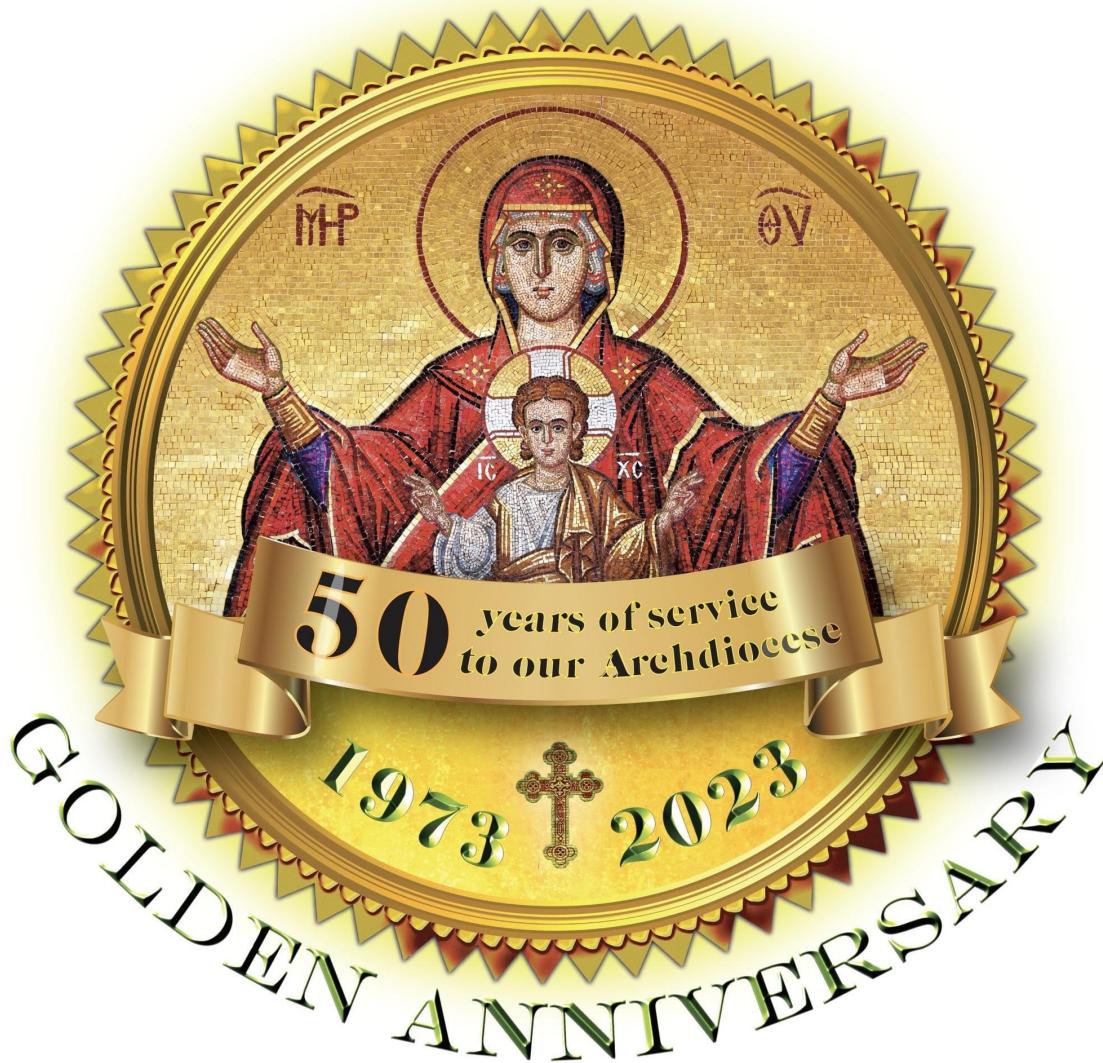


**WINTER 2024**

# ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN NORTH AMERICAN BOARD

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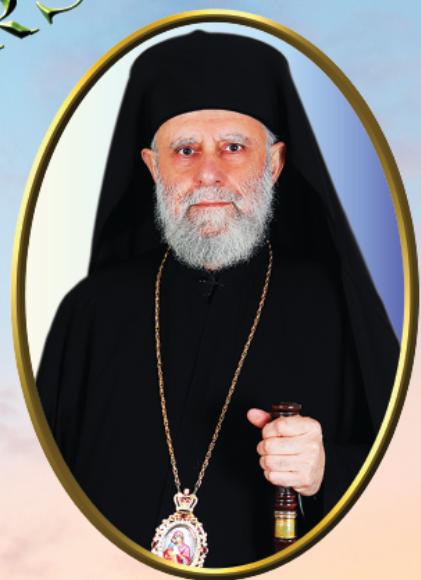
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# THE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA



FOUNDED by His Eminence  
**Metropolitan PHILIP**  
(of thrice blessed memory)



WELCOMING His Eminence  
**Metropolitan SABA**  
(Many Years, Master!)

**“A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST  
THROUGH SERVING OTHERS”**

# ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

THE MOST REVEREND METROPOLITAN PHILIP -- FOUNDER

"A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS"



THE MOST REVEREND  
METROPOLITAN SABA  
358 MOUNTAIN ROAD  
ENGLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY 07631

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN  
NORTH AMERICAN BOARD



January 2024

FROM THE DESK OF SHERYL VANDERWAGEN, NAB PRESIDENT

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory Forever!

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! I pray that the recent feast days were a blessing to you and your families. Here in Grand Rapids, Michigan we were blessed to have our first outdoor Blessing of the Water at one of our downtown public parks on the banks of the Grand River which runs through our downtown. It was a joint celebration with clergy and parishioners from the three Antiochian parishes in town along with the local Greek parish. What a blessing to be able to come together as one community in prayer for the city at the beginning of the new year.

This is a time for renewal and many of us make New Year's resolutions hoping to have that renewal in our own lives. We attend the services of the church where water is blessed, we invite our priests to bless our homes, we refill our Holy Water bottles, all in a hope for renewal in our daily lives.

The new year also brings a renewal of commitment to our parishes and along with it a renewed commitment to our Antiochian Women. The NAB (North American Board) offers many opportunities for individuals and parish chapters to renew that commitment including:

- NAB Project 2024 – Establishing an Endowment Fund for Our Widowed Clergy Wives
- 2024 Humanitarian Act of Mercy – Project Mexico's Infant Orphanage
- 2024 NAB Book Selections: Pearl of Great Price and Woven
- March is Women's Month activities.

It is my prayer as you seek renewal in your own lives in this Year of Our Lord, 2024 that it will also include a renewal of your commitment to the Antiochian Women in your parishes, your dioceses and the NAB. As we move into the last half of our 50<sup>th</sup> year, may God continue to bless you and give you strength for the journey.

Washed with the cleansing laver of the Spirit  
from all the poison of the mired and murky foeman,  
we have been set on a path new and unerring,  
leading to inaccessible joy and gladness  
found by them alone with whom God is reconciled.  
(Katavasiae of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canon of Theophany, Ode 5)



ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN – THE NORTH AMERICAN BOARD

❖ ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA ❖

# ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN 2024 PROJECT

ESTABLISH AN

# *Endowment Fund*

FOR OUR  
BELOVED

# *Widowed Clergy-Wives*

NORTH AMERICAN BOARD - ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

This year's Antiochian Women PROJECT  
seeks to honor our widowed clergy-wives  
for the years of selfless service they have given  
to our Archdiocese. Our love for them and  
our deep respect has moved us to establish a  
dedicated Endowment Fund, from which the  
yearly dividends will be distributed among them.

The amount of financial support we can offer  
each year will directly depend on the amount  
of funding we raise through this year's PROJECT.

So, let's show our heartfelt support  
for these well-deserving ladies,  
and inaugurate this Endowment Fund  
with a generous financial base.



# ***Memory Eternal***

## ***Isabel Elac***

### ***January 8, 2024***

Our Antiochian Women's Ministry incurred a profound loss with the passing to eternal life of our first duly elected President – Ms. Isabel Elac, on Monday, January 8, 2024. Isabel had the distinction of being the first president of the NAB to be elected "at large" in 1987 (previously, the presidency rotated among the presidents of the regions/dioceses).

She worked with women from all corners of the Archdiocese. Isabel lived her life in dedicated service to Christ's Holy Church, serving her local parish of St Nicholas Cathedral in Los Angeles, CA in multiple leadership roles.



As our President, Sheryl VanderWagen said in a letter of condolence to the family, "Isabel was active at all levels of the Antiochian Women, her local parish, the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West and the North American Board, having served as President and later as Treasurer of the NAB. Isabel also carried with her the institutional history of the Antiochian Women, as one of the founders of our organization 50 years ago. It is always a much deeper loss when our members who hold that history depart this life and we will surely miss Isabel even more for that reason.

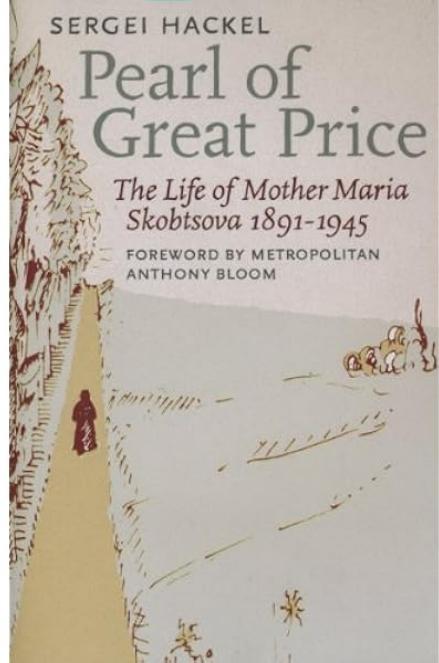


Isabel was a light to all who knew her and her contributions to the Antiochian Women over the years were a light to all of us who currently serve on the NAB. She stood as a model for us as we strive to carry out our mission as "A Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others." Isabel lived a life of service to her Church and to our Sisterhood. May God grant all of us the ability to carry on the legacy with which she has left us.

May God grant rest to her soul and may her memory be eternal. Christ is Risen!"

Isabel was respectfully remembered on the Archdiocese website at: <https://www.antiochian.org/regulararticle/1893>

**"Well done, good and faithful servant"**  
Matthew 25:23

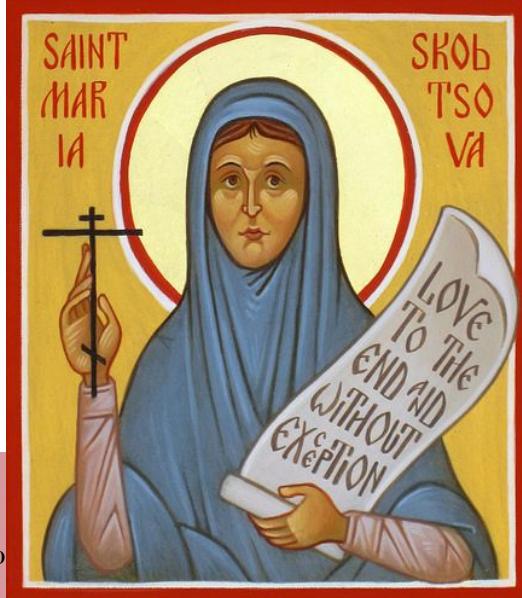


This is the moving story of Mother Maria Skobtsova, a nun of the Orthodox Church, who was born into a Russian aristocratic home but who died a martyr's death in one of Hitler's concentration camps. In the intervening years, the vicissitudes of life led her through two marriages, childbirth and childrearing, and exile from her homeland – until she became an unconventional nun, devoted to the service of the destitute and the despairing in Nazi-occupied France.

Mother Maria was eventually consigned to Ravensbruck concentration camp because of her support of the Jews in Paris. There she continued to help those around her up until – and even by means of – her own death. Now canonized by the Orthodox Church as St Maria, she demonstrates how to love the image of God in each person, even when surrounded by hatred, evil, and brutality.

**About the Author:** Sergei Hackel (+ 2005), priest of the Moscow Patriarchate in the UK, was for many years the editor of the ecumenical journal *Sobornost* and the "voice" of the BBC Russian religious broadcasts during the Soviet era.

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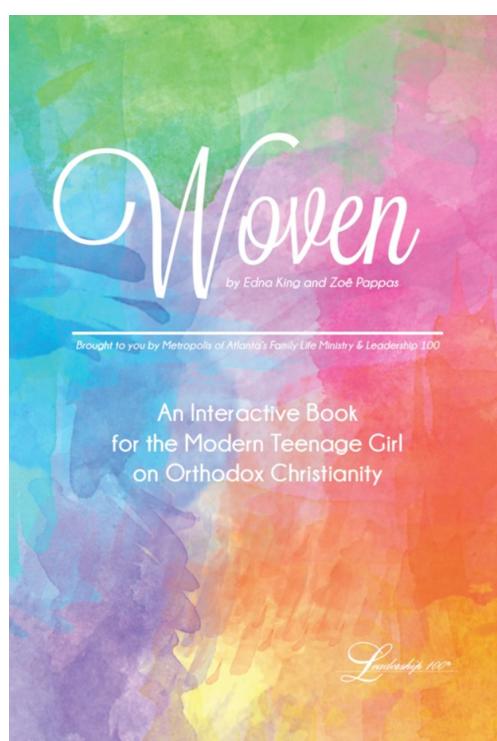
Order a book from [SVPress.com](http://SVPress.com)    [Chapters 1-2 questions](#)  [Chapter 3-5 questions](#)  
[Chapter 6 questions](#)  [Chapter 7 questions](#)

AW NAB is also introducing something new this year...gather your young women in the parish and connect in “an interactive book for the modern teenage girl on Orthodox Christianity”.

*Woven* is the first book of its kind in the Orthodox world created specifically to help teen girls confront the many challenges they face in today's world. Five chapters address topics such as creation, emotions, self-image, social media usage, friendship, and relationships. A sixth chapter helps the reader reflect on what she's learning and thinking.

*Woven* is a full-color book with spiral binding for ease of use. Each chapter features interactive illustrations, journaling opportunities, activities, discussion, and direct connections to Scripture and the lives of the saints. Although an individual reader can use and benefit from this book, it is designed and organized for use with groups, and a free downloadable Facilitator's Guide is available.

[Download](#) the Facilitator's Guide: Second Edition.



# THE SISTERHOOD OF PEARLS

Kh. Susan Wallace  
St. James – Stillwater, OK

Pearls, the real ones....not the imitation, are truly a thing of beauty. As I age, I find myself drawn to their classic artistry. To think how much time is invested in the production of just one is quite amazing. They are created from an irritation. When a small object, such as a grain of sand, is washed into an oyster the formation begins because the oyster has a defense mechanism when an irritant finds its way into its shell. A substance called nacre (mother of pearl) is deposited on the surface of the irritating object. Layers and layers of this pearly substance are deposited from a source within the oyster until the irritation is stopped by its encrusting. This laborious endeavor ends up as a beautiful pearl. Thus, the oyster is created and equipped to deal with tribulation. In fact, you could say that the pearl is a symbol of victory over tribulation.

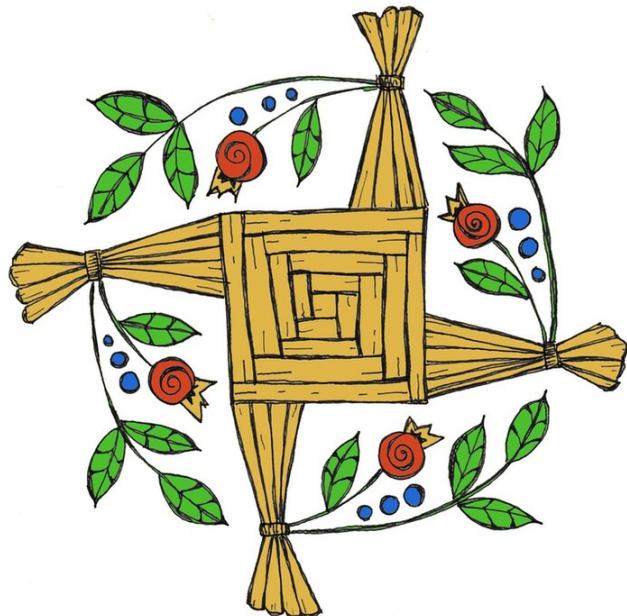


Likewise, each of us is a beautiful pearl in the Kingdom of God when we overcome life's adversities with faith. No one's life is easy. It gets gritty as we all have "stuff" to deal with. Jesus said, "In this world, you shall have tribulation." But then he also said, "But be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world." We have been given the "pearly deposit" of the Holy Spirit to deal with the grit of life. Praying without ceasing adds layer upon layer of His comfort and guidance so that we can live in Peace. That is how we too become overcomers.

An overcoming woman of God knows where her "Mother of Pearl" comes from. She has the Holy Spirit within her. The Holy Spirit Himself "makes intercession for us," (Romans 8:26.) We are instructed to pray always "in the Spirit," (Eph. 6:18.) Each time we pray "in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit," we encrust our irritant, (our trials, our tribulation, our sorrow, our suffering, our disappointment, our grief and our offenses) with "the oil of gladness" and those 'deposits' of the Holy Spirit laboriously create a thing of beauty.

Do not despise the irritants of life. God allows them for they are transforming you into a 'pearl of great price.' Jesus is THE Pearl of Great Price, and each time you surrender your will to His through prayer; each time you die to self, you are being restored into His likeness. As a Christian woman, you are a beautiful pearl in the making. Together, as sisters in Christ, we can become a necklace of heavenly pearls that adorn His Kingdom with the beauty of holiness. And as the Russian novelist, Dostoevsky, said, "Beauty will save the world."

FEB  
1



## ST BRIGID OF IRELAND

(PRONOUNCED BREE-JYAH IN GAELIC)

PATRONESS OF IRELAND

St. Brigid is affectionately known as the Mary of the Gael.

Sometimes she is called Brigid of Kildare after establishing the first monastic community in Ireland, located under a large oak tree, known as the Church of the Oak (in Gaelic, Cill-Dara).

St. Brigid founded a school of art that produced the legendary Book of Kildare, an illuminated early Christian document similar to the Book of Kells.

When she died in 525AD, the nuns kept a fire burning in the Kildare convent. This fire burned for centuries with the sisters tending to it, and it did not burn out until 1220AD.

It was relit and burned another 400 years!

Saint Brigid's association with fire and the closeness of her feast day to the Feast of the Meeting of our Lord in the Temple (also known as Candlemas), celebrating Christ as the Light unto the World, links the two feasts.

She is patroness of dairy maids, infants, midwives, blacksmiths, poets, nuns, boatmen and sailors, chicken farmers, and students. She is the model of a contemplative life who cared for the earth, the poor and needy, for justice and equality; peace and reconciliation.



Even as a child, she was known for her compassion for the poor. She would give away food, clothing, and even her father's possessions to the poor. One day he took Brigid to the king's court, leaving her outside to wait for him. He asked the king to buy his daughter from him, since her excessive generosity made her too expensive for him to keep. The king asked to see the girl, so Dubthach led him outside. They were just in time to see her give away her father's sword to a beggar. This sword had been presented to Dubthach by the king, who said, "I cannot buy a girl who holds us so cheap."

The miracles performed by St Brigid are too numerous to relate here, but perhaps one story will suffice. One evening the holy abbess was sitting with the blind nun Dara. From sunset to sunrise they spoke of the joys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and of the love of Christ, losing all track of time. St Brigid was struck by the beauty of the earth and sky in the morning light. Realizing that Sister Dara was unable to appreciate this beauty, she became very sad. Then she prayed and made the Sign of the Cross over Dara's eyes. All at once, the blind nun's eyes were opened and she saw the sun in the east, and the trees and flowers sparkling with dew. She looked for a while, then turned to St Brigid and said, "Close my eyes again, dear Mother, for when the world is visible to the eyes, then God is seen less clearly by the soul." St Brigid prayed again, and Dara became blind once more.

St Brigid fell asleep in the Lord in the year 523 on February 1 after receiving Holy Communion from St Ninnidh of Inismacsaint (January 18). She was buried at Kildare, but her relics were transferred to Downpatrick during the Viking invasions. It is believed that she was buried in the same grave with St Patrick (March 17) and St Columba of Iona (June 9).

Continue reading the full essay on the life of St. Brigid: <https://www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2010/02/saint-brigid-bridget-of-ireland.html>



It is said the origin of the St. Brigid's cross came when she was called to the bedside of a dying pagan chieftain.

While sitting with the dying man, St. Brigid picked up some rushes from the floor and began to weave them into a cross. The sick chieftain asked her what she was doing, and she told him of Jesus Christ. He became a Christian before he died.

Celebrate  
ST. BRIGID OF  
IRELAND  
FEB. 1/14

[WWW.PAROUSIAPRESS.COM](http://WWW.PAROUSIAPRESS.COM)



As a young girl, she gave away the household's butter and bacon to hungry beggars and dogs, then miraculously replaced the food for her family.

Many churches dedicate and name their Food Pantry after St. Brigid.

A St. Brigid cross is often displayed at the front entrance of homes for protection; near the food pantry for hopeful abundance throughout the year.



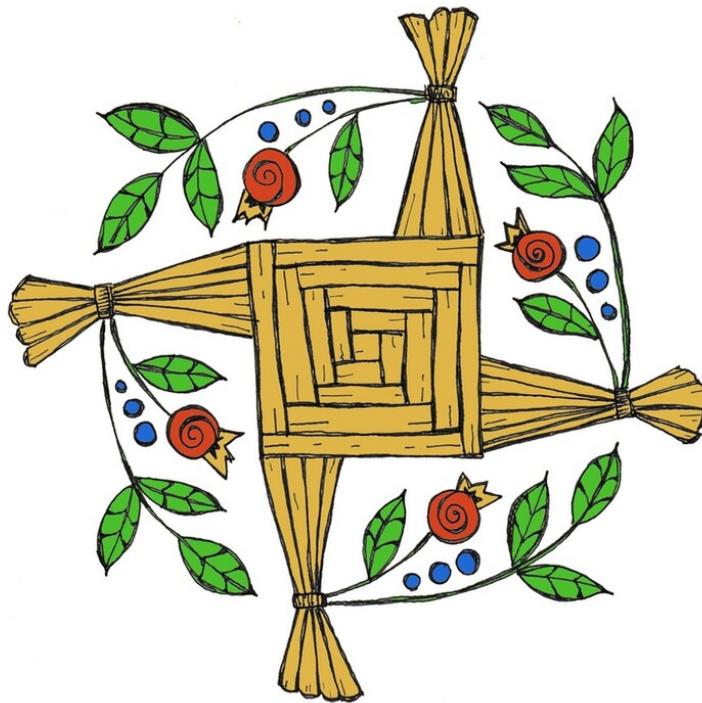
## Troparion (Tone 1) –

O holy Brigid, you became sublime through your humility,  
and flew on the wings of your longing for God.

When you arrived in the eternal City and appeared before your Divine Spouse,  
wearing the crown of virginity,  
you kept your promise  
to remember those who have recourse to you.

You shower grace upon the world, and multiply miracles.

Intercede with Christ our God that He may save our souls.



## Kontakion (Tone 4) –

The holy virgin Brigid full of divine wisdom,  
went with joy along the way of evangelical childhood,  
and with the grace of God  
attained in this way the summit of virtue.

She now bestows blessings upon those who come to her with faith.

O holy Virgin, intercede with Christ our God  
that He may have mercy on our souls.

# Antiochian Women 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Icon

## Platytera Mounted Icon

This beautiful icon was painted especially for the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America in celebration of our 50th Anniversary. These high-quality reproductions are mounted on 3/4" wood and finished with a keyhole on the back for easy hanging.

5" round icon \$34

8" round icon \$42

10" round \$49

\*Special sizes available upon request -- contact info below

Visit [www.APicons.com](http://www.APicons.com) for this and other icon-related products. Or, follow this direct link:  
<https://apicons.com/collections/traditional-mount/products/platytera-virgin-and-christ>

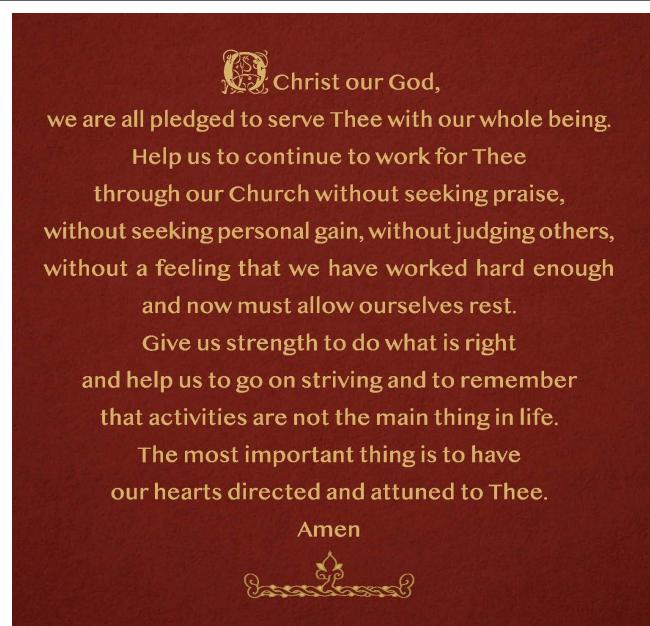


## Antiochian Women Prayer Card (see 2 pics below)

2-sided 5"x5" heavy card stock, UV coated

features new icon of the Platytera on the front and the Antiochian Women prayer on the back Package of 25 -- \$20.00

Visit [www.APicons.com](http://www.APicons.com) for this and other icon-related product. Or, follow this direct link:  
<https://apicons.com/collections/specialty-items/products/antiochian-w>



# Darkness and Light

A reflection by Khouria Mary Honoré  
U.S Navy Antiochian Chaplain's Wife

As the Holy Days of Nativity and Theophany wind down, I find that I tend to harbor an inner conflict. On the one hand, I relish the lasting joy of celebrating these feasts after the sobriety of Advent! But on the other hand, the end of the Nativity brings us face to face with the remainder of the long winter that will bring us to Lent. And though we all know that Pascha is coming, we know from years past that we must first pass through the solemnity of Lent and the sacred darkness of Holy Week in order to at long last reach that glorious "Feast of Feasts." This relationship of darkness and light brings to mind a story that I wish to share with you...

After the birth of our 4th child on December 24, 2019, I struggled with severe postpartum depression. Looking back on those difficult months (made all the more chaotic with the unfurling Covid-19 pandemic) the impenetrable and overwhelming darkness I felt is still palpable to me. I felt that I couldn't accomplish anything, that what seemingly feeble contributions I could make to my family and community were worthless, that I had no value as a human, and even that my husband and children would be better off without me. In reality, of course, none of this was true! But the evil one is hard at work to attack us at our most vulnerable. In the midst of my struggles with this overwhelming depression and darkness I couldn't even voice what I needed to those closest to me. My husband was at a loss as to how to support me, though he loved me fiercely through those days. He realized how unwell I was when he came home one afternoon to find me asleep on the kitchen floor when I was home alone with our four children.

Thankfully, I have an incredible spiritual father who came alongside us in full support and helped me to learn to be kind to myself, to embrace my own human fragility, to understand that the deep depression I was experiencing was not the result of my own sin or shortcoming. That the darkness I traversed was not from God, but that God was there in the midst of it and He loved me through it. To truly understand that I needed God, and that God loves me. Over the years I had (unintentionally) developed an unhealthy view of my own humanity, and this was magnified greatly with the effects of PPD. I would think *There are people all over the world who are truly struggling, who truly need God...but my life is beautiful, and my burdens are light! I have no right to feel overwhelmed or be depressed when my reality can't actually be labeled as "hard."* My struggles seemed nonexistent and insignificant in the grand scheme of things, so I made myself believe that they weren't "real."

Changing and growing my mindset and view of myself has been an ongoing journey and struggle ever since. I've had to relearn how I see myself and my place in God's creation. At the urging of my spiritual father, I tried to get out of the house for a short walk every

day. I would listen to a song by Andrew Peterson called “Be Kind to Yourself” (look it up!) on continuous repeat and just cry and beg God to help me to be kind to myself. I began to be able to let my husband share my struggles, helping me realize what my actual needs were and how they might be met. Some days were (and continue to be) really hard. At times I have to truly fight for my joy and that in itself is exhausting. But visits with a therapist, conversations, and confession with my spiritual father, letting close friends and family in on my struggle, support from my doctor, and finding ways to express myself creatively all helped me begin to find healing and feel like being alive is a good thing!

I realized that in caring for my children and my household I had neglected my own creative tendencies. There was a creative force within me simply aching to be free! One day I picked up my kid’s cheap Crayola watercolor paints and painted a beautiful yellow beech leaf that I had found on a walk. It felt incredible to make something out of nothing when what started as a blank page and dried paint pans slowly but surely became a lovely little painting. I titled it “Beauty Amidst Depletion” because I needed to remind myself that even as depleted as I myself felt, that didn’t rob my life of its beauty. By creating this painting, I enjoyed making mistakes because I saw that I could learn from them. I pushed through the process until at last I had a completed, albeit imperfect, original artwork. I was hooked!



I began to paint with watercolors as a means to help calm and center myself. I have yet to make it a truly daily practice, but over 4 years later I’m still practicing, and I have learned and grown so much. It is thrilling to make mistakes, to learn how to forgive myself for making them, to appreciate my tools even when they don’t behave as I want them to, to train myself to be patient as I work to create the many layers that a painting may require to come to its full splendor. I recently

decided to attempt a large amaryllis flower as a gift for my mother-in-law’s birthday. Starting the painting was such a challenge...it was *slow* work, frustrating and meticulous. A few hours into the painting I thought *Why did I even attempt this?! There’s no way this can come out looking even remotely nice.* Then after I had spent about 10 hours on what seemed like a total lost cause of a painting, I thought *What a waste. This just doesn’t look right, and it probably never will.* But I decided to finish the painting in hopes that I might learn some applicable lessons.

Generally, when working with watercolors, one begins with the lighter colors and works one’s way to the darker shades. For my amaryllis painting the darker shades created the shadows at the very center of the flower. As I began to layer on the darker paint, I was shocked to see how lively it made the amaryllis appear! Suddenly my dull-looking flower began to come off the page. I caught my breath and made the decision that this was not, in fact, a lost cause. Rather, it was a found one...that after all that work and hours spent layering on the lighter and more colorful layers, the darkest layers were what really “made”

the painting. A couple more hours of meticulous layering of the darker shades of color at long last brought my amaryllis to life. When the painting was finished, I was struck by the thought that this darkness bringing illumination can also be a beautiful metaphor for our lives as Christians. And I realized that I had learned this valuable lesson in my own life through my struggles with PPD.



In writing this reflection, I couldn't help but think over and over of the well-known passage from Isaiah 9:2 –

*The people who walked in darkness  
Have seen a great light;  
Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death,  
Upon them a light has shined.*

When we traverse through dark seasons in life, it can be so easy to forget that the light is still there just out of reach but waiting to shine again. As in my learning process through my amaryllis painting, I could have

given up and finished the painting early because it was “fine” even though it wasn’t what I wanted. But as I continued to push through the struggle, I was able to discover that the darkness that was finally incorporated into my painting was what made the entire composition vibrant and beautiful! I wouldn’t have thought that my amaryllis “needed” the dark shades, but because of those dark shadows my whole painting was made glorious. This lesson holds true when I look back on hard times in my own life: Darkness, doldrums, depression, difficulties. But I have learned to tell myself and I strive to impart this lesson to my children: hard doesn’t have to be “bad.” Sometimes hard is just hard, and darkness is just dark. But darkness isn’t the end. Sometimes it is our very walk-through darkness that reveals the greater light.

So, as we all settle into the 2024 calendar year and begin to anticipate the impending Lenten season, let us remember that as we walk in darkness it can lead us to see a great light. May God’s light shine upon us brightly this coming year!

**Kh. Mary is the wife of Fr. Andrew,  
aka: Chaplain Honoré, of the  
United States Navy, stationed at a  
Nuclear Submarine base at  
King's Bay, Georgia**

# PILGRIMAGES

Submitted by Donna Greenhut  
St. Athanasius – Sacramento, CA

Catechumens bring with them a multitude of blessings to a congregation. Each has special gifts to share and a new perspective or enthusiasm which enriches the congregation. We were blessed 9 years ago when an inquisitive and adventurous catechumen opened the door to the riches of monastery life to all of us at St. Athanasius, Sacramento.



Ioanna, our then-catechumen, made initial visits to local and some not-so-local monasteries, and came back with a goal to make these visits a regular part of her life, and to invite and to encourage others to come with her. From four to now over 18 women and young adults have become monastery-goers, bringing home to our parish the abundant gifts we receive from our dedicated time to the Lord. Growing from trepidatous newcomers, self-conscious about every misstep or careless bow, we now go eagerly, anticipating the gentle welcome of the monastics and the blessed spirit which permeates these places of regular prayer.

We don our long skirts, head scarves and baptismal names, and, with the blessing of our parish priest, we enter a world where God is more fully present all around us.

Our first weekend visit was to St. Xenia's Skete in the Trinity Mountains of Northern California (a 3.5-hour trip from Sacramento). The gentle spirit and loving hospitality of these four godly servants of God warmed our hearts towards the riches of the monastic life, which led to frequent return visits and a warm friendship with these women who live prayerfully and quite simply in the forest about 10 miles from St. Herman of Alaska's male monastery, where we attended services. Their prayers, teaching, and examples encouraged us to return to the city in peace and renewed commitment to serve God, His Church, and our families. We continue to visit with them in small groups of no more than four as often as schedules and weather allow.

More adventurous was committing to travel for a week-long visit to St. Paisius' Monastery in Southeastern Arizona. Here was a very different climate and a beautiful setting with its own order of prayer and work. Comfortable accommodations and clear instructions helped put pilgrims more at ease. (I've found that "follow the leader" works well to allay awkwardness!) It feels like we entered another world as we disrupt our sleep schedules with hours of daily prayer with soul-cleansing chant, venerate beautiful icons and relics and learn about the lives of these co-laborers with Christ, and enjoy simple but delicious meals in silence with the nuns while listening to a spiritual reading. We are

inspired, not only by the saints around us, but by these strong women who have carved a gorgeous place of refuge from the world in the harshness of the desert. Our days are spent in prayer, teaching, working together (often beading prayer ropes or helping with the pomegranate and olive harvesting), meeting and fellowship with other visiting pilgrims, and selecting new books and icons in the bookstore. There is also plenty of time to allow the Holy Spirit to draw you aside for prayer in one of the three chapels or to speak with you on a long walk around the buildings, orchards, and pastures. Our visits to St. Paisius are now a yearly tradition in October.



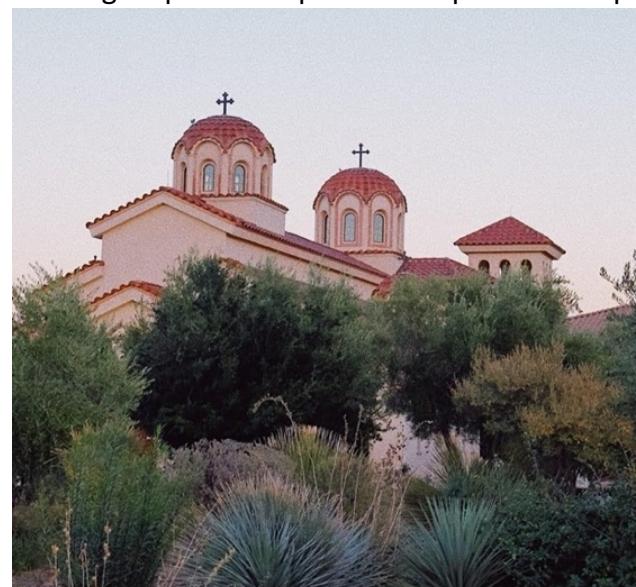
We feel His hand and blessing upon us as we step away from our too-busy lives to give time dedicated to Him. Peace comes home with us as the prayerful chanting lingers in our hearts. Time given to God is never without fruit. New icons of saints who spoke to us in the desert grace our homes and church.

Also gracing our church is a hand painted icon of St Nino, Enlightener of Georgia. Three of us, through the prayers and guidance of our monastic friends at St Xenia's, made a pilgrimage to the country of Georgia. I personally wished to experience what it was like to be in an Orthodox country. We were not disappointed. "2<sup>nd</sup> only to Jerusalem in riches", this land abounds with ancient churches and monasteries where visitors can venerate holy icons, tombs and relics of saints and martyrs old and new, bathe in the holy spring of St. Nino's and venerate the place of the robe of Christ. Sincere Orthodox believers openly reverence churches and ask blessings of priests they meet on the streets as they go about their daily lives. We returned feeling saturated with God's love and faithfulness.

Confident now in the blessings we will receive, we are wanting to visit so many other grace-filled places. God willing, our next adventure will be a pilgrimage to Romania with Fr. Seraphim from Mull Monastery next summer.

I can't encourage you enough to make a trip to a monastery. Get a blessing from your priest and the abbess of the monastery where you are going. Go with the right spirit. Be open and respectful. Drop your vanity, ego and your insecurities at the gate. Trust you will experience kindness and hospitality and understanding of your awkwardness. As much as you are able, plan to stay long enough to enter into the rhythm of their lives. Know that God meets each of us with sometimes very different inner experiences as we all go about the daily prayerful routine.

Let God minister to you through these servants who give their lives in prayer.



# **Memory Eternal**

## **Kh. Martha Lynch**

### **May 24, 2023**

*From the family of Kh Martha:*

Kh. Martha F. Lynch fell asleep in the Lord on the Leavetaking of Pascha, May 24, 2023, with her daughters Margaret Chobanian and Caroline Vuyadinov at her side at her home in Crystal Lake, IL. She is preceded in death by her husband, Fr. David (Charles) Lynch, on June 29, 2008. The two met at the Canterbury House, the Episcopal campus ministry at the University of Michigan. After college, she became a schoolteacher while he attended seminary at Nashotah House. They married in July 1961 and welcomed the arrival of their two daughters.



After serving in parishes in Michigan and Wisconsin, Fr. Charles retired from the Episcopal church in 1995 and both were received into the Orthodox Church at St. George in Flint, MI by Fr. Joseph Abud, Kh. Leslee Abud was Martha's sponsor. Shortly after, Fr Charles Lynch was ordained into the Orthodox Church by Bishop Basil (Essey) in Wichita, KS, and took the name Fr. David Lynch. He was assigned as rector of St. Augustine Antiochian Orthodox Church in Denver, CO, a Western Rite parish in the Antiochian Archdiocese.

In 2001, Fr. David retired from actively serving as a parish priest, and he and Martha moved to Crystal Lake, IL. Fr. David was attached to All Saints Antiochian Orthodox Church in Chicago, IL, and served with Fr. Patrick Henry Reardon until 2007, when Fr. David started attending OCA parish Holy Resurrection in Palatine, IL after recovering from a head injury to be closer to home. In 2008, he sustained another head injury which ultimately led to his death.

Martha's life was marked by a deep love of the Lord and her commitment to the Christian faith. She took herself to church as a child, as both of her parents were atheists. She was very interesting, extremely smart, quick-witted, and funny - she was always ready for a good laugh. She was drawn to children her whole life, known for her generosity, and accepting nature, and zeal for life. She was a ballet dancer as a young person and became a schoolteacher after college. As an adult, she learned American Sign Language, the art and science of handwriting analysis, Thai Chi sword form, and how to write Orthodox Icons - she wrote over 250 icons in her lifetime.



**"Show Your mercy, O Lord, and grant rest to our mother,  
making her a partaker of Your eternal blessings and granting  
her a place at Your right hand, for blessed and glorified are  
You unto all ages. Amen."**

Remembrance of our beloved widowed Khourias, in this life & when they repose is a long-standing commitment of our Antiochian Women's Ministry. We encourage you to remember these beloved ladies in your prayers with gratitude for all they did in our parishes, alongside their late husbands.

# **Orthodox Missionary in Fiji**

## **Visits Sts. Peter and Paul -- Potomac, Maryland**

Submitted by Barbara Bosworth – Sts. Peter and Paul

The AW of Sts. Peter and Paul Antiochian Orthodox Church in Potomac, Maryland were blessed to host Orthodox missionary Ruby (Catherine) Maggard who visited with them on September 10<sup>th</sup>, just four days prior to departing for her posting in Fiji. The parish has a well-established “Distant Missions Ministry” in partnership with the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC).

Ruby is serving with OCMC under the direction of the Metropolis of New Zealand (Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa) at the Holy Trinity Orthodox Church Community in Saweni, Fiji. Ruby’s parents were Protestant missionaries for eight years in Mexico and Guatemala, setting an example for her in leading a life dedicated to Christ. Ruby has been active at St. Anthony-the-Great Orthodox Church (OCA) in Bozeman, MT since 2002 when she was baptized as Catherine, with her family. Over the past three years she has been preparing to be a long-term missionary to the growing Orthodox Church on the Pacific Island of Fiji with the blessing of Metropolitan MYRON of New Zealand (Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa).



While living in New Zealand, Ruby first heard about the mission possibility in Fiji. At first, she thought she would move to Fiji and work with the mission on her own. However, she received the wise counsel to reach out to OCMC. The Mission Center advised her to complete an application for short-term mission work to get things started, however, without realizing, she completed the application for long-term mission work instead. Ruby stated, “In that moment it felt like I was being called to something greater than I had ever imagined.” The path has been long to her being in the field, filled with many obstacles and many miracles. The inspiration and guidance of St. Nina has been a huge help to her along the way. St. Nina was a missionary to the country of Georgia in the 300s, where the Lord allowed her to be the catalyst for the conversion of the entire country.

Now that Ruby has arrived in Fiji, she is working with Dr. Eleni Athinodorou, principal of St. Tabitha Children’s Home, to establish a playgroup for mothers and children in the area. The playgroup will be a place for mothers to bring their toddlers to play together, sing, and to enjoy company. The hope for this playgroup is to be the foundation for a future kindergarten associated with the Church mission in Saweni, Fiji. Dr. Athinodorou did similar work in Sierra Leone where she worked at a teacher’s college and helped support the community there.

Orthodoxy was introduced in Fiji in 2007 by then Metropolitan of New Zealand (Fiji Tonga Samoa) AMPHILOCHIOS. He saw the children and people there and was moved. He was a missionary from his youth in Africa and India, and he had the faith and courage to start the church where Orthodoxy was unknown. He wanted the children who were

homeless to have a home, so he was inspired to establish Saint Tabitha's Children's Home. He ordained 4 native priests and built 4 churches. The Church of the Holy Trinity was consecrated in 2015, and now serves as the main temple of the people of Saweni and the surrounding areas. His Eminence AMPHILOCHIOS retired in 2018, and the mission in the islands of the Pacific continues under the direction of Archimandrite MELETIOS, director of the mission of New Zealand (Fiji, Tonga, and Samoa) and the new Metropolitan MYRON.

Learn more about the Apostolic mission in the Islands by visiting [orthodoxpacifika.com](http://orthodoxpacifika.com) and watching the documentary titled, "Hello Orthodox" on YouTube.

As the missions and evangelism agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States, it is OCMC's mission to *make disciples of all nations by bringing people to Christ and His Church*. Learn more about OCMC and their work by visiting [www.OCMC.org](http://www.OCMC.org)



The AW of Sts Peter & Paul in Potomac have adopted to support Ruby's work as a missionary as part of their charitable Acts of Mercy.

To learn more about OCMC Missionaries visit OCMC.org and to see more on Ruby Maggard choose the "How We Serve" tab and then "Missionaries" and then scroll down to Ruby's profile. If you'd like you can sign up to get quarterly updates directly from Ruby.

**"Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God."**

**2 Corinthians 5:20**

# ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

THE MOST REVEREND METROPOLITAN PHILIP -- FOUNDER

"A SISTERHOOD SERVING CHRIST THROUGH SERVING OTHERS"



THE MOST REVEREND  
METROPOLITAN SABA  
358 MOUNTAIN ROAD  
ENGLEWOOD, NEW JERSEY 07631

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN  
NORTH AMERICAN BOARD



*"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.." (James 1:27)*

Bishop JOHN, Reverend Clergy, & Sisters in Christ,

Christ is in our midst!

I am humbled to be your NAB Humanitarian Coordinator once again for this new term. It is with great pleasure and excitement to announce our 2023-2024 NAB "Act of Mercy". We will be supporting the **Project Mexico & St. Innocent Infant Orphanage**. This is a new mission of the Orphanage and is the only Orthodox Orphanage in all of North America. Currently, St. Innocent houses boys/young men only. It is now expanding to welcome and care for infants. Construction is underway! The Orphanage plans to house and care for 12 infants the first year. The infants, like the boys, will be given Orthodox teachings and raised with an Orthodox spiritual life. They will be provided with an education, basic necessities, activities, emotional and physical enrichment, and most of all the love of God.

In speaking with the Board Chairman of Project Mexico & St. Innocent Orphanage, Dennis Awad, below are the goals and ways we can support this new Orphanage:

- Infant Orphanage start-up needs for 1 year. Educational costs are approximately \$100,000. The Orphanage plans on hiring at least two missionary interns to help with the newborn babies the first year. The orphanage is seeking \$50,000 in a scholarship fund for the 2 individuals for 1 year.
- Mr. Awad also spoke with Metropolitan Saba and his assistant Monk Paul about the new infant Orphanage and they are supportive of their efforts to develop the new infant Orphanage. Monk Paul said that he had some blankets for infants that were being made at a monastery that he wanted to provide to the Orphanage. This could be followed through by many of our talented women across the Archdiocese. It is suggested to have a blanket (maybe with the child's name on it) with a separate, small Antiochian Orthodox Cross as the plan is to baptize all children who are received at the Orphanage.

The direct donation link is as follows: <https://projectmexico.org/AW>. Included here is also a link to the Orphanages Amazon Wish List, which will send needed items directly to the organization (<https://www.amazon.com/baby-reg/project-mexico-september-2023-sandiego/1KUXBC1SJZGVZ>)! Additionally, if chapters have a collection of gently used baby clothes or items and would like to donate, please contact Noelle [noelle@projectmexico.org](mailto:noelle@projectmexico.org).

I am excited as this is a blessing to so many and caring for Christ's youngest flock. As always, please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns. Thank you for your continued hard work and compassionate acts of mercy to those in need.

In Christ,

/s/ Lauren Ferris

Lauren Ferris

2023-2025 NAB Humanitarian Coordinator

# ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN SHARED ACT OF MERCY



Project Mexico &  
St. Innocent  
Orphanage



B A B Y • NEW INFANT ORPHANAGE

## How Can You Help?

- Direct Donations - <https://projectmexico.org/AW> or via the QR code below
- Make baby blankets
- Donate gently used baby clothes contact Noelle [noelle@projectmexico.org](mailto:noelle@projectmexico.org)
- Orphanage's Amazon Wish List \*check often, list continually being updated\*



"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."

James 1:27

## AWE FALL RETREAT: CHURCH & FAMILY... WHICH COMES FIRST

Presenter: Khouria Janet Shadid -- November 4, 2023

Submitted by Angela Saliby – AW AWE President



At the **Holy Protection Monastery** in **White Haven, PA**, was our gathering “haven” for **AWE’s** third annual Fall Retreat.

There were 60 people in attendance representing 12 churches from our Eastern dioceses for the early morning liturgy and memorial service and enjoyed breakfast together before beginning the presentation. Many parishes in the region attended including younger moms from York, PA with their teen daughters to experience the monastery.

Through the **graces of Khouria Janet Shadid**, her enlightened

**presentation, spiritual wisdom and deeply profound thoughts** were an inspiration to us all. She began with the example of why ducks like rain, as their feathers cannot absorb water, they swim around not being bothered getting wet, as a message to us all, “let things roll off our backs, and to enjoy life.”

Asked the question of which comes first in our lives? **God, Family or Church**. In that order, God is the center of our hearts, and we emulate him as Christ saved us. As God is transparent, where God is, there is no evil. As the family is a “mini church”, Christ is the head of the church, and we need to attend to our church like it is “our home.” When the church is in our lives, we do not have “spiritual neglect.” Families need to attend church and be involved in the activities of the church, if they don’t go, there will be “chores” to do at home instead. Keeping the balance and prioritizing church and faith is important. Family prayer gives a sense of security and guides the family unit. Make a ‘holy’ home by celebrating feast days and participate in wholesome activities together for a balanced upbringing and a focus on God.

Khouria Janet’s examples were vivid by engaging her own family experiences with her beautiful boys through their years of upbringing and throughout her talk, emphasizing iconic images. When experiencing difficult times, she stated these quotes:

- **God never says no, but yes, not now, or I have something better for you.**
- **We should be a beacon of light where there is darkness.**
- **Worries are few because my blessings are many.**





She emphasized how important it is to have a **joyful heart, be positive and speak in a positive way**, turn the situation around, or do we even realize when we are being difficult? That we need to change and stay calm. If engaged in negative comments, reply in a positive way, or even ignore the person causing the conflict and “turn the other cheek.”

Most importantly, we need to remember the **power of prayer**, focus on ourselves because we cannot change others, but change the way we react to others, speak up but learn to let go.

She introduced the three personality behaviors we encounter; **aggressive, passive aggressive and assertive** which cause our reactions to various situations and confrontations in our lives. We must have the power of learning to say **NO**, she demonstrated with her handy talking device which made us laugh and understand how important it is to know when we have limits and need to turn it over to someone else who's equally capable. Not to be critical, because sometimes we have more power than we think we have and through this build trust in the Lord with all our heart.

The four ways to understand conflict were engaging and her examples lead to many questions. **To listen, validate, ask questions when we can and to show empathy.** ‘Don’t let their sin be your sin’, she advised, “to love everyone, and respect doesn’t mean we have to like their behavior.” To know and understand how we affect others is key.

The presentation gave us time to think deeply about the scenarios given and equate them to our own lives. This is the takeaway from the enlightening experience of listening to Khouria Janet present and how it touches each of us in that very special way.

Highlights also were that we gathered for an AWE group photo outside on the steps of the monastery and enjoyed a delicious lunch prepared by the sisters, many toured the monastery before leaving for their travels back home. This beautiful day was a joyful and AWESOME experience!





Antiochian Women of the East

Invite You to Attend Our

## VIRTUAL BOOK CLUB



ONE SESSION  
VIA ZOOM



FEBRUARY 25, 2024

6:30-8:00 PM EST

This is the moving story of Mother Maria Skobtsova, a nun of the Orthodox Church, who was born into a Russian aristocratic home but who died a martyr's death in one of Hitler's concentration camps. In the intervening years, the vicissitudes of life led her through two marriages, childbirth and childrearing, and exile from her homeland -- until she became an unconventional nun, devoted to the service of the destitute and the despairing in Nazi-occupied France.

Mother Maria was eventually consigned to Ravensbrück concentration camp because of her support of the Jews in Paris. There she continued to help those around her up until -- and even by means of -- her own death. Now canonized by the Orthodox Church as St Maria, she demonstrates how to love the image of God in each person, even when surrounded by hatred, evil, and brutality.

Kindly pre-register using the link or the QR code below

<http://tinyurl.com/book-club-02-25-24>



APRIL 19 - 21, 2024

45th ANNUAL

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN'S LENTEN RETREAT  
DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES AND THE WEST



At Camp St Nicholas  
Frazier Park, CA



We are honored to have Kh. Susan Wallace  
from St. James Antiochian Orthodox Church  
in Stillwater, OK as our Retreat Speaker.

Her topic will be  
“Ascending the Mountain; moving  
deeper into the Heart of God”

SAVE THE DATE - PLAN TO ATTEND  
Watch for full registration details soon!

For questions, please contact  
Georgette Malouf via email:  
[gevette0324@yahoo.com](mailto:gevette0324@yahoo.com)

# Learning And Fellowship Opportunities

Registration Now Open

All Invited!!

**Bringing Prayer Home!**

March 15th – 17th 2024





**2024 Spring Retreat**

Combined EDMC and AWE Retreat  
Plus Activities for Teen Soyo

**Akathist to St. Raphael**

Join us to pray at the Resting Place of St. Raphael (weather permitting)

**Very Rev. Ed. Hughes**

Speaking this year on: Bringing Prayer to the Home and the Importance of Prayer in the Home

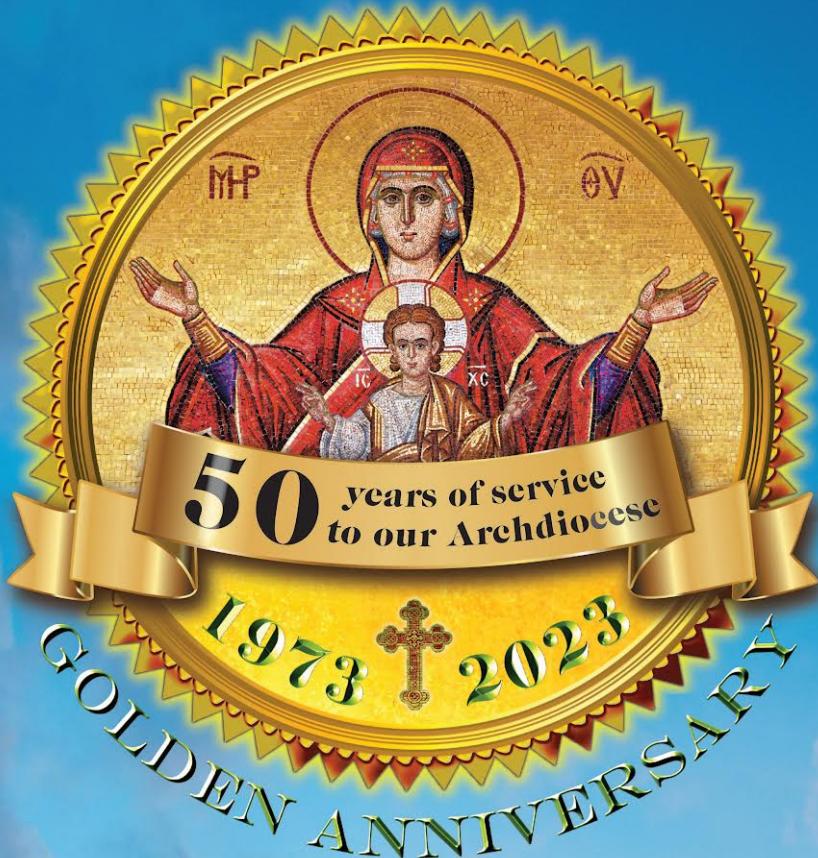
**Akathist to St. Thekla**

Join us for a procession and Akathist at the Shrine of St. Thekla (weather permitting)

Copy or Click the link below to register Now!!

<https://registration.antiochianvillage.org/LentenSpring2024>

# The Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America



## Our Mission:

- to develop a spirit of Christian leadership, awareness, and commitment among our members
- to foster a genuine expression of love and service through works of charity
- to instill a sense of fellowship and a deeper understanding of our Holy Orthodox Faith

**"A Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others"**

Founded by His Eminence  
**Metropolitan PHILIP**  
(of thrice blessed memory)

"Both the Old and the New Testaments testify beyond doubt to the important role which women played in the history of salvation... I propose, therefore, that a National Sisterhood of Charity be organized in the Archdiocese..."



Los Angeles, California 1972

The Antiochian Women of the  
Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest presents

## The Tote Bag Project

All proceeds will go to the Widowed Clergy Wives Fund



18.5 x 15 x 4.8 inches

We have designed a beautiful  
canvas tote bag, to show  
the  
diversity and  
togetherness we have with our  
sisters in Christ

To place your order  
please email  
Rudaina Swais  
[Rudaina.Swais@gmail.com](mailto:Rudaina.Swais@gmail.com)

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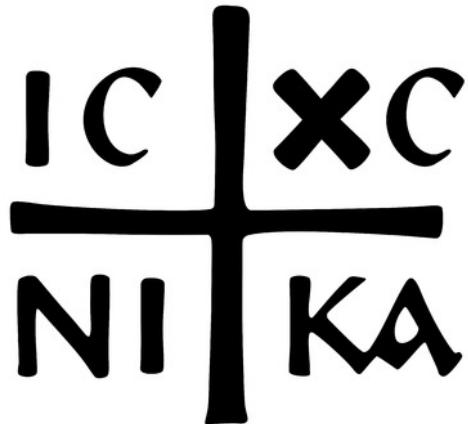
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## We wish to hear from you!

Share “all the beautiful things!” We’re looking for poetry, short stories, or a reflection on one of our beloved Women Saints. Share something your daughter, goddaughter, granddaughter, niece, or friend may have written. Do you take photographs? Share a moment that particularly made you aware of God’s presence. Are you an Artist, and wouldn’t mind sharing your talents with the rest us? Do you make homemade items? Let AW know about them, so we can share.  
(Please ONLY email original pictures)  
Send to: [antiochianwomenla@gmail.com](mailto:antiochianwomenla@gmail.com)



Next E-Bulletin: Spring 2024  
Deadline is **March 10th!**



<https://www.facebook.com/>



[AntiochianXSisterhood](#)

## **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.*

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