

DIAKONIA

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA



Spring 2014



The Annunciation

March 25th

Troparion (Tone 4)

*Today is the beginning of our salvation,
the revelation of the eternal mystery!
The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin
as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace.
Together with him let us cry to the Theotokos:
Rejoice, O full of grace. The Lord is with you!"*

The Resurrection Of Christ

Troparion (Tone 5)

*Christ is risen from the dead,
trampling down death by death,
and upon those in the tombs
bestowing life!*

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!



ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

❧ A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS ❧

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women Of North America

The Most Reverend
Metropolitan PHILIP
Founder

The Most Reverend
Archbishop JOSEPH
Overseeing Hierarch

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His Grace Bishop. JOHN, Spiritual Advisor

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MaryLou Catelli.....*Membership*
Sherry Abraham Morrow.....*Finance*
Deana Bottei & Jamie Isaac.....*Widowed Clergy Wives*
Program

Antiochian Women's Prayer

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

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

PUBLICATION GUIDELINES:

Deadlines

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

To submit articles, e-mail as an attachment to:

lucy.hanna@sbcglobal.net

Submission Details

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

Content

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

In this issue of the DIAKONIA we highlight the

The Diocese of Los Angeles and the West and

The Diocese of Eagle River and the Northwest

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

What is DIAKONIA

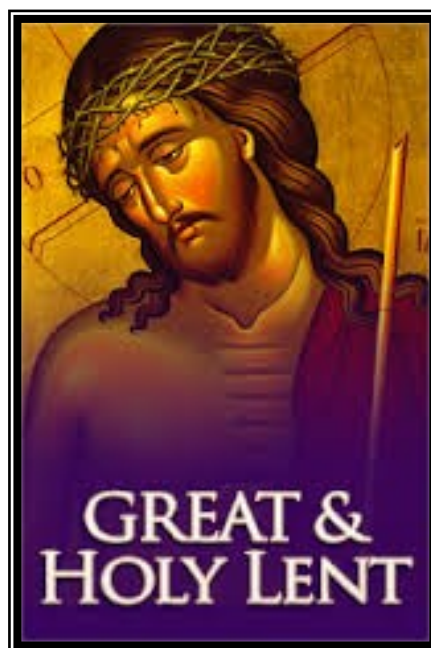
The word **DIAKONIA** is a Greek word meaning *Service*, usually pertaining to service in the Church. The purpose of the Antiochian Women's organization is primarily spirituality and humanitarian service. In the words of our beloved Metropolitan PHILIP it is "**Theology in Action**".

A NOTE TO DIOCESAN PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTORS:

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

The following items are needed to highlight your diocese:

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



	Diocese	Date of Publication	Date Due
1	NAB Board (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	Done
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.



His Eminence, Archbishop JOSEPH's Lenten Message

Beloved faithful Antiochian women of our Archdiocese,

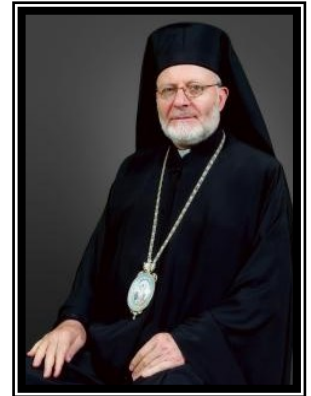
"When you desire to pursue some beautiful work for the love of God, put death as the limit of your desire. In this way you will be deemed worthy to ascend in actual deed to the level of martyrdom in every suffering and injury which you may encounter within this limit, provided that you patiently endure unto the end and do not grow indolent." (St. Isaac the Syrian, Homily 62).

With these incisive words, our venerable father St. Isaac provides us with a most beneficial way of grasping what Christian martyrdom means. So often, when we think about the martyrs, our thoughts turn to saints of long ago and in distant lands. Now, most of you are aware of the great struggles which our Orthodox Christian brothers and sisters are undergoing presently in the Middle East, in Syria, Egypt, and the other biblical lands. We may rightly wonder what our part may be in this struggle, since we live in this peaceful land of America, where we may go to church and practice our faith with great freedom and with a wide scope of action. St. Isaac in his God-given wisdom, supplies us with a profound insight: if we take seriously any Christian action "for the love of God," and we are so dedicated to it that death itself would not stop us, than we ourselves become true martyrs. We can "ascend in actual deed to the level of martyrdom"! In this episcopal word, I want to invite you to share in the martyrdom of our suffering brethren. Let us learn something here, and put it into action for Jesus' sake, and for the consolation of our suffering brethren!

What is a martyr? How can our practice of our Orthodox faith in all its forms, worship, asceticism, charity and mercy, become martyric? A martyr is a witness. These two words are translations of the same Greek word from the Bible. A martyr-witness stands for the truth of something, by authenticating it in his life's blood. The last book of the Bible calls our Lord Jesus a martyr (Rev 1:5, 3:14) and all of the Apostles were martyrs. Jesus taught all His disciples, "The servant is not greater than the master. If they hated Me, they will hate you also." Anyone who follows Christ is a witness-martyr to His resurrection and the new life issuing from the baptismal Font. Therefore, he or she is already a potential martyr, even before doing anything. Now that

I have expressed this fundamental truth, I invite you to see the big picture before us now.

All of us are living in an especially precarious time in the arena of the Middle East. I say, "arena" because Christians there are martyrs, even today. Christian persecution has been going on throughout the 20th century until now, especially in the Middle East. One researcher wrote recently, "...based upon decades of tracking..., roughly 100 million Christians today suffer interrogation, arrest, and even death for their faith, with the bulk located in Asia and the Middle East." "In the early 20th century, Arab (-speaking) Christians amounted to 20% of the population (of the Middle East)... running the lion's share of the (Middle East's) schools, hospitals, and social service centers, besides serving as administrators in government. Now there are only 5% and that number is steadily declining." "Egypt... the crucible of the Arab Spring... is fast turning into a Christian winter." During the most recent meeting between His Beatitude Patriarch John X of Great Antioch and All the East and His Holiness Patriarch Kirill of Moscow and All Russia, speaking about the war in Syria, these, our arch-pastors said, "No heart can remain indifferent to the horrible tragedy in Syria."



What damage has been done so far? How have the Christians suffered? According to sources, as of this moment at least 83 churches and not less than 2 monasteries have been destroyed or seriously vandalized. We include here the precious gem in Ma'aloula, St Thekla Monastery, in the heart of the land where is still spoken that ancient Aramaic, our Lord Jesus' mother tongue according to the flesh. The abbess, Mother Pelagia, her sisterhood, and the orphans in their care have been completely dispossessed. Among the martyrs unto blood are Fr. Fadi, one of our priests, who was killed as he arranged to ransom a captive parishioner. In the city of Hama, another priest, Fr. Vasileios, was killed by gunmen while he attempted to rescue a wounded person who was crying out for help.

This new hieromartyr, in observing Christ's command to love, fulfilled the whole meaning of his life by this last abbe's, Mother Pelagia, her sisterhood, and the orphans in their care have been completely dispossessed. Among the martyrs unto blood are Fr. Fadi, one of our priests, who was killed as he arranged to ransom a captive parishioner. In the city of Hama, another priest, Fr. Vasileios, was killed by gunmen while he attempted to rescue a wounded person who was crying out for help. This new hieromartyr, in observing Christ's command to love, fulfilled the whole meaning of his life by this last heroic and martyric act of Christian witness.

All of us here I am sure know about a member of the Holy Synod of Antioch, Metr. Boulos (Paul) who, along with his companion in the pursuit of charitable endeavours, Archbp. Youhanna (John) of the Syriac Church, was kidnapped. Their whereabouts and welfare remain unknown to us up to the present. However, we do not cease to pray for them day and night, until they come back safe to us.

One Arab-Christian leader said recently to those in the West, "Does anyone hear our cry? How many atrocities must we endure before somebody, somewhere, comes to our aid?" These are not the words of someone shirking his Christian witness or martyrdom, but rather a clarion call to Christians in other lands who are lulled into passivity and who may have forgotten what the highest expression of the Christian life is: self-denial even unto the ultimate cost in blood, should one be so called upon by divine Providence. Most recently, the Heritage Foundation offered a presentation by the first Syrian Christian delegation to visit the United States, in an official capacity. In that presentation, held on January 27th, not even a month ago, these facts were presented (www.heritage.org/events/2014/01/syria?ac=1):

- 9 million have been displaced from their homes; 2.4 million have fled. The city of Homs is almost completely cleared of its Christians. The Christian quarter in Aleppo is ruined.
- Christian persecution began not with the other (non-Christian) Syrians, but rather with the incitation of the armed extremist bands who came into Syria from other countries, especially Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar.
- Although some of the Muslim neighbors around the Christians, many of whom existed on friendly terms for a long time before, continue to be supportive of their Christian neighbors even in this tense situation, Syrian Christians ever more frequently hear from

their neighbors that they are unwanted and unwelcome. This leads to a sense of desperation and fear, thus increasing the rate of emigration.

What can we do about this, as fellow Christians? How can we here in the comforts of America share in the martyric witness of our brethren in the Middle East? First, let us answer the appeal of Patriarch John X of Antioch (issued last September, and still relevant today!) to contribute monetarily to the relief of our brethren. St. John Chrysostom teaches us to share in the martyrdom of those suffering for Christ's name by contributing to their relief. We are communicants in the same Bread and the same Cup; let us also share in the same burdens. Monetary relief is a material expression of our Christian faith and love, in solidarity with the whole catholic Church. "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (I John 3:16-17). This is another "John 3:16" which we should memorize and put into practice every day!

Let me bring my message to a conclusion, using a final counsel and a prayer offered by St. Isaac: *Instead of an avenger, be a deliverer. Instead of a fault-finder, be a soother. Instead of a betrayer, be a martyr... Conquer evil men by your gentle kindness, and make zealous men wonder at your goodness. (Hom. 64)*

Once you have read this important word, resolve now to contribute to the humanitarian relief of our suffering brethren. Include their plight in your daily prayers, and do all you can to support their Christian witness-martyrdom!



Syrian children near their tent at a refugee camp in the Lebanese border town of Aarsal.
Photograph: Bilal Hussein/AP, www.theguardian.com

Acquiring peace

I was sent a very interesting You-tube link about a Sociologist who was discussing her research. She was so shocked by her unexpected findings that she didn't know what to do with the data. The focus of her research was why some people feel connected and others don't. Six weeks into her project she saw this very clear pattern that caught her completely off-guard. She used the analogy of sitting through a work review & listening as your boss tells you **20 things** you did well and one thing that is "**an opportunity for growth.**" And, of course, people focus on the one area that is an opportunity for growth.

She noted that when she asked people about LOVE they often told her about heartbreak. When she asked them about BELONGING- they told her about their most excruciating experiences of being rejected. When she asked about connection- they told her stories about feeling disconnected. The reality is: many of us might respond the very same way if those same questions were posed to us.

Her research led her to conclude that there is a Fear of Disconnection. People ask themselves: Is there something about me (that if others saw it or knew it) I won't be worthy of connecting with them? Most people I know experience this to some degree: I am not smart enough, rich enough, pretty enough, thin enough, good enough. This causes them to conclude: I am not worthy of CONNECTION with you. That, in and of itself, is a sad situation but when that idea gets transferred into our relationship with God it can be devastating. God, I am not worthy of CONNECTION with YOU.

St. Isaac the Syrian said: Be at PEACE with your own soul then heaven & earth will be at peace with you. But we are not at peace with ourselves, are we? We are the most overweight, in debt, addicted, medicated adults in US History. Her research showed how people try to selectively NUMB certain emotions that they don't like.

I feel shame, vulnerability, grief, disappointment, fear. I don't want to feel these so- I will have a couple of drinks; I'll take a pill; I will eat an entire chocolate cake. I DON'T WANT TO FEEL THESE THINGS.

The problem with that approach is: you can't numb these feelings without numbing other emotions. When we numb: shame, fear, vulnerability, grief, disappointment – we also numb: joy happiness & gratitude. The result of

that is: We feel miserable & we begin looking for purpose & meaning in our life & THEN we feel vulnerable & we reach for a couple of beers, a pill, a chocolate cake, we blame others, are perfectionists or reclusive.

Our life has entered into an unhealthy cycle. And the first step (a scary one in many respects) is to stop and ask ourselves: WHY & HOW we are numbing ourselves? Because Orthodox people, in this country, are not exempt from this. Self-medication may seem like a quick fix but it is certainly not the way of healing that Christ has laid out for us.

St. Seraphim of Serov said something quite encouraging along these lines: Acquire the spirit of Peace and thousands around you will find their salvation. ACQUIRE! The Peace of God is something that everyone reading this article can Acquire.

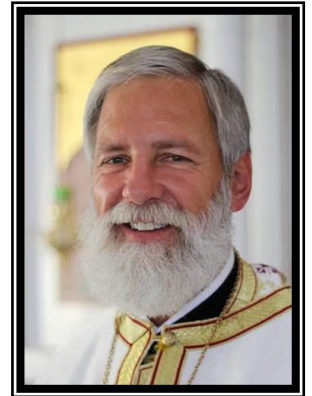
Along these same lines, St. Seraphim notes: *There is nothing better than PEACE in Christ, for it brings victory over all the evil spirits on earth and in the air. When PEACE dwells in a man's heart it enables him to contemplate the grace of the Holy Spirit from within. He who dwells in PEACE collects spiritual gifts as it were with a shovel, and he sheds the light of knowledge on others. All our thoughts, all our desires, all our efforts and all our actions should make us say constantly with the Church: O Lord, give us peace!* When a man lives in peace, God reveals mysteries to him.

Jesus told His disciples: *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* St. Isaac of Syria said: *The soul that loves God has its rest in God & in God alone. In all the paths that men walk in the world, they do not attain peace until they draw near to hope in God.*

There are all sorts of paths from which to choose but there is only one path that leads to healing...to peace! May God help us all to choose that path.

I pray that God grants each of you a blessed remainder of Lent and a most glorious Pascha.

In Christ, Unworthy Priest David



40th Anniversary

January 2014

Hierarchs, Rev. Fathers, Sisters in Christ,

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

To follow in many president's theme before me "Who are the Antiochian Women?" Why do we even bother to have such an organization when women are known throughout history to do the labors of love for our local churches?

To say I have been asked these questions a few times is an understatement. So if I may, humbly, share my thoughts. We know the line "A sisterhood serving Christ through serving others." So first, every woman over the age of 18 in our parishes is an Antiochian Women. Whether we admit it or not – paying dues does not make us an Antiochian Woman, going to the meetings does not make us an Antiochian woman. Being a woman in the Antiochian Archdiocese makes us an Antiochian woman. Once we embrace this our membership grows! Our challenge is to help all women appreciate their role in the organization. Yes, paying dues and showing up are important, they are the feet to our service. Without attendance at meetings we cannot coordinate our efforts. Without dues, we are unable to respond financially when we are petitioned to give to someone in need.

The next phrase – "serving Christ through serving others" is the most interesting part to me. We serve Christ. We serve others but our service to others is to serve Christ. Our love for Him overflows in all that we do; whether it is repairing vestments, baking holy bread, welcoming new families, sending cards, calling on a shut-in, helping a new mom, or raising money for a worthy cause – it is ALL to serve Christ. Our project and our humanitarian efforts are not to say "Look what we have done!" it is to say we love Christ and through that love we share our finances and our gifts to those in need. If we are truly serving Christ, then all we do should be done in love and with joy. It is through the umbrella of the Antiochian Women that our service extends beyond our local communities and into the world where, as the loaves and fishes, it is multiplied through God's blessing upon our efforts.

This year we are blessed to have both a humanitarian effort and a Project in harmony that supports those in deepest need. When we see the images of the suffering our Christian brothers and sisters in Syria must endure

we are compelled to pray. Through our many gifts we are called also to give.

His Eminence, Metropolitan Philip has asked us to make raising funds for the Orphans of Syria our project. Will our funds alleviate the suffering for all? The answer is no. However, is our loving heavenly Father able to multiply our gifts in ways unknown to us? YES! Then it is with this confidence we raise money and give out of love.

Our humanitarian effort is also a tangible expression of love. We are putting together Emergency Kits which will be sent to those in need. This is a wonderful way to bring not only the women in our parishes together but to join with our parish as a whole to bring a token of love and compassion to so many suffering. I very much encourage parishes to make time during coffee hour, Sunday School and our ladies monthly meetings to assemble these Emergency Kits.

Our efforts are not to bring glory to ourselves but instead as we pray the Prayer of the Antiochian Women, we are reminded our work is to bring glory to Christ our God.

*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.*

What a beautiful prayer to remember as we serve Christ through serving others!

Through the prayers of our Ever-Virgin Theotokos, may we continue to serve humbly and without tiring.

Your sister in Christ,

Melinda Bentz
President

Diocese of Los Angeles & the West and Eagle River & the Northwest



Introducing The 2013 - 2015 Board of Antiochian Women Of the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West And the Diocese of Eagle River and the Northwest

The Most Reverend Archbishop JOSEPH - Diocesan Hierarch



Joseph G. Al-Zehlaoui was born on November 2, 1950 in Damascus, Syria to Georgi and Mathil (Baghdan) Al Zehlaoui. He received his elementary education at the St. John of Damascus and Al Assiyeh schools in Damascus, and his secondary education at Our Lady of Balamand Monastery in Koura, Northern Lebanon. He then studied philosophy at Lebanese University in Beirut and theology, languages and music at Salonika University in Greece. He is fluent in Arabic, English and Greek.

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

During his clerical ministry, he served as General Supervisor and Professor of Religious Education at the Al Assiyeh Orthodox College and supervised the Patriarchal headquarters in Damascus. Besides being the Patriarchal Assistant during the previous several years, His Grace, Bishop JOSEPH served as the secretary to the Holy Synod of Antioch, Editor-in-Chief of the Patriarchal Bulletin and participated in several theological conferences in Greece, Texas and Australia.

At the request of His Eminence, Metropolitan PHILIP, His Grace was selected by the Holy Synod of Antioch

on January 24, 1995, to be an Auxiliary Bishop for the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of N America.

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

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

Very Rev. David Hovik - Spiritual Advisor



I was born and raised in Everett, WA. My father, Gordon, was an Everett firefighter and my mother, Geraldine, was the assistant director for the Everett Housing Authority. I am the middle child of three boys (my poor mother). After graduating from Everett High School in 1972, I attended Everett

Community College and was planning on going into radio broadcasting (becoming a DJ). That summer I was set up on a blind date with Kh. Debbie and she shared the gospel with me for the first time, which I can recall. After about two months of serious soul-searching I knelt down and prayed and, as far as I was able, committed my life to following Jesus Christ. I had no idea what I was getting into.

After Community College, I graduated from Seattle Bible College and then from Fuller Theological Seminary. I pastored Evangelical non-denominational churches for 19 years, served as both a hospital and prison chaplain and taught high school in a private Christian school. I began to examine Orthodox Christianity in 1990 and in February of 1997, by God's Grace and after a long journey, our congregation was received into the Orthodox Church by Sayidna JOSEPH. I enrolled in the St. Stephen's Course of Orthodox

Theological Studies and was ordained to the diaconate and then to the priesthood. I have served as the priest at St. Andrew Orthodox Church in Arlington, WA for over 16 years. Kh. Debbie and I have been married for 37 years: we have been blessed with 4 children (two girls and two boys) and ten grandchildren. Yes, I can still change a diaper in under 30 seconds. Our children and grandchildren are all members of our parish, so we are doubly blessed.

In February of 2004 Sayidna JOSEPH appointed me as the Spiritual Advisor of the Antiochian Women of our Diocese and I have been trying to figure out "why" ever since. Seriously, this appointment has been a great blessing to me and a very enjoyable experience as I have gotten to know many of the wonderful ladies in our God-protected Diocese. They keep trying to teach me a little Arabic and, with God's help, I'll get it - eventually.

Melinda Bentz - President



Born in St. Louis, Missouri, I was baptized Roman Catholic then my family converted to the Nazarene Church. Growing up a Nazarene Preacher's kid my parents instilled a deep love for God, the Church and serving others as the foundation in my life. I am blessed to be the President of the Antiochian Women for the Diocese of Los Angeles & the West and Diocese of Eagle River & Northwest. It is absolutely my joy and I realize an awesome responsibility to serve you as you serve our Lord!

I graduated from Olivet Nazarene University with a BA in Psychology and Sociology. My education from a private Christian College has been a blessing in my life. It helped set a foundation for my professional life and personal life. It was also at Olivet that I started questioning my protestant faith and started seeking the original Church. It was not until I met my husband that I found the Holy Orthodox Church. Since being chrismated into the Church in 1999 by Fr. Stephen Hardy +Memory Eternal+ I have found my home and am extremely grateful for all those who have mentored me, taught me and prayed for me.

My past positions in the Antiochian Women have been as President of my local parish, Public Relations for the Diocese and most recently as Vice-President before being elected to President this past PLC. Each position has allowed me to learn more about my faith and

become sisters with women across the Archdiocese. I also serve as Secretary on my Parish Council and choir director for my parish.

Together with my husband, Bill Bentz and our 3 daughters Brigitte, Ginger and Brittany, we worship at Holy Cross in Palmdale, CA. My hobbies include cooking, photography and singing

Georgette Malouf - V. President/ and NAB Project Coordinator



The Orthodox Church and church community have been a part of my life since as long as I can remember. I grew up singing in the choir, teaching Church School and being very active in SOYO and eventually the Ladies. Being active in my local church, St. Nicholas in Los Angeles, lead me to meet, have a wonderful friendship, and eventually marry my husband of 35 years, Ed Malouf. We have three children, Christian, Natalie, and Lauren.

I was fortunate enough to stay home with the kids as they were growing up. When they started college, I began working at an elementary school office as the Special Education Coordinator.

I have held all officer positions and many coordinator positions in the Antiochian Women of the Diocese of the West. I have also been active and held positions in the NAB as an officer and coordinator.

Jill Benza - Recording/Corresponding Secretary



Thank you for the opportunity to serve as the secretary for the Antiochian Women for the diocese. This is my second term as secretary. It has been my pleasure to meet new people from all over our diocese and learn more about what we as women can do to support our churches, its members and our communities.

Here's a little info about me: married to John for 45 1/2 years; have three adult children John M., Jeffrey and Jill N. Originally from Ohio and the Orthodox Church of America; lived in Arizona for 34 years; a member of the Antiochian Orthodox Church since 1985. Attended St. George in Phoenix until being a founding member of the St. Ignatius of Antioch Antiochian Orthodox Church in Mesa, Arizona in the mid 1990's; have served the

church in various capacities from Teen Soyo advisor, to church school teacher to festival chair to parish council president.

I retired in 2007 from Mesa Public Schools as the assistant superintendent in charge of business and support services. Currently my time is filled with being blessed with the opportunity to spend quality time with my grandchildren (have two extraordinary daughters-in-law, five beautiful grandchildren, three granddogs and three grandcats), working on behalf of my parish and being active in the community by serving on the board for my home owners association and on the board of the United Food Bank, a major provider of food to over 250 community assistance agencies. I am also involved in a women's nonpartisan political organization.

It has been my pleasure to work on behalf of the Antiochian Women as secretary of our diocesan organization and I look forward to serving in the future.

Michele Baba - Treasurer



Michele was born in Altoona, PA, and grew up in Anaheim, CA, attending St. Luke Orthodox Church in Garden Grove, which is where she met her husband Danny. After their marriage, they participated in the founding of St. Mark Church in Irvine.

Michele continued her deep involvement in the church life by teaching Sunday School for 15 years at both St. Mark and St. Luke and was an active parent in Teen SOYO at both parishes. She served as Ladies President at St. Mark and worked on many committees. She served as board member on the St. Nicholas Camp Committee over her last 12 years at camp including director, arts and crafts, sports, and most recently as supportive medical staff.

Michele received her Bachelors Degree from California State University Long Beach. Her working career has included teaching at Prince of Peace Lutheran School in Anaheim and as an account executive for Shesido Cosmetics. For the past 14 years she has been employed by Saddleback Valley Unified School District, working in Special Education and Elementary P.E. teacher. She enjoys being outside working with children, especially her own: Lauren, Michael, Daniel, and Alexander. Michele's favorite means of relaxation is her practice of yoga! With their children grown, Michele and Danny

now have more time together they enjoy listening to music and attending concerts.

Charmaine Darmour - Public Relations Director



I'm really excited to serve as the Public Relations Officer for the Antiochian Women (AW) of the Diocese of LA & the West! I was born & raised in Parma, Ohio and where I was a member at St. George Antiochian Church in Cleveland, Ohio. While at St. George, I was active in Teen SOYO, taught Sunday

School and sang in the choir. I was very blessed to spend time at the Antiochian Village throughout the summers of my teen & college years. My time at "the Village" really deepened my faith and greatly influenced the person I am today. The friendships I made there are still among my most treasured relationships. After graduating from Cleveland State University, I moved to Southern California. It's hard to imagine that was over 25 years ago! In the early 90's I served for three years as the Bible Bowl Coordinator in our then "Western Region." I currently attend St. Michael in Van Nuys, where I sing in the choir, serve on the Parish Council and am the President of our local AW Chapter. I've worked for 25 years with wonderful people at the Anaheim Police Department, who I'm proud of on a daily basis. I ask that you please keep our 1st Responders in your prayers.

There is a lot to see in this world, so I travel whenever possible. My favorite destination thus far has been Alaska! I also really enjoy reading & singing.

My goal in this new role is to really help get us, the Antiochian Women, more connected to each other. My predecessor set up a facebook page "Antiochian Orthodox Women" - please "like" our facebook page & post events from your church, so as Sisters in Christ, we can learn from each other's experiences and grow closer.

Lucy Hanna- Immediate Past President



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

in London, England where my father was a visiting professor at the University of London for one year.

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

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

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

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

Christina Shaheen Reimann, M.A., M.Ed., CADCII - Religious Coordinator



Raised and nurtured in the Orthodox Christian Church by faithful and loving parents, I am a priest's wife in the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese. My great grandfather, grandfather, father, and uncle were priests, and my two brothers and husband currently serve as priests in the Orthodox Church.

Growing up Orthodox in a priestly family was normal and inspiring. I believe that I have the best job in the world, because I get to support and love the priest, he who offers and distributes 'Him Who is offered, accepts and is distributed, eaten yet never consumed' (St. Basil's Liturgy) and to journey with His Body the Way of His Cross and Resurrection. It is a great privilege to serve Christ and His Church by serving His priest and His Body of Believers.

While growing up Orthodox, I have always participated in the sacramental life of the church, as well as its ministries: singing in the choir, chanting, teaching Sunday school, presenting in the Oratorical Festivals, leading retreats, and assisting the priest with whatever he needed.

My education includes studies in Education, Theology, and Counseling Psychology. I graduated with a B.A. from Hellenic College, with a double major in Education/Theology (1984). At St. Vladimir Seminary I earned an M.A. in Theology (1986). At the University of Massachusetts, I received an M.E.d in Rehabilitation Counseling (1990) and went on to earn a certification in Alcohol and Drug Addiction Counseling in the states of MA and CA (1993).

My secular work: I taught Emotionally Traumatized/Learning Disabled Children in Boston Public Schools, while working on my Master of Education degree. Hired by the place of my internship, I counseled alcoholics, families and spouses. It was also my job to teach education groups on addictions and how it affects the family. I have experience in outpatient, inpatient counseling, and running the Family Education Unit of Fuller Memorial Hospital in South Attleboro, MA. Prior to my move to S. California in 1996, I ran the Dedham Community Care Center's premier Sober House for the Dually Diagnosed. I worked with a team to get it licensed by the state. In 1999, I did consultant work for Burbank Counseling Center.

Additionally, I am blessed, along with my loving husband, Fr. John Reimann, to nurture and educate two beautiful daughters: Anastasia, 14, and Elizabeth, 11 in the Orthodox Faith. We are homeschooling parents, who love to learn and grow with our talented and steadfast girls. Fr. John and I served St. Nicholas Cathedral in LA from 1996-2008. In 2008, we were assigned to St. Anthony's in San Diego. My ministries at St. Nicholas were many: Choir, Chanting, Teaching Adult Catechism, Camp (16 years.) I currently serve St. Anthony's parish as Khouria, praying for and loving our flock, as Church School Director, and assisting the Ladies Society in their many ministries.

Melody Bahu - Membership Coordinator



I was baptized at St. Luke Church in Garden Grove, California and have been an active member for the past 27 years. At St. Luke I have held offices in Teen SOYO, Secretary of our Ladies Group and currently Vice President. I have also recently started and mentor our young adult group-GAP. In 2011 I was elected Public Relations Director for the Antiochian Diocese of Los Angeles and the West and currently am blessed to serve as Membership Coordinator. I am a meal coordinator for FOCUS at our parish. I have participated in OYO trips during my youth and Project Mexico, which has always had a special place in my heart.

Professionally I have practiced Real Estate, Insurance, Public Relations, Marketing, Notary and Talent Development. Last year I was recruited to work in New York for a year at a software company. I came back to CA in May for Graduate School at my alma mater Chapman University to study Leadership Development.

I believe that I represent the future of our diocese and it is my responsibility to be active and use the gifts I have been blessed with as an officer, teacher/mentor or usher. I am setting examples for my peers to become involved and be invested in our future, to learn from our elders aka the Experts. Life is like the ocean, it ebbs and flows and it's not only about how we can affect something or someone else, but how we can be affected ourselves.

Elizabeth Krammes-Spring Retreat/Scholarship Co-Chair



My family attends St. Andrew Orthodox Church in Riverside. We sing in the choir and assist as needed with various activities such as the weekly bulletin, coffee hour, patronal festivities and older members' social events. My immediate family consists of husband, Barry-an art professor, two sons and one daughter. I homeschooled my children for many years. All three of our adult children are in university programs at present. In 1996, we came into the Orthodox Church at St Michael, Whittier, CA, from Protestant backgrounds.

Originally from the Midwest, we've lived in CA for the last 30 years; most of the time in Whittier, but 4 years in the mountains of Big Bear. I have a Master's degree in Intercultural Studies and taught English classes to

international students part time. I'm involved with student and university events through my husband's work. Lifelong learning, needs of the less fortunate, missions, reading, and music are interests of mine. Our family enjoys traveling and have been blessed to visit many places in Western and Eastern Europe as well as Turkey and China. We try to have an open home and often have guests staying with us.

Establishing ways of strengthening women's fellowship and mutual support is very important, at the parish level and beyond. The last year and especially the past few months have brought the repose of several dear family, friends and parishioners. As we continue in our roles of Christian service may we draw closer to the Lord and lovingly uphold one another in the trials and sorrows we must face.

Ramona Blanski-Spring Retreat/Scholarship Co-Chair



I was born in El-Mina, Lebanon, and immigrated to the U.S in 1992. I am very excited about taking more responsibilities in the Antiochian women as co-coordinator of the ladies retreat, and looking forward working with Beth Krammes and the ladies on increasing attendance at the retreat. I am married to Rusty Blanski and have two daughters, Alexandra and Christina. We attend Holy Cross in Palmdale, CA. I teach Sunday school and organize the monthly ladies breakfast at my Church. I earned my B.S in chemistry from the Lebanese University, and my M.S in physical chemistry from University of Maryland, Baltimore County. I teach chemistry and physics at an early college high school in Lancaster CA. I also advise the rocket club and Science Olympiad teams at my school. I enjoy very much reading, swimming, traveling, cooking and spending time with my family.



Third Sunday after Pascha
Myrrhbearing women at the tomb

Happenings Around The Diocese Of Los Angeles & the West

By Charmaine Darmour, Diocesan PR Director

Across our Archdiocese the Sisterhood of Antiochian Women (AW) are busy in their communities supporting various charities, gathering in prayer & fellowship and supporting their local parishes in an endless variety of ways. The Antiochian Women of the Diocese of Los Angeles & the West are certainly no different! Our

Diocese is actually double size, extending all the way to the Great State of Alaska & including the provinces of Western Canadian, so the following is but a glimpse into all that is happening around the Diocese!

In Saskatoon, the AW of St. Vincent meet on a weekly basis to pray the Paraklesis to the Theotokos. At St. Barnabas in Costa Mesa they have a continual book discussion and have just started a new book, "The Hermitess Photini" by Archimandrite Joachim Spetsieris.

There is also much service going on throughout our Diocese. In October, the ladies at St. Mark in Irvine, CA held their 3rd annual Breast Cancer Awareness Weekend with a 3 mile walk on Saturday, and a luncheon after Liturgy on Sunday with all proceeds benefitting "Living Beyond Breast Cancer."



At St. Michael, Van Nuys the proceeds from the Sunday Coffee Hours support both St. Barbara Monastery in Santa Paula, CA and their child in the Children's Relief Fund. Speaking of the Children's Relief – the AW of St. George in Phoenix, AZ have been supporting this great project for 36 years!!! Currently they do so with monthly zahtar bread sales. Another service project benefiting the children in need at Sunshine Acres Children's Home, is the Angel Tree program by the AW of St. Ignatius in Mesa, AZ.

It should come as no surprise that throughout our parishes there are an endless variety of festivals – all of which highlight the culinary mastery of the Antiochian Women!! Each month, there is a Falafel sandwich sale at St. Joseph the Damascene in Vancouver, BC. At St. John the Evangelist, in Orinda, CA over 2000 grape leaves were rolled for their Middle Eastern in just under 3 hours! In Phoenix at St. George the women cooked & baked to support their parish "Feast of the Middle East." If Oktoberfest is right up your alley, St. Barnabas in Costa Mesa is the place to visit!



Of course the Christmas season brings Christmas bazaars at parishes including St. John Cathedral in Eagle River, Alaska and St. Mark, Irvine.



Do you like soup? If so, the AW of St. Ignatius – Mesa, AZ sell homemade soup along with baked goods at their Christmas Bake Sale. Lots of goodies to choose from!

As we enter into Great Lent, there will be our Spring Lenten Retreat, featuring our Spiritual Advisor, the Very Reverend David Hovik. This year we will be learning about the second half of the Beatitudes, in the beautiful San Bernardino Mountains. As the year progresses, the activities of the AW continue, with assorted good works including a variety of projects in support of our annual NAB project.

THE ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA: Who are they? And what is their Focus and Purpose?

*By Lucy Hanna, Immediate Past President and
NAB Co-Public Relations Director*

The Answer to the first question is simple: Every Orthodox woman, 18 years or older, who is a member of a parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America is an Antiochian Woman, regardless of ethnic origin or ancestry and whether your parish has an organized chapter or not.

The answer to the second question, while also simple, may be a bit more lengthy. Women have a natural capacity to love and nurture. This is what His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP capitalized on when he founded the National Organization of Antiochian Women in 1973. Then, to help us in our ministries he formed a committee to establish a focus and a purpose for our organization as a roadmap to guide us in a spirit of Christian leadership, awareness and commitment, fostering love through charitable acts and creating a sense of fellowship and understanding of our heritage and traditions.

It has been said that the women are the backbone of all the parishes throughout the Archdiocese. Besides teaching Sunday School, singing in the choir, serving on the parish council, running church bookstores, cleaning, cooking and baking the Prospora, they still have time to do charitable and humanitarian work within their parishes, in their communities and even for national and international charities. One of the main purposes of having a national organization is to guide women across the Archdiocese focus on deserving charities. To accomplish this, we have a North American Board who, with the guidance of the Metropolitan, the overseeing Hierarchy and the Spiritual Advisor, investigate and find these deserving charities. Then, in order to pass along the information, we have counterparts on the diocesan level, who in turn pass along the information to the parishes. It is therefore very important to have women representatives from every parish who are responsible to receive and distribute this information. These would be the chapter board or officers.

Other materials trickled down from the NAB to the chapters through the diocesan boards are the Religious programs (the “Read the Bible in a Year” and the “Lives of Women Saints” programs are two such past examples), the DIAKONIA newsletter, humanitarian

projects, membership programs, etc. are others.

Some parishes feel that they don’t need an elected board to do their charitable work. Of course, they don’t, but to make matters more orderly, it is important for the diocesan board to know who is to receive the information, in most cases it is the “President”. It is important to have someone in charge of the money collected from the fundraising events for the charities. This would be the “Treasurer” who will then send the money to the diocesan treasurer, who in turn will send it to the NAB treasurer. The NAB treasurer then writes a check for the total amounts received from all dioceses to the Archdiocese for the Metropolitan to oversee the distribution to the charities. To keep record of all the decisions and plans, it is important to have someone take notes. That would be the secretary. It is not “titles” we are seeking, but rather an orderly process.

Among the many charitable acts of the Antiochian Women are those that help our own women such as the annual scholarships offered to women 25 years or older who are members of the Antiochian Archdiocese and who **need** to return to school to further their education. Others include our annual projects, which are worthy causes for which we have raised over 3 million dollars since 1975. These projects are too many to list and they include Pastoral Education, Balamand Seminary and University, Missions, Orthodox Media, Seminarians, Antiochian Village, Patriarchal Charities, St. George Hospital in Beirut, International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), Orphanages, and Retired Clergy Housing, Children with Special Needs, Convent of St. Thekla, Tornado Relief Fund, and now our current

project is “Helping the Orphans of War in Syria”.

So, who are the Antiochian Women? They are all these women who sacrificially give of their time, talent and means to help the less fortunate. They are the women who strive to emulate our Most Holy Mother, the Theotokos, and all the Saints in doing charitable works. They are every woman in the more than 300 parishes in our Archdiocese.

Through the prayers of our Mother the Most Holy Theotokos, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy upon us and save us. Amen.



EMBRACING ORTHODOX LENTEN TRADITIONS

*By Heidi Blair, St. Michael's Antiochian Orthodox
Church, Van Nuys, CA*

For our family, Lenten fasting led us to Orthodoxy.

That's quite a statement, isn't it? Back in 2005, when we only had one small child in the house, my husband wanted to make Lent more significant than usual. We were born-and-raised Protestants and were a bit underwhelmed by the way Lent was honored in our tradition; people usually tried to give up something negative (like candy or alcohol) or tried to do something positive (like exercise more or read their Bible daily). It felt a lot like making a New Year's resolution; it didn't really matter if you did it but it was kind of fun to try. That year my husband Chad decided he wanted to eat simply during the Lenten season. After a bit of research, he discovered a tradition that *always* did this during Lent - the Orthodox Church.

Fast forward to 2014- we now have three sons and our family converted to the Orthodox Church as a unit in December 2010, a day filled with much joy!

Lent was and continues to be one of the most challenging, and most rewarding, seasons in our church year. Chad and I have discussed many times how to incorporate Lent into our kids' lives, in a way that is positive and significant, rather than oppressive and irritating. It is we, the parents, who set the mood of the house; it is we who set the example of how to "do" Lent.

We spend lots of time in conversation about Lent, Pascha, and Christ's sacrifice, with the kids around the dinner table as we eat our meat-free, dairy-free dinner. We teach them new prayers during this season, pulled from our small red prayer book. We cheerfully moan about missing bacon and sausage, so that the kids see that it is OK to struggle with desires vs. needs. When the kids feel discouraged, we remind them over and over about how amazing the Pascha party will be (waffles at 2AM!). And each night, we add coins to the "Food For The Needy" box that sits in the center of our table.

Practically speaking, I spend most of Lent working my way through a fairly intense Spring Cleaning list; for me, there is no better time to reflect and pray than when I am scrubbing out closets. I scroll through Pinterest searching for vegan/shellfish recipes (some of them here: <http://www.pinterest.com/blairheidi/fasting-lent-recipes/>). I

attempt with occasional success to do my morning prayers and Bible reading. And though our family is not Arabic, I make pumpkin kibbe to get us through the day (that is some serious yumminess). This year is special for our oldest boy; at age 9, he will receive his very own Orthodox Study Bible and spend time with his daddy learning why God's word is so important.

Lent is indeed a worthwhile struggle.



MEDITATION FOR GREAT LENT

*Fast from judging others; feast on the Christ dwelling in us.
Fast from emphasis on differences; feast on the unity of life.
Fast from apparent darkness; feast on the reality of light.
Fast from thoughts of illness; feast on the healing power of God.
Fast from words that pollute; feast on phrases that purify.
Fast from discontent; feast on gratitude.
Fast from pessimism; feast on optimism.
Fast from worry; feast on divine order.
Fast from complaining; feast on appreciation.
Fast from negatives; feast on affirmatives.
Fast from unrelenting pressures; feast on unceasing prayer.
Fast from hostility; feast on non-resistance.
Fast from bitterness; feast on forgiveness.
Fast from self-concern; feast on compassion for others.
Fast from personal anxiety; feast on eternal truth.
Fast from discouragements; feast on hope.
Fast from lethargy; feast on enthusiasm.
Fast from thoughts that weaken; feast on promises that inspire.
Fast from idle gossip; feast on purposeful silence.
Fast from problems that overwhelm; feast on prayer that fulfills.*

REFLECTION ON BEING AN ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

*By Rania Al Debss of St. Philip,
Edmonton, Alberta Canada*

Sisters in Christ,

I have been a member of St. Philip Orthodox Church all my life. This has been my home Parish from my pre-school years until my adult years. How blessed am I to have had the opportunity to experience and be a part of a growing Orthodox community. A community who cares, shares and works together towards a common goal, a goal of fellowship and worship. I have had the pleasure of pursuing many positions throughout the years at St. Philip's Church. As a child I was a Sunday school student, as a young adult I was a Sunday school teacher, and as an adult I have held several positions throughout the years. Such positions include Recording Secretary for the Antiochian Women, Treasurer for the Antiochian Women, Sunday school teacher, acting Secretary for the Parish Council, Organizer of the Arabic school program for children, and currently President of the Antiochian Women for the past two years.

I graduated from the University of Alberta with a BA Degree specializing in Criminology. Although I worked for 3 years in my profession, once I had my first of four children, I chose to stay home and focus on raising my family. It has been an honor to have my four children ages 4 to 9 to experience the involvement of the Antiochian Women with me. It is a blessing to have learned about commitment, dedication and the importance of fellowship and involvement with the Church. By having my young children actively involved with me as I continuously come and go, I have also instilled in them the meaning of obedience, patience, respect and honoring one another as we are all one family under one home, the Church.

As an Antiochian Women, I believe that unless we, the Antiochian Women begin something, no matter what it is, then we will never complete it. Every woman should be thankful and grateful to have the opportunity to bring people together, get others involved and to serve in the Church. We play an important role in fellowship. We initiate after service coffee hour, potlucks, fundraisers, bake sales, meetings and ladies fellowship evenings. The events are endless.

While actively involving the Antiochian Women and the Parish, we become a Spiritual body, not one of busi-

ness or social organization. We have learned that serving can take place in many forms. Such forms as what once started as dinner fundraisers and bake sales, has grown to New Year's Eve parties and hosting the Sunday of Orthodoxy. This reveals our ambitions. Striving for more and accomplishing goals with little limits. I believe that as spiritual women, we focus on our innate gifts to serve our Church and Community. Because our work is voluntary and not just for the money, we learn to embrace the value of a good Orthodox life. The value which comes from prayer, love, and forgiveness.

As Antiochian Women, we are not waiting for praise or discovery. We are Antiochian Women because we share, serve and pleasantly smile to emphasize the importance of fellowship and Community as one. "We are a sisterhood serving Christ through serving others."



2014 SPRING RETREAT

Southern California Diocesan Antiochian Women's Retreat

April 4-6, 2014

CAMP LOCH LEVEN in MENTONE, CA

We are again blessed to have as our Retreat
Speaker our very own Spiritual Advisor:

V. REVEREND DAVID HOVIK

THEME: THE BEATITUDES (PART 2): THE
PATH TO THE KINGDOM OF GOD



For more information: <http://www.antiochianladiocese.org/>

NORTH AMERICAN BOARD MID-WINTER MEETING February 7-9, Phoenix, Arizona

The North American Board gathered in sunny Arizona this year instead of the usual location at the Antiochian Village in Pennsylvania. There were lots of smiles from East Coasters as they soaked in the warm sun!

The meeting started on Friday night with a welcome and opening prayer led by NAB president, Violet Robbat. The remainder of the evening was filled with reports from the NAB officers and committee members, and a book club discussion led by His Grace Bishop JOHN on the book "Help! I'm Bored in Church," by Father David Smith. It was a lively late-night discussion that was fun for all.

The meeting continued on Saturday morning with reports from each of the Diocesan Presidents that make up the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese. A lengthy discussion ensued about "Who is an Antiochian Woman?" and many attendees chimed in with the same answer, "We all are! Every woman 18 and older who is a member of a parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America is an Antiochian Woman." We will be passing out stickers that say "I am an Antiochian Woman" to the women at all parishes during the month of March, which is Antiochian Women's month.

Some of the women also shared their humanitarian

efforts of making health, school, and baby kits for children and adults displaced by the war in Syria. As of January 30, 2014, 282 kits have been sent to the IOCC. This humanitarian effort will continue throughout the year.

The meeting wrapped up at lunchtime on Saturday. There were many hugs and much laughter as women from across the country caught up on each others' lives. It was a wonderful weekend of worship, prayer, business, sharing meals together, and fellowship. We look forward to the summer meetings at the Antiochian Village on July 18-20, 2014.



NAB Board and Committee Members

Front Row: Sherry Abraham Morrow, Laila Ferris, MaryLou Catelli, Violet Robbat, Dianne O' Regan
Back Row: Melissa Skocypec, His Grace Bishop JOHN, Deana Bottei.



Women from across the country gathered at St. George in Phoenix, AZ, for a gathering of the NAB

SYRIAN WAR ORPHANS

Their Daily Struggle

Presented by Margaret Putman and Lama Hana-Mousa at St. Ignatius in Mesa, AZ for purposes of fundraising for the 2013-2014 AW Project

Please attempt to walk in the shoes of your Syrian sisters and brothers with the following information, and please respond with a donation to the IOCC fund for Syrian War Orphans.

Please contemplate for a moment the devastation that is continuing day after day as a result of the War going on in Syria. Think of the human cost; people lost, killed, or maimed. Think of the destruction: cities damaged or destroyed including homes, schools, and hospitals. Think about roadways, water lines, electrical power disruptions, garbage disposal, farms and agriculture, supply lines for food – everything is affected in war. Think about the price of food and basic necessities increasing to the point that there just isn't enough money to buy and one doesn't have anything to trade.

Think of the grief for what is lost, fear, loss of power, isolation, depression, uncertainty. Think of what it must be like to be a mother who has lost her husband. Think of what happens to her children if something happens to her. They may have been hurt or may have suffered physically from the fighting and there is no treatment. Her children may be scattered as neighbors flee with children or as teen sons strike out into the countryside on their own. Think about the fear they have for seeking out basic needs and not finding them: security and safety, food, clean water, sanitation, and shelter. Think about the potential for the children to be victimized or exploited or for some to turn to theft, vandalism, or even being trained to fight and return to Syria.

There are 21.9 million people who call Syria home. The UNHCR anticipates that in 2014 as many as 50% of the Syrian people will need some kind of humanitarian assistance. Currently, it is estimated that there are 6 million displaced people living in Syria. Another 2.5 million people have registered as refugees in neighboring countries such as Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, Iraq, and Egypt, with an estimated 2000 more people leaving Syria each day.

This humanitarian crisis disproportionately affects women and children. 75% of enrolled refugees are

children younger than 17 and adult women. Children report suffering from flashbacks, sleeping troubles, bedwetting, or even speech problems. Others become aggressive or hyperactive and others become shy, quiet, or withdrawn. Children are the breadwinners in many households. UNICEF estimates 1 in 10 children are working. Most toil long hours in hazardous conditions in restaurants, barbershops, street stands, clothing stores, rock quarries, and carpenter shops. Attending school is only a memory for some children who have not attended since the start of the war. Their preoccupation has turned to day to day survival instead of thinking about education and a career.

Once rare infectious diseases have spread in rebel-held areas brought on by the collapse of sanitation and living conditions, including measles, typhoid, hepatitis, dysentery, tuberculosis, diphtheria, whooping cough, and leishmaniasis (a disfiguring parasitic skin disease carried by sand flies). In 2013 it was especially disturbing to hear that there were 90 cases of polio, a disease that has otherwise been eradicated. Children are dying because of otherwise preventable or treatable diseases, such as dysentery. Children are not getting enough to eat and drink, leading to serious cases of dehydration and malnutrition and subsequent susceptibility to disease and developmental delay.

Question: "What does the Bible say about orphans and widows?"

Answer: The Bible reveals God's attitude toward orphans and widows: He cares very deeply for them. God commands us to protect and care for orphans and widows (Psalm 82:3).

In our world, those who are helpless tend to be taken advantage of by those who think they can get away with it. However, nothing escapes God's notice, and He will avenge the orphans and widows. When God gave the Law to Moses and the Israelites, He gave instructions for how to treat the orphans and widows among them, with harsh consequences promised if they failed in their responsibility. Caring for those in distress is not optional for followers of Christ.

We should not view caring for orphans and widows as simply a command from God we must fulfill "or else." There is tremendous blessing in practically serving and standing up for orphans and widows. In considering what our own attitude should be toward them, it's helpful to remember that all of us were once orphans, spiritually speaking, but we were adopted into God's

family through Jesus Christ ([Ephesians 1:3–7](#)). Just as it was God’s pleasure to do this for each of us, it is our joy and privilege to partner with God in loving, serving, and protecting the orphans and widows among us.

Please do not allow these orphans to continue to go without food, shelter, or clothing. Please contribute to the Antiochian Women’s project to help the Orphans of War in Syria.



*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)***

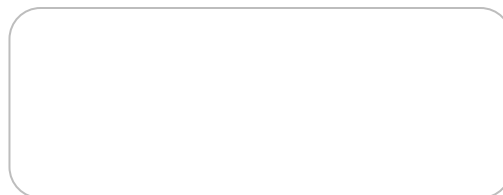
Our Goal: \$200,000!

A Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others



ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

Lucy Hanna
1853 Kensington Road
Corona, CA 92880



Mark your Calendars for the 2014 Parish Life Conferences

Diocese	Dates	Host Parish
Diocese of Wichita	June 11 - 15	St. Ephraim Church, San Antonio, TX
Diocese of Miami	June 11 - 15	St. George Church, Orlando, FL
Diocese of Worcester	June 19 - 22	St. George Church, Boston, MA
Diocese of Toledo	June 25 - 29	St. John Church, Ft. Wayne, IN
Dioceses of Los Angeles and Eagle River	July 2 - 6	St. Nicholas Church, San Francisco, CA
Dioceses of Charleston and New York	July 2 - 6	St. George Church, New Kensington, PA
Diocese of Ottawa	July 2 - 6	St. Elias Church, Syracuse, NY