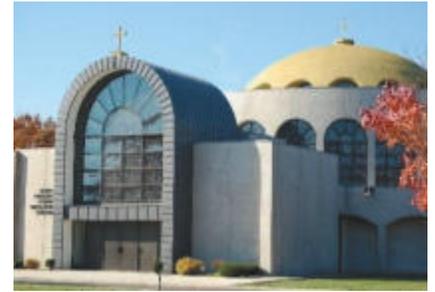


THE MESSAGE TO MHNHYMA

July 2021 Newsletter



CHRIST IN YOU



A statue of Jesus Christ, with its hands missing but still intact, was found amidst the rubble after the World War II firebombing of Dresden, Germany. To this day one can see this damaged statue in Dresden, and the attached sign that reads: “*You are the hands of Christ.*”

At the risk of trying to be funny, the sign might have said that a statue without hands is a “*statue of limitations.*” All jokes aside, we say that to make a point, that is that Jesus Christ is alive today in the sense that He lives in people who live a Christ centered life, thus allowing their hands to be Christ’s hands, their attitude to be Christ’s, their goals to be Christ’s and so forth.

It is what St. Paul terms “**Christ in you, the hope of glory**” (Colossians 1:27). This phrase could serve as the apostle’s motto, for St. Paul emphasized this idea often and strongly — a desire to have Christ within. “**To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works within me mightily**” (Colossians 1:29). Here again is that thought: “within.”

We’re speaking here of the basic and essential power of the Christian life. Christ in the Christian is as crucial as an engine in a automobile; He is the horsepower, the energy that prompts performance.

When a catechumen is brought to the Church to be baptized they themselves or if they are infants/little children through their Godparent are asked if they “*accept Christ; join Christ; pledge themselves to Christ.*” It is this early invitation to have “**Christ in you,**” as St. Paul wrote it.



In our Chapel there is a beautiful icon picturing Christ knocking on a door. It was inspired by Revelation 3:20: “**Behold I stand at the door and knock...**” An interesting feature of this icon is that there is no doorknob on the door, a deliberate omission by the iconographer to convey the thought that the door has to be opened from within — that Christ could only knock, He could not enter unless the person inside let Him in. Once inside, Christ can do a lot of good. The effectiveness of this indwelling Presence is readily seen.

The lives of the Saints are testimony to this. It is fascinating to study the roster of the Saints of God. Volumes have been compiled about them. Their ranks are far from being limited to the clergy of the Faith. Saints have come from every walk of life; men, women, and children; black, brown, red, yellow and white; rich and poor; sophisticated and simple; but all loving the Lord and serving Him.

Let us all remember the words of our Lord, “**everyone who acknowledges Me before men, I will also acknowledge before My Father who is in heaven; but whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny before My Father**” (Matthew 10:32-33).

So you see, my brothers and sisters in the Lord, we need to have Christ in us. To learn to hear His voice and respond to it; to confess Him and provide witness to the world by our lifestyle revealing the true power of His Gospel. Christ within is the difference! † Fr. Ted



WHAT IS RIGHT WITH OUR COUNTRY

By Joan Clayton

I have been thinking about what is right with our country and I came up with a long list. If you add yours to mine, we would run out of paper! Here are some things on my list!

- Attending the church of your choice.*
- Voting at the polls and having a choice.*
- Marrying the love of my life.*
- Thanking those who work so hard for all of us.*
- Hearing Christmas carols in a shopping mall.*
- Knowing that Jesus died for us all.*
- Making a dream come true with hard work.*
- A loving parent whose role is not shirked.*
- An older couple with a lingering stride.*
- Reading the Bible for a lifetime guide.*
- Hearing “Taps” played with a trickling tear.*
- Living in America, free without fear.*
- Seeing flags flying on Veterans day.*
- Hearing the laughter of children at play.*
- Steeple on churches that chime.*
- Teachers explaining lessons one more time.*
- Forgiving those who trespass against us.*
- Being proud of ancestors and the family tree.*
- Farmers who work from dawn until night.*
- McDonald’s opening at morning’s early light.*
- Mountain-moving faith that refuses defeat.*
- Giving a smile to everyone you meet.*
- People praying for others, sacrificing their time.*
- Not holding grudges or having deceit in their mind.*
- Remembering veterans who gave us their all.*
- Being proud of our country and standing tall.*
- Righting the wrongs wherever you can.*
- Living at peace with your fellow man.*
- Cherish your freedom, and the blessings it has brought.*
- Honoring the memory of those who have fought.*
- What’s right with our country? Why is it so grand?*
- It’s God fearing people who take a right stand!*



YOUTH & FAMILY MINISTRY



WRONG IS WRONG!

In this period of loose and sagging morals, Satan provides many rationalizations for immoral behavior. Those who would live faithful Orthodox Christian lives must not be ignorant of the Evil One's devices (2 Corinthians 2:11). Wrong is always

wrong despite our efforts to excuse our actions.

Wrong is Wrong: Even if you don't get caught! Let us remember, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place, keeping watch on the evil and the good" (Proverbs 15:3).

Wrong is Wrong: Even if you do it for a good cause! The honorable purpose does not justify a dishonorable deed or action. The end never justifies the means. (Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). "All wrongdoing is sin" (1 John 5:17). "Everyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ, but goes beyond it, does not have God" (2 John vs. 9).

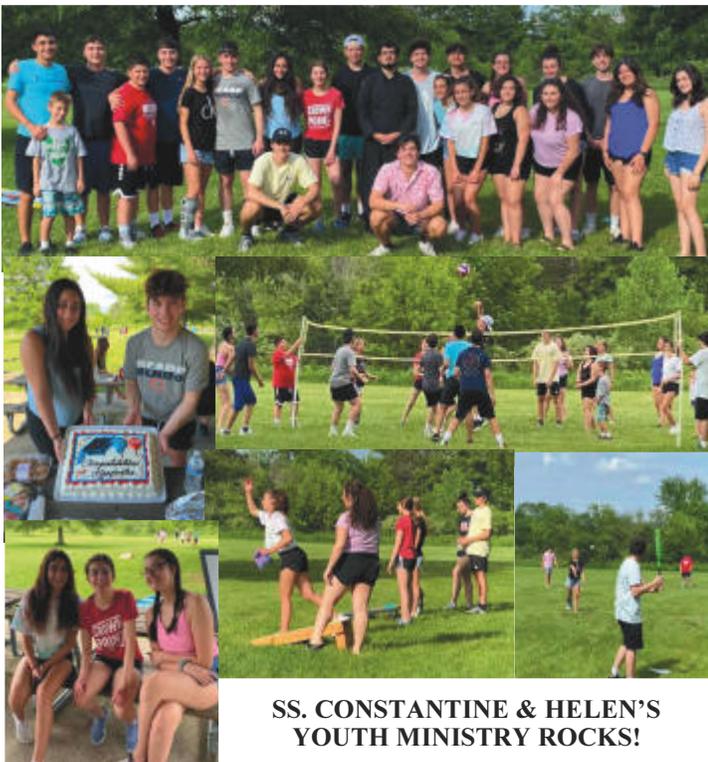
Wrong is Wrong: Even if others are doing worse things! To the lost on the Day of Judgment, it will be little comfort to know others committed worse sins. "The devising folly is sin, and the scoffer is an abomination to all" (Proverbs 24:9).

Wrong is Wrong: Even if it doesn't bother the conscience! The conscience can be trained or educated to accept wrong doing; even an honest sin or evil done in sincerity is sinful in the sight of God. "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for we reap whatever we sow" (Galatians 6:7).

Wrong is Wrong: Even if it is commonly considered acceptable! The Bible says, "You shall not follow a majority in wrongdoing" (Exodus 23:2). The Christian should "Not enter the path of the wicked, and do not walk in the way of evildoers. Avoid it; do not go on it; turn away from it and pass on" (Proverbs 4:14-15). St. Paul warns us to "Hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:21-22).

Reflect on these words, not just now, but in the future as we journey through life. And remember, **there is never a right way to do a wrong!**

YOUTH PICNIC: Great end of the year picnic with our Goyans and celebrating our senior members. Baseball, volleyball, water balloon fight, bags tournament, food, and tons of fun!!



SS. CONSTANTINE & HELEN'S YOUTH MINISTRY ROCKS!



GRADUATE SUNDAY was held in our community on June 6th. On this day we honored the following students for their academic accomplishments, as well as awarded our various scholarships. We wish all our graduates and scholarship recipients continued success in their future endeavors. May the blessings of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, be with them always.

CONGRATULATIONS!

HIGH SCHOOL – CLASS OF 2021

Christopher Andreou – Crown Point High School
Emily Pilatos – Lincoln Way East High School
Perry Pappas – Lake Central High School
Angelo Poponas – Crown Point High School

COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY – CLASS OF 2021

Maria Agoris – Loyola University
Jack Gardner – Purdue University
Maria Kostides – Loyola University
Lauren Massow – Burkle School of Music
Anjelica Mojica – IUPUI, Fort Wayne
Stephanie Sgouroudis – Valparaiso University
Frankie Zahariadis – Purdue University

POST GRADUATE – CLASS OF 2021

Dr. Nicholas Galouzis, MD – Indiana School of Medicine
MBA – Business School; Oxford, England

GOYA SCHOLARSHIP

Perry Pappas; Emily Pilatos; Angelo Poponas

MIKE LATOS SCHOLARSHIP

Maria Jeffirs

CATHEDRAL SCHOLARSHIP

Perry Pappas; Emily Pilatos; Angelo Poponas

CHRIS KANOLIS SCHOLARSHIP

Perry Pappas; Emily Pilatos

PANAGIOTIS PROIMOS SCHOLARSHIP

Christopher Andreou; Athanasios Chirois; Brianna Condes;
Jonathan Delis; Demetrios Fotopoulos; Mattheos Mattheos;
Perry Pappas; Athina Parianos; Phoebe Petsalis;
Emily Pilatos; Angelo Poponas; Spiro Skiadopoulos;
Nicholas Skotadis; Jennifer Tomasic; Irene Tsakopoulos;
Leonidas Tsirtis; Niko Zaromitides; Michael Zaronias.

ST. SAVVAS KALYMNIAN SOCIETY SCHOLARSHIP

Dimitri Ginis

ORDER OF AHEPA #78 SCHOLARSHIP

Alex Heck; Maria Jeffirs
Perry Pappas - Community Service Award



OVERHEARD: One day at the park there was a football game being played. A little boy kept running up to a man on the sidelines after every down and pleaded. "Please let me play! Again and again he cried out to the man, "Please let me play! Please put me in for a few plays!"

Finally he turned to the little boy with an exasperated look on his face and said: "Would you please go bother your own coach for a while!"

THOUGHT: You are only young once. After that you merely think you are.

Vacation Bible School

THANK YOU to everyone who contributed to make VBS a success this year! Over 50 of our youth came together to grow in faith and love for Christ, learning about the great saints of the Old Testament who trusted God in the most difficult of circumstances.

Thank you to all of our families who sacrificed time out of their summer schedules to be present. Thank you also to our teachers, assistant teachers, support staff, and everyone who volunteered their time and energy to put a great program together for our kids. A special thank you to Pres. Kathy Pappas, Pres. Danielle Burikas, Susan Tsagris, and Aleka Dovellos for serving on our planning committee and laying the foundation for a successful event. We hope everyone has a great summer, and we are looking forward to doing this again next year!

PASS IT ON
It only takes a spark
to get a fire going -
and soon all those around
will light up in it's glowing
**THATS HOW IT IS
WITH GOD'S
LOVE** 
Once you've experienced it
You spread his love to everyone
You want to pass it on!



**VBS 2021
A FUN, LEARNING EXPERIENCE
OF OUR GREEK ORTHODOX FAITH**



WHO IS WORTHY?

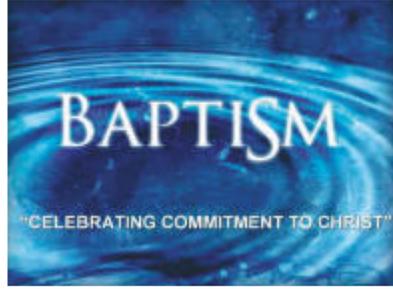
“Follow Me,” says Jesus (Matthew 4:19).

But I am not worthy to follow Him, someone will say. Were the fishermen worthy? Was Saul the persecutor worthy? God does not choose the fit. He outfits those whom He chooses. It was after Saul chose to follow Him that he became Paul, the great apostle. It was after the impetuous, vacillating Peter chose to follow Jesus that he became the resolute and steadfast leader of the Christian Church.

The words “Follow Me” indicate that Jesus is more interested in the future than in the past. It’s not so much where you’ve been in the past that matters to Jesus as much as where you are going now. You may have been in the depths of hell in the past but He offers to lift you now to the heights of heaven. The words “Follow Me” are directed to those who have fallen and seek to rise; to those who seek to come out of a painful past to a glorious future, out of darkness into the light.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: *“When I began to pray with all my heart, everything around me seemed delightful and marvelous. The trees, the grass, the birds, the earth, the air, the light seemed to be telling me that they existed for man’s sake, that they witnessed to the love of God for man, that everything proved the love of God for man, that all things prayed to God and sang His praise. Thus it was that I came to understand what the Philokalia calls ‘the knowledge of the speech of all creatures.’”*
- The Way of the Pilgrim

WISDOM OF THE CHURCH FATHERS: The Lord has become everything to you, and you must become everything to the Lord.
-St. John Kronstadt



MAINTAINING THE PURITY

Our task as baptized Orthodox Christians is to strive to maintain the purity of the white garment of God’s righteousness which we received in baptism. This can be accomplished only through daily repentance since daily we soil our white garment through sins of thought, word and deed. In addition to daily repentance, we need constant vigilance and watchfulness against the temptations of the evil one. There is a story of a woman wearing a white dress who wanted to explore a coal mine. When told she was not properly dressed for such a trip, she objected, “What’s to keep me from wearing a white dress into a mine?” The man at the entrance said, “There’s nothing to keep you from wearing a white dress into the mine, but plenty to keep you from wearing a white dress out.”

Our task is to keep our baptismal garment free from contamination. John H. Jowett wrote, “It is a wonderful thing to see a white pond lily rising out of the mud. It is a more wonderful thing to see men and women in white garments living in cities that are filled with pollution. It is one of the miracles of grace to find a noble life among ignoble people. And we see these people every day. They bear the marks of the Lord Jesus.” They are the ones who have put on Christ in baptism and through daily repentance and watchfulness maintain the purity and divine splendor of their baptismal garments.

CHURCH FATHERS SPEAK: Observe an you will see unholy vanity abounding even to the very grave in fine clothes, oils, servants, perfumes and such....A vain person is a true idolater; he seems to honor God, but in reality he wishes to please men, not God. Every lover of self-display is vain glorious.
-St. John Climacus

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COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

CHURCH OFFICE HOURS: With COVID-19 pandemic restrictions being eased, our church office hours have returned to 9:00am-4:00pm, Monday through Friday. The church office is closed on Saturday and open on Sunday following worship 10:45-11:15am.

Announcements for the Sunday bulletin and names to be commemorated for Memorials on Sunday need to be submitted to the church office by Wednesday at 12:00 noon. Articles or announcements for the monthly newsletter "*The Message*" need to be submitted to Fr. Ted by the 1st of each month for the upcoming month.

We would like to welcome and introduce to our community the newest member of our church office staff: Anastasia Bairaktaris. Anastasia joins Kelly Bikos as our office staff. Denise Komorowski is our Banquet and Hall Rental coordinator.

HELPING HAND FUND: This fund was established to help families in our parish with financial hardships. Many of our very own require financial assistance during difficult times. It is a very comforting feeling knowing that you can go "home" and find help that is given freely and with love. If you would like to make a donation, please contact Fr. Ted at the church office 769-2481.

FOOD PANTRY APPEAL: Our Food Pantry is seeking donations of canned or dried food items, as well as personal hygiene supplies and household cleaning supplies. Donations may be brought to church on Sundays or left at the church office during the week.

Our Cathedral Food Pantry, which is held each Friday from 9:00-11:00 a.m., is the core of our Outreach Program. Each week, numerous families and individuals come to us for assistance. Many of these families have four or more children. We try to provide the basic food stuffs for at least one week. Please, assist our Food Pantry in any way you can. You will truly be blessed for it!

JC'S CLOSET UPDATE: Our Outreach Project of JC's Closet will be on hiatus for the next couple of months.

Donations will be accepted again at the end of July. Target or Walmart gift cards are also welcomed at any time. For information on this program and/or how you can assist, see Eva Kostides. Thank you!

ATTENTION PARISHIONERS: If you are planning to move to a new location, or if you have already moved, please inform the church office so that we may change our records. It costs our parish money for every piece of mail that is returned as "Address Change Requested." PLEASE let the church office know of any changes to your address, home or cell phones, email address, etc. Remember, before making any firm plans for baptisms, weddings, funerals or memorial services, please check with the parish priest first to see if dates and times are permissible.

Also, please refrain from scheduling baby or bridal showers during the Lenten fast, or on Sundays during worship hours.

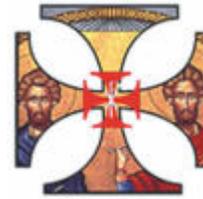
When scheduling a Sunday Memorial Service, kolyva (boiled wheat) is needed (COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted). People are once again scheduling memorials without bringing kolyva, let alone sacramental wine (St. John Commanderia), bread, olive oil or a donation for the poor. Please follow our Orthodox practices!



BACK PACK BACK TO SCHOOL BLESSING: With schools in our area preparing to begin their new school year, our Cathedral will have a special blessing service for our children as they return to school on Sunday, August 8th. Students, teachers and administrators are asked to be in church on this day so that a special prayer may be offered for them as they start off the new school year. Following the blessing each student and teacher in attendance will be given an icon for them to keep with them for the school year.

With the need greater than ever, we will be collecting school supplies for children who are currently in: NISEC of NWI, foster care, and shelter care. All backpacks and supplies will be distributed in Lake, Porter and LaPorte Counties of Indiana. See Eva Kostides for details. Please help us out and bring a little something to church with you on Sundays or during the week. For ideas on what to bring, here's a list of things needed: New Backpacks, Folders & Notebooks (Wide & College ruled paper), Loose Leaf paper (Wide & College ruled), #2 Pencils, Pencil Sharpeners & Erasers, Pens & Highlighters, Color Pencils, Pencil Boxes, Box of 24 crayons, Hand Sanitizer, Kleenex, Binders, 2 Pocket Folders, & Rulers. Deadline for supplies is Sunday, August 1st.

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS



LOUKOUMADES SALE: Our St. Helen's Philoptochos Society would like to thank everyone who supported their Loukoumades Sale on Graduate Sunday. Over \$700 was raised to benefit our Philoptochos' philanthropic endeavors.

FESTIVAL BAKING UPDATE: Once again our Philoptochos will be responsible for the Bakery for our Grecian Festival. We need a variety of baked goods, Greek and non-Greek. If you can bake something, please do. If you can't bake, a monetary donation may be made, which will assist us in purchasing ingredients and items for our Bake Shop. Please check the Sunday Bulletin for updates, or with Julia Papadopoulos for specific details.

Scheduled baking dates here at church are as follows:
Tuesday, July 6: 8:00am

MARK YOUR CALENDARS: the Philoptochos Annual Spaghetti Dinner that benefits our Cathedral/Ross Township Food Pantry will take place on Thursday, September 23rd. More specific details will be forth coming.

PHILOPTOCHOS MEMBERSHIP is ongoing throughout the year. Philoptochos needs YOU to fulfill its mission! You can support Philoptochos either as an active member or as a supportive member. For those too busy to attend a monthly meeting or be involved in any of its ministries or activities, your yearly \$30 or more membership is a meaningful way to participate and offer your assistance.

PHILOPTOCHOS ELECTIONS: At the last Philoptochos meeting held on Monday, June 7th, the Oath of Office for board members was administered by Fr. Ted followed by election of officers. The results of the elections are as follows:

President – Frances Klimis
1st Vice President - Julia Papadopoulos
2nd Vice President – Patty Makarounas
Recording Secretary – Nicki Droza
Corresponding Secretary – Irene Nestorovich
Treasurer – Leni Vinzant
Assistant Treasurer – Kalliope Dedelow
Advisor – Vicki Dovellos

Along with the officers the board members for 2021-2022 are: Irene Batalis, Nitsa Coulson, Elaine Kardoulis, Roberta Korfiyas, Eva Kratimenos, Giasimo Petsalis, Dalia Spanos, Bessie Stassis, & Helen Kravas Vallas.

We thank our outgoing officers and board members for all their hard work and dedicated efforts for the good of our St. Helen's Philoptochos, our Cathedral of Ss. Constantine and Helen, as well as our Metropolis, Archdiocese and Patriarchate.

Congratulations to our new board and we pray for them to continue and build off the successful accomplishments of our Philoptochos' philanthropic endeavors in assisting in being friends to those who have need.



CANCER BENEFIT WALK: Our Philoptochos will be participating in the *Relay for Life American Cancer Society Walk* on Saturday, August 7th. If you would like more details or to join in their efforts, either by walking or donating to this cause, contact Frances Klimis, Philoptochos President.

GREEK FEST 2021

SAVE THE DATES:
Friday, July 9
Saturday, July 10
Sunday, July 11

OUR CATHEDRAL GREEK FEST this year, because of the COVID-19 pandemic and the concerns many people have, will be focusing not on a full blown Greek Festival as in the past but a smaller and more efficient event centered around a Drive-Thru as we did last fall.

To make this event a success, we are seeking donations for bakery, dairy, meat, produce and other various items. We especially need donors for the 400 lambs that we need to cover the expenses for this year's Festival. If you can donate a lamb or two (\$100-whole, \$60-half) or be of assistance in donating other items, please see Fr. Ted, Parish Council President John Petalas, Greek Fest chairman Bill Logothetis, or by contacting the church office. Your assistance will help ensure a successful festival. Our goal for this year's festival is to raise at least \$100,000. We can do it if everyone pitches in.

Raffle tickets have been mailed out to all members of our Cathedral. If you have not received your raffle tickets or need more, contact Dora Adams through the church office. This year, we will be giving out \$10,000 in prizes (\$5,000 – 1st Prize; \$2,000 – 2nd Prize; \$1,000 – 3rd Prize; \$500 – 4th & 5th Prizes. Plus there will be five (5) Early Bird drawings of \$200 each. The 1st Early Bird drawing was on Father's Day, Sunday, June 20th. The winner was Andy & Maria Kourtesis, ticket #0943. Tickets are \$25 each. We urge everyone to make every effort to sell your tickets. It is through the raffle that the Festival makes most of its profit.

Volunteers are needed to help set up for the Festival, work it, and clean up after it. Please volunteer your time and talent. Our regular core labor force has shrunk over the years due to illness and death, as well as work and vacation schedules. We need more people to step forward, especially our young adults between the ages of 18-35. For more details, contact Chairman Bill Logothetis.



CHOIR NOTES: It's been almost a year and a half since we have had an organized choir sing the hymns of the Divine Liturgy on Sundays. We are trying to get a choir back together after the long COVID-19 layoff. Anyone interest in lifting their voices up in praise of the Lord and joining the choir for the New Ecclesiastical Year is asked to contact Paula Dranger following Sunday worship.

TIME TO TEE IT UP: Our Cathedral Golf Outing will be held on Friday, August 27th at Innsbrook Country Club. For specific details, see the enclosed flyer. Proceeds raised from this event will be used to fund many of the ministries of our church that Stewardship isn't covering.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS: As COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted, we look forward to getting back to a normal routine here at our Cathedral. One ministry in particular that needs parishioner assistance is our Sunday school. Plans are under way to start up this program again in the fall. However, before we can do that, we need to have a committed staff of teachers and Sunday school director. If anyone is interested to helping us put together a program for this very important and vital ministry, please contact Fr. Dimitri through the church office.

BEDTIME BIBLE STORIES: Our "summer camp" for Pre-K and Kindergarteners will be taking place in August (before the start of the school year) and is in need of volunteers. If you are someone who loves the Church and inspiring faith in young people, contact Fr. Dimitri to learn more about getting involved with this ministry opportunity.

LEARN GREEK: Our Cathedral Greek Education program is back! Registration for the 2021-2022 Greek School year is under way. Registration forms are available from our Cathedral website or in the church office. Register before July 4th for a discounted rate.

*Thank You God
for everything in my life.
The good & bad.
Some were
Blessings
& some were
Lessons!*

A little delivery boy, carrying a basket of eggs, tripped and fell, dropping the basket and smashing the eggs. People gathered around him in sympathy. Reaching into his pocket, one man said, "I care \$1.00." Turning to the man next to him, he said, "How much do you care?" The man replied, "I care \$2.00." In a short time the people present translated their caring into action and raised the

money to pay for the broken eggs.

Our Stewardship Offerings to the Lord for His work through the Church tells Him, "I care \$ _____ for the continuation of Your ministry through the Church"

This year of 2021, our parish faces a reduced budget of \$800,000, without major repairs or costly renovations. To meet our financial obligations, we have set a goal of at least \$800,000 for our Stewardship Program to reach in pledges (average pledge \$1500). We are \$417,645 short of our goal to raise \$800,000 through stewardship. As of June 1st, the church office has received 524 pledges for a total of \$382,355, which averages out to \$729.68 a pledge. As you can see, this is less than half of what is needed to operate our Cathedral ministries and maintain our facilities. Please note that \$200 from every pledge goes to the support of the Archdiocese and the Metropolis of Chicago. Please remember the goal of \$800,000 is what our community needs to operate at and be vital in the lives of all our members, as well as Greek Orthodox Christians in the United States and throughout the world.

When considering your pledge, please do not view it as "How little can I give?" but rather "How much can I offer to God and His Church?" Remember the sacrificial giving of the members of the early Church. Without our personal love and commitment of time, talent and resources – THERE IS NO CHURCH – and without the Church, then who will preach the Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ?

We will never truly know the meaning of faith, unless we learn to give freely and joyously, not only of our substance, but of ourselves.

To make giving easier for all our faithful, we have established an online program called [Tithe.ly/give](https://tithe.ly/give). This will allow those who have internet accessibility to continue to make offerings for stewardship payments, candles, Helping Hand, Food Pantry, Fall Greek Fest and other donations that help cover the costs of operating our parish with just a click of your computer keys. Here is the link:

<https://tithe.ly/give?c=1385847>.

It is a profession of faith when we all work together and help our church to better plan for its various financial needs and expenditures. Thank you!

OUTREACH MINISTRY

On Friday, June 11th, our Cathedral's Outreach Ministry visited St. Mark's Church in Gary to offer our service to the men and women who gave of themselves in the service of our great country.

Through the generosity of so many individuals we were able to fill 100 bags of groceries, along with lunches and socks for our homeless military vets which we presented to them.

This is the second time we have assisted our homeless veterans in providing for their daily needs.

Thank you to all our donors, organizers and volunteers who have grown this ministry this past year.



**GOD BLESS
ALL OUR VETERANS!**



SUMMER TIME

Ownership vs. Stewardship of Time
By Fr. Dimitri Burikas



In letter 21 of C.S. Lewis' classic book The Screwtape Letters, the experienced demon Screwtape advises his novice nephew Wormwood on how to bring his human assignment down into the realm of Hell by confusing the human's understanding of time.

(Disclaimer: The Screwtape Letters is not Orthodox theology, nor theology at all, but I see it as an insightful view into the day to day life of a practicing Christian.)

Screwtape suggests that Wormwood should plant in the mind of his human the idea that his time is his own, his property, and that he should have the right to decide how the 24 hours of the day will be spent. That way, Screwtape argues, when an unexpected visitor arrives during an expected quiet evening, the man will be thrown out of gear and become angry.

Does Lewis' hypothesis on our misunderstanding of time hold up? Consider...How do you feel when your Saturday morning tee time gets washed out by a rainstorm? How's your blood pressure when your child's school calls you in right in the middle of a rare quiet afternoon? How much do you love when you get called into work on your day off?

Of course, all of these situations would at least annoy and at most enrage us. Why? In Lewis' opinion, we view ourselves as masters of our own time, and we don't like it when the universe doesn't honor our owners' rights.

And yet, nothing could be farther from the truth. We are not owners of our own time at all. We came into time without consent and will leave it again without consent. No matter what we do, we can't slow down time nor speed it up. We can neither buy more time nor sell it for profit. Time streamed on before we arrived and will continue after we are gone. To think of time as our own is simply delusional.

Going a step further, we can see how viewing time as our personal property is problematic for us in terms of our Christian faith. After all, the Church makes certain demands of our time, specifically to gather in worship on Sunday mornings and for the celebration of various feast days. While not practiced widely in parish settings, the traditional daily routine of Orthodox worship and private prayer takes quite a few of those 24 hours we perceive as our own and places them in God's possession.

If we understand ourselves to be owners of our own time, then God and the Church are doing an injustice to us by commanding we give our rights over to someone other than ourselves (even if it is God). In this worldview, God is in fact a thief, stealing our time away from us by force for His own use. In this light, we will either resent God for injuring our personal property or rebel against Him, refusing to give the appointed time to Him at all.

What's the remedy in this lose-lose situation? First, we must recognize that we do not own our time, nor are we masters of it. Time, rather, is a gift from God, as is everything we have in this life. Our role, then, is not to be owners or masters of our time but stewards of God's gift.

This vision of our relationship with time totally shifts the narrative because stewardship works differently than ownership. As stewards, we receive a gift from God; we care and grow this gift, knowing that we will eventually return the gift to God; God then transforms the gift again and returns it to us even better than its original form.

This cycle of receiving-transforming-giving is the heart of the Christian life of stewardship. For example: God gives us material gifts; we are called to care and grow them and return them to God through our stewardship to the Church and care of the poor; the Church transforms our gifts into the worship and ministry life of the Church; we experience the worship and ministry life and are ourselves transformed.

It is no different with time. As stewards of this gift, we are called to care for it and use it wisely, giving God the first fruits, the best of the best. The first-fruits of time happens to be Sunday morning, the first waking hours of the first day of the week. When we offer God that time, He receives the gift and transforms it again for our benefit. In the Sunday Liturgy, we experience a taste of the Kingdom of Heaven, the fullness of time itself. This experience transforms us into the image of Christ we were created to be. By being good stewards of time, we taste our very salvation.

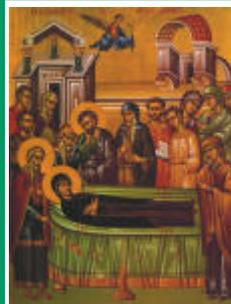
A proper relationship with time is critical now more than ever. Society is placing more and more demands on our time (especially for our youth and children), even on Sunday mornings. I don't think this is news to anyone. In a recent gathering of all the ministry heads of our parish, the consensus was that the main obstacle for growing participation in both worship and ministry life was competing schedules and limited time, particularly for those ministries relating to the youth.

As we hit the summer months, the strain is taken to a new level. Vacations, summer camps, activities, sports, outings are all given their piece of the time pie. There is a threat that we will squeeze the Church – both community worship and personal prayer – out altogether.

In The Screwtape Letters, this is exactly what the devils want us Christians to do, to separate ourselves from God on the grounds that it's our right to do so (How dare God ask so much of me!). The consequences of this kind of life are serious. Our faith needs to be fed consistently in order to grow and thrive. It's why the Church calls us to the divine services again and again, not as a command or obligation but as an offering of love.

This summer, I pray that we as a community will be good stewards of God's gift of time and offer Him the first-fruits in the Sunday Liturgy, letting our souls be fed and nourished by the Body and Blood of our Lord. Our sacrifices to attend Sunday morning services will be returned to us a hundredfold.

May God bless you all with a joyful, safe, and peaceful summer!



HEROES OF THE FAITH: THE DORMITION OF ST. ANNA

On July 25th we commemorate the Falling Asleep (Dormition) of St. Anna. Her main feast is September 9th. She is the wife of Joachim, the mother of the Theotokos, and thus the grandmother according to the flesh of our Lord Jesus.

According to the ancient tradition of the Church, the Theotokos was born of barren and aged parents, Joachim and Anna, about the year 16 or 17 before the birth of Christ.

Joachim was descended from the royal line of David, of the tribe of Judah. Anna was of the priestly tribe of Levi, a daughter of the priest Matthan and Mary, his wife.

Anna, lived for sixty-nine years, and her spouse Joachim, for eighty; according to one account, Saint Joachim died two years before Saint Anna. The Theotokos had been orphaned of both her parents already when she was eleven years of age, when she was living in the Temple.

Saint Anna is invoked for conceiving children, and for help in difficult childbirth.