



THE Veil

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
ST. MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Adventures in Parenting

Stories from our parish on Directing Little Feet down the Narrow Path

SOPHIA P. | FORMER COMMS MANAGER

The Christian family is a *koinonia* of persons who exist together in unity and love, a community arranged in imitation of the Holy Trinity. That's a high calling! But family life is also an everyday calling, a daily and mundane thing. Navigating the waters of family dynamics is something that each of us must learn to do with patience, humility, and trust in God.

According to Realm, St. Mary's has received over thirty new members into the faith in the past five years alone. Our parish is filling with families, many of whom are beginning, or deepening, the journey of expanding their families. But expanding a family is more than a biological act—it requires formation of body *and* soul. What does it mean to form a soul for the Kingdom? How can we raise children to fix their eyes on the age to come?

With Fr. David's blessing, *The Veil* this summer is pleased to present you with some of the wisdom of those at our parish who are seasoned as both parents and Orthodox Christians. Their stories, humbly offered, are not necessarily prescriptions, but you may be wise to take note.

The Home as the Little Church

In Orthodox tradition, the home is often called the "Little Church." Like the temple, the home is a place where the rhythms of the Church year, the fasts, feasts, and times of prayer create the structure of daily living. Icons in every room orient us as we do our chores, our homework, and gather with friends. And when obedience to these structures falters, mercy and repentance offer a humble path of return, and we have

the opportunity to receive God's grace. In this way, our religion becomes the central ordering force for all other activities in the home.

Dn. Nicholas and Dsa. Cathy offered a picture of the faith forming the heart and structure of their household. Dsa. Cathy found that her upbringing by devout Catholic parents served her well in creating a similar atmosphere for her own children.

"We tried to have the same Christ-centered life with prayer, reading the lives of the saints, observing the fasts and the feasts of the Church, and lots of time at church," Dsa. Cathy said.

But the construction of such religious scaffolding can be challenging if you don't have a strong background to support your efforts (and even if you do, it can remain so). So where can a new family begin?

Watering the Garden of the Soul with Good Habits

Again and again, seasoned parents pointed to the power of small habits kept faithfully.

A simple habit: going to church.

"My younger son wasn't able to stay in the church for a whole service until he was in the altar," Dsa. Cathy said. "He liked to move around a lot. He wasn't an early fan of fasting food either."

Still, due to consistent effort, their older son memorized the liturgy by age three and played church at home with a toy censor and colorful vestments. Their younger son, initially resistant to altar service, began joyfully serving after being handed a bread basket one Sunday. For their family, persistence bore fruit.

Fr. David's advice on parental endurance adds gentle humility: "You do what you can (*cont'd on p6*)"



Saint Mary
ORTHODOX CHURCH

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God Grant You Many Years!

Don't see your name? Join us on Realm and fill out your profile. If you include your birthday and nameday, you'll see them here.

BIRTHDAYS

June

Nathalie A.
Rafael A.
Elena B.
Jonathan C.
Selene C.
Nora D.
John D.

Calla E.
Laurel E.
Kristalia F.
Mike G.
Rachel J.
Matthew K.
Nina K.
Ioana M.
Alexis M.

Maximus M.
Galina M.
Nicholas M.
Elena O.
Caleb P.
Zachary P.
Paula R.
Mihai R.
Brian S.

Julie S.
Marcus S.
Psa. Stephanie
Grace S.
Matt V.
Emma W.
Michael W.
Charity W.
Alex W.

July

Mihaela B.
Paige B.
Anna C.
Ptdn. Peter D.
Narcisa D.
Lacie F.
Nicole F.
Any F.

Eve F.
John G.
Stacy G.
Lucy J.
Lydia J.
Stephanie K.
Elias L.
Andrew S.
Juliana S.

NAMESDAYS

June 11 — St. Nathaniel, St. Luke of Simferopol
June 26 — St. David of Thessaloniki
June 27 — St. Joanna the Myrrhbearer
June 29 — Ss. Peter & Paul
July 2 — St. Stephen the Great
July 5 — St. Athanasius of Athos

July 12 — St. Paisios of Athos
July 17 — St. Alexandra the Passionbearer
July 20 — Prophet Elias
July 22 — St. Mary Magdalene
July 24 — St. Christina of Tyre
July 25 — Dormition of St. Anna
July 27 — St. Panteleimon
July 28 — St. Irene

ANNIVERSARIES

June

Bobby & Nathalie A.
Ben & Jessie C.
David & Nicole F.
Chris & Sarah V.

July

Mihai & Cristina B.
Seth & Jehan C.
Livi & Phuong D.

Ptdn. Peter & Dsa. Tanya D.
Armand & Amanda S.
Victor & Elena O.
Ion & Narcisa D.



THE ST. MARY WEEDING GROUP NEEDS YOUR HELP

All around our lovely property, there are flower beds that have a variety of plants from normal bushes, to azaleas and hostas, to spring bulbs, and much more. It takes a very small group who love nature to keep these beds weeded, trimmed, and replanted as necessary. And if mother nature does not cooperate with occasional rain, watering is needed. We all enjoy looking at the lush grass and the plantings that are around the church. The Weeding group is asking for a few more volunteers to keep our land beautiful for us, our visitors and the neighborhood.

If you would like to help, please contact Ellen R. or Jenni S. to join.



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—SAVE THE DATE—

St. Mary's Annual

DINNER DANCE

Saturday, October 11th @ 6pm
St. Luke's in McLean | Theme: TBD
Tickets: \$75 (sales begin in August)

Looking forward to a fun evening filled with great food, a silent auction and dessert auction, dancing, and good company! If you are interested in helping plan the Dinner Dance, please reach out to Yara and Sara C.! Assistance is needed for leading the silent auction, setting up the venue, and cleaning up the venue.

Thank you!



Church School Seeking Teachers for the 2025-2026 School Year

We are seeking volunteers to teach Church School for **1st-3rd Grade**.

For more information, please reach out to Ioana via email or [Realm](#).

2025

2025

2025

2025

Congratulations TO OUR GRADUATES!

Jason L.

Son of Dn. Ken & Dsa. Irene

Jason graduated from Virginia Tech with a B.S. in Industrial Design. He was nominated by his department for the national Industrial Design Student Association Merit Award competition. He served as President of Orthodox Christian Fellowship, was elected as a Class Officer, and worked with Consulting Group at VT. This Fall, he will serve in a year-long program with Orthodox Volunteer Corps in Boston before pursuing a job in the design field.

Anna L.

Daughter of Craig & Renée

Anna is graduating from the University of Chicago magna cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa with a double major in economics and religious studies, and a minor in computer science. Her honors thesis in economics concerns the causes of the baby boom during and after World War II. She is president of the Orthodox Christian Fellowship. She is famous, or infamous, for regularly walking from Hyde Park on the South Side to downtown Chicago and back. In the fall, she will attend Stanford Law School, where she will no doubt walk all over Palo Alto, Menlo Park, and Atherton year round.

Gregory L.

Son of Jim & Ioana

Greg is graduating from George Mason University with a degree in Government and International Politics, along with a concentration in Russian and Eurasian Studies. A member of St. Mary's since the age of 10, Gregory has been an active part of the community for many years. He plans to pursue a career in government, public policy, and national security.

Alex W.

Son of George & Eleni

Alex graduated Magna Cum Laude from the University of Mary Washington with a B.S. in Applied Economics and a Minor in Business Administration. He is a member of Omicron Delta Epsilon International Economics Honor Society. Alex was active at St. Mary's throughout his childhood and was an altar server for several years. He enjoys working with and analyzing data. Alex greatly appreciates all the support he has received throughout his life from his parish family.



Above: 2024-2025 Church School Director Melanie T.

Upper left: 2025-2026 Church School Director Caleb F.



Church School Recognition Day, June 1, 2025

Congratulations to all our students!
Thank you to all our teachers!

Fathers and Mothers *in the Holy Spirit*

PETER D. | PROTODEACON

I was asked to write a few words on spiritual fatherhood and its importance in the life of an Orthodox Christian. Of course, we cannot speak of spiritual fathers without also mentioning spiritual mothers—both go together.

A major role of a spiritual father is to impart teachings that will guide our lives. In the Church, we are drawn to examples of ancient monastic wisdom, such as St. Anthony the Great and the Desert Fathers, who struggled to live lives of humility and purity, seeking to be united with God. They left us their spiritual writings, e.g., in the [Philokalia](#). In more modern days, we have saints who impart their wisdom through their lives. For example, consider [Priest-Martyr Dimitri Klepinin](#) and [Mother Maria Skobtsova of Ravensbrück](#), who lived lives of obedience and integrity, service and sacrifice during the Nazi occupation in Paris and who ultimately died in concentration camps. They continue to inspire us today and thus continue to serve us as spiritual father and mother.

Then, of course, we see those around us in the Church today who are honored by the title of "Father," namely, our deacons, priests, and bishops (the bishops possess more honorific titles but they are still our fathers). What do they teach us about fatherhood? They show us their *raison d'être* by their very lives: deacons teach us how to serve others, priests how to sacrifice for others, and bishops how to shepherd others. I was fortunate to have many such examples—taking action to serve, showing patience in adversity, and working hard. I was given some excellent advice by [Fr. Alexander Schmemmann](#), who combined brilliance with humility and openness: "Peter, when you have a disagreement with someone, ask yourself 'Do I love this person or not?' If the answer is 'no,' be quiet." Thus, love must be our foundation for any relationship.

The clergy spiritual responsibilities are ours as well. Parents serve their children, sacrifice for them, and shepherd them. So do neighbors for neighbors, supervisors for employees, teachers for students. And sometimes this works in reverse, with children caring for parents in need of extra love and affection, and subordinates watching out for their bosses to make sure they don't do the wrong thing. Thus, we act as spiritual fathers and mothers

to many. In my own family, my father was a man of few words, with only three years of schooling in Czarist Russia, a refinery laborer all his life, but who taught me by his life the spiritual values of humility, generosity, and hard work. My mother had to leave school after 8th grade, despite being the valedictorian, to work in a shirt factory to support her younger eight brothers and sisters. She taught me by word and example steadfast love, perseverance, and patience in the face of personal struggles.

All spiritual fathers and mothers are inspired by Jesus Christ, who is Himself the exemplar of spiritual fatherhood, giving Himself to His people, without pride, ego, or care for self. [Fr. Gabriel Bunge](#) comments: "Calling Christ 'father'—something surely unfamiliar to modern sensitivities—was rather common in the ancient Church." Why is this? Because Jesus Himself shows to us His Father's fatherhood: "He who has seen me has seen the Father." (John 14.9) Jesus proclaimed that his food was to do the will of the Father and to accomplish his work. He was obedient to His Father. He stood up with integrity to the Pharisees and Scribes. He served His people, preaching, teaching, and healing. He sacrificed Himself for us on the Cross. He is the Good Shepherd, asking us to follow and learn from Him.

On the one hand, we are all spiritual sons and daughters, learning from parents, elders, clergy, the writings of the Fathers, the lives of the saints, and ultimately from Christ Himself. We hear the advice of Moses: "Ask your father, and he will tell you, your elders, and they will inform you." (Deut 32.7) The Sage counsels us: "Pay attention and turn your ear to the sayings of the wise.... for it is pleasing when you keep them in your heart and have all of them ready upon your lips." (Prov 22:17-18)

In turn, we are called to be spiritual fathers and mothers of those around us, especially our children, our spouses, our neighbors, our co-workers, our friends, and those in need of God's mercy and help. May we view every moment we spend with others as a miracle wrought by God, who has brought us together for His own purpose, namely, to love as He has loved us. ✠

RECOMMENDED READING

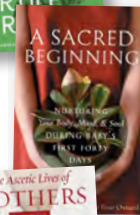
Books Our Parents Love



Parenting Toward the Kingdom: Orthodox Christian Principles of Child-Rearing



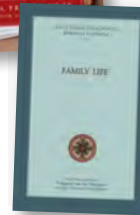
Fertile Ground: A Pilgrimage Through Pregnancy



A Sacred Beginning: Nurturing Your Body, Mind, and Soul during Baby's First Forty Days



The Ascetic Lives of Mothers: A Prayer Book for Orthodox Moms



Spiritual Counsels IV: Family Life by St. Paisios the Athonite

"The child, nurtured in his mother's bosom and warmed in his mother's embrace, begins to love before he learns the concept of love, and he begins to subordinate his will to the moral law before he learns the concept of the moral law, and it is the mother alone who is most suited to arousing in the child's heart his first conception of God."

— St. Nectarios of Aegina, *Mothers and the Upbringing of Children*

PARISH COUNCIL REPORT: On-Track Finances, New Outreach Efforts

DAVID D. | PARISH COUNCIL PRESIDENT

The St. Mary's Parish Council has had a busy spring. We are continuing to address the challenges of a growing community, while maintaining our ministries and services. Some recent updates on parish finances, giving, and a new campaign supporting children with disabilities are below.

Parish Financial Report

Even amidst the growing economic uncertainty, our parish is off to a very good financial start to 2025. At the end of the first quarter, our operating income (i.e. income from parishioner donations) was 100% of budget year-to-date while our operating expenses were only 72% of budget. Below are some key highlights from our Q1 2025 financial report:

- Operating income = \$110,935
- Operating expense = \$88,647
- Humanitarian and Missions appeals:
 - St John's dinner raised \$5,458 for the [Valea Plopluli orphanage](#)
 - OCMC soup luncheon raised \$3,065 to support our missionaries

Percentage-based Giving

St. Mary's has been blessed with an influx of new parishioners, and we are grateful that our community has become a home for so many. As we meet some of the challenges that come with that growth, we encourage parishioners to revisit the "percentage-based giving" messages Father communicated in 2024 and earlier this year. Setting aside 10% of our income may not be immediately achievable for most of us, but we are now reaching that target as a parish, and are excited to see the continued results of your generosity. Thank you for all you do to make our home parish an effective, vibrant community.

On Behalf of All

The **On Behalf of All** project seeks to nurture the worship and prayer of young Orthodox children ages 0-12 with disabilities. Our parish has been selected as a pilot participant in this new initiative. As a member parish, we will receive advice, support, and financial assistance to better support these children. Allison Jordan and Richard Strube recently attended a conference with the pilot leads and other parishes to discuss ideas and to kick-start the initiative. We are grateful for the work they have done to date, and are looking forward to working with parish families to create an environment that meets the needs of all our children. ✕

(Parenting, cont'd) where you can while you can, and trust in the Lord for the rest."

However, Fr. David also emphasized that parents' own habits shape children more deeply than the ones they try to impose, and most of the interviews reflected this piece of wisdom.

"The most powerful thing is for your children to see you worship," Dn. Nicholas noted. "Not just be there—*worship*."

Our parents also strive to foster intellectual habits that deepen the family's understanding of the faith. Regular reading of Scripture and spiritual writings, thoughtful reflection, and meaningful conversation were mentioned as household norms.

"The most edifying conversations I've had with each of my three children have occurred during long trips the two of us took together, without the distractions of work, school, social media, or even other family members," said our Church School high school teacher Jonathan J.

That said, a good family structure and strong education set the stage for a rich faith, but Fr. David observed that they cannot replace experiencing Christ and seeing His reflection in others.

"Studies have shown," Fr. David said, "that kids are most likely to stay in the faith when they see their parents worship, when they have a good mentor figure in another

faithful adult who is not their parent, and they have had an experience of the holy. The young people I see fall away often have trouble with one or more of those three: their parents aren't good examples, they don't develop that mentorship (or worse, are betrayed by it), or they never experience the presence of God deeply."

Our parents navigating complex family circumstances all have to fight hard for their children with discernment and faith. Men's Fellowship head Jonathan C. converted later in life, and once married to Anna C., they found themselves with a new, blended family, where their children were older and more independent. **(cont'd on p7)**



Parish Waste Management Update

ELLEN R. | PARISHIONER

You may have noticed the change in the trash bins in the Fellowship Hall. They're reflecting our work to better handle our trash and recycling at the parish. Here's how it works.

- **One large blue bin for general recycling.** Please look at the posters we have that display what Fairfax County can and cannot take. Notably, we cannot recycle plastic bags in Fairfax County. Failure to follow [their guidelines](#) means that it will be rejected and placed in a landfill. Let's work together to avoid that.
- **One purple bin for recycling glass.** Place glass containers used to prepare Fellowship Hour, or you can even bring your glass containers from home. We have several volunteers who take the glass to the designated glass recycling bins that are all over the county.
- **One large trash can for all the regular trash.** All the other items go here that can't go into the blue or purple recycling bins.

We are looking into ways to start composting again, and will let you know when we get it set up.

We are also collecting all aluminum cans and taking them to a recycling center that pays us for them. It is not a lot of money, but if you want to help, you can bring soda cans from home and we will add them to our bags. It's a simple way to help the environment and earn some money!

Please direct any questions to Ellen R. ✕



Create a Lasting Legacy

PETER D. | PROTODEACON

The recently-fallen-asleep Archbishop Anastasios of Albania was described as leaving behind an enduring legacy: a newly-vibrant Church, with hundreds of parishes, seminaries, schools, missions, charitable institutions, a new generation of clergy, etc. This servant of God managed to rally people around his dream of a restored Church in Albania, seemingly crushed by decades of communist oppression, but under his guidance rising from the ashes to new glory.

Each of us can create a legacy in our own corner of life, in the Church and the world, one which continues beyond our time on this earth. We can make decisions now that greatly impact the future, especially regarding how our financial resources, whether great or small, will be used to further God's Kingdom. We can do this via planned giving.

The simplest form of planned giving is to leave a bequest for the Church in our will, either a lump sum or a percentage of our estate. That bequest could be for our parish, a seminary, a charitable or mission organization such as FOCUS, OCMC, etc. It could be in the form of cash, stock, or even real estate.

(Parenting, cont'd) "We live in an age of little faith and even outright hostility to Christianity," Jonathan C. said. "When our children go to college, the prevailing worldview is nonreligious or even anti-religious. Parents must give careful thought to how to handle this dilemma."

Water is Thicker than Blood

It is a wonderful grace, then, that so much of God's mercy is dispensed to us through His Church, where our familial shortcomings can be softened and healed by the community of His body. Spending meaningful time with godparents, god-siblings, and other Orthodox friends and

Other ways are via specialized charitable trusts, such as a Charitable Remainder Trust, which provides for an immediate tax deduction and a continuing stream of income to you, until your passing or other specified timespan, at which point it goes over to the charity. Another trust, called a Charitable Lead Trust, also with certain tax benefits, does the reverse, giving the charity a continuing stream of income while you live, and then going over to your heirs when you pass. There are other options in addition, all of which could be designated as part of an endowment, which would last in perpetuity.

To leave such a legacy would be a "great work" as Jesus said: "Truly, truly, I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater works than these." (John 14:12) What would be required is to sit down, evaluate your present and future financial situation with your advisors, consider your heirs as well as the Church, and seek God's will in deciding what to do. There are many different options, and one of them will likely be right for you.

It is important for you to discuss all these possibilities with your financial ad-

visors and estate attorney to better understand what would be the best course of action for you. Neither myself nor our parish can provide you with any financial, legal, or tax advice.

visor and estate attorney to better understand what would be the best course of action for you. Neither myself nor our parish can provide you with any financial, legal, or tax advice.

Whatever you do, your having left a sacrificial legacy to the Church places you among the "living stones" which St. Peter speaks about: "You, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ." (1Peter 2:5). ✕

P.S. — For those of us receiving Required Minimum Distributions (RMD) from their IRA, remember that the IRS advises that you can make Qualified Charitable Distributions directly to a charity, which are excludable from adjusted gross income up to an annual current (2025) value of \$108,000, independent of whether you itemize or take the standard deduction. As usual, please consult your financial and tax advisors before making any decision.

relatives helps children grow deep roots in a faith that they can authentically call their own.

"The best thing my parents did for me was expose me to the family tradition," said Fr. David. "[But] being a priest and raising children far from my family has meant that I had to expand the meaning and role of family to the wider parish."

Spending a few days at Antiochian Village is another way that many children are able to experience the faith on their own terms. Through retreats, conferences, and youth camps, children can find new ways of connecting to God. Some parents even mentioned that their children kept in touch

with camp counselors throughout the year.

Jonathan J. works with the same principle in his high school classroom in Church School. Each Sunday, he asks the teens to share their highs and lows from the past week in order to build relationships based on honesty and empathy.

"This helps me rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep," he said. "We shouldn't try to make other persons duplicates of ourselves, but encourage each of us to find our unity as fellow members of God's household."

The Larger Church Family

Other relationships **(cont'd on back)**

(Parenting, cont'd) within the Church emerge organically. From intentional god-parenting, to offering advice when asked, to simply existing in the same space, your presence affects others.

Our Ecclesiarch Katherine M. experienced this when she found herself as a mentor and friend to many younger women in the parish without going out of her way to form such relationships.

"I never sought to mother to anyone," she said. "They chose me."

She learned that young people notice everything—strengths, foibles, and failures—and sought to engage their interests and problems from an authentic angle. Eccl. Katherine said that she tries to ask open-ended questions, listen to their responses, and always resist the urge to offer advice too directly—which she noted can accidentally be passed on in a condescending tone, effectively closing the door to growth.

"There are so many younger people who want an older person's friendship," she said.

Anna C., wife of Jonathan C. and head of several ministries including Community Connections and Reel Women, has chosen to take this reality of influence seriously. She shared that after her children were grown, turning her nurturing instinct toward the community became a way to foster deeper Christian love.

"I now believe that perhaps our greatest role as Christians is to support, uplift, love and nurture each other," Anna said. "It is wonderful whenever we are able to discern the 'child' in another person, regardless of



Above: Dn. Nick D. distributes the Gifts with his sons

"On Pascha, I was about to distribute Holy Communion, but there was no one immediately available to hold the cloth. My son Nick stepped up to help, and then my son John asked if we needed two to hold the cloth. Now, we don't really need two, but of course I said yes! So I had the privilege and joy of distributing our Lord's Body and Blood to the faithful, while flanked by my two faithful sons who were helping me. And then their mother came up for Communion. Joy upon joy! The Lord has blessed me and my family beyond measure." —Dn. Nick

age or position. Suddenly, any feeling of conflict, contempt, jealousy, or irritability toward others dissolves, and the 'parent' comes out in us."

For men in particular, Dn. Nicholas emphasized the power of example in the Church. "There [is sometimes] a sense that going to church is What Mom Does. [But some] studies indicated that Mom's faithfulness is not as much as a factor as Dad's presence and participation in terms of the

kids' staying faithful in the Church."

Watching men worship, pray, and serve with seriousness of heart, then, is a gift to all the children of the parish, whether or not they are sons or daughters by blood.

Have Patience and Enjoy the Journey

It should be a great comfort to all parents that we don't raise our children alone. Our parenting—however imperfect—is aided by the grandparents, godparents, our clergy, and the Church at large, whether by direct assistance or by example. While this is not an excuse for laziness, we can and must trust our children to the Church, the saints, the angels, and to the mercy of God. After all, not even God is alone—Love Himself exists in three persons in perfect community.

"Metropolitan Kallistos Ware teaches that the Holy Trinity is the basis for all forms of Christian community," Jonathan J. points out. "This truth means we need to recognize both what we share together as a family, and also what distinguishes each of us as a unique person."

Fr. David encourages us to endure this process with patience, and to enjoy the journey. His perspective is that it's not a sprint or even a marathon. Parenting is, as he put it, "a backcountry hike over many miles and days."

"Keep camp with your fellows," Fr. David said. "Sing songs and share meals. God will reveal to you what He has revealed to others before you, and you shall join the saints on the road to happy destiny!" ✠



THE Veil

The Official Newsletter of the Protection of the Holy Mother of God Orthodox Church
Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, Orthodox Church in America (OCA)

Hierarchy: Archbishop NATHANIEL of Detroit | Parish Priest: V. Rev. Dr. Fr. David G. Subu
Deacons: Protodn. Peter Danilchick, Dn. Nicholas Dujmovic | Choir Director & Head Chanter: Sdn. Nicholas Jones
Subdeacons: Eugene Huang, Nicholas Jones, Bogdan Maxim, Anthony Freude, Kenneth Liu | Parish Council President: David Dill

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