



METROPOLITAN ANDREY SHEPTYTSKY INSTITUTE OF  
**Eastern Christian Studies**  
IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



December 23, 2024

This Month at MASI

Dear Friends of the Sheptytsky Institute,  
Glory be to Jesus Christ!

The Fall 2024 term is drawing to a close and yet the weather here in Toronto remains quite warm and beautiful. December has been a busy month of serving the Lord and forming disciples!

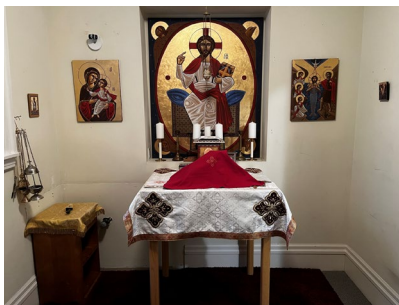
In preparation for the Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord, Sheptytsky Institute hosted a [Jesus Prayer 33 prayer challenge](#). Participants committed to praying 33 Jesus Prayers daily while being introduced to Eastern Christian spirituality through video lectures and weekly meetings at Sheptytsky House and over Teams. This last Wednesday, they were presented with their “chotki” a small prayer rope with the invitation to continue their prayer rule. One of the participants, and MASI student, Lisa Mcleish, writes:



With help and guidance from the enrollment office, I signed up for an Eastern Catholic history course with Fr. Andrew Summerson. At first, I sat there in awe, wondering if I could ever understand this beautiful and Mystical knowledge. Instead of feeling alone in my thoughts, I felt accepted and welcomed. This course occurred during a very difficult time in my life, so it seemed intensely Providential.

Fr. Andrew's incredible and inspirational style of teaching allowed me to have an extraordinary encounter with the Lord through the writings of St. Ephrem, as well as through the teachings of other Church Fathers. This gave me great peace in a storm, beyond all my human understanding.

I signed up for the Jesus Prayer 33 (JP33) online retreat this semester, which again came at a time that I truly needed prayer and fellowship. I have met wonderful people through this group, who shared their hearts so lovingly and prayerfully. Fr. Mike was leading the JP33 group, and he was such a rock and inspiration through his presence and solid teachings. This world desperately needs what the Sheptytsky Institute offers, and I pray for its continued success and awareness for all to experience its beautiful Traditions and reverent Liturgical Worship.



We are grateful for Lisa and all our students and are excited to offer the sequel program, Jesus Prayer 100, during the Great Fast in 2025!

You may not know, but we have a beautiful chapel in the Coptic Tradition located in Sheptytsky House! Miral Yousef, Maya Iskandar, Marina Fahim and Pierre Ishak, Students from the [Orthodox Christian Students Association \(OCSA- Coptic Orthodox\)](#), visited us this month, and we began brainstorming how to work together to evangelize the students of University of Toronto.



December was a busy month of Missions for Fr. Mike, who delivered a St. Philip's Fast Mission at St. Demetrius the Great Martyr Parish in Toronto, and a retreat on The Holy Spirit to the young adult "Saints" of St. John the Baptist Shrine in Ottawa. He was warmly received at both parishes and is grateful that Sheptytsky Institute can serve to enrich the faithful of the Toronto Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy!

Our chaplaincy continues to meet weekly for Liturgies on Tuesdays and various feasts, and our daily vespers on Friday evenings followed by a veggie supper and fellowship. One of the participating Mary Mother of God High School Students, Daniel Varghese, explained his love for vespers by writing:



"You should come to vespers," two of my colleagues told me some weeks into high school. I was reluctant. I had only known them since the year's start and yet, my Fridays were free, and I could not find a reason not to attend. My brother and I decided to attend vespers one day and took in every second of it with admiration, curiosity, and joy. Being Roman Catholics with mainly statues in our churches, the number of icons in the chapel were beautifully overwhelming, not to mention the number of times the Sign of the Cross was made, ever since, my brother and I have attended vespers whenever we could...Attending vespers to praise God with Byzantine chant made for a further deeper prayer. An old teacher of mine told me that chanted prayer is prayer prayed twice. The chanting somehow reflected the sense of a loving community and prayer as a group is where God is. Never have I ever attended anything like vespers in this rite and so, I expect to come as frequently as possible.

St. Sophia services will continue with the Theophany Great Blessing of Waters and caroling on Friday, Jan 10, 2025! We are excited to roll out our new [St. Sophia's Chaplaincy webpage](#), easily accessed on the frontpage of the [Sheptytsky Institute Webpage](#). Please visit the new site to see our updated chapel schedule. Don't forget to subscribe to our chaplaincy Facebook and Instagram channels and check out some of our chaplaincy talks and homilies at [Musings with Fr. Mike](#).

We are looking forward to welcoming Rev. Dr. Jack Custer who will be a resident theologian at Sheptytsky House in the Winter 2025 term. Fr. Jack comes with many years of experience in pastoral ministry, a licentiate from the Pontifical Biblical Institute and a doctorate from the Pontifical Gregorian University. He will be sharing his expertise at MASI by providing **two free public seminar series** focusing on Genesis and Exodus. Liturgy will precede these seminars, and a free lunch will follow! [Head over to our website](#) for more information and to register. Finally, **save the dates June 20-21 for Study Days 2025**- more information to come soon!

This good work in December, as well as our future ministry possibilities, **are made possible through your continued financial support of the Institute**. Thank you for your support and generosity! From all of us here at the Institute, may the Newborn King, laid in a manger for our salvation, bless you now and always!

Sincerely yours in the Newborn Christ,

Rev. Alexander Laschuk, JCD/PhD  
Executive Director, Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies

Catherine Pawluch, JD  
President, Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute Foundation

Rev. Michael Bombak, BEd, STB, MTh  
Chaplain and Programming Coordinator, Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies