

The Antiochian Diocese of Los Angeles and the West

Diocese of Eagle River & the Northwest

# Antiochian Women's Newsletter

Fall 2016



**Special thanks to all women across the Diocese who are involved and play a pivotal role in bringing the churches together. Those mentioned here and those not mentioned.**

**You are the fabric of our communities.**

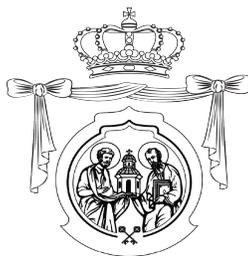
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His Eminence

The Most Reverend

Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and

Metropolitan of

All North America

## Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America



Beloved Antiochian Women of our Archdiocese:

I greet you all in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His Mother, the most Holy Theotokos as we begin a new ecclesiastical year together working for the glory of God.

The book of 1 Chronicles, 16:11, says “Seek the Lord and His strength; seek His face continually.” This verse expresses the essence of our Orthodox theology. As the people of God, no matter what role we have in His Holy Church, we are to seek Him continually. When we look at someone’s face, when we look into his or her eyes, we can tell a lot about that person and see who he or she is. The same happens with God. When we seek to see God’s “face”, we become one with Him. We are enveloped with His love and begin to see the beauty and joy of conforming to the divine will. But where do we seek and find God’s face?

As we conform our lives to the will of God, we then begin to see clearly the image of God in our neighbor. This neighbor is not just our spouses or our children or our family and friends whom we usually love very freely, but rather the beggar in the street, the criminal, the co-worker who ignores us, the schoolmate who has cheated us, the relative who does not speak to us or the displaced person thousands of miles away. Conforming our lives to God causes us to want to act and to move others to action. That is why our project for 2017 is “Strengthening the Ministries of our Church”. By strengthening our ministries, we can have an impact on our neighbors and ourselves-on their salvation and on our own. We can, in fact, begin to have an impact on the society in which we live. By looking inward, we can begin to clearly look outward. By repenting and turning back to God, we can become a light to others that will attract them to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church so that they might know Christ and set their sights on the Kingdom of God.

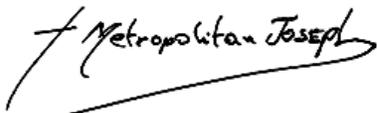
In the litanies of the Church, we are always praying that we remember the most holy Theotokos and all the saints. In doing so, we ask that “we commend ourselves *and each other* and all our lives unto Christ our God.” We can see that we are connected to one another as the body of Christ. When we sin or separate ourselves from God, we also separate ourselves from His body, the Church. Therefore when this happens, it is necessary to not only make ourselves right with God, but with His community, the Church. We do this by repenting and by the mystery or sacrament of Penance (Confession). St. John Chrysostom said in one of his sermons that the Church is a hospital for sinners, not a hotel or museum

for saints. We come to the Church to be healed and to change by the power of the Gospel, by Christ's healing hand, by the holy mysteries, by the strength we gain from the saints and our brothers and sisters in Christ and by the healing power of true and sincere repentance.

Finally, the Church is not only a place we should run to in times of need, but a training ground for all of us during "good" times so we can be prepared to handle the bad times. Just as an athlete must train for a marathon before he can expect to run a long race, so too we as Christians must constantly be in training to be able to endure when difficult times come in our lives. If we ignore the Church during the good times then we will not be "in shape" to deal with the difficult times that we are faced with in the journey of life and the journey of our salvation. In relation to your service to others as Antiochian Women, you too must train and be ready for the race ahead in order to be the example to others I wrote about at the beginning of this letter. Look inward in order to repent, prepare yourselves for difficult times and be good examples to others in order to not just give them a piece of bread, but to lead them to the Church and, ultimately, help them on the path to the Kingdom of God.

Finally, I pray that, together, we will set and achieve our goals for the coming year so that we might build up our God-protected archdiocese through our faith and through laboring in His holy vineyard.

Your Father in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Joseph". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left and then curves back under the name.

**+JOSEPH**

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

# A Message From Our Spiritual Advisor

V. Rev. Fr. David Hovik

Dear Ladies:

## HEALING: OVERCOMING OUR PASSIONS

At the top of 6,500 foot Mt Athos is the Small Chapel of the Transfiguration and off to the side of it- is set-up an Immense Iron Cross: TWO important traits of our Life in Christ.

One, our voluntary embracing of the CROSS in our life and two, the Eucharistic Life we participate in through the Church.

St. Silouan the Athonite said: *No matter how much we may study, it is not possible to come to know God unless we live according to His commandments, for God is NOT known by science, but by the Holy Spirit.* And he continues: *Many philosophers and learned men came to the belief that God exists, but they did not know God. It is one thing to believe that God exists and ANOTHER to KNOW HIM. If someone has come to know God by the Holy Spirit, his soul will burn with love for God day & night, & his soul cannot be bound to any earthly thing.*

The goal is for us to COME TO KNOW GOD! To know Him Intimately, Deeply! One thing that blocks this knowledge is our passions. We CANNOT KNOW GOD DEEPLY while they are in control of our life.

Sin in the West is viewed primarily as a LEGAL MATTER: it's seen as a Transgression or Rebellion against God's Law. However, in the Orthodox Church Sin is an ILLNESS (it is a Medical Issue)! Our Soul is Wounded and has become Diseased.

The Church exists to CURE this WOUND and the resulting PASSIONS. However, for us to be cured requires co-operation with Christ and with the priest (the physician). A Priest is a true Psycho-therapist: a therapist of your Psyche (your SOUL).

When you come to confession, it should be preceded by you offering up an earnest Prayer for his discernment (as your spiritual physician). That he would know how to treat your particular illness (the particular PASSIONS that YOU are battling).

A Council known as the Quinisext (5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup>) Council was held in the year 692 and there were 102 Canons (Guidelines) that it produced. The 102nd Canon (the last one) is all about the proper TREATMENTS that the Church should use to HEAL its members.

Every Spiritually Sick person is to follow the Church's General Guidelines for Healing: We partake of the Sacraments, we go to Confession regularly and we follow the Ascetical Guidelines of the Church (keeping the Fasts, etc).

But each of us is unique and that means that we also need a PARTICULAR method that is suited to our particular Spiritual Illness.

Right away, you can see our challenge: There are some people who experience very little healing because they are unwilling to even follow the most basic guidance of the Church.

What would that Basic Guidance be? 1. Sunday is the Lord's Day and apart from illness (or something catastrophic) you would always be at the Divine Liturgy, prepared to partake of the Body & Blood of Christ! 2. We don't blow off Wednesday & Friday Fasting & we certainly keep the four major Fasts of the Church Year! 3. We go to Confession on a Regular Basis (at least 5 -6 times a year). 4. We work our Family & Work schedules around the Major Feasts of the Church and other services. 5. We have a Regular Rule of Prayer that we keep.

That is a small sampling and the point I am trying to underscore is that those are Guidelines that apply to Every Orthodox Christian down through the Centuries: that is CHRISTIANITY-101.

That is the STARTING POINT of our attempt to be Healed from our PASSIONS. Sometimes a priest (a Spiritual Physician) can only go so far because a person (the patient) does not want to change.

Some people are offended (some deeply offended) that the Church *guides* them in How & What to Eat; in How to Spend their Sundays & other Holy Days throughout the Year; in how often they should Confess or Pray.

Yet, we would say that these are: MILD MEDICINES.

So, I want to pause for a moment, and ask you to consider your life in the CHURCH at this most Basic Level. If you want to get well, the starting point is the application of these Mild Medicines!

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann said: In the FALL, we ceased being hungry for the Creator (God) & began to hunger for His Creation (this world).

In applying these most basic medicines, then, we are trying to rekindle a Hunger for God.

Canon 102 actually instructs the Priest or Spiritual Father: *To consider the quality of sin & the readiness of the sinner for conversion. [the priest]... ought first of all to consider the disposition of him who has sinned, & to see whether he [or she] tends to health or [on the contrary] makes the disease worse.*

My task, as a priest, is to come up with a SUITABLE METHOD OF TREATMENT for each person that comes to me for confession.

The Canon says that the Father Confessor is to apply the particular means of treatment with KINDNESS. It even cautions that excessive treatment can be HARMFUL.

What can we conclude in all of this? 1. There are people in the Church that really do not want to put forth any effort to be healed and that they will remain in an unhealed state. 2. There are others who do want to be healed and are willing to follow the Basic Guidelines of the Church and they will experience some-measure of Healing. 3. There are also those who are willing to go deeper in their pursuit of healing and the Spiritual Father has to carefully discern the proper treatment program for each person in that category. For some it will be GENTLE and for others it will be a bit MORE STRINGENT!

The priest's responsibility is two-fold: 1. to always help you move to the next level (we can't impose it – it's all about you're your Free-will) and 2. to prescribe the proper Medicine: Mild for those who are easily crushed or inclined to despair & more Stringent for those who can take it.

CAN YOU SEE HOW DESPARETLY A PRIEST NEEDS YOUR PRAYERS?

In Christ's Love,

Fr. David





THE MOST REVEREND  
METROPOLITAN JOSEPH  
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# 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 ✧



## A Message From Our President

Reverend Clergy and Beloved Sisters in Christ,

Serve the LORD with gladness; come before Him with joyful songs! Psalm 100:2

I'd like to begin by expressing our thanks to our Fall Gathering hosts at St. Simeon, one of our newest parish communities! We truly appreciate all of your hard work, preparations & plans that made for a wonderful time together.

As I begin the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of my term of office I want to reiterate what a blessing it is to serve as President of the Antiochian Women of our Diocese. During the 1<sup>st</sup> year, I had the opportunity to visit a dozen parishes, in 4 states, which allowed me to the honor of meeting Sisters in Christ from around our Diocese & learn of the good works & fellowship that occurs in their parishes. I am committed to continuing to reach out across our Diocese & getting to know more of you, and have visited 3 more since our PLC. I really enjoy these visits! We can & should learn from each other & I encourage that when you are traveling or if there is a parish not far from you that you visit with them & get to know each other.

Our Diocese being spread out across such a large geographical area (8 states, 4 provinces over 2 countries!) I again want to encourage you to seek information & communicate through the blessing of technology! Social Media is a great resource for us to stay connected. Please take a moment to like our Facebook page by searching for Antiochian Women Diocese of Los Angeles & the West or click the first link below (also see a snapshot of our Facebook page below.

- Antiochian Women Diocese of Los Angeles & the West [Facebook Page \(Click Here\)](#)
- Our Diocese of LA & the West web page has a dedicated section for the Antiochian Women at: <http://www.antiochianladiocese.org/women.html> it's been recently updated & I encourage you to take a look!
- Also, on the Archdiocese web page there is also a section for Antiochian Women that I encourage you to visit at: <http://antiochian.org/women>

During this upcoming year there is much for our ministry to be involved in – much of which you'll find in this newsletter. Additionally, information will continue to be sent out via email & also posted on our Diocese web page & our Facebook page. It is imperative that we have the name of the correct contact for your parish & her contact information. Please send me an email with any updates.

I am very excited to announce our new St. Xenia Military Ministry! Many of our parish communities have military service men & women. Thank you to Pauline Magnusson of Holy Cross in Palmdale who is the Coordinator of this new ministry. We will begin by forming a list of those that serve and share that list across our Diocese so that we can join in prayer for their well-being. As the ministry grows, there will be opportunities to reach out to those who serve. I cannot possibly explain how proud I am of all the humanitarian Acts of Mercy going on all over our Diocese. At the parish level, you are working to provide help to those in need in your local communities, to Orthodox projects and charitable works that have impact all over our globe. May our Lord continue to bless & encourage you all to continue this important work.

A common challenge across our archdiocese is the struggle to keep our young people involved in the life of the church and by extension to become involved in our Antiochian Women ministry. Let us all make it a focus to reach out to the younger women in our parishes, so they know as members of our parishes they too are Antiochian Women and part of our **“Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others.”**

Please feel free to call upon me with questions or feedback. I look forward to continue working together remembering we are one family. Please stay in touch. Let us know what is happening with the Antiochian Women of your parish!!

In HIS Service,

*Charmaine E. Darmour*

Charmaine E. Darmour, President

Cell: 714-287-1266 email: [antiochianwomenla@gmail.com](mailto:antiochianwomenla@gmail.com)





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# ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

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## “Strengthening the Ministries of Our Church”

**“Fear not, for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10)**

**W**e are excited to announce the theme of our 2017 Antiochian Women Project:

**“Strengthening the Ministries of our Church”**

This theme is a distillation of the sweeping vision which Metropolitan JOSEPH openly shared with us at the summer meetings in July. His Eminence spoke with farsighted boldness and passion about the many challenges and opportunities which lay before our God-protected Archdiocese. His vision is of a vigorous Church actively proclaiming our faith in Jesus Christ and lovingly ministering to the broken world around us. This is already a description of the ministries in many of our parishes, but to keep moving forward while broadening our active ministries, we must reinforce and strengthen our foundations.

The Antiochian Women are always ready to “Encourage, Support, and Fund” the godly ministries of our Archdiocese. We have proved this, time and again, with many generous fundraising projects over the past 43 years. This year’s Project gives us an opportunity to make a significant contribution to *strengthen the fundamental ministries* of our Archdiocese.

In the Project poster, the lights of the cities and towns across North America represent the thousands of faithful men, women, and youth of our Archdiocese showing forth the Light of Christ through their selfless ministries within the Church and to the world around us.

The funds we raise this year will go to strengthen the following ministries in our Archdiocese: planning senior housing projects; founding missions; supporting seminarians; encouraging youth ministries; protecting the unborn; teaching the Faith; caring for the elderly and those in prisons, nursing homes and hospitals; helping to feed, house, and clothe the poor; and inspiring monastic vocations.

As the quote from Isaiah assures us, it is God’s strength which will enable us to “make firm” the foundation of His Church.(Eph 2:19-20) His Eminence has given us perhaps the most far-reaching and wide-ranging challenge of any Project to date. It is a tremendous challenge. God has inspired Sayidna JOSEPH with this vision; God will strengthen us to do our part. Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

Thank you, in advance, for your hard work and faithfulness.

Kh. Suzanne Murphy  
 Vice President of the North American Board & NAB Project Coordinator

+ STRENGTHENING THE MINISTRIES OF OUR CHURCH +  
+ SENIORS + SENIOR HOUSING PROJECTS + ESTABLISH MISSIONS + MONASTERIES +  
+ FEED, HOUSE, CLOTHE THE POOR + TEACH THE FAITH + PROTECT THE UNBORN +  
+ SEMINARIANS + CARE FOR THE ELDERLY + YOUTH MINISTRIES +



ENCOURAGING  
SUPPORTING  
FUNDING

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN  
2017 PROJECT

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA - NORTH AMERICAN BOARD

# News Around the Diocese

## St. Mark -- Irvine, CA

On Saturday, October 22nd, the St. Mark, Irvine-CA Antiochian Women and Friends held their 6th Annual Breast Cancer Awareness Walk around Mission Viejo Lake. The next day, following Divine Liturgy, there was a luncheon with all proceeds to benefit Living Beyond Breast Cancer, which helps survivors who are rebuilding their lives. We are proud of the increasing participation of women who walked, donated their time, money and talent to make it happen. Together we can make a difference.



## The Antiochian Women of St. Luke -- Garden Grove, CA

*For the past few years, the Antiochian Women of St. Luke have been focusing on their charitable giving. Through the support and generosity of our parishioners, the ladies have been able to:*

- Send financial gifts to our Diocesan seminarians during the Lenten and Advent Seasons
- Send donations to St. Barbara's Monastery in Santa Paula; The Monastery of the Holy Assumption in Calistoga; and Holy Resurrection Monastery in Temecula
- Send monetary donations to The Antiochian Orthodox Church of the Annunciation, Calgary to help with their support of Syrian refugees.
- Purchase stoles for our protodeacon
- Help with new Altar cloths
- Help with providing lunches and health kits for FOCUS

*The ladies have also participated in NAB Book Club, Parish Life Conference, Fall Delegates meeting, attended movies together.*

## **St. George -- Phoenix, AZ**

We have had a very busy year with planning for the PLC along with so many of our other projects and events that have taken place. We are also preparing for our Annual Food Festival at the end of September, October 1 & 2. Our ladies have been baking, cooking, and preparing for this big event. We have our Bookstore to get ready and our Ladies Table to greet new guest and sell our special aprons and cookbooks. We have a lot planned for the rest of the year with our Bible gatherings and luncheons/meetings, our Za'atar Bake sales, Holiday Bake Sale, Thanksgiving food gifts, and our Annual Christmas meal.

We are always continuing our outreach program, helping those in need, our elderly, helping them with hospital and finding proper living assisted homes, visiting the sick, and for hungry people. Still providing help kits to street people, with water, socks, Band-Aids, food bars, canned meat, cookies, and a coupon for food to McDonald's and a Rescue Mission card with locations for help and phone numbers. We also have our ongoing non-perishable food collection that we send to our area food-bank every week for families in need. Our charitable services go beyond the work we do as a group, but also, as individuals, many of our wonderful ladies are in many other helpful services for many outside projects and helpful to so many people in need, May God Bless them.

Lastly, we continue with our services for baking the weekly Holy Bread Offering and when asked the Memorial Wheat in memory of loved ones, and when asked to prepare the Meal of Mercy for a bereaved family. I could continue with more of our good works and deeds, but we are all glad to offer our services if we are able, where ever the need is and when we are called upon to act as a group representing our Church and our Ladies.

Wishing you all God's Blessings and peace.

## **Prayer of the Antiochian Women**

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.

## St. Ignatius of Antioch -- Twin Falls, ID

In the spring our book club started reading “Royal Monastic: Princess Ileana of Romania” by Bev Cook, this is the story of Mother Alexandra. We have about five or six ladies from our parish who gather together every Thursday afternoon for an hour, we usually bring a small lunch with us and read our way through a chapter or so at a time. We have opened it to our entire parish and are sometimes joined by some of the men as well as some of our younger members. We have found the story of Mother Alexandra to be a very moving one, and as a group, we have found ourselves rejoicing in her triumphs and weeping with her in her sorrows and trials.



The ladies in our parish started this small gathering about 5 years ago when a secular book club they had been attending was disbanded. It has slowly grown over the years and we now have a small but tight knit group of people who gather once a week to read and have some fun discussion. Sometimes we gather at someone’s home and sometimes we gather in our parish hall. It is only an hour a week, but in that hour we have built strong relationships with plenty of friendly camaraderie in the mix. It is a time for us to discuss what we have learned or to share personal stories in relation to what we are reading about, and a time to fellowship together. We have learned the value of good conversation as well as many lessons to be gleaned from the books that we have read and we always look forward to our Thursday afternoons to once again gather together and lose ourselves in another great book. Our book club has been a huge blessing to us, and we pray for the Lord’s guidance and grace as we continue to grow and learn about the beauty of the Orthodox faith.

# Antiochian Women's Retreat Pacific North West Deanery



"From Here to Eternity, 'Learning to Love, as God loves'" this was the theme of the second annual Antiochian Women's Retreat in the Pacific Northwest Deanery. Held on Saturday, October 1st, over fifty of our Sisters in Christ gathered together in fellowship at our parish of St. Andrew in Arlington, WA. This year the guest speaker was the V. Reverend Gregory Horton, pastor of Holy Myrrh bearers Antiochian Church in Bonner's Ferry, Idaho. It was a day of learning, fellowship & of course love.

# October Fall Gathering Hosted by St. Simeon

## *Antiochian Women*



## *Diocese of LA & the West*

St. Simeon in Santa Clarita October 7-9th graciously hosted our Fall Gathering. On behalf of all who were able to participate we thank them for their hospitality. On Saturday, 26 ladies attended our Antiochian Women's meeting representing 12 parishes. Updates were provided on our new AW Project and our new Book Club. We shared ideas on how to encourage participation by younger women of our parishes, and introduced our new Military Ministry.

\*\*A most exciting moment was a unanimous vote to send support, in the amount of \$2,000 to our sister community in Calgary as they provide aid & support for nearly 60 Syrian refugee families that are under their care.

Please keep these families in your prayers as they start their new lives.

# Stories of Inspiration

## **Losing and regaining faith!**

I am telling my story hoping it will be of some comfort to others facing difficult situations.

As children both my husband and I were schooled in the values of the Church. It was a lifelong positive association, giving me strength as I lived by the teachings. My faith was deep and important to me.

Before I was twenty I had fallen in love with the man that became my husband, my companion and my best friend. For medical reasons we were not able to have children. Together, we travelled to work, we socialized as a team, travelled to many parts of the world, and had an extensive number of friends and associates. We were involved in many aspects of the Church, which provided comfort and guidance, giving us a quality of life for which we were truly thankful.

It was a marriage of love, a marriage of commitment to our faith and a marriage treasured by both of us during our almost 49 years together. While we were vacationing tragedy struck when, without any signs of poor health, my darling husband passed away very suddenly. I was devastated. I was mad at the world and rightly or wrongly blamed my God. Why would He do this to me? I went into a very deep period of anxiety and depression, drinking excessively and living on an improper diet. Tears were a regular happening and I came to the point where I wanted my life to end thereby giving thoughts to how and when. I prayed morning, noon and night, that God would let me die that day.

What happened then? Reflecting back I felt that it was divine guidance that led me to helping a long-term friend and his wife who were having serious medical problems and needed someone to help them. I got involved, I got motivated and I became the vitalized person I once was. Others told me that I was once again a caring, loving individual.

I found it very difficult to go to church as I was reminded how very much I missed hearing my husband sing beside me. Slowly, with the love of my family, the church family and friends, I was able to find comfort in my church, which I had dearly missed. As well, I found love and support from the cherished, wonderful long-time friendships I had. I feel now that God did not punish me, but gave me strength to live a wonderful life. It's said that "when one is left, there is a reason" and I believe mine is to help family, friends, and others in need.

I am also convinced that once again it was divine intervention that connected me with a new friend who has brought much happiness to my life.

My message to all is, do not give up, have faith we all can live again, and trust in our Lord.

Nancy  
St. Vincent of Lerins Orthodox Church. Saskatoon, SK

## An Unforeseen Opportunity to Serve

What began as our parish (St. Michael, Van Nuys) extending love & support to two of our own resulted in our being blessed to serve those in need. Like many of our parishes, we have members of our parish family serving in the military. For us, it is a pair of brothers, Tyler, serving in the US Army and Ryan serving as a US Marine. Last year, Christmas 2015 – Tyler was deployed to Afghanistan and our Antiochian Women made plans to “adopt” Tyler’s squad of 12 soldiers. (Unbeknownst to his parents – Ryan had made plans to surprise his family for Christmas so his care packages were sent in February.)

Then we ran into a fabulous problem – our parish responded with such overwhelming generosity that we had more items than we could have imagined and a significant amount of monetary donations as well. On the Sunday after Thanksgiving, we busied ourselves like St. Nick’s helpers and packed 17 boxes to ship to Afghanistan. Each member of the squad received a customized box that included a homemade Christmas stocking made with love by one of our ladies, and the additional boxes were filled with items to share. Packing the boxes was nothing but sheer joy, as our ladies & our youth worked together knowing how important our “mission of love” was.

A few weeks later the good news came from Tyler that our packages had all made it half way around the world! Tyler sent a letter to the parish and said, “Things like this is what boosts our morale and gives us a little bit of home over here in Afghanistan.”



Remember, we had that problem of having had an incredibly generous response to our appeal? We thought it would be resolved when in February when we sent another 12 boxes to Tyler & his squad in Afghanistan and also sent packages to Ryan who was now serving in Venezuela at our US Embassy. By late Spring Tyler had safely returned stateside, for which we all gave thanks to our Lord for watching over him. However, we still had a *significant* amount of the monetary donations leftover! At that point we could not have foreseen the opportunity to serve that was about to come our way.

We reached out to both Tyler & Ryan to seek their input on how best to use our leftover funds. As it turned out, Ryan had a special & urgent request. The situation in Venezuela is one of great strife & the people are suffering greatly. The people are unable to obtain the most basic of food and personal items. Ryan shared with us that our Marines serving at the US Embassy had begun sharing their own care packages with the non-military personnel who worked side by side with them at the Embassy. These were the cooks, the groundskeepers, the drivers – local people desperately trying to provide for their own families in a country riddled with turmoil. Could he request his home parish to help these people? How could we not respond to this call for service, from a son of our parish?

Once again, we shopped, and together our St. Michael family packed boxes to be shipped off to Venezuela. This time however, we were not packing coffee, granola bars, magazines & other assorted snacks – we were packing essential items that we take for granted will always be available – toilet paper, soap, lotion, over-the-counter medications like vitamins & Tylenol, and other basic items. We all felt blessed to be able to honor Ryan’s request.

Once the packages arrived, Ryan distributed them and sent the following letter that clearly explains the situation and the impact the Venezuelan people have made on him, and now on our parish family.



**Ryan wrote:** *“I am sure many of you know that the situation in this country is no less than shameful. Venezuela holds the largest oil supply in the world, but yet the local government is unable to supply the country with basic necessities such as water, power, food, and holistic needs. Consequently, crime has riddled the country in order to support families. So much crime, that Venezuela has become the second most dangerous country in the world outside of a combat zone. Thousands of Venezuelans travel back and forth from their borders just to obtain food, medicine, and water from other countries in support of their families. With neighboring countries becoming frustrated with the constant invasions; people are being imprisoned for their*

*attempts, further crippling their families. The items in these packages are very useful and have prevented more venturing by the people who have received them.*

*Of all the countries I have had the opportunity of living in; the people of Venezuela have demonstrated the highest level of pride and love for their country. They desperately want to strive for a better way of life and their only concern is to make life suitable for their future.*

*So while I have been distributing these donations there was more that was received than what meets the eye. Creams, shampoo, deodorants, soaps, and toothpaste came into the hands of families who have lost the luxury of obtaining such needs. However, it did not take a lot of effort to see what else was inside these boxes. Even though I have been begging my parents to no longer send items for me, **what I received from these packages was so much greater than anything I have ever received before. And that was to be able to witness love. As each person clung to ointments and gasped with relief, I had the honor to experience love.... These reactions were out of love. Love for their children, love for their elders; love for humanity.** I think since I left home, I have found that a lot of the world's cures are beyond politics and above military force. **It takes humane acts of generosity, kindness, and understanding that no matter what flag you live under; in the end we are children of God.** It disappoints me that it takes moments like these to understand this. For everyday should be spent in love with each other and respect towards one another. So in turn, I cannot thank you enough for giving me such an amazing gift.*

*There are truths to be witnessed and not exploited; all it takes is the simple gestures to interact with people in order to find them. For your generous donations; many Venezuelans are able to witness the humane acts that you have bestowed upon them and have brought us closer to unity as children of God.”*

In Matthew 25:40, we are taught, “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

On behalf of our Antiochian Women of St. Michael, Van Nuys and our US Marines who are truly serving “the least of these my brethren” please keep our brothers & sisters, the people of Venezuela in your prayers.

**May God bless & keep in HIS care all of our military personnel serving all over the world.**



# Introducing Our New Military Ministry Coordinator

I am an Antiochian Woman...

...because the mercy of God compelled me to “come and follow Him” one day, about 6 years ago, when I was happily a member of the faith community I’d been raised in. That journey out of the rich faith tradition I’d been raised in since birth started in the unlikely setting of being a lay community chaplain in a law enforcement agency. It led to a 3 year journey of being received into the catechumenate by an Antiochian Orthodox military chaplain at RAF Mildenhall while on annual tour with my Air Force Reserve unit, learning more about the faith at St. Anna Greek Orthodox Church in Roseville, California, and being received into the Holy Orthodox Church at our current parish of Holy Cross Antiochian Orthodox Church in Palmdale, California

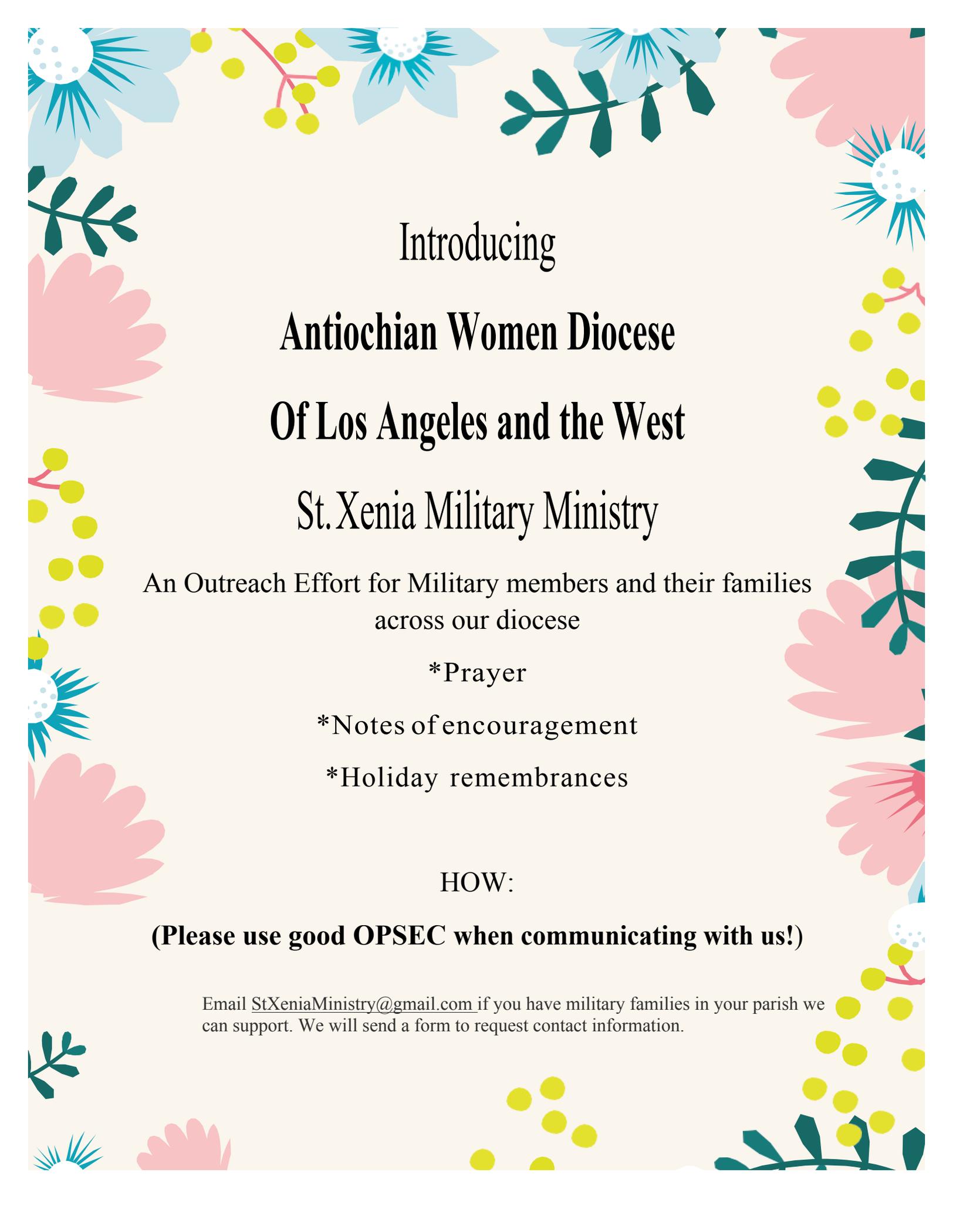
...because as a daughter of God, a wife to my beloved Carl for 14 years, and a homeschooling mother to four beautiful children, the daily effort to work out my salvation is best done in connection with others – especially my sisters in Christ.

...because I believe that, like St. Xenia, herself a military wife, I must continually listen for where it is that I am needed, learning to joyfully serve and love Christ in each person.



- Pauline Fletcher Magnusson

Email [StXeniaMinistry@gmail.com](mailto:StXeniaMinistry@gmail.com)



Introducing

**Antiochian Women Diocese**

**Of Los Angeles and the West**

**St. Xenia Military Ministry**

An Outreach Effort for Military members and their families  
across our diocese

\*Prayer

\*Notes of encouragement

\*Holiday remembrances

HOW:

**(Please use good OPSEC when communicating with us!)**

Email [StXeniaMinistry@gmail.com](mailto:StXeniaMinistry@gmail.com) if you have military families in your parish we can support. We will send a form to request contact information.



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☞ A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS ☞

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



## A Message From Our Religious Coordinator

Dear Sisters in Christ,

I hope that you are all well and able to spend some time outside enjoying the beauty that God surrounds us with during the Fall. This time of year is important, because I think there is much symbolism in the change of seasons. If one were to stop and think about it, our lives very much follow the same pattern as the seasons. In the Spring as in birth there is much hope and promise with new life. Then you get to enjoy the fun, carefree time of summer and youth. As the years pass we are blessed to experience a Fall season. This season is punctuated by change. Vibrant colors of Spring and Summer change to a deeper, richer form. Roots have had time to grow deep and strong providing necessary stability. It is in this time that one can reflect on past joys and sorrows. The flowers of our lives still are present just changed externally, with a different beauty. Finally, we have Winter...the final season. During this season of our lives much has changed. Some look at it and see desolation and cold without any hope. Others are able, through their Faith to see the warmth sparkling on the surface of the ice-covered ground, or reflecting off of a snowflake. This is a quiet time that God, in His infinite wisdom, allows us in order to prepare for the end of our life.

The holy righteous Simeon the God-Receiver, who is commemorated on October 8<sup>th</sup>, is a good example of how to weather a long Winter season. St Simeon was translating a book of the Prophet Isaiah, and read the words: “Behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a Son” (Is 7:14). He thought that “virgin” was inaccurate, and he wanted to correct the text to read “woman.” At that moment an angel appeared to him and held back his hand saying, “You shall see these words fulfilled. You shall not die until you behold Christ the Lord born of a pure and spotless Virgin.” From this day, St Simeon lived in expectation of the Promised Messiah. Tradition says that he died at the great age of 360. I’m sure that by this age he was more than ready to leave this life for the Resurrection!

We must take care and realize the importance of embracing each stage of our lives, because each unique time gives us something precious which helps form us into who we need to be. With each struggle the choice must be made to view it as a cross too heavy to bear, or a gift that allows us to grow. I know that many of you are struggling right now, and my prayer is that you will find some

light in this darkness. Look around with your soul and you will see Him everywhere, and feel His warmth and love surrounding you.

The Antiochian Women have great resources available on our web page <http://www.antiochiandiocese.org/women.html>. At the bottom of the page, on the right, there is a link to Teachings on Our Faith which has much information. Our Facebook page is also a great way to stay connected with each other. I have also attached information on the woman saints that are being commemorated October 8, the day of the Fall Gathering. Pray for one another, and let God's bright light shine from you into this darkened world. Stay well and keep God and his Holy Orthodox Faith as your anchor and hope.

With love in Christ,

Diakonissa Joanna Townsend

Religious Coordinator Diocese of LA & the West

## 2015-2017 Board Directory

<p><b>Charmaine Darmour</b> – <i>President</i>            Cell: 714-287-1266            Email: <a href="mailto:antiochianwomenla@gmail.com">antiochianwomenla@gmail.com</a></p>	<p><b>Michele Baba</b> – <i>Vice President/NAB Project</i>            Cell: 949-306-5455            Email: <a href="mailto:michele_baba@yahoo.com">michele_baba@yahoo.com</a></p>
<p><b>Lauren Malouf</b> – <i>Secretary</i>            Cell: 818-687-0406            Email: <a href="mailto:lmalouf@hchc.edu">lmalouf@hchc.edu</a></p>	<p><b>Ramona Blanski</b> – <i>Treasurer</i>            Cell: 661-433-9561            Email: <a href="mailto:blanskir@yahoo.com">blanskir@yahoo.com</a></p>
<p><b>Dia. Suhaila Sweis</b> – <i>Public Relations</i>            Cell: 650-455-9790            Email: <a href="mailto:sue.sweis55@gmail.com">sue.sweis55@gmail.com</a></p>	<p><b>V. Rev. Fr. David Hovik</b> – <i>Spiritual Advisor</i>            Cell: 425-345-7536            Email: <a href="mailto:frdhovik@comcast.net">frdhovik@comcast.net</a></p>
<p><b>Georgette Malouf</b> – <i>Spring Retreat/Scholarship</i>            Cell: 818-391-6217            Email: <a href="mailto:gette0324@yahoo.com">gette0324@yahoo.com</a></p>	<p><b>Christie Robinson</b> – <i>Humanitarian</i>            Cell: 805-455-4312            Email: <a href="mailto:christie.d.robinson@gmail.com">christie.d.robinson@gmail.com</a></p>
<p><b>Melinda Bentz</b> – <i>Immediate Past President</i>            Cell: 661-435-1659            Email: <a href="mailto:melbentz@yahoo.com">melbentz@yahoo.com</a></p>	<p><b>Dia. Joanna Townsend</b> – <i>Religious</i>            Cell: 208-777-2152            Email: <a href="mailto:little.lady@mac.com">little.lady@mac.com</a></p>



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 ✧ DIOCESE OF EAGLE RIVER & THE NORTHWEST ✧



## Humanitarian Report

Christ is in Our Midst:

Last year I was so impressed by all the good works being done throughout our Diocese in so many different areas including our IOCC Kits. Although at this time there is not a designated Act of Mercy for the Antiochian Women of our Archdiocese, we would like you to focus on various charities and projects that are special to your Parish and community. You are encouraged to look for opportunities for community involvement and Acts of Mercy at all times and not just during the Holiday Seasons. We pray for God's mercy at all times and are called to BE merciful at all times as well.

This is a list of just a few ideas, but please don't let this limit your creativity!

- Prepare backpack weekend meals for children of low-income families; schools can make suggestions about the type of foods and when to deliver them to the school
- Pay the power bill for a needy family (schools and agencies often have a list of families who need this type of financial help)
- Visit elderly the elderly or infirmed from your parish community
- Send greeting cards (seasonal, get well, thinking of you, etc. signed by several parishioners, including youth, to those on your parish prayer list
- Make contributions to your priest's discretionary fund for requests that come to him
- Establish and maintain a parish food pantry and/or clothes closet or donate to/work with those in your community
- Plan to adopt a child or family from a community "Angel Tree" at Christmas
- If your community has immigrants/refugees from Syria or other countries, find out how your chapter/parish can help them feel welcome and what needs they have
- Support the USO and parish members and others who serve our country in the military
- Remember young adults from your parish away at college or in the military
- Remember your parish clergy and their wives and seminarians and their families with greeting cards, gift cards, and other forms of encouragement; remember retired clergy and the Khouria

Please keep track of the entire Acts of Mercy happening in your community and report them to me in January and June (don't worry, I will remind you). It is always so wonderful to hear from all of you.

In closing, I would suggest that you consider involving the men of the parish, Teen SOYO and youth Sunday School in some of these Acts of Mercy. Work together, side-by-side.

Yours sister in Christ,  
 Christie Speier Robinson Humanitarian Coordinator      christie.d.robinson@gmail.com

# Antiochian Women's Scholarship

Congratulations to Mibrak Gebereselsaie of our parish of St. Ignatius of Antioch Orthodox Christian Church in Twin Falls, Idaho who is a recipient of one of the 3 NAB Antiochian Women's Scholarships awarded this year. Each year the North American Board (NAB) of Antiochian Women awards scholarships in the amount of \$500 to aid women of our Antiochian Archdiocese return to education or training in order to improve their circumstances & that of their families. Mibrak shared with us in the Fall 2015 Diocese Newsletter that she is a refugee from Eritrea where she was raised in the Eritrean Orthodox Church & did not expect to find an Orthodox Church when she arrived here in America.

Our best wishes to Mibrak as she pursues her educational goals!

Applications for the 2017 Scholarships will be available in March. Applicants must be female over 26 yrs of age, in good standing & active at a Antiochian Parish, applying for or registered in an academic or trade program of study & demonstrate financial need.



# 2017 ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN'S LENTEN RETREAT

DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES AND THE WEST

ST. NICHOLAS CAMP, FRAZIER PARK, CA

MARCH 31- APRIL 2, 2017



**SAVE THE DATE ~ DETAILS COMING SOON**

For questions, please contact  
Georgette Malouf at 818-563-2838  
or email: [gette0324@yahoo.com](mailto:gette0324@yahoo.com)

# Antiochian Women Book Club

Do you know that we have an Antiochian Women's Book Club? All across our Antiochian Archdiocese our Sisterhood is being encouraged to participate. This year's book selection is "**Hinds Feet on High Places**" by Hannah Gurnard. This book is a beautiful allegory dramatizing the yearning of God's children to be led to new heights of love, joy and victory.

In this story, we follow Much-Afraid on her spiritual journey through difficult places with her two companions, sorrow and suffering. Learn how Much-Afraid overcomes her tormenting fears as she passes through many dangers and mounts at last to the High Places. There she gains a new name and returns to her valley of service, transformed by her union with the loving Shepherd.

We encourage you to join in reading this book and also to form a Book Club with the women in your parish.

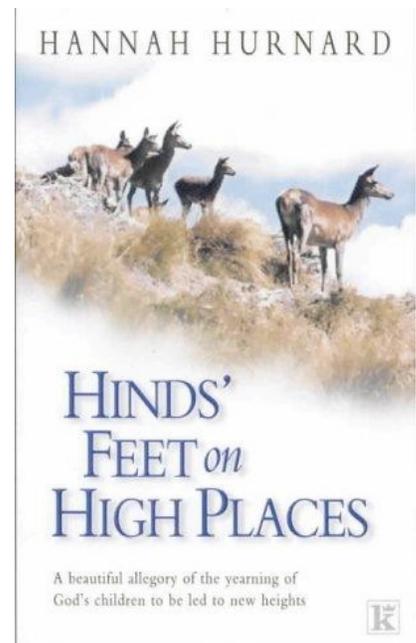
Discussion questions will be sent out to enhance your Book Club experience.

Happy Reading!!

**These verses from the Bible shed light on the title:**

“The Lord God is my strength and He will make my feet like hinds feet, and He will make me walk upon mine high places.” (“The Lord is my strength; He will direct my feet to the end; He will set me upon high places, so to conquer by His song.” – Orthodox Study Bible) Habakkuk 3:19

“Who makes my feet like a deer and sets me on high places. Psalm 17:34 “He makes my feet like the feet of deer and sets me on my high places.” II Kingdoms 22:34





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## Chapter Dues and Invoice

Fall 2016

Rev. Fathers and Sisters in Christ,

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

With the blessings of Metropolitan JOSEPH, and on behalf of our Diocesan Board of the Antiochian Women, we send greetings to you and your parishes. This letter is to give background to the work we do as an organization and how the annual dues are put to work each year in service to our diocese.

In 1973 Met. PHILIP, of thrice blessed memory, founded the Antiochian Women as a philanthropic organization to serve within the life of the church from the parish level up to the Archdiocese level. We have been called upon year after year to raise funds for worthy causes such as the Retired Clergy Fund, the Seminarian fund, and the Orphans of War in Syria to name just a few of the many projects we have undertaken throughout the years. Annually the NAB also gives out scholarships to women returning to trade school or college in order to support their family

On the Diocesan level, through the guidance of Met. JOSEPH, we support our mission priests and seminarians with annual financial gifts, we donate scholarships to the Youth Music Ministry, and annually we give scholarships for ladies to attend the annual spring retreat, and also send remembrances to our beloved widowed Khouria to mention just a few of the many ways in which the dues are used to be a blessing around the diocese. Your chapter dues also serves to support the work of the diocesan board.

None of these charitable works are possible without each parish supporting the work of the Antiochian Women through the paying of annual dues. \$100 of the annual dues of \$250 is sent to the North American Board of Antiochian Women for their duties and good works all across our Archdiocese. While missions are not required to pay dues, they are encouraged to contribute what they are able. Please send your check in the amount of \$250 by November 1<sup>st</sup> 2016 to Ramona Blanski, Treasurer & include the attached form.

Thank you to our beloved clergy and to the women of your parish who work so diligently to support our churches and missions. Our work is only possible through your support and prayers.

Serving through Christ,

Charmaine Darmour, President

Ramona Blanski, Treasurer

**Antiochian Women**  
**Diocese of Los Angeles & the West**  
**Diocese of Eagle River & the Northwest**

**2017 A.W Dues in the amount of \$250 is due by November 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016**

Missions, while not required to pay dues, are requested to send what they are able.

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

**Send check to:**

Ramona Blanski, *Treasurer*

1014 Lakeview Drive,

Palmdale, CA 93551

Antiochian Women of: \_\_\_\_\_

<Your parish name here>

Parish Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Parish Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_