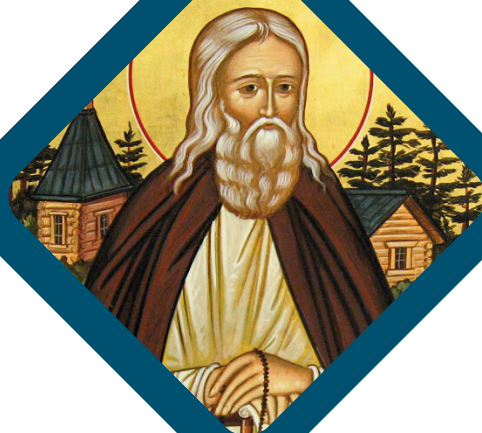


St. Herman House

Facing the needs of our neighbors, together.

Nativity Reflection



Blessed Nativity! The Nativity Fast is a discerning spiritual journey that is designed to prepare the Orthodox Faithful for the manifestation of the Christ child. While the Nativity Fast is physically demanding, it is about opening our minds and hearts to God's purpose in our lives.

Fasting is challenging for many people, including myself. There is a myriad of reasons we fail during fasting seasons – I'm too busy, it's inconvenient for me or I'm just plain lazy. We are content making excuses as to why we can't live up to the church's fasting rules.

The beauty of fasting is that it IS supposed to challenge us. Our struggles are meant to draw us closer to Christ. Fasting is about spiritual cleansing. It gives us a chance to refocus our faith in anticipation of the Christ child's birth. While we are fasting and abstaining from certain foods, it should remind us that we should do everything with restraint and humility.

We should practice self-discipline & moderation in all we do. The struggles we face are temporary, knowing full-well that the Kingdom of God is at hand.

What are our first thoughts when we start craving our favorite cut of meat or that hunk of cheese we've been missing out on? Are we disheartened or are we thankful? Are we short-tempered with those around us, or are we supportive and encouraging to their journey?

When we experience the uncomfortable feelings of hunger or the craving for something that seems within reach, does our mind wonder to those who might experience this every day? Do we wallow in self-pity, or do we find a way to help others?

As Orthodox Christians, our Nativity Journey should also include service to others. When we think we are struggling we should look to see who we can help.

— “ —

He who gives alms in imitation of God does not discriminate between the wicked and the virtuous, the just and the unjust, when providing for men's bodily needs.

~ St. Maximos the Confessor

— ” —

That is why Acts of Charity or Alms Giving is such an integral part of this journey. We are incredibly blessed at St. Herman House for many of you that reach out to us at this time of year. You want to provide for the men of the house and serve the community. In doing this you are putting into practice Christ's decree to love thy neighbor!

Acts of charity and being a beacon of light to others during this Nativity season enrich us as well as those we serve. Our service sends waves of positive impact throughout our community. Thank you for being a partner with us as we serve the needs of our neighbors, together!

May God continue to bless your Nativity Journey! Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Kirk D. Ries, Director

Goodbye, Mary Ellen

At the end of November, we said goodbye to Mary Ellen, our beloved Case Manager. She has been with us for four and a half years! Mary Ellen has been a huge part of the work we do, assisting residents & the community with housing & employment opportunities, connecting them with resources, & caring for them.

Closing words from Mary Ellen:

"On my first day at St Herman's, I thought 'How will I ever remember everyone's name?' So many new faces and personalities to absorb! Little by little, inch by inch, I developed relationships with the men of St Herman's, and the larger community which we serve.

Like most relationships, time and attention were the key ingredients. The countless stories, and the tears shed from both sadness and silliness will stay with me forever. What once seemed so foreign to me, now feels like family. Without sounding pollyannaish, there is something truly special about 4410 Franklin Blvd. It gets in your bones."



One of my favorite quotes is from Ram Dass, and I feel as though it captures the mission of St Herman House: **'We're all just walking each other home.'** It has been the honor of my career to walk alongside our community."

Please keep Mary Ellen in your prayers as she begins a new chapter in her life.

RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT: PATRICK



"Thank you for giving me a chance."

Patrick came to St Herman House in early February 2024 with the weight of the world on his shoulders. He is the father of 3 teenage sons and describes himself as a very "hands-on dad." After losing his job because of its demanding schedule and late nights, Patrick was eventually evicted. That's when he called St. Herman House. While staying at FOCUS Cleveland, he was able to find work & housing through the help of Mary Ellen, the Case Manager.

Upon moving out, Patrick brought his youngest son to meet his St. Herman's family. It's worth mentioning that Patrick is 6 ft. 8" tall, and to watch him become emotional and tearful when introducing his son to the other residents and staff was quite moving. His parting words were, "I still cannot express the gratitude I have for you for taking me in and allowing me to reestablish myself. Thank you for giving me a chance. I honestly do not know where I'd be without St. Herman's."

November Event Recap

On November 4th, we had a wonderful evening at our Annual November Speaker Event Fundraiser at St. Vladimir Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral!

At the event, we welcomed three dynamic panelists: Fr. Jason Foster from the Holy Nativity of the Lord Orthodox Church in Shreveport, LA; Karen McHenry, the Homeless Youth Coordinator for Bellefaire; & Detective Freddy Cuevas of the Greater Cleveland Regional Transit Authority Police.

Together, the panelists offered their stories & insight about young adult homelessness, focusing on how we as the community can help address this issue.

Special guest Paul Finley, our former Director, also helped us honor six Diakonia Award recipients at the event, who were recognized for their outstanding service to St. Herman House: John, Kirk, Marty, Roy, Coley & Albert.

Thank you to everyone who attended, sponsored, or supported us from afar. Because of your generosity, we raised over \$20,000! We could not serve the community in the capacity that we do without your support!

PANELIST QUOTE

“Outside the physical needs, what they need is family, like all of us. They come from broken relationships, quite often, and they’re looking for someone to say: I love you as you are. I accept you as you are. I’m not going to leave you. I’m not going to turn away from you.”

Fr. Jason Foster, Holy Nativity of the Lord Orthodox Church, Shreveport, LA

EVENT PHOTOS





H. PAUL FINLEY ENDOWMENT

To support St. Herman House - FOCUS Cleveland



The proceeds from this endowment fund will continue Paul Finley's legacy of service to the residents of St. Herman's House and the ministries of FOCUS Cleveland.

FOCUS

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