

## **The Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Antioch has begun: “We will remain in the land of Antioch”**



The sessions of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate of Antioch have commenced under the presidency of His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East, with the participation of Their Eminences the Metropolitans: Elias (of Beirut and its surroundings), Elias (of Tyre, Sidon, and their surroundings), Damaskinos (of São Paulo and all Brazil), Saba (of New York and all North America), Silouan (of Byblos, Batroun, and their surroundings), Basilios (of Akkar and its surroundings), Ephraim (of Tripoli, Koura, and their surroundings), Ignatius (of France and all Western and Southern Europe), Ghattas (of Baghdad, Kuwait, and their surroundings), Silouan (of the British Isles and Ireland), Antonios (of Zahle, Baalbek, and their surroundings), Nicholas (of Hama and its surroundings), Basilios (of Australia, New Zealand, and the Philippines), Ignatius (of Mexico, Venezuela, Central America, and the Caribbean), Athanasios (of Latakia and its surroundings), Jacob (of Buenos Aires and all Argentina), Ephraim (of Aleppo, Iskenderun, and their surroundings),

Neophytos (of Shahba), Gregorios (of Homs and its surroundings), and Antonios (of Bosra, Hawran, and Mount of the Arabs).

The opening session began with a prayer offered by the Fathers of the Holy Synod, invoking the Holy Spirit to enlighten them amidst the turmoil afflicting the world and the critical circumstances surrounding the Church and her children, so that they may steer the ship of the Church toward safe harbour, strengthening hope, serving humanity, and bearing witness to the Lord.

The Patriarch began his address by thanking God for allowing this meeting to take place despite the difficult circumstances, recalling the plight of the abducted Metropolitans of Aleppo, Paul Yazigi and John Ibrahim, which continues to be met with the world's silence and indifference. He emphasised that the Church of Antioch is one family, uniting her hierarchs within the body of the Holy Synod; she proceeds from Antioch and extends to the ends of the earth. She is not confined to the historical dioceses of the East but reaches all dioceses of the diaspora; she is not limited to pastoral ministry but is called to be a voice of truth in many fields — in politics, in economics, and in service to others.

The Patriarch also delivered a message of steadfastness and perseverance in this land where the holy Apostles once walked, affirming that the bells of our churches will continue to ring and that God will remain the source of wisdom in our words and the compass guiding our actions. "We are Antiochians, and we shall remain Antiochians. We shall stay on the land of Antioch, armed with hope — not merely human optimism, but complete trust in the promises of God."

The Fathers of the Synod also prayed for the repose of the souls of the martyrs of the criminal explosion that took place in the Church of Saint Elias in the Dweila district of Damascus, asking the Lord to grant them rest in His bosom, and for the wounded, that our good God may grant them health, healing, and patience.

It is worth noting that present at the opening session, along with Metropolitan Saba Esper, Metropolitan of New York and all North America, was a delegation of members from the Board of Trustees of that Archdiocese. Their presence was an opportunity to receive the blessing of the Patriarch and the Hierarchs, and to express the depth of Antiochian unity. Metropolitan Saba also presented a detailed report on the condition of the Archdiocese, speaking about its history, the vision of its faithful, and their future aspirations.



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