

## CHURCH STAFF

- Parish Priest: Very Reverend Archimandrite Christodoulos Margellos
- Parish Council President: Jim (Demetrios) Katsihtis
- Philoptochos President: Eleni Giakoumopoulos
- Sunday School Directors: Susu Saba
- Greek School: Ilektra Kolokouri
- Choir Director: George Tzougros

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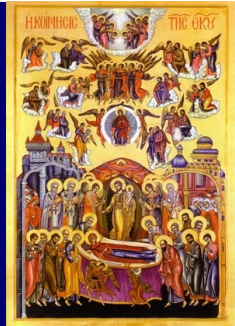
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# Wonder Worker

JANUARY 2023

## RECLAIMING OUR BAPTISM

The Baptism of Christ is celebrated as “*Theophany*” (from the Greek meaning “*the appearance of God*”), and “*Epiphany*” (from the Greek meaning “*manifestation*”), allows us to understand how Jesus Christ has manifested or revealed Himself to the world. In the early Church the birth of Jesus and His baptism were celebrated on the same day (January 6). The early Christians chose this date in order to replace the pagan cult of the winter solstice (worshipping the sun). The Church worshipped not the sun, but the Son of Righteousness, Jesus Christ. In the 4th century the pagans of Rome changed its calendar and moved their pagan solstice up to December 25. The Church of Rome decided to move the celebration of the Nativity from January 6 to December 25.

The Orthodox Church celebrates the Baptism of the Lord on January 6. The Holy Gospels consider the Baptism of Jesus to be as significant as the cross and the resurrection. All four evangelists describe in detail the Lord’s Baptism. Jesus is thirty at the time of His baptism and up to this event has lived with His family in Galilee. He has lived as an ordinary man working with His hands. His divine nature up to this time has not been revealed. Jesus is baptized by St. John the Baptist on the banks of the Jordan River. God has revealed Himself in the person of Jesus Christ. God the Father witnesses to the divinity of Jesus and proclaims Jesus to be His only Son, “**This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased**” (Matthew 3:17).

The Baptism of Christ is known and celebrated as “*The Feast of Lights*.” His baptism is a Feast of Lights because it was for us, His children that Jesus allowed Himself to be plunged into the waters of the Jordan. His baptism is for our illumination, “**The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned**” (Isaiah 9:2; Matthew 4:16). Bishop Kalistos Ware wrote, “*In reality it is not He Who is cleansed in the Jordan, but we ourselves.*”

Theophany is a gift of renewal, recreation and regeneration. The Nativity of Jesus celebrated Christ becoming man, assuming us. He became a part of us because He never stopped loving us. At His Epiphany Jesus is not only with us, but enlightens us. A wise monk wrote, “*The light of Christ at Christmas was but a star in the dark night; at Epiphany it appears to us as the rising sun; it will grow and, after the eclipse of Holy Friday, burst forth yet more splendid, on the morning of Easter; and finally, at Pentecost, it will reach its full zenith.*” God is praised more often as light in the hymns and prayers than He is as love or wisdom. The Feast of our Lord’s Baptism proclaims that Christ has appeared and enlightened the world. “*Today we have escaped from darkness, and by the light of the knowledge of God we have been illuminated*” (Patriarch Sophronius).

The New Year begins with the celebration of the Feast of Baptism. It is not only Jesus’ baptism but our baptism. Let us begin the New Year with renewing the baptism we received. Jesus began His public ministry at His Baptism and began to change people’s lives. Let us not put the Grace of God in the closet. “**The people who sat in darkness have seen great light...from this time Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand’**” (Matthew 4:16-17). Repentance is renewal. It is through repentance that we receive the Light of Christ’s love. St. Irenaeus described the Holy Trinity as God the Father stretching His two arms out to us in love; one arm is Jesus and the other arm is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Trinity is reaching out to us in love. Let us respond with love by reaching out our arms to God. “*Christ our God, Light of Lights, God made manifest, has shone upon the world. O you people let us glorify Him!*”

+Very Rev. Archimandrite Christodoulos Margellos

# January 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p>1</p> <p>Circumcision of our Lord &amp; Saint Basil the Great</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy</p> <p>No Sunday School</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p> <p>8:00 p.m. Philoptochos Chapter Meeting via Zoom</p>	<p>4</p> <p>Fast Free Day</p> <p>11:00 a.m. Adult Religious Education Class</p>	<p>5</p> <p>Strict Fast Day Eve of Theophany 8:00 a.m. Royal Hours of Theophany 10:00 a.m. Vespers Liturgy with Great Blessing of the Waters 8:30 p.m. Adult Religious Education class via Zoom</p>	<p>6</p> <p>Fast Free Day</p> <p>Theophany of our Lord</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy with Great blessing of the Waters</p>	<p>7</p> <p>Fr. Christodoulos in Dubuque, IA</p> <p>4:00 p.m. Great Vespers</p>
<p>8</p> <p>Sunday after Epiphany</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy</p> <p>Sunday School</p> <p>1:30 p.m. Blessing of Lake Monona Brittingham Park Madison</p>	<p>9</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p> <p>Strict Fast Day</p> <p>11:00 a.m. Adult Religious Education Class</p> <p>7:00 p.m. Choir Practice</p>	<p>12</p> <p>8:30 p.m. Adult Religious Education Class via Zoom</p>	<p>13</p> <p>Strict Fast Day</p>	<p>14</p> <p>Fr. Christodoulos in Dubuque, IA</p> <p>4:00 p.m. Great Vespers</p>
<p>15</p> <p>12th Sunday of Luke</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy</p> <p>Sunday School</p> <p>Parish Vasilopita Philoptochos Luncheon</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p> <p>Saint Anthony the Great</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy</p> <p>7:00 p.m. Parish Council Meeting</p>	<p>18</p> <p>Strict Fast Day</p> <p>11:00 a.m. Adult Religious Education Class</p> <p>7:00 p.m. Choir Practice</p>	<p>19</p> <p>8:30 p.m. Adult Religious Education Class via Zoom</p>	<p>20</p> <p>Strict Fast Day</p>	<p>21</p> <p>Fr. Christodoulos in Dubuque, IA</p> <p>Russian Mission Service</p> <p>4:00 p.m. Great Vespers</p>
<p>22</p> <p>15th Sunday of Luke</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy</p> <p>Sunday School</p> <p>Parish Outing Tubing at Tyrol Basin, Mt. Horeb 1:00-5:00 p.m.</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p> <p>7:00 p.m. Parish Council Meeting</p>	<p>25</p> <p>Strict Fast Day</p> <p>No Religious Education Class</p> <p>7:00 p.m. Choir Practice</p>	<p>26</p> <p>7:00 p.m. Women's Spiritual Meeting</p>	<p>27</p> <p>Strict Fast Day</p>	<p>28</p> <p>Fr. Christodoulos in Dubuque, IA</p> <p>4:00 p.m. Great Vespers</p>
<p>29</p> <p>Sunday of the Canaanite</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy</p> <p>Sunday School</p>	<p>30</p> <p>Three Hierarchs</p> <p>8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>31</p>				

## **The Parish Council Update January 2023**

**Officers:** Jim Katsihtis, President; Maria Molzahn, Vice President; Bruce Hansen, Secretary; Scott Storck, Treasurer; Niko Papadopoulos, Assistant Treasurer

**Members:** Christy Chappell-Belkin, Conn Choles, Carol Griskavich, Nick Helser, Mike Smith, John Soloninka

Blessed New Year! We pray that this year will be blessed, healthy and safe year for everyone, and that we all continue to grow in our faith and relationship in and to our Lord Jesus Christ. While it's not the start of our ecclesiastical year, it's still a perfect time to be thinking and praying about what each of us can do for our parish, our community and for God's Kingdom ("From this day...let us strive to love God and fulfill His will," St. Herman).

St. Seraphim of Sarov (commemorated January 2) learned from helping "do the books" of his Father's business that certain activities were much more profitable than others, and that we should concentrate our time and energy on what matters most. Let's also apply that lesson and follow the example of St. Seraphim by focusing our time and energy on our Lord, His Church and His Kingdom this year.

### **December Parish Council Elections**

Congratulations to Bill Margetis and Peter Georgalan who were newly elected to the Parish Council! May your term and service be fruitful and found worthy!

A special thanks to John Soloninka whose term is expiring. John has faithfully and tirelessly served this and other parishes for decades. We give thanks to God for you, John (and Sue), and for your service and many accomplishments!

### **Strategic Survey**

In the coming weeks, we will be sending you a survey to gather your thoughts and to help us shape our Strategic Plan and priorities for the coming years.

### **Special Clergy-Laity Assembly**

A Metropolis Clergy-Laity Special Assembly took place on December 29th via Zoom to discuss the search for a new Metropolis Center. The Assembly recessed until a property has been identified that could be brought back to the Assembly for review, in light of property and spending guidelines discussed by the Assembly.

### **2022 Stewardship**

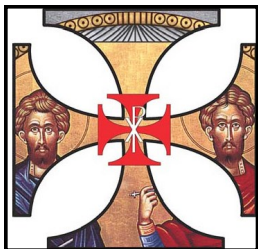
If you haven't already, please return your Stewardship form and continue to pray for, and generously support, our parish. Your stewardship helps support our worship, ministries, youth programs and facility expenses. Our goal is for stewardship to cover our operating expenses and for us not to have to rely on fundraisers for standard operating expenses. Please help us reach that goal. And please consider joining the Stewardship Committee to provide input and help us grow and engage our stewards more.

### **Next Parish Council Meeting**

The next Parish Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, January 17th at 7:00PM. Parish Council meetings will typically be scheduled on the third Tuesday of the month.

On behalf of the Parish Council,

Jim  
407-408-3096  
jkatsihtis@gmail.com



# FOCUS ON PHILOPTOCHOS HELP US TO HELP OTHERS

January 2023

**Focus on PHILOPTOCHOS**  
**#PhiloCares #ArmyofAgape**

Thank you to our hardworking, dedicated officers, board, and Philoptochos members, volunteers and extended family who power our efforts each and every day. In 2022, we achieved a multitude of projects and goals, all together. It's not just about the numbers or financials, but about the community we establish and strengthen with our efforts.

We now look forward to what 2023 has in store for Philoptochos. Let's never lose sight of the importance of our individual contributions and how simple acts of kindness can make a difference in someone else's life.

May God fill your life with love, joy, and peace throughout the New Year of 2023.  
Very proud to be part of this Army of Agape!!!  
Lena Giakoumopoulos, Philoptochos President

## LOOKING AHEAD

Chapter Meeting: January 3 at 6:00 pm CT via ZOOM

Learn more about what we do and who we serve at the next chapter meeting. We welcome new members to join us, get involved and be part of our sisterhood.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85430511181?pwd=bIBMeGYvZzJMcG1QT21VSHRFUVlhZz09>

Meeting ID: 854 3051 1181  
Passcode: 059076

## January 15, 2023 – Vasilopita Luncheon – Fundraiser for Saint Basil Academy

Join us for the Philoptochos Vasilopita luncheon after the liturgy on January 15. Traditional Greek Chicken with potatoes, Vasilopita Bread, Coffee and Desserts. Cost: \$15.00 per meal. All proceeds go to support Saint Basil's Academy.

We need volunteers for cooking, set up and clean up. To volunteer, please contact Lena Giakoumopoulos at [lenagiak@gmail.com](mailto:lenagiak@gmail.com).

To place orders, please RSVP to Maria Molzahn at [mariaandpatrick@gmail.com](mailto:mariaandpatrick@gmail.com) by Sunday, 1/8/2023.

**JANUARY COLLECTION TRAY:** This month the Philoptochos collection basket is for the Saint Basil Academy-Vasilopita Fundraiser. This is the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese special school for children in need. It provides a nurturing environment and safe haven where resident Orthodox children receive developmental, educational, spiritual and material needs to adulthood.

## MEMBERSHIP 2023

Come meet amazing women whom you can call your sisters in our army of agape. We welcome all ladies 18 years of age and up to please join us. Get yourself in the spirit of giving and show your love by doing the good work of Philoptochos. If you are interested in joining us

as a member, please contact me at [lenagiak@gmail.com](mailto:lenagiak@gmail.com) or [philoptochos@agocwi.org](mailto:philoptochos@agocwi.org). Look for membership 2023 forms in next month's newsletter.

## NOTES FROM DECEMBER

Donations made to Madison Metropolitan School District (\$500) in gift cards.

## DATES TO REMEMBER

- Metropolis-Wide Vasilopita – **January 15**, St. Spyridon, Palos Heights, IL
- Metropolis-Wide Philoptochos President's Meeting – **February 11**, Ss. Constantine and Helen, Merrillville, IN
- Philoptochos AGOC Chapter Mid-winter luncheon - **February 18**, Madison

# ASSUMPTION

## Snow Tubing

Please join us for our second year  
tubing at Tyrol Basin on Sunday  
January 22nd from 1-5pm

To purchase tickets please visit:  
<https://tyrolbasin.com/tubing/>  
\$25 per ticket  
Buy online one week in advance

We hope you can come out for some parish family fun!





# YOUTH CORNER

## January

Happy January and Happy New Year Sunday School families,

We hope you all have a wonderful start to the new year and may this new year bring us more love, joy, peace, and good health. The Sunday school teachers are very grateful to be teaching your children about the Orthodox faith and the love of Christ. Below are pictures from the events we had during 2022, we can't wait for all the exciting events that will happen in the new year!



Just a few dates to save happening in the month of January:

1. Sunday school classes resume Sunday January 8th
2. Sunday January 22nd after church at 3pm there will be a fun family outing to go tubing in Tyrol Basin! We will send out a link to register soon!

There are drinks, hot coco, and food at the resort. We want to continue doing church events to build a better church community in fellowship, there's nothing better than coming together to enjoy each other's company. We hope that you can make it!

## COMMUNITY NEWS

**PARISH COUNCIL MEETING:** Will be held on Tuesday, January 17th at 7:00 p.m.

**GREAT BLESSING OF LAKE MONONA:** Join the Orthodox Communities of Assumption, Saints Cyril & Methodius & Saint Ignatius in coming together for a Blessing of Lake Monona.

We will be gathering on Sunday, January 8th at Brittingham Park at 829 W. Washington Ave in Madison. Service will begin at 1:30 p.m. If the Ice thickness is sufficient we will be just off shore on Monona Bay.

This a wonderful blessing not only for our communities but also for the entire Madison Area.

**VASILOPITA CELEBRATION:** On Sunday, January 15th, we will have our annual Vasilopita cutting. We invite all the families of our Church to join us in the "cutting of the New Year's Vasilopita." The cutting of the Vasilopita will take place in the Church Hall during the Vasilopita Luncheon prepared by our Ladies Philoptochos. The Philoptochos also has the January Collection they do going to benefit St. Basil's Academy and Children Center in Garrison, New York. Cost to attend the luncheon is \$15. See Flier for more info on the Luncheon

**ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASS:** A.R.E. classes are in full swing. We are currently continuing the Book "The Orthodox Church". We will have in person classes on Wednesday's at 11:00 a.m. here at the church. We will also have a virtual zoom class on Thursday's beginning at 6:30 p.m. The classes are the same and interchangeable. We look forward to continuing our journey together.

**WOMEN'S SPIRITUAL MEETING:** Women's spiritual zoom meetings will be on Thursday, January 26th at 7:00 p.m. If you are interested in participating and you haven't signed in yet please contact Peli Galiti at pegaliti@gmail.com You will get the zoom link in your email.

All women from Assumption parish, St. Ignatius Parish and other parishes are welcome.

**PARISH OUTING TO TYROL BASIN:** On Sunday, January 30th we will have a parish outing to Tyrol Basin for a day of Tubing or skiing. We will meet at Tyrol Basin at 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. The Cost is \$25 per person for the tubing. If you would like to ski instead you will need to consult the website for pricing and details. <https://tyrolbasin.com/>

We are asking everyone to purchase the tickets on your own as there is no discount for groups and there are liability forms to fill out. The Tickets go on sale a week in advance so they will not be available for purchase until the 23rd of January. If you need the church to purchase the tickets for you arrangements can be made.

If you are interested please email or contact Fr. Christodoulos so he can keep a list of those who plan on attending. Join us for a fun afternoon on the slopes.

**SAVE THE DATE: PARISH OUTING TO THE MADISON CAPITALS GAME:** Once again our parish is going to be doing an outing for the Madison Capitals Hockey Team on Saturday, February 18th. Just like last year we have a link to purchase tickets to the eagles nest with all you can eat and drink packages. It is also Team USA Bobblehead night. Packages are as listed.

-For kids 12 & under it is all you can eat and drink for \$17

-For adults with no alcohol All you can eat or drink for \$22

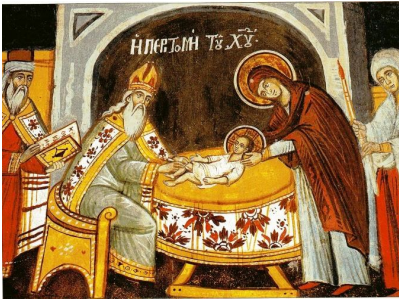
-For adults all you can eat & drink including Alcohol for \$28

This will be a great game to attend with the whole family. Come cheer on our Madison Capitals to defeat the Omaha Lancers on February 18th at 7:05 p.m. at the Bob Suter's Capital Arena. Link for tickets is below

[https://tickets.madcapshockey.com/events/21868-omaha-lancers-vs-madison-capitals?promo\\_code=greekchurch](https://tickets.madcapshockey.com/events/21868-omaha-lancers-vs-madison-capitals?promo_code=greekchurch)

**PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND & CONSTANTINOPLE:** I have been blessed to lead a few trips to the Holy Land as a priest and I plan to lead another one for our parish here at Assumption. We are currently planning on departing in November of 2023. The Itinerary is being finalized and we this trip will be all inclusive. The cost will include Airfare, hotel, breakfast, dinner and transportation. In the past this has run around \$3,200 and we will get a final price point when we get closer to November of this year. Consider joining us for this once in a lifetime opportunity to see where Jesus walked, lived, dies & resurrected. We normally meet with both the Patriarchs of Jerusalem and Constantinople. We will have a meeting soon and will send out info as soon as we have it. God Bless.



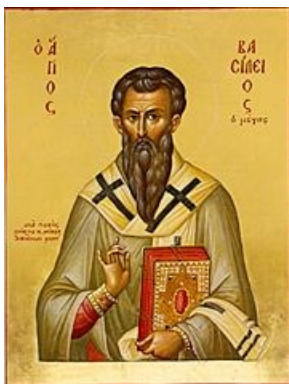


**The Circumcision of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ:** On the eighth day after His Nativity, our Lord Jesus Christ was circumcised in accordance with the Old Testament Law. All male infants underwent circumcision as a sign of God's Covenant with the holy Forefather Abraham and his descendants [Genesis 17:10-14, Leviticus 12:3].

After this ritual, the Divine Infant was given the name Jesus, as the Archangel Gabriel declared on the day of the Annunciation to the Most Holy Theotokos [Luke 1:31-33, 2:21]. The Fathers of the Church explain that the Lord, the Creator of the Law, underwent circumcision in order to give people an example of how faithfully the divine ordinances ought to be fulfilled. The Lord was circumcised so that later no one would doubt that He had truly assumed human flesh, and that His Incarnation was not merely an illusion, as certain heretics had taught.

In the New Testament, the ritual of circumcision gave way to the Mystery of Baptism, which it prefigured [Colossians 2:11-12]. Accounts of the Feast of the Circumcision of the Lord continue in the Eastern Church right up through the fourth century. The Canon of the Feast was written by Saint Stephen of the Saint Sava Monastery.

In addition to circumcision, which the Lord accepted as a sign of God's Covenant with mankind, He also received the Name Jesus [Savior] on the eighth day after His Nativity as an indication of His service, the work of the salvation of the world [Matthew 1:21; Mark 9:38-39, 16:17; Luke 10:17; Acts 3:6, 16; Philippians 2:9-10]. These two events -- the Lord's Circumcision and Naming -- remind Christians that they have entered into a New Covenant with God and "are circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ" [Colossians 2:11]. The very name "Christian" is a sign of mankind's entrance into a New Covenant with God.



**St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia:** Saint Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia, "belongs not to the Church of Caesarea alone, nor merely to his own time, nor was he of benefit only to his own kinsmen, but rather to all lands and cities worldwide, and to all people he brought and still brings benefit, and for Christians he always was and will be a most salvific teacher." Thus spoke Saint Basil's contemporary, Saint Amphilochios, Bishop of Iconium.

Saint Basil was born in the year 330 at Caesarea, the administrative center of Cappadocia. He was of illustrious lineage, famed for its eminence and wealth, and zealous for the Christian Faith. The saint's grandfather and grandmother on his father's side had to hide in the forests of Pontus for seven years during the persecution under Diocletian.

Saint Basil's mother Saint Emilia was the daughter of a martyr. On the Greek calendar, she is commemorated on May 30. Saint Basil's father was also named Basil. He was a lawyer and renowned rhetorician, and lived at Caesarea.

Ten children were born to the elder Basil and Emilia: five sons and five daughters. Five of them were later numbered among the saints: Basil the Great; Macrina (July 19) was an exemplar of ascetic life, and exerted strong influence on the life and character of Saint Basil the Great; Gregory, afterwards Bishop of Nyssa (January 10); Peter, Bishop of Sebaste (January 9); and Theosebia, a deaconess (January 10).

Saint Basil spent the first years of his life on an estate belonging to his parents at the River Iris, where he was raised under the supervision of his mother Emilia and grandmother Macrina. They were women of great refinement, who remembered an earlier bishop of Cappadocia, Saint Gregory the Wonderworker (November 17). Basil received his initial education under the supervision of his father, and then he studied under the finest



teachers in Caesarea of Cappadocia, and it was here that he made the acquaintance of Saint Gregory the Theologian (January 25 and January 30). Later, Basil transferred to a school at Constantinople, where he listened to eminent orators and philosophers. To complete his education Saint Basil went to Athens, the center of classical enlightenment.

After a four or five year stay at Athens, Basil had mastered all the available disciplines. “He studied everything thoroughly, more than others are wont to study a single subject. He studied each science in its very totality, as though he would study nothing else.” Philosopher, philologist, orator, jurist, naturalist, possessing profound knowledge in astronomy, mathematics and medicine, “he was a ship fully laden with learning, to the extent permitted by human nature.”

At Athens a close friendship developed between Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian (Nazianzus), which continued throughout their life. In fact, they regarded themselves as one soul in two bodies. Later on, in his eulogy for Basil the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian speaks with delight about this period: “Various hopes guided us, and indeed inevitably, in learning... Two paths opened up before us: the one to our sacred temples and the teachers therein; the other towards preceptors of disciplines beyond.”

About the year 357, Saint Basil returned to Caesarea, where for a while he devoted himself to rhetoric. But soon, refusing offers from Caesarea’s citizens who wanted to entrust him with the education of their offspring, Saint Basil entered upon the path of ascetic life.

After the death of her husband, Basil’s mother, her eldest daughter Macrina, and several female servants withdrew to the family estate at Iris and there began to lead an ascetic life. Basil was baptized by Dianios, the Bishop of Caesarea, and was tonsured a Reader (On the Holy Spirit, 29). He first read the Holy Scriptures to the people, then explained them.

Later on, “wishing to acquire a guide to the knowledge of truth”, the saint undertook a journey into Egypt, Syria and Palestine, to meet the great Christian ascetics dwelling there. On returning to Cappadocia, he decided to do as they did. He distributed his wealth to the needy, then settled on the opposite side of the river not far from his mother Emilia and sister Macrina, gathering around him monks living a cenobitic life.

By his letters, Basil drew his good friend Gregory the Theologian to the monastery. Saints Basil and Gregory labored in strict abstinence in their dwelling place, which had no roof or fireplace, and the food was very humble. They themselves cleared away the stones, planted and watered the trees, and carried heavy loads. Their hands were constantly calloused from the hard work. For clothing Basil had only a tunic and monastic mantle. He wore a hairshirt, but only at night, so that it would not be obvious.

In their solitude, Saints Basil and Gregory occupied themselves in an intense study of Holy Scripture. They were guided by the writings of the Fathers and commentators of the past, especially the good writings of Origen. From all these works they compiled an anthology called *Philokalia*. Also at this time, at the request of the monks, Saint Basil wrote down a collection of rules for virtuous life. By his preaching and by his example Saint Basil assisted in the spiritual perfection of Christians in Cappadocia and Pontus; and many indeed turned to him. Monasteries were organized for men and for women, in which places Basil sought to combine the cenobitic (koine bios, or common) lifestyle with that of the solitary hermit.

During the reign of Constantius (337-361) the heretical teachings of Arius were spreading, and the Church summoned both its saints into service. Saint Basil returned to Caesarea. In the year 362 he was ordained deacon by Bishop Meletius of Antioch. In 364 he was ordained to the holy priesthood by Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea. “But seeing,” as Gregory the Theologian relates, “that everyone exceedingly praised and honored Basil for his wisdom and reverence, Eusebius, through human weakness, succumbed to jealousy of him, and began to show dislike for him.” The monks rose up in defense of Saint Basil. To avoid causing Church dis-

cord, Basil withdrew to his own monastery and concerned himself with the organization of monasteries.

With the coming to power of the emperor Valens (364-378), who was a resolute adherent of Arianism, a time of troubles began for Orthodoxy, the onset of a great struggle. Saint Basil hastily returned to Caesarea at the request of Bishop Eusebius. In the words of Gregory the Theologian, he was for Bishop Eusebius “a good advisor, a righteous representative, an expounder of the Word of God, a staff for the aged, a faithful support in internal matters, and an activist in external matters.”

From this time church governance passed over to Basil, though he was subordinate to the hierarch. He preached daily, and often twice, in the morning and in the evening. During this time Saint Basil composed his Liturgy. He wrote a work “On the Six Days of Creation” (Hexaemeron) and another on the Prophet Isaiah in sixteen chapters, yet another on the Psalms, and also a second compilation of monastic rules. Saint Basil wrote also three books “Against Eunomius,” an Arian teacher who, with the help of Aristotelian concepts, had presented the Arian dogma in philosophic form, converting Christian teaching into a logical scheme of rational concepts.

Saint Gregory the Theologian, speaking about the activity of Basil the Great during this period, points to “the caring for the destitute and the taking in of strangers, the supervision of virgins, written and unwritten monastic rules for monks, the arrangement of prayers [Liturgy], the felicitous arrangement of altars and other things.” Upon the death of Eusebius, the Bishop of Caesarea, Saint Basil was chosen to succeed him in the year 370. As Bishop of Caesarea, Saint Basil the Great was the newest of fifty bishops in eleven provinces. Saint Athanasius the Great (May 2), with joy and with thanks to God welcomed the appointment to Cappadocia of such a bishop as Basil, famed for his reverence, deep knowledge of Holy Scripture, great learning, and his efforts for the welfare of Church peace and unity.

Under Valens, the external government belonged to the Arians, who held various opinions regarding the divinity of the Son of God, and were divided into several factions. These dogmatic disputes were concerned with questions about the Holy Spirit. In his books *Against Eunomios*, Saint Basil the Great taught the divinity of the Holy Spirit and His equality with the Father and the Son. Subsequently, in order to provide a full explanation of Orthodox teaching on this question, Saint Basil wrote his book *On the Holy Spirit* at the request of Saint Amphilochius, the Bishop of Iconium.

Saint Basil’s difficulties were made worse by various circumstances: Cappadocia was divided in two under the rearrangement of provincial districts. Then at Antioch a schism occurred, occasioned by the consecration of a second bishop. There was the negative and haughty attitude of Western bishops to the attempts to draw them into the struggle with the Arians. And there was also the departure of Eustathius of Sebaste over to the Arian side. Basil had been connected to him by ties of close friendship. Amidst the constant perils Saint Basil gave encouragement to the Orthodox, confirmed them in the Faith, summoning them to bravery and endurance. The holy bishop wrote numerous letters to the churches, to bishops, to clergy and to individuals. Overcoming the heretics “by the weapon of his mouth, and by the arrows of his letters,” as an untiring champion of Orthodoxy, Saint Basil challenged the hostility and intrigues of the Arian heretics all his life. He has been compared to a bee, stinging the Church’s enemies, yet nourishing his flock with the sweet honey of his teaching.

The emperor Valens, mercilessly sending into exile any bishop who displeased him, and having implanted Arianism into other Asia Minor provinces, suddenly appeared in Cappadocia for this same purpose. He sent the prefect Modestus to Saint Basil. He began to threaten the saint with the confiscation of his property, banishment, beatings, and even death.

Saint Basil said, “If you take away my possessions, you will not enrich yourself, nor will you make me a pauper. You have no need of my old worn-out clothing, nor of my few books, of which the entirety of my wealth is comprised. Exile means nothing to me, since I am bound to no particular place. This place in which I now

dwelling is not mine, and any place you send me shall be mine. Better to say: every place is God's. Where would I be neither a stranger and sojourner (Ps. 38/39:13)? Who can torture me? I am so weak, that the very first blow would render me insensible. Death would be a kindness to me, for it will bring me all the sooner to God, for Whom I live and labor, and to Whom I hasten."

The official was stunned by his answer. "No one has ever spoken so audaciously to me," he said.

"Perhaps," the saint remarked, "that is because you've never spoken to a bishop before. In all else we are meek, the most humble of all. But when it concerns God, and people rise up against Him, then we, counting everything else as naught, look to Him alone. Then fire, sword, wild beasts and iron rods that rend the body, serve to fill us with joy, rather than fear."

Reporting to Valens that Saint Basil was not to be intimidated, Modestus said, "Emperor, we stand defeated by a leader of the Church." Basil the Great again showed firmness before the emperor and his retinue and made such a strong impression on Valens that the emperor dared not give in to the Arians demanding Basil's exile. "On the day of Theophany, amidst an innumerable multitude of the people, Valens entered the church and mixed in with the throng, in order to give the appearance of being in unity with the Church. When the singing of Psalms began in the church, it was like thunder to his hearing. The emperor beheld a sea of people, and in the altar and all around was splendor; in front of all was Basil, who acknowledged neither by gesture nor by glance, that anything else was going on in church." Everything was focused only on God and the altar-table, and the clergy serving there in awe and reverence.

Saint Basil celebrated the church services almost every day. He was particularly concerned about the strict fulfilling of the Canons of the Church, and took care that only worthy individuals should enter into the clergy. He incessantly made the rounds of his own church, lest anywhere there be an infraction of Church discipline, and setting aright any unseemliness. At Caesarea, Saint Basil built two monasteries, a men's and a women's, with a church in honor of the Forty Martyrs (March 9) whose relics were buried there. Following the example of monks, the saint's clergy, even deacons and priests, lived in remarkable poverty, to toil and lead chaste and virtuous lives. For his clergy Saint Basil obtained an exemption from taxation. He used all his personal wealth and the income from his church for the benefit of the destitute; in every center of his diocese he built a poor-house; and at Caesarea, a home for wanderers and the homeless.

Sickly since youth, the toil of teaching, his life of abstinence, and the concerns and sorrows of pastoral service took their toll on him. Saint Basil died on January 1, 379 at age 49. Shortly before his death, the saint blessed Saint Gregory the Theologian to accept the See of Constantinople.

Upon the repose of Saint Basil, the Church immediately began to celebrate his memory. Saint Amphilochios, Bishop of Iconium (November 23), in his eulogy to Saint Basil the Great, said: "It is neither without a reason nor by chance that holy Basil has taken leave from the body and had repose from the world unto God on the day of the Circumcision of Jesus, celebrated between the day of the Nativity and the day of the Baptism of Christ. Therefore, this most blessed one, preaching and praising the Nativity and Baptism of Christ, extolling spiritual circumcision, himself forsaking the flesh, now ascends to Christ on the sacred day of remembrance of the Circumcision of Christ. Therefore, let it also be established on this present day annually to honor the memory of Basil the Great festively and with solemnity."

Saint Basil is also called "the revealer of heavenly mysteries" (Ouranophantor), a "renowned and bright star," and "the glory and beauty of the Church." His honorable head is in the Great Lavra on Mount Athos.

In some countries it is customary to sing special carols today in honor of Saint Basil. He is believed to visit the homes of the faithful, and a place is set for him at the table. People visit the homes of friends and relatives, and the mistress of the house gives a small gift to the children. A special bread (Vasilopita) is blessed and distributed after the Liturgy. A silver coin is baked into the bread, and whoever receives the slice with the coin is said to receive the blessing of Saint Basil for the coming<sup>11</sup> year.



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# BLESSING OF THE WATERS OF LAKE MONONA



Join the Orthodox Communities of Assumption, Saints Cyril & Methodius & Saint Ignatius in coming together for a Blessing of Lake Monona.

We will be gathering on Sunday, January 8th at Brittingham Park at 829 W. Washington Ave in Madison. Service will begin at 1:30 p.m. If the ice thickness is sufficient we will be just off shore on Monona Bay.

This a wonderful blessing not only for our communities but also for the entire Madison Area.

**When:** Sunday, January 8<sup>th</sup>,  
2022 at 1:30 p.m.

**Where:** Brittingham Park on  
Lake Monona. 829 W. Washington  
Ave. Madison, WI



Come Join Us,  
Sunday, January 15  
Immediately After Church!

Traditional Greek Chicken  
with potatoes,  
Vasilopita Bread,  
Coffee and Desserts

Cost: \$15.00 per meal

All proceeds go to support  
Saint Basil's Academy



Please RSVP to Maria Molzahn at  
[mariaandpatrick@gmail.com](mailto:mariaandpatrick@gmail.com) by Sunday,  
1/8/2023.

Hosted by the  
Ladies Philoptochos Society





Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America under the jurisdiction of  
**HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN NATHANAEL  
OF CHICAGO**



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**62<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL**

*Vasilopita Celebration*



**SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2023  
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***Congratulations to Joe and Jane Schirmer***



Who received the Second Saint Kosmas Award from Nancy and David Giffey. This award was presented to Jane and Joe on Sunday, November 6th, 2022, “in honor of their dedication to the beauty of our church gardens and to the mindful ecological choices they have consciously pursued.”\* In addition to this award, David Giffey presented Jane and Joe a print of a painting he had done of St. Kosmas early in his career. Among his many traits St. Kosmas loved nature. He had encouraged the planting of trees to replace those that had been cut or burnt from the Greek countryside.

"Nine years ago the First Saint Kosmas Award was presented to Luther Gette for his dedicated work planting and tending our church flower gardens. Luther lived in the neighborhood and was a member of Assumption. Over the nine years since Luther left Madison, Jane and Joe Schirmer have donated untold hours of time, ongoing care, and love to our Assumption Church flower gardens. Perhaps most significantly, in this critical time when Mother Earth needs our intelligent and healing care, the Schirmer's have chosen to avoid all use of dangerous pesticides and herbicides. This organic and practical approach must be recognized as equal in importance to the beauty of their aesthetic choices and hours of physical labor."\* (\*Nancy and David Giffey)