

# the Light

OCTOBER 2022  
NEWSLETTER**ANNUAL AMEN  
VIRTUAL RETREAT**

November 19, 2022

10:00 am - 1:30 pm EDT - Zoom

**DOMSE CLERGY &  
WINTER RETREATS 2023**

January 24-29, 2023

Details to come!

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## Parish Spotlight

**ST. MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH****CLERGY**

Very Reverend Father Peter Shportun

**FEAST DAY:** The Dormition of the Most  
Holy Theotokos (August 15)**EMAIL:** [stmaryschurch@bellsouth.net](mailto:stmaryschurch@bellsouth.net)**WEBSITE:** [stmaryschurchwpb.org](http://stmaryschurchwpb.org)

## St. Mary Orthodox Church West Palm Beach, Florida

In 1959, with the blessing of Metropolitan Antony (+1966), fifteen dedicated families established Saint Mary Orthodox Church of West Palm Beach, Florida. Named after their ancestral home parish of Saint Mary, in Douma, Lebanon, the first liturgical services were held at the Syrian Lebanese American Club, and were led by Fr. Abraham Zaine, a retired priest living in Delray Beach. As the church community grew, property was purchased on Florida Mango Road in West Palm Beach, and a new church and hall were constructed with the first services held in the new church during Holy Week 1964. Over the 63 years of existence, the Saint Mary's Community has been ministered to by fourteen priests. The current priest is the Very Reverend Father Peter Shportun who has pastored the community since January 1, 2012.

Over the years, Saint Mary's Church has evolved from a small church of 15 families of Middle Eastern descent to a spiritual home to over two hundred

*(continued on page 2)*

(St. Mary - continued from page 1)

parishioners, which are a combination of first, second and third generation families from the Middle East, as well as those from multi-ethnic backgrounds. In addition, numerous "seasonal parishioners" call Saint Mary home during the winter months. Since the pandemic, an increased number of families and individuals have made Saint Mary their home. Saint Mary provides ministries and activities for all ages including Orthodox Christian Education through Sunday School, Bible Study and Orthodoxy 101; SOYO, and its companion group SMIT's (SOYO Members in Training) for our 11- and 12-year old's; The Saint Mary's Ladies Society and A-Men. Outreach to those to the needy in Palm Beach County has been a constant throughout the years, following the Gospel lesson taken from Matthew 25. Parishioners work with the Homeless Coalition and the Lewis Center to assist those who are homeless; Vickers House to provide food (Thanksgiving Boxes of Love) and creature comforts to families in transition and Angel Tree Gifts at Christmas through one of the local elementary schools to less fortunate children.

The highlight of the year has always been our parish feast day celebration. Throughout the first fifteen days of August, Paraklesis Services are held nightly. Vespers and Artoklasia held on the eve of the feast is a true Pan Orthodox gathering of priests and the faithful with the church filled to capacity. The subsequent Divine Liturgy and Feast Day Dinner is a celebration of community. Family Nights, the Annual Hafli, Trunk or Treat, Pre-Advent Thanksgiving Luncheon, the Super Bowl Party, and Sunday Luncheons and Fellowship Hours are just a few of the social activities that bring the Saint Mary's Community together for fellowship and growth. However, the most important aspect of Saint Mary's is centered around the Holy Altar which include Orthros and Divine Liturgy each Sunday morning beginning at 8:50 AM, Wednesday evening Vespers at 6:30 PM, as well as the celebration of feast day Divine Liturgies and other liturgical services throughout the ecclesiastical year.



## Upcoming Events

### OCTOBER

#### AMEN VIRTUAL BIBLE STUDY

October 20, 2022  
7:00 pm - 8:00 pm EDT  
Zoom

### NOVEMBER

#### AMEN LEADERSHIP AND LOCAL CHAPTER PRESIDENTS MEETING

November 15, 2022  
7:00 pm - 8:00 pm EST

#### ANNUAL AMEN VIRTUAL RETREAT

November 19, 2022  
10:00 am - 1:30 pm EST  
Details to come!

## 2023 JANUARY

#### DOMSE CLERGY & WINTER RETREATS 2023

January 24 - 29, 2023 (Tentative)  
Clergy Retreat: January 24 - 26  
Winter Retreat: January 27 - 29  
Details to come!

### JUNE

#### DOMSE 2023 PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE (PLC)

June 14 - 17, 2023 (Tentative)  
St. George Cathedral, Miami, FL  
Details to come!

IF YOU HAVE ARTICLES OR SUGGESTIONS FOR THE LIGHT NEWSLETTER, PLEASE EMAIL THEM TO [DOMSENEWSLETTER@GMAIL.COM](mailto:DOMSENEWSLETTER@GMAIL.COM)

Fr. Nathaniel Trembley, Theology Editor  
Deborah Abdo, Editor and Manager  
Chelsea Beazley, Graphic Designer  
Sh. Shell Keim  
Bishop Nicholas





## FEATURED EVENT

# DOMSE Fall Retreat 2022

## A SOYO PERSPECTIVE

By Mary Anna Meese | St. Anna Orthodox Church | Columbia, TN | Photos by Elizabeth Baclic

Saint Ignatius Church in Franklin, TN, graciously hosted the annual fall retreat for the third time this year and the spiritual benefits were evident. Each day I was increasingly sure God's hand was on the hearts of the clergy, leaders, hosts, and volunteers of the 2022 fall retreat. The morning of day one (Friday) was filled with excited smiles and tearful embraces. It is a beautiful thing to gather in prayer together. That is how we started our day on Friday. A simple yet divine gathering of morning prayers led by Fr. Peter Nugent. Shortly following morning prayers was a spiritual retreat session by Fr. Stephen De Young, the author of "God is a Man of War" as well as other familiar books. His session was titled "Finding Beauty in God's Creation" and he dove into the significance of the different days

of Creation. Certain important points such as the unfortunate absence of connection between us and God's creation were discussed. Fr Stephen fearlessly plunged into the vitality of feasting and connecting with the people we love. During this engaging talk, SOYO gathered for icebreakers, games, and Dn. Marek introduced us to our theme, "The Beauty of Participating in The Christian Family." I was extremely impressed by the inclusivity and general kindness in our amazing group of teens. Each day at this retreat ended the same way, vespers followed by assembling for fellowship and a meal.

Saturday morning was brimming with smiles, activities, and fellowship. Once again, we gathered in prayer together, followed by brunch and a

group viewing of the Camp St. Thekla video immediately following. One of the most beautiful moments of the entire retreat was all camp alumni, staff, and campers singing the troparion of St. Thekla aloud for everyone to hear. After brunch was finished, everyone made their way over to the church for a session titled "Gender Euphoria: The Joy and Struggles for God's Design" by Fr. John Oliver. From my perspective nearly everyone, even most of the teens, were completely captivated by his words. There wasn't a distracted or uninterested face in the room. He compassionately broke down the gravity of the war on sexual purity and traditional marriage. Our DOMSE clergy make enthusiastic, yet gentle, speakers who give us much spiritual food to think about. Shortly

*(continued on page 4)*



*(Retreat - continued from page 3)*

following this session, time was set aside to engage in a rare experience of asking our beloved clergy our burning questions. Then our youth gathered to assemble hygiene bags for those in need. At each retreat, there are service projects like this for our SOYO to take part in. After that, workshops were once again in full swing, and the teens gathered in the nave with Dn. Marek to discuss our favorite parts of the retreat and bring up any points of interest. After great vespers and dinner, the night was sadly ending. The teens had

the privilege of spending time talking with his grace, Bishop NICHOLAS over s'mores. The YAF had a chance to go off-site and enjoy each other's company over bowling. And, during the same time, both the AMEN group and the Antiochian Women went off-site to fellowship over a meal.

The next morning brought the retreat to a close with a hierarchical divine liturgy and fellowship hour. There is so much beauty in connecting with our Orthodox community every year and I can tell

everyone leaves the retreat a little different. After attending this event for the third time, I can confidently say it is my earnest recommendation that you don't miss the 2023 fall retreat!





# The Light is Celebrating 1 year!

**THANK YOU**  
for joining us on this journey!



Bishop Nicholas



Fr. Nathaniel Trembley  
Theology Editor



Chelsea Beazley  
Graphic Designer



Deborah Abdo  
Editor and Manager



Sh. Shell Keim



## Words from Sayedna Nicholas

DOMSE, through the grace of God, keeps breaking records of participation for spiritual retreats! The 2022 Fall Retreat broke the record with 253 faithful participating at St. Ignatius Church, Franklin, TN. As I always state, the number itself is not important! However, it indicates the spiritual and fellowship growth in the diocese and denotes reaching more of the faithful on a regular basis. It is worthy to note that there was a large number of first timers at the Fall Retreat, which is very encouraging. God willing at some point in the future, together we, as a diocese, will reach every faithful member and encourage all to be closer to God. The ultimate goal is to become God-like through daily steady and constant spiritual progress. May God help us all achieve this lofty goal. We profusely thank the Diocesan Ministry Council (DMC) members, Father Philip Begley, Fr. Bob Stanford, Eric Beard, all the faithful of St. Ignatius, and all the speakers who worked diligently for months to prepare for the retreat and put forth such an organized and spiritual retreat. It could not have been done without you! My hat is off to you. In addition, the men have their **annual Fall AMEN retreat**, November 19, 2022. The customary stimulating speakers will give incentive and motivation for continued spiritual growth. I personally look forward to this retreat. At this point in time, we will start to shift gears to begin planning for the **2023 Clergy and Winter Retreats** at the end of January. We are looking forward to seeing you all at St. Elias Church, Atlanta, GA. Further information on the retreats will be forth coming.

Despite the hardship that our God-protected archdiocese has been going through, we need to persevere and be laser-focused on our personal spirituality and our diocesan spirituality. This is the only way not to be swept up into anxiety, an unfocused spiritual life, and gossip. For this reason, I urge all to continue efforts to concentrate on our diocesan matters and personal spiritual concerns that we can affect rather than worrying about issues that we have no control over. We look forward to further directions and wisdom from our Father in Christ, Patriarch JOHN X. May God help him and grant him courage, wisdom, and strength to direct the ship according to the wind of the Holy Spirit.

**May God bless you and may  
the Holy Trinity protect you all.**



## FEATURED ORGANIZATION

# Teen SOYO

## OFFICER INTRODUCTION: DOMSE SOYO PRESIDENT

Olivia Baca | St. Ignatius Orthodox Church, Franklin, TN

Hello everyone! My name is Olivia Baca, and I am so excited to be your new DOMSE SOYO President. I can't wait to get to know all of you; but in the meantime, I'll tell you all a little bit about myself.

I live in Franklin, Tennessee, and attend St. Ignatius Orthodox Church with my parents and five younger siblings. I'm currently a homeschooled senior in high school with a love for organizing, writing, and re-reading Anne of Green Gables over and over. One of my favorite hobbies is to play music. I've been playing the violin since I was eight years old. Between

myself and the rest of my family, we cover everything from piano, guitar, cello, mandolin, and ukulele. We also love to chant and sing in the church choir.

Ever since I was little, I always looked up to the SOYO teens, just waiting for my turn to hang out and play games with the "cool kids." Now, having been a part of SOYO for several years, I know that SOYO is much more than that and I am so grateful for all the ways it has shaped me. SOYO not only connects us with the teens at our local parish, but with other Orthodox teens around the whole archdiocese.

It provides teens a place to ask hard questions, an opportunity to serve others alongside close friends, and learn about ourselves and our identity in Christ.

I can't wait to see what this year will bring and look forward to meeting you all in person, God willing!



## Theology Editor's Corner

Everyone knows about Florida's beaches, but not as many people know about the state's freshwater springs. At each one of these hidden gems, crystal clear and deep blue and turquoise water constantly flows out of the ground at a temperature of 72 degrees – offering swimmers a welcome cool down during the hot summer months and manatees a warm refuge when the waters of the Atlantic become too cold for them during the winter. Florida's springs receive a constant flow of pure water from the depths of the earth and then pass it on to all the plants and animals that live downstream.

As Christians, every one of us can be a pure, life-giving spring because God wills to pour out the infinite riches of His divine mercy, life, grace, and love into each

one of us. But we can only receive these blessings by constantly passing them on to everyone else around us, for according to St. John the Theologian, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us, if we love one another (1 John 4:12). Thus, we can only become like God and contain everything that He is by constantly overflowing the limits of our own banks with an active love that ministers to the needs of others. On the other hand, when we are selfish and try to hold onto our own lives or other earthly blessings, we become a stagnant cesspool – unable to enliven anyone else or to receive the fullness of God's divine life ourselves. As we seek to love one another, may we be filled to overflowing with the grace of the Holy Spirit since our Lord Jesus Christ has promised to give us water that becomes in us a well springing up to eternal life! (John 4:14)