

# THE CHAMPION

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

FEBRUARY 2024



## MESSAGE FROM FR. PANAGIOTIS

The Presentation “Why You Will Marry the Wrong Person” is essential viewing material for all couples. Seriously. Watch the video on YouTube, it is only about 20 minutes long. The title is intended to get your attention, but the reflections are astute.

In this talk Alain de Botton covers every topic related to romantic love that one will face leading into a marriage. One of his most insightful sections is his discussion of Self-Knowledge. He claims that those around us, our parents, friends, and romantic partners know us better than we know ourselves, and he makes the point that an understanding of who we are “is out there but its not in me.” As a result, we may struggle in love because we are unaware of our own tendencies and patterns. That lack of awareness, de Botton argues, comes from distraction/addiction. Now he explains that addiction is not necessarily related to substances but is rather “any pattern or behavior wherein you cannot stand to be alone with yourself and your more uncomfortable thoughts or emotions. You can be addicted to anything as long as it keeps you away from yourself.” He mentions that our mobile devices have made it possible to live without ever truly coming into contact with ourselves.

The last piece to unpack of our parish’s guiding biblical verse, that God desires “that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of truth” (1 Timothy 2:4), relates to truly knowing ourselves in Christ. I have previously mentioned (see the Dec 2023 Champion) that coming to the knowledge of truth is about coming to meet and experience Christ Himself. But in doing so we also come to the true knowledge of ourselves. God reveals to me my true self when I come to Him. His light shines upon my soul and exposes both my virtues and my sins. Knowing and seeing ourselves as God does becomes the foundation for our future spiritual efforts, cultivating virtue and eradicating sin. There is no room for blissful ignorance within a Christian progressing toward God’s desired salvation.

Thus within the life of St. Athanasios our ministries and practices will become an opportunity for us to better know ourselves in Christ, to set aside the addictions that we use to distract us from coming into contact with ourselves. We do this first and foremost through the healing found in the sacrament of Confession. There are many hang ups about this sacrament:

Will Father Judge me or think less of me for what I say? – Unequivocally no. An article in our monthly publication cannot do justice to how intently the feeling of love and compassion pour out in the sacrament of Confession. Quite honestly it works the exact opposite of this fear. As a priest my love for someone only increases after hearing their confession.

Why do I even need to confess in front of a priest, can’t I just ask God for forgiveness in my private prayers? – Of course, you can and should ask for forgiveness during your private prayers, just as you should take proper care of your body in your daily life. But regularly throughout the year, or when we get sick, we turn to a doctor to help address physical symptoms or ailments that we might not be equipped to handle. Likewise confessing in the presence of a priest allows the priest to guide your spiritual healing and self-discovery. The need of a doctor does not eliminate the need for daily healthy habits, just like the need of a priest does not eliminate the need for daily spiritual habits, and vice versa.

I encourage all in our parish to embrace this sacrament regularly as a practice within your journey to self-knowledge.

But if I may return to de Botton’s original point about self-knowledge, while it might be diminished in us, others know us well. It is in fact the purpose of our interpersonal relationships within the Christian community to be mirrors, reflecting back to us opportunities for self-knowledge and growth. If interactions with my brothers and sisters in Christ are opportunities for me to interact with Christ, by virtue of the fact that they are made in His image, then these same interactions fulfill His role of illumining my virtues and vices. Friendships, koumbaroi, co-workers in ministry all serve vital roles in revealing me to myself. In fact this is the basic function of relationships: to know and to be known by others. So opportunities like our Small Groups or even the relationships you establish through the sacraments make certain “that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of truth.”

*Fr. Panagiotis*

## FUNERALS

Angelo Hasapis  
Kalliope Haralambopoulos

## MEMORIALS

Angelo Hasapis (40 Days)      Harry Koulos (6 Months)  
Victor Kasmouski (40 Days)      Aspasia Koulos (1 Year)  
Ted Macks (40 Days)      William Plattos (1 Year)

# PARISH COUNCIL

It's official! I (Brian McAnally) am now the 2024 Parish Council President. I am humbled and honored to serve. I would like to thank Foti Georgopoulos for his 6 years serving as our president and all that he has accomplished. He will continue to work by my side as my 1st Vice President as we transition. I would also like to thank Father Panigiotis for having the confidence in me to serve as President and look forward to working with him in this new role.

On Jan 7th we held a meeting for the election of the Executive Council. I would like to thank the parish council for electing me to serve as your President. Below is the 2024 Executive Council that was elected by our Parish Council. Congratulations to all and thank you for your continued dedication to our parish and our beloved Saint Athanasios!

- Brian McAnally - President
- Foti Georgopoulos - 1st Vice President
- Anna Caniglia - 2nd Vice President
- Treasurer - Frank Demas
- Assistant Treasurer - Aaron Mundie
- Recording Secretary - George Manos
- Corresponding Secretary - Tracey Collins

## Saint Athanasios Vespers & Feast Day:

On Jan. 17th and Jan. 18th we celebrated the Vespers and Feast Day of Saint Athanasios. Thank you to all that helped prepare for each of the services as well as the luncheon and to all of those who attended. We would also like to thank His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael for being with us for the Vespers Service and His Grace Bishop Timothy for being with us at Liturgy.

We launched our Capital Campaign on Jan 21st at our Feast Day Luncheon and would like to thank Mike Tsimouris and his committee for all of the long hard hours they put into this. This campaign will place our church on a sound financial footing so that we may achieve our ultimate goal. "So that all may be saved and come to the knowledge of truth".

Last but not least, I want to thank you the parish for your continued love and support to our beloved Saint Athanasios. We are truly blessed to have such a loving, caring, and dedicated parish.

Looking forward to a blessed 2024!

**Brian McAnally**  
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 January, February and March using the QR Code below:



**SCAN  
HERE!**



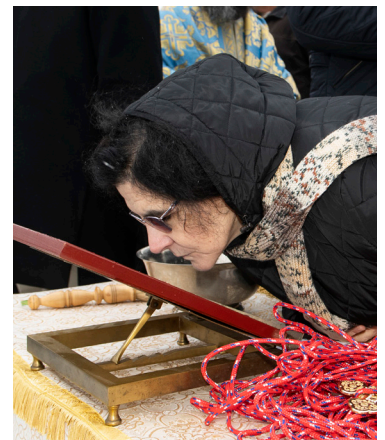
Scan QR code for an overview of the program.

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



# FOX RIVER BLESSING

On the Feast of Theophany (January 6th) we were blessed to join the St. Athanasius Romanian Orthodox parish of Aurora along with officials from the City of Aurora to celebrate the inaugural Fox River Blessing. Together, Fr. Panagiotis and Fr. Daniel Pop celebrated the blessing of the waters service, calling down the Holy Spirit upon the waters of the Fox River. Many faithful from both parishes were in attendance to commemorate the Baptism of our Lord and the sanctification of our city.



# 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)

## Friday, February 2

Divine Liturgy - Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple  
6 pm JOY Meeting

## Sunday, February 4

Divine Liturgy - 15th Sunday of Matthew  
11:30 am JrGOYA Tech Session  
11:30 am Philoptochos General Meeting

## Monday, February 5

7 pm Lionheart Series

## Tuesday, February 6

7:30 pm Discover Orthodoxy

## Wednesday, February 7

11am Bible Study

## Friday, February 9

7pm Vespers - St. Haralambos  
Holy Taxiarchai & St Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church  
7373 N Caldwell Ave, Niles, IL 60714

## Saturday, February 10

Divine Liturgy – St. Haralambos

## Sunday, February 11

Divine Liturgy - 16th Sunday of Matthew

## Tuesday, February 13

6:30 pm GOYA Meeting

## Sunday, February 18

Divine Liturgy - Sunday of the Canaanite

## Thursday, February 22

7pm JrGOYA Fireside with Father (Botsis residence)

## Sunday, February 25

Divine Liturgy - Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee  
11:30 am Choir Rehearsal

## Monday, February 26

6:30 pm GOYA meeting

## Tuesday, February 27

7:30 pm Discover Orthodoxy

## Wednesday, February 28

11 am Bible Study

## Thursday, February 29

3pm Hesed House - Prep and 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:

### Boxed Breakfast (pancake, cereal, oatmeal)

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

# PHILOPTOCHOS

January flew by! We had a successful Vasilopita Throwdown. Nine bakers participated in our friendly bakeoff on January 7th, which raised \$775. Philoptochos matched the funds raised, enabling us to donate \$1550 to St. Basil's Academy. Congratulations to our star bakers, Sherry Haralambopoulos and Scott Fanning. Thank you to Elli Koulos and Rita Andrianopoulos for organizing the event!

We hosted back to back receptions for St. Athanasios Feast Day. A hardy group of women braved the subzero temperatures to make hundreds of bougatsas, and set up St. Matthew Hall in preparation for our receptions after the Vespers and Liturgy services. Shout out to Stephanie Altidis and Connie Patsavas-Romios for heading up those events.

We are excited to welcome Ellie Lebron on Sunday, February 4th as a guest speaker in church. Ellie is founder of Radical Love, a nonprofit organization in our local area that provides a variety of services to refugee families, seniors and children. We donated \$1000 from Bingo Night in October to Radical Love, and will be preparing 150 nutritious snack bags for school children next month with JOY as part of our "feeding the hungry" mission.

Members are encouraged to join us after Liturgy on February 4th for our general meeting in the conference room.

We hope everyone will join us on Saturday, March 9th for our Apokreatiko Glendi! Tickets are \$60 for adults and \$25 for children under 12. RSVP to Leah Fanning at [leah\\_fanning@yahoo.com](mailto:leah_fanning@yahoo.com) or 630-664-3220.



**ΑΠΟΚΡΕΑΤΙΚΟ  
GLENDE**

**MARCH 9, 2024**  
**6:00 PM**

Join us for Dancing, Dinner, and Drinks!  
Music by DJ Apostolis  
Adults \$60 Children \$25  
RSVP to Leah Fanning at  
[leah\\_fanning@yahoo.com](mailto:leah_fanning@yahoo.com) or 630.664.3220

A portion of the proceeds to benefit Orthodox Christian Fellowship. Sponsored by the Saint Athanasios Philoptochos Society.

# STEWARDSHIP

February is the month of Love. It is also the month where our 2024 Stewardship campaign is well underway and you are all finalizing your 2024 Stewardship commitment. It is a time where we might pause and ask ourselves if our Stewardship is an act of obligation or an act of love. The term love-inspired Stewardship (provided by the Christian Stewardship Network) is defined as a spiritual practice of self-giving. How can we be a parish where all of us are love-inspired givers?

Obligation may imply doing the minimum or doing just enough to pass. It may feel like just trying to pass a class you need for graduation versus shooting for an A. Love on the other hand is different. With love, there are no limits. If you have ever been in love, you know that love means wanting to give everything you have for the other person or planning for the next time you will do something with your loved one. The connection between love and Stewardship is spoken by 1 Peter 4:10: "As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace.

Love as an expression of Stewardship means that we consider all of God's abundant gifts and how we can make best use of these gifts so we can love our neighbor, so we can return our thanks and praise to God, and so that we can do every little thing with great love.

Thank you for your continued love of our parish St. Athanasios. Your love shows up in our Parish life every day and is making a difference.

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

# CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

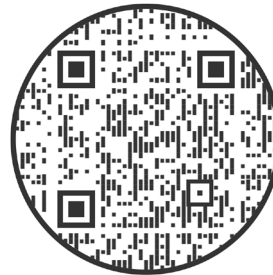
On Sunday, January 21st we held our Feast Day Luncheon. Thank you to all that worked hard to make this day a success; all the kitchen help and all those who attended the lunch.

In addition to celebrating our Patron Saint, we took the opportunity to officially launch the Saint Athanasios Capital Campaign. The Capital Campaign is a long term three phase plan to: 1) raise additional money above and beyond stewardship in order to pay off the mortgage by June 2025, the Church's 60th anniversary; 2) to assess the current building's needs/repairs and to meet those needs; and 3) to begin to think about the use of our vacant property next door and how we will pay for whatever we decide to do with the property.

Please take the time to visit the web site at [saintathanasios.com/capital-campaign](http://saintathanasios.com/capital-campaign) or use the QR code to learn more about the Campaign. I look forward to answering any questions that you may have.

Thank you.

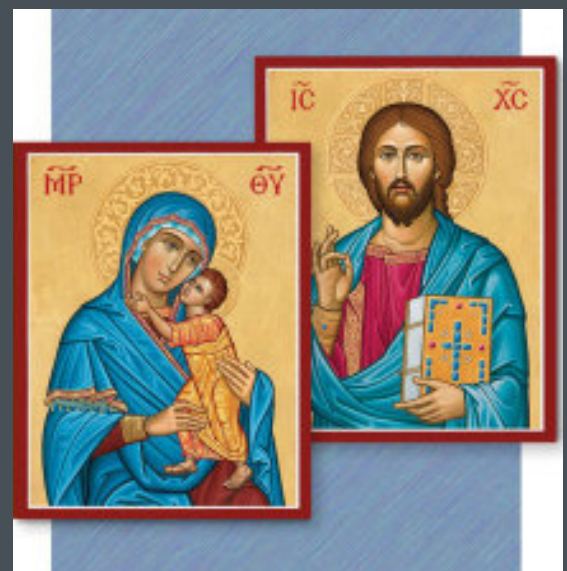
**Mike Tsimouris**  
Capital Campaign Chairman



**SCAN TO  
LEARN MORE**

# BOOK STORE

February is a good time to begin thinking about your spiritual needs for our Lent starting on March 18th and Easter on May 5th. While we are re-stocking our inventory for this coming year, please consider any custom orders of icons to allow time for the various monasteries we work with to paint/dry your selections. Any name can be made into a specialized saint's icon with the writing in Greek, English, Russian, Romanian or other languages. Also, if there are book titles that we do not carry at this time in our Bookstore that you are interesting in owning, please also let us know. Contact Jean Demas, Bookstore Coordinator, [bookstore@saintathanasios.com](mailto:bookstore@saintathanasios.com) for more information.



# MEN'S GROUP

We are starting the year with a social outing, an educational session and a volunteer event. Hope to see you there.

## NFL Watch Party

Our 3rd annual NFL watch party was Saturday, January 20th. Great time watching football and catching up with friends.

## Lionheart Series

Our third session will be Monday, February 5th. Look for registration details on the website and in the Friday bulletin.

## Hesed House Dinner Service

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

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

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).



## 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, February 5, 2024
- Monday, April 15, 2024



Please contact Nick Dagiantis at [ndagiantis@gmail.com](mailto:ndagiantis@gmail.com) with any questions.

FEB  
**4**



## JR GOYA TECH HELP SESSION

**St. Matthew's Hall  
Sunday the 4th @ 11:30**

Jr Goyans will be on hand to help parishioners with their church related IT questions and provide step by step instructions on:

**SIGN UP GENIUS**

**QR CODES**

**YOUTUBE SUBSCRIBE & STREAMING**

## February JOY



February 2, 2024

6:00-7:30 PM

Meet in Saint  
Matthews Hall



All kids Kinder-5th grade  
will be talking about  
SERVICE this month.

We will complete a  
service project  
to benefit children in  
our area.

## ORATORICAL FESTIVAL

Calling all 7th to 12 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 the QR code for more information including festival topics, criteria, etc.



## Oratorical Festival



Scan the QR code with your phone's camera for more information, criteria, and festival topic notes.

Monday, June 10, 2024

*Save The Date!*



Presented by  
Saint Athanasios Church

### Location

  
THE LINKS  
- AT CARILLON -  
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](http://saintathanasios.com/golf)

### Questions?

Contact Frank Demas at  
224.805.6920 OR Pete Nassos at  
[panassos@gmail.com](mailto:panassos@gmail.com)

Sponsorship Opportunities Available



# PHOTOS FROM ST. ATHANASIOS FEAST DAY





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



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FEBRUARY 2024



PRESENTATION  
OF OUR LORD  
IN THE TEMPLE

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

# THE CHAMPION



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ATHANASIOS

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