



**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA**

Prot. no.: 332/2025

June 24, 2025

Beloved in Christ,

I greet you with a heavy heart as we continue what has otherwise been a joyous time for me, leading our seminarians, recent seminary graduates, and clergy on a pilgrimage through Jordan and Lebanon. This journey has allowed them to deepen their roots and gain a richer understanding of the Patriarchate of Antioch and Christianity in the Middle East.

Two days ago, for the first time, we celebrated the feast of the Sunday of All Saints of Antioch, recalling the many martyrs and other great saints of our ancient and Apostolic Church where “the Disciples were first called Christians” (Acts 11:26). Sadly, in addition to the martyrs of history like Ignatius, Barbara, Christina, Joseph of Damascus and the recently canonized father and son priests Nicholas and Habib, new faithful were added whose blood will nourish the soil of our Church, allowing it to grow and flourish in the days and years to come. During the sacred and holy Divine Liturgy, there was a terrorist attack on our church of the Prophet Elias in the suburb of Dweilaa in Damascus, Syria. As of this letter, more than 25 people have been martyred, and dozens more have been injured. This is the first such deliberate bombing of a church in Syria since the start of the war in 2011.

Along with praying for the souls of the departed, the families of these new martyrs for the Faith need our prayers and encouragement. With that in mind, I ask that all our churches hold Paraklesis services in the coming days, asking the Most-Holy Theotokos to comfort those who are suffering. At the same time, I am directing all our parishes to hold Trisagion Prayers of Mercy this Sunday, June 29, for those who lost their lives in this cowardly act of violence directed at people who were simply trying to pray and participate in the Divine Liturgy.

Finally, this Sunday is especially significant, as it marks the feast of Saints Peter and Paul, the patrons and protectors of our Holy See of Antioch. The successor of these holy apostles is our Father in Christ, His Beatitude Patriarch John X. A notable

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layman, Mr. Carol Saba, wrote a piece after the bombing which began, “The Patriarch consoles everybody, but who consoles the Patriarch?” As the successor of our patron saints, let us also pray for him, that he may continue to lead the Church of Antioch through this difficult time.

Wishing you and your families peace, and asking for your continued prayers as we continue our pilgrimage, I remain,

Your Father in Christ,



+SABA

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

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

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