

DIAKONIA

40 YEARS of SERVICE
1973 - 2013



Winter 2013/2014



The Ladies Society of St. James Antiochian Orthodox Church in Poughkeepsie, NY, hosted an introduction party at their new church Banquet Hall on Saturday, September 28, 2013.

It was an afternoon filled with food, music and many new friends.

In attendance were ladies from St. Nicholas Church in Bridgeport, CT, St. George Church in Danbury, CT, St. George Church in Little Falls, NJ, St. Mary Church in Brooklyn, NY, St. John the Baptist Church in Levittown, NY, and Virgin Mary Church in Yonkers, NY.

On behalf of the entire diocese I would like to thank the Ladies Society of St. James and their wonderful priest Very Reverend Father Hisham Nimri for hosting such a wonderful event and giving us the opportunity to meet each other. I hope that this becomes a tradition for the diocese and that we get to meet more ladies from surrounding churches in the future.

Fadia Juzdan, Diocesan President

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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The Most Reverend
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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.

In this issue of the DIAKONIA we highlight the

**Diocese of New York and the Archdiocesan District,
and the Diocese of Charleston, Oakland,
and the Mid-Atlantic**

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.

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

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October 23, 2013

Beloved Antiochian Women:

It gives me great pleasure to see the wonderful work that the Antiochian Women of our archdiocese continue to do. Since I established this organization of our archdiocese in 1973, I continue to be amazed at the love and support they show for each other and for those in need. Throughout the years, the Antiochian Woman have raised countless amounts of money for various charitable projects to help both those within our archdiocese and people all over the world. In 2014, we have a very special project, that of helping the orphans of the war in Syria. We often see the damage to buildings and structures in wars; however, the devastation of families and human lives is even greater. We must do what we can to help! I have set a goal of \$200,000 which I pray through your efforts, we will attain in 2014.

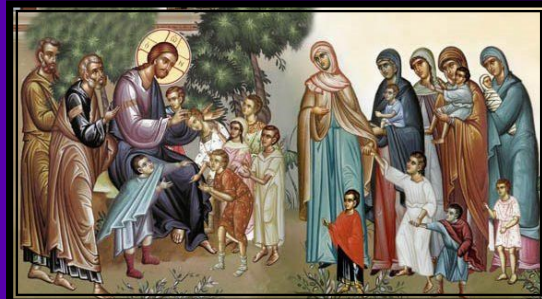
Keeping in mind that this wonderful organization of our archdiocese is first and foremost a grass-roots organization, I pray that our ladies in the parishes will continue to inspire new generations of workers, teachers, chanters, and choir members on the local level. From my earliest days as a deacon in Detroit and later as a priest in Cleveland, it was always the ladies who made sure everything was taken care of properly in the Church and that the needs of the children were being met. I know in most parishes, that is still the case. You are indeed the back-bone of our parishes. May your efforts be crowned with every success!

Your Father in Christ,


+Metropolitan PHILIP

Archbishop of New York and

Metropolitan of all North America



Let the children come to Me, ...for of such
is the kingdom of heaven." Matt. 19:14

"...the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch." ACTS 11:26



His Eminence, Archbishop JOSEPH's Nativity Message

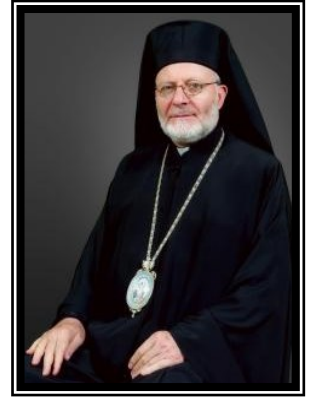
The season of preparation for the great feast of the Nativity of our Lord is upon us. The annual commemoration of the birth of the Messiah resonates far and wide in our world. It is arguably the most well-known and endearing of all the Christian feasts, even among non-Christians, for many of them also observe it with deeply-felt customs such as exchange of gifts, decorating the home, and so on. We Christians are aware of the more negative aspects of this secular celebration, as it centers around commercialism and heightened social gatherings at work and in the neighborhood, often expressing only worldly values. We who seek to live a spiritual way of life can sometimes adopt a cynical and negative outlook on all this commercialism; however, it may do us some good to realize that the world in its ignorance is still attempting, somehow, to recognize something profound. But we Orthodox Christians, all the more because of the Grace of participation in the Mystery of our Faith, grasp the great significance of this time of year and how to prepare for it. For this reason, let us now underscore a few elements needful for our remembrance and practice.

Early on, we Christians understood the need for a season of preparation in order to celebrate Nativity, “Christ-mass” (the Divine Liturgy on December 25, Christ’s birth). This festival is the third greatest in the whole year; following Pascha, the resurrection of Christ from the dead, and Epiphany, the manifestation of Christ as Son of God—both of these feasts stem from the very beginning of the Church in apostolic times—Nativity dates from the era of Constantine the Great and is the premier feast commemorating the first element of Epiphany from which it was derived; namely, the birth of the God-man, Jesus Christ, with the cooperation of His all-pure Mother, our Lady the Theotokos and ever-Virgin Mary.

So how do we prepare properly to “keep the feast”? What practices and thoughts ought we to engage in toward this holy purpose, in order to find and retain “the peace which passeth all understanding,” and being “rooted and built up in Christ and established in the faith”?

Similar to Great Lent, the very first of the fasting periods and most ancient forty-day preparation for Pascha, we have a forty-day preparation for Nativity. We call this the “Nativity Fast”: penitential, humble, quiet, but also joyous and expectant. The Nativity Fast, as such, is a period of intensified spiritual watchfulness and awareness, but unlike Great Lent, the Nativity Fast is not strictly penitential. Indeed, unlike the period during which Great Lent falls (late February, March, and into April), the period of the Nativity Fast (always exactly November 15 through December 24) sees many great saint’s day festivals. The presence of these many saint’s days lends an awareness of a growing joy and radiance, even well before Nativity arrives on Christmas Eve. In Great Lent there are only one or two festal days, whose observance is greatly muted, but for Nativity Fast, we can mention Ss Catherine, Andrew, Nicholas, Spyridon, and Ignatius of Antioch, for example. Most of these are observed in a heightened festal manner in church, and we ought to participate in these services, since from one saint to the next, as we draw ever closer to the Nativity itself, more and more psalms and hymns about the Nativity are added to the services. This growing joy is evident to the feast-lovers! A beautiful example of this is how on the feast of the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple (Nov 21), we begin to chant the special set of hymns, “Christ is born, give glory!” Why do we chant this so early, fully five weeks before December 25? Precisely due to the interest of expectation! The Church encourages Her faithful children to take a share in the ever-growing joy.

Now, these forty days extending from November 15 through December 24 do constitute a fast. During any fast, the Church urges us to cleanse our hearts from sin, evil, egotism, and worldliness and to turn to the Lord. During this season, we faithful go to confess our sins and receive blessed absolution. We intensify



our church attendance and double our charitable endeavors. Spiritual reading is often a wonderful way to heighten our readiness. In the absence of this, we often fall prey to bad thoughts and our faith remains weak and ineffectual. So let us spend the forty days reading an extended life of a saint, such as St Nicholas or St. Spyridon, or a profound homily or theological writing (such as “On the Incarnation” by St. Athanasius). When we go shopping to purchase festal gifts for our loved ones, let us add a gift or two for the poor and those who are in special need. The church can provide you with ideas: talk to your priest, your fellow-communicants, and keep your eyes open to the many opportunities for charity that present themselves.

The fast is enjoined upon us as well, although it is a lighter fast consonant with this season of growing joy: we keep it strictly lenten on Wednesdays and Fridays as throughout the year, and allow for fish, wine, and oil on all the other days. Some, imitating the monastics, like to keep Monday lenten as well. Only the last five days, the “Forefeast of Nativity,” (December 20-24) are kept just like on Great Lent. As with any fasting, personal abstinence

from the pleasures of eating are transmuted into the charitable act of sharing our substance with the poor, as taught by the prophets of old. Also, fasting gives wings to our prayer and gives us a share in the angelic life. In sum, we spend increased attention on giving to charitable causes and involving ourselves in charitable endeavors, works of mercy, in an expression of our faith in the God “Who shone out of the darkness with the Light of life.”

Let me close this exhortation with the beautiful words from one of our hymns which we hear chanted in church during this Nativity Fast:

“Dance, O Isaiah; receive the Word of God; prophesy to the Maiden Mary that the bush will burn with the fire of the splendor of the Godhead yet will not be consumed.

Make ready, O Bethlehem; open thy gate, O Eden; proceed on your journey, O Magi, that ye may behold our Salvation swaddled in a manger. Above the cave, the star proclaimed Him Who is the Life-bestowing Lord, Who saveth our race!”





SANCTIFIED SCHOOLING: WORKING OUT SALVATION WITHIN EDUCATION

By The Right Rev. Bishop Thomas (Joseph), Ed.D

The Orthodox Christian faith is growing on our continent and, with it, awareness of the challenge of raising and educating our children in a way that is shaped by that faith. On many occasions I have been asked my opinion, as both a hierarch and as an educator, as to my preferred educational option, whether parents ought to favor public schools, private schools, homeschooling or some other approach.

It has become clear to me, though, that there can be no "one size fits all" approach; each circumstance requires careful and prayerful consideration and exploration of options. Parents must decide based on their particular situation what will be the best preparation for the Kingdom of Heaven for their children, how their children's schooling can be not only educational, but sanctifying. "Sanctified Schooling," as I've come to call it, means finding the best educational fit for students and their families to grow in sanctity as they grow physically, intellectually and emotionally. Whichever educational option that parents select, they need to be diligent in attending closely to their children's development and ensuring that it is shaping them into servants of God. Below, I will discuss different potential models for "Sanctified Schooling." Because it is perhaps the least well known model, I'll give particular attention to homeschooling in order to highlight some excellent developments and to dispel some popular illusions. As we proceed to explore these options, please keep in mind that, as St. John Chrysostom wisely remarked so long ago, the education of children is the holiest of tasks.

It is one of the great blessings of our country to have a developed and well funded public school system. As political entities, however, our public schools vary greatly (in intent, focus, ideology, and depth of secularization) from place to place. Many cities and states are so secular that parents are harassed and threatened about missing schooling for religious purposes. (We even had one priest who was threatened with jail time for asking for his children to be excused to attend festal church services.) In other parts of the country, however, school boards are so supportive of Christianity that they forbid assigning homework on Wednesday nights since the majority of local children attend Bible studies that night.

If public schooling is selected as the best option for a

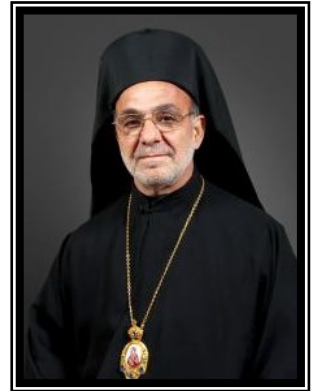
family, it is important that the parents work hard to keep communication open with their children, especially, but also with teachers, administration and the school board, and that they analyze what is being taught to their children, what the learning environment is like, and whether these things are conducive to their children's

salvation. We cannot simply hand our children over to public schools, even in the best and most Christ-honoring communities in our country.

In cases where public schooling is deemed detrimental to the spiritual development of the child, perhaps a private school might be the best option. This, again, must be evaluated on a case by case basis. Some private schools may be too expensive, too socially elite, or even more secular than the public schools. While an excellent education in terms of academic preparation will open many vocational doors, we must be careful that our children's hearts aren't shut to the Gospel. Again, even the best situation needs the constant attention of a God-loving parent.

Parish schools can be an ideal option for many families. I am thankful that there are about 80 Orthodox parish schools in our country at this point in time. Despite this growth, however, most parishes do not have a school and this option is unavailable to most Orthodox Christian faithful on our continent. Of those parishes that have schools, however, some of them have little more than an institutional association with the parish, but no real commitment to fostering Orthodox Christian identity in the students. Wearing an "Orthodox" label does not mean that the school is actually helping the students work out their salvation. Catholic and Protestant schools, perhaps attached to churches of those confessions, have been beneficial to many Orthodox families; while we share much in common with them, again we must be monitoring the education carefully and be in constant discussion with our children.

Homeschooling is an option that more families are turning to—it is estimated that roughly 4% of all



children in America are being homeschooled, more than 2 million students. This choice is often due to financial and geographical constraints but also because it allows families to shape the education of their children. While this has been criticized in the past as stifling social development, that isolation is largely a thing of the past as homeschooling has blossomed to a prominent educational option. Far from isolating children or stifling their social development or education, it is actually known that homeschooled children are more likely than others to be involved in community service (71% vs. 37%), more likely to continue on to college (74% vs. 49%), more likely to understand government and politics (96% vs. 65%) and more likely to have read a book in the last six months (99% vs. 69%). There may be some families who are isolating their children by homeschooling them, but that is by no means the norm.

Because of its rapid growth, homeschooling has been noticed and supported in our society, even in government. Thirty-two US states and the District of Columbia sponsor a "cyber" charter school to assist homeschooling families. This relieves the parents of the burden of selecting and purchasing materials. In one state in which I traveled recently, I noticed many advertisements for these cyber schools.

There are excellent online schools and educational facilities that are available for parents to use. One of these is the Classical Learning Resource Center, which is run by an Orthodox Christian and has been offering courses according to classical methods for about a decade with excellent reviews.

Another of these, explicitly Orthodox, is the newly launched St. Raphael Orthodox Online Homeschool. Under the guidance of a priest in the diocese I serve, Dr. James Taylor has employed his great love of the Orthodox Church with his technical expertise, as well as a life time of education, to create a rewarding, affordable, and challenging option for stepping up the academics of the homeschooling family. If you are comfortable with the Internet and serious about the development of your child's reading, writing, and discussion skills, I recommend you look into this new online school. This program could actually be useful as a supplement to any family, even non-homeschooling families.

Another example of the flowering of homeschooling is the emergence of co-operative educational groups ("co-ops"). Most homeschooling families are involved in at least one co-op, many of which operate in a classroom



setting weekly or monthly. One homeschooling family in my diocese is involved in a co-op that provides a one day per week traditional school setting with a focus on history, the Bible, and public speaking according to a well-formulated national standard. This has been a good option for them in keeping educational autonomy but also exposing their children to multiple social settings.

Another of these co-ops is sponsored by one of the parishes in my diocese, St. Philip Church in Souderton, Pennsylvania. St. Justin Academy, the parish co-op, has been successfully functioning for about five years now. Each year has seen a different focus—service projects, art and science, catechesis, field trips, etc.—but it has always succeeded in keeping homeschooling families connected to the life of the Church. This has been an evangelical tool, as well, as some non-Orthodox Christians have been favorably introduced to the parish through association with the co-op.

Another parish in my diocese is exploring using their church Sunday School rooms as a center for homeschool-style education. Parents will bring their children to the church for an educational regime that they have prepared themselves. Some may use cyber-school materials, privately purchased curricula, or an eclectic gathering of resources, but they will come together to learn alongside each other. This parish is considering employing a "music studio" style of directly hiring tutors. This is appealing to the parish community that wants to be a hub for homeschooling because there is less administrative and financial overhead than would be required for a conventional parochial school.

To me, an ideal situation might be somewhat like that one, in which schooling is centered in the church building, with daily church services, common meals, and a flexible educational model that may have some things in common with homeschooling and perhaps some in common with a classroom-style approach. The essential ingredient is that educational life be centered in the life of the Church.

Finally, it should be known homeschooling has grown beyond the stereotype of isolation that many have in mind, even specifically among Orthodox families. (As an example, of the 27 children who went to Antiochian Village this past summer from one parish in my diocese, nearly one third of those children are homeschooled.) To that end, we recently conducted a survey of Orthodox Christian homeschooling families, measuring how they participated in church life.

As you will see, the results of this survey very strongly indicate that homeschoolers aren't isolated but, rather, are engaged in our camping programs, parish-based co-ops, community-based co-ops, and social, athletic, and service activities. I'd like to bring to everyone's attention a few of the most encouraging data points: Of the 249 families that responded to the survey, 90% have their children engaged in "the life of the church" (in addition to attending church services) and 66% send their children to camp or plan to do so when they are old enough. There is also a very impressive list of activities that homeschooled children are involved in outside of

the home.

I've discussed homeschooling here at more depth not because I think it is the best fit for every family, but because I wanted to dispel some old caricatures and prejudices that are no longer a reality and celebrate the fact that these children are active in the church and community, and by many indications, they are more active than many of their peers.

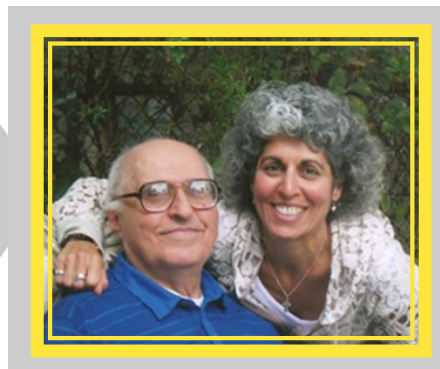
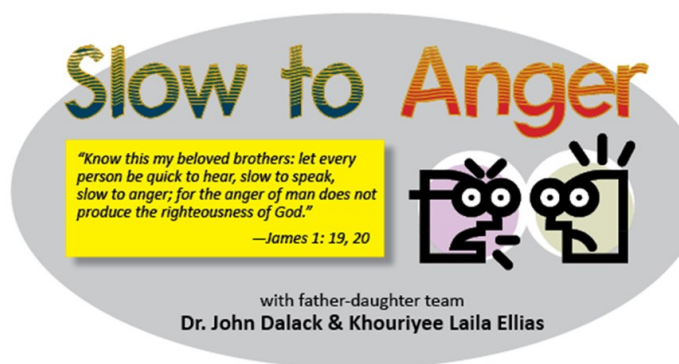
Whether we are educating our children ourselves, sending them to public or private or parochial schools, or fashioning a hybrid of these, let us keep foremost in our mind that we must take seriously this most holy task of preparing our children for life in the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever your circumstances demand, I strongly encourage you to make the schooling of our children not just academic but primarily sanctified.

This article was written with contributions from the Rev. Fr. Noah F. Bushelli and the Rev. Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick.

Lenten Retreat 2014

March 21st to 23rd

Antiochian Village



Featured Speakers

Dr. John Dalack

and daughter

Kh. Laila Ellias

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN OF THE EAST LENTEN RETREAT

John Dalack is a well-known and respected clinical psychologist on Staten Island, New York. His distinguished career includes 25 years of service to the Staten Island Mental Health Society, nearly two decades in private practice and a regular column in the Life Style Section of the *Staten Island Advance* entitled *Straight Talk on Parenting*. He is Co-Chairman of the Antiochian Archdiocese Department of Lay Ministries since 1980, giving lectures, workshops, retreats and *Enliven to Christ Seminars* across the country. John also has served as Adjunct Field Supervisor and Lecturer at St. Vladimir Orthodox Theological Seminary. He devotes his life to serving his Church. He is a member of St. Mary Antiochian Church, Bay Ridge Brooklyn. He is also served as a member of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees since 1970.

Laila is the wife of the V. Rev. Michael Ellias. She has worked as a licensed speech/language pathologist since 1984, serving adults and children in a variety of settings: clinic, hospital and school. She currently works for the NYC Department of Education as a Speech Coach, providing professional staff development and training to speech therapists, classroom teachers and other school staff in working with the most severely developmentally challenged students throughout the 5 boroughs of New York. She has taught Church School to each of the parishes to which Fr. Michael was assigned, St. Elias, Sylvania, OH, St. George, West Roxbury, MA, and St. Mary, Brooklyn, NY.



The Church at Home

They say that when our children go off to college, the Church loses them until they get married and have children of their own. Then and only then they might return to the Church. While this is correct, we do have tools in our arsenal to deal with this problem to a great extent. It starts early on in the life of children. There needs to be cooperation between the parish and the home. We need to build from the ground up!

According to St. John Chrysostom, the home is “the little church” where Christian education starts and ends. The church is a reinforcement for the Christian education received at home. It does not replace it but augments it, since most families including children go to church once a week only, on Sundays. At most, children hear the message of God mainly in Sunday School once a week and they hear the opposite message from society and their peers a million times a week, no exaggeration, as they listen to their iPods, watch movies, speak on their personal phones, text, read billboards, access the Internet on their personal computers and other devices, use Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and so on.

Some say that the mother’s role in the family and in the parish is secondary since God created her as an “afterthought” when He took a rib from Adam. In other words, God created Adam and then thought he needs a helpmeet so He created Eve not from scratch as He did with Adam, but from Adam’s rib. Therefore, women can have a role in the family and in the parish, but it is secondary. It would seem to be true if one reads the account of creation carelessly! However, things are not always what they seem to be. To illustrate this point, I would like to share with you a little story that I have read:

Once there was a man, who went to the doctor due to some problem. He tells the doctor that his wife is getting deaf. The doctor says, I do not have a treatment right now for this problem, I can suggest something to you through which you can know her level of deafness then we can start treatment."The doctor says, "Go home and try calling your wife from 30 feet away and then go a little closer and then call her again and go little further and repeat the same. Do this in order to know her level of deafness". The man says, Ok doctor, I will try this out"and left. The man

goes home. He tells his wife, Honey what's for dinner?" He does not get any reply. He goes a little closer and asks the same. He does this ten times and he almost speaks directly into her ear.

On the last try, his wife answers and says, "for the 10th time, today is a special dinner for you."It means it was not his wife who was deaf but he himself.



We need to explore deeply why God created Eve. The concept of personhood in the Orthodox Church versus the idea of an individual in the world is what explicates the mystery. A person, by definition, is known through his/her personal relationships with others and an individual, by definition, is known through seclusion. In the Orthodox Church, we characterize the Holy Trinity as Three Persons, par excelance, since they are known through Their relationships with each other. Therefore, it was impossible that God planned to create Adam alone and then created Eve as an afterthought. If it were so, then God was planning to create an individual and not a person, which contradicts His image in us. Hence, it could not be true. A concrete way of elucidating God’s image in us is unity in diversity. According to the Creed, the Three Persons of the Trinity have the same substance, that is to say the Son is begotten from the Father and the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father: all Three have the same substance, which is unity. At the same time, the Trinity is Three Persons and that is diversity. This image is reflected in humans - that is to say Adam and Eve were created of the same substance while being two distinct persons.

Having said this, God could not have created Adam without Eve since it breaks the imagery and makes Adam an individual, not a person. Given this fact, the woman is an integral part of God’s creation of humanity. Hence, the cooperation between the husband and the wife in the context of the family is essential and it is what creates “the little church” in the home. Moreover, the wife is the backbone of the family since she is the one who is more equipped for the task of raising children in the family than the husband. This innate ability to comfort, to nurture, to teach, and to be a

resource to a child is unique to the mother, in most cases. It is noteworthy that, in general, the mother spends more time with the children than the father. Children, being impressionable especially in the first five years of their lives, receive invaluable education not only through the direct teachings from the mother, but also through her actions, behavior, and words. Children absorb like sponges the parents' guidance and especially the mother's influence on them even if it is not directly apparent at first.

Several characteristics must exist in "the little church" in order for it to be truly the little church, of which this article discusses the top four. It starts with the parents! The first requirement is that the husband loves his wife and the wife respects her husband. The husband loving his wife and the wife respecting her husband should take place on a daily basis. These are the most fundamental two needs of a husband and a wife. Without them, a marriage becomes rocky and the children will sense it, take it in, and act it out in the future. Intrinsically and by enlarge, men are task oriented, achievement oriented, and are interested in the end-result more than the journey of accomplishing a task. Inherently and generally, women have a relational orientation and are concerned with the journey more than the end result. That is not to say that the journey is not interesting to men and the end result is not important to women! Knowing these facts by men and women play a great deal in fulfilling the aforementioned respect and love factors. Ontologically speaking, the Church in her infinite wisdom was the first and has been the most important family psychotherapy teacher. For this reason, families ought to seek their priest's council should issues arise, or for general guidance.

The second characteristic is that there should be structure in the household as there is in the Holy Trinity. Jesus said to His Disciples:

*"But the Comforter, which is the Holy Spirit, **whom the Father will send** in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you." (John 14:26)*

He also said to His followers:

*But when the Helper comes, **whom I shall send to you from the Father**, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me." (John 15:26)*

Notice that in both of the quotes above, the Holy Spirit will be sent and not that He will be asked to go to the Disciples. **Even though the Three Persons of the Trinity are equal**, there is implied structure and

obedience in those quotes by the Holy Spirit toward the Father and the Son.

This same structure and obedience is also present in the behavior of the Son toward the Father, although the three Persons of the Trinity are equal:

*Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; **nevertheless not My will, but Yours**, be done." (Luke 22:42)*

Another important concept can be illustrated by example of the US government. There can be only one President of the United States at a time and one Speaker of the House. If there were two presidents or two speakers, we would have chaos. Therefore, there must be one head of an organization to preserve structure and order.

In the same manner, the Lord has appointed the husband as the head of the household, as it is evident in Chapter 5 of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, which is read during the Wedding Service. This is done for structure and order reason, and not to imply that the wife is less in stature than the husband is. This structure intends order and cooperation between the husband and the wife and in addition, obedience by the children toward their parents.

The third and very important attribute of the little church home is prayer, fasting, and giving. These are the three pillars of the Orthodox life.

Prayer is not meant just as a response to a reality of a state of wonder or a state of agony. Note what St. Isaac the Syrian stated about prayer, "Prayer heartens the conscience, invests the mind with power, strengthens one's hope, fires one's confidence. Thus is man made able to withstand the tribulations and evils of this world, for when he compares them with the glorious things he is to inherit, he can defy torture and all manner of affliction."¹ St. Ephraim the Syrian wants us to take notice of how the parents and children are to draw closer to God and acquire His attributes on the way to being like Him (i.e. theosis²), "Virtues are formed by prayer. Prayer preserves temperance, suppresses anger, restrains pride and envy, draws down the Holy Spirit into the soul and raises man to heaven".³ Fr. Matta El-Meskeen describes what prayer is supposed to be in our lives so that we are kept from crashing spiritually, "Prayer is an inward light that exposes the blemishes and defects of our daily conduct. This saves us from being driven into the abyss of hell".⁴ For God does not seek mere believers. Rather, He seeks "true worshippers ...who worship Him... in spirit and truth." (John 4:23, 24) He further states that prayer is a preventative measure that steers us away from sin: "Prayer restrains our hearts from coveting injustice. It keeps our feet from

wandering down the path of sin and our tongues from flattery and lies. Prayer supplies us with a deep insight, so that we may refrain from involvement in wrong doing or condoning improper behavior or praising wayward or wicked actions”.⁵

Our window to heaven, and hence to see God, so to speak, is the Sacraments of the Church, which take place during corporate prayers. The Family must partake of corporate and personal prayers so that it is always aware that it, the family that is, is in God’s presence in everyday life and thus transmit it to others. God breathed life into Adam⁶ and through procreation and baptism into every human being’s existence, and as long as the person is breathing, God is in the life of that person on Earth. The parents and the children need to be cognizant of this fact at all times.

Fasting accomplishes many important factors in the family life. The two most important are self-control and obedience to the Church. Fasting induces and promotes self-control. Without self-control, there is no Orthodoxy, no Church, and the concept of personhood is compromised. The first time God imposed fasting on humanity was when He told Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Jesus Himself fasted, though more severely than we are asked to fast, in the desert before He started His ministry on Earth. Abstaining from the food groups that the Church prescribes is obedience to the Church. Obedience is the beginning of love. If a person is not obedient to anyone, he/she does not love anyone. The manner of fasting, however, needs to be discussed with the family’s Spiritual Father, since jumping with both feet into a full fast, not having fasted ever, is a direction to failure. The name of the game is gradual and consistent graduation from one level of fasting to another.

Giving is the third pillar the family needs to observe. Regular and generous giving is a characteristic of the Orthodox concept of Stewardship. This concept declares that nothing we possess is ours to keep. We are just managers set by God over the possessions we have and, to be good stewards, we should give the less fortunate than us portions of what we have. This giving does not apply to material possessions only, but also to time and talents. The parents need to teach these concepts to their children as they grow up and put the concepts to actual practice through the local parish. Hence, the children are immersed in Church life so that their souls are attached to Her, leading to no future separation.

The fourth equally important requirement of the little church is regular, consistent education and supervision of the children by the parents. St. John Chrysostom

values this chief task tremendously as he notes:

*“Let everything take second place to our care of our children, our bringing them up to the discipline and instruction of the Lord. If from the beginning we teach them to love, true wisdom, they will have more wealth and glory than riches can ever provide”.*⁷

Not only prayer is deeply needed, but also instructions in renouncing sin and acquiring Christian virtues. It is not sufficient to chase after virtues. It is, however, just as important to reject and (progressively) eradicate a sin as one attains its virtuous counterpart. Without doing so, virtues cannot be gained. For example, the virtue of humility cannot be attained unless the sin of arrogance and pride are gradually exterminated. There is a plethora of Orthodox books to read that pertain to every area of Christian life. The parents can start reading the four volume Orthodox Faith, by Fr. Thomas Hopko. I find these books very useful and they provide comprehensive information on the faith and the life of the Orthodox Church. One can buy these books or read them online at <http://oca.org/orthodoxy/the-orthodox-faith>. In addition, reading authenticated Orthodox spiritual books and the Old and New Testament should be the family’s source of inspiration. Reading them, studying them, and having spiritual discussions about them with the Spiritual Father is important in order to discern what God requires from a family and to receive instructions on everything that the family needs:

*“If we diligently study the Scriptures, we will find the lessons to guide us in everything we need!”*⁸

Gently correcting, appealing, and encouraging children to adhere to Church instructions and Jesus’ commandments throughout their early and adolescent life in a consistent and objective manner will yield good fruit and necessarily develop God-pleasing children, as the Book of Proverbs proclaims:

“Train up a child in the way he should go, And when he is old he will not depart from it.” (Proverbs 22:6)

As part of this Orthodox education and Orthodox way of life, I fervently exhort all parents to send their children to the Antiochian Village Camp every summer so that “the little church” is further augmented and supported with a proven system that enlivens and inspires children on the right narrow path to please God.

The abovementioned Church at Home qualities are the most basic and vital to observe in an Orthodox home, their lack thereof jeopardizes the stability and Christian

productivity of the Church at home and will lead to the eventual alienation from God. Consulting with the family Spiritual Father on a regular basis is indispensable to make certain the family is on the right track. Being engrossed in the local parish life is also remarkably advantageous in the process to remain on the side of God and avoid the chasm of worldly sin that the Prodigal Son (cf. Luke 15) encountered. A myriad of families do follow this formula and are headed in the

correct direction. Therefore, I ask you, is it any wonder that we do have inspired children and young adults who have been through the process of education of the Orthodox “little church” supported, enlightened, and supervised by the Orthodox Church! Conversely and unfortunately, we do have the opposite reality of children and young adults who have a dire need to go through the same educational process to become what God intends for them to be.

¹ St. Isaac the Syrian, in “The Four Books of St. Isaac the Syrian, the Bishop of Nineveh,” 1.1.118, Arabic version.

² Theosis is a Greek word that has become popular in English in the context of the Church. The English translation is Deification. It means that a human becomes God-like by Grace but not by nature. For more details, please see the Orthodox Study Bible article on Deification within St. Peter’s first Epistle. Pay a special attention to the analogy of the “sword and fire”

³ St. Ephraim the Syrian, in Moore, “Orthodox Prayer”, pp 22.

⁴ Father Matta El-Meskeen, “Orthodox Prayer Life, the Interior way”, SVS Press

⁵ Father Matta El-Meskeen, “Orthodox Prayer Life, the Interior way”, SVS Press

⁶ Cf Genesis 2:7

⁷ St. John Chrysostom’s Homily 21 on Ephesians

⁸ St. John Chrysostom’s Homily 20 on Ephesians

Message from the Diocesan President

Fadia Juzdan

Dear Sisters in Christ,

Blessings to you and your families! I would like to express how fortunate I feel to be part of such an extraordinary group of women, who are working diligently for Christ and His beloved Church. I would like to take a few moments in this newsletter to reflect on a scriptural passage that reminds me of the importance of not “passing by”. The parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37), which is read on November 10 this year, is a constant reminder of our mission as Christians. In the story Christ explains that a man was walking down from Jerusalem and was robbed; he was attacked and stripped of this clothing. The only person willing to help the poor man was a Samaritan; a priest and a Levite “passed by” without acknowledging the condition of the beaten man. The Samaritan brought him to an inn and cared for him. Jesus asks the people, “Which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?” The people answer Jesus saying, “He who showed mercy on him.” Christ then replies, “Go and do likewise.”

This is such a powerful message, and comes at such a perfect time in the year. As we quickly approach the Nativity season it occurs to me that we should consider Christ’s message and try as hard as we can not to “pass by” those who need us the most. Whether it be our husbands, our children, our parents, or our friends, we must always strive to “do likewise” and love as the

Samaritan loved. One aspect of the passage that strikes me the most is how many words are spoken by the Samaritan: None! The power of love is revealed through action rather than through words. This parable reminds us, especially during this time of year that acknowledging and putting others before myself is what Christ calls us to do. As the Antiochian Women, I believe we consistently strive to do just that. Whether it be working in the kitchen, raising funds for Archdiocesan projects, or serving our communities, we as an organization seek to put others first and constantly find new ways to serve our beautiful church.

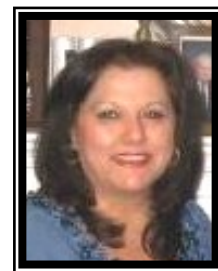
I learned a lot after reading this passage. I should take more time to acknowledge the least of my brethren, take more time to serve others, and take less time worrying about my own wants and needs. This passage serves as a wonderful gateway into the Nativity season, a reminder that “as much as we have done to the least of these my brethren,” we have done unto Christ.

Have a Blessed Advent Fast and Joyous Nativity Season!

In Christ,

Fadia Juzdan

AWE President



+ A MESSAGE TO THE ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN +

By Fr. Don Shadid – November 2013

Antiochian Women Spiritual Advisor

Dioceses of New York & Washington, D.C. and

Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic



Dearly Beloved:

Christ is in our Midst! Glory be to Jesus Christ! I pray that this finds all well and at Peace (John 14:27) as we enter into this Season of Winter, and the Beautiful & Salvific Fasts & Feasts that it brings!

Here in Johnstown, PA, we are surrounded by God's Creation of Nature ... mountains, trees, vegetation & animal life galore ... hence, everyday we are witness to the Cycles of Nature ... birth, growth, decay, death and re-birth (i.e. "resurrection"!). How often I am in wonder as I contemplate God's Creation and His Divine Selfless Love for it! We, of course, are part of His Creation; we are spiritual & noetic like the angels, we are like the vegetation & animals in that we contain many of the same elements as they, yet we are unique in that we, and only we, have been created in His "Image & Likeness" (Genesis 1:26-27). Thus, we have the potential of living divine life by faith & grace.

As we read in the Holy Scriptures, if God takes care of His Creation of Nature, clothing the lily of the field, etc., how much more so will He take care of us?!? Thus, through our beloved Mother, the Church, God has offered to us the opportunities to Fast, to Pray and to Care for the "least of His Brethren" ... all those who are in need (Matthew 25:31-46). And all of these are to be simply our loving response to He Who Loved us first; for despite our falling into the sickness of sin, He wants us, He desires us and He wishes for us to be healed so that we can be all that He created us to be ... His Children in eternal Communion with Him!

As this Holy Season of our Lord's Nativity draws near, and of course, just beyond, awaits the Epiphany, the Great Lent and the Great & Holy Pascha, let us in all Humility make a deliberate effort at living the divine life. Let us, through our responses to His Perfect Love, draw ever closer to our God who took on flesh for us, walked with us (showing us how to be Human), suffered for us, climbed upon the Cross for us, died for us and vanquished death for us! Let us do this through a "planned neglect" ... whereby we will purposefully strive to neglect those things which keep us from the Fasts & Feasts of our Lord. Our efforts will be rewarded, just as Jacob's were at Peniel, when He wrestled with God. (Remember when there was a Letter Grade for "Effort" on your Report Card in Elementary School!?!)

All of this, then, is my Prayer for us as we struggle to love God with all of our Heart, Soul, Mind & Strength, expressing that Love now in our Prayer, our Fasting and, as Fr. Tom Hopko says, "in concrete acts of Love for our neighbors ... the members of our own families & parishes, and most of all for those who hate us and oppose us." Amen. Amen Amen.

Introducing The 2013 - 2015 Boards Of the Diocese of New York and the Archdiocesan District, and the Diocese of Charleston, Oakland, and the Mid-Atlantic

His Eminence the Most Rev. Metropolitan PHILIP



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 Rt. Rev. Bishop THOMAS - Bishop of Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic



Of Arab-American heritage, Thomas Joseph was born in Paterson, New Jersey, in 1953. He attended John F. Kennedy High School in Paterson, graduating in 1970. He went on to college at William Paterson College, graduating in 1974. After college, he worked in the Department of Community Improvements in Paterson, then served as a teacher for the Paterson Board of Education. When the Antiochian Village camp opened in the late 1970s, he was recruited by Fr. John Namie to serve as one of the original camp counselors from 1979 to 1982.

In the fall of 1979, Thomas began part-time study at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, and was made a subdeacon by Metropolitan Philip in July of 1982. He continued his studies until the spring of 1983, when he was assigned to Virgin Mary Church in Yonkers, New York.

In 1984, Metr. Philip assigned him to St. George Church in Houston, Texas, where he served as Director of Christian Education and Youth Services. While in Texas, the Archdiocese also assigned him to oversee Christian Education and then later teen activities for the churches in the Southwest Region (now the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America). In July of 1988 Thomas was ordained to the diaconate by Archbishop Michael (Shaheen) of Toledo.

On August 28, 1994, Bishop Antoun (Khoury) ordained Dcn. Thomas to the priesthood, and Fr. Thomas served as assistant pastor at his parish in Houston until August of 1996, when he was appointed pastor of St. Nicholas Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church in Pinellas Park, Florida (near St. Petersburg).

Between 1996 and his consecration to the episcopacy, Fr. Thomas served in multiple capacities aside from his work as a pastor. He was an appointed member of the Archdiocese Youth Department Board; Spiritual Advisor to the Teen SOYO (Society of Orthodox Youth Organization) Southeastern Region; Chairperson of the Tampa Bay Orthodox Clergy Association; Director of Programs in Pastoral Bioethics for the International Academy of Bioethics and Philosophy of Medicine in the United States; Speaker at Braunels, Germany, and at City University of Hong Kong on Bioethics; author of published articles on Christian Bioethics; Speaker at Antiochian Village and third session camp priest for many years; past President and Vice President of the Tampa Bay Council of Orthodox Churches. In July 2002, Fr. Thomas was granted a Master of Arts degree in Applied Orthodox Theology jointly from the Antiochian House of Studies and the St. John of Damascus School of Theology of the University of Balamand in Lebanon.

On February 15, 2004, Fr. Thomas was elevated to the rank of archimandrite by Bp. Antoun, and on December 5, 2004, he was consecrated to the episcopacy by Patriarch Ignatius IV (Hazim) of Antioch in Damascus, Syria.

Bp. Thomas was enthroned as Bishop of Oakland and the East at St. George Cathedral in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on May 6, 2005. In August of 2006, Bp. Thomas was awarded a Doctorate in Education from California Coast University. His Grace also sits on the editorial board of the journal *Christian Bioethics*, which is published by Oxford University Press.

His Grace is also the author of several published articles, including *Human Embryonic Stem Cell Research: Its Importance in the Culture Wars*, *Training Up a Child: Educational Options for Orthodox Christians* and *An Orthodox University: Higher Education for Orthodox Christians*. He also co-authored *The Emergence of Local Orthodox Christian Societies in America*.

In 2006, the Church of St. George in Charleston, West Virginia, purchased a chancery for the diocese, and in October of that year was elevated to a cathedral, thus adding another see to the diocese and renaming it to the Diocese of Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic. His Grace's residence is at the diocesan chancery in Charleston.

In addition to his duties in the Diocese of the Mid-Atlantic, Bp. Thomas also served as the locum tenens of the Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest from December 2010 to December 2011. Within the Archdiocese, His Grace assists Metropolitan Philip in overseeing the Antiochian Village, the Christian Education Department, the Youth Department and the Antiochian House of Studies.

Since 2011, he has also chaired the Committee for Youth of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of North and Central America.

The Rt. Rev. Bishop NICHOLAS - Bishop of Brooklyn and Assistant to the Metropolitan



Bishop NICHOLAS was born into an Orthodox Christian family (the son of William and Nadia Ozone) in Damascus, Syria in January, 1963. Bishop NICHOLAS attended the Patriarchal Cathedral of the Dormition of the Theotokos in Damascus as a child. He attended the French Lycée Laïque elementary and middle school and the Omia High

School while growing up in Damascus. Bishop NICHOLAS immigrated to the United States in February, 1981. He earned his B.S. degree in Electrical and Computer Engineering with honors from Northeastern University, Boston, MA in June of 1985. He then went on to receive his Master of Science degree in Computer Engineering at the same school in 1988 and finally he received a specialization certificate in Object Oriented Design, Architecture and Coding in 1995. After working in his field for almost 20 years, he decided to go to seminary in 2002. Bishop NICHOLAS also lectured on Electrical and Computer engineering topics to Electrical Engineering Bachelor of Science students for many years at Wentworth Institute of Technology, Boston, MA. He graduated from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology with a Master of Divinity, Highest Distinction, in Brooklyn, MA, in May 2005. He has also attended many professional engineering conferences and courses and conferences on psychology and human behavior. Bishop NICHOLAS speaks Arabic and English fluently. His second language in Syria was French, which he has used, along with Hebrew, Ancient Greek, New Testament Greek, and Modern Greek, to conduct research on theological subjects.

Bishop NICHOLAS was ordained a deacon on the Feast of St. George, April 23, 2004 by His Eminence, Metropolitan PHILIP. He was ordained a priest by His Grace, Bishop ANTOUN on January 9, 2005. After graduation from seminary in June 2005, he served as the pastor of St. Philip Church, Ft. Lauderdale, FL, and until the end of 2011. It was at his parish in Ft. Lauderdale that he was elevated to the dignity of Archimandrite by Metropolitan PHILIP on February 14, 2010. Bishop NICHOLAS was nominated by the General Assembly of the 2011 Archdiocese Convention and elected by the Archdiocese Holy Synod on July 27, 2011 as Bishop of Brooklyn and Assistant to the Metropolitan. Bishop NICHOLAS was consecrated to the Holy Episcopacy by His Beatitude Patriarch IGNATIUS IV on December 11, 2011.

V. Rev. Don Shadid - Spiritual Advisor



Fr. Don was born & raised in Peoria, IL, being Baptized & Chrismated at All Saints Greek Orthodox Church. He has been active in Church all of his life, beginning in the Altar, Church School, Jr. Choir & GOYA at All Saints. While working on his Bachelor's Degree in the Biological Sciences at Illinois State University (ISU), Fr. Don started an Orthodox Campus Ministry, under the guidance of Fr. Mark Stevens (OCA) and worked as a "Campus Ministry Associate" After graduating from ISU, with the Blessings of His Eminence, Metropolitan PHILIP, he began his M.Div. Studies at St. Vladimir's Seminary (SVS) in the Fall of 1981. The next summer found Fr. Don at the Antiochian Village as a Seminarian, Cabin Counselor & Nature/Ecology Director. It was there that Janet Abdalah (sister of His Grace, Bishop JOHN – Diocese of Worcester & New England and editor of The Word Magazine) was assigned to Fr. Don's Nature Hikes for "crowd control" and the two met; and as they say, "the rest is history" (they are honored to say that they are Antiochian Village Marriage #3)! After graduation from SVS in May 1984, Fr. Don worked full-time at the Antiochian Village as Assistant Camp Director and Program Director at the newly constructed Heritage & Learning Center, under the mentorship of the late Fr. John Namie (Memory Eternal!). Fr. Don was ordained to the Holy Priesthood in April 1986 and in June of that year was assigned to the Pastorate at St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church in Johnstown, PA, where he serves until this day.

Fr. Don & Kh. Janet have been blessed with two wonderful sons, Christopher, who graduated Holy Cross Seminary in Boston (Class of 2013) and is the newly appointed Program Director at the Antiochian Village Camp; and Stephen, Pharmacy student at Duquesne University (Pittsburgh, PA - Class of 2014), who have been active in the Church all of their lives as well!

In addition to his ministry with the AWE and the 109 yr. old Parish Family of Johnstown, Fr. Don has been involved in numerous ministries & organizations (e.g. past spiritual advisor for Eastern Region Fellowship of St. John the Divine; Treasurer of the Council for St. Sophia Orthodox Christian Academy [a Pan-Orthodox Pre & Elementary School housed at his parish], Treasurer for the local Orthodox Clergy Association for many years, Assistant Scoutmaster, Assistant Advisor – Venture Scouts [BSA], Board Member & Secretary for a Professional Christian Counseling Ministry & OCF Regional Chaplain for the Mid-Atlantic Region). Fr. Don has also earned his Doctor of Ministry Degree

through the Antiochian House of Studies and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

Fr. Don loves his Family, his doggies, the Outdoors, Movies, Bagpipes, Classic Country Music, Water-Skiing, and talking about the Orthodox Christian Faith (he used to dream about discussing Orthodoxy with Elvis, Johnny Cash & Mel Gibson!) He is so very thankful to God for all of his Blessings and all of his Crosses too! Nish-qor Allah (Thanks be to God)!

Fadia Juzdan - President



I live in Woodland Park, New Jersey and belong to Saint George Church in Little Falls. I have been married to my wonderful husband Ziad for 26 years, and we have four wonderful Children. Paul is 24, and is attending Seton Hall Law School, George is 22 and is a senior at Montclair State University, Nicholas 20 is a junior at Montclair State and our princess Janine is 16 and a junior in high school.

I was born in Yaffa, Israel and moved to this country in 1987 and have been a member of Saint George Church ever since. I am very active at my local parish and have held several different positions in the church. I was the first woman Parish council chairperson at St. George and now hold the position of the president of the Ladies Society. My family is also very involved in church activities; my husband is the parish council chairman and our children are active members of SOYO. I work as a senior accountant at Ricoh Americas Corporation. I enjoy cooking Arabic food and reading novels with a good cup of coffee by my side

Julia Kalyoussef - Vice President/Humanitarian



I was born in Aleppo, Syria. Both my parents were born in Turkey. Antioch and Samandag were both cities of Syria before Turkey seized them. Because of their origin I was able to visit Turkey many times and visited the first church of Peter and Paul in Antioch several times. I grew up as a very active member of the church serving as superintendent of Sunday school, youth adviser and worked in the archdiocese of Aleppo. I moved to the US in 1988. I am married and have two sons and two grandchildren. I work in Paterson Public School as personal aide with children with autism and behavior problems. I have been an active member of St George Church in Little Falls, NJ for 25 years and an active member of the ladies society where I served as vice president.

Grace Dibi - Recording Secretary



I was raised in Kinnelon, NJ by God-fearing parents who instilled in me and my five siblings the importance of putting Christ first in our lives and following His commands. We attended a non-denominational Bible church that emphasized the study of God's Word. In

1986 I met my husband Elias who had just arrived from Haifa, Israel and we married seven months later. I adapted rather quickly to the middle-eastern culture and we began attending an Arabic speaking church. We have four beautiful children, two girls and two boys, and have been married for 27 years. We joined St. George Antiochian Church of Little Falls in 2009. We were very impressed by the parishioners' dedication to Christ and to serving their community and we knew we had to be a part of their family. Our children joined SOYO and I joined the Ladies Society that year and have enjoyed the fellowship of the women and the satisfaction of being able to help our church accomplish their goals. In the secular world I am an Assistant Vice President and BSA Officer in the compliance department of a community bank in Bergen County, NJ. I enjoy the outdoors, traveling and relaxing with family and friends. I am honored to be serving as the Secretary for the Antiochian Women of my diocese.

Marlene Ayoub - Treasurer



I am from Totowa, New Jersey and I'm truly honored to represent the Antiochian Women of the East (AWE) as the Treasurer for a second term. I've been a member of St. George Church in Little Falls for 15 years with my husband Faraj and our two girls, Victoria (15) and Sophia (13). I'm part of the church choir, the Ladies'

Society, the PTA, and The Fellowship. My family and I are always eager to give of our time in support of the Church. I'm currently working as an Office Assistant at the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese.

Kh. Pam Pier - Immediate Past Co-President



Our family's journey to Orthodoxy began over 25 years ago. It has been wonderful journey. In the years since our reception into the Orthodox Church, God has truly provided many, many blessings. My husband, Fr. Peter Pier, and I have worked together in a small parish, St. John Chrysostom, in York, PA. I am active in the liturgical life of the church, singing and chanting, and I organize and sometimes lead various social, educational, and spiritual events in the parish.

My husband and I have been married for 35 years. We have 3 children. I work full-time as a logistics and material planner.

Public Relations Director - Vacant

Kh. Minerva Sabbagh - Religious Coordinator



I am the wife of Rev. Anthony Sabbagh of Allentown, PA. We were married in 1970 in El Paso, Texas. I was born in Juakhat, Syria. I came to America, when I was seven with my mother and five siblings on a ship. My two oldest sisters came in 1956 and my dad in 1955. I became an

elementary teacher and now I've been subbing since 2004. I have four children: Khouria Tammy, married to Fr. Demetrius Makoul; Mary, married to Deacon Joseph Landino; Christina, married to Subdeacon Peter, and Hope a junior at Desales University. One of my favorite Scripture verses is Psalm 5:7: "But as for me, I will come into Your house in the multitude of Your mercy; in fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple. Lead me, O Lord, in Your righteousness because of my enemies. Make Your way straight before my face."

Kh. Helen Waggener - Immediate Past Co-President



My husband is Fr. Alban from Holy Trinity, Lynchburg, VA. We are converts, so I am still learning. Father and I have four sons: the older two are married and one has two little boys. Arranging to see them all at the same time is a project in itself, but a rollicking

good time when it happens. Joshua is an air traffic controller in the Denver area. Seth is a news producer in Birmingham. Matthias works for an arborist here in Lynchburg. Paul does landscaping and renovation projects here in town...and oh, yes, he's in a band.

I am a volunteer counselor at our pregnancy center. During the school year I teach three art classes at one of the home school co-ops. Two afternoons a week I help Father at his secular job as the manager of the used book department at the local independent bookstore.

At church I share Sunday School responsibilities and head up our Antiochian Women of the East book club and run a little bookstore at church too.

In our vast spare time, I garden (sunflowers are my favorite), knit, read (huge Jane Austen fan) and hike (which means trying to keep up with Father in the woods).

Membership Coordinator—Vacant



The 2014 Mid-Winter Meetings Slated for February 7 - 9, 2013

With the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP, the 2014 Mid-Winter Meetings will be hosted by St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church, of Phoenix, AZ, and will be held in Scottsdale, Arizona in February. The Archdiocese and Diocese officers of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America, the Fellowship of St. John Divine, and Teen SOYO will gather to conduct the business of our Archdiocese organizations. Please contact each individual organization's president for specific questions.

Travel, lodging, and registration information:

Hotel Reservations: Group rate of \$129.00/night at the Holiday Inn Express Scottsdale North, conveniently located just 4 miles from the church. Reservations may be made by calling the hotel directly at 480-596-6559 or online using the Group Code ANA. Reservations must be made no later than January 6, 2014 to guarantee the discounted rate.

Hotel Contact Information: Holiday Inn Express Scottsdale North 7350 E. Gold Dust Ave, Scottsdale, AZ 85258. Phone: 480-596-6559 and Fax: 480-596-0554.

Host Location: All meetings, meals and services will be held at St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church 4350 E. Gold Dust Ave., Phoenix, AZ 85028, V. Rev. Fr. Christopher Salamy, Pastor.

Registration: All participants must register by January 31, 2014. Registration information will be on the Archdiocese website shortly.

Schedule: The Winter Meetings Weekend will begin on Friday evening, and conclude with Divine Liturgy on Sunday February 9 at St. George Church. To view tentative schedule go to: <http://www.antiochian.org/sites/default/files/2014-nac-winter-meetings-phoenix-announcement.pdf>

Transportation: Participants flying to Phoenix International Airport (PHX) will need to provide their own ground transportation from the airport to the hotel/church. The hotel and church are approximately 20 minutes from the airport. The hotel does provide a complimentary shuttle for hotel guests within 5 miles of the hotel. We must provide the hotel with a desired schedule for the shuttle in advance, so please contact your NAC/NAB President if you wish to use the hotel shuttle to travel between the hotel and church.

If you are looking for some fundraising ideas, here is one that is sure to be a success! At St. George in Little Falls, we are blessed with an enormous amount of cooking talent. Ladies work hard all year preparing for various events. One fundraiser that our ladies have been doing for decades now is the Annual Thanksgiving Pastry Sale. The ladies meet about 5 or 6 times in the month of November and prepare different Arabic sweets that are sold during the Thanksgiving/Christmas season. We greatly enjoy working together. It gives us time to enjoy each other's company and work to raise funds for our beloved parish. We share coffee and conversation and do what we enjoy doing, Baking! Every year we sell out before we even finish baking! With love and patience we try to give back to our community by using the talents God has given us!



*Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of
North America*



Project 2013-2014
***Help the Orphans of
War in Syria***



***“For I was hungry and you gave
Me food; I was thirsty, and you gave
Me drink.” (Matthew 25:35)***

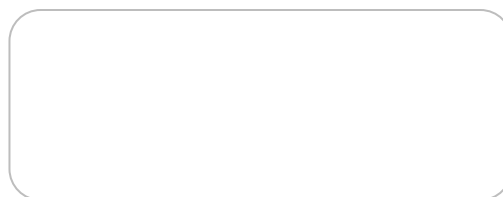
Our Goal: \$200,000!

A Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others



ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

Lucy Hanna
1853 Kensington Road
Corona, CA 92880



Diocesan Public Relations Directors: Please send all bios, photos, articles, any news or events from your parishes and communities to lucy.hanna@sbcglobal.net. All articles are due the first of the month PRIOR to the month of publication according to the following schedule:

	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	Done
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.