



The Weekly Forerunner

St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church

301 Struthers Liberty Rd

Campbell, OH 44405

OCA - Diocese of the Midwest



AUGUST BULLETIN SPONSOR

In memory of Karen Muzyka– Given by AP Andrew Bartek

Liturgical & Events Schedule

Sunday, August 18

9:35 AM: Hours

10:00 AM: Divine Liturgy / Monthly Panichida / Social

Saturday, August 24

6:00 PM: Vespers / Confessions

Sunday, August 25

9:35 AM: Hours

10:00 AM: Divine Liturgy / Social (Monthly B-day cake)

2024 - COUNCIL MEMBERS

Nancy Tusinac (President)

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Maintenance Issues:

Michael Simko - 330-565-0084

Michael Centofanti - 330-544-3518

40 DAY REMEMBRANCE

August 18– Newborn Trip Nicholas Williams

August 25– Betty Ewenish / AP Alexis

September 1– Maria Michaels / William Romancheck, Jr

September 8– Andy Zenko / Enriqueta Litonjua Santa Maria & Maria Cecilia Dayao

September 22– Albert

Martyrs Florus and Laurus of Illyria / Commemorated on August 18

The Martyrs Florus and Laurus were brothers by birth not only in flesh but in spirit. They lived in the second century at Byzantium, and afterwards they settled in Illyria [now Yugoslavia]. By occupation they were stone-masons (their teachers in this craft were the Christians Proclus and Maximus, from whom also the brothers learned about life pleasing to God).

The prefect of Illyria, Likaion, sent the brothers to a nearby district for work on the construction of a pagan temple. The saints toiled at the structure, distributing to the poor the money they earned, while they kept strict fast and prayed without ceasing.

Once, the son of the local pagan-priest Mamertin carelessly approached the structure, and a chip of stone hit him in the eye, severely injuring him. Saints Florus and Laurus assured the upset father, that his son would be healed.

They brought the youth to consciousness and told him to have faith in Christ. After this, as the youth confessed Jesus Christ as the true God, the brothers prayed for him, and the eye was healed. In view of such a miracle, even the father of the youth believed in Christ.

When the construction of the temple was completed, the brothers gathered the Christians together, and going through the temple, they smashed the idols. In the eastern part of the temple they set up the holy Cross. They spent all night in prayer, illumined with heavenly light. Having learned of this, the head of the district condemned to burning the former pagan priest Mamertin and his son and 300 Christians.

The martyrs Florus and Laurus, having been sent back to the prefect Likaion, were thrown down an empty well and covered over with earth. After many years, the relics of the holy martyrs were uncovered incorrupt, and transferred to Constantinople. In the year 1200 the Novgorod pilgrim Anthony saw them. Stephen of Novgorod saw the heads of the martyrs in the Pantokrator monastery around the year 1350.

Office: 330-755-4931 / Cell: 570-212-8747

<https://www.stjohnthebaptist-campbell.org/>

padrebartek@gmail.com

PLEASE KEEP OUR ELDERS OF THE CHURCH & SHUT-INS IN YOUR PRAYERS— UPDATED 5-8-24

Send a “Thinking of You” card or remember their Birthday with a card. If anyone needs to be added, please contact Fr. Andrew.

Joint STOTS/OCPM Certificate Program in Prison Ministry Graduates First Class

The first ever Certificate Program in Prison Ministry, in partnership with Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM) and St. Tikhon’s Orthodox Theological Seminary (STOTS) graduated its first cohort of students June 16-22, 2024.

The inaugural seven students of the Certificate Program have been remotely learning and reflecting together since February from their own homes and parishes across the United States. But coming together for the culminating residency on the campus of St. Tikhon’s brought a spiritual depth to the experience no one, not even the Certificate Program staff, were fully prepared for. *Con’t next pg*

1 Corinthians 1:10-18 (Epistle)

Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, “I am of Paul,” or “I am of Apollos,” or “I am of Cephas,” or “I am of Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

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PRAYER LIST– Updated 8-14-24

PARISHIONERS: Achilles Arvan / Audrey Chengelis / Donna Chiarelli / Helen Colaluca / Joan Cross / Ann Cvercko / Pauline Fesz / Mary Fredericks / George Horodnic / Paula Kennedy / Sue Kennedy / George Kolesar / Barbara Kolesar / Matushka Helen Psinka / Mary Jane Puskas / Carol Ruff / Kenny Ruff / Sub-deacon Vladimir Rusnak / Joanna Shepelevich / Dorothy Shirilla / Julia Simko / Emilia Yannitto / Marion Zwinski

HIERARCHS & CLERGY: Archbishop Benjamin / AP James Gleason (Fr.) / AP Emil Hutyan / AP Vladimir Demshuk / Fr. Michael Rustic / Fr. Matthew Nyumu & his family & parish

FAMILY & FRIENDS: David (Willison) / Dominic (Centofanti) / Ellen (Clark) / Genna & her newborn baby girl (Koval) / Trudy Ellmore (Fr.) / John Galpin (Fr.) / Bruce Harris (Sabo) / Karen (Gommel) / Katie (Garrity) / Basil Glovinsky (Fr.) / Ellen (Kessler) / Paul (Kolesar) / Karen (Vansuch) / Kathy (Kolesar) / Malakai (Kolesar) / Joe Kollar (Fr.) / Andrew LaChard (Jesko) / Jonathan Leso (Fr.) / Mea (Mahan) / Mary (Mahan) / Pauline Meath (Fr.) / Matushka Raissa (Nicoloff) / Eugene (Pallai) / Teri Petroff (Fr.) / Chris Quotap (Fr.) / Julia Shirilla / Bob Smrek (Sirilla) / Katherine (Steffaro) / Johanna (Tusinac) / Richard (Tusinac) / Brian (Shirilla) / Joseph (Vansuch) / Eleanor Marie (Vansuch) / Paula (Voytilla) / Mary Ann Bozichovich (Kennedy) / Patty Bozichovich (Vansuch) / Drew (Willison) / Catherine Zile (Fr.) / Brenna & her unborn baby (Fr.) / Kasey & her unborn child (Gommel)

MILITARY FAMILY & FRIENDS: Cory Deaton (Fr.) / Alena Grabavoy (Fr.) / Liam Garrity (Zelinsky)

MISCELLANEOUS: Metropolitan Paul (Orthodox Diocese of Aleppo) & Archbishop John (Archdiocese of Aleppo) still being held captive & Metropolitan Arseny imprisoned / The UN & IOCC humanitarian aid workers around the world / Those suffering persecution in Syria, Iraq, Israel, Egypt, Ukraine and around the world.

Prison ministry con't from previous pg

Students and staff of the Certificate Program in Prison Ministry pray together at St. Tikhon's Monastery.

Being able to participate in a daily cycle of services at St. Tikhon's Monastery takes the students' experiences far beyond the classroom, drawing nearer to Christ and each other. "I and all my colleagues have been thunderstruck with the experience of being here at St. Tikhon's," says Joseph Nast, recent graduate. "To come here and have such wonderful fellowship with other people I've only known through Zoom for a few months... I've got brothers and sisters in this ministry who have become dear friends."

As the culminating experience of the Certificate Program, students are able to put their studies into practice by visiting the nearby Pennsylvania state prison, SCI Waymart. This year, students even got to witness firsthand what it is like to baptize someone behind bars, a deeply moving experience for everyone. "We could not have designed the Certificate Program to be so impactful," says OCPM Executive Director, Nicholas Petrogeorge. "We did our part, creating a partnership between OCPM, St. Tikhon's Seminary, St. Tikhon's Monastery, and SCI Waymart, but the whole ecosystem of this program and the community together created something genuinely life-changing for all of us."

Back home, several Certificate Program graduates are already volunteering in prisons close to where they live. "Life as a parish priest can be busy," says Fr. Chrysostom, Joseph's parish priest. "To have Joseph now, who can come back and teach us more about prison ministry, is a huge blessing to our parish and those who will

benefit from this ministry in our area."

Joseph Nast is among the first graduates of the new Certificate Program in Prison Ministry, through Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM) and St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary (STOTS).

"It's essential we get as many laypeople and clergy involved in this as we can," says Archbishop Michael, rector of St. Tikhon's Seminary. "Prison ministry is a sacred task, given to us by the Lord Himself. Obviously, this is a daunting task, if you look at all the people that need to be reached. But on the other hand, it's not about the numbers. We can establish this program seven people at a time. We can train and place these people. Christ has told us to do this ministry for so long, and we haven't done it. I'm so proud, even in a small way, to be helping this ministry."

To learn more about the Certificate Program in Prison Ministry, visit theocpm.org/certificate. Applications for the Spring 2025 cohort will open in the early fall.

Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM) is an agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States. For Orthodox Christians who have been arrested for crimes, OCPM helps them return to the Faith, offering forgiveness and reconciliation with Christ. For both Orthodox and non-Orthodox alike, OCPM provides spiritual care, enabling prisoners to find hope and purpose in their lives. For more information, please visit www.theocpm.org or follow them on Facebook and Instagram @theocpm.

AUGUST Candle & Bulletin Sponsors

NOTE: If anything is missing from the Sponsorships please contact Fr. Andrew ASAP

- Bulletin:** In memory of Karen Muzyka– Given by AP Andrew Bartek
Wine: In memory of my family & friends- Given by AP Andrew Bartek
Incense: In memory of nephew Francis Imburgia– Given by Emilia Yannitto
Iconostasis Candles & Eternal Light: In Memory of George & Ruth Libertin- Given by Nick & Monica / In honor of the Readers Nicholas 80th B-day on Aug. 12 & their granddaughter Zoe Faith on 1st b-day / In memory of Mary Sveda- Given by Mr & Mrs George Kolesar
Altar Candles: In memory of my mother Olga Zelina– Given by Maureen Koval
Tetrapod Candles: In honor of Michael Centofanti on the occasion of his b-day- Given by Martha Centofanti & Sue Kennedy
St. Herman Candles: Commemorating all who participate in maintenance of the church, the teachers, singers & those who participate in social events. Praying for everyone to love one another.
St. Panteleimon Icon Candles: In memory of Mary Kennedy on the occasion of her b-day- Given by Martha Centofanti & Sue Kennedy / For the Health of Kenny Ruff– Given by Carol Ruff
Protection Icon Candles: In memory of my mother Helene Flaherty on the occasion of her birthday– Given by Maria Demkosky / In memory of newborn Trip Nicholas– Given by Dorothy Shirilla
St. John the Baptist Candles: in honor of my brother Michael’s b-day- given by Nancy Tusinac
Flowers: In honor of Gary Thompson on occasion of his birthday– Given by Patty Thompson

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><u>\$50 per month</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Wine *Bulletin *Iconostasis Candles & Eternal Light *Altar Candles *Tetrapod Candles | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>\$30 per month</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *St. Herman candles *St. Panteleimon Icon candles *Protection Icon candles *St. John the Baptist candles | <p style="text-align: center;"><u>\$25 per month</u></p> <p>Incense</p> <p>Flowers - \$50 for 2 weeks at a time– Updated</p> |
|--|--|---|

ATTENDANCE: A Comparison - AUGUST	2023	2024
1st week		
Vespers	Monastery	4
Transfiguration Liturgy	62/37	Normal Sunday 54 / 36
Transfiguration Vespers	See Above #	15 Here (Liturgy was at Monastery)
2nd Week		
Vespers	No vespers	8
Liturgy	66 / 47	68 / 48
Dormition Vespers	13	
Dormition Liturgy	16	
3rd Week		
Vespers	7	
Liturgy	57 / 37	
4th Week		
Vespers	13	
Liturgy	63 / 44	
Beheading Vespers Liturgy	8	

AUGUST FINANCIALS	
Expenses	\$5,363.27
Income	<u>\$6,382.00</u>
TOTAL	+ 1,018.73
Weekly Tithes	\$5281
Weekly Candles	\$316
Weekly Flowers	\$100
Un-needed Gifts	\$100
Incense	\$25
Altar Candles	\$160
Protection Candles	\$80
Fund Raiser	\$320
Charity Collection:	\$393

AUGUST Special Monthly Charity
 Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City

- Joseph Uhrin (1973) ©
Sophie Kotanchik (1964)
1- Peter Vansuch (1971) ©
2- Dr. Zervas (1931) ©
4- Rose Bartek (1984)
4- Nicholas Kioussis (1956) ©
4- Mary Kovach (1963) ©
5- Elias Lisko (1925) ©
6- Julia Sirilla (1992) ©
6- George Libertin (2019) ©
6- Mike Kropinak (1959) ©
7- Helen Kropinak (1991) ©
7- George Rusnak, Jr (2021) ©
7- Mike Gerakios (1937) ©
8- Stella Gebbia (1998) ©
8- Christina Krajnak (1920) ©
9- Anna Marie Tennis (1973) ©
10- Olga Zelina Kucheruk (2013) ©
11- Carl D. Essex (2014)
11-George Tobak, Sr (1972) ©
11- John Kropinak (1926) ©
12- Fr. Stephen Jula (2014)
12- Michael Pacak (1978) ©
12- John Kristian (1956) ©
13- Daria Voytilla (2019) ©
13- Elia Milovancovich (1933) ©
13- John Holecko (1939) ©
14- Bobby Almasche (2022)
14- Kaliop Koulianos (1950) ©
15- Archpriest John Mutusiak (2019)
15- Eugene Sanders (2014) ©
15- Alice Stalian (1920) ©
15- John Georgeadis (1941) ©
15- Thomas Kristian (2023) ©
16- Shawn Larriccia (2022)
16- Anna Livosky (1984) ©
16- Joseph Fedorchoh (1987) ©
16- Justin Pubos (1989) ©
16- Anna Mikita (1999) ©
16- Margaret Kalas (1920) ©
17- Helene Flaherty (2015)
17- Mary Pikos (1943) ©
17- Jack Vallas (1944) ©
18- Mary Duritza (1984) ©
18- Anna Cverko (1982) ©
18- George Madich (1920) ©
19- Fr. George Dyak (1995)
19- Steve Hanuscin (1920) ©
19- Harry Kidon (1925) ©
20- John Kaschak (1976) ©
21- Fr. Paul Herbert (2016)
21- Sophie Boldish (1967) ©
22- Fr. Peter Molchany (1990)
22- Mary Rusnak (1991) ©
22- George Roseta (1922) ©
22- Basil Sarokos (1930) ©
22- Kostas Zombobi (1930) ©
22- Joseph Raschak (1930) ©
22- Mary Karcotis (1943) ©
22- Infant John Emil Graban (1956) ©
23- Helen Gerakios (1925) ©
24- Rosica Rago (1922) ©
24- Felogia Fradzeskus (1924) ©
25- Steve Kalas (1938) ©
26- Michael Hally (1991) ©
26- George Tabus (2000) ©
27- John Vrabel (1972) ©
27- Christopher Forgac (1976) ©
27- Mike Lawrence (1961) ©
28- Matthew Lariccia Sr (1992)
28- John Simko (1969) ©
28- Simeon Kaliscak (1921) ©
28- Harry Sosnovchik (1925) ©
28- George Despetarich (1956) ©
28- Karen Muzyka (2023)
29- Anna Vrabel (1972) ©
29- Pani Gizella Mihaly (1975)
29- Joseph Vansuch (1964) ©
30- Mike Pihunias (1948) ©
31- Mike Lawrence (1930) ©
31- George Vasilos (1930) ©

Matthew 14:14-22 (Gospel)

And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick. When it was evening, His disciples came to Him, saying, "This is a deserted place, and the hour is already late. Send the multitudes away, that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food." But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fish." He said, "Bring them here to Me." Then He commanded the multitudes to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes. So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained. Now those who had eaten were about five thousand men, besides women and children. Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.

Orthodox Church in America's Office of Pastoral Life Awarded \$1.25 Million Grant to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders

By the Grace of God, the Orthodox Church in America's (OCA) Office of Pastoral Life (OPL) is thrilled to announce a \$1.25 million grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. that will better equip clergy and their families to face economic challenges that can persist throughout their careers.

OPL supports clergy as they fulfill their vocation of pastoral service by offering resources that promote personal, spiritual, and educational growth and health. Through workshops, seminars, retreats and Thriving in Ministry peer learning groups, OPL seeks to equip clergy, clergy wives and clergy families with resources and tools to maintain and enhance their ministries so that they may better lead the faithful across North America.

The OCA is one of 13 organizations to receive grants through the fourth phase of Lilly Endowment's National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders. The aim of the initiative is to assist select denominations and their agencies, foundations, and other ministry-serving organizations to address and alleviate economic challenges that hinder the ability of pastors to lead congregations effectively.

"Clergy health and economic stability are perennial challenges facing our Church," says His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon. "Now more than ever, it is crucial to renew our efforts to foster the physical, spiritual and emotional health of our clergy so that our parishes and institutions will be guided by pastors who can fulfill the Apostolic work of the Church."

OPL Director Fr. Nicholas Solak added, "This initiative provides a promising opportunity for our clergy and the communities they serve. Strengthening the financial stability of our clergy is essential for them to dedicate themselves fully to their pastoral responsibilities, free from the stress of economic uncertainty. The Office of Pastoral Life is committed to utilizing these funds to establish a sustainable and supportive financial foundation for our clergy and their families. We are excited to announce that this new program will be called the Financial Health Initiative (FHI). A portion of this grant includes a matching fund requirement, offering the faithful a chance to contribute to and support this vital work."

This grant and its activities result from an extensive research and planning process conducted by OPL. As part of this process, focus groups were conducted and specialized surveys were sent to more than 1,000 OCA priests, priests' wives, parish lay leaders, and bishops. The results clearly show that a positive transformation throughout the Church's culture can occur by :

supporting clergy during three specific arcs of their ministries early, middle and final season of their ministries. OPL will tailor specific financial literacy training, coaching, and direct support to clergy who are at each of these phases. It is our hope that this grant will strengthen pastoral vocations, build responsible stewardship, and provide an opportunity for the faithful to express gratitude for the sacrifices of clergy families.

In the coming months, OPL staff will work with hierarchs, diocesan chancellors, and key lay leaders to promote the Financial Health Initiative (FHI) grant activities so that all eligible OCA clergy and their families can participate. To support this grant, and the broader work of OPL, a new website was recently launched, <https://opl.oca.org>, where anyone interested can learn more about OPL's goals, mission, and activities.

OCA Priest and Students Participate in Suprasl 2024

For the third year in a row students and clergy of the Orthodox Church in America participated in the annual World Gathering of Orthodox Youth - Suprasl 2024 - organized by Suprasl: A World Fellowship of Orthodox Youth at the Monastery of the Annunciation and the Suprasl Academy in northeastern Poland from June 30 - July 8.

Participating from the OCA were Father Nilos Nellis of Saint John in the Wilderness Orthodox Sanctuary, Birchdale, British Columbia; Caleb Hooper from Saint Nicholas Church, Mogadore, OH; and Jacob Simms from Saint Paul Church, Dayton, OH.

Father Nilos was one of the key-note speakers who delivered a series of reflections on the topics of gratitude, resilience, creation and the spiritual life.

Gathered under the theme, "It is Time for the Lord to Act: Liturgy and Creation," Suprasl 2024 brought together 90 students from twenty-five countries. Through lectures and practical workshops, participants looked at the ways the Lord acts in our lives, especially through the Divine Services, and contemplated their own relationship with Jesus Christ through the creation and natural environment.

Suprasl 2024 was organized with the blessing and support of His Beatitude Metropolitan Sawa of Warsaw and All Poland, in conjunction with OrthNet and the Fellowship of Orthodox Youth in Poland. Participants represented ten of the world's autocephalous Orthodox Churches.

"Suprasl was a unique experience for me. I was able to encounter the Orthodox faith through many cultures very different from my own," said **Con't next pg**

Celebrations in AUGUST

BIRTHDAYS

- 4 Meiriam Dardovski
- 9 Elaine Basala
- 12 Layne Demkosky, Reader Nick Vansuch, Ethan Donofrio
- 13 Frank Batura, Jr., Ed Kusinski
- 14 Eli Arvan, Katie Zelinsky
- 15 Anthony Cavaliere
- 16 Anthony Jesko, Jr.
- 29 Archbishop Michael
- 31 Sharon LaVallee, Fr. Emilian Hutnyan, Melanie Rusnak

ANNIVERSARY

- 10 Fr. Michael & Pani Mellissa Chendorain
- 18 Nicola & Shelly Nicoloff, Philip & Trudy Ellmore
- 21 Fr. Gregory & Matushka Xenia Burner, Dc. David & Mat. Gemmel
- 27 Fr. Michael & Presbyteria Jessica
- 28 Fr. Eli Bremer Priestly ordination
- 29 Zoland & Claudia Zile
- 30 Fr. Peter & Pani Bernadette

NAMES DAY

- 23 AB Irene of Canada
- 30 AB Alexander of Dallas

Suprasl con't from previous pg

Caleb Hooper from Mogadore, Ohio. "Even with all the differences between my own culture and those cultures with a larger Orthodox presence, we all shared a commonality within Christ and communion with all Orthodox Christians. With the ongoing growth of the Orthodox Church in America, I hope we can bring the same joy and commitment to Christ into our own culture."

In bringing Orthodox young people together from around the world, Suprasl 2024 created an opportunity for the participants to taste and celebrate the unity found within the Orthodox Faith regardless of nation, politics or culture.

Speaking about the importance of Suprasl, Father Heikki Huttunen from Finland said, "Politics presently stifles the relations among our Church hierarchy. Luckily young people are able to meet, listen to each other, build trust and forge friendships, united by our common faith. The inspired persons who prepare and run the [Suprasl] event render great service to Orthodox Christianity worldwide through this initiative."

Suprasl 2024 benefited greatly from a group of speakers and workshop leaders who worked for half a year to develop an engaging program. The group included Dr. Elizabeth Theokritoff (UK), Dr. Aleksandra Stevanovic (Serbia), Dr. Ari Koponen (Finland), Father Nilos

Nellis (Canada), Ksenia Medvedeva (Belarus), Father Dr. Seraphim Makhoul (Lebanon), Father Vladimir Misijuk (Poland), Mikhail Khotyakov (Germany), Father Panteleimon (Karczewski) (Poland), and Sisters Theohariti and Theosemni from the Chrysopigi Monastery in Crete.

"This is my second time participating in Suprasl's World Gathering of Orthodox Youth," said Sophia Chiriac from Romania. "I am really impressed to see how the event has grown and I appreciated the cohesiveness of the workshops and lectures this year. From Dr Theokritoff's lectures on the Eucharist and the natural world; to Father Nilos' reflections on living a life of gratitude, and Dr Alexandra's lecture which explored the ways we can negotiate between the pace of the modern world and our need to care for God's creation, the speakers were not only inspiring but gave me practical tools which I can use in my community."

Apart from lectures and workshops, the participants were able to visit and experience the richness of Orthodoxy in Poland, through visits to the Monastery of the Nativity of the Mother of God in Zwerki, Poland, and the Monasteries of the Great Martyr Catherine and Saint Demetrios of Thessaloniki in Zaleszany and Saki respectively. While at the monastery in Saki, a Trisagion service was sung by the Lebanese participants for a Syrian Orthodox refugee who was found on the Belarussian/Polish border in 2022 and who was buried by the monastic brotherhood.

The participants also visited the famous monastery of Saints Mary and Martha on the Holy Mountain of Grabarka where, following tradition, they added a large hand-painted cross to the forest of thousands of crosses brought to the monastery by believers for the past 300 years.

"Suprasl was a great experience. As Americans we often complain about our minority position, the seeming loneliness of being Orthodox in such a big country. Well, it is not exactly different everywhere else, and the virtues we must practice are the same," said Jacob Sims of Dayton. "By meeting together we are able to encourage each other and be reminded that Christ is active in His Church no matter how scattered we may be. Participating in Suprasl has helped me to understand that I am not alone in the Church, and not alone in whatever struggles I might have as an Orthodox Christian in the world. And that is very comforting. I hope more of my American peers can experience Suprasl in the future."

A final highlight of the week was the midnight Divine Liturgy in the monastery's cathedral church. Prior to the Divine Liturgy, Father Vladimir Misijuk, an alumnus of St. Vladimir's Seminary, served the Proskomedie in the nave of the Church where the participants could witness and participate **Con't Next Pg**

Suprasl con't from previous pg

by verbally offering the names of departed and living faithful to be commemorated. This followed a presentation Father Vladimir offered earlier in the day on the Proskomedie and the silent prayers of the liturgy.

“I can’t find the words to express the joy I felt during the Divine Liturgy where we all sang and chanted the responses and hymns in our languages creating a harmony which I have never before experienced,” said Anna Berbati from Albania.

Suprasl is a unique project in the Orthodox world and inspirational for the participants who used the meeting to dream about more projects to manifest the unity of Orthodoxy. “In difficult times, times of crisis in the world Orthodox Church, it is the youth who will shine its unity,” said Maxim Fionik of Poland. “That is what he did here this week, and that is what we will continue to do and inspire in our parishes and communities.”

Suprasl is a non-profit organization that acts with the blessing and support of Orthodox hierarchs worldwide while being administratively independent. Its projects are made possible by the generous contributions of the Orthodox Vision Foundation, Saint Mary’s Cathedral, Minneapolis, MN., Saint Mark Church, Bethesda, MD, Holy Ghost Church, Bridgeport, CT, Orthodox Journeys, and many individual donors. Suprasl 2024 was also made possible in large part thanks to a grant from the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs under its “Public Diplomacy 2024” grant competition

Suprasl’s next events include a two-day walking pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain of Grabarka for the feast of the Transfiguration, August 15-20, and a student trip to Cappadocia led by Father John Behr, January 19 - 26.

Balancing Service with Prayer

Question

Recently, a couple of members of our parish council asked if I was interested in being a council member or in serving on the Stewardship committee. I feel a little guilty for saying no, but I feel pulled toward prayer and meditation and learning about a deeper faith. In light of this, I’m not sure how to best serve the Church and, in particular, my parish at this time in my life. How is one to balance serving in the Church with prayer and meditation and learning?

Answer

It is only my personal opinion, but sometimes we are made to feel guilty—and sometimes we make ourselves feel guilty—if we are not engaging in all sorts of “activities” and “busy-ness” around parish communities,

implying in some way that if we’re not teaching Sunday School or counting the collection or slicing bagels or cutting the lawn that we are not “serving” the Church.

Implicit in this is the incorrect notion that praying, studying, meditating, struggling for “growth in life and faith and spiritual understanding” and “working out our salvation” are somehow secondary pursuits, or that those who merely pray and meditate and study are not “active” in the community or are not “pulling their weight.”

What is unfortunate in such instances is that, while indeed there are those who are called to teach Sunday School or count collections or slice bagels or cut lawns, there are also those who are called to pray—for the community, for the Church at large, for the growth of the parish, for those who teach and slice and mow lawns, for the clergy, for those who do not pray, and for those who have no one to pray for them. It is only my opinion, but there are those who are called to this “ministry”—as opposed to “activity” or “busy-ness” for the sake of keeping busy or merely looking busy.

Saint Paul clearly teaches that there are many ways to serve God and others, that God has blessed each individual with particular gifts and talents “for the building up of the Body of Christ,” and “so that in all things, God might be glorified.” Some are called to teach; some are gifted to preach; others are blessed with musical talents, financial acumen, organizational skills—all of which are important in the life of any parish community.

And I believe that there are those who are especially gifted to pray, to sit at the feet of the Lord, as did Mary, the sister of Lazarus, while others, using their gifts and talents, pursue teaching and slicing and mowing.

So, it is only my opinion, but we need to not only consider praying and studying and reflecting as a genuine ministry of the Church—of even greater importance than collecting food for the needy—as, without prayer, all of the other things are simply reduced to “busy-ness” for its own sake and “activity” for the sake of anything other than praising the Lord. The trick is to transform activity into ministry—to slice the bagels for the sake of the other and as a way of “washing one another’s feet” or to teach Sunday School not for the sake of “keeping busy” but for the sake of planting the heart of the Gospel—a Gospel that hinges on prayer—in the hearts and souls of others.

What I might suggest is that you engage in those things which are expected of everyone else in the parish community while using whatever talents and gifts God has given you to support those who have other talents and gifts and who fulfill other functions that help to make the faith community “whole, complete, and lacking in nothing.”