



**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA**

Balamand, February 24, 2023

To My Beloved in the North American Archdiocese

**My reverend brother hierarchs,
My sons, the pious priests and deacons,
My daughters and sons, God's faithful of the blessed Antiochian Orthodox
Christian Archdiocese of North America,**

Grace and Peace!

I received the news of my election as the metropolitan of your God-protected archdiocese with silence and feelings of deep emotions. I remembered the day of my elevation to the office of the holy episcopacy twenty-four years ago. At that time, I had said in my address, *“As I stand in Your presence, O Lord, let my hands carry Your gifts to Your people, my feet to lead them to You, my mouth to utter Your words, my heart to extend Your love to them. Make me a good and faithful servant.”*

I had never imagined only a few months after that I would be suddenly called by the Fathers of the Holy Synod of Antioch, being thirty-nine years of age, newly ordained to the holy episcopacy, with little experience, to shepherd the Archdiocese of Hauran in Southern Syria.

While serving an archdiocese that suffered from the brutality of history, the divine grace of God supported me tangibly. My mission started with building up the people and erecting construction projects. It was an intense struggle and one that refined my soul. It taught me patience, asceticism, a love of poverty, and not wanting to look toward anything except the bleeding and resurrected face of Jesus Christ.

My quick transfer from serving a distinctive parish to serving an archdiocese forgotten by history, threw me amid severe suffering. However, it also gave me invaluable spiritual consolation. I never imagined for a moment that the Master of the Church would again

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

delegate me from serving my archdiocese to serving another archdiocese with great potential.

Indeed, Your judgments, O Lord, are wondrous, and Your ways are amazing. How far are Your judgments from the judgments of human beings?

I now ask:

Was it a coincidence that God had arranged for me to become acquainted with the beloved Antiochian Archdiocese of New York and all North America since the first year of my theological studies?

Was it a coincidence that after five years of my priestly ministry, God orchestrated for me to visit and spend about six months in the regions of your archdiocese, allowing me to serve the Divine Liturgy in thirteen states as well as in Canada, and to enrich myself with such pastoral experience?

Was it a coincidence that your archdiocese was, and still is, my biggest supporter in restoring life to the Archdiocese of Hauran? Thanks to the God-loving people, of which you are at the forefront, it has become a bride of Christ gloriously adorned with a bridal dress over the past twenty-four years.

Frequently, I used to repeat what the Prophet Amos told, before my Lord and Savior, that he was "*neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but just a herdsman and a dresser of sycamore trees*" (Amos 7:14). But He used to remind me with His words to the Prophet Jeremiah: "*Wherever I send you, you go, and whatever I command you, you say. Do not be afraid to confront anyone. I am with you to save you... To all whom I send you to, you shall go, and whatever I command you, you shall speak. Be not afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you. ... Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant.*" (Jeremiah 1:7,10). I have always tried to walk by the inspiration of this revelation.

Today, He is sending me to you through the commission of the Fathers of the Holy Synod of Antioch as a servant, father, and shepherd. As He honors me to minister to you, I cannot but bow my head obediently and confidently trusting in His support and your cooperation with me. Together, we will "*pluck up and break down*" all evil, and "*build and plant*" every good. We, the shepherds, cannot save the sheep of Christ who were entrusted to us unless we follow the example of the Good Shepherd ourselves.

I will work with all my energy according to the heart of the only Good Shepherd, Christ our Lord, relying on His support and your cooperation with me. Let us together become

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His faithful disciples so that your remarkable archdiocese may continue to be *“purified with water and the word, and that He presents her to Himself a glorious church without a blemish, wrinkle, or any such thing.”* (Eph 5:27).

Let us strive together as bishops, priests, deacons, and faithful laity, so we may truly become the *“People of God’s house”* in action. There is much in my heart and mind to share with you, but I will wait until we meet in person with actions, prayers, and tears, so then we will rejoice with the presence of the Lord in our midst.

I ask for your prayers on my behalf as I lift you up in every prayer that I offer to the Lord of the Church and entrust you with the blessing of God the Father, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Spirit.

I pray that you have a blessed and sanctifying Great Lenten season.

+SABA

Archbishop of New York
and Metropolitan of All North America

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

358 Mountain Road, P.O. Box 5238, Englewood, NJ 07631-5238
(201) 871-1355 T archdiocese@antiochian.org (201) 871-7954 F