



**The Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
OF NORTH AMERICA**

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August 7th, 2008

To: The Esteemed Hierarchs, Members of The Archdiocese Board of Trustees,
Clergy and Faithful of the Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
of North America:

On August 5th, 2008, The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America issued a press release which established a vicariate with the name "Vicariate for Palestinian/Jordanian Communities in the USA". The membership of this vicariate will consist of those communities in the USA which were originally part of the Patriarchate of Antioch, but most recently (since 1993) were uncanonically claimed by the Patriarchate of Jerusalem. From an historical perspective, it has been clear since the disintegration of Orthodox unity which existed in North America until 1917, that the Arabic-speaking Orthodox people in North America have been exclusively under the pastoral care of the Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. Similarly, the Greek-speaking Orthodox people (e.g. Cypriot, Greek, Egyptian, Turkish, etc.) have always been under the pastoral care of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. What reaction would occur if the Antiochian Archdiocese were to establish a vicariate for Greek communities which separate themselves from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese?!

These former "Jerusalem Patriarchate" communities separated themselves from the Antiochian Archdiocese without canonical releases, and in some cases are served by priests who are under canonical suspension. It is important to point out that since this separation occurred in 1993 we have taken extraordinary measures to reconcile these communities with The Antiochian Archdiocese and have appealed to both the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Patriarchate of Antioch as well as others for their assistance. Unfortunately, none of our numerous appeals for intervention were answered.

As such, our directive of May 2, 2003 remains in force. To emphasize the main point of that directive, the clergy of The Antiochian Archdiocese are still forbidden from communing and/or concelebrating with any clergy who are a part of this newly-formed "Vicariate for Palestinian/Jordanian Communities in the USA" of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, whether in our parishes, their parishes, or as a part of Pan-Orthodox gatherings.

We lament this action by the Ecumenical Patriarchate which further complicates the already uncanonical jurisdictional situation here and continues to undermine the efforts of all Orthodox hierarchs of SCOBA to achieve administrative unity and canonical normalcy in North America.

Praying that this urgent situation will be resolved in a spirit of peace, harmony and love, we remain

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Metropolitan Philip' with a stylized flourish at the end.

Metropolitan PHILIP
Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of All North America

Copy to: His Beatitude IGNATIUS IV, Patriarch of Antioch and All The East
His Holiness ALEXY, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia
His All-Holiness BARTHOLOMEW, Patriarch of Constantinople
His Beatitude THEOPHILOS, Patriarch of Jerusalem
All Hierarchs of the Standing Conference of Canonical Orthodox Bishops
In America (SCOBA)