

# HOLY CROSS CROSSROADS

*"O Nations, in our eagerness; let us celebrate before its time the Nativity of Christ! Let us lift up our minds and hearts to Bethlehem and contemplate the great Mystery in the cave. Eden was opened when God came forth from the pure Virgin, a perfect Man and perfect God. Wherefore, let us cry out and say, "Holy God the eternal Father! Holy is the Mighty One, the Incarnate Son! Holy is the Immortal One, the Spirit Paraclete! All Holy Trinity, glory to You!"*  
*(Vespers of the Nativity)*

Beloved Members and Friends of Holy Cross,

**Christ is born! Glorify Him! Χριστος Γενναται! Δοξασατε!**

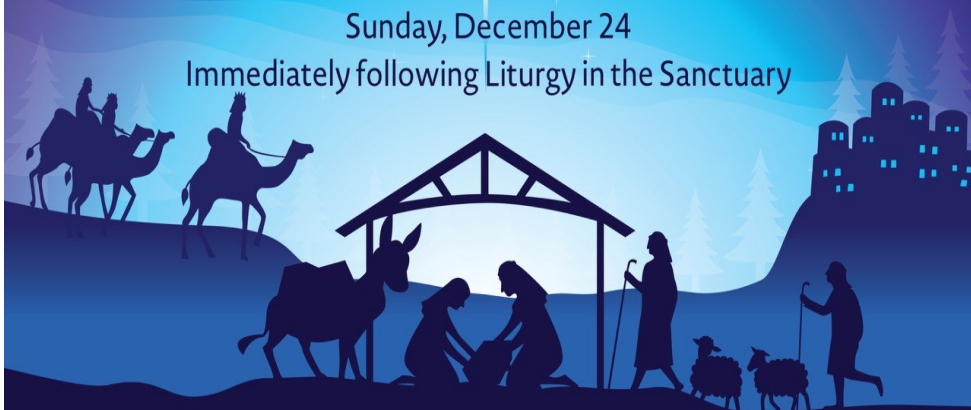
As we approach the Feast of our Lord's Nativity, let us lift up our hearts to the Lord! Let not our joy be stolen by the coldness and



# 2023 Holy Cross Christmas Pageant



Sunday, December 24  
Immediately following Liturgy in the Sanctuary



*Rehearsal: Sunday, December 17 during Sunday School*

We encourage all Sunday School-age children (pre-K through 12th grade) to participate and if possible to attend the rehearsal.

Please contact Elias Diamond, [ediamondhcpgh@gmail.com](mailto:ediamondhcpgh@gmail.com), to let us know if your child/children can participate. Thank you!

# Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church

123 Gilkeson Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15228

*Crossroads, published monthly Volume 23 Issue 12*

Under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and His Eminence Metropolitan SAVAS of Pittsburgh

The mission of Holy Cross is to keep and proclaim, pure and undefiled, the Orthodox Christian faith and traditions in conformity with the doctrine, canons, worship, discipline and customs of the Church.

**Fr. Michael Kallaur, Presiding Priest**

**Fr. Daniel Korba, Presbyter**

**Dn. Frank Dickos, Deacon**

**Elias Diamond, Pastoral Assistant**

Nena Jovonovich, Secretary

Website: [holycrosspgh.org](http://holycrosspgh.org)

Office (412) 833-3355 FAX (412) 833-3357

Community Center Phone:(412) 854-6001

Office Hours Monday-Friday 9am-5pm

## Organizations & Committees

Church School	Elias Diamond	(412) 833-3355
Philoptochos Pres.	Thea Manos	(412) 600-8640
Phil. Membership	Adrienne Dickos	(412) 833-4980
Circle of Angels	Carol Halkias	(412) 276-5002
	Christine Peters	(724) 693-9290
Garden of Love	Dina Hartlep	(412) 720-9383
	Stacie Metrose	(412) 833-5164
Greek School	Didra Kirschner	(412) 561-2892
	Dena Yamalis	(412) 343-8355
Junior Dance	Kristina Gzikowski	(412) 257-5015
Senior Dance	Georgia Yamalis	(412) 728-2259
Choir		
First Steps	Sophia Alfaras-Melainis	(412) 251-3209
JOY	Elias Diamond	(412)413-7427
Young Adults	Elias Diamond	(412)413-7427
GOYA	Denise Melis	(412) 341-9264
Golden Club	Cynthia Kostelnik	(412) 833-9423
	Rene Koett	(412) 831-3142
Bookstore	Mary Portellos	(724) 941-8699
House Committee	Konrad Mayr	(412) 877-7780
Building Comm.	Michael N. Zervos	(412) 833-6843
Sts. Mary & Martha	Adrienne Dickos	(412) 833-4980
Interior Design Committee	Janet Conomos	(412) 831-7997

## **\*Services:**

Sundays:	8:15am Orthros 9:30 am Divine Liturgy
Mondays:	6:30pm Paraclesis
Wednesdays:	7 pm Bible Study and <i>via Zoom</i>
Weekdays:	8:30am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy
Saturdays:	Vespers 5pm

*\*See monthly calendar for all services.*

## Parish Council 2023

Constance Zotis, President  
 Jordan Nicholas, Vice President  
 Nicholas Tripodes, Treasurer  
 Jim Mustakas, Financial Secretary  
 Rachel Kartofilis, Secretary  
 Nick Ambeliotis  
 Christopher Chaney  
 Mark Hummel  
 Frank Kalogeris  
 George Liadis  
 Tom Mourtaeos  
 Christine Picard  
 Dean Stambolis  
 Donna Staub  
 Annie Urso

**Funeral/Memorial information:** Use of the Community Center is available for parishioner funeral lunches at no charge. Parishioners may contact any caterer they choose to purchase and prepare their **Makaria** (Mercy Meal). For **Kollyva**, you may bring your own or contact Denise Melis directly (412) 341-9264.



**Coffee Hour** fellowship is an extension of our Divine Liturgy! Please gather with family, koumbari or friends to sponsor/prepare one Sunday. See the calendar on website for open dates, and call the church office to confirm



darkness of a fallen world. Our thoughts can elevate us to the Throne of The King of Kings! The Lord of Lords! The Prince of Peace! Let us hasten to forgive one another and have a kind word for those whose hearts need to be warmed by the Lord's presence in their life. Our manger, our soul, can receive the Lord who desires to abide in us, if we prepare a place for Him. Come quickly my beloved to the Holy Church of Christ and bring a gift worthy of a King. Bring Him your sins, your failings, your brokenness in Holy Confession. He alone can restore you and give you His peace. Bring Him your offerings for all the blessings He has bestowed upon you. Bring Him your joy and gratitude to serve such a King who willingly humbles Himself as a baby.

We may ponder, why does this season of Christmas, year after year, bring such excitement and wonder? Fr. Alexander Schmemmann (Theologian from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century) expresses the joy of Christmas in this way, "Why does joyful excitement build over the Christmas season as people, even those of lukewarm faith and unbelievers, behold that unique, incomparable sight of the young mother holding the child in her arms, and around them the 'wise men from the East,' the shepherds fresh from night-watch in their fields, the animals, the open sky, the star? Why are we so certain, and discover again and again, that on this sorrowful planet of ours there is nothing more beautiful and joyful than this sight, which the passage of centuries has proven incapable of uprooting from our memory? We return to this sight whenever we have nowhere else to go, whenever we have been tormented by life and are in search of something that might deliver us."

Fr. Alexander goes on to reflect about children and Christmas. How, as adults, we lose the wonder, the trust, and innocence of youth. As adults we are unwilling to give ourselves over completely to the Lord.

Fr. Alexander continues, "It is the words "child" and "God" which give us the most striking revelation about the Christmas mystery. In a certain profound way, this is a mystery directed toward the child who continues to secretly live within every adult, to the child who continues to hear what the adult no longer hears, and who responds with joy which the adult, in his mundane, grown-up, tired and cynical world is no longer capable of feeling. Christmas is a feast for children, not because of the tree that we decorate and light,

but a much deeper sense that children alone are unsurprised that when God comes to us on earth, he comes as child. Above all, is it not the capacity, so characteristic of children, to wonder, to rejoice, and most importantly to be whole both in sorrow and in joy? Adulthood chokes the ability to trust, to let go and give oneself completely to love and to believe with all one's being. And finally, children take seriously what adults are no longer capable of accepting; dreams, that which breaks through our everyday experience and our cynical mistrust, that deep mystery of the world and everything within it revealed to saints, children, and poets.

Only when we break through to the child living hidden within us, can we inherit as our own, the joyful mystery of God coming to us as a child. The child has neither authority nor power, yet the very absence of authority reveals him to be a king; his defenselessness and vulnerability are precisely the source of his profound power. The child in that distant Bethlehem cave has no desire that we fear him; He enters our hearts not by frightening us, by proving his power and authority, but by love alone. He is given to us as a child, and only as children can we in turn love him and give ourselves to Him. The world is ruled by authority and power, by fear and domination. The child God liberates us from that. All He desires from us is our love, freely given and joyful; all He desires is that we give Him our heart. And we give it to a defenseless, endlessly trusting child. Through the feast of Christmas, the Church reveals to us a joyful mystery; the mystery of freely given love imposing itself on no one. A love capable of seeing and recognizing and loving God in the Divine Child and becoming the gift of a new life." (*Celebration of Faith*, Vol. II pg. 53-54)

Christ came to give us life, that we would have eternal life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10). What can we offer to our Savior and Redeemer? The only gift He asks of us is our freely given love! All of our petitions in the Church end with this admonition, "Let us commit ourselves and one another, and our whole lives to Christ our God." This is both the desire and the goal of our lives. May it be so!

Wishing you and your families a blessed Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Καλα Χριστουγεννα!

With love in Christ,  
Fr. Michael

## The Orthodox Spirit and the Nativity Fast

His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

Saint Porphyrios of Kafsokalyvia (also known as Saint Porphyrios the Seer, +1991) recounts, in the context of narrating events from his life, his experience as a spiritual father with the sacrament of confession. He was a mere fourteen years old when he fled to Mount Athos. There, he lived in the company of two hermits who were brothers according to the flesh. His illness compelled these hermits to send him down from the sacred mountain in search of medical treatment and recovery. Upon returning to his village and regaining his health, the metropolitan of the archdiocese ordained him a priest and granted him the blessing to be a father confessor, all while he was a young man of just twenty-two years, and he only knew the spiritual direction of ascetic monastic life.

In reflecting on that experience, he mentioned that he kept the book of Saint Nicodemus of Athos by his side. This book, rooted in the realities of the 16th and 17th centuries, meticulously cataloged sins one by one and established rules for repentance and discipline for each sin. The canons contained within this book may seem excessively stringent to the modern person.

Saint Porphyrios' unwavering commitment to his faith and his monastic education compelled him to consult this book after every confession. He would assign penitents a regimen that corresponded to their particular sin: three hundred prostrations daily, weeks or months of fasting, and so forth. However, he soon realized that these rules exceeded the capacities of the faithful and did not contribute to their spiritual growth. On the contrary, they led to a sense of despair regarding the possibility of overcoming their sins, and this despair often caused them to return to their sins.

He thus made the decision to close the book and place it on the shelf. Instead, he began to inquire of the penitents regarding the number of prostrations they could reasonably perform and the duration of fasting they could sustain, providing them with an obedience tailored to their abilities.

The example of Saint Porphyrios teaches us the distinction between the spiritual teachings of the Church and their practical application. Spiritual growth is a gradual process in which believers ascend toward their desired spiritual state. The Church's role is to provide personal support and guidance to individuals on their spiritual journeys, helping them climb the ladder of salvation. Pastors or spiritual fathers draw from living spiritual experiences, not just static texts, to offer spiritual care that considers the individual's capacity, readiness, and circumstances.

Father confessors accompany the faithful on their spiritual path and tailor their guidance to the unique needs of their spiritual children, focusing on what is most beneficial for their growth in Christ. The Gospel serves as a general spiritual guideline, but the specific application and embodiment of the Gospel's teachings depend on the spiritual father's experience and the individual believer's abilities, circumstances, and state of being. This principle forms the foundation of Orthodox spiritual guidance.

A story from *The Garden of Monks* (*The Paradise of the Desert Fathers*) illustrates this concept. It tells of a young man from a wealthy family who sought monastic life in an Egyptian desert monastery. The monks of the

monastery slept on the ground, following the customs of their time. However, the abbot granted the young man the privilege of using a pillow while sleeping. Some of the other monks saw this as special treatment and complained. The abbot responded by saying, "My sons, you used to sleep on the ground in your homes, and when you came to the monastery, your sleeping conditions did not change much. But he used to sleep on a bed with a pillow of ostrich feathers. Whose monastic sacrifice is greater?"

This incident, along with countless others in our spiritual heritage, emphasizes the importance of tailoring guidance to each person's abilities, circumstances, and potential to help them progress to higher levels of spiritual growth. As the Apostle Paul says, "When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things" (1 Cor. 13:11).

"The letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:6) yet going beyond the letter and reaching the Spirit requires deep spiritual experience and profound humility, which enables pastors to be receptive to the experiences of those more spiritually advanced and benefit from them. Often, stubbornness and excessive rigor are rooted in hidden passions such as self-righteousness or vainglory. History has witnessed the downfall of many who, in their strictness, stifled and overwhelmed those under their guidance.

Our Orthodox spiritual heritage teaches us to be rigorous in self-discipline while being compassionate and merciful towards others. This message is especially relevant since some priests considering abstinence from oil as a central aspect of the Nativity Fast. The Nativity Fast in the Orthodox Church is observed as follows:

- Abstention from food and drink until noon is not required.
- Fish and seafood are allowed until December 12, which coincides with the feast of Saint Spyridon the Wonderworker.
- The strictness of fasting increases as Christmas approaches.

Abstaining from oil is a monastic tradition blessed for those who desire it, with the blessing of their spiritual father, but it is not obligatory. Some individuals justify abstaining from oil based on references in the Great Horologion. The Church's response is that the influence of monastic practices became more widespread with the growth of the monastic movement and the guidance provided by monastic fathers. Our liturgical books were formulated under this monastic influence. The Church does not prohibit these practices, but it does not impose them on everyone. Thus, such practices remain optional and contingent upon the willingness of the believer to live a more ascetic life, guided by a spiritual father who understands their potential and spiritual condition. It is crucial to be aware of the potential pitfalls associated with what our heritage refers to as the "devil of excessive zeal."

The spiritual father's role is to accompany his spiritual children, nurturing their spiritual growth and development, rather than burdening them with practices that exceed their capacity and lead to despair, ultimately causing them to abandon the Christian path leading to salvation. The arrangements within our Church order (the Typikon) are designed to help believers engage with and experience the salvific events they commemorate. These arrangements aim to facilitate spiritual growth, purity, and holiness rather than serve as additional burdens. In the words of Jesus, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27).

**From Talanton Newsletter:**

**Dear friends and benefactors of St. Gregory Palamas Monastery**

We greet you in this joyous time of preparation for the feast of the **Nativity** of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, and the feast of Theophany commemorating our Lord's Baptism. We would like to reflect on the conditions that maximize our receptivity to His coming and presence in the world.

*In calling the Magi by a star, Heaven brought the first-fruits of the nations unto Thee, a Babe lying in a manger; and they were astonished that there was neither scepter nor throne, but only the uttermost poverty. For what is meaner than a cave? And what is lowlier than swaddling clothes? Yet in them the riches of Thy Divinity shone forth. O Lord, glory be to Thee.*  
—*Hypakoe pl. 4*

The above quoted hymn is read after the third ode of the canon for oratorios of Christmas Day and beautifully expresses the wonder of the magi as they beheld the humility and lowliness of the one to whom heaven's star had directed them. This is precisely the glory of God and the power of humility made flesh in the Holy Child of Bethlehem. It is certainly something that goes beyond the imagination and human understanding. God in the flesh, glory streaming from the cave and manger, angelic choirs announcing to shepherds in the field the holy birth, visitors both great and lowly, who have received from heaven the knowledge and meaning of this event, are participants. On the other hand, the rich and wise of the world are totally ignorant of the meaning of this holy birth. Herod is enraged and threatened by this humble child and the teachers and priests of the Old Covenant do not receive any invitation or announcement. The humility of God's entrance into the world as the God-man is expressed in every detail of the **Nativity** of our Lord and this humility teaches us that the prerequisite for receiving Christ is a humble heart and disposition.

St. John Climacus lists "humility" as step 25 of the Ladder, one of the higher virtues. So we see that this virtue does not come to us easily or prematurely. There are 25 steps to take before we arrive at humility. Certainly, a humble person is a person who is actively pursuing the commandments of God, confessing and repenting and otherwise doing all the good that he can possibly do. Having passed through the practice of the fundamental virtues of obedience, penitence, remembrance of death, and contrition, the struggler is on a firmer footing for the struggle against the passions of anger, malice, slander, talkativeness, falsehood, despondency, gluttony, lust, avarice insensitivity, fear, vainglory and pride. It is precisely in the struggle against the passions that we realize through our progress and our falls that it is only with God's help that we come to any measure of victory over the passions. The above mentioned passions are obstacles to a warm and flowing communion with God. Too often we do not realize how crippling and paralyzing these passions have become. If we work to struggle against them, we forget that it is only with God's help that we have any measure of victory. Even our failures indicate that we have left God out of the equation. Those failures occur because we were relying on ourselves too much and those failures should direct us back to God. When we have truly turned to God and directed all of our hope on Him then we are on the path to the paradise of humility. That is, we are not worried or anxious about anything, other than to serve and please God.



Humility is truly a paradise and a gift from God. God himself is the most humble and he gives blessed humility to those who have struggled to live in Him and long for communion with Him. St. John Climacus said, *Humility is a grace in the soul and with a name known only to those who have had experience of it. It is indescribable wealth, a name and gift from God 'Learn from Me', that is, from an angel, not from a man, not from a book, but 'from Me', that is, from My dwelling within you, from My illumination and action within you, for 'I am gentle and meek of heart' in thought in spirit, and your souls will find rest from conflicts and relief from evil thoughts.*

St. John says that Humility eludes adequate description. He asks of the wise for a description of this blessed virtue and the answers are the following. . . *Humility is constant forgetfulness of one's achievements. It is the admission that in all the world one is the least important and is also the greatest sinner. Another says, it is the mind's awareness that one is weak and helpless. A third says, it is to forestall one's neighbor at a contentious moment and to be the first to end a quarrel. It is the acknowledgment of divine grace and divine mercy. It is the disposition of a contrite soul and the abdication of one's own will.*

In the end, this virtue defies description. St. John continues; *Do you imagine that talk of such matters will mean anything to someone who has never experienced them? If you think so, then you will be like a man who with words and examples tries to convey the sweetness of honey to people who have never tasted it. He talks uselessly. Indeed I would say he is simply prattling.*

A humble man gives glory to God for everything. He rejoices in the smallest gifts and blessing as though he had received the costliest treasures of the world. He accepts the circumstances of his life, both good and bad, as providential. He understands these circumstances as either for strengthening and confirmation in faith and virtue, or for his correction and repentance. He is neither increased by flattery, nor decreased by criticism. He fears only a break in communion with God. Humility has become a fortress and protection for his soul. He realizes that the enemy of his ego is the friend of his soul.

The tools that cultivate humility are an exact knowledge of the law of God, an exact knowledge of our sins, repentance and confession. St. John Climacus says; *Repentance lifts a man up. Mourning knocks at heaven's gate and Holy humility opens it. This I say, and I worship a Trinity in Unity and a Unity in Trinity.*

In the popular Christmas carol, *Joy to the world*. We sing, *let every heart prepare him room and heaven and nature sing*. So let us prepare ourselves using the tools and gifts that God has given us for the cultivation of blessed humility and we will be prepared to receive Christ who is clothed in the glory of His humility. My great grandmother would often say of the high and mighty, *there was never a bird that flew so high that he didn't have to come down to earth in order to eat*. When we celebrate these coming feasts, we are celebrating the coming of the one who from the highest heaven came down to earth to clothe us with the Garment of Salvation, to feed us with the Bread of Life and to shelter us in the Holy Ark, the Church. He did not come because he needed something from us. He came because he loves us. May we imitate His Divine Humility and enter the paradise promised to us in His **Nativity!** *Glory to God in the highest, His peace is on earth and His good pleasure in mankind!*

Most of us have dreams when we sleep at night. Sometimes these dreams relate to significant events or situations in our lives. Other times they can be full of nonsensical, whimsical things, dancing bears, floating castles in the sky, things that we don't see in every day life... Whatever our dreams may hold, nonetheless, sometimes our dreams can feel very, very real. So real, in fact, that we may awake and need a few moments to become aware of the fact that the reality we just left was not a reality, but rather, a figment of our imagination.

Today's Gospel reading is a passage from the Gospel of Luke, and in fact, it is unique to Luke's Gospel, being found in neither Matthew, Mark, nor John. Christ tells us a parable about a rich man, blessed with all kinds of material abundance. His land brings forth abundantly, so he decides that he will tear down his old barns to build even bigger ones, bigger barns to better secure his grain and his goods, all so he can say to his own soul, "Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, and be merry!" Yet, his luxurious life is not to be so for this man, as it is on this very night that God will take his soul from him, and so Christ tells us that, "So is he who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich towards God."

The things of this life, the treasures which we so often chase at the expense of our treasure in heaven, though they may seem real as our dreams, in the end will prove just as fleeting. As a great poet once wrote, "We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep." Or, as our Orthodox funeral service reminds us in one hymn: "A flower withers and a dream passes, and likewise, every human being disintegrates." With two funerals at Holy Cross this past week, two funerals of parishioners who most certainly laid up their treasure in heaven, this should be in the forefront of our mind. Are we laying up our treasure in heaven? Or are we too consumed with grasping at the things of this dreamlike reality? It is an important question to ask, lest we find ourselves in the unenviable position of the man in today's parable. This does not mean we all have to renounce all worldly possessions and become monks. What it does mean however, is that we recognize all these worldly possessions as fleeting, as mere tools which are aimed at our real purpose: to lay up our treasure in heaven, where no thief can break in, and neither rust nor moth can corrupt it.

This Gospel lesson builds on and complements yesterday's Gospel lesson, also from the Gospel of Luke. In yesterday's lesson we read, "At that time, as Jesus was going along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." And Jesus said to him, "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man has nowhere to lay his head." This passage can be explained by an image provided to us in the writings of Saint Basil, wherein he compares our situation in this life, to that of a traveler in a desert, stopped at a way-station, a rest stop along their journey. This life for us, is really only a rest stop for our true destination, and thus, it would be foolishness to think we can stay here. Just think of all the great monuments that humans have built over time and where they all. The Colossus, the giant statue once on the isle of Rhodes has been reduced to scrap metal. The Colosseum of Rome is crumbling. The Tower of Pisa is leaning. So too will all of us eventually be. So again, I ask us: where is our treasure? During this Nativity fast, we should ask ourselves this daily, moment to moment, so we do not trade the eternal treasure the Lord offers us for the perishable treasures of this life. ~*Elias Diamond*

*11.19.23*



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA  
ARCHEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL

Prot. No. 313/2023

**Archepiscopal Encyclical for National Philoptochos Sunday**

November 12, 2023

Unto the Most Reverend and Right Reverend Hierarchs, Pious Priests and Deacons, Monks and Nuns, Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils, Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Members of Leadership 100, Day and Afternoon Schools, Philoptochos Societies, Youth, Greek Orthodox Organizations, and entirety of the Christ-loving Plenitude of the Sacred Archdiocese of America:

*And who is my neighbor?* (Luke 10:29)

Beloved sisters and brothers in Christ,

Today is National Philoptochos Sunday, always on the day that we read the parable of the “Good Samaritan” in our churches across the country. This most famous of parables is an answer to the question: “And who is my neighbor?” – a question that our Philoptochos Societies have been responding to for generations.

Especially, as regards the philanthropic ministries and initiatives of our Venerable Ecumenical Patriarchate, our Philoptochos Societies across the country manifest the love of neighbor as one’s own self (Luke 10:27). They give generously and without hesitation, and I pray that all who hear or read this Encyclical will do the same. Philoptochos understands that the love that is shown to others, is a love of one’s own life. They have never forgotten the charities of the Mother Church of Constantinople, and they never will.

Let us follow their good example, in answering the young man’s question to our Lord Jesus Christ: “And who is my neighbor?” Philoptochos has shown us the way, even as the “Good Samaritan” teaches every generation of Christians what the essence of true love really is. May we all be inspired to stop for a moment on our busy pathways of life, and regard even those across the ocean as our neighbors. Let us offer them the healing love that will ultimately cure the world of all her ills, and thus fulfill the greatest commandments of all: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself” (Luke 10:27).

With paternal love in Christ,

† ELPIDOPHOROS

Archbishop of America

Note: To be read in every parish of the Archdiocese on Sunday, November 12, 2023.

**Attention High School Seniors and Parents!**

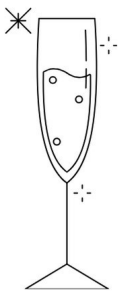
The application for the Popi Hagelios Memorial Philanthropy Award of the Philoptochos Society of Holy Cross Church is available on November 19 in the Narthex, Elaine Sofis, [esofis@comcast.net](mailto:esofis@comcast.net) or Denise Melis, [dmelis@comcast.net](mailto:dmelis@comcast.net) electronically. The application is due by Sunday, March 17, 2024. NO EXCEPTIONS! The award is available to a 2024 PLEDGED Holy Cross family member who is a 2024 graduating high school senior. A similar application is available at Mt. Lebanon High School. You may apply to both philanthropy awards, but will only be eligible for one \$1,500 award.



# Holiday Family Greek Night

Come join your para for an evening of  
music, dancing, and fun!

**Friday, December 29th**  
**7 pm - Midnight**  
**Holy Cross Community Center**



**\$250 for a table of 8**  
(Comes with 2 mezze platters)

**\$25 for individual tickets**

Cash Bar  
Greek Cookie Table  
Music by The Greek Company



**Order your tickets online:**  
**<https://bit.ly/GreekNight2023>**



*All proceeds benefit Holy Cross Philoptochos*

*\* Cash & Check purchases will be made available during December Coffee Hours and at the event.*

*\* We need volunteers! Contact Vasso at [vassopaliouras@gmail.com](mailto:vassopaliouras@gmail.com) if you can bartend, sell tickets at the door, set up &/or tear down.*



# Blood Drive



## Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church Blood Drive In Memory of Kathy Frommeyer

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 16**  
**8:00 A.M. TO 2:00 P.M.**

**OLD SOCIAL HALL**

**PLEASE  
pre-schedule  
your appointment!**

To schedule an appointment to donate:

- Go to [vitalant.org](http://vitalant.org) and search with Account Code **10055301** or by zip code.
- Call 1-877-25VITAL.
- Or scan this code for a list of all available times:



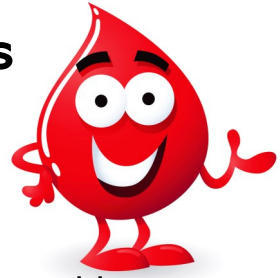
**APPOINTMENTS RECOMMENDED**



**GIVE BLOOD TODAY | [vitalant.org](http://vitalant.org)**

**vitalant.**

# Frequently asked questions about donating blood:



## Who can donate?

- ◆ Anyone 16 (with parental consent) or older
- ◆ Must weigh at least 110 pounds
- ◆ Must be feeling well and have not had covid-19 in the last two weeks
- ◆ Not taking antibiotics, certain blood thinners and certain other medications

## How much time does it take?

- ◆ Allow about an hour that day for the process

## How to prepare:

- ◆ Eat a low fat meal within two hours of donation
- ◆ Hydrate by drinking 8-16oz of water about an hour before, or any other non-caffeinated or non-alcoholic beverage
- ◆ Avoid caffeinated sods, coffee, iced tea and energy drinks on the day of donation



Good morning Fr. Michael, Fr. John, Fr. Dan,  
Deacon Frank, parents, fellow Goyans, and parishioners

YOUTH SUNDAY

For those who don't know, my name is **Katie Kucherawy**. I am honored to be one of this year's GOYA co-presidents with Eirene Paliouras. I have been an active member of GOYA since 7th grade and have attended Camp Nazareth since I was 8 years old. Many of my best friendships have come from being a part of GOYA and attending camp.

GOYA is like another family to me. They have seen me at my worst and my best. They've stood by my side no matter what and supported me in everything I've done. We go to see each other at our activities and whenever our schools' sports play one another. We also attend each other's shows and graduations. Without GOYA and all the people involved, I wouldn't be who I am today.

These friendships are extremely important to me and I know that they will last a lifetime because they have already stayed strong over many years. I always look forward to getting to see my GOYA and camp friends because not only are they fun to be around but we can also have meaningful conversations whether that is about our faith or life in general.

I've enjoyed attending the basketball tournaments during my time in GOYA. While I may not have played in all of them due to various injuries, I always enjoyed having the opportunity to attend tournaments to support my friends and go to dances with them.

Even when things don't go as planned, we still can laugh together and have fun. For example, last season, I was accidentally jumped on at the dance causing a swollen and bruised foot. Because it wasn't a big problem, we all laughed and many people said, "Katie is the only person who could come to a basketball tournament, not play, and still get hurt." Regardless of this, I still had an amazing time with my friends because we have fun no matter what in GOYA.

I've also loved being able to participate in the many GOYA service projects - especially shopping for Christmas gifts for those in need. Making a difference in our community with my friends has been really special to me because not only am I helping someone who otherwise wouldn't be getting a gift, but I'm also getting to spend time with my friends.

We participate in the Diocese program's volleyball tournaments, basketball tournaments, camp retreats, and summer camp.

GOYA volunteers with many groups. We have volunteered at and for:

- The Garden Gala
- Both of our Food Fairs (Summer & Autumn)
- Christmas Angel Project
- Our annual GOYA Bake and Soup Sale

Speaking of, this year's sale will be November 12th (next Sunday). Please come support us so that we can purchase Christmas gifts for those in need.

We also have donated to the:



- Allegheny Holiday Project
- Neighborhood Resilience Project
- Holy Cross Landscape Committee
- Dress for Success
- Allegheny Prom Dresses

I would like to thank everyone who makes all of our GOYA events possible, especially Fr. Micheal, Elias, our coaches, and of course Denise. Having this program has meant the world to me, so I would encourage anyone in 7th to 12th grade to join.

Finally, I would like to announce that GOYA will be making a donation to the Holy Cross Iconography project today.

Thank you.





September 1, 2023

Holy Cross Orthodox Church  
123 Gilkeson Rd  
Pittsburgh, PA 15228

Dear Fr. Michael Kallur and Mrs. Kathy Pyros,

Thank you for your generous donation of 75 Backpacks to the Neighborhood Resilience Project.

Your generous donation helps continue the mission of the Neighborhood Resilience Project. Rooted in the Gospel and the teachings of the Orthodox Church, inspired by the Civil Rights Movement (American 1950's-1960's), the mission of the Neighborhood Resilience Project is to support the transformation of neighborhoods from Trauma Affected Communities to Resilient, Healing and Healthy Communities through Trauma Informed Community Development.

The Neighborhood Resilience Project is a tax exempt organization with the EIN of 83-2086038. We cannot complete this work without your support.

Thank you and Sincerely,

*Fr. Paul T. S.*  
Rev. Paul T. Abernathy  
CEO  
Neighborhood Resilience Project

*Words cannot express how much we love and appreciate you all. Thank you for always remembering the poor. May God bless your beautiful parish!*

PTA:kcc

Neighborhood Resilience Project  
2038 Bedford Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
[www.neighborhoodresilience.org](http://www.neighborhoodresilience.org)



Dear Holy Cross Family,

**A big thank you to all who contributed to our Neighborhood Resilience Project Warm Winter Clothing Drive!** *The Drive is now closed - please save your donations at home for another opportunity.*

It was extremely successful and our community donated at least 40 heavy bags and boxes filled with winter clothing. Shown here are some of the extremely dedicated NRP staff - Miss Linda, Noah and Bisrat. They send their sincere thanks!

Ponny Jahn and Sofia Jahn



“SING PRAISES TO OUR GOD,  
SING PRAISES”

**THE ANNUAL PAN-ORTHODOX CHRISTMAS CONCERT**  
is Back!



**FEATURING: THE PAN-ORTHODOX CHOIR  
OF GREATER PITTSBURGH, UNDER THE  
DIRECTION OF FR. THOMAS SOROKA  
AND  
CHOIRS FROM MULTIPLE ORTHODOX  
JURISDICTIONS**

**Sunday, December 10, 2023, 4 pm**

St. Nicholas Serbian Orthodox Church  
2110 Haymaker Road, Monroeville

**SPONSORED BY: THE ORTHODOX CLERGY BROTHERHOOD OF GREATER PITTSBURGH**

Fellowship following the concert Freewill offering to benefit various Orthodox Charities



*Glory to God in the highest, and on  
earth peace, good will toward men.*

# Choral Concert

**Featuring**

**The Byzantine Choir  
of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh**

and

**The St. Elijah Serbian Orthodox Church Choir**

singing sacred a cappella choral music from the Byzantine  
and Slavic traditions to celebrate the Nativity season.

Saturday, December 23  
St. Elijah Serbian Orthodox Church  
2200 Main Street  
Aliquippa, PA  
5 pm - Vespers  
6 pm - Concert  
Light Refreshments to follow  
Free admission, non-perishable items  
accepted for donation


# HOLY CROSS



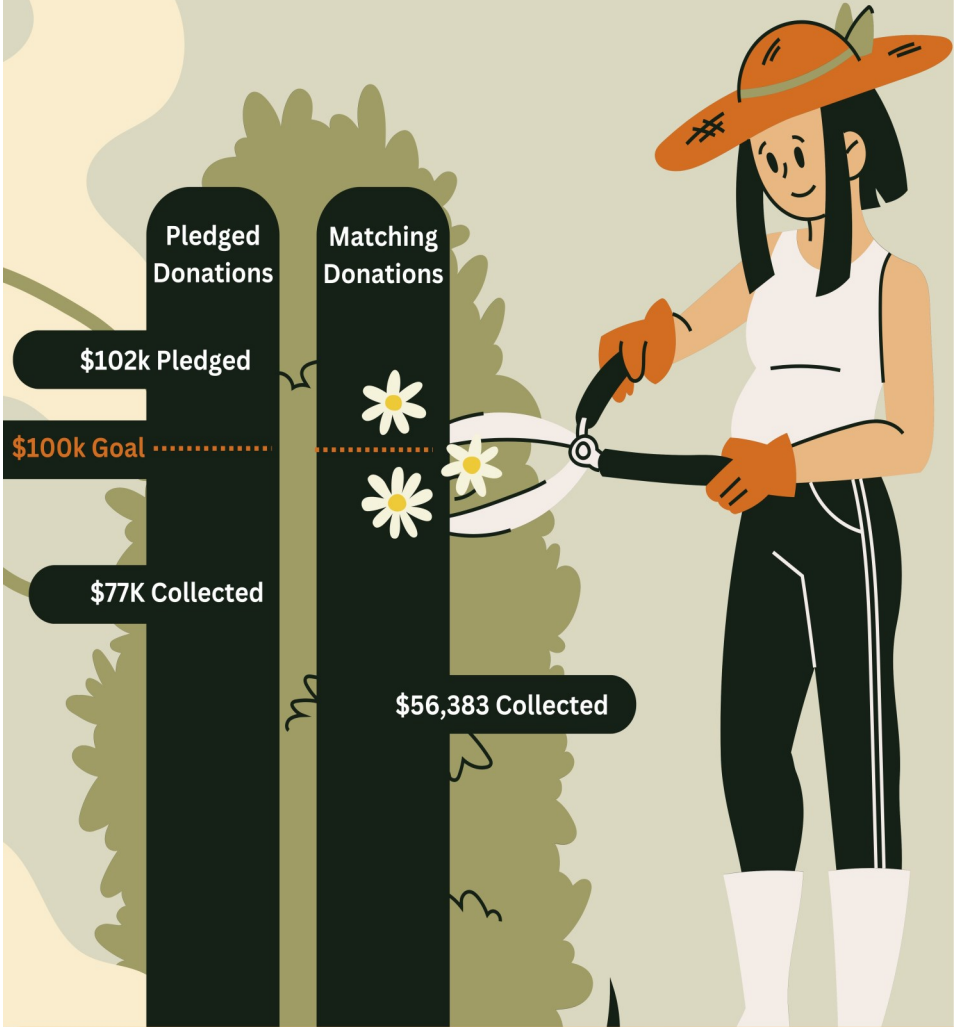
SUN	MON	Tue
<p><b>3</b> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy Parish Council Elections</p>	<p><i>4 Great Martyr St. Barbara</i></p> <p>6:30pm Paraclestis</p>	<p><i>5 St. Savas the Sanctified @Metropolis in Shadyside</i> 9am Matins/10am Divine Liturgy</p> <p><i>7pm Vespers @ St. Nicholas Cathedral</i></p>
<p><b>10</b> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p><b>11</b></p> <p>6:30pm Paraclestis</p>	<p><i>12 St. Spyridon@ Monessen</i> 9am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy</p>
<p><b>17</b> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p><b>18</b></p> <p>6:30pm Paraclestis</p>	<p><b>19</b></p>
<p><b>24 CHRISTMAS EVE</b> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy <b>CHRISTMAS PAGEANT</b> <i>5pm Great Vespers (Christmas Eve)</i></p>	<p><b>25 NATIVITY OF CHRIST</b> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p><b>26</b></p>
<p><b>31</b> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p><i>1 St. Basil</i> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy <b>New Year (Civil)</b></p>	

# DECEMBER 2023



WED	THU	FRI	SAT
		<b>1</b> 6pm JOY Christmas Party -Old Social Hall 6:36pm GOYA <i>Christmas Party</i>	<b>2</b>  5pm Vespers
<b>6 St. Nicholas</b> @Cathedral of St. Nicholas 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy  4:30PM GREEK SCHOOL 6:45 GOYA BBall 7PM BIBLE STUDY	<b>7</b>  <u>Community Night</u> 6pm Vespers 6:30pm Dinner 7:30pm Speaker	<b>8</b>	<b>9 Conception of the Theotokos St. Anna</b>  5pm Vespers 6:15pm YAL Movie Night "Man of God"
<b>13 St. Herman of Alaska</b> 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy  4:30PM GREEK SCHOOL 6:45 GOYA BBall 7PM BIBLE STUDY	<b>14</b>	<b>15 St. Eleftherios</b> 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Div. Liturgy	<b>16</b>  8am-2pm Blood Drive  5pm Vespers
<b>20 St. Ignatios</b> 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy  4:30PM GREEK SCHOOL 6:45 GOYA BBall 7PM BIBLE STUDY	<b>21</b>	<b>22 St. Anastasia</b> 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Div. Liturgy  Noon~Royal Hours	<b>23 Saturday before Nativity</b> 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Div. Liturgy  5pm Vespers
<b>27 St. Stephen</b> 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy  6:45 GOYA BBall	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>  7-MIDNIGHT PHILOPTOCHOS GREEK NIGHT	<b>30</b>  5pm Vespers

# LANDSCAPE COMMITTEE MATCHING FUNDRAISER



IT CAN'T BE COMPLETED WITHOUT YOUR SUPPORT!



40 day blessing  
for Theophilus, the son of  
Katina (Passodelis) and Christopher Fanelli



*Wedding of Anastasia Raftis and Yianni Franges*



# ST. ANTHONY'S MONASTERY IN ARIZONA



# NATIONAL CLERGY RETREAT IN PHOENIX, AZ



# CONSECRATION OF HOLY TRINITY NORTH HILLS



ΠΡΕΣΒΥΤΕΡΑ ΕΛΕΝΙ ΑΝΔ ΛΥΚΕ ΒΙΣΙΤ ΤΗΕ  
ΛΙΟΚΑΡΕΑΣ ΦΑΜΙΛΙ ΑΝΔ ΤΗΕΙΡ ΟΛΙΒ ΟΙΛ  
ΠΡΟΔΥΤΙΟΝ ΙΝ ΚΑΛΑΜΑΤΑ, ΓΡΕΕΚΕ





GREEK-AMERICAN PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION  
ΕΛΛΗΝΟΑΜΕΡΙΚΑΝΙΚΟΣ ΠΡΟΟΔΕΥΤΙΚΟΣ ΣΥΝΔΕΣΜΟΣ

*Celebrating 100 Years | 1923-2023*

You are cordially invited to join G.A.P.A. for an evening of fellowship and memories at our

## *Centennial Gala*

*Celebrating 100 years of brotherhood,  
philanthropy, and service to the  
Greek-American community & beyond!*

**Saturday, December 9, 2023**

Cocktails & Hors D'oeuvres: **6:00 PM** | Dinner: **7:00 PM**

**Crowne Plaza Hotel Pittsburgh South**

164 Fort Couch Road | Pittsburgh, PA 15241

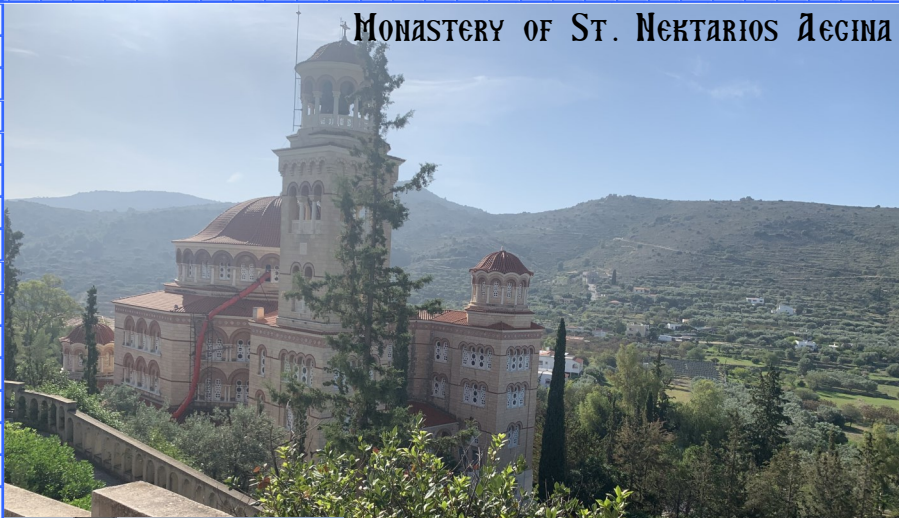
*Live music by the fabulous Stigma Band*

Dinner & Dance - **\$85** | Dance Only - **\$25** (9:00 PM)

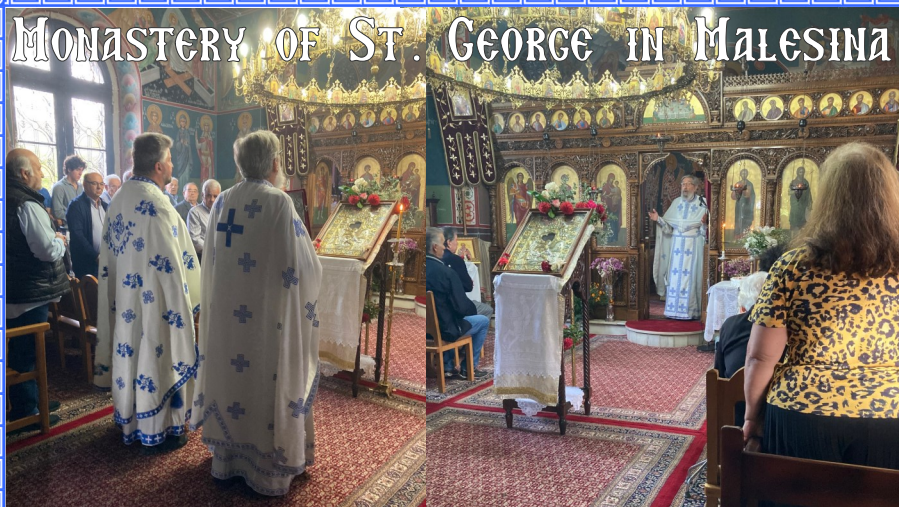
For reservations, please contact **Joanne Melacrinou** at (412) 400-4607 -or-

**Helen Valsamidis** at (724) 777-5155 no later than Saturday, 11/23/2023.

# MONASTERY OF ST. NEKTARIOS AEGINA



# MONASTERY OF ST. GEORGE IN MALESINA





**MARIA ANTIQUA OLDEST CHURCH IN ROME DEDICATED TO THE MOTHER OF GOD. BUILT AROUND 400 AD. DISCOVERED ON PALATINE HILL (EARLY 1900S) AFTER BEING DESTROYED IN AN EARTHQUAKE IN THE 9TH CENTURY.**





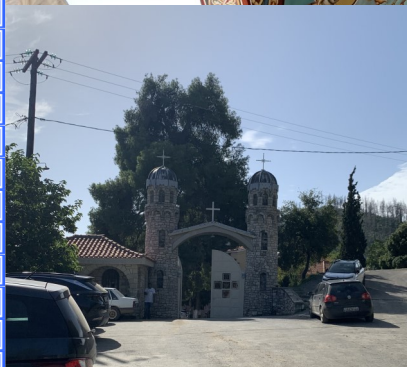
ON THE WAY TO OSIOS DAVID & ST. NICHOLAS OF EVIA -  
WITH FR. KONSTANTINOS MANETAS



MONASTERY OF OSIOS DAVID  
& ST. NICHOLAS OF EVIA



# MONASTERY OF OSIOS DAVID & ST. NICHOLAS OF EVIA



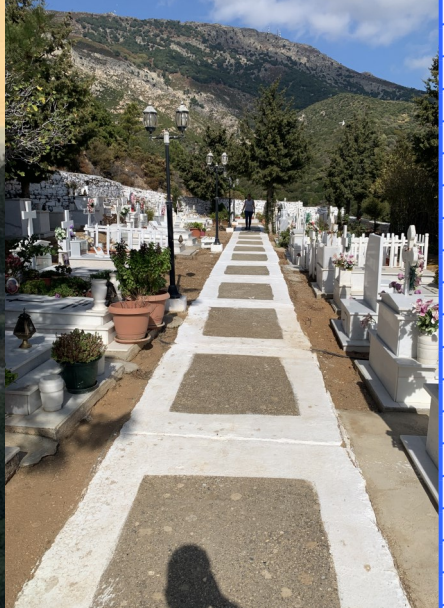
# MONASTERY OF ST. GEORGE OF MALESINA

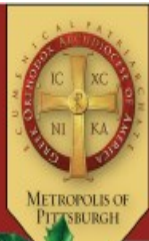


# ΑΓΙΟΣ ΚΥΡΙΚΟΣ



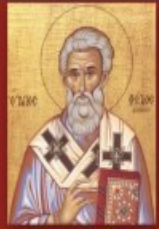
# IKARIA





VOLUME 7 NO. 8 ISSUE: 59

DECEMBER 2023



# A Good Word - Λόγον Αγαθόν

NEWSLETTER OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX  
METROPOLIS OF PITTSBURGH



**OPEN HOUSE**  
**TUES DEC 5TH**

Please join us to celebrate His Eminence Metropolitan Savas' Name Day - the Feast of St. Savas the Sanctified on Tuesday, December 5th, 2023 at the Metropolis of Pittsburgh.

9:00 am - 11:00 am Orthros & Divine Liturgy followed by an Open House until 2:00 pm.

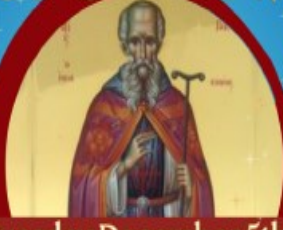
Refreshments served.

Please RSVP by 11.30.23 to Louise  
lhenry@pittsburgh.goarch.org / 412 621 5529

We look forward to seeing you!

His Eminence Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh cordially invites you to the Celebration of the Feast of

## ST. SAVAS THE SANCTIFIED



**Tuesday December 5th**  
Metropolis of Pittsburgh  
5201 Ellsworth Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

9:00-11:30 a.m. Orthros & Divine Liturgy followed by Open House until 2:00 p.m.  
Refreshments served.  
R.S.V.P. by Nov 30th to Louise at  
louise@pittsburgh.goarch.org / 412 621 5529

**2024**

**ATHLETIC SEMINARS**

**ONE MONTH EARLIER!**



**December 2 at 10 AM**  
Register at <https://tinyurl.com/AthleticSeminarDec2>


**December 3 at 5 PM**  
Register at <https://tinyurl.com/AthleticSeminarDec3>

*For Advisors, Coaches, GOYA Officers, Clergy*

**HAPPY**

# Thanksgiving

TO ALL OUR METROPOLIS FAMILY



Give thanks to the Lord for His mercy endures forever.  
Psalms 118:1



## New Metropolis Center Construction Update

With a few additional parish level pledges, we are now at the \$11M fundraising mark (by God's Grace!) with the need to raise another \$3M for project completion.

We continue to visit parish councils where all have the opportunity to participate in building our new home. Invite us!

There will be memorialized all the names of parishes that have participated substantially and so far it is not unusual to have parishes commit \$10K-\$20K per year for each of 5 years. If you already dedicate a portion of festival proceeds to charity (and we all should), please consider this project for a 5-year pledge. If not, please consider starting such a benevolence in perpetuity and begin by donating here.

Again, and I will say this every month until we've reached our financial goals: **WE MUST AVOID DEBT!**

We will continue fundraising until we are there! Please help us such that this new home of work and worship and gathering and fellowship only ever be a blessing **AND NEVER A BURDEN** to our church. Please help.

I ask you to consider paying forward your multi-year pledge, raise your pledge amount to help us avoid the debt or make your initial pledge. And there is still matching money to apply to your new pledge.

To get your pledge matched, please scan the QR code above.



*Mark your calendars!*

**10<sup>th</sup> ST. PHOTIOS<sup>TM</sup>  
AWARDS BANQUET**



**SAVE THE DATE!**



MAY 18TH 2024 • 4:00 PM

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON PITTSBURGH-CRANBERRY

[pittsburgh.goarch.org](http://pittsburgh.goarch.org)



### SUPPORT HIS EMINENCE AND OUR METROPOLIS MINISTRIES

It costs approximately \$1,000 per day to operate our Metropolis - including Metropolitan Savas's Archpastoral visitations, preparations for summer camp and GOYA retreats, our vital registry, and more. Please consider sponsoring a day in the life of the Metropolis:

Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh, 5201 Ellsworth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

412-621-5529 (Main) 412-465-0460 (Camp) 412-621-8543 (Youth)

[pittsburgh.goarch.org](http://pittsburgh.goarch.org) [info@pittsburgh.goarch.org](mailto:info@pittsburgh.goarch.org)



## **Saints Mary & Martha Women's Fellowship The Holy Cross**

**Tuesday, January 30, 2024**

**The Penitent Thief Speaker: Fr. George Callas**

At the home of Pres. Kassiani Callas  
1365 Craigview Drive, Mt. Lebanon 15243  
RSVP 330-604-2925

**Tuesday, February 27, 2024**

**The Suffering Servant Speaker: Fr. Theodosios Palis**

At the home of Adrienne Dickos  
1840 Kent Road, Upper St Clair 15241  
RSVP 412-400-4290

**Tuesday, March 19, 2024**

**History of the Cross post-Crucifixion to present**

**Speaker: Dn. Frank Dickos**

At the home of Irene Zotis  
76 Woodland Drive, Mt. Lebanon 15228  
RSVP 412-721-0146

**Tuesday, April 23, 2023**

**The Sayings of Christ from the Cross**

**Speaker: His Eminence Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh**

At the home of Stellani Coleman  
105 Cedarbrook Ct., McMurray 15317  
RSVP 724-255-6178

**Tuesday, May 28, 2023**

**Modern Miracles of the Cross**

**Speaker: Fr. John Chakos**

At the home of Mary Zotis  
419 Longleaf Dr., Venetia 15367  
RSVP 412-835-2381

**Remember, all meetings run  
from 7pm-9pm.**

Thanksgiving is November 23.  
Pascha is May 5.



Order your poinsettia to beautify our church for Christmas.

- ♥ in memory of or
- ♥ in honor of or
- ♥ for the health of

a loved one by returning the form below with your payment.

Plants are \$20 each. Please order by Friday, December 11.

**Choose one**

In Honor of \_\_\_\_\_

For the health of \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of \_\_\_\_\_




From \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to church office by **Friday, December 15**

Light From the Church on the Hill  
A Metropolitan Theodosios Memorial Lecture

DISCOVERING THE MYSTERY OF  
**ATONEMENT**  
IN THE STORIES OF  
**CS LEWIS**


Starting with Lewis's Narnia Chronicles, Dr. Humphrey will explore the variety of images and story lines that he employs to draw us into the mystery of the atonement.



St John the Baptist Orthodox Church  
601 Boone Ave, Canonsburg, PA

**DEC | 12<sup>th</sup> | 2023**

Edith M. Humphrey is the William F. Or Professor Emerita of New Testament at Pittsburgh Theological Seminary, and a member of St. Nicholas Orthodox Church, McKees Rocks. She is a native of Canada and taught at several Canadian universities before moving to Pittsburgh in 2002. Married to her husband Chris for 48 years, and an Orthodox convert since 2009, she is a mother of three married children. She is the author of numerous articles and eleven books.



6pm Vespers 7pm Lecture  
frunner.org

SAVE THE DATE!



**NEW YEARS EVE  
2024**

Holy Trinity Ambridge  
**THE MERAKLIDES**

Reserve Your Table  
18 & Over - \$50 10-17 - \$25  
4-9 - \$15 4 and Under - free

For More Info  
Contact Church Office  
(724)266-5336

**HOLY CROSS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
**123 GILKESON ROAD**  
**PITTSBURGH, PA 15228**

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



Non-Profit  
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Pittsburgh, PA

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2023** 

**CHRISTMAS EVE**

8:15am Orthros

9:30am Divine Liturgy

**CHRISTMAS PAGEANT**

*5pm Great Vespers (Christmas Eve)*

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2023** 

**NATIVITY OF CHRIST**

8:15am Orthros

9:30am Divine Liturgy