

THE CHAMPION

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

DECEMBER 2024



MESSAGE FROM FR. PANAGIOTIS


“Come, let us rejoice in the Lord as we declare this present mystery. The middle wall of partition is broken asunder.”
(Vespers Hymn of Christmas)

On the Feast of Christmas, the Church proclaims that by coming down to us and becoming incarnate, God breaks down the “middle wall of partition” that existed between us. He in heaven and we on earth were separated from one another. With the fall of mankind, we lost the closeness we once had in Paradise where mankind dwelt in the presence of God. Thus, a wall existed between us, partitioning us off from one another. Since we could not retrace our path back to paradise, Christ broke through that wall so that once again God and man dwell together.


The use of the phrase “The middle wall of partition is broken asunder” is peculiar in this hymn. The hymnographer is referring to the partition between God and man. But the origin of this phrase comes from St. Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians (2:14). In that context, St. Paul is writing about the partition that existed between the gentiles and the commonwealth of Israel, quite literally a barrier in the temple that kept gentiles and Jews physically separated from one another. So, in addition to the middle wall of partition between God and man (hymn), Christ also breaks asunder the middle wall of partition between human beings (Ephesians 2:14).

Christmas is a celebration of union: union between God and man and also union among mankind. Christ establishes this union as we hear Him pray to the Father at the Mystical Supper, “The glory that You have given me I have given them, so that they may be one, as We are one, I in them and You in Me, that they may be completely one” (John 17:22-23). Christmas Joy springs from union: us in God, God in us, and us one with each other.

We must be on guard that our hearts are never partitioned against God nor against our fellow man. This Christmas season, I pray that we join the work of Christ and break asunder the middle walls of partition that exist both in and around us. May the Joy and unity of Christ be with us as we celebrate along with the angels, “Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, goodwill among men!” (Luke 2:14)



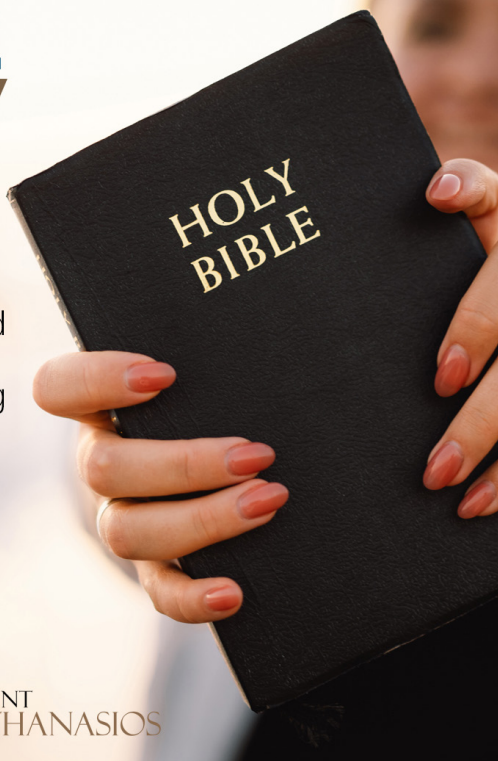

**BIBLE STUDY
PODCASTS**
WITH FR. PANAGIOTIS



**SCAN
TO LISTEN**

**BIBLE
STUDY**

Join our Bible Study this Fall as we explore Creation (Genesis 1-3). Sessions are the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 11am starting September 18th.

SAINT
ATHANASIOS

MEMORIALS

Pauline Siambis (6 months)
John Siambis (5 years)

PARISH COUNCIL

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

2024 & 2025 Parish Ministry Initiatives:

I am happy to announce that we have successfully fulfilled each of our goals and initiatives that were set for 2024. We have set our 2025 goals and initiatives and have already begun to set them into motion. I would like to thank Father Panagiotis for his guidance and leadership through this process. It is truly a blessing to see this become a reality. I would also like to thank the parish council, our parish administrator, our ministry leaders, our committees, and all of our parishioners for each of your roles to achieve this. It is so heartwarming to see how believing and trusting in the mission and vision of St. Athanasios has made and is continuing to make a difference in our community.

Parish Council Elections:

Parish Council nominations and elections were held. Thank you to our parishioners and the election committee for your participation. Congratulations to the newly elected parish council members. We are blessed to have such a diverse group of individuals and am looking forward to continuing to strive towards our vision for the parish.

Stewardship:

Our 2025 Stewardship Campaign was launched at the parish assembly. Our theme for this year's campaign is "Your Own from Your Own" On behalf of St. Athanasios and the stewardship committee I would like to thank you for your generous giving of your time, talents, and treasures. The 2025 stewardship goal is a 15% increase over 2024. Please listen to your heart as you begin to complete your 2025 pledge card.

Capital Campaign:

A congratulations is in order. We have completed Phase One of the Capital Campaign ahead of schedule and are ready to move into Phase Two. Thank you to those who have contributed and made your pledges. We have paid off our mortgage and are now ready to focus on the structural and major repairs of our building. Please continue to pledge towards this campaign so that we can reach our goal and take care of the current and upcoming needs of our building and grounds.

Vespers & Feast Day:

Please be sure to join us for our Parish Vespers and Feast Day! Vespers will take place on January 17th at 7:00 pm and our Feast Day Divine Liturgy on January 18th at 9:30 am. Please make arrangements to attend these services as we celebrate and honor our Saint Athanasios.

Feast Day Luncheon: Please join us on January 18th in St. Mathew Hall for our Feast Day luncheon. More information about the luncheon will be sent via email and in our Bulletin.

I wish everyone a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

Brian McAnally

Parish Council President

VASILOPITA THROWDOWN **SUNDAY, JANUARY 5, 2025**

Calling all bakers! Vasilopita Throwdown coming January 5th.

Please join the fun after liturgy and come taste vasilopita cakes and breads offered by parishioners for judging. This event raises money for Philoptochos charities serving the needy. We welcome anyone who would like to participate by offering a vasilopita cake or bread (there will be two categories).

To sign up as a baker, please contact Elli Koulos at ekoulos23@live.com or text 630-346-3447.





CHRISTMAS Party

JOY PARTY

December 13, 2024 | 6:00 PM

JOY members, join us for our Christmas Party on December 13th from 6pm to 7:30pm in Saint Matthew's Hall. Please RSVP in the Remind App:



JR GOYA PARTY

December 7, 2024 | 6:00 PM

Jr. GOYAns - join us for our Christmas Party at the Botsis home on December 7th from 6pm to 8pm. Please RSVP in the Remind App:



GOYA PARTY

December 20, 2024 | 6:30 PM

GOYAns - join us for our Christmas Party (Location TBD) on December 20th from 6:30pm to 8:30pm. Please RSVP in the Remind App:



GOYA ICE SKATING OUTING

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2024

Hey GOYAns! Get ready for some winter fun on the ice! Join us for an afternoon of skating on Sunday, December 8th, from 4:30 pm to 6:00 pm at All Seasons Ice Rink in Naperville. Don't miss out—RSVP in Remind so we know you're coming:



CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

DECEMBER 15

The Saint Athanasios Christmas Pageant will be Sunday, December 15th immediately following Divine Liturgy. Join us to experience the magic of Christmas together. Don't miss out – we can't wait to share this special moment with you!



PARISH CALENDAR

All services are live streamed on our Facebook Page & YouTube Channel.

Orthos begins at 8:30am with Divine Liturgy following at 9:30am (unless otherwise noted below)

Sunday, December 1st

Divine Liturgy - 14th Sunday of Luke
11am Choir Rehearsal
11:30 am Christmas Pageant Rehearsal #2

Tuesday, December 3rd

7:30 pm Choir rehearsal

Wednesday, December 4th

Divine Liturgy -St Barbara and St John of Damascus
11am Bible Study

Thursday, December 5th

6:30pm Christmas Party - Philoptochos
7pm Vespers - St Nicholas
St Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church
10301 Kolmar Ave, Oak Lawn, IL 60453

Friday, December 6th

Divine Liturgy -St Nicholas

Saturday, December 7th

Pilgrimage to Holy Trinity Cathedral (OCA)
6pm JrGOYA Christmas Party

Sunday, December 8th

Divine Liturgy - 10th Sunday of Luke
11am Choir Christmas Rehearsal
12 pm Christmas Pageant Rehearsal #3
4:30 pm GOYA Meeting at All Seasons Ice Rink

Monday, December 9th

6 pm Men's Small Group

Tuesday, December 10th

7 pm Discover Orthodoxy

Wednesday, December 11th

7pm Vespers - St Spyridon
St Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church
12307 Ridgeland Ave, Palos Heights, IL 60463
7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal

Thursday, December 12th

Divine Liturgy - St Spyridon the Wonderworker
11am Agape Meeting
7pm Spiritual Committee: Soul Sisters

Friday, December 13th

6pm JOY meeting

Saturday, December 14th

11:30 am Sunday School Christmas Pageant
Rehearsal #4
5pm Christmas Carols and Christmas Party

Sunday, December 15th

Divine Liturgy - 11th Sunday of Luke
11:30 am Christmas Pageant

Tuesday, December 17th

Divine Liturgy - St Dionysios of Zakinthos
7pm Discover Orthodoxy
7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal

Wednesday, December 18th

11am Bible Study

Friday, December 20th

6:30 PM GOYA Christmas Party

Sunday, December 22nd

Divine Liturgy - Sunday before Nativity
No Sunday School

Tuesday, December 24th

9am The Great Hours of the Nativity of
Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
6pm Vespers Divine Liturgy of St Basil
(Christmas Eve)

Monday, December 25th

Divine Liturgy - Nativity of Our Lord and
Savior Jesus Christ

Sunday, December 29th

Divine Liturgy - Sunday after Nativity

COFFEE HOUR

Coffee-hour host(s) are needed! Please help us promote fellowship, community, and friendship following the Divine Liturgy by hosting Coffee-hour. There are several open dates. Please call the church office to sign-up today!

We are looking to expand our Coffee Hour Ministry. If you are interested in joining, please reach out to the office.



FOOD PANTRY



Thank you for your support!

Please donate food that is Healing to the Hungry - Lean Proteins (Saturated Fats), No Sodium, Low Sugar Fruits, Whole Grain Items. No dented cans or open packaged foods. Expired food can not be accepted. This month's request is:

Boxed Meals & Boxed Sides

Please contact Betty Roussos at bettyroussos@yahoo.com with any questions.

PHILOPTOCHOS

We kicked off November with a rousing Trivia Night! What a fun evening for close to 100 attendees. We received three generous donations in addition to the funds collected for games, allowing us to send \$1500 to the IOCC for hurricane relief and \$1500 to Radical Love. Thank you to everyone for your support!

We have met our fundraising goal for our Welcome Home fund for Radical Love. In the coming weeks we will complete the purchase of all the items and deliver them to Radical Love.

Mid-month we met at church with GOYA to assemble brown bag lunches for Hesus House. We had a great time with our high schoolers, who worked a lot faster than we did! We plan to do at least one more event like this in the spring.

Our Angel Tree is up in St. Matthew Hall. We are collecting gifts for 125 local children this holiday season. Thank you for your support of this longstanding annual tradition.

Philoptochos Sunday was Nov. 17. We had a memorial and artoclasia for members, and hosted coffee hour. Thanks for everyone who helped by bringing food, setting up and cleaning up.

Our Christmas Party is coming up on Thursday, Dec. 5 at the home of Kristin Standish. Father Panagiotis is in need of grocery cards from Jewel so please bring one that he can distribute as needed. Your generosity will help our mission of Feeding the Hungry.

Calling all bakers!! Our Vasilopita Throwdown will be Sunday, Jan. 5 in St. Matthew Hall. As we did last year, we will have two categories—cake and bread. Please contact Elli Koulos if you want to participate. Proceeds will go to St. Basil's Academy and youth-related programs.

SAVE THE DATE! Our Apokreatiko Glendi will take place on Saturday, Feb. 22 in St. Matthew Hall. Tickets are \$60 for adults and \$25 for children. We are counting on our church community to support our biggest fundraiser of the year. Proceeds will be going to Philoxenia House and Fanari Camp.

Sue Manos
Philoptochos President



APOKREATIKO GLENDI

FEBRUARY 22, 2025 | 6 PM
ST. ATHANASIOS CHURCH
1855 E. FIFTH AVE. | AURORA, IL

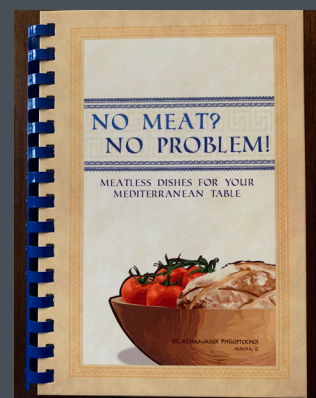
DINNER | DANCING | DRINKS
MUSIC BY DJ APOSTOLIS

ADULTS \$60
CHILDREN 12 & UNDER \$25
CASH BAR

RSVP TO LEAH FANNING AT
LEAH_FANNING@YAHOO.COM OR 630-664-3220.

PORTION OF PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT
FANARI CAMP AND PHILOXENIA HOUSE.

SPONSORED BY THE SAINT ATHANASIOS PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY



St. Athanasios Philoptochos Society
cookbook sale. No Meat No Problem.
\$25 per copy postage and handling included.
Orders need to be received by December 15th for
Christmas delivery. Send your order with check
payable to St. Athanasios Philoptochos to Mary
Kyes 7402 Canterbury Place Downers Grove,
IL 60516. Please include your mailing address,
telephone number. Questions? Email mkyes11@comcast.net. Proceeds donated to local charities.

STEWARDSHIP

Thank You for your Generous Giving

On November 3rd, the Stewardship Committee provided a Stewardship update at the Fall Parish Assembly. The update focused on two aspects of our ongoing Stewardship initiatives ... a review of our 2024 Campaign and an introduction to our 2025 Campaign. From a 2024 perspective, we have exceeded our 2024 Stewardship Goal ... THANK YOU for your Generous Giving!

The theme for our 2025 Stewardship Campaign is **"Your Own from Your Own,"** from the Divine Liturgy as we offer back to God that which He has given us. He receives our humble offering of bread and wine and returns them to us as His Body and Blood in Holy Communion. You will learn more about this theme throughout 2025.

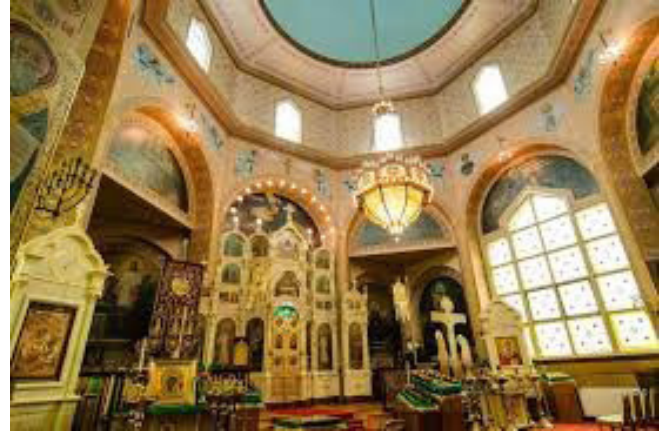
Your 2025 Pledge card will be sent to you in early December for completion or you can go on-line to complete it. We ask that you submit your 2025 commitment by mid-January. The 2025 Treasures Stewardship Goal is \$408,300, a \$58,300 or 15% increase over 2024. This would result in Stewardship covering 67% of our 2025 operating expenses. In 2024, Stewardship covered only 50% of our operating expenses. The remaining portion of our operating expenses is covered by external fundraising activities. We need to strive to a future position where Stewardship will cover 100% of our day-to-day operating expenses.

Our ask of you is to "listen to your heart" and to continue your Generous Giving of your Time, Talents, & Treasures and consider increasing your 2025 Commitment by at least 15% in 2025.

Thank you again for your generosity, which is endless.

In His Service,
Elli Koulos and Pete Nassos

SPIRITUAL GROWTH



PILGRIMAGE: Holy Trinity Orthodox Cathedral in Chicago, IL (a spiritual and architectural icon). Saturday, December 7, 2024

- St. John Kochurov of Chicago, was the builder of the church and the first clergy martyr of the Russian Revolution.
- St. Tikhon of Moscow consecrated the church in 1903, and later became Patriarch of Moscow.
- Louis Henry Sullivan designed the cathedral and parish structures.

We will serve as volunteers for Cathedral's Kitchen (CK) - a service-based ministry that helps feed those in need and connects them with valuable resources and services to assist them on their journey. Afterwards, we will do a tour noting the spiritual and historical significance of the cathedral.

Contact Spiro J. Deligiannis (630-677-5014) if interested in participating and/or if you have any questions.

BOOK STORE

As we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, we honor the tradition of the Magi bringing gifts to the Baby in the Manger. Visit our Bookstore to select a treasured icon, book, ornament, or other religious item to gift to your loved ones. Custom orders may not arrive until after the holidays or they possibly can be available via a rush request. Wishing everyone a very blessed holiday season and many thanks for supporting our Bookstore throughout the year!



MEN'S GROUP

Thank you all for your support and participation in this ministry!

Blood Drive

With the leadership of Mickey Koulos, the Men's Group sponsored a blood drive on Wednesday, November 6. Thank you to all who donated!

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology Fundraiser

This was second year of the fundraiser for Chicago Metropolis seminarians that occurred on Thursday, November 14. Thank you to Spiro Hountalas who was a major contributor to the success of this event.

Men's Workshop - Busyness & Stillness

Fr. Panagiotis is leading a four-part workshop on busyness and stillness. Please join our next workshop on Monday, December 9.

NFL Playoff Watch Party

Our annual NFL watch party will be Saturday, January 11. A terrific opportunity to watch some playoff football and catch up with friends. Stay tuned for more details!

2025 Hesed House Dinner Service

We will be working with Bill Collins and the Hesed House ministry in 2025. More details to follow about dinner service dates.

You can like and follow our Facebook page by searching for "Men's Group of St Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church"

If anyone is interested in learning more about the Men's Group, please contact Spiro Hountalas (naperspike@aol.com), Peter Metrou (pnmetrou@gmail.com), Bill Collins (bctc@sbcglobal.net) or Nick Dagiantis (ndagiantis@gmail.com).

DISCOVER ORTHODOXY



Join us to learn more about the Orthodox Church. Discover Orthodoxy teaches the basics and foundations of Orthodox Christianity, our theology, worship, spirituality, and practices. The class is intended both for those who are preparing to join the Orthodox Church and for Orthodox Christians who wish to deepen their understanding of the faith. Classes start at 7pm on the following dates: 12/10, 12/17, 1/14, 1/28, 2/25

SOUL SISTERS

All women of St. Athanasios ages 18 and above are invited to participate and explore the theme for this ecclesiastical year: "Stillness and Prayer as a Cure for our Busy Lives"

Soul Sisters will meet monthly on Thursday evenings in St. Matthew Hall from 7-8:30 pm. Whole group fellowship followed by small group discussions.

Mark your calendars for the second Thursday: Dec 12, Jan. 9, Feb 13.

Questions? Contact Maria Lambrou:
makokoslambrou@yahoo.com or 708-269-9991

AGAPE MINISTRY

All aboard the Agape Express! This month we had a wonderful time on our trip downtown to visit the Hellenic Museum. After such an educating afternoon, we were happy to be able to enjoy a delicious lunch in Greektown.

Join us next month for our Christmas party on December 12th.

Contact Samantha Dulles for questions. 312.504.4448 or agape@saintathanasios.com.



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

I hope you and your loved ones are all well and that you had a great Thanksgiving holiday. As a community we have many things to be thankful for including our extreme generosity. During the past eleven months, over 110 donors have come forward and helped us raise approximately \$167,000 for Phase One of the Capital Campaign.

As a direct result, I am happy to announce that through our combined efforts we have retired our mortgage, and we are debt free! Thank you!!

Over the next several weeks we will celebrate the feast days of some of the most well-known Saints of the Orthodox Church. Saint Andrew, Saint Barbara, Saint Nicholas, Saint Anna, Saint Spyridon. It will all culminate with the birth of Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Clearly, December is a time of celebration in the Church. In addition to these feast days, we should celebrate our secular accomplishment of finally being debt free. We earned it, the victory is ours, we should cherish it!

However, when we all wake up on January 1st, this accomplishment will be in the history books. It will not be a time for us to rest but rather a time for us to resolve to get back to work to achieve our ultimate goal "So that all may be saved and come to the knowledge of truth".

Until then, let's sit back, smile and celebrate our accomplishment. We have earned it!

I wish everyone a Very Merry and Blessed Christmas and a safe, healthy and prosperous New Year!

For more info please visit our website or use the QR code to find out how you can support the campaign and commit to our Church for future generations.



Mike Tsimouris
Capital Campaign Chairman

SPIRITUAL GROWTH CORNER

"Coming to Bible study has truly deepened my faith. It is my desire to know more of God and be more like Him. Father Panagiotis' passionate teaching has enriched my understanding of God.

Here are two examples from Genesis: Saint Basil encourages us to not just be in "awe" of creation but to go further and marvel at God, the Creator.

Genesis mentions seed bearing plants. We learned that a seed must die in the soil and then life springs forth. This is a foreshadowing of Christ death and resurrection that brings forth our eternal Life.

At the end of our church service, the choir sings, "We have seen the Light". This is the same experience I have after Bible study. It shows me God's character. In His Light, I can bring Him glory and reflect His Light to others."

Kathy Lymberopoulos

COLLEGE MINISTRY ANDREW KUNCL

Andrew Kuncl is attending the University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign. His major is in Finance and Accounting, and he expects to graduate in May 2025. His favorite class so far has been "Applied Financial Analysis". His short-term plan after graduation is to work as an investment analyst at the Maranon Capital company. In the long term, he sees himself living in downtown Chicago and pursuing a career in finance. The Orthodox Church Andrew attends while at college is the "Three Hierarchs Greek Orthodox Church". What he likes most about the Saint Athanasios Parish is how welcoming everyone always is. Whenever he comes back home to Saint Athanasios, he feels that everyone treats him like family. Andrew's favorite sport is football, and his favorite team is the Chicago Bears. He enjoys grilling, poker and learning about stocks. His favorite season is Spring, because the weather is warming up and Easter is the best Holiday! His favorite restaurant while at College is "Murphy's Pub" and back home, he loves "Q BBQ".





You're Invited

SAINT ATHANASIOS

FEAST DAY LUNCHEON

JANUARY 18, 2025 | 11:30 AM | SAINT MATTHEW HALL

ADMISSION:
COMPLIMENTARY

QUESTIONS?
CALL 630.851.6106 or
EMAIL office@saintathanasios.com



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EVENT WITH US

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**Weddings
Baptisms
Christmas
Easter**





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Beyond our delicious line-up of Prime Steaks, Chops, and Seafood, we offer an authentic selection of Greek Specialties, including Whole Oven Roasted Branzino, Lamb Racks & Greek Potatoes, Classic Pastitsio, and much more. Check out the **Greek Classics** on our menu for all your favorite Mediterranean flavors.

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Glory Him!



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THE CHAMPION



**SAINT
ATHANASIOS**

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