

St Matthew Orthodox Church
Orthodox Church in America - Diocese of the Midwest
Rev. John Thetford
607 Ravenswood Dr
Green Bay WI, 54302

From the Desk of Fr John:

Most of us are familiar with the basics of the Nativity story: Mary, a virgin betrothed to Joseph, receives the news that she is miraculously pregnant, and will give birth to Jesus, called “Emmanuel.” Then, she and Joseph travel to Bethlehem, but Mary must give birth to Jesus in a cave that serves as a stable. When Jesus is born, he is wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, and shepherds come and visit him, while the angels above sing “Glory to God in the highest!”. Then, three wise men (also called kings), drawn by a star in the sky, come and offer gold, frankincense, and myrrh. All of the details are familiar enough to us... but what do they all mean?

The Names Jesus and Emmanuel:

“Jesus” is the same name in Hebrew as Joshua (both are “Yeshua”). Joshua, after the passing of Moses, was the leader in the Old Testament who led God’s people out of the desert and into the promised land. Jesus, in a greater way, leads us into the true promised land - the eternal Kingdom of Heaven. The name Jesus, as well, means “God saves”, so the coming of Jesus means that the Son of God is personally coming to save mankind. With the same idea in mind, Emmanuel means “God is with us,” for Jesus is both divine and human.

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The Manger, the Swaddling Clothes, and the Cave/Stable in Bethlehem.

A stable is a place for animals, while a cave, in the ancient Middle East, was a place to bury the dead. Jesus is thus laid in a manger, which is a feeding trough, and in a stable, to show that he is food for animals - us! He gives us His Body and Blood in the Eucharist, and we consume the Eucharist as our food. And He is born in Bethlehem, which literally means “House of

Bread”. The stable is also a cave, as a way of signifying that despite being the immortal Son of God, Jesus has come to die on the Cross, and will be wrapped in winding clothes (picture how the Egyptians wrapped their dead) and will be placed in a cave for burial.

The Angels and Shepherds:

Jesus, as the King or Messiah, is the Shepherd of Israel. This was a common biblical image for a King in the Old Testament, and was foreshadowed by David himself having been a shepherd. But in the prophecy of Isaiah ch. 40, it says that God Himself will come and shepherd the people. The Angels, of course, are God’s messengers, and proclaim the good news that God is sending His Son into the world to save mankind.

The Wise Men and their Gifts:

The word “Magi”, in the New Testament Greek, literally meant “wizard”, and particularly, a Persian wizard. These magi were part of the highest caste in Persia though, and thus, could also be thought of as “kings” in that sense, since Persia’s ruler was called “the King of Kings” (another title that Christ claims for himself!). And Isaiah 60 foretells of foreign kings coming to God’s city to bear gifts of gold and frankincense to worship God. The myrrh, on the other hand, is another reflection of Christ’s coming to die as a man, since myrrh is an embalming ointment for the dead.

May we always seek to deepen our understanding of the Lord’s Nativity!

In Christ,
Fr. John

Parish Council President's Perspective.....Paul Novak



I hope this finds you and your families well. I hope you and yours had a wonderful Thanksgiving.

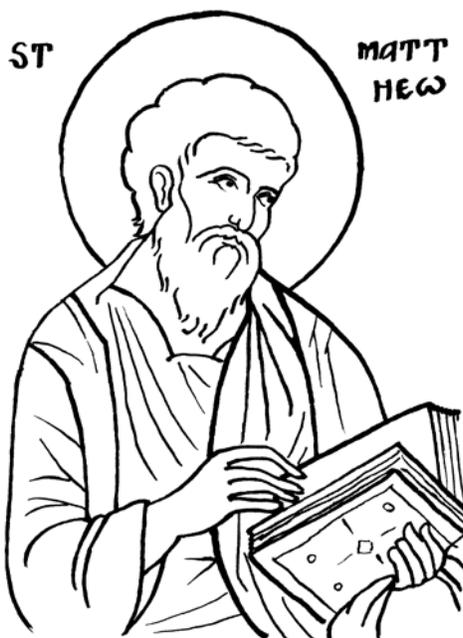
At Saint Matthews we have a lot to be thankful for. Our community continues to grow as we now have 80 -100 people attend Divine Liturgy on any given Sunday. New younger members are joining the church. Some of you now sing, visit the sick, teach, some help with cleaning up after coffee hour while others keep the church in good repair. Thank you for your contributions.

We are financially stable and continue to give to those in need while improving our building and temple in which we pray. Our community outreach continues with services at Holy Transfiguration chapel in Sister Bay and starting this month with our Waupaca Area Outreach. The Fall Festival grows bigger every year and our St. Matthew Dinner was attended by 100 parishioners this year. We have been blessed to have a Deacon and full time Priest. Having a full time Priest at SMOC is a blessing that you have made possible through the years of faithful giving. I recently read a speech that highlighted what our Priests mean to all of us.

“ When a priest and his family move to a parish community, it is more than just moving to a new town, they become an integral part of the community, and once the priest is there: He celebrates the Divine Liturgy. He leads us through fasts and celebrates feasts. He instructs us in the faith. He leads inquirers to the true faith. He is there to welcome our babies into the world and baptize them. He is there to help us guide our children in the faith. He hears our confessions and guides us. He is there for us in difficult times to help and counsel. He celebrates us in joyous times. He comforts us in the worst of times. He crowns us in marriage. He blesses us in our travels and other events in our lives. He visits and anoints us when we're sick. He prays for us, and comforts us and our loved ones when our time in life draws near to the end. He prays and sings away our soul, after we fall asleep in the Lord. He prays for us, always.”

Thank you Father John, Deacon Spyridon and your wives and children for all that you do for us at SMOC. We are blessed and thankful. I am looking forward to the Nativity of our Lord, and a blessed 2023.

In Christ,
Paul M. Novak



God grant you many years!

December Birthdays

- 1 Kirill Pitkevich
- 1 Anastasia Sarsama
- 2 Mary Petersen
- 4 Gabriel Phillips
- 5 Micki Danguitis
- 6 Maria Nistor
- 6 Julian Sarsama
- 8 Brandon Enck
- 11 LinLan Holzman-Crass
- 11 Natalya Tomac
- 12 Eva Pitkevich
- 13 Michael Jeffers
- 15 Bob Phillips
- 19 Eric Johnson
- 21 Marina Lyudmer
- 24 Mark Schahczenski
- 25 Tara Enck
- 26 Barbara Crass
- 30 Yeven Melnykov
- 30 Alexandra Schweiner

December Anniversaries

- 14 Matthew & Maria Catalano
- 15 Bernie & Dorothy Olson
- 26 Chuck Bayerl & Elaine Gavaras



Reader's Schedule

Saturday Vespers

- 12/3 Paul
- 12/10 Pedro
- 12/17 Matt
- 12/24 Will
- 12/31 Melissa

Sunday Matins & Liturgy

- 12/4 Doug
- 12/11 Matthew
- 12/18 Elaine
- 12/25 Paul
- 1/1 Noah





May God grant many years to the newly-illuminated servant of God Kyra (Kina Grace Valverde), her family, and her godparents!



Letter from the Treasurer

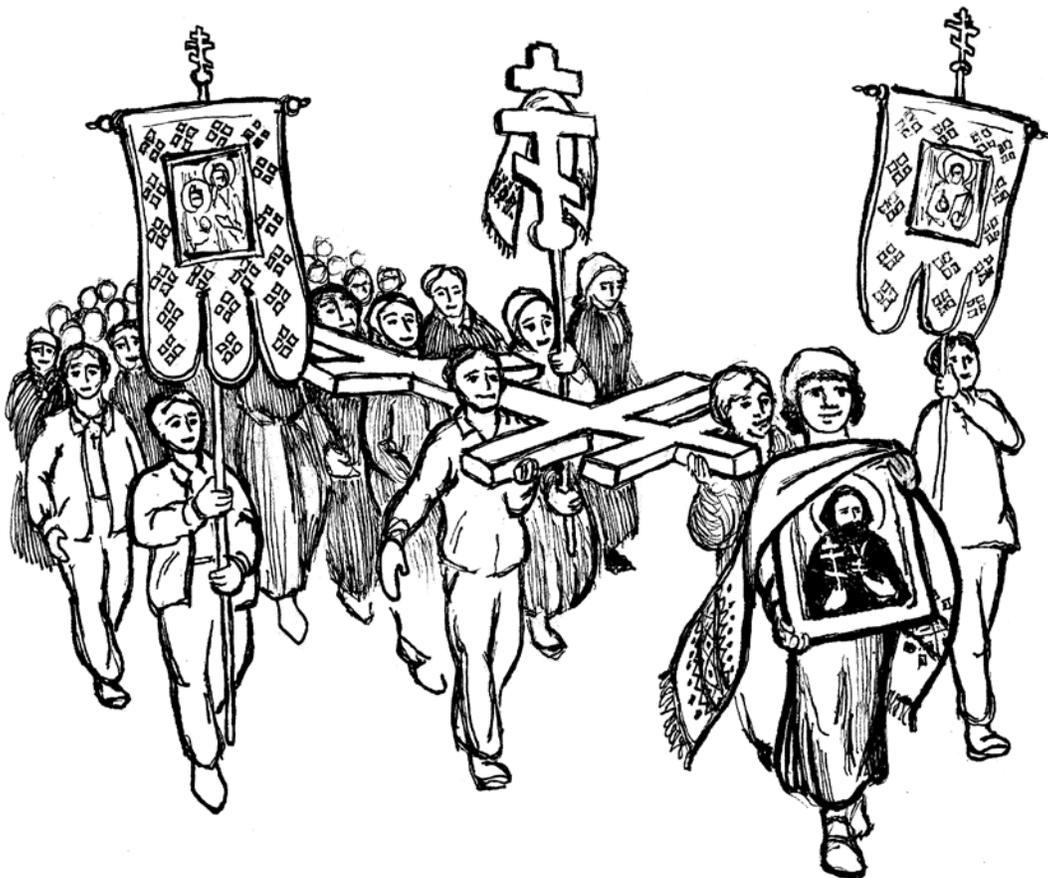
Dear SMOC family,

Each newsletter I try to tell you how grateful I am to be in such a giving and generous parish of believers. This is still true but I want to point out a few examples that need mentioning. First is the overwhelming financial support of our current siding project. \$36,000 has been donated to the siding and window replacement project and we hope to finish this installation as soon as weather and manpower permits. Secondly is the purchase and installation of the exterior icons on the Southeast wall of the church. So beautiful and so inspiring. Finally the fantastic results of our fall festival. \$500 was sent out for seminarian support and \$2000 was given to our diocese for the support of Alaskan clergy who desperately need support, encouragement and a whole lot of prayer.

This week begins our 2023 fiscal year planning and I am asking each of you to pick up a pledge card from the candle stand and choose to make a pledge that stretches you spiritually. A pledge goal that tests your faith and your desire to see God work in our parish and our community. 2022 was a stretch year. We will end this year with over \$15,000 donated to local and world ministries. At the same time we have met all our needs and continued to upgrade our building and make mortgage payments 25% over our base payment. Thank you all for being apart of this.

2023 will be a big challenge for us as we are facing an economic reset in our nation. The cost of salaries, utilities, services and supplies are inflated. We will share this impact with you at our annual meeting in February but by then we will be paying for this inflation. Please pray and act on your 2023 pledge this month and place your pledge card in the offering basket or hand it to me. Our parish leadership thanks you for your committed giving.

Tom Julian
SMOC Treasurer



Recap from the Orthodox Christian Fellowship's 2022 Fall Retreat

The weekend of November 4th-6th, my brother Blaise and I, with over 60 other college age adults (ages 18-25), attended a Pan-Orthodox retreat at the St. Iakovos Retreat Center in Kansasville, WI. The retreat center is pretty new and both beautiful and peaceful. Our group consisted of Orthodox from Greek, Antiochian, Serbian, Russian, Oriental and OCA churches.



Our speaker, Christian Gonzalez, Director of Ministry in the Orthodox Youth Ministry, discussed many interesting and useful topics that tied in our faith with regular life scenarios. The first and main points were “What do I want?” and “What am I longing for?”, directed towards everyday life and our life with Christ. After each speaking session, we would break into small groups to meet and discuss what we learned in the seminars.

Other activities included making “well-wishes” cards for the local nursing homes, fun icebreaker events and free time with games, snacks and lots of interaction with new friends and brothers in Christ. In a pre-retreat email, we were instructed to bring “dancing clothes.” We didn’t understand why until Saturday when the many ethnic groups demonstrated, and then taught, the rest of us their dances. Several people expressed surprise that the OCA didn’t have dancing as part of church! Because we made friends from all over the state and Minnesota too, we were really excited to learn that there is an OCF “Discord” group with over 500 members, including priests and deacons, so we can keep in touch and that also that has several zoom events that we can participate in.

On Saturday evening before free time, we all gathered in the chapel where a map of the world and the Orthodox cross were outlined in lit tea lights. We took turns and prayed for people and events all over the world and then moved a light to whatever area it was that we prayed for. The leader explained that in this way, we could visualize the way prayer brings light to a dark world. It was a very poignant time and several cried as we prayed for the many unfortunate groups of people in current events as well as our more personal concerns.

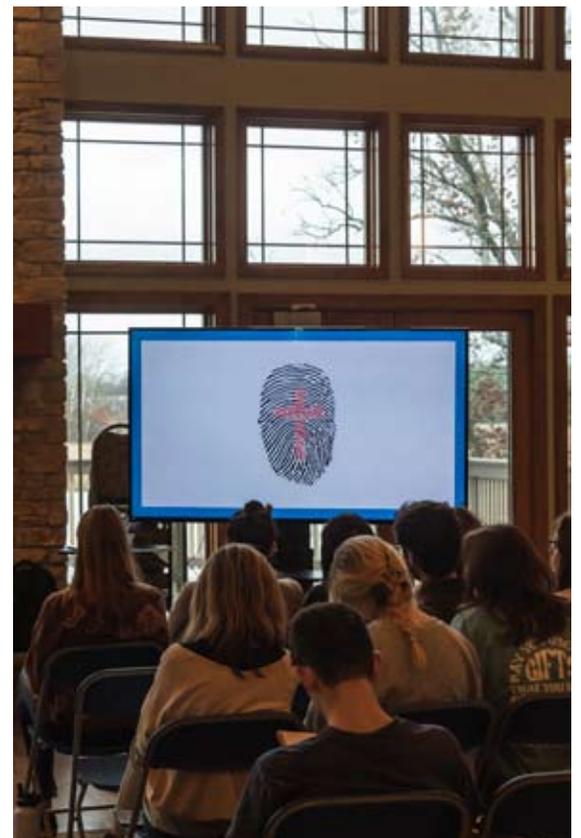
The event was absolutely life-changing. I recommend everyone within our age group attend events in the OCF and join the OCF online group for more information on upcoming events.

~Camber Pfitzinger





OCF Fall Retreat Participants at the St Iakovos Retreat Center



Liturgical Schedule

Sat, December 3, 5:00 pm Great Vespers

Sun, Dec 4, 8:30 am Matins & 9:30 Liturgy

Sun, Dec 4, 9:30 am Monthly Typika Service
in Waupaca

Tues, Dec 6, 9:10 am Hours & 9:30 Liturgy
(St. Nicholas)

Wed, Dec 7, 6:00 pm Daily Vespers

Sat, Dec 10, 5:00 pm Great Vespers

Sun, Dec 11, 8:30 am Matins & 9:30 am Liturgy

Tues, Dec 13, 7:30 am Akathist (St. Herman)

Wed, Dec 14, 6:00 pm Daily Vespers

Sat, Dec 17, 5:00 pm Great Vespers

Sun, Dec 17, 8:30 am Matins & 9:30 am Liturgy

Wed, Dec 21, 6:00 pm Daily Vespers

Fri, Dec 23, 9:30 am Royal Hours of Christmas Eve

Sat, Dec 24, 9:30 am Divine Liturgy (Christmas Eve)

Sat, Dec 24, 4:15 pm Vigil/Vespers & Matins
(Nativity)

Sun, Dec 25, 9:10 am Hours & 9:30 am Liturgy
(Nativity)

Saturday, Dec 31, 5:00 pm Great Vespers

Choir Practice

Children's Singing: December 11

Regular Choir Practice: December 18

The Upper Room

As we move into the last month of 2022, the Upper Room young adult group will be continuing their discussion of the Sacraments. On weeks that they have a smaller group due to choir practice, they have begun listening to and discussing a recording of Fr. Thomas Hopko's lecture "Sin: Primordial, Generational, Personal." Though the subject may sound dour, anyone who has heard Fr. Thomas knows he is a very entertaining and engaging speaker. On Saturday, Dec. 10th, prior to Vespers (tentatively 2 PM), the group will be having a matinee showing of the film "Ostrov" aka "The Island," a 2006 film about a holy "fool for Christ" whose strange behavior both baffles and enlightens those who meet him. Anyone in the parish who wishes to see this soul-profitting film is welcome!

Preserve, O Lord, our Master and Hierarch Archbishop Daniel. Many years to you, Master!

The Most Reverend Daniel, Archbishop of Chicago and the Midwest and our ruling diocesan hierarch, visited our parish to celebrate our patronal feast by joining us in liturgical worship and for our annual St Matthew Dinner. During his archpastoral visit, His Eminence tonsured into the clerical state and ordained the Reader Lazarus (Matthew) Tomac and Subdeacon Constantine (Pedro) Sarsama.



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Upcoming events:

Tuesday, Dec 6 - Liturgy for St. Nicholas: On St. Nicholas' feast day, we will have Hours at 9:10 am & Divine Liturgy at 9:30 am. A blog post with some good resources on how Orthodox traditionally keep St. Nicholas Day is accessible at: <https://www.asceticlifeofmotherhood.com/blog/stnicholasdayguide>. A short memorial will also be offered after Liturgy for Matushka Val Herrick for the anniversary of her falling asleep.

Saturday, Dec 10 - Viewing of "Ostrov" Film: The Upper Room Youth and Young Adult group will be watching the film "Ostrov" starting at 2 pm. This film is about a repentant murderer who becomes a "holy fool", and has become well known in Orthodox Christian circles.

Waupaca Outreach:

Deacon Spyridon will begin serving a Typika service at his home south of Waupaca approximately once a month on Sundays. On these Sundays, everyone who lives in the greater area (i.e., closer to his home than to St. Matthew's) is encouraged to attend the Typika service at the Roegner's home.

The first of these services will take place, God-willing, on Sunday, December 4, at 9:30 am. The address is W4863 Park Place, Waupaca (or Saxeville), WI 54981. The home is the only brick home on Park Place, a small road running along the northern shore of Long Lake.

Specific information about finding the home and parking can be found on our parish website's "Waupaca Outreach" page here: <https://smocgb.com/waupaca>

Saturday, Dec 17 - Christmas Tree Decoration and Carol Singing: At 3:30 pm prior to Vespers at 5:00 pm, the children are invited to put up and decorate the Christmas Tree in the parish hall. There will also be carol singing and some snacks will be provided.

- Advent: From November 15 to December 24, we continue in Advent, the season of preparation for the annual celebration of the birth of Christ. And in a way, Advent also serves as a reminder that our whole life is a preparation for the 2nd coming of Christ. So we give alms especially during this season, passing on the gifts that Christ has given us, and we also fast from certain foods (although that aspect of it is not as rigorous as Great Lent). And we pray more, especially remembering to pray for those in need. Please feel free to ask Fr John if you have any questions about how to best keep Advent.

Please note that there will not be Communion at these Typika services. However, to have the service is still a great opportunity for those who live in the area of Waupaca, Stevens Point, Waushara County, and even the southern Fox Cities area including Oshkosh. Many thanks to Deacon Spyridon, Matushka Photini, and their family for hosting these services!

Cleaning Schedule

NOVAK (week of) 12/4/22 for 12/18
SCHAHCZAENSKI (week of) 12/11/22 for 12/18
JULIAN (week of) 12/18/22 for 12/25
TOMAC (week of) 12/25/22 for 1/1/23
WEILAND (week of) 1/1/23 for 1/8/23



Sarmale - Romanian Stuffed Cabbage

from Pedro Sarsama

Ingredients:

- 2 tbsp vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup uncooked rice, preferably long grain
- 2 pound ground meat (equal parts pork & beef or pork & lamb)
- 1/2 head of minced garlic (more, if preferred)
- 1/4 cup parsley
- 1/4 cup summer savory (cimbru)
- 2 tbsp paprika
- Optional herbs & seasonings: thyme, garlic powder, marjoram, dill
- Salt & pepper to taste; many people substitute Vegeta all purpose seasoning for the salt.
- 2 pound sour cabbage leaves
- 15 slices smoked bacon (chopped)
- Several jars of shredded saurkraut
- Optional: additional bacon grease or beef/lamb tallow if ground meat is lean.
- Note: add more herbs & spices to taste

Steps:

- Rinse the rice in cold water until rinse water is clear
- Saute onions and garlic in oil over medium heat for 3-5 minutes
- Add rice, stirring constantly while cooking 1-2 more minutes. Remove from heat and cool.
- In a large bowl, thoroughly mix meat, herbs, seasonings, and (if needed) grease or tallow. Do not over-salt; there will be some additional salt from the saurkraut and from the sour cabbage leaves (if you are using leaves from a jar rather than quick-pickling them). Some people use a stand mixer, but most prefer to mix by hand.
- Mix in cooled rice/onion/garlic mixture.
- At this point, I usually form a small patty of the mixture and cook it on the stovetop to assess the level of seasoning. If it needs more, I'll add more. When cooking for myself, there is no such thing as too much garlic or paprika. In general, there's no such thing as too much cimbru in sarmale! It is very easy to over-salt, especially if using Vegeta, so tread lightly on that front. Spend a lot of time working in your spices as you add more. It can take a while to mix evenly throughout the mixture. You can add more spices later but you can't take them back out once they're mixed in.
- Before you begin rolling, line a roasting pan with a layer of cabbage leaves; I use the tougher and smaller leaves that are not good for rolling sarmale. This first layer keeps the cabbage rolls from burning to the pan. You may want to put a similar layer around the side walls of the pan as you build up the layers.
- Once you're happy with the level of seasoning and you've staged your roasting pan, it's time to roll!
- Open a cabbage leaf and orient it so that the base of the stem is the bottom. Put in 2-3 tbsp of the mixture just below the center of the leaf. Roll the base of the leaf up partway, just enough to cover the mixture, then fold the sides in over the base. After that, finish rolling fairly tightly. It can take a few tries to get it right; don't overthink it. Some people like to make square-ish packet shaped sarmale; others prefer perfect cylinders. Figure out what works for you; it'll taste great either way.
- Each time you finish a layer of rolls, lay a thin layer of saurkraut over it (reserve all the saurkraut "juice), and toss in a few pieces of the chopped bacon; some people simply place a smoked hamhock in the center of the pan instead.
- After you've filled your roasting pan (or ran out of ingredients), pour in the saurkraut juice you've reserved. I sometimes add a jar or two of water in addition to this, depending on the size of the pan. You want liquid to come to the bottom of the top layer. I then cover in a final layer of saurkraut and a layer of cabbage leaves before covering it all with aluminum foil.
- Roast at 350 degrees Fahrenheit for 3-4 hours, or until the rolls are tender.
- Serve with sour cream & enjoy!

This fantastic dish is typically served on Christmas, Pascha, and any festal or celebratory occasion.