

## **“State of the Parish” Address by Fr. Marc – September 30, 2023**

### **Our Vision and Mission: Who We Are and Why We Exist**

Christians believe that God has come into this world in Jesus Christ as the incarnate Son of God in order to teach us, to heal us and to restore us to Communion with God in this life and more fully in the life of the world to come. Jesus left His disciples with these instructions:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age.” The work of the Church in the world has sometimes been summarized in three words drawn as points on a triangle: Witness, Work (e.g. good works serving the poor and needy), and Worship.

Metropolitan Philip also gave our parish and others a specific mission when we converted to Orthodoxy in 1987. He said, “Take Orthodoxy to America,” and we tried to take this mission seriously. Within this community of believers each Christian also has his or her own personal mission to become a righteous and holy person by freeing ourselves from sin and filling ourselves with the love of God so that we can learn to love as God loves. Ultimately, though, we look for the life of the world to come, as this is the only thing that makes sense of this broken and troubled world.

### **Where We Have Come**

#### **Through the work of a many people over a period of fifty years our parish has built a legacy:**

...of community through the sacrifice and work of many to build homes nearby and to live stable lives, to financially support the Church by tithing, and to care for one another in many ways (reading groups, Easter Feasts, funerals, etc.).

...of participation in worship through congregational singing, simple chanting, the priests prayers being said aloud, and a Church building that through its architecture emphasize the corporate worship of all together, clergy and laity.

...of education through the Eagle River Institute, the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd/Atrium, and Saint John’s School.

...of hospitality through the Saint James House and the many families that have lived there to oversee it.

#### **In seeking to fulfill our spiritual mission in this world we have also come to own properties:**

Saint James House; School (3 buildings); Maranatha House; Parish House; Cathedral; 50 Acres and Saint Sergius Chapel; Cemetery

### **Where We Are Now**

#### **Facts about properties and ministries and clergy:**

Properties have to be maintained. This is being good stewards of what God has given us. Or else we have to sell them or “mothball” them. So far we have done well at keeping our properties maintained. We need a person to oversee the maintaining of these properties.

Ministries (ie the work that goes on within these properties) have to be administrated (for example the Saint James House, the Maranatha House, the Eagle River Institute, Catechism classes, CGS/Atrium, Sisters of Mary and Martha, Youth Group, Brothers of Lazarus, Bookstore, Weddings, Funerals, Retreats, Monies have to be collected, spent, managed and accounted for). Or if this ministries are no longer needed, they can be ended and new ministries can take their place. [St. John's School has become a big ministry and now has its own Board planning for the future with the need for strategic planning.] We need a person to oversee the administration of these ministries.

Clergy exist in the Church to help the people fulfill their ministries, grow spiritually and worship. A pastor and assistant priests are needed to lead worship, teach, counsel, encourage and help people use their talents withing the parish. Deacons are needed to be examples of serving others and to help lead the worship services.

## **Where We Are Going**

### **So some of the questions before us as we look to the future are:**

How can we find someone to help Fr. Marc and eventually take over as pastor? (Currently Fr. Marc fulfills both the roles of parish administrator and pastor.)

How do we find additional deacons and priest to also serve as clergy?

How do we find someone to administrate our current ministries alongside the pastor?

How do we assess our ministries and make sure they are still what we are called to do?

How do we make a plan to organize our priorities and set a course for our parish's work?

The Parish Council has been discussing these questions and at this point is pursuing the following goals:

We need to keep a full-time facilities manager who can also assume some other duties.

We will seek to define the role of a Parish Administrator and to hire a someone for this job in the very near future.

We also need to provide a salary for a full-time, assistant priest should the Archdiocese assign someone to our parish.

We need new people to be deacons and priests.

### **Assets and Debts**

The finances of the Church have been stable for a good number of years and have been adequate to afford 3 full-time staff, a part-time bookkeeper/secretary, a part-time janitor and groundskeeper, along with other seasonal workers. However, a preview of this year's finances suggest that the parish income may be about four thousand dollars below the monthly budget. We currently have about \$500,000 held in a Capital Projects fund and in a Mission Fund. We have no debt.

**All of these questions and challenges are the responsibility of all of us together. With God's help we will must prayerfully seek to find God's will in addressing them. No one else is going to come answer these questions for us.**