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HISTORIC FIRST MEETING

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**Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese**

**OF NORTH AMERICA**

**358 MOUNTAIN ROAD**

**ENGLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY 07631-3798**

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**January 2, 2004 — Englewood, New Jersey**

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HISTORIC FIRST MEETING OF THE LOCAL HOLY SYNOD OF THE  
SELF-RULED ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE  
OF NORTH AMERICA, HELD ON DECEMBER 29 AND 30, 2003

**T**HE FIRST MEETING OF THE Local Holy Synod of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America was held on Monday, December 29 and Tuesday, December 30, 2003 at the Archdiocese Headquarters in Englewood, New Jersey. The meeting was historic in that it represented the first time that the bishops have met as a Local Holy Synod, after the granting of self-rule status to the Archdiocese by the Holy Synod of Antioch in October 2003.

His Eminence Metropolitan Philip, Primate of the Archdiocese, presided. In attendance were three of the Antiochian Bishops of North America: His Grace Bishop Antoun, His Grace Bishop Joseph, and His Grace Bishop Basil. His Grace Bishop Demetri was not in attendance.

The focus of this meeting was to reach agreement on several very important topics which will allow the orderly implementation of self-rule.

First, the plans for the special convention were discussed. This special convention will be convened in Pittsburgh, PA during the weekend of July 16-18, 2004. The special convention will have two primary agenda items, which will be discussed and voted upon by the entire General Assembly of the Archdiocese: the approval of amendments to the Archdiocese Constitution which are

necessary for the implementation of self-rule; and the nomination of candidates who will stand for election as diocesan bishops of this Archdiocese. The Local Holy Synod of the Archdiocese of North America will elect the new diocesan bishops sometime after this special convention.

Second, two documents were reviewed which put forth the Rights and Responsibilities of the Metropolitan, and the Rights and Responsibilities of the Diocesan Bishops. These documents specify, in detail, the working relationships between the Primate of the Archdiocese, and his diocesan bishops, who will receive enhanced responsibilities within their dioceses. These documents were approved unanimously.

Third, the bishops reviewed a document which specifies the proposed structure of the Archdiocese. Each diocese was identified, along with the cathedral which will serve as the seat of the diocesan bishop, and the geographical boundaries of each diocese. This document was also approved unanimously.

The final discussion involved the status of Bishop Demetri. The Synod agreed on a course of action but will postpone implementation until January 23, 2004, which is the scheduled date for the court case to be heard. This postponement will insure that there is no interference in any

way with the legal proceedings. However, the latest date for the implementation of the course of action will be February 23, 2004. Until that time, Bishop Demetri's status will remain as it was specified in the Metropolitan's letter of July 14, 2003. To quote from that letter, "I have also directed Bishop Demetri not to preach or preside at any liturgical service during the time that he is under treatment or this matter is under investigation."

With the enthusiastic and focused leadership of His Eminence Metropolitan Philip, this meeting of the Local Holy Synod of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America was conducted with an intense spirit of love, brotherhood, and cooperation. This allowed important issues to be debated constructively, and agreements to be reached which will pave the way for the new era of self-rule for this Archdiocese.

It is expected that the next meeting of the Local Holy Synod will be held in conjunction with the spring meeting of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees, which will be held at the Antiochian Village in Ligonier, Pennsylvania from June 4-6, 2004.