the Light

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2026
NEWSLETTER

DOMSE CLERGY & WINTER RETREATS 2027 - In person
January 27 - January 30, 2027
St. Elias Orthodox Church, Atlanta, GA
Details to come!

WINTER CAMP 2027
February 12-15, 2027
Asbury Hills, Cleveland, SC
In person
Details to come!

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DOMSE Fall Retreat 2026

St. Ignatius Orthodox Church | Franklin, TN



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FEATURED EVENT

DOMSE Fall Retreat 2026

Sanctify Those Who Love the Beauty of Thy House

A FIRST FALL RETREAT | By Kirstie Ruffatto | Christ the Good Shepherd, Gold Hill, NC

This September I attended the DOMSE Fall Retreat for the first time. I made the seven-hour drive to St. Ignatius Orthodox Church in Franklin, Tennessee, and the first thing that met me was the beauty of the church itself.

It is easy for my world to shrink to the size of my own community. Then I stand in another church, among the faithful from across the Southeast, and I remember how large the Church is, and that my small corner belongs to it. That is what I love about gatherings like this one, and it is what I most wanted to carry home.

The retreat's theme was St. Athanasius's On the Incarnation. What I took away from the speakers who went through this text was the great love of God.

I also had the opportunity to lead two sessions. On Friday I led a panel, "Poetic Knowledge: Exploring the Nativity Icon." The purpose was to give participants an experience of poetic knowledge rather than simply explain it. Three panelists and I approached the icon first through attention, memory, narration, and wonder rather than through analysis. We looked at the icon, put it away, and spoke about what we actually noticed and remembered. Then we looked again. Only later did we move toward what it means because love should precede analysis. We do not want to dissect an icon before we have learned to love the whole thing.

I was not sure which clergy member would be on the panel, and I was delighted by Fr. Matthew Snowden's experience and love of the Nativity icon. He helped reveal how to love

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(Fall Retreat - continued from page 2)

and live with the icons of the Church. They are not just works of art. Fr. Matthew, Shellie Sowell, and Anne Marie McCollum helped me to see and love the Nativity icon and Christ better. They also helped me to love St. Joseph better, and to address his role in the icon and in the life of Christ.

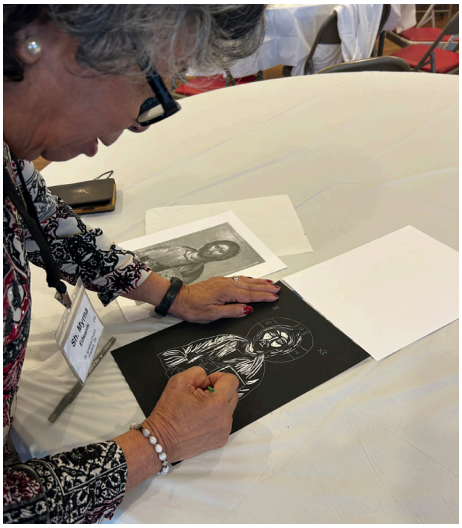
On Saturday I led a workshop, "Seeing the Light: Depicting the Word Incarnate." The purpose was to give participants an experience of learning to see an icon through drawing. Using the Christ Pantocrator by Theophanes as our model, we began simply by looking at Christ. Then we looked a second time, attending specifically to the light: where it is, where it is strongest, and how it moves across the face. From there, the act of looking became an act of drawing. Participants traced an outline of the Pantocrator onto scratchboard and scratched away the dark surface wherever they saw light. When the hand responds to what the eye sees, drawing can become a way of learning to see.

Between sessions I found myself attending to the way the light came into the church and interacted with the iconography, particularly the parish's own icon of the Nativity. After a session spent with one Nativity icon, it was a joy to stand before the one this community lives with.

It was humbling to be among those teaching on the truths of the Church. I am always reflecting on the prayer, "Sanctify those who love the beauty of Thy house," and having the opportunity to share my love of the beauty of the Church in a communal setting was wonderful. I am grateful to His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS for granting me his blessing to teach. His care, trust, and shepherding of our diocese are a gift, and so was his invitation to take part in that work.

So much of the Orthodox life is experiencing and living out our life with Christ, and it is a gift to see that life on a larger scale than our own parishes. If you have never been to the Fall Retreat, come. Taste and see that the Lord is good.















Sacred Music Notes

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

This summer was filled with music! The annual Summer Music Institute held at the Antiochian Village was enjoyed by a number of DOMSE members, both at the beginning of their musical journeys and those who have served for a long time. Three teens and seven adults from DOMSE parishes were in attendance. We were filled with unity and joy as we worshiped, learned, relaxed (a little!), and grew together. The daily services were powerful in terms of the beauty and strength of the trained voices of the participants. We benefited from the excellent examples of Fr. John El-Massih, Mareena Boosamra Ball and others leading the services, observing best practices in both practical and subtle qualities. The lectures were inspiring; the classes were challenging and fruitful. The Village had a new chef this year, and the food was fantastic! Mealtimes were filled with old friendships, new connections, and such joy that the teens felt the need for some impromptu dabke! I pray that if your church musicians have not yet attended a Sacred Music Institute, that they set aside the time, and your parish budgets the funds for them to be there next year. This joy is for everyone.









DOMSE College Scholarship 2026-2027

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

With the blessing of His Grace Bishop NICHOLAS, the DOMSE Scholarship committee is excited to announce the 2025-2026 Judges' Choice recipients of the DOMSE College Scholarship!

Our Diocese awarded $ 2,500 college scholarships to THREE of our DOMSE Teens.

THE JUDGE'S CHOICE RECIPIENTS FOR 2026-2027



KATIE MILLER
St. Peter Church
Madison, MS

Katie is attending Mississippi Christian University, pursuing a degree in Biology (pre-med).



LYDIA COX
St. Nicholas Mission
Jackson, TN

Lydia is attending Union University, pursuing a degree in Accounting.



PETER SNOWDEN
St. Nicholas Mission
Jackson, TN

Peter is attending Savannah College of Art and Design, pursuing a degree in Film & Television Production.

CONGRATULATIONS!

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 2027 Scholarship application at DOMSE.ORG with an EXTENDED application period! March 1 to May 1, 2027!!!**

Scholarship & Historical Info

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 their higher education.

The DOMSE Scholarship is funded by your donations and any net profits from the annual Fall Retreat. Consider supporting the DOMSE Scholarships, donate: https://domse.org/domse-scholarships/

- Applicants in 2026 = 9 (3 Judges' Choice awarded)
- Applicants in 2025 = 8 (3 Judges' Choice awarded)
- 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)



Words from Sayedna Nicholas



CLICK HERE TO WATCH THE VIDEO ON YOUTUBE!

A CONVERSATION WITH BISHOP NICHOLAS

His Grace Bishop Nicholas of the Antiochian Diocese of Miami and the Southeast joins AMEN DOMSE for a wide-ranging conversation about some of the biggest questions facing Orthodox Christians today—from the growing number of converts entering the Church to online Orthodox content, discerning God's will, dating outside the Faith, artificial intelligence, and the future of Orthodoxy in America.

His Grace brings a particularly interesting perspective to the conversation: before entering seminary, he spent approximately 20 years working as an electrical, computer, and software engineer.

In this conversation, you'll learn:

- How we can know whether the Orthodox Church has preserved the faith of the Apostles
- How catechumens and newly baptized Orthodox Christians should approach spiritual content online
- Why gaining Orthodox knowledge isn't enough if we don't actually live the Faith
- How the Church is responding to the growing number of converts and catechumens
- How Christians can discern God's will when making important decisions
- How Orthodoxy can communicate theological and liturgical concepts that don't translate easily into English
- Whether statues have a place within Orthodox Christianity
- How Orthodox Christians should approach dating someone outside the Church and the idea of "flirt to convert"
- How an Orthodox bishop—and former computer and software engineer—approaches artificial intelligence
- Why AI requires discernment and shouldn't simply be trusted because it produces a convincing answer
- What the future of Orthodox Christianity in America could look like
- Why reading the lives of the saints is so important for new Orthodox Christians
- Why consistency, structure, and remaining steadfast in the Faith matter in the Christian life

His Grace emphasizes the importance of preserving the Faith handed down through the Church while also preparing for the challenges created by growth. As more people inquire into Orthodoxy, he discusses the need for additional clergy, new missions, stronger formation, and continued engagement with converts after they enter the Church.

The conversation ultimately returns to a simple message for Orthodox Christians living in a world constantly pulling them in other directions: stay the course and remain steadfast in the Faith.




DOMSE
LIVING THE ORTHODOX FAITH
WORSHIP • WITNESS • SERVICE • FELLOWSHIP
IN CHRIST
Diocese of Miami & the Southeast
DIOCESE OF
MIAMI &
THE SOUTHEAST
Clergy & Winter Retreats 2027
Registration Information Coming Soon!
CLERGY RETREAT
JANUARY 27 - 28, 2027
WINTER RETREAT
JANUARY 29 - 30, 2027
HOSTED AT
St. Elias
ATLANTA, GA

Save the Dates!
2026, 2027, & 2028 Event List

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION
2027		
January 27 – January 30, 2027	Clergy & Winter Retreats 2027	St. Elias (Atlanta, GA)
February 12 – 15, 2027	Camp St. Thekla Winter Camp 2027	Asbury Hills in Cleveland, SC
March 3 – 6, 2027	AMEN Conference & Retreat 2027	Woodland Camp (Temple, GA)
TBD, 2027	Antiochian Women Lenten Retreat	Virtual
TBD, 2027	AMEN Lenten Retreat	Virtual
TBD, 2027	SOYO Lenten Retreat	Virtual
TBD, 2027	YAM Lenten Retreat	Virtual
March 1 – May 1, 2027	2027 DOMSE Scholarship	Virtual
June 9 – June 12, 2027	Parish Life Conference 2027	St. Elizabeth Church (Murfreesboro, TN)
June 27 – July 3, 2027	Camp St. Thekla Summer Camp Session 1	Asbury Hills in Cleveland, SC
July 4 – July 10, 2027	Camp St. Thekla Summer Camp Session 2	
September 17 – 18, 2027	Fall Retreat 2027	St. Ignatius (Franklin, TN)
2028		
January 26 – January 29, 2028	Clergy & Winter Retreats 2028	St. Elias (Atlanta, GA)
February 11 – 14, 2028	Camp St. Thekla Winter Camp 2028	Asbury Hills in Cleveland, SC
TBD, 2028	AMEN Conference & Retreat 2028	Woodland Camp (Temple, GA)
TBD, 2028	Antiochian Women Lenten Retreat	Virtual
TBD, 2028	AMEN Lenten Retreat	Virtual
TBD, 2028	SOYO Lenten Retreat	Virtual
TBD, 2028	YAM Lenten Retreat	Virtual
March 1 – May 1, 2028	2028 DOMSE Scholarship	Virtual
June 7 – June 10, 2028	Parish Life Conference 2028	St. Paul Church (Naples, FL)
June 25 – July 1, 2028	Camp St. Thekla Summer Camp Session 1	Asbury Hills in Cleveland, SC
July 2 – July 8, 2028	Camp St. Thekla Summer Camp Session 2	
September 15 – 16, 2028	Fall Retreat 2028	St. Ignatius (Franklin, TN)

Clergy & Winter Retreats = Always the last weekend of January
Camp St. Thekla Winter Camp = Always President's Day weekend
Parish Life Conference = Always the 2nd weekend of June
Camp St. Thekla Summer Camp = Always the last 2 weekends of June
Fall Retreat = Always the 3rd weekend of September

The Diocese of Miami and the Southeast (DOMSE)'s
Parish Life Conference

Music City 2027

Mary, Martha & Music

June 9-12

$145 room rate
10 minutes from the airport

Free shuttle to Opry Mills Mall, Opryland Resort & Grand Ole Opry

The Inn at Opryland
Nashville, Tennessee





Hosted by St. Elizabeth Orthodox Church, Murfreesboro, TN

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
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Sh. Shell Keim
Bishop Nicholas

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!

Upcoming Events 2027

JANUARY

DOMSE CLERGY & WINTER RETREATS 2027 - In person
January 27 - January 30, 2027
St. Elias Orthodox Church, Atlanta, GA
Details to come!

FEBRUARY

WINTER CAMP 2027 - In person
Asbury Hills, Cleveland, SC
February 12-15, 2027 - Details to come!

MARCH

2027 DOMSE SCHOLARSHIPS!
March 1 - May 1, 2027 - Details to come!

AMEN CONFERENCE & RETREAT 2027
Woodland Camp, Temple, GA
March 3-6, 2027 - Details to come!

SPRING

AMEN LENTEN RETREAT 2027 - Virtual
TBD Details to come!

YAM LENTEN RETREAT 2027 - Virtual
TBD Details to come!

ANTIOCHIAN WOMEN'S LENTEN RETREAT 2027 - Virtual
TBD Details to come!

SOYO LENTEN RETREAT 2027 - Virtual
TBD Details to come!

JUNE

DOMSE 2027 PARISH LIFE CONFERENCE (PLC) - In person
June 9 - 12, 2027
St. Elizabeth Orthodox Church
Murfreesboro, TN - Details to come!

CAMP ST. THEKLA 2027 – SESSION 1
June 27 - July 1, 2027

JUNE

CAMP ST. THEKLA 2027 – SESSION 2
July 4 - July 10, 2027

SEPTEMBER

DOMSE 2027 FALL RETREAT - In person
September 17-18, 2027
St. Ignatius Orthodox Church
Franklin, TN - Details to come!