

the Light



NOVEMBER 2021
NEWSLETTER



**3RD ANNUAL AMÉN
VIRTUAL RETREAT**

November 20, 2021
10:00 am - 1:30 pm EST

DOMSE CLERGY & WINTER RETREATS

St. Elias, Atlanta, GA | **In person**
Clergy Retreat: January 26 - 27, 2022
Winter Retreat: January 28 - 30, 2022

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Parish Spotlight

**ST. GEORGE ANTIOCHIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH**

CLERGY

The V. Rev. Father Kamal
"Damaskinos" Al-Rahil
The Rev. Deacon Eric "Raphael" Bateh

FEAST DAY

St. George – celebrated April 23rd
if it does not fall during Great Lent,
otherwise during Bright Week

EMAIL: stgeorgejax@comcast.net



St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church | Jacksonville, FL

St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church is unique in that it was founded by the Middle Eastern community from the holy land. Given that Saint George is known as the faithful servant of God and invincible martyr, it is only fitting that the Middle Eastern community would collaborate and find a way to practice their Christian faith here in America. Through church activities such as hosting the Midwinter Delegate Meeting (for over

sixteen years), a \$100 Pick-A-Number Fundraiser hosted by the Parish Council, Easter cookies and lunches prepared by the Ladies Auxiliary (AW) our church continues to spread the word of Christianity and flourish.

We have been blessed at St. George, and at the request of His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS, we were able to help a new mission in the diocese with some liturgical items. Also, our

YAM (YAF), Teen SOYO, and AMEN groups give back to the community by volunteering time and monetary donations to outreach programs such as The Salvation Army, Daniel's House, Hubbard House, and the Sulzbacher Center, which provide food and shelter for the hungry, the orphaned, and victims of domestic abuse.

To find out more, click here
for our Facebook page





FEATURED ORGANIZATION

Teen SOYO

Teen SOYO (or the Society of Orthodox Youth Organization) is focused on teaching our youth and teens how to live the Orthodox Christian life through worship, witness, service, and fellowship. This year, the president is James Elliott (St. John; Memphis, TN), the vice president is Briana Ogan (St. Ignatius; Franklin, TN), the secretary is Evangeline Oliver (St. Elizabeth; Murfreesboro, TN), the treasurer is Christian Mounayyer (St. George Cathedral; Coral Gables, FL), and the social media coordinator is Joshua Kiem (All Saints; Raleigh, NC). One of Teen SOYO's main focuses this year has been on bringing DOMSE's teenage family closer together by providing activities to revitalize their fellowship after the pandemic. During the pandemic, Teen SOYO hosted several virtual retreats, including the Winter Retreat and the Cyber Spring Retreat, which provided the teens an opportunity to meet together even from their homes. However, over the summer, a great number of our teens and youth were also able to gather in person for Camp Saint Thekla, which has always been one of the most beloved activities for DOMSE's Teen SOYO. Teen SOYO is open to all teenagers (ages 13-19), and anyone who would like to join SOYO can contact their local parish's SOYO president or parish priest to let them know that they are interested in the work that we do.

To find out more about our organization or our past and future events, visit us on Instagram, Twitter, or email us.



DOMSESOYO

domsesoyo@gmail.com



Upcoming Events

NOVEMBER

3RD ANNUAL AMEN VIRTUAL RETREAT

November 20, 2021

10:00 am - 1:30 pm EST

DECEMBER

AMEN LEADERSHIP AND LOCAL CHAPTER PRESIDENTS MEETING

December 14, 2021

8:00 pm - 9:00 pm EST

AKATHIST TO ST. JOSEPH THE BETROTHED

December 26, 2021

4:00 pm - 5:00 pm EST

JANUARY

DOMSE CLERGY & WINTER RETREATS

St. Elias, Atlanta, GA

Clergy Retreat: January 26-27, 2022

Winter Retreat: January 28-30, 2022

JUNE

DOMSE PLC 2022

St. John, Memphis, TN

June 15 - June 18, 2022



IF YOU HAVE ARTICLES OR SUGGESTIONS FOR THE LIGHT NEWSLETTER, PLEASE EMAIL THEM TO DOMSENEWSLETTER@GMAIL.COM

Fr. Nathaniel Trembley, Editor
Deborah Abdo, Manager
Chelsea Beazley, Graphic Designer
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Bishop Nicholas

the
Light

AMEN

ANTIOCHIANMEN.ORG

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN

[DOMSEWOMEN](https://www.instagram.com/DOMSEWOMEN)

[ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN OF DOMSE](https://www.facebook.com/ANTIOCHIANWOMENOFDOMSE)

YOUNG ADULT

[DOMSEYAF](https://www.instagram.com/DOMSEYAF)

SOYO

[DOMSESOYO](https://www.instagram.com/DOMSESOYO)

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CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

[DOMSECHRISTIANED](https://www.instagram.com/DOMSECHRISTIANED)

Mission Spotlight

Christ the Good Shepherd Orthodox Mission Concord, NC

MISSION

"Growing to be like Christ through love, humility, and suffering."

CLERGY

The Rev. Father Thomas Fernandez,
Pastor

FEAST DAY

Pentecost – celebrated with a big picnic, good food and music, and games for the children

WEBSITE: www.orthodoxconcord.com

EMAIL: office@orthodoxconcord.com



CHRIST_THE_GOOD_SHEPHERD_NC



CHRISTTHEGOODSHEPHERDCONCORD

Christ the Good Shepherd Orthodox Mission began during the COVID-19 pandemic, when twenty families joined together in the summer of 2020 to begin an Orthodox Mission under the guidance of His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS. At first, we met for prayers led by parishioners on a family's farm. But then, in the fall of 2020, the V. Rev. Fr. Paul Solberg joined us from Wake Forest and began leading weekly Vespers. Shortly thereafter, Dn. Thomas and Sh. Stacie Fernandez joined us to support our children's ministry, since we have over 60 children! In short order, the local Roman Catholic church offered to let us use their facilities to meet for worship, and in January 2021 we were given our parish name – Christ the Good Shepherd – by His Eminence Metropolitan JOSEPH. In March of 2021, Fr. John Finley delivered our antimins, and we celebrated our first Divine Liturgy. Then, in August of 2021 – almost exactly one year after a handful of families met to pray during

the pandemic, thinking, "Wouldn't it be nice to have a church in our community?" – Dn. Thomas Fernandez was ordained to the holy priesthood and began to serve as our parish priest. God has been faithful to provide for us every step of the way!

Fr. Thomas now serves as our pastor, but we thank Fr. Paul Solberg, our interim pastor who helped to start and support the mission in its beginning days. There are many opportunities for community and fellowship at Christ the Good Shepherd – the Antiochian Men's group meets weekly for a movie or a fire outside, the Antiochian women meet monthly for fellowship and book study, and our youth group and children's ministry are growing! We have had over 20 baptisms and chrismations in our short time together, in addition to welcoming over 20 new catechumens to our community. If you live in Concord, or the surrounding areas, we would love to have you worship with us!



Words from Sayedna Nicholas



As we approach the Nativity Fast, we beseech the Lord Jesus Christ to help us make progress on the road to salvation and to further our development of becoming God-like; for His birth has set up our journey as Orthodox Christians to accomplish this goal through His life on earth, while His death on the Cross and His resurrection have made it abundantly clear how we follow Him.

For this issue, some Diocesan news includes the ordination of Clint Hamm to the Holy Diaconate on July 18, 2021, as Dn. Timothy, and his assignment to St. Elizabeth Church, Murfreesboro, TN, and Dn. Thomas Fernandez' ordination to the Holy Priesthood as Fr. Thomas on August 7th, 2021, and his assignment as the Pastor of our newest mission Christ the Good Shepherd Mission, Concord, NC. In addition, I am happy to report that the 2021 Fall Retreat, in Franklin, TN during the period of October 15-17 was a record-breaking success. The final number of participants at this in-person retreat was two hundred and forty-seven (247) clergymen and parishioners, and sixteen (16) speakers presented wonderful insights into the topic of healing. Nevertheless, I leave the detailed report to Kh. Destinie Winn in this issue of the Light.

As a continuation of the Spiritual corner of my monthly address, I would like to introduce three additional virtues that augment the three that I presented in October. These virtues are important because they keep us aligned with the Orthodox Church and maintain us on our path to becoming God-like.

First, Self-Control is defined as mastery over lusts of the mind and the flesh. Lack of self-Control leads to chaos in one's life and loss of direction at the very least. In actuality, it would be embedding ourselves in the world's wrongful ways that shall vanish: "For all that *is* in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life – is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing

away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:16-17). Self-Control is one of the most important foundational virtues as it can be the underpinning on which one can build other virtues.

Second, Humility is seeing oneself as we are seen by God. It is accomplished by attributing all good and every success in our life to God, "for every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from thee, the Father of Lights" (James 1:17). Humility does not mean degrading ourselves. Nor does it mean displaying certain external behaviors or demeanor. Our Lord was humble, but He did not exhibit those characteristics. Rather, He showed us perfect humility as the Son of God when He washed the feet of His disciples: "If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. for I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:14-15).

Third, Obedience is the willful following of instructions that are given by someone upon whom the Church has invested authority. Obedience cannot be forced upon people! If it is, then it would be called slavery rather than obedience. But it is worthy to note that obedience is not degrading to the person! It does not devalue the person! Obedience is a sign of spiritual strength, not a symbol of weakness. Christ Himself was obedient to His Father as he revealed during His prayer at the Garden of Gethsemane: "He went a little farther and fell on His face, and prayed, saying, "O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.""

As I did previously, I pray that the Lord Jesus grants us all additional strength and wisdom to practice these virtues diligently and serve Him in what is best for humanity to become God-like.

But lastly, on an administrative note, please be ready to participate in the annual AMEN virtual Fall Retreat, which is scheduled on November 20th, and register for the annual in-person Clergy Retreat, which will be held on January 26th and 27th, followed by the annual in-person Winter Retreat, which will be held on January 28th through the 30th. Both of these in-person retreats will be held at St. Elias Church, Atlanta, GA. God bless you all!



DOMSE Fall Retreat 2021

BY KH. DESTINIE WINN (ALL SAINTS CHURCH, RALEIGH, NC)
PHOTOS BY KH. DESTINIE WINN & ELIZABETH BACLIG

When word spread about the Fall Retreat for DOMSE, I was thrilled! At first, I didn't know what to expect, since we are relatively new to the Diocese, and this was my first time attending a retreat in person. We loaded up our car and headed out for the 8-hour drive to Franklin, Tennessee. I was told ahead of time just how beautiful the drive from North Carolina is, but seeing it in person, I was blown away! As we drove through the winding roads of the Smoky Mountains, I was in awe of how majestic the tree covered mountains are with their wispy low-hanging clouds. Then, as we neared the end of our drive, through the rolling hills of Franklin, we made a sharp turn down into a lush green valley and quickly discovered the oasis at the bottom which is St Ignatius Orthodox Church. If you've not visited this parish, be sure to add it to your bucket list! It's a beautiful glimpse of heaven on earth. Walking into the temple took my breath away!

Little by little, Clergy, laity, families, and individuals trickled into the registration room to receive their name tags. Joyous reunions, hugs, smiles, and laughter filled the room. The energy was palpable. I saw kids

running around making new friends, including my own. Truly the Spirit of the Lord was with us, offering us a chance at spiritual renewal. We checked our small children into the childcare and geared up for a wonderful weekend of fellowship.

To begin the retreat, His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS spoke to us and rejoiced at the opportunity to meet together in person again after a long period of time apart. Through his guidance, the focus of the retreat was on healing, and the Scripture for the retreat was Jeremiah 30:17: "I will restore health to you and heal you of your wounds," says the Lord."

We received nourishment for both our souls and body. We were not only nourished with the most scrumptious food (yum), but also with lectures from professionals and clergy on the healing powers that the Church offers us. Important topics were discussed surrounding humility, repentance, addiction, relationships and being intentional. Each topic had both a spiritual and practical application in our lives, especially in light of the past year and a half. After each

lecture, there was time set aside for Q&A which allowed us to dive even deeper into these topics. In addition to these lectures, we were given the opportunity to attend break-out sessions. These sessions were offered as a smaller group and gave a more intimate opportunity to learn more about the Theology of Icons, A Practical Introduction to Byzantine Chant, Choir, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd and Sacred Arts in Sunday School, Prison Ministry, and Young Adults Fellowship. As if that wasn't enough to nourish us, we were able to participate in regular Liturgical life as well, Vespers every evening and the Divine Liturgy on Saturday and Sunday morning.

As Saturday came to a close, we attended Vespers, ate supper together, and had one final opportunity to gather in our fellowship groups: Antiochian Men, Antiochian Women, Teen Soyo and YAF (Young Adult Fellowship). And when we drove away, I felt such a sense of peace and joy. I am thankful for all the hard-working men and women who labored to put this lovely weekend together for us and that allowed the Holy Spirit to do His work in our hearts.



More From DOMSE's Fall Retreat



Editor's Corner

Our Lord Jesus Christ says that all men will know that we are His disciples if we have love for one another (John 13:35). And while Christian love for one another is expressed in many different ways and can take on many different forms, one of them is the joy that we experience when we come together as a church community to celebrate the divine services. The warmth that we have for one another in prayer, the strong sense that everyone is welcome, and the conviction that each and every one of us can take the next steps in our spiritual life within this particular community if we will only submit ourselves to Christ – these things create a quiet but charged atmosphere that draws us deeper into the life of the Holy Trinity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

This is something that became apparent to me when we were finally able to gather together as a Diocese at St. Ignatius Orthodox Church for DOMSE's annual Fall Retreat from October 15th to 17th. After more than a year and a half of extra distance and caution during the Coronavirus pandemic, and as a newcomer to the Diocese, it was such a joy to simply be together during the Divine Liturgy. Looking around at the church, with its beautiful iconography, and seeing His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS, together with all of the brothers – my fellow priests and deacons, as well as all of the faithful – my

brothers and sisters in Christ, I was filled with an aching and throbbing sense of thankfulness. Like the disciples who "disbelieved for joy" when they encountered our Lord Jesus risen from the dead (Luke 24:41), it was so shocking to be a part of a larger community again – shocking to experience something so good that had been impossible for so long. Here, I recognized that the feeling of a thankfulness that hurts is also a kind of love, even if it is love that is still being filtered through a certain amount of disbelief.

But for us who are in Christ there is no reason to continue to disbelieve. For just as our Lord Jesus addressed the doubts of His disciples by eating with them and opening the Scriptures to them, we too can join together in godly fellowship as we plumb the depths of the faith. This is what happened at the Fall Retreat – we ate together, we attended the talks, and then we continued to discuss what was said as we ate together again. But much of the same is available for any of us who fully and faithfully participate in the weekly life of our parishes. Looking ahead, the Winter Retreat at St. Elias Orthodox Church in Atlanta, GA is just around the corner for those who are able to make the effort. And for everyone else, we can take full advantage of our local parish life in the meantime. Because Christ is in our midst! He is, and ever shall be!