



THE MOST REVEREND
 METROPOLITAN PHILIP (SALIBA)
 FOUNDER
 358 MOUNTAIN ROAD
 ENGLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY 07631

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

☞ A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS ☞

❖ DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES & THE WEST ❖

❖ DIOCESE OF EAGLE RIVER & THE NORTHWEST ❖



Spring Newsletter 2011

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*

Prayer for the People of Japan

Almighty Lord, Thou Who art most merciful and compassionate, we beseech Thee to calm the earth and waters and bring peace and healing to all those who are suffering from the devastating earthquake in Japan. Grant them Thy strength to endure the hardships they are facing and the courage to rebuild their country. We also ask, O Lord, that Thou grant eternal repose to all those who have lost their lives and receive them into Thy Kingdom. Stretch forth Thy mighty hand upon their families who are suffering not only at the loss of their loved ones, but for the loss of their homes and homeland. Thou, O Lord, art the calm of every storm and the Hope for all those who call upon Thy Name, and to Thee we ascribe glory, together with Thine eternal Father, and Thine All-Holy, Good, and Life-giving Spirit, now and ever, and to the ages of ages. Amen





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Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

The Diocese of Los Angeles and the West

His Grace, Bishop JOSEPH
Diocese of Los Angeles and the West

The Antiochian Women have taken on an important project this year: the Convent of St. Thekla at the Antiochian Village. Why is this important?

Many of us think of the 'Church' strictly in terms of our own parishes. We have a hard time understanding anything beyond our routine experiences. Yet, there is much more to our Church life than parishes. There are chanceries and camps and seminaries and missionaries and ministries... and monasteries.

But why, you may ask, would anyone want to become a monk or a nun? These people select a different path to God than the way of married people. They seek God just like married people do, but they do so within a community devoted to worship and prayer. While families struggle to raise children, support parishes and live out the spiritual life in the world, monks and nuns retire from the struggles of the world to engage in a spiritual struggle.

Like us, they struggle with the flesh, but they do so in isolation from the potential distractions that we face each day. It is a hard path, but so is our path amidst the cares of this world. The married life and the monastic life both have advantages and disadvantages.

They are also mutually dependent systems. Monasteries require the support of the married community both in terms of alms they receive as well as our children who decide to forsake the world and become monastics.

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Yet, they offer us important gifts: their constant prayers and intercessions for us, as well as spiritual refuges from the world when we are injured and need guidance and care. Monasteries practice hospitality, but it is more than receiving guests with coffee and cookies: they offer their perspective on our difficulties, either through their silence or their prayerful words.

Just as the married family raises children, so monasteries raise up spiritual children. By this, I mean both the new monks and nuns in addition to those who come to the monastery for help.

It is fitting that the Antiochian Village, which has come to be a refuge for our children from the stress and cares of their lives, should be the site for this convent. I think it is important for our youth to be exposed to a healthy monastic community and learn that there is more than one way to live as a Christian. Too often, children are forced to live out the expectations of their parents: go to college, get a career, get married, have children, make lots of money, etc. They are measured by their worldly lives. You would be surprised at how many parents are perfectly content with their children knowing little about Christianity so long as they get good grades!

Did our Lord Jesus Christ die so that our children can have material success? Or, did He die so that they could be free from the bondages of our fallen nature? He died and rose again so that we could be free, and part of that freedom is being able to choose our way to Him, either through marriage or monasticism. When we prevent our children from making such choices on their own by imposing our wills on them, we become negative.

Not everyone who goes to a monastery becomes a monastic, since not all are called to such a life. But, it is important for our children to know about this life and see it at the Village, so that they will know that refuges such as St. Thekla's Convent are all around us and ready to receive us when we need help. I have known many people who have been saved by the care and ministry of monasteries and convents here and abroad.

I encourage all of you to continue in this effort to support the Convent of St. Thekla, now and in the future. This is a worthy project, and one that God Himself will reward you for.

By: His Grace, Bishop JOSEPH

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SPIRITUAL ADVISOR
Very Rev. Fr. David Hovik

The Blessing of the Lord!

We recently had a wonderful celebration of the Feast of the Annunciation and, weekly, we are celebrating the Akathist Hymn to the Most Holy Theotokos. Our preparation for the Feast of Feasts, Holy Pascha, should be seen through the lens of the life of our Lord's Mother. Because, in reality, it is her life to which we aspire. It is the formation of Christ, in her, that we are trying to emulate. With that in mind, I offer to you three short homilies written by St. Nikolai Velimirovich which underscore the goal(s) of all of our Lenten efforts.

In Christ,

Fr. David

Homily One: The Handmaid of the Lord

And Mary said: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord' (Luke 1.38).

Here indeed, brethren, is a true handmaid of the Lord! If a handmaid is she who exchanges her will completely for the will of her Lord, then the Most-holy Virgin is the first among all of the Lord's handmaids. If a handmaid is she who, with intent and with complete attention, beholds her Lord, then again the Most-holy Virgin is the first among the handmaids of the Lord. If a handmaid is one who meekly and quietly endures all insults and trials, awaiting only the reward of her Lord, then again and again the Most-holy Virgin is the first and most excellent of all the handmaids of the Lord. She did not care to please the world, but only God; nor did she care to justify herself before the world, but only before God. She herself is obedience; she herself is service; she herself is meekness. The Most-holy Virgin could in truth say to the angel of God: *'Behold the handmaid of the Lord'*. The greatest perfection, and the greatest honor that a woman can attain on earth, is to

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be a **handmaid of the Lord**. Eve lost this perfection and honor in Paradise without effort, and the Virgin Mary achieved this perfection and this honor outside Paradise with her efforts.

Through the prayers of the Most-holy Virgin Theotokos, O Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. To Thee be glory and praise forever. Amen.

Homily Two: A Canticle From the Soul of the Theotokos

'My soul doth magnify the Lord' (Luke 1.46).

Brethren, we have in total only a few words spoken by the Most-holy Theotokos recorded in the Gospels. All of her words pertain to the magnification of God. She was silent before men but her soul conversed unceasingly with God. Every day and every hour, she found a new reason and incentive to magnify God. If only we were able to know and to record all her magnifications of God throughout her whole life, oh, how many books would it take! But, even by this one magnification, which she spoke before her kinswoman Elizabeth, the mother of the great Prophet and Forerunner John, every Christian can evaluate what a fragrant and God-pleasing flower was her most holy soul. This is but one wonderful canticle of the soul of the Theotokos, which has come down to us through the Gospel. However, such canticles were without number in the course of the life of the Most-blessed One. Even before she heard the Gospel from the lips of her Son, she knew how to speak with God and to glorify Him in accordance with the teaching of the Gospel. This knowledge came to her from the Holy Spirit of God, whose grace constantly poured into her like clear water into a pure vessel. Her soul magnified God with canticles throughout her whole life, and therefore God magnified her above the Cherubim and the Seraphim. Likewise, small and sinful as we are, the same Lord will magnify in His Kingdom us who magnify her, **if we exert ourselves to fill this brief life with the magnification of God in our deeds, words, thoughts and prayers.**

O Most-holy, Most-pure and Most-blessed Theotokos, cover us with the wings of thy prayers. To thee and thy Son and our Lord be glory and praise forever. Amen.



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Homily Three: The Gospel Instruction of the Theotokos

His mother saith unto the servants, 'Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it' (John 2.5).

Here is joy for all the faithful: she who is closest to Christ the Savior in heaven, as she had been on earth, cares for the faithful, appears to them, helps them and advises them:

'Whatsoever He, my Son and my God, saith unto you, do it.' Thus, she advised the servants at the marriage in Cana, and the servants obeyed her and saw a miracle. From those few words of the Most-holy Virgin, God's Bride, recorded in the Gospel, we receive a precious instruction, truly the one and only Gospel instruction that she gave to mankind during her life on earth.

Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it! As though she wanted to say: 'He knows all; He can do all; He loves you all; therefore, you should look neither here nor there, but hear Him and obey Him.' She comprehended the responsibility in this world of living for Him and directing others to Him as the Source of life, and she voluntarily continues carrying out this responsibility even from heaven. Throughout the Church's entire history, she has taught the faithful to do whatsoever He said. And even today, from her heavenly glory, she mystically descends among the faithful to counsel them to do that which He has commanded. That is her Gospel -- the Gospel of the Most-holy Virgin, the Theotokos. It consists not of the Four Gospels but of four words: **'Do whatsoever He saith.'** O my brethren, let us obey her! Let us obey her as a mother and more than our mother, for she desires the greatest good for us: to reign in the eternal Kingdom of her Son.

O Most-holy Virgin, help us to fulfill His words. To Thee and to Him be glory and praise forever. Amen.



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President's Report Lucy Hanna

Dear Sisters in Christ,

I greet you in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and welcome those of you who are with us here at the Southern California Spring Retreat. To those of you who were unable to attend, I send you my love and best wishes.

First I want to thank each and every one of you for your dedication to serving the Lord through serving others. This is what the Antiochian Women organization is all about. You are the backbone of the Antiochian Archdiocese. May God bless your work for His glory.

On July 1st, during the Antiochian Women meeting and brunch at the Parish Life Conference, hosted by St. Mark Church, Irvine, CA and St. Barnabas Church, Costa Mesa, CA, we will be electing new officers. Following the elections, the new president will be appointing coordinators for the various committees. I encourage all of you to examine your hearts and consider running for an office or accepting a coordinator position. You will be receiving information and nomination forms from Georgette Malouf very soon. Please take it seriously and offer back to God some of the talents He has given you.

The theme of the conference this year is "Be Mindful of O Lord of the Priesthood, the Diaconate and every Priestly Rank". For more information on the conference, please log on to <http://plc2011oc.info>. Early bird registration ends May 14, 2011.

Our annual NAB project this year is once again the construction of the convent of St. Thekla at the Antiochian Village. You will receive more information on this from our Diocesan Vice President and Project Coordinator, Melinda Bentz.

Please know that I am always available to support you and answer any questions you may have. Feel free to contact me by phone or email any time.

Your sister in Christ,

Lucy Hanna, President
 Home: (951) 736-9809
 Cell: (951) 415-7667
 Email: lucy.hanna@sbcglobal.net





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Vice President's Report Melinda Bentz

We continue in our Lenten Journey and as we approach the Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt, many of us are learning, worshipping and growing together at the Spring Retreat; our respite to recharge before Palm Sunday, Holy Week and Great and Holy Pascha. The anticipation of when we can joyfully proclaim "Christ is Risen" is growing with each Liturgy and Pre-Sanctified Liturgy. We are already in a flurry of activities as our choirs rehearse and plans are made for decorating our churches for Palm Sunday, Holy Week and of course Great Pascha! Our children are beginning to get excited about their new Pascha outfit and discussions among the adults hint at the joy of breaking the fast together. Yet we still have a few weeks left to focus on our thoughts on our spiritual walk during these 40 days of preparation. May these remaining days be a blessing to each of you.

Our fundraising effort for 2011 is a continuance to raise funds for The Convent of St. Thekla. Let this be the year which each parish, large and small is able to support this project! Progress towards the goal of breaking ground and building a proper monastery is steady and thoughtful. The following excerpt is from an update on the Arch-Diocese website:

"On November 1, 2010, Mother Alexandra met with Douglas Shoop at the Antiochian Village. They toured the building site and met to discuss details for the production of 3D renderings and schematic drawings. Please continue to pray for Mother Alexandra and for women to consider joining her in living the monastic life at Saint Thekla Convent. Also, please remember Douglas Shoop in your prayers - that God will guide his talents and bless the work of his hands."

We are blessed to be the generation to say through our fundraising and prayers we helped build this blessed Monastery for our children and all future generations. I encourage each parish to commit to raise funds for our first woman's monastery. As we complete this period of fasting and prayer, please remember St. Thekla's Monastery in your prayers and through your giving.

The deadline for project monies is May 1, 2011 and should be sent to me at:

Melinda Bentz
3030 Camino Hermanos
Lancaster, CA 93536

Your sister in Christ,

Melinda Bentz
Vice-President

O glorious Thekla, companion of Paul the divine, you were enflamed with the love of your Creator, by the teaching of the divine preacher. You despised the passing earthly pleasures, and offered yourself to God as an acceptable and pleasing sacrifice, disregarding all suffering. Intercede with Christ your Groom to grant us His great mercy.

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From: Judy Pappoff, Diocesan Treasurer, Antiochian Women
 To: Chapter Presidents or Representatives

Re: **Local Chapter Dues Reminder**

Dues for 2011 were due November 1st, 2010. Annual dues for each parish are \$200.00, of which \$75.00 go to the North American Board Treasury. *All churches are expected to have an active Antiochian Women chapter and to contribute to the diocese by paying these dues.* Dues help cover administrative costs and most importantly, fund our charitable works. In 2010, we gave over \$5000.00 to charitable causes from our dues money. Missions are not required to pay dues, but any donation by missions will be appreciated.

Please submit your dues before the end of Lent. Canadian parishes, please submit in U.S. dollars.

“Thank you” to all the churches and missions who have already paid your 2011 dues!

Please make your checks payable to: ***Antiochian Women-Diocese of Los Angeles and the West***

Please complete and detach and return the form below along with your check to:

Judy Pappoff, Treasurer
 16627 Sequoia St.
 Fountain Valley, CA 92708

"-----"-----"-----"-----"-----"-----"-----"-----"-----"-----"

Parish _____

City _____

Parish Antiochian WomenContact _____

Contact's e-mail _____

Contact's Phone # _____

Amount Enclosed \$ _____



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Nomination Form

Year: _____

Name of Nominee: _____

Address: _____

E-Mail Address: _____ Phone: _____

Office Nominated for:

- President
- Vice President/Project
- Rec/Cor. Secretary
- Treasurer
- Public Relations

Please state if you are interested in an appointment to a Coordinator position:

- Humanitarian
- Membership
- Religious
- Spring Retreat / Scholarship

Qualifications for office: _____

Antiochian Women Offices Held: (If you need more space, please use separate sheet describing your experiences)

Local: _____

Diocesan: _____

NAB: _____

Other Offices Held: (Soyo, Fellowship of St. John the Divine, etc.) _____

Approval of the Parish Priest (Required)

Home Parish: _____ Name of Priest: _____

Address: _____ Phone: _____

Signature of Parish Priest: _____

Send completed form to: Georgette Malouf, 1021 N. Orchard Dr. Burbank, CA 91506
 Questions? Email Georgette at gette0324@yahoo.com or call (818) 563-2838
 Take the challenge.....let us commit ourselves to the Antiochian Woman of the Diocese!



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Public Relations Report Kim Lukins

Wow, two years has flown by! I want to take a minute to thank the women of our God protected diocese for making my job an easy one. I have gotten to meet many, many wonderful women who I never would have had the chance to meet without this position.

I told Lucy Hanna when she asked me to run, that “I am not the face any organization wants to use for ‘Public Relations’, because I am not an extrovert in any sense of the word. I really want to thank her for telling me “Yes, you can” over and over during the past two years and also for helping me many times! She is a huge blessing in my life.

The Antiochian Women is truly a sisterhood serving Christ through serving others. I had no idea what this group really was accomplishing before becoming Public Relations Director. (There’s a scary thought) I knew of the organization and had been to meetings, but my experience was purely a local one. It’s hard to appreciate the beauty and value of a whole forest when you are one of the trees, I guess. We have a lovely group at our Parish and much is done but I never paid attention beyond that.

I thought I would share a little of ‘the whole forest’ with everyone, so below is the description of Antiochian Women from the membership handbook.

I look forward to seeing you at the retreat and pray that you and yours are well.

Your sister in Christ
 Kim Lukins



The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America was founded in 1973 through the vision of His Eminence, Metropolitan PHILIP (Saliba) — since 2008, we simply refer to our organization at “The Antiochian Women.” We are one of the official organizations of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America. Our purpose is to work among the women of our Archdiocese to develop a spirit of Christian leadership, awareness, and commitment; to foster a genuine expression of love and service for each other and to the world around us through works of charity; to instill a sense of companionship among our sisterhood; and to foster a deeper understanding of the heritage and traditions of the Orthodox Church.

Our Antiochian Women organization brings the women of our Archdiocese together for prayer, charitable



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works, and mutual support as we strive to fulfill our calling in Christ to serve others. This goal gives us our official motto: “*A Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others.*” The Antiochian Women organization operates fundamentally at the local parish level, with a board of officers at the diocesan level. All of our efforts throughout the Archdiocese are harmonized and coordinated by the oversight of our North American Board (NAB), which consists of the officers from each diocesan organization and officers elected from our membership to serve as officers of the NAB.

The Antiochian Women communicate through our web page (<http://www.antiochian.org/women>), through e-mails, and by information shared through mailings to our parishes. Timely information about activities and programs are distributed, such as scholarships for women, special charitable projects, and spiritual resources such as the lives of women saints and Bible study material. We also publish newsletters, DIAKONIA and SOPHIA, that keep the members of Antiochian Women inspired and informed. Back issues can be found on our website in PDF format.

Since 1975, our Antiochian Women Organization has raised approximately \$2,500,000.⁰⁰ to support the following projects:

- Orthodox Media
- Married Seminarians
- Patriarchal Charities
- St. George Hospital
- Heritage & Learning Center
- Balamand University
- Bishops’ Endowment Fund
- International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)
- Antiochian Village
- Theological Education
- Orphanage Endowment Fund
- Retired Clergy Fund
- Children with Special Needs
- Convent of St. Thekla

In addition to these important projects, our local chapters have raised untold thousands of dollars that support similar activities and programs in their own parishes and in their local communities. Our prayer is that God will “give us strength... to go on striving” -- and to do all of our good works not for our own self-satisfaction, but as a way to glorify His Holy Name. We also pray that we always remember that “the most important thing is to have our hearts directed and attuned to [the LORD].”

Through the prayers of the Theotokos, may it always be so ❖

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Message from Saint Andrew Church Riverside California

I greet you all at this special time of our Orthodox year and may God grant you a fruitful Lent!

This past year has been one of Joy for the faithful of Saint Andrew Orthodox parish. Our beautiful new church temple is almost ready for occupancy. The magnificent 12-foot-high oak doors carved in Turkey are installed. The marble floors have also been installed incorporating



a unique round mosaic of a 'Bishop's rug' located directly under the expansive dome, which is now covered with icons written by the Orthodox monks from Colorado. Inside the dome the icon of Christ the Pantocrator looks down upon the faithful. Many more icons will be added covering our walls of beloved saints and the Apostles. There are more

than 100 columns supporting the building and the central dome's cross is 63 feet above the ground. The beautiful travertine stone walkway, stairs and marble wainscoting on the front of the church temple is 95% completed. Traditional church designs and warm shades of taupe, rusts, deep ambers, blue-grays, and rose-red reflect the stone work and colors found in ancient Orthodox churches of Greece, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, Romania, Russia and Serbia.

The ladies of Saint Andrew Parish have indeed been busy this year preparing delicious food for our iconographer monks as they worked high on the vault scaffold preparing the iconography. During the month of February we hosted the Annual Southern California Liturgical Clergy Seminar for over 40 clergy, led by His Grace Bishop JOSEPH. The ladies prepared delicious food and beverages which included breakfast, lunches, and dinner in our fellowship hall.

The Ladies of Saint Andrew are also continuing to build on our homeless meal Ministry, providing delicious home cooked meals to a local Homeless shelter once a month.

Currently we are hard at work on planning for a mid July Open House inviting the community to visit and tour our new church temple. We hope the Open House will segue into our Consecration - Patronal Feast to be held Saturday December 3 on our church grounds.

More details on our Open House and Consecration will be mailed to all the parishes. Until then I'd like to wish you a very blessed Lent and together at Pascha we will sing with joy:

"Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!"

Your sister in Christ,
Leigh Cordery, President



Exterior of St. Andrew Church before the installation of the stone on the walkway and stairs, and the marble wainscoting around the base.



The St. Andrew interior with a temporary Iconostasis. The marble iconostasis was carved in Syria and is on its way by ship to California..



Some of the clergy attending the Liturgical Seminar during Vespers.

Ladies of Saint John Saint John the Evangelist Orinda, CA

Ladies of St. John in Orinda, California organize first annual Lenten clothing drive, "Clothing for a Cause", aligning with local charities to deliver much needed professional and casual clothing.

At St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church in Orinda, California, the Ladies Auxillary (LoSJ) coordinated a two-day clothing drive to secure both professional and casual clothes for all ages. The brainchild of both Melanie Madanat and Sara Church Reese, the drive provided an additional focus for the parish on the acts of purging, cleansing and giving during the Lenten period. Over two consecutive Sundays, eleven wardrobe boxes of clothing and five bags of scarves, ties, accessories, and shoes were delivered to Wardrobe For Opportunity, about two dozen bags to the Bay Area Rescue Mission, and two bags to the Bay Area Crisis Nursery.

"We were delighted at the outpouring of support from the Parish", says Sara. "The quality of the professional clothing was outstanding." Wardrobe for Opportunity will use this clothing to prepare women and men to enter or re-enter the job market. Each will learn how to mix and match clothing to last them from interview to a full month's worth of outfits on the job.

Melanie Madanat first approached the LoSJ in August of 2010 with the idea of coordinating clothing donations to charities that were important to the Church. "I wanted to know where my clothing was going and that I was directly affecting individuals who are less fortunate" states Melanie. "I felt like this was an excellent opportunity for St. John members to show support for local charities and to live the example of our Christian faith."

Sara had the same idea and contacted the LoSJ separately. In late November, Sara and Melanie connected and ran with the project from there. They worked together over the coming months, with feedback from the LoSJ and its director Lisa Hanna, to develop a plan for the clothing drive. This included identifying appropriate charities, understanding their needs, devising logistics and preparing a communication plan.

Many folks from St. John helped in diverse ways to ensure the success of the clothing drive in addition to the people who donated clothing. Nick Nicola provided dozens of hangers and a sturdy metal rack on which volunteers sorted the clothing. Jim Reese, Sara's husband, helped to coordinate the movers, Albion Moving & Storage Company, who lent, delivered and set up the wardrobe boxes that were integral to the process. Afaf and George Wahbeh cleaned the professional clothing for free. Father George, our priest, delivered dry cleaned items to Wardrobe for Opportunity and Rula Adranly and Melanie Madanat delivered the items to the Bay Area Rescue Mission and Crisis Nursery.

As Lisa Hanna observed, "where two different women had the same idea independently, and a broad range of church members embraced the project so thoroughly, we feel like this was something the Holy Ghost intended us to do." The LoSJ hopes to make this event a part of the parish's annual Lenten observances and is willing to help other parishes wishing to explore a similar drive.



About the Charities

Wardrobe for Opportunity: Wardrobe for Opportunity works in partnership with the community to assist low-income individuals to "Find a Job, Keep a Job, and Build a Career." www.wardrobe.org

Bay Area Rescue Mission: To share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with the homeless and needy and empower them to change their world. <http://www.bayarearescue.org/>

Bay Area Crisis Nursery: The purpose of the Bay Area Crisis Nursery is to prevent abuse and neglect of children by providing support to families who are in stress or crisis. www.bacn.info

To learn more about St. John the Evangelist Orthodox Church please visit: <http://www.stjohnorinda.org/index.php>

Myrrhbearers
Antiochian Women of St. Stephen Orthodox Church
Campbell, CA 95008

Dear Sisters in Christ,

This past year, our women's group, Myrrhbearers, met monthly to discuss business and engage in a wonderful religious book study. In October, while we were reading *Bread & Water, Wine & Oil* by Archimandrite Meletios Weber, we were thrilled to help St. Stephen's host a very successful fundraiser for Fr. Meletios and the monks at the Monastery of St. John. The rest of our year was filled with organizing several church events, including the ever-popular dessert and service auction benefiting the NAB project and collecting Christmas presents for the poor in our community.

Now Great Lent has arrived. This year, as we launch into preparations for Holy Week and our Paschal BBQ celebration, our Myrrhbearers group continues to pray, work, and study together. Once again, our leadership in Myrrhbearers has changed. Last year's president has become our vice president in charge of event planning, and our previous secretary has stepped up to "learn the ropes" of being the Myrrhbearer president. The reorganization of our leadership is invigorating and we are eager for the next generation of St. Stephen women to continue our tradition of service and hospitality.

May the mercies of our Lord be upon you and your families as we journey through Lent.

In Christ,

Cherisse Bartusiak
Vice President, St. Stephen Antiochian Women



Antiochian Women Saint Peter the Apostle Pomona, CA

The Women of Saint Peter's have been very busy this winter. Our Parish purchased property from a small Chinese congregation who sent the money to Mongolia to build a Christian church there. The property had been lovingly cared for, but the battle against low funds and changing neighborhood demographics made a move expedient.



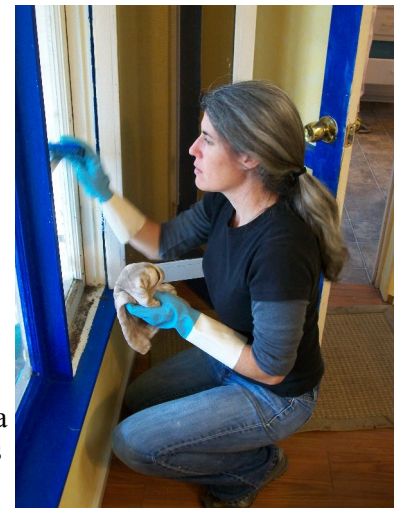
The Women quickly organized and made the house on the property their project. Every wall and cabinet needed paint and there were some more complicated issues to address. Our ladies became renovation pros and worked their tails off. Some contractors lended a hand for the more technical work as well. Through long hours and hard work, the house was transformed into Church School rooms, a Bookstore, A front reception area, Father Patrick's office, and of course the Kitchen and Bathroom. The house received the name "Ruth House" after our major benefactor Elsie 'Ruth' Dille of blessed memory.

We also, with the help of some strong men, packed and moved our parish to our new site. You never realize how much stuff you have until it's time to box it up!

While all this work was going on our parish member/ Architect / Project Manager Cindy O'Bleness was working long hours getting the construction done on the property so

that we could get our occupancy permit. The church building was transformed into a beautiful Orthodox Nave. There was a small building that the previous congregation had used as a fellowship hall. Cindy drew up the plans and created a janitor's closet and two large gorgeous bathrooms. There had been a pergola type structure at one end of the church building with dirt and carpet for picnic tables. Cindy had trees pulled out, the area graded and a patio poured for our coffee hour gatherings. She designed a roof with lights and ceiling fans and is working on canvas sides for inclement weather. We love it.

We still are waiting for approval for our sign. We need to landscape and put up a storage shed, but we cannot believe the transformation that has blossomed before our very eyes! Our entire congregation worked hard with very little strife which is an amazing thing when you have so many people working on the same project.



Our Women have continued to provide a meal for coffee hour and for those who need a little help at home. We are still working on selling our fundraising cookbook and hope to have it to several bookstores before summer.

Our third annual Talent show is also in the works for next fall and promises to be a fun night!

A garage sale is planned for June to provide money for the Thekla project and we look forward to our annual youth pilgrimages this coming summer to St Paisios and St Anthony's monasteries in Arizona. Last year the Women's groups was able to sponsor both a young men's and a young women's trip and all were greatly benefited. We thank God for these beautiful spiritual opportunities.

God has been good to us this past year. His blessings never cease.

