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**AND MUCH
MUCH
MORE,
INSIDE!**

The Diocese of Los Angeles and the West & The Diocese of Eagle River and the Northwest

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN'S SUMMER NEWSLETTER



His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA

June, 2019

Beloved Sisters in Christ,

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

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

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

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

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

Your Father in Christ,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Metropolitan Joseph". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

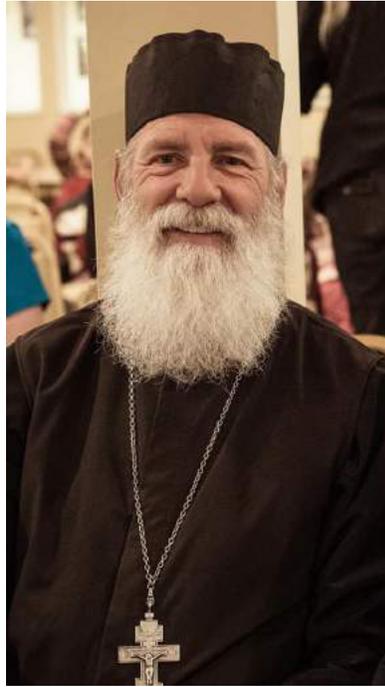
+JOSEPH

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

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

The Opposite of What We Expect

A Message from our Spiritual Father, Fr. David Hovik



Elder Amilianos, who long served as the Abbot of Simonopetra Monastery on Mt. Athos, reposed in the Lord on May 9 of this year. He was tonsured as a Monk in December of 1960 and was ordained to the priesthood in August of 1961. He was not only a gifted preacher but also very zealous for the Orthodox Faith. Before becoming a Monk, Elder Amilianos had been part of the Zoe' Movement in Greece - which was full of Zealous Orthodox trying to rebuild the Orthodox Faith in Greek Society!

Shortly after ordination, his Bishop assigned him to the Monastery of St. Bessarion - which had become very run-down after the Greek Revolution and World War II. Here, this energetic young monk found himself in an isolated and rather bleak place with a handful of aged Monks who were unenthusiastic and also suspicious of this new young, educated Monk. To make matters worse, there was no phone. Which meant, he had no contact with his Spiritual Father. Perhaps, for the first time, Elder Amilianos realized that the conditions we encounter (in our pursuit of the Spiritual Life) are often the OPPOSITE of what we expect!

This is a very important lesson for each of us as we embark on this journey toward wholeness in Christ. The conditions (be that people or situations) we encounter in our day-to-day lives as we pursue Christ and the Spiritual Life are often the OPPOSITE of what we expect!

Years later Elder Amilianos said:

“The devil had cast fire into my Brain and I was about to abandon my Monastic Vows. It was as though Roaring Waves were Breaking over my Soul as I sought deliverance from this distress!”

Have you ever felt like this: dark nights and agonizing trials? The Fathers refer to this as “The Dark Night of the Soul!” Even though Elder Amilianos understood the importance of the Jesus Prayer, he related that he was so discouraged that it only resounded FEEBLY within him...because he had no Faith in it. His heart was about to break, and he didn’t know what to do. Taking walks didn’t help. The nights seemed stifling to him and he was getting NO support from those around him but (and this is the crucial component of this article) he continued to seek God.

The conditions we encounter in our pursuit of Christ and Spiritual Life are often the OPPOSITE of what we expect!

Fr. Arsenie Papachoke had already spent time in a Romanian prison when he was a Zealous Layman but now he had committed himself to live as a Monk and, for a second time, he was being sent to prison under the Communists. The charges? Speaking to young people, who had come to his Monastery, about the importance of living a serious Christian Life. His sentence? 40 Years in the horrible Aiud Prison.

For 17 Hours each day, they had to stand in their cell. They could not lay down on the floor or lean against the walls and they were fed a few ounces of food every 3 days. The cells were freezing in the winter and the prisoner’s teeth would fall out from no calcium.

The conditions we encounter in our pursuit of Christ & the Spiritual Life are often the OPPOSITE of what we expect!

Yet, what happened to Elder Amilainos and Elder Arsenie are crucial for our understanding of what the fruit of seeking the Kingdom of God looks like.

It was 3:00 am and Elder Amilianos was praying in his room when he decided to close the window to try and get a few minutes rest. Suddenly, his Monastic Cell was filled with light. He looked around but was unable to figure out the source of this light. Stepping outside, the Courtyard was filled with LIGHT! Then, he related, “My heart opened-up and, involuntarily, it began to say the Jesus

Prayer. It built a Nest in my Heart...” and from that moment on, his Life was Transfigured by the Grace of God and he devoted himself to the Prayer of the Heart & to Ascetic Labors.

Fr. Arsenie relates how the Communists sought to annihilate the Christian Faith but instead of eliminating it- the prison was transformed into a Monastery of sorts and prisoners who had not previously sought God at all – began to live their lives in deep pursuit of God. Fr. Arsenie and others began to hear confessions and even (secretly) served the Divine Liturgy.

He told a cell-mate, “One cannot know how *God establishes the path to turn everything into Good in the end.*” That is the truth! We cannot know the path that God establishes for us. It may not seem like a good end is in sight in the midst of our current life situation. It didn’t seem like that for Elder Amilianos or Elder Arsenie or Christ’s Disciples!

Yet, as they continued seeking God (in the face of abysmal life circumstances) they had incredible encounters with God. The same is true for us: The conditions we encounter in our pursuit Christ and the Spiritual Life are often the OPPOSITE of what we expect! But God can turn anything into Good.

Our task is to continue seeking Him in the midst of whatever CONDITIONS we find ourselves!

If you are not aware, our much-loved Fr. David suffered a bad fall and substantial injury to his leg.

His recovery is going to be several months long (no weight bearing on his right leg for the first three months)!

Please keep Fr. David and his Khouria Debbie in your prayers as they journey together on this road to recovery.

WE LOVE YOU, FATHER DAVID!!

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

THE MOST REVEREND METROPOLITAN PHILIP – FOUNDER

✧ A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS ✧

✧ DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES & THE WEST ✧
✧ DIOCESE OF EAGLE RIVER & THE NORTHWEST ✧



President's Message June 2019

Christ is in our midst!

“A Sisterhood Serving Christ, Through Serving Others” that is of course the motto of our Antiochian Women’s ministry. As I approach the conclusion of my second term as your Diocese President, it is something I’ve been giving much thought to.

It should go without saying that any opportunity to serve our Lord & HIS house is a blessing. Specifically serving our AW ministry, in both my parish and for the last six years on a Diocese level, (as both Public Relations Director and the last four years as President) has overflowed with blessings, the primary of which is meeting so many Sisters in Christ from around our Diocese & forming valued friendships.

I grew up watching my mother serve on a parish level and then a Diocese level in what was then called the Midwest Region. On our current Diocese Board we have a mother – daughter team serving with Georgette Malouf & Lauren Malouf. No doubt, Lauren’s service is a result of watching her mother serve. Learning by the examples of others is how we grow as women & also how we grow our ministry.

While reading our AW Book Club selection “The Sweetness of Grace,” a section dedicated to “Attending Services in Mind & Spirit” caught my attention. In this section, one of my favorite scripture verses where Jesus tells us, “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Matthew 6:21) is referenced. But can’t this also apply to not just attending our services but also serving & sustaining God’s house? Isn’t our Orthodox Church & faith our “treasure” and do we not want our hearts to always be there? With that in mind, I’d like to encourage you to all give prayerful consideration to how you too can serve our church & specifically this AW’s ministry in your local parishes & on a Diocese level.

My dear Sisters in Christ, each of you have an important role to play as we seek to meet our goal as, “A Sisterhood Serving Christ, Through Serving Others.”

With Love in Christ,

Charmaine E. Darmour
President, Antiochian Women
Diocese of LA & the West

Monastery Trip in the Pacific Northwest

By Suzy Hadeed of St. George Orthodox Church in Portland, Oregon



The Antiochian Women of St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church of Portland, OR had the blessing of visiting the beautiful monastery of St. John the Forerunner in Goldendale, WA on May 18, 2019. About 50 of us took a bus together and made the two-hour trip up North on a beautiful Saturday morning with our beloved priest, Fr. George Saada. The sisters were there to greet us with big smiles and a welcoming spirit. Here is a little information about the Monastery:

The Holy Monastery of St. John the Forerunner was founded in 1995, when local Doctor Gerald Timmer donated his 48-acre property to the Greek Orthodox Diocese of San Francisco for the foundation of a women's monastic community which was accepted by His Eminence Metropolitan Anthony.

Geronta Ephraim, a priest-monk and former abbot from Holy Mount Athos, Greece, was contacted by His Eminence to help establish the monastery in Washington. ("Geronta" in Greek means an "Elder" or "Abbot".) Already the spiritual father/elder of 11 monasteries in Greece, 1989 he began the work of establishing monasteries in North America with the blessing of the Church officials and the appeal of the Orthodox faithful in the United States and Canada.

There are now 17 such monasteries in North America. These communities have prayer for the world as their primary profession, and then to provide spiritual guidance to the faithful and help preserve the Holy Traditions of the Church through exemplary Christian life and devotion to God.

Geronta Ephraim called three nuns from the Holy Orthodox Monastery of the Panagia Hodigitria in Volos, Greece to come to Goldendale. At first the small monastery of St. John the Forerunner was virtually unknown. Slowly, with much prayer, perseverance, and Grace from God, the Orthodox faithful, and others wanting to know about the Orthodox Church, began to visit and help the monastery. There are now 26 nuns and novices at St. John Monastery.

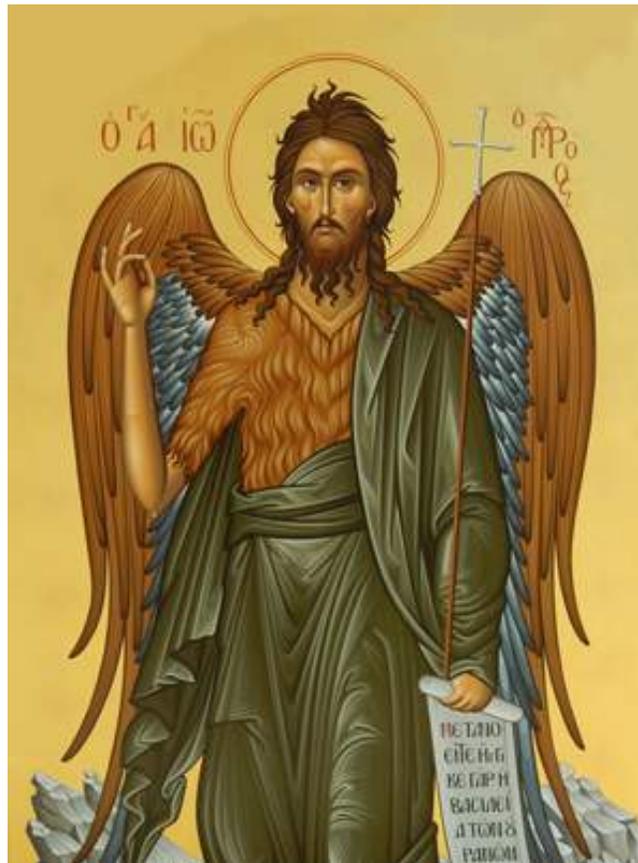
We started our day there with a Paraklesis service, led by Fr. George and accompanied by the angelic voices of the sisters in the incredibly beautiful church which was built years later. After the service, we spent some time with the sisters hearing about the Monastery and asking questions. It was a blessing to be there and to witness the incredible faith and love of the sisters and to hear about what they do at the Monastery and about their monastic life. After our discussion, we were served a delicious meal prepared by the sisters. It was truly amazing, as was their hospitality! After our meal, we watched a 20-minute video about the history of the Monastery. This was very interesting and educational.



After this presentation, we were able to visit the coffee/gift shop. The sisters make all kinds of sweets, candles, jams, lotions, soaps, etc. to sell in order to support themselves. They also have an espresso bar and sell books, icons, and other gifts in the shop. The monastery supports itself solely by the handiwork of the sisters and donations. Our ladies left there with many bags of goodies!

As we boarded the bus to head home, all the sisters were lined up, waving good-bye with their sweet smiles and prayerful spirits. We could literally feel their love and prayers!

Many of our ladies had never been to a monastery; some had been there several times. Either way, it was a true blessing for all. Some were moved to tears, and many couldn't wait to come back and bring their families. Our ladies can't wait until our next trip together! I encourage other Antiochian Women groups to rent a bus and to take a trip together. On the bus, we had the opportunity to bond, to sing hymns, and to discuss important church and business matters. It was very productive, spiritually uplifting, and lots of fun!



St. Tabitha Stitchers

The Antiochian Women of St. Luke Orthodox Church in Garden Grove, CA



A group of women at St. Luke who have quilted for some years have decided to put our talents to work through the church. We also have women and teens who make tied fleece blankets, and some who knit or crochet afghans for infants and adults. We are providing the quilts, blankets and afghans to shut-in parishioners, nursing home and hospice patients, and to organizations such as “Project Linus”. Our recipients have been very grateful.

Many parishioners who do not “stitch” in any capacity have donated funds to help purchase supplies for our ministry.

St. Tabitha is our Patron Saint since she did similar work. She is our inspiration.



How Iconography Has Influenced My Life

By Helena Glum of St. Vincent of Lerins Orthodox Church in Saskatoon, Canada

My first contact with icons was over thirty years ago. For a short time, my husband and I were a part of a journey towards Orthodoxy. At that time, we were having our babies, and I soon found that due to the stress of it all I just wanted to return to our evangelical roots. I convinced my husband to return with me.

In the early 2000's, with the advent of the computer age into our lives, my husband began a thorough research into Orthodoxy, as he definitely felt a great void in his Christian walk. After many discussions and prayer, we began our journey into Orthodoxy at St. Vincent of Lerins Orthodox Church in Saskatoon in 2006. We were Chrismated in 2007.

One of the first attractions that drew me in were the icons. I was always asking people to explain to me who these icons were of and what their stories were. The beautiful colours and stories they told were fascinating to me.

Our four sons were in their teen years at this point in their lives. I purchased their icons of their Patron Saints, Andrew, John, Stephen, Nicholas and began to pray and ask them to pray for our sons. I found peace many times before their icons on our sons' journey to adulthood, and still do.

About six years ago there was an iconography workshop offered locally, which I attended. We wrote an icon of Christ. I was fascinated with all the information we received about icons and their meaning and history. Since that time, I have been blessed to be a part of a local iconography group that meets twice a year for eight weeks. We have two instructors, Anna Mycyk and Giselle Bauche. I have learned so much about the history of iconography, the colours, the saints, and the language of icons. I have felt honoured to develop this love language with the saints I have written. We now have icons in almost every room in our home. I believe that their presence enriches our lives. I know they pray, inspire, and strengthen us on our journey. May God be praised!



Outreach in Southern California

By Jill Wallerstedt of St. Athanasius Orthodox Church in Santa Barbara, CA

My name is Jill Wallerstedt and I have the privilege of living at St. Barbara Monastery as a Lay Sister. Mother Victoria accepted me into their community where I worship with the nuns and participate in their daily life, and I also do community work in Santa Paula and Los Angeles with the poor and needy.

The idea of being a lay sister came from the model at St. Elisabeth Convent in Minsk, Belarus. The convent has “black sisters” who are professed nuns and “white sisters” who are lay women. They work together in many types of social services in their city.

I have a heart for working with the homeless. In Santa Paula, CA I work with a nonprofit organization called SPIRIT of Santa Paula. They offer many services to the poor including meals, showers, laundry, referral to services, winter shelter and Safe Parking (for people living in their cars or vans). I help people connect with social services and I do record keeping for our grants and reporting.

In Los Angeles, I have the privilege of working with parishioners at Holy Virgin Mary Cathedral to do street outreach to their homeless neighbors. Literally within a block of the church there are people living in tents on the sidewalks. We visit the ones closest to the church once a month, offering hygiene supplies, some food, socks and prayers. We have gotten to know people by name. We are also learning about other groups that do this same work in the area so we can tell our neighbors about them. In the future we may offer other services as needed.

Living at the monastery and working with people on the street has taught me humility and reliance on God in all situations. I am learning to look past missing teeth, dirty clothes, and illnesses to see the heart of every person as a child of God, no less deserving of His love than I am. I encourage you to smile and say hello to anyone you see on the streets who looks down on their luck. Simply recognizing that person as being worthy of a greeting can make a big difference in their lives.

If you are interested in learning more about working with the homeless, feel free to contact me at jillwallerstedt@gmail.org.

You can read about the St. Elisabeth Convent in Minsk, Belarus at: <http://obitel-minsk.ru/en/>

For more information about SPIRIT of Santa Paula, please visit: <https://www.spiritofsantapaula.org/>

Photos From Around the Diocese



PALM SUNDAY BAKE SALES



Photos From Around the Diocese



Church of the Redeemer in Los Altos Hills, CA



St. Ignatius Church in Twin Falls, ID



Our Antiochian Women Celebrate with Tea!



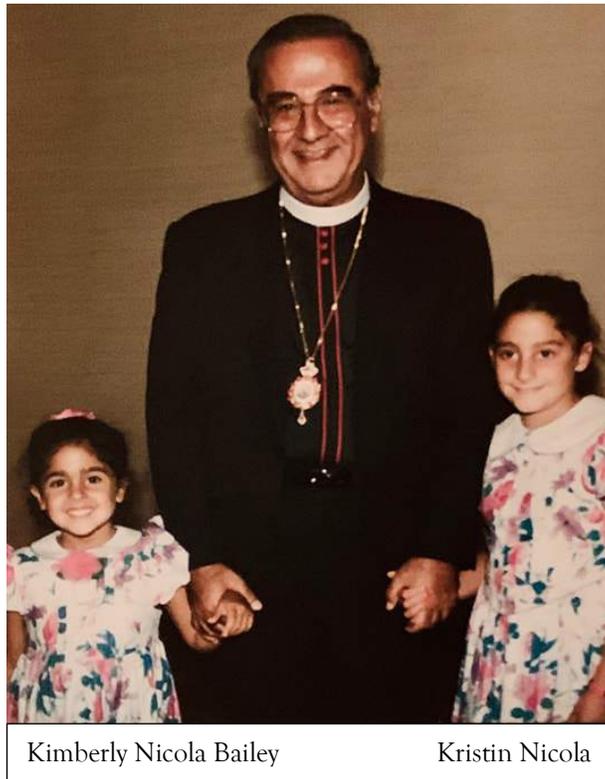
St. Athanasius Church in Sacramento, CA



St. Mark Church in Irvine, CA

A Niece's Tribute to "Uncle" Sayidna Philip

By Kristin Nicola of St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church in Orinda, CA



I'd like to share with you my memories and a few lessons learned from my Uncle, of Thrice Blessed Memory, Metropolitan Philip Saliba. For 48 years, Metropolitan Philip was the Shepard of the Antiochian Orthodox Church and his faith, work, and dedication led our church into the modern era.

On his many visits to the Bay Area, my brother, sister and I were so fortunate to have had him stay with us. Our parents would spend weeks getting the house in order, planning the menus of his favorite meals. Mom would show me how to make things so that it tasted just as his mother had made for him. Uncle Philip would arrive and we would go to Round Hill Country Club and swim and play for hours. He would read and smoke his pipe, a sweet scent which lingered around him, even long after he quit smoking.

I'll never forget overhearing an exchange between him and my father one afternoon. "Nick, Nick" he called from the top of the stairs. "Undack Boy-ya (shoe polish)?" My dad said "Sayidna, what do you need Boy-ya for?" He said, "I need to polish my shoes." "Please Sayidna," my dad pleaded, "I'll polish your shoes!" "Laa Inula - Laaa. thank you. I always polish my own shoes." It was moments like

that, that I understood that this MAN was just that. A human being, a mere mortal, a sinner just like the rest of us.

The last five years have been surreal. I don't know why I never imagined a time when Uncle Philip would not be here on this earth, guiding me on my spiritual journey, teaching me about life's obstacles and how to accept and overcome them. When we spent time together, he shared with me his love for poetry and literature and his unwavering love of the Cleveland Browns. He asked me questions about school, what interested me in particular about Medieval history or the Lao Tzu book he saw peeking out of my purse, and told me to never stop learning and to understand that an informed mind is so important. He told me to love all people and stand up for them as if they were your family. He taught me about humility and generosity, and he spoke to me about his love for the church, and for the flock.

We spoke at length about Psalms 50, his favorite scripture. One line in particular stands out in memory, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge." He engrained in me that this was so important to note, that there is only one who will judge us, and that otherwise we cannot judge nor be judged even if we disagree or are made uncomfortable by another's chosen path.

He told jokes and stories from his world travels, always ending in his immense belly laugh, which could turn any frown upside down. He shared stories from his childhood spent in Abou-Mizan with his 3 brothers, from his time in the Seminary and then as a young priest in Ohio. When he began to tease Bishop Antoun, we knew we could join in, too. Nothing was sweeter than making those 2 men laugh.

We discussed the reasons he dedicated his life to God and his love for children, always interested in speaking with them in order to learn from their innocence and purity, not to mention the pure joy they brought him. I recently finished the book *Becoming*, by Michelle Obama and she wrote: "Kids wake up each day believing in the goodness of things, in the magic of what might be. They're uncynical, believers at their core. We owe it to them to stay strong and keep working to create a more fair and humane world. For them, we need to remain both tough and hopeful, to acknowledge that there's more growing to be done." Uncle Philip immediately came to mind after reading that. It so beautifully paralleled his life's work. He spent every minute of every day pursuing humility, forgiveness and understanding that we are all sinners. He taught me that we all have the ability to make choices,

the ability to understand the world and God's teachings and to use our minds and our good sense to make the world a place filled with respect and acceptance. One where children need not compromise their innocence.

While preparing for this article, I re-visited some of Uncle Philip's writings. In the book "And He Leads Them, The Mind and Heart of Philip Saliba," a collection of his sermons and essays, I was drawn to a piece he'd written in response to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's death. He wrote:

"Harmony and peace in this land MUST be the reflection of our inner peace and serenity. Unless this inner tranquility is achieved on a personal basis, the might, the wealth, and all the glory of this nation will be reduced to ashes. Violence breeds violence, hate breeds hate, chaos breeds chaos. Ultimately, unless the divine image is restored to the American personality, we will legislate in vain, labor in vain and hope in vain."

It has been 51 years since he wrote those words. 51 years and it still applies today. I feel so fortunate to have known and loved Uncle Philip. I couldn't be more grateful to have been a benefactor of his love and his teachings. He loved us all, everyone in our church, this Archdiocese and on this earth so much. He gave us all everything he had. His words live on in the many books he wrote. His spirit is ever present, and a guiding force and I spend every day trying to live in a way I know he would be proud.

I'd like to end with a verse from his favorite song, "The Impossible Dream" from the Man of LaMancha, a song I listen to everyday:

And the world will be better for this
That one man, scorned and covered with scars
Still strove with his last ounce of courage
To reach the unreachable star
To fight the unbeatable foe
To dream the impossible dream.

Journey to Kenya

By Kh. Christine Rogers of St. John's Orthodox Cathedral in Eagle River, Alaska



In November of 2018, I was blessed to travel to Nyeri, Kenya on an OCMC mission trip. My team consisted of myself and three other priests' wives from the Midwest. We went to establish a yearly clergy wives retreat for the Diocese of Nyeri and Mt. Kenya, which is under the direction of His Grace Bishop Neofitos. We stayed in Kenya for eight days and absolutely fell in love with the beautiful country and her equally beautiful people.

Our first day consisted of a trip to the orphanage and lunch with His Grace at the Diocesan Headquarters. The next day we drove to Nanyuki where the conference was being held. Over 60 women attended, most of them wives of deacons and priests. We spoke on topics ranging from confession and prayer all the way to stress management and nutrition. The retreat lasted three days and concluded with Liturgy at the church of Saints Peter and Paul in Nanyuki, with 15 priests in attendance to mark the end of the inaugural conference!

Our last two days in the country, we were treated to a safari and several sight-seeing excursions, visiting Thompson Falls, the Great Rift Valley, and standing on the Equator in Naromoro. We got to watch a pride of lions stalk a herd of antelope and even pet a rhinoceros. Our final day, we went back to the orphanage to say goodbye to the children and distribute gifts that we had brought, and then headed to catch our evening flight out of Nairobi.



The entire experience was full of blessings. If you ever have the opportunity to visit Kenya and worship with her people, don't walk: run. It was a completely life changing experience for me, and I left behind friends who became family. Imagine my delight when His Grace called me in March of this year and asked me to return as the head of the team to continue the good work that we began last year! I will be returning to Kenya this November for the second annual conference and am overjoyed to be seeing familiar faces and places.

I am currently fundraising for this trip, and as part of our efforts, my team will be working to raise the money to underwrite the cost of attendance for the Kenyan priests' wives who will be coming. If you would like to contribute to this effort, please visit ocmc.org/donate, and select "support a missionary." You will find my name (Kh. Christine Rogers) under Kenya missions. Thank you for your support and your prayers!



Lenten Retreat 2019

By Yolanda Diaz of St. James Orthodox Church in Modesto, CA



As with all of us Antiochian Woman, there is so much going on in life! I couldn't see how I was going to stop and take a weekend to get to the Women's Retreat, and I wasn't even sure I wanted to put the energy into getting there! Daughter battling a major health issue. Caring for a grandmother who is living with dementia. Diabetes...my husband's knees...work...church events...how could I justify leaving?!

As I vented all of these concerns to my beloved priest...he answered, "I think those might be the very reasons you should try to make it."

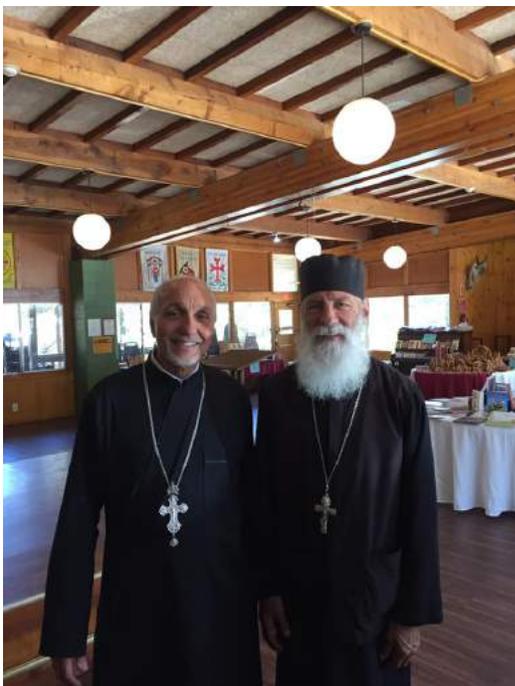
Thinking about the last few years at the retreat...all I could remember was not sleeping so well! Then a scene entered my mind. I was slowly making my way back up to the cabin after drinking a cozy hot cup of tea during Q & A with the Abounas. I was alone; it was dark, and still ...only the sound of my feet crunching along the snow-covered path lit by black iron lamp posts... was I entering Narnia? I was full...spiritually and physically. It was a beautiful reminder of the many treasures I took home with me...and I got ready to head to the 2019 Retreat.

We arrived at Camp Saint Nicholas after a relaxing trip down from Modesto. I entered into the dining hall and looked at the warm familiar scene. *I belonged here.* Georgette and Lauren were greeting everyone. The room was buzzing, pilgrims putting on name tags, getting warm drinks...perusing the bookstore.

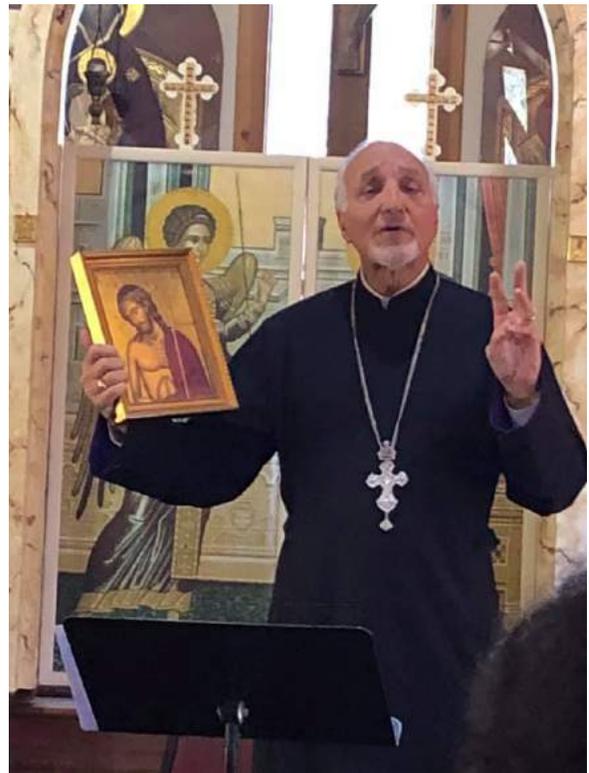


That evening and into Saturday, Father George Ajalat, our Clergy Wives Spiritual Father, had a heaping, but a warm and gentle, helping of spiritual food. Father used the Parable of the Bridegroom to help us understand the importance of remaining vigilant in our faith, through an intimate relationship with Christ, and our works by faith. A reminder for some, and an enlightenment for me...the oil of the ten Virgins is alms...charity. The Bridegroom is our Lord and we, His Virgins. He gently but firmly encouraged us all to be awake and awaiting our Lord, running to the church, the chalice, and confession, to get to know Our Lord as the Bridegroom who became a bondservant for us, and for our salvation.

Saturday Night after Vespers, Father David Hovik, our Antiochian Women's Spiritual Father, encouraged us to remain strong in our efforts to become refined. He reminded us that our passions and pain are not to be run from, but to be embraced, as, working out how to control them, becomes a work of faith toward our salvation.



Women from 15 of our Diocesan Churches made the pilgrimage to Camp Saint Nicholas this Spring! We were spoiled with amazing favorite dishes like pot sticker salad, and some new hits like Mushroom Ravioli...never an empty cup or belly...it truly felt like a feast! Our beloved choir sisters Ruth Rutledge, Xenia Enke, Chris Holland and Caitlin David led us in hymns and devotion. Saint Matthew set up an amazing bookstore to purchase from, with proceeds going to the Antiochian Women's fund.



As I wrap up this writing, I pray God always be my reminder of all good things when sign ups open in the Spring for the Women's Retreat. Amazing fellowship, abundant meals, Pascha gift shopping, listening to my beautiful diocesan sisters sing and pray in unison during services, and intimate teachings from our beloved fathers. See you in 2020!

Riding This Roller Coaster Called Life

By Heidi Blair of St. Luke Orthodox Church in Garden Grove, CA



*Heidi Blair is an Orthodox wife and mom to 3 boys.
Her family attends St Luke in Garden Grove, CA.*

Forrest Gump once said that life is like a box of chocolates, but I don't think he had it quite right. For many of us, life is more like an amusement park. On some days, we are on the repetitive carousel, going in circles with annoying music in the background. On other days, we are on the roller coaster- ups and downs! When those rare perfect moments happen- no line for your favorite ride! - we know to stop and soak it in.

Life in our house has been a bit of a roller coaster this past year. We moved two hours away to a new city, taking our children out of the only home, school, and town that they had ever known. I started a new job, moving from public school to private school- which had its share of challenges. We bought a house for the first time, which of course came with leaks and unexpected broken bits. Everything was new and just getting to the grocery store was a challenge (hurray for Google maps!).

During all of this upheaval, the one constant in our lives was and is God. It is always such a relief to rest in the knowledge that God is always there, knows all, sees all, and is full of unending love for His people. And as a reflection of this, our beautiful Orthodox Church is a calming constant as

well. As a convert, one of the things I love about the Orthodox Church is how it doesn't follow the trends of whatever is happening in the modern world. While other churches scramble to become "relevant" or "engaging" with all manner of sometimes silly tactics, our Church carries on with what it does best- worshipping God.

Each week during Divine Liturgy, I am reminded of this. The repetition of the prayers and hymns is the opposite of the amusement park carousel, for these words and hymns fill and refill our souls. Each week as I repeat what I believe in the Nicene Creed, it takes me out of the crazy roller coaster of life and reaffirms that God is constant in His love and mercy. When I look around at the icons, and especially at the large icon of Jesus way up on the ceiling, my worries lessen, and my spirit is calmed. I know that the chaos of life will not consume me, for my God is good. My good Shepherd is watching over me.

Amazingly, we have made it through our first year in our new town. Though challenges continue to pop up, we are settling into our "new normal". With God by my side in all His awesomeness, I will find joy in the ups and downs of life's roller coaster.



St. Ignatius Church Ladies 2019 Annunciation Tea

By Brittany Butler of St. Ignatius Orthodox Church in Twin Falls, ID

On March 23, the women of St. Ignatius in Twin Falls, Idaho held their 4th annual Annunciation Tea. They had a great turnout for their small parish of roughly 40 ladies of varying ages, and everyone had an excellent time! Marni Porath of the local nonprofit Rising Stars Therapeutic Riding Center was the guest of honor. She delivered an excellent and heartfelt presentation about Rising Stars, a non-profit offering equine therapeutic riding and equine assisted therapy to children and adults with disabilities. Following this and the delicious tea party fare, a slide presentation was given to introduce the newcomers to the Theotokos. Finally, a silent auction was held, with nearly \$270 raised for the Antiochian Women's 2019 Project: building a new cathedral for the Antiochian Village! We look forward to next year's tea and can't wait to welcome the local ladies with good food, hot tea, fun fellowship, and the pure joy of our Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary!





LIVING

Fr. David Hovik
Tatiana Konovalov
Julianne Diaz
Kh. Carla Zell
Anna Younathan
Diana Lindahl
Heidi Blair
Katie Lapp
Melody Bahu
Samira Bahu Sand
Marilyn Juroe
Fr. Wayne Wilson
Tammy Salamone
Kh. Joanna Townsend
Sh. Zinetta Nassif
Patti Diaz

NEWLY DEPARTED

(within the year)

Caren Deeb Kouri 6/2/18
Carol Kinan 7/23/18
Kh. Mimi Dahdoud, 9/12/18
Paula Hamma 12/3/18
Fudtha Nassar 1/2019
Rev. Fr Ibrahim Chahoud 1/14/19
Vy Kavan 5/29/19

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**Antiochian Women Diocese of Los Angeles
& the West**

Religious Organization
435 like this

✓ Liked ▼



Antiochian Women North America

Religious Organization · 845 like this

✓ Liked ▼

We are a Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others. Our members are all [Antiochian Orthodox women](#) over the age of 18 in t...



**Antiochian Orthodox Christian
Archdiocese of North America**

Eastern Orthodox Church
Religious Organization
7,549 like this

✓ Liked ▼

KEEP UP WITH US ON FACEBOOK!

Antiochian Women 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.



