

THE CHAMPION

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

MARCH 2023



MESSAGE FROM FR. PANAGIOTIS

Praying Through Lent

Few prayers are as synonymous with the Lenten season as the Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim. Perhaps we may be familiar with this prayer, but I am sure that for many this will be an introduction. The Church adds the prayer of St. Ephraim all our weekday Lenten services, and also recommends that each individual should add this prayer to our own personal daily prayer rule for the period of the Fast.

So what is it about this prayer that makes it so central to Lent? It is the fact that this prayer is a perfect balance between overcoming our vices as well as cultivating the virtues. It asks for God's grace to turn from sin, and likewise His strength to turn toward righteousness. Throughout Lent as we focus on our spiritual growth in anticipation of the Resurrection, it can be difficult to balance both of these aspects. Often we tend to emphasize overcoming vice through practices like Holy Confession. But we must also wholeheartedly pursue the good. The first two verses of this prayer balance one another and keep us focused during Lent on the transformation that comes from both eliminating sin as well as nurturing goodness.

With the last verse of the prayer we are reminded to keep our attention focused on our own growth. The temptation during Lent is to compare ourselves to those around us. The phrase "keep your eyes on your own plate" is quite appropriate for Lent, and not just because of the practice of fasting.

Lastly the Prayer of St. Ephraim intentionally incorporates the practice of prostrations (making the sign of the Cross, kneeling, and touching our head to the floor). In reference to prostrations the 14th century Metropolitan Theoleptos of Philadelphia said, "Do not neglect prostration. It provides an image of man's fall into sin and expresses the confession of our sinfulness. Getting up, on the other hand, signifies repentance and the promise to lead a life of virtue." The act of prostration is a physical expression of the words we discussed above. They incorporate our bodies into the very prayer we are offering with our souls. In this way, our entire being is offering the prayer.

The prayer is as follows:

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk.

(Prostration)

But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant.

(Prostration)

Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen.

(Prostration)

As we walk through this Lenten season, I pray that you will embrace the Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim as a daily part of your prayer life.

Fr. Panagiotis

Community Palm Folding Pot Luck

April 7, 2023

6:00PM

Saint Matthew Hall



PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE

Lent: As we begin Lent on February 26th, I hope you were able to participate in the Forgiveness Vespers on Sunday evening and enjoyed a nice Ice Cream social. Please be sure to join us for Lenten services during the course of Lent. Also, join us on Wednesday evenings after presanctified liturgies for our Lenten discussion were different ministries will provide a meal for all attending.

Stewardship: I would like to thank all parishioners for submitting and completing their 2022 stewardship pledge. There are families that still have a balance for 2022, we ask if you are able to send in your remaining balance. Thank you to all parishioners that have turned in their 2023 Stewardship pledge form.

Upcoming Events: Our Men's group will be having a March Madness event at Spartan Ale House on March 18th, please join us! They will also be cooking for Hesus House on March 30th. If you are interested in participating, please contact the Men's group. Our Sunday School Lenten Retreat will take place on April 8th. For children K – 5th grade. Please sign up your children today!

Aurora Greek Fest: Mark your calendar as our Aurora Greek Fest will take place May 19th – 21st. Please be on the lookout 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

Aurora Greek Fest



SAVE THE DATE!

MAY 19-21, 2023

Saturday of Lazarus Retreat

APRIL 8, 2023 (10:30 AM)

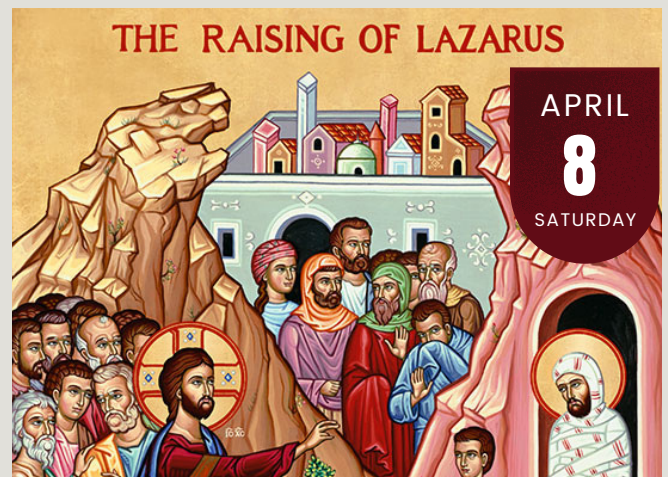
Calling all Kindergarten through 5th grade students, join us on Saturday, April 8th for the Saturday of Lazarus Retreat! You'll get to learn all about the raising of Lazarus during lunch, crafts, music, and game time! You will also have a chance to meet with Father and venerate Saint Lazarus's relics. And, the beloved cooking session is back; we'll be baking Lazarakia cookies again! Join us for this retreat and better prepare yourself for Pascha! There is a \$20 attendee registration fee and lunch/snacks will be provided to our students.



Register for
Retreat



Retreat Leader
Sign Up



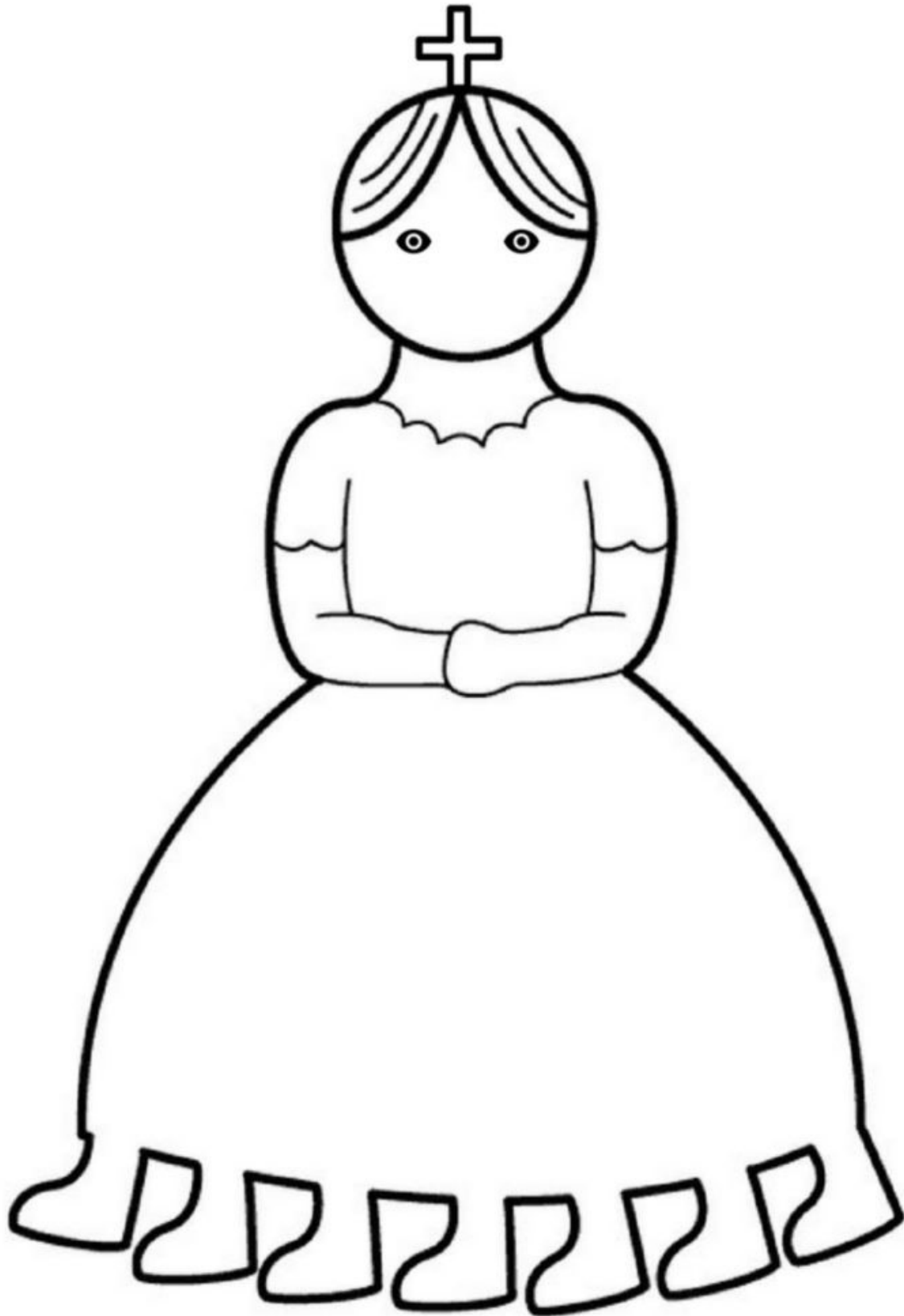
SATURDAY OF LAZARUS Retreat

10:30AM TO 2PM | STUDENTS K - 5TH GRADE
SAINT ATHANASIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
\$20 ATTENDEE REGISTRATION FEE

K - 5th grade students, join us for lunch, crafts, music, and games all in preparation for Pascha!

KYRA SARAKOTI (Lady Lent)

Kyra Sarakosti is a Greek Lenten tradition used to help families teach their children about Lent. She is often made out of a dry dough or in this case a drawing that can be colored and decorated before being displayed in the house. She has no mouth or ears to show that she does not speak or listen to gossip. Her hands are held in prayer, and she has seven feet (one for each week leading up to Pascha). Every Saturday the family tears off one of the feet to help keep track of the remaining time in Lent. We encourage you to cut this page out of the Champion, decorate Kyra Sarakosti with your family, hang the drawing on your refrigerator or by your icons, and utilize this Greek tradition to enrich your family's Lenten experience this year.



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)

Wednesday, March 1

6:00 pm Presanctified Liturgy
7:30 pm Lenten Dinner & Lecture
Parish Council/Speaker – Dr. Vaia Papadimitriou

Thursday, March 2

7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal

Friday, March 3

7pm Salutations to the Theotokos

Saturday, March 4

9:30 am Divine Liturgy – St Theodore & the Miracle of Kolyva

Sunday, March 5

Divine Liturgy – Sunday of Orthodoxy
10:45 am Sunday School Icon Procession
6 pm Pan-Orthodox Vespers
Holy Resurrection Serbian Orthodox Cathedral

Monday, March 6

6pm Great Compline

Wednesday, March 8

11am Bible Study; Book of Exodus
6 pm Presanctified Liturgy
7:30 pm Lenten Dinner & Lecture
Philoptochos/Speaker – Dn. Perry Hamalis

Thursday, March 9

7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal

Friday, March 10

7pm Salutations to the Theotokos

Sunday, March 12

Divine Liturgy - Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas
6:30 pm Conitron Vespers
Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church

Monday, March 13

6pm Great Compline

Tuesday, March 14

6pm GOYA Service Project

Wednesday, March 15

6pm Presanctified Liturgy

Thursday, March 16

7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal

Friday, March 17

6:30 pm JOY meeting
7pm Salutations to the Theotokos

Saturday, March 18

6pm Men's Group Social – March Madness
at Spartan Ale House

Sunday, March 19

Divine Liturgy - Sunday of the Cross
7pm Conitron Vespers
St George Greek Orthodox Church

Monday, March 20

6pm Great Compline

Wednesday, March 22

11am Bible Study: Book of Exodus
6pm Presanctified Liturgy
7:30 pm Lenten Dinner & Program: Choir
7:30 pm Choir Dress Rehearsal for Lamentation

Friday, March 24

Aurora Food Pantry Easter Baskets
7pm Vespers – Feast of Annunciation

Saturday, March 25

9:30 am Divine Liturgy – Annunciation of the Theotokos

Sunday, March 26

Divine Liturgy - Sunday of St John Ciimacus
7pm Conitron Vespers
St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church (Elmhurst)

Monday, March 27

6pm Great Compline

Tuesday, March 28

7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal

Wednesday, March 29

6pm Presanctified Liturgy
7:30 pm Lenten Dinner & Lectures
Men's Group/Speaker – Fr. Nick Lionas

Thursday, March 30

6pm Men's Group – Preparing Dinner for Hesus House

Friday, March 31

7 pm Akathist Hymn

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!



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

Rice and Cereal Bars

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

PHILOPTOCHOS

Our Vasilopita Throwdown was a HUGE success! Thank you to all who baked and sampled the 13 entries and a BIG thank you to Elli Koulos and Amy Gladis for chairing this very successful event. We raised \$1450 so we will be donating \$2900 to St. Basil's Academy.

Also, thank you to all the bakers, many who were philoptochos members representing other ministries. Our winner was Spiro Hountalas representing the Men's Group.

More thanks goes to all who helped with Vespers and our Feast Day and especially Stephanie Altidis and Thanea Walter for co-chairing this event! We appreciate the help baking, serving, setting up and cleaning up. What beautiful services and fellowship.

Coming soon...Look for more information about the Lenten dinner we are hosting on March 8th for the parish after Presanctified liturgy. The speaker will be Dr Perry Hamalis. Please join us for a wonderful meal and talk.



Aurora Food Pantry Easter Baskets

Philoptochos is once again partnering with the Aurora Interfaith Food Pantry to fill Easter baskets for distribution to their clients. This year we will be collecting items for 100 baskets and gathering to assemble them together in St. Matthew Hall (tentative date 3/24 before evening services). Please use the link to view the "wish list" and sign up to supply items. We ask that all items be delivered to Sue Manos or Samantha Dulles NO LATER THAN 3/19. Questions? Please contact Sue at suemanos@gmail.com or 630-747-3783. Thank you for your support with this philanthropy!

Scan to
View Wishlist

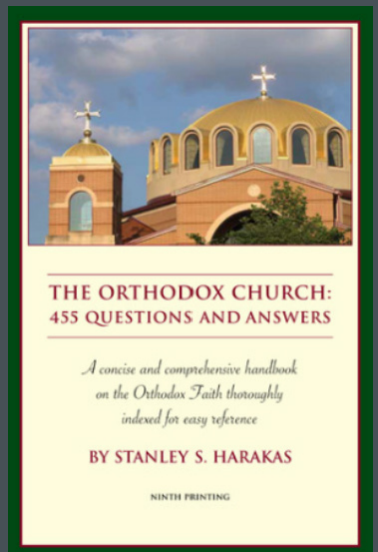


BOOK OF THE MONTH

Book Review by Andre Castillo

The Orthodox Church: 455 Questions and Answers by Father Stanley S. Harakas is a great read for both Orthodox Christians and those outside of the church. The book is a revised compilation of questions and answers from a column in The Hellenic Chronicle newspaper covering topics arranged alphabetically, such as theology, ecclesiology, Holy Tradition, the scriptures, salvation, departure of the soul, church calendar, major feast days, the saints, church history, the national churches and ethnic traditions, social issues, medical issues, and prayer. It also has commentaries on western theology of why practices and doctrines differ from those of the Roman Catholics, Non-Chalcedonians and Protestants. All questions are answered specifically by clerics from the Greek Orthodox Church.

In my view, the best part of the book is its commentary on sacramentology and liturgics. In conclusion, while there is no substitute for spiritual guidance from a spiritual father, this book is a great tool for referencing any topic pertaining to the Orthodox Church and will be helpful for both new converts and lifelong Orthodox Christians alike to immerse themselves into all the church has to offer.



STEWARDSHIP

Our 2023 Stewardship Campaign, GIVING THANKS, is less a theme and more a way of life for us as Orthodox Christians. The question of the Psalmist "What shall I give to the Lord in return for all His benefits towards me?" (Psalm 116:2), is answered in every liturgy when we pray, "Let us offer ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God."

Each Divine Liturgy is a Eucharist, a giving thanks, to the Lord. There we learn to offer our whole self to Him in prayer. When we understand the true meaning of the Holy Eucharist, we bridge the gap between liturgy and life, between our beautiful theology and practical stewardship. As Eucharistic Orthodox Christians, we see the world as God's gift. We offer the world back to God in thanksgiving with the words, "Thine own of Thine own we offer to Thee...."

The Stewardship Committee asks you to reflect upon the gifts and blessings that God has bestowed upon you. Then prayerfully consider how you might offer your thanks to the Lord through your stewardship of Time, Talent, and Treasure. Please complete and return the 2023 Stewardship Commitment Card as a reflection of GIVING THANKS.



DOWNLOAD
PLEDGE CARD

2023
COMMITMENT

SAINT
ATHANASIOS

GIVING THANKS

JOY MEETING

MARCH 17, 2023 (6:30 PM)

All kids kindergarten through 8th grade, please join us 6:30-8 pm Friday 3/17 at Saint Athanasios Church. Kids will play games, Greek dance, and learn about God! Dinner will also be served.

Please contact Chrissy Pagonis at 630.817.5700 and let her know if you can attend or have any questions.



JOY

MEN'S GROUP

Thank you all for your support and participation in this ministry. The month of March has a few opportunities for us to get together. Hope you can attend some of the events.

Upcoming Events

March Madness Get Together

On Saturday, March 18, we will meet up at the Spartan Ale House in Naperville to watch some college basketball games, starting at 6:00pm.

Easter Basket Team Up with Philoptochos

On Friday, March 24, we will team up with Philoptochos and fill Easter baskets for the Aurora Interfaith Food Pantry.

Lenten Dinner Meal

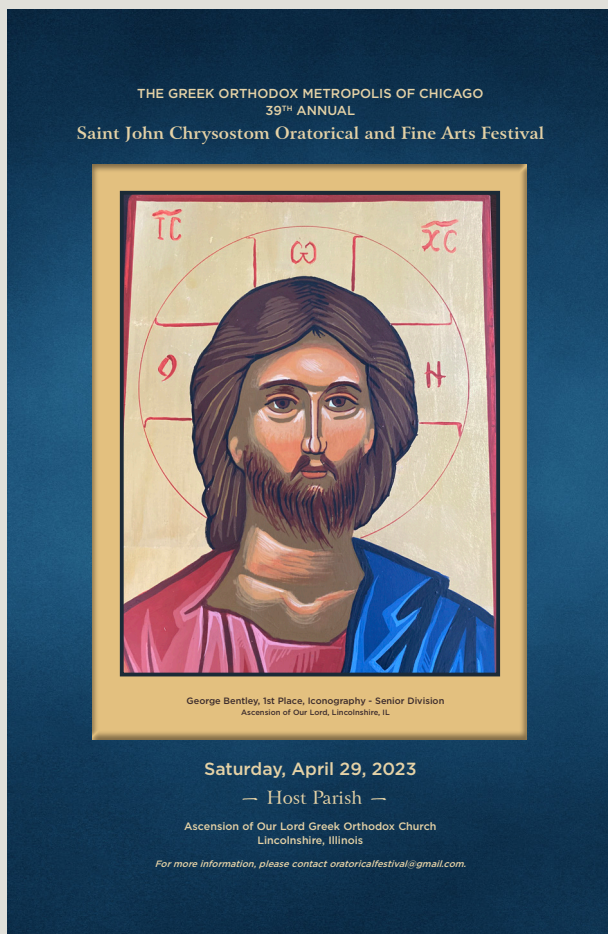
On Wednesday, March 29, Fr. Panagiotis has asked the Men's Group to cook a Lenten meal to be served after Presanctified Liturgy that evening.

Hesed House Dinner Service

The Men's Group is continuing their quarterly dinner service at Hesed House on Thursday, March 30. We will meet at church to prep the food in the afternoon and then drive to Hesed House to setup for dinner. We start serving at 6:00pm

More details for these events will be in the church bulletins and Men's Group Facebook page. 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).



Students: Participate in The Oratorical Festival

APRIL 5, 2023 (12 PM)

Calling all 7th to 12th 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. 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. Participants at the National Finals may be eligible for awards ranging from \$500 to \$2000. Our high school classes will be incorporating the topics of the Oratorical Festival to prepare our students with this competition.

Scan QR Code to Download Festival Packet



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.



Monday, June 12, 2023

Save The Date!



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

More Details to Follow Soon



How Do We Sign up?

Call church office: 630-851-6106
Web: saintathanasios.com/golf

Questions?

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

Sponsorship Opportunities Available

Lenten Dinners & Lectures

Join us each Wednesday evening during Lent for Presanctified Liturgy (at 6pm) followed by a community dinner & Lenten Lecture (at 7:30pm). Dinners will be hosted by various ministries throughout the parish and we have a great lineup of speakers planned.

March 1 - Dinner: Parish Council; Speaker: Dr. Vaia Papadimitriou

March 8 - Dinner: Philoptochos; Speaker: Dn. Perry Hamalis

March 22 - Dinner & Program: Choir

March 29 - Dinner: Men's Group; Speaker: Fr. Nick Lionas

April 5 - Dinner: Sunday School; Speakers: Oratorical Festival



Lenten Donations

2023

CONTACT THE OFFICE TO DONATE
630-851-6106
OFFICE@SAINTATHANASIOS.COM

HOLY WEDNESDAY

Flour 5LB
Olive Oil 1 bottle
Mystical Supper Icon Flowers

HOLY THURSDAY

Crucifixion Icon Flowers
Crucifix Floral Wreath (2)

GOOD FRIDAY

Kouvouklion Flowers
Kouvouklion Carnations
Rose Petals for Epitaphios

PASCHA/MISC

Pascha Icon Flowers
Clergy Pascha Candle
Rose Water
Lamp Oil
Red Eggs

SALUTATIONS ICON FLOWERS

1st Salutation	March 3
2nd Salutation	March 10
3rd Salutation	March 17
Annunciation Vespers	March 24
Akathist Hymn	March 31

PALM SUNDAY

Feastal Icon Flowers
Palm Strips for Crosses
Palm Fronds
Bay Branches

BRIDEGROOM ICON FLOWERS

1st Bridegroom	Palm Sunday
2nd Bridegroom	Holy Monday
3rd Bridegroom	Holy Tuesday



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Montgomery, IL 60538 630-892-1100



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Through Lent

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THE CHAMPION



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