

Elizabeth E. Marses

Grade 12

Bio: Elizabeth Marses is a proud graduate of Cranston High School West. She is graduating with the following academic achievements: High Honors; RI Civic Leadership Award; National Honor Society; Rhode Island Honor Society; and Spanish National Honor Society. She also received various awards for her participation in three varsity sports, which included soccer, basketball, and track and field. Elizabeth has been an active member of the Church of the Annunciation where she attended Sunday School and Greek School, participated in the Odyssey Dance Troupe for over 10 years, and recently acted as treasurer and Vice President of GOYA. She also works in the family business and enjoys volunteering in her community. She is excited to attend Bryant University as a member of the Honors Program with a concentration in Accounting.



Each Sunday, as I watch our church service through my television screen, I realize that the Covid-19 Pandemic has greatly impacted my faith in a positive way. Although many believe that this pandemic has stripped us of our faith, I believe in some ways that the coronavirus is a blessing in disguise. I personally feel like this pandemic has brought me closer to Christ. Rather than just listening to the readings and hymns during the church services, I have recently taken the initiative to read and pay more attention to some of the Bible verses that have been included in the weekly emails, which have inspired me during this time of struggle. Furthermore, I have been trying to think about how these teachings can apply to my everyday life. Even though these readings and teachings have always been available, I notice that I have a stronger desire to connect as much as possible to our faith over these past several weeks. Throughout life, I have realized that even during times of stress and uncertainty, there are also many blessings that God offers to guide us along the way. In the future, I know that I will be more attentive to these blessings no matter the circumstances.

When concerning how the pandemic will change the way we worship, I think about Father Nick's recent sermon on June 7th. Father Nick stated that we should wear our masks and sanitize our hands because we want to do so out of love and respect for others, and not just because we have to. Father Nick went on to say that we should also attend church because we want to, not because we have to. This statement has truly resonated with me during this past week because I have come to a new realization that I really do want to be in church. I believe that this pandemic has allowed us to truly appreciate the way in which we worship. Sometimes in life we take things for granted, even our usual routines, such as going to church. Rather than attending church because we believe it is one of our "duties" as Orthodox Christians, I am hopeful that this pandemic has changed the way we worship in a positive manner. I suspect that people will have even more desire to attend church with open hearts because they want to be there, not because they have to. More specifically, parishioners may even begin to cherish those moments physically in church more than they have in the past. I know this will be the case for me. While I do believe that Christ is always with us, no matter where we are or where we pray, I know that I will be even more grateful to physically attend our church in the future. On the other hand, I also wonder if live streaming of

our services will allow families more opportunity to pray remotely if they are unable to physically be in church. For example, we often travel every summer to a location that does not have an Orthodox church, however I can see us attending on a Sunday morning through the live stream in the future if it is available. Regardless of our new appreciation for physically attending church or the possibility of attending church remotely if there is no other option, I believe that the Covid-19 Pandemic has changed the way we worship in a positive way if more people are attending more frequently and with more desire to do so.

In closing, I hope that people can focus on all of the good outcomes during this very difficult and challenging time. I will never forget Holy Week 2020 when my family and I were sitting on our couches as opposed to the church pews all week, but I will also cherish the memories during this time when we made our own palms together for Palm Sunday and set up our “home church” in front of our television screen. Although Covid-19 has brought much devastation to our world, I thank God for all of his blessings during this unprecedented time, his love, protection, guidance, and revelation.