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Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America - Metropolitan JOSEPH Ordains Fr. John (Rassem) El Massih to the Holy Priesthood



Sunday, August 30 was a special day for Ss. Peter and Paul Church in Potomac, Maryland, as it witnessed His Eminence Metropolitan Joseph ordain the “first-chanter” of the Antiochian Archdiocese to the holy priesthood.

Fr. John (Rassem) El Massih once served as Sayidna Joseph's assistant and travel companion. The Archdiocese knows him well for his acumen and extensive knowledge with Byzantine chant. He lectures on the subject at the Antiochian House of Studies, the Archdiocesan Sacred Music Institute, and St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. He also released two CDs: "The Voice of the Lord: Selected Hymns from the Feast of Theophany" and "Sun of Justice: Selected Hymns from the Feast of the Nativity of Christ in Arabic, Greek, and English." Fr. John, along with his Kh. Alexis and their two children, Sonia and Matthew, will remain at Ss. Peter and Paul Church pending his permanent assignment.

"He is well trained and well established, but what he loves the most is to be in the altar, and preach and teach," His Eminence said of Fr. John in his homily. "God has granted him with a special gift – his beautiful voice and his musical skill. No matter where he goes, I will keep him teaching music."

The year 2020 has been difficult for many families because of the Coronavirus pandemic, and undoubtedly, Orthodox Christians miss their large church families. Still, Sayidna Joseph pointed to this troubling time as proof that God has not abandoned His children, and that they can still run to Him.

"Whether we are present in the church, whether we are watching on the livestream, whether we are following on our phones while we are traveling or at home, the Divine Liturgy, the word of God, and the presence of God unite us," His Eminence said.

A small group of clergy and laity gathered at the church, and more than 1,600 people watched the livestream on YouTube.

"We can praise Him in the church. We can praise Him at home. We can praise Him while we are driving a car. We can praise Him while we are flying on the plane," Sayidna said. "We can praise Him while we are preparing our meals in the kitchen. We are called to be in His presence everywhere and at all times."

During the Divine Liturgy, His Eminence led the Trisagion Prayers for the repose of the former pastor of Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Fr. Isaac Crow. Sayidna Joseph also churched baby Emilia Maria Toumi, the third daughter of the current pastor, Fr. Luke Toumi, and Kh. Razan Toumi.

[Photo album](#)

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