

His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

The Ecclesiastical New Year, September 1, 2022

To be read from the pulpit and printed in the bulletin.

Brother Hierarchs, reverend Clergy, and beloved Faithful in Christ,

Greetings and blessings to all of you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we celebrate the beginning of the new ecclesiastical year!

The transition from one year to the next is a moment to take stock and renew our perspective. It prompts us to reflect on things we might be taking for granted and to make resolutions to remedy this neglect. Just as the world does this at the start of the civil new year (January 1), so might we do the same at the start of our ecclesiastical new year today.

Last year at about this time, I asked you to reflect on the place of our youth in our parishes and archdiocese. Unfortunately, this was a subject many of us had previously taken for granted. However, after putting our heads together and putting our shoulders to the wheel, our engagement with young people is making great advances, and momentum is building toward even greater progress in the future.

Now, as another year begins, I want to draw your attention toward another often-neglected subject: vocations, particularly the calling to priestly ministry. Sometimes it seems like people think priests grow on trees or hatch from eggs in some distant fairyland. Their priest is always there for them, and when he is transferred or retires, the metropolitan sends them a new one. In many parishes, few people imagine that one of their boys might end up in this role. Unfortunately, in some parishes or families, young men might even be discouraged from following this path. Yet we always expect that the priest will be there when we need him.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, priests come from parishes and families. They are called by God and nurtured in this calling by those around them. We all have a role to play in raising them up.

Beyond this one calling, there are many other vital callings in the Church: deacons, monastics, chaplains, youth directors, pastoral assistants, musicians, administrators, iconographers, healers, caregivers, and the like. In fact, each of us is called by God and empowered by His Spirit to serve the Church and the wider world in some way, as St. Paul tells us in his epistles. Within the Body of the Church, we are Christ's hands, feet, and mouth—each receiving from Him some part to play in the salvation of the world. But fulfilling that calling is up to us, and it is up to each of us to help one another discern and prepare for those callings.

Throughout the next twelve months, I urge all of you to focus on fulfilling and supporting vocations in the Church. First, I encourage each of you to pray regularly concerning the need for

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priests, deacons, and other vocations in the Church, following the exhortation of our Lord: “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few; therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest that He might send out workers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:37–38). Pray also that the Lord would help you follow His calling in your life and enable you to see and support the callings of your friends and family members in the Church.

Second, I urge our priests and parishes to discuss the subject of vocations in homilies, classes, written articles, and retreats throughout the coming year, teaching our faithful how to discern their vocations and how to support the vocations of others within the Church—especially the calling to priestly ministry. For our part, the archdiocese will be providing some resources for this effort over the coming months. To start with, the upcoming issue of *The Word* will feature interviews with several of our seminarians, in which they describe their paths toward finding and following their own vocations. I encourage you to read these stories and consider how God is leading you toward your own particular service in the Church.

Finally, I ask you to support (in particular) those men among your friends and family in whose lives you see the calling and gifts of priestly ministry. Too often, our young men have been steered away from this beautiful ministry toward practical professions, for the sake of their financial success. There is nothing wrong with those professions, but the men whom God is calling to the priesthood can find an even higher and more lasting success there—a heavenly reward. Let us support them wholeheartedly in this aspiration.

Brothers and sisters in Christ, let each one of us devote ourselves with utmost fervor to serving God and cooperating with His great work of salvation in this world. Although He is almighty, He calls us to work alongside Him—not because He lacks anything in Himself, but because He wants to share with us the joy of bringing light into this dark world. He is calling us. Do you hear Him? How will you respond?

With fervent prayers for all of you and all our parishes, I remain,

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Metropolitan Joseph". The signature is written in a cursive style and is preceded by a large, stylized cross symbol.

+JOSEPH

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

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