

**ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN  
OF THE EAST**

**PRESENTS**

**AWESOME NEWS**

**FALL 2020**

**NEWSLETTER**



## **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.*

## A Message from our Public Relations Director:

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

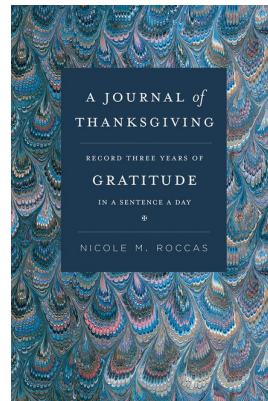
As I've shared before, my role as your Public Relations Director is focused primarily on chapter cohesion. Now, more than ever, we have found ourselves isolated and attempting to remain connected in any ways we can. Christ calls us to community and in the midst of the current pandemic, we have found keeping community to be a challenge. Nevertheless, I have been extremely encouraged by our chapter reports that have shared how parishes have been intentional about keeping community and our Sisterhood alive and active these last few months. I pray you will be just as encouraged and inspired by our fellow sisters!

In an effort to provide resources and ideas to help us remain active and encouraged in our faith, I have provided a few links below for resources that have been highly recommended to me by many of you. Furthermore, be sure to register for our AWE Zoom *Living Faith* presentations, as we are continuously coordinating to bring you edifying topics discussed and presented by a variety of speakers. Be sure to also subscribe to our YouTube channel (link and QR code provided on next page). May we all remain steadfast in our journeys of faith, even in the face of uncertainties in life!

In Christ,  
Colleen McAfee

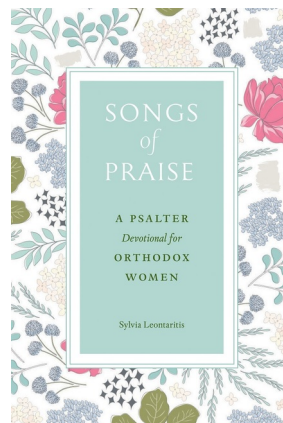
### A Journal of Thanksgiving: Record Three Years of Gratitude in a Sentence a Day

<https://store.ancientfaith.com/a-journal-of-thanksgiving/>



### Songs of Praise: A Psalter Devotional for Orthodox Women

<https://store.ancientfaith.com/songs-of-praise-a-psalter-devotional-for-orthodox-women/>





Below you will find the link to our YouTube page. You can find the recordings of our AWE Zoom presentations. Click on the link (or copy and paste) or scan the QR code with your smartphone's camera or QR Reader and it will take you directly to our YouTube page. Don't forget to click "subscribe" so you can be notified of any new uploaded videos!

YouTube Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6LuWieZn5n6og-e03jyWkQ>



Click on the following YouTube links to access our previous AWE keynote speakers

Kh. Frederica Mathewes Green (*The High and Holy Calling of Being a Wife*, 4/26/20)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jcolcQMauk>

Elissa Bjeletich (*My Cup Runneth Over: What is Orthodox Self Care?*, 5/31/20)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D2-tejDsOMw>

Dr. Maria Khoury (*Love thy Neighbor: Reflections from the Holy Land*, 7/19/20)  
(Part One)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpetD5M5Uo0>  
(Part Two)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7pv76CtzQAI>

Kh. Janet Shadid (*How to Stay Positive in these Current Times*, 8/09/20)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlpO\\_UjGmSw](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VlpO_UjGmSw)

# Antiochian Women of The East

## Summer Newsletter

Message – Fr. Don Shadid, Spiritual Advisor

***In the name of the Father, the Son & the Holy Spirit, One God, Amen!***

Dear Sisters-in-Christ:

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

As we are now in the waning days of summer, and preparing to enter into the beautiful & crisp (love that adjective!) days of Autumn, we find ourselves still struggling with the uncertainties of “our time” ... issues & threats that constantly seem to divide us, e.g. the Corona Virus, the issues of race, gender, politics, etc.. Yet it is important to remember that since the Fall of God’s Creation, there have been threats & issues in “every time.”

In order to understand why this is so, allow me to offer a very brief synopsis of our Salvation History. Thus we begin with our forebearers, Adam & Eve. They were given all of God’s Creation, and placed as stewards of it. They were commanded by God to not eat from the “Tree of Knowledge of Good & Evil,” and yet, upon the temptation of the Devil, the Adversary, they did indeed partake of it. God had promised that if they disobeyed Him, they would suffer unto death, and all that leads to it (sweat, toil, hunger, thirst, weariness, sorrow, pain, suffering, sickness, tribulations, tragedy & tears) would be theirs. Now, in spite of this Fall from Grace, the Church Fathers always remind us of God’s Great, Perfect & Eternal Love for us. St. Gregory the Theologian exhorts us to not see God’s action as punishment, but as an act of His Mercy ... “death, which cuts off sin, so that evil may not be everlasting.” You see, if Adam & Eve had remained in the Garden after their disobedience, they would have partaken of the “Tree of Life” and thus, they would have been in their fallen state unto Eternity, forever separated from God. This, then, is why there always has been, and always will be evil in this world, until the Second Coming of our Lord.

Now, dear Sisters-in-Christ, always remember this: we Orthodox Christians have the Gospels of Jesus Christ, i.e. the Good News (see Ro. 15:16, 1 Cor. 1:17 & 15:1, Eph. 3:6-7 & 2 Ti. 2:8)! God has never and will never abandon us: “Be valiant and strong, do not fear nor be afraid ... nor be terrified ... for the Lord your God, He is the One Who goes before you and with you and among you. He will not leave you nor forsake you.” (Deut. 31:6 ... see also Heb. 13:5-6)

Although we know all of this in our hearts, it is still easy to fall into a seemingly never-ending state of “uncertainty;” and I would offer that this is because of “fear.” We are afraid of the unknown and that which we are not able to control. But again, our Lord’s Gospel, His Word, encourages us and offers us the Lord’s Promise to uphold us: “Fear not, for I am with you. Do not go astray for I am your God Who strengthens you; and I will help and secure (uphold) you with My righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10) Fear is a favorite weapon of The Adversary and he is brashly wielding it during these days. Yet, did you know that God’s exhortation to not be afraid is found 365 times in the Holy Bible? God is in control ... He is in charge! Thirty-Three of those citations can be found at this link: <https://debbiemcdaniel.com/?s=33+verses+about+fear+and+anxiety> .

I would like to share a story with you that I have shared many times. It comes from the writings of the late Fr. Anthony Coniaris (Memory Eternal!), who uses it to help us understand God’s Love, which conquers fear. It has to do with the construction of The Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, CA (1933-1937). One of the most difficult challenges that affected the engineers & workmen was a distinctly human one. At the time, it was known that for every million dollars spent on construction, one workman was usually killed. The Golden Gate



Bridge was to cost 35 million dollars! So, each worker worried that he might be among the 35 lives that would be lost. Every safety precaution was employed: steel helmets, non-skid shoes, life-preserver jackets, health examinations and special diets to reduce dizziness, all to no avail. Each worker was consumed with worry ... and ... fear. It was not the danger of falling that paralyzed them, it was the fear of falling. Finally, a solution was derived ... it was a huge rope net, hung under the entire length of the bridge. It cost 80 thousand dollars, but it proved to be a worthwhile investment. The fear of falling was reduced and the workmen began to focus on their work, instead of the possibility of falling into the deadly waters below. Nothing had changed in their working condition, but now they had a promise that relieved their fear. *(Note: in total, 19 men fell off of the bridge and were saved by the net ... these survivors dubbed themselves the "Halfway to Hell Club" ... and that's the rest of that story!)*

In Christ, we have a satisfying answer to any question or uncertainty which inflicts fear upon us! No matter what we are fearful of, in Christ, we have His promise that underneath us will always be the net of God's love to catch us safely! God is in charge ... God is in control. When we face the "problems" of this world, let us also remember the words of the late Fr. John Namie (first Camp Director of the Antiochian Village – Memory Eternal!) ... "There are no such things as problems in this world, but there is Sin." And all Sin can be washed away through God's loving forgiveness, which is wonderfully manifested for us Orthodox Christians in the Sacramental Life of the Church; for in that Life, we visibly partake of the invisible grace of God! Let us also remember the words of the father who sought Jesus's Healing of his son ... Jesus told him that all things were possible if he would only believe, and he exclaimed: "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mk. 9:14-29) This is where God's Grace comes into the story ... wherever we fall short in our communion with Him, He gives us what we need to fulfill His Will ... to believe that He is God ... that He is in charge and that He is in control!

With that thought, allow me to close this message with an admonition from our God, and an exhortation from one of our Orthodox Hierarchs.

Our God, the God of Abraham, Isaac & Jacob, the God who is three Persons and of one Essence admonishes us to remember the following: "Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalms 46:11) In the Hebrew language, to "be still" means to "let go," to "stop striving" and "to slacken & let drop." You see, it is our Lord calling upon us to surrender to Him, to depend wholly on Him! A dear Brother-in-Christ, Fr. Michael, recently offered a Homily on this fear which is paralyzing us spiritually, emotionally & physically. He reflected that during these times of pandemic, violence & unrest, we have been "forced into asceticism" to some degree ... what with staying home more, social distancing, etc. He reminded us that over the last so many years, more & more, we have abandoned fasting & prayer. Now, perhaps God is giving us another chance ... another opportunity to gather in our Home Churches around our Icon Corners, to perhaps be more prudent in our grocery shopping and thus, concentrating more on necessities. Indeed our Lord teaches us in the Gospels the importance of fasting & prayer in order to draw closer to God. It is only when we empty ourselves, that God can fill us with Himself (Grace, Forgiveness, Love, Peace, Patience, etc.). Jesus is the perfect example of this "emptying," as He prayed to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane: "... not as I will, but as You will." (Mt. 26:39) It is during these times, then, that we can offer our anxieties, our fears, our uncertainties to God; and I truly believe that when we do that, He will take them from us, and somehow, as Healer & Loving Father, He will use these times for His Glory & for our Salvation. It is only when we do this, that we can let God banish our fears. He wants to love us, to protect us, to heal us ... He wants to be in relationship with us ... as our God, our Father ... and we as His Children!

Lastly, some years ago, at the Pittsburgh IOCC Dinner for "Syrian Relief," His Eminence, Metropolitan SAVAS of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh, was asked to say a few words after a very graphic & startling video/slideshow of the tragedy that was occurring in Syria, as Christians & others were being severely persecuted by ISIS. There was a "pall" over the room of 500+ caring souls who had gathered to raise awareness & monies for relief ministries in Syria. His Eminence stood in front of the Faithful and waited until

he had everyone's complete attention. Then he delivered this wonderful exhortation of Hope & God's Love ... he simply said: "Brothers & Sisters-in-Christ, we have just seen some tragic & awful images of the suffering of our Brothers & Sisters ... children & adults ... Christian & non-Christian ... at this moment, let us be lifted up by what we know ... remember, as Christians, we know the "rest of the story" (i.e. the Devil may seem to win some battles in this world, but He will be defeated by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has conquered death itself, thus opening up Eternity for one & all who choose to love God & their neighbor)! Everyone's heart was lifted and encouraged to continue in their ministry to those suffering from the sins of others.

Dear Antiochian Women & all who read these words, remember that God is in charge and that He is in control ... in Isaiah 7:14, we are promised that our Lord is called "Immanuel" (God with us) ... we are not to be afraid, for we can find Peace (John 14:27) & Rest in His admonition: "Be still, and know that I am God." (Psalms 46:11).

***Glory be to Jesus Christ! Glory be to Him forever!***



## Antiochian Women of the East

### Partners with FOCUS North America Back to School Backpack Program

The Antiochian Women of the East along with many other churches in the New York City area in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic partnered with FOCUS North America in sponsoring the Back to School Backpack program to meet the need and serve the families who even had less to spend on items like school supplies during this crisis. The Backpacks were distributed the end of August as shown below in the pictures shared by FOCUS. For more information on FOCUS North America, see this link

<http://focusnorthamerica.org/>







# ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN OF THE EAST

## 2020 Chapter Reports

Holy Cross – Linthicum, MD

Holy Spirit Orthodox Church – Huntington, WV

St. Anthony – Bergenfield, NJ

St. George – Charleston, WV

St. George Church – New Kensington, PA

St. George Church – Upper Darby, PA

St. John the Baptist – Lewistown, MD

St. Michael – Greensburg, PA

Sts. Peter and Paul – Potomac, MD

St. Philip – Souderton, PA

St. Stephen the Protomartyr – South Plainsfield, NJ

Virgin Mary – Yonkers, NY

## **Holy Cross – Linthicum, MD**

Holy Cross Sisterhood has a Sisterhood Breakfast the first Saturday of each month. At these meetings, they say prayers (usually third hour), discuss any personal pandemic challenges and has a speaker on various topics assigned to that meeting day. In addition, they have had “pop-up” Zoom meetings, just for fellowship and to stay in touch. Periodically, emails with prayers and articles related to the pandemic are sent to the ladies. Furthermore, Holy Cross women have individually participated in making masks for Johns Hopkins Hospital and others who need them. The women have also participated in the church’s gathering and distributing of non-perishable food and other essential items for their local food bank.



## **Holy Spirit Church – Huntington, WV**



Though they haven’t met at all since the pandemic closures and the reopening of their parish, the ladies of Holy Spirit in Huntington, WV have primarily communicated via phone calls in order to maintain their chapter cohesion. Their local charitable acts have been put on hold but are gradually being reinitiated to fulfill the needs of their local food pantries and information and referral services. They primarily conducted fundraisers for the special NAB project, which was also cut short due to the pandemic.



## **St. Anthony – Bergenfield, NJ**

The ladies of St. Anthony have stayed connected to their fellow Sisters and parishioners during the pandemic through phone calls and Zoom meetings. Additionally, their humanitarian efforts and acts of mercy throughout the last year have included a December Coat Drive, feeding the homeless in a local food bank, as well as donating funds for meals to be provided for the less fortunate in their area.



## **St. George – Charleston, WV**

During the current pandemic, the women of St. George have stayed in contact via a Facebook group, Zoom, and phone calls. Throughout the year, their charitable acts of mercy have remained active. They have collected clothing and items for less fortunate new moms and newborns (in collaboration with a charity group through a local hospital). Since the pandemic began, the ladies of St. George have continued to collect such items and will distribute, when allowed, to a local hospital.





## St. George – New Kensington, PA

Though it has been difficult, the women of St. George have remained connected with the help of their Deacon Abraham, who has facilitated conference calls for the officers on several occasions. In addition, several of the ladies have been instrumental in running and keeping the parish's monthly food bank operational, despite the obstacles brought on by COVID-19.



## St. George – Upper Darby, PA

During these isolating times, the women of St. George have found that phone calls, live-streaming services, Facebook, as well as their parish's newsletter email have been effective in keeping their fellow sisters connected. Throughout the past year, St. George has been intentional in maintaining its humanitarian efforts. In November 2019, they coordinated Thanksgiving Dinner Boxes. From November to December 2019, the ladies were actively involved in Holiday Gift Drive for People's Emergency Center of Philadelphia (which aids in homeless housing for families/mothers, as well as other social services). January to March 2020, the ladies were involved in a blanket, coat, sock, and glove drive for 12 Baskets Full Homeless Ministry/Project Home.

## **St. John the Baptist – Lewistown, MD**

The women of St. John the Baptist have maintained written letters and phone calls during the pandemic. Recently in Maryland, restaurants have allowed outdoor seating again and they have resumed their monthly “Mom’s Dinner Out” for the mothers of young children (who often need a respite from the challenging demands of motherhood), gathering in small groups and eating outdoors. Moreover, the parish has continued to contribute to its local food bank, despite COVID-19 hindrances.



## **St. Philip - Souderton, PA**

The women of St. Philip have maintained their chapter cohesion by virtual Zoom fellowship, sharing experiences and taking turns answering a few set questions, while offering one another courage and support during these isolating times. They have also assisted a group within their church who feed the homeless and by donating many needed items such as blankets, hygiene items, and clothing. Some ladies made masks to share with local organizations and parishioners within the church. Others sent cards to people to stay in touch.



## **St. Michael – Greensburg, PA**

Though it's been a challenge, the ladies of St. Michael have relied primarily on emails to stay connected. Phone calls have also helped during this isolating time.



## **Sts. Peter and Paul – Potomac, MD**

Group emails, Zoom baby shower, and phone calls to women who are isolated have been ways the women of Sts. Peter and Paul have stayed connected with their fellow Sisters and parishioners during the pandemic. Also, they have continued their Acts of Mercy by sending out Angel Fund gift cars to parishioners in need.



## **St. Stephen the Protomartyr – South Plainfield, NJ**

The ladies of St. Stephen the Protomartyr have stayed connected during the pandemic by holding a virtual Zoom meeting every week.



## **Virgin Mary – Yonkers, NY**

Unfortunately, due to the global pandemic, the women of Virgin Mary Orthodox Church were unable to plan and host any additional events (fundraising, paint night, Father's Day BBQ). Nevertheless, Mother's Day and Father's Day letters were sent to parishioners and they have remained connected via prayers, phone calls, and emails. Throughout the past year, the ladies of Virgin Mary have been extremely active and focused on various projects and special occasions. Such activities include special potluck, fall retreat, Andrus orphanage visit, book club discussion, March-Ladies month, presenting gifts to families churching their newborns, and last but not least, (prior to COVID-19) they launched their visits to the ladies who were ill or sick and tried to spend some time with them and show them love and compassion.





