

Archdiocese's Vicar General Represents Metropolitan Joseph at Key Gatherings



With the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph, Archpriest Thomas Zain, Vicar General of the Antiochian Archdiocese and Dean of St. Nicholas Cathedral in Brooklyn, New York, recently represented Sayidna in official functions important to the Archdiocese and Orthodox Christianity in the United States.

The most recent was Tuesday, October 8 when Fr. Thomas participated in the [Joint Commission](#) of Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, as facilitated by the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the USA and the Standing Conference of Oriental Orthodox Churches. The meeting at the Armenian Cathedral of St. Vartan in New York City was the joint commission's first in ten years.

Fr. Thomas reported that, after a such a long hiatus, it was refreshing to see the leaders of these churches addressing mutual issues of pastoral concern, including inter-marriages, religious education and practical aspects of Christian life. They pledged to support and encourage youth gatherings, spiritual retreats and concerts featuring their choirs. The leaders also discussed how they can better represent

themselves and congregations not as ethnic communities – but Christ-centered communities – before government leaders.

Sayidna Joseph had been participating in the meetings of the Holy Synod of Antioch at Balamand, Lebanon, and was unable to attend the joint commission gathering.

Last month, Fr. Thomas went to Washington, D.C. where he joined a group of ecclesiastical and civic leaders to plead for the plight of Christians in the Middle East. According to the [**Brooklyn Reporter**](#), the group met with U.S. Senators Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, and U.S. Representatives Carolyn Maloney and Max Rose. The group reminded these lawmakers that Christians have lived in the Middle East since the dawn of Christianity, and that they must be allowed to live freely and peacefully there.

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