

THE CHAMPION

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

JANUARY 2024



MESSAGE FROM FR. PANAGIOTIS

Statistics vary from year to year and across media outlets, but anecdotally we all know there is a 50/50 chance that whatever resolutions we make at the beginning of this month will be abandoned by the end of the month. If we are lucky they might last until mid-February, after all, that is when parking starts to open up again at the gym. But it seems that inevitably our early enthusiasm is not enough to carry us through to accomplishing what we are most excited about at the beginning of the year.

The Ohio State University's Fisher College of Business cites a lack of accountability as one of the key factors in resolution failure, and reports that when you are accountable to someone else to accomplish a goal you are twice as likely to achieve it. While I do not consider the 2024 Parish Ministry Initiatives that we introduced at the Fall General Assembly to be resolutions in the same vein as losing weight or drinking less coffee, I do understand the importance of accountability for progress. This is where you, the parishioners of St. Athanasios come in. I would like to remind you of the 2024 Parish Ministry Initiatives that we committed to so that you can help keep me and the parish leadership accountable. We will be proactive, but you may also check in with me, the parish council, and ministry leaders throughout the year. Ask us about the progress we are making. Offer suggestions if we get stuck and need help.

Financial

1. Launch a Capital Campaign to 1) Eliminate our mortgage; 2) Address all current and near future building needs; and 3) begin to imagine how to utilize the property next door.
2. Invest \$10,000 into community outreach and evangelism ministries and activities.

Outreach/Evangelism

1. Implement a Welcome Packet and Protocol for all guests and inquirers.
2. Expand Hesed House ministry from the Men's Group to a stand-alone ministry.

Spiritual Growth

1. Launch Small Groups Program for 2023/2024 Ministry Year.
2. Encourage Confession as a normal practice within the lives of Orthodox Christians.

Leadership/Personnel Development

1. All Parish Council members will complete Effective Christian Ministry Course for continuing education.
2. Hire a parish Youth Director.
3. Parish Administrator will take on additional operations responsibilities.

Ultimately each of the above initiatives is born out of our effort to fulfill God's desire "That all should be saved and come to the knowledge of truth" (1 Timothy 2:4). We are aiming to remove barriers and plant seeds for the future, all with this basic purpose in mind. I pray the Lord bless our efforts in His vineyard in the coming year.

May God grace and bless you and your family in the coming New Year.

Fr. Panagiotis

FUNERALS

Ted Macks

MEMORIALS

Eleni Zafiroopoulos (2 Year)

Marianthe (Mary Ann) Gavrily (5 Year)

Theodore (Ted) Gavrily (5 Year)

Dimitrios (James) Gavrily (13 Year)

PARISH COUNCIL

Happy New Year!

Breakfast with Santa: We had our breakfast with Santa, on December 17th. We had a wonderful turnout of 180 people that came to the breakfast. The children enjoyed seeing Santa Claus and Ms. Claus, the face painter, balloon artist, and decorating cookies and building gingerbread houses. I would like to thank Alex Pagonis, Chrissy Pagonis, Louie Lambrou, Amalia Georgopoulos, Rose Pagonis and Brian McAnally for all their hard work!

Vespers and Feastday Celebration: Join us for our Vespers and Feastday on January, 17th for Vespers, and our Feastday January 18th.

Feastday Luncheon: Join us on January 21st, for a delicious meal as we celebrate our Feast Day. At our feast day luncheon we will be also talking about the launch of our Capital Campaign. Please join us so we all can celebrate as a parish family and for you to hear details about our Capital campaign!

Wishing you all a Happy, Healthy and Blessed New Year!

Foti Georgopoulos
Parish Council President



THEOPHANY HOUSE BLESSINGS

STARTING JANUARY 9TH

CONTACT THE OFFICE OR
SCAN THE QR CODE TO SCHEDULE



Divine Liturgy

THE GREATEST INVITATION

Enrich your experience with the Divine Liturgy, the Greatest Invitation we will ever receive.

5 part series designed to help us:

- Grow in the Liturgy mindset away from the “me-centered” mindset of the world.
- Understanding relationships and the importance of being in person with those in our community.
- Learn about the synergy that occurs between our work and God’s Grace.
- Be reminded of God’s radical love which is experienced most fully in the Divine Liturgy.

Small group facilitators will lead one 90-minute lesson per month. Choose the location and date that is most convenient for you. Please sign up for January, February and March using the QR Code below:



**SCAN
HERE!**



Scan QR code for
an overview of the
program.

Questions? Need help with sign up? Contact Maria Lambrou:
makokoslambrou@yahoo.com | 708-269-9991



KNOW THE SAINTS

On January 18th We Will be Celebrating the Divine Liturgy in Honor of Our Patron Saint.

Athanasios the Great, Patriarch of Alexandria

In the half-century after the First Ecumenical Council held in Nicea in 325, if there was one man whom the Arians feared and hated more intensely than any other, as being able to lay bare the whole error of their teaching, and to marshal, even from exile or hiding, the beleaguered forces of the Orthodox, it was Saint Athanasios the Great. This blazing lamp of Orthodoxy, which imperial power and heretics' plots could not quench when he shone upon the lampstand, nor find when he was hid by the people and monks of Egypt, was born in Alexandria about the year 296. He received an excellent training in Greek letters and especially in the sacred Scriptures, of which he shows an exceptional knowledge in his writings. Even as a young man he had a remarkable depth of theological understanding; he was only about twenty years old when he wrote his treatise "On the Incarnation." Saint Alexander, the Archbishop of Alexandria, brought him up in piety, ordained him his deacon, and after deposing Arius for his blasphemy against the Divinity of the Son of God, took Athanasios to the First Council in Nicea in 325. Saint Athanasios was to spend the remainder of his life laboring in defense of this Holy Council. In 326, before his death, Alexander appointed Athanasios his successor.



Of his fifty-seven years as Patriarch, he had spent some seventeen in exiles. Shining from the height of his throne like a radiant evening star, and enlightening the Orthodox with the brilliance of his words for yet a little while, this much-suffering champion inclined toward the sunset of his life, and in the year 373 took his rest from his lengthy sufferings, but not before another luminary of the truth -- Basil the Great -- had risen in the East, being consecrated Archbishop of Caesarea in 370.

Besides all of his other achievements, Saint Athanasios wrote the life of Saint Anthony the Great, with whom he spent time in his youth; ordained Saint Frumentius first Bishop of Ethiopia; and in his Paschal Encyclical for the year 367 set forth the books of the Old and New Testaments accepted by the Church as canonical. Saint Gregory the Theologian, in his "Oration On the Great Athanasios", said that he was "Angelic in appearance, more angelic in mind; ... rebuking with the tenderness of a father, praising with the dignity of a ruler ... Everything was harmonious, as an air upon a single lyre, and in the same key; his life, his teaching, his struggles, his dangers, his return, and his conduct after his return ... he treated so mildly and gently those who had injured him, that even they themselves, if I may say so, did not find his restoration distasteful."

FOX RIVER BLESSING

FRIDAY, JANUARY 6, 2024 (2:30PM)

St. Athanasios Greek and St. Athanasios Romanian Orthodox Churches will gather at the RiverEdge Park Pedestrian Footbridge with officials of the City of Aurora to celebrate the first Fox River Blessing on the feast of Theophany, January 6th at 2:30pm.

Parking available at 350 N River St. Aurora, IL 60506



PARISH CALENDAR

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

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

Monday, January 1

Divine Liturgy - Circumcision of the Lord;
Saint Basil the Great

Friday, January 5

6 pm Vesperal Divine Liturgy - Eve of Holy Theophany

Saturday, January 6

2:30 pm Fox River Blessing
Divine Liturgy – Holy Theophany
7pm Vespers - St. John the Baptist
St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
2350 E Dempster St., Des Plaines, IL 60016

Sunday, January 7

Divine Liturgy - *Synaxis of John the Holy Glorious Prophet, Baptist, & Forerunner/ Afterfeast of the Theophany of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*
Sunday School Classes Resume
11am Vasilopita Throwdown

Tuesday, January 9

7:30 pm Discover Orthodoxy

Friday, January 12

6 pm JOY meeting

Sunday, January 14

Divine Liturgy - Leavetaking of Theophany
11am Monthly Choir Rehearsal
11:30am JrGOYA Garden Christmas
Decorations Take Down

Tuesday, January 17

Divine Liturgy – St. Anthony the Great
7pm Vespers – St Athanasios
9pm Philoptochos Vespers Coffee Hour

Wednesday, January 18

Divine Liturgy - Feast Day of St. Athanasios the Great
11am Philoptochos Reception

Saturday, January 20

5 pm Men's Group NFL Watch Party

Sunday, January 21

Divine Liturgy - 12th Sunday of Luke
11:30 am St. Athanasios Feast Day Luncheon

Tuesday, January 23

7:30pm Discover Orthodoxy

Thursday, January 25

7pm Jr. GOYA Fireside with Father

Sunday, January 28

Divine Liturgy - 15th Sunday of Luke
Coffee hour hosted by GOYA

Monday, January 30

Divine Liturgy - Three Holy Hierarchs

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 the continued support with both donation of food and time. This month, we are focusing on back to school. See below, for monthly request. When dropping off, please remember to ask for a weight and submit to the church office or Christina Valavanidis. We are grateful for your support! (No Expired Food or partially opened packaged foods. Please do not bring toys or pantry items such as flour, sugar, spices, etc.) This month's request is:

Soup

Please contact Christina Valavanidis at christina.valavanidis@gmail.com with any questions.

PHILOPTOCHOS

Happy New Year! December was a busy month for us. We partnered with the Mens Group to provide dessert for their November dinner at Hesed House. Four ladies made 250 Rice Krispies treats, which were a huge hit with the shelter residents!

Because of the generosity of our parishioners, we made Christmas wishes come true for 80 children this year through your Angel Tree donations. Thank you to Betty Poulakidas and Connie Romios for organizing this philanthropy again. We also filled 75 stockings for the Aurora Interfaith Food Pantry with your donations. A shout out to Kristin Standish and Voula Ortega for chairing this event.

We had a great turnout at our Christmas party. It was so nice to see so many of our members for a fun evening of sisterhood and Christmas Carol trivia!

On Sunday, January 7th, we will be celebrating St. Basil and raising funds for the St. Basil Orphanage in New York with our annual Vasilopita Throwdown. This year we will have two categories for judging by the parish community: Bread and Cake. If you would like to reserve your entry as a contestant, please contact Elli Koulos (ekoulos23@live.com) and specify bread or cake. Philoptochos will match the funds collected on the 7th and present a prize to the winners of each category!

Our next General Meeting is set for Sunday, February 4th. Ellie Lebron, the founder of Radical Love, will be our guest speaker. Please join us after church to learn more about our plans for Spring.

Mark your calendars for Saturday, March 9th and join us at our Apokreatiko Glendi!

ΑΠΟΚΡΕΑΤΙΚΟ
GLENDI

March 9, 2024



Join us for Dinner, Dancing and Drinks!
Registration Coming Soon.

Sponsored by the Saint Athanasios
Philoptochos Society



VASILOPITA THROWDOWN

JANUARY 7, 2024

Calling ALL Bakers. We are raising funds for the St. Basil Orphanage!

This year we will have two categories for judging by the parish community:

Bread and Cake.

Philoptochos will match all funds raised and present a prize to the winners of each category!

If you would like to reserve your entry as a contestant, please contact Elli Koulos (ekoulos23@live.com) and specify bread or cake.



STEWARDSHIP

As 2023 comes to a close, we finish our 2023 Stewardship Campaign, "Giving Thanks", and start our 2024 Campaign, "Well Done, Good and Faithful Servant". Before doing so, we would like to review some of the key themes presented in our 2023 Champion Articles.

- In April, we presented the Chicago Metropolis definition of Stewardship ... Stewardship is our grateful and loving response to God's love, grace, and gifts to us.
- In May, we expanded on the giving of your Time and Talents as part of your Stewardship Commitment.
- In June, we expanded on the Giving of your Treasures as part of your Stewardship Commitment.
- In July/August, we focused on the fact that Stewardship Giving can be illustrated by Parishioners of all ages ... Stewardship is foundational to every aspect of our Church life. It is core to our faith, beliefs, and our everyday life. Without giving our Time, Talents, and Treasures, these items would not exist.
- In September, we used the analogy of returning to school at the end of the summer to Stewardship. We need to come back to our Stewardship Way of Life as the summer ends.
- In October, we focused on the role that Parents and Grandparents have in teaching the younger generations about Stewardship. These teachable moments are there if we stay alert, embrace them, and understand how to explain them to the younger generations that follow in our footsteps.
- In November, we discussed the need to connect with others in our Parish to drive their engagement and generosity.
- Finally, in December, we asked you to evaluate your 2023 Stewardship commitment and giving, and consider expanding your Stewardship commitment in 2024.

You can review the 2023 Stewardship Articles, by viewing them on the St. Athanasios website

In conclusion, as you lovingly and thoughtfully prepare your 2024 Stewardship commitment, we THANK YOU for your past, current, and future Stewardship Giving.

In His Service,
Elli Koulos and Pete Nassos

BOOK STORE

Father Panagiotis has a favorite title available for purchase in our Bookstore, *The Screwtape Letters*, by C.S. Lewis, to begin the New Year nurturing your spirituality. This modern classic features letters from a demon, Screwtape, to his nephew and protege, Wormwood. The elder demon gives advice on temptation to the younger and delves into moral questions about good vs. evil, repentance, and grace. Through this wonderful tale, we are given an insightful view at the true nature of sin to emerge with a better understanding about resisting temptation and living a faithful life.

January JOY Meeting



All Kinder - 5th graders are invited
to celebrate the

Baptism

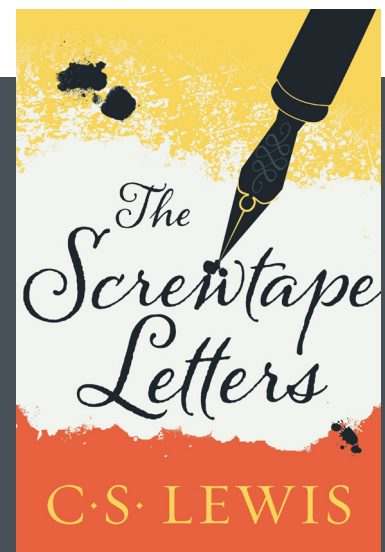
of

Jesus Christ

FRIDAY | JANUARY 12 | 6:00-7:30 PM

Saint Athanasios Church

Questions, please reach out to Amanda McKinney 630-533-2839 or Leah Fanning 630-664-3220



MEN'S GROUP

We are looking forward to an exciting 2024. Thank you all for your support and participation in this ministry! Here are a few upcoming events:

NFL Watch Party

Our annual NFL watch party will be Saturday, January 20th. A terrific opportunity to watch some playoff football and catch up with friends. Stay tuned for more details!

Hellenic College/Holy Cross (HCHC) Fundraiser

There was a great turnout on Thursday, November 9 for our fundraiser to help support HCHC. Special thanks to keynote speaker Mike Emanuel, Fr. Panagiotis Boznos, Spiro Hountalas, Peter Metrou, Louie Lambrou, Liuba Kichakov and Alex Magdalinos for their support of this event. Pictures available on our Facebook page.

Lionheart Series

We have completed two of the four Lionheart Sessions in 2024. Our third session will be Monday, February 5th. More details to follow.

Hesed House Dinner Service

We will continue our quarterly Hesed House dinner service in 2024. Look for more information on our serving 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 (pnmlawyer@aol.com) or Nick Dagiantis (ndagiantis@gmail.com).



**MEN'S GROUP
WATCH PARTY**
JANUARY 20, 2024

More Details Coming Soon!



**MEN'S
RESOURCE**
FAITHTREE.ORG

LIONHEART SESSIONS

**A VIDEO-BASED
SMALL GROUP STUDY FOR THE
MEN IN YOUR COMMUNITY**

LIONHEART SESSIONS

Fr. Panagiotis will be leading a 4 part series on what true Christian manhood looks like. Lessons will include men as servant-leaders, men in relationships, overcoming obstacles that stand in the way of authentic manhood, and the pursuit of God in Community. More details to follow.

Save These Dates:

- Monday, February 5, 2024
- Monday, April 15, 2024



SIGN UP

Please contact Nick Dagiantis at ndagiantis@gmail.com with any questions.

JR. GOYA

JANUARY 14, 2024

Happy New Year Jr. Goyans!


We hope you had a joyous and restful Christmas break. This month we will resume our biannual meetings. On Sunday, January 14th we will be meeting in St. Matthew hall immediately after Sunday School and again at 7pm on Thursday, January 25th at the Botsis Home (1176 Hobson Mill Dr, Naperville).

We look forward to seeing some new faces in our group as we kick off 2024.



2023 SAINT ATHANASIOS
Christmas
Pageant





SAINT

ATHANASIOS

THE GREAT

You're Invited

SAINT ATHANASIOS

FEAST DAY LUNCHEON

JANUARY 21, 2024 | 11:30 AM | SAINT MATTHEW HALL

ADMISSION:

\$20 PER TICKET

\$10 PER CHILD (12 AND UNDER)

RSVP BY JAN 14 TO:

FOTI GEORGOPOULOS

CALL 630-251-3462 or

EMAIL Fotig1985@gmail.com

Funds raised will contribute to the Saint Athanasios Capital Campaign



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KITCHEN — BAR — MARKET

CHE FIGATA

ITALY TO TABLE



JANUARY 2024



THE BAPTISM
OF OUR LORD



A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

THE CHAMPION



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