

A Little About our Bishop cont'd.

a community can better enjoy a Church home that is beautiful and welcoming to all who enter the doors. Enough people making those types of statements can greatly change and transform our community!

In order, to help you better be able to make those types of statements, here are a few projects that can be done around the Church. With the effort and work of the entire body of Christ, none of these projects are out of reach for our community.

Enhanced Fellowship Opportunities – One of the most important things that we need to properly be the Body of Christ is to be connected to one another, as all of the members make up the body. Added fellowship together brings us strongly together as a community that helps and supports one another; celebrates with one another; grieves with one another; and joyfully experiences Christ in all things together!

Holy Bread Making Rotation – Each and every week we use loaves of bread as our offering to God. God, in turn, takes our offering and offers Himself back to us in His Body and Blood. This wonderful mystery is something that we can all share, by sharing the responsibility to make the prosphora for the Divine Liturgy.

Church Grounds Up-Keep – The Church is our home and we should look at it in that way. Just like we take the opportunity to improve and keep up our own homes, we need to do the same for our Church building. God has blessed us with lots of space. It is time we set our hearts to the stewardship of that facility. This includes some weekly cleanly and some extra special cleaning and upkeep that pops up throughout the year.

More Sustained Outreach Ministry – With the Light of Christ that we all experience on a regular basis, we should desire to shine and spread that Light as far as we are able. We live in a city that has lots of real needs. Lord willing, with the help of many in the community we can begin to have a more vibrant presence in the community, addressing the needs of those around us.

Taken together, those 4 major points can look a bit overwhelming. But, when we look at those points and recognize our own gifts, we realize that it does not take too much to accomplish them. Let us say together, “This year, I am going to seek to be a faithful member of the Body of Christ to ensure that this year, we are going to shine the Light of Christ faithfully united together!”

Archangel Gabriel Reads

A Christian Ending: A Handbook for Burial in the Ancient Christian Tradition by J. Mark and Elizabeth Barna

At almost every service of the Church we pray for a “Christian ending to our life.” What that might mean is a mystery, but it is something that almost anyone would agree that they desire. This new book is far more than a theology of the end of life. In fact, there is very little theology contained in it. Instead, it is a practical look at how our culture currently handles death and how the Ancient Christians handled this event. Following the early tradition, the authors lay out ways that an Orthodox parish today, can help all of the faithful to face this mystery of death and resurrection.

“An Orthodox Christian life ends with the act of Christian burial. The body of a Christian, which was immersed in the sacred waters of Baptism, anointed with Holy Chrism, and nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ, has become the sanctified dwelling place of God, even in death remaining worthy of profound reverence. By undertaking the solemn task of preparing the body and celebrating the traditional funeral rites, not only does a Christian community show proper respect for the body of the departed, but all involved also receive tremendous spiritual blessing and nourishment. This book provides a detailed description of the many facets involved in this great act of love. May it be a blessing for all who heed the advice it offers, and may it help all our communities to enter more deeply into the awesome mystery we must all face: death, and the preparation for our resurrection.” - Metropolitan JONAH (OCA)

Ask Abouna (Father)

Why do we bless the water in January?

Each year, in celebration of Christ's baptism in the Jordan River, we bless water in the Church. This water, is then taken by the faithful and brought to their homes for use in their daily lives. The water is also then taken by the priest to celebrate house blessings and used on many occasions throughout the year. This simple expression serves as a reminder that God is present and sanctifying each and every part of our lives. God is with us in our homes. God is with us when we travel. God is with us when we sleep. God is with us when we are sick. God is with us when we are well. God is always with us. Sanctifying and blessing the waters at Theophany reminds us of all of that.

Announcements

Special Services. Please see the enclosed calendar to keep up to date with the special services that take place during the month of January.

Coffee Cup Conversations with Fr. Philip. If you are looking for an informal way to see and speak with Fr. Philip, on Thursdays from 4—6 pm, Fr. Philip will be at Johnston Street Java ready to speak with anyone who would like to see him about anything, big or small. Come and have a coffee cup conversation with Father!

General Assembly. Each year we hold a general assembly meeting where we elect new parish council members and discuss the goal and vision of the year ahead. This year's meeting will be held following the Divine Liturgy on January 15. We will have lunch provided for this important occasion.

Donations Needed. One of our ongoing projects is providing fresh underwear and socks for Acadiana Outreach as well as stocking up our own food pantry. Please bring by any of these items for distribution.

Volunteers Needed. Are you looking for an opportunity to help out our Church community? Do you see a need that is not being addressed that you would like to help with? Please let any Parish Council Member or Fr. Philip if you would like to help out with any ongoing projects in the Church community.

Parish Council Update

With the return of the normal schedule of meetings the Parish Council is taking on exciting new projects for the upcoming year:

- 1) Pledge Drive. Over the last few weeks we have been holding our pledge drive. If you have not filled out a pledge card, you can find them in the narthex of the Church. Please remember that in order to vote at the general assembly meeting, you must have returned a pledge card on or before that day.
 - 2) General Assembly Meeting—On Sunday, January 15, we will hold our annual general assembly meeting. Please make every effort to attend this important day in the life of the Church.
 - 3) Cleaning Schedule—Keeping the Church facility clean is a task that is much too big for any one person or family. Starting this year, there will be a sign-up sheet to take charge of the cleaning of the Church each month. For the tasks to be done each week or each month, see the laminated list that is posted on the bulletin board and on the refrigerator upstairs. Thank you for your help with this important ministry in our community!
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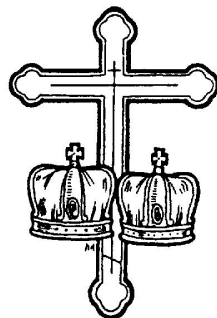
**Please visit our website:
www.stgabrielorthodox.org**

Birthdays

Mohanna Khlaifat-1/1
Saliba Qaisieh - 1/4
Rula Mouawad-1/11
Casey Albritton-1/20
Moussa Khlaifat-1/21
Michael Mouawad-1/26
Ann Qaisieh-1/27
Willow Ann-1/29
Michelle Hand McAdams-
1/30
Seraphim Nelson-1/30

If your birthday is not listed and it should be, please see Fr. Philip and let him know to include you!

Anniversaries



Teachings of the Church Fathers

“Teach your heart to follow what your tongue is saying to others.” -
Abba Poemen the Great

