

THE **الكلمة**

WORD

**PRESERVING OUR
ANTIOCHIAN
HERITAGE**

**BLESSED
MATRONA
THE BLIND**

**A WORD ABOUT
CLERGY WIVES**

**THE NEW YOUTH
PROTECTION POLICY**

THE WORD

الكلمة



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COVER: Ordination of Schemamonk Paul to the Holy Priesthood on February 9, 2025, by His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X at Balamand Monastery in Lebanon.
Photos from the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch

A Word About Clergy Wives

BISHOP JOHN

My wife Joanne and I have been blessed to speak to seminarian and clergy wives many times over the years. I believe that we have an important message for them, but it took me all this time to realize that to be more effective, I need to share this message with the faithful as well. So here goes my first attempt to share our perspective with you, the readers of the WORD.

Clergy wives, like their husbands, are neither superior nor inferior to the other members of the Church. We are baptized with the same water and anointed with the same chrism. Although all in the Church have differing roles and responsibilities, we all share in the priesthood and ministry of Jesus Christ. Clergy wives are not servants to the parishioners, they are parishioners who like all other parishioners are servants of the God of all. Like all other parishioners, each has a responsibility to discover their own charism or spiritual gifts and to fulfill their vocations to the best of their abilities. God is the giver of all good things, so we must be givers of our time, talents, and resources to be like Him.

Clergy wives and their husbands are not stamped out like cookies at the blade of a cookie cutter. Each is unique and each needs to discover and employ her individual gifts. Some may sing, others teach, still others may cook, a few will administer, and some will simply take care of their husbands and/or children. What each does is best discovered in interaction with their confessors, spouses, and God.

The enemy of such discernment is self-expectations, and the expectations of others based on other clergy families. The other clergy may be of neighboring parishes, former pastors, or friends who do ministry in Orthodox or non-orthodox churches. This is of course unfair and opposed to our understanding of God who created each of us as unique persons. I suggest it takes the uniqueness of every human person to get a better understanding of the God who creates all.

I often have recounted an encounter my khouria had with an older member of our parish. Like a good young priest's wife, my wife greeted the woman, who ignored her. Thinking that the lady didn't hear her, my wife greeted her louder. When the woman didn't respond the second time, my wife wondered if the woman didn't understand, so Joanne greeted her in Arabic. The woman now responded that she heard my Joanne the first time, "it's just that I had never seen a priest's wife in a red dress before" the woman quipped. Joanne retorted, "You had best get used to it because I like red!"

On the part of the clergy wife, with sensitivity to the needs, styles, and practices of the local community they are entering, the clergy wife needs to prayerfully follow God's will for them as He makes ministry opportunities available. If the clergy wife is full of herself, she will be ineffective, and if she is too humble, she will miss opportunities to use her gifts that God gave her to use in His ministry. She needs to be balanced, and she works out the balance with her spiritual fathers.

The Most Reverend
Metropolitan SABA

The Right Reverend
Bishop THOMAS

The Right Reverend
Bishop ALEXANDER

The Right Reverend
Bishop JOHN

The Right Reverend
Bishop ANTHONY

The Right Reverend
Bishop NICHOLAS

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Sometimes people who were hesitant – for whatever reason – to ask me a question would approach my Joanne. Often I heard her say, "Oh, that is a question you need to ask my husband." Other times she would say, "I know that my husband suggests that this is the way to deal with it." It is noteworthy that in Orthodox cultures the priest's wife is called the feminine form of priest, presbyter, or deacon. Sometimes she is called "little mother" after the Theotokos. The Theotokos has a special role of intercession and support of us and her son.

The Orthodox Church empowers clergy wives to serve God and the Church in many ways. We receive this as strength and a gift for all of our salvations. She is neither greater or lesser than anyone else, but together we have an opportunity to come closer to God and each other as we show each other the respect and love that all Christians owe each other. Every Christian is in the image and likeness of God and is called to be like Christ.



DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES & THE WEST PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE

JUNE 25 - 29, 2025

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ST. NICHOLAS ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX
CHURCH, SAN FRANCISCO

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THURSDAY JUNE 26

- Morning and Afternoon Workshops
- Order of St. Ignatius Reception
- Young Adult Dinner
- Taco Thursday Welcome Reception

FRIDAY JUNE 27

- Organization Meetings
- Bible Bowl
- Ice Cream Social & Teen Dance
- "Candyland" Theme

SATURDAY JUNE 28

- Young Adult Pilgrimage to Holy Virgin Mary Russian Cathedral
- Awards Brunch
- Oratorical & Choir Festival
- Middle Eastern Dinner and Dance (Hafli)

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The New Youth Protection Policy

This December, His Eminence Metropolitan Saba sent the following letter to clergy, introducing the archdiocese's new Youth Protection Policy.

Beloved clergy,

“But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:6)

These words from our Lord highlight the sacred responsibility that we share as clergymen to care for our youth and ensure we do all that is possible to keep them safe. I would like to offer my gratitude to Dr. Anne Thomas, our director of human resources, and the Department of Youth & Young Adult Ministries for the work they have done to assemble a comprehensive Youth Protection Policy for our archdiocese. You will find more detailed information and instructions in the accompanying introductory letter along with the policy itself in this packet.

This policy has my blessing and the approval of our Board of Trustees, and I expect that you will wholeheartedly embrace this effort and guide your parish council and organizations to be fully compliant with all of its contents. Again, there is no greater responsibility than that which we owe our young people, and I have the greatest confidence in you that you will lead this effort with diligence and care.

With prayerful best wishes for a grace-filled Advent fast and glorious feast of the Nativity of our Savior, I remain,

Your Father in Christ,

+SABA

Following this letter, the archdiocesan Department of Human Resources and the Department of Youth & Young Adult Ministries shared resources to support parishes and individuals in implementing the Youth Protection Policy. These resources include a dedicated site on the archdiocese webpage as well as two implementation webinars which almost 150 clergy, parish council members, and youth protection coordinators attended. Parishes, camps,



and other archdiocesan entities are now reviewing and engaging the Youth Protection Policy, working together in a shared commitment to the ongoing and attentive care and protection of our youth.

What Is the Youth Protection Policy?

The Youth Protection Policy (YPP) is a framework to prevent, identify, and respond to instances of youth abuse that may occur within church premises or during church, diocesan, or archdiocesan-related activities. This policy also applies to the care and protection of vulnerable adults.

The policy includes four key components:

1. Mandatory policies

As part of their active commitment to safeguarding youth, all parishes will follow specific steps in compliance with the Youth Protection Policy. Some of these steps include making sure that all youth workers and other required individuals within the parish read and acknowledge the policy (renewed annually), complete a background check (renewed every 3 years), and complete youth safety training (renewed annually). The archdiocese has partnered with Sterling Volunteers to provide a single sign-on platform where all of these components can be completed and renewed, making it simple for individuals to register and fulfill their requirements. Because all parishes will be using this same system, individuals will also be able to transfer their completion certificates across parishes within the archdiocese and across some pan-Orthodox entities as well.

Your parish will designate a youth protection coordinator who will help manage these critical pieces of the Youth Protection Policy for your community. This is an important administrative role

within your parish, and we honor and thank those who will be serving in this capacity. Not sure if you need to complete a background check and youth safety training? Reach out to your youth protection coordinator for more information.

2. Code of conduct

Though the policy cannot capture all the ways adults should and should not engage with youth, it does provide a guideline for promoting interactions with youth that are caring and proper given the context of each situation. The code of conduct outlines both encouraged and prohibited behaviors to help protect youth in your parish from instances of misconduct and abuse. The code of conduct can also help protect adults from false allegations and accusations that may arise based on misunderstandings.

The code of conduct document should be posted in your parish. We encourage every person in the parish – regardless of whether you work directly with youth or not – to review the code of conduct so you can model encouraged behaviors and contribute to a community of active and informed vigilance.

3. Protective practices

What kinds of practices can parishes put into place in order to safeguard their youth? The Youth Protection Policy offers a variety of best practices meant to support youth workers and others who often interact with youth. These protective practices include recommendations for youth program supervision, personal interactions, and electronic communications with youth. It also includes parish facilities considerations.

Youth leaders and parish council members alike will want to review and discuss these practices to

determine how to adopt and adapt them to their local circumstances.

4. Instructions for responding to instances of misconduct

Though we certainly pray that no such instances will occur in our parishes, we also know that even in churches, abuse of youth is a reality we must all be vigilant to identify and address. In such cases, it is imperative that abuse is reported – first to civil authorities – and then in a report to the Antiochian Archdiocese Department of Human Resources. The Youth Protection Policy outlines what to do if you have a reasonable suspicion of abuse, as does the FAQ for Reporting Abuse document, which should be accessible in your parish.

As a reminder, “reasonable suspicion of abuse” generally includes but is not limited to a witnessed act of abuse, a child’s disclosure of abuse, or signs of abuse in a child. Reasonable suspicion may also come from another person who may have heard about possible inappropriate behavior from the victim. Not only

are adults in parishes considered mandated reporters in most states and provinces, but it is imperative for the well-being of our entire communities that each person in the parish recognizes his or her critical duty to report known or suspected child abuse or neglect.

Upholding Our Sacred Trust

When youth participate in the life of the church, their care is entrusted to the respective programs of the archdiocese. All of us in the parish must be prepared to uphold this sacred trust.

We encourage all parishioners to review the Youth Protection Policy site which can be found on all Youth & Young Adult ministry pages at antiochian.org as well as via this QR code. All the documents and resources referenced in this article are linked to the site.

Our archdiocese is committed to the care and protection of our youth. Together, our protective practices, vigilance, courage, and action can help ensure a safe and nurturing environment where our youth can flourish and grow.

Youth Protection Policy



Antiochian Orthodox Christian
Archdiocese of North America



Blessed Matrona The Blind

Fr. Michael Shanbour

As we look at the lives of the saints, we note that suffering always seems to play a role in the way God leads them to sanctity. Some take upon themselves voluntary crosses of ascetic labors. St. Simeon the Stylite lived atop a pillar in prayer and fasting for 36 years. Celtic saints like Cuthbert chose to stand in the frigid ocean waters, praying with hands raised for hours. Others, like St. Nectarios of Aegina, bore particularly heavy spiritual crosses of ill treatment, slander, and persecution from fellow members of the Church. Still others, however, were called to carry a cross of physical suffering or infirmity. The Apostle Paul had his “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7). St. Pimen the “Much Ailing” suffered a form of paralysis for 20 years and, while he healed others, only became healthy on the day of his death.



A Miraculous Child

The blessed Saint Matrona belongs to this latter group.¹ She was born without eyes (that is, pupils), and with eyelids shut fast, as St. John Chrysostom and others describe the man born blind in chapter 9 of the Gospel of John. Matrona Dimitrievna Nikonova was born in 1881 in the village of Sebino of the Epiphansky district (now the Kimovsky district) of the Tula region, a couple of kilometers from the field on which the Russians defeated the Mongols in 1380.

Her parents were pious Orthodox Christians, but very poor by earthly standards. Matrona was the fourth and youngest child. Before her birth, her mother, Natalia, concerned about the financial burden, planned to give the child away to an asylum, where poor or

¹ The slightly differing sources for this article can be found at <https://orthochristian.com/79033.html> and <https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2012/05/saint-matrona-blind-of-moscow-1952.html>

illegitimate children were raised at the government's expense. Natalia, however, had a prophetic dream. She saw her future daughter in the form of a white bird with a human face, eyes closed, coming from above and perching on her right hand. Perceiving the dream as a divine sign, she abandoned her plan. She loved her poor blind child, who was given the name of St. Matrona of Constantinople, an ascetic of the fifth century (who is commemorated November 9).

From the time of her infancy, Matrona manifested extraordinary signs of holiness. Her mother complained to a friend that the baby would not take milk on Wednesdays and Fridays, but slept all day and could not be awakened. This same phenomenon is found in the life of St. Nicholas and others, and even some contemporary monks and nuns.

While still a toddler, at night she would somehow feel her way (or find her way by spiritual sight?) to the family icon corner, taking the icons from the shelf to play with. Another sign occurred at her baptism. As she was immersed into the waters, all present saw a "wispy column of aromatic smoke" above the infant. The righteous priest who baptized her said he had never seen anything like it. Inspired by God, he prophesied that she would be holy and that she would foretell his death. This indeed happened. Still a young child, one night Matrona informed her mother that Father Vasily had died.

The little girl also had a raised birthmark on her chest in the form of a cross. Once when her mother chided her for not wearing her baptismal cross, the six-year-old Matrona responded, "Mama, I have my own cross on my chest!" Her dear mother could only ask her forgiveness for having scolded her.

The children in her village were not so kind. They would ridicule her cruelly in various ways, make fun

of her, and even strike her with tree branches. Once they put little Matrona into a pit, as the envious brothers of Joseph the Comely did (Genesis 37:24), and then watched to see how she would get out. Because of these "games," Matrona stopped playing with children and remained at home.

The girl's pious parents raised her in the Church. The lovely Church of the Dormition of the Mother of God was situated near the Nikonov home. When Matrona went missing, they would often find her standing quietly at the back of the church. She knew the prayers and hymns and, during divine services, would sing with the choir.

Insight and Healing

By age seven or eight, Matrona's spiritual gifts began to become manifest. Once, she enthusiastically announced, "Mama, get ready, I'm going to have a wedding!" Soon a procession of carriages began arriving at the Nikonov home: people with sorrows and illnesses were coming to see Matrona. When her mother inquired about all the activity, the girl replied, "I told you that there would be a wedding!" Matrona prayed over these pilgrims and many were healed.

Although blind, Matrona saw everything with the eyes of her heart. One feast day, Natalia Nikona asked her husband to come to church with her. His schedule, however, would only allow him to read and sing the prayers at home. Upon her return, Matrona alleged, "Mama, you weren't in church!" When her mother asked how that could be, Matrona informed her, "Father was in church, but you weren't there." She had "seen" her mother in church upset and worried by her husband's absence, and therefore understood that mother was only in church bodily, whereas her father had prayed attentively at home.

By God's grace, she not only knew the sins and offenses of people who came to her, but even their thoughts. Matrona also received knowledge of approaching dangers and social turmoil. Once, when leaving the home of a distant relative, she prophesied, "I will leave now and tomorrow there will be a fire – but you won't get burned." Indeed, that is what happened. The fire began the next morning and burned most of the village. As the flames approached the house, however, the wind suddenly changed direction and the relative's house was spared.

The healings also continued. Bedridden invalids rose to their feet and walked. Many sad and suffering souls were consoled by her presence and words. First people came from surrounding villages, but eventually from districts and regions. They came by foot, by cart, and in wagons. In gratitude for her aid, they left food and gifts for her parents. In this way, the child who was expected to be a financial burden became the main bread-winner for the family!

Yet Matrona's spiritual stature did not come without cost. When her mother wondered at her sitting outside on a chilly day, Matrona revealed, "It's

impossible for me to sit inside; they put fire on me, they poke me with their pitchforks." The confused mother retorted, "But there's no one there!" "You don't understand, Mama, Satan is tempting me."

Another Physical Cross

At age 17, Matrona was suddenly deprived of the ability to walk. She was not surprised. She knew that after receiving Holy Communion that day, "a woman" would come to her and take away her physical strength. Later Matrona would reveal, "I did not try to avoid it. It was the will of God." From that time on she could only sit, but she never complained.

A Pillar of the Faith

Before she lost the use of her legs, Matrona had the opportunity to take pilgrimages to holy places with the pious daughter of a wealthy landowner – to the Kiev Caves Lavra, Holy Trinity-St. Sergius Lavra, St. Petersburg, and more. She once attended a service celebrated by St. John of Kronstadt at Andreevskiy Cathedral in Kronstadt. After the service the saint called out to the people to make way for a fourteen-



year-old girl so that she might approach the solea. The clairvoyant St. John said, "Little Matrona, come to me. Behold, here is my replacement, the eighth pillar of Russia." At the time, no one knew exactly what these words meant, but later her close ones understood that she would be a spiritual stalwart for Orthodox Christians under Soviet persecution.

Indeed, she foresaw the coming revolution while still young. "Churches will be robbed and destroyed, and people will be persecuted." She spoke about the stealing and redistribution of land. With this knowledge, she instructed people regarding their pursuits. For example, she advised a landowner to sell everything and leave the country. He did not heed her word, however, and lost everything, including his life.

Under Soviet Rule

As her brothers, Mikhail and Ivan, had joined the Communist Party, her spiritual care for people was worrisome and they feared reprisals from the party. So in 1925 Matrona left home and moved to Moscow, which she called "the holy city, the heart of Russia." From then on, she never had a permanent home, but became a wanderer and relied on others for shelter. Some of these people treated her poorly, even depriving her of food.

The Soviets tried many times to arrest Matrona but, on account of her foreknowledge, she escaped. Once, however, she waited for the police officer who had come to take her. When he arrived, she said, "Go, go quickly, there is misfortune for you at home!" The man arrived home to find his wife had been badly burned. He was able to get her to the hospital in time to save her life. Later, he informed his chief of what had happened and said he would never dare arrest this holy woman.

Under these conditions, the Eldress continued her ministry of spiritual and physical healing. She received

around 40 people each day, which often left her so exhausted she was unable to speak. She slept on her side with a clenched fist as a pillow. Matrona found her strength in unceasing prayer (most of the night) and in confession and Holy Communion. She received people sitting cross-legged. She would put her hands on the head of the person kneeling before her and make the sign of the cross over them. (She herself made the sign of the cross so often that she had a small dimple on her forehead.) Then she would pray and give them the words they needed for their soul. Some were healed physically; others left exhilarated, as if on wings.

Among the healings were those suffering from demon possession. One girl became stiff as a board in Matrona's presence and began spitting on her and trying to escape. After instructing her companions to let her go, she fell writhing on the floor, vomiting blood. The girl fell asleep for three days and upon waking was perfectly well.

Matrona would often pray over water to use for healing (it was difficult to find sacramentally blessed water in those days). In one case, a desperate atheist, a woman, came seeking a remedy for her son, who could not be helped by psychiatrists. After agreeing to believe in God, the woman received this blessed water and went to her son in the hospital. The boy immediately cried out, "Mama, get rid of what you have in your hands, don't torture me!" After she quickly threw the water on his face, the boy calmed down and said, "How wonderful!" He was soon released from the hospital.

Eldress Matrona required her "patients" to repent, have faith in God, and to be faithful in the life of the Church. She required everyone to wear a cross. She instructed couples who had only received a civil marriage to be married in the Church. She encouraged people to seek medical help. "Our body is a house that

God has given us and we are responsible for keeping it repaired. God created the world and healing herbs. We shouldn't resist his gifts." She rejected the "folk medicine" and pagan healing practices, however, that were in vogue under Soviet Russia. She told her confidants that she waged an invisible war against sorcerers and other evil powers.

Spiritual Vision and Travel

Matrona foretold the coming of the World War: "Many of our people will perish, but the Russian people will win the war." She often spoke about helping the soldiers, unseen, on the fronts. People came asking about the fate of their loved ones in battle. The Eldress would inform them if they were alive or not.

In 1946 an architectural student learned that her thesis advisor had decided to fail her. This would be a tragedy for her family, as her father was in prison and her mother depended on her financially. If she did not graduate, she could not get a job. Coming to Matrona in tears, she heard these words of consolation: "Don't worry, don't worry, you will pass your exam. Tonight,

we'll have tea and talk about it. I will go with you to Italy, to Florence, to Rome, and we will see the works of the great masters." That evening her new "advisor," Matrona, with her spiritual vision "traveled" to Italy and began describing in detail the designs of the buildings relevant to her thesis. Making corrections based on this information, she passed with flying colors.

On one occasion, it appears the Lord even allowed her to see physically. Her close friend Zenaida was lamenting that Matrona could not see the beauty of the world. Matrona responded, "Once, God opened my eyes and showed me the world and His creation. I saw the sun and the stars in the sky and everything on earth...."

Her Last Years

Eldress Matrona felt deeply the spiritual toll that communism had taken on her countrymen. "The people are under hypnosis, they are not themselves, a terrible power has come into being This power exists in the air and penetrates everything." In previous times these forces were counteracted



“because people were going to churches, they wore crosses, and their homes were defended by icons, lampadas, and blessings. Before, demons could only fly near these houses, but now they inhabit both houses and people because of unbelief and apostasy from God.” She urged people not to participate in political demonstrations, to close their windows and doors as “hordes of demons” filled the air at these times.

Despite her spiritual suffering, she was always gentle and compassionate. She was patient with human weakness, warm, sympathetic, and joyful. She did not preach, but gave practical advice for each situation. Her eyelids were tightly shut, but her countenance was kind and loving. She counseled not to judge others, to “protect yourself with the sign of the Cross, prayer, holy water, and frequent Holy Communion,” and to “keep a lamp burning in front of the icons.”

The time of Matrona’s death was revealed to her three days beforehand. She calmly gave instructions about her funeral, asking that it be held at the Church of the Deposition of the Robe of the Mother of God on Donskaya Street. She confessed each day and received Holy Communion. In her humility, she admitted to being afraid of death. Yet her boldness before God was revealed in these words: “Everyone, everyone, come and speak to me as someone living about your sorrows, and I will see you and hear you, and help you.... Everyone who appeals to me for help, I will meet at their death. Everyone.”

Matrona had predicted that initially very few would remember her and come to her grave, “but after many years people will learn about me and crowds will come for help in their sorrow, asking me to pray to our Lord God, and I will hear and help everyone.” Her prophecy came to pass over 30 years later, as many came and still come to beseech her intercessions. Her relics are

now enshrined at the Monastery of the Protection of the Mother of God at Taganskaya. She was glorified by the Russian Orthodox Church on May 2, 1999. Her feast day is celebrated on the day of her repose, April 19/May 2.



“

**CROSS YOURSELVES
OFTEN, IT IS LIKE A
LOCK ON A DOOR!**

St. Matrona the Blind of Moscow

”



Preserving Our Antiochian Heritage

Julia Ritter, Museum & Library Director, Antiochian Village

The Antiochian Heritage Reservation & Digitization Project.

After much anticipation, the Antiochian Heritage Museum & Library has embarked on an important heritage preservation and digitization project to preserve its archives and rare collections for years to come. The project focuses on our extensive holdings of early manuscripts and books, and will also include letters, photographs, and ephemera relating to early Antiochian communities in North America during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Many of these items are extremely rare and fragile, with pages that have become brittle, torn, and discolored with age.

Working to preserve the items (through cleaning and repairing) and to digitize them (by photographing and creating a finding aid) not only ensures they will be here for future generations to appreciate, but also allows researchers to view the materials digitally, avoiding the need for direct handling of these fragile works.

Among these special collections are over 50 manuscripts, one of them a 200-year-old *Pentecostarion*, handwritten in Arabic by a priest from Shweir in the mountains of Beirut. His graceful handwriting, in red and black ink, is punctuated with occasional decorative flourishes. Our holdings also include rare works of Arabic literature and poetry written by members of the Syrian/Lebanese diaspora and published in North America during the 19th century, as well as documents relating to the historic establishment of

the Hosn Hospital in Syria. Most items have been donated over the years by families and clergy who would like to see these items preserved and shared with others. The Hosn Hospital archive, for example, was a gift of Mr. Phil Nemy of St. George Cathedral in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, whose grandfather spearheaded the remarkable grassroots fundraising effort here in the U.S. during the mid-1900s, which supported the founding of the hospital in rural Syria.

During my 18 years at the Antiochian Heritage Museum & Library, we have taken various steps to begin preserving our rare collections and share them with others. One example of this was our recent partnership with North Carolina State University's Moise A. Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies, in which the Khayrallah Center staff came to the Antiochian Village to digitize our collection of *The Word / Al-Kalamat* and some of our parish commemorative booklets. To help us identify the scope and significance of our Arabic-language collections, and to be able to catalog these items, we have also sought the assistance of various Arabic-speaking researchers over the years (mostly on a volunteer basis), among them Dr. Hani Bawardi of the University of Michigan Dearborn. But only recently has the goal of preserving, digitizing, cataloging, and sharing these collections become more solidly within reach, thanks to essential funding, and the arrival of a new staff member.

The project requires both expertise and financial support, and we are grateful to have received both over the past year.

An initial donation of \$3,000 from the Orthodox Vision Foundation jump-started this project by allowing us to purchase some preliminary conservation supplies as well as a high-end digital camera, and a copy-stand with lights to secure the camera from

above (ideal for photographing manuscripts and books). A subsequent gift included a book/document scanner, two laptops, and two external hard drives, received from a student of the Antiochian House of Studies (AHOS) who was eager to support our work. One of the new laptops now connects to the digital camera, allowing us to shoot high-resolution photographs of books and manuscripts right from the laptop, avoiding the need to climb a ladder to reach the camera's viewfinder. The second laptop interfaces with the new book scanner, which is used for lower-resolution scanning needs.

Pennsylvania's Empowered History Grant

In 2024, the Museum & Library received a \$750 grant from the Pennsylvania State Archives' Empowered History Micro-Grant program to support these preservation activities (maximum grant \$1,000). Due to the overwhelming number of applications submitted, the grant selection process had to be extended by several months, so we were particularly pleased to have received the funding requested. We used the Empowered History funds to purchase additional conservation supplies, including specialized Japanese papers, leather for repairing book and manuscript covers, and a small, lightweight vacuum specially designed to remove dust and dirt particles from fragile materials.

Who is conducting this preservation and digitization work?

The hands-on preservation and digitization work is being conducted by our part-time library digitization specialist, Evleen Jabbour, who joined our staff at the Antiochian Village in October 2023. Evleen brings over a decade of conservation experience, previously

digitizing and cataloging the rare manuscripts and archives of the St. John of Damascus Manuscript Conservation Center at the Balamand Monastery in Lebanon. In addition to her expertise in the field of manuscript preservation, Evleen's first language is Arabic, which allows us to achieve a deeper understanding of the contents of our Arabic collections and their significance within the fields of theological, historical, and literary research. The project itself is taking place completely on-site at the Antiochian Village. Our librarian, Katie Strevig, who holds a Master of Library Science (MLS) degree and has worked in our library for over 13 years, provides essential expertise in the use of the Library of Congress cataloging protocol as well as organizational and technical guidance for this important project.

Why preserve materials from our Antiochian heritage?

Through these efforts, we preserve a little-known part of history and make it available to

a wider audience for generations to come. Our aim is to continue to make it possible for people to learn about and appreciate the experiences of those who came before us, including the experiences of early Arabic-speaking Christians and others who arrived in the U.S. during the late 19th and early 20th century, who established churches and communities starting in New York City, through Pennsylvania, and across North America. Their stories – their thoughts, writings, even their material possessions – serve as windows into their shared and individual experiences, which in turn provide us with insights and deepen our understanding of other cultures and of our nation's past. These topics are of great interest to scholars and members of our church but also to our conference center guests, many of whom are learning for the first time what “Antiochian heritage” means. Indeed, one of the goals of our Museum & Library is to bridge understanding among people and create eye-opening experiences for our visitors. It is our



Photograph of St. Michael Syrian Orthodox Church, Monessen, PA, early 1900s. The Arabic handwriting reads, “This is St. Michael Syrian Orthodox Church, established in Monessen, Pennsylvania, on 1st of July 1914. Priest of this church is Fr. Gergios Michael Al-Nakat.”



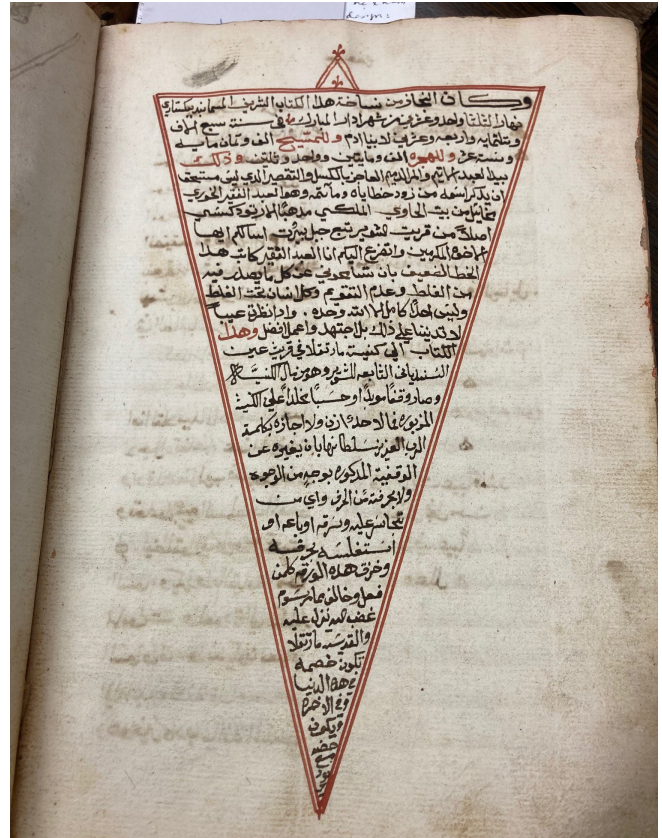
An example of the extremely fragile condition of many items in the collection, particularly those from the late 19th and early 20th centuries when paper was highly acidic.

hope that this project will contribute to this ongoing effort.

Eventually, materials will be made available digitally to visitors and the public.

This project would not have been possible without the unwavering support of His Eminence Metropolitan Saba and the Antiochian Village Council.

To support our ongoing work, please consider making a donation to the Museum & Library's Heritage Fund. For more information about the project or how to donate items to the collection, please contact Museum & Library Director Julia Ritter at julia@avcenterpa.org. And stay tuned for project updates on the AV Conference Center Facebook page!



Page from a Pentecostarion, handwritten by a priest from Shweir in the mountains of Beirut, 1816.



Evleen Jabbour and Julia Ritter learning to use the new digitization equipment.

SOME THOUGHTS FROM ST. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH ON SUBMISSIVE LOVE AND SERVICE

William W. Weber

St. Ignatius, an Apostolic Man — The Orthodox Synaxarion says that Ignatius “had known the apostles in his youth and, in company with Polycarp, was initiated into the deepest mysteries of the faith by St. John.”¹ St. John Chrysostom says that the saint was reared by the apostles and went everywhere with them.² As a confirmation of his apostolic character, he was appointed bishop of Antioch around the year 69. Until his death some 40 or more years later, he spent his life laboring for the gospel throughout Syria. When the Roman emperor came to Antioch, Ignatius accosted him with the intent of submitting to martyrdom in order to save his flock. Trajan responded by condemning the saint to death in the arena in Rome. And thus St.

¹ The Synaxarion of Holy Hieromartyr Ignatius the God-Bearer of Antioch, December 20.

² Chrysostom, Homily on Ignatius 1.

Ignatius followed our Lord and his apostolic mentors in laying down his life for those he loved.

St. Ignatius, an Advocate for Voluntary Cooperation with Clergy — After his conviction, the saint traveled in chains and under guard through the Roman province of Asia as he made his way to Rome. In Asia, he visited churches and clergy and wrote epistles to the Christians in Ephesus, Magnesia, Tralles, Philadelphia, and Smyrna. He also wrote to the bishop of Smyrna, St. Polycarp, as well as the church at Rome. In none of these writings did he tell anyone to submit to him, and only once did he refer to himself as bishop (Romans 2.2). Rather, he encouraged the Christians to freely submit to their own clergy - their bishop, presbyters, and deacons - and to one another. Basically, he was exhorting them to follow his own example - and



that of their clergy - in taking up the cross of Christ in their individual lives. **To freely submit is to freely follow Christ and to voluntarily cooperate with those He has given us as guides and fellow pilgrims.**

To the Christians in Tralles, Ignatius wrote the following

“ Whenever you freely submit yourselves to the bishop as to Jesus Christ, it is evident to me that you are not living the way people typically do, but the way Jesus Christ wants us to. He died for our sakes in order that, by putting your faith in his death, you may escape dying. (Trallians 2.1, p. 68)³ ”

The bishops of these churches were their head pastors. So in our circumstances Ignatius’ exhortation applies not only to how we relate to our bishops, who are usually far away, but to our priest, who is near and stands in for the bishop in his absence. Americans do not want to hear what Ignatius is saying. We are too independent. We can figure this Church thing out all by ourselves. Such thoughts as these do not reflect the mind of Christ or the mind of the Church. They are not at all Christian. On the contrary, “freely submitting ourselves to our pastor as to Jesus Christ is essential to our living Christ’s way and escaping spiritual dying, both now and in the age to come. We either yield our wills to God or pride reigns and we end up living the way people typically do, putting their faith in themselves and spiritually dying” (comments on Trallians 2.1, p. 69, slightly adjusted). Ignatius’ admonitions are in keeping with the apostolic commandments found in the Epistle to the Hebrews:

³ This quotation—and the ones that follow—come from the author’s book, *Dying to Reach God: A New Translation and Commentary on the Writings of St. Ignatius of Antioch and St. Polycarp of Smyrna, Second-Century Christian Martyrs*. Eugene, OR: Resource Publications (an imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers), 2024. The author would appreciate that any copies purchased be done so directly through him at divineeconomy@proton.me.

“ Obey your leaders, as ones who will have to give an account, and be submissive, in order that they may keep watch over your souls with joy and not with groaning, for this would be detrimental to you. (Hebrews 13:17) ”

In writing to the Christians in Smyrna, St. Ignatius expanded on the theme of cooperating with clergy.

“ You must all follow the bishop, as Jesus Christ does the Father. Follow, too, the council of presbyters as you do the apostles, and show reverence for the deacons as you do for what God commands. Let no one perform anything involving the church without the bishop. (Smyrnaeans 8.1, p. 130) ”

Practically speaking, this means everyone who serves in the church must do so with the pastor’s blessing. And not just a one-time blessing, after which we go and do our own thing. Parish council members need to heed the voice of their shepherd and follow his lead. Church school teachers must not exercise their gifts in ways that run counter to their pastor’s direction. Those serving behind the altar and in the kitchen, at the chanters’ stand and in the choir, as well as those who help in a myriad of ways – indeed, all of us – must cooperate freely with our pastor and not act out of an independent and contrary spirit.

In writing to his friend St. Polycarp, the bishop of Smyrna, St. Ignatius bared his soul .

“ You all must give heed to the bishop, so that God may also give heed to you. As for me, my life is devoted to those who freely submit themselves to the bishop, presbyters, and deacons. May it be granted me to have my place with them near God. (St. Polycarp 6.1, p. 148) ”

Ignatius showed himself to be a humble and clear-sighted man who longed to be “near God” beside “those who freely submit to” their clergy. We say we want God to draw near and pay attention to us, but do we? If so, we must pay attention to the leaders God has given us. For us to serve God in our churches (or rather in His churches) we need to love our God-given leaders. **Submissive love requires an attitude of the heart, not just certain outward actions.**

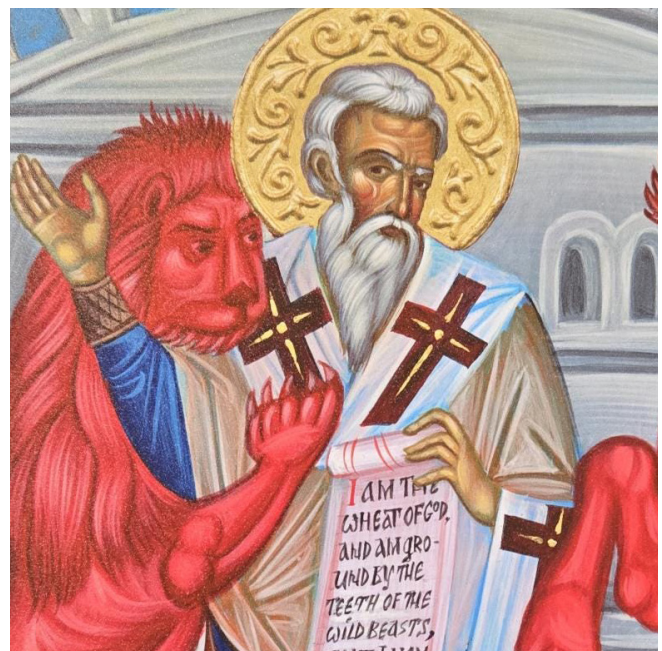
St. Ignatius was crazy for, impassioned for, and longed to be one with Christ God.

He may have had shortcomings, as most pastors do, but he was not power-hungry. And to the degree that he had any “lack” in any way, he “lacked” that he not “lack God” (Trallians 5.2). The submissive love he poured out as a libation for his flock (see Romans 2.2) shows us his likeness to Christ, whose submissive love we hymn in the Lamentations Service on Holy and Great Friday. Let us strive to imitate the submissive love shown by our Savior and St. Ignatius, as we engage in service within our churches. By doing this, may we obtain a firm hope to reap the reward of “holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14):

“ It is right, then, in every way to glorify Jesus Christ, who has glorified you all. That way, as you are being perfectly adjusted together through one voluntary obedience by freely submitting yourselves to the bishop and to the council of presbyters, you may be made holy in every way. (Ephesians 2.2, p. 12) ”

William Weber authored a new book called *Dying to Reach God: A New Translation and Commentary on the Writings of St. Ignatius of Antioch and St. Polycarp of Smyrna, Second-Century Christian Martyrs.*

What happened to the church after the apostles were gone? Men they ordained like Ignatius and Polycarp demonstrate what it was like. They left behind nine amazing writings that illuminate the mystery of Jesus Christ and the challenges of the second-century church. This book has translations for each text with side-by-side commentary and other aids to help the reader understand and apply what is being said. Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, wrote seven letters on his way to Rome to be martyred in the arena. Six of these went to churches, including three churches that the apostle John had written to. Ignatius’s seventh letter went to Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna. He, in turn, wrote a letter to the church at Philippi, the very church the apostle Paul founded and wrote to. The final piece, the first of its kind, is a detailed account of Polycarp’s arrest and martyrdom in imitation of the Lord. The purpose of this book is to encourage and exhort readers to learn from the words and deeds of Ignatius and Polycarp how to follow Christ in the apostolic way of sacrificial and submissive love. This book is available on Amazon and other book sellers.



The Blessings of Sisterhood

Connie Kouri
President, Antiochian Women, Diocese of LA & the West

A few years ago, I lost some precious women in my life. You know that person that you share all of life's events with, that will talk you off the proverbial bridge, or that will make you laugh. That person you call several times a day for no particular reason, just because. They are your touchstone, your sister by choice not birth, your confidant... you know that person!

Today, I reflect on the profound feeling of loss. The deafening silence to never again hear their voice. The sadness of walking through my life without their encouragement, their light, their wisdom. But I remember attending a church service where the Akathist of Thanksgiving was read, and I heard these words of praise to God:

Glory to Thee through every sigh of my sorrow

Glory to Thee for every step of my life's journey, for every moment of glory

Glory to Thee, curing affliction and emptiness with the healing flow of time

Glory to Thee, promising us the longed-for meeting with our loved ones who have died

These words reminded me that God has perfect timing and that I believe God will not take a loved one from us until that person has blessed us with every bit of hope, knowledge, and strength they have



to share. They will have given us all they have to give on this earth and now are called to their heavenly home ... in God's perfect timing!

With each passing day, I realize that these precious women are still with me – they are the voice in my head, the joy in my heart, the knowing laughter of shared experiences. Every time I hear a favorite family story, prepare a holiday meal, or create a new craft, they are there, alive in my memories. When I remember them, the hole in my heart gets smaller, the loneliness eases, and the deafening quiet gains a voice.

Life has changed a lot in the last few years, but one thing remains the same: my involvement with Antiochian Women. One reason I am thankful today is when I was looking for a purpose, the motivation to move forward, something to fill the void, it was my involvement with the Antiochian Women in my parish and diocese, that provided the anchor when life left me afloat.

We say that the Antiochian Women are “A Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others.” For me they have been more than a sisterhood, they have been my saving grace! Being involved with the

Antiochian Women has been a true blessing, offering me a way to pay back and pay forward. They have given me a sense of belonging, sense of purpose, sense of hope that was lacking due to the loss I experienced.

March is Antiochian Women's Month in our archdiocese. I encourage you to get involved with the Antiochian Women of your parish and diocese. We all are blessed with different gifts and talents, even if we don't recognize them as such.

I've had women tell me they have nothing to give this ministry, I would disagree. Whether you are a woman 18 years old or 100, you have something to offer. Perhaps it's your energy, fresh ideas, positive outlook, or experiences. It all brings new life to this ministry ... and *YOU* are the ministry. If the challenges of life pull you down, it is a solid foundation on which to stand.

Our Antiochian Women ministry offers something for all women – including you! Visit the Ministries tab at antiochian.org to learn more.

Thank you to our Sisterhood of Antiochian Women for being a beacon of light during one of my darkest hours.



ARCHDIOCESAN OFFICE

ORDAINED

ABDALAH, Gregory to the holy diaconate by Bishop JOHN at the liturgy presided over by Bishop ANTHONY on January 12, 2025 at St. George in Phoenix, AZ. Dn. Gregory is assigned to that parish.

BOYER, Isaac (Karsten) to the holy diaconate by Bishop THOMAS on December 29th at the Church of St. George in Allentown, PA. Dn. Isaac is awaiting assignment.

KASSAB, Nicholas (Ghassan) to the holy diaconate by Bishop ALEXANDER on November 24, 2024 at St. George in Montreal, CA.

McGEE, Habib (Caleb) to the holy diaconate by Metropolitan SABA on January 5, 2025 at St. John Church in Memphis, TN.

PAUL, Schemamonk Paul to the holy diaconate by His Eminence Metropolitan SABA February 8, 2025 at Our Lady of Balamand Monastery in Lebanon, at St. George Church, and then to the holy priesthood on February 9, 2025 by His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X at Dormition Church Metropolitan SABA has commissioned Hieromonk Paul to supervise Life-Giving Trinity Monastery in Grand Junction, TN, which could receive visitors after Pascha.

ELEVATED

BEGLEY, Fr. Philip to the rank and dignity of archpriest by Bishop NICHOLAS on September 22, 2024 at St. Ignatius Church, Franklin, TN.

ASSIGNED

BOURASSA, Fr. Jacob attached to St. John the Baptist in Post Falls, ID.

FENTON, Fr. John assigned to Priest in Charge of St. Nicholas Church in Spokane, WA.

RELEASED

Rev. Dn. Peter Winson into the ranks of the clergy of the Orthodox Church in America.

DECEASED

Very Rev. Fr. George Shukri MAKHLOUF, 81, on December 21, 2024. He was a devoted servant of God, a loving husband to his late wife, Laila, a cherished father and grandfather, and a tireless advocate for peace and justice.



Fr. George's life was defined by unwavering faith, boundless love, and selfless service. Born in Jerusalem, he was a Nakba survivor who endured the hardships of being orphaned and expelled from his home in West Jerusalem to Jifna in 1948. He found refuge in the church and prayer, completing his theological studies at a Catholic seminary in Paris. After finishing his studies in Paris, he returned to train with the Melkite Archbishop of Jerusalem, Hilarion Capucci, and led the church choir in Ramallah. It was there that he met a member of the choir, our mother, Laila. They fell in love and married in 1974, sharing 30 beautiful years together.

Fr. George began his professional journey as an educator at the Greek Catholic School of Our Lady of Annunciation in Ramallah, Palestine, and later at the Ramallah Friends School. In 1985, he answered the call to priesthood and was ordained in the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. He served faithfully at the Orthodox Church in Ramallah before immigrating to the United States. There, he became pastor of Virgin Mary Church in Yonkers, NY, and later served at St. John the Baptist Church on Long Island. In his later years, he continued his ministry as an

adjunct retired priest at St. Elias Church in Atlanta, GA. His wisdom, humility, and kindness touched countless lives throughout his ministry.

Fr. George dedicated his life to pastoral duties and to advocacy for justice and peace in his homeland, Palestine. He represented Palestine on both local and international platforms, participating in numerous political and interfaith conferences. Collaborating with political leaders, rabbis, imams, and religious figures of all faiths, he tirelessly raised his voice for the oppressed. His commitment to justice, equality, and the dignity of all people formed the cornerstone of his legacy.

Fr. George's greatest joy was his family. He was a loving father and proud grandfather whose love knew no bounds. He is survived by his two sons, Shukri (and his wife, Yasmine) and Majeed; his brother, Joseph; his cherished nephews and nieces; and his seven beloved granddaughters: Raina, Isabella, Zaina, Arianna, Laila, Natalia, and Noelle, who brought light to his later years.

Patriarch JOHN X Offers Bold Vision for Syria

Church of the Holy Cross, December 15, 2024



"Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love" (1 Cor. 16:13–14). With these words, I begin, and with these words, I

address our dear children in this cherished homeland. I extend my hand to yours during these delicate times, so that together, we may place our hope in the Almighty Creator, the Father of Lights and God of all consolation, to wipe away every disturbance from our hearts, crown them with His holy hope, and strengthen us to seek a better tomorrow.

We stand on the threshold of a new phase, perceiving the dawn of a homeland we all love and cherish. We are on the brink of renewal, which we desire to be radiant with hope and crowned with light. Here in Damascus, from the Straight Street, from Al-Mariamiyya, the neighbor of the Umayyad Mosque, we declare to the world: as Christians, we are from the soil of Syria and from the Cedars of Lebanon, from the majesty of Qasioun Mountain, the expansiveness of Homs, the legacy of Aleppo, the waterwheels of Hama, and the gushing springs of Idlib, from the sea of Lattakia and the Euphrates of Deir ez-Zor. We are not guests in this land, nor did we come to this land today or yesterday. We are from the ancient roots of Syria and as old as the jasmine of Damascus. We are from Apostolic Antioch, from this land that has adorned the world with the name of Jesus Christ. We proclaim this and engrave it as a covenant, saying it to our children, to our brothers, to our partners in the homeland, and before our Creator, Who willed that we exist on this earth alongside others, alongside our Muslim brethren, with whom we seek the pleasure of the Lord of the worlds, the Master of heavens and earth. I have said it before, and I repeat it now: *"My Muslim brothers, between the 'we' and the 'you,' the 'and' (in Arabic, 'waw') falls away, leaving only 'we you' and 'you we.'"* Together, we are the bearers of a shared history with all its ups and downs, and our destiny is one.

In Syria, we are in a homeland of national partnership, a partnership that has always been, and will remain, with God's will, unified—unified by its soil and, above all, by the unity of the hearts of its

people, from all spectrums. As Christians, we have extended our hand since the very beginning, and today, we extend it to all components of this nation. We are the sons of Syria—the dream every Syrian aspires to. And the Syria we envision is:

Syria: A Civil State: A state where all are equal in rights and duties, including the preservation of personal status laws for each of its components.

Syria: A State of Citizenship: We do not seek our citizenship as a favor from anyone. We are an integral part of this national fabric, a fabric that transcends the logic of majority and minority, adopting instead the logic of role and mission. Just meters away from us stands a church or the home of John of Damascus, who once served at the Umayyad Court. We come from the Church of the Patriarch of Mercy, Gregory Haddad, whose funeral procession was attended by all of Damascus—Muslims and Christians alike.

Syria: A State of Coexistence and Civil Peace: We extend our hand to everyone, as we have always done, and we call on both the near and the far to safeguard civil peace and national partnership. We urge everyone to look towards a bright future, one that we build together with aspiration, consideration, and hope. We say this not to commend the past but to hope for a promising future. We say this as we embrace the freedom from hearing our church bells, which have always, and will always, resonate alongside the minarets, calling together upon the Most High, seeking and striving to be one heart.

Syria: A State of Law and Respect for Religions: For how can it be otherwise when all its components are on the same boat, a boat that rejects the logic of protectionism and subjugation. We say this with our eyes fixed on a homeland that enshrines the rule of law, respects religions, and upholds human dignity—the foundation upon which its honor is built.

Syria: A State of Respect for Collective and Individual Freedoms: Responsible freedom based on a state of civil institutions that ensures equality for all and calls for the involvement of women and youth in rebuilding Syria. In addition, it ensures that all Syrians are equal in front of the law, and that all of them have the right to participate in political life and hold public posts on the basis of competence without any discrimination.

Syria: A State of Democracy: A state where sovereignty belongs to the people, the law is the arbiter, and power transitions peacefully.

Syria: A State of Respect for Human Rights: Ensuring the independence of the judiciary and equal opportunities for all its citizens, emphasizing adherence to international human rights law and rejecting all forms of violence, hate speech, and discrimination.

The ultimate guarantor for achieving all these aspirations is the constitution. Therefore, the process of drafting the constitution must be a holistic and inclusive national endeavor.

We must also emphasize that Christians are not to be used as material for media exploitation. It is essential to be mindful of how to handle media and social media platforms, especially regarding the many rumors they spread irresponsibly.

Furthermore, we stress the importance of distinguishing between caution and prudence on one hand and fear on the other. We do not interact with our fellow Syrians in fear, for love is the bond that unites us all. As the Evangelist John says, *“perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love”* (1 John 4:18).

As we approach Christmas, the season of the hope brought by the Newborn in a manger, I ask God to protect Syria and inspire those responsible for its

leadership during this phase, for the good of this country and its kind-hearted people who deserve life and see hope reflected in the eyes of their children. From this hope, we look forward today, affirming and keeping in mind that *"God is in her midst; she shall not be moved."* Blessed be His name forever. Amen.

PATRIARCH JOHN X TO U.N. ENVOY: CHRISTIANS ARE INTEGRAL TO SYRIA

From the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East.



Meeting of the Patriarchs and Heads of Christian Communities with the U.N. Special Envoy to Syria at the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate

His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X, Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, His Holiness Patriarch IGNATIUS Aphrem II, Syriac Orthodox Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, His Beatitude Patriarch JOSEPH I, Melkite Greek Catholic Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, and His Excellency Cardinal MARIO Zenari, Apostolic Nuncio to Syria, met with the heads of Christian churches in Damascus – Their Eminences the bishops, the reverend clergy, and representatives of various Christian monastic orders in Damascus and its surroundings – at the headquarters of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate.

The meeting included a deep dialogue on the current sensitive circumstances Syria is facing, including ways to support and encourage the resilience of its people while offering them comfort and hope amid numerous concerns about their present and future. They also addressed having a unified Christian testimony within the community, the nation and the world, emphasizing the need for solidarity and cooperation. A joint committee was proposed to follow up on emerging needs and work toward shared goals and visions through active and continuous coordination.

His Beatitude Patriarch JOHN X welcomed His Excellency, Mr. Geir Pedersen, the United Nations' Special Envoy to Syria. His Beatitude then affirmed to His Excellency that Syria has always been and will remain a country of national partnership par excellence, rejecting a logic of majorities and minorities. He emphasized that all citizens are equal in rights, freedom, and law, sharing a common destiny and united by a shared history with its ups and downs. The love for the homeland is the supreme national interest that transcends personal, ethnic, or sectarian interests.

Christians, Patriarch JOHN X reiterated, are not guests in their country but are an integral and essential part of its fabric. They enjoy the same rights and bear the same responsibilities as all citizens in building a nation governed by justice, equality, peace, and security, based on citizenship and coexistence.

This vision should manifest practically through inclusive and comprehensive national participation in



drafting a free and democratic consensual constitution. Such a constitution must guarantee, on one hand, the right of citizenship and active participation of all Syrian groups – regardless of gender, ethnicity, or religion – across political, social, and administrative levels based on merit without discrimination. On the other hand, it should respect religions and their laws, including personal status laws for each component of the state, while safeguarding individual and collective freedoms. This approach would preserve the civil nature of the state and ensure equality in rights and duties, making the constitution a true reflection of the people's aspirations for a future that honors the Syrian people's history and values. Mr. Pedersen, in turn, expressed his deep appreciation for the meeting with Christians of Damascus and Syria. He emphasized that Syria belongs to everyone, and that Christians are undoubtedly not guests but citizens with full rights and responsibilities. He noted that Syria is entering a new phase which is often accompanied by changes and challenges. However, change can be positive if directed correctly.

He shared his experiences from visiting various places and meeting many people inside and outside Syria, highlighting the essential message that all Syrians must come together as citizens of a country that accommodates everyone. This vision, he said, is also supported by the international community, as evidenced by his briefings to the U.N. Security Council and his interactions with international entities. The task ahead is great, including the implementation of international resolutions, particularly Resolution 2254. Syrians themselves will lead the transitional phase, with the international community providing support. Mr. Pedersen reiterated that the drafting of a new constitution is the responsibility of all Syrians, with international backing. Efforts are also ongoing to lift economic sanctions and begin reconstruction. He acknowledged the enormity of the task but

stressed that the meeting sends a very powerful message in the right direction.

The meeting concluded with a prayer to God, the Father of Lights, and the Source of all comfort and hope, asking for the healing of pain, injustice, and anxiety from every grieving, oppressed, and troubled soul. They prayed for His mercy to pour into hearts, uniting them in love to serve humanity and the nation with good deeds, shining as a beacon of light to the world, bearing witness to an authentic, unified Syria.

Called to the Priesthood? Here's How to Apply for Seminary

A Master of Divinity (MDiv) degree from an Orthodox Theological School is the required educational qualification for ordination to the holy priesthood in our archdiocese. Now that the Antiochian House of Studies (AHOS) offers an accredited MDiv, we have received several questions about how this new degree program fits into our archdiocesan educational program. Therefore, we are providing the following guidance.



As has been the longstanding policy of our archdiocese, all men who wish to study for an MDiv in preparation for ordination to the holy priesthood must apply for the blessing of the Metropolitan before applying to a theological school.

If they are approved, the Metropolitan will bless them to apply to a school of his choice. Candidates do not normally indicate a preference of which school they wish to attend; rather, they obediently attend the program chosen by the Metropolitan.

However, the distinctive features of the AHOS MDiv program allow for a slight modification of this procedure. The program utilizes a hybrid-learning model, which is different from traditional, on-campus seminary; these two different models each have different advantages and benefits and thus may be suited to students in different life situations or with different future goals. Therefore, when applying to the Metropolitan for a blessing to begin MDiv studies, applicants may include a statement explaining why studying through AHOS might make more sense in their particular case (no such statement is necessary if they are willing and able to attend a traditional, on-campus seminary). Of course, providing such an explanatory statement must be made with the understanding that the Metropolitan will have the ultimate decision.

All men who feel called to priestly ministry should begin by discussing this vocation with their priest. When the time is right, the priest may then request a seminarian application packet from the archdiocese office and pass it on to the applicant.

Open Enrollment Begins for Antiochian House of Studies

Are you looking to serve the Lord in His parishes and communities?

Do you want to pursue excellence in theological education and pastoral formation?

Do you want academic theological education that leads to an intimate relationship with God?

The Antiochian House of Studies (AHOS) brings the ethos of the historical “School of Antioch” of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and all the East to North America. Antioch has a missionary heritage with rich ethnic and linguistic diversity to all.



As an internationally renowned program of Orthodox theological study, AHOS offers degrees accredited by the Association of Theological Schools in the U.S. and Canada (ATS):

- Master of Theological Studies
- Master of Pastoral Care and Counseling
- Master of Divinity
- Doctor of Ministry
- Ph.D. in Orthodox Studies

AHOS also offers the St. Stephen's Certificate in Orthodox Theology.

Apply now through April 15, 2025 at www.ahos.edu.

Clergy and Faithful Celebrate Bishop THOMAS' 20th Anniversary in the Episcopacy



On Thursday evening, Dec. 12, His Grace Bishop THOMAS, Diocese of Oakland, Charleston,

and the Mid-Atlantic, gathered with the clergy and faithful of Western Pennsylvania to celebrate a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy to honor the 20th anniversary of his consecration to the episcopacy. His Grace was consecrated by His Beatitude Patriarch IGNATIUS IV (Hazim) of Antioch in Damascus, Syria on December 5, 2004.

It was a dual celebration, since it was also the 20th anniversary of the parish of St. George in Oakland, PA. being named a cathedral.

Sayidna THOMAS was then honored with a special Lenten meal generously provided by a local Middle Eastern restaurant and hosted by the ladies of St. George Cathedral.

After the meal, His Grace was honored by the V. Rev. Fr. Joshua Makoul, Dean of the Cathedral, with a thoughtful reflection on the relationship that Sayidna THOMAS has cultivated with the clergy and parishes of the diocese he has been blessed to oversee for the past twenty years.

The evening concluded with Bishop THOMAS reflecting on the ways God has blessed him, at times in surprising ways, with all that he has needed to serve Christ's Body on behalf of our beloved metropolitans over the years. He also asked for our continued prayers and support as he continues to serve our God-protected archdiocese and this diocese for as long as God allows.

May God grant Sayidna THOMAS many years!

New Antiochian Camp for the Diocese of Worcester Launches in Summer 2025

With the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan SABA, the Archdiocese Camping Ministry is excited

to announce the launch of its brand-new summer camp: Camp St. Joseph of Damascus, taking place from Aug. 11–16, 2025 in Lenox, MA. Registration for campers and staff opened on Jan. 2, 2025.

This marks the first new summer camp in the Antiochian Archdiocese in over seven years, and the archdiocese's first summer camp in New England, offering an extraordinary opportunity for youth to grow spiritually and experience a week filled with faith, fellowship, and fun. Camp St. Joseph of Damascus embodies the four pillars of SOYO – worship, witness, fellowship, and service.

The patron saint of the camp is St. Joseph of Damascus, who served as the pastor of St. Raphael Hawaweeny's family. Known for his commitment to his people and unshakable dedication to Christ, St. Joseph serves as a model of spiritual leadership for all campers and staff.

Camp St. Joseph's program will include the traditional aspects of camps in the archdiocese, including Christian education, recreational activities, evening programs, and daily services. The facility traditionally operates as a sports camp so there are a variety of activities, including a facilitator-led ropes course, a pool, and a lake. Amongst other services, each evening will feature the Paraklesis service as we prayerfully prepare for the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos.

The camp will be honored by the presence of His Grace Bishop JOHN, who will preside over the entire session, providing spiritual guidance and leadership to all campers and staff. Sbdn. William



**CAMP SAINT JOSEPH
OF DAMASCUS**

Ozone, the diocesan youth director, will serve as the camp director. He can be reached at william.ozone@campstjoseph.org.

Camp St. Joseph will be the culmination of a full year of SOYO programming in New England, giving our youth the opportunity to create tight-knit relations with fellow Orthodox youth. The young adults who serve as counselors will continue to serve as mentors throughout the year as they enrich their relationships with each other and deepen their faith in Christ through our SOYO activities.

Informational zoom sessions will take place after registration opens, with dates to be announced on our website and social media channels. For more details and to register, please visit our website at campstjoseph.org.

If you would like to support the mission of Camp St. Joseph of Damascus, please consider making a donation.

We look forward to welcoming campers to this exciting opportunity to deepen their faith, form meaningful friendships, and experience the joy of living in Christ-centered community. Don't miss out on this transformative experience – mark your calendars and join us this August at Camp St. Joseph of Damascus!

Metropolitan SABA Inducts, Upgrades 20 Members of The Order of St. Ignatius

Story by Dn. Peter Samore, photos by Dn. Elias Nicolas

In celebration of St. Ignatius of Antioch, His Eminence Metropolitan SABA presided at Great Vespers at Virgin Mary Church in Yonkers, NY, on Friday, Dec. 20. Welcoming him were the pastor, Archpriest Dimitri Darwish; the chancellor of the

Archdiocese, Archdeacon Emile Sayegh; Mr. Edward Assile, treasurer of The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch; and the community.

His Eminence was delighted to induct 20 new and upgraded members into The Order of St. Ignatius, the philanthropic arm of the archdiocese. Their financial contributions support Antiochian clergy and seminarians, Christian Education, SOYO leadership training and Special Olympics, summer camp scholarships, and more ministries beyond the Antiochian Archdiocese.



Following the inductions, the church hosted the annual pre-Christmas gathering of The Order's members of the New York–New Jersey area, featuring a program of Nativity chants and carols.

Consider joining to expand the impact you can have on people's lives. Learn how at theorder.antiochian.org.

Widowed Clergy Wives Endowment Exceeds \$1 Million

Dn. Peter Samore, Director of Communications

The Antiochian Women, with the blessing, direction, and encouragement of His Eminence Metropolitan SABA, have dedicated their current project to build an endowment fund for the widowed clergy wives across the Antiochian Archdiocese.

In his love and care for the widowed clergy wives, and to show the archdiocese's gratitude for their sacrifices,

His Eminence asked to infuse this endowment with a transfer of Archdiocese funds to help the Antiochian Women meet their \$1 million goal faster.

Now, Ms. Sheryl Vanderwagen, President of the Antiochian Women, and Mr. Salim Abboud, chief financial officer of the archdiocese, are delighted to report that the fund has exceeded its goal to support the dedicated women who labored with their late husbands in the vineyard of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“This is a project that is so near and dear to my heart,” Ms. Vanderwagen said. “It’s one of the most important projects the Antiochian Women have ever sponsored.” But His Eminence and the sisters of charity won’t rest on this laurel. They want our help to continue building the endowment to provide even more support for these mothers of our parishes.

Thanks be to God, in the first year of the project, the Antiochian Women sought to raise \$150,000. Their extraordinary fundraising efforts, coupled with a \$150,000 matching donation, brought their total to nearly \$396,000.

With the blessing of Sayidna SABA, the archdiocese’s Board of Trustees infused this endowment fund with a transfer of \$645,000, raising its total to more than \$1 million.

In December, this group of dedicated wives will receive nearly \$40,000 in financial support.

“I’m very thankful to Sayidna SABA, the Board of Trustees, the hardworking Antiochian Women, and our generous, anonymous donor for teaming up to help us exceed our goal so quickly,” Ms. Vanderwagen added.

His Eminence commends the Antiochian Women and all those who felt the calling of generosity in their hearts to give in support this worthy endeavor.

The service project will continue into 2026. Please consider contributing today through your parish’s Antiochian Women chapter if you feel the prompt of the Holy Spirit in your heart to donate.

TWIN FALLS

During the weekend of December 15–17, 2023, St. Ignatius of Antioch Orthodox Christian Church in Twin Falls, ID, celebrated its 30th anniversary. His Grace Bishop Anthony graciously joined Fr. Michael and Kh. Maria Habib, clergy, parishioners, friends, and family members from local and surrounding communities for the celebration.

With festivities beginning on Friday night, the parish warmly received Sayidna for vespers that night, which was followed by an encouraging talk from Sayidna and wonderful fellowship over dinner. “There’s a simmering arrogance in our world that wants to take on the role of God and rely on science and technology to give us our meaning,” His Grace shared. “The American dream has changed from seeking virtue to seeking self... The Church does not believe in the progressiveness of society that comes via science and technology. We believe this life will end. We believe in the Kingdom. Historical progress is not the answer; the mystical progress – process – of growing into the likeness of Christ is the life we follow... All of us come here with different histories and they’re melted together into the history of the Church. We should love the time we’re in and not wish we were in a different time. God knows better than we do.”

Sayidna was also kind enough to meet with the parish’s growing young adult group for a question-and-answer session, in which he shared additional wisdom: “A mistake is something you did; it’s not who you are. If you sin, confess it and move on. Leave

it alone... Christ has always been turned toward you. He's just waiting for you to turn toward Him."

Two parishioners, Brent (Theodore) Butler and Stephen Basaraba, were tonsured readers at Sunday's hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Finally, at the banquet that followed, several parishioners, including one of the parish's 10 current catechumens, shared their stories of coming to Orthodoxy and how they came to call St. Ignatius their home parish. May God grant St. Ignatius Orthodox Church – along with the other parishes of our great and growing Archdiocese – many, many years!

Clergy Wives Weekend

by the CWW planning team



On a beautiful weekend in October (18–20), 15 clergy wives from across the country met at the Antiochian Village for the Annual Clergy Wives Weekend (CWW). This weekend was initially established by Kh. Stefanie Yazge in 2009, in memory of Kh. Joanne Abdallah (+2008), as a supportive and edifying weekend gathering for clergy wives. After Stefanie's passing in 2017, the weekend has continued almost every year since, and was even offered as a two-day Zoom gathering during the Covid lockdown. Thanks be to God for the generosity and care of His Grace Bishop John, the V. Rev. Fr. Anthony Yazge, and the faithful women of AOWNA, many clergy wives have been able to gather and benefit from time

spent together, in worship, education, and fellowship. This year was no exception.

After arrival on Friday afternoon, attendees were treated to a delicious Lenten supper, prepared by attending clergy wives, under the direction of Kh. Janet Shadid, who expertly and lovingly prepared and managed the kitchen for our meals. Saturday morning, following the arrival of Mo. Christophora and Mo. Paula from the Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Ellwood City, PA, we gathered for prayers, breakfast, and then our first session with Mo. Christophora entitled: Let It Go. Throughout two sessions, Mother encouraged us with her words, referring to Holy Scripture and to various Orthodox writings – including the V. Rev. Alexander and Mka. Juliana Schmemmann – and walked us through the divine services, pointing out all the ways we are encouraged to leave the world behind to enter into the Heavenly Kingdom here on earth.

Following lunch and a break, we were treated to a journey through various Holy Icons and Feast Days – presented by Kh. Erin Kimmett, with special focus on two of the anchor icon depictions: the Nativity of Christ and His Glorious and Holy Resurrection, and a discussion of finding balance in our lives as baptized children of Christ, wives, and mothers, and finally along our path as clergy wives.

We were enlightened and inspired. Then we gathered in St. Ignatius Chapel to celebrate Great Vespers served by Fr. Chris Shadid, followed by dinner and fellowship in the dining hall. Saturday evening, we were instructed in the art of dot painting by Kh. Luanne Barr. Her gentle, confident, and calm instructions and demonstration enabled even those least creative among us to participate with joy and newfound skills! Following the Divine Liturgy, a Trisagion service for our departed and beloved sisters in Christ, and a

fortifying brunch, we said our goodbyes and left for our homes, renewed, refreshed, and recharged.

We are grateful to all who attended, and to Fr. Chris and the staff at the Antiochian Village for their hospitality, and again to Sayidna John and the women of AOWNA for their love and financial support.

We hope to see more of our number next year, God willing. Please be on the lookout for a save-the-date notification coming your way, and please spread the word.

Camp St. Nicholas Marks Milestones for Historic Year

Fr. Andrew Andrews and Dn. Peter Samore



This year marked two milestones for Camp St. Nicholas, a “holy mountain” that has shaped the lives of generations of children and adults in our Lord Jesus Christ, providing lifetimes of friendships that their own children and grandchildren now enjoy.

The first and oldest summer camping program in the Antiochian Archdiocese honored the dedication and sacrifices made for its continuity and growth in Frazier Park, CA.

First, on April 20, the camp dedicated a new shrine in the pine forest above the cabins in honor of the beloved “camp priest” and resident manager, V. Rev. Nicholas Neyman of blessed memory and eternal repose. It coincided with the annual Lenten retreat of the Antiochian Women of the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West.

The dedication included Kh. Malvi Neyman, one of her daughters and sons-in-law, Kh. Juliana Youssef and V. Rev. Samer Youssef – who met at Camp St. Nicholas – and their three sons Dimitry, Damian, and Dominic. Other camp alumni joined them.

The shrine’s icon of Christ the High Priest is carved into a granite slab and adorned with gold accents. Local woodworkers from the Frazier Mountain community built the shrine that holds the icon. A plaque affixed to the shrine reads: “In Memory of Protopresbyter Nicholas Neyman – Dedicated Priest in Christ’s Holy Church – Serving Camp Nicholas 1981–2005.”

Kh. Malvi told the gathering that, remarkably, the selected spot for the shrine above the cabins was especially important to Fr. Nicholas, as this was the very clearing where he would hike to pray each morning. Now, the campers and staff pray before this shrine in every session, offering the Akathist service “Glory to God for All Things,” surrounded by God’s creation.

Second, 2024 marked the 60th anniversary of Camp St. Nicholas in Frazier Park. For about 10 years before the camp’s founding, St. Nicholas Cathedral in Los Angeles had rented other campsites – and even camped in tents – to give its children a place to pray, play, and work together.

On June 8, hundreds of former campers, counselors, staffers and directors celebrated with a reunion at the cathedral. The event, in proper camp style, was

very informal with dining coming from food trucks and ice cream bars passed tableside for dessert. One former camper Larry Ajalat had his “elbows on the table,” so his penance was, of course, to run around the mess hall – sort of.

Actually, Larry sprinted out of the cathedral hall, and then a video showed him “running” all the way to Camp St. Nicholas (stopping at Tommy’s for a chili burger along the way), running around the mess hall at camp, running back from camp (stopping at Tommy’s again) and then coming back into the cathedral hall. Larry was winded!

A makeshift museum displayed photographs and documents like the original camp blueprints. Short video vignettes introduced the inaugural members of the Camp St. Nicholas Hall of Fame. They included camp founders like Robert Andrews, the last surviving founder; clergy including V. Rev. John Reimann in honor of his 25 years as a session priest; Dr. Fred Milkie of blessed memory, whose acceptance speech was given by two of his children who also became camp doctors; directors like Katrina Bitar who served as camp director for 19 summers; and “Mr. Camp” himself, Edward Malouf, in recognition of his six decades of participation at camp, starting as a camper and holding every possible role over the years.

The evening program recognized many of the hallmarks of camp such as the skit nights and

musicians that made campfires and talent shows so memorable. Of course, the night featured the singing of campfire songs. A photo booth allowed attendees to create new photos with camp friends to update the ones from years ago.

The fun and camaraderie of the reunion was only exceeded by the generosity of the donors who in the aggregate contributed over \$600,000 to endow future repairs and expansions. A committee is exploring bids and making plans to implement improvements to every part of the camp.

The Frazier Park facility hosts three weeks of summer camp – plus a week of training for staff – serving approximately 300 campers from over 25 Antiochian parishes in the western states. Camp St. Nicholas offers winter camps for teenagers and collegians. It also hosts retreats by the Antiochian Women, the Young Adult Ministry, and various local parishes both within and outside the Antiochian Archdiocese.

Soon Camp St. Nicholas will produce a feature-length documentary, beginning with tent camping in the 1950s and running through the present Diocese of Los Angeles and the West camping program. Hopefully, that video will raise additional funds for the camp endowment and awareness of how Camp St. Nicholas continues to shape lives in Christ.



2025 Archdiocese Convention **July 19-27, 2025**

Calendar of Events

Saturday July 19

- Great Vespers with Artoklasia - Saint George Church
- Welcome Dinner - Saint George Church

Sunday July 20

- Orthros - Saint George Church,
- Hierarchical Divine Liturgy - Saint George Church
- Welcome Luncheon - Saint George Church

Monday July 21

- VIP Luncheon (by invitation)
- Hospitality Hub25
- Choir Rehearsal
- Blessing of the Chapel
- Vespers
- Diocesan Teen SOYO Officers Meeting
- Antiochian Welcome Night
- Compline
- "Ask Abounda"

Wednesday July 23

- Bible Study and Confessions
- Daily Orthros
- Shrine Visitation- The Miraculous Weeping Icon of Saint George, Cicero, IL
- Hospitality Hub25
- Exhibits/Vendors
- Club Saint George - Ages 4 - 6
- Club Saint George - Ages 7 - 9
- Club Saint George - Ages 10 - 12
- Finance Committee Meeting
- NAB Antiochian Women Meeting and Brunch
- Financial Strategic Planning and Budget Committee Meeting - TBD
- Saint Vladimir's Seminary Alumni Reception
- Home Schooling Department Meeting
- Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries
- Department of Inter-Orthodox/Inter-Faith Relations Meeting
- Department of Sacred Music Meeting
- Antiochian Village Council Meeting
- Department of Clergy Insurance and Retirement Meeting
- Department of Convention and Conference Planning Meeting
- Department of Marriage and Parish Family Ministry Meeting
- Department of Missions and Evangelism Meeting
- Department of Stewardship and Lay Ministry Meeting
- Workshop - TBD - English
- Workshop - TBD - Arabic
- Young Adult Ministry (YAM) Meeting
- Choir Workshop/Rehearsals
- Vespers
- Dinner on your own
- Bible Bowl
- Family Entertainment Night
- Young Adult After-Social
- Compline
- "Ask Abounda"

Friday July 25

- Orthros and Confessions
- Divine Liturgy
- Shrine Visitation - The Miraculous Weeping Icon of Saint George, Cicero, IL
- Hospitality Hub25
- Exhibits/Vendors
- Club Saint George - Ages 4 - 6
- Club Saint George - Ages 7 - 9
- Club Saint George - Ages 10 - 12
- Brunch/Lunch on your own
- Metropolitan's Address and Archdiocese General Assembly
- Teen Lunch and Humanitarian Event
- Choir Rehearsal
- Vespers
- Arabian Nights - Dinner and Hafli
- Compline
- "Ask Abounda"

Host Parish

Saint George Antiochian Orthodox Church
1220 S. 60th Court Cicero, IL 60804

CONTACT US

(708) 656-2927 - Info@AC2025Chicago.org

Tuesday July 22

- Bible Study and Confessions
- Daily Orthros
- Shrine Visitation - The Miraculous Weeping Icon of Saint George, Cicero, IL
- Hospitality Hub25
- Exhibits/Vendors
- Club Saint George - Ages 4 - 6
- Club Saint George - Ages 7 - 9
- Club Saint George - Ages 10 - 12
- Clergy/Clergy Wives Breakfast
- Clergy Wives Meeting
- Clergy Meeting with Hierarchs
- Order of Saint Ignatius General Assembly
- Diocesan Teen SOYO Officers Meeting
- Orthodox Leadership Initiative Meeting
- Workshop - TBD - English
- Workshop - TBD - Arabic
- Department of Liturgics
- Department of Western Rite Meeting
- Department of Theological and Pastoral Education Meeting
- Department of Finance Meeting
- Financial Strategic Planning and Budget Committee Meeting - TBD
- Choir Workshop/Rehearsal
- Vespers
- Club Saint George - Evening Edition - Ages 4 - 6
- Club Saint George - Evening Edition - Ages 7 - 9
- Club Saint George - Evening Edition - Ages 10 - 12
- Diocesan Teen SOYO Officers Meeting
- Order of Saint Ignatius Reception and Dinner
- VIP Club
- Compline
- "Ask Abounda"

Thursday July 24

- Archdiocese General Assembly
- Choir Rehearsal
- Club Saint George - Evening Edition - Ages 4 - 6
- Club Saint George - Evening Edition - Ages 7 - 9
- Club Saint George - Evening Edition - Ages 10 - 12
- Great Vespers with Artoklasia
- Balamand Alumni Reunion
- "My Kind of Town" (Chicago Dinner and Music)
- Compline
- "Ask Abounda"
- Bible Study and Confessions
- Daily Orthros
- Shrine Visitation - The Miraculous Weeping Icon of Saint George, Cicero, IL
- Hospitality Hub25
- Exhibits/Vendors
- Club Saint George - Ages 4-6
- Club Saint George - Ages 7-9
- Club Saint George - Ages 10-12
- Teen Lunch and Social

Saturday July 26

- Bible Study and Confessions
- Daily Orthros
- Shrine Visitation - The Miraculous Weeping Icon of Saint George, Cicero, IL
- Hospitality Hub25
- Exhibits/Vendors
- Oratorical and Choir Festival
- Archdiocese Board of Trustees Luncheon and Meeting
- NAC Senior SOYO Alumni Reunion
- Teen Lunch and Retreat
- Young Adult Lunch and Retreat
- Choir Workshop/ Choir Rehearsal
- Workshop - Enliven To Christ
- Medical Professional Ministry Meeting
- Great Vespers
- Club Saint George - Ages 4 - 6
- Club Saint George - Ages 7 - 9
- Club Saint George - Ages 10 - 12
- "Antiochian Legacy" Grand Banquet and Hafli

Sunday July 27

- Orthros and Confessions
- Hierarchical Divine Liturgy



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- ARCHDIOCESE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
- "ASK ABOUNA" ALL WEEK
- CLUB SAINT GEORGE AGES 4-12
- BIBLE BOWL
- ORATORICAL FESTIVAL
- TEEN EVENTS
- YAM EVENTS
- WORKSHOPS
- "MY KIND OF TOWN"
- ARABIAN NIGHTS DINNER AND HAFLI
- ANTIOCHIAN LEGACY BANQUET AND GRAND HAFLI

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"Then Mary said, 'Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word.' And the angel departed from her."
Luke 1:38

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