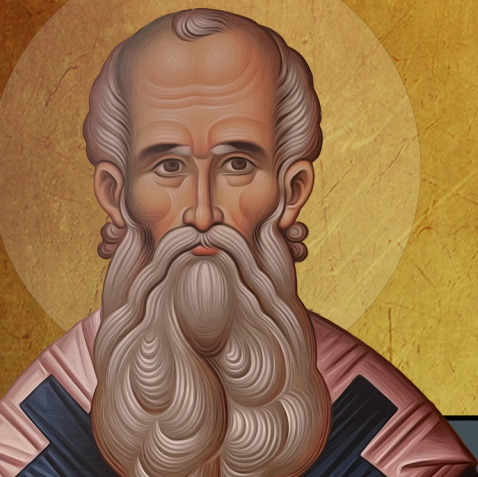




THE CHAMPION

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

AUGUST 2025



MESSAGE FROM FR. PANAGIOTIS

"In giving birth thou didst preserve thy virginity, in thy dormition thou didst not forsake the world, O Theotokos, thou was translated unto life, since thou art the mother of life, and by thy intercessions doest thou redeem our souls from death."

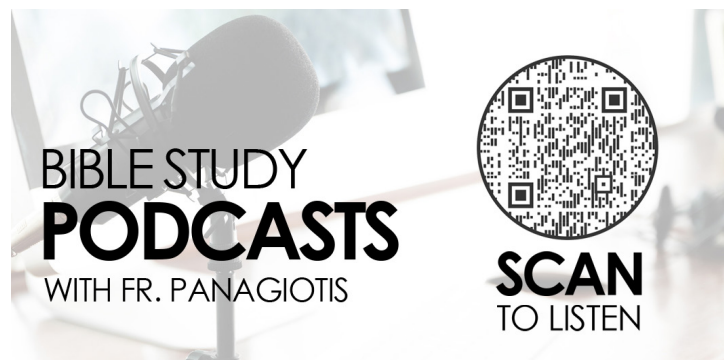
August, the crown of summer, is graced with one of the most beloved feasts in the life of the Church: the Dormition (Koimisis) of the Most Holy Theotokos, celebrated on August 15. Sometimes called the "Summer Pascha," this feast combines reverence, beauty, and deep theological meaning—reminding us that death, for those who are united to Christ, is not an end but a glorious beginning.

The word "Dormition" means "falling asleep." Unlike the typical understanding of death, the Church describes the Theotokos' departure from this life as a peaceful sleep, full of hope and without fear. Tradition holds that all the Apostles were miraculously gathered in Jerusalem to be present at her repose. Christ Himself received her soul, just as she once received Him in her womb. Her tomb, found empty three days later, is a sign of the resurrection promised to all who live and die in Him.

The Dormition is not merely a commemoration of the Virgin Mary's death. It is a declaration of our own destiny. The Theotokos—who bore Christ in her body, who stood by Him at the Cross, and who rejoiced in His Resurrection—is the first among the faithful to fully share in the fruits of Christ's victory over death. Her bodily assumption into heaven, though not a formal dogma in the Orthodox Church, is embraced as a sign that in Christ, humanity is lifted up into divine life.

To prepare for this feast, the Church offers us a fasting period from August 1–14 and the beautiful Paraklesis (Supplication) Canons, chanted on most evenings. In these moving hymns, we cry out to the Theotokos as our protector, healer, and intercessor. These services teach us to entrust our lives to her prayers, especially during times of sickness, trouble, and sorrow.

Let us embrace this season with prayer, fasting, and worship. Let us draw near to the Panagia not only with words, but with hearts that seek her Son. May her Dormition remind us that those who give their lives to Christ, as she did, are not swallowed by the grave but are raised into eternal life.



MEMORIALS

Effie Foley (40 Days)

Desi Stamatopoulos (1 Year)

Panagiota Tsapsari (1 Year)

Theon (Becky) Rousso (2 Years)

Anastasia (Tess) Fourtis (10 Years)

Christos Vardountiotis (10 years)

John Dracopoulos (10 year)

Alexandra Kleanthis (29 Years)

Peter Kleanthis (50 years)

BAPTISMS

Alexander Morton

Son of Nika & Ryan Morton

Troy Theodore Yfantis

Son of Theo & Megan Yfantis

PARISH COUNCIL

Congratulations to Father Panagiotis! Father was elevated to Protopresbyter by His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael on June 10th 2025. This is a significant honor and is the highest ecclesiastical title bestowed upon a married clergyman. This honor is reserved for those whose leadership, dedication, and ministry profoundly stand out. It underscores both spiritual leadership and administrative excellence. Father Panagiotis's work has truly exemplified this. We are deeply blessed to have Father Panagiotis as our parish priest at St. Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church, shaping our community through his commitment and care. May God continue to bless him with many years. AXIOS! He is worthy!

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 2025/2026 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 10-13. Thank you to Voula Ortega for coordinating this Summer Camp and all of the volunteers that assisted.

St. Athanasios OCMC Family Mission Sunday: The Orthodox Christian Mission Center held a lunch and an informative program in St. Mathew Hall on June 29th. Thank you to Fr John Chakos (keynote speaker) & Presvytera Alexandra, OCMC Ambassador Kristin Standish, OCMC Event Coordinator Elaine Drikakis, and Noe Pulido for coordinating this event. A special thank you to Ambrosia Greek Eatery for providing the meal. This was a successful fund raiser for the OCMC. Thank you to all of those individuals who attended and donated towards this ministry. St. Athanasios donated \$3000.00 on behalf of our parish.

Golf Outing: Our Annual Golf Outing took place on June 9th. 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: Our Church New Year Picnic will be held after liturgy on Sunday Sept 7th. Please mark your calendars and join us as we kick off the new ministry year and the New Ecclesiastical New 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 19-21. Please mark your calendar to volunteer and participate. Please contact our chairpersons Tracey Collins & Frank Demas or the office for more information on how you can be of assistance.

Wishing everyone a blessed month!

Brian McAnally
Parish Council President

DISCOVER ORTHODOXY

Classes start at 7pm on the
following dates:

9/23	12/9
10/14	12/23
10/28	1/13
11/11	1/20
11/25	2/10

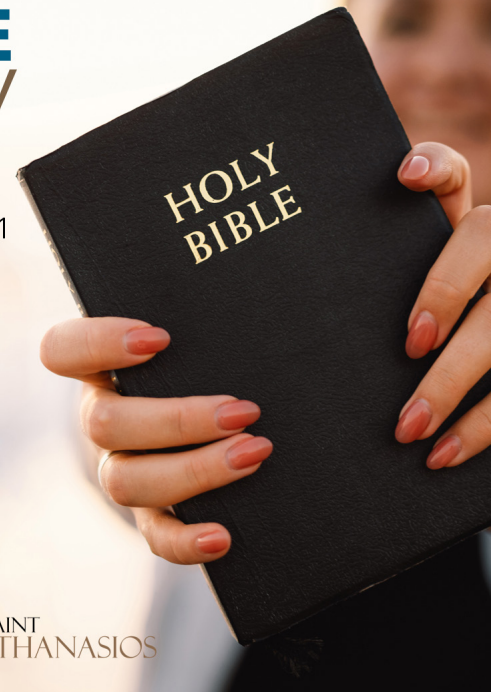
BIBLE STUDY

Join our Bible Study
this Fall as we explore 1
Corinthians. Sessions
are at 11am on the
following dates:

9/24	11/12
10/1	11/19
10/15	12/3
10/29	



SAINT
ATHANASIOS



Save The Date

=== OCTOBER 19, 2025 ===



SAINT ATHANASIOS 60TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER

CELEBRATING YESTERDAY, TODAY, & TOMORROW

WWW.SAINTATHANASIOS.COM



PARISH CALENDAR

All services are live streamed on our YouTube Channel.

Orthros begins at 8:30am with Divine Liturgy following at 9:30am (unless otherwise noted below)

Friday, August 1

7pm Supplication to the Theotokos (Paraklesis)

Sunday, August 3

Divine Liturgy - 8th Sunday of Matthew

Monday, August 4

7pm Supplication to the Theotokos (Paraklesis)

Tuesday, August 5

6:30 pm Vespers - Feast of the Transfiguration
Holy Transfiguration Greek Orthodox Monastery
17906 IL-173, Harvard, IL 60033

Wednesday, August 6

Divine Liturgy - Transfiguration of our Lord
3pm Hesus House Prep & Deliver
7pm Supplication to the Theotokos (Paraklesis)

Friday, August 8

7pm Supplication to the Theotokos (Paraklesis)

Saturday, August 9

Pilgrimage to St John Chrysostom Monastery

Sunday, August 10

Divine Liturgy - 9th Sunday of Matthew

Monday, August 11

7pm Supplication to the Theotokos (Paraklesis)

Wednesday, August 13

7pm Supplication to the Theotokos (Paraklesis)

Thursday, August 14

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

Friday, August 15

Divine Liturgy - Dormition of the Theotokos

Sunday, August 17

Divine Liturgy - 10th Sunday of Matthew

Sunday, August 24

Divine Liturgy - 11th Sunday of Matthew
1pm Farmer's Market

Friday, August 29

Divine Liturgy - Beheading of John the Baptist

Sunday, August 31

Divine Liturgy - 12th Sunday of Matthew

COFFEE HOUR

Help to promote fellowship, community, and friendship following the Divine Liturgy by hosting Coffee-hour. Consider hosting Coffee Hour for occasions such as Memorials, Namedays, Birthdays, 40-day Blessings, etc - or no occasion needed! For more information and to sign up to host a Coffee Hour, please call the office.

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 to everyone who generously donated food to our Pantry! Your contributions make a real difference in the lives of our community members who need it most. We are so grateful for your kindness & support.
2024 total - 691lbs of Food!

Please donate food that is Healing to the Hungry - Lean Proteins (Saturated Fats), No Sodium, Low Sugar Fruits, Whole Grain Items. No dented cans or open packaged foods. Expired food can not be accepted. This month's request is:

Baby Food, Baby Cereal and Baby Snacks

Please contact Betty Roussos at bettyroussos@yahoo.com with any questions.

PHILOPTOCHOS

Welcome back! Summer flew by!! As we get ready for another year, I want to take a look at what we accomplished last year.

- Purchased 50 household items – from sheets and towels to small appliances - to help set up a home for a family in the Fox Valley area through Radical Love.
- Packed and served 150 lunches for the homeless at Annunciation Cathedral through the Metropolis' Feed the Hungry program.
- Donated 125 gifts through the Angel Tree to the Salvation Army.
- Delivered 18 home-cooked meals to parishioners through our Meal Train ministry.
- Assembled and distributed 25 baskets for shut-ins at Christmas and Easter.
- Donated used clothing and accessories to the Freedom Ministry in Nashville and Valley Runway for school district 204.
- Provided lunch for volunteers and Sunday School students on Good Friday.
- Served dinner for 60 parishioners at the Wednesday Lenten lecture series.
- Assembled 100 snack bags for school-aged children for Radical Love.
- Hosted coffee hour for Philoptochos Sunday.
- Hosted the Vasilopita Throwdown.
- Hosted coffee hour after St. Athanasios Feast Day Vespers and Liturgy services.
- Hosted a pizza and ice cream lunch for Father's Day.
- Provided \$1575 in assistance to the needy in our community.
- Donated \$2500 to Philoxenia House and \$1500 to the Nancy Gladis Scholarship Fund from our Apokreatiko Glendi.
- Donated \$1500 to IOCC for hurricane relief.
- Donated \$1300 to Radical Love from our Trivia Night.
- Donated \$975 to St. Basil's Academy from our Vasilopita Throwdown.
- Donated \$750 in grocery and gas cards for Father Panagiotis to distribute to parishioners.

We are focusing on planning more hands-on activities for the coming year to further our impact in the local community. Please join us for our Fall Kickoff on Saturday, September 13th in St. Matthew Hall!

Sue Manos
Philoptochos President



AGAPE MINISTRY

Join us on September 11th at 11am for our Kickoff meeting! All seniors of St Athanasios are welcome. We will be having lunch, socializing, and playing BINGO and other games.

Contact Samantha Dulles for questions. 312.504.4448



STEWARDSHIP

Understanding Stewardship Data: Strengthening Our Church's Future Part 2

One of the goals of the Stewardship Committee is to educate the Parish on the role Stewardship has in strengthening our Parish. Stewardship is the largest contributor to the financial health of our Parish. Currently, Stewardship contributes about 50-55% of our operating revenue. Our ultimate goal is to have Stewardship contribute 100% of our operating income. This achievement would allow us to reach Stewardship Independence, which we have discussed in previous Champion articles.

To help us monitor our progress towards this goal, we look at two key metrics:

1. Number of Stewards increasing their Pledge
2. Average Pledge amount

When we introduced our 2025 Stewardship program in late 2024, we presented a 2025 goal that was 15% greater than our 2024 Stewardship level. This was our first step in the journey to achieving Stewardship Independence. Through the end of June, 60 or 26% of the Pledged 2025 Stewards have increased their commitment.

Currently, our average pledge amount is about \$1,200, which has been pretty consistent over the past 6 years. For us to achieve Stewardship Independence, the average Pledge needs to increase to about \$2,300.

The latest Stewardship data presents both progress and opportunities for growth — we are calling on each of us to reflect on our role in this collective effort.

It should be noted that the Stewardship Committee recognizes and understands that some Stewards within our community may have financial limitations that prevent them increasing their Pledge.

As we have said many times before, Stewardship is the lifeblood of our Parish, ensuring that ministries thrive, our mission expands, and our church remains a source of faith and community.

Please let us know what else we can do to help drive progress towards our future Stewardship goals.

In His Service,
The St. Athanasios Stewardship Committee



2025 PILGRIMAGES

Saturday, August 9

St John Chrysostom Monastery

Pleasant Prairie, WI

1:00pm Departure from St. Athanasios

2:30pm Q&A with Sister Vrieni

4:30pm Bookstore / tour the grounds

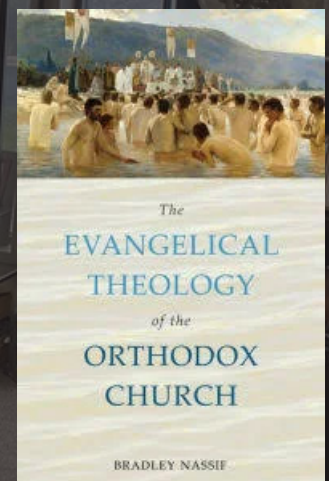
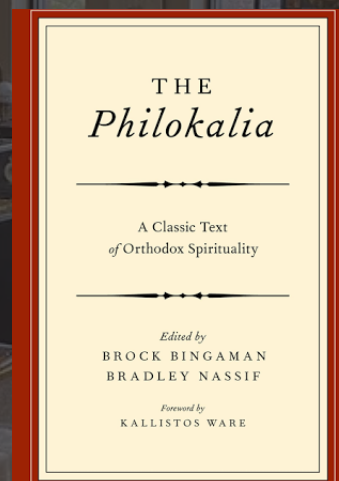
5:00pm Vespers

6:30pm Departure from monastery

Contact Spiro J Deligiannis (630) 677-5014

BOOK STORE

Stop in our Bookstore to purchase, "The Evangelical Theology of the Orthodox Church," by Fr. Gabriel Nassif, priest at Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Church in Warrenville, to read about how the gospel is presented in Orthodox worship, doctrine, and spiritual life. The word, "evangelical" is synonymous with "gospel" that speaks about God's great saving acts in Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Church and is not to be confused with the Protestant Evangelicalism. Fr. Gabriel offers ways to nourish the gospel in Orthodox homes and parishes today to become a catalyst for spiritual renewal. He is also co-editor of, "The Philokalia: A Classic Text of Orthodox Spirituality," that contains other interesting content regarding the understanding of our Orthodox faith.



MEN'S GROUP

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

For those of you that may not be familiar with us, we are a Group of Orthodox friends who gather to share their experiences about life, their philosophies, values and ideas. We meet to provide charity, support, mentoring and build fellowship among the Orthodox community of men in the western suburbs.

Welcome Back Dinner

Come join us for dinner on Thursday, September 11th at church. This will be a great opportunity to catch up with friends, meet new members and learn about our upcoming 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 (pnmetrou@gmail.com), Bill Collins (bctc@sbcglobal.net) or Nick Dagiantis (ndagiantis@gmail.com).

HESED HOUSE DINNER SERVICE WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 6

Cooking @ 3:00 PM

Dinner @ 7:00 PM

**Volunteers Needed to
Cook and Serve!**



Hesed House Ministry will be preparing and serving dinner at Hesed House on **Wednesday, August 6th**. Preparation and cooking begins in the St. Athanasios kitchen at 3pm. Food is then transported to Hesed House for set up by 6:30pm and then dinner is served to Hesed House at 7pm. Volunteers will be needed for preparation / cooking, transporting and serving dinner at Hesed House. If interested contact Bill Collins directly at Bctc@sbcglobal.net

AURORA GREEK FEST

On behalf of the Spring Aurora Food Festival, we would like to thank our St. Athanasios parishioners, family and friends, for the outpouring of support throughout our spring festival!

Since many have been asking here is a brief summary of how we did:

3 day totals comparison May festivals

2024.	2025
\$103,874	\$109,023

NET Profit	
Budget.	Actual
\$80,000	\$90,256.50

So even with the significant price increases on grocery items and a dust storm on Friday we were still able to be profitable. All thanks to your generosity in sharing your time, talent and treasures, we not only survived, but we thrived, and we thank God! We met new friends, we created new memories, and we came together in our love for Christ to labor alongside one another and for our community. Nothing would be possible without the extensive preparation before, during and after the festival. Thank you!

THANK YOU to the donors, sponsors, and personal donations that offset many of our expenses and accelerated our overall festival success! We'd also like to thank our local veterans for their moving opening ceremony that launched our festival and set the tone for the weekend!

What a beautiful example of living in a community, laboring for Christ, and having fun along the way! Thank you again! Words cannot adequately express the level of gratitude we feel!

Your Aurora Greek Fest Chairs,

Tracey Collins and Frank Demas



SEPT 19-21

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



JOY

SEPT. 14, 2025 | 11:30 AM-1 PM

JOY Kick-Off — Join us for games, fun, and friends! RSVP in the Band App.

JR GOYA

SEPT. 8, 2025 | 6:30 - 8 PM

Jr. GOYA Kick-Off — Let's start the year off right! RSVP & details in the Band App.

GOYA

SEPT. 25, 2025 | 6:30 - 8 PM

GOYA Kick-Off — Come for fun, food, and fellowship. RSVP in the Band App.



SEEKING GOYA ADVISOR



We're looking for a dedicated and faithful adult to serve as a GOYA advisor for our parish youth group! If you have a heart for working with teens and a desire to help them grow in their Orthodox faith, friendships, and service, we'd love to have you join our team. This role involves mentoring, organizing activities, and simply being a steady, supportive presence in the lives of our young people. If you're interested or would like to learn more, please reach out to youthdirector@saintathanasios.com

TEACHERS NEEDED



Do you have a heart for teaching and a love for sharing the faith? Our parish is currently seeking Sunday School teachers for the upcoming year. No prior experience is necessary—just a willingness to serve and grow with our children in Christ. Training and support will be provided! If you're interested or want to learn more, please reach out to sundayschool@saintathanasios.com

2025 SUMMER CAMP PHOTOS



dahliawb.com
630.596.6826

**Weddings
Baptisms
Christmas
Easter**



Being part of the Divine Liturgy is the biggest honor of our life! Partaking in the Sacraments. Participating in the Divine Liturgy. If we are part of God's flock, the devil cannot break us! When we are in a desert period, that is the time when God will reveal Himself to us. When we keep trying and keep struggling. It's like the bread we are eating every day. Sometimes, we like it. Other times, it sustains us. It's something we need.

- Dr. Vaia Papadimitriou

by Penny Panayiota Deligiannis

In November 1990, Vaia Papadimitriou of Soufli, Evrou, Greece was a graduate student at Chicago's Hyde Park University working to complete her PhD. in Particle Physics when she secured her first professional job as a Scientist at Fermilab (America's particle physics and accelerator laboratory). Fermilab offered her the postdoctoral Dr. Leon Lederman Fellowship. Dr. Vaia remembered, "From Warrenville where I lived, Saint Athanasios was the closest church. I was a local here from 1990-1995. With love and care, parishioners embraced me. Meeting Fr. Chris Constantinides and Deacon Vasilios Smith, I feel very privileged that I connected early on with the families of John and Margo Prokos, Costas and +Anna Baroukas and many others creating my support network, receiving wonderful love and lifelong friendships."

Beginning 1995-2003, Texas Tech University hired her to serve on their Faculty as an Assistant Professor, then Associate Professor and finally Full Professor. Every two weeks, she commuted to Texas staying in Illinois during her summers off from Teaching. In 2003, Dr. Vaia's hard-earned expertise and God-given Gifts were clearly recognized when Fermilab hired her as a Senior Scientist! Dr. Vaia revealed, "I prayed to Saint Athanasios asking him to bring me back here and he did! I moved to Batavia in 2003. I feel Saint Athanasios is my community and like being a part of it. I'm looking forward to coming to church and seeing everyone. In my life, I have several experiences with God's interventions. Either smaller or bigger things such as professional and health issues. **I believe in the power of prayer and the power of the Saints' intercessions!**"

"Under Christine Dreschler's leadership, I started teaching Saint Athanasios' 6th Grade Sunday School with Dr. Bessie Stavropoulos in 2006. In 2009, I taught 6th and 5th Grade Sunday School classes. From 2018-2021, I taught the High School class. Along with the curriculum, we collected students' questions on special topics. A favorite one was the relation between Science and Religion where we learned that they are complementary; they work in parallel and aren't contradicting each other. Throughout COVID, a special generation of kids were taught via ZOOM. The students are coming back, having interest. Not all of them but several of them. Being part of their lives is an honor at that delicate age. I like interacting with young people. When I was that age, many people gave me a lot and invested in me. I felt an obligation to do the same. I'm enjoying it. It's not a duty."



Dr. Vaia Papadimitriou

"Under Fr. Panayioti's guidance, Anna Caniglia and I assumed the responsibility in March 2023 to serve on the College Ministry. **It's very rewarding to interact with students at this important time in their lives when they're forming themselves, planting foundations.** I find it refreshing to be with them. **It's special to address students and see what is in their mind.** I find it encouraging. The students say what remains with them is they like this community and the fact they are remembered," reflects Dr. Vaia. "During their college breaks, students attend Divine Liturgy and are a part of our community. The young people are coming back to church. The fact is we have so many young people joining. People are searching for Orthodoxy as part of their journey. Thank God for that! **I find that participating in the liturgical services, educational outreach and philanthropic activities of the Church while getting to know our parishioners is a treasure that will stay with us forever!**"

Book excerpt from **The Prologue from Ochrid, Part One**. *While you are on earth, regard yourself as a guest of the Host, that is, of Jesus Christ. If you are at a table, He honors you thus. If you breathe the air, you breathe His air. If you bathe, you bathe in His water. If you travel, you travel around His Earth. If you accumulate goods, you accumulate what is His; if you squander them, you squander what is His. If you are influential, you are so by His permission. If you are in company with others, you are with His other guests. If you are in the countryside, you are in His garden. **If you are alone, Jesus Christ is present!** If you set off anywhere, He sees you. If you do anything, He has it in mind. He is the most careful Host whose guest you have ever been. And be, in your turn, careful towards Him. A good host merits a good guest. These are all simple words but they speak a great truth to you. All the Orthodox Saints knew this truth and ordered their lives accordingly. Therefore, the immortal Host rewarded them with eternal life in heaven and with glory on earth!*



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AUGUST 2025

DORMITION OF THE VIRGIN MARY



A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

THE CHAMPION



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