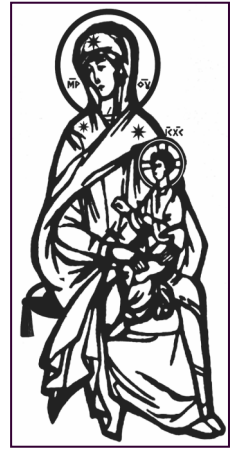


# DIAKONIA

SUMMER 2011



## *St. Elizabeth the New Martyr of Russia commemorated July 5*



St. Elizabeth was an older sister of the Empress Alexandra of Russia, and was married to the Grand Duke Serge, a younger son of Tsar Alexander III and the Governor of Moscow. She converted from the Protestant faith to Orthodoxy of her own free will several years after her marriage, and organized women from all levels of society to help the sick and needy.

Grand Duke Serge was killed by an assassin's bomb on February 4, 1905, just as St. Elizabeth was leaving for her workshops. She visited her husband's killer in prison and urged him to repent, giving him an icon. She eventually built a shrine over the site of her husband's martyrdom (which was said to have been destroyed by Vladimir Lenin himself in 1917). After her husband's murder, she began to withdraw from her former social life. She founded the Convent of Sts. Martha and Mary in Moscow, a community of nuns which focused on worshiping God and helping the poor. She sold all her fine clothes and jewels, and moved out of her palace into the buildings that she had purchased on behalf of the convent. St. Elizabeth and her sisters continued to visit the poor and hungry in Moscow. During the First World War, she nursed sick and wounded soldiers in the hospitals and on the battle front. She was respected and admired throughout Russia and people came to her for spiritual direction.

After her brother-in-law, Tsar Nicholas II, abdicated the throne and he and his family were placed under house arrest, St. Elizabeth was urged to abandon her convent and seek shelter with her remaining family in Western Europe. She refused all offers of help, saying she would not leave the other sisters and

would die in Russia if that was His Will. On Pascha, 1918, Soviet soldiers came to the convent and ordered her to leave Moscow to join the royal family near Ekaterinburg. She was allowed to leave with a novice, Sister Barbara, but was not permitted to say goodbye to the other sisters. After arriving in Ekaterinburg, St. Elizabeth was denied access to the Tsar's family. She and Sister Barbara were placed in a convent, where she was warmly received by the sisters. At the end of May St. Elizabeth and St. Barbara were moved to the nearby village of Alopaevsk with the Grand Dukes Sergius, John, and Constantine, and the young Count Vladimir Paley. They were all housed in a schoolhouse on the edge of town. St. Elizabeth was placed under guard, but was permitted to go to church and work in the garden.

On the night of July 5, they were all taken to a place in the woods, 12 miles from Alopaevsk, and executed. Grand Duke Sergius was shot, but the others were thrown down a mineshaft, with grenades being tossed in after them. St. Elizabeth lived for several hours, and could be heard singing hymns by local villagers who came up to the mineshaft after the murderers had left. A few days later, the bodies of St. Elizabeth and St. Barbara were recovered from the mineshaft after the pro-Tsarist armies took Alopaevsk. They were ultimately taken to Jerusalem in 1920, and buried in the church of St. Mary Magdalene on the Mount of Olives. —*Reprinted from Orthodox Women Saints found at [antiochian.org](http://antiochian.org) / AW-WomenSaints.*

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**Antiochian Women, A Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others**

**The Antiochian Orthodox  
Christian Women  
Of North America**

***A Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others***

The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan PHILIP  
Founder

The Right Reverend  
Bishop JOSEPH  
Overseeing Hierarch

**North American Board**

Archimandrite John Abdalah, Spiritual Advisor

**Officers:**

Cindy Nimey ..... President  
Violet Robbat ..... Vice-president  
Dianne O'Regan ..... Recording Secretary  
Sherry Abraham-Morrow ..... Treasurer  
Roberta Royhab ..... Public Relations  
Laila Ferris ..... Immediate Past President

**Coordinators:**

Kh. Dannie Moore ..... Humanitarian  
Kh. Suzanne Murphy ..... Membership  
Jamie Isaac ..... Religious  
Kh. Helene Hajal ..... Scholarship  
Alicia Atik ..... Constitution &  
Bylaws

**DIAKONIA is a Newsletter of the North  
American Board of the Antiochian  
Women, an organization of the  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian  
Archdiocese of North America, and is  
published quarterly in the fall, winter,  
spring and summer.**

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In this issue of the DIAKONIA we highlight the  
***Antiochian Women of the Diocese of  
Worcester and New England.***

It has been my privilege and blessing to serve  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North  
America as editor of the DIAKONIA for the two-  
year term, July 2009 through July 2011.

—Roberta Royhab

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**What is DIAKONIA?**

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

***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.***

## ***The strength and dedication of women on the local level have made Antiochian Women, dioceses and churches what they are, says women's leader***

**By Marilyn Robbat, President, Antiochian Women of Worcester and New England**

Dear Sisters in Christ:

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

We are blessed in New England to have a small, intimate Diocese of eleven (11) churches with a maximum traveling distance of approximately 1 3/4 to 2 hours. We rotate our meeting locations among our churches and join the rest of the Diocese now with Fall and Spring General Assembly Meetings in late October and late February—adding another Antiochian Women's Meeting ONLY in early January (weather permitting)—and culminate with the Parish Life Conference in June, which is in Hyannis, MA (Cape Cod) this year on June 17 - 19, hosted by St. John of Damascus Church of Dedham.

We are grateful to the Officers and Coordinators of the North American Board, who have worked so diligently throughout the year to feed information to their counterparts on our Diocesan level; and they, in turn, pass that information and more that they personally have developed on to our local Chapters. It is HERE, on the local level --in each of our chapters--where the work of the Church comes to fruition. It is HERE where each and every Antiochian Woman contributes her treasures, time and talents. It is HERE where the most difficult job of all occurs--working in the trenches; because if the grass roots are not healthy, then the plant will not thrive and Orthodoxy will not grow. ***It is the strength and dedication of these local women, who work tirelessly in every Diocese--not just in New England--who have made Antiochian Women, our Dioceses and our Churches what they are. So "Thank You" to all Antiochian Women, who have worked so diligently. Thank you to all the Clergy, who have encouraged our women to excel.***

We are indeed grateful for the work done by our Diocesan Executive Board of the Antiochian Women of New England. You will have an opportunity to meet and read about each and every one of these exceptional women in this issue of the DIAKONIA. These are all dedicated and experienced women, many of whom have worked on an Archdiocesan, Diocesan and Local level as well. We are fortunate to have so many of them working on behalf of Antiochian Women and the New England Diocese.

Your sister in Christ,

Marilyn T. Robbat, President, Diocese of Worcester & New England

# Meet the 2009-2011 Board of Antiochian Women of the Diocese of Worcester & New England

## BIOGRAPHIES :

### *Marilyn Robbat - President*



I am a cradle Orthodox and have been a member of St. Mary Orthodox Church in Cambridge MA for some 38+ years, since my marriage to Michael in November of 1973. My home parish was St. John of Damascus Church, now in Dedham, MA, where I attended Church School, was active as a teen, sang in the Choir for many years and

ultimately became Choir Director and was president of New England Region SOYO, prior to my marriage.

Marrying Michael brought me to a special place: St. Mary Church in Cambridge where I again sang in the Choir, brought up our three daughters, now all grown and ages 36, 34 and 28 (two of whom are married), served as Choir Director, President of the PTA & Women's Club, and have been employed as the Church Secretary/Administrator for the past 22 years.

I have been a part of Antiochian Women for a number of years holding offices on a local, regional/diocesan level as well as serving on the North American Board as previous Regional/Diocesan President, Public Relations, Vice President and President from 2001-2003. This experience has afforded me an opportunity to pray, work, laugh and enjoy the friendship and love of many wonderful women throughout the country.

My interests OUTSIDE the Church include cooking, movies and reading—with not a great deal of time left for those endeavors!!

### *Delores George - Vice President/NAB Project*



I was born and raised in Worcester, MA, a member since birth of St. George Orthodox Cathedral. My parents emigrated from Lebanon, and my father was a Church founder including being a Chanter virtually all of his life. I had five brothers and two sisters, Memories Eternal. My

oldest brother was called into Heaven exactly on the Feast of Pascha and my youngest brother, +Archpriest Victor F. George was born on the Feast of the Transfiguration. Two other brothers were lifelong Arabic Chanters. Coming from a large family was a lot of fun!

I was a Sunday School teacher, I actively worked organizing the youth group, The Knights of St. George, and I have been in the Church Choir for so many years. I am currently serving as Recording Secretary of our St. George Women's Club and also The Brotherhood organization and The Young Mahiethett Society.

In 1978, I became an Executive Recruiter and thereafter I opened two large staffing and recruiting agencies. In 1986, I opened my own agency, and have been self-employed since then. I have been serving as the Recording Secretary to the MA Association of Personnel Services for several years, and I also was awarded the "Good Citizen Award." I am a Certified Personnel Consultant with a SOMWBA and DBE Certification.

The Patron Saint of our family is St. George. I ask for His assistance and Intercession, along with our most Holy Theotokos in carrying out the Will of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### *Katie Birtwell - Recording Secretary*



I am the current recording secretary of the Antiochian Women - Diocese of Worcester and New England. I converted to Orthodoxy six years ago. I am also president of the Ladies of St. George, the women's society in my home parish of St. George Orthodox Church in Norwood, MA, and am a member of the Church

Choir there.

I am a retired lawyer and have taught Earth Science in a school outside Boston for the last 15 years. I also have been involved for 12 years in a program that encourages girls to continue their studies in math and science. I am also a free-lance illustrator and teach drawing and jewelry making in after-school programs.

I have been digging fossils since the age of four and have

spent two summers studying the Burgess Shale fossil formation in Canada. I also taught English, science and art in an English language summer program in Siennica and Minsk Mazowiecki, Poland for three summers. I also ran a summer camp in a poor village in Poland for two years, and donations from my home parish helped to clothe the children there.

I have my dear husband (we have been together for nearly 40 years), an adult son and daughter and four housecats. I keep very busy and am grateful for my life. I am convinced that the work of the Antiochian Women is very important and special!

***Valerie Torpey Irving, Esquire - Treasurer***



I was born and grew up in Roslindale, MA, a community in the southwest side of Boston. Our home was on a dead end street, a few houses away from the Arnold Arboretum, a 265 acre park of trees, shrubs and vines from all over the world. My brother Jack and I attended Sacred Heart School, Roslindale, and I later

attended St. Thomas Aquinas High School in Jamaica Plain and Roslindale High School. At St. Thomas we would read scripture every morning before the start of the day's activities, a habit that is still with me. I was a single parent to my son Brian when I later returned to college and graduated from UMASS Boston with a Bachelor Degree in Human Resources Management.

In 1985, while working in Human Resources, I met my husband Jim. He is a graduate of the Electrical Engineering Program at Northeastern University. We married in 1987. In 1988, and for several years, we were volunteers for the Prison Spiritual Ministry, a group who supported the Prison Chaplain at MCI Norfolk with the spiritual growth of inmates by attending Holy Liturgy and a prayer service weekly. We also visited MCI Plymouth, MCI Framingham, Pondville Correctional Facility and Baystate Correctional Facility. I also facilitated a counseling group of inmates and juvenile offenders at MCI Norfolk called "Second Thoughts". Although I no longer go "behind the wall", I still correspond with inmates on a regular basis.

I graduated from Massachusetts School of Law in 1994. Since that time, I have been a Sole Practitioner Attorney, representing children and parents in Care and Protection Cases in Juvenile Court. For the past 12 years I have been a mentor to new attorneys for the Committee for Public Counsel Services,

Children and Family Law Division and served three years as their Regional Coordinator for Norfolk County. Currently I chair the Juvenile Court Bench Bar Committee for the Bar Association of Norfolk County. I have previously served my community as a town meeting representative, member of the By Law Review Committee, and Finance Committee member, also serving as chair of the Finance Committee.

In late 1999, my friend Jeannine, who was also our Maid of Honor, invited me to attend a Bible Study on the Book of Revelation with Fr. Michael Elias at St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church in Boston. At that time I was happy attending my non-Orthodox church weekly, teaching in their Sunday School, and caring for their flower garden. It was shortly after that, when my son Brian, who was my only child, died. I was unable to find comfort in my church and believed with all my heart that I was not in the church of the Apostles. About a year later, my husband and I started attending Holy Liturgy at St. George Boston with my Jeannine and her daughter Erin on a weekly basis. As I grieved the loss of my son, and studied scripture and Orthodoxy, I realized that the Orthodox Church was a community most like the church of the Apostles.

In 2001, my husband and I were chrismated by Fr. Michael Elias, and Jeannine was our co-sponsor. I joined the Order of St. Ignatius in 2004. Contributing to St. Ignatius brings me joy and is an opportunity to help our extended church family and other worthy endeavors. At St. George I have served as Chair of the Ladies Society and on the Parish Counsel. While I was serving on the Parish Counsel St. George became a supporter of St. Francis House, a day shelter in Boston for the homeless. We make an annual donation to the St. Francis House, and once a year, we hold a clothing drive to collect warm coats for the homeless. On the diocesan level, I am serving my second term as Treasurer for the Antiochian Women.

My husband Jim was ordained a Sub-deacon in 2007 by Metropolitan PHILIP. We both graduated from the St. Stephen's Course of the Antiochian House of Studies in 2008. At that time, there were four students from St. George enrolled in St. Stephen's. We are grateful for the kind help and guidance the other students provided to us. Deacon Ely Hamaty also gave us encouragement, as he is a St. Stephen's graduate. For one of our required annual projects we cooked and served Sunday dinner to the homeless at the Boston Rescue Mission with the teens from the parish. Since that time, the teens have continued this important ministry on a monthly basis under the direction of our former Youth Director Kahlil Samara and now with Elisabeth Lourie. Currently, I am completing a Master's of Theology Program in connection with the Antiochian House of Studies and the Balamand University.



God blessed us in 2008 with a daughter and with her loving godparents. God continues to bless us in our new role as parents. Sadly, my close friend, maid of honor and co-sponsor Jeannine died in 2009. Her three children and eight grandchildren (including Adam and Hal, our godchildren) continue to bring us joy and keep her memory very much alive.

### ***Pam Samara - Public Relations***



My husband George and I are lifelong members of St. George Cathedral in Worcester, MA. Our children are Leila and Jamil who live in Boston, and Sub-Deacon Khalil, and his wife Mariah (Salloum), who live near Cleveland, OH. I was a Family & Consumer Science (Home Economics) teacher for 28 years in Worcester, retiring four years ago. At my church, I have been a Sunday School Teacher and Superintendent, Women's Club Corresponding Secretary and presently the Treasurer. At the Diocesan level, I was the Humanitarian Coordinator, Recording Secretary, and am now the Public Relations Chairperson. For 24 summers, I have been a Volunteer at Antiochian Village Summer Camp.

### ***MaryEllen Mabardy - Humanitarian Coordinator***



Mary Ellen is a member of St. Mary Church in Cambridge, MA. She is a proud mother of four and Tata also of five. She has been a member of St. Mary Women's Club for 38 years and has held the office of President many times. Also, she has been President of our region for Antiochian Women. Mary Ellen has also been Treasurer and Membership Coordinator. She is currently Humanitarian Coordinator for our Diocese.

### ***Kh Erin Kimmett - Co-Chair, Religious Coordinator; Retreat Coordinator***



Kh. Erin Kimmett was born and raised in Wichita, KS where she was an active member of Saint George Cathedral. In 1993, she was blessed to meet and later marry her wonderful husband, Fr. Joseph Kimmett. They were assigned to Saint George Church in Norwood, MA where they have lived and served for the past 17 years. Together they are raising their two great boys, Nicholas, age 15, and

Zachary, age 12.

Inspired by her Sitey's 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 Church Choir, and of course, as with her Sitey (known to many as "Aunt Vi") you will often find her in the kitchen!

Kh. Erin has a BFA in graphic design and is a trained Byzantine iconographer. She has painted icons for churches and individuals for nearly 20 years; she also owns the Annunciation Press. She has been a member of the Board of Theophany (Orthodox) School for the past 10 years.

### ***Mary Lou Catelli - Co-Chair, Religious Coordinator***



My name is Mary Lou Josephs Catelli and I am a lifelong member of St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church of Pawtucket, RI. I have been married to Bill Catelli for 37 years. I am the eldest of four children, my siblings being Joanne Abdalah (Memory Eternal), Lois Kilsey and Leon Josephs. I am the proud aunt of 10 nieces and nephews.

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

My introduction to Antiochian Women came from my mother, Matilda Tahmoush Josephs, who followed her mother, Jameela Samra Tahmoush, a founding member of "The Ladies' Society" in the early 1920's. My involvement in the church community includes singing in the Church Choir, member of St. Ignatius, member of Antiochian Women and Epistle reader. I have been a Sunday School teacher, superintendent, member of the Charitable Giving committee, and choir director. I am a member of the Education Committee of Theophany School, Quota International, Women's Auxiliary of Memorial Hospital 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 local church group. I began as the Diocese Humanitarian Coordinator and when Joanne became the National President she appointed me as her Humanitarian Coordinator. I presently co-chair the Religious Coordinator position with Kh. Erin Kimmett. Antiochian Women is a rewarding ministry of the Antiochian Orthodox Church.

## **Cindy Hayes - Membership**



My name is Cindy Lee (Massiwer) Hayes, I am currently President of the St. Mary Ladies Society; serve as a member of the Parish Council; sing in the Church Choir; was previously a Sunday School teacher; am a member of the Order of St. Ignatius. I have been Membership Coordinator for DOWNE for the past two years.

Being so active and able to have held many posts on the parish level is also a tribute to my late husband Donald Hayes, who passed away four years ago, who always gave me the time to be so committed and involved. I am also blessed with three wonderful children, Donald Jr., 23, Daniel, 21, and Sarah, 17. They are my gift from God and the treasure I share with my husband, Don. In my professional life I am a manager for the Rhode Island Department of Transportation / Construction Management Group. I am the epitome of a busy woman.

When St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Church in Pawtucket RI, celebrated its Centennial last October, I was not only privileged to be co-chair of the weekend festivities but proud to say I was a member of the third generation of charter members who began the parish. And in the true spirit of my hard working family; my grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles and cousins who have always been a vibrant force in the community I too am happy to serve My Lord and my Parish. My greatest wish is that I have instilled this devotion to serve to my children.

It has been a privilege to be Membership Coordinator of DOWNE these past two years and by far no easy task. It is not easy trying to coordinate an event for the Diocese, but when it works, it is a wonderful thing. I hope I am able to continue in the position and go on to inspire others to take the step to serve.

## **Melissa Nassiff - Website Coordinator**



I grew up in a series of Protestant churches, including Baptist, Presbyterian (where I was baptized) and Episcopal, with side trips into Pentecostal and Evangelical; I spent most of my adult life as an Episcopalian.

My husband had been raised Orthodox, but became an Episcopalian when we were married. I had been so unfamiliar with Orthodoxy that when I first met him and he told me he was Orthodox, I thought he was telling me he was Jewish! About 15 years ago we left the Episcopal church, and eventually visited an Orthodox church. This was what I'd been looking for all my life, it seemed, and we've been Orthodox ever since. I

was chrismated in 2000. Since then I've been active at St. Mary's Church in Cambridge, MA, serving in the Women's Club and the Fellowship of St. John the Divine, coordinating a discussion group, serving as secretary of the parish council, issuing the parish's weekly e-mail newsletter and being website coordinator for the Antiochian Women of the Diocese.

I am happily retired, after a career as a paralegal managing legal compliance for employee benefits administration companies. My husband and I have three adult children and three grandchildren; we are blessed to have all of them within easy visiting distance. One of my greatest pleasures is spending time with our grandchildren.

## **Joyce Nader Hanna - President's Task Force Coordinator**



I was born in Detroit, MI. At the age of two, my family went on a vacation to visit family in Mexico City – where we stayed 10 years! There, I was fortunate to learn the Spanish language. At the age of 12, my family moved to California. I became active in SOYO and the Choir of St. Nicholas Cathedral in Los Angeles.

In 1968, as president of the Western Region of SOYO I attended the Archdiocese Convention in Pittsburgh, PA. There, I met my husband, John A. Hanna, Jr. (Jack) who was the president of the New England Region of SOYO. Later, Jack as NAC President, and I as NAC Treasurer, attended several meetings and Leadership workshops across the country. We married in 1970 and have been living in the Boston area ever since.

We attend St. George Church of Boston where our three boys, Steve, Dan and Greg were a part of the Church School, Altar Boys and SOYO. Through the years, I've been active in our church's Parent's Guild, Ladies' Society and the local and Diocesan Choir. I was the President of the New England Region Antiochian Women from 1991-1993. I am now a proud "Sitti" of Nick, Alex, Will, Cameron and Connor. It's been a wonderful experience being a part of the growth of the Archdiocese from coast to coast, and I thank God for steering my life in that direction.

## **Gladys Laham - Parliamentarian**



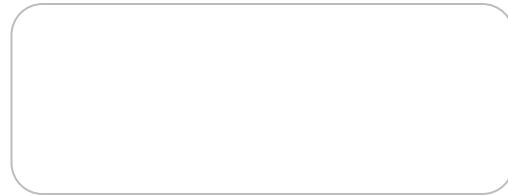
I was born in Boston, MA, and have always been a member of St. George of Boston. I met my husband Robert at church, married and still live in the Boston area. We are the proud parents of our wonderful three children, Robert, Kenneth and Carol.

We have been blessed with five grandsons and our children have and are still serving the Church. I have been involved with the Antiochian Women since its inception, being the first Cultural Chairman; I served as the third North American Board President from 1978 to 1980.



## Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women

Roberta Royhab  
PO Box 1128  
Perrysburg OH 43552-1128



During my tenure as NAB President, the first newsletter and spiritual pamphlets were mailed to all our Regional chapters. We had the first Spring Meeting and at that time we traveled to a Church in a different Region and we were always graciously received.

With the help of the late Rev. Fr. John Namie, we dedicated the outdoor Shrine of St. Thekla at the Antiochian Village.

A fund namely "On Going Project for Women" was established. The purpose was to support and award scholarships for women in need. The income from this fund was to be used for this purpose. It was and still is a wonderful way to let our ladies know that we care and that we are sisters in Christ.

In the Diocese of New England I have served as President, Vice President and Humanitarian Chairman for the Antiochian Women. Our humanitarian deed was to support the children at the Shriners Burns Hospital in Boston. The Ladies donated approximately 95 teddy bears which were donated to the hospital for these young patients. At another time, 100 beanie babies were donated by our ladies and given to the young children at the Children's Hospital in Boston.

The children at the Dana Farber Cancer Hospital were recipients of games, puzzle, reading books and coloring books to be used while they were having a treatment. Our ladies have always been generous and I say thank you for their caring

and support. What better way than to try to bring a little joy to these young innocent children.

At our parish of St. George, I have served as Vice President, Treasurer, and President of our Ladies Society and also Chairman of several functions. our Ladies Society and also Chairman of several functions.

During the St. George Weekend celebration this year, I was honored and awarded the Antonian Silver Medal of Merit by Bishop AN-TOUN. I am most humbled to receive this award from the Archdiocese in recognition of service to my family, church and the Antiochian Women.

The Church has always been a part of our lives for us and our children and we thank God for all of His blessings. *I will bless the LORD at all times, His praise shall continually be in my mouth. Psalms: 34*



***Nora Walker, pictured at left, is the Immediate Past President of Antiochian Women of the Diocese of Worcester and New England.***