



THE Veil

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
ST. MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH
JULY/AUGUST 2026
VOLUME 40, ISSUE 6

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Complaint or Criticism: The Fixable Problem Text

LACIE FABER | COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

ference: Is the problem fixable?

If the concern is about a behavior, a plan, a missed communication, a confusing process, or an unmet need, then it is probably something we can discuss and improve. But if our words turn the problem into a personality flaw, a sweeping accusation, or a judgment about someone's motives, we have likely crossed from complaint into criticism.

"You are lazy."

"You are selfish."

"You never care."

"You always ruin things."

“ Our words rarely begin with our mouths. They begin with the story we are telling ourselves. ”

"You do not like me."

These statements may come from real frustration or real hurt, but they rarely lead to healing when they are stated as conclusions about another person's character, motives, or feelings. They make the other person feel accused rather than invited into repair. They also tempt us to believe that the problem is the person, rather than something happening between us that needs attention.

Metropolitan Philaret's prayer asks God to guide "my thoughts and feelings" in all our

Every parish family has moments of frustration. Something is forgotten. A message is misunderstood. A plan changes. Someone feels overlooked. These things happen wherever human beings are trying to serve God together.

The question is not whether concerns will arise. They will. The question is how we will speak about them.

In the Morning Prayer of Metropolitan Philaret, we ask God: "Bless my dealings with all who surround me." That is a beautiful place to begin. Before we raise a concern, before we explain what disappointed us, before we decide what someone else meant, we can ask God to bless the conversation and the person in front of us.

One helpful distinction from the field of conflict resolution is the difference between a complaint and criticism. A complaint names a specific problem that can be addressed. Criticism attacks a person's character, motives, or worth.

A complaint says, "The event details were hard to find. Could we make the date and time easier to see next time?"

Criticism says, "Nobody here communicates."

A complaint says, "I was hurt when I did not receive a response."

Criticism says, "You do not care about other people's ideas."

The difference matters because a complaint gives us something to work on together. Criticism gives us someone to defend against.

One simple question can help us tell the dif-



Saint Mary
ORTHODOX CHURCH

The Veil | Official Newsletter of St. Mary Orthodox Church | Falls Church, VA | Volume 40, Issue 5

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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.

JULY BIRTHDAYS

Stacy G.
Mihaela B.
Pdn. Peter D.
Anna C.
Nicole F.
Juliana S.
Elias L.
John G.
Svetlana M.
Narcisa D.
Paige B.
Lacie F.
Lydia J.
Lucy J.
Kristina R.
Anya F.
Eve F.
Leo F.
Simeon F.
Andrew S.

AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

Juliana S.
Andra P.

Natnael A.
Christina B.
Maria B.
David M.
Elspeth G.
Inna S.
Dn. Ken L.
Doug M.
Dsa. Cathy D.
Maria A.
Susan F.
Nicholas K.
Nathan L.
Margaret J.
Matthew C.
Abby E.
Caleb F.
Thomas J.
Richard S.
Alex G.
Francis K.
Gabriel S.
Sophia S.
Joseph W.

NAMESDAYS

July 2 — St. Stephen
July 5 — St. Elizabeth the New Martyr, St. Andrew
July 11 — St. Sophrony
July 12 — St. Paisios
July 17 — St. Alexandra the Passion-Bearer
July 20 — Prophet Elias
July 21 — St. Anna, Mother of the Theotokos
July 22 — St. Mary Magdalene
July 24 — St. Christina of Tyre
July 27 — St. Panteleimon
July 28 — St. Irene of Chrysovalantou
Aug. 15 — Theotokos (Dormition)
Aug. 20 — St. Inna, Prophet Samuel
Aug. 26 — St. Natalie of Nicomedia, St. Adrian of Nicomedia
Aug. 30 — St. Alexander, Archbishop of Constantinople

JULY ANNIVERSARIES

Mihai B. & Cristina B.
Seth & Jehan C.
Victor & Elena O.
Pdn. Peter & Dsa. Tanya D.
Ion & Narcisa D.
Livi D. & Phuang D.
Doug & Dea M.
Luke & Kristina R.
Armand & Amanda S.

AUGUST ANNIVERSARIES

Jeff B. & Eva F.
Pete & Michaela D.
Jonathan & Lori J.
Sdn. Nick & Emilia J.
Brian & Inna S.
Fr. David & Ps. Stephanie
George & Eleni W.

ST. MARY'S 2026 ANNUAL

DINNER DANCE

THROW ON YOUR BEST RANCH GLAM FIT— DENIM, DIAMONDS, SEQUINS, VELVET & YOUR FAVORITE COWBOY BOOTS!

SATURDAY, OCT 3
ST. LUKE'S IN MCLEAN
6:00-10:00PM
-COCKTAIL HOUR
-CANDLELIT DINNER
-SILENT AUCTION
-DESSERT AUCTION

SCAN TO REGISTER:




DOXA CON PRIME 2026

Becoming Saints
in a Brave New World

November 6-7, 2026
@ Catholic University of America

Faith. Fandom. Imagination. Holiness.

Keynotes by
Christopher Ruocchio
and Fr. Anthony Cook

Featuring an exciting line-up of breakout sessions,
panels, games,
fan art, and fellowship.

Early bird registration
live now through August 31!




St. Mary's "Best Kept Secret": Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

LACIE F. | COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

During the first week of June, three St. Mary parishioners gathered at St. Tikhon's Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania for Catechesis of the Good Shepherd (CGS) training, taking another joyful step toward deepening and expanding our parish's atrium program.

St. Mary parishioners Lacie F., Charity W., and Brittany D. attended in hopes of supporting our existing Level I atrium for ages 3-6 this year. The training was intensive, thoughtful, and deeply encouraging. Charity described the training as "a very intense week, with long days, and homework on top of it all," but also said it was "so worth it." Brittany, who came in unsure of what to expect, found that CGS was far richer than a classroom method. "CGS is so much more than that," she reflected. "It's truly something you have to experience or witness firsthand."

That beauty and depth are part of what makes the atrium such a gift to our parish. What is often less understood about St. Mary's "best kept secret" is that CGS is not only enriching for the children. It is deeply enriching for the adults, too. Whether cradle Orthodox or convert, there is a place in

the atrium, our Montessori classroom, to explore the foundations of the faith in a way that is prayerful, tactile, and unhurried. Rather than memorizing and reciting information, the atrium invites us to understand how the liturgical calendar shapes our participation in the Divine Liturgy and draws us more deeply into relationship with Christ, the Good Shepherd.

One of the most compelling parts of the training was learning how carefully CGS meets children where they are. Charity was struck by the catechist's role as a spiritual guide, learning to observe each child and help them enter into meaningful work according to their ability and interest. "Everything is adaptable," she shared.

Brittany was especially moved by the atrium itself. "The atrium is such a sacred space for children," she said. "It isn't filled with bright colors or anything flashy and distracting, which is so refreshing compared to the busyness of everyday life. It creates a peaceful environment that is perfect for young, developing minds." The simple Practical Life works, such as handwashing, polishing, and dusting, reminded her as a parent of "how important it is to slow down and be truly present," and perhaps how this same slowing down could benefit our own relationship with God.

One of the most beautiful parts of this work is making the materials themselves. Through painting, sculpture, felting, woodworking, sewing, and other handcrafts, adults create the essential elements of the infancy narratives, parables, and liturgical and sacramental life of the Church. These materials become invitations into moments of work, wonder, and reflection for our students.

And then the children begin to



Pictured: Participants of the CGS Level I Catechist Formation at St. Tikhon's, 2026

make connections. In the atrium, children take the materials into their own hands and discover meaning in ways that are surprising and deeply moving. Sometimes they combine activities, which is not strictly "best practice," and yet those moments can reveal what is taking root in their hearts. This past year, the St. Mary's CGS instructors watched children place the model prosphora in the dough, set it in a small chalice, add a hand cross, and proudly proclaim, "Look, teachers, it's Jesus in the chalice!"

Those moments remind us why the atrium matters. The children are not simply learning about the Church. They are beginning to recognize, through their own prayerful work, the presence of Christ in the life of the Church. Looking ahead, St. Mary hopes to expand into Level II, for ages 6-9, in fall 2027. To make that possible, we are looking for interested adults who may wish to complete the full training, which includes two weeks of formation over two years, and help build this beautiful program.

If you would like to shadow, learn more, assist in the atrium, or enroll your 3-5 year old, as of September, in Church School this fall, please reach out to our newly fully-certified catechist, Lacie F. ✕



Pictured: Demonstration of the Growing Seed Parable presentation, St. Tikhon's 2026

New Monthly Akathist Service to Mother of God of the “Inexhaustible Cup”

MATT H. | PARISHIONER

Beginning on the Feast of the Transfiguration, August 6, St. Mary’s will begin offering a new monthly Akathist to the Mother of God of the “Inexhaustible Cup” on the first Thursday of each month at 7:00 PM. All are welcome, especially those who struggle with addiction of any kind, or who have family or friends who struggle. The service will also be live-streamed for those who cannot attend in person.

I felt called to approach Fr. David about beginning this Akathist because I have struggled with addiction myself for roughly a decade, and the only real progress I feel I have made has come through the intercessions of the The-

otokos, ever since I began praying this Akathist at home in desperation. I also wanted to offer this service in honor of two of my closest friends whom I lost during the last five years, one just a few months ago, to addiction and despair.

If there are enough people interested, Fr. David has graciously offered to add a class called “Repent and Recover,” based on his PhD dissertation and homily series of the same name, which presents an Orthodox approach to 12-step recovery.

A brief background of this icon and Akathist:

The Inexhaustible Cup icon of the Most Holy Theotokos was revealed in

Russia in 1878. A retired soldier from Tula, suffering from alcoholism and unable to walk, was guided in dreams by St. Barlaam of Serpukhov to the Serpukhov Monastery of the Entry of the Most Holy Mother of God into the Temple. After a Moleben, or prayer service, before the icon, he was healed of both his addiction and his physical infirmities. Since then, the icon has shown forth many miracles of healing from alcoholism, addiction, and other passions. ✠

Fellowship Hour: A Labor of Love for the Year Ahead

MELANIE K., ALYSSA M., DSA. IRENE L. | PARISHIONERS

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

First, THANK YOU!!

We’d like to thank everyone for helping to feed the hungry upstairs masses after Liturgy every week. It is truly a labor of love, a collaborative effort, and an expression of Christian hospitality and warmth, and its effects are visible on the smiling, laughing faces we see every week.

For the upcoming year, we’d like to pass on a few notes so that 2026-27 can be just as successful, if not more so.

The weekly alphabetic group assignments will change a little bit based on new parishioners joining as well as beloved parishioners moving out the area. (You/your family is assigned a week based on your last name.)

Communicate with your team lead(s) when they send out an email about your week. Coordination is the name of the game so that the team leads are aware who can bring food. If you are unsure about what to bring, just ask your team lead! If you’re not going to be in church the week of your fellowship meal, it’s fantastic if you let your team leaders know that, too.

Please be considerate and take a portion of food to “tide you over.” About 120 adults partake in the fellowship hour food and we want to have enough for everyone to break their fast.

Let’s try to minimize the amount of paper and plastic waste we create. If you do go up for a second round, please bring your original plate or bowl with you to use again.

If contributing to the meal itself is ever a challenge, we always need people to serve, clean up, take out the trash, empty the coffee pot, wipe

counters and tables, etc. There is always a way to contribute!

The newly reconfigured alphabet groups for the coming year starting September are:

Week 1: A – Do (Jon C. & Matt C.)

Week 2: Du – Kim (Allison J.)

Week 3: Knight – Pap (Melanie K.)

Week 4: Price – Z (Nathan & Charity W., Dylan S.)

That’s it! Please check out our table at the Ministry Fair at the end of August to find out where your talents can best shine! ✠

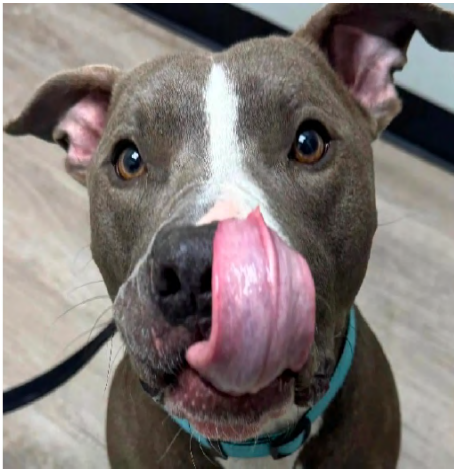


Me and Bluey . . . and God: What a little dog shows me about myself and God

PAISIOS, THE SINNER | PARISHIONER

Bluey wakes up every morning with his tail wagging and stays happy all day. It occurred to me watching him that I should be like that. I have every reason to wake up joyful and stay so all day, because God has been so good to me. The many mercies I have been shown, beginning with being rescued from a life of slavery to hedonistic pleasures that were literally killing me, right up to this moment in time where the Lord continues to guide me through some challenging problems that I'm facing, should make me wake up every morning with a joyful and positive attitude, just like Bluey. Unfortunately, this is not always the case, but it is something to strive toward and for which to pray.

Bluey loves everybody. He meets every



Pictured: Bluey, the dog!

person in his path with a wagging tail that indicates he wants to be friends. I believe the call of the Gospel is to be just like this. Do we go out of our way to greet the stranger who visits our parish? Do you smile at people you meet? Sometimes a friendly smile is all it takes to make a bad day better for someone. We are called to even love our enemies and to do good to those who despicably use us. It seems to me that the call of God on the Christian is to love the whole world. Bluey does this. I could do a better job of it.

Bluey is also very forgiving. He es-

caped from the house one night and it took me almost two hours to corral him. When I would coax him toward the car, he would look at me and then proceed to run off. Isn't that just like me when God tells me to do something? How many times have I heard the voice of the Lord come to me, in things I have read or sermons I have heard, indicating a direction I should go, and I have done the opposite.

I'm ashamed to admit that when I got him in the car, I gave him a dope-slap upside the head. In retrospect, I realize I did this because I was scared to death he was going to get hit by a car. I was angry that he had put such fear in me. He tucked his tail underneath, lowered his head, and shrunk into himself, not understanding why I smacked him. Yet later that night, I went upstairs to apologize to him, feeling terrible that I had been so mean to him. Upon seeing me, the tail began to wag, and he was all snuggles against me once I was in bed. Forgive and forget.

This is a lesson I am slowly learning. I have had some people really wrong me, and I still harbor less than saintly thoughts towards them. I have had times when life became quite abrasive, and I uplifted my face to heaven and very vocally expressed my displeasure to God for allowing these things. Fortunately for me, God, like Bluey, is very forgiving, despite the embarrassingly crude manner in which I addressed Him. I am thankful for the Sacrament of Confession.

Another thing about Bluey is that he always wants to be where I am. The minute he hears the car door slam when I arrive home, he rushes the door to greet me. If I don't immediately give him some love, he gives me a little growling until I give him my full attention. At night he snuggles right up against me. He follows me around the house when I am doing chores.

I wish I could say I do the same thing in my relationship with Jesus. More often than I care to admit, instead of snuggling up to Jesus in prayer, I find some excuse to turn off the lights and go to sleep. And there are times when I do pray, or am in church, that my body is there and my mind is a million miles away.

And, finally, Bluey is happy just to be Bluey. I realize this sounds a little silly because there is no such thing as an existential crisis for Bluey. But there is a simplicity to Bluey that would be a good thing for me to have. In short, he is happy to be dog. He does dog very well. But I am not happy to be Paisios. I do not do Paisios very well at all, and truth be told, I have not for a long time. I find myself constantly fretting over why I am not like the saints in our Orthodox faith. Instead of just being Paisios and enjoying the life that God has given me, I have periods of discontent and depression because I want to be something that I am not. How much better it would be for me to simply cast myself upon Christ just as I am and rest in the knowledge of His goodness and love. Bluey's whole contentment is be with me, to be my dog. Perhaps some day I will learn to be like Bluey, content to be God's sinner that He has saved by His marvelous and abundant grace and love. ✠



July 21st marked the 10th anniversary of the planting of the beautiful myrtle trees that decorate the lawn outside the nave. Nicole F. highlighted that the decision to plant myrrh trees was inspired by the Icon of the Mother of God "of the Myrtle Tree."

(Cont'd from the front) deeds and words. That matters because our words rarely begin with our mouths. They begin with the story we are telling ourselves. If I have already decided that someone is careless, selfish, dismissive, or impossible, my words will carry that judgment even if I try to sound polite.

In parish life, many of the people we are tempted to criticize are brothers and sisters volunteering their time, attention, and energy to serve the Church. Like us, they are working with the time they have, the information they have, the pressures they are carrying, and the limits they may not always be able to explain.

Most of the time, they are not actively trying to ignore us, discount our preferences, or make our lives harder. They may simply be stretched thin. They may not know what we know. They may have missed a detail. They may have made a decision with different information than we had.

This does not mean every concern should be swallowed. Orthodox Christianity does not teach avoidance. Love is not pretending. Peace is not silence. But the prayer gives us the shape of Christian directness: "Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering and embarrassing others."

That is exactly the spirit we need when we bring a concern. Firmly and wisely. Without embittering. Without embarrassing. Without turning a fixable problem into a personal accusation.

Careful language does not make our concern weaker. It makes our concern more Christian. It helps us tell the truth without pretending to know another person's soul.

The "fixable problem" test is not about excusing hurtful behavior. Some concerns really do need to be addressed directly. But directness does not require contempt. We can be honest without becoming harsh. We can name what happened without declaring what is wrong with the other person.

Instead of saying, "You do not care," we might say, "When I did not hear back, I felt unsure whether the message had been received. Could we find a better way to confirm important details?"

Instead of saying, "This parish never plans ahead," we might say, "I had trouble knowing where to find the schedule. Could we choose one regular place to post updates?"

Instead of saying, "You always take over," we might say, "I noticed I had trouble finding a chance to speak during the meeting. Could we make more space for everyone to contribute?"

In each case, the concern becomes something visible, specific, and workable. The other person is not reduced to the worst interpretation of the moment. There is still room for explanation, apology, problem-solving, repentance, and reconciliation.

The Morning Prayer also asks God for "a pure heart" and "a way of speaking that befits the faith I profess." That phrase is worth carrying into every parish conversation.

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But the prayer gives us the shape of Christian directness: "Teach me to act firmly and wisely, without embittering and embarrassing others."

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Does my way of speaking befit the faith I profess? Do my words sound like they belong to someone who has received mercy? Do they make room for peace, repentance, and renewed fellowship?

This is especially important in a parish. The Church is not a customer-service environment where every preference must be instantly satisfied. It is the Body of Christ, where each person is learning to love, serve, forgive, repent, and bear burdens with others. We should approach one another with gratitude and thanksgiving well before we arm ourselves with complaint or critical words. A warm complaint can be an act of love. It says, "This matters, and so do you." It leaves room for repair. It protects the dignity of the person while still naming the problem.

Before raising a concern, we might ask:

What specific problem am I naming?

Is it something that can be changed, clarified, repaired, or improved?

Am I describing a behavior, or judging a person?

What am I assuming about the other person's motives?

Have I remembered what this person is already giving?

Can I begin with gratitude before I ask for change?

Can I act firmly and wisely without embarrassing or embittering others?

A parish does not become peaceful because no one ever has concerns. A parish becomes peaceful when its people learn to bring concerns with humility, courage, gratitude, and love. Perhaps this is why Metropolitan Philaret's prayer ends with such dependence on God: "Direct my will. Teach me to pray. Pray within me." Good communication is not only a technique. It is a spiritual discipline. It begins when we ask God to govern not only our words, but the heart from which our words arise. ✠

In a previous life, the author dedicated her graduate studies to Peace and Conflict Management. She asks for grace, however, as it is often much easier to write about these things than to live them out.

Crowd Surfing for Jesus: An evening with Flyleaf and Lacey Sturm

PSA. STEPHANIE | PARISHIONER

On the evening of July 15, my husband (Fr. David) and I had the extraordinary ministry opportunity to pray with Dove nominated and BMI winning Christian hard rock band-Flyleaf with Lacey Sturm! Well known Flyleaf songs are "I'm So Sick", "Cassie", and "Fully Alive".

Flyleaf formed in Belton, TX in the early 2000's, with their peak being 2008-2011. Lacey left Flyleaf in 2012 to take a break from the struggles of stardom and focus on her family. Lacey put out a solo album in 2016, which led her to become the first female in history to reach #1 on the Billboard Hard Rock charts. She also made the Billboard Top 200 Hard



Pictured: Robert, Lacey, Psa. Stephanie, Fr. David.

Rock Charts overall. After much prayer and discernment, Lacey returned to Flyleaf in 2023 and in 2025, began their sold-out 20th Anniversary Reunion Tour. However, she wished to approach this experience a bit differently than most rock stars.

Lacey is a fairly recent convert to the Orthodox faith. She is part of the wave of actors and musicians who mingle in similar circles, discovering the Orthodox Church and sharing it with others they know. For this tour, she is requesting a near-by Orthodox priest to attend as a Chaplain during each show. After initial introduction and getting to know Lacey over some tea and pie -- we were ushered to the side stage area to watch the opening acts. Big surprise: Convictions -- a Christian speed metal band. Who knew? There were young and old alike, moshing and crowd surfing towards the band, who were screaming about the saving grace of Jesus. I was fascinated by this classic form of heavy metal being used as a vehicle to evangelize. Did I understand what he was saying? No. Fortunately, the lead guitarist had the most beautiful tenor voice and when he sang, it was awesome!

After the first two acts were over, Lacey's faithful assistant, Robert, had us come back to the Green Room to pray with the band. Once we were gathered, my husband blessed them with a prayer and anointed Lacey, willing band members, and staff with Holy oil from Jerusalem. Lacey likens this ritual before every

show as "girding your loins" for protection -- to perform in front of an audience who are lost, atheist/agnostic, or Christians who are doubting or in pain. Lacey prays the songs would offer comfort and lift up those needing Jesus in their life. Before she closes each show with her most personal song "All Around Me", she gives a testimony about her struggles as a teen, who eventually accepted Christ, and He is worth living for. All the bands playing, focused on mental health and spiritual wellness. They all wanted to let the audience know Christ is the answer to whatever darkness is taking hold of them or someone they know. As soon as Flyleaf's most famous song began, crowd surfing resumed as though it were an altar call, reaching out to Lacey to take their hand. When the show was over and most of the crowd was cleared out, there was left a young woman on her knees, head bowed, praying intensely as though it was the first time. It was very moving.

As we were about to leave, Robert came back to bring us to the Green Room. It was such a blessing in hearing more detail about her Christian journey, talking with her as woman and mom. We could relate on many things, but that is another story for another day. When she shared her continued struggles with being a Christian rock star, often worshipped by misguided fans instead of Jesus as Savior, I shared with her about the young lady we saw. She smiled and said, "And that is why I am still continuing on ... for now". ✕

Homeschool Families: Help Us Dream Up Something New at St. Mary

NICOLE F. | PARISHIONER

St. Mary is exploring the possibility of a homeschool mini co-op or regular fellowship gathering for Orthodox homeschool families during the upcoming school year. This could be a wonderful opportunity for prayer, learning, friendship, encouragement, and play.

We would love to hear from you as we gauge interest and shape what might serve families best.

Please let us know:

Would your family be interested in a homeschool mini co-op or monthly fellowship event at St. Mary?

What rhythm would work best for you: monthly or

biweekly?

Would a mid-morning format with a short prayer service, study hall, brown bag lunch, and playtime be helpful?

Are you hoping for something more structured, such as classes, enrichment activities, or parent-led learning?

Which weekday would work best for your family during the upcoming school year? Do you know other Orthodox homeschool families who may be interested?

If your family is interested, please reach out to Nicole F. and share your thoughts. Your input will help us discern whether there is enough interest to begin building something new together. ✕

Recycling Update

ELLEN R. | PARISHIONER

Thank you to everyone who has been bringing in aluminum cans for recycling. This month, your donations earned \$36 for the parish!

Please keep bringing your cans so we can continue this simple, helpful effort together. Collection bins are located in the large blue can outside the kitchen door and in the fellowship hall near the entry door.

Every can helps us care for God's creation and support our parish. ✂



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. Kenneth Liu | Choir Director & Head Chanter: Sdn. Nicholas Jones
Subdeacons: Eugene Huang, Nicholas Jones, Bogdan Maxim | Parish Council President: David Dill

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