our faith, and witness to Christ in our modern world. He has already engaged the Antiochian Women in this vision and ministry by making their project for 2014-2015 the seeding of monasteries and camps. Metropolitan JOSEPH has also met with the Fellowship of St. John the Divine leadership to engage them in ministering to young adults with new visions, hopes and zeal. With twenty years of Church leadership experience in our Archdiocese, our new Metropolitan has “hit the ground running” and we are grateful to God for all God has given us.

The days between the falling asleep of our beloved chief shepherd Metropolitan PHILIP and the election of our distinguished chief shepherd

Metropolitan JOSEPH were filled with all kinds of real emotions. Many of us wrestled all kinds of forces of this world and the spiritual world. The election of a bishop is sometimes compared to the birthing of a child, complete with the pain and travail of delivery. The election of our Metropolitan was no exception to the rule. Nevertheless, God has elected for us through our Holy Synod of Antioch, to whom we are completely loyal and in unity with, our Metropolitan JOSEPH. I thank our Patriarch JOHN X, the Holy Synod of Antioch and the faithful and clergy of our Archdiocese for their part in expressing God’s will and I ask God to grant all many years.

In this issue of *The WORD*, we announce the election of our New Metropolitan JOSEPH, share some highlights of the events of our Church since our last report, share interviews of Metropolitan JOSEPH and Bishop ANTOUN, and share the tribute of Dr. Najeeb Saliba to our beloved Metropolitan PHILIP of thrice blessed memory which was inadvertently omitted from the special memorial edition. Finally, I express thanksgiving for the life and ministry of Metropolitan PHILIP and all of the bishops, clergy and faithful who worked with him for close to half a century. Only God can calculate the sacrifice of those builders as well as those who established the Antiochian Church on the American shores before them.



Bishop JOHN



"I can do all things in  
Christ who strengthens me."

(Philippians 4:13)

ADDRESS BY

His Eminence,  
Metropolitan JOSEPH

TO THE ARCHDIOCESAN CLERGY SYPOSIUM  
ANTIOCHIAN VILLAGE, BOLIVAR, PA • JULY 17, 2014

"First, everything we do  
must be rooted in unifying  
ourselves with our Lord  
Jesus Christ, just as the  
vine and branches are  
united. Secondly, all our  
deeds must be for the  
good of our salvation."



Clockwise from top:

Bishops ANTHONY, JOHN and  
THOMAS at Camp Vespers

Fr. Joseph Allen begins the  
Clergy Symposium

Metropolitan JOSEPH and his clergy  
attend the Clergy Symposium

Bishops pray at the grave  
of Metropolitan PHILIP







+The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Love of God the Father, and the Communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all!

The Psalmist David wrote: “Behold now, what is so good or so pleasant as for brothers to dwell together in unity?” (Psalm 132:1).

This Psalm captures precisely what I have experienced this week as we have gathered together – working and praying “in unity.” As we leave this Holy Mountain tomorrow after Liturgy, we will take this very message of unity back to our parishes and ministries. Our hope is that the various lessons we have each learned here will be incorporated in our everyday practice of priestly service to God and to those entrusted to our care.

Tonight, I am going to use my time to share with you my vision for the future of this Archdiocese. I truly believe that each and every one of us is an important and integral part of this body.

We are grateful for everything which our beloved Metropolitan PHILIP, of thrice-blessed memory, created over the past 48 years. We humbly accept the fruit of his labor, as well as the labor of the faithful who worked alongside him, and the legacy upon which we will now build.

We have serious work ahead of us. Although we begin a new chapter, let me remind you that we are not starting from the beginning. As good stewards, we will only continue the work with which we have been entrusted and my expectation

is that we will continue to work as a team. As for myself, I promise you that every decision that is required of me will come by way of prayer, deliberation and by the thorough consideration of all pertinent information. I can assure you that I will be acutely attentive to things requiring any significant decision – praying first for guidance in all matters.

You need to know that I take very seriously that which our ecclesiology teaches. For direction, I will rely on St. Ignatius of Antioch. His vision of the Church is “a oneness of mind,” meaning that the Bishop, together with the council of Presbyters and Deacons, will serve and guide the people of God. In addition, we must keep in mind that all our Bishops are Archpastors who, together with me, share the pastoral staff of our Chief Bishop – our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Bishops must be treated with the respect and reverence that is due all hierarchs. Together, with the effort of my brother bishops assisting me in the pastoral burden of this Archdiocese, we will council together and communicate carefully; with their united support I will lead this Archdiocese in a concord of love and oneness of mind.

And now, what about yourselves, my dear presbyters? You are the ones whom St. Ignatius

refers to “as council of God and as the band of the Apostles” (*Ignatius to the Trallians 3:1*). The bishop and the priests should never be separated from one another. Perhaps there are those who at times feel put aside or disregarded in some way, but this ought never to be the case. We always stand together! In standing together, we are reminded that the Archdiocese of North America is strong – first spiritually and then in its resources. Its reputation precedes it. As good as things are and have been, however, we must never be satisfied with the status quo. As stewards, it is ours to inherit from God and then grow that “which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God” (Colossians 1:25).

First, everything we do must be rooted in unifying ourselves with our Lord Jesus Christ, just as the vine and branches are united. Secondly, all

decisions made by the Holy Synod and maintain ties with the mother church of Antioch accurately and precisely communicating all church matters between North America and the mother church.

In order to maintain true unity within the Archdiocese, I plan to visit all our dioceses actively in order to maintain strong ties with our beloved hierarchs. My joy will come from working closely with each of them to first solidify and deepen our spiritual life.

It will be important to continue our relationships with all other Orthodox jurisdictions through our work in various pan-Orthodox assemblies and committees. In doing so, the spirit of unity will reflect a global presence.

Concerning the current state of our Archdiocese: in all administrative matters, my priorities will be to create complete and whole transparency;

“It is imperative to focus on evangelism and outreach as the main part of our apostolic ministry – to reach out to the entire nation of North America”.



our deeds must be for the good of our salvation.

I want to make it very clear that I will respect and abide by all the Holy Apostolic Canons and

to improve the function of the administrative offices in order to serve the Archdiocese better; and to implement updated, fast, professional and

“Behold now, what is so good or so pleasant as for brothers to dwell together in unity?” (Psalm 132:1).

Clergy and faithful dismiss after Trisagion Prayers for Metropolitan PHILIP





Clergy and campers pray at the grave of Metropolitan PHILIP

efficient methods of working and communication, using technology to our advantage.

I look forward to familiarizing myself more with our clergy, their families and their needs, in order to serve and support them. I anticipate selecting candidates for the diaconate and for the priesthood of the highest level of quality.

It is imperative to focus on evangelism and outreach as the main part of our apostolic ministry – to reach out to the entire nation of North America.

In developing methods of addressing twenty-first-century challenges through which the Church will inspire active spiritual life, stronger educational programs are needed on every level – from clergy to laity. We need a stronger means to reach our youth and to encourage them to commit themselves to their faith and to their Church. This will be realized, in part, by working more closely with existing organizations, namely Teen SOYO, the Fellowship of St. John the Divine, the Antiochian Women, and the Order of St. Ignatius.

The Archdiocese Board of Trustees has the potential to become more dynamic and effective in a variety of ways. From a bounty of resources, we are in a position to invest in the available talents from among the clergy and laity and use these to advance the ministries of the church.

It is necessary to unify liturgical practices and

establish and encourage serious monastic life as an option for the faithful, both young and old.

By reviewing the status of each individual department within the Archdiocese, we will learn what we need to change or improve.

Having shared just a few thoughts with you here briefly, I ask your prayers.

My prayer for all of you comes from the gospel of St. Luke (12:11–12), where we read: “Now when they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say.”

Know that you have my utmost respect, love and constant prayer, as a father with his children.

Peace be with you all!

# Into the Heart of Antioch

THE NORTH AMERICAN DELEGATION TO THE ANTIOCHIAN UNITY CONFERENCE



Delegates await the start of the Unity Conference

In late June, an historic event took place in the life of the Church of Antioch: the first Antiochian Unity Conference, called by His Beatitude JOHN X, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, to gather together representatives of the Patriarchate from across the globe. The conference was held in Balamand, Lebanon, from June 25 to 29, and concluded on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul with a massive outdoor Patriarchal Liturgy on the grounds of Balamand University, attended by faithful from across the region as well as those gathered for the Conference.





This gathering occurred during a momentous time for our ancient Patriarchate of Antioch. A strong and ascendant Patriarch, JOHN X, in the early stages of his leadership, guides the Church with love and joy in the Holy Spirit, while the Church carries a heavy cross: the historic homeland of the Patriarchate in Syria suffers war and the constant threat of violence, and the Church in Lebanon struggles with the burdens of life on the doorstep of war. The discussions of the conference were informed by the presence in spirit of the brother of Patriarch JOHN, His Eminence Metropolitan PAUL of Aleppo, abducted during the conflict over a year ago, along with Syriac Metropolitan YOHANNA of Aleppo.

Yet in the midst of this time of suffering,

shed in Antioch glowing in this blessed assembly. The heart of Antioch that beats with Christian zeal, love and leadership is rejoicing to see the gathering of all brothers. Today the walls of Damascus embrace the bells of Beirut, and Saint Peter's grotto in Antakya touches the dome of Balamand. Today Zahle greets Lattakia and Akkar sweeps the wounds of Aleppo. Today Homs embraces Mount Lebanon and Hama washes the nets of Tyre and Sidon. Today the bells of Suweidaa play the hymn of love to the churches of Tripoli and Koura. Today our sons in Iraq and the Gulf lean on the chest of their Antiochian Church in this blessed gathering of the brothers. Today the Church

Photos preceding page clockwise:

Balamand Monastery

Patriarch JOHN X before the Great Entrance at Sunday Liturgy

Patriarch JOHN X receives all the Antiochian presbyters. Present are Frs. Anthony Gabriel and Thomas Zain.

Patriarch JOHN X with Fr. Michel Najim

Bishop ALEXANDER at the Unity Conference Liturgy



there was joyful fellowship in Balamand, as His Beatitude indicated in these words from the official English translation of his homily on the Feast of Saints Peter and Paul, the patronal Feast of the Patriarchate:

Today the heart of our Church is beating with love and joy. Today the apostles Peter and Paul are rejoicing to see the light they

of Antioch in the homeland embraces apostolically the Antiochian Church of overseas. Today our sons in North America, Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Australia, France, Germany, England, Scandinavia, Switzerland, Austria, all Europe and the four corners of the world embrace the mother Church that baptized them and their ancestors and anointed

Above: Patriarch JOHN X with North American attendees







Unity Conference attendees from all over the world

their lives with the name of Christ. They in turn anoint her by their love and giving, by their longing and sacrifice in standing up for its concerns. Today we all bow down to the Lord Jesus our Creator and Savior in the time of crises, who allowed us to meet here today in Balamand, in this Antiochian University, in Koura, the bride of Lebanon.

Our North American Archdiocese was well-represented at the conference, including an official delegation of nine members, as well as other attending hierarchs and invited clergy and laity. Over twenty people in total were present from the Archdiocese. The official delegation included Archpriests Thomas Zain and Timothy Ferguson, representing the clergy; Fawaz El-Khoury and Daniel Braun, for the Board of Trustees; Daniel Abraham, for the Order of St. Ignatius; Violet Robbat, for the Antiochian Women; Khalil Samara, for the Fellowship of St. John; Jordan Kurzum, for SOYO; and Douglas Cramer, for the Department of Internet Ministry. Very Rev. Fr. Michel Najim also attended, having been asked by His Beatitude to deliver one of the conference's major papers. Others from the Archdiocese at the Conference included His Eminence Archbishop JOSEPH, on the eve of his election as Metropolitan of All North America; Their Graces Bishops ALEXANDER, JOHN, and NICHOLAS; Michael Homsey (for IOCC); Very

Rev. Fr. Antony Gabriel and Khalil Kardous (for the Antiochian Heritage Foundation); and Anne Mackoul. His Eminence Metropolitan SILOUAN was also present, continuing his oversight of the Archdiocese in his concluding days as Patriarchal Vicar by providing guidance to the delegation.

The official delegation stayed during the conference in historic Byblos, Lebanon, on the Mediterranean coast, and commuted each day to the Balamand, enabling them to plan and speak together in order to provide a single witness and representation on behalf of the Archdiocese. Over the course of the conference, His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X took time to meet separately with the hierarchs, the clergy, and the laity who were in attendance from North America, in order to deepen the mutual love and communion between our Archdiocese and the Patriarchate of Antioch, during the final period of our transition following the passing of His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP of thrice-blessed memory.

Patriarch JOHN X's homily to the gathered faithful included these words of encouragement, of particular significance for the faithful in North America:

Our Antiochian Orthodox Church is a vineyard in the true sense of the word. The vineyard spreads its branches outwards and they grow in a new land and flourish in new parishes and dioceses overseas, in the



Patriarch JOHN X at Unity Conference Liturgy

two Americas, Australia and Europe. These dioceses might have a special situation because they are planted in a far-away land, but they stem from the Antiochian root that provided them with priests, pastors and experience. So the generous sons of our Church became ambassadors of the spirit of the Antiochian Church and a strong supporting arm to the mother Church and motherland. Our Antiochian unity, the theme of this conference, is expressed through the presence of the believers from these dioceses with us today. Among them are also brothers and sisters who converted to the Orthodox Church through our Antiochian jurisdiction and of whom we are proud, and for them we pray constantly.

While there was prayer and fellowship, planned and unplanned, in abundance, the formal work of the conference was centered on an ambitious agenda. Five major areas of study were identified. A pair of major papers on each area was presented to the gathered assembly, and there were dedicated breakout sessions as well, devoted to developing ideas and recommendations in detail. The areas of focus included Pastoral Interaction; Financial and Wakf Property Development; Social Work; Effective Presence in Society; and Communication. By the conclusion of the conference, over 80 specific recommendations

across these areas had been compiled for further consideration by the Holy Synod of Antioch.

Throughout the proceedings, there was a constant exploration and prayerful deliberation over the nature of our shared identity, needs, and hopes. The underlying meaning of a united Antiochian Christian identity was well-stated in the words of Very Rev. Fr. Michel Najim of Los Angeles, California, in his feature paper on Pastoral Interaction:

The apostolic spirit of Antioch blazes brightly and ignites the churches of its far-flung archdioceses throughout the world. Lest the members of our holy Patriarchate suffer a loss of this apostolic light through isolation or ignorance, we deem it essential that all the provinces of Antioch share in the same apostolic, martyric, and evangelic witness of their Mother Church. Let this apostolic torch illumine the interiors of all our churches, so that no obliviousness persist, and that no one remain bereft of the spirit of the holy chief apostles, our heavenly patrons, Ss. Peter and Paul. Indeed, this apostolic spirit animates and promotes the now two-thousand-year-old unifying ethos of Antioch. This spirit, which is nothing other than the "spirit of Jesus," integrates our ancient, yet ever-new, Patriarchate.

Douglas George Cramer



# Our Metropolitan JOSEPH

Metropolitan JOSEPH was consecrated to the holy episcopacy on June 30, 1991, at the St. Mary Cathedral in Damascus, after many years serving as a deacon and a priest. His Eminence was born in Damascus, Syria, in 1950. He completed his basic schooling at the St. John of Damascus and al-Assiah schools in Damascus, and then at Our Lady of Balamand Monastery in Koura, Lebanon. He completed his undergraduate studies at Lebanese University in Beirut and then earned his Master of Theology (M.Th.), with special studies in music and languages, from Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, Greece. He was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from St. Tikhon Seminary in South Canaan, Pennsylvania, in May, 2010.

Metropolitan JOSEPH was ordained to the holy diaconate at the request of Patriarch ELIAS IV of thrice-blessed memory by Metropolitan PATELEMON of Tyroloyis, Dean of the theological schools of Balamand and Thessalonica, on December 4, 1976. Sayidna JOSEPH was ordained to the holy priesthood by Patriarch IGNATIUS IV of thrice-blessed memory on December 10, 1980, at the Dormition Cathedral in Damascus. As priest, Fr. JOSEPH served as Dean of St. Mary Cathedral in Damascus and as overseer of Holy Cross Church and other parishes in the suburbs of Damascus. He served as superintendent of the secondary school in Damascus from 1980 until 1983. Father JOSEPH then went abroad to pastor the Antiochian Orthodox Church in London, England, from 1983 to 1986, and then the Antiochian Orthodox Church in Cyprus from 1986 until 1991, when he was elected bishop.

His Grace was consecrated with the title Bishop of Katana in Syria, and served as Patriarchal Assistant and Secretary of the Holy Synod of Antioch. In 1995 he was sent to America by Patriarch IGNATIUS IV of thrice-blessed memory and the Holy Synod at the request of Metropolitan PHILIP of thrice-blessed memory and the Archdiocese Board of Trustees. Here, in our Archdiocese, Bishop JOSEPH was assigned to serve the churches of the West Coast by Metropolitan PHILIP. Bishop JOSEPH was enthroned at St. Nicholas Cathedral by Metropolitan PHILIP as the first Bishop of the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West on September 12, 2004.

On December 11, 2011, at the Church of the

Dormition of the Theotokos in the Patriarchal Monastery of Our Lady of Balamand in Lebanon, Patriarch IGNATIUS IV elevated Bishop JOSEPH to the rank of Archbishop, in honor of his many years of service as a bishop, both in our Archdiocese and in the Patriarchate of Antioch.

On Thursday, July 3, 2014, the Holy Synod of Antioch, meeting in Balamand, Lebanon, elected Archbishop JOSEPH to be Metropolitan of All North America.

Metropolitan JOSEPH's achievements in apostolic ministry over the course of almost twenty years of diakonia as Bishop of the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West, as well as the Locum Tenens of the Diocese of Eagle River and the Pacific Northwest, form a solid testimony to his spiritual, ethical, and personal leadership. Over a vast expanse of the western United States and Canada, including Alaska, Metropolitan JOSEPH tirelessly and unrelentingly maintained a personal apostolic presence in the more than sixty parishes under his care in his years as Bishop of the Diocese of Los Angeles. His Eminence also maintained a personal culture of contact, by direct phone, with all his clergy. Many of the clergy and laity testify that Sayidna always remembered and acted on any important issue placed before him. This unique combination of traits – sobriety and blameless familiarity – has formed the bedrock for his personal effectiveness with all.

Based upon his solid spiritual, intellectual, and cultural formation and education, Metropolitan JOSEPH effectively established solid and meaningful Annual Clergy Seminars and deepened

the spiritual and educational experience of both clergy and laity at the annual Parish Life Conferences. He brought in many and diverse Orthodox authors, leaders, and teachers to enrich the clergy and the laity of his two western dioceses. This served to promote a strong sense of clergy brotherhood and inter-parochial exchanges. Guest speakers and visitors constantly remarked that Archbishop JOSEPH's clergy were outstanding in their consistent and active involvement in such events. His Eminence labored intensely to deepen the spiritual life of his clergy, by encouraging frequent confession, personal prayer, continual education, and a heightened sense of the fullness of our Orthodox Christian tradition of interior and ascetical transfiguration in Christ.

During these years, His Eminence also demonstrated episcopal hospitality in his way of life and led the way in cultivating an active pan-Orthodox community in the western United States and Canada. All of the canonical Orthodox hierarchs of the West related to Archbishop JOSEPH in a personal way as an episcopal concelebrant. This episcopal brotherhood was increasingly reflected in the inter-parochial interaction of the priests and laity of all the parishes across the western states and provinces.

Metropolitan JOSEPH also established strong, clear, and straight-forward liturgical guidance for all his parishes. He pioneered the use of the internet in publishing the entire text of all the Sunday and festal services of the Church throughout the year. His love for the divine services inspired him to improve the liturgical praxis of all the clergy, through constant interactions and special teaching. In addition, he constantly promoted the spiritual climate of the dioceses under his care with such things as "the thought of the day."

Metropolitan JOSEPH is fluent in English, Arabic and Greek, and is conversant in other European languages. His name-day is the second Sunday after Pascha (JOSEPH of Arimathea).





A photograph of Metropolitan JOSEPH, an elderly man with a white beard and glasses, wearing a black clerical shirt with a white collar and a gold chain with a large medallion. He is seated in a dark leather chair in front of a large window with a view of green foliage. The text "Our First Interview With Metropolitan JOSEPH" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

# Our First Interview With Metropolitan JOSEPH

Bishop JOHN visited Metropolitan JOSEPH on July 26, 2014, to receive his blessings and a message for the readers of *The WORD*. Metropolitan JOSEPH was hospitable, candid and loving. Here is what he had to say.

We thank God for all of His blessings, wisdom and guidance bestowed upon us. I thank our Father in Christ, Patriarch JOHN X, for his leadership, love and constant prayers for this Archdiocese. We pray to almighty God that He will grant our Father, Patriarch JOHN X, strength and perseverance during this critical time in the life of our Patriarchate, especially the challenges and danger facing the people and land of the Middle East. We thank my brother Metropolitans, the members of the Holy Synod of Antioch, for their confidence, their love and their support. I also would like to take this opportunity to thank my brother hierarchs of this Archdiocese for all of their hard work, godly ministry and efforts to maintain the unity and strength of our Archdiocese. We pray that the merciful God will remember our beloved Metropolitan PHILIP in His heavenly Kingdom and will reward him richly for all of the accomplishments realized during his half-century ministry. He left for us a big legacy to build upon.

Now we begin a new chapter in the life the Archdiocese. The Archdiocese is not one person, but the whole body; metropolitan, hierarchs, clergy, monastics and all the believers. If we work together as a team – and I call all of us to work as a team – the Archdiocese will be strengthened and Metropolitan PHILIP from the Kingdom of God will rejoice. When I say that we work as a team, it means that everyone shares in this ministry. We don't have to wait for invitations to serve. Although service needs to be orderly, I urge each of you to recognize that this Archdiocese is your home, your life and your responsibility, too. God has entrusted this Archdiocese to all of us. Just as your family gathers at home, when we gather as the Archdiocese we are one big family. Jesus is the head of this family. He is the vine and we are the branches. We have a lot of work ahead of us. We have a lot of work to do. There is no time to waste. Saving souls cannot be delayed until tomorrow.

I will work ceaselessly with my brother hierarchs of this Archdiocese, visiting, encouraging, guiding and teaching. We will listen to our people. Together we will study and share life, deepening our faith. The clergy are asked to work hard and maintain godliness in their lives, homes and parishes. They are to obey the teachings of our Lord and convey the true message of Jesus Christ to every home and, most especially, to the lost sheep everywhere in this vast Archdiocese. I call upon them to do all that they can, using everything under their control

for the sake of our shared godly ministry. I call upon all of our believers to make their spiritual life their first priority. We must not be given up to excuses, because God has prepared everything for us. It is right for us to be with Him and to be obedient to His teachings, keeping all of the Christian values in our life and living according to them. If we keep our eyes and attention on the Christian values, our life will be enriched and our children will be safeguarded from evil attacks.

You and I together have a great ministry to save the beautiful and wonderful souls that God has entrusted us with. Surely, we will build using bricks and stones so that the Archdioceses prospers and its properties are well-maintained, but your salvation and the salvation of your children is the real goal. I need your prayers and support, as well as the prayers and support of all of the Antiochian people, both financially and spiritually.

Together we need to help those who are unfortunate here and abroad. We need to bring joy and hope to those who are hurting. We need a Christianity of action. We need to help wherever it is needed.

I promise to use all the power and influence of my office to give voice to those who need to be advocated for. I will speak for the sake of justice and peace so that our voice can be heard. We will not forget the Christians and others who are suffering in the troubled areas of the world. Our brothers and sisters who are suffering need our witness and



support. We will not ignore their suffering and we stand with them.

Two areas that are dear to my heart are monastic life and the youth (camp ministry). Patriarch ELIAS IV of blessed memory, after his visit to North America in the 1970s, addressed the seminarians and said, “In North America they have everything, but lack monasteries.” For years

more monasteries throughout the Archdiocese. The other priority dear to my heart is our youth. I want to keep them in the faith and sustain their spiritual lives. They need out attention and prayers, as well as our sacrifices for this task. We need to improve our camps and further develop youth programs. I will need the help of our hierarchs, clergy and faithful to accomplish these goals.



We have a lot of work ahead of us. We have a lot of work to do. There is no time to waste. Saving souls cannot be delayed until tomorrow.

Metropolitan JOSEPH commemorates Patriarch JOHN X at the Unity Conference Liturgy

this has been on my heart, and now the time has come to meet this challenge. Beloved, monastic life strengthens the life of the church as monastics bear witness to the biblical truths in the way they live their lives. In general and in this Archdiocese in particular, we would be well-served to have a strong monastic witness. Therefore we are looking ahead to see if our old and young people throughout the Archdiocese are willing to respond to God’s call. We are already blessed with two monasteries as a start: St. Silouan the Athonite Monastery in Wichita, and St. Thekla in Glenville, Pennsylvania. We will make serious efforts to have

In the future, our investment in our youth will bring forth spiritual leaders, good fathers and mothers, good citizens and Orthodox Christians able to share our faith with America and our children. I know that it is not easy and this looks crazy and impossible, but with God all things are possible. Remember that St. Paul says in his letter to the Philippians, “I can do all things in Christ who strengthens me” (4:13).

Thank you for your prayers and support.

# ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE

## ORDAINED

AMMARI, Elias (Loui), to the diaconate by Metropolitan JOSEPH, on April 23, 2014, at St. Nicholas Cathedral, Los Angeles, California. He is attached to the Cathedral.

MAHFOUZ, John, to the diaconate by Metropolitan JOSEPH, on May 18, 2014, at St. Anthony Church, San Diego, California.

TANNUS, Gabriel (Jabra), to the diaconate by Bishop NICHOLAS, on May 11, 2014. He is a second-year seminarian at St. Vladimir’s Seminary.

## ELEVATED

FERZI, Priest Elias, to the dignity of Archpriest by Metropolitan JOSEPH, on May 11, 2014, at St. Philip Church, Edmonton, Alberta.

## RECEIVED

SARCHIZIAN, Priest Minas, from the Romanian Archdiocese. He is attached to St. Michael Church, Van Nuys, California.

## REPOSED

ALLEN, Very Rev. John (Brenden) of St. Michael Church, Whittier, California, in July of 2014. He is survived by his wife Joan.

BETHONEY, Fr. Robert James, on June 17, 2014, at the age of 73. He is survived by his wife Khouria Elizabeth and their married daughter Alexis. He was attached to St. George, El Paso, Texas.

MATHESON, Very Rev. Dr. Daniel, on July 5, 2014, at the age of 99. Father Daniel was born on the family farm in Pictou County, Nova Scotia. He was the youngest of four children born to Charlie and Annie Matheson. He was predeceased in 2010 by his beloved wife of 68 years, Presbyteria Vera. He is survived by his devoted children Mary (Crawford), Neil (Donna) and Peter (Cindy). He was blessed with four grandchildren: Rawni, David, Heather and Danielle. He took much delight in being the great-grandfather of Kate, Sam, Will, Jack and Cullen.

# DAILY DEVOTIONS

OCTOBER 2014  
V. Rev. Fr. George Alberts

- 1. HEBREWS 9:1-7; LUKE 10:38-42; 11:27-28 (FAST)
- 2. EPHESIANS 4:14-19; LUKE 6:12-19
- 3. EPHESIANS 4:17-25; LUKE 6:17-23 (FAST)
- 4. 1 CORINTHIANS 14:20-25; LUKE 5:17-26
- 5. 2 CORINTHIANS 6:16-7:1; LUKE 6:31-36
- 6. EPHESIANS 4:25-32; LUKE 6:24-30
- 7. EPHESIANS 5:20-26; LUKE 6:37-45
- 8. EPHESIANS 5:25-33; LUKE 6:46-7:1 (FAST)
- 9. EPHESIANS 5:33-6:9; LUKE 7:17-30
- 10. EPHESIANS 6:18-24; LUKE 7:31-35 (FAST)
- 11. 1 CORINTHIANS 15:39-45; LUKE 5:27-32
- 12. TITUS 3:8-15; LUKE 8:5-15
- 13. PHILIPPIANS 1:1-7; LUKE 7:36-50
- 14. PHILIPPIANS 1:8-14; LUKE 8:1-3
- 15. PHILIPPIANS 1:12-20; LUKE 8:22-25 (FAST)
- 16. PHILIPPIANS 1:20-27; LUKE 9:7-11
- 17. PHILIPPIANS 1:27-2:4; LUKE 9:12-18 (FAST)
- 18. COLOSSIANS 4:5-9, 14, 18; LUKE 10:16-21
- 19. 2 CORINTHIANS 11:31-12:9; LUKE 7:11-16
- 20. PHILIPPIANS 2:12-16; LUKE 9:18-22
- 21. PHILIPPIANS 2:17-23; LUKE 9:23-27
- 22. PHILIPPIANS 2:24-30; LUKE 9:44-50 (FAST)
- 23. PHILIPPIANS 3:1-8; LUKE 9:49-56
- 24. PHILIPPIANS 3:8-19; LUKE 10:1-15 (FAST)
- 25. 2 CORINTHIANS 1:8-11; LUKE 7:2-10
- 26. 2 TIMOTHY 2:1-10; LUKE 8:26-39
- 27. PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23; LUKE 10:22-24
- 28. COLOSSIANS 1:1-2, 7-11; LUKE 11:1-10
- 29. COLOSSIANS 1:18-23; LUKE 11:9-13 (FAST)
- 30. COLOSSIANS 1:24-29; LUKE 11:14-23
- 31. COLOSSIANS 2:1-7; LUKE 11:23-26 (FAST)



# Statement of the July 2014 Meeting of the Holy Synod of Antioch



Holy Synod at Balamand after the election of Metropolitan JOSEPH

*(The following official translation has been provided by the Patriarchate of Antioch.)*

The Third Ordinary Session of the Holy Synod of Antioch was held between 1 and July 4, 2014. His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X presided over the meeting, with the participation of Their Eminences the Metropolitans SPIRIDON (Archdiocese of Zahleh and dependencies), GEORGES (Archdiocese of Mount Lebanon and dependencies), YOUHANNA (Archdiocese of Lattakia and dependencies), ELIAS (Archdiocese of Beirut and dependencies), ELIA (Archdiocese of Hama and dependencies), ELIAS (Archdiocese of Tyre, Sidon and dependencies), ANTONIO (Archdiocese of Mexico, Venezuela and dependencies), SERGIOS (Archdiocese of Chile), DAMASKINOS (Archdiocese of Brazil and dependencies), SABA (Archdiocese of Houran and All Jabal Al Arab), PAUL (Archdiocese

of Australia and New Zealand), GEORGES (Archdiocese of Homs and dependencies), SILOUAN (Archdiocese of Buenos Aires and All Argentina), BASILOS (Archdiocese of Akkar and dependencies), EPHREM (Archdiocese of Tripoli, El- Koura and dependencies), IGNATIUS (Archdiocese of France, Western and Southern Europe) and ISAAC (Archdiocese of Germany and Central Europe).

Also, in attendance were Their Eminences the Archbishops NIPHON (Saykali) and JOSEPH (Zehlawi), and Their Graces the Bishops MOSES (El Khoury), LOUKA (El Khouri), GHATTAS (Hazim), ALEXANDER (Mofarrej), NICOLAS (Baalbaki), IGNATIUS (Semaan), ATHANASIOS (Fahd), DIMITRI (Cherbak), ELIE (Toumeh), CONSTANTINE (Kayal), JOHN (Haykal), ROMANOS (Daoud), JOHN (Abdallah), NICHOLAS (Ozone), EPHREM (Maalouli) the Patriarchal Vicar

and Secretary the Holy Synod, and Economos Fr. George Dimas, the Record-Keeper of the Holy Synod. His Eminence Metropolitan PAUL (Yazigi) Aleppo was also present in the prayers and invocations of the Synod Fathers, despite his absence caused by his abduction.

be presented to the churches in order to discuss its implementation in the Antiochian sphere.

The Synod Fathers reviewed the recommendations presented by the General Antiochian Conference held in Balamand between 25 and 29, June 2014. They offered thanks to the Lord



Holy Synod of Antioch meets at the Balamand. Patriarch JOHN X chairs the synod meeting.

In the opening session of the Holy Synod of Antioch, the Synod Fathers welcomed with great joy Their Beatitudes the Antiochian Patriarchs: MAR BECHARA BOTROS Al-Rai, IGNATIUS EPHREM II Karim, GREGORIOS III Laham, and IGNACE YOUSSEF III Younan, along with their accompanying bishops. The prelates discussed together ways to allow them to discover the depths of their unity in Christ, and to strengthen the witness of the Christian presence in the Antiochian sphere. This witness is based on the evangelical spirit, and is subject to the requirements of human relationships based on selfless love. This common endeavor seeks to preserve the well-being of the suffering Middle Easterners and their well-being. Thus, they decided to create a joint commission for the purpose of stimulating dialogue and cooperation between the Antiochian churches and preparing a joint action plan. This plan will

God for the success of this Conference, during which the faithful were given the opportunity to discuss several issues with their spiritual fathers and hear what the Spirit is saying to the Churches in a filial spirit of love, and in an atmosphere of openness and affability. The Synod Fathers commended the spiritual vigilance of the faithful, their commitment to their Church matters, and their labor in the field of the Lord in a cooperative spirit of love. The Synod members decided to form a synodal commission in order to study these recommendations and submit the results to the Holy Synod.

The Synod Fathers were informed of the decision of His Eminence Metropolitan CONSTANTINE (Papastephano), Metropolitan of Baghdad, Kuwait, the Arabian Peninsula and dependencies, to resign from leading his Archdiocese. The Fathers accepted his resignation, and thanked





Patriarch JOHN X

His Eminence for all his efforts and services for the Archdiocese. They prayed to the Lord God to strengthen him and give him many blessings in his old age. Furthermore, His Beatitude gave the Synod Fathers a detailed presentation on the visit he made to this Archdiocese, during which he met the faithful in the Kingdom of Bahrain and in the United Arab Emirates. In this visit, His Beatitude had the opportunity to see their pastoral needs and was able to meet with the leaders of their parishes. The faithful have shown their readiness to stimulate and strengthen the Antiochian Orthodox presence in these countries. In this context, the Synod Fathers decided to review the geographical composition of the Archdiocese, which was reconstituted as follows:

1. The Archdiocese of Baghdad, Kuwait and dependencies, covering Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Oman;
2. The Patriarchal Vicariate of the Kingdom of Bahrain;
3. The Patriarchal Vicariate of the Emirate of Qatar;
4. The Patriarchal Vicariate of the United Arab Emirates.

Similarly, the Synod Fathers listened to a detailed presentation given by His Beatitude about his recent irenic visit to the Russian Orthodox Church, and the visit's main ecclesiastical and civil aspects.

The members of the Holy Synod also discussed the situation in the Archdiocese of New York and All North America, whose metropolitan seat has been vacant since the repose of His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP (Saliba) of thrice-blessed memory. Subsequently, they elected in an extraordinary session His Eminence JOSEPH (Zehlawi) as Metropolitan of New York and All North America. The fathers sent their greetings to all their faithful in this Archdiocese, congratulating them for the election of their new Archpastor. They also conveyed their best wishes to the new Metropolitan, praying to the Lord God to bless his service at the Divine Altar of the Lord.

The Synod members discussed the importance of the upcoming Great Pan-Orthodox Council, scheduled to take place in 2016. They emphasized the importance of the testimony of Orthodox unity in the world today, and the need to overcome all obstacles that might obstruct the

Council's success.

In recognition of the pastoral labor of Archbishop NIPHON (Saykali), and in tribute to his role in the expansion of ties with the Russian Orthodox Church and in consolidating the Antiochian presence in the Russian sphere, the Synod decided to dignify him by granting him the honorary title of "Metropolitan of Chehba (Philipopolis)."

The Synod Fathers contemplated the pain and sufferings of the Syrian people. They heard a report of the visit of His Beatitude to the city Maaloula, and then to the ruined Archdiocese of Homs. They were informed of the charitable and relief work being led and conducted by the Orthodox Church in Syria. Given the magnitude of the events that overcame the people and their Church, and the tragedy and damage that have befallen both human beings and the very stones, sparing neither monasteries nor places of worship, the Synod Fathers have beseeched their faithful to remain attached to their land and not to abandon it. They asked them to remain steadfast, since their presence in this land is a witness to Christ's conquering of death in His Holy Resurrection. They admonished them to turn to God, and not to despair, because God is with us, like dew in the middle of flames. In these difficult times, God cures our many injuries, and soothes our great pain.

The Synod Fathers also deplored the silence of the world on the terrorism that affects the Syrian people and disfigures the dignity of the human person, whether by kidnappings, various tortures, and forced displacement of peoples. They called on the international community and appealed to the living conscience of all people to stop acting only as spectators of these afflictions. The Synod Fathers invited them to take the initiative to work seriously to end the crisis and to allow refugees to return to their homes and villages, and to help free all abducted people – the nuns and priests, as well as the two Metropolitans of Aleppo, JOHN (Ibrahim) and PAUL (Yazigi) who were kidnapped more than 14 months ago. Their abduction is in itself a precedent with no equivalent in the history of this East. This is a flagrant violation of human rights and the rights of groups, and is met with a global and regional indifference.

Lebanon was also present in the discussions of Synod members. They called on all parties concerned to hurry and fill the constitutional vacuum

created by the vacancy of the Presidency of the Republic. The quick election of a president would reduce the dangers that threaten Lebanon in the midst of regional changes underway. They called on leaders to set aside their factional disputes and narrow perspectives, in loyalty to their country, in order to work for the development of their people and their well-being. They confirmed the need to fight criminal acts and terrorists.

The Synod Fathers also prayed for the country of Iraq, which is also in crisis. They invited the world to turn its attention to the sufferings of people who have endured the plagues of war for decades now. They called on men of good will to work for the unity of this country, the development of its citizens, and for the preservation of the Christian presence in it.

The Synod Fathers also turned to the resisting Palestine, whose children continue to be brought every day to the slaughter, while the world has hardened its heart and blocked its ears and closed its eyes in order not to see, or hear, or understand the continuous tragedy of the Palestinian people who are killed, removed from their houses, and forcibly displaced and desecrated. The Synod Fathers ask the world to work seriously and quickly to find a quick and fair solution to this conflict which remains a bleeding wound in humanity.

The Fathers also congratulated their Muslim brothers in the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, asking God to send down His peace upon them and their countries, so that they can overcome this terrible time. They reaffirmed the importance of strengthening the bond that unites us all, in order to work against the dangers that are befalling us, and to rebuild our countries, physically and humanly, on the basis of divine values.

In conclusion, the members of the Holy Synod expressed their joy in seeing the Christian witness given by the faithful throughout the Antiochian sphere, especially in the Archdioceses of Europe, Australia and the Americas. The Fathers wish to remind them that they are called to be "the salt of the earth and the leaven that leavens all the bread." This is achieved through their involvement in the civic work of their homelands, working in the service of all persons, beyond race or religious affiliation, through formulating policies that go beyond the conditions of the present, incarnating the Lord's sovereignty in thought and life.



# Bishop ANTOUN Reflects

ON HIS LIFE IN THE ARCHDIOCESE, METROPOLITAN PHILIP, AND METROPOLITAN JOSEPH

We were at the Antiochian Village in July, 2014, for the Clergy Symposium, sitting in front of the portrait of Patriarch ALEXANDER (Tahan), the Patriarch who ordained Bishop ANTOUN to the diaconate in 1951. Bishop ANTOUN began to reminisce about the late Patriarch and his ordination. Metropolitan PHILIP served this Patriarch as his Secretary and Deacon. Sayidna PHILIP found this portrait at St. John of Damascus Parish during a pastoral visit. “How important it is for us to remember those godly men who went before us, forming our spiritual lives through their witness and teachings,” remarked our senior Bishop ANTOUN.

*Sayidna ANTOUN has served the Archdiocese of North America for 60 years. He is part of the history of our Church, witnessing its growth and changes as a priest and bishop, as a pastor and as an administrator; as an immigrant and as an American. As we experience our transition from the leadership of Sayidna, PHILIP to that of Sayidna JOSEPH, we are blessed to hear Bishop ANTOUN's reflections, visions and hopes.*

I served as a teacher in the Orthodox School in Damascus, and later as the Principal of St. John of Damascus School in Syria. I then moved to San Paolo, Brazil, and served the Church there as a deacon before coming to the United States, where I studied at St. Vladimir's Seminary. Almost right away I was reunited by phone with my long-time friend, Metropolitan PHILIP, who was then a priest in Cleveland, Ohio. Because I missed my friend Fr. PHILIP, I went to visit him there. I had asked how long a trip Cleveland would be from New York. He told me it would be a few hours: just tell the Greyhound Bus [people] you want Cleveland and they will bring you here. The trip took overnight! I found my friend PHILIP waiting for me in the Church.

It was Metropolitan Anthony BASHIR who invited me to serve in North America. With the permission of my bishop in Brazil, Metropolitan IGNATIUS (Ferzly), I made North America my home. I studied at St. Vladimir's Seminary, and soon Metropolitan ANTHONY ordained me in Boston during a Parish Life Conference hosted by

St. George Church on St. George Street. He asked me to serve temporarily at St. George Church in Philadelphia, where I served seven years, and during which time we hosted two Parish Life conferences.

In 1967 Metropolitan PHILIP appointed me to serve St. George in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. During that time Metropolitan PHILIP suffered his first heart attack. He needed some help, so he asked me to move from Toronto to help him in Brooklyn, New York. For two years we searched for a new headquarters and we found a place, the present headquarters in Englewood, New Jersey. During these eight years at the headquarter I managed the bookstore, cut the grass, cooked meals and carried suitcases. I also taught our Antiochian students at St. Vladimir's. Among my students are Bishops BASIL, JOHN and THOMAS, as well as many of our clergy. In 1975 I witnessed the reunification of the Toledo and New York Archdioceses. This was a great day in the history of the Antiochian Church in America. In 1977, after the visit of Patriarch ELIAS IV, I asked to go back to parish life and went to St. George, Allentown, where I served one year. Then Fr. Gregory Abboud died, so I was appointed the Dean of the St. Nicholas Cathedral to replace him. From that time Metropolitan PHILIP asked me to serve as an Auxiliary Bishop. After some struggle within the Synod of Antioch, I was elected to serve as Auxiliary Bishop. During my thirty years with Metropolitan PHILIP he sent me over all of the Archdiocese, visiting parishes



Bishop ANTOUN at the Antiochian Village Library

and establishing missions. In 1987, after long discussions, Metropolitan PHILIP accepted the Evangelical Orthodox Church into the Antiochian Archdiocese. Traveling to all of these parishes and preparing them to serve within the traditions of the Antiochian Church was a highlight of my ministry. I witnessed the establishment of the Antiochian Women in Atlanta, Georgia. These women are the backbone of the Archdiocese. I was also there for the creation of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch, Teen SOYO, and the rebirth of the Fellowship. Metropolitan PHILIP and I worked so hard establishing, nurturing and supporting these organizations. We also worked hard supporting the clergy and encouraging the parishes. In the 1970s we found a camp in Pennsylvania. We fought hard to establish the Antiochian Village Camp, and then the Center, the Library and the Chapel at the Antiochian Village.

Since my consecration as a bishop, I traveled throughout the Archdiocese. All of my work brought me happiness. The love of my life is

the Archdiocese, her people, and especially the clergy. With my partner, Metropolitan PHILIP, we established the Antiochian House of Study. Here at the symposium we see around us the many deacons and priests and bishops prepared to work with us through the programs of the House of Studies.

My life as Deacon, Priest and Bishop of this Archdiocese was wonderful. Now at an age of reflection, I hope that this Archdiocese, under the leadership of our new Metropolitan JOSEPH, will remain blessed. He has a big job for the future of Antioch in this land. He has my support and my prayers.

I wish to express my gratitude to my life-long friend, the late Metropolitan PHILIP. I also thank the Archdiocese Board of Trustees, The Antiochian Women, The Order of St. Ignatius, and the youth, asking God to continue to bless them and keep them united in faith. I pray that we continue in unity in the Archdiocese under the leadership of the new Metropolitan. I love and admire this man.



# Next Class of the Pastoral Marriage and Family Counseling Program



The Antiochian House of Studies Program is again offering this certificate program in 2015, with course work to be done at the Antiochian Village May 11-15, May18-22; and August 24-28, August 31-September 4, 2015. The application deadline is January 31, 2015.

This two-year training program for clergy, parish staff, or Christian Education persons will be conducted under the direction of Father Joseph Allen, with Bishop JOHN providing episcopal oversight. Applicants should have an M.Div. degree or diploma through the House of Studies and three years of parish experience. The program consists of eight courses offered in two sets of two weeks each, Monday through Friday, each requiring class time. Readings are given for each two-week course several months prior to the courses. Papers from the course are due one month following each set of courses. The classes are done in sequence; participants cannot enter

the program once it begins its two-year cycle. The program is designed to provide hands-on training for clergy and others who serve in the parish. Participants can expect courses that are concrete, practical, and helpful in parish and community settings. The courses include presentations by faculty of concrete experiences of listening, interviewing, and counseling, demonstrating skills that have helped individuals, couples, and families (including video segments). Participants will practice skills in pairs and under supervision. Approaches to, and models of, marriage and family counseling are demonstrated and discussed. Participants can expect to develop a strong ethical, pastoral, and professional approach to marriage and family counseling in order to be helpful to others. Faculty members are trained in pastoral counseling with couples and families, and have many years of experience. Once accepted in the program, participants receive a packet that includes guidelines, course syllabi, and reading requirements for the first two courses. Courses are graded and papers returned after each pair taken. Following completion of the final courses, grades are sent to the House of Studies and participants receive a certificate in Pastoral Marriage and Family Counseling. Coursework may not be transferable to other graduate programs, but the program does provide intense training and a certificate for those serving in parish settings. The deadline for applications is January 31, 2015. A non-refundable application fee of \$50 should be sent to the Antiochian Village, 140 Church Camp Trail, Bolivar, PA 15923. As noted above, coursework for 2015 will be held at the Antiochian Village May 11-15, May 18-22, 2015; and August 24-28, August 31- September 4, 2015. For further information, contact Amy Stiffler, at 724.238-3677 or [events@antiochianvillage.org](mailto:events@antiochianvillage.org); or Bishop JOHN at [frjpa@aol.com](mailto:frjpa@aol.com).

# Najib Saliba Speaks of Metropolitan PHILIP at the Mercy Meal

Reverend clergy, members of the diplomatic corps, members of the Board of Trustees, ladies and gentlemen: on behalf of my family here and in Lebanon, and for myself, I want to thank you all for coming from near and far to bid my brother, Metropolitan PHILIP a last farewell. He loved you all, and you loved him in return. I can tell you for certain, and many of you already know, that whatever he did and said, the interests of the Church and the community were uppermost in his mind. He dedicated his whole life to the service of God and man, from the age of fourteen to his last breath last week. He was like a candle which burns itself out to provide light for others. Metropolitan PHILIP was no ordinary man. He was a man of action, a leader for all occasions, light or heavy, calm or stormy; he never wavered and never abandoned the ship. He never failed to rise to the demand of the moment. His passing is a tragedy of many dimensions. His family, here and in Lebanon, and all those who have been close to him, will miss him terribly in the days to come. I shall miss our historical discussions, his vision and insight into events. Orthodoxy and Orthodox unity in America will miss his leadership. The dispossessed, the downtrodden the needy and the victims of violence and natural disasters will miss his generosity, sympathy and support. The Arabs will miss a strong voice for peace and justice at one of the most critical moments in their history. Without him, the world will never be the same. With him no dream was impossible. Without him all dreams seem impossible. As one Arab poet put it, “In the darkness of the night, people look for the moon and find it not.” May his memory be eternal, and may God keep you and protect you against any and all adversities.

Above right: Archbishop DEMETRIOS of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese at the funeral of Metropolitan PHILIP



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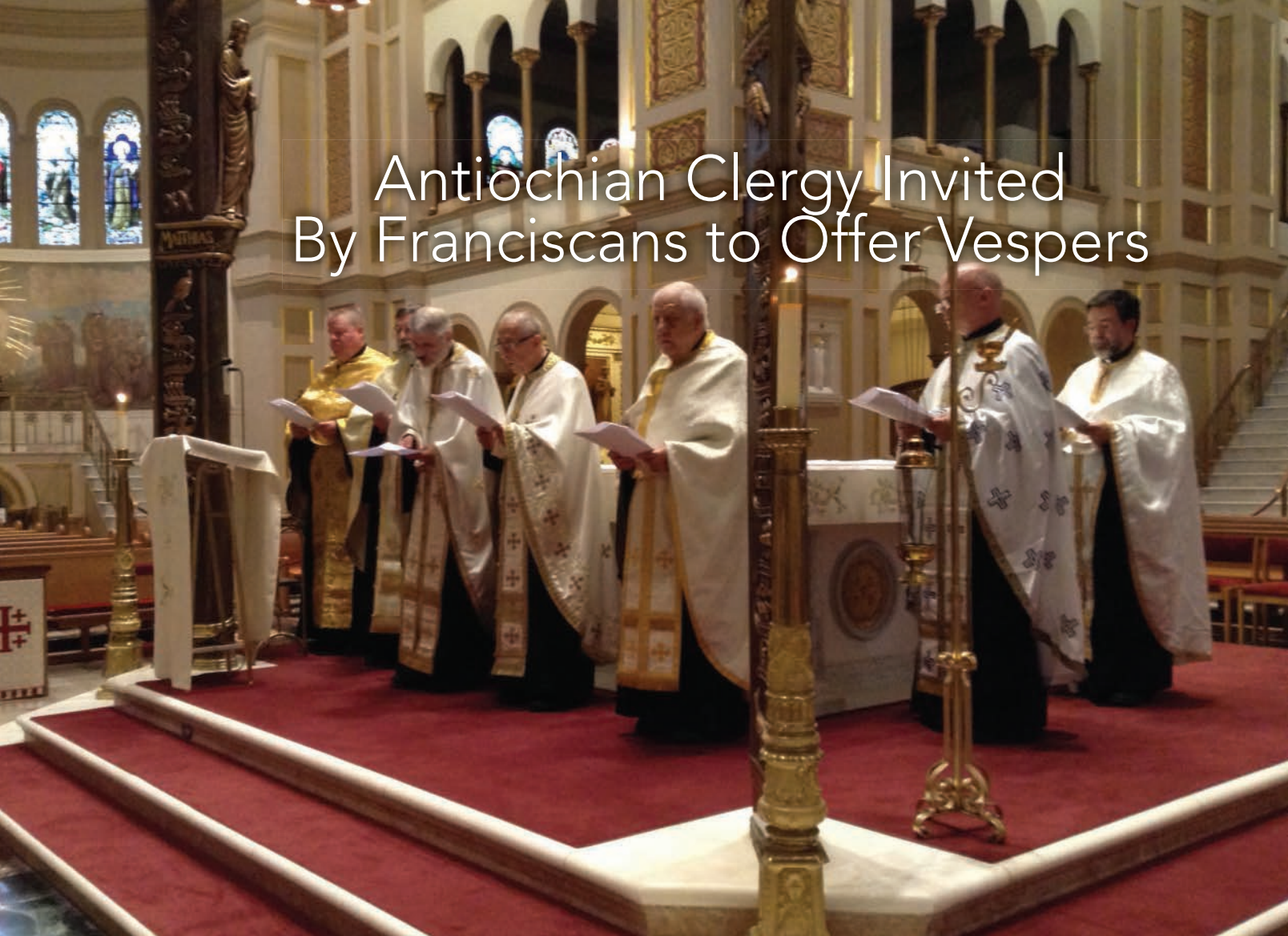
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# Antiochian Clergy Invited By Franciscans to Offer Vespers



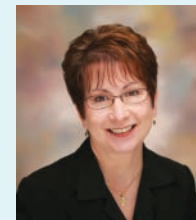
Top: Washington, DC Atiochian clergy

The Antiochian clergy of the Capital Deanery (the Greater Washington, DC/Baltimore area) were invited by the Franciscans of Washington, DC, to offer Orthodox Vespers at the Franciscan Monastery as part of the fiftieth anniversary celebration of the meeting of Pope Paul VI and Ecumenical Patriarch ATHENAGORUS in Jerusalem in 1964. This anniversary was also marked in Jerusalem this year by the meeting of Pope Francis I and Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW on May 25, where they prayed together for peace in the Middle East.

The Franciscans wrote to Metropolitan PHILIP, of blessed memory, before his repose, asking for his blessing for this service, emphasizing our common need to support the suffering Christians of the Middle East. Frs George Rados, Joseph Rahal, Isaac Crow, John Anderson, Nicholas Alford, Patrick Cardine and James Hamrick were joined by choir members from three parishes in offering Vespers in the beautiful Memorial Church of the Holy Sepulchre. After the service all enjoyed the warm hospitality of our Roman Catholic brethren at a reception in the cloister of the monastery.

## Sharing the Faith

News from the Department of Christian Education



### From the Director's Desk Beloved in Christ,

Welcome to those of you who are joining this ministry, and greetings to those who are returning! One of my favorite quotes about working with children comes from St. John Chrysostom: "This, then, is our task: to educate both ourselves and our children in godliness ..." St. John Chrysostom, Homily on Ephesians 6:1-4.

If you take a look at that quote, it mentions educating yourself, first. The one needful thing, is to sit at the Master's feet. Do you have a favorite chair? Can you put your Bible or prayer book, or icon nearby? Maybe some days all you can do is to touch the Bible as you pass by; some days you can sit and read and pray. Make the little effort, see the result. Bring the peace and joy into your lesson planning and into your classroom.

There is much to share in these few pages.

- What's New at the Department
- Internet Ministry
- Departmental Meeting Report
- MS/HS Teach-Together Texts
- MATTHEW [www.antiochian.org/matthew25](http://www.antiochian.org/matthew25)
- OI 2014: THEOSIS *Your Life with God*
- The Plan of Salvation Curriculum Update

A brief note to Church School Directors to make parents who are sending a child away to college aware of the Orthodox Christian Fellowship – our college organization. Their website is [www.ocf.net](http://www.ocf.net). The parents can notify them so they may connect the student with a parish and an OCF chapter.

May God be with us all as we embark on another year of engaging the hearts of the children with Christ,

In the service of the Lord,

*Carole A. Buleza*

### What's New at the Department?

Elaine Atherholt who worked as Staff Assistant for the past year, has left for college, and her mother has taken her place. Leslie Atherholt graduated from Penn State University with a degree in advertising. She worked as a media buyer for a small advertising agency in Baltimore and as the Marketing Director for Special Olympics Maryland before taking time off to raise and home-school her three children. She lives in York, Pennsylvania, with her husband, Deacon Jerome Atherholt, and their family. They are members of St. John Chrysostom Orthodox Church. How fortunate we are!



### Internet Ministry

We have a whole team now engaged in Internet ministry, which includes Pinterest, Facebook, and website pages. In addition to our AODCE Pinterest Board, Kristina Wenger handles our Facebook and website pages for Orthodox Christian Parenting and Church School Teachers. Kh. Leslee Abud handles Facebook for Church School Directors and I handle that website page. Catherine Sullivan handles the Orthodox Christian Small Church Schools Facebook page, and the blog, "The Mustard Seed." You can find Kristina's review of "God Is Not Dead" on the Parenting Facebook Page, and on the Teacher website she has placed instructions on doing lesson plans.

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The Department of Christian Education in Chicago. Back: Bob Snyder, Fr. George Alberts, Kyra Buleza, Fr. Christopher Rigden-Briscall, Fr. Michael Gillis. Front: Sandy Mitchell, Catherine Sullivan, Carole Buleza, Vasiliki, Kh. Gigi Shadid Betty Randolph, Kh. Leslee Abud. Not present: Kh. Anna Timko-Hughes, Hollie Benton, Gail Meena Malaniak

### Report on the Meeting of the Christian Education Department June 3-4, 2014, Chicago

By Catherine Sullivan, Departmental Associate

A few days before the special convention in Chicago to nominate three candidates for the position of Metropolitan, the staff of the Department of Christian Education met with Director Mrs. Carole Buleza in the same venue. Fortunately, most of the Department, coming from British Columbia to the north, and South Carolina to the south, was able to attend in order to work together on recommendations for educational materials and programs for middle and high school students.

**Evaluating** – Our time was spent evaluating the current curriculum available as well as experimental curriculum not yet offered. Here we looked at whether the specific materials held

fast to Orthodox teachings, were user-friendly for administrators and teachers, were attractive to children and could be written in at lesson time. We found very few that were probably not usable, some we judged excellent, and a number we felt were very good, but simply needed updating. Staff members will be working on re-writing some pieces, pending permission of the authors, in the next few months, so that we can provide updated versions by next year.

**“Teach-Together Texts”** – There are many programs for middle and high school that consist of 5-7 lessons, in particular the Interim Curriculum pieces available from the OCEC and the “zines” published in recent years by the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. Teachers and Directors have asked for suggestions on how to piece together a year’s program for grades 6-12. During the second part of our meeting we settled on suitable “teach-together texts” for the various grades.

### Suggested “Teach-Together Texts” for Middle and High School

By Carole Buleza

Having finished a not-so-stellar few years of teaching these grades without any specific program, I was keenly aware of the need for some guidance. As the publishing situation in the pan-Orthodox world continues unresolved after five years, it remained to our staff to work creatively with what is extant – whether by modifying or by giving guidance on programming. We looked at what might fit together for an interesting year’s worth of lessons. As noted in the report, we have several other materials which we will be suggesting for “teach-together texts.”

A change to note – *The Way, The Truth, and The Life*, has previously been recommended for 8th Grade. It is our understanding that it is more commonly and successfully used over a two-year span, 8th and 9th grade. We do offer a 9th-grade alternative suggestion. In addition, we will have a few educational objectives written for the items in the Teach-Together Texts. Check the Teacher and Church School Director pages on the Christian Education website for progress on these.

The listing is below. THESE ARE NOT SOLD TOGETHER. The parentheses indicate the publisher. GOA is the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, and the number following is the number of lessons. OCEC is the Orthodox Christian Education Commission, and the number following is the number of lessons. You can find the GOA materials at goarch.org/. Type “zines” in the search bar and click on the catalog. They are on page 3. The OCEC is at orthodoxchristianed.org, the Interim Curriculum pieces are on the inner pages.

#### SIXTH GRADE

Stewardship: Serving in God’s World (GOA, 5)  
Of Your Mystical Supper (GOA, 5)  
Facing Up to Peer Pressure (GOA, 5)  
Honesty (GOA, 5)

#### SEVENTH GRADE

What’s Love Got to Do With It? (OCEC, 7)  
Journey Through Holy Week Zine (GOA, 5)  
“What Would You Do?” (OCEC, 14)

#### EIGHTH GRADE and NINTH GRADE

The Way, The Truth, and The Life (OCEC, 28)

#### ALTERNATE FOR NINTH GRADE

“The First 800 Years” (OCEC, 7)  
“The Work of Salvation” (OCEC, 7)  
“For Unto Us a Child Is Born Zine” (GOA, 4)

#### TENTH GRADE

Celebrations (OCEC, 46)

#### ELEVENTH GRADE

Heaven on Earth: The Divine Liturgy Zine (GOA, 5)  
“My Body My Spirit” (OCEC, 7)  
A Lamp Unto My Feet: Intro to the Bible Zine (GOA, 5)

[www.antiochian.org/matthew25](http://www.antiochian.org/matthew25)

A few years ago, our Archdiocesan Creative Festivals Program had as its theme, **“Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me”** (Matthew 25:40). At the conclusion of the festival a few of us spoke of how critical the Gospel passage is, and how each time we hear it we wonder if we are doing enough to fulfill it. We wondered if there was a way we could start out our children with a spirit of giving and generosity from their earliest years, through the church school, and beyond. How could we help train ourselves and especially our children to fulfill this very clear and critical mandate? **Loving God by loving our neighbor – the two beats of our hearts.**

We created a simple program for school-age children. Kh. Gigi Shadid, an associate of the department, and the mother of three young children, came up with an idea *without* adding extra lessons. The idea is to invite the children of each grade to “give” in a specific way that year. For example, the children of one of the younger grades are asked to open doors for others, all through the year. The teacher will have a small color poster to help the children remember their giving opportunity.

To HUGS we added a poster and links for Orthodox service organizations for older teens and adults, YES, Real Break, Project Mexico, and FOCUS, N.A. The resulting compilation is the resource website, MATTHEW25.org. Its purpose is to make our faithful aware of the opportunities for Orthodox to serve. To see the face of Christ in those we serve is life-changing – that is what we are encouraging – and we hope one day to hear Christ say, “Come, you blessed of my Father,





inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” (Matthew 25:24)

The web site is [www.antiochian.org/matthew25.org](http://www.antiochian.org/matthew25.org). Leslie Atherholt of the department will monitor it. If you wish to have your Orthodox organization on this site, please send your information to [aodce@aol.com](mailto:aodce@aol.com) and we'll list it as a service opportunity.

### The Orthodox Institute for Continuing Education in the Faith, 2014: “THEOSIS: Your Life with God”

If you ask theologians what salvation is in the Orthodox Church, most will likely say, “*theosis*.” Consider the word *theo-sis*. Like the word *metamorpho-sis*, it indicates that an activity is occurring. Salvation in the Orthodox Church is a verb. It is becoming god. In the words of Saint Athanasius, “For the Son of God became man so that we might become god.” Surely that should give one pause.

Is something so amazing happening in you? Could something so awesome be trying to happen? What if there is so much more to your life with God? How can you know?

While this theology was once kept in the monasteries, and even there seemed to be hidden for a long time, it has come to light now in the

last centuries and has inspired Orthodox faithful around the world. In the words of Peter 1:4, we are invited to be partakers of the divine nature by the grace of Jesus Christ who opened the gates of heaven to us through his death and resurrection, “*by which having been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature ....*”

We have many wonderful presenters, ready to explain what it means to be a “partaker of the divine nature,” among them, the renowned Fr. Anthony Coniaris (via Skype), Dr. Kyriacos Markides, and Dr. Harry Boosalis – all of whom are inspiring speakers. Dr. Boosalis will give all three of the core courses, which will make it seem like a “retreat” if you choose to take all three the same day. Joining us also is Rev. Dr. David Hester, whose expertise is the Jesus Prayer. Fr. John Oliver will speak on “The Holy Spirit and the Monastery” at Valaam, and Fr. Michael Gillis will present Isaac the Syrian’s expression of *theosis*. Mother Christophora will discuss whether the quest for theosis is different for women, Martha Condra will help us with fasting, and Elizabeth White will lead us back to “wonder,” where we first met God. Truly, this will be a weekend for spiritual renewal. I don’t think you’ll find another conference like this one.

Interviews, schedules, and registration forms are all on our website. Please register NOW. There is a change this year. NOTE: You will register for lodging and meals with the Conference Center, and for the Orthodox Institute with the Department of Christian Education. Details are at [www.antiochian.org/OI2014](http://www.antiochian.org/OI2014).

### “The Path of Salvation” Curriculum Research Update

*By Carole A. Buleza, Director, Antiochian Orthodox Department of Christian Education*

Many of you know I have been working on the foundations for a new catechetical program for a few years, which I have been calling “Catechesis of the Orthodox Way.” It’s now called, “The Path of Salvation,” after a very interesting activity I’ve been doing at training events for years now. I had planned to give an update on the progress of my research this summer at the Clergy Symposium,

but was not able to attend. Instead, I offer it here, in part. It is on my website [www.antiochian.org/christianeducation](http://www.antiochian.org/christianeducation), in its entirety, which includes some of the tables of research data noted at the end of this narrative, as well as my thoughts on “The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd.”

### The Orthodox Christian Education Commission

– In 2002, two years into my tenure as Director of the Antiochian Department of Christian Education and as Director of the OCEC Curriculum Department, I proposed to the OCEC Board of Trustees that we revise the curriculum and that we begin by determining the hundred most important prayers, icons, and points of faith that we want the children to know by 8th grade. We did this and those are called the educational

standards. The first book of the revision is the 8th- grade text, *The Way, The Truth, and The Life*, published in 2005. The four units of the text are approximately aligned with Fr. Thomas Hopko’s *The Orthodox Faith* series of four (rainbow) books. It is the text listed for 8th Grade; however, we now recommend it for use in 8th and 9th grade, so the students have more time to absorb the content. *Firm knowledge of the faith*, and *spiritual maturity* are the “two hands” I wanted to offer the students with this book and all those to follow, as knowledge alone does not make an Orthodox Christian.

**Spiritual Maturity.** “Spiritual maturity” has no set definition. Of course, for Orthodox Christians, it is easy to say “*theosis*.” But that does not

have a set definition. The question was simply, “What concepts of our Tradition are essential to the faith, distinctive to Orthodoxy, and useful in nurturing children’s spirituality?” After a great deal of searching through the *Philokalia* and many spirituality books, and discussion with the OCEC Board of Trustees, the following five aspects of our spirituality were decided upon: conversion, repentance, liturgy, struggle, wisdom. These were included in the lessons of *The Way, the Truth and The Life*.

I was not able to continue the revision project because of personal issues. I had years to think about it. I realized that one hundred points of faith, with spiritual maturity tacked on, was backwards. We wanted our children first and foremost to be *converted* to Christ, to know *repentance*, to know what it meant to offer themselves and the whole world to God at the Divine *Liturgy*, to win the *struggle* with evil, and to be wise with the *wisdom* of the saints, and then, yes, to articulate their faith. Their *spiritual strength* is what will count in the end. *Continued on [www.antiochian.org/christianeducation/plancurriculum](http://www.antiochian.org/christianeducation/plancurriculum)*

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YOUR LIFE WITH GOD

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The V. Rev. Anthony Coniaris  
Renowned author, speaker, publisher & pastor emeritus, who will join us via Skype

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER**  
Dr. Kyriacos Markides  
Professor of Sociology, University of Maine, & author of books on Christian mysticism

**CORE COURSES**  
Dr. Harry Boosalis  
Professor of Dogmatic Theology, St. Tikhon's Seminary, author & Mount Athos trip leader

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32 September 2014

Department of Christian Education



# The Road to Damascus: My Conversion

Incense, chant, vestments, and fasts – the liturgical church. The liturgical tradition, universal fraternity, history and apostolicity of the Church throughout the world are not without their reasonable attractions. The Church has left its traces in the annals of time from its foundation to the present day; these traces have fascinated me deeply for a number of years and have enlivened my study of theology and Church history in preparation for clerical ministry. My intrigue with the nature of the Christian tradition gave me reason to search beyond the shallow experiences of modernity and started me on a path that changed how I would live the Christian life.

In my experiences, I have balanced my natural inclinations on the one hand, with what I intended to be sound thinking, on the other. I have meant to equip myself on the journey at least with a basic biblical and historical framework, and intellectual honesty. While I was growing up as a modern American Protestant, I was exposed to worship in settings ranging from autonomous charismatic communities to western liturgical churches, each of which seemed to make sense in its own context. I came to the conclusion on my own that my home, as well as my future priesthood, would be found in one of the “big three” Christian traditions: the Roman Catholic Church, the Eastern Orthodox Church, or the Anglican Communion.

I assumed that, by earthly balances and measures, a man might find his home practically within the Kingdom of God. This assumption was inherently wrong, seasoned by a western pattern of thought, and rooted in pride. In the midst of what I thought to be an honest academic assessment, having tested the waters in each of the “big three,” I found myself as lost and confused as ever. The approach I had taken during my adolescent and early adult life had finally failed me. Previously, I had resolved my dilemmas by coming to a decision, informing God of that decision, and expecting Him to be faithful to bless and prosper the outcome. To be honest, the god of my life could no longer be me, but I would have to prostrate my soul before the King of Kings and let Him be God. By the time my reason found

the end of its rope, I had faced the truth that I must humble myself and let God be my everything, as He is the only good and perfect Lord. I began this new journey where I would have least expected, yet somehow for the first time I have begun to learn what it really means to submit in humility before Our Lord. The overwhelming grace of Jesus Christ and the outpoured presence of the Holy Spirit to the glory of God has reached my low estate and resurrected me from the grave of self. My experience has been one of a heart conversion which has rekindled my life in the fire of the Holy Spirit and caused my faculties to surrender as, by the divine help of His grace and mercy, I have fallen in love with my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

When you find what you think it is that you seek, it may be in the most unlikely of places. The beauty of the incomprehensible surpasses any rationale that the mind may conceive. In my search for truth, I have become entranced by the mystery that was only revealed to me once I had experienced the toils and confusion of the theology of my past traditions. The truest majesty is revealed in the benevolence of the inscrutable Giver of life, He who always provides His children shelter when they seek it. Jesus’ words to His disciples resound with eternal assurance: “I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” These words penetrated my soul as I stood, awestruck by the presence of God, and read them on the Pantocrator painted in the ceiling of St. Antony’s Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church, a place in which my spirit has found refuge for a number of months. This was the moment in which I became overcome with the anointing of the Holy Spirit. Suddenly, everything that I knew about Christian Orthodoxy within the chambers of my mind was met with an otherwise incomprehensible understanding of the heart. In the midst of the Liturgy of the Great Canon, which serves to link the narratives of the Old Testament with their ultimate fulfillment in Christ, I had come into contact with Truth. I felt the soul-quaking results of transformation. I trembled in astonishment as, in a matter

of moments, my heart bowed before its Creator and submitted to the most blessed assurance that my refuge would be found in the Eastern Orthodox Church, in the heart of Jesus Christ Himself. Finally, my soul was assured. The quest for answers was no longer a struggle. I knew without doubt that Jesus had conquered death. The Holy Spirit had illuminated the darkness of this world and filled the void left by the impermanence of earthly longings. Just as I became so moved by this undeniably honest worship, I felt the pull to fall before my God in reverence. Simultaneously, every able body at St. Antony’s moved to the aisles of the parish between the pews to prostrate before their Lord. Together we bowed, humbly receptive of all that God had granted us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control.

My journey has begun, and now I will make my way toward communion with the Church in which I have found Christ and Christ has found me. These alterations to my soul are unprecedented in my life. Never before have I been so at peace, nor so comforted in the joys which stream from the abundance of heaven. I am confident that my heart has found its belonging in the oldest Christian communion on earth, the source and heart of which is invariably its authority and its truest love, Jesus Christ.

by Brett Heide



## The Nicene Creed:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty,  
Maker of heaven and earth,  
and of all things visible and invisible;  
And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of  
God, the Only-begotten,  
Begotten of the Father before all worlds,  
Light of Light,  
Very God of Very God, Begotten, not  
made; of one essence with the Father,  
by whom all things were made:  
Who for us men and for our salvation  
came down from heaven,  
and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and  
the Virgin Mary, and became man.  
And was crucified also for us  
under Pontius Pilate, and suffered  
and was buried;  
And the third day He rose again,  
according to the Scriptures;  
And ascended into heaven, and sitteth  
at the right hand of the Father;  
And He shall come again with glory  
to judge the living and the dead,  
Whose kingdom shall have no end.  
And I believe in the Holy Spirit,  
The Lord, and Giver of Life,  
Who proceedeth from the Father,  
Who with the Father and the Son  
together is worshiped and glorified,  
Who spake by the Prophets;  
And I believe in One Holy Catholic  
and Apostolic Church.  
I acknowledge one Baptism for the  
remission of sins.  
I look for the resurrection of the dead  
and the Life of the world to come.  
Amen.



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