Patriarch John of Antioch officiates at Divine Liturgy on the Sunday of Orthodoxy



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On March 9th, the Sunday of Orthodoxy, at the invitation of His Beatitude Patriarch John X of the Great Antioch and All the East, Archimandrite Philip (Vasiltsev), representative of the Russian Orthodox Church, **took part** in the Divine Liturgy at the Maryamiyah Holy Dormition Cathedral in Damascus.

Officiating at the Divine Liturgy was His Beatitude Patriarch John of Antioch. Among his concelebrants were Bishop Romanos of Seleucia, chief secretary of the Synod of the Orthodox Church of Antioch; Bishop Moussa of Daraya; Bishop John of Sergiopolis; Bishop Moses of Larissa; Archimandrite Philip (Vasiltsev), representative of the Russian Orthodox Church; and the Damascus clergy.

The divine service was celebrated in the Arabic, Church Slavonic and Greek languages.

Among those who attended the Liturgy were Mr Emmanuel Kakavelakis, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Greece to Syria, and member of the European Parliament Nikolas Farantouris.

In his homily, His Beatitude Patriarch John addressed the transitional President of Syria Ahmad Al-Sharaa, saying, in particular: “We earnestly invoke God’s mercy upon all civilians and public security forces who have fallen, and we pray for the swift recovery of the wounded and injured. We also affirm the necessity of forming a fact-finding committee to ensure accountability for those responsible for the spilling of innocent blood, whether among civilians or public security forces.”

The tragic developments in the Syrian coastal region have caused many casualties among civilian population and public security officers and left great many people wounded. The majority of the victims were innocent unarmed civilians, women and children. In his homily, Patriarch John also said: “The sanctities and dignities of the people have been violated, and the slogans and chants being used are spreading division, fueling sectarianism, and undermining civil peace. Additionally, numerous cities, towns, and villages have seen their homes burned and their possessions looted. The targeted areas have primarily been those inhabited by Alawites and Christians, and many innocent Christian civilians have also lost their lives.”

His Beatitude called upon the President to “put an immediate end to these massacres... and restore a sense of security and stability for all Syrians,” regardless of their religious affiliation. “Mr. President, we urge you to advance national reconciliation, civil peace, and peaceful coexistence, and to uphold freedoms as a supreme value in a society founded on the principle of citizenship,” Patriarch John added.

Archimandrite Philip expressed his warm greetings to His Beatitude Patriarch John on the occasion of the Feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy and conveyed to him a message of support from His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Rus’.

His Beatitude Patriarch John thanked His Holiness Patriarch Kirill for his invariable support for the Orthodox Church of Antioch.

The day before, on March 8th, Patriarch John X of Antioch and All the East of the Orthodox Church of Antioch, Patriarch Mor Ignatius Aphrem II of Antioch and All the East of the Syriac Orthodox Church, and Patriarch Youssef Absi of the Melkite Greek Catholic Church issued **a joint statement**, condemning the mass killings of civilians in Syria.

“The Christian Churches while strongly condemning any act that threatens civil peace, denounce and condemn the massacres targeting innocent civilians, and call for an immediate end to these horrific acts, which stand in stark opposition to all human and moral values. The Churches also call for the swift creation of conditions conducive to achieving national reconciliation among the Syrian people,” the statement reads, in particular.

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