

THE CHAMPION

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

MAY 2023



MESSAGE FROM FR. PANAGIOTIS

Christ is Risen! Χριστός Ανέστη!

For the majority of this month we will continue in the joy and light of the Resurrection of Christ, yet we will end the month with the conclusion of Pascha and the celebration of our Lord's ascension. After His resurrection, He appeared among His disciples and followers, and beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself (Luke 24:27). When the time had come, after forty days, Christ gave His final commands to His disciples, and ascended into Heaven. This year we will celebrate the feast of Ascension on May 25th.

It is those final commands that I would like us to think about this May. The Evangelists tell us that Christ's last words were a commission to preach and spread the Gospel to all:

"Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations." (Luke 24:47)

And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." (Mark 16:15)

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18)

St. Matthew describes sharing the faith and bringing others into the Church as a COMMANDMENT of God, something that is in fact required of us. Many of us might feel intimidated by this, or that it is not actually our place to "preach" to others. The best way for us to begin is exactly as Christ began with His disciples. As He called them, He used the simple phrase: Come and See. The Lord has worked wonders in your life, and will work wonders in the lives of those you invite. Share with those around you the blessings, challenges, and mercy that God has bestowed on you. And then, invite them to Come and See.

As Christ ascends, He shares with us the responsibility for introducing the world to God. What a beautiful and heavy gift He gives. But He does not leave us without help. The upcoming feast of Pentecost celebrates God sending His Holy Spirit upon the members of the Church to give us the strength and power to fulfill His Ascension Commandment. Let us take strength from the last days of Pascha, before turning our attention to evangelizing all nations.

Fr. Panagiotis



Junior Olympics

May 27-28, 2023

Activities for ages 7-18 include, soccer, tennis, track and field, softball, volleyball, swimming, chess, tavli and more. 10k open for ages 13- adults. Registration coming soon. For more information contact:

Maria Lambrou: saintathanasiosjro@gmail.com



PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE



Xpistos Anesti!

PASCHA: What a beautiful Holy Week and PASCHA for all of us to celebrate together as a Church family. We thank Fr. Panagiotis for the beautiful services, as well as Deacon Nick Anton. Deacon Nick is a native of the Chicagoland area, and we were blessed to have him. Thank you to our Chanters and our Choir. Our Altar boys did such a phenomenal job this week. I also thank our wonder Parish Council for all their work during Holy Week and dedication to our Parish. We thank Metropolitan Nathanael and His Grace Bishop Timothy for being with us as well.

Building Damage due to storm: Several weeks ago we had a very bad storm that came through the Chicagoland area. Due to this storm, there was some damage that was caused to our Church. There was some gutter damage on the dome, air flow intake unit was bent and the panel flew off, some flashing on our building got removed, our flag pole was bent and had to come down. We are working on getting quotes for the flag pole, and have made the necessary repairs for the other areas. I would like to thank Alex Pagonis, for handling taking the flag pole down as it became a huge safety issue.

Upcoming Events: Our GOYA will be having the end of Year BBQ on Friday, May 5th; Men's Group Blood Drive will take place on Saturday, May 6th 9:00 am – 1:00 pm. Joy Meeting on Friday, May 12th at 6:30 pm. The Aurora Greek Fest May 19th -21st. Our College Ministry Welcome back lunch & Get to work on May 20th during the festival. Please be sure to sign up your children and yourself for these events.

Aurora Greek Fest: Mark your calendar as our Aurora Greek Fest will take place May 19th – 21st. Please be on the look out for Sponsorship information, our Donation list and Gyro Drive. For a successful festival, we also need volunteers. If you have never helped at the festival, now is your time. We have many areas that we need assistance in, be on the lookout for our volunteer sheet once we get close to the festival. If you are interested in making a donation or volunteering, please feel free to contact me. Wishing all of you a happy and blessed month!

Foti Georgopoulos
Parish Council President



MAY 19-21
ST. ATHANASIOS CHURCH



www.auroragreekfest.com

STUMP THE PRIEST

Why do we wear our wedding rings on our right hand?

Given that we are about to enter into wedding season this seems like a very timely question. While it is culturally more common in the United States to wear the wedding ring on the left hand, that is not a universal practice. In many European countries the cultural practice is to wear the wedding ring on the Right hand. Although much of the preference comes down to cultural differences, for the Orthodox wearing the wedding ring on the right hand is a theological statement.

In the scriptures the right hand is always a place of honor, especially when compared against the left hand, take the separation of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25. The righteous sheep are placed at the right hand of God, while the unrighteous goats take their place at the left hand of God. Moreover, in the book of Exodus, the Israelites sing a hymn praising God for delivering them from Pharaoh by His Right Hand: "Your Right hand, O God, is glorified in strength; Your right hand, O God, dashed the enemies in pieces" (Exodus 15:6).

When the priest blesses the couple's wedding rings, he references this verse of Exodus and the blessing of God's right hand.

"Your own right hand, Lord, armed Moses in the Red Sea; by the word of Your truth were the heavens established and the foundations of the earth made firm; and the right hands of Your servants shall likewise be blessed by Your mighty word and Your upraised arm" (Prayer of the Blessing of the Rings).

So during the wedding service we are asking God that the couple be granted the strength of God's right hand, which protects and creates. By putting the rings on the right hand, we remind the couple that their marriage is a source of blessing for them, and that it calls them to live a holy life. If their right hand is blessed to symbolically imitate God's right hand, then their whole marriage by extension is to symbolically imitate God's life. That is essentially the same point that St. Paul makes about marriage in Ephesians 5:20-33, which is the Epistle read at Orthodox weddings.

Saint Athanasios Bible Boot Camp

JUNE 13-16, 2023 (9:00 AM - NOON)

Calling all Kindergarten through 5th grade students, join us for this year's summer camp: Saint Athanasios Bible Boot Camp!! This 4 day spiritual boot camp will be filled with games, crafts, music time, and more! Children will learn how to "put on the full armor of God" by participating in discussions, playing games, making "armor," praying and studying parts of the Bible. This is a great opportunity for students to learn all about how to be warriors for Christ! Join us for the camp and better prepare yourself to be privates in Christ's army!



Register for
Camp



Volunteer
Sign Up

Saint Athanasios
Bible Boot Camp
Summer Camp 2023

- KINDERGARTEN TO 5TH GRADE STUDENTS!**
- JUNE 13 - JUNE 16, 2023 | 9:00AM - NOON**
- SAINT ATHANASIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**
- \$40 PER ATTENDEE**

Register Here

6TH - 12TH GRADERS! We need volunteers! Sign up here!

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, May 5

6pm GOYA End of Year Party

Saturday, May 6

9am Blood Drive

Sunday, May 7

Divine Liturgy - Sunday of the Paralytic
11am Parish General Assembly

Wednesday, May 10

Divine Liturgy - Mid Pentecost
11am Bible Study; Book of Exodus

Friday, May 12

6:30pm JOY meeting

Sunday, May 14

Divine Liturgy - Sunday of the Samaritan Woman

Monday, May 15

6:30 pm Philoptochos General Meeting

Friday, May 19

12pm Aurora Greek Fest

Saturday, May 20

12pm Aurora Greek Fest
College Ministry - Welcome Back Lunch & Get to Work
7pm Vespers - SS. Constantine & Helen
Greek Orthodox Church
108 N 5th St, Rockford, IL 61107

Sunday, May 21

Divine Liturgy - SS. Constantine & Helen
12pm Aurora Greek Fest

Wednesday, May 24

Divine Liturgy - Leave-taking of Pascha
11am Bible Study; Book of Exodus
7am Vespers - Ascension of Our Lord
Greek Orthodox Church
1207 Riverwoods Rd, Lincolnshire, IL 60069

Thursday, May 25

Divine Liturgy - Ascension of Our Lord

Saturday, May 27

Metropolis of Chicago Junior Olympics

Sunday, May 28

Divine Liturgy - Fathers of the 1st Council
Metropolis of Chicago Junior Olympics

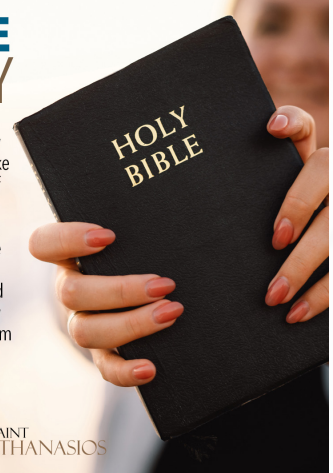
USHER MINISTRY

We are looking for volunteers to join our new Usher Ministry. Ushers help serve weekday, weekend and Sunday Liturgies. Duties include welcoming parishioners, passing trays and assisting with Communion and Church dismissal.

Interested? Contact Foti Georgopoulos at fotig1985@gmail.com to Join

BIBLE STUDY

Join our Bible Study this Spring as we take a look at the book of Exodus and the journey of Israel out of Egypt to await the promised land. Sessions are the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of the month at 11am February-May.



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



On behalf of the ministry Food Pantry, we wanted to thank all our parishioners for continuing to support our initiative and providing food to those in need. We are in need of volunteers to assist with drop off, please see below for details. 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! This month we are asking for

Beans and Canned Fruit

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

PHILOPTOCHOS

What a wonderful April filled with faith and fun! We started the month out by hosting the Metropolis-wide Philoptochos Lenten Retreat at our own St. Athanasios. Almost 200 women came together to attend services, share a meal, and learn from both Father Panagiotis Boznos and Father Andrew Georganas. Thank you to Father Pangiotis and to the committee for working so hard to make the day a success.

This year we also hosted a Good Friday lunch for the community again. Thank you to everyone who contributed by bringing Lenten food to share. Finally, we teamed up with the Men's group and filled Easter Baskets for Aurora Interfaith Food Pantry. We filled 100 baskets to donate!



GOYA

END OF YEAR PARTY
MAY 5, 2023 (6:00 PM)

All High School kids please join us for the GOYA End of Year Party on Friday, May 5th starting at 6:00 PM. More details to follow on church bulletin.

Please contact **Margarita Altidis** at margarita.altidis@gmail.com with any questions.

JOY

JOY SUMMER KICK-OFF
MAY 12, 2023 (6:30 PM)

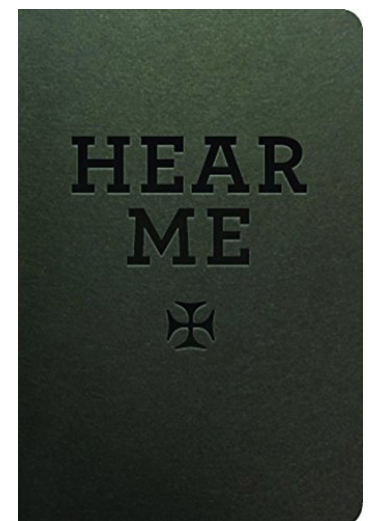
All kindergarten through 8th grade families please join us on Friday May 12th 6:30-8:00 pm at Saint Athanasios. Dinner will be served. Kids will enjoy a spiritual lesson, Greek dancing, and field games!

Please contact **Chrissy Pagonis** at chrissy@alexpagonis.com with any questions.

BOOKSTORE

Book Review: Hear Me: A Prayer Book for Orthodox Young Adults, by Annalisa Boyd.

This very popular book for Orthodox youth has more prayers, answers more questions, and discusses difficult subject matter. The smaller design is easy to carry in a pocket, purse, or backpack for inspiration at any time to help young people walk with Christ in prayer and spiritual inspiration. Vaia Papadimitriou recommends this title as a graduation gift for high schoolers to help them on their path as they move to their next steps. Stop in our Bookstore to purchase this book soon.



STEWARDSHIP

We all know that there are three types of Stewardship ... Time, Talents, and Treasures. In December 2022, we heard two beautiful testimonials by Spiro Hountalas and Voula Ortega on Time and Talents. You can view these testimonials and read summaries of them under the Stewardship tab in the St. Athanasios website.

Time and Talents Stewardship can be seen every day in our parish life. In a two-week period, we witnessed six activities that illustrate examples of Time and Talents Stewardship:

1. Assembly of the St. Athanasios Champion by a group of ladies who do this every month.
2. Beautification of our church in preparation of Holy Week and Easter
3. Preparation and serving of almost 300 dinners at the Hesed House by our Men's Group
4. Assembly of Easter Baskets by the Philoptochos and Men's Group for distribution by the Aurora Interfaith Food Pantry
5. Setup for the annual Metropolis Philoptochos Lenten retreat held at St. Athanasios
6. Preparation of the Virgin Mary's Icon by a dedicated parishioner for the Friday evening services during Lent

Thank you to all of the individuals who participated in these and other activities, and gave their Time and Talents in many different ways to serve the Lord and help others within and outside our beloved Parish through our Ministries. This is something that we all should be very proud of.

In the upcoming two months, here are more opportunities to volunteer your Time & Talents.

- Men's Group Blood Drive, May 6
- Aurora Greek Festival, May 19 – 21
- Junior Olympics, May 27 – 28
- Opa Open Golf Outing, June 12
- Summer Camp, June 13 – 16

Next month we will explore the third component of Stewardship ... Treasures.

In your service,
Pete Nassos & Elli Koulos



MEN'S GROUP

Xristos Anesti!

Thank you all for your support and participation in this ministry. We have an upcoming blood drive and information on a fundraising event. You can read more below.

Blood Drive

The Men's Group will sponsor a blood drive on Saturday, May 6, 9:00am-1:00pm. Every donor will save up to 3 lives!

Please consider this life-saving opportunity by scheduling an appointment (walk-ins are welcome). More details in the Friday emails on how to register.

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology Fundraising Event

The Men's Group is working on a dinner event to benefit the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in June. This will be a great opportunity to support future seminarians. (See our ad on page 9)

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).



Saturday
May

6

9:00am - 1:00pm

Helpful tip:
Make sure to eat a healthy meal and drink plenty of water before donating.

PHOTO ID IS REQUIRED.

Call (630) 723-2589 with eligibility questions.

SAINT ATHANASIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH BLOOD DRIVE

Sponsored by the Men's Group

Located in St. Matthew Hall at 1855 E 5th Ave, Aurora

Appointments appreciated; walk-ins welcome!

To schedule, go to www.versiti.org/IL, load the Versiti Donor app, call (800) 770-GIVE, or scan the QR code below.

EVERY DONOR WILL SAVE UP TO 3 LIVES!



SAINT ATHANASIOS UPCOMING PILGRIMAGES



SUMMER 2023

St. John Chrysostom Monastery

Wisconsin



FEBRUARY 2024

Holy Land

Israel



Gyros Drive

We Need Your Help!

Donate a Gyro Cone

\$150 Per Cone

40 Cone Goal!

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



Monday, June 12, 2023

OPA OPEN

Presented by Saint Athanasios Church

Location

21200 S Carillon Dr,
Plainfield, IL 60544
(815) 886-2132
www.carillongolf.com

Event Details

Registration & Lunch: 11:30-12:15 PM
Tee Off: 12:30 PM
Shotgun-Scamble
On course contests for players of all abilities
Dress Code: Golf Attire
Dinner: 5:30 PM
Raffle & Auctions

What's Included

Golfers: \$175
Juniors (18& Under): \$125
Golf/Cart/Range Balls
Lunch (Dogs/Burgers/Sand)
Prime Rib & Chicken Dinner
On-Course Games & Prizes
Duffers Kits/1st Tee Gift
Non-Golfers Dinner
Adults \$50
Kids (12 & Under): \$15

All Proceeds Go to St. Athanasios Ministries



How Do We Sign up?

- Sign up and pay on church website: saintathanasios.com/golf
- Sunday's after service in church hall
- Call church office: 630-851-6106

Questions?

Contact Frank Demas at 224.805.6920 or Pete Nassos at panassos@gmail.com

Sponsorship Opportunities Available



SATURDAY OF LAZARUS RETREAT RECAP

Thank you to all those who participated in and volunteered to help with the Saturday of Lazarus Retreat! Our students had a blast baking Lazarakia, venerating Saint Lazarus' icons, making their crafts, and learning hymns for Pascha! Big thank you to the volunteers who helped lead sessions and guide students throughout the program! Check out some photos from the day by scanning the QR code below!



SCAN QR CODE TO VIEW PHOTOS FROM EVENT



Fundraiser

HELLENIC COLLEGE/HOLY
CROSS GREEK ORTHODOX
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

JUNE 22

EMPRESS BANQUET HALL

ADDISON, IL

6 TO 9 PM

Join Us to Help Raise Funds to Educate the Future Leaders of the Orthodox Church

Hellenic College is that rare undergraduate with a higher purpose: to foster the moral and spiritual as well as intellectual development of every student.

Holy Cross is a graduate school of theology that educates and forms Orthodox Christian men and women for service to the Church and society. Whether preparing for the holy priesthood or for lay vocations in which they can put their faith into action, HCHC students make up a vibrant community engaged in pursuing the eternal truths of Christ's message of salvation for all the world.

TICKETS \$100 (PERSON) | \$1,000 (TABLE)

**KEYNOTE
SPEAKER**



**MIKE
EMANUEL**

Chief Washington
Correspondent
FOX News Channel



RSVP BY JUNE 15
SCAN QR CODE
OR CALL 630.851.6106

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ST. ATHANASIOS MEN'S GROUP &
THE HCHC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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- Lunch
- Dinner

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Family Restaurant

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Montgomery, IL 60538 630-892-1100



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NAPERVILLE, IL

coffee | fresh bakery | breakfast & lunch | gelato & sorbetto
monday - saturday 6 am - 4 pm | sunday 7 am - 3 pm



CityGate Centre | Route 59 & Ferry Road in Naperville | A Calamos Family Property

MAY 2023

Making
Disciples
of All
Nations



A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

THE CHAMPION



SAINT
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