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Message from
Metropolitan
Joseph

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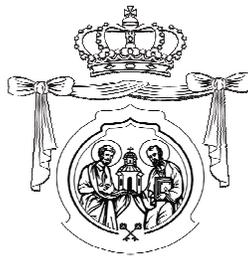
...AND MUCH
MUCH
MORE,
INSIDE!

The Diocese of Los Angeles and the West

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN'S WINTER NEWSLETTER



His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA**

January 10, 2020

To Our Beloved Antiochian Women:

Greetings and blessings to you and your families during this holy season of the Nativity and Theophany of Our Lord!

The feasts of the Nativity and Theophany are closely linked together so much so that they were one feast in ancient times. The theme of both is one of enlightenment. By mid-December, the days have become shorter and shorter, and we spend more time in darkness. These feasts take place after the winter solstice as light begins to break in and the days begin to become longer. This fact of nature is something the Church uses symbolically to show that before the coming of Christ, humanity lived in the “darkness of ignorance.”

The world is enlightened first by the coming of the Son and Word of God in the flesh. He is revealed as the Sun of Justice by a star in the east and angelic choirs singing “Glory to God in the highest!” The world is further enlightened, when during His baptism in the waters of the Jordan, the voice of the Father testifies that Jesus Christ is His Son, and the Holy Spirit confirms the truthfulness of that word by alighting on Him in the form of a dove.

Beloved Sisters in Christ, we need you to receive the enlightenment that comes with coming to the knowledge of the Truth revealed in these two feasts – one that serves to close out one secular year and one that opens a new one. We need you to let that Light shine in your homes, parishes, and our archdiocese. As Our Lord commands, we cannot hide the Light under a bushel!

I also ask your help in letting the light of our Orthodox Faith shine even brighter on our Holy Mountain in western Pennsylvania, the Antiochian Village. Our vision of a new cathedral standing as a beacon for our Archdiocese can only be realized with the help of our dedicated Antiochian Women. I look forward to our working together to make this vision an incarnated reality!

With paternal love and prayerful best wishes for you and your families to receive an abundance of spiritual and material blessings in this new year, I remain,

Your Father in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Metropolitan Joseph". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

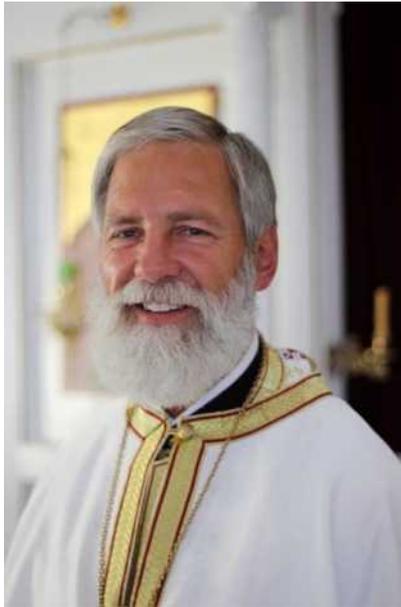
+JOSEPH

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)

Just a Little Spit

A message from our Spiritual Father, Fr. David Hovik



Would you surrender your life over a piece of “spit?”

In 1227 the people in the city of Tbilisi, Georgia had to answer that very question. Some call it the most Terrible Day in Georgian History.

On the first day of the battle, the Georgian Army fought off the invading Muslims. However, that night, a group of Persians (who were living in Tbilisi) secretly opened the gates and summoned the Muslim army into the city. A manuscript describing this reads:

“Words are powerless to convey the destruction that the enemy wrought: tearing infants from their mother's breasts, they beat their heads against the bridge...”

A river of blood flowed through the city: I won't describe the details, but the river and the streets were filled with DEATH.

The Sultan ordered that the cupola of the Sioni Cathedral be taken down and replaced with his vile throne. He commanded the Icons of Christ and the Theotokos be taken out of the Cathedral and placed in the center of the bridge over the Mtkvari River.

He then forced the remaining citizens to gather at the bridge, ordering them to SPIT ON THE HOLY ICONS. Those who betrayed the Christian Faith and spit on the icons had their lives spared.

While the Orthodox who kept the Faith and refused to spit on the icons were beheaded. 100,000 Georgians sacrificed their lives to venerate the Holy Icons. 100,000 heads and headless bodies were carried down the Mtkvari River.

Ladies, let's suppose they lined us up at a bridge near St. Nicholas Camp and they brought the two Icons of Christ and the Theotokos out of the Chapel and set them up in the middle. You don't have any time to think about this. There is no escape plan. Would you venerate the icons and have your head cut-off or would you spit on them?

It's just a little spit and they will allow you to live! Could you rationalize spitting? I have my whole life before me! What about my family and everything I own?

What if you would lose your job by refusing to sign a document supporting Transgenderism and Gay Marriage? It's just a piece of paper! How will I support my family if I lose this job? I think there are some Mtkvari Rivers coming our way! We better be prepared for some form of martyrdom right now! Because the overwhelming Force of Globalism (secular humanism & scientific materialism) is preparing to roll over us like that Muslim Army rolled over Tbilisi.

St. Justin Martyr, who was put to death in 165 AD, nailed it when he said, "Let it be understood that those who are not found living as [Jesus] taught are NOT Christians - even though they profess with their lips the teachings of Christ."

Perhaps it's more practical to think of this in the context of getting wrapped up in Materialism and the pursuit of more and more stuff. When that stuff is a driving force in your life and the culture threatens to take that away from you (unless you conform to its demands) - You may rationalize: What's a little spit (conformity to the culture) - if I get to keep all this stuff?

Jesus clearly warns us not to have money and the pursuit of materialism at the Center of your Life. Our life is to be centered on Christ and if we are losing sight of Christ during this frantic pursuit of money to buy more needless stuff - we have missed the entire point of the Gospel! We are to seek first the Kingdom of God! Why? So, we can be Healed, and, in turn, help heal others. Money and the acquisition of stuff will not heal you.

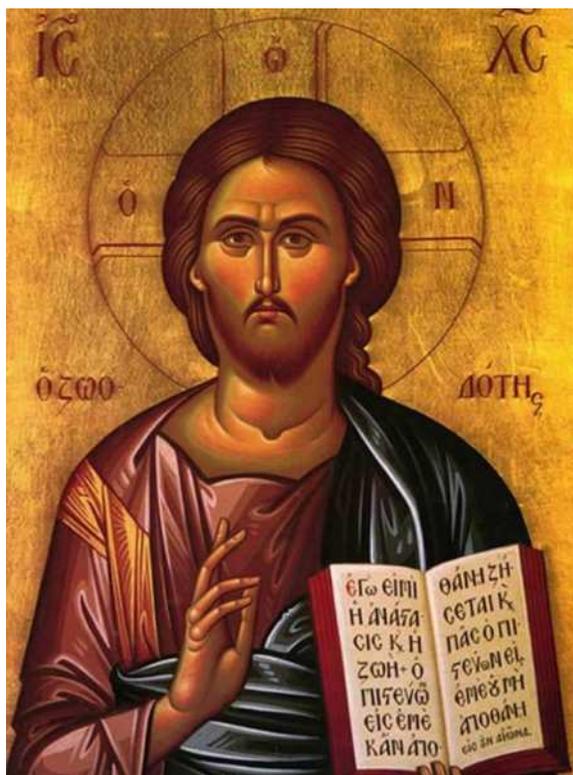
I once had a flight from Kodiak to Anchorage that was canceled and then, as I am waiting at the Airport, the new flight was delayed another hour. I was the first one on the plane and the very last

person to board the plane sat next to me. She was just shy of 30 and had been using drugs since she was 18. She was a heroin addict and was somewhat high as we began to talk.

Between her “F-Bombs”, I discovered that she was a former prostitute who was in a terrible relationship and was heading to Anchorage to make some money dancing (if you get my drift). I immediately thought, “Now, I know what my flight was canceled. I am supposed to talk to her about Christ and about how He can heal her life.”

For the next hour, I listened to her life story and spoke to her about St. Mary of Egypt, about my own conversion and about how Christ can heal her. Drugs and alcohol will not heal you. I had just come from a place where the people I was with lived very simple (not-materialistic) lives. Young people, who were struggling, yet striving and beginning to get a handle on life, made it clearer than ever that materialism will not heal you.

Our Life in Christ is not to be about Materialistic pursuits! It is about seeing Christ FORMED IN US so that we, in turn, can help Christ be formed in others.



ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

THE MOST REVEREND METROPOLITAN PHILIP – FOUNDER
A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS



THE MOST REVEREND
METROPOLITAN JOSEPH
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❖ DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES & THE WEST ❖



Reverend Clergy & Beloved Sisters in Christ,

Christ is in our midst! HE is and ever shall be!

Here we are again, starting a New Year... 2020 which to me sounds like some far off distant time, yet it's the here & now!

“He put a new song in my mouth, a hymn of praise to our God. Many will see and fear the Lord and put their trust in him” (Psalm 40:3).

One of the reasons I enjoy the Psalms so much, is that they are full of praise & singing of songs to our Lord. If you know me, you know I am always singing & when not in church, it is still the beautiful music of our church that I'm singing. In happy times rejoicing, in fellowship with other Orthodox Christians. In times when I need to feel closer to God, singing our sacred music is my prayer & a way, as the Psalm says, to express my trust in HIM.

What about our times together as Sisters in Christ? Certainly, our times together working for our parishes, helping those in need, or growing in fellowship are a perfect opportunity to “put a new song in my mouth.” Music lifts our spirits, brings people together & deepens our bonds.

As you work together in 2020 carrying out our mission of a “Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others,” I want to encourage you to consider joining together in a “hymn of praise to our God.”

This is my fifth year as your Diocese President. I could not be prouder of the incredible work done in every corner of our giant Diocese. You make a difference and impact countless lives.

With Love in Christ,

Charmaine E. Darmour
President, Antiochian Women
Diocese of LA & the West

❖ DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES & THE WEST ❖

❖ ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA ❖

A Retreat in Washington

by Kh. Helen Robinson of St. Innocent Orthodox Church in Everson, WA

With the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH, the Antiochian Women of the Pacific Northwest Deanery held the fifth annual Autumn Women's Retreat at St. Andrew Antiochian Orthodox Church in Arlington, Washington. This year the retreat combined a three-hour men's retreat on Friday evening with a longer day-long retreat for the women on Saturday. The retreat on Saturday began in the morning with the Divine Liturgy for the Feast of St. Nektarios the Wonderworker. Approximately 60 men and 50 women attended, representing seven greater Seattle area parishes and three jurisdictions. We were blessed to have as our speaker, Fr. John Bethancourt – pastor of Holy Trinity Antiochian Orthodox Church in Santa Fe, NM.

On Friday evening, the men enjoyed homemade soup prayerfully made by the ladies of St. Andrew, followed by a three-hour talk given by Fr. John about the Jesus Prayer. Some overheard several men at the end of the evening plotting a way to sneak into the women's portion of the retreat the next day. No one wanted the talks to end so soon!



Fr. John began the Saturday retreat by explaining that sin is not really about the breaking of rules but is primarily the breaking of a relationship. Our ancestors in the Garden did not want God, but rather, they wanted something else. Conversely, Jesus is perfect and has never broken

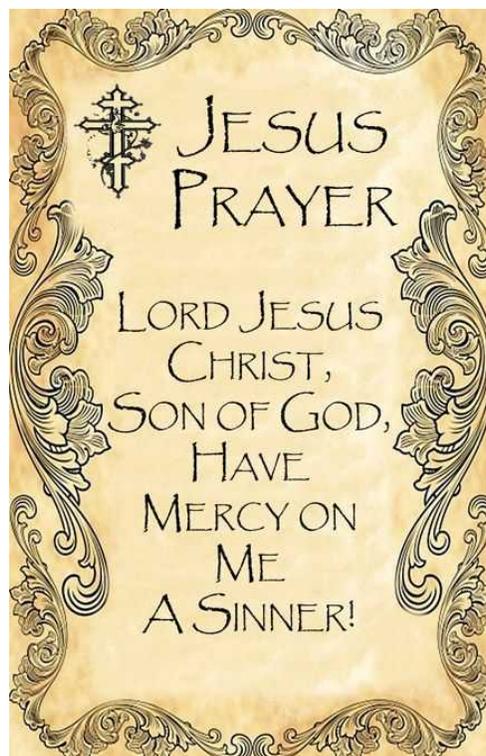
communion with His Father. This tenant is perfectly depicted in the parable of the Prodigal Son. As Fr. John explained, when the son asks for his share of his inheritance (his father's stuff), he is already out the door; he has already broken communion with his father. Later, when the son is starving and homeless, he remembers his father and turns back in the direction of his father who is still waiting for him. One of the most awesome points of the retreat was when Fr. John explained that when the father gives his son the gift of a new robe, that portion of the verse is better translated from the Greek not as a "new robe," but as the First Robe, the one given to Adam and Eve before the fall, the robe of divine yearning and love for God. Because of his repentance and turning back, the son is restored to his Father.



Fr. John then beautifully and lovingly explained about the three-fold cord which moves us in the direction of our Father and heals our nous, restoring our relationship to our Father. Of course, it took Fr. John many hours to explain the three-fold cord! But I will tell you what they are so as not to incite your incessive powers: 1. The Jesus Prayer, 2. Circular energy or ever moving stillness, and 3. Breathing, which is a gift from God. Toward the end of the day, Fr. John led us in practicing the Jesus Prayer. It was the most beautiful and peaceful time, together longing for God in silence and stillness.



We want to thank the many ladies from St. Andrew who devoted their time and talents to make this a very special retreat. Special appreciation to Fr. David Hovik for his divinely inspired and blessed choice of our speaker! And of course, much love and prayer and devotion to Fr. John Bethancourt, for prayerfully, wonderfully and affectionately inspiring the over 100 retreatants on their journey to a healed nous and healed relationship with our Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, through the Prayer of the Heart.



ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

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September 11, 2019

Dear Antiochian Women of the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West,

Christ is in our midst. He is and ever shall be.

Hello everyone around our Diocese. I hope this message finds you and your families in good health and enjoying the last days of summer. In So. Calif, we were lucky this year to have less heat and even lesser fires, so we are in good shape for the upcoming fall season. Thank GOD for HIS many blessings.

As Membership Coordinator for our organization, it is my job to keep an updated roster of contacts for each of our parishes. We will have information e-mailed to you off and on during the year, and this way we can all stay in touch, even though great distance keeps us apart. We don't want anyone to be left out of our organization so that you can be updated on the events of the coming year.

You are receiving this e-mail because your name was on the list either from last year, as President/Leader of your A.W. group, or because you attended the Parish Life Conference in San Diego, and signed your names/e-mails to the list at our A.W. Meeting on Friday. More than one person from your parish might receive this e-mail, and that's fine - the more the merrier. At this time, I would ask you to check for the accuracy of your name and e-mail if you are either President, Co-President, Leader of your group in your parish. If you are still the main contact, please send me a quick reply. If not, please send me the name and e-mail of the new leader of your group. If there are any corrections to be made in your name/e-mail, please send those in also. I will receive all the information by e-mail and formulate a roster for this new 2 year term.

Thank you very much for your willingness to serve your parishes and to keep everyone informed of our yearly events as they come up. We are one Sisterhood in Christ, and we want to have representation from all of the parishes, as we meet new friends, greet old friends and work together for the Glory of God the Father. Take care and be safe out there. Please feel free to contact me at my information below any time you have questions or concerns. Looking forward to seeing you all again soon and meeting new ladies.

In Christ,

Samia Habib
A.W. Diocesan Membership Coordinator

cell: 3(818) 919-3870
e-mail: sambur@juno.com

❖ DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES & THE WEST ❖

❖ ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA ❖

SAVE THE DATE

*We are so excited to welcome you to the
41st Annual Antiochian Women's Lenten Retreat
for the ladies of the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West
at St. Nicholas Camp in Frazier Park, CA.*

April 3-5 2020

MORE DETAILS TO FOLLOW!

PLEASE CONTACT KHOURIEH JEAN BABA

@jeanbaba68@gmail.com or by calling: 916-955-4736

GUEST SPEAKER TO BE ANNOUNCED SOON...



Fulfilling the Vision



ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN 2020 PROJECT

NORTH AMERICAN BOARD • ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

“Fulfilling the Vision”

“Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.”

[Isaiah 56:7]

NAB PROJECT 2020 — *Fulfilling the Vision*

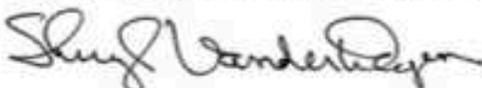
Metropolitan JOSEPH has tasked the Antiochian Women with continuing to raise funds in support of his vision for the Antiochian Village. The 40-year old vision of Metropolitan PHILIP, of thrice-blessed memory, for the Antiochian Village has been enhanced by the vision set forth by Metropolitan JOSEPH at our Archdiocesan Convention. There is still much that needs to be done at the Antiochian Village and the new cathedral is only the beginning.

We would like to thank the Antiochian Women throughout North America for their generous support of the 2019 NAB PROJECT, which totaled more than \$125,000 and which was presented to Metropolitan JOSEPH during the Antiochian Women Luncheon at this summer's Archdiocesan Convention in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In His Eminence's address to the women, he presented his enhanced vision for the Antiochian Village, building on Metropolitan PHILIP's original vision.

His Eminence envisions a new cathedral large enough to host all the campers, clergy, and other large gatherings; a monastery; a place for our Bishops to retire so they can spend their final years in prayer for the faithful of the Archdiocese; and finally, a crypt, a place of repose beneath the cathedral for our Hierarchs, including St. Raphael.

This is our NAB PROJECT 2020: to raise funds “Fulfilling the Vision” begun with Metropolitan PHILIP and continuing with Metropolitan JOSEPH for our “holy mountain”, our beloved Antiochian Village.

Thank you for your generous support for the 2020 NAB PROJECT.



Sheryl VanderWagen

NAB Vice-President & Project Coordinator

Holy Orthodoxy: My Healing Balm

by Claudia Zait of St. Michael Orthodox Church in Van Nuys, CA

I wonder what sufferings you are enduring right now. Even if we are doing fine, if those whom we love are not well, neither are we. Since childhood I have carried burdens of responsibility. A daughter of illegal immigrants, I grew up being my parents' translator as well as the babysitter for my brothers. I always tried to make life a little easier for my Mom and Dad.

Although Catholic by birth, I became protestant when my Mother took us all to a wonderful, non-denominational church. There, I became something like a child Bible scholar. Later, I married a wonderful man; a man of God who had converted to Christ in a powerful, radical way although he was Jewish, son of Israeli parents.

All the hardships and sufferings I experienced growing up prepared me for the difficult, truly miserable and lonely life that awaited me in marriage and in motherhood. There is no such thing as a poor Jew, I once was told. "There is and I married him," was my reply. So preoccupied was my husband to support us financially, that I was left to fend for myself in the care and homeschooling of our 3 little ones. Added to this were the responsibilities of helping out in our home-business. My exhaustion was so excruciating and my sadness so profound that I burst forth one day, "Lord, where is the abundant life You promised?"

The healing of our broken lives, I came to believe, would be found in the true worship of God. To worship Him in Spirit and in Truth became my life's necessity. But to which of the many versions of Christianity could I run toward? Like my husband who once cried out, "God, who are You? Show me and I will follow You. Are You Buddhist? I'll become Buddhist. Are You Muslim? I'll become Muslim, just show me," I too was imploring, "Lord, how do You want us to worship You? Do You want us to be Pentecostal? Do You want us Baptist? Presbyterian? Should we remain in Messianic Judaism?" The more I studied, the more I knew that I lacked the mental and spiritual powers to discern my right hand from my left. I was lost and my children were doomed to the Christian confusion of this age.

You want God? Get ready for a collision; an earthquake. Expect a meltdown; a mental breakdown. This is what happened to me when I encountered Orthodoxy. Because as a Protestant

I was a “Roma-phobe” (one who rejects Catholicism) and a know-it-all, the Lord used a backdoor to reach me. It was 2014 and I was trying to understand the events of the Maidan; in the Ukraine. In a very insightful blog someone had asked the blogger what books he recommended to get background knowledge of that region of the world. I ordered the titles immediately: *The Gulag Archipelago* (Solzhenitsyn) and *The Orthodox Church* (Bishop Kallistos Ware). As I read, I felt scales beginning to fall from my eyes.

I called my friend Anya (whom later became my Sponsor and God-Mother to my children), asking if I could go with her to her Church, an Orthodox Church. Swept away by the flamboyant worship of Christ our King, all I did was cry. Later at her home, Anya put into my hands a book: *Everyday Saints and Other Stories* by Archimandrite Tikhon. The book scared the living daylights out of me! I could only take small dosages of the book at a time. This was the most bizarre experience of Christianity I had ever heard of.

The next six months were spent reading all I could about Orthodoxy. I incorporated a prayer rule and set up a space for that in the home. I began to contemplate icons (“idols” in protestant parlance) and pray with them. I started crossing myself. I was leaving Protestantism behind and bringing my children with me; teaching them everything I was learning to the bewilderment of my poor husband.

Somehow I had found AncientFaith.com and downloaded its App onto my phone. The plethora of podcasts served as education, comfort, and therapy for me. It was through Ancient Faith Ministries that I found St. Michael Orthodox Church in Van Nuys, CA, where we have worshiped God since 2015. My Husband and I were Chrismated and the Children baptized earlier this year, in April 2019 by Father Timothy, my spiritual Dad, who by his example teaches me more than he’ll ever know.

My beautiful and obedient daughters are now teenagers and we are moving through very turbulent waters. We arrived to Orthodoxy as refugees, not to begin at zero, but to begin in the negatives. My daughters, no doubt, have trauma from my parenting and I struggle with anxiety. In 2017, for three days (or more), I laid in bed, unable to get up or function. I had been reading *Parenting Toward the Kingdom: Orthodox Principles of Child-Rearing* by Dr. Mamalakis and realized to

my utter horror that I had done EVERYTHING wrong in Motherhood! I wasted years upon years with wrong, ugly and sinful parenting. Lord, have mercy!

Christ, through His Church, provides me with the healing balm I need to endure the agony and the consequences of my mistakes and sins. I cannot imagine surviving this difficult time in my life without the tools Orthodoxy provides. Far from resenting the past, I bless it and embrace it and thank God for it because it is what led me to the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church: the Body of Christ.

Dear Sisters, please pray for me, for my daughters, for my son and husband. Though we've come this far, the journey ahead seems long and I'm completely drained. Saint Paul tells us in Romans 8:37, "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." How soothing, isn't it?



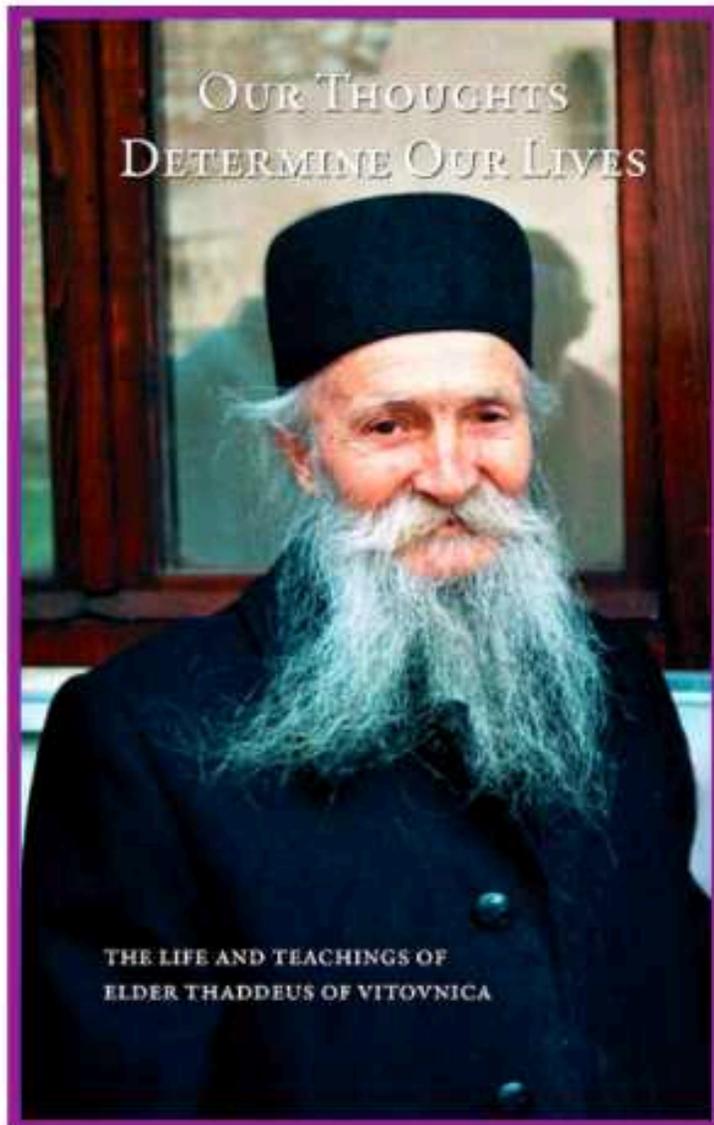
WITH THE BLESSING OF BISHOP JOHN, WE ARE RECOMMENDING THE FOLLOWING
FOR OUR ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN BOOK CLUB SELECTION:



OUR THOUGHTS DETERMINE OUR LIVES, by Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica

"Love little things, and strive for that which is modest and simple. The Lord watches over us, and He is pleased that you long for His peace. Until the soul is ready, He will only sometimes allow us to see that He is present everywhere and fills all things. At these moments the soul feels such joy!... But then the Lord conceals Himself from us again, in order that we might long for Him and seek Him with our hearts!"

— Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica



THE ELDER THADDEUS OF VITOVNICA was one of the most renowned spiritual guides of Serbia in the twentieth century. As a novice he lived in obedience to Elder Ambrose of Miljkovo Monastery, a disciple of the Optina Elders. From him Fr. Thaddeus learned the Prayer of the Heart and the selfless love that came to characterize his whole ministry to the suffering Serbian people.

Born in 1914, Elder Thaddeus lived through all the suffering endured by Serbia in the twentieth century. Over the course of two World Wars, during the Communist takeover, and through the NATO bombings of 1999, he co-suffered with his people. He taught, counseled, and prayed for all who came to him in pain and sorrow. His words

of love and hope provided spiritual balm for people from all classes of society.

In 2002 Elder Thaddeus reposed, leaving behind a large collection of his teachings, preserved by his faithful spiritual children. His life, teachings, and spiritual conversations are here presented for the first time in English. ❖

Scholarship Winners

Each year, the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America awards grants, in the amount of \$500.00 each. The grant is meant to help women with the cost of education or training, which they have undertaken to improve their circumstances or those of their families.

This past year, our own Diocese of Los Angeles and the West was fortunate enough to have two of its members receive these scholarships.

One of our scholarship recipients is Elizabeth Sugarman from Holy Cross Orthodox Church in Yakima, Washington.

Elizabeth writes:

I am studying to become a physical therapist assistant and work in an outpatient orthopedic setting. I will complete my program in June but will take my licensure exam early spring in order to begin work as soon as possible.



It has been a long journey for our family, as my husband has struggled for many years with Crohn's disease, and provision has been difficult at times. I am blessed to find a career that I am passionate about and have previous experience in, as well as allowing me to help others. I am thankful for the endless support of our parish at Holy Cross, family, friends and the AOCWNA. We could not have done it without you!

Our other scholarship recipient is Kh. Laura Frizelle from St. John Orthodox Church in Eagle River, Alaska.

Kh. Laura writes:

My plan was to study to become a certified Occupational Therapist. I took all of the prerequisites last year, did very well, was accepted, registered and started an orientation process with my start date for the online program to begin this Fall. As it turned out the program was longer than I expected, tuition increased, my financial aid was not very much and I decided that there were just too many difficulties for me to overcome right now while living in Alaska, especially with 4 kids (2 soon to be college students) at home. So unfortunately, school is on hold.



My husband, Fr. Thomas and I are taking the year to earnestly pray and consider what the Lord's will is for us and our family. In the meantime, I am so very thankful for the scholarship check and I will use it for paying off my student loan at UAA from last year.

**For information about this year's Antiochian Orthodox
Christian Women of North America awards grants,
please visit:**

<https://www.antiochian.org/regulararticle/480>

Journey to a Pilgrimage

by the Antiochian Women of St. Athanasius Orthodox Church in Sacramento, CA



The women of Saint Athanasius parish in Sacramento, California have been on an unhurried, five-year journey to their first week-long pilgrimage to St. Paisius Monastery in Arizona. It has been a slow process, partly because our church has not had a culture or history of monastic pilgrimages, and partly because, we as women didn't realize how much we needed the influence of monastics in our daily lives. Things started to change a few years ago, when as a church family, we began visiting Holy Assumption Monastery in Calistoga for one-day retreats and work days. Calistoga is less than two hours away, and the monastery doesn't require head coverings or skirts for the women. This was an easy, undemanding introduction to monastics, and the nuns made everyone feel welcome. After these visits, a few of us women wanted more than just a day with the nuns. We also wanted to visit a monastery where the demands of our everyday life weren't so accessible.

Just about the time that the hunger for a longer monastery pilgrimage was growing, our church was blessed with copies of the *Atlas of American Orthodox Monasteries*. This book made it simple to find a women's monastery that met our requirements of being close enough to drive to in a day and having services in English. With our priest's blessing, we women started going on weekend retreats with the precious nuns at St. Xenia Skete in Wildwood, CA (St. Xenia is a sister skete to St. Herman's Monastery in Platina, the men's monastery co-founded by Father Seraphim Rose of blessed memory). These pilgrimages to St. Xenia were refreshing and spiritually renewing

but they also required more of us. We all learned to deepen our prayer life at St. Xenia's as the services were earlier, more frequent, and lasted longer than most of us were used to. And there is something to be learned about obedience and humility when you submit yourself to the dress requirements of a head covering, long sleeved tops and long skirts.



After three years of weekend retreats to St. Xenia, we were finally read, as a group, for a week-long pilgrimage to Saint Paisius. We were blessed in advance by our priest, Father Stephen Howell, who arranged for daily teachings from Sister Nazaria and a special teaching session with Father Dorotheos during our pilgrimage. In many ways this week was beyond description, but below are some of our reflections on our first annual pilgrimage:

Khouria Elizabeth's Reflections:

“I was really worried about going a whole week to a monastery, and I wanted to have an excuse to not go. I am so glad my worrying went away as soon as I arrived. Before I came, I was struggling with distraction and it seemed our visit really helped me. Being around relics that we venerated daily brought me peace. I was impacted mostly by the love surrounding us. I felt we were closer to the heavenly realm, and grew closer to God. Most surprising was that the week went too fast (Also that I was asleep by 8 pm every night)! It was also surprising how easy it was too fast. Here in the world it's often hard to know what to cook!

Yes, my faith was deepened so much more, especially going to early morning services. It was so peaceful, and I sure used my prayer rope during those services. When the sun came up, light

appeared on the Theotokos icon in front, lighting up her face. It was so inspiring! Even the daily work and walks opened my eyes to the beauty surrounding us that God created. I loved having classes and being able to meet with Father Dorotheos for spiritual advice. I am still working on not dwelling on distractions!

The weeklong pilgrimage is so much better than the short trips, as you have time to completely desensitize the world from your mind and to worship God completely. In a weekend pilgrimage, it seems you get there just in time to leave again! I would suggest for first timers to just go for a weekend, to see what it is all about. If it's your first time, a whole week could be overwhelming. It's rather easy too, to wear scarves, long skirts and long sleeves."



Natalia's Reflections:

"I was surrounded by Love. I felt grace, beauty, peace, and freedom. I learned how to pray. I prayed a lot for my beloved living and beloved departed relatives and friends. I spent seven days in one of the most beautiful and spiritual places in the world. I met some of the most hardworking, very intelligent, and educated nuns, full of LOVE. I was brought to the great history of Orthodoxy and great saints whose relics were available for us to venerate; and who are with us, praying to God for us. I spent seven full days with six wonderful and the nicest ladies whom I was willing to learn from. I had the privilege to meet and speak with Father Dorotheos, who opened up my cold heart. I enjoyed the priceless lessons. I brought home so many unique icons, gifts, and jewelry. I enjoyed fasting, something that I was afraid of. I enjoyed waking up so early for services and going to sleep so early that I couldn't believe that it was me, due to my sleep deprivation. I don't remember one

negative thing. I feel that those seven days gave me a chance to improve my quality of my life. A different person returned to the real world, and I'm trying hard to preserve the feeling of God's Grace and Love. Thank God for everything!"



Mary Grace's Reflections:

"The wonderful teachings from both Sister Nazaria and Father Dorotheos touched on numerous aspects of my life that needed to be refined. Everything just made sense. There was the peace, the beauty of the services and the desert, the love from my fellow pilgrims, the monastery helpers and the monastics. With the beyond delicious food that was super nourishing, I didn't even crave meat or dairy. I got used to waking up early for services and actually looked forward to attending all the services both mornings and evenings. From Sister Nazaria and fellow pilgrims, I learned a lot about new Saints, the relics of the many glorious saints, the array of great spiritual books that can aid my spiritual and personal struggles and different prayers for different passions and struggles. In addition to prayers, there were many Akathists available to us for extra support and comfort.

My spiritual life was greatly impacted. Through the teachings and being around holiness, I found a new desire and zeal to improve my spiritual life through earnest prayers and reading spiritual books to enrich my life. Being there for a week was helpful for me in that I was able to internalize and have the extra days to set a foundation on what I wanted to be different upon returning to my worldly life: daily prayers and reading spiritual books to strengthen my faith. Also reading about the many, many saints with their motivating stories to energize my faith."



Nonna's Reflections:

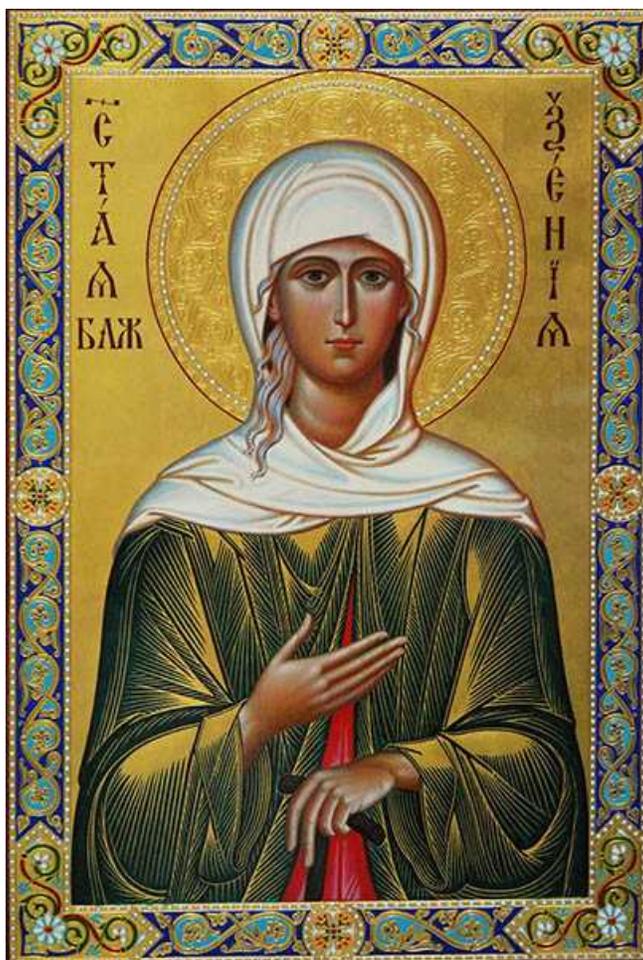
“For me, surely the most beneficial aspect of pilgrimages is removing myself from the noise and cares of the world. The desert is a beautiful place to do this. God can really work on my heart and attitudes and perspectives when I give him free rein. What surprised me, and how this trip differed from a weekend retreat, is how much it felt like **work**. Weekend retreats are getaways of peace and refreshment. This was more like turning the soil, upending rocks from my heart, and planting learned lessons that I need to keep watering now that I am home. There were days I felt sore and beat up, but I feel like through the grace of God, important work was done. I don't know how much that this encourages others, but that's my takeaway, in reflection.”



Ioanna's Reflections:

“I have made previous week-long pilgrimages to St. Paisius, and each one has been different. Some have been filled with all the joy and love expressed by Kh. Elizabeth, Natalia and Mary Grace. Some have been like Nonna's, filled with hard spiritual work of turning up soil and upending rocks. One thing I have found to be true of all my pilgrimages is this - if I come on a pilgrimage with humility and a heart willing to learn, God always shows up and He never leaves me unchanged. I always leave this place in a better spiritual state than when I arrived. What made this pilgrimage special is that I came with sisters from my home church. I was able to spend time growing in Christ with the women I labor and worship with weekly. It has deepened our faith and has strengthened our bonds with each other.

In our final teaching session with Sister Nazaria, she expressed the hope that we would return, and that we would consider St. Paisius a spiritual home. I know I speak for all of my sisters on the pilgrimage, that we will definitely be returning, making this pilgrimage an annual event, and that we are all blessed to have St. Paisius Monastery, as well as St. Xenia Skete, to call our spiritual homes.”



Serving and Learning:

A Busy Fall for the Antiochian Women of St. Simeon

by Karen Sibert Haddy of St. Simeon Orthodox Mission in Santa Clarita, CA

Though St. Simeon Orthodox Christian Church in Santa Clarita is a relatively new mission church in Southern California, our group of Antiochian Women has had an active and productive fall due to the stellar leadership of Kristy Maloof and Bobbie Fitzgerald and the thoughtful guidance of Fr. George and Kh. Janine Ajalat. Here are some of our highlights of this year:



Fr. George Ajalat
congratulating
President Kristy
Maloof for a job well
done!

- We were honored in August by a visit from Charmaine Darmour, the President of the Antiochian Women of the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West. She updated us on activities at the Diocese level including events at the July Parish Life Conference, Diocesan website resources, and the online Book Club.
- We increased our outreach to newcomers as well as our own parishioners by instituting a rotating system, managed online by Tracy Kuncar, to have greeters at the church door before Liturgy each Sunday. We also placed a magnetic board with nametags by the door. With Fr. George's blessing, we encourage parishioners to pick up their nametags as they

enter and wear them especially during coffee hour so that we can get to know one another, and newcomers can get to know us more easily.

- We set up a “Meal Train” to provide meals to families with new babies, and a “Sunshine” outreach, managed by Karinna Thompson, to keep in touch with parishioners who are ill at home or in the hospital.
- “Care packages” were assembled and sent off to all our college students who are living away from home. These included homemade marshmallow Rice Krispies squares, Halloween treats, and computer flash drives. By all accounts, the students were delighted to receive them!

A major highlight of our year was a daylong retreat (not limited to women) featuring a fascinating presentation by Kh. Randa Al Khoury Azar, a professional iconographer and a faculty member at the Antiochian House of Studies. The October 12 event was attended by many of our parishioners and visitors from neighboring churches, all of whom were blessed by Kh. Randa’s visit.

Kh. Randa began the day with an explanation of the purpose of icons in Orthodoxy. They are not to be worshipped, but venerated and honored. “Worship is for God, and only God,” Kh. Randa said. “Icons are a means of honoring God, his saints, and the holy angels. The honor that is given to the icon passes to its prototype.”

Icon of St. George,
written by
Kh. Randa Al Khoury
Azar



Noting that many of the saints depicted in icons have been martyrs for Christianity, Kh. Randa asked the question, “Those who defended their faith, don’t they deserve to be venerated?” Kh. Randa quoted from St. John of Damascus and his famous work, “Apologia Against Those Who Decry Holy Images”:

“I do not worship matter, I worship the God of matter, who became matter for my sake, and deigned to inhabit matter, who worked out my salvation through matter. I will not cease from honoring that matter which works my salvation...The image is a memorial; just what words are to a listening ear. What a book is to the literate, that an image is to the illiterate. The image speaks to the sight as words to the ear; it brings us understanding.”

She explained that an idol is a sculpted work showing an imaginary god or animal, and thus there are no three-dimensional sculptures or statues in the Orthodox tradition. In contrast, an icon “is a window into heaven that opens your eyes into another realm,” Kh. Randa said. “Through color and lines, an icon expresses what the gospel proclaims in words.”



Icon of the Dormition,
written by
Kh. Randa Al Khoury
Azar

“Accepting the icons and venerating them is accepting the mystery of the Incarnation of God Himself,” Kh. Randa said. “Refusing or rejecting the icons or attacking them is denying the Incarnation of God and the existence of Christianity.”

Because each icon is intended to be a narrative, iconographers speak of “writing” an icon, not painting or drawing it. Before she begins to write an icon, Kh. Randa first prays and then reads extensively to learn about the saint or the subject. “Iconography has canons and rules,” she explained. “The iconographer does not add anything new to religious icons, but strictly follows the Christian tradition and the canons of iconography.” The work must invite the Christian to enter into “contemplation, prayer, and silence.”

What distinguishes an icon from a painting?

First, Kh. Randa explained, there is no sense of time in icons because they are not intended to be “of this world”. While a painting may depict events in sequence, a religious icon can depict different scenes and events as if they occur at the same time. This is because of God’s perception of time, according to Holy Scripture: “A day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.”

Another difference is that holy icons are not painted in realistic perspective. Instead, they give a sense of entering the divine world where space and time are insignificant. The concern is for spiritual truth. The decision to depict a figure as big or small, placed near or far away, depends on its importance in the event. There are no shadows in iconography because there is no sense of the time of day.

There is no attempt by iconographers to show the human body in its normal proportions, Kh. Randa explained. The intent is to portray inner beauty instead of ideal physical appearance. To that end, there are no open mouths, no expression, and no actions. The mouth is small, meaning that the individual obeys the sacred commandments of God rather than speaking. The large forehead symbolizes teaching and knowledge. The large eyes are for seeing the uncreated light of God.

Kh. Randa hopes to continue sharing her knowledge and experience about the beauty of iconography and the important role it plays in the Orthodox Church. In her words, “Icons are windows into heaven, and were created to serve the Church in spreading the Faith.”

We were honored and blessed by Kh. Randa’s visit to St. Simeon, and our chapter of Antiochian Women looks forward to a great year in 2020!



FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT
ST. SIMEON'S RETREAT WITH KH. RANDA,
SEE THE SPRING EDITION OF OUR NAB NEWSLETTER,
DIAKONIA!



We were blessed by Bishop Anthony's presence!



Thank you to
Sts. Peter and Paul
Orthodox Church in
Ben Lomond, CA for a
Wonderful and
Productive Fall
Gathering!
What a weekend!



Three Presidents...
past and present!



Photos from Around the Diocese



The Antiochian Women of St. George Orthodox Church in Phoenix, AZ host a Christmas Tea!



The Antiochian Women of Orthodox Church of the Redeemer in Los Altos Hills, CA at their Fellowship Dinner.



The Antiochian Women of Three Hierarchs Orthodox Church in Wenatchee, WA prepare for their Kebob-Fest!



The Antiochian Women of St. Andrew Orthodox Church in Riverside, CA visit St. Barbara's Monastery.

Photos from Around the Diocese

Antiochian Women



St Matthew - Torrance, CA

St Simeon Santa Clarita



Antiochian Women

Can you spot our President,
Charmaine Darmour?

She travels far and wide to
visit our Antiochian
Women!

Our PLC Hosts in San Diego, CA



Photos from Around the Diocese



The Antiochian Women of St. Michael Orthodox Church in Van Nuys, CA prepare for their Yuletide Dinner!

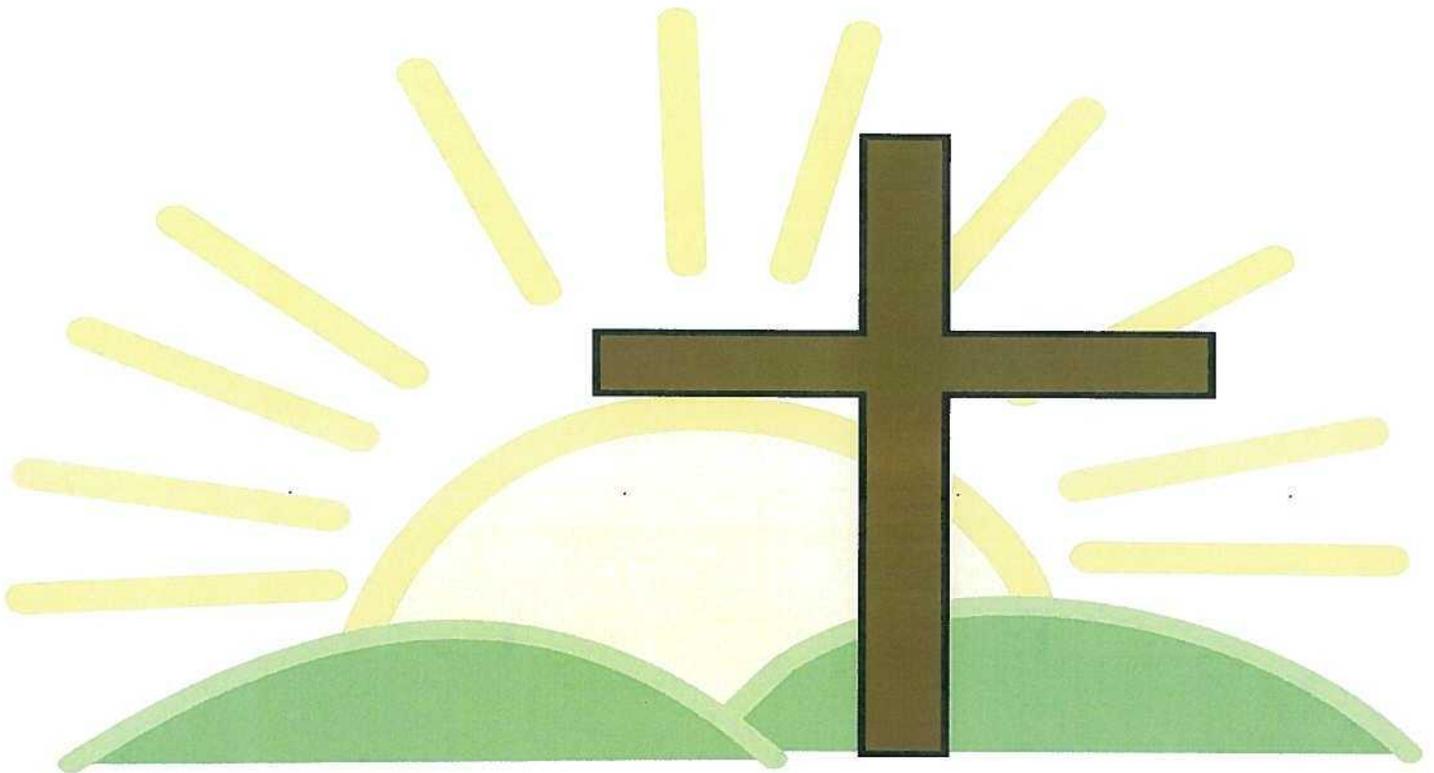


The Antiochian Women of St. Mark Orthodox Church in Irvine, CA celebrate at their Friendship Tea!



Parish Life Conference, 2019 in San Diego, CA

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN – DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES AND THE WEST, SUNSHINE MINISTRY



"Let Us Pray Without Ceasing"
Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. Colossians 4:2

Dear Sisters in Christ,

We are humbled and honored to be part of this ministry of prayer. Our goal is to establish a women's prayer list for those who are experiencing challenging struggles in life whether medical, emotional or spiritual.

We all value the power of prayer and there are seasons in our lives where we welcome additional prayer. Let us pray together for strength, recovery, comfort and guidance, as a sisterhood in Christ. As part of this ministry, we would like to reach out to those in need with a card such as Get Well, Thinking of You and Memory Eternal to remind us that we are all connected through our extended church family.

Submit prayer requests and addresses for cards to: awdlawsunshine@gmail.com

All names submitted to the prayer list will be added to the Antiochian Women DLAW blog on: <https://antiochianwomenblog.wordpress.com>.

In His service,

Sisters in Christ,
Connie and Diana



Antiochian Women's Board Members 2019 - 2021

President

Charmaine E. Darmour of
St. Michael Orthodox Church in Van Nuys, CA

Vice-President

Michele Baba of
St. Luke Orthodox Church in Garden Grove, CA

Recording Secretary

Georgette Malouf of
St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in Los Angeles, CA

Treasurer

Connie Kouri of
St. Luke Orthodox Church in Garden Grove, CA

Public Relations

Lauren Malouf of
St. Nicholas Orthodox Cathedral in Los Angeles, CA

Past-President

Melinda Bentz

Spiritual Advisor

Very Rev. Fr. David Hovik of
St. Andrew Orthodox Church in Arlington, WA



Antiochian Women's Coordinators 2019 - 2021

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Sarah Steiger of
Sts. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church in Ben Lomand, CA

Membership Coordinator

Samia Habib of
St. Michael Orthodox Church in Van Nuys, CA

Retreat Coordinator

Kh. Jean Baba of
Holy Virgin Mary Orthodox Church in West Sacramento, CA

Spiritual Coordinator

Kh. Kyra Lewis of
St. Luke Orthodox Church in Garden Grove, CA

Sunshine Coordinators

Diana Stanford of
St. Luke Orthodox Church Garden Grove, CA

Connie Kouri of
St. Luke Orthodox Church in Garden Grove, CA

HAVE YOU “LIKED” US YET????



**Antiochian Women Diocese of Los Angeles
& the West**

Religious Organization
435 like this

✓ Liked ▼



Antiochian Women North America

Religious Organization · 845 like this

✓ Liked ▼

We are a Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others. Our members are all Antiochian Orthodox women over the age of 18 in t...



**Antiochian Orthodox Christian
Archdiocese of North America**

Eastern Orthodox Church
Religious Organization
7,549 like this

✓ Liked ▼

KEEP UP WITH US ON FACEBOOK!

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

THE MOST REVEREND METROPOLITAN PHILIP - FOUNDER
A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS



THE MOST REVEREND
METROPOLITAN JOSEPH
358 MOUNTAIN ROAD
ENGLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY 07631

❖ DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES & THE WEST ❖



RE: Chapter Dues

Fall 2019

Rev. Fathers and Sisters in Christ,

Christ is in our midst! He is and ever shall be!

As we begin a new year for our Antiochian Women ministry, it is time for our Fiscal Year 2019-2020 dues to be submitted. Our dues aid our ministry on both an Archdiocese level through the works of our North American Board (NAB) and here in our own Diocese.

Annually the NAB provides scholarships granted to women returning to trade school or college in order to support their family. The NAB also provides financial support to Antiochian seminarians, our beloved widowed Khouria, and for assorted administrative necessities.

In our Diocese of LA & the West, we too provide financial support to the seminarians and widowed Khouria from within our Diocese, as well as, with the guidance and blessing of Metropolitan Joseph, we give support to mission clergy. We donate scholarships to the Youth Music Ministry, and give scholarships for ladies to attend the annual spring retreat. We've also adopted a child, "Maria" from Children's Relief Fund. Your chapter dues also serve to support the work by the diocesan board.

None of this would be possible without each parish supporting the work of the Antiochian Women through paying of annual dues. Annual dues are \$250, with \$100 being sent to the North American Board for their duties and work across our Archdiocese. While missions are not required to pay dues, they are encouraged to contribute what they are able.

Please send your check in the amount of \$250 by November 15th 2019 to Connie Kouri, Treasurer and please be sure to include the attached form. ****Canadian parishes – are kindly reminded that the \$250 is in U.S. funds****

Thank you for your commitment to our ministry. Our work is only possible through your support and prayers.

Connie Kouri
Treasurer
Antiochian Women Diocese of Los Angeles & the West
Cell# 714-319-0511
conniko@sbcglobal.net

Antiochian Women Diocese of Los Angeles & the West

Fiscal Year 2019 – 2020 A.W. Dues in the amount of \$250 (US funds)
due by November 15th, 2019

Missions, while not required to pay dues, are requested to send what they are able.
A kind reminder to our Canadian parishes – dues are \$250 in U.S. funds

Please make checks payable to: *Antiochian Women Diocese of Los Angeles and the West*
and write in the Memo: *Dues for Fiscal Year 2019-2020*

Send check to:
Connie Kouri, *Treasurer*
8018 E. Santa Ana Cyn. Rd. #100-187
Anaheim, CA 92808

Antiochian Women of: _____
Your parish name here

Parish Address: _____

Parish Contact: _____

Contact e-mail: _____

Contact Phone: _____

Amount Enclosed: \$ _____ Date: _____ Check #: _____

Antiochian Women Prayer

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.
O Christ our God, we are all pledged to serve Thee with our whole being. Help us to continue to work for Thee through our Church without seeking praise, without seeking personal gain, without judging others, without a feeling that we have worked hard enough and now must allow ourselves rest. Give us strength to do what is right and help us to go on striving and to remember that activities are not the main thing in life. The most important thing is to have our hearts directed and attuned to Thee.

Amen.



