

St. Mary Antiochian Orthodox Christian Church

A Parish of the Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese (antiochian.org) ... and ...
The Diocese of Charleston, Oakland & The Mid-Atlantic (antiochian.org/east)
(“...the Disciples were called Christians first in Antioch!” [Acts 11:26](#))



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Most Rev. Metropolitan JOSEPH – Archbishop & Primate
Right Rev. Bishop THOMAS – Auxiliary Bishop
(Diocese of Charleston / Oakland & The Mid-Atlantic)
Very Rev. Fr. Donald E. Shadid, M.Div. & D.Min. – Archpriest & Pastor
Rev. Fr. Anthony G. Roeber, M.A. (Theology) & Ph.D. – Attached Clergy
Edward Makdad – Parish Council Chairperson

“Go to Church ... Say Your Prayers ... Don’t Forget God!”

(+Fr. Tom Hopko’s Mom)

Fr. Don – Home: 814-255-4077 – frdon@stmaryaocc.org – Office: 814-255-2148

+ **THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD, GOD & SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST** +
Festal Matins & Divine Liturgy – Sunday Evening – December 24, 2017

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!



A WARM WELCOME TO ALL!

We welcome all of you, our Faithful and our visitors, to St. Mary Orthodox Church! It is a pleasure to have you with us as we glorify and praise the Name of our God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Please sing along with our Choir during the Liturgy.

Please note that the Sacrament of Holy Communion can only be given to Orthodox Christians who have prepared themselves by prayer, fasting, regular Confession (at least twice per year ... 7 Yrs. old & up), who attend Liturgy regularly & on time ... and ... are at peace with all people.

When receiving Holy Communion, please fold your arms over your chest, open your mouth wide, tip your head back slightly and allow the priest to place the elements in your mouth.

For our non-Orthodox brethren, we welcome you to sing and pray with us, venerate the Cross and receive the Holy Bread at the end of the Divine Liturgy. Please join us again soon. May God Bless You Always!

HOLY OBLATION: Offered by: *Loretta Shahade* in beloved memory of parents, *Sam & Mary Shahade* and sister, *Crissy Shahade.*" ... **and** ... *Anthony Abraham* for the health of *All Within our St. Mary Parish Family* as we celebrate the glorious Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ ... **Christ is Born! Glorify Him!**

PASCHAL CANDLES: Offered in beloved memory of son, brother & uncle, *Eddie Martin (+10 Yrs.)* by *Huda Martin & Family.*

PROSKAMEDIA CANDLES: Offered: in beloved memory of father, *William (Speedo) Salem (+53 Yrs.)* by *Christine Salem //* for the health of grandson, *Lt. David Heider*, who has safely returned from the Persian Gulf and is serving stateside, by *Elaine Heider //* in beloved memory of *George Heider* by wife, *Elaine* and their Family (*Mary Elizabeth & Ken and Family, David & Nancy and Family, Gregory & Jennifer and Family and Matthew & Stacy and Family*).

SEVEN-BRANCHED CANDLES: Offered: in beloved memory of nephew, *Andrew (A.J.) Dubnansky* by *Becky Bidelman ... and ...* for the health of *Lottie & Larry Bertino* by *Tom & Judy Davidson.*

**For The Living – “God Grant Them Many Years!”...and...
For The Departed – “May Their Memory Be Ever Eternal!”**

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- VARIATIONS & NOTES ON THE LITURGY -

PLEASE NOTE: *When the Great Feasts of The Nativity or Theophany of our Lord fall on a Sunday or Monday, the “Liturgy of St. Basil the Great” (Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia) is celebrated on the day of the Feast, and the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom is celebrated on the Eve. Within the “Liturgy of St. Basil,” the priest’s prayers for the Faithful are longer and the Anaphora Prayers (the “offering up” of the Liturgical Gifts for consecration) are more detailed regarding our Salvation History. Please be attentive during these prayers and quiet moments so that you may truly join your prayer to that of the Church. We have Service Books on the Front Pews for this Liturgy so that you may more easily & fully participate in our Worship. May Your Prayers Be A Pleasing Sacrifice To The Lord!*

FIRST ANTIPHON: (*Refrain - “Through the intercessions of the Theotokos...”*)
“I will confess Thee, O Lord with my whole heart; I will tell of all Thy wonders. In the council of the upright, and in the congregation, great are the works of the Lord.” / *Refrain.* / “They are sought out in all the things that He hath willed. Confession and majesty are His work, and His righteousness abideth unto ages of ages.” / *Refrain.* / “Glory & Now” ... *Refrain.*

SECOND ANTIPHON: (*Refrain – “Save us, O Son of God, Who wast born of a Virgin; who sing to Thee. Alleluia.”*)
“Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord; in His commandments shall he greatly delight. His seed shall be mighty upon the earth. The generation of

the upright shall be blessed. / *Refrain.* / "Glory and riches shall be in His house, and His righteousness abideth unto ages of ages." / *Refrain.* / "There hath risen up in darkness a light for the upright; he is merciful and compassionate and righteous." / *Refrain.* / "Glory & Now" ... and ... "O Only-begotten Son & Word of God"

THIRD ANTIPHON: (*Sung During The Little Entrance – Tone Four*)

Verses: "The Lord said unto my Lord: 'Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool. The Lord shall send Thee a rod of strength out of Zion. With Thee is dominion in the day of Thy power, in the beauties of Thy saints.' "

Troparion: See "Troparion of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ" Below.

ENTRANCE HYMN (*Instead of "Come, let us worship & fall down...":*)

From the womb before the morning star have I begotten Thee. The Lord hath sworn, and He will not repent; thou art a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek. Save us, O Son of God, who wast born of a Virgin, who sing to Thee. Alleluia."

AFTER THE LITTLE ENTRANCE:

TROPARION OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST: (*Tone Four*)

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, hath given rise to the light of knowledge in the world; for they that worshipped the stars did learn therefrom to worship Thee, O Sun of Justice, and to know that from the east of the Highest Thou didst come. O Lord, glory to Thee.

KONTAKION OF THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST: (*Tone Three*)

Today the Virgin giveth birth to the Transcendent in essence; to the Unapproachable, the earth doth offer a small cave; Angels join in choir with shepherds in giving glory; with a star the Magi travel upon their journey; for our sakes is born a young Child, He Who existed before the ages as God.

ANTI-TRISAGION HYMN (*Sung instead of "Holy God, Holy Mighty,...":*)

"As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia!"

EPISTLE: Galatians 4:4-7 (*The Nativity of our Lord*)

HOLY GOSPEL: Matthew 2:1-12 (*The Nativity of our Lord*)

Concerning the "Kiss of Peace," prior to the Nicene Creed, we encourage you to greet those around you with a handshake, saying: "**Christ Is Born!**"... the response being: "**Glorify Him!**" In this way, we express our faith that the Word of God has taken on flesh and "is indeed with us" ("*Emmanuel*"); and our love for one another in our church is made manifest.

God is With Us! He is and Always Shall Be!

MEGALYNARION (*Instead of "It Is Truly Meet..." – for St. Basil's Liturgy – Tone Six*):
In thee rejoiceth all creation, O thou who art full of grace: the hierarchy of the angels, and all mankind, O consecrated temple and paradise endowed with speech; glory of virginity of whom God, Who is our God before the ages was incarnate and became a little child. For He made thy womb a throne, and thy belly did He make more spacious than the heavens. In thee doth all creation rejoice, O thou who art full of grace, and it glorifieth thee.

NOTE: *The Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great requires "In thee rejoiceth all creation" for the Megalynarion. However, as the faithful depart the church, the choir will sing the "Megalynarion of the Nativity of Christ" which is provided below.*

KOINONIKON (*Communion Hymn ... Tone Eight*):
"The Lord hath sent redemption to His people. Alleluia!"

INSTEAD OF "We Have Seen The True Light...":
See "Troparion Of The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ" Above.

To be sung as the Faithful depart the Church ...

MEGALYNARION – NATIVITY OF CHRIST (*Instead of "It Is Truly Meet..." T-One*):
Magnify, O my soul, her who is more honorable and more exalted in glory than the heavenly hosts.

I behold a strange and wonderful mystery: the cave a heaven, the Virgin a cherubic throne, and the manger a noble place in which hath lain Christ the uncontained God. Let us, therefore, praise and magnify Him.

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- THIS WEEK'S EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS -

(Church Office: Office Hours to vary this week.)

**NOTE: From Christmas Day until January 4. inclusive.
there is a General Dispensation from All fasting!**

+ Monday, December 25 – THE NATIVITY IN THE FLESH OF OUR LORD, GOD & SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST! ... *Christ is Born! Glorify Him!*

+ Saturday, December 30 – GREAT VESPERS – 5 PM.

+ Sunday, December 31 – SUNDAY BEFORE THE THEOPHANY OF CHRIST (Which Falls on The Apodosis [Leave-Taking] of The Nativity of Christ) – MATINS (Morning Prayers) @ 8:30 AM & DIVINE LITURGY @ 9:30 AM ... Followed by Agape / Fellowship in our Social Hall ... **NO CHURCH SCHOOL.**

+ Friday, January 5 – GREAT (ROYAL) HOURS FOR THE THEOPHANY (EPIPHANY) OF OUR LORD – 9 AM ... and ... FESTAL MATINS (ORTHROS) FOR THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD – 6 PM ... Followed By THE GREAT BLESSING OF THE WATERS and THE FESTAL DIVINE LITURGY OF ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM FOR THE THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD with The Baptism & Chrismation of The Catechumen, Andrew Bodine and The Chrismation of The Catechumen, Robert Hines – 7 PM – followed by Agape/Fellowship in our Hall.

+ Saturday, January 6 – THE FEAST OF THE DIVINE EPIPHANY / THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD, GOD & SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST! ... and ... GREAT VESPERS – 5 PM.

... and ...

House Blessings Begin! ... NEW! NEW! NEW! ... If you would like your Home Blessed this year, please call the Church Office and ask to be put on the House Blessing List for 2018 ... Thank You! The Church Secretary, Karen, or Fr. Don will then contact you to schedule a time for the Blessing of your Home!

+ Sunday, January 7 – SYNAXIS OF THE HOLY PROPHET, FORERUNNER & BAPTIST JOHN ... MATINS (Morning Prayers) @ 8:30 AM & DIVINE LITURGY @ 9:30 AM ... Followed by Fellowship in the Social Hall & Church School for our Youth ... HAPPY NEW YEAR! ...

May our Lord Bless all within our St. Mary Parish Family with a Healthy, Joyous & Peaceful (John 14:27) New Year!

+++ CONFESSIO N SCHEDULE +++

After All Weekday & Saturday Services and By Appointment Before Services.

Due to Fr.'s Commitment to Matins, Confession Will Not Be Offered On Sunday Mornings.

THOSE IN SPECIAL NEED OF OUR PRAYERS: CONEMAUGH VALLEY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL: Margaret Abraham (#R-934); ARBUTUS PARK MANOR: Mitchell Azar (#423) & Lottie Bertino (#325); CAMBRIA CARE CENTER: Donna Haidar (#130) & Marie Hyde (#413); LAURELVIEW VILLAGE: Janice Fronis (#918), Matushka Olga Govrusik (#528), Vivian Salem (#111) & Dorothy Wensel (#812); THE VILLA ASSISTED LIVING: Lillian Azar (#307) ... and ... IN TREATMENT, RECOVERING AND / OR "SHUT-IN AT HOME": Becky Azar; Renee D'Ettorre; Patty Devich; Elaine Heider; Robert & Joseph Hines; Olga Hodge; Elias Jackson; Infant, Isaiah Joseph Krestar & Dorothy (Rose) Polke. **May God Be With All of Them & All of Those Who are Ill and / or in Need!**

Ten Commandments for a Happy Church!

- 1) Speak to people. Speak to everyone, especially to those whom you don't know. There is nothing quite so nice as a cheerful word of greeting.
- 2) Smile at people. It takes 72 muscles to frown and only 14 to smile. Your smile is one of your finest assets. Use it! It doesn't cost a thing!!!
- 3) Call people by name. The sweetest music to any person's ears is the sound of his or her own name. If you don't know the person's name, introduce yourself and likely the person will respond with his or her name.
- 4) Be friendly & helpful. If you want friends, learn to be a friend. Everyone needs them. No one has too many.
- 5) Be cordial. Try to speak and act as if everything you do is a genuine pleasure.
- 6) Be genuinely interested in people. Try to like everybody and everybody will like you. Do not limit yourself to a few friends when there are so many likable people about you.
- 7) Be generous with praise. And be just as sparing with criticism.
- 8) Be considerate of the feelings of others. Usually, there are three sides to a controversy: yours, the other person's and the right one.
- 9) Be alert to give service. What we do for others counts most in life. Try giving yourself away. It's fun!
- 10) Develop a sense of humor. To this good sense of humor, add a generous dose of patience and a dash of humility. Then get ready to receive many blessings. They're sure to come!

PRIEST'S MESSAGE: Janet, Christopher, Stephen & I would like to wish all members of our Parish Family a most Joyous, Blessed & Peaceful (John 14:27) "Twelve Days of Christmas" and "A Healthy & Joyous New Year!" Thanks also to all of you for your constant prayers, support & love throughout the last 31 ½ years.
May God Grant Our St. Mary Parish Family Many, Many Years!

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

In The Love Of Our Newborn Lord,

+ ***Fr. Don***

Epistle

(The Feast of The Nativity of Our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ)

Priest: Let us attend.

Reader: *Let all the earth worship Thee and sing to Thee. Shout with Joy to God, all the earth.*

Priest: Wisdom.

Reader: The Reading is from St. Paul's Letter to the Galatians (4:4-7)

Priest: Let us attend.

BRETHREN, when the time had fully come, God sent forth His Son, born of woman, born under the Law, to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" Therefore, you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.



+ + + *Over* + + +

Holy Gospel

(The Feast of The Nativity of Our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ)

The reading is from the Holy Gospel
according to Matthew 2:1-12

NOW, when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod the king, behold, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, saying, "Where is He who has been born king of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and have come to worship Him." When Herod the king heard this, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him; and assembling all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Christ was to be born. They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet: 'And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judea, are by no means least among the rulers of Judea; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern My people Israel.' " Then Herod summoned the wise men secretly and ascertained from them what time the star appeared; and he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child, and when you have found Him bring me word, that I too may come and worship Him." When they had heard the king they went their way; and lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, until it came to rest over the place where the child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy; and going into the house they saw the child with Mary His mother, and they fell down and worshiped Him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh. And being warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they departed to their own country by another way.



*The Nativity of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ – December 25, 2017**

But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son (Galatians 4:4) to save the human race. And when nine months were fulfilled from the Annunciation, when the Archangel Gabriel had appeared to the Most-holy Virgin in Nazareth, saying, *Rejoice, thou that art highly favored ... behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son* (Luke 1:28, 31), at that time there went forth a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the people of the Roman Empire should be taxed. In accordance with this decree, everyone had to go to his own town and be registered. That is why the righteous Joseph came with the Most-holy Virgin to Bethlehem, the city of David, for they were both of the royal lineage of David. Since many people descended on this small town for the census, Joseph and Mary were unable to find lodging in any house, and they sought shelter in a cave which shepherds used as a sheepfold. In this cave on the night between Saturday and Sunday, on the 25th of December-the Most-holy Virgin gave birth to the Savior of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. Giving birth to Him without pain just as He was conceived without sin by the Holy Spirit and not by man, she herself wrapped Him in swaddling clothes, worshiped Him as God, and laid Him in a manger. Then the righteous Joseph drew near and worshiped Him as the Divine Fruit of the Virgin's womb. Then the shepherds came in from the fields, directed by an angel of God, and worshiped Him as the Messiah and Savior. The shepherds heard a multitude of God's angels singing: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men* (Luke 2:14). At that time three wise men arrived from the east, led by a wondrous star, bearing their gifts: gold, frankincense and myrrh. They worshiped Him as the King of kings, and offered Him their gifts (Matthew 2). Thus entered the world He Whose coming was foretold by the prophets, and Who was born in the same manner in which it had been prophesied: of a Most-holy Virgin, in the town of Bethlehem, of the lineage of David according to the flesh, at the time when there was no king in Jerusalem of the lineage of Judah, but rather when Herod, a foreigner, was reigning. After many types and prefigurings, messengers and heralds, prophets and righteous men, wise men and

kings, finally He appeared, the Lord of the world and King of kings, to perform the work of the salvation of mankind, which could not be performed by His servants. To Him be eternal glory and praise! Amen.

REFLECTION

The Lord Jesus, born in Bethlehem, was first worshiped by shepherds and wise men (astrologers) from the east—the simplest and the wisest of this world. Even today, those who most sincerely worship the Lord Jesus as God and Savior are the simplest and the wisest of this world. Perverted simplicity and half-learned wisdom were always the enemies of Christ's divinity and His Gospel. But who were these wise men from the east? This question was especially studied by St. Dimitri of Rostov. He claims that they were kings of certain smaller regions or individual towns in Persia, Arabia and Egypt. At the same time, they were erudite in the knowledge of astronomy. This wondrous star appeared to them, which announced the birth of the New King. According to St. Dimitri, this star appeared to them nine months before the birth of the Lord Jesus, i.e., at the time of His conception by the Most-holy Theotokos. They spent nine months in studying this star, in preparing for the journey and in traveling. They arrived in Bethlehem shortly after the birth of the Savior of the world. One of them was called Melchior. He was old, with long white hair and beard. He offered the Lord the gift of gold. The second was called Caspar, of ruddy face, young and beardless. He offered the Lord the gift of frankincense. The third was called Balthasar, of dark complexion and a very heavy beard. He offered the Lord the gift of myrrh. After their deaths, their bodies were taken to Constantinople, from Constantinople to Milan, and from Milan to Cologne. It can be added that these three wise men were representatives of the three main races of men that descended from Noah's three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth. The Persian represented the Japhethites, the Arabian represented the Semites, and the Egyptian represented the Hamites. Thus it can be said that, through these three, the whole human race worshiped the Incarnate Lord and God.

To God Be Glory and Praise Always! Amen.

+ How to Prepare for the Holy Eucharist +

To all those who partake of the Body & Blood of Christ when they participate in the Divine Liturgy:

As Orthodox Christians, we are called to the Chalice each and every time that we celebrate the Divine Liturgy; however, it is most essential that we prepare ourselves to receive the Lord, so that we will not approach unworthily and risk experiencing the "consuming," rather than the "purifying," fire of the Eucharist.

With this in mind, the following guidelines will help us in our preparation:

+++ No excessive partying or socializing on Saturday evening ... we should keep ourselves in a quiet & prayerful atmosphere, reading the gospels and epistles of the New Testament and praying the "Prayers of Preparation" before Communion (these latter prayers can also be done on Sunday Morning if there is time);

+++ Maintain a prayerful atmosphere on Sunday morning ... (difficult with children, yes, but not impossible ... try it!);

+++ No consumption of food or drink past a reasonable bedtime the night before (preferably no later than Midnight) ... this includes no coffee, no smoking and no chewing gum on Sunday morning as well;

+++ If you need your medicine in the morning, please take it ... if you are supposed to eat or drink something with it, then do so as moderately as possible;

+++ As always, we should partake of the Sacrament of Confession at least 2 - 4 times a year if we are taking Communion frequently (hint: use the 4 fasting periods of the liturgical year...Advent, Great Lent, Apostles' Fast & Dormition Fast) ... if we are not frequent communicants (3-4 times per month), then Confession before Communion is necessary each time we partake;

+++ At the very least, attend the Sunday cycle of prayer ... Saturday Evening Vespers, Sunday Morning Matins (Morning Prayers) and Sunday Divine Liturgy ... if we attend Sunday Liturgy irregularly (e.g. – missing more than once a month), then we should not be taking Communion each time we attend, unless we have had Confession in the recent days prior (some exceptions – e.g. work or vacation);

+++ Be on time to the Divine Services and be at Peace with all people ... if we arrive at Church after the Little Entrance with the Gospel, we should not receive Communion on that day ... it is truly a sign of disrespect when we enter the services late and / or when we leave the Liturgy early (before the Dismissal) ... and ... our Lord tells us that we cannot love God and hate our brother ... for whoever is "angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment;" (Matthew 5:22) ... and ...

+++ Fellowship Hour is not to be started until after the Divine Liturgy is completed!

Please strive to practice these Spiritual Disciplines and at the very least, observe the guidelines above concerning Fasting, Confession & regular Divine Liturgy Attendance.

IMPORTANT NOTICE REGARDING PARISHIONER ENVELOPES & "ARCHDIOCESE OFFERING"

Please be reminded that our St. Mary Parish Council has, after prayer, discussion & review of our current Envelope System and Financial Offerings to the Archdiocese, approved a few changes to our current Envelope System:

a) we have moved into a new "System" which makes use of a "Packet," rather than a Box of Envelopes ... these are now available after Church in the Church School Vestibule ... please see Renee D'Ettorre, Khouria Janet or Fr. Don if you need assistance;

b) regarding the Archdiocese Assessment that was collected "per baptized soul" for many years, our Antiochian Archdiocese, in 2006, moved into a system of "proportionate giving" ... to provide an example to us all and to take away some of the time consuming record keeping that was involved with the system of "assessments" ... thus all parishioners are reminded that, in keeping with the Holy Scriptures, our St. Mary Parish Family submits 10% of our Annual Receipts (minus Fundraiser Expenses, Donations, and a few other deductions) to the Archdiocese, whether we receive this amount from our Parishioners or not ... therefore, all of our Faithful are asked to please submit their Archdiocesan Offering, ***which is \$50 per Baptized Soul in your Family, to our St. Mary Parish as soon as they are able;***

c) *in light of the above, as we have in the past, we are using an "Archdiocese Envelope" (Purple Border) ... it is in the February section of your Packet of Envelopes* ... again, please submit this with the appropriate Offering (***\$50 per Baptized Soul***) ... and, if you wish to spread this Offering out over a short period of time, please do so, and indicate this on your Envelope ... **and ...**

d) lastly, note that only those Offerings that are received by Sunday, December 24, 2017, will be recorded as 2017 Contributions. The "End of the Year Statements" will be mailed out by the end of January ... if you do not get yours, please call the Parish Office.

If you have any questions about this part of your Calling to Christian Stewardship, please see Fr. Don or Edward Makdad.

Thank You and God Bless You & Your Families During 2018 and Always!

+ ST. MARY PARISH – FINANCIAL NOTES FOR 2017 / 2018 +

- As it has been noted during the last several years, our Archdiocese has moved into a “Tithing” system of giving in regards to our parishes and their contributions for our Archdiocesan Ministries. In 2006 we were asked to give 8% of our Parish’s Income to the Archdiocese, in 2007 it was 9% and since 2008 and forward, it has been 10% ... this was approved at the 2005 Archdiocesan Convention in Dearborn, MI. In the Holy Scriptures, our Lord asks for our “Tithe” (10%), our returning 10% of what He has blessed us with so that His Work may be done ... (Leviticus 27:30 / Deuteronomy 14:22–29 / Malachi 3:8). Therefore, let us offer our thanks to God for the wise guidance of our Hierarchical, Clergy & Lay Leadership as we seek to always fulfill His Will for His Vineyard, the Church;
- Also, please be reminded that the “Archdiocese Obligation” is **\$50.00 per baptized person in your family** ... and as in the past, our Parish Council asks that you please submit your contribution towards this as soon as you are able, and no later than the Sunday before Christmas, using the Archdiocese Envelope (Purple Border) that is in your February Packet of Envelopes;
- Along with all of this, please know that the Archdiocese Budget has been increasing yearly due to our rapid growth over the last several years, “Thanks be to God!” Today, an estimated 350,000 faithful of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America are served by nine hierarchs and over four-hundred and fifty clergy in 238 churches throughout the United States & Canada. For years now, other Orthodox jurisdictions have been assessing their membership almost double this amount (**\$50.00 per baptized soul**) per year, not to mention their Diocesan assessments. There are no Diocesan Assessments within the Antiochian Archdiocese. Thus, please plan for this as you prayerfully plan your stewardship for 2018;
- Lastly, note that only those offerings which were received by Sunday, December 24, 2017, will be recorded as 2017 Contributions. The “End of the Year Statements” will be mailed out in January 2018 ... if you do not get yours, please call the Parish Office ... **and** ...
- If you have any questions about this part of your stewardship, please see Fr. Don or Edward Makdad. Thank You!

+++ ORDER OF ST. IGNATIUS – 2017 / 2018 +++

Today, we express our appreciation for the various ministries of The Order of St. Ignatius. Thus, we say "Thank You!" to the Members of this Service Order. **May God Bless Them All & Grant Them Many Years!** In light of this, please also consider the following!

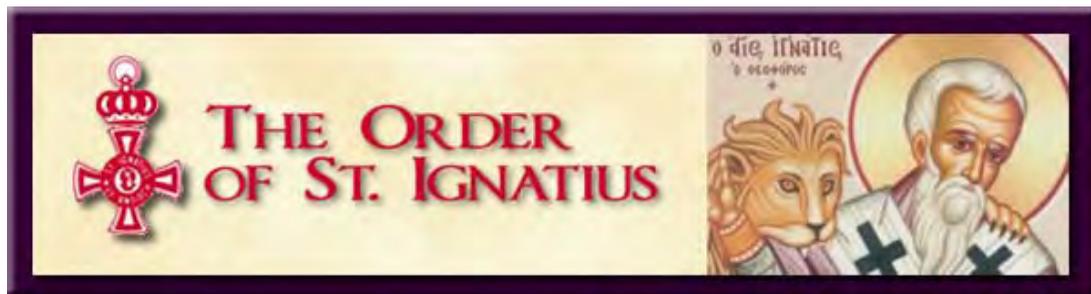
OUR CALLING, ORTHODOX PHILANTHROPIST?

Philanthropist...a beautiful sounding word. Philanthropist...a word even more beautiful in meaning. Philanthropist ... lover of mankind! We are all called to be philanthropists ... to love each other ... to take care of each other ... but how?

In our Antiochian Orthodox Archdiocese, a vehicle of Orthodox Philanthropy was called into existence by our beloved Chief Shepherd & Father of Thrice-Blessed Memory, Metropolitan PHILIP, when he created "The Order of St. Ignatius" (1976). May Saidna PHILIP's Memory Be Ever Eternal! As you have heard for many years, the Order serves our Archdiocese as her philanthropic arm through its support of the Antiochian Village, our educational programs, our missions, our retired clergy, and many, many other worthy ministries. For the past forty-one years this has been accomplished through a body of people, now over four thousand in number, who have been willing to serve God through committed giving.

If you have considered the Order before and didn't join, there are always opportunities to learn more ... just ask any one of our parishioners who are members of the Order ... *Tony Abraham, Jim Azar, Larry Bertino, Lisa Catanese, Renee D'Ettorre, William & Lindsay (Heider) Fennell, Albert Ghantous, Elaine Heider, Norman Joseph, Dr. Adib Khouzami, Ed Makdad, Jr., Sandy Milkie, Sub-Deacon Todd Mokhiber, Christine Salem, Fr. Don, Khouria Janet, Christopher & Stephen Shadid and Loretta Shahade.*

You are invited to discover how God's abundance toward you may be thankfully returned to Him through generosity toward His People. "Come and See!"...*God may be calling you to serve Him in this way.*



+++ OVER PLEASE +++

Some Thoughts on the Order of St. Ignatius ...

(His Grace, Bishop THOMAS & Fr. Don ask that you please consider learning about and joining this worthy ministry of our Archdiocese ... His Grace would be very happy to induct you into The Order at a time & place convenient for you ... for more information, please see Fr. Don or any of our other parishioners who have joined ... see list on front of this Insert).

Why you should join the Order of St. Ignatius of Antioch?

- Service and commitment to the Church
- Teach the Orthodox way by utilizing your talents.
- Involvement in the life of the Church, willingly and joyfully, being instruments of peace.
- Grateful to Almighty God for His many blessings.
- Never say "No" when the Lord and the Church call for a job to get done.
- Acknowledgement of our sinfulness and weakness; realizing the need for growth through the Sacraments of the Church.
- Totally committed and dedicated to the growth of the Archdiocese and the realization of its programs and goals.
- Inner satisfaction and fulfillment by being part of a dynamic, dedicated and visionary group of faithful, where love and friendship grow.
- Unselfish giving and living for the glory of God not only on the parish and regional level but on the Archdiocese level as well.

Donate to the Order through Electronic Fund Transfer ...

QUICK, EASY, SIMPLE AND NO CHARGE FOR THE SERVICE.

- For the rank of Knight or Dame, which is a \$500 donation per year, \$41.67 is deducted around the 5th of each month.
- For the rank of Commander, which is a \$1,000 donation per year, \$83.34 is deducted around the 5th of each month.
- Life Members (\$15,000 either in one donation or spread over three years) can also have a monthly deduction. Please contact the Administrator at the Archdiocese for more info.
- Complete an Order application and include a signed authorization form (available for print at www.orderofstignatius.org or from the Administrator) which authorizes The Order to begin deductions the following month.
- Include the required \$60 induction fee with the application and the banking information will be taken from the check.
- Members can upgrade at any time.
- Members on the EFT system never receive a dues reminder or have to be concerned about writing a check and finding a stamp.

Now The Order can be more accessible to members of the Archdiocese through the Electronic Fund Transfer System (EFT). Many people pay their utility bills, rent, mortgages, car payments and gym dues through automatic deductions. It is far more time efficient and cost effective to eliminate checks, stamps, and having to remember to pay invoices.

Orthodox Christian Educational Opportunities and Resources:

(If you would like any further information about anything referenced here, you may contact Vera Acker at KhVeraAcker@gmail.com.)

Most Holy Theotokos Rescuer of the Perishing - a new Orthodox Assisted Living Facility in Clearwater, Florida. For more information, contact Peter Schweitzer, who has been instrumental in its establishment: info@theotokosrescueroftheperishing.org or [727-421-0718](tel:727-421-0718)

Saint Emmelia Homeschooling Conferences in three locations

Our conferences are both educational and retreat-like, with many opportunities for worship and fellowship with other Orthodox homeschooling families. Workshops cover topics of interest to inquiring, beginning, and veteran homeschoolers and supporting spouses. If your entire family cannot attend, we welcome solo attendees, as well!

Three locations: East (Bolivar, PA); South (Houston, TX); and West (Dunlap, CA).

Saint Thomas House in Franklin, Tennessee, is a residential ministry for young people (ages 18-25) who desire to live, learn, and serve together in the traditions of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Contact St Ignatius Church in Franklin for information.

The Center for Orthodox Thought and Culture at Eastern University:

A fully accredited undergraduate education with a broad range of majors and also including a minor in Orthodox Thought and Culture in its Arabic, Greek and Slavic iterations. Also included will be liturgical and community life.

St. Raphael School, a live online Orthodox school for our home school families, offers a liberal arts curriculum, Orthodox catechism, and Biblical Greek courses.

St Constantine School

This new Antiochian Orthodox school in Houston, Texas, is now accepting applications for all grade levels, kindergarten through undergraduate college. To apply or find more information about classical Christian education at TSCS and our experienced, motivated educators, please visit the website.

Saint Sophia Orthodox Christian Academy

The Saint Sophia Orthodox Christian Academy is located in Johnstown, PA, and serves students from the Greater Johnstown region. Saint Sophia Academy exists as a mission and ministry of the Orthodox Parishes of the Greater Johnstown area and is committed to providing a quality classic or traditional academic learning experience for its students, one that is grounded within the life, beliefs and content of the Orthodox Church.

Christ the Savior Academy

An Orthodox, classical elementary school in Wichita, KS, spanning from Junior Kindergarten to 5th Grade. It follows a liberal arts curriculum, in which the students study English grammar, learn Latin and Greek, read classic literature, pursue music and art, and experience the spiritual wealth of the Orthodox Christian faith and life.

Studying at the Balamand University:

The President of the University at Balamand has appointed me as his assistant to help with recruitment, so I am informing you about the educational opportunities that exist at the Balamand Seminary. For information about the university, please visit their website:

Courses at the Balamand University are offered in English.

Antiochian House of Studies:

I also serve as the overseer for the Antiochian House of Studies. The House of Studies has programs that lead to degrees in theology. These programs are accredited. For information, visit their page on the Antiochian Archdiocese website.

I am also presently serving on the Board of Trustees of **St Tikhon's Theological Seminary**. Please visit their website for more information.

University of Saint Katherine

San Marcos, CA

Saint Katherine College provides a balanced education in the liberal arts and sciences, founded and rooted in the life of the Orthodox Christian Tradition.

Be the Bee Retreats

Be the Bee is a pan-Orthodox endeavor, reaching out to young people with videos on living the Christian Life. BeeTreats are open to all area Orthodox parishes, regardless of jurisdiction. As a pan-Orthodox project, it's a chance for us all to come together in fellowship, service, and worship for a great day in Christ! Please promote the BeeTreat in your area.

**DO NOT FORGET TO BUY YOUR SCRIP AFTER CHURCH TODAY!
WE HAVE ALL THE BRANDS YOU NEED...GIANT EAGLE, SHEETZ, ETC!**

+ **IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING PRAYER REQUESTS FOR THE WEEKLY BULLETIN** +
In your Prayer Requests, please indicate whether each person is an Orthodox or non-Orthodox Christian, so that Fr. can properly commemorate your Orthodox Christian Loved Ones on the Holy Paten, and thus in the Chalice. Please know that all names that you submit are commemorated in the Holy Services on Sunday and throughout the Week. It is indeed an awesome responsibility & great Joy to offer your Prayers before God! **Thank You & God Bless!**

+ + + **PLEASE MARK YOUR CALENDAR** + + +

*Our ministries at "Saturday's / Sunday's Kitchen" in 2018 will be on
Sun., Jan. 28, Sat., May 26 & Sat., Dec. 1.*

If you can help us, please call the Office (255-2148) and let us know!

Thank You & God Bless!

+ + + A Prayer for Peace + + +

With Terrorism and so many other forms of violence becoming almost a daily tragedy, Fr. Don would like to ask all of our Faithful to join him in offering "A Prayer for Peace" for one and all. Please add this to your Rule of Prayer as we seek the Peace that only God can provide through the Power of the Holy Spirit, for the Peace of this world is so temporary & fleeting ([John](#) 14:27). May God help us to remember that our true enemies are the Powers of Darkness, not the flesh & blood of our Lord's Creation!

Almighty God and Creator, You are the Father of all people on the earth. Guide, I pray, all the nations and their leaders in the ways of justice and peace. Protect us from the evils of injustice, prejudice, exploitation, conflict and war. Help us to put away mistrust, bitterness and hatred. Teach us to cease the storing and using of implements of war. Lead us to find peace, respect and freedom. Unite us in the making and sharing of tools of peace against ignorance, poverty, disease and oppression. Grant that we may grow in harmony and friendship as brothers and sisters created in Your image, to Your honor and praise. Amen.

+ + + ST. MARY PARISH FAMILY WISH & NEEDS LIST + + +

Greetings to all who read this Announcement ... please read on.

Our St. Mary Parish Family has a "Wish & Needs" List for our ministries within our Parish and our Community. How can you help? First & foremost, please keep our Parish Family in your prayers as we seek to be the Church, the Body of Christ present & active in the world today. Secondly, if you are able to offer something towards any of these, please see Fr. Don, Margie Hamaty or Larry Bertino. If you can think of any items that you believe our Parish needs or could use, please let us know. These are just some of the items on our "Wish & Needs" List:

+ Donations towards the completed Sewer Line Replacement Project & Bathroom Repairs that were necessary ...

+ Life-Size Icons on Back Wall of Altar Area - American & Healing Hierarchical Saints ... if 2 ordered at a time, cost is \$1500 apiece ... only two spaces left ...

+ Vestibule Icon Project ... Thematic Iconography in our Narthex / Candle Area ... need Sponsors for Phases #1 & #3 ...

+ Cleaning & Refinishing of our Church Pews ...

+ Replacement of Front & Rear Doors near Offices ... these will be etched with a Christian Design and will be more energy efficient, as well as aesthetically pleasing ... existing doors are very old and energy inefficient ...

+ Replacement of Wooden Doors in Main Building (Church Vestibule, Maintenance Room & Bathrooms) ...

Any donation that you can offer will be most appreciated.

Thank You & God Bless!

St. Mary Parish Financial Snapshot

As of November 30, 2017

	<u>November 2017</u>	<u>Year to Date (YTD)</u>
Parishioners' Offerings	\$ 23,720.60	\$ 111,713.60
Expenses Paid	\$ 9,348.61	\$ 159,256.61
Parishioners' Offerings <u>vs.</u> Expenses Paid	<u>\$ 14,371.99</u>	<u>\$ - 47,543.01</u>

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE ONLY INCOME LISTED HERE IS FROM PARISHIONERS' DONATIONS.
ALSO ... THIS REPORT WILL NOT BE REVIEWED AND VOTED ON UNTIL OUR JAN. 2018 COUNCIL MTG.

WE HAVE A WEBSITE ... CAN WE HAVE YOUR E-MAIL ADDRESS?

Did you know that our Parish has a Website ... and ... our Parish Office is connected to the Internet?!? Yes, we are "catching up" with Technology and we have some interesting things on our Site (e.g. a video of the 1960s Groundbreaking and Consecration of our Church). Jay McClatchey is our Web Master. If you will give us your e-mail address, we can keep in touch with you as well. Lastly, if there is any news that you would like posted on our Site and / or if you have any ideas, please contact Fr. Don and Jay.

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN MISSION CENTER (OCMC) – 2017 MISSION TRIPS!

OCMC is planning 16 Orthodox Mission Teams in 2017 and once again, we need your assistance. We need clergy leaders and hard working volunteers! OCMC Mission Teams need volunteers in 2017. There are openings for hard workers in Albania, Guatemala, Kenya, Indonesia, Alaska and Mexico. Details are available on the OCMC website ... www.ocmc.org. Please consider these opportunities to serve in missions. Information and applications for the Teams can be found at: www.ocmc.org. If you have any questions, or are interested in participating, please contact us.

+ IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING PRAYER REQUESTS FOR THE WEEKLY BULLETIN +

In your Prayer Requests, please indicate whether each person is an Orthodox or non-Orthodox Christian, so that Fr. can properly commemorate your Orthodox Christian Loved Ones on the Holy Paten, and thus in the Chalice. Please know that ALL names that you submit are commemorated in the Holy Services on Sunday and throughout the Week. It is indeed an awesome responsibility & great Joy to offer your Prayers before God! **Thank You!**

CAN WE KEEP IN TOUCH WITH YOU VIA E-MAIL?: If you will give us your e-mail address, we can keep in touch with you concerning Parish News, Events, etc. We will not share your information with anyone. Please send your e-mail address to office@stmaryaocc.org ... **Thank You & God Bless!**

+ ANTIOCHIAN ORTHODOX REWARDS PROGRAM +

The Antiochian Archdiocese Board of Trustees, with the support of the Bishops and endorsement from Metropolitan Joseph, are extremely excited to announce the Antiochian Orthodox Rewards Program. This is an online shopping rewards program connecting individuals and their businesses to their favorite retailers. It also provides the ability to order gift cards from a large selection through the Gift Card Mall including Visa, American Express, Target, Best Buy, Barnes & Noble, iTunes, department stores and more.

The program creates an automatic monetary contribution that will go directly to our parish as well as a portion being contributed to the Clergy Retirement Fund. We believe this is a great way for parishioners to earn money for their parish on everyday purchases while finding deals and exclusive discounts from thousands of retailers.

To view an overview video about the Antiochian Orthodox Rewards Program please click here: <https://vimeo.com/193822498>.

Parishioners will simply access the site via antiochian.org/rewardsprogram and register with their email. Each family member who shops online should register. For additional ease, the shopper will not have to access the rewards site prior to making their purchases if they install the "Support Button" on their Chrome, Safari, or Firefox Browser. Once installed, every time they explore the web, approved sites will be indicated by an Orthodox cross icon. They will also see the contribution percentage donated on each site. A link to a tutorial/overview video is noted above.

If you have any questions, please email: info@philanthropyportal.com. Hopefully, this will provide many benefits to our parish and the Clergy Retirement Fund!

MONTHLY CANDLES: The 2018 Monthly Candle Prayer Sheets are in The Brochure Rack outside of Fr. Don's Office window in the Hallway. There are 3 Monthly Candles here at our St. Mary Parish: (1) **Paschal Candles (2 large decorated Candles on each side of Holy Doors)**; (2) **Proskamedia Candle (burns on Altar near the Tabernacle 24/7)** & (3) **Seven-Branched Candle (on top of Tabernacle)** ... **requested Donation ... \$20 per Candle per Month.** Please note that there can be more than 1 sponsor per candle per month. Also, unless a candle is sponsored for more than 1 month, sponsorship expires at end of the month, no matter when it is started in that month. ***Thank You & God Bless!***

HOLY OBLATION & AGAPE (FELLOWSHIP) SPONSORS NEEDED FOR 2018!

The prayerful work of offering the Holy Bread for our Divine Liturgy, and the Refreshments for our "Fellowship Hour / Time of Agape (Love)" are sacred opportunities for us to participate in the Liturgical Prayer of the Church and we should all participate when we are able. In the Holy Oblation, we bring forth our simple gifts of bread, wine & water to God, with our prayers that He will return them to us as the Body & Blood of His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ! The Agape (Love) Refreshments are our offering of sustenance & sharing of God's Gifts of Food & Drink as we break our Fast together in Christian Love. Each & every Sunday is a "little Pascha" for us, thus, as we do on Pascha, we are called to break bread together in Christian Love ... the Meal of Agape!

Unfortunately, we are having difficulty in obtaining Sponsors for the Holy Bread and for the Agape Fellowship after the Divine Liturgy. It is our Orthodox tradition that each parishioner, as a member of our St. Mary Parish Family, participate in these ministries.

When we pass the Sign-Up Sheet around in the Sanctuary, or at any time, you may sign-up for this wonderful ministry / opportunity. The Sign-Up Sheets are on clipboards which are located outside of the Priest's Office on the Pamphlet Table.

Thank you for your cooperation ... God Bless!

Home Nursing Agency Seeking Volunteers to Support Hospice Families & Grieving Children

Do you want to use your life to make a profound impact for others? Consider becoming a Home Nursing Agency volunteer for Hospice or the Healing Patch program for grieving children and their families. Home Nursing Agency has the right opportunity to fit your schedule, skills, and comfort level. Hospice volunteers offer companionship and show compassion as they support hospice patients and their families, both during the hospice care journey and after the patients have passed away.

Volunteers are the heart of the Healing Patch, a free program for grieving children and their families. Volunteers serve in many roles by facilitating groups, serving food, greeting attendees, sewing quilt squares and memory bears, and assisting with special projects.

If you are interested in becoming a volunteer for Hospice or the Healing Patch, or would like to learn more, please contact our Volunteer Coordinators at 1-800-445-6262 or visit www.homenursingagency.com.

READINGS & INSPIRATION from the Diocese of Charleston



SPIRITUAL NOTES + BIBLE STUDY + SPIRITUAL NUGGETS

Please note that there is a new section on our Diocesan Webpage at the Antiochian Archdiocese Website ... antiochian.org/charleston/readings. Here you will find: **"Spiritual Notes"** (His Grace, Bishop THOMAS has long provided his flock with appropriate weekly teachings selected from his treasured collection of essays, articles, homilies & more, including many rare pieces from earlier decades of The Word), **"Bible Study"** (A weekly study of scripture from His Grace, Bishop THOMAS, Fr. Stephen DeYoung & the Diocese of Charleston, Oakland and the Mid-Atlantic) and **"Spiritual Nuggets"** (Brief meditations & quotations offered by Fr. Noah Bushelli).

"Thank You!" to our Father-in-Christ and Shepherd, His Grace, Bishop THOMAS for this opportunity to grow in our knowledge "of" God! **May God Grant Saidna THOMAS Many, Many Years!**

FAMILY KITCHEN / SATURDAY KITCHEN WISH & NEEDS LIST: The Family Kitchen / Saturday Kitchen (Clinton Street – Downtown) has issued a new "Wish & Needs List" ... *Coffee, Flour, Brown Sugar, Sugar & Creamer Packets, Sweet & Low / Equal Packets, Salt & Pepper, Parsley Flakes, Garlic Salt, Paprika, Poultry Seasoning, Onion Salt, Allspice, Lemon Pepper, Rosemary, Italian Seasoning, Chili Powder, Pepper Flakes & Meat Tenderizer.* If you can help by donating any of these, or perhaps a SCRIP Card for Giant Eagle, etc., that would be greatly appreciated! ***Thank You and God Bless!***

"Find out how much God has given you. From it, take what you need. The remainder which you do not require is needed by others. The excesses of the rich are the necessities of the poor." – Blessed Augustine

ST. MARY SCRIP PROGRAM ... NEWS & NOTES!

Attention Ladies ... Join Us For A Scrip Lunch!

- + Please join the Ladies of St. Mary to fundraise – while we eat!
- + 2nd Tues. of each month ... January 2017 Location = call Office.
- + Buy a Gift Card from Olga, Becky or Kelli (or share one with a friend) and St. Mary will earn a % of whatever you spend, including the Tip!

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ST. MARY SCRIP PROGRAM ... REMINDERS!

Attention Ladies ... Join Us For A Scrip Lunch!

- + Please join the Ladies of St. Mary to fundraise – while we eat!
- + 2nd Tues. of each month ... 11 AM ... January 2017 Location = call Office.
- + Buy a Gift Card from Olga, Becky or Kelli (or share one with a friend) and St. Mary will earn a % of whatever you spend, including the Tip!

***Please do not forget to buy your Scrip after Church today ... remember,
St. Mary SCRIP is Fund-Raising while you shop!***

***** DO NOT FORGET TO BUY YOUR SCRIP AFTER CHURCH TODAY!
WE HAVE ALL THE BRANDS YOU NEED ... GIANT EAGLE, SHEETZ, ETC.!**

Ten Commandments for a Happy Church!

- 11) Speak to people. Speak to everyone, especially to those whom you don't know. There is nothing quite so nice as a cheerful word of greeting.
- 12) Smile at people. It takes 72 muscles to frown and only 14 to smile. Your smile is one of your finest assets. Use it! It doesn't cost a thing!!
- 13) Call people by name. The sweetest music to any person's ears is the sound of his or her own name. If you don't know the person's name, introduce yourself and likely the person will respond with his or her name.
- 14) Be friendly & helpful. If you want friends, learn to be a friend. Everyone needs them. No one has too many.
- 15) Be cordial. Try to speak and act as if everything you do is a genuine pleasure.
- 16) Be genuinely interested in people. Try to like everybody and everybody will like you. Do not limit yourself to a few friends when there are so many likable people about you.
- 17) Be generous with praise. And be just as sparing with criticism.
- 18) Be considerate of the feelings of others. Usually, there are three sides to a controversy: yours, the other person's and the right one.
- 19) Be alert to give service. What we do for others counts most in life. Try giving yourself away. It's fun!
- 20) Develop a sense of humor. To this good sense of humor, add a generous dose of patience and a dash of humility. Then get ready to receive many blessings. They're sure to come!

***** Parish Scrip Earnings Exceed \$40,000.00 in 11 Yrs.!!! *****

Please remember to use Scrip for all of your Household, Family & Holiday Shopping ... especially gas & groceries! Scrip is Fundraising while you shop!

See Olga Hodge, Martha McLoota or Becky Azar for details.

HILLTOP SENIORS – THIS IS FOR YOU! The Hilltop Seniors Association invites you to join us. Dues are \$5 per year and our Meetings are held at The Grove. Join and meet your neighbors and have an opportunity to participate in fun activities & bus trips. For information, please contact: Lois Tomb @ 255-2877 or Nora Dorian @ 255-1578. You may mail Dues to Nora Dorian @ 545 Goucher St., Apt. 81, Johnstown, PA 15905. Thank You!

OUR BULLETIN IS ONLINE! Did you know that thanks to the wonder of the Internet and our Webmaster, Jay McClatchey, our Weekly Bulletin is now Online! All you have to do is go to: stmaryaocc.org ... and then click on "Weekly Bulletin" (on the left menu). Please check out the Bulletin before you come to Church ... that way you will be prepared to fully participate in the Liturgical Worship & Praise of our Lord! A special "Thanks!" to Jay for his ministry!

WEEKDAY LITURGICAL SERVICES AT ST. MARY PARISH: One of the purposes of our precious Church, as given to us by our Lord Himself, is to serve as the Meeting Place of Heaven & Earth ... and this is beautifully fulfilled via our Liturgical Services. Indeed, it is when we are in our Congregational / Corporate Liturgical Prayer that we are participating in the Eternal Worship of God's Heavenly Kingdom! Complementing this, the Holy Mothers & Fathers of our Church have always attested to the belief that our Life in Eternity will simply be the Utmost Fulfillment of our Life here on Earth ... i.e. if the priority of our Earthly Life is seeking Communion with God, then our Eternity will be a Fulfillment of that Communion ... and conversely, if the priority of our Earthly Life is spent in the pursuit of earthly things, thus separating us from God, our Eternity will be one of separation from God ... i.e. – Hell!

In light of this, Fr. Don is pleased to announce that our Daily Services have resumed. Our Schedule is as follows:

*Tuesday & Thursday Mornings – Daily Orthros (Morning Prayers) @ 8 AM ...
and ... Wednesday Evening – Daily Vespers (Evening Prayers) @ 6 PM.*

Please join us as we begin & end our days with Prayer ... let us gather together as the Family that God has called us to be!

REMINDER: RELIGIOUS GIFT ITEMS AVAILABLE: Just a reminder ... we do have some religious items available for sale in our Social Hall ... just see Margie Hamaty, Kathy McMillan, Rita Azar or Renee D'Ettorre. Thank You!

***** Parish Scrip Earnings Exceed \$40,000.00 in 11 Yrs. !!! *****

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+ + + **VOLUNTEER MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES** + + +

Do you enjoy helping people? Looking for a way to give of yourself in a positive way? You can serve our Lord by serving others!

Community Nursing Hospice Care

Home Care Volunteers – Provide socialization by visiting with the patient & respite for the Caregiver.

Bereavement Volunteers – Follow up with the primary caregiver after the patient dies through phone calls, cards, letters or a visit once a month.

Spiritual Care Volunteers – Provide spiritual support with prayer, offering Communion or Bible Reading and are involved in our Annual Memorial Services. This group consists of Pastors, as well as lay people.

Reference & Criminal Background Checks and Training Required.
For more Information ... **855-254-4116**.

Home Nursing Agency

Hospice Volunteers – show compassion, are emotionally present and listen, write letters, read, talk or listen, provide administrative support, work as part of the Hospice Team, are responsible & dependable, etc.

Healing Patch – offers a soft place to fall for children & their families who have lost a loved one ... here they can discover they are not alone in their grief by interacting with others who have encountered similar losses ... some of a volunteer's qualities: compassion, empathy, acceptance of others, flexibility, dedication & commitment ... must be at least 21 years of age ... volunteers do not "fix" what has happened ... they bring Hope & Healing back into the life of a child!

For more Information ... **800-445-6262**
(ext. 4119 - Patty ... or ... 4110 - Melody).

Think About This...

In light of the recent Sandy Hook School Shooting, and in remembrance of the Amish School Shooting of 2006, we reprint this reflection by our own Terry Mattingly.

Please keep the young Victims and their Families in your Prayers.

(This column was syndicated by Scripps Howard News Service on October 4, 2006.)

The helicopters kept making circles in the air so that the cameramen could keep showing the dairy farms and country roads, the bonnets and wide-brimmed straw hats, the horse-drawn buggies and the one-room schoolhouse framed in yellow police tape.

Soon the facts started going in circles as police recited a litany about 600 rounds of ammunition, a shotgun, a semiautomatic pistol, a stun gun, explosives and, later, the killer's sick collection of chains clamps, hardware and sexual aids. Witnesses said Charles Carl Roberts IV was angry with God, angry with himself, haunted by guilt, fed up with life and driven by a hellish grudge.

Then journalists began asking questions that went in circles, the questions that nag clergy as well as state troopers. Why? Why the Amish? How could God let this happen? How can justice be done now that the killer is dead?

"Like everyone else, I could not believe what I was seeing on my television," said Johann Christopher Arnold, senior elder of the Bruderhof communes. While sharing many beliefs with the Amish and Mennonites, the Bruderhof ("place of the brothers") embrace some modern technology. Still these movements share European roots in pacifism, simple living and an emphasis on the sanctity of human life.

"The Amish are our cousins so I know some of what they must be feeling," said Arnold, in his thick German accent. "I know these parents are hurting, I know they are asking questions, but I know that they know the answer is forgiveness. Tragedy and pain can soften our hearts until they break. But if we trust God this will help us to feel compassion."

The gunman's stunned wife released a media statement that showed her understanding of her Amish neighbors and their beliefs. She knew she could appeal for prayers and forgiveness, even though outsiders might find her words hard to fathom.

+ + + *Over* + + +

“Our hearts are broken, our lives are shattered, and we grieve for the innocence and lives that were lost today,” said Marie Roberts. “Above all, please pray for the families who lost children and, please, pray, too, for our family and children. Some of the Amish went even further. One woman told the Los Angeles Times: “I am very thankful that I was raised to believe you don’t fight back. You should forgive.”

To grasp the Amish point of view, it’s crucial to understand that they truly believe God desires justice, but also shows mercy and “they believe that these are not contradictory things,” said Arnold. “They know that God said, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay.’ The Amish certainly believe that this killer will not go without punishment, but they also believe that his punishment is in God’s hands.”

These are hard words in an age when many Americans hold one of two competing beliefs about eternity and God’s judgment.

Millions of believers – lukewarm and fervent alike – assume that the really bad sinners are the people who commit the really bad sins, those spectacular sins tied to violence, drugs and sex. These really bad people are condemned to hell.

Meanwhile, many other people believe that all people are automatically going to heaven, no matter what they believe or what they do. According to this point of view, the massacre inside the West Nickel Mines Amish School will have no impact on the eternal destiny of Charles Carl Roberts IV.

Once again, the Amish believe that God knows all and that God, and only God, can judge. What the Amish emphasize, stressed Arnold, is that forgiveness is the only way that humans can break a cycle of violence and sin.

In this case, the gunman left suicide notes that showed that he was driven by guilt and a grudge that he would not surrender. It appears that Roberts could not forgive God and could not forgive himself.

In the end, this killed him and through him this grudge killed others.

“If you hold a grudge, it will live on in your heart until it leads to violence of some kind,” said Arnold. “If you do not forgive, then you cannot be healed. Forgiveness can heal the forgiver as well as the one who is forgiven. This is what the Amish believe. It will be hard and it will take time, but this is what they now must strive to live out for all the world to see.”

Terry Mattingly (www.t matt.net) directs the Washington Journalism Center at the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. He writes this weekly column for the Scripps Howard News Service. Terry is also a member of our sister parish, Holy Cross Orthodox Church, in Linthicum, MD.

+ A Christmas Prayer +

by Archimandrite George M. Corry (Memory Eternal!)

(Fr. George is a Native Son of our St. Mary Parish Family and his easy-going & compassionate pastoral nature will never be forgotten. He is one of the most beloved priests of our Archdiocese.)

Lord, we thank you for the gift you have given us on this glorious night of the Nativity of Your Son, Jesus Christ. The gift of Yourself. The gift of Love.

Forgive us for our ungratefulness.

You gave us Love! We give you wars, killing, hatred and greed.

You gave us Humility! We give you a lustful greed for the material things in life. We bypass the golden treasure of the Holy Spirit that you placed in our hearts.

You gave us concern and compassion! We give you selfishness, bitterness, jealousy, and hatred. We give you the massacres of Aushwitz, Cambodia and Lebanon.

You gave us freedom! We give you concentration camps, racial prejudice, dictatorships, civil and so-called religious wars.

You tell us to follow You! We search for You but forget the hungry, the naked, the thirsty, the sick and the imprisoned. We only think of ourselves. We don't understand when You tell us, "As you have treated the least of your brethren, so you have treated me, your Lord."

You tell us that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit! We answer by drug addiction, alcoholism, and obesity.

You tell us to be pure of heart! We answer by pornography, adultery and insincerity.

You want to be first in our hearts, our minds, and our souls! We want personal pleasure, material wealth, no commitments to anyone or anything; then if there's any time left, maybe we will think of You.

Lord, we are ashamed that You have loved us, even though we succumb to the wily darts thrown by Satan.

Lord, we are ashamed that You have given us Your most precious gift – Yourself. We have given You nothing.

Lord, we ask You tonight to help us overcome the temptations of Satan.

Lord, we pray that we can also give of ourselves to one another so that You, our God; You, our Love, can be number one in our hearts.

Lord, we pray that we can rid ourselves of our weakness and truly follow You by loving each other and putting our lives in Your Hands, and forever, worship and glorify You. Amen.