

The Holy Synod of Antioch Opens Its Session Balamand



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The Holy Synod of Antioch convened at the Monastery of Our Lady of Balamand under the presidency of His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X, with the participation of the Hierarchs, Their Eminences: Elias (Beirut and Dependencies), Elias (Tyre, Sidon and Dependencies), Damaskinos (São Paulo and All Brazil), Saba (New York and All North America), Silouan (Byblos, Batroun and Dependencies), Basilios (Akkar and Dependencies), Ephrem (Tripoli, Koura and Dependencies), Ignatius (France, Western and Southern Europe), Ghattas (Baghdad, Kuwait and Dependencies), Silouan (British Isles and Ireland), Antonios (Zahle, Baalbek and Dependencies), Nikolaos (Hama and Dependencies), Basilios (Australia, New Zealand and the Philippines), Ignacio (Mexico, Venezuela, Central America and the Islands of Caribbean Sea), Athanasios (Latakia and Dependencies), Jacques (Buenos Aires and All Argentina), Ephrem (Aleppo, Iskenderun and Dependencies), Niphon (Shahba), Gregorios (Homs and Dependencies), and Antonios (Bosra, Hauran and Jabal al-Arab).

The Fathers of the Holy Synod inaugurated the opening session with prayer, invoking the Holy Spirit to guide them amid a world beset by turmoil and the critical challenges facing the Church and Her faithful. They sought divine wisdom to steer the Church toward safe harbor, to rekindle hope, to minister to humanity, and to bear witness to the Lord.

In his opening address, His Beatitude gave thanks to the Lord for making this gathering possible despite the harsh and difficult circumstances. He recalled the unresolved case of the abducted bishops of Aleppo, Paul Yazigi and Youhanna Ibrahim, which continues to be met with global silence and neglect. His Beatitude emphasized that the Church of Antioch is one family, united through its Holy Synod—rooted in Antioch, yet extending to the ends of the earth. Its mission transcends traditional archdiocesan boundaries and is not limited to pastoral work but also extends to be the voice of truth in the spheres of politics, economics, and ministry. His Beatitude delivered a resolute message of resilience and survival in this homeland sanctified by the footsteps of the Holy Apostles, affirming that the bells of our churches shall continue to ring, and that God shall remain the Source from which our words of wisdom spring, and the Compass that guides our actions. We are Antiochians, and shall remain so—firmly rooted in the land of Antioch, armed with a hope that is not mere human optimism, but full trust in the promises of God.

The Synod Fathers also lifted prayers for the martyrs of the brutal bombing at Saint Elias Church in Douweila, Damascus, asking the Lord to grant mercy to the departed and to bestow healing, strength, and patience upon the wounded.

It is worth noting that alongside Metropolitan Saba Esper of New York and All North America, several members of the Board of Trustees were present at the opening session. This occasion provided an opportunity to receive the blessing of His Beatitude and the Holy Fathers of the Synod, affirming the depth of Antiochian unity. In a detailed report, Metropolitan Saba presented key facts about the archdiocese—its history, its present realities, and the vision and future aspirations of its faithful.

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