

DIAKONIA

A NEWSLETTER OF THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA



WINTER 2016

Highlighting

Diocese of New York and the Archdiocesan District
Diocese of Charleston, Oakland, and the Mid-Atlantic



Troparion of the Presentation

Tone 1

*Rejoice, O Virgin Theotokos, full of grace,
for from thee arose the Sun of justice,
Christ our God, lighting those who are in
darkness. Rejoice and be glad, O righteous
old man, carrying in thine arms the Deliv-
erer of our souls, Who granteth us Resur-
rection.*

Kontakion of the Presentation

Tone 1

*Thou, O Christ God, Who by Thy Birth,
didst sanctify the Virgin's womb, and, as is
meet, didst bless Simeon's arms, and didst
also come to save us; preserve Thy fold in
wars, and confirm them whom Thou didst
love, for Thou alone art the Lover of man-
kind.*

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

☞ A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS ☞

The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women Of North America

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

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His Grace Bishop. JOHN, Spiritual Advisor

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Antiochian Women's Prayer

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

DIAKONIA is a Newsletter of the North American Board of the Antiochian Women, an organization of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, and is published quarterly in the months of September, December, March and June.

PUBLICATION GUIDELINES:

Deadlines

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

To submit articles, e-mail as a word attachment to:
antiochianwomenna@gmail.com

Submission Details

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

Content

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

In this issue of the DIAKONIA we highlight the

The newly elected North American Board Officers and Coordinators With a message from His Eminence, Metropolitan JOSEPH

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

What is DIAKONIA?

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

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

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

Introducing the Officers for Diocese of New York and the Archdiocesan District Diocese of Charleston, Oakland, and the Mid-Atlantic



Diocesan President, Marlene Ayoub

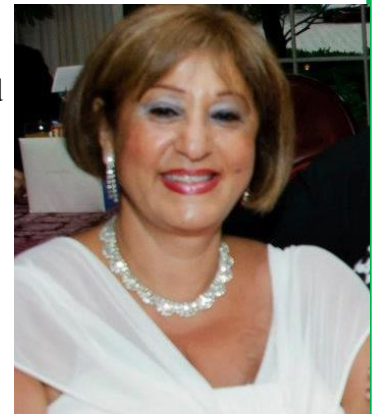
I was born in Beirut, Lebanon and immigrated to the United States when I was ten. I grew up attending and being very active in a Melkite Catholic Church; that is until I married my wonderful husband, Faraj, in January 1998. That is when St. George Church of Little Falls, New Jersey became my home.

Faraj and I are blessed to have 2 amazingly talented girls, Victoria (17) and Sophia (15). They are the sunshine of our lives and bring us so much laughter and joy. We are all active members of St. George and are always eager to give of our time in support of the Church. I'm currently employed by the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese in Englewood, NJ where there's never a dull moment!

Vice-President & Humanitarian Coordinator, Julia Kalyousef

I was born in Aleppo, Syria. Both of my parents were born in Turkey. Antioch and Samandag were both cities of Syria before Turkey seized them. Because of their origin I was able to visit Turkey many times and visited the first church of Peter and Paul in Antioch several times. I grew up as a very active member of the church serving as superintendent of Sunday School, Youth Adviser and worked in the Archdiocese of Aleppo. I moved to the United States in 1988.

I am married and have two sons and two grandchildren. I work in Paterson Public School as personal aide with children with autism and behavior problems. I have been an active member of St George Church in Little Falls, New Jersey for 25 years and an active member of the ladies society where I served as Vice-President.



Recording Secretary, Grace Dibi

I was born and raised in Kinnelon, New Jersey by wonderful godly parents who instilled in my five siblings and me the importance of having a relationship with our Lord and following His commands. That spiritual journey led me to St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church in Little Falls, New Jersey. My husband Elias and our four children have attended this church since 2009. We have been actively involved in the various ministries such as the Antiochian Women and Teen SOYO.

I am very honored to be serving my second term as the Recording Secretary for the AWE. I have learned so much from my fellow officers and from many of you whom I have met along the way. In the secular world, I am a Vice President, BSA/AML Officer at a community bank in Bergen County, NJ.

Treasurer, Kh. Rima elChami Zafaran



I am the wife of Fr. Meletios Zafaran from St. George, New Kensington, Pennsylvania We have been at this parish for five beautiful years.

We are blessed with four children, Mark (17), Maria (14), Marnia (10) and Michael (7). Graduating from Balamand in 1994, I earned a Bachelors degree in Theology.

I am honored to serve the church as secretary for the Myrrh Bearing Women and serve as Co-Chair of the Special Projects Committee that benefits our church. I am also teaching the Sunday School children especially with completing the Creative Art Lesson this year. I am honored as well to be the Treasurer for our Diocesan Antiochian Women.

Religious Coordinator, Cathy Firek

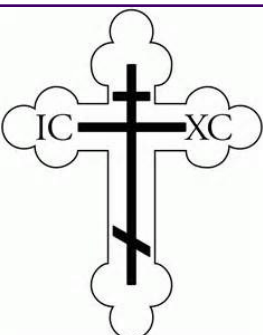
I am honored to have been asked to be the Religious Coordinator for the Eastern Region Antiochian Women. With the help of my Spiritual Father, I hope that I am able to provide a better understanding and knowledge of the Orthodox faith through the writings and teachings of the Church.

My family holds four generations of members at St. George Orthodox Church in New Kensington, PA. We have all been lifelong members and servants. Over the past several years, I have served on the Executive Board of the Parish Council and held the positions of Secretary and Treasurer. I have been the SOYO Youth Advisor. I have served as Treasurer of the Myrrh-bearing Women, and I have also been very involved in many other organizations and activities within the Church. St. George holds a very dear place in my heart and it makes up a big part of who I am and who I am proud to be!



On a personal note, I have been married to my husband, Dave, for 20 years. He was chrismated into Holy Orthodoxy on our wedding day and over the years he has become a very active and involved member of the church. We have two children; Jacob, age 18; and Julianna, age 16, who are both very active in SOYO; holding offices at both the region level and the local level. I am very proud that they have made serving the church a priority in their young lives. Outside of church, I am very active at my children's school and in their different activities.

When we are not busy at church or with school activities, I love to be in the kitchen cooking and baking.



Memory Eternal

Randa Haddad Stevens

Public Relation Officer for The Diocese of Wichita & Mid-America

Reposed in the Lord January 7, 2015





The Sanctification of our Parish Life

His Grace Bishop THOMAS (Joseph)

From the very beginning of Our Lord's ministry, when he called the first disciples, Peter and Andrew, the Church has existed both as a community and within a community. In these roles, there are a variety of activities that the parish Church undertakes, both in terms of liturgical services and in charitable work and outreach, both within the parish and out in the larger community as a whole. If any of these are lacking, then the parish has not lived up to the calling of Christ. If there is liturgy without outreach, then we fail, since "faith without works is dead," but if we have outreach without liturgy, we also fail, since "man is not justified by works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ." Therefore, it is necessary for a healthy parish to effectively balance both liturgy and community outreach in order to properly work towards the salvation of each of its members. This requires careful planning and scheduling, as well as the proper delegation of tasks throughout the parish community.

The liturgical life is central to any parish community, as it has been since the days of the Apostles, whom the Book of Acts records as being "daily in one accord in the Temple." It's fair to say, that were it not for the liturgical services, a parish church would cease to be a church, and would simply be a charitable organization or social club. Each of the liturgical activities of the Church has its proper time, most of which will be on the same day every year. Therefore, there is no reason why the necessary people for each service, the readers, the chanters, the acolytes, and the prosphora bakers, should not be scheduled many months in advance. This applies just as much for weekday services as it does for Sundays and Feasts; there should never be a time when there is uncertainty as to whether or not there will be the necessary complement of people to perform all the necessary liturgical functions. Further, this does not even necessarily need to be the priest's or deacon's function. It is perfectly possible for each of the divisions, the chanters, the acolytes, and the bakers, to create their own schedules, in conjunction with the clergy.

Schedules and planning are also required for non-liturgical functions, such as charitable and educational outreach ministries, including the catechesis of children and adults. Further, there are many ministries that are commonly regarded as the provenance of the clergy that could just as easily be undertaken by groups of pious laypeople. Lay ministry teams could be organized for the tasks of visiting the sick, the shut-ins, and prisoners, in conjunction with regular clerical visitations, as well as providing support for charitable works to support the poor and hungry. After all, when Christ says to those on His right hand, "I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me," He wasn't simply speaking to the priests and deacons, but to every Christian believer. However, if such activities are to be undertaken with any sort of consistency and regularity, they must be carefully scheduled with a similar attention to that given to the liturgical services.

All activities undertaken, both liturgical and non-liturgical, ought to be put together into a single master schedule, so as to ensure that no one ends up "double-booked." If feasible, a parish might want to undertake a semi-annual parish leadership retreat, where the schedule of the various parish ministry teams could be laid out for the next six months. The heads of each of the ministry teams could present their proposed schedule, including events and requested people, which then could be cross checked against the other ministries and the individuals' personal schedule in order to make each timetable work. This way, each schedule will mesh like the cogs of a machine, allowing the cycle of liturgical and charitable service to function smoothly.

(continued next page)

(The Sanctification of our Parish Life cont.)

Parishes do not grow by accident. They become vibrant through prayer and hard work. An indispensable part of that hard work is planning and scheduling, as well as encouraging others to become involved. It has always been my experience that parishioners will eagerly volunteer for parish work when they see others doing so. This can help to relieve the burden on the core group who, in many parishes, end up doing almost everything. Through baptism, we are all called to evangelize and make Christ present in the parish and the surrounding community. This becomes part of the parish charism through proper planning, preaching, and evangelization. Sadly, we as Orthodox Christians have not always embraced this evangelical imperative. Too often, we've been content in offering weekend services and not moved beyond this insular and isolationist model. If we are to fulfill our God-appointed task to "preach the Gospel to every creature" then we must have a combination of devout prayer and charitable Christian outreach, each at its proper time. As King Solomon reminds us, "To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven."

****SAVE THE DATE****

Antiochian Women of the East

Diocese of New York & Washington DC

Diocese of Charleston, Oakland & the Mid-Atlantic

April 15-17, 2016

Annual Lenten Retreat at Antiochian Village

Bolivar, Pennsylvania

Details coming soon...

With permission from Abbess Victoria we share the January message from St. Barbara's Monastery.



Dear Friends of St. Barbara Monastery,

We are seeing more and more news articles about acts of terror committed by ISIS, not only in the Middle East, but in North Africa and Europe and even the Far East. Noting that these terrorist acts target most anyone who does not support ISIS' ideology, whether themselves Muslims of some other stripe, Christians, or simply "Westerners" of any religion or no religion at all, we in America have begun to fear for ourselves. In the aftermath of the San Bernardino attack, our President even deemed it necessary to address the nation in an attempt to calm the burgeoning fear.

In centuries past, the members of ISIS simply would have been called 'barbarians,' 'Hagarenes' or 'Sons of Ishmael'—which is the terminology we meet in our liturgical services. Barbarians, practically by definition, were the pagans from beyond the borders of the Ecumene (or Greco-Roman Empire). They included Goths, Vandals, Huns, Mongols Avars, various Slav tribes and a host of others regarded as generally hostile to the civilized world. 'Hagarenes' or 'Ishmaelites' were terms more specifically used for the Saracens to the East of the Empire and, after the rise of Islam in the 7th century, the hostile Muslim Sultanate that formed there and set out to conquer the world.

Not many years ago, when we would chance across the word 'barbarians' in the liturgical texts, we would falter momentarily. In some places, the word was carefully blocked out and replaced by words like 'enemies' or 'adversaries' (as in the Troparion for the Holy Cross). 'Hagarenes' or 'Ishmaelites' were somewhat less problematical terms—probably because they don't quite register until the reader or singer has moved on to the next sentence! But now, in view of political developments in our 21st century world, these terms are becoming uncomfortably relevant again, and the troparia, kontakia and stichera that use them increasingly apply to present realities just as written.

Our Orthodox forbears everywhere—Greece, the Balkans, Russia and Ukraine, the Middle East—all knew what it was to live in circumstances where they were overshadowed by threats of terror and unspeakable atrocities. This is an unfamiliar state of affairs for us in America, but just about nowhere else! Indeed, the Menaion abounds with accounts of martyrs and confessors from every century and every place who suffered for their Orthodox Faith at the hands of barbarian "terrorists" and invaders.

These saints, upholding us by their prayers to God on our behalf, all have a single, unwavering message for us: Repeating the words of the Lord in the Gospel, they say: "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (Mt 10:28).

Abbess Victoria and the community of St. Barbara Monastery

www.stbarbaramonastery.org

PARISH HIGHLIGHTS from the Diocese

The Women of St Philip's in Souderton, Pennsylvania

As a group and individually, we support the parish, the NAB projects, and the community in a variety of ways. As a group, our women conduct a bazaar featuring hand-crafted and unusual items at the church's annual International Food Festival, with a portion of proceeds supporting local agencies that help women and children in need. Our annual Meatfare Donation Luncheon supports the NAB project, providing the parish with a delicious meal of roast beef, oven-roasted potatoes, salad, rolls, and desserts, as well as information about the project. The people of St Philip's are generous in their support.

Individually and in small groups, our women bake prosphora for the Eucharist and artos for festal Artoklasia; sew pillowcases for children with cancer and make fleece blankets for the needy; coordinate our monthly collections of non-perishable foods and non-food items for local agencies and our annual holiday giving for the needy; work with our Handmaidens to foster their love for Christ and service in the church; organize a children's summer reading club; pray for, send cards to, call, and visit our elderly and shut-in parishioners; ... the list could go on!

We are grateful to all our women for their dedication to St Philip's, their compassion for the needy, and their support of the wider Church, and we are grateful to God for the opportunity and resources to do all these things, that we and those who see our good works may glorify our Father in heaven.



Saints Peter & Paul Antiochian Orthodox Church

Potomac, Maryland

The SS Peter & Paul Orthodox Church Liturgical Choir of Potomac, MD, led by director John Slanta, gave a Christmas program of Liturgical and Traditional Christmas Carols for the men at the Salvation Army Northern Virginia Rehabilitation Center in Alexandria, VA, on December 16, 2015. Five parishioners are on the local Salvation Army Advisory Council of the Center. Later in the month, a Christmas choral concert was given at the parish and opened to the community and was directed by Francisco De Araujo with several choir members singing. (Photos below)

The Antiochian Women of SS Peter & Paul provided "Shut-In Christmas Treat" bags to 16 parishioners who are ill or who are no longer able to come to church services; they also provide periodic "Angel Fund" grocery store gift cards to families and single widows who sometimes are unable to make ends meet.

The Antiochian Women of SS Peter & Paul have been in a 15 year partnership with Bethesda Cares, a homeless shelter, that provides survival kits for the homeless men and women they serve. Parishioners contribute funds, as well as items such as toiletries, socks, hats and gloves, which are then placed in logoed backpacks and delivered to Bethesda Cares.

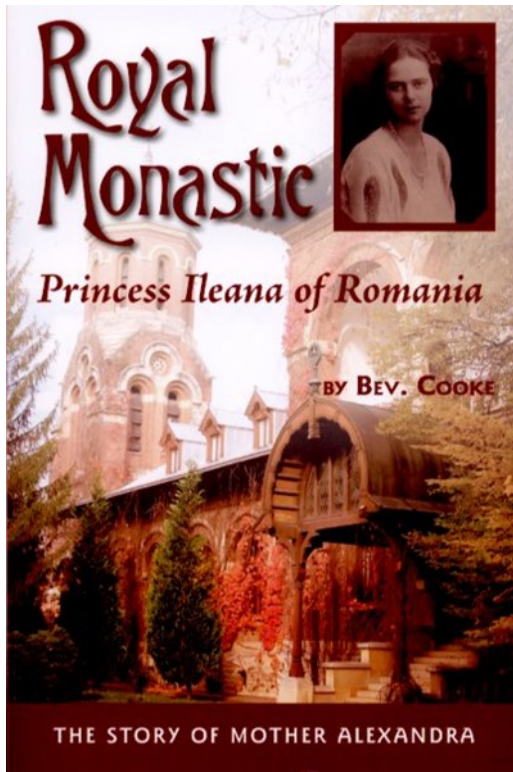
Our in-reach to the community brought out the creative talents of the women who decorated many beautiful Christmas wreaths that were made available for purchase. A 'mini retreat' was held on the topic of *The Art of Spiritual Letter Writing* using the Pastoral Epistles of St. Paul as a guide to further our own spiritual formation. In the works is a republishing of the "Traditions" section of the parish cookbook with hopes that it will also be available on the church website to parishioners.

John Slanta directs the choir at Salvation Army.



Francisco De Araujo directing Christmas Choral Concert

Antiochian Women Book Club



The book chosen is **Royal Monastic** (Princess Ileana of Romania) by Bev Cooke.

This is the story of Mother Alexandra of Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City, PA .

This book club selection has been blessed by our Antiochian Women North American Board (NAB) Spiritual Advisor, Bishop JOHN and supported by the NAB President, Dianne O'Regan.

Women across our Archdiocese are encouraged to participate in reading **Royal Monastic** & joining together for discussion groups with questions that are being provided.

We will also be posting an occasional question on our Facebook page for commenting.

Royal Monastic can be purchased through multiple sources:

Ancient Faith Ministries Bookstore – <http://store.ancientfaith.com/royal-monastic-princess-ileana-of-romania/>

If you order through your Parish bookstore, you will get a discount off the regular price of \$15.95.

Antiochian Village Bookstore: <http://store.antiochianvillage.org/Royal-Monastic-Princess-Ileana-of-Romania.html>

Amazon: http://www.amazon.com/Royal-Monastic-Princess-Ileana-Romania/dp/1888212322/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1453703827&sr=1-1&keywords=royal+monastic+princess+ileana+of+romania

The book will capture your attention and make for easy, fast reading. So much history!

One is drawn into her life and moves along with her until she departs this life. After reading her story, you will likely continue to keep her in your heart and remembrance.

We remember our sister, Kh. Joanne Abdalah, past NAB Antiochian Women's president, who is buried at the cemetery on the grounds at the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration. Memory Eternal!

Book Study Questions Prepared by Rebecca Phillips

SECTION I: A TUMULTUOUS CHILDHOOD

Chapter 1 – Birth & Family

Princess Ileana's early exposure to the Orthodox faith and to monasticism came from her mother, Princess Marie. Discuss the importance of parents as spiritual examples for their children. How can parents today cultivate a love and understanding for the Orthodox faith in their children?

What saints or people have been instrumental in your spiritual walk? What are some of the lessons you have learned from them?

HUNGRY CHILDREN

at home & abroad

HELP FEED
HUNGRY CHILDREN

Antiochian Women
2015-16 Project

NOW



A NOTE TO DIOCESAN PUBLIC RELATIONS DIRECTORS:

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

The following items are needed to highlight your diocese:

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

	Diocese	Date of Publication	Date Due
1	NAB Board (His Eminence Archbishop JOSEPH, and His Grace Bishop JOHN)	October 2015	Done
2	Diocese of New York and the Archdiocesan District (His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH & His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS). Diocese of Charleston, Oakland, and the Mid-Atlantic (His Grace Bishop THOMAS)	January 2016	Dec. 1, 2015
3	Diocese of Los Angeles and the West and the Diocese of Eagle River and the Northwest (His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH)	April 2016	Mar. 1, 2016
4	Diocese of Miami and the Southeast (His Grace Bishop ANTOUN)	July 2016	June 1, 2016
5	Diocese of Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate NY (His Grace Bishop ALEXANDER)	October 2016	Sept. 1, 2016
6	Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest (His Grace Bishop ANTHONY)	January 2017	Dec. 1, 2016
7	Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America (His Grace Bishop BASIL)	April 2017	Mar 1, 2017
8	Diocese of Worcester and New England (His Grace Bishop JOHN)	July 2017	June 1, 2017

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

A NOTE TO ALL OUR READERS:

Thank you to Marlene Ayoub, her Board and her Diocese for submitting their bios, photos and updates on their activities. Great job getting everything together during the peak of Thanksgiving, Nativity & Theophany!

Please, take the time to find us on Facebook and follow our page: Antiochian Women North America. Current events, photos and updates are posted on a regular basis. Every Parish is encouraged to share Parish and Diocesan news. ***As a safety note, please do not include personal phone numbers, addresses, email addresses or other direct contact information on Facebook, including our NAB page. ***

Please pray for our dear sister Sherry Abraham-Morrow and her family as she continues her battle with cancer.

Your sister in Christ,
Melinda Bentz