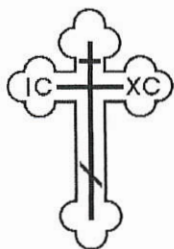


# St. Mark Evangelizer

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

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April - June 2020 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)

## A Prayer

by Grace Bishop Alexis of  
Bethesda

O God Almighty, Lord of heaven and earth, and of all creation visible and invisible, in Your ineffable goodness, look down upon Your people gathered in Your name. Be our helper and defender in this day of affliction. You know our weakness. You hear our cry in repentance and contrition of heart. O Lord who loves mankind deliver us from the impending threat of the corona virus. Send Your Angel to watch over us and protect us. Grant health and recovery to those suffering from this virus. Guide the hands of physicians, and preserve those who are healthy that we may continue to serve You in peace and glorify Your most honorable and majestic Name, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages.

## Thoughts from Exile

(Adapted from my video presentation on the St. Nicholas Forum)

We entered Lent with the theme of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise. Little did we realize how vividly that would apply to us this year. Through a seemingly random and universally rampant infestation of a primitive viral life form, we are all now "exiled"- denied the use of our churches. Making matters worse, it all pretty much coincided with the beginning of the Lenten season when we "go to church" more often than at any other time of the year. Moreover, we are deprived even of each other's company.

"Social distancing" is the order of the day. This hits Orthodox Christians squarely, since we are all about social gathering. But though the Coronavirus may be "novel", the closing of churches is not. Historically it has happened many times for various reasons - war, political strife, invasions, earthquakes, fires and yes, even plagues.

Metropolitan Tikhon was recently interviewed on Ancient Faith radio and told of what a difficult decision it was to close the churches in our Archdiocese - to tell his priests to tell their people NOT to come to church. I could relate having throughout my career done everything to encourage people to come to church. What now? What to do? Well, if during Lent, we are supposed to change our lifestyles, this one is doing it in spades. Things are no longer normal or familiar. We've been forced out of our comfort zones and separated from the

familiar routines and activities of our lives. We've been asked this time not by the church, but by civil authorities to "withdraw from the world for a while". Isn't that what Great Lent is all about? Still in the Christian spiritual context, in order for this to be beneficial, it must be coupled with a concurrent effort to draw closer to God (binge watching shows and news obsession don't count). Many good articles, quotes,

blogs and discussions appear online, all trying to encourage us to do just that under these extraordinary circumstances.

Ecclesiology is the study of the church. "Ecclesia" means gathering or assembly of the faithful - the laos tou Theou, or people of God. So in this, we see the fundamental challenge of how we can be the church when we

cannot gather or assemble.

We try to overcome this by gathering "virtually" via technology. But as many have rightly said; it's not quite the same. Christian believers in ancient times when faced with this same challenge (without the benefit of social media or technology) also strove to deal with deprivation from their churches.

In the 11th. century, the Muslim Caliph, Al-Hakim, decreed the closure of all churches in Egypt for nine years. It was a time of great distress for all Christians. One day, the Caliph was walking through the streets where Christians resided and he heard their voices praising and (cont. on page 2)

### Notice:

All services are  
canceled through  
April 1st. in  
an effort to stem  
the spread of  
Covid 19

## THOUGHTS FROM EXILE

### *Continued from Previous*

and praying in each house. Then he said, “Open their churches again and let them pray as they please. I wished to close a Church in every street. But today I discovered that when I made this decree, a church was opened in every home.” Indeed, as St. John Chrysostom said, “the house is a little Church...” There are very specific things we can do in our homes to make them “little churches.” The Sunday of the Cross was a wonderful opportunity for this. Victor Lutes started the ball rolling by suggesting that we could all decorate crosses in our own homes and share photos of them with each other via our parish email list. Our chancellor, Fr. John Vitko, encouraged us all to venerate them with the prescribed rite of prayer and bowing before them singing the hymn: “Before Thy Cross, we bow down in worship, O Master....”. Sunday of the Cross was a great success here at St. Mark! Matushka Sasha and I offered an Akathist service on our parish YouTube channel with up to 93 viewers at one point. Following this we had a virtual “coffee hour” online with the Zoom conferencing software platform which involved close to 40 participants. Dozens of emails with photos and descriptions of decorated crosses which were made and venerated in homes by families and individuals circulated on our parish list serve to the delight of all.

As wonderful as this is, I want to go a little deeper into the theological underpinnings of our understanding of Christianity as both a solitary and communal practice of faith. Ten years ago at a conference on Orthodox spirituality, Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware) said that “we are created... in the image of the Holy Trinity, according to the likeness of a God who is not only one but one-in-three, of a God who is mutual love. We are icons of a God whose being is relational being, a God who is social and communal.” We are created in other words for relationship and for mutual love and service. As Christians, we understand ourselves to be members of a single body, and this is reaffirmed in the life of the Church. St. Paul says: “For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit. For the body does not consist of one member but of many” (1 Corinthians 12: 12-27). This vision of unity in plurality is also affirmed by the Fathers. St. Basil the Great has pointed out that “nothing is so characteristic of our nature as to associate with one another, to need one another, and to love our own kind”.

Yet at the same time, the fathers also affirm that solitude and communion are not mutually exclusive. They are interdependent and complementary. A person, in other words, may be alone in the sense that they are not in the immediate company of others; and yet, if they live a genuine and creative life of the Spirit, deep down in the heart, an unbroken bond of communion with others can be discovered. Therefore as Metropolitan Kallistos points out; “seclusion does not necessarily signify isolation. Our fellow humans may be physically absent, but can be spiritually present. Communion can exist on many different levels”.

And so it was that many of the desert monastics would annually leave their monasteries at the start of Lent, to dwell alone in solitude, and return to one another for Holy Week and Pascha. I believe that this in some way speaks to our current situation. Although we did not choose to dwell apart, and we don’t know the duration of our mutual “exile”, we may expect that at the end of this trial, the joy of our return to one another in communion will be all the more intense and joyful. In anticipation, I say; “Christ is Risen!”. – Fr. Gregory



# MUSIC AGAIN, AND SOMETHING ELSE

*Submitted by Matuskha Alexandra Safchuk*

Three months ago, when I wrote a reflection on music for our newsletter, I intended to write this as a second part. I knew that we would be getting close to Pascha by the end of March and I know how central music is to our worship. During these weeks our choir practices music both familiar and new. I have tried from time to time to listen to those practices, sitting on a pew in the center of the empty church. It is often a sublime moment for me. Of course I never thought that I would be looking at those empty pews on the fourth week of the Fast and thinking it realistic that I might be chanting a little Christ is Risen into an iPhone in a few weeks instead of hearing our stellar choir sing it in so many beautiful arrangements and languages..



Everything is different now.

Over the last week I have begun to miss the Presanctified Liturgy. For some reason the echoes of those hymns are drifting through my head, gently reminding me both of where we have been all these years and where we are today. I know that I can listen to them on YouTube and that Presanctifieds are being served on-line, but there is something precious about the fragile resonance in my head.

I had wanted to write to you about the value of music, and about the healing power of sound. I thought I would incorporate how hymns that we might now think of as earworms taught doctrine and sadly, also heresy, in the early church. Now my earworms are 20-second renditions of Happy Birthday, Baby Shark and, I'm happy to report, The Lord's Prayer and The Jesus Prayer 4 times while I wash and wash and wash my hands.



Everything is different now.

For some reason I have also been thinking about the account of Pascha in Dachau, 1945. American soldiers liberated the camp just before Holy Week. But before the people were able to leave, Pascha came. I had always thought that they were able to serve the Paschal Liturgy, but when I reread the account it does not seem that they did. They sang the hymns from memory. They made vestments from towels. A

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# MUSIC AGAIN, AND SOMETHING ELSE

*Continued from Previous*

young Greek Orthodox monk recited the sermon of St. John Chrysostom by heart. It's an amazing account of a celebration amidst suffering, where existed an uncertain future. One of the participants in the Paschal celebration described the services:

In the open air, behind the shanty, the Orthodox gather together, Greeks and Serbs. In the center, both priests, the Serb and the Greek. They aren't wearing golden vestments. They don't even have cassocks. No tapers, no service books in their hands. But now they don't need external, material lights to hymn the joy. The souls of all are aflame, swimming in light.

Blessed is our God. My little paper-bound New Testament has come into its glory. We chant "Christ is Risen" many times, and its echo reverberates everywhere and sanctifies this place. (<http://orthochristian.com/61330.html>)



Everything is different now.

And yet it is the same. We are still Orthodox Christians. Whether we circle St. Mark on River Rd on Pascha morning or walk around our living rooms with lit candles. Whether we have Kulich or Hawaiian rolls. Whether our brilliant choir leads us, or a lone, off-key voice assaults our ears. Nothing is as it was, but this Lent, this Pascha something important is put in front of us. We don't know why. We can't analyze it or define it. But we must break through the ugliness, the sad reality of the separation, and find here the joy of the Resurrection. Seeing beyond ourselves, asking God to sanctify this time and this place, and to set our hearts aflame. Christ is Risen!

With love in Christ, and missing you all,

Matushka Sasha Safchuk

*Photos from Pascha 2019 by Victor Lutes*





# A RETIREMENT PROJECT

*Submitted by Michael Lungociu*

Downsizing and selling our Rockville home and moving to Annapolis made retirement possible. So last November I retired and decided to enjoy the Advent season and pray that God would show me his plans for me. We have our limited time here and I felt older and I had a deep need to do something more than work for the man.

One of the church bulletins last fall had information about the IOCC. I had been searching for something and I had tried several groups. I tried Engineers without Borders, Annapolis Green, Sierra Club, Bay Savers and I sent my resume out to a few solar energy companies as well. I was to learn the IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charity) has an amazing organizational structure. Their two headquarters are in St Paul Minnesota and a second one here in Baltimore. I'm still involved with the other groups but the IOCC seemed right for me.

I joined the IOCC home build volunteers in early January. I learned as a home build volunteer, the type of help that families receive after a disaster. On this trip we helped a single woman named Darlene who had fallen through the social safety net after hurricane Irma. Usually the rebuilding work starts 6-12 months after the disaster. IOCC teams will keep coming back for years, depending on the need. The home build teams work in partnership with organizations such as Habitat for Humanity or Disaster Recovery Support Initiative (DRSI). On this trip we worked with VIND of Valusa County Florida, an acronym for "Volusa County Interfaith Network for Disasters."



Darlene

I arrived on January 6, 2020 and was picked up by Nouli at the airport in a rented 15-passenger van. There were two other people she needed to pick up at the airport that day and we needed to wait. She (Nouli) asked me are you hungry, we had a bit of time to kill. And we drove to a Panera near the airport to have a bite and get to know each other. Her husband who I was still to meet was at the worksite with another volunteer scoping out the work for the week. Nouli and her husband Sheff were from Minnesota and had owned a restaurant called the Tin Fish. They sold the restaurant and now have two food trucks and only work summers, spending winters as volunteer leaders for IOCC. After eating, we picked up TJ, 26 years old a handyman who doubles as a substitute teacher. He was the youngest in the group. Then we picked up Lewis a 73 years old chemical engineer and master electrician.

Our group of 4 drove to a United Methodists Church in Daytona that was to be our home for the next week. There I was to meet the rest of our crew. There was a couple from Tennessee, TJ and Diane. (Yes, Two TJ s). This TJ was the oldest among the group at 86. Diane his wife will remain ageless. In addition, there was Jake, a Navy retired who had just done a DNA ancestry thing that determined he was 98% Neanderthal and Orthodox. Yes, that had gotten some laughs. There was Michael a retired anesthesiologist going back to school to learn to be an electrician. Finally, there was Vitally, 30, from the Ukraine with a strong eastern European accent, who had a lot of jobs one

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# A RETIREMENT PROJECT

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of which was doing window replacement, and then me. The 10 of us were the IOCC crew. We all arrived Monday and shared a prayerful evening eating and reviewing the week ahead. Sheff and Nouli were happy that we were an adult crew with talent

Tuesday morning after prayers and breakfast, Sheff drove the crew of 10 to the worksite arriving at 8am.

The home to be worked was a two-bedroom ranch owned by Darlene an older woman still working as a caregiver and living in the house with leaky roof and more. She had tarps inside her house covering her furniture and other belongings. She had been living like this for nearly two years after hurricane Irma.

At the worksite we met Shannon and Greg. They are professional contractors working with VIND to make sure the materials and tools are on site and to manage the work. There was also Terry whom we met later as she stopped by the worksite. She is the VIND coordinator or project manager. Her job is to find the people who have fallen through the social safety net and to muster the money for materials and schedule the work like ours.



Sheff & Nouli

We worked each day from 8am to 3pm and Friday we worked until 1:30. We had less than 4 days the ten of us working along with Shannon and Greg to make this home right.

That first day on site was Tuesday and we:

- Strip the roof put all the debris into a dumpster
- Replace rotted roofing 10 sheets of plywood
- Pulled down damaged ceiling drywall and put new drywall up unfinished
- Removed a section of water damaged rotting siding from the back of the house.
- About 1/3 of the siding on the back needed to go and be replaced
- Demolished the counter and base cabinets in the kitchen.

Now we'll need to put it all back together on the days remaining. We were hurting but full of smiles.

The next morning, Wednesday, day two we did it again. The roof work had to wait for an inspector and this slowed us down a little. So, we worked the ceiling repair, the back siding, yard and garden cleaning. The inspector showed up at 1:30. After he left we had 8 people up on the roof and laying the tar paper down, finishing the tar-paper by 3.

On Day 3, Thursday: We finished up the ceilings ready for painting. Finished installing all the roof shingles less ridge vent. Installed and painted the back siding. There was still the kitchen to do Friday morning. Shannon got the kitchen cabinets to the site. We were beat but the smiles were as big as ever. Darlene would come out and look a with tears in her eyes at her new roof.

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# A RETIREMENT PROJECT

*Continued from Previous*

That Thursday on the ride back to church, Jake the highly loveable Neanderthal man said, “We are not putting the old stove/oven back into a remodeled kitchen. I agreed the stove should be trashed. He started trying to ask for donations and I helped him by chipping in all I had toward a donation. We collected \$350 between us. Sheff recommended we go to Lowes in the morning and see what we could find.

Day 4, Friday began as the few previous days. Jake was first up making coffee. God, I loved him for doing this. I had gotten up and just washed my face and was headed back to my bunk to either get dressed or catch a few more Z’s for the day. A decision I planned to make after my head hit the pillow again. I was intercepted walking to the room by Jake. The sun was not close to rising yet. With a blank stare, He says to me, “I’m going to Lowes.” As he is looking at me with a blank stare, and it takes me a moment to remember in my pre-coffee coma. I ask him, “Would you like me to come with you?” It was a question I did not want to ask, because I knew. His reply, “Oh, yes could you?” I really had no choice. “Of course, I will.” was my reply. I said then, “Just let me get dressed and grab a cup of coffee for the road. The other Mike had passed by on the way to the shower and I told him to let Sheff and Nouli know that I had gone with Jake to Lowes.



The Kitchen Crew!

On the way to Lowes, Jake was at a loss for words on how to negotiate on an oven for \$350. As he grappled with what he might say, I finally told him I’ll do the talking and not to worry. Selling Uncle Michael’s Hot Sauce has taught me a couple things in negotiating. He was also worried we would need to rent a truck to haul it to the site. Jake had his car he drove down from the Carolinas, and I told him “We will get the stove in your car no truck is needed. Trust me.” He had an Outback with a bunch of stuff in the back. When we got to Lowes, I asked him if he had a tape measure. He said “Yes.” I then told him, “Put the seat down and make room in the back and measure the opening of the hatch. I’m going in to find an oven and talk to the manager.”

As I waked into Lowes, I asked for the manager, using my best urban Bethesda attitude, while walking to the appliance section. A gentleman met me there and I explained the situation in detail. It did not hurt that I had the IOCC tee-shirt with the Cross of Christ on it to make me look sincere. I asked him if he had a tape measure. He did. We walked to the back where the damaged appliances were. The prices were too high as I walked down the row. I felt determined but very unsure we would find one. Finally, the second from the end, the same but newer model and color as Darlene’s old one, but with 5 burners, and for \$349.00. It was an “*Oh My God, Thank You*” moment. I knew God put it there for us. It had a slight dent on the side. A never to be seen blemish. God did his part. Jake comes walking down the aisle as I ask manager for the tape measure. I measure the oven at 27+ inches deep. I ask Jake what is the height of the tail-gate. He says almost 29 inches. I say we’ve got it. Let’s go with it. Just then a clerk with a hand truck showed up. And we were out of there.

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# A RETIREMENT PROJECT

*Continued from Previous*

Darlene cried when she saw the new oven on her front lawn, as we hauled out the old one. We finished her kitchen that Friday.

On another note, as far as the garden goes, Darlene had buried her dog in the backyard last fall. Diane worked and had made the area around the site a lovely place. The overall experience was very rewarding in so many ways: spiritually, physically, and mentally.

I'm headed to Key West on March 9th to do the same kind of thing. This time with Kim. The group will be smaller because many people have been pulled off to go to Nashville after the tornados down there. The IOCC is doing what it can.

I Love my St Mark parish. It seems as though the more we love the easier it is to love more. I don't know what I can do or how long I will be able to do what I can do? I ask God to give me strength every day to carry out His work. I sometimes feel so undeserving of the blessings I have received and regard them as temporal in this life. I have all that I need and I am thankful for all God gives and I humbly accept.

With Love in Christ,  
Michael Lungociu



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# FOCA CHILI COOK OFF

The Annual FOCA Chili Cook-off took place on Saturday, February 1st! Our winners pictured below.

First Place: Regina Kundell

Second Place: Sharon Carter

Third Place: Karen Phinney



# VEGAN CHILI

*Submitted by Sharon Carter*

I am really surprised that so many of you enjoyed the vegan chili I made for the FOCA Chili Cook off and Pre-sanctified Liturgy. I am so glad! Many of you asked for the recipe, so, here it is! A couple of notes first: I grew up cooking with my Dad, Pete. He never measured anything and neither do I. So I had to make a few rounds of this chili in order to record the right spice measurements and the cooking method. Feel free to adjust anything to your liking!

Also, a big thank you to Tammy Jacobsen for encouraging me to enter the Chili Cook Off with this. I have been vegan now for about 8 months and had no idea how I would make a vegan chili, or that anyone would even like it! So THANK YOU Tammy!!

## Ingredients:

3 tablespoons oil of your choice – I used Vegetable oil, but olive or others would work just fine.

1 tablespoon of minced garlic. Or more, I personally believe you measure that with your heart!

1 white onion, chopped (see note)

1 green bell pepper, chopped (see note)

**Note:** I chop the bell pepper and then chop enough of the onion to be equal to the amount of bell pepper.

1 Jalapeno, chopped.

1 8 oz bag of soy crumbles – I used Morning Star Farms. But I know there are many other brands out there. Any would do.

1 6 oz can of tomato paste

1 can of diced tomatoes, drained

1 can of vegetarian refried beans (this is the secret ingredient for thickening!)

2 cans of black beans, drained and rinsed

1 Chipotle pepper in Adobo, minced fine (see note)

**Note:** Unfortunately, you have to buy an entire can just for the one chipotle pepper. But they freeze really well for later use, or for future chili! Grab some gloves because these are no joke-spicy. Be sure to deseed the pepper and mince it fine. You want it to pretty much melt into the chili. Also, add about 1-2 teaspoons of the Adobo (sauce.)

**Spices:** You won't need these right away, but it's good to get them out and ready.

Garlic powder; Chili powder; Cayenne pepper; Paprika; Onion powder; Cumin; Oregano; Better Than Boullion – Vegetable Boullion; Sugar

Heat in a big pot the oil of your choice on Medium-Medium High heat. Add garlic and onion. Cook until starting to soften, about 3 minutes. Add the chopped bell pepper and jalapeno pepper. Cook until they start to soften as well. Add the frozen soy crumbles and stir. Add the below seasonings:

Season - Round 1

1 tsp garlic powder

3 tsp chili powder



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# VEGAN CHILI

*Continued from Previous*

¼ tsp cayenne pepper  
¼ tsp paprika  
½ tsp onion powder  
½ tsp cumin  
1 tsp oregano

Stir that all together and let the soy crumbles thaw, let the spices warm up and get aromatic, stir occasionally. While this is going, open and drain all your cans. Add the following in any order: diced tomatoes, tomato paste, black beans.

Add about 24 oz of water and 2 tablespoons of Vegetable Better Than Boullion.

Now, add your minced chipotle pepper + 1-2 teaspoons of Adobo. Add the refried beans too.

Once you have all this in the pot, give it a good stir. Allow the refried beans and boullion to melt into the liquid. Once it starts to boil a bit, lower the heat to medium and add the second round of seasoning.

Season - Round 2

½ tsp garlic powder  
1 tsp cumin  
¼ tsp onion  
¼ tsp paprika  
1 tsp chili powder  
1 tsp oregano  
2 tsp Better than Boullion

Stir that all in, cover, and cook on medium (or a little lower depending on your stove) for about 30 mins. It should simmer nicely, not boil or burn. Stir occasionally.

At the very end, 1 tbsp sugar to cut the bitterness from the canned tomatoes and chili powder.

You may certainly eat this right away, BUT it does get so much better after a night or two in the fridge. Also, this freezes wonderfully!

Lastly, notice I did not add any salt during the seasoning process. I found that the Better than Boullion salted the chili enough for my taste. You can definitely add salt if you wish!

Enjoy!



# BISHOP OF BETHESDA

*Photos by Victor Lutes*

On Sunday, January 26th, 2020, His Grace Bishop Alexis served his first Hierarchical Divine Liturgy as Bishop of Bethesda. Before the beginning of the Divine Liturgy His Grace tonsured Alexander Norton as Reader in the church. Bishop Alexis was consecrated on Saturday, January 25th at St. Nicholas Cathedral, Washington, DC.





# DIVINE LITURGY...ONLINE?

Before the directive was given that all churches were to close out of an abundance of caution from COVID-19, many of you participated in Divine Liturgy for St. Gregory Palamas on Sunday, March 15th. See all the home churches below!





# REAP WHAT YOU SOW

*Submitted by Marsha Zellem*

*About 6-7 years ago Sasha Lutes planted this pussy willow bush in front of the parking lot at St. Mark. At that time the small clipping was about 12 inches tall. Last week Sasha used his tree clippers to cut the mature catkins off in preparation for Palm Sunday in April. Hopefully his crop will fulfill the need to avoid purchasing some from the florist. Perhaps he should plant another? Marsha*





# VENERATION OF THE CROSS

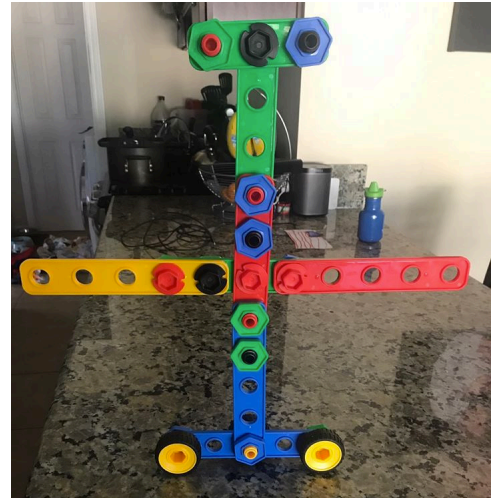
*Submitted by All; Compiled by Victor Lutes*





# VENERATION OF THE CROSS

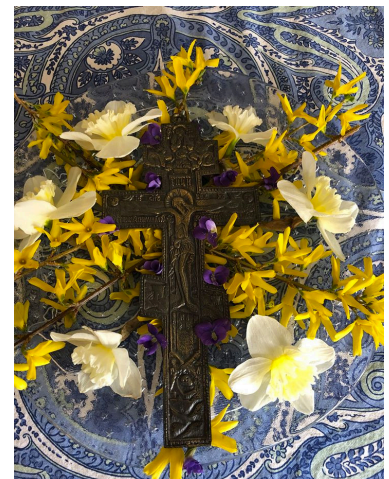
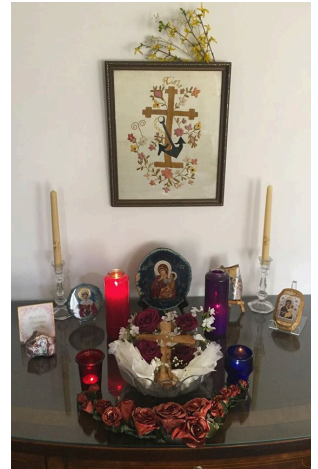
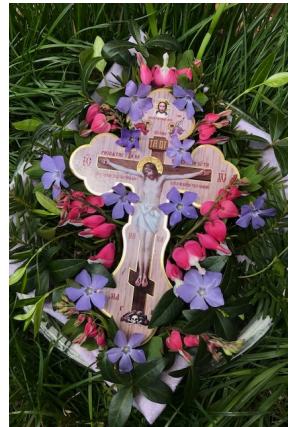
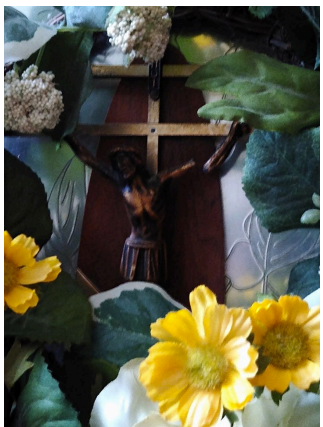
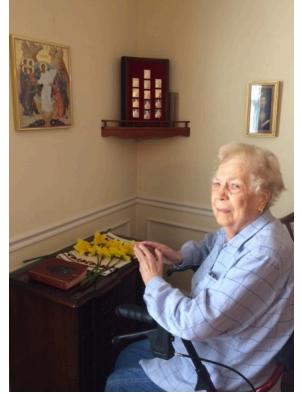
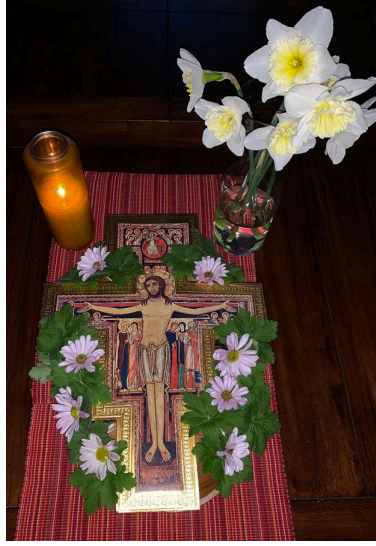
*Submitted by All; Compiled by Victor Lutes*





# VENERATION OF THE CROSS

*Submitted by All; Compiled by Victor Lutes*





# REFLECTIONS ON CORONAVIRUS

*His Grace Bishop Alexis of Bethesda*

## **Some Thoughts on the Crisis and the Call of the Corona Virus: A Reflection by His Grace Bishop Alexis of Bethesda**

The Bishops of the Holy Orthodox Church love their flocks and ever strive to lead them to well-watered and rich pastures. They care for them, body and soul. In so doing, they are following their Master Christ who not only “cast out unclean spirits,” but also healed “all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.” (Matthew 10:1). In the Gospels, we see that Christ sometimes treated the soul first and the body second; at other times, the body first and the soul second. In the presence of the highly contagious and potentially lethal corona virus, the Bishops’ concern is for the bodily welfare of their people lest even a single lamb be needlessly lost. This is not from a lack of faith or dearth of compassion, but from unwavering faith and an abundance of compassion. Compassion is expressed in giving each sinner the time necessary to repent, for in “hell there is no repentance” (Saint John of Damascus). Faith is expressed in the certainty that our Lord can always be in our midst, that He can always be by our side, for the Psalmist proclaims, “If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there” (Psalm 139:8). And if I am shut up in my home away from Church, “Thou art there,” even as the Lord was there for and with the Apostle Peter when he was locked up in prison, so He is there for and with us.

During times of uncertainty, anxiety, and fear, we naturally turn to God for refuge, peace, and courage. This is our birthright as baptized Orthodox Christians. Indeed, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth should change” (Psalm 46:1-2). With the corona virus, the earth has changed, but we do not fear. The faithful are isolated in their homes, physically separated from loved ones, and even unable to gather together as the Church for the celebration of the mysteries, but we do not fear, for God remains our refuge, our peace, and source of courage. Many are understandably discouraged and downcast about the decision to ban eucharistic gatherings in Church for the sake of the health of our neighbor whom we love. Yet, God remains our refuge, our peace, and our source of courage. Within this trial, this threat to so much that we hold so very dear, there is a call that is given and a promise that beckons. But to hear that call and see the fulfilment of that promise, we need to approach our Savior as His faithful children have always approached Him, not with self-righteous indignation or self-pitying despondency, but with humble, patient hope.

The call is to prayer of the heart. The promise is the purifying and illumining grace of the Holy Spirit. In the emphasis on more frequent communion over the past forty years, we might be tempted to neglect the necessary on-

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# REFLECTIONS ON CORONAVIRUS

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going moment-to-moment inner communion with Christ by prayer, that talking with Him and walking with Him that characterized most of the lives of the Apostles before and after the institution of the Mystical Supper. Many of our greatest saints were deprived of Holy Communion for periods of time that for us would be unbearable to contemplate, but that for them were periods of continued growth from glory to glory, because they were never without Holy Communion with Christ through prayer. Prayer is not easy; it requires concentration, dedication, and love, but through the gates of prayer, we can touch Christ, Christ can touch us, and we can be healed. It is imperative for us all to learn to serve Liturgy at the Altar of the heart and the time is now at hand.

During this crisis of the corona virus, we are given the opportunity to become men and women of deep prayer. We are given the occasion to “enter into our closet, and when we have shut the door, pray to our Father which is in secret” (Matthew 6:6), offering Him our repentance, our gratitude, and our love. We can come to understand that “prayer is a safe fortress, a sheltered harbor, a protector of the virtues, a destroyer of passions. It brings vigor to the soul, purifies the mind, gives rest to those who suffer, consoles those who mourn. Prayer is converse with God, contemplation of the invisible, the angelic mode of life, a stimulus towards the divine, the assurance of things longed for, ‘making real the things for which we hope’” (Theodore, the Great Ascetic, Century 1:61). As Saint Sophrony of Essex puts it, “prayer is infinite creation, far superior to any form of art or science. Through prayer we enter into communion with Him that was before all worlds...Prayer is delight for the Spirit.” (On Prayer, 9).

The Elder Aimilianos whose love for the Divine Liturgy was incomparable once said, “It is pointless to go to Church, unnecessary to attend Liturgy, and useless to commune, when I am not constantly praying” (The Church at Prayer, 14). A spiritual life of private prayer is not a monastic prerogative, but the common inheritance of all the faithful. The saintly elder further notes, “The harm that befalls us if we do not know how to pray is incalculable. Incalculable? It is the only harm from which we suffer. There is no catastrophe that can compare to it. If all the stars and all the planets were to collide with one another, and the universe to shatter into smithereens, the damage would be far less than that which befalls us if we don’t know how to pray” (The Church at Prayer, 10). The threat of the virus perhaps can open our eyes to the threat of not knowing how to pray to God in our heart. The threat of the virus may turn into a blessing that can enliven our spiritual life.

The temptation before us is to deafen our ears to this call to active, arduous prayer to approach God and instead to prefer more passive, easier ways for God to approach us. Now is not the time to try to devise any means to avoid this prayer in private, but it is the time to heed the call to prayer in our heart to the God of our heart. There is a rich, inner world beckoning to us, a world where God is all in God. Let’s take the gift of this time to enter into that world. And if we do so, when we come together for the Divine Liturgy with a yearning magnified by distance apart, that Liturgy will be more radiant and more angelic than anything we have known before. Through a deep life of inner prayer, we will indeed learn how to set aside all earthly cares, that we may receive the King of all.

*Source: <https://www.oca.org/news/headline-news/some-thoughts-on-the-crisis-and-the-call-of-the-corona-virus-a-reflection-by-his-grace-bishop-alexis-of-bethesda>*

# PALM SUNDAY

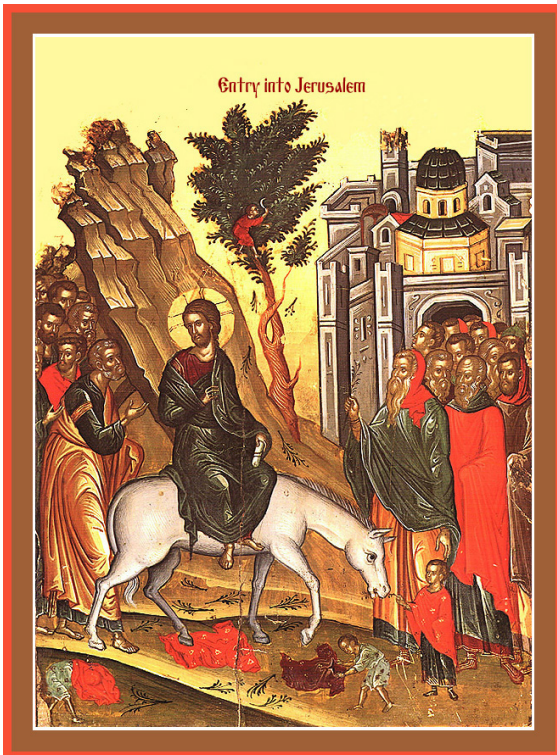
Activity: On Palm Sunday, print, cut out and color the palms. Process around your house with the cross and sing the Troparion!

## Troparion

By raising Lazarus from the dead before Thy  
passion,  
Thou didst confirm the universal Ressurrection,  
O Christ God!  
Like the children, with the palms of victory,  
We cry out to Thee, O Vanquisher of death;

## Hosanna in the Highest!

Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the  
Lord!



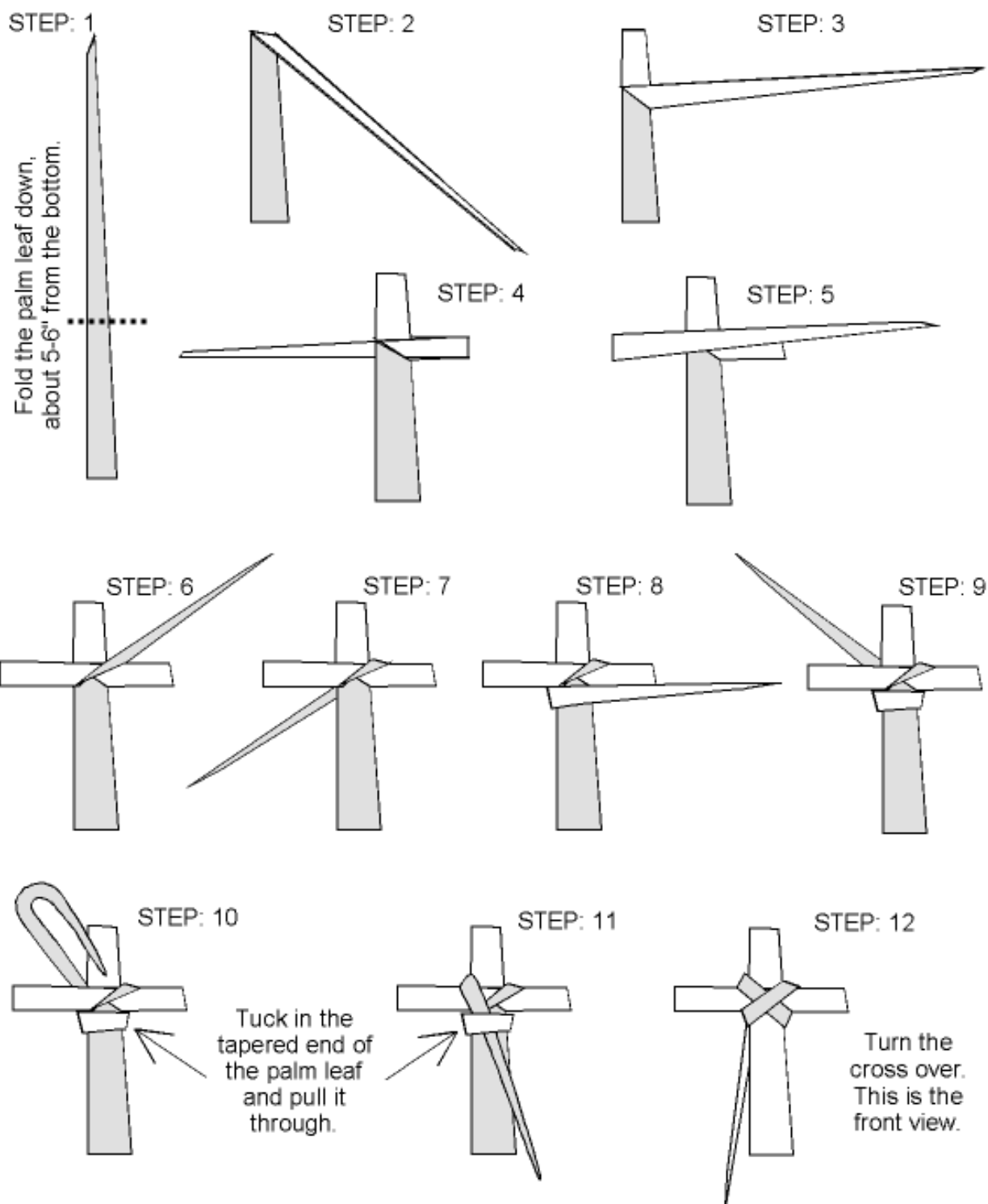


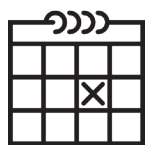
# PALM CROSS

No palm fronds available? No problem! Cut strips of paper to the dimensions listed below!

## Palm Leaf Cross Directions

Supplies: One palm leaf strip about 24-26" in length, 1/2" in width, tapering to the end.



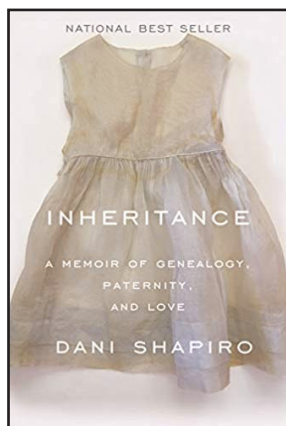


# UPCOMING EVENTS

## WOMEN'S BOOK CLUB MEETINGS

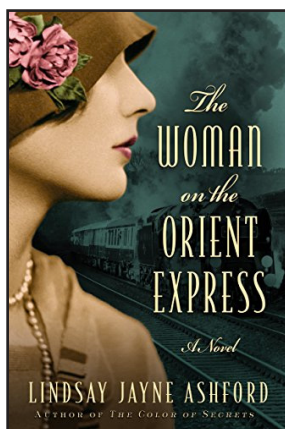
The women's book club meets on the fourth Sunday of the month, following Liturgy, in the Library for discussion. Here are the upcoming books and dates:

April 26th



Inheritance: A Memoir of Genealogy,  
Paternity and Love  
Dani Shapiro

May 31st



The Woman on the Orient  
Express  
Jayne Ashford

March 22nd



I Live Again: A Memoir of Ileana,  
Princess of Romania and Arch-  
duchess of Austria  
Ileana, Archduchess of Austria

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

During COVID-19 Quarantine protocols, the Blessed Matushka Olga Prayer Group meets every Tuesday at 10:30 am via Zoom: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/152870659>. All are welcome to join and pray. April meeting dates are not listed below because of the uncertainty of when protocols will be lifted.

The Blessed Matushka Olga of Alaska Prayer Group meets regularly on the 1st 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 3rd Tuesday of the month at 10:30 AM in the church nave.



Please join us as you can and please remember us in your prayers. All prayer requests may be given to Debby Dillon, Mat. Alexandra or Marcella Hydock. Also, there is a prayer request email address on the St. Mark website.

We hope you can join us on:

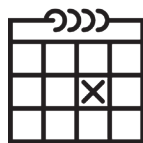
### Intercessory Prayer Dates & Times:

- TUESDAY, MAY 5th, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, JUNE 2nd, 10:30 AM

### Akathist Dates & Times:

- TUESDAY, MAY 19th, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, JUNE 16th, 10:30 AM





# UPCOMING EVENTS

## GROCERY CARDS

Please consider donating grocery cards for the needy all, and especially, through-out Lent! Please see Father Gregory or Kyra Smerkanich for questions or donations. Thank you!!

## STEPPING STONES MEAL DELIVERY

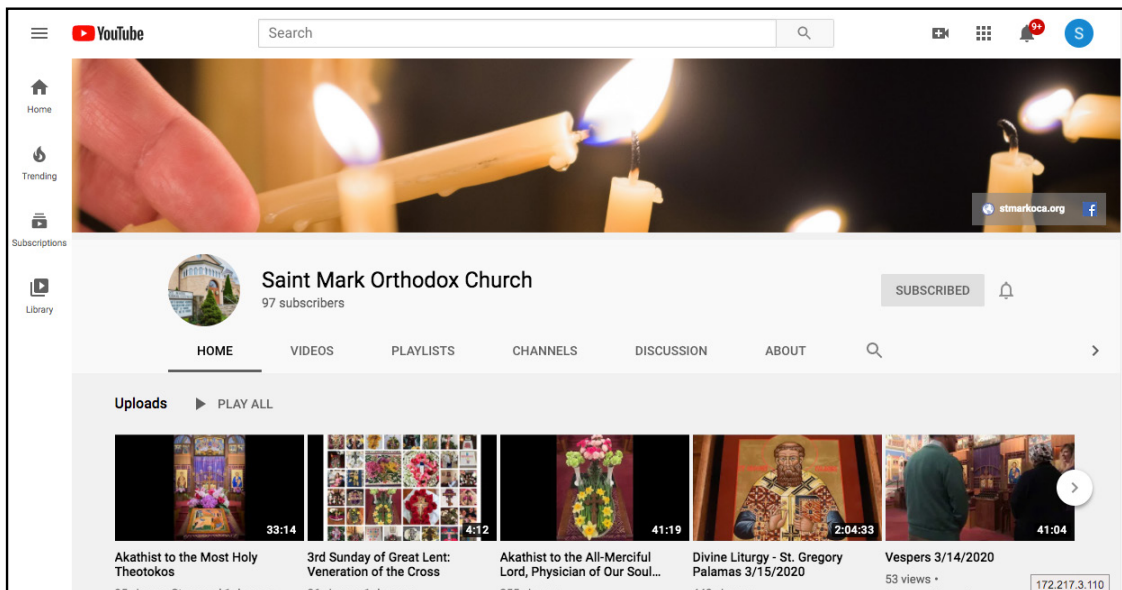
Please sign up for monthly food preparation and delivery to Stepping Stones shelter in Rockville, MD. The sign-up sheets are on the Outreach bulletin board outside the fellowship hall.



## St. Mark Live Stream



St. Mark has a YouTube Channel! Many of you have already participated via live stream in Divine Liturgy and prayer services during the quarantine. This ministry is more important now than ever before! The live stream helps us still feel connected to each other during this time of disconnection and united during this time of division, as brothers and sisters in Christ. So please, subscribe and follow so that you may get notifications anytime we go live.



## Births

02/10/20 - Isabella Caroline Bussenger

02/11/20 - Jacob Fillmore Prose

02/12/20 - Luke James Miller

03/23/20 - Adam James Needham



Isabella Caroline Bussenger



Jacob Fillmore Prose



Adam James Needham

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## *Memory Eternal!*

### Deaths

2/24/10 - Bruce German, Father of Chris German

*May Their Memory Be Eternal!*

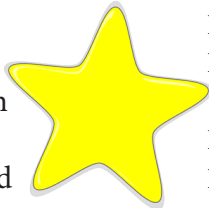




# Happy Birthday!

## April

1 Gherman Uritsky  
 2 Jack Albert  
 Elizabeth Cannon  
 Joshua Pierce  
 Elianna Niemi  
 4 Alexis Pearce  
 Jessica Herrera  
 Paulina Masick  
 5 Barbara Kreta  
 Faith Skordinski  
 6 Mary Mytryshyn  
 7 Nathaniel Safchuk  
 Irene Tarpy  
 8 Darlene Marti  
 10 Martin Riskam  
 Don Truitt  
 Aaron Wickard  
 11 Melanie Firestone  
 12 Eric Williams  
 15 Christopher Safchuk  
 16 Sophia Nimmer  
 18 Nina Uritsky  
 19 Ashley Albert  
 20 Mary Rudin  
 21 Doug Burns  
 Anastacia (Stacy) Jacobsen  
 23 Lori Landsburg  
 Chloe Emerson Little  
 Kiprian Tatusko  
 24 Susan B. Petro  
 25 Sasha Lutes  
 26 Hilary Frimenko  
 Peter Truitt  
 27 Dorothy Gumpert  
 Sarah Jenkins-Petro  
 Justin Markovich  
 28 Linda Weir  
 29 Sarah Hardy  
 Tristan Pearson  
 30 Marge Dove  
 Justin Humphries



## May

1 John Michael Mikuluk  
 2 Susan Rodak  
 3 Manuella Buzoianu Balan  
 7 Madeleine Voth  
 Nicholas Voth  
 8 Olga Lobas  
 Patricia Pearson  
 9 Michael Karas  
 10 Grace Dillon  
 12 Paul Antich  
 Shirley Dean  
 Joanna Navarro  
 Ellen Barber  
 13 Alexander Norton  
 Bella Prose  
 15 Antonina Riscuta  
 16 Alexandra Brasoveanu-Tarpy  
 Dorothy Dillon  
 17 Sherry Safchuk  
 19 Carol Mary Ashley  
 Stephen Ilario  
 21 Coy Williamson  
 22 Simina Lal Ciubotaru  
 Renee Zabela  
 Dominic Rotunda  
 23 Kenneth Bernstein  
 Carl Firestone  
 Cindy Jefferson  
 24 Nicholas Paul Moser  
 25 Talia Sieff  
 26 Christina Berencz  
 Andrew Bumbak  
 27 Timothy Firestone  
 Fr. Mark Koczak  
 28 Shawn Niemi  
 29 Henry William Meyers  
 Lisa Robinson  
 Patricia Prose  
 31 Michelle Bahumian  
 Hannah LeFors  
 Alexandra Sedor



## June

1 Alexandra Zabela  
 3 Christine Cacic  
 James J. Rosolanka  
 5 Michael Cacic  
 Rachael Datch  
 Robert Rudin  
 6 James W. (Skip) Mersereau  
 7 Simon Markovich  
 9 Nicholas Niemi  
 10 Mat. Gemma Phelps  
 11 Hannah Antich  
 Nicholas Corbin  
 Eliot Landsburg  
 13 David Burke Jackson  
 Ann Marie Steger  
 Vadim Uritsky  
 14 Joshua Lindsay  
 Maximus Timothy Masick  
 Daniel Schuresko  
 15 Tina Burpee  
 Mary Ann Holovac  
 John Humphries  
 Alexandra Kissell  
 16 Fr. David Cowan  
 Wright Steinberg  
 Kara Yakubik  
 18 Kathryn Balamaci  
 19 David Jefferson  
 Rachel Salas  
 20 Karen Jankovic  
 21 Kimberly Yakubik  
 22 Salomea Jankovic  
 Peter Sielinski  
 23 Timothy Dillon  
 Michael Hydock  
 Ravyn Malatesta  
 Timothy Perry  
 Benjamin Oleynik  
 Joshua Tucker  
 25 Alexsandra (Sunny) Holovac  
 Harell Little  
 Tara Shimer  
 26 Nicola Ilario  
 27 Dawn Little  
 30 Ella Rose Datch  
 Jenna Datch  
 Nick Pedersen

