

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

May 2017

Beloved Hierarchs, Reverend Clergy, Esteemed Members of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees and Parish Councils, Beloved Faithful:

Christ is Risen! Truly He Has Risen!

Greetings to you and your families on this blessed Feast of the Holy Resurrection of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ.

We wanted to update you on a new development in our Syrian Relief Program. As the situation in Syria worsened this past year, we increased our efforts at the Archdiocesan level and began a new series of meetings with the State Department, the White House and several NGO's and humanitarian organizations. We of course have also been in regular contact with the Patriarchate in Damascus to offer assistance and to learn how we might be most effective as an archdiocese to help our suffering brothers and sisters.

Although the military action in Syria has abated for the time being, the suffering of the Syrian people is great. There will be much to do over the next years to truly help them – to ease their suffering and to provide them assistance in rebuilding their lives. The level of suffering is unimaginable; lives have been lost, homes have been decimated, families have been torn apart, and many of our churches and holy places have been destroyed.

We will continue our efforts in Washington, DC on their behalf, but we want to ensure that as an Archdiocese we are doing everything we can to ease the suffering of our brothers and sisters in Christ and of all those in Syria who have been impacted by this terrible crisis.

We therefore have established a special fund for Syria and have launched a webpage on the Archdiocese website for Syrian Relief. We are pleased to let you know that individuals and parishes can now contribute directly and securely on our website. You can visit the website to donate through this link: <http://www.antiochian.org/syrian-relief-program-introducing-derd>.

We continue to receive numerous emails, calls and letters from within and outside our Archdiocese, from Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike, regarding the Syrian relief effort. Many have expressed their willingness to help, give money, sponsor families, and more, but in some cases, there has been a concern that donations going through 3rd Party organizations might not be going directly to where it would be most needed. That is why we have taken the step of setting up a donation mechanism on the Archdiocese website. Any donations made through our site will be earmarked and held in a special account and 100% of funds will go directly to the Patriarchate's Department of Ecumenical Relations and Development (DERD) which will utilize funds for the most critical needs. DERD is the largest independent local NGO operating inside Syria and it has a highly effective humanitarian program in place. DERD seeks to offer help to those who are in dire need, ensuring that all efforts are made to provide service to all, regardless of race, religion or ethnicity.

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

358 Mountain Road, P.O. Box 5238, Englewood, NJ 07631-5238
(201) 871-1355 T Archdiocese@antiochian.org (201) 871-7954 F

As I previously directed, parishes may collect and conduct fundraisers for humanitarian relief efforts in Syria, but all monies collected should be forwarded to the archdiocese. If any parish intends to conduct a fundraiser for a specific diocese or parish in Syria (or anywhere in the Patriarchate), permission must first be given by me and then the money is to be sent here and we will forward it on your behalf. We are asking that no monies be sent from the parishes outside the Archdiocese. This is so our committee can keep track of all fund-raising and humanitarian efforts.

I am asking that if you haven't yet appointed a parish/mission liaison to receive future correspondence and coordinate with our efforts, you should do so immediately. You should identify your parish liaison and email his or her name, email address and phone number to SyrianRelief@antiochian.org.

Finally, we have put together a collection of writings from His Beatitude, Patriarch John X on the crisis in Syria, as well as official statements and information from the Patriarchate, which we are blessed to share with you. You can download this publication at the following link: http://www.antiochian.org/sites/default/files/patriarchate_publication_2017_pdf_0.pdf.

May these efforts be pleasing to our Lord Jesus Christ and may they bring some measure of comfort to our suffering brethren.

Your Father in Christ,

+JOSEPH

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

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

358 Mountain Road, P.O. Box 5238, Englewood, NJ 07631-5238
(201) 871-1355 T Archdiocese@antiochian.org (201) 871-7954 F