

St. Demetrius Orthodox Church

January 2016

2015 Priest Report

"Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer." Romans 12:12

During Super Bowl XXXVII (37) FedEx ran a commercial that spoofed the movie *Castaway*, in which Tom Hanks played a FedEx worker whose company plane went down, crashed, and left him stranded on a desert island for years. Looking like the bedraggled Hanks in the movie, the FedEx employee in the commercial goes up to the door of a suburban home, package in hand. He explains that he survived five years on a deserted island, and during the whole time he kept this package safe in order to deliver it to her. She gives a simple "Thank you," but he is curious about what was in the package that he has been protecting for years. He says, "May I ask, what was in that package after all?" She opens it and shows him the contents, saying, "Oh, nothing really. Just a satellite phone, a global positioning device, a compass, a water purifier and some seeds." Like the contents in this package in the commercial, the resources for church growth are available to us. We just need to open the package and take advantage of the tools we already have and use them.

Anyone can be average. Any church can be average. We have a lot of good things going on in our church, however our challenge is to go beyond just being good and become something great. It takes spiritual determination and spiritual discipline from each person in this church to achieve what God calls us to be. When I graduated from Seminary, I envisioned myself in a big cathedral (like the cathedral I grew up in, with a multi-complex structure, with an athletic and school programs and lots of people I can share in my ministry.) Then life happens, and reality of parish life takes its course. My Spiritual Father said to me, "God gives you the parish to minister to, your job is to minister to the flock you have." From that conversation I had 26 years ago before my first parish, it didn't matter to me how big the church was, but how big and magnificent the parishioners were in the churches I served. St. Demetrius may be a small parish, but for me, it has such a big loving heart, and I'm proud to serve you as a priest.

This year at St. Demetrius Church it was emotionally tough but a beautiful year. We had to say good-bye to some of our magnificent pillars of our parish, and of course Fr. Roman at the monastery. Although we mourn for their passing, we are full of joy that they have received their crowns in the Kingdom. I am honored, as a priest, to have had ministered to these beautiful individuals. To wipe our tears of loss, we have been filled with joy as God has brought in two new families into our parish, the Hallocks and the Waters families, welcome! After our completion of *Moses and the Exodus* from last semester, our Church School has been learning about Joshua, and the Battle of Jericho. I would like to thank Denise Parks, and my wife Patty for teaching and my children Milena and Angelo for helping out when needed. Our Adult Education Class has been studying about the Orthodox response to Atheism. I would also like to thank Paul Geczy for being our Reader, Steve Grace and Nick Anastasiadis for keeping order in the altar with our altar servers and for Kalliopi Anastasiadis for faithfully

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This newsletter is sponsored by Olga Lazaroff and family

In loving memory of Michael

who left us to be with Don on January 16, 2014.

May His Memory Be Eternal!

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making the wonderful Prospora for our Liturgies, and Andrea Heiser for her wonderful secretarial input. I would also like to thank the Choir and the directors Barb Rocco, Diane McQuillan and Jean Tannis and up in coming director Jovanka Koprivica for prayerfully leading our services throughout the year.

Our parish statistics are as follows:

- We have 48 pledging members in our parish
- We have 17 registered in our church school program
- 7 funerals, 1 marriage, 2 baptisms, 1 conversion

Our parish was active in the Right to Life 40 days for Life prayer vigil in front of Planned Parenthood. We helped St. Mark Orthodox Church in Rochester Hills with the food baskets, collected food for the Food Pantry; participated in the Relay for Life, and we prayed for people who needed our love and prayers.

I began this report with illustrating the point that we have all the tools right in our church to continually grow spiritually. It first begins, with opening the box in our hearts, and using the gifts that God has given us. First, we need to be sincere, be genuine and real. We have a wonderful variety of loving people in our parish, be aware of each others needs. Get to know the new parishioners and see if others need a helping hand. Secondly, be excited for Church. Be excited for what God is doing in your life and in the life of the Church. Our enthusiasm for serving God ought to be contagious! We grow the church by being positive and faithful. Be joyful in hope means that you see the glass half full and not half empty. We need to be patient in affliction and faithful in prayer. Be patient, for God's plan and power are greater than all the problems we are going through. We can be patient because we know that God is using the events in our lives to strengthen us. Don't look at the temporary situation, look at the eternal benefit. Continue to be prayerful, practice hospitality and get involved with the activities and services in the church. Let us use the gift we have and grow in a way to bring glory and honor to God. If we focus on growing spiritually as an individual and sharing these gifts to others, the Body of Christ, the Church will grow.

I'm excited being here at St. Demetrius, the church that God has brought me to minister to and grow. I love you all and I'm thankful God has given me a church family that accepts challenges as part of growing. Let's determine to make a difference for His glory. Let's build a future that our children can enjoy.

Archpriest Fr. Dusan Koprivica