



**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE**  
**OF NORTH AMERICA**

**Prot. no.:** 397/2023

November 1, 2023

My sons and daughters in our protected parishes, in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America,

*"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the blessing of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit may be with you all." (2 Corinthians 13:14)*

Beloved Faithful,

Following the call of the Holy Synod of Antioch, which beckons all its children to dedicate a Sunday following the Synod's conclusion to collect aid for our brethren at the Patriarchate of Jerusalem, and to partake in the relief of their suffering while demonstrating the Christian communion of humanity in times of affliction, we hereby announce that the upcoming Sunday, falling on November 12, shall be designated as the day for collecting aid throughout our Archdiocese. We kindly request all parishes to send their collections to the Archdiocesan headquarters. The Archdiocese will continue to collect aid for one month starting from November 12<sup>th</sup>.

In response to some of your questions regarding the inclusion of petitions in the Divine Liturgy for the sake of peace and mercy in the Holy Land, I would like to clarify:

The practice of introducing new petitions into the Divine Liturgy does not depend on a personal decision by a bishop or priest. Following the Holy Tradition of our Orthodox Church, at the end of the Great Entrance while processing with the Holy Gifts, the priest offers the people's supplications and mentions names and regions that are going through turbulent events. This is what we hope for from all of you in these days when humanity is in dire need of divine mercy.

Furthermore, we recommend that the service of the *Paraklesis* (Supplicatory Canon) be held in the churches to the extent possible for the faithful to offer supplications

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and entreaties, seeking mercy and peace in the Holy Land, especially in Gaza at this time.

We hope, and as we have witnessed in every crisis, that each and every one of you will wholeheartedly contribute to this humanitarian and fraternal duty. In closing, I am sharing two prayers for you to use during these times.

May you always be guarded by God's care.

Yours in the Service of Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+SABA". The signature is stylized, with a large, sweeping stroke for the plus sign and the letters "SABA" written in a cursive, flowing style.

**+SABA**

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

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

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## Prayer from the Akathist to the Myrrh-streaming Icon of the Mother of God – “Softener of Evil Hearts”

Who shall not call thee blessed, O Virgin full of grace! Who shall not hymn thy loving-kindness toward the race of men! We pray unto thee, we beseech thee: Leave us not to perish in misfortunes; melt our hearts with love, send thine arrow to our enemies, so that love may wound our hearts with peace toward those who persecute us. Even as the world hateth us, do thou extend thy love toward us, and even as the world persecuteth us, do thou accept us and grant us the God-given power of patience to endure without complaint the temptations encountered in this world. O Mistress! Soften the hearts of wicked men who rise up against us, lest their hearts should perish in iniquity, but, O Full of Grace, do thou entreat thy Son and our God to visit their hearts with peace, so that the devil, the father of evil, may be put to shame. And we, singing thy loving-kindness toward us, lowly and vile as we are, shall hymn thee, O most wondrous Mistress, O Virgin full of grace: Hearken unto us in this hour, as our hearts are heavy, guard us with peace and love toward one another and toward our enemies, eradicate every wickedness and hostility that we have, as we sing to thee and to thy Son, our Lord Jesus Christ: Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

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**“A Prayer to the People of Gaza”**  
**by His Eminence Metropolitan George (Khodr)**

"O Jesus Christ, O King of Peace, our people in Gaza doth yearn for Thy abundant mercy. Take their children in Thine hands and extend Thy care to all their people. Wipe away every tear from their eyes, replacing sorrow with joy. O Lord, Thou who consolest every heart, place Thy Spirit in the troubled hearts, so they may find comfort in Thee and Thy compassion. Be a source of rest for the wounded and a healing balm. Ease their pains and deliver them from all fear. Take their burdens upon Thy shoulders and have mercy on those who have gone to Thee.

O God, cleanse their land from all defilement, and greed. Feed the people of the city with all they need, and let them not know death, oppression, or injustice, for in Thee, there is only justice and life.

Pour out upon all nations a sense of Gaza's suffering and a spirit of solidarity with them, striving for peace.

These are Thy children, all of them. Do not allow them to be displaced or struck again, so that we may live with them as brothers, building ourselves and the world with the spirit of forgiveness and tolerance.

Protect Thy Church there and shield it from torment. Put an end to this tragic ordeal, and encourage peace-loving nations to rebuild the city anew. Accept the prayers of the ancient Gazan saints who enriched the Church with deep spirituality and golden words. O God, end this war, for Thy people have grown weary. Embrace, O Lord, this martyred city until it glorifies Thee, and we glorify Thee with it as we stand in solidarity.

To Thee be honor, worship, and glory, together with Thy Father and Thy Holy Spirit. Amen."

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