

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

November 11, 2015

Beloved Hierarchs, Reverend Clergy, Esteemed Members of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees and Parish Councils, Beloved Faithful:

Greetings to you and your families in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as we are about to begin the time of prayer and fasting in preparation for His Nativity in the Flesh.

Over the past several weeks and months, we have received numerous emails, calls, and letters from within and outside our Archdiocese, from Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike, expressing their willingness to help, give money, sponsor families, and more, with regard to the Syrian refugee and relief effort. As a result, during our Board of Trustees meeting in Los Angeles last month, I appointed a committee to oversee all the humanitarian and fundraising efforts of our Archdiocese relating to the ongoing Syrian crisis. (You can read appointment letter explaining the scope and members of the committee on www.antiochian.org).

The next step in this process is to communicate with you, the clergy and parishes of our God-protected archdiocese, regarding the guidelines that every parish and group are to follow regarding these efforts so that we make a unified effort as a united archdiocese. Part of this effort on the archdiocesan level has been to meet with the State Department and relief agencies such as Church World Services to see how we can participate and be effective as an archdiocese to help our suffering brothers and sisters. As a result, we instruct the pastors and the parishes to follow the following guidelines with regard to their local efforts:

1. Each parish/mission should immediately appoint a liaison to receive future correspondence and work with local relief agencies such as Church World Service who are responsible for settling refugee families. You will hear more about this in the future, but for the time being, please identify a liaison in your parish and email his or her name, email address and phone number to SyrianRelief@antiochian.org
2. For humanitarian relief efforts in Syria, parishes may collect and conduct fundraisers locally on behalf of the Archdiocese or IOCC. All monies collected should be forwarded to the Archdiocese with instructions on where they are to go (IOCC for Syrian Relief or directly to the Patriarchate). If any parish intends to conduct a fundraiser for a specific diocese or parish in Syria (or anywhere in the Patriarchate), permission must first be given by me, and then the money is to be sent here and we will forward it on your behalf to the designee. **NO MONIES ARE TO BE SENT OR GIVEN OUTSIDE THE ARCHDIOCESE OR OVERSEAS DIRECTLY FROM THE PARISHES.** This is so our committee can keep track of all fund-raising and humanitarian efforts. Please strictly abide by this directive.

"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26)

3. Those parishes or individuals willing to sponsor refugee families if/when they start coming should identify themselves by sending email to SyrianRelief@antiochian.org.
4. For those wanting to support relief efforts in the United States or Canada through monetary contributions, they may also send their donations to the Archdiocese with clear instructions that the monies are to be used to help settle families arriving in the U.S. or Canada.

Finally, we are in the process of developing a webpage that will keep the faithful informed and provide information for those interested in helping with either financial support, donations of goods, providing services such as translating, medical and dental care, etc., for the refugee families as they arrive on our blessed shores. This is already happening in Canada due to the cooperation between the government and the churches there; however, we are still waiting for the United States to streamline its process. We want to be prepared if and when we do indeed have families arriving.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Joseph', written in a cursive style.

+JOSEPH

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