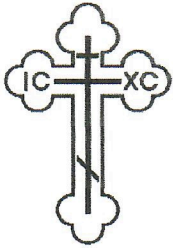


# St. Mark Evangelizer

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

Volume 24 - Number 1

January - March 2024 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)

## House Blessings



Beginning with the Great Blessing of Water at the Feast of Theophany (Jan. 6th.), I will make myself available for the visiting and blessing of parish homes. This annual tradition provides us with a wonderful opportunity to pray and share some quality time together.

Those interested are invited to contact me to work out times and dates.

- Fr. Gregory

## Joy to the World!

...The Lord has come. Let earth receive her King! The opening lines of this beloved Christmas carol provide the theme I want to address. Like love, we usually equate joy with emotion, most akin to happiness. But there is I think, a difference. When we are happy, there are many things that can take away our happiness since it's often dependant on circumstances. But in the Gospel of St. John, chapter 16, verse 22, our Lord speaks of a joy that no one can take away from His disciples. True joy transcends the conditions and circumstances of this world and is rooted

in the vision and presence of Christ in the hearts of those who seek Him and love Him. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann was careful to differentiate between joy and happiness. He tried to help us understand that very often, "happiness" is the superficial "hee hee, haa haa" of the world, while "joy" always runs much deeper; enduring even through sadness, sustaining us and buoying up our hearts and souls.

So it is with joy that we Christians are to live our lives and celebrate the feasts and fasts of our Church. Fr. Thomas Hopko said: "One of the most devastating accusations that can be made against Christians is that they have no joy. Joyless Christians are a contradiction in terms. People who are bitter, complaining, condemning, accusing, dissatisfied and depressed are certainly not Christians. They can only be people whose life is untouched by grace, people whose existence is confined to the suffocating limitations of 'this world' whose 'ruler' is the devil and whose 'form...

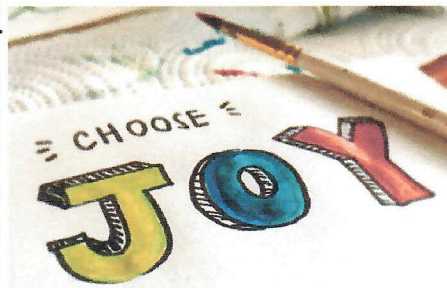
is passing away' (Jn 12:31; 1 Cor 7:31). They cannot possibly be those who belong to Christ and the kingdom of God. For Christians by definition have Christ's 'joy fulfilled in themselves' (Jn 17:13)."

Fr. Schmemmann points out that: "Joy is not something one can define or analyze. One enters into joy." "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord (Mt 25:21)". And one enters into this joy, this exceeding great joy, he insists, only by entering into the liturgical and eucharistic life of the Church herself.

Fr. Hopko adds that: "Here, and only here, as in the celebration of the Nativity of Christ and His Epiphany in the world, can a person partake of that joyful reality for which the world itself was created in the beginning."

Yet still we often find it difficult to discover and maintain this joy in ourselves in the face of so much sadness, devastation and evil around us. The headlines constantly remind us that even though God has visited His people, many continue to use and misuse their free will to cause suffering and death. In response to Christ's own nativity, King Herod himself sought to destroy Jesus when he was only a child. Wars continue to rage in various places throughout the world, but we are reminded that this is precisely the reason that Christ came into this world - to show us the way beyond sin and death toward the promise of His Kingdom of righteousness, peace and everlasting life. May God grant us the courage to choose joy always and live by His Grace.

- Fr. Gregory



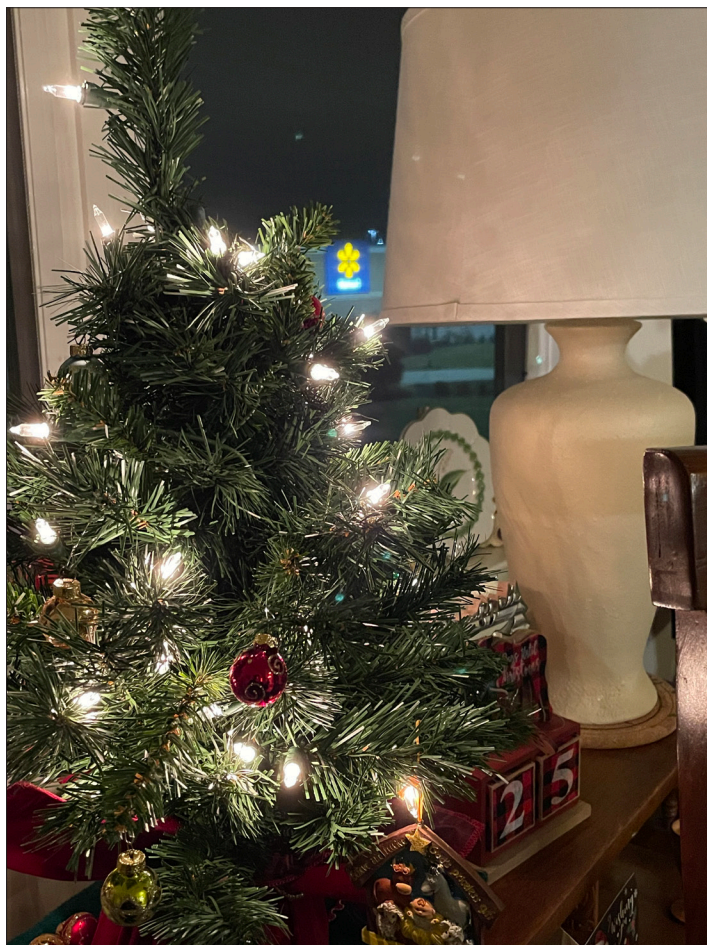


**DECEMBER 13TH, 2023**

*Submitted by Matuskha Alexandra Safchuk*

In the summer of 2020, I wrote about the experience of sitting bedside during my father's hospice care. Today, as I write this in the early morning hours of St. Herman's day, December 13th, 2023, I am sitting bedside during my mother's hospice care. Because hospice is available at the Assisted Living my mother chose (chose being relative since she chose to stay home but that was not safe) after my father's death, she has been able to stay in her own tiny apartment, cared for by some of the same people who have been giving her increasing assistance over these last 3+ years. People who now know which are her favorite pants, how she likes her coffee and not to expect her at meals if Ohio State or the Browns are playing football.

These same people have been unfailingly kind to me, the daughter who previously blew into town for a week a month to restock mom's tissues and chocolate and accompany her to doctor's appointments. Last week, when she started on oxygen because she couldn't take breaths deep enough to oxygenate her limbs properly, I started staying around the clock with her. During the last two months of lifting her, carrying her, helping her eat I have become a fixture and one by one staff and residents came to tell me about her days, how she loved to work at the computer, talk to her grandchildren and read on her Kindle. Now they come to say good-bye, to tell her that they are praying for her and to bring her red Jello (her favorite, and imagine, she made it to 97).



This has been an excruciatingly lonely experience for me. Sitting in the chair, looking out the window she looked out for hours, past her little Christmas tree to the Walmart sign behind her building, I am filled with a sad dread, a loneliness profound and crushing. Was mom lonely? Why didn't I do more? I hear people shuffling down the hall to stay mobile and kill time, asking the nurse several times a day if it is time to take their meds. The Assisted Living tries to provide interesting activities (Bingo, cookie decorating, outings to see Christmas lights) but the highlight of the day seems to be meals where residents make choices from a limited menu of items that, despite the staff's best efforts, all taste pretty much the same.

*(Continued on next page.)*

**DECEMBER 13TH, 2023**

*Continued from Previous*

For most of the residents this is home, although some are clear that they are here temporarily as they recover from surgery or have physical therapy. My own mother quite often told people she would be moving out soon, just as soon as I smartened up and moved back to Cleveland. This was both her community and a community she resisted being part of.

In time another resident will live in the room in which I now write. Someone else will take my mother's place at the dinner table in the dining room and look fearfully into the face of the nurse administering medications, wondering if it will be their photograph next on the Memorial Table across from the elevators. We know so little about what comes after this life that even painful suffering and loneliness might seem preferable to the unknown. I have made a mental note to get to know God better, so that when I look upon His face after my death, I will recognize Him.

The Ohio hospice handbook gave me important information about how to prepare for a volcanic eruption or tsunami (really, people?) but it did not give me instructions about how to cope with the crippling loneliness as I pad down the hall to the public restroom. For that I must look further, beyond these walls and into my own hard and barren heart. A kind friend, Matushka Natasha Lazor texted me that the room here is filled with angels and saints and Christ Himself. I have struggled to sense that, to dispel the isolation that being so alone can bring. But I am infinitely grateful for the reminder that we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1) and they guide us, comfort us, bring us into the community of Christ.

Thank you for being a community for me. You deserve better, younger, more creative, but I am deeply grateful that you have loved me.

With love in our Born and Risen Lord,  
Matushka Sasha

P.S. On that afternoon, December 13th, 2023, my mother died peacefully. May Olga's memory be eternal and may she rest with the saints.



# BAZAAR 2023

*Photos by Victor Lutes*



*(Continued on next page.)*



# BAZAAR 2023

*Continued from Previous*





# A CONCERT OF PSALMODY

# BEHOLD HOW GOOD



# A CONCERT OF PSALMODY

January 19, 2024 7:30 pm

Reception to follow



Tickets at [archdiocesanchoir.org](https://www.archdiocesanchoir.org)

Ss. Peter and Paul  
Orthodox Church

10620 River Rd. Potomac, MD



# ANGEL TREE 2023

*Submitted by Tammy Jacobsen*

The Spirit of St. Nicholas is alive and well in St. Mark Church. A very big thank you to all who participated in our Angel Tree project this Christmas season. Your generosity in providing the Christmas wishes of 40 children is overwhelming. The gifts kept pouring in, many people inquiring if all the children were sponsored by our deadline. Those people who did not have the privilege of making a child's wish a reality, still gave, enabling us to provide grocery cards to those families with the largest need. When our contact's staff came to pick up all the gifts, it took three cars to transport the goodies to their office. The families were so excited and appreciative, they sent a plate of cookies and candy to the church as a way of saying thank you. Those treats were available at coffee hour the weekend after picking up the gifts. You are all truly a blessing to those who know you. Thank you for being God's answer to these children's prayers.





# ST. NICHOLAS DAY WORKSHOP

*Photos by Victor Lutes*



*(Continued on next page.)*

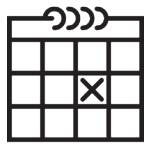


# ST. NICHOLAS DAY WORKSHOP

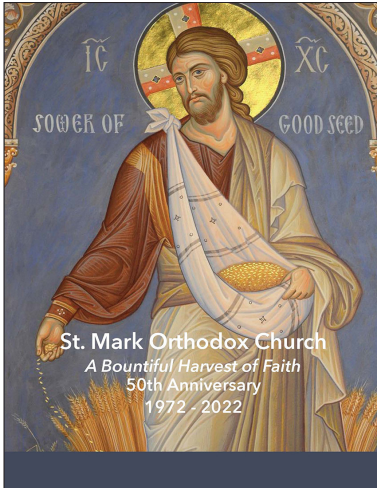
*Continued from Previous*







# UPCOMING EVENTS



**50th ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATIVE BOOK:** It's here! The 50th Anniversary book is now available for pick up! See Martha Baxtresser, Michael Chow, Sharon Carter or Jerry Marti for a copy!

**UPCOMING FEASTS & SERVICES:**

Theophany Compline and Blessing of Water - Friday, January 5th @ 7:00 pm

Theophany - Divine Liturgy - Saturday, January 6th @ 9:30 am

St. Gregory the Theologian - Divine Liturgy - Thursday, January 25th @ 10:00am

Meeting of the Lord in the Temple - Divine Liturgy - Friday, February 2nd @ 10:00 am

Great Lent Begins - Monday, March 18th

**GROCERY CARDS**

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

**ST. MARK YOUTUBE CHANNEL:** <https://www.youtube.com/saintmarkorthodoxchurch>

**ST. MARK WOMEN'S BOOK GROUP** selections for January-March 2024. We meet on Zoom at 7:15 pm on the dates below the link will be sent the day before each discussion.

**January 4th - *The Screwtape Letters*** by C.S. Lewis. It is available on the following YouTube link. <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLA8BAC9375345E6C7&si=R-D-pQbD63DO7vKu>.

**February 1st - *The Lost Summer of Louisa May Alcott*** by Kelly O'Connor McNeese.

**March 7th - *The Sisters of Summit Avenue*** by Lynn Cullen.

---

**UPDATED BLESSED MAT. OLGA OF ALASKA WOMEN'S PRAYER GROUP**

We meet on the 1st Tuesday of the month @ 10:30 a.m. in the church nave. We no longer do a hybrid version for intercessory prayer.

We meet on the 3rd Tuesday of the month @10:30 a.m. to pray an Akathist virtually. A link for the Akathist is usually sent the day before.



Please join us if you can. To update the intercessory prayer list please contact Debbi Dillon at [debbi.dillon@gmail.com](mailto:debbi.dillon@gmail.com) We thank you for prayers on our behalf. Holy Mother Olga, Pray to God for us!

**Intercessory Prayer Dates & Times:**

- TUESDAY, JAN 2nd, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, FEB 6th, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, MAR 5th, 10:30 AM

**Akathist Dates & Times:**

- TUESDAY, JAN 16th, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, FEB 20th, 10:30 AM
- TUESDAY, MAR 19th, 10:30 AM



# UPDATER

## Weddings

10/15/23 - Daria Victorov & Kevin Moore  
10/20/23 - Abby Dean & Andrew Boyd  
12/31/23 - Hannah LeFors & Anthony Portuesi



*May God Grant Them Many Years!*

---

## Births

10/12/23 - Phoebe Kohler  
11/22/23 - Margaret Victoria Karas

## Baptisms

10/14/23 - Christos Luke John Williams  
10/21/23 - Eilene Deng  
12/27/23 - Markos Milau

*May God Grant Them Many Years!*

---

## Memory Eternal!

### Deaths

10/18/23 - Doug Smith  
11/5/23 - Ivan Manova  
11/12/23 - Esther Yavelak  
11/19/23 - Carole E. Roberts  
12/13/23 - Olga Lobas  
12/17/23 - Rebecca Hanchak

*May Their Memory Be Eternal!*





# Happy Birthday!

## January

4 Samuel Kumar  
5 Michael Albert  
Anna Meyendorff  
7 John Bainbridge  
Lisa Cannon  
Ted Koopersmith  
Pamela McHugh  
8 Alexander Masick  
9 Susan Petro  
Debbie Sieff  
11 Debbi Dillon  
Anelia Rotunda  
12 Regina Kundell  
14 Joan Mitchum  
15 Michael Beddow  
Michael Bezuneh  
Nicholas Bilyeu  
16 Justin Ciubotaru  
17 Hannah Perry  
Janice Victorov  
18 Katheryn Cannon  
19 Tom Cipu  
22 Slavina Skenderska  
23 Eugenia Jankovic  
24 Anthony Sekellick  
25 Rose Zabela  
26 Matthew Nimmer  
Ivana Rotunda  
27 Michael Berencz  
James Lacko  
28 Kaitlin Barber  
Nicholas Herrera  
29 Tyler Church  
Jurretta Heckscher  
Marilyn Macht  
30 Michelle Corbin  
31 Rodica Cipu

## February

1 William Koopersmith  
2 Olga Skenderska  
Tammy Tsuchida  
Andrew Wickard  
5 Gabriel Baleanu  
Victoria Olynik  
Fr. Gregory Safchuk  
7 Abigail Datch  
11 Marge German  
Stefan Gleason  
Tom Jenkins  
Tamara Karas  
Anna Nakshin  
Jacob Prose  
14 Luke Matthew Tatusko  
17 Clark Little  
Chloe Nimmer  
18 Peter McHugh  
19 Nina Borissow  
Mary Ann Fitzgerald  
Donna Glenn  
21 Roberta (Mitchum) McCunney  
22 Nancy Stanton  
24 Caleb German  
Michael McCunney  
25 John Bilyeu  
Stacy Nimmer  
Tabitha Voth  
27 Isaiah Rodak  
28 Marjorie Sielinski

## March

3 Mat. Tamara Cowan  
4 Samantha Sokich  
6 Doug Dillon  
Ryan Jefferson  
7 Eileen Holovac  
10 Debra Yakubik  
11 Jerry Lutes  
Kyra Smerkanich  
12 Aaron Prose  
13 Nadia Burns  
14 Beth Tucker  
15 David Hardy  
Sean McHugh  
16 Patricia Ihnat  
17 Matthew Looby  
19 Catherine Corbin  
20 Vera Bumbak  
21 Kieran Perdue  
22 Caleb Bryan  
23 Adam Needham  
25 Michael Mihailov  
26 Kellie Holovac  
29 Susan Sielinski  
30 Meghan Fitzgerald  
31 David Rodak  
Rachel Sieff  
Zachary Sieff

Happy  
Birthday

