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TO BE READ FROM THE PULPIT AND PUBLISHED IN THE CHURCH BULLETIN
December 31, 2003

Beloved Hierarchs, Clergy, Trustees, and All Faithful of this God-Protected and
Self-Ruled Archdiocese:

Greetings and Blessings to all of you in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ on this Eve
of the New Year !

Since our return from Damascus on October 18th, 2003 we have been very busy with the
detailed planning of the first steps that must be taken in order that we properly implement
the **self-rule** status that was granted to this Archdiocese by the resolution of the Holy
Synod of Antioch. The official English translation of this resolution was previously sent
to you to be read from the pulpit. We have also received many questions from our clergy
and faithful who are rightfully interested in understanding the next steps, and the time
frame for those steps. This letter addresses some, but not all of those questions. We must
all be patient, and understand that events must happen in a certain order, to insure that the
best interests of the Church are being served. As St. Paul teaches "Let all things be done
decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Now that our **self-rule** status is final, the first step will be for us to integrate the
Synodal resolution into the Archdiocese Constitution. We will accomplish this
integration by the amendment process that is specified in our current constitution. As
such, we will call a special convention consistent with Article V, Section 2 of our current
constitution. This special convention will be held from Friday July 16th through Sunday
July 18th, 2004 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Delegates are expected to arrive in
Pittsburgh on Thursday July 15th. The date and location has been chosen so that the
clergy of the Archdiocese can proceed directly from the special convention to the
biennial Clergy Symposium that is scheduled from July 19th through July 23rd at the
Antiochian Village. All clergy, parishes, and missions must be represented either in
person or by legal proxy, as is the case at our regular conventions. The parish will grant
their priest time off from his pastoral duties, as well as travel and living expenses for his
attendance at this Special Convention. Specific information regarding the hotel and
agenda for this special convention will follow in the near future.

Our intention is to have two major items on the agenda for this special convention; The
approval of the amendments which integrate the Synodal resolution on **self-rule** into

the Archdiocese constitution, and the nomination, by our General Assembly, of candidates who will stand for election as Diocesan Bishops. The nominations will occur according to Article I Section 6 of our current constitution. The election will occur at a later time by the Local Synod of the North American Archdiocese, with the participation of "two or three Metropolitans" designated by the Patriarch of Antioch and invited to participate in the election.

As stated above, our clergy and faithful have asked many additional questions regarding the implementation of **self-rule**. Some information can be given now, as follows:

1. We will be drawing Diocesan boundaries that will become the jurisdictions of the Diocesan bishops. Although these dioceses may resemble the current regions, there will likely be changes, as well as the creation of new dioceses that do not correspond exactly to any of the existing regions. This is necessary to insure that our Diocesan bishops have the maximum opportunity to visit their flocks, and make personal contact with them. The specification of Diocesan boundaries is likely to be done before the special convention is convened.
2. The enthronement of our current bishops into specific dioceses will occur some time after the special convention. The consecration and enthronement of newly elected bishops will occur sometime after their election.
3. There is no plan to establish Diocesan Assemblies in the foreseeable future since we have Diocesan Parish Life Conferences.
4. The Diocesan bishops will have additional duties and responsibilities as appropriate. We will however, preserve the strong unity of this Archdiocese under the leadership of the Metropolitan.
5. Commemorations - The Metropolitan will commemorate the Patriarch of Antioch, the Holy Synod of Antioch, and the Local Holy Synod of the Archdiocese. The Diocesan Bishop will commemorate the Metropolitan and the Local Holy Synod of the Archdiocese. The clergy will commemorate the Metropolitan followed by the Diocesan Bishop. The commemoration of the Diocesan Bishops will begin after the Special Convention in July.

Together we have much difficult work ahead of us. Let us pray fervently that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide us, so that our work may be pleasing to our Lord Jesus Christ, for the Glory of His Holy Name, and the Glory of His Church.

Your Father in Christ,



Metropolitan PHILIP

Primate

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America