

Fr. John Behr to speak at Cleveland area retreat February 16

The Greater Cleveland Council of Orthodox Clergy and the Orthodox Christian charity ZOE For Life! will sponsor a free, one-day retreat with Archpriest John Behr at Saint George Antiochian Orthodox Church, Cleveland, OH on Saturday, February 16, 2019.

Father John will speak on “Coming to Know and Sharing Christ.”

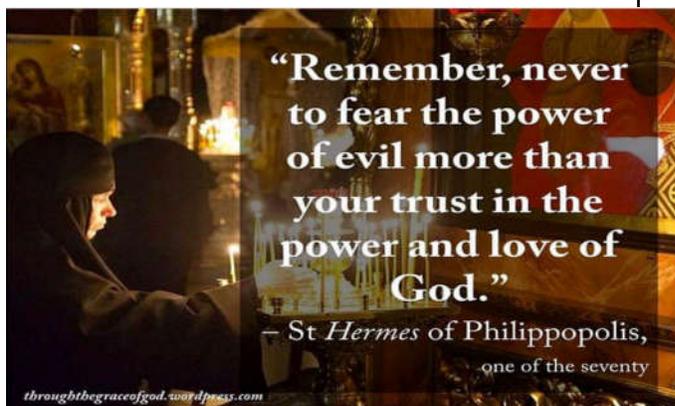
An internationally known Orthodox theologian and author, Father John is the Director of the Master of Theology Program at Saint Vladimir’s Orthodox Theological Seminary, Yonkers, N.Y. He is also the school’s Father George Florovsky Distinguished Lecturer in Patristics.

The retreat will begin with registration at 9:30 a.m. and conclude with Vespers at 5:00 p.m. Lunch will be served at noon.

While the retreat is free of charge, free will offerings to ZOE For Life! will be gratefully accepted, according to ZOE President Paula Kappos.

ZOE for Life! is a non-profit, Christ-centered support organization with three major goals: to help women who need confidential emotional and spiritual support during crisis pregnancies; to assist Orthodox Christians seeking to adopt; and to provide an education for pure living and other resources. ZOE is endorsed by the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America.

For further information, call ZOE For Life! at 440-893-9990.



Maple Heights, OH parish honors life-saving “superheroes!”

Archpriest Emilian Hutnyan and several members of [Saint Andrew Church](#), Maple Heights, OH, attended a reception at the Maple Heights Senior Center on Wednesday, January 16, 2019 to honor and thank two young Maple Heights men who were instrumental in saving the lives of a little girl and her mother.

“Their decision to stop and help this young girl and her mom saved their lives,” explains parishioner Christine Hoover. “They saw the little girl by herself, without a coat, in freezing temperatures, and in the dark, they decided to stop. When they did, they discovered her mom unconscious in the drive way. They placed the little girl in their car to keep her warm and went to help the mom, calling 911. Many people chose to drive by that night, and the situation could have had a very different outcome had these men not stopped to help.”

Father Emilian offered several prayers for the men, their families, the mother and daughter who were saved, the first responders, and the city of Maple Heights.

“Each of them was offered a donation on behalf of our parish to thank them for their efforts,” Christine added. “Our Mayor and city officials are always appreciative of our relationship with the city, and we feel blessed to be a part of it.” After the event, the Mayor said, “Father Emilian, Saint Andrew’s Eastern Orthodox Church, and several parishioners came out this evening to celebrate these superheroes. Father Emil, what a beautiful and inspiring prayer. Thank you for always showing up when the city calls.”

Father Emilian also presented cash donations, on behalf of the parish, to both young men and to the family that was saved.

Metropolitan Tikhon concludes archpastoral visit to Mexico City

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon and His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin of San Francisco and the West were offered a warm welcome by His Eminence, Archbishop Alejo of Mexico City and his clergy and faithful during their visit to the Orthodox Church in America's [Diocese of Mexico](#) from January 11 through 14, 2019.

On Saturday evening, the hierarchs attended Great Vespers in Mexico City's [Cathedral of the Ascension](#), after which they informally engaged with the clergy and faithful. On Sunday morning, Metropolitan Tikhon concelebrated the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy and the Great Blessing of Water with Archbishops Benjamin and Alejo. The hierarchs, clergy and faithful then processed to the park adjacent to the cathedral—to the delight of the many people from the surrounding community who joined the gathering—where they blessed the large Orthodox cross erected in years past.

At the conclusion of services, Metropolitan Tikhon expressed his heartfelt thanks to Archbishop Alejo and the faithful for their warm welcome and shared the joy he always experiences during his visits to the diocese.

On Sunday evening, Archbishop Alejo hosted a dinner for Metropolitan Tikhon and Archbishop Benjamin and the diocesan clergy and their wives. His Beatitude enjoyed speaking with the clergy's wives about their unique vocation in ongoing missionary work and evangelization.

While in Mexico City, Metropolitan Tikhon also met with Deacon Angel Andrés Palacios Barreto, who reported on progress made at the recently established [Saint Andrew Mission](#) in Tijuana—the first Orthodox Christian mission parish to be planted in this city of two million residents—in 2018.

The Orthodox Church in America's Diocese of Mexico traces its origins to an early 20th century movement to establish a faith community distinct from the nation's Roman Catholic Church. The community continued as an "Old Catholic" body until Father José Cortes y Olmos was appointed its bishop in 1961. He and his clergy gradually became convinced, through study and reflection, that the Old Catholic ecclesiological principles did not conform to the criteria of the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church.

In 1965, Bishop José and his clergy contacted the then-rector of Saint Seraphim Church, Dallas, TX, Father Dmitri Royster, who had been instrumental in converting many Mexicans to Orthodoxy and translating Orthodox liturgical services into Spanish. After Father Dimitri's consecration to the episcopacy in 1969 and the granting of autocephaly the following year, Bishop Dmitri presented the case of the Orthodox Church in Mexico to the hierarchy of the Orthodox Church in America. As a result of numerous exchanges and visits, the Holy Synod asked Bishop Dmitri to visit Mexico officially and to report on his findings. This report was studied by the OCA's Department of Canonical Affairs, which recommended acceptance of the Mexican communities into the Orthodox Church.

In 1971, Bishop José petitioned for the acceptance of his community into the Orthodox Church in America. He and other priests of his community, together with an estimated ten to twenty thousand faithful, were received into the Orthodox Christian faith. Father José subsequently studied at Saint Vladimir's Seminary, Yonkers, NY, prior to his consecration as Bishop of Mexico City, which took place at New York City's Holy Virgin Protection Cathedral on April 22, 1972. Despite countless obstacles, what had become the Exarchate of Mexico continued to grow through the establishment of additional missions and conversions.

On January 28, 1983, Bishop José fell asleep in the Lord after a relatively short bout with cancer. Bishop Dmitri continued to oversee the life of the Mexican Exarchate until 2005, when a successor to Bishop José was found. On May 28 of that year, in services celebrated at Saint Tikhon's Monastery, South Canaan, PA, Archimandrite Alejo [Pacheco-Vera] was consecrated as an Auxiliary to Bishop Dmitri. On October 16, 2008, he was elected as the Exarchate's ruling Bishop and enthroned in the presence of the entire Holy Synod of Bishops at Mexico City's Ascension Cathedral on January 18, 2009. The Exarchate subsequently was granted full diocesan status.

In recent years, missionary efforts have intensified in the Diocese of Mexico, especially with the organization of short-term mission trips to San Esteban, Pisaflores and elsewhere.

A photo gallery of the visit is available on the OCA [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).

Metropolitan Tikhon leads faithful at annual DC March for Life

Orthodox Christianity well represented at pre-March program and prayers. St. Tikhon's and St. Vladimir's Seminaries were well represented at the March.

Thousands of pro-life marchers from across the United States braved the cold in the nation's capital on Friday, January 20, 2019 for the 46th annual March for Life which marked the anniversary of the January 22, 1973 Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion in the United States. The theme of this year's March was "[Unique From Day One](#)".

His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, led the Orthodox Christian hierarchs, clergy, seminarians and faithful at the March. Other members of the OCA Holy Synod of Bishops and Chancery staffers who participated included His Eminence, Archbishop Melchisedek of Pittsburgh; His Eminence, Archbishop Michael of New York; His Grace, Bishop Daniel of Santa Rosa; Archpriest Alexander Rentel, Chancellor; Archpriest Eric G. Tosi, Secretary; Melanie Ringa, Treasurer; and Archdeacon Joseph Matusiak. Archpriest John Parker, Dean of [Saint Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary](#), South Canaan, PA and Archpriest Chad Hatfield, President of [Saint Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary](#), Yonkers, NY, led many students from their respective schools. Among others present were His Grace, Bishop Thomas of the Diocese of Oakland, Charleston and the Mid-Atlantic of the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America and His Eminence, Archbishop Vicken Aykazian, the Ecumenical Director and Diocesan Legate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church.

Metropolitan Tikhon, Archbishops Melchisedek and Michael, Father Tosi and Archpriest John Kowalczyk appeared on the stage for the pre-March opening prayers, delivered this year by Roman Catholic Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, KS. At the conclusion of the pre-March program, Metropolitan Tikhon presided at the celebration of a prayer service before making his way with the Orthodox Christian marchers to the Supreme Court building. Among the participants in the service was [US Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar](#), a member of DC's Saint Nicholas Cathedral. A video of the prayer service can be viewed on the OCA [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).



On the eve of the March, Metropolitan Tikhon and the OCA delegation attended the Prayer Vigil at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, where they were welcomed by His Excellency, the Most Reverend Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio to the United States and Titular Archbishop of Gunela. Archbishop Joseph Naumann of Kansas City, KS presided at the service, which was organized by the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, and extended a warm welcome to those representing the Orthodox, Oriental Orthodox and other Christian traditions.

Metropolitan Tikhon and the OCA delegation also attended the annual Rose Banquet on the evening of the March.

In related news, while in the nation's capital Metropolitan Tikhon had the honor of receiving a private tour of the Supreme Court at the invitation of Justice Samuel Alito.

A photo gallery can be viewed on the OCA [website](#) and [Facebook page](#).

Photo Credit: Subdeacon Roman Ostash



Justice Samuel Alito welcomes Metropolitan Tikhon at US Supreme Court.

Remembering Mother Alexandra

This week we especially remember Mother Alexandra, Foundress and Abbess of the [Monastery of the Transfiguration](#), Ellwood City, PA, who fell asleep in the Lord 28 years ago—on January 21, 1991.



Mother Alexandra—the former Princess Ileana of Romania—planted the monastery in 1967 as the fulfillment of her dream to provide a place where American Orthodox Christian women from all ethnic backgrounds could live the monastic life and benefit from the liturgical cycle in the English language. The desire of her heart was to provide a fountain of spiritual refreshment to the people of the country that gave her a home after her exile.

Born Princess Ileana in Bucharest, Romania in 1909—the youngest daughter of King Ferdinand and Queen Marie of Romania—Mother Alexandra endured the harsh realities of World War I. With her mother and sisters, she would visit the soldiers in the hospitals and on troop trains, praying with them. She also helped the Red Cross as an interpreter for one of the American colonels distributing supplies.

In 1931, she married Archduke Anton Hapsburg of Austria, with whom she gave birth to six children over the course of 10 years. During World War II, their castle in Austria was initially used as housing for German troops, but later she turned it into a Red Cross hospital. In 1944, she returned to Romania, to Bran Castle, which she inherited from her mother, where she established the new Hospital of the Queen’s Heart across from the castle in memory of her mother to serve soldiers, villagers, and anyone in need of medical attention.

She and her entire family were exiled from Romania by the Communists in 1947, having been told they could leave the country with whatever they could carry or be confined in a monastery until they were executed. They lived in Switzerland for a short time before moving to Argentina. In 1950, she was given a medical visa to come to the United States. The following year, although separated from Anton, she came with her four youngest children

(the oldest two children were already in the United States for their studies) and settled in a suburb of Boston. At that time, then-Senator John F. Kennedy introduced a bill in the US Congress to grant her permanent residency. To provide for her family, she accepted numerous speaking engagements across the country, in which she spoke of her life and about the evils of Communism.

In 1961, with the blessing of His Eminence, Metropolitan Anthony [Bloom], she began the process of discerning her calling to the monastic life and entered the Monastery of the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God in Bussy-en-Othe, France. Sister Alexandra remained in this monastery for six years, visiting the US every summer to maintain her permanent residency status. While in the US, she would teach at the Vatra, Grass Lake, MI about Orthodoxy and monasticism. She clearly saw the need to plant in America an English-speaking monastery for women.

In 1964, property was purchased in Ellwood City, PA, and three years later, she was tonsured into the monastic life as Mother Alexandra. She returned to Ellwood City where the Monastery of the Transfiguration was officially established. She lived to see the fall of Communism in her homeland in 1989 and was able to make a return visit to Romania the following year.

Mother Alexandra authored numerous books and other writings, including *I Live Again*, available in [print](#) and [ebook format](#); *The Holy Angels*; *Hospital of the Queen’s Heart*; *The Lord’s Prayer* (available from the [Monastery of the Transfiguration](#) bookstore); *The Symbol of Faith: Meditations on the Nicene Creed*; and *Introduction to the Jesus Prayer*.

Mother Alexandra fell asleep in the Lord on January 21, 1991, and she was interred in the monastery cemetery. She requested the following verse to be on her gravestone: “None of us lives to himself and none of us dies to himself. If we live, we live to the Lord and if we die we die to the Lord, so then whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord’s” [Romans 14:7].

May the memory of Mother Alexandra be eternal!