

• ST JOHN OF DAMASCUS ORTHODOX CHURCH •

12989 CR 1113, Tyler, TX 75703

Priest Report • January 29, 2023

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Glory to Jesus Christ!

Thinking back over the last year, I am struck by how quickly the time has passed. As Steve Miller famously put it, “Time keeps on slippin’, slippin’, slippin’ into the future.” We passed through all the seasons and kept all the feasts, baptized, married, and buried members of our community. We worshipped together and kept the rhythms of Orthodox life. Perhaps we matured spiritually or perhaps we merely passed the time.

I’ve thought a lot about the idea of “expecting” versus “waiting”; how one is filled with content, with hope, and with expectation. In the prayers of the Hours, we ask God to “wound us with longing” for Him. We ask Him to fill our minds and hearts, to turn all of our attention away from the troubles of this world, and toward the life of the age to come, where “all sickness, sorrow, and sighing have fled away.”

All of this was available to us over the course of the last year. My hope is that you have been refined somewhat, that you have moved further into Paradise, that you have put away to some extent the sins which so easily ensnare you. But above all, I hope that Christ has become more constant, more present, more beautiful and real to you through your prayers, fasting, and charity.

**2022**

St. John’s continues to grow numerically and financially and has begun to put into place our plans for developing missions in East Texas. With the arrival of Fr. Athansios and Pres. Britni Kombos, we have seen St. Paisios Mission in Nacogdoches quickly be renewed with an expectation that it will flourish in 2023 and the years to come. We have similar hopes for St. Ephraim Mission in Longview with the arrival of Fr. Herman Garrison.

We had a large class of catechumens in 2022 and many new inquirers. People continue to search out the true faith of the Orthodox Church and they are finding it in our community. Our task is to remain constant in our faithfulness and welcoming to all that come seeking the Truth.

Our metrical books reflect the following numbers for 2022:

- Baptisms / Chrismations – 25
- Wedding – 1
- Funerals - 3

We can see in these numbers the full life of the Church. While we mourn the loss of our friends, we remain confident in our faith and hope in the resurrection and the life of the age to come. It is exciting to see the life of the Church year after year and to see how St. John's is participating in the Great Commission. May God continue to shine his face upon us as we do this good work. May he make the memory of our departed loved ones eternal and may he grant us all many years!

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory forever!

I remain your servant in Christ,

Fr. David