

DIAKONIA

Spring 2007

March 2007 - May 2007



Annunciation Icon by the hand of Nicholas Papas

The Annunciation

March 25th

Troparion (Tone 4)

Today is the beginning of our salvation, the revelation of the eternal mystery!

*The Son of God becomes the Son of the Virgin as Gabriel announces the coming of Grace. Together with him
let us cry to the Theotokos:*

"Rejoice, O full of grace. The Lord is with you!"

*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

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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:
(951) 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. Articles will not be returned. Photos will be returned if requested.

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
**Antiochian Women of the Diocese of
Wichita and Mid-America**

In each issue, we 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.

READ THE DIAKONIA ON LINE AT
<http://www.antiochian.org/AW-DIAKONIA>

ON THE SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

“And when Jesus heard it, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick; I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.’” (Luke 5:31)

As we approach the end of the Holy Fast of Great Lent, I would like to encourage all of you to avail yourselves of the healing Sacrament of Confession. As Orthodox Christians, Confession is not an option which we can choose or not choose to do. It is absolutely necessary for our spiritual healing and well-being, and those who think they can go without Confession for long periods of time are setting a trap for themselves that will be evident when they encounter tragedy and loss.

Orthodox Christians benefit greatly from Confession, when we repent of our sins and receive freedom from the bondages of our heavy consciences, which are soiled by the memories of our sins and resentments. In Confession, we can forgive ourselves and others, and release the heavy load that unforgiveness sets on our shoulders.

Why do we confess to another person? If humans could fix themselves, the world would not have psychologists and counselors. Even secular people realize that our human problems are too great for one person to deal with alone. In the process of Confession, we build a loving relationship with someone more advanced in the spiritual life, who guides us through the maze of our thoughts and memories, leading us to Reality. We eliminate the things in our minds that keep us from God. We become free. The person who rejects Confession also rejects true freedom, preferring the slavery of ‘privacy.’ Sadly, the ‘private’ person is usually blissfully unaware that everyone around him knows his sins but him.

Confession is not merely the reading off of a list of sins, but delving deep into the heart to discover the passions and suffering that drive us to sin. Once found, we can take steps to receive the cure for these passions through spiritual exercises called Penances. A Penance is not a ‘punishment,’ but an act which helps us gain greater awareness of the passion under treatment, so that we can more fully invite the Holy Spirit into us and receive healing. When someone commits a serious sin, such as marital infidelity or violence against another, he or she should not receive the Sacraments for an extended period, so that the penitent can achieve greater realization of the seriousness of such a sin, so that he or she will not fall into it again. Penances aid us in becoming better persons, freeing us from enslavement to repetitive sins.

The Great Fasts of the Church (Great Lent, Advent and Dormition) are excellent times to prepare one’s Confession, and I recommend that all of you use these times to purify your souls and increase the Holiness that God has for you. Confession takes time and repeated efforts. It takes prayer and fasting. We weep over our sins, which the Holy Fathers

refer to as a ‘second Baptism’ of tears. Confession is a lot of work.

For this reason, I am instructing the clergy to refrain from hearing Confessions during services

(i.e. quick and fast Confessions) if they are serving alone, especially during Orthros and the Divine Liturgy. This practice was from a time when people also partook of Confession at other times as well, including long discussions with spiritual elders. These days, however, many people *only* come to Confession during services, which is not enough time for serious self-examination. It also disrupts both the Confession process and the services when a priest must both listen to a Confession and conduct a service.

Given the great work necessary to prepare for and given an honest Confession and, thusly, receive God’s grace and mercy, it is totally inappropriate for anyone to simply ask the Priest to grant Absolution without confessing one’s sins. I ask that the Laity not burden the Priest by asking him to ‘pray over my head’ without making an honest Confession of your sins.

You may ask, ‘Who can I ask to hear my Confession and pray for Absolution from my sins?’ Your Pastor or any priest of this Diocese who has the blessing to hear Confessions and offer prayers for your Absolution. First and foremost, you should go to your Pastor, who is your father, for Confession. If your Pastor is unable to help you with your problems, then he can refer you to a canonical priest with talents in the areas in which you need help. Should you go to a Priest other than your Pastor, you must let your Pastor know who it is who heard your Confession.

Some of you may desire to receive spiritual guidance from Clergy or Monastics outside the Antiochian Archdiocese. In such cases, people run the risk of choosing a spiritual guide who is not under appropriate discipline or who may hold to policies that conflict with our Archdiocese’s pastoral standards. To prevent such problems, Clergy and Laity who seek out Confessors outside the Archdiocese must first seek permission either from one’s Pastor or the local Dean. Once permission is given, Laity are expected to inform their Pastors each time they make Confession, so the Pastors know that the flock is being ministered to.

Clergy who are not licensed marital counselors or psychologists ought not to engage in these fields during

(Continued on page 4)



(Continued from page 3)

Confession. Confession is not psychology, and deep problems in these areas ought to be handled by professionals who are trained in these areas. I expect Pastors to locate mental health professionals in their areas to whom they may refer parishioners. Such professionals, if not Orthodox Christians, should at least be 'friendly' towards our Faith. Those professionals who espouse 'values free' counseling are to be strictly avoided.

I pray that all of you have a fruitful Great Fast, with intensified prayer and almsgiving, so that we may all greet the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ with great joy and cleansed hearts. Let us endeavor to make our Confessions in an honest manner, so that we may fully receive the benefits of Absolution. May our Merciful Lord have mercy on us and forgive us!

Message Judy Stevens, Diocesan President

"Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered; let those who hate him flee before him!"

Thank you so much for giving us the opportunity to spotlight our Diocese. I bring you tidings from all of the women of our Diocese. We are composed of 46 parishes/missions stretched across 11 states. There are 8 deaneries in our Diocese and per Bishop Basil's suggestion, we have a coordinator for each one. Our Parish Life Conference is each June and the Fall Gathering is in October and is held in Oklahoma City since it is a central meeting place and has many amenities. At the Fall Meeting we have several sessions which involve the whole family. This past October we were fortunate to have Maria Khoury with us. We were all very impressed with her presentation and were able to obtain her books that she brought. We are hoping to have more of a retreat for our women this fall and get the business portion of our meeting covered on Friday afternoon.

Our Diocese has a project that is handled by Sherry Abraham Morrow, who is currently our NAB Humanitarian coordinator. She handles the sale of our T-shirts, sweatshirts, aprons, bibs, holy bread cloths and cookbooks. She sells them at all the conventions and meetings. We thank her for her dedication to this project. The profits are donated to Camp St. Raphael - last year we gave them \$1,819.33.

We are continually working on getting more women involved in our Diocese, stressing that all women are members of the Antiochian Women. We are currently collecting funds for the Retired Clergy Project. Last year, our Diocese raised \$22,301.19. God bless our women for all their hard work.

We are so fortunate to be guided by our beloved Bishop BASIL and our Spiritual advisor, Fr. Constantine Nasr. God grant them many, many, many years. I want to give many thanks to our NAB president, Laila Ferris, and all my officers and coordinators for all their time and efforts. God has truly blessed our Diocese and we thank our previous leaders for guiding us and giving us their footsteps to follow.

God bless all of you and thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve. People come and go in and out of our lives, but the ones we love leave footprints on our hearts. You are all loved.

THE GATES OF HELL

by The Very Reverend Father Constantine Nasr
St. Elijah Orthodox Church
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

In 1976 His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP Saliba visited Russia. Upon his return an article appeared in The Word magazine in which His Eminence quoted Matthew 16:18 "upon this rock I will build my Church and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." The Metropolitan was directly calling attention to the victory of the Church over seventy years of communist persecution.

As a gift from St. Elijah, my wife, Sharon, and I had the opportunity to take a tour to St. Petersburg and Moscow in August, 2006. What a wonderful spiritual encounter it was. We arrived in St. Petersburg, a city full of beauty, art, culture, history, palaces and, above all, churches. After seventy years of destruction and hell to millions of faithful Orthodox at the hands of the communists, the Church in Russia is a true resurrection of living and vibrant churches. We saw men openly wearing crosses around their necks. Every where across Russia churches are being rebuilt, services are being held, people are praying, and young people are being baptized.

As we traveled on a river boat from St. Petersburg to Moscow, we were impressed by the serenity and peacefulness of nature. Time and time again, as we rounded a bend, we saw silhouetted against the sky brightly colored onion-domed churches.

At Uglitch we had the opportunity to walk through the city and visit some of the churches. As we were returning to the boat, we saw a man selling icons and other antique artifacts. I spotted an icon and held it. Made out of tin, it was quite old and worn. It was the icon of St. Anna of Kashinskaya, a saint for drunkards.

I negotiated a price for the icon and bought it for \$20. As I looked at it carefully, I noticed little holes in the icon, most likely caused by BBs as the icon had been used as a target for practice. This icon is a true witness of both the persecution and the victory of the Church. Not only were the living attacked, but the saints were attacked as icons were assaulted and churches were destroyed. But the icon, like the saints and the Church, survived. I am blessed to have this icon, a visible and constant reminder that the gates of Hell did not overcome the Church of Jesus Christ.

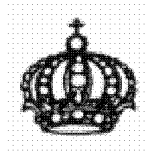
As we arrived in Moscow, we were amazed at the beauty and splendor of Christ the Savior Church. It had been destroyed under communism and used as a public swimming pool. Today it has been rebuilt and stands as a beacon of hope for all of Russia. This wonderful church will hold about 10,000 people.

An added bonus not included in our itinerary was being hosted by our beloved Bishop Niphon, Antiochian Patriarchal Representative in Moscow. He gave a dinner for all of us on the tour. We thoroughly enjoyed his gracious hospitality.

Everyone that went returned with memories of a wonderful experience, a rejuvenated spirit and unique stories to tell. For me, Christ's victory over the gates of Hell so vividly seen in the icon of St. Anna of Kashinskaya is my story.

The Most Reverend
Metropolitan PHILIP

The Right Reverend
BASIL



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of All North
America

Bishop of Wichita and the
Diocese of Mid-America

The Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese
OF NORTH AMERICA

The Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America

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P A S C H A 2 0 0 7

Beloved and Christ-loving Officers and Members of the Antiochian Women:

In behalf myself, your sister Antiochian Women and all of the clergy and faithful of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America, I greet you in the Name of the Resurrected Theanthropos Jesus Christ. Christ is risen! *Χριστὸς ἀνέστη!* *المسيح قام!* *ΧΡΗCΤΟC ΒΟΚΡΕΠΕ!* *Hristos a înviat!* *Cristo ha resucitado!* On this radiant Feast of feasts I counsel you with these timeless words from our Father among the Saints, Ambrose the Bishop of Milan who peacefully fell asleep in Christ at dawn on Pascha in the year 397:

What use is there to celebrate Holy Pascha (which means “a passing over”) for those who observe it only externally? What benefit do they receive if they themselves do not pass over and partake of the Paschal Lamb? They deserve every pity and the Church prays for them that our Lord Jesus Christ, our eternal Pascha, set them on the right path and bring them to their senses. And so I too implore you, brethren, to celebrate Pascha in a manner worthy of its significance. Let us sinners celebrate it by passing over from a sinful life to a virtuous one; let those who think of themselves as perfectly righteous celebrate it by passing over from their degree of righteousness to a still higher degree, from piety to greater piety, from perfection to perfection, so that none would remain without passing over to something better, and from that to something far better, ‘forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before’ (*Philip. 3:13*). Celebrating Pascha in this manner, we will remain true Christians, observing our Pascha in a worthy fashion. May the One responsible for the present Feast, and Who Himself lives and reigns in endless time for ever and ever, help us through His grace.

Wishing you and your families a glorious Paschal season, looking forward to being with many of you at the Archdiocesan Convention this July in Montreal, and assuring you of my continued love, prayers and blessings, I remain

In the Risen Christ,

+ *Bishop Basil*

+ B A S I L

Bishop of Wichita and the Diocese of Mid-America

“...the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.” ACTS 11:26

Introducing The 2005—2007 Board of the Antiochian Women of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America

THE OFFICERS

The Rt. Rev. Bishop BASIL - Bishop of Wichita and Mid-America



BISHOP BASIL was born in the southwestern Pennsylvania town of Monessen on November 26, 1948. He is the only son and eldest of three children born of William and Genevieve Essey. He was baptized on April 17, 1949, at St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in Monessen, and raised at St. Michael Antiochian Orthodox Church in Monessen.

His Grace received his primary and secondary education in the public schools of Monessen. In 1970 he received his B.A. in Psychology from California State University of Pennsylvania in California, PA. He entered St Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary in Crestwood, NY, in 1970 and received his M.Div. in 1973. From 1973 until 1975 he served as pastoral assistant at St George Church in Detroit, MI, and from 1975 until 1986 he served as director of the Archdiocese's Department of Youth Affairs with offices at the main chancery of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America in Englewood, NJ. While working in that capacity, he served as assistant pastor at St Anthony Church in Bergenfield, NJ, and instructor of Contemporary Byzantine Chant at St Vladimir's Seminary from 1980 until 1986. During 1986 and 1987 he resided at the St John of Damascus Patriarchal Institute of Theology at the Balamand Monastery of the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos in the al-Koura region of north Lebanon where he studied, taught and did research and translations for *The Liturgikon: The Book of Divine Services for the Priest and Deacon* which was published by the Archdiocese's Antakya Press in 1989 (reprinted in 1994).

Bishop BASIL was tonsured a reader by the late Metropolitan ANTONY (Bashir) at St Michael Church in Monessen on October 27, 1964, and was ordained to the subdiaconate and diaconate by Metropolitan PHILIP (Saliba) at St Ignatius of Antioch Church at the Antiochian Village in Bolivar, PA, on September 30, 1979. On January 27, 1980, he was ordained to the priesthood by Metropolitan PHILIP at St Anthony Church in Bergenfield, NJ, and on October 9, 1988, he was elevated to the dignity of archimandrite by Metropolitan Philip at St George Church in

Wichita, KS. From July 1, 1987, until his consecration to the episcopacy in 1992, he served as priest at St George Church in Wichita, KS. During his pastorate the new church temple was erected, consecrated and elevated to the status of Cathedral on April 21, 1991. He received monastic tonsure to the Lesser Schema (Stavrophore or Mantiya) at the Patriarchal Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist in Tolleshunt Knight by Maldon, Essex, England, during the night between January 19 and 20, 2003, at the hands of the monastery's abbot, Archimandrite KYRILL.

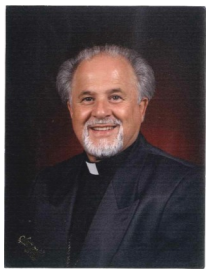
His Grace was nominated for bishop (auxiliary to Metropolitan PHILIP) by the General Assembly of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America on July 26, 1991, and was elected to the episcopacy (with the titular see of Enfeh al-Koura in north Lebanon) by the Holy Synod of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of the Great City-of-God Antioch and all the East on November 14, 1991. He was consecrated to the episcopacy on May 31, 1992, at St George Cathedral in Wichita, KS, by Metropolitan PHILIP of the Archdiocese of North America, Metropolitan ELIAS (Audi) of the Archdiocese of Beirut, Bishop ANTOUN (Khouri) titular bishop of Seleucia and auxiliary of the Archdiocese of North America, and the late Archbishop MICHAEL (Shaheen) of Toledo, OH, auxiliary of the Archdiocese of North America. From 1992 until 1995 he resided at the Los Angeles Chancery, and in September 1995 he took up residence at the Wichita Chancery. By a decision of the Holy Synod of the Patriarchate dated October 9, 2003, His Grace became a diocesan bishop and, since his enthronement on December 15, 2004, bears the title of Bishop of Wichita and Mid-America.

Bishop BASIL co-chaired the Joint OCA-Antiochian Canonization Commission which led to the glorification of Bishop RAPHAEL (Hawaweeny) of Brooklyn on May 29, 2000. His Grace oversaw the publication of the book containing St Raphael's Life, Akolouthia and Akathist (Antakya Press 2000), arranged the hymnography for St Raphael to Byzantine melodies, and directed the Clergy Brotherhood Choir which recorded an audio CD of the hymns for the feast of St Raphael (Antakya Press 2001).

His Grace, The Right Reverend Bishop BASIL resides at the Chancery of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America located at 1559 North Woodlawn Boulevard, Wichita, KS 67208-2429.

The Diocesan Cathedral of St George is located at 7515 East 13th Street at Broadmoor, Wichita, KS 67206-1223.

Father Constantine Nasr - Spiritual Advisor



Fr. Constantine was born in Jerusalem in 1944. He graduated from Albany Central High School, Albany, NY in 1964. He received his BA in History from Iona College, New Rochelle, NY in 1970 and his M.Div. from St. Vladimir Theological Seminary in 1973.

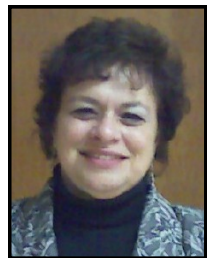
Fr. Constantine is married to Kh. Sharon. They have 2 sons, Constantine, a film maker who graduated from USC and resides in California, and Philip, a seminarian at Holy Cross Seminary in Brookline, MA.

In June 1973 he was ordained to the holy Priesthood and served as pastor of St. George Orthodox Church, Cedar Rapids, Iowa until 1982 when he was assigned as pastor of St. Elijah Orthodox Church, Oklahoma City, OK where he is serving until the present. In September 1987 he was elevated to Archpriest and subsequently to Ekonomos in September 1995.

Fr. Constantine also served as Dean of the Iowa-Nebraska Deanery and the Kansas-Oklahoma Deanery as well as Spiritual Advisor for the Southwest Order of St. Ignatius. He is a founding member and Spiritual Advisor of the International Task Force on the Patriarchate of Jerusalem.

Over a number of years that spanned from 1967 to 2002, Fr. Constantine assisted in the development of numerous missions including St. George, Jacksonville, FL, St. Elias, La Cross, WI, St. George, Kearney, NE, St. Elias, Denver, CO, St. Benedict, Wichita Falls, TX and others. He authored numerous books and publications including *"The Bible in the Liturgy"*, *"Journey through the Divine Liturgy"*, *"The Resource Book for Orthodox Evangelism"*, *"Memory Eternal: Selected Eulogies"* and *"A Practical Guide for Priests and Pastors"*. He is a guest lecturer every year at various conferences and training sessions.

Judy Stevens - President



I am a convert to the Orthodox faith. I was raised as a Missouri Synod Lutheran in a small town in Iowa. My marriage to my husband, Phillip (a cradle orthodox) lead me to the Orthodox faith. Once you have been through Lent and Pascha you are converted. My husband and I have been married for 32 ¾ years. We had four sons, Joshua, Jason, Jeremy and Jeff. We have added 1 daughter-in-law, Dana and 2 grandchildren, Arianna and Jason.

I am currently President of our local chapter of the Antiochian Women and have been an active member for 25 years. I have been blessed to be a member of St. Thomas Orthodox Church in Sioux City, Iowa. We had the same priest for over 22 years, Father Thomas Begley. We were blessed in August to have, Father Paul Hodge assigned as our new priest. We know that Father Paul will do a fine job and thank Bishop BASIL for granting us Father Paul. My Orthodox faith has helped me so much in all of life's

struggles. To me the church is more than just a church. We talk about church families and sometimes our church families are our true family. I have also been involved as a Sunday School teacher for 28 years and love being around young children.

When you belong to the Diocese of Wichita and Mid America your church family extends across many states. I thank God for all our officers and coordinators along with our Spiritual Father, Father Constantine Nasr and of course our beloved Bishop BASIL. God grant them and all Orthodox women and their families many, many years.

Randa Stevens - V. President/Project Coordinator



I was Born in Beirut, Lebanon, and lived my childhood in Damascus, Syria and then in Jounieh, Lebanon. I Studied at the Jesuit School and am fluent in French, Arabic and English, and studied philosophy. Out of school I became a flight attendant for the Middle East and Saudi Airlines. In Oct. of 82, my sister and I immigrated to the United States to join the rest of my family in Oklahoma City.

At my first National Archdiocese Convention in Boston, I met Gene Stevens. He proposed to me and I moved from OKC to Wichita, KS. I was married at St. Mary Orthodox Christian church. I thank God for giving me the blessings to have my wonderful three children, Theodora, Nathalie and Gabriel. They are as active as mom is in the Church. I thank God for the nineteen years of my marriage.

When I was called to serve the Lord according to his will, I ended up teaching Sunday School and became the superintendent, I then helped serve on the council, I also held the position of president of our local Antiochian women chapter. I traveled to the Antiochian Village as a volunteer, while my kids enjoyed the camping session. I love to participate in our major fundraisers at my church. I had the opportunity to represent my church as a delegate, and taught at our pan-orthodox VBS with St George Cathedral. I am now serving my second term as Vice President of the Antiochian Women for the Diocese of Wichita and Mid America. My job as VP is mainly the project for the Clergy Retirement Fund. Everything I have done is for the Glory of God

Jane Harakal - Recording Secretary



I was born and grew up in Northwestern Ohio. I have a Bachelor's degree in Music Education from Bowling Green State University where I met my wonderful husband, John. We married right after my graduation in 1952. I was a public school music supervisor in Kirksville, MO, for 4 years, working John's way through Medical School. I have not been gainfully employed since then, and enjoy being a full time Mom to 2 girls and 2 boys who have now given me 9 grandchildren and my third great grandchild is on the way. I have been a widow for 11 years.

I became an Orthodox Christian in 1993 when our church became St. Peter's in Ft. Worth. I am active in everything (it

seems) at the church, currently serving as president of our women's group- St. Sophia. I have served two terms on the vestry. Currently, I also serve as president of our chapter of the Order of St. Ignatius. I have enjoyed serving as Humanitarian Coordinator, and two terms as Recording Secretary of the Antiochian Women of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America.

In addition to my work in the church, I also love the volunteer work I do at the Ft. Worth Botanic Gardens, and the Girls' Service League (an organization giving money to females for as long as it takes to earn a college degree), reading, doing anything with my family, and traveling.

Winona Nava - Treasurer



My name is Winona Nava, a parishioner of Holy Trinity Orthodox Church in Santa Fe, NM. I was among the group of 21 founding members of Holy Trinity who traveled to Salina, Kansas in December of 1995 to enter into communion with the Holy Orthodox Church through the sacrament of Chrismation. The following day, December 31, 1995, we traveled to Wichita for the ordination of our Priest, Fr. John Bethancourt and Deacon Basil Rives. Our labor as a mission bore fruit in January of 2006 when our Women's group had the pleasure of assisting with the consecration of our Holy Trinity Temple by His Grace Bishop Basil.

The first member of the Wichita congregation to welcome me was Sherry Abraham-Morrow. She shared with me the importance of being a part of the Antiochian Women's Sisterhood during New Year's Eve Festivities at the Cathedral. She encouraged me to start an Antiochian Women's Group at our new Parish and to attend the annual Parish Life Conference. I founded our Holy Trinity Antiochian Women's group in the spring of 1996 because of her enthusiasm, encouragement, and inspiration. Shortly thereafter I began attending the Parish Life Conferences. Sherry has continued to be a mentor and inspiration to me in my work with the Antiochian Women.

In 2000 I found it necessary to resign as President of our Chapter of Antiochian Women to care for my mother. I was re-elected President in 2002 after the death of my mother. The following year I became Treasurer of the DOWAMA (at that time Southwest Region) Antiochian Women and have truly enjoyed being an active part of our sisterhood. My husband, Sub-Deacon Raphael Nava, and I feel extremely blessed to be a part of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese. We have 5 children and 11 grandchildren who are a joy to us. We love spending time with our children and grandchildren, particularly in the mountains during the summer, and traveling, when time allows.

Those travels have enabled us to worship at Orthodox Churches throughout North America and to meet and correspond with other Antiochian Women and faithful Orthodox. We have also been able to attend many of the local and national meetings and enjoy our time at these wonderful "family reunions." Since our first service in

Salina, Kansas, we have truly felt at home thanks to the warmth and love shown by all.

Professionally I'm President/CEO of the Guadalupe Credit Union in Santa Fe, NM. I have been involved in the financial services industry for over 30 years. I am a graduate in business and accounting from the College of Santa Fe. I serve on the Holy Trinity Parish Council, am on the Board of Birthright of Santa Fe and Los Alamos (a crisis pregnancy assistance service that provides abortion alternatives) and serve on the Board of the Credit Union Executive Society-Rocky Mountain Chapter.

Carol Comp - Public Relations



I was born in Pennsylvania and grew up in Horsham, PA where I graduated from Hatboro-Horsham High School in 1969. I was raised in a devout, Christian home, and attended the Methodist Church. I was always very active in the church youth group and choir. I graduated from Philadelphia General Hospital School of Nursing in 1974. In the summer of 1974, I moved to Oklahoma City with my husband, Philip. We have three children—Vanessa, Justin and Aubrie. Vanessa is married to Aaron Peterson, and they live in San Lorenzo, CA. Justin and Aubrie are attending Oklahoma City Community College, and Oklahoma City University Law School respectively.

My journey to Orthodoxy began many years ago, although I did not know at the time that I was searching for Orthodoxy. While I continued my nursing education for higher degrees, I also read about many different churches and what they believed. One day in 1988, I was at the library, and I saw a book titled "The Orthodox Church in America" by Timothy Ware. I had no idea what an Orthodox Church was, but when I read what the Orthodox Church believed, I realized that what the Orthodox Church believed is what I had felt in my heart since childhood. At that time, our neighbors Bonnie and Stanley Naifeh attended St. Elijah's in Oklahoma City. I asked Bonnie if I could go to church with her one Sunday. I went that one Sunday, and I have attended there ever since. I was Chrismated at Pentecost in 1989. I currently serve as president of St. Elijah's Ladies Guild and as Public Relations Coordinator for the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America. I have served previously as president and secretary of the Ladies Guild. I have also served on the Parish Council at St. Elijah.

I am an avid walker and enjoy day hiking with my husband. My hobbies include genealogy, cross-stitch, and outdoor activities in God's Nature.

Sherry Abraham Morrow - Immediate Past President



Please refer to the September (Fall) 2005 issue of DIAKONIA for Sherry's biography.

THE COORDINATORS

Jan Farha Klopp - Humanitarian



My name is Jan Farha Klopp. I was born in Oklahoma City, Ok in 1953 and have been a member of St. Elijah ever since. I have been blessed to have known no other church home but one and it has served me well. At one time or another, I have been involved with various works, including serving as a Teen Soyo advisor, serving on the Parish Council and teaching Sunday School. I have also served our Ladies Guild as Vice President and President. I am presently serving the Diocese of Wichita and Mid America as the Humanitarian Coordinator.

The following are Coordinators for whom no biographies or photos were submitted:

Verla McCullough - Membership/Missions

Peggy Gregory - Religious

Teresa Thurman-Zuck - Web Site

Sacred Meals Offer to Aid Retired Clergy Fund, Extended

The cookbook, Sacred Meals by Fr. John Finley is being offered to all chapters of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America for half-price to aid in their fundraising efforts for the Retired Clergy Fund. This offer is exclusively for that purpose and all profit should be sent to your Diocesan Treasurer along with any other money raised for this project.

- Orders should be placed by individual chapters.
- The suggested retail price per unit is \$18.95.
- Books will be sold to individual chapters at \$9.48 each. This is an exclusive 50% discount and will not be offered to parish bookstores (Minimum order – 10 books. Cases of 28 are also available.)
- Free shipping will be included in order to maximize profits for the chapters.
- This offer has been extended till Pascha.

To place orders now, call **1 (800) 573-9337** or email sacredmeals@cox.net

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	Diocese	Date of Publication	Date Due
1	NAB Board	September 2005 ✓	August 1, 2005 ✓
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

REMINDER

Diocesan Boards: Please remember the following schedule for submitting your articles and profiles. One diocese is highlighted in each issue according to the following schedule. However, articles and news from all dioceses and parishes of the North American Antiochian Archdiocese are welcome in every issue.

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

Christ is Risen!

The following is a homily that was given by Fr. Gregory Horton, Pastor of St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church in Post Falls, Idaho, at the 2006 Diocese of the West Parish Life Conference.

We are now entering the very heart of the Church year when all things are filled with light and the faithful are proclaiming Christ is Risen! This exuberant and joyful greeting can never be considered mere information. It is proclamation!

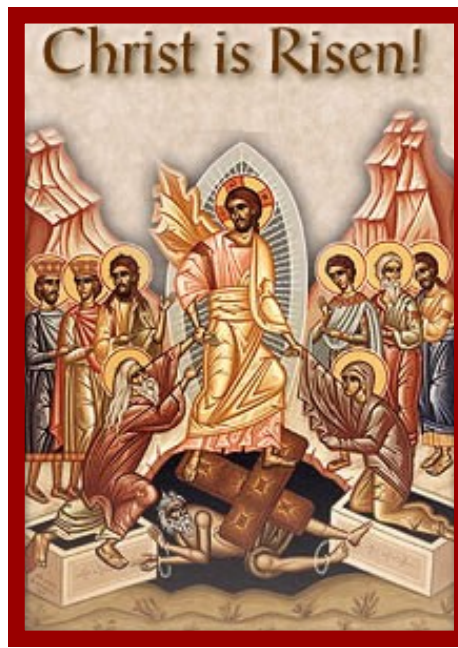
The first time that I ever heard this proclamation was about 25 years ago in a little Russian church in Miami, Florida. Beforehand, many people had told me what to expect, but I was in no way prepared to experience the spiritual power of this proclamation. I was in no way prepared for all of the Paschal elements (the lights, processions, bells, singing, and shouting). I had known the INFORMATION all of my life. I knew that Christ had risen from the dead. But it was never proclaimed to me until that moment... and how it burned my heart!

So how do we move from simple passing on of information to life changing proclamation that results in nothing ever being the same again? Well, that is the theme of this conference (last year's Parish Life Conference). By the power of the Holy Spirit, we are filled to the brim with a sort of Divine Insanity. We become prophets, dreamers and visionaries. Anything and everything is possible...if only we embrace it in our lives!

Before the Crucifixion, Christ tried to explain to the Apostles that He would die and rise again on the 3rd day; but they didn't get it. After the Resurrection, the women were told by an angel to go quickly and proclaim (there's that word again) this incredible news to the Apostles...and they did; but the Apostles still didn't get it. Even after dwelling among them during these refreshing days following the Resurrection that we are sharing together in San Diego (at last year's Diocese of the West Parish Life Conference)...these glorious 40 days...they still didn't quite get it. They were still uncertain. It was only after the Holy Spirit was poured out onto them and into them that they finally remembered all of the information and

proclaimed it to the world. Now there was meaning! Now there was vision! Now they were changed! Now the world could never be the same!

So after experiencing the reality of the Resurrection of Christ, and especially after our own Baptism, Chrismation, and Partaking of the Divine, Holy Communion, how can our lives be anything but Divine Intoxication and Joy? How can they our hearts not be brimming with true Excitement and Fire! Dear Orthodox Christians, the Holy Spirit is upon us!



Allow me, at this point, to tell a story. No, on second thought, I actually need to proclaim it. In 1989, I was visiting the Soviet Union as a Priest and I arrived with my party at the Kievan Caves Monastery. Housed here are the incorrupt relics of the Holy Fathers from 800, 900, or 1000 years ago. The deacon that hosted our tour showed us to an underground room. Present in this room were the departed Bishop Zachariah and many Monks. The deacon proceeded to tell us about a Paschal incident that had occurred in his presence about ten years earlier. As he and another deacon entered the underground room in order to cense the departed fathers lying there and to greet them with the Holy resurrection, Bishop Zachariah himself started proclaiming from the grave that Christ is risen! What's more, the monks buried in the same room as him responded "Indeed he is Risen"!!!

I believed what that sweet Deacon proclaimed to me even as I believe the scriptural accounts of the Resurrection of Christ. So if the Holy Spirit can enliven a dead body to proclaim that Christ is Risen, what can we not do?! We have so much spiritual power that we don't even know about yet! After The Holy Apostle Peter preached one Spirit-filled, divinely given sermon to the crowd on the day of Pentecost... when he allowed God to really proclaim something through him...about three thousand people joined the Church! Now I don't know about Southern California (the site of last year's conference), but in North Idaho, (the location of preacher's parish), if we add three thousand souls in one day, we're going to need to make some pretty big adjustments in order to meet the needs of our new community. But that's our vision! And

that's our dream come true at the same time! Our vision and our dream are that Christ is risen and we live it and we can hardly keep it inside because it is flowing out of us. It is truly divine insanity.

And some might say "so what"? What if the whole world considers us mad for proclaiming such teachings and living differently because of it? Well, that's okay too. Didn't the people on Pentecost think that the Apostles were drunk when they received the Holy Spirit? It's our great, great blessing to be spiritually drunk in the risen Christ. There will always inevitably be some who won't understand and they will want to stop us. We've learned a Paschal lesson about this up in North Idaho during the ringing of bells at Midnight. The first few years after the ringing of the bells, I quickly needed to add a new ministry (men guarding the parking lot because of neighbors driving up to the church in pickup trucks armed with shotguns ready to target anything that moved). Our new practice is to call the sheriff every year so that the civil authorities can protect our divine madness from the onslaught of those who just don't understand.

Finally, please allow me to set before us a threefold Paschal challenge. I would expect...

For us Orthodox Christians to be so madly in love with our Resurrected Lord that the very first thing that comes pouring out of us during the Paschal period when we greet one another is "Christ is Risen" – On our lips, in our eyes and filling our hearts. I must admit that I was puzzled yesterday at the clergy meeting when we were asked to remind one another that we greet each other with the Paschal greeting during these 40 days. Did I need to be reminded to proclaim that Christ is risen? It is like being reminded to breathe so that we don't die! It is life itself! It is our holy vision!

I would also expect...

For us Orthodox Christians to be so madly in love with our resurrected Lord that we greet absolutely everyone...family, friends, Orthodox Christians, and even strangers (maybe even especially strangers) with Christ is risen! Three thousand people didn't become Christians on Pentecost because the Apostles chose to simply stay in the room and exchange the good news among themselves. People need to hear this life-saving message. And if they don't hear it from us, then from whom? Oh yes, we will get lots of strange looks, condescending smiles, and smart remarks. But we will also touch some hungry hearts. You might hear: "Christ is risen!" "Yes, he has!"; "Christ is risen!" "How do you know?" "Christ is risen!" "You betcha He has!" "Christ is risen!" "Alleluia!" "Christ is risen!" "What do you mean?" "Christ is

risen!" "Amen!" I've heard a million responses; and all of them invite us to dialogue about the Risen Christ! My favorite response was one that I heard at my hotel from a security guard: "Christ is risen!" "Does your church believe in Marriage?" So we talked for several hours about Christian marriage!

By the power of the Holy Spirit, we have something to say. All of us have something to say to the people we meet. Are we ready? Our Diocese descends on a luxury hotel every year with the potential to touch the hearts and souls of desk clerks, waiters and waitresses, maids, janitors, managers, security guards, other guests, etc, and all we need to do is proclaim that Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. The Holy Spirit will do the rest.

I would also expect...

For us Orthodox Christians to be so madly in love with our resurrected Lord that we sometimes even forget what time of the year it is and continue to proclaim that Christ is Risen in every season! I am not proposing anything official (no liturgical innovations); but when we run into the cashier at Wal-Mart and have nothing meaningful to say in Mid August, Why not proclaim Christ is Risen? Our beloved ones come to us in November or in January with big problems, (sickness in the family, lost all of their money, lost their job, their husband or my wife has left them, etc.). How important it is for us to remember at those times that Christ is Risen after all is said and done and by that same power we can be healed. Why wait until Pascha each year to live and share that reality? St. Seraphim of Russia greeted everyone with Christ is Risen all year round and he is a Saint of our Church! He experienced the divine insanity of being a Christian every day...not only during Pascha.

Dear Friends, all of the joy, all of the love, and all of the power of God is contained in that little statement. All of the meaning and vision and prophecy and spirituality of our lives is captured by that simple expression. Everything that I am supposed to be and do is embodied in those few words. If I don't proclaim them, then I am not alive. So, please forgive me, but again once more let us enter the mystery beyond mysteries together as we proclaim to San Diego (or wherever we are), to those who love us and those who hate us, and to the entire Universe: "CHRIST IS RISEN!"

Truly He is Risen!

*Antiochian Orthodox Christian
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