



Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch

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Office of the Presiding Bishop

Concerning the Use of the Titles “Patriarch” and “Matriarch” in the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch

Purpose

The purpose of this document is to clarify the use of the titles *Patriarch* and *Matriarch* within the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch. This statement is issued in response to a request from a sister national Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch seeking clarification regarding the historical use and present standing of these titles.

Historical Usage

Within the history of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch in the United States, the titles *Patriarch* and *Matriarch* were used by Archbishop Herman Adrian Spruit and Archbishop Meri Louise Spruit. Their use of these titles reflected the unique pastoral and spiritual leadership they exercised during the formative years of the Church.

Beginning with the tenure of Archbishop Richard Gundrey, the use of the titles *Patriarch* and *Matriarch* was formally retired. Since that time, these titles have not been employed within the governance or public life of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch.

It is our understanding that the historical use, discontinuation, or any future consideration regarding these titles is solely the prerogative of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch in the United States.

Relationship Among the National Catholic Apostolic Churches of Antioch

This opportunity is also taken to clarify the relationship between the Church in the United States and the other national Catholic Apostolic Churches of Antioch.

Although each Church is separate and independent in its organization and governance, all share the same vision and a common commitment: to serve the people of God by removing unnecessary barriers that hinder full participation in the life of the Church.

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Church Central e-mail antioch1@swcp.com

Because the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch was initially established in the United States, the Church in the United States holds a position of honor within our communion. This position, however, does not entail authority or jurisdiction over the other national expressions of the independent Antiochian tradition.

The Presiding Bishops of the national Catholic Apostolic Churches of Antioch and the Presiding Bishop of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch in the United States are equal in dignity and authority within their respective Churches. The only distinction is that the Presiding Bishop in the United States is regarded as *primus inter pares*—that is, *first among equals*. This designation signifies a place of honor within the communion of Churches, not a position of jurisdiction or governing power over the others.

In this sense, the structure of our relationship reflects in some ways the ancient tradition of the Eastern Orthodox Churches regarding the Patriarch, although without adopting that title. The Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch recognizes that the term *Patriarch* properly belongs to the historical Churches of the East and to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Rome, and not to Churches that arose in modern times.

Conclusion

This clarification is offered to foster mutual understanding among the national Catholic Apostolic Churches of Antioch and to reaffirm both the autonomy of each Church and the communion that unites them in a shared mission of service to the people of God.

Given under the authority of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch in the United States, on the 29th day of March, in the year of Our Lord, 2026.

Fraternally,

+Mark Elliott Newman

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Presiding Bishop

Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch - USA

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