

THE CHAMPION

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

MARCH 2024



MESSAGE FROM FR. PANAGIOTIS

*By the waters of Babylon,
There we sat and wept
When we remembered Zion.
Upon the willows in her midst,
We hung up our musical instruments;
For there our captors asked us for words from our songs,
And those who carried us off said to us,
“Sing us the songs of Zion.” (Psalm 136:1-3)*

There is really only one story throughout the scriptures: the story of mankind's rebellion against God through sin, and God's eternal commitment to restoring us. Understood this way, we come to know that the story of the scriptures is in fact my story, lived out by so many others before me, but equally written by me.

Take for example our commemoration on the Sunday before Lent begins (this year, March 17th). On this day “we remember the expulsion of the first-formed Adam from the Garden of Eden” (Synaxarion of the day), and during the Orthros service the chanters proclaim:

“In times of old did Adam sit and cry in sorrow opposite the delights he had in Paradise; his hands did upon his forehead strike, as he said this: O merciful Lord, have mercy on me who have fallen.”

Throughout the services this day, the Church makes it abundantly clear that the events of Adam's expulsion (Gen 3:17-24) are the result of him being led away by sin. Similarly the people of Judah, after generations of sin and rebellion against the worship of God, are defeated by the Babylonians, and led away (4 Kingdoms 25:11). Psalm 136 records a comparable scene to Adam sitting outside the gates of Paradise, narrating the Judeans sitting by the waters of Babylon, away from their holy city of Jerusalem (Zion).

These accounts from the scriptures speak about the pain that one feels when coming face to face with the consequences of rebellion against the Lord. Sin is nothing short of rebellion, rebellion against God, His commandments, His rule, His will for us. And when we allow ourselves to be led away in rebellion, we find ourselves far from the delights of Paradise and the dwelling of our Lord. Such an experience is not unique to Adam, or to the Judeans, but is my story as well.

However bleak this account may seem, it is not complete. The Judeans eventually return to their home and rebuild the temple that they had lost, this time wiser not to fall into idolatry. Likewise, the iconography of the Resurrection shows Christ lifting Adam out of his exile and returning him to Paradise. Therefore, return and resurrection are also aspects of my own story through Christ.

Ultimately this is what the Lenten season is about, grieving over how far I have been led astray, in order to begin the journey back to God. I pray that during the coming weeks we will reject sin, which has carried us away, so that we may share in the Lord's resurrection and our return to Paradise.

Good Strength and a Blessed Lent!

Fr. Panagiotis

BAPTISMS

Amalia Garbis
(Daughter of Christopher Jeremiah & Sarah Garbis)

Nikollete Klasen
(Daughter of Tom & Demetra Klasen)

MEMORIALS

Kalliope Haralambopoulos (40 Days)

Eleni Koutoulidis (4 Months)

Sophia Lekas (1 Year)

Christos Deligiannis (3 Year)

Paris Altidis (3 Year)

Dimitrios Lekas (25 Year)

PARISH COUNCIL

Lent

Please join us in worship as we begin the Lenten services on Sunday March 17th with Forgiveness Vespers that evening followed with the Great Compline Services on Mondays, the Presanctified Liturgy Services on Wednesdays, and the Salutations Services on Fridays. Also, be sure to join us on Wednesday evenings after Presanctified Liturgy for the Lenten discussions and meals. These and other Lenten service dates and times will be in the weekly bulletins as well as the parish calendar on the website.

Ministries

Our 2024 parish ministries and small groups are in full swing. These are great opportunities to get together in fellowship to learn more about our faith, ourselves and each other. Detailed information with dates and times can be found on the website, weekly bulletins and the monthly champion newsletters or you may contact the parish office.

Parish Council

The Executive Council & Parish Council are continuing to focus and is making progress on our 3-year vision and 2024 Initiatives. Our 2024 initiatives consist of 4 categories: (1)Financial (2)Outreach/Evangelism (3)Spiritual Growth (4)Leadership/Personnel Development. Our ultimate goal is to fulfill God's desire "that all should be saved and come to the knowledge of truth".

Capital Campaign

Our Capital Campaign that was launched at our Feast Day Luncheon is off to a great start. We need everyone's continued support and prayers so that this campaign may be successful and that we can achieve our goal and vision. Thank you to those who have made their pledges and donations.

Lenten Prayer

The Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim:

O Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power, and idle talk. But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience, and love to Thy servant. Yea, O Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions, and not to judge my brother, for blessed art Thou, unto ages of ages. Amen.

Wishing you and your families a Blessed Lent!

Brian McAnally

Parish Council President



MAY 17-19

LOCATION
SAINT ATHANASIOS
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
1855 EAST FIFTH AVE
AURORA IL

**CARRY OUT
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630.851.6106

FEST TIMES
NOON TO 9 PM
(FRIDAY & SATURDAY)

NOON TO 7 PM
(SUNDAY)



www.auroragreekfest.com

LENTEN CONFESSION SCHEDULE

Sign up here for the sacrament of Holy Confession. If you are unavailable during any of the scheduled slots, or they are all full, please reach out to office@saintathanasios.com to find an alternative date and time.



**SCAN FOR
APPOINTMENT**





KNOW THE SAINTS

The Saturday of the Souls this year falls on the same date as the feast of the 40 Martyrs of Sebaste (March 9). In addition to the memorials that day, the relics of the 40 Martyrs will be available for veneration.

These holy Martyrs, who came from various lands, were all soldiers under the same general. Taken into custody for their faith in Christ, and at first interrogated by cruel means, they were then stripped of their clothing and cast onto the frozen lake which is at Sebastia of Pontus, at a time when the harsh and freezing weather was at its worst. They endured the whole night naked in such circumstances, encouraging one another to be patient until the end. He that guarded them, named Aglaius, who was commanded to receive any of them that might deny Christ, had a vision in which he saw heavenly powers distributing crowns to all of the Martyrs, except one, who soon after abandoned the contest. Seeing this, Aglaius professed himself a Christian and joined the Martyrs on the lake, and the number of forty remained complete. In the morning, when they were almost dead from the cold, they were cast into fire, after which their remains were thrown into the river. Thus they finished the good course of martyrdom in 320, during the reign of Licinius. These are their names: Acacius, Aetius, Aglaius, Alexander, Angus, Athanasius, Candidus, Chudion, Claudius, Cyril, Cyrion, Dometian, Domnus, Ecdicius, Elias, Eunoicus, Eutyches, Euty chius, Flavius, Gaius, Gorgonius, Helianus, Heraclius, Hesy chius, John, Lysimachus, Meliton, Nicholas, Philoctemon, Priscus, Sacerdon, Severian, Sisinius, Smaragdus, Theodulus, Theophilus, Valens, Valerius, Vivianus, and Xanthias.



Lenten Dinners & Lectures

Join us each Wednesday evening of Lent for a Meal and Lenten Lecture following the Presanctified Divine Liturgy.

- 3/20 - Fasting (Fr. Panagiotis)
- 3/27 - Confession (Fr. Panagiotis)
- 4/3 - St. Dymphna (Pres. Nichole)
- 4/10 - Missions in Korea (Dn. Perry Hamalis)
- 4/17 - Oratorical Festival
- 4/24 - Hymns of Holy Week (Kostas Mavrogiannis)



PARISH CALENDAR

All services are live streamed on our Facebook Page & YouTube Channel.

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

Sunday, March 3

Divine Liturgy - Sunday of the Prodigal Son
3pm Divine Liturgy Small Groups Last Session (at Church)

Wednesday, March 6

11am Bible Study

Friday, March 8

4 pm Aprozkatiko Setup
6 pm JOY meeting

Saturday, March 9

Divine Liturgy - Saturday of Souls/40 Martyrs of Sebaste
6pm Apokreatiko Glendi

Sunday, March 10

Divine Liturgy - Judgement Sunday (Meatfare Sunday)

Saturday, March 16

Divine Liturgy - Holy Ascetics

Sunday, March 17

Divine Liturgy - Forgiveness Sunday (Cheesefare Sunday)
11:30 am Philoptochos - "Radical Love" - snack bag packing
5pm Forgiveness Vespers

Monday March 18

5pm GOYA Lenten Dinner & Compline
6pm Great Compline

Wednesday, March 20

11am Bible Study
6pm Presanctified Liturgy
7:30 pm Lenten Dinners & Lectures: "Fasting"
(Father Panagiotis)

Friday, March 22

7 pm Salutations to the Theotokos

Saturday, March 23

Divine Liturgy - St. Theodore & Miracle of Kolyva
5 pm March Madness Watch Party

Sunday, March 24

Divine Liturgy - Sunday of Orthodoxy
Icon Procession
7pm Vespers - Feast of Annunciation
Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral
1017 N LaSalle Dr, Chicago, IL 60610

Monday, March 25

Divine Liturgy - Annunciation of the Theotokos
6pm Great Compline

Wednesday, March 27

7:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy
7:30 pm Lenten Dinners & Lectures: "Confession"
(Father Panagiotis)

Friday, March 29

7pm Salutations to the Theotokos

Sunday, March 31

Divine Liturgy - Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas

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:

Canned Tuna/Chicken

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

PHILOPTOCHOS

We welcomed Ellie Lebron on Sunday, February 4th. She spoke from the heart about Radical Love and the great work they're doing in the Fox Valley community. We were pleased to present her with a check from our fall Family Bingo night. Following liturgy, we had a nice turnout for our general meeting.

Plans are well underway for our upcoming Apokreatiko Glendi. If you have not made your reservations yet, there's still time! We will be featuring music from DJ Apostolis and traditional Greek dancing from the Neolea Dancers. Adults are \$60 and children are \$25. Proceeds will benefit Orthodox Christian Fellowship. Please contact Leah Fanning at leah_fanning@yahoo.com or 630-664-3220 for reservations. Payment can be made by cash, checks made to St. Athanasios Philoptochos or Zelle. We are also able to process credit or debit cards. We hope to see you all dressed up--any colorful attire, wigs, masks, beaded necklaces or any other fun/festive look is encouraged!

Our Spring philanthropic outreach is with Radical Love. We are partnering with JOY to fill 150 snack bags for school children to have on the weekends. The JOY children voted for the items to include and we will be filling bags at their upcoming meeting on March 8th at 6 pm. Everyone is welcome to join us.

Sue Manos
Philoptochos President

**ΑΠΟΚΡΕΑΤΙΚΟ
GLENDI**

MARCH 9, 2024 6:00 PM

ST. ATHANASIOS CHURCH
1855 EAST 5TH AVENUE AURORA, IL 60504



Join us for Dancing, Dinner, and Drinks!
Music by DJ Apostolis
Greek Dancing performed by Neolea Dancers
Adults \$60 Children \$25
RSVP to Leah Fanning at leah_fanning@yahoo.com or 630.664.3220

Proceeds to benefit Orthodox Christian Fellowship.
Sponsored by the Saint Athanasios Philoptochos Society.

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.

SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY

Mark your calendars for the Sunday of Orthodoxy Icon Procession on March 24th! Sunday School students and families, please remember to bring an icon for the procession on this special day. Additional details will be provided to our Sunday School classes soon!



Sunday of Orthodoxy

**ICON
PROCESSION**

Sunday, March 24
During Sunday School

Sunday School students, remember to bring your icons for the procession on March 24th!

We'll gather in the Sunday School classrooms for instructions and then assemble in St. Matthew's Hall to begin the icon procession in the church.

QUESTIONS?
sundayschool@saintathanasios.com

STEWARDSHIP

Generosity ... Joyful, Loving, and Grateful support of our church and its mission

What are the basic concepts of Generosity and how can we apply them to Stewardship as well as our everyday life? This is a timely and important topic being discussed by churches and stewardship committees around the Metropolis. Generosity is defined in the following manner ...

- Generosity reflects the gratitude we have to God for the gifts He has given us. It is not just about money; it is the generosity of volunteerism, dedicating time, and talents, as well.

In many ways, the basic concepts of Generosity are defined and embedded thought-out the Bible:

- Generosity is a Virtue – Matthew 10:8
 - Freely you have received, freely give
- Generosity is a Practice – Matthew 25:35-36
 - Taking care of the hungry and thirsty, the homeless and hurting
- Generosity is Learned
 - Children watch and learn. We must teach them and encourage them to be Generous in their lives
- Generosity is more than Money
 - It is how we use our talents, our time for others, practice hospitality, offer encouragement, make connections
 - It is measured by our giving and volunteering
- Generosity is Transformative, Inspiring and Contagious
- Generosity is also a cornerstone of our Faith and our day-to-day life.
- "...and prepare your Generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of Generosity and not as a grudging obligation." 2 Corinthians 9:5
- "So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver" 2 Corinthians 9:7
- "For God so Loved the world that He Gave His only begotten Son..." John 3:16

"It is the Heart that does the giving. The fingers only let go" Nigerian proverb

Now is the time to personally reflect on these passages and how generosity is ever present in your life. Our April Champion article will dig deeper into Generosity as this is a robust topic discussed at the monthly Chicago Metropolis Stewardship sessions. We look forward to sharing more about the topic of what generosity means and how it is connected to Stewardship and the Bible.

In His Service,
Elli Koulos and Pete Nassos

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

The month of March typically signals the end of winter and the beginning of spring, give or take a late snow! March also brings a change in the clocks, the first day of spring and this year the beginning of Great Lent. It is a time of reflection, re-birth and re-commitment. I would like to invite you to consider what the community of Saint Athanasios has meant to you, what it continues to offer to you and what it can mean to you in the future.

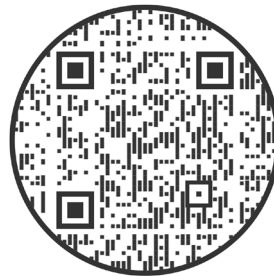
If you have not already done so, please take the time to visit the Capital Campaign web site at www.saintathanasios.com/capital-campaign or use the QR code below to learn more about the Capital Campaign, inform yourself and inform others on what we are trying to accomplish.

Recently, Pledge Cards were mailed out; if you did not receive one or would like an additional one, please stop by the Church office or pick one up at the Pangari, candle stand. I ask that you take the time to complete the pledge card and generously support our efforts.

As of this date, thanks to your generosity, we have raised a total of \$51,898.62. We have made a mortgage principal payment of \$29,050 and plan on making an additional payment of \$22,848 in the coming weeks.

I look forward to answering any questions that you may have.

Mike Tsimouris
Capital Campaign Chairman

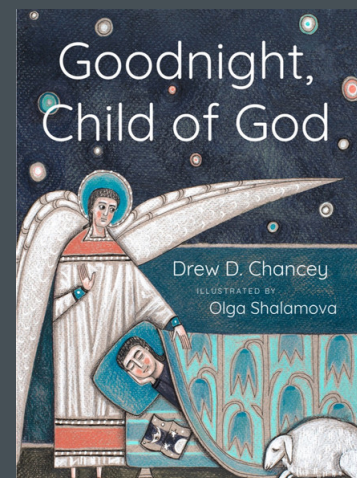


**SCAN TO
LEARN MORE**

BOOK STORE

Book Review, by Amanda McKinney

Goodnight, Child of God, is a bedtime book to read to children that reveals the presence of the Kingdom of Heaven all around us. The poetic text, written by author Drew D. Chancey, who takes inspiration from the beauty and goodness of the life God has given us, surrounds children while they are serenely preparing for sleep. This book shows children how they are always surrounded by the love God has for them. After a child's busy day, this book's content helps them drift into a peaceful sleep. Stop by the Bookstore for your copy of Good night, Child of God.



MEN'S GROUP

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

February was a busy month as we had our third session of the Lionheart series and prepared/served dinner at Hesus House.

Here are some upcoming events.

NCAA March Madness Watch Party

Our 3rd annual NCAA March Madness watch party will be Saturday, March 23 at Poor Boy's Pub in Montgomery, starting at 6:00 PM.

Lionheart Series

Our fourth and final session will be Monday, April 15. Look for registration details soon.

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).



MEN'S RESOURCE
FAITHTREE.ORG

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, April 15, 2024



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

JR GOYA

February Recap

Sunday, February 4th our JR GOYANS provided technical help and assistance to the parish by answering questions about YouTube, QR codes; SignUp Genius. Thank you to all who participated and supported this ministry.

Look Ahead

JR GOYA will not officially meet the month of March due to spring break recess, but we hope to see everyone at the Glendi on Saturday, March 9th.

Mark Your Calendars:

Final "Fireside with Father"

When: Thursday, April 25th

Where: Botsis Home, 1176 Hobson Mill Dr, Naperville, IL 60540

Time: 7pm

All 6th, 7th, & 8th graders are invited to join us as Father guides us through a reflection on our Lenten Journey.



March JOY Meeting

Preparing for Lent

Come learn about Lady Lent

Friday March 8th 6-7:30 pm

Saint Matthew's hall

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

Questions?

Contact Frank Demas at 224.805.6920 OR Pete Nassos at panassos@gmail.com

Sponsorship Opportunities Available

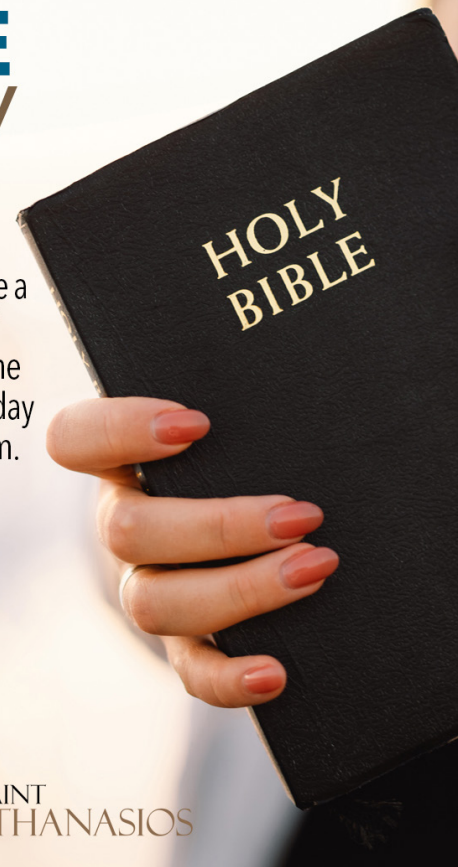
GOYA

GOYA met for dinner and fellowship this month. Join the Remind to receive updates by texting @stagoya to 81010. We hope to have a table for the Glendi on March 9th!



BIBLE STUDY

Join our Bible Study this Spring as we take a look at the Names of Jesus. Sessions are the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of the month at 11am.



SAINT ATHANASIOS

Lenten Donations

2024

CONTACT THE OFFICE TO DONATE
630-851-6106
OFFICE@SAINTATHANASIOS.COM

HOLY WEDNESDAY

Flour 5LB
Olive Oil 1 bottle
Mystical Supper Icon Flowers

HOLY THURSDAY

Crucifixion Icon Flowers
Crucifix Floral Wreath (2)

GOOD FRIDAY

Kouvouklion Flowers
Kouvouklion Carnations
Rose Petals for Epitaphios

PASCHA/MISC

Pascha Icon Flowers
Clergy Pascha Candle
Rose Water
Lamp Oil
Red Eggs

SALUTATIONS ICON FLOWERS

1st Salutation	March 22
2nd Salutation	March 29
3rd Salutation	April 5
4th Salutation	April 12
Akathist Hymn	April 19

PALM SUNDAY

Feastal Icon Flowers
Palm Strips for Crosses
Palm Fronds
Bay Branches

BRIDEGROOM ICON FLOWERS

1st Bridegroom	Palm Sunday
2nd Bridegroom	Holy Monday
3rd Bridegroom	Holy Tuesday





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Easter**



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KITCHEN — BAR — MARKET

CHE FIGATA

ITALY TO TABLE



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MARCH 2024



BY THE WATERS
OF BABYLON

A Monthly Publication of Saint Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

THE CHAMPION



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