

the Light



MAY 2023
NEWSLETTER



AMEN LEADERSHIP AND LOCAL CHAPTER PRESIDENTS MEETING

May 16, 2023
7:00 pm - 8:00 pm EST - Zoom

DOMSE 2023 PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE

St. George Cathedral, Miami, FL
June 14-17, 2023
[REGISTER HERE!](#)

CONNECT WITH US!



Parish Spotlight

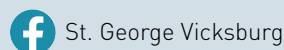
ST. GEORGE ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

CLERGY

V. Rev. Fr. Gabriel Karam, Pastor

EMAIL: stgeorge2709@gmail.com

WEBSITE: stgeorgevicksburg.org



St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church is in Vicksburg, Mississippi, and was founded in the latter part of the nineteenth century by a handful of people who migrated from Syria and Lebanon. They traveled up the Mississippi River to settle, live, and work in Vicksburg. Gradually, friends and relatives of this small group were drawn to this area in growing numbers, and it was evident that they were forming a community of their own, thousands of miles from their homeland. Although the early days were difficult and challenging, these courageous people faced up to the challenges of being in a new country. They worked hard, steadfastly stuck together, and soon found the strength to make every sacrifice necessary to acquire their own house of worship, an Orthodox temple. So deeply rooted was their religious faith that these

(continued on page 2)

St. George Antiochian Orthodox Church Vicksburg, MS



strangers in a foreign land, with the help of God, found the means, will, and determination to purchase their own church. The hardships and sacrifices were many, but the expression of their faith was soon to become a reality. From 1906 to 1910, services were held by the itinerant priest in homes.

In 1908 the community was given official recognition in the Arabic American ecclesiastical magazine, *The Word*, by Bishop RAPHAEL, the vicar bishop who headed the SyroArabian Mission of the Russian Archdiocese of North America. In 1910 the community purchased the old Gibson Memorial Church and transformed it into an Orthodox church. On February 22, 1914, Saint RAPHAEL, while touring around the country to visit the parishes under his care, came to Vicksburg on the weekend of Meatfare Sunday and dedicated the church.

St. George was one of the first Orthodox churches in the southern part of the United States and has played an important role in the lives of many Orthodox faithful, whether Lebanese, Syrian, Greek, Russian, Serbian, or other nationalities. The fourth pastor of St. George, Right Reverend Antony Bashir, who served from 1927 to 1929, later became Metropolitan Archbishop of the Antiochian Archdiocese of North America in 1936.

In 1960 the women of St. George began their tradition of the annual Lebanese Dinner, and St. George purchased its parish rectory. On April 3, 1966, the groundbreaking ceremony for the new St. George church was held, and in January 1967 the new church was consecrated by His Eminence Metropolitan PHILIP, then the newly consecrated Metropolitan for North America.

From its humble beginning, St. George has grown and developed over the years, and today's generation is fortunate to be the beneficiary of the early settlers of Vicksburg whose steadfastness in difficult times formed a community strong in the Orthodox faith. As the oldest Antiochian Orthodox Church in Mississippi and the oldest Antiochian Church in the South, St. George is blessed to be celebrating 117 years in Vicksburg.

Presently, we are proud to build upon the foundation laid over a century ago. Today, we are a community of all ages. We are dedicated to the teachings of the church.

The Antiochian Women of St. George hosted the 62nd Annual Lebanese Dinner in February serving dinners to approximately 3,000 guests. The women sponsor families at Thanksgiving and provide meals, adopt children at Christmas, plan the Paschal Picnic, and provide meals after Liturgy several times a year. The women are currently focusing on starting a book club to read and discuss books together and starting new activities for the women and the entire congregation both at the church and other places of interest as well.

St. George has a relatively new but active AMEN chapter. The men recently began a series of guest speakers, hosted a First Responders' Dinner, which will be an annual event, painted Sunday school classrooms, and sent Christmas cards to active military men and women from Vicksburg and the surrounding areas. Men and women from both groups help maintain the newly landscaped garden at the church adorned with three beautiful new mosaic icons.

Teen SOYO is small in number but

(continued on page 4)



NEW CHURCH DEDICATED — Above is an interior view of the new St. George Church, shown during one of the dramatic phases of dedication and consecration services Sunday. See additional story and photo on Page 1. (Staff Photo).





LENTEN RETREAT UPDATE

Antiochian Women

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN OF DOMSE PRESIDENT: Sh. Shell Keim

All Saints Orthodox Church, Raleigh, NC

Our DOMSE Antiochian Women met this past month for our second annual Hub & Spoke Lenten Retreat. I think most of us can think of a lot of negatives that came from our time of pandemic lock downs and separation. It was devastating for so many and thwarted our ability to fellowship face to face, share moments of joy and sorrow, connect to new friends, and stay connected to old ones. I think a silver lining of that season in our lives was gaining the ability to use technology to maintain those connections.

It is our desire as Antiochian Women to be able to fellowship together as often as possible. I relish the time we spend at retreats and conferences and love getting to know each of you. Travel is difficult in our diocese because of the great distances between our churches. Last year the Antiochian Women attempted to kill two birds with one stone and foster in-person fellowship while connecting all of us throughout the diocese. That's how the Hub & Spoke Antiochian Women's Lenten Retreat was born.

Thanks to our lovely ladies around the diocese, this year was a huge success! Each ladies group gathered their

members in a central location in their area. Some churches that were close in proximity were able to gather more than one ladies group together. Each group used a common ZOOM link to join the meeting. One location was the "hub," and that location hosted our guest speaker for all to listen to over zoom.

This year Sh. Shell Keim interviewed Fr. Kosta Petrogeorge on the topic of Women & Worry. Fr. Kosta is an Orthodox Priest and a certified family therapist. We explored things we worry about, where we worry, what the Church says about worry, and some practical tasks we can do to change our worry into work. This work is a work that is restful and productive. Christ and His Church tell us not to worry, so as we spent time together, we were able to be encouraged on our road to less worry and more prayerful work.

This year our retreat Hub was All Saints Orthodox Church in Raleigh, NC. The ladies of All Saints were joined by their sisters from St. Raphael Orthodox Church in Fuquay-Varina, NC. With all the ladies who zoomed in we had 140 Antiochian Women at the retreat! That is an amazing number, and I am grateful for the time that our ladies took during this busy season to come together and fellowship.

We were blessed to be joined by His Grace Bishop Nicholas as he visited with the faithful at Archangel Gabriel Orthodox Church in Lafayette, LA. We are grateful for the DOMSE Zoom account that allowed us the ease of connecting through technology. I pray that by God's grace we may all see each other at the PLC in Miami in June but until then it was a joy to be joined with so many of you Antiochian Women for this special event.





TOUCHING BASE WITH ONE OF OUR

DOMSE Scholarship Recipients!

Susan Reid | St. Paul Church, Naples, FL

ATTENTION TO ALL OF THE DOMSE HIGH-SCHOOL GRADUATES!

As you prepare to enter college this fall, don't forget that the DOMSE Scholarship application period is June 1 to July 1, 2023! We hope you plan to [submit your application](#).

We touched base with one of our past DOMSE scholarship recipients, Susan Reid, and asked her a few questions and advice to our-soon-to-be highschool graduates!

Q: What is something you want to share about college with other soon-to-graduate high school students that you wish someone had shared with you about college?

One thing I have learned from living on campus (away from my family) is the importance of having good friends. True friends act as good examples for each other. Each is willing to push the other toward excellence because of his/her love for the other. I realize such friendship is only possible through the grace of God. Although I miss my family, college has given me an opportunity to be a part of a community where I can grow alongside my peers in both knowledge and virtue.

Q: Have you found an opportunity to connect with other Orthodox Christian students on campus? (OCF, local parish, church friends from home who are also attending your school) If yes, how are you supporting each other in the Faith?

I have met a few other Orthodox students on campus. We sometimes offer to drive each other to church, and a couple of us have and plan to work as counselors again this year at Camp Saint Thekla.

Q: What are your top two college experiences so far?

One of my favorite college memories so far was attending an Honors College bonfire at our professor's house. Several of us played guitar and we all sang together around the fire. This wonderful experience gave me a sense of unity with my peers and professors. It helped me to feel at home.

Another favorite college memory is when three of my friends and I went for a walk by the woods near campus, and we climbed a tall pine tree. From up in the tree, we had a great view of the road and a Bojangles in the distance, standing all by itself. My friends and I have a lot of fun outside, whether we are studying or out for a leisurely walk. It is good to remember that as we are gaining the responsibilities of adulthood, we can still enjoy climbing the trees!

Q: What would you say to high school seniors in our diocese to encourage them to apply for the DOMSE scholarship?

Apply for the DOMSE scholarship! It is an easy application process, so why not give it a try?

(St. George - continued from page 2)

large in enthusiasm and service. The teens donate to the Storehouse Community Food Pantry, adopt two children at Christmas each year and shop together to buy for them, provide service to Rainbow Farms Therapeutic Riding Center, help the women with the Paschal Picnic, and shop for and make 25 Mother's Day baskets.

Our children attend Sunday school after Liturgy each week. Our church school children also join the teens throughout the year for the Fall

Festival, the Nativity Pageant, and the Paschal picnic. Exciting plans are underway for our children and teens for Fall 2023.

One of our favorite activities as a



church community is Family Spiritual Night held once a month in the home of different parishioners. Our people also enjoy when His Grace Bishop Nicholas visits our parish twice a year, meets with the various organizations, and celebrates Liturgy with us.

St. George is blessed with a rich history, and by God's grace we will continue to grow through the blessings of our fathers in Christ, Bishop Nicholas and Father Gabriel, and by honoring the memories of those who sacrificed so much to build our church.

2023 Parish Life Conference Diocese of Miami and the Southeast

IMPORTANT DEADLINES



Hotel Reservation Deadline

May 22, 2023



Event Registration

May 22, 2023



Bible Bowl and Oratorical Registration

June 1, 2023

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS



AW Meeting with Fr. Kamal Al-Rahil

Topic: Educating Our Next Generation



AMEN Meeting with Fr. Stephen De Young

Topic: Introduction to your Bible



SOYO Meeting with Fr. Herman Lasseter

Topic: Keeping our eyes on the image of
Christ through the imagery of peer pressure



Christian Ed Workshop with Anna-Sarah Farah

Topic: Preparing our Children for their First
Confession

June 14-17, 2023

Miami, FL

Register at www.miamiplc.com



FEATURED ORGANIZATION

Teen SOYO

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



Christ is risen! Now what?

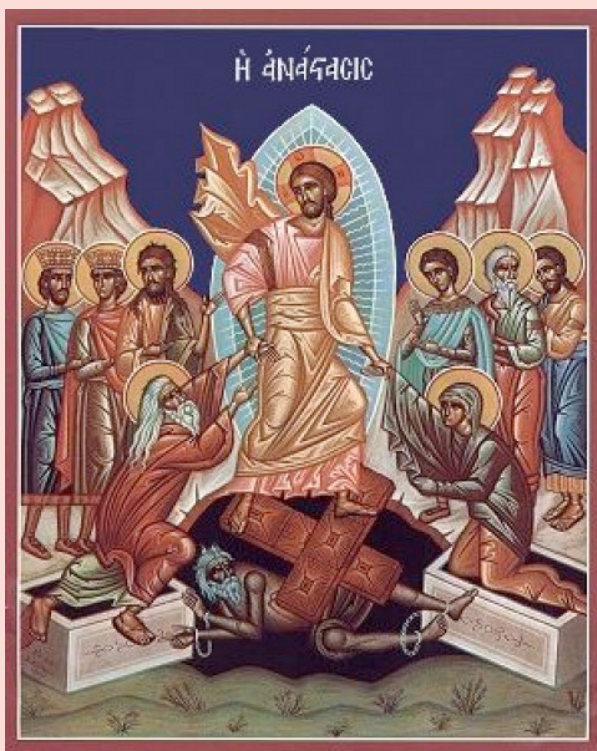
Lent is now over, and whether you drove to church every day during Holy Week or said your prayers at home instead, the journey is over, and the battle is won! Christ is Risen, and death is defeated! We've feasted, danced, sang, shouted, and rejoiced over Christ's resurrection, the feast of feasts in the Orthodox church. But now what? Does life go back to normal? For a lot of us, it seems like it does. We can eat meat and dairy now; we don't have 4-5 services a week anymore; we don't say all the extra prayers in church anymore; the list goes on. But do our hearts go back to normal? We've done all this praying and preparing and repenting, and for only one day of the year? Of course not! The Church is still rejoicing! But are WE rejoicing outside of church? We sometimes tend to segregate our lives into a work life, a school life, a family life, a church life, etc. A lot of us are finishing up school for the year and studying for finals. When we're under all the stress of our everyday lives, it's easy to forget our joy, and to only remember it when we're at church or saying our evening prayers. In other words, our joy is only part of our 'church life.' But the truth is that our lives are not segregated. Our life is a whole.

The joy of the Resurrection should infiltrate our WHOLE life. EVERYTHING we do, whether

it be work, school, chores, sports, or even the interactions we have with others, all should reflect the joy we have in the Resurrection. Church doesn't end when we leave the church building; we take it with us throughout the week. The joy of Pascha doesn't end when we drive home from the Paschal feast at 3am; rather, we take it with us and spread that joy throughout our whole life. What does that joy look like? One of the easiest ways to spread joy is to serve. Maybe it's doing the dishes without being asked. It could be cooking a meal for a family who recently had a baby or is going through a difficult time. If you're able, you might take a friend out for lunch! You can also maintain this joy by taking care of yourself. Nurturing your soul through reading scripture, taking care of your

body with good foods, or shifting your mindset by writing three things you're grateful for every day can expand your joy. One of the most challenging ways to carry this joy, however, is to forgive. Whether someone has wronged you several years ago, last week, one time, or many times, this is the time when we let go of every offense. The joy of the Resurrection is too great to remember all the sins committed against us! Our sins and the sins of others have died with Christ on the cross. This means we must also forgive ourselves; we are no longer bound by sin but are free! As the Paschal Stichera proclaims: "This is the day of resurrection. Let us be illumined by the feast. Let us embrace each other. Let us call brothers even those that hate us, and forgive all by the Resurrection, and so let us cry: Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life."

Even though the Church recognizes the Ascension, on May 25th, to be the end of the 'Paschal Season', we sing the troparia of the resurrection every single Sunday afterwards! The joy of the Resurrection does not have to end on May 25th, nor does it only exist within the walls of the church. I challenge you to carry this joy with you wherever you go; spread the love of Christ, and the light of his resurrection, even to those that hate us, for Christ is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!





Words from Sayedna Nicholas

It has been an inspiration for me personally this year to spend Holy Week and Pascha in the North Carolina region of the DOMSE as I have decided to devote the same holy period to a different region of the diocese every year. My journey started in the Concord mission of Christ the Good Shepherd for the Bridegroom Services in the evenings and the Pre-sanctified Liturgies in the mornings; on to Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Jefferson (formerly in Boone) for the Holy Unction Service and the Vespertal Divine Liturgy on Thursday morning commemorating the Last Supper of our Lord Jesus Christ; then on to St. Raphael of Brooklyn Mission in Fuquay Varina for the twelve Passion Gospel readings and Procession of the Holy Cross, the Royal Hours, Great Vespers of Holy Friday of the Taking Down of the Body of Christ from the Cross, and Orthros of Great and Holy Saturday of the Lamentations; and finally on to All Saints Church in Raleigh for the Vespertal Divine Liturgy commemorating Christ's Victory over death, the Great and Holy Paschal service, the Agape Vespers, and the parish picnic. During the Vespertal Divine Liturgy, Fr. David Winn and I baptized fourteen and chrismated nine catechumens. The service was very long and wonderful. This journey was memorable since I had time to spend with so many clergy, parishioners, catechumens, and inquirers from different parishes on diverse occasions of this period and to relive with them the Biblical story of our Saviour and the theme of every day during Holy Week. I invite you all to review those themes periodically for the uplifting and preparatory effects in your lives. May the Light of our Risen Lord be a blessing on you all and guide you on your journey to become God-like. His inspiration is invaluable, His blessing is precious, and His gifts

are irreplaceable. Let us use them wisely for our spiritual edification and our divine ascent. Christ is Risen... Truly He is Risen. I look forward to selecting another region of DOMSE for next year's Holy Week and Pascha.

We should carry with us all year long the sentiment and the excitement of the joyous sadness of Holy Week and the exhilaration of Pascha so that we may keep our eyes on the prize of salvation while fighting our daily good fight to increase in our voyage to holiness and achieve the goal of becoming God-like. Please remember that our Lord is waiting anxiously with open arms at the top of the ladder of divine ascent to receive us as a parent would receive us back home after a long trip. I acknowledge that it is not an easy trip up the ladder. However, He is there with us every step of the way to help us as we struggle to climb every rung. He wants us to be successful! That is why He has already guided us by giving us the final exam questions and answers through the Holy Orthodox Church.

In other news, the PLC hosted by St. George Cathedral, Miami, FL is upon us. It is planned to be held during the period from June 14 to June 17. However, you are welcome to stay on Sunday, June 18 for two Hierarchical Divine Liturgies in two days. In addition, Camp St. Thekla is also fast approaching and is planned for June 25-July 1 for session one and July 2-July 8 for session two. Both sessions are full and have wait lists.

May God bless you and may the Holy Trinity protect you all!

We should carry with us all year long the sentiment and the excitement of the joyous sadness of Holy Week and the exhilaration of Pascha so that we may keep our eyes on the prize of salvation while fighting our daily good fight to increase in our voyage to holiness and achieve the goal of becoming God-like.





Theology Editor's Corner

Christ is risen! Indeed, He is risen!

During the Paschal season, we begin our individual prayers and our prayers together in the Church by chanting the Paschal hymn three times – “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life.” This joyful hymn replaces the prayer to the Holy Spirit that we usually pray when we present ourselves to God – “O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who art everywhere and fillest all things. Treasury of Blessings, and Giver of Life: Come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every impurity, and save our souls, O Good One.” These two prayers are different, but there is a close connection between them since both prayers open us up to receiving an extra measure of the Holy Spirit.

The prayer to the Holy Spirit is powerful because it clearly expresses the central paradox or tension of the spiritual life – that God is everywhere present and fills all things, but that we must still ask Him to fill us and abide in us; for He seems to be absent only from the human heart that has turned away from Him. But whenever we turn to Him in prayer, we receive His grace, presence, power, love, peace, and joy, because we receive an extra measure of the Holy Spirit. In the same way, the joy of Pascha also wells up within us and fills us whenever we sing “Christ is risen” or greet one another with the Paschal greeting, and thus remember our Lord Jesus Christ’s Resurrection from the dead and His triumphant victory over sin, the devil, and death. And according to Fr. Sergius Bulgakov, the twentieth century Russian theologian, teacher, and pastor, the perfect joy that we receive on Pascha is the Holy Spirit Himself (*Churchly Joy: Orthodox Devotions for the Church Year*, 112).

Given this, the joy and brightness, feasting and fellowship of Pascha and the entire Paschal season prepare us for the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. And this is why St. Seraphim of Sarov’s greeting to others – “Christ is risen, my joy!” – goes hand in hand with the acquisition of the Holy Spirit. May the joy of Pascha – the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ’s victory over death – prepare all of us for the coming of the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Giver of Life!

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

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Bishop Nicholas

Upcoming Events

MAY

AMEN LEADERSHIP AND LOCAL CHAPTER PRESIDENTS MEETING

May 16, 2023
7:00 pm - 8:00 pm EST - Zoom

AMEN VIRTUAL BIBLE STUDY

May 18, 2023
7:00 pm - 8:00 pm EST - Zoom

JUNE

2023 DOMSE SCHOLARSHIPS!

June 1 - July 1, 2023
[CLICK HERE FOR INFO!](#)

DOMSE 2023 PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE (PLC)

June 14 - 17, 2023
St. George Cathedral, Miami, FL
[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER!](#)

"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness."
Genesis 1:26

2023 Parish Life Conference
Diocese of Miami and the Southeast
Miami, Florida
Hosted by St. George Cathedral Coral Gables, Florida

14-17 June 2023

EVENT & HOTEL REGISTRATION NOW OPEN!

Embassy Suites by Hilton Miami International Airport
Room Rate: \$145/night

Event Registration at
www.miamiplc.org

Saint George Cathedral looks forward to hosting all of you in June!

- Bible Bowl
- Oratorical
- Creative Arts Festival
- Workshops
- Organization Meetings

CAMP ST. THEKLA 2023 - SESSION 1

June 25 - July 1, 2023
SESSION FULL
[CLICK HERE FOR WAITLIST!](#)

JULY

CAMP ST. THEKLA 2023 - SESSION 2

July 2 - July 8, 2023
SESSION FULL
[CLICK HERE FOR WAITLIST!](#)