

## Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of N. America - Historic Weekend of Celebrations in Brooklyn Concludes with Hierarchical Divine Liturgy



Seven hierarchs, assisted by almost two dozen clergymen, gathered in worship ([watch video](#) and [view album](#)) around the holy altar at the Archdiocesan Cathedral of St. Nicholas in Brooklyn, New York on Sunday, October 20. They celebrated so much for which they were thankful: the body and blood of our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ; the starts of the centennial celebrations of the cathedral on State Street and the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Syro-Arabian Mission by St. Raphael of Brooklyn; the elevation to the dignity of archpriest of the cathedral's assistant priest, Fr. Adrian Budica; the quarter-century anniversary in the priesthood of the cathedral's dean, Fr. Thomas Zain; and the tonsuring of his son, George, to the rank of reader.

Leading the celebrations was His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph, primate of the

Antiochian Archdiocese, joined by Their Graces Bishop Basil of Wichita, Bishop Thomas of Charleston, Bishop John of Worcester, Bishop Anthony of Toledo, and Bishop Nicholas of Miami. Their special guest was His Eminence Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk, Chairman of the Department of External Church Relations of the Russian Orthodox Church, who represented His Holiness, Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and all Russia. The Russian Church provided St. Raphael as a priest in 1895 — and consecrated him as a bishop — for the founding of the Syro-Arabian Mission, the precursor of the Antiochian Archdiocese.

“We must continue to remain the salt of the earth, to preserve Christ in our hearts, and to save this world from madness and decay,” Metropolitan Hilarion said in his homily. “We must do all that we can to transfigure it. Each of us is a disciple of the Lord, with humility and love, bringing the gospel to those near and far. Such was the ministry of St. Raphael of Brooklyn, who came here 125 years ago, to found the community of this church.”

At the conclusion of the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, Metropolitan Joseph welcomed Metropolitan Hilarion, who arrived in the U.S. the night before. “Your presence here for this great celebration is greatly appreciated,” Sayidna said. “We thank you for bringing the blessing of the holy Patriarchate of Russia.” Sayidna also stressed the enduring relationship and shared history the Churches of Antioch and Russia cherish.

His Eminence recalled the pilgrimage of Archdiocesan clergy and laity he led to Russia in May, where he visited Metropolitan Hilarion. “You cannot imagine the joy and the richness of the faith we brought home with us. We have witnessed the beautiful way of faith in Russia. People are strong and deep in their faith.” Sayidna then turned to the congregation and said, “Go to Russia and see the spirituality and the piety and the monasteries, and the experience of many holy fathers and mothers. St. Raphael experienced all of that.”

Earlier that weekend, Sayidna Joseph convened the autumn meetings for the Archdiocesan bishops, the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch, the Antiochian Village Council, and the Board of Trustees.

On Saturday night, following Great Vespers ([watch video](#) and [view album](#)) a banquet was held to honor Fr. Thomas Zain’s 25 years in the holy priesthood. Joining the Archdiocesan leaders at the Brooklyn Law School were the president of the borough of Brooklyn, Mr. Eric Adams; the Honorary Consul General of Lebanon in New Jersey, Mr. John Abi-Habib, and his wife, Mrs. Sonia Abi-Habib. Fr. Michael Ellias, pastor of St. Mary Church in Brooklyn served as master of ceremonies. Fr.

Thomas' wife, Kh. Claudia, Mr. Fawaz El Khoury, vice chairman of the Board of Trustees, and Mr. Roger David, President of the Order, spoke lovingly of him. His Eminence presented Fr. Tom with the Certificate of Meritorious Service honoring his years of service as priest, cathedral dean, Vicar General and various roles in the Archdiocese.

**Photos by Subdn. Andre Christoforides and Khourieh Destinie Winn**

- Source: [antiochian.org](http://antiochian.org) / Peter Samore