

DIAKONIA

September 2005



Induction of the 2005 - 2007 North American Board of the Antiochian Women

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America
A Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others

The Antiochian Orthodox
Christian Women
Of North America

The Most Reverend
Metropolitan PHILIP
Founder

The Right Reverend
Bishop JOSEPH
Overseeing Hierarchy

NAB Board

V. Rev. John Abdalah, Spiritual Advisor

Officers:

Laila Ferris President
Cynthia Nimey Vice-president
Dianne O'Regan Recording Secretary
Violet Robbat Treasurer
Lucy Hanna Public Relations

Marilyn Robbat Past President

Coordinators:

Elinor Bourjaily Parliamentarian
Sherry Abraham Morrow Humanitarian
Joanne Bitar Membership
Sarah Hodges Religious
Peggy King Scholarship
Saydeh Karabatis Web Site
Barbara Baz Widowed Clergy Wives Program

Antiochian Women's Prayer

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

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

PUBLICATION GUIDELINES:

Deadlines

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

Preferred Methods of Submission

- E-mail as an attachment to:
teta.of.9@sbcglobal.net
- Submit your article on a CD or floppy disk to Lucy Hanna, 1853 Kensington Road, Corona, CA 92880.
- FAX typed, double spaced articles to (909) 736-0800.

Submission Details

- Please include your name and the phone number where you can be contacted for questions.
- Attach a hard copy for reference.
- Keep a copy. Except for photos, articles will not be returned.

Content

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

In this issue of the DIAKONIA we highlight the
North American Board.

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

What is DIAKONIA

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

The following are also coordinators for whom no biographies were available.

Peggy King - Scholarship

Saydeh Karabatis - Web Site

Barbara Baz - Widowed Clergy Wives Program

Mark Morrow - Constitution and Bylaws

Thoughts to Ponder....

Success

You can use most any measure when you're speaking of success,
You can measure it in a fancy home, expensive car or dress,
But the measure of your real success is one you cannot spend.
It's the way your child describes you when they're talking to a friend.

Author Unknown



Sherry are maintaining both of their homes, and split their time between Wichita and Oklahoma City. So Sherry has now become active at St. Elijah, as well as St. George Cathedral. She has enjoyed serving the Antiochian Women very much and feels very blessed to be a part of this wonderful organization. She will always cherish the many friends she has made throughout the Antiochian Archdiocese.

Joanne Bitar - Membership

(No Photo available) My name is Joanne Nicola Bitar. I have been married to Father Elias Bitar for 30 years. We lived in Los Angeles, California, for five years where our first two daughters, Katrina and Sara, were born. In 1980 we moved to Orinda, California, where our third daughter, Martha, was born. In 1985 we were transferred to Little Falls, New Jersey, where we still live. Three years later our son, Antony, was born. I told my husband, "We are not moving again!!" When Antony started school, I thought why should I stay home. I got a job as Lunch Coordinator in the elementary school. I love working with the children.

I got involved with the Antiochian Women about 14 years ago. I have served as officer and coordinator on the local, Regional and NAB levels including President of the Eastern Region. The rest of my time is full of taking care of my family and just doing "khouriye" things.

Sarah Hodges - Religious

(No Photo available) My name is Sarah Hodges. I have been married to Mickey Hodges, who when not earning a living in the advertising world, translates megalynaria and was part of the Septuagint translation team.. We have four children, Chris (15), Irene (14), Ben (11) and Joe (7). I have a B.A from Lake Forest College, Illinois, an MBA in Finance and International Business from NYU, with one year at Hautes Etudes Commerciales in France. I have served as Treasurer and President of the local Antiochian Women of St. John Church, Memphis. On the Regional level, I have served President and I am now honored to serve as Religious Coordinator on the NAB level. My Current occupation is wifing and mothering.

Elinor Bourjaily - Parliamentarian

Elinor Bourjaily was born and raised in Akron, OH. In 1950 she married Fred Bourjaily and moved to Cleveland, OH. They had two daughters and a son. Elinor is still very active her parish, St. Matthew Church in North Royalton, OH. She has held almost every office and is now a lifetime member of the Parish Council. On the Regional level she also held many offices including President and on the NAB level, Elinor also held many offices including President of NAB from 1989 to 1991. During her term, Elinor traveled the length and breadth of the Archdiocese, spreading the message of the Antiochian Women, and encouraging new chapters.



Elinor relaxing in her favorite place, on the porch at the Antiochian Village

Elinor loves to spend time at the Antiochian Village, which she calls, “the most beautiful spot in the world”. She has recently become a great grandmother for the first time.

Antiochian Women
North American Board

Most Reverend
Metropolitan PHILIP
Founder
358 Mountain Road
Englewood, New Jersey 07631



Dear Sisters in Christ,

I would like to introduce myself to those of you who do not know me. My name is Lucy Hanna and I was elected to the office of NAB Public Relations Director at the general assembly of the Antiochian Women at the Archdiocese Convention in Dearborn (Detroit), MI, this last July. It is my job to promote the works of our Sisterhood of Charity, the Antiochian Women throughout the Archdiocese and to assist the diocesan Public Relations Directors in their efforts to do the same.

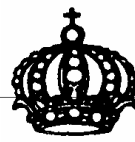
To that end, I will be resuming - and expanding - the publication “DIAKONIA” which I was publishing when I previously held this office. As we did then, we will be introducing the boards and bringing you news and articles from each diocese and their parishes. Each issue will feature one diocese. We will begin however, by introducing the North American Board in this issue.

I look forward to hearing from all of you. Send me articles, news, and information from your parishes and communities for publishing in any future issue regardless of which diocese you belong to (the schedule below is only for the introduction of the boards of each diocese). To be a true sisterhood, we need to stay in touch with each other, rejoice with each other over our successes and triumphs and learn from each other’s mistakes.

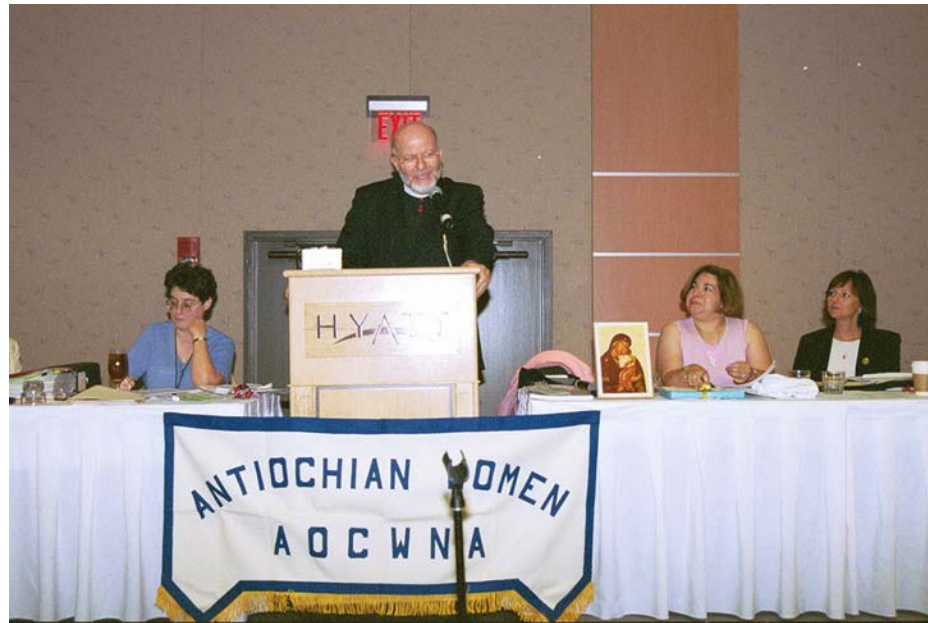
All articles are due the first of the month PRIOR to the month of publication. The schedule of publication is as follows:

	Diocese	Date of Publication	Date Due
1	NAB Board (Sorry, I’m a bit late on this one)	September 2005 ✓	Done ✓
2	NY and the Archdiocesan District, and Oakland, PA and the East	December 2005	November 1, 2005
3	Ottawa, Eastern Canada and Upstate NY	March 2006	February 1, 2006
4	Toledo and the Midwest	June 2006	May 1, 2006
5	Worcester and New England	September 2006	August 1, 2006
6	Miami and the Southeast	December 2006	November 1, 2006
7	Wichita and Mid-America	March 2007	February 1, 2007
8	Los Angeles and the West, Eagle River and the Northwest.	June 2007	May 1, 2007

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



The following is His Grace Bishop Joseph's address to the general assembly of the Antiochian women during the Archdiocese Convention in Dearborn, Michigan, July 27, 2005.



His Grace Bishop JOSEPH addressing the Antiochian Women....

"We are here not for a summer vacation. It is more than that. It is nice for people to have fun and have a good time, but God has asked us to gather here to do His work before anything else. I feel very sorry and very hurt when there are not enough people participating in our ministries. We care so much for the flesh and for the body and for this earth that we forget what God has made us for. The women are very important in the life of the Church. You are the most important body within the Church. You make a big difference in our ministry. When everyone left our Lord

Jesus Christ alone on the cross, the women were there. Can you see how important women are? How important the mothers are? How important the teachers are? So you are important. You are the myrrh-bearing women.

"A moment ago, Fr. Chris (Fr. Christopher is the director of the Orthodox Christian Network, Come Receive The Light, which is the media ministry of SCOBA (Standing Conference of Orthodox Bishops in America), spoke about the Orthodox Christian ministry, the television station, and how strong the media is in America. But, believe me, you are stronger than his network. You are the living message. You are the living network. People will listen to you more than they will watch or listen to TV and radio.

"Your being here is not an easy thing. Thank you for your commitment. Thank you for all your sacrifice. Thank you for being good mothers and good women and good wives and for all you have given up at home to come here. The women have done good work over the years. You have helped charities, monasteries, orphanages and other institutions all over the world. Thank you very much, and may God reward you abundantly for your hard work."

"Now I want to get your attention. A few years ago, I used to help the Antiochian Women organize retreats. I don't see it any more. I don't see it at the Mid-winter meetings, at the summer meetings or any other time. We need to discuss something more than business, more than money, more than paperwork. Yes, of course we need to do these things, but more importantly, we need to do more that would lead to our salvation. How can we ignore it? How can we forget about it? Over the past few years, there have been retreats in Southern California and in Northern California. They barely had enough registrations to cover expenses. They told me that I should cancel the retreat because they didn't have enough people, but I never canceled any retreat, and I will never cancel any Church event.

mission in the Riverside area. With the help of many of our wonderful clergy in Southern California and the dedication of a handful of families who quickly joined in the effort, our mission was established and in 1989 received the name St. Andrew Orthodox Church and has now grown to over 70 families. In 2002 we moved into phase 1 of our building project which included the fellowship hall, kitchen, offices and classrooms. We are now in the second phase, building the Temple to our Lord.

On the local level of the Antiochian Women, I have served as President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary. On the Regional level, I have served as President, Vice President, Secretary, Religious Coordinator, Retreat Coordinator and Cultural Coordinator. On the NAB level I have served as PR and Religious Coordinator and now Public Relations Director again for the second time.

Marilyn Robbat - Immediate Past President



I have been married to Michael A. Robbat for almost 32 years and we have three (3) daughters Kristen, Stephanie & Michelle, aged 30, 28 and 22, two of whom still are at home. We are members of St. Mary Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where I have been employed as the Church Secretary/Administrator for the past 16 years. I have been a part of Antiochian Women for a number of years holding local chapter offices, (I am presently the Women's Club President), regional/diocesan offices (I am presently Membership Coordinator for the Diocese of Worcester & New England.) and am still serving on the North American Board in an advisory capacity. My interests OUTSIDE the church include cooking, movies and reading—with not a great deal of time left for that!!

THE COORDINATORS

Sherry Abraham-Morrow - Humanitarian



Sherry Abraham-Morrow belongs to St. George Cathedral in Wichita, KS. She has held several positions for the Antiochian Women. She served as President, Vice President, and Secretary of the St. George Cathedral Guild. In the Southwest Region (now the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America), she served as Treasurer for three terms, President for two terms, and Vice President. On the North American Board, she has served as Treasurer, Secretary, and is currently serving her second term as Humanitarian. In addition to her church activities, Sherry is also a member of the Bona Dea Club, a ladies' social club, and served as President, Vice President, and Secretary of that group. She volunteers at Music Theatre of Wichita and is a member of the Music Theatre Guild. She has served as Assistant Treasurer and Treasurer on the Music Theatre Guild Board, and is currently on the Social Committee.

Sherry was born and raised in Woodward, OK, and graduated from Oklahoma State University with a Bachelor's Degree in Elementary Education. Shortly after she graduated from OSU, she married Don Abraham and moved to Wichita. They had two beautiful daughters. Don and Sherry owned and operated Ali Baba Bakery for 19 years. Sherry worked full time at the bakery with Don until he was diagnosed with cancer. At that time, they sold the bakery. Sherry also worked on the weekends with Don's family in their steak house for many years. Don passed away February 28, 1995.

In November of 2003, Sherry married Mark Morrow. Mark belongs to St. Elijah Church in Oklahoma City, OK. His late wife, Susu, was also very active in the Antiochian Women, and served as NAB President. Mark and Sherry's beautiful blended family consists of two sons, three daughters, two sons-in-law, two daughters-in-law, and four adorable granddaughters. A fifth grandbaby is due in December. Mark and

Violet Robbat - Treasurer



My name is *Violet Robbat*. I am former member of St. John of Damascus Church, Dedham, MA, where I was active as a Sunday School teacher, Teen SOYO Advisor and President of Senior SOYO. My husband Richard and I have been married for almost 32 years and members of St. Mary Church, Cambridge, MA. We have two children, Michael and Andrea. At St. Mary, I have been an active member of the Women's organization, Teen SOYO Advisor, Bible Bowl coach and Sunday School Superintendent. I have been active in the Antiochian Women since its inception, holding many positions on the Regional level, including President of the former New England Region and have served on the NAB level as Public Relations Director, Recording Secretary and now I am in my second term as Treasurer.

I am a Special Education Tutor working with high school students who have learning disabilities and I have also coached a Varsity Cheerleading Team for 19 years. Although not currently working in the field, I am also a registered Cytologist of the American Society of Clinical Pathologists. I enjoy reading, traveling, gardening and embroidery among other things.

Dianne O'Regan - Recording Secretary



Dianne O'Regan is a convert to Orthodoxy, having been raised in the Roman Catholic Church. She has attended St. Michael the Archangel in Louisville, Kentucky for over ten years. Dianne has been a Legal Assistant for almost 25 years, working in the criminal, civil and corporate law fields. Since 1996, she has worked at the law offices of Stites & Harbison in Louisville. She also indexes and copy edits academic books for national publishing houses.

On the parish level, she has been a member of the St. Michael choir, performs both Slavic and Greek dances at the church's annual Ethnic Fair, and has served the local women's organization in various capacities. On the Diocesan level, Dianne has held the offices of President, Recording Secretary and Public Relations Director, and currently serves as the Historian for the Midwest Antiochian Women. She has been

honored to serve as Recording Secretary for the North American Board for the past two years, and was reelected to this position at the 2005 Archdiocese Convention. In her spare time, Dianne loves to read (with a fondness towards history), needlepoint and volunteers as a member of the Board of Directors for the Kentuckiana Shetland Sheepdog Club and as Secretary of Show Affairs for the Louisville Kennel Club. In 1991, she received her Bachelor of Arts degree (Summa Cum Laude) from the University of Louisville in Political Science with an Emphasis in Russian Studies. She is currently working towards her Master of Arts Degree in Secondary Education.

Lucy Hanna - Public Relations Director



My name is Lucy Hanna. My husband, Dr. Lotfy Hanna, and I emigrated from Egypt with our three children and settled in Portland, Oregon, where we joined St. George Antiochian Church. Our son Fr. Nabil Hanna, is the pastor of St. George Church of Indianapolis, IN; Our daughters, Suzy Hadeed and Mary Thompson, both still live in Portland. We are blessed with nine beautiful grandchildren. During the 19 years we lived in Portland, I was active in all aspects of the church, teaching Sunday School, singing in the choir, chairing the annual festival, and serving on the parish council.

In 1986 we moved to California where we settled in Corona and attended St. Mark Church in Irvine. In 1989, I received the blessing of Metropolitan Philip to start a

“So I’m saying this to get your attention, so that you do something noble. I’ve been stopped on my travels by Jehovah’s Witnesses, but I’m never stopped by Orthodox Christians. This is unhealthy. So if we sit here and we raise money, and we do our business, we lose our Orthodoxy. It is important to do business, but our salvation is more important.

“Encouraging young people, young ladies, to join is very important. We talk to them not by words but by our actions. You are the reflection of the Holy Theotokos. Whether you understand this or not – this is the truth. You are a reflection of her in purity, in commitment, in humility, in obedience, in Christian virtue. Please don’t forget this.

“Try to encourage yourselves and others to come to a retreat, and I will be available to you. My ministry is not to just listen to reports of what you’re doing. My ministry is to show you the way towards salvation.

“The church is about salvation. We are doing this ministry because we believe that the more we minister, the more we sanctify ourselves. So that’s why we serve you with joy. The One who loves us went for us on the cross, and we have to do the same, every day. And the cross I’m talking about is not the pain. No one can go through that pain. But our evil actions will crucify us. Our Lord’s cross is different. He went for us, and now we have to enjoy the gladness of His Holy Cross.

“Read books, educate yourselves, read to your children and to your grandchildren about the Faith. Every year we see the same faces. Try to evangelize people to Orthodoxy. I’m not asking you to evangelize Jehovah Witnesses only, but try to evangelize even the Orthodox people by your virtue, by your ministry, by your godliness, by your commitment.

“Thank you very much for this time and for being committed to the Faith and for bringing joy to the Hierarchs and to everyone by your faith and good works. Thank you for every effort, and I ask Almighty God to help you and have mercy on us.”



...and the
Antiochian
Women from all
seven dioceses,
listening,
discussing,
sharing ideas,
And enjoying
each other's
company.

Message from NAB Spiritual Advisor

Fr. John Abdalah

Metropolitan PHILIP has long recognized the strength of the women on the local level.

In 1973, wishing to expand and strengthen the ministry of the women even further, he asked the women to organize on regional and archdiocesan levels. With the birth of the Antiochian Women came opportunities for sharing, self-reflection, spiritual growth and service to the Archdiocese. The women have risen to the call of our shepherd, and done so with dignity and success. We have taken care of orphans, supported seminarians, built programs and buildings both within our Archdiocese and outside the Archdiocese, and are now working to protect the clergy retirement funds.

At the Archdiocese Convention in Dearborn, MI, our Episcopal overseer, Bishop JOSEPH, challenged us to do some work once again in the areas of sharing and self-reflection. He reminded us of the importance of pausing to examine our goals and focusing ourselves on our Lord. He called us to make time at our mid-winter meeting to retreat, focus and rededicate ourselves. While we have taken a little time at each meeting for such reflection, I wholeheartedly agree with Bishop JOSEPH that such a retreat is timely and imperative. Without such vision-building experiences, we will not continue to receive the blessings that we have so enjoyed, and will not be able to give to God what He calls us to do. I pledge to work with Bishop JOSEPH and Metropolitan PHILIP to be sure that we meet this call.

This is an exciting time to be working with the Antiochian Women. I thank you for allowing me this opportunity to serve the Lord with you in your blessed service.

In Christ,

Fr. John Abdalah

Message From NAB President

Laila Ferris

Dear Sisters in Christ,

On behalf of the North American Board Officers and Coordinators and myself, I wish to sincerely thank the Antiochian Women of this Archdiocese for their dedicated work in order to fulfill the mission of this blessed Sisterhood of Charity. You have successfully worked diligently to care for those in need, and also have continued to ensure that as Antiochian Women we stand strong in our faith, which gives us the strength and wisdom to bring our projects to fruition.

I also wish to congratulate you on the exciting completion of year one on our ***Antiochian Women's Project: The Retired Clergy Fund.*** You helped raise \$115,000.00 towards our goal of \$500,000.00 over a five year period. Your work never ceases, nor does your drive to reach this goal for a most worth Project. To "*care for those who care for us*" is truly important, for who more important should we direct our attention to but to those who care for the most important part of us - our souls. Our Retired Clergy and their wives are so deserving our abilities to ensure that they are well cared for in their later years in life. I know that you will, once again, succeed in year two of this Project as you did last year. You never fail to serve those who are in need of your love and care.

Please know that the N.A.B. Officers are here to serve, support and assist you at all times. It is only through your hard work and efforts that any of our goals can be accomplished. As a Sisterhood that stands strong through our faith and service to our Lord, we will always succeed.

In the Service of Christ,

Laila Ferris

Father John Abdalah - Spiritual Advisor

Father John Abdalah is the Dean of St. George Orthodox Cathedral in Pittsburgh, PA, as well as the Dean of clergy of Western Pennsylvania. He is on the faculty of the Antiochian House of Studies, teaching Priestly Formation, and a founding member of the Orthodox Pastoral Counseling Institute of Pittsburgh.

Fr. John is also the editor of *The WORD*. He holds a Doctor of Ministry degree in Pastoral Care from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary. He has been our NAB Spiritual Advisor since 1997.



Laila Ferris - President



My name is *Laila Risk Ferris*. I am currently the President of the Antiochian Women, North American Board. I am honored to be holding such a position in representation of the women of this Archdiocese. I have held several local, regional and NAB positions in the past, including President, Vice President and Recording Secretary on the local level; President, Vice President and Cultural Coordinator on the Regional level; and on the NAB level I have the positions of Treasurer, Vice President and now I am in my second term as President.

Along with having a great time working in the above positions, I am married to Paul Ferris. We have three children - Paul, Jr. (PJ), Christopher and Lauren - now in college. I was born and bred in El-Paso, TX and absolutely love the desert life (no humidity). My home parish is St. George, El-Paso, TX, and with my family, am very active in all events and organizations. I work in the world of education and am presently Principal at Mesita Elementary School, El-Paso Independent School District. I truly love working with children and those adults dedicated to teaching and learning. I am now also involved in the preparation of the 2006 Parish Life Conference.

Cynthia Nimey - Vice President



My name is *Cynthia Nimey* and I am the NAB vice president. I have served the Antiochian Women in various offices including Can-Am Region President, Vice President and Project Coordinator. On the NAB level I have previously served as Treasurer and I am now in my second term and Vice President. I have served my parish of St. George, Utica NY in many positions. Currently I am parish council president. I converted to the Orthodox Church right before marrying my husband Richard, a cradle Orthodox. We have been blessed with three wonderful sons, Matthew, Richard and Luke.

I enjoy being an Antiochian Woman. It is so satisfying to work on projects that involve all the Antiochian Women of the Archdiocese. Together we have been able to accomplish some outstanding goals, most recently fulfilling the one million dollar endowment fund for orphanages. One day I would love to be able to spend a week or two volunteering at one of the orphanages to serve the children who need our help. I am excited about the new project; The Clergy Retirement Fund, "Care for those who care for us". It is a great project that needs support from all parishes in the archdiocese. Our clergy are important and it is our duty to care for their future needs.

Introducing The 2005—2007 North American Board

THE OFFICERS

The Rt. Rev. Bishop JOSEPH - Hierarchical Overseer

Joseph G. Al-Zehlaoui was born on November 2, 1950 in Damascus, Syria to Georgi and Mathil (Baghdan) Al Zehlaoui. He received his elementary education at the St. John of Damascus and Al-Assiyeh schools in Damascus, and his secondary education at Our Lady of Balamand Monastery in Koura, Northern Lebanon. He then studied philosophy at the Lebanese University in Beirut and theology, languages and music at Salonika University in Greece. He is fluent in Arabic, English and Greek.

Bishop JOSEPH was ordained to the Holy Diaconate while a student in Salonika, in December, 1976. Subsequently, he was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by His Beatitude, Patriarch IGNATIUS IV, at St. Mary Cathedral in Damascus in December, 1980. His election to the holy episcopacy was on May 5, 1991, and the consecration was on June 30, 1991 in the Holy Cathedral of the Patriarchate in Damascus with the title “Bishop of Katana, Syria”. While a Deacon, he served parishes in Salonika. As a Priest, he was Dean of St. Mary Cathedral of Damascus, and overseer of the Holy Cross Church and other parishes in the suburbs of Damascus. In 1983, he pastured the Arab Orthodox faithful living in London, England, and in 1986 was sent to Cyprus to minister to the Arab Orthodox living on the island.

During his clerical ministry, he served as General Supervisor and Professor of Religious Education at the Al-Assiyeh Orthodox College and supervised the Patriarchal headquarters in Damascus. Besides being the Patriarchal Assistant during the past several years, Bishop JOSEPH served as the secretary to the Holy Synod of Antioch, Editor-in-Chief of the Patriarchal Bulletin and participated in several theological conferences in Greece, Texas and Australia.

His Grace was elected by the Holy Synod of Antioch on January 24, 1995, to be an Auxiliary Bishop for the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.

On September 12, 2004, His Grace Bishop JOSEPH was enthroned as the first Bishop of the Holy Diocese of Los Angeles and the West by His Eminence, Metropolitan PHILIP, Primate, and the Local Holy Synod of the Holy Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America.



Highlights from the NAB Summer Meeting and Luncheon At the 47th Archdiocese Convention, July 24 - 31, 2005

The beautiful Hyatt Regency Hotel in Dearborn, Michigan was the site of the 47th Archdiocese Convention. For the first time we gathered as the Self-Ruled Antiochian Archdiocese of North America. We seemed to be floating on air with exuberance at being surrounded by all our Hierarchs, our clergy and all our friends from all corners of this God-protected Archdiocese. We were energized both spiritually and mentally. Meeting after meeting and service after service, we kept on going tirelessly, being rejuvenated by the services, the homilies, the Bible studies, workshops, the Oratorical contest, Bible Bowl, and the list goes on.

The Very Rev. Joseph Antypas and all the members of our host parish of St. George in Troy, Michigan, went out of their way to ensure that every one of us was comfortable.

On Wednesday, July 27, 2005, over 80 women gathered for the Summer Meeting of the North American Board. As always the meeting was opened with the Antiochian Women’s Troparion and Prayer led by NAB Spiritual Advisor, Very Rev. Fr. John Abdalah. NAB President Laila Ferris thanked everyone for being there and for all their hard work, dedication and commitment on behalf of the Antiochian Women.

After the minutes of the midwinter meetings were approved, the women spent a considerable amount of time discussing the treasury. It has become quite difficult for the treasurer to prepare her report until

the last minute because of dues and project monies coming in late. Treasurer, Violet Robbat asked that all Dioceses adhere to the deadline.

Vice President and NAB Project Coordinator Cindy Nimey thanked everyone for their hard work on the Retired Clergy Fund Project. Metropolitan PHILIP

had challenged us with a \$500,000.00 goal over a period of five years. We had a good start raising \$115,000 in our first year thanks to everyone’s hard work. This amount includes \$1000.00 which was a gift to the Metropolitan from the Antiochian Women on the occasion of his 40th anniversary in the episcopacy and

he asked that we apply it to the Clergy Retirement Fund project. Cindy added that, within the next year, a lot of the publicity for the NAB Project will touch on the widowed clergy wives. There are currently 13 widows who collect from this fund. Remember that our Project’s slogan is “Care For Those Who Care For Us.” It isn’t just the priests, but their wives, who will be supported by this fund. If our priests didn’t have such wonderful support from their families, they couldn’t support us the way they do.

Laila reported that this year, we gifted nine married seminarians \$500 each and quoted Bishop Basil as saying: “The Antiochian Women are taking care of these priests at the beginning of their ministry, and now we have been given the task to take care of them at the end of their ministry through the Retired Clergy Fund Project.



Outgoing Officers of the North American Board
of the Antiochian Women 2003 - 2005

In his address, the NAB spiritual advisor, Fr. John Abdalah said that it was an honor and a pleasure for him to serve with such beautiful and lovely women. Fr. John said he did not have any wisdom for us. Instead, he had a question for us: “What can we do if we are going to help our seminarians at the beginning and the end?” If we are going to take care of the seminarians as they begin and end their studies, then we need to be there for them when they retire as priests. We need to figure out how we can keep taking care of them, and we need to figure out ways that we can continue to inspire; that we push the Spirit into other women so they can also share in the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Instead of trying to teach us something that he doesn’t know the answers to, Fr. John said he wanted to learn about what we are doing in our parishes that is working and inspiring new women to enter into the ministry of Jesus Christ. A very inspiring discussion followed as women contributed stories of their successes and failures so we can all learn from them.



Fr. John closed by explaining that we discover the Holy Spirit in the ministry that is Christ, in which we are participating. It takes sharing, effort, and a continuing focus on our mission. We need to understand that we’re not just a social group – we’re the Church – and we’re sharing Christ’s action for salvation with the people around us. We’re not just raising money; we’re inspiring each other to be saved.



The ladies then enjoyed a delicious lunch in a fabulous setting of elegantly decorated tables. Metropolitan PHILIP joined us and after the meal addressed us with an inspiring message of encouragement and gratitude for our role in the Archdiocese and our work on behalf of the retired clergy.

Laila Ferris thanked him for his encouragement and presented him with a gift of \$1000 in honor of his upcoming 40-year anniversary in the Episcopacy. His Eminence graciously thanked her and all the ladies and donated the check back to the Retired Clergy Fund due to his love for his clergy. God grant you many years Sayidna.

After the lunch break, the women resumed their meeting. We heard reports from all the coordinators and diocesan presidents.

After listening attentively to some of the reports, His Grace Bishop JOSEPH addressed the women bringing some insight and fatherly advice to them. *(The whole text of his message is printed on pages 4 and 5 of this newsletter).*

After a few more discussions on several issues, Immediate Vice President and Nominating Committee chairman, Marilyn Robbat conducted the election of the new officers for 2005 to 2007. She explained that due to the need for stability during the transition from Regions to Dioceses, Metropolitan PHILIP has given his blessing to our request for a one-term extension. The following are the individuals who presented the proper paperwork and signatures from their parish priests and were subsequently elected by acclamation:

President	Laila R. Ferris
Vice-President	Cynthia Nimey
Recording Secretary:	Dianne M. O’Regan
Treasurer:	Violet K. Robbat
Public Relations:	Lucy Hanna

(The preceding information is only highlights and is not intended to be, or to replace the minutes of the meeting. The minutes were prepared and

distributed by Secretary, Dianne O’Regan).

At the General Assembly of the Archdiocese Convention on Friday July 29, the newly re-elected president of the Antiochian Women made us all proud when she “wowed” everyone with her poise and eloquence when she gave her report on our behalf. Laila gave a rundown on the work of the women and their support of the ongoing project, the Clergy Retirement Fund. She then presented His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP with a check for \$115,000.

THE MIDWINTER MEETINGS WILL BE HELD
FEBRUARY 3 - 5, 2006
AT THE ANTIOCHIAN VILLAGE.
WATCH FOR MORE INFORMATION,
OFFICIAL SCHEDULE AND ROOM RATES
IN THE MAIL AND IN THE
DECEMBER DIAKONIA



Laila Ferris delivering her report to the General Assembly at the Archdiocese Convention