The Weekly Forerunner

St. John the Baptist Orthodox Church
301 Struthers Liberty Rd
Campbell, OH 44405

AUGUST Bulletin Sponsor–
In Memory of Mary Sveda– Given by Barbara Kolesar

Liturgical & Events Schedule

Sunday, August 30
9:15-9:45 AM: Confessions by app't
9:35 AM: Hours
10:00 AM: Divine Liturgy / Social
Last Day of City Fest
9:45 pm: Fireworks to end the City Fest

Tuesday September 1
CHURCH LITURGICAL NEW YEAR

Wednesday, September 2
7:30 PM: Public City Council Meeting

Saturday, September 5
5:15-5:45 PM: Confessions by app't
6:00 PM: Vespers

Sunday, September 6
9:15-9:45 AM: Confessions by app't
9:35 AM: Hours
10:00 AM: Divine Liturgy / Panachida for the 25th Anniversary of the 9/11 attacks / Social

The Beheading of the Holy Glorious Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John Commemorated on August 29

The Beheading of the Prophet, Forerunner of the Lord, John the Baptist: The Evangelists Matthew (Mt.14:1-12) and Mark (Mark 6:14-29) provide accounts about the martyric end of John the Baptist in the year 32 after the Birth of Christ.

Following the Baptism of the Lord, Saint John the Baptist was locked up in prison by Herod Antipas, the Tetrarch (ruler of one fourth of the Holy Land) and governor of Galilee. (After the death of king Herod the Great, the Romans divided the territory of Palestine into four parts, and put a governor in charge of each part. Herod Antipas received Galilee from the emperor Augustus).

The prophet of God John openly denounced Herod for having left his lawful wife, ***Con't next Pg***

August / September Reader Schedule

August 30– Natalia Simko
September 6– Jacob Hyrb
September 13– Sub-deacon Donald Tamulonis
September 20– Reader Matthew Vansuch
September 27– Reader Nick Vansuch

Social Schedule: AUGUST / SEPTEMBER

August 30– Sonja H.
September 6– O Club
September 13– Council
September 20– Sisterhood
September 27– No Social / Purse Bingo Fundraiser

Broadview Heights Parish Participates in "Back to School Backpack Program"

On Sunday, August 9th, Archangel Michael Church blessed and assembled backpacks and school supplies for underprivileged children as part of FOCUS' "Back to School Backpack Program." The worthwhile cause was spearheaded by our parish "R" Club chapter which raised over $2,000 for the project.

Following the blessing which took place near the end of the Divine Liturgy, children of the parish helped to fill each backpack with the assorted educational supplies complete with handmade notes offering encouragement for the upcoming school year.

The children learned the value of caring, sharing, and kindness towards others, especially those less fortunate than themselves.

SEPTEMBER Candle & Bulletin Sponsors

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

Bulletin:
Wine:
Incense:
Iconostasis Candles & Eternal Light:
Altar Candles:
Tetrapod Candles:
St. Herman Candles: Commemorating all who participate in the maintenance of the church, the teachers, singers and those who participate in social events. Praying for everyone to love one another.– Given by Anonymous
St. Panteleimon Icon Candles:
Protection Icon Candles:
St. John the Baptist Candles:
Monthly Flowers:

$50 per month	$30 per month	$25 per month
*Wine	*St. Herman candles	Incense
*Bulletin	*St. Panteleimon Icon candles	Flowers–
*Iconostasis Candles & Eternal Light	*Protection Icon candles	
*Altar Candles	*St. John the Baptist candles	
*Tetrapod Candles		

St John con't from pg 1

the daughter of the Arabian king Aretas, and then instead cohabiting with Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip (Luke 3:19-20). On his birthday, Herod made a feast for dignitaries, the elders and a thousand chief citizens. Salome, the daughter of Herod, danced before the guests and charmed Herod. In gratitude to the girl, he swore to give her whatever she would ask, up to half his kingdom.

The vile girl on the advice of her wicked mother Herodias asked that she be given the head of John the Baptist on a platter. Herod became apprehensive, for he feared the wrath of God for the murder of a prophet, whom earlier he had heeded. He also feared the people, who loved the holy Forerunner. But because of the guests and his careless oath, he gave orders to cut off the head of Saint John and to give it to Salome.

According to Tradition, the mouth of the dead preacher of repentance once more opened and proclaimed: "Herod, you should not have the wife of your brother Philip." Salome took the platter with the head of Saint John and gave it to her mother. The frenzied Herodias repeatedly stabbed the tongue of the prophet with a needle and buried his holy head in a unclean place. But the pious Joanna, wife of Herod's steward Chuza, buried the head of John the Baptist in an earthen vessel on the Mount of Olives, where Herod had a parcel of land. (The Uncovering of the Venerable Head is celebrated February 24). The holy body of John the Baptist was taken that night by his disciples and buried at Sebastia, there where the wicked deed had been done.

After the murder of Saint John the Baptist, Herod continued to govern for a certain time. Pontius Pilate, governor of Judea, later sent Jesus Christ to him, Whom he mocked (Luke 23:7-12).

The judgment of God came upon Herod, Herodias and Salome, even during their earthly life. Salome, crossing the River Sikoris in winter, fell through the ice. The ice gave way in such a way that her body was in the water, but her head was trapped above the ice. It was similar to how she once had danced with her feet upon the ground, but now she flailed helplessly in the icy water. Thus she was trapped until that time when the sharp ice cut through her neck.

Her corpse was not found, but they brought the head to Herod and Herodias, as once they had brought them the head of Saint John the Baptist. The Arab king Aretas, in revenge for the disrespect shown his daughter, made war against Herod. The defeated Herod suffered the wrath of the Roman emperor Caius Caligua (37-41) and was exiled with Herodias first to Gaul, and then to Spain.

The Beheading of Saint John the Baptist, a Feast day established by the Church, is also a strict fast day because of the grief of Christians at the violent death of the saint. In some Orthodox cultures pious people will not eat food from a flat plate, use a knife, or eat food that is round in shape on this day.

Today the Church makes remembrance of Orthodox soldiers killed on the field of battle, as established in 1769 at the time of Russia's war with the Turks and the Poles.

CANDLES FOR CROSS VENERATION SUNDAY

In memory of my parents Morris and Antonia Pecuszok– Given by Ann Cvercko.

PLEASE KEEP OUR ELDERS OF THE CHURCH & SHUT-INS IN YOUR PRAYERS

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

Mrs. Mary Fredericks
648 Dumont Ave
Campbell, OH 44405

Matushka Helen Psinka
c/o Concordia Villa St. Joseph
1030 W State Street / Room 1B49
Baden, Pa, 15005

Mrs. Dorothy Shirilla
8362 Van Dr.
Poland, OH 44514

Joan Cross
97 Butler Street / Apt 1-rear
Brooklyn , NY 11201

Mildred Wilfong
153 Runnemede Dr
Boardman, OH 44512

Mrs. Audrey Chengelis
c/o Assumption Village
9800Market Street / Room 1402
North Lima, OH 44452

Emilia Yannitto
8017 Salinas Tr.
Boardman, OH 44512-5402

Mrs. Pauline Fesz
488 Harmony Lane
Campbell, OH 44405

George Horodnic, Sr.
c/o Briarfield Manor
461 South Canfield-Niles Rd / Room 101
Austintown, OH 44515

Mrs. Julia Simko
c/o Woodlands @ Hampton Woods
1525 E Western Reserve Rd /
Room 1101
Poland, OH 44514

Carol Ruff
2207 Birch Trail Blvd
Youngstown, OH 44515-4910

Sue Kennedy
593 Hyatt Ave
Campbell, OH 44405-1479

Ann Cvercko
1875 Mallard Land
North Lima, OH 44452

Church New Year Commemorated on September 1

The first day of the Church New Year is also called the beginning of the Indiction. The term Indiction comes from a Latin word meaning, "to impose." It was originally applied to the imposition of taxes in Egypt. The first worldwide Indiction was in 312 when the Emperor Constantine (May 21) saw a miraculous vision of the Cross in the sky. Before the introduction of the Julian calendar, Rome began the New Year on September 1.

According to Holy Tradition, Christ entered the synagogue on September 1 to announce His mission to mankind (Luke 4:16-22). Quoting Isaiah 61:1-2, the Savior proclaimed, "The spirit of the Lord is upon Me; because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to proclaim release to captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord..." This scene is depicted in a Vatican manuscript (Vatican, Biblioteca. Cod. Gr. 1613, p.1).

Tradition says that the Hebrews entered the Promised Land in September.

65th Annual Diocesan Assembly to Convene October 5–7 in Broadview Heights, OH

The Diocese of the Midwest will convene its 65th Annual Diocesan Assembly from October 5–7, 2026, hosted by Archangel Michael Church in Broadview Heights, Ohio.

Diocesan clergy, parish delegates, and ex-officio members are reminded to save these dates on their calendars. Online registration and dedicated hotel reservation links will open in early September via domoca.org.

Additional information, including the assembly agenda, schedule of services, and pre-assembly reports, will be published as materials become available. Vendors interested in securing a space to exhibit at the assembly are encouraged to contact Matushka Michelle Jannakos at office@domoca.org for inquiries.

We look forward to gathering in prayer and fellowship as we work to advance the life and mission of our Diocese.

40 DAY REMEMBRANCE

August 30– Becky Baxter
September 6– Irene Manzanek
September 13– Nicholas Zolak

AUGUST CHARITY

St. Herman's Seminary

SEPTEMBER Celebrations

Birthday

August 31- Sharon LaVallee / Melanie Rusnak
1- Dennis Konik
3- Lynn Basala
6- Dc. David Gemmel
7- Michael Simko
8- Joshua Rusnak
9- Kim Konik
11- Fr. John Beskid / Joann Sirilla
14- Debbie Perman / Chris Baxter / Sub-deacon Donald Tamulonis
17- Barbara Kolesar
18- Ron Tusinac / AP David Lis
21- Mary Luthern
22- Pani Bethany Mihaly
23- Gregory Simko
27- Tracy Zenko / Jim Johnston

Anniversary

August 30- Fr. Peter & Pani Bernadette Zarynow
3- Frank & Crystal Batura
5- Ron & Nancy Tusinac
7- Steven & Karen Simko
9- Michael & Martha Centofanti
13- Sam & Angie Dardovski / Fr. Peter Zarynow
14- Sub-deaconate ordination of Dr. Donald Tamulonis
16- Beth & Tom Hull
17- Dc James & Mat. Christine

Names Day

August 30- AB Alexander of the Bulgarian Diocese
8- Mary Fredericks / Mary Luthern / Mary Ruth Mico
17- Sonia Tsvetkoff / Nadine Sabol
30- AB Michael of NY & NY & NJ

ATTENDANCE: A Comparison - *AUGUST*	2025	2026
1st Week		
Vespers	13	8
Liturgy / Communion Transfiguration Vespers Transfiguration Liturgy	59 / 39 Monastery 18 / 15	56 / 32 Monastery Monastery
2nd Week		
Vespers	7	5
Liturgy / Communion Dormition Vespers Dormition Liturgy	47 / 30 7 19 / 14	43 / 33 14 17 / 14
3rd Week		
Vespers	12	11
Liturgy / Communion	54 / 31	40 / 28
4th Week		
Vespers	5	No Vespers
Liturgy / Communion Beheading Vespers Beheading Liturgy	46 / 32 9 15 6	40 / 30
5th Week		
Vespers Liturgy	6 59 / 33	

First Cohort of Chicago MDiv Program Gathers for Inaugural Retreat

Candidates in the Diocese of the Midwest's new Master of Divinity program gathered in Chicago the weekend of August 14–16 for a retreat marking the beginning of their first academic year. The Chicago MDiv program is a joint initiative of the Diocese of the Midwest and Saint Tikhon's Seminary, offering an accredited three-year curriculum that is taught by means of a combination of online instruction and in-person intensives. The weekend was the candidates' first in-person gathering as a group.

The Chicago MDiv program was initiated with the celebration of the Feast of the Dormition of the Holy Theotokos, with Vigil and the Divine Liturgy celebrated at Holy Trinity Cathedral, Chicago. Joining His Eminence Archbishop Daniel were Archpriest Herman Kincaid, Diocesan Chancellor; Archpriest John Parker, Dean of Saint Tikhon's Seminary; Priest Alexander Koranda, Cathedral Dean; Deacon Timothy Heinbokel, Director of the Chicago MDiv Program; and Deacon Paul Garklavs. In his homily for the feast, Archbishop Daniel entrusted the students and their theological studies to the intercessions of the Most Holy Theotokos, noting that she is the "first theologian" of the Church because she is the one who first received, pondered, and responded to the revelation of God's plan in the Incarnation.

The MDiv candidates represent parishes and communities from throughout the Diocese of the Midwest. They are:

Deacon Andrew Bender, Christ the Saviour, Chicago; Protodeacon Dana Bichler, Holy Myrrhbearers, St Cloud, MN; Deacon John Eller, Holy Annunciation, St James, MO; Deacon Justin Hickman, St Raphael of Brooklyn, Quincy, IL; Deacon Noah Klembara, Archangel Michael, Broadview Heights, OH; Joel Morris, Holy Annunciation, St James, MO; Avery Peterson, St Herman, Minneapolis, MN; Aaron Robinson, Christ the Saviour, Byesville, OH; Eric Saathoff, Holy Trinity, St Paul, MN; Hierodeacon Menas (Thomas), St Paul the Apostle Monastery, Boscobel, WI; Paul Virijevich, Holy Assumption, Lublin, WI; and Micah Wilson, St Stephen, Crawfordsville, IN. ***Con't pg 6***

SEPTEMBER Reposed List / © Parishioner

Tony Ginarakis (1938) ©
Michael Pikos (1962) ©
1- His Eminence Bishop Nikon (2019) / George Diakogannes (1930) © / Michael Feltovich (1988) ©
2- Manuel Melas (1936) © / Vasili Mastrovasilis (1950) ©
4- Nicholas Vaytilla (1982) © / Helen Sarisky (1945) ©
5- Archpriest Anastasy Richter (2021) / Nicholas Babinec (1920) © / John Hauscin (1924) ©
Andrew Pretko (1953) © / Katherine Mistovich (1963) ©
6- His Beatitude Metropolitan Herman (2022) / Andrew Shirilla (1956) ©
7- Barbara Jackubek Barnyak (2013) ©
8- Steve Kolas (1980) ©
9- Steve Graban (1994) © / John Kalas (1923) ©
10- Eudoxia Alisofis (1933) ©
11- George Magdos (1940) © / Infant Kaulianas (1957) © / John Kavouklis (1959) ©
13- Ann Vavlas (1947) © / Bertha Mastraselis (1960) © / Irene Xenakis (1965) ©
14- John Roman (1943) © / Mary Leschinsky (1959) ©
15- Steve Bartek (1962) / Terri Lariccia (2021) / Mike Kotousis (1935) ©
Mary Jane Puskas (2024 ©
16- Billy Deaton (2022) / Steve Timkovich, Sr (1980) © / Vladimir Yavorskiy (2001) ©
Theodore Kiddon (2002) © / Synthia Skoufatos (1928) ©
17- John Pacak (2004) © / Victoria Mraz (2004) © / Katherine Despalorich (1961) ©
18- Stephen Sature (2004) / Bob Whitham Sr (2020) / Dimitri Velichkoff (1927) ©
Michael Leschinsky (1959) ©
19- George Bolina, Sr (1981) © / Mary Shirilla (1987) © / Mary Stewart (2016) ©
John Yurchak (1926) © / Andrew Graban (1942) © / Andrew Shirilla (1956) ©
20- Mary Patellis (1925) ©
21- Olga Bilas KIddon (2014) © / Nettie Kucheruk (2007) © / Steve Furin (1965) ©
22- Sophie Taboh (1979) © / John Davis (2009) © / Anthony Tranarakes (1949) ©
24- Martha Shevetz (1983) © / Anna Semon (1987) © / William Thomas (2010) ©
25- Michael Vansuch (1982) © / George Taloban Malahralko (1977) © / Steven Sirilla (1987) ©
Helen Graban (2009) ©
27- Michael Holobanich (1969) © / Helen Libertyn (1976) © / John Cvercko (2000) ©
Nicholas Strineka (1931) © / Anthonias Michailas (1961) ©
28- Helen Drotar (1971) © / John Matic (1922) ©
29- Julia Rich Holibonich (2016) © / Barbara Sveda (1961) © / Stephen Feltovich, Sr. (1968) ©
30- Bishop John Martin (1984) / Tommy Leonchik (2020) / Laurissa Rusnak Sirilla (2022) © / Vasilis Klimas (1949) ©

Matthew 21:33-42 (Gospel)

Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, 'They will respect my son.' But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, 'This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.' So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?" They said to Him, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons." Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'?

1 Corinthians 16:13-24 (Epistle)

Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong. Let all that you do be done with love. I urge you, brethren – you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints –that you also submit to such, and to everyone who works and labors with us. I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such men. The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house. All the brethren greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss. The salutation with my own hand – Paul's. If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER LIST

PARISHIONERS: Achiles Arvan / Audrey Chengelis / Joan Cross / Ann Cvercko / Pauline Fesz / Mary Fredericks / George Horodnic / Gianna Hryb / Sue Kennedy / Matushka Helen Psinka / Nadine Sabo / Dorothy Shirilla / Julia Simko / Reader Nick Vansuch / Mildred Wilfong

CLERGY: Fr. Basil Duesenberry / Fr. Andrew Gall / AP Drew Clements / AP James Gleason (Fr.) / AP Emil Hutyan / AP Michael Rustic / Fr. Peter Simko / Fr. Theophanes Kamau & family & parishioners at St. Joachim & Anna in Nairobi, Kenya

FAMILY & FRIENDS: Mat. Melanie Adamcio / Mary Ann Bozichovich (Kennedy) / Diane Caban (Sirilla) / George Caban (Sirilla) / Donna Chiarelli / Karen Debiec / Erin (Willison) / Thomas Hull, Jr. / Ron Hryb / Paula Kennedy / Joe Kollar (Fr.) / Ginny McCay (Fredericks) / Matushka Raisa (Nicoloff) / Conner (Sabo) Chris Quotap (Fr.) / Bob Smrek (Sirilla) / Matt Turner (Sirilla) / Mary Margaret Tusinac / Emilia Yanitto / David (Willison) / Drew (Willison) / Eleanor Marie (Vansuch) / Katherine (Steffaro) / Richard (Tusinac) / Miranda & her newborn Gwendolyn / Lindsey & her newborn James III

MILITARY FAMILY & FRIENDS: Cory Deaton (Fr.) / Alena Grabavoy (Fr.) / Kyle Grabovoy (Fr.) / Liam Garrity (Zelinsky) / Kenneth (Simko) / Brandon Rader (Middle East)

MISCELLANEOUS: The UN & IOCC humanitarian aid workers around the world / Those suffering persecution in Syria, Iraq, Israel, Egypt, Ukraine and around the world.

Fourteen Seminarians Preparing for the New Academic Year

Fourteen seminarians of the Diocese of the Midwest are preparing to begin the new academic year as they begin or continue their theological education and priestly formation at Saint Vladimir's Seminary and Saint Tikhon Seminary. Both seminaries will be holding orientation programs prior to the beginning of classes on September 7 & 9, respectively.

As the number of those entering the Orthodox Church is on the rise, the Diocese acknowledges the growing number of men discerning a call to serve the Church through the priesthood. These fourteen seminarians represent parishes throughout the Diocese.

The seminarians preparing for the 2026-2027 academic year are:

Luke Anderson, Holy Trinity, St. Paul, MN; Alexander (Mason) Baker, Saint Mark, Rochester Hills, MI; Timothy Blinnikov, Holy Myrrhbearers, St. Cloud, MN; Henry Brink, Holy Trinity, St Paul, MN; Elias Johns, Saint Thomas the Apostle, Springfield, MO; Deacon Joseph Goshorn-Maroney, Saint Stephen, Crawfordsville, IN; Michael Katanlenich, Saint John of Kronstadt, Lincoln, NE; Gabriel Krug, Holy Trinity, Overland Park, KS; Samuel Miller, St Mary's Cathedral, Minneapolis, MN; Matthew Stames, Saints Peter and Paul, Lorain, OH; Justinian Tatooles, Holy Trinity Cathedral, Chicago, IL; Seth Watson, Holy Dormition, Canton, OH; Matthew Yeager, Holy Annunciation, St. James, MO; Benjamin Zack, St Panteleimon, Summit, IL.

Archbishop Daniel expressed his gratitude for the seminarians' dedication and asked the faithful throughout the Diocese to continue supporting them in prayer as they discern their calling and prepare for priestly ministry.

"We are greatly blessed by the growing number of men who desire to prepare for the priesthood," Archbishop Daniel said. "I ask everyone throughout the Diocese to pray for them. I wish to express my gratitude to the priests and parishes that have inspired and guided our seminarians, as well as to the families, friends, and communities whose prayers, encouragement, and financial support accompany these men on their journey toward priestly ministry."

As the seminarians begin the 2026-2027 academic year, the Diocese encourages all the faithful to keep them in their prayers and to pray for an increase in vocations to the priesthood.

Retreat con't from pg 4

The retreat sessions were held at Saint Luke Church, Palos Hills, IL, the program's home campus. Sessions included personal introductions, explanation and outlining of the curriculum for the first academic year, introduction of faculty members, and general student orientation. Saturday Vespers and Sunday Divine Liturgy were celebrated by Archpriest Paul Jannakos, parish rector. Moments of fellowship and sharing further highlighted the weekend gathering.

The Chicago MDiv Program is possible thanks to a generous grant from the Lilly Endowment, providing financial support for the program's administrative, faculty, and facility costs.

ARCHPASTORAL MESSAGE OF THE MOST REVEREND DANIEL ARCHBISHOP OF CHICAGO AND THE MIDWEST AT THE BEGINNING OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL YEAR

Beloved Clergy, Venerable Monastics, and dearly Beloved Faithful of the Diocese of the Midwest: Glory to Jesus Christ! As we approach the beginning of the new Ecclesiastical Year on September 1, the Holy Church once again invites us to enter the sacred rhythm of her liturgical life. Unlike the passing measures of secular time, the Church's year is not merely a succession of days and months. It is an unfolding season of grace, in which the saving works of our Lord Jesus Christ are made present to us through prayer, worship, fasting, feasting, repentance, and thanksgiving.

This annual cycle of fasts and feasts is a precious gift. Through it, the Church gathers our scattered lives and directs them toward the Kingdom of God. We celebrate the Nativity of Christ, His Holy Theophany, His life-giving Passion and Resurrection, His glorious Ascension, and the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. We honor the Most Holy Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary, the holy Apostles, Martyrs, Hierarchs, Monastics, and all the Saints. Their commemorations remind us that holiness is not an abstract ideal but the true vocation of every Christian.

The fasts of the Church likewise call us back to what is essential. By abstaining from certain foods and indulgences, we learn to restrain the passions, deepen our prayer, give generously to those in need, seek reconciliation, and hunger more earnestly for God. Fasting is never an end unto itself, nor is it merely a matter of dietary observance. Joined to repentance, mercy, and participation in the sacramental life, it becomes a path toward spiritual freedom and renewed communion with Christ.

The feasts teach us to receive life with gratitude and joy. Yet, Christian joy is not an escape from suffering. It is the fruit of Christ's victory over sin and death. Every feast reveals some aspect of this victory, while every fast prepares the heart to receive it. Together, the fasts and feasts form a school of discipleship, shaping us gradually into the likeness of our Savior.

I therefore urge the clergy, monastics, and faithful of our Diocese to begin this Ecclesiastical Year with renewed dedication. Let us order our homes and daily schedules according to the life of the Church. Let us participate faithfully in the Divine Liturgy and the appointed services, observe the fasts with discernment, receive the Holy Mysteries with proper preparation, read the Holy Scriptures, and establish a consistent rule of daily prayer.

Let our spiritual and churchly practice also bear visible fruit in works of mercy. May every parish and mission community within our God-protected Diocese strengthen its care for the poor, the lonely, the grieving, the displaced, and all who struggle in body or soul. A calendar filled with holy days profits us little if our hearts remain closed to our neighbors. The grace we receive in worship must extend into our families, workplaces, communities, and the whole of creation entrusted to our stewardship.

To my beloved clergy, my brothers and co-laborers in this Vineyard: teach the faithful the meaning of the liturgical cycle with patience and pastoral sensitivity. Invite them not only to know the calendar but to live by it and keep it. Make the divine services accessible, beautiful, and prayerful. Encourage frequent confession and worthy reception of Holy Communion. Above all, lead by your own example of humility, fidelity, hospitality, and love.

To parents and families: make your homes little churches. Mark the feasts with prayer, give places of honor to the holy icons, sing the Church's hymns, share meals, and live your family lives with acts of kindness and generosity. Teach children that the Church's seasons are not burdens imposed upon life but gifts that reveal life's deepest meaning. In this way, the faith will be handed on not merely as information, but as a living inheritance.

Beloved in Christ, each new Ecclesiastical Year is both a gift and a summons. The time given to us is precious, and its fulfillment is found in Christ. Let us not allow this year to pass without bearing spiritual fruit. May every fast soften our hearts, every feast enlarge our joy, every divine service deepen our communion, and every day become an offering of thanksgiving to God.

At the beginning of this new Church year, I ask you to join me in praying:

O Lord, bless the crown of the year with Thy goodness. Grant peace to Thy Church, strength to Thy people, wisdom to our leaders, healing to the afflicted, consolation to the sorrowful, peace to the world, and mercy to us all. Guide us through every season of fasting and feasting, that we may grow in repentance, faith, hope, and love, and at last enter the unending Day of Thy Kingdom.

Through the prayers of the Most Holy Theotokos, especially venerated in her sacred Tikhvin Icon, of our holy fathers and mothers, and of all the saints, may the blessing of the Lord rest upon the clergy, monastics, faithful, parishes, missions, institutions, and families of the Diocese of the Midwest throughout the coming Ecclesiastical Year.

With my Archpastoral blessing and love in Christ,
DANIEL Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest