Loneliness vs. Community

The Gift of the Church Family

by Fr. Luke A. Veronis, pastor of Saints Constantine and Helen Church, Webster, Massachusetts

“America is suffering an epidemic of loneliness. According to a recent large-scale survey from the health care provider Cigna, most Americans suffer from strong feelings of loneliness and a lack of significance in their relationships. Nearly half say they sometimes or always feel alone or “left out.” Thirteen percent of Americans say that ZERO people know them well. The survey shows that loneliness is worse in each successive generation.”

Think about that! Nearly half of Americans say they sometimes or always feel “left out” or alone. And 13% say that ZERO people know them well! What a sad state of our contemporary society today!

These words were from the beginning of the article “How Loneliness is Tearing Us Apart” in the New York Times yesterday. Senator Ben Sasse of Nebraska goes on to say “loneliness is killing us,” literally, “with skyrocketing rates of suicide and overdose deaths in America. This year, 45,000 Americans will take their lives, and more than 70,000 will die from drug overdoses.” And to combat this loneliness, people are finding a sense of community online through the “polarized tribes forming on the left and the right in America. Essentially, people locate their sense of “us” [online] through the contempt peddled about “them” on the other side of the political spectrum.”

“Why are we becoming so lonely? One reason is the changing nature of work. Work is one of the key sources of friendship and community…. Yet the reality of the workplace is rapidly attenuating, as people hop from job to job, and from city to city… There’s also a pervasive feeling of homelessness: Too many Americans don’t have a place [a community] they think of as home — a “thick” community in which people know and look out for one another and invest in relationships that are not transient.

Sasse used a phrase coined in Sports Illustrated, how people increasingly lack that “hometown gym on a Friday night feeling.” We don’t have a place to gather together in a common spirit with our neighbors and community where we could lay aside certain differences — especially political differences — and connect with other people. Many Americans don’t have a place or community that creates a “deep sense of belonging.”

The article ends with Senator Sasse saying that “the trick is “learning how to intentionally invest in the places where we actually live.” In other words, being a member of a community isn’t about whether I [live in a small town and go to the Friday night game.] It is about the neighbor I choose to be in the community I wind up calling my home. Each of us can be happier, and America will start to heal, when we become the kind neighbors and generous friends we wish we had.”

Loneliness vs. Community continues on page 4.
Our Life Together

Baptism
Maxwell McMonagle
Parents: Liam & Natalie McMonagle
November 24, 2018

Deaths
Elaine Walker
November 27, 2018
Stamata Angelos
December 8, 2018
May their memory be eternal.

Thanks for the Memories!

- Fr. Anthony for offering me the opportunity to be an employee in the church office in 1986.
- The humbling experience of working with 12 priests over the past 32 years.
- Admiring the talents of fellow staff members who have been hired through the years to maintain and improve the logistics of running the daily operations of the church and all the programs that serve our church family and the community at large.
- Such fantastic programs of the Missions and Outreach realm that are in place due to the unselfish leadership of “many” talented and dedicated people.
- For the leadership of many parish council members who have advanced the financial stability of St. Mary’s, expanded the size of the facility, and enhanced the exterior beauty of the property.
- Community events being held at St. Mary’s enhanced by the Greek Festival has introduced the Orthodox Church to the community at large.

The most important aspects of all the involvement I’ve had as the church administrator are the people I have met and had the pleasure to serve. The part I will treasure most of all are the many friendships I have been blessed with through this experience.

Many thanks for being a part of my life.

Sylvia Kafkas

Share YourShelf
Stock the Shelves in January!
FOCUS Minnesota has found a new home! They are now located at 550 Rice Street in St. Paul (55103).
For the month of January, Share YourShelf will help them restock the food shelves!
We need your help. Please consider an office, school, or neighborhood food drive. Would you be able to collect 100 food items, or $100?

Needed items include:
- canned soup
- canned fruit
- mac and cheese boxes
- pasta (any kind)
- rice
- oatmeal
- peanut butter
- jam/jelly
- pasta sauce or canned tomatoes

Food items will be picked up throughout the month from St. Mary’s, and all monetary donations will go to FOCUS at the end of January.

St. Mary’s Church Staff

Priest
Fr. George Dokos
Associate Priest
Fr. Jason Houck
Attached Priest
Fr. John Kostas
Emeriti
Fr. Anthony Coniaris
Fr. Theodore Filandrinos
Deacon
Deacon Paul Kalina
Administrator
Julie Moricz
Parishioner Support/Communications
David Mertesdorf
Ministry Support
Doria Saros
Youth Director
Jonathan Klein
Music Director
Thespina Macres
Organist
Mark Macres

St. Mary’s Parish Council
President
Joseph DiGiovanni
Vice President
Dean Tortorelis
Secretary
Andrew Theodotou
Treasurer
Marshall Estep
Assistant Treasurer
Steve Rakes
Members
George Andreadakis
John Beauchamp
Paul Hastings
William M. Hoef
Dean Murdakes
Pamela Nelson
Randy Twito

www.stmarysgoc.org
Education, Fellowship, & Worship

Sunday Schedule
Saturday Great Vespers – 5:00 p.m.
Orthros – 8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Weekday Schedule

Tuesday, January 1
Circumcision of Christ
Saint Basil the Great
New Year’s Day
Orthros – 9:00 a.m.
Divine Liturgy – 10:00 a.m.

Friday, January 4
Royal Hours – 9:00 a.m.

Saturday, January 5
Eve of Holy Theophany
Orthros – 9:00 a.m.
Divine Liturgy with Great Blessing of Water – 10:00 a.m.
Great Blessing of Water – 1:00 p.m.
Hidden Falls Park, St. Paul
Great Vespers of Holy Theophany – 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, January 6 (December 24)
Holy Theophany
Julian Calendar Nativity Eve
Orthros – 8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy with Great Blessing of Water – 9:30 a.m.
Nativity Vespers and Veneration of the Miraculous Myrrh Streaming Iveron Icon and Anointing – 4:00 p.m.

Monday, January 7 (December 25)
Synaxis of John the Baptist
Julian Calendar Holy Nativity
Confessions – 8:30 a.m.
Festal Divine Liturgy and veneration of the Miraculous Myrrh Streaming Iveron Icon and Anointing – 9:30 a.m.

Thursday, January 17
Saint Anthony the Great
Orthros – 8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Friday, January 18
Saints Athanasios and Cyril
Orthros – 8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Friday, January 25
Saint Gregory the Theologian
Orthros – 8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Wednesday, January 30
Three Hierarchs
Orthros – 8:30 a.m.
Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Blessing of the River
The Minnesota Eastern Orthodox Christian Clergy Association (www.meocca.org), will hold the second annual Theophany/Epiphany Blessing of the Waters service on the Mississippi River on Saturday, January 5, 2019, at 1:00 p.m., at Hidden Falls Park, 1313 Hidden Falls Drive, St. Paul. The half-hour service is free and open to the public. The service will end with the local priests immersing a gold cross in the Mississippi River, symbolizing Jesus Christ’s baptism in the River Jordan 2,000 years ago.

Fellowship and Study Groups

Adult Senior Bible Study on Winter break

Intercessory Prayer
Wednesdays, January 2 and 16
10:30 a.m., Nave Chapel

Men’s Fellowship
Friday, January 4
7:00 a.m., Fireside Room

Saturday Bible Study
Every Saturday
9:00 a.m., Fireside Room

Senior Citizens on Winter break

Women’s Bible Study
Wednesdays, January 2 and 16
11:00 a.m., Fireside Room

Koinonia

Edina Koinonia
Thursday, January 24, 7:00 p.m.
Joan Calott’s home
952.944.9397

Lake Calhoun Koinonia
Sunday, January 27, 5:00 p.m.
Fr. George & Presbytera Christa’s home
612.825.1067

Northeast Metro Koinonia
Thursday, January 24, 7:00 p.m.
Costas & Barbara Nichols’ home
763.571.0460

South of the River Koinonia
Time and date to be announced
Mark & Elizabeth Skoog’s home
612.743.2789

West Metro Koinonia
Wednesday, January 23, 7:00 p.m.
Gus & Cristina Nicklow’s home
952.476.7624

Questions over Coffee
Second Sunday of Each Month
Lecture Room: 11:30-Noon
Beginning January 13, Fr. John will be available to lead a discussion about the practices and meaning of our Orthodox worship life: Liturgy, Lenten services, the sacraments, and prayer.

Seniors Citizens
The Senior Citizens’ group is now on winter break. The group will meet again on Tuesday, April 9, for lunch, meeting, and a program. See you in April!
Reading this article “How Loneliness is Tearing Us Apart” - especially during Thanksgiving weekend when many people spent beautiful time with their families, while so many other people sat alone on Thanksgiving day with no one to share the special national holiday with – made me think about the great blessing we all have to be a part of the Church! I look at our own Saints Constantine and Helen Church Family in Webster, and I believe that this is a community in direct response to the epidemic of loneliness which contemporary society suffers. The Church is NOT simply a building. The Church is a FAMILY; it is the FAMILY OF GOD which offers a deep sense of community to a broken world. Our Church Family is a place where people can find belonging, where we can feel accepted and loved for who we are, despite any brokenness or sinfulness we may have. The Church is a place where we can feel cherished, valued and respected. Above our, the Church is a place which can dispel the darkness and evil of the world, including the extreme loneliness many people feel, and experience the eternal and divine love of God. The Church helps us realize we are a part of a very special family – a family not only with the friends we meet every Sunday, but a family that is worldwide. I have traveled in Africa, Europe, Asia, Central America and the Middle East, and wherever I have gone, I have been welcomed with love by people of this beautiful worldwide Family.

And the love and belongingness we feel as a part of this family extends even beyond its global reach. We are a part of an eternal family that embraces all the faithful who have gone on before us – including our loved ones who have passed, as well as all the faithful saints who are a part of God’s holy Church. Whenever we come to Church on Sunday or any day to worship the Holy Trinity, we gather together with the saints of God, and realize we are never alone! “We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1) who make up God’s blessed family. We have a loving Father! We have our Lord Jesus Christ as our Brother and Friend! We have the Holy Spirit abiding in us! And we have a communion of saints, in heaven and on earth, who make up our great big eternal family. WE ARE A PART OF THAT FAMILY and we need to remember that we are never alone!!!

The Church, when we actually understand what the Church is, and when the local Church truly acts like the Body of Christ and lives out its mission as the Family of God, is surely an antidote to the epidemic of loneliness in our society today. In fact, the Church is the greatest treasure and blessing we have in our lives! It is the community that unites us to our Creator, and unites us to one another, in a communion of love! What greater treasure can there be?!?

We heard today’s Gospel story talk about how difficult it is for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Jesus even said, “It is harder for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven.” And yet, when we realize that our true riches are something far beyond any material possessions or wealth we may possess, but instead our true riches are the treasure of faith and fellowship found in the Church Family, in the Body of Christ, then we will realize that it is not impossible for a truly rich person to enter the kingdom of heaven. In fact, we experience the kingdom of God here and now, every Sunday and every time we gather together in the loving fellowship, friendship, and community of the Church, beginning in our communion with God and continuing in the loving fellowship of faithful brothers and sisters in Christ.

The antidote to loneliness can be found in the Church! May we all discover what a blessing the Church truly is, and honestly become active in being the Church!

Did You Know

St. Mary’s is blessed with so many diverse activities and individuals, each bringing their own talents and skills, including those who work in our office throughout the week. We wanted to provide you with some information to help you in the New Year and beyond. Help us help you by contacting the individual person when you have a need. One call or email is all it takes. If you are having difficulty connecting or getting a response, please contact our Parish Administrator for assistance!

Planning a Baptism or Chrismation? — Contact Doria
Need to block space for your meeting? — Contact Julie
Want to add an article to the monthly Messenger? — Contact David
Interested in helping teach Church School? — Contact Dena
Notice an item that needs to be fixed? — Contact Julie
Have a loved one moving to assisted living? — Contact Doria
Want to verify your stewardship contribution? — Contact David
House Blessings
During January and February, Fr. George, Fr. Jason, and Fr. John will be dedicating time each week for house or business blessings. They look forward to seeing as many parishioners as will allow them to visit! To schedule a blessing, please send an e-mail request to: frgeorge@stmarysgoc.org or call the Office, 612.825.9595.

Orthodox Game League
The winter Game League night is Saturday, January 12, 7:00 p.m., at Holy Trinity Orthodox Church (Archangel Michael Hall), 956 Forest Street, in St. Paul. Adults (age 18 years and older) are invited to enjoy time with each other and play games. Want to learn a new game? Want to play a classic? Want to teach a game? Then this is for you! Questions? Please contact Nikki Beauchamp, 612.910.2943. Please bring a munchie and/or dessert to share.

Please note that the Archangel Michael Hall is ACROSS the street from the church.

Pan-Orthodox Catechism Classes
The Winter/Spring catechism classes sponsored by the Minnesota Eastern Orthodox Christian Clergy Association (MEOCCA) will be offered Mondays beginning January 14 through April 8, 7:00-9:00 p.m., at St. George Greek Orthodox Church in St. Paul. Clergy from the various Twin Cities Orthodox churches will lead the classes. To register for the series, please go to the MEOCCA website, meocca.org, and click the link for the catechism classes. There is no charge for the class.

A Taste of Greece, 2019
It’s never too early to think about the next Festival! The 2019 Festival is scheduled, as usual, for the weekend after Labor Day. This year it is September 6, 7, and 8. The planning committee will begin meeting early in the new year and volunteer sign up won’t be too far off. We encourage everyone to give some thought to how each can help make this another successful Festival. Some areas that were low on staff this past year were clean up, volunteer room, as well as chairpersons to head up some of the various areas of the Festival. Give some thought to helping and be ready to step up when the requests are posted. You won’t regret it!

Cemetery Plots Available
Two burial plots in the St. Mary’s section of Lakewood Cemetery are available. Anyone interested in purchasing them are invited to contact Jimmy Theros, 612.889.5332.

Church Cancellation Procedures for Winter
The winter months are upon us and we want to ensure all our parishioners stay safe and don’t attempt to travel during icy or severe conditions. Here’s how we plan to keep you informed.

- Cancellations of events, activities, and services will be announced a minimum of two (2) hours prior to the start time.
- We will update our website and office voicemail announcing the cancellation as another opportunity for you to be notified.
- All individual group leaders (choir, church school, senior citizens, etc.) must notify the church office of your decision to cancel so we can make the necessary updates.
- The Parish Council President must also be notified of any cancellations, and no cancellations will occur without the blessing of our priests.

While we plan on always having scheduled services, no one should travel to church if road conditions in your area are dangerous. Please remain at home, giving thanks to God that at least a priest and chanter are leading the services praying for all of us.

Pan-Orthodox Ethnic Dance Party
Saturday, February 2, 2019
by Steve Selin
My fellow Orthodox friends! We need your help in starting a tradition of pan-Orthodox ethnic dancing. Come join, hand-in-hand, with your Orthodox brothers and sisters and celebrate the rich cultural roots that are present in our Twin-Cities community. Our youth and young adults have started something special at camp and are inviting their parents, grandparents, and everyone else, to come and connect through these simple and lively dances. Although we come from such unique and vibrant backgrounds, we stand as one in the Orthodox Church.

It is going to happen Saturday, February 2, at St. Mary’s Greek Orthodox Church in Minneapolis at 7:00 p.m. This free event is for all ages. We ask that you bring, if possible, a special appetizer or dessert to share. A cash bar priced to cover expenses will be provided. All will receive instruction in at least one Arab, Bulgarian, Greek, Romanian, Russian, and Serbian dance. All Orthodox parishes in the Twin Cities are invited. Please spread the word and invite your friends and family.

Reserve your spot with an RSVP. Go to our website, www.stmarysgoc.org and click on the link for the event. Please come and give it a try!
“Our thoughts determine our lives.”

For anyone who has thought—or is thinking—that their thoughts are not what they should be or what they want them to be, Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives: The Life and Teachings of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica is a grace filled resource of wisdom and insight. Elder Thaddeus (1914-2003), a beloved elder from Serbia, was immersed in the Church Fathers, so his wisdom is clear, kind yet firm, and filled with humility. His words speak to the heart of the matter and are clear invitations to repent of all that is harmful and grow in all that is good in every aspect of one’s life. Here is a sampling of Elder Thaddeus’s wisdom from the beginning of the book:

Our life depends on the kind of thoughts we nurture. If our thoughts are peaceful, calm, meek, and kind, then that is what our life is like. If our attention is turned to the circumstances in which we live, we are drawn into a whirlpool of thoughts and can have neither peace nor tranquility.

Everything, both good and evil, comes from our thoughts. Our thoughts become reality. Even today we can see that all of creation, everything that exists on the earth and in the cosmos, is nothing but Divine thought made material in time and space. We humans were created in the image of God. Mankind was given a great gift, but we hardly understand that. God’s energy and life is in us, but we do not realize it. Neither do we understand that we greatly influence others with our thoughts. We can be very good or very evil, depending on the kind of thoughts and desires we breed.

This is a book for everyone. It is a great companion—filled with inspiration as well as some warnings—for the journey through life to life.

Ministry of Iconography

Iconographer Deb Korluka will be offering a winter/spring series of icon classes. The schedule of 2019 classes is as follows:

**Session 1:** St. Mary’s Greek Orthodox Church
Thursdays from 5:30-9:30 p.m.
January 17, 24, 31, and February 7
Tuition cost is $135.00 plus materials.
Session 1 will concentrate on the prototype of “The Holy Face.”

**Session 2:** St. Mary’s Greek Orthodox Church
Thursdays from 5:30-9:30 p.m.
February 21, 28, March 7, 14, and 28
Tuition cost is $165.00 plus materials.
Session 2 will study an icon of “Weep Not for Me, O Mother.”

**Session 3:** The Basilica of Saint Mary
Saturdays during Great Lent from 9:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
March 9, 30, April 6, and 13
Tuition cost is $295.00 plus materials.
Session 3 will contemplate the sacrament of Repentance and will study and write an icon, one of two choices: St. Francis of Assisi or St. Seraphim of Sarov.

All sessions concentrate on technique along with a spiritual and theological study on the prototype.

Please register by sending a deposit of $75.00 to Icon Art Studios, 13921 127th Street North, Stillwater, MN, 55082.

All inquiries can be sent via e-mail to akorluka@aol.com or 612.889.5868.
Prayers for the Unborn and March for Life

Sunday January 20, 2019, is “Sanctity of Life Sunday.” As is our tradition here for the past ten years, we will offer immediately before Liturgy the “Service for the Naming and Commending of Children Who Have Died before Birth and Have Not Been Baptized.” These prayers have been written in response to the ongoing need of our families who have lost children by miscarriage, spontaneous abortion, or intentional abortion. Please join us at 9:15 a.m. on the Solea that morning. You are then invited to join us on January 22 for the annual March for Life which takes place at the State Capitol in St. Paul.

Orthodox Christians across the country will be joining in their local marches to speak out publicly against abortion, to influence their legislators to support pro-life legislation, and to remember all the unborn babies who have been aborted as well as the mothers who have been wounded physically, emotionally, and spiritually. To date since January 22, 1973, the number is over 58 million.

The bus will pick us up at St. Mary’s at 9:15 a.m. and stop at St. George Greek Orthodox Church, then proceed to the Cathedral of St. Paul for the 10:30 a.m. Service for the Unborn (we have reserved seating). Following the service, we will march together with our banner to the Capitol building for the program. The bus picks us up around 1:00 p.m. for the return to St. Mary’s.

We recommend you bring your children (many Catholic schools close to join the march). It’s a wonderful way to evangelize our faith beliefs. Dress warm – we never know what the weather will be!

Love in Action: FOCUS Minnesota

From the mustard seed beginning on Lake Street in Minneapolis to the Orthodox Church of America location at 550 Rice Street in St. Paul, FOCUS is embarking on a new journey in love and humility to serve those in need. See the new site by going to focusmn.weebly.com

Since the FOCUS closing in 2018, St. Mary’s has collected money to support reopening FOCUS Minnesota. We are excited to announce that during January 2019, St. Mary’s is committed to increase our giving efforts with a food drive. We need to restock FOCUS Minnesota food shelves. We will make personal contacts with volunteers and provide details by using our St. Mary’s website and e-mails, Sunday bulletin and information signs.

This FOCUS facility will serve many more in need and encourage a renewed commitment to love one another. There are many current volunteers who are excited. Those who have worked with FOCUS remember the stories of those FOCUS has helped. FOCUS guests have expressed appreciation as they put on a jacket, shared a meal, or selected food-shelf items for themselves and their family.

Again, during the month of January, we will assist FOCUS Minnesota by having a food drive to restock the shelves. St. Mary’s, through Mission and Outreach, has continued the program “Share Your Shelf,” and now adding “LOVE IN ACTION Food Drive.” We ask that all of the current FOCUS volunteers invite additional volunteers to participate in this new beginning. They can volunteer for this January restocking by giving their name to Hope Kennedy or leave your name and email at the Welcome Table. What a good way to begin the New Year by serving others.

Below is a summary report from FOCUS Minnesota website, WE ARE HOME!:

What a past year for FOCUS, a year of transition and movement from leaving one space to find their new home, located at 550 Rice Street, St. Paul. The uncertainty day to day of where a new FOCUS could find the right building to offer all the services for those in need with continued Christian love and caring. With the amazing change from basement to floor level, this building will have so much more to offer with ease for the clients.

The FOCUS Minnesota website shows three main areas for us to become involved: Time (hand out groceries, clothes, dinners), Talent (grant research and writing, marketing, program development, social work, public health, community outreach), and Donations.

Joyce Uptown Foodshelf

St. Mary’s has received a postcard of thanks from the Joyce Uptown Foodshelf for the donation of 2,113 pounds of food (2,000 pounds was received during the Greek Festival), during September 2018. St. Mary’s support for the Uptown community is sincerely appreciated.
The New Year marks the start of the annual Philoptochos Membership Drive, and we extend an invitation to all women of the parish to join us! In addition to serving as the charitable arm of the church, Philoptochos supports the parish with service and funding, and promotes Orthodoxy and the spiritual growth of our congregation. Dues are self-determined, meaning you choose what amount to give, and all levels of membership are welcome – from active attendee and volunteer to financial supporter only. Watch for a letter in the mail with more details.

UN-Decorate the Church
Wednesday, January 9, 10:00 a.m.
We’ve enjoyed the beautiful Christmas décor, and now it’s time to put it away. Please join us to take down the ornaments, ribbons and greenery. The trees will be dismantled and carried to storage by others, so no heavy lifting is required. Chair: Andrea Tiggas.

Vasilopita Sunday
Sunday, January 13
Sunday, January 13, is your last chance to buy Vasilopita (sweet bread) and support St. Basil Academy, a home for children in need! Following the community cutting of vasilopita after Liturgy, stop by the Philoptochos table to select from an array of loaves at various price points. Thank you for your support! Chair: Toni Bazakos.

We will be slicing bread for Sunday’s distribution on Saturday, January 12, at 10:00 a.m. in the church kitchen. Join us if you’re able, bread knife in hand.

Book Club Discussion
Monday, January 28, 6:45-9:00 p.m., Kalina home
All women of the parish are invited to participate in our new book club! The first read is “God’s Path to Sanity” by Dee Pennock, and the discussion will be led by Diakonissa Alexandria Kalina. The Kalinas are opening their home to us: 6413 Cherokee Trail, Edina, 55439.

Twenty books were ordered and a few remain – pick up your copy for $18.00 at the Philoptochos Table on Sundays after church. Discussion questions will be e-mailed to participants in mid-January. At the first meeting, attendees will determine how often to meet, best location, possible future book titles, and the like.

Thank You…
To Toni Bazakos, for chairing the baking of 150+ loaves of Vasilopita (sweet bread) in honor of St. Basil and for fundraising for St. Basil Academy. Thank you also to her assistants Paulette Hastings and Tina Menter.

To Diane Achterling and Mary Kay Twito, for hosting the Christmas Day reception after Liturgy.

To Christmas Decorating Chair Andrea Tiggas, and her volunteers: Nick J. Boosalis, Athena Dascalos, Alice Mikhail, Tia Muchulas, Louis Tiggas, Elena Tudor, Mary Kay and Randy Twito.

To Mary Kafkas, for selling jewelry and purses at the Redeemer Holiday Craft Sale. With her additional efforts, the total amount of funds raised by our Bling Sale for Fire Relief in Greece reached $1400!

Coming Up in February 2019
Sunday, February 3
Sweet Sunday and Membership Tea
Sunday, February 10
Board Meeting, 11:30 a.m., Meeting Room 2
Saturday, February 23
Ladies Night Out!
Sunday, February 24
Philoptochos Meeting, 11:30 a.m., Terrace Room
Sunday, February 24
Spring Fillo Sale Begins

Hellenic Post 129 American Legion Celebrates 100 Years
Nationwide, 2018 marked the centennial year for the American Legion. St Mary’s American Legion Hellenic Post 129 celebrates its 100 years in 2019. In honor of this occasion, a special evening is being planned for Saturday, November 9. Mark your calendar, plan to attend and watch for more information in “The Messenger!”
St. Mary’s Stewardship Sunday Testimonial

Parishioner, Sophia Rouman, shared the following powerful testimonial with us on Stewardship Sunday, November 4, 2018, following the Liturgy:

Reverend Fathers, fellow parishioners, good morning.

As part of our journey towards Stewardship Sunday, I would like to share with you what St. Mary’s means to me.

We are created in the image of God and to be strong and faithful stewards of the church. We are to use our time, talents and treasures that God entrusted to us, and use them to help one another. Stewardship is our way of doing so. Stewardship includes volunteering to serve on church committees, helping to organize and execute church functions, singing in the choir, teaching Sunday School, cleaning and maintaining the Church, and other forms of ministry. It is engagement in the total life of the church.

I have taken it upon myself this semester to begin to learn Ancient Greek and through some discovery, I learned that “steward” is actually related to the Greek word οἰκονόμος (oikonomos), which literally means “house manager.” We each have roles in our own households that we are responsible for and that are very important. Without proper care of the household, dysfunction can, and does, arise. So, if we put time, energy, and care into our own homes, we need to also put that same, but really much more, effort into our true home, our church.

My family is deeply connected to St. Mary’s in many ways. My mother was raised in this church by two parents who treated St. Mary’s like it was a second home to them. My papou and yiayia were faithful servants of this Church and parish, consistently giving of their time and talents in many ways. This is how my parents raised me as well, to know this church not only as a place of communion with the Lord, but also as my home.

Our church channels stewardship in many different ways, giving us many opportunities to connect with our faith and our community. There are numerous examples at St. Mary’s where stewardship has been evident. St. Mary’s has provided me many opportunities to learn and grow in my faith, and this is due to the various ministries and strong programs that we have available. It is through all of us, the giving of time, talent and treasure, that the ministries and opportunities are available to every parishioner. Some examples of these different opportunities are the Sunday school program, the Oratorical Festival, Greek dance, GOYA, prosforo, and festival baking, Greek Independence Day planning, and IOCC events, to name a few.

St. Mary’s also supports philanthropic organizations such as FOCUS Minnesota, an outreach of the Orthodox Church predicated on love. It is a non-profit organization aimed at serving those less fortunate in our Minneapolis/St. Paul area. FOCUS is a way for us to connect with our St. Mary’s community, as well as our broader community.

One of the ministries special to me is the Oratorical Festival. I had the opportunity during high school to participate in our Metropolis’ St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival multiple times. It was because of many people’s willingness to give of time and talent that established and continues to support this festival. Whether you are a judge, a resource to the participants, or help organize the event itself, each role is vital to the Festival’s success. The Oratorical Festival was a fulfilling opportunity for me, which would not have been possible without your stewardship to the program. That experience greatly influenced the person I have become. The Oratorical Festival taught me how to truly construct my thoughts, how to put emotions into words, speak publicly, and most importantly, explore and practice my faith. In fact, I probably wouldn’t be standing here today able to deliver this talk if it weren’t for that opportunity to learn and grow my skills.

I am very grateful that we continue to encourage the younger generations to participate in this very important learning moment, not just for the participants themselves, but also for parishioners. The Oratorical Festival is a way for our youth to use their God-given talents to teach themselves and others about our faith, as well as an opportunity to connect our faith to our life. I remember the question topics relating to contemporary issues and how we can resolve these issues through our faith. I hope to see this vital path of stewardship continue for many years to come.

St. Mary’s is also a place I come when I just need a place to think. Life is full of distractions and noise, and it is important to remember who is always there, and who will always listen. Since I was a child, the church has been a place I can come to focus, remember what is most important, and ask for the Lord’s guidance and mercy.

I will conclude with this; St. Mary’s is a home to each and every one of us, and it is because of the members of this household that we are able to truly serve the Lord and are able to do his will, as stewards.

—Sophia Rouman
Just a reminder on how you can help make the ARK OF THE COVENANT campaign a success?

- Prayerfully consider sharing your time and talents by joining one of St. Mary’s ministries in 2019.
- Prayerfully consider increasing your annual stewardship contribution in 2019.
- Complete the Time and Talent and the Financial Commitment forms for 2019.
- Return both forms to the Church Office before December 31, 2018, if possible, or early in the new year.

For more information, contact:
- Diakonissa Alexandria Kalina at 952.913.7540 or ackalina@yahoo.com
- Athena Mihas at 612.387.3890 or athenamihas@gmail.com

We really appreciate your participation in our 2019 Stewardship Campaign. Your contributions of Time, Talent and Treasure make a significant difference to our Parish community. You are the STEWARDS OF OUR FAITH!

Weekday Coffee Time

We are always overjoyed to see so many faithful at the various weekday Divine Liturgies and other group gatherings each month. The friendships we develop over coffee and tea are often long lasting, and we are grateful that so many people call St. Mary’s home.

To assist with this fellowship and allow our office staff to concentrate on their responsibilities, we have purchased a new coffee maker for use in the kitchen area of the Fireside Room. It’s a simple machine, with easy step-by-step instructions. All we ask is that you designate someone from your group to be responsible for preparing the coffee and then cleaning the pots at the end.

St. Mary’s will continue to supply the coffee, cups, napkins, and other needed items. We encourage you to bring a snack to share if that is appropriate. We pray this new enhancement will make our fellowship time stress free for all.
Metropolis of Chicago Forms Young Professional Board to Advise the Metropolitan and the Metropolis Council

CHICAGO, IL, December 5, 2018 – The Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago today announced an open invitation for young adults and emerging leaders, ages 21-40, to apply for the newly created Young Professional Advisory Board of the Metropolis.

The new initiative, conceived by His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael, is intended to be an opportunity for young adults to participate in a leadership capacity for the benefit of the Metropolis.

Once established, the Metropolitan and Members of the Metropolis Council will rely on 24 individuals chosen from across the Metropolis for advice, consultation and feedback related to the business of the Metropolis. Advisory Board Members will participate in monthly meetings to discuss and review the initiatives of the Metropolis. In addition, four members of the Board will serve as ex officio non-voting members of the Metropolis Council and will participate in its regular meetings. All members will serve a two-year term.

“Diversity of opinion is important to us and we expect to benefit greatly from the creativity, perspective and energy of young adults of the Metropolis,” His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael said. “Since members of the Advisory Board will have my attention, and that of the Metropolis Council, I am confident this initiative will help build several, strong bridges between the current and future generations of leaders of the Metropolis.”

The formation of the Young Professional Advisory Board follows the launch of the Roundtable program, which is designed to foster a long-term dialogue between Greek Orthodox young adults and the Metropolitan.

Young adult parishioners of the Metropolis interested in applying for the Young Professional Advisory Board can do so by e-mailing the YAL Chicago Board. Also, questions and comments can be e-mailed directly to YAL Chicago Board at yalchicago@gmail.com.

About the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago
Tracing its roots back to 1923, the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago is the diocese of Greek Orthodox faithful in Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Wisconsin as well as northern Indiana and southeastern Missouri, consisting of 58 parishes and two monastic communities. The Metropolis is one of nine Metropolises in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and is presided over by His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael. The central offices of the Metropolis are located in Chicago, Illinois. For more information, please visit: http://chicago.goarch.org

For More Information:
Chris Varones
312.213.3887
chris.varones@aesopgroup.com
Children and Youth

What’s Happening?

**Faith Group**
0-5 Year Olds and Parents
- Wednesday, January 9
- Thursday, January 24
  9:30-11:00 a.m.
  Great Hall and Terrace Room

**HOPE and JOY**
Kindergarten-Grade 2 and Grades 3-5
- Saturday, January 5
  2:00-4:00 p.m.
  Bowling at Bowlero Eden Prairie
  We will be going bowling this winter at Bowlero Eden Prairie
  12200 Singletree Lane, Eden Prairie.
  Please RSVP to Georgia Andron, greekborba@hotmail.com,
  with your child’s shoe size.
- Wednesday, January 16
  6:15-8:00 p.m.
  HOPE and JOY at Parish Night
  Fruit of Goodness: Be the Bee

**Junior GOYA**
Grades 6-8
- Wednesday, January 16
  6:15-8:00 p.m.
  Junior GOYA at Parish Night: Fruit of Goodness: Be the Bee
- Friday, January 18-Monday, January 21
  Winter Camp at Camp Courage with St. Mary’s OCA
  The theme is "The Sacrament of Marriage: Mystery, Monasticism, and Martyrdom." Some topics that are to be covered will include dating and relationships, purity, choosing the right partner, challenges in relationships, modern day issues concerning the Sacrament, and the wedding ceremony itself. Transportation is not provided. The cost is $180 per child by December 28. St. Mary’s GOC will subsidize $130 of the $180, but you will have to pay for Camp up front. To register, visit: www.stmarysoca.org/youth/saints. Please let Jon know if you register.

**Senior GOYA**
Grades 9-12
- Wednesday, January 16
  6:15-8:00 p.m.
  Senior GOYA at Parish Night:
  Fruit of Goodness: Holiness in Action
- Friday, January 18-Monday, January 21
  Winter Camp at Camp Courage with St. Mary’s OCA
  The theme is "The Sacrament of Marriage: Mystery, Monasticism, and Martyrdom." Some topics that are to be covered will include dating and relationships, purity, choosing the right partner, challenges in relationships, modern day issues concerning the Sacrament, and the wedding ceremony itself. Transportation is not provided. The cost is $180 per child by December 28. St. Mary’s GOC will subsidize $130 of the $180, but you will have to pay for Camp up front. To register, visit: www.stmarysoca.org/youth/saints. Please let Jon know if you register.

**Basketball Practices ~ in the Great Hall**
Sunday, January 6
  12:45-1:45 p.m. - JOY basketball practice
  1:45-2:45 p.m. - Girls GOYA basketball practice

Saturday, January 12: 2:30-4:30 p.m.
  2:30-4:30 p.m. - JOY basketball practice
  (check with Coach Tina)

Sunday, January 13
  12:45-1:45 p.m. - Girls GOYA basketball practice
  1:45-2:45 p.m. - Boys GOYA basketball practice

Sunday, January 20
  12:45-1:45 p.m. - JOY basketball practice

Saturday, January 26
  2:30-4:30 p.m. - JOY basketball practice
  (check with Coach Tina)

Sunday, January 27
  12:45-1:45 p.m. - JOY basketball practice
  1:45-3:45 p.m. - Boys GOYA basketball practice

Our Children and Youth Mission Statement
To cultivate a safe and welcoming environment for kids by nurturing healthy relationships within the church family. We will teach the youth by building a strong foundation of knowledge, and together, we will experience the Orthodox tradition by following the four circles of youth ministry: Liturgia (Worship), Diakonia (Service), Martyria (Witness), and Koinonia (Fellowship), leading our youth to develop, by their own free will, a personal relationship with God and to pursue union with Him.
**November Recap**

Back in November, the HOPE/JOY youth group had fellowship with one another by attending the musical, “Mary Poppins Jr.” at Stages Theatre. The Junior GOYAns focused on their stewardship by assisting IOCC set and decorate the tables in the Great Hall for their Dinner Fundraiser. In the spirit of St. Nicholas, the Senior GOYAns are adopting a military troupe overseas and made cards (see photo below) and care packages to send to them! Finally, our basketball practices are now in full swing as we are preparing for the Basketball Tournament in Milwaukee in February.

**Church School News**

Sunday, January 6: No class (Theophany)
Classes resume the normal schedule on Sunday, January 13.

Follow the GOYAns on Instagram: St_Marys_GOYA

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A **Blessed 2019** to All!
When you, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan River, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. And the voice of the Father bore witness to you, and called you his beloved Son. And the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the word as true and steadfast. O Christ our God who did appear and enlightened the world. Glory to you!

—Hymn of Theophany, 1st Tone
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<tr>
<th>Sunday</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 Circumcision of Christ</td>
<td>2 10:30am-Intercessory Prayer</td>
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<td>4 Eve of Holy Theophany</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saint Basil the Great New Year’s Day</td>
<td>11:00am-Women’s Bible Study</td>
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<td>9:00am-Men’s Fellowship</td>
<td>9:00am-Royal Hours</td>
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<td>9:00am-Orthros</td>
<td>10:00am-Divine Liturgy</td>
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<td>9:00am-Orthros</td>
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<td>Office Closed</td>
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<td>Great Blessing of Water</td>
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<td>1:00pm-Blessing of Water</td>
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<td>2:00pm-HOPE Bowling</td>
<td>5:00pm-Great Vespers</td>
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<td>6 Holy Theophany</td>
<td>7 Synaxis of John the Baptist</td>
<td>8 6:00pm-Open Gym</td>
<td>9 9:30am-FAITH Play Group</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>12 Eve of Holy Theophany</td>
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<td>Julian Calendar Nativity Eve</td>
<td>Julian Calendar Holy Nativity</td>
<td>6:15pm-Parish Council</td>
<td>11:00am-Orthros</td>
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<td>9:00am-Bible Study</td>
<td>2:30pm-JOY Basketball</td>
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<td>&quot;The Messenger&quot; Deadline</td>
<td>8:30am-Confessions</td>
<td>9:30am-Festal Divine Liturgy for Holy Nativity</td>
<td>9:30am-Divine Liturgy</td>
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<td>9:30am-Orthros</td>
<td>5:00pm-Great Vespers</td>
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<td>8:30am-Orthros</td>
<td>9:30am-Divine Liturgy</td>
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<td>9:30am-Divine Liturgy</td>
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<td>12:45pm-JOY Basketball</td>
<td>1:45pm-Girls’ GOYA Basketball</td>
<td>4:00-pm-Nativity Vespers</td>
<td>11:00am-Women’s Bible Study</td>
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<td>Jr./Sr. GOYA Winter Camp</td>
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<td>13 Sunday after Theophany</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16 9:00am-&quot;The Messenger&quot; Mailing</td>
<td>17 Saint Anthony the Great</td>
<td>18 Saints Athanasios and Cyril</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:30am-Orthros</td>
<td>9:30am-Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>6:00pm-Open Gym</td>
<td>10:30am-Intercessory Prayer</td>
<td>8:30am-Orthros</td>
<td>8:30am-Orthros</td>
<td>9:00am-Bible Study</td>
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<td>11:30am-Coffee Talk w/Fr. John</td>
<td>11:45pm-Jobs Workers’ Mtg.</td>
<td>12:45pm-JOY Basketball</td>
<td>11:00am-Women’s Bible Study</td>
<td>9:30am-Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>9:30am-Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>2:30pm-JOY Basketball</td>
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<td>12:45pm-Girls’ GOYA Basketball</td>
<td>1:45pm-Boys’ GOYA Basketball</td>
<td>6:00pm-Parish Night</td>
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<td>Jr./Sr. GOYA Winter Camp</td>
<td>5:00pm-Great Vespers</td>
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<td>8:30am-Orthros</td>
<td>9:15am-Prayers for the Unborn</td>
<td>11:15am-Philoptochos Meeting</td>
<td>11:30am-Chant Ensemble</td>
<td>7:00pm-Edina Koinonia</td>
<td>8:30am-Orthros</td>
<td>9:00am-Bible Study</td>
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<td>9:30am-Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>11:30pm-Chant Ensemble</td>
<td>11:45pm-Mission/Outreach</td>
<td>12:45pm-JOY Basketball</td>
<td>7:00pm-Northeast Metro Koinonia</td>
<td>9:30am-Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>2:30pm-JOY Basketball</td>
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<td>12:45pm-JOY Basketball</td>
<td>Jr./Sr. GOYA Winter Camp</td>
<td>2:30pm-JOY Basketball</td>
<td>1:45pm-Boys’ GOYA Basketball</td>
<td>5:00pm-Lake Calhoun Koinonia</td>
<td>Jr./Sr. GOYA Winter Camp</td>
<td>5:00pm-Great Vespers</td>
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<td>27 Fifteenth Sunday of Luke</td>
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<td>30 Three Hierarchs</td>
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<td>8:30am-Orthros</td>
<td>9:30am-Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>9:30am-Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>6:30pm-Choir Rehearsal</td>
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<td>9:30am-Divine Liturgy</td>
<td>12:45pm-JOY Basketball</td>
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