

**MOSCOW PATRIARCHATE**  
**ADMINISTRATOR OF THE PATRIARCHAL PARISHES**  
**OF THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN THE USA**

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№32

May 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023

**His Eminence,**  
**Sava,**  
**Archbishop of New York,**  
**Metropolitan of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese**  
**of North America**

*Your Eminence,*  
*Dear Metropolitan Sava!*

It is with great joy and brotherly love in Christ that I welcome you on this momentous day in your life and on your journey as a diligent, committed, and faithful Servant of Christ and His Church. Congratulations, dear Brother in Christ, on your enthronement as Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America!

You are called to continue the mission of your predecessors at a time when people need to hear the gospel more than ever. And while this can seem daunting and at times, seemingly an impossible task, we are reminded that this also creates endless opportunities to plant the smallest of seeds that may blossom into the tallest of trees.

We are called to endure and stay true to our calling as our predecessors have done in the past. It is impossible to reflect on your recent appointment without recalling the work of your predecessors, especially Saint Raphael (Hawaweeny) of Brooklyn. From the moment of his arrival in the USA, Saint Rafael cared for his flock as for his own children, finding places to serve, pray, and preserve the faith and culture of his brothers and sisters through love, compassion, patience, and wisdom, all of which was made possible because he relied on God's will.

Saint Rafael was wise and educated, always finding a way to grow his Orthodox community. Having taught in the Kazan Theological Academy in Imperial Russia, he was well versed in Russian Orthodoxy.

This connection and friendship between our communities is what gave birth to the election of St. Raphael by the Russian Holy Synod as Bishop of Brooklyn in 1903, and the consecration of Saint Rafael as the first Orthodox Christian bishop consecrated on American soil on February 29th 1904.

It was on that day when Saint Tikhon (Bellavin), future Patriarch of Moscow and all Russian, then Bishop of the Aleutians and North America, consecrated Archimandrite Rafael at Saint Nicholas Syrian-Arab Orthodox Church in Brooklyn, NY, and while presenting him with the bishop's staff said "The American Church rejoices over you... Your kinsmen and fellow Orthodox Syrian countrymen rejoice, for now they receive what, perhaps, they only dreamed of." I believe these words to be as relevant today as you continue the work of Saint Rafael as they were in 1904. I pray that Saint Rafael be a spiritual guide for you and a source of strength and wisdom in your ministry.

Dear Brother in Christ, while the world around us will always challenge our faith, let us be reminded of our mission with the words of Saint Ignatius of Antioch, that "the visible center and head of the Eucharistic Assembly is the Bishop: It is he who leads the Assembly and preaches the word of God; it is he who offers the Eucharist, as an Icon of Christ, the Great High Priest, and as the one who presides in the place of God."<sup>1</sup> May these words always provide perspective and comfort, and remind you, that God's will and His grace will always protect you and strengthen you.

Once more, dear Metropolitan Sava, I congratulate you, on your Enthronement! Although I cannot personally be with you today, please know that I am with you in prayer. I ask that you to accept these sincere words of congratulations and joy for your new vocation on behalf of all of the clergy and faithful of the Patriarchal Parishes of the Moscow Patriarchate in the USA and I wholeheartedly look forward to concelebrating with you in the very near future.

With brotherly love in Christ,

*Matthew*

Bishop of Sourozh  
Interim Administrator  
of the Patriarchal Parishes in the USA, Canada and Mexico

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<sup>1</sup> St. Ignatios, *Patrologia Græca*, Vol. V, col. 668A (Epistle to the Magnesians, VI.1).