

THE CHAMPION

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

SEPTEMBER 2023



MESSAGE FROM FR. PANAGIOTIS

“That all should be saved and come to the knowledge of truth.”

(1 Timothy 2:4)

With the start of the new Ecclesiastical Year (Sept 1), the kickoff the 2023/2024 ministry year (Sept 10), and the Aurora Greek Fest (Sept 22-24) the amount of activity in the Church seems as if it is going to skyrocket. With all this activity it can be easy to lose sight of the purpose behind all the action. Even for me the bustle of the beginning of the ministry year can move too quickly for me to stay attentive to our greater purpose.

It was while praying about this that the Lord helped to clarify for me. When I asked myself: What is the purpose behind the ministries of the Church? I was reminded of a line of scripture. It was clear as day “God our Savior desires that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). If this is my Lord’s desire and every day I pray “Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” then the work of the Church can be nothing other than working to fulfill God’s desire that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of truth.

Thinking of every activity, every ministry, every event, and even every interaction in light of attempting to fulfill God’s desire that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth has had a profound impact on how I view life within St. Athanasios.

This verse, the fulfilling of our Lord’s desire, must be the lens and filter through which all aspects of life within our parish pass. Take the upcoming Aurora Greek Fest as an example. Why do we host this festival? What is its purpose: to bring all who attend to salvation and the knowledge of the truth. The festival isn’t about food or even fundraising. It is about opening our doors so that people can enter our Church and meet Christ. Perhaps they meet Him in the warmth and hospitality of our volunteer. Or perhaps they meet Him when they encounter the Icon’s of Christ and the saints during a Church tour. Regardless of where, let’s be clear: the purpose of the festival is to bring people to Christ for their salvation.

That salvation comes to us through acquiring the knowledge of truth: truth about God and truth about ourselves. If this discovery of truth is also part of the Lord’s desire, then our ministries must also be focused on nurturing the search for deeper knowledge of God and deeper knowledge of ourselves. That is why we will be focusing our educational ministries this year in smaller interactions to help us go an inch long but a mile deep as opposed to a mile long and an inch deep. Look forward to our Small Group sessions on the Divine Liturgy and especially the Small Group sessions within the Men’s Group.

Whether it is through interactions at the festival, participation in the ministries of the parish, or simply our relations with God and neighbor, I entreat you to frame all of your life around an effort to fulfill God’s desire “that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of truth.”

Fr. Panagiotis

WEDDINGS

Nikolla Zguri & Dhimitra Gerco

BAPTISMS

Sophia Maniatis

(Daughter of Dan & Emelie Maniatis)

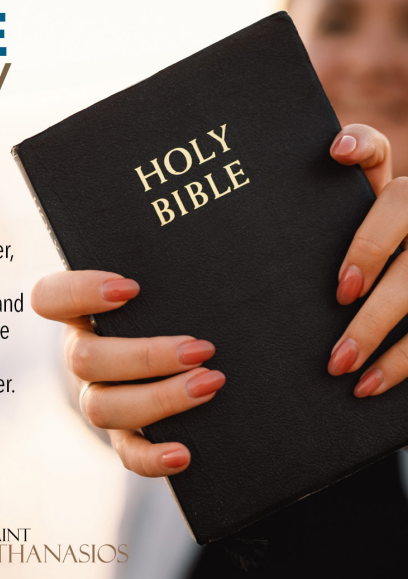
BLESSINGS

Ezekiel Ortega

(Son of Joel & Voula Ortega)

BIBLE STUDY

Join our Bible Study this Fall as we take a look at the Universal Letters of James, Peter, John, and Jude. Sessions are the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 11 am September-December.



SAINT
ATHANASIOS

PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE



I pray that you are all enjoyed your summer!

September 1st marks the ecclesiastical new year. Sunday school will be starting this month, as well as many of our ministries. Please be on the look out for email blasts, bulletins, and the church calendar for upcoming ministry meetings and events. Don't forget enroll your children in our Sunday school program as well!

Church Picnic: We will have our Ministry Fair and Church Family picnic on September 10th. This event will be sponsored by the Parish Council. As in previous years, this will be a free event and there will be games for our youth, and also the opportunity for all of us to be together in fellowship and a great opportunity to meet new families that have joined our Parish. Be sure to visit the tables that will be setup for our Ministry fair to learn about the many ministries that we have here at Saint Athanasios. More information will be sent out, so please be on the look out and join us!

Aurora Greek Fest: The fest will take place September 22nd – 24th. Please be on the lookout for email blasts with information about the festival. Sponsorship opportunities are available. Raffle tickets will be mailed out and information to be a sponsor or to donate a Gyro cone.

Wishing you all a blessed month!

Foti Georgopoulos
Parish Council President



SEPT. 22-24

LOCATION
SAINT ATHANASIOS
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
1855 EAST FIFTH AVE
AURORA IL

**CARRY OUT
CATERING**
630.851.6106

FEST TIMES
NOON TO 9 PM
(FRIDAY & SATURDAY)

NOON TO 7 PM
(SUNDAY)



www.auroragreekfest.com



Divine Liturgy

THE GREATEST INVITATION

Enrich your experience with the Divine Liturgy, the Greatest Invitation we will ever receive. In person small groups are forming soon. Use the QR code for an overview of the program.



For more information contact Maria Lambrou at makokoslambrou@yahoo.com

STUMP THE PRIEST

My 3-yr old granddaughter questioned why the priest was wearing a “kapelo” during the liturgy, and why he removed it during the Great Entrance. I had no answers, but we’re both looking forward to yours!

The black cylindrical hat that the clergy wear is called a Kalimavki, and is traditionally worn by all Orthodox clergymen; deacons, priests, and bishops. Celibate clergy and monks will also wear a black veil on top of their kalimavki. As a rule of thumb, clergy do not wear anything upon their heads while they are in the Holy Altar, with some specific exceptions (a bishop will wear his mitre, a celibate priest will wear his kalimavki and veil, and the deacon will wear his kalimavki during the great censing before the Great Entrance), but they will don their headwear when they are outside the Holy Altar (again with certain exception). For this reason, we are more accustomed to seeing Deacons wearing their kalimavki than Priests. Deacons spend the majority of their ministry outside of the Holy Altar on the Solea, and when they return to the Holy Altar periodically during the service, they will take their kalimavki off. During a typical Divine Liturgy, a married Priest will only wear his kalimavki when saying the dismissal from the royal gates.

The history and development of the kalimavki and other Orthodox headwear is quite interesting and tells us much about the effects of secular life upon the Church. Originally Orthodox clergy would not wear anything upon their heads, with the exception of monks who wore a veil but no kalimavki. As late as the 13th century, St. Symeon of Thessaloniki reports that the only clergymen in all of Orthodoxy who wears any type of hat or mitre is the Patriarch of Alexandria, and that this is an ancient tradition unique to that city. Following the fall of Constantinople to the Ottoman Empire, Christians within the empire faced varying degrees of limited acceptance and intolerance. One of the Ottoman tools of subjugation was the imposition of the kalimavki as a required article of clothing for all Orthodox clergy when they were in the public sphere. A visibly labeled people are easier to harass. This is a fact that oppressive regimes throughout history have known to be true.

Much like the Cross, the Orthodox clergy embraced the symbol of their persecution. Russian and Slavic Churches, which were never under the control of the Ottomans, adopted the kalimavki as part of their attire out of solidarity for their brothers who were being oppressed. By the time that the Ottoman empire fell, the kalimavki had become an accepted part of Orthodox Church's attire and a memorial to her time in captivity. The kalimavki had become so associated with the normal dress of Orthodox clergymen, that when the modern state of Turkey was established, its secular government, which sought to rid the country of religious observance, forbid Orthodox clergymen to wear it. What was once imposed on the Orthodox Church as an aid in oppression had now been taken away for that same reason.

If we look around the world, we see that the kalimavki, and its different cultural variations, is now considered standard in Orthodox attire, with the exception of in the United States. As the Orthodox Church came to the U.S. as an immigrant faith, its early adherents often times sacrificed religious identifiers for national identifiers. In the early 1900s in the U.S., a kalimavki communicated that you were foreign more than it communicated that you were an Orthodox clergyman. That seems to be changing in the last few generations of clergymen in the U.S. As Clergy are more secure in their national identity as Americans, the religious symbols that previous generations sacrificed for assimilation are making a return. With that re-embrace of Orthodox identifiers, the kalimavki is becoming more visible in Orthodox parishes around the U.S.

BOOK REVIEW

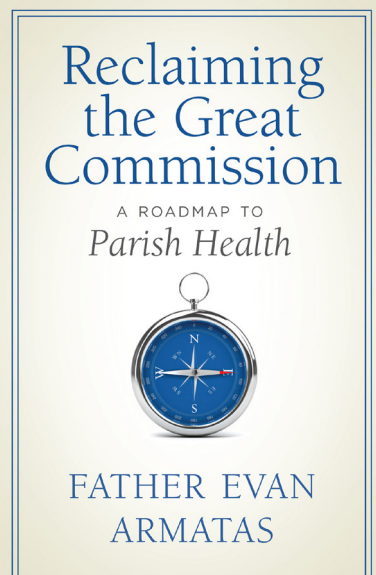
By Ted Dulles

Reclaiming the Great Commission: A Roadmap to Parish Health

The original Greek word for fellowship is “koinonia” which is used to indicate the deep and intimate relationship shared by a group of people. When I read this sentence in this book by Father Evan Armatas, I immediately thought of our beloved St. Athanasios Church family.

Father Evan, in his insightful observations of how we live our faith while being impacted by American Christianity, brings the wisdom that he acquired by being a Greek Orthodox Priest for over 20 years, and his lifelong Orthodox Christian journey in America.

This book is inspired by Jesus' last words to his disciples “Go... and make disciples of all nations” (Matt. 28: 19-20). If you are curious as to how that commandment would be put into motion in a local parish community, this book portrays this with excellent illustrations. Anyone in our parish can benefit from the learnings described by Fr. Evan. The title includes the phrase “A roadmap to parish health” but this book offers more than a roadmap since it is an edifying spiritual guide to how we can journey closer to the Lord and a Life in Christ.



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)

Friday, September 1st

Divine Liturgy - Indiction
(Beginning of the Ecclesiastical Year)

Sunday, September 3rd

Divine Liturgy - 13th Sunday of Matthew

Wednesday, September 6

11am Bible Study

Friday, September 8th

Divine Liturgy - Nativity of the Theotokos
6pm JOY Meeting

Saturday, September 9th

10am Choir - Welcome Back Social & Rehearsal

Sunday, September 10th

Divine Liturgy - Sunday Before Holy Cross
Ministry Fair/Welcome Back Picnic
Sunday School Starts

Tuesday, September 12

6pm - Men's Group Welcoming Back BBQ

Wednesday, September 13th

7pm - Vespers - Exaltation of the Holy Cross
Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church
7560 Archer Rd, Justice, IL 60458

Thursday, September 14th

Divine Liturgy - Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Saturday, September 16th

11:30am Philoptochos Kickoff Luncheon
7pm - Vespers - St Sophia & Her Three Daughters
St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church
525 Church Rd., Elgin, IL 60123

Sunday, September 17th

Divine Liturgy - Sunday after the Cross
12pm Altar Boy Orientation

Monday, September 18

Operation Classroom
6:30 pm GOYA meeting

Thursday, September 21st

7pm - Jr. GOYA Fireside with Father

Friday, September 22nd

12pm Aurora Greek Fest

Saturday, September 23rd

12pm Aurora Greek Fest

Sunday, September 24th

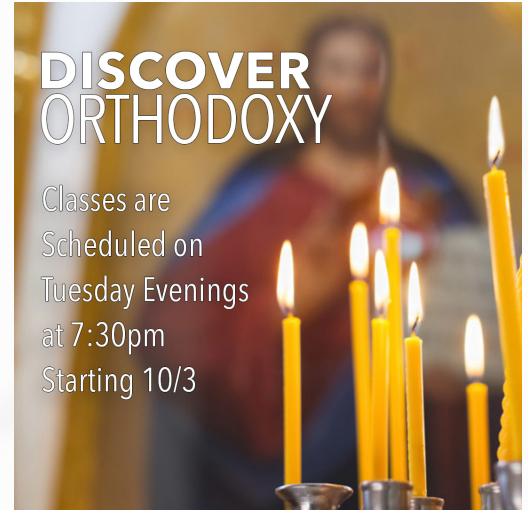
Divine Liturgy - 1st Sunday of Luke
12 pm Aurora Greek Fest

Tuesday, September 26th

Divine Liturgy - Falling Asleep of St John the
Theologian

Wednesday, September 27th

11am Bible Study



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:

Juice Box and Crackers

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

PHILOPTOCHOS

Thank you to everyone who donated to our first Feed The Hungry activity in August. Volunteers gathered at church to assemble lunches of roast beef sandwiches, chips, apples, granola bars, breadsticks and peanut butter, homemade cookies and water. We distributed 144 lunches to the homeless outside Annunciation Cathedral and delivered extra sandwiches to migrants camped outside the local police station. Our next Feed The Hungry date is November 7th. We are planning our Fall Kickoff for September 16th. Family Bingo will be back on October 7th. We hope you'll join us for these events!

We have a number of activities in the works for fall, including a kickoff event and fall fundraiser. More details to come!



COLLEGE MINISTRY

During the next few months, the Saint Athanasios College Ministry is glad to introduce to the Parish our College Students who are expected to graduate in May of 2024, and to highlight their profiles. The first profile is of Anthony Collins.



Anthony Collins

Anthony Collins is attending the University of Iowa College, with his major in Business Analytics. His favorite class so far has been "Data Visualization". The Orthodox Church he attends while at College is Saint Raphael at Iowa City. He expects to graduate in May of 2024 and his short-term plan after graduation is to find a job at a Technology Company. In the future, he would like to start a Blockchain Technology Company of his own.

Anthony's favorite sport is golf. His favorite team is the Chicago Blackhawks and his preferred player is Connor Bedard from Canada. His favorite season is winter, related to his love of hockey. He enjoys Greek food, and his favorite restaurant is "COVO" at Bolingbrook. What he likes most about the Saint Athanasios Parish is its community and building relationships and friendships within and outside the church.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sign up for Sunday School!!

Have your students join us in learning about Christ's love by registering them for the upcoming Sunday School year! First day of Sunday School is September 10th. Payment can be made at the end of the registration form. Cost is \$35.00 per child. Scan QR Code to register your student!

Please contact **Voula Ortega** at sundayschool@saintathanasios.com with any questions.



Register

STEWARDSHIP

Back to Stewardship

Vacations, camps and summer activities are winding down and for parents, the focus is now on Back to School. Even in July, we see commercials for sales on school supplies and backpacks as a reminder to plan ahead for the beginning of school in August/September and beyond. Even without children in school, we are planning for a new season... getting the last vegetables from our gardens and finishing the outdoor warm weather projects that are almost impossible to do in colder months. This is a time to question ourselves...how do we get our planning and mindset back to stewardship??

As you know, stewardship components are Time, Talents and Treasures and now is a time to plan for how we will share these gifts with our beloved St. Athanasios. Here's how to Get Back to Stewardship.....

Time: Mark your calendars for important dates where you can give time to the church. Examples of dates to save might include attending the Philoptochos Membership kick-off on September 16th, helping serve a meal with the Men's Group on August 31 at the Heses House, volunteering at the Aurora Fall Food Festival on September 22 - 24, and many more events highlighted in the Champion.

Talents: We all have many skills that can be offered in stewardship. Writing a book review for the Champion, helping plant spring flowers in front of the church, baking delicious sweets to be sold at the Festival, organizing volunteers for a fundraising event, supporting the many ministries that are starting in the fall, etc. are all examples of talents we have and that can be benefited by our church. As you Get Back to Stewardship, do not forget the ways (big or small) you can use your talents.

Treasures: Completing your annual 2023 stewardship pledge and planning at year-end for your 2024 pledge is something to plan/budget for. Prayerfully consider how and when to use your treasures to help support the financial obligations of the church and the ministries that help others. This may also include donating flowers for St. Athanasios Vespers or something as simple as buying a meal for the homeless.

As we Get Back to Stewardship, let's be playful, thoughtful and joyful offering our Time, Talents and Treasures to help our St. Athanasios thrive. Remember, your Stewardship of Time, Talents, and Treasures provides the foundation for our Parish Ministries and our efforts in meeting the challenge of spreading Christ's Word and our Orthodox Faith.

In your Service,
Pete Nassos & Elli Koulos



The 2023 St. Athanasios Golf Outing was held on Monday, June 12th at the Carillon Golf Club. We had outstanding weather, a turnout of 122 golfers playing in the event and even more staying for dinner and awards presentation. The committee would like to thank all who participated in and supported the outing with sponsorships, prizes, and/or their time. Special thanks to all all golf committee members, and the volunteers who helped in the preparation as well as day of outing tasks. We are pleased to announce that the financial results were the best ever. We had a budget of \$20,000 net, and we netted \$24,399! Proceeds will go towards the Nancy Gladis foundation (Fanari Camp Scholarship) and other ministries of the parish.

We look forward to another great event next year, so please SAVE THE DATE: Monday, June 10, 2024 for the 2024 St. Athanasios Golf Outing!

GOYA

For our kick-off, GOYA volunteered at the Aurora Interfaith Food Pantry and enjoyed lunch together afterwards. Attendees noticed a need for clothes for junior high/high school aged children, so we will be collecting washed, gently used items on the first day of Sunday School to donate as the school year begins. Our next meeting is September 18th from 6-8:30pm at the church. We will be partnering with Philoptochos to sort the generously donated care closet items for our fall drive!



MEN'S GROUP

Thank you all for your support and participation in this ministry. For those of you that may not be familiar with us, we are a Group of Orthodox friends who gather to share their experiences about life, their philosophies, values and ideas. We meet to provide charity, support, mentoring and build fellowship among the Orthodox community of men in the western suburbs.

Our upcoming events for the rest of 2023

Hesed House Dinners

We will be preparing and serving dinner for over two hundred residents on the Thursdays of August 31 & November 30. The Hesed House is the second largest homeless shelter in Illinois and is located in Aurora. This effort has become a truly fulfilling mission of our Orthodox faith and community outreach of our parish. The effort is also open to all our parishioners to participate.

BBQ Get Together

Come join us for a BBQ on Tuesday, September 12th at church. We will be grilling, eating and enjoying refreshments. This will be a great opportunity to catch up with friends, meet new members and learn about our upcoming activities.

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology Fundraising Event

We are working with the Metropolis and Alumni Association of HCHC on a dinner event to benefit the Hellenic College/Holy Cross School of Theology this fall. This will be the first time an event like this is being held on a Chicago Metropolis event level. This will be a fantastic opportunity to support seminarians and future leaders of the Orthodox Church. Date and additional details to follow shortly.

Blood Drive

The Men's Group will sponsor a blood drive on Saturday, November 4, 9:00am-1:00pm. Every donor will save up to 3 lives! More details will follow.

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

We welcome men (21+) to join us as we grow our mission. If interested, please contact Spiro Hountalas (naperspike@aol.com), Peter Metrou (pnmlawyer@aol.com) or Nick Dagiantis (ndagiantis@gmail.com).



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, October 16, 2023
- Monday, December 18, 2023
- Monday, February 5, 2024
- Monday, April 15, 2024

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



FAMILY BINGO NIGHT

OCTOBER 7, 2023 6:00 PM
SAINT ATHANASIOS CHUCH

Adults - \$15
Kids 12 and under - \$10

Admission includes dinner, one BINGO card, and tons of fun.

Additional cards and concessions will be available for purchase that night.

50/50 raffle and prizes for ALL Bingo winners

Proceeds will go to Radical Love serving needy children, seniors and immigrants in the Fox Valley area: <http://theradicallove.org>.

**QUESTIONS, PLEASE REACH OUT
TO LEAH FANNING AT
LEAH_FANNING@YAHOO.COM**



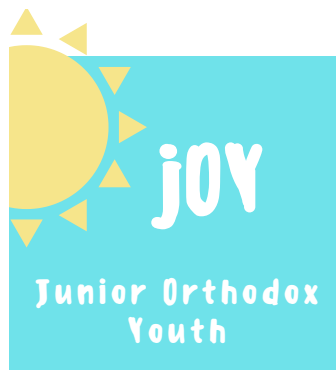
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- SHAMPOO
- CONDITIONER
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- FEMININE PRODUCTS

GOYA & Philoptochos are collecting new, full-size toiletry items for schools in Bartlett.

Buy directly from the Amazon Wishlist or buy products of similar quality. If purchasing from Amazon, ship the items directly to the church.

Please bring items to church by **September 16.**



Fostering relationships of young Orthodox Christians through fellowship and stewardship!

Friday September 8th from 6-7:30 in Saint Matthews Hall. We look forward to connecting with our elementary school (K-5) youth. Snack provided.

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

Email: joy@saintathanasios.com

Mark your calendars now for future JOY meetings -
Our subsequent meetings will be 10/13, 11/17, 12/15, 1/12, 2/2, 3/8, 4/12 and 5/10.
All to occur at church from 6:00-7:30 pm



Gyros Drive We Need Your Help!

Donate a Gyro Cone

\$150 Per Cone
30 Cone Goal!



Contact Foti for donations at fotig1985@gmail.com or call 630.251.3462

Sept. 22-24



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EVENT WITH US

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Gyros | Pastichio | Mousaka

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ITALY TO TABLE



SEPTEMBER 2023



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