



# SS. PETER AND PAUL ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHURCH

## ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF NORTH AMERICA

"All Things Are Possible to Him Who Believes" (Mark 9:23)

**Metropolitan SABA**  
Primate of the Antiochian  
Archdiocese

### PRIEST

Rev. Fr Luke Toumi  
frluke@peterpaulpotomac.org  
(301) 765-3400 office  
(610) 844-2583 cell

### DEACONS

Dn. Christian Manasseh  
DnChristian@peterpaulpotomac.org  
Dn. Chris Abdelahad  
Chris@peterpaulpotomac.org

### COUNCIL

#### Chairperson

Ken Bailey  
Vice Chairperson

Jamil Hermes

#### Treasurer

Scott George

#### Secretary

Ulisses Santamaria

#### Members

Ron Cook  
Elizabeth El-Hage  
Michael El-Hage  
Wissam El Hage  
Abraham Fannoney  
Joe Gavin  
Amjad Khalil  
Richard Mahan  
Vanessa Mourad  
Nicholas Nahas  
Alexa Tsintolas  
Maria Zacharias

### CHURCH SECRETARY

Nidale El Achkar  
office@peterpaulpotomac.org  
(301) 765-3400 ext. 0  
WhatsApp 301-755-0320

### GIFT SHOP

Antiochian Women

## SUNDAY, APRIL 27TH, 2025

### NEW SUNDAY OR ANTI-PASCHA SUNDAY OF THOMAS THE APOSTLE, CALLED "THE TWIN"

HIEROMARTYR SIMEON, BISHOP OF JERUSALEM AND  
THE KINSMAN OF THE LORD; JOHN THE CONFESSOR,  
ABBOT OF THE MONASTERY OF THE CHASTE

**\*\*Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom\*\***

The body can neither love nor hate. A body cannot love a body. The ability to love belongs to the soul. When the soul loves the body, it is not love, but desire, passion. When the soul loves the soul not in God, it is either rapture or pity. When the soul in God loves the soul, regardless of appearance (beauty, ugliness), this is love. And in love there is life.

- St. Nikolai Velimirovich

**Great Vespers:** Saturday 6:00 pm  
*Check the Calendar*  
*for possible cancellation or changes*  
**Matins:** Sundays 9:20am  
**Divine Liturgy:** Sundays 10:30am  
**Confessions:** By appointment

### CHOIR DIRECTOR

Kristopher Reese  
choir@peterpaulpotomac.org

### ASSISTANT CHOIR DIRECTORS

Marie Hyder  
Mark Buchko

### BYZANTINE CHOIR

Led by Amjad Khalil

### USHERS

Jerry Audi  
Michael El Araj  
Abe Fannoney  
Sam Khalil  
Steve Simon

### MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Sam Khalil

### ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

Svitlana Sweat

### CHURCH SCHOOL

#### Directors

Samia Zolnerowich  
Jennifer Montgomery  
SundaySchool@peterpaulpotomac.org

### TEEN SOYO

### & YOUNG ADULTS

#### Advisors:

Dn. Chris Abdelahad  
Tia Saah  
Lina Saah

**President:** Kiernan El-Hage

**Vice President:** Samuel Griffin

**Secretary:** George Manasseh

**Treasurer:** Dimy Kehdy

**Social Media:** George Boyle

### KOGOK HALL RENTAL

#### Manager

George Rados

#### Sales Coordinator

Denise Bolus  
Nidale El Achkar

### CHARITIES COORDINATOR

Paula Massouh

### ORDER OF ST. IGNATIUS

Jumana Misleh

We welcome all our guests and visitors worshipping with us at the Divine Liturgy.  
Please let our ushers know that you are visiting with us today. We would love to stay in touch!  
Please know that Holy Communion is offered to Orthodox Christians, *after* preparing themselves through prayers, fasting, & confession.  
Non-Orthodox visitors are welcome to receive blessed bread at the end of the Divine Liturgy & share food with us at coffee hour.

## **THE SYNAXARION**

On April 27 in the Holy Orthodox Church, we commemorate Hieromartyr Simeon, Bishop of Jerusalem and the kinsman of the Lord; and John the Confessor, Abbot of the Monastery of the Chaste.

On this day, the second Sunday of Pascha, we inaugurate the celebration of Christ's Resurrection, and the occasion whereon the Holy Apostle Thomas touched the Savior's side.

### ***Verses***

*If the seals of the Virgin's womb and of the grave did not hinder Thee,  
How could the seals of the doors hinder Thy might, O Savior?*

This day is called New Sunday, Thomas Sunday or Anti-Pascha. The last term means "in place of Pascha" because Thomas did not immediately hear of Christ's Resurrection and disbelieved it. Starting with this day, the Church dedicates Sunday to the celebration of the Resurrection.

As the Disciples were gathered on Pascha, Jesus entered and greeted them in His usual way, saying, "Peace be unto you." Then He showed them His hands, feet and side. Jesus ate with His Disciples and reassured them of His Resurrection. However, Thomas was not with them at that time, and insisted upon seeing the Savior's wounds—the print of the nails in His hands and feet, and the spear in His side—before he would believe that Jesus was risen. Eight days later, Christ appeared again to the Disciples, this time with Thomas present. The Master told Thomas to see and feel His wounds. Then Thomas immediately cried out, "My Lord and my God!" But Jesus tells His Disciples, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." This event also clearly illustrates the human and divine Natures of Christ.

### **APOLYTIKION FOR THOMAS SUNDAY IN TONE SEVEN**

While the tomb was sealed, Thou didst shine forth from it, O Life. While the doors were closed, Thou didst come in to Thy Disciples, O Christ God, Resurrection of all, renewing in us through them an upright spirit, according to the greatness of Thy mercy.

### **THE KONTAKION OF PASCHA IN TONE EIGHT**

Though Thou didst descend into the grave, O Immortal One, yet didst Thou destroy the power of Hades, and didst arise as victor, O Christ God, calling to the myrrh-bearing women, Rejoice, and giving peace unto Thine Apostles, O Thou Who dost grant resurrection to the fallen.

For the Health of these Parishioners

Samantha Carter	Joyce & Terri	Christo & Mary Christakis
Suad Shammass	Victor & Family	Hanneh Daoud
Mike & Dorothy Marge	Ibrahim Saah	Vilma Bellone
Michael Shihadi	Joanna Khoury	Sherrie Zachariah & family
Nadim Zarour	Michael Amouri	Nour & Anastasia
Qustandi & Nahida Kaibni	Mary Sahouri & Family	Asma Ayoub
Juliana, Metody & family	Yousef & Ghada	Elias, Taylor & Rami
Isabel Threddeh	Ghassan & Zakieh Jweied	Margo, Sam & Family
Shakeh Kerjilian & Family	Sylvia & Selma Habib	Barbara Zamer & Family
Frank & Barbara Ellis	Paul Misleh	Edward & Eleanor Husson
Brian, Caroline & Family	Fadia, Rich & family	Elizabeth Albinger & family
Steve, Jennifer & Family	Allison Ayoub	Abdallah, Christiane & family

DEPARTED

David Newkirk  
All Deceased Veterans

REMOVAL OF CROWNS

Gail & Ken Bailey

Special Prayer this Week for

Elizabeth Carroll	Lilly Cook	Milena Paskaleva & Family
Tommy Zamer Jr.	Antoinette Najmeh	Gino Michaels & Family
John & Bette Adam	Leslie Courtright	Everett & Tammy Alvarez & Family
Gail & Ken Bailey & family		All Active Military & Retired Veterans

**Coffee Hour** is offered in honor of **Everett Alvarez** for his lifetime service and sacrifice and in recognition of recent honors.

**Holy Bread** is offered for the health of **Everett & Tammy Alvarez & Family** and in memory of **deceased Family Members**.

If you want to offer Holy Bread or host Coffee Hour please use the QR Codes on the side to do so.

LITURGICAL TEXTS

Scan QR Code  
To Follow Along  
the Service



Coffee Hour  
Available Dates

June 15	July 20
June 22	July 27
July 6	August 3

Host Coffee Hour

Offer Holy Bread



## Coming Up @ Ss. Peter & Paul

Today, April 27, **Honoring Everett Alvarez Jr. Commander, US Nave, (RET)**, after the Divine Liturgy

August 11 - 15, **Summer Bible Camp for ages 4 to High School Graduates**

## Graduates Recognition

Congratulations for your recent achievement!

We want to celebrate you, so please scan the QR Code to fill out the form!



### Summer Bible Camp

AGES 4 - High School Graduates

August 11 - August 15  
9:30 AM - 4:30 PM

**Deadline for  
Registration  
May 31**



### Ss. Peter & Paul WhatsApp Community

Join a Variety of Chat Groups  
And Receive Parish Announcements

Scan  
QR Code to Join



### St. Raphael's Table First Saturday of the Month

Preparing and distributing meals and toiletries to our neighbors in need.

**To Participate  
use this QR code**



**Amazon Wishlist**  
for Toiletry Bags  
is available here.



### March & April Charity Drive

#### Fundraiser for Church Lenten Meal Packing

Thank you to everyone who participated in our annual Lenten community service project on Sunday, March 30.

Thanks to your efforts, Ss. Peter and Paul was able to successfully prepare 25,000 meals for area families in need, once again.

**If you weren't able to participate and/or contribute to  
the March and April Drive - there's still time!**

For Donations:

- Go to "make a donation" from the stewardship page on the Church's website and select "Charity Drive".
- Write a check payable to Ss. Peter and Paul with "2025 Lenten Meal Packing Fundraiser" in the memo line.
- Scan the QR Code.



### Antiochian Women Luncheon & Fashion Show

May 10, 2025 (11:30 AM - 2:30 PM)

#### Westwood Country Club

800 Maple Avenue E, Vienna, VA

\$75 Ticket



Got a Question about  
**Orthodox Christianity**  
or Our Faith & Worship

Join Us every Sunday  
**in the social hall**  
*after the Divine Liturgy  
for a Catechism Class*

### April Charity Drive

#### Fundraiser for Church Lenten Meal Packing

Thank You to all who helped pack 25,000 meals for area families in need last week. We need to raise \$10,300 to cover the cost of these meals.

We know that with everyone working together, we can meet our ambitious target!

*Scan the QR Code For Online Donations*



For online donations,  
use **your phone's  
camera** to scan this  
code and follow the  
link to our secure  
donation portal.



## **THE EPISTLE**

*Great is our Lord, and great is His strength. Praise ye the Lord, for the Lord is good.*

### **The reading from the Acts of the Apostles. (5:12-20)**

In those days, many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles; and they were all with one accord in Solomon's porch. None of the rest dared to join them, but the people magnified them. And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women, so that they even carried out the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and pallets, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the cities around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed. But the chief priest rose up and all who were with him, that is, the sect of the Sadducees, and filled with jealousy they laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out and said: "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life."

## **THE GOSPEL**

### **The reading from the Holy Gospel according to St. John. (20:19-31)**

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be to you." When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be to you. As the Father has sent me, even so I send you." And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." Now Thomas, one of the twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in His side, I will not believe." Eight days later, His disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. The doors were shut, but Jesus came and stood among them, and said, "Peace be to you." Then He said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see My hands; and put out your hand, and place it in My side; do not be faithless, but believing." Thomas answered Him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Thomas, you have believed because you have seen Me. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe." Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His Name.

# The Chalcedonian and Non-Chalcedonian Churches: An Objective Presentation

*By His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)*

In this article, I address a sensitive issue that has been raised in various circles within our Archdiocese. I have received several questions during my pastoral visits or via email regarding the Oriental Orthodox churches (non-Chalcedonian), in general, and the Coptic Church, in particular. Many people are confused due to the lack of accurate and official information on the one hand, and the abundance of conflicting information now available on the internet through its various platforms on the other hand. The digital platforms have opened the possibility for everyone to present their own views as though they were the official church position.

I aim to offer a quick but accurate overview of what happened in the fifth century, leading up to the current reality, to provide accurate information for the faithful.

First, I tell my spiritual children that speaking about theology requires not only goodwill but also scientific and objective theological knowledge, as well as the ability to express oneself accurately, with precision in the use of terms and expressions. Additionally, humility is essential, enabling the speaker to be open to the Holy Spirit for inspiration in every word spoken. The speaker should not monopolize the Church's stance as his own, whether he is a cleric, monk, layperson, or even a theologian. This approach prevents him from assuming the role of God by distributing entry tickets to the Kingdom of Heaven, thus assuming a divine role. May God protect us from such a slip.

\*\*\*\*

The Fourth Ecumenical Council convened in the city of Chalcedon (in modern-day Turkey) in 451 A.D. to resolve the issue of the Person of Christ, which at that time was a source of controversy, confusion, and misguided interpretations. This council defined the official Christian doctrine that Christ is a person (hypostasis) with the fullness of both divine and human natures. In simpler terms, He is one person: fully God and fully human.

The council's statement of faith included the following: "We confess the one and same Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, the same perfect in divinity, and perfect in humanity, truly God and truly man, of rational soul and body, consubstantial with the Father regarding His divinity, and consubstantial with us regarding His humanity, like us in all respects except for sin...

"One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures which undergo no confusion, no change, no division, no separation; at no point was the difference between the natures taken away through the union, but rather the property of both natures is preserved and comes together into a single person and a single subsistent being; He is not parted or divided into two persons, but the one and the same only-begotten Son, God, Word, Lord Jesus Christ, just as the prophets taught from the beginning about Him, and as the Lord Jesus Christ Himself instructed us, and as the Creed of the Fathers handed it down to us."

\*\*\*\*

The churches now referred to as the Oriental Orthodox (Coptic, Syriac, Ethiopian, and Armenian) refused to accept the Fourth Ecumenical Council, also known as the Chalcedonian Council, leading to what is considered the first schism in the Christian world. These churches rejected the teaching of two natures in Christ. They adhere to the belief in one incarnate nature. The Copts accept "one nature from two," but reject the formulation of one person (hypostasis) in two natures.

The Holy Fathers distinguished between the terms hypostasis (person) and physis (nature). The Chalcedonian Fathers intentionally made this distinction to unify how these terms are used Christologically and Triadologically, that is, to have one unified dogmatic terminology. When the Orthodox say, together with the council, that Christ is one person in two natures, they mean one person with a fully divine nature and a fully human nature. (This expression is harmonious with the Church's faith that the Holy Trinity is in three persons and one nature.)

The non-Chalcedonians, however, interpret the word "nature" to mean both "person" and "nature" at the same time,

insisting on "one nature (physis) from two natures (physis). They use "nature" twice, each time meaning something different. The first time "nature" is mentioned in this phrase (one nature), the intention is to say, "one person," while the second time it is mentioned (from two natures), here the meaning is actually "nature," that is to say, a full divine nature and a full human nature. This is why they have been called Monophysites (believers in one nature), a term they reject today, but they affirm both the full divinity and full humanity of Christ.

Although early non-Chalcedonian theologians, such as Severus of Antioch, wrote in Greek, some hold the view that these churches broke away from the Greek-speaking world after the fall of the Byzantine Empire in the East.

A common view holds that the difference in terminology between the Greek language, which carries a rich philosophical heritage, and the local languages of the time played a significant role in this misunderstanding. Additionally, many scholars believe that there were other factors behind the schism, including some with a nationalistic dimension, which also contributed to this doctrinal division.<sup>1</sup>

Whatever the reasons that fueled this schism<sup>2</sup>, the primary factor remains doctrinal. The churches separated after the Fourth Ecumenical Council for centuries, sometimes engaging in conflicts, and leading separate lives. Over the centuries, each church developed its own spiritual heritage, unrecognized by the other, further entrenching the division.

In the twentieth century, a wave of dialogue emerged worldwide. Theological dialogue committees began informal discussions between the Eastern and Oriental churches from 1964 until 1971, presenting the results of their findings to their respective churches. When we say, "informal dialogue," we mean discussions conducted with the churches' approval, but with non-binding results. Each delegation takes the final resolution, which includes the dialogue's conclusions, to its church, where it is studied and either adopted or rejected, depending on its compatibility with the church's teachings. Joint dialogue meetings have concluded that the problem lies in the difference in terminology, which remains today. According to theologians who participated in these dialogues, the issue is primarily linguistic.

One drawback of these theological dialogues is that they remained at the theological level without involving the faithful or sharing the results with them, leading to the emergence of two factions among the faithful in both Churches which rejected these conclusions, considering them to be an oversimplification driven by impure motives, which rekindled controversy and debate. Consequently, not all churches have officially adopted a doctrinal statement embracing this interpretation.

However, relations began to improve on other levels, with official visits, participation in theological conferences, and the enrollment of students from non-Chalcedonian churches in theological studies or advanced theological programs in Greece, Russia and the United States, and in certain Orthodox institutes. The coexistence of Coptic, Armenian, and Syriac Churches with the Orthodox Churches in the East, facing shared existential and missionary challenges, has increased opportunities for mutual encounter in daily life.

While the churches have encouraged fraternal relations, the sharing of the Eucharist and the other sacraments has not been established between them.

Today, relations between the two sides are characterized by brotherhood, meeting in love while preserving the faith as each church understands it, striving to highlight points of convergence in the hope of reaching unified expression and overcoming the historical elements that have deepened the separation.

---

1 Gregorios, Paulos Mar, William Henry Lazareth and Nikos A. Nissiotis. "Does Chalcedon Divide or Unite? Towards Convergence in Orthodox Christology." (1981)

2 Some scholars believe that this schism had political motives. I chose not to discuss these.

# **Church History - Fifth Century**

## **Inner Struggles**

In the first decades of the fifth century, when Alexandria and Constantinople were continuing their feud over their respective positions in the Church and in the Empire, Nestorius, the bishop of Constantinople (r. 428–431), made known his refusal to honor Mary, Christ’s mother, with the traditional title of Theotokos. He claimed that the one born from Mary is not the Logos Himself, but merely the “man” in whom the eternal Logos of God came to dwell. Thus, Mary could not properly be called “Theotokos,” which means “the one who gave birth to God,” but only either “Christotokos,” meaning “the one who gave birth to Christ,” or “anthropotokos,” meaning ‘the one who gave birth to a man’—i.e., the man Jesus, to whom the Logos was joined.

Saint Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria (r. 412–444), with the active support of Pope Celestine of Rome, forcefully rejected the teaching of Nestorius, claiming that it is indeed proper to call Mary Theotokos since the one born from her “according to the flesh” is none other than the divine Logos of God. The only-begotten Son of God was “begotten of the Father before all ages”; and He it was “Who for us men and for our salvation came down from Heaven, and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became man” (The Nicene Creed). Thus, the Son of God and the Son of Mary is one and the same Son.

## **Third Ecumenical Council**

Nestorius and his followers refused to yield to Saint Cyril’s appeals for repentance. Thus, in 431, in the city of Ephesus, a Church council was summoned by Emperor Theodosius II (r. 408–450) to resolve the issue. On the first day, Nestorius, supported by only ten bishops, still refused to change his mind, so he was condemned by Saint Cyril and his group of 57 bishops, and by Bishop Memnon of Ephesus and his group of 52 bishops. This decision, however, was not accepted by Bishop John of Antioch and his group of 30 bishops, who arrived at the council four days after it started—having been delayed in their travels. They maintained their support for Nestorius, who had previously been an outstanding preacher in Antioch.

The controversy was not resolved until two years later, when Bishop John and Saint Cyril signed the Formulary of Peace of 433, in which the condemnation of Nestorius was reaffirmed, but with language that more clearly honored the typically Antiochian emphasis on the full reality of Christ’s humanity. The Council of 431 (along with the Formulary of Peace of 433) subsequently became known as the Third Ecumenical Council.