

THE WORD ... FROM SOYO

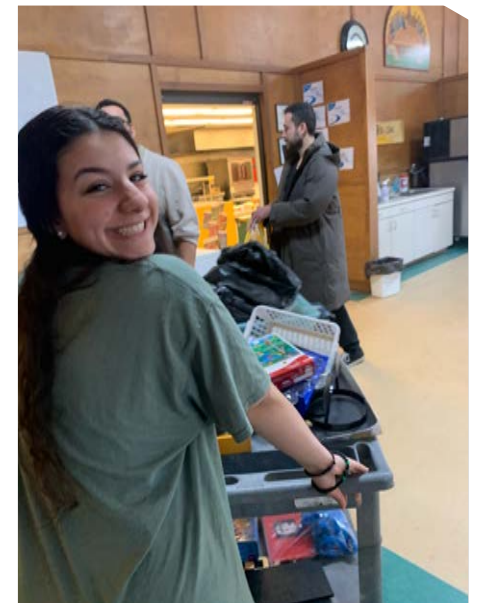
Midwinters at the Village | Deep Dive with the Dioceses | Lenten Recipes | Spiritual Reflection

Midwinters at the Village

In February, NAC SOYO was blessed to have its annual Midwinters gathering at the Antiochian Village. From February 23rd-25th, our dioceses came together and truly embraced and exemplified the four pillars of SOYO: Worship, Witness, Fellowship, and Service. Throughout the whole weekend, we were blessed to engage in spiritual reflection led by Father Phillip Rogers and Father Kosmas Morfas. In addition, the Teen SOYO officers were able to come together in prayer, including Orthros, Vespers, Compline, and Divine Liturgy. NAC SOYO was not afraid to get their hands dirty either as they volunteered their time helping clean out the village dining hall. To wrap things up on the last night, the officers and advisors came together and had a Hafli night, full of laughs, singing, and some mediocre Dabke.

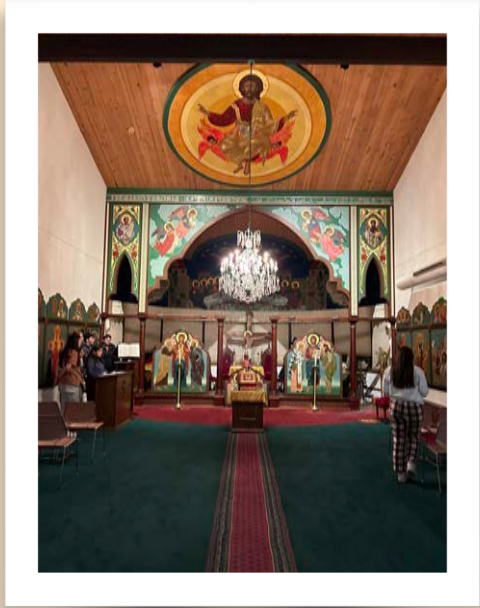


SERVICE



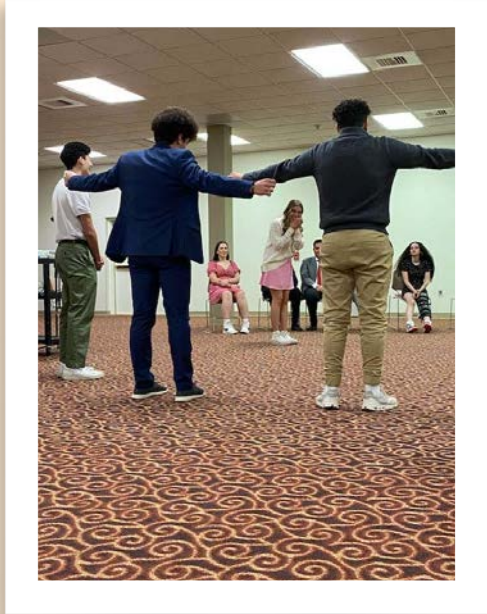
SERVICE

Worship



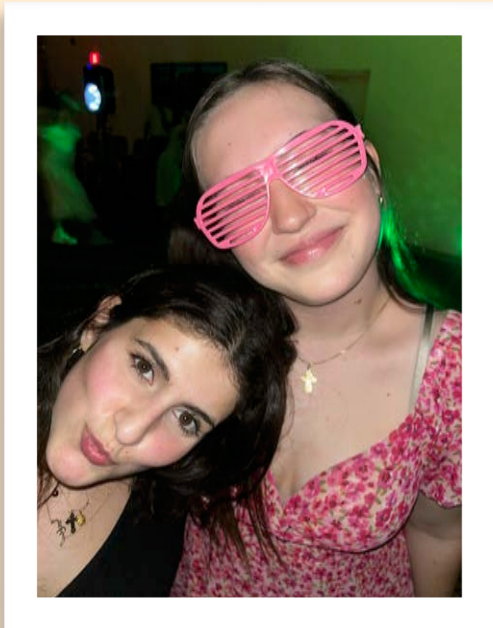
Compline, followed by "Ask Abouna"

Witness



Reenacting Bible Stories with a twist

Fellowship



Hafli Night on the last night

Service



Organizing the AV Dining hall

Deep Dive with the Dioceses

Diocese Recaps

February and March was a busy two months for the Archdiocese. The Diocese of Worcester and New England had their annual winter gathering on March 3rd. Hosted by St. John of Damascus in Dedham, this event began as everyday in our lives should, Divine Liturgy. After Liturgy, DOWNE made its way to the ice, as they wrapped up their day ice-skating.

DOWNE

The Diocese of Wichita and Mid America kept busy with a Sage lock-in at St. Elijah in OKC. This lock-in consisted of Spiritual discussions primarily about the education of God and the concept of sex in the Orthodox Church. Switching gears, St. Anthony and St. George in the Houston area came together for a fun and engaging family camp. Lastly, at St. Constantine and Helen in Dallas, the well deserving parents of the parish had a parents night-out fundraiser.

DOWAMA

The Diocese of Washington, New York, Charleston, Oakland, and Mid Atlantic did not hold back the past couple of months. Going back to the Village, DOWNYDCOMA had their annual spring retreat where they had over 35 teens in attendance. Throughout the retreat, they discussed "Where is God when bad things happen", which was led by Fr. Joshua Barnett. They also held a neighborhood resilience project led by St. Moses The Black in Pittsburg. There they engaged in service, making blankets and leaving bible quotes inside of them for the less- fortunate. To wrap up the retreat, they engaged in various activities, including going on the challenge course and a serenade night.

DOWNYDCOMA

The Diocese of Miami and the Southeast kept strong in their social media activity. The diocese still post weekly lives of the Saints videos on Instagram, while also reaching out to Orthodox parents and teens across their diocese, encouraging them to engage in teen SOYO. They also just recently had their Lenten Retreat. They were blessed with Karen Hanna as their guest speaker who organized a fun event for the teens of the diocese.

DOWSE

Lastly the Diocese of Toledo and the Midwest, found new ways to connect teens across their region. The Midwest had two incredible deanery retreats, one in Ohio and the other in Indiana. In these two retreats, they focused on spiritual reflection, community building, and personal growth, tailored to people seeking to deepen their faith and connections within a serene setting. They also had a guest speaker who spoke on various topics, specifically how to help teens navigate their spiritual lives. This retreat truly featured a mix of worship, witness, service, and fellowship activities.

DOTAM

Deep Dive with the Dioceses

Parish SOYO of the Month

Drum Roll Please . . .

For the month of April, the “Parish SOYO of the Month” goes to St. George in Akron Ohio. This parish truly exemplifies the four pillars of SOYO: Worship, Witness, Service, and Fellowship. This parish teamed up with their sister parish, St. George Cleveland and helped serve dinner at St. Herman’s House of Hospitality. The Akron Teen SOYO board, led by Raquel Maghes, hosted a dance for teens to come and embrace fellowship amongst their community. The parish held a fish fry fundraiser in order to raise money for the youth of the parish to attend the Antiochian Village. If that wasn’t enough, they also held a coat drive and canned food drive to help people in need. The teens also kept strong in helping out their parish during church services by ushering, serving in the alter, and chanting in the choir. Amazing work St. George in Akron Ohio!



Deep Dive with the Dioceses

Diocese Highlights

- ◆ In the Diocese of Wichita and Mid America, teens from St. George in Houston are gathering together to help set up and organize a birthday party for Fr. James Shaddid.
Happy Birthday from NAC Teen SOYO Fr. James!
- ◆ In the Diocese of Worcester and New England, St. George in Worcester gathers together every Wednesday with pan-Orthodox churches in the area for Pre-Sanctified Liturgy. For Sunday of Orthodoxy, St. George went to St. Spyridon in Worcester to gather and Worship together.



Deep Dive with the Dioceses

Upcoming Events

- ◆ The Diocese of Worcester and New England will be having their annual Lenten Retreat on April 5th & 6th. April 5th will be at St. George in Norwood and April 6th will be at St. George in West Roxbury.
- ◆ The Diocese of Toledo and the Mid West plan to have Lenten zoom meetings throughout the rest of the Lenten season. These will be held every Sunday at 9 PM EST.
- ◆ The Diocese of Washington, New York, Charleston, Oakland, and Mid Atlantic is planning to have their annual PLC in June.
- ◆ The Diocese of Wichita and Mid America also is planning for their upcoming parish life conference coming up in the summer.



SUMMERTIME IS...
**PARISH LIFE
CONFERENCE
SEASON!**

Lenten Recipes

Trying to find foods to eat during Lent can often get tricky. In the last newsletter edition, it was February, LENT IS NOW HERE! That's why NAC is giving you new recipes appropriate for the Lenten fast. In April, one of our own NAC board members, Micayla Nejme, shares how to make her famous vegan pasta salad.



Ingredients

- ◆ 1 cup grape tomatoes (cut in half)
- ◆ 2/3 cup chick peas
- ◆ 1/2 cup sliced black olives
- ◆ 1/4 cup chopped parsley
- ◆ 1/2 cup red onions, diced
- ◆ One pack of penne pasta

Dressing

- ◆ 1/4 Cup olive oil
- ◆ Pinch of salt
- ◆ 1 teaspoon oregano
- ◆ Lemon juice (optional)

Directions

Step 1: Boil pasta according to packaging and let cool completely.

Step 2: Cut tomatoes, onions and parsley.

Step 3: In a large bowl, add the chopped vegetables, along with the olives.

Step 4: Rinse the chick peas and add to the bowl.

Step 5: Add the pasta, oil salt and oregano and toss everything together.

Step 6: Add fresh squeezed lemon if desired.

Step 7: Refrigerate for one hour and enjoy! before you start, have a positive mindset, and bake this with LOVE.

Enjoy!

Spiritual Reflection

NAC encourages Orthodox Christians around the world to engage in Spiritual reflection. This month, Fr Kosmas Morfas, shares his reflection on the journey of Great.



A blessed beginning to Great Lent! As we continue our journey towards the empty tomb, we may find our Lenten zeal beginning to wane. Having entered a little ways into Lent, we may begin to feel the heat of the midday sun beating down upon us. The excitement with which we entered into Great and Holy Lent may be turning to apathy, and the light of Pascha may somehow feel even further away than when we began our Lenten journey.

Perhaps we started the Great Fast with a resolve and intention to really fast, to really apply ourselves this year. Our Lenten zeal may be faltering and floundering. Even the word “floundering” brings to mind the fact that we forgot to eat fish on March 25th, the feast of the Annunciation! How will we survive until Palm Sunday?? How will we make it until Holy Saturday???

If this is you, fret not. While Pascha is certainly still a ways off, the Triodion period is still not too far behind in our rearview mirror, and, unlike Lot’s wife, we could find some spiritual benefit from looking back on what has already come to pass.

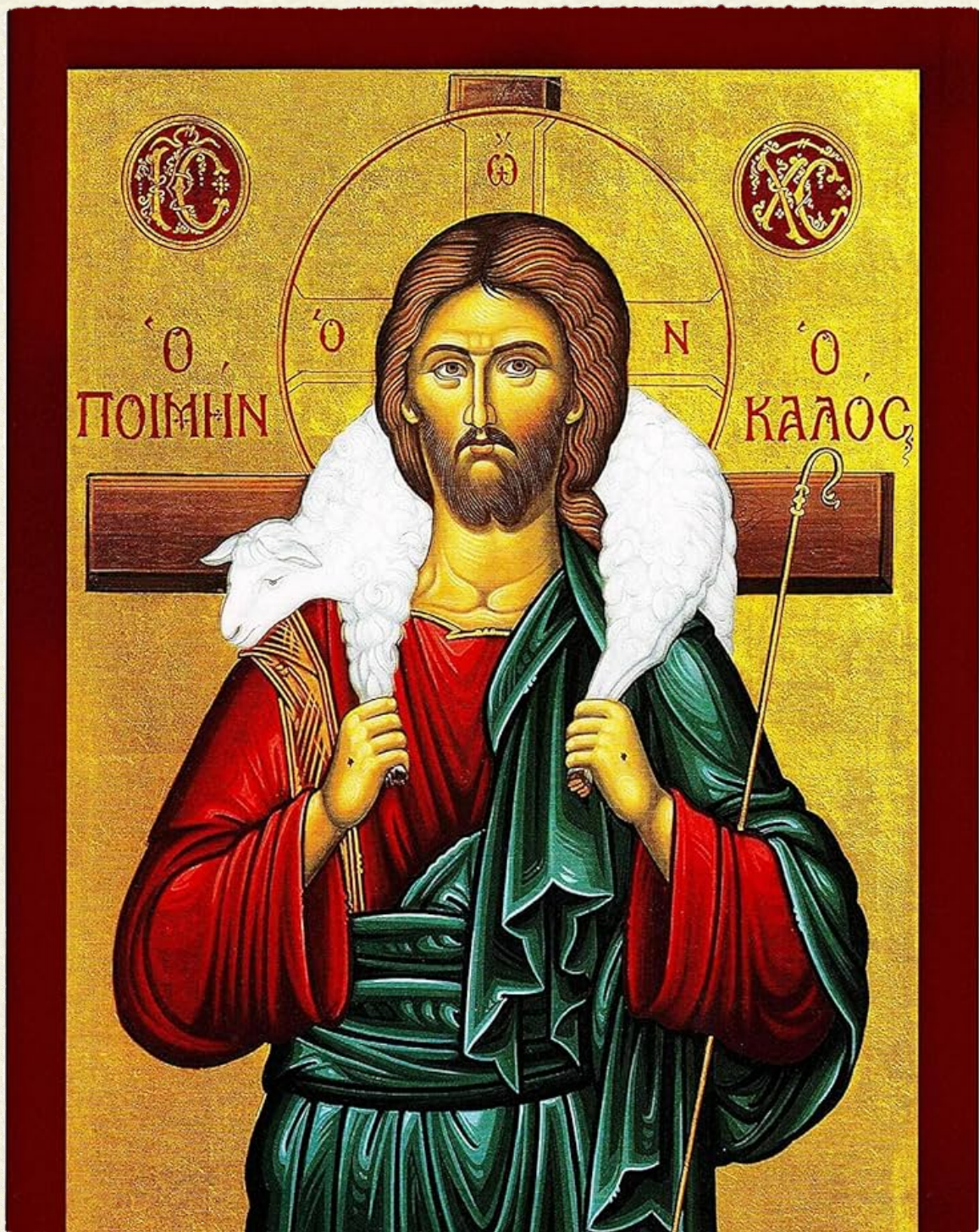
In the Triodion period there were four Gospel readings that served as “instruction manuals” for our entrance into Great Lent: The Publican and the Pharisee, the Prodigal Son, the Final Judgment, and a portion from the Sermon on the Mount.

What is the Church telling us with these four Gospel readings? Among other things, the Church is saying, “Hey, bring these Gospels with you into Lent, they are really important!” These Gospels are the means by which we prepare for Lent, and they are the means by which we will stay on the Lenten path, even as our zeal wanes.

While this reflection isn’t the place to go over every detail of these Gospels, a common theme runs through them all: our proper disposition before God and our neighbor during the fast. In these Gospels, we exalt the disposition of the Publican as he stands afar off in the temple, and yet close to God, beseeching God for forgiveness. In these Gospels, we are warned of the disposition of the older son, who is bitter at the return and exaltation of his younger brother who “was lost but now is found.” In these Gospels, we are told of the disposition towards our neighbor that separates the sheep from the goats at the final judgment. Finally, in these Gospels, we are told of the disposition towards forgiveness and fasting necessary for our “treasures” to be “laid up in heaven.”

While we keep our eyes towards the empty tomb, may we remember the “reason for the season,” given in these four Gospel readings going into Lent – nearness to God and nearness to our neighbor. “Fasting is a medicine. But medicine, as beneficial as it is, becomes useless because of the inexperience of the user,” St. John Chrysostom tells us. The church in Her experience shows us a fast pleasing to God is one that draws us closer to all things, both to God Himself and His creation. May we bring these Gospels with us on the rest of our Lenten journey, and when the days get long and the vegetables get bland, may these Gospels offer us comfort as we journey towards the empty tomb.

Icon of Jesus Christ the Good Shepherd



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*This newsletter is not associated with and has no correlation to the Archdiocese magazine "The Word".