

MOST REVEREND
METROPOLITAN PHILIP
PRIMATE
RIGHT REVEREND BISHOP ANTOUN
AUXILIARY
RIGHT REVEREND BISHOP JOSEPH
AUXILIARY
RIGHT REVEREND BISHOP BASIL
AUXILIARY
RIGHT REVEREND BISHOP DEMETRI
AUXILIARY



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese

OF NORTH AMERICA

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE July 29, 2004 – Englewood, New Jersey

SPECIAL CONVENTION IMPLEMENTS SELF-RULE STATUS FOR THE ANTIOCHIAN ARCHDIOCESE

On Friday, July 16th, 2004, the Special Convention of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America was convened at the Hilton Hotel in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and was chaired by His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP. The delegates to this Special Convention were called to discuss and implement four important items of business as follows:

1. To consider and approve the proposed amendments to the Archdiocesan Constitution which would incorporate the October 9, 2003 Resolution of the Holy Synod of Antioch that granted self-rule status to this Archdiocese.
2. To nominate candidates for the episcopacy, who will preside as Diocesan Bishops over three newly-created dioceses within the self-ruled Archdiocese.
3. To discuss the new diocesan structure of the self-ruled Archdiocese, and the detailed Rights and Responsibilities of the Metropolitan, and the Diocesan Bishops.
4. To approve a budget for the fiscal year ending January 31, 2006, that accounts for the additional expenses and income required in order to implement the self-rule status.

A quorum was present that represented 92% of the eligible voting delegates, an extremely high percentage, reflecting the historic nature of this gathering.

The reading of the message of His Beatitude, IGNATIUS IV, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East was the first item of business. In his message, His Beatitude expressed his “deep love and confidence”, and expressed his feelings that “God has been and will always be, glorified by your deeds, since we are all together laboring for the well being of Christ’s Church.”

A lively, and constructive discussion ensued around the proposed amendments to the Constitution. It was clear from the start that there was a “oneness of mind” among all of the delegates, with the love and unity of the Holy Spirit clearly present in the discussion.

The debate ended with a motion to approve the amended Constitution by acclamation, and this motion passed unanimously.

The new diocesan structure of the self-ruled Archdiocese was presented. There are nine dioceses, including the Diocese of New York, which will be under the omophorion of His Eminence, Metropolitan PHILIP, Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of North America. The other 8 dioceses will be under the omophorion of Diocesan Bishops. Three existing Auxiliary Bishops (Bishop ANTOUN, Bishop JOSEPH, and Bishop BASIL) become Diocesan Bishops. Three newly elected bishops will also become Diocesan Bishops. Two dioceses will remain vacant for now, under the omophorion of one of the existing bishops. The hierarchs are members of the newly formed Local Holy Synod, with the Metropolitan as the presiding member. In addition, a document was read which specifies the detailed Rights and Responsibilities of the Metropolitan and the Diocesan Bishops. This document was approved unanimously by the Local Synod and will insure that good order is maintained in the working relationships of the hierarchs.

The proposed budget for the fiscal year that ends on January 31, 2006 was presented, and passed unanimously. This budget is the largest in the history of the Archdiocese, and includes the increased expenses and income required to implement the self-rule status. Included in these expenses are the stipends for the new Diocesan Bishops, as well as operational expenses for their chanceries.

Finally, the seven candidates for the Episcopacy were presented, and each spoke briefly on the subject of his vision for this Archdiocese. After the presentations, all delegates to the General Assembly cast their votes by secret ballot to nominate candidates for election as Diocesan Bishops. The Local Holy Synod has the ultimate responsibility to elect the new bishops, with the participation of three Metropolitans from the Holy Synod of Antioch, who will be designated by His Beatitude Patriarch IGNATIUS IV. The election of bishops is expected to occur sometime after the October 2004 meeting of the Holy Synod of Antioch.

The Special Convention concluded with the celebration of the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, which was attended by all of the clergy and laity who were present at the Special Convention.

Although the General Assembly had been scheduled for two days, all of this work was accomplished in one day, due to the cooperation, love, and unity which was clearly manifested throughout the deliberations. All of the delegates departed from the Special Convention with a renewed spirit and optimism for a bright future. We are united with our Mother Church of Antioch, we are united as one Archdiocese at home, and we are blessed with dedicated and competent leadership. Our heartfelt appreciation and love is expressed to our beloved Patriarch IGNATIUS IV, and the members of the Holy Synod of Antioch for their expression of love and trust in their maturing children of North America.