



THE Veil

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
ST. MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

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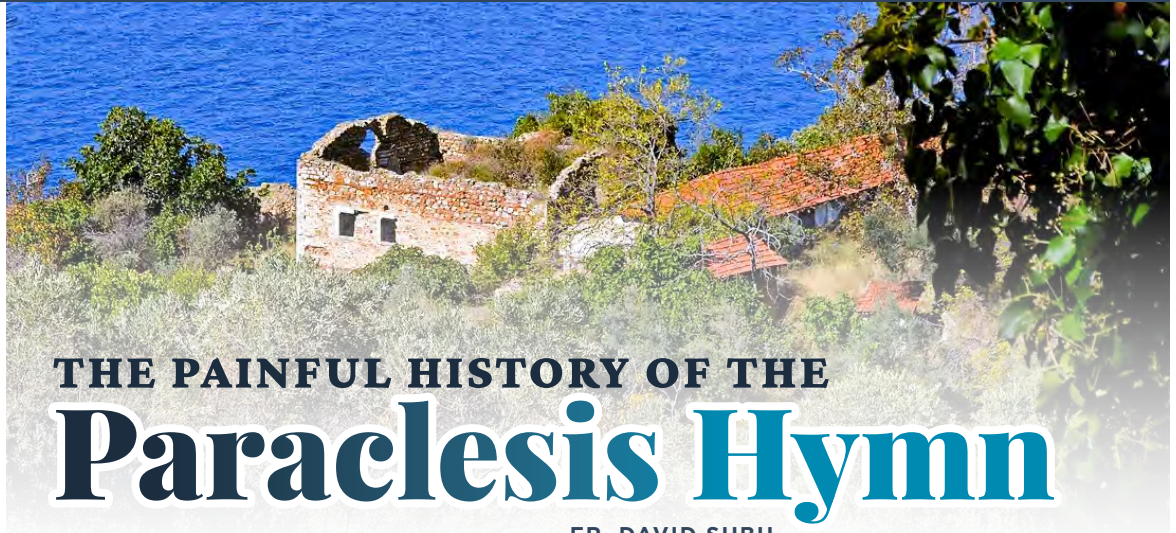
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THE PAINFUL HISTORY OF THE Paraclesis Hymn

FR. DAVID SUBU

On the southern coast of the Black Sea, hewn from a cliff overlooking the waters, the remains of the Pelekete Monastery can still be found, now empty and in ruins. Its name means “hewn with an axe” because of its construction on the rocky cliffs, but the name would also foreshadow a tragedy there. By the 8th century, the monastery was a center of spiritual life, overseen by the Abbot Theosteriktos, whose name means “God’s Support” or “Strength.” About 800 monks were there by then, with nearly 40 priestmonks.

At that time, the Emperor Constantine V rose to power, a violent iconoclast, persecuting the churches for their use of icons and imagery. As monasteries outside the cities were often centers of tradition and were resistant to iconoclasm, it was not long before Theosteriktos and the monks of Pelekete fell into disfavor. Constantine V sent his most ruthless general, Michael Lachanodrakon (google translates this amusingly as “Cabbage Dragon” but at the time he was simply “The Dragon”, reflecting his aspect as destroyer.) Lachanodrakon came into the monastery with a mob in the middle of the liturgy, smashing the chalice to the ground and punching the abbot in the face, showing the true character of the iconoclasts. The

monks tired to fight back to defend their elder, who ordered them to stand down and retreat. The persecutor gave the abbot a declaration to sign rejecting the icons, in the name of the Emperor.

The abbot refused, using the popular and vulgar epithet for the Emperor, “Copronymous” (“The Dung-Named”), and the Dragon immediately set to slaughtering about half of the monks. He then ordered any survivors bound and sent to the Emperor, while setting fire to the monastery and reducing it to ashes. Upon seeing them the Emperor shouted “Worthless monks! Recalcitrant and reactionary, in my kingdom! I am Constantine the Fifth and I do not banter!” To which one of the monks, Sinesios, cried out: “Copronymous! We are children of Theosteriktos and have learned from our elder to trample upon the devil and his iconoclasts!” To no one’s surprise, he was immediately beheaded, as were the rest of the monks, one by one, until only Theosteriktos remained. This was too much for some of the soldiers and officers who rose up at that moment and forced the Emperor to retreat. One of them cursed the Emperor and cried out that he too was a venerator of the sacred images. He too was killed for his faith.

The next day, the Emperor, (*cont’d on p.6*)



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

Natnael A.
Maria A.
Maria B.
Cristina B.
Matthew C.
Cathy D.
Abigail E.
Caleb F.
Susan F.
Elspeth G.
Margaret J.
Thomas J.

Nicholas K.
Ken L.
Nathaniel L.
David M.
Bridget O.
Andra P.
Shannon R.
Inna S.
Francis S.
Richard S.
Juliana S.
Tim Y.

NAMESDAYS

Aug 7 — St. Teodora of Sihla
Aug 9 — St. Herman of Alaska
Aug 15 — Theotokos (Dormition)
Aug 20 — Prophet Samuel
Aug 26 — Ss. Adrian & Natalia of Nicomedia
Aug 28 — St. Moses the Ethiopian
Aug 30 — St. Alexander, Archbishop of Constantinople

ANNIVERSARIES

Brian & Inna S.
Jonathan & Lori J.
Fr. David & Psa. Stephanie
Jeff & Eva F.

Pete & Michaela D.
Sdn. Nick & Emilia J.
Zachary & Sophia P.
George & Eleni W.



REGISTER FOR FALL 2025 CATECHISM CLASSES

Sept 13–Nov 15 @ 3pm–4:30pm, every week on Saturdays

This Fall, we are offering a course to help catechumen articulate the history, purpose, value, and meaning of the Eastern Orthodox Church's dogma and doctrine as outlined in the Nicene Creed. Upon finishing this course, catechumen will be well-prepared for reception into the Orthodox Church.

[CLICK HERE TO REGISTER](#)



www.praythenewstoday.com

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We deliver the top news stories without partisan bias and offer up each one to God, all in less than 15 minutes a day.

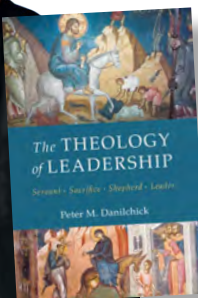
It's prayer, not politics—promised.



New release from St. Vladimir's Seminary Press from our own Protodeacon Peter!

The Theology of Leadership

Servant • Sacrifice • Shepherd • Leader



In a world awash with leadership theories, workshops, and self-help formulas, why do so many leaders still falter under pressure? The Theology of Leadership offers a decisive answer: true leadership begins not with personality traits or management techniques, but with spiritual transformation. Drawing deeply from the riches of Orthodox Christian theology, Rev. Dn. Peter M. Danilchick presents a bold and refreshing vision of leadership grounded in obedience, integrity, service, sacrifice, and shepherding.

Purchase at tinyurl.com/theology-of-leadership

August

2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
3 9am-11:30am Matins & Liturgy	4 7pm-7:40pm Paraclesis	5 7pm-8pm Festal Vespers	6 TRANSFIGURATION 7am-8am Festal Liturgy with the Blessing of Fruit 7pm-7:40pm Paraclesis	7 ST. TEODORA OF SIHLA 7pm-7:40pm Paraclesis	8 12pm-1pm Philokalia Group 7pm-7:40pm Paraclesis	9 ST. HERMAN OF ALASKA 5pm-6pm Great Vespers
Dormition Fast August 1-14						
10 9am-11:30am Matins & Liturgy 9:50am Churching: Melanie T.	11 11am-11:30am Memorial: Bhalla 7pm-7:40pm Paraclesis	12 7pm-7:40pm Paraclesis	13 7pm-7:40pm Paraclesis	14 7pm-9:30pm Festal Vigil	15 DORMITION 10am-11:30am Festal Liturgy with the Blessing of Flowers/Herbs 6:30pm-8pm Women's Bible Study	16 BRANCOVEA- NU MARTYRS 10am-12pm Baptism: Meltzer 5pm-6pm Great Vespers
Dormition Fast August 1-14						
17 ST. GEORGE THE PILGRIM 9am-11:30am Matins & Liturgy	18	19	20 PROPHET SAMUEL	21	22	23 5pm-6pm Great Vespers
24 9am-11:30am Matins & Liturgy	25	26 SS. ADRIAN & NATALIA	27	28 ST. MOSES THE ETHIOPIAN	29 BEHEAD- ING OF ST. JOHN (STRICT FAST)	30 5pm-6pm Great Vespers
Office Closed August 25-30						
31 9am-11:30am Matins & Liturgy	1 CHURCH NEW YEAR	2	3	4	5	6 ST. DAVID OF EGYPT
Episcopate Congress (Office Closed) Sept. 4-6						

Visit stmaryorthodox.org/calendar for the most updated event listings.

Invitation to the Film and Fellowship Loving Women of St. Mary's

(AKA the "Reel" Women Group!)

ANNA C. | REEL WOMEN GROUP CO-LEADER

Ladies,

Does anybody remember sleepovers, girls' nights out, and other warm, intimate, shared experiences with female friends? With children, busy careers and lives, most of us have not had time for such joyful, shared experiences and simple, unhurried fellowship with other women.

If you are female, enjoy movies, and are looking for a fun outing, we invite you to join **Reel Women**. It is a ministry that brings together St. Mary's women once a month to watch a movie determined by vote, get to know one another, and socialize around dinner or a drink before or after the movie.

Personally, I have absolutely relished the opportunity to watch wonderful films I may not have found and picked on my own and get to know wonderful women who share interests as well as faith and values.

Reel Women was started by Cathy D. a few years ago. Under her capable leadership, our group grew and our options for movies and experiences increased. Cathy recently stepped down from her post. In her absence, Christina J. and I will co-lead the group. We are grateful for Cathy's hard work and inspiring leadership and hope to continue what she set in motion.

Below are facts and changes to keep in mind:

- This group meets once a month, usually the first Tuesday of the month unless there is a rare opportunity on another date, such as a federal holiday.
- During the winter months of November, December, January, and February we will observe "winter hours" — that is, we will alternate matinees with evening shows each month.
- Starting March, we will switch to "summer hours" — that is, evening shows only.
- Movie choices are posted a week before the show for people to vote on.
- There is an optional dinner before or after the shows.

These are not set in stone. They will be often adapted or changed as the group determines. There will be a few outings in the next 3 months, but the summer season is more relaxed in terms of scheduling. The fall season begins in September.

Please go to the Reel Women group on [Realm](#) to find out about this ministry and, if you haven't already, join the group. For further information, please contact Anna C. or Christina J.✕

Parishioners Enjoy Another Nats Game Outing Together

CHRISTINA J. | NATS GAME ORGANIZER

On Sunday, June 15, forty St. Mary's parishioners went out to the ballgame for our annual Nats Game outing. Despite overcast skies, it was a wonderful way to spend Father's Day.

This year, the Nats are celebrating their 20-year anniversary, so Nats Park is showering their fans with fun extras throughout the season. The day we attended, children under 12 years old were able to get a free hot dog meal, while many of our dads snagged a free Hawaiian shirt offered by Kona Big Wave with the 20th anniversary logo on it.

The game itself got off to an exciting start, with both Miami and Washington scoring one run each in the first inning. Miami pulled ahead with a home run in the top of the second. The Nationals nearly rallied in the bottom of the fifth, but ultimately couldn't close the gap. The final score was Miami 3, Nationals 1. Bummer!

Even with the loss, we all enjoyed the afternoon together, as we do each year.✕



It's hard to fit forty parishioners in one shot!

St. Mary's CGS Program Improves through Training at St. Tikhon Monastery

LACIE F. | COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

As our children prepare to commence the school year—some for the very first time—a growing number of Orthodox parishes across the country are preparing a special place for their children to nurture a deep and beautiful connection to our Savior and our liturgical life. **Catechism of the Good Shepherd** (CGS) is a beautiful program designed in the Montessori tradition that embraces the sacred mystery of the relationship between God and the child. In a CGS classroom, called an **atrium**, children are drawn to God by an inner bond. The catechist prepares the environment and offers scripture and liturgy. Together, child and adult listen and wonder: “God, who are you? How do you love us?” The atrium supports this relationship and helps it grow.

Currently, St. Mary hosts a beautiful Level I (Ages 3-6) Atrium which will be taught by Lacie F. and Sdn. Eugene H. during the 2025-2026 school year. While parents enjoy fellowship hour, each child will be welcomed into a calm, intentional workspace environment where interactive stations revolve around the Parable of the Good Shepherd. In our studies, called “work,” Jesus announces that he is the Good Shepherd who calls each one by name and that

the sheep listen to the voice of the Shepherd and follow him. It is to the wonder and joy of the children throughout the course to discover—on their own—that they are the sheep.

As we prayerfully prepare for the coming year, we hope to expand the repertoire of parishioners trained as catechist through CGS-approved workshops nationwide. This past June, I was able to attend the **Level I** (or part 1) workshop at St. Tikhon's Seminary, which provided a beautiful retreat-like atmosphere with ample opportunities to attend liturgy at the monastery across the street, wander the grounds and enjoy nature, and visit the bookstore and coffee shop. The joy of the students in my class was palpable—largely a mixed group of Orthodox and Catholic participants—they quickly made friends and learned from one another. Some were trained Montessorians and others seeking information on how CGS can be adapted for neurodivergent children. Some participants were just starting their parish's CGS journey—others had multiple courses of Level I-III and were building their catechist numbers.

Given that CGS originally grew out of the Roman Catholic tradition, special attention was made by Dr. Mary Ford

to provide Orthodox adaptations to the curriculum and we even received a special visit from His Eminence, the Most Reverend Michael, Archbishop of New York and New Jersey who encouraged us on our journey.

As we build our program at St. Mary, it will be important to continue sending willing and able parishioners to take training as it takes two week-long courses to complete each level's catechist training, and the previous level completion before advancing to **Level II** and **III**. There is ample training and resources provided for anyone who may wish to embark in supporting the many youngsters we will soon have in this age group and hope that many will step up to support the next generation. ✕



Participants in St. Tikhon's 2024 CGS course, learning to create environments for exploration, wonder, and joyful prayer — tailored for the spiritual needs of young children. Source: nynjoca.org/news_250114_2.html

Connect 2025 Unites Orthodox Young Adults in D.C.

JAMES T. | EVENT COORDINATOR

Now in its eighth year, the Connect Orthodox Conference is an annual conference for Orthodox Christian Young Adults (ages 22-39) who are brought together for fellowship and worship. The event rotates to a new city every year, and includes a weekend of social events, meals, engaging speakers, and worship services to bring young adults together and “connect” with each other. The conference welcomes young adults of all Orthodox backgrounds,

whether they are single or married; in school or working; cradle or convert.

The exciting news is that Connect 2025 (Oct 3-5) will be hosted right here at the J.W. Marriott in downtown Washington D.C. for the first time. The planned program includes a dinner social at Clyde's of Chinatown, speaker series, dance party, local tours, and Sunday liturgy at St. Sophia's cathedral. This will be a tremendous opportunity for our young adults to participate in a weekend of

camaraderie, socializing and worship with Pan-Orthodox young adults from across North America.

Registration for this year's conference has already opened and can be found along with the event description at www.connectorthodox.org. Any young adults interested should consider attending, and anyone wishing to donate to this ministry can do so on the website.

Please reach out to James T. for any questions. ✕

(Paraclesis, cont'd) seeing he could not move Theosteriktos by any means, had him mutilated, cutting off his nose, ears and fingers, flaying his skin and throwing him into a dungeon to die. Thus he demonstrated that the ultimate outcome of iconoclasm is not merely the desecration of icons made by hands, but an attempt to disfigure the image of God in man. In spite of such cruel tortures, St. Theosteriktos survived nine long years of imprisonment, nursed back to relative health by sympathetic soldiers.

In time, he was released and returned to the ruined Pelekete. Rather than move somewhere else, he took up his abode in a corner of the ruins in a small wooden hut, and after three years of quiet seclusion, more monks came to learn from this faithful elder and rebuilt the monastery. Like Job, he was restored, but ever remembering his wounds and

troubles, he sat down and composed what we now know as the Small Paraclesis, or canon of supplication to the Mother of God, starting with the first verse:

St. Theosteriktos lived another 25 years with his brothers, and died in

*With many temptations surrounding me, * Searching for salvation, * I have hastened unto you; * O Mother of the Word, and ever-Virgin, * From all distresses and dangers deliver me.*

peace, the heresy of iconoclasm temporarily subdued by his and his spiritual children's ultimate sacrifice and courage. Theosteriktos truly modeled God's steadfastness and confirmation.

Now that you know his story, and what inspired the composing of the Paraclesis, perhaps you will find it more

meaningful when you chant it at home or attend the service. While it can be served at any time or place, it is traditionally also sung during the first two weeks of August, during the Dormition Fast. We are all at some point in our life "going through it" and experiencing the weight of struggles. Let us join our voice to that of the holy confessors and find solace in their song and know that we are not alone. ✠



Ruins of the St. John of Pelekete monastery.
Source: thebyzantinelegacy.com/pelekete



Doxacast Remix Reaches 21 Episodes

CINDY S. | DOXAICON CO-CHAIR

In its eight months on the air at Ancient Faith Radio, the *Doxacast Remix*—Doxacon's official podcast—has racked up 21 episodes covering a wide array of topics related to speculative fiction. A revival of 2018's original *Doxacast*, the *Remix* is hosted by St. Mary's parishioner Cindy Collins Smith and often features members of the St. Mary's community as well as speakers from Doxaicon.

Our clergy, parishioners, and former parishioners have covered topics

as diverse as *Dune* (Fr. David), *Alternative History* (Dn. Nicholas D.), *Supernatural Shakespeare* (Amy D.), David Lynch and *Twin Peaks* (Richard Strube), *Warhammer 40K/Horus Heresy* (Sam Cook), *Harry Potter* (Allison J.), *Game of Thrones* (Cindy S.), *Baldur's Gate 3* (Daniel S.), and *Babylon 5* (Amy, Richard, Sam, Maggie J. and Jos J.).

The common thread in all these discussions is that they exist at the intersection of faith and fandom. Using St. Basil's "Great Address To Young Men On The Right Use Of Greek Liter-

ature" as our model, the *Doxacast Remix* seeks to explore how speculative fiction can enrich and enhance our Christian life.

You can listen to the *Doxacast Remix* at its home on Ancient Faith Radio or by looking it up on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or Pocketcasts. ✠

Join the conversation on the
Doxacast Remix Discord server!

discord.gg/vSThJRsbjX

Thank You for Donating to the School Supply Drive

ELLEN R. | PARISHIONER

At the end of June, we held our annual school supply drive for Mason Crest Elementary School. Thank you to everyone who helped with the lun-

cheon and donated funds. We directly support many children's ability to receive school supplies through this drive, so thank you all again for your participation.

We will be delivering the items to the school as soon as the teachers return in August. If you would like to help deliver the supplies, please contact Ellen R. ✠



Matushka Olga

A Mother for All of Us

NICHOLAS K. | PARISHIONER

St. Olga of Alaska (1916-1979), increasingly world-renowned, lived her entire life in the obscure village of Kwethluk. She is both far and close to us.

No roads lead to Kwethluk (pop. 700+). To get there you can charter a small plane, but even the FAA states that the town's runway is "soft during spring breakup." A commercial flight from Anchorage to Bethel, followed by a 30-minute motorboat up the Kuskokwim River, is a summer option. In the long, dark winters, locals drive up the frozen river – a highway-on-ice.

As one native of Kwethluk noted: "[We] live off from [sic] subsistence mainly salmon, ducks, moose." A friend who attended St. Olga's glorification in Kwethluk this June reported: "There is no infrastructure here: no gas, limited water, one tiny store. No hotel. What there is, is self-sacrifice and love. Love beyond what I have ever seen and gentleness in equal measure, and quiet like a blanket, the river noisy by comparison."

Although her relics may be remote to us, her life story isn't. Like our own lives, Matushka Olga's life was rather mundane and full of struggles. Married at 18, she (remarkably) gave birth to 13 children. She served as a midwife and was a mother figure to many. In

the initial years of her marriage, communication with her non-church going husband Nikolai was difficult.

And yet, St. Olga's inner life of prayer fueled a remarkable influence on her community. Notably, her prayers led her husband back to church. Nikolai eventually was ordained to the priesthood.

St. Olga's spiritual influence had other tangible results: her local area of "perhaps five hundred parishioners produced six priests and two deacons¹." And as her akathist states: "You labored in the far north as a new Tabitha, making clothes to shelter the poor from the cold and warming their souls with your love." Her theosis is

“**Look at a tree. It goes through trials of its own: rain, frost, heat, and wind, but it stands firm and unwavering no matter what comes at it. The elders tell us this so we too can remain strong no matter what we go through.**”

— a Yup'ik teaching

described by Alaskans as becoming a "real person" — someone who fulfilled in her own life "the image and likeness of Christ, whose heart holds within it the whole world²."

To conclude, I would like to mention ...birds. St. Olga died in November, after the rivers had frozen and the birds had migrated south. Just before her funeral, warm winds blew in, thawing the rivers to allow many to attend her funeral. As her body was brought out of the church, birds miraculously appeared, accompanying her relics. This June, as seven bishops arrived in Kwethluk by boat for her glorification, a flock of birds flew overhead to greet them.

My wife Melanie and I had purchased flights to attend the services in Kwethluk — plans we had to cancel due to my cancer diagnosis. Following two surgeries early this year, we learned that my six weeks of daily radiation treatments would end on June 20, St. Olga's glorification day. In over 30 visits to the cancer center, we never heard birds in the underground parking garage. And yet on June 20, we heard the beautiful chirping of a bird. Melanie noticed it was a single, soulful bluebird. Our faith told us that this was St. Olga visiting us from afar.

Matushka Olga, pray to God for us! ✠

Notes

1. *Orthodox Alaska*, by Fr. Michael Oleksa, p. 198.

2. [orthodoxcanada.ca/Saint_Matushka_Olga_\(Michael\)_of_Kwethluk](https://orthodoxcanada.ca/Saint_Matushka_Olga_(Michael)_of_Kwethluk)



Recycling Update

ELLEN R. | PARISHIONER

Here is what is happening with the trash and recycling. You will notice that in the Fellowship Hall, there are two trash bins near the entrance from the hallway: one is marked **Aluminum Cans Only**. There is also a large round blue bin outside the kitchen door by the air conditioner. We are still collecting aluminum cans in these bins and taking them to be recycled and being paid for collecting them and turning them in. Please continue to bring them from home to place them in one of these bins here at church.

The other rectangular trash can is **general recycling**. Fairfax County only recycles a limited number of items, and if there is trash mixed into the recycling, *it all goes to the landfill*. There is a sign that lists the items they will take—plastic bottles, cartons, plain paper, newspaper and clean cardboard. Please only place the listed items in the general recycling!

The large round can inside the kitchen door is for all the other trash.

Many scientists think that these extreme heat waves and storms are related to global warming. Anything we can do to reduce global warming, such as recycling, can help our planet survive well into the future. ✕



. JOIN US .

Annual PICNIC

and Ministry Fair

After Divine Liturgy

SEPT 7

Sign-up to volunteer, bring food, or reserve a ministry display table here:



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)

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