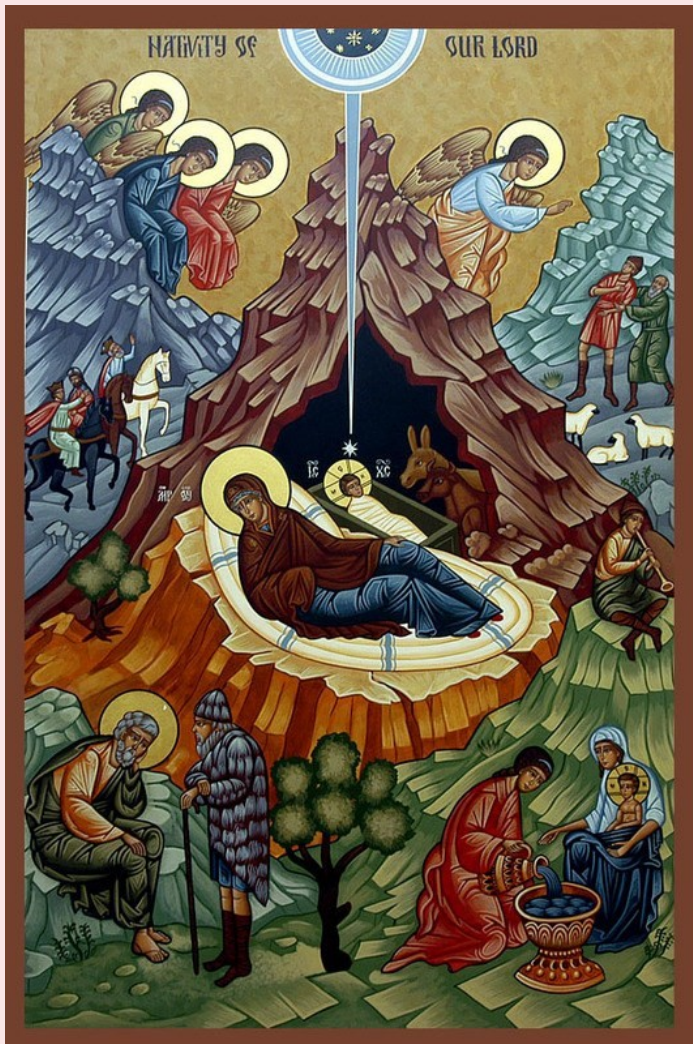


DIAKONIA

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN
WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA



Nativity 2018 Featuring the Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York with an Advent Message from His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH



Apolytikion of Forefeast of the Nativity

*Be thou ready, Bethlehem, Eden hath opened unto all.
Ephratha, prepare thyself, for now, behold, the Tree of life
hath blossomed forth in the cave from the Holy Virgin. Her
womb hath proved a true spiritual Paradise, wherein the
divine and saving Tree is found, and as we eat thereof we
shall all live, and shall not die as did Adam. For Christ is
born now to raise the image that had fallen aforetime.*

Kontakion of Forefeast of the Nativity

*On this day the Virgin cometh to a cave to give birth to God
the Word ineffable, Who was before all the ages. Dance for
joy, O earth, on hearing the gladsome tidings; with the An-
gels and the shepherds now glorify Him Who is willing to be
gazed on as a young Child Who before the ages is God.*

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

✠ A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS ✠

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women Of North America

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

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His Grace Bishop JOHN, Spiritual Advisor

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Antiochian Women's Prayer

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

DIAKONIA is the newsletter of the North American Board of the Antiochian Women, an organization of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, and is published quarterly.

PUBLICATION GUIDELINES:

Deadlines

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

To submit articles, e-mail as a word attachment to:

antiochianwomenna@gmail.com

Submission Details

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

Content

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

In each issue we will highlight one of the Dioceses. We encourage everyone, however, to submit news and articles from all Antiochian parishes of North America for publication in every issue so we may keep in touch with each other.

What is DIAKONIA?

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

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

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

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Antiochian Women North America



**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA**

October, 2018

Make ready, O Bethlehem, for Eden hath been opened for all. Prepare, O Ephratha, for the tree of life hath blossomed forth in the cave from the Virgin; for her womb did appear as a spiritual paradise in which is planted the divine Plant, whereof eating we shall live and not die as Adam. Christ shall be born, raising the image that fell of old.

Beloved Sisters in Christ,

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

We begin again our spiritual preparation for the Nativity of Our Lord. Over the next forty days, we will increase our prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. We will strive to reconcile ourselves to God and neighbor. We will work to make ourselves ready to behold the great mystery of the Word of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, born in the flesh from a humble Virgin, surrounded by dumb beasts in a cave, wondered at by shepherds, adored by Magi, and glorified by the Heavenly Hosts.

At the closing of our spiritual labors, we will come to the celebration of the Forefeast of the Nativity and chant the above-quoted troparion, which gives us a beautiful image of our preparation during the fast. Bethlehem is called to make herself ready for "Eden hath been opened for all." Ephratha is called to prepare herself for "the tree of life hath blossomed forth." The hymn continues to describe Christ, the Incarnate Word, as a "Divine Plant" planted in the womb of the Virgin to be offered as food to the faithful. When we partake of the Divine Plant, we are promised that "we shall live and not die as Adam."

This rich and beautiful imagery shows that while our first-parents fell by eating the fruit from the Tree of Knowledge, we are now able to partake of the Fruit – the Body and Blood of Our Lord, Jesus Christ – of the Tree of Life – the Wood of the Precious and Life-giving Cross – because the Virgin has now given birth to the Word of God, the Divine Plant.

When we think of these poetic images offered by the Church, we must remember for a plant to grow, it needs soil that has been prepared, it needs water, and it needs light.

For us to receive the Divine Plant, let us spend these days tilling the soil of our hearts through fasting and repentance, watering our souls with works of mercy and reconciliation, and placing ourselves in the Light through prayer and attendance at divine services. By these, we shall partake of the Holy Mysteries unto life everlasting.

Fervently beseeching the Lord to grant us a pure and holy time of the Advent Fast and a glorious celebration of the Nativity, I remain,

Your Father in Christ,

+JOSEPH

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

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

A Message from Diocesan President, Susanne Zeidan

As a life-long parishioner of St. Elias Cathedral in Ottawa, I grew up in a Christian environment. From an early age, I remember so clearly attending Sunday School, picnics, and many Feast Day celebrations, especially for our patron, St. Elias.



In 1947, my father at the age of 15 immigrated from Lebanon, and brought with him a strong Orthodox base. My mother converted to Orthodoxy when she married. I believe because she was not born Lebanese Orthodox, my father made sure we knew our heritage; therefore, we traveled to Lebanon many times as children.

Dimitri and I met in Ottawa, married in Lebanon and moved to the USA, where we had two of our three children. Upon our return to Canada, while working full time and raising our family, we maintained a close connection with our Church family. We are involved with the operations of St. Elias Cathedral and have worked on every committee for the many fundraisers, conferences, as well as holding several executive positions. The 2017 Parish Life Conference was hosted by my home Cathedral, where I chaired the Conference Committee. I have been actively involved with the Antiochian Women of St. Elias Cathedral all of my adult life.

Currently, I am the Antiochian Women's President of our Diocese, and was previously a two-term President of the Diocesan Antiochian Women. I also held the position of Treasurer for another three terms. My husband is also very active on the Diocese and Archdiocese level. Dimitri has held the position of Chair of the Diocese for the Order of St. Ignatius and was elected to the Board of Trustees in 2011.

As a family, we have attended many of the Parish Life Conferences and Archdiocese Conventions. When we can fit it in, we travel to Lebanon to visit family. Our three children are in Post Graduate Studies. Katya, Krista and Marcus were raised in the Church, and have devoted many summers to Camp Transfiguration as campers, then as Counselors. Previously, Katya was the Program Director of Camp Transfiguration, and has spent a few summers working on the staff at the Antiochian Village, after having been a volunteer for many years.

My grandparents and my parents were involved in our local church, and we grew up knowing it was our responsibility to continue their legacy. Through the Church, we have been blessed with many friends and a large Orthodox family. It has been an honour to serve as President and Treasurer of our Diocese and meet many women from the different regions. St. Elias Cathedral is a wonderful part of our daily life, and we receive much encouragement, support and love from Abouna Ghattas and Kh. Helene Hajal. I feel we are truly Blessed.

Fond regards,
Susanne Zeidan



Meet our Sisters from Ottawa, Eastern Canada, and Upstate New York

Affaf El-Jakl - Vice President

Born in Lebanon, my parents migrated to Australia when I was three years old. In Australia, I was raised in an Orthodox home surrounded by my family and friends where I attended the University of Melbourne majoring in Accounting. Our home church was St. George in Melbourne, Australia (now a Cathedral).

I met my husband in Lebanon while we were both on vacation (he from Halifax and me from Melbourne). I was truly blessed to be able to get married in Lebanon in the same 400-year-old church, St. Saba, where my great grandparents, grandparents and parents were married and where I was baptized as a child.

Living in Halifax, I am truly blessed to be able to call St. Antonios Church my home – the warmth and love I feel for my Church and Parish is unparalleled. I have been on the Parish Council for the last five years and am currently serving as the Parish Council President. I have been a Sunday School Teacher for the past ten years and have also served on the Antiochian Women's Board. God has granted me two sons who are also very active in the Church as Altar Boys and members of Teen SOYO.

This is my first year serving as Vice President for the Antiochian Women of the Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York. This is a tremendous blessing bestowed upon me, and I am so honored to be a part of a wonderful group of women whose only mission is to serve others and spread the love and word of God. May God strengthen and grant us many years in His Service!



Nadea Saikaley - Recording Secretary

I was born and raised in Ottawa, Canada. My parents came to Canada from Lebanon in the very early 1960s. I have three biological sisters, but have gained more sisters and friendships that will last a lifetime since joining the Antiochian Women at St. Elias Cathedral in Ottawa.

I have been very active with the various events at St. Elias. I am on the Lebanese Festival committee, bake sale committee and help in the organization of our Lenten lunch. I am happy to serve as the Recording Secretary for our Diocese since being elected in 2013.

I have worked for 36 years at the Ottawa Hospital in various departments/divisions for various specialists and continue to work as an administrative assistant. Travelling is one of my favorite past times.



Holy Women of the Orthodox Christian Church



As compiled by the Religious Coordinator of the
North American Board of the Antiochian Women

Ever wonder about the lives of Women Saints?

Several years ago the North American Board took on the enormous task of compiling a list of Women Saints, their stories and their Icons. This beautiful work introduces us to a Woman Saint for each day of the year!

<http://ww1.antiochian.org/women/orthodox-women-saints>

Meet our Sisters from Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York

Patricia Aramouni – Treasurer

Patricia Aramouni is the President and Founder of Fancy Sox hosiery boutique, and Soxcess Retail Consultants. She has been married to Roger Aramouni for 25 years when she joined the St. Elias Cathedral family. She has two wonderful boys: Alexandre, 22 (Ottawa U graduate) and Nicolas, 19 (2nd year at Ottawa U). She attended the University of Ottawa and graduated in 1985 with two degrees: one in Psychology and the other in Business Administration. In 1992, she won the “Young Entrepreneur” award for Eastern Ontario. In 2007, Fancy Sox was a “Business of the Year” finalist for the Lebanese Chamber of Commerce. Patricia served on the Rideau Center Board of Directors for ten years and is also a Board member of the Downtown Rideau B.I.A. She spent a lot of time volunteering at her children’s elementary school, where she implemented and coordinated the Catechism Program for 80 kids.



She is an active volunteer at St. Elias Cathedral having served on the Mother’s Day committee for the past few years and was recently appointed as the Chairperson of the Bake Sale committee. She also served on the 2017 Parish Life Conference committee. She loves attending the retreats and Parish Life Conferences.

Dona M. Savage – Public Relations and Membership

I am currently holding the Public Relations and Membership positions in the Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upper New York. I attend St. Elias Orthodox Church in Syracuse, New York.

I have previously served as the Sunday School Superintendent, Antiochian Women’s President and Recording Secretary for my church, and I am currently serving as Corresponding Secretary.

I am also the Secretary at our church office where I do many tasks and help Fr. Elias with whatever he needs done.

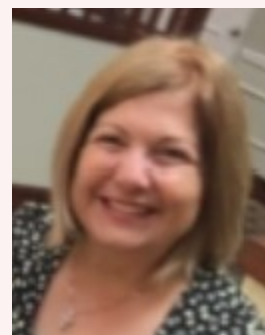
I am also a member of The Order of St. Ignatius. I help with our quarterly publication “The Cornerstone,” writing articles, proofreading, compiling birthday and anniversary lists, and preparing the publication for mailing.



Gehane Ephtimois Zahran – Immediate Past President

I was born in Egypt and immigrated 43 years ago to Montreal with my husband, George Zahran. We both retired eight years ago. I dedicate much of my time giving back to my community. My church is St. George in Montreal.

As the Immediate Past President of the Antiochian Women of our Diocese, I feel blessed to have had the opportunity to meet and serve exceptional ladies who take pride in giving to their church and their community at large. God bless them as they continue to fulfill the Projects put forward to them by our Father, Metropolitan JOSEPH. Together with our sisters in Christ from the other dioceses, they have accomplished so much and continue to do so. May God grant them and their families health and many years!



Meet our Sisters from Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York

Lianne Nimey - Humanitarian Coordinator

I am a 41 year old Italian mother of Amelia Rose who is 7 1/2 and Matthew John who is 4 1/2. I have been a kindergarten teacher for 20 years in the Utica, New York School District, which has an inner city, poverty stricken, and multicultural population. I was born and raised Roman Catholic, attended Catholic Schools and have always loved church. I remember being a young girl and walking myself to my neighborhood parish every weekend. I was very upset when my home parish closed. I began visiting other Catholic churches in my area in hopes of finding a new home, but never did.



In 2006, I met my husband Matthew and was introduced to Orthodoxy. I had never heard of the Orthodox Church before I met him. I enjoyed my visit to St. George and wanted to learn more about the Faith. The more I learned the more I knew it was the perfect fit for me. Meeting my husband opened up a whole new world for me. God, as always, provided the path and the rest is history. Over the past 12 years, I was Chrismated, married and gave birth to two beautiful children whom I am proud and blessed to be raising Orthodox. My mother-in-law, Cindy Nimey, was NAB President when I met my husband, so it didn't take long until I attended my first NAB Mid-Winter meeting at the Antiochian Village. While at the Village, I met so many wonderful women, some of whom are still active and do so much for their parishes. I began attending Antiochian Women meetings at my church and became acclimated and active very quickly. I served as my chapter's President for three years, but stepped down after my son was born. Having a three year old and five month old gave me a reason to cut back a little. However, I am still a Sunday School teacher and Ladies' Group Secretary, and I commit as much time as I can to our endeavors. I am also the Humanitarian Coordinator for our Diocese. This role gives me the opportunity to attend Diocesan and NAB meetings semi- annually, if life permits. I love attending the Parish Life Conferences, but have not been able to make the last three years. I am hoping that my mother-in-law and I will be able to attend our 2019 Diocesan Parish Life Conference, God willing.

Being an Antiochian Orthodox Woman is not something you do for a little while and then stop. It is who we are and what we do all the time. May God grant us the strength to continue all that we do!

IS YOUR NEW YEARS RESOLUTION TO READ THE BIBLE THROUGH IN A YEAR?

Read the Bible in a Year And Special Readings for Special Needs guidance is found on the Antiochian Women's page of the Archdiocese Website.

The first card will contain scriptures to help you in times of trials. On each of the cards that follow will be a set of scriptures. They will help you to read through the Bible in one year. You can use the cards as book-marks so you will always remember where you left off. You will find that the order of scriptures do not represent the order they are found in the Bible. Instead, the scriptures are listed in chronological order. Try not to get behind. You will read a little each day. At the end of the year you will have read the whole Bible. May God be with you as you embark on one of the most important journeys of your life.

**Your sister in Christ,
Lucy Hanna, NAB Religious Coordinator 2003 - 2005**

<http://ww1.antiochian.org/women/read-through-bible>

Meet our Sisters from Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York

Mariane Cassis, Religious Coordinator



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

My name is Mariane Elias (Cassis). I was married to my beloved husband, Amin Cassis, 31 years ago, in the Orthodox Faith at St. Mary Greek Orthodox Church in Egypt. God gifted us with two wonderful children: Pierre (28 years old) and Christine (24 years old) whom, by God's Grace, were raised in the Church, for which we are very grateful.

My husband, my son Pierre, and I arrived in Montreal, Canada in 1993 (our daughter had not been born yet). Since our arrival, St. George has been our Church Community.

I have been blessed to be part of the St. George Byzantine Choir, a member and officer of the Antiochian Women and a Sunday School teacher. I also serve on the Religious Committee for our church's Antiochian Women and serve as the Religious Coordinator for the Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York.

In our local Antiochian Women's meetings, we discuss the information sent to us from our NAB Religious Coordinator, Kh. Dannie Moore, and elaborate about the special feasts and fasts of the Church from the start of the Ecclesiastical New Year through the Feast of the Elevation of the Theotokos (Dormition).

Our local Antiochian Women are blessed to have an "ask Abouna" session during our monthly meetings. We can ask questions and seek clarification on issues concerning our life, family and Orthodox Faith. We also learn more about the Great Feasts and Fasts and other special events that will take place in the Ecclesiastical year.

We are currently working with our parish priests to have workshops on the following subjects:

"Parents' Workshop" will include topics such as parent/adult children communication, relationships, substance abuse, etc. We are working with our parish mentoring program, directed by our parish clergy, to help facilitate this series of workshops planned for early 2019.

In March, during Antiochian Women's Month, we will host a Women's Lenten Retreat on "Monasticism and Spirituality" to our young adults.

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

Yours in Christ,

Mariane Cassis, Religious Coordinator

Meet our Sisters from Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York

A Summary of the 65th Annual Parish Life Conference for the Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada, and Upstate New York

The 65th Annual Parish Life Conference for the Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York was held in our beautiful city of Halifax from June 28 through July 1, 2018. We worked hard to ensure that these four days were some of the best our guests spent outside of their home parishes. Our schedule was dense with activities and events that drew everyone together spiritually and in fun.

In Halifax, we are well known for our warm hospitality. This is most true in our home parish of St. Antonios. The weekend opened with a delicious welcome dinner following the tour of our new home at St. Antonios Church. Our guests were treated to the delicious taste of Halifax and were offered a generous array of seafood, from lobster to oysters and much more!

We also offered tourist events in our registration package to allow our guests to experience our beautiful city and beyond. Our activities were planned with every age in mind. On June 29, our guests took in the sights of the Halifax Harbour aboard the Harbour Queen and were treated to fun, music, snacks and water views of our beautiful city. On June 30, our guests were taken to one of Nova Scotia's scenic treasures, Peggy's Cove! We packed everyone a picnic lunch as well as giving a tutorial on the famous attraction. This, by far, is the most visited and photographed site in Nova Scotia.

During the meetings that took place on June 29, we had two guest speakers join Teen SOYO and the Antiochian Women. Dr. Emad Massoud spoke to the teens on addiction as it related to social media and technology in today's world. Father Luc, the Abbot of the Hermitage of the Annunciation in New Germany, spoke to the Antiochian Women. Every guest in attendance was treated to a Lenten meal. Both events were well attended.

In addition to these two meetings, the clergy met with His Grace Bishop JOHN. The Young Adult Ministry (YAM) also held their meeting that Bishop JOHN attended. The Order of St. Ignatius gave a presentation during the Saturday night Dinner and Hafli encouraging new members to join.

The Diocesan Council Meeting also took place at the Parish Life Conference. Each organization provided an update to the Council. Other updates were provided from Camp Transfiguration, Christian Education, Creative Arts Festival, Sacred Music, Fall Retreat, and the 2019 Parish Life Conference Committee.

With all of the blessings of the week something was still missing. We greatly missed the presence of His Grace Bishop ALEXANDER at this Parish Life Conference, who was unable to attend as a result of illness.

We were blessed to have a successful and well attended PLC. The weekend was filled with sunshine and smiles. Every guest left knowing that they have family here in Halifax.

Submitted by Maria Saikali Haddad

Meet our Sisters from Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York

A Report on the Fall Retreat of the Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York

With the blessing of Bishop ALEXANDER and the warm welcome of its Pastor and Parish Council, St. George Church Montreal hosted the Diocesan Fall Retreat on October 20-22.

We had a record-breaking attendance of 156 people, out of which 28 were Antiochian Women, 76 from Teen SOYO, 28 from the Young Adult Ministry, and 24 guests and clergy.

It was the second year since the Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada, and Upstate New York had moved towards a “Retreat Style” Fall Gathering.

We were blessed with amazing guest speakers: Fr. Seraphim Gisetti and Kh. Masha Gisetti from the St. Ephraim Addiction Center in Colorado. With their help and intricate logistics, this Retreat offered three different tracks, one for each of the main organizations of the Diocese (the Antiochian Women, Teen SOYO, and the Young Adult Ministry). There was a plenary session to set the tone on Friday night. On Saturday, the speakers met twice with every organization for in depth and customized discussions about addiction, its causes, impacts, and various facets, and the concerns of every age group in this regard.

In the non-speakers’ blocks, each organization filled its day differently, whether be it with business meetings, additional presentations, icebreakers, games, or outings.

Additionally, adult participants were offered the option to take part in a choir or iconography workshop.

Sunday was an opportunity to partake of Divine Liturgy and a light coffee hour with the participants who could stay.

The Antiochian Women were present to welcome many who arrived on Friday evening as well as Saturday morning. It was wonderful to see so many join us from different cities across the Diocese. It was exciting to see the enthusiasm they demonstrated when they saw one another, as many had met at previous events.

The Youth of St. George prepared the Lenten refreshments on Friday, the Diocesan Board of Teen SOYO (with the assistance of The Circle Organization of St. George) prepared the continental breakfast on Saturday morning, the Young Adult Ministry prepared the snacks, and the Antiochian Women prepared and served the main meal on Saturday, a hot luncheon. About 15 women set up a variety of foods and desserts. The women worked very well together, learning new ideas from one another. The mood and camaraderie was wonderful to see, and we served 160 people.

The Antiochian Women of St. George also organized an outing to a restaurant for supper on Saturday evening where many of those who were staying in Montreal for the weekend joined us. We chatted with the women, each learning from the other what activities were planned for the upcoming year.

Pondering the Icon of the Nativity of Christ

As with all Icons, the layers of meaning in the Icon of the Nativity speak to us at different times in our lives. Notice in the Icon on the cover of this Diakonia, Mary is facing Joseph instead of Jesus, which is rare in any icon featuring both Jesus and Mary. She is concerned about him and interceding for him. Jesus lies next to Mary wrapped in grave clothes foreshadowing his coming death.

www.orthodoxroad.com/nativity-icon-explained

Meet our Sisters from Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York

The Antiochian Women of St. George Orthodox Church Richmond Hill, Ontario

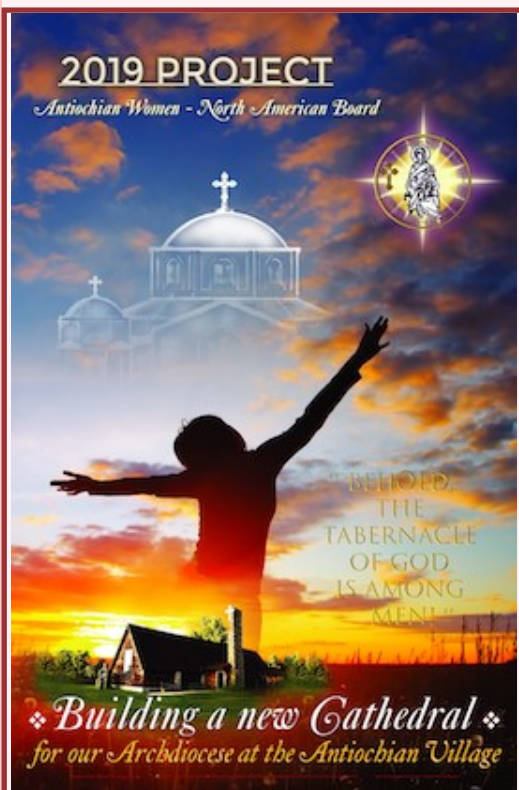
The Antiochian Women of St. George in Richmond Hill, Ontario, work as a team, a family and a sisterhood, helping and supporting each other and our church.

We are blessed to have so many dedicated, hard working and generous women in our midst. Glory to God!

Our Antiochian Women officers were elected in September 2018, and immediately thereafter, the ladies came together quickly to organize a Thanksgiving luncheon for our church community. The luncheon took place on Sunday, September 30 after Liturgy. The ladies, and others from the parish, readily and generously donated a vast array of food and drinks, and the ladies prepared, cooked and served the food with dedication and love. Many stayed at the church banquet hall until after midnight to cook and then arrived early on the day of the luncheon to finish the preparations and set up. The men's society of St. George as well as the staff at the church banquet hall were also eager to lend a helping hand and assisted with anything that needed to be done. About 281 people attended the luncheon. We are so thankful to have such a wonderful church community!

In addition to social events to unite our ladies and our church, we have regular meetings to ensure that all information is readily shared and that input and feedback can be continually received. The ladies are actively working on spiritual, humanitarian, fundraising and social events for the rest of the church year.

We are humbled to be able to serve our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ with joy, by serving the church—His mystical body. We pray that God will continue to grant us His grace to continue in His service.



Excerpt from Kh. Suzanne Murphy's letter introducing our project.

"We often refer to the Antiochian Village as being our "holy mountain." Metropolitan JOSEPH has the vision of building this new cathedral on the highest point of the Antiochian Village, near the entrance road, so that it can be seen over a great distance. The inspiring testimony of its domes and crosses will send out the blessing of God across the Ligonier Valley. And then when our many groups gather at the Village – our children for summer camp; our bishops, priests, and deacons for the Clergy Symposium; our families for Family Camp – and when we host the Special Olympics and the OCF College Conference, or when outside groups come to the Village for their meetings and events, as we ascend the path up to our new cathedral, we will have the sense that we are literally ascending the "mountain of the Lord" (Psalms 24:3)."

To read the complete letter and for all support materials, please visit the Antiochian Women's page of the Archdiocese website.

<http://www.antiochian.org/regulararticle/175>

Meet our Sisters from Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York

The Antiochian Women of St. George Orthodox Church New Hartford, New York

The new Church calendar has begun and Fall has arrived! This is a wonderful time to reflect on the previous year, to do some “Fall cleaning” and to prepare and look forward to the months to come. At St. George New Hartford, we have just wrapped up our Eighth Mediterranean Festival which was a great success. Our festival is mainly a fundraiser for our parish. We are working very hard to pay off our mortgage. However, that is not the only benefit we receive from this annual event. Although it provides us a means to meet our neighbors and introduce them to our beautiful church and faith, I believe the greatest benefit we receive is how close it draws our own community together.

As we begin our Antiochian Women’s meetings for the New Year, we reflect on what we were able to accomplish last year and set goals for the coming year.

We will continue to help with fundraising efforts through the year round sale of baklava and bake sales. We will also be a driving force in the food preparation for our Ninth Mediterranean Festival.

Last year, one of our goals was to aid in the beautification of our church, purchasing icon runners for the icon stands in the Narthex and Nave. In the past, we helped with the Sunday School rooms and we now want to improve our Fellowship Hall, purchasing curtains for the windows. One of our Antiochian Women is a talented seamstress and donated her time to make these curtain. They really add to the room, giving it more color and a warmer feel.

Our book club continues and provides a wonderful a time of fellowship and spiritual growth. Our first book for this year is “Icon, A Novel,” by Georgia Briggs. The past two years we have held a women’s Lenten Retreat. Last year we were blessed to have Kh. Krista West speak and are looking forward to planning this year’s retreat!!

We send cards of sympathy, as well as get well and thinking of you cards to our own community. Pascha and Christmas baskets are prepared for our shut-ins. Each Spring, a blood drive is held with the American Red Cross. During the Nativity season, we have a Giving Tree filled with ornaments requesting items for the chosen charity. Last year’s tree collected money and gas cards for the families of three local children who were ill and had to travel for treatment, stickers for the Golisano’s Children’s Hospital in Syracuse, New York, and a monetary donation to the REaCH Organization (Research, Education and Cure for Hydrocephalus).

We have formed coffee hour teams and provide food after the Liturgy every Sunday.

Although we are small in number, we do our best to help with what we can and donate our time, talents and treasures.

Meet our Sisters from Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York

Mediterranean Festival Photos September 2018 - St. George, New Hartford, New York



Antiochian Women of St. Antonios Orthodox Church – Halifax, NS

Our committee meets the first Tuesday of every month, with the presence of Father Maximos Saikali and Khoureh Rita Saikali. The first part of the meetings we discuss the feedback of past events and plan for any upcoming events that the church is hosting. During the second part of the meeting, we have the ability to discuss a particular spiritual or social subject with Father Maximos that the ladies have decided upon at the previous meeting.

Our committee is focused on helping our youth, children in Sunday School, and the church in hosting a range of events. Every Sunday after the liturgy, we always make coffee and offer refreshments to encourage fellowship and communication of our parishioners.

During our meetings, Father Maximos always provides us a Bible study session that is either presented by himself or by a guest speaker. We prepare and serve luncheons at special occasions and the fundraised proceeds go to the church SOYO group, a charity, or to buy some items needed for our new church. By dedicating many of our efforts each year to the Halifax Lebanese Festival, our women are a big help to fundraising in order to cover some of the expenses of our new church building. that is presented every July and the ladies of our committee would dedicate their time and talents to provide a successful Festival, every year. We also commit ourselves to visiting the grieving and sick people of our community.



Meet our Sisters from Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York

The Antiochian Women of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church Montreal, Quebec

We were very blessed to have yet another successful year at St Nicholas Church. Our Church's Antiochian Women are very dedicated and committed to serving our community.

This year we had many successful events, such as:

Helping our Sunday School Team with our popular Turkey Dinner.

St. Barbara's Feast with SAYADNA and all our Montreal clergy.

St. Nicholas Feast Day Reception.

Fundraiser Hafli.

Decorating Christmas stockings for the elderly.

Christmas Eve Reveillon.

Epiphany Reception.

Sponsoring an orphan in Lebanon, a tradition at our Church.

Meals on wheels for our elderly community.

Monthly visits to our elderly community.

Antiochian Women's Month.

Decorating and selling candles for Palm Sunday.

The very popular annual Palm Sunday Bake Sale.

Easter Breakfast.

Paint Night.

The list goes on and on, thanks to our active women. A big thanks to our hardworking Antiochian Women, and to all the friends of the Antiochian Women.



Meet our Sisters from Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York

The Antiochian Women of St. Elias Orthodox Church Syracuse, New York

Eager to start off our year, we conducted our first potluck gathering for all the ladies of our church. On the evening of September 8, around 30 of the ladies came together and enjoyed a great night of fellowship, accompanied by good food and music. This was the first event of our term, and we plan to have more activities that show us the real meaning of togetherness, whether it be during the days we're working or the days of simple gatherings like this one.

The Antiochian Women of St. Elias will host several events in the upcoming year, including "Thanksgiving Dinner" in November 2018.

In December 2018, we will celebrate St. Barbara, and the "Christmas Ornament Exchange". All funds generated from this event will be donated to Vera House and Ronald McDonald House.

In January 2019, we are planning to prepare the "Zalabiya" for the Feast of the Epiphany.

On February 9, 2019, we will hold our annual Valentine's Party (with a place and time to be determined).

The Feast of the Annunciation is March 25, 2019, and on March 24, 2019, the ladies will hold a Fish & Chips luncheon. That same evening, we will host a Pan-Orthodox Vespers followed by a potluck from the women of our church.

Due to our kitchen renovation, we will postpone our cooking classes until end of April or early May 2019. The classes are offered by the ladies on Tuesday evenings (7-9 p.m.), and tentative dates include April 30, May 7, May 14, and May 21, 2019.

As the newly-elected officers of the Antiochian Women of St. Elias, Syracuse, we are very honored to have been elected to these positions. Georgina Al Khoury is President, Lina Abu Manneh is Vice President, Merian Azar is Treasurer, and Layla Elamir is Secretary



How do I Submit Articles and Photos for Publication?

Step by Step Guidelines

God bless each of you across our beautiful Archdiocese for every photo, story, and article that is submitted for publication in the *Diakonia*. Without your submissions and the beautiful work that you do in your local parishes and Dioceses, the *Diakonia* simply would not exist! Sharing a glimpse into the life of your parish chapter and highlighting a meaningful tradition is what makes the *Diakonia* a publication we all want to read.

Despite best efforts, mistakes happen when compiling the submissions and creating each issue. Please understand that mistakes and/or omissions are in no way intentional.

To help decrease errors and guesswork which contribute to omissions and mistakes, when submitting anything for publication in the *Diakonia*, please follow these steps:

1. Send all submissions to your Diocese Public Relations Officer who then will send it to:

AntiochianWomenNA@gmail.com

2. Please title the email as either:

Submission Diakonia, Parish Name, City, State

Submission Diakonia, Name, Organization Title

Examples for all email correspondence related to the DIAKONIA:

Submission Diakonia, St. Nicholas, Los Angeles, CA

Submission Diakonia, Dianne O'Regan, NAB President

Submission Diakonia, Kh. Jeanette Gallaway, President, Toledo and the Midwest

3. Ensure photo(s) is/are of good quality and that there is an explanation to the photo. The photo may bring wonderful memories to the submitter, but the readers need to know why the photo is being submitted and what the photo is showing.
4. Please submit all documents in Microsoft Word format only (.doc, .docx).
5. Ensure the corresponding article or biography is included with the photo(s) being submitted.
6. Please be prompt with submissions.
7. Remember all submissions will be corrected as needed and may be edited for length and clarity.
8. Have patience. Just like in our parish chapters, all roles on the Diocesan and the North American Board are volunteer and we do the best we can with the skills we have and the time that is available to us.
9. **Most importantly, share what is important to you and your chapter!** It is wonderful to read about our Sisters' activities and seeing the photo(s) that help tell the story.

God bless you and thank you for sharing with all of us who you are and glimpses of your activities in service to our Lord.

A NOTE TO DIOCESAN PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTORS:

All articles, news from parishes, photos, bios and messages are due the first of the month PRIOR to the month of publication. Please collect and email them to antiochianwomenna@gmail.com according to the schedule below:

The following items are needed to highlight your diocese:

1. Bios and photos from your Diocesan Bishop, Spiritual Advisor and Board Members.
2. Messages from your Diocesan Bishop, Spiritual Advisor and President.
3. Photos and news articles from the chapters. All articles must be about or of interest to the Antiochian Women.
4. Notices of Diocesan gatherings, retreats, conferences, etc.

	Diocese	Date of Publication	Date Due
1	NAB Board (His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH and His Grace Bishop JOHN)	Done	August 15, 2017
2	Diocese of New York and the Archdiocesan District (His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH and His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS). Diocese of Charleston, Oakland, and the Mid-Atlantic (His Grace Bishop THOMAS)	Done	November 15 2017
3	Diocese of Los Angeles and the West and the Diocese of Eagle River and the Northwest (His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH)	Done	February 15,
4	Diocese of Miami and the Southeast (His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS)	Done	May 15, 20
5	Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate New York (His Grace Bishop ALEXANDER)	Done	October 1st, 2
6	Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest (His Grace Bishop ANTHONY)	Winter Issue	November 15, 2018
7	Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America (His Grace Bishop BASIL)	Spring Issue	February 15, 2019
8	Diocese of Worcester and New England (His Grace Bishop JOHN)	Summer Issue	June 2019

To ensure publication in the next issue, please submit your news and articles by

Dear Sisters in Christ,

As a convert I often struggle with the rigors of fasting before Nativity. Being raised in a preacher's home, this is the time of year when even "lightly" Christian remember our Lord Jesus Christ so we would join in celebrating the season. As Orthodox we are called to fast and prepare for Christ's birth. Reading the excerpt from a Winter Pascha, Chapter 20: The Two Comings of Christ by Fr. Thomas Hopko found on the Antiochian Archdiocese website, has put the Orthodox experience into perspective for me. We fast in part because we recognize that Christ's first coming, His Nativity is the beginning of His sacrifice at Pascha. One would not exist without the other. So in our joy for Christ's birth, we are humbled by the true purpose of His birth. "The two comings of Christ are held together in Christian thought, action, and prayer at all times. They cannot be separated. When they are, it is the end of Christian faith, life and worship. The first coming without the second is a meaningless tragedy. The second coming without the first is an absurd impossibility. Jesus is born to bring God's kingdom."

May we prepare ourselves for Christ's first coming with peace and love.

In Christ,

Melinda Bentz, Public Relations