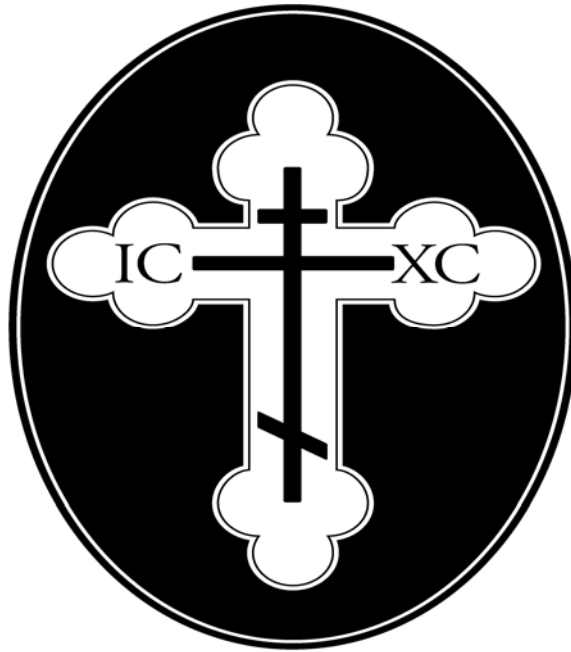


**ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX  
ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA  
DIOCESE OF LOS ANGELES AND THE WEST**

**PARISH INFORMATION PAMPHLET REGARDING  
PARISH LIFE CONFERENCES  
AND  
FALL GATHERINGS WITH DIOCESAN HIERARCH**



**PREPARED WITH THE BLESSINGS OF METROPOLITAN JOSEPH**

**BY THE**

**CONFERENCE PLANNING AND COORDINATION COMMITTEE**

## **ENDORSEMENT AND COMMENTS METROPOLITAN JOSEPH**

***Beloved in Christ: It is with great joy that I endorse this Parish Information Pamphlet about the Parish Life Conferences and the Fall Gatherings. The contents of this pamphlet are intended to help our clergy and faithful understand the importance of these events in the life of our Diocese. This Pamphlet is hereby approved for use in this Diocese, and each pastor is expected to distribute copies of this Pamphlet to every family in the parishes.***

***Yours in Christ,***

**+ J O S E P H**

***Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan of all North America***

### **PURPOSE OF THIS PAMPHLET**

The purpose of this pamphlet is to provide detailed information about the importance of the Parish Life Conferences (hereinafter "PLC") and the Fall Gatherings with Diocesan Hierarchy (hereinafter "FG"), including all related activities, to the Pastors, Assigned and Attached Clergy (hereinafter "Clergy") and all of the faithful Orthodox Christians (hereinafter "Laity") in the Diocese of Los Angeles and the West (hereinafter "Diocese").

### **DISTRIBUTION OF THIS PAMPHLET**

This Pamphlet is being distributed to all Clergy and Laity in the Diocese through the efforts of each of the parishes in this Diocese (hereinafter "Parish or Parishes").

### **BACKGROUND AND HISTORY OF THE PLCs**

Essential to the growth of the Parishes in our Archdiocese was the establishment of Senior SOYO, the Syrian Orthodox Youth Organization in the late 1940's. (The name SOYO was changed to the Society of Orthodox Youth Organizations in the 1970's). The purpose of this organization was to develop lay leadership in working with our Clergy, focusing on the growth of the individual Parishes in numbers and in spirituality. Senior SOYO members were active in establishing and participating in our church schools, choirs, establishing youth programs and activities, mentoring to our teens and assisting with the establishment of new missions.

By 1954 Senior SOYO had formed a regional organization of the Senior SOYO Chapters of the Western Region Parishes. Regional Senior SOYO Chapters in the West began meeting annually at Senior SOYO Conventions as had their counterparts in the six other Archdiocese Regions. As the number of Parishes in the West grew, so did the emphasis of the role that Senior SOYO would play in the growth of the Church. In addition, representatives from the Western Region Senior SOYO, along with delegates from the other Regions would meet annually at the Archdiocese Convention.

In the mid-1970's the Senior SOYO Conventions across the Archdiocese took on a new look and a new emphasis. The idea of a Parish Life Conference with a variety of activities in which the entire family could participate took hold and came into being. The Senior SOYO Delegates and members would continue to meet at these Parish Life Conferences. Further, the regional delegates and members of the Teen SOYO and the newly formed Antiochian Orthodox Christian Women of North America (1975) began meeting at the PLCs as well. In 1981 regional delegates and members of the newly formed Western Region Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch began meeting at these PLCs as well. During this transitional period of the mid-1970's emphasis on activities for our youth also flourished at these PLCs. It was during this time that the Bible Bowl, Oratorical Contest and the Creative Arts, Writing, Poetry and Photography Festivals took on a new importance at the PLCs.

Senior SOYO continued to play a major role in the planning of PLCs in our Diocese until the early 1990's when it was replaced by the Fellowship of St. John the Divine. By this time, Junior SOYO had become Teen SOYO. The Fellowship continued this role until 2003 when the Conference Planning and Coordinating Committee (CPCC) was established. Reporting directly to the Diocesan Hierarchy, the CPCC has been charged with the responsibility of selecting the venue and assisting the host Parish with the planning and execution of this annual event. As the PLCs continue to play a major role in the life of the Church, the participation of our youth, young adults, parents and families is reaching new plateaus.

The success of the Parish Life Conferences cannot be measured by the numbers in attendance or by the activities alone. To understand the true impact of these Conferences we must look at the spiritual growth we have experienced and the bonds of friendship that have been made and will continue to be made with our Orthodox brothers and sisters throughout the Diocese. We must look at the renewed spirit demonstrated by our youth, young adults and families in their determination to work for the Church as leaders and become responsible Christians. What we have learned about ourselves and the Church and what we have taken back to our parishes from these PLCs to assist in the fostering of Orthodoxy and fellowship has been priceless.

### **WHO SHOULD ATTEND THE PLCs?**

**The PLC is for every member of the Diocese.** The PLC of our Diocese is typically held during the first week of July from Wednesday through Sunday, with Clergy and Clergy Wives Meetings and Luncheon with the Diocesan Hierarchy held on Wednesday and/or Thursday; Laity Events commence on Thursday. The PLC is the annual gathering of the Diocese with our Diocesan Hierarchy, to worship together; to conduct the business of the Diocese; to see old friends and make new friends; and, to interact with each other within our common Orthodox Faith. The PLC consists of activities for all walks of life; from youth activities (children, teens and young adults), to organizational meetings for Teen SOYO (teens' organization), Antiochian Women (women's organization), Fellowship of St. John the Divine (young adults' organization), and The Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch (Archdiocese philanthropic organization), to homilies and teachings on our Orthodox Faith, social events and daily services where we all gather as a Diocesan family to celebrate the Divine Liturgy around the Lord's Table. The PLC provides something for everyone.

## **Clergy Attendances and Participation in the PLC**

The Archdiocese and this Diocese have mandated the following:

All Pastors should be at the PLC for the Clergy Meeting with the Diocesan Hierarch on Wednesday; attend and participate in the PLC Events, including the Clergy/Clergy Wives Luncheon with the Diocesan Hierarch and the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch Dinner; attend all of the services; and, remain at the PLC through Sunday Hierarchical Liturgy. However, some Pastors may need to return to the Parishes earlier if there is no other priest to serve Divine Liturgy in their place.

Further, all Pastors should refrain from scheduling weddings, un-crownings, churchings, baptisms or parish social/fundraiser events during the dates of the PLC, including the weekend of the PLC.

All Assigned and Attached Clergy who attend the PLC are expected to attend all of the services and should try their best to purchase a Ticket Book and other event tickets and to remain at the PLC for the maximum time possible.

## **Laity Attendance and Participation at the PLC**

The Archdiocese and this Diocese encourage the Laity to attend the PLC's and ask them to do their best to support the following:

All Laity should encourage their children, including young adults, to attend and participate in the Creative Festivals (Arts, Writing, Poetry and Photography Contests), Oratorical Contest, Bible Bowl Contest and PLC Events

All Laity should participate in the appropriate Diocesan Organizational Meetings.

All Laity should acquire a PLC Ticket Book or, at a minimum, some of the PLC Event Tickets.

All Laity are encouraged to place an entry in the PLC Souvenir Journal.

## **WHAT ARE THE MANDATORY REGISTRATION, BADGE AND SECURITY REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PLCs?**

Each and every person present at the PLC, for any reason or at any event, other than the Liturgical Services, must be registered; He/She must receive a PLC Badge and must wear their PLC Badge during the entire PLC.

Children 12 and under are not charged a Registration Fee, but they must also be registered, and receive and wear their PLC Badge.

All persons, Clergy and Laity, over the age of 12 years must be Registered and must receive and wear their PLC Badge.

All persons, Clergy and Laity, over the age of 12 years, that do not acquire a Ticket Book or a Ticket for an individual ticketed event, will be charged a Processing Fee.

All persons under the age of 18 must have completed and delivered to the Registration Committee a signed Parent Consent Form, regardless if the parent, parents or guardian are present at the PLC or not.

All Teens must have completed and delivered to the Registration Committee a signed Teen Code of Conduct Form, regardless if the parent, parents or guardian are present at the PLC or not.

Registration Badges will not be issued until a person has filled out the Registration Form, the Parent Consent Form and Teen Code of Conduct Form (if applicable) and paid for their attendance at the PLC.

The PLC Security Team will be at the doors to all events to assure that everyone entering the room is wearing a PLC Badge. The Security Team's authority must be respected. There can be no sharing or exchanging of PLC Badges by attendees. This is an unacceptable action, especially by Christians at a Church Event. Anyone found to share or exchange PLC Badges will be asked to leave the PLC and they will not be granted any refunds for unused ticketed events.

### **WHEN AND HOW DO I REGISTER FOR THE PLCs**

On-Line Registration is provided for Early-Bird Registrations commencing in January. All who pre-register must still check in and pick up their PLC Badge and other information. It is best to plan to **arrive at Registration 30 minutes prior** to your first event/meeting to allow ample time to work your way through the Registration Lines and still attend your event/meeting on time.

On-Site Registration is provided commencing on the first day of the PLC. Those who arrive at the PLC without previously registering, should allow themselves **at least one hour**, prior to the first event/meeting they are going to attend in order to provide sufficient time to registered for the PLC and receive their Badge and PLC Information Package. On-Site Registration is based on a first-come, first-served basis and we do not want anyone to be disappointed because they did not properly plan their schedule to allow for registration prior to entering the event/meeting.

### **WHO SHOULD PROMOTE ATTENDANCE AT THE PLCs AND PARTICIPATION IN THE DIOCESAN ORGANIZATIONAL MEETINGS AT THE PLCs?**

It is the responsibility of each Parish within the Diocese to promote the PLC to their parishioners. This can be accomplished through their Sunday bulletin announcements; Pastors speaking on the subject of the PLC following the Divine Liturgy; sending and forwarding (from the PLC Host Parish) blast emails to parishioners; allowing the Host PLC Committee to come and speak on the PLC at the end of Divine Liturgy and/or during coffee hour to pre-register parishioners after Church. In cases where the Parishes are located a great distance from the Host PLC Parish and it is not practical for the Host PLC Committee to travel to all Parishes, the remote Parishes should assign a member of their Parish to speak on and promote the PLC within their Parish. A joint effort between both the Pastor and the Parish Council of each Parish of this Diocese is crucial for the success of the PLC.

All of these efforts should be focused on maximizing attendance at the PLC; encouraging participation at the Diocesan Organizational Meetings; obtaining Entries for the PLC Souvenir Journal; and, obtaining participation in the Creative Festivals, Bible Bowl and Oratorical Contests.

### **WHAT IS THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT THE PLC AND WHO SHOULD ATTEND?**

The General Assembly at the PLC is the one place where everyone can learn what is going on throughout all of the Diocesan Organizations as each of the Organizational Presidents makes a presentation on their respective organization, including Antiochian Women, Teen SOYO, Fellowship of St. John the Divine and the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch. Further, the Chair of the CPCC will introduce the ensuing PLCs and their hosting parishes. Sometimes there is a guest speaker. The General Assembly is also blessed with a speech by the Diocesan Hierarch. The General Assembly, generally held on Friday Afternoon, should be attended by all Clergy and Laity present at the PLC.

### **WHAT ARE THE PLC CREATIVE FESTIVALS AND WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE?**

Creative Festivals is an Archdiocesan and Diocesan program that allows the children and teens from each parish to prepare and submit entries in the categories of Art, Photography, Poetry and Writing based on an Annual Theme, chosen by the Archdiocese. This allows our youth to express their Orthodox Faith and participate in the life of the Diocese. Whether or not Church School exists in a parish within the Diocese, each child from pre-school through high school should submit an entry in at least one of the four categories of the Creative Festivals.

The Judges Choice of each category and each grade level are displayed at the PLC for viewing by all attendees. Further, at the Awards Brunch, held on Sunday following the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy, each winner is recognized and presented with an award by our Hierarch. Awards for winners not present at the Awards Brunch will be sent to the Parishes.

The entries for the Creative Festivals are prepared at the local Parishes under the scheduling and supervision of the Church School Superintendent or another individual appointed by the Pastor. For more information, rules and topics for the Creative Festivals visit the Website at [www.antiochian.org/festivals/cf](http://www.antiochian.org/festivals/cf).

### **WHAT IS THE PLC ORATORICAL CONTEST, WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE AND WHO SHOULD ATTEND THE CONTEST?**

The Oratorical Festival is an Archdiocese and Diocese program for the Teens to give an oration in front of our Diocesan Hierarch, Clergy and Laity on the Annual PLC Theme. This is one of the high points of the PLC. It provides an important venue for all of us to see the future of the Church in our young people and how they articulate the Annual Theme in an oration. Participation in the Oratorical Festival will assist our teens as they prepare for college and their own careers, giving them experience in delivering a formal oration on a given subject while allowing them to express their Orthodox Faith.

The Oratorical Contest is divided into two categories Juniors (ages 13-15) and Seniors (ages 16-19). The judges select the top contestant in each of the two categories based on a predetermined judging and scoring sheet, as established by the Archdiocese Department of Christian Education.

At the Awards Brunch, held on Sunday following the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy, Judges Choices and all participants are recognized and presented with an award by our Diocesan Hierarch. Awards for Judges Choices not present at the Awards Brunch will be sent to the Parishes. Additionally, the CPCC provides the Senior Judges Choice with a stipend to assist in his/her travel to compete on the Archdiocesan level to against the Senior Judges Choices from the other dioceses for a chance to be named the Judges Choice for the Archdiocese. All participants in the Archdiocese level Oratorical Festival receives a cash scholarship. This National Oratorical Festival takes place at the Archdiocese Bi-Annual Convention and in the alternate year, at the Antiochian Village in late July.

The Oratorical Contest is scheduled to take place late morning on Saturday, following the Divine Liturgy at the PLC and should be attended by everyone present at the PLC. For more information, rules and topics for the Oratorical Contest visit the Website at [www.antiochian.org/festivals/oratorical](http://www.antiochian.org/festivals/oratorical).

### **WHAT IS THE PLC BIBLE BOWL CONTEST, WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE AND WHO SHOULD ATTEND THE CONTEST?**

The Bible Bowl is an Archdiocese and Diocese program for the Teens and Adults to be quizzed on and demonstrate their knowledge of a selected book of the Bible each year. Participation in the Bible Bowl allows the participants to demonstrate their knowledge of the Bible as they are asked questions by a proctor for a two hour period in front of our Diocesan Hierarch, Clergy and Laity. This is another high point of the PLC demonstrating the diligent study of our parish teams..

Each Bible Bowl Team is comprised of three individuals (with additional substitutes if desired) and is divided in to three divisions: Juniors (Ages 13-15), Seniors (Ages 16-19) and Adults (20 and over). Each Parish is allowed to have one team in each of the three divisions, for a total of three teams from the Parish. The Bible Bowl is scored by the Scorekeepers. Judges are selected to ascertain the exact meaning/wording of the Bible with regards to each question, as necessary.

At the Awards Brunch, held on Sunday following the Hierarchal Divine Liturgy, each Judges Choice Team is recognized and presented with an award by our Diocesan Hierarch. Awards for Judges Choice Team Members not present at the Awards Brunch will be sent to the parishes. Additionally, the CPCC provides the Judges Choice Senior Team with a stipend to assist in their travel to compete on the Archdiocesan level against the Senior Team Winners from the other dioceses for a chance to be named the top Bible Bowl Team in the Archdiocese. This Archdiocesan competition takes place at the Archdiocese Bi-Annual Convention and in the alternate year, at the Antiochian Village in late July.

The Bible Bowl is scheduled on Saturday Evening following dinner at the PLC and should be attended by all present at the PLC. For more information, rules and topics for the Bible Bowl Contest visit the Website at [www.antiochian.org/festivals/biblebowl](http://www.antiochian.org/festivals/biblebowl)

## **THE FALL GATHERINGS WITH DIOCESAN HIERARCH**

The history of FG (originally called the Fall Delegates Meeting) dates back to the early days of Senior SOYO when delegates of Senior SOYO would meet in the Spring and the Fall. With the advent of the PLCs, the Spring and Fall Delegates meetings incorporated meetings of the Teen SOYO and the Antiochian Women. In the late 1980's the Spring Delegates Meeting was eliminated. And, in the early 2000's, the Fall Delegates Meeting was changed to the Fall Gathering as the meeting had grown to include many attendees besides SOYO delegates.

The FG is held annually, generally on the second weekend in October. The weekend commences on Friday with a hospitality/welcome night. Saturday features the meetings of the Diocese Organizations of Teen SOYO, the Fellowship of St. John the Divine and the Antiochian Women. A social event on Saturday night and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy on Sunday complete the activities of the weekend. In addition there is a Teen SOYO outreach activity held on Saturday afternoon. The weekend is not just limited to the delegates but includes all the members of the Diocese Organizations as well as anyone interested in attending. The weekend is hosted by Parishes in our Diocese on a rotating basis. Information on this event can be found on the Diocesan Website.

## **WHO SHOULD ATTEND THE FGs**

The FGs are for every member of the Clergy and Laity of this Diocese, and is not exclusively for delegates of the organizations. Accordingly, parish Laity should be encouraged to attend this event, especially when the venue is close to one's parish or residence. Unlike the PLCs, the only financial cost for attending this event is a nominal registration fee which has included a light breakfast on Saturday and lunch on Saturday. Generally the host parish will provide an informal dinner event or charge a nominal fee for the meal. Those traveling from outside the area of the host parish may opt to stay with friends or at the hotel where favorable rates have been negotiated by the host parish.