



His Eminence, the Most Reverend

+ **MARK**

Archbishop of Philadelphia and Eastern Pennsylvania
Orthodox Church in America

September 1, 2026

The Beginning of the Church Year: The Indiction

Dear to God,

Christ is in our midst! He is and ever shall be!

I greet you all as we enter the new liturgical year. We live in an age that too easily forgets Holy Tradition. Our Tradition is a living inheritance, entrusted to the Church and made present in her worship. The liturgical life of our Church is not merely an addition to our Faith. It expresses, it teaches, and it embodies that Faith. Participation in the liturgical life of the Church is crucial to our salvation, for it is within the life of the Church that we encounter the living God.

A well-known story goes like this: A person asked their parish priest, "*If God is everywhere, why do I go to church?*" The priest smiles, pauses for a moment, and replies, "*The whole atmosphere is filled with water; but when you want to drink, you have to go to a fountain or a well.*" God is indeed everywhere and "*fills all things*", but within the Church we come to the fountain of living water. Here, we hear His Word. Here, we receive His Holy Body and Most Precious Blood. Here, we encounter the living God through the prayer and worship of His people.

The Church year sanctifies time. Through its cycle of fasts and feasts, the events of our salvation are not treated merely as distant memories or reduced to secular "*holidays*" from which sanctity and holiness have been removed. Rather, these saving events are made present as we gather to worship our Lord. The question is whether we accept this invitation from the Church. Do we honor the feasts? Do we take seriously the Holy Mysteries? Do we receive with love and care the Tradition that has been entrusted to us? Do we arrange our lives around the Church, or do we attempt to fit the Church into whatever time remains?

Receiving and preserving this "*living inheritance*" also requires us to support those who are preparing to serve Christ and His Church. As a new academic year begins, I ask you to remember our diocesan seminarians and their families: Subdeacon Jacob and Mariana Kurtz, together with their children, Luka, Noah, and Magdalena Christine, at St. Tikhon's Seminary, and Nicholas and Abigail Sheridan and their son, Theodore, at St. Vladimir's Seminary. Their formation for service in the Church is not undertaken by them alone, but is a work in which the entire Diocese has a share. Through our prayers, encouragement, and material support, we help sustain them as they devote themselves to study, worship, and preparation for future ministry. In supporting them, we also make an investment in the future life and ministry of our Diocese.

I ask every parish and each of the faithful to remember these families by name in your daily prayers. Send them a card or letter of encouragement. Where possible, please consider assisting them with a financial contribution or gift card. Such gestures remind our seminarians and their families that they are not forgotten, but are upheld by the prayers and love of the faithful whom

they are preparing to serve. No gift is too small when it is offered with prayer and love, for, as the Apostle Paul reminds us, "*God loves a cheerful giver*" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

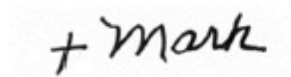
Correspondence and gifts may be sent to:

Subdeacon Jacob and Mariana Kurtz
Children: Luka, Noah, and Magdalena Christine
St. Tikhon's Theological Seminary
P.O. Box 130
South Canaan, PA 18459

Nicholas and Abigail Sheridan
Children: Theodore
St. Vladimir's Theological Seminary
575 Scarsdale Road
Yonkers, NY 10707

May God bless your kindness and our God-protected Diocese! We pray that the Lord may crown this new Church year with His goodness. Please continue to remember me in your prayers as I remember you in mine.

Your unworthy father in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "+ Mark". The plus sign is a simple cross, and the name "Mark" is written in a cursive, slightly slanted script.

+MARK
Archbishop of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Eastern Pennsylvania
