



# ADDRESS OF METROPOLITAN PHILIP

*to the*

**ARCHDIOCESE CONVENTION, 2003  
MIAMI, FLORIDA**

Your Eminences, Your Graces,  
Beloved Clergy, Esteemed Members  
of the Board of Trustees, Parish  
Councils, and all Faithful of our  
God-protected Archdiocese,

*“The son of man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28).*

**A**S YOU WELL KNOW, THE theme of our convention this year is “service.” In order to understand this theme, we must know its context. In Matthew 20:20, “the mother of the sons of Zebedee came up to Him (Jesus) with her sons, and kneeling before Him, she asked Him to do her a favor. And He said to her, ‘What do you want?’ She said to Him, ‘Command that these two sons of mine may sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom.’” The story continues: “And when the ten heard it, they were indignant at the two brothers.” But Jesus called them to Him and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles like to lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant and whoever would be first among you must be your slave; even the son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus is trying to teach His disciples that any honor, any prestige, any authority and any greatness, if it is not based on service, is false, prideful, empty and meaningless. If we are not willing to sacrifice even our lives as “ransom for many,” we

do not deserve to be His followers. We cannot serve others if we do not love them. In John 12:26, Jesus said: “If anyone serves me, he must follow me.” And to follow Him, we must take up the cross and follow Him. The road to the kingdom is narrow, difficult, covered with thorns and hissing reptiles. Are we willing to walk this road and accept this challenge?

Some thinkers ask, “What happened to Christianity? It is ineffective, marginalized, and without any impact on our moral, spiritual, political and social life.” I say, “Nothing has happened to Christianity; it is still treasured in the Church which Christ established and redeemed by His own blood.” Yes, my friends, Christianity is here, pure and intact; but we do not have many Christians, many true followers of Christ, especially in the so-called Christian nations of this world.

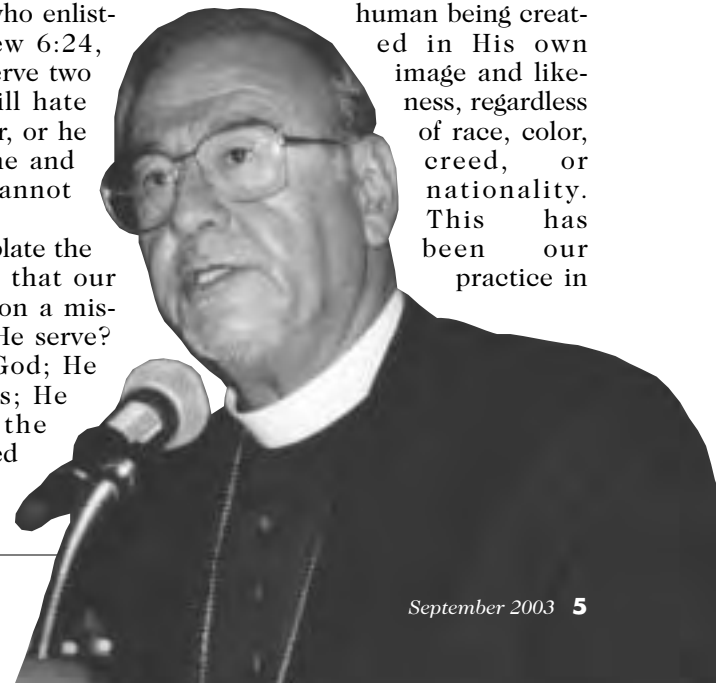
In II Timothy 2:4, St. Paul said: “No soldier on service gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to satisfy the one who enlisted him.” And in Matthew 6:24, Jesus said: “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

If we, seriously, contemplate the life of Christ, we realize that our Lord came to this world on a mission of service. How did He serve? He reconciled man to God; He preached the good news; He healed the paralyzed, the blind, the lepers; He raised the dead. In other words, He came to heal our spiri-

tual and physical sickness. Did He come to our broken world out of necessity? Was He forced to come and serve us? No, He came out of absolute love, willingness and in full obedience to the Father. St. Paul puts it this way in Galatians 4:4, “In the fullness of time, God sent forth His son, born of a woman,” to make us God’s sons. Because of His love for us, “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). He became man in order to make us “partakers of the Divine nature” (II Peter 1:4).

The whole purpose of the incarnation, then, was to rescue us from the corruption of death, and this is the ultimate of love and service. If God so served us, loved us, died for us and was resurrected from the dead for us, how should we serve Him in return? In Matthew, He said, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me” (25:40). Therefore, we serve Him by serving each other and

by serving every human being created in His own image and likeness of race, color, creed, or nationality. This has been our practice in





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this Archdiocese and it will remain so. All of us have been created with talents; let us not bury these talents in the ground. Let us use them for the service of others and for the edification of the Church.

In First Corinthians 12:4, St. Paul said: "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of working, but it is the same God who inspires them all in everyone." You can see that all of us have various gifts. By virtue of our baptism, we

God has appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, then healers, helpers and administrators."

All of us must work together like a symphony, as St. Ignatius put it, not for our own glory but for the glory of God and the edification of the Church. God gave us this vineyard to cultivate it and protect it. There are many wolves and foxes waiting to devour the sheep and destroy the vineyard. We must not let them and we must seek the help of God to give

tional parish, and yet last year, we had thirteen divorces in the parish." Our families are breaking apart and the number of divorces is now one in two marriages. One of my priests told me a few weeks ago: "The forces of this world are tearing the very fabric of family life asunder." In order to reverse this trend and protect our children from this anti-Christ culture, we must do our best to transform this culture into a Christ-centered one; hence the importance of the new "Department of Marriage and Parish Family



are called to be ministers and servants.

Our Archdiocese exemplifies this biblical reality. Some of us are bishops, some of us are priests, some are deacons and subdeacons. Some of us are Archdiocesan Trustees, some are members of the Order of St. Ignatius, some are members of the Antiochian Women, some are members of the Fellowship of St. John the Divine and some are members of SOYO. Some are choir leaders and some are choir members. Some are church school superintendents and some are church school teachers. Some of us raise money for the poor to feed the hungry and clothe the naked. Is this not what the Church is all about? In the same epistle, Chapter 12:27, St. Paul continues: "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And

us the strength so that we may protect this vineyard with our mighty arms.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We have come a long way during the past thirty-seven years, but we still have a long way to go. We have not yet reached the state of perfection and I doubt if we ever will; but we must try. We used to rely on the old values which the immigrants brought with them to these blessed shores. Unfortunately, the old values no longer exist because we have ceased to be a church of immigrants. We are an integral part of this society, subjected to all the forces of decadence and corruption. We no longer live in ethnic ghettos, nor are we an island. One of our distinguished trustees told me a few months ago: "I come from a tradi-

Ministries," which I established this year under the leadership of Khourieh Maggie Hock. Maggie will visit our conferences and conduct seminars on pre-marriage and post-marriage problems. If you need her in your parish, extend to her an invitation at your own expense. If you want to know more about this important department and Khourieh Maggie, I refer you to our April issue of *The WORD* magazine. I have full confidence in Maggie and ask you to give her your full cooperation. My dear friends,

We cannot serve you as you deserve without adequate financial support. The last time we increased your assessment was eight years ago. I would like to remind you again and again that this assessment is based on the number of baptized souls in your parish, active or non-



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active, alike. If you have non-active members in your parish, it is the responsibility of your priest, your parish council and your stewardship committee to activate them. But as long as these people are on your mailing list, and as long as you marry them and bury them, you must pay for them.

Last May 14, the Department of Finance met at the Archdiocesan headquarters to examine our finances and prepare a budget for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2005. After a lengthy discussion, the department approved a budget in the amount of \$4,413,000.00, the biggest budget in the history of our Archdiocese. In order to cover this budget, the department voted unanimously to increase the assessment from \$25.00 per baptized soul to \$30.00 per baptized soul, annually. Some of you might ask, "why the increase in the budget?" The answer is:

1. We have budgeted \$60,000.00 for the new Department of Marriage and Parish Family Ministry.
2. We have budgeted \$45,000.00 to cover the operation of the new museum at the Heritage and Learning Center which will be dedicated next year in June.
3. We have budgeted \$150,000.00 to renovate the swimming pool, the camp kitchen, and camper cabins at the Antiochian Village.
4. We have budgeted \$55,000.00 for increased costs of various departments, retired clergy housing allowances, and Archdiocese headquarters.
5. We have budgeted \$20,000.00 to increase the stipends of our bishops, which they certainly deserve.

All these increases total \$330,000.00. I remember in 1966, the budget of the whole Archdiocese was \$65,000.00. Now, if we suddenly, and through magic, do not lose ten thousand people from this Archdiocese, we will be able to live with this budget. At this time, I would be remiss if I do not thank the tithing parishes in our

Archdiocese, which are giving ten percent of their gross income to their parishes and the Archdiocese. Do not ever forget that what you have is not yours; it belongs to God. I have asked the Director of our Christian Education Department, Mrs. Carole Buleza, to make tithing a part of our Christian Education curriculum.

I am happy to tell you that in the year 2002-2003, we had twenty-nine seminarians enrolled at various seminaries. Eleven of them graduated last May and have already been assigned to various parishes. In the year 2003-2004, we will have twenty-six seminarians enrolled at various seminaries in North America. Our seminarians receive full scholarships from our Archdiocese, contrary to seminarians from other jurisdictions, who have to borrow money in order to pay for their theological education. Every year we receive a large number of applications for theological studies. These applications must go, like all ordinations, through a Review Board, chaired by His Grace Bishop Antoun. The recommendations of this Review Board are submitted to me for final approval. I would like to take this opportunity to thank His Grace Bishop Antoun and all members of the Review Board for a job very well done. Thank God the overwhelming majority of our priests are doing their best to bring man to God and God to man.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The last issue which I would like to revisit with you is the question of our autonomy. For the past fifty years, our Archdiocese has championed the cause of Orthodox unity in North America. If you read my book entitled, *And He Leads Them*, which was published two years ago, you will find a prominent theme which runs through the whole book; this theme is Orthodox unity in North America. If we do not take practical steps to begin this journey to the promised land of Orthodox unity in this hemisphere, we will remain nothing but an insignificant footnote on the margin of history. Where is our spiritual impact on the life of

this nation? Where is our impact on the moral life of this nation? Where is our impact on the social life of this nation? Where is our impact on the political life of this nation? I can still ask many, many questions, but unfortunately, the answer is simple: we have no impact whatsoever. Why? Because of our disunity and fragmentation; and we are becoming more and more fragmented because of blind leadership.

Two years ago, at the Archdiocese Convention in Los Angeles, California, a resolution was submitted to you seeking autonomy for this Archdiocese. After discussion, this assembly voted, and the vote was 97.7%, in favor of autonomy. Last year, in June 2002, I traveled, with a delegation, to attend the meeting of the Holy Synod of Antioch. The Holy Synod resolved unanimously to bless your wishes and called for the appointment of a joint committee from the Patriarchate and this Archdiocese to meet and work out some of the details of this autonomy. Last November 2002, His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius IV appointed a Patriarchal Committee chaired by His Eminence Metropolitan Elias Audi of Beirut and I appointed a committee, chaired by His Grace Bishop Basil. His Eminence Metropolitan Georges Khodr of Mount Lebanon was appointed by His Beatitude as Chair of the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee met in Geneva, Switzerland, and after two days of deliberation, approved the statement which was mailed to all of you and which you will consider at this assembly. This statement was approved by our Archdiocese Bishops' Council on April 30, 2003. It was also endorsed by an overwhelming majority of the Board of Trustees of this Archdiocese with a very minimal change. If you accept this Geneva statement, I will be able to submit it, on your behalf, to the Holy Synod of Antioch as the official recommendation of this Archdiocese.

A member of the Board of Trustees who did not vote for the Geneva statement said to me, "Why the rush? Be patient!" We have



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been patient for the past two years. This reminded me of a story which happened in Tripoli, Lebanon in the early 50's. In those days, I was teaching Arabic Language and Literature at the Balamand Seminary. His Beatitude, of Thrice-blessed memory, Theodosius VI, was then the Metropolitan of Tripoli. Every Saturday, he sent his car to bring me to Tripoli to assist him in the Divine Liturgy on Sunday. One Saturday, while talking in his office, suddenly we heard voices in the lobby of the Archbishopric. He blessed himself and said to me, "My son, it is Saturday and we do not have a Spiritual Court today. Go and find out who is there." I did and found two old people, a husband and wife, shouting at each other. I returned to the Archbishop's office and told him what was happening. The Archbishop blessed himself again and said to me, "Invite them in." They walked into his office very tense and troubled. The Archbishop said to them: "You must be having problems." They said: "Yes, we want a divorce." The Archbishop said to them, "I will talk to you separately." The wife left. I got up to leave, also. The Archbishop said to me, "My son, you stay." I did, hoping to learn something. The Archbishop asked the husband, "What is wrong with your wife?" The husband said, "She does not cook; she does not clean the house; she does not iron my shirts and she does not shine my shoes, etc." The Archbishop said, "Now go out, and let me hear from your wife." The wife walked in and the Archbishop asked her, "What is wrong with your husband?" She said, "He does not work; he plays cards all day with his friends; he drinks too much; he gambles and sometimes I find him looking at the woman next door; he doesn't show me any affection." The Archbishop said to me, "My son, invite the husband in." I did. The Archbishop said to both of them, "You are having very serious problems. Go home; be patient and come and see me next year." When they left, I was puzzled and curious. I said to the Archbishop, "I did not understand

your wisdom. These are two old people. Between now and next year, they may kill each other." He blessed himself for the third time and said, "Yes, my son, you are right. Between now and next year, either she will die or he will die and the problem will be solved."

My dear friends,

Our people in the East believe that time or death can solve problems, i.e., if Metropolitan Philip dies, the problem will be solved, and the Archdiocese will be divided and our quest for autonomy will die. Thus, "Why the rush? Be patient!" We, in America, do not believe that time and death can solve problems; nor do we believe that the death of the Metropolitan can divide this strong, united and mighty Archdiocese. We are confident that, with the help of God, we can solve problems, not time or death. If we ever reach a dead end, we will part the mountain and make an exit. There are no dead ends; because there are other choices. If we do not take this simple step toward Orthodox unity in North America, our quest for this unity will suffer a setback for the next one hundred years.

This message will be incomplete if I do not thank my brother bishops: namely, His Grace Bishop Antoun; His Grace Bishop Joseph; His Grace Bishop Basil and, last but not least, His Grace Bishop Demetri. I am proud of our bishops. They have been working very hard and all of them are committed to our future dreams.

I would like to thank our beloved clergy who preach the good news, in season and out of season. In the prayer of the prothesis of the liturgy of St. Basil, we read: "Thou art He who hath appointed us to this service in the power of thy Holy Spirit. Graciously grant us, therefore, O Lord, to be servants of thy New Covenant, ministers of thy holy mysteries." To you, fathers and servants of the New Covenant, I say, once again, "Thank you from the depth of my heart."

I would like to thank our distinguished Vice-Chairman, Doctor George Farha, who traveled with our

delegation to Damascus, Syria, and Geneva, Switzerland, for the sacred cause of this Archdiocese.

I would like to thank the Chairman of the Department of Finance and Village Council, Mr. Robert Laham and all his co-workers on the budget committee, for a job very well done. Next June, we want all of you to come to the Antiochian Village and witness the dedication of our new museum which will house our sacred and cultural heritage.

I would like to thank our faithful Assistant Treasurer, Mr. George Nassor, who does his work joyfully and cheerfully.

I would like to thank our two brilliant chancellors, Mr. Robert Koory and Mr. Charles Ajalat, for their valuable legal work on behalf of our Archdiocese. If we had to pay them for their work, it would cost this Archdiocese tens of thousands of dollars.

I would like to thank our very able Secretary of the Board of Trustees, who takes excellent and exact minutes, Doctor John Dalack.

I would like to thank all our esteemed members of our Board of Trustees for their generosity and commitment to the eternal ideals and principles of this God-protected Archdiocese. Besides the work they do for us, many of them contribute to the Archdiocese very generously to help realize the goals of this Archdiocese. Check your financial report carefully.

I would like to thank the Chairman, leadership and all members of the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. They are indeed the philanthropic arm of this Archdiocese. The Order of St. Ignatius is responsible for one-third of our budget and, since its inception, it has raised more than thirteen million dollars (\$13,000,000.00) for charity and various projects of this great Archdiocese. We are eternally indebted to the membership of the Order.

Thirty years ago, in a bright moment of our history and during the Archdiocese Convention in Atlanta, Georgia, I founded the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America. These



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wonderful ladies are totally dedicated to the cause of orphans and the poor of this world, regardless of race, color, creed or nationality. If the Order is the philanthropic arm of this Archdiocese, the Antiochian Women are the heart of our Archdiocese. I proudly congratulate them on their thirtieth anniversary.

Next, I would like to thank the leadership and members of the Fellowship of St. John the Divine, who have worked so hard every year to make our parish life conferences fruitful and productive. SOYO or Teen SOYO is the heartbeat of this Archdiocese. If you visit our parish life conferences throughout this Archdiocese, you will find that the best attended meeting is the meeting of SOYO. Between Father Joseph Purpura, Father Michael Nasser, the Department of Christian Education, the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch and the leadership of Teen SOYO, we are doing everything possible to keep our teens joyful, faithful and committed to the Church through Christ Jesus, who is the only way, the only truth and the only life.

I would like to thank Robin Nicholas, who has been the devoted coordinator of the "Food for Hungry People Program" for many years. As you know the Church is rooted in charity and we must always be mindful of those who are hungry, thirsty, naked, prisoners and strangers, according to Christ's commission. It is a shame that some parishes who can give so much for the poor, give so little. Many thanks to you, Robin, for a job well done.

I would be remiss if I do not take a moment to thank all of the chairs of the Archdiocese Departments and Commissions, namely: Charities and Children's Relief Fund, Christian Education, Clergy Insurance and Retirement, Communications and Information, Conciliar Press, Conventions and Conference Planning, Inter-Orthodox and Inter-faith Relations, Lay Ministries, Liturgies and Translations, Missions and Evangelism, Sacred Music, Stewardship, Theological and Pastoral Education, The Western Rite, and *The Word* magazine for your hard

work and dedication. Each and everyone of you is to be commended for giving freely of your time and talents and working diligently for the cause of Orthodoxy.

Last, but not least, I would like to express my very deep gratitude to my staff; although they are few, they accomplish so much. I want to thank Archdeacon Hans, who takes good care of the Book Department and many, many other things in the Archdiocese. Archdeacon Hans is truly a blessing to us.

Next, I want to thank a lady who has dedicated her life to this Archdiocese. Words are inadequate to describe her energy and zeal. Lately, she has been nagging me about retirement, and every time she does that, I tell her to "go to your desk and finish your work." Recently, I said to her, "You will never finish your work. I guess you are not going to retire until I die or you die." Thank you, Kathy, for your work and all the years.

I would like to thank Arlene Assile who knows everything about the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. She reports to me every week about the increase of membership and every time, she enthusiastically and proudly says to me, "We now have

more than 2,800 members." I say, "buss" (Is that all?) She shakes her head and says, "Buss."

I would also like to thank the newest member of my staff, my Episcopal assistant, the Reverend Father George Kevorkian, who is really a breath of fresh air in my office.

Last, but not least, I want to thank a gentleman who keeps me informed about our receipts and expenditures, Mr. Peter Dacales. You know well that without fiscal responsibility, this Archdiocese can easily be "in the red." I will not let that happen. Many thanks, Peter.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the theme of our convention this year is "service," I would like to conclude this message with these words from an Orthodox Western Father:

"Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve.

To give and not to count the cost.

To fight and not to heed the wounds.

To toil and not to seek for rest.

To labor and not to ask for any reward,

Save that of knowing that we do Thy will."

Thank you.

