



THE MESSENGER

MARCH 2024

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Our Mission Statement

TO PROCLAIM, CELEBRATE, AND SHARE
THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION IN
JESUS CHRIST IN ACCORDANCE
WITH THE ORTHODOX TRADITION.

The Five Tasks of Our Parish Vision

Hear
Pray
Grow
Serve
Share



METROPOLIS
OF CHICAGO

Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy



Every year on the first Sunday of Great Lent we celebrate differently because we are invited to bring icons to church. Children are invited to process with clergy showing icons of their patron saints, Christ or the Holy Virgin Mary and a general celebratory state of joy radiates among the people. Truly, we joyfully celebrate an event that brought about great joy to faithful Christians many centuries ago.

The Vespers of Sunday evening celebrates the event when iconography

was fully restored once and for all as good and useful in our churches and homes. The event took place in the year 843 AD in Constantinople, when a procession with icons took place in the city headed by Patriarch Methodios and Empress Theodora along with her son Emperor Michael III. At the Hagia Sofia (Holy Wisdom) Cathedral in Constantinople clergy and laity together proclaimed the honor and veneration of icons as true Christian teaching. All rejoiced then but this proclamation had come with great turmoil and strife which lasted more than a century.

In the year 787 AD in the city of Nicaea, the Seventh Ecumenical Council convened between September 24 and October 13 with 367 bishops representing Christians from throughout the known world. Patriarch Tarasios of Constantinople presided over the Ecumenical Council which was sponsored by the Empress Irene. This Ecumenical Council already proclaimed the doctrine of veneration of iconography as true Christian doctrine but the debate which began earlier in 726 AD continued even after the Seventh Ecumenical Council until the glorious event of 843 AD in Constantinople. Repeatedly icons were removed from

(continued on page 3)

Our Life Together

Baptisms

William
Parents: Stewart and
Alexis (Lake) Utter
February 11, 2024

Deaths

Byron Zotaley
January 15, 2024

Georgia Fisher
January 30, 2024

Share Your Shelf

March's recipient is
FOCUS MINNESOTA

IMMEDIATE NEEDS:

Pasta / Pasta Sauce, Canned Veggies,
Tuna, Cereal

Sunday, March 3

Oatmeal or Cream of Wheat

Sunday, March 10

Spam

Sunday, March 17

Peanut Butter

Sunday, March 24

Canned Meat (e.g., tuna / chicken)

Sunday, March 31

Peanut Butter and Jelly

For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, 'You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.' ~ Deuteronomy 15:11

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**GREAT LENT BEGINS
MONDAY, MARCH 18**

Fellowship and Study Groups

Intercessory Prayer

Wednesdays, March 6 and 20
11:00 a.m.
Nave Chapel

Koinonia

Thursday, March 28
6:30 p.m.
Meeting Room 1

Men's Fellowship

Friday, March 1, 7:00 a.m.
Judges 5-6
Fireside Room

Friday, March 13, 7:00 a.m.
Psalm 18 (16 in LXX)
Fireside Room

Saturday Bible Study

Every Saturday, 9:00 a.m.
Fireside Room (and on Zoom)

Women's Bible Study

Wednesdays, March 6 and 20
11:30 a.m.
Fireside Room



The second Sunday of Great Lent (March 31) is dedicated to the memory of **St. Gregory Palamas**.



Learn about
St. Gregory Palamas,
Scan the code.

Worship Schedule Weekend

Saturdays, March 9, 16, and 23

Saturday of Souls
Divine Liturgy – 10:00 a.m.

Saturdays, March 2, 9, and 16

Great Vespers – 5:00 p.m.

Sundays (live-streamed)

Orthros – 8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Lenten Schedule

Lenten Wednesdays

4:00 p.m. - Holy Confession
5:30 p.m. - Divine Liturgy of the
Presanctified Gifts
7:00 p.m. - Lenten Dinner;
Youth Programs;
Church School
Confession

Lenten Fridays

4:00 p.m. - Holy Confession
6:00 p.m. - Salutations to the
Theotokos (March 22
and 29, April 5 and 12)
Akathist Hymn
(April 19)

Pan-Orthodox Lenten Vespers

Sundays at 5:00 p.m.; Lenten meal
and Fellowship to follow

March 24 – Triumph of Orthodoxy

St. Mary's Cathedral in Minneapolis

March 31 – St. Gregory Palamas

St. George Greek Orthodox Church in
St. Paul

April 7 – Veneration of the Cross

St. George Antiochian Orthodox
Church in West St. Paul

April 14 – St. John of the Ladder

St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church in
Minneapolis

April 21 – St. Mary of Egypt

St. Stephen Romanian Orthodox
Church in South St. Paul

April 28 – Bridegroom Matins

St. Herman Orthodox Church
in Minneapolis

Parish News & Events

St. Mary's Church Staff

Proistamenos

Fr. Timothy Sas

Associate Priest

Fr. Jason Houck

Attached Priest

Fr. John Kostas

Deacons

Fr. Paul Kalina

Fr. Luke Twito

Office Manager

David Mertesdorf

Office Assistant

Giulia Chatfield

Communications & Marketing

Nikolas Kouzes

Finance

Michael Rakes

Ministry Support

Doria Saros

Youth Director

Scott Rudquist

Chanter

Joseph Karos

Choir Director

Emily Skoutelas

Organist

Mark Macres

St. Mary's Parish Council

President

Jeannie Possis

Vice President

Louis Tiggas

Secretary

Elisabeth (Libby) Cheolis

Treasurer

Cristina Nicklow

Assistant Treasurer

Athena Mihas

Members

Benjamin Amundgaard

Alex Dascalos

Sam Hanna

Andrew LeRoy

Dean Psychogios

Sophia Rouman

Nicholas P. Santrizos

Thank you

The Sons of American Legion Hellenic Sons Squadron would like to thank the Church community for their participation in the Toys for Tots program this past Christmas. Over 175 toys (an entire pickup truck full to the top) were donated and all of the toys were distributed to the Toys for Tots center at Mall of America.



Blood Drive

Saturday, March 9

The Hellenic Squadron 129, Sons of the American Legion blood drive is scheduled for Saturday, March 9, from 11:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. at St Mary's Church. The SAL will provide a pancake breakfast to all donors who show up for their scheduled appointment. At present, the bloodmobile is limited to 30 appointments that need to be scheduled on-line. Scan the code to schedule your donor appointment.

Annunciation/Greek Independence Day

Sunday, March 24

Mark your calendar! Sunday, March 24, will be the date for the annual Annunciation/Greek Independence Day Celebration. A delightful program by the youth of our community featuring dancing, readings, and music will be performed. Don't miss this always popular event. Watch for further details.

Seeking Grief Support?

Tuesdays, March 4-April 9

If you have experienced a loss and are looking for support with other Orthodox Christians, join us for Grief Explorations. We'll meet on Tuesdays, March 4-April 9, from 6:30-7:30 p.m. at St. Mary's Orthodox Cathedral, 1701 Fifth St. NE, Minneapolis. We'll discuss the impact of grief on the mind, body, and spirit, as well as things you can do to help ease the process. We'll also learn about complicated grief and how to get additional support if needed. If you are interested in attending, please send an email to: Stmarysgriefgroup@gmail.com Contact **Joni Snidarich** with any questions at **612.910.0855**.



TELOSCOMMUNITY.ORG

When young adults show up at an Orthodox parish, they are looking for a people and a place to belong to. And whether or not they find those people and that place, will largely depend on the rest of us. How can you and your parish do a better job of welcoming and supporting young adults?

Action: Get to know a young adult you don't know in fellowship/coffee hour. Look for one way to connect them into the wider community. Examples: introduce them to other young adults, introduce them to another adult you know who shares a common interest, invite them to attend a parish-wide social event or outreach opportunity.

Presentation of Christ in the Temple

(continued from page 1)

churches by iconoclasts (icon breakers) and returned to churches by iconodules (icon lovers).

The debate over the veneration of icons is not just about creating visual beauty by a certain form of artistic expression and it most definitely is not about giving worship to graven images. In truth, this debate, and the understanding of offering respect and veneration to beautiful spirit-filled images is reflective of our teaching on the Incarnation of God as man, a visible man who lived and died as we do. By His birth from the Virgin Mary, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, once again confirmed the sanctity of the human body, as He had done together with the Father and the Spirit at the time of Creation. The Word, the Son of God became real to our senses in the flesh. Likewise, the sanctification of all Creation becomes real in the holy icons which adorn our churches and homes. Therefore, we celebrate this day truly as a Triumph of Orthodox teaching.

Lastly, we do not worship icons, as worship is only due to God, but we venerate them as items which express the teachings of the Holy Church offering honor and veneration to the saints and events which they depict. May our forefathers and foremothers, especially the Holy Empresses Irene and Theodora, strengthen us to keep the teachings of the faith with piety and holiness! †

Young Women's Bible Study

The Young Women's Bible Study will resume meeting this spring. This season's topic is the Gospel of Mark. Meetings are held at Patty Christopoulos' home, 5312 Highwood Drive, Edina, on Tuesdays from 7:15-8:45 p.m. The study begins at 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday, April 2 – Mark chapters 1-4

Tuesday, April 16 – Mark chapters 5-8

Tuesday, April 30 – Mark chapters 9-12

Tuesday, May 14 – Mark chapters 13-16

PLEASE sign up by texting Patty at 952.200.9566 by March 24.

Materials to prepare for each session will be emailed in advance by Patty Christopoulos who will lead the study.

Gofundme for Gigi Daugherty



Saint Mary's parishioner, Gigi (Tiggas) Daugherty, was diagnosed 2½ years ago with Glioblastoma Multiforme (GBM), a terminal brain cancer. As Gigi states, "God has blessed me with the time thus far with my



wonderful husband, family, and friends. However, even with health insurance, there are still out-of-pocket expenses which are not covered by the insurance, I am reaching out to you for assistance with these expenses to relieve the burden on our finances. Only the Lord knows how much time I have left; however, I am hoping you will find it in your heart to help me out, so my husband is not left with unpaid medical bills."



THANK YOU from OCMC!

THANK YOU to everyone who came out to SHOW YOUR LOVE FOR MISSIONS! Nathan Hoppe, OCMC's longest-term missionary, shared news about OCMC's many projects around the world that support and strengthen local churches and minister to physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual needs. OCMC needs our prayers and financial support for projects in 21 countries in Africa, Central and South America, Europe, the Middle East and Asia. You can still answer Christ's call to "Go, and make disciples of all nations" by making a donation today! Use the QR code or see Terri Leckas for an OCMC donation envelope.

Youth News & Events

Parish Night

Wednesday, March 13, 6:15-8:00 p.m

We start with prayer in the nave from 6:15-6:30, eat dinner from 6:30-7:00, Lesson from 7:00-7:45 (break out into different groups: HOPE/JOY, Jr. GOYA, Sr. GOYA, and Adults), and wrap up from 7:45-8:00. All are welcome to attend!



(birth through pre-K)

Thursday, March 7, 9:30 a.m.

Tuesday, March 19, 9:30 a.m.

Great Hall and Terrace Room



HOPE (K-grade 2)

JOY (grades 3-5)

Wednesday, March 13, 6:15-8:00 p.m

HOPE/JOY at Parish Night - See above for details

Wednesday, March 20: 6:45-8:00 p.m.

Lenten Learning Night. We will take a journey through Lent learning the importance of each Sunday.



(grades 6-8)

Wednesday, March 13, 6:15 p.m

Junior GOYA at Parish Night - See "Parish Night" blurb for details

Wednesday, March 20, 6:15 p.m

Lenten Confession night for all 5th and 6th graders.

Wednesday, March 27, 6:15 p.m

Lenten Learning Night. We will take a journey through Lent learning the importance of each Sunday.



(grades 9-12)

Wednesday, March 13, 6:15 p.m.

Senior GOYA at Parish Night - See "Parish Night" blurb for details

Wednesday, March 20, 6:15 p.m.

Junior Olympics Fundraiser. The Senior GOYAns will be serving the post-Presanctified meal and collecting money to help fundraise for the journey to Chicago.



Church School

March 24 is the Sunday of Orthodoxy.

Children are asked to bring an icon from home and join in the Great Entrance procession. Please be prompt to Divine Liturgy! There will be extra icons available if you forget one.



Students in grades 7-12: start working on your speeches for the **St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival on Sunday, March 31.** Scan the code for speech topics and information on doing a chant, icon, or written piece.

Kindergarten through grade 6: start creating your art masterpieces for the Art Festival. This year the projects are to be done individually at home, they will not be done as a class. Here are the topics by grade:

Kindergarten: The Cross

1st grade: The Church

2nd grade: Holy Communion

3rd grade: One of the Sacraments (or on the Sacraments)

4th grade: My Patron Saint

5th grade: One of the Parables or "I am blessed"

6th grade: One of Jesus' "I Am..." (e.g. I am the tree, you are the branches, I am the Good Shepherd, I am the light of the world, etc)

For questions, please see Diakonissa Alexandra Kalina for high school division and Dena Tortorelis for elementary division.

Mark your calendars for the dates for confession by grade either before or after Presanctified Liturgy as follows:

Wednesday, March 20 - Grades 5 and 6

Wednesday, March 27 - Grades 11 and 12

Wednesday, April 3 - Grades 7 and 8

Wednesday, April 10 - Grades 9 and 10

Wednesday, April 17 - Grades 3 and 4

Wednesday, April 24 - Grade 2



Follow the GOYAns on Instagram
@St_Marys_GOYA

Youth Feedback

If you have any comments, suggestions, or concerns regarding our youth program(s) please let us know. We have a new formal feedback process. Go to our St Mary's home page-Click on "Youth," then "Youth Program Feedback" Your comments will be forwarded to a member of the Parish Council and will be reviewed for follow up.

Philoptochos



March Meetings

Tuesday, March 12, 6:30 p.m.
Board Meeting – Meeting Room 1

Sunday, March 17, 11:45 a.m.
General Meeting – Terrace Room,

Upcoming Activities

Membership Drive is Underway Now through March 31

In January, all women of the parish received a letter inviting them to become a member of Philoptochos. For over 90 years, Philoptochos has served as the philanthropic arm of the church. We invite you to join our chapter in our efforts to actively support local, national, international, as well as Orthodox charities through many hands-on activities throughout the year. We also support the parish in many ways, including decorating for different seasons of the year, hosting Pan-Orthodox and other events, and hosting the Festival bake sale. Stop by our table during the coffee hour on Sundays throughout the month to get more information, drop off your membership form, and volunteer for upcoming activities.

Note that membership dues are determined by each individual, with the first \$22 going to our Metropolis and National Philoptochos and anything above that staying with our chapter.

Women's Book Club Discussion

Book club will not be held in March, but it will resume on April 11! The book for April will be: *The Crucifixion of the King of Glory: The Amazing History and Sublime Mystery of the Passion* by Eugenia Scarvelis Constantinou. It is available for purchase in the bookstore now! Need to sign up? Contact Katherine Boosalis (katherine@boosalis.net). (If you have declined a book club meeting invitation in the past, your email may have inadvertently been omitted in future invitations.)

Koliva Workshop Friday, March 8

Join us for a hands-on workshop to create a koliva/memorial wheat tray that will be used during the first Saturday of Lent and the two Saturdays of Soul services prior to the start of Lent. Koliva is also used during memorial services. Koliva is boiled wheat combined with ingredients such as almonds, walnuts, pomegranate seeds, raisins, parsley, powdered sugar. Participants, please bring a small bowl or tray. Workshops are led by Sacred Baking Chair Toni Bazakos. Register at the Philoptochos table on Sundays or by calling the church office, 612.825.9595.

Spring Fillo Sale March 10, 17, and 24

Fresh fillo is the best fillo! Place your order for fresh fillo by stopping at the Philoptochos table after church on March 10, 17, and 24 or by sending an email to Andrea Tiggas at adtiggas@msn.com. Your orders will be available for pickup on March 31 at the Philoptochos table after church.

Tandem Baby Bottle and Needs Drive Begins March 24

This Lent, we will host our annual drive for Tandem Family Resource Center, but with a twist. In addition to our Baby Bottle Drive, we are asking for a bit more this year as their needs continue to grow and the ministry grows and develops new resources. This year we will do a "needs" drive beginning March 24 through Palm Sunday. The needs requested include baby diapers and essentials, newborn clothes, socks, formula, and personal hygiene needs for the mamas. Watch for a more specific list!

Lenten Dinner – Volunteers Needed! March 27

The Lenten meal will be hosted by Philoptochos on Wednesday, March 27. Stop by our table during the coffee hour on Sundays throughout the month to sign up or please watch for the Sign-Up Genius.

Philoptochos to Serve Dinner at FOCUS in April Sunday, April 14

Philoptochos is hosting the free Sunday night meal at FOCUS Minnesota on April 14. Please watch for the Sign-Up Genius email inviting you to contribute a part of the pasta meal or volunteer to serve. Thank you for helping us prepare more than 200 meals for people in need.

Thank You

Thank you to all those who helped with volunteering in February...

...to those who helped staff the Philoptochos table.

...to all who baked, volunteered, and supported the Sweet Sunday/Membership Drive on Sunday, February 11. The proceeds were designated for the Philoxenia House in Rochester, MN. Learn more at <https://www.philoxeniacharities.org/aboutus!>

....to Sacred Baking Chair Toni Bazakos and team for the Artoclasia Baking Workshop on February 24.

Please watch the weekly bulletin, webpage, and our table on Sundays for updates on events or needs.

Missions & Outreach

Pray, Serve, Evangelize. What powerful words shared by a Bishop. What a beautiful thing to start your day with prayer, and to pray throughout the day. What a beautiful thing to serve and what a beautiful thing to evangelize.

Pray.



MCCL (Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life), "March for Life" was held on Monday, January 22, 2024, with a 10:30 prayer service at the Cathedral of Saint Paul, St. Paul. After the Prayer Service, everyone walked to the Minnesota State Capital where it appeared to be one of the largest gatherings, with many signs, for the unborn. "No more Abortion up to Birth," 3 year-olds holding signs that said, "Let All Sizes Live!," and "Abortion kills a human being," were just a few of the signs.



A lady speaker, who was to have been aborted by the doctor, gave a moving story of how she is so grateful to be alive! What a touching story and how would I feel if found out that could have been me?

Serve.



January 16 — Simpson House Dinner

It felt good to serve, to be able to provide and serve meals (Thank you to the special lady who made this month's meal) to those who are without a home at this time in their life. The meals are a meaningful way to care. One volunteer especially would like to help with each meal St. Mary's serves at Simpson House. Thank You to each of the volunteers. Isn't it great to see the joy of serving, in being a volunteer to help with a meal?

The Minnesota FoodShare March Campaign February 26 - April 6, 2024



Serve by sharing food for the working poor and homeless to CES FoodShare Campaign. Bring the food to St. Mary's for CES to pick up from their box/barrel. Look for more information in the weekly bulletins.



Evangelize.

Bring-A-Friend Vespers

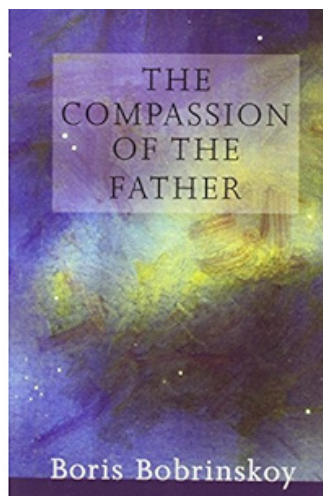
Saturday, March 2, 2024, 5:00-7:00 pm

This is a great way to introduce our faith to our friends and family in a pressure free way! After Vespers there will be a brief introduction to the Orthodox church and an informal reception in the Terrace Room. Please RSVP by Monday, February 26, by calling St. Mary's Office 952.825.9595. It is not required but appreciated to plan our refreshments.

In the Bookstore

By Rebecca Myerly

bookstore@stmarysgoc.org



In this liturgical season of the Triodion, journeying toward Lent with the rich and deep Sunday Gospel readings including the Parable of the Prodigal Son, **The Compassion of the Father** by Boris Bobrinsky is an informative and enlightening book to read—good spiritual nourishment for the fast ahead. Father Boris (1925-2020, memory eternal) was a theologian known for his works on

the Holy Trinity. This book starts with an extensive introduction by Maxime Egger titled “Toward a Transparency to the Holy Trinity: The Life and Work of Father Boris Bobrinsky,” in which the reader will find much information to help understand and appreciate Father Boris and his thinking. Maxime writes:

In his reflection on the Holy Trinity, Fr Boris is touched more and more, impressed, even overwhelmed, by the mystery of the Father, “the first and ultimate source of all knowledge and all life,” which he senses is inscribed, buried in the mystery of Christ. It is...the mystery of tenderness of the one who is infinite mercy and compassion, who never tires of receiving his prodigal son...(38)

Father Boris reflects:

Certainly, the mystery of the Father is revealed only through Christ: ‘The one who has seen me has seen the Father’ (Jn 14:9). (38)...What is a father if not an overflowing of love? But do we feel it as such? How do we live this filial relationship to the Father? Do we really know the meaning of fatherhood—if only the purely human and earthly—without which this relationship to the father no longer makes much sense? Are we able to understand and to live the meaning and implications of the ‘bowels of mercy’ and of the tenderness of the Father? What effect does all this have on our awareness and our life? These are questions I ask myself, and I ask them aloud. Questions which the Holy Spirit Himself asks in us, by prompting us to become more aware of the mystery of the person of the Father. (39)

This is what Father Boris does in *The Compassion of the Father*. Divided into three overarching sections—“Facing Evil and Suffering,” “The Liturgy of the Heart,” and “Toward the Knowledge of God”—he offers wide ranging yet remarkably focused reflections rooted in Scripture and the church fathers, with chapters titled “The Lamb of God Takes upon Himself Human Suffering,” “Love for Enemies in the Gospels,” “The Mystery of Forgiveness,” “The Prayer of the Heart and Suffering,” “The Art of the Invocation of the Name,” “The Inner Eucharist,” “Theology and Spirituality,” “The Theology of Language and the Language of Theology,” and “Sacred Tradition and Human Traditions.” All these reveal and develop this quote from his book:

The forgiveness of the Father descends on the world, for it is the Father who is wounded. Here we find a theme that is fundamental in the church fathers, that of the Father’s compassion, meaning “suffering with.” The Father is not insensitive before the passion, the suffering, and the decay of humanity that removes itself from Him at an infinite speed. The Father suffers from a “love wound,” and the high point of His suffering is the death of the Son He sends into the world, this world He “so loved.” Until the end of time, the sign of the forgiveness of God will be the gift of the Holy Spirit. (76)

Father Boris’s deep and extensive thinking was/ is inclusive yet also clarifying in details and discerning differences. In *The Compassion of the Father* he offers a wide scope of theological wisdom and awareness. Chapter by chapter he points and guides the listening reader: “Being entirely turned toward the Father is to share His love, His infinite compassion for the creature.” (90)



St. Mary’s Bookstore Hours

Sundays, after the Liturgy until 1:00 p.m.

Stop by and explore the selection of Orthodox Christian literature, icons, and gifts.



St. Mary's 2024 Stewardship

OWNERSHIP, ENGAGEMENT, GENEROSITY: Commit to St. Mary's

Thank you for your participation in our 2024 Stewardship Campaign and your on-going support of St. Mary's through your gifts of time, talent, and treasure. We thank the many parishioners who have already submitted their Time and Talent pledge forms for 2024. Thank you for committing to Christ and His Church!

As of February 14, 2024, we have received a total of \$80,256 in Offering payments.

- This represents 5.4% of this year's budget for ministries and operating expenses
- The goal is to cover 100% of ministry and operating costs each year with Stewardship Income rather than relying on rental and festival income.



If you haven't submitted a pledge form, please take a moment to prayerfully complete one and return it to the church office as soon as possible. If you need a form, scan the code, or contact the church office at

612.825.9595. Please remember that to be considered a Steward in good standing for 2024, you must return your pledge forms to the church office by March 31.

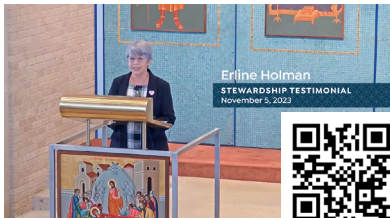
With gratitude,
—The St. Mary's Stewardship Committee

2024 Offering Income YTD vs Annual Budget

Offering Income as of Feb 14	2024 YTD Actual	2024 Annual Budget	YTD % of Budget
Payments Received	\$80,256	\$1,499,957	5.4%
Remaining Amount to Raise:			
\$1,419,701			

Pledge Forms Completed for 2022, 2023, and to Date 2024

Pledge Year	# of Pledges	Pledges to Date	% of Budget
2024	236	\$783,858	58.8%
2023	351	\$963,307	72.3%
2022	154	\$432,738	34.1%
2023 Increase vs. 2022	197	\$530,569	



STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN TESTIMONIALS

As part of our stewardship campaign, we asked three parishioners to share a testimony on each of the pillars of our theme: Ownership, engagement, and generosity. In the January Messenger, Erline Holman's testimonial was highlighted. In the February issue, Ben Amundgaard's testimonial was highlighted. In this issue, we highlight the last testimonial that was given by Nikolas Kouzes (see page 10). All three of these testimonials are now available to watch on our YouTube channel. Scan to codes to watch each testimonial.

Below is a beautiful testimony from Nikolas Kouzes, who shared his message following the Liturgy on November 19, 2023, and highlighted what "Ownership" means to him.



Ownership, Engagement, and Generosity. Intentional words chosen by the St. Mary's stewardship committee to invigorate and remind us of what it means to be stewards. They call them "Pillars" of stewardship. I like that very much as these are structural in nature and do a lot of heavy lifting. These are beautiful concepts to express how we participate in our relationship with Christ, Our God, and they are a summation of how we express our commitment as Stewards of His Church.

In the past two weeks, we've had some great testimonials about these concepts.

Erline Holman spoke on the topic of Engagement and shared her personal experience coming to St. Mary's and how to become engaged in the life of our community.

Ben Amundgaard spoke on the subject of Generosity and shared some theological aspects of what it means to be generous.

Today, I will share some thoughts on the concept of **Ownership**. I had many thoughts and questions about Ownership. Engagement and Generosity seem very Christian to me. But Ownership, at first thought, doesn't seem very Christian. Jesus told the young rich man, in Matthew, Chapter 19, "go, sell what you have and give the money to the poor and you will have riches in Heaven." Then, Jesus asked him to come and follow Him. After hearing this the young man went away, troubled, because he had many possessions. And Jesus went on to say the often quoted, "it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven."

Ownership on the surface doesn't feel very Christian, but upon further exploration, it really is a deep Christian concept.

It's easy to think of ownership in the legalistic view. Ownership implies owning something. The act, state, or right of possessing something. The legal right to use, possess, and give away a thing. "The ownership of land" for example. Or owning things, property,

even intellectual property. We can legally claim ownership with the right paperwork. What do you own? As U.S. citizens, in 2023, we all are very blessed. I am sure it's safe to say, regardless of your station, we can all undoubtedly say we have stuff.

But, what does ownership mean in the Christian context?

Ownership within Christian stewardship can easily be connected to the church building. We, as a parish, are responsible for the care, maintenance, preservation, and expenses associated with keeping our spiritual home operating. This, I think, is basic stuff. We all understand this. But I think this type of "ownership" is really a byproduct, an outcome, a result of being an Orthodox Christian. This is only part of what is meant by ownership.

Ownership is a constant process of renewal, as ownership is a form of commitment. It is an act that takes responsibility for what it means to be a follower of Christ. Jesus taught His disciples, and us, through stories, or parables, and by His actions. His miracles. His death at the cross and his glorious resurrection. So that everyone would know THE WAY to be with Him. To become like Him in the world...to be shown THE WAY into His Kingdom. So that through him we may be saved. As St. Athanasius, who defended the identity of Christ in his work, *On the Incarnation*, wrote, "Christ was made man that we might be made God." Through God's love, compassion, and commitment to us, He restores His creation—our humanity!—this is deep stuff! Really complex, deep stuff that goes all the way back to The Book of Genesis. Or in the verse from the Gospel of John often quoted, "He gave his only begotten son so that whoever believes in Him—or follows him—should not perish but have life everlasting."

So, if we are followers of Christ, and we live to emulate His life, when does ownership become a Christ-like action?

I think the answer to this is found in the same story I mentioned about the young rich man in the Gospel of Matthew, but in the version found in the Gospel of Mark, chapter 10, verse 21. Jesus says, "go your way, sell whatever you have, give it to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven." However, in this version of the story Jesus goes on to add, "come, take up the cross and follow me." This is ownership. Christ asks us, He invites us, to die with Him. He owned His death through the cross. When we take up the cross, when we die to our sin, our passions, our possessions, even when we actually die for our love and belief in Him, we are restored—transformed. We give our sin, our failure, our limitations, to God so that He might, through His grace, transform us.

Taking up the cross is ownership. This is claiming ownership over our role as followers of Christ.

For those of you who do not know me, I was born into this church. Not only baptized as an Orthodox Christian, but here at St. Mary's, by Fr. Anthony Coniaris of blessed memory. From ages 0 – 18, I was very active in the life of the Church. I served in the altar, I participated in all the youth activities, camp programs, I went to church every Sunday, even during the weekday services with my Yia Yia. But when

I moved away to New York for school, I slowly began to fall away from the Church. Like the prodigal's son (but without the material wealth) I wasted my spiritual wealth. I was soon eating with the swine. Living a life far away from my spiritual home and family. I was not taking responsibility in my role as one who had "put on Christ" as we say in our baptismal hymn. I began to doubt what I had been taught and what I believed. But like the story told in Luke, chapter 15, I came to my senses and realized what I had separated myself from. Thank God for His grace, love, and compassion, that I was able to return.

And thank God for this community, this parish, my Yia Yia, my parents, my sister, my wife, Fr. Jason and his family, the Houcks, and of course all the role models here, the Sunday School Teachers, and Camp Counselors.

In my college years, and after, I was really seeking what my purpose was in life. I convinced myself of many different things. My life as self-trained musician to become a rock star. My life as an artist. My career as a Creative Director in marketing and branding. My pursuit to find a loving relationship, and marry, and have a family. I got lost in these identities, but these were pursuits at a time in my life outside of a life in Christ and I soon learned that I could not bear fruit or thrive when I had cut myself off of the vine.

It started by slipping into a way of thinking that was counterproductive to living a life with Christ. I became at first, a cafeteria Christian, where I would, "take that belief, but not that one. I don't like that, so I'll leave that behind." I would pick and choose what I thought was right and true. I was so ignorant and full of hubris. This way of thinking, this path, leads to becoming lost and wrapped up in our own sense of self-importance. Orthodoxy, in contrast, is a Way of Life, it is a path, it is a prescribed framework for us to experience the fullness of the Faith...but, we all know this.

I had to learn that it's okay to have doubts. As Father Anthony (Coniaris) taught us in his book, **Eastern Orthodoxy: A Way of Life**,

"To say then that we have doubts is simply another way of saying that we are human. A Christian has no more reason to be ashamed of such doubts than he has reason to be ashamed of his faith. The two are inseparable. The doubt of the believer is a healthy doubt. It acknowledges that we do not know everything about our faith. It leads us on to more knowledge and, therefore, to growth."

For the Orthodox Christian, the answer to, "what is my purpose," is a simple one. And yet, it is very difficult to live in practice. Our purpose in life is to repent. To love and worship God so that we may be with Him as we were created to be. To receive our inheritance. In this way, ownership is the act of perseverance.

To own our role in this life...to own our place, our part, to own the fact that God accepts us even when we don't always accept Him, to have ownership over our sin and to repent, is to own the fact that we belong to Our Lord, God, and Savior, Jesus Christ. He owns us.

Everything we have was given to us by God. And ultimately belongs to God. This includes our life here on Earth. We are only stewards or caretakers of God's creation. Knowing this, and owning this perspective, encourages a sense of responsibility and accountability for how we manage and use our resources, talents, and time entrusted to us by God.

Ownership, in the Christian context, is a concept that goes beyond mere possession and highlights the spiritual responsibility to manage one's belongings with a sense of duty to God and each other—including those who are outside of the Church.

Owning your relationship in Christ, is to own what you know. What has been revealed to you and live it—to the best of your ability. This is what we are called to do by Jesus Christ. He covered this in His Sermon on the Mount, in the Gospel of Matthew.

In this aspect, ownership is a collaboration with God by living His commandments. But it is VERY difficult to do. In this way ownership is walking the narrow path.

As Jesus teaches us in Matthew chapter 7, verse 13, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."

I will close with a quote from Saint Paisios the Athonite. It helped me to understand how we can pursue a life of commitment to God, with Ownership, Engagement, and Generosity.

"Desire and effort must come from you. God will provide the power and the result."

To Him, be all glory, honor, and worship, In the name of the † Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, now and ever and to the ages of ages, Amen.

—Nikolas Kouzes



TWIN CITIES PAN-ORTHODOX LENTEN VESPERS

SUNDAYS AT 5:00 P.M. DURING GREAT LENT

Following each service we will gather for a Lenten meal and Fellowship.

MARCH 24

Triumph of Orthodoxy

St. Mary's Orthodox Cathedral

1701 5th St NE, Minneapolis, 55413

MARCH 31

St. Gregory Palamas

St. George Greek Orthodox Church

1111 Summit Ave, St Paul, 55105

APRIL 7

Veneration of the Holy Cross

St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church

1250 Oakdale Ave, West St Paul, 55118

APRIL 14

St. John of the Ladder

St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church

3450 Irving Ave S, Minneapolis 55408

APRIL 21

St. Mary of Egypt

St. Stephen Romanian Orthodox Church

350 5th Ave N, South St Paul, 55075

APRIL 28

Bridegroom Matins

St. Herman Orthodox Church

5355 38th Ave S, Minneapolis, 55412





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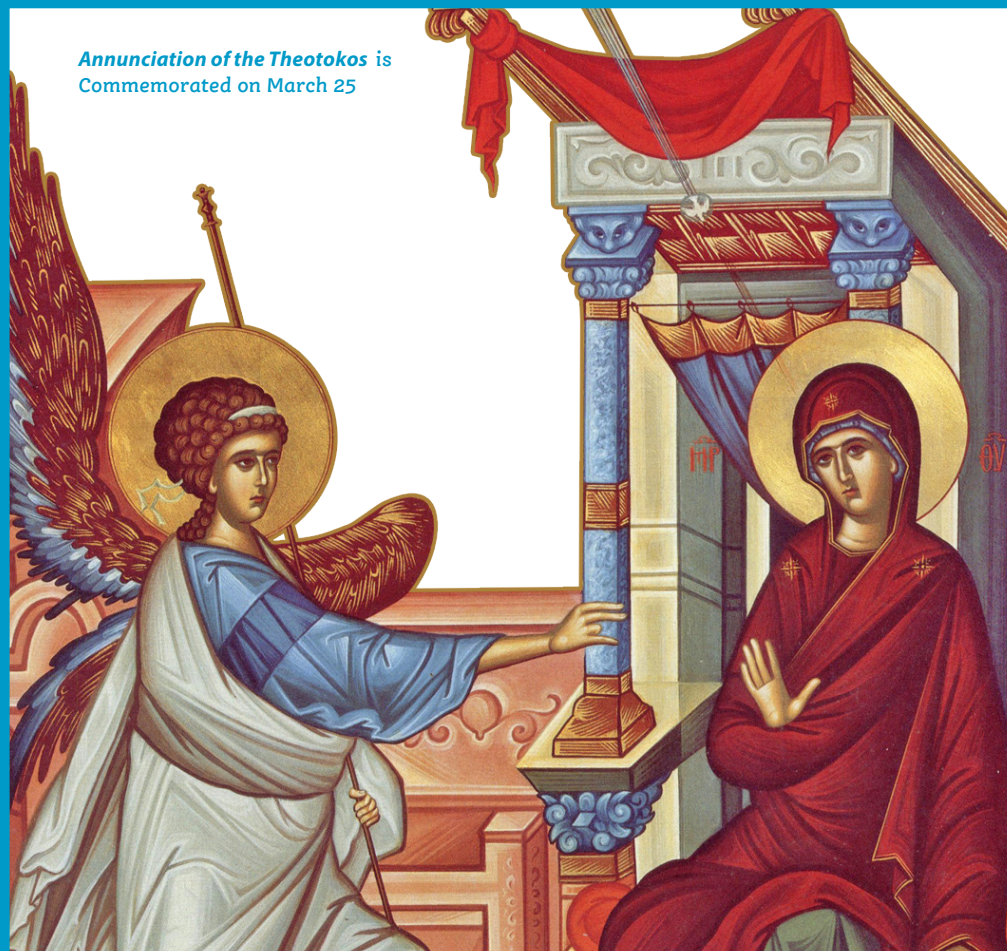
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Annunciation of the Theotokos is
Commemorated on March 25



THE MESSENGER

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PUBLICATION DEADLINES

The Messenger

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March 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Lenten Vespers March 24: St. Mary's Orthodox Cathedral March 31: St. George Greek Orthodox					1 7:00am-Men's Fellowship	2 9:00am-Bible Study 5:00pm-Great Vespers Bring a Friend Reception
3 Sunday of the Prodigal Son "The Messenger" Deadline 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy 11:30am-Greek Dance Practice	4 6:00pm-Greek Dance Practice	5	6 11:00am-Intercessory Prayer 11:30am-Women's Bible Study	7 9:30am-FAITH Play Group	8 6:00pm-Koliva Workshop	9 First Saturday of Souls 40 Martyrs at Lake Sebaste 9:00am-Bible Study 10:00am-Divine Liturgy 11:00am-4:00pm-Blood Drive 5:00pm-Great Vespers 7:00pm-FOCUS Benefit Concert
10 Judgment (Meatfare) Sunday 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy after Liturgy-Missions/Outreach Newcomer Mixer	11	12 6:15pm-Parish Council 6:30pm-Philoptochos Board	13 6:15pm-Parish Night	14	15 7:00am-Men's Fellowship	16 Second Saturday of Souls 9:00am-Bible Study 10:00am-Divine Liturgy 5:00pm-Great Vespers <i>Healing House Dinner and Bible Study</i>
17 Forgiveness (Cheesefare) Sunday 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy 11:30am-Philoptochos Mtg. 11:45am-Missions/Outreach	18 Clean Monday First Day of Great Lent 6:00pm-Service of Holy Confession 6:00pm-Greek Dance Practice	19 9:30am-FAITH Play Group 6:00pm-Open Gym Basketball	20 9:00am-"The Messenger" Mailing 11:00am-Intercessory Prayer 11:30am-Women's Bible Study 4:00pm-Holy Confession 5:30pm-Presanctified Liturgy 7:00pm-Lenten Dinner 7:00pm-HOPE/JOY Mini Mtg. <i>Grades 5 & 6 Confession</i>	21	22 4:00pm-Holy Confession 6:00pm-Salutations to the Theotokos	23 Third Saturday of Souls 9:00am-Bible Study 10:00am-Divine Liturgy after Liturgy-Celebration Preparations
24 Sunday of Orthodoxy 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy Annunciation Celebration 5:00pm-Vespers	25 Annunciation of the Theotokos 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy	26 6:00pm-Open Gym Basketball	27 4:00pm-Holy Confession 5:30pm-Presanctified Liturgy 7:00pm-Lenten Dinner 7:00pm-Jr. GOYA Mini Mtg. <i>Grades 11 & 12 Confession</i>	28 6:30pm-Koinonia 7:00pm-Stewardship Com.	29 4:00pm-Holy Confession 6:00pm-Salutations to the Theotokos	30 9:00am-Bible Study 10:00am-FAITH Play Group
31 Saint Gregory Palamas 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy Oratorical Festival 5:00pm-Vespers						