

# Antiochian Women's Summer Newsletter

Diocese of New York & Washington D. C.  
and the Diocese of Charleston, Oakland,  
& the Mid-Atlantic



His Eminence  
The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and  
Metropolitan of  
All North America

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE**  
**OF NORTH AMERICA**

June, 2019

Beloved Sisters in Christ,

Greetings and blessings to you and your families in the Name of our Great God and Savior, Jesus Christ!

We begin our summer with the feast of Pentecost, the granting of the Holy Spirit to the Holy Apostles fifty days after the Lord's glorious Resurrection. We once again begin our prayers with an invocation of the Heavenly King, the Giver of Life. In the beginning, we read that the Holy Spirit hovered over the waters bestowing life to creation, and we see for ourselves the Holy Spirit renewing creation in the springtime for our enjoyment in the summer months.

While we enjoy God's creation during the summer season, we should attend to our spiritual renewal as well. The holy time of Great Lent, Pascha, Ascension, and Pentecost should have been our spiritual springtime, and this summer should be one of living in Divine Grace, not just basking in the sunny weather. The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives should be transformative. St. Nikodemos of the Holy Mountain wrote of the tremendous transformation of the Apostles after Pentecost – from their hiding in fear in the Upper Room to their courageous preaching to the world: "What grace! What power! What fire of the Holy Spirit, which, setting the heart aflame but once, makes hares into lions, the weak strong, the unwise wise."

Let us not spend our summer months without experiencing the grace and power of the fire of the Holy Spirit in our lives and the lives of our families. May the Holy Spirit grant you these gifts of courage, strength, and wisdom as you exercise your important ministries in the lives of your families, our Archdiocese, and our communities.

Wishing you all of God's blessings during these summer months, I remain,

Your Father in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Metropolitan Joseph". The signature is stylized and includes a long horizontal flourish at the end.

**+JOSEPH**

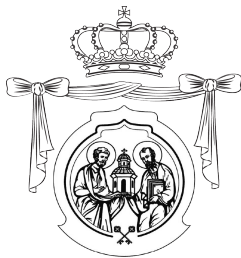
Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

*"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26)*

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His Eminence  
The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan JOSEPH

The Right Reverend  
Bishop THOMAS



Archbishop of New York and  
Metropolitan of  
All North America

Diocese of Oakland, Charleston,  
and the Mid-Atlantic

## ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

Dear Sisters in Christ,

It is with gratitude in my heart that I greet you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ! Your love and service to Christ and His Church, through your Christian leadership, works of mercy and fellowship, have been a great blessing to our God-protected Archdiocese for the past 46 years. Truly you are a “Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others.”

Your loving obedience to Christ and His Church has been a great encouragement to me and a witness to the world as you go about your ministry. St. Porphyrios, describing his own early monastic life, writes, “My whole life was a paradise: prayer, worship, handicraft, and obedience to my elders. But my obedience was an outcome of love not coercion. This blessed obedience benefited me greatly.” (Wounded by Love, p 24) This description of his life is an example for all of us and reminds me of your work of prayer, worship, acts of mercy and a loving obedience to Christ and His Church.

Love and obedience are corresponding virtues. Obedience frees us from the necessity of having our own way and pleasing our own desires, as our hearts and minds are rooted in love. Love, on the other hand, leads us to obedience to Christ and union with the Holy Trinity. Jesus said to his disciples, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” (John 14:23)

This is the same kind of loving obedience that the Theotokos expressed when the Angel Gabriel announced to her that she would bear no other than the Son of the Highest. “Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.” (Luke 1:38) And Jesus, in the Garden of Gethsemane before his arrest, trial and crucifixion, prayed “Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.” (Luke 22:42)

History is full of the stories of women who manifested this kind of loving obedience to Christ and His Church. One example is St. Julianna of Lazarevo (January 2) who is “an astonishing example of a self-denying Christian woman.... From her early years she lived devoutly, kept the fasts, and set aside the majority of her time for prayer.... Her love for people was expressed by nursing the sick and sewing clothing for the poor.... Upon the death of her husband, Juliana distributed to the poor her portion of the inheritance. Living in extreme poverty, she was nonetheless vivacious, cordial, and in everything she thanked the Lord.”

*“The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11: 26)*

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***Troparion (Tone 4)***

*By your righteous deeds you revealed to the world,  
An image of the perfect servant of the Lord.  
By your fasting, vigil and prayers,  
You were inspired in your evangelical life,  
Feeding the hungry and caring for the poor,  
Nursing the sick and strengthening the weak.  
Now you stand at the right hand of the Master, Christ,  
O holy Juliana, interceding for our souls.*

May your ministry continue to be living examples of a loving obedience to Christ and His Church, as we labor together in Christ's vineyard.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bishop Thomas". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "B" and a long, sweeping underline.

Rt. Rev. Bishop THOMAS (Joseph)  
Auxiliary Bishop, Diocese of Oakland, Charleston, and the Mid-Atlantic

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THE MOST REVEREND  
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# ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

THE MOST REVEREND METROPOLITAN PHILIP – FOUNDER

✠ A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS ✠

❖ DIOCESE OF NEW YORK & WASHINGTON DC  
DIOCESE OF CHARLESTON, OAKLAND & THE MID-ATLANTIC ❖



Dearest Ladies of our AWE:

*Glory be to Jesus Christ! Glory be to Him Forever!  
Christ is in Our Midst! He is and Always Shall Be!*

These two greetings, and the responses offered in reply, have long been in use in our Holy Orthodox Church as exhortations of faith, in which we proclaim the Divinity of our Lord Jesus Christ and that we acknowledge His eternal & loving presence! I wish to bring this simple fact to your attention, for I believe that so very often, those “words” and “traditions” (lower case “t”) of our Church become “just” words & traditions that are, indeed, to be said. Yet, how often do these words just slip away as we move on to our next thought or word?

Our “One, Holy, Catholic (universal) & Apostolic” Orthodox Church has always been very careful about the words that are used in our liturgics, our hymns, our prayers, our theology & dogmatics, our fellowship and yes, even in our simple greetings. Since we human beings are created in God’s “image & likeness” (Genesis 1:26-27), we share in His rationality & freedom (the image) and seek to be assimilated to Him through the attainment of virtues (the likeness). This gift of God’s “image” is what makes us a person, for we are God’s offspring (reminder, God is three persons & one essence). The rest of creation acts by God’s Divine Plan (e.g. instinct, biological programming, etc.), not freedom as we have it. We are able to rationalize and make decisions for ourselves; thus, words are how we express all of this. Thus, words are important and are given to us to use in the celebration of God’s “image” within us and in our journey towards the “likeness” of God (our goal of becoming ‘god by grace’).

Our loving and protective mother, the Church, as well as our humble fathers-in-Christ, the Bishops, Priests & Deacons, like all holy and good parents, teach us how to use words to glorify God and to draw closer to Him in communion (“common union”). For instance, the Church refers to the Great Lent as a “time of bright sadness” and the late Fr. Alexander Schmemmann refers to Jesus Christ as the “Divine Humility Incarnate.” These paradoxes are able to be used because God is the omnipotent Creator of all Creation; He can and does “bend” our “normal” use of grammar & syntax for the glory of His Name and thus, our salvation! Lastly, how we use words is important too; our Blessed Church has always had the practice of worshiping in the language of the people; wherever she is, she is to use the language of the people in which to worship our God, rather than to impose a foreign tongue!

God has created us in a most careful & deliberate way; thus, I would ask for each of us to be a bit more careful & deliberate about how we understand and use the words that come out of our hearts and mouths in our liturgical & private prayer, our hymns, our speaking about God, our fellowship and yes, even in our simple greetings! The next time you greet one another as we Orthodox do, please let it truly mean something!

Yours in Christ,

*Fr. Don*

Very Rev. Fr. Don Shadid, Spiritual Advisor

SUMMER 2019

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♦ PRESIDENT ♦



June 27, 2019

Your Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH, Your Grace Bishop Thomas, Reverend Fathers, and Sisters in Christ,

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

It is hard to believe I am almost done with my second year as the President of the Antiochian Women of the East; I still have so much to learn and do! I want to emphasize how much of a blessing it is to serve our two dioceses and to learn about them through my visits to the parishes. I moved recently to Virginia and this gave me the opportunity to be able to visit more churches in our region. For example, most recently I visited St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church; it was a unique and an amazing experience to learn about the Western Rite traditions. I am planning to visit more churches in the near future.

During my visits I talked with the ladies about who we are, what we do, what is going on in our region, how we can feed our spiritual lives, and what are the expectations of our parishes in not only our own communities but also within our dioceses. I noticed some of the churches I visited are eager to learn more about what other churches are doing and need to be educated about the North American Board. I enjoyed listening to their opinions and feedback. I believe we have made big changes in some churches and am committed to continuing this outreach to get to know more ladies within our parishes.

I am so proud to be part of the AWE. The officers, coordinators, and Spiritual Advisor maintain regular communication via phone conferences once a month, which last for one hour and half to two hours. In addition, we communicate everything digitally through multiple emails and text messages. I thank them from the bottom of my heart for their hard work and commitment to our two dioceses. A woman's strength should be spent on her God. The scriptures say in Proverbs 31:25, *"strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in the time to come."* Our board is a true representation of this.

I am sadly announcing we are going to miss Khouria Loukia and Khouria Rima, who are completing their terms this summer. Khouria Loukia was my second hand and brain; I could not imagine without her help I could not have survived the past two years. Khouria Rima had the most experience as an AWE officer. She offered wisdom during our discussions and remained patient and helpful at all times. We love you and we thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your hard work, commitment, and devotion to the AWE. May God grant you both many years!

Included below are additional updates:

- ❖ Vision 20/20: I have personally contacted all 45 parishes/missions in our dioceses during my first and second year in office, giving them expectations for the upcoming year as well. I have noticed an increase in participation of AWE chapters at the local and diocesan levels. I have been encouraged by the churches within one to two hours of driving distance coming together to participate in activities and fellowship together.
- ❖ I am very happy to announce our new Diocesan Newsletter, published for the first time in December of 2018, another way to get to know each other. I am so thrilled to let you know that 27 parishes from our dioceses displayed their full devotion to God and their communities in our first issue. A total of 24 parishes participated in our recent Summer Newsletter Issue.

Ms. Rula Osama Khoury ❖ PRESIDENT of the Antiochian Women of the East  
P.O. Box 711191, Herndon, VA 20171 - (cell) 724-799-1820 – aweorthodox1973@gmail.com

❖ ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA ❖

- ❖ The AWE Bylaws were approved by Metropolitan JOSEPH; we included a copy of the BYLAWS in each packet to take home with you to your AW groups within your parishes. We would like to thank Fadia Juzdan for helping us update the terminology to match that of the NAB Bylaws as well as making minor revisions.
- ❖ We ordered 100 scarves which display the AWE logo to see if our ladies would be interested in purchasing them. We have received an overwhelming response. As a result, we ordered 200 more in addition to 500 special bags which have a cross to carry holy bread. All the monies raised will go toward a designated Humanitarian project.
- ❖ To date, we have collected \$2995.00 for the Khouria Stefanie's Music Project; we would like to ask for more donations to complete the project in her memory.
- ❖ We hope the following information enables the Antiochian Women in your parishes to make plans and set goals for the coming months. Please mark your calendars for the following:
  - **AW Fall Gathering-** We are going to hold our first Fall Gathering at Holy Protection Monastery in White Haven, PA on October 19, 2019. The monastery overlooks the Lehigh River Valley in the Pocono mountain region. We will spend a day at the monastery enjoying its beauty and silence.
  - **Diakonia-** In December of 2019 it will be the AWE's turn to participate in the *Diakonia*. All the articles and reports will be due in November 1, 2019. Articles are welcomed on an endless variety of topics, ranging from describing a special ministry team in your parish, visiting a monastery, submitting personal reflections, to sharing the activities of the women of your parish.
  - **Antiochian Women Lenten Retreat-** The retreat will take place on March 13-15, 2020 at the Antiochian Village Heritage & Learning Center, Bolivar, PA. In addition to services and classes, you will have an opportunity to visit and venerate the resting place of St Raphael of Brooklyn. The speaker will be announced.

On behalf of all the officers and coordinators, I would like to thank our Hierarchy and Spiritual Advisor, Fr. Donald Shadid, for the guidance given to us to carry on God's work in our dioceses. I appreciate our officers and coordinators for their commitment to these positions and their ability to work so closely together, even with hundreds of miles that separate us throughout the year (answering my endless emails, text messages, and phone calls)!

Have a blessed and peaceful Summer.

Your sister in Christ,

*Rula Osama Khoury*

Rula Osama Khoury  
AWE President

## St. George Church, Upper Darby, PA

2018 - 2019 was a busy year for St. Katherine Women's Guild of St. George, Upper Darby, PA..

In November-December, we collected and donated gifts for the families of the People's Emergency Center (PEC) of Philadelphia. PEC offers emergency shelter, transitional housing, housing for teen mothers, and over 50 programs including literacy, financial skills, and computer training.

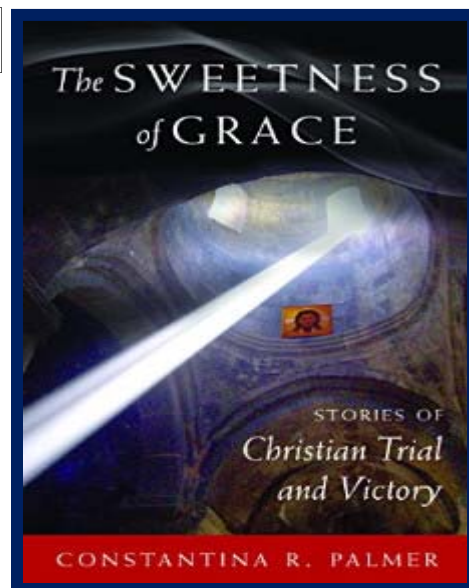
In Spring, we held a falafel dinner to raise money for new altar server robes. We held our annual Palm

Sunday Bake Sale which will fund the altar server robes, the AW-NAB Cathedral Project, and the Kh. Stefanie Music Project. We also baked traditional and American pastries for our Parish Food Festival in May.

We also participated in the Antiochian Women Book Club by reading and meeting to discuss "The Sweetness of Grace" by Constantina Palmer.

Submitted by:

Cynthia Long, AW President



## Holy Trinity Church, Lynchburg, VA

We had a baby shower in April for one of our gals who gave birth last month (her second). Showers for brides or expectant moms is one thing we do as a group. In addition, we set up a meal train for the new mom so cooking responsibilities are relieved for a few weeks.

As a parish, we welcomed 7 new members at Paschal Vigil. We had a record of 85 people in attendance. And the next day, after Matins, we hosted 65 people at our house for the Paschal Feast...also a record! Glad the weather was lovely as folks spilled out of the house onto the front and back porches and the sidewalks. We will be celebrating 13 years as Orthodox Christians on Pentecost and the next week celebrating our parish name day on Trinity Sunday

Submitted by:

Kh. Helen Waggener



## Holy Spirit Church, Huntington, WV

The Ladies of Holy Spirit Orthodox Church met once a month from January to June, 2019.

The meetings usually take place at the church social hall beginning at 1:00 p.m and ending by 2:30 or 3:00 pm.

The meeting consists of refreshments, social time and Father John discussing a topic the ladies had asked Father to discuss.

Our next book study will be "When You Pray", a practical guide to an orthodox life of Prayer, by L. Joseph Letendre.

On Holy Friday the Ladies spent the day at church decorating the tomb and the church sanctuary for the Pasch Services on Saturday. We enjoyed lunch together and attending the services with all our parishioners.

The Ladies visit the parishioners living in assisted living communities, nursing homes and those confined to their homes. We take the bulletins from the church and other news about the church. We also take an icon for their rooms or homes and a copy of the Dynamis for the current month. We have a weekly Bible Study about the daily reading of the Dynamis led by our Priest, Father John Dixon

We are supporting a local school's drive for children who do not always have food to eat on the weekend. We take food items the children can prepare themselves. Their backpacks are filled with food on Thursdays so they may take it home with them for the weekend on Friday. There are about 50 children attending the school that is signed up for the program and another 50 on the waiting list.

During the June Meeting we will be discussing fund raising projects to raise money to pay our annual dues and make a donation to Metropolitan Joseph's project to build a Cathedral at the Antiochian Village Camp.

Submitted by:  
Lexa C. Lewis

## St. Basil Church, Hampton, VA

The Antiochian Women of St. Basil have stayed busy! To begin 2019, we gathered for a fun community dinner at a local Thai restaurant, and determined that we'll continue meeting at a local restaurant at least once a quarter to shake things up some and strengthen our community outside of the Church walls. We have held 4 "Diaper Sprinkles" to celebrate the expecting mothers in our growing parish and welcome the new babies, and are in eager anticipation of one or two more to come. During Lent we worked together to decorate the Bier for Holy Friday and Pascha as well. As we continue in 2019, we are looking forward to helping with our Sacred Arts festival in September, and annual fund-raiser brunch in November.

Submitted by:  
Melissa Edens, AW president



## St. George Church, Washington, DC

The Ladies Myrrh Bearing Society of St. George in Washington DC continues to dedicate efforts in any and all aspects needed throughout the year.

The LMBS plays a very integral role as our parish's main fundraising organization while maintaining the traditions of the church and supporting our next generation.

We began the Ecclesiastical New Year with preparations for our Annual Bazaar in September, which continues to be our biggest fund raiser of the year.

We also held a Falafel and Maneesh sale which has become our parishioners favorite. Of course, our main priority to maintain the traditions of our parish continued, such as our year round seasonal Nativity decorations, preparing the Naash, and hosting all Holy Paschal activities.

We continued to build on our Antiochian Sisterhood with our sister

parish SS. Peter and Paul in Maryland. Our October Fall gathering was very fruitful and was reciprocated with a beautiful March Tea in Maryland. We look forward to hosting our next event in December 2019.

The LMBS was happy to assist our Teen SOYO with their efforts in a Thanksgiving Turkey meal drive which they managed to make nearly 70 complete meal bags. As well as, we proudly acknowledged and honored our high school/college graduates for June 2019. We do not lose sight that our future is only through the nurturing and support of our next generation!

As a result, the strength of our sisterhood and the fellowship makes all our efforts worth it!

May Christ's blessings continue to embrace and protect all our Sisters in Christ!

Submitted by:

Rose Fakhoury, LMBS VP



## St. John the Baptist Church, Levittown, NY

The Antiochian Women of St. John the Baptist Church in Levittown, NY held a falafel breakfast during Great Lent, and an Easter/Pascha cookie sale this year!



## St. Mary Church, Wilkes-Barre, PA

The Ladies of St. Mary play a very active role in the life of our parish. They assist with our weekly Spaghetti Dinner held each Thursday from September to June. They also hold a kibbee sale in June. Each Sunday during Advent, 2 of our Ladies read a Liturgical text and prayer and light a candle on our "Orthodox" Advent wreath following the Divine Liturgy. During Ladies month they take the collection, usher and read the Epistle and also give a sermon at the end of the Divine Liturgy. This coming September we will hold our first annual parish festival, "A Day in Damascus", and our Ladies will be preparing food for the festival as well as helping at the festival itself. They also prepare the Holy Bread for our Divine Liturgies. One of our regular fundraising events is our Rummage and Book Sale.



Throughout the year, our Ladies participate in the life of the church by singing in the choir and sponsoring the coffee hour. They are always ready to help whenever needed and our parish is truly blessed to have such an active group of Ladies.



## St. George Cathedral, Pittsburgh, PA

This new year has already been chock full of ministries and events for the Antiochian Women of Saint George Cathedral in Pittsburgh, Pa! We are making great efforts to humbly serve in four areas of ministry: spiritual, humanitarian, social, and fundraising.

Spiritually, our energy was focused this March for Women's Month by ushering, collecting, reading the epistle, and hosting coffee hour throughout the month. We hosted a lovely meal for the parish prepared and served by a few of our ladies. Another special way the women show their love for Christ is by honoring newly churching babies and their parents. We purchase icons for the newly churching infants and give them this gift from their church family on that day. We have been blessed with several churching's this year, and are eagerly preparing for more! As Antiochian Women, we were fed spiritually at the Antiochian Village's Women of the East Lenten retreat. It was a beautiful affair, and well attended by our AW. There we prayed, learned of the three pillars of the Orthodox Church, and supped with other Antiochian women throughout the East coast! Old friends were reunited, new bonds were formed, and much insight was gained on our spiritual lives in the church. As Holy Week is quickly approaching, the women of Saint George Cathedral will be giving their time and creative efforts by decorating the Bier and other areas of the church on Good & Holy Friday.

For humanitarian endeavors, our AW donated and acquired donations of gift cards/cash and clothing at Christmas time for the nuns of both monasteries; The Holy Transfiguration Monastery, and

The Nativity of the Theotokos Monastery. Our ladies would say that the biggest endeavor of the past year was raising money for the National Antiochian Women Project "Building a New Cathedral for Our Archdiocese at the Antiochian Village". With our combined efforts, through Christ and the love and support of the parish, we were greatly humbled and overjoyed to be able to offer five thousand dollars! We look forward to the National Project for 2019.



We never struggle to find ways to spend time with each other and enjoy fellowship, which is one of our pillars of service. During Advent, we spent time together decorating the Parish Christmas tree and enjoying dinner at one of Pittsburgh's eateries. Then our beloved president (**Rula Osama Khoury**) held a dinner at her own house as a farewell party before her big move out of state! It was a party full of laughter, hugs, and tears. On a more serious note, one of our social events was to raise awareness of Internet safety for the Teen SOYO and any and all parents of the church. The talk, "Online Safety & Appropriate Online Behavior", was given by one of our members and proved to be very thought provoking and helpful to all who attended.



For fundraising, the AW like to keep their attention focused on just a few for the year. This year during Great Lent, a falafel lunch fundraiser was held by the AW. The profits of this fundraiser was to assist any Antiochian Women who needed help to pay the expenses of the Women's Lenten Retreat. Not only was a generous sum raised, but we were able to feed our hungry parish and create a time of communion with one another.

With Pascha fast approaching the Antiochian Women look with excitement for the rest of the year ahead. We can't wait to greet each other with the Paschal exclamation, "CHRIST IS RISEN!" There are already eager preparations for a first ever Father's day luncheon hosted by Saint George AW for all the fathers in our community. May the rest of 2019 be pleasing to God, His church, and our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ!



## St. John the Baptist Church, Lewistown, MD

Fall 2018 – Some of our women attended a home group book study on “Becoming a Healing Presence,” hosted at the home of Maria Koropsak. We had some ladies from St. Mary’s Orthodox Church in Chambersburg, PA join our group. It was a blessed time of fellowship and growing together.

February 3 – The 4th Sunday after Epiphany – AWE President, Rula Khoury, came to visit us. She shared what AWE ministry has been doing for the past year. After Mass, Father James performed the blessing of the throat, a Western Rite tradition of St. Blaise. This was the first time Rula had experienced this Western Rite tradition. We were thrilled to have Rula with us.



At the beginning of Holy Week, we held a special children’s church for our elementary and preschool children to go over why and how we celebrate Holy Week and Pascha.

In addition, our parishioners donate food and monies monthly to our local community Food Bank.



## St. George Church, Danbury, CT

The Antiochian Women of St. George Church in Danbury, CT are busy throughout the year in services to God, the Church and our local community.

A group of dedicated women bake Holy Bread on a regular basis to ensure its availability for every service throughout the year.

During the Women’s Month of March, members give Sermonettes, read the Epistle, Chant, and take up the collection. They also sponsor a Lenten Luncheon in support of the “project of the year”.

Our women also Chant and sing in the Choir throughout the year. After funerals, Mercy Meal lunches are prepared and served to help comfort families and honor the memory of those who have fallen asleep.

Women bring flowers in honor of the Blessed Theotokos for the Akathist services in Lent and decorate Christ’s Bier for Good Friday service. They also contribute in making the outside of our beloved Church more beautiful by gardening and planting flowers.

A very special luncheon was prepared by our ladies; in celebration of Bishop JOHN’s visit in which he ordained two seminarians from St. Vladimir’s Seminary. A dinner was also served to visiting Seminarians during Lent.

The Antiochian Women are kept busy with raffles, bake sales, cooking, and working at our Annual Festival during the summer. Money raised from events during the year are used to help maintain our Church building, support special projects and help local Churches.

Overall, the Antiochian Women of St. George Church in Danbury, CT help to maintain the wellbeing of the parish by always centering Christ through their work and showing the meaning of a true stewardship.



## St. George Church, Allentown, PA

St. George Church, Allentown, the “church with a big heart” is continually active and productive as we work to achieve our God-calling mission and ministry here and abroad.



His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH honored us by his visitation to ordain two of our members to the priesthood on Sunday, March 3, 2019. The Ladies Altar Society witnessed and participated in this double Ordination. Deacon Thomas Underwood was ordained to the Holy Priesthood and Sub-deacon Peter Attar was ordained to the Holy Diaconate. A celebration banquet was held in their honor on March 2 with Metropolitan JOSEPH presiding. Fr. Anthony Sabbagh, head priest and Fr. Joseph Landino, assistant priest, invited and welcomed clergy to participate in this unique and holy event. Our Ladies Altar Society provided a Lenten luncheon after the Ordination. The Ordination was so

uplifting that we felt like it was heaven was on earth. We've been blessed within a few years with the ordination of Fr. Joshua, Fr. Joseph, Fr. Thomas and Deacon Peter.

During Antiochian Women's Month in March, the Ladies Altar Society participated in Sunday services with reading the Gospel and collections. Ebtisam Moussa delivered the sermonette on the 2019 North American Project “Building a Cathedral” and commented on the Virgin Mary's Salutation by Archangel Gabriel to her and her obedience to God's message.

On Saturday, March 30, the annual Ladies Altar Society luncheon was held at The Olive Garden Restaurant with our priests and secretary. This social time was filled with friendship, camaraderie and conversation.

During the year, the Ladies Altar Society participates in weekly Bible Study with Fr. Anthony. Our humanitarian ministries include a monthly dinner for the homeless led by one of our members, Naife Khalouf; financial aid to the war orphans in the Al-Husn Valley Diocese, Syria; and sponsorship of four children through the Children's Relief Fund of the Antiochian Archdiocese. Our caring ministry to the homebound and bereaved is supported by the efforts of Fay Moses and Naife Khalouf. We hold several fundraisers throughout the year and provide support for our annual Heritage Festival. Thank you to the Ladies Altar Society for spiritually and physically following God's words to become a family of God throughout the year. Our love for God and Church is evident in our giving of time, energy and wealth. We are

eager, willing and able to rise to the challenges of our charitable, spiritual and social ministries.

Submitted by:  
Kh. Minerva Sabbagh

## St. John Chrysostom Church York, PA

The Sisterhood of St. Olympia of St. John Chrysostom Orthodox Church in York, PA meets the first Sunday of each month. We began the church year with the beautiful Akathist to St. Olympia, and we begin each meeting with her Troparion.

In August we held an Ice Cream Social to raise money for our seminarian fund. For several years we have been giving grocery cards at Pascha to the married seminarians at St. Tikhon's to help with their expenses.

In September our members assembled hurricane clean-up buckets to be distributed through IOCC.

In November we began our St. Nicholas Project to provide gifts for six mothers and their children through the Bridge of Hope ministry in our community. 94 gifts were donated by many of our parish members and were presented to the families at a dinner provided by some of the church women soon after St. Nicholas Day.

We sponsored the annual Parish Nativity Card, with all proceeds going to the National Project. We also held two collections in January and February, raising the total for the project to \$1660.75.

Our parish also has an on-going drive for donations to the local food bank, supplying needed items which vary from month to month.

Submitted by:  
Barbara Bleam, AW President

## Virgin Mary Church, Yonkers, NY

Some humble events that were successfully executed because of the Grace of God and the commitment and generosity of our community:

- 1) We hosted the dinner following the Healing Prayer with seven priests in November
- 2) We visited Andrus (foster home for kids with autism) and spent the afternoon with them sharing a pizza dinner, and giving them some presents before Christmas in December.
- 3) We had a falafel fundraiser in April.
- 4) We gathered our families under the roof of our mother The Theotokos Virginia Mary and hosted the Mother's Day luncheon honoring and celebrating all the moms especially the elderly matriarchs.
- 5) Celebrate the third Friday Akathist (Madayeh) service with our guests the family of Saint Vladimir Orthodox Seminary clergy, fac-

ulty, community, students and their families. This year the tradition of Christian love and Agape fellowship continued. On Friday, March 29, 2019 we celebrated the third Akathist to the Virgin Mary with our neighboring seminary family. Reverend father Christopher Eid (our parish priest) had the honor to concelebrate with the Very Reverend Dr. Father Chad Hatfield the president of St. Vladimir Seminary and many other faculty and student clergy. Many students and clergy chanted the responses. At the end of the service Fr. Chad, speaking of the Virgin Mary, shared words of wisdom with our communities. Upon the dismissal and distributing flowers that were blessed decorating the icon of the mother of God, all attendees were invited to the lower level banquet hall to break bread and share of the many delicious Lenten dishes and refreshments that the Antiochian Women of the Virgin Mary church prepared.

Our community at Virgin Mary Church, Yonkers was happy to host again the family of St. Vladimir Seminary.

The service was in Arabic and English, full of profound praises for the Holy Theotokos, Ever Virgin and the Mother of our God. Everyone enjoyed the Lenten varieties prepared with love and generosity by our wonderful ladies. Our gathering was warm and blessed.

We thank all the families and ladies who contributed to this event's success, and ask the Lord to bestow His mercy and blessings upon us.

We ask the Lord to always guide our steps to do Thy will.

Glory to Thee o God!

Submitted by:

Rouba Saliba, AW President



## St. George Cathedral, Charleston, WV

March was a very busy month for our Antiochian Women's group, the Ladies Guild. We participated during the Liturgy by passing the offering tray, reading the Epistle and ushering the communion lines during women's month. On March 17, we hosted a pot luck dinner after the service for the Sunday of Orthodoxy, with members of our cathedral bringing covered dishes and feeding the parishioners not only from our church but from neighboring orthodox churches as well.



We also took pre-paid spinach pie orders for Lent and spent two days making them so parishioners could pick them up after Liturgy on a Sunday. And we are taking donations for our annual Easter greeting card to be sent to all parishioners before Pascha. The proceeds from this card and our Christmas card go to the national Antiochian Women's Project.

Our representatives to the Church Women United group, in Charleston, attended the World Day of Prayer program and luncheon the first Friday in March.

We hosted a baby bottle campaign. We distributed empty baby bottles to our parishioners in hopes they would fill them up with donations and return within 3 weeks. The donations collected went to a local organization, Cross Roads- that helps women facing unplanned pregnancies get on the right track and choose LIFE. This campaign was very successful and a great way to give back to our community and minister to those in need.

Our social committee had a Friday night game night with all kinds of board games, refreshments, and charades to end the evening. Other socials are planned for later in the year.

We will also have a Lenten breakfast after Holy Thursday morning service .

But our big event for spring will be our annual St. George's Day luncheon on Sunday, May 5 (due to St. George's Day falling during Holy Week). The ladies prepare the food; we have a short program and donations are received from parishioners who in return receive a St. George favor such as night-lights, magnets, icons, visor clips. That is also the only time the priest may not be served first unless George is a part of his name, because we serve the tables with Georges first, or a form of "George". So parishioners have learned to try to sit at a table with a "George".

We take a summer break in June and July and return in August to prepare for our annual dinner in October that serves about 2200 people.



## St. James Church, Hyde Park, NY

St. James Church Ladies Society of Hyde Park, NY has organized several events in the church for the children and members of the community. These events included an Easter egg hunt, Halloween party, and a visit from Santa for Christmas. During the Thanksgiving and Christmas season we collected money and purchased complete dinners and gift cards for families in need in partnership with the Hyde Park Food Pantry and Hudson Valley Community services. The Ladies Society was able to provide meals for thirty-five families each time. We hope to increase this number each year.



## St. Stephen the Protomartyr Church, South Plainfield, NJ



The St. Stephen Women's group is a dedicated group of women that supports the church in many aspects such as spiritual, fundraising events and support in many church activities. Every year we supply turkey baskets for needy families in our area. We also provide new clothing and shoes for underprivileged children twice a year. Additionally, we sponsor a child from the Children's Relief Fund in Lebanon. Last year, our "Act of Mercy" project was dedicated to Robert Wood Johnson Hospital's cancer patients. We made care packages which included a variety of items intended to comfort the patients. We also actively donate to the Church School and the local Rescue Squad. During March, which is Antiochian Women's month, we encourage the women to participate during mass, where we had our women read the Epistle and collect the donations. Additionally, together as a group we visited the Holy Protection Monastery in White Haven, PA. The women of St. Stephen are always willing to lend a hand in helping out with the annual festival by cooking, baking and setting up. Annually, the women also help with the Tricky Tray multiple bake sales

and promote our church by participating in in-town local fairs. We also raise money for the annual special projects by the Archdiocese. God bless all the women of St. Stephen's Church for their hard work and dedication.

Submitted by:

Barbara Fanik, President

## Ss. Peter & Paul Church, Potomac, MD



The Antiochian Women at Ss Peter and Paul in Potomac, Maryland compile goods for dozens of backpacks with sundry gifts and toiletries for a local Maryland homeless outreach.

Additionally, we prepare the Christmas gift bags for our church members who find it challenging to come to church services regularly, due either to illness or advanced age.

Ss. Peter and Paul Antiochian Women sponsor annually two children through the Children's Relief Fund, which is a ministry initiated by Father George Rados, and now administered by Father Isaac Crow, our priest at Ss Peter and Paul.

Through the efforts of the Antiochian Women at Ss Peter and Paul, Poinsettias and greens adorn the Church at the Nativity, similar to Holy Week and Pascha when Antiochian Women prayerfully prepare the Naash with spring flowers.

In addition, an annual Christmas lunch celebrating fellowship together in Christ was held at a restaurant.

The Ss. Peter and Paul Antiochian Women with the assistance from parishioners have an active ministry to quietly support those in our parish with meals, prayers, and cards.

An initiative called the "Angel Fund", an outreach of the Antiochian Women, supports parishioners in need providing grocery gift cards to bridge the gap for their food needs. Clergy confidentially designate recipients who would benefit from the Angel Fund. The fund was established in 2014. Anyone can contribute or designate money towards this fund.

The Angel Funding is partially funded through an elegant Mother's Day weekend fashion show/luncheon at Congressional Country Club that is a consistent sell-out event.

A one day retreat with Krista West at Ss. Peter and Paul Church Saturday, January 26, discussing the topic title, Envisioning The Kingdom The Why and How of Beauty in the Orthodox Church. The Women assisted with a luncheon.

A Lenten service project in April supported by our Antiochian Women, will help purchase and pack over 25,000 meals for local food pantries in Virginia, Maryland, and the District. The entire parish participated in this undertaking, accomplished in less than two hours during Coffee Hour!

## St. Mary Church, Hunt Valley, MD

March 24, 2019 - We had our annual Lenten food sale. Our ladies cook Lenten food every year and sell it to our parishioners. We advertise it to the community and other churches as well. The goal is to help people find new food ideas during lent and to encourage each other to be creative while raising money for our ministry.

March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2019 - We visited Greenfield Senior Living in Cockeysville and played a game of bingo. Not only did we entertain them but also gave their caregivers a break.



April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2019 - Palm Sunday we had our Easter cookie sale. These are ethnic homemade cookies. Each lady brought two dozen, and we sold cookies by the pound. We had a wonderful time working together while selling delicious Easter cookies.



## St. George Church, New Kensington, PA

The Myrrh Bearers have been part of the lie at St. George for over eighty years, and during that time our efforts have been focused on helping to support the church. The ability to aid the various aspects of parish life comes from the sale of kibbe, meat pies, and pastries. "Cooking days" are held several times a year to make and sell these items at least five times a year. The days are full of fellowship as we work and learn together. Occasionally we get together to just socialize and appreciate one another. We invite the entire women of the parish to share stories of the past, through our annual Spring Fling event.

We prepare boxes of sweets as gifts for shut-ins (elder women in the parish) on Christmas and Easter which includes a large icon. Additionally, we celebrate also the shut-ins birthdays every month.

We sponsor the coffee hour once a month and our sister's in Christ enjoy meeting together around the word of God.

We provide Health Kits and School Kits to IOCC.



## Holy Cross Church, Linthicum, MD

The Sisterhood of Saint Nina, of the Holy Cross Church in Linthicum, Maryland, meets every September to plan the events for the upcoming liturgical year. Our events are designed to fall into one or more of the four main goals of the Antiochian Women:

1. Express love and service through charity
2. Enhance fellowship
3. Develop deeper understanding of our Holy Orthodox Faith
4. Develop a spirit of Christian leadership, awareness and commitment

2018 was no exception. But, in 2018 we went a step further. We held a special Sisterhood Afternoon Tea with Kh. Frederica Mathewes-Green, an outreach event to bring non-Orthodox exposure to the church. Each Sisterhood member was encouraged to bring a non-Orthodox friend to the Tea as a way to introduce our friends and neighbors to the Orthodox Church. The Spring Tea met a couple of our own Sisterhood goals, too. It helped to enhance our own spirituality and enabled another venue for fellowship with one another

Sixty women came to hear Kh. Frederica speak about Mary, The Theotokos, as the Early Christians knew her. The Fellowship Hall was transformed into a lovely tea room with the china and special tablecloths provided by Sisterhood members. We ate scrumptious homemade sweet and savory tea cakes and sipped on a variety of teas as we listened to Kh. enlighten us with her research about Mary, the Mother of God.

Our many visitors also received a tour of the church nave with an explanation of our newly completed iconography.

The Spring Tea was a wonderful addition to our other activities, the Christmas Giving Tree, a gift giving to needy children; assisting with lunches at Arundel House of Hope, a homeless shelter; helping the nuns at The Sacred Monastery of Saint Nina in honor of our Sisterhood's patron saint; the handiwork of Blessed Guild of Olga. We also have monthly Sisterhood Breakfasts where we discuss relevant spiritual topics, talk with one another about our concerns and deepen our bonds.

Submitted by:

Elaine M. Papp, Chair, Sisterhood of Saint Nina



## St. Anthony Church, Bergenfield, NJ

The women of Saint Anthony's have had a very busy year. We kicked off the school year by hosting coffee hour for the parish as we celebrated the Elevation of the Cross. Throughout the year we maintain a Women's Guild Booth with religious items, books and novelties.

All hands were on deck to assist at our Bergen Street Food Truck Festival. This event reached out to the local community, raised funds for St. Jude's, gave exposure to our Pan Orthodox parish and helps our church operating budget.

The women had an enjoyable time going to the movies seeing the thought provoking movie "A Star is born" on a Sunday afternoon.

The fall brought ladies Baking, Baking, and baking our ethnic delights for our International Festival in November. Our members are an integral part in making our Festival a success while exposing the community to our varied ethnic backgrounds with delicious food and pastries.

Our fall philanthropic endeavor was a Coat Drive which garnered over 60 coats which were donated to the Emmaus a House in NYC (a Christian effort to help those in need) and the Union City Shelter. The women supported the collection of hats, scarves and gloves undertaken by our church school and sent to orphans abroad through the Orthodox effort "Warm the Children".



Our Christmas trip to the Skyland Manor in Ridgewood to enjoy the beautifully decorated historic mansion and a lovely lunch was a great way to celebrate the joyous season. The celebrating continued with a Touchstone Jewelry Sale and Christmas gathering with profits to benefit the Women's Guild.

The Ladies kicked off the New Year by going into NYC to see "Pretty Woman" on Broadway. After that, all our energy went into preparing for our "Luck of Saint Anthony Tricky Tray" which was held around St. Patrick's Day. It was a big hit in the community with terrific prizes, delicious food and delectable cookies baked by the ambitious bakers of the Women's Guild. The proceeds from this successful event enabled us to give a significant contribution towards our much needed church air conditioning replacement as well as our contribution to the church operating expenses. We shared our success by making contributions of \$500 to IOCC, "Warm the Children", Bergenfield Food Pantry and the Walk in Dinner Program our church sponsors three times a year.

The Women's Guild Yard Sale was held after Mother's Day and proved to be another success. Spearheaded by the Women, the help of many parishioners was invaluable. This event was quite a group effort and promoted fellowship among parishioners.

An end of the year dinner was held at a local Armenian restaurant. It brought many of our members together to enjoy a delicious meal and conversation. Father Joseph and Father Michael attended to show their support of the hardworking women of the parish.

Submitted by:

Betty C. Gakos (Women's Guild President)



## St. Michael's Church, Greensburg, PA

"O Christ our God, we are pledged to serve Thee with our whole being."

This first sentence of the Prayer of the Antiochian Women should be on our lips as soon as we rise in the morning to start our day, with others on our minds, not only ourselves. Serving others is serving God.

At St. Michael's we have been trying to do just that, but we can still do much more. Presently we are involved with a local Lutheran Church where we help serve lunch and donate money for the food to help those in need come and have a meal. A huge benefit of this participation is that we have bonded with the ladies of that church and have made new friends.

We continue to support the Sponsor A Child program that has been ongoing for over 20 years. The ladies have also recently helped some individuals financially who were in need because of health issues.

Socially we try to get together at various places along with the entire parish to have some quality time with each other outside of the church setting. These times are especially good for us.

Spiritually we are having our third One Day Advent retreat in December. We invite the entire congregation and other churches in the Deanery to join us. Our first two were so rewarding and we look forward to having this as a regular event.

Helping Father John whenever possible is also a main focus with the women. We try by attending the services of the church and helping with baking of the Holy Bread, wheat for memorials, singing, chanting, cleaning and decorating the church for holidays, and anything else Father might need.

Also, doing the majority of the cooking for our annual fund raiser in September is a very large undertaking for the ladies. We start preparing months ahead and try to get the entire parish to participate in this endeavor for our church.

We pray that we can focus on the beautiful words of the Prayer of the Antiochian Women and to truly have the strength to do what is right.

Submitted by:

The Women of St. Michael's



## St. George Church, Little Falls, NJ

The Ladies Society of St. George, Little Falls, NJ have been very active in 2018 - 2019, the Ladies have participated in the following:

### October

- Book sale (Becoming a Healing Presence)

### November

- Made Thanksgiving pastries for sale

### December

- Ladies Christmas lunch where many women attended and was overall a wonderful and joyous occasion
- Ladies hosted New Years Party where there was a great attendance and a large success

### March

- Ladies month
- Ladies ushered and read the Epistle in both Arabic and English
- Held lectures throughout the Lenten period with different speakers
- Hosted a Lenten dinner as we do every year where all women of the church cook and bring food
- Made spinach pies and sold them to raise money towards building a new cathedral
- Made and sold knafeh for Cheesefare Sunday
- Some of our women attended the retreat at the village

### April

- Had a communion breakfast for all women of the church

### May

- Held a lunch for St. George Day Feast, money raised will help offset the cost of the bus trip to the village for our children
- Began cooking and preparing food for our upcoming annual festival

### June

- Annual festival of the church in which all women come together to help where needed.



## St Philip, Souderton, PA

The Women of St. Philip, Souderton, Pa, have worked to serve as the Antiochian Christian women have throughout history as models of hospitality, generosity, giving attention to those in need and in fellowship with each other. Included are the women who can't attend meetings but work on their own ministries, parallel to ours. Below is a list of some of the work we do.

### New ministries:

- A Meal-Train app. has been set up for families with new babies or health issues
- A pre-Lenten mini retreat for women with a focus on menus, guiding kids through Lent and more.
- The sewing of beautiful hand made bags as a fund-raiser for camp scholarships.

### Annual Events:

- The annual Roast Beef Donation Lunch, always held on Meatfare Sunday. This is an easy event for us, the menu is always the same and the parish loves the food. The funds raised at this event goes exclusively to AWE and the project of the year.
- The annual Bazaar held in conjunction with our International Food Festival and the whole community turns out for good food and browsing our tables. We sell every-

thing from gently used jewelry (a big hit), hand-crafted items, cookbooks, aprons and more. These proceeds help our local pregnancy care and domestic abuse center and our church.

- We have, in the past, hosted baby showers but this year we had our first official Mother's Tea. It's a lovely event, served High Tea style with china cups and saucers, dainty tea sandwiches etc. The goal of this event is to create strong connections among new mothers and all mothers.

### Ongoing:

- The monthly collection of targeted items such as hygiene supplies, or canned goods for donation to local food banks is organized by one of our women.
- The baking of phosphora by the women.

- Matushka Olga sewing club, one woman teaches the children how to sew quilts and the ladies make blankets for the homeless and pillowcases for cancer patients.

### Future plans

- With the help of a new co-leader we will be renaming and re-organizing our women's group after Pascha with the goal of including new members and taking the focus off monthly meetings, each member developing their own strengths and ideas and creating more fellowship and opportunities for enrichment by guest speakers.
- We are planning to join the March for Life in January 2020 and reach out to our local sister parishes to join us and perhaps develop some way to be more Pro-Life in ways that will reach our sisters in need.

We are grateful for all our women and the opportunity to serve and reflect the heritage of Antiochian women.



*We look forward to gathering together  
at the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese  
Convention in Grand Rapids, MI*

*July 21st - July 28th, 2019*



### **Women's Lenten Retreat March 29 – 31, 2019**

The topic for the retreat was “Pray, Fast, Give”, taught by Father Charles Baz. It was a magnificent time of refreshment through attending Liturgies, praying the Akathist, Vespers, Orthros and learning from Father Charles’ teaching.

The retreat started off on Friday with the beautiful Akathist to the Mother of God Service. I wanted to learn the history about the Akathist and I found this by Hieromonk Job Gumerov. The Akathist was written in honor of the Mother of God, and was sung standing all night, from Friday to Saturday of the fifth week of Great Lent, after the victory over the Persians and Avars who had attacked Constantinople in 626, with Shah Hosroes Sarvar as their leader. The imperial city was surrounded by sea and by land. The situation was hopeless. The Mother of God gave her miraculous help and the city was saved. Out of thanksgiving for this intercession the feast of the Laudation of the Most Pure Mother of God (Saturday Akathist) was instituted. The word “rejoice” pronounced repeatedly is taken from the Gospels. This is how the Archangel Gabriel greeted the Mother of God when he brought her the annunciation of the Messiah who would be born of her. *“Rejoice, Thou are full of grace! The Lord is with Thee. Blessed are thou among women.” Luke 1:28.*

After dinner, we watched a wonderful movie called “Life is Beautiful” an incredibly moving story about love, family and the greatest love anyone can give. Jesus said *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” John 15:13.* I will not tell details in case you have not seen the movie,

but this set the tone of our retreat. We know that the greatest love in history is the love our Lord Jesus Christ showed in the laying down of his life for the salvation of the world. The love that our Lord showed is what drives us to the three pillars of *Praying, Fasting, and Giving* that we as Orthodox Christians practice during Lent.

Friday evening, after the movie, we gathered in the lobby and Rula Khoury (our AWE President) demonstrated how to make the Koliva for Saturday's Memorial service. It was a unique experience for many of us new to the Orthodox faith. Koliva is made for memorials for the departed. The main ingredient "wheat" brings to mind the quote from John's Gospel "Christ said, 'Unless a wheat of grain falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.'" (John 12:24).

I found the article below written by [Andrew Athanasiou](#) – which beautifully explains our Tradition.

*"Koliva is boiled wheat with (depending on the recipe) a combination of some or all of the following ingredients: powdered sugar, almonds, ground walnuts, sesame seeds, cinnamon, pomegranate seeds, raisins, anise, parsley and more.*

*As Orthodox Christians we are awaiting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming and the General Resurrection of the dead, through Christ we have Life! But, remembering the memory of our deceased beloved ones is an opportunity to pray for the souls of the departed as well as a way to help us heal from the death.*

*Koliva is an important part for the beginning of Lent. The first Saturday of Lent and the previous two Saturdays leading up to it are called the Saturdays of the Souls. Saturday, year round, is a remembrance of the dead, but these particular Saturdays the remembrance is intensified. According to tradition, Koliva is connected to Lent because of a miracle from St. Theodore the Tyro. In the 4<sup>th</sup> Century AD, Emperor Julian the Apostate knew that Christians would be hungry after the first week of strict fasting, which would make them go to the markets in Constantinople to buy food. Emperor Julian ordered blood from pagan sacrifices to be sprinkled on the food that was sold there, trying to force the Christians to paganism. St. Theodore the Tyro, who had died in the early 300's, appeared to the Patriarch of Constantinople, Eudoxios, in a dream, telling him that Christians should just boil wheat from their homes and sweeten it with honey, to avoid the polluted foods at the market."*

Saturday morning, we had Divine Liturgy for Soul Saturday. As explained in the article, during this Liturgy, we commemorate the memory of our hierarchy departed from this life as well as our departed loved ones. It is fitting that we celebrate Soul Saturdays during Lent because our Lord Jesus fulfilled the true Sabbath when he rested in the tomb on Saturday.

Sunday morning started with Orthros Service, Divine Liturgy (Third Sunday of Lent) and was followed by the Procession of the Holy Cross. A beautiful reverent service for the veneration of the Holy Cross of our Lord.

Father Charles noted that his teachings were drawn from the teachings of Father Thomas Hopko (of blessed memory). I would like to highlight just a few of the teachings from Father Charles' presentation. I would love to include his entire presentation as it was so enlightening and edifying, but I have done my best to pull just some of the beautiful teachings that truly resonated with me.

The three pillars of the Great Fast of our Holy Orthodox Faith are outlined by our Lord Jesus Christ himself, in his Sermon on the Mount. (Matthew 6:1-20) are:

- *We pray to God.*
- *We fast for ourselves.*
- *We give to others.*

In order to experience Pascha we must diligently prepare by praying, fasting, and almsgiving. The Orthodox Church is the Church of the Resurrection. Our ultimate goal is the “resurrection.” Jesus is the only reason for “resurrection, life and hope.”

(Excerpts from Father Charles Presentation in italics)

Fasting:

“Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.” *Matthew 6:16-18*

*Importance of Fasting - St. Basil the Great – “Fasting is not abstaining from food only but also abstaining from sin. Fasting is the accuser of sin, and the advocate of repentance, and, as the life worthy of angels and the salvation of humans.”*

*Adam and Eve were exiled from Paradise because of disobedience in eating the forbidden fruit. When Adam and Eve ate, they surely “died”. Death entered into the world and they were separated from God and all their descendants, the entire human race. Their transgression entered into the human race by their “mouths.” They were expelled from Paradise by the action of “eating,” we are invited back into Paradise by the action of “eating,” (which we consume in the Holy Eucharist. A foretaste of the Heavenly Banquet) during the Great Fast we train and discipline our mouths both ways; by what we eat and what we say.*

The Great Fast should be a joyous time. After a weary winter, we look forward in anticipation for the coming of spring; as we journey through the blessed struggle of the Great Fast we anticipate the joy of Pascha.

Prayer:

“And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words. Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. *Matthew 6:5-8*

*To abstain from certain foods without an increased prayer life and doing charitable works (almsgiving) is futile.*

Father Charles’ key points:

- *Prayer is Communication & Communion with God.*
- *The Lord Jesus Christ Himself was a man of Prayer.*
- *The Lord instructs us and teaches us to pray.*
- *Whenever the Disciples were in trouble or at a loss, Jesus was praying.*
- *Every righteous person, male or female, in the Holy Scriptures, Old and New Testament, prayed.*
- *The Saints in Heaven are in a continual state of prayer: We pray through them and they pray for us.*
- *We are to “Pray without Ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17).*

Father then went on to teach us on the two forms of prayer:

- *Communal/ Community – the Church.*
- *Devotional/Personal – in private.*
- *Both are important for the Spiritual life.*

Father Charles then went on to explain the singular and plural “you” in Matthew 6:5–8 and in the Lord’s Prayer; where it applies to Communal prayer and Devotional prayer, teaching us how it applies to both.

Almsgiving:

“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.” *Matthew 6:1–4*

*St. John Chrysostom - “Almsgiving is greater than all virtues. It places its lovers by the side of the King Himself, and justly.”*

- *In Greek it stands for “Act of Mercy”.*

*St. John Chrysostom - “Feeding a hungry person is better than raising someone from the dead.”*

*Matthew 25: 34–36, 40 “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me...*

*And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’*

- *It is the only thing God will judge us for in the Last Judgement, hence, the Gospel reading of Meatfare Sunday (Matthew 25:31-46)*

*“Your salvation could be contained in that little 3x3 box of Food for Hungry People.” Father Charles Baz*

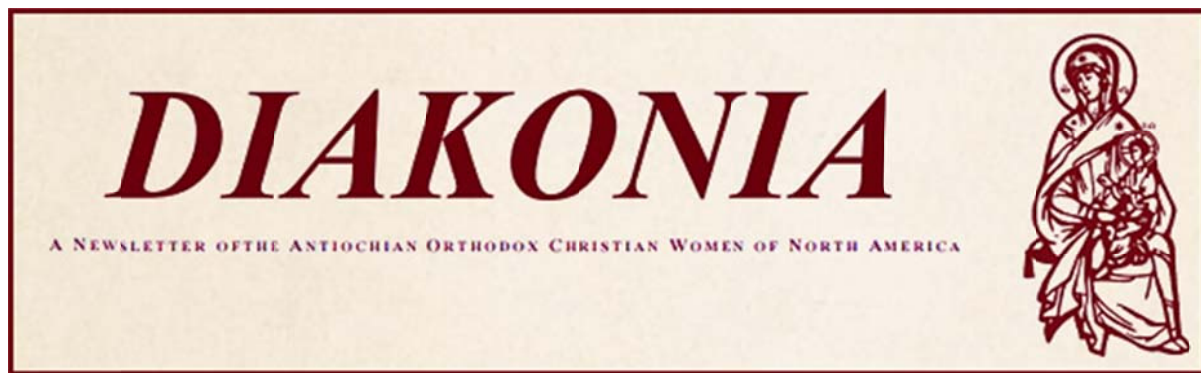
In conclusion:

*Orthodoxy is above all the Church of the Resurrection, for its very foundation is the Risen Christ, and He is its one and only basis for Christian existence, life and hope. Unfortunately, many of our people do not fully experience this profound Joy of Pascha. This is because they fail to embrace fully a necessary time of preparation. For without an “expectant preparation” the deeper meaning of Pascha is lost.*

The teachings of Father Charles brought about a deeper, spiritual understanding of the beautiful disciplines of our Holy Orthodox faith, as he brought together the meaning and the reason why Mother Church gives us these disciplines. They are put there for the health of our souls so that we may know how to prepare in anticipation for the joyous moment when we meet the Lord in the ultimate, eternal Pascha in the Heavenly Kingdom.

***All Glory be to God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit – The Blessed Holy Trinity!***

***By Maria Koropsak***



**DIAKONIA** is the 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.

The December Issue of the Diakonia will be featuring the Antiochian Women of the East. Please submit your news articles and photos by **November 1, 2019.** Let the entire Archdiocese read about the Antiochian Women of The East to help and maintain the wellbeing of our parishes by always centering Christ through our work and showing the meaning of a true stewardship. We ask the Lord to always guide our steps to do Thy will.

Glory to Thee o God

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 of Blessed Repose, it is "Theology in action." It is therefore befitting to name our newsletter **DIAKONIA**.

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>