

THE CHAMPION

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

JANUARY 2023



MESSAGE FROM FR. PANAGIOTIS

Saint Peter's Chains

Without leaving Rome, thou didst come to us by the precious chains which thou didst wear. O foremost of the Apostles. And worshipping them with faith, we pray: By thine intercessions with God, grant us great mercy.

January sees the festivities of the Church take no post-Christmas hiatus. We proceed directly from Christ's birth to His baptism and then to the commemoration of a host of major saints in the Church: St. John the Baptist, St. Anthony the Great, Sts. Athanasios (our parish's patron) and Cyril of Alexandria, St. Gregory the Theologian, and the Three Hierarchs. But there is also a lesser-known feast of the Church that falls on January 16th. It is the celebration of St. Peter's miraculous escape from prison and the veneration of the chains he wore while in captivity.

Found in Chapter 12 of the Book of Acts, we read the account of Peter's imprisonment in Jerusalem. After seeing that the execution of the Apostle James pleased the enemies of the Church, Herod Agrippa had St. Peter arrested in order that St. Peter might share the same fate as St. James the Apostle. Yet, while in prison, an angel appeared to St. Peter by night. The angel miraculously released St. Peter from his chains and guided him to safety, mystically opening each of the prison doors as they approached. St. Peter found refuge in the house of the Evangelist Mark's mother, giving praise to God with all present on account of his deliverance from impending death.

Even after we have the good news of Christ's descent into Hades and release of all those held captive by sin, God reiterates this message symbolically through St. Peter's imprisonment and release. Just like those who had died before the coming of our Lord, St. Peter found himself ensnared by an evil foe. Bound, with no hope of escape, God sends help and unfastens the shackles which held him. Still, He does not leave St. Peter to his own devices to navigate the path to safety of his own accord. The one sent by God walks together with St. Peter to the open gate of his salvation.

This is the story of St. Peter. This is also the story of Christ and His descent into Hades. This is the story of each of us as we seek the Lord's help in releasing us from struggle, sin, and hardship. We do not walk alone in these times. Instead, we are guided by the help of God, who descends to the very point of our captivity and steers us toward salvation.

May we receive the same grace and guidance from the Lord in our times of need.

Fr. Panagiotis

MEMORIALS

Joanne Vamay (1 Year)

FEAST DAY SERVICES

Tuesday, January 17, 2023
Feastday Vespers - 7:00 PM

Wednesday, January 18, 2023
Feastday Orthros - 8:30 AM
Divine Liturgy - 9:30 AM

PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE



Happy New Year! I hope that you and your family are all well and had an enjoyable Christmas and wishing you and your family a blessed and Happy New Year!

Ministries: We continue to offer many ministries for all age groups of our Parish. Please be sure to visit our Church calendar, and also view our weekly bulletin for information on upcoming meetings, and events. Our Men's Group will be having a NFL playoff event at Poor Boys Pub in Montgomery, on January 21st. Please join us and bring a friend! Additionally, our GOYA will be baking the Artoklasia for our Vespers service on 1/16. Please have your children participate.

Usher Ministry: In speaking about our Ministries, we do have our new Usher Ministry. Fr. Panagiotis has asked me to chair this ministry. We are looking for parishioners that are interested in serving on Sunday mornings and services that take place during the week. You would assist with welcoming parishioners, taking candles to the Icon Screen, and candle stands, assist with dismissal and passing trays. More information will be coming about this ministry and an opportunity to sign up to become an usher. If you are interested, please feel free to contact me.

Vespers & Feast Day: Please be sure to join us for our Parish Vespers and Feast Day! Vespers will take place on January 17th at 7:00 pm and our Feast Day Divine Liturgy on January 18th. Please make arrangements to attend as we celebrate and honor our Saint Athanasios.

Feast Day Luncheon: Join us on January 22nd for our Feast Day luncheon. A delicious meal will be provided for all to enjoy. More information about the luncheon will be sent via email blast and in our Bulletin.

Stewardship: I would like to thank all parishioners that participated in our Stewardship Ministry. If you haven't already completed your 2022 pledge please do so. Following our Stewardship Sunday we had three presenters speak to all of us about the importance of Time, Talent & Treasure. We ask that you prayerfully consider the importance of your Time, Talent and Treasure when you submit your 2023 Stewardship Pledge and the great impact it makes to our beloved parish of Saint Athanasios.

Wishing you all a very blessed and healthy New Year!

Foti Georgopoulos
Parish Council President

VASILOPITA THROWDOWN JANUARY 8, 2023

Philoptochos will be sponsoring the Vasilopita Throwdown on January 8th where we invite each ministry and any interested bakers to offer a Vasilopita for judging by the community. During coffee hour, parishioners may purchase a coin which will be used to select your favorite Vasilopita and the one with the most coins wins! Proceeds from this friendly competition will be matched by Philoptochos and will benefit St. Basil's Academy. Please come join the fun while helping those who need our help.

Contact Elli Koulos for questions and to register at ekoulos23@live.com

GOYA "TSIKNOPEMPTI" FUNDRAISER
PROJECT MEXICO MISSION TRIP
February 16 | 3-8 PM
MENTION ST. A GOYA WHEN
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CHECK OUT OUR
FUNDRAISING PAGE
HERE!



STUMP THE PRIEST

Can you explain the hand gesture that all the saints are making in our Icons?

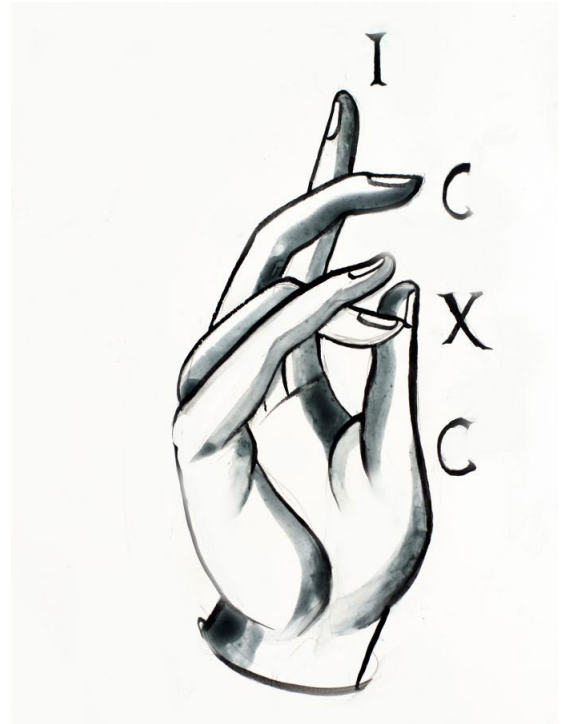
Not all of the saints are making the same hand gesture in their icon, but the particular one that our question is about is the one we see most often and typically being made by Christ or a saint who was a bishop or priest. In fact, this hand gesture is not just reserved for icons. It is the same hand gesture that a priest makes whenever he is offering a blessing. You can see in the image that the fingers are held in such a way as to form the letters ICXC. For grammatical reasons, Ancient Greek abbreviations would use the first and last letters of a word. So ICXC is how you abbreviate the name Ιησους Χριστος Jesus Christ.

Now that we know what the symbol is, the next question is: why does the blessing in the Orthodox Church, either in iconography or in the actions of the priest, take the form of ICXC? This is because when a priest or saint blesses, we are blessing in the name of Christ ie it is Christ who is actually performing the blessing. That is why at the end of the Liturgy when the priest is distributing the antidoron he will say, "The blessing of the Lord..." because it is not the priest's blessing you are receiving, it is the blessing of Christ through the priest.

This tradition goes all the way back to the book of Acts when St. Luke records one of the prayers of a group of early Christians.

"Grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word, by stretching our Your hand to heal, and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your holy Servant Jesus." (Acts 4:29-30)

The prayer makes it clear that the hand that is being stretched out to heal and work signs and wonders is God's hand, and that the things which are being done are being done through the name of Christ.

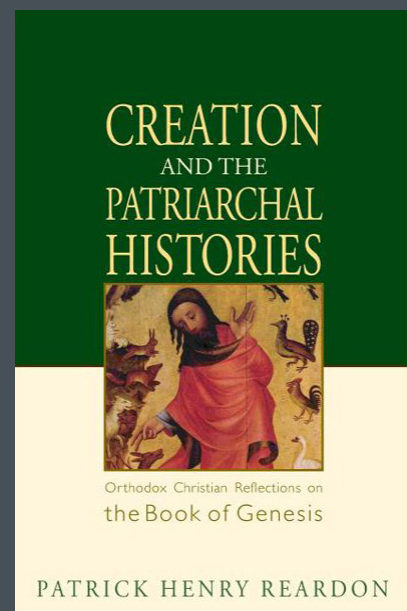


BOOK OF THE MONTH

Creation and the Patriarchal Histories: Orthodox Christian Reflections on the Book of Genesis

Author Father Patrick Henry Reardon discusses a concise yet thorough walk-through of the first book of the Old Testament. For a book like Genesis which is consistently misunderstood in various ways by the contemporary reader, Father Patrick takes the time to present the proper understanding and context within the framework of a chapter-by-chapter discussion. The beauty of the content is his ability to convey the coherence of the Old and New Testaments as one book. Using quotes from the Holy Fathers, the Gospels, Epistles, and even Jewish historians like Josephus, he shows that the centrality of Christ the Messiah is as apparent in the Old Testament as it is in the New. The Old and New Testaments are a 'package,' with one being necessary to understand the other. He conveys creation and the world itself as God's 'writing,' and reminds the reader that the understanding of the Old Testament in general and Genesis in particular was not specific to the Christians, but was shared by the Jewish people also. Using the insight contained within this short book, Christians do not need to fear or 'talk around' the Book of Genesis within the context of the modern world.

Review by Aaron Mundie



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)

Sunday, January 1st

Circumcision of the Lord; Saint Basil the Great
Divine Liturgy
Coffee Hour hosted by Bill Boznos & Valerie DiGiovanni

Tuesday, January 3rd

7:30pm Discover Orthodoxy

Thursday, January 5th

Eve of Holy Theophany
6 pm Divine Liturgy

Friday, January 6th

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

Saturday, January 7th

Synaxis of St John the Baptist
Divine Liturgy

Sunday, January 8th

Divine Liturgy – Sunday after Epiphany
Vasilopita Throwdown

Sunday, January 15th

12th Sunday of Luke
Divine Liturgy
One Year Memorial Joanne Vamay
Coffee Hour hosted by Katerina Voigitzis
Metropolis of Chicago Vasilopita
St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church
12307 Ridgeland Ave, Palos Heights, IL 60463

Monday, January 16th

3 pm GOYA Artoclasiya Making

Tuesday, January 17th

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

Wednesday, January 18th

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

Friday, January 20th

6:30pm JOY meeting

Saturday, January 21st

6:30pm Men's Group NFL Watch Party
at Poor Boy's Pub

Sunday, January 22nd

15th Sunday of Luke
Divine Liturgy
11:30 am St. Athanasios Feast Day Luncheon

Tuesday, January 24th

7:30pm Discover Orthodoxy

Sunday, January 29th

Divine Liturgy
Coffee hour hosted by GOYA

Monday, January 30th

Three Holy Hierarchs
Divine Liturgy

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! As we start the new year, please consider bringing the below listed foods

Cereal

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

PHILOPTOCHOS

It was a joyous morning on Saturday, December 3rd as we put together Christmas stockings for the Aurora Interfaith Food Pantry. GOYA and Philoptochos came together to fill 50 stockings for those in need. Thank you to all who donated their time and those who donated the items that went inside. It was a wonderful morning!



APOKREATIKO GLENDI

FEBRUARY 18, 2023 (6-11 PM)

Join us for the Philoptochos Apokreatiko Glendi Dinner Dance on Saturday, February 18, 2023 at St. Matthew Hall. The event begins at 6:00 pm.

Tickets

\$50 for adults

\$25 (children 12 and under)

Children 3 and under are free

To RSVP email Rose Pagonis at rose@rosepagonis.com.

ICE CREAM SOCIAL

FEBRUARY 26, 2023 (5-6 PM)

Please join us before Forgiveness vespers to partake in what some might say is the best form of dairy before lent starts. And then stay for Forgiveness vespers as we enter the Lenten period.



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.

2022 Stewardship Statistics

- 278 Families
- Pledged: \$299,703
- Paid: \$283,978

As of 11/30/2022



DOWNLOAD
PLEDGE CARD



GIVING THANKS

2023 COMMITMENT



SAINT
ATHANASIOS

CHURCH NAMEDAY ARTOKLASIA BAKING JANUARY 16, 2023 (3-6 PM)

All high schoolers are invited to learn to make Artoklasia for the church nameday vespers from 3-6pm on Monday, January 16.

Contact Margarita Altidis with any question at margarita.altidis@gmail.com



MEN'S GROUP

Thank you all for your support and participation in this ministry. The Men's Group is looking forward to more activities in 2023!

Upcoming Events

- NFL Playoffs Watch Party – Saturday, January 21 at Poor Boy's Pub in Montgomery (6:30 PM)
- Heses House Dinner Service – Thursday, March 30

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).



SUNDAY SCHOOL

We had another successful Christmas Pageant this year! Thank you to everyone who was involved in the planning and performance!



HOUSE BLESSINGS

Usher in the New Year by signing up for a Theophany House Blessing.

- Aurora (East Side) – **Jan 6 & 7**
- Aurora (West Side) - **Jan 10**
- Aurora (Make Up) – **Jan 31 Late Afternoon**
- Naperville (North of 75th Street) - **Jan 11 & 12**
- Naperville (South of 75th Street) - **Jan 13 & 19**
- Naperville (Make Up) – **Jan 31 Late Morning/Early Afternoon**
- Montgomery - **Jan 20**
- Oswego - **Jan 21**
- Plainfield/Bolingbrook - **Jan 24**
- Geneva/Batavia/St. Charles - **Jan 25**
- Downers Grove/Lisle/East of I-355 - **Jan 26**
- Montgomery/Oswego/Plainfield/Bolingbrook (Make Up) - **Jan 27**
- All Area Make Up – **Feb 1**

Use the following link to schedule your house blessing.

<https://calendar.app.google/GYoXmka4DbacFaQw5>



FROM THE LOFT

Music Theory of Theophany

Kali Hronia! I hope you had a blessed Christmas season with your family and friends.

The New Year begins with one of the most beautiful and important feast days in the church: Theophany, or the manifestation of the Holy Trinity at Christ's baptism in the Jordan River, on January 6. For this feast day, there will be a number of changes in the music from a "typical" liturgy. Most notable is the Apolitikion, which is sung during the Small Entrance. For Theophany, this is "En Iordan" or "When in the Jordan." The rich text of this hymn describes Christ's baptism and the presence of the Holy Trinity. Musically, this is represented in the rising and falling of the embellished melodic line, symbolizing heaven and earth. In fact, the melody and the "ison" (the repeated pitch that serves as a foundation for the melody) continue to meet on the same note, representing the union of heaven and earth. The final line is declamatory and exultant, with the highest notes being sung: "O Christ God, who appeared and illumined the world, glory to You."

Whether you come and join us in the loft, sing along from the pews, or simply take in these beloved hymns, I hope these articles will encourage you to listen for something new, something surprising, something beautiful - and therefore connect you more deeply to the liturgy and the Word of God.



"Come and see the works of the Lord...Come and hear!"

A mosaic-style illustration of Saint Athanasios, a bearded man with long, wavy hair, wearing a dark blue and white robe. He is set against a golden background with a purple halo. The entire scene is framed by a dark, arched border. On the left and right sides, there are faint, stylized figures or symbols.

SAINT ATHANASIOS
FEAST DAY
Luncheon

Sunday, January 22, 2023

11:30 AM

Saint Matthew Hall

Admission:

\$25 per Adult

\$10 per Child (12 and under)

R.S.V.P. by January 10, 2023

*Call 630.851.6106 or email
office@saintathanasios.com*

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JANUARY 2023



Saint Peter's
Chains

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

THE CHAMPION



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