

# the Light



SEPTEMBER 2024  
NEWSLETTER

## DOMSE FALL RETREAT 2024

September 20 - 21, 2024

St. Ignatius Orthodox Church, Franklin, TN

In person [CLICK HERE FOR INFO!](#)

## ANNUAL AMEN FALL RETREAT 2024

November 16, 2024

10:00 am - 1:00 pm EST

Virtual [CLICK HERE FOR INFO!](#)



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## Clergy Spotlight | Fr. James Guirguis



**M**y name is Fr. James Guirguis. My parents are both of Egyptian nationality and are Coptic Orthodox Christians. I was born in the suburbs of Chicago, IL and moved to North Carolina in 1997 to study at NC State University. While there I met my lovely wife Khouria Jennifer. After getting married my wife and I travelled to New York so that I could pursue my M. Div at St. Vladimir Orthodox Theological Seminary. We have 4 children: Isabelle (19), Lydia (17), Juliana (14) and Andrew (9). We are blessed to serve a wonderful mission called St. Raphael of Brooklyn Mission in the suburbs of Raleigh, NC (Fuquay-Varina). I am the author of an introductory book on the Orthodox Christian faith called "Ask For the Ancient Paths" and I regularly post my homilies at [outofegyptblog.wordpress.com](http://outofegyptblog.wordpress.com)

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# 2024 Fall Retreat

September 20-21, 2024 ~ St. Ignatius Orthodox Church  
3535 Ignatius Lane, Franklin, TN 37064

## “Sacramental Living”

COLOSSIANS 3:17 “...IN WORD OR DEED, DO IT ALL IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS...”

### Schedule!

All times listed are CST.

DATE	TIME	EVENT & DETAILS	LOCATION	
September 20	8:00 am	Breakfast at your hotel/home	Hotel / Home	
	8:00 am – 6:00 pm	Retreat Check-in	Foyer	
	9:00 am – 9:30 am	Morning Prayers & Opening Welcome Speakers: Bishop NICHOLAS & Fr. Philip Begley	Main Church	
	9:30 am – 10:00 am	Coffee Break	Fellowship Hall	
	10:00 am – 12:00 pm C	Spiritual Retreat Session 1: “Introduction to Sacramental Living, Baptism Renewal & Chrismation” Speaker: Fr. Joseph Bittle & Fr. Gregory Rogers	Main Church	
	10:00 am – 12:00 pm C	Teen SOYO Session 1: “Baptism & Chrismation” Speaker: Fr. David Bibeau	Old Church	
	12:00 pm – 1:30 pm	Lunch	Fellowship Hall	
	1:30 – 3:00 pm C	Spiritual Retreat Session 2: “Communion & Confession” Speaker: Fr. Peter Shportun	Main Church	
	1:30 – 3:00 pm C	Teen SOYO Session 2: “Dating, Marriage, and Ordination” Speaker: Fr. David Bleam	Old Church	
	3:00 pm – 3:30 pm	Fellowship Time and Snacks	Fellowship Hall	
	3:30 – 5:15 pm C	Workshops		
	Friday		Workshop 1: “The Divine Liturgy: The Greatest Invitation” Workshop Leader: Michael Baclig	Old Church
			Workshop 2: Teen SOYO Discussion: “Marriage Workshop” Workshop Leaders: Fr. David & Kh. Destinie Winn	Main Church
			Workshop 3: Painting of Holy Water bottles Workshop Leader: Elina Pelikan / Fr. Bob Sanford	Fellowship Hall
5:30 pm		Vespers	Main Church	
6:30 pm		Dinner	Fellowship Hall	
7:30 pm		Family & Fellowship around the campfire	Campfire Area	
September 21		9:00 am	Divine Liturgy & Bishop NICHOLAS’ Address to the Diocese	Main Church
		10:30 am	Fall Retreat Group Picture (After Divine Liturgy)	TBA
		10:30 am – 5:00 pm	Retreat Check-In	Foyer
		10:45 am	Brunch	Fellowship Hall
	11:30 am	Camp St. Thekla presentation & video (For Everyone) Presenter: TBD	Fellowship Hall	
	12:15 – 1:15 pm C	Spiritual Retreat Session 3: (For Everyone) “Marriage & Ordination” Speaker: Fr. Paul Girgis	Main Church	
	12:15 – 1:15 pm C	Teen SOYO Session 3: Discussion on Confession with Bishop Nicholas	Fellowship Hall	
	1:30 – 2:30 pm C	Spiritual Retreat Session 4: (For Everyone) “Unction” Speaker: Fr. Gabriel Khoury	Main Church	
	2:30 – 3:00 pm	Break/Snacks	Fellowship Hall	
	3:00 pm – 4:00 pm	Teen SOYO Project: Service Project Supervised by: Mrs. Kristi Perkins	Fellowship Hall	
	3:00 – 3:45 pm	Ask SAYIDNA (For Everyone)	Main Church	
	4:00 – 5:15 pm C	Workshops		
	Saturday		Workshop 1: “Pilgrimage to Mt. Athos” Workshop Leader: Jason Pollard	Main Church
			Workshop 2: Teen SOYO Discussion: OCF Workshop Workshop Leader: TBD	Old Church
		Workshop 3: “Supporting the Sacraments in Your Home” Workshop Leaders: Fr. David & Kh. Destinie Winn	Fellowship Hall	
5:30 pm		Great Vespers	Main Church	
6:30 pm		Dinner	Fellowship Hall	
7:30 pm		Fellowship Time: Bonfire & Smores for Everyone	Campfire Area	
Sunday Sept 22		9:00 am	Orthros	Main Church
		10:00 am	Hierarchical Divine Liturgy	Main Church
	12:00 pm	Fellowship Hour	Fellowship Hall	

Everyone is expected to arrive by Thursday evening  
Clergy may leave after 1 pm on Saturday

C = Childcare is provided during this time.  
(DOMSE Kid’s Club Activities)

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## SACRAMENTAL LIVING

ΑΙΟΣ HE IS WORTHY  
MUSTAHEQ AXIOS

### DOMSE FALL RETREAT

ST. IGNATIUS CHURCH – FRANKLIN, TN  
September 20th - 21st, 2024

**REGISTER HERE!**

## 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!



**AMEN**  
ANTIOCHIANMEN.ORG

**ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN**  
DOMSEWOMEN  
ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN OF DOMSE

**YOUNG ADULT**  
DOMSE YAF

**SOYO**  
DOMSESOYO  
DOMSESOYO

**CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**  
DOMSECHRISTIANED

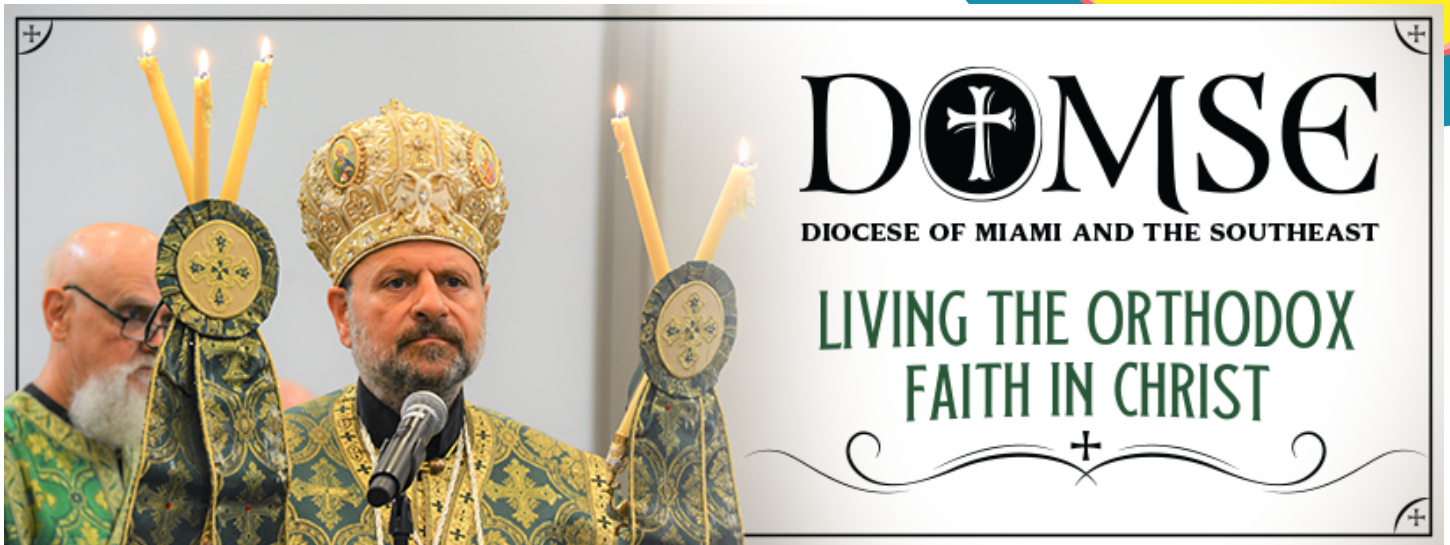


# Words from Sayedna Nicholas

As you may know, the Ecclesiastical year begins on September 1st, ushering in an entire twelve months of new blessings from God. New optimism begins the year with the usual and familiar feast days, fasting periods, and retreats. They all culminate in a spiritual growth that is unprecedented on a personal level. Each one of us needs to explore new heights in our closeness to our Creator and in sailing uncharted individual spiritual grounds within the context of the Orthodox Church Doctrines, Scriptures, and Holy Traditions. Simply put, spiritual stagnation is unacceptable, spiritual decline is unfathomable, and spiritual falling-out-of-Grace is incomprehensible. The only way forward is growing in our Lord Jesus Christ! This is not open to individual interpretations but rather in accordance with the elucidations and explanations of the Church Fathers as the Holy Spirit inspired them. The Christ promised us the guidance of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 4:1, Acts 2:1, Acts 13:2, Acts 15:28, Romans 14:8, Romans 8:26-27). If we believe in Christ, we must believe in His teachings and the pledges He guaranteed us. The Holy Spirit has been guiding the Orthodox Church, despite the occasional stumbling of Her fallible leaders throughout the ages, during the last two thousand years. And therefore, the Church is infallible! May the Holy Spirit be our inspiration to reach new spiritual heights in Christ Jesus.

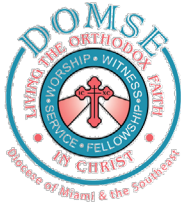
**May God bless you and may the Holy Trinity protect you all.**

+BISHOP NICHOLAS



# Diocese of Miami and the Southeast

## 2024, 2025, & 2026 EVENT LIST



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

DATE	EVENT	Location
September 20 – 21, 2024 Always 3 <sup>rd</sup> weekend in September	Fall Retreat 2024	St. Ignatius Franklin, TN
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 <sup>rd</sup> 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!





# Sacred Music Notes

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

## Greetings from the Music Department

**Our online music school is here!** With the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan SABA, we now have Byzantine and Choral Music programs for new and experienced Orthodox church musicians. Registration is now open! The Fall Semester is September 9 - December 20, 2024. Classes meet once a week for 15 weeks. The tuition fees for classes are very affordable, especially at the introductory rate of \$300 for the full course. Course and instructor details and all links for registration are available on the [Archdiocesan Sacred Music Website](#).

**Attention Priests and Deacons** - There are courses for everyone. I would like to highlight Rev. John El Massih's Chant Class for Clergy, where he helps clergy learn to chant their parts in various services. He is a masterful teacher, with a humor and depth of knowledge that makes his classes consistently rewarding. Especially if you have inexperienced musicians at your parish, having clergy that chant well can make a big difference for them.

## Here are registration links:

[Byzantine Track Registration](#) - email any questions to [aabyzantinemusicschool@gmail.com](mailto:aabyzantinemusicschool@gmail.com).

[Choral Track Registration](#) - email any questions to [sacredmusic@antiochian.org](mailto:sacredmusic@antiochian.org).

We hope that many parishes will benefit from our new online school. As in Psalm 47, let us sing praises with understanding!

Singing with you,  
Kh. Nora

**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

## Upcoming Events

### SEPTEMBER

#### DOMSE FALL RETREAT 2024

September 20 - 21, 2024  
St. Ignatius Orthodox Church  
Franklin, TN - In person  
[CLICK HERE FOR INFO!](#)

### NOVEMBER

#### ANNUAL AMEN FALL RETREAT 2024

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

## 2025 JANUARY

#### DOMSE CLERGY & WINTER RETREATS 2025

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

### APRIL

#### AMEN LENTEN RETREAT 2025

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

#### ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN'S LENTEN RETREAT 2025

April 5, 2025  
12:00 pm - 2:00 pm EST - Virtual  
Details to come!

#### SOYO LENTEN RETREAT 2025

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

#### YAM LENTEN RETREAT 2025

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

*(continued on page 6)*



# Theology Editor's Corner

Prayer is the lifeblood of our relationship with God, and it is the central way that we can stay connected to Him from moment to moment. When we practice a prayer rule of morning and evening prayers, we dedicate our whole day to God and mentally prepare ourselves to be mindful of Him throughout the day and to talk to Him as often as we can. Here, St. Theophan the Recluse says, "just as someone standing in the sunshine is warm, so too is the person who always remembers God" (135). However, one of the greatest difficulties that we face when practicing a prayer rule is wandering thoughts, especially when we are reading prayers out of a prayer book. How can we make the most of our prayers and stay present as we offer them up to God?

[St. Theophan the Recluse's book, \*The Spiritual Life and How To Be Attuned To It\*](#), is a kind of manual for prayer, and he offers the following guidance on wandering thoughts. He says,

For diminishing the straying of thought during prayer, it is necessary to make an effort to pray with warm feeling. To do this, it is necessary to warm the soul before prayer with meditation and bows [i.e. *metanias* or prostrations] (134 )...

So that the words of the prayers in the prayerbook take on meaning and warm the heart, you should sit down in your free time... and think out thoroughly the content of the prayers, and become keenly aware of them. Then when you read the prayers during prayer-time, whether in the morning or evening, all those thoughts and feelings which came to you during meditation will be renewed, and they will collect your attention and warm your heart. Never read a prayer hurriedly. Another thing: Try to learn the prayers by heart. This greatly aids undistracted prayer. A prayer must be learned just like anything else (135)...

Just try each time to carry them out with full attention and corresponding feelings. To be more successful at this, spend a little of your free time at reading over all the prayers separately. Think them over and feel them, so that when you recite them at your prayer rule, you will know the holy thoughts and feelings that are contained in them. Prayer does not mean that we just recite prayers, but that we assimilate their content within ourselves, and pronounce them as if they came from our minds and hearts (191).

Ultimately, our thoughts wander when we only bring a part of ourselves to prayer, and St. Theophan is helpful in showing that we can only overcome this problem by making a concerted effort to bring more of ourselves to God in prayer – more of our mind, feelings, and even our body. Reflecting on the prayers beforehand helps us to understand them more fully and awakens the feelings that are associated with each of the phrases – even giving us a sense for how these feelings unfold as we pray. And bows – *metanias* and prostrations – allow us to engage our bodies and pray also with them. May we feel the bright warmth of God's divine light as we meditate on the words of our daily prayers and pray them with more of our mind, body, and heart!

## Upcoming Events *(cont.)*

### JUNE

#### 2025 DOMSE SCHOLARSHIPS!

June 1 - July 1, 2025

[CLICK HERE FOR INFO!](#)

#### DOMSE 2025 PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE (PLC)

June 11 - 14, 2025

St. George Orthodox Church  
Jacksonville, FL - In person  
Details to come!

### SEPTEMBER

#### DOMSE FALL RETREAT 2025

September 19 - 20, 2025

St. Ignatius Orthodox Church  
Franklin, TN - In person  
Details to come!

### NOVEMBER

#### AMEN CONFERENCE & RETREAT 2025

November 5 - 8, 2025

Woodland Christian Camp & Retreat  
Center, Temple, GA - In person  
Details to come!

