



THE Veil

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
ST. MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2026

VOLUME 40, ISSUE 1

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...and more inside!

The Journey to Pascha Begins in the Heart

FR. DAVID S.

As we turn the calendar to February, we find ourselves standing at the threshold of the Lenten Triodion—the season of special services from now until Holy Week. In our current catechism course, we are discussing the Christian life as a "journey"—not a destination we reach through abstract thought, but a path we walk with our very lives. If Great Lent is the Great Pilgrimage of the year, then the Triodion serves as our spiritual map and compass, orienting our hearts toward their true home in Christ.

The journey begins on February 1st with the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee. This is the first "trail marker," and it points inward. We are reminded that the distance between us and God is not measured in miles, but in the humility of our hearts. Like the Publican, we must learn to stand before God without pretension, recognizing that our embodied faith begins with the simple, honest cry for mercy.

The following week, on February 8th, we encounter the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. This is perhaps the most poignant image of the "homecoming" theme. Many of us feel spent or exhausted by the whirlwind of daily life, much like the younger son in a far-off country. But the Good News of this Sunday is that the Father is already watching the horizon for us. Repentance is not a legalistic transaction; it is the act of "coming to oneself" and realizing that we were made for something more than the grind of this world.

As we move toward Meatfare Sunday (February 15th), the Gospel of the Last Judgment reminds us that our journey is never a solitary one. We meet the Lord not only in the chalice, but in the "least of these"—the hungry, the stranger, and the sick. If we cannot recognize Christ in the face of our brother or sister, our fasting remains a hollow exercise.

Finally, we arrive at Forgiveness Sunday (February 22nd). Before we can step onto the narrow path of the Fast, we must set down the heavy weight of resentment. We forgive others just as we have been forgiven; we lighten our hearts so that we may see the "divine light" more clearly.

I encourage you this month to see these Pre-Lenten Sundays as "spiritual spring training." Let us use this time to declutter our schedules and our souls. Accept a pastoral visit, participate in the sacraments, and let us prepare to enter the "Bright Sadness" of Lent together as a family.

May our journey back to simplicity be blessed, and may we find the Lord waiting for us at every turn of the road. ✠



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

January

Adrian A.
Demitri A.
Natalia B.
Mina C.
Lauren C.
Colby F.
Lucy F.
Anghelina G.
Annalise G.
Merryn G.
Christina H.
Christina J.
Theodore K.
Robin K.
Maria L.
Benton L.
Victoria O.
Elaine R.
Antoinette R.
Leilah R.
Armand S.

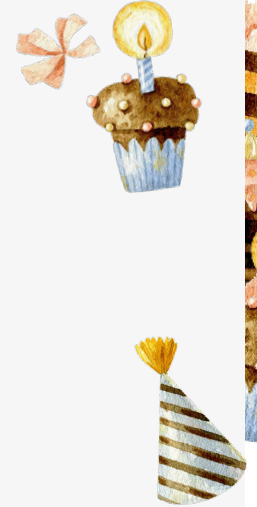
February

Victor C.
Sdn. Eugene H.
Valentina H.
Jonathan J.
Sdn. Nick J.
Alexis K.
Dimos K.
Maximus K.
Helena K.
Dea M.
Christian
Lucia P.
Maria R.
Kenton P.
Nick S.
Sarah V.
Paula Y.



NAMESDAYS

Jan. 2 — St. Juliana the Merciful
Jan. 3 — St. Genevieve
Jan. 7 — St. John the Baptist
Jan. 11 — St. Vitalis
Jan. 12 — St. Tatiana
Jan. 13 — St. Jacob of Nisibis
Jan. 14 — St. Nina of Georgia
Jan. 17 — St. Anthony
Jan. 21 — St. Maximus the Confessor
Jan. 22 — St. Timothy
Jan. 24 — St. Xenia of St. Petersburg
Jan. 28 — Ss. Ephraim & Isaac the Syrian
Feb. 3 — St. Anne the Prophetess
Feb. 10 — St. Haralambos
Feb. 12 — St. Valentina
Feb. 12 — St. Alexis of Moscow
Feb. 17 — St. Theodore the Recruit
Feb. 18 — St. Leo the Great, Pope of Rome
Feb. 26 — St. Photini
Feb. 27 — St. Raphael of Brooklyn



ANNIVERSARIES

Anthony & Anya F.
Bogdan & Galina M.
Michael & Emma W.

Susan & Evan F.
Michael & Dianne F.

FOCUS
NORTH + AMERICA

DMV

KICK-OFF MEETING

Join us as we begin developing a
local ministry in the DMV!

The Fellowship of Orthodox Christians United to Serve
(FOCUS) is a pan-Orthodox ministry that mobilizes
communities to serve our neighbors in need.

Light refreshments will be served. All are invited!

SATURDAY, JANUARY 31, 2026 @ 4 PM

Ss. Peter and Paul Antiochian Orthodox Church
10620 River Rd, Potomac, MD 20854

SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT
[FOCUSNA.ORG/DMV](https://focusna.org/dmv)
TO RSVP BY JANUARY 24



February

2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 PUBLICAN & PHARISEE 9am-11:30am: Matins & Divine Liturgy (Hosted by A-Di) 12:30pm-2pm: Parish Assembly (& Children's Movie) 2:30-3:30pm: Festal Vespers	2 MEETING OF OUR LORD 7-8am: Festal Liturgy with Blessing of Candles	3	4	5	6 3-4pm: Philokalia Book Study	7 11am-1pm: Baptism: Thompson 3-4:30pm: Adult Catechism 5-6pm: Great Vespers
8 PRODIGAL SON 9am-11:30am: Matins & Divine Liturgy (Hosted by Do-Ke) 11:30am-1pm: Church School	9	10	11 ST. BLAISE	12	13 3-4pm: Philokalia Book Study	14 10:00-11:30am: Memorial Liturgy 12pm-1:30pm: Adult Catechism 2:30-4:30pm: St. Mary Tea 12pm-1:30pm: Adult Catechism 5-6pm: Great Vespers
Clergy Conference February 9th-February 13th (Office Closed)						
15 MEATFARE/ LAST JUDGEMENT 9am-11:30am: Matins & Divine Liturgy (Hosted by Kh-P) 11:30am-1pm: Church School	16 ST. NICHOLAS OF JAPAN 7-9pm: Parish Council	17	18 7-7:45pm: Vespers	19	20 3-4pm: Philokalia Book Study 3:30-8pm: Women's Bible Study	21 10am-11:30pm: Financial Peace University 3-4:30pm: Adult Catechism 5-6pm: Great Vespers
22 CHEESEFARE/ FORGIVENESS SUNDAY 9am-11:30am: Matins & Divine Liturgy (Hosted by Q-Z) 11:30am-12pm: Forgiveness Vespers *No Church School*	23 6-7pm: Confessions 7-8:30pm: Great Canon	24 6-7pm: Confessions 7-8:30pm: Great Canon	25 6-7pm: Confessions 7-8:30pm: Great Canon	26 6-7pm: Confessions 7-8:30pm: Great Canon	27 ST. RAPHAEL OF BROOKLYN 10:30am-12pm: Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 3-4pm: Philokalia Book Study 6pm-7pm: Akathist	28 10am-11:30pm: Financial Peace University 11am-12p: Baptism: Salem 3-4:30pm: Adult Catechism 5-6pm: Great Vespers
Great Lent Begins February 23-April 11						
1 SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY 9am-11:30am: Matins & Divine Liturgy (Hosted by A-Di) 11:30am-1pm: Church School	2	3	4 6-7pm: Confessions 7-8:30pm: Pre-Sanctified Liturgy	5	6 10:30am-12pm: Pre-Sanctified Liturgy 3-4pm: Philokalia Book Study 6pm-7pm: Akathist	7

Great Lent | February 23-April 11

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

Ministry Spotlight: Connections Team

ILEANA C. | PARISHIONER

Every Sunday liturgy, you are greeted by members of our Connections Team, who pass out the weekly bulletins and any other materials that are provided for that week. Our Connections Team also makes sure that taking the eucharist is orderly each Sunday. But our Connections Team is so much more than those activities you see every Sunday. This team is responsible for looking out for new faces

and making sure they are welcomed to our parish, including during Fellowship Hour after liturgy each Sunday where there is a Connections Center table. This team follows up with newcomers, sending welcome emails and providing materials to orient newcomers to our church. Our Connections Team has been a big driver behind the phenomenal growth in membership in our parish since COVID. The team is always innovating. We re-

cently added physical Connect Cards for newcomers to complete in lieu of our physical guest book, and an online version of these cards is also available for scanning with newcomer phones. If you are interested in joining this team and helping to grow Orthodoxy in our community, please contact Ileana C. ✕



St. Mary Parishioner Profile Update

LACIE F. | COMMS MANAGER

As our parish family continues to grow, keeping our records accurate helps us stay connected and care for one another well as a community in Christ. Up-to-

date information allows us to share important parish communications—and yes, to joyfully sing Many Years for birthdays, name days, and anniversaries.

We kindly ask all households to review and update their information by January 31, so our records are accurate ahead of the upcoming parish assembly. Taking a few moments now helps ensure clear communication and thoughtful pastoral care throughout the year.

Updating your information can be done through our parish registration system. Whether you already have an account or need assistance getting started, support is available. If you have questions, need help accessing your ac-

count, or would prefer guidance in person, please contact our Communications Manager, Lacie Faber, at lacie@stmary-orthodox.org. She is happy to assist.

Thank you for helping us keep our parish family organized, connected, and supported. May God bless you and your household abundantly. ✕



Or visit:
<https://tinyurl.com/erffuj3w>

Caring For Our Parish as it Grows

LACIE F. | COMMS MANAGER

Overcrowding remains a real challenge for our parish, particularly for families with young children and for parishioners who would benefit from accommodations we do not yet fully have in place. While this is not something we can solve overnight, meaningful progress is underway. We are actively working to clear and repurpose additional space in the basement church school area and in the fellowship hall to better support children and families. We are also making use of every available corner of our property and adjacent parish-owned homes to serve the needs of our growing community.

One especially hopeful development is the renovation of the Roosevelt House, soon to be renamed the St. Olga House. Through the generous service of one of our parishioners, this space is being transformed to house Fr. David's office, Parish Council functions, the church store, and, when needed, additional seating and restroom access. This work represents not only practical expansion, but a shared investment in the future life of our parish.

Over the past several months, many of you have shared thoughtful feedback about the Safety Ministry at our parish. We are grateful for the time and care parishioners have taken to speak honestly about what has been helpful and what has felt challenging. That feedback matters, and it is shaping how we move forward.

While the Safety Team often prepares for major scenarios such as active assailant situations, their day-to-day support is far more tangible and familiar. This includes watching for spills in the fellowship hall, identifying heavy icons or furnishings that may be at

risk of tipping, and responding to medical situations or encounters involving unwelcome guests who may be under the influence of alcohol or other substances. The team also helps coordinate a range of training opportunities, including verbal de-escalation techniques, recognizing suspicious behavior, emergency preparedness, and psychological first aid. Many of these trainings are facilitated in collaboration with the Fairfax County Police Department.

In addition, members of the Safety Team continue to learn alongside other faith communities by attending local events such as the "Houses of Worship Preparedness & Safety" program hosted by the Fairfax County Police Department. These opportunities help ensure our parish benefits from best practices while remaining grounded in our own context and needs.

Per feedback from parents and teachers, during church school hours we will be working to limit adult foot traf-

fic in the children's areas. This change serves two purposes. First, it improves safety and accountability. Second, it reduces distractions that teachers and students have reported during class time. We appreciate everyone's cooperation as we work to create an environment where our children can learn and grow with focus and peace.

We also want to gently remind families that if children need a reprieve from the nave during services, there are designated spaces intended for that purpose. The family nook at the back of the nave and the nursery downstairs are safer and more appropriate options than the narthex. The narthex contains candles and other reachable items that can present hazards for children, especially during crowded services.

As we continue to navigate enhancements to safety, security, and accommodations, and as we work toward raising the capital needed for renovation and expansion, we welcome continued dia-

logue. We encourage parishioners to share respectful feedback through the newly established Feedback to Parish Leadership group in Realm, which allows concerns, ideas, and observations to be received in a constructive and orderly way.

We ask for your continued patience, grace, and prayer as we refine how safety, hospitality, and worship intersect in a busy and vibrant parish. It is important that we care well for one another, especially the most vulnerable among us, while preserving the reverence and warmth that make our parish home. ✕



From the Pastor's Desk

Fr. David is now using Calendly to make scheduling one-on-one conversations a little easier for parishioners. While we may continue to fine-tune links as we test this new tool, this option is now available for those who would like to connect.

Need to chat? Whether you're seeking pastoral guidance and care, exploring Orthodoxy, or simply need a place to share what's on your heart, let's talk.

(Please note: this scheduling option should not be used for regular confession, unless it is a first-time confession or a life confession.)

Scan here to get on his calendar!



Faces of Our Parish

LUKE & KRISTINA R. |
PARISHIONERS

Meet Luke: "I was raised in a devout Christian household by parents who were active in our church. My early formation took place in Protestant settings, particularly within the Calvary Chapel movement. My parents also homeschooled my brothers and me, which gave me the freedom to pursue my growing passion for music and spend ample time at the piano. From an early age, I was drawn to Christian apologetics and theology, and for a time I even considered whether to attend a music conservatory or go to seminary.

During my college years, I attended and worked at several Presbyterian churches, serving as a pianist, organist, and choir director. By that point, however, I had begun to wrestle seriously with core Protestant assumptions I had long taken for granted. This period of questioning was deeply unsettling and led me to reexamine both my faith and total sense of identity. Around 2017–2018, in an effort to recover the faith of my youth, I began exploring historical Christianity alongside broader philosophical and religious movements, including existentialism and perennialist thought.

In 2019, a conversation with an old friend introduced me more directly to Eastern Orthodoxy. He gave me *The Orthodox Church* by Bishop Kallistos Ware, which I read with great interest. Through that encounter—and through the witness of faithful friends—I came to a deeper and more integrated understanding of Christian faith and practice. People such as Fr. Seraphim Rose articulated a grounded, embodied Christianity that addressed questions I had for years struggled to resolve in both the notional/hyper-technical Protestant models and the muddled perennialist approaches to religion.

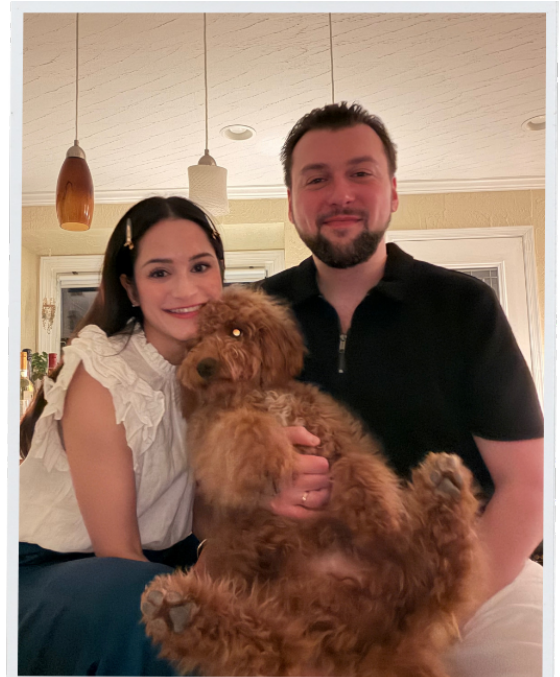
I first attended St. Mary's in 2019, after visiting the cathedrals of St. John the Baptist and St. Nicholas in D.C., and quickly fell in love with the parish. The warmth of the community and the lived faith at the local level made a lasting impression on me and I immediately felt that I had found home. Around this same time I began dating Kristina, and I knew I'd found my wife! I started formal catechesis with Fr. David in early 2020 (one of the first of what Fr. David aptly called the "Cate-Zoom-ens") and was baptized and chrismated on the Feast of the Transfiguration, August 6, 2021. The following week, I moved to Ohio to begin my doctorate at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

By trade, I am a concert pianist and currently serve on the faculty of the Levine School of Music in Washington, D.C. While performing and teaching occupy much of my life, outside of my work I enjoy serving in the Church with Kristina, cooking, and spending time outdoors.

Here's a recent interview I did where you can learn more about my work as a musician:



Meet Kristina: I have always thought of myself as a Christian, from the time I was born in Moscow through my childhood, when my father moved our family to India. Because I grew up in a mixed-religion household, my Christianity never felt exclusive and was also wrapped up



in my own heritage. I felt just as deeply Hindu, and for many years the two faiths seemed to coexist naturally within me. Since neither religion was imposed on my brother or me, it felt normal to be both—much like sharing both Russian and Indian heritage. Only later did I realize that being asked to choose one faith would feel less like a decision and more like choosing between parents.

That moment of questioning came when I met my husband, Luke, during our years at George Mason. Until then, I had held both identities without seriously examining their claims to truth. Meeting Luke gently but firmly disrupted that comfort and pushed me to seek not what felt familiar, but what was true. At the time, Luke and I were studying piano at GMU. ***Continued on pg. 7***

Continued from pg. 6

We spent countless hours playing for each other, preparing for performances, learning new repertoire, and—if I am honest—finding reasons to spend time together. My favorite moments were often the simplest: sitting in the car outside a store, talking and listening to music. Looking back, I feel deep warmth and gratitude. It still amazes me how God brings the right people into our lives at exactly the right time. What made our meeting even more striking was that Luke had already begun pursuing Orthodoxy before we met. By the time we started dating, it was already a deep part of his life. Through his example and patience, I found the courage to name what had slowly become clear to me: that I am an Orthodox Christian! That choice, however, was not without pain. In embracing Orthodoxy, I was, in a way, leaving my Hindu past behind.

St. Mary's was initially difficult for me: a combination of the distance, the time commitment, and my own struggles with consistency. But really because attending meant my choice was no longer abstract. It was lived and visible, and at times it still felt like I was choosing one parent over another.

Those thoughts still surface occasionally. But when they do, I look at where God has brought me and the life that has gradually taken shape over these years. In that light, my doubts soften and grow quieter, and I remember His grace and mercy. Today, I teach piano lessons, music theory, and aural skills at home, which is my favorite! I have also earned certifications in data analytics and worked in insurance. Much of my time is now joyfully occupied by our new puppy and by life at St. Mary's. I am grateful to offer my time and efforts to the Church, something that feels natural after growing up watching my mother build and lead an NGO with strength and devotion for thirteen years. ✕

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 1, 2026 | 12PM UNTIL COMPLETION OF BUSINESS

2025 ANNUAL PARISH ASSEMBLY *agenda*

OPENING PRAYER
ROLL CALL
APPROVAL OF PARLIAMENTARIAN AND TELLERS
REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF JANUARY 2026 PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES
PARISH PRIEST'S REPORT
PARISH DEACONS' REPORTS
PARISH COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S REPORT
MINISTRY REPORTS
AUDITORS' REPORT
TREASURER'S REPORT
STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN REPORT
RECOMMENDED 2026 BUDGET PROPOSAL FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL
RECOMMENDED 2026 PARISH COUNCIL SLATE AND ELECTION OF THE PARISH COUNCIL
ADJOURNMENT AND CLOSING PRAYER

MR. DAVID DILL, PARISH COUNCIL PRESIDENT | V. REV. FR. DAVID G. SUBU, PARISH PRIEST
MRS. YARA MELTZER, PARISH COUNCIL SECRETARY



St. Mary Tea

EVERYONE IS
INVITED!

All are welcome to
this family-friendly
event and
encouraged to invite
guests!

Saturday, Feb 14,
2026 @ 2:30-
4:30pm in the
Fellowship Hall

Enjoy sweets, snacks, tea
& coffee--a great
Valentine's Day treat!

RSVP TODAY!



ON A MADONNA AND CHILD BY ROGIER VAN DER WEYDEN (D. 1464)

BY JONATHAN CHAVES | PARISHIONER

HANDS PRESENT A BABE WITH CLASP-LOCKED BOOK;
AND HE, OF COURSE, KNOWS JUST WHAT HE WILL DO:
THIS BIBLE, FINELY BOUND, WITH GILT AGLOW,
IN FULLNESS OPEN WIDE SO ALL MAY LOOK.

THE PAST'S BEEN KNOWN BUT NOT IN FULLEST MEANING;
THE PRESENT IS THE NEXUS OF ALL TIME.
NOW ALL OF TRUTH MANKIND WILL SOON BE GLEANING,
AND CAPTURING IN IMAGE AND IN RHYME.

THE FUTURE, PROPHESED AND NOW REVEALED,
WILL JOIN THE PAST AND PRESENT ON THE CROSS;
HIS RISING FROM THE DEAD, FROM MOST CONCEALED,

INSCRIBED UPON THESE PAGES, SHOWING LOSS
TO BE TRANSFORMED INTO GREAT GAIN, THE SON
PAST, PRESENT, FUTURE, EMBODYING AS ONE.



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)

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