

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

St. Raphael School Journal

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Newsletter
February 2024



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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Happy New Year! Welcome to the February edition of the newsletter. A special shoutout to our new member Sophia. Welcome Sophia! Inside you will find a witty reflection on gratitude, an essay on the new year, 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

“But I say to you, the Lord says, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, pray for those who persecute you. Why did he command these things? So that he might free you from hatred, sadness, anger and grudges, and might grant you the greatest possession of all, perfect love, which is impossible to possess except by the one who loves all equally in imitation of God.”

-MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR

ST. RAPHAEL, BISHOP OF BROOKLYN



Troparion

Your proclamation has gone forth throughout North America, / calling the scattered sheep into the unity of the church. / hearing your voice, they responded to your teaching, / and through your writings you instructed them in piety. / now guided by your example, O Father Raphael, / we sing hymns of praise unto Christ our God. / 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

February 2

The Meeting of our Lord in the Temple

February 5

Rest of St. Theodosios of Chernigov

February 11

St. Theodora the Empress

February 13

Holy Apostle and Martyrs Priscilla and Aquila

February 24

Find of the Honorable Head of St. John the Baptist

February 27

St. Raphael Bishop of Brooklyn

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

A Wearisome Winter or a Fantastic February

By Anastasia Fahey

We have just finished the Nativity fast, and celebrated Nativity and Theophany, but it appears we are at a stalemate. As much as I enjoyed Christmas and all of its festivities, now that it's over I'm not sure what to do with myself. It's the middle of winter and most of us are stuck in the daily cycle of schoolwork. Laziness seems to be very prominent. I'm anchored in my monotonous schedule as the days become shorter and colder.

We started out the new year with such vigor, but if we are going to keep this up we need to make some changes. The first thing we can do is give those New Year's Resolutions a good review. Are there some new hobbies that we wanted to do? Now is the time to start journaling or that drawing we've been meaning to do. We can bake something delicious for a friend or learn a new instrument. There are ever so many books on the shelf waiting to be read. The possibilities are endless!

If we find ourselves sitting at home with a stagnant social life (And no, social media doesn't count), then we can fix this as well.

Most of us see our friends at church on the weekends, which is wonderful, but maybe we can do more. Since team sports are a great way to build friendships, consider doing a winter sport. Set up a day to get lunch with a friend. At the bare minimum we can give a relative we haven't seen in ages a call. It might seem old fashioned, but people love receiving handwritten mail, so we could write a letter. Other possibilities include: joining a club, youth group, choir, or co-op.

"If we must be confined in our homes this winter then at least make them enjoyable to be in."

Staying active and productive, no matter the weather, is important. I think it's fairly safe to say that we don't enjoy doing chores, but there is some satisfaction in a hard task completed. When our living space is clean and orderly then our minds become clear as well. We can reorganize our closet, tidy a bookshelf, or dust that spot that hasn't been touched in ages. If we must be confined in our homes this winter then at least make them enjoyable to be in.

Basically, we need to try to keep ourselves busy throughout winter by creating new friendships or strengthening old ones, starting some hobbies, or making our household more homely. We are very susceptible to Satan's temptations when we are bored. This might have ended up more as a self reflection but maybe a few souls out there find my ramblings helpful. Happy February everyone! And stay productive!

Ephesians 5:15-17 "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is."



Reflection Of The Month

On Relying On God

By Georgia Knowles

Dear Reader,

The chickens were beyond elated to get their daily dumping of feed this morning. Upon opening the coop door, I was overwhelmed by a plethora of yellow feathers and many pairs of eagerly bobbing eyes and beaks, each pair a little more anxious than the next. I dumped the mix of corn and feed and before I had emptied the bucket of its contents, there was a whirr of scratching and pecking and clucking and every sort of chickenley celebration. Hay was flung in every direction, tail feathers fluffed to the fullest extent possible and beaks lifting and landing at least a thousand miles an hour. One chicken, 'Wee lass' by name, lifted her head towards mine and clucked not once, not twice, but three times to express her sincere gratitude for my having dumped the feed. And it is here wherein the subject of my reflection lies: in gratitude.

"Do I come running gratefully to Him when He gives me my spiritual feed?"

This observation of our chickens has caused me to ponder about whether or not I have accepted with gratitude everything that God has given me. Do I come running gratefully to Him when He gives me my spiritual feed? Perhaps, as I have done many times for my chickens, He has poured out my feed in the mud for the betterment and feeding of my soul. But, as you might expect, dear reader, muddy feed is not quite as wonderful as dry feed, and not quite so enjoyable to eat, as the chickens well know. But unlike the chickens who accept the muddy feed with just as much appreciation as they do the dry, at times we don't give glory to God when He gives us burdens. We complain or even grow despondent as though we don't believe that God is caring for us. Let's take the example of the simple chickens who truly believe that every serving of feed is good and worth many clucks of gratitude.

Once Upon A Time

By Mary Kjendal

Once upon a time, on a beautiful Wednesday in January, I was skiing. Tom had taken my brother, our friend (who we'll call Michael Anthony Durka), and me up to the ski mountain, and it was a phenomenal day. The powder was fresh, the temperature was chilly, the air was clear, and the snow was falling lightly.

Late in the morning, Tom gave me the car keys, and Michael took me down to the car to go to a class. I couldn't unlock the car, though, so I gave Michael the keys to unlock the car himself. Then we went to the lodge, I went to class, and we went back on the slopes. Michael and I only took one run.

From the top of the mountain, we took Quail (Michael fell) over to Waterfall, down Waterfall (he somersaulted again, but so did I), across a catwalk, and to the base of the mountain. When we reached the lodge, where we were going to meet the others for lunch, Michael looked up at me with a blank face. He started to search his pockets frantically, saying "oh no oh no oh no" under his breath.

I started to get just a little uneasy, and I asked Michael, "What's wrong? Did you lose your phone? Tom's car keys?"

Little did I know that the answer to one of my questions was "yes."

Michael nervously laughed and continued searching the same pockets 10 times each. He had lost Tom's keys on the slopes.

I half-heartedly suggested that we ski down the same trails, in hopes of finding the little key fob... in 2 feet of fresh powder.

We skied the same trails, praying to Ss. Phanurios and Menas frantically. We didn't find it. Every little piece of moss we saw, though, made us skid to a stop to see if it was the key fob. We must have looked like lunatics, skiing so slowly and stopping every so often to pick up each piece of moss.

Well, we went into the lodge for lunch (though our packed lunch was in the car), and when Michael was using the restroom, Tom and my brother found me and sat down with me.

Then Michael came back and asked, "Did you tell him?" I kind of snorted and assured Michael that I had saved the job for him to do himself.

Tom laughed and was like, "Tell me what?"

Oops. Michael told Tom to sit down before he broke the news. Then, as we both smiled in dread, he told Tom, "I lost your car keys. But it's ok! I have AAA, I can call them and figure it out. It'll work out."

Tom genuinely thought we were joking. But Michael walked away to call AAA and Tom turned to me and said, "He was serious?"

I nodded. "But just ask one of your roommates to drive up here with your spare key, right?"

Tom shook his head and explained that he only had one key, because he had gotten his Audi at an auction, and it only came with one key.

The rest of the afternoon, Tom was on the phone with the Audi dealership and Michael was on the phone with AAA. Thank God, there were other people we knew at the mountain, so when the lifts closed at 4 pm, and the tow truck still hadn't arrived, we sat in the car of Tom's business partner for TWO hours, waiting for the tow truck.

Another problem was that the keys to Michael's car were locked in Tom's car. (And so was my cranberry bread.) So when we arrived at Tom's house and the tow truck dropped off Tom's car, we had to call a locksmith to break into Tom's car so we could get Michael's car keys and my cranberry bread.

It was the funniest day in a long time, and the most fun day of skiing in my life. We all laughed so much while we waited for the tow truck and then finally drove home. Glory to God for all things!

This is a true story. Some of the names have been changed to protect certain parties.

Student Submissions

Advertisement

The Saint Raphael Newsletter Is Calling For

Student Submissions

Happy 2024 Everyone! We pray you had a very Merry Christmas, a blessed New Years, and a restful winter break. We would love to start seeing your work again. Send your Poetry, Photography, Artwork, and Writing to be published in the Newsletter!

Please Send It To Our Team's Email:

raphaelschooljournal@gmail.com

Graphics by:

Mary
Kjendal,

Sevastiane
Archer

&

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 School will do their best to answer them!

If you have loved ones that you would want the team to pray for, please send us your prayer requests to the journal email.

Please Submit your Questions and Prayer Requests To Our Team's email:
raphaelschooljournal@gmail.com

Student Submissions

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LOOKING FOR

Class advocates

IF YOU ARE IN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING CLASSES:

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

April (Languages):
Greek, Russian, and Arabic, any level

If you are in any of the classes listed above, we would love for you to send in a paragraph about your class to be published in the newsletter. Email Mary Kjendal at karymjendal@gmail.com ASAP! 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 an Arts or Theater class, you need to submit your paragraph near the beginning of February for it to be published in March.) Thank you for your time and participation!



Student Submissions

Writing Page

Written By **Annie Cook**

The Death of Alexander the Great

It is June 10, 323 BC. The greatest general on earth is dying (Greenblatt, 33). He has conquered most of the known world and has been as far as India. But now he is on his deathbed. That man was Alexander the Great. How did this happen? Alexander the Great brought about his own death by his obsession with drinking, his pride, his temper, and his recklessness.

Alexander learned from a young age how to drink immoderately, and this affected his health greatly. In 322 BC, when Alexander was thirty-two, his secretary, Eumenes, recorded that, “on the fifth day of the month [October] he drank with Eumaeus; on the sixth he slept after drinking.... On the seventh

he feasted with Perdiccas and drank again so that he slept through the eighth. On the fifteenth of the month, he drank in the same fashion and passed the next day as he usually did after drinking.” (Wood, 219) If someone drinks that much, he cannot be healthy. Unsurprisingly, then, in May of 323 BC he was stricken with a fever after a wild party. Two weeks later, he was dead.

Alexander was a prideful man, and that might have made him think that he would always be healthy, because he was supposedly a descendant of Achilles and Heracles. He went all the way to Siwa in Egypt to visit the shrine of Ammon so that he could be declared pharaoh (75-76).

Student Submissions

Writing Page

The Death of Alexander the Great (cont..)

He even named seventy cities after himself (Lasker, 29). Alexander was arrogant and adopted Persian customs, like making people do prostrations before him, and Persian clothes. This was unacceptable for the Macedonians. He also ordered a traditional Persian wedding for his army, and married thousands of his soldiers to young Persian women (Wood, 218). He also had a fiery temper. Alexander was known for his cruelty and he sometimes wiped out entire cities on a whim. When he sacked Tyre, “somewhere between six thousand and eight thousand were killed, and thirteen thousand taken prisoner.” (70) The women and children were sold into slavery. He also acted this way about his army.

When Alexander got into an argument with some of his veterans, he “jumped off the platform into the crowd and pulled out the ringleaders, dispatching them to instant execution.” (219) It is quite likely that Alexander’s soldiers got fed up with him and decided to poison him. Another thing that contributed to his death was his recklessness. Alexander often led his troops into battle. When he besieged Multan, Alexander was the first one up the siege-ladder, with three of his guards following behind. The siege-ladder broke, however, leaving them stranded on the wall. Instead of waiting to be rescued, Alexander jumped off the wall into the city, and had his lung punctured by an arrow (200).

Student Submissions

Writing Page

The Death of Alexander the Great (cont..)

It is possible that the injury never healed and led to his death.

Alexander caused his own demise because of his drinking habits, pride, temper, and recklessness. If he hadn't died, who knows what might have happened. But, because of the character that he had, he probably would have gotten poisoned anyway. Tyrants never last long, but they do leave their mark on the world. As the orator Demades exclaimed, "Alexander dead? Impossible: the whole world would stink of his corpse." (230).

Works Cited

Greenblatt, Miriam. Alexander the Great and Ancient Greece. Rulers and Their Times. Terrytown, NY: Benchmark Books, 2000.

Lasker, Joe. The Great Alexander the Great. New York, NY: The Viking Press, 1983.

Wood, Michael. In the Footsteps of Alexander the Great. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977.

Little Chippy's Spring

By Natasha Richart

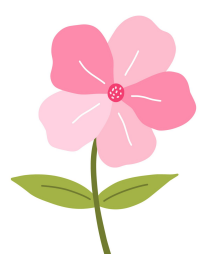
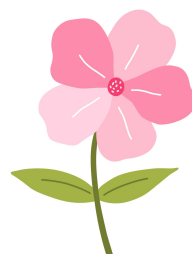
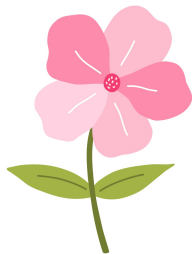
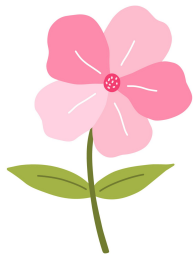
Snug under the roots of a mistletoe tree,
A baby chipmunk lies.
Dreaming of heavenly spring.
When the golden sun will rise.

This baby chipmunk,
Chippy was his name.
He lies in his little hollow,
Waiting for Spring to proclaim.

Outside of the mistletoe tree,
Snow falls on the earth.
But soon it will melt.
Exposing the world's rebirth.

Chippy lies in his snug little den,
Sipping cups of peace.
The snow starts the drip;
Welcoming the geese.

Chippy rises, to stretch and yawn,
The sun shines with pleasure,
He creeps out of his little den,
To find a most wonderful treasure.



Theosis of the Arts

Reflection on "Elements: The Transfiguration of Elijah, a Priest of the Oriental Church."

By Sophia Gheorghe

****Please note: This book review and book are recommended for ages 13 and up with parent permission before reading.**

Hello everyone! I'm Sophia, the new column writer, and I'm so excited to start writing for the SRS newsletter!

I wanted to share with you all this book I'm reading, "Elements: The Transfiguration of Elijah, a Priest of the Oriental Church." I've read so many books, as I am a huge bookworm, but when I started reading this book, I was really shaken up. It's really deep.

This book is about a boy named Elijah, and he's Egyptian with the Coptic faith. He lives in Canada with his parents and has a special connection with God and nature. He talks with the Theotokos as if she's his mom. Every living creature, from Mr. Cardinal to Mr. Earthworms, is his friend. He delights in speaking with the trees, learning about their past. His favorite place to be is in church, where he feels closest to his Creator.

When he comes of age, he starts going to elementary school. He makes some friends, but he is distant and doesn't really talk with them. Everything goes smoothly until seventh grade when a cute girl comes up and talks to him. He is shy and hesitant at first, but they become fast friends. Elijah is starting to lose his innocence he had as a child. He starts losing interest in church, his love for God, the Theotokos, the saints, and nature. All he basically lives for is his friend Martina.

As Elijah starts high school, he begins hating going to church. My guess is because his parents kept forcing him to go, which is not really the best thing to do when your grouchy teen doesn't want to go to church. He meets a guy at school that was in the same kindergarten class as him, and they start talking. Joshua, his new friend, sadly introduces Elijah to drugs. He doesn't tell anyone about taking them, but there is a noticeable change in him. Martina starts disliking his new attitude, and in the end, they break up.

When he graduates high school, he goes to college. He has a group of friends but isn't interested in girls because the last relationship he had with a girl named Mary was a total failure. His feelings change when he sees Esther, a beautiful young lady (she's also an Egyptian Copt) who lives for Christ only. Elijah's life changes when he starts dating Esther because she unconsciously leads him back to church. The story goes on, but as not to spoil anything for those who want to read it, I will stop here.

While I was reading this book, I compared my life to Elijah's. How empty my heart actually is from all good deeds. How I, too, sometimes don't care about going to church. That I don't find a point in praying all the time, but I started noticing that church and prayer are the main things in our lives. Without spiritual nourishment, the soul dies. And that's what happened to Elijah. As he got caught up in worldly pleasures, he forgot about taking care of his soul. God didn't forget him, though, and sent him Esther, this beautiful girl adorned with the virtues, to bring him back on the path. God also sends us help while we are lost, though we might not always look for it. He doesn't force things on us, so if we aren't ready, then God gives us some time before He sends someone else to help us out. We just have to be ready to accept it.

As we are in the new year, everyone sets up new goals. For some, they might be getting better grades at school by getting homework done on time. For others, being a better person. These are good goals. However, we should also set spiritual goals. How to become a better Christian, having a prayer rule, and trying to be more humble and loving are just a few ideas. God wants us to get closer, especially in these times. Let's try this year not to do what Elijah already did because it is a painful experience, even though it might not feel like it at the time.

~ I hope you all have a very blessed new year! ~

Meet the Newsletter Team!

Theodora Ciuca



Assistant Editor

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

Mary Kjendal



Column Writer

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

Sophia Gheorghe



"To honor is saint it to imitate a saint." - St. John Chrysostom

Georgia Knowles



Column Writer

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

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*

Thomas Bean



Column Writer

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

Anastasia Fahey



Column Writer

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

Natasha Richart



Column Writer

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

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*