

***Toolkit for Spiritual Growth: A Practical Guide
to Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving***

Summer 2021 Reading Club

Welcome!

Class Dates:

6 weeks | Week of June 7th-Week of July 12th

Class Times:

Wednesday

7pm-9pm EST (6pm-8pm CST)

Instructors: Rev. Fr. Dionysios Koulianos, B.A., M.Div.

Presbytera Maria Koulianos, B.S., M.Div., Th.M.

Email: mkoulianos@hchc.edu

Cell Phone: 260.797.1226 (text available)

Course Text: [*Toolkit for Spiritual Growth:*](#)

[*A Practical Guide to Prayer, Fasting, and Almsgiving*](#)

Electronic Supplemental Material (click on links):

[Prayers of St. Silouan the Athonite](#)

[“The Disconnected Cross: Philanthropy and Almsgiving”](#)

[“Fasting: Is it Really Necessary”](#)

Additional Resource: Composition Notebook

Class Description:

Toolkit for Spiritual Growth Reading Club offers specific details on the basic steps to grow in the Faith through Jesus Christ's teachings on Prayer, Fasting and Almsgiving. These three components are described by, author, Fr. Evan Armatas as "the basis for our spiritual life as Christians" and will be the discussion topics of this six-week reading club. We will explain the fundamentals of this three-legged stool of Orthodox practice.

Using the work of the Orthodox Fathers, Fr. Armatas offers simple explanations and applications with practical guidance regarding our spiritual journey:

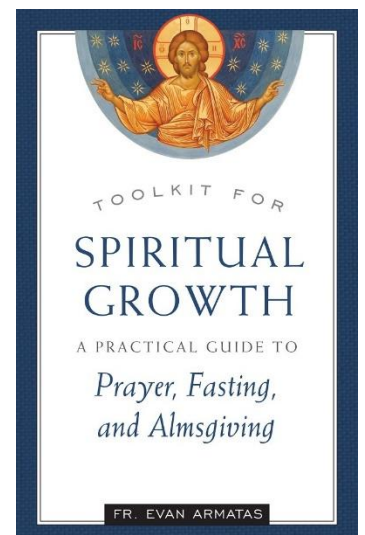
- **Prayer**
 - personal, liturgical; in both homes, private, and the Church
- **Almsgiving**
 - heartfelt concern for others that reflects love and leads to healing
- **Fasting**
 - connection between the physical and spiritual; how fasting and our struggle with sin are closely related

Using the book, *Toolkit for Spiritual Growth*, we will discuss and provide a guide that will assist one and all in their pursuit of God. Our discussions will be thought-provoking and supplemented with writings from the Fathers of the Church and the use of modern Orthodox reflections. It will be an opportunity for participants to value one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

These spiritual practices put us back together in a rightly ordered way and lead us into life. For many such a concept seems impossible. How can a disciplined and obedient life be a free one as well? I think the simplest answer to the question is the one Jesus gave: 'Come and see.' (Armatas, 7)

Come and join us on this 6-week read and seminar discussion!

Come and let us grow in the Faith together!



Reading Schedule:

Assigned pages should be read BEFORE the start of each class.

Unless otherwise noted chapters are from *Toolkit for Spiritual Growth*.

- Week 1** Introduction, Chapter One “Prayer”
- Week 2** Chapter One CONTINUED
[Prayers of St. Silouan the Athonite](#)
- Week 3** Chapter Two “Almsgiving”
- Week 4** Chapter Two CONTINUED
[“The Disconnected Cross: Philanthropy and Almsgiving”](#)
- Week 5** Chapter Three “Fasting”
- Week 6** Chapter Three CONTINUED, Wrap-Up & Conclusion
[“Fasting: Is it Really Necessary”](#)

Participant Conduct and Expectations:

The main expectation is that participants will read the assigned pages of the book and electronic pdfs. Participants may be asked to report on their reading at the beginning each session.

All participants are to strive for the *Two Greatest Commandments*; to love God and to love their neighbor as themselves. Please refer to the [Scholé Academy Handbook](#) for participant conduct.

The Virtual Classroom:

We will be using the free online “virtual classroom” software provided by Zoom. The virtual classroom will provide participants with interactive audio, text chat and an interactive whiteboard in which texts, diagrams, video, and other media can be displayed and analyzed. We will provide participants with a link (via email) that will enable them to join the virtual classroom.

Specific information regarding the technology used by Scholé Academy (including required technology) can be found by visiting the [Technology in the Classroom](#). Please note, participants should have their cameras on during class.

If needed, participants will submit documents by scanning and uploading them to their personal computer, then attaching those files as pdfs to the reading club Schoology page (access granted after enrollment is secured).

About the Instructors:



Presbytera Maria Koulianos has been an educator for over 20 years, loving every minute, with vast experiences in both public and private schools as a classroom teacher, developing and implementing learning programs for students, and as an area administrator. She earned her Bachelor of Science in education from Indiana University with certifications in elementary education, 7/8 non-departmental, language arts 1-9, and computer education K-12. She holds a Master of Divinity and a Master of Theology from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Brookline, MA, where she wrote her thesis, *The Annunciation of the Theotokos from a Liturgical Perspective*. Presbytera Maria and her husband, Father Dionysios, live in the greater Springfield, MA area where he is the priest of Saint George Cathedral Greek Orthodox Church. She hopes to inspire her students to love literature and become lifelong learners.



Rev. Fr. Dionysios Koulianos was born on and grew up in Katerini, Greece on December 6, 1974, where he received his primary and secondary education. In March 1998 he relocated to the United States to the city of Fort Wayne, Indiana. He married his Presbytera, Maria (Makridakis), native of this same city, on July 11, 1998 in Katerini, Greece. In these first years, he worked full time in the production division of an aluminum foundry that produced products for General Motors while learning the English language and attending classes at ITT Technical Institute where he graduated in 2002 receiving an Associate of Applied Science in Computer Network System Technology.

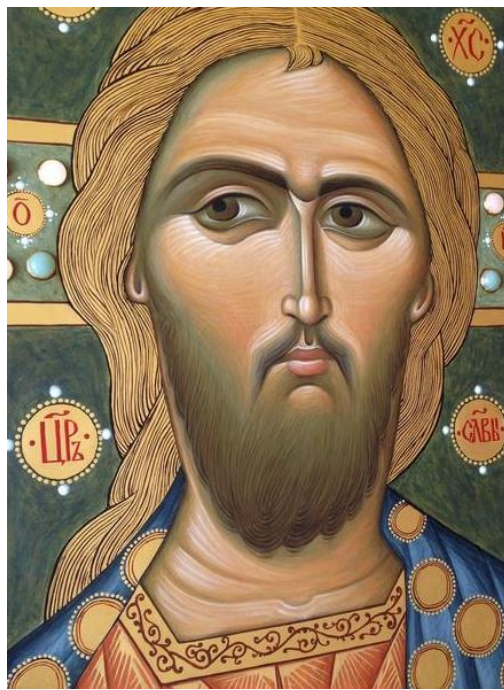
For the next eight years he worked as a Systems Analyst at Professional Federal Credit Union all the while being an active steward, choir member, chanter, and parish council representative at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church of the same

city. In 2010, he felt called to follow Christ, and with the blessing of the Metropolitan, he and his wife, came to Brookline, MA, where they both attended classes at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. He received a Bachelor of Arts from Hellenic College (2012) in Religious Studies and a Master of Divinity from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (2015).

By the grace of God and through laying on of hands by His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of Detroit, he was ordained to the Holy Diaconate on Sunday, June 14, 2015, at his home parish in Fort Wayne, IN. Then through the laying on of hands by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America, was ordained to the Holy Priesthood on Sunday, August 2, 2015, at Saint Demetrios Cathedral in Astoria, NY.

Saint Demetrios Cathedral was his first assignment where he served as an assistant priest. In 2016, he was transferred and elevated to proistamenos to his assignment of Saint Catherine Greek Orthodox Church in Braintree, MA.

Fr. Dionysios and his wife, Maria relocated to their new home on March 1st, 2020 when he was installed by His Eminence Metropolitan Methodios and elevated to the position as the Dean of the St. George Greek Orthodox Cathedral of Springfield, MA. Every day, they live a happy life where they work together to glorify God with all their hearts.



To God be all the glory; Father, Son and Holy Spirit, AMEN!