

the Light



DECEMBER 2022
NEWSLETTER



**AMEN VIRTUAL
BIBLE STUDY**

December 15, 2022

7:00 pm - 8:00 pm EST - Zoom



**CAMP ST. THEKLA
WINTER CAMP 2023
(WAMP)**

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Parish Spotlight

ST. ELIZABETH ORTHODOX CHURCH

CLERGY

Rev. Fr. John Oliver

Dn. Timothy Hamm

FEAST DAY: St. Elizabeth the New
Martyr, July 18

WEBSITE: stelizabethtn.org



St. Elizabeth Orthodox Church | Murfreesboro, TN

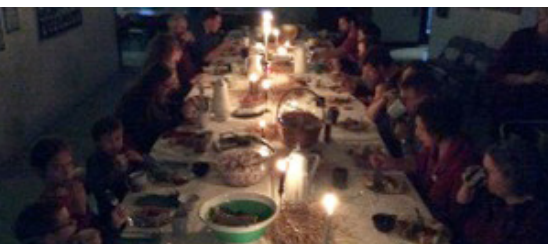
The fourth century marked a critical moment in the development of the Christian movement. Gasping for air after the longest and most fierce persecution to that point, courtesy of a deranged Diocletian, the Church awakened after the conversion of Constantine the Great to the dawn of a new and unprecedented freedom. A dramatic but dangerous relationship between a worldly State and an otherworldly Church began. With the new freedoms, some Christians grew comfortable while others grew

skeptical. And those wary of what this new governmental approval might do to the heavenly witness of the Church — “What hath Jerusalem to do with Athens?” — began clustering in far hills and deep countryside, giving sharp rise to a new monastic movement. Who is the Christian to be, they wondered: apart from culture or a part of culture? Or both? The fourth-century Basil the Great envisioned a “New City” — an experiment in both communal living and cultural availability — where men and women,

rich and poor, old and young would come together to share their gifts and become a healing place for all.

To grow into our own “new city” — becoming both heavenly minded and earthly good — is our hope at St. Elizabeth Orthodox Church, in Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Like many parishes in DOMSE, we began as an intimate home fellowship. The founders of St. Elizabeth’s had been members of two regional Orthodox

(continued on page 2)





churches but nursed a desire to establish an Orthodox presence closer to home. The new community was granted mission status in December 2004 by His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP, of thrice-blessed memory, and the first Divine Liturgy was celebrated, still in a home, in January 2005 with five families. No mission statement for St. Elizabeth's was necessary other than the cogent description of the four pillars of the Christian movement recorded in Acts 2:42. So, we adopted that for ourselves: The mission of St. Elizabeth Orthodox Church is to "continue in the apostles' doctrine [our educational life], in fellowship [our relational life], in the breaking of the bread [our sacramental life], and the prayers [our liturgical life]." Our parish is named in honor of Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna, granddaughter of Queen Victoria of England and aunt of Tsar Nicholas II by marriage. She had been Protestant —

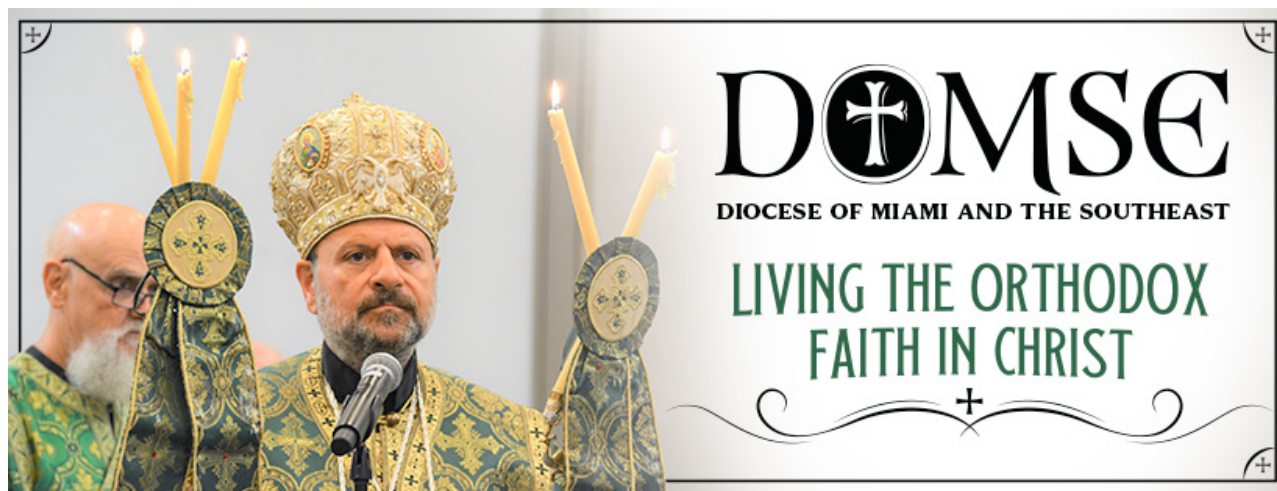


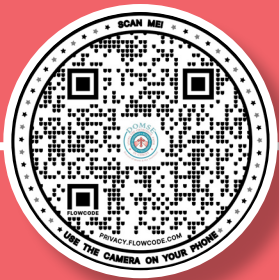
German Lutheran, in particular — but converted to the Orthodox Christian faith while in Russia. Her conversion was neither forced nor required by marriage, but a voluntary response to the truth and beauty she encountered in the faith of her adopted homeland — the same truth and beauty that inspire the members of our parish, and we pray, will inspire newcomers for generations to come.

Candidly, we have little interest in trying to manufacture growth, since all growth is a "God-thing" and will happen according to His timing, His purpose, and His glory. Instead, our focus is on creating the conditions within our spiritual family that an inquirer might find appealing to join. So, a vigorous laity participating in over thirty Ministry Teams covering all facets of parish life forms the bloodstream of our community — from a full Agape Meal after Divine



Liturgy to a Connections Team helping visitors meet church members of similar interests; from a Boyhood-to-Brotherhood initiative equipping our young boys with life skills to a Handmaidens' Ministry providing opportunities for our young girls; from a Mercy Meals fellowship offering nourishment to those in need to a Bereavement Team available for our beloved ones facing the end of life. Like every parish of DOMSE, we at St. Elizabeth's want to make positive contributions to each other and to our neighborhoods. We strive to become an ecosystem of well-being for "spirit, soul, and body" (1 Thessalonians 5:23), an increasingly distinct subculture where members rely on each other for personal strength and public witness, a "new city" dedicated to the glory of God and the Holy Orthodox Faith. A guiding question for us, then, is: if our church were to disappear, would we be missed?





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Young Adult Fellowship
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Teen SOYO

OFFICER INTRODUCTION: DOMSE SOYO SECRETARY

Brendan Wilson | St. Elias Orthodox Church, Atlanta, GA

Hello! My name is Brendan Wilson, and I am so happy to be able to serve in DOMSE as the secretary of Teen SOYO. I am excited to meet all of you in person, God-willing, at the upcoming Winter Camp at Camp St. Thekla, Parish Life Conference, and other DOMSE events throughout the year.

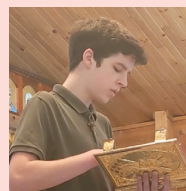
I currently attend a homeschool tutorial with my siblings, but when I'm not doing school, I like to play piano, ping pong, and recently I've gotten into chess. I also love byzantine chant and hanging out with my friends after church and at Teen SOYO events.

I was born in Tennessee, but two years ago my family and I moved to Hiram, Georgia. At my home parish, St. Stephen's Orthodox Church, my siblings and I love to serve in the church by chanting at the services. Everyone has a role in the church and a way to serve, so I hope that this year I can help fellow teens find what their role in the church is as well.

I recently turned 16 years old, and for the few years I've been in Teen SOYO, I have loved it so much. The teen years are some of the most important in anyone's life. That is why it is so important for teens to have access to a SOYO group. Being a part of SOYO is becoming increasingly more important as the evils of the world become more and more prominent in the lives of teenagers. Teen SOYO is so important and so good for teens, and God-willing in this upcoming year I can make it even better for them!

When I was younger, I always looked up to the teens. I always wanted to hang out with them, and that is no different from how the younger children are today. They look up to us so much, and we have to be good examples to them and look out for them as they become older and enter those important teen years.

May God grant us the grace to grow in our love for Him and His Holy Church through our participation in Teen SOYO and the liturgical life in the coming year.



IMAGES FROM YOUTH MONTH ACROSS THE DIOCESE



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Light

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ANTIOCHIANMEN.ORG

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DOMSEWOMEN
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Words from Sayedna Nicholas

I would like to start my December 2022 address of The Light by giving you an update on my visit to Lebanon and my meetings with our Father in Christ Patriarch JOHN X. As you may know, His Beatitude asked the bishops of North America and the temporary committee he appointed to travel to Balamand, Lebanon to meet with him to discuss the next step(s) in the process of electing the new metropolitan. We met with his Beatitude individually and collectively. The meetings were very positive and constructive with one common goal: the well-being of our Archdiocese and the election of the new metropolitan. Having discussed the issues at hand, His Beatitude gave us his blessing to start the nomination process according to our archdiocese constitution and the patriarchate constitution under the supervision of His Eminence Metropolitan ANTONIOS, the Patriarchal Vicar for the Archdiocese. After the meetings concluded, the North American delegation met with His Eminence Metropolitan ANTONIOS, set the date for a preparatory Bishops meeting for December 2, 2022, set the date for a preparatory Board of Trustees meeting for December 3, 2022, issued the report that was immediately posted on the archdiocese website as follows: <https://antiochian.org/regulararticle/1395>, and set the date for the Nominating Convention for January 12 & 13, 2023. May the Lord God guide us all to carry out this process with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the archdiocese constitution, and the patriarchate constitution.

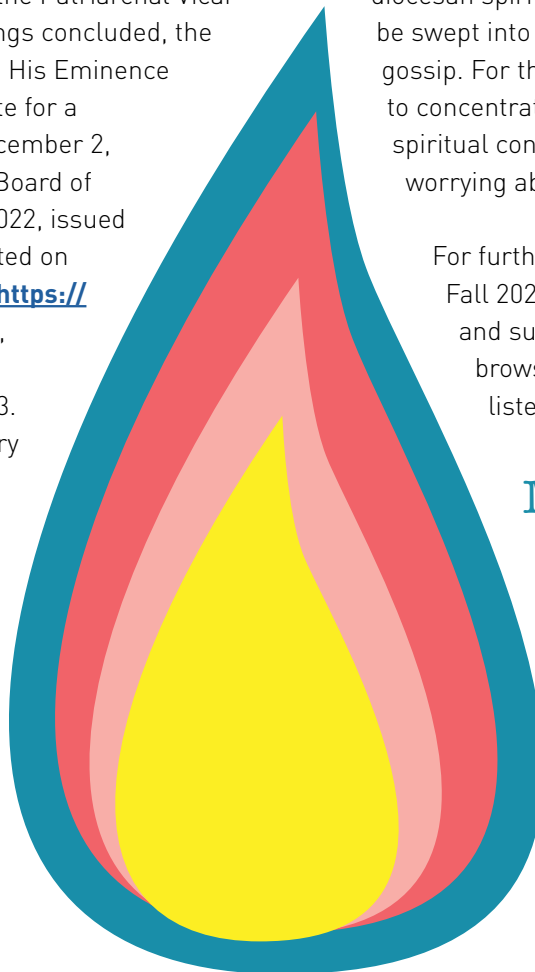
As the result of the preparatory meetings set for early December 2022, there will be further instructions in detail on how the election process will unfold. For a more detailed outline of the process, please refer

to my November 2022 article of The Light where I list, among other details, the archdiocese constitution and the patriarchate constitution qualifications of the candidates: [DOMSE TheLight Nov22.pdf](#)

Again and again, we all need to pray to our Lord Jesus Christ and ask Him to guide Metropolitan ANTONIOS to direct the nomination process and guide the clergy and the laity to vote for the three suitable candidates whose names will be submitted to His Beatitude for the Holy Synod to elect one of them to lead our archdiocese.

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 for this is the only way not to be swept into anxiety, unfocused spiritual life, and gossip. For this reason, I urge all to continue efforts to concentrate on the diocesan matters and personal spiritual concerns that we can affect rather than worrying about issues that we have no control over.

For further information regarding the rest of the Fall 2022 schedule and the 2023 winter, spring, and summer schedule, please point your browser to [DOMSE.org](#) and scroll down to the listed events.



May you have a Blessed Nativity, and may God bless you and may the Holy Trinity protect you all.



Theology Editor's Corner

One of the icons that I hold dear is the icon of the Three Holy Youths – Ananias, Azarias, and Misail who we celebrate on December 17th. These three Old Testament saints were thrown into a fiery furnace by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar because they would not bow down before a golden idol that he had set up and commanded everyone to worship. The icon shows the three saints in the flames of the furnace – united by a fire that does not consume them – and sheltered under the wings of the Angel of the Lord – the one who has “the appearance of... a son of the gods” (Daniel 3:25) or our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

This icon teaches us so much about our lives in this world, for it is here that we face trials at every turn – trials like pain, hardship, hunger, and want. No matter who we are, or what we do, or how much money we make, we still struggle with the process of aging, with various forms of injury or sickness, and with the prospect of our own death and the deaths of those that we love. In addition, there are so many tasks that we must do from day to day, but we often lack the physical strength, energy, or mental focus to accomplish them.

These trials can feel so difficult that they are like flames of fire

that threaten to overwhelm us and utterly consume us. However, they can also be a source of unexpected blessing, since they show us that we cannot trust in ourselves, or any material thing alone, but instead must put our trust in God – in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, our Shepherd and Angel who is able to guide us through every hardship and lead us safely home.

This is the lesson that we seek to learn during every fasting period of the Church. We experience the hardship of a small trial, so that we can be purified – so that we can let go of everything that we are holding onto too tightly and put our trust in God alone. We feel irritable and impatient when we cannot eat or drink whatever we want, whenever we want – when we cannot turn to rich foods for comfort and joy. But this small denial opens us up to experience more of God’s presence, power, and peace, which is the very thing that we need the most when we face larger trials.

In the Canon of Preparation for Holy Communion, we pray, “The wise children did not adore the golden idol

but went themselves into the flame and defied the pagan gods. They prayed in the midst of the flame, and an angel bedewed them with the words: The prayer of your lips has been heard... Sing of the acts of God who descended into the fiery furnace with the Hebrew children and changed the flame into dew and exalt Him as Lord throughout all ages.”

May the Nativity Fast and the trials that we face burn away every impurity from within us and may our Lord Jesus Christ be present with us in the midst of them all!



Upcoming Events

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2023

FEBRUARY

CAMP ST. THEKLA WINTER CAMP 2023 (WAMP)

February 17-20, 2023

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JUNE

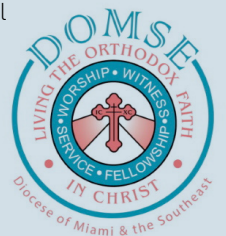
DOMSE 2023 PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE (PLC)

June 14 - 17, 2023 (Tentative)

St. George Cathedral

Miami, FL

Details to come!



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THANK YOU!

IF YOU HAVE ARTICLES OR SUGGESTIONS FOR THE LIGHT NEWSLETTER, PLEASE EMAIL THEM TO

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→ **CAMP ST THEKLA** ←

WINTER CAMP



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