



ST. GEORGE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CATHEDRAL  
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V. REV. PAUL D. O'CALLAGHAN, DEAN

March 17, 2009

Most Reverend Metropolitan PHILIP, Primate  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese  
358 Mountain Rd.  
POB 5238  
Englewood, NJ 07631

Your Eminence, Metropolitan PHILIP,

Master, bless.

Our Council of Presbyters met today at St. George Cathedral, Wichita, KS, with deans and elected presbyters, to study the recent decision of the Holy Synod of Antioch regarding the status of diocesan and auxiliary bishops.

With love and reverence, we seek your counsel on the following questions that arose during our deliberations. We assure you of our prayers and respect as our beloved Metropolitan of this holy and God-protected Archdiocese, and our love and respect for His Grace, Bishop BASIL. We pray for your continued good health.

We humbly submit the following questions for your consideration:

1. Are there other diocesan bishops, outside our Archdiocese, that are affected by the Holy Synod's decision?
2. There seems to be differences in tone and meaning between the Arabic original and the English translations of articles 77 and 78. Can these be clarified?
3. What were the intentions of the Holy Synod in formulating these amendments?
4. Is the Pittsburgh Constitution binding, since it was duly approved and implemented by the legally binding decision made at special Archdiocesan Convention of July 2004?
5. Since official Archdiocesan documents state that the provisions for self-rule, including those pertaining to the local synod of the Archdiocese, are irrevocable, as witnessed both by the Pittsburgh Constitution and the Patriarchal version of October 15, 2004, how can they be overturned by amendment of the Patriarchal by-laws?

6. Given that the granting of self-rule required that the Patriarchal Constitution be amended to reflect the self-ruled status of the North American Archdiocese, and that this Constitution governs its by-laws, not vice versa, how could the Constitution be overturned by amendments of by-laws?

7. What was the need, and why the urgency, for a special meeting of the Holy Synod of Antioch? Were constitutional procedures followed for the calling of that meeting?

8. Given the fact that the mechanism of resolution for possible problems or disagreements is specified in our Constitution as belonging to the Local Synod of Bishops, with right of appeal to the Patriarch and the Holy Synod, why were these amendments necessary?

9. We are not aware of any study, investigation, or report containing information regarding concerns of disunity or other issues of disagreement within our Archdiocese. What was done by our bishops that precipitated the Holy Synod's decision? Did the Patriarch discuss these issues with our bishops when he visited in the fall of 2008?

10. How can enthroned diocesan bishops be dethroned other than on specific canonical grounds?

11. If there is no Local Synod within our Archdiocese, in what way do we retain our status of Self-Rule?

12. If Bishop Basil, for example, is no longer Bishop of Wichita, what is his current title?

13. How are we to understand the status of bishops who were not only enthroned but also consecrated for specific dioceses, if they are no longer bishops of those dioceses?

14. Are the dioceses which were created at the time of our becoming self-ruled now reduced to regions?

15. We understand that the decree was sent for approval to all the members of the Holy Synod. Did they all respond? What were their responses?

Once again, assuring your Eminence of our filial love and obedience, we pray for the abiding unity of your flock in Christ.

Your servants in Christ

(signed)

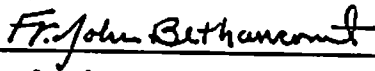
Cc: His Beatitude, Patriarch IGNATIUS IV of Antioch and all the East  
His Grace, Bishop BASIL



**Protopresbyter Paul O'Callaghan**  
*Proëstos and Dean of St George Cathedral*  
St. George Cathedral, Wichita, KS



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*Vice Dean of the Central Texas Deanery*  
St. Elias, Austin, TX



**Archpriest John Bethancourt**  
*Grammateus and Elected Member-at-large*  
Holy Trinity, Santa Fe, NM



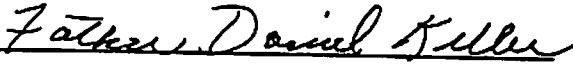
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*Dean of the Great Plains Deanery*  
St. Mary, Omaha, NE



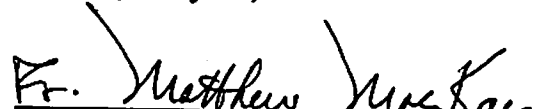
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**Archimandrite Daniel Keller**  
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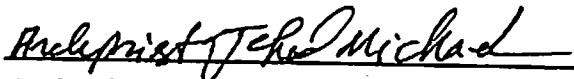
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**Economos Constantine Nasr**  
*Dean of Oklahoma*  
St. Elijah, Oklahoma City, OK



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