



# SAINT MARY OF EGYPT ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA

## NEWSLETTER - JANUARY 2011

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[WWW.STMARYOFEGYPT.COM](http://WWW.STMARYOFEGYPT.COM)

### Clergy

*Hieromonk Cyprian (DuRant) – Priest in charge*

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*Archpriest Peter Smith – Rector  
Currently on Sabbatical*

*Deacon Lazarus Muska*  
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*Archpriest Dimitri Oselinsky (attached)*  
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### Lay Leadership

*Matushka Terri Smith  
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*Katherine Terry*  
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### Regular schedule of services

#### Sunday

- 9:40 AM Hours
- 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy

#### Monday

- 9:30 AM Molieben

#### Tuesday

- 9:30 AM Akathist
- 7:00 PM Catechumen/Seeker class at Starbucks

#### Wednesday

- 7:00 PM Daily Vespers

#### Thursday

- 7:40 AM Hours
- 8:00 AM Divine Liturgy
- 7:00 PM Adult Study Class

#### Friday

- 9:30 AM Prayer Service

#### Saturday

- 4:30 PM Confessions
- 6:00 PM Vigil

Check the website for up-to-date times!

### January Feasts and Events

- Jan 1<sup>st</sup>** – Circumcision of the Lord
- Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>** – Theophany of our Lord
- Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>** – Baptism
- Jan. 10<sup>th</sup>** – Knit and Chat
- Jan. 12<sup>th</sup>** – Nursing home visits at 2:30
- Jan. 16<sup>th</sup>** – Annual parish meeting



## **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION ARE NEEDED FOR:**

- The Orthodox Church in America
- Our Holy Synod; Metropolitan Jonah; Archbishop Dmitri; Archbishop Seraphim
- Metropolitan Theodosius; Bishop Nikon
- Archpriest Peter, Matushka Anastasia
- Mother Seraphima; Deacon Lazarus
- Deacon Kevin, Kamilla Joy, Justin Peter, Abigail Marie, Symeon Basil and Miranda Rose Smith
- Our catechumens: James and Elizabeth; Gabriel; Melissa; Charles; Cameron; Kim
- Nippon, Theophila and Xenia; Father Thomas and Matushka Angela Alessandroni
- Julia; Mary Stepura; Tatyana Anikin and her children
- Demetrios, Tamara, Maura Faith, Caroline Hope and Thomas Reilly Pridmore; Gayle Brown
- All Seminary students from the Diocese of the South;
- Lottie Sivulich; Dena Smith; Gordon and June Smith (Fr. Peter & Mother Terri's families);
- Mary Kowalski (Mother Terri's aunt);
- Phyllis and Paul Skiba and family- especially Dan, Sharon, Lara Olivia and Alex;
- Veronica Holcombe (Noble) and her family, especially her mother Irene Watson;
- Phil Tikhon, Hugh & Susan, Jody and the Mattox family;
- All Missions and Mission Stations in the Diocese of the South;
- Nicholas and Xenia;
- Robert and Xenia Peterson; Karl; Christian;
- Elaine Calugar and family, Carole;
- Anya, Peter, Timothy; Cristian, Alexandra and the child to be born of her, Andrea Nicole;
- Jan and Ron Arrington, Melissa McKoy;
- Anna, Victor; Tanya and family - especially Veronica;
- Patricia, Carolyn, Thomas, Photini and Sophia;
- The Coulter family – especially Michelle's mother Beatrice;
- Sasha, Natalie and their family;
- Chaplain Fr. George Hill, Michael Ephraim, and the faithful of the 2nd Battalion, 508th Parachute Infantry Regiment serving in Afghanistan
- Photini; Mary; Nasco and Nicole; Moses; John;
- Royce; Chrisoula and Sophia; Patrick; Donna
- Ed, Allan; Pauline;
- Todd, Mathew and Kimber; Scott; Linda
- Nicholas, Maryanne, Isaiah, Sophia and the newly born Genevive Noelle
- David, Elizabeth and the child to be born of her, David
- Babylos, Tatiana and the child to be born of her, Natalia
- James, Michaela and the child to be born of her, Rachael
- All those who have suffered and/or are suffering at the hands of others;

## **IN MEMORY OF THOSE DEPARTED THIS LIFE IN THE HOPE OF RESURRECTION:**

- All those who are victims of the evils, oppressions, violence and terrors of the world
- All victims of Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing and Religious Persecution, especially those in Kenya and Indonesia
- Those who have lost their lives as a result of abuse at the hands of others;
- The souls of all aborted or stillborn children.



## ***A Sermon on the Day of Theophany***

*Delivered by St John (Maximovitch) of San Francisco*

*Our father among the saints John Maximovitch, Archbishop of Shanghai and San Francisco – The Wonderworker (d. 1966), was a diocesan bishop of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia (ROCOR) who served widely from China to France to the United States.*



*Countless miracles have been attributed to this holy bishop, both during his lifetime and since his repose. He guided souls in many places across the globe during his earthly sojourn.*

**T**oday the nature of the waters is sanctified. Today the Son of God is baptized in the waters of the Jordan, having no need Himself of cleansing, but in order to cleanse the sinful human race from defilement.

Now the heavens open and the voice of God the Father is heard: This is My beloved Son. The Holy Spirit descends upon the Savior of the world, Who stands in the Jordan, thereby confirming that this indeed is He Who is the incarnate Son of God. The Holy Trinity is clearly made manifest and is revealed to mankind.

The waters of the Jordan are sanctified, and together with them all the waters of creation, the very nature of water. Water is given power to cleanse not only the body, but also man's whole soul, and to regenerate the whole man unto a new life through Baptism.

Through water all of nature is cleansed, for out of water the world was made, and moisture penetrates everywhere, giving life to everything else in nature. Without moisture neither animals nor plants can live; moisture penetrates into rocks, into every place in the world.

The waters are sanctified and through them the whole world, in preparation for renewal and regeneration for God's eternal Kingdom which is to come.

Every year on this day the glory of God is revealed, renewing and confirming what was accomplished at Christ's Baptism. Again the heavens are opened; again the Holy Spirit descends. We do not see this with our bodily eyes, but we sense its power. At the rite of blessing, the waters which are thereby sanctified are transformed; they become incorruptible and retain their freshness for many years.

Everyone can see this- both believers and unbelievers, both the wise and the ignorant.

Whence do the waters acquire this property?

It is the action of the Holy Spirit.

Those who with faith drink these waters and anoint themselves with them receive relief and healing from spiritual and bodily infirmities. Homes are sanctified by these waters, the power of demons is expelled, God's blessing is brought down upon all that is sprinkled with these waters. Through the sanctifying of the waters God's blessing is again imparted to the whole world, cleansing it from the sins we have committed and guarding it from the machinations of the devil.

Today the Holy Spirit, descending up on the waters when the Cross of Christ is immersed into them, descends up on all of nature. Only in man He cannot enter without his will.

Let us open our hearts and souls to receive Him and with faith cry from the depths of our souls:

“Great art Thou, O Lord, and marvelous are Thy works, and there is no word which sufficeth to hymn Thy wonders.” ✠

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## Upcoming Annual Meeting

**T**he annual parish meeting is scheduled for Jan. 16<sup>th</sup>. Here are some relevant sections of the Diocesan parish by-laws:

### Selected sections from Article III

#### Membership

*Section 1 Definition.* Members of the Parish are those persons who:

- (a) have been baptized and chrismated, or otherwise canonically received, into the Church and who consciously uphold and profess the Orthodox Faith;
- (b) are regular communicants, that is, frequent participants in the Holy Mysteries of Confession and Communion. Members ideally partake of the Mysteries weekly, but in any case, no one can be a member of the Parish who fails to comply with this obligation at least once a year;
- (c) fulfill the financial obligations established by the Parish. All members are urged to make a yearly commitment for financial support of the Parish in the form of a pledge, the standard of which is a tithe (one-tenth) of their income; and
- (d) declare their intention to be members.

### Selected sections from Article IV

#### The Parish Meeting

*Section 1 Authority and Franchise.* The Parish Meeting is the highest authority of the Parish as a civil corporation. All members of the Parish as defined in Article III, Section 1, who have been members for a period of six months and are at least eighteen years old may attend and vote at the Parish Meeting.

*Section 2 Place of the Parish Meeting.* The Parish Meeting must be held on Parish premises.

*Section 3 Periodicity of the Parish Meeting.* The Parish Meeting is held annually on a predetermined Sunday of the year following the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

*Section 4 Notice and Agenda of the Parish Meeting.* Notice of the annual Parish Meeting shall be given by the rector or priest-in-charge from the ambon at the Divine Liturgy on the three consecutive Sundays preceding the date of the Meeting. Notice must also be made at least once in written form in a special circular or in the parish bulletin mailed to all voting members of the Parish (See Section 1, Article IV).

The Parish Council shall set the agenda of the annual Parish Meeting at least thirty (30) days prior to the Meeting. Members of the Parish must submit proposals for inclusion on the agenda to the Parish Council in writing at least sixty (60) days prior to the annual Parish Meeting.

*Section 5 Competence of the Parish Meeting.* Matters pertaining to the life of the Parish that may be discussed and acted upon at the Parish Meeting include:

- (a) the approval of the annual operating budget submitted by the Parish Council (Article X);
- (b) the election of the Parish Council members, the auditing committee, and the lay delegates to the Diocesan Assembly and the All-American Council, if the latter is to be convened in that current year;
- (c) hearing and approving annual or special reports by committees and Parish organizations;
- (d) matters concerning the purchase, improvement, or sale of real property; investment of Parish funds (other than in savings accounts); and the transfer of any interest in or change of ownership and the incurring of indebtedness or otherwise encumbering Parish funds or property;
- (e) proposal of resolutions to the Diocesan Assembly provided that these be submitted to the Bishop three months prior to the date of the Assembly.

No Parish Meeting, either annual or Special, shall take any action which is contrary to or not in accord with these By-laws or to the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America. Should there be any such conflict, the By-laws or the Statute shall prevail. Should there be a question whether an action of a Parish Meeting is valid or lawful under these By-laws or the Statute of the Orthodox Church in America, the issue shall be submitted to the Diocesan Bishop, and his ruling shall be final.

*Section 7 The Quorum for the Annual Parish Meeting and the Special Parish Meetings.* The Quorum for the annual Parish Meeting shall be no less than fifty percent of the total number of voting members of the Parish. The quorum for a Special Parish Meeting shall be no less than one-third of the total number of voting members of the Parish.

In the absence of a quorum at the annual Parish Meeting or at a Special Parish Meeting, said meeting shall be adjourned and reconvened on the same day of the following week, and at the adjourned meeting the members present shall constitute a quorum.

*Section 8 Voting.* A simple majority of those voting members in attendance at the Parish Meeting, annual or Special, shall decide all matters within the competence of the Meeting.

*Section 9 The Presiding Officer.* The rector or priest-in-charge is the presiding officer of the Parish Meeting, annual or Special. The warden may chair parts of the meeting, in accordance with a prior agreement reached between him, the rector, and the Parish Council.

*Section 10 Confirmation of Minutes.* A copy of the minutes of the every Parish Meeting, signed by the rector or priest-

in-charge and the warden, shall be sent to the Bishop, through the District Dean, for confirmation. All decisions and resolutions in those minutes become effective upon receipt of that confirmation. No decision or resolution of a Parish Meeting, either annual or Special, is valid or effective or otherwise in force until it is submitted to and approved by the Diocesan Bishop.

Please come and join us! A full copy of the parish bylaws is available at the Diocese of the South website:

<http://dosoca.org/parishresources.html> ✠

## Dear Baba Holy Water and House Blessings

*Dear Baba,*

*It is Theophany and I'm at a loss. I don't know what to do with the Holy Water. Please give me some practical advice. Also, my priest says it is time to sign up for house blessings. What am I signing up for? What do we have to do? Is it true he'll bless even the storage rooms? Does my house need to be immaculately clean? Help! A priest will soon be on his way to my house with holy water and I have no idea what to do.*

*- Panicked Homeowner*

**M**y dearest Panic; We've talked about the house blessings before but there is nothing like repetition. There is the often quoted expression "repetition is the mother of learning." So we'll go through the particulars of a house blessing again. But I think we need to start with your question about the holy water.

It is difficult to understand in today's society what holy means. We've also talked about that before and for brevity sake, I'll refer you to that previous discussion. Basically, remember that once holy it stays holy. It isn't only holy when we feel like it or when it is useful. Holy Water is no different. The water is blessed in a beautiful and special service called the Great Blessing of the Waters appropriately held at the Feast of Theophany – the baptism of Our Lord and Savior in the River Jordan. This water is then kept in vessels in the church for specific use throughout the year. I highly recommend you make every effort to attend this Great Feast of the Church.

It is also available for us to take small amounts home as well. And my dear, there are some guidelines for you to follow in that regard:

- Think of using the Holy Water medicinally. It can be used sparingly at home – it can be sipped when ill or facing major challenges and it can be used to bless your bed at night for example. Remember always that it is holy.
- So with that in mind, you can see why a proper container would be necessary. There are special small holy water bottles available for purchase and those are a lovely idea. I've seen glass jars used as well. All that is fine but it must



be thoroughly cleaned prior to use.

- I admit my dear that I cringe when I see folks rummage around in the back of their car until they find a partially used water bottle then shake out the contents prior to filling it with Holy Water. For starters, we don't need to take 8 or more ounces of Holy Water at a time. A few ounces will suffice. And to quote my early teen friends, it is just gross. We wouldn't dream of welcoming a guest into our home by offering them an unmade bed with dirty sheets that we've just shaken the crumbs out of and used towels still damp from previous use. So too we shouldn't take Holy Water into our homes in dirty, used containers.
- Be mindful too of the Holy Water in the Church temple and do not treat it like a drinking fountain. Please don't use it to quench your thirst or that of your children while in church.

A friend of mine told me about her trip to Moscow years ago. She saw the faithful receiving small vials of Holy Water. They clutched the vials to their hearts as the most pure gold. Their faces radiated the joy of being able to carry this holy thing to their homes. She spoke of being shaken to the core to realize how complacent she had become with holy things.

Now as for blessing your home, I congratulate you for going ahead and scheduling a house blessing. Ready or not, it should be done every year. Prepare yourselves and your home but please I beg you, don't use a messy storage room as an excuse to not have your house blessed.

Find a time between Theophany and the beginning of Great Lent (this year it begins on March 7) and get your house blessed. Some clergy will need to cut off house blessings before that so please check with him and don't wait until the last minute.

I found a wonderful, short article on [www.theologic.com](http://www.theologic.com) in their archive section of Orthodox Family Life. Why that website has so many practical articles, if it offered tea it might just replace me. The author, Nichola Krause, writes "Christ, by entering the Jordan, sanctified it, and with it all creation. Material creation once again became 'very good' as it was in the beginning. The central sign of God's sanctification of all things through the feast of Theophany is the act of blessing the homes of faithful Christians. The priest visits all members of the Church to pray with them in the place where they live, and to bless their surroundings with Holy Water. He asks God to have mercy on the house, to rid it of every evil and to fill it with every blessing. Thus the house itself, together with the living persons of the family, is 'filled with all the fullness of God'."

Some tips on preparing for the priest's visit:

- Clean your house. Everyone in the family should help. We've just spent Nativity Lent decluttering our hearts; now let's clean up the house. Does it have to be perfect – no. But you should make an effort to avoid a 'bless this mess' scenario for the blessing. Because your home, your sanctuary from the world, is about to be blessed, it deserves to be tidied. Just as you wouldn't show up in Church in your bathrobe, unshowered, unkempt, and dirty, you wouldn't have a dirty, messy house presented for blessing either. But my dear – it is all about balance.

Tidy but don't do an 'extreme makeover.'

- Prepare a list of the family members you wish to have commemorated. Use their baptismal names and not nicknames or secular names. It should be Katherine not Meemaw or Aunt Kate. Include Godparents and close friends. Check with your priest about how he wishes to handle the non-Orthodox. If you will be commemorating clergy, list them with their title. For example it isn't Fr. James but the Priest James, the Archpriest George and so forth. And remember, the priest doing the house blessing will not commemorate himself.
- In a second column or second list, prepare a list of the departed. Please do not forget them. Again, use their baptismal names and check with your priest on how he wishes to handle the non-Orthodox.
- Decide on a place that will be your starting and stopping point for the house blessing. For some it is their icon corner, others may choose an icon in their living room or dining room. In this place, put your lists of those living and departed that will be commemorated and a candle that will be carried through the house. It is also desirable to have a censer and an icon(s) so all three will lead the procession of the priest through your home. This is a fantastic job for the children to lead or help lead the procession. Most I've seen take great pride in this solemn duty of blessing every room in the house.
- Plan out the route and if you have children who will be leading it, think through it with them. After the initial prayers are said the priest will go through the entire house singing the Troparion of Theophany. What route should he take to visit every room and then return to the starting point? Include in your plans the bathrooms, closet areas, garage, basement, and store rooms. I promise you with the blessings, the prayers, the movement through the house, the priest will not stand agape at what your garage or store room look like. With the number of rooms and the number of houses blessed, he won't remember the details. At most I've heard priests comment that a particular house was huge and required that the Tropar be sung 10 times. Soak in the blessing – don't miss it with fretting.
- The day of: make sure the lights are on in each room and hallway; turn off stereos, TV's, computer games, cell phones – anything that is a distraction to the holy process happening in your house.
- Most priests will bless the pets as they move through the house although most (especially cats for some reason) tend to flee. Just make sure they are not under foot.
- Plan to visit with the priest afterwards in a pastoral visit. Depending on the time of day, it is appropriate to put out some refreshments (although I have heard of many a Matushka who has begged for mercy on her husband's girth during house blessing season).
- And yes, while not required, it is customary to offer the priest a little something after the house blessing. No it is not required, no he isn't doing it for the money, but do consider his gas expenses and so forth. It is an uncomfortable subject for many a clergyman but I've had

so many people over the years ask about this that I'll just be blunt right here over this cup of tea. You know, Babas can be very good at that. Yes you may give him a small offering and if you want to know what is customary in your parish, ask some of the long time faithful to get an idea of amounts. And then decide freely on your own. Please understand there is no pressure here.

- Some fun things I've seen done are group house blessings for parishioners living in a cluster near each other. Some do a progressive dinner; others will have the priest bless on a particular circuit with the families meeting up at the last house for a festive potluck dinner.
- Others will invite friends and family over for their house blessing. Be creative. It can be so much fun.

I'd like to offer a closing thought for you to ponder as we sip on this tea. Nichola Krause writes that the house blessing rids the house of every evil and fills it with every blessing. How does that evil get there? We bring it in. Just like we track dirt in on our shoes, so we allow the demons to ride in on our shoulders into our very homes. We invite it in with our choices. When we let the sun set on our anger, when we choose in ways that fall short of the glory of God, we bring in the dust, dirt of this world into our home. Just like our home needs a physical cleaning, so it needs a spiritual cleansing too. Not only should your home be blessed this season, but keep holy water in your home to bless rooms, bless beds regularly. Consider this your home's spiritual restoration that you will maintain throughout the year.

With enveloping hugs and another hot cup of tea;

Baba ✝

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## Announcements

### Parish Events

- **Jan 1<sup>st</sup>** – Circumcision of the Lord
- **Jan. 6<sup>th</sup>** – Theophany of our Lord
- **Jan. 8<sup>th</sup>** – Baptism
- **Jan. 10<sup>th</sup>** – Knit and Chat (Contact Debra Peterson)
- **Jan. 12<sup>th</sup>** – Nursing home visits at 2:30
- **Jan. 16<sup>th</sup>** – Annual parish meeting



SMEOC

Jan 2011 (Eastern Time)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<p>26</p> <p>Divine Liturgy for the</p> <p>9am - Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>9:40am - Hours</p> <p>10am - Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>27</p> <p>9:30am - Various Prayer</p>	<p>28</p> <p>No Class at Starbuck's</p> <p>9:30am - Akathist</p>	<p>29</p> <p>7om - Daily Vespers</p>	<p>30</p> <p>9:30am - Akathist</p>	<p>31</p> <p>9:30am - Various Prayer</p> <p>6om - Great Vespers</p>	<p>1</p> <p>Circumcision of Christ and</p> <p>9:40am - Hours</p> <p>10am - Divine Liturgy</p> <p>4:30pm - Confessions</p> <p>6pm - Viall</p>
<p>2</p> <p>9am - Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>9:40am - Hours</p> <p>10am - Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>3</p> <p>9:30am - Various Prayer</p>	<p>4</p> <p>9:30am - Akathist</p> <p>7om - Catechumen/haulfer</p>	<p>5</p> <p>10am - Vespersal Liturgy</p> <p>7om - Theophany Viall</p>	<p>6</p> <p><b>THEOPHANY OF OUR LORD</b></p> <p>9:40am - Hours</p> <p>10am - Divine Liturgy</p> <p>7om - Fr. Cvrilian's Class:</p>	<p>7</p> <p>9:30am - Various Prayer</p>	<p>8</p> <p>10am - Baptism</p> <p>4:30pm - Confessions</p> <p>6om - Viall</p>
<p>9</p> <p>9am - Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>9:40am - Hours</p> <p>10am - Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>10</p> <p>9:30am - Various Prayer</p> <p>7om - Knit and Chat @</p>	<p>11</p> <p>9:30am - Akathist</p> <p>7om - Catechumen/haulfer</p>	<p>12</p> <p>2:30pm - Nursina home</p> <p>7om - Daily Vespers</p>	<p>13</p> <p>7:40am - Hours</p> <p>8am - Divine Liturgy</p> <p>7om - Fr. Cvrilian's Class:</p>	<p>14</p> <p>9:30am - Various Prayer</p>	<p>15</p> <p>4:30pm - Confessions</p> <p>6om - Viall</p>
<p>16</p> <p>9am - Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>9:40am - Hours</p> <p>10am - Divine Liturgy</p> <p>1om - Annual Parish</p>	<p>17</p> <p>9:30am - Various Prayer</p>	<p>18</p> <p>9:30am - Akathist</p> <p>7om - Catechumen/haulfer</p>	<p>19</p> <p>7om - Daily Vespers</p>	<p>20</p> <p>7:40am - Hours</p> <p>8am - Divine Liturgy</p> <p>7om - Fr. Cvrilian's Class:</p>	<p>21</p> <p>9:30am - Various Prayer</p>	<p>22</p> <p>4:30pm - Confessions</p> <p>6om - Viall</p>
<p>23</p> <p>9am - Choir Rehearsal</p> <p>9:40am - Hours</p> <p>10am - Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>24</p> <p>9:30am - Various Prayer</p>	<p>25</p> <p>9:30am - Akathist</p> <p>7om - Catechumen/haulfer</p>	<p>26</p> <p>7om - Daily Vespers</p>	<p>27</p> <p>7:40am - Hours</p> <p>8am - Divine Liturgy</p> <p>7om - Fr. Cvrilian's Class:</p>	<p>28</p> <p>9:30am - Various Prayer</p>	<p>29</p> <p>4:30pm - Confessions</p> <p>6om - Viall</p>
<p>30</p> <p>9:40am - Hours</p> <p>10am - Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>31</p> <p>9:30am - Various Prayer</p>	<p>1</p> <p>9:30am - Akathist</p> <p>7om - Great Vespers:</p>	<p>2</p> <p><b>Meeting of the Lord into</b></p> <p>9:40am - Hours</p> <p>10am - Divine Liturgy</p> <p>7om - Daily Vespers</p>	<p>3</p> <p>7:40am - Hours</p> <p>8am - Divine Liturgy</p> <p>7om - Fr. Cvrilian's Class:</p>	<p>4</p> <p>9:30am - Various Prayer</p>	<p>5</p> <p>4:30pm - Confessions</p> <p>6om - Viall</p>