

*"I can do all things through Christ
who strengthens me." Philippians 4:13*

St. Raphael School Journal

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Newsletter
November 2023



Kontakion of St. Raphael the Bishop of Brooklyn

You were a guardian and a defender of the Church's teaching: you protected your flock from false doctrines and confirmed them in the true faith. O holy father Raphael, son of Syria and glory of North America, always intercede before the Lord that our souls may be saved.

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Welcome to the November edition of the newsletter! Inside you will find a humorous column with a deeper meaning, a beautiful essay on thanksgiving, some wonderful student submissions and so much more!

The Newsletter is open and ready for submissions!

Do you have questions for a spiritual father, a piece of artwork for the Fine Arts page, or an assignment you are proud of? Send it on in! We'd love to see what you've got.

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St. Raphael School Journal

Praying List

Living

Fr. Peter

Eleousa

Phyllis

Lynn

Joseph

Linda

Andrew

Departed

Barbara Joy

Suzan

Elliot

Timothy

Fr.

Porphyrios

Fr. Abraham

Anna

“God is a fire that warms and kindles the heart and inward parts. Hence, if we feel in our hearts the cold which comes from the devil - for the devil is cold - let us call on the Lord. He will come to warm our hearts with perfect love, not only for Him but also for our neighbor, and the cold of him who hates the good will flee before the heat of His countenance.”

-SERAPHIM OF SAROV

ST. NEKTARIOS OF AEGINA



Troparion

O faithful, let us honor Nektarios the divine servant of Christ, / offspring of Silyvria and guardian of Aegina, / who appeared in these last times as a true friend of virtue, / pouring forth all manner of healing upon those who reverently cry: / Glory to Him who gave you strength! / Glory to Him who granted you a crown! / Glory to Him who through you grants healing to all!

Feasts of the Month

November 1

St. Cosmas and Damian

November 6

St. Paul the Confessor

November 17

St. Gregory of Neocaesarea

November 21

The Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple

November 27

St. James the Persian

October 28

St. Stephen the New

Note from the Editor

Dear St. Raphael Journal readers, thank you for checking out our newsletter! It wouldn't be possible without all the amazing support from SRS teachers and staff. If you would like to see more student submissions, please explore the St. Raphael School Journal Website. *To submit names for the prayer list or a student submission, email the Newsletter team here.*

Gen Bell
Managing Editor & Website Coordinator

Reflection of the Month

November Pondering

By Georgia Knowles

Dear reader,
The weather was lovely yesterday; gray clouds covered the sky, we had a slight breeze, and the fresh scent of oncoming rain filled the air. This is my favorite kind of weather, so naturally I walked up to the window to admire it and ponder on the idea of going outside. Suddenly, I was torn from my thoughts by a resounding thud, a flutter of wings, and the perturbing sight of a bald, pink turkey's head bobbing to match the speed of its feet as she rushed past the window.

Her goal was the cat food bowl. With a triumphant leap, she was on the porch rail, delighting in her delectable reward. Now, it is well worth mentioning that the action of arriving on the front porch is a rather difficult feat. For one, there is about a six foot wooden fence that stands between the front and back yards, creating an almost impassable barrier. The other obstacle is custom made, created for no other reason than to prevent said turkey, (by the name of Big Bertha), from alighting upon said

porch. This barrier is made up of three long boards, screwed between the fence and the side of the house, giving off a sort of 'jail-cell' feeling as you look out the front door. The space between the boards is not even enough to put your head through, so my guess is that she climbs over the boards to get passed.

All that to say, despite the annoyance of heaving the giant turkey onto my hip, and hurling her over the barrier once again- only to have her turn around and retrace her steps ten minutes later-

"In doing this today, we gain a small amount of spiritual momentum which spurs us on to doing it tomorrow."

I have come across a point to ponder upon. Perhaps we can apply this to our spiritual life- but instead of Bertha and her phenomenally unstoppable desire for the cat food, it's us and our journey toward the Kingdom of Heaven. Unlike Bertha, I at times do let obstacles get in the way of my spiritual progress. Maybe it's texting friends in the morning when I really should be doing morning prayers, or maybe getting caught up in a hobby

and coming to vespers late. Whatever it is, I can clearly see that I lack the zeal to go charging at full speed toward a spiritual goal. Too often I find myself falling into the trap of 'I'll do it later' whereas, in the case of Big Bertha, she's already in a mid-hurtle over the fence before she has a second thought. Christ says in the Gospel of Matthew "The kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force." This does not mean that we should be violent toward others to achieve the kingdom of God, but that we should be violent on ourselves.

It means that instead of putting it off for later we decide to read the life of the saint now. It means trying our best to abstain on fasting days. In doing this today, we gain a small amount of spiritual momentum which spurs us on to doing it tomorrow. If we continue struggling to do the small things which make up an Orthodox lifestyle, with time and labor, someday we too will find ourselves soaring over the obstacles of life to achieve something a bit more worthwhile than a bowl of cat food.

Gratitude Equals Attitude

By Anastasia Fahey

It's a common tradition in America that on thanksgiving everyone takes a turn stating what they're grateful for. I know many people that become misty eyed during the family ritual, and when the small children participate it is very heartwarming. Often people become shy when it comes to their turn, but why is it so hard to say we're grateful for the important people in our life? And why must we give thanks, other than the fact that it is a tradition? With many horrible things occurring all over the world and in our own lives, it is quite easy to be overwhelmed and pessimistic. A truly grateful person enjoys and appreciates every good thing that happens to him. He doesn't take anything for granted.

Numerous studies have been done that show the benefits of being thankful. People who practice gratitude were found to have an improved sense of happiness, more relaxed, and optimistic. They became less self centered, established more social connections, increased decision-making skills, attained better physical health and much more! I myself have noticed that being around thankful people makes me more happy. We are only now finding out how good it is to

be thankful through studies, but we have been told numerous times before by the saints and throughout scripture. In James 1:17 it says "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." And again in Psalm 106:1 "Praise ye the Lord. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever." We should acknowledge the good things in our life no matter how small, and

"We should acknowledge the good things in our life no matter how small, and praise God for granting these to us."

praise God for granting these to us. Today everyone is trying to fill themselves with the world to make themselves happy whether it be in buying the newest game, eating something delicious, or watching the latest movie. No matter how much we try to absorb from the world we will always be discontent. St. Ambrose of Optina states "We must begin with thanksgiving for everything. The beginning of joy is to be content with your situation." Enjoy what you have right now, and don't constantly seek pleasure.

We don't have to be thankful just on Thanksgiving. Instead, every day we should look for something to appreciate. I challenge each of you to write down or at least think through a few things every day that you're grateful for. You will find that it changes your attitude and life. Happy Thanksgiving!

The Modern Challenge to Orthodoxy: Passions

By Thomas Bean

Orthodox Christians are taught to be loving, caring, honest, and help everyone. But in this world, this world of sin and hatred, we are challenged continuously throughout our lives to resist the passions of earthly desire and to hone our minds and souls on the eternal reward. How can we continue, though, to follow Christ's footsteps towards the kingdom of heaven when there is so much that stands between us and Him? We've lied, we've stolen, we have been angered to such an extent that we have thrown ourselves completely off the path.

I will briefly use the example of a modern-day tragedy, the attack on Israel from Hamas. Many people are hurt by sadness, anger, frustration, and despair, and rightly so since they are lost in the calamity of war. But in the Orthodox Christian mindset, we must not rely on anger and human emotional distractions to drive us forward. God has many times over relied on us that we must turn the

other cheek, not hate, or condemn the person; but instead pray for their wellbeing. These teachings are extremely essential for our journey to the heavenly kingdom.

I would like to share a recent personal experience that relates to this. I was at my swim team, swimming, when I heard one of my coaches asking me a question, and I gave my answer.

“Orthodox Christians are taught to be loving, caring, honest, and help everyone.”

After I answered my coach, he yelled at me for missing my goal time by .2 of a second. This response from him usually didn't bother me, but he had done this to me so many other times throughout this one practice that my patience was eroding. I was prepared to lash back saying that he shouts at me for no reason and that .2 of a second isn't a big deal at all. But then the thought came to me, why argue with

your coach? He is simply trying to get you to push harder even though his method of coaching is quite strict. And what good will it be to me, not only just a swimmer, but an Orthodox Christian to lash just because I was angered of coach trying to make me better? I would only create more problems for myself, and I wouldn't be following our duty as Orthodox Christians, to love and care for everyone, even when they have angered you. So, let this be a reminder to all the students and families that we are not here to judge or hate, we are here to serve and love others. Amen.



Once Upon A Time

by Mary Kjendal

Once upon a time a world was lit on fire. It was November. Cold, grey, and colorless, the world was dreary and despondent. It was a quiet day, but a shout was heard from down the street. Two boys were facing each other, their fists raised. One of them had shouted, breaking the silence of the afternoon.

Across the street, a little girl had just woken up from her nap, and she was staring at the moon and stars painted on her ceiling. She yawned and rubbed her eyes sleepily. She heard her mom in the kitchen downstairs making dinner. She stretched and swung her legs out of bed.

Two doors down, an elderly couple were sitting on the couch in front of the television. The man snored gently, and his glasses slipped off his nose onto the floor. Their cat jumped off the counter and nosed the fallen glasses. The woman sighed and got up from the couch to walk to the stove, where a pot of water was boiling.

In their backyard, their grandchild was playing in a pile of leaves. He giggled when a leaf fell from the tree onto his head.

I was on my porch, sitting on the steps. Reading a book, I was lost in my imagination, leaning against the post.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a quiet mob of people in the park. They were not wildly amusing, so I returned my full attention to my book. Just a moment later, though, the world was in chaos.

Life was suddenly not grey or dull – life was orange, bright, pain, and light.

Everything was on fire.

The two boys found each other in the brightness and looked in each other's eyes in unchecked fear.

Their faces were white and they gripped each other's arms for stability.

The little girl cried out that her eyes hurt and shouted for her mom as loud as she could. Her mom rushed up the stairs blindly and found her little girl crying. She sat on the bed, hugging her daughter against her chest.

The elderly couple rubbed their eyes; the man sleepily, for he had just woken up, the woman in disbelief. The elderly man groped on the floor for his glasses, and brushed against the cat who wailed, frightened.

Their grandchild stopped laughing and sat in the pile of leaves, crying. He burrowed his head in the leaves, and then he cried harder when dirt got in his eyes.

I closed my eyes in pain, the brightness being overwhelming. The heat started to build up, and I sat still, sweating. I saw in my mind the quiet mob of people. I saw a man remove a matchbox from his pocket and strike a match. It took forever for the match to fall to the ground. It immediately caught on fire and the world seemed to combust. It seemed like eternity.

Heat and light and pain.

Seconds later, the fire died. The world returned to it's previous state. But somehow, it didn't seem so grey.

Two boys faced each other, their eyes wide. One of the boys cried, and they hugged.

Across the street, a little girl opened her eyes and smiled shakily at her mom, who hugged her tighter.

Two doors down, an elderly couple sat on the couch, together. They held each other's hands and cried.

In their backyard, their grandchild brushed the leaves out of his hair and laughed.

I sat on my porch and looked around me in disbelief. It took me a moment, but then I understood why they lit the match.

Student Submissions

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CALLING ALL
students

SEND YOUR ARTWORK, CREATIVE WRITING, POETRY, AND PHOTOGRAPHY TO BE PUBLISHED IN THE ST. RAPHAEL SCHOOL JOURNAL

email your submissions to
raphaelschooljournal@gmail.com



Graphics
By

Mary
Kjendal

&

Theodora
Ciuca



STUMP THE PRIEST

Do you have any questions about the Orthodox Faith or of The Church and don't know who to ask? Our Priests at Saint Raphael will do their best to answer them!

Please Submit Your Questions To
Our Team's Email:
raphaelschooljournal@gmail.com

Student Submissions

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CLASS ADVOCATE POSITIONS


IF YOU ARE IN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CLASSES:

December (Liberal Arts):
Liberal Arts, any level

February (Sciences):
Astronomy and Holy Scripture: The Heavens Declare

March (Arts and Theater):
Iconography Apprenticeship
Byzantine Chant
Poetry Explorer
Christian Theatrical Arts
Fundamentals of Carpatho-Rusyn Plain Chant
Christian Theatrical Arts
Christian Themes in Popular Films

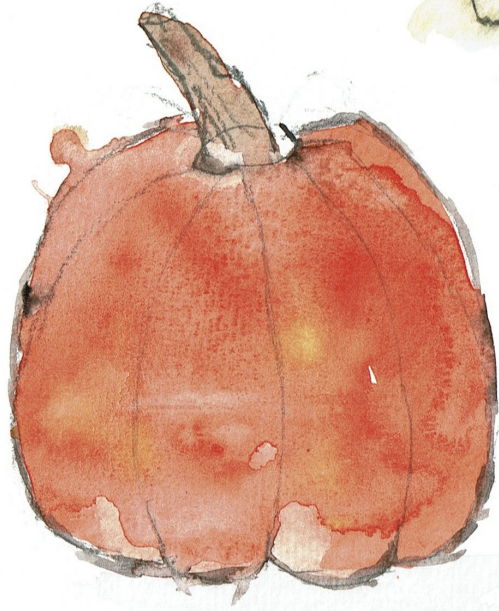
If you are in the classes listed above, we would love for you to send us an email if you're interested in being a class advocate. Please let us know what classes you take through Saint Raphael. Email Mary Kjendal at karymjendal@gmail.com ASAP! Every month, SRS Journal is spotlighting a genre of courses. This means that every month, we need students from the classes in the next month's category to write a paragraph about their class. All you need to do is write one paragraph and submit it to Mary Kjendal a month ahead of the corresponding category. (E.g., if you are in a Writing class, you need to submit your paragraph near the beginning of October for it to be published in November.) Thank you for your time!



Student Submissions

Fine Arts Page

Drawn By Jonah Punnose



Welcome
FALL

Drawn By Anonymous



Student Submissions

Poetry Page

Rocks and Riverbeds

By Mary Joana Reese

Light sifts through the trees
Soft new grass on my hands
Sweet smelling soil between
 my toes
The clear Autumn air in my
 face

Wind, like fingers, through my
 hair
Leaves, like fire, flicker by,
The Swaying of bows, swung
 by a gale,
The patter of rain on the
 window.

The sweep of the rake,
 gathering leaves,
The grass fading on the dark
 dirt,
The cool smooth of rain
 soaked stones,
The streams that make ruts in
 the road

Goodbye

By Theodora Ciuca

In the golden glow of the setting sun,
We say goodbye, our day is done.
Though parting brings a tear to the
 eye,
It's not forever, just a brief goodbye.

In this moment, we must part ways,
But in our hearts, our connection
 stays.

Goodbye for now, but not for long,
Our friendship and love remain strong.

Embrace

By Anonymous

In November's chill, the leaves they
 fall,
A tapestry of colors, a vibrant
 sprawl.
The air grows crisp, the sky so gray,
As autumn's beauty fades away.

With cozy sweaters and fireside
 cheer,
We gather close, those we hold dear.
In November's embrace, we find our
 grace.

Student Submissions

Poetry Page (continued...)

Dearest Theotokos

By Sophia M. Gheorge

Dearest Theotokos, Lady and
Mother,
To Thee I run in times of trouble
In times when my soul seems the
stormiest,
And my mind in the craziest-
Most Holy Theotokos, save us!

When I feel abandoned and alone,
And the vice of despondency in in
my soul is sown,
To You I cry out and run,
So you my shine on me like a
brilliant sun,
Most Holy Theotokos, save us!

Sweetest Virgin, Oh Lady pure,
To You I turn when toward me
temptations do lure,
Do not let me fall into its evil
schemes,
Which hurts the soul like scary
dreams,
Most Holy Theotokos, save us!

Protector of orphans, widows, and
poor,
You let everyone in that knocks at
heaven's door;
To beg Your Son to have mercy
on us we ask You to do,
And we all earnestly cry out to
You-
Most Holy Theotokos, Save
Us!

Darkness To Light

By Ioan Garret

As did the Lord transition nothing
and darkness to light and
existence
so art we going over the fence
from Spring to Fall

We art all
in ecstasy
as we see
this world changing.

Stump The Priest!

Answered by Fr. Noah Bushelli

Q. *What is the role of the priest in confession?* -*Theodora Ciuca*

A. In Confession priest is at least three things: A Witness, a Counselor, a Channel of Grace, and a Steward of the Mysteries.

1. The priest is a witness to the parish community that the penitent is repenting. This relieves the need of parishioners policing each other. He is also a witness to the penitent of the Church's forgiveness. Psychologically, the evil one plays games with us and may try to trick us into thinking that a sin is not forgiven or that one is unworthy to approach the chalice. The memory of the prayer of absolution and the priest's guidance alleviates those mental tricks.

2. The priest is also a counselor, encouraging, comforting, correcting, and teaching the right way to think, live, pray and serve.

3. The priest in his apostolic succession of sacramental ordination brings the grace of the forgiveness to the penitent. The apostles were given the authority to "bind and loose" and that is passed through the bishops to the priests. (Matthew 16:9)

4. The priest has to guard the Holy Mysteries (Sacraments) of the Church to ensure only people that are prepared can receive Holy Communion and the other mysteries.

Q. *In the bible, why did God save some people from death, but not others?* -*Jonah Punnose*

A. There is a mystery here that we will never truly understand. But we can "stand under" the truth that "all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28). In His infinite wisdom and love he provides (sees ahead) what is best for each of us. It can be painful and confusing from our limited perspective but it will all make sense when we are resurrected without sickness, sorrow, and sighing but to life everlasting!!!

Theosis of the Arts

Saint Nektarios "Man of God"

By Theodora Cuica

Good morning! Good Afternoon! Good Evening! And welcome to the Column "Theosis Through The Arts"! As we begin to celebrate the feast day of St. Nektarios of Aegina, I was remembering back to when the movie "Man of God" swept through the nation in 2021. It was truly a masterpiece and a blessing bestowed to us. And since we venerate St. Nektarios this month, I thought I would talk about the movie, "Man of God". So, let's get started!

"Man of God" is a biographical film that offers a captivating portrayal of the life of Saint Nektarios of Aegina, a revered figure in our faith. The movie takes us on a journey through the remarkable life of this humble and devout man.

The story begins with Nektarios, a young lawyer who becomes disillusioned with the secular world and answers a spiritual calling to become a monk. He faces numerous challenges and obstacles on his path to religious life, including opposition from those who doubt his sincerity. However, Nektarios remains steadfast in his faith and is eventually ordained as a priest.

The film explores Nektarios' enduring commitment to helping the poor and the sick, emphasizing his compassion and the miraculous healings attributed to him. Despite facing trials and false accusations, he remains steadfast in his devotion to God and his community. "Man of God" offers a moving portrayal of Saint Nektarios's unwavering faith, humility, and selflessness. The film also delves into the profound impact he had on the people around him, as well as the broader Orthodox Christian world.

"Man of God" is a beautifully crafted cinematic tribute to a revered figure in the Orthodox Christian tradition, offering viewers an inspiring and thought-provoking experience while shedding light on the life and legacy of Saint Nektarios of Aegina.

It is truly amazing that we are able to see movies like "Man of God" on screen today when so many movies distract from our morals. Saint Nektarios was someone who was able to endure the horrible rumors that were said about him and take the persecution he received from those of the same faith and he stayed faithful to God and his faith never faltered no matter what happened.

He is someone that we can look towards when we might feel a bit weaker. The Lord never abandons us and we should always place our trust in the Lord, no matter what comes our way. If you haven't seen "Man of God" I totally recommend that you should see it, if you have seen it, I would encourage you to try watching it again.

As always, I'm so glad to be writing to you all and thank you so much for reading. God bless!

Pies and Pumpkins

By Natasha Richart

In the day when a log cabin was a home
And the woods grew all around,
And off the milk was skimmed the foam,
And the cows were fat and round,
There was a little pumpkin pie,
As sweet and soft as candy
Who had been made along with turkey
thighs
Man, that pie was a dandy.
All night long it waited on the table,
While the potatoes and turnips were
heaped on plates.
And outside the leaves fell off the maple,
Still that pie waits.
To this very day it sits,
Alone in that forgotten house,
Waiting to be heaped on plates,
Like the past potatoes and turnips,
Still that pumpkin pie waits.



Course Spotlight on Writing

Collected by: Mary Kjendal, Edited by: Mary Kjendal and Theodora Ciuca

Novel Writing with Dr. Erin Moulton: Written by Catherine Drake

Our class has an age range of about nine years old up to fourteen. On the first day of class, we all got to discuss our favorite novels and explain the main characters, distinguish the setting and climax, and say what we thought about it as our homework. As the classes moved on, we started planning our novels, figuring out who our main characters and secondary characters would be, what setting it would be in, and so forth. Now that we are approaching November, we are pre-writing. When November 1 arrives, we will officially start writing on the NaNoWriMo website. We each got the opportunity to figure out an appropriate word goal, and we have thirty days to fulfill it. Our most recent assignment was to plan the outline and the overall plot of our books, which included the introduction, rising action, climax, and falling action. I believe this class is very special because the stories each of us are working on are very distinct and different, in a good sense. This class created stories with a broad category of genres, such as adventure, fantasy, realistic, dystopian, humor, and more. It's going to be very exciting to see how everyone's novel turns out!

Meet the Newsletter Team!

Annalise Dawson



Co Managing Editor

"To love beauty is to see light"

-Victor Hugo

Georgia Knowles



Column Writer

"If you don't come back, sir, then I shan't, that's for certain."

-Samwise Gamgee

Anastasia Fahey



Column Writer

"God can't give us peace and happiness apart from Himself because there is no such thing."

C.S. Lewis

Theodora Cuica



Assistant Editor

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

- Philippians 4:13

Genevieve Bell



Managing Editor

Website Coordinator

"To the world you may be one person, but to one person you may be the world."

- Dr. Seuss

Natasha Richart



Column Writer

"All grown-ups were once children...but only few of them remember it."

- The Little Prince

Mary Kjendal



Column Writer

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."

Winston S. Churchill

Thomas Bean



Column Writer

"A generation which ignores history has no past and no future."

Robert A. Heinlein

Sevastiane Archer



Secretary

"Prayer is the place of refuge for every worry, a foundation of cheerfulness, a source of constant happiness, a protection against sadness."

-St. John Chrysostom