

# THE CHAMPION

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

AUGUST 2024



## MESSAGE FROM FR. PANAGIOTIS

"You were transfigured upon the mountain, O Christ our God, showing to Your disciples Your glory as much as they could bear. Do also in us, sinners though we may be, shine Your everlasting light, by the intercessions of the Theotokos, O Giver of light. Glory to You." (Hymn of the Transfiguration, Aug. 6th)

Every feastday from the life of Christ is simultaneously a feastday for us as His followers. The Transfiguration is no exception to this rule. The story of the Transfiguration is found in Matthew 17, where Christ takes His three most trusted disciples with Him to pray on Mount Tabor. While there He was transfigured, or His form changed, so that His disciples were blinded by the divine light radiating from Christ. The force of Jesus's divinity, shining forth as light, quite literally knocked His disciples on the ground.

At this occasion, Peter, James, and John were blessed to see what in fact was always there, the power and energy of God fully present within Jesus Christ. They witnessed "the true light which, coming into the world, gives light to every man" (John 1:9). They marvel at the realization that the one standing in front of them, Jesus Christ, is clearly shown to be the Son of God, Light of Light, True God of True God.

The Christian faith is about living in Christ, being united to Him, so that He shares with us all that is His. That is why what we observe in the Transfiguration is the pinnacle of the Christian life. Many saints throughout their lives have lived a holiness that completely unites them with Christ, so that Christ is alive in them. These saints often shine with the Divine light of the Transfiguration when they pray. Moses himself shone forth with such splendor and light after receiving the commandments that the Israelites asked him to wear a veil to protect them from the glory of God that emanated from his face.

By showing His divinity to His disciples, Christ both showed them who He truly is and at the same time showed them what they are called to become. Thus St. Irenaios explains, "The Glory of God is man fully alive" (St. Irenaios of Lyon. A.H. 4.20.7). When we are alive in Christ we shine with His light and glory.

What a great calling for Christians, to live and shine the very glory and light of God in a world so consumed by darkness and dread. When we have turned away from sin and are fully alive in Christ, His light shines through us. This light drives out the darkness and the darkness cannot overtake it. As we celebrate our Lord's Transfiguration, I pray that we pursue our own transfiguration, living in Christ, shining with His glory, and driving out darkness wherever we find it.

Blessed Feast of the Transfiguration



## WEDDINGS

Eleni Metrou and Shackleton Steward

## BAPTISMS

Brooks McBreen  
(Son of Mallory and Paul McBreen)

## MEMORIALS

Alexandra Pieri (40 Days)

# PARISH COUNCIL

I hope everyone is enjoying their summer. The parish council and ministry teams have been busy gearing up for the upcoming ministry year. We have been working on the ministry year calendar and our 2024/2025 ministry year initiatives. September 1st marks the ecclesiastical new year. Sunday school will be starting next month, as well as many of our ministries. Please be on the lookout for email blasts, bulletins, and the church calendar for upcoming ministry meetings and events.

**Summer Camp:** Our youth from grades Kindergarten – 5th grade participated in our Summer Camp June 11-14. Thank you to Voula Ortega for coordinating this Summer Camp and all the volunteers that assisted. Thank you to our GOYA who were also a big help in assisting with the summer camp.

**St. Athanasios OCMC Family Mission Sunday:** The Orthodox Christian Ministry Mission Center held a brunch and an informative program in St. Mathew Hall on June 30th. Thank you to Nathan Hoppe (keynote speaker) Gabrielle Hoppe (youth program leader), OCMC Ambassador Kristin Standish, and OCMC Event Coordinator Elaine Drikakis for coordinating this event.

**Golf Outing:** Our Annual Golf Outing took place on July 15th. A big thank you to all of our sponsors and participants. Thank you to Frank Demas, George Manos and their committee for a job well done. It was a fun day of golf and games on the course. We also would like to thank all of the volunteers that assisted throughout the day and evening.

Upcoming Events:

**Ministry Fair and Ministry Year Kick Off Picnic** will be held after liturgy on Sun. Sept 8th. Please mark your calendars and join us as we kick off the new ministry year.

**Aurora Greek Fest:** We have just completed our spring Aurora Greek Fest in May and now it is time to start thinking about the fall Aurora Greek Fest again! The Aurora Greek Fest will take place September 27-29. Please mark your calendar to volunteer and participate. Please contact our chairman Foti Georgopoulos or the office for more information on how you can be of assistance.

Wishing everyone a blessed month!

**Brian McAnally**

Parish Council President



**SEPT 27-29**

**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)


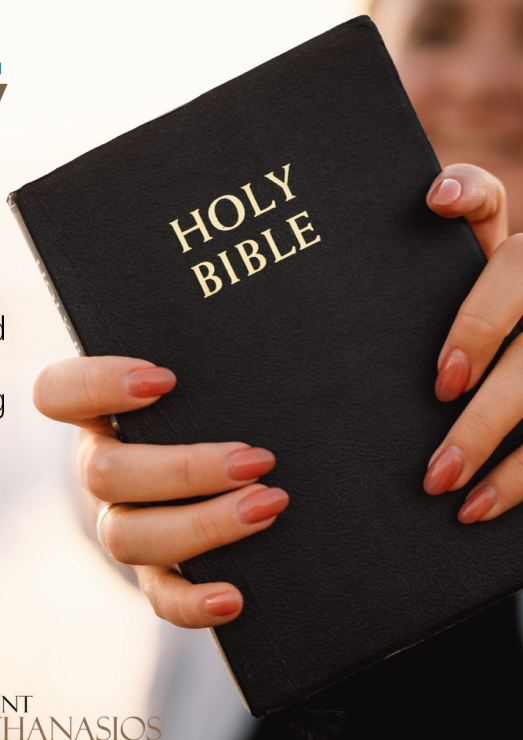
NOON TO 7 PM  
(SUNDAY)



[www.auroragreekfest.com](http://www.auroragreekfest.com)

**BIBLE  
STUDY**

Join our Bible Study this Fall as we explore Creation (Genesis 1-3). Sessions are the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 11am starting September 18th.



SAINT  
ATHANASIOS





# KNOW THE SAINTS

We are blessed with the relics of many saints within our parish. Typically in this section of The Champion we highlight the life of the saint whose relics we possess and has a feastday sometime in the month of publication. While that does not apply to any of the saints for this month, we wanted to inform the community that we have been hard at work transforming the room just to the left of the entrance of the Church into what is called a λειψανοφυλάκιον or a reliquary room. The new reliquary room will house all of our relics. This room will offer our parishioners the opportunity to venerate the relics of the saints, and provide a space for private prayer. The Reliquary Room will be open during every service, and upon request during the week. We are blessed to have relics of the following saints in our Reliquary Room:

## Bone Relics

- St. Athanasios
- St. George
- St. Demetrios
- St. Paraskevi
- St. Lazarus
- St. Barnabas
- St. Barbara
- St. Matthew
- Sts. Peter & Paul
- St. Nektarios
- St. John of Damascus
- 40 Martyrs of Sebaste

## Cloth Relics

- St. Dionysios of Zakynthos - Slipper
- St. Gerasimos of Kefalonia - Slipper
- St. Spyridon of Trymithous - Slipper
- St. Paraskeva of the Balkans - Cloth





# 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)

## Thursday, August 1

6pm Supplication to the Theotokos (Paraklesis)

## Friday, August 2

6 pm Supplication to the Theotokos (Paraklesis)

## Sunday, August 4

Divine Liturgy - 6th Sunday of Matthew

## Monday, August 5

4pm Philoptochos Feed the Hungry (prep)  
7pm Vespers - Feast of the Transfiguration  
Holy Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Monastery  
17906 IL-173, Harvard, IL 60033

## Tuesday, August 6

Divine Liturgy - Transfiguration of our Lord  
9:30 am Philoptochos - Feed the Hungry at Annun-  
ciation Greek Orthodox Church

## Wednesday, August 7

6pm Supplication to the Theotokos (Paraklesis)  
7:30 pm Choir Summer Rehearsal

## Friday, August 9

6pm Supplication to the Theotokos (Paraklesis)

## Sunday, August 11

Divine Liturgy - 7th Sunday of Matthew

## Monday, August 12

6pm Supplication to the Theotokos (Paraklesis)

## Wednesday, August 14

7pm - Vespers - Feast of the Assumption  
of the Virgin Mary  
Assumption Greek Orthodox Church  
601 S Central Ave, Chicago, IL 60644

## Tuesday, August 15

Divine Liturgy - Dormition of the Theotokos

## Wednesday, August 16

7:30 pm Choir Rehearsal

## Sunday, August 18

Divine Liturgy - 8th Sunday of Matthew  
12pm Philoptochos Social - Board & Brush

## Wednesday, August 21

7:30pm Choir Summer Rehearsal

## Sunday, August 25

Divine Liturgy - 9th Sunday of Matthew

## Wednesday, August 28

7:30 pm Choir Summer Rehearsal

## Tuesday, August 29

Divine Liturgy - Beheading of John the Baptist  
3pm Hesus House Prep & Deliver

## 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. 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:

### Cereal and Peanut Butter

Please contact Christina Valavanidis at [christina.valavanidis@gmail.com](mailto:christina.valavanidis@gmail.com) with any questions.



# PHILOPTOCHOS

I hope everyone is enjoying their summer break. Thank you to Kristin Standish for hosting our end of year party in June. We had a perfect summer evening to celebrate our successes this year.

To recap, this is all we accomplished together during our 2023-24 year:

- Collected 300 items to donate to Bartlett High School for their new Care Closet.
- Packed and served 300 lunches for the homeless at Annunciation Cathedral through the Metropolis' Feed the Hungry program.
- Prepared dessert for 250 people at Hesed House.
- Donated 80 gifts through the Angel Tree to the Salvation Army.
- Donated 75 filled Christmas stockings for clients of Aurora Interfaith Food Pantry.
- Delivered 50 home-cooked meals to parishioners through our Meal Train ministry.
- Supported the AIFP and Loaves and Fishes Food Pantry in Naperville with non-perishable food donations.
- Donated \$1000 to Radical Love from our Bingo night.
- Donated \$1000 to the Maui Wildfire Relief Fund.
- Cooked and served dinner for 40 women and children at Hesed House's family shelter.
- Donated \$3000 to Orthodox Christian Fellowship from our Apokreatiko Glendi.
- Awarded a \$1500 scholarship to a high school senior.
- Provided lunch for volunteers and Sunday School students on Good Friday.
- Served dinner for 60 parishioners at the Wednesday Lenten lecture series.
- Assembled 150 snack bags for school-aged children for Radical Love.
- Hosted coffee hour after St. Athanasios Feast Day Vespers and Liturgy services.
- Donated \$1500 to St. Basil's Academy from our Vailopita Throwdown.
- Provided \$2500 in assistance to the needy in our community.

I am very excited about our plans for the 2024-25 year. Mark your calendars for Saturday, Sept. 21 for our kickoff luncheon!

Sue Manos  
Philoptochos President





# STEWARDSHIP

## Youth Stewardship - The Vision of the Future

In the previous two Stewardship articles regarding Youth Stewardship, we discussed the concepts of "What is Youth Stewardship" and "Teaching Youth Stewardship". We would now like to transition to what is our future vision of Youth Stewardship at St. Athanasios.

As we have learned the benefits of teaching Stewardship to our youth, it is now time to imagine what the future can hold for youth Stewardship. We all have an opportunity to educate our youth about the importance of personal generosity and we can also offer ways they can engage in our church and community. By doing this, we can help them create a sense of ownership of their life commitments and the shared responsibility they have in our spiritual home. What would a Youth Stewardship program at St. Athanasios look like and how can we all be a part to make it successful? As we mentioned last month, our church education programs and ministries play a part as do the parents of the community.

The following are some core concepts of our vision for our Youth Stewardship Program would include:

- Bringing the spirit of stewardship to the youth of the Church and cultivating a sense of community among them.
- Education on personal generosity
- Inclusion of various recognition methods to inspire and reinforce concepts.
- Hands on generosity project to practice Stewardship.

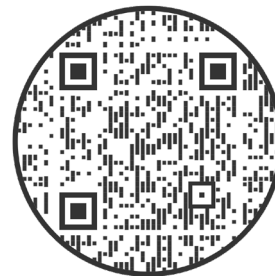
Expect to see more updates regarding this topic over the remainder of the year. The Stewardship Committee will be working with Father Panagiotis, the Parish Council, Youth Ministry Leads, the Sunday School Director, and parents to finalize our Youth Stewardship program for deployment in 2025.

In His Service,  
**Elli Koulos and Pete Nassos**

# CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

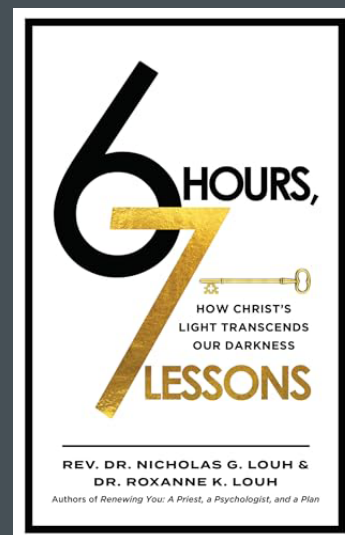


**Capital Campaign committee is pleased to announce that as of today we have raised over \$120,000. Thank you! Please take the time to visit the web site or scan the QR code above to get involved in this effort and help us reach our goal**



# BOOK STORE

In "6 Hours, 7 Lessons: How Christ's Light Transcends Our Darkness," learn about the seven statements said by Jesus during His darkest moments on the Cross that offer us tremendous wisdom when we feel alone, forgotten, and unable to surrender, forgive, or let go of our mistakes. Father Nicholas Louh, an Orthodox Christian priest, and licensed clinical psychologist, Dr. Roxanne Louh, show us that there is no sadness so dark that our Lord has not already experienced for His grace to help us. Christ's final words show us the light of His love and protection while giving us the guidance we need to find hope and healing in any situation.





# MEN'S GROUP

Thank you all for your support and participation in this ministry!

## Hesed House Dinner

We will continue our quarterly Hesed House dinner service on Thursday, August 29. Please consider volunteering your time for this rewarding event.

## Welcome Back Dinner

On Thursday, September 5, please join the Men's Group for our annual Welcome Back Dinner. Enjoy food, drinks and hear about our upcoming/ongoing activities.

## Food Pantry

Each month, our church collection of donated food needs to be delivered to local food pantries. We need volunteers to transport our donations. If you are interested, please contact us for more information.

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).

# YOUTH MINISTRY KICK-OFF DATES

## JOY

Friday, September 13 in Saint Mathews Hall

## GOYA

Saturday, September 21. Location TBD.

## JR. GOYA

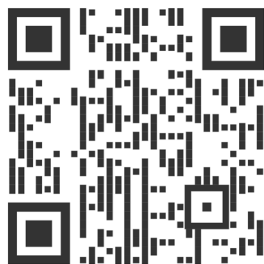
September. Details TBD.

# 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 8th. Payment can be made at the end of the registration form. Cost is \$40.00 per child.

**SCAN TO REGISTER  
YOUR STUDENT**



## Interested in Teaching Sunday School?

We are seeking dedicated and enthusiastic Sunday School teachers and substitutes to join our Sunday School team. If you have a passion for working with children and sharing the teachings of our faith, we would love to hear from you! Whether you can commit to a regular teaching schedule or are available to step in as a substitute, your contribution will make a significant impact. Interested individuals should email [sundayschool@saintathanasios.com](mailto:sundayschool@saintathanasios.com) by August 14th for more information.





# SUMMER CAMP RECAP





# 2024 OPA OPEN







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AUGUST 2024



TRANSFIGURATION



A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

# THE CHAMPION



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