Once more, Into the Breach

Once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more; Or close the wall up with our English dead. In peace there’s nothing so becomes a man As modest stillness and humility: But when the blast of war blows in our ears, Then imitate the action of the tiger; Stiffen the sinews, summon up the blood, Disguise fair nature with hard-favour’d rage

–William Shakespeare; Henry V, Act III, Scene 1

Beloved, we have entered once again upon that season of struggle, with the Great Fast approaching in short time. It is meant to be for Christians a time of renewal but renewal which comes through hard fought efforts. In Henry V, Shakespeare sets for us a tension between peace and war, between stillness and action. Yet the Desert Fathers saw this not as a tension of opposition but as dynamic, creative, even salvific. God has given us the power of to “stiffen the sinews” and “summon up the blood” not only for our earthly survival but also to teach us how we must engage the spirit in spiritual contest.

Hearken unto these words from St. Macarius of Egypt:

If we want to draw close to Christ we must first drag ourselves forcibly towards the good, even though our heart may not wish it. ‘The kingdom of heaven is subjected to violence, and the violent take it by force’, said the Lord (Matt. 11:12). And He also said: ‘Strive to enter through the narrow gate’ (Luke 13:24).

We must, then, force ourselves even against our will towards virtue, towards love when we lack love, towards gentleness when we have need of it, towards sympathy of heart and compassion, towards patience in the face of insult and contempt, and steadfastness in the face of mockery, if we have not yet acquired the habit of these things, and towards prayer if we still have not attained spiritual prayer.

If God sees us struggling in this way and forcibly dragging ourselves towards the good even when our heart seems to oppose it, He will bestow true prayer on us, will give us compassion, patience, forbearance, and in general will fill us with all the fruits of the Spirit.—The Freedom of the Intellect 134.

Aldous Huxley in Brave New World, the dystopian quest for universal happiness is exemplified by the drug Soma, which he describes as “Christianity without tears.” It is a world of inescapable comforts to which the Savage cries out, “But I don’t want comfort. I want God, I want poetry, I want real danger, I want freedom, I want goodness. I want sin.” H. Richard Niebuhr summarized the modern world’s version of Christian theology as “A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross.” In The Abolition of Man, C.S. Lewis described the problem of a modern society that does not properly connect the rational and emotive powers within us, saying, “We make men without chests and expect from them virtue and enterprise... We laugh at honor and are shocked to find traitors in our midst.” All of these are but symptoms of the loss of a classical Christian worldview which understands the nature and purpose of this world as a spiritual arena and our role in it.

Yet we are Orthodox Christians. Every year we have our arena’s championship season—Great Lent. We are called to put aside our comfort and self-absorption and to walk with Christ to Jerusalem and there face the ultimate trial of the Cross. Our weapons are fasting, prayer, and almsgiving, and yes, even humility and stillness. Christ told Pilate that his kingdom was not of this world. Through the Cross, both then and now in our taking it upon ourselves, that (cont’d on p7)
Commemorations

Don’t see your name? Join us on Realm and fill out your profile. If you include your birthday and nameday, you’ll see them here.

God grant you many years!

**ANNIVERSARIES**

David & Amy D.  
Scott & Kristen S.

**BIRTHDAYS**

Tanya D.  
Kami G.  
Clara M.  
Emilia H.  
Tep R.  
Irina A.  
Nina M.  
Lisa J.  
Renee L.  
Kieran H.  
Julia P.  
A P.  
Mehret A.  
Joshua F.  
Daniel A.  
Sarah J.  
Kami C.  
Michael M.  
Todd S.  
Jeanie C.  
Christine S.  
Talia B.  
Zac W.  
Sarah J.  
Sophia D.  
Nadine T.  
Yvonne A.  
Bogdan M.

Realms is the way we’ve chosen to keep in touch with the community through the COVID-19 quarantine. Through Realm, you’ll be able to receive news from St. Mary’s, sign up to attend services in person, participate in interest groups, and get other updates from St. Mary’s.

To sign up, simply email UnderTheVeilOfHerProtection@gmail.com with your name and birthday.

**ST. MARY’S IS FOLLOWING VIRGINIA GUIDELINES FOR**

**Phase Three**

**INCLUDING THE AMENDED EXECUTIVE ORDER 67**

St. Mary’s is currently open with limited attendance. We appreciate your patience and loving-kindness as we do our best to comply with state guidelines and practice obedience to our synod of bishops. We pray that this phase will go smoothly and safely, and that we return to less restricted practices soon!

Everything you need to know about how to attend a service in person is kept up to date at stmaryorthodox.org/covid19. You can view Virginia’s Phase Three guidelines at virgina.gov/coronavirus.
Events are subject to change. Please check the calendar at [stmaryorthodox.org/calendar](http://stmaryorthodox.org/calendar) for the most up-to-date event listings, service texts, and links to the services. Most services and events are streamed online. Zoom links and passwords can be found on Realm.

### MARCH 2021

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<td>MEMORIAL SATURDAY&lt;br&gt;3:00pm-4:30pm Adult Catechism: The Mysteries&lt;br&gt;5:00pm–6:00pm Great Vespers</td>
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<td>15 GREAT LENT BEGINS&lt;br&gt;7:15–7:45am Morning Prayers (ONLINE)&lt;br&gt;7:00pm-8:30pm Great Canon</td>
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<td>21 SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY&lt;br&gt;9:00am-10:00am Matins&lt;br&gt;10:00am-11:30am Divine Liturgy</td>
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**MEATFARE WEEK**

**CHEESEFARE WEEK**
I am sure you would agree that the hub of activity at St. Mary’s (at least in normal, non-COVID-19 times) is the kitchen/fellowship hall. This is where we have gathered over the years to snack and share our stories after liturgy, hold social or small fundraising events, celebrate birthdays and life-cycle events, hold cooking classes or offer dinners parishioners won in our annual auctions. Yet our beloved little kitchen has also been a source of frustration. When we asked some of you about what you thought was missing, inconvenient or dysfunctional at our current kitchen, pent up frustrations came pouring out:

- There is no proper storage for almost all items.
- There is barely any room.
- There is not enough space for multiple people to work behind the counter and we are limited in how many items can be cooked at once.
- We really need to replace the plumbing – hot water is non-existent, and the plumbing is probably as corroded as St. Nina’s.
- There is only one sink and we have no dishwasher.
- Even simple things, like the water pressure, do not work.

Yet you were also willing to share your dreams and visions for a functional kitchen and consider the many things we would be able to accomplish with such a critical resource. You envisioned:

- A much larger, fully equipped and well-functioning kitchen that could accommodate preparing and serving food for large-scale events such as the dinner dance, Doxacon, a food festival, private celebrations such as wedding and baptismal receptions and, possibly, rentals to selected outside groups.
- A much larger cooking area.
- More space for food storage.
- A double sink for washing items and properly rinsing them without using too much water.
- A much better traffic flow so that there will no longer be long lines or “traffic jams”.
- DRAWERS! Not simply shelves.
- A faucet that is high enough for putting together a flower arrangement and be able to get water in comfortably.
- A beautiful kitchen with light, clean and neutral colors, so it’s a good background for any decorations.
- A space so lovely and calm, we could perhaps hang icons on the walls.
- Two ovens in the kitchen, a six-burner range and even a warming cabinet.

What is even more heartening about this picture, however, is that the collective vision that emerged is within our reach. Our architect, Maria A., studied your “wish list” and has already revised her original concept design to reflect what we heard.
Take a look at her revised design. Notice:

- A considerably larger kitchen (possibly three or four times larger than the current kitchen, though this only a very rough estimate).
- A well-equipped and modern kitchen with more cabinets, double appliances (2 dishwashers, 2 refrigerators, 2 sinks, double wall oven)
- A large island in the middle. This will mean that more persons can now work simultaneously on the same or different tasks, without impeding each other.
- Increased functionality and adaptability. The island can also accommodate a number of group activities—from cooking classes to arts and crafts—or serve as a place to put trays with food or hot casseroles before serving them to people.
- An overall layout which, unlike the current design, allows for a great deal of flexibility and very fluid circulation.
- Changes in the bathroom design. Maria took out the handicap stalls from both men's and women's bathrooms (in her original design concept) and created one unisex bathroom which will be handicap accessible and will also have a baby changing table. By doing that, extra space was created which will be used to create a large storage (4 feet x 16 feet).

The concept design is a living document that will continue to be adapted through dialogue with the parish. Join us in envisioning and creating. Send any thoughts or ideas you have on the kitchen design to undertheveilofherprotection@gmail.com and let us know if you want to participate in future user group meetings.

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Parish Assembly 2021 Successfully Conducted on Zoom

**PARISH NEWS | SOPHIA P.**

As a parish committed to slowing the COVID-19 spread, St. Mary’s conducted the 2021 Annual Parish Assembly virtually last month, and to great effect. On February 21, 2021, over 50 parishioners successfully met online, handled the parish business, and voted through Zoom.

St. Mary’s pays for a handful of hefty Zoom accounts laden with features that have proved invaluable to parish activity, including the Parish Assembly. We have been steadily gaining experience handling a menagerie of interactive needs online, including running services with minimal distraction to virtual attendees, teaching Church School remotely, and facilitating complex online interactions like Doxacon 2020. Accordingly, there were very few hiccups in the virtual experience of this year’s Parish Assembly, even for members that were less familiar with Zoom technology.

The 2020 Annual Report Book was not printed this year for the community. Instead, it was distributed virtually to voting members. Fr. David made the tough call not to invite non-voting members, mainly for the technological reason that it would endanger the accuracy of counting votes. Voting was conducted through Zoom’s Poll feature, which made the process simple and clear for voters.

The Parish Assembly included the clergy’s uplifting reports of parish activity through the pandemic, treasurer Ellen R.’s encouraging review of the finances through 2020, and Anna C.’s report of the Capital Renovation Project. The Capital Renovation Project included the first revelation of an exciting proposed floor plan for the rework of the existing building, as put together from months of work from the team and assembled by our own architect, Maria A. While report was received with general positivity, some reservations were expressed that were unable to be resolved due to the topic’s complexity and time constraints. The Assembly approved the treasurer’s proposed 2021 budget, and the new 2021 Parish Council slate was accepted as recommended and was sworn in with a caphony of unmuted microphones from the new members. The Assembly adjourned (at what is perhaps a record) at 4:30pm.

While no one would say that this was an ideal way to handle the Assembly, it was a seamless and successful way to conduct the Assembly under the circumstances. We are pleased to move on to the next methodological hurdle with girded loins — the conduct of Great Lent and Pascha.

If you would like a copy of the 2020 Annual Report, please send a request to Fr. David at frdavid@stmaryorthodox.org.
An Uplifting Fasting Activity: Praying the Psalter

MINISTRY REPORT | ILEANA C.

Did you know that St. Mary’s has had the Psalter Prayer Group for more almost 10 years? And did you know that while this group normally prays the Psalter twice a year—during Lent and Advent—the group actually prayed the Psalter thrice during 2020? Libby H., who founded this group, had a long history of praying the Psalter every month from her time as a Protestant before she converted to Orthodoxy. As she learned about the Orthodox fasting periods, she realized that a group of 20 people could pray the entire Psalter twice during forty day fasting periods. She thus founded this group, which is open to all—both male and female, as well as Orthodox Christians everywhere. The entire Psalter is prayed every day by the group because each person is praying a different Kathisma. In addition to praying the Psalter, the group also prays for each of its members daily during the 40 days of readings. While Libby originally founded this group to ensure her own personal accountability in praying the Psalter, group members have also shared with Libby how much praying the Psalter has helped them as well. The goal is to develop a consistent prayer life and learn from the Psalms. This group has grown over the years with some people choosing to pray the Psalter twice a year, some once a year, and others choosing to take a longer break. During Advent 2020, 27 people prayed the Psalter daily, from diverse locations and during diverse times of the day based on individual preferences. Anyone who is interested in learning more, or wishes to join, can message Libby on Realm, providing an e-mail address, so that Libby can follow-up. Will you take the Psalter challenge this Lent?

Church Mouse’s Corner

Purple: The Color of Penitents and Kings

FEATURE | SOPHIA P. (GUEST-WRITING)

I am guest-writing for Katherine for this edition in order to not only give our beloved ecclesiarch a wee break after a short and exhausting February, but also to share with you an enlightening piece of history I’ve gathered while dipping my toes in her sphere of knowledge. I will leave best and most curious details of church-mousery to her, things of which I’m just a student, but here is a little Lenten treasure I can’t keep to myself: the mystery of “purple”.

Most of us probably associate Lent with the color purple. As someone with an art education, upon hearing the word “purple”, I immediately don a monocle, lift the nearest teacup with an extended pinky, and insist that the speaker repent and call it violet. There are good reasons for this insistence, but this measure of uncalled-for color-snobbery is painfully recent, according to Kh. Krista West. In her book The Garments of Salvation, Kh. Krista spills a lot of printer toner on the topic of liturgical colors being more traditionally understood in terms of dark and bright rather than each season corresponding to blue, white, gold, purple, and so on, as we do now. Katherine summarizes this understanding very well in her column in the November 2020 issue of The Veil, but an over-simplified gist is that for traditional Orthodoxy, bright colors are used for festive seasons, and dark colors are used for the quiet, contemplative seasons that anticipate the bright ones.

Now, about purple — Kh. Krista explores what she calls the “paradox of purple” through lens of the ancient understanding of color as I’ve written above and the history of purple as a valuable dye color. It was discovered that the clear liquid produced by crushing Mediterranean sea snails (Murex brandaris and Murex trunculus) can be made into a brilliant and color-fast purple dye, and because it was produced in Tyre in Phoenicia, it became known as “Tyrian purple”. Unfortunately for the little sea snails, it apparently took about 12,000 snails to produce 1.4 grams of pure dye, which perhaps provides a good perspective on why purple has been considered a luxurious color reserved for royalty for thousands of years. As far as I can gather, entire economies may have centered around the creation and distribution of purple dyestuffs and fabrics.

Notably, variations in the dye’s preparation affect the hue that can be produced — all of which were called Tyrian purple. For our modern sensibilities, it’s better to consider Tyrian purple as a “class” of pigment hues, as Hellenistic writers included in this class a massive range of dull reds, magentas, blues, and violets. Kh. Krista notes too that the most expensive dye was the Tyrian dull red — which may cause the relations between purple and blood to become clearer to us. Tyrian purple is unique on the ancient color spectrum because in its most valuable form, a color we might call “wine” or “burgundy”, it carries with it qualities of both dark and light as understood by the ancient mind. Pliny the Younger is recorded to have described it as “dark by reflected light and brilliant by transmitted light” — and on this topic, Kh. Krista remarks that it’s entirely conceivable that “the symbological (cont’d on p7)
(Into the Breach, cont’d) kingdom is manifested to this world—it intrudes into it!

St. Hesychios taught this: Through His incarnation God gave us the model for a holy life and recalled us from our ancient fall. In addition to many other things, He taught us, free as we are, that we should fight against the demons with humility, fasting, prayer and watchfulness. For when, after His baptism, He went into the desert and the devil came up to Him as though He were merely a man, He began His spiritual warfare by fasting and won the battle by this means - though, being God, and God of gods, He had no need of any such means at all. —On Watchfulness and Holiness 12

He also shared what he had been taught: “One of the saints has said : 'Let the rancorous man vent his rancour on the demons, and let the belligerent man turn his hostility once and for all against his own body. The flesh is a treacherous friend, and the more it is coddled the more it fights back.' And again : 'Be hostile to your body, and fight against your stomach.' —On Watchfulness and Holiness 198

Brothers and sisters, we do not have an opt-out stay-at-home version for the school of the spirit. We are in this fight on one side or another—choose wisely! St. Theodorus the Great Ascetic wrote: “We have been commanded not to revile or abuse in return those who revile and insult us, but rather to speak well of them and to bless them (cf. Matt. 5:44). For in so far as we are at peace with men we fight against the demons ; but when we feel rancour towards our brothers and fight against them, we are at peace with the demons, whom we have been taught to hate 'with perfect hatred' (Ps. 139:22), fighting against them without mercy.”—Century of Spiritual Texts 80

We have been given sinews and strength in our body for labors, but also strength in the soul for spiritual struggle. Let us not be afraid to engage them. Our victory is in Christ and the crown awaits those who compete according to the rules, let us remember to “run in such a way that you may obtain it” (1 Cor. 9:24)

— FR. DAVID

Pray the Hours with the Morning Prayer Group

MINISTRY REPORT | SOPHIA P.

Some morning routines involve reading the newspaper over coffee, a jog around the block, or quiet meditation, but a little group of parishioners at St. Mary’s has made it their mission and habit to pray morning prayers together over Zoom.

This quiet little ministry — the Pray the Hours group — has been meeting almost every weekday morning to read third and sixth hours since near the beginning of the pandemic. They begin logging on Zoom together around 7:15am, where Sdn. Nick J. and Eccl. Katherine switch off reading the third and sixth hours of the Horologion from Holy Transfiguration Monastery, which typically takes less than 15 minutes. Some of the five to six participants are settled in their prayer corners at home to follow along in their own Horologion prayer books, and others still themselves and listen while preparing for their morning commute or perform other morning tasks.

The routine has become a cornerstone in the lives of the participants. Many of the regulars related how the Zoom gathering has been instrumental in helping them maintain morning prayer habits.

“I’m not much of a morning person,” regular attendee Cindy S. told me, laughing. “But the 7am call time has been a great impetus to be up!”

After the hours have been read, the group almost always enjoys conversation together, often about liturgical or spiritual questions.

“You may not have noticed, but I love the Psalms,” said Libby H., since the hours are largely composed of psaltery. “Knowing that people are expecting me to be here is a way that people can hold me accountable to show up!” Libby also runs the Psalter Group for Great Lent and Advent.

The hours group actually began long before the pandemic. Although it is currently conducted through Zoom, Eccl. Katherine and Sdn. Nick have been praying the hours together for five years this past February in the church building with Fr. David’s blessing. It was a main way that Katherine transformed her existing morning prayer rule from the Anglican tradition to the Orthodox way, with Sdn. Nick’s guidance and shared desire for accountability in a morning prayer habit.

“I’m amazed that I can do anything for five years, and am a much kinder person for it,” Eccl. Katherine said, laughing. “I’m much more balanced and more able to take whatever is thrown at me that day.”

All the participants talked about the strong sense of comradery that praying the hours together has created.

“This is how I’m able to interact with others,” Christina J. said.

“It’s been very heartwarming to see how people are willing to add this their to day,” Sdn. Nick said.

If you are interested in praying the hours too, please request to join the Pray the Hours prayer group on Realm.

(Purple, cont’d) significance of this would not have been lost on the highly symbolically attuned Byzantines. Just as Christ is the bridge between God and man, so [Tyrian purple] was the bridge between light and dark and therefore the symbolically appropriate color for the King of Heaven.” So, one may recall the suffering and spilled blood of Christ, while at once anticipating His triumph, His royalty, and all the glory and mystery within Eucharist, all within a single color.

I’ve found this knowledge a beautiful and useful thing to take with me into this upcoming Lent: may you find it as useful!
To a Woman Who is a Fountain

You are a fish in the water
and the water itself.
Those who drink from your fountains
cast aside their crutches
or hang them on the wall.
You are a windmill
drawing the water of life
from hidden wells,
an oven baking loaves of wedding bread
on which are molded flowers,
grapes, and fish.
Those who enter your doors
burn candles and incense
which smells of trees in canyons,
and they remember
descending into the canyon,
through the pink flowers
to the stream below,
flowing with water so pure
it seemed almost invisible....

— JONATHAN C.