

## **A Statement of the Decision of the Holy Synod of Antioch Concerning the Role of Bishops**

The clergy and laity of the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America received with greater excitement and with much gratitude the decision regarding the Amending of Articles concerning Bishops according to the By-Laws of the Patriarchate of Antioch. It affirmed once and for all that the Archdiocese is united under one leader who becomes again the point of reference of all bishops, priests, deacons, and the laity of this God protected Archdiocese. The Metropolitan is the hierarch who defines the responsibilities of the bishops and the place where they should serve. After four years of captivity, our church in North America will regain its direction under the mandate of our Metropolitan.

We salute His Beatitude Patriarch IGNATIUS IV and the members of the Holy Synod for issuing this historic decision on February 24, 2009. We pray that, as things take their normal and natural order, we will experience and enjoy the unity of the Antiochian Orthodox Church in North America, under the spiritual leadership of our Primate. Under this wise decision, the relationship between our Archdiocese and the Mother Church will reflect harmony and cooperation and appreciate our mission in North America. At the same time, it will help our hierarchs and brethren in the Mother Church witness the labor of love in the vineyard of our Lord.

The clergy and laity of the Antiochian Orthodox Church in the Midwest Region and, in particular, in the Greater Detroit Area, offer our thanks to God for this gift as we prepare to enter into the Lenten Journey. We pledge to work under our spiritual leader, His Eminence, Metropolitan PHILIP, and pray that the Lord grant him many, many years, that under his blessed leadership and vision, we will respond to all challenges and proactively, lay the ground for a fruitful and glorious future.

“Among the first be mindful, O Lord, of our Father and Metropolitan PHILIP, whom do thou grant into thy holy churches in peace, safety, honor, health and length of days and rightly dividing the word of thy truth.”

On behalf of the Antiochian Orthodox Churches in the Greater Detroit Area,

St. George Church of Troy  
V. Rev. Fr. Joseph Antypas  
Rev. Fr. Ayman Kfouf

St. Mary of Livonia  
V. Rev. Fr. George Shalhoub

St. Mary of Berkley  
V. Rev. Fr. George  
Baalbaki