

CHURCH STAFF

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

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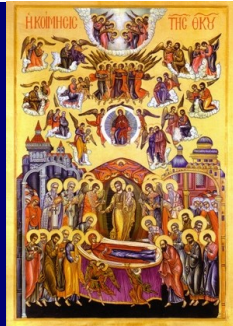
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Wonder Worker

SEPTEMBER 2023

A PROFOUND ORTHODOX CELEBRATION

The Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross, observed on September 14th, occupies a central place in the liturgical calendar of the Orthodox Christian Church. With deep-rooted theological significance and historical importance, this feast is not just a remembrance but a profound spiritual journey that reveals the essence of Orthodox faith.

The origins of this feast date back to the early 4th century when Saint Helen, the mother of Saint Constantine the Great, embarked on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Her quest led to the discovery of the True Cross, the actual instrument of Christ's crucifixion. This remarkable find marked a pivotal moment, not only in Church history but in the history of Christianity itself.

For Orthodox Christians, the Holy Cross is more than a historical relic; it is a symbol of profound theological importance. It signifies the ultimate sacrifice of Christ on behalf of humanity and serves as a powerful reminder of the redemption and salvation offered through His crucifixion and subsequent resurrection. The Feast of the Elevation of the Cross reaffirms the Orthodox belief that through Christ's suffering and triumph over death, humanity finds eternal life.

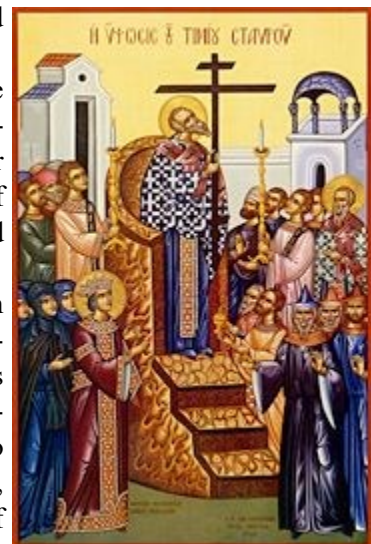
The liturgical observance of this feast is a deeply moving experience. Orthodox churches are adorned with crosses, icons, and liturgical vestments. During the Divine Liturgy, the moment of "elevation" is especially significant. As the priest raises the cross high above the altar, it symbolizes the exaltation of Christ, inviting the congregation to participate in this profound act of devotion. Believers approach to venerate the cross by kissing or touching it, expressing their faith and love.

The Elevation of the Holy Cross is celebrated with great reverence and devotion by Orthodox Christians around the world. While the core liturgical elements remain consistent, there are regional customs and practices that enrich the celebration. Processions, hymns, and prayers unite Orthodox communities in a collective expression of faith.

Orthodox iconography has long depicted the Holy Cross as a central theme. Icons of the crucifixion, adorned with intricate details and symbolism, are a common sight in Orthodox churches. These icons serve as visual reminders of Christ's sacrifice and inspire deep contemplation among the faithful.

In today's complex and often turbulent world, the Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross retains its profound relevance. It offers Orthodox Christians solace, hope, and a reaffirmation of their faith in the face of life's challenges. The message of the cross – of love, redemption, and eternal life – remains as vital today as it did in the early days of Christianity.

The Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross is not merely an annual event; it is a sacred journey of faith for Orthodox Christians. As they gather in churches across the globe to celebrate this momentous occasion, they rekindle their commitment to the message of the cross – a message that transcends time and speaks to the very core of their faith. In the Elevation of the Holy Cross, Orthodox Christians find not only history but a living testimony of Christ's enduring love and the promise of eternal life.



September 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Strict Fast Day	2
3 13th Sunday of Matthew 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy	4 Happy Labor Day	5	6 Strict Fast Day 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice	7 Philoptochos Baking Day Festival Set Up Day	8 Strict Fast Day Philoptochos Packaging Day Festival Set Up Day	9 GREEK FEST+ Gates open at Noon
10 Sunday Before Holy Cross 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy GREEK FEST + Gates Open at Noon	11	12	13 Strict Fast Day 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice	14 Strict Fast Day Elevation of the Holy Cross 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy with Procession of the Holy Cross	15 Strict Fast Day	16 Russian Mission Service
17 Sunday Following Holy Cross 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy First Day of Sunday School with Blessing of the New Sunday and Greek School Year	18	19	20 Strict Fast Day 11:00 a.m. Adult Religious Education Class 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice	21 8:30 p.m. Adult Religious Education Class Via Zoom	22 Strict Fast Day	23 Conception of John the Baptist 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy +Sacrament Ethiopian Service
24 1st Sunday of Luke 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School	25	26 Falling Asleep of Saint John the Theologian 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy	27 Strict Fast Day 11:00 a.m. Adult Religious Education Class 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice	28 8:30 p.m. Adult Religious Education Class Via Zoom	29 Strict Fast Day	30 Philoptochos Baking Day 5:00 p.m. Parish Outing to Forward Madison Soccer Game

The Parish Council Update June/July 2023

Officers: Jim Katsihtis, President; Christy Chappell-Belkin, Vice President; Bruce Hansen, Secretary; Scott Storck, Treasurer; Niko Papadopoulos, Assistant Treasurer
Members: , Conn Choles, Peter Georgalan, Carol Griskavich, Nick Helser, Bill Margetis, Maria Molzahn, Mike Smith.

Blessed Ecclesiastical New Year! September marks the beginning of the ecclesiastical year and the resumption of our ministries and youth programs. September also marks the much anticipated return of GreekFest+.

Our church places two major feast days in September to help and guide us: the Nativity of the Theotokos and the Exaltation of the Cross. We pray that the Holy Spirit helps and strengthens us all toward making a good start.

GreekFest+

Mark your calendars, spread the word and please volunteer to help...GreekFest+ will take place on September 9th and 10th! Please see or contact our GreekFest Co-Chairpersons, Maria Katsaros-Molzahn and/or Christy Chappell-Belkin, for more information and to sign up for ways in which you can help. We need everyone's help, no matter how small. Please help us share our Orthodox Christian faith, culture and hospitality with the community, and please help us raise much needed funds for our parish and ministries.

Roof Project & Matching Fund

As agreed at our Parish General Assembly, we recently replaced our aged, failing roof to protect our sanctuary and the beautiful, precious iconography on our ceilings and walls written by David Giffey. Please consider donating to help us cover as much of the cost as possible. Through a generous parishioner, each donation will be matched up to the first \$15,000!

Parish Council Vacancy

We have a vacancy on the Parish Council. Please prayerfully consider becoming a member and offering your time and talent back to our Lord. We need both general help as well as special skillsets. If you feel called, please contact Fr. Christodoulos or a Parish Council member for more information and opportunities.

Maintenance Help

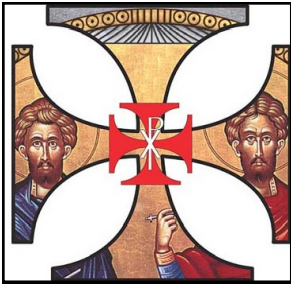
Our Maintenance Committee needs your help. If you can help with handywork or be available to meet with contractors/servicer providers, please see or contact Mike Smith or John Soloninka.

Metropolis Clergy Laity Conference

The 2023 Metropolis Clergy-Laity Assembly will be held on October 11-13th in Rolling Meadows, IL. Please contact Father or a Council member if you are interested in attending.

Luncheon to Honor our Chanter, Lenny Fafalios

Please join us in the social hall after Divine Liturgy on October 1st for a luncheon to honor Lenny Fafalios for 50 years of service as a chanter! Thank you Lenny! May our Lord bless you and your family and grant you xronia polla!



FOCUS ON PHILOTOCHOS HELP US TO HELP OTHERS

Philoptochos Forward

Traditionally, our parish recognized the Ecclesiastical New Year with a picnic/barbeque. This year brings a new tradition: Greek Fest Plus! Along with our whole church community Philoptochos embraced this event and helped prepare multiple delicacies for us to enjoy and share with broader Madison neighbors and friends! I, for one, can't wait to get my "opa" on!

Of course, Greek Fest Plus, is but one aspect of our Philoptochos and Church obligations. We are a vibrant group of women, devoted in our love for Jesus and our Church, helping others in our community far and wide. Nationally, during the 2022 year, Philoptochos donated \$755,827.52 to local, state, national, and international agencies. Along with our national and international obligations we also provided money to support local childrens and their families, the homeless population, and our own church.

In order to maintain and grow our outreach, we need to ensure the development of a workable budget providing revenue sources to meet our obligations. Last week the Philoptochos Board met and developed the 2023-2024 budget. The details of the budget will be presented to and voted by the full Philoptochos on Tuesday, 9/26 at 7 pm via ZOOM. Weather permitting and, in an effort to provide opportunities for all members, Philoptochos meetings going forward will alternate between Sundays after church or Tuesdays via Zoom. For those that like to plan, 10/22 will be the after church meeting.

Parallel to creating a budget, we must establish the revenue stream mechanism. For our community, Dial-A-Baklava Plus provides the best source of revenue for us. While some dates are already set (see below) we will finalize plans for this event at the September meeting. Please note, the pick-up date for this event has shifted to Saturday, 12/9.

Dial-A-Baklava Info:

Spanakopita Baking chair: Sue S solofam5@yahoo.com

9/30 9 am - 3ish

10/21 9 am - 3ish

Keftedes Chair: Korinna H Korinna.Hansen@wisc.edu

10/13 3 pm - 7 pm

10/14 9 am - 3ish

Baklava is usually made on the Thursday before pick-up, please set aside 12/7 if you are available. A sign-up for that day will be forthcoming.

As always thank you again to everyone for everything you've done and are getting ready to do!

Maria Molzahn, mariaandpatrick@gmail.com



The Ladies' Philoptochos Society Assumption Greek Orthodox Church 2023 Membership Drive

We invite you to join us and share in our philanthropic mission. Through your stewardships and our various fundraisers, we can donate to many worthy causes helping people in need locally, nationally, and internationally. Locally we donate our resources and Philoptochos power to several organizations on a regular basis, and to special hardship situations as needs are presented to us. Nationally and internationally we support the philanthropic programs of our Metropolis Philoptochos and our National Philoptochos.

We need you to join us in this most important mission. If you haven't already updated your Philoptochos membership, please do so now. While the minimum requirement for membership is \$22.00, all those proceeds go to support our National and Metropolis levels with their projects. Any money donated beyond the \$22.00 will go to our local Philanthropy Fund activities and other chapter obligations.

We hope that you will join us as a member and as a volunteer. Whether you attend regular meetings, volunteer to help with our activities, or would like to support our work with your stewardship, you will be a valued Philoptochos member. We look forward to hearing from you.

Please complete the form below and submit it with your 2023 stewardship payment, by February 28, 2023. Checks should be made payable to "Philoptochos" and please write *membership* in the memo section. The mailing address is below. Thank you!

NAME	
ADDRESS	
PHONE	
EMAIL	

I am interested in helping with the following project(s) and please include me!

Vasilopita Luncheon (January)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Baklava Plus Sale (Sept. – Nov.)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mid – Winter Luncheon (February)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Maintaining the Church Hall/Kitchen	<input type="checkbox"/>
Greek Independence Day Dinner	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cooking for Homeless Shelter	<input type="checkbox"/>
Koulourakia baking (Holy Week)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Baking Breads for Special Dinners	<input type="checkbox"/>
Spring/Easter bake sale	<input type="checkbox"/>	Coffee Hour Hostess	<input type="checkbox"/>
Greek Fest Bake Sale (drive by pick up or onsite)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prosforon (Holy Bread) baking	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reception for Assumption Feast Aug 14	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bucket Brigade (church cleaning)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Baptisms, Weddings, Funerals, and/or Memorial Services (if requested)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Operation Classroom	<input type="checkbox"/>

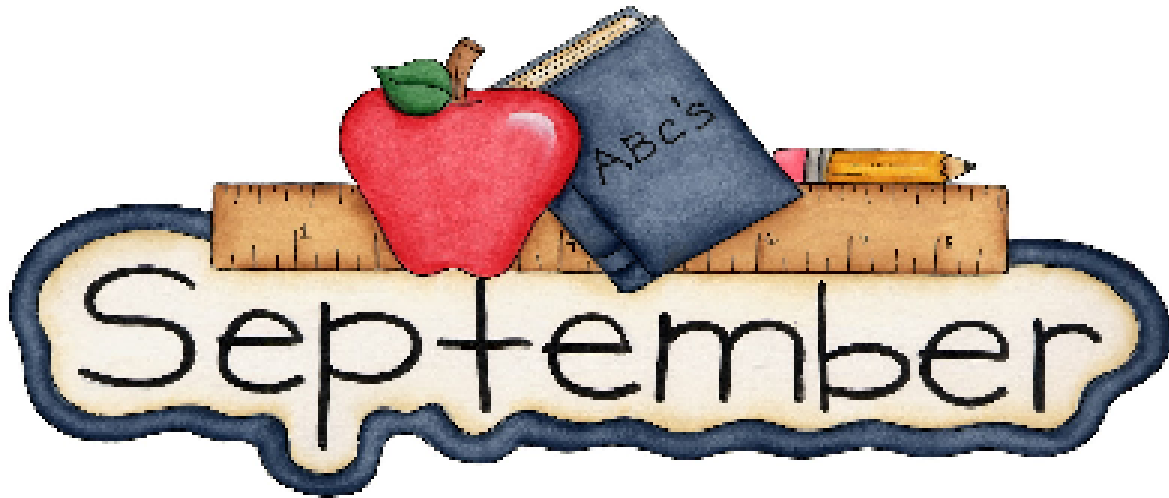
My Stewardship payment of \$_____ is enclosed (check #_____).

Please note: \$15.00 goes to National Philoptochos, \$5.00 to the Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos, and \$2.00 to the Bishop's Fund. We ask for a minimum pledge of \$22.00.

*Please return to Beth Fatsis (1215 E Johnson St, Madison, WI 53703)
or drop it in the Philoptochos mailbox at Church.*

Thank you for your generous time and support!

YOUTH CORNER



Hello Sunday school families,

Welcome back to another school year everyone! Hope you all have a wonderful and restful summer break. As we all begin to get back to the routines of school and scheduling we wanted to welcome back our Sunday school students to a new school year!

Sunday school will begin on **Sunday September 17th** after Holy Communion. We are really excited to reconnect with the children of our parish and we have lots to share with them every week. Please make sure to have registered your children and grandchildren and bring them weekly so we can continue to build this wonderful program for our parish. If you need the registration google form let Father or myself know and we can email it to you.

If there is anyone who would like to become involved as a teacher, substitute, or a high school student looking to complete some service hours for school we would love the extra help in the classrooms. Please contact Father or myself for that. The Sunday School teachers are looking forward to an exciting blessed year.

In Christ,
Susu Akkawi
Director of Sunday School

COMMUNITY NEWS

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: Will be held on Tuesday, September 19th at 7:00 p.m.

PHILOPTOCHOS MEETING: Our next Philoptochos meeting will be in September.

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASS: A.R.E. classes are beginning again this month. We will be reading the book "Words of the Heart" about the life and teachings Gerondissa Makrina Vassopoulou. Classes will begin on Wednesday, September 20th at 11:00 a.m. for in person classes and On Thursday, September 21st at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom. Everyone is welcome to join us.

ROOF REPLACEMENT CAPITAL CAMPAIGN MATCHING DRIVE: We are blessed to have an anonymous donors who has offered to match up to \$15,000 for the roof replacement. The Roof will run around \$35,000 and we would like to get it completely covered through donations. Currently we have gathered almost half. If you are interested in giving a donation for the roof put "Roof Donation" on the memo line of the check or mark it on the envelope. Together we can get this project finished and fully funded.

GREEK FEST 2023: AGOC Parish Council is delighted to announce that Greek Fest will return in 2023 and will be held Saturday, September 9th and Sunday, September 10th. Greek Fest has been a staple of our community for over half a century and in the past decades has been an event people in the city of Madison and surrounding areas look forward to. In addition to the fundraising component it is also a unique opportunity to highlight Greek culture and Pan Orthodox traditions which have created the diverse and dynamic fabric of our Church. Work has begun with early stages of planning and logistics. The applications for all required permits are being prepared for submission to the city for approval.

The success of past festivals lies entirely with the dedication and hard work from everyone who has volunteered their time and energy over the years. We are looking forward to working with everyone to ensure another successful Greek Fest. We can be reached at 608-244-1001 or by emailing AGOCMadisonGreekFest2023@gmail.com if anyone has any questions or suggestions or if any past committee leaders would like to return in the same capacity or a new one.

GREEK FEST + 2023: The AGOC Parish Council is in the midst of finalizing our Greek Fest Plus to be held on Saturday, 9/9, and Sunday, 9/10.

2023 PARISH OUTING TO FORWARD MADISON FC: On Saturday, September 30th, we will have a Parish Out-ing to the Forward Madison FC Soccer Game vs the Lexington SC with a 5:00 p.m. Kick-Off.

We have 50 tickets available for the game and they will include entrance to the game and an official Forward Madison FC Scarf. The cost is \$22. To purchase tickets please contact Fr. Christodoulos through email frchristos@gmail.com or contact the church office.

Initially we have 50 tickets and 20 are already sold. Information for buying tickets will be available soon! Join us for what is sure to be a great night of fun & fellowship.

YOUTH WORKERS NEEDED: Anyone interested in helping Fr. Christodoulos and the Youth Committee to help organize our various youth programs and ministries for next year (beginning this Fall) is asked to contact Fr. Christodoulos at the church office. We need youth (JOY & GOYA desperately needed) advisors, athletic director (If we want to participate in Jr. Olympics), Sunday School teachers etc. Without parishioner support, especially our youth's parents, we cannot continue to grow our various programs. Please offer your time and talent. See Fr. Christodoulos.

SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS NEEDED! In scripture we read, "Teach them the good way wherein they should walk" (1 Kings 8:36). We are all called to teach, whether it is at home, work, play or at church. We kindly ask the members of our community to hear these words and commit yourself to the teaching of our children through our Sunday School Program. We are in need of all grades but especially Pre-School Teachers. All those interested are asked to contact Susu. There will be a Sunday School staff meeting later in August. Yours presence and commitment is truly appreciated.

GREEK FEST PLUS VOLUNTEER FORM

Your Name:

Your telephone:

Your email:

Availability (check all that apply):

Greek Fest Saturday, 9/9

☐ Saturday, Foodline, 11:45 am - 3:30 pm: 1 person

☐ Saturday, Foodline, 3:30 pm - 7:15 pm: 4 people

☐ Saturday, Kitchen, 11:45 am - 3:30 pm: 1 person

☐ Saturday, Kitchen, 3:30 - 7:15 pm: 1 person

Greek Fest Sunday, 9/10

☐ Sunday, Foodline, 11:45 am - 3 pm: 4 people

☐ Sunday, Foodline, 3 pm - 6:15 pm: 6 people

☐ Sunday, Kitchen, 11:45 am - 3 pm: 1 person

☐ Sunday, Kitchen, 3 pm - 6:15 pm: 1 person

☐ Sunday, Tear-down, 6 - 7 pm: 4 people

Post Fest Clean Up, 9/11

☐ Monday AM, time to be determined: 4 - 8 people

Questions:

Contact Maria at (608)835-0184 or drkmforlbo@gmail.com

Contact Christy at (608)658-6276 or christy.chappell@gmail.com



GREEK FEST* 2023

September 9th & 10th

Saturday 12-7pm

Sunday 12-6pm

Assumption Greek Orthodox Church

11 N. Seventh St., Madison, WI 53704

at the corner of E. Washington Ave. & N. Seventh St

Enjoy music, dancing, church tours and delicious Greek favorites including gyros, fries, spanakopita, Greek lemon chicken, loukoumades, beer, wine + more!

Sample a full array of sweets and baked goods at our bake sale and cafe in the lower level inside the church.



2023 Parish outing to the Forward Madison FC



**On Saturday. September 30th, we will have a Parish Out-
ing to the Forward Madison FC Soccer Game vs the
Lexington SC with a 5:00 p.m. Kick-Off.**

**We have 50 tickets available for the game and they will in-
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son FC Scarf . The cost is \$22**

**To purchase tickets please contact Fr. Christodoulos
through email frchristos@gmail.com or contact the
church office.**

**Initially we have 50 tickets and 20 are already sold. Infor-
mation for buying tickets will be available soon!**

**Join us for what is sure to be a great night of fun &
fellowship.**

SAVE THE DATE

On Sunday, October 1st, 2023. The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America celebrates National Church Musicians Sunday. This is a day we can honor all our choir members and chanters who help us celebrate our Divine Services through out the year.



On This year we are also celebrating the 50 years of service of our Head Chanter Lenny Fafalios.

We will be having a Luncheon to Honor Lenny following Liturgy on Sunday, October 1st.

More Details to come out soon.

Join us in honoring his dedicated service to the Holy Church of Christ.

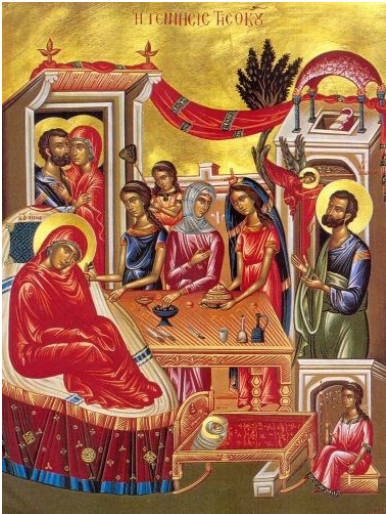
SAVE THE DATES

Assumption Sunday school 2023-2024 events

Mark your calendars for the different events happening throughout the school year!

- Sep 9-10 (Sat & Sun): Greek Fest+
- Sep 17 (Sun): First day of Sunday School
- Oct 15 (Sun): Pumpkin Patch and Corn Maze Outing
- Nov 10 (Fri): Prosfhora Night
- Nov 26 (Sun): Thanksgiving Break
- Dec 8 (Fri): Gingerbread Night
- Dec 17 (Sun): Christmas Pageant
- Dec 22 (Fri): Christmas Movie Night
- Dec 24 & Dec 31 (Sun): Christmas Break
- Jan 14 (Sun): Winter Tubing Outing
- Feb 4 (Sun): Bowling Night
- Mar 14 (Thur): SkyZone Night
- Mar 31 (Sun): Spring Break
- Apr 27 (Sat): Lazarus Family Retreat
- Apr 28 (Sun): Palm Sunday - No Classes
- May 5 (Sun): Egg Hunt after Easter Agapi
Church service - No Classes
- May 19 (Sun): Last day of Sunday School
- June 2 (Sun): Graduate Sunday





THE NATIVITY OF OUR MOST HOLY LADY THE MOTHER OF GOD & EVER-VIRGIN MARY:

The Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary: The Most Holy Virgin Mary was born at a time when people had reached such a degree of moral decay that it seemed altogether impossible to restore them. People often said that God must come into the world to restore faith and not permit the ruin of mankind.

The Son of God chose to take on human nature for the salvation of man-kind, and chose as His Mother the All-Pure Virgin Mary, who alone was worthy to give birth to the Source of purity and holiness.

The Nativity of Our Most Holy Lady Theotokos and Ever Virgin Mary is celebrated by the Church as a day of universal joy. Within the context of the Old and the New Testaments, the Most Blessed Virgin Mary was born on this radiant day, having been chosen before the ages by Divine Providence to bring about the Mystery of the Incarnation of the Word of God. She is revealed as the Mother of the Savior of the World, Our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Most Holy Virgin Mary was born in the small city of Galilee, Nazareth. Her parents were Right-eous Joachim of the tribe of the Prophet-King David, and Anna from the tribe of the First Priest Aaron. The couple was without child, since Saint Anna was barren.

Having reached old age, Joachim and Anna did not lose hope in God's mercy. They had strong faith that for God everything is possible, and that He would be able to overcome the barrenness of Anna even in her old age, as He had once overcome the barrenness of Sarah, spouse of the Patriarch Abraham. Saints Joachim and Anna vowed to dedicate the child which the Lord might give them, to the service of God in the Temple.

Childlessness was considered among the Hebrew nation as a Divine punishment for sin, and therefore the righteous Saints Joachim and Anna had to endure abuse from their own countrymen. On one of the feast-days at the Temple in Jerusalem the elderly Joachim brought his sacrifice to offer to God, but the High Priest would not accept it, considering him to be unworthy since he was childless.

Saint Joachim in deep grief went into the wilderness, and there he prayed with tears to the Lord for a child. Saint Anna wept bitterly when she learned what had happened at the Jerusalem Temple. Never once did she complain against the Lord, but rather she prayed to ask God's mercy on her family.

The Lord fulfilled her petitions when the pious couple had attained to extreme old age and prepared themselves by virtuous life for a sublime calling: to be the parents of the Most Holy Virgin Mary, the future Mother of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Archangel Gabriel brought Joachim and Anna the joyous message that their prayers were heard by God, and of them would be born a most blessed daughter Mary, through Whom would come the Salvation of all the World.

The Most Holy Virgin Mary surpassed in purity and virtue not only all mankind, but also the angels. She was manifest as the living Temple of God, so the Church sings in its festal hymns: "the East Gate... bring-ing Christ into the world for the salvation of our souls" (2nd Stikhera on "Lord, I Have Cried", Tone 6).

The Nativity of the Theotokos marks the change of the times when the great and comforting promises of God for the salvation of the human race from slavery to the devil are about to be fulfilled. This event has brought to earth the grace of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of Truth, piety, virtue and everlasting life. The Theotokos is revealed to all of us by grace as a merciful Intercessor and Mother, to Whom we have recourse with filial devotion.



THE UNIVERSAL EXALTATION OF THE PRECIOUS & LIFE-GIVING CROSS:

The Elevation of the Venerable and Life-Creating Cross of the Lord: The pagan Roman emperors tried to completely eradicate from human memory the holy places where our Lord Jesus Christ suffered and was resurrected for mankind. The Emperor Hadrian (117-138) gave orders to cover over the ground of Golgotha and the Sepulchre of the Lord, and to build a temple of the pagan goddess Venus and a statue of Jupiter.

Pagans gathered at this place and offered sacrifice to idols there. Eventually after 300 years, by Divine Providence, the great Christian sacred remains, the Sepulchre of the Lord and the Life-Creating Cross were again discovered and opened for veneration. This took place under the Emperor Constantine the Great (306-337) after his victory in the year 312 over Maxentius, ruler of the Western part of the Roman empire, and over Licinius, ruler of its Eastern part. In the year 323 Constantine became the sole ruler of the vast Roman Empire.

In 313 he had issued the Edict of Milan, by which the Christian religion was legalized and the persecutions against Christians in the Western half of the empire were stopped. The ruler Licinius, although he had signed the Edict of Milan to oblige Constantine, still fanatically continued the persecutions against Christians. Only after his conclusive defeat did the 313 Edict of toleration extend also to the Eastern part of the empire. The Holy Equal of the Apostles Emperor Constantine, having gained victory over his enemies in three wars with God's assistance, had seen in the heavens the Sign of the Cross, and written beneath: "By this you shall conquer."

Ardently desiring to find the Cross on which our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, Saint Constantine sent his mother, the pious Empress Helen (May 21), to Jerusalem, providing her with a letter to Saint Macarius, Patriarch of Jerusalem.

Although the holy empress Helen was already in her declining years, she set about completing the task with enthusiasm. The empress gave orders to destroy the pagan temple and the statues in Jerusalem. Searching for the Life-Creating Cross, she made inquiry of Christians and Jews, but for a long time her search remained unsuccessful.

Finally, they directed her to a certain elderly Hebrew by the name of Jude who stated that the Cross was buried where the temple of Venus stood. They demolished the pagan temple and, after praying, they began to excavate the ground. Soon the Tomb of the Lord was uncovered. Not far from it were three crosses, a board with the inscription ordered by Pilate, and four nails which had pierced the Lord's Body (March 6).

In order to discern on which of the three crosses the Savior was crucified, Patriarch Macarius alternately touched the crosses to a corpse. When the Cross of the Lord touched the dead one, he came to life. Having beheld the raising of the dead man, everyone was convinced that the Life-Creating Cross was found.

Christians came in a huge throng to venerate the Holy Cross, beseeching Saint Macarius to elevate the Cross, so that even those far off might reverently contemplate it. Then the Patriarch and other spiritual leaders raised up the Holy Cross, and the people, saying "Lord have mercy," reverently prostrated before the Venerable Wood. This solemn event occurred in the year 326.

During the discovery of the Life-Creating Cross another miracle took place: a grievously sick woman, beneath the shadow of the Holy Cross, was healed instantly. The elder Jude and other Jews there believed in Christ and

accepted Holy Baptism. Jude received the name Cyriacus and afterwards was consecrated Bishop of Jerusalem.

During the reign of Julian the Apostate (361-363) he accepted a martyr's death for Christ (see October 28). The holy empress Helen journeyed to the holy places connected with the earthly life of the Savior, building more than 80 churches, at Bethlehem the birthplace of Christ, and on the Mount of Olives where the Lord ascended to Heaven, and at Gethsemane where the Savior prayed before His sufferings and where the Mother of God was buried after her death.

Saint Helen took part of the Life-Creating Wood and nails with her to Constantinople. The holy emperor Constantine gave orders to build at Jerusalem a majestic and spacious church in honor of the Resurrection of Christ, also including under its roof the Life-Giving Tomb of the Lord and Golgotha. The temple was constructed in about ten years. Saint Helen did not survive until the dedication of the temple, she died in the year 327. The church was consecrated on September 13, 335. On the following day, September 14, the festal celebration of the Exaltation of the Venerable and Life-Creating Cross was established.

Another event connected to the Cross of the Lord is remembered also on this day: its return to Jerusalem from Persia after a fourteen year captivity. During the reign of the Byzantine emperor Phocas (602-610) the Persian emperor Khosroes II in a war against the Greeks defeated the Greek army, plundered Jerusalem and captured both the Life-Creating Cross of the Lord and the Holy Patriarch Zachariah (609-633).

The Cross remained in Persia for fourteen years and only under the emperor Heraclius (610-641), who with the help of God defeated Khosroes and concluded peace with his successor and son Syroes, was the Cross of the Lord returned to the Christians.

With great solemnity the Life-creating Cross was transferred to Jerusalem. Emperor Heraclius in imperial crown and royal purple carried the Cross of Christ into the temple of the Resurrection. With the emperor went Patriarch Zacharios. At the gates by which they ascended Golgotha, the emperor suddenly stopped and was not able to proceed farther. The holy Patriarch explained to the emperor that an angel of the Lord was blocking his way. The emperor was told to remove his royal trappings and to walk barefoot, since He Who bore the Cross for the salvation of the world from sin had made His way to Golgotha in all humility. Then Heraclius donned plain garb, and without further hindrance, carried the Cross of Christ into the church.

In a sermon on the Exaltation of the Cross, Saint Andrew of Crete (July 4) says: "The Cross is exalted, and everything true gathers together, the Cross is exalted, and the city makes solemn, and the people celebrate the feast".



Assumption Greek Orthodox Church

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2023 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 without the need for fundraisers. Please help us reach that goal. And please consider joining the Stewardship Committee to provide input and help us grow and engage our stewards in a life in Christ.

Next Parish Council Meeting

The next Parish Council meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, September 19 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

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