



Volume 1 | Issue 10

Antiochian Welfare Association Newsletter

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September 13th, 2021

*Community support
and healing resources*

Welcome to the latest edition of our Newsletter.

AWA

What is AWA?

Under the guidance of H.E. Metropolitan Basilios, the Antiochian Welfare Association (AWA) was established in October 2020 to provide services to relieve hardship, distress, helplessness, and alienation of the Antiochian community in NSW.

What to expect from AWA

AWA will continue to promote welfare opportunities in the form of:



Education



Social & recreational
activities & programs



Information services



Activities that promote
culture & heritage



Development & leadership
programs



Support & resources for
Antiochian Orthodox parishes

Patron Saint

The Patron Saint for AWA is St John the Merciful – Patriarch of Alexandria, well known for welfare and charity.



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For more information, visit the AWA [webpage](http://www.antiochian.org.au/awa).

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A FAMILY IN A PANDEMIC

Fr. Bassam Nassif | May 18th, 2020

Assistant Professor of Pastoral Theology | University of Balamand



As the COVID-19 pandemic spread, family life has taken a pretty dramatic turn from the normal, particularly with the on-going concern about infection, illness and possibly death. Given that the current situation will remain in place for a long time, societies have generally committed to taking preventive measures and the previous way of life is currently on hold. Very few individuals venture out, work and school are suspended, social gatherings are curtailed, and these precautions have forced family members to stay at home. Indeed, many people have lost their jobs, while others are trying to work from home. As for students, many educational institutions are delivering their instructions through online learning. Students are no longer able to be in the physical presence of their teachers and schoolmates, and they are unable to interact with them face-to-face. Even church services have been impacted. The faithful are obligated to take strict precautions when attending church, and many have opted instead to pray from home during this time. Social gatherings have become undesired or even forbidden due to the necessity of social distancing, which does not encourage effective communication nor does it strengthen human relationships. This change in daily living is stressful for families and individuals, especially those who are facing economic crisis, job loss, and the inability to travel or connect with other people.

Certainly, each family is unique in terms of its structure, relationship, and living situation. However, what general guidelines can we follow during this time in order to cultivate hope in our soul and safeguard our family?

First, this isolation from others and the increased time with family provides learning opportunities. While we may have been forced to be distanced from others, we have, in fact, been offered the opportunity to be closer with our immediate family members. It is time for increased communication between husbands and wives, and between parents and children. This new opportunity to be with each other may not have been available in the past due to the pressures of daily life, such as long working hours, studies, and social commitments. Now, we can focus our attention to the people around us at home, listening to their words, understanding their needs and desires, and sensing their inner pain and struggles, while trying to have empathy and offering them support. It is a good time for husbands and wives to express their affection for each other and to learn about their primary love language. It is also a time for parents to fill their children with love and affection, as Saint Paisios the Athonite stresses. A good time for communication and exchange of ideas may be during lunch or after dinner. We must open the door for family members to express their fear or anxiety. Sometimes, during conversations, we sense anger or other undesired emotions in the tone of our loved ones, but this anger could be nothing more than an emotional expression of the deep discomfort from our current situation, a desire to be loved more, or tension from work or study. Family solidarity is essential in these difficult times because it contributes greatly to a deep understanding of one another and it helps to support and alleviate each other from the feelings associated with our current harsh reality. A good level of communications can prevent anger and anxiety from becoming deeply rooted leading to psychological disorders. Indeed, it is necessary to remind each other of the good things we have, and to be thankful to the Lord for the beautiful gifts and moments we have experienced in our life. Being thankful helps change our negative perspective and feelings toward our current situation. While we may not understand everything that is happening around us, we can still share with our loved ones our daily thoughts and experiences. Active listening and communicating with each other is a sign of our effective presence and a token of love that we freely give to our family.

Second, regarding the management of children's affairs, Saint John Chrysostom advises the necessity of finding some kind of a rhythm at home, a daily routine that caters to the needs of all

family members. Parents can work together with their children to prepare a daily schedule which can include times for studying, sharing meals together, praying, reading, and may also include doing chores and enjoying some entertainment or play time. The daily active interaction between parents and children at home helps to channel the children's energy and to maintain their psychological and spiritual health. Daily routine and frequent communication with the children can also prevent them from falling into the traps of virtual social communication, which can increase their sense of isolation from their family and heighten their anxiety. In addition, parents may discover new talents in their children and they can direct them to develop these talents. Moreover, any delegated task can be a teachable moment, such as household tasks, repair tasks, car maintenance tasks, gardening tasks or even a walk in nature. All of the things they learn will prepare them for living on their own and being independent at some point

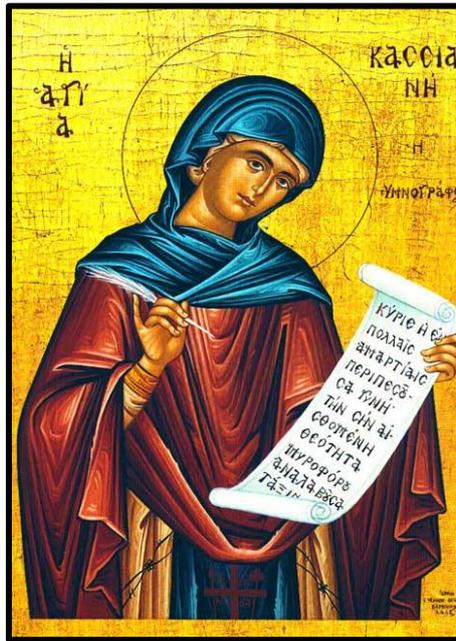
later in life. It will also teach them new skills and built their confidence and self-esteem.

Third, the goal of Christian life is holiness through the acquisition of the Holy Spirit, according to Saint Seraphim of Sarov. In our daily challenges, we ask, how much faith do we have? We can test the depth of our faith by measuring the extent of our trust in the Lord. Is Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen Savior, my Lord and my God? Our faith is reflected in our daily behavior and our spoken words. Reconciling with each other and helping one another, despite the difficult living conditions we are facing, is another sign of our dependence on the Lord. Personal prayers are also powerful in our home and daily life. We ought to focus on prayer, reading the Bible, reflecting on the lives of the saints, and examining other spiritual readings. We must also build into our days some quiet time where we can experience an opportunity to discover ourselves and the Kingdom of God within us. As we empty ourselves, putting our worries and anxieties before the Lord, He sends His Divine grace to enlighten our mind with good thoughts and hope, as He said: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light (Matt. 11:28-30).

Certainly, it is a new and difficult period, but as Christians, we see this time as "a time for the Lord to work." Let us strive with discernment, and according to our abilities, to acknowledge our human weakness and limitation, asking God, along with the Theotokos and all the saints, to help us live this present life in a manner pleasing to Him and always guided by His grace. Amen.

This article published on 18 May 2020 on <https://pemptousia.com/>.

ST. KASSIANI



Who is St. Kassiani?

St. Kassiani the Hymnographer is the patron of our archdiocese choir - [The St. Kassiani Antiochian Orthodox Choir](#).

St. Kassiani was born in Constantinople around 805AD. Part of an aristocratic family, she received an excellent education, both secular and sacred. Kassiani was intelligent and renowned for her beauty. Renouncing the world, she built a convent in Constantinople and becoming a nun, she led an ascetical and philosophical life, pleasing to God.

She pursued her literary and musical interests, becoming the Orthodox Church's **first and only female hymnographer**. Her Feast Day is celebrated on September 7th.

Learn more about St. Kassiani's life [here](#).

COVID-19 INFORMATION

It can be difficult to understand all the health messages, rules and restrictions around COVID-19, which makes it all seem quite confusing. The Council for Intellectual Disability have developed [easy-to-read English resources](#) to help the community work through these important health messages.

Additional COVID-19 information:

- [NSW Roadmap](#)
- [Greater Sydney restrictions](#)
- [COVID-19 travel registration](#)

ST. EMILIA'S GO ONLINE!

What is the St. Emilia's Young Mums Group?

St. Emilia's Young Mums Group is a not-for-profit, volunteer-run, and self-funded group which provides mothers with young children an opportunity to gather and learn in a relaxing and welcoming environment.

Prior to COVID-19 restrictions, the group met once a month at the Antiochian Youth Centre, Punchbowl. A professional speaker is invited each month to provide information on spiritual, health, safety, welfare and other topics.

For more information, visit the St. Emilia's [webpage](#).

Patron Saint

St. Emilia is the daughter of a martyr, the wife of St. Basil the Elder, and a mother of 10 children. She instilled the Orthodox faith in her children, teaching them to pray and devote their lives to the service of the Church. Of her 10 children, 5 are commemorated as saints on the Church calendar, therefore St. Emilia is often called "the mother of saints".

Now Online!



We're back, and we're going ONLINE!

With the blessing of H.E. Metropolitan Basillios, the St. Emilia's Young Mums Group will resume during the COVID-19 lockdown phase through **weekly** online sessions.

Upcoming session details:

DATE: Thursday, 16th Sept 2021

TIME: 7:30 PM

TOPIC: Dealing with frustrations & anxieties in lockdown

SPEAKER: Metaxia Toumbalekis (Psychologist)

LINK: <https://bit.ly/StEmilia>



CONTACT US



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@SaintEmilias

R U OK?

R U OK? Day (Thursday 9 September, 2021) is a national day of action dedicated to reminding everyone that **every day** is the day to ask, "Are you OK?" and support those struggling with life's ups and downs. There are many ways to ask this question. See the flyer below or visit the [R U OK? website](https://www.ruok.org.au/) for some ideas.

It's not always easy to keep the conversation going when someone says they're not OK, but it could change a life. Access the interactive conversation roleplay [video](#) to help you learn what to say after R U OK?

Access translated R U OK? resources [here](#).

really Are they OK?
Ask them today
Have a conversation using these 4 steps

- 1. Ask R U OK?**
 - How are you travelling?
 - You don't seem yourself lately – want to talk about it?
- 2. Listen with an open mind**
 - I'm here to listen if you want to talk more.
 - Have you been feeling this way for a while?
- 3. Encourage action**
 - Have you spoken to your doctor about this?
 - What do you think is a first step that would help you through this?
- 4. Check in**
 - Just wanted to check in and see how you're doing?
 - Have things improved for you since we last spoke?

Learn how to ask at [ruok.org.au](https://www.ruok.org.au)

RUOK?
A conversation could change a life.

SETS PROGRAM



What is the SETS Program?

The Settlements Engagement and Transition Support (SETS) Program began in January 2019 – a program that has been assisting the newly arrived people to Australia.

Who can the SETS Program assist?

Predominantly new arrivals (migrant, refugee and humanitarian entrants) who have been in Australia between 6 months and 5 years. The program also provides assistance to youth in general who are at risk or are disconnected from their community.

The SETS program aims to address settlement needs in order to improve:

- social participation,
- economic well-being,
- independence,
- personal well-being and
- community connectedness.

The program is complementary to the Humanitarian Settlement Program (HSP) and other Commonwealth support to humanitarian entrants and for other vulnerable migrants.

For more information, visit the SETS [webpage](#).

SUPPORT FOR VISA HOLDERS

The NSW Government COVID-19 Emergency Relief Grant for Vulnerable Temporary Visa Holders has distributed funding across NSW to specialist migrant and settlement NGOs providing support to vulnerable people who are experiencing hardship due to COVID-19.

For asylum seekers (residing in NSW) in crisis during COVID-19 who do not receive assistance from the Commonwealth government, please contact one of the below organisations.

- [Asylum Seeker Centre](#) - within Greater Sydney Metro
- [Jesuit Refugee Services](#) - within Greater Sydney Metro
- [House of Welcome](#) - within Greater Sydney Metro
- [Settlement Services International](#) - within Greater Sydney Metro
- [The Salvation Army](#) - focusing on regional NSW areas
- [Australian Red Cross Society](#) - focusing on regional NSW areas