



*The Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese*  
OF NORTH AMERICA

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**January 18, 2005 – Englewood, New Jersey**

**THREE NEW BISHOPS ASSUME DUTIES FOR DIOCESES OF THE SELF-  
RULED ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH  
AMERICA**

*The following letter from the Department of Legal Affairs was sent to the faithful of the Archdiocese to be placed in each parish bulletin.*

Venerable Hierarchs, Esteemed Members of the Board of Trustees, and Beloved Clergy and Faithful of this God-Protected Archdiocese:

We greet you with prayers for all good things in this New Year!

His Grace, Bishop THOMAS (Joseph), Bishop of Pittsburgh and the Diocese of the East, His Grace Bishop MARK (Maymon), Bishop of Toledo and the Diocese of the Midwest, and His Grace Bishop ALEXANDER (Mufarrij), Bishop of Ottawa and the Diocese of Eastern Canada and Upstate New York assumed their new duties on January 1, 2005.

Bishop THOMAS has moved into the chancery at the Antiochian Village in Ligonier, Pennsylvania, and Bishop MARK has moved into the chancery in Toledo, Ohio. Bishop ALEXANDER will soon move to a temporary location in Canada until renovations are completed at the permanent chancery in Montreal. They will later be formally enthroned at their diocesan cathedrals by the Metropolitan and members of the Local Synod.

Formerly Fr. Thomas Joseph, Fr. Mark Maymon and Fr. Rafeek Mufarrij were included in the nominations made by the General Assembly of the Special Convention of July 2004 as candidates for the office of diocesan bishop. According to the Constitution of the self-ruled Antiochian Archdiocese of North America, adopted July 16, 2004 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, they were elected to the episcopacy by the Local Synod on October 29, 2004, in Naples, Florida. Subsequent to their election, and at the request of His Beatitude IGNATIUS IV, the new bishops-elect were sent to Damascus, where they were consecrated to the episcopacy at the hand of His Beatitude during the weekend of December 3 – 5, 2004. The Archdiocese, on behalf of the faithful, has expressed its heartfelt

thanks to Our Father in Christ, Patriarch IGNATIUS IV and the members of the Holy Synod of Antioch for the continuing support of the North American Archdiocese.

The Holy Synod of Antioch, at its meeting of October 14, 2004, in approving the basic implementation by the Pittsburgh Constitution of the self-rule granted on October 9, 2003, suggested some changes in the Pittsburgh Constitution. Pursuant to our constitution, the suggested changes were submitted to the Archdiocese Department of Legal Affairs for review. The Department of Legal Affairs has determined that the major appropriate suggested changes do not require amendments to the Pittsburgh Constitution.

Under the Pittsburgh Constitution, (as occurred in the case of the three new bishops), the Patriarch of Antioch may exercise his option to not send representatives of the Holy Synod of Antioch to participate, with the Local Synod, in the election of diocesan bishops. It is also permissible under our constitution, where approved by the Metropolitan and Local Synod (as occurred in the case of the three new bishops), to send our bishops-elect to Damascus for consecration.

The Pittsburgh Constitution, therefore, as approved by the faithful on July 16, 2004, stands as the Constitution of this Archdiocese, without the need for further revision.

The faithful of the Archdiocese are hopeful that His Beatitude Patriarch IGNATIUS IV will be with us at the Archdiocesan General Convention in Detroit, which will be held from July 25-31, 2005.

The Archdiocese adds its Axios to Bishops THOMAS, MARK, and ALEXANDER as they assume their new duties. May God grant them many years!