

the Light



SEPTEMBER 2023
NEWSLETTER



**AMEN VIRTUAL
BIBLE STUDY**

September 21, 2023
7:00 pm - 8:00 pm EDT - In-person & Zoom
St. Elias Orthodox Church, Atlanta, GA

DOMSE FALL RETREAT 2023

September 22-23, 2023
St. Elias Orthodox Church, Atlanta, GA
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YOUTUBE

Parish Spotlight

**STS. PETER & PAUL ANTIOCHIAN
ORTHODOX CHURCH**

CLERGY

V. Rev. Fr. Vasile Mihai
Dn. Andrew Hall

FEAST DAY: June 29, the feast of Saints
Peter and Paul

WEBSITE: saintspeterandpaul.church



Sts. Peter & Paul Antiochian Orthodox Church | Jefferson, NC

Saints Peter and Paul Antiochian Orthodox Church is located in Jefferson, NC, a small town in the Blue Ridge Mountains in northwestern North Carolina. The parish was founded in 1998 and currently has about sixty parishioners. On August 19 and 20 His Grace Bishop Nicholas presided over a double celebration, the 25th anniversary of the parish and the ordination of the first deacon of our parish, Andrew Hall.

The parish struggled for many years without a full-time priest and without an actual church building of their own. Without having a metropolitan area nearby, growth came very slowly. The parish rented many spaces in Boone, NC, for the first 24 years. Visiting priests and part-time priests served the parish on and off during this period. When a priest could not serve, the parish always held lay led typica services on Sunday as well as

daily vespers on Wednesdays and great vespers on Saturdays. For many years two subdeacons gave sermonettes on Sundays with the approval of the priest in charge at the time. The church leaders felt it was very important to maintain a regular schedule of services. Boone, NC, is a resort area as well as home to Appalachian State University so many students and tourists visited and/or attended throughout the years. *(continued on page 2)*



(St. Paul - continued from page 1)

In 2018, the church had an opportunity to purchase fourteen acres of land in Boone. They had been saving funds for many years and were able to fundraise to add to the savings to buy the land free and clear. The church began to investigate building on the lot and quickly discovered that the expense would be too great for them to bear. The land lacked water, sewer, electricity, and a road to name just a few of the challenges they faced.

In 2019, the church was blessed to welcome Fr. Vasile Mihai as her full-time priest. Fr. Vasile had just retired from a Greek Orthodox parish in Savannah, Georgia, and he was aware of the Boone parish, and its needs. He was able to obtain permission from the Greek Orthodox Metropolitan to serve an Antiochian parish. Having a full-time priest proved to be the key to growth for the parish. Visitors and inquirers were able to get a true experience of the Divine Liturgy and Fr. Vasile took special care to welcome everyone and to answer any questions they had about the faith. This became a turning point in growth for the parish.

In late 2021, a vacant church was located in the nearby town of Jefferson, NC. The church is a historic structure built in 1899. Due to very generous donations by parishioners and benefactors and with the guidance and help from our Shepherd, His Grace Bishop Nicholas, the parish was able to purchase the church building, fellowship hall and the rectory next door without a mortgage.

The church began services in their new location on August 5, 2022. Since then, it has grown significantly. Cradle Orthodox and converts have come to the church and have quickly considered



it their church home. The congregation is known for its hospitality and welcoming nature.

God has truly been at work in allowing Sts. Peter and Paul to flourish in the mountains of North Carolina. The faithful feel that they have been truly blessed and pray that the growth will continue. Please come visit us. Our schedule of services is as follows:

Wednesdays at 6:00 PM Daily Vespers, Saturdays at 6:00 PM Great Vespers, and Sundays at 8:45 AM, Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy at 10:00 AM. Major feasts of the church are also celebrated; please see the monthly calendar on the website.

Come experience the beauty of the NC mountains and worship at Sts. Peter and Paul! Glory be to God!



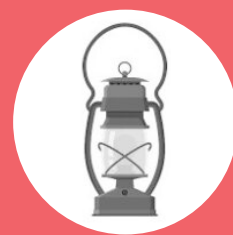
2023 Fall Retreat

St. Elias Orthodox Church, Atlanta, GA

September 22-23, 2023

"Thy Word is a Lamp Unto My Feet"

PSALM 118:105



REGISTRATION CLOSES SEPT. 14 -
THERE IS NO ON-SITE REGISTRATION.

REGISTER HERE!

SPECIAL HOTEL PRICING OF \$129
ENDS ON SEPTEMBER 8.

Schedule!

C = Child Care Provided

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

R = Raffle Draw

Thursday, September 21

7:00pm AMEN Bible Study: Fr. Stephen De Young (In person @ St. Elias)

Friday, September 22

TIME	EVENT
9:00am	Morning Prayers
9:30am	Retreat Check-In / Registration
9:30am	Coffee & Breakfast for all served by St. Elias
10:00am C	Session One: Fr. Stephen De Young: <i>The Whole Counsel of God</i> , Introducing the Bible
11:30am C	Breakout Sessions: Clergy – Fr. Stephen De Young SOYO – Fr. Jacob Andoun YAF – Fr. David Winn Antiochian Women – Sh. Shell Keim AMEN – Fr. Matthew Snowden
12:30pm R	Lunch for all served by DOMSE Young Adult Fellowship
1:30pm C	Session Two: Fr. Alexis Kouri: podcast + Importance of Reading the Bible
2:30pm C	Breakout Sessions: Clergy – Fr. Alexis Kouri SOYO – Fr. Nathaniel Trembley YAF – Fr. David Winn Antiochian Women – Sh. Shell Keim AMEN – Fr. Matthew Snowden
3:30pm C	Social Media Awareness with Bishop NICHOLAS
4:30pm	Fellowship Time for all; Coffee & Cookies served by St. Elias
5:00pm	Vespers
6:00pm R	Dinner for all served by DOMSE Antiochian Women
7:00pm	Sayidna's address to the Diocese
7:30pm	DOMSE Jeopardy Game! – For everyone!
8:30pm	Clergy fellowship with Bishop NICHOLAS

Saturday, September 23

9:00am	Divine Liturgy
	Retreat Picture (Immediately after Divine Liturgy)
10:45am	Retreat Check-In / Registration
10:45am R	Brunch for all served by DOMSE Teen SOYO
11:30am C	Session Three: Fr. John Oliver, Is the Bible's Content Relevant to Today's Issues?
1:00pm	Break Time <i>Clergy may depart at this time</i>
1:30pm	Afternoon Movie & Popcorn "Marriage made in Heaven" (Teen SOYO and older) "Joseph – King of Dreams" (Children Ages 4 to 12)
4:00pm	Fellowship Time for all with coffee and cookie break
5:00pm	Vespers
6:00pm R	Dinner for all served by DOMSE Antiochian Men
7:00pm	Organization Fellowship Time SOYO – Discussion and games with Sayidna YAF – Offsite activity Antiochian Women – Onsite activity AMEN – The Independent (Billiards and Brotherhood)



SUPPORT YOUR DIOCESE

DONATE TO: CAMP ST. THEKLA,
DOMSE SCHOLARSHIP,
ANTIOCHIAN MEN, ANTIOCHIAN
WOMEN,
YOUNG ADULT FELLOWSHIP, TEEN
SOYO, OR A GENERAL DONATION

Raffle Items!

All raffle ticket sales will go to the DOMSE Scholarship fund.

- AMEN Hoodie
(donated by Amen)



- 101 Orthodox Saints book
(donated by Christian Education)



- Free registration for next Winter/Fall Retreat
(donated by DMC)



- Archangel Michael Icon
(donated by Young Adults)



- Apple AirPods Pro
(donated by Antiochian Women)



- 14K Gold Necklace & Cross
(donated by Kim AbuGhazaleh)



- \$300.00 off Camp St. Thekla 2024 Summer
(donated by Teen SOYO)



the Light

AMEN
ANTIOCHIANMEN.ORG

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN
DOMSEWOMEN
ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN OF DOMSE

YOUNG ADULT
DOMSE YAF

SOYO
DOMSESOYO
DOMSESOYO

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
DOMSECHRISTIANED



FEATURED ORGANIZATION

Christian Education

DOMSE CHRISTIAN EDUCATION COORDINATOR:

Anna-Sarah Farha | St. George Church, Jacksonville, FL



DOMSECHRISTIANED

DOMSE Christian Education is an active, vibrant ministry made up of more than thirty Sunday Church Schools across the diocese. If you are not already involved with Christian Ed at the parish level, prayerfully consider approaching your priest and church school director about service opportunities. On behalf of DOMSE Sunday Church School students and their families, an immense “thank you” goes out to all the dedicated educators for their enthusiasm and commitment to the highest standard of Orthodox Christian Education for our diocese.

Parents play an essential role in the success of Christian Education. It all starts at home, “The Little Church!” The following article introduces an idea on how parents and Sunday School teachers can partner up to foster our students’ faith formation.

Engaging Parents with Religious Education

V. Rev. Dr. Tony Vrame

“WHAT DID YOU LEARN TODAY IN SUNDAY SCHOOL?” might be the most common question parents ask their children in the car after church. And the most common answer is... “Nothing.”

The answer might be caused by a child who just doesn’t want to talk about it or because the child really didn’t learn anything. Another possibility is that the wrong question is being asked. Because parents don’t know what is happening in most Sunday

School classes, they can’t ask a better question.

TEACHERS CAN HELP. As you prepare your lesson, prepare three or four facts and three or four questions that you will distribute via email to parents. Keep it all simple; nothing that wouldn’t fit on the visor of a car when printed out.

Parents now become your co-teachers. By giving them a few facts, you teach the parents and equip them for the conversation in the car. By giving them a few questions, parents can reinforce what you’ve taught. Mix up the questions from simple answers to open-ended questions that could create a discussion among the family members.

For example, for a lesson about the Feast of the Elevation of the Cross, you might include the following:

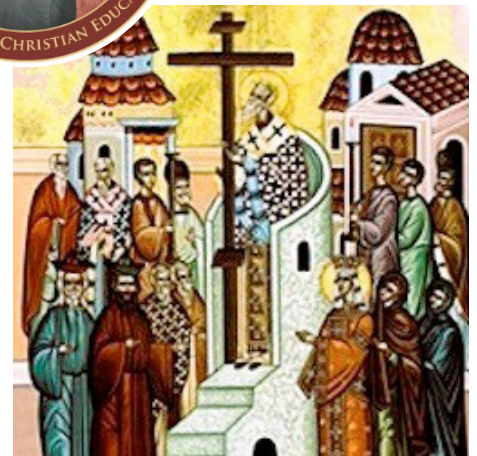
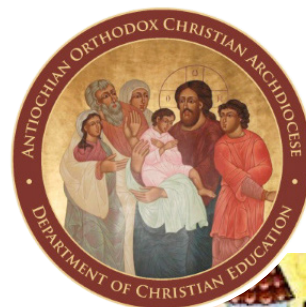
1. St. Helen found the cross in 326 AD. She was St. Constantine’s mother.
2. The name of the herb, basiliko (i.e., basil), means the king or royal.
3. The priest lifts the cross up and blesses the four corners of the church, the four compass points, blessing the whole world!

Some questions that could be asked:

1. Who was St. Helen and why was she looking for the Cross?
2. How did she find it?

3. Why is the Cross important for Christians?
4. Talk about a time when you “carried a Cross.” (This would be better with older students, ages ten and up).

To accomplish this, a teacher needs the email address or phone number for the parents of all the students. The teacher can email or text the facts and the questions the day or evening before (of course parents should be told in advance to look for these). Or teachers can make a handout and distribute them at coffee hour or as class is dismissed (the trick is not to give them to the children. We all know what happens when a child gets the “note to give to parents!”) **With some advance work and some basic organization, parents can become more engaged with their children’s formation in faith.**





Teen SOYO

OFFICER
INTRODUCTION:
PRESIDENT

Stella Hallberg
All Saints Church
Raleigh, NC

Hello DOMSE! My name is Stella Hallberg, and I am so happy to be returning to The Light newsletter's Teen Corner as this year's SOYO President! I live in Cary, North Carolina, and attend All Saints Church in Raleigh. I love chanting (as a beginner) and singing in our church choir. I have two younger siblings and two dogs. I am sixteen years old and a junior in high school. My favorite subjects are math and rhetoric (a fancy word for public speaking). I love to act, listen to music, watch TV, and play piano. I really enjoyed serving as SOYO Treasurer last year and am so excited to continue being a part of DOMSE SOYO. This year is going to be a great one! Teens, make sure you come to all our retreats this year, and go follow us [@domsesoyo](https://www.instagram.com/domsesoyo) on Instagram!



As many of you know, Mother Nektaria (Velloff) fell asleep in the Lord on August 9, 2023. Mother lived the last 27 years of her monastic life at St. Paul Skete, an Antiochian monastic community. Although she lived most of those years in obscurity to most of those in our diocese and archdiocese, she lived powerfully for those who knew and interacted with her. Entering the monastic life at age 36 in 1987 at Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Elwood City, PA, she was tonsured as a nun in 1993 at Holy Dormition Monastery in Rives Junction, MI.

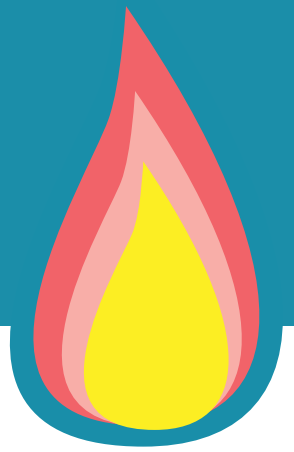
Her life at the Skete began in 1996 in Memphis, TN a block away from St. John Orthodox Church. She prayed faithfully in her small chapel there until she relocated to Skete property in Grand Junction, TN, about 75 minutes east of St John. There she hosted visitors, spoke at retreats at parishes all over the Eastern U. S., and, most importantly – prayed! There is little doubt she protected many by her prayers. Since her passing, stories continue to come out of things she did for others that only they knew. Some most certainly border on the miraculous. As Mother Gabriella (abbess of Dormition Monastery) said, that is the best way to learn of those deeds – after we have fallen asleep.

His Eminence, Metropolitan SABA's words should ring in our ears as we remember her. "... Mother Nektaria should be remembered as a spiritual pioneer. ... May her decades of perseverance in the angelic life, out of the sight of many, be like a seed hidden in the earth that one day bursts forth with vigorous new life!"

Memory Eternal, Mother Nektaria. Pray to God for us!!



Words from Sayedna Nicholas



According to St. Isaac the Syrian, “Whenever in your path you find unchanging peace, beware: you are very far from the divine paths trodden by the weary feet of the saints. For as long as you are journeying in the way to the city of the Kingdom and are drawing nigh the city of God, this will be a sign to you: the strength of the temptations that you encounter. And the nearer you draw nigh and progress, the more temptations will multiply against you.”

Even though this statement by St. Isaac may sound counterproductive, it is one of only two ways to measure our spiritual progress. Neither way stems from within ourselves, nor is it according to our own opinion. Our secular society plays up our opinions and gives us rights that are not ours to grow our egos and boost our self-esteem. We often state or think, “It is my right to know this,” or “It is my opinion that counts more than another person’s,” or “I have my truth and you have your truth,” etc.! All these fallacies pervade our society and since we live in this society, these issues become part of our thinking as we adopt them out of convenience, overlooking the Church’s prescribed direction and disregarding the saints’ teachings that have been received from Christ Himself.

Nevertheless, St. Isaac encourages us to take heart since “a trial does not come unless the soul has first secretly received both a portion greater than the measure which she had formerly received and the Spirit of grace. The Lord’s temptations and the trials of the apostles testify to the truth of this, for they were not permitted to enter into temptation until they had received the Comforter.” As you may have noticed, the quoted words of “the truth” were underlined to emphasize that the truth, not my truth or your truth, but the truth, is not relative but absolute and so are other truths in our world.

It is worthy to note that St. Isaac warns us of the easy and comfortable life that some desire, for it produces no spiritual fruits. He states, “if a soul has an infirmity, has not strength for great temptations, and asks that she should not enter into them, and God hearkens to her, then know for certainty that inasmuch as the soul is insufficient for great trials, in the same measure is she insufficient for great gifts. For God does not grant a great gift without a great trial. In His wisdom, which is beyond the understanding of His creatures, God has ordained that gifts be bestowed in proportion to temptations.”

The second way to measure our spiritual progress is through our spiritual father, for he is the only objective person looking in from the outside into the most inner thoughts and feelings of our minds and hearts. A true spiritual father is capable of advising us with wisdom on our spiritual direction and progress. For this reason, every Orthodox Christian needs with certainty a spiritual father.

Shifting gears to our diocese life, it is with great sadness that I report the passing into life eternal of the Very Rev. Fr. Joseph Shaheen, the Rev. Father David Randolph, Sister Nectaria, and Mr. Kal Kardous, a member of the Archdiocese Board of Trustees. May their memory be eternal!

On a happier note, the Fall Retreat is upon us and registration is open according to the publicized schedule on www.domse.org. We look forward to seeing you all as we have exciting topics to discuss and enlivening speakers hosted at St. Elias Church, Atlanta, GA.

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

+BISHOP NICHOLAS



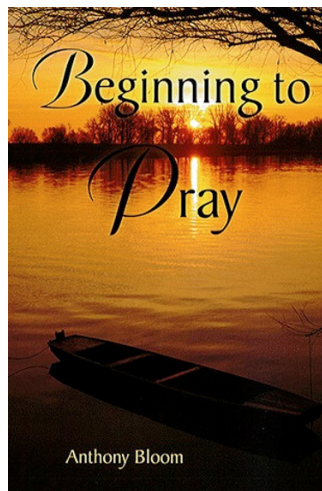
Theology Editor's Corner

The Ecclesiastical New Year begins on September 1st, and it is a good time to think about our spiritual practices and whether we are being as focused and intentional as we could be. Here, His Eminence Metropolitan ANTHONY Bloom offers the following guidance in his book, *Beginning to Pray*, which is a modern classic:

First of all... we must choose a prayer. That is very important. Just as it is important to use the right words if you are in a relationship with someone, so it is with prayer... If you are ashamed of your prayer, God may be uneasy about you and the prayer too, and you will never be able to bring it to God wholeheartedly. The first thing, then, is really to find words of prayer that are worthy of you and worthy of God. I say 'worthy of you and worthy of God' because if they are good enough for you, then God can accept them, but if they are not good enough for you, leave God alone. He has heard better things than that... The first thing which I suggest, therefore, is that you should ask yourself what words of prayer make sense for you to offer to God, whether they be your own or those of other people. Ask yourself also how much they touch your heart, to what extent you are capable of concentrating your mind on them – for if you cannot be attentive to the words you say, why should God? How can He receive them as an expression of love if you do not put your heart into them, if you have only put in a certain amount of courtesy together with a certain amount of absent-mindedness?

(*Beginning to Pray*, 47-48, 49-50)

May God be with each one of us as we pray! May He direct our will, teach us to pray, and pray He Himself in us, as we say in the Morning Prayer of the Optina Elders!



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

DOMSENEWSLETTER@GMAIL.COM

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

Upcoming Events

SEPTEMBER

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St. Elias Orthodox Church, Atlanta, GA

[REGISTER HERE!](#)

[SCHEDULE HERE!](#)

2023 FALL RETREAT

Hosted at St. Elias Orthodox Church,
Atlanta, GA

September 22 - 23, 2023

Break out sessions

Guest speakers

DOMSE Jeopardy

Movie & popcorn

Fellowship time

Raffle

Child care



"Thy Word is a Lamp Unto My Feet"

Psalm 118:105

OCTOBER

AMEN VIRTUAL BIBLE STUDY

October 19, 2023
7:00 pm - 8:00 pm EDT - Zoom

2024 FEBRUARY

CAMP ST. THEKLA WINTER

CAMP 2024 (WAMP)

February 16-19, 2024
Details to come!

JUNE

2024 DOMSE SCHOLARSHIPS!

June 1 - July 1, 2024

[CLICK HERE FOR INFO!](#)

DOMSE 2024 PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE (PLC)

June 12 - 15, 2024
St. Stephen Orthodox Church
Hiram, GA
Details to come!

CAMP ST. THEKLA 2024 - SESSION 1

June 23 - June 29, 2024
Details to come!

CAMP ST. THEKLA 2024 - SESSION 2

June 30 - July 6, 2024
Details to come!