

DIAKONIA

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA



Fall 2012

Featuring the Diocese of Ottawa, E. Canada & Upstate NY



The Nativity Of the Theotokos

September 8

THE SYNAXARION

On September 8 in the Holy Orthodox Church we celebrate the Nativity of our Most-holy Lady, the Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary.

The Holy Virgin Mary was born of aged parents, Joachim and Anna. Her father was of the lineage of David, and her mother of the lineage of Aaron. Thus, she was of royal birth by her father and of priestly birth by her mother. In this, she foreshadowed Him Who would be born of her as King and High Priest. Her parents were quite old and had no children. Because of this they were ashamed before men and humble before God. In their humility they prayed to God with tears, to bring them joy in their old age by giving them a child, as He had once given joy to the aged Abraham and his wife Sarah by giving them Isaac. The Almighty and All-seeing God rewarded them with a joy that surpassed all their expectations and all their most beautiful dreams; for He gave them not just a daughter, but the Mother of God. She was Mary, Full of grace, Blessed among women, the Temple of the Holy Spirit, the Altar of the Living God, the Table of the Heavenly Bread, the Ark of God's Holiness, the Tree of the Sweetest Fruit, the Glory of the race of man, the Praise of womanhood, and the Fount of virginity and purity.

*Through her intercessions, O Lord Jesus Christ
our God, have mercy upon us, and save us.
Amen*

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

✠ A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS ✠

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women Of North America

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Founder

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Antiochian Women's 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.*

DIAKONIA is a Newsletter of the North American Board of the Antiochian Women, an organization of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, and is published quarterly in the months of September, December, March and June.

For archived issues of DIAKONIA, go to:
<http://www.antiochian.org/AW-DIAKONIA>

PUBLICATION GUIDELINES:

Deadlines

- Please submit your articles by the first of the month prior to the month of publication so we can be sure they are included.

To submit articles, e-mail as an attachment to your diocesan Public Relations Director or to:
lucy.hanna@sbcglobal.net

Submission Details

- Please include your name and the phone number where you can be contacted for questions.

Content

- All articles must be of interest to or regarding NAB, Diocesan or local Antiochian Women.
- All articles may be edited for length and clarity.

In this issue of the DIAKONIA we highlight the
**The Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada
And Upstate New York**

In each of the next seven issues, we will highlight one of the Dioceses. We encourage everyone however, to submit news and articles from all Antiochian parishes of North America for publication in every issue so we may keep in touch with each other.

What is DIAKONIA

The word **DIAKONIA** is a Greek word meaning *Service*, usually pertaining to service in the Church. The purpose of the Antiochian Women's organization is primarily spirituality and humanitarian service. In the words of our beloved Metropolitan PHILIP it is **"Theology in Action"**.



THE CROSS IN OUR LIVES

This article is reprinted here at the request of some of our readers.

It was first published in the Fall 2007 issue of DIAKONIA.

The month of September being the month in which we celebrate the feast of the Elevation of the Precious and Life Giving Holy Cross, it is befitting to learn about the importance of the Cross in our lives.

Many heretics of our time don't believe in the cross, even if they may call themselves Christians. Some pop stars and actors wear the cross, but by the witness of their lives we can assume that they don't put much value in the cross except as an empty symbol. There is nothing new under the sun and there have always been accusation against our Church. In the second century, Christians were accused of practicing incest, of being cannibals, of being ignorant and of being bad citizens. The most dangerous accusation was that the Christian teaching was unreasonable. This idea purported that the incarnation was nonsense; God would not lower Himself to become a tiny baby or to be crucified as a common thief.

At the peak of these accusations was that Christians worshipped a crucified animal. In the excavation of the old city of Rome, a stone was discovered which pictured a crucified person, who had the head of a donkey. This picture was drawn to ridicule the Christians who worshipped someone who had been crucified.

In response to all these accusations, Christians pointed to the injustices. There were no secrets among Christians. Christians were good citizens and Christianity was a reasonable belief. The death of Christ was the supreme sacrifice! The cross is not just a symbol or piece of material in our life. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18).

Without the Holy Cross of our Lord and deep understanding of our faith, we manifest the same accusations. Faith and knowledge must go together. Faith alone leads to superstition and knowledge alone is limited to facts. The process is called Transformation which means transfiguring ourselves to a better understanding of faith and a better life in light of the Holy Cross.

Our prominent St. Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch (AD 115), struggled to disprove and refute two contemporaries of the Christian faith:

1. Orthodox Judaizers, who were relapsing to the Old Testament thinking that Jesus was merely a prophet who was above passion and crucifixion. They found the Old Testament a relaxing religion in which the cross did not exist.

2. The so-called Docetism, which asserted that Christ had not really come in the flesh and was not really crucified; He only appeared to be crucified.

These two heresies resisted Orthodoxy throughout the history of Christianity taking different forms. History reveals how foolish and scandalous the cross seemed to many religions; to Jews, Judaizers, Gentiles and Moslems.

These heretics still exist in our age because many are convinced that the prophets and the Son of God are above the punishment of crucifixion. To them, only condemned personas are affixed to the cross to await death. These tendencies were always disproved by the fact of Jesus' birth in the flesh and Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus' death on the cross marked the end of the Law of the Old Testament (Gal 3:13).

Jesus was lifted up on the cross as Moses lifted the serpent in the wilderness. What is this serpent which was lifted up by Moses? What is the meaning of the typology? If we go back to the Book of Numbers in the Old Testament, we will see that the people became impatient in the desert and that they spoke against God. Thus, the fiery serpent was sent among the people so that many of them died. These poisonous snakes were a kind of divine judgment on the people's rebellion against God. So, Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord told Moses to make a bronze serpent and set it on a pole. Everyone who



was bitten when they saw it would live. This could be seen as spiritual testing; persecution, difficulty, trial. This whole process is one of self-denying.

Jesus used the symbol of the healing snake as representing His crucifixion and resurrection which heals us from death and sin. The verb “lifted up” has a double meaning. It refers to the cross of Jesus and to His glorification in His resurrection and ascension.

From His analogy, the crowd understood that Jesus spoke about His death, but for the masses of people, Messiah and death were incompatible. When Jewish nationalism was on the rise, the expectation of a Messiah acquired political overtones. The people expected Jesus to be a national leader, a mighty king who would deliver the people from the Roman yoke and restore the earthly kingdom of Israel. The crowds and even the disciples that gladly listened to Jesus shared in the understanding of Messiah. They continued to hold these hopes until the very end. The people wanted Jesus to be a king who would not hesitate to use the sword for the realization of their nationalistic dreams.

Jesus predicted His death and He identified Himself with the suffering servant of Christ. When He predicted His death, Jesus pointed at the same time to His resurrection. The resurrection reveals what was achieved on the cross. St. Paul said: “But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Gal. 6:14).

Christ’s death on the cross brought salvation (Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:16) and hence, it was the basis for Christian hope. It is the sign of the supreme sacrifice and the resurrection; it signifies life rather than death.

Of course, we do not believe that the divinity of Jesus was crucified on the cross. Thus, we always make a distinction between the two questions “what?” and “who?” Who was crucified on the cross? The answer is Jesus Himself, the second person of the Trinity. What was crucified on the cross? Only the humanity of Jesus was crucified, not His divinity, because the divinity is above our reach. His divinity is unapproachable by human minds.

By His divinity He made the cross the sign of the new life. Our cross is through baptism and repentance. For this reason we become communicants of His cross by our baptism, life, struggle and suffering for the sake of Jesus. We cross ourselves all the time – before kissing an icon, when we pray, before we eat, to express the daily experience of the cross. It is the power of God! The cross to the unbelievers is foolishness, but to us believers it is the power of God. Every action of Christ, including all His working of miracles, was truly great and wonderful. But of all things the most wonderful is His

honorable cross. For by nothing else, except by the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, death has been brought low, death has been despoiled and resurrection bestowed. The power given us by the death of Christ, that is to say the cross has clothed us with the wisdom and power of God. This we have been given as a sign on our forehead, just as Israel was given circumcision. For by it, we faithful are set apart from the skeptics and we are recognized apart from unbelievers.

So that honorable and most truly venerable cross, upon which Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice for us, is itself to be adored because it has been sanctified by contact with His sacred body and blood. We have splinters of this most honorable wood as a relic because it touched the humanity and the sacred divinity of our Lord.

We also adore the likeness of the honorable and life giving Cross, even though it is made of another material. We do not honor the material, but the likeness as a symbol of Christ. We preach Christ crucified. Therefore, the sign of Christ in the Cross is to be adored, for wherever the sign may be, there He will be too. If the form of the cross should happen to be destroyed however, the material from which the cross was composed is not to be adored, even if it was of gold or precious stones. We honor the material as a sign of Christ, for wherever the sign is, Christ is there. We also trace this sign upon our bodies and thereby bless ourselves. Thus we adore everything that has reference to God, although it is to Him that we direct the worship.

Deny yourself and carry your cross daily. To build a godly life you must understand the depth of carrying your cross daily. Read the Bible, but don’t read the Bible by itself. Communicate with the person of Jesus! This is your life! Read the Bible slowly and carefully. Read it and pray it at the same time. The experience of Church is in the Bible! The life of the Church is in reading, living and praying altogether. Christ remained silent when Pilot asked Him about the accusations against Him, because He presupposed that Pilot did not understand His theology. Silence has the greatest power to teach. It is the strongest defense. This kind of theology needs peace and silence. The Holy Theotokos kept silent. Protect your families by keeping silent. Carry your cross of poverty, sadness, agony, anxiety, despair or sickness. Carry your cross of the vices gluttony, fornication, avarice, anger, negligence or pride. We must struggle and not give up. Give a word of encouragement. The same Grace is given to all in baptism and in communion. God can heal all. These crosses lead us to confusion, disillusion and pain, but His cross, the TRUE CROSS, leads us to joy and salvation.

News from St. George Church of Montreal

Antiochian Women in Action

- † On Tuesday, September 11th, the Antiochian Women of St. George are extending an invitation to all their sister parishes in the Montreal area, St. Nicholas and St. Mary, to attend their opening social. Two great speakers from the Montreal Neurological Institute will be addressing health issues; the first one is about Women's Health and Stroke Prevention, and, the second one about Promoting Quality of Life for the Hospitalized patients/families at the Montreal Neurological Hospital/Institute.
- † On Saturday, September 15, St. George parish will host a grand banquet to honor Father Antony's 50 years as priest, complete with a historical video presentation.
- † On Saturday, September 29, the women are having their annual walkathon on Mount Royal to benefit the Montreal Neurological Institute and Hospital (McGill University Health Centre).
- † November - baking all month for the annual BAKE SALE on the Feast of St. Barbara.
- † November 18 Holiday Bazaar
- † December The annual Christmas Party.
- † The 2013 Diocese of Ottawa Parish Life Conference will be hosted by St. George Church of Montreal from Wednesday July 3 to Sunday July 7, 2013.



St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church
555-575 Jean-Talon east
Montreal (Quebec) H2R 1T8

Announcing the 34th Annual St. Thekla Pilgrimage

ST. THEKLA CONVENT at ANTIOCHIAN VILLAGE, September 21 –23, 2012



As Orthodox Christians, our lives are a type of pilgrimage, so why set time aside to attend the St Thekla Pilgrimage? The key is in "setting aside." We invite you "to set aside all earthly cares" and to join us in refocusing and refreshing ourselves in our Orthodox life. Like St Thekla, Protomartyr and Equal to the Apostles, together we will pray at the Divine Liturgy and services, obtain guidance and direction from the Gospels for our lives at home, and enjoy fellowship with other pilgrims.

Antiochian Village is the burial place of St. Raphael of Brooklyn. Many people come each year to visit his burial place as they attend the St. Thekla Pilgrimage.

This pilgrimage is sponsored annually by the Convent of St. Thekla and the Abbess of the convent, Mother Alexandra (motheralexandra@gmail.com).

For more information and registration, go to: http://www.antiochianvillage.org/assets/files/center_pdf/St.%20Thekla%20Pilgrimage/2012%204%20panel%20brochure.pdf.

Through the intercession of Saint Thekla, may this pilgrimage be blessed.

In addition to the usual events of the pilgrimage, this year we will also have a deacon's retreat in conjunction with the pilgrimage. For information about this retreat, please contact Dn. Gregory Roeber (agr2@psu.edu).

Introducing The 2011 - 2013 Board of Antiochian Women Of the Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada & Upstate New York

The Rt Reverend Bishop ALEXANDER - Diocesan Bishop



His Grace Bishop ALEXANDER was consecrated to the Holy Episcopacy on December 5, 2004. His consecrating bishops included His Beatitude IGNATIUS IV at the Patriarchal Cathedral in Damascus, Syria. He was enthroned as the first Diocesan Bishop of Ottawa, Eastern Canada, and Upstate New York at St. Elias Cathedral in Ottawa, June 12, 2005.

Bishop ALEXANDER served as priest of St. Mary's Antiochian Orthodox Church in Hunt Valley, Maryland from 2000-2004.

Bishop ALEXANDER was born into an Orthodox Christian family in north Lebanon in 1956. He attended Tripoli Boys' School and after passing the Lebanese Baccalaureates I and II, he enrolled in the American University in Beirut. Due to fighting in Lebanon, he was unable to continue his education there and instead moved to the U.S. to attend the University of North Texas. He graduated with a B.A. in 1978 and an MBA in 1980. He returned to Lebanon, where he worked from 1981 to 1985 for a company that imported raw materials for factories.

In October 1985, he returned to the U.S. and found work as a supply manager at Prince George's Hospital in the Washington, D.C. area. After eight years in that job, he worked for a local company that exported medical supplies to the Middle East and then in 1995 was hired by Federated Stores to work as a sales associate for Bloomingdale's in Rockville, Maryland. While there, he wrote to Metropolitan PHILIP requesting his blessing to enter seminary. He was directed to attend St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary in Crestwood, New York, from which he graduated in 2000.

Bishop ALEXANDER was ordained to the Diaconate on January 9, 2000 and to the priesthood on April 9, 2000. He was elevated to the Archimandrite on July 4, 2004. Bishop ALEXANDER's name day is August 30 (St. Alexander, Archbishop of Constantinople).

Very Rev. Iskander Younes - Spiritual Advisor

Father Iskander is the pastor of St. George Church, Richmond Hill, Ontario, Canada.

Susanne Zeidan - President



As a long time Parishioner of St. Elias Cathedral in Ottawa, I grew up in a Christian environment. At 15, my father arrived in Canada and brought with him a strong Orthodox base. As we grew up in Ottawa, I remember so clearly attending Sunday School, picnics, and many feast day celebrations, especially for our patron

Saint Elias. My mother converted to Orthodoxy when she married, and I believe because she was not Lebanese, my father ensured we, as children, knew our heritage. Because of this, we traveled to Lebanon many times as children.

I met my husband in Ottawa shortly after he graduated Engineering from Ottawa University and we got married in Lebanon by the Archbishop. Upon our return to Canada, we continued to attend St. Elias Church. While working full time and raising our family, we maintain a close connection with our Church family.

Both my husband, Dimitri, and I have been involved with the operations of the Church and organizations. We have assisted with the past Parish Life Conferences, and have held several positions, including the Parish Council. We were on the committee to consecrate our Cathedral in 2000, and most importantly, to welcome our New Bishop ALEXANDER, to the Diocese.

I have been an active member of the Antiochian women of our parish for many years, and have held many offices. Currently, I am Vice-President and past President of a four year term.

As a family, we have attended many of the Parish Life Conferences and Archdiocese Conventions. When we can fit it in, we travel to Lebanon to strengthen the family ties we have there. Our three children, Katya, Krista and Marcus were raised in the Church, and have devoted many summers to Camp Transfiguration, and belong to many of the Church organizations.

It is an honour to serve as President of our Diocese, and to get to know the women from the different regions. It feels natural to be part of this wonderful Parish, we receive much encouragement and love from Fr. Ghattas Hajal and Kh. Helene. We truly are Blessed.

Kh. Suzanne Murphy - V. President/NAB Project



Kh. Suzanne is the wife of Fr. Gregory Murphy, pastor of St. Michael Church in Geneva, in Upstate New York. At the parish level she wears many hats, including choir director, church school and of course, the Antiochian Women.

For her complete bio, please see the Fall 2011/Winter 2012 issue of DIAKONIA. You can find it at <http://www.antiochian.org/AW-DIAKONIA>

Kh. Kim Rigden-Briscall - Recording Secretary



Kh Kim attends Christ the Saviour Antiochian Parish in Waterloo, Ontario where her husband Fr. Christopher is the priest and she teaches Church School. They have four children: Elijah (17yrs), Esmé (16yrs), Nikolai (10yrs) and Margaret (8yrs).

In her professional life Kh Kim provides training and consulting to 911 centers all over North America. She specializes in teaching emergency dispatchers how to deal with difficult callers and how to manage stress.

Kh Kim loves racing triathlon and you can often find her biking, running or swimming when she is not at church or working

Kh. Helene Hajal - Treasurer

Kh. Helene is the wife of Fr. Ghattas Hajal, pastor of St. Elias Cathedral in Ottawa. No photo or bio was received.

Janice Saba - Public Relations/Immed. Past Pres.



I was born in Los Angeles, Calif, and was active in Sunday School, Choir, and all the various Archdiocese Convention projects, Essays, Poetry, and Oratorical, all through the years which solidified all the Orthodox catechism in a fervent manner. I won the very First National Oratorical Contest in 1970 at the Chicago Archdiocese Convention and presented my Speech: "Church, is it Relevant or Irrelevant" at the Grand Banquet. That led me to spearhead the first West Coast OCF when I was a student at Stanford University, with neighboring UC Berkeley and UCSF. We held many retreats with Southern California Pan-Orthodox youth. The friendships I built at that time, 40 years ago, remain today.

After I graduated from Pepperdine School of Law in 1976, I married Economist George Saba from St. George, Montreal (whom I met at the 1972 Convention in Los Angeles) and we raised four children, never missing a Sunday at St. George Montreal, where Fr. Antony Gabriel was our Spiritual Father, Cousin and Friend.

My son Tom, a Pediatrician, followed in my footsteps winning the National Oratorical Contest about 30 years after I did. His twin sister Katherine Chalhoub, is an Oncology Nurse. My older daughters Marie Zogaib, and Joy Hajjar studied Higher Education Administration and Business. All four children met and married young people they met at the College Conferences at the Antiochian Village, all from the Midwest Diocese, so my husband and I share our time between Montreal and Michigan!

I taught High School in Montreal for about 20 years, since Quebec follows the French Civil Law Code, my English Common Law was of no use, but I garnered my energies around the children's public school and Sunday School activities. Now I am enjoying my seven little grandchildren, Rosie, Jasmine, Dahlia, Luke, Maya, Zoe, and Michael, who bring me untold joy.

Even though it was really tough to leave my familiar California country, culture, language, career, family and friends, for "le amour" ... AND a cold French Canadian lifestyle, the vibrant Orthodox Community in Montreal became my refuge, my foundation, and my family.

I look back fondly on the years I have served as Diocesan President, and on the North American Board. Truly, we are a Sisterhood.

Lianne Nimey - Humanitarian Coordinator



My name is Lianne Nimey. I was born and raised Catholic and never knew what Orthodoxy was until I met my husband. After learning about the Orthodox faith, I was intrigued and impressed. I am a traditionalist and love rules and appreciated the originality of our faith.

My husband and his family are very devoted Orthodox members. My mother-in-law, Cindy Nimey, was the NAB President for four years. She is a strong pillar in our church and so is my husband. I am so proud to be Orthodox and can't wait to raise our daughter Amelia and future children with the teachings of the Orthodox Church. After my first trip to the Antiochian Village for meetings I became the humanitarian coordinator for our diocese. I am also the women's group president in our parish, St George in New Hartford, New York. I love my life in the Orthodox family!

Roulida Salibi - Membership Coordinator

No photo or bio available

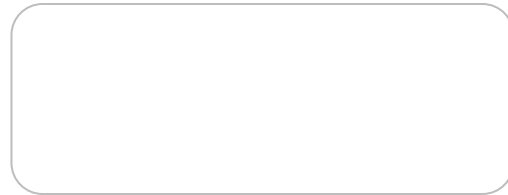
Religious Coordinator - Vacant

Scholarship Coordinator - Vacant



ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

Lucy Hanna
1853 Kensington Road
Corona, CA 92880



A REMINDER TO DIOCESAN PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTORS:

All articles, news from parishes, photos, bios and messages are due the first of the month PRIOR to the month of publication. Please collect and email them to lucy.hanna@sbcglobal.net according to the schedule below:

The following items are needed to highlight your diocese:

1. Bios and photos from your Diocesan Bishop, Spiritual Advisor and Board Members.
2. Messages from your Diocesan Bishop, Spiritual Advisor and President.
3. Photos and news articles from the diocese or parishes.
4. Notices of diocesan gatherings, retreats, conferences, etc.

	Diocese	Date of Publication	Date Due
1	NAB Board	September 2011	Done ✓
2	Diocese of New York and Washington, D.C., Diocese of Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic	December 2011	Done ✓
3	Diocese of Los Angeles and the West and the Diocese of Eagle River and the Northwest	March 2012	Done ✓
4	Diocese of Miami and the Southeast	June 2012	Done ✓
5	Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate NY	September 2012	Done ✓
6	Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest	December 2012	November 1, 2012
7	Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America	March 2013	February 1, 2013
8	Diocese of Worcester and New England	June 2013	May 1, 2013

To ensure publication in the next issue, please submit your news and articles by this date.