

THE NATIVITY

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# The Word

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contents



The Most Reverend  
Metropolitan PHILIP, D.H.L., D.D.  
Primate

The Most Reverend  
Archbishop JOSEPH

The Right Reverend  
Bishop ANTOUN

The Right Reverend  
Bishop BASIL

The Right Reverend  
Bishop THOMAS

The Right Reverend  
Bishop ALEXANDER

The Right Reverend  
Bishop JOHN

The Right Reverend  
Bishop ANTHONY

The Right Reverend  
Bishop NICHOLAS

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COVER: NATIVITY ICON by Randi Sider-Rose  
Behold, the virgin shall be with child  
and bear a Son, and they shall call  
His name Immanuel, which means  
"God is with us."  
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Christ is Born, Glorify Him!

God put flesh on His Word. With this action, He revealed Himself to His world, claimed space and time as His own, and challenged His people to be who and what they were created to be. He modeled life as it is to be lived, taught in parables, touched us with healings and even showed us how to be complete in death. Christ is born, the prophecies are fulfilled, God has entered our lives and we are now challenged to respond. In glorifying Christ, we recognize Him as God, we accept His Lordship, we enter into His Priesthood, and we complete our humanity.

The Word of God praises the Father and takes care of us. This typifies the priesthood of Christ. In the liturgy the deacon commends us to stand alert and in awe of God so that we can offer our priestly oblation in Christ (peace). With the choir, we respond in words that express Christ's priestly mission: "a mercy of Peace, a sacrifice of praise." We respond to God by praising God and taking care of each other. We do this as Christians sharing in Christ's action, which is His Priesthood.

There is much to say about the relationship of Christ's nativity and His priesthood. The three aspects of Christian priesthood are prophet, priest and king, or, said in another way, the revelation of God's will, mediation and stewardship. Christ's lineage on the side of His mother is from Joachim, a descendant of David, and from Anna, who is a descendant of Levi. David expresses the priesthood of kingship while Levi represents the priesthood of sacrifice on behalf of the people. Levi represents the priestly tribe of the Jews, the Levites. On the side of His Father, the Word of God comes from God and reveals God, which is the very meaning of prophet. So Christ is a priest – *the* priest – of kingship and sacrifice on the side of his mother, and a prophet – *the* prophet – on the side of His Father. Christ is *the* priest.

By glorifying God we accept Him, and in accepting Him we join ourselves to Him. This is done by sharing in His priesthood, which is our corporate action. Liturgically this is experienced as we gather in His name to be the Church and

praise the Father together with the angels in the Son by the action of the Holy Spirit. In the workplace this is done by sharing our God-given joy and peace as we witness to our harmony with God by doing our jobs well. In our families and with our friends, we share God's love, peace and joy, as we witness to each other the truths that God reveals.



God creates us in His own image and likeness. He loves, and so we love. He is merciful and so we are to be merciful. He forgives, and so we forgive, and in so doing accept new beginnings and new life. Christ is born; in glorifying Him we accept and multiply peace, mercy and good will in His world. In glorifying Christ we share in His mission and share in His life.

Today Christ is born in us. We show mercy and love to those suffering in the Middle East, in the Philippines and in our homes. We share the joy of salvation because to us is born the life of the world.

Bishop JOHN





## INTERNATIONAL GUESTS JOIN MEMBERS OF THE St. Stephen's Course for the Residency Program

Priests from abroad joined members of the St. Stephen's Course of Studies in Applied Orthodox Theology from August 26 to September 5 at the Antiochian Village for what is called the "Residency Program." This program is a component of the St. Stephen's Course, the St. Stephen's Master of Arts in Applied Orthodox Theology, the Pastoral Marriage and Family Counseling Certificate Program, and the Doctor of Ministry Program, which together make up the Antiochian House of Studies (AHOS).

Metropolitan Philip established AHOS in 1980 with the St. Stephen's Course, a three-year, distance-education, directed-reading course of studies for those who cannot attend an Orthodox theological seminary. The St. Stephen's Course is open to men and women from all walks of life who want to know better our Church and its history, its doctrine, and so forth. The graduates have received a well-rounded education and formation in our Orthodox heritage, and have assisted the priest in various ways.

At the end of each year of study, the students attend the one-week Residency Program. Each day participants begin with Matins, after which follow breakfast, classes, lunch, more classes, Vesper Services, dinner, and again more classes, with the day ending about 10 p.m. This past fall, on the Tuesday evening of the residency, Fr. Maximos Nnachette from Nigeria, Fr. Konstantin Lautillo of the Philippines, Miladin Tripic from Australia, and Pelagia

Chuan of Taiwan made an hour-long PowerPoint presentation on the Church in their respective countries to a general assembly of students and faculty. Fr. Maximos brought a gift, a carving of the Theotokos holding the Christ Child made from a special wood indigenous to the area of his village. Fr. Lautillo told us how his parishioners had learned to make prayer ropes to raise funds for the Church.

A graduation banquet was held after the final Vespers on Thursday evening, and students received their certificates and diplomas. Students also then toured the icon studio, where mentor Nicolae Gavariliu teaches those specializing in Byzantine Iconology the theology of the Icon, why and how the icon is created in that particular style. It is inspiring to see the progress each student makes over the course of their three years of study. They start with pencil drawings of Christ's face, then progress to a small icon, and then finally to a full size icon.

It has been a rewarding experience for me to meet different students from all parts of the world. We have had international students from Ireland, England, Italy, Sweden, Greece, middle East, Egypt, Nigeria, South Africa, Mauritius, Australia, New Zealand, China, Taiwan, Philippines, Japan, South Korea, South America and Mexico. They are planting the seeds for the Orthodox Church in these areas. May God grant them strength, health, and many years in their mission.

Archdeacon Peter N. Boulukos, Registrar, Antiochian House of Studies



"This past week was my first year attending the Residency Program at the Antiochian Village, and my first experience at an Orthodox gathering outside of a church service. (I am fairly new to the Orthodox Church, compared to most who were in attendance.) I have attended numerous seminars, retreats and conventions as a Protestant Christian, but none came close to the quality and quantity of teaching that was offered. I garnered quite a bit not only through class instruction, but also in observing how you and the leaders carried themselves. Lord willing, I'll be back for Year Two."





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- 1 Bishop THOMAS with first week faculty and students
- 2 Bishop THOMAS with international students
- 3 Fr. Elias Bitar leads chant
- 4-5 Fr. Joseph Allen, Cheri Mullan and Archdeacon Peter Boulukos present certificates
- 6 Students at Thursday Banquet
- 7 Students entertain the faculty
- 8 Iconology Class
- 9 Bishops JOHN and NICHOLAS, faculty and second week International Students
- 10-12 Banquet entertainment
- 13 Bishops JOHN and NICHOLAS at Vespers
- 14 Iconology Class
- 15 Chanters at Vespers
- 16 Iconology Class
- 17 Archdeacon Peter Boulukos





## Antiochian Women Celebrate 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

In 1972, at the Archdiocese Convention in Los Angeles, California, His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP stated, “We must realize once and for all that women have a definite ministry in the life of the Church. Very often we have the tendency to confine women’s role to the kitchen. Both the Old and New Testaments testify beyond doubt to the important role which women played in the history of salvation. Time does not permit me to speak in detail about Ruth, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachael, the Virgin Mary, the Ointment-Bearers, the Deaconesses and many others who ministered to the church and Christ. I propose, therefore, that a NATIONAL SISTERHOOD OF CHARITY be organized in the Archdiocese.”

With much foresight, he asked Helen Rihbany\* to explore the need for a “National Sisterhood” of women in the Antiochian Archdiocese. Helen took a survey of all the North American parishes, which included parish priests, chapter presidents and members of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees. This massive undertaking took a whole year. She compiled the results of her work into a report, and presented it to Metropolitan PHILIP. In 1973, her tireless efforts laid the foundation for the formation of the “Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America,” known at that time as AOCWNA.

In 1973, Interim Officers were appointed by Metropolitan PHILIP at the Archdiocese Convention, in Atlanta, Georgia. They were President, Pauline Maloof\*; Vice President, Shamseh Dalack\*; Treasurer, Nellie Mackoul\*; Recording Secretary, Elaine Karram\*; Corresponding Secretary, Jacqueline Shaker\*; Public Relations, Helen Rihbany\*; Spiritual Advisor, Very Rev. Fr. Michael Simon\*; and Legal Advisor, Very Rev. Fr. John Badeen.

A year later, in 1974, at the Archdiocese Convention in Montreal, Canada, the delegates elected the Interim Officers to serve as the elected Officers, with Pauline Maloof as President. By virtue of her office she also became a member

of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees. Initially all of the officers came from the same region, with the exception of Helen Rihbany who came from New England. The Coordinators were Shamseh Dalack\* (Project), Gladys Laham (Cultural), Elaine Saliba (Humanitarian), Helen Sahadi\* (Membership), Pearl Nahass (Religious), and Nellie Mackoul\* (Finance). There were six regions at that time, with each one taking a turn. The term of office was one year. The officers could choose to succeed themselves after one year, if they wished. At the Archdiocese Convention in Montreal, the organization became official with the adoption of the Constitution. Fr. John Badeen, who served as Legal Advisor, was asked to prepare the By-Laws. The By-Laws were completed and distributed to the Regions on April 16, 1975. Each region elected its own officers. Dues were twenty-five dollars per chapter and the project for that year was “The Commission of Continuing Pastoral Education and Spiritual Vocation.” The amount raised was \$8,665.05, which included a \$1,000.00 donation. At that time, there were sixty-three chapters.

The *purpose* of the Organization was Christian leadership, awareness and commitment; the encouragement of a sense of fellowship; the expression of love and service; and charitable deeds.

The *foci* were Religious, Humanitarian, Projects and Cultural. During this time the first tri-fold brochure was printed and distributed. It featured the purposes of the organization, and highlights of their meetings, which included their project for that year. Guideline manuals were written and distributed on the subjects of the Religious, Cultural, Humanitarian, and Projects foci, and Membership and Finance.

In 1976 a new slate of officers was elected to the first two-year term. March was chosen as Women’s Month, Kh. Joanne Allen\* wrote our Antiochian Women’s Prayer, an official Crest was designed and approved for a banner to be displayed, and an instructional Retreat Manual was distributed.

During the Fifth Anniversary, President Elsie and her sister Laurice Kaleel presented the first North American Board (NAB) AOCWNA gold pin of the Theotokos to all past and present officers, chairpersons, or coordinators and Regional Presidents, who have served on the NAB. This practice continues to this day, and the pin is very generously donated by the Kaleel Family.

In 1987, the officers were chosen from all “corners of the Antiochian Archdiocese.” Throughout the years, we have been asked to raise monies for many other projects, such as the Balamand Seminary, Missions, Orthodox Media, Antiochian Village, Married Seminarians, Patriarchal Charities, the West Coast Chancery, St. George Hospital, the Heritage and Learning Center, Balamand University and the Bishop’s Endowment Fund, IOCC, Balamand University Housing, Theological Education, and orphanages. (We raised over a million dollars in seven years for the Orphanage Endowment Fund.)

From 2005 to 2008, our Project was the Retired Clergy Fund. Metropolitan PHILIP challenged us to raise five hundred thousand dollars in five years, and we did so in four. We then continued to raise funds for Children with Special Needs, the Convent of St. Thekla at Antiochian Village, and the Antiochian Village Tornado Relief Fund.

At the Archdiocese Convention in Houston, Texas, Metropolitan PHILIP challenged us to raise two hundred thousand dollars for our project for 2013 – 2014: “Helping the Orphans of War in Syria.” Over the course of forty years, the Antiochian Women have raised over two million,

seven hundred thousand dollars. In 2005, elected officers were allowed to succeed themselves for two more years, for the very first time. With the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP, the acronym “AOCWNA” was changed to Antiochian Women.

We have wonderful religious publications, Sophia and DIAKONIA, an all-encompassing Membership Handbook, a DVD presentation entitled, “Holy Women of the Orthodox Christian Church,” an “Acts of Mercy” Membership Handbook, a DVD presentation entitled “Yes We Do” (shown at the Archdiocese Convention in Chicago), an updated Antiochian Women’s brochure, a Spiritual Aids Bookmark (reformatted from the Spiritual Aids handbook, written in 1976 by Kh. Claudette Hanna), and the “I Am An Antiochian Women” stickers.

We also continue our involvement in the “Treehouse Ministry” and “Operation Lace-Up,” and remember our Widowed Clergy Wives at Christmas, with a card, note and small gift, and again on their birthdays. We provide the Antiochian Women’s Scholarship, and donate a thousand dollars to the Clergy Wives Retreat to ensure that any seminarian’s wife who faces financial challenges but wishes to attend may do so. We remember our married seminarians with a gift of five hundred dollars at Christmas.

These are just some of the many things that our Antiochian Women have accomplished. Under the leadership of these wonderful women who have served over the past forty years, their boards, and the guidance of our spiritual advisors, the Antiochian Women have continued to thrive and achieve many things, as we work together in God’s vineyard.

On behalf of the North American Board of the Antiochian Women, and on the occasion of our Fortieth Anniversary, we extend our deepest gratitude to His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP for his vision and foresight in founding this wonderful organization in 1973: “A Sisterhood Serving Christ Through Serving Others.” We pray that God may bless and watch over Metropolitan PHILIP and grant him many years.

Violet K. Robbat, President,  
Antiochian Women North American Board

\* *Memory Eternal*





# Bishop ANTHONY Addresses Priests at 9th Annual Synaxis

The priests of the Diocese of Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic gathered together for their ninth annual Brotherhood Synaxis, held at the Antiochian Village from October 1 to 4, 2013. Bishop ANTHONY of the Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest was the guest speaker. His excellent talks addressed the need for parish priests to be aware of the challenge that the secular worldview presents in ministering to their flocks. In addition to His Grace's lectures, the clergy had a supplication service for St. Raphael, whose tireless efforts brought about many of the churches of the Diocese, and who is buried on the grounds of the Village Camp.

Additionally, His Grace Bishop THOMAS inspired his priests on several occasions with discussions of activities in the Orthodox world, the Archdiocese, and the Diocese; he also counseled them to be diligent and prayerful in all their efforts. The priests from the Diocese's Western Rite parishes served a Divine Liturgy on Wednesday morning. Father Andrew Damick gave an excellent talk and sermonette on the life of St. Joseph of Damascus, the patron saint of the clergy brotherhood. Fathers James Hamrick, Noah Bushelli and Demetrios Makoul also delivered sermons that provided much food for thought. One evening a movie was shown, followed by a discussion. The Synaxis concluded with a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy concelebrated by Bishops THOMAS and ANTHONY, with Sayidna Anthony providing a sermon that reflected on the Gospel of the morning, to send the clergy on their way. God willing, the Brotherhood will gather again in 2014 from September 30 to October 3.

The clergy thanks the administration and the staff of the Antiochian Village for their gracious hospitality and for the outstanding amenities, and especially to Tim and his crew for their excellent meals. Thank you, Bishop ANTHONY, for your words and kindness and prayers. Thank you, Bishop THOMAS, for your care and vision that the brotherhood gather and strengthen the bonds of brotherly love that help to make us better priests. Finally, thank you, Your Eminence, Metropolitan PHILIP, for your love and vision in caring for your priests.

(front l-r) V. Rev. Fr. Anthony Yagze, V. Rev. Fr. Boniface Black, His Grace, Bishop ANTHONY, His Grace, Bishop THOMAS, V. Rev. Fr. Olof Scott, V. Rev. Fr. Gregory Mathewes-Green, V. Rev. Fr. Peter Pier.  
(second row) V. Rev. Fr. Gregory Long, Rev. Fr. Joseph Gereige, V. Rev. Fr. Joel Gillam, Rev. Fr. James Purdie, V. Rev. Fr. John Nosal, V. Rev. Fr. Meletios Zafaran, V. Rev. Fr. Don Shadid, V. Rev. Fr. Samuel Haddad.  
(third row) Rev. Fr. Stephen De Young, Rev. Fr. Andrew Damick, V. Rev. Fr. John Dixon, Rev. Fr. Daniel Meyer, Rev. Fr. Demetrios Makoul, Rev. Fr. Noah Bushelli.  
(fourth row) Rev. Fr. Patrick Cardine, Rev. Fr. James Thayer, Rev. Fr. Raphael Garcia, Rev. Fr. Alban Waggener, Rev. Fr. James Hamrick, V. Rev. Fr. Nicholas Alford, V. Rev. Fr. Fred Pfeil.







Metropolitan PHILIP,  
Bishop NICHOLAS,  
Antiochian Faculty and  
Seminarians

## METROPOLITAN PHILIP *welcomes* SEMINARIANS TO DINNER



As the autumn sets in each year, one thinks of a new ecclesiastical and school year, football season, and changing leaves. For our Antiochian seminarians, another staple of the fall every year is their annual dinner with His Eminence, Metropolitan PHILIP. Each year Sayidna welcomes his spiritual children to the Archdiocese headquarters, where they pray, eat and talk together. This year, on September 24, 2013, seminarians and their wives from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, St. Tikhon's Seminary and St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary were in attendance along with the archdiocesan clergy who teach them at the various seminaries.

The evening began with Great Vespers. The seminarians chanted the entire service under the direction of Rasem El-Massih, who is finishing his studies at St. Vladimir Seminary. After Vespers and a group photo, the group enjoyed a scrumptious dinner prepared by the archdiocesan chef Almaza Farhat and her staff. His Eminence welcomed the seminarians. Then



Metropolitan PHILIP and  
Seminarians at Vespers







Metropolitan PHILIP  
and Bishop NICHOLAS  
host Seminarian Dinner



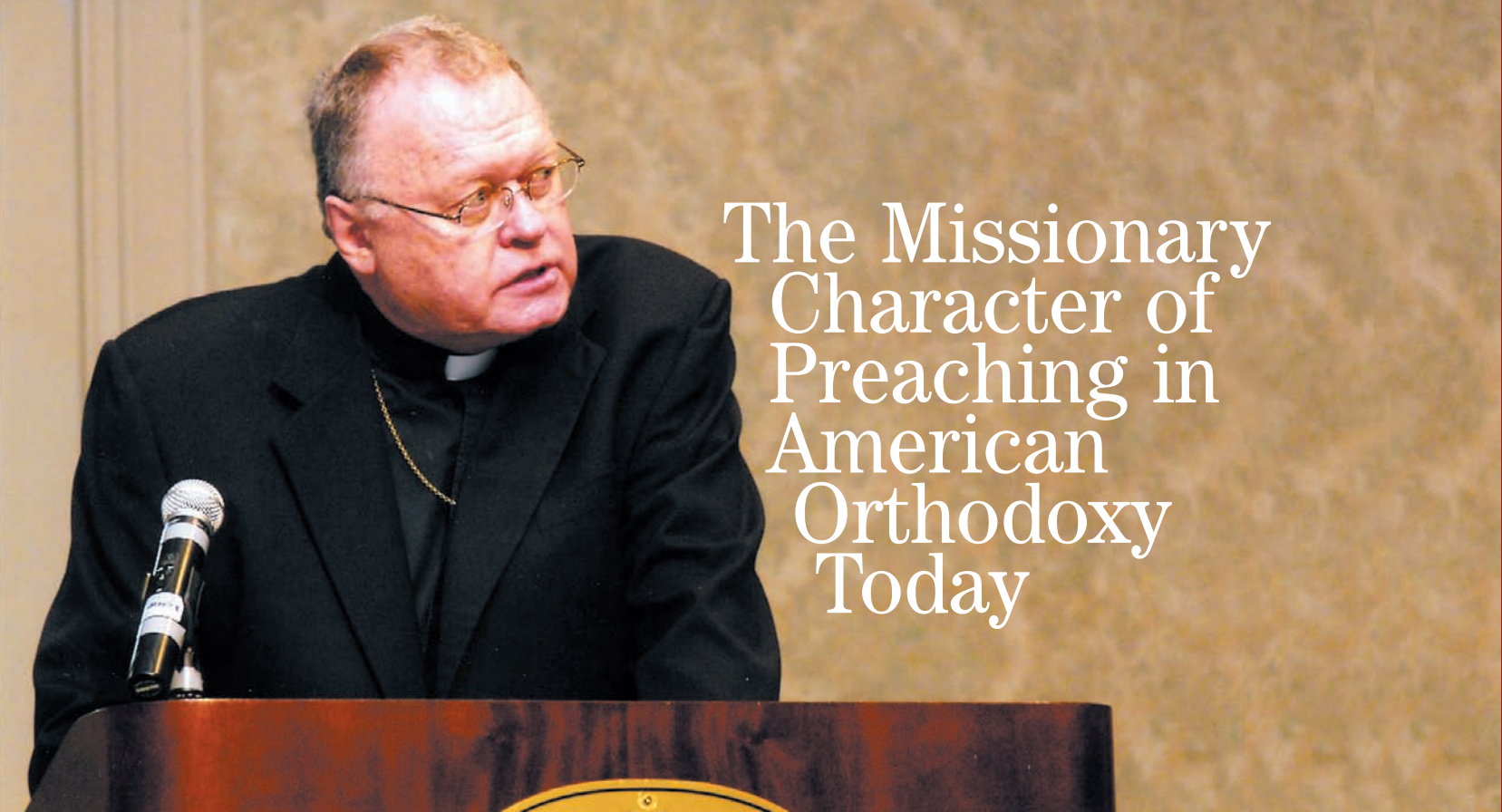
His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS of Brooklyn addressed them, reminding them that our Lord will be with them even when they face difficult times in their ministries.

After dessert, Metropolitan PHILIP spoke about the importance of touching the lives of their future flocks by being with them through their joys and sorrows, and ministering to them where they find them when they arrive at their new parishes.

The seminarians then thanked Sayidna for his hospitality and love and the evening ended with them singing "Many years" to their father in Christ.







# The Missionary Character of Preaching in American Orthodoxy Today

*In March 2009, while doing research for his doctoral dissertation, Daniel Miles interviewed Archpriest Peter Gillquist of blessed memory, an author, speaker, and former Chairman of the Department of Missions and Evangelism for the Antiochian Archdiocese.*

**What do the words mission and evangelism mean to you?**

Mission tells me I have a task before me, a job that must be done. It's about being "on a mission." To quote the Blues Brothers, the Church is on a "mission from God" to preach the Good News to the world. That's what evangelism is – the proclamation of the Gospel.

**How would you describe your position and your responsibilities in the department? How would you describe the work of the department?**

The Department is commissioned by the Metropolitan mainly to help establish new missions of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America, and help established parishes grow. We also play a role in the broader scheme of evangelism on a societal scale through a variety of means, including providing guidance and education for those who want to start Orthodox missions; leading seminars and conferences; speaking at outreach-related events; producing

evangelistic materials to address potential converts' questions; training Orthodox Christians in evangelism; and providing nation-wide resource and referral services for inquirers into the Orthodox Christian faith.

When His Eminence Metropolitan Philip founded the Department in 1988, it was I and a part-time secretary. After adding four staff members a few years later, I have taken on a role of coordinating the work of our Department members. My primary direct ministerial role has been public speaking in a variety of settings and to a wide array of audiences. My duties also include collaborating with other Antiochian Archdiocese departments and Orthodox Christian agencies on projects related to our mission. For example, in recent years I served as the development director of the Orthodox Study Bible – Old Testament Project, and helped with the editorial work. I work closely on an ongoing basis with Conciliar Press, an Orthodox Christian publishing house which focuses on evangelistic literature.

**How are you and the Department seeking to spread Orthodoxy in the United States?**

Our general approach is to encourage and train Orthodox Christians of any jurisdiction to be evangelists in their everyday lives, in their immediate communities and spheres of influence. One of our primary means toward that end is the annual Orthodox Conference on Missions and Evangelism. First and foremost, the Conference teaches Orthodox Christians, the bulk of our participants, how to share their faith, help their parishes grow, and assist with new mission start-ups. In addition, a number of non-Orthodox Christians join us annually, and over the years the Conference has become known as a place where those exploring Orthodoxy can get a taste of the evangelical side of the Church.

Literature and other media are vital tools for evangelism. Our Department has produced a couple of evangelistic pieces ourselves – such as our periodic newsletter, the DVD "Upon This Rock," and the website [www.gettoknowtheoriginal.net](http://www.gettoknowtheoriginal.net) – but more often we work with others to guide the development and promotion of these tools. Our lay administrator and I sit on the Conciliar Press editorial board, where we offer frontline insights from the perspective of missions and evangelism, and help shape Conciliar Press's literature and marketing for evangelistic purposes. We work closely with the St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology, Ancient Faith Radio, Orthodox Christian Network, Orthodox Christian Cassettes, Orthodox Christian Fellowship, the Orthodox Christian Mission Center, and several other Orthodox organizations, collaborating on joint projects and helping each other develop our ministries for the good of all. We make a practice of using the services and products of these Orthodox ministries in our work, and frequently refer those with whom we work directly to these agencies.

Public speaking engagements are a key method our department mission priests and I use for spreading Orthodoxy in America. Our first priority is to work hands-on with Antiochian Archdiocese mission start-ups and provide training at established parishes. But we also make ourselves available to speak at parishes of other Orthodox jurisdictions, as time allows. Most often such opportunities are multi-jurisdictional outreach events, for which one of us has been asked to

speak directly to a non-Orthodox audience. Last, but not least, we welcome invitations to speak at Protestant venues, and make every effort to add such engagements to our schedules.

**Please give some direct examples of ways the Department has been effective in the area of mission and evangelism.**

Since the Department was founded in 1988, the Antiochian Archdiocese has established over 100 new missions, more than half of which have grown to full parish status. Existing Antiochian Archdiocese parishes have grown considerably; this growth and the new missions have placed the Antiochian Archdiocese as the fastest growing jurisdiction of Orthodoxy in North America.

At any given time we are in ongoing contact with as many as fifty non-Orthodox clergymen, mostly Protestant, who are exploring Orthodoxy. The list keeps changing as some pastors eventually become Orthodox, and new inquirers are added to the list.

Those with whom we work have offered consistently positive and highly encouraging feedback. Participants at the annual Orthodox Conference on Missions and Evangelism have given the Conference nearly universal high marks through written evaluations, verbal feedback, and as evidenced in their spreading the word about the Conference to friends. Many non-Orthodox participants have cited the Conference as the factor that finally moved them to join the Orthodox Church, including a number of formerly Protestant pastors who are now Orthodox priests. Other individuals who have become Orthodox often will tell us that some aspect of our work played a deciding role in their conversion. And Orthodox clergy with whom we have worked frequently identify the Department as instrumental in helping their parishes grow.

**How important is preaching (the delivery of sermons) in mission and evangelism? How does the department use the preaching ministry to do the work of mission and evangelism?**

Preaching is incredibly important. When our mission priests work with missions or visit parishes, they usually are asked to preach, and do so eagerly. We encourage all parish priests to preach about the importance of missions and evangelism, and inspire and lead their parishioners to



In my opinion, every Orthodox believer – and especially our clergy – should belong to one secular organization to give them the opportunity to interact with non-Christians.

reach out to their local communities with the gospel. But preaching is not to be limited to Sunday liturgies. Parish priests, or others gifted with preaching and with the blessing of their bishop, should look for opportunities to preach the gospel in any venue they can find, to any audience, whether Orthodox Christian or not. As part of our effort to promote preaching, especially as an evangelistic tool, each year I teach homiletics at the Antiochian House of Studies.

**Is internal mission and evangelism, that is, renewal of the faith of those who are already baptized Orthodox Christians, a part of the work of the department? How? If not, why not?**

It is indirectly. Sometimes one of us will be invited to speak at an Orthodox parish by the parish priest explicitly to “wake up” and inspire his people. At other parishes we might be called upon as part of those parishes’ ongoing continuing education efforts, developing parishioners’ understanding and appreciation of the Orthodox Christian faith. Most often, when we are invited to speak in a polemical way on some topic dealing with the basics of our faith, ostensibly to non-Orthodox listeners, the crowd probably includes more Orthodox Christians, and we end up indirectly addressing their questions and concerns, thus helping to renew their faith.

**Is the Department directly involved in the cause of Orthodox unity in the United States? Do you believe that Orthodox unity would aid mission and evangelism work in the United States? If so, why? If not, why not?**

As noted above, we make ourselves available to speak at and otherwise assist parishes of other Orthodox jurisdictions, and we work on an ongoing basis with a number of Orthodox organizations which are either ministries of other jurisdictions, or “independent” organizations of a cross-jurisdictional nature. In the midst of this continent’s non-canonical Church structure, we find many instances in which we can ignore or push jurisdictional barriers. But the current state of affairs is far from ideal. With true and complete administrative unity of the various Orthodox Churches in North America, we could work side-by-side with other Orthodox Christians unhindered by multiple and sometimes competing bureaucracies, and

make the best possible use of our shared resources. Ultimate Orthodox unity in the United States and Canada is a non-negotiable pre-requisite for bringing North America home to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church. After all, if we can’t show ourselves to be united, how can we possibly be taken seriously as advocates for unity of all peoples in one body of Christ?

**What are the long term vision and goals of the Department? What is your personal vision for the Department and for Orthodox Christianity, in general, in the United States?**

The vision of this Department, in the words of our visionary leader, Metropolitan PHILIP, is no less than to bring America to Orthodoxy. We will preach the gospel to those who have not already believed in Jesus Christ, and persuade Roman Catholics and Protestants of the fullness of the Christian faith found in the Orthodox Church. We will realize this vision through our own efforts and in concert with others. One specific goal: we will prioritize planting Orthodox missions in those cities of fifty thousand or more people which do not already have an Orthodox Church, especially cities with colleges and universities.

**Is there anything else that you would like to add about mission and evangelism and the work of the Department?**

In my opinion, every Orthodox believer – and especially our clergy – should belong to one secular organization to give them the opportunity to interact with non-Christians. Maybe it’s a musical group, a sports club, Junior League or Rotary Club (where you can volunteer an Orthodox speaker for the Christmas or Easter program).

During my college years, I was a member of the Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity. In the early 1990s I was asked to serve as national chaplain of the fraternity. This has given me the opportunity to preach the gospel to literally hundreds of college students each year who otherwise likely would not hear much about our Lord Jesus Christ.

Daniel Miles, Ph.D.  
Dr. Miles was valedictorian of the class of 2003 at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts, and went on to earn his Ph.D. with Highest Honors from The University of Thessaloniki in 2011. His primary research interests are theology of mission, homiletics and foreign languages.

# ORATORICAL FESTIVAL

In Matthew, Chapter 25, Verses 35–36, Jesus says: “I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to me.” God calls us to take care of our neighbor, which is essentially taking care of Him, by giving Him food, giving Him drink, welcoming Him, clothing Him, visiting Him, coming to Him and, most importantly, loving Him. As Orthodox Christians, we are called to live out the commandment to “love thy neighbor as thyself,” that can bring us not only closer to one another, but also closer to God. This progression towards God, shown through serving our neighbors, is so important to us, especially in our world today, with all of the constant noise and distractions – TV, radio, and the Internet with its social media. We are continuously told that *this* will make you popular; if you wear *this*, you will be well-liked; and so on. It may seem like a simple matter, our calling to avoid these distractions, but as sinners we find it much more difficult to do than we might think. As this is so essential to our salvation, however, we have no other choice but to continue to work harder, if we are to hear one day those precious words, “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into the joy of your Lord.”

Because our ultimate goal is salvation, we must work towards it all our lives. It may seem, sometimes, as if life is never-ending, with time enough for everything. We lose sight of our own mortality because we cannot grasp the concept of our earthly bodies passing away while our soul lives on. Because of this difficulty, it may seem as if we have more than enough time to work out our salvation, which consequently allows us to procrastinate more and more. This is especially a problem for teenagers, because it feels as though we have our entire lives ahead of us. Along with that, some say that teens have the greatest part of this struggle to disregard these temptations, and I agree, though I may be a little biased. As strenuous as this may seem to be, especially to an Orthodox teenager, however, we have to live our lives as the five wise virgins, with their lamps trimmed, ready and waiting for the bridegroom, rather than putting it off for tomorrow. With the constant temptations that

are thrown at us this way and that, every moment that we are given becomes more and more precious. As I have been growing through my teenage years, I have noticed that some of my peers often pose questions regarding “the meaning of life.” Thankfully, as Orthodox Christians we already have that question answered. The “meaning of life,” the ultimate goal of our lives, is to strive for salvation, to one day reach the Kingdom of Heaven. Knowing that, at any point in our lives, so much can change in a matter of seconds, we are challenged to fulfill each opportunity that we have, always keeping our actions oriented to salvation. This may seem frightening, but this doesn’t mean that each of us is called to be a monk or a nun; rather, it means working toward salvation in common ways, such as taking the initiative when someone is in need, whether it is emotionally, physically or spiritually. Opportunities to do this are thrown at us every day, perhaps in the simple form of standing up for someone, or loving someone and praying for them.

Knowing how challenging this can be, we are provided with many useful tools to help us, such as Scripture, the sacraments of the Church and the writings of the Church Fathers. During two short weeks recently, when I was a counselor at Camp St. Thekla, the campers were taught in their daily Christian Education classes how the church acts as a hospital. Using this analogy, the Scriptures, along with the sacraments, are medicine for our spiritual healing. They can give us strength, comfort and guidance. Scripture is ever-present in the life of our church, which models how it can also benefit us in our personal lives. Also, one thing that I love about my Orthodox Study Bible is that it contains a section where it offers specific psalms for comfort, strength, guidance, and so forth.

Although many are not sure what to say, how to say it or to even say anything at all, when the topic of the Second Coming arises, a flood of questions rushes into my mind when I hear those two words. It begins with something like, Have I done every-



Continued on Page 33



# Syrian Relief

## Church, Organization or Individuals

## Amount

St. Mary Church - Brooklyn, NY	\$4,349.00
St. Sophian Church - Dripping Spring, TX	\$451.00
St. Nicholas Cathedral - Brooklyn, NY	\$7,900.00
St. George Church - Flint, MI	\$1,013.00
St. George Church - Houston, TX	\$4,421.00
St. James Church - Loveland, OH	\$2,436.00
St. Philip Church - Edmonton, AB	\$2,626.53
St. Philip Church - Ft. Lauderdale, FL	\$5,000.00
Basilica of Saint Mary - Livonia, MI	\$6,900.00
St. George Church - Jacksonville, FL	\$4,805.00
Holy Cross Church - Palmdale, CA	\$4,942.36
Holy Transfiguration Church - London, ON	\$1,318.10
St. George Church - Cleveland, OH	\$23,660.00
St. George Church - Phoenix, AZ	\$10.00
St. Nicholas Church - Los Angeles, CA	\$14,031.00
Mr. Leon Smatt - Brooklyn, NY	\$200.00
All Saints Church - Chicago, IL	\$1,004.00
Mr. and Mrs. Jeffery and Marta Solof - North Andover, MA	\$35.00
The Annunciation Church - Calgary, AB	\$876.00
St. Michel Church - Wichita, KS	\$151.00
St. James Church - Modesto, CA	\$1,084.00
St. John Church - Memphis, TN	\$6,720.00
Ss. Constantine and Helen Church - Dallas, TX	\$500.00
St. Nicholas Church - Bridgeport, CT	\$1,251.00
All Saints Church - Raleigh, NC	\$5,173.00
St. Nicholas Church - Montreal, QC	\$1,060.00
St. George Church - Montreal, QC	\$1,800.00
St. Michael Church - Greensburg, PA	\$60.00
St. Basil Church - Metairie, LA	\$1,139.00
St. John Chrysostom Church - York, PA	\$854.00
Mr. and Mrs. Theodore and Jessica Chongris - Ohio	\$200.00
St. Mark Church - Youngstown, OH	\$320.00
St. George Church - South Glen Falls, NY	\$281.00
Mr. Robert Kent - New York	\$200.00
St. Peter Church - Ponoma, CA	\$9,922.00
St. Andrew Church - Riverside, CA	\$2,723.00
St. Mary Church - Wilkes Barre, PA	\$1,000.00
St. James Church - Williamston, MI	\$660.00
St. Luke Church - Abilene, TX	\$538.00
Holy Myrrhbearers Church - Bonner Ferry, ID	\$1,015.00
St. Nicholas Church - Grand Rapids, MI	\$19,773.00
St. Barnabas Church - Delware, OH	\$591.00
St. John Church - Rapid City, SD	\$100.00
St. Mary Church - Iron Mountain, MI	\$600.00
St. George Church - Orlando, FL	\$404.00
St. John Church - Lake Charles, LA	\$115.00

St. Basil Church - Kansas City, KS	\$985.00
Holy Trinity Church - Little Rock, AR	\$479.00
St. Mary Church - Yonkers, NY	\$485.00
St. Elias Church - Arvada, CO	\$532.00
St. George Church - Pittsburgh, PA	\$1,185.00
Janet Mitchell - Rochville, MD	\$100.00
St. Peter Chruch - Madison, MS	\$1,500.00
Mr. Richard Zakka - West Palm Beach, FL	\$4,000.00
Mr. And Mrs. Joseph and Mirna Lubbos - Clifton, NJ	\$500.00
Mr. Joseph Ayoub - Studio City, CA	\$100.00
St. Mark Church - Irvine, CA	\$1,200.00
Holy Cross Mission - Ormond Beach, FL	\$1,136.00
St. George Church - Methuen, MA	\$575.00
Ss. Peter and Paul Church - Salt lake City, UT	\$300.00
St. George Church - Dunbury, CT	\$1,003.00
St. Anthony Church - San Diego, CA	\$4,219.00
St. George Church - Grand Rapids, MI	\$1,511.00
St. Elijah Church - Oklahoma City, OK	\$5,000.00
Three Hierarchs Mission - Garden City, KS	\$200.00
Holy Incarnation Church - Allen Park, MI	\$230.00
St. Michael Church - Monessen, PA	\$369.00
St. Nicholas Church - Pinellas Park, FL	\$770.00
St. Patrick Church - Midland, VA	\$1,320.00
Holy Ascension Church - West Chester, PA	\$465.00
St. George Church - New Hartford, NY	\$1,500.00
St. Paul Church - Emmaus ,PA	\$610.00
St. Matthew Church - N. Royalton, OH	\$490.00
St. Mary Church - Goshen, IN	\$325.00
Holy Cross Church - Dorr, MI	\$572.00
St. Silouan Mission - College Station, TX	\$120.00
St. George Church - Altoona, PA	\$755.00
St. Elias church - New Castle, PA	\$450.00
St. Nicholas Church - Myrtle Beach, SC	\$630.00
St. George Church - Upland, CA	\$1,140.00
St. George Church - W. St. Paul, MN	\$4,140.00
Mr. And Mrs. Thomas and Josephine Williams - Rapid City, SD	\$100.00
St. Paul Church - Lynnwood, WA	\$1,000.00
Holy Resurrection Church - Gillette, WY	\$428.00
St. Nicholas Church - Urbana, IL	\$2,900.00
St. Ananias Church - Evansvill,e IN	\$458.00
St. Barnabas Church - Costa Mesa, CA	\$3,768.00
St. John Church - Dedham, MA	\$1,327.00
St. Philip Church - Davie, FL	\$1,000.00
St. George Church - El Paso, TX	\$1,200.00
St. Vincent Church - Saskatoon, SK	\$6,040.00
St. George Church - Troy, MI	\$1,150.00
St. Raphael Church - Iowa City, IA	\$200.00

Holy Transfiguration Church - Hillsboro, KS	\$301.00
St. John Cathedral - Eagle River, AK	\$1,100.00
All Saints Church - Bloomington, IN	\$2,468.00
St. John Church - Fort Wayne, IN	\$749.00
St. Antonios Church - Halifax ,NS	\$2,000.00
St. Nicholas Church - Shreveport, LA	\$300.00
St. Ignatius Church - Monona, WI	\$3,500.00
St. George Church - Kearney, NE	\$927.00
St. Mary Church - Montreal, QC	\$725.00
St. Nicholas Church - Beckley, WV	\$890.00
St. Raphael of Brooklyn Church - Chantilly, VA	\$985.00
St. James Church - Poughkeepsie, NY	\$500.00
St. Michael Church - Las Vegas, NV	\$1,000.00
St. Anthony Church - Melbourne, FL	\$710.00
St. Mary Church - Alsip, IL	\$3,530.00
St. George Cathedral - Charleston, WV	\$5,800.00
St. Stephen Chruch - S.Plainfield, NJ	\$735.00
St. George Church - Fisher, IN	\$3,149.00
St. George Church - Worcester, MA	\$1,428.00
St. George Church - Richmond Hill, ON	\$5,000.00
Holy Cross Church - Linthicum Heights, MD	\$1,563.00
St. Ignatius Church - Mesa, AZ	\$452.00
Orthodox Church of the Redeemer - Los Altos Hill, CA	\$2,288.00
St. Mary Church - Greenwood, IN	\$500.00
Ss. Peter and Paul Church - Topeka, KS	\$517.00
St. Mary Curch - Wichita, KS	\$340.00
St. George Church - Silver Spring, MD	\$1,308.00
St. Stephen Church - Campbell, CA	\$787.00
St. Philip Church - Souderton, PA	\$850.00
Christ the Savior Church - Jacksoville, TX	\$1,000.00
St. Matthew Church - Torrance, CA	\$584.00
St. John Church - Levittown, NY	\$670.00
St. John Church - Post Falls, ID	\$622.00
Three Hierarchs Church - Wentachee, WA	\$579.00
St. Elias Church - La Crosse, WI	\$492.00
St. Peter Church - Naples, FL	\$250.00
St. George Church - Portland, OR	\$4,110.00
St. George Church - Toledo, OH	\$400.00
V. Rev. Fr. Gabriel M. Ashie - Orange, CA	\$200.00
St. Timothy Church - Lompoc, CA	\$760.00
St. George Church - Cedar Rapids, IA	\$685.00
St. Anthony church - Bergenfield, NJ	\$450.00
St. Ignaius Mission Port Colborne, ON	\$150.00
Mr. George Darany	\$1,000.00
Mr. Basil Sadakah	\$300.00
The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch	\$60,000.00
St. Mary Church - Chambersburg, PA	\$2,185.00

Holy Resurrection Church - Tucson, AZ	\$2,588.00
St. Nicholas Church - Springdale, AR	\$609.00
St. Elias Church - Syracuse, NY	\$1,212.00
St. George Church - Albany, NY	\$460.00
St. George Church - Bridgeville, PA	\$835.00
St. George Church - Little Falls, NJ	\$500.00
The Philoptochos Greek Orthodox Church Church - Rye, NY	\$250.00
St. Michael Church - Cotuit, MA	\$583.00
All Saints Church - Homer, AK	\$200.00
St. John Church - Thurmont, MD	\$150.00
St. Michael Church - Geneva, NY	\$8,457.00
St. George Church - Westminster ,MD	\$218.00
Holy Trinity Church - Santa Fe, NM	\$750.00
St. Andrew Church - Lexington, KY	\$1,300.00
St. George Church - Washington, DC	\$872.00
St. Mary Church - Omaha, NE	\$902.00
St. Michael Church - Van Nuys, CA	\$4,457.00
St. Andrew Church - Lewes, DE	\$223.00
St. Luke Church - Chagrin Falls, OH	\$202.00
St. Gabriel Missioin - Lafayette, LA	\$550.00
St. John Church - Orinda, CA	\$423.00
St. Nicholas Church - Cedarburg, WI	\$2,200.00
St. Athanasius - Goleta, CA	\$300.00
St. Mary Church - Johnstown, PA	\$456.00
St. Elias Church - Atlanta, GA	\$3,697.00
Mr. Theodore Stefos - Lancaster, MA	\$40.00
Mr. John Stefos - Lancaster, MA	\$100.00
Holy Trinity Church - Lynchburg, VA	\$260.00
Holy Apostles Mission - Bowling Green, KY	\$534.00
St. Stephen Church - West Brookfield, MA	\$3,558.00
St. Luke Church - Garden Grove, CA	\$2,512.00
St. Mary Church - Berkley, MI	\$1,471.00
St. Elias Church - Ottawa, ON	\$2,692.00
St. George Church - New Kengington, PA	\$637.00
St. Michael Church -Louisville, KY	\$2,500.00
Ss. Peter and Paul Church - Potomac, MD	\$7,121.00
Holy Cross Mission - Society of St. Willibrord	\$40.00
St. Ignatius Church - Florida, NY	\$300.00
Prophet Elijah Curch - Ellensburg, WA	\$485.00
St. Michael Church - Beaumont, TX	\$12,106.50
St. Mary Church - West Palm Beach, FL	\$1,868.00
St. Basil Church - Poquoson, VA	\$100.00
The Living Hope Baptist Church - Geneva, NY	\$289.00
Estate of Helen Rebeck - Clifton, NJ	\$1,000.00
Patricia B Milhem - Worcester, MA	\$100.00
St. Paul Church - Naples, FL	\$420.00
St. George Church - Upper Darby, PA	\$250.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$392,295.49</b>





## St. Vladimir's Seminary Signs Agreement with Theological Institute in Russia

The Dean and Chancellor/CEO of St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, The Very Rev. Dr. John Behr and The Very Rev. Dr. Chad Hatfield, have signed an agreement with Ss. Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute of Post-Graduate Studies in Moscow, laying the foundation for the establishment of the "St. Philaret of Moscow Russian House of Studies" at St. Vladimir's. The cooperative statement was signed at the culmination of the visit of the Dean and Chancellor to Russia October 7–14, 2013. The Russian House of Studies will become part of the Seminary's International Houses of Studies program, which will welcome an exchange of teachers and students from the Moscow Patriarchate's school.



"Our plans for partnering with overseas schools continue apace, said Fr. John Behr. Through these collaborative efforts we will be able to serve the Church in the United States more effectively, enriching the formation of our students and laying the groundwork for ongoing dialogue with Orthodox schools of theology overseas."

Representatives who signed the agreement on behalf of Ss. Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute included His Eminence The Most Rev. HILARION (Alfeyev), Metropolitan of Volokolamsk and Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Department for External Church Relations, The Rev. Vladimir Shmaliy, and Hieromonk Ioann Kopeikin. Metropolitan HILARION, an episcopal member of St. Vladimir's Seminary's Board of Trustees, hosted the St. Vladimir's delegation, which also included SVS Press Marketing and Operations Manager the Rev. Dn. Gregory Hatrak.

The St. Vladimir's delegation fully participated in Russian Orthodox church life during their week-long trip, which included the following highlights.

- Tuesday, October 8: Celebration of the Divine Liturgy at Holy Trinity St. Sergius Lavra (Sergiev Posad) with Metropolitan HILARION presiding; celebration of an Akathist in the courtyard of the Lavra with His Holiness KYRILL, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, presiding, and a private audience with the Patriarch following; presentation of the Popular Patristic Series to the Moscow Theological Academy Library.

- Wednesday, October 9: Participation in the opening Ceremonial Day at the St. Petersburg Theological Academy with the presentation of the Popular Patristics Series to the St. Petersburg Theological Academy; visit to the Publishing House of Sretensky Monastery to discuss production of Orthodox Christian materials in Russia and North America; meeting with the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) representative to the

Moscow Patriarchate, Archimandrite Alexander Pihach, regarding possibly opening an English-language bookstore at the OCA's Representation Church of St. Catherine the Great Martyr, Moscow.

- Thursday, October 10, Friday, October 11: Participation in the "St. Isaac the Syrian and His Spiritual Heritage" conference, sponsored by Ss. Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute and the Philosophy Department of Moscow State University, with Fr. John Behr delivering a paper on "St. Isaac of Syria on the Cross"; other speakers included Schema Monk Gabriel Bunge, Sebastian Brock, and Archimandrite Vasilios of Iviron Monastery.

- Saturday, October 12: Fr. John Behr addressing students at the Ss. Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute informally, regarding the history and contemporary life of St. Vladimir's Seminary, and his own current theological inquiry on the subject of "Becoming Human"; the presentation of the Popular Patristic Series to Ss. Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute; meeting with faculty at St. Tikhon's Orthodox University, Moscow, and the presentation of the Popular Patristic Series to St. Tikhon's Orthodox University; a vigil at the famed Church of the Mother of God, "Joy of All Who Sorrow," on Bolshaya Ordynka Street, with Metropolitan HILARION presiding.

- Sunday, October 13: a Concelebration of Divine Liturgy at the Church of the Mother of God "Joy of All Who Sorrow," with Metropolitan HILARION presiding; the signing of the agreement between St. Vladimir's Seminary and Ss. Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute.

"It was a great joy and blessing to serve in St. Petersburg and Moscow and to see the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church so evident in both of these cities," Fr. Chad reflected at the end of their trip. "We look forward to the fruits of our partnership with Russian Orthodox theologians and students."

(From left) Archpriest Chad Hatfield, Archpriest John Behr, Metropolitan HILARION, Hieromonk Ioann Kopeikin, and Priest Vladimir Shmaliy preparing to sign the cooperative agreement between St. Vladimir's Seminary and Ss. Cyril and Methodius Theological Institute.

it was a great joy and blessing to serve...



# Archdiocese Office

## Elevated

HAMATY, Deacon Elias, to the dignity of Archdeacon by Bishop JOHN, on November 25, 2012.  
KFOUF, Priest Ayman, to the dignity of Archpriest by Metropolitan PHILIP on October 20, 2013, at St. George Church, Troy, Michigan.  
WILCOXSON, Father Aidan, to the rank of Archpriest by Bishop BASIL on September 15, 2013, at St. John the Forerunner Church, Cedar Park, Texas.

## Awarded

Antonian Gold Medal to Archpriest Joseph ANTYPAS by Metropolitan PHILIP on October 19, 2013, at St. George Church, Troy, Michigan.

## Ordained

HANNA, Deacon Nicholas, to the holy priesthood by Archbishop JOSEPH on September 15, 2013, at St. Nicholas Cathedral, Los Angeles, California.  
HOWELL, Deacon Matthew, to the holy priesthood by Archbishop JOSEPH on September 7, 2013, at St. John Cathedral, Eagle River, Alaska. He was assigned as the Pastor of St. Herman Church in Wasilla, Alaska.

PHELPS, John, to the holy diaconate by Archbishop JOSEPH on September 7, 2013, at St. John Cathedral, Eagle River, Alaska. He was attached to St. Herman Church in Wasilla, Alaska.

ROGERS, Deacon John, to the holy priesthood by Archbishop JOSEPH on September 8, 2013, at St. John Cathedral, Eagle River, Alaska. He remains attached to St. John Cathedral.

VAIR, Deacon Mark (Burke), to the holy priesthood by Bishop NICHOLAS on November 5, 2013, at St. Stephen Church, S. Plainfield, New Jersey. He is appointed to that parish while he completes his seminary studies.

WILSON, Andrew, to the holy diaconate by Bishop BASIL on September 15, 2013, at St John the Forerunner, Cedar Park, Texas.

## Received

CREMEENS, Priest Timothy, from the Orthodox Church in America, effective November 1, 2013.

## Appointed

HANNA, Father Nicholas, as the Assistant Pastor of

St. George Church, Upland, California, under the pastorship of the Very Reverend George Manneh, effective November 1, 2013.

KFOUF, Archpriest Ayman, to the pastorate of St. Elias Church, Sylvania, Ohio, effective November 5, 2013.

ROEBER, Priest Anthony, to St. Mary Church, Johnstown, Pennsylvania, which is pastored by the V. Rev. Dr. Donald Shadid.

## Consecrated

St. Luke Church, Erie, Colorado, by Bishop BASIL on September 28, 2013.

## Deposed

Ephraim Alkhas, from the priesthood of the Orthodox Church, as of July 24, 2013.

## Suspended From Priestly Functions

WARREN, Priest Ignatius, of St. Elias Church, Sylvania, Ohio, effective November 1, 2013.

His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP thanks everyone who greeted him on His Name Day, on November 14, 2013.

Bishop THOMAS thanks everyone for their cards, gifts and prayers on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of his ordination. A special thank you to those who contributed to the presentation of Life Membership in the Order of St. Ignatius.

Former North American Council (NAC) SOYO officers reminisce with former youth advisor, Sayidna BASIL, during lunch at the Archdiocese Convention held in Houston, Texas.



# Sharing the Faith

News from the Department of Christian Education



## Beloved in Christ

I write these words just after the 2013 Orthodox Institute at Antiochian Village. The fellowship and book-signings were a chance to get to know and speak with some of the prominent people in the Orthodox Church. The presentations were truly educational and inspirational. An eight-panel display of "Art and Symbols of the Catacombs" shed light on the images that were most important to the early Christians. All together it was a memorable and valuable weekend.

## The 2013 Orthodox Institute for Continuing Education in the Faith

Almost a hundred people participated in The Orthodox Institute at Antiochian Village, October 31 – November 3, 2013. The theme was "Blessed is the Kingdom: Acts 2:42 and Today," and the goal was to answer the question, "Can we revive the spirit of giving for which the early church was known?"

Courses ranged from learning about the early Church, and practical and insightful courses for improving parish life today, to parish involvement in Orthodox service programs.

If you wish to host a "mini-OI" with any of the courses from this event, and with the Catacombs Exhibit, please contact Myra Kovalak at mekovalak@gmail.com.

Knowing the prominence of our speakers and the importance of our topic, we invited Bobby and Paige Maddex of Ancient Faith Radio to attend and record several sessions. The recorded sessions are: "The Spirit of Giving in the Early Church" (Met. SAVAS). "Understanding Orthodoxy in America Today" (Krindatch), "Women in the Church" (FitzGerald), "The Early Church" (Yazge), "Living the Mystery" (Freeman), "Challenges and Opportunities for the Ancient Faith Today" (Allen), "How to Love One Another" (Shadid), "Vibrant Parishes" (Kormos) and "Developing Ministries and Koinonia Groups" (Anderson). These, along with their transcripts (and many more photos) can be found



His Eminence Metropolitan SAVAS delivering the keynote address.



Participants who earned the theme certificate, "Blessed is the Kingdom: Acts 2:42 and Today," and their instructors.



Those who earned the Advanced Teacher, Elementary, Certificate and their instructors.

on [www.antiochian.org/christianeducation](http://www.antiochian.org/christianeducation), or at [www.ancientfaith.com/specials/recent\\_programs](http://www.ancientfaith.com/specials/recent_programs).

In his keynote address, "The Spirit of Giving in the Early Church," His Eminence Metropolitan SAVAS of Pittsburgh could have delivered an exposition of the love and great charity works of the early Christians. Instead, he offered a broader understanding on the topic of wealth and poverty.

BACK ROW: NAC SOYO Presidents Alan Abraham, Grand Rapids, Michigan, and George Freije, Indianapolis, Indiana; our Youth Advisor Sayidna BASIL; NAC SOYO Vice President Esther Simbol, Terre Haute, Indiana; Spiritual Advisor Fr. Joseph Abud, Flint, Michigan; NAC SOYO Secretaries Isabel Elac, Los Angeles, California, and Susan Shatella, Montreal, Canada.

FRONT ROW: NAC SOYO Treasurer Robert Bayouk and NAC SOYO President Brian Kishfy, both from Montreal, Canada.





Those who earned their Church School Director Certificate and their instructors.



Those who earned the Advanced Teacher MS HS Certificate and their instructors.

He used four sources to show a range of perspectives on giving during those years. I have included below just a few words from the keynote address and invite you to listen to the full presentation on Ancient Faith Radio.

Kevin Allen's "Challenges and Opportunities for the Ancient Faith Today" used the research of Alexei Krindatch to analyze the position of the Orthodox Church among other Christian denominations and in North American culture. I have excerpted a few paragraphs of his excellent presentation. Although the large omitted sections do it an injustice, my hope is that you will be enticed to listen to the entire session on Ancient Faith Radio. He has many insights that can help guide the Orthodox Church.

"Amazing" is the word that shows up on many evaluations of the conference. Those who presented and those who participated seemed to have hearts for Christ and a vision of the Holy Spirit active in the Church. We thank our amazing

presenters for providing the handouts and texts from their sessions. Conference participants will receive their CD in a week or so.

**CD Available.** For those who wished they could attend, all of the materials and handouts for the theme-related courses, and the recordings and their transcripts, are available on CD for \$65. Contact [orthodoxinstitute2013@yahoo.com](mailto:orthodoxinstitute2013@yahoo.com). In this way we can bring the message of the conference to a wider audience, and invite priests or adult educators to use the materials for workshops. The date for the next Orthodox Institute is October 30 – November 2, 2014. The topic will be announced on the Christian Education website soon.

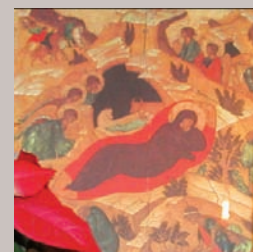
## NEW RESOURCES

Also included also in this issue are book reviews and an article on our Department's Pinterest site. The books are wonderful (think gifts for your

children, godchildren and grandchildren), and Pinterest offers many, many resources and ideas.

**Website Resources.** On the website we offer information on The Jesse Tree, and Christmas Vignettes, courtesy of Kh. Linda Funk. We have many, many resources available on the Creative Festivals site that make for a good experience. Please check them out.

Most importantly, take time during this Christmas season to sit in the glow of candles in front of the Nativity icon, or lights on the tree, *and be still*. Invite your children, (maybe one at a time) or someone you love, to sit next to you. How magnificent is the fact that "God is With Us!"



In Christ Our Lord,  
*Carole A. Buleza*  
Director

## The 2013 Orthodox Institute Presentation: THE SPIRIT OF GIVING IN THE EARLY CHURCH

*Paraphrased excerpt from the Keynote Address by His Eminence Metropolitan SAVAS of Pittsburgh. The complete address can be found at [www.ancientfaith.com/specials/recent\\_programs](http://www.ancientfaith.com/specials/recent_programs)*

It is important to consider the economic conditions of the Roman Empire, 2,000 years ago. The wealth is highly concentrated in the imperial family and the landed gentry. Everybody else rents and works the land. There is no middle class – there are two groups: the 2.8% that are wealthy, and the remainder that are just getting by, or not. This is a shockingly poor world. Keep in mind, then, in the audience for this early gospel, in the congregations that Paul is writing to, there aren't many people in higher echelons. He is talking to people who are just getting by.

How did people understand their position? What is the biblical understanding for wealth and poverty – that so few have so much and so many have so little? Is there an explanation for, and a strategy for addressing this? No. There is no economic theory, no grand design. But, there are perspectives. I'm going to use four examples, the

Book of Revelation, the Letter of James, the Acts of the Apostles, and the *Shepherd of Hermas*. These represent a range of understandings and strategies for how to deal with wealth and poverty discrepancies....

## The 2013 Orthodox Institute Course: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE ANCIENT FAITH TODAY

*Excerpts from Kevin Allen's presentation. The complete text can be found at [www.ancientfaith.com/specials/recent\\_programs](http://www.ancientfaith.com/specials/recent_programs)*

I was asked to speak about the "Challenges and Opportunities of the Ancient Faith Today." We are witnessing major changes in what is the fluid religious landscape in America and increasingly the world (except, of course, in Muslim-majority countries, which becomes part of our story, as I will explain later). These changes give rise to many challenges and opportunities for the Orthodox Churches, as well as other Christian churches. This is what we'll be discussing today, hopefully with both clarity and honesty.

...

I want to begin today by stating at the outset what I believe is the single most *significant obstacle* to addressing, *let alone solving* the challenges the Church faces; and that is *the lack of a cohesive and coherent strategic plan for the future of Orthodoxy in the U.S.* At least I am not aware that one exists. The reason we do not have a cohesive and coherent strategic plan is directly related to the fact that we do not have a coherent and cohesive ecclesiological structure in the US, despite the unity we proclaim!

...

There are significant challenges we face in developing a healthy Orthodoxy in America. We need to struggle in humility with all of our hearts to rekindle the fire for God in the Orthodox Church and not to accommodate the ideology of a dying world in our values, attitudes and mindsets.

So the question is, *Are we ready to meet the challenges being presented to us in this culture* by those who are becoming increasingly disaffected with other Christian traditions, and by spiritual seekers looking for meaning and purpose missing in the post-modern secular culture?

...

First and perhaps foremost I believe *this re-*

*quires that our hierarchs and leaders have a "bigger" and clearer vision for the Orthodox Church in North America.*

This requires a commitment to *this country*: to its *non-Orthodox* lost, poor, and neglected, as well as to our faithful. We are starting to see this through the excellent social-service efforts of FOCUS USA and the International Orthodox Christian Charities, both of which are great blessings (and both founded by the same man – Charles Ajalat of Los Angeles).

This requires us to have always before us the goal of "an aggressive 'internal mission' of spiritual renewal and re-dedication of our priests and people to Jesus Christ." Perhaps our monastic communities could be part of this renewal?

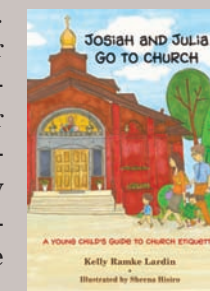
This means a commitment to evangelizing our American culture, rather than accepting, or accommodating secularist ideologies and social policies by our people and clergy. There is no distinction between the "public" and the "private" for true Christians, or as Father Stephen Freeman – one of our speakers here – puts it, a two-storey universe, where God is "up there" and we are "down here."

This requires an effective "mission strategy" for America, including external and internal evangelism, as well as outreach to minorities, and a plan for better distribution of churches across the country so people have access to Orthodoxy....

## Resource Reviews

Josiah and Julia Go to Church,  
and The Littlest Altar Boy  
Reviewed by Rosemary Shumski

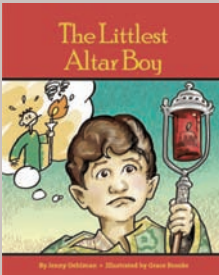
Two new picture books recently became available from Conciliar Press, *Josiah and Julia Go to Church*, by Kelly Ramke Lardin, with illustrations by Sheena Hisiro, and *The Littlest Altar Boy*, by Jenny Oehlman, with illustrations by Grace Brooks. Both would be excellent additions to a Sunday Church School library or a child's home collection of books. I'm reviewing them together because they share a similar style – they're written for young children, have wonderful illustrations, and convey their messages not in a heavy-handed way, but through the use of gentle humor.





*Josiah and Julia Go to Church* is designed as a young child’s guide to church etiquette. It’s a “board book,” so the pages are sturdy enough for a baby or toddler. The story was inspired by the author’s own children. Through the examples of Josiah and Julia, children can learn what to do (and what not to do!) in church. I liked the way the author showed good and bad behavior from both children; one child is not doing the “wrong thing” all the time while the other is “the good one.” Each child makes mistakes at times and each child also behaves properly at times. Topics such as dressing appropriately for church, kissing icons, lighting candles, and speaking quietly in church are introduced.

*The Littlest Altar Boy* addresses a young boy’s fears as he prepares to be an altar server for the



very first time. He worries that he’ll trip on his robe or have a mishap with his candle. He imagines scenarios when things go horribly wrong, and his thoughts are cleverly illustrated through the use of cartoons. But in the end, all goes well as he

realizes that others are there to help him.

I highly recommend both of these books. They fill a need for Orthodox Christian picture books that are suitable for younger children.

*Rosemary Shumski is the Administrative Assistant for the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese Department of Christian Education, and teaches Preschool at St. John Chrysostom Church, York Pennsylvania.*

AODCE IS ON PINTEREST

By Shelley Seifarth

If you’ve not heard of the website Pinterest, it is an online social image-sharing site that allows users to create a bookmarking system based on specific themes. These pinboards are organized into



collections of photos (pins) under titles such as food, DIY, travel, hobbies, etc. These pins can be captioned

and in many cases, link to a website for a recipe, or more details/information for the idea or interest depicted in the image. Registered users of Pinterest can follow other users, whose pins appear on their main Pinterest page in a “pin feed.” Users can choose to re-pin any image of interest onto their own collection of images. Once an account is set up, users can also browse, “like,” and comment on other pins.

The Antiochian Department of Christian Education has a Pinterest account with categories of pinboards that may be of interest to you, such as Lent, Pascha, Pentecost, Fasting, Photos, Quotes, Saints, Learning/Lessons/Education, Crafts, Icons, Feast Days, Articles and Resources, and Great Ideas. You can check out the site through this link. If you are a Pinterest user, you are welcome to follow our boards. If not, joining Pinterest will provide you with a valuable organized resource tool for Orthodoxy!

<http://pinterest.com/aodce/>

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**Eagle River and the Northwest**

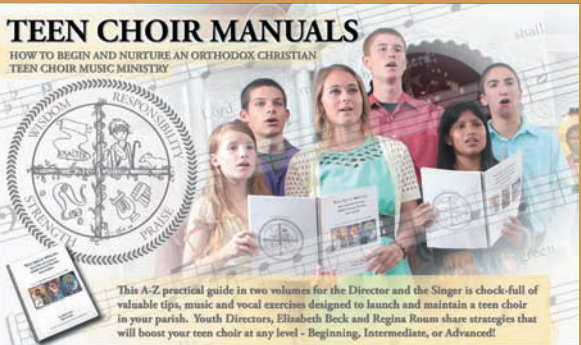
(Carole Buleza, 717.747.5221, [aodce@aol.com](mailto:aodce@aol.com))

DAILY DEVOTIONS

JANUARY 2014

V. Rev. George Alberts

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. COLOSSIANS 2:8-12; LUKE 2:20-21, 40-52               | 15. HEBREWS 10:1-18; MARK 8:30-34 (FAST)              |
| 2. TITUS 1:5-2:1; MARK 12:38-44                         | 16. HEBREWS 10:35-11:7; MARK 9:10-16                  |
| 3. TITUS 1:15-2:10; MARK 13:1-8                         | 17. HEBREWS 13:17-21; LUKE 6:17-23 (FAST)             |
| 4. 1 TIMOTHY 3:14-4:5; MATTHEW 3:1-11                   | 18. EPHESIANS 5:1-8; LUKE 14:1-11                     |
| 5. 1 CORINTHIANS 9:19-27; LUKE 3:1-18 (STRICT FAST)     | 19. COLOSSIANS 3:12-16; LUKE 18:35-43                 |
| 6. TITUS 2:11-14, 3:4-7; MATTHEW 3:13-17 HOLY THEOPHANY | 20. HEBREWS 13:17-21; LUKE 6:17-23                    |
| 7. ACTS 19:1-8; JOHN 1:29-34                            | 21. HEBREWS 12:25-26, 13:22-25; MARK 10:2-12          |
| 8. HEBREWS 5:11-6:8; LUKE 21:5-7 10-11, 20-24 (FAST)    | 22. JAMES 1:1-18; MARK 10:11-16 (FAST)                |
| 9. HEBREWS 7:1-6; LUKE 21:28-33                         | 23. JAMES 1:19-27; MARK 10:17-27                      |
| 10. HEBREWS 7:18-25; LUKE 21:37-22:8 (FAST)             | 24. JAMES 2:1-13; MARK 10:23-32 (FAST)                |
| 11. EPHESIANS 6:10-17; MATTHEW 4:1-11                   | 25. 1 CORINTHIANS 12:7-11; JOHN 10:9-16               |
| 12. EPHESIANS 4:7-13; MATTHEW 4:12-17                   | 26. 1 TIMOTHY 1:15-17; MATTHEW 15:21-28               |
| 13. HEBREWS 8:7-13; MARK 8:11-21                        | 27. JAMES 2:14-26; MARK 10:46-52                      |
| 14. HEBREWS 9:8-10, 15-23; MARK 8:22-26                 | 28. JAMES 3:1-10; MARK 11:11-23                       |
|   | 29. JAMES 3:11-4:6; MARK 11:23-26 (FAST)              |
|   | 30. HEBREWS 13:7-16; MATTHEW 5:14-19                  |
|   | 31. 1 PETER 1:1-2, 10-12, 2:6-10; MARK 9:10-16 (FAST) |



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## Antiochian Village

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with all your mind; and your NEIGHBOR as yourself.



# Communities in Action

Bishop THOMAS Visits  
St. Mary Church,  
Hunt Valley

The fourth and fifth weeks of Great Lent this year were especially blessed and spiritually powerful for Archpriest Fr. Theodoros Daoud, Deacon Gabriel, and the entire St. Mary's family as His Grace Bishop THOMAS's annual pastoral visit, scheduled for the weekend of March 23–25, and The Feast of the Annunciation coincided with these two critical weeks in the Church's journey to Pascha.

The principal liturgical highlights of His Grace's visit were his presiding over the offering of the fourth stasis of the Akathist

the Virgin Mary by the Archangel Gabriel, and individually to appropriate and live out, just as did the Theotokos, the reality of the Lord's redemptive love for humanity demonstrated by the Incarnation.

At the conclusion of the Hierarchical Liturgy His Grace and all present proceeded to the newly constructed road that will serve as the entrance to the site of the new Byzantine-style Church the St. Mary's community is building. Bishop Thomas prayed over and blessed the new road, aptly named "Heaven's Way."

Just prior to the beginning of the Hierarchical Liturgy, Bishop THOMAS ordained Vasili Poulos to the Subdiaconate. Sub-deacon Vasili is a graduate of the St. Stephen's Program, holds a Master of Arts Degree in Applied Orthodox Theology from The University of Balamand's St. John of Damascus Institute of Theology, and is a doctoral candidate in the Doctor of Ministry Program offered in academic partnership between The Antiochian House of Studies and Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

The eventful Sunday of the Feast of the Annunciation ended with a delicious luncheon prepared and served by the St. Mary's Sisterhood of Martha and Mary in honor of Sayidna. Archpriest Fr. Theodoros and the entire St. Mary's community themselves were exceedingly honored by His Grace's visit and grateful for it, and were spiritually renewed and revitalized by his presence and constant en-

couragement. Everyone at St. Mary's looks forward joyfully to its Shepherd's next visit.

Antiochian Heritage  
Foundation Honors  
Dr. George Farha as  
"Person of the Year"

Following the convention in Houston, His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP travelled to Wichita, Kansas, to attend the "Person of the Year" event at St. George Cathedral on Tuesday July 30. Following the celebration of Vespers that evening, he presented to Dr. George J. Farha the specially designed "Person of the Year" plaque signed by himself and Ekonomos Antony Gabriel. Archpriest Father Paul O'Callaghan was Master of Ceremonies at the dinner in honor of Dr. Farha, attended by well over 350 people. Ekonomos Antony Gabriel made a presentation on the Antiochian Heritage Foundation, and spoke of Dr. Farha. Brenda Farha graciously offered her personal expression of gratitude for this honor.

Metropolitan PHILIP spoke eloquently about his many years working with Dr. Farha and the many trips they took together to the Middle East. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, Fawaz El Khoury, who has great respect for Dr. Farha, shared some humorous anecdotes from their travels to the Middle East. His Grace Bishop BASIL, a hospitable host, gave the benediction.

The evening was not only a success but a wonderful family gathering. Bishop BASIL and

Father Paul, through their ministry in Wichita, cultivated a family atmosphere so that no one thought he or she was attending a banquet, but rather a lovely celebration of a wonderful man who contributed so much during his lifetime – in Wichita, in his community, in his parish, and in the Archdiocese.

Dr. George J. Farha is not only a man of great faith, but he unstintingly gives of himself and of his resources to make this world a better place.

We were also fortunate to be have been hosted by Doctor Sam and Jacque Kouri. Nancy Colhonia also hosted the out-of-town guests for a very pleasant dinner.

Looking back at these few days that were spent in Wichita, all of us felt so good that we there after so many years. Sayidna PHILIP was received with a great deal of love by his flock in Wichita and, while he was extremely tired after the convention, I am sure he was invigorated by the response generated by his presence. It really was a special event.

The "Person of the Year" award is bestowed upon those who have given of themselves in an extraordinary way to the Church and the community. The idea originated with a suggestion from Khouria Lynn Gabriel. The first recipient was Helen Thomas, and it was providential that she could receive this affirmation of her long career before her death. The Antiochian Heritage Foundation is very proud to have initiated this award with the

blessing of Metropolitan PHILIP. It has proven to be a valuable way to recognize the many outstanding achievements of people who have distinguished themselves in the service of others.

I hope that this short article gives you, the faithful of this Archdiocese, a better understanding of the purposes and the goals of the Antiochian Heritage Foundation, and that you will support it spiritually, financially and morally.

Holy Cross, Linthicum,  
Celebrates  
20th Anniversary,  
Bishop THOMAS's 25 Years  
Since Ordination

The beautiful services of the Patronal Feast of the Elevation of the Cross on 13, 14, and 15 September were reflected in the lovely fall weather that graced the weekend. The clergy and faithful of Holy Cross Antiochian Church, Linthicum, Maryland, were overjoyed to welcome His Grace Bishop THOMAS, our beloved diocesan bishop, who along with His Grace Bishop MELCHIZEDEK (OCA, Diocese of Pittsburgh) and some two dozen clergy, and many other well-wishers, to our commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the founding of Holy Cross, the celebration of Sayidna THOMAS's twenty-fifth year of ordination, and the ordinations of Lt. Col. Kelvin Gardner (Chaplain, USAF). In total, four services and a luncheon Banquet were held. Also included in the weekend was the annual retreat of the

deacons of the eastern dioceses. The retreat speaker was the renowned scholar, Dr. Christopher Veniamin, Professor of Patristics at St. Tikhon's Seminary.

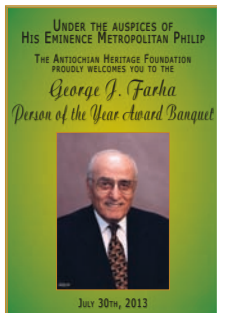
The Vigil of the Feast was served on Friday evening and presided over by Vladyka MELCHIZEDEK, with superb chanting by the parish chanters. Fr. Gregory Mathewes-Green, Pastor of Holy Cross, served the Great Vespers and Fr. Stephen Mathewes, a son of the parish and now Pastor of Christ the Savior Church in Bluff City, Tennessee, served the Matins portion of the Vigil.

The next morning the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy included a new and very moving setting of the Cherubic Hymn, which was sung beautifully by the choir and was composed for the occasion by Fr. John Monto, who is assigned to Holy Cross. Sayidna THOMAS gave a characteristically powerful sermon on the Cross. During the Liturgy, Kelvin Gardner, who took the name "Joseph," was ordained a deacon. Fathers John Mefrige and John Stefero served as his sponsors.

Following the morning Liturgy, a Banquet was held to honor His Grace Bishop THOMAS and Holy Cross parish. Among those receiving gifts were Sayidna THOMAS (a large portrait for the chancery and a very large, many-tiered, amazingly decorated cake), Father Gregory (a beautiful inlaid blessing cross), Deacon Mark O'Dell on his tenth anniversary of ordination, and Colleen Oren on the fifteenth anniversary



Hymn on March 23 and of Great Vespers of the Annunciation on March 24, and his celebrating Sunday Orthros and the Hierarchical Liturgy marking the Feast of the Annunciation. Bishop THOMAS's recurring message to the faithful throughout the Annunciation weekend services was that they must constantly strive to comprehend fully the meaning of the "good news" announced to







(Back row) Archimandrite Pitirim Stenach, His Grace, Bishop THOMAS, Fr. Chris Davis, Sub-deacon Todd  
(Front row) Sub-deacon Albert Deep, Fr. Kevin Long, Fr. John Schmidt, Deacon Seraphim Moslener, Server John Kalcevic

of her service as Choir Director.

Also, in honor of Sayidna THOMAS' Anniversary a check for \$4,000 was presented to Father Anthony Yazge, Antiochian Village Camp Director, for the refurbishing of existing shrines and the construction of new ones at the Camp. (The Bishop THOMAS Fund, established to receive contributions for this purpose, will continue to do so until the end of the year.) His Grace ended the program segment of the Banquet with remarks that inspired all who were present, delivered with His Grace's usual wit and insight. His Grace Bishop MELCHIZEDEK, who had given his blessing at the start of the Banquet, then presided at the Great Vespers which was served at the Banquet Hall. Most of the visiting clergy returned to their home parishes as Saturday drew to a close.

The service of Matins was

served the next morning, followed by the Hierarchical Liturgy at which both Bishops served and Vlado MELCHIZEDEK preached a moving sermon on Christian discipleship. Deacon Joseph (ordained deacon on Saturday) was raised to the Holy Priesthood on Sunday, again accompanied by Fathers Mefrige and Stefero. After the service Bishop MELKISEDEK was presented with an icon of

the Elevation of the Holy Cross to commemorate his visit, and both Father Joseph and Khouria Arlene were given gifts from both Holy Cross parish and Fr. John Mefrige's parish in San Antonio. The latter's parish was the home church of the Gardner family until recently, when Father Joseph (Lt. Col. Kelvin Gardner) was transferred to the Pentagon.

Sayidna THOMAS met with the Sunday School children after the Liturgy and fielded questions ("How many hats do you have?", "What do you do with that stick?"), only once passing off a question to Father Gregory. Several children commented later that they wished Bishop THOMAS could be with them every Sunday!

The many months of prayer and planning that preceded the weekend were very much rewarded with blessings from Our Lord. As we look forward to many more

years of episcopal ministry for His Grace Bishop THOMAS, and commit Holy Cross Church to a future of worship, witness, and service, our hearts are full of joy and gratitude to the one true God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages!

#### St John the Evangelist in Beaver Falls Celebrates 25th Anniversary

St. John the Evangelist in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, celebrated its 25th year on its Feast Day, September 25, with His Grace, Bishop THOMAS, presiding over Great Vespers and a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. The parish, which began as a mission with the blessing of Metropolitan PHILIP on February 28, 1988, was blessed to have area clergy share in the Divine Liturgy with Bishop THOMAS, including Fr. Chris Davis, priest at St. John's, Deacon Seraphim Moslener of St. John's, Fr. Kevin Long of St. Elias Parish in New Castle, Fr. John Schmidt of St. Elias Romanian Parish in Ellwood City, and Archimandrite Pitirim Stenach of St. Elias, Ellwood City. We were challenged by the clergy to live out the tradition of our namesake and to continue the work, as Orthodox are only .3 percent of the population in this country. We were reminded that we are never too old to do God's work. All gave thanks for the women who prepared the hall and food in a beautiful way.

## ORATORICAL FESTIVAL continued from pg 19

thing right? Have I done enough? Have I forgiven my brothers and sisters? Did I make the right choices, leave positive impressions? Was I viewed as a Christian from the outside? This then sends my thoughts circling in confusion. Thankfully, we have been given the tools that we need to figure out the answers to these questions. We have been given Scripture, Confession, the commandments, and never-ending love and strength from God, for as He tells us through St. Paul in Second Corinthians, Chapter 12, Verse 9, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."

A psalm that is particularly dear to me is Psalm 37, Verses 3-6: "Trust in the Lord, and do good. Dwell in the land and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord; And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday." I love this psalm because I occasionally worry about important things, but also small things like whether my shoes go with my outfit. Reading this Psalm helps to calm those worries and allows me to focus more on trusting in Him, rather than allowing my heart and mind to be heavy. In the Gospel of St. Luke (21:34-36), we read: "But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole Earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass and to stand before the Son of Man." We must stand up and be kind, and love one another, as He has loved us. We cannot allow distractions such as peer pressure to get in the way of our salvation. Even though the right thing to do is oftentimes the more difficult thing to do, we must do our very best. We must feed the hungry, minister to the lost, and pray for every soul. And by doing so, we draw closer to each other and to God. This becomes a daily task for us because in the Gospel of St. Mark (13:32-33), we are told, "But of that day and hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is." He discusses how we know that Christ will come back, at any given time. "But know this, that if the master of the

house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore, you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect," says St. Matthew (24: 43-44).

By living out the commandment to love one's neighbor as oneself, as well as the other commandments, we can be better prepared for the time when He does come again. This is so crucial to us, especially as Orthodox Christians, because we are challenged so much every single day of our lives. We have so much pressure placed on us to do everything right, but we must remember that everyone makes mistakes. When we do make mistakes, however, we have hope. Another remarkable tool offered by our Orthodox faith is the sacrament of confession. We can be forgiven when we don't make the correct choices. Gregory the Theologian notes the importance of confession by saying that "all must shed tears, all must be purified, all must ascend." Confession ultimately can save our accursed souls. By participating in the sacrament of confession, we are spiritually, emotionally and mentally calmed, while our hearts and souls are filled with peace. Though at times we focus more on having peace for ourselves, St. Seraphim of Sarov reminds us that it is not only for us individually when he tells us, "Acquire peace, and thousands around you shall be saved."

Thankfully, we have all of these essential means by which we can continue to focus on salvation. As I continue to strive for my personal salvation I will try to keep in mind all of the useful tools and work with them accordingly. By keeping in mind the possible immediacy of the Second Coming, we are motivated to better ourselves. St. Matthew says in Chapter 14 about the second coming, "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels and they will weed out of His Kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear."

Rebecca Parsons, 18 of St. Ignatius Church, Franklin, Tennessee  
*Rebecca was the Judges' Choice from the Diocese of Miami and the South East.*



# SPECIAL OLYMPICS Different Abilities



Many people throughout North America anticipate the annual SOYO Special Olympics Sports Training Camp. Athletes who participate each year count the days until camp begins. Teen SOYO members apply months in advance to be coaches, in hopes that they can serve and commune with the Special Olympics participants just as generations of teens have before them. This year, Teen SOYO raised an estimated \$54,000 on our annual Special Olympics Awareness Day in October 2012 towards the more than \$60,000 needed to run the 2013 Special Olympics Ministry. When Teen SOYO volunteers and coaches arrived at the Antiochian Village, we were greeted with tremendous thanks from Special Olympics Pennsylvania staff and volunteers, who let us know that, thanks to Teen SOYO's hard work and contributions, the Sports Camp would be hosting the largest number of athletes it has ever seen: 184.

We jumped straight into training, as we were told how we as coaches should run our sports programs, what we should do in the case of an emergency, and how we needed to prioritize our responsibilities. There was also time for the new Teen SOYO coaches to listen to stories from the veteran ones. We new coaches received good tips from the experienced coaches, on topics ranging from the importance of keeping the athletes' water bottles filled, to how to react to an athlete having a seizure. We were told never to refer to our athletes as "kids," or even "campers," because most of the participants were older than we were, and some are more talented in athletics than we will ever be, with or without disabilities. The word *disabled* was also discussed during our training.

We were told that the athletes did not have *disabilities*, but rather *different abilities*. Moreover, it was explained to us that each and every person on Earth was blessed by God with these *different abilities*. The athletes, we were told, have a close relation to God; they are the most non-judgmental human beings, and we would not be able to imagine a summer without being at Special Olympics Camp after this. We were warned of how addictive serving others through Special Olympics could be, and we even saw the proof in people who used to be Teen SOYO coaches and who returned this year as Special Olympics volunteers and Sports Clinicians (Heads of Sports Departments).

Everyone was anticipating the arrival of the athletes. We cheered for them as they walked off their buses, but, the moment they were off, the work began. As Teen SOYO coaches, we helped them unload the buses, checked them into the medical center, and walked them down to their cabins. Each Teen SOYO coach was in charge of a cabin of four to six athletes, who all performed at different ability levels, and who all had different reasons for attending our Special Olympics Sports Training Camp. One athlete who has been attending the camp for nearly three decades, Loretta Claiborne, told us that she comes for the athletic training. "I love learning about new sports, and learning new tricks from you folks! I always learn something new here." We thought that highly unlikely, as she is an athlete who has won multiple gold, silver, and bronze medals in the Special Olympics, but why else would she continue to come back? Other athletes have said that they come for the relationships and friendships that they make. One athlete, Janet, confided in me, "I didn't know that y'all would be so lov-

able and lovin'! I want to thank y'all for lovin' me so much!"

As Teen SOYO coaches, we do so much more for the athletes than just teach them sports and cater to their needs for a week. Yes, we do a lot of labor. Many of us woke up extra early each day to take our athletes on a morning walk to fight against obesity, while others woke up early to help dress, bathe, and prepare our athletes' for the day's activities in enough time to be at breakfast by 8:00 a.m. We made sure the athletes took their medications on time, and we helped them with whatever they could not do for themselves physically. We encouraged the athletes however, to be independent, and were amazed by how capable many of them are. In our morning sports rotations, each coach was assigned to a sport in which we were expected to train the athletes. From bocce to flag football, athletes worked hard to keep up with the training we planned for them. Some athletes were excited to participate and nothing could hold them back from playing, such as Andrea, an athlete in Track and Field, who used a walker all the time, but always made it to the finish line. Other athletes were harder to motivate and afraid of failure. That's where we were expected to step in on an emotional level. We had to prove that they were able and capable.

We learned that many of these athletes faced adversity each day outside of our sports camp. Some people saw them only as broken human beings, identifying them by their disabilities. The athletes often receive strange looks on buses, or even worse, expressions of pity. They don't want pity. They want love. Loretta Claiborne calls our camp "God's Mountain," not because it is a program run by Teen SOYO, or because it is held at an Orthodox Church Camp, but because it is the one place where the athletes are treated as equals. They are not recognized by their disabilities, but by their *different abilities*: their athletic abilities; their ability to make people smile or laugh; their compassion; and their ability to love unconditionally. It was because of these different abilities that the work we did throughout the day seemed to be so easy. Personally, I wondered if I was doing enough for them, because all of the work was such a pleasure, but the athletes were sure to express to us how much they appreciated the work we did. Another coach who had similar

sentiments asked an athlete what he thought of the work she did. He answered her, "Josie, you will never be forgotten."

The athletes got to try different sports in the afternoon than in the morning. I was assigned to a group of athletes who functioned at the lowest level at the camp, and therefore required some special attention. For example, when they were scheduled to go swimming, it was a challenge getting them into their bathing suits and into the water safely. They were some of the most inspirational, God-like people there, however. They were also some of the friendliest and funniest. One athlete from this group, Dedra, gave a fellow coach and me some words of wisdom, "Be courteous, be a good sportsman, and party!" Her "different ability" was making others laugh and showing compassion. Another was Father Anthony Yazge's son, Markie, who was always a gentleman and always had a sweet smile on his face. He would help us girls walk through doors, and would help Dedra step over things, since she has trouble walking. Another, Janet, asked for me to take her to the chapel one day. I took her, expecting to teach her about our icons and God, but instead, she taught me through her different abilities about what it means to be a true icon of Christ.

What was it about our sports training program that brought so much good out of everyone? During our Teen SOYO debrief on the last night, we discussed what we learned throughout the week. It was unanimous: we found true love. No one was ever consumed with his or her own needs, but rather, with the needs of others, and because of that, our souls were content. We fulfilled Jesus's commandment to love our neighbors as ourselves. We recognized and rejoiced in each other's different abilities. We showed the athletes our humanity, and reminded them of their own humanity. By doing this, we experienced Heaven on Earth. By the end of the week, I understood why Loretta called our SOYO Special Olympics Sports Training Program "God's Mountain." All of us Teen SOYO coaches were so sad to say goodbye to our athletes, and we can't wait to return again next year. Until then, I'm going to do my best to create God's Mountain everywhere I go.

Leilah A. Rodriguez-Anter  
SOYO President, Diocese of Los Angeles and the West  
2013 SOYO/SOPA Special Olympics Coach

Donations to make the 2014 SOYO/SOPA Special Olympics Sports Camp possible may be made through your local Antiochian Parish on Sunday October 20, 2013. Donations may also be made online at <http://www.teensoyo.org/Pages/Donate.aspx> after you click on "donate" please fill in all the requested information and specify "SOAD" in the "additional information" box. Thank you for your generosity.



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