

Saint Rafka

Catholics of the East in the Upstate!



Immaculate Conception - Birth of John the Baptist Season of Announcement

Saint Rafka Maronite Catholic Church is a Parish of the Eparchy of Saint Maron of Brooklyn. The Antiochene Syriac Maronite Church is one of over twenty Eastern and Oriental Catholic Churches in communion with the Bishop of Rome. Led by His Beatitude, **Bechara Boutros Rai**, Patriarch of Antioch and all the East in Berke, Lebanon, the Syro-Maronite Church has parishes and missions on six continents. Saint Rafka Parish was established as a mission in 2002. The community grew and flourished and was raised to the rank of parish in 2021.

**Most Rev. Gregory
John Mansour**

Bishop

109 Remsen Street,
Brooklyn, NY, 11201
718.237.9913

**Father Bartholomew
Leon**

Pastor

1215 S. Highway 14
Greer, SC 29650
864.469.9119

**Father Toni Jabbour,
OMM**

Parochial Vicar

1215 S. Highway 14
Greer, SC 29650
864.469.9119

OFFICE HOURS

10:00 AM - 4:30 PM,
Monday, Tuesday,
Wednesday
10:00 AM - 2:30 PM,
Thursday and Friday

DIVINE LITURGIES

The Divine Liturgy is
celebrated on

Saturday,
12 PM, Arabic
4 PM Vigil
Sunday, 11 AM
7 PM
Tuesday, 10:00 AM
Wednesday, 7:00 PM
Thursday 10:00 AM
Friday, 10:00 AM

CONFESSIONS

Saturday, 3:15 PM
Sunday 10:15 AM
6:30 PM
Weekdays before
liturgy as requested

FINANCE COMMITTEE

Joseph Chebeir
Paula Howard-Casby
Tom Judge
[Dee Kalata](#)
[Ron Rossi, Sr.](#)
Marlene Saad
Richard Sleiman

Joseph Chebeir
Financial Administrator
864.469.9119
[Joe Chebeir](#)



Bill Leon
Secretary
864.469.9119
[Bill Leon](#)

Sam Jordan Amat
Organist
[Sam Amat](#)

Nadia Najm
Choir Director
Scott Herr
Assistant Director
[Nadia Najm](#)
[Scott Herr](#)

Jessica Dagher Allen
First Holy Communion
[Jessica Allen](#)
Lisa Advent
MRE Students
[Lisa Advent](#)

Lisa Advent
MYO/MYA Leader
[Lisa Advent](#)

Knights of Columbus
Jim Dyer
Grand Knight
[Jim Dyer](#)

Marlene Saad
Scripture Sharing
[Marlene Saad](#)
If Interested, Call
864.580.1054

Marie Kidd
Food Pantry
[Marie Kidd](#)

Hospitality Committee
[Marie Kidd](#)
[Hannan Saade](#)
[Mark Duffy](#)

Bridget Nevin
Garden Club
[Bridget Nevin](#)

Candice King-Palgut
Prayers and Squares
[Candice King-Palgut](#)

Building Committee
Phase 1
Richard Sleiman
Thomas Judge
Ron Rossi, Sr.



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MASS INTENTIONS

Mass intentions are a good way to remember and pray for your loved ones, alive or deceased.

If you would like to request an intention please remember to submit your intentions for Liturgy ASAP by calling the parish office at 864.469.9119 or by email at secretary@saintrafka.org. Please remember that it is rare to be able to have your intention the following Sunday! **Masses are now generally booked up about three months in advance.**

BAPTISM & CHRISMATION

Baptism in the Maronite Rite is always accompanied by Chrismation (Confirmation). Both Sacraments are given by a priest, and always in the same ceremony. Preparation to receive the Sacraments of Baptism and Chrismation is required. We encourage this to happen before the birth of your child. Please contact the [Church Office](#) for more details.

ANOINTING OF THE SICK

The Anointing of the Sick is routinely offered during the Divine Liturgy on Wednesday evening and during pastoral visits by the priest to homebound and ill parishioners. Let me know if you will be in the hospital or have other special needs. Contact the [Church Office](#).

THE MYSTERY OF CROWNING (MARRIAGE)

Couples must contact the pastor **at least** six months prior to the desired date of the wedding. To initiate the marriage preparation process or if you have questions for weddings taking place at Saint Rafka. Contact the [Church Office](#).

PARISH REGISTRATION

Registration forms and welcome packets are available in the church office and the vestibule. Membership is a condition for the reception of the sacraments of baptism/confirmation, first reconciliation, first Eucharist, and Crowning (marriage). Registration is also required before the parish can issue a sponsorship certificate for those asked to be sacramental sponsors. You must be a registered, contributing member for at least three months before a certificate is provided.

YOUTH MINISTRY

Teenagers are invited to join our Maronite Youth Organization, aka MYO. Contact **Lisa Advent** lisaadventphotography@gmail.com for more information.

Ramsho (Evening Prayer)

Join us on Tuesday at 5:45 PM for evening prayer and prayers of intercession to Saint Sharbel.

WICKETT HALL AND ASHY PAVILION

Wickett Hall and Ashy Pavilion can be used by our registered and supporting parishioners for family events, reunions, etc. Others may request permission to rent the Hall or Pavilion. Please contact the [Church Office](#).

MARONITE RESOURCES

Daily [readings](#) for the Divine Liturgy.
Daily morning prayer and evening prayer of the Divine Office [here](#).

TRAVELING AND NEED TO GO TO MASS?

Where to go to Mass when traveling? Look here!
MassTimes.org
[The Catholic Directory](#)
[Parishes Online](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA

Please follow us at @saintrafkagreenville on **Instagram** and/or **St. Rafka Maronite Church** on **Facebook**. <http://www.facebook.com/strafka>
Also [YouTube](#)!

SAINT RAFKA FOOD PANTRY

Established in 2019, the Saint Rafka Food Pantry is for those who need immediate food assistance. Need food? Call the church office or come by, 10 AM - 2 PM. You can also email **Marie Kidd** who is coordinating this project. All gifts of food are anonymous. Donations of food are accepted either at the Church Office or the back of the church.

SCRIPTURE SHARING

Scripture haring discussion following the Carmelite Way with Saint Therese of the Little Flower and Saint John of the Cross

IN DEFENSE OF CHRISTIANS [IDF](#) Individuals banning together help and make know the plight of the Christians in the Middle East and their suffering.

SHRINE OF THE PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS in the United States. [Video here](#).

Scripture Readings

1 Samuel 1:9-11; 19b-23

Hannah rose after one such meal at Shiloh, and presented herself before the LORD; at the time Eli the priest was sitting on a chair near the doorpost of the LORD's temple. In her bitterness she prayed to the LORD, weeping freely, and made this vow: "O LORD of hosts, if you look with pity on the hardship of your servant, if you remember me and do not forget me, if you give your handmaid a male child, I will give him to the LORD all the days of his life. No razor shall ever touch his head."

When they returned Elkanah had intercourse with his wife Hannah, and the LORD remembered her. She conceived and, at the end of her pregnancy, bore a son whom she named Samuel. "Because I asked the LORD for him." The next time her husband Elkanah was going up with the rest of his household to offer the customary sacrifice to the LORD and to fulfill his vows, Hannah did not go, explaining to her husband, "Once the child is weaned, I will take him to appear before the LORD and leave him there forever." Her husband Elkanah answered her: "Do what you think best; wait until you have weaned him. Only may the LORD fulfill his word!" And so she remained at home and nursed her son until she had weaned him.

Gal. 4:21-5:1

Tell me, you who want to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the freeborn woman. The son of the slave woman was born naturally, the son of the freeborn through a promise. Now this is an allegory. These women represent two covenants. One was from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; this is Hagar. Hagar represents Sinai, a mountain in Arabia; it corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery along with her children. But the Jerusalem above is freeborn, and she is our mother. For it is written: "Rejoice, you barren one who bore no children; break forth and shout, you who were not in labor;

for more numerous are the children of the deserted one

than of her who has a husband."

Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of the promise. But just as then the child of the flesh persecuted the child of the spirit, it is the same now. But what does the scripture say? "Drive out the slave woman and her son! For the son of the slave woman shall not share the inheritance with the son"

of the freeborn. Therefore, brothers, we are children not of the slave woman but of the freeborn woman. For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.

Luke 1:57-66

When the time arrived for Elizabeth to have her child she gave birth to a son. Her neighbors and relatives heard that the Lord had shown his great mercy toward her, and they rejoiced with her. When they came on the eighth day to circumcise the child, they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother said in reply, "No. He will be called John." But they answered her, "There is no one among your relatives who has this name." So they made signs, asking his father what he wished him to be called. He asked for a tablet and wrote, "John is his name," and all were amazed. Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed, and he spoke blessing God. Then fear came upon all their neighbors, and all these matters were discussed throughout the hill country of Judea. All who heard these things took them to heart, saying, "What, then, will this child be?" For surely the hand of the Lord was with him.





SAINT RAFKA'S CHRISTMAS MARKET

Embrace the season's spirit and discover
a treasure trove of unique handmade crafts,
delightful treats, and festive joy

7 & 8 December

10:00 AM / 6:00 PM

**1215 SC-14 Greer, SC 29650
United States**



Reflection

On this Sunday, the Church and her children, join with Zechariah and Elizabeth to celebrate the birth of the St. John the Baptist with songs of joy, praise and thanksgiving. The *Song of Zechariah* (his name means: God has remembered) in the Gospel of Saint Luke the evangelist, celebrates the fulfillment of God's promises made long ago, his kindness, and his compassion. While it is a personal song of joy for the birth of a child, it now has become a universal song of salvation on behalf of all humanity.

Also, the letter of St. Paul to the Galatians, reminds us of the past promises God had made to Abraham and his nomadic people and the signs that accompanied them as barren women become pregnant. The Gospel of Luke shows Elizabeth – like Sara, the aged wife of Abraham – rejoicing in the Lord at the birth of her unexpected son John (his name means in Hebrew: God is gracious). She and Zechariah, now rejoice in God's plan of salvation, by dedicating their son to God's will.

In Semitic religious traditions names have meaning and purpose; the name "John" (*Youhanan* in Hebrew) means: "God is kind and gracious." Thus, the child John, will grow to become an expression of that graciousness poured out in the form of forgiveness of sins by the river Jordan – the first baptismal fountain! Like John we too are called to become forerunners for Christ in our world by ourselves becoming expressions of God's forgiveness and grace.

The Church, joins on this *Jubilee of the Birth of the Forerunner of the Lord*, "the infant of grace" – who makes straight his paths – revealing the graciousness of God for his people. In the *Hoosoyo* she recollects *this astonishing birth* with praise and thanksgiving that extend throughout infinity. She draws her children to listen attentively to the announcement of the Baptizer made at his birth, and later by him by the river Jordan.

From the birth of John we look mystically forward to the birth of the Beloved Son of God: "like people awaiting a new dawn and like a ship

whose watchman has seen the land!" We behold this as the sign and expression of God's fatherly loving-care towards us and all of his creation. It is so fitting, therefore, to follow this remembrance of the graciousness of God liturgically with the tree-time holy praises of the Trinity: "Qadeeshat Aloho"!

Let us move on to show our thanksgiving by praying together the living Creed: the *gift of faith*, the *remembrance of love*, and the *expression of Christian joy*. Like this holy child of joy, John, whose name is only a reminder of God's infinite mercy, now we offer our faith, handed down from one generation to another, as the hope for the ages!

Steven Bonian, S.J.



Abouna's Corner

Dear Parishioners and Friends,

This week I was beginning to wonder if I was living at the North Pole! Wow! It has been cold!! This is what I love about living in the Upstate - if you don't like the weather, wait a minute! It will change!!

It was a great pleasure to have **Father Aaron Sandbothe** home last weekend to celebrate the Solemn Liturgy with us. Father always gives an informative homily and celebrates a beautiful liturgy.

This weekend, on Sunday, we celebrate two Feasts: Immaculate Conception and the Birth of Saint John the Baptist. Unlike the Latins, we do not move the dates of the great feasts. As **Bishop Gregory** wrote recently to the priests: *"This year the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, December 8, falls on a Sunday. In the United States, it seems that the Latin Rite Bishops have decided to move the feast to the next day, Monday, December 9. However, the Holy Father will celebrate the Feast at the Vatican on Sunday, December 8.*

Thankfully, none of this confusion affects us Maronites. We have a long tradition of celebrating more than one feast on the same day. So, just to be clear and to reiterate what is published in our Eparchial calendar, we will celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception on Sunday, December 8, along with the Sunday of the Birth of John the Baptist." Thus, there will be no public liturgy on December 9 of this feast.

Thanks to all who prepared food for the **Potluck Luncheon** last Sunday. The food and fellowship were wonderful and it was a nice way to end the Thanksgiving weekend. Now we are back to reality as we prepare for Christmas.

Let's talk about Christmas events! This Friday, December 13, our children will present the **2nd Annual Christmas Recital** at 7:00 PM in the Church. **Chantal Dagher**, along with **Sam Alamat**, will lead the children as they sing and perform Christmas music ancient and new, Arabic and English and a few surprises along the way. The production will be broadcast live on Facebook for those who can't be here in person. View at <https://www.facebook.com/strafka/>

Speaking of Christmas, **Christmas Flower Memorials** are now at the back of the church building. If you would like to donate for the Christmas Flowers and have your family and friends listed in the memorials, please make your donation in the envelope provided and drop it in the collection plate or give it to the ushers. Thank you in advance!

Have a great end to the holiday weekend! See you in Church!

Ab. Bart

Christmas Liturgy Schedule

Tuesday, December 24, 4:00 PM Vigil Mass

Wednesday, December 25, 12:00 AM, Midnight Mass*

Wednesday, December 25, 11:00 AM, Mass of Christmas Day

*Don't ask me what time this starts!!!!

Church Offerings and Attendance

December 1, 2024		
4 PM	76	\$1084.00
8:30 AM	20	\$188.00
11 AM	117	\$1376.00
7:00 PM	23	\$743.00
Mail		\$770.00
PayPal/Electronic		\$70.00
Total	236	\$4,231.00
Budget	225	\$4,100.00
+/-	11	\$131.00
Year to Date		\$201,521.00
Budget for year +/-		\$4,721.00
Second Collection		
4:00 PM		\$764.00
8:30 AM		\$129.00
11:00 AM		\$337.00
7 PM		\$0.00
Total		\$1,230.00
Holy Hour		22
Funeral		0
2024 Totals		
4:00 PM		3973
8:30 AM		149
11 AM		5538
7 PM		2028
Weekday Masses		4608
Holy Hour		286
Holy Day		525
Special Liturgy		157
Funerals		452
Weddings		60

Average Attendance

4 PM	8:30 AM	11 AM	7 PM
83	30	115	42

Facts regarding our bulletin!

Bulletins emailed last weekend: 392

Percentage opened 65%

Opened emails: 255 - Unopened emails: 137 -

Masses, Sanctuary Lamp & Flowers

To have the Sanctuary Light for your relatives or intentions, please use the envelope provided at the entrance. Donation is \$5.00.

To have flowers for a memorial of a loved one, please use the envelope provided at the entrance. Donation is \$50.00 per Sunday.

If you would like a **Mass** offered for your loved ones, please call the church office at 864.469.9119 or secretary@saintrafka.org. Envelopes for Masses also available at the door of the church.



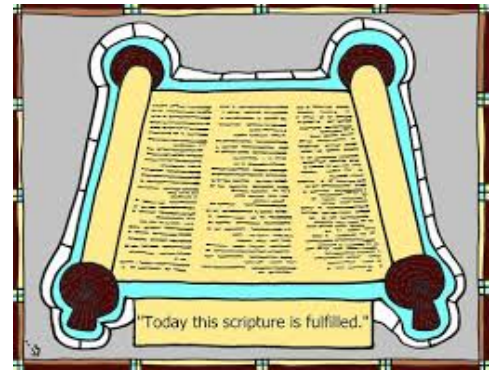
CATHOLIC
INFORMATION CENTER

<https://catholic.center/>



Liturgical Readings

Old Testament (Arabic) 1 Samuel 1:9-11; 19b-23	Fattan Farra
New Testament (English) Gal. 4:21-5:1	Elias Saadeh



Mass Intentions

December 7 - 8	Immaculate Conception (Birth of John the Baptist)	
Saturday, 4 PM	Bob (Birthday) & Melissa Dowd and Family	Bob Dowd
Sunday, 8:30 AM	Ryan Killough (L)	Kristie Killough
Sunday 11 AM	+Naomi Herr	Scott Herr
Sunday, 7:00 PM	Lisa Jo Kelly (L)	Barb Mytych
Tuesday, 10:00 AM	+Ray LaPoint	Catherine Jankowsky
Wednesday, 7:00 PM	Living & Deceased Friends & Family	
Thursday 9:00 AM	+Paul Gonya	Ceil & Andy
Friday, 10:00 AM	Luz Gallardo	Ciel & Andy
Saturday, 12:00 Noon	Greg Mytych (L)	Barb Mytych
December 14 - 15	Announcement to Joseph	
Saturday, 4 PM	Lee Mytych (L)	Barb Mytych
Sunday, 8:30 AM	Mary Pearson (L)	Barb Mytych
Sunday 11 AM	+Father Robert Falabella	Kristie Killough
Sunday, 7:00 PM	+Martimiano V. Quiterio	Bilma V. Saiz
Tuesday, 10:00 AM	Marlene Dowd, Birthday	Bob Dowd
Wednesday, 7:00 PM	Matt Mytych (L)	Barb Mytych
Thursday 10:00 AM	+Martimiano V. Quiterio	Bilma V. Saiz
Friday, 10:00 AM	+Martimiano V. Quiterio	Bilma V. Saiz
Saturday, 12:00 Noon	Holy Souls in Purgatory	Marie Kidd

All men of the parish are invited to join men from Prince of Peace parish for breakfast and fellowship. The Catholic Men's Breakfast meets on the first Thursday of each month at 8:00 AM at the Eggs Up Restaurant, 3935 Pelham Road, Greenville. Please join us and feel free to bring a friend! Any questions call Jack Stewart, 864 787-7592.

Video on the Sainted Massabki brothers on Facebook. <https://www.facebook.com/NoursatEnglish/videos/1008068293229859>

Calendar of Events

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
December 8 Immaculate Conception 8:30 AM, Divine Liturgy 10:30 AM, Holy Rosary 11:00 AM, Divine Liturgy 5:00 PM, Syro-Malabar Liturgy 7 PM, Last Chance Mass	9	10 10 AM Divine Liturgy Arabic Devotions to follow	11 6:30 PM, Holy Rosary 7:00 PM, Divine Liturgy	12 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy	13 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy	14 12:00 PM Arabic Mass 3:15 Confessions 4:00 PM, Vigil Liturgy
15 Joseph 8:30 AM, Divine Liturgy 10:30 AM, Holy Rosary 11:00 AM, Divine Liturgy 5:00 PM Korean Mass 7 PM, Last Chance Mass CHRISTMAS NOVENA BEGINS	16	17 10 AM Divine Liturgy Arabic Devotions to follow	18 DAY OF CONFESSIONS 9 AM - 6:30 PM 6:30 PM, Holy Rosary 7:00 PM, Divine Liturgy	19 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy	20 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy	21 12:00 PM Arabic Mass 3:15 Confessions 4:00 PM, Vigil Liturgy
22 Genealogy 8:30 AM, Divine Liturgy 10:30 AM, Holy Rosary 11:00 AM, Divine Liturgy 5:00 PM, Syro-Malabar Liturgy 7 PM, Last Chance Mass	23	24 4:00 PM Vigil Mass	25 Christmas 12:00 Midnight 11:00 AM Mass of the Day	26 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy Baptism	27 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy	28 12:00 PM Arabic Mass 3:15 Confessions 4:00 PM, Vigil Liturgy
29 8:30 AM, Divine Liturgy 10:30 AM, Holy Rosary 11:00 AM, Divine Liturgy 7 PM, Last Chance Mass	30	31 10 AM Divine Liturgy Arabic Devotions to follow	January 1 Holy Day of Obligation 11:00 AM Divine Liturgy	2 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy	3 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy	4 3:15 Confessions 4:00 PM, Vigil Liturgy



Catholics serving Catholics

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Downtown Chapel
 639 North Main Street
 Greenville, SC 29601
 (864) 232-6733

Northwest Chapel
 6710 White Horse Road
 Greenville, SC 29611
 (864) 294-6415

Southeast Chapel
 1604 NE Main Street
 Simpsonville, SC 29681
 (864) 688-1600

Saints of the Day

December

December 8, Immaculate Conception
December 12, Saint Spyridon the Wonderworker, Confessor
Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the USA
December 14, Saint Nemutallah Al-Hardini, Confessor (+1858)
December 20, Saint Ignatius, Bishop and Martyr, Patriarch of Antioch (+107)
December 25, Birth of Our Lord
December 26, Praises of the Mother of God
December 27, Saint Stephen, Protomartyr
December 29, Martyrdom of the Children of Bethlehem (Holy Innocents)

Prayer List

Deacon Bob Smith, Richard Wickett, Anna Maria Portilla, Sandra Reece, Marcia Palmer, Mary Howard, Lisa Moman, Leslie Ziminsky, Tome Ziemetz, Dan Beckman, Lisa Bolt, Crysten Yammine, L. Stadler, Mary Killough, Thomas Sloan, Ciera D, Irene Ponce, Philomena Reed, Rick Argon, Sister Mary Emmanuel, OSC, Hewitt Dickerson, Brielle Sheriff, Carol, Gina, Jeni Yacu, Rodena and Bruce Thompson, Andrea Emilia Bernabey, Nadim Chebeir, Mike, Leo, B J Dursse, Deacon Dick Murtaugh, Vicki Gosnell, Sam Clutter, Michael Tierney, Paul Shimow, Betty Mileski, Doug Logan, Rita Charbonete, Frances Danton, Diane Hickey, Alan Frechette, Jacob and Jaxson Rivera, Andrea Wise, Patrizia, Susan Clarke, Andy Frisari, Beth, Mary Dowden, Karen Rodgers, Nancy Georgion, Rosemary & Jim King, Mark Knight, Stephen Wedgeworth, MR, Hilda Hix, Catherine Caul, Albert Martin, Nanine D'Aquin, Elizabeth Fallet, Anthony Kozakiewicz, Bill Riley, KG, Linda Crosby, Jenny Gould, Maurice Mercier, Breese, Jennifer Payne, Matt Smith, Leila Chebeir, Tammy Lopez, Anthony Fagliarone, Fernando, Carolyn Groner, Tim Eaton, Kelly Mullens, Carol Craven, Mel Casby, Vincent Howard, K.F., Eileen Howard, Jack Campbell, Hilda Hix, Sue Bauer, Chrisoula, Theresa Woodson, Noah Scott Kestler, Art and Judy Pape, Suhail Yousiff, Tom Craven, Jr., Michael Rau, Chris Davis, Pixie Geren, Mike Dyer, Christian Pereira, Art Newton, Nancy Georgion, Recovery of RS, Claire Barnett, Ethel Brassel, Katrina Shunk, George Vargo, Irma Galvan, Mary Cleary, Joe Lemire, Virginia LaFave, Nabeel

Birthdays

December

7, Richard Washnock
9, Priscilla Watson
9, Helena Arida
10, Mimo Eid
10, Caeli Grace Sloan
11, Fawaz Askar
12, Greg Lepak
12, Oliver Sandifer
13 Darcy Bolak
14, Austin Hill
15, John Paul Sleiman
15, Denise Sakran
15, Father Bart
15, Father Patrick Cooper
15, Louise Mary Tallarico
15, Elizabeth Tyte

Anniversaries

December

7, Maher and Mona Qubti
7, Chris and Miroslava (Mika) Robinson
8, John and Joanna Davis
8, Roy and Catherine Araujo
14, Joseph and Tiffany Chebeir
20, Deacon Bob and Lois Smith

Necrology

November

+Tala Howard, December 11, 2006
+Faye G. Tadross, December 26, 2006
+Bishop Stephen Hector Doueihy, December 17, 2014
+Mary Anne McAfee, December 21, 2020
+Barbara A. Sanfilippo, December 22, 2020
+James (Boo) Francis, Sr., December 26, 2020

Important Dates to Remember

Christmas Market, December 7 - 8
Christmas Recital, December 13
Children's Christmas Party, December 22
Fast of Nineveh, January 21 - 23
Marriage Enrichment Day of Reflection, January 25
Hafli, February 22, 2025

Christmas Flower Memorials



This is where the memorials
will be listed.
Get yours in today!

Prayers and Squares

Fundraiser A Giving Tree

We will set up a Christmas tree in the Narthex on December tenth. There will be hundreds of hand made ornaments waiting for you. All you have to do is select the ornaments you want, leave your donation in the box, and take them home.

Ornaments make great keepsakes, they are the perfect little gift for your child's teacher, the mailman, or anyone you think should be remembered during the Christmas season.

It has been several years since we have needed to raise funds for the quilt ministry. God has been good to us, and we have gotten some incredible donations of fabric, and some amazing deals as well. But we need to buy batting(the center of the quilt), maintain machines, and we have worn out many of our cutting rulers. We ask that you support us as we continue our work of bringing comfort and the prayers of the church to those facing challenges in life. Thank you, from the quilt ladies!

Special Announcements

MRE - Maronite Religious Education Classes

Our thanks to **Jessica Dagher Allen** preparing our children for First Holy Communion and to **Lisa Advent** and assistants for teaching our other children in our religious education program. Below is the schedule of classes for this “academic” year. Classes meet after the 11 AM Divine Liturgy.

December 8, December 22, January 12, January 26, February 9, February 23, March 9.
First Confessions, Practice, etc. to be announced.

Marriage Enrichment

A Marriage Enrichment Day of Reflection will be held on Saturday January 25, 2025. The Day of Reflection will be given by **Vivian Akel, LCSW** (Clinical Social Worker). Vivian is a Maronite Catholic from Brooklyn, NY, and the Safe Environment Coordinator for the Eparchy of Saint Maron. She brings many years of social work, pastoral counseling and theology along with a deep commitment to the Catholic Faith. The day will include talks, prayers and lunch.



Blessed Are You
**MYO Eparchial
Day Retreat**

All in Grades 7-12
Encouraged to Attend

\$30
PER PERSON

Southern Region

 **DEC 7** Saturday, December 7
11 AM - 7 PM

 **Saint Sharbel Church**
600 Mt. Vernon Church Rd
Raleigh, NC



Register online:
myoeparchystmaron.org
Registration Closes Nov 27



What Has Prayers and Squares Been Doing?

We make quilts! But we do other things also. We make prayer squares (small quilts) for the Neonatal Intensive care unit, as well as angel gowns and pouches for micro preemies through full term babies. At a time of such intense grief a parent needs to be able to say goodbye with some dignity. We have been sharing fabric with other catholic groups who are sewing for charity. We had an abundance of military fabrics, so we shared with a group that makes pillow cases for the veterans home. We donated enough fabric to get another church started with making quilts for the children's hospital. We have shared children's fabric with a group that makes quilts for the Ronald McDonald House. We also share fabric that goes to quilts made for Steps to Hope (a battered women and children's shelter). We use our long arm machine to quilt tops that have been made for Steps to Hope, and the Ronald McDonald house. We are Busy!!!

If you are facing physical, spiritual, or other life challenges, please request a prayer quilt. We want to wrap you in the comfort of God and the prayers of the church. Your name can remain private if you wish. We would love to give a quilt for every new baby born into the Saint Rafka church Family. Please let us know if you are expecting. Any church member who joins the military is also eligible for a quilt and a prayer square for the inside of their helmet. All you need to do is call the office with the name, and the prayers requested.

We need help. Come and sew with us on Tuesdays from 10 am to 2 pm. If you don't know how to sew, we are happy to teach you, we also have extra machines we can loan. Are you busy and can't come on Tuesdays? No worries, we have quilt kits that are ready to sew, and you can sew at home. We can make it work. If you prefer hand work, we need ties placed in quilts and labels sewn on.

We were blessed by a HUGE donation from Walmart this year. We got 600 bolts (2 pallets) of fabric from them. They are no longer selling fabric from bolts, and donated all the stock to us. What an amazing blessing! We also keep our eye out for estate sales. That is where all the military fabric came from. We got a lot of children's fabric from a friend who was downsizing. We are always happy to accept donations of cotton fabric suitable for making quilts. We need to purchase batting, replace worn out cutting rulers, service and clean our machines. We always need Thread in neutral colors, light gray, cream, and white. We go through a lot of blades for the rotary cutters, and we need to replace a couple of cutting mats. We purchased a used laptop, a floppy and CD drive. We can now start using the embroidery software that came with our original group of sewing machines. Thank you so much for all your support. Come quilt with us!!!



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Visit HelpOurMarriage.org to Register for an Upcoming Western Carolina Retrouvaille Weekend Retreat or Call (704) 702-2112 for Information
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Join us for our 4th Annual

Pink & Blue Gala

Friday, February 21, 2025

Discounted Early Bird Tickets on sale until Dec. 15th!

Our gala will be held at the lakeside Fluor Enterprises dining venue in Greenville starting at 6:00pm. You are invited to join us for a Mardi Gras themed evening with fine dining and a live and silent auction.

Our guest speakers will include Bishop Jacques Fabre-Jeune, CS and Fr. Rhett Williams!



Find out more here!

We can't host a successful event without your help! If you are interested in sponsoring or have auction items to donate, scan QR code or visit stclareshomesc.org/pink-blue-gala.



Contact Colleen Chmiel for Questions
Stclaresvolunteer@charlestdiocese.org
843-259-1108

*February 22nd
2025*



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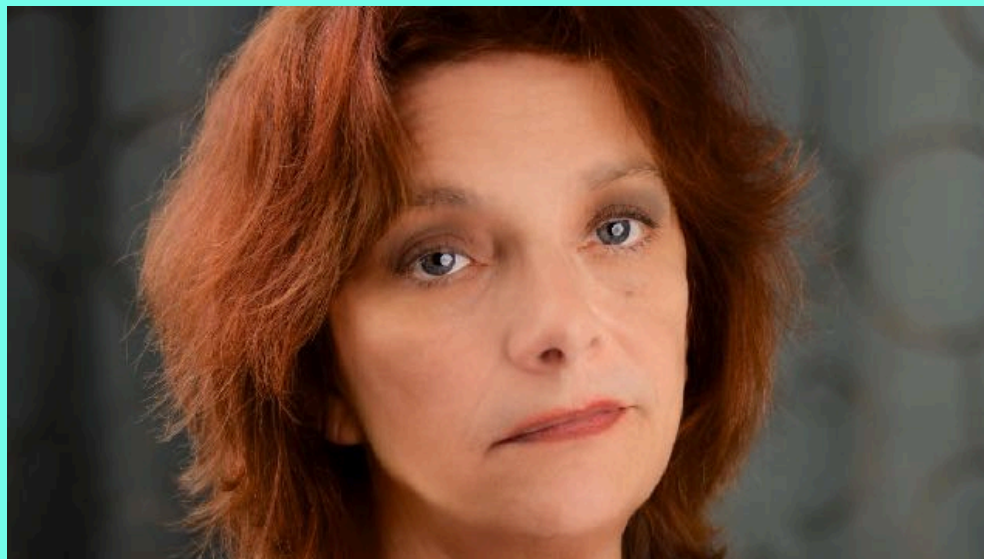
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Mary Dowden suffered a debilitating stroke on November 5, 2021 and she and husband Greg are in great need of having to add ramps, bars, etc. to their home as well as facing great medical bills. **Greg Dowden** has set up a [GoFund.Me page](#) for anyone who would wish to help with the great expenses involved. You can also write a check to Saint Rafka for Mary Dowden. Thanks to all who have reached out. May God continue to heal Mary and bless each one who helps this loving family in their time of need.



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