



**The Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese  
OF NORTH AMERICA**

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January 27, 2005

**IMPORTANT MESSAGE REGARDING OUR CONSTITUTION**

TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE PARISH BULLETIN

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

It has come to our attention that many of you may have received an email from Tarek Mitri dated January 25, 2005, with the subject "The North American Constitution." Please be advised that this email is considered a serious intrusion into the affairs of this Archdiocese by Tarek Mitri, who has no ecclesiastical capacity to send such a communication to our clergy under his own signature.

Communications under the direct signature of His Beatitude Patriarch IGNATIUS IV to Metropolitan Philip and this Archdiocese are, of course, always welcome.

As you all know, the Archdiocese Constitution that was legally adopted by our Special Convention held in July 2004 in Pittsburgh is in harmony with the Synodal self-rule resolution of October 9, 2003 which was adopted unanimously by the Holy Synod, and signed by His Beatitude Patriarch IGNATIUS IV and all of the members of the Holy Synod. The Pittsburgh Constitution was submitted to the Holy Synod by Metropolitan PHILIP on October 13, 2004.

There is a very serious inaccuracy in the last sentence of the email from Tarek Mitri. In referring to our legally adopted Pittsburgh Constitution, he states that "It was discussed during the course of the meeting of the Holy Synod, October 13-15, 2004, and the attached revised constitution was unanimously approved." Contrary to this statement, the proposed October 15, 2004 constitution (which was attached to Tarek Mitri's email), although read by the Patriarch's legal adviser in the meeting, was not even discussed in detail by the members of the Holy Synod nor was it unanimously approved.

Our Metropolitan PHILIP in not supporting such proposed constitution, pointed out to the members of the Holy Synod that our Constitution, by law, could only be amended by our General Assembly in the ways provided by our Constitution. Moreover, any amendments to our Constitution became effective immediately upon adoption at a General or Special Convention and the approval of our Metropolitan. Therefore the proposed constitution of October 15, 2004 could only be considered as suggested changes to our Constitution. These suggestions were submitted to the Department of Legal Affairs to avoid any inconsistencies with our existing Constitution and the Holy Synod's self-rule Resolution of October 9, 2003.

The legal department in reviewing the suggestions of the legal advisor to the Patriarch in the proposed Constitution has noted that:

1. The proposed October 15, 2004 constitution violates the spirit and letter of the irrevocable Synodal self-rule resolution of October 9, 2003, which was itself immediately effective. Moreover it is not appropriate for any person to attempt to rewrite the Constitution of this self-ruling Archdiocese and to attempt to negate self-rule and give less authority to the Archdiocese than it had prior to the Synodal Resolution of October 9, 2003.
2. Under Section 8 of the October 9, 2003 self-rule resolution, the Holy Synod of Antioch was required to approve the Pittsburgh Constitution insofar as it was consistent with that resolution. Since the Pittsburgh Constitution is entirely consistent with the Synodal Resolution none of the suggested changes apply and any required approval has been given.
3. The proposed October 15, 2004 constitution did not receive enough scrutiny by the Holy Synod, nor was it discussed in detail in the Holy Synod meeting.

We will, at all times in this Archdiocese, be bound by our legally adopted constitution and the civil laws of this land in which we reside. Article VII of our constitution allows timely proposed amendments to be submitted for consideration only by any of the following procedures:

1. by a majority vote of the General Assembly of a Regular or Special Convention
2. by a recommendation from the Archdiocese Department of Legal Affairs
3. by a recommendation from the Archdiocese Board of Trustees
4. by a recommendation from any parish of this Archdiocese in good standing

Under all of the above procedures, any proposed amendments are "to be certified by the sponsor and submitted to the Metropolitan Archbishop and the Department of Legal Affairs for the purpose of studying and determining the legality of such proposed change." As a courtesy, the proposed October 15, 2004 constitution was submitted to the Department of Legal Affairs for review.

As communicated in the press release of January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2005, the Department of Legal Affairs rendered a decision that the "major appropriate suggested changes do not require amendments to the Pittsburgh Constitution" and the legally adopted Pittsburgh Constitution "stands as the Constitution of this Archdiocese, without the need for further revision."

Yours in Christ,

The Department of Legal Affairs  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America