



AHOS

Residency 2026

TWO WEEK NARRATIVE REPORT

Antiochian Village

August 31 to September 11, 2026

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AHOS Residency 2026 Report

A Narrative of Worship Learning and Community

Antiochian Village | August 31 to September 11, 2026

Overview

The first week of the 2026 Antiochian House of Studies Residency brought students, faculty, clergy, and church leaders together at the Antiochian Village for an intensive period of theological education and spiritual formation. Across the week, daily worship framed a full academic program, while shared meals, pastoral conversations, and major ecclesial events gave the residency a strong sense of common purpose. The experience showed how AHOS joins scholarship with prayer and ministry, forming students not only through classroom instruction but also through participation in the living tradition of the Church.

The residency opened with an orientation session that welcomed students into the academic and communal rhythm of the week. The Very Reverend Father Michel Najim, President of AHOS, offered an opening message, and the Right Reverend Archimandrite Fadi Rabbat, Academic Dean, introduced the faculty. The gathering also recognized Julia Ritter for her years of service as Registrar and welcomed Deacon John Bean into that role. The Very Reverend Father Elias Boulos, Director of the Residency, then provided guidance for the days ahead, and the session concluded with prayer offered by the Very Reverend Father Joseph Antypas. Students moved directly from orientation into their first classes, establishing from the beginning that the residency would be both purposeful and demanding.

Attendance was notably strong, filling the Antiochian Village to capacity. This broad participation gave the program an atmosphere of vitality and confirmed the continuing growth of the AHOS community. The presence of His Eminence Metropolitan Saba, together with the contribution of a Byzantine choir, further deepened the spiritual character of the opening and connected the academic work of the residency to the worship and pastoral life of the Archdiocese.



Opening remarks welcomed residents into the academic and spiritual life of the week.

AHOS App

This year, AHOS launched its dedicated mobile application for the Residency Program. The app was designed to support students and faculty by providing convenient tools for viewing the daily agenda, managing resources, sharing information, accessing session details, and much more. It gives participants quick and easy access to the information they need throughout the residency, helping them remain informed, organized, and connected.

A Week Shaped by Worship and Formation

Prayer provided the structure within which the academic program unfolded. Residents began their mornings with Orthros and returned to communal worship through Vespers and other services. The observance of the new Ecclesiastical Year was marked by a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy presided over by Metropolitan Saba. During the Liturgy, Subdeacon Alexandre Tabbal was ordained to the Holy Diaconate and Deacon Timothy Rask was ordained to the Holy Priesthood. Their ordinations became one of the defining moments of the residency, reminding the community that theological study ultimately serves the sacramental and pastoral mission of the Church.

The liturgical life of the week also held moments of remembrance and pastoral solidarity. Metropolitan Saba presided over a Trisagion service for the repose of Mitri Elias Rabbat, father of Archimandrite Fadi Rabbat, as faculty, staff, and students offered their condolences and prayers. In this way, the residency embraced both celebration and mourning within a shared life of faith.



The Hierarchical Divine Liturgy and ordinations marked the beginning of the Ecclesiastical Year.

Learning in Service of the Church

The academic schedule served students from several programs and stages of study. Sessions included Church History, Liturgical Theology, theological fundamentals, homiletics and liturgical practicums, Byzantine chant, iconology, church administration, Western Rite studies, and specialized doctoral work. Library orientation, project guidance, and student information sessions helped participants navigate both the immediate residency and their broader programs of study. Rather than reproducing every scheduled class, the week can be understood as a coordinated effort to strengthen theological knowledge, liturgical competence, pastoral judgment, and practical readiness for ministry.

A special presentation by Archpriest Hareth Ibrahim, titled Preserving the Antiochian Heritage, asked participants to consider their responsibility for safeguarding and transmitting the traditions, spirituality, and identity inherited from earlier generations. The subject reflected a concern that ran through the residency as a whole: education should prepare students to carry the Church's heritage faithfully into new pastoral settings.

The program also created room for direct conversation between students and church leadership. An open question-and-answer session with Metropolitan Saba allowed students to raise pastoral and theological questions and to receive his guidance. This exchange complemented formal coursework by

giving residents access to the experience and perspective of their chief shepherd. Other evening discussions, practicums, and fellowship gatherings reinforced the same pattern of learning through dialogue, mentorship, and shared experience.



Residents took part in an open pastoral conversation with Metropolitan Saba and church leaders.

The Graduation of the Class of 2026

The week's most public celebration was the graduation of the AHOS Class of 2026 in the Ajar Amphitheater. Following the opening welcome and blessing, Father Michel Najim delivered the President's message and Archimandrite Fadi Rabbat offered the Academic Dean's message. Father Juvenaly Hale spoke on behalf of the graduating class, and Metropolitan Saba gave the keynote address.

The conferral of degrees expressed the academic and ecclesial character of the occasion. Father Michel conferred the degrees, Metropolitan Saba presented the diplomas, Bishop Thomas placed a cross on each graduate, and Father Fadi placed the academic hood. A choir directed by Father Raphael Hanna accompanied the ceremony with Byzantine chant. The sequence honored the sustained work of each graduate while placing academic achievement within the worship, leadership, and service of the Church. A banquet afterward brought faculty, graduates, families, and friends together in celebration.





Graduates, clergy, families, and friends gathered in the Ajar Amphitheater for the Class of 2026 ceremony.

Conclusion

As the first group of students prepared to depart, the conclusion of the week carried both gratitude and continuity. They left after a concentrated experience of prayer, study, pastoral formation, and fellowship. Classes and services continued through the weekend as AHOS prepared to welcome the second group of residents, linking the close of one week to the beginning of the next.

Taken as a whole, the first residency week demonstrated the distinctive strength of the AHOS model. Academic instruction remained closely connected to liturgical practice, pastoral guidance, personal relationships, and the wider life of the Archdiocese. The ordinations, heritage presentation, dialogue with Metropolitan Saba, and graduation ceremony were not separate additions to the schedule; they gave visible expression to the purpose of the program. The residency formed a temporary community in which students could deepen their knowledge, strengthen their vocation, and experience theological education as a shared journey in service to Christ and His Church.



The first group of residents shared a final gathering before departing the Antiochian Village.

The Second Week and the Completion of the Residency

The departure of the first group did not bring the residency to an end. A second group of PhD, DMin, MDiv, and MPCC students arrived at the Antiochian Village and entered the same rhythm of worship, study, meals, and fellowship. Orthros opened the week, followed by breakfast and an orientation led by Father Michel Najim, Archimandrite Fadi Rabbat, and Father Elias Boulos. Coursework then resumed across the programs, while Feastal Vespers with Litia and Artoklasia prepared the community for the Nativity of the Holy Theotokos.



The second group entered the residency through orientation, worship, and the renewal of academic work.

The feast gave the second week a distinct liturgical center. The community celebrated the Divine Liturgy for the Nativity of the Holy Theotokos, presided over by Archimandrite Fadi Rabbat with concelebrating priests and faculty members, in the presence of His Grace Bishop Thomas Joseph. Under the direction of Father Raphael Hanna, the choir carried the service in song. A separate collection of photographs from the feast recorded the prayerful character of the celebration and the gathering of the community around the altar.



The Nativity of the Holy Theotokos was celebrated through festal worship, chant, and the Divine Liturgy.

As the week continued, students returned each morning to Orthros and then to the demands of their programs. Breakfast provided an informal setting for conversation before classes, and the academic day moved forward through sustained theological work. Vespers and a shared dinner repeatedly brought the community back together, creating a daily pattern in which study remained grounded in worship and relationships developed alongside formal formation.



Study, conversation, and common prayer continued to shape the daily experience of the second week.

On the final day, the community gathered once more for Orthros and shared a last breakfast marked by conversation, reflection, and gratitude. The concluding Vespers and communal dinner brought two weeks of theological formation to a gentle close. Students departed carrying not only the material

covered in their courses, but also friendships strengthened through prayer and the experience of living as one community at the Antiochian Village.



The final gathering expressed gratitude for two weeks of learning, worship, friendship, and shared life.

Conclusion

The transition from the first group to the second gave the residency a sense of continuity. Each group experienced a concentrated program of prayer, study, pastoral formation, and fellowship, while the shared structure of the two weeks united them within the same institutional and spiritual mission.



Taken as a whole, the first residency week demonstrated the distinctive strength of the AHOS model. Academic instruction remained closely connected to liturgical practice, pastoral guidance, personal relationships, and the wider life of the Archdiocese. The ordinations, heritage presentation, dialogue with

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The first group of residents shared a final gathering before departing the Antiochian Village.

The appendices that follow preserve the principal opening and graduation addresses, together with the official roster of the Class of 2026, as part of the permanent record of the residency. They allow the voices of the President, the Academic Dean, and Metropolitan Saba to accompany this narrative account while also recognizing the graduates whose achievements were celebrated.

Appendices

- *Appendix One Address by Metropolitan Saba at the Class of 2026 Graduation Ceremony*
- *Appendix Two Opening Address by President Father Michel Najim at the Beginning of Week One*
- *Appendix Three Address by President Father Michel Najim at the Class of 2026 Graduation Ceremony*
- *Appendix Four Opening Address by President Father Michel Najim at the Beginning of Week Two*
- *Appendix Five Opening Address by Academic Dean Archimandrite Fadi Rabbat at the Beginning of Week One*
- *Appendix Six Address by Academic Dean Archimandrite Fadi Rabbat at the Class of 2026 Graduation Ceremony*
- *Appendix Seven Opening Address by Academic Dean Archimandrite Fadi Rabbat at the Beginning of Week Two*
- *Appendix Eight Graduates of the Class of 2026*

Appendices

The following appendices present the available texts of the principal addresses delivered during the opening sessions and the Class of 2026 graduation, followed by the official roster of graduates. The addresses are arranged first by Metropolitan Saba, then by President Father Michel Najim, and finally by Academic Dean Archimandrite Fadi Rabbat.

Appendix One Address by Metropolitan Saba at the Class of 2026 Graduation Ceremony

Reverend Fathers, beloved faculty members of AHOS, students, and all of you:

He called me the keynote speaker, but I want to speak in my broken English. Yet what I say comes from a heart full of love toward you, Christ, and His Church.

Saint Sophrony of Essex mentioned in one of his interviews that the person who is sanctified by the grace of the Holy Spirit becomes a habitation of God. Theology then becomes narration. When one sees God and becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit, one simply relates the things one has heard and the things one has seen. As we say and believe in the Orthodox Church, the theologian is the one who prays, and the one who prays is a theologian.

Tomorrow you will return to your communities and to your parishes, because the Church of Christ is waiting for you. You have received your certificates in theology. But what does this mean? This is the question: Is it enough to study about God in order to be a theologian? In theological academies, we study theology and we study about God. We learn many things about God: dogma, liturgy, Church history, the Holy Fathers, and many other fields. We gain a great deal of information about God. Through this knowledge, we know about Him. That is good, but it is not enough.

We must also strive spiritually to live with God. Then we know Him because we live with Him. We experience His presence and His action. When knowledge of God is joined to knowledge about God, then we begin to become theologians.

In the words of Saint Sophrony, the theologian speaks about his or her experience. We do not theologize only with the mind. We speak from experience.

As Metropolitan Hierotheos teaches in the Orthodox tradition, there are two kinds of faith. There is faith from hearing, when we study, read, and listen to others; and there is faith that comes from seeing God and perceiving His presence in our life and in our world. We are called to become witnesses of our faith and of our God.

I want to mention Orthodox people who were contemporary with us. They did not study theology formally, but they knew theological matters. They read widely, and they lived our faith in their communities and churches. This is to tell you that, if you are humble like the Theotokos, about whom Father Fadi spoke to us today, humility opens the way for God to work in us.

One of these people was a learned man, yet when you sat with him you did not feel that he was extraordinary, because of his humility. He wrote many books. I hope that one day more of this work may be translated into English. He said that we must at least realize that theology means having a direct experience of God.

Another was an engineer from Beirut who continued to write even into advanced age. He also said that we do not merely offer people, in a language they understand, the teaching that God loves them and that God

became man for our sake so that they might become gods by grace. We must first feel and live this reality. In the freedom of the children of God, we help others discover the name of God anew in beauty and in culture.

Our task, therefore, begins with humility. We place ourselves in the hands of God and tell Him, 'Our beloved God, work through us.' Our role is to become pure vessels in whom He may dwell. We preach, support, listen, and do whatever we are called to do in order to witness to His love, His compassion, and His salvation.

The theologian expresses and narrates what he or she has personally lived and experienced. Father John Romanides says that the one who speaks about God truly graduates with a degree in theology when he experiences theosis.

The spiritual life is not a matter of sitting still; it is a matter of walking. In our life as Christians, we must walk throughout our whole life. The more we live with God, the more He may give us the gift of preaching and of expressing this experience.

You now have the keys of theology. Open the doors from tomorrow, because the Church of Christ is waiting for you. God bless all of you.

Appendix Two Opening Address by President Father Michel Najim at the Beginning of Week One

Welcome to the Antiochian House of Studies, a place set apart for education, for the ministry of formation; a place where the noetic faculties are enlightened, hearts are enlarged, and souls are formed according to the likeness of Christ. This House of Studies is more than a common school of theology. It is more than a gathering of classrooms and books. It is a workshop of grace and prayer, a sanctuary of learning, a community of professors and students, and, God willing, a forge for saints.

In contemporary secular America, where cultural relativism, individualism, and religious indifference are increasing, patristic teaching is especially crucial and essential. Today many of the institutions that once transmitted spiritual and moral formation have fallen into confusion. The family has fractured; neighborhoods have dissolved; many schools can scarcely educate; and even many heterodox theological institutions wonder what they are to teach. Often, they teach a strange, secular, human-centered theology cultivated through human reason alone. Instead of divine and spiritual knowledge, they teach their own personal knowledge and doctrine, studying, researching, and educating according to human understanding.

Such knowledge is, in reality, ignorance of all goodness, for had they not first fallen from the knowledge and contemplation of God, they would not have been brought down to this lesser knowledge. Therefore, the Fathers of the Church acted as guardians of dogmatic teaching against a scholastic theology that sought to destroy the apophatic and mystical approach—the gift of infused contemplation given to pure hearts by the Holy Spirit.

Thus, AHOS believes that America cannot build strong theological education without strong spiritual and patristic foundations, at a time when many are ill-equipped even to recognize patristic teaching as the foundation of their theology. We believe that the Holy Spirit has been at work in you, drawing you to the Antiochian House of Studies to receive a theological formation grounded in spiritual fatherhood—the most effective means for recovering an authentic teaching of theology.

AHOS is a school of patristic theology in which students are spiritually begotten under professors who serve as their spiritual fathers. Every professor is a φιλοπάτωρ—one who has filial love toward the Fathers of the Church. No theologian may be a μισοπάτωρ—one who hates the Fathers and is hostile toward their teaching.

In the early centuries of the Church, this method of instruction was widespread and held in great honor. An example may be found in the trial of the deacon Babylas before the proconsul of Asia Minor. When asked whether he had children, Babylas answered that he had many. Because certain pagans present took this to mean children by blood rather than children according to the Christian faith, the proconsul accused him of lying. Babylas replied confidently that, should the proconsul wish, he could discover that very hour that in every district and city he had "children according to Christ" (Martyrdom of Carpus, Papyrus, and Agathonice, 32).

This patristic methodology of instruction centers on the father-child relationship. St. Irenaeus describes this bond precisely: when a person has been taught by the mouth of another, he is called the son of the one who instructs him, and the instructor, in turn, is called his father (Against Heresies IV.41.2). Clement of Alexandria speaks in like manner: everyone who is instructed becomes, in respect of this submission, the son of his instructor (Stromata, Book I, 1).

In his book On the Decrees of the Council of Nicaea (De Decretis), Saint Athanasius the Great addressed the Arians, saying:

"See, we are demonstrating that this doctrine has been handed down from father to father. But you, how many fathers can you cite in support of your assertions? Not one who is wise or of sound understanding, for all reject you. The devil alone is your father in this apostasy. He it was who, from the beginning, sowed the seed of this impiety within you, and who now incites you to slander the Ecumenical Council for committing to writing not your doctrines, but the faith that those who were eyewitnesses and ministers of the Word handed down to us from the beginning.

For the faith confessed in writing by the Council is the faith of the Catholic Church. In affirming this faith, the blessed Fathers expressed themselves as they did while condemning the Arian heresy. This is the principal reason why you devote yourselves to slandering the Council. It is not the terminology that troubles you; rather, it is because those very terms expose you as heretics, more arrogant and presumptuous than any other heresy."

Saint Athanasius challenges the Arians to produce even one "wise" or "sound" father who supports their assertions, concluding that they have no ancestral claim to the truth. Instead, he asserts that the devil alone is the father of the Arian "apostasy," suggesting that they have broken from the apostolic line to follow a source of "impiety."

The defense of the Council of Nicaea is central to Athanasius's argument. The Ecumenical Councils did not innovate but rather committed to writing the same faith that had been transmitted through generations of "blessed Fathers."

The "faith handed down from the beginning" functions as a defense against what Athanasius calls the "arrogant and presumptuous" nature of heresy. He justifies the Nicene definitions as necessary tools to safeguard the immutable truth that the Church has preserved since its inception.

The Fathers, then, are those in whom this living witness is encountered, and in whom the authentic path of discipleship to Christ is found. The true content of the Christian faith is transmitted and renewed from generation to generation, from father to child, as a divine inheritance given directly by God. Every student receives this teaching from God Himself; the student accepts the instruction of his father as coming from God, and as the very means by which the power of divine grace is transmitted. In every case, the vehicle of this transmission remains the Word of God.

With the blessings of Metropolitan Saba, the dean and the professors will nourish you with the milk of the Word. They will raise you up through their teaching; they will strengthen you through their instruction, preparing you to become true ministers of God. This will free you from ignorance, making you partakers and fellow heirs of patristic theology. Therefore, honor His Eminence Metropolitan Saba, His Grace Bishop Thomas, and the dean and professors with every kind of honor, for they have received from God an authority that touches life and death.

Your professors follow the great teachers and luminaries in their instruction; their lessons are the very principles of the faith and sound doctrine. This is what St. Basil meant when he spoke of the need to preserve the teaching handed down by the Fathers within the Tradition (Epistle 140.2).

Four convictions should guide your study here:

1. You must discover the true dimension of the AHOS educational system—a relationship that transforms instruction into formation.
2. You must recognize that this relationship opens for you a living encounter with God.

3. You must labor so that AHOS manner of teaching theology enriches a stagnant and sterile world with the fruitfulness of divine love.

4. You must recognize that this relationship is not reduced to mere instruction, nor to a mechanical and stereotyped exchange of ideas. The truths we learn must become the virtues we practice.

Saint Symeon the New Theologian said: "Knowledge is not the light! Rather, it is the light that is knowledge, since 'in it and through it and from it are all things' (Rom. 11:36)." The key to knowledge is the grace of the Holy Spirit given to you through faith, and awareness of the Holy Spirit. In very truth it produces knowledge and understanding through illumination, opening every closed and veiled mind.

Appendix Three Address by President Father Michel Najim at the Class of 2026 Graduation Ceremony

What was accomplished at the Antiochian House of Studies was not ours alone. The Dean and the faculty labored diligently, and the Board of Directors and the administration worked not to give you something of their own making, but to open before you the inexhaustible treasury of Holy Scripture and the wisdom of the Holy Fathers. Whatever was taught, whatever was received, whatever was transformed in you — that is your crown. That is the garland you carry out of these studies today.

And because of this, we as a House of Studies rejoice. We do not merely smile or applaud; we leap for joy. We are lifted. No words fully contain the greatness of our joy at your graduation. The professors and fellow students who have walked alongside you — how much delight has been kindled in their souls, beholding so many whom they love standing before them now, graduated, prepared, and sent forth! The love that fills this room is not ceremonial. It is fervent. It is the love of an extended family, for you have become real members of this family.

Indeed, this Antiochian house of studies is rightly compared to a path toward paradise — and not merely to the paradise of old. For in Eden, Adam fell. But here, you have been guided toward a new and better paradise: the paradise of restored humanity, of minds illumined, and wills ordered toward theosis. The school's aim is to help, with the grace of the Holy Spirit, transform your personality from a simple biological or "secular" personhood into a "soteriological," ecclesial, true personhood embedded in Orthopraxis — one that focuses solely on attaining union with God. You are graduates who have decided to live with sole reference to likeness and deification. You are called to be "theological beings," who live out the fruits of revelation and the experience of the Holy Spirit.

You are sent into the vineyard of your parishes and your society. Saint John Chrysostom, in his homilies, spoke of the pastoral vocation in precisely these terms: the minister of God finds souls like untended soil — thorns, thistles, barren olive trees — and through patient labor, transforms them. The thistle becomes the grapevine. The fruitless tree bears abundantly. You are not sent to preserve what is already beautiful. You are sent to cultivate what is not yet.

This is the nature of the theological vocation. This is why we rejoice. This is why we cannot contain our joy.

We, the administration and faculty, confess something to you today: we are enslaved to your dedication, your commitment, and your love for Christ — and in this slavery, may we never be loosed. For this slavery is better than a crown. It is better than freedom itself, because it prepares a place for all of us at the Last Judgment — not by force, but by the free and joyful choice of love.

What shall we say about the dedication you have demonstrated, the passion, the devotion, the fervor you have brought to this sacred field of study? You have enriched this house of studies. You have made this school an asketicon. Heresy is put to shame when truth is loved this deeply. The school is crowned when its graduates complete their studies successfully and faithfully.

There is smooth sailing for the school when its graduates hold fast to the Orthodox mind, when the spirit of the Fathers dwells securely among the graduates, and the graduates know the mind of the Fathers.

Go, then, dear graduates. Go as those who have been formed in the faith, set on fire by love, and crowned for the work ahead. The parishes are waiting — not for perfect answers, but for your faithful and active ministry; not for catechetical teaching alone, but for transformation.

The vineyard is before you.

Go and tend it well.

Appendix Four Opening Address by President Father Michel Najim at the Beginning of Week Two

Beloved students, you who stand now in your second and third years, and you who labor further still in doctoral studies — grace and peace to you today.

I want to begin with a sentence that should be carved into the doorframe of every room in this House of Studies. In his Twenty-Third Oration, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus declared that we do theology "in the manner of fishermen, not in the manner of Aristotle" — Ἀλιευτικῶς, οὐκ Ἀριστοτελικῶς. Some have rendered this more freely: in the manner of the Apostles, not in that of Aristotle. You will find it in *Patrologia Graeca* 36, 448C, should you wish to go and read it for yourselves — and I hope you will.

Hear what this means. It is a recapitulation of all patristic tradition. It builds nothing upon philosophical principles. It walks in the footsteps of the fishermen of Galilee rather than in the intellectual robes of the Lyceum. It is spiritual in manner, of the Church, not of the marketplace of philosophers.

That is the spirit in which we join hands here — Dean, professors, and students together — not only to perform learning for one another, but to glorify God, so that we may be glorified by Him. May the unanimity of mind that exists among us, following the Fathers of the Church, be for us a cause of salvation and restoration. And may we never lose so much as one line of their writings, lest we suffer some deprivation of the grace hidden within them.

Father Georges Florovsky called patristic theology "kerygmatic theology" — proclaimed theology — even where it was logically arranged and armed with intellectual argument. Its ultimate reference was never the argument itself, but the vision of faith, spiritual knowledge, and lived experience. Apart from Christ, theology carries no conviction. Cut off from the life of faith, it degenerates into empty dialectic — a vain polylogia, all words and no Spirit. Patristic theology, by contrast, was rooted existentially in a decisive commitment of faith.

You have come to this House of Studies in an age of theological strife and never-ending deliberation — an age, I might say, of scholastic pseudo-theology. And you know that the Fathers formally protested against the use of dialectics, against "Aristotelian syllogisms," and labored instead to bring theology back to the vision of faith, to the experience of the saints. That is your inheritance. That is the ground on which you now stand.

Your Dean and your professors are not trying to fill your heads with information. They are trying to guide you toward the Spirit who renews you, who gives you new eyes, new ears, a new tongue. God removes the veil from the eyes of the mind and shows what His will is, and what is useful.

Saint Gregory the Theologian, in Oration 41, declares: "It is now time to speak of the other tongues — revere them, or fear them, when you see that they are of fire." Let these words guide us as we begin this week together.

During this week, let us devote ourselves to your professors' teachings and instructions. There will be enough time later for further discussion and deliberation. For now, sit attentively at the feet of your professors, receiving with humility the treasures of the Orthodox faith. When your minds have been fully formed and your understanding matured, the time will come for you to teach others.

Today, you are called to the in-depth study of patristic theology, as befits those who earnestly desire the grace and illumination of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, having laid aside whatever is foreign to the mind of the Church, let us devote ourselves wholeheartedly to learning Orthodox theology from your professors, receiving it with reverence, diligence, and a sincere desire for the truth.

This kind of theology can never be separated from purity of mind. As Saint John Climacus says: the summit of purity is the beginning of theology. Theology, rightly understood, is a constant appeal to the vision of faith.

For that reason, and no other, Aristotelian formulas can never be the foundation of Orthodox theology. To do theology in the manner of the fishermen is to acquire their pure mind.

May you lose none of what the Fathers have given you. And may what they have given you become, in you, what it was in them: not information carried, but a life transfigured.

Appendix Five Opening Address by Academic Dean Archimandrite Fadi Rabbat at the Beginning of Week One

Your Eminence Metropolitan Saba, Your Reverence Great Economos Fr. Michel, President of the Antiochian House of Studies, Your Reverence Fr. Elias, Director of the Residency, Dear Colleagues, Faculty, Staff, Students, and members of our AHOS family, As I speak to you today, Your Eminence, Fathers, and beloved family, I am moved by the sense of possibility that fills our house—the quiet confidence that comes from being part of a lineage that spans centuries and stretches into North America with a clear, hopeful purpose. I speak to you not as one standing apart but as one who has learned, through many seasons, that education is most powerful when it is lived in intimate companionship, when scholarly rigor is braided with prayer, and when our shared life becomes a witness to the Gospel in all its tenderness and its cost. AHOS carries the ethos of the historical School of Antioch—the heart of a missionary tradition that first bore the name “Christian” and that has, from its earliest days, welcomed many tongues, many peoples, and the wide array of gifts the Spirit distributes as He wills. This is not a banner we display; it is a living conviction, inherited from the Fathers, that truth is safeguarded not in isolation but in communion—in the humble, patient labor of learning together under Christ, the true Teacher.

We are here to offer a distinctly Antiochian Eastern Orthodox Christian education that invites clergy, laity, and all who seek, to enter the Orthodox way of life—a life deeply relational, rooted in worship, and quietly courageous before the world. In the hours and days ahead, you will be asked to bring your whole self to this work: your questions, your longings, your wounds, and your sincere desire to serve. Our curriculum is not a ledger of topics to be checked off; it is a path we walk together—learning to think with sound doctrine, to worship with integrity, to act with compassion, and to relate to one another with honesty and mercy. Because we hold the Apostolic Tradition as our compass and the Church as our mother, we strive, in the words of the Apostle, to speak the truth in love, that we may grow up together into Him who is our Head. I want to offer you three commitments, drawn from the heart of who we are and who, by God’s grace, we hope to become—not as rules imposed from without, but as invitations to transformation from within. First, I commit to being a companion in your scholarly journey. I know the academic road can feel steep, and I also know its fruits are abundant when pursued with faith seeking understanding. Here you will be invited into rigorous study, into questions that pierce the surface, and into conversations that test our assumptions with grace and patience. I pledge to meet you where you are, to challenge you with care, and to rejoice with you in every moment of clarity and wonder when the mind, illumined by the Spirit, glimpses something of the truth of God. Whether we gather in the same room or across a screen, may our minds be rigorous and our spirits generous, for theology divorced from humility is not theology at all, but noise. Second, I commit to fostering your spiritual formation and your sense of belonging in this household of faith we call AHOS. The Orthodox way of

life—worship, doctrine, action, and relationship—cannot be reduced to a set of practices or a checklist of duties; it is a way of being, a therapeutic path toward the healing of the whole person, that shapes how we pray, how we treat one another, and how we respond to need in the world. In every discipline we pursue, may we listen attentively for the movements of the Holy Spirit, may we seek counsel from our spiritual fathers and mothers, and may we cultivate a rhythm of personal devotion that sustains and deepens our leadership as we go forth to serve others. In this house, even as each of us grows individually, we grow together into a common life in Christ that nourishes, heals, and calls us to witness with integrity. Third, I commit—and I ask each of you to commit with me—to a life of genuine Orthodox mentorship, rooted in love, and marked by clear communication and transparency. The Fathers of the Church did not merely transmit doctrine; they poured out their lives for their spiritual children, after the pattern of St. Paul, who was gentle among the Thessalonians as a nurse cherishing her own children, and who was ready to share with them not only the Gospel of God but his own soul, because they had become dear to him. This is the mentorship we are called

to embody here: elders walking beside the young, faculty walking beside students, all of us walking beside one another—not from a distance, but as family, bound together by love that “bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.” And this love, if it is to be real and not sentimental, must be clothed in honesty: in communication that is clear rather than guarded, in relationships that are transparent rather than shadowed by suspicion or unspoken grievance. Let there be no hidden agendas among us, no walls of silence where a word of truth, spoken in love, could heal. Let us walk, as St. John writes, “in the light, as He is in the light,” so that we may truly have fellowship with one another. As we continue our shared life together, I invite you to entrust this community with your hopes and even your doubts.

I invite you to receive mentorship as a gift and to offer it as a gift to those who come after you. I invite you to participate openly in the disciplines that form character—the habits of study, of worship, and of service—that will sustain you long after any single course or assignment has ended. Welcome to AHOS. Welcome to your House. Welcome to a life of learning, prayer, and service that is far greater than any one of us, yet made whole by each one of us, abiding in Christ, abiding in truth, in love, and in service to one another. Thank you, and may God, through the prayers of our Fathers, bless our shared journey.

Appendix Six Address by Academic Dean Archimandrite Fadi Rabbat at the Class of 2026 Graduation Ceremony

Your Eminence Metropolitan Saba, Your Eminence Metropolitan Gregory, Your Grace Bishop Thomas,

Your Reverence, Fr. Michel Najim, President of the Antiochian House of Studies,

Distinguished Members of the Board of Directors,

Esteemed Professors, Faculty, and Staff,

Beloved sons and daughters in Christ,

Dear graduates, Today, as we gather with thanksgiving to celebrate your graduation, we do so in the blessed days leading to the Feast of the Nativity of our Most Holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever- Virgin Mary, which the Church will celebrate next week, on September 8. Her birth is not simply the birth of one child among many. It is the beginning of the fulfillment of God's promise of salvation. In the Nativity of the Theotokos, the Church sees the dawn of the New Covenant, for she is the one chosen from all generations to become the Mother of the incarnate Word, our Lord Jesus Christ. As we chant in the feast: "Your nativity, O Theotokos, has proclaimed joy to all the world; for from you has shone the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God."

The birth of the Theotokos announces that God has not abandoned His people. He prepares His work quietly, faithfully, and often in ways beyond our human understanding. Saints Joachim and Anna endured many years of sorrow and barrenness, but they did not abandon their faith or lose hope in God. In His time, God answered their prayers and granted them Mary, who would become the living temple of the Lord and the Mother of God. Dear graduates, this feast speaks directly to each one of you. God's plan for our lives is often prepared silently, through years of prayer, study, struggle, patience, and faith. We do not always understand His timing, nor do we always see clearly where He is leading us. Yet, as God prepared the Theotokos from her birth for her unique vocation, He also prepares each one of us for the service to which He calls us. The life of the Theotokos teaches us that the greatest freedom is not to follow only our own desires, but to accept the will of God with faith. When the Archangel Gabriel announced to her the mystery of the Incarnation, she answered: "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." —Luke 1:38 These few words of the Virgin Mary contain the whole meaning of Christian life. They reveal to us what it means to know God, to trust Him, to serve Him, and to accept His holy will. Many times, we believe that our lives are entirely in our own hands. We make plans, choose paths, seek success, and think that we alone determine our future. Certainly, God has given us freedom, intelligence, and responsibility. Yet, the deeper truth is that our lives find their true meaning when our will is united with the will of God. The Theotokos teaches us this truth better than anyone else. When the Archangel Gabriel came to her, he did not come with an easy message. He announced a mystery beyond human understanding: that she would bear the Son of God, the eternal Logos, our Lord Jesus Christ. She did not receive a complete explanation of every pain, every sacrifice, every sorrow, or every joy that would follow. She received an invitation from God. And she answered: "Behold the maidservant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word." This was not a passive answer. It was a free, courageous, faithful, and active "yes" to God. In her obedience, the Theotokos became the living temple of the Word of God. The eternal Logos, through whom all things were made, took flesh from her. As we read in the Gospel according to Saint John: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). The Virgin Mary accepted the will of God, and through her acceptance the salvation of the world entered human history.

Saint Irenaeus teaches us that Mary is the New Eve. Through Eve's disobedience, humanity received death; through the obedience of the Virgin Mary, humanity received life. The knot of Eve's disobedience was untied by the obedience of Mary. Where humanity had said "no" to God, the Theotokos said "yes." Where fear could have overcome faith, she chose trust. Where human reasoning could have closed the door, humility opened it to the grace of God. Dear graduates, today you stand at an important moment in your lives. You have completed a journey of study, prayer, sacrifice, and perseverance. You have received knowledge, formed friendships, encountered challenges, and grown in your understanding of the Holy Orthodox faith. But graduation is not the end of your formation. It is a new beginning. You may not know every detail of the path that lies before you. You may have plans, dreams, responsibilities, and questions. Some of you will serve the

Church directly through ministry, teaching, pastoral work, and theological study. Others will serve Christ in your families, professions, parishes, and communities. Yet all of you are called to bear Christ into the world. The greatest lesson that you can take from the Antiochian House of Studies is not merely the knowledge you have acquired. Knowledge is important; theology is important; academic discipline is important. But theology is never only information. Theology is the knowledge of God that becomes prayer, worship, repentance, love, and life. The word theology comes from the Greek words Theos, meaning God, and logos, meaning word, reason, or study. But for us, the Logos is not an idea. The Logos is a Person: Jesus Christ, the Word of God. Therefore, true theology is not simply speaking about God. It is receiving Christ, living in Christ, and allowing Christ to transform our minds, hearts, and souls. This is precisely what the Most Holy Theotokos did. She heard the word of God. She received the Word of God. She carried the Word of God within her. And she offered Him to the world. The Church calls her Theotokos, the Mother of God, not only to honor her, but to confess the truth about Christ. The One born of her is not merely a man, not merely a prophet, not merely a teacher. He is God the Word incarnate. As Saint Gregory the Theologian teaches, “If anyone does not agree that holy Mary is Mother of God, he is at odds with the Godhead.” Therefore, to follow the Theotokos is to follow her Son. Her whole life directs us toward Christ. At the wedding in Cana, her final recorded words in the Gospel are addressed to the servants: “Whatever He says to you, do it.” —John 2:5 This is also her message to each one of us today: Whatever Christ says to you, do it.

When Christ calls you to forgive, forgive. When He calls you to serve, serve. When He calls you to be patient, be patient. When He calls you to stand for truth, stand with humility and courage. When He calls you to love those who are difficult to love, love them. When He calls you to take up your cross, do not be afraid. The Theotokos followed Christ not only in the joy of Bethlehem and Cana, but also in the sorrow of Golgotha. Saint Simeon had told her: “A sword will pierce through your own soul also” (Luke 2:35). Yet she remained faithful. She stood beneath the Cross. She did not abandon her Son when the way became difficult. This is an important lesson for all of us. Accepting the will of God does not mean that life will always be easy. It does not mean that there will be no trials, sorrow, or uncertainty. But it means that we will never walk alone. When we entrust ourselves to God, His grace sustains us. When we remain faithful, even in difficulty, God transforms our crosses into a path toward resurrection. The Holy Virgin Mary shows us that faith is not merely believing that God exists. Faith is trusting God when we do not fully understand His plan. It is saying, with humility and confidence: “Let it be to me according to your word.” Dear graduates, as you leave this institution, take with you the mind of the Church, the faith of the Apostles, the witness of the Holy Fathers, and the love of the Theotokos. Remember that the Antiochian House of Studies is not only a school. It is your home. It is the house of your fathers, brothers, sisters, professors, and friends who will always receive you with love and joy. Go into the world as witnesses of Christ. Carry the knowledge you have received, but above all carry the spirit in which this knowledge was given: humility, faith, prayer, compassion, and love. Like the Theotokos, be ready to receive Christ in your hearts. Like the Theotokos, be ready to say “yes” to God. Like the Theotokos, point others not to yourselves, but to Jesus Christ. May the Most Holy Theotokos protect you, guide you, and intercede for you. May she teach you to accept the will of God with courage and peace. May she help you to remain faithful in every trial, humble in every success, and loving toward every person whom God places in your path. And may the Lord grant that the knowledge you have received here may become living fruit in the Church and in the world. “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” —1 Thessalonians 5:23

Congratulations, dear graduates! Mabrouk! ¡Felicidades! Félicitations! Συγχαρητήρια!

Appendix Seven Opening Address by Academic Dean Archimandrite Fadi Rabbat at the Beginning of Week Two

Your Grace Bishop Thomas, Your Reverence Great Economos Fr. Michel, President of the Antiochian House of Studies, Your Reverence Fr. Elias, Director of the Residency,

Dear Colleagues, Faculty, Staff, Students, and members of our AHOS family,

As I stand before you today, I feel again the quiet weight of privilege that comes with belonging to a house whose roots reach back to the very city where the disciples were first called Christians. We do not begin this second week as strangers gathered by circumstance, but as heirs—heirs of Antioch, heirs of a faith handed down mouth to mouth, heart to heart, generation to generation, until it reached us here, in this place, at this hour.

I speak to you not as one who has arrived, but as one still walking the same road as you, still learning what it means to receive a tradition faithfully and to hand it on without diminishment. That is, in the end, what this week is about.

AHOS exists to form minds and souls in an education that is rooted—not merely informed, but rooted—in the wisdom of the Fathers. Ours is not a curriculum assembled from convenience or trend; it is a patristic inheritance, carefully guarded and humbly transmitted, in which St. Ignatius, St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil, and the great cloud of witnesses who once walked the streets of Antioch still speak to us across the centuries.

To study here is to sit, in some real sense, at their feet—to let their prayer shape our thinking, and their thinking deepen our prayer. This is what distinguishes theological education in the Orthodox way: knowledge is never separated from holiness, and holiness is never divorced from the discipline of the mind.

And because we are heirs of Antioch, we are heirs also of her ethos—a missionary boldness married to a pastoral tenderness, a Church that from her earliest days sent Paul and Barnabas to the nations, and that has never since ceased to open her doors to every people, every tongue, every soul seeking Christ.

Continuity, for us, is not nostalgia. It is a living faithfulness that allows this small house in North America to breathe with the same breath as the ancient Church of Antioch—confident in her doctrine, courageous in her mission, and generous in her welcome.

For at AHOS, we are family. And a family, if it is honest to the Gospel, does not close its doors. We accept diversity as a gift of the Spirit, not a challenge to be managed. We receive every person who walks through our doors—every background, every language, every story of struggle and grace—with an open heart, because this is how Christ Himself received the world: not by demanding worthiness first, but by loving first, and trusting that love would do its transforming work. Whoever you are, wherever you come from, you belong here. This house is yours.

I want to offer you three commitments this week—not as obligations imposed, but as the shape our family life together must take if it is to be faithful to who we are.

First, I commit to mentorship—real, patient, unhurried mentorship. The Fathers did not simply hand down texts; they handed down themselves, walking alongside their spiritual children the way St. Paul walked with the Thessalonians, “gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.”

I pledge to walk with you in this same way: available, attentive, and honest, celebrating your growth and standing near you in your struggles. And I ask every elder, every faculty member, every returning student in

this room to do the same for those who are newer to this path. Mentorship is how a tradition stays alive—not in books alone, but in lives poured out for other lives.

Second, I commit to keeping our formation rooted in patristic Orthodoxy, even as we engage honestly with the questions of our age. We will not trade depth for ease, nor trade the wisdom of the Fathers for passing fashions.

Every course, every seminar, every quiet conversation this week is meant to plant you more firmly in the soil that has nourished the Church for two thousand years, so that whatever you build upon it will stand.

Third, I commit—and I ask you to commit with me—to guarding the Antiochian ethos of family, diversity, and welcome that makes this house what it is. Let no one among us feel like a guest merely tolerated.

Let everyone feel like a son or daughter fully received. Let our differences of language, culture, and journey be treated not as obstacles to unity but as the very colors of the one Body of Christ, “where there is neither Greek nor Jew... but Christ is all, and in all.”

As we begin this week together, I invite you to bring your whole self—your questions, your gifts, your uncertainties, your hope.

I invite you to receive mentorship as a gift, and to become, in time, a mentor to someone else. I invite you to let the Fathers form you, and to let this family—diverse, imperfect, and bound together by love—hold you as one of its own.

Welcome to AHOS. Welcome home. Thank you, and may God, through the prayers of our holy Fathers, bless our shared journey this week and always.

Appendix Eight Graduates of the Class of 2026

The following roster records the names of the graduates as they appear on their diplomas or certificates, arranged by degree and certificate program.

PhD in Orthodox Studies

Graduate Name
Laura Lynn Wilson

Master of Divinity

Graduate Name
Gilbert (Fr. Yakoub) Daoura
Fr. Juvenaly Hale
Jason B Hicks
Rudá Fernando Vieira Kuhnen
Justin N. Olmstead
Alexander Shehadeh Tabbal

Master of Pastoral Care & Counseling

Graduate Name
Jennifer Dye
V. Rev. Mark Fenn
Kimberly Marie Hancock
Aimee Delivee Hartecramer
Kathleen Laura McKinnon
Brian E. Savage
Stephen Villa
Michael William Witcoff
Joseph Youssef
Denise Lantz Yurchak

Master of Theological Studies

Graduate Name
Katherine N. Archer
Scott Clark Austin
Jonathan Michael Back
Tiffany Leah Brook
Cooper Buss
Reid Conley
Susan DuBois
Barnabas el Macari
John Rhett Forman
Fr. Eshetu Janfa Gebresenbet
Charlie Issa Gnaim
Erik N. Hadden
Alexandra Zheng Harner
Joshua L. Hawkins
Phylopatr George Khalil
Joshua David Leland
Archpriest Iaroslav Lutoschin
Richard Fowler Mansfield Jr.
Derek K. Ng
Michael Oaks Regnier
Fr. Deacon Bradley Joseph Shaffer
Maha Khristo Shami
Luke Thompson-Kolar
Subdeacon Nicholas Vantangoli
Fr. Youhanna Youssef

St. Stephen's Certificate in Applied Orthodox Theology

Graduate Name
Jacob Bellflower
Michael Ray Brecht
Edward George Bridy
Heath Ignatius Choate
Cory DuPont
Joseph Chris Faissal
Subdeacon Alexios Christopher Hargrave
Glyn Lasarus Jones
John Francis Marion
Thomas Kyle McGuin
Timothy John Mellor
Aaron John Michael
Frank Petras
Rodolfo Sanchez II
Michael Emil Scioli
Phillip Stoffregen
Matthew Curtis Winter