

Wonder Worker

SEPTEMBER 2024

CHURCH STAFF

- Parish Priest: Very Reverend Archimandrite Christodoulos Margellos
- Parish Council President: Christy Chappell Belkin
- Philoptochos President: Maria Molzahn
- Sunday School Directors: Susu Saba
- Greek School: Ilektra Kolokouri
- Choir Director: George Tzougros

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THE ELEVATION OF THE HOLY CROSS: A FEAST OF TRIUMPH AND PARADOX

The Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross, celebrated on September 14th in the Orthodox Church, commemorates two historical events: the finding of the True Cross by Saint Helen, mother of Emperor Constantine, in the 4th century, and its subsequent return to Jerusalem after being captured by the Persians. This feast holds a central place in the Orthodox liturgical calendar, marking a pivotal moment in Christian history and encapsulating the profound paradox of the Cross itself – a symbol of both suffering and salvation.

The Historical Context

The story of the True Cross is intertwined with the early history of Christianity. According to tradition, Saint Helen, guided by divine inspiration, embarked on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem in search of the Cross on which Christ was crucified. After extensive excavations, three crosses were discovered, and the True Cross was identified through its miraculous power to heal. The Cross was then enshrined in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, becoming a focal point of Christian pilgrimage and veneration.

In the 7th century, the Persians captured Jerusalem and took the Cross as a trophy of war. However, it was triumphantly recovered by Emperor Heraclius in 628 AD and returned to its rightful place in Jerusalem. The Elevation of the Holy Cross commemorates this joyous event, signifying the restoration of the Cross as a symbol of Triumph of Orthodoxy, victory and hope.

Theological Significance

The Cross occupies a central place in Orthodox theology, representing the ultimate act of sacrifice and love. The Elevation of the Holy Cross invites us to contemplate the profound mystery of Christ's death and resurrection, and its implications for our own lives. The Cross is not merely a symbol of suffering and defeat, but rather a sign of triumph and salvation. Through His crucifixion, Christ conquered death and opened the gates of Paradise for all who believe in Him.

The feast also underscores the paradoxical nature of the Cross. It is through Christ's voluntary embrace of suffering and death that He brings about the salvation of the world. The Cross, therefore, represents both the depths of human sin and the heights of divine love. It is a reminder that true strength lies not in power or domination, but in humility and self-sacrifice.

Liturgical Celebration

The Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross is marked by solemn and joyous liturgical celebrations in the Orthodox Church. The central act of the feast is the elevation of the Cross, during which the priest raises a processional cross high above the altar, sym-

Continued on next page

bolizing Christ's exaltation and victory over death. The faithful venerate the Cross by bowing and kissing it, expressing their gratitude for Christ's sacrifice and their commitment to follow His path.

The liturgical hymns and readings for the feast emphasize the power and significance of the Cross. They proclaim the Cross as the "weapon of peace," the "glory of the Church," and the "strength of kings." The faithful are called to embrace the Cross as a source of hope and inspiration, and to live their lives in accordance with its teachings.

Spiritual Implications

The Elevation of the Holy Cross is not merely a historical commemoration, but also a call to personal transformation. It invites us to reflect on our own relationship with the Cross and its implications for our daily lives. The Cross challenges us to confront our own sinfulness and to embrace the path of repentance and renewal. It calls us to prioritize spiritual values over material pursuits, and to live lives of love, compassion, and self-sacrifice.

The Cross also offers us hope and encouragement in the face of life's challenges. It reminds us that even in the midst of suffering and darkness, Christ's light shines brightly. By embracing the Cross, we can find strength and consolation, knowing that we are not alone in our struggles.

Conclusion

The Feast of the Elevation of the Holy Cross is a powerful reminder of the central mystery of the Christian faith. It invites us to contemplate the profound love of God, manifested in the sacrifice of His Son on the Cross. It challenges us to embrace the Cross as a symbol of both suffering and salvation, and to live our lives in accordance with its teachings. By doing so, we can experience the transformative power of Christ's love and find true fulfillment and meaning in our lives.

The Cross is not merely an object of veneration, but a way of life. It calls us to follow Christ's example of humility, selflessness, and love. It challenges us to reject the values of a world obsessed with power and material possessions, and to embrace the values of the Kingdom of God.

As we celebrate the Elevation of the Holy Cross, let us renew our commitment to Christ and His teachings. Let us take up our own crosses and follow Him, trusting in His promise of eternal life. May the Cross be our guide and our strength, leading us ever closer to the heart of God.

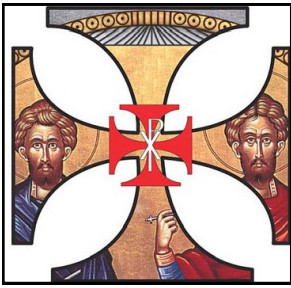
+Very Rev. Archimandrite Christodoulos Margellos



September 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Ecclesiastical New Year 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy	2 Happy Labor Day	3 Creek Feat + Prep	4 Strict Fast Day Creek Feat + Prep	5 Creek Feat + Prep	6 Strict Fast Day Creek Feat + Prep	7 CREEK FEST + Noon to 7:00 p.m.
8 Sunday before Holy Cross Nativity of the Theotokos 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy CREEK FEST + 11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.	9 Creek Feat + Tear Down	10	11 Strict Fast Day 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice	12	13 Strict Fast Day	14 Fast Day Wine & Oil Permitted Elevation of the Holy Cross 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy with Procession of the Holy Cross
15 Sunday after Holy Cross 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy First Day of Sunday School	16	17 Saint Sophia & her 3 daughters: Faith, Hope & Love 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy 7:00 p.m. Parish Council Meeting	18 Strict Fast Day 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice	19	20 Strict Fast Day	21 Ethiopian Mission
22 1st Sunday of Luke 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School	23	24	25 Strict Fast Day 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice	26	27 Strict Fast Day	28 Russian Mission Service
29 2nd Sunday of Luke 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School	30					

Maintenance Updates



FOCUS ON PHILOPTOCHOS HELP US TO HELP OTHERS

Philoptochos Forward, Agape Marches On

The chief end of our life is to live in communion with God. To this end the Son of God became incarnate, in order to return us to this divine communion, which was lost by the fall into sin. Through Jesus Christ, the Son of God, we enter into communion with the Father and thus attain our purpose.

(St. Theophan the Recluse, Letters to various people, 24)

September is upon us, and with it our Ecclesiastical New Year. Thank you to everyone that helped out with our Church Feast Day Vespers Coffee Hour and Church Service. Everything was delicious and beautiful to look at.

Our Annual Greek Fest Plus celebration is quickly approaching! Thank you to everyone who has signed up already. It is critically important for all of us to step up and help out. This link does take you to the sign-up form: <https://forms.gle/YwALFTtfsTMPTY546>. Again, thank you to everyone that has already signed up!

Moving forward, our fall will be full with the biggest fundraiser for us: Baklava Plus.

Baking days include:

10/4 Keftedes prep; 10/5 Keftedes

10/9 Koulourakia

10/23 kourambiethes/Paximadia

11/1 Span prep; 11/2 Spanakopita assembly

11/8 Span prep; 11/9 Spanakopita assembly

11/21 Baklava

11/22 Baklava Plus packaging

11/23 Baklava Plus pick up

Please add these days to your calendars and look for sign up sheets soon.

During the Clergy/Laity Convention our national Philoptochos focused on the importance of expanding our AGAPI and outreach to our broader community. During our September meeting scheduled for 9/22 after church we will discuss this topic in depth. I look forward to seeing you there!

Best, Maria Molzahn

Saturday, September 21st Metropolis of Chicago Dive for the Cross and BBQ

St. Andrew Greek Orthodox Church
5649 N. Sheridan Road, Chicago, IL 60660

10:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

CALLING ALL YOUTH OF THE METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

All Parishes are invited to join the Clergy of Chicago
as they bless the Waters of Lake Michigan
then throw the Cross for the youth to retrieve

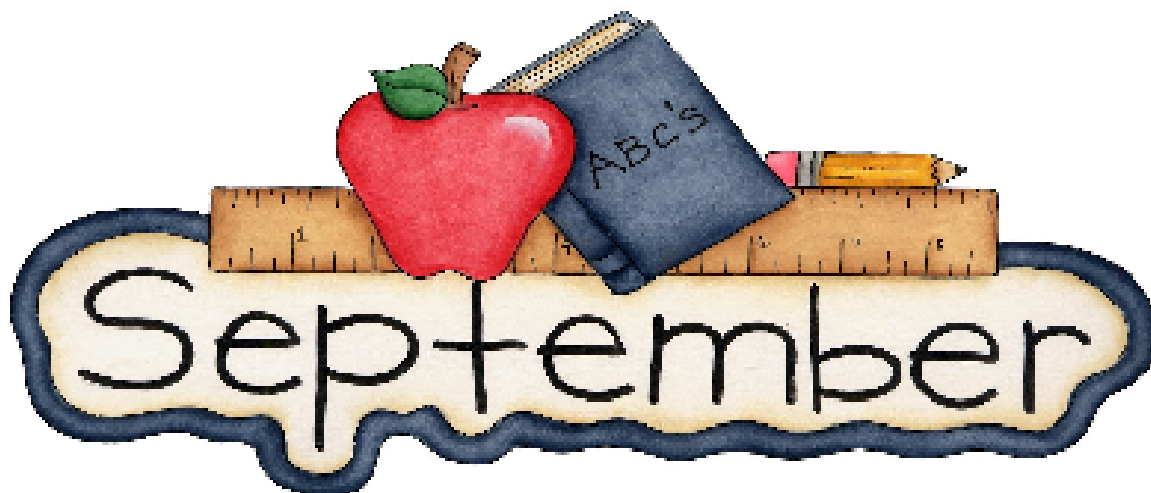
BBQ lunch at St. Andrew's to follow

Parishes, please collect your RSVPs and send them
to St. Andrew Greek Orthodox Church
no later than September 12th for food counts

(773) 334-4515, info@standreworthodox.org



YOUTH CORNER



Hello Sunday school families,

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

Sunday school will begin on **Sunday September 15th** 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 or substitute we would always love the extra help in the classrooms; in addition, If you have any boys from the ages of eight and older who would like to be an altar boy please contact Father or myself. 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 17th at 7:00 p.m.

PHILOPTOCHOS MEETING: The Next meeting will be in September 22nd following Liturgy.

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASS: have no ended for the Summer and will beginning again in October. We will be continuing the Gospel of John.

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.

VASILIKO WANTED: We are in need of Vasiliko (Basil) plants for the celebration of the Litany of the Holy Cross that will take place on September 14th. If you can be of assistance, please bring them to church prior to the Orthros service of the day.

METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO DIVE FOR THE CROSS: The Metropolis of Chicago Dive for the Cross and BBQ' that will be held on Saturday, September 21st, at Saint Andrew Greek Orthodox Church (Chicago, IL), from 10:30am – 1:30pm. All youth of the Metropolis of Chicago are encouraged to attend and participate. See Flier for mor details.

2024 PARISH OUTING TO FORWARD MADISON FC: On Saturday. October 12th, we will have a Parish Outing to the Forward Madison FC Soccer Game vs the Chattanooga Red Wolves 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 Madi-son FC Scarf . The cost is \$27. To purchase tickets please contact Fr. Christodoulos through email frchristos@gmail.com or contact the church office.

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

GREEK SCHOOL 2024-2025: hope you all had a beautiful summer full of joy and good memories! The time to think about greek school has come.

This year, Vaggelis Dermisis will continue with teaching the older kids as he did last year, and myself with Zoe Schirmer and my daughter Alexandra, helping the Sundays that I have to travel for my son's soccer, will teach the younger kids.

Classes will take place after Sunday's church liturgy from around 11:45am to 12:45pm and the first lesson will start on September 29.

This year, Greek school will charge tuition that will cover materials, books and Vaggelis's hourly salary. Tuition will be \$450 for the whole year for the first kid and 50% off for any other sibling, and it can be submitted either in one installment by November 15th or in two installments of \$225 each, with the second installment due by January 31st.

NOTE: If you are financially tight and need some support with tuition, please do not hesitate to approach Father Chris or me and let us know. Greek school is not about making profit, it is about giving the opportunity to our youth to expand their cultural horizons, learn about their origins and promote education. This concern should not prevent your kids from being part of our church community's mission.

I am attaching a registration form so I have some info about our returning or new students, please return it in person, mail it to the church, take a photo and email it to me, whatever is easier for you, by September 29.

I hope I see all those past students coming back and I am very excited to meet new ones! Wish all of you a productive, safe and great new school year!

Ilektra Kolokouri-Anagnostopoulos - Director of Assumption Greek school



Family Synaxis

METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO

& PICK UP YOUR CROSS & FOLLOW ME MINISTRY

Invite you to our Annual Fall Retreat

God's Design

FOR OUR FAMILY

Saturday, October 12 — 9:00AM - 4:00PM

Ascension of Our Lord Greek Orthodox Church
1207 Riverwoods Road, Lincolnshire, IL 60069

Keynote Speaker



**FR. GEORGE
DOKOS**

*Parish Priest
Holy Apostles Greek
Orthodox Church
(Westchester, IL)*

A day retreat for the whole family!

What do the Fathers of the Church have to tell us about Orthodox family life? How do we center our children around Christ? Join us for this day retreat to explore the rich teachings of our Church about the Christian family and how we can become holy in our own homes.

- Prayer services as a family
- Parent workshops and discussions
- Children's games and activities
- Parallel and inclusion programming available for children with special needs via Pick Up Your Cross Ministry
- Breakfast and Lunch provided



Scan the QR Code to Register Now!

\$75 per family — Must Register by October 6

Ages 4+ (Toddler Care Unavailable)

Questions? chicago.family.synaxis@gmail.com

Or visit www.gocfamilysynaxis.org



ASSUMPTION GREEK SCHOOL OF MADISON

2024-2025 Registration Form

Student's Full Name _____

Age _____

Address _____

Mother's Name _____ Father's Name _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

E-mail _____

Emergency Contact:

Phone _____

If you are not a returning student please answer the following questions:

1. Has your child ever attended any type of Greek school or taken any type of Greek lessons?

Yes No

1. If yes, for how many years? _____

2. Does your child know how to speak, read, write or understand any Greek ? (circle whatever applies)

If yes, what is the level? Beginning, intermediate, advanced.

3. Do you use the Greek language at home? Often rarely never

Tuition fee for the 2024-2025 school year: \$450.00 per student (\$225 for any siblings)

(Please make checks payable to AGOC and write Greek school in the memo section)

Paid in full _____ 1st installment _____ 2nd installment _____



The Nativity of our Most Holy Lady the Mother of God and 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 mankind, 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 Righteous 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 feastdays 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.

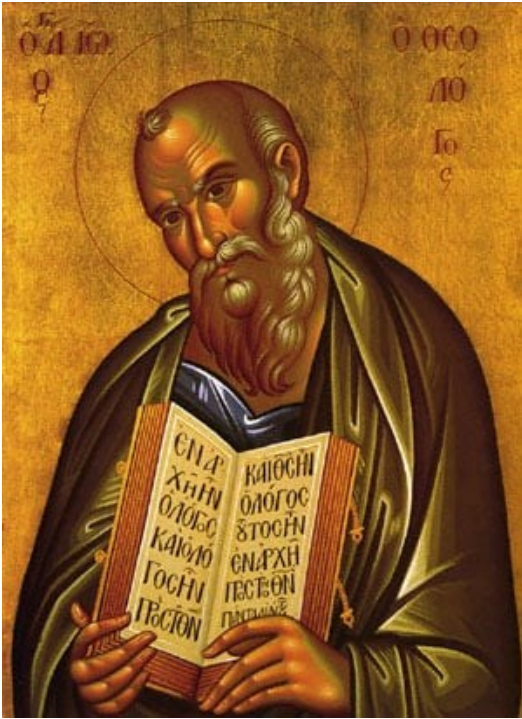
Saint Joachim in deep grief went into the wilderness, and there he prayed with tears to the Lord for a child. Saint Anna wept bitterly when she learned what had happened at the Jerusalem Temple. Never once did she complain against the Lord, but rather she prayed to ask God's mercy on her family.

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... bringing 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.



Rest of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian:

The Holy, Glorious All-laudable Apostle and Evangelist, Virgin, and Beloved Friend of Christ, John the Theologian was the son of Zebedee and Salome, a daughter of Saint Joseph the Betrothed. He was called by our Lord Jesus Christ to be one of His Apostles at the same time as his elder brother James. This took place at Lake Gennesareth (i.e. the Sea of Galilee). Leaving behind their father, both brothers followed the Lord.

The Apostle John was especially loved by the Savior for his sacrificial love and his virginal purity. After his calling, the Apostle John did not part from the Lord, and he was one of the three apostles who were particularly close to Him. Saint John the Theologian was present when the Lord restored the daughter of Jairus to life, and he was a witness to the Transfiguration of the Lord on Mount Tabor.

During the Last Supper, he reclined next to the Lord, and laid his head upon His breast. He also asked the name of the Savior's betrayer. The Apostle John followed after the Lord when they led Him bound from the Garden of Gethsemane to the court of the iniquitous High Priests Annas and Caiphas. He was there in the courtyard of the High Priest during the interrogations of his Teacher and he resolutely followed after him on the way to Golgotha, grieving with all his heart.

At the foot of the Cross he stood with the Mother of God and heard the words of the Crucified Lord addressed to Her from the Cross: "Woman, behold Thy son." Then the Lord said to him, "Behold thy Mother" (John 19:26-27). From that moment the Apostle John, like a loving son, concerned himself over the Most Holy Virgin Mary, and he served Her until Her Dormition.

After the Dormition of the Mother of God the Apostle John went to Ephesus and other cities of Asia Minor to preach the Gospel, taking with him his own disciple Prochorus. They boarded a ship, which floundered during a terrible tempest. All the travellers were cast up upon dry ground, and only the Apostle John remained in the depths of the sea. Prochorus wept bitterly, bereft of his spiritual father and guide, and he went on towards Ephesus alone.

On the fourteenth day of his journey he stood at the shore of the sea and saw that the waves had cast a man ashore. Going up to him, he recognized the Apostle John, whom the Lord had preserved alive for fourteen days in the sea. Teacher and disciple went to Ephesus, where the Apostle John preached incessantly to the pagans about Christ. His preaching was accompanied by such numerous and great miracles, that the number of believers increased with each day.

During this time there had begun a persecution of Christians under the emperor Nero (56-68). They took the Apostle John for trial at Rome. Saint John was sentenced to death for his confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, but the Lord preserved His chosen one. The apostle drank a cup of deadly poison, but he remained alive. Later, he emerged unharmed from a cauldron of boiling oil into which he had been thrown on orders from the torturer.

After this, they sent the Apostle John off to imprisonment to the island of Patmos, where he spent many years. Proceeding along on his way to the place of exile, Saint John worked many miracles. On the island of Patmos, his preaching and miracles attracted to him all the inhabitants of the island, and he enlightened them with the light of the Gospel. He cast out many devils from the pagan temples, and he healed a great multitude of the

sick.

Sorcerers with demonic powers showed great hostility to the preaching of the holy apostle. He especially frightened the chief sorcerer of them all, named Kinops, who boasted that they would destroy the apostle. But the great John, by the grace of God acting through him, destroyed all the demonic artifices to which Kinops resorted, and the haughty sorcerer perished in the depths of the sea.

The Apostle John withdrew with his disciple Prochorus to a desolate height, where he imposed upon himself a three-day fast. As Saint John prayed the earth quaked and thunder rumbled. Prochorus fell to the ground in fright. The Apostle John lifted him up and told him to write down what he was about to say. “I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord, Who is and Who was and Who is to come, the Almighty” (Rev 1:8), proclaimed the Spirit of God through the Apostle John. Thus in about the year 67 the Book of Revelation was written, known also as the “Apocalypse,” of the holy Apostle John the Theologian. In this Book were predictions of the tribulations of the Church and of the end of the world.

After his prolonged exile, the Apostle John received his freedom and returned to Ephesus, where he continued with his activity, instructing Christians to guard against false teachers and their erroneous teachings. In the year 95, the Apostle John wrote his Gospel at Ephesus. He called for all Christians to love the Lord and one another, and by this to fulfill the commands of Christ. The Church calls Saint John the “Apostle of Love”, since he constantly taught that without love man cannot come near to God.

In his three Epistles, Saint John speaks of the significance of love for God and for neighbor. Already in his old age, he learned of a youth who had strayed from the true path to follow the leader of a band of robbers, so Saint John went out into the wilderness to seek him. Seeing the holy Elder, the guilty one tried to hide himself, but the Apostle John ran after him and besought him to stop. He promised to take the sins of the youth upon himself, if only he would repent and not bring ruin upon his soul. Shaken by the intense love of the holy Elder, the youth actually did repent and turn his life around.

Saint John reposed when he was more than a hundred years old. He far outlived the other eyewitnesses of the Lord, and for a long time he remained the only remaining eyewitness of the earthly life of the Savior.

When it was time for the departure of the Apostle John, he went out beyond the city limits of Ephesus with the families of his disciples. He bade them prepare for him a cross-shaped grave, in which he lay, telling his disciples that they should cover him over with the soil. The disciples tearfully kissed their beloved teacher, but not wanting to be disobedient, they fulfilled his bidding. They covered the face of the saint with a cloth and filled in the grave. Learning of this, other disciples of Saint John came to the place of his burial. When they opened the grave, they found it empty.

Each year from the grave of the holy Apostle John on May 8 came forth a fine dust, which believers gathered up and were healed of sicknesses by it. Therefore, the Church also celebrates the memory of the holy Apostle John the Theologian on May 8.

The Lord bestowed on His beloved disciple John and John’s brother James the name “Sons of Thunder” an awesome messenger accompanied by the cleansing power of heavenly fire. And precisely by this the Savior pointed out the flaming, fiery, sacrificial character of Christian love, the preacher of which was the Apostle John the Theologian. The eagle, symbol of the lofty heights of his theological thought, is the iconographic symbol of the Evangelist John the Theologian. The appellation “Theologian” is bestowed by Holy Church only to Saint John among the immediate disciples and Apostles of Christ, as being the seer of the mysterious Judgments of God.