



Antiochian Women~ A Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others ~

~ Diocese of Los Angeles and the West ~

~ Diocese of Eagle River and the Northwest ~

December 2012

# Nativity 2012 Newsletter

The Most Reverend Metropolitan Philip (Saliba), Founder  
358 Mountain Road  
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*Please copy and distribute or otherwise make this newsletter available to the women in your parish.*

## 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

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA  
DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES AND THE WEST  
DIOCESE OF EAGLE RIVER AND THE NORTHWEST 2011-2013**

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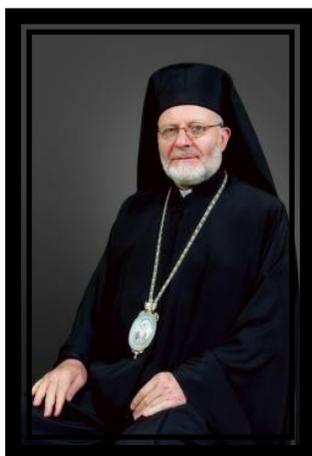
## Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America

The Diocese of Los Angeles and the West

His Eminence, Archbishop JOSEPH

### The Orthodox Advent Tradition

By: His Eminence, Archbishop JOSEPH



Contemplating the blessings of the Advent season, at times we ponder whether we have lost our blessings to the material world in which we live. Surrounded by ostentatious displays of wealth and unhealthy indulgences, we realize that they are slowly taking the place of more appropriate preparations for the celebration of Christmas. The very foundation of the Christmas Feast is the birth of an unassuming Child born quietly, humbly. The King of Glory was born of a mother who was turned away from every house, in a cave among the animals who could not speak.

Advent is the time of our preparation to meet the Lord of Lords. Certainly, we desire to offer our best gifts to the Christ Child, but they must be gifts of substance - the gifts of **prayer, repentance, forgiveness** and **love**. We want to adorn Him with our virtues.

In the words of King David, "A sacrifice to God is a broken spirit, a heart that is broken and humbled God will not despise." Advent gives us the opportunity to offer Him hearts that were broken but now healed, minds that were filled with turmoil now at peace and bodies once diseased now whole and healthy. These are the gifts that He desires of us - our entire person healed, changed and renewed through the despising and renouncing of sin.

Making the effort of fasting, heightened prayer and almsgiving during Advent prepare us to receive the Christ Child. How will He recognize us as His own if we are stained with pride, self-love and the stench of un-repentant sin? Meanwhile, when we repent truly and deeply, through our tears and His mercy, our sins are washed away and we are purified. He accepts us with great joy and is well pleased.

*Cont'd.*

# The Orthodox Advent Tradition

By: His Eminence, Archbishop JOSEPH

*Cont'd.*

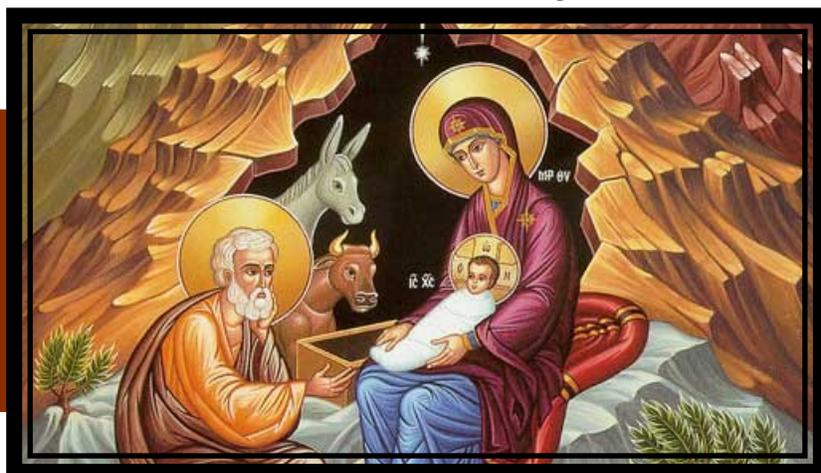
Advent is the time of year prescribed by the Holy Orthodox Church as an opportunity for renewal, for a re-dedication of our lives to Him. Just as He was born to give His life for us, so, too we renew ourselves and are born in the Spirit. In so doing, we offer ourselves to God just as our Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself for us on the Cross.

While we speak of the birth of Christ, we remember His offering on the Cross. Just as Advent is the foreshadowing of Great Lent, one is the preparation for the joy of the Resurrection and the other lays the groundwork for the same event through His Incarnation. We are reminded that Christ was first born incarnate and then resurrected. We follow that example, seizing the opportunity for spiritual renewal.

Repentance in any moment gives us the gift of renewal. After Baptism, repentance through confession and liberating ourselves from sin, places us in a restored state and now properly prepared to experience the true joy of the Feast of the Nativity.

As my beloved in Christ, I urge you not to be 'distracted with much serving' as was Martha during Jesus' visit. In gratitude for all that He has blessed you with, "choose the good part which will not be taken from you". This Advent, make a change and prepare the best gift possible for the Greatest Guest. Prepare yourselves in order to receive the true joy of this Holy Season - the realization that the Savior is born within you.

**Christ is Born! Glorify Him!**



## +His Beatitude Ignatius IV (1920-2012), Memory Eternal!

### His Beatitude Ignatius IV+ *Memory Eternal!*

It is with great sadness that we report that His Beatitude Ignatius IV (1920-2012), Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, fell asleep in the Lord on December 5th, 2012, at St. George Orthodox Hospital in Beirut Lebanon, after having suffered a stroke earlier this week.



His Beatitude Patriarch Ignatius IV (Hazim) of Antioch and All the East was born in 1920 in the village of Muharda, near the city of Hama Syria. In 1936, he moved to Beirut, where he became an altar server. Years later, upon taking monastic vows, he became a hierodeacon. In 1945 he graduated from the American University of Beirut, and from 1949 to 1953 studied at the Saint Sergius Theological Institute in Paris. On his return to Lebanon, the young theologian with a master's degree was ordained hieromonk. In 1942, he became one of the founders of the Influential Orthodox Youth Movement in Lebanon and Syria, which has done much to renew youthful participation in Church life. In

1953, His Beatitude became one of the organizers of Syndesmos the worldwide Brotherhood of Orthodox Youth. In 1961 he was ordained Bishop of Palmyra and Patriarchal Vicar, and in the following year, he was sent to the monastery of Balamand as superior and as dean of the Theological Seminary founded, which in 1988 was transformed into an Orthodox University, the first in the Middle East. He has published a series of theological books and numerous articles. His Beatitude is an honorary doctor of Sorbonne and Saint-Petersburg (1981) and Minsk (2003) Theological Academies. In 1970, the future Patriarch was appointed Metropolitan of Latakia (Laodicea). On 2 July 1979, he was elected Primate of the Church of Antioch and enthroned on 8 July of the same year.

# A Message about Fasting

By: Father David Hovik, Spiritual Advisor

We are soon to hear: "Christ is Born! Glorify Him!" However, between now and then we find ourselves in the midst of the Advent Fast. So, let's consider fasting for a few moments.

If a doctor takes a scalpel to us haphazardly he will hurt us but if he uses the scalpel to remove cancer he is trying to effect healing within us. When Jesus, and later the Church, speaks about Fasting they are trying to effect spiritual healing within us. But, if we don't understand what the Christ and Church are doing, it may seem like they are trying to hurt us by causing a meaningless inconvenience in our life.

Let's think for a minute about a person learning to play an instrument or drive a stick-shift. In the beginning of such endeavors there is a lot of information thrown at you and your world seems taken over by lessons & practice. Then you discover there are more lessons & a lot more practice. That wouldn't be so bad if you could see the Big Picture – see the end result. But at first it's all about doing things that don't seem related.

You have to learn to read musical scales and individual notes. Next, it's learning how to count beats and clean your instrument. Is playing an instrument all about learning notes? No. Is it all about counting with metronomes ticking back and forth? No. But it is partially about those things and there is a reason you do it – even though you can't see it at the time. The reason you can't see it is because you lack experience.

Driving a stick-shift isn't all about giving it the right amount of gas or all about putting the right amount of pressure on the clutch or all about shifting. But all of those pieces have to come together to drive a stick-shift. However, it's hard to remember that when are first lurching down the road because you lack experience.

*Cont'd.*

# A Message about Fasting

By: Father David Hovik, Spiritual Advisor

*Cont'd.*

In the end, a music teacher or the driving instructor want you to come to the place where everything CLICKS (where it all comes together & you don't have to think about those individual parts). Of course there are lots of people who give up their instrument and never learn to drive a stick shift. Yet, think about moments in your life when those types of things did CLICK and you actually got it. It came together for you.

When a person becomes Orthodox there is a lot of information that comes their way. Often times we follow instructions but we really don't see how a particular action will benefit us. Confession (learning to read notes); Fasting (learning how to count beats); Long services (learning how to let the clutch out slowly); Extra services (learning how to give it the right amount of gas) and Saying the Jesus Prayer (proper shifting). All of this can seem a bit overwhelming. But if you practice your Orthodox Faith (say your Rule of Prayer, keep the fasts, confess regularly, read the scriptures and study the lives of the saints) at some point it will all CLICK and come together for you!

We give up certain foods in Fasting because we are returning to the way Adam & Eve ate before the Fall but there must be a proper balance between the outward and the inward aspects of fasting. There are strong tendencies to over-emphasize external guidelines about food in a legalistic way or to scorn these guidelines as outdated and unnecessary. Both of these extremes are a betrayal of true Orthodoxy because the proper balance between the outward and the inward has been impaired. The Orthodox Church has maintained a true vision of man as a unity of the visible and invisible. We don't neglect the positive role played by the body in the spiritual life. "Your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. . . glorify God with your body" (1 Cor. 6: 19-20).

*Cont'd.*

# A Message about Fasting

By: Father David Hovik, Spiritual Advisor

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*Cont'd.*

Metr. Kallistos says: The primary aim of fasting is to make us *conscious of our dependence upon God*. If we fast seriously it involves a measure of real hunger, and also a feeling of tiredness and physical exhaustion. The purpose of this is to lead us to a sense of inward brokenness and contrition; to bring us to the point where we fully appreciate Christ's statement, *'Without Me you can do nothing.'*

The function of the hunger and tiredness is to make us *'poor in spirit'*-aware of our helplessness & of our dependence on God. True fasting is a conversion of our heart & will. It's a return to God like the Prodigal Son. St. John Chrysostom said: Fasting is *'abstinence not only from food but from sins'*. *'The fast'*, he insists, *'should be kept not by the mouth alone but also by the eye, the ear, the feet, the hands and all the members of the body: the eye must abstain from impure sights, the ear from malicious gossip, the hands from acts of injustice.'* St. Basil objects: "It is useless to fast from food, and yet to indulge in cruel criticism and slander: 'You do not eat meat, but you devour your brother!'"

Do I have to keep the Fast? You have to, if you want to. Do I have to practice my music lessons? You have to, if you want to. But, in both cases when it finally CLICKS – you'll want to!

In Christ's love,  
Fr. David

# ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

☞ A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS ☞

∨ DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES & THE WEST ∨

∨ DIOCESE OF EAGLE RIVER & THE NORTHWEST ∨



THE MOST REVEREND

METROPOLITAN PHILIP (SALIBA)

FOUNDER

## President's Letter

Dear Archbishop JOSEPH, Reverend Fathers and Sisters in Christ,

I greet you with the love of our Lord JESUS Christ and his most Blessed Ever-Virgin Mother, the Theotokos, and pray for each of you a peaceful Nativity Fast.

This newsletter, although delayed from our usual time during the Fall Gathering, gives us this wonderful opportunity to ponder the joy of Nativity and to pause with reverence that the Lord of All chose to be born an infant child to a pious young girl. “Christ, finding the holy body and soul of the Virgin, builds for Himself a living temple, and as He had willed, formed there a man from the Virgin; and, putting Him on, this day came forth; unshamed of the lowliness of our nature.” St. John Chrysostom. I am filled with a deep sense of awe, of unworthiness and gratitude that the Lord of Lords demonstrated such profound humility to take on the form of His creation.

Perhaps, you are like me and find the Nativity Fast infinitely more difficult than the Great Lenten Fast. This is a time of feasting, parties, gatherings and indulgences in this modern American culture. Yet, we as Orthodox Christians are called to fast and pray. Indeed, we are called to prepare ourselves in anticipation for the mysterious and holy birth of our Lord as a precious infant child. How many conversations occur at work and with non-Orthodox friends about this fast? How many more temptations do we face during this time of year? Yet, what a joyful time of year for us as we anticipate our Saviour's birth!

I want to encourage each of you this Nativity Season to reach out to those who may not have family around, those who are ill, those who are perhaps over-whelmed with the daily tasks of motherhood, or those who are stressed with work or burdened with joblessness. Share a gift of prayer, a visit, a card, a phone call, some random act of kindness. During this time of fasting from foods, fast also from self-centeredness and be a gift of joy to someone.

With all my love this most beautiful season, pray for me as I remember you and your chapters in my prayers.

Through the prayers of our Blessed Ever-Virgin Holy Mother, the Theotokos, I remain your sister in Christ.

Sincerely,

Melinda Bentz

President Antiochian Women, Diocese of Los Angeles & the West

Diocese of Eagle River & the Northwest

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## Announcing the 2012-13 NAB Antiochian Women's Project: "The Antiochian Village Tornado Relief Fund"



His Eminence Metropolitan Philip has tasked the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America (AOWNA) with a new fundraising project for 2012-2013, "The Antiochian Village Tornado Relief Fund." Between 2010 and 2012, the AOWNA women in chapters across the U.S. and Canada raised over \$315,000 for the Convent of St. Thekla at the Village, and will now turn their attention towards another project to benefit the Archdiocese's "Holy Mountain."

In the late afternoon of June 1, 2012, a tornado with winds of 110 mph cut a wide swath through the Village grounds in Bolivar, PA, damaging over fifty acres. Thankfully, no camp counselors or staff received injuries, and no outside groups were using the Village at the time. However, the tornado damaged 600 trees and twenty-two buildings; four of the buildings were completely new cabins set to house sixteen girls each. The remaining buildings incurred extensive damage requiring varying degrees of repair, from new roofs to collapsed walls. Because of the destruction, sixty-four of the girls who attended Summer Camp bunked at the nearby Conference and Retreat Center.

The damages, according to the archdiocese's insurance adjuster, totalled over one million dollars, and while the Archdiocese has an excellent policy, extra funds are still needed, since the insurance will fall short of total coverage for all the necessary repairs. Explained Vice President/NAB Project Coordinator Dianne O'Regan, "We have been informed that the priority is to rebuild the four girls' cabins followed by the other buildings that were destroyed...everyone in the parish—men, women and children—should know about the project, and be reminded that every woman who is a member of the Archdiocese is an 'Antiochian Woman.'"

*Diocese deadline will be April 15, 2013 so that all monies  
can be turned in to the NAB by May 15th.*

## From our Treasurer: Michelle Baba

To: Chapter Presidents or Representatives

From: Michele Baba, Diocesan Treasurer, Antiochian Women

Re: Local Chapter Dues Reminder

Dues for 2013 are due November 1st, 2012. 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. Missions are not required to pay dues, but any donations by missions will be appreciated.

**Thank You** to all of the churches and missions who have already paid your 2013 dues! If you have not submitted your chapter's dues yet,

please make your checks payable to:

Antiochian Women-Diocese of Los Angeles and the West

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

Michele Baba

23041 El Caballo

Lake Forest, CA 92630

Parish \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

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

Contact's Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Contact's e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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

## Fellowship and Fundraising Ideas

By Jill K Benza, Recording Secretary

One of the best things about attending a Parish Life Conference is having the opportunity to share ideas with each other about successful events for both fellowship and fundraising. Here are some ideas that were shared at the PLC last July:

- *Holy Cross, Palmdale, CA:* Kh. Mandy Thompson reported that a wine tasting event was held to raise funds for the St. Thekla Monastery. Wines were paired with chocolate and a silent auction was held. Cost of \$15.00 per person or \$25.00 per couple. Generated over \$1,000.00 and lots of fun.
- *St. Luke, Garden Grove, CA:* Krista Lengle-Leahu reported that they are trying to get new people involved. They sponsored an Oktoberfest event, Super Bowl party, and are looking forward to hosting the PLC 2013. In addition, this chapter had a very successful baby shower for the Martha and Mary House.
- *St. Nicholas San Francisco, CA:* Held a family night with a talent show and pot luck supper. It was great fellowship. Check out their pictures on Facebook.
- *St. James, Modesto, CA:* Sold soup after Presanctified Liturgies and held a garage sale to generate funds. Hosted a Kids Night Out at church, Christmas caroling and a clothing drive for The Treehouse project.
- *St. Virgin Mary, West Sacramento, CA:* Kh. Jean Baba reported that they have been encouraging teen girls to join. Plus planning a retreat to Alaska.
- *St. Ignatius, Twin Falls, Idaho:* Kh. Michelle Fenn reported that they held a women's retreat in Washington and sponsored a Flamenco Dance fundraiser.
- *St. Andrew, Riverside, CA:* Regina Roum reported that over 1,000 people attended the banquet for the consecration of their new church. The ladies sponsored a tea and conducted an outreach program to bring women from all over the community. Their parish is working with the homeless and all organizations are working together. She invited everyone to visit and see their new church. Kh. Catherine Trenham added that they are getting support from fathers, Godfathers, uncles, etc to watch the children after Liturgy so that the ladies may have their meeting. It's working.

## Fellowship and Fundraising Ideas Cont'd.

By Jill K Benza, Recording Secretary

- *St. Timothy, Lompoc CA:* Kh. Elizabeth Sommer shared that a small group of women come together to pray the Akathist to the Theotokos on behalf of their children.
- *Church of the Redeemer, Los Altos Hills, CA:* Eve Voydat shared that they hosted a senior citizens luncheon and have a retreat in the Santa Cruz area in May of each year.
- *Sts. Peter and Paul, Ben Lomond, CA:* Janelle Machnee reported that younger women are getting involved and, as one of those women, she is glad she did.
- *St. Nicholas Cathedral, Los Angeles, CA:* Kh. Eva Najim reported that they continue sponsoring the Debutant Ball, provide food baskets to needy and hold a tea each September.
- *Holy Resurrection, Tucson, AZ:* Marina Boosamra-Ball asked our support for the youth who may go to the Youth Music Ministry Program being held at the Antiochian Village this summer. We need to train the upcoming generation of both choir members and directors.

### **2013 DATES TO REMEMBER:**

**Spring Retreat: To be Announced**

**2013 Parish Life Conference:** July 3-7 hosted by  
St. Luke Church, Garden Grove, CA

**Archdiocese Convention:** July 21-28 hosted by  
St. George, Houston, TX

**Fall Gathering:** October 11-13 hosted by Holy Cross,  
Palmdale, CA

# A Message from Melissa Skocypec

Public Relations Director

My name is Melissa Skocypec, and I have taken over the position of Public Relations Director for the remainder of the 2011-2013 term. It is heartwarming to be a part of a group of women who are so loving and giving of themselves through their time, service, and devotion to their church and their parishes. Thank you for offering me this opportunity to try something new and to get to know all of you.

I was raised in a Nazarene church in a small town in Kentucky. When I was eleven we moved from our small Kentucky town to Illinois, and my family did not join a new church. Religion was missing from my life. Ten years later, I was in college and met my husband-to-be, Randy, who was raised his entire life in the Ukrainian Orthodox church. After spending time with Randy and his family, I knew that I wanted to convert to the Orthodox faith. We were married in a beautiful Orthodox wedding ceremony 17 years ago, and we have since baptized all three of our children into the Orthodox faith. I could not be happier with the spiritual direction my life has taken.

I am currently a member of St. Ignatius Church in Mesa, Arizona, where I am the treasurer of the Women's Group at our parish, and also a Church School teacher. My family has belonged to a Ukrainian Orthodox church, a Greek Orthodox church, and finally an Antiochian Orthodox church. I have to say that I finally feel like I am "home." The women in my parish are amazing. They are welcoming and loving, and are always willing to help with any and all jobs. As many of you have experienced yourselves, the women in a church wear many hats and perform many tasks to keep people fed, nurtured, and welcomed. I am thrilled to be a part of this group, and I am happy to learn from those who have gone before me, and to teach those who will come after me. The services that I provide to others is a gift that I am very grateful for, and I feel like it is important to utilize the individual strengths of the women in our parishes to find everyone's special place and purpose in their parish.



I am very happy and excited to be a part of the Antiochian Women of the Western Diocese and am grateful for the opportunity.

Your Sister in Christ,  
*Melissa Skocypec*



## Good News from St. Ignatius, Mesa, AZ

It has been a big year for our little mission. By the grace of God and the generous support of our parishioners we were able to purchase a new church building! We held our first services inside in late November, and were happy to begin our Sunday School classes on December 2. We couldn't be happier with our new location (still in Mesa, AZ) and are looking forward to many years of services, prayer, and fellowship in our new home.

Our women's group has been busy with a number of different service projects and fundraisers. We happily donated \$1500 to our building fund as well as 2 half camp scholarships, and a donation to the St. Thekla convent. Our donations are funded by luncheons and bake sales through the support of our parishioners. We also had a clothing drive fundraiser, with all proceeds going directly to our building fund. We have been busy working to move out of our old location and into our new building. It takes the help of many people to make a project like that run smoothly, and our women and men have stepped up to the challenge! To finish out the year, our youth is putting on a Nativity Play, and we also have an angel tree program to give Christmas gifts to 50 children from a nearby children's home called Sunshine Acres. We are so fortunate to be blessed by God, and we are pleased to be able to share our good fortune with those in need!

~Milana Shelton, President




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## My Story of Prayer and Survival

By Jill N. Benza, St. Ignatius, Mesa, AZ

When I was first asked to write an article for the newsletter about my illness last spring, I was stumped at how to start. Do I talk about the prayers, the fear, and the large tumor in my heart? I started out by just writing my story and soon I realized that my story was way too long for a newsletter. I would need to focus my thoughts on one or two areas. My story, the short ten cent version is this: I had a large, bratwurst size tumor growing in my heart and two feet of tumors in my vena cava which branched off and wrapped around my liver.

These tumors had been growing for years and I had no idea. I was flown to Houston for surgery, because as the doctor here said, surgery at M.D. Anderson in Houston was my "best chance of survival". On May 7<sup>th</sup> I had surgery that lasted for close to 10 hours with 17 doctors. I "slept" for about eight days after and when I finally woke up, the lower half of my body was extremely swollen; I had a paralyzed vocal cord and was on antibiotics to fight off an infection. I was in the hospital from April 24 until June 1<sup>st</sup>. When I returned to Arizona, I had to do physical therapy and was unable to live in my house alone for about a month.

*Cont'd.*

# My Story of Prayer and Survival

By Jill N. Benza, St. Ignatius, Mesa, AZ

*Cont'd.*

Like I said, that is the short story, the important part and what I want to share with you is this, I was and remain humbled by the love and support I received from across the world. Prayer has always been a part of my life. I was raised in the church, attended Sunday school, spent many summers at Camp St. Nicholas and now serve on my parish council. In all of that time, prayer has been a focus. As an aunt and Godmother I encourage the little ones around me to learn the Our Father and recite it with us in church. As a little girl when we would say a prayer before dinner, we could raise one finger of our clasped hands to pray for someone special before my dad finished the prayer. During my illness last spring I, and my family, probably prayed more than ever before and I felt it.

But what was so humbling to me were all the prayers I received from across the world, and from many different religions. The day after I was told I had a heart tumor, a dear friend sat on my hospital bed, put her arms around me and prayed for me. She doesn't attend my church; she is a member of a non-denominational Christian church in our town. To me it didn't matter, I wanted and needed her prayers.

Prayers that I received came from nuns in Romania, a small Polish Catholic parish in Chicago, a Russian Orthodox church in Massachusetts, a family sitting around their dinner table, a monastery in Russia, a Southern Baptist church in Los Angeles, from an Archbishop in the Ukrainian Orthodox church and from the Mormon Temple in Mesa, Arizona.

St. George Church in Houston, priests and parishioners, adopted me and my family while we were there. They showered us with love and provided comfort. Total strangers, who are now beloved friends, provided a place for my mom and dad to stay and prayed for us.

Fr. James Coles, my parish priest, prayed and anointed me with holy oil before my mom and I were flown to Houston, Texas. He prayed and anointed me again when he came to see me in Houston. This time he brought with him holy oils inside a beautiful cross with relics that belonged to Fr. Joseph Kreta, of beloved memory, whose family had very kindly offered it to Father James to bring to Houston to anoint me. This cross and the meaning behind it humbled me beyond belief.



During my illness the prayers gave me comfort. Afterwards, when people would share with me that they or their family prayed for me, I was at times overwhelmed with emotion. I believe those prayers helped to get me here today. I believe those prayers were heard. I believe that prayer is mighty and powerful. Thank you from the bottom of my tumor free heart!

*Jill N. Benza*

## Update from St. Stephen, Campbell, CA

To; Our Sisters in Christ our Lord,

We hope that all of you are doing well. For this Nativity Newsletter I would like to share some of the things that have happened since the Spring Newsletter; Myrrhbearers had a "Diaper Fundraising" for the Protection of the Theotokos Family Center in Romania; \$1292 was sent to them in April. In April the first child, a daughter, was born to a couple in our Church. The parents are Steve and Meng-Meng Terpe. A son, first child to Chad and Jennifer Harris is due November 21st. In February of 2013 Marc and Debbie Baumann are expecting their fourth child, a daughter.

We had a Summer Potluck in August that was enjoyed by those who went. We hosted our Summer Luncheon/NAB fundraiser on September 30<sup>th</sup> (later than usual due to commitments of Crucial Persons). We did raise \$1840 to go to St. Thekla. In November, there is a Women's Retreat at the Vallombrosa Center in Menlo Park. In December, we will have a night to ask our Priests questions that have been on our minds, we will have a Toy Drive for a local Charity, and the St. Nicholas play and Celebration of the Feast Day of St. Stephen will take place.

We are looking forward to the Holidays in Joyful Anticipation and Rejoicing in the Birth of our Savior Jesus Christ.

*Janelle Stroschein-Karengin*

## Update from St. Nicholas, San Francisco, CA

Greetings from St. Nicholas! In our parish, the ladies donate a lunch to serve after mass on Sundays. We generate revenue from this and we encourage other families to donate a lunch to keep the momentum going. We also encourage the young mothers and adults to participate with us during the ladies month to usher and do other duties. The Ladies Auxiliary hosted a Family Night Talent Show for all ages: children, youth, young adults, and seniors in our church hall on Friday November 30. This event has been very successful for us. Our Ladies Auxiliary at St. Nicholas parish practice our Christian faith by focusing to help an individual person, or by purchasing costumes for our Sunday School children Christmas play.

Your Sister in Christ,

*Ida Batshon*, St. Nicholas, San Francisco, CA

# Lucy Hanna, Immediate Past President

MEMBERSHIP COORDINATOR REPORT TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
2012 FALL GATHERING  
OCTOBER 12 - 14, 2012

Your Eminence Archbishop JOSEPH, Fr. David and Sisters in Christ,  
I greet you in the Name of our Lord and Savior Jesus.

So far, I have only received the membership DVD entitled "YES WE DO!" from our NAB Membership Coordinator. It was also sent to every parish in the Archdiocese directly from NAB. In light of that I have put together a few ideas for our own diocese in an effort to increase membership in our chapters.

## MEMBERSHIP DRIVE IDEAS:

Membership is the lifeblood of any organization. Attracting and retaining members can be a very challenging task, but there are many ways to help make your membership drives successful.

**Use the Internet** to promote what you have to offer as a group to increase your organization's roster. Set up a fan page on Facebook. This is free and allows other Facebook users to become fans of your page. Use the page to publish information about your chapter and planned events. Twitter is another great resource. By tweeting you can build a group of followers for membership possibilities.

**Word of Mouth:** The best method of recruitment is still word of mouth. Have members of your group each try to recruit new members from the ladies of your parish. Remember that ALL women 18 years or older in every parish are "Antiochian Women". Our goal is to make them all **active** members. Active members provide vitality for our Organization at every level. Thus recruitment must be one of our primary tasks.

**Promote Your Purpose:** An often overlooked way to recruit new members is to promote what your group stands for. Many organizations think their message is obvious, but an outsider looking in may have no idea why the group exists.

**Give Women a Reason to Join:** A group that offers nothing to its members will likely see its roster shrink instead of grow. Every group needs to offer an incentive for joining. Offer support to young mothers for example. Start a book club. Some booksellers offer membership discounts.

I also encourage you to see the ideas for recruitment and retention in our Membership Handbook. Please print a copy of the Membership Handbook for your parish officers and refer to it when you are planning your meetings and activities. The Membership Handbook is currently available for download on-line via the Archdiocese's Website:

[http://www.antiochian.org/aocwna\\_membership\\_handbook](http://www.antiochian.org/aocwna_membership_handbook)

Please send your comments and suggestions to me and 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,

Immediate Past President and Membership Coordinator.

Home: (951) 736-9809 Cell: (951) 415-7667 Email: [lucy.hanna@sbcglobal.net](mailto:lucy.hanna@sbcglobal.net)

## Update from St Michael, Van Nuys, CA

On Sunday, November 4<sup>th</sup>, St Michael in Van Nuys celebrated our Parish Feast Day. After Divine Liturgy, our Antiochian Women hosted a family friendly Taco Cart luncheon. The Taco Cart was set up outside so our family enjoyed a variety of taco selections hot off the grill with all the traditional fixins! Our ladies supplemented the meal with a beautiful array of salads, beverages & desserts. Our Community Center was full of our parish family who lingered and enjoyed an afternoon of fellowship with each other. A good time was had by all! Looking ahead, our Ladies have begun planning for a reception to be held after Divine Liturgy as part of the festivities of the January 12-13, 2013 weekend as our Parish Family celebrates the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in the Holy Priesthood of our beloved, Very Rev. Timothy Baclig. We wish you all a Blessed Advent and a most Joyous Nativity!

*Charmaine Darmour*

### TUSCAN PUMPKIN WHITE BEAN SOUP

This delicious soup is the perfect winter warm up!

Ingredients:

Olive oil cooking spray	¼ tsp oregano
1 medium onion chopped	¼ tsp cumin
15 oz can of pumpkin	salt & pepper to taste
4 cups vegetable broth	
6 tbsp parmesan cheese (optional during fasting times)	
1 -15oz can white beans—drained & rinsed	

Coat a large soup pot with cooking spray & set over medium heat. Add onion and cook till tender about 6 minutes. Stir in pumpkin, broth, beans, cumin & oregano and simmer 8-10 minutes. In a blender puree soup until smooth. Return soup to pot & reheat—season with salt and pepper.

Yields 6 - 1 cup servings—Ladle soup into bowls and top each with 1 tbsp parmesan cheese. Enjoy!

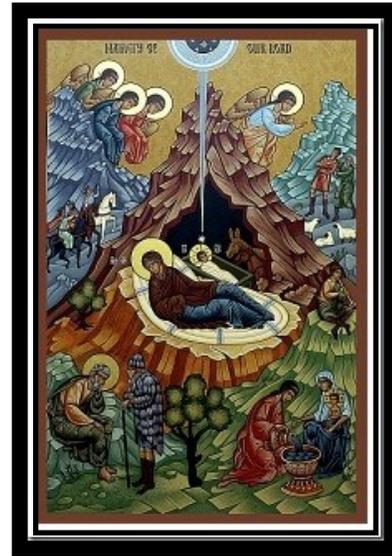
## Metropolitan Philip's Christmas Meditation

**Lord,**

What shall I offer you on your birthday in return for your infinite love?  
 I have neither gold nor silver, neither myrrh nor frankincense.  
 My house is without a roof. I have no room for you; not even a manger.  
 My soul is even darker than the clouds of my passion.  
 My eyes are too dim to look beyond the horizon of myself.  
 Help me behold your bright star; "For in thy light we shall see light."

**Lord,**

You have been knocking on my door for thirty-nine years,  
 but I never dared let you in because my garment is not  
 white as snow.  
 Forgive me if I do not invite you to my table, for my  
 table is full of everything you despise. I have denied you  
 more than Peter.  
 I have doubted you more than Thomas.  
 I have betrayed you more than Judas.  
 My hands are empty. My lips are not clean to sing your  
 praise.  
 And my heart is wrinkled with sorrow like a withered leaf  
 under autumn's wind.



**Lord,**

The only thing I can offer you on your birthday is myself.  
 Drown me in the ocean of your love.  
 Feed me with your heavenly bread, for the bread of this world will never satisfy my hun-  
 ger.  
 Quench my thirst with your divine fountain, for the water of this earth will never satisfy  
 my thirst.  
 Give me your eyes to see what you see, your ears to hear what you hear and your heart  
 to love what you love.  
 Take me with you to Mount Tabor and let me bathe in your eternal light.

**Lord,**

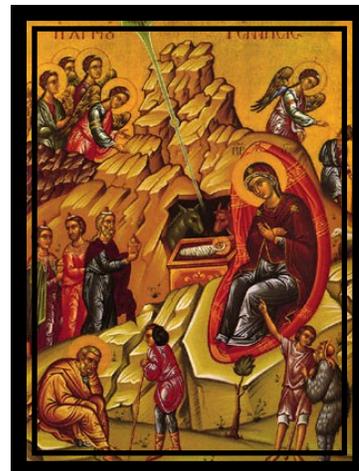
"Create a clean heart in me. Cast me not away from Thy face. Restore unto me the joy of  
 Thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit."  
 Teach me how to pray in simple words, for only through prayers I may overcome my  
 loneliness.  
 Help me to care for the needy, the oppressed, the orphans, the sinners and the despised  
 whom you love.  
 As I kneel before your manger with love and humility I beseech you to listen to my  
 prayers.

## Troparion and Kontakion of the Nativity of our Lord

### *Troparion*

*Tone Four*

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God,  
hath shone forth the light of wisdom  
upon the world;  
for therein those who worship the stars  
have been taught by a star  
to worship Thee, the Sun of Righteousness,  
and to know Thee, the Dayspring from on high.  
O Lord, glory be to Thee



### *Kontakion*

*Tone Three*

Today the Virgin giveth birth to the Trancendent One,  
and the earth offereth a cave to the Unapproachable One.  
Angels with shepherds give glory,  
the magi journey with a star,  
for our sakes, a young Child is born, Who is Pre-eternal God!

# Guidelines for the Nativity Fast

(November 15 through December 24)

The Nativity Fast is one of the four Canonical Fasting Seasons in the Church year. This is a *joyous* fast in anticipation of the Nativity of Christ. That is the reason it is less strict than other fasting periods. The fast is divided into two periods. The 1st period is November 15th through December 19th when the traditional fasting discipline (no meat, dairy, fish, wine, and oil) is observed. There is dispensation given for wine and oil on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Similarly, fish, wine, and oil are permitted on Saturdays and Sundays. The 2nd period is December 20th through 24th when the traditional fasting discipline (no meat, dairy, fish, wine, and oil) is observed. There is dispensation given for wine and oil only on Saturday and Sunday during this period. Here are the guidelines:

Meat	Dairy	Fish	Wine	Oil
beef, chicken, pork, turkey, elk, veal, lamb, deer, rabbit, buffalo, and so forth	milk, eggs, cheese, butter, yogurt, cream, and so forth	fish with a backbone (not including shrimp, octopus, shellfish, squid, or other seafood.	(some include all types of alcohol in this category)	(some include all types of oil in this category)
<b>Abstain.</b>	<b>Abstain.</b>	<b>Permitted</b> only on Saturdays and Sundays before December 20. (some permit fish Tuesdays and Thursdays also)	<b>Permitted</b> only on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, & Sundays before December 20.	<b>Permitted</b> only on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, & Sundays before December 20.

Abstinence includes refraining from the food and drink mentioned above, as well as from smoking. The Eucharistic Fast means abstaining from at least the previous midnight for communing at a morning Liturgy.

## The Purpose of Fasting

The purpose of fasting is to focus on the things that are above, the Kingdom of God. It is a means of putting on virtue in reality, here and now. Through it we are freed from dependence on worldly things. We fast faithfully and in secret, not judging others, and not holding ourselves up as an example.

- Fasting in itself is not a means of pleasing God. Fasting is not a punishment for our sins. Nor is fasting a means of suffering and pain to be undertaken as some kind of atonement. Christ already redeemed us on His Cross. Salvation is a gift from God that is not bought by our hunger or thirst.

- We fast to be delivered from carnal passions so that God's gift of Salvation may bear fruit in us.
- We fast and turn our eyes toward God in His Holy Church. Fasting and prayer go together.
- Fasting is not irrelevant. Fasting is not obsolete, and it is not something for someone else. Fasting is from God, for us, right here and right now.
- Most of all, we should not devour each other. We ask God to "set a watch and keep the door of our lips."

### **Do Not Fast**

- between December 25 and January 5 (even on Wednesdays and Fridays);
- if you are pregnant or nursing a newborn;
- during serious illness;
- without prayer;
- without alms-giving;
- according to your own will without guidance from your spiritual father.

## **Looking Ahead:**

Our next newsletter will be released prior to the Spring Retreat in April 2013. I will be requesting articles, updates, recipes, etc in early March.

For the Spring newsletter, we would like to focus on the humanitarian efforts in each parish.

Please email me with any requests that you would like to see in this newsletter. This is a resource for the women in our diocese!

*Thank you for your support,*

Melissa Skocypec, Public Relations Director  
 Diocese of Los Angeles & the West and Eagle River & the Northwest  
 Email: melissa\_skocypec@cox.net  
 480.792.1225 home

## About Antiochian Women

### History

The history of the Antiochian Women has been rich and varied. As the organization celebrated twenty eight years in July 2001, it had raised over \$1,273,000.00 towards its annual Projects, funding humanitarian programs and projects of the Antiochian Archdiocese and participating in the preparation of a legacy for the generations to follow. It has encouraged a new generation of women to explore the fullness of their ministry in the Orthodox Church, and has established a network of retreats and symposia providing a forum for the development of fellowship and the deepening of faith.

### Purposes

*The purposes of the Antiochian Women are:*

1. To develop among women throughout the Antiochian Archdiocese a spirit of Christian leadership, awareness and commitment as taught in the Holy Orthodox Church.
2. To foster among women throughout the Antiochian Archdiocese a genuine expression of love and service through works of charity, and
3. To instill among women throughout the Antiochian Archdiocese and the community at large a sense of fellowship and a deeper understanding of the heritage and traditions of the Antiochian Archdiocese and the Orthodox Church.

*Have a Blessed Nativity!*