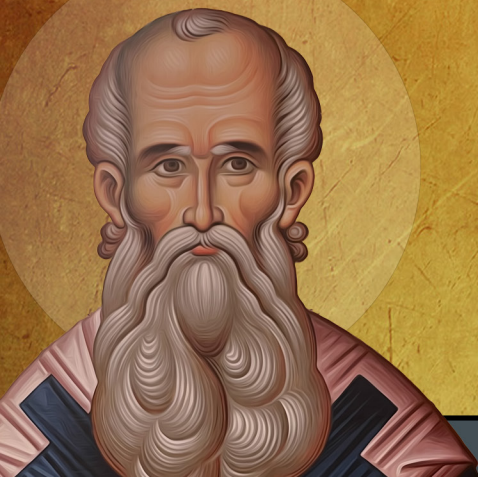




THE CHAMPION

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

OCTOBER 2026



MESSAGE

FROM FR. PANAGIOTIS

There is something almost instinctive about the way a mother protects her children. When danger comes, she does not stop to calculate the cost. She gathers them close, places herself between them and whatever threatens them, and does everything she can to keep them safe.

It brings to mind the image of a mother hen gathering her chicks beneath her wings. The little ones disappear beneath her feathers, sheltered by the one who loves them and watches over them (Matthew 23:37)

That is a beautiful image for the feast we celebrate on October 28: the Holy Protection, or Agia Skepi, of the Theotokos.

The feast recalls a vision in the Church of Blachernae in Constantinople, where the Mother of God was seen extending her veil over the faithful gathered in prayer. Her veil became an image of something Christians have experienced throughout the centuries: the motherly protection and intercession of the Panagia.

Because the Panagia is Christ's Mother, and therefore the mother of all Christians, we confidently seek her prayers. Like children running to their mother when frightened, wounded, or uncertain, we run to the Panagia and ask her to gather us beneath her protection.

For Greeks, this feast carries a special historical significance. The Church of Greece observes the Holy Protection on October 28, the same day on which we remember Greece's entrance into the Second World War in 1940. During those terrible years, the Greek people turned fervently to the Theotokos, giving thanks for her protection in the midst of war and suffering.

But the Holy Protection is much bigger than one nation. This is a feast beloved by Christians in lands touched by war because its message speaks directly to the frightened human heart. When homes are threatened, families separated, soldiers sent into danger, and the future uncertain, the Church turns again to the Mother of God and asks: Gather your children beneath your protection.

Most of us may never experience a battlefield, but all of us know what it means to feel vulnerable. We worry about our children. We face illness, grief, temptation, uncertainty, and circumstances beyond our control. In those moments, the Church reminds us that we are not left alone.

Bring those fears to the Panagia. Bring her the names of your children and grandchildren. Bring her those who are suffering. Bring her those living amid violence and war. Ask her to spread her protecting veil over them.

And like children beneath their mother's wings, may we find beneath her protection the courage to place our trust in her Son.

Most Holy Theotokos, protect us and save us through your prayers!

BAPTISMS

Esme Irene Maniatis (daughter of Daniel & Emelie Maniatis)

Caleb Sullivan Garbis (son of Christopher Jeramiah & Sarah Garbis)

WEDDINGS

Arielle Noel & Lane Mikkelson

Eleni Aleksis & Janaq Jano

David Gray & Gina Galanis

MEMORIALS

Dimitri Taylor (1 Year)

Harry Koulos (3 Years)

Harriet Hountalas (5 Years)

Nicholas Patsavas (20 Years)

PARISH COUNCIL

Wishing everyone a beautiful start to our new ecclesiastical year! It has already been a wonderful season of fellowship and activity at St. Athanasios.

Last month, we gathered for a beautiful parish picnic, kicking off the new year together with our community and celebrating the first day of Sunday School. Our Sunday School program is now in full swing, and if you have not yet registered your children, it is not too late! Please contact the church office for registration.

A HUGE thank you to everyone who helped make our Fall Aurora Greek Fest another tremendous success! Special thanks to Tracey Collins and Frank Demas for their leadership, and to all of the volunteers who gave their time and talents. Events like this truly showcase the spirit of our parish.

Our Discover Orthodoxy program is also well underway. If you are interested in learning more about our Orthodox faith, you are always welcome to join us on Sundays.

This month, we are especially honored to host the Metropolis Choir Conference, welcoming choir members from throughout the Metropolis October 8–11. We look forward to this special gathering and to the beautiful Divine Liturgy on October 11!

On October 13, please join us for a Town Hall introducing our new 2030 Vision. Your presence and participation are important as we look toward the future of our parish together.

Philoptochos is also hosting its fall fundraiser this month, featuring a beautiful designer handbag raffle. Please support this wonderful fundraiser if you are able.

Thank you for continuing to make St. Athanasios the incredible family that it is. We thank God for all the blessings He continues to shower upon us!

Anna Caniglia
Parish Council President



DISCOVER ORTHODOXY

Discover Orthodoxy returns this fall with a new format designed to help inquirers and those preparing to enter the Orthodox Church experience the beauty of the Orthodox Christian faith through both learning and lived practice. Whether you are exploring Orthodoxy for the first time or seeking a deeper understanding of the faith, we invite you to join us on this journey of discovery. Classes begin Sunday, September 6, and meet each Sunday.

**SCAN TO VIEW
SCHEDULE**



68TH ANNUAL CHOIR CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 9-11, 2026

Registration is now open for the Federation of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians 68th Annual Choir Conference hosted by St. Athanasios on October 9-11, 2026! The conference is open to choir singers, chanters, or anyone who is interested in learning more about music in the Orthodox church. Visit <https://chicagofederation.org/conference2026/> to register or reach out to Margarita Altidis margarita.altidis@gmail.com if you have any questions or are interested in donating.

SOWING THE WORDS OF PRAISE



68TH ANNUAL FEDERATION OF GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH MUSICIANS CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 9-11, 2026 | ST. ATHANASIOS, AURORA, IL

CALLING ALL CHOIR MEMBERS, CHANTERS, OR ANYONE INTERESTED IN CHURCH MUSIC!

Registration includes all workshops & rehearsals, as well as meals, including an awards & celebration banquet!

For questions about the registration process, email: webmaster@chicagofederation.com

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS



WEBSITE & REGISTRATION



CHICAGOFEDERATION.ORG

ST. ATHANASIOS

PARISH TOWN HALL

**TUESDAY, OCTOBER 13
6:30 P.M.**

We invite every member of our parish family to join us for a Parish Town Hall on Tuesday, October 13, at 6:30 p.m. Together we will discuss the 2030 Vision in greater detail, answer questions, hear your ideas, and continue discerning where God is leading St. Athanasios in the years ahead.



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)

Sunday, October 4

Divine Liturgy - 2nd Sunday of Luke
10:15am Discover Orthodoxy: Orthodox Life
(Catechumens Only)
11:30am Philotochos General Meeting

Tuesday, October 6

7pm Soul Sisters

Wednesday, October 7

3pm Hesed House Dinner; Prep & Deliver

Thursday, October 8

Metropolis Choir Conference
9:30am Agape Meeting; Oak Park Conservatory
6:30pm GOYA Night

Friday, October 9

Metropolis Choir Conference

Saturday October 10th

Metropolis Choir Conference

Sunday, October 11

Divine Liturgy - Sunday of the 7th Ecumenical Council
Metropolis Choir Conference
11am Metropolis Choir Conference Luncheon

Tuesday, October 13

6:30pm 2030 Vision Town Hall

Wednesday, October 14

7pm Men's Group; Small Group (Religious Ed Program)

Sunday, October 18

Divine Liturgy - St. Luke the Apostle and Evangelist
12pm Discover Orthodoxy: Doctrine

Thursday, October, 22

6:30pm Joint JrGOYA & GOYA: Bardwell Night

Friday, October 23

Divine Liturgy - St. Iakovos the Brother of the Lord

Sunday, October 25

Divine Liturgy- 6th Sunday of Luke
10:15am Discover Orthodoxy: Orthodox Life
(Catechumens Only)
11:30am Monthly Choir Rehearsal
7pm Vespers - St. Demetrios
St Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church
893 Church Rd, Elmhurst, IL 60126, USA

Monday, October 26

Divine Liturgy-St. Demetrios the Great Martyr

Wednesday, October 28

Divine Liturgy - Holy Protection of the Theotokos
3pm Blood Drive
7pm JrGOYA Night

Friday, October 30

6pm JOY Night

Saturday, October 31

9:30am Holy Trinity Cathedral (OCA): Feast of St John
Kouchurov & Kitchen Volunteer & Church Tour

COFFEE HOUR

Bundt-iful COFFEE HOUR

Sunday October 18, 2026. Plan on having a Bundt-iful Coffee Hour!

How? Bake and bring your favorite bun, Bunk... Ohhhh... you know, the cake! The one with a hole in the middle. A Bundt cake!

Bring a ring of joy to our coffee hour and let's shape some sweet fellowship together. Please send a brief note to coffee@saintathanasios.com, confirming you are bringing your favorite!



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.

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:

Spices, Seasoning Packets, Herbs & Buillion Cubes

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

PHILOPTOCHOS

Philoptochos kicked off the ecclesiastical new year with a Mimosas and Membership brunch. We enjoyed great food, good conversation and reconnected with friends old and new. Thank you to Maria Boznos, Nicole Gross and Kara Nassos for planning such a beautiful event!

Our fall fundraiser is underway! We are raffling off a Burberry handbag with a retail value of \$2250. Tickets are \$25. Contact any board member to get your tickets. Proceeds will be donated to the Metropolis' Project HOPE.

Our next general meeting will be held after Liturgy on October 4th. Anyone interested in learning more about Philoptochos is welcome to join us.

Philoptochos Sunday is coming up on November 1st. We will have a memorial and artoclasia and will also be hosting coffee hour. More details will be included in the weekly email. We'll also be drawing the winning raffle ticket for our handbag!

ST. ATHANASIOS LADIES
PHILOPTOCHOS

Burberry *Bermondsey Bag*
RAFFLE

BURBERRY
Retail Value
\$2,250

TICKETS ARE
\$25 EACH

A portion of the proceeds will be donated to Project HOPE,
which benefits "children, families and individuals living within the parishes
of our Metropolis as well as members of our community who are striving
to achieve food security and stable housing."

WINNER WILL BE CHOSEN
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 1ST!



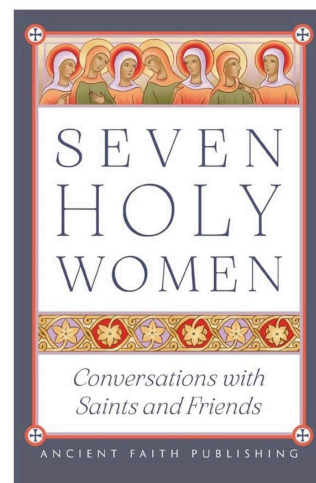
SOUL SISTERS

What a joy it has been to continue Soul Sisters throughout the summer! We've continued our book study of *Seven Holy Women*, a beautiful collection of short stories that allows us to explore a new story at each gathering. No prior reading or participation is necessary—simply come as you are!

It has been such a blessing to see old friendships deepen and new friendships blossom through this ministry. We look forward to continuing to grow together in faith and fellowship.

Questions? Contact Maria Lambrou at makokoslambrou@yahoo.com

Our next gathering will be Tuesday, October 6th at 7:00 p.m. at the home of Ellena Vranas. We hope you'll join us!



STEWARDSHIP

Stewardship Perspectives

Over the last four years, we have shared several definitions of Stewardship to help you gain a better understanding of what it is and what it means to us.

We started by sharing the Metropolis of Chicago's Stewardship definition and then a definition by Williams and McKibben, the authors of *Oriented Leadership*.

Metropolis of Chicago:

Stewardship is our grateful and loving response to God's love, grace and gifts to us. It is our personal commitment to God and His Church to ensure its vitality and continuous growth by joyfully and sacrificially offering of our talents, time and treasures that we have received from Him. Stewardship puts our faith in action and demonstrates our trust in God.

Williams and McKibben:

Stewardship is the call of the faithful to share willingly the gifts that God has bestowed on them, including sharing these gifts for God's work. Stewardship is devotion and service to God and His Church as persons, as families, as a Parish, as a Metropolis, as a National Church, and as the Church Universal. Stewardship is our active commitment to use ALL our time, talent and treasure for the benefit of humankind in grateful acknowledgement of Christ's redeeming love.

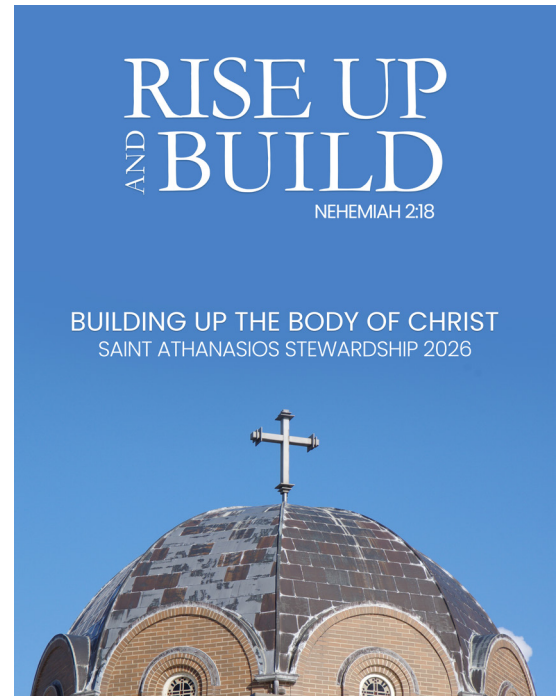
Recently **Fr. Jim Kordaris**, the Director of Stewardship, Outreach, and Evangelism for the Archdiocese of America provided his thoughts on what Stewardship is:

Stewardship is about how we live our lives and make our choices. Love and Stewardship are inseparable when we consider God's blessings in our lives. This guides the way we use His gifts with love and compassion for others.

His thoughts tie together some common themes ... Stewardship is core to how we live our lives ... it is how we use the gifts that God has bestowed upon us ... it is not about us; it is about our love and compassion for others.

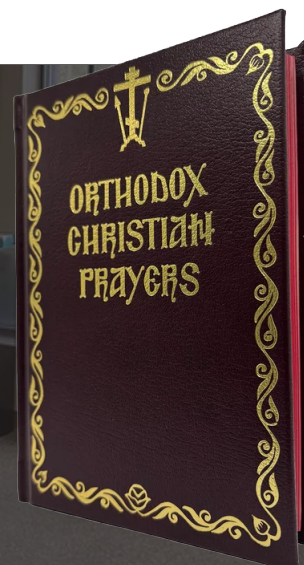
Please use these thoughts as you consider what Stewardship means to you and how you plan to use your Time, Talents, and Treasures for the benefit of others.

In His Service,
St. Athanasios Stewardship Ministry



BOOK STORE

Have you ever thought of our Bookstore as a teaching tool in our Church where everyone is welcome to seek something to enrich and inspire on their spiritual journey? Education from books and icons can reflect, strengthen, and expand our love of God in today's world where we often need guidance to help us understand the Word of God for ongoing spiritual sustenance. Our Discover Orthodoxy shelves have many titles recommended by Father Panagiotis to help increase your knowledge of our faith and practices. Stop in soon!



MEN'S GROUP

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

Welcome Back Dinner

Thank you to everyone who attended and helped make our Welcome Back Dinner a success! It was a wonderful opportunity to reconnect with old friends, welcome new members, and learn more about the activities and events planned for the coming year.

Aurora Greek Fest

We had a great time preparing the church and helping with the food for the fall festival. Of course, we also made sure to enjoy the food and put together our own menu outside. It's always a fun time around the grill!

Lives of the Saints Series

We will continue our "Lives of the Saints" series this year. Our first meeting will be Thursday, October 14. Please look for more details about the program and upcoming meetings.

Fall Blood Drive

Our semi-annual Fall Blood Drive will be Wednesday, October 28. More details, including registration information, will be available soon.

Food Pantry

Each month, our church collects donated food that is distributed to local food pantries. We are looking for volunteers who can help transport these donations to the pantries. If you are interested in helping, please contact us for more information. Every contribution of time and effort makes a difference.

Stay Connected

You can like and follow our Facebook page by searching for "Men's Group of St Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church"

Join Us

If you are interested in learning more or getting involved, please contact:
Spiro Hountalas — naperspike@aol.com | Joe Dougherty — joseph.dougherty47@gmail.com | Isaiah Kelley — ike2000@gmail.com | Nick Kallas — nick@grandproductions.com

HESED HOUSE



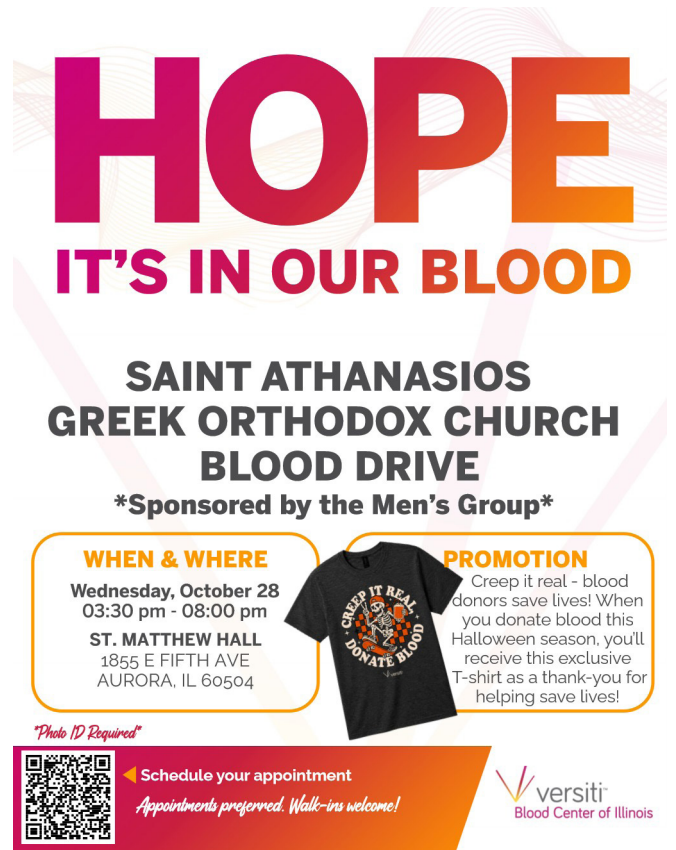
HESED HOUSE DINNER SERVICE
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7
Cooking @ 3:00 PM
Dinner @ 7:00 PM

Volunteers Needed to
Cook and Serve!



HESED HOUSE
BECAUSE EVERYONE DESERVES DIGNITY

Hesed house ministry will prepare and serve dinner to Hesed house on Oct 7. For details and slot availability contact Bill Collins at bctc@sbcglobal.net



HOPE

IT'S IN OUR BLOOD

SAINT ATHANASIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH BLOOD DRIVE

Sponsored by the Men's Group

WHEN & WHERE
Wednesday, October 28
03:30 pm - 08:00 pm
ST. MATTHEW HALL
1855 E FIFTH AVE
AURORA, IL 60504

PROMOTION
Creep it real - blood donors save lives! When you donate blood this Halloween season, you'll receive this exclusive T-shirt as a thank-you for helping save lives!



"Photo ID Required"



◀ Schedule your appointment
Appointments preferred. Walk-ins welcome!



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630.596.6826

**Weddings
Baptisms
Christmas
Easter**



JOY NIGHT

October 30th 6pm to 7:30pm

JR. GOYA NIGHT

October 28th from 7pm to 8:30pm

GOYA NIGHT

October 8th at 6:30pm to 8pm

Joint Jr. GOYA & GOYA

Bardwell Night - October 22nd at 6:30pm to 8pm

Orthodox SPROUTS

PRAY. PLAY. LEARN. GROW TOGETHER IN CHRIST.

Orthodox Sprouts is a new parent and tot ministry at Saint Athanasios for children ages 40 days through 4 years old and the caregiver who brings them.

Whether you're a parent, grandparent (Yiayia or Papou!), nanny, babysitter, or another loved one caring for a little one, you'll find a welcoming community where you and your child can **pray, play, learn, and grow** together in Christ.

Each gathering includes prayer, Bible stories, music and movement, hands-on activities, free play, and fellowship—creating opportunities for both children and caregivers to learn, connect, and grow together in Christ.



PRAYER



BIBLE STORIES



MUSIC & MOVEMENT



HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES



FREE PLAY



FELLOWSHIP

BEGINNING JANUARY 2027



ONE MORNING
GATHERING



ONE EVENING
GATHERING

Orthodox Sprouts is hoping to meet twice each month, with one morning and one evening gathering to accommodate a variety of schedules.



More information, meeting dates, and registration details will be announced this fall.



To register your child and get on our mailing list, please sign up here:

<https://forms.gle/qkwdufjKWLAticjA9>

or email orthodoxsprouts@saintathanasios.com

Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these. ~ Matthew 19:14

SAINT ATHANASIOS

JOY

We are excited to have you join us!
Please see below for our upcoming session details.



SESSION DATES

- Friday 10/30
- Saturday 11/7
Brookfield Zoo tree decorating (time TBD)
- Friday 11/13
- Friday 12/11
- (2027 Friday dates TBD)



TIME:

6:00 PM – 7:30 PM



LOCATION:

Saint Matthew hall at church unless otherwise noted



SESSION FORMAT

Each session will include the following activities:

- Ice breaker / Intro session
- Lesson
- Craft
- Snack
- Game



Parents are asked to stay and assist.



SCAN
HERE



CONTACT INFORMATION

Email:
joy@saintathanasios.com



Leah Fanning
630-664-3220

Amanda McKinney
630-533-2839

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Welcome back to Sunday School! What a joyful and blessed start to our new ministry year. We are grateful for the dedication of our teachers as they guide and nurture the next generation of Orthodox Christians.

As we learn about Christ, our prayer is that our students will grow not only in knowledge, but in their faith and love for Him. May this year bring our students closer to Christ and to one another as we grow together in His love.



COLLEGE MINISTRY

Tia Poulakidas is attending the University of Rochester in Rochester- New York. Her areas of study are "Ecology" and "Evolutionary Biology", and she expects to graduate in May 2027. Her favorite class so far has been "Microbiology". After graduation, Tia's plan is to find a job as a veterinary assistant and explore this path of work. In the longer term, ideally, she will be working in wildlife research or complete veterinary school (or some combination of both!). While at College, Tia attends the Holy Spirit Greek Orthodox Church at Rochester. What she likes most about the Saint Athanasios Parish is the supportive and welcoming community that she calls home. She feels very blessed to have been provided a strong spiritual foundation that has continued to guide her and help her flourish in Christ even after leaving for school. Her favorite sport is basketball, and her favorite team is the Dallas Mavericks. She enjoys reading and journaling. Her favorite season is Fall, settled right between the heat of the summer and trenches of a Rochester winter. She enjoys hikes to see the changing colors and anything involving pumpkins and autumn themes. Her favorite College restaurant is E Suki.



Support Our Future Church Leaders

Join our parish family at the 4th Annual Metropolis Scholarship Dinner. The event supports students at Hellenic College and Holy Cross School of Theology. Father Panagiotis leads the selection committee for these important scholarships. A member of our Men's Group also serves on the event committee. Last year, the fund helped six students, including one from our own parish.

Scan the QR code to secure your spot and indicate you would like to sit with the St. Athanasios group.

4TH ANNUAL DINNER BENEFITING METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO HCHC SCHOLARSHIP FUND

Your gift empowers students to serve the Church and the world as future clergy and lay leaders



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

**Mr. Constantine
Zografopoulos**

Executive Director of Z Life
Builder

The Empress Banquets

ADDISON, IL

Thursday, November 5, 2026

6:00 PM COCKTAILS

7:00 PM DINNER

JOIN US AT OUR 4TH ANNUAL
DINNER TO HELP RAISE FUNDS
FOR THE CHICAGO METROPOLIS
STUDENTS ATTENDING HELLENIC
COLLEGE HOLY CROSS SCHOOL
OF THEOLOGY

TICKETS AND TABLES

\$125 INDIVIDUAL | UP TO \$5,000 SPONSORSHIP TICKETS
PACKAGES

RSVP BY OCTOBER 29, 2026



SCAN QR CODE
OR CALL 312-736-2280

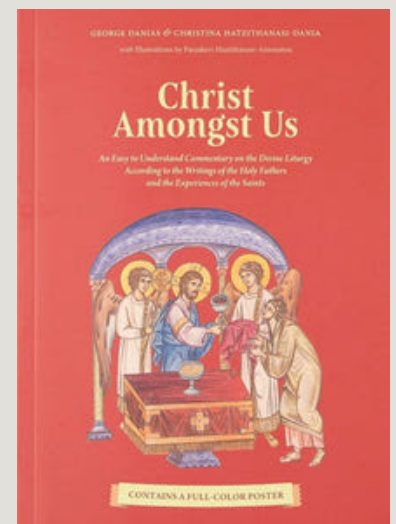


CHICAGO.GOARCH.ORG/HCHC

DID YOU KNOW...?

The Holy Anaphora

Let us stand well; let us stand with fear; let us attend, that we may offer the holy oblation in peace. After the recitation of the Symbol of Faith, the deacon exclaims these words, Let us stand well...that we may offer the holy offering in peace, that is the Holy Sacrifice which we offer up to God. We are reaching the most sacred moment of the Divine Liturgy. At this time the angelic powers stand in fear and terror, covering their faces with reverence while praising God. People are often unaware of what is actually happening at this time and talk with one another and create disturbances (...). The Divine Liturgy is a time of reconciliation with the Lord. In spite of this, just as He is prepared to forgive us, we talk are inattentive and make noise. We leave the Church having angered God and all the more! Concerning such behavior St. John Chrysostom says: "Can't you be silent inside the Temple? If not, then leave, so as not to become a stumbling block to others." However, the solution is not to leave the Church! Instead, let us remain in the Divine Liturgy and carefully consider what is happening: how the Lamb of God is coming to be sacrificed for us, how the precious Blood of the Lord is ready to be poured out into the holy Chalice, how all the heavenly Powers are praying with us. After reflecting on these things, let us set our hearts on high-raising them from the earth to the heavens! Let us lift up our hearts, the priest exclaims, and we respond, We lift them up to the Lord. In other words, in doing this we have turned towards the Lord.



Book is on sale
in the bookstore

"Christ is Amongst Us" by George Dania & Christina Hatzithanasi-Dania with Iconography by Paraskevi Hatzithanasi-Anthonatou pages 63-65



MODERN STEAKHOUSE WITH A GREEK ACCENT.

Beyond our delicious line-up of Prime Steaks, Chops, and Seafood, we offer an authentic selection of Greek Specialties, including Whole Oven Roasted Branzino, Lamb Racks & Greek Potatoes, Classic Pastitsio, and much more. Check out the **Greek Classics** on our menu for all your favorite Mediterranean flavors.

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OCTOBER 2026



PROTECTION OF
THEOTOKOS

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

THE CHAMPION



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