



# SAINT STEPHEN BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH

4141 Laurence Avenue, Allen Park, MI December 3rd, 2023

ststephen@parma.org 313-382-5901

website: saintstephenbyzantine.church

Priest: Rev. John R.P. Russell, M.Div.  
412-378-0308  
jrprussell@gmail.com

Deacon: Rev. Deacon Lawrence Hendricks

Cantors: Dominique Azcuy, Victor Azcuy, Daniel Barillas,  
Guillermo Barillas, Debra Grega Beckerman, Cecilia  
Hendricks, Pani Mary Hendricks, Pani Katie Russell,  
Mary Russell, David Woods, Mary Woods

Hall Manager: Victor Azcuy  
ststephenshall123@gmail.com (239) 895-8931

**Glory to Jesus Christ! Welcome to St. Stephen!**  
You are welcome here. Join us in prayer and worship  
of almighty God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

## About the Parish

St. Stephen Byzantine Catholic Church, led by the Holy Spirit, is called to evangelize – to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We commit ourselves to welcoming and caring for all of God's children.

We are a parish of the Byzantine Ruthenian Catholic Eparchy of Parma, Bishop Robert (Pipta) is our bishop. Archbishop William (Skurla) of Pittsburgh is our Metropolitan. We are in communion with our holy father Francis, the Pope of Rome.

“Eastern Catholics are in [comm]union with Rome. We share the same faith and the same mysteries, however, our way of expressing them follows the same tradition as the Orthodox Churches.”  
– our former pastor Fr. Joseph Radvansky in *A Brief Explanation of the Eastern Catholic Churches*.



# LITURGICAL SERVICE TIMES

Sunday & Saturday morning at 10:00am

Wednesday & Friday evening at 7:00pm

**4:00pm Great Vespers** *for Sunday – followed by Confessions*

Cantor: Mary R

**Sunday, December 3, 2023** ☩

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. Tone 2

The Holy Prophet Zephaniah.

*5th Resurrectional Matins Gospel: Luke 24:12-35.*

Ephesians 6:10-17. Luke 18:18-27

**8:15am Matins** *for Sunday*

**9:30am Akathist** *(Reader Service); Confessions – in Sacristy*

**10:00am Divine Liturgy** *– for the people of the parish* Cantors: Mary H & Cecilia  
Reader: Erin

*for Malina & John Michael Patrick, from Sarah Marron (12-2)*

*+Melvyn & +Josefa, from Sarah Marron (11-28)*

*+Frank & +Mary Kovtun, from Maryalice Lukas (11-29)*

*After Liturgy: Fellowship & Potluck in the hall. ECF classes. Guild Meeting in the small hall.*

*5:00pm Revelation Discussion on Zoom*

**7:00pm Vespers** *for Monday – at St. Francis in Ann Arbor* Cantors: Mary H & Debra

**Monday, December 4, 2023** ☩

☩ The Holy Great Martyr Barbara (306). Our Venerable Father John of Damascus (749)

2 Timothy 2:20-26. Luke 20:27-44.

**6:00pm Great Vespers &**

**7:00pm Divine Liturgy** *for ☩ Venerable Father Sabbas*  
*+Irene Farris*

Cantor: Victor A

Tuesday, December 5, 2023



✙ Our Venerable and God-bearing Father Sabbas the Sanctified (532).

*Vespers Paramia:* Wisdom 3:1-9 • Wisdom 5:15-6:3 • Wisdom 4:7-15.

*Matins Gospel:* Luke 6:17-23.

*for Sabbas:* Galatians 5:22-6:2. Matthew 11:27-30.

*for the day:* 2 Timothy 3:16-4:4. Luke 21:12-19.

7:00am Coffee with Fr. John – a casual meetup on Zoom

**6:00pm Great Vespers &**

Cantors: Mary H, Cecilia, &

**7:00pm Divine Liturgy** for ✙ Holy Father Nicholas

Victor A

+Michael Camilleri, from Betty Sutyak

Wednesday, December 6, 2023



✙ HOLY FR. NICHOLAS THE WONDER-WORKER, ARCHBISHOP OF MYRA IN LYCIA.

*Vespers Paramia:* Proverbs 10:7, 6; 3:13-16; 8:6, 34-35, 4, 12, 14, 17, 5-9; 1:23 •

Proverbs 10:31-11:12 • Wisdom 4: 7-15.

*Matins Gospel:* John 10:9-16.

*for Nicholas:* Hebrews 13:17-21. Luke 6:17-23a.

*for the day:* 2 Timothy 4:9-22. Luke 21:5-7, 10-11, 20-24.

6:30pm Confessions

**7:00pm Vespers** for a day of alleluia – with prostrations

Thursday, December 7, 2023



Day of Alleluia

Our Holy Father Ambrose, Bishop of Milan (397).

Titus 1:5-2:1. Luke 21:28-33.

Friday, December 8, 2023



Day of Alleluia

Pre-festive Day of the Maternity. Our Venerable Father Patapius.

Titus 1:15-2:10. Luke 21:37-22:8.

**7:00am Matins** with Alleluia and prostrations

6:30pm Confessions

**7:00pm Great Vespers** for the ✙ Maternity of the Holy Anna

Cantors: Mary H & Cecilia

Saturday, December 9, 2023



✙ THE MATERNITY OF THE HOLY ANNA. Holy Hannah, Mother of the Prophet Samuel.

*Vespers Paramia:* Genesis 28: 10-17 • Ezekiel 43:27 - 44:4 • Proverbs 9: 1-11.

*Matins Gospel:* Luke 1:39-49, 56.

*for the Maternity:* Galatians 4:22-31. Luke 8:16-21.

*for the day:* Ephesians 1:16-23. Luke 13:18-29.

**10:00am Divine Liturgy for the ✙ Maternity of the Holy Anna**

**Cantor: Victor A**

*+Melvyn & +Josefa, from Sarah Marron*

**4:00pm Great Vespers for Sunday – followed by Confessions**

Sunday, December 10, 2023



TWENTY-EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST. Tone 3

The Holy Martyrs Menas, Hermogenes, and Eugegraphus (4th Century).

*6th Resurrectional Matins Gospel:* Luke 24:36-53.

Colossians 1:12-18. Luke 17:12-19.

**8:15am Matins for Sunday**

**9:30am First & Third Hour** (*Reader Service*); **Confessions** – *in Sacristy*

**10:00am Divine Liturgy** – *for the people of the parish*

**Cantors: Mary H & Cecilia**

**Reader: Mary R**

*+Irene Farris (12-4)*

*+Michael Camilleri, from Betty Sutyak (12-5)*

*+Melvyn & +Josefa, from Sarah Marron (12-9)*

*After Liturgy: St. Nicholas Celebration! – in the hall. No Classes.*

**Cantors: Mary W & David**

**7:00pm Vespers for Monday**

Monday, December 11, 2023



*Day of Alleluia*

Our Venerable Father Daniel the Stylite (489).

Hebrews 3:5-11, 17-19. Mark 8:11-21.

7:00pm Byzantine Book Club - online: [meet.google.com/xuc-eiwo-sia](https://meet.google.com/xuc-eiwo-sia)

*or in person:* 8461 Barrington Drive, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

Tuesday, December 12, 2023



✙ Our Lady of Guadalupe (1591).

✙ Our Venerable Father Spiridon the Wonderworker, Bishop of Tremithus.

*Vespers Paramia:* Genesis 28: 10-17 • Ezekiel 43:27 - 44:4 • Proverbs 9: 1-11.

*Matins Gospel:* Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28.

*for Guadalupe:* Hebrews 9:1-7. Luke 1:39-56.

*for the day:* Hebrews 4:1-13. Mark 8:22-26.

7:00am Coffee with Fr. John – a casual meetup on Zoom

**9:30am Third & Sixth Hour**

**10:00am Divine Liturgy**

Cantor: Mary R

*for the health of John Schimele, from Bea & Paul Baize*

Wednesday, December 13, 2023



✙ The Holy Martyrs Eustratius, Auxentius, Eugene, Mardarius, and Orestes.

The Holy Virgin Martyr Lucy. Our Holy Father Herman of Alaska.

*Matins Gospel:* Matthew 10:16-22.

*for the Martyrs:* Ephesians 6:10-17. Luke 21:12-19.

*for the day:* Hebrews 5:11-6:8. Mark 8:30-34.

**7:00am Matins**

6:30pm Confessions

**7:00pm Vespers** *for a day of alleluia – with prostrations*

Thursday, December 14, 2023



*Day of Alleluia*

The Holy Martyrs Thrysus, Leucas, Philemon, Appolonius, and Callinicus (2nd Century).

The Blessed Priest and Ascetic Father Nimatulla al-Hardini (Joseph Kassab).

Hebrews 7:1-6. Mark 9:10-16.

**7:00pm Office of Holy Repentance**

Cantor: Mary H

## Friday, December 15, 2023

The Holy Martyr Eleutherius (120). Our Venerable Father Paul of Latra (950).

⌘. Our Holy Father Stephen, Archbishop of Surozh (c. 775).

Hebrews 7:18-25. Mark 9:33-41.

**9:30am Third & Sixth Hour**

**10:00am Divine Liturgy**

Cantor: Mary R

*for the descendants of Melvyn & Josefa, from Sarah Marron*

*6:30pm Confessions*

**7:00pm Vespers** *for Saturday*

## Saturday, December 16, 2023 *Saturday of Alleluia*

The Holy Prophet Haggai.

Ephesians 2:11-13. Luke 14:1-11.

**10:00am Divine Liturgy**

Cantor:

*for Malina & John Michael Patrick, from Sarah Marron*

**4:00pm Great Vespers** *for Sunday – followed by Confessions*

## Sunday, December 17, 2023

SUNDAY OF THE FOREFATHERS. Tone 4.

⌘ The Holy Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Children, Hananiah, Azariah, and Mishael.

*Vespers Paramia:* Isaiah 43:9-14 • Wisdom 3:1-9 • Wisdom 5:15-6:3.

*7th Resurrectional Matins Gospel:* John 20:1-10.

Colossians 3:4-11. Luke 14:16-24.

**8:15am Matins** *for Sunday*

**9:30am First & Third Hour** *(Reader Service); Confessions – in Sacristy*

**10:00am Divine Liturgy** *– for the people of the parish*

Cantors: Mary H & Cecilia

Reader: Daniel B

*for the health of John Schimele, from Bea & Paul Baize (12-12)*

*for the descendants of Melvyn & Josefa, from Sarah Marron (12-15)*

*After Liturgy: Fellowship & Potluck in the hall. ECF classes. Catechism Class*

*5:00pm Revelation Discussion on Zoom*

**7:00pm Vespers** *for a day of alleluia – with prostrations*

## Monday, December 18, 2023 Day of Alleluia

The Holy Martyr Sebastian and his Companions (287).

Hebrews 8:7-13. Mark 9:42-10:1.

7:00pm Byzantine Book Club - online: [meet.google.com/xuc-eiuo-sia](https://meet.google.com/xuc-eiuo-sia)

or in person: 8461 Barrington Drive, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

## Tuesday, December 19, 2023 Day of Alleluia

The Holy Martyr Boniface (290).

Hebrews 9:8-10, 15-23. Mark 10:2-12.

7:00am Coffee with Fr. John – a casual meetup on Zoom

**10:00am Third & Sixth Hour** with prostrations

## Wednesday, December 20, 2023

⊗ Pre-festive Day of the Nativity. The Holy Martyr Ignatius the God-bearer (107).

Hebrews 10:1-18. Mark 10:11b-16.

**7:00am First & Third Hour**

6:00pm Confessions

**6:30pm Vespers &**

**7:00pm Divine Liturgy for Thursday**

+George Gonschak

Cantor: TBD

## Thursday, December 21, 2023

Pre-festive Day of the Nativity. The Holy Martyr Juliana of Nicomedia (304).

Hebrews 10:35-11:7. Mark 10:17-27.

6:30pm Councils Meeting

## Friday, December 22, 2023

Pre-festive Day of the Nativity. The Holy Great Martyr Anastasia (304).

First Hour: Micah 5:2-4a; Hebrews 1:1-12; Matthew 1:18-25.

Third Hour: Baruch 3:36-4:4; Galatians 3:23-4:5; Luke 2:1-20.

Sixth Hour: Isaiah 7:10-16; 8:1-4, 8-10; Hebrews 1:10-2:3; Matthew 2:1-12.

Ninth Hour: Isaiah 9:6-7; Hebrews 2:11-18; Matthew 2:13-23.

Hebrews 11:8, 11-16. Mark 10:23b-32a.

**10:00am Royal Hours for  Christmas**

Cantor: Victor A

*6:30pm Confessions*

**7:00pm Vespers for Saturday**

## Saturday, December 23, 2023

Saturday before the Nativity of the Lord. The Holy Ten Martyrs of Crete (250).

Commemoration of the Dedication of the Great Church of Holy Wisdom in Constantinople.

Galatians 3:8-12. Luke 13:18-29.

**10:00am Divine Liturgy**

Cantor:

*+Melvyn & +Josefa, from Sarah Marron*

**4:00pm Great Vespers for Sunday – followed by Confessions**

## Sunday, December 24, 2023

THE SUNDAY BEFORE THE NATIVITY. THE SUNDAY OF THE ANCESTORS. Tone 5

Vigil of the Nativity. The Holy Great Martyr Eugenia (262).

*Vespers Paramia:* Genesis 14:14-20 • Deuteronomy 1:8-11, 15-17 • Deut. 10:14-21.

*8th Resurrectional Matins Gospel:* John 20:11-18.

Hebrews 11:9-10, 17-23, 32-40. Matthew 1:1-25

**8:15am Matins for Sunday**

Cantor: Victor A

**9:30am First & Third Hour** (*Reader Service*); **Confessions** – *in Sacristy*

**10:00am Divine Liturgy** – *for the people of the parish*

Cantors: Mary H & Cecilia

Reader: Lance

*+George Gonschak (12-20)*

*+Melvyn & +Josefa, from Sarah Marron (12-23)*

*After Liturgy: Fellowship & Potluck in the hall. No Classes. Decorate the Church for Christmas!*



**4:00pm Great Vespers** for ☩ Christmas Cantors: Mary H, Cecilia. Reader: Mary W  
*Koljady (Christmas Carols) and Holy Supper in the hall* Cantor: Mary W

**9:00pm All-Night Vigil** (*Great Compline & Matins*) for ☩ Christmas

Cantors: Victor A & Mary W

**Monday, December 25, 2023**

*Christmas!*

☩ THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD, GOD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST.

*Vespers Paramia:* Genesis 1:1-13 • Numbers 24:2-3, 5-9, 17-18 • Micah 4:6-7; 5:2-4 •

Is. 11:1-10 • Baruch 3:35-4:4 • Dan. 2:31-36, 44-45 • Is. 9:6-7 • Is. 7:10-16a; 8:1-4, 8b-10  
Galatians 3:15-22 & Hebrews 1:1-12.

Matthew 13:31-36 & Luke 2:1-20.

*Matins Gospel:* Matthew 1:18-25

*for the Nativity:* Galatians 4:4-7. Matthew 2:1-12.

*for the day:* Hebrews 11:17-23, 27-31. Mark 10:46-52.

**9:30am Koljady** (*Christmas Carols*) in the church

**10:00am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil** for ☩ Christmas Cantor: Mary R. Reader: Zac

**Tuesday, December 26, 2023**

⦿. The Synaxis of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary.

The Holy Martyr Euthymius, Bishop of Sardis.

*for the Synaxis:* Hebrews 2:11-18. Matthew 2:13-23.

*for the day:* Hebrews 12:25, 26, 13:22-25. Mark 11:11-23.

**10:00am Third & Sixth Hour**

**6:00pm Great Vespers &**

Cantor: Victor A

**7:00pm Divine Liturgy** for our patronal feast of St. Stephen – with procession

+Stephen L. Kastura, from Kathleen Johnston

#### LEGEND

☩ Great Feast

☩ Feast with an All-night Vigil

✙ Feast with the Polyeleos at Matins

⦿. Feast with the Great Doxology at Matins

⦿ Feast with Six Stichera at Vespers



by tradition, a strict fast day (no meat, dairy, eggs, fish, wine, or oil)



by tradition, wine and oil are permitted (no meat, dairy, eggs, or fish)



by tradition, fish, wine, and oil are permitted (no meat, dairy, or eggs)



by tradition, dairy, eggs, fish, wine, and oil are permitted (no meat)

## Philip's Fast (Filipovka)

Nov. 15th – Dec. 24th

*a translation of the fasting description provided in Chapter 33 of the Typicon:*

"It is fitting to know that, during the fast of the Holy Apostles, and of the Nativity of Christ, on Tuesday and Thursday, we do not eat fish, but oil and wine only. On Monday, on Wednesday and Friday, we taste neither oil nor wine, but we fast until the ninth hour [3pm], and on these days we eat dry food. On Saturdays and Sundays, we eat fish. If a saint having the [Great] Doxology occurs on a Tuesday or on a Thursday, we eat fish. If on a Monday, likewise. If on a Wednesday or a Friday, we permit oil and wine only. We eat once a day. If a saint having a vigil [occurs] on a Wednesday or a Friday, we permit oil and wine and fish. If the memorial of the saint whose temple it is occurs on a Wednesday or a Friday, we do likewise."



## The Office of Holy Repentance

During this penitential season in preparation for the Nativity of our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ, we will celebrate the full form of the office of holy repentance on **Thursday, December 14<sup>th</sup> at 7pm**. This includes private confession to a priest. There will be an additional priest – Fr. Constantin Hadarag – available for confessions as well on this evening. This is a good opportunity for any prepared children to make their first confession, for those who have been a long time away from this holy mystery to return, and for all of us to simply to go to confession, which is key to a healthy spiritual life.

## Bible Discussion – Revelation: God's Gift of Hope

St. Stephen Parish is beginning its study and discussion of the Book of Revelation.

Biblical prophecy can be very difficult to understand; as a result, many people simply skip over the books dealing with biblical prophecy. The book we'll be using, *Revelation: God's Gift of Hope*, provides a helpful Catholic interpretation of perhaps the most mysterious book in the Scriptures. Through this study, participants will see the book of Revelation with new eyes and will grasp hold of its intended, hope-filled message.

To get started, follow this link to an introduction:

[Introduction to the book of Revelation K Perrotta Nov 2023](#)

<https://voicethread.com/myvoice/thread/25505738/151063639/136824465>

Our meetings will be on **Sundays at 5:00pm, starting this Sunday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>**.

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84684461827>

Meeting ID: 846 8446 1827

Or, if you want to meet in person, Fr. John will simultaneously host in the small hall.

# Saint Nicholas Celebration!

St. Nicholas is coming to visit us at St. Stephen on Sunday **December 10<sup>h</sup>**, just after his feast day! He will join us in the hall after the Divine Liturgy. Everyone, please come to the hall and greet him with our hymn to St. Nicholas! Then, I think he may bring something good for our children. Meanwhile, we will be inspired by hearing about the generous and charitable life of St. Nicholas. Don't forget to come to church for St. Nicholas Day!

**On the evening of Tuesday, Dec. 5<sup>th</sup>:**

- Great Vespers & Divine Liturgy for St. Nicholas!

**Then, on Sunday, December 10<sup>th</sup>:**

- A celebration after Liturgy including:
  - A visit from St. Nicholas & the hymn to St. Nicholas!
  - A presentation on the life and significance of St. Nicholas

## The Guild of St. Stephen

The Guild usually meets on the second Sunday of each month. This month, however, they meet on the first Sunday, **December 3<sup>rd</sup>**. The Guild of St. Stephen has a long and storied history. Come and be a part of its future! The mission of the Guild is primarily fundraising for the parish to help enable our many ministries of worship, service, and evangelization.

## Guild Cookie Sale

The next Guild Fund raiser will be the **COOKIE SALE** taking place on **Sunday, December 17** after liturgy in the hall. There will be a variety of cookies to pick from. \$15.00 per container. Just pick your favorites! If anyone would like to bake cookies to contribute, this would be greatly appreciated.

## Byzantine Book Club

We are reading and discussing *Poustinia: Encountering God in Silence, Solitude, and Prayer* by Catherine Doherty. Meetings are most Mondays at 7pm.

You may join in person at the Hendricks Homestead  
(8461 Barrington Drive, Ypsilanti, MI 48198)

or online through the link: [meet.google.com/xuc-eiuo-sia](https://meet.google.com/xuc-eiuo-sia)  
[Join by phone](#) (US) +1 662-510-4431 PIN: 111 641 182#

# 2023 Christmas Services

*Christmas is on a Monday this year,  
which means the services are arranged differently than usual.*

When December 24<sup>th</sup> falls on a Saturday or Sunday, the day of strict fasting and the celebration of the Royal Hours in preparation for Christmas are moved to the preceding Friday, since Saturday and Sunday are never days of strict fasting in the Byzantine tradition. We do abstain from certain foods, such as meat, on Saturdays and Sundays during fasting seasons and on this Christmas Eve, but we eat other foods after Divine Liturgy in the mornings. *(To fast is to spend some time eating nothing. On strict fast days, such as Friday, December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023, the Byzantine tradition is to fast (or eat nothing) until Vespers (sunset) or until Ninth Hour (about 3pm). This is not a law in our particular Church but may be followed voluntarily).*

Divine Liturgy is celebrated *every* Sunday morning. This is true even if Christmas Eve (December 24<sup>th</sup>) falls on a Sunday, as it does this year. On Sunday morning at 10am, therefore, as we always do, we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom.

Since Divine Liturgy is celebrated on the morning of December 24<sup>th</sup>, it is *not* celebrated *again* in the evening. *(It is a general rule in our tradition that the Divine Liturgy is only celebrated once per day in each church).* Therefore, Vespers for Christmas will be celebrated by itself, still with a Gospel, but without the Divine Liturgy, at 4pm on Sunday, December 24<sup>th</sup>. Our parish Holy Supper will follow this, beginning with the singing of our Christmas Carols (*Koljady*) in the hall. The All-Night Vigil for Christmas (Great Compline & Matins) will begin at 9pm on Sunday night. We will begin singing our Christmas Carols (*Koljady*) again at 9:30am on Monday morning. Finally, the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil for Christmas will be celebrated Monday morning at 10:00am, since it was not celebrated the night before. *Christ is born! All of this is as described in the Typikon (2023 Typicon, pp. 93 - 96).*

## Coffee with Fr. John

*a casual meetup on Zoom*

Perhaps you have questions and haven't been able to find a moment to ask. Or perhaps you'd just like to hang out for a while in the morning before work. You're invited to share some time as we journey together through this life in Christ. This will be an online meeting through Zoom at 7am on Tuesdays. You can join with or without video.

Zoom Meeting:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/83054002720?pwd=QzZNMS9GUE9KTlkxU01DdVdCeTRLZz09>

Meeting ID: 830 5400 2720

Passcode: 389460

## **Adopt a Family**

Our parish is adopting a family in need for Christmas. Thank you to everyone for taking the paper ornaments with the ages and wanted items on them. Please purchase the item, wrap it, and put the ornament on it as a tag and return the gift to the table. **We need the gifts by December 17<sup>th</sup> in order to get them to the family in time for Christmas.**

There is also a box under the table for non-perishable food items. For example corn, stuffing, etc. Please place any items you have in this box. THANK YOU!!

## **Annual Stewardship Appeal**

Giving is a way of opening ourselves to opportunity. When we choose to be God's opportunity of help and love for another person, we place ourselves in God's design for giving and receiving from one another. Let us stand in awe of the holiness of God today as we practice recognition of our Lord by giving back to him.

Visit us online at [parma.org](http://parma.org) to submit your one-time or monthly donation to the Stewardship Appeal. Thank you for your generosity!

St. Stephen's goal this year is \$7,300.

So far, 17 contributors have donated \$2218, which is about 30% of our goal.

## **Make Evangelization part of the Nativity Fast**

by Carson Daniel Lauffer

The Nativity or Philip's Fast is the preparation for the coming of the Son of God to redeem all of humanity. We prepare our lives for His coming by Fasting from satisfying our wants for leisure, food, and other matters and instead offer more prayers and more acts of kindness.

We can combine prayers, kindnesses, and fasting by inviting our friends and relatives to worship with us during this time, especially on the Sundays that Celebrate the Divine Condescension during the Christmas season.

Start by praying each day for God to lead you to a person or persons who need the gift of Christ in their lives by attending worship with you.

Then ask God to give you the courage to invite these persons to worship.

Invite everyone whom God brings into your life to join you at worship.

Offer to drive them to Church if they lack transportation.

Introduce them to others in the Church including Father John, and Father Deacon Lawrence.

Studies for decades have shown that 85 – 90% of people who attend worship do so by invitation of family and friends. Be that friend who introduces another to Christ and His Church.

## Upcoming Retreat Opportunities

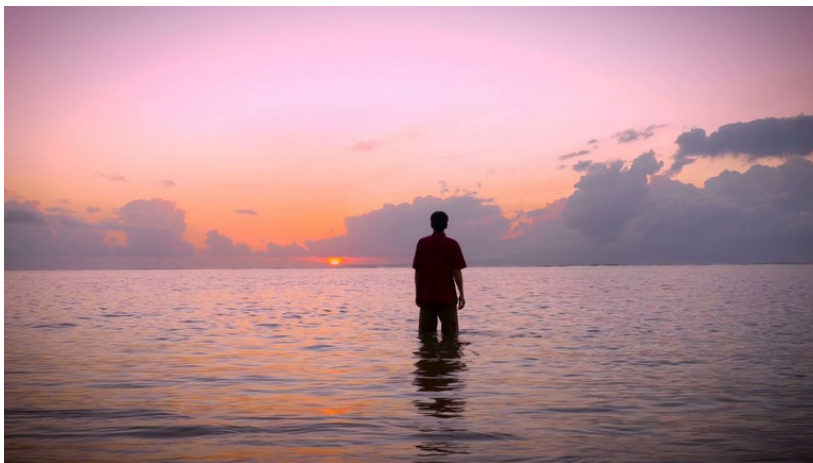
We encourage you to check for more opportunities!

<https://www.parma.org/retreats>



**The 11th Annual Women's Retreat** will take place February 16-18, 2024, at Our Lady of the Pines Retreat Center in Fremont, Ohio. The retreat master will be Fr. Lukas Mitro, administrator of the Holy Resurrection Church in Euclid, Ohio. The topic is The Beatitudes: The Way of Life. More information coming soon!

**The Third Annual Men's Retreat** will take place March 15-17, 2024, at Our Lady of the Pines Retreat Center in Fremont, Ohio. The retreat master will be Father Thomas J. Loya, the pastor of the Annunciation of the Mother or God parish in Homer Glen, Illinois.



The topic is Fallen Passions to Apatheia: Pursuing the Virtuous Life. More information coming soon.

## **St. Nicholas Apostolate**

The St. Nicholas Apostolate is a means for members in our parish to practice Christian love through giving charitable donations and volunteering. The St. Nicholas Apostolate is facilitating donations from the parish for three funds modeled after the three purses of St. Nicholas. He was a wealthy man before he became a priest and bishop, and he chose to use his wealth to save three impoverished women from slavery by giving each of them a sack of gold coins for a dowry. St. Nicholas is often shown holding three purses or three coins. The three purses of the St. Nicholas Apostolate will be used to support the following:

- 1) charitable organizations  
(such as Day House, Image of God Pregnancy Center, & Fish & Loaves)
- 2) fellow parishioners in need
- 3) neighbors and strangers who come to the parish seeking help.

One way that parishioners are encouraged to practice Christ's command to "help those that ask" is through monetary donations. Someday soon, a donation box next to an icon of St. Nicholas will be placed in the narthex with envelopes for parishioners to donate to a purse of their choosing or simply to make an unrestricted gift. Donations for the first purse, charitable organizations, are given directly to the organizations. Donations for the second and third purses, our parishioners and our neighbors, are distributed by Fr. John Russell as he deems appropriate. All donations are tax deductible. In the near future, volunteer opportunities will also be organized for the parish to participate in.

**The St. Nicholas Apostolate is not a philanthropic club, but rather is a vehicle for the parish community to respond to God's commandment to love our neighbor, especially our neighbors in need.**

"On the subject of mutual charity, you have no need for anyone to write you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another.... Nevertheless, we urge you... to progress even more." (1 Thessalonians 4:9-10).

Contact Fr Deacon Lawrence ([frdeaconlawrence@yahoo.com](mailto:frdeaconlawrence@yahoo.com)) for more information.

## **Synodal Process**

From the survey and the conversations with parishioners in the context of reflections on the Beatitudes, we have formulated some goals for St. Stephen's.

### **\* Develop opportunities for adult religious education**

In the survey, parishioners expressed some reservations about their readiness to share the Christian faith with others. It seems that further education would be helpful. In order to develop something that will best meet parishioners needs, we need to ask more specific questions to discover areas in which they would most like to learn and formats they would find most helpful.

Action: we will create some ways of inquiring into educational needs in the parish during the fall. In the new year we will begin to present new educational opportunities.

Our goal is to involve at least 20 percent of the active adults in the parish in new educational experiences by Pascha next year.

### **\* Encourage and help parishioners to go on retreats**

Most parishioners report that they do not often or ever go on retreats. Taking retreat time is a normal practice in Christian life. While retreats in the eparchy are routinely brought to parishioners' attention, more could be done to encourage and help them.

Action: we will give more attention to helping parishioners see the value of taking retreats and will work to identify and promote retreats and help people attend them (transportation, etc.).

We would like to see 10 percent of the active adults in the parish attend a retreat by the end of 2023.

### **\* Develop outreach opportunities**

In conversation over the Beatitudes, parishioners expressed the need for ways of serving neighbors in need and also for deepening community life within the parish. Developing outreach opportunities in a way that also deepens parishioners relationships with each other would help to meet this need.

Action: We have revived the long defunct St. Nicholas Apostolate as a way of involving parishioners in service to needy neighbors—and to each other in the parish. The apostolate will encourage donations for help to individuals outside and inside the church and will help parishioners learn about, support, and participate in selected local nonprofit organizations.

Our goal is to involve at least 20 percent of the active adults in the parish in this apostolate.

**Please continue to let us know your thoughts about the parish and about these initiatives in particular. You may always call or write:**

**313-382-5901**

**4141 Laurence Avenue, Allen Park, MI 48101**

**ststephen@parma.org**





*His Eminence, Metropolitan Gregory's*  
**NATIVITY FAST PRAYER CHALLENGE 2023**

*To Be Prayed Every Evening of the Nativity Fast*

Most-merciful Master, Lord Jesus Christ our God, at Your Holy Birth, the choirs of angels proclaimed peace on earth. At Your Glorious Resurrection, You came to Your disciples saying "Peace be with you!" As we prepare to celebrate Your coming in the flesh, send Your peace upon the whole world, especially upon the Holy Land and all other places of warfare and unrest. Cleanse us of all impurity, O Lord, so that our hearts may be filled with Your peace which surpasses all understanding. In this way, may we live peacefully according to Your commandments in our families, communities, and churches. For You are the King of Peace and the Savior of our Souls, and to You we give glory forever. Amen!

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## **Prayer List**

*Pray for the healing of* John Aral, Barb Barnes, Don & Theresa Butella, Dorothy Brooks, Pat Carlson, Louise Dalbo, Lawrence Thomas Dion, Chris Lauffer, Michael Mykeloff, Judith Ng, Ron Ostrowsky, Thomas Payeur, & Edith Santo

## **Rides to Church**

If you need a ride or would like to offer a ride to others, please contact Victor Jiomkowski (313-930-0801 / v.jiomkowski1111@att.net) so he can help make the arrangements. The St. Nicholas Apostolate is still looking for a second person to help coordinate rides to church for people having trouble getting to services. If you are interested in helping with this, please contact Victor Jiomkowski or Father John.

## **Church Cleaning**

Please sign up to clean our church. Sign up for any week you're available to clean and clean the church on any day of that week.

## **CHARITABLE GIVING**

*from St. Stephen Parish*

*We donate \$50 per month to Fish & Loaves Community Food Pantry*

*Since our last contributions,*

for the Church in Central & Eastern Europe, we have collected \$85.

for Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan, we have collected \$138.

for the retirement of our nuns, we have collected \$475.

for Peter's Pence, we have collected \$40.

for Catholic Home Missions, we have collected \$40.

## **Image of God Pregnancy Center**

Our parish helps to support Image of God Pregnancy Center (4151 Seminole St., Detroit), a place of hope for disadvantaged women on the city's east side for the past 11 years. Their facility provides vital resources at no cost to current and expecting mothers, from pregnancy testing to professional counseling, in Detroit's most underserved area.

## **Special Collections 2023**

December 9-10, 2023 (*use envelopes dated Aug 27, 2023*):

### **Retirement Fund for Religious**

- Retirement Fund for the Religious: The Sisters of St. Basil the Great in Uniontown benefit directly from this USCCB Collection for their retired nuns. As they were active and provided ministry to our Eparchy in the past, we wish to help them by participating in this collection. This collection is not for our retired priests but will only benefit the retired nuns of the community of St. Basil the Great.

**ATTENDANCE** – *Thank you for praying with us.*

Attendance at Divine Liturgy on November 26<sup>th</sup> was **47**. Average Sunday attendance ≈ **59**

Devote yourselves “to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship,  
to the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42).

**COLLECTION** – *Thank you for supporting your parish.*

Collection for November 26<sup>th</sup> was **\$1,132.17** Average Weekly Collection: **\$2,062.76**

Sunday: \$601; Online: \$402.17; Holy Day: \$56; Candles: \$18; Fuel: \$55

“Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion,  
for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor 9:7).



**Saint Stephen**

BYZANTINE CATHOLIC CHURCH