

DIAKONIA

FALL 2010



Presentation of the Blessed Virgin in the Temple

*Celebrated Nov. 21, Fresco from 14th century by Manuel Panselinos,
Cathedral Church "Protan" in the box, the Holy Mountain Athos*

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women Of North America

The Most Reverend
Metropolitan PHILIP
Founder

The Right Reverend
Bishop JOSEPH
Overseeing Hierarchy

North American Board
Archimandrite John Abdalah, Spiritual Advisor

Officers:

Cindy Nimey.....President
Violet Robbat.....Vice-president
Dianne O'ReganRecording Secretary
Sherry Abraham-Morrow.....Treasurer
Roberta RoyhabPublic Relations

Laila Ferris.....Immediate Past President

Coordinators:

Kh. Dannie MooreHumanitarian
Kh. Suzanne MurphyMembership
Jamie Isaac.....Religious
Kh. Helene Hajal.....Scholarship
Alicia Atik.....Constitution & Bylaws
Kh. Barbara Baz.....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 fall, winter, spring and summer.

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.

Preferred Methods of Submission

- E-mail as an attachment to **Roberta Royhab (419-340-4560)**, **DIAKONIA Editor**, at robertaroyhab@bex.net.
- Submit your article on a CD to Roberta Royhab at PO Box 1128, Perrysburg, OH 43552-1128.

Submission Details

- Please include your name and the phone number where you can be contacted for questions.
- Attach a hard copy for reference.
- Keep a copy. Articles will not be returned. Photos will be returned if requested.

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 Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate NY**

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

What is DIAKONIA

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

**Message from His Grace Bishop ALEXANDER,
*Bishop of the Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada
and Upstate New York***



On Knowing God

In the Gospel we read on the Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council (John 17:1-13) Jesus says in what is commonly known as His High Priestly prayer: "And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." The letters of St. Paul are replete with references to "knowing God". For example in his letter to the Ephesians 1:17, St. Paul says: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him." In Philippians 3:8 he says: "Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord..." and in verse 10 "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection".

When we think "knowing", we think about head knowledge and data. People of old conceived of "knowing" as an experience or an encounter. Many years ago I was on a bus tour in France and happened to sit next to an evangelical lady from the US. We started talking about Christ and after a long discussion the lady declared to me "you have met Him (Christ)" I insisted that I had been baptized. She reiterated that I "had met Him". It was not till much later that I understood what she had meant. Many people know about God but very few of us baptized Christians know God. Knowing God is being in relationship with God ...experiencing His presence in our lives and His forgiveness. It is much like a man and a woman who try to get to know each other before they decide to marry. But a person may say I can physically be with my future spouse, how can I know God when He is not physically around me?

It is Jesus who makes the Father known to us...through the teaching in the Scriptures, through the experience of the Church, through the record of God's work for His people and through the work of the Holy Spirit within each of us believers. Jesus enables us to recognize God's presence all around us. He prompts us to pray. Prayer is quite simply talking with God. God isn't this stern remote person who is difficult to approach. Part of knowing God is to be able to speak freely with Him...like a friend. He listens and in the silence of our prayer we can hear Him speak to us. He does not always necessarily give us what we want. He knows what is best for us and if we trust Him then we trust that what comes about is for our edification and well being.

Remember how Mary, Martha's sister, from the Gospel of Luke 10:38-42, sat at the feet of Jesus listening to Him while Martha worked in the kitchen preparing food. Through listening to Christ and learning from Him she formed a relationship with Him and it is because of that she was able to proclaim in the Gospel of John (11:27) "Yes Lord I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world". Mary knew God.

Now I am not suggesting that anyone neglect their families under the pretense of devoting all their time to prayer and reading scripture. Neither am I saying that we become "weird" for Jesus but rather that we become refreshingly different. Central to this "knowing" relationship is that we make a serious effort to leave behind our sinful and devious ways becoming anew in Christ. Of course none of this is magical. Establishing relationships takes time, often a lifetime. It is difficult, challenging and requires a lot of patience but it is not impossible. However, we cannot do it on our own. We need God to help us to get to know Him and we need His Body and Blood as frequently as possible.

Once we know Christ we cannot help but be transformed and once people see how we have been transformed, then they will glorify the God in us.

May God bless you and bless your work in our churches!

Bishop Alexander, Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York

Antiochian Women of the Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York

Message from Susanne Zeidan, Newly-elected President:

Greetings from Lebanon where I am spending the month of October with my daughter and extended family. Looking forward to an exciting year ahead for the Ladies of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York, with a full slate of Christmas bazaars, auctions, fashion shows, lectures, retreats, baking, quilt making, festivals, madayeh dinners and ministering to the parishes. Hope to meet some of you at the Winter Meetings.

Message from Janice Saba, Immediate Past President:

I was very happy to turn over the reins to our most capable VP Susanne Zeidan and to Kh. Suzanne Murphy and Kh. Helene Hajal, who have all worked tirelessly for many years. Our Diocese is made spiritually whole by Faye Thomas who is an example to each and every one of us, of someone who is not cradle Orthodox, but teaches, embraces and loves the Orthodox Church and lives as an example to us all. She always has time to prepare stimulating workshops and talks on church architecture, prayer and marriage seminars, her heart is so pure and beautiful.

This is the first year we are doing a Diocesan Debutante Ball in May, at the Crowne Royal Plaza Hotel in Montreal. All the Churches are involved and young ladies ages 18-24 are invited to be debutantes. Also in Ottawa we have our Spring Basket Auction which is a huge event, and in Montreal St. George is hosting a Fashion Show! Camp Transfiguration gets bigger and better every year, thanks to Director Alex Younis, his capable staff and our beloved Saloma Tannis from Ottawa, who donates and cooks up an Arabic feast every year along with Alida Rossy, Susanne Zeidan and other volunteers. It's a beautiful camp complete with lake, fishing, hiking and a great staff!

We are very proud of our Diocese and its growth and momentum over the past few years. God bless all our wonderful ladies who are the "heart of the Archdiocese" (Met. PHILIP).

BIOGRAPHIES :

The Rt. Rev. Bishop ALEXANDER

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

Spiritual Advisor — Fr. Iskandar Younis

Fr. Iskandar is pastor of St. George Church, Richmond Hill, Ontario, which is near Toronto.

Susanne Zeidan — President

Susanne of St. Elias Cathedral, Ottawa, Canada, is the new president. She works with her husband Dimitri (Chair of St. Ignatius for the Diocese) in their construction firm in Ottawa. She has three children, Krista, Katya and Marcus who are all active

young adults at St. Elias.

Susanne works with the Ladies of the Cathedral in their annual Mother's Day Basket Auction, retreats, socials, Camp Transfiguration, the Fellowship, baking and serving the church. She rotates her time between her home in Ottawa and her home in Lebanon.

Kh. Suzanne Murphy—Vice-President

Kh. Suzanne also serves as Membership Chairman of North American Board (NAB) of Antiochian Women; she edited the new Antiochian Women Membership Handbook.

Faye Thomas - Secretary & Religious Coordinator

Kh. Helene Hajal –Treasurer

Kh. Helene also is NAB Scholarship Coordinator; see her biography online in the Fall 2009 DIAKONIA.

Janice Saba — Immediate Past President

Janice has been active for many years in church life, following her four children up the ranks from Sunday School Teacher, Youth Chairman, Choir and the Order of St. Ignatius. She has held numerous NAB offices.



In left photo, from left are George Saba, Dimitri Zeidan, Janice Saba and Susanne Zeidan. Photo at right was taken at the 1985 convention; Janice, at right, is shown with Violet Robbat, who is current NAB VP/Project. The two first met as teenagers at a Soyo Delegates meeting in Boston, MA, and have been friends for over 40 years.

Born and raised in Hollywood, CA, Janice met her husband George at the 1972 Archdiocese Convention in Los Angeles; they have lived in Montreal for 33 years. All four of their children met their spouses at the Antiochian Village College Conferences. Marie married Joe Zogaib (Fellowship of St. John/Midwest Diocese), they have two children; Joy met Elias Hajjar (Parish Council, St. George Cathedral, Toledo, OH), they have 2.5 children; Katherine married George Chalhoub (Parish Council, St. Mary's, Livonia, MI) this summer; Dr. Tom Saba is engaged to Lillian Kishek (St. Mary's, Livonia).

Janice and George recently purchased a second home which they are renovating, which is located across the street from Maria and Joe in Ann Arbor, MI. So from her college years in OCF at Stanford, to raising her family on the East Coast and now spending much time in the Midwest, Janice has crossed all the time zones!

Lianne Nimey — Humanitarian Coordinator

I am 33 years old and was born and raised in Utica, NY. I attended Catholic Schools from Kindergarten through High School. In 1994, I attended a local Community College in Utica, then transferred to SUNY Cortland where I earned my teaching degree.

I was blessed with a position in the Utica City School District in 1998 and since then have been teaching Kindergarten to inner-city students. My school has a large ESL (English as second language) population and a large number of poverty families.

Seven years ago my I took on an additional role as an inclusion teacher. This means that special education students are combined with regular education students in my classroom all day. I work with a special education teacher and assistants. This setting is a bit more strenuous than regular Kindergarten but I continually pray to God to give me the strength and knowledge to help all my students.

In July of 2006 I met my future husband Matthew, son of NAB President Cindy Nimey. At the time I hadn't heard of the Orthodox Faith. Once I began learning about the Faith I became extremely impressed with its originality and was chrismated into the Church. We were married in July 2009 and now are expecting a baby in February.

I teach Sunday School in my parish, St George, Utica, and am president of my women's group. I became active with Antiochian Women after attending an NAB meeting with Cindy.

Midwest Antiochian Women are selling baby bibs to raise funds for Convent of St. Thekla

In far right photo Fr. Daniel Daly, Spiritual Director of Midwest Antiochian Women, models a "where's grandfather" bib, with grandfather written in green in 10 languages; at immediate right Kh. Elfriede Daly is shown with their granddaughter Athena who is wearing a "where's grandmother" bib, with grandmother written in purple in 10 languages. The terry cloth bibs with vinyl backing are made in the U.S.A. Midwest Women are selling them for \$7.00 each as a fundraiser for the Antiochian Women's annual project, the building of the Convent of St. Thekla at Antiochian Village. Elaine Shaheen designed the bibs and is taking orders with payment; you may contact her at 810-733-8114 or Elasha@aol.com.



Many years to His Grace Bishop JOSEPH on occasion of his 15th anniversary as bishop in LA

Letter from Cindy Nimey, President of the North American Board of Antiochian Women

Dear Sisters in Christ,

I hope this letter finds you all well and enjoying the wonderful autumn season. Indian summer in New York State is beautiful—magnificent colors, warm days and crisp evenings. Great weather to give anyone just the right boost of energy to get things done, and we have much to do! God bless you as you begin a new year of work for your churches and dioceses.



I am very excited that Metropolitan PHILIP has approved our new letterhead. I emailed a file to all of you with instructions from Fr. Gregory Murphy on how to save it and use the file. If you haven't received it please let me know and I will get it to you. Please make copies for the officers and coordinators in your dioceses so that they can also begin to use it. I am very pleased with the final work and many thanks to Fr. Gregory for his many hours of work to complete this project.

Our mid winter meeting is scheduled for February 4 – 6, 2011 at the Antiochian Village. Please arrange your schedules and make your travel arrangements so that we can all be together to continue the many good works we do and allow us time to grow spiritually with our presiding Bishop, spiritual advisors and Mother Alexandra.

It is our pleasure once again to continue to support the Convent of St. Thekla project at the Antiochian Village. It is going to be so wonderful to have a women's monastery on the grounds of the Antiochian Village. This past summer we were able to walk down the path to the parcel of land that the monastery will be built on, if you weren't there you can see the pictures and article on the web site. It is such a tranquil and spiritual site, you could feel God's presence and feel that it is the perfect place to build a monastery. Please encourage your chapters to support this much needed project and help them join us at the village for our meeting so that they have the opportunity to see firsthand the benefits of having Mother Alexandra amongst us and the proposed monastery onsite.

The new Antiochian Women Membership Handbook has been posted on the website making it easily available. Please remember to mention the website at your fall meetings or in your future correspondence so that all of our Antiochian Women can use the many resources that we have produced.

I have enjoyed the past three years as president and I am looking forward to working with all of you talented and great women of this Antiochian Archdiocese as I complete my term. Remember that next summer there will be elections at the Archdiocese Convention in Chicago so please keep this in mind and think about what office you might want to run for. It is a wonderful opportunity and I encourage you to stay involved and continue to be part of our growing sisterhood.

Praying that you are all able to enjoy the rest of the beautiful fall weather, and that the coming winter isn't too hard on any of you. Remember that I am here for you if there is anything you need. I will do whatever I can to help you, just contact me at any time.

Your sister in Christ, Cindy Nimey, President, North American Board of Antiochian Women

The Spirit of Thankfulness

It is natural for us to ask help from God in times of trouble or sorrow. It is also natural to plead on behalf of our loved ones. These two forms of prayer - *petition* and *intercession* - are vital. But the *prayer of thanksgiving*, mentioned so often in Scripture and made so eloquently in many Psalms, must also be an essential part of our lives as Christians.

Are we truly thankful to God for His innumerable blessings and mercies toward us? Do we really feel we even have anything to be thankful for? Perhaps, amid our daily duties and struggles, an occasion for gratitude seems hard to find. We may have pressing financial needs, urgent family problems, deep personal sorrows or concerns. We may be only too well aware of the evils of our time, or the sins of our heart. We may simply feel empty, weary, isolated. The evening news, or the events in our neighborhood, may make us feel that talk of thanking God is at best simple-minded and at worst hypocritical.

In reality, the practice of prayerful thanksgiving is essential to acquiring inner peace. Far from being simple-minded, it requires - and develops - a living faith and humility in the soul. One of the reasons God often seems far from us is simply because we do not - even will not - see Him where He is, in the daily circumstances of life He sends us.

Giving thanks to God for everything in our "ordinary" lives can help us to see at last that nothing in our lives is really ordinary. Life is never "ordinary". It is rather a passage from time into eternity. The circumstances that rise before us, the problems we encounter, the relationships we form, the choices we make, all ultimately concern our eternal union with or separation from God.

If we as Christians truly believe that our lives are lived under the sign of the Cross and in the light of eternity, then we must believe that God is with us in all the changing fortunes of our days. And we must also believe that despite natural disasters and human ills, evil is not finally triumphant and death is not victorious. In our lives there are no chance events, no irrational twists of empty fate, but rather the ever-

present workings of a provident God, Who uses all means to lead us into the harbor of Christ.

When we begin to feel, however faintly, the truth of this, we shall find much to be grateful for. The spirit of thankfulness is a necessary part of the spiritual discipline of living in the present moment - with God - and not in the past or the future.

We cannot know what will happen tomorrow, or even tonight; we cannot change what is already past. But we can be grateful today for the blessings of today - the blessing of life itself, the blessing of communion with God through prayer and the Holy Eucharist, the blessing of repentance, the healing of forgiveness.

Even the small, seemingly trivial, moments in our day - the sight of a bird in the sky, the greening of a tree, the laugh of a child, the voice of a friend - speak to us of God if only we wish to hear, for everything of beauty, of light, of love, comes to us from Him.

In such small moments, as much as in the dramatic crises of our lives, the headlong rush of time opens upon eternity. If we learn to live quietly, attentively, faithfully, in the "now" which alone truly exists for us, we shall be prepared by degrees for the "everlasting now" which awaits us after death. If we do not find and follow Christ in the present moment, we shall not recognize Him at the end of time.

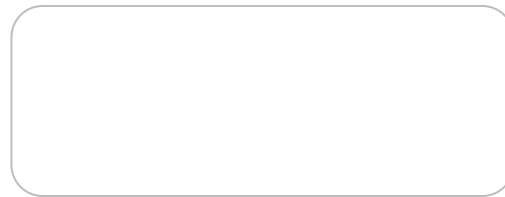
Let us ask of God a grateful heart, and let us resolve to give thanks each day for the day itself and the presence of Christ in it, sustaining our life by His hand and giving courage to our struggles, zeal to our repentance, contrition to our prayer, and stability to our labors. If only we will make an effort, we will find that giving thanks to God - even in adversity - opens our hearts to see blessings we had not thought to find.

*From 1999 Orthodox Family Life, which reprinted this article with permission from **Life Transfigured: A Journal of Orthodox Nuns**, Vol. 24, No. 2, Summer 1991, pp.8-9, produced by The Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration, Ellwood City, Pa.*



Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women
of North America

Roberta Royhab
PO Box 1128
Perrysburg OH 43552-1128



REMINDER to Diocesan Boards: Please remember the following schedule for submitting your articles and profiles for the *DIAKONIA*. One diocese is highlighted in each issue according to the following schedule. However, articles and news from all dioceses and parishes of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America are welcome in every issue.—Roberta Royhab, Editor

	Diocese	Date of Publication	Date Due
1	NAB Board	(Fall) October 2009	Done
2	Diocese of Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic and the Diocese of New York and Washington D.C.	(Winter) January 2010	Done
3	Diocese of Los Angeles and the West and the Diocese of Eagle River and the Northwest	(Spring) April 2010	Done
4	Diocese of Miami and the Southeast	(Summer) July 2010	Done
5	Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate NY	(Fall) October 2010	Done
6	Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest	(Winter) January 2011	December 1, 2010
7	Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America	(Spring) April 2011	March 1, 2011
8	Diocese of Worcester and New England	(Summer) July 2011	June 1, 2011

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