

the Light



NOVEMBER 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!

CONNECT WITH US!



Hurricane update

by Hannah Hunt

**Sts. Peter and Paul Orthodox Church,
West Jefferson, NC**

As I sit here reflecting on the events of the past two weeks, the constant hum of helicopters fills the air—ferrying supplies to remote areas and searching for residents still trapped. Everyone in the High Country of North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee seems to be caught in some state of numbness, emotional fatigue, and mental exhaustion. Writing these words feels like emerging from a surreal dream into the sobering clarity of reality.

On Friday morning, September 27, as power flickered in and out across the region, early reports of devastation began to spread. Flash flood warnings came and went, initially seeming routine. But as power outages swept

across our counties, reality began to sink in. Those with a trickle of cell service received increasingly urgent flood alerts on their phones—until even those signals fell silent.

By mid-morning, communication was reduced to sporadic text messages. There were no phones, no power, no internet, and, in many places, no drinkable water. Those of us in church leadership at Saints Peter and Paul Mission in Jefferson, NC, scrambled to contact parishioners however we could. I focused on reaching members of our Antiochian Women and students from OCF chapters at Appalachian State University and Lees-McRae College. My daughter managed to text that her basement was flooding, but they were safe—for now. Then, nothing.

Soon, I learned that one of our parish members, Renee, a single mother of

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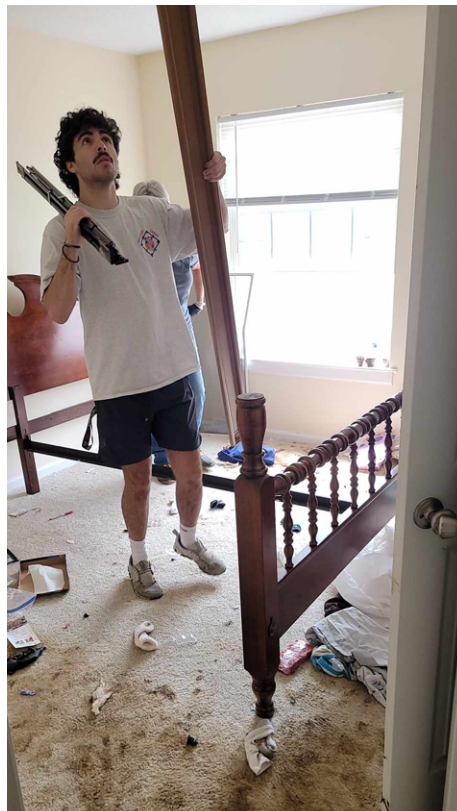
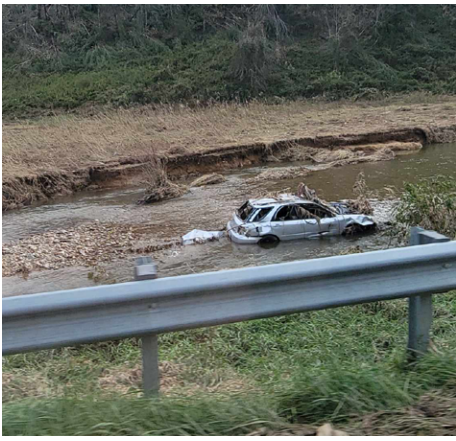
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five, was in danger. Her home was flooded up to the light switches, and she was trapped upstairs with her children. Thankfully, she was rescued from downtown Boone and taken to a shelter at the university.

We tried to get a sense of the road conditions through neighbors who work with Samaritan's Purse. My husband and I made the difficult decision to rescue Renee and bring her to our home. In our off-road vehicle, we navigated treacherous roads, witnessing firsthand the destruction of familiar landscapes. Bridges were washed away, and once-reliable roads were now impassable.

My mother, living alone on a mountaintop, was entirely isolated. My brother undertook a journey that should have taken minutes but stretched into hours. He eventually brought her to safety at my house. Meanwhile, we kept trying to reach other parishioners. Roads were either gone or too damaged to traverse, making it nearly impossible to get to many areas.

The fire department managed to check on one of our elderly shut-ins and confirm her safety; our members were able to deliver hot meals to her early in the week. However, her power failed again, and she had to be transported to a shelter. From there, she was transferred to a hospital and eventually to a nursing home off the mountain.

Our parish council president's family lost their beloved campground to mudslides. At the church, we discovered that the foyer and nursery were flooded with inches of grey water. We are still assessing the damage and hoping that our Persian rugs can be salvaged. By Sunday, the scope of the destruction caused by Hurricane

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(Hurricane - continued from page 2)

Helene was only beginning to come into focus. With communication still limited, we relied heavily on text messages to stay informed.

That weekend we received word that Renee's townhouse complex was a total loss and would likely be condemned on Monday. A small group from the church who had mobility rushed to help her gather whatever could be saved from the second floor. The first floor was buried in inches of toxic mud and grey water. On Monday, the building complex was indeed gutted. Our quick actions spared many of her most precious items, but the loss of her car and clothes seemed trivial compared to the heartbreak of losing her prayer book and icons.

Throughout that week, I coordinated with the Antiochian Women's chapter and Khouria Destinie Winn from All Saints parish in Raleigh, who were rapidly organizing aid outreach for our area. On Thursday, we gathered volunteers and met a truck filled with supplies from multiple parishes in the Raleigh area. After transferring everything into private vehicles, a convoy of four cars set out for a community that had just been cleared of debris after six days of isolation. We also sent two vehicles of supplies to another town that had been cut off for five days.

The devastation in these rural areas was overwhelming—people's lives were

piled along roadsides. Bent and broken cars filled the rivers. Local rescue workers, themselves grappling with personal losses, faced the dual burden of recovering their own communities while helping others.

In the weeks since, All Saints and several other parishes in the Raleigh area have continued sending supplies, and I've worked to direct them to where they are needed most. We have also been deeply touched by the generous aid from the Ladies Philoptochos organization from St. Nektarios Greek Orthodox Church in Charlotte. Countless other churches and individuals have also reached out to support Saints Peter and Paul through donations.

As of October 11th, two weeks after the storm, every parishioner has been accounted for. But the road to recovery will be long. Many are without flood insurance (who expects to need flood insurance on a mountain?), and rebuilding personal property and businesses will be a significant challenge. Although most of our folks have power and potable water restored, some of our neighboring counties are still struggling.

But in the midst of all the fear, grief, and uncertainty, something beautiful has emerged. Neighbors are helping neighbors, without thought of politics, religion, race, or social standing. Strangers are feeding each other,

clearing blocked driveways, offering clothes, or simply sitting with one another in shared sorrow. One neighbor sent me a card, thanking us for being "the hands and feet of God." While I pray to one day be worthy of such praise, I've realized that this is what we are all called to do—every day.

This outpouring of compassion, love, and service is a testament to the goodness that still shines through humanity. Even as we continue searching for missing neighbors and recovering bodies, we find strength in each other. Funerals are beginning, and the sorrow of recognizing familiar faces among the deceased will be hard to bear. We plan to hold a memorial prayer service for our community on November 2nd.

The love and support from our brothers and sisters across DOMSE have been a great comfort, and we are deeply grateful for the constant care shown by our wonderful shepherd, Bishop NICHOLAS. Throughout this ordeal, His Grace has remained in close contact with Deacon Andrew, and his love, concern, and prayers for us have sustained us.

To donate directly to our parish, please visit our [Saints Peter and Paul](#) website. Local organizations also in need of support include Hospitality House, Hunger and Health Coalition, Reaching Avery Ministries, Ashe Food Pantry, and Wine to Water.



Clergy Spotlight

Fr. Thomas Fernandez



Fr. Thomas was raised in a devout Roman Catholic family throughout his childhood. While attending East Carolina University he earned a bachelor's degree in nursing and married Anastasia Vutsinas. She had been raised Greek Orthodox in her childhood and they, together, began attending an Evangelical Church as they raised a family of five children in Greenville, NC, where he worked in Rehabilitation Medicine. Kh. Anastasia has a Master of Arts degree in Vocational Special Education and enjoys teaching children. Fr. Thomas enjoys fitness training. Prior to becoming Orthodox, Fr. Thomas had also served as an Assistant Pastor for five years during which time he had been studying church history and early church doctrine. This led he and his wife to return to their liturgical roots. They relocated to Wilmington, NC where they became members of St Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church. After being ordained in 2009 to the Diaconate by His Grace, Bishop ANTOUN of thrice blessed memory, he completed the Master of Arts degree in Applied Orthodox Theology through the Antiochian House of Studies. He

has served as a Deacon in both the Greek and Antiochian Archdiocese. During the Covid pandemic in August 2019 before Fr. Thomas was ordained a priest, His Grace, Bishop NICHOLAS, asked if he along, with Fr. Paul Solberg, would assist in establishing an Antiochian Orthodox mission among several young families located in and around the Concord, North Carolina area. They began to travel each weekend to Concord. Initially, they began to hold Great Vespers outdoors at a farm home with approximately 75 adults and children. During the week, Fr. Paul provided on the ground pastoral guidance while His Grace, Bishop NICHOLAS, would also hold weekly Zoom meetings with adults and children. The community continually coalesced and gained mission status within the Archdiocese being named "Christ the Good Shepherd." Deacon Thomas was ordained to the priesthood on August 7, 2020, and the mission continues to grow new catechumens and has a full range of ministries now in place.



Words from Sayedna Nicholas

"An ascetic's main focus is to correct himself inwardly so he can get closer to God. He is, in effect, a true Christian!" says St. Nektarios to the president of the school in the movie **Man of God**, as he attempts to convey the idea of asceticism to him. Is asceticism for monastics only or is it for us all?

The president of the school said that asceticism is "a thing of the past, of the dark ages" attributing it to the Ottoman Empire occupation of the region. He added that it is characterized by long Mantiyas and long beards.

In actuality, asceticism existed long before the occupation of the Ottoman Empire of that region and it is unrelated to long Mantiya's and long beards. As far as Orthodoxy is concerned, it originated with our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ. Jesus said, "if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me." (Mat 16:24) This is exactly what asceticism is! It is the denial of our self-will to follow the commandments of Christ. It is a very difficult path to follow, especially as we live in our highly secular society. However, it is doable! There are saints who arise among us. They live the ascetical life, and some are even recognized and later declared by the Orthodox Church as such. That is why every Orthodox Christian has a baptismal name of a saint so that he/she may model his/her life after that saint. It is strongly recommended that everyone reads the lives of the saints to be inspired by their zeal for Christ that drives forward their asceticism.

My baptismal name's saint was a model in asceticism as it is reflected in his Troparion:

In truth you were revealed to your flock as a rule of faith, an image of humility and a teacher of abstinence; your humility exalted you; your poverty enriched you. Hierarch Father Nicholas, entreat Christ our God that our souls may be saved.

And his Kontakion:

You revealed yourself, O saint, in Myra as a priest, for you fulfilled the Gospel of Christ by giving up your soul for your

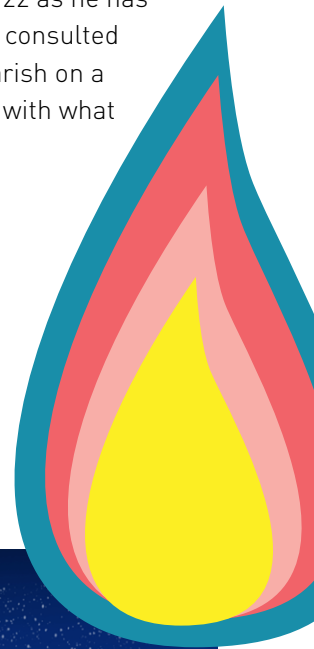
people and saving the innocent from death. Therefore, you are blessed as one become wise in the grace of God.

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

On an administrative note, I elevated Father Philip Begley to the dignity of Archpriest on September 22 as he has performed his duties remarkably and has consulted with me on the issues pertaining to his parish on a regular basis so that I know and can help with what he has been doing.

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

+BISHOP NICHOLAS





Sacred Music Notes

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

It's beginning to sound a lot like Christmas...

Many church musicians practice extra hard to make their best musical offerings for the feast of the Nativity of Christ. Our newly updated Sacred Music Library has many beautiful settings of hymns for the Christmas services. Whether you are looking to add to your repertoire, or are just starting out, here are some highlights.

[Kontakion for the Nativity of Christ - F. Karam](#)

This is the ubiquitous four-part Kontakion. I usually add barlines for my choir because it makes it easier for me to conduct, and for them to read with the musical understanding that the beat after the barline is strong. It gives the phrasing clear direction.

[Kontakion for the Nativity of Christ - El-Massih](#)

This is Fr. John's adaptation of the Byzantine setting from Holy Transfiguration Monastery, set to the special melody. On this day the virgin. The melody is very similar to Karam, but set for solo voice, or unison choir with ison. This link does not include Byzantine notation.

[Apolytikion for the Nativity of Christ - C. Karam](#)

Here is the song of the day, in both Western and Byzantine notation.

[Koinonikon for the Nativity of Christ - Farrow](#)

Using the regular Tone 8 Koinonikon melody, Dr. Farrow has set the Christmas text.

[Koinonikon for the Nativity of Christ - Archangelsky/George](#)

The classic, similar to Tone 1 melody, four-part setting in e minor, used in many of our parishes.


[Koinonikon for the Nativity of Christ - Suchy-Pilalas](#)

This setting is new to me, and I am thrilled to have it! Available in both Western and Byzantine notation, this sparkling setting for your advanced singers definitely takes the text to the next level.


May you have a blessed Nativity fast and may all your preparations be fruitful! As always, feel free to contact me at norableam@gmail.com if I can be of any help to you, or the musicians in your parish.

OCF PRESENTS
the 2024
*Southeast
Autumn Regional Retreat*
"NOT MEANT TO BE ALONE"
Life in Christ in Community
RETREAT SPEAKER:
SARAH FINLEY
College students from around the southeast are invited to join in a weekend of fellowship, education, worship, and service. Come explore how we grow in our faith and love through our day-to-day choices to seek connection and build lasting community with those around us.
Diakonia Retreat Center
Salem, South Carolina
Register at
ocf.net/events
Registration closes 11/6/2024
Travel Scholarships available
November 22 - 24, 2024

Winter Camp St. Thekla
February 14th - 17th
Ages 12 - 17
+
*"Put on the whole armor of God,
that ye may be able to stand
against the wiles of the devil."*
+
Staff Applications Open Now
Camper Registration Open - Nov. 1st




SATURDAY **11/16/24**




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

Festal Orations

Saint Gregory of Nazianzus



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



Upcoming Events

NOVEMBER

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

2025 JANUARY

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

FEBRUARY

WINTER CAMP ST. THEKLA 2024
February 14-17, 2025 - 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
November 5 - 8, 2025 - In person
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

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!



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

Fr. Nathaniel Trembley, Theology Editor
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Sh. Shell Keim
Bishop Nicholas

the
Light

AMEN
ANTIOCHIANMEN.ORG

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN
DOMSEWOMEN
ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN OF DOMSE

YOUNG ADULT
DOMSE YAF

SOYO
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CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
DOMSECHRISTIANED



Theology Editor's Corner

Thanksgiving is a civic holiday that is part of the tapestry of our lives as Americans. It is a day of feasting and celebration: a day of being together with family and friends to eat turkey and stuffing, gravy, potatoes, sweet potatoes, green bean casserole, cranberry sauce, and pumpkin or pecan pie; it is a day to give thanks to God for all of the blessings that He has given us throughout the year. While the holiday harkens back to the Pilgrims who first settled here and the Native Americans who helped them in their time of need, it is also the only civic holiday in our country that explicitly focuses on God and on giving thanks to Him.

Given this, it is appropriate that Thanksgiving has become a part of the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church. For years, many individual Orthodox parishes have celebrated Thanksgiving with the Akathist of Thanksgiving, which is also known as the Akathist Hymn: Glory to God for All Things, but in the Antiochian Archdiocese, we now also have a Vespers service and Divine Liturgy variables especially for this Feast. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, the long-time Dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary and one of the great witnesses to Orthodox Christianity in America, preached his last homily on Thanksgiving Day in 1983, and this very homily is included in our rubrics to be read at the Divine Liturgy, and it has even entered into the Vespers hymnody for the Feast, as can be seen below.

"Thank You, O Lord!" A Sermon for Thanksgiving Day By Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

Everyone capable of thanksgiving is capable of salvation and eternal joy. Thank You, O Lord, for having accepted this Eucharist, which we offered to the Holy Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and which filled our hearts with the joy, peace, and righteousness of the Holy Spirit. Thank You, O Lord, for having revealed Yourself unto us and given us the foretaste of Your Kingdom. Thank You, O Lord, for having united us to one another in serving

You and Your Holy Church. Thank You, O Lord, for having helped us to overcome all difficulties, tensions, passions, temptations and restored peace, mutual love, and joy in sharing the communion of the Holy Spirit. Thank You, O Lord, for the sufferings You bestowed upon us, for they are purifying us from selfishness and reminding us of the "one thing needed": Your eternal Kingdom. Thank You, O Lord, for having given us this country where we are free to worship You. Thank You, O Lord, for this school, where the Name of God is proclaimed. Thank You, O Lord, for our families: husbands, wives and, especially, children who teach us how to celebrate Your holy Name in joy, movement, and holy noise. Thank You, O Lord, for everyone and everything. Great are You, O Lord, and marvelous are Your deeds, and no word is sufficient to celebrate Your miracles. Lord, it is good to be here! Amen.

First Vespers Hymn for Thanksgiving at "O Lord I Have Cried" in Tone 1

Everyone capable of thanksgiving is capable of salvation and eternal joy. Wherefore, we Thine unworthy servants offer praise to Thee our Savior; for Thou hast given all things to us, even our very lives. Thou hast poured blessings upon us though we are ungrateful and disobedient. Showing mercy rather than righteous vengeance, Thou didst even give Thyself as a sacrifice to save us. Accept our hymns as a thanks offering, and through them enable us with our whole heart to eternally praise Thee the Creator, Benefactor and Savior of our souls.

Wherever the Orthodox Church has spread and taken root, some of the best elements of the larger culture have been baptized and brought into the life and witness of the Church. Thank God that this process continues within the Antiochian Archdiocese! And glory to God that we can give thanks to Him on Thanksgiving Day within the Church – offering up bread, wine, and our entire lives to Him, so that we can receive them back as His Body and Blood!