



بَطْرِيكِيَّةَ أَنْطَاكِيَّةَ وَسَائِرِ الْمَشْرِقِ لِلرُّومِ الْأَرْثُوذُكْسِ
Patriarcat Grec-Orthodoxe d'Antioche et de tout l'Orient

No: 3/2023

To our Beloved in the Lord, Hierarchs, Priests, Deacons, and Faithful of our Holy Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America meeting at the Special Convention,

In the Nicene Creed, we declare our faith in the Church, describing Her as Apostolic. By this we denote the Church which descends from the Apostles who were gathered in the Upper Room at Pentecost. We also proclaim the mission of the Church in this world as being apostolic, which means that She is called to evangelize the whole world, bringing to all nations the Salvific Word and True Faith. This Faith has been loyally preserved by our Antiochian Church. By the Grace of God, this Church has abided in this Faith, being united with the Mother Church and through Her with all the Antiochian Archdioceses spreading abroad.

One hundred years ago, this Antiochian Apostolic Spirit was at the root of founding our beloved Antiochian Archdiocese of North America. Sowed on the relics of the Holy Fathers from the East and by the hands of great Men of God headed by Saint Raphael of Brooklyn, this mustard seed has grown to become a fruitful tree, an "Antiochian Village," and a blessed image of the Great City of God - Antioch, established on the soil of the New Land of North America.

This blessed Centennial Jubilee of our Holy Antiochian Archdiocese coincides with the meeting of the Special Convention today. This Convention gathers the honorable hierarchs, clergy, and parishioners, under the guidance and love of His Eminence, the Patriarchal Vicar, Metropolitan ANTONIOS (Soury), whom we graciously thank for completing his ecclesiastic mission during the past months with much excellence, performing it with great care and deep love. His Eminence has conveyed the Antiochian Spirit and paternal love, which we, as Patriarch, were keen on extending them to you through him.

You meet to send the names of three nominees as candidates to the care and wisdom of the Holy Synod. The Synod is entrusted to ask the Great Shepherd of our souls to guide our Antiochian Church in choosing an Archbishop to shepherd the Archdiocese during the coming phase, which, as we all discern, shall be full of challenges in a turbulent world. For this, I ask with you the intercessions of the Holy Theotokos, Saints Peter and Paul the founders of the Church of Antioch, and Saint Raphael of Brooklyn to guide the works of your Special Convention.

I pray with you the inspiring words of Saint Raphael's Troparion, as follows:

“Rejoice, O Father Raphael, Adornment of the Holy Church! Though art Champion of the true Faith, Seeker of the lost, Consolation of the oppressed, Father to orphans, Friend of the poor, Peacemaker and Good Shepherd, Joy of all the Orthodox, Son of Antioch, Boast of America: Intercede with Christ God for us and for all who honor thee.”

Last but not least, as I call your eyes to behold the Lord’s countenance, your minds to be attentive to His voice, and your hearts to be tendered by His eternal Love, I fervently implore Him to keep you, make His face shine upon you, and give you peace.

Balamand, 10 January 2023.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be in Arabic script, positioned above the printed name.

† JOHN X

Patriarch of Antioch and all the East