

# the Light



OCTOBER 2023  
NEWSLETTER



**ANNUAL AMEN  
VIRTUAL RETREAT**

December 9, 2023

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

**DOMSE CLERGY &  
WINTER RETREATS 2024**

St. Ignatius Orthodox Church, Franklin, TN

Dates & details to come!

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OUR SECOND ANNIVERSARY EDITION!

## DOMSE Fall Retreat 2023

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**NEW!**







## FEATURED EVENT

# DOMSE Fall Retreat 2023

By Robert W. Klein | St. James Mission | Buford, GA | Photos by Elizabeth Baclog

The two hundred people from throughout the diocese who attended the DOMSE Fall Retreat September 22-23 at St. Elias Orthodox Church in Atlanta were treated to a full slate of spiritual and educational events.

On the schedule were Divine Liturgy, Bible study, fellowship, movies, and fun, along with a series of lectures and seminars, as well as the hospitality and cuisine of the parishioners of St. Elias. Individual breakout sessions were set up for Clergy, SOYO, YAF, Antiochian Women, and AMEN.

"The Fall Retreat participants descended on Atlanta expecting spiritual edification and rich fellowship," said Bishop Nicholas. "They left with a sense of deep satisfaction as they grew closer to God

and formed tighter relationships and new friends. Many were first timers at a diocese event. It was spectacular for them and the veterans as they listened to the retreat's illustrious speakers."

### Reading Scripture and Applying It to Our Lives

The theme of the retreat was "The Word is a Lamp Unto My Feet," with most of the sessions focused on Scripture through an Orthodox lens.

Father Stephen De Young's talk Friday morning introduced the Bible as *The Whole Counsel of God*, which is the title of his most recent book. He offered an overview of the Bible, tracing the history of the Scriptures and their canonicity from ancient Jewish times through the modern centuries, and

defining terms such as inerrancy and Sola Scriptura according to the Orthodox Faith.

Father Stephen outlined what he called the three steps for reading Scripture: 1.) Read it and ask, "What does it say?" 2.) Interpret it and ask, "What does it mean?" 3.) Apply it and ask, "So what?" – in other words, "Live it and do it!"

On Friday afternoon, Father Alexis Kouri spoke about the importance of reading the Bible and, again, applying it to our daily lives. He talked about his personal experiences in setting up what has become the Ancient Faith podcasts "Daily Orthodox Scriptures" and "Daily Orthodox Scriptures for Kids," and of their various social media apps.

(continued on page 2)





(Retreat - continued from page 2)

Father Alexis offered his own templates for Bible reading: 1.) Read the Bible daily in small increments, but “set the bar so low that you can’t fail ... not too much at a time or you’ll burn out.” 2.) When listening to a podcast, freeze it frequently to read over the verse yourself; when reading the Bible, stop frequently to pray; don’t have expectations, because “it’s an encounter with the Holy God, so ‘take your shoes off, you’re on holy ground.’” 3.) Have a plan, whether it’s following the Church Lectionary, or reading straight through the Gospels or the New Testament; you can even “read five chapters every day for a week but make it the same five chapters every day!”

On Saturday morning, Father John Oliver asked if the Bible’s content is relevant to today’s issues – “That’s like asking is reality relevant to today” – and, once again, pointing out ways in which Scripture applies to our day-to-day experiences. He touched upon the poetic, literary, and allegorical aspects of the Bible, and his talk was itself poetic, literary, and allegorical, with forays as seemingly far afield as Winnie the Pooh, scientific analysis, the pagan “gods” of old, and today’s social media scene.

The Bible, Father John said, is a story, and is indeed *The Story*, “the

core drama of our lives,” which can be summarized as the Creator, the Creation, “the human whose being is in direct communion” with the Creator, the serpent, the fall, the hiding, and “most importantly ... the Creator searching for His lost children,” all of which culminates in John 20:16, where Jesus calls Mary by name, just as he calls each of us by name.

### Social Media Awareness

Friday afternoon, Bishop Nicholas talked about how to establish rules and priorities for using social media safely. He described social media as designed to be “literally addictive,” and said that it is a battle to use it for the right reasons.

Sayedna suggested limiting the amount of time exposed to social media, and keeping to the agreed-upon deadlines; shutting off all devices and placing them on the kitchen counter at a set time each evening; turning off the home router and unplugging the TV at the same time each night; keeping gadgets out of the bedroom and using blue-light filters, first so as not to disrupt sleep patterns, and second to decrease eye damage; and being certain that families don’t lead separate lives online, since they don’t lead separate lives in the flesh.

He also urged parents to constantly communicate with their children, teaching them the Truth, explaining why they have social media rules, and leading by example. In other words, following the exact same rules as the rest of the family.

“Protect your children,” Bishop Nicholas said. “Teach them how to manage social media. When Steve Jobs introduced the I-pad, he held it up for the audience and said his own children would not be using it.”







# Parish Spotlight

## ST. JOHN ORTHODOX CHURCH

### CLERGY

V. Rev. Fr. Philip Rogers, Pastor  
 V. Rev. Fr. John Mashburn, Pastor Emeritus  
 V. Rev. Fr. Basil Cushman, Attached  
 V. Rev. Fr. Don Berge, Attached  
 Rev. Dn. James Elliott  
 Rev. Dn. Tim Mashburn  
 Rev. Dn. Charles McKelroy

**FEAST DAY:** September 26

**WEBSITE:** [stjohnmemphis.org](http://stjohnmemphis.org)



## St. John Orthodox Church Memphis, Tennessee

"I'm not sure we will ever fill this place." That was the sentiment in 1990 when St. John Orthodox Church in Memphis, TN began to worship in the new-to-them building on Tutwiler Ave in Midtown Memphis. The building wasn't new, almost 100 years old, but the story of the building was a small image of the story of the community itself. Like many of those who were worshiping in the building, the building itself was originally a Protestant Church. Though not all, at the time the parish bought the building in 1990, the core membership had been members of the Evangelical Orthodox Church and had been received into Orthodoxy in 1987. Under the faithful leadership of Fr. John Troy Mashburn, pastor of St. John until 2016, this small group of Orthodox Christians set out to fill that place. And fill it they did!

The first thing that everyone notices when they walk into St. John for the first time is the beautiful iconography. Virtually every inch of the Nave is

covered with saints and feast days. There are over 100 individual saints depicted. Those depicted span the whole history of the Church, from the Prophets and other Old Testament figures to the recently canonized St. Paisios of Mt. Athos. The nave is certainly filled with iconography and the faithful are truly surrounded by a "great cloud of witnesses."

Walking into the nave on a Sunday morning, besides the iconography, the next thing to notice is the people. St. John is a bustling place with people of various backgrounds and ages. This has been the case since the beginning. The Church has grown so much over its history that out of St. John has come three different missions in DOMSE: Holy Trinity in Little Rock, Arkansas; St. Nicholas in Jackson, TN; and St. Paul in Tupelo, MS. As the faithful look around the nave each week there is often talk of where the next mission will be planted to

*(continued on page 5)*



*(St. John - continued from page 4)*

continue to further the Gospel in this area. To accommodate the growth over the years a parish hall, St. Raphael Hall, was added in 2017. This space has allowed for additional fellowship and events in the bigger space and opened space in the older building for other functions. In the old fellowship area, St. John now boasts a vast library that is regularly used by members and inquirers alike and has inspired other Churches to follow suit.

All those faithful people who fill the nave and are surrounded by the cloud of the saints reflect a great love for God in their prayer. Every day of the year there is some type of prayer going on in the nave. At least one of the hours (1st, 3rd, 6th, or 9th) are prayed each day and on some days, more than one. This prayerfulness sparked a desire to establish a local monastery, St. Paul Skete in Grand Junction, TN. With the recent repose of the beloved Mother Nektaria, the skete is currently without a monastic, but there is great hope that a new community will be planted in the future.

A great love for God is always reflected in a love for neighbors and a desire to serve others. St. John has a food pantry ministry that hands out food every Wednesday morning to those in need. The community has become involved with a local ministry for people without shelter during the winter (Room in the Inn). When those in the community are in need, our men, women, young adults, and teens are always ready to lend a helping hand.

"I'm not sure we will ever fill this place." By the grace of God, today the Church building that is the home of St.

John Orthodox Church is truly full in every sense. There is hardly a spot for any additional iconography (though we are trying to squeeze more on pillars under the balcony). There is also hardly a spot for any additional people to worship, though the Lord continues to bring more and more visitors and

inquirers every week. The hearts of the faithful are full of Love for God and for their neighbor and continue to desire to know more. St. John is a blessed community in DOMSE, looking ahead to see what the Lord will inspire in the future.



**CLICK HERE FOR PARISH LIVE STREAM**





# The Liturgical Kitchen

## PROSPHORA BREAD RECIPE

Recipe sent in by Ileana Ibanescu | Photo from [@orthodoxmom](#)



### Prospora Recipe (for one loaf)

#### Ingredients

500g flour (bread flour,  
not bleached, non GMO)  
300g lukewarm water  
4g salt  
2g instant yeast / 3g dry  
yeast / 5g fresh yeast  
few drops of Holy Water  
one pinch of Artos from  
Pascha

#### Instructions

- Preheat oven to 325F
- Dissolve yeast in lukewarm water and let sit about 5 minutes
- Mix salt and flour, Artos, Holy Water and then add the water mixture, mix until all flour gets wet. At this point cover the bowl with a plastic foil/bag or a towel and let sit for 20 min (this is called autolyse, and allows the flour to better absorb the water)
- After 20 min of autolyse, we need to do two sets of knead and rest (knead 5 min, rest covered for 3 min, knead for 5 min, and then let rest 3 min, covered)
- After two sets of kneading and resting, divide the dough (if more than one loaf is made), and shape the loaf as a disk, about 8" and cover with a plastic bag/foil or towel and let rest for about 10 min to relax
- Put each loaf on the baking pan, apply the Holy seal using a little flour
- Let the dough proof covered, until almost double. Depending on the kitchen temperature, this can vary between 30 min-60 min or even longer
- Bake in preheated oven, 10 min at 325F, and then 35-45min at 340F until golden, longer for gas stoves. For baking on two layers, rotate loaves after 30 min.
- Let it cool completely on racks, covered with a towel.

#### Notes:

- 1 part instant yeast = 1.5 parts active dry yeast ~ 3 parts fresh yeast
- It is better to cover the bowl or the pans (while proofing) with a plastic bag or foil, the dough will not get dry

Prospora is the name of the Bread that is used for the divine services in the Holy Orthodox Church. This Bread is prepared by faithful Orthodox Christians following a specific recipe accompanied by special prayers. Many communities have their own take on this recipe, but it always follows basically the same steps. The ingredients are flour, water, salt, and yeast. This recipe is not to say that anyone with a different recipe is doing anything wrong, but we thought sharing this recipe by this experienced Holy Bread Maker from our Diocese would be a blessing to all.

## Prayers during the preparation of the prospora

### While you knead the bread:

Dear Lord, this bread that we bake represents each one of us in this family and in our congregation. We are offering ourselves to You, our very life, in humble obedience and total commitment. We place ourselves on your holy altar, through this bread, to be used by You in any way to enlarge your kingdom. Accept our gift and make us worthy to receive the greater gift when you consecrate this bread and give it back to us as your Holy Body. Amen.

### When you apply the seal, on each loaf:

O Heavenly King, O Comforter, Spirit of Truth, Who art in all places and fillest all things, Treasury of good things, and Giver of life: come and abide in us, and cleanse us from every sin, and save our souls, O Good One.

### When you put the bread in the oven:

Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name; Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. Amen.





# Words from Sayedna Nicholas

The priesthood is exemplified by certain traits of ministry that one would need to constantly live and practice. Among these most important characteristics is the ministry of a life of service. It is not just serving the people of God and it is not just serving God. It is appropriating the Gospel message and Christ's life in general in the context of the parish and the faithful. On the other hand, a ministry of service cannot just be quoting the Bible but should lead to fruitful results; for "when He saw a fig tree in the way, He came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, let no fruit grow on you henceforward forever. And at once, the fig tree withered away." It is meeting parishioners where they are and bringing the Church's theology to a level they can understand, without compromising the Church or the Faith.

If one in the priestly office solely serves his flock, he will end up with the feeling of sentimentality or disdain. However, when we only serve God in our ministry, we will deduce the wrong conclusion that people are not important. Therefore, a balanced approach is in order through prayer and contemplation of God.

It is worthy to note that "those who are in the Priestly Office" are not restricted to those who are in the ordained Priestly Office but it includes all those who belong to the Royal Priesthood. That is to say, all those who are baptized in Christ, so that we can affirm "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Furthermore, being in the "business" of service is not only having faith in the Christ, but also believing in Him. For believing in Christ goes beyond the mere words of faith "I have faith in Christ" to the action of putting faith to work through service, confirming that "faith without works is dead."

This process of faith and works needs a third element for it to be sustainable and diligent. It is daily prayer! Prayer in the Orthodox Church is one of the fundamental pillars of living an Orthodox Christian life since it draws us closer to God and helps us acquire His

attributes that are enumerated in the list of Christian virtues. Prayer is a tool to develop a true relationship with God as we, through His grace, strengthen ourselves on all fronts. St. Ephraim the Syrian wants us to take notice of how we draw closer to God and acquire His attributes: "Virtues are formed by prayer. Prayer preserves temperance, suppresses anger, restrains pride and envy, draws down the Holy Spirit into the soul and raises man to heaven."

Furthermore, prayer improves our outlook on life as it helps us to concentrate on the important aspects of our existence, God. Please note what St. Isaac the Syrian affirmed about prayer, "Prayer heartens the conscience, invests the mind with power, strengthens one's hope, fires one's confidence. Thus, a man is able to withstand the tribulations and evils of this world, for when he compares them with the glorious things he is to inherit, he can defy torture and all manner of affliction."

Shifting gears to other matters that have taken place in DOMSE. The Fall Retreat was an astounding success with a multitude of faithful in attendance and illustrious speakers. The fruits of such retreats are self-evident in the parishioners' lives as they apply the concepts they learn and form fellowship with others. On another note, we are deeply saddened to report that Deacon Sidney Elliot of St. John Church, Memphis, TN has reposed and passed on to life eternal. May God rest his soul.

In addition, we have already started planning for the Clergy and Winter Retreats in January that will be hosted at St Ignatius Church, Frankly, TN. I look forward to seeing you all at the retreats.

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

**+BISHOP NICHOLAS**





# Teen SOYO

OFFICER  
INTRODUCTION:  
SOCIAL MEDIA  
DIRECTOR

Susannah Bandy  
St. Elias Church  
Atlanta, GA

Hey, DOMSE! My name is Susannah Bandy, and I'm super excited to be back for another year of service! I am once again the vice president for the SOYO board, but I'm also the social media director this year! A little about me: I'm 17 years old, I'm a senior in high school, and I've been homeschooled my whole life. I've danced for 12 years, mostly ballet and modern, and I'm really sad to be leaving my dance company when I graduate in the spring. I'm interested in nursing, and hope to attend the University of North Georgia next year to pursue it. I'm very excited to be running the social media for DOMSE teen SOYO this year, and hope to be able to share our faith with others through that. Teens, if you're seeing this, be sure to go and follow @domsesoyo on instagram for weekly stories about the lives of the saints and for information about our retreats and activities!

## SUPPORT

# Camp St. Thekla

in honor of  
*St. Thekla's feast day*  
September 24th



Scan the QR code or visit the **DOMSE** website and select **Camp St. Thekla** to donate!



# WINTER CAMP IS COMING

## SAVE THE DATE!

### Feb. 16-19, 2024

Camper registration will open on [our website](#) November 1st, 2023, for all campers ages 12-17. Too old for Wamp? These campers need counselors, so if you've been a counselor for CST in the past, staff applications open today (October 1st, 2023) at [our website](#). Otherwise, we hope you'll apply for the summer!



## ST. THEKLA





## DOMSE Coloring Contest Winner!

**Congratulations to Olivia Koury, age 10, from St. Elias Orthodox Church!** Our DOMSE fall retreat kids participated in a coloring contest at our DOMSE fall retreat 2023. **Thank you, kids of DOMSE, for your great work!**



## Upcoming Events

### OCTOBER

#### AMEN VIRTUAL BIBLE STUDY

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

### NOVEMBER

#### AMEN LEADERSHIP AND LOCAL CHAPTER PRESIDENTS MEETING

November 28, 2023  
7:00 pm - 8:00 pm EST - Zoom

### DECEMBER

#### ANNUAL AMEN VIRTUAL RETREAT

December 9, 2023  
10:00 am - 1:00 pm EST - Zoom  
Details to come!



## 2024

#### DOMSE CLERGY & WINTER RETREATS 2024

Dates TBD  
St. Ignatius Orthodox Church  
Franklin, TN  
Details to come!

### FEBRUARY

#### CAMP ST. THEKLA WINTER CAMP 2024 (WAMP)

February 16-19, 2024  
Details to come!

### MARCH

#### AMEN CONFERENCE & RETREAT

March 7 - 9, 2024  
Woodland Christian Camp & Retreat Center, Temple, GA  
[REGISTER HERE!](#)

#### SOYO LENTEN VIRTUAL RETREAT 2024

March 30, 2024  
8:00 am - 5:00 pm EDT - Zoom  
Details to come!

## BIG NEWS!

Our **FIRST-EVER** In-Person Antiochian Men Conference and Retreat is **CONFIRMED** and scheduled for March 7-9, 2024!

It will take place at Woodland Christian Camp and Retreat Center in Temple, GA. Take advantage of the all-inclusive early bird pricing (\$149 for 2 nights and 6 meals). [REGISTER HERE!](#)



## THE AUDACITY OF MANHOOD:

STRENGTH THROUGH VIRTUOUS WORK

March 7-9, 2024

WOODLAND CHRISTIAN CAMP  
& RETREAT CENTER • TEMPLE, GA

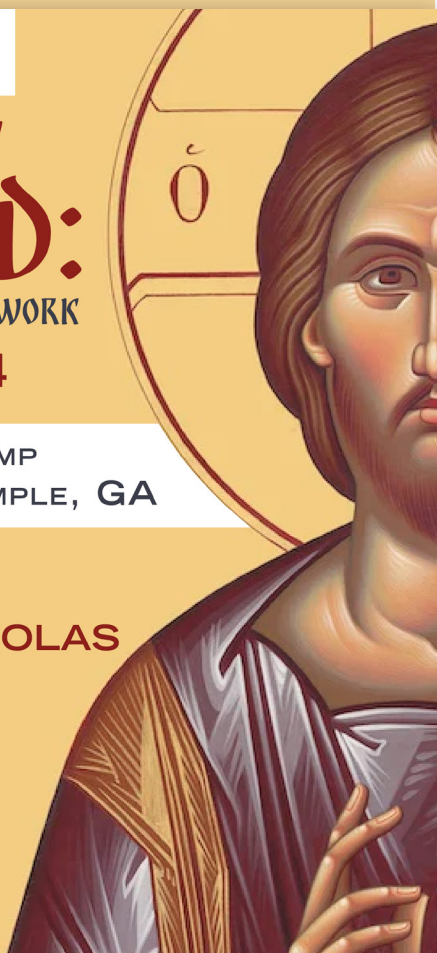
GUEST SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

His Grace, Bishop NICHOLAS

Fr. Stephen De Young

Fr. Hans Jacobse

Fr. Jacob Andoun



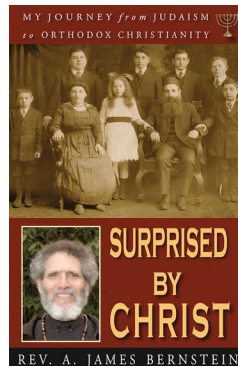


# Theology Editor's Corner

Fr. James Bernstein's book *Surprised by Christ: My Journey from Judaism to Orthodox Christianity* is one of the single best books for introducing inquirers and catechumens to the Orthodox Christian faith. One of the spiritual gems from the book is a quote from St. Anthony the Great that Fr. James uses to show how the Orthodox Christian East differs from the Roman Catholic and Protestant West. St. Anthony says:

God is good, dispassionate, and immutable. Now someone who thinks it reasonable and true to affirm that God does not change, may well ask how, in that case, it is possible to speak of God as rejoicing over those who are good and showing mercy on those who honor Him, while turning away from the wicked and being angry with sinners. To this it must be answered that God neither rejoices nor grows angry, for to rejoice and to be offended are passions; nor is He won over by the gifts of those who honor Him, for that would mean He is swayed by pleasure. It is not right to imagine that God feels pleasure or displeasure in a human way. He is good, and He only bestows blessings and never does harm, remaining always the same. We men, on the other hand, if we remain good through resembling God, are united with Him; but if we become evil through not resembling God, we are separated from Him. By living in holiness, we cleave to God; but by becoming wicked we make Him our enemy. It is not that He grows angry with us in an arbitrary way, but it is our own sins that prevent God from shining within us and expose us to demons who punish us. And if through prayer and acts of compassion we gain release from our sins, this does not mean that we have won God over and made Him change, but that through our actions and our turning to God, we have cured our wickedness and so once more have enjoyment of God's goodness. Thus, to say that God turns away from the wicked is like saying that the sun hides itself from the blind ("On the Character of Men" quoted in *Surprised by Christ*, 253-254).

Here, St. Anthony makes it clear that the root of our problem is that we have turned away from God; not that God has turned away from us. So, we are healed and made whole by repentance and turning away from the sins and selfish impulses that alienate us from God. In the Orthodox Christian life, we do this by keeping the commandments to love God, and our neighbors, and even our enemies and through the entire sacramental life of the Church – especially Baptism, Confession, and the Eucharist. Here, Fr. James' book is a great blessing to anyone who is looking into the Orthodox Christian faith for the first time or anyone who would like a firmer foundation in their faith. May the God who loves us without any shadow of change shine in us as we seek Him with all of our heart!



## Upcoming Events (cont.)

### APRIL

#### AMEN LENTEN VIRTUAL RETREAT 2024

April 6, 2024  
8:00 am - 5:00 pm EDT - Zoom  
Details to come!

#### YAF LENTEN RETREAT 2024

April 13, 2024  
8:00 am - 5:00 pm EDT - Zoom  
Details to come!

#### ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN'S LENTEN RETREAT 2024

April 20, 2024  
8:00 am - 5:00 pm EDT - Zoom  
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!

**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