Antiochian Women
40 Years of Service 1973 - 2013
Spring 2014 Newsletter
Diocese of Los Angeles & the West

HIGHLIGHTS OF THIS ISSUE...

Holy Week & Pascha Message of Archbishop JOSEPH 2
Spiritual Advisors Message - V. Rev. David Hovik 4
President’s Message 6
2014 Antiochian Women’s National Project 8
Antiochian Women—Membership 9
Spring Lenten Retreat 10
Personal Reflection— Kh. Kyra Lewis 11
First Visit to a Monastery—Unexpected Joy 13
Happenings Throughout the Diocese 16
Diocese Roster 24
Chapter Dues Reminder 25

Prayer of the Antiochian Women

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

Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women, of North America
A Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others
His Eminence the Most Reverend, Metropolitan PHILIP, Of Blessed Memory
Founder - 1973
Holy & Great Week and Sunday of Pascha, 2014

by His Eminence, Archbishop JOSEPH

We worship Thy Passion, O Christ! Show us also Thy glorious Resurrection!

15th Antiphon, during the Service of the Crucifixion

The Lenten great Fast is all but complete as I attend to these words in my episcopal message to you, my dear spiritual daughters in Christ. Holy and Great Week draws near, and we prepare ourselves and one another, through re-doubled ascetical endeavors and acts of charity, to participate in the Paschal Mystery, the heart of our holy Faith: that is, in the saving Passion, Burial, and third-day Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer of all mankind.

Some of you approach this most sacred season with rather new eyes and ears to take in the sacred rituals; others of you return after long years, perhaps your whole life long, to share in these mysteries of our salvation. We face lengthy services in church, much reading, praying of multiply repeated litanies, chanting of psalms and hymns, eye-catching floral arrangements and many processions. We even have a thick book with hundreds of fine pages to guide our questioning minds, from one service to the next. It takes a whole page in fine print merely to list out the numbers and names of the many services, morning and evening, over these eight days from Sunday of Palms to Sunday of Pascha!

Why? Why all the services, the long readings and prayers, the many prostrations and processions? The answers to these important questions are deep and profound. But I deem it most fitting to make a simple answer, for your edification and to instill reverence, piety, and deeper faith: Mother Church knows that the best therapy for our ignorance, or superstition, unbelief or misbelief, is simply to attend and listen. You may know in your brain the fact: “Christ died for me.” But how does that important truth begin to enter the heart, where it can germinate and become a living truth which promotes interior repentance, soul-saving tears, compunction of heart, and a stimulation to holy zeal? Through attentive listening and pious participation! “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing from the Word of God.” In the learning of any performing art, such as choreography (dancing) or acting, the artist perform. Then, as a neophyte, the student does the same, imitating the movements of the expert. This is how we share in this Holy Week drama; we listen, reflect, weep, and resolve to follow the Master to death, burial, and resurrection. Even though we
have a full book with all the words, we must not bury our nose in the book; but rather, we are better participants if we quietly pray with listening ears, to really take in the holy teaching and admonition.

Holy and Great Week unfolds in two parts: the first part, Palm Sunday evening through Holy Wednesday evening *anticipates* the Passover (or, Pascha; both are the same biblical word) of the Lord. The Lord is “coming to His voluntary Passion,” as the priest says by way of concluding each service in this first half of Holy Week. We chant the Bridegroom hymns on all three days, Holy Monday through Wednesday: “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh at midnight...” and “I behold Thy bridal chamber...” This prepares us for the sacred drama of salvation.

The second and climactic part of Holy Week, running from Holy Thursday morning through midnight starting Sunday of Pascha, *involves* us in this central Mystery of eternal salvation. These are the “three days” (we call it *Triduum*), in which all the services form a connected, sustained prayer in which all the Christian faithful, along with the new converts who are undergoing initiation by means of the baptismal Font, share in the suffering, death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is the central mystery of Faith and the matrix of our salvation! Each day’s scriptural passages, hymnody, and psalmody develop the relevant theme of that day’s sacred events: Christ’s Supper with the Disciples, His arrest, betrayal, condemnation, mockery, “the crown of thorns, the nails, the cross, the spear.” All the hymns were composed by saints, many a great long time ago. We continue to draw rich veins of soul-saving nourishment from them, provided that we are attentive! If we follow the example of the Mother of God, nothing misses our attention.

In closing, I emphasize that we hear so often in the hymns, “Today”! Take note through the Week, how often any given hymn contains the word, “Today” or “on this day” or “now.” The hymns lead us into *direct* participation, not mere historical memorial. In Orthodox worship the Pauline injunction is put into practice, “Behold, now is the day of Salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2b). I cite an example of this feature, from the first of the stichera written by St John of Damascus (8th century) for Vespers of the Paschal Vigil (held on Holy Saturday morning):

“Today hath Hades sighed, crying, “It were better for me that I had not received the Begotten of Mary. For when he approached me, He loosed my power and crushed my gates of brass, arousing the souls which I had possessed, He being God.” Wherefore, glory be to Thy Crucifixion and to Thy Resurrection, O Lord!

In closing, the whole Service of Holy & Great Week is a medicine for all the faithful, newly-baptized and hoary gray-haired saint, a medicine to rid us all of the toxic deposit of sin, the corrosion of the soul-destroying vices and sinful passions, and a prophylaxis against temptation from every quarter. Then, in a deep welling of spiritual and transfiguring joy, we draw near to the Paschal Feast and chant with radiant hearts, Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.
St. Innocent of Alaska wrote one of the clearest, most concise and inspirational explanations ever penned about Orthodox Christianity in his small booklet: *Indication of the Way into the Kingdom of Heaven.* If I was allowed to give a person only one thing to read (apart from the Scriptures) to explain Christianity, this booklet would be it.

One of the passages that St. Innocent deals with directly is Mark 8:34- "*Whosoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*" There are very clear steps he lays out for those wanting to enter the Kingdom of Heaven and he writes: *The road into the Kingdom of Heaven was made by the Lord Jesus Christ, and He was the first one who traveled it.*" The Bible teaches that only he who follows Jesus can reach His Kingdom. But how can one follow Him? Here He quotes Jesus in our Gospel reading can one follow Him? Here He begins to analyze Mark 8:34.

The words *whoever desires* to come after Me are very important to St. Innocent because they underscore that Christ does not compel anyone to follow Him. *He has no need of the unwilling ones, but He desires that each person freely follow Him.* Consequently, only those who willingly choose the Savior’s path reach the Kingdom of Heaven. He says: *Christian! Your salvation or perdition is entirely in your own hands. In His unspeakable wisdom and love, the Lord has given you freedom to choose what you wish, and He does not force you to do anything against your will.*

Therefore, if you truly wish to follow Jesus Christ, He will show you the way into the Kingdom of Heaven and will help you along each step. If you do not wish to follow Him, it is your decision. But take care not to disdain the grace of God! Pitying you, Jesus Christ knocks for a long time at the door of your heart, waiting for your decision to save yourself. But woe to you if He, tiring of waiting, turns His face away from you, as a hopeless son or daughter of perdition. Then no one, neither the most powerful and influential person, nor all the angels in heaven, will be able to help you!

That is why it is extremely important to nourish in ourselves the desire and resolve to follow the path of salvation. We must learn where the path that Christ showed us leads and we must learn how to follow it.

He wrote: *Our map to the Kingdom of Heaven is the Holy Scriptures and other Orthodox books; the rangers [guides] are the pastors of the Church, whose duty it is to help the faithful on their way toward Paradise. The provisions are the Mysteries (Sacraments) of the Church, which reinforce our spiritual strength.*
Sometimes the path leading to Paradise may become narrow, steep and overgrown with bushes, whereas other paths may seem wider and easier to travel.

It is very important not to stray from the correct path. The Lord Jesus Christ and His Apostles repeatedly warned that there is but one path that leads to the Kingdom of Heaven, the one given in the Gospel. All others, especially the wide and comfortable ones, lead to perdition.

He then examines more closely the path indicated to us by our Lord Jesus Christ. He said: Whoever desires to come after Me must: Deny himself, Take up his cross & Follow Me. It is here that I want to focus. Taking up our cross refers to the various difficulties and sorrows associated with a Christian life. The singular path to the Kingdom of God ALWAYS involves Cross-bearing, difficulties and sorrows in a person’s life.

He then says something very important for us:
Our Crosses may be external & they may be internal.

In one week, a local television helicopter crashed, killing both men on-board; His Eminence, Metropolitan PHILIP reposed; A massive landslide 12 miles from our church killed over 20 people and destroyed 30 homes; a young man our family knew quite well was the step-father of one of the teenagers swept away in the slide; one of our families had to evacuate their house because of the potential wall of water that may come down the river, one of my good priest friends, Fr. Alexander Atty, passed away; a college parishioner of ours was in the hospital for a week with an emergency surgery situation. That was one week.

Now, let’s take into account all of the external & internal crosses YOU are each bearing. St. Innocent underscores: the way of the Cross IS the Path. There IS no other path. And it IS the Path that Jesus Himself walked. To take up your cross, St. Innocent wrote, means to tolerate everything without complaining, regardless of how unpleasant things might become. People insulting us; laughing at us; provoking us. If we help someone and they don’t show gratitude; if people talk about us behind your back; if misfortune befalls us; Illness in our family; personal failure; someone oppressing us?

Bear it all with patience in the name of Jesus Christ.
He continues: Do not make the mistake of considering yourself punished unjustly, but accept everything as your cross. Why did God not make the path to the Kingdom of Heaven light and pleasant? Only God knows. Who would question His divine wisdom? He saw that the narrow path is what we need. We who are below see only bits and pieces, but He, who is above all creation, sees our lives from the standpoint of eternity. Therefore, if you wish to attain the Kingdom of Heaven, follow the path which Jesus Christ took, and He, the all-merciful one, will help you every step of the way.

My prayer for you all is that your hearts will be open to walking this clearly marked path, trusting God’s aid with every step.

In Christ,
Unworthy Priest David
President’s Letter

Your Eminence Archbishop JOSEPH, Rev. Fathers, Sisters in Christ,

Christ is in our Midst!

I pray this Lent has been spiritually fruitful and as we complete the days of our fast are fast approaching the time to rejoice in the glory of Pascha.

We have been saddened by the loss of our beloved Metropolitan PHILIP. His vision in 1973 founded the Antiochian Women and with his guidance we have raised over $1.5 million dollars for projects such as Retired Clergy Fund, Children with Special Needs, and this year to Help the Orphans of War in Syria. Resources can be downloaded at: http://www.antiochian.org/antiochian-women-announce-project-syrias-war-orphans While we are saddened by his passing, we are also now filled with joy that our Shepherd is in heaven remembering us before the throne of God.

This year’s spring retreat was the highlight of my Lenten journey. A very heartfelt and loving “Thank you!” to our spiritual advisor V. Rev. Fr. David Hovik for providing us with loving spiritual meat as well as his untiring hearing of our confessions and providing us with spiritual healing. This year Fr. David continued his teachings on the Beatitudes and through careful opening of the scriptures, teachings of the fathers and anecdotes, he guided us to a greater understanding of what is our nous and our need to seek with earnestness to heal our nous through the medicine offered us through the Church. Many years and may your ministry continue to be blessed Fr. David. Thank you also to the parish of St. Andrew (Arlington, WA) for supporting your beloved priest as he serves the Antiochian Women. We recognize his presence at the retreat means his absence from your parish.

A very big thank you to our co-coordinators of this year’s retreat, Beth Krammes and Ramona Blanski. They both worked tirelessly and with deep love to ensure a peaceful and rewarding retreat. Thank you also to Ruth Rutledge for her gift of music. She planned, rehearsed and directed the music for the services and for this we are most grateful. Thank
you to St. Matthews of Torrance for again setting up a bookstore for our benefit. Thank you to all our Rev. Fathers for encouraging the ladies of your parishes to attend our annual retreat. It is a cherished time to stop, reflect, pray and prepare ourselves for Holy Week and Great and Holy Pascha.

As we prepare ourselves for the spiritual journey of Holy Week, I encourage you to attend the services, pray – especially for those in great need, and to allow yourself the great gift of joy of Pascha. Remember our NAB project: “Help the Orphans of War in Syria” and our Humanitarian project to assembly relief kits for IOCC to distribute. All information is on the Archdiocese website under the Antiochian Women page. I encourage each of you to visit our site and to share this information with the ladies of your parish. Every women in our diocese is an Antiochian Woman. Our goal is to help each woman in our parishes to find a place of service and sisterhood.

Pray for me and you remain in my prayers as we complete the fast.

Looking to the joy of Pascha and to joyfully shout in unison Christ is Risen! Truly HE is Risen!

Your sister in Christ,

Melinda Bentz
President
Diocese of Los Angeles & the West, Eagle River & the Northwest
melbentz@yahoo.com

Resources:
Fliers for NAB Project: Help the Orphans of War in Syria
http://www.antiochian.org/antiochian-women-announce-project-syrias-war-orphans

Information on the Antiochian Women
http://www.antiochian.org/women

“YES WE DO” video
http://www.antiochian.org/node/26462

Orthodox Women Saints by feast day:
http://www.antiochian.org/content/orthodox-women-saints
Project 2013-2014
Help the Orphans of War in Syria

“For I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink.” (Matthew 25:35)

Our Goal: $200,000!

A Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others

***Please Submit Project Money to our Diocese Treasurer by Mother’s Day***
April 2014

Christ is in our Midst!

I hope this message finds you well and that the Lenten Season is bringing you much comfort and many blessings. March was Antiochian Women month, which was a great time to reach out to women of all ages in your parish to show that all women are Antiochian Women. Especially our younger ladies, continue to help them find a place of service in the parish and in the Antiochian Women if they are not already involved.

Our “efforts are multiplied a thousand-fold by the many like-minded women in our chapters across North America”—Antiochian Women.

I sent out letters and brochures to each parish, if you did not receive one, please ask your priest or church secretary and let me know if you need me to send more brochures. These are great to pass out to your newest members as well as current members to remind us all our value and roles as women in the Antiochian Church and our own parishes. Your assistance to email or mail our Secretary, Jill Benza, an updated roster, is much appreciated, as we like to stay current on our communications with everyone.

I pray that you all have a blessed and glorious Pascha. I look forward to seeing you all at the Parish Life Conference in San Francisco and please feel free to contact me anytime.

Your sister in Christ,

Melody Bahu
Membership Coordinator
Antiochian Women Diocese of the Los Angeles & the West and Eagle River & the Northwest
949-228-6105
melody@bahuins.com
As Lent comes close to completion and the services of Holy Week and Glorious Pascha draw near, nearly 60 persons, 2 priests, one subdeacon, women young and old from 14 parishes gathered in the foothills of the San Bernardino Mountains for a weekend of spiritual refreshment, challenge and precious fellowship. From Friday afternoon, April 4th through Sunday noon, April 6th, table conversations and the many other interactions encouraged and inspired. (Note: To our knowledge, no mouse appeared to enliven anyone’s room stay. One raccoon and many bluebirds were seen).

Our spiritual advisor, Fr. David Hovik from St. Andrew, Arlington, WA was our speaker and retreat leader. He gave excellent, clear and riveting teaching on Matthew 5:1-12, *The Beatitudes, The Path to the Kingdom of God* including powerful stories and personal example. The St. Matthew Women’s group brought their wonderful bookstore to the retreat including books Fr. David had highly recommended for our continued study and growth. We were further blessed to have V. Rev. Paul Eyler & his Khouria Ilene join us for Vespers and Divine Liturgy. Fr. Paul is retired from our parish of St. Michael in Las Vegas and served years ago as our Antiochian Women’s Spiritual Advisor. Additionally, Khouria Ilene served as the Diocese President 1988-1990.

Camp Loch Leven provided fresh, delicious, fully Lenten meals and great hospitality. We had a tour of their historic lodge circa 1922, which is being renovated, and a warm bonfire on Saturday night with singing, talk and laughter.

Our weekend concluded with Matins and Divine Liturgy, for St. Mary of Egypt Sunday. Our clergy, choir and chanters led us so well in our prayers and worship. Then we had brunch, enjoying last talks around the tables, before packing up and returning home. How thankful we are for this time to draw apart and receive God’s blessing for our lives and our sisterhood.
Lord, Jesus Christ, grant me Your Peace, Comfort and Your Strength.

In October of 2009, this became my prayer. My husband, the Archpriest Michael, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. After the initial shock...so many questions. What were the treatment options, if any? Chemo? Radiation? Surgery? How much time did he have? How were we going to tell our families? How were we going to tell our St. Luke’s family? How were we going to handle this “death sentence”? We hoped for the best; prepared for the worst. But we prayed, “Thy will be done”. “Thy will be done”...I pray it daily when I recite the Lord’s Prayer; but when crisis strikes, do I really mean that? Do I want God’s will to be done? As an Orthodox Christian, I believe anything that comes our way is somehow for our salvation...so yes, “Thy will be done”.

Lord, Jesus Christ, grant me Your Peace, Comfort and Your Strength.

After a month of chemo and radiation, surgery was on Bright Wednesday, 2010. It couldn’t come at a more perfect time, three days after celebrating the glorious Resurrection of Our Lord! Surely God would hear the prayer of one of His priests and allow him to continue ministering to his flock. After many hours into surgery, the surgeon called us into a private room and told us the devastating news. Needless to say, that it took all my energy to listen to what the surgeon was telling us, while dealing with the shock, the disbelief that my husband was not going to be alright, but rather the total opposite. Lord, how was I going to tell the large group of parishioners that have gathered in the waiting room? How was I going to be of comfort to them? How was I going to be of comfort to our daughters? How was I going to tell my husband, when he's out of surgery and in recovery? Lord, Jesus Christ, grant me Your Peace, Comfort and Your Strength.

After allowing my husband sufficient time to recover from surgery, he began a 6-month round of chemo ... 3 weeks on/ 1 week off...trying to slow the growth of the cancer. So began a new phase in our lives; surely, this was not the life I signed up for when we were married. Or was it? “O Lord, Thou hast ordained for them an indissoluble bond of love”. We tried to keep things at home “as normal as possible”: enjoying Angel baseball games, going to a few concerts, skeet and trap shooting at the range, etc. As his health permitted, my husband continued to serve at the Holy Altar and go to the church office.

God is good! My husband was feeling as well as can be, with no major side effects from the chemo. So with the ok from his doctor, in August, 2010, we booked a cruise to Alaska. We had planned on a land trip to Alaska in 2011 to celebrate our 25th Wedding Anniversary, but we were not dumb about pancreatic cancer and we knew that the chances of us being together for our 25th were extremely slim. By God’s grace, we were able to venerate the icon of “Our Lady of Sitka”. In February, 2011, 6 months before our actual 25th anniversary, we spent 4 days at a bed and breakfast in Julian, CA, to celebrate. I notice that he’s rapidly losing weight and tiring more than usual. He said he just doesn’t feel quite right inside.
Lord, Jesus Christ, grant me Your Peace, Comfort and Your Strength.

A CT scan in March, 2011, confirmed what we already suspected. The cancer was spreading, as the doctor said, with a vengeance. Forgive me. Selfishly, I thought only of myself. I was going to be a widow. How was I going to handle that? Who’s going to be there for me? Who’s going to walk our daughters down the aisle at their weddings? Who’s going to baptize our grandchildren? With whom was I going to grow old?

When I attended the church services, my eyes were immediately drawn to the iconostasis, where our church has an icon of St. Sophia and her 3 daughters, Faith, Hope and Love. How could I possibly complain about what I was going through, as I was watching this horrific disease consume my husband, while this poor mother witnessed her daughters’ martyrdom?

We went to the local funeral home to make arrangements. Surprisingly, or not, we were “comfortable” with everything and it wasn’t as “creepy” as we thought is would be. We even went to Starbucks when we finished. Afterwards, there was a deep sense of calm, peace, and I dare say, a type of holiness in our home and with all of us. We prayed together every evening and my husband anointed us with oil from the shrines of many saints. Some may say that he was preparing to die, while I believe he was preparing to live…in the Kingdom!

Lord, Jesus Christ, grant me Your Peace, Comfort and Your Strength.

Mid-July, we set up hospice care in our home. We knew that time was drawing near. But when? My husband said he’s ready; he was getting antsy. I spent my days and nights by his side. We talked; we prayed; yes, we even laughed.

August 12th, we noticed a huge decline; he could no longer get out of his chair, he was drinking very little, he could not swallow his meds. On Sunday, the 14th, Fr. Jon came to bring him, what would be, his final Holy Communion in this world. As Fr. Jon is was reading the prayers, my husband’s lips were moving, he was reciting the prayers. After he received the Holy Gifts, he smiled, looked upward and said “thank you”.

Lord, Jesus Christ, grant me Your Peace, Comfort and Your Strength.

August 15th, the Feast of the Dormition of the Most-Holy Theotokos. My husband’s breathing was shallow but not labored. He was not responsive to earthly voices. His face was very peaceful. My daughters, along with a dear friend, and I read the Canon for the Departing of the Soul from the Body. When we finished the canon, he breathed his last breath. We sang the Trisagion for the Departed and made the appropriated phone calls.

Lord, Jesus Christ, grant me Your Peace, Comfort and Your Strength.

On August 17th, on what was suppose to be our 25th Wedding Anniversary, we prayed the Panikhida. We sang “Memory Eternal” instead of “God grant you many years”. … it just didn’t seem fair.

Lord, Jesus Christ, grant me Your Peace, Comfort and Your Strength.

I prayed this throughout the funeral service. It was the only way I could keep it together. And it continues to be my prayer, moment by moment, day by day.

Lord, Jesus Christ, grant me Your Peace, Comfort and Your Strength.
I would like give an account of a trip I took to St. John the Forerunner Greek Orthodox Monastery in Goldendale, WA. But first, my context: I am a member of St. Vincent of Lerins Antiochian Orthodox Church in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada. My husband and I converted to Orthodoxy from a Protestant background 12 years ago. We have five children ages 1 through 8, and we enjoy being involved in our small parish life. My husband is the choir director and a reader; I sing in the choir and help out in various ways, but mostly I am busy at home with our children. Never a dull moment and barely any time to myself! The trip to the monastery for me was a real pilgrimage and together with three close Orthodox girlfriends, flew clear across the country and down across the border to spend four days at St. John’s monastery - my first stay at a monastery since becoming Orthodox. If you see Saskatoon on the map, you will notice that we are fairly isolated from other major cities, and even more distanced from any Orthodox monasteries.

I admit that I was apprehensive and even a little skeptical about going, mostly because I had no idea what to expect. I had some pre-conceived notions: that only those who are pious or especially spiritual visit monasteries, that I’d feel like a phony in light of the nuns’ piety, that I’d feel awkward in their presence and in their services, that I’d be bored, that I wouldn’t have any profound questions for the abbess, that I’d find it all too alien and overwhelming. I grew up completely unaware of the existence of Christian monasteries and their purpose. Even after being Orthodox for over a decade I still had a very limited understanding of the monastic life - let alone the benefit that exists for those who visit them. Luckily the one friend I was traveling with was our priest’s daughter who had been to the St. John monastery before and was able to arrange the trip for us and calm my initial anxieties about going.

We arrived in time for the Vespers service so we quietly slipped in the back of the small candle-lit chapel. I remember being struck by the simplicity and purity of the nuns’ voices as they sang that service. It was peaceful and their voices blended flawlessly (as singing daily together would produce such vocal skill and unity). It was entirely in Greek and somehow it didn’t matter to me. (This was something I had also been apprehensive about - attending numerous services without hearing a word of English? How would I concentrate or pray along?!) We had made our visit during the Paschal season, so the beautiful Greek Paschal troparion (“Christ is Risen”) soon became familiar and the melody continues to remain with me, as does the memory of the sisters’ voices filling the tiny chapel. Throughout that first service and all through the next day, I found myself constantly watching the nuns and thinking, “They have done this exact same daily routine for months - years! - and they will continue to do this until their dying day, here in this place! Are they really happy here, willingly living their lives away from their families, wearing the monastic habit, never leaving the monastery grounds”... It seemed so surreal, so unbelievable to my "modern" North American mind to fathom. After a few days there I realized that indeed these women are deeply fulfilled and at peace in their choice to live as monastics. You can see it in the light of their eyes and the radiance of their faces. Their lives are simple, their prayers sustain the world, and they preserve purely the Christian faith for all of us, no matter how the world changes around them. My life, in contrast, is the one that is actually hard to fathom!
The sisters were most hospitable! One sister was assigned to the guesthouse and would check in on us daily to chat briefly, answer any questions, and let us know the schedule. The guest house was large enough to host about 20 guests, with a kitchen and a large living room heated by a wood stove. During our stay, there were only a handful of other guests coming and going, so it was relatively quiet and we spent our evenings sitting by the fire visiting, reading, or just going to bed early (which for me, never happens at home!). I think a big part of what was so peaceful for me there was not having my usual responsibilities of my home life. For a few days I could rest from being pulled in multiple directions: I could sit down to a meal that I hadn’t cooked, I had no laundry to wash, no phone calls to make, no toddler battles to diffuse. I found my mind to be quieted and full of a clarity that was rare and so refreshing. I know this to be God’s presence, and it reminds me of the prayer where we ask to be “transformed by the renewing of our minds…”

I never did feel bored. I did some reading, a bit of writing and some wandering, but the days somehow felt full, rhythmic, and passed too quickly. We attended morning liturgy before breakfast each day and the evening Vespers before supper. I was surprised at how in a sense we were “ignored” by the sisters, but this was not uncomfortable. We were very at ease to be among them, but they were busy - they each had their daily work and since they have constant visitors on their grounds, they simply do not have time to chat with everyone. One or two of the sisters would join us after meals to visit a little or show us around, but largely we were left to ourselves. Apparently if you come alone or with the intention to work, there are jobs they would assign to you, but because we were a group of four and we had travelled far, they assured us each day that we were just to “rest” and enjoy the break away from our busy home lives. I was grateful for this!

A large source of income for the monastery is their gift store, Greek bakery and coffee shop (located conveniently beside the guest house) and just off a main highway which draws endless customers. A priest living nearby operates a coffee roastery for the monastery and the sisters serve fresh coffee to accompany their baklava, gyros, and other homemade Greek delectables. Needless to say, we gals spent a good chunk of time - and change - sipping lattes on the sunny patio! Besides Orthodox books and music, the gift store sells many items made by the sisters including candles, incense, icons, cards, prayer ropes, jams, and skin care products. We each came home laden with gifts, books, and baklava for our family members.

I felt like God had given me a gift in being able to witness the monastic life. It gave me a bigger (and better) perspective on my personal and parish life. I find myself often thinking back to the monastery and trying to retain in my mind the clarity that I experienced there. One of the visiting priests who talked with us over Sunday lunch said that, “The monastery is a refuge and a haven for Christians in the world. And it gives us the truest example of what the Christian life is supposed to look like here on earth.” I have thought on this often. Yes, even though our parish life is meant to portray this picture as well, it is hard because as much as we participate in our church communities, much of our time is spent physically “outside” of the church’s arms, in our homes and workplaces. We are pulled in many directions and have so many distractions. I try to remain in remembrance of God amidst my daily tasks and the secular culture around me by staying as close to the church life as possibly, yet floundering often (I feel!) to create a godly home for our children, to be wise in my numerous daily decisions and to be Christ-like in my relationships. The nuns at the monastery live a very undistracted, structured and simple rhythm of work and prayer. One
sister talked to us about the paradox of how living her life in obedience to the Abbess is truly freeing. I think about this often as I am in the throws of raising my children. Isn’t it true how a child who has learned obedience is more peaceful, has greater self-control, and a greater awareness of others because they learn that the world does not revolve around them? So too for me. I need to live in submission to my duties to my family, to learn obedience to the Church’s instruction, and to take the spiritual “medicine” of the Eucharist and Confession often to help me grow in self-discipline, humility, and love for God and others.

Another tangible lesson to learn from the sisters was praying with a prayer rope. We rarely saw a nun without her prayer rope in hand, whether in church services or just walking to and from her work. They really were living a life of ceaseless prayer! It was suggested to us that although we couldn't understand the Greek services, we should pray with our prayer ropes. I have been told often by my priest to make a habit of praying with a prayer rope, but it really hit home deeply when I was able to see the sisters in constant prayer throughout their days. Their “daily grind” was still hard work (monastics have to wash dishes, do laundry, and rake leaves too!) and it was such a lesson for me to see firsthand how prayer can be a part of it all. I am working on becoming more disciplined in this. We were also told that you can pray for others with your prayer rope (“Lord, have mercy on Nicholas”... “Lord, enlighten Julia”... “Lord, help Grandma”...) It doesn’t only have to be the Jesus’ prayer for oneself all the time. It can be a tool of intercessory prayer for those who are on our hearts at any given time.

I can’t talk about my visit without sharing briefly about the monastery’s large church building which was under construction while we were there. As I stepped inside the unfinished building, I was moved to tears. To see this beautiful temple half built, with a capacity for 300 people, made from cinderblocks, 2x4’s, and plywood, general contracted by a Greek abess who barely speaks English and a humble group of 22 sisters, I was awed. Here is a picture of what we can accomplish when we have faith in God! My heart and mind were illumined by standing in the shell of that temple and I can believe now that a building can glorify God and speak of His majesty to the world. A beautiful and “heavenly” structure can elevate our souls to God and be an act of charity for the world. What other buildings exist in society today where one enters and finds themselves humbled in spirit and drawn to God? How critical it is for our Orthodox church buildings to reflect the presence of God through beauty of structure, acoustics, and iconography!

I was sad to leave the monastery! Driving back to the airport was a shock as I adjusted to the speed and chaos of the culture we’re accustomed to living in. I was nervous to re-enter my life back home and feared that I would lose the joy I had been given at the monastery. I feared that maybe my experience was just an emotional high, a moment in time that would soon wane. It has been almost a year now since that trip and I can say that miraculously I have had my memories linger quite tangibly, and there have been unexpected lessons from the nuns’ lives that keep bubbling up to the surface and encouraging me in my faith. At the monastery I received God’s love like a tiny burning ember that has not stopped glowing deep inside me. It was an unexpected joy and I look forward to my return visit, which is already booked for this coming May! I encourage you to make a monastery pilgrimage this year, and may you find renewal and joy in the treasure of the Church’s monastic heritage.
Happenings Around Our Diocese

St. John Cathedral, Eagle River, Alaska — Submitted by Kh. Christine Rogers

The Sisters of Mary and Martha (also known as the Antiochian Women of St. John’s) have been very busy in recent months! We held our annual Christmas Bazaar in November, raising over $1500 for the Syrian Orphans fund. Our Advent retreat and almsgiving project was in support of the Clare House, a local charity serving women and children who are victims of domestic abuse. We filled 20 bins with bedding for the residents to use, and many talented seamstresses spent the morning sewing pillow cases for the children. We also spent that morning decorating our Cathedral social hall for Christmas. In January, we were thrilled to invite Dr. John Dalack to Alaska, where he gave a two day retreat on marriage and parenting, which was very well attended not only by our parish, but other local Orthodox Christians.

St. Luke – Garden Grove, CA
Submitted by Karen George

The Ladies Club of St. Luke’s Garden Grove elected new officers in November, 2013. Karen George is President; Melody Bahu is Vice President, Nia Lenick is secretary, and Christine Mayer, is Treasurer. Due to the continued generosity of Colleen Khouri in donating the Christmas Angel ornaments and the continued sales force of Maria Brunson, and Staci Lundquist, the Angel sales were a big success and our Christmas tree looked wonderful. Once again we were able to fund the Father Michael Lewis Scholarship fund and it has been determined that a contribution will be made every year. We had our Holiday luncheon in January 2014 in the church Hall. We had several ladies come and we enjoyed an afternoon of fellowship. The ladies purchased the altar server robes in green, and are hoping they arrive by Pentecost. Due to the generosity of a new parishioner to St. Luke we were also able to purchase the blue alter sever robes as well. This has been a goal for the ladies for several years. We are happy that this goal has been met. A lot of new parishioners have joined St. Luke from St. John the Theologian, and are contributing a lot to our parish. We are very blessed to have these ladies becoming involved. The ladies are working on getting ready for Pascha. We are decorating candles, working to prepare both Palm Sunday lunch as well as Pascha breakfast. We have a new fundraiser this year, selling Sees candy for Easter. We are looking forward to our Prayer sister luncheon that we be held in June. St. Luke’s is very blessed to have so many ladies involved in our church. We thank God for all of them.
Do you feel it? Did that gentle breeze just brush your cheek? Want to know what it is that you just felt?? It's the Winds of Change. There's been a steady breeze of change through the Women of St. Barnabas Parish in 2014. A renewed Love for Christ, His Church, and the Sisters of our Parish.

This year, we brought a new Vision Statement to our Ladies. "Our Vision is this: The Women's Fellowship of St. Barnabas Orthodox Parish desires to provide Spiritual, Social, and Service opportunities for the betterment of our church family, our community, and our world." We also adopted a theme for this year...No Woman Left Behind! Our Parish, a few years back, experienced some rapid growth. That growth has not slowed down and we are seeing new faces every time we turn around. The Women's Leadership Team & myself, are finally getting all the eggs into one basket, connecting with the new faces, and making sure there is...No Woman Left Behind. With this new Theme we started a Baking Team, a Celebrations Committee, an expanded Meals Ministry, and much more.

Our full calendar for the year includes monthly events that are on a rotating schedule of being Spiritual, Social, or Service oriented. To date, we have visited an Assisted Living home to paint nails and bake brownies, hosted our Annual Annunciation Tea with almost 100 in attendance, and had a dinner and Karaoke night! The number of women attending these events has increased hugely in compared to our last 2 years.

We have also implemented something I call "Love Notes," through the time-honored tradition of writing notes to each other! And actually sending those notes in the mail! The response has been overwhelmingly awesome. I've been approached with warm embraces, cheeky kisses, and eyes full of love and gratitude. Remember what it feels like to get something in the mail that is not junk mail or a bill?? The Women of St. Barnabas do.

In closing, let me tell you about a secret project that we started, called "Secret Service Projects". You won't find it on our website, or on any of our calendars....shhhhh....it's a SECRET! As women, we go through tough times, & overwhelming times. As sisters, in a Parish family, I believe it's our responsibility to look out for one another. On a few occasions these past few months, we've chosen a Woman to surprise & bless with service. Babysitting, house cleaning, helping pack for a big move. An email is sent out & whomever is available to help, shows up! To keep this service fresh & organic, we've not made it any sort of official ministry of our Women's Fellowship. We just keep our eyes and ears open to our sisters, waiting for the next opportunity to surprise them with a "Secret Service Project". Shhh.....
In the short time since I have been Sisterhood President, I have witnessed many blessings. Through the abundant love that filters from the women of St. John’s Orthodox Church I have seen our Lord Jesus Christ. He works with consistency and kindness, respect, compassion and reverence. It has been a busy season in the life of our parish. As part of our philanthropic activities, we were able to deliver a healthy contribution of gifts to the North Idaho Violence Prevention Center at Christmas time. The women and children that receive these gifts are so appreciative. It was a blessing to be able to deliver to them. It brought tears to my eyes to see their gratitude and hope. Other activities coordinated by the Sisterhood have included our spring bake sale, two mercy meals, a Lenten retreat "Praying the book of Revelations," and our upcoming Annunciation Tea, which is a fundraiser for the Orphans of War in Syria.

I have been allowed to see good works and humble hearts. A work of love comes from a desire to do good, and these women most definitely do. They work, and pray, raise children, take care of families, bring food and clothing to the hungry, and support each other with sincerity through all the trials of life. I am humbled and grateful to be a part of this sisterhood that is serving Christ through serving others and very proud to be an Antiochian Woman.

Greetings from the women of Prophet Elijah Mission in Ellensburg, Washington! The women of our parish have worked tirelessly in the past year with a strong focus on the beautification of our church grounds and ongoing building of our future church. One project that touched many of our hearts was the creation of the Katherine Hartung Memorial Garden in honor of Presbytera Katherine from The Dalles, WA who passed away on November 21st, 2013, the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple. Our parish was blessed to inherit the cross in 2012 that Fr. Luke built as a means of offering prayers for her healing and our parish artist and sister in Christ, Loukia Ullman, has sketched out a beautiful garden landscape in her memory. In addition to building our church in the literal sense, the women of our parish have organized monthly donations to the local food bank and annual donations to the local pregnancy center in honor of St. Lucia during the Nativity Fast. Weekly emails are sent out to all parishioners requesting prayers for the youth of the mission and stockings are stuffed full for each child when St. Nick comes for a visit in December. In March, we celebrated Women’s Month by reading the Epistles and several of our ladies attended a Lenten Women’s retreat at the monastery in Goldendale, WA. We are excited to connect with other women from the region to learn creative ways to increase our building fund and grow our sisterhood.

May you all have a blessed Lenten season and a glorious Pascha!
The ladies of at St. Matthew Orthodox Church in Torrance, CA are an active, growing and energetic group. First of all, we are very thrilled as new ladies are joining our church and our group; membership growth and meaningful involvement are the constant goals for our group. Fellowship and growing in the faith is what brings us together. Currently we have a book club that meets once a month; the ladies chapter meets once a month as well.

We are always encouraging the ladies members to participate in the Spring Lenten retreat (this year 8 ladies registered!) and in the Life-giving monastery retreat in Dunlap, CA (the weekend after Pascha). We make sure information is communicated in time and we try to facilitate access for the older members.

St. Matthew bookstore will be present at the Lenten Spring retreat as a resource for the participants; starting last year, the management of the bookstore was transitioned to the women's group.

The ladies group has supported many facilities projects around the church - kitchen renovation, contributing towards the expenses for the roof repair and is currently fundraising for more extensive and necessary repairs and improvements (fellowship hallway, Sunday school classes, bookstore, backyard, etc.).

All these projects require more and more resources; the ladies of St. Matthew organize falafel fundraisers (the best in town!), spinach pies (before lent and the Nativity fast), ladies dinner fellowship, etc.

We are also providing every year the Palm Sunday fish luncheon and we are helping with the flower decorations for Pascha. The women will also have a bake sale on Palm Sunday and we're planning a Mother's day dinner as well.

This month we also had a fundraiser for IOCC to buy and prepare emergency kits for the orphans in Syria. We are deciding on what to buy and we are going to involve the youth in putting the kits together.

As you can see we are a busy little group; God willing, we'll keep that way and most importantly we'll grow closer to God.

Spring has sprung and with it the Antiochian Woman of St. Michael have been keeping busy. During the Lenten Season, we are responsible for the weekly dinners following PreSanctified Liturgy. For March, Ladies Month, we read the epistles & served as ushers. We additionally held our annual Annunciation Tea, and this we were blessed to have Kh. Jan Finley join us as our Guest Speaker, and to welcome ladies from four sister parishes. The day begins with worship, and then we enjoy wonderful fellowship, learning and a dazzling buffet of Lenten delicacies. We have been busy baking spinach pies and Arabic pastries for our Palm Sunday Bake Sale, and will also be coordinating the Paschal Breakfast following the Resurrection Liturgy. Throughout the year we are responsible also for the Coffee Hour on Sunday. These assorted items help us to support the NAB Project, St. Barbara Monastery as well as other charitable causes. Additionally, our Ladies are focused on fundraising to help toward the building of a new sanctuary. We look forward to continuing to work together as we serve God’s Holy House.
The ladies of St. Andrew in Riverside, CA, have a special tradition to gather for a formal tea party on the Saturday preceding the feast of the Annunciation. This occasion is a beautiful setting to invite neighbors and friends to come and experience a little taste of what we are as Orthodox women, as well as honor Christ’s most pure mother for her beautiful submission to the will of God. This past weekend on March 22\textsuperscript{nd}, many of our ladies invited guests to come and enjoy the afternoon with us.

This year was the 16\textsuperscript{th} year we have hosted our \textit{Annunciation Tea} and we packed our hall with 180+ women and girls! We had the privilege of having one of our resident harpists bless us with background music as we enjoyed tea along with all different types of Lenten finger foods which our beautifully set buffet was heavy laden with. Our little girls presented a hymn for the Mother of God in honor of the Annunciation, followed by a song from our teen girls and then our adult ladies’ choir. The highlight of the afternoon was our guest speaker Fr. Michael Sitaras from Saints Constantine and Helen Orthodox Church in San Diego. He spoke with us about the Annunciation and the obedience and resignation of our Lady to the will of God. He addressed those of us in the parish that have been suffering from the loss of loved ones this past year and related our sorrows and the burdens we bare to the burden that Christ’s mother bore at the foot of the cross. He ended his talk by drawing a sketch of the Annunciation & explaining what this holy icon conveys to us.

Following the food, song & speaker, we reverently lined up before our icon of the Annunciation as our choir sang \textit{Oh Pure Virgin}, and each lady approached & offered a flower which she had brought from her garden to give for adornment of the icon for the feast. The final, glorious bouquet is always a profound representation of how each of us comes before the living God with an individual beauty & uniqueness & as we unite our lives together to serve & honor Him...the final product turns out to be something magnificent!!
St. Ignatius – Mesa, AZ
Submitted by Melissa Skocypec, Chapter President

Greetings from Saint Ignatius in Mesa, AZ! We are thrilled to see our parish as well as our Antiochian Women’s Group growing and growing! It is wonderful to be a part of such a loving and supportive group of women. As part of the Lenten season, we are baking pascha bread, nut rolls, apricot rolls, and banana bread as a mini bake sale to help our parishioners fill their Pascha baskets with delicious treats.

To begin our spring cleaning, some of our ladies came up with an amazing list of cleaning duties that will be listed on individual index cards for anyone who would like to help with the task of readying our church building for Holy Week and Pascha. Hopefully this will make it very easy for anyone and everyone in our parish to grab a few cards and participate in the cleaning, and also to ensure that every task gets completed.

Earlier this year, our women’s group was discussing how we wanted to raise funds for the 2014-2015 Syrian War Orphans Project, and two women volunteered to do a short presentation to our parish about the project, and about the devastation in Syria. They did such a remarkable job with their presentation that we collected over $1500 for the project! Thank you to Margaret Putman and Lama Hana-Mousa for their efforts in preparing this presentation (see an excerpt from their presentation in the Spring 2014 issue of the DIAKONIA). The Saint Ignatius Antiochian Women’s group is also offering one full scholarship to benefit our teens who are participating in Project Mexico this summer. We are very proud of our teens who have been raising money to help offset the cost of this trip.

As the year continues, we will continue our service and fundraising endeavors as well as adding some fun activities for our women to enjoy as a group!

St. Mark – Irvine, CA
Vera Bahbah and Afifa Artoul, Chapter Co-Chairs

March was designated as Antiochian Women's Month by His Eminence the Most Reverend Metropolitan PHILIP Saliba - Memory Eternal. During the month of March our ladies ushered and read the Epistle on each Sunday of the month. Additionally, we baked spinach pies for our members to enjoy during Great Lent. On March 23rd, Cross Veneration Sunday we hosted a Falafel Luncheon and wore our new aprons for the first time. All proceeds of the luncheon went to "Help the Orphans of War in Syria." Other activities that took place during Great Lent were a bake sale on April 13th including a second round of spinach pies, as well as the upcoming Pascha breakfast.
Hello to all the beautiful AOCWNA. We at St. George in Phoenix, AZ, pray you enjoyed a blessed winter and will be presented with an equally-blessed spring.

Our hands have not been idle since the last newsletter. One of our ongoing projects is the baking of zataar bread and spinach pies, which we sell during our Fellowship Hour after Divine Liturgy. For February and March of this year, in particular, the monies we raise from these sales will be used toward our AOCWNA project, "Orphans of the Syrian War Conflict". We are also raffling off 4 beautiful baskets of Middle Eastern foods and items to raise funds for this project; and finally, we are putting together "Emergency Health kits" to send to the orphans.

We have moved our Ladies' Bible Study to an hour prior to our monthly potluck meetings. This way more women are able to attend the study offered by one of our Priests, and it is a wonderful way to share.

One of our members recently opened Naya's, a Mediterranean restaurant, and 48 of us enjoyed a ladies' day out for lunch. The food and hospitality was outstanding, and it was a lovely way to spend an afternoon.

During the Nativity Season, we offered poinsettias in order to raise funds, as well as accepting donations for fresh, home-made zulabee on Epiphany.

We also have an annual Christmas Tea where we can slow down and relax during a busy time period. The Tea has always been one of our top fundraisers.

We continue to bake Holy Bread. We make Memorial Wheat and put together Meals of Mercy, as requested. Our bookstore thrives. All of this is good, as we use our monies to support our Church and a variety of charitable projects. On Good Friday, we decorate Christ's Tomb; and throughout this Season, we raise funds by offering Pascha flowers.

May you all have a Blessed Pascha Season.
The Ladies Auxiliary of the Church of the Redeemer began the year by celebrating the Feast of the Epiphany with zalabia sweets that were enjoyed by all. This year we started a facebook page for our Ladies. It is a means to communicate with suggestions, feedback, comments and to post all events and updates.

As March is Antiochian Women’s Month, the Ladies were involved in reading the Epistle, both in English and in Arabic, as well as offering sermons and ushering. March was full of activities including a cheese fair potluck. We also held our annual Tea Party at the home of our Ladies President. Forty ladies enjoyed beautiful weather and delicious food.

As a fundraiser we hold a falafel luncheon once a month. Additionally, we have a large Palm Sunday Bake Sale. We held a workshop on how to make kaak and mamoul. Orders are placed in advance and all the goodies sell fast! Donations go to support Palestinian families in need. After the Easter Hajmeh (Rush) service, we have a midnight potluck and colored eggs for everyone to enjoy.

Our Annual Women’s Spring Retreat in Santa Cruz will be May 23rd. This year’s speaker is Dr. Nancy Godfery speaking on Breast Cancer. Another project is our Senior Citizen luncheon to show appreciation for the elderly members of our parish. It includes lunch, bingo and music. It’s a fun event everyone looks forward to!

Are you on facebook??
Friend us at: Antiochian OrthodoxWomen

Great way to connect with each other! Post your events and happenings with your Sisters in Christ, all over our Diocese! Post photos of Bake Sales, Retreats, Festivals, Community Service Events, etc.
### ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

**DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES & THE WEST**

**DIOCESE OF EAGLE RIVER & THE NORTHWEST – 2013-2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Contact Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Melinda Bentz</td>
<td>(661) 435-1659 (Cell) <a href="mailto:melbentz@yahoo.com">melbentz@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vice President/NAB Project</td>
<td>Georgette Malouf</td>
<td>(818) 563-2838 (Home) (818) 391-6217 (Cell) <a href="mailto:gette0324@yahoo.com">gette0324@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recording/Corresponding Secretary</td>
<td>Jill K. Benza</td>
<td>(480) 357-9797 (Home) (480) 388-0378 (Cell) <a href="mailto:jill.benza@yahoo.com">jill.benza@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treasurer</td>
<td>Michele Baba</td>
<td>(949) 306-5455 (Cell) <a href="mailto:michele_baba@yahoo.com">michele_baba@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td>Charmaine E. Darmour</td>
<td>(714) 287-1266 (Cell) <a href="mailto:cdarmour@sbcglobal.net">cdarmour@sbcglobal.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Advisor</td>
<td>Very Rev. Fr. David Hovik</td>
<td>(360) 435-9769 (Parish) (425) 345-7536 (Cell) <a href="mailto:frdhovik@comcast.net">frdhovik@comcast.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Past President</td>
<td>Lucy Hanna</td>
<td>(951) 736-9809 (Home) (951) 415-7667 (Cell) <a href="mailto:lucy.hanna@sbcglobal.net">lucy.hanna@sbcglobal.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanitarian</td>
<td>Volunteer Needed!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Kh. Christina Reimann</td>
<td>(760) 744-2553 home <a href="mailto:jcreimann@att.net">jcreimann@att.net</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership</td>
<td>Melody Bahu</td>
<td>949-228-6105 <a href="mailto:melody@bahuins.com">melody@bahuins.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Retreat/Scholarship Co-chair</td>
<td>Elizabeth Krammes</td>
<td>(562) 906-0902 (Home) <a href="mailto:indeedandintruth@yahoo.com">indeedandintruth@yahoo.com</a>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Retreat/Scholarship Co-chair</td>
<td>Ramona Blanski</td>
<td>661-433-9561 (cell) <a href="mailto:blanskiir@yahoo.com">blanskiir@yahoo.com</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Sisters In Christ,

I want to thank all of the Chapters that have sent in their 2014 dues. As you may not know, this money is used to help some of our priests and all seminarians from our Diocese. This year, we were also able to help with support of our youth attending the Youth Music Ministry workshop held at the Antiochian Village. For those of you who have not yet submitted your dues, we ask that you please do so to be in good standing. Delegates at our upcoming Parish Life Conference, in San Francisco, can only vote if your parish is in good standing.

As a reminder, annual dues for each parish are $200.00 of which $100.00 goes to the North American Board Treasury (NAB). All churches are expected to have an active Antiochian Women chapter and to contribute to the diocese by paying these due. Dues help cover administrative costs and most importantly, fund our charitable works. Missions are not required to pay dues, but any donation by missions would be appreciated.

Additionally, I’d like to express my thanks to those who have already submitted their funds in support of our NAB Project to help the Orphans of War in Syria. To date, we’ve received approximately $4000 towards the project and that is from only 5 churches. Our beloved founder, the late Metropolitan PHILIP, of blessed memory, challenged all of us to double our efforts for this most heartbreaking of causes. Please honor his request by supporting this the last NAB Project he designated.

Thank you to all who work for the Glory of God’s Holy House within our Diocese.

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

Complete, detach and return the form below along with your check to:

Michele Baba, Treasurer
23041 El Caballo
Lake Forest, CA 92630

Parish__________________________________________________________________________
City____________________________________________________________________________
Parish Contact______________________________________________________________________
Contact’s e-mail______________________________________________________________
Contact’s Phone #____________________________________________________________
Amount Enclosed $________________

ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN WOMEN OF NORTH AMERICA

25