



THE Veil

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
ST. MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

OCTOBER 2026
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Be Yourself, American!

FR. JOHN FINLEY, TRANSCRIBED EXCERPT FROM FR. ROMAN BRAGA SPEAKING IN 1995
AT ST. IGNATIUS ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH IN FRANKLIN, TN (COPIED FROM THE
WORD MAGAZINE)

Orthodoxy is to find Christ in ourselves ... You became Orthodox. You didn't find Orthodoxy individually. If you think that you came just by yourself to Orthodoxy, you are still Protestant. Orthodoxy is the experience of peoples in God, not of individuals.

First of all, you came back to Church, and don't think that you're saved without thinking about others. In an organism, as St. Paul says, if you cut off your little finger, the whole organism is suffering. The same thing, salvation is communal; it's not individual.

And you come to the Orthodox Church in America, not to become Syrians, not to become Romanians, not to become Russians or Bulgarians. Be yourself, American. Otherwise, God doesn't accept your experience, because you have a tradition, you have a background that is given by God. God made me to be born in the Carpathian Mountains; I cannot be other. For me, Orthodoxy is the experience of the Romanian peoples in the Church. We come into the church, not as isolated individuals; we come with our families, with our nation, with our culture. Sanctify and transfigure your culture. There are many good things in this country. Be good patriots.

Orthodoxy today is accused of being chauvinistic and Nazi and nationalistic. It's not true. But you cannot be Orthodox without your history. If you study better St. Maximos the Confessor, it's a very difficult holy father, he thinks that we are in a structure like concentric circles. The first circle (the little one) is the individual, which is a person, not an individual. An individual is something isolated, a person is somebody who lives

in community. And the individual (person) is included in the family. The family is a church. We save our soul in the church and in the family. The family is included in your culture; in your ethnicity, so to say; in your history. And that ethnicity is included in another circle that is the Church, the universal Church. And the last circle or sphere is God. If it doesn't develop in this structure, we don't reach God, because God doesn't need me as an isolated person who is nobody. If I come to God, I come with my family, with my history, with my identity. God wants persons.

Christianity is a very personal religion. When Jesus Christ said if you don't deny yourself, you are not worthy to follow Me. If you want to follow me, deny yourself, because if you want to save your soul, you will lose it, but if you lose your soul for me and the Gospel, you will save it.

This is not a double standard here.

Here, we are false personalities, because we are not authentic personalities. To be an authentic personality, be yourself. You have an identity behind you, you have a culture behind you, you have a country—you have a place in which God wanted you to be born. And that nation or country in which you are born has a history. You have to come into Orthodoxy with the whole destiny of the American people because they have to find Christ and to be saved. Even if you are a minority, you can be just one person, but you come with the destiny of your people in Orthodoxy. That is Orthodoxy; it's the experience of peoples in God, not of isolated individuals.

...Cont'd on Pg. 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.

SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

Andrea B.
Mihai B.
Lily C.
Liviu D.
Cassi E.
Emma J.
Joseph J.
Isabel K.
Jason L.
Alexandra L.
Michelle L.
Dorina M.
Tom P.
Elaine P.
Seraphina S.
Luke R.
Claudia S.
Matt T.

NAMESDAYS

Oct. 1 — Protection of the Holy Mother of God
Oct. 6 — Apostle Thomas
Oct. 9 — St. Tikhon of Moscow
Oct. 11 — St. Kenneth of Kilkenny
Oct. 12 — St. Symeon the New Theologian
Oct. 18 — Apostle Luke
Oct. 28 — St. Anastasia the Roman
Oct. 31 — Saint John of Chicago

SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Jordan & Mariia C.
Nicholas & Stephanie D.
Matt H. & Anna H.
Joseph & Margaret J.
Ioana & Jim M.

Pan-Orthodox Young Adults & Professionals Gala

A NIGHT IN *Byzantium*

Join us for a Byzantine-themed night filled with live music, a DJ, a photo booth, and a full buffet dinner!

DRESS CODE: Byzantine Inspired / Semi-Formal

OCTOBER **17** 6-10 PM

SAINTS PETER AND PAUL
ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH

RSVP HERE:

Early Bird Tickets \$65 until
September 25th - After Tickets
will be \$75 until October 11th

10% of ticket sales will be donated
to FOCUS North America



Please email OYAPGala@gmail.com for any questions or concerns.



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 Rucchio
and Fr. Anthony Cook

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

Register Today!



Opening Our Doors Wider: St. Mary's Embraces Accessibility for All

ALLISON J. & RICHARD S. | PARISHIONERS

On Saturday, September 26th, St. Mary's hosted a retreat focused on the mission and work of the On Behalf Of All (OBOA) ministry. The goal of this ministry is to remove barriers to full participation in the Divine Liturgy and promote inclusion and accessibility in all aspects of parish life for parishioners of all abilities. St. Mary's is one of twelve pilot parishes for the nationwide OBOA initiative. Pilot parishes of On Behalf Of All are spread throughout the country and, in addition to St. Mary's, represent eight of the Metropolises of the Greek Archdiocese, as well as including a parish of the Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese.

Saturday's retreat was facilitated by St. Mary's accessibility coaches: Deacon Demetrius Jeff Romanczuk, from Archangel Gabriel Mission in Hickory, NC and Presbytera Maria Drossos, MDiv, from Annunciation Cathedral of New England in Boston MA. The retreat featured a presentation on the many aspects of accessibility in the life of the Church, incorporating videos, discussion questions, and conversation about ways to implement inclusive practices at St. Mary's. One analogy shared at the

walls. Analogously, all should find themselves equally welcome in the life of the parish, in both the life of the community and the building itself. Participants at the retreat were encouraged to carry this question with them: "Do you see anyone's needs being unmet?" This question invites us all to share ways we might better help others feel welcome in our parish community.

As we all know, our beloved current building presents some challenges for our growing community. The two most obvious of these challenges are the size constraints and the lack of accessibility for people who use wheelchairs or are otherwise mobility-impaired. While both of these challenges will likely persist for the foreseeable future, feasible opportunities for improving accessibility were identified for consideration. These include audio enhancements for those with hearing challenges, ways that reactions to incense might be reduced, high contrast tape indicating stairs and doorhandles, use of a visual schedule for Liturgy and Church School, and ways to allow girls to assist with passing out antidoron as one way to enable the vestibular stimulation needed by both boys and girls.

Considering environments outside of the worship space, other topics discussed were: the possibility of moving a couch into the library for fathers to use—thus preserving the nursing room for mothers, setting up a sensory room/space for those wanting relief from

overstimulation, and creating an appropriately decorated room/space



Pictured: Participants in group photo with facilitators

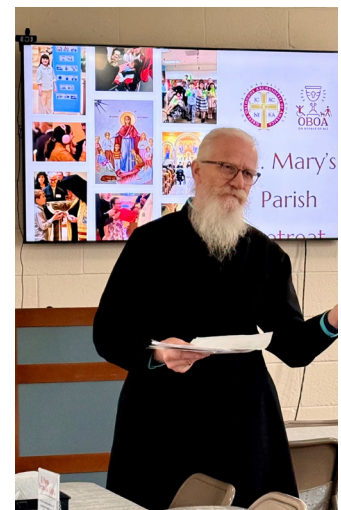
for those seeking relief from crowding in the nave and narthex.

In the spirit of the "Ask. Just ask," guidance shared during the retreat, we encourage all readers to share any feedback on these ideas, or to share other ideas on how we can help meet the as yet unmet needs of those in our parish. These suggestions can be shared with Fr. David, OBOA Ministry leaders Allison Franklin Jordan and Richard Strube, and members of the Parish Council. Everyone is welcome to join the On Behalf Of All group on Realm to contribute to this essential ongoing work. ✝



Pictured: Participants during facilitated session on hospitality

retreat was that a church should be as inclusive as a library: all are equally welcome at a library, regardless of their status outside of the library



Pictured: OBOA Coach Dn. Demetrius

The Little Church at Home: Making Prayer Part of Family Life

MATTHEW & MELANIE T. | PARISHIONERS

As the sun sets, our little ones get ready for evening prayers. Lydia, our older daughter, lights the tall candle at the center of our altar and the incense burner. Baby Nina holds (and plays with) her electric tea light. We switch off the lamps around the room and stand together in the warm glow of candlelight. Then we begin.

Our prayer corner is inspired by the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, Blueprints for the Little Church by Elissa Bjeletich and Caleb Shoemaker, and the wonderful examples of other St. Mary's families. It has also been beautified by icons given to us by friends and godparents.

We want our icon corner to feel welcoming enough for our children and their friends so they might want to linger. Alongside icons of Christ, the Theotokos, and the saints, we keep family milestones like wedding and baptism photos, as well as pictures of loved ones who have fallen asleep. Potamitis Publishing's lives of the saints books are kept within easy reach so young and old can curl up and read on the com-

fortable rug in front of the icon corner. The space occasionally has a wooden block church with peg-doll clergy and saints that our daughters' godmother gave them. We also keep the Theophany holy water there so it can be within easy reach.

We gather here as a family for evening prayers and occasionally morning prayers on weekends. Positioned near our dining table, it is also close by for mealtime prayers. It is also a space where we have sought to be comforted, where we bring our children to read psalms and pray together when mourning a loved one.

When we moved into our current home, Lydia helped trace icon outlines and make paper cutouts to plan the wall arrangement. Today, she helps take care of the space by adjusting arrangements, changing candles, and placing seasonal touches—like green garlands during the Nativity Fast, colorful flowers in spring. For Nina, Lydia helped set up icons on the floor along with church-themed toys and electric candles—

things she can hold during prayer time.

While our main corner anchors our daily prayer routine, we've learned that smaller, secondary prayer spots are wonderfully helpful too. For instance, we hung an icon on the wall next to the front door so we can pause with Lydia



Pictured: The Tingstrom Family prayer corner!

and say "Glory to You, O God" before heading out to catch the school bus.

Our hope is that our prayer corner continues to be a space that our children use, make their own, and God willing, develop their personal rhythms of prayer. ✕

Closer to Home: Neighborhood Small Groups at St. Mary

LACIE F. | COMMS MANAGER

As St. Mary grows, we want to make it easier for parishioners to build meaningful Christian friendships beyond Sunday morning and feel more deeply connected to the life of the Church.

Our parish already has many strong small-group opportunities centered on shared interests, stages of life, and fellowship. The next step is to pilot neighborhood-based groups so parishioners can gather closer to where they live and work—especially important in the DMV, where a short distance can mean a long drive.

We hope to identify a few host homes in areas such as Falls Church,

Alexandria, Burke/Springfield, and Reston/Western Fairfax. These are not rigid geographic assignments; parishioners can join whichever group best fits their schedule, commute, or family.

Hosting is intentionally simple. You do not need to be a teacher, theologian, or formal group leader. Hosts simply open their home on a realistic schedule—perhaps monthly—for prayer, conversation, coffee, dinner, a potluck, or fellowship. Fr. David can provide occasional discussion prompts or themes when helpful.

The goal is not to create more formal programs, but more places where parishioners can know one another,

support one another, grow in faith, and share ordinary Christian life during the week.

Our homes can become places of hospitality, friendship, and prayer—small extensions of parish life throughout the region.

Could your home be one of them?

If you would consider hosting a Neighborhood Small Group, please contact Fr. David. Once hosts are in place, we can begin connecting parishioners and bringing a little more of St. Mary closer to home. ✕

Reading the Psalms Together: A St. Mary Nativity Fast Tradition

LACIE F. | COMMS MANAGER

One of St. Mary's quieter traditions has been helping parishioners build something that can be surprisingly difficult in our busy lives: a consistent rhythm of daily prayer.

As the Nativity Fast approaches, the Psalter Prayer Group will once again come together to pray through the Psalms—not gathered in one room, but united in prayer from our homes, workplaces, and wherever daily life happens.

The group is active during the Nativity Fast and Great Lent and offers a wonderfully simple way to make prayer a more intentional part of these seasons. Each participant is assigned one of the Psalter's 20 kathismas, or sections, to pray on the first day. From there, you move to the next kathisma each day. Because everyone begins in a different place, our parish group collectively prays through the entire Psalter every single day. By the end of the 40-day Fast, each participant will have personally prayed through the entire Psalter twice.

And you don't need to be an expert—or even own a special Psalter—to partic-

ipate. Your Bible is enough. Assignments include which individual Psalms make up each kathisma. Prayer can happen first thing in the morning, before bed, during a quiet lunch break, or even while waiting in the car for a child's activity. As the group has emphasized in years past, the goal is not simply to complete an assignment, but to begin weaving prayer more naturally into everyday life.

This year's Nativity Fast begins November 15, and sign-ups for the Psalter Prayer Group will open November 1 and close November 11. Participants should join the Psalter Prayer Group on Realm and then respond to the Nativity Fast sign-up. Joining the Realm group alone does not commit you to participating in every fasting season.

A Ministry Ready for Its Next Steward

This Nativity Fast will also mark a special transition for this longstanding St. Mary ministry.

Libby H., who has faithfully coordinated the Psalter Prayer Group for many years, will be looking for someone to step into the coordinator role following

this Fast. We are deeply grateful to Libby for the many seasons she has spent organizing assignments and quietly encouraging our parish to remain rooted in prayer.

The coordinator's work helps make possible something much larger: dozens of individual prayers becoming one shared offering of the parish. If you have participated in the group before—or if this ministry simply speaks to you—please prayerfully consider whether you might be willing to help carry it forward.

And if you've never joined us before, perhaps this Nativity Fast is the perfect time to begin.

Sign-ups: November 1–11

Join: Psalter Prayer Group on Realm

You may pray at different times and in different places, but throughout the Fast, you'll know that fellow parishioners are opening the Psalms and praying alongside you each day. ✕

Another Successful School Supply Drive

ELLEN R. | PARISHIONER

On August 13, Alexis, Libby, Warren and Ellen delivered the school supplies we had gotten for Mason Crest Elementary School. Principal Shin and Assistant Principal Aiello greeted us and were thrilled to see what we brought for the students. This included 120 cans of Clorox Wipes, 183 boxes of tissues, 768 glue sticks, 331 boxes of crayons, 333 boxes of colored pencils, 472 dry erase markers, 216 Ticonderoga pencils, and 250 pencil toppers. Their PTO has been organizing the distribution of supplies to the students when they return this month and the teachers are very happy they will have all the supplies they need for the students.

Thanks to everyone who donated to this important cause.

We are looking for someone to take over this ministry for next year. Please let Ellen R. know if you are interested. It is a job that takes about 2 weeks in the summer. ✕



(...Cont'd from front) I don't know if you understand that ... be yourself, be an American Orthodox Church, not a Syrian Orthodox Church. It is natural that Orthodoxy in America will become an American Orthodox Church through you, not through me. We are born in our own countries, we have our own background, our own identity, but you have to come with your own identity, and with the destiny of this country, because there is a goal which this country has to reach. If you read in Prophet Daniel, chapter 10, every nation has an angel; the angel of the Egyptian people, it says there, the angel of the Hebrew people is Michael, the archangel, and so on. Who is the angel of the American people? Well, we have to think about that.

This nation is not just at random; it has a history. And never, never hate the religion that you came from; always to thank God for my Baptist Church, my Evangelical Church that made me understand Orthodoxy and to come back to church. Thank God, because the basics were there, and the fact that you were sincere in that denomination in which you were before, that is important because the Holy Spirit brought you home. Thank God for my Presbyterian Church that made me understand Orthodoxy, and pray for them, and wish for them to find the Church, no matter how many you are. You never are in a minority if you are with the

Truth. If you are with the Truth, even if you are one, you are a majority.

So come with the whole American history and the perspective of the salvation of the American people here. And pray for the salvation of the American people of which you are included. So we don't want you now to borrow things from Russia, or from Romania, or from Syria, or from Greece. No! Be yourself. God wants you to be yourself.

When God said if you save your soul, you will lose it—there are two kinds of personalities here: one is authentic and one is a false personality. Our false identity, or false personality, is that we don't want to be ourselves; we are something according to TV, or imitating other things here. This world is a huge stage in which we perform, we don't live, we perform because we want to have a tie like that guy, to have that haircut, and so on ... No! If you want to save this false personality, you will lose the other one, you will lose the true personality, you lose your soul.

But if you sacrifice this, to lose what is false in you for the Gospel and Christ, you will save the true personality. So we have to be true, to be ourselves, to have our identity, to come to God following that structure: person, family, ethnic group, Church, God—these concentric spheres or circles. If we don't develop in this structure, we are not ourselves, we are not Beeven Orthodox. ✕

Help Direct St. Mary's Charitable Giving

ELLEN R. | PARISHIONER

Have you ever wondered how St. Mary decides which organizations receive parish donations each year?

Each year, our parish budget includes funds specifically set aside for charitable giving. Some of these gifts are designated by Parish Council for seminaries, monasteries, and organizations St. Mary has chosen to support on an ongoing basis. Others are directed to local, national, and international groups doing meaningful work in their communities and around the world; and this is where parishioners can help.

Some of the organizations we support are identified because members of our own parish know their work firsthand, are involved with them personally, or have seen the impact they are making. Those recommendations help us discover worthy ministries and

charities that may otherwise be easy to miss.

In November, Parish Council will review charitable organizations and determine where St. Mary's giving funds will be directed for 2026.

If you would like to help research, discuss, and recommend organizations for consideration, please contact Ellen R. to join the committee. The commitment is expected to involve approximately two meetings, after which recommendations will be submitted to Parish Council for final approval.

This is a wonderful opportunity to help St. Mary extend its ministry beyond our own walls and support organizations doing good work locally, nationally, and internationally. ✕



Pictured: The fruit of our giant pumpkin vine in the children's area.



September 2026 Parish Council Meeting Summary

DAVID D. | PARISH COUNCIL PRESIDENT

The St. Mary Parish Council met in person and online on September 21, 2026. In this meeting we covered a wide range of topics, though our planned focus topic of security and safety was moved to October. We were pleased to welcome 15 non-PC members of the parish, who gave feedback and asked questions as the meeting progressed.

Annandale Road Property Update

Unfortunately, we have had to step away from negotiations with the sellers of the Korean Evangelical Church. While we had reached an agreement on most of the sales contract terms, a pre-contract inspection remains a point of contention. We had planned to purchase the property "as-is" (if approved by the parish and bishop) but feel it would be irresponsible to sign a contract prior to a professional assessment of the property. If negotiations resume, or if we find another promising location, we will keep the parish apprised of any developments.

Ministry/Aid Donations

Our parish treasurer, Chris G, walked us through the ministry, seminary, and humanitarian aid budgets for 2026. Each year, we budget a top-line amount for giving but must then allocate that budget to

deserving organizations and activities. This year, the Parish Council decided to invite a group of parishioners to research charities and ministries, then return to the council with a proposal for the remaining 2026 funds. More information will be sent to the parish soon.

St. Nina/St. Olga Home Repairs

Both the St. Nina house (which Katherine M. lives in) and the St. Olga house (occupied by the Nick and Emilia J. family) require significant repairs. A leak developed in the St. Nina house, leading to water damage over two floors. Much of the cost will be covered by insurance, but the PC approved funding for the deductible as well as other non-covered expenses.

While we attempted to very quickly renovate the St. Olga house to accommodate our beloved choir director, Subdeacon Nick, and his family, there are several lingering issues we must address. The most serious is a systemic electrical fault. We must wait for Dominion Power to repair the external hook-up before we can complete internal repairs, but Ellen R has been working diligently to bring together the needed resources and organizations.

Financial Peace University (FPU) Parish Membership

The PC discussed a proposal from

Doug M. to register the parish for an FPU membership, which saves on the individual costs learners have paid in the past. The full cost of the parish membership has been covered by a generous donation from a parishioner. The PC discussed a critique of the organization from interested parishioners as well as whether we should continue supporting this specific curriculum vs. alternatives. After hearing all opinions, the PC voted to use the donated funds in 2026, though we recognize the discussion will need to continue as part of the 2027 budget build.

Fellowship Hour Organization

Renee L. expressed her interest in finding ways to speed up the lines for food during fellowship hour. She will coordinate with the ministry leads, Dsa. Irene L. and Alyssa M., to continue improving our already wonderful fellowship hour.

Ministry Descriptions

Ileana C. reminded the PC and ministry leads that we need to thoroughly update our ministry descriptions as the Stewardship Committee continues to progress plans for a more thorough inventory of parish skills and interests.

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 or would like to volunteer your time and skills to our community. ✕

***Update: As of 10/1, the sellers of the Annandale Rd. property reinitiated communications and we will keep parishioners updated with any additional information.*

OCL 39th Annual Conference: Toward a More Perfect Orthodox Union

LACIE F. | COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Orthodox Christian Laity (OCL) will hold its 39th Annual Conference, "Toward a More Perfect Orthodox Union," bringing together Orthodox laity, clergy, and hierarchs to explore greater Orthodox Christian unity, cooperation, and witness in America.

Among the distinguished speakers is Dr. Bill Marianes, whose work through Orthodox Ministry Services helped support the Effective Parish Assessment (EPA) and SWOT process recently undertaken here at

St. Mary. Other participants include His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon, His Eminence Archbishop Nathaniel, Serge Schmemann, and leading Orthodox scholars and thinkers.

The conference is open for both in-person and virtual participation. Consider joining this important conversation about the present and future of Orthodox Christianity in America! ✕

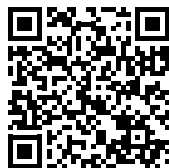




**GIVE
TODAY:**



**FUTURE
PLEDGE:**



From the Pastor's Desk

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

Scan, visit <https://calendly.com/frdavid-p308/> or email frdavid@stmaryorthodox.org to get on Fr. David's calendar!



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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