

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

Beloved in Christ,

We greet you with great joy as we embark upon this new Lenten journey which lies ahead. Before us lies a strenuous path leading to the Feast of the Holy Resurrection of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ. May your journey be blessed!

This year marks the 30th anniversary of an important event in the life of our Archdiocese. I do not want to let this event pass without remembering and giving thanks to God for it.

Beginning in early 1987, over two-thousand members of the former Evangelical Orthodox Church were received with open arms into the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America. Over the course of several months, the faithful from seventeen parishes in cities across North America were chrismated and clergy were ordained.

The process started in the Los Angeles area on February 8th, where our beloved Metropolitan PHILIP of thrice-blessed memory, received the largest numbers. The next Sunday at Saint Nicholas Cathedral in Los Angeles, more LA area laity were chrismated and more ordinations took place.

This process continued next in Santa Cruz, California (the weekend of February 18) and then to Nashville, Tennessee for more chrismations and ordinations the following weekend (February 21).

His Grace Bishop ANTOUN made several trips in March, 1987, to bring in EOC parishes in Jackson, Mississippi; Memphis, Tennessee; Gary, Indiana; as well as three parishes in Canada.

Finally, His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP flew to Anchorage and Seattle to complete the process by early April. By Pascha 1987, all the EOC parishes had been received into the Antiochian Archdiocese.

In his address at the National Convention in Detroit that year, His Eminence reflected back on those grace filled months. He stated: "I wish I could go beyond words to describe to you the joy which I experienced as I was chrismating these little children of the Evangelical Orthodox faithful. Every experience I had was like a chapter from the Book of Acts. I felt as if the Church was recapturing her apostolic

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

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spirit and rediscovering, once again, her missionary dimension.” And later he added: “From the depth of my heart, I say to the Evangelical Orthodox, ‘Welcome Home!’”

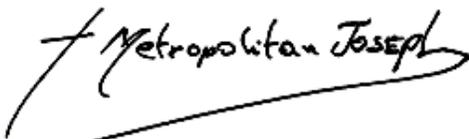
Like our beloved Metropolitan, many of the leaders of this movement have now gone to be with the Lord. Father Peter Gillquist, Father Richard Ballew, Father Gordon Walker, Father Jack Sparks, Father Harold Dunaway, and other founding members have finished the course of their earthly journey. They have joined the great cloud of witnesses we read about in Hebrews, where they are praying for us and cheering us on as we continue the journey.

Dear ones in Christ, I strongly believe that what was “completed” by Pascha of 1987 continues on today, and that the blessing of God is no less active now than it was from the beginning. For over 20 years I have been privileged to shepherd and work with many, and now with all of you. As your Metropolitan, I pledge to do no less than what was begun by our late Metropolitan PHILIP. And in return, I ask all who were present during those holy and all-revered days, to be the leaven that continues to spread throughout this nation.

Since you are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, you must “run with endurance the race that is set before [you]” (Hebrews 12:1). You must be very active and dynamic in all your labors. In all of this, I am sure that God will cause you to bear still much more fruit in the years ahead.

With a joyful heart, I congratulate and embrace each one of you in Christ. Please be assured that you have my appreciation and commitment forever!

Your Father in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Joseph". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

+JOSEPH

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