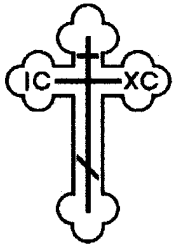


# St. Mark Evangelizer

Newsletter for Saint Mark Orthodox Church - 7124 River Road, Bethesda, MD 20817

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January - March 2016 Issue



Saint Mark Church is a parish of the Orthodox Church in America, Archdiocese of Washington DC, under the omaphor of His Beatitude, Metropolitan, Tikhon.

**Divine Liturgy:** Sunday 9:30AM

Weekday Feasts 10:00AM

**Confession:** Saturday 5:00PM

Vespers: Saturday 5:30PM

**Church School:** Following Sunday

Divine Liturgy (September - May)

**Rector:** Archpriest, Gregory Safchuk

**Telephone:** (301) 229-6300

[www.saintmarkoca.org](http://www.saintmarkoca.org)

## On accepting God's will

I offer the following words of encouragement from a well known, wise and seasoned bishop within our Holy Orthodox spiritual tradition.

"It is an act of humility towards the mystery of the presence of the Lord in our lives to accept trials and difficulties, even upsetting ones, even ones which come from other people. It is letting the Lord follow His plan for us and respecting the mystery of His presence. We must let the Lord be quite free to follow His plan for us. We must accept everything and everybody He uses to fulfill this plan. When it is impossible for us not to be sad, our sadness should be gentle and serene. We must accept suffering and not become bitter." (From *"Courage to Pray"*, by Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) of Sourozh)

## High Anxiety

Those of sufficient age might realize I borrowed the title above from a Mel Brooks 1977 film of the same name. Although his movie was a comedy, I've come to realize that anxiety is anything but funny. It's also all too common among people - many people; even believing and faithful Christian people. Like Martha, the sister of Lazarus, we are often anxious and troubled about many things. Indeed, there are many things in life that are troubling and worrisome. Through the years all of us must learn to face them. I can remember pressures beginning in grade school. Not knowing "the answer", perhaps the social awkwardness of being all alone at recess or lunch or incurring the intimidation

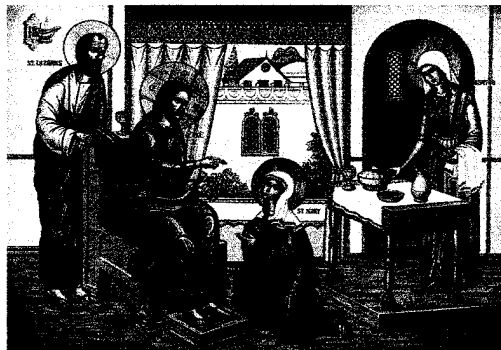
of a bully. As we age, the sources of anxiety may seem to multiply and become more serious and all consuming. Romance (or lack of it), family strife, economic, career or health issues, deadlines, or maybe just the sheer volume

of things to do at times may threaten to overwhelm us. I hear about this a lot during the Christmas and New Year period. It's a serious confession topic and a challenge to our faith.

At the heart of the matter is the realization that things happen that are beyond our control, that are "bigger" than us, and that can greatly impact our lives - sometimes in very negative ways. As a result, we feel helpless and vulnerable. In response, we sometimes turn our attention to them completely and obsess over them in futility, trying to get them to go "our way". Another path sometimes chosen can be to try to "escape" or seek comfort by relying on some crutch. Denial, abuse of food,

alcohol or drugs - all ironically self-destructive behavior that ultimately does not help, and in fact makes things even worse.

What does help, we might ask? To turn to the Lord in faith, and like Martha's sister, Mary, choose the one thing needful - listen to His teachings. Great comfort can be found in Jesus' words from Matthew chapter 6, which include the following: "Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek all these things; and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."



This of course does not mean that we should be irresponsible. We must try to provide for ourselves and our families and influence things to go in a positive direction, but we should continually submit our plans and efforts to God for

His blessings; re-ordering our priorities, and patiently seeking to accept and accomplish His will, not our own. We should live in the "present", with an eye toward the future, but not dwell on the past. "Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day's own trouble be sufficient for the day." (Mt. 6:34) We are assured in scripture that God is mighty. He loves and cares greatly for us. We in turn must live in faith, give thanks and trust in Him. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on Him, for He cares about you." (1 Pet. 5:6-7)

- Fr. Gregory

## OFFERING PRAYER

Although this issue of the Evangelizer will take us into Great Lent, I am looking at my ornament-less but lit Christmas tree as I write. The scaffolding is coming down in our church, revealing the work of God's grace through the hands of our iconographers and the prayers of our community. We expect a warm December 25th, and in fact today it is raining. I have made only a paltry selection of cookies and am thinking that burgers on Christmas sounds like a good plan, particularly if someone else cooks them.

Meanwhile, in our nation, acts of mass violence have destroyed the lives of many and scarred countless others physically and emotionally. Is there anyone who visits a mall, attends an athletic competition, pumps their own gas or enjoys a holiday party who does not occasionally wonder, "what next?" Even for those who thought, "it could never happen here" the idea that our border patrol and military strength can protect us from the evil that exists is no longer credible. Truly, it was only an illusion.

In the midst of this, "prayer shaming" has become a trending topic. The first time that I heard the term the thought flitted through my mind that perhaps it was meant as a reprimand for those who may off-handedly say to others, "I'll pray for you" in a pithy and solicitous way, without the intention of praying at all. But it seems that prayer shaming is more about casting aspersions on those who might offer up prayers, suggesting that they do not intend any other action, and supposing that prayer is some sort of static, futile exercise. I cannot speak for other faiths, but for Christians there is a clear relationship between what we pray and what we do. The scripture teaches us that, "faith without works is dead" (James 2:17).



There has even been the implication that those who would offer prayers are of a particular political stance, as if those of another party have never taken a final exam for which they have not adequately prepared, or stood over the bed of a sick child, or lost control of their car on an icy road and not, almost instinctively, asked God for intervention. There have been those who have written that we ought to ditch the prayers and solely rely on political action, to which I can only reply, incredulously, "REALLY?"

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## OFFERING PRAYER

*(Continued from Previous)*

Prayer is a serious business and even if we forget to pray as promised we ought to offer up those prayers as soon as we remember, no matter how the circumstances may have changed. God exists outside of time, and yes, it is a mystery. He hears our prayers, always. We know that Christ Himself was prayer shamed (Matthew 27:42) and whatever our political leanings, the offering up of prayer is the responsibility of all Christians. We are in good company, for generations of martyrs, confessors and ascetics, mothers and mine-workers, the sinners and the righteous have dared to approach God in repentance and love, in thanksgiving and fear, in sorrow and in joy. Prayer is at the nerve center of our relationship with God.



The Church takes us through it, helping to reveal in matter that which we grasp for in prayer. In feasts and fasts, with candles and incense, prayer, both corporate and private, gently, slowly, peels away the temptations and passions that plague us. As the scaffolding in our hearts is broken down by the regular leaning toward God in prayer, we see unfolding His work within us, directing our actions, guiding our thoughts. On our walls the feast days of the Lord have been revealed, taking us visually through the account of Christ's saving work. In our hearts the Lord reveals Himself to us, offering us salvation. Prayer gets us to the place where we can accept it.

With Love in Christ,

Matushka Alexandra Safchuk

## A LAYMAN'S TEN COMMANDMENTS

*Submitted by: Marge German*

Someone has written these beautiful words. Must read and try to understand the deep meaning of it. They are like the ten commandments to follow in life all the time.

- 1.) Prayer is not a "spare wheel" that you pull out when in trouble, but it is a "steering wheel" that directs the right path throughout.
- 2.) A Car's WINDSHIELD is so large & the Rear view Mirror is so small? Because our PAST is not as important as our FUTURE. So, Look Ahead and Move on.
- 3.) Friendship is like a BOOK. It takes few seconds to burn, but it takes years to write.
- 4.) All things in life are temporary. If going well, enjoy it, they will not last forever. If going wrong, don't worry, they can't last long either.
- 5.) Old Friends are Gold! New Friends are Diamond! If you get a Diamond, don't forget the Gold! Because to hold a Diamond, you always need a Base of Gold!
- 6.) Often when we lose hope and think this is the end, GOD smiles from above and says, "Relax, it's just a bend, not the end!"
- 7.) When GOD solves your problems, you have faith in HIS abilities; when GOD doesn't solve your problems HE has faith in your abilities.
- 8.) A blind person asked St. Anthony: "Can there be anything worse than losing eye sight?" He replied: "Yes, losing your vision!"
- 9.) When you pray for others, God listens to you and blesses them, and sometimes, when you are safe and happy, remember that someone has prayed for you.
- 10.) WORRYING does not take away tomorrow's TROUBLES, it takes away today's PEACE.

## A VISIT FROM DR. MARIA KHOURY

On Saturday, November 14th, a lovely fall evening, a storyteller came to St. Mark. The children gathered expectantly in the teen room and Dr. Maria Khoury, an Orthodox Christian living in the Holy Land, came and read from her book, *Christina Visits the Holy Land*.

Dr. Khoury's vivid descriptions of places that we so often hear about but few able to visit were greeted with rapt attention from both the children and the adults present. She also showed a selection of other children's books that she has written.

Following Vespers, speaking with the adults, Dr. Khoury provided a glimpse into her own life in the Holy Land and the struggles faced by Christians there. She answered questions about her books, her family's involvement in a local winery, and the work that she has undertaken to provide information about the life of Christians in the Holy Land.

We are very grateful to Dr. Khoury for visiting, to Rachael Datch for organizing and to Marilyn Rouvelas and others for bringing delicious snacks.

Dr. Khoury has left some of the Christina series books to be offered for sale. If anyone is interested please see Matushka Sasha.



Photo by Dan Golembiewski

# ICONOGRAPHY UPDATE

## THE COMPLETION OF PHASE TWO OF OUR ICONOGRAPHY PROJECT

*Written and Submitted by: Karen Phinney, Chairperson*

Visiting often, sitting, watching and talking to the iconographers during these last 3 weeks, has been a journey not only for me, but for many others.

The scaffolding is down, the iconographers have gone home, the church is filled with Christmas flowers and garland and I am in awe of the complexity that my eyes and heart behold.

The eyes are bombarded with various ancient iconography dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century, while the ornamentations (borders) were inspired from cathedrals in Ravenna from the 700's. How many centuries have passed and we still marvel and are inspired by ancient works? What stories are spoken to our hearts when we sit quietly and see them perhaps as individual icons or as a pictorial his-



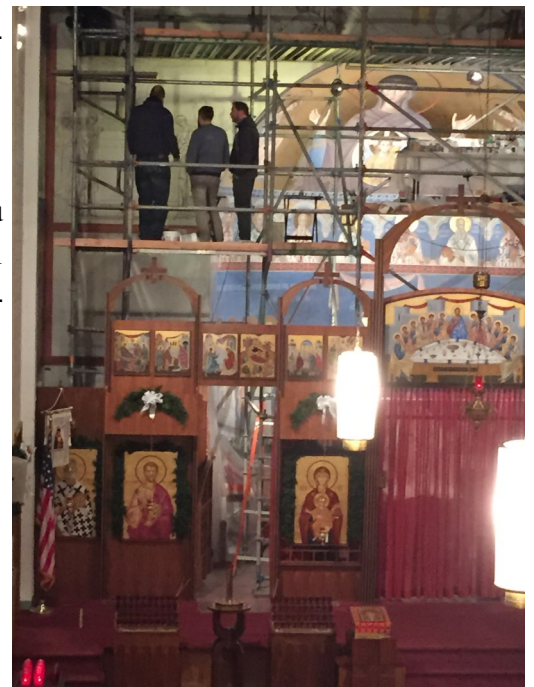
tory of our faith?

Somehow they have been combined and interwoven into our present. That was the purpose of our Icon Committee, when we started on this journey over two and a half years ago and now it has come to its hopefully, successful end.

I would like to thank and am grateful to all the committee members that have worked on this project and to you, the parishioners who have supported our efforts. I give thanks to all known and anonymous donors that have given their time, expertise, financial backing, food and lodging to our iconographers. Without you, this would not have been possible. I hope and pray that you all will feel that you have been a part of this venture, beautifying our Holy Temple.



Our Icon Committee members are: Fr. Gregory and Matushka Safchuk, George and Barbara Freimann, Wayne and Cathy Tatusko, Martha Baxtresser, Paulina Masick, Theresa and Steven Sekellick, Gale Rutan, Skip Mersereau, and Karen Phinney, Chairperson.



# THE CHRISTMAS FAIRY

*Submitted by: Lori Landsburg*

I like to collect old children's books. I have one called The Elson Readers, Book One, authors, William Elson and Lura Runkel, published in 1927 by Scott, Foresman and Company in the Phillipine Islands.

The book contains many wonderful stories, but the one I love best is the Christmas story called The Christmas Fairy. This particular story was written by Edna Riddleberger.

It was the day before Christmas. Two little children went to the woods. They wanted to find a Christmas tree. Poor little children! They had never had a Christmas tree.

"Oh, dear!" said the little girl.

"We have nothing to put on the tree."

"We must find a tree with many cones on it," said the little boy.

"Cones will make our tree beautiful."

"Yes, yes!" said the little girl.

"We must find a tree with cones on it."

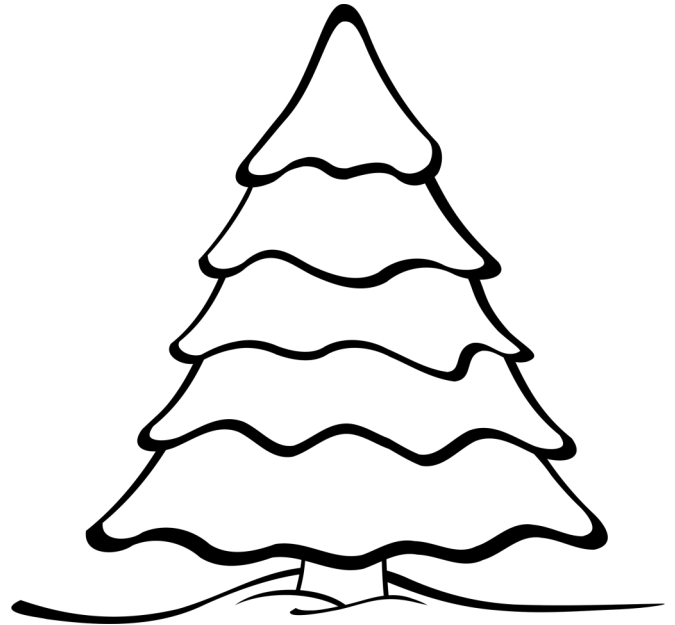
The children walked on and on but they could not find a tree with cones on it. By and by night came. The children were very, very, very, tired. They could not find their way home so they sat down to rest. Soon the little girl fell asleep. The little boy was tired, too, but he did not close his eyes.

"I must take care of my sister, " he said.

"I will put my coat around her to keep her warm."

He sat there a long time until he shook with the cold. By and by he saw a very bright light. It waked his little sister. Soon the children saw a beautiful fairy. She came right up to them.

"Who are you?" asked the little boy.



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# THE CHRISTMAS FAIRY

*(Continued from Previous)*

"I am the Christmas Fairy," said the fairy. "I am always in the woods at Christmas time. I make the woods bright at night. Then little boys and girls can find the prettiest trees. Come, children! I will take you to a beautiful tree."

The fairy took them to a beautiful tree. It had many, many cones on it. "Here is your tree," said the fairy. Then she said, "Little cones, light the tree." The little cones began to shine like gold.

"Oh, what a wonderful Christmas tree!" said the children.

"It will light you all the way home," said the fairy.

"It will shine for you on Christmas Day too."

The children took the beautiful tree. It lighted them all the way home. They were very, very, very, happy.

The pictures that go along with the story are beautiful.

Because of this story, my Christmas trees always have cones on them. Some are glass ornaments that shine at night when the tree lights are turned on. There are so many positive things to talk about with children after reading this story.





## HOLIDAY BLESSINGS

*Submitted by: Vera Bumbak*

Recently I came across a comment that said “Count your blessings and not your troubles”; after reading that, one can’t help but be thankful. So today I would like to “Count My Blessings” and give thanks for just a small part of the many blessings in my life, especially here at St. Mark, which is such an important part of my life.

Let’s just start with today (November 15), when Father Gregory served the “Liturgy of Preparation” in the center of church so we could observe part of the ritual of bread and wine becoming the “Body and Blood of Christ”. Did I come to observe? Well, I intended to, but one thing or another seemed to crop up and I finally dragged myself there about 9:35 – much too late. But! All was not lost because someone (Victor Lutes?) not only got there on time but had the foresight to bring his camera to video the entire service which I was then privileged to watch with the Sunday School class on the TV that Sasha and Victor carted in!

But, reflecting on the Liturgy of Preparation, where does the prosphora come from? As it turns out it doesn’t come from the local grocery store but is made by a group of dedicated parishioners using a special recipe and special molds. Who are these special people? I can guess, but I will simply say they are a part of my many “hidden blessings”. And of course someone has to buy the wine, make sure the utensils are prepared, covers ironed, etc.

But that’s just one part of what goes on behind the scenes at St. Mark (albeit a very important one). So starting with the altar, I’d like to mention just a few things that must happen on a continuing basis that I take for granted. Every time there is a service someone must make sure there is charcoal, incense, a lighter, candles are lit behind and in front of the altar, proper books for prayer, proper vestments, and a myriad of things I have no idea about. Also, someone cleans the altar area, and did you notice that periodically the color of curtains and covers inside and outside the altar area change, as well as votive candle holders? Ever wonder how that happens? Well, actually some very special people have taken this responsibility to make sure changes are made in accordance with the seasons of the church.

We all know and appreciate the dedicated crew who man the candle counter and those who welcome everyone especially visitors to our church, making sure they receive a bulletin which magically appears each weekend with inserts containing the proper hymns and readings for the day! And what would we do if the choir decided not to sing one Sunday!

But that just briefly covers a little of what happens before we even begin to pray to God!

It takes a lot of resources to keep a facility such as ours running – priests, deacons, altar servers, council members, choir directors and members,

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## HOLIDAY BLESSINGS

*(Continued from Previous)*

coffee hour directors and hosts, and financially, we are indebted to the bazaar committee and volunteers, rummage sale organizers and workers, FOCA, gift and book shops and many other functions and donations from each one of you.

That's a lot of stuff I'm so grateful for – but there's much more! Did you know that periodically when the AC or heat comes on it brings with it an odor that is quickly dispensed with by a secret “Odor Squad”? That is an invaluable service that only a few of us who stand in the back can really appreciate.

Recently when I was entering the church for a service I noticed someone in the middle of the parking lot with a broom and dustpan sweeping up leaves! Which brings me to another area we take for granted – housekeeping of the church inside and out, cleaning the votive candle holders, dusting and polishing everything, repair of the pews, power washing parts of the outside of the building, changing burned-out lights inside and outside, as well as focusing lights on the altar iconography 50 feet up! Who would do something like that without a crane? Some more “special people”!

Our church is a beautiful place to worship God, not only on the inside but the plantings around the outside are inviting and lovely, cared for by “someone”, and have you noticed that the unsightly bank is now beautifully landscaped so that when we process around the church it is a pleasure to behold!

Anyway, I think you get the idea – we at St. Mark are indeed blessed to have such a dedicated group of people who anonymously do so very many things to keep St. Mark the wonderful church that it is. I know there are lots of other things that are done by special people to keep St. Mark functioning that I have not mentioned, but have you noticed that when we have a real need of some sort, magically the members ban together and take care of it whether it be a need for money, food, help with Outreach, etc. But, I could not end this without mentioning Matushka Sasha who seems to silently bustle around doing things like organizing groups who pray, discuss books, decorate the church, as well as train the handmaidens who help with communion. I'm not sure but I would bet she attends every bazaar workshop and when the bakery runs out of some baked goods or bread, she magically produces more. And what would Lenten lectures be like if she didn't organize the meal and make her soup and bread! She silently worries and prays about every one of us and does so many other things she'll never admit to taking responsibility for – another one of our “special people.” And of course, what really makes St. Mark so special are the members who sometimes come and go but all bring your own talents and interests which makes us a real family. Thank you all so very much for being a part of my life – I really depend on you and need you and cherish all of you. May God bless you all and Grant You Many, Many Years and Wonderful Health! With much love in Christ – Vera Bumbak

# FRUITION

by Fr. Jonathan Tobias



Reprinted from Fr. Jonathan's *Second Terrace* blog. The original article, posted September 20th, 2014, can be found here: <http://janotec.typepad.com/terrace/2014/09/fruition.html>. Submitted to the *Evangelizer* by Skip Mersereau

Joachim and Anna were faithful, pious, cheerful, peaceful, dedicated, welcoming, pleasant, personable, generous, kind, openhearted, friendly...just plain nice.

They were "good people." They were the kind of couple that you were always glad to have over for dinner. They remembered all the birthdays, they sent nice notes to cheer you up, they showed up at all the viewings at the funeral homes.

They were happy together, as all married couples should be.

But there was an aching heart at the center of their home.

There was no child, no baby, no slamming of the screen doors and the peals of delight at the first day of summer, no crayon masterpieces on the fridge door.

This ache, thus, is easy to understand. A child -- or children -- is an expected fulfillment of marriage. What is begun in the nuptial, joyful embrace of husband and wife is perfected by the bringing forth and raising up of a daughter or son.

For Joachim and Anna -- this wonderful, nice couple -- the ache of childlessness was even harder than it is now. Society can be cruel and judgmental. As Joachim and Anna grew older, the nasty gossip in the neighborhood started to turn against them. Anna was called "barren," and people made up theories about just why they didn't have a child. Perhaps God was judging them, the gossipers said, because of some past sin. Perhaps something was wrong with Joachim.

When people don't love *who* they're talking about, and when they don't actually know *what* they're talking about, the guesswork of gossip is always wrong, and always destructive. Thank heaven, at least, there were no phones back then: the situation would have been even worse.

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## FRUITION

*(Continued from Previous)*

And so, the loneliness that was at the aching heart of this nice couple spread outside the home and into the entire neighborhood.

It is obvious that Joachim and Anna did not give up. They persisted. They kept their faith. They believed, without missing a beat, that God is infinite, and that God is good. They kept in their heart the shining hope that God is the “Keeper of Promises” and the “Giver of Second Chances.”

He is the Redeemer and Rescuer: it is the main job of humans to believe this no matter what.

They kept on fasting. They kept attending the prayers, the chanting of Psalms at the Temple. They kept giving charity to the needy around them. They kept to their humble lifestyles, working with their hands. They kept to being meek, poor in spirit, hungry and thirsty for righteousness.

When their neighborhood got cruel, and society turned its back on them, Joachim and Anna simply turned more to the Lord.

That is what God’s people do, even when the people of the world do not.

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It is obvious that this story has a happy ending, because today is, after all, [sic] the Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos: Anna gave birth to Mary, the Ever-Virgin and Mother of the Church, the Body of Christ.

The neighborhood and the world had already written off Anna because she was “too old.” It was now long past the age of childbearing for her. She was called “barren” behind her back and probably to her face.

But they still prayed. One day, Joachim, who was a shepherd, went into the desert to pray. While he was away, Anna prayed. As she did, she looked at a nest in the garden, and she saw hatchlings being fed by their mother.

“Why was I born?” Anna said out loud in her sadness. An angel of the Lord appeared, and told her that she would soon bear a little baby girl, and that she should call her Mary.

At the same time, Joachim was also greeted by an angel, who had announced to him the same glad tidings. He hurried back to Jerusalem, and amazingly, Anna hurried to the entrance gate of the city.

In the greatest love story of all time, this wonderful, nice couple -- who never fell out of love, who remained faithful to God and each other, even in desperate sadness, even in the face of loneliness, contempt and neighborhood gossip -- reached each other at the same place and at the same time ...

... at Jerusalem’s Golden Gate, where in joy and love, they embraced ...

... in a scene that has become the greatest Christian symbol for nuptial happiness, peace, and fruition.

Joachim and Anna, in this embrace at the Golden Gate, is what every Christian marriage should grow up to be.

Nine months later, a little girl was born ... a little girl that would change the world

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It was happiness enough for that little house in Jerusalem to be filled with the sounds of a little girl.

But it was joy of the soul and overflowing to know that this little girl would become the Ever-Virgin Mother of God, who would lead the Church in the millennial Kingdom of Prayer, all throughout the spiritual and symbolic thousand years of the reign of the saints.

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# FRUITION

*(Continued from Previous)*

How could Joachim and Anna have ever known, in their struggle, that their Grandson would one day tell the chief Jewish Elder, in a secret meeting on a Jerusalem night (some fifty years into the future), these words -- the most Important Words Ever Spoken For All Time (and Eternity): *(Continued on Next Page)*

*For God so loved the world,  
that He gave His Only-Begotten Son,  
that whosoever should believe in Him  
should not perish,  
but have everlasting life.*

Joachim and Anna's long disappointment and struggle, the long heartache and loneliness -- all this that they experienced was actually part of the Greatest Plan of All Time, the deepest mystery that kings and prophets and even angels longed to understand, because they could sense it in God's nature of love, but they couldn't ever quite grasp.

And all along, God was working this out, and bringing His "For God so loved the world" idea to fruition ... to this nice couple, who were happy together ...

... who were happy in God.

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Think about it: the great Cosmic Plan, the most secret and powerful mystery ever known -- far more powerful than anything dreamt up by conspiracy theorists ... a Cosmic Plan so large that it extends beyond this planet and out into the galaxy and beyond the boundaries of the universe ...

... this Cosmic Plan came down to a single Love Story, so romantic and humble, between a man and a woman who stayed faithful *through disappointment*.

They prayed. They stayed. They waited on God to fill their emptiness, to encourage their discouragement.

And so should you.



# BAZAAR COMMITTEE THANK YOU

*Submitted by: Tina Burpee*

THANK YOU to everyone who helped with this year's bazaar. It is so encouraging to see everyone pitch-in and help with the workshops and all three days of the bazaar. Thank you to those who came to the food workshops; to those who made food at home, to the potato makers;



ryone who prepared borscht and baked from scratch; to the chicken pounders, rollers & dippers; to those who braved the elements and worked outdoors; to those who procured gifts, to those who sold raf-



fle tickets, to those who acted as chairpersons and those who acted as helpers; to those who took off from work on Friday; to those who gave tours and explained our faith; to those who prayed for the strength to keep going; to those who stood on their feet for three days of fellowship and fun and gave unselfishly of their time and money to make our bazaar, once again, a wonderful success. Our bazaar has become a beautiful way to give of ourselves for the Love of our Church; but ultimately it is for the Love of God. May God grant you many years!



# PARISH HAPPENINGS

## GOOD DEEDS

In October, there had been a request in our Sunday bulletin, by FOCUS, for helpers to give out coats and shoes to children in Alexandria. I called and talked to someone in Pennsylvania who told me this was going to be at a fire station off Route 1 in Fairfax County. So two days later, on a rainy morning, I volunteered. This was a combined effort from several groups. An organization from PA, near Philadelphia, seemed to be in charge along with the fire department. One of the firemen explained that they had been getting the coats manufactured in China to distribute; now they had someone in the U.S. also making them. This spokesman recognized all the groups that had come to help, including the fire department auxiliary, the police department, FOCUS, the sheriff's office, and neighborhood groups. We would first unpack the coats and arrange them on tables by size, separating girls and boys. We did the same with the shoes.

At about 10:00, school buses started arriving with Headstart children. Each child was greeted by a volunteer who took them to choose a coat and then to be fitted for shoes. People were there with service dogs that the children could pet. Then they were taken back to the bus. Most of these children were from Gum Springs, a low income area near Mt. Vernon; one bus came from Prince George's county, as well. Besides getting new coats, the children met police officers in a positive situation.

There were about 10 people from FOCUS helping: two were from Pittsburgh, a couple were members of St. Nicholas, a couple from All Saints Mission in Alexandria and me. It is good for the community to see the Orthodox Church at work.

- Submitted by Joan Mitchum

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## MONASTERY VISIT

On Sunday, December 6, parishioners from St. Mark attended Liturgy at the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration for the feast day of Saint Nicholas. Debbie Sieff spent the whole weekend at the monastery with Linda Pierce and Cindy Jefferson while Marsha and sons were only there for Liturgy on Sunday. It was a extra special day for Victor Lutes as it was his Birthday.

A special thank you to Mother Paula for taking the photo.

Back Row (Left to Right): Sasha Lutes; Victor Lutes. Front Row (Left to Right): Laura Pierce, Cindy Jefferson, Marsha Zellem, Debbie Sieff.



# REQUIREMENTS AND PRACTICE OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

*Submitted by: Skip Mersereau*

“As there weren’t many of us, and we weren’t strong, the Elder simplified our life somewhat and placed more emphasis on two central points. In other words it should be organized around the Jesus Prayer, the invocation of the name of Jesus, and the Liturgy.

He always reminded us he had experienced all the stages of the spiritual life, the monastic life. He lived under obedience in a coenobium for 14 years; then for 8 years in caves; then he became the abbot and founder of a monastery; then he lived the enclosed life. So he’d experienced all the stages of the monastic life. And he’d say that nowadays there aren’t any deserts anymore; the way things are in the world, there isn’t any wilderness; people everywhere are under control of modern media and of technology.

Now that there’s no wilderness and perfect quietude in the desert, it’s even more important that we should learn how to experience the Liturgy properly. If we celebrate the Liturgy and experience the Liturgy in the right way, we’ll find the same Grace that the ascetics did in the desert, and even more, the Elder said. And this was from someone who knew all the stages.

He said, the whole of Grace is in the Liturgy. What’s needed from us is to learn how to prepare for the Liturgy, and how to celebrate the Liturgy, with attention and fear, so that we can actually enter into the communion of the gifts of the Saints, into the communion of the body and blood of our Lord, into the communion of the Grace of the Lord Himself.

So I might say that the Elder had a passion for the Liturgy. Even from the day before, if he was going to celebrate, he was overcome by this passion. That’s to say he couldn’t wait to stand before the altar of the Lord, before Grace, before the throne of the Grace of the Lord. (Because) The Liturgy’s really been given to us, it’s a great gift from God. There may be many ascetic traditions that can present truly great ascetics with whom we can’t compare, but they haven’t got the Liturgy, which is celebrated by Christ Himself and which makes us participants in His redemptive work.

There was a missionary to China who said we can’t impress people there by preaching, fasting and prayer because they fast continually and pray a great deal. But one way we can evangelize them is by introducing (them) into the worship of the Divine Liturgy. There it is Christ himself who does the work. The Liturgy is the work of God and the people, and in it is all the Grace of heaven: where Christ is, His army is also present. All the ranks of the Saints and angels are there, and when we pray in the Liturgy, we become members of the valued and powerful members of the body of Christ, of the Church. We enter into communion, the communion of the Saints.

We shouldn’t forget the words of St. Paul who said we can understand the depth, the height, the length and the breadth of the love of God only in the company with all the Saints. *(Continued on Next Page)*



# REQUIREMENTS AND PRACTICE OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

*(Continued from Previous)*

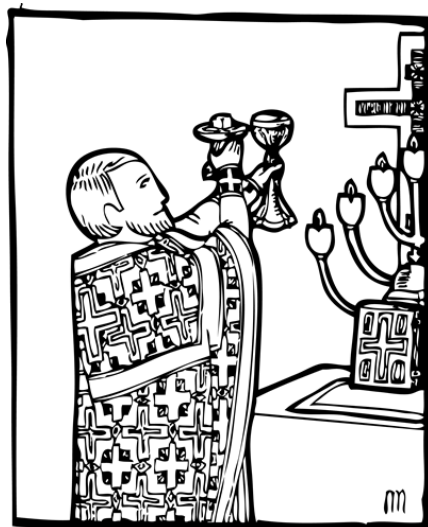
And in the Liturgy we have the chance to unite ourselves to all the Saints and to become sharers in all the wealth of the gifts of all the Saints of God throughout the ages. We can leave the Liturgy having been comforted, as the Psalm says, in other words with the indescribable and incorruptible comfort of the Holy Spirit, because of the Grace which we freely receive on our entry into this communion of Saints, with all the Saints.

This is why the Elder laid so much stress on the Liturgy: because he knew that there we are freely saved; (there) we freely receive the wealth of the gifts of God. The gift is of course free, but we must beware of preventing its reaching us. We must come to it in clear conscience and if we have some small gift, we should offer that to God, since this is our very own preparation before going to the Divine Liturgy. Just as in monasteries, for example, the monastic rule isn't a chore imposed upon us. It's an honor and a privilege which is given to us so that we can polish our small gift and then come into the assembly of our brethren and unite it with their gifts, and so become sharers in the wealth of gifts of our brethren.

This exquisite exchange of our life and the life of God can then take place. So the monastic rule and preparation for the Liturgy, all of this prepares us to share freely in the great spiritual riches which are not to be found in any other tradition in the world. Only in the Church of Christ, because in the Church of Christ, He Himself is the head, and it is He who is the priestly minister of our salvation, offering and being offered and accepted and distributed, to all unto the ages (of ages).”

— *Archimandrite Zacharias (Zacharou) of the Holy Monastery of St. John the Baptist Monastery, Essex*

To watch the video visit: <http://pemptousia.com/video/fr-zacharias-requirements-and-practice-of-the-divine-liturgy/>



# CHURCH SCHOOL HAPPENINGS

## CHILDREN'S CHOIR PRACTICE

The Children's Choir rehearses music for the 2015 Nativity Play and Christmas Concert



## NATIVITY PLAY & CHRISTMAS CONCERT

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!” - *Luke 2:14*



# OCMC NEWS

## SAVE THE DATE!

*SATURDAY, MARCH 19, 2016 - LENTEN RETREAT AND OCMC DINNER*

The first Native Kenyan has been ordained a bishop in Kenya, Bishop Neofytos of Kenya. He is coming to Houston in March for a meeting and presentation and has agreed to come to the DC area to attend a retreat and dinner at St. Katherine's Church in Annandale. As plans are finalized for his visit more information will be forthcoming, but this is just a heads-up notice for planning purposes.

## 2016 MISSIONARY TRIPS SCHEDULED

### PROJECT MEXICO - July 14-20 2016

Fifteen volunteers from the DC area are planning a trip to Mexico to help renovate a house and help at an orphanage. Six openings are still available with the group. For further information contact Eleni Porter@beporter1@verizon.net.

### ALBANIA

3/19/2016 to 3/27/2016 – Teaching. Work with Albanian youth leaders and OCMC missionaries at the Orthodox Student Center at Student City in Tirana.

5/23/2016 to 6/10/2016 - Outreach Earn credit hours and study Orthodox Christian Missiology under the supervision of Fr. Luke Veronis. The class consists of 2 parts: coursework offered through the Missions Institute of Orthodox Christianity and a mission practicum to be held in Albania.

6/7/2016 to 6/20/2016 – Youth Work. Help administer English language camp programs for the Children's Home of Hope in Shen Vlash and the Protagonist School in Tirana.

### GUATEMALA

4/8/2016 to 4/17/2016 – Healthcare. Provide healthcare as part of a long term initiative of the Orthodox Church ministering to the physical and spiritual needs of individuals in Aguacate and neighboring villages in norther Guatemala.

6/15/2016 to 6/28/2016 – Youth Work. Provide a 5-day summer church school program for two communities in south-west Guatemala near Nuevo.

8/26/2016 to 9/4/2016 – Healthcare. Provide health care by ministering to the physical and spiritual needs of individuals in Aguacate and neighboring villages in northern Guatemala.

### INDONESIA

5/9/2016 to 5/21/2016- Healthcare. Assist with health care of people in Medan, North Sumatra at an Orthodox Hospital.

6/28/2016 to 7/11/2016 – Teaching Assist the Orthodox Church in Indonesia with its ongoing mission in Medan, North Sumatra and Singaraja, Bali.

### MEXICO

3/26/2016 to 4/2/2016 – Teaching in the remote villages of Pinafore and San Esteban.

### UGANDA

5/9/2016 to 5/21/2016 – Health Care; Provide health care in Kampala.

### ALASKA

7/1/2016 to 7/11/2016 – Youth. Teaching basics of Orthodoxy at the Kuskokwim Deanery.

7/20/2016 to 7/30/2016 – Youth. Work with Orthodox clergy and leaders of the Yukon River.

7/27 2016 to 8/5/2016 – Youth. Help the three Saints Orthodox Community in Old Harbor.

For additional information on any of the above Mission Trips, go to the OCMC Website, [http:// www.ocmc.org](http://www.ocmc.org).

# FOCA NEWS

*Submitted by: Barbara Freimann, Secretary*

St. Mark FOCA meets on the third Saturday of each month after Vespers. Upcoming events for FOCA members and interested parishioners are listed below. Anyone interested in joining St. Mark FOCA, please contact FOCA president, Paul Dean.

- **SATURDAY, JANUARY 16<sup>TH</sup>** - FOCA chapter meeting after Vespers.
- **SUNDAY, JANUARY 17<sup>TH</sup>** - Novogodny Ball (Russian New Year Ball) in Philadelphia, PA.
- **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6<sup>TH</sup>** - FOCA Chili Cook-off after Vespers.
- **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 20<sup>TH</sup>** - FOCA chapter meeting after Vespers.
- **SATURDAY, MARCH 5<sup>TH</sup>** - District Bowling Tournament (Tentative)
- **SATURDAY, MARCH 19<sup>TH</sup>** - FOCA chapter meeting after Vespers.

## ST. MARK FOCA: CHAPTER 229 NEWS

At the FOCA Colonial District Convention in October held at St. Andrew Orthodox Church in Baltimore, the following members were elected to serve : Governor, Walter Alesevich; Lt. Governor, Larry Skvir; Treasurer, Nancy Stanton; Recording Secretary, Judy Clyde; Corresponding Secretary, Diana Haverlack; Two Year Nominating Committee, Jamie Magruder; One Year Nominating Committee, Paul Federonko; Spiritual Advisor, V. Rev. Theodore Boback. Congratulations!

At the Colonial District Convention it was announced that our own Hannah LeFors from St. Mark was the District Scholarship Winner of \$400. Congrats Hannah!

At the recent St. Mark Annual Parish meeting, Paul Dean, President of St. Mark FOCA, presented a \$3,000.00 check to the Iconography Committee. These monies were the proceeds from the FOCA-sponsored Chari-Tea held last August.

St. Mark's 4th Annual Oktoberfest was a wonderful success! Thanks to all who came, ate, listened to blue grass and enjoyed the evening. The proceeds were around \$800. Thanks, Nancy Stanton and the kitchen crew who made this such a fun evening!

At our meeting in November the following Officers were elected by unanimous ballot: President, Paul Dean; Vice-President, Marcella Hydock; Treasurer, Michael Thompson; Secretary, Barbara Freimann; District Representative, John Ihnat. Congratulations!

### Dates to Remember:

**Novogodny Ball in Philadelphia, Sunday, January 17, 2016.** There is a group going up to Philly. If you are interested contact Barbara Freimann.



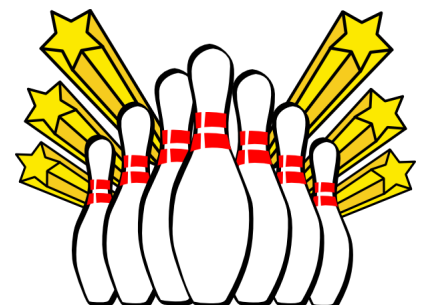
**CHILI COOK-OFF will be on Saturday, February 6th, 2016. - BINGO!**

**District Bowling Tournament is tentatively set for Saturday, March 5, 2016.** If you would like to bowl for St. Mark, contact Paul or Shirley Dean. Banquet Committee is chaired by Kim Ahmadi.

The St. Mark Fellowship of Orthodox Christians in America welcomes new members. We meet the third Saturday of each month immediately following Vespers. Meetings usually last about 30 minutes. Dues are currently being collected. \$40 per person \$10 for adult students. See George Freimann, Membership Chairman.



*Our Motto: Pray, Study, Toil, Always be Temperate.*



# UPCOMING EVENTS

## BLESSED MAT. OLGA OF ALASKA WOMEN'S PRAYER GROUP

The Blessed Matushka Olga of Alaska Prayer Group meets regularly on the 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday of the month at 10:30 AM in the church nave for intercessory prayer. In addition, the group meets regularly to pray varying Akathists on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month at 10:30 AM in the church nave.



You may give your prayer requests to Debbi Dillon, Marcella Hydock, or Matushka Alexandra. We hope you can join us on:

- **TUESDAY, JANUARY 5<sup>TH</sup> @ 10:30 AM** - Intercessory Prayer
- **TUESDAY, JANUARY 19<sup>TH</sup> @ 10:30 AM** - Akathist
- **TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 2<sup>ND</sup> @ 10:30 AM** - Intercessory Prayer
- **TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 16<sup>TH</sup> @ 10:30 AM** - Akathist
- **TUESDAY, MARCH 1<sup>ST</sup> @ 10:30 AM** - Intercessory Prayer
- **TUESDAY, MARCH 15<sup>TH</sup> @ 10:30 AM** - Akathist

## STEPPING STONES MEAL DELIVERY

Please sign up for monthly food preparation and delivery to Stepping Stones shelter in Rockville, MD. The sign-up sheets are on the Outreach bulletin board outside the fellowship hall. Delivery dates are as follows, with deliveries taking place after Liturgy:

- **SUNDAY, JANUARY 3<sup>RD</sup>** - Beef Pot Roast.
- **SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7<sup>TH</sup>** - Chicken.
- **SUNDAY, MARCH 6<sup>TH</sup>** - BBQ.
- **SUNDAY, APRIL 3<sup>RD</sup>** - Lamb.

## WOMENS BOOK GROUP

St. Mark Women's Book Group meets on the last Sunday of each month after Liturgy. Meeting dates and books to discuss are listed below:

- **SUNDAY, JANUARY 31<sup>ST</sup>** - *Ghost Boy* by Martin Pistorius.
- **SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 28<sup>TH</sup>** - To Be Determined.
- **SUNDAY, MARCH 27<sup>TH</sup>** - To Be Determined.



(Continued on Next Page)

# UPCOMING EVENTS

*(Continued from Previous)*

## **SAVE THE DATE!!!**

- **SUNDAY, JANUARY 24<sup>TH</sup>** - FATHER BASIL'S 90th BIRTHDAY! Father Basil Summer has graciously accepted an invitation to celebrate his 90th birthday with us at St. Mark on Sunday, January 24th. Everyone is invited to attend and participate in one of our famous "Enhanced Coffee Hour" celebrations following Liturgy on that day. More information will be provided in a church bulletin flyer very soon. Save the date for this special occasion!!!!
- **SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6<sup>TH</sup>** - ANNUAL FOCA CHILI COOK OFF!! Stay tuned for further details!
- **SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7<sup>TH</sup>** - SUPER BOWL LUNCHEON! What better way to prepare for the Super Bowl than an all-you-can-eat piroghi luncheon following liturgy!! Other bazaar specialties will also be available as well as salad and dessert. The free-will offering will be used for seed money for next year's bazaar and food festival. Mark your calendars. Hope to see you there!
- **SUNDAY, MARCH 20<sup>TH</sup>** - SOUPER SUNDAY!!!! Join us for the Church School Soup Fundraiser immediately following Liturgy!
- **SATURDAY, APRIL 9<sup>TH</sup>** - PARISH CLEAN UP DAY! Mark your calendars and join us for our annual, pre-Pascha, parish clean up!

## **SAVE THE DATE!!**

**SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 6TH 2016**

**for the**

**ANNUAL FOCA CHILI  
COOK-OFF!!!**

**Immediately following Vespers.**

**Stay tuned for further details!**



# UPDATER

## NEW ADDRESS – PHONE – EMAIL

Mark and Cindy Helba 533 Gentlewood Square Purcellville, VA 20132	Dr. Dan and Eleanor Carstea ccarstea123@gmail.com	Don Truitt: dht0526@verizon.net Jan Truitt: jantruitt333@verizon.net
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## 2016 PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS

**CONGRATULATIONS** to new council members voted in at our Annual Parish Meeting! New council members will be sworn-in on January 10<sup>th</sup> following Liturgy, with their terms beginning on January 1, 2015: John Bilyeu, Paulina Masick, Skip Mersereau and Debbie Sieff. Thanks to all the newcomers, those renewing their term and special thanks to all the outgoing council members for their years of dedicated service to St. Mark, namely: Konstantine Lyubimov and Chris German God Grant them MANY YEARS!

## 2016 DISTRIBUTIONS FOR THANKSGIVING AND CHRISTMAS

Thanks! to your Helping Hands: 40 Families and over 42 Children will have fuller Holidays!

Thanks to a flood of your kindness and generosity supporting our loaves and fishes program to distribute grocery gift cards, St. Mark was able to help roughly 40 families of Stepping Stones, Highland Elementary and our community through each of their Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday meals. These efforts augmented the feasting of as many as 300 people. In addition participants in our Angel Tree program helped over 42 children in Highland Elementary school's 26 needy families through the donation of toys, clothing, and gift cards to celebrate the season of Christmas gift giving. Over-all, we distributed \$ 4,150 in grocery cards and at least \$ 1,050 in Christmas gifts. What a wonderful, heartfelt out-pouring, a great and speedy effort by many hands, feet and screeching tires at an incredibly busy time. Many, many thanks for a job well done! Merry Christmas to one and all and to all a good night! Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

## SHOP AMAZON.COM AND HELP SUPPORT ST. MARK!

In 2015 to date, St. Mark has received \$65.14 from the Amazon Smile program. Thanks for supporting St. Mark through this program! Through the AmazonSmile program, Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of eligible AmazonSmile purchases to St. Mark. No extra charges are applied to your purchase. On your first visit to AmazonSmile, ( <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/23-7254573> ) select St. Mark as your charitable organization to receive donations from eligible purchases. Questions? Visit the AmazonSmile “Program Details” at: [http://smile.amazon.com/gp/charity/pd.html/ref=smi\\_ge\\_uuas\\_pd\\_pd](http://smile.amazon.com/gp/charity/pd.html/ref=smi_ge_uuas_pd_pd)

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# UPDATER

*(Continued from Previous)*

## **FYI - MONTGOMERY COUNTY BANS STYROFOAM**

Effective January 1, 2016, all styrofoam has been banned by Montgomery County. Although we believe they are primarily looking at restaurants and carry-outs, the ban affects everyone. We are in the process of looking for alternatives for our coffee hour cups and the plates and containers used for the bazaar. All of the non-styrofoam cups and containers will be double the cost of the styrofoam, so please keep this in mind when dropping a donation in the coffee hour baskets. In the meantime, we are allowed to use up any styrofoam that we still have in stock after the effective date, so it will probably be late February or March before you see new disposable coffee cups.

## **HANNAH LEFORS - REAL BREAK OCF - ALASKA**

Hannah LeFors will be going on Real Break with the OCF this March to Alaska! During the Real Break Trip to Alaska, she will be working alongside the community of St. John Orthodox Cathedral in Eagle River, Alaska with the poor and homeless, as well as projects at the Cathedral itself. She is looking forward to meeting the people in the St. John community, growing spiritually with them and the other members on the trip. The cost for the trip is \$1,300, plus travel costs. She greatly appreciates and is extremely thankful for all the support!

## **VICTOR LUTES - REAL BREAK OCF - ALASKA**

This spring break I have the opportunity to join other college students from all over the USA to serve those in need, educate myself on The Faith, and deepen my relationship with Christ. I'm excited to announce that I plan on going on another Orthodox Christian Fellowship RealBreak mission trip this upcoming March, this time to Alaska! I'll be spending the week alongside the community of St. John Orthodox Cathedral in Eagle River, AK on community service projects with the poor and homeless in the surrounding areas, as well as projects at the Cathedral itself. Please consider making a donation to help me go on this trip! The cost of the trip is \$1,300, which includes ground transportation, lodging, meals, outings, materials, and a donation to the host location. If you'd like to help, you may donate online at OCF's website [www.ocf.net/real-break/sponsor/](http://www.ocf.net/real-break/sponsor/) and click on "Donate Now", then select your amount and specify "Sponsor a Real Break Student," then enter Victor Lutes into the "Honoree's Name" section. I would also appreciate your prayers for me and the other Orthodox students embarking on this incredible journey! -In Christ, Victor Lutes



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# UPDATER

(Continued from Previous)

## MODEL OF THE HAGIA SOPHIA CATHEDRAL IN CONSTANTINOPLE

Will is in the fifth grade at Sidwell Friends School in Washington, D.C., and he chose the Hagia Sophia. The subject was the result of an assignment to create something original and not from a kit.

He used the internet to look at pictures of Ayia Sofia [sic] and also St. Sophia in Washington DC (without the minarets.)

The roof comes off so you can view the inside. The model was created with wooden paint paddles and Styrofoam. (And a chalice borrowed from his brother's Lego collection.)



*Way to Go Will!!*



## Births

Nov 17th - Nathan, son of Jennifer Marti Glazer and Scott Glazer.

Grandson of Jerry and Darlene Marti.

*May God Grant Them Many Years!*

## Deaths

Oct. 5th - Wesley Gibson; Father of Laura Pierce

Oct. 9th - Frances; Cousin of Marilyn Macht

Oct. 10th - Dr. James Halkett, PhD; Father of Jan Truitt.

Norbert Guba; Brother of Howard Guba

Oct. 31st - Carmeta; Mother of Fr. Tim Perry

Nov. 12th - John Matwey.

Dec. 5th - Constance; Mother of Kim Lungociu.

Dec. 23rd - Lynne Halkett; Mother of Jan Truitt

*May Their Memory Be Eternal!*

## A GLIMPSE INTO CHRISTMAS PAST

*Dr. Gerald Marti reads Christmas Stories at Holy Supper*

