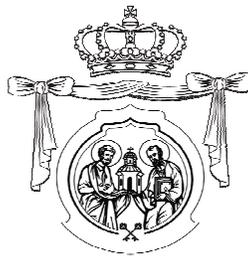


His Eminence
The Most Reverend
Metropolitan JOSEPH



Archbishop of New York and
Metropolitan of
All North America

**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AMERICA**

January 18, 2018

Beloved in Christ,

Greetings and blessings to you in the Name of Our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ!

For many decades in the life of our Archdiocese, we have celebrated Antiochian Women's Month every March. I have always found this month to be very important during my many years of ministry, and I will continue to support it enthusiastically during my tenure as the Metropolitan – but perhaps not for the reasons many may wrongly assume.

Let me emphatically state that the purpose of this month is not meant to *allow* the women of our parishes to participate in the life of the Church one month out of the year. Women are an integral and vital part of the ministry of the Church year round!

We set aside this month of March to honor the unique ministry of the women of our Archdiocese. Often, the ministry of women is done quietly and can easily be taken for granted. There is the hard work of our mothers, grandmothers, and godmothers in transmitting the Faith to our children – how often do we see and appreciate it? There are the various initiatives of the Antiochian Women. We might notice the help a bake sale provides our budgets, but do we take notice of their work in inspiring vocations, supporting seminarian families, endowing funds for orphanages around the world, or raising needed funding for the Antiochian Village? Do we honor the women who serve on our parish councils, direct our choirs, or lead our efforts in Christian education?

In our Orthodox iconographic tradition, the Theotokos is always portrayed pointing to her Son. Although her assent to bearing the Son and Word of God in her womb brought salvation to the world, she always humbly directs our gaze to Christ. This beautiful image so aptly describes the ministry of our Antiochian Women, who work so tirelessly in service to Our Lord and Savior. As the Metropolitan of this God-protected Archdiocese, I honor our Antiochian Women because their Christ-like service – in ways similar to their patroness, the Theotokos – will in turn point all of us to Christ.

I offer my heartfelt gratitude to all of the Antiochian Women for their selfless ministry. I ask that all of us work together to support their initiatives and never take them for granted. Praying that we all enter into the time of the Great Fast with a spirit of love, humility, and service, I remain,

Yours in the service of Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Metropolitan Joseph". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

+JOSEPH

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America

"The disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11: 26)

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