

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

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### SPRING MEETING OF THE EPARCHIAL SYNOD OF THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA HELD ON APRIL 30<sup>TH</sup>, 2003

The spring meeting of the Eparchial Synod of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America was held on Wednesday April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2003 at the Archdiocese Headquarters in Englewood, New Jersey.

His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP, Primate of the Archdiocese, presided. In attendance were the Antiochian Bishops of North America: His Grace Bishop ANTOUN, His Grace Bishop JOSEPH, His Grace Bishop BASIL, and His Grace Bishop DEMETRI.

A wide range of important topics were discussed which have impact not only on the Antiochian Archdiocese, but also on Orthodoxy in North America.

Of extreme importance is the status of the detailed work which is being done to finalize the details under which the Autonomous Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America will operate. On November 20–22, 2002, a joint commission with representatives from the Patriarchate of Antioch, and the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America met in Geneva, Switzerland to draft the final operational details which will govern the Autonomous Archdiocese of North America. The output of this meeting was the Geneva Proposal, which was reviewed in detail by the Eparchial Synod. The Eparchial Synod approved 99% of this document, and expects the remaining details to be addressed without difficulty.

Another matter of extreme importance which was discussed is the crisis which has been created by the illegal, and shameful activities of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in North America. The Patriarchate of Jerusalem has established headquarters in Long Island, New York, under the leadership of Archbishop DAMASKINOS. They have targeted locations in North America where well established, and stable Antiochian and Greek Orthodox parishes exist, with the express purpose of dividing these parishes through recruitment of parish members. Metropolitan PHILIP held a meeting with Archbishop

DEMETRIOS of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North America to address this serious issue, and to seek the assistance of Archbishop DEMETRIOS to halt this activity. When a similar activity was undertaken in Australia in 1993 by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople severed communion with the Patriarch of Jerusalem and excommunicated two archbishops on his staff, Archbishops TIMOTHEOS and ISYCHIOS, until the activity was halted, and a pledge was made that it would not occur again. It is expected that this precedent-setting action of 1993 would be repeated now, given that the circumstances are identical, and that well-established Antiochian Churches are being threatened.

The Eparchial Synod also discussed the following matters, which represent important progress on the part of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese of North America:

- The Metropolitan's appeal to all Archdiocese parishes to collect money to assist the children of Iraq who are suffering from years of oppression, as well as the effects of war.
- New procedures for the screening of prospective seminarians and members of clergy to detect possible impediments as early as possible in the process of their education and ministry
- The need to maintain strong discipline and consistency among the clergy of the Archdiocese. Metropolitan PHILIP declared that discipline and consistency have always been, and will continue to be an important priority of this Archdiocese.
- The tremendous growth of the Order of St. Ignatius, the philanthropic, and humanitarian arm of the Antiochian Archdiocese in North America. The Synod made a unanimous pledge to continue it's strong support for the recruitment of new members.
- Reports by the Regional Bishops highlighting the tremendous progress in building, expanding, and renovating parishes, and the vital lay ministries of our Teen SOYO, Antiochian Women, and Fellowship of St. John the Divine. The Metropolitan commended the Regional Bishops for their diligent work as loving shepherds.
- The formation of the new Department of Marriage and Family Ministry, headed by Khourieh Maggie Hock of Omaha, Nebraska. This department will develop and deliver programs to insure that the health and well-being of marriages and families within the Archdiocese is being maintained, and improved.

It is expected that the next meeting of the Eparchial Synod will be held in conjunction with the bi-annual convention of the Archdiocese which will be held in Miami, Florida from July 21 – 27, 2003.