

the Light



OCTOBER 2024
NEWSLETTER

ANNUAL AMEN FALL RETREAT 2024

November 16, 2024
10:00 am - 1:00 pm EST
Virtual [CLICK HERE FOR INFO!](#)



DOMSE CLERGY & WINTER RETREATS 2025

January 29 - February 1, 2025
St. Elias Orthodox Church, Atlanta, GA
In person - Details to come!

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OUR THIRD ANNIVERSARY EDITION!

DOMSE Fall Retreat 2024

St. Ignatius Orthodox Church | Franklin, TN



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FEATURED EVENT

DOMSE Fall Retreat 2024

Michael Baclig | St. Nicholas Orthodox Church | Springdale, AR | Photos by Elizabeth Baclig

The 2024 DOMSE Fall Retreat took place on September 20-21, 2024, and it was a big success, thanks be to God! Almost 200 of the DOMSE faithful attended the Fall Retreat this year which was hosted at St. Ignatius Orthodox Church in Franklin, TN. The retreat kicked off on the first day with morning prayers and a welcome from His Grace, Bishop NICHOLAS as well as Fr. Philip Begley, the host pastor. Shortly after this, Fr. Joseph Bittle and Fr. Gregory Rogers teamed up to give a compelling talk titled "Introduction to Sacramental Living, Baptism Renewal & Chrismation." During that session, Fr. David Bibeau gave a separate talk to the teens on the same topic. This was followed by lunch where people from all over our diocese enjoyed fellowship during a fantastic Mediterranean meal.

After lunch, Fr. Peter Shportun gave a deeply meaningful talk titled "Communion & Confession." During this time, the teens once again attended a separate talk titled "Dating, Marriage, and Ordination" led by Fr. David Bleam. Later in the afternoon, the focus of the retreat shifted to the first set of workshops. The first workshop was focused on The Divine Liturgy and was led by AMEN President Michael Baclig. The second was a workshop on marriage led by Fr. David & Kh. Destinie Winn for the teens. The third workshop was a fun activity led by Elina Pelikan where retreat participants painted holy water bottles together. After the workshops, the faithful attended Vespers before gathering for a dinner that featured shrimp tacos. The first day ended with some wonderful fellowship among the many families who were in attendance.

(continued on page 3)



(Fall Retreat - continued from page 2)

The second day of the Fall Retreat started with the celebration of the Divine Liturgy followed by Bishop NICHOLAS addressing everyone in the diocese. After this, a group photo was taken and then everyone gathered in the fellowship hall for a tasty brunch which was catered by Cracker Barrel. Towards the end of brunch, everyone was treated to a Camp St. Thekla presentation which featured a slideshow and video clips from the camp sessions this past summer. After this, Fr. Paul Girgis gave a talk titled "Marriage & Ordination" while Bishop NICHOLAS led a discussion about Confession with the teens. The final talk was given by Fr. Gabriel Khoury on the Sacrament of Holy Unction which was a very edifying experience for all those who attended.

After the last talk, Bishop NICHOLAS offered an "Ask Sayedna" Q&A session for the retreat attendees. The second set of workshops followed this session which included three separate workshops. The first workshop was a discussion about the Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) with the teens. The second was a detailed presentation of a "Pilgrimage to Mt. Athos" which a small group from St. Ignatius Church had recently gone

on. The final workshop was titled "Supporting the Sacraments in Your Home Life" led by Fr. David and Kh. Destinie Winn. After the conclusion of these workshops everyone attended Great Vespers before sitting down for a delicious barbeque dinner. The day ended with some more fellowship time where many decided to stay late and engage in good conversation.

On Sunday, September 22nd, many of the Fall Retreat participants attended Orthros and a Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at St. Ignatius Church. During the Liturgy, Fr. Philip Begley was elevated to Archpriest by Bishop NICHOLAS which was kept a secret from Fr. Philip until the last moment – congratulations and many years Fr. Philip!

A big thanks to everyone at St. Ignatius Church for hosting such a fabulous Fall Retreat and we look forward to seeing you again next year!



Clergy Spotlight

The Unconventional Journey of Fr. David Winn



Fr. David and Kh. Destinie Winn are quintessential southern Californians who managed to find each other—and their faith—amidst the sun, surf, and high school hallways. High school sweethearts, they tied the knot in 2007, a year after they both began their undergraduate studies at Biola University. Clearly, they believed in teamwork from the start.

At Biola, Fr. David dove headfirst into biblical and theological studies, aiming for pastoral ministry in the same evangelical denomination where his father was a minister. Meanwhile, Kh. Destinie majored in elementary education, driven by her love for children and a passion for teaching. Together, they were the dynamic duo of academics and service.

Fr. David's time at Biola was marked by scholarly excellence and leadership. He was a standout in the university's Torrey Honors Institute and was inducted into the Epsilon Kappa Epsilon honor society, a recognition for those who excel in academics and Christian servant-leadership.

The couple graduated in 2010, diploma in one hand and a sense of purpose in the other. But the road to ministry took an unexpected turn in 2012 when they were received into the Orthodox Church at St. Barnabas Orthodox Church in Costa Mesa, CA. Nothing disrupts plans for Protestant ministry quite like a sudden turn towards Orthodoxy! Fr. David put his pastoral ambitions on hold and donned a different uniform, serving as a deputy sheriff in Orange County.

While Fr. David was keeping the public peace, Kh. Destinie pursued a master's degree in teaching, adding yet another

academic feather to the Winn family cap.

But Fr. David's calling to ministry remained a persistent whisper in his ear. In 2017, with an episcopal blessing, the Winn family packed their bags and moved to Crestwood, New York, where Fr. David enrolled at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary. There, he traded his badge for a cassock and his sheriff's star for an Orthodox cross. He was ordained to the holy diaconate in 2018 and to the holy priesthood in 2019. He earned his M.Div. from St. Vladimir's in May 2020, completing his studies with the same academic rigor that had defined his journey all along.

In the midst of all this, the Winn family grew by four: Elizabeth, Adelaide, Daniel, and William—a lively crew who bring joy, noise, and an occasional moment of blessed chaos to their home.

By God's providence, Fr. David was sent to DOMSE and attached to the altar of All Saints in Raleigh, in August 2020. When Fr. Nicholas Sorensen retired on January 1, 2021, Fr. David assumed the mantle as pastor. His path to the priesthood may have had a few detours, but his dedication to serving Christ and His Church never wavered. Now, as the shepherd of his flock, Fr. David combines his unique background in theology, law enforcement, and family life to guide his parish with wisdom, compassion, and a sense of humor that is as warm as the California sun.



Words from Sayedna Nicholas

“It is hard to be hungry and destitute and there is nothing one can do. But there is something in the midst of this hopelessness when the Lord becomes your only hope. It is then that one can feel His presence. I have been blessed to participate in your suffering my brother,” says St. Nektarios as he sits on the ground next to a homeless man in Athens, Greece, after having been undeservingly expelled from Egypt due to clergy jealousy and for them having feelings of being threatened by his good-hearted efforts to help the needy.

In this day in age, perhaps without realizing so, we expect instant gratification, as it is promoted vigorously by our secular society through many means including social media and many social interactions. Our society does not accept struggling and completely rejects suffering!

As we have discussed for the past seven years, our goal as Orthodox Christians is to become God-like. Is there a better standard than St. Nektarios’ exemplary endurance of hardship to the extent of being “hungry and destitute”! I have watched the movie “Man of God” more than ten times. It never ceases to touch my heart as it underscores

the Christian way of life and behavior, even when we are wronged and persecuted. I do recommend watching this “documentary” when a person feels down, harmed, upset, angry, or destitute. Self-scrutiny is crucial so that we don’t fall into unwarranted errors and offend someone, or even God Himself.

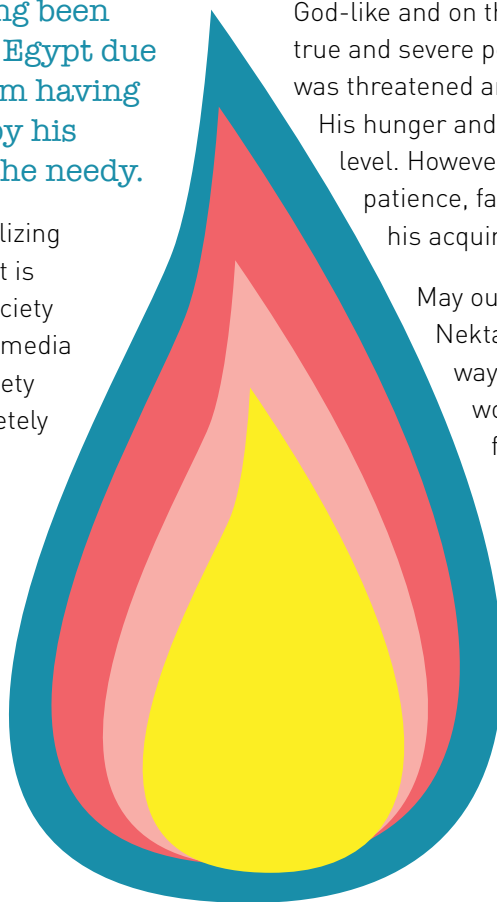
If we compare our reaction every day to St. Nektarios, it may help us further our journey on the narrow road to becoming God-like and on the path to salvation. St. Nektarios endured true and severe persecution to the extent that his livelihood was threatened and faith in God was tested but sharpened.

His hunger and destitution were harsh to the maximum level. However, his reaction was godly and exemplified patience, faith, self-control, and love, to name a few of his acquired virtues.

May our gracious Lord help us all follow St. Nektarios’ reaction and abandon the world’s way of response so that we may continue to work on acquiring the virtues as God wishes for us.

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

+BISHOP NICHOLAS



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

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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!



DOMSE College Scholarship

Elias AbuGhazaleh | Holy Cross Orthodox Church, Ormond Beach, FL

The DOMSE Scholarship Program was established with the blessing of His Grace, Bishop NICHOLAS in 2021. His vision was to establish a scholarship program to recognize High School graduates as they pursue higher education. As you can see below, the DOMSE Scholarship Program has become more important as our youth face ever-increasing costs of higher education. The number of applicants, since the start of the program is as follows:

- Applicants in 2024 = 13 (3 Judges' Choice awarded)
- Applicants in 2023 = 6 (2 Judges' Choice awarded)
- Applicants in 2022 = 9 (2 Judges' Choice awarded)
- Applicants in 2021 = 3 (2 Judges' Choice awarded)

With the blessing of His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS, the DOMSE Scholarship committee this year is excited to announce the 2024 Judges' Choice recipients of the DOMSE College Scholarship!

Glory to God that we were able to increase the number of scholarships and award three deserving teens this year. Our Diocese was able to award \$2500 college scholarships to THREE of our DOMSE Teens.

THE JUDGE'S CHOICE RECIPIENTS FOR 2024



LUCY REID
St. Paul Church, Naples, FL

Lucy is attending Belmont Abbey College, pursuing a degree in The Great Books.



SUSANNA BANDY
St. Elias Church, Atlanta, GA

Susanna is attending University of North Georgia, pursuing a degree in Nursing.



SUSANNA SETZLER
St. Stephen Church, Hiram, GA

Susanna is attending Samford University, pursuing a degree in Chemistry (Pre-Med).

Congratulations! It is good to know that the future of DOMSE is in good hands with such amazing and intelligent youth. We pray that these teens will spread the light of Christ to everyone that they encounter in their college experience!

Keep a lookout for the upcoming DOMSE 2025 Scholarship application at [DOMSE.ORG](https://www.domse.org).



TOUCHING BASE WITH

Past DOMSE Scholarship Recipients

Elias AbuGhazaleh | Holy Cross Orthodox Church, Ormond Beach, FL

With the 2024-2025 school year underway and reading the [DOMSE Scholarship website](#) announcement about this year's Judges' Choice, I congratulate those selected. This started me thinking about our very first scholarship recipients.

As you may recall, the DOMSE Scholarship Program awarded its first two recipients in 2021. This would mean that their senior year would be this school year, 2024-2025. So, I reached out to see how their senior year started for them.

I touched base with William Neaime (St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church, Atlanta GA), and much to my surprise, he shared this photo.

Congratulations William!

I don't know William personally; I only met him in person once at the 2022 Winter Retreat.

But after seeing that picture, I acquired an instant proud-of-you smile and was interested to hear the details!

William graduated with his bachelor's degree this past December 2023 from the University of Georgia. In total, it took him 2.5 years to complete his degree. He graduated Summa Cum Laude with a 3.92 GPA.

He ended up changing his major, as after his first semester, he realized finance may not be the best degree for him. He felt a calling to serve other people and try to make a difference in a field he was genuinely passionate about.

He changed his major to Housing Management & Policy, a degree focusing on low-income/community housing and government policy initiatives that influence housing affordability and the housing market itself. He had originally

thought this may lead him to a career with the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

During college, he did a nine-month financial analysis internship with Segra, an IT corporation, out of Charlotte, NC, while pursuing his degree full-time. It was an eye-opening experience, and he wouldn't have traded it for anything. While a pleasant experience for William, the internship solidified his decision to change paths and pursue a path of service to others. During his final semester of college, he decided to pursue a military career, as it was simply something he felt called to do. He realized it was only something he could do while he was young, so he decided to bite the bullet and start his officer application for the Army. After four letters of recommendation, an essay, facing an interview board, and a selection board/committee, he was finally selected on August 23, 2023.

On September 3rd, William signed his contract to attend the Army's Officer Candidate School after completing Basic Training at Fort Moore in Columbus, GA. He ships out to Basic Training on November 18th.

William also shared the following advice, which I thought was well-stated! To those unsure of what they would like to pursue during their post-secondary education, his only advice is to pursue something you are genuinely passionate about. Perceived financial incentives or any other material motivation are no match for the vigor that true passion for something can give you.

While at the University of GA, William participated in the OCF program headed by Father Anthony Salzman. The church is only about a 10-15-minute drive from campus. On weekdays, Father Anthony can often be seen painting Iconography between the Tate Student Center and the UGA Bookstore, which was a great conversation starter for non-Orthodox students who may be curious as to why a priest is painting in the middle of a college campus.

Congratulations again, William!



Following up with another DOMSE Scholarship recipient (2021), I touched base with Lauren Evancho (All Saints Orthodox Church, Raleigh, NC) and here is what she had to share about her journey so far:

I am a senior this year and will be graduating in the spring! I ended up switching out of my Biomedical Engineering major to Neuroscience and I am still a Music major. So, when I graduate in May, I will have a double major in Neuroscience and Music and a minor in Chemistry. After I graduate, I plan to take a gap year to work, study, and travel before hopefully attending Veterinarian Graduate School the following year. Overall, my experience at the University of North Carolina (UNC) at Chapel Hill has been challenging but rewarding. I feel that I have learned a lot about myself and grown as a person over the past few years. I think that the most important lesson that I have learned is to put everything into perspective. Freshman year, I spent a significant amount of time worried about my GPA, at the cost of more important things such as spending time with friends and family and taking time to myself.

During my gap year, I am most excited about traveling (hopefully spending a month in Europe next summer). I have never been to Europe, and I want to travel to as many countries as possible. Since many countries in Europe are knowledgeable about and rich in culture pertaining to the Orthodox Faith, I want to visit museums and see iconography from different locations and dates, and visit Orthodox Churches in Greece, Romania, and Turkey. I am most nervous about being by myself for the first time in my life. I have always lived with other people, and I am unsure of what it will be like to live on my own. I plan to focus on community support during this transition like family, friends, colleagues, and the church.

In terms of jobs, I was a UNC Resident Advisor (RA) for all of my sophomore and junior year. This position was difficult at times but overall taught me many skills to be utilized in my future workplace. I really enjoyed talking to and helping my residents and collaborating with the community to host events and encourage interactions between residents. One of the more difficult aspects of my position was having to address residents that were in conflict with each other, had broken the community living standards, and at times had broken the law. It was also challenging to support residents having medical and mental health emergencies, especially

as UNC had a shooting last year. These difficulties were ultimately why I chose not to continue being an RA my senior year, but overall, I am extremely grateful for the experience. Additionally, this is not a job, but I have been volunteering at the Orange County Animal Shelter for the past year. I absolutely adore volunteering there and get to help walk, play with, take photos of, and socialize with dogs.

My advice for people planning on double majoring or majoring in a STEM-related major would be to consider taking summer classes and not be afraid of taking an extra semester if necessary. Academia can be extremely draining, and it is important to give yourself grace and allow for time to rest. For me, at least, it was much less overwhelming to take only 13-15 credit hours a semester and then take a summer class or two instead of trying to take 16-18 credit hours in a semester, especially if some of the classes are challenging.

My university does have an OCF chapter, but I am located only 45 minutes from my hometown of Raleigh, so I often go back home and go to All Saints Orthodox Church where I grew up. I am part of the choir at my home parish and am close to a lot of people there, so that is what works best for me. For students that are unable to or do not wish to frequently travel home, I would recommend finding an Orthodox church nearby, if possible.



SATURDAY **11/16/24**

6TH ANNUAL AMEN
THE ANTIOCHIAN MEN
DIOCESE OF MIAMI & THE SOUTHEAST
AMEN VIRTUAL RETREAT

Festal Orations
Saint Gregory of Nazianzus

Event #1 @ 10 am EST
Books, Breakfast,
& Brotherhood Part X
Discussion led by
Michael Baclig

Event #2 @ 12 pm EST
Guest Speaker:
Fr. Paul Fuller

Upcoming Events

NOVEMBER

ANNUAL AMEN FALL RETREAT 2024- Virtual
November 16, 2024; 10:00 am - 1:00 pm EST
[CLICK HERE FOR INFO!](#)

2025

JANUARY

DOMSE CLERGY & WINTER RETREATS 2025 - In person
January 29 - February 1, 2025
St. Elias Orthodox Church, Atlanta, GA
Details to come!

APRIL

AMEN LENTEN RETREAT 2025 - Virtual
April 5, 2025; 9:00 am - 11:30 am EST
Details to come!

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN'S LENTEN RETREAT 2025 - Virtual
April 5, 2025; 12:00 pm - 2:00 pm EST
Details to come!

SOYO LENTEN RETREAT 2025 - Virtual
April 5, 2025; 8:00 pm - 9:00 pm EST
Details to come!

YAM LENTEN RETREAT 2025 - Virtual
April 6, 2025; 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm EST
Details to come!

JUNE

2025 DOMSE SCHOLARSHIPS!
June 1 - July 1, 2025
Details to come!

DOMSE 2025 PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE (PLC) - In person
June 11 - 14, 2025
St. George Orthodox Church, Jacksonville, FL
Details to come!

SEPTEMBER

DOMSE FALL RETREAT 2025 - In person
September 19 - 20, 2025
St. Ignatius Orthodox Church, Franklin, TN
Details to come!

NOVEMBER

AMEN CONFERENCE & RETREAT 2025 - In person
November 5 - 8, 2025
Woodland Christian Camp & Retreat Center, Temple, GA
Details to come!

Diocese of Miami and the Southeast 2024, 2025, & 2026 EVENT LIST



Visit for more info: <https://domse.org/events/>

DATE	EVENT	Location
November 16, 2024	6th Annual AMEN Retreat 2024	Virtual
January 29 – February 1, 2025 Always the last week of January	Clergy & Winter Retreats 2025	St. Elias Atlanta, GA
February 14 – 17, 2025 Always President's Day weekend	Winter Camp 2025	CST
April 5, 2025	AMEN Lenten Retreat	Virtual
April 5, 2025	Antiochian Women Lenten Retreat	Virtual
April 5, 2025	SOYO Lenten Retreat	Virtual
April 6, 2025	YAM Lenten Retreat	Virtual
June 1 – July 1, 2025	2025 DOMSE Scholarship	Virtual
June 11 – June 14, 2025	Parish Life Conference 2025	St. George Jacksonville, FL
June 22 – June 28, 2025	Camp St. Thekla Summer Session 1	CST
June 29 - July 5, 2025	Camp St. Thekla Summer Session 2	CST
September 19 – 20, 2025 Always 3 rd weekend in September	Fall Retreat 2025	St. Ignatius Franklin, TN
November 5 – 8, 2025	AMEN Conference & Retreat 2025	Woodland Camp Temple, GA
January 28 – January 31, 2026	Clergy & Winter Retreats 2026	St. Elias Atlanta, GA
February 14 – 16, 2026	Winter Camp 2026	CST

Save The Dates!



AMEN
ANTIOCHIANMEN.ORG

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN
DOMSEWOMEN
ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN OF DOMSE

YOUNG ADULT
DOMSE YAF

SOYO
DOMSESOYO
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CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
DOMSECHRISTIANED



Theology Editor's Corner

According to St. Theophan the Recluse, the main purpose of this life is to prepare for the life to come ([The Spiritual Life and How To Be Attuned To It](#), 77), which is eternal life or life with God. But this is something that we can experience even now, in part, if we follow our Lord Jesus Christ, keep His commandments, and thus become like Him. Here, St. Theophan says,

The entire order of the Christian life is thus: Believe in God, in the worshipful Trinity that saves us in the Lord Jesus Christ through the benevolence of the Holy Spirit and, receiving the beneficial powers through the Divine Mysteries of the Holy Church, live according to the commandments of the Gospel, being inspired with the hope that God, for the smallest feasible labor of ours... will not deprive us of heavenly blessings... [78]

Attention must be concentrated principally on carrying out the commandments. We already believe, what else is needed? Carry out the commandments, *for faith without works is dead* [James 2:26]... The Lord... [has] given us a multiplicity of opportunities for performing good works according to His will, so that, if we pay attention to ourselves, we may at every moment perform God-pleasing works. There is no need to go abroad for this... Just look around yourself each day and each hour; on whatever you see the seal of the commandment, carry it out immediately, in the belief that God Himself this very hour requires this work of you, and nothing else. Work at becoming even more strongly fixed in this thought. As soon as you have done so, peace will begin pouring into your heart from the belief that each moment you are working for the Lord... [78-79]

By doing something for one person, we are doing it within the general mass of humanity. If each one of us did what was possible to do for whoever was standing right in front of our eyes, instead of goggling at the community of mankind, then all people, in aggregate, would at each moment be doing that which is needed by those in need, and, by satisfying their needs, would establish the welfare of all mankind... But those who keep thoughts of the welfare of all mankind inattentively let slip by that which is in front of their eyes. Because they do not

have the opportunity to perform a general work, and let slip by the opportunity to perform a particular work, they accomplish nothing towards the main purpose of life.

I was told of such an instance in St. Petersburg. There was some sort of meeting of young people who were advocates of universal welfare... One gentleman was making an impassioned speech about love for mankind and the people. Everyone was enraptured. But when he returned home, his servant did not come to the door quickly enough – he had not seen him coming. The servant did not give him a candle quickly enough, something had happened to his pipe, and it was a little cold in his room. Our philanthropist could not stand this, and finally, he sharply reprimanded his servant. The latter answered something back, and the former struck him in the chest. And so here is our fine fellow, who was overflowing with love toward mankind in one place, who could not behave properly toward even one person at home [79-80].

St. Theophan's words are especially important for us to keep in mind as we enter into another election season. The political parties want us to believe that supporting their policies, positions, and candidates is the most important thing that we can do to change the world, give others their due, and create an ideal society. But from a Christian perspective, this is false. We can only change the world one person at a time; and we begin with the particular acts of love, generosity, and kindness that we show to whoever we happen to meet – just as the good Samaritan showed love to the Jewish man who fell among robbers and helped to nurse him back to health. May God help us to leave behind the pride of the politicians and their media enablers who direct our attention to general works and distract us from our task, and give us the strength to do the humble and quiet work of loving our neighbors so that we are shown to be members of His Holy Church and citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven!

