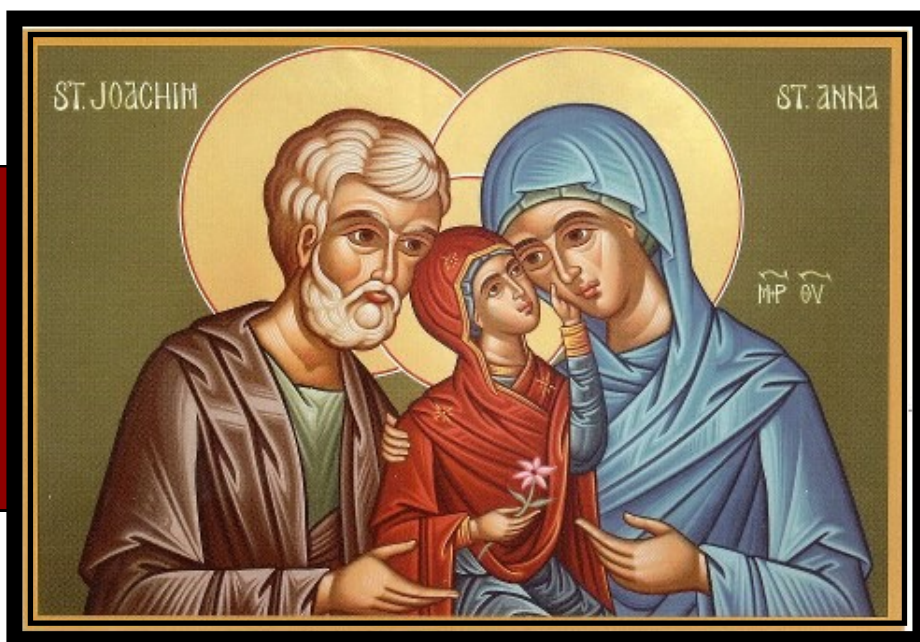


# *DIAKONIA*

Fall 2013



## *The Antiochian Women Of North America* **40 YEARS of SERVICE** **1973 - 2013**



*The  
Nativity  
of the  
Theotokos*

*September 8*

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

❧ A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS ❧

# The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women Of North America

The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan PHILIP  
Founder

The Most Reverend  
Archbishop JOSEPH  
Overseeing Hierarch

## **NAB Board**

His Grace Bishop. JOHN, Spiritual Advisor

### **Officers:**

Violet Robbat ..... President  
Dianne O'Regan..... Vice-president  
Laila Ferris.....Recording Secretary  
Anne Bourjaily-Thomas.....Treasurer  
Lucy Hanna & Melissa Skocypec.....Public Relations  
Cindy Nimey .....Immediate Past President

### **Coordinators:**

Constitution & Bylaws ..... TBD  
Cindy Nimey ..... Parliamentarian/Scholarship  
Kh. Dannie Moore..... Humanitarian  
Kh. Suzanne Murphy..... Membership  
MaryLou Catelli.....Religious  
Sherry Abraham Morrow.....Finance  
Deana Bottei & Jamie Isaac...Widowed Clergy Wives  
Program

### ***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.

### **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:

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.

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In this issue of the **DIAKONIA** we highlight the  
**North American Board.**

The Dioceses will be highlighted in the next seven issues as per the schedule on page 3. 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.

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### **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"***.

## Letter from the Editors:

Your Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP, Your Eminence Archbishop JOSEPH, Your Grace Bishop JOHN, Reverend Fathers the Diocesan Spiritual Advisors, and Sisters in Christ,

I would like to introduce myself to those of you who do not know me. My name is Lucy Hanna and I was elected to the office of NAB Public Relations Director at the general assembly of the Antiochian Women at the Archdiocese Convention in Houston, Texas this last July to serve another two-year term. For the first time we now have a PR Co-Director. Melissa Skocypec, from Queen Creek, Arizona, will be working with me and assisting me. Please join me in welcoming Melissa to the board. She has done a great job as PR Director for the Dioceses of LA and the West, and I am sure she will do the same for NAB. It is our job to help you promote the works of the Antiochian Women throughout the Archdiocese.

Part of promoting our organization is through the publication "DIAKONIA." As we have in the past, we will be introducing the boards and bringing you news and articles from each diocese and their parishes. Each issue will feature one board. We will begin, however, by introducing the North American Board in the first issue.

Please send me articles, news, and information from your parishes and communities for publishing in any future issue regardless of which diocese you belong to (the schedule below is only for the introduction of the boards of each diocese). To be a true sisterhood, we need to stay in touch with each other, rejoice with each other over our successes and triumphs and learn from each other's mistakes. Melissa and I look forward to hearing from all of you.

All articles are due the first of the month PRIOR to the month of publication.

Sincerely,  
Lucy Hanna and Melissa Skocypec

|   | Diocese  | Date of Publication | Date Due         |
|---|--|---------------------|------------------|
| 1 | NAB Board (His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP, His Eminence Archbishop JOSEPH, and His Grace Bishop JOHN)  | September 2013      | Done             |
| 2 | Diocese of New York and the Archdiocesan District (His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP & His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS). Diocese of Charleston, Oakland, and the Mid-Atlantic (His Grace Bishop THOMAS) | December 2013       | November 1, 2013 |
| 3 | Diocese of Los Angeles and the West and the Diocese of Eagle River and the Northwest (His Eminence Archbishop JOSEPH)  | March 2014          | February 1, 2014 |
| 4 | Diocese of Miami and the Southeast (His Grace Bishop ANTOUN)   | June 2014           | May 1, 2014      |
| 5 | Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate NY (His Grace Bishop ALEXANDER)  | September 2014      | August 1, 2014   |
| 6 | Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest (His Grace Bishop ANTHONY)   | December 2014       | November 1, 2014 |
| 7 | Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America (His Grace Bishop BASIL)  | March 2015          | February 1, 2015 |
| 8 | Diocese of Worcester and New England (His Grace Bishop JOHN)   | June 2015           | May 1, 2015      |

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



**The Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese  
OF NORTH AMERICA**

358 Mountain Road, P.O. Box 5238, Englewood, NJ 07631-5238  
Telephone (201) 871-1355 \* Fax (201) 871-7954  
Website: [www.antiochian.org](http://www.antiochian.org) \* Email: [archdiocese@antiochian.org](mailto:archdiocese@antiochian.org)

September 3, 2013

Beloved Hierarchs, Clergy and Faithful of our God-Protected Archdiocese:

Greetings to you and your families as we begin a new ecclesiastical year. I pray you had a pleasant summer. I write to you today as our president and United States Congress contemplate military action against Syria. As those of us with deep roots in that land already know, more bombs and destabilization of the country will only lead to further bloodshed and devastation. In my opinion, based on a lifetime of knowledge in that area of the world, it serves neither the interest of the United States, nor the Syrian people (or the people of the Middle East at large for that matter) to bomb and further destabilize the country. Extremists groups such as Al-Kaeda are waiting in the wings to prey on any weakness in the Syrian government and infrastructure. The results of such a bombing would be yet another step in the extermination of our Christian presence in the Middle East, a presence that dates to the dawn of Christianity. Our Church has already suffered greatly and has new martyrs waiting to be glorified –we do not need any more!

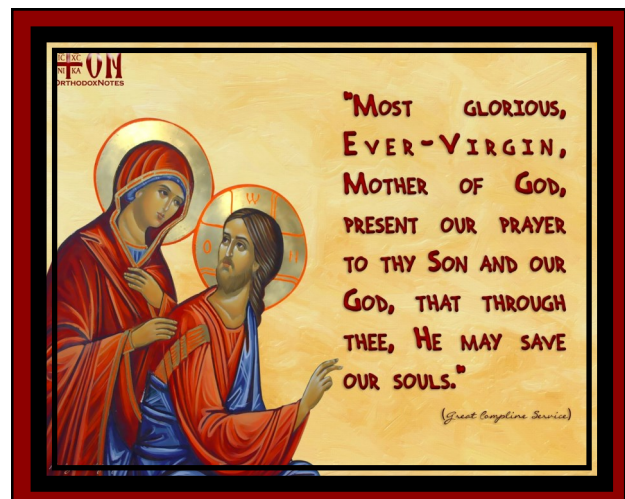
Therefore, I urge all of you during the next few days to contact your respective senators and congress people to urge them to vote **NO** to any unilateral military action by the United States. Time is of the essence so please distribute this email to everyone you know as quickly as possible and share this message on your Facebook and other mass media sights.

Wishing you all a peaceful new Church year, I remain,

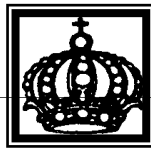
Your Father in Christ,

+Metropolitan PHILIP

Archbishop of New York and  
Metropolitan of all North America







## The Antiochian Women and Martyrdom

*“The Martyrs earned paradise with their blood; the Monastics, with their ascetic life. Now we, my brethren, who beget children, how shall we earn paradise? With hospitality, by relieving the poor, the blind, the lame, as Joachim did... Almsgiving, love, and fasting sanctify man, enrich him in both soul and body, and bring him to a good end; the body and the soul become holy.” --St. Kosmas of Aitolia (18<sup>th</sup> c.)*



I bring you greetings in the Name of the Lord! Our Antiochian Women’s organization in this archdiocese is well-known for its active service, in promoting our holy Faith through many charitable endeavors, and in encouraging spiritual growth among our women, their families, and parish communities. You who lead in the various archdiocesan, diocesan, and parochial levels of this organization have a large responsibility—really, a two-fold responsibility: not only to become genuine Christians yourselves, by doing all that Christ calls you to, but also to set a good example to others whom you influence and lead. And all of you who read this, share the same Gospel vocation, to sanctify yourselves. “Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself just as He (Christ) is pure” (1 John 1), and in our Lord’s own words, “Ye shall be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matt 5). These words of Jesus interpret and make clear the ancient word of God spoken through the God-seer, Moses, “Ye shall be holy, for the Lord thy God is holy.” You see, this is what St Kosmas said at the end of the opening quote I offered here in this little message, “... (to) become holy.” This is our vocation. God gives the Grace; we give the struggle, the labor, the repentance! The product is holiness, the condition of belonging to God.

So, what has this to do with the Antiochian Women of North America? You are called to serve; but service without holiness is necessarily tinged with pride and egotism. The clear water of charity can be spoiled by one drop of ink, the poison of self-promotion and self-esteem. St. Kosmas offers us a very encouraging and clear word about how to avoid such pitfalls when he places such an emphasis upon the fundamental elements of a holy life: hospitality, relief to the poor... almsgiving, fasting, and love.” It is difficult to explain all of these things adequately in this short space. But perhaps I can bring another holy father of our faith to

add clarity, St Isaac of Syria. Since we Americans are so subject to the temptation to boast about our achievements and our social standing, we may profit well in our pursuit of holiness, to pay heed to his clear teaching : “A woman or a man who craves esteem cannot be rid of the causes of grief” (homily 1). “These are the passions: love of wealth; gathering objects of any kind; bodily pleasure...; love of esteem, from which springs envy; the wielding of power; pride in the trappings of authority; stateliness and pomposity; human glory, which is the cause of resentment; fear for the body” (homily 2). With these beautiful and convicting pronouncements from this great saint, we can profit much. Let the reader stop and carefully re-read these and reflect carefully upon each word and phrase.

As we are called to service, let us not pay any attention to position or status, among other things. Rather, let us increase our secret struggle, “in your closet where your Father sees in secret,” as Jesus taught us. When we find ourselves presented with opportunities to practice mercy (this is exactly what “almsgiving” means), let us not delay to act, for “Almsgiving is like the rearing of children... if you have possessions, distribute them at once; but if you have none, do not desire any” (again, St. Isaac, homily 4). Let us be careful to guard our tongues, for “where words abound, sin is not absent” (Proverbs). And, lastly, notice that St. Kosmas placed hospitality at the top of his list! *Philoxenia*, “love of strangers,” what we call “hospitality” is a fundamental Christian virtue. It is because of hospitality that Christians calm down social passions and foster the healing of troubles between peoples wherever there is a Christian presence. Some have argued, quite persuasively, that the decline of the Christian presence in the Near East—due to the many forms of persecution—is a basic factor contributing to the rise of civil violence. You know, when you invite

someone to eat and drink with you, you calm her (or him) down and create the conditions for a true encounter in love. We win people with perishable things such as food and drink, and take them down the path in life toward imperishable things, the salvation of their souls.

I close this teaching with an extract from the final prayer of St. Macrina the Younger, that great Mother of our faith, who was an expert in practicing hospitality. Macrina was a noble woman who encouraged her whole household to become a little monastery, a lighthouse of Christ to all. She showed us the close connection between all the ways of life in the Church—familial and monastic. Out of her spiritual nursing household, came a family of saints. St. Macrina captured what is central to our earthly struggle. May we find ourselves in conformity to her noble and evangelic way of life! Let us struggle to do so, following her good example, for your household, too, can become a new Eden where St. Kosmas' words become fulfilled. St. Macrina ended her earthly life with these words of prayer, "...do Thou give me an angel of light to conduct me to the place of

refreshment, where is the water of rest, in the bosom of the holy Fathers. Thou that didst break the flaming sword and didst restore to Paradise the man that was crucified with Thee and implored Thy mercies, remember me, too, in Thy kingdom; because I, too, was crucified with Thee, having nailed my flesh to the cross for fear of Thee, and of Thy judgments have I been afraid. Let not the terrible chasm separate me from Thine elect. Nor let the slanderer stand against me in the way; nor let my sin be found before Thine eyes, if in anything I have sinned in word or deed or thought, led astray by the weakness of our nature. O Thou Who hast power on earth to forgive sins, forgive me, that I may be refreshed and may be found before Thee when I put off my body, without defilement on my soul. But may my soul be received into Thy hands spotless and undefiled, as an offering before Thee."

Through the intercessions of our venerable Father, St. Isaac, and of our venerable Mother, St. Macrina the Younger, may this good character adorn all you Antiochian women in our Archdiocese and everywhere, with the Grace of the Lord, to Whom be glory forever, amen!



Message from His Grace Bishop JOHN

*North American Board Spiritual Advisor*

Working with the Antiochian Women for the past 16 years has been a gift. The Antiochian Women seem to understand instinctively that by doing ministry, that is serving God by serving His people, we are actualized. By actualized I mean able to do what we are created to do, and able to be what we are created to be. Women seem to know that it is in sharing God's love that we experience the joy and peace of God. Women know that in caring for each other that we build up our families, parishes, Archdiocese and world. It should hardly be a surprise that women dominate the "helping professions", those professions of healing and support, of our society just as they dominate the organizations and ministry teams of our parishes.

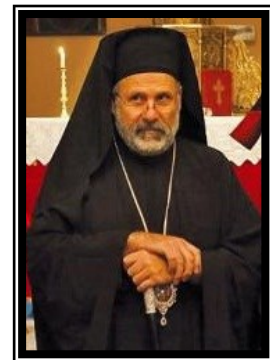
The Antiochian Women have a clear identity. Typically, the Antiochian Women are the Church leaders who keep the Church working, are loyal to the Lord, maintain the relationships of the parish and manage the resources the Church needs to operate. Some think that this means cleaning and cooking. Such would be a foolish oversimplification. Rather it is by cooking, cleaning, loving, teaching, coaching,

supporting, feeding and protecting that God shines through his people. It is through this work that God serves His people. It is in doing this work that the workers share intimately with God.

Doing ministry is not without its own reward. It is in serving that we have the Church for ourselves and each other. It is by being the Church that we have the Church for ourselves and for those we love. It is by teaching that we better understand and learn.

The Antiochian Women have blessed me with this simple understanding. The Antiochian Women have blessed the Church and the Antiochian Women continue to be blessed as they serve, by their service, and in their ministry.

Bishop JOHN





THE MOST REVEREND  
METROPOLITAN PHILIP (SALIBA)  
FOUNDER  
358 MOUNTAIN ROAD  
ENGLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY 07631

# ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

✠ A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS ✠

❖ NORTH AMERICAN BOARD ❖



*HAPPY 40<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY!*

Christ Is In Our Midst!

Days, weeks, months and years have come and gone, in the blink of an eye, and here we are celebrating our Fortieth Anniversary! The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America have, over the years, come so far and accomplished so much since its inception in July of 1973. Consider the millions of dollars we have raised over the years for the many worthwhile projects which Metropolitan PHILIP has asked of us because there was a need. Then there are our many Humanitarian Deeds, Religious Retreats, Membership Handbook, Public Relations Newsletters, Antiochian Women's Banner, Trifold Brochure, March as Women's Month, Antiochian Women's Scholarship, Married Seminarians, Orthodox Clergy Wives, Widowed Clergy Wives, Operation Lace-up and the list goes on and on.

Today, as in the past, we are blessed with many talented women who are serving on their Chapter and Diocesan boards, and on the North American Board. As President, I feel truly blessed to have these wonderful women on our board, and to have the honor and pleasure of working with them, all for the Glory of God. I cannot thank them enough for all of their hard work and dedication over the past two years, which, to name a few, gave us our "Spiritual Aids" Bookmarks, the first Book Club, a revamped Antiochian Women's Trifold Brochure, "Treehouse Family Ministries", suggestions based on the "Acts of Mercy", the DIAKONIA newsletter, Project 2011-2012 - The Convent of St. Thekla and Project 2012-2013 - Antiochian Village - Tornado Relief Fund", "I Am An Antiochian Woman" stickers, many of the above listed additional projects, and the list goes on and on. We have certainly accomplished so very much. A special thank you to Archbishop JOSEPH, our Founder, Bishop JOHN, our Spiritual Advisor, our clergy, who have served us, as Spiritual Advisors, and to our Diocesan Bishops.

During the course of the Archdiocese Convention General Assembly, held this past summer in Houston, TX, the many good works of this wonderful organization, were reported in various organizations reports. It left many of us with a great sense of accomplishment knowing that our hard work, over the past two years, did not go unnoticed.

Over the course of the next two years, I know in my heart we will once again be successful and many new and wonderful ideas will develop. For 2013-2014, our new project is to "Help the Orphans of the War in Syria". These beautiful children of God, who were true blessings to their parents are now left orphaned and homeless. I ask you to please open your hearts to the plight of these poor children, and help us raise the \$200, 000.00 asked of us by Metropolitan PHILIP.

May God bless you for all of your hard work and dedication to this wonderful Antiochian Women's Organization. I pray that the next two years will be as fruitful as the past two in your Chapters and Diocese, and **Happy 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!**

In Christ,

*Violet*



Mrs. Violet K. Robbat ❖ PRESIDENT of the North American Board  
15 Tufts Road, Lexington, Massachusetts 02421 - (h) 781-862-4388 - vmkrobbat@yahoo.com

❖ ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA ❖



## Introducing The 2013 - 2015 North American Board

### ***His Eminence the Most Reverend Metropolitan PHILIP - Founder***



Metropolitan PHILIP was born on June 10, 1931, in Abou Mizan, Lebanon, the fourth of five children to Elias and Saleema Saliba. After completing his primary education at the Shouier Elementary School, he entered the Balamand Orthodox Seminary, near Tripoli, Lebanon, at the age of fourteen. He subsequently attended and was graduated from the Orthodox Secondary School in Homs,

Syria, and the Assiyeh Orthodox College in Damascus, Syria.

Ordained to the holy diaconate in 1949, he was assigned to serve as secretary to His Beatitude, Alexander III (Tahan), the Patriarch of Antioch and all the East. In 1952, he was appointed lecturer in Arabic language and literature and student advisor at the Balamand Orthodox Seminary.

While a deacon, Metropolitan Philip was awarded a scholarship and invitation to undertake studies in Great Britain at the Kelham Theological School and the University of London. In 1956, he arrived in the United States and enrolled at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts. Assigned to a position at St. George Church in Detroit, Michigan, he entered Wayne State University from which he was graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1959.

On March 1, 1959, he was ordained to the holy priesthood by Metropolitan Antony (Bashir) and assigned to the pastorate at Saint George Church in Cleveland, Ohio. While serving in this capacity, he carried to completion the building of an educational and cultural center for the parish. He also served in many religious and civic posts while in Cleveland, among them the Eastern Orthodox Welfare Council, the Television and Radio Commission of the Cleveland Area Church Federation, and the Mayor's Civic Committee. He undertook graduate theological studies at Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in Crestwood, New York, and was graduated from that institution with a Master of Divinity degree in 1965.

In March of 1966, the Antiochian Archdiocese, meeting in special convention, nominated Philip Saliba to succeed the

late Metropolitan Antony (Bashir) as Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America. In July of that year, the Patriarchal Vicar for the widowed See of New York, Metropolitan Ilyas(Kurban), Archbishop of Tripoli, Lebanon, elevated Philip Saliba to the dignity of Archimandrite. He was elected for the See of New York by the Holy Synod of the Antiochian Patriarchate on August 5, 1966, and on August 14 was consecrated to the episcopacy by Patriarch Theodosios VI (Abourjaily) at the Monastery of the Prophet Elias in Dhour Shouier, Lebanon. Metropolitan Philip was enthroned at his Cathedral of Saint Nicholas in Brooklyn, New York, on October 13, 1966.

### ***The Most Reverend Archbishop JOSEPH - Hierarchical Overseer***



Joseph G. Al-Zehlaoui was born on November 2, 1950 in Damascus, Syria to Georgi and Mathil (Baghdan) Al Zehlaoui. He received his elementary education at the St. John of Damascus and Al Assiyeh schools in Damascus, and his secondary education at Our Lady of Balamand Monastery in Koura, Northern Lebanon. He then studied philosophy at

Lebanese University in Beirut and theology, languages and music at Salonika University in Greece. He is fluent in Arabic, English and Greek.

Joseph was ordained to the Holy Diaconate while a student in Salonica, in December, 1976. Subsequently, Deacon Joseph was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by His Beatitude, Patriarch IGNATIUS IV, at St. Mary Cathedral in Damascus in December, 1980. Father Joseph's election to the holy Episcopate was on May 5, 1991, and the consecration was on June 30, 1991 in the Holy Cathedral of the Patriarchate in Damascus with the title "Bishop of Katana, Syria". While a Deacon, he served parishes in Salonica. As a Priest, he was Dean of St. Mary Cathedral of Damascus, and overseer of the Holy Cross Church and other parishes in the suburbs of Damascus. In 1983, he pastored the Arab Orthodox faithful living in London, England, and in 1986 was sent to Cyprus to minister to the Arab Orthodox living on the island.

During his clerical ministry, he served as General Supervisor and Professor of Religious Education at the Al Assiyeh Orthodox College and supervised the Patriarchal headquarters in Damascus. Besides being the Patriarchal



Assistant during the previous several years, His Grace, Bishop JOSEPH served as the secretary to the Holy Synod of Antioch, Editor-in-Chief of the Patriarchal Bulletin and participated in several theological conferences in Greece, Texas and Australia.

At the request of His Eminence, Metropolitan PHILIP, His Grace was selected by the Holy Synod of Antioch on January 24, 1995, to be an Auxiliary Bishop for the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of N America.

On September 12, 2004, His Grace, Bishop JOSEPH, was enthroned as the first Bishop of the Holy Diocese of Los Angeles and the West by His Eminence, Metropolitan PHILIP, Primate, and the Local Holy Synod of the Holy Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of N America.

On December 11, 2011, His Grace, Bishop JOSEPH was elevated to the dignity of Archbishop by His Beatitude, IGNATIUS IV, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East at the Balamand Monastery in Northern Lebanon

### ***The Rt. Rev. Bishop JOHN - Spiritual Advisor***



Bishop John was born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts. From an early age, he had a desire to serve Christ through the holy priesthood and so, after college, he attended St. Vladimir's Seminary and earned a Masters of Divinity. (M.Div.) While in seminary, he married Joanne Josephs of Pawtucket, RI. He was ordained to the diaconate and priesthood shortly afterwards. Fr.

John and Kh. Joanne are the parents of three children, Gregory, Joseph, and Maria. On May 25, 2008, after a three year battle with cancer, Kh. Joanne reposed.

After his ordination, Fr. John served St. George Antiochian Church in Little Falls, New Jersey for one year, St. George Orthodox Church in New Kensington, Pennsylvania for sixteen years, and then S. George Cathedral in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania for seventeen years. Fr. John served as Dean of the Western PA Deanery from 1987 - 2011. For the last sixteen years, he has been the editor of The Word magazine. Bp. John has also served as spiritual advisor to the North American Board of the Antiochian Women and the North American Council of the Fellowship of St. John the Divine. He taught Antiochian seminarians at the annual Antiochian House of Studies and is the mentor to seminarians for the House of Studies program. He also has taught at the Graduate School for the St. John of Damascus Institute of Theology in Lebanon. Bishop JOHN was consecrated Bishop for the Diocese of New England in December of 2011.

### ***Violet Robbat - President***



I was born in Boston, MA and am a former member of St. John of Damascus Church, Dedham, MA, where I was active as a Sunday School teacher, Teen SOYO Advisor and President of Senior SOYO (known today as St. John the Divine). I graduated from Northeastern University with a Degree in Cytology, and became a member of the Massachusetts Society of Cytology and the American Society of Clinical Pathology. Cytology is the study of cells, and my job at Massachusetts General Hospital entailed diagnosing Cancer. In 1973, I married my husband Richard (39 years) and we are members of St. Mary Orthodox Church, Cambridge, MA. We have two wonderful children, Michael and Andrea, who is married to Steve Plasko, a terrific young man.

At St. Mary's, I am active in our Women's Club and as a Bible Bowl Coach, and have been a Sunday School Superintendent and Teen SOYO Advisor. I have been active in the Antiochian Women since its inception holding many positions on the Regional/Diocesan Level, including President, Vice President, Recording Secretary, Public Relations, Cultural Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator. On the NAB Level I have served as Public Relations, Recording Secretary, Treasurer, and Vice President. A very special thank you to all of you for re-electing me as your President for a second two-year term.

For the past seventeen years, I have worked with high school students who have learning disabilities, as a Special Education Instructional Assistant, and as a Teaching Assistant in Biology. I am a member of the Lexington Education Association, the Massachusetts Teachers Association, and the National Education Association. I enjoy reading, cooking, traveling, gardening, and embroidery, among many interests.

### ***Dianne O'Regan - Vice President/ NAB Project Coordinator***



I am a convert to Orthodoxy, having been raised in the Roman Catholic Church, and have attended St. Michael the Archangel Church in Louisville, Kentucky for over 16 years. I graduated with my Associate of Arts in Political Science from Bellarmine University, and my Bachelor of Arts (Summa Cum Laude) from the University of Louisville in Political Science with an emphasis in Soviet/Russian Studies. Having been employed as a Legal Assistant for over 30 years, I have worked in the criminal prosecution,

criminal defense, civil and corporate law fields. Since 1996, I have been employed at the law offices of Stites & Harbison. I also work on a part-time basis to index and copy edit academic books for national publishing houses.

On the local level, I serve as a church school teacher, choir member, and editor of the monthly newsletter, in addition to serving the local women's organization in various capacities. On the Diocesan level, I have held the offices of President, Recording Secretary, and Public Relations Coordinator, as well as currently holding the positions of Vice President, and Archivist/Historian. In the summer of 2009 at the Midwest Parish Life Conference, I was honored and blessed to be presented the Metropolitan PHILIP Award in recognition of outstanding leadership qualities and contributions to the diocese.

On the NAB level, I served as Recording Secretary from 2003-2007 and 2009-2011. I also served as NAB Religious Coordinator from 2007-2009. During that period, I compiled and edited "Orthodox Women Saints" for the Antiochian Archdiocesan website, which later was recreated into a CD-ROM entitled "Holy Women of the Orthodox Christian Church" in honor of the Antiochian Women's 35th anniversary. I also published religious programs every other month, entitled, "Sophia!," which were distributed throughout the Archdiocese.

#### ***Laila Ferris - Recording Secretary***



I have held several local, regional and NAB positions in the past, including President, Vice President and Recording Secretary on the local level; President, Vice President and Cultural Coordinator on the Regional level; and on the NAB level I have held the positions of Treasurer, Vice President and President.

Along with having a great time working in the above positions, I am married to Paul Ferris. We have three children - Paul, Jr. (PJ), Christopher and Lauren. I was born and bred in El-Paso, TX and absolutely love the desert life (no humidity). My home parish is St. George, El-Paso, TX, and with my family, am very active in all events and organizations. I work in the world of education and am presently Principal at Mesita Elementary School, El-Paso Independent School District. I truly love working with children and those adults dedicated to teaching and learning.



***Anne Bourjaily-Thomas***  
***Treasurer***  
No bio available

#### ***Lucy Hanna - Public Relations Director***



I was born in Cairo, Egypt and grew up in Alexandria where my family moved when I was one year old. I attended and graduated from the Sacred Heart School, a British Catholic school, except for my sophomore year of high school when I attended James Allen Girls' School in London, England where my father was a visiting professor at the University of London for one year.

I married Dr. Lotfy Hanna right after high school and we have three children: a son, Fr. Nabil, pastor of St. George Antiochian Church of Indianapolis, IN and two daughters, Suzy Hadeed and Mary Thompson. Both our daughters live in Portland, Oregon. All our children are married and between them, they gave us nine grandchildren.

In 1968 when our children were still small, we emigrated to the USA and settled in Portland, where we joined St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church. During the 19 years we lived in Portland, I was active in the Antiochian Women, taught Sunday School, chanted and sang in the choir, chaired the annual festival, and served on the parish council. In 1972, as soon as my youngest child started kindergarten, I went to college and studied fine arts. In 1976, I studied Real Estate, was licensed, and worked in that field (as salesperson and loan officer) for the next 30 years until I retired in 2006.

In 1986 we moved to California where we settled in Corona and attended St. Mark Church in Irvine. In 1989, I received a blessing from Metropolitan Philip to start a mission in the Riverside area. With the help of many of our wonderful clergy in Southern California and the dedication of a handful of families, our mission was established and in 1992 received the name St. Andrew Orthodox Church. This last December, 2011, our beautiful new temple was consecrated.

On the local level of the Antiochian Women, I have served as President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. On the Diocesan level, I have served as President, Vice President, Secretary, Religious Coordinator, Retreat Coordinator and Cultural Coordinator. On the NAB level I have served as PR Director and Religious Coordinator. I am currently the NAB PR Director again and publisher of this newsletter



#### ***Melissa Skocypec - Public Relations Co-Director***

I was born in Ludlow, Kentucky and was brought up in a Nazarene church. As an elementary school child, I greatly enjoyed the social part of church life as the captain of our bible quiz team, and I attended many services and other

functions with my family. When I was 11 we moved from small Kentucky town to Illinois, and my family did not find a new church. Religion was missing from my life. Ten years later, I was in college and met my husband-to-be, Randy, who is 100% Ukrainian and was raised his entire life in the Ukrainian Orthodox church. After spending time with Randy and his family, I knew that I wanted to convert to the Orthodox faith. We were married in a beautiful Orthodox wedding ceremony 18 years ago, and we have since baptized all three of our children into the Orthodox faith. I could not be happier with the spiritual direction my life has taken.

My husband, our three children, and I currently attend St. Ignatius of Antioch Antiochian Orthodox Church in Mesa, AZ. I have held the office of secretary of our women's group, and am currently in my third year as treasurer. I was asked to fill in for the office of Public Relations Director for my diocese last year when the elected PR director moved out of the diocese. I wasn't sure what I was doing but jumped in with both feet and learned quite a bit along the way. When Lucy Hanna asked me to be her Co-PR director for the NAB this year, I agreed. Sometimes I feel like I am not "qualified" for the job since I am a convert to Orthodoxy, but I have discovered that Orthodox women are amazing and welcoming, and anyone who is willing to contribute their time and talents are welcomed with open arms.

With three kids, ages, 6, 9, and 12, I spend a lot of my time being a room mom, dance mom, swim mom, girl scout leader, and chauffeur. My own personal interests include digital scrapbooking, taking Zumba classes, and vacationing with my family.

***Cindy Nimey - Immediate Past President, Parliamentarian and Scholarship***



My home parish is St. George Antiochian Church in New Hartford, New York. It is a small parish but one that I love with all my heart and do my best to support not only for my faith but for the parish. My membership in the Antiochian Women began in my home parish where I have served

numerous positions over the past thirty years, then to the Diocese level and onto the Nab level serving as treasurer, vice president and president. I have made many friends from as far as the northeast corner of Canada to the southern shores of California. As outgoing president I look forward to giving support to our newly elected president and all of the current officers. I encourage more women to get involved with their local Antiochian Women's group and benefit from the sisterhood and friendship.

My husband Richard and I have three sons, a daughter-in-law and our first grandchild, Amelia Rose. I am already

encouraging her to be an Antiochian Woman! I spend much of my spare time trying new recipes, cooking and baking for family and friends as well as many, many trays of Baklava for a church fundraiser.

We thank God every day for all the wonderful blessings he has bestowed on us and ask him to bless the work of the Antiochian Women.

***Kh. Dannie Moore - Humanitarian Coordinator***



To serve the Holy Church through the Antiochian Women organization is an honor. Through the love and guidance of Ernestine Ede, Jean Sam and Jean Arcos, I became involved in the work of the Antiochian Women in 1993.

My husband, Father Andrew, and I with our children and several other families were received into the Antiochian

Archdiocese by his Eminence, Metropolitan PHILIP, in 1987. That was the beginning of our parish, St. Stephen Orthodox Church. Before we entered the Antiochian Archdiocese, we were a part of the Evangelical Orthodox Church (EOC) and working in the inner city of Atlanta. Previous to being a part of the EOC, we were in the Presbyterian Church for 18 years. I grew up in the Methodist Church and Father in the Baptist.

Fr. Andrew and I have been married 50 years and have six children and fourteen grandchildren.

St. Stephen is located on 25 acres with some of our parishioners living on the land. We thank God for the beauty of the land and for having our own cemetery. We help serve the poor in our county by having a food pantry. Many single mothers and grandmothers raising grandchildren come for assistance. The food is provided by our parishioners. Many come and are blessed by the beauty of the Orthodox Church and the quietness of the land.

Having graduated from Crawford W. Long School of Nursing many years ago, I chose to stay home with my children. A cherished treasure in my heart! Now I help with these beautiful grandchildren.

Working with the Antiochian Women, I have served in the Diocese of Miami and the Southeast as Humanitarian Coordinator, Membership Coordinator, Vice-President and President. The last two years I have served as Humanitarian Coordinator for the North American Board, and am presently serving this second term. It is a joy to serve with the Antiochian Women!

*"One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." Psalm 27:4*



### ***Kh. Suzanne Murphy - Religious Coordinator***



Kh. Suzanne Murphy is the wife of Fr. Gregory-Lazarus Murphy. They serve as the clergy family of St. Michael's Parish in Geneva, which is in the Finger Lakes area of Upstate New York. Fr. Gregory says that Kh. Suzanne and he have a true "team ministry" at St. Michael's -- she is the director of the choir and the sole chanter of the parish,

so she is at every service, either chanting or leading the choir (or both). She also serves as his liaison with the Church School faculty, and with the Antiochian Women. She also looks forward to accompanying Father when he visits the elderly and homebound, especially when he brings the Holy Mysteries, as he values her help in singing the service with him.

In the secular world, Kh. Suzanne also has a full-time job as an elementary music teacher in the Geneva Public Schools. She also teaches in the Academic Intervention/Reading Recovery Program of the Geneva school system, where she helps "at risk" children to keep pace with grade-level reading. When they lived in the Boston area before coming to Geneva, Suzanne was named a "Teacher of Distinction" as one of the faculty members of a "National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence." She was also named as one of the "40 Outstanding Teachers in the Arts" by the Boston Symphony Orchestra Education Outreach Committee and the Massachusetts State Department of Education's Massachusetts Cultural Council. Since moving to Geneva, Suzanne has also been an Adjunct Faculty member in the Music Department of Hobart & William Smith Colleges, where she teaches voice. Additionally, she is a faculty member of the St. Peter's Arts Academy, which is a private arts school serving the greater Finger Lakes area. Last summer, Suzanne was invited to teach at the Sacred Music Institute at the Antiochian Village. Suzanne also sings in local and regional ensembles, including the Hobart and William Smith Colleges Chorale, the Syracuse Vocal Ensemble, and as the alto soloist in several productions sponsored by The American Landmarks Concerts Series. Suzanne has also been grateful to be a long-time member of the Boston Byzantine Choir.

Kh. Suzanne and Fr. Gregory have been blessed with four children: David, Aaron, Adam, and Moriah, all of whom are now in college or graduate school. In her spare time (whenever she can find any), Suzanne loves to knit and make handmade gifts for her family and friends. She feels blessed to be able to serve as the NAB Membership Coordinator, and as the Vice-President for the Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada, and Upstate New York.

### ***MaryLou Catelli - Membership Coordinator***



My name is Mary Lou Josephs Catelli and I am a lifelong member of St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church of Pawtucket, RI. I have been married to Bill Catelli for 39 years. I am the eldest of 4 children, my siblings being Joanne Abdalah (Memory Eternal), Lois Kilsey, and Leon Josephs. I am the proud aunt of 10 nieces and nephews.

I graduated from Rhode Island College in 1970 with a B.S. in Education and from Providence College in 1976 with a M. ED. I had the pleasure of pursuing a fulfilling career as a Special Education Teacher for 35 years retiring in 2005. Presently I teach in the Graduate School of Providence College, fulfilling another lifelong dream. My introduction to Antiochian Women came from my mother, Matilda Tahmoush Josephs, who followed her mother, Jameela Samra Tahmoush, a founding member of "The Ladies' Society" in the early 1920's. My involvement in the church community includes singing in the choir, member of St. Ignatius, member of Antiochian Women, and epistle reader. I have been a Sunday School teacher, superintendent, member of the Charitable Giving committee, and choir director. I am a member of the Education Committee of Theophany School, Quota International, Women's Auxiliary of Memorial Hospital, Lincoln Garden Club, and Council for Exceptional Children.

My involvement with Antiochian Women at the Diocese level was prompted by my sister, Joanne, when she was President of her local church group. I began as the Diocese Humanitarian Coordinator and when Joanne became the National President she appointed me as her Humanitarian Coordinator. I presently co-chair the Religious Coordinator position with Kh. Erin Kimmett. Antiochian Women is a rewarding ministry of the Antiochian Orthodox Church and I encourage all women to join us since we all can claim "I Am An Antiochian Woman."

### ***Sherry Abraham Morrow—Finance***



I belong to St. George Cathedral in Wichita, KS. I have held several positions for the Antiochian Women throughout the years. I served as President, Vice President, and Secretary of the St. George Cathedral Guild. In the Southwest Region (now the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America), I served as Vice President, President for two terms, Treasurer for two terms, and Secretary. I am currently the DOWAMA Special Projects Coordinator. On the North American Board, I have served as Secretary, Humanitarian for two terms, Treasurer for three terms, and am currently serving as Finance Coordinator.

In addition to my church activities, I am also a member of the Bona Dea Club, a ladies' social club in Wichita, and have served as President, Vice President, and Secretary of that group. I am currently the Corresponding Secretary. I also volunteer at Music Theatre of Wichita and am a member of the Music Theatre Guild. I have served as Assistant Treasurer and Treasurer on the Music Theatre Guild Board, and am currently Chairman of the Social Committee.

I was born and raised in Woodward, OK. I graduated from Oklahoma State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education. Shortly after I graduated from OSU, I married Don Abraham and moved to Wichita. We had two beautiful daughters. Don and I owned and operated Ali Baba Bakery for 19 years. We specialized in pita bread, but eventually made over 100 different varieties of breads. I worked full time at the bakery with Don until he was diagnosed with cancer in 1994. At that time, we sold the bakery. We also worked on the weekends with Don's family in their steak house for many years. Don passed away February 28, 1995.

In November, 2003, I married Mark Morrow. Mark belongs to St. Elijah Church in Oklahoma City, OK. His late wife, Susu, was also a very active member of the Antiochian Women, and served as NAB President. Our wonderful blended family consists of two sons, three daughters, two son-in-laws, two daughter-in-laws, five beautiful granddaughters, and two adorable grandsons. We are looking forward to the arrival of our eighth grandbaby in March, 2012. Mark and I maintained both of our homes when we got married, and we split our time between Wichita and Oklahoma City. So I have now become active at St. Elijah Church, as well as St. George Cathedral.

I have enjoyed serving the Antiochian Women very much, and feel very blessed to be a part of this wonderful organization. I will always cherish the many friends I have made throughout the Antiochian Archdiocese.

#### ***Deana Bottei - Clergy Widows Program***



As a resident of Sioux City, Iowa, I am blessed and grateful to be a part of the DOWAMA region. My amazing husband Edward – who I met at church -- supports me and keeps me sane through all of my involvements. For the past six years I have worked full-time as the school secretary at a local middle school.

I am a lifelong member of St. Thomas Orthodox Church in Sioux City, where I currently serve as our Sunday School superintendent as well as the teacher of our first and second grade classroom. My church involvement further includes being a member of our choir for the past 20 years,

the director of our choir for the past two years, and a member of our Antiochian Women's group for the past 11 years. My commitment to the DOWAMA region began four years ago when I took on the position of Public Relations Coordinator. Two years later I was elected to serve as the President of our great region. This past June I was reelected to one more term. At the Archdiocesan Convention in July I volunteered to serve as the Widowed Clergy Wives coordinator, sharing the position with Jamie Isaac of El Paso, Texas. Serving the church is one of my greatest passions.

I am mom to a beautiful eight-year-old daughter, Sadie, who is one of my other great passions. She is in third grade this year and has boundless energy. Sadie keeps me on my toes, as she is active and curious. Sadie is a Girl Scout Brownie and I serve as her troop leader. She also takes violin lessons (taking after mom!) and is really enjoying learning the instrument.

In the little spare time that I have, I love to read, do crossword puzzles, sing and play my violin. We enjoy to travel as a family and experience new adventures. During the summer we spend lots of time outside, riding our bikes and swimming in our pool. When the cold Iowa winter takes its toll we spend our time indoors, cuddled up watching a good movie, playing with our two puppies, or having a family game night.

#### ***Jamie Isaac - Clergy Widows Program***



I was born in Birmingham, Alabama. At age 3, my father passed away unexpectedly, leaving my mom to raise me and my sister, age 1. We then moved to and grew up in El Paso, Texas as faithful parishioners of St. George. I grew up in an Orthodox Christian environment while attending the University of Texas at El Paso.

I received a BS in Education with a minor in Math, after which I began teaching high school. After teaching mathematics for 26 years, I taught 10 years at the University of Texas at EP, and received my MAT at the same time, by the Grace of God. I went on to teach at the El Paso Community College, where I co-host a "Tune-In-4 -Help" live algebra tutoring show where students can call in and ask questions and get help.

I have been involved in all our church ministries, from serving as various offices in Sr. SOYO (as it was called at that time), Sunday school superintendent and teacher, I assisted with past Parish Life Conferences, served on the Parish Council, one term as treasurer, and presently serve as chair of the local Order of St. Ignatius, and member of the Parish Council and Choir. I have been an active member of the Antiochian women of our parish for many



years, and have held many offices, presently the Religious Coordinator.

On the diocesan level, I am currently the Humanitarian Coordinator for DOWAMA and Vice Chair of the Order of St. Ignatius. On the NAB level I have served as Religious Coordinator and presently serve as Co-Chair for Widowed Clergy Wives.

We drove many vans of teens to the Parish Life Conferences and have attended many of the Parish Life Conferences and Archdiocese Conventions with my three

children, James, Joseph and Tiffany who were raised in the Church, and have spent many summers at Camp at the Antiochian Village. I have 5 grandchildren ranging from 2 to 10 years old.

It has been and is an honor and great blessing to serve and to get to know and to work with the women from the different dioceses. I am truly thankful for the small way that I can serve God through serving others.

End of Bios!



### North American Board Officers

Laila Ferris, Anne Bourjaily-Thomas, His Grace Bishop John, Violet Robbat, Lucy Hanna, Dianne O'Regan

(several officers not pictured due to early flights from Houston convention)



### **SAVE THE DATES FOR THE MID-WINTER MEETINGS**

**February 7 - 9, 2014**

With Metropolitan PHILIP's blessing, the Mid-Winter Meetings are set for February 7 - 9, 2014 and will be hosted by St. George Church of Phoenix, Arizona. Stay tuned for more information on hotel reservations, etc. will be in the next issue of DIAKONIA and will also be communicated through email and on the Archdiocese and Diocesan websites.



# Feasts of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross

In the Orthodox Liturgical Calendar, there are several different Feasts of the Cross, all of which commemorate the cross used in the crucifixion of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. While Great Friday of Holy Week is dedicated to the Passion of Christ and His Crucifixion, the other feast days celebrate the cross itself as the instrument of salvation.

## **September 14**

This feast is called the “Exaltation of the Holy Cross”. The True Cross was discovered in 326 by Saint Helena, the mother of the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great, during a pilgrimage she made to Jerusalem. Relying upon the oral tradition of the faithful, Saint Helen found the precious Cross together with the crosses of the two thieves crucified with the Lord. However, Helen had no way of determining which was the Cross of Christ. With the healing of a dying woman who touched one of the crosses, Patriarch Macarius of Jerusalem identified the True Cross of Christ. Saint Helen and her court venerated the Cross along with many others who came to see this great instrument of Redemption. The Patriarch mounted the pulpit and lifted the Cross with both hands so that all of the people gathered could see it.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre was then built at the site of the discovery, by order of Helena and Constantine. The church was dedicated nine years later, with a portion of the cross placed inside it. Other legends explain that in 614, that portion of the cross was carried away from the church by the Persians, and remained missing until it was recaptured by the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius in 628. Initially taken to Constantinople, the cross was returned to the church the following year.

The date of the feast marks the consecration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in 335. This was a two-day festival. Although the actual consecration of the church was on September 13, the cross itself was brought outside the church on September 14 so that the clergy and faithful could pray before the True Cross, and all could come forward to venerate it.

In Byzantine liturgical observance, the Universal Exaltation of the Precious and Life-giving Cross commemorates both the finding of the True Cross in 326 and its recovery from the Persians in 628, and is one of the Twelve Great Feasts of the church year. September 14 is always a fast day and the eating of meat, fish, dairy products is prohibited. The Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross has a one-day Forefeast and an eight-day Afterfeast. The Saturday and Sunday before and after September 14 are also commemorated with

special Epistle and Gospel readings about the Cross at the Divine Liturgy.

At Vespers on the eve of the feast, the cross is placed on a tray that has been covered an Aër (liturgical veil) and decorated with fresh basil leaves and flowers with a candle burning before it, and the priest carries it on his head to the Holy Table (altar) where it is laid in the place of the Gospel Book, which is set at the high place. Those portions of the vespers and matins which in some customs take place before the icon of the Feast, instead take place in the front of the Holy Table. The bringing out of the cross and the exaltation ceremony occur at matins.

The cross remains in the center of the temple throughout the afterfeast, and the faithful venerate it whenever they enter or leave the church. Finally, on the leave-taking of the feast, the priest and deacon will cense around the cross, there will be a final veneration of the cross, and then they will solemnly bring the cross back into the sanctuary through the Holy Doors. This same pattern of bringing out the cross, veneration, and returning the cross at the end of the celebration is repeated at a number of the lesser Feasts of the Cross.

## **March 6**

While the September 14 feast is determined by the Consecration of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, this lesser feast commemorates the actual Finding of the Precious Cross and the Precious Nails by Empress Saint Helen. This feast does not have any of the liturgical peculiarities of the September 14 feast.

## **Third Sunday of Great Lent**

The Eastern Orthodox Christians celebrate an additional Veneration of the Cross on the third Sunday of Great Lent. The services for this day are modeled on the Feast of the Exaltation (September 14), including bringing the cross out into the center of the church and its veneration by the faithful. It remains in the center of the church until Friday of the week following week.

In addition to the above commemorations, Orthodox Christians also hold Wednesday and Friday throughout the year as commemorations of the Cross.





ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

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