

the Light



JANUARY 2024
NEWSLETTER



CAMP ST. THEKLA
WINTER CAMP 2024 (WAMP)
February 16-19, 2024
Diakonia Retreat Center
[REGISTER HERE!](#)

WINTER SACRED
MUSIC INSTITUTE
February 22-25, 2024
St. George Cathedral, Coral Gables, FL
[MORE INFO HERE!](#)

CONNECT WITH US!



CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!

May our Lord Jesus Christ through His Nativity, the New Year of 2024, and the upcoming Feast of Epiphany bring you all a peaceful, joyous, and spiritual year. The grace of God continues to strengthen our diocese as we plan the Winter Camp (**February 2024 Winter Camp registration ends on January 5th, 2024**), the Antiochian Women, Antiochian Men, Young Adults, and Teen SOYO Lenten retreats (during Great Lent), the Parish Life Conference (PLC) in June, and Summer St. Thekla Camp (in June and July). I pray that all will be looking forward to those 2024 spiritual events. For more details on those events, please refer to our website www.DOMSE.org and scroll down to the events section. [Make sure to check out the DOMSE scholarship in the events section to advise your graduating high school seniors to apply.](#)

As we embark on the new year, we need to prioritize self-motivation as one of the important concepts in life that, when applied in someone's daily living, success may become a reality. The source of self-motivation, however, wells from different sources depending on where it is applied. In Christianity, self-motivation that stems from Christ's love for His creatures and His sacrifice on the Cross for their salvation is an indispensable notion. When it is made effective in a human's life, spiritual triumph ensues resulting in God-like behavior. This journey may vary in different persons' lives. The results, however, are constant, spiritual growth! Is it any wonder that saints make this staple one of their foci!



While the year unfolds, the secular and workplace challenges are imminent as we face unprecedented encounters with nothing less than the evil one himself in the disguise of technology and other forms of numerous distractions. Technology in itself can be used the correct way to aid us in life and it can be used the wrong way to hinder our spiritual progress. Technology in itself and by itself is not the problem! But how we use it is! We are in control of our direction no matter where the commotions and disturbances may attempt to lead us. Remembering and maintaining recollection on a daily basis that we are the presidents and CEOs of our lives lead to regulating our journey's path as does the rudder of the ship. A rudder does not propel a ship forward, rather it determines its direction in the ocean. Let our rudder be Jesus Christ and His love for us, aided by our parish life and our diocese spiritual events throughout 2024!

For further information regarding the 2024 DOMSE events schedule, please point your browser to www.DOMSE.org and scroll down to the listed events. Looking forward to seeing you all at the various DOMSE events and at your parishes.

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

+BISHOP NICHOLAS

in this issue...

SACRED MUSIC NOTES	P. 2
THE FEASTING KITCHEN	P. 3
THEOLOGY EDITOR'S CORNER	P. 6



Sacred Music Notes

DOMSE MUSIC CHAIR: Kh. Nora Bleam
St. Andrew Orthodox Church | Pensacola, FL

CALLING ALL CHANTERS AND CHOIR DIRECTORS!

It's time to make plans to attend the Winter Sacred Music Institute, focusing on the Pentecostarion: from Pascha to Pentecost.

This is the first time it will be hosted in our region, and it is a great opportunity for the musicians of DOMSE. Wouldn't it be wonderful if each parish could send one of their music leaders?

What does one do at a Sacred Music Institute?

You sing! Reading sessions are an important part of any musical professional development. To start the conference, Father John El-Massih and Mareena Boosrama Ball will lead us in both Byzantine and 4-part settings of Communion Hymns. As we sing, we learn the history and context of the hymns, as well as see good examples of conducting and how to teach unfamiliar music to a group. Some of the settings will be easier, and you can take them home and begin using them in your parish this year. Others will be more complex and sung for our own musical pleasure and enrichment. When we sing together, especially in varied styles, we build community. Everyone benefits!

You pray! We rehearse for the Vespers and Divine Liturgy services, and then worship together.

You stretch and sing! Each day we warm-up together with a vocal

technique session. We want our voices to be strong, healthy, and pleasing to hear. These practical exercises physically train you to be a better singer. Also, individual voice and conducting lessons are available for sign-ups.

You meet other church musicians! You make new friends, get new ideas and encouragement.

You listen and think! There are group lectures. There are around fifteen different break-out sessions covering topics as varied as choral settings of the Hierarchical "As Many of You As Have Been Baptized" or "the Doxastika of the Praises in Tone 5" or "How to Give Pitches" or "How to Teach Sacred Music to Preschoolers."

The beautiful music you enjoy at your parish does not happen magically. Send someone from your parish! Musical leaders must volunteer, be trained, and practice what they have learned. Then other people must join them. God does not wait for us to be



the Pentecostarion from Pascha to Pentecost

With the blessing of Metropolitan SABA,
the Department of Sacred Music
invites you to join us for the annual

Winter Sacred Music Institute

February 22-25, 2024

SAVE THE DATE

Hosted by
St. George Cathedral
Coral Gables, Florida



perfect to love us and include us in his family; neither do we need to wait until we are amazingly confident singers to join our choirs. You likely are needed.

Come to the Music Institute! Sing! Learn! Be blessed!

Wishing you all the blessings of the Feast of Nativity!

Need musical support? Looking for a piece of music? Reach out to me at norableam@gmail.com

Helpful Link: [Archdiocesan Sacred Music Website and Sacred Music Library](#)



The Feasting Kitchen – Vasolopita

By Kh. Destinie Winn
All Saints Church | Raleigh, NC

Looking for a fun way to ring in the civil New Year? Why not start the year with Vasilopita? Let me explain. Every year on New Years, the faithful bake a citrusy cake or bread with a coin hidden inside for the feast of St. Basil the Great (Jan 1). This tradition is said to be based on the story that follows:

During a time of famine, the emperor demanded an excessive tax from the people of Caesarea, so each family had to give up all their valuables, money, and jewelry. Upon finding out this injustice, St. Basil fearlessly defended his people, calling the emperor to repentance. The emperor was moved by St. Basil's speech, canceled the tax, and returned all the valuables to the Saint. The Saint was faced with a daunting task: out of a large number of items, he had to return each one to its rightful owner. He prayed, then prepared a huge cake, and baked the treasures inside of it. After calling his flock to prayer, he blessed and cut the cake, offering a piece to each person. Miraculously, each owner received his own valuables in his piece of the cake. Vasilopitas have been baked on St. Basil's feast day every year since his repose, to commemorate this miracle.

A special cake containing a hidden coin is cut and shared among the members of the household. Whoever gets the piece with the coin hidden inside of it, is considered to have St. Basil's blessing for the whole year! It is made of a variety of doughs, depending on regional and family tradition.

Prayer for Vasilopita

Let us pray unto the Lord. Lord, have mercy. O Creator of all things, Lord, and King of the ages, plenteous in mercy and bountiful in goodness, who didst accept the Magi's gifts in Bethlehem, who art the Bread of life that came down from heaven, who by Thine authority didst establish the seasons and the years and dost hold our life in Thy hands. Hear us who pray to Thee on this holy day upon our entrance into the new year of Thy goodness and bless (+) this loaf/ cake, which has been offered to Thy glory and in honor of our Father among the Saints Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia. Do Thou who art Benevolent, look down from Thy holy heaven and send down upon us, upon those who have offered these gifts and upon them that partake thereof, Thine heavenly gifts, for our hope is in Thee, the living God, unto the ages. Bless this parish (home, school, foundation, etc.) and our entrances and exits; replenish our life with all good things and direct our footsteps that we may keep Thy divine commandments, for man shall not live by bread alone; Through the intercessions of Thy Most pure Mother, of our Father among the saints Basil the Great and of all Thy saints who from all ages have been well pleasing to Thee. Amen.



Happy New Year and
Blessed Feast of St Basil!

[Click here for Recipe](#)

REGISTER FOR CAMP ST. THEKLA

WINTER CAMP

FEB 16 - 19, 2024 | DIAKONIA RETREAT CENTER
\$235 PER CAMPER

REGISTRATION CLOSING JAN 5

Click here to register



THE ANTIOCHIAN MEN
CONFERENCE & RETREAT

THE AUDACITY OF MANHOOD:

STRENGTH THROUGH VIRTUOUS WORK

March 7-9, 2024

WOODLAND CHRISTIAN CAMP & RETREAT CENTER • TEMPLE, GA

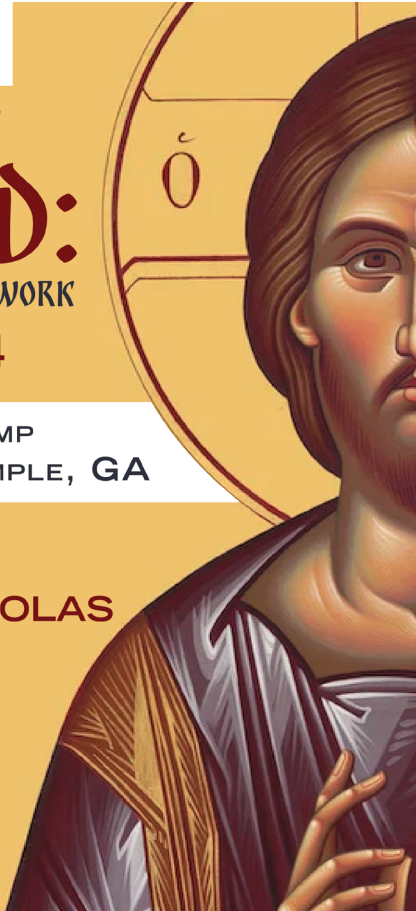
GUEST SPEAKERS INCLUDE:

His Grace, Bishop NICHOLAS

Fr. Stephen De Young

Fr. Hans Jacobse

Fr. Jacob Andoun



Upcoming Events

FEBRUARY

CAMP ST. THEKLA WINTER CAMP 2024 (WAMP)

February 16-19, 2024
Diakonia Retreat Center
[REGISTER HERE!](#)

WINTER SACRED MUSIC INSTITUTE

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MARCH

AMEN CONFERENCE & RETREAT

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

SOYO LENTEN VIRTUAL RETREAT 2024

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

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!

Support
Your
Diocese



DONATE TO:

Camp St. Thekla | DOMSE Scholarship
Antiochian Men | Antiochian Women
Young Adult Fellowship | Teen SOYO
or a General Donation

Thank You!



Teen SOYO

Stella Hallberg
All Saints Church | Raleigh, NC

Hello DOMSE! It's Stella, your DOMSE SOYO President. You have officially met all of this year's SOYO Board! We would now like to tell all teens about an exciting opportunity: the TRUST Project. NAC SOYO is offering four \$1000 grants and two \$500 grants to parish SOYO groups in the Archdiocese. This money must be used to complete a teen-led service project to help your community. Applications are due January 31, 2024, and can be submitted online at teensoyo.org/trust. Sophia, our DOMSE SOYO secretary, and I had the blessing of testing the TRUST Project last year at our home parish. We were able to fill the pantry of our local women's shelter with food, including thirty-one boxes of breakfast sandwiches and fifty-six peanut butter cups. It was such a blessing to have the resources to execute a bigger service project, especially as a teen. I encourage every parish to brainstorm project ideas and apply for a TRUST Project grant. You won't regret it!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!



Upcoming Events *(cont.)*

JUNE

2024 DOMSE SCHOLARSHIPS!

June 1 - July 1, 2024

[CLICK HERE FOR INFO!](https://teensoyo.org/trust)

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 - 29, 2024

Details to come!

CAMP ST. THEKLA 2024 - SESSION 2

June 30 - July 6, 2024

Details to come!

T.R.U.S.T. PROJECT

APPLICATIONS OPEN!

Are the teens in your parish interested in receiving a grant to fund a service project?

NAC SOYO is offering four \$1000 grants and two \$500 grants to local SOYO chapters. Applications are due January 31st, 2024. Find more info at the link below!

SUBMIT APPLICATIONS TO
teensoyo.org/trust

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



Theology Editor's Corner

During the season of the Nativity and Theophany, we celebrate the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in the flesh. He is the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6) who has overcome every form of division by His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. Nevertheless, His work continues through each one of us today, which is why He says that the peacemakers are blessed and will be called the sons of God (Mat. 5:9). The Lutheran pastor Richard Wurmbrand experienced the full wonder of this one Christmas Eve in a Communist prison camp in Romania. He says,

When I was in jail I felt very, very ill. I had tuberculosis of the whole surface of both lungs, and four vertebrae were attacked by tuberculosis. I also had intestinal tuberculosis, diabetes, heart failure, jaundice, and other sicknesses I can't even remember. I was near to death.

At my right hand was a priest by the name of Iscu. He was the abbot of a monastery. This man, perhaps in his forties, had been so tortured he was near to death. But his face was serene. He spoke about his hope of heaven, about his love of Christ, about his faith. He radiated joy.

On my left side was the Communist torturer who had tortured this priest almost to death. He had been arrested by his own comrades. Don't believe the newspapers when they say that the Communists only hate Christians or Jews — it's not true. They simply hate. They hate everybody. They hate Jews, they hate Christians, they hate anti-Semites, they hate anti-Christians, they hate everybody. One Communist hates the other Communist. They quarrel among themselves, and when they quarrel one Communist with the other, they put the other one in jail and torture him just like a Christian, and they beat him.

And so it happened that the Communist torturer who had tortured this priest nearly to death had been tortured nearly to death by his comrades. And he was dying near me. His soul was in agony.

During the night he would awaken me, saying, "Pastor, please pray for me. I can't die, I have committed such terrible crimes."

Then I saw a miracle. I saw the agonized priest calling two other prisoners. And leaning on their shoulders, slowly, slowly he walked past my bed, sat on the bedside of this murderer, and caressed his head — I will never forget this gesture. I watched a murdered man caressing his murderer! That is love — he found a caress for him.

The priest said to the man, "You are young; you did not know what you were doing. I love you with all my heart." But he did not just say the words. You can say "love," and it's just a word of four letters. But he really loved. "I love you with all my heart."

Then he went on, "If I who am a sinner can love you so much, imagine Christ, who is Love Incarnate, how much He loves you! And all the Christians whom you have tortured, know that they forgive you, they love you, and Christ loves you. He wishes you to be saved much more than you wish to be saved. You wonder if your sins can be forgiven. He wishes to forgive your sins more than you wish your sins to be forgiven. He desires for you to be with Him in heaven much more than you wish to be in heaven with Him. He is Love. You only need to turn to Him and repent."

In this prison cell in which there was no possibility of privacy, I overheard the confession of the murderer to the murdered. Life is more thrilling than a novel — no novelist has ever written such a thing. The murdered — near to death — received the confession of the murderer. The murdered gave absolution to his murderer.

They prayed together, embraced each other, and the priest went back to his bed. Both men died that same night. It was a Christmas Eve. But it was not a Christmas Eve in which we simply remembered that two thousand years ago Jesus was born in Bethlehem. It was a Christmas Eve during which Jesus was born in the heart of a Communist murderer.

These are things which I have seen with my own eyes.¹

Glory to God for the testimony of Fr. Iscu and Richard Wurmbrand! May Christ be born in each one of us as we forgive even our enemies, seek repentance, and extend the infinite love of God to everyone!

¹This account was originally published in *Again* magazine, September 1987. It can be accessed at: www.johnsanidopoulos.com/2010/03/lutheran-pastors-account-of-romanian.html