

THE CHAMPION

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

NOVEMBER 2023



MESSAGE FROM FR. PANAGIOTIS

That ALL should be saved and come to the knowledge of TRUTH. (1 Timothy 2:4)

Hopefully this verse sounds familiar to you as you open your Champion and begin to read my monthly article. I have been repeating these words of St. Paul on a regular basis now, incorporating them into my sermons and Champion articles. But if not, let me begin by reiterating that St. Paul is reminding his disciple St. Timothy that it is the desire of God "That all should be saved and come to the knowledge of truth." As children of God, who have love for our Father, we are called to work with Him to fulfill His desire. Thus, our ministry and parish life will be focused on bringing all toward salvation and the knowledge of truth.

Last month I introduced the four foundations of Ministry at St. Athanasios,

That ALL will be saved

1. Our Salvation i.e. the people already within His Church
2. Our Neighbor's Salvation i.e. those not yet in His Church

And come to the knowledge of TRUTH

3. Truly knowing Christ
4. Truly knowing Ourselves

and I said that each of these foundations will be expressed through corresponding practices. Today I would like to introduce the first of these practices: Invitation into the Story of God.

William Shakespeare famously penned the words: "All the world's a stage, And all the men and women merely players; They have their exits and their entrances." In this play we call existence, God is the author. It is His story which unfolds throughout the generations, from the creation of the cosmos through the never-ending day of His Kingdom. While we all have parts to play within the story, for lack of a better term, God is the main character, and the plot of the story is His eternal love for His creation. Which means that we are crucial players within the story. Our role is both to receive His love and to return our love to Him.

We begin this practice of invitation by first accepting the one that God has extended to us. We must be intentional about understanding and framing the story of our life, our past, present, and future, as scenes or acts within the larger story of God's love for His creation. We do this by telling the story of our life over and over again to friends and family, to our spiritual fathers, in our personal prayers, in the sacrament of Confession. Sharing our experiences with the Church allows our story to be shaped and refined while we struggle to live out our role. On a ministry level we will accept God's invitation through the use of small groups within the life of the parish.

In the 2023/2024 ministry year we have launched two such opportunities: The Lionheart Sessions within the Men's Group & the Divine Liturgy small groups provided by our religious education committee. Both of these programs are centered around sharing our experiences in order to gain clarity about our individual roles within the story of God.

In the context of St. Paul's writing to St. Timothy, all means ALL. Evangelism to the world around us is an invitation to those who are in the story, but perhaps not yet begun to play their role. If it is truly the desire of God that all will be saved, and we are called to be "God's fellow workers" (1 Corinthians 3:9), then we fulfill His desire by inviting those outside of the Church to enter into the Church and assume their proper role within the unfolding story of God. We must be active in sharing God's story with the world around us and take on the mantle of inviting others to discover the part God has set aside for them. In practice this means that the parish and its parishioners will be visible in promoting and inviting the neighboring community to participate in the life of the Church.

Taking both aspects of invitation together (understanding our role within the story and inviting others to assume theirs) we can proclaim our lines, written for us by God in the Psalms, "Come and see the works of God... Come and hear, and I will describe to you... what things He did for my soul" (Psalm 65:5, 16).

Fr. Panagiotis

BAPTISMS

Noah Rashid (Son of Efthia & Jake Rashid)

Ezekiel Ortega (Son of Voula and Joel Ortega)

Adam Saxen (Son of Marisa and Daniel Saxen)

WEDDINGS

Christo Vlahos and Jacqueline Currie

MEMORIALS

George Merelos (40 Day)

Harry Koulos (40 Day)

Elizabeth Boutsikakis (6 Month)

Katherine Papasideris (6 Month)

Demetrios Zafiroopoulos (6 Month)

Anna Baroukas (1 Year)

Effie Hampilos (1 Year)

Anastasios Vogiatzis (1 Year)

Demetrios & Despoina

Papadimitriou (5 Year)

John Papasideris (10 Year)

Christos K. Hountalas (15 Year)

PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE



Clergy Laity: On October 12 & 13th, myself, Fr. Panagiotis, Brian McAnly and Emie Stavropoulos were delegates for our Parish. The first day was filled with breakout sessions, and Plenary Sessions. The first plenary session was about the Metropolis budget. The budget was for a two year budget, and was voted and passed. We also discussed the Metropolis Center. Our Metropolis is currently located in Lombard. The Metropolitan and the real Estate committee, have expressed that they are still looking to find a place suitable for our Metropolis offices, and that the Metropolis will be located in the City of Chicago.

Men Group Fundraiser: Our Men's group is holding a fundraiser on November 9th at the Empress Banquets in Addison. The proceeds of this event, will go towards Hellenic College / Holy Cross School of Theology. Tickets are \$100.00. If you are interested in purchasing a ticket, please contact, Spiro Hountalas, Peter Metrou or Nick Dagiantis.

Parish Assembly: As a reminder to all parishioners, our Parish Assembly will take place on Sunday, November 19th at 11:00 am. We will be going over the budget and the vision of our Parish. Please be sure to attend!

Upcoming Events: Please mark your calendars and save the date for our Christmas Breakfast on December 17th. Two special guests will come and visit us that day, which I know all the children will be happy to visit with. More information on this event will be sent out soon.

Wishing you all a happy and healthy month! Happy Thanksgiving!

Foti Georgopoulos
Parish Council President

Divine Liturgy

THE GREATEST INVITATION

Enrich your experience with the Divine Liturgy, the Greatest Invitation we will ever receive.

5 part series designed to help us:

- Grow in the Liturgy mindset away from the "me-centered" mindset of the world.
- Understanding relationships and the importance of being in person with those in our community.
- Learn about the synergy that occurs between our work and God's Grace.
- Be reminded of God's radical love which is experienced most fully in the Divine Liturgy.

Small group facilitators will lead one 90-minute lesson per month. Choose the location and date that is most convenient for you. Please sign up for November using the QR Code below:



November



Scan QR code for an overview of the program.

Questions? Need help with sign up? Contact Maria Lambrou:
makokoslambrou@yahoo.com | 708-269-9991



In November we will be celebrating the Divine Liturgy in honor of two saints whose relics are in our community.

St. Nektarios of Aegina – November 9

This saint was born in Thrace in 1846. He became a monk in 1876; because of his virtue, a year later he was ordained deacon, receiving the new name of Nektarios. Under the patronage of Patriarch Sophronius of Alexandria, Nektarios went to Athens to study in 1882; completing his theological studies in 1885, he went to Alexandria, where Patriarch Sophronius ordained him priest on March 23, 1886 in the Cathedral of Saint Sabbas, and in August of the same year, in the Church of Saint Nicholas in Cairo, made him Archimandrite. Archimandrite Nektarios showed much zeal both for preaching the word of God, and for the beauty of God's house.

On January 15, 1889 Nektarios was consecrated Metropolitan of the Pentapolis in eastern Libya. Although Nektarios' swift ascent through the degrees of ecclesiastical office did not affect his modesty and childlike innocence, it aroused the envy of lesser men, who convinced the elderly Sophronius that Nektarios had it in his heart to become Patriarch. Since the people loved Nektarios, the Patriarch was troubled by the slanders. On May 3, 1890, Sophronius relieved Metropolitan Nektarios of his duties; in July of the same year, he commanded Nektarios to leave Egypt.

Without seeking to avenge or even to defend himself, the innocent Metropolitan left for Athens, where he found that accusations of immorality had arrived before him. He was appointed dean of the Rizarios Ecclesiastical School in Athens. Through his eloquent sermons his unwearied labours to educate fitting men for the priesthood, his generous alms deeds despite his own poverty, and the holiness, meekness, and fatherly love that were manifest in him, he became a shining light and a spiritual guide to many. In 1904 he began the building of his convent of the Holy Trinity on the island of Aegina. He took up his residence on Aegina in 1908, where he spent the last years of his life, devoting himself to the direction of his convent and to very intense prayer. He became the protector of all Aegina, through his prayers delivering the island from drought, healing the sick, and casting out demons. Here also he endured wicked slanders with singular patience, forgiving his false accusers and not seeking to avenge himself.

An innumerable multitude of miracles have been wrought after his repose in 1920 through his holy relics, which for many years remained incorrupt. There is hardly a malady that has not been cured through his prayers; but Saint Nektarios is especially renowned for his healings of cancer for sufferers in all parts of the world.

St. Matthew the Apostle & Evangelist – November 16

This Apostle, who was also called Levi, was the son of Alphaeus and had Galilee as his homeland. A publican before being called by Christ, he became one of the Twelve Apostles, and an Evangelist. While still in Palestine, he wrote his Gospel first in Hebrew, being also the first of all to write the Gospel. When he is depicted in icons, there is portrayed next to him the likeness of a man, one of the symbolic living creatures mentioned by Ezekiel (1.10), which, as Saint Irenaeus writes, is a symbol of our Saviour's Incarnation.



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, November 1st

Divine Liturgy - SS Cosmas & Damianos
11am - Bible Study

Saturday, November 4

8:30am Men's Group - Blood Drive

Sunday November 5th

Divine Liturgy - 5th Sunday of Luke

Monday, November 6th

6pm Feed the Hungry - setup

Tuesday, November 7th

9:30am Feed the Hungry - distribution
7pm Vespers - Synaxis of the Angels
Holy Taxiarchai & St Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church
7373 N Caldwell Ave, Niles, IL 60714
7:30pm Discover Orthodoxy

Wednesday, November 8th

Divine Liturgy - Synaxis of the Holy Archangels
7pm Vespers - St Nektarios
St Nektarios Greek Orthodox Church
133 S Roselle Rd, Palatine, IL 60067

Thursday, November 9th

Divine Liturgy - St Nektarios
6pm HCHC Fundraiser

Sunday, November 12th

Divine Liturgy - 8th Sunday of Luke
11:30am JrGOYA Gardening

Monday, November 13th

Divine Liturgy - Saint John Chrysostom

Wednesday, November 15th

11am - Bible Study

Thursday, November 16th

Divine Liturgy - St Matthew the Apostle & Evangelist

Friday, November 17

6pm - JOY Meeting

Sunday, November 19th

Divine Liturgy - 9th Sunday of Luke
11am - Parish Assembly Fall

Tuesday, November 21st

Divine Liturgy - Entrance of the Theotokos Liturgy
6pm Akathist of Thanksgiving
7:30pm Discover Orthodoxy

Saturday, November 25th

Divine Liturgy - St Katherine

Sunday, November 26th

Divine Liturgy - 13th Sunday of Luke

Wednesday, November 29th

7pm Vespers - St Andrew
Saint Andrew Greek Orthodox Church
5649 N Sheridan Rd, Chicago, IL 60660

Thursday, November 30th

Divine Liturgy - St Andrew the Apostle
3pm Men's Group - Hesed House
7pm JrGOYA Fireside with Father

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:

Mashed Potatoes

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

PHILOPTOCHOS

We had a great time at our second Family Bingo night on Oct. 7th! Proceeds from the event will be donated to Radical Love, an organization serving refugee families, children and seniors in the Fox Valley area. Thank you to Leah Fanning, Connie Romios, Nicole Gross and Maria Pinto for organizing such a fun evening, and to our emcee and bingo caller George Manos.

We will be heading down to Annunciation Cathedral once again to distribute sack lunches as part of the Metropolis' Feed the Hungry initiative. We will be assembling meals at church on Monday, Nov. 6th, and distributing them outside Annunciation on Tuesday, Nov. 7th. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Philoptochos President Sue Manos.

Philoptochos Sunday is Nov. 12th. We will have an artoclasia and are hosting coffee hour. We hope you'll join us as we celebrate our sisterhood.

Did you know Philoptochos has a meal train outreach that is available to all parishioners? What is the meal train? The meal train was established to help support parishioners who need a helping hand—whether it's a family that just had a baby, lost a loved one, or who are going thru treatment for an illness. The intent is short-term (4-6 meals) support. If you need this type of assistance, or know a family who does, please provide the contact information to the church office and a member of the meal train committee will reach out. We need cooks too! Please consider signing up to cook for the meal train by contacting Leah Fanning at leah_fanning@yahoo.com.

We're already planning for our Christmas philanthropy projects. We are once again partnering with Aurora Interfaith Food Pantry to fill Christmas stockings for the children of their clients. A wish list will be available soon. Also, look for our Angel Tree in St. Matthew Hall toward the end of the month. As in the past, we will be partnering with the Salvation Army to give local children Christmas gifts.



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.

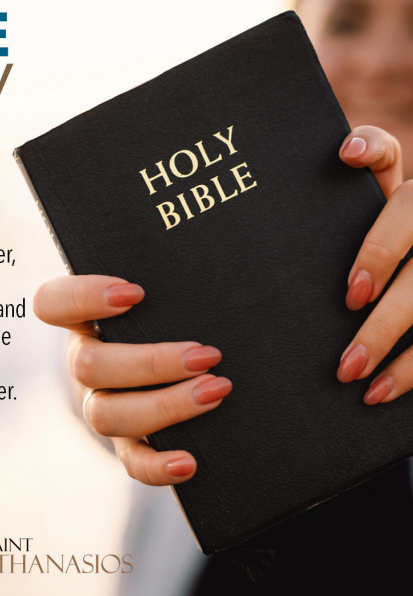


Nick Nassos

Nick Nassos is attending Purdue University, with his major in Statistics, and he expects to graduate in December 2023. His favorite class is "Entrepreneurship". His short-term plan after graduation is to find a job in the sports industry, focusing on using information to help generate growth and make an impact to the organization. In the future, he would like to work for a professional Sports Team. His favorite season is Summer because he likes being outdoors. He coaches tennis both at Purdue and back home. He enjoys watching basketball games at Purdue and his favorite football team is the Green Bay Packers. The Orthodox Church he attends while at college is the "Saint Alexis" church. What he likes most at the Saint Athanasios Parish is the Food Festival - volunteering at it and enjoying meals with his family. Other than Greek food, he enjoys eating at the "Old Town Pizza" on Route 59 and the "Triple XXX" diner at college.

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 11am September-December.



SAINT
ATHANASIOS

STEWARDSHIP

Our parish community is a community of selfless givers devoted to Christian giving of Time, Talents and Treasures. Part of a successful Stewardship program is the engagement of Parishioners with the Parish's core values and ministries, which happens through meaningful connections. Maybe you have been invited to join a ministry or you have had great conversations with someone new to the church. Perhaps you have volunteered with a few others to work in the church office every week. In your interactions, you may also be connecting people to other people and connecting people to a purpose. Connections establish relationships and positive, healthy relationships create a culture of engagement and to close the circle, engagement leads to the generosity of Time, Talents, and Treasures.

As stewards of the Parish, it is important not to underestimate the power that a positive connection can have on a person and a community. If we care enough to get to know someone, their interests and their family's interests, we are more likely to get to know how we can apply their Talents to the church and its ministries. We can all take an active role in being the one to invite someone to join in or to take the time to connect people to a purpose. Another beautiful outcome of these deliberate efforts to connect people to people is that it brings together diverse perspectives, ideas and talents. It is not unheard of that someone walks into a parish community and through their engagement we, as a parish, are benefactors of the Talents that we did not previously have.

You may be asking yourself what specifically you can do. You may be doubting that you are a person that can proactively and effectively make these valuable connections. It is quite simple and do not underestimate the benefits of any interaction or connections you make. You may ask questions of another in a curious way and learn something you didn't know. You may respond to an invitation and volunteer your time, inviting someone to join you. If you are shy, you can still offer invitations for participation in any of our ministries just by starting a conversation about what you enjoy about that ministry.

Connecting others to a purpose is the most effective way to complete the cycle of connection. Think about the benefits of connecting people to their faith (as an example). That alone will produce abundant engagement. Connecting people to Christ is connecting them to love, service and humility. This is the most powerful way to keep people coming back again and again. While our Priest and Parish leaders own much of this responsibility. We all can play a part as Stewardship is our spirituality in action, our faith in action, our theology in action.

In His Service,
Elli Koulos and Pete Nassos



**NOVEMBER
JOY**

ALL kids Kinder-5th
grade are invited to join
the FUN!!

Friday November 17th

6:00-7:30 pm
Saint Athanasios Church

Questions, please reach out to Leah
Fanning at 630-664-3220 or Amanda
McKinney at 630-533-2839
Email:
joy@saintathanasios.com

BOOK STORE

Growing up the attached icon hung over my bed and was used to bless anyone with illness. I always knew them as Οι Άγιοι Άνταρρυοι, or The Silverless Saints who are considered to be the patron saints of physicians, surgeons, pharmacists, and twins.

They were twins born in Asia Minor to Αγία Θεοδότη [Saint Theodota] and a pagan father. Their father died when they were young. They were raised and became pious Orthodox Christians. During the 4th century, they were skilled physicians who received healing powers through the gift of the Holy Spirit. They traveled the region healing illnesses of mind, body and soul. With an unwavering belief in "Freely have you received, freely give." (Mt. 10:8). The brothers never received payment for their services.

During their practice and after their deaths, many miracles are attributed to them. Including the miracle of Palladia and that of Malchus' wife. Because of a misunderstanding the twins were almost buried in separate graves until a camel, through a miracle, spoke in a human voice to correct the error. The brothers are buried together in Mesopotamia.

Sts. Cosmas and Damianos are celebrated each year on November 1. Due to their similar dedication to those in need, the National Philoptochos Society has adopted them as their patron saints. Stop in our Bookstore to purchase an icon of these saints.



MEN'S GROUP

We have a busy fall schedule and look forward to your participation in these events.

Lionheart Series

The first Lionheart Session occurred on Monday, October 16. One of four sessions which focuses on what true Christian manhood looks like. The next session will occur in December.

Blood Drive

With Mickey Koulos' leadership, the Men's Group is sponsoring a Blood Drive on Saturday, November 4. Every donor will save up to three lives! Please support this event and sign up.

Hellenic College/Holy Cross (HCHC) Fundraiser

Join us to help raise funds to educate the future leaders of the Orthodox Church! On Thursday, November 9, we are co-hosting this event at the Empress Banquet Hall. Keynote speaker is Mike Emanuel. Details on how to purchase tickets are in the Friday bulletins.

Hesed House Dinner Service

We will cook and serve food at our quarterly Hesed House dinner service on Thursday, November 30. If you are interested in donating food/money or just to volunteer your time and talents, please contact Spiro, Peter or Nick.

New Grant Award

With Spiro Hountalas' effort, the Men's Group has been awarded a \$2,700 grant from the Hellenic Foundation to use for our Hesed House dinner service. Thank you Spiro!

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 you would like to receive future information via separate e-mail on these events or take on a leadership role, please contact Spiro Hountalas (naperspike@aol.com), Peter Metrou (pnmlawyer@aol.com) or Nick Dagiantis (ndagiantis@gmail.com).

Blood Drive

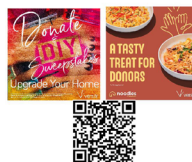
Turn a new leaf
Fall into giving

Saturday
November

4

8:30am - 1:00pm

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



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!

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LIONHEART SESSIONS

A VIDEO-BASED
SMALL GROUP STUDY FOR THE
MEN IN YOUR COMMUNITY

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



SIGN UP

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



Christmas Pageant

Attention, Sunday School families!!

It's that time of year again! We are excited to announce that the planning stages for our Christmas Pageant are already underway! This is the wonderful story of Jesus' birth as told through the eyes and hearts of our Sunday School students. Pageant roles are open to all grade levels, and there are speaking and non-speaking parts available.

This year's pageant is on Sunday, December 18th. Rehearsal dates are:

- Sunday, November 12th from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm
- Sunday, December 3rd from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm
- Sunday, December 10th from 11:30 am to 12:30 pm
- Saturday, December 16th from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm (lunch provided)

Parents, we would be delighted to have you join us in guiding our little stars during the show. Please let us know if you are interested in helping!

To cast your student in a role, scan the QR code below before November 9th. We will assign parts at our first rehearsal on November 12th.

We cannot wait to see your kiddos' smiling faces at this year's pageant!

With love and joy in Christ,

Saint Athanasios Sunday School
sundayschool@saintathanasios.com



Jr. Goya invites all 6th, 7th, & 8th graders to come out for our November events. Immediately following Sunday School on November 12th we will be meeting at the front garden to plant spring bulbs for this month's service project. And later in the month on Thursday, November 30th we will meet at the Botsis residence (1176 Hobson Mill Drive in Naperville) for our monthly "Fireside with Father" fellowship ministry. Parents use the QR code below to join the GroupMe chat for meeting notifications and to see our event calendar. See you soon!



Jr Goya worked together after church on Sunday, October 15th planting the front garden with fall color.



METROPOLIS
OF CHICAGO

Fundraiser

HELLENIC COLLEGE/HOLY
CROSS GREEK ORTHODOX
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

NOV 9

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



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ST. ATHANASIOS MEN'S GROUP &
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NOVEMBER 2023



I will declare
what He has
done for
my soul

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

THE CHAMPION



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