

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

St. Raphael School Journal

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Newsletter
March 2025



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 back! As March unfolds, we're excited to bring you this month's edition of the Newsletter. With the arrival of spring on the horizon, we hope you're feeling inspired and ready to take on the opportunities ahead. This month is especially meaningful as we enter the season of Lent, a time for reflection, renewal, and spiritual growth. We also have St. Patrick's Day to look forward to!

The Newsletter is now open for submissions! Do you have a new piece of artwork to share for our Submissions page? We'd love to hear from you and see what you've been working on. Keep an eye out for exciting student contributions this month as we embrace the spirit of Lent and celebrate the vibrant energy of March together!

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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

Zane

It is not how you look on the outside, but how you live your life that makes you a Christian.”

-St. John Chrysostom

THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS



Kontakion: Tone 8

O Victorious Leader of Triumphant Hosts! / We, your servants, delivered from evil, sing our grateful thanks to you, O Theotokos! / As you possess invincible might, set us free from every calamity / so that we may sing: Hail, O unwedded Bride!

Feasts of the Month

March 2

Forgiveness Sunday

March 3

Lent Begins

March 9

Sunday of Orthodoxy

March 16

Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas

March 17

St. Patrick's Day

March 23

Sunday of the Holy Cross

March 25

Annunciation of the Theotokos

March 30

Sunday of St. John Climacus

Note from the Editor

Dear St. Raphael Journal readers, thank you for taking the time to read our newsletter! This wouldn't be possible without the incredible support of the SRS teachers and staff. To see more student submissions, be sure to visit the St. Raphael School Journal Website. *To submit names for the prayer list or a student submission, email the Newsletter team here.*

Theodora Ciuca
Managing Editor & Website Coordinator

Featured Essay

Preserving Through The Hard

By Sevastiane Archer

I don't know about you but lately, I've been asking myself "Why?" a lot. Why do I have to do well in school? Why do I have to be patient with people? Why do I have to keep my commitments? The thing is, usually I ENJOY school and my obligations and I feel better being patient than not being patient.

In March, the end of school feels so far away and along with Lent, I lose my excitement and willingness to do things I usually love. If I force myself to do something...it will get done but it will feel like a chore. Of course, there are those things in life that really are chores, but school and sports (at least for me) are not and should not be chores.

The loss of motivation is rough but if I just go through the motions that isn't going to benefit me in the long run. It's like an endless cycle...there is something needs to be done...I don't want to do it...I procrastinate...I

get it done...repeat. It's hard to break a cycle the longer you're stuck in it. That said, once I look at it with the perspective of, "I get to" it slowly motivates me. What we tell our brains matters...just like the endless cycle I showed previously, if I were to describe my brain good things and that what I have to do is a reward I might slowly start to believe it.

"What we tell our brains matters."

The power of positivity is immense, it's a good version of the cycle of procrastination. If I think positive thoughts, it puts me in a better mood...when I'm in a good mood I'm more motivated...I get everything I need to do done...it makes me feel good that I accomplished my tasks...and it's a cycle of positivity! Let's look at Lent from this perspective. Lent is a tough time for me, there's fasting and many services that

sometimes feel pretty long. It's easy to have those thoughts but the thing is...those thoughts are not the thoughts that God is sending you. It's from the devil and the devil wants you to fall, he will make you think that whatever you are not supposed to be doing is ok and then when you fall, he makes sure that you fall into despair. This is another kind of cycle.

Especially during Lent there are all sorts of temptations and it's SO hard to keep going but if we pray, keep our fast, and go to confession we will have an easier time not falling because we will have our priests to help us and we have repentance which makes us have a clean slate.

During Lent let us strive to fast, pray, read our Bibles, go to confession, and when we fall (which we will) not despair but get up, pray, and give glory to God!

Once Upon A Time

Shadow of Betrayal

Waiku raced into Asahi's room. He was sitting by his screen window, looking out into the stone steps that led to the pond that I had just left.

"Asahi, you have to leave now!"

His black hair whipped around his neck as Asahi turned towards me.

"It's Mother, she is trying to...to kill you."

"Waiku, I know you're upset—"

Ugh.

"Asahi, I'm not lying. It's true, and Mother wants the inheritance."

"Waiku, why would you make this up?"

"Why would I make this up?! I'm not making this up!"

"I just told you and Mother, and now you are crashing here with stories of Mother trying to kill me."

In my rising anger, I failed to see a shadow creeping up behind the door.

"Asahi! Please, please believe me! I wouldn't lie to you."

"But you're lying right now."

Asahi had always believed me before.

Why wouldn't he now?

"Mother gave me father's sword. You know what that means."

I did, but it didn't change what I had

heard. The sword was a symbol of passing responsibility. It meant that

Asahi was filling in as head of the

family, and though he always had

been, this was an official symbol.

Killing him now would be like killing Father.

Tears pricked my eyes again for what must have been the third time that day.

"You don't believe me?"

"I don't Waiku."

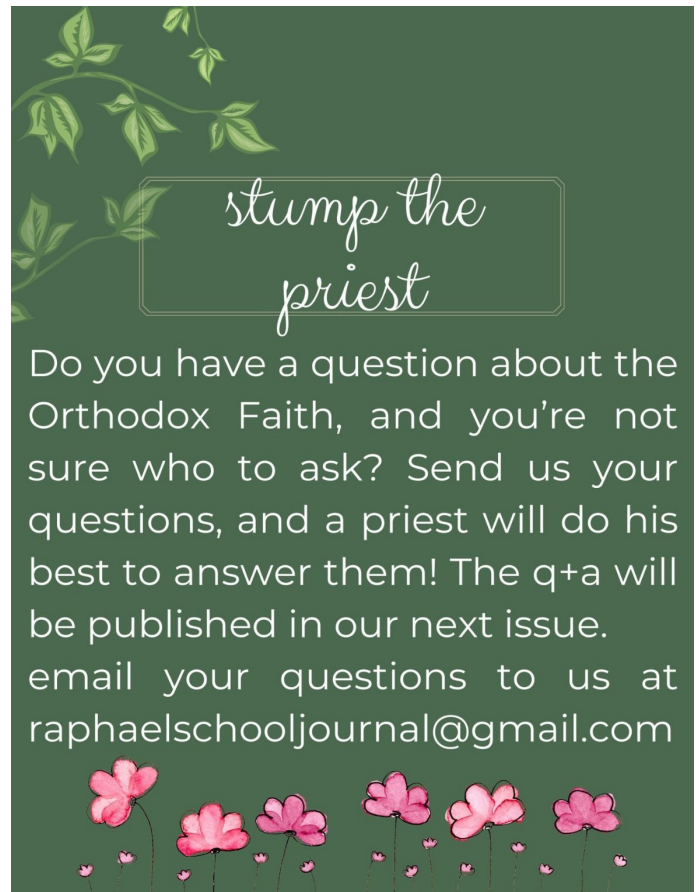
Student Submissions

Advertisement



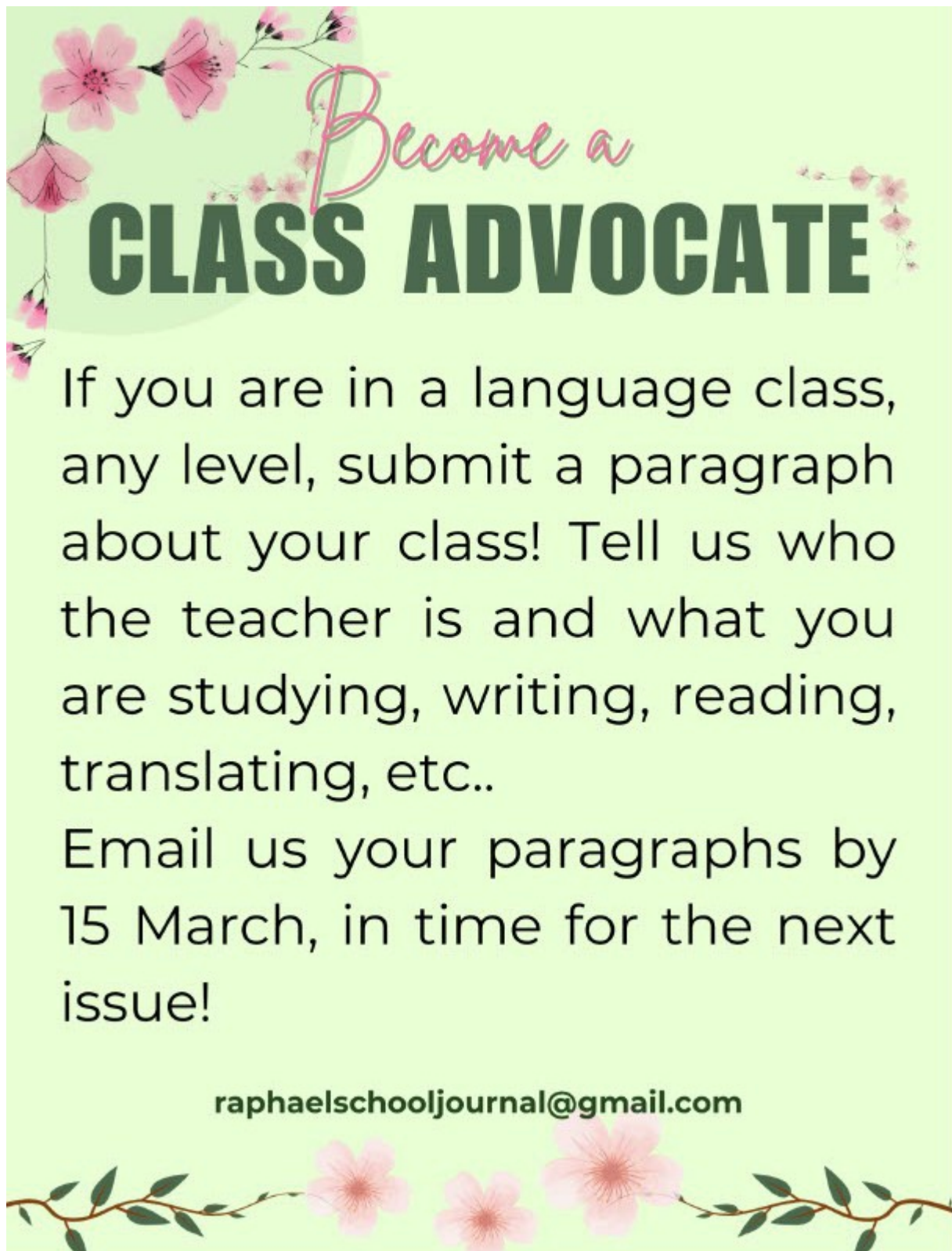
Graphics By

Mary
Kjendal



Student Submissions

Advertisement

The advertisement features a light green background with pink cherry blossom illustrations. The text is centered and reads: "Become a CLASS ADVOCATE". "Become a" is in a pink cursive font, while "CLASS ADVOCATE" is in a bold, dark green sans-serif font. Below this, a paragraph of text in a black sans-serif font explains the contest: "If you are in a language class, any level, submit a paragraph about your class! Tell us who the teacher is and what you are studying, writing, reading, translating, etc.. Email us your paragraphs by 15 March, in time for the next issue!". At the bottom, the email address "raphaelschooljournal@gmail.com" is written in a dark green sans-serif font. The entire graphic is framed by pink cherry blossoms and green leaves.

Student Submissions

Poetry

The Woes of The Cross Written by Mary Haggard

The sun went dark,
The veil of the temple was torn into,
The heart of the Theotokos was
pierced,
All the disciple but John fled,
Woe he who betrayed the Lord!
Woe to those who rejoiced in his
death!
Woe to the wicked one's cunning
plans!

Theosis Through the Arts

Preparing for Lent

By Sophia Gheorge

.....

Christ is in our midst! As the new month dawns, we, as Orthodox Christians, are getting ready for Great Lent. As you might know, four weeks before Lent the church leads us on a path of repentance and a time of getting ready for the hardships of Lent and joy of Pascha. This period is called the Triodion, and in this column I will be talking about the four weeks mentioned above.

The first Sunday is the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee. The parable of the Publican and Pharisee is told in the Gospel of Apostle Luke, chapter 18:10-14. In this parable, a Pharisee and a tax collector, or publican, go to the synagogue to pray. The Pharisee prays in this way: "God, I thank You that I am not like other men- extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess." The tax collector, standing a little ways off, "would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast saying, 'God, be merciful on me, a sinner!'" Christ finishes the parable by saying that the tax collector went home more justified than the Pharisee, for, "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (Short explanation.)

The Sunday of the Prodigal Son is read from the gospel of Apostle Luke the second Sunday. This parable is about a Father with two sons; since everyone knows this, I'll go right to the explanation. The Father represents God the Father, and the sons represent two kinds of men, the righteous and the sinners. The younger son shows us how we, when we are tempted by the evil one and are lured into his traps, stray from our Heavenly Father and go to the far away city, which represents the devil and the temptations. When the son ends up with the pigs, he remembers his Father, and how well life was back home, and that even his Father's servants were treated better than he was. He ends up going back home, where his Father receives him with open arms. There is a lot to say on this topic, but that is the main idea. The Sunday of the Judgment is when we remember the second coming of Christ. (continue to page 2.....)

Theosis Through the Arts

Preparing for Lent

By Sophia Gheorge

.....

This gospel portrays the goats and the sheep; the goats are the sinners on the left side of Christ, and the sheep are the saints that are on the right side of Christ. He tells the saints to come to Him, because they have helped Him when He was in need, and tells the sinners to depart from Him for the opposite reason. When they ask Him what He means, Christ says, “Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these of my brethren, you did it to Me.”

The Sunday of Forgiveness is the last Sunday before the Great and Holy Lent. On this Sunday, we remember Adam’s banishment from Eden. After liturgy, or in the evening after vespers, depending what your church does, we all ask each other for forgiveness. We do this so we may enter Great Lent with a clear conscience, and we can focus more readily on our spiritual struggles.

The quotes I got from the Orthodox Study Bible, published by Thomas Nelson. The book I used to get my information from is Synaxarion of the Lenten Triodion and Pentecostarion, published by HDM Press, Rives Junction, Michigan (Annunciation Romanian Orthodox monastery).

I wish you all a very blessed and fruitful Lent!

Reflection Of The Month

Account of the Annunciation of the Theotokos

By Elizaveta Durka

.....
Dear reader,

On March 25th in the Holy Orthodox Church, we celebrate the Annunciation to our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos and Ever-virgin Mary.

The Angel announced as Son to the Virgin, the Great Angel of the Father's great counsel.

On the twenty-fifth the Angel spake of joy unto Mary.

When the All-Holy Virgin was entering her fifteenth year, after having spent eleven years of living and serving in the Temple of Jerusalem, the priests informed her that, according to the Law, she could not remain in the Temple but must be betrothed and enter into marriage. The All-Holy Virgin surprised the priests when she told them that she had dedicated her life to God and that she desired to remain a virgin until death. Then, Zacharias, the high priest and father of the Forerunner, under the inspiration of God, betrothed the Virgin Mary to Joseph of Nazareth to preserve her virginity and to care for her. When the fullness of time had come, as prophesied by Daniel the Prophet, and when God was pleased to fulfill His promise to the banished Adam and to the Prophets, the Archangel Gabriel appeared in the chamber of the All-Holy Virgin. As some priestly writers wrote, precisely at that same moment when she held open the book of the Prophet Isaiah and was contemplating his great prophecy: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son! (7:13)" Gabriel appeared in all of his angelic brightness and saluted her: "Rejoice, highly favored one! The Lord is with thee," and the rest in order as it is written in the Gospel of Luke. This annunciation and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Virgin, leading to the incarnation of our Lord, began the salvation of mankind and restoration of all creation.

Through the intercessions of the Most Holy Theotokos and of all Thy Saints, O Christ God, have mercy upon us. Amen.

Today is the beginning of our salvation, and the manifestation of the mystery from the ages; for the Son of God becometh the Son of the Virgin, and Gabriel proclaimeth grace. Wherefore, do we shout with him to the Theotokos: Hail, O full of grace! The Lord is with thee

Meet the Newsletter Team!

Theodora Ciuca



Managing Editor

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

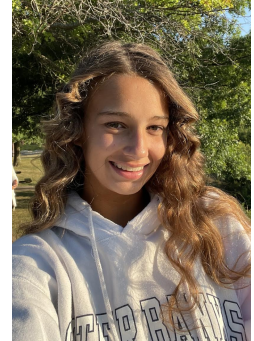
Mary Kjendal



Co-Managing Editor

*"A rose does not speak, but its
fragrance spreads far in silence."
- St. Theophan the Recluse*

Natasha Richart



Column Writer

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

Mary Reese



Column Writer

*"Sometimes you will never know the
value of a moment until it becomes
a memory."
~Dr Seuss*

Sevastiane Archer



Column Writer

*"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*

Sophia Gheorghe



Column Writer

*"It isn't what we say or think
that defines us, but what we
do."
- Jane Austen*

Elizaveta Durka



Column Writer

*"Let us not then be anxious about the praise of
men, nor seek to display our good deeds before
others, but let us bury them in the secret place
of our hearts, and let God alone see them."*