



One of the lesser known feasts of the Church is the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, celebrated on February 2nd. Of all the celebrations commemorating events in the life of Christ, the Presentation has the least amount of pomp. There is no fast like with Christmas or Pascha, no special blessings like the waters of Theophany, grapes of the Transfiguration, or basil of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. It is typically just marked with Liturgy on the day of the feast and not much else. Even though the celebration is subdued, the importance of this day is anything but.

First some background on the feast. February 2nd is 40 days after Christmas and this feast commemorates Christ being presented in the Temple along with a sacrifice of two turtledoves (Luke 2:22-38). We still participate in this act 2000 years later in the Orthodox Church when we bring our newborn children to the Church for what we call a 40 Day Blessing.

But the significance of the Presentation lies in more than just the fact that it shows the continuity of the Church practices with the life of Christ. It can be found in the dynamics of giving-thanksgiving-blessing-returning which describe our Liturgy and our entire relationship with God. God bestows upon the Theotokos the gift of His Son, who is also her Son. The Theotokos then goes to the temple to offer sacrifice and thanksgiving for the gift she has received. She presents her Son to the priest, who takes Him in his hands and pronounces a blessing upon Christ. Finally, the priest returns Christ to His mother and she takes Him to depart back to their home.

Strip away all the embellishments of the Divine Liturgy, and you have the exact same dynamics. God grants us the gifts of the earth (food & drink i.e. bread and wine). We bring it to the Church as a sacrifice to offer thanksgiving (Eucharist/Ευχαριστία). The priest taking the bread and wine in his hands lifts it up and pronounces the blessing of God upon the bread and wine. After it is blessed and becomes His body and blood, the priest returns it to us when we come forward to receive Holy Communion and we carry Him within us as we depart back to our home.



1965-2025

This process is not limited to just what we do in the services (40 day blessings & Divine Liturgy) of the Church. This describes our very relationship with God. He has given us our being, the world around us, our family, friends, talents, etc. These are gifts from Him much in the same way that He presented himself to His mother as a gift. Thus we are to live every day giving thanks for the blessings we have received, offering them up to Him. Giving the Lord the credit for our good fortune and understanding that all comes from Him, offering thanks in our daily prayers. When we offer our talents and blessings to the Lord and His Church in thanksgiving, He blesses them and returns them back to us, transformed and sanctified. Thus Christ fulfills His words, "For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance." (Matthew 13:12)

I pray this feast does not pass unnoticed this year and that it assumes a place of prominence in your heart. Through the Feast of the Presentation of Christ, we learn the very core of how we are to relate to God.

#### **MEMORIALS**

John Gust Koutselas (6 Year)





# PARISH COUNCIL

On Jan 12th we held the Oath of Office for our newly elected 2025-2026 Parish Council proceeded by our Executive Committee Officer Elections. Congratulations to each of you and thank you for your dedication to our parish and our beloved Saint Athanasios!

#### **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

Brian McAnally - President
Anna Caniglia - 1st Vice President
2nd Vice President -Tracey Collins
Treasurer - Aaron Mundie
Assistant Treasurer - Jim Kuncl
Recording Secretary - Nick Dagiantis
Corresponding Secretary - John Maniatis

#### PARISH COUNCIL

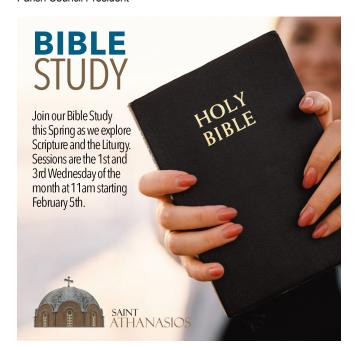
Ted Dulles Scott Fanning George Gladis Victoria Kappas Phil Nassos Jenny Perozzi Thano Prokos Mike Tsimouris

#### Saint Athanasios Vespers & Feast Day

On Jan. 17th and Jan. 18th we celebrated the Vespers and Feast Day for Saint Athanasios. Thank you to all that helped prepare for each of the services as well as the luncheon and to all of those who attended. We would also like to thank His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael, His Grace Bishop Timothy, and other Clergy for their attendance. We launched phase 2 of our Capital Campaign at our Feast Day Luncheon and would like to thank Mike Tsimouris and his committee for all of their work and commitment they have put forth into this campaign. We have successfully completed phase 1 and have eliminated our mortgage. Please continue to support our capital campaign as we move into phase 2 so that we may achieve our ultimate goal which is "So that all may be saved and come to the knowledge of truth". Last but not least, I would like to thank you the parish for your continued love and support to our beloved Saint Athanasios. We are truly blessed to have such a loving, caring, and dedicated parish.

Looking forward to a blessed 2025!

# Brian McAnally Parish Council President





#### All are invited!

Learn about the Hearing Loop—a Hearing Assistive Listening System newly installed in our church

Free Hearing Screenings

Hearing loss InformationHearing Loop System Demonstration



Steve Thunder, BSE Thunder Hearing & Sound



# ICE CREAM SOCIAL SUNDAY, MARCH 2, 2025



Please join the community for an Ice Cream Social at 4pm on Sunday, March 2nd in the St Matthew Hall for our last treat of dairy before the Fast begins.

And then stay for Forgiveness Vespers at 5pm as we enter the Lenten period together.



On this day, Saturday of Souls, according to the order instituted by our Holy Fathers, we call to remembrance all those who have died from the beginning of the ages in faith and in the hope of the resurrection and of life eternal.

The present commemoration of the dead is based on the reality that many of our fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters died under such circumstances that funeral prayers and normal memorial services could not be offered for them. Either in a foreign land or on the seas, on impassable mountains or in gulfs or precipices, through starvation or diseases, in wars, in fires, or during earthquakes, and in so many other ways, perhaps in poverty or in need, our known and unknown brothers and sisters in Christ did not enjoy the chanting and necessary spiritual care. Therefore, our Holy Fathers, moved by their love for humanity, appointed the present celebration to take place in the Church everywhere, having received this from the Holy Apostles, so that all who have died through various mishaps or accidents may be remembered together, for the benefit of their souls. There is great profit to the soul from these memorials in the Church. This is the first reason.

The second reason is that since the Holy Fathers were going to place the memory of Christ's Second Coming on the following day, Sunday, they appropriately commemorate the souls on the preceding day, as it were, propitiating the fearful Judge, who cannot be deceived, to apply His usual compassion and to appoint them to the promised delight.

We always remember the souls of the dead on the Sabbath, for the Sabbath (Saturday) is the day of rest. In Hebrew, Sabbath literally means "rest." As the Jews have this day for their repose and paused from every work and professional dealing, we Christians have it to remember the repose of our those who preceded us. On this day, we hold memorial services and have koliva blessed in the church, give alms, and perform various works of mercy. (Synaxarion of Saturday of Souls)

# **KOLIVA FOR SATURDAY OF SOULS**

2 cups boiled wheat berries/ kernels. (Purchase 1 1b of wheat)

1/2 cup walnuts, chopped 1/2 cup (6-7) zwieback toasts, ground into crumbs 1/2 cup golden raisins

2 tablespoons sesame seeds, toasted

2 tablespoons minced flat-leafed parsley

1/2 to 3/4 teaspoon cinnamon

Powdered sugar and blanched almonds: enough to cover surface of the serving bowl.

#### Thursday:

- Sort and soak wheat kernels for 4 hours. (Read label: some brands provide directions for cooking without soaking).
- Boil the entire 1 lb. package for later use. Boil 4 cups of water and add entire package of wheat. Reduce heat and simmer until kernels plump and split open (approximately 1 1/2 hours). Stir and add more boiling water during simmering. Rinse and drain well.
- Spread cooked kernels on tea towels to dry. Lay other towels underneath tea towels to wick away moisture. Consider saying a prayer for the deceased at this time.

- Chop walnuts. Ground zwieback and reserve enough to cover serving bowl (approx. 1/4 cup).
- Toast sesame seeds (toasting is optional). Measure raisins and cinnamon.
- In large bowl, add raisins then zwieback crumbs. Coat the raisins with crumbs to separate clumps of raisins. Measure 2 cups of dried, boiled wheat.
- Note: Equally divide remaining wheat and freeze to use for next two Saturdays of the Soul liturgies.
- Mix the 2 cups of wheat with raisins and crumbs. Add all other remaining ingredients.
- Optional ingredients to include: 1/2 cup pomegranate seeds, sliced or slivered blanched almonds. Do not add sugar (sugar increases chance of koliva spoiling from fermentation).
- Pour into serving bowl. Refrigerate.

#### Saturday morning:

- Cover koliva with reserved zwieback crumbs. Cover with wax paper and press firmly/smoothly in place
  Sift enough powdered sugar to cover the crumbs. Using a new piece of wax paper, press and flatten the powdered sugar.
  Using blanched almonds, create a cross on the powdered sugared surface. Leave a hole in the center of the cross large enough for a small candle.
- At church: place a candle in the center of the cross. Include a list of the deceased you wish to have memorialized.

# **FOOD PANTRY**

## PARISH CALENDAR

All services are live streamed on our YouTube Channel.

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

Sunday, February 2
Divine Liturgy - Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple 11:30 am Catechumen Orientation 11:30 am Sunday School Staff meeting

Wednesday, February 5 11am Bible Study 3pm Hesed House - prep & deliver

**Thursday, February 6** 7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal

Friday, February 7 6pm JOY Meeting

Sunday, February 9
Divine Liturgy - Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee:
Triodion Begins Today
11:30am Philoptochos General meeting - guest Speaker
John Mangouras
7pm Vespers - St. Haralambos
Holy Taxiarhai & St Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church
7373 N Caldwell Ave, Niles, IL 60714

Monday, February 10 Divine Liturgy – St. Haralambos

**Tuesday, February 11** 7 pm Discover Orthodoxy

Thursday, February 13
11am Agape Meeting
11am Hearing Health Fair
7 pm Spiritual Committee: Soul Sisters Meeting
7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal

**Sunday, February 16**Divine Liturgy - Sunday of the Prodigal Son

Wednesday, February 19 11am Bible Study 12pm Mobile Audiologist

**Thursday, February 20** 6:30 pm GOYA Tsiknopempti Dinner 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal

**Saturday, February 22** Divine Liturgy - Saturday of Souls 6pm Apokreatiko Glendi

Sunday, February 23 Divine Liturgy - Judgment Sunday (Meatfare Sunday) 11 am Choir Rehearsal

Tuesday, February 25 7:00 pm Discover Orthodoxy

Thursday, February 27 6pm Men's Small Group 7pm JrGOYA Meeting 7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal

# 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: 2/25

# **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.





Thank you to everyone who generously donated food to our Pantry! Your contributions make a real difference in the lives of our community members who need it most. We are so grateful for your kindness & support. 2024 total - 691lbs of Food!

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:

Soup, Peanut Butter & Jelly

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

# **PHILOPTOCHOS**

Philoptochos welcomed in the new year with our Vasilopita Throwdown. Nine talented bakers brought their best cakes and breads for a delicious competition after liturgy. Congratulations to the winners-Stephanie Altidis in the bread category and Thano Prokos in the cake category! Most importantly, we raised \$975 for St. Basil's Academy and youth related ministries.

We hosted coffee hour after our Feast Day Vespers and provided lunch after our Feast Day Liturgy. Thank you to everyone who provided food, helped with lunch, and helped with setup and cleanup! It is a big undertaking and the contributions of so many parishioners are greatly appreciated. Thank you too to everyone that made the bougatsas we served!

Our next big thing is our Apokreatiko Glendi on February 22nd! Please join us for an evening of great food, music by the DJ Apostolis and the Neolea dance troupe. Proceeds will go to the Nancy Gladis Scholarship Fund and Philoxenia House. Your participation is key to our success!

Sue Manos Philoptochos President







#### **STEWARDSHIP**

#### The Power of Early Stewardship: Building a Stronger Church in 2025

Stewardship is a vital expression of faith, reflecting our gratitude for God's blessings and our commitment to His work. By pledging early for 2025, we empower our church to plan ministries, outreach, and facilities improvements with confidence. Early commitments provide clarity in budgeting and ensure that programs can grow and flourish, aligning with the church's mission.

For example, when pledges are made early, St. Athanasios can confidently schedule mission trips, expand youth programs, or launch new community outreach initiatives without hesitation. Similarly, fulfilling 2024 pledges as soon as possible allows us to close the year responsibly and enter 2025 fully prepared.

Stewardship also extends beyond finances. Pledging your time and talents early helps our ministry teams organize effectively. Whether it's teaching Sunday School, joining the choir, or helping with outreach events, knowing who is available allows St. Athanasios to start the year strong and serve more effectively.

As Scripture reminds us, "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Through timely and joyful giving of our resources and gifts, we can strengthen St. Athanasios's foundation and carry out God's work in 2025 and beyond. Thank you for submitting your 2025 pledge!

In His Service,

Elli Koulos and Pete Nassos

# **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: Feb 13.

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

# **BOOK STORE**

As we begin our Great Lent for Pasha in early March, now is the time to participate in thoughtful religious study. In collaboration with our Spiritual Growth Ministry led by Angela Finegan, the following recommended books are available in our Bookstore:

- A Commentary on the Divine Liturgy and the Life in Christ, by St. Nikolaos Cabasilas
- Theosis: The True Purpose of Human Life, by Archimandrite Giorgios
- A Spiritual Psalter, by St. Ephraim the Syrian
- The Orthodox Church: An Introduction to Eastern Christianity, by Timothy Ware
- The Orthodox Way, by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware

Stop in soon to purchase one or more of these titles and others, as well as icons, CDs, DVDs, and gift items.

## MEN'S GROUP

Thank you all for your support and participation in this ministry in 2024! We hope to continue our successful ministry in 2025 with your help.

#### **NFL Playoff Watch Party**

Thank you for attending our annual NFL watch party on Saturday, January 11. Good conversations, good drinks and great food!

#### Men's Workshop - Busyness & Stillness

Fr. Panagiotis is leading a four-part workshop on busyness and stillness. Please attend our next workshop on Thursday, February 27.

#### 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).



Hesed House Ministry will be providing dinner to Hesed House on February 5th. Preparation / cooking will take place at Church on 2/5 starting around 3pm, Hesed House arrival by 630pm and Hesed dinner is at 7pm. This includes but is not limited to food prep, cooking, Church kitchen clean up, food transport to Hesed House, food service at Hesed House, and Hesed House kitchen clean up.

Contact Bill Collins at bctc@sbcglobal.net if interested.

#### **AGAPE MINISTRY**

The Agape Ministry had a cozy afternoon watching the movie "Man of God" together. Everyone brought some nibbles and stayed warm on a cold winter day. Join us next month on 2/13 at 11am for a Hearing Health Fair. Look for more information and a sign up sheet soon. Contact Samantha with any questions. 312.504.4448 or agape@saintathanasios.com





# SPIRITUAL GROWTH CORNER

My experience in the Men's Group at St. Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

My experience in the St. Athanasios Men's Group has been deeply meaningful and enriching. The group fosters a sense of community, spiritual growth, and personal development through fellowship, prayer, and support. As a Small Group Leader, I was privileged to guide and encourage my brothers in their faith journeys, while building lasting relationships. These small groups allow us to go beyond casual Sunday greetings, offering an opportunity to connect on a deeper, more personal and spiritual level. One of the most significant relationships I formed was with Nick Kallas, who honored me by asking me to be his Koumbaro at his wedding to Natalia Kosmouskaya. This role further strengthened our bond and highlighted the lasting impact of the Men's Group in building authentic, supportive relationships within our church community.

**Charles Cucuras** 



# JOY

#### February 7, 2025 | 6:00 PM

We'll be exploring The Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee — a powerful lesson on humility, prayer, and repentance. Come learn on how this parable speaks to our lives today and what it means to approach God with a humble heart. Message us in Remind to let us know if you plan on attending.



# JR GOYA

#### February 27, 2025 | 7:00 PM

Jr. GOYAns, join us on Thursday, February 27, from 7:00 – 8:30 PM for our next meeting! We'll be in Saint Matthew's Hall making blankets for those in need. It's a great way to serve others while spending time together. Let us know you'll be there by messaging us on Remind!



# GOYA

#### February 20, 2025 | 6:30 PM

GOYAns, join us for our Tsiknopempti Dinner on February 20, 2025, from 6:30 PM to 8:00 PM! Get ready for a fun evening filled with great food and fellowship. Stay tuned for more details, which will be posted on Remind!.



# ORATORICAL FESTIVAL

Calling all 7th - 12 grade students: Participate in the Oratorical Festival! The St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival is a nationwide program of the Department of Religious Education (DRE) of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, where Orthodox youth present speeches discussing the Greek Orthodox faith and the Church. The Oratorical Festival is divided into the Senior Division (grades 10-12) and Junior Division (grades 7-9). Youth get to explore and deepen their faith and hone their speech writing and public speaking skills. Participants start at the Parish level, then proceed to the District or Metropolis level. And then, two finalists representing each Metropolis of the Archdiocese advance to the National Finals. All participants at the National Finals receive awards ranging from \$1,500 to \$7,000. Finalists at all levels are eligible to receive the Chrysostom Scholarship to Hellenic College ranging from \$2,500 to \$30,000 per year, to receive a credit for the pursuit of one undergraduate degree. Our high school classes will be incorporating the topics of the Oratorical Festival to prepare our students for this competition.





SCAN TO LEARN MORE

# **GOOD FRIDAY RETREAT**

Calling ALL Sunday School Students (Kindergarten to 12th grade)! Join us for our Good Friday Retreat on Friday, April 18th, from 9 AM to 3 PM. This year's theme, "Darkness to Light," will guide us in exploring the profound journey from Christ's crucifixion to His resurrection. A light breakfast and lunch will be provided. School excuse letters are available for registrants. The registration fee is \$12 per attendee.



# 2025 PILGRIMAGES

#### Tuesday, June 24

Holy Transfiguration, Harvard, IL. Nativity of St.. John the Baptist. Liturgy, followed by workshop

#### Saturday, July 19

St. John Christostomos, Pleasant Prairie, WI. Translation of the Holy Relics of St. Seraphim. Outdoor work opportunity, followed by Vespers.

**Sunday, August 10** St. Sava & New Gracanica, Lake County, IL. After feast of the Transfiguration, veneration of incorrupt relics of St. Mardarije.

#### October 9-13

Columbus Day weekend Helene College/Holy Cross Seminary and St. Nicholas Shrine, Boston and New York City

Dates are tentative, yet all destinations are confirmed, with details forthcoming. Expression of interest, contact Spiro J. Deligiannis (630-677-5014)

Also, PROJECT MEXICO in Summer 2026!

#### LENTEN RETREAT



March 8,2025

Divine Liturgy followed by light lunch and retreat in St. Matthew Hall. All women and men 18 years or older are welcome to attend.

# CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

I hope you and your loved ones are all well and that your New Year is off to a great start. As a community, we kicked off the New Year with many church wide activities including the celebration of the feast day of our patron saint, Saint Athanasios. This year's annual feast day luncheon was extra special because we not only celebrated our patron saint but we also had the opportunity to commemorate the recent retirement of the church's mortgage. It was truly a special event for all us!

As we talked about at the luncheon, with the completion of the Phase One goal we are now starting our journey to achieving the Phase Two goal of meeting the building's structural needs. As outlined in our plan, we need to raise an extra \$125,000 per year for the next several years. This is in addition to us meeting our stewardship and other budget goals.

On the surface this number may look a bit overwhelming. We should not be discouraged. With 300 active families/stewards in our community, this equates to roughly \$400 per steward. Based on our treasures, some will be able to give more. In Phase One of the Capital Campaign, for those who participated, the average donation was \$1,465.

To be successful we need to focus on near term goals and give generously of the gifts that God has given us. Look at the road 10 feet in front of us and not the top of the mountain. As we discussed at the Fall General Assembly, subject to us meeting fundraising targets and getting the necessary approvals, we would like to move forward this coming Fall with the landscape renovation.

The only way this works is with your continued generosity and financial support. We look forward to answering any questions, and working with you to achieve the Phase Two goals including our ultimate goal, "So that all may be saved and come to the knowledge of truth".

Please visit the Capital Campaign web site at link below or use the QR code to find out how you can support the campaign and commit to our Church for future generations.

Thank you,

Mike Tsimouris Capital Campaign Chairman







# **FEAST DAY PHOTOS**













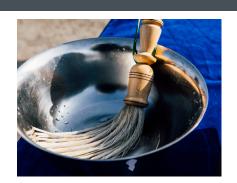




# THEOPHANY PHOTOS





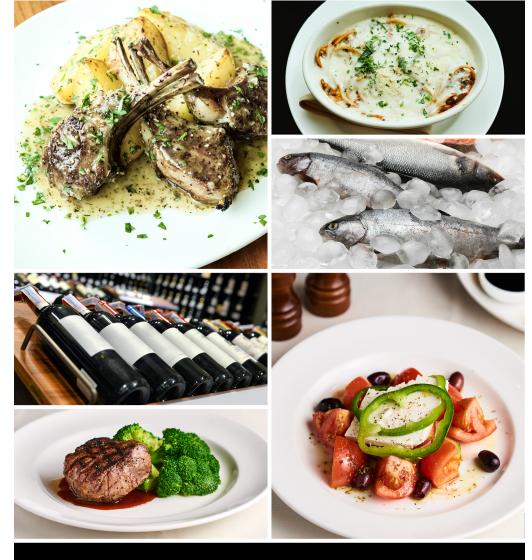












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# **COLLEGE MINISTRY**

#### Ellen Chlachidze

Ellen Chlachidze is attending the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. Her major is in Mathematics and Computer Science, and she expects to graduate in May 2025. Her favorite class so far has been "Commutative Algebra". After graduation from College, Ellen's plan is to pursue graduate studies in Mathematics and work on a PhD thesis. The Orthodox Church at Ellen's college town is the "St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church". What she likes most about the Saint Athanasios Parish is that she has formed long lasting connections here. There are many people she has known since she was very young, and this is special to her. Ellen's favorite sport is basketball, and her favorite team is the New York Liberty. She enjoys reading, hiking and studying art history. Her favorite season is Fall, because of the beautiful colors all around. She loves seafood, and her favorite restaurant while at College is "Avalon".





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A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church



OF OUR LORD **PRESENTATION**