THE Veil

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From the Pastor's Desk: Curing Our Spiritual Blindness

FR. DAVID SUBU | PARISH PRIEST

In the Gospel of Luke, our Lord tells the sobering parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19–31). When we read this story, it is easy to view the rich man as a one-dimensional villain—someone who actively hated the poor man at his gate. But if we look closely at the text, his sin was not malice or cruelty. It was something far more subtle and dangerous: blindness.

Lazarus lay right outside his doorstep, covered in sores, longing merely for the scraps that fell from the table. The rich man didn't curse Lazarus. He didn't order him driven away. He simply didn't see him. Lazarus was part of the background scenery, entirely invisible to a man whose heart and mind were consumed by his own comfort, his own schedule, and his own little world.

As a growing parish family, this is a spiritual danger we must constantly guard against. We do not act out of hatred or intentional exclusion; often, we simply act out of rush and distraction. We can easily become so absorbed in our familiar routines, our crowded fellowship hours, or our personal schedules that we fail to notice the person carrying an invisible burden right outside our gate—or right next to us in the pews.

Over the past year and a half, St. Mary's has been privileged to participate as a guest pilot parish in the On Behalf of All initiative through the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese. Through our workshops, retreats, and the visit of guest speakers like Deacon Demetrius Romanczuk, we have been challenged to examine our own blind spots regarding accessibility, inclusion, and the physical and social barriers that prevent people from fully participating in parish life.

> **"When disabilities prevent a person from being able to meaningfully participate in the sacramental life of the Church, it is as if we have a starving soul on our doorstep."**

When a person living with a disability, mobility decline, or neurodivergence cannot meaningfully access the sacramental life of the Church, it is as if a starving soul is left on our doorstep. Yet, in most cases, bridging these gaps doesn't require grand, impossible feats. Lazarus was not asking for the rich man's estate—he simply desired crumbs. So often, a little extra sensitivity, a willingness to yield a seat or adjust a pathway, or a small gesture of grace is all that is needed to make a barrier bridgeable.

Saint Paul writes to the Galatians: "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20). To live a life crucified with Christ means that our old, self-absorbed way of seeing the world has died. In its place, Christ lives through us—and He has always been a Savior who stops at (...

...Cont'd on Pg. 6

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.

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Bobby A.
Anastasia B.
Sara M.
Hans C.
Ileana C.
Samuel C.
Alexandra D.
Caleb D.
Maria D.
Svetlana D.
Stephanie D.
Kurt E.
Gabriel H.
Allison J.
Joe M.
Yara M.
Jason R.
Ellen R.
Tatiana R.
Stephen S.
Christopher T.
Raphael Z.

NAMESDAYS

Nov. 8 — Archangel Michael
Nov. 14 — St. Philip the Apostle, St. Theodora
Nov. 16 — St. Matthew the Apostle
Nov. 21 — Entrance of the Theotokos
Nov. 24 — St. Katherine of Alexandria

NOVEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Jonathan C. & Anna C.
Sdn. Eugene H. & Stephanie C.
Caleb & Lacie F.
Warren & Libby H.
Craig & Renee L.
Jeff & Megan M.
Joe & Alyssa M.
Daniel & Yara M.
Nathan & Charity W.





Denim, Diamonds & Dollars: Ranch Glam 2026!

LACIE F. | COMMS MANAGER

St. Mary's traded its Sunday best for denim, diamonds, and friendly competition at the 2026 Ranch Glam Dinner Dance, bringing parishioners together for food, fellowship, fundraising, and some fierce auction rivalries—all in support of Vision 2030: Home for Generations!



The evening featured delicious food catered by The Bone, earning plenty of praise, along with music, dancing, and a silent auction that revealed some surprisingly competitive parishioners. Bidding wars erupted over coveted items, particularly Amy Dill's commissioned artwork and a South Carolina getaway to visit Fr. Dn. Nicholas and Dsa. Cathy D. Apparently, nothing brings out an Orthodox Christian's competitive spirit quite like a good cause and the chance to outbid a fellow parishioner!

Between bidding wars, nearly the entire parish joined in some good old-fashioned line dancing. Who knew St. Mary's had so many cowboys and cowgirls? Guests also memorialized the evening at the photo booth, thanks to Sara M. and Cha Cha Photo Booth, who generously supported us despite a healthy dose of jet lag. Now that's dedication!



Of course, no parish event is complete without a little behind-the-scenes excitement. In a plot twist worthy of its own auction item, the Communications Manager left all the bid sheets at home, prompting her ever-patient husband to return home almost immediately after arriving at the venue. Fortunately, few noticed, and dollar bills were soon flying!

Beyond the laughter and competition, Ranch Glam reminded us what makes St. Mary's special: a community that comes together, gives generously, and has a wonderful time doing it. Heartfelt thanks to our organizers, volunteers, donors, bidders, and everyone who made the evening a success!

And to next year's auction participants: you've been warned. The competition is fierce, and the cause is worth it!

The Bigger Picture: Vision 2030 — Home for Generations

While Ranch Glam is behind us, Vision 2030: Home for Generations is moving forward! Our Capital Campaign aims to secure a future home with room to worship, gather, learn, serve, and grow. Parish leadership continues exploring promising local properties and submitting letters of interest as opportunities arise, seeking a permanent home for our growing parish family.

We ask every parishioner to remain part of this journey. Please pray for St. Mary's future, for wisdom among our leadership, and for the doors God may open. As you consider your stewardship, remember that sharing our time, talents, and treasures will turn this vision into reality.

A home for generations isn't built by one fundraiser or donor. It's built by all of us, together.

A Sneak Peek at Next Year... Little Parishioners, Big Plans!



We've noticed St. Mary's has been steadily infiltrated by little people—and glory to God for it! With so many young families, we're already dreaming up a family-friendly celebration. Perhaps Around the Orthodox World, an Old-Fashioned American County Fair, a Medieval Kingdom Feast with knights and princesses, or a Pirates & Princesses Adventure? Whatever the theme, expect food, dancing, fellowship, and fun for all ages—all supporting our future home.

Stay tuned—the next generation of St. Mary's may just steal the show! ✠

Love Demands Action: Answering Christ's Call

SDN. EUGENE H. | PARISHIONER

If you follow college basketball, you would know that Mike Kryzewski is one of the greatest basketball coaches of all time. He coached Duke to five NCAA titles between 1991 and 2015, but it was the 1992 regional final against Kentucky that affected the way I teach, or to be more specific, it was something Coach K said during a timeout in that game that affected the way I answer and ask questions.

Kentucky had just taken the lead on a crazy shot by Sean Woods to take a one point lead with 2.3 seconds left, forcing a Duke timeout. Even worse for Duke, the ball had to be inbounded from the baseline. In the huddle, Coach K began by saying two things. The first was directed to the entire team: "We are going to win." The second was a question directed to forward Grant Hill.

"Can you throw the ball 75 feet?"

I love a good question, a question that surprises you, a question that forces you to think, a question that compels you to make an important choice, or a question that pulls honesty out of you.

Some examples of good questions:

"What is your earliest childhood memory?"

"What is truth?"

"Will you take the red pill or the blue pill?"

I found it interesting and a bit strange that Coach K, having limited time in a timeout to set up a play, asked Hill that question at that moment instead of just telling Hill what he wanted him to do since Coach K would already know if his player could perform the task. I'll bet they even practiced for this exact situation. In an ESPN documentary, he explained why he asked Grant Hill if he could throw the ball that far:

"I wanted to get a positive answer from him."

In that intense moment with the season on the line, Coach K was being a master teacher in addition to seeking a victory. Of course he knew Grant Hill could throw the ball that far, but with 2.3 seconds left and the season on the line, he wanted Grant Hill to remember and believe that he could throw the ball that far. Plus, he wanted everybody in that huddle to know Grant Hill could throw the ball that far. In other words, with that one question, he was instilling in the team faith in themselves and faith in each other for that last play.

A good question not only elicits a desired answer but also brings to light something embedded in the mind of the answerer. It could be a math concept previously thought to have no practical use, a random history fact, or some strength or weakness of character of the person doing the answering.

In the 21st Chapter of the Gospel of John, after the Resurrection, Jesus had a sort of team huddle with Peter where he asks Peter a question to teach Peter something about himself.

By Chapter 21, Jesus had already appeared to Mary Magdalene once and to the disciples three times—twice in a room and once at the beach of the Sea of Tiberias where a few of the disciples were fishing. After breakfast on the beach, Jesus pulled Peter aside for a chat.

"Simon, son of John, do you love me...?"

"Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

"Feed my lambs."

"Simon, son of John, do you love...?"

"Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

"Tend my sheep."

"Simon, son of John, do you love me?"

"Yes, Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you."

"Feed my sheep."

Our relationship with God is a constant team huddle where we are, through life experience, explicitly or implicitly questioned by God or by ourselves about what we truly believe and who we truly love, and, just as important, what our response should be to that belief or love.

To the question, "Do you love me?", if the answer is no, then I guess we have nothing to do, no responsibility, and no sacrifice to make. We can make up our own life rules and change them whenever we want. But if we say yes, then the answer is the first step to transformation. That affirmative answer requires action on our part, and then the work of salvation begins. For Peter, the "yes" came with a leadership role in the early Church, including eventual martyrdom.

Even if our response actions may not be so grand as winning a national championship or dying as a martyr, we also have to act based on belief in and love for Him. If we don't, it is fair to question how much we truly believe. Our love is manifested in how we treat our friends, colleagues, family, and enemies. It is manifested in doing the often cumbersome work presented to us. It is manifested by being truthful, honest, kind, and helpful.

Perhaps my huddle with Jesus could go like this:

"Do you love me?"

"Yes."

"Then listen to your wife and look at her when she is talking to you."

"Do you love me?"

"Yes."

"Then don't go to bed without apologizing."

"Do you love me?"

"Yes."

"Then show everyone more compassion. People aren't perfect and neither are you."

"Do you love me?"

"Yes."

"Then stop wasting time and do your job. We're gonna win." ✠

Do Less, Try Harder: A Men's Fellowship Retreat

CALEB F. | PARISHIONER

It is inescapable, persistent, and apparently destined to run our lives—perhaps someday hunting us through sewers and deserts while feeding off our body heat. Yes, artificial intelligence. And as the men of St. Mary's discovered, apparently we can't even escape AI at a cabin without electricity or indoor plumbing in the woods of Shenandoah National Park.

From October 9–11, ten adults and three youth gathered at Doyles River Cabin for the Men's Fellowship Retreat, trading the conveniences (and distractions) of everyday life for a rustic weekend in Virginia's beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains.

Built in 1936 by the Civilian Conservation Corps, the historic log cabin sits in a forested clearing overlooking Cedar Mountain and Via Gap. Maintained by the Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, it offers few modern luxuries but plenty of character: bunk beds, a wood-burning stove, a stone fireplace on the covered porch, and an outdoor privy. Getting there requires a half-mile hike from Skyline Drive, meaning every sleeping bag, bag of groceries, and other creature comfort must be carried in. Apparently, fellowship begins with manual labor.



Fortunately, the cabin's location also provided immediate access to some of Shenandoah's finest scenery. The nearby Doyles River Falls Trail winds through autumn hardwood forests past two picturesque waterfalls, one plunging 28 feet and the other an impressive 63 feet. The approximately 3.3-mile round trip rewards hikers with beautiful views, although its nearly 1,200 feet of elevation gain on the return serves as a rather effective reminder of one's physical limitations.

The weather was mercifully mild for much of Friday and Saturday, with autumn temperatures in the 60s providing a pleasant backdrop for outdoor adventures. Sunday's heavy rainfall, however, made a persuasive case for packing up and returning to civilization. There are only so many character-building opportunities one weekend requires.



In between hikes, tending fires, and enjoying a surprisingly varied menu of lentils, steak, and tacos, the men shared conversations that stretched well into the wee hours of the night. Despite their best efforts to disconnect, discussions inevitably wandered back to artificial intelligence. Apparently, even a cabin built nearly a century before ChatGPT is no match for the gravitational pull of modern technology.

But amid the laughter, shared meals, and late-night debates, the weekend also offered room for deeper reflection. One particularly thoughtful discussion centered on a deceptively simple question:

How would you describe what it means to be an Orthodox Christian in two sentences or less?

It's the sort of question that sounds easy until someone actually asks you to answer it. How do we distill the richness of Orthodox theology, worship, tradition, and the daily struggle of Christian life into just a few words?

After considerable discussion, it's unclear how many participants returned home and promptly asked ChatGPT to "make this more concise."

For one participant, however, the answer came not around the campfire, but weeks later:

Do less. Try harder.

Do less of the busy world. Try harder to be more like Christ.

Perhaps that simple reflection captures the real value of the retreat. Orthodox Christian life is not merely about knowing more, saying more, or filling our schedules with more activity. It is about making room for prayer, humility, love, and the often difficult work of becoming more Christlike.

For one weekend, a nearly century-old cabin without electricity became a place to reconnect—with nature, with one another, and with the deeper purpose of our faith. The meals, hikes, laughter, and conversations were wonderful in themselves, but the fellowship they fostered was the greater gift.

Sometimes, growing closer to Christ begins not by adding more to our lives, but by making room for what matters most. Even if we still can't stop talking about AI. ✠

Cont'd from front) the gate, who notices the overlooked, and who leaves the ninety-nine to bring in the one who feels left behind.

As we enter this new month, I invite each of us to ask the Holy Spirit to cure us of our comfortable blindness. Let us ask ourselves:

Who do I know that is missing or finding it difficult to participate in our Liturgy?

How can I show small, concrete acts of hospitality to those navigating physical, sensory, or social challenges?

How can our parish move from managing our own space to expanding our hearts?

The chasm between the Rich Man and Lazarus became permanent because it was never crossed in this life. But today, by God's grace, those chasms can be bridged right here in our community. May the Lord grant us open eyes, warm hearts, and a wide embrace, building a parish home where no one is left lying unseen outside our door. ✠

Interested in getting involved with St. Mary's On Behalf of All ministry? We invite parishioners who would like to participate or stay informed about upcoming opportunities to join the "On Behalf of All" group on Realm!

A Season of Gratitude, Service, and Preparedness

IOANA M. | PARISHIONER

As we approach Thanksgiving, I want to express our heartfelt gratitude to the members of the Safety Ministry who faithfully serve every Sunday. Your time, dedication, and willingness to help others often happen quietly, but they make a meaningful difference in keeping our parishioners, families, and visitors safe. Whether assisting someone in need, responding to an emergency, or simply staying alert and ready to help, your service reflects the spirit of care and love that makes our church family special. Thank you for giving so generously of your time and talents.

As we enter the final weeks of hurricane season, it is also a good reminder of the importance of being prepared, both at home and at church. Severe weather can bring power outages, flooding, and other unexpected emergencies. Each of us should take time to prepare personally by keeping essential supplies, medications, flashlights, and emergency contact information readily available, and by having a plan for our families. As a church community, we should also make sure we know our emergency procedures, keep safety supplies accessible, and be ready to assist those who may need extra help. Preparedness is an act of care for ourselves, our families, and our entire church community.

This Thanksgiving, we are especially thankful for the people who give their time and energy to serve others. May God bless our Safety Ministry volunteers and their families for their kindness, dedication, and generous hearts.

With sincere appreciation and gratitude,

Ioana M.

Safety Ministry Chair ✠





October 2026 Parish Council Meeting Summary

DAVID D. | PARISH COUNCIL PRESIDENT

The St. Mary Parish Council (PC) met in person and online on October 19, 2026. In this meeting, we discussed recent findings by the property search committee, reviewed the approved emergency operations plan, and received an update on church maintenance projects. We also reviewed our quarterly financial results.

Property Search

We unfortunately have had to leave negotiations with the owners of the Korean Evangelical Church on Annandale Road, as we were not able to agree on contract terms. However, the property search committee and clergy visited another property at 8336 Carrleigh Parkway in Springfield last week. The church is very well maintained and could easily accommodate our parishioners and ministries. The site covers over four acres, with 150 parking spots. The worship space can seat 370, the fellowship hall can fit 123 at tables (likely expandable to 150), and the main spaces are handicapped accessible. The basement has very expansive storage, meeting, classroom, and multipurpose rooms across 11,000 square feet. We submitted a non-binding letter of intent, including an offer of $5M, last Friday, October 16, and are waiting for a response.

Emergency Operations Plan Walkthrough

The PC and clergy are grateful for the continued efforts of our safety team to secure our grounds, watch out for risks, and maintain St. Mary's as a welcoming place for visitors. Ioana M. walked the PC through her detailed emergency operations plan, including incident escalation procedures, emergency evacuation instructions, and safety roles and responsibilities. You will notice evacuation route maps throughout the church and new, larger signs on each door; Ioana created those after consultation with the Fairfax County Police Department.

Quarterly Financial Report

The PC reviewed the latest financial data compiled by our treasurer, Chris G. Parishioners continue to generously support our community and ministries. There are no significant deviations from the approved 2026 budget to report, other than that maintenance costs are higher than projected due to needed repairs at the St. Olga and St. Nina houses.

St. Olga/St. Nina Repairs

Two major repair projects have been underway at the St. Olga and St. Nina houses this fall. We have been working to complete substantial electrical upgrades and replacements at the St. Olga house, after we were notified of safety issues and substandard wiring. That work has now been completed, and the electrical system has been inspected by the county.

In August, we were notified of significant water leakage and damage at the St. Nina house. A plumber stopped the leak, and a water remediation team was called in at the direction of our insurance provider. The remediation team did not give a quote, which is typical at the start of an investigation. After their work was complete, we were given an invoice for $45,000, which does not include actual repairs (tiling, dry wall replacement, etc.). The insurance adjustor agreed these prices were egregiously high. The insurance company and contractor are discussing now; we will keep the parish up to date on final outcomes. We are also trying to repair at least one of the bathrooms as quickly as possible so our beloved ecclesiarch can return to her home.

Financial Peace University (FPU) Registration

Please refer to the link Doug M. provided if you would like to register for an FPU account. An account provides budgeting tools, training on demand, and coaching calls. Registration is free, as a parishioner has generously covered the cost for a parish-wide subscription.

Thank you for your continued support to all parish activities and ministry leaders. Please get in touch with me at davidadill@gmail.com if you have any questions.

Yours in Christ,
David D. ✠



A HOME FOR GENERATIONS

Vision 2030

GIVE TODAY:

FUTURE PLEDGE:



The Veil

The Official Newsletter of the Protection of the Holy Mother of God Orthodox Church
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Hierarch: 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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