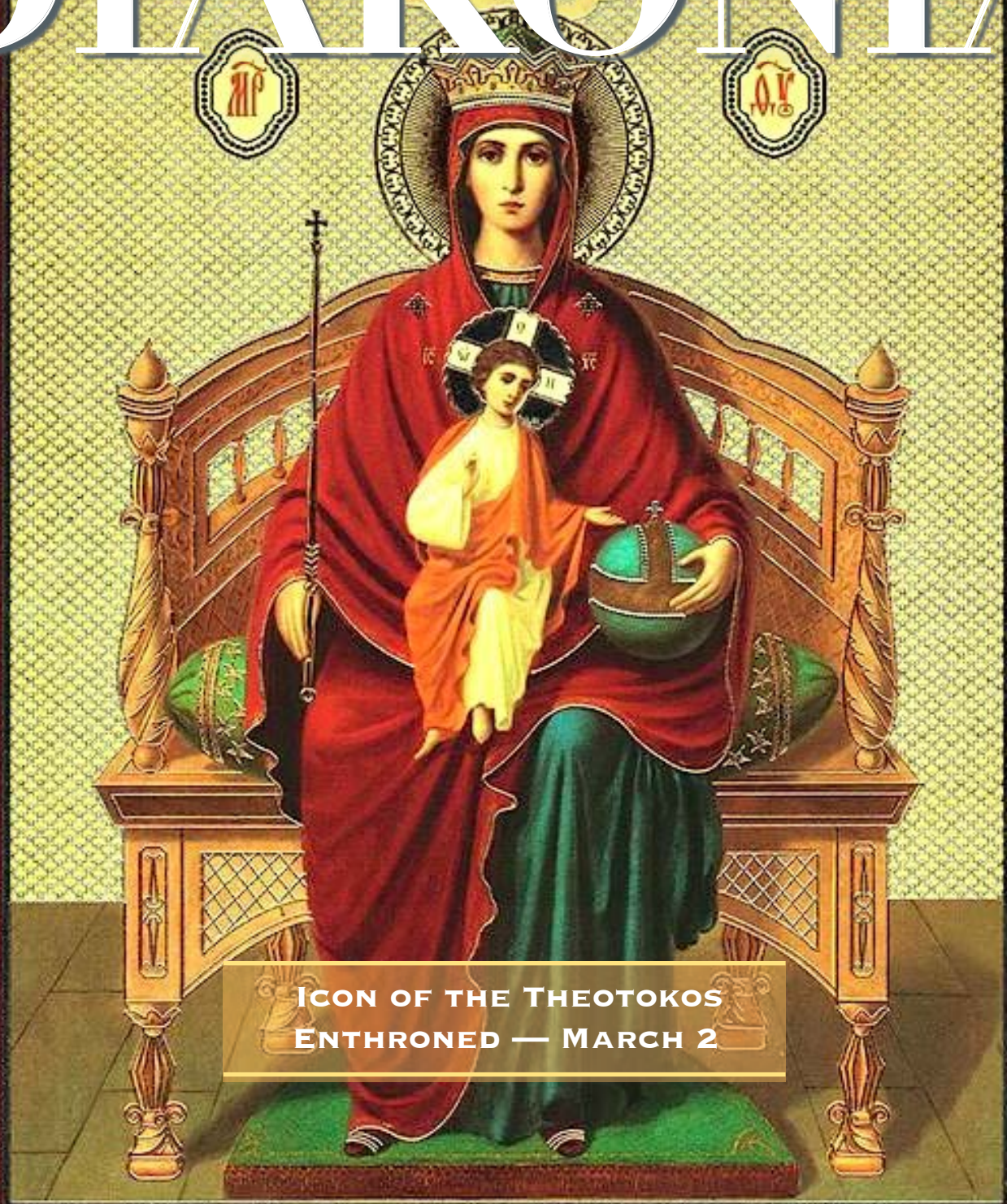


# DIAKONIA



ICON OF THE THEOTOKOS  
ENTHRONED — MARCH 2

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER ❖ SPRING 2020

THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

СВЯТЫЙ ДІАКОНІА



## 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 CAN ALLOW OURSELVES TO 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 ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

## THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

### *“A Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others”*

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THE ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN is an Organization of the  
**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA**  
His Eminence, the Most Reverend JOSEPH, Archbishop of New York & Metropolitan of All North America  
and Hierarchical Overseer for The Antiochian Women

**THE NORTH AMERICAN BOARD**  
His Grace Bishop JOHN, Spiritual Advisor

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### ***What is DIAKONIA?***

In translation, the Greek word “*diakonia*” means “service” — usually pertaining to service in the Church. The purpose of our organization is to help the women of our Archdiocese increase our spiritual growth and involvement in the Church, thereby learning how to better serve our Lord Jesus Christ. Our love for God leads us to love for our neighbor, and to undertake acts of charitable and humanitarian service in the Name of Christ.

In the words of our Founder, Metropolitan PHILIP of thrice-blessed memory: “*Diakonia is theology in action.*”

To read the DIAKONIA online, or for general information regarding the Antiochian Women, please go to the Antiochian Women website at: <http://ww1.antiochian.org/women>

To read past issues of DIAKONIA, go to: <http://ww1.antiochian.org/women/diakonia>  
“Like” and “follow” us on Facebook: Antiochian Women of North America

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**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 as an online journal in the months of September, December, March and June.

### **PUBLICATION GUIDELINES**

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

**To submit articles/photographs:** e-mail your article as an MSWord attachment; send your photograph as a PDF, PNG, or JPEG to the Editor, Kh. Kelleylynn Barberg, at the following address: [KhKelleylynn@gmail.com](mailto:KhKelleylynn@gmail.com)

**Submission Details:** Please include your name and a phone number where you can be contacted for questions/follow-up.

**Content:** All articles or photographs that you submit should be about events or activities of the North American Board, or about your local parish chapter, or about the Antiochian Women at the deanery or diocesan level. All submissions may be edited for length, clarity, or accuracy. If your article or photograph is chosen for inclusion in the DIAKONIA, you agree to give full copyright permissions to the Editor and her staff.

*Through the prayers of the Theotokos, O Saviour, save us!*



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THE ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

*"A Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others"*

*"Diakonia"*

*is produced by the Public Relations Coordinator of the Antiochian Women's North American Board*

*Editor: Kh. Kelleylynn Barberg*

*e-mail your comments, corrections, suggestions to: [khkelleylynn@gmail.com](mailto:khkelleylynn@gmail.com)*

**This Edition: SPRING 2020**

Cover Photograph: Icon of the Theotokos Enthroned ("Reigning") — source:  
<https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2020/03/miracle-on-day-of-abdication-of-tsar.html>





Dear Sisters in Christ,

Although in some places of our Archdiocese winter still has its cold hand firmly gripping the landscape, with this issue of the DIAKONIA we are looking forward to the renewal of the earth with springtime blossoms and warm, sweet breezes that will make us forget about Old Man Winter. The first day of Spring occurs with the Vernal Equinox on March 21st — and so, in our mind, we know that when March arrives, Spring is just around the corner.

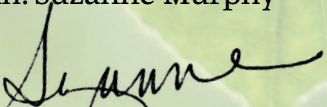
The month of March is, of course, ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN MONTH — and this year, the first of the month coincides with the beginning of Great Lent. I pray your fundraising activities are very successful as we endeavor to raise significant funds to put toward our 2020 PROJECT. And that you are spiritually renewed by our Lenten Journey.

I am so glad that we are able to highlight the activities of the **Diocese of Los Angeles and the West**. This diocese stretches from the Mexican border in the south to the Arctic Circle in Alaska! What a huge and varied diocese this is. It is tremendously active and you can read about their many activities in their own L.A. Diocesan Antiochian Women Newsletter, which is available on the AW NAB homepage. Just go to our Archdiocese website and when you open the link to our Antiochian Women page, scroll down to the bottom of the page and look in the column on the right-side. You will see a link there for their LA & West newsletter.

Congratulations to **AW DLAOW President, Charmaine Darmour**, and the other officers and appointed coordinators. With a diocese this large, much attention has to be devoted to keeping everyone feeling connected and moving in unison. And it is especially wonderful to see how good the participation is for their diocesan activities, since so many of the DLAOW members have to fly from distant places to gather together. You are awesome! 😊

I always like to be reminded of St. Paul's words when thinking of the work of the Antiochian Women: *"He will not forget how hard you have worked for Him, and how you have shown your love to Him by caring for others."* (Hebrews 6:10) Let us never lose sight of our Motto, and never tire of working for our Lord and our neighbors in this world.

With love,  
I am your sister and servant in Christ,  
Kh. Suzanne Murphy

  
PRESIDENT OF THE NORTH AMERICAN BOARD





# A Word from His Eminence

His Eminence  
The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and  
Metropolitan of  
All North America

## ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

March, 2020

Beloved Antiochian Woman of our God-Protected Archdiocese:

This month, “Ladies Month” as we commonly refer to it in the Archdiocese, coincides with the beginning and first part of the Great Fast and always includes the Great Feast of the Annunciation. What a beautiful time of the Church year to rededicate our lives and everything we do “unto Christ our God” as we recite in the litanies of the Church.

As we concentrate on our spiritual lives through increased prayer, fasting and giving alms to the poor and needy, we delve deeper into the reality of what it means to be a Christian in the often mixed up world we live in today. At the same time, as members of the Antiochian Women of our mighty Archdiocese, you put these ascetical and salvation building foundations I just mentioned into concrete actions and realities through your good and mighty works in obedience to the will of God and the direction of your Metropolitan.

This year, we have as our project theme, “Fulfilling the Vision”. This “vision” includes the next phases of the Antiochian Village. When our beloved Metropolitan PHILIP of thrice-blessed memory purchased and founded the Antiochian Village in the late 1970’s, he had many visions for this beautiful piece of land, some of which he realized in his lifetime like the Camp and the Heritage and Learning Center, and others that have yet to be fulfilled. After assessing the needs of our Archdiocese over the past five years, in addition to his “visions”, I have added some of my own and, now, in 2020, it is part of that continued overall vision to begin the next phase of growth on this sacred piece of land.

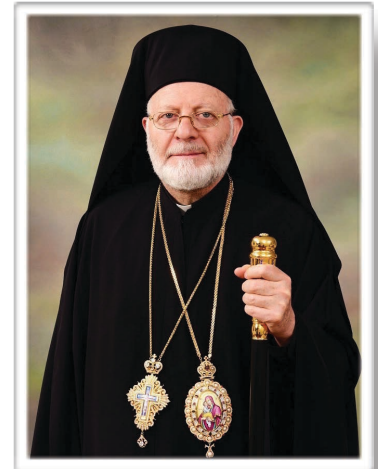
This “vision” includes a new cathedral with a crypt for our past and future hierarchs, a shrine for St. Raphael of Brooklyn for the proper veneration of his holy relics, offices and a conference room, a residence for our hierarchs when they retire, and a monastery on a secluded part of the property.

We know with faith and help of our Antiochian Women, this dream, this vision, will become a reality. Recently, many of us heard of the repose of the Elder Ephraim of Arizona. This humble monk came to this country and, with the faith and support of his followers, established 17 fully functioning and majestic monasteries for men and women all over the United States and Canada in just the past 30 years. If he was able to do this, I have faith that we in our Archdiocese can also plant a thriving monastic community in this beautiful piece of land that has been entrusted to us from God. As such, I am grateful in advance for your charitable and fund-raising efforts in helping with this grand project.

Finally, as we begin our Lenten journey, I pray that each one of you will be spiritually strengthened to accomplish the course of the Fast with humility and love for one another.

Wishing you all a blessed season of fasting, I remain,  
Your Father in Christ.

+JOSEPH  
Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America





# *Your Elected & Appointed Leadership Team*

## THE DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES & THE WEST

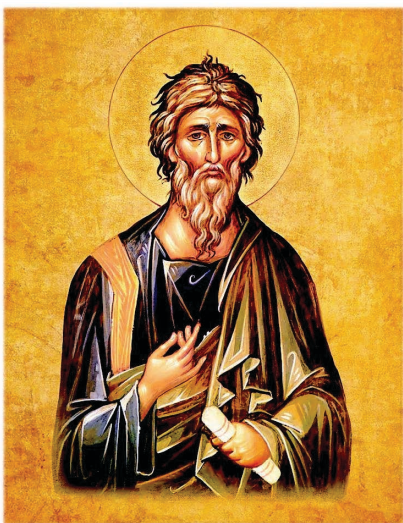


### **SPIRITUAL ADVISOR**

**THE VERY REVEREND FR. DAVID HOVIK**

Kh. Debbie and I have been married for 44 years and have lived in the same house for 40 years. We have 4 children and 10 grandchildren (ages 20 - 11) and all, except our youngest son in Alaska, attend our parish. I am the founding priest of St. Andrew Parish in Arlington, WA. I was an Evangelical Protestant pastor for 19 1/2 years before our congregation was received into the Holy Orthodox Church on Feb. 8, 1997 by His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH. I am beginning my 24th year as a priest.

In the past I have taught in a private Christian school and served as a chaplain in both a hospital and a prison. I currently volunteer in the Washington State Prison system. One of my great joys has been to serve as the Spiritual Adviser for the Antiochian Women in the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West for over a decade. As most of you know, I shattered my distal femur on June 5, 2019. By God's grace, I have recovered, and I want to thank you for all your prayers and well wishes. ❖







## **PRESIDENT**

**CHARMAINE DARMOUR**

I'm currently serving my third term as Diocese President. I was born & raised in Parma, Ohio – just outside Cleveland where I attended St. George.

At age 22 my adventuring spirit took me to Southern CA, and for the last 31 years I've resided in Orange County. Although blessed to be raised in a strong Orthodox family, it was my summers at Antiochian Village that made our faith personal to me. My time at “the Village” really deepened my faith and greatly influenced the person I am today. The friendships I made there are still among my most treasured relationships.

When I moved to CA, I became involved in our Diocese – then called “Western Region,” serving for three years in the early 90's as the Bible Bowl Coordinator. I've been a member of St. Michael in Van Nuys for over 20 years — however, I'm very much a free spirit & enjoy visiting parishes throughout our Diocese — so any given Sunday you never know where I might turn up! I've served

on Parish Council, I sing in the choir & also serve as the parish AW Chapter President.

For over 30 years, I've worked at the Anaheim Police Department, with people I'm proud of on a daily basis. I ask that you please keep our First Responders in your prayers.

There is a lot to see in this world, so I travel whenever possible. My favorite destination thus far has been Alaska. I also find our PLC's, Archdiocese Conventions & Diocese Fall Gatherings a bonus opportunity to see great sites! A road trip from Southern CA to Portland, OR for our PLC in 2018, definitely being a favorite.

Serving on a Diocese level of our AW has blessed me with the opportunity to meet countless fabulous women. We are a Sisterhood and getting to know you all is a priceless gift. As this term continues, I look forward to meeting many more of the amazing women in our Diocese. My on-going goals for our ministry are to find ways to connect us and also to encourage the women in our parishes to reach out to the women in neighboring parishes to get to know each other & truly become a Sisterhood! ❖







## **VICE PRESIDENT**

**MICHELE BABA**

Michele was born in Altoona, PA and grew up in Anaheim, CA, attending St. Luke Orthodox Church in Garden Grove, which is where she met her husband Danny. After their marriage, they participated in the founding of St. Mark Church in Irvine. Michele continued her deep involvement in the church life by teaching Sunday School for 15 years at both St. Mark and St. Luke and was an active parent in Teen SOYO at both parishes. She served as Ladies President at St. Mark and worked on many committees. She served as board member on the St. Nicholas Camp Committee for the past 12 years. Her involvement has included: director, arts and crafts, sports, and most recently as supportive medical staff. Michele received her Bachelor's Degree from California State University Long Beach. Her working career has included teaching at Prince of Peace Lutheran School in Anaheim and as an account executive for Shesido Cosmetics. For the past 16 years she has been employed by Saddleback Valley Unified School District, working in Special Education and Elementary P.E. teacher. She enjoys being outside working with children, especially her own: Lauren, Michael, Daniel, and Alexander. With their children, Michele and Danny now have more time together; they enjoy listening to music and attending concerts, especially those featuring her daughter who plays both the violin & viola. Michele enjoyed serving on our Antiochian Women Diocese Board as Treasurer for four years, and has spent the last two years serving as Vice President. ❖



## **CORRESPONDENCE SECRETARY**

**GEORGETTE MALOUF**

The Orthodox Church and church community have been a part of my life since as long as I can remember. I grew up singing in the choir, teaching Church School and being very active in SOYO and eventually the Ladies organization at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Los Angeles, CA. I went to college at California State University at Northridge majoring in Sociology. Being active in my local church, led me to meet, have a wonderful friendship, and eventually marry my husband of 44 years, Ed Malouf. We have three children, Christian, Natalie, and Lauren. I was fortunate enough to stay home with the kids as they were growing. When they started college, I began working at my children's elementary school (which was also mine) as a Special Education Coordinator and presently in the Administration Office. I became active in our local Antiochian Women's Chapter at a young age. I loved being with and learning from the senior women of our Church. I have held all office positions of St. Nicholas Ladies Society and in the Antiochian Women of the Western Diocese. I have also been active and held positions in the NAB. ❖





**RECORDING SECRETARY/  
SUNSHINE COMMITTEE**

**DIANA STANFORD**

**TREASURER/  
SUNSHINE COMMITTEE**

**CONNIE KOURI**

Dear Sisters in Christ,

We would like to introduce ourselves. We are **Diana Stanford** and **Connie Kouri** and have been members of St. Luke's in Garden Grove, CA all our lives. We are humbled and honored to be part of this ministry of prayer. Our goal is to establish a women's prayer list for those who are experiencing challenging struggles in life whether medical, emotional or spiritual.

We all value the power of prayer and there are seasons in our lives where we welcome additional prayer. Let us pray together for strength, recovery, comfort and guidance, as a sisterhood in Christ. As part of this ministry, we would like to reach out to those in need with a card such as Get Well, Thinking of You and Memory Eternal to remind us that we are all connected through our extended church family.

Submit prayer requests and addresses for cards to:

[awdlawsunshine@gmail.com](mailto:awdlawsunshine@gmail.com)

All names submitted to the prayer list will be added to the Antiochian Women DLAW blog on:

<https://antiochianwomenblog.wordpress.com>

We look forward to being part of this sisterhood of prayer warriors.

Sisters in Christ,

*Connie & Diana*







## **PUBLIC RELATIONS COORDINATOR**

**LAUREN MALOUF**

Lauren is a born and raised California girl. Lauren attends St. Nicholas Orthodox Cathedral in Los Angeles, CA, the very same church in which she was baptized. While in High School, Lauren served on the Diocesan Teen SOYO Board in all capacities, including Diocesan President. In 2012, she received her Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education from Hellenic College in Brookline, Massachusetts. Lauren currently teaches at Sylvan Park Elementary School in Van Nuys, CA. Lauren also works as a Math Education Professional Development Facilitator for the UCLA Mathematics Project. Lauren serves on the Diocesan Conference Planning and Coordinating Committee as the Creative Arts Coordinator. When Lauren is not working she can be found watching her Los Angeles Dodgers. ❖



## **RETREAT COORDINATOR**

**JEAN BABA**

My name is Khourieh Jean Baba, wife of V. Rev Fr Paul Baba from Holy Virgin Mary Church in West Sacramento, CA. I am a devoted wife, Mother to three adult children, Nicholas, Nathaniel and Gabriella, God-Mother to 13 and Khourieh and friend to my flock at church, and away from home Mama to the College students. I retired from a 20 year banking career in 2011 and have spent the last seven years as an Arabic Medical-Language Interpreter. In my free time, I enjoy cooking for my family and friends and entertaining in our home, reading and taking long walks. In my parish life, I am the Director of our Church's Festival and major events. I stay very active in the community where I

live and participate with outreach to the homeless and as an advocate for the senior citizens. In 2019, at the PLC in San Diego, I was blessed by Metropolitan JOSEPH to take on the role as AW Retreat Coordinator. I happily accepted and feel blessed with the support from the ladies of our Diocese. ❖





## HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR

SARAH STEIGER

Hi. My name is Sarah Steiger and I am the new Humanitarian Coordinator for the Diocese of LA and the West. I attend Ss. Peter and Paul's in the small town of Ben Lomond, CA in the Santa Cruz Mountains. I am an active member in our Antiochian Women's group, choir and our annual children's summer church camp. I'm married and have two children, a son (10) and a daughter (7), who keep me on my toes. We also live across the street from our parish, so I never have an excuse to be late to church!

I came into Orthodoxy in my 30's after meeting my husband in a local triathlon club. I had no idea what Orthodox Christianity was so I had a very accelerated introduction during our time of courting. I feel like I am constantly learning and growing and am in awe of all the Church embodies on both a personal and community level.

Before full-time mothering and household managing, I had a career in Higher Education and Student Affairs at the University of California at Santa Cruz and still miss working with college students. I enjoy spending time outdoors, hiking, doing Crossfit, reading, planning trips, visiting monasteries, and punch needle hooking.

I'm looking forward to serving with other amazing Orthodox women and learning more from others about Christ's call to serve and growing in our sisterhood. ✚

PSALM 139:13-14

FOR YOU POSSESS MY HEART, O LORD: YOU  
TOOK HOLD OF ME FROM MY MOTHER'S  
WOMB. I WILL GIVE THANKS TO YOU, FOR I  
AM FEARFULLY AND WONDERFULLY MADE:  
MARVELOUS ARE YOUR WORKS, AND MY  
SOUL KNOWS THIS VERY WELL.





## **MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR**

**SAMIA HABIB**

I am a Cradle Orthodox woman born to immigrant parents from Lebanon. My brothers and I are first generation in this country, and I grew up Glendale, CA, where we attended St. Nicholas Orthodox Cathedral for many years. I was involved in Church School, Summer Camp, Teen SOYO, and as I reached adulthood, I became a Church School teacher and member of the Antiochian Women, where I held many offices.

I married Greg Habib in 1974, and we reside in Burbank, CA. Greg and I were married for almost 45 years, until he passed away last year of a very sudden and unexpected heart attack.

We have two grown sons, Fr. Michael Habib, along with his wife, Kh. Maria, and 3 grandchildren Maximus Joseph, Maura Sophia, and, and Matthias Gregory. They live in Twin Falls, Idaho, where he is parish priest at St. Ignatius Orthodox Church. Our younger son, Gabriel Habib, lives with me in Burbank, and he is a Licensed Massage Therapist and Personal Trainer. We look forward to him getting married in the near future and giving us more grandchildren.

At the Diocesan-level, I have held many offices and coordinator positions, including President in 2005-2007. We have been members of St. Michael Orthodox Church in Van Nuys, CA, for 9 years, where I have been actively involved with the Antiochian Women for different events, assist with coffee hour and with reading during Orthros, and offer my services for other church events.

I am a retired Preschool Teacher after many years, which now gives me the flexibility to do things I didn't have time for, and to visit my grandchildren more often. I look forward to meeting new ladies this coming year and encouraging them to get involved as much as they can. ❖







## **RELIGIOUS COORDINATOR**

**KH. KYRA LEWIS**

My name is Kh. Kyra Lewis. I am the wife of the late Archpriest Michael Lewis (+) and the mother of Ana (Greg) Hudson and Katya Lewis; and most recently, grandmother (Baba) of Alyena Karen Hudson. I was born in Manville, NJ (yes, I'm a proud Jersey girl), where I was baptized, raised, and married at SS. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church (OCA) in Manville; where my parents and siblings still attend.

I met my future husband at Kutztown University of PA where we both studying Russian. In the Fall of 1985, my husband began his studies at St. Vladimir's Seminary in NY. In 1986, we were married and began our life as a married couple for his last 2 years of seminary.

In July 1988, we were assigned to St. May's Antiochian Orthodox Church in West Pam Beach, FL, where we served until July 1997. While there, I was active in our local chapter of the Antiochian Women's group and, then, Senior SOYO. I was also blessed to serve as Vice-President of the Southeast Region AOCWNA.

In July of 1997, we were assigned to St. Luke's Antiochian Orthodox Church in Garden Grove, CA, where my family and I attend. I was a church school teacher for many years. I am one of our parish's Prosphora bakers and am active in the AW of St. Luke, where I have served as president and now currently, as religious coordinator. At Charmaine Darmour's gentle persuasion, I now serve as the religious coordinator of DLAW.

I enjoy reading, especially the lives of the saints and historical fiction; and doing word puzzles. It goes without saying that I love spending time with my granddaughter.

If there is anything special that you would like to see posted on our blog or you just want to say "hi", I can be reached at [kyralewis886@gmail.com](mailto:kyralewis886@gmail.com) ❖



# *A Word from our Spiritual Advisor*



## **JUST A LITTLE SPIT**

*A message from our Spiritual Father,  
Fr. David Hovik*

Would you surrender your life over a piece of “spit?”

In 1227 the people in the city of Tbilisi, Georgia had to answer that very question. Some call it the most Terrible Day in Georgian History.

On the first day of the battle, the Georgian Army fought off the invading Muslims. However, that night, a group of Persians (who were living in Tbilisi) secretly opened the gates and summoned the Muslim army into the city. A manuscript describing this reads:

“Words are powerless to convey the destruction that the enemy wrought: tearing infants from their mother's breasts, they beat their heads against the bridge...”

A river of blood flowed through the city: I won't describe the details, but the river and the streets were filled with DEATH.

The Sultan ordered that the cupola of the Sioni Cathedral be taken down and replaced with his vile throne. He commanded the Icons of Christ and the Theotokos be taken out of the Cathedral and placed in the center of the bridge over the Mtkvari River.

He then forced the remaining citizens to gather at the bridge, ordering them to SPIT ON THE HOLY ICONS. Those who betrayed the Christian Faith and spit on the icons had their lives spared. While the Orthodox who kept the Faith and refused to spit on the icons were beheaded. 100,000 Georgians sacrificed their lives to venerate the Holy Icons. 100,000 heads and headless bodies were carried down the Mtkvari River.

Ladies, let's suppose they lined us up at a bridge near St. Nicholas Camp and they brought the two Icons of Christ and the Theotokos out of the Chapel and set them up in the middle. You don't have any time to think about this. There is no escape plan. Would you venerate the icons and have your head cut-off, or would you spit on them?

*(continued on next page...)*



It's just a little spit and they will allow you to live! Could you rationalize spitting? I have my whole life before me! What about my family and everything I own?

What if you would lose your job by refusing to sign a document supporting Transgenderism and Gay Marriage? It's just a piece of paper! How will I support my family if I lose this job? I think there are some Mtkvari Rivers coming our way! We better be prepared for some form of martyrdom right now! Because the overwhelming Force of Globalism (secular humanism & scientific materialism) is preparing to roll over us like that Muslim Army rolled over Tbilisi.

St. Justin Martyr, who was put to death in 165 AD, nailed it when he said, "Let it be understood that those who are not found living as [Jesus] taught are NOT Christians – even though they profess with their lips the teachings of Christ."

Perhaps it's more practical to think of this in the context of getting wrapped up in Materialism and the pursuit of more and more stuff. When that stuff is a driving force in your life and the culture threatens to take that away from you (unless you conform to its demands) – You may rationalize: What's a little spit (conformity to the culture) – if I get to keep all this stuff?

Jesus clearly warns us not to have money and the pursuit of materialism at the Center of your Life. Our life is to be centered on Christ and if we are losing sight of Christ during this frantic pursuit of money to buy more needless stuff, we have missed the entire point of the Gospel! We are to seek first the Kingdom of God! Why? So, we can be Healed, and, in turn, help heal others. Money and the acquisition of stuff will not heal you.

I once had a flight from Kodiak to Anchorage that was canceled; and then, as I am waiting at the airport, the new flight was delayed another hour. I was the first one on the plane and the very last person to board the plane sat next to me. She was just shy of 30 and had been using drugs since she was 18. She was a heroin addict and was somewhat high as we began to talk.

Between her "F-Bombs", I discovered that she was a former prostitute who was in a terrible relationship and was heading to Anchorage to make some money dancing (if you get my drift). I immediately thought, "Now, I know why my flight was canceled. I am supposed to talk to her about Christ and about how He can heal her life."

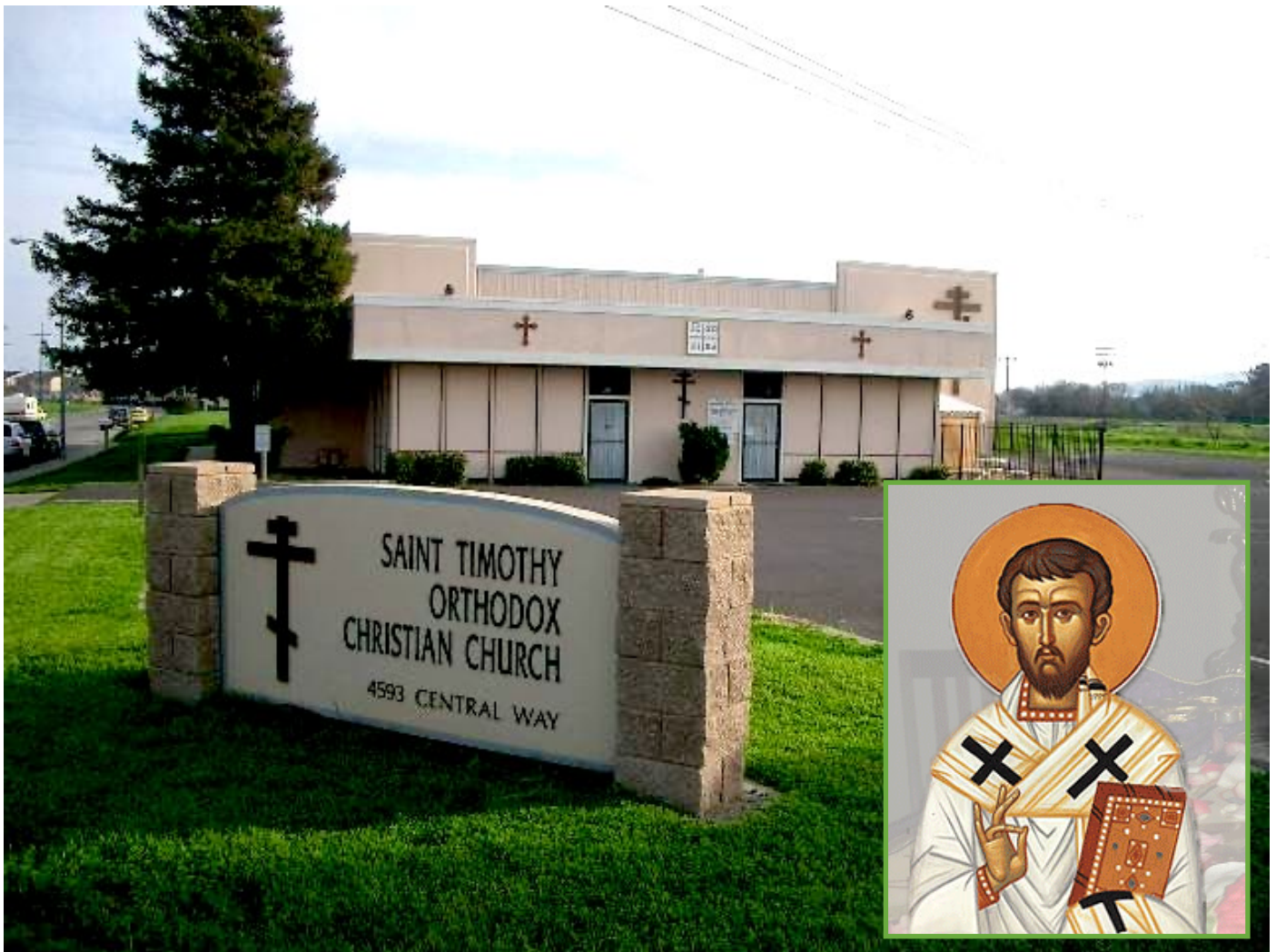
For the next hour, I listened to her life story and spoke to her about St. Mary of Egypt, about my own conversion and about how Christ can heal her. Drugs and alcohol will not heal you. I had just come from a place where the people I was with lived very simple (not-materialistic) lives. Young people, who were struggling, yet striving and beginning to get a handle on life, made it clearer than ever that materialism will not heal you.

Our Life in Christ is not to be about Materialistic pursuits! It is about seeing Christ FORMED IN US so that we, in turn, can help Christ be formed in others. ✚

*This article was originally featured in the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West's 2020 Winter Newsletter.*

## St Timothy's Orthodox Church, Fairfield, CA

2019 was a full year for the women of St. Timothy's. As we seek to reflect the love of Christ in our lives, our Antiochian Women's chapter has taken on several projects, devoting ourselves to expand hospitality and service efforts, working to give to those in need, both in



the parish and in the world, while also taking time to step back and be renewed through prayer and community.

In 2019, we established the Hospitality Committee to identify newcomers and to welcome and reach out to them, as well as to identify needs among our parishioners. Efforts have included organizing meals for those who are sick or grieving a family death.





In the summer, we partnered with **FOCUS** [Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve] North America. We filled **24 Backpacks** with school supplies and had

excess supplies. Donations were provided to the Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District to distribute to local underserved children at the start of the new school year. This was our second year participating in FOCUS' Back to School Backpacks project and we hope to continue this as an annual act of mercy.



In September, the women of St. Timothy's contributed significantly to the success of our parish's first-ever **Festival**, lending their time, versatile talents and teaching skills. It was a pleasure to welcome the local community to visit our parish, learn about Orthodoxy and enjoy some delicious food, music and entertainment.





# 2019 Fall Festival

Saturday, Sept. 7 • 10am - 10pm  
Sunday, Sept 8 • noon - 8pm

**FREE Admission**

**Learn about Orthodoxy**  
Church Tours • Books & Icons

**Middle Eastern Music**  
Live entertainment by  
California Star Nader Zak  
Music by Samer Judeh

**Hookah**

**Foods & Desserts**  
From Different Cultures

**95.3 KULC** will be on site with prizes from 1pm - 3pm

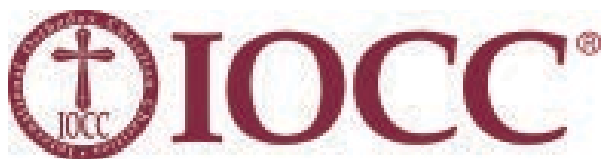
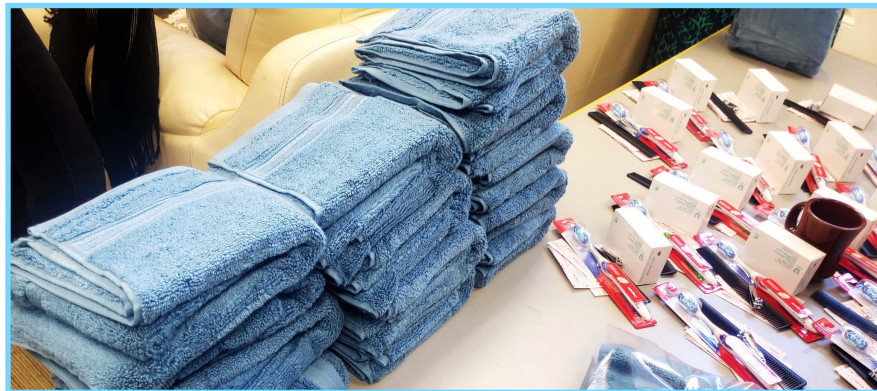
**Fun for all the Family**  
Kids Carnival Games • Raffles • Music • Dancing

**St. Timothy Orthodox Christian Church**  
4593 Central Way • Fairfield, CA 94534  
(680 at 80, Cordelia)



Welcome to the  
Fall Festival





We also partnered with IOCC [International Orthodox Christian Charities] to collect supplies for **emergency health/hygiene kits**. Supplies for over 30 kits were purchased and put together!

In November of 2019, the Women of St. Timothy's church held our first **Silent Retreat**. Attendees spent 45 minutes in silent prayer. The retreat was very well received and we plan to continue and expand on the retreat in the months and years to come.



As we neared the end of the year, we celebrated at our annual **Christmas Tea** where we shared food, drank tea, exchanged gifts, and enjoyed our time together.

In 2020 we will continue and expand on several of these programs, including our hospitality efforts, outreach to new members, visiting the sick, providing to those in need, as well as growing in our faith and spiritual lives together through prayer, retreats, our book study group and regular fellowship. ✚

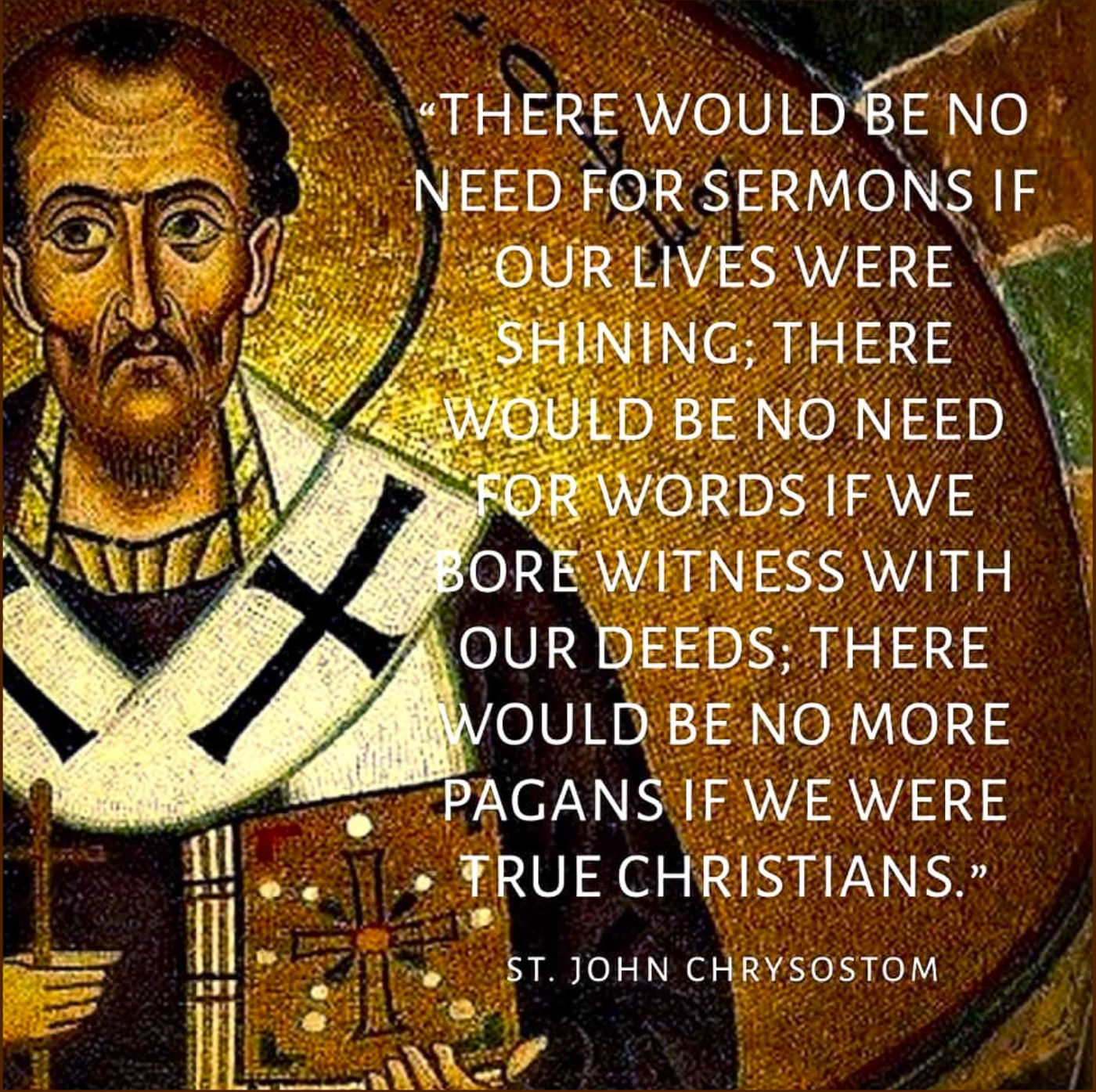




*The Antiochian Women of St. Timothy's*





An icon of St. John Chrysostom, a bearded man with a halo, wearing a white garment with a large black cross. He is holding a book in his left hand and a staff in his right hand. The background is a textured, golden-brown color.

“THERE WOULD BE NO  
NEED FOR SERMONS IF  
OUR LIVES WERE  
SHINING; THERE  
WOULD BE NO NEED  
FOR WORDS IF WE  
BORE WITNESS WITH  
OUR DEEDS; THERE  
WOULD BE NO MORE  
PAGANS IF WE WERE  
TRUE CHRISTIANS.”

ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

*Our Lenten Journey Begins March 2<sup>nd</sup>*



## St Simeon's Orthodox Church, Santa Clarita, CA



ST. SIMEON'S IS A MISSION OF OUR DIOCESE AND THEY JUST RECENTLY FORMED THEIR ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN CHAPTER — JUST IN TIME FOR THE 2019 PLC. THEY HAVE “HIT THE GROUND RUNNING!” AND WE ARE PROUD OF THEIR ENTHUSIASM AND GOOD WORKS. THEY HAVE TAKEN NOTE OF THE MANY OTHER ACTIVE CHAPTERS IN OUR DIOCESE, AND ARE TAKING OUR MOTTO TO HEART: “A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS.”

HERE IS THEIR REPORT:

### Serving and Learning:

#### *A Busy Fall for the Antiochian Women of St. Simeon*

*By Karen Sibert Haddy of St. Simeon Orthodox Mission, Santa Clarita, CA*

Though St. Simeon's Orthodox Christian Church in Santa Clarita is a relatively new mission church in Southern California, our group of Antiochian Women has had an active and productive fall due to the stellar leadership of Kristy Maloof and Bobbie Fitzgerald, and the thoughtful guidance of Fr. George and Kh. Janine Ajalat. Here are some of our highlights of this year:

- We were honored in August by a visit from Charmaine Darmour, the President of the Antiochian Women of the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West. She updated us on activities at the Diocesan level including events at the July Parish Life Conference, Diocesan website resources, and the online Book Club.
- We increased our outreach to newcomers as well as our own parishioners by instituting a rotating system, managed online by Tracy Kuncar, to have greeters at the church door





Fr. George Ajalat congratulating President Kristy Maloof for a job well done!

before Liturgy each Sunday. We also placed a magnetic board with name tags by the door. With Fr. George's blessing, we encourage parishioners to pick up their name tags as they enter and wear them, especially during coffee hour, so that we can get to know one another, and newcomers can get to know us more easily.

- We set up a "Meal Train" to provide meals to families with new babies, and a "Sunshine Outreach" managed by Karinna Thompson, to keep in touch with parishioners who are ill at home or in the hospital.

- "Care packages" were assembled and sent off to all our college students who are living away from home. These included homemade marshmallow Rice Krispies squares, Halloween treats, and computer flash drives. By all accounts, the students were delighted to receive them!



## ICONOGRAPHY RETREAT

A major highlight of our year was a daylong retreat (not limited to women) featuring a fascinating presentation by **Kh. Randa Al Khoury Azar**, a professional iconographer and a faculty member at the Antiochian House of Studies. The October 12 event was attended by many of our parishioners and visitors from neighboring churches, all of whom were blessed by Kh. Randa's visit [see photo below].

Kh. Randa began the day with an explanation of the purpose of Icons in Orthodoxy. They are not to be worshipped, but venerated and honored. "Worship is for God, and only God," Kh. Randa said. "Icons are a means of honoring God, His saints, and the holy angels. The honor that is given to the Icon passes to its Prototype (that is, to the one who is depicted)."



Noting that many of the saints depicted in Icons have been martyrs for Christianity, Kh. Randa asked the question, "Those who defended their faith, don't they deserve to be venerated?" Kh. Randa quoted from St. John of Damascus and his famous work, "Apologia Against Those Who Decry Holy Images":

*"I do not worship matter; I worship the God of matter, who became matter for my sake, and deigned to inhabit matter; who worked out my salvation through matter. I will not cease from honoring that matter which works my salvation...The image is a memorial; just what words are to a listening ear. What a book is to the literate, that an image is to*



*the illiterate. The image speaks to the sight as words to the ear; it brings us understanding."*

She explained that an idol is a sculpted work showing an imaginary god or animal, and thus there are no three-dimensional sculptures or statues in the Orthodox tradition. In contrast, an Icon "is a window into heaven that opens your eyes into another realm," Kh. Randa said. "Through color and lines, an Icon expresses what the Gospel proclaims in words."

"Accepting the Icons and venerating them is accepting the mystery of the Incarnation of God Himself," Kh. Randa said. "Refusing or rejecting the Icons or attacking them is denying the Incarnation of God and the existence of Christianity."

Because each Icon is intended to be a narrative, iconographers speak of "writing" an Icon, not painting or drawing it. Before she begins to write an Icon, Kh. Randa first prays and then reads extensively to learn about the saint or the subject. "Iconography has canons and rules," she explained. "The iconographer does not add anything new to religious Icons, but strictly follows the Christian tradition and the canons of iconography." The work must invite the Christian to enter into "contemplation, prayer, and silence."



### **What distinguishes an Icon from a painting?**

First, Kh. Randa explained, there is no sense of time in Icons because they are not intended to be "of this world". While a painting may depict events in sequence, a religious Icon can depict different scenes and events as if they occur at the same time. This is because of God's perception of time, according to Holy Scripture: "A day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day."

Another difference is that holy Icons are not painted in realistic perspective. Instead, they give a sense of entering the divine world where space and time are insignificant. The concern is for spiritual truth. The decision to depict a figure as big or small, placed near or far away, depends on its importance in the event. There are no shadows in iconography because there is no sense of the time of day.

There is no attempt by iconographers to show the human body in its normal proportions, Kh. Randa explained. The intent is to portray inner beauty instead of ideal physical appearance. To that end, there are no open mouths, no expression, and no actions. The mouth is small, meaning that the individual obeys the sacred commandments of God rather than speaking. The large forehead symbolizes teaching and knowledge. The large eyes are for seeing the uncreated light of God.

### Symbolism and color in Iconography

Nothing in an Icon is accidental; every detail and color has meaning, Kh. Randa said.

- **Gold** is the color of the uncreated light, the glory of God, and God's grace. The halo is gold to signify the radiating glory of the represented person, surrounded by the uncreated light.
- **White** signifies purity, cleanliness, and the heavenly realm. Icons of the resurrected Christ typically show Him clad in white and gold.
- **Silver** indicates purity of soul and holiness.
- **Green** is the color of youth, fertility, life, and the Holy Spirit. The priest wears green vestments at Pentecost to signify the renewal of life.
- **Blue** signifies the kingdom of God on earth, the humanity of the Theotokos, and human life. In our church, this is why the Icon of St. Simeon shows him in a blue robe to underscore his human nature.
- **Red** signifies the blood of Christ, of sacrifice, and martyrdom. It also signifies divinity. Icons of the Theotokos often show her wearing a red veil and mantle over a blue robe, showing that she was first human, and then by her complete obedience to God became divine.
- **Purple** indicates wealth, power, and authority, as in the parable of Lazarus and the rich man.
- **Brown** is the color of earth and mountains.
- **Black** is the color of evil and death, used to paint caves and symbols of the grave. It can also be the color of secrecy. Black is the absence of light, and therefore it has no place in



the transfigured reality. The black robes of monks can symbolize the rejection of worldly pleasures and habits.

Other details in an Icon have specific meaning too, Kh. Randa said. The act of holding a Cross indicates that the saint was a holy martyr, because it symbolizes the most perfect sacrifice of life for others, which is the Crucifixion. Wings are reserved for angels, the messengers of God, and the ribbons worn by angels are like “antennae” to pick up the voice of God. Mountains are a symbol of steps leading to God, helping us rise from earthly thoughts to heavenly thinking. We are always closer to God on a mountaintop, as on Mount Tabor in the Feast of the Transfiguration.

### **How an Icon is prepared**

Kh. Randa explained that only the highest quality materials are used in preparing Icons, because of “the respect we owe to such important eternal ideas and people.”

“Why go cheap with our faith?” she asked. “We want the best of everything in our Icons.” The cloth used is 100% cotton linen, the gesso that primes the surface is a mix of marble or chalk, the clay is natural, and the gold is 22K to 24K to represent the atmosphere of heaven.

The colors used are powdered natural pigments, she said. An egg yolk binder is used as a symbol of creation and of Pascha. The use of a wood frame with a cradle or raised edges indicates that the Icon is a window showing us the way to real life after this earthly life. The eyes are always the last part finished, as the eyes express and reflect the soul of the subject.

The iconographer doesn't expect praise for writing the Icon, and therefore it is never autographed. “It's the work of the Holy Spirit through the hands,” Kh. Randa said. “We thank God for accepting us, the sinners, to use our hands to write the Icon. It is not my work; it is God's work through me.”

In the last part of her presentation, Kh. Randa gave an excellent overview of the controversies in early Christendom and heresies that led to the destruction of Icons in an attempt to attack the beliefs of the faithful. These conflicts continued from the 5th century to the year 842, when the Byzantine Empress Theodora brought back honor and veneration to Icons. Later she was canonized, and we remember St. Theodora on the first Sunday of Great Lent each year when we celebrate the Sunday of Orthodoxy.

### **How Kh. Randa became an iconographer**

Born and raised in Jordan, Kh. Randa earned her bachelor's degree in the field of economics. Later, she pursued special training in conflict resolution and communication skills. When she and her husband, Fr. Mansour Azar, moved to his hometown in Lebanon,

Kh. Randa made use of her training and knowledge to help him establish the St. Nicholas Marriage Preparation Center in the Diocese of Mount Lebanon. It was in Lebanon that Kh. Randa first had the opportunity to learn to write Icons.

“I can’t remember a time in my life when I wasn’t fascinated with Icons. They always captured my eyes and heart, and I always felt them alive and talking to me,” she says. “I was blessed in Lebanon to meet the right people at the right time to pursue this dream and get to know how to write Icons the old traditional way.” Subsequently, Kh. Randa has added to her skills and techniques by training with internationally known iconographers from all over the Orthodox world.

In 2013, Kh. Randa and Fr. Mansour emigrated to the United States with their two children, and Fr. Mansour became the Pastor of Saint George Antiochian Orthodox Church in Upland, California. With the blessing of H.E. Metropolitan JOSEPH, Kh. Randa has continued to write Icons which have found their way into many churches, homes, and private collections.

Keeping up her skills in writing Icons takes a great deal of practice – sometimes eight to 12 hours a day, Kh. Randa says. “It requires lots of reading and dedication, practice and passion, patience and persistence, and so much love and prayer.”

She relates to the experience described by St. John of Damascus: *“I enter into the common place of therapy of souls, the church, choked by thoughts as by thorns. The blossom of the Icons attracts me to gaze at it, and as a meadow delights my sight, and imperceptibly instills into my soul the glorification of God.”*

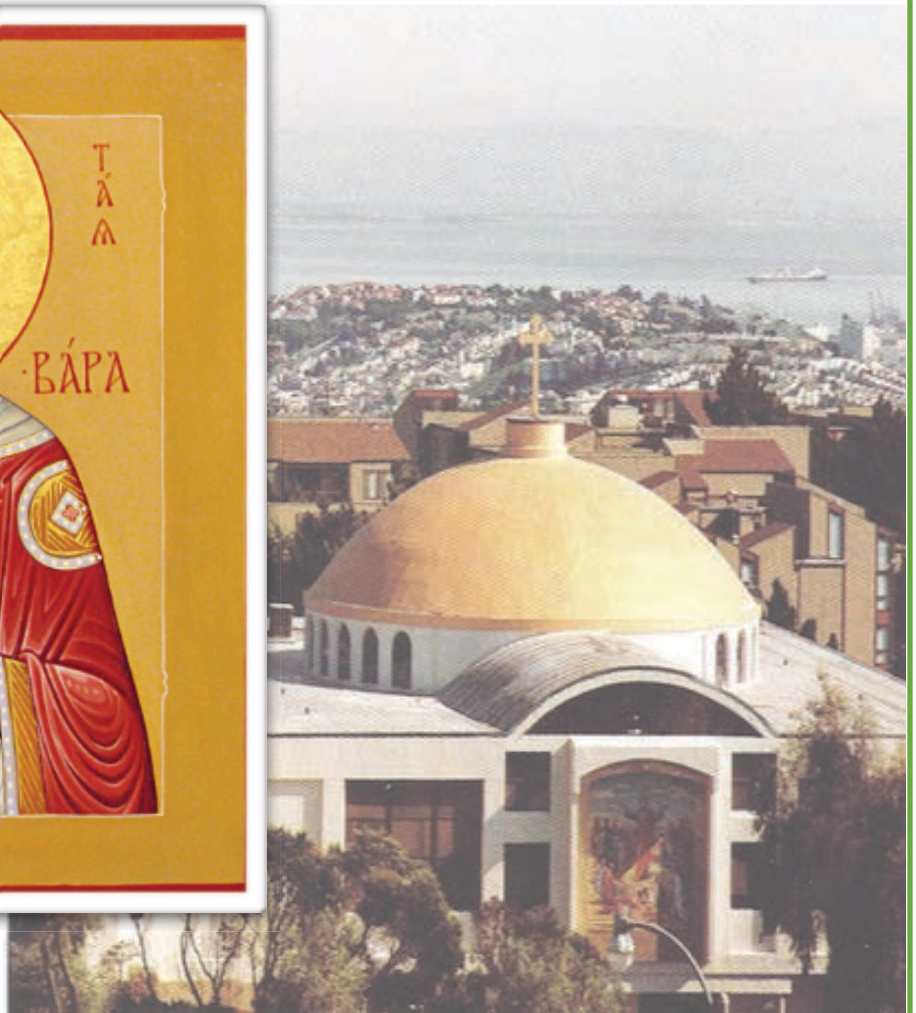
Kh. Randa hopes to continue sharing her knowledge and experience about the beauty of iconography and the important role it plays in the Orthodox Church. In her words, “Icons are windows into heaven, and were created to serve the Church in spreading the Faith.”

We were honored and blessed by Kh. Randa’s visit to St. Simeon, and our chapter of Antiochian Women looks forward to a great year in 2020! ❖





## St Nicholas Orthodox Church, San Francisco, CA



### **The Ladies of St. Nicholas: Celebrating the Feast of St. Barbara**

*By Kh. Eman Baalbaki of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in San Francisco, CA*

St. Barbara is an Orthodox Saint who lived during the fourth century. She was a martyr that was beheaded because of her faith in Jesus Christ. Some stories say she is from the Sun Country (Baalbek, Lebanon) while others say she hails from Nicomedia (present day Turkey). While growing up and learning from her teachers about Jesus Christ and the Holy Trinity, she placed her faith in Christianity and refused the false idols that her father worshipped. Because of her belief in Jesus Christ, St. Barbara faced many different types of persecution and torture, including mutilation and shameful displays of her body in public. While trying to escape her persecution, Barbara ran into a field of barley while being masked by a miracle of God.

Many Middle Eastern immigrants to the United States have brought with them the popular tradition of preparing the oats and barley in remembrance of St Barbara on her Feast Day. **St. Barbara's Day** is a very big deal in the Middle East, especially in Syria, Lebanon, Palestine and Jordan. Many of the children go house-to-house singing songs about St. Barbara, while wearing masks and costumes in remembrance of this beloved saint. While wearing the masks is not as popular of a tradition here in the U.S, preparing the oats & barley is still a widely practiced celebration.



The women of our church prepare the food to serve to the parish, with profits from the sales donated to charity in St. Barbara's honor. We celebrate her life on December 3rd of every year by cooking the sweet wheat oats and barley. As our Lord Jesus taught us in John 12:24, *"Truly, Truly I say to you unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit."* The wheat is a part of our tradition as Christians and it is a resemblance of resurrection. When we eat the barley we remember that we should take our masks from our life, repent, and become the sons and daughters of Jesus Christ again. ✚







## St Ignatius Orthodox Church, Mesa, AZ

*They were gifted this church... The prior occupants could no longer sustain it and they took applications from churches in the area and our parish of St. Ignatius was chosen to receive this incredible gift ... Glory to God! — Charmaine Darmour (DLAW AW President)*

“IT SEEMS LIKE ONLY YESTERDAY THAT A SMALL GROUP OF ORTHODOX BELIEVERS WAS GATHERED IN A CONFERENCE ROOM AT THE MESA PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOOD AND NUTRITION BUILDING. AND HERE WE ARE TODAY, 100 FAMILIES STRONG, GATHERED TO CELEBRATE 20 YEARS OF SAINT IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH ORTHODOX CHURCH! I HOPE YOU SEE THE MIRACLE THAT GOD HAS WORKED IN OUR MIDST! FOR MUCH OF THESE 20 YEARS WE HAVE PRAYED ASKING THE LORD TO GRANT ALL OUR PETITIONS THAT ARE FOR OUR UNITY, SALVATION, AND ETERNAL LIFE. WE HAVE ASKED HIM TO GRANT ALL THE FUNDS AND EVERYTHING NECESSARY FOR A PROPER ORTHODOX CHURCH IN MESA FOR HIS GLORY AND THAT OF HIS ONLY-BEGOTTEN SON, OUR SWEETEST LORD JESUS, AND HIS LIFE-CREATING SPIRIT. WE HAVE ASKED GOD TO ESTABLISH US FIRMLY UPON HIS DIVINE WORD AND GRANT US GRATEFUL HEARTS.”

— The V. Rev. Fr. James Coles, Pastor of St. Ignatius  
[from November 10, 2019: Twentieth Anniversary Gala Celebration]



## “KEEP THE BELLS RINGING”

*By Tresa Stapleton; St. Ignatius Antiochian Women, Mesa, Arizona*

Our Sweetest Lord Jesus has indeed answered our prayers! This past fall, St. Ignatius was given a nine-acre property that includes a beautiful Spanish style mission church and a school, guest house, planetarium, basketball court and a lovely garden courtyard. Much to the delight of the children, there are two bell towers. The parish voted unanimously to receive this miraculous gift and purchase the five acres next to it! Our new 14-acre property is surrounded by pristine desert landscape and is breathtakingly beautiful.

Next, we began the process of putting our existing building on the market. The refurbished office building has been the home of St. Ignatius since 2012. We have filled it with worship, baptisms, weddings, funerals, meals, retreats and lock-ins. But it is time to move on to the miracle we have been given. After just a few days on the market, to the delight of our church family, we received and accepted a full-price offer on our building. We are praying for a smooth closing.





As you can imagine, these changes have sparked enthusiasm and joy in all of our parishioners: children, men and women, young and older folks alike! At our recent annual meeting, parishioners volunteered to join one of 10 teams set up for cleaning and packing our existing property, and cleaning and decluttering our new property. Our team leaders have organized work days and have itemized the tasks that need to be accomplished in each room before moving on to the next. There is a job for everyone: landscaping, rewiring outside lanterns, cleaning years of grime from floors and walls, donating books and school furniture, and visualizing how each space will be best utilized for parish ministry. We plan to be moved into our new location by March 1, ready for Forgiveness Sunday and the beginning of Great Lent! May it be blessed!

The women in our parish are active in all aspects of parish life. We have always been busy in the life of our parish, but now our women are also offering their labor and time, along with many other members of the parish, to help provide a smooth transition to our new property.

Many times, we have heard comments such as, *"I must pinch myself as I look around this beautiful place and realize, the Lord gave this to us! What a blessing!"*

Many of us are getting to know one another better as we work alongside each other, scrubbing, sweeping, and cleaning walls. How did I not know that a woman I have stood behind for a few years, works as a forensic lab technician, or that a young father can play the piano that was left in the hall, like a real pro! One woman commented, with a sparkle in her eye, that, *"all of this wonderful working together has breathed such joy and life in our community!"*

Our parish chapter of the Antiochian Women meet monthly with a two-month hiatus in the summer. Our biggest fund raiser is our craft/bake sale. With the proceeds we have donated to the building fund, provided summer camp scholarships, and gifts for each father on Father's Day. We support projects such as special holiday celebrations, mercy meals, and an angel tree for charity gift donations at Christmas. We recently voted to donate a tenth of our earnings to St. Paisius women's monastery in Safford, Arizona.

On Saturday, January 18 at 5 p.m., after a short open house at the new property, we had Great Vespers and the bells were rung for the very first time. At 5:01 p.m. Fr. James received a text from a neighbor he has gotten to know: *"We just heard the bells! Bring more life, more activity, more bells!!!"*

With the Lord's help and with each other, this is our happy desire! ❖



# DLAW FALL GATHERING 2019

## **The Diocese of Los Angeles and the West 2019 Fall Gathering**

*By Sarah Steiger of Sts. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church, Ben Lomond, CA*

The 2019 Fall Gathering for the Diocese of Los Angeles and West was held at Saints Peter and Paul Parish in Ben Lomond, California — in the beautiful Santa Cruz Mountains. Surrounded by soaring Coastal Redwood trees, we were blessed by the presence of His Grace Bishop ANTHONY from the Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest. He brought his love, kindness and spiritual guidance to more than 120 attendees from parishes throughout Northern and Southern California, as well as a few attendees and clergy from Washington, Idaho, and Oregon. Bishop ANTHONY was able to spend time with the Antiochian Women, Teen SOYO and Young Adult delegations throughout the morning as he encouraged us in our faith and service to Christ and our neighbors.

We spent time in fellowship during lunch in the beautiful sunshine enjoying tacos, followed by optional activities like a group hike in the redwoods and a visit to a local winery. After Vespers, we dined at a historic Italian restaurant before returning to our homes and hotels to await a power shut off due to high wind warnings. By God's grace, we were not negatively impacted too much and, as Orthodox Christians have for centuries, we held Orthros and Divine Liturgy by candlelight. A resourceful mountaineering-spirit was shown by the parishioners at Ss. Peter and Paul when they made a hot lasagna lunch using generators to power ovens in nearby homes. Glory to God for All Things! ❖











## *A Retreat in Washington*

### **Fifth Annual Antiochian Women's Retreat — of the Pacific Northwest Deanery: November 8-9, 2019**

*By Kh. Helen Robinson of St. Innocent Orthodox Church, Everson, WA*

With the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH, the Antiochian Women of the Pacific Northwest Deanery held the fifth annual Autumn Women's Retreat at St. Andrew Antiochian Orthodox Church in Arlington, Washington. This year the retreat combined a three-hour men's retreat on Friday evening with a longer day-long retreat for the women on Saturday.

The retreat on Saturday began in the morning with the Divine Liturgy for the Feast of St. Nektarios the Wonderworker. Approximately 60 men and 50 women attended, representing seven greater Seattle area parishes and three jurisdictions. We were blessed to have as our speaker, Fr. John Bethancourt, pastor of Holy Trinity Antiochian Orthodox Church in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

On Friday evening, the men enjoyed homemade soup prayerfully made by the ladies of St. Andrew, followed by a three-hour talk given by Fr. John about the Jesus Prayer. Some overheard several men at the end of the evening plotting a way to sneak into the women's portion of the retreat the next day. No one wanted the talks to end so soon!

*(continued on next page...)*



Fr. John began the Saturday retreat by explaining that sin is not really about the breaking of rules, but is primarily the breaking of a relationship. Our ancestors in the Garden did not want God, but rather, they wanted something else. Conversely, Jesus is perfect and has never broken communion with His Father. This tenet is perfectly depicted in the parable of the Prodigal Son. As Fr. John explained, when the son asks for his share of his inheritance (his father's stuff), he is already out the door; he has already broken communion with his father.

Later, when the son is starving and homeless, he remembers his father and turns back in the direction of his father, who is still waiting for him. One of the most awesome points of the retreat was when Fr. John explained that when the father gives his son the gift of a new robe, that portion of the verse is better translated from the Greek not as a "new robe," but as the First Robe, the one given to Adam and Eve before the fall, the robe of divine yearning and love for God. Because of his repentance and turning back, the son is restored to his Father.



Fr. John then beautifully and lovingly explained about the "three-fold cord" which moves us in the direction of our Father and heals our *nous*, restoring our relationship to our Father. Of course, it took Fr. John many hours to explain the "three-fold cord"!

But I will tell you what they are, so as not to incite your incessive\* powers:

1. The Jesus Prayer
2. Energy or ever moving stillness
3. Breathing, which is a gift from God

Toward the end of the day, Fr. John led us in practicing the Jesus Prayer. It was the most beautiful and peaceful time, together longing for God in silence and stillness.

We want to thank the many ladies from St. Andrew who devoted their time and talents to make this a very special retreat. Special appreciation to Fr. David Hovik for his divinely inspired and blessed choice of our speaker! And of course, much love and prayer and devotion to Fr. John Bethancourt, for prayerfully, wonderfully and affectionately inspiring the over 100 retreatants on their journey to a healed *nous* and healed relationship with our Triune God — Father, Son and Holy Spirit — through the Prayer of the Heart. ✚

\* [EDITOR'S NOTE: "intense" "active" "aggressive"]







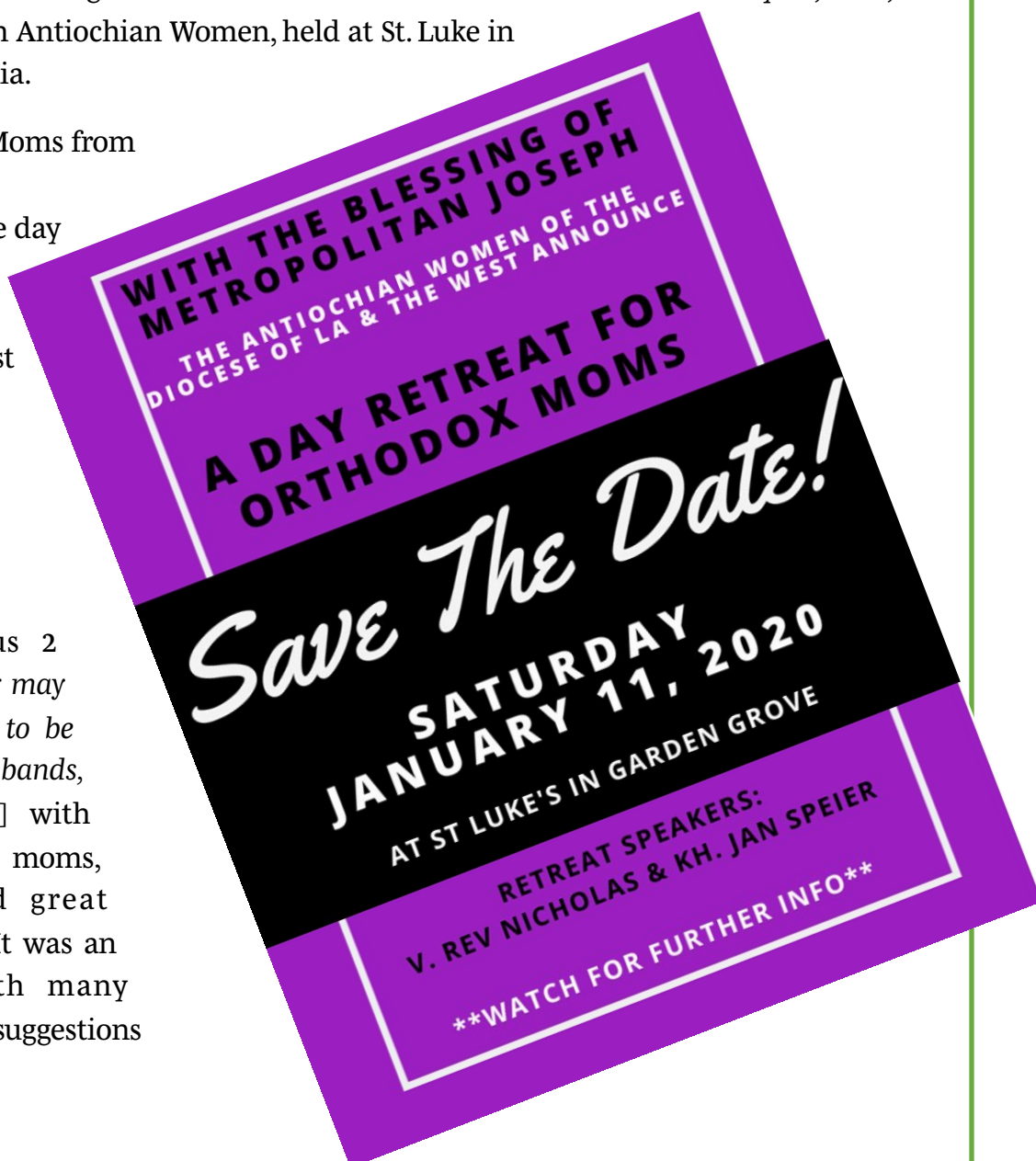
## ORTHODOX MOMS' RETREAT

*By Madeline Heffelfinger of St Simeon, Santa Clarita, CA*

I had the blessing of attending the first ever **Orthodox Moms' Retreat** on January 11, 2020, hosted by our Diocesan Antiochian Women, held at St. Luke in Garden Grove, California.

There were nearly 60 Moms from 11 Southern California parishes who spent the day together in prayer and fellowship, while learning from our guest speakers, the Very Rev. Fr. Nicholas Speier and Kh. Jan, from St. Athanasius in Santa Barbara.

It was truly a Titus 2 moment [*"...That they may teach younger women to be sober; to love their husbands, and their children..."*] with seasoned moms, new moms, grandmothers, and great grandmothers alike. It was an interactive day with many questions and several suggestions and antidotes to our





daily struggles and victories as moms. We made several new friends and felt a bond that will last for years to come.

Father Nicholas and Khourieh Jan opened their hearts to us and shared their experiences. They shared their good times, and the struggles they had to overcome, as we all do, as parents.



One thing that stood out to me the most was, that we, as moms, must lay our children at the feet of God. When times get tough (and they will) we are to pray to God, pray to our patron saint, and pray to our Most

Holy Mother of God to intercede for our children. After all, as Kh. Jan mentioned, she is a mother as well. We need to bond together and share one another's burdens just as the scriptures tell us. Father Nicholas shared many ideas and parenting suggestions from the Holy Fathers.

I am looking forward to the next Orthodox Moms' Retreat, may it be blessed. ❖







# Antiochian Women of St. Mark's Parish Irvine, California BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

## 9th Annual Breast Cancer Walk

*By Afifa Munayyer Artoul of St. Mark's, Irvine, CA*

### WE WALK FOR A REASON:

- Supporting the Fighters
- Admiring the Survivors
- Honoring the Taken
- Serving as Antiochian Women of St. Mark

This year was our 9th Annual Breast Cancer Walk! The Antiochian Women of North America are faithful and devoted to many humanitarian needs. Our Chapter is active in supporting all these humanitarian needs on an annual basis, but we felt the need to serve beyond what we traditionally do all year. We felt we needed to serve all women, with no difference of race or religion.

With the blessing of our priest, Father Michael Laffoon, we devoted ourselves to carry on a very important project that supports a cause that affects the lives of women around the world. We chose October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month, to raise money & awareness that would benefit the organization "Living Beyond Breast Cancer (LBBC)". This is an organization that provides educational programs, support services, and more, to the breast cancer survivors.

We dedicate a weekend in October to both hold a Walk & to provide a luncheon to all of the parishioners which is graciously donated by Mr. and Mrs. Fouad and Rima Tarazy in Memory of their loved ones.

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ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN     HUMANITARIAN "ACTS OF MERCY"

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A few years ago, we were blessed to receive from the NAB an Icon of Saint Macrina, patron and intercessor for those suffering from Breast Cancer. On a Saturday in October our Antiochian Women and friends held our Breast Cancer Awareness walk around Mission Viejo Lake. We began our walk with a prayer led by our president. Afterwards, we enjoyed a boat ride with a lunch. During the boat ride we display our St Macrina Icon and read her Christian Journey. Icons were gifted to three ladies who are breast cancer survivors.

Then on Sunday, in addition to the luncheon, our church family was treated to pink deserts & drinks amid lots of pink decorations. During the event, the Saint Macrina Icon was displayed next to the Breast Cancer Awareness centerpiece and a lit candle for all to see. Icons were given to two ladies from our church who are battling breast cancer.

It was a beautiful pink weekend, great weather, and a lovely scene around the lake. We got to know each other better, share stories, and support the ladies during the walk. The boat ride was another enjoyment that brought the ladies together.

Through the prayers of Saint Macrina, may Christ our God, the Great Physician and Healer of our souls and bodies, have mercy on us and save us. AMEN.



ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN HUMANITARIAN "ACTS OF MERCY"







## A REFLECTION

*By Sarah Gillis Machnee of St. Vincent Orthodox Church, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan*

Several years ago I was asked to write an article on marriage. In it, I recalled our wedding day and, in particular, the priest rushing through the Holy Doors to place our crowns of martyrdom on the Altar. I remembered the peace and resolution with which I anticipated the life those crowns prophesied for us.

When I look back at the woman I was ten years ago on my wedding day, I see a girl full of enthusiasm and confidence. I was aware that there would be struggle in the life that I chose, but I was sure that I was ready to take on whatever married life could bring. I was confident in myself and in my faith in God. I thank God that He blessed me with such joy and comfort as I embarked on this new journey because it helped my husband and me begin our married life grounded in our love for God and the Church when we needed it the most. Now, though, I am beginning to understand more about the concept of martyrdom, and how it is so necessary for humans in order to grow closer to God.

As any married couple can attest, our first year was full of learning, which is when the struggle of married life began. For example, I learned that I wasn't a very good cook, and Terry (my husband) learned how to lovingly communicate that to me! I also learned that my fasting and prayer are different from Terry's. I

was shocked that he would eat eggs on a Wednesday in order to have energy for the day. I was ashamed of myself later when I learned that he would deny himself other things in secret.

These little realizations about myself began making little jabs at my confidence. Over the years, and as the children have come along (5 of them within 6 years!), my stores of enthusiasm and confidence have begun to be depleted. I have had to rely on help from







others (especially when I had my twins). Before I had children, I was full of opinions about how children ought to behave, and how they should be disciplined. But then I had my own, and everything I thought I knew was challenged. My children, while they bring me much joy and fulfillment, also bring me to the end of myself. I am tired, humiliated, and at a loss for how to

respond to their constant and ever changing needs. This form of martyrdom has brought me to a knowledge of my weakness, which causes me to look up to God for help, rather than depend on my own strength.

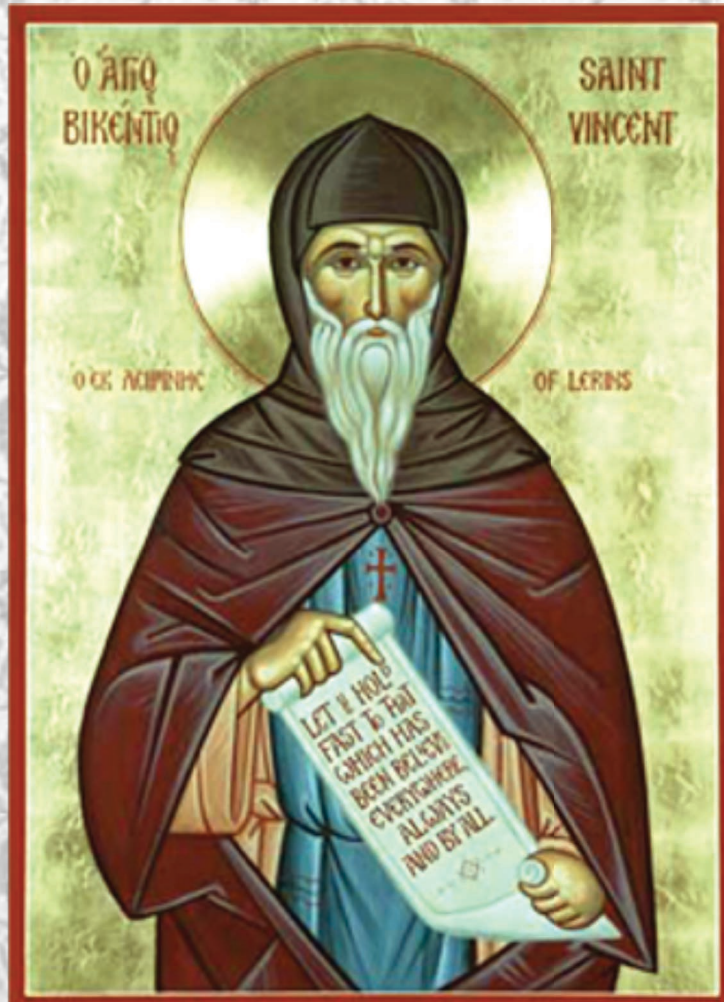
Before I had children I was confident in my faith but, with pregnancy and nursing, I've had periods of time when I was too overwhelmed to attend church services and too weak to fast. I started to feel discouraged and distanced from the Church and from God, and began to wonder if I was still really an Orthodox Christian, since I was not participating in the life of the Church. And this is when I realized how self-righteous I am! I had forgotten that my relationship with Christ is not determined by how well I fast, or how many liturgies I attend. I had been mistaking outward piety for a genuine relationship with God.

I look at myself today and I see a woman who is not sure of anything anymore. I am beginning to understand that much of the self confidence and enthusiasm that I had when I was younger was misplaced in the outward actions of my faith, like attending church often and fasting and having a regular rule of prayer.

Now, as a mother and wife, I feel like I am starting out again on my spiritual journey, but without any of the vigor of my youth. Rather, it is as a child trusting in the unconditional love of my Father, who loves me even when I have nothing to give Him in return, except myself.

At the end of myself is where I have begun to find God. ✚





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TRUE PIETY ADMITS NO OTHER RULE THAN THAT WHATSOEVER THINGS HAVE BEEN FAITHFULLY RECEIVED FROM OUR FATHERS THE SAME ARE TO BE FAITHFULLY CONSIGNED TO OUR CHILDREN; AND THAT IT IS OUR DUTY, NOT TO LEAD RELIGION WHITHER WE WOULD, BUT RATHER TO FOLLOW RELIGION WHITHER IT LEADS; AND THAT IT IS THE PART OF CHRISTIAN MODESTY AND GRAVITY NOT TO HAND DOWN OUR OWN BELIEFS OR OBSERVANCES TO THOSE WHO COME AFTER US, BUT TO PRESERVE AND KEEP WHAT WE HAVE RECEIVED FROM THOSE WHO WENT BEFORE US.

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Vincent of Lerins, Aeterna Press (2016). "The Commonitory of Vincent of Lerins", p.11,





# Holy Orthodoxy:

## *My Healing Balm*

*By Claudia Zait of St. Michael Orthodox Church, Van Nuys, CA*

I wonder what sufferings you are enduring right now. Even if we are doing fine, if those whom we love are not well, neither are we. Since childhood I have carried burdens of responsibility. A daughter of illegal immigrants, I grew up being my parents' translator as well as the babysitter for my brothers. I always tried to make life a little easier for my Mom and Dad.

Although Catholic by birth, I became protestant when my Mother took us to a wonderful, non-denominational church. There, I became something like a child Bible-scholar. Later, I married a wonderful man; a man of God who had converted to Christ in a powerful, radical way, although he was Jewish, son of Israeli parents.

All the hardships and sufferings I experienced growing up prepared me for the difficult, truly miserable and lonely life that awaited me in marriage and in motherhood. There is no such thing as a poor Jew, I once was told... "There is and I married him," was my reply.

So preoccupied was my husband to support us financially, that I was left to fend for myself in the care and homeschooling of our 3 little ones. Added to this were the responsibilities of helping out in our home-business. My exhaustion was so excruciating and my sadness so profound that I burst forth one day: "Lord, where is the abundant life You promised?"

The healing of our broken lives, I came to believe, would be found in the true worship of God. To worship Him in Spirit and in Truth became my life's necessity. But to which of the many versions of Christianity could I run toward?

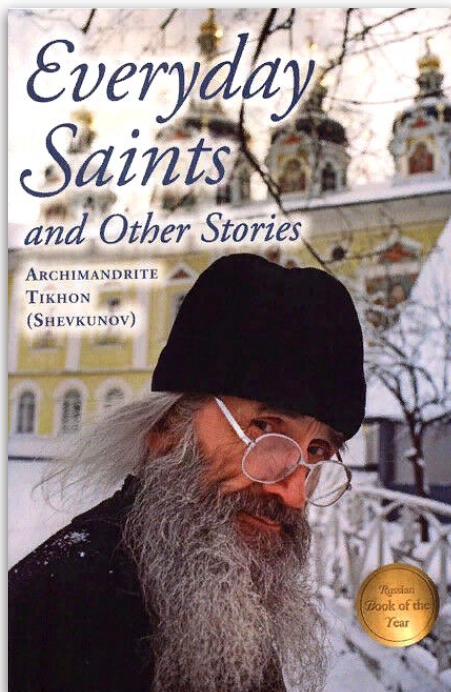
Like my husband, who once cried out, “God, who are You? Show me and I will follow You. Are You Buddhist? I’ll become Buddhist. Are You Muslim? I’ll become Muslim, just show me!” I, too, was imploring, “Lord, how do You want us to worship You? Do You want us to be Pentecostal? Do You want us



Baptist? Presbyterian? Should we remain in Messianic Judaism?” The more I studied, the more I knew that I lacked the mental and spiritual powers to discern my right hand from my left. I was lost and my children were doomed to the Christian confusion of this age.

You want God? Get ready for a collision, an earthquake. Expect a meltdown, a mental breakdown. This is what happened to me when I encountered Orthodoxy. Because as a Protestant I was a “Roma-phobe” (one who rejects Catholicism) and a know-it-all — the Lord used a backdoor to reach me.

It was 2014 and I was trying to understand the events of the Maidan, in the Ukraine. In a very insightful blog someone had asked the blogger what books he recommended to get background knowledge of that region of the world. I ordered the titles immediately: “The Gulag Archipelago” (Solzhenitsyn), and “The Orthodox Church” (Bishop Kallistos Ware). As I read, I felt scales beginning to fall from my eyes.



I called my friend Anya (whom later became my Sponsor and God-Mother to my children), asking if I could go with her to her Church, an Orthodox Church. Swept away by the flamboyant worship of Christ our King, all I did was cry. Later at her home, Anya put into my hands a book: “Everyday Saints and Other Stories” by Archimandrite Tikhon. The book scared the living daylights out of me! I could only take small doses of the book at a time. This was the most bizarre experience of Christianity I had ever heard of.

The next six months were spent reading all I could about Orthodoxy. I incorporated a prayer rule and set up a space for that in the home. I began to contemplate Icons (“idols”



in protestant parlance) and pray with them. I started crossing myself. I was leaving Protestantism behind and bringing my children with me; teaching them everything I was learning to the bewilderment of my poor husband.

Somehow I had found AncientFaith.com and downloaded its App onto my phone. The plethora of podcasts served as education, comfort, and therapy for me. It was through Ancient Faith Ministries that I found St. Michael Orthodox Church in Van Nuys, CA, where we have worshiped God since 2015. My Husband and I were Chrismated and the Children baptized earlier this year, in April 2019 by Father Timothy, my spiritual Dad, who by his example teaches me more than he'll ever know.

My beautiful and obedient daughters are now teenagers and we are moving through very turbulent waters. We arrived at Orthodoxy as refugees, not to begin at zero, but to begin in the negatives. My daughters, no doubt, have trauma from my parenting and I struggle with anxiety. In 2017, for three days (or more), I laid in bed, unable to get up or function. I had been reading "Parenting Toward the Kingdom: Orthodox Principles of Child-Rearing" by Dr. Mamalakis and realized to my utter horror that I had done EVERYTHING wrong in Motherhood! I wasted years upon years with wrong, ugly and sinful parenting. Lord, have mercy!

Christ, through His Church, provides me with the healing balm I need to endure the agony and the consequences of my mistakes and sins. I cannot imagine surviving this difficult time in my life without the tools Orthodoxy provides. Far from resenting the past, I bless it and embrace it and thank God for it because it is what led me to the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church: the Body of Christ.

Dear Sisters, please pray for me, for my daughters, for my son and husband. Though we've come this far, the journey ahead seems long and I'm completely drained. Saint Paul tells us in Romans 8:37, "*Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.*" How soothing, isn't it? ❖

In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God.

Romans 8:37-39





# *Fulfilling the Vision*



**ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN 2020 PROJECT**  
NORTH AMERICAN BOARD - ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

Background © Shutterstock - Simon Blazek Cathedral Design Sketch & Architecture for St Luke Orthodox Christian Church of Erie Colorado by CJK DESIGN - Christ J Kamages FAIA architect Poster design, graphic elements, photo mod. © Gregory-Lazarus Murphy +



## *“Fulfilling the Vision”*

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*“Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people.” [Isaiah 56:7]*

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### **NAB PROJECT 2020 — *Fulfilling the Vision***

Metropolitan JOSEPH has tasked the Antiochian Women with continuing to raise funds in support of his vision for the Antiochian Village. The 40-year old vision of Metropolitan PHILIP, of thrice-blessed memory, for the Antiochian Village has been enhanced by the vision set forth by Metropolitan JOSEPH at our Archdiocesan Convention. There is still much that needs to be done at the Antiochian Village and the new cathedral is only the beginning.

We would like to thank the Antiochian Women throughout North America for their generous support of the 2019 NAB PROJECT, which totaled more than \$125,000 and which was presented to Metropolitan JOSEPH during the Antiochian Women Luncheon at this summer’s Archdiocesan Convention in Grand Rapids, Michigan. In His Eminence’s address to the women, he presented his enhanced vision for the Antiochian Village, building on Metropolitan PHILIP’s original vision.

His Eminence envisions a new cathedral large enough to host all the campers, clergy, and other large gatherings; a monastery; a place for our Bishops to retire so they can spend their final years in prayer for the faithful of the Archdiocese; and finally, a crypt, a place of repose beneath the cathedral for our Hierarchs, including St. Raphael.

This is our NAB PROJECT 2020: to raise funds “Fulfilling the Vision” begun with Metropolitan PHILIP and continuing with Metropolitan JOSEPH for our “holy mountain”, our beloved Antiochian Village.

Thank you for your generous support for the 2020 NAB PROJECT.



Sheryl VanderWagen

NAB Vice-President & Project Coordinator

WITH THE BLESSING OF BISHOP JOHN, WE ARE RECOMMENDING THE FOLLOWING  
FOR OUR ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN BOOK CLUB SELECTION:



## OUR THOUGHTS DETERMINE OUR LIVES, by Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica

*"Love little things, and strive for that which is modest and simple. The Lord watches over us, and He is pleased that you long for His peace. Until the soul is ready, He will only sometimes allow us to see that He is present everywhere and fills all things. At these moments the soul feels such joy!... But then the Lord conceals Himself from us again, in order that we might long for Him and seek Him with our hearts!"*

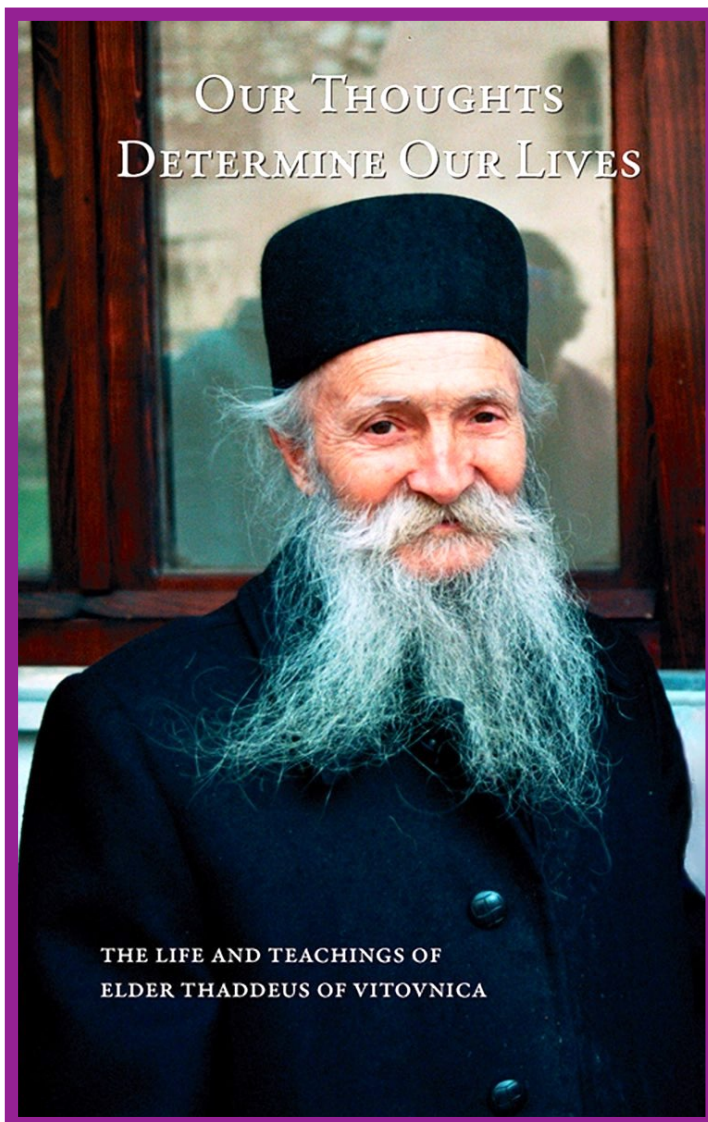
— Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica

THE ELDER THADDEUS OF VITOVNICA was one of the most renowned spiritual guides of Serbia in the twentieth century. As a novice he lived in obedience to Elder Ambrose of Miljkovo Monastery, a disciple of the Optina Elders. From him Fr. Thaddeus learned the Prayer of the Heart and the selfless love that came to characterize his whole ministry to the suffering Serbian people.

Born in 1914, Elder Thaddeus lived through all the suffering endured by Serbia in the twentieth century. Over the course of two World Wars, during the Communist takeover, and through the NATO bombings of 1999, he co-suffered with his people. He taught, counseled, and prayed for all who came to him in pain and sorrow. His words

of love and hope provided spiritual balm for people from all classes of society.

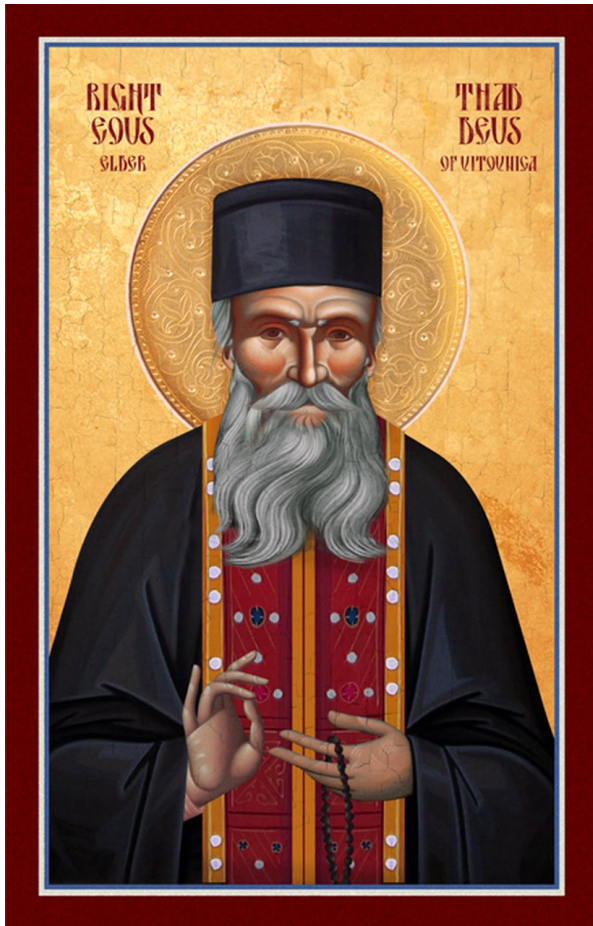
In 2002 Elder Thaddeus reposed, leaving behind a large collection of his teachings, preserved by his faithful spiritual children. His life, teachings, and spiritual conversations are here presented for the first time in English. ❖





# *Life Events of the Elder Thaddeus*

These notes are prepared by NAB Religious Coordinator, Fadia Juzdan —  
if you have any questions, you may contact her at: [fjuzdan@gmail.com](mailto:fjuzdan@gmail.com)



Born and baptized October 6 (Old Calendar) 1914, Feast of Holy Apostle Thomas, weakly and sick, fearing he would die, in Serbia. Named Tomislav.

As young boy, mother died. Father remarried twice. Step-mothers abusive. Father didn't stand up for him. Different from other kids because of dietary issues. No one thought he'd be good for anything. Found solace in God, and his own thoughts.

Realized early in life that life consists of serving others and that he must patiently bear both sorrow and pain in serving.

Was apprenticed to be a tailor rather than a farmer because physically weak. Not successful.

At 18 years old, desire arises to become a monk. Writes letter to Gornjak monastery.

While awaiting reply, he falls gravely ill, decides to forgo treatment. Told has 5 years to live.

1932 Goes to monastery against parent's will. At Gornjak monastery, told and guided to go to Miljkovo monastery instead, to find the kind of monasticism he seeks. This monastery is coenobitic, meaning life in community. Strict prayer rule: Daily liturgy, strict fasting, full cycle prayers, pray in cell.

1932 At Miljkovo, becomes a Novice. He is given several obediences all of which he failed at, but his Abbot covered his failures with love and patient forbearance. As he thought he had only 5 years to live, he confessed all thoughts, and gave himself over to constant prayer of the heart. Once he became a monk, the battle with his thoughts intensified. Abbot counsels him to pray with contrition of heart. He starts zealously to read the Holy Fathers.

After one year, Abbot Ambrose dies in 1933. Monastery starts to break up. He's thrown into deep sorrow, and loses prayer of heart. His soul is torn by sadness. Finds consolation in a book called The Path to Salvation by St. Theophan the Recluse.

1935 He goes to Gornjak monastery. Tonsured a Monk. Takes name of Thaddeus. From there, sent to school to learn iconography. Learns the mystical theology of icons, but cannot continue because of paint fumes.

1937, the supposed last year of his life, ordained Heiromonk and sent to Pech in Kosovo until 1941, when has to flee from violence at the outbreak of WWII. Back to Belgrade where he is accepted into Radovica monastery.

1941 Arrested by Nazis. Questioned whether he is a communist. Returns to Vitovnica where SS demands that he be at their disposal, he refuses.

1943 Arrested again, thrown into prison without charges, and sentenced to death. With his soul in anguish, has first vision of an Angel as a soldier, showing him a map of Serbia and all whom he must comfort.

1949 Becomes Abbot at Pech. Monastery in ruins, communists giving trouble. Suffers two nervous breakdowns as a result of fear, anxiety, and worry. Learns to leave his cares, and those of neighbors, in the hands of God. Bears the cross of serving as abbot for next six years.

1955 Briefly serves parishes.

1956 Back serving as Abbot at Pech.

1957 Back to Belgrade as Abbot of Gornjak until dies in 2003.

1959 Desires, and given blessing to go to Mt. Athos to Hilandar monastery where he is not well received. Later, learns that it was because he followed his own will. Comforted by the Mother of God while there, he learns from her that "his nerves are worn out."

1962-1972 Abbot of Vitovnica. During this time has two visions:

First: "This is how you must ease all tension. Do not take on the worries of this world too much, but guard your peace and live with God!"

Second: "The Savior told him to fall down before His Most Holy Mother, the Protectress of Monastics."

During this time, he realizes that he never wanted to be an abbot because it took him away from a life of silence, vigilance, and prayer. He wrestled with God for always sending him back to a flock and duties as an abbot. Lesson learned that if you don't have humility, God will not stop at humbling us.



1972 Sent into retirement, then installed as Abbot of Pokajnica monastery. Another vision from God asking: “Why do you fight the good fight when you have no obedience? Whenever you were assigned to serve at a certain place as abbot you complained about it, asking to be excused. You must not do so anymore! Know you must carry out every obedience with much love, earnestly, and with zeal, without paying any attention to the envy and malice around you...this is the cross you must bear.”

1978 he has vision of his own death with judges accusing him of not getting along with anyone. A man on his right says, “Do not be afraid! It is not true that you cannot get along with anyone. You just cannot get along with yourself!” At that moment, the words of St. Isaac the Syrian came to him, “Make peace with yourself, and both heaven and earth will make peace with you.”

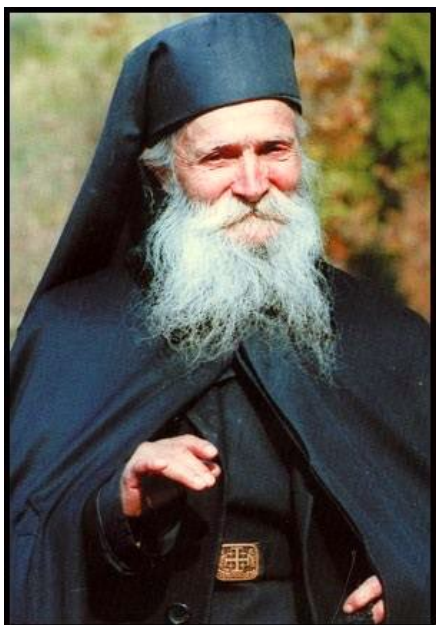
1980s people around Serbia start to stream to him. From then on, he gave talks, lessons, spiritual advice, and prayers to all who came. It was his cross to bear.

1992 first heart attack. 1996 second heart attack.

November 2001 Ill. Said that “Holy Fathers say the perfect Christian life is extreme humility, meaning patient long-suffering is what we most need in this life. We must bear everything patiently, and forgive all. If we have good thoughts and desires these thoughts give us joy and peace, even in this life, and even more so, in eternity. Then, we will see, there is no death.”

2002 Has stroke. Long illness follows. Saw illness as an aid to perfection. Endured it with love, obedience, and humility.

2003 He reposed on the Feast of St. Mary of Egypt. March 31 Old Calendar.



*It seems that we do not understand one thing:  
it is not good when we return the love of  
those who love us, yet hate those who hate us.  
We are not on the right path if we do this.  
We are the sons of light and love,  
the sons of God, his children.  
As such we must have His qualities and His  
attributes of love, peace, and kindness  
towards all.  
- Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica*

## HOW THIS BOOK IS ORGANIZED

This book was compiled from transcribed talks, audio taped conversations and written texts, and sermons. It is organized by subject matter with a sermon at the end of the book that gives a complete view of how the elder presented his teachings.

Each chapter has within it, numbered, stand-alone paragraph(s) of thoughts, reflections, stories, advice, and counsel that can be a springboard for our discussion.

### **“OUR THOUGHTS DETERMINE OUR LIVES”**

ON THOUGHTS: How would you respond to people if your thoughts were evil and troubled and how would you respond if your thoughts are peaceful, loving and kind? Practice this when talking to your family and friends and acquaintances. Our Heavenly father wants all His children to have His Divine properties. He wants us to be full of love, peace, joy, truthfulness, and kindness.

ON FAMILY LIFE: Think about the time you had to spank your child to get obedience but failed. How would you approach your child differently? Expect Obedience from your children but it should be done with love. Practice love to achieve what you want; their obedience becomes part of their character. Therefore, they will be obedient to God.

ON HUMILITY: Think of the times that you were provoked day in and day out by your manager at work or by a coworker or a family member. If we can stay calm and keep our inner peace despite that person's rudeness our soul will become meek and humble. We should be able to cure our outward and inward pride.

ON SERVING GOD AND NEIGHBOR: How often do you feel resistance to the work you do, or don't fully listen to people when they talk to you? If you see that every type of work on earth and in all the universe is God's work and should be performed from your heart without reservation. This will help us free ourselves from our inner resistance and this action will serve God and our neighbor. When talking to people give them your full attention.

ON MONASTICISM: How often do we think that a Monastic life is easy? Monks must learn to live with each other and learn to be peaceful and quite meek and humble. Monks are there to pray for the salvation of all mankind.

ON REPENTANCE: Think about a habit you have that you are trying to get rid of, you pray about it and stop it, but then fall into it once and again? We need to repent and



change our way of life. Repentance is a change of life, a change of direction and turning towards the Absolute Good.

ON PRAYER: How often do we pray to God when we are distracted, we pray with our bodies and lips and not with truth and spirit, our minds and our hearts are not present? When we pray or do anything in our lives, we should do it from our heart. To achieve salvation, we always need to transform our minds and lives in remembrance of God.

ON LOVE: Think about your life and how much love you need in your life? Keep God in your everyday life because God is Love. When we love certain people or things there is a little bit of love but mostly it is enslavement. Give your heart to God because whoever we give our hearts to this person can harm us or abandon us.

ON THE FALLEN WORLD: Look around you and your life and see how much is the Holy Spirit part of it? Mankind prefers evil to good. Such is the result of our fallen Nature. It is easier for us to think evil than good. But when we think evil, we have no peace or rest from such thoughts.

ON SPIRITUAL STRUGGLE: What in your life creates an inner resistance? We have acquired a habit of always opposing one thing or another, we have to learn to be obedient to God because he has put us in the position where we find ourselves, and we will get the most out of it when we learn to be humble.

ON THE FAITH: Can we live without faith as the atheist say? We should believe that nothing ever happens either in the world or in the universe without the will of God or His permission. We should love one another, repent and have positive thoughts to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord, if we receive communion when we are breeding hateful thoughts towards a neighbor, we are receiving him not unto our salvation but unto judgement.

ON INNER PEACE: Think about situations you were in when you want to oppose evil with evil? When we are attacked with evil we should learn to pray “Lord, help me to preserve my inner peace, teach me how to be calm and peaceful and kind, just like Thine angels.”

ON THE SPIRITUAL REALM: Have we spoken to a materialistic person, how people cannot understand each other because of materialism? We Christians have been called to spread upon the earth the atmosphere of heaven, eternity, love, peace, truth, and stillness. It is difficult because we have accepted much evil into our hearts, and now we need to get rid of it. ✚

# ICON OF THE THEOTOKOS ENTHRONED

Commemorated on March 2nd



This Icon is also called “She Who Reigneth.” It was on March 2/15, 1917, that this Icon was first revealed. It was the very day that Tsar Martyr Nicholas II abdicated the throne of Russia, and it was in the village of Kolomenskoe, near Moscow, where this Icon was discovered.

On both the 13th and 26th of February, a pious peasant named Evdokia Adrianova had two visions. A mystical voice told her that there was a large Icon that was dark with age that was need to be cleaned and prayed before. Being very devout, she prayed fervently that more be revealed to her. Her second dream revealed a white church in a village she recognized as Kolomenskoe.

She went to the village and when she saw the church she recognized it as the one from her dream. She went to the priest, Fr. Nikolai Likhachev, and told him about her dreams. They looked all over for the Icon, but could not find it. The custodian urged that they look more diligently.

So, they looked in the bell tower, under the staircase, in storage rooms, and in the basement of the church amid old odds and ends, boards and rags. Then they discovered it — it looked like an old dirty board, blackened with age. They cleaned it, and they saw the Heavenly Queen seated on a throne with a crown on her head, a scepter, and an orb in her hands. She was dressed in a robe of royal purple with the Christ Child on her lap.

To Adrianova, there was no doubt that this was the Icon in her dream. She begged Fr. Nikolai to serve an akathist hymn and a molieben for thanksgiving. Word soon got around about this Icon, and pilgrims in great numbers began to come to this little village of Kolomenskoe. There was no doubt in the minds and hearts of the people that through the prayers of the Tsar Martyr, he entreated the Holy Theotokos to take on the authority over his people, who had rejected their anointed emperor, and that she will reign over the land of Russia until the people repent through much suffering and the throne is returned to the nation. Pious people, today, believe that the Holy Theotokos continues to reign over Russia until an Orthodox Tsar is restored.

**TROPARION (Tone 4) —**

*The choir of angels reverently minister unto thee  
and all the heavenly hosts unceasingly call thee blessed, O Virgin Theotokos.  
Fervently we implore thee, O Lady, that the Divine Grace of thy precious Reigning Icon  
and flashing rays of the glory of thy miracles may descend from it upon all  
who in faith pray unto thee, and cry unto God: Alleluia!*

This text is from “Icons of the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary and Prayers for Her intercession” (compiled and edited by Theodore Khoury, Youngstown, Ohio; 2004 — self-published; available [www.iconsandmore.com](http://www.iconsandmore.com))

Image of the Icon appearing on this page: <https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2010/03/enthroned-or-reigning-icon-of-mother-of.html>



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# DIAKONIA

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