

# DIAKONIA

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

Summer 2015



100th Anniversary  
of our Father among  
the Saints, Raphael  
of Brooklyn  
1915 - 2015

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

☞ A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS ☞

# The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women Of North America

His Eminence, the Most Reverend JOSEPH,  
Archbishop of New York  
and Metropolitan of All North America

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His Grace Bishop. JOHN, Spiritual Advisor

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### *Antiochian Women's Prayer*

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

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

## PUBLICATION GUIDELINES:

### **Deadlines**

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

**To submit articles,** e-mail as an attachment to:  
lucy.hanna@sbcglobal.net

### **Submission Details**

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

### **Content**

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

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In this issue of the DIAKONIA we highlight the  
**The Diocese of Worcester & New England**

In each of the next four 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.

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## What is DIAKONIA

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

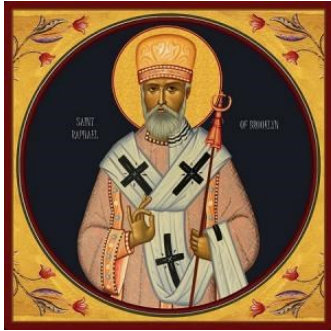
To read the DIAKONIA online, or for general information regarding the Antiochian Women, please go to the Antiochian Women website at:  
<http://www.antiochian.org/women>

To read past issues of DIAKONIA, go to:  
<http://www.antiochian.org/AW-DIAKONIA>



*“Rejoice, O Father Raphael, adornment of the holy Church! Thou art champion of the True Faith, seeker of the lost, consolation of the oppressed, father to orphans and friend of the poor, peacemaker and good shepherd, joy of all the Orthodox, son of Antioch, boast of America. Intercede with Christ God for us and for all who honor thee.”*

+ *Apolytikion for St. Raphael, Tone 3*



The year 2015 marks the 100th Anniversary of the repose of our father in Christ Saint Raphael of Brooklyn. As such, the theme for all of our Parish Life Conferences and the Archdiocesan Convention is “Life of our Father among the Saints Raphael of Brooklyn”. It is with the hymn above that the Church remembers and honors the life of this great Saint of North America. He truly exemplified the model of a caring and loving pastor who was willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of his spiritual children. He is an adornment in the sense that his life amplifies the beauty of the Church. He is a champion of the True Faith in that he was never willing to compromise the Holy Orthodox Faith, despite the fact that he was present in a strange land, under very difficult circumstances. He is a seeker of the

lost and consolation of the oppressed in that he travelled far and wide, despite great personal hardship, to gather the lost sheep of North America under his pastoral care. He is a father to orphans and friend of the poor as demonstrated by his loving attention to the material and spiritual needs of the most needy. He is a peacemaker and good shepherd in that he calmed any turmoil amongst the people by his loving presence and wisdom. He is a joy of all the Orthodox, son of Antioch, and boast of America in that he came from the ancient Church of Antioch to breath life into the fledgling Church in America. Let us all strive to have our own lives follow the example which St. Raphael has given to us.

When one looks at the goals which have been set forth for the Antiochian Women (from the web page of the Antiochian Women), one is struck by the very strong relationship of those goals to the example set by St. Raphael throughout his ministry. Those goals are:

1. To develop among women throughout the Antiochian Archdiocese a spirit of Christian leadership, awareness and commitment as taught in the Holy Orthodox Church.
2. To foster among women throughout the Antiochian Archdiocese a genuine expression of love and service through works of charity, and
3. To instill among women throughout the Antiochian Archdiocese and the community at large a sense of fellowship and a deeper understanding of the heritage and traditions of the Antiochian Archdiocese and the Orthodox Church.

Just as St. Raphael made it priority to serve those in need, so do the Antiochian Women. Just as St. Raphael was a “father to orphans and friend of the poor”, so are the Antiochian Women in your outreach to orphans and those who are in need of a helping hand. This strong alignment of purpose was not arrived at by a deliberate effort. Rather it stems from the common love that is manifested by all Orthodox Christians who truly take to heart the command of our Savior to feed the hungry and to clothe the naked. It seems clear that St. Raphael would be greatly pleased that his legacy is being honored by all of the hard working and faithful women of this God-protected Archdiocese.

In the same way that St. Raphael set an example that we now follow, we are called to set an example to be followed by our future generations. Our work must always be done with a strong spirit of love, cooperation, and mutual respect, because we are all members of the Body of Christ, which is His Church.

May your work continue to be blessed through the prayers of our father among the Saints Raphael of Brooklyn.

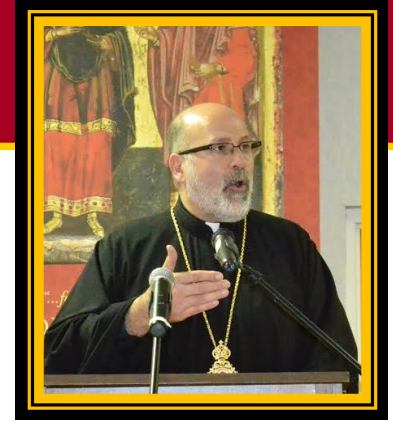
Your Father in Christ,

+Joseph

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of All North America

## MESSAGE FROM HIS GRACE BISHOP JOHN

Dicesan Bishop and NAB Spiritual Advisor



*The Antiochian Women have been given a mandate by Metropolitan JOSEPH to develop the spirituality of the Antiochian Archdiocese through nurturing the faithful by providing spiritual programs and encouraging monasticism. Because Antiochian spirituality is incarnational and women are nurturers and life-givers, this mandate seems well suited to the Antiochian Women. This is our Identity and mission. I wish to offer a few reflections on identity and how does identity relates to our mission?*

Our Identities involve both

- (1) how we belong to the groups (community) we define ourselves by and
- (2) how we are separate individuals within these groups as well.

Healthy communities are built of healthy persons or individuals who understand the communities of which we belong and shape our identities. In Orthodox theological circles, folks spend a lot of time speaking against individualism. By individualism we generally mean self-centeredness, selfishness, separateness and self-determination. These things taken to their logical conclusion at best prevent community and family building and at worse lead to hedonism and isolation. But community and individuality are not mutually exclusive concepts and individualism is not always self-centered.

Our identity as human beings comes from sharing what is common to humanity. We belong to the human community, made up of persons in the image of likeness of God. All humans are created in the image and likeness of God, called to give glory to God and to be stewards of His world. We belong to the Orthodox Christian community that shares the revelations of God through His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ who Himself established our Church for us to live and worship within. His body the Church is under His Headship by the grace and movement of the Holy Spirit.

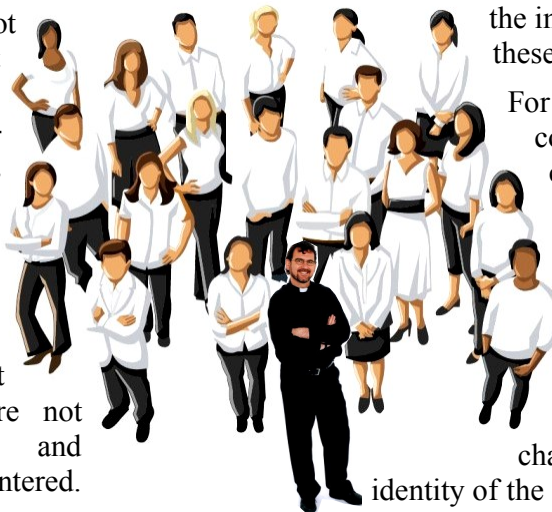
Our identity as Orthodox Christians allows us to grow and be protected by godly relationships with our bishops and their representative clergy to be protected, educated and thrive. Our identity is drawn from these relationships and the tenants or expressions of the faith (scriptures, history and teachings) that we use to

understand ourselves. Our identity is further shaped by the gender that we were fashioned in as Orthodox Christian men or women and further shaped by our families and cultures.

Within the circles that we live we have experiences that mold us. Ultimately, our identity comes from knowing first how we are one in community with those who join us in each of these identifying circles and then second, how we are separate and whole persons in the image of God both within and outside these circles.

For example, I belong to the following communities: a man, an Orthodox, a clergyman, an American. What is most basic to being a human, an Orthodox Christian, an American, a man or woman, is clearly who I am. There may be, however, some characteristics of what people generally consider the norm of these communities that are not characteristic or authentic to the identity of the group at all. For example humans in our time are often fearful, aggressive, unkind, competitive and hurtful to others. Some Orthodox Christians are judgmental, lax in following the traditions of the faith and lazy about Church attendance. Many Americans are often insensitive to the needs of others outside their group, self-indulgent using a disproportionate amount of the world's resources and values self-pleasure over the needs of others. Some men are not protectors, respectful and cherishers of God's gifts. But none of these things are what is basic to what we Orthodox Christians define being human, Orthodox Christian, American (or from any ethnic or national group) or being man or woman.

Humans are persons in the image and likeness of God with the mandate to sanctify the world given us and the potential to grow into the likeness of God who is Good. Orthodox Christians are people who put on Christ and



have the potential of incarnate Truth in a fallen world, loving God and caring for His people. Americans are people with a potential to live out the principles that America was founded on. Men and women have opportunities to choose to express God's attributes (his love, care, goodness) in their lives and through their relationships. We cannot choose to accept or reject what it means to be human, Orthodox, man or woman or from a particular culture. We can however do our jobs poorly and live counter to our identities or we can even rebel against what it means to be ourselves. This will of course lead us to being unhappy and unfulfilled. Happiness can only be achieved when we are congruent to ourselves. When we fight our identity we suffer

internal dissonance. How frustrating it would be for a cat who thinks he is a bird to be constantly trying to fly. We would do well to strive to be congruent with our God-given identity!

It is the nature of Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women to build up the Church by sharing God's truth, nurturing His people, and birthing the relationships and communities necessary for the growth of His kingdom. We can only find peace and contentment when we do this work. I am pleased and blessed to be journeying with you in this life as the NAB spiritual advisor and look forward to the mandated work which we have been given.

## A TRIBUTE TO "WOMAN"

Author Unknown. This story has been around for a while but always worth reading again.....

By the time the Lord made woman, He was into His sixth day of working overtime. An angel appeared and said, "Why are you spending so much time on this one?", and the Lord answered, "Have you seen My spec sheet on her? She has to be completely washable, but not plastic; have over 200 movable parts, all replaceable and able to run on diet coke and left-overs; have a lap that can hold four children at one time; have a kiss that can cure anything from a scraped knee to a broken heart - and she will do everything with only two hands".

The angel was astounded at the requirements. "Only two hands? No way! And that's just on the standard model? That's too much work for one day. Wait until tomorrow to finish".

"But I won't", the Lord protested. "I am close to finishing this creation that is so close to My own heart. She already heals herself when she is sick AND can work 18 hour days".

The angel moved closer and touched the woman. "But You have made her soft, Lord".

"She is soft", the Lord agreed. "But I have also made her tough. You have no idea what she can endure or accomplish".

"Will she be able to think?" asked the angel.

The Lord replied, "Not only will she be able to think, she will be able to reason and negotiate".

The angel then noticed something, and reaching out, touched the woman's cheek. "Oops, it looks like You have a leak in this model. I told You that You were trying to put too much into this one".

"That's not a leak", the Lord corrected. "That's a tear!"

"What's the tear for?" The angel asked.

The Lord said, "The tear is her way of expressing her joy, her sorrow, her pain, her disappointment, her love, her loneliness, her grief and her pride".

The angel was impressed. "You are great, Lord, You thought of everything! Woman is truly amazing!"

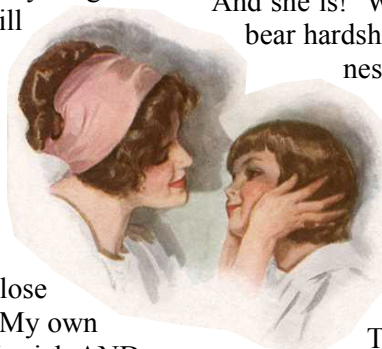
And she is! Women have strengths that amaze men. They bear hardships and they carry burdens. They hold happiness, love and joy. They smile when they want to scream. They sing when they want to cry.

They cry when they are happy and laugh when they are nervous. They fight for what they believe in. They stand up to justice. They don't take "no" for an answer when they believe there is a better solution. They go without, so their family can have.

They go to the doctor with a frightened friend, they love unconditionally. They cry when their children excel and cheer when their friends get awards. They are happy when they hear about a birth or a wedding. Their hearts break when a friend dies, they grieve at the loss of a family member, yet they are strong when they think there is no strength left. They know that a hug and a kiss can help to heal a broken heart.

Women come in all sizes, in all shapes and colors. They'll drive, fly, walk, run or e-mail you to show how much they care about you. The heart of a woman is what makes the world keep turning! They bring joy and hope. They have compassion and ideals. They give moral support to their family and friends.

Women have vital things to say and to give. However, if there is one flaw in women, it is that they tend to forget their worth.





## MESSAGE FROM THE VERY REVEREND EDWARD HUGHES

### Diocesan Antiochian Women Spiritual Advisor



In 1842, the Patriarch of Antioch, Methodios appealed for financial help from Russia because of the abject poverty of the patriarchate in those days. He sent a delegation to collect alms throughout Russia. As a result, Russia became interested and aware of the situation existing in Antioch in those days. As a result, a report was compiled called THE STATE OF THE PATRIARCHATE OF ANTIOCH IN 1850. This document details the desperate conditions under which the patriarchate sought to function. One paragraph reads: "The Orthodox people in Syria are industrious, sober, temperate and religious. The mother, the priest, tradition and customs are the strict guardians of the Faith and of the rules of the Church in that country. In spite of their poverty, in spite of burdensome tributes and imposts, in spite of frequent wars, the Orthodox are forward to maintain the monasteries, the schools and the parish churches."

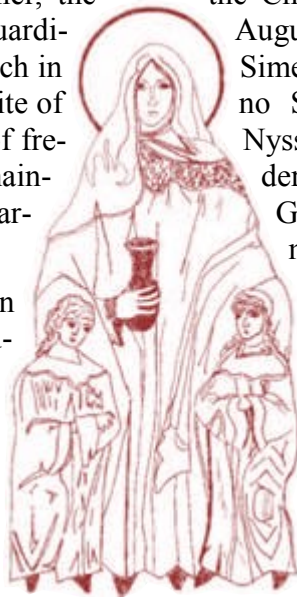
Notice the prominent place of mothers in this report. There is no institution, no authority, no influence given greater importance to mothers in the religious life of the people and the functioning of the Church.

This is according to the very nature of our Church and of life itself as God has given it to us. It is Mothers that nurture and care for children, teaching them love and security and trust. It is Mothers that teach their children to pray, to trust and to love God. It is Mothers that take their children to Church and teach them how to follow the services. It is mostly Mothers that teach in our Sunday Schools, passing on the formal teachings of the Church, and helping the children to understand their Faith, the Faith which they originally gave to these children to begin with. No priest can, through the most eloquent preaching, the most insistent teaching, or the best intentions convince or influence anyone if the mother does not agree and support him. No Churches would be built if the mothers did not insist on them. No one would go to Church if the mothers did not encourage them.

When the women of our Church know their Faith and are committed to the Church, there is no fear for the future. Children will not stray from the Faith. Churches will not be empty. Our communities

will not want for good deeds, almsgiving and charity. In short, everything flourishes when the women are strong in the Faith. The old saying "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." is nowhere more true than in the Church. From the days of the Myrrh-bearing women, the great women Equals to the Apostles, and of course, the most august Mother of God Herself, we have been completely indebted to the women for their powerful, unassailable leadership in the Church. Without St. Monica, there is no St. Augustine; without St. Martha, there is no St. Simeon the Stylite, without St. Emilia, there is no St. Macrina, Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Peter of Sebasteia or Nafkratios the wonder-worker of Mt. Nitria. Indeed, St. Basil the Great wrote: "I was brought up by my grandmother, blessed woman... I mean the celebrated Makrina who taught me the words of the blessed Gregory; which, as far as memory had preserved down to her day, she cherished herself, while she fashioned and formed me, while yet a child, upon the doctrines of piety." "The teaching about God, which I had received as a boy from my blessed mother and my grandmother Makrina, I have ever held with increased conviction. On my coming to ripe years of reason, I did not shift my opinion from one to another, but carried out the principles delivered to me by my parents. Just as the seed when it grows is first tiny and then gets bigger, but always preserves its identity, not changed in kind though gradually perfected in growth, so I reckon the same doctrine to have grown in my case through gradually advancing stages. What I hold now has not replaced what I held at the beginning."

May Almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit always protect, guard and keep our mothers and all the Antiochian Women in peace, health and safety for ever and ever.



## A Sincere Word of Thanks...

Your Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH,  
Your Graces the Diocesan Bishops,  
Reverend Fathers the Diocesan Spiritual Advisors, and  
Sisters in Christ,

It seems unbelievable that two years have passed since my last election as Public Relations Director for the Antiochian Women of North America. Over the last fourteen years (between 2001 and 2015), I have served you as Public Relations Director and Publisher of the DIAKONIA Newsletter for a total of ten years. Although I knew and have been friends with a great many of you over most of those years, I have come to know and love each one of you even more through your biographies, articles and church activities which you have sent me for publishing. I cannot thank each one of you enough for taking the time to write them and the care you took to take pictures to send along with your biographies and articles.

Special thanks go to the Diocesan Public Relations Directors for the many hours they worked to collect the biographies and articles from their diocesan bishops, spiritual advisors and board members and from the parish chapters. Your hard work and dedication were greatly appreciated and I couldn't have done my part without you doing yours.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to write your biographies and articles, take pictures and write the write-ups to go with the pictures. I especially want to thank Graces the Bishops and the Spiritual Advisors who made the time from their busy schedules to write their inspiring messages.

To His Grace Bishop JOHN, Mrs. Violet Robbat and all the North American Board, I'd like to send a special thank you for their support and encouragement over the years. You have been the rock of this organization.

To Melissa Skocypec I owe a word of deep gratitude for her assistance over the last two years.

I also want to thank the women who wrote articles for the WORD Magazine on behalf of the Antiochian Women. You have enriched us with your thoughts and experiences which you so eloquently expressed in your articles.

Now, as you may have noticed, I left the best for the last. There are no words that would express my thanks and appreciation to our beloved Metropolitan JOSEPH who has also been our Hierarchal Overseer for the last twenty years. Throughout all the years I served, there was not one time when His Eminence said he was too busy to write an article or to answer a question or give advice when needed. You will find a message from him in EVERY issue of DIAKONIA since the first issue in 2001. Thank you and God grant you many years your Eminence.

This coming July, at the Archdiocese Convention in Boston, you will be electing a new Public Relations Director and I will be retiring. I wish the best for my successor. It was a pleasure and an honor to serve the Antiochian Women Organization and the Archdiocese in this capacity.

Yours in Christ,  
Lucy Hanna

O Holy Mother of God, Mother of all mothers, who gave birth to and nurtured the true Light, enlighten us so that we may emulate Thee in our lives and grant us the wisdom to be good mothers and nurturers for our children and all those who need our help; for blessed and glorified art thou unto all ages. Amen.



**Introducing  
The 2013 - 2015  
Board of Antiochian Women  
of the Diocese of Worcester and New England**

***The Rt Reverend Bishop John - Diocesan Bishop***



**BISHOP JOHN** was born and raised in Boston, Massachusetts. His home parish was St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church. From an early age, he had a desire to serve Christ through the holy priesthood and so, after college, he attended St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary near New York City.

While in seminary, he became engaged to Joanne Josephs to whom he was married in August 1978. He was ordained to the diaconate and priesthood shortly afterwards. Fr. John and Kh. Joanne are the parents of three children, Gregory, Joseph, and Maria.

On May 25, 2008, after a long battle with cancer, Kh. Joanne reposed.

After his ordination, Fr. John was assigned to St. George Antiochian Church in Little Falls, New Jersey, where he served for a year, after which point he was transferred to St. George Orthodox Church in New Kensington, Pennsylvania, where he served for sixteen years, and then to the St. George Cathedral in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where he served for another sixteen years. In Pittsburgh Fr. John studied pastoral care at the Pittsburgh Pastoral Institute and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary earning a D.Min. in Pastoral Care and membership in the American Association of Pastoral Counselors. Fr. John facilitated a support group for widows and widowers called THEOS (They Help Each Other Spiritually) for 25 years. Fr. John also served as Dean of the Western PA Deanery from 1987 - 2011. Since 1997 he has been the editor of The Word magazine. Bp. John has also served as spiritual advisor to North American Board of the Antiochian Women and the North American Council of the Fellowship of St. John the Divine. He teaches Priestly Formation at the annual Antiochian House of Studies

and is the mentor to the seminarians for the House of Studies program, bringing with him pastoral experience and practice. He also has taught for the Graduate School for the St. John of Damascus Institute of Theology in Lebanon.

After his wife's repose, Fr. John was elevated to the rank of archimandrite by His Eminence, Metropolitan PHILIP. In 2011, at the convention of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, Fr. John was elected to be the Antiochian Bishop of Worcester and New England and was consecrated by Patriarch IGNATIUS and 12 bishops at the Balamand Monastery on December 11, 2011. Bishop JOHN serves on the Canonical Regional Planning and Theological committees of the Assembly of Bishops.

***V. Rev. Father Ed Hughes - Spiritual Advisor***



I was born in Kingston, Pennsylvania and graduated from Lycoming College in Williamsport, PA in 1977 with a BA in Religion, Near East Culture and Archeology, and from St. Vladimir Seminary in 1980. I worked full time with Fr. John Namie during the first three seasons of the Antiochian

Village Camp. In May, 1982, I was married to Anna Timko and then was ordained deacon and priest in July at the Antiochian Village by Metropolitan Philip. In August I was assigned to St. Michael's in Beaumont TX where I also served as the Ladies' advisor to the SW Region. In 1985, I was assigned to St. Mary's in Wilkes-Barre, PA.

I have served as Antiochian Women's Spiritual Advisor in the Southwest, Eastern, and New England Regions. In 1989 I was assigned to St. George in Lawrence, MA where I started out as the senior SOYO advisor and later was made Ladies advisor for NE Region, now the Diocese of Worcester. In addition, I was appointed Dean of the Clergy of New England after Fr. Niphon Abraham's retirement in 1995. From 1989 until 2015 I served the Archdiocese



as the chairman of the Department of Liturgics and Translations. In 1986 I became Commissioner and since January 2009 the Vicar General of the Western Rite. I also serve as adjunct professor of Antiochian Studies at Holy Cross Orthodox Seminary in Brookline, MA, teaching Arabic and Liturgics.

We have four children – Sarah, Michael, Martha and Elizabeth. Sarah is married to Fr. Philip Begley and lives in South Glens Falls, NY; Michael lives in Williamsport, PA and cares for my 92 year old mother; Martha is married and lives in Mansfield, PA and gave us our first grandchild in December 2014; Elizabeth will be a senior at Lycoming College in Williamsport, PA. Matushka Anna teaches high school and also serves on the Archdiocese Department of Christian Education and on the Orthodox Christian Education Commission.

#### ***Cindy Hayes - President***



It is amazing to say that two years have passed since I last completed this Biography and what changes I have made; I am now President of Antiochian Woman for the Diocese of Worcester and New England. It has been a distinct pleasure to serve Antiochian Women in this

capacity and I am thankful for this opportunity. This blessing has given me more appreciation for my faith, family and friends than I could have ever imagined.

The Antiochian Women are the hardest working group that I have ever been associated with. I am proud to look around the room wherever I am and know that the sisters, mothers, aunts, grandmothers, and friends are the back bone of our parishes. If I am able to do one thing in my life I hope it is to be an example for someone who would like to become more active in the church and to get involved in the Antiochian Women.

I am also proud to say that I have experienced many Firsts in these past two years. My First Archdiocese Convention as a Delegate (Houston 2013)! My First Winter meeting (Arizona 2014)! My First trip to the Antiochian Village (Summer meeting 2014)! On a sad note my First Change of Chief Shepherd, as in March 2014 we experienced the passing of Thrice Blessed Metropolitan +PHILIP, Memory Eternal. But also the Joyous election of His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH, Many Years Master!

Of the many blessings that have been given to me include my late husband Don (May 2007), my treasure on earth my three children; Donald Jr. (27), Daniel (25) and Sarah (21), and also my wonderful parents, siblings, their families and my friends. It is somewhat overwhelming to put these pieces of my life into place, as I never would have guessed this path for myself. But that is the beauty of having faith in God and knowing that the path that is set before us is not always what we planned, but by trusting in God we know He will direct our steps along that path that is set before us.

#### ***Valerie Torpey Irving Esq. - Vice President***



I have served as Vice President of the Antiochian Women of my diocese for the past two years, and as Treasurer for the prior two years. During that time, I have come to know many new friends through attending our quarterly Liturgy or prayers, our meetings,

our annual Ladies Retreats, our Seminarian Receptions and other events sponsored by our group. Being a part of the Diocesan leadership has been a great privilege to me. We have so many talented and creative ladies serving in leadership positions who are very generous with their time.

My hope is that every lady, not only in our eleven parishes, but in all of North America, will participate in some way in the life of their own parish ladies club and in their Diocesan Antiochian Women's group. There are friends waiting there to meet you and to work alongside you as we serve our fellow humanity and in the process, become one with Christ. We always say that every woman is an Antiochian Woman.

#### ***Katie Birtwell - Recording Secretary***



I converted to Orthodoxy ten years ago and I am so happy and blessed to have done so! I am a retired lawyer and will retire from my second career as an Earth science teacher in two years. I have taught English, art, and science during summers in Poland and travel frequently within the

U.S. and Canada on fossil-hunting expeditions. My husband and I have been together for 43 years and we

enjoy having our two grown children and granddaughter living in the same town as we do. I am happy to serve the Antiochian Women as I believe in the importance of our work.

***Salwa Khoury - Treasurer***



I was born in the famous Jerusalem of the "Holy Land". In 1948 I moved with my parents to Damascus, Syria where I met my husband Nabil. We got married and moved to the USA . God blessed us with four Children and eight Grandchildren. I am a

member of St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church in Pawtucket, R.I. I am involved in my Church activities and in the Antiochian Women at the Diocese of Worcester & New England level.

***Pamela Samara - Public Relations Director***



My husband George and I are lifelong members of St. George Cathedral in Worcester. Our children are Leila, Sub-Deacon Khalil & Mariah (Salloum), and Jamil. I was a Family & Consumer Science (Home Economics) teacher for 28 years

in Worcester. For 25 summers, I was a Volunteer at Antiochian Village Summer Camp. My newest job comes with the title of Sitoo to Jonah, August and Nadine. On the local Parish level, I have served as a Sunday School Teacher and Superintendent, Women's group Corresponding Secretary and presently the Treasurer. At the Diocesan level, I have been Humanitarian Coordinator, Recording Secretary, and am now the Public Relations Director.

***Joan Hanna - Parliamentarian***



St. George Church of West Roxbury (Boston) has always been my home Parish, except for a five year stay in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, while my husband pursued a Doctor's Degree in Mathematics. We have three sons and six grandchildren; four girls and two boys. I always say

the girls bring sugar and spice and everything nice to the home.

When my youngest son entered high school, I decided to complete my education and returned to Boston University where my husband was a Professor. I received a B.S. in Business Administration and went onto a Masters Degree in Criminal Justice which led to my present volunteer position at the West Roxbury District Court. I did advance studies while at B.U. in Gerontology and as a result I am a licensed Emergency Medical Technician. I also have a Real Estate Brokers License. In my spare time, I play duplicate bridge with my husband. It is very challenging.

I have always been active in my Church as a former Sunday School teacher, and for several years President of our very active Ladies Society. I was Regional New England President from 1997 to 1999. I enjoy the company of all the Ladies because they really live the words of the Antiochian Women Prayer.

***MaryLou Josephs Catelli - Religious Coordinator***



I am a lifelong member of St Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. I have been married to Bill Catelli for 40 years. I am the eldest of 4 children, my siblings being Joanne Abdalah (Memory Eternal), Lois Kilsey, and Leon Josephs. I am the proud aunt of

10 nieces and nephews.

I graduated from Rhode Island College with a B.S. in Education in 1970 and received a Masters of Education degree from Providence College in 1976. I had the pleasure of pursuing a fulfilling career as a Special Education teacher for 35 years retiring in 2005. Presently, I teach in the Graduate School of Providence College, fulfilling another lifetime dream.

My introduction to Antiochian Women came from my mother, Matilda Tahmoush Josephs (Memory Eternal), who followed her mother, Jameela Samra Tahmoush, a founding member of "The Ladies Society" in the early 1920's. My involvement in the church community includes singing in the choir, Member St. Ignatius, and member of Antiochian Women. I have been Teen Soyo President, Sunday School teacher and superintendent, member of Charitable Giving committee, and choir director. I help my community through working in Quota International, Women's Auxiliary of Memorial

Hospital, Boys and Girls Club of Pawtucket, Lincoln Garden Club, And Council for Exceptional Children.

My involvement with Antiochian Women at the diocesan level was prompted by my sister, Joanne, when she was President of her Parish. I began as the Diocesan Humanitarian Coordinator and during her presidency of AW she appointed me as her Humanitarian Coordinator. I presently co-chair the Religious Coordinator position with KH. Erin Kimmett. Antiochian Women is a rewarding ministry of the Antiochian Orthodox Church and I encourage all women to join us since we all can claim, "I AM AN ANTIOCHIAN WOMAN"!!

#### ***Kh. Erin Kimmett - Religious Retreat Coordinator***



Erin (Farha) Kimmett was born and raised in Wichita, Kansas where she was an active member of Saint George Cathedral. In 1993, she was blessed to meet and later marry her wonderful husband, Father Joseph Kimmett. They were assigned to Saint

George Orthodox Church in Norwood, Massachusetts where they have lived and served for the past 20 years. They are blessed to have two sons, Nicholas, 18, and Zachary, 16.

Inspired by her Sitey's heartfelt love and dedication to parish work, Erin is involved with the Antiochian Women in the parish and the diocese, she loves to chant and sing in the choir, and of course, as with her Sitey (known to many as "Aunt Vi") you will often find her in the kitchen!

Erin has a BFA in graphic design and is a trained Byzantine iconographer. She has painted icons for churches and individuals for more than 20 years; she also owns the Annunciation Press.

#### ***Vacant - Humanitarian Coordinator***

#### ***Vacant - Membership Coordinator***

## **MY MOTHER'S LEGACY**

by Christine Bezreh

I always thought that the women working in our church kitchen were a group of older ladies who needed to fill their time with activities to keep them busy. My mother, Barbara Simon, was an active member of the Saint George of Boston Ladies Society and Antiochian Women, and set quite an example of service to the church. It was only when she stopped driving that I began to accompany her to meetings. I never realized how special this group was, and I was grateful for the time it gave me with my mom. Unfortunately she grew ill and could no longer attend those meetings. I missed this meaningful time with her.

After she passed away, I had more time to be active in the Virgin Mary Society at my parish, St John of Damascus Church. It coincided with the time they were looking for new leadership, and so there I was, co-chairing the group! Let's face it, our projects center around raising money for the church with proceeds from our cooking. As I started regularly volunteering in the kitchen, I was astounded at the amount of time and energy these women put into their work. These are not women who need to keep busy; these are women who come on walkers and in back braces, or after dropping their kids off at school, or on their only day off from work, to fulfill their mission. When I ask them why they do it, they say, "I am grateful to God for everything He has given me, and this is my way of giving back."

So even though I take care of my family, have a part-time job, and work and travel for the Order of St Ignatius of Antioch, I will always find time to work alongside and be inspired by these extraordinary Antiochian Women.





## *Happenings Around The Diocese Of Worcester and New England*

### **St. Mary Church, Pawtucket, Rhode Island**



*Ladies of St Mary's holding the Icon of Christ after He was taken down from the Cross on Holy Friday*

Holy Week is the completion of our journey through Great Lent where we relive Our Lord's Passion. For those of us who are able to attend Good Friday Royal Hours and decorate the Bier, there are moments of the Anticipated Joy of the Resurrection but also the sadness of the moment as we participate in these solemn services. It is a very emotional moment to be holding the Icon of Christ for the faithful to venerate. With tears in our eyes as those in attendance come forth, it brings all of our feelings to the surface. This is such a beautiful moment that we as mothers, sisters, daughters, have a special connection to each other and the traditions of Holy Week. Each year, the Ladies of St Mary's Church decorate the Bier in the tradition of their mothers and grandmothers before them. The singing of the lamentations, carrying the Epitaphios, every step that we take during these last days, bring us closer to that Glorious celebration of the Resurrection. It is an amazing journey that is as different as it can be each year but it always remains the same.

### **St. Stephen Church, Springfield, MA**

The St Stephen Women's Group hosted a 10 week session running from the end of January through the end of March called "Food for the Journey." We provided dinner every Tuesday evening followed by a presentation from local clergy members. The event was a huge success. We also gathered together with the children of our parish and baked muffins for the local rescue mission. Our next event will be a spring tag sale to raise money for our children to attend the Antiochian Village.



### **Emmanuel Church, Warren, MA**

Our women have continually helped out with a monthly community meal. We serve free meal on the first Tuesday of each month. The women help cook and serve the meal to approximately 120 people. Once a year we have a fundraiser that supports these meals and that was on April 18th and was a success.

This past week we assembled and packed 19 hygiene kits ready to send out to IOCC and will now start to collect for school kits.

Fr. Chris Nerreau hosted a family night at Emmanuel, the first annual with hopes of many more. This was held on March 27th and the Antiochian Women were honored with a plaque given to us for thanks for all we do to help the church.

### **St. Mary Church, Cambridge, MA**

On March 24, our Women's Club held their annual Lenten Food Sale. Over 40 people came to the church to help prepare Spinach Triangles. A great time was had by all.



## *Happenings Around The Diocese Of Worcester and New England*

### **St. George Church, Norwood, MA**

On Friday, February 6, 2015, Ladies Secretary Cindy Apgar hosted on behalf of the church an amazing “Oldies” evening. 80 parishioners and guests valiantly braved the bitter cold and icy roads to attend the evening. Dinner accompanied by classic music from the 40s to the 70s. Cindy, with several parishioners decorated the parish hall with memorabilia from classic movies, television shows and records. Tables were designated by celebrities including Shirley Temple, Frank Sinatra, Lucille Ball and Desi Arnaz, Audrey Hepburn, Clark Gable and many more. The menu included homemade soup, salad, dinner rolls, carving stations of turkey, ham and roast beef, dessert, and old-fashioned root beer floats. There was also a raffle of donated items from parishioners and local business owners. It was a fun filled evening - soon to be replicated (we hope).

On Wednesday, March 25, 2015, our ladies of St. George Norwood hosted its annual Lenten fish dinner. Ladies Treasurer Camille Florio, as she does every year, chaired the event on behalf of the ladies society. This year’s fish dinner fell on the Feast of the Annunciation. Roughly 40 parishioners and guests were in attendance. Dinner included: Fresh baked haddock with homemade tatertore, rice, glazed carrots, salad, hummus, Syrian bread, fresh fruit, coffee, soft drinks and dessert. Food was prepared by our Kh. Erin and the ladies of our church. Proceeds of \$750.00 were raised to support the NAB Project and a check was sent directly to AWDOWNE.

### **St. George Church, Lawrence, MA**

This past year, we had our annual Food Fair in November, a Falafel sale during Lent, and our Spring Luncheon.





## *Happenings Around The Diocese Of Worcester and New England*

### **St. John of Damascus Church, Dedham, MA**

On Sunday, December 21, 2014, the parish of St. John of Damascus Church hosted a 100th Anniversary Celebration for the Virgin Mary Society. It began in church, when Fr. John Teebagy asked all past and present members of the organization to come forward for a presentation. The parish unveiled a new icon, "The Icon of the Three Hands." This icon was created by St. John of Damascus in thanks to the Theotokos for a miraculous healing.



To the usual depiction of Christ and His Mother, John added a third hand made of silver. This very beautiful icon was especially commissioned in honor of the Virgin Mary Society and was written by Bishop Gregory.

The celebration continued at a lovely luncheon in the church hall. After the invocation by Fr. John, a welcome message was delivered by Raymond Hamwey, son of past president Maryann Hamwey. A wine toast was given by Karen Kurker Robbat, daughter of past president Laurice Kurker. Greetings were conveyed by Violet Robbat, President of Antiochian Women of North America and daughter of past president, Lillian Khouri. At the end of the program, the ladies gathered for a photo (above) and were presented with gift ornaments. It was a special ending to a special day.

#### **Article in Boston Globe**

In March of 2014, the Virgin Mary Society of St. John of Damascus Church was featured in the cooking section of The Boston Globe. The ladies had decided to prepare assabee (meat fingers) as a fundraiser for last year's project, "Help Orphans of the War in Syria." On the appointed day, members of the VMS gathered in the St. John's kitchen along with a reporter and photographer from the newspaper, and demonstrated how to make the phyllo-wrapped meat fingers. They also made Chicken and Hushweh and Sheik-al-Mahshie, and all the recipes were featured in the article. This was an excellent way to call attention to the church and to the Antiochian Women project to an audience of approximately 250,000 readers. The recipe for the Assabee is provided here.

### **Assabee (Meat Fingers)**

#### **Ingredients:**

- 1 lb. coarse ground lamb or beef
- 1 medium onion, chopped
- 1/4 cup pine nuts
- 1 tsp. salt
- 2 tsp. Syrian Pepper
- 1/4 tsp. black pepper
- 1/2 lb. filo dough
- 1 C. clarified butter

#### **Instructions:**

1. Brown the meat with the onion, nuts, and spices, breaking up any large clumps of meat. Drain any excess fat. Set aside to cool slightly.
2. Cut the dough in thirds the long way, making 3, 4-inch strips. Cover with plastic wrap or a damp towel. Take one strip and brush lightly with butter. Lay another strip on top, and brush with butter. Place about 2 TB. of the meat mixture at the end of the strip closest to you, without going completely to the edge, and roll in cigar-like fashion to the end. Press the ends together so the meat will not fall out. Place seam-side down and brush the top of the roll with butter. Repeat with remaining meat and filo. At this point they may be frozen in a single layer, and baked later directly from the freezer.
3. Place on a baking sheet and bake at 375 degrees for 25 minutes, or until browned lightly. Serve with plain yogurt.



## *Happenings Around The Diocese Of Worcester and New England*

### **St. George Cathedral, Worcester, MA**

For four months this past year, we worked with the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) preparing Emergency Kits. These kits included Baby Care Kits, School Kits, and Health Kits. We received many donations of items and money for the Kits from our parishioners. We were able to mail 20 Baby Kits, consisting of 7 items in each kit, 20 School Kits, consisting of 9 items in each kit, and 52 Health Kits, consisting of 8 items in each kit. These donations totaled 736 items for 92 kits. We still have funds which we will use to purchase more items to send more kits. We are continuing this successful and humanitarian project after Easter.

In 2013, we celebrated the 85th Anniversary of our Women's Group, and during our St George Weekend celebration, seven women were honored as having served as President of our group, and many of our mothers, aunts, cousins and grandmothers were remembered for their contributions to our Organization. Our oldest member, Margaret Haddad George, were given special recognition by then Bishop JOSEPH.



### **St. George Church, Lowell, MA**

The Ladies Society of St. George hosted a Lenten Dinner to support the NAB Project "Nurturing the Seeds of Orthodoxy"



### **St. Michael Church, Cotuit, MA**



Thanks to a generous donation from Thrivent Financial, a group to which our wonderful Father Ben Kjendal belongs, our Women's Group was able to purchase a large number of fleece pieces of fabric to make blankets that were distributed to Emerson House, a home in Falmouth, MA for battered women. We had a great response from our women making these blankets and the women at Emerson House appreciated them greatly.



ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

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