

Ignatius IV

Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and all the East

The Most Reverend and Most Holy Father, Patriarch of Antioch, the Great City of God, of Syria, Lebanon, Arabia, Cilicia, Mesopotamia and all the East; Father of Fathers, Shepherd of Shepherds, Master of Masters, and Thirteenth of the Holy Apostles, our Father and Chief Shepherd: May God Grant Him Many Years!

The See of Antioch ranks third in honour among the 15 self governing Orthodox Churches all of whom are in communion with each other. The city of Antioch was founded in 301 BC on the banks of the Orontes River. Antioch was considered the third most important city of the Roman world after Rome and Alexandria. Christianity came to Antioch from among those converted at Pentecost. St. Paul and St. Barnabas preached there and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians. There are references to the Christian community of Antioch throughout the Acts of the Apostles. The first Bishop of Antioch was St. Peter the Apostle, and the third, St. Ignatius, who became Bishop in 67 AD. St. John Chrysostom, whose Liturgy is served throughout the Orthodox world, and St. John of Damascus the scholar and theologian who defended the Faith at the Seventh Ecumenical Council, were also from the Church of Antioch. When the Turks took the city of Antioch in the 15th Century, the See of Antioch was moved to Damascus; here it remains to this day.

The present Patriarch of Antioch, His Beatitude, **Ignatius IV** (Hazim) is the 170th successor to St. Peter. He was born in 1921 in the village of Mhardey near Hama in Syria. He is the son of a pious Orthodox family and from an early age was attracted to service in the Church. While studying in Beirut, for a degree in Arabic Literature, he entered the service of the local Orthodox diocese, first by becoming an altar server, then a deacon. In 1945 he went to Paris where he graduated from the St. Sergius Theological Institute. From his time in France he has been moved by a deep desire to pass on the Orthodox Faith, and to take Orthodoxy out of its unhistorical ghetto by discovering in its Holy Tradition living answers to the problems of modern life. On his return to the Middle East, he founded the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Balamand, Lebanon which he then served for many years as Dean. As Dean he sought to provide the Patriarchate with responsible, intelligent leaders who had received a good spiritual and academic training and who were witnesses to an awakened and deeply personal faith.

He became bishop in 1961 and Metropolitan of Lattakia in Syria in 1970. The new Metropolitan was a reserved and friendly man, who manifested a deep and courageous straightforwardness; he was simple, direct and down to earth. His style broke with the former tradition of episcopal grandeur and he inaugurated an authentic practice of frequent Communion. On 2 July 1979, under the name of **Ignatius IV**, he became the Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch, the third ranking hierarch of the Orthodox Church after the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Alexandria. After his election as Patriarch he said:

"I know that I will be judged if I do not carry the Church and each one of you in my heart. It is not possible for me to address you as if I were different from you. No difference separates us. I am an integral part of you; I am in you and I ask you to be in me. For the Lord comes, and the Spirit descends on the brothers and sisters gathered, united in communion, as they manifest a diversity of charisma in the unity of the Spirit ".