

Wonder Worker

DECEMBER 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 INCARNATION: A COSMIC RENEWAL REFLECTING ON THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

The Nativity of Our Lord, celebrated with joy and reverence by Orthodox Christians worldwide, marks not merely a historical event but a cosmic turning point. It is the feast of the Incarnation, the moment when God Himself entered into human history, taking on flesh and dwelling among us. To truly grasp the profound significance of this event, we turn to the wisdom of Saint Athanasios, whose treatise "On the Incarnation" illuminates the divine logic behind this wondrous act of love.

The Divine Dilemma: Corruption and the Image of God

Saint Athanasios begins his treatise by outlining the predicament of humanity. Created in the image of God, humans were endowed with immortality and communion with their Creator. However, through disobedience and the fall into sin, this image became tarnished, and mortality entered the world. Corruption and decay took hold, threatening to extinguish the divine spark within humanity.

"For the transgression of the commandment was turning them back again according to their nature; and as they had at the beginning come into being out of non-existence, so were they now on the way to returning, through corruption, to non-existence again," writes Saint Athanasios.

Faced with this dilemma, God, in His infinite love and mercy, could not abandon His creation. Yet, a simple act of forgiveness would not suffice. Justice demanded that the debt of sin be paid, and humanity, trapped in its fallen state, was unable to offer adequate restitution.

The Incarnation: A Bold and Necessary Act

Herein lies the brilliance of the Incarnation. As Saint Athanasios eloquently argues, only God Himself could bridge the chasm between humanity and divinity. By taking on human flesh, Christ, the eternal Word of God, united Himself with our fallen nature, taking upon Himself the consequences of sin and offering the perfect sacrifice for our redemption.

"He indeed assumed humanity that we might become God," proclaims Saint Athanasios. This bold statement encapsulates the transformative power of the Incarnation. Christ's divinity permeates His humanity, and through Him, humanity is granted the possibility of deification, of participating in the divine life.

The Nativity, therefore, is not merely the birth of a holy man, but the dawn of a new creation. It is the moment when God Himself enters into the very fabric of human existence, renewing and restoring the tarnished image of God within us.

The Logic of the Cross: Victory over Death

Continued on next page

Saint Athanasios further emphasizes the necessity of the Incarnation by pointing to the inevitability of the Cross. Christ's death on the cross, though seemingly a tragic defeat, is in fact the ultimate victory over death and corruption.

"For by death He Himself was life, and by corruption He Himself was incorruption," writes Saint Athanasios. Through His death and resurrection, Christ conquers the power of death, opening the way for humanity to share in His eternal life.

The Nativity, then, foreshadows the Paschal mystery, the culmination of Christ's earthly mission. It is the beginning of the journey that leads to the cross and ultimately to the empty tomb. The infant born in Bethlehem is the same God who will willingly lay down His life for the salvation of the world.

The Nativity: A Source of Hope and Renewal

The significance of the Nativity extends beyond the theological realm. It offers a message of profound hope and renewal for all humanity. In the Incarnation, we see God's unwavering love for His creation, His willingness to enter into the depths of human suffering and offer a path to salvation.

The Nativity reminds us that we are not abandoned in our struggles. God is with us, Emmanuel, sharing in our joys and sorrows. He has taken on our humanity, sanctifying it and making it a vessel for His divine grace. As we celebrate the Nativity, we are called to emulate Christ's humility and self-emptying love. We are invited to participate in the divine life, to become partakers of His divine nature.

Living the Incarnation: A Call to Transformation

Saint Athanasios' treatise "On the Incarnation" serves as a powerful reminder of the transformative power of the Nativity. It challenges us to move beyond a sentimental celebration of Christmas and delve into the profound theological implications of this event.

The Incarnation is not merely a past event, but an ongoing reality. Christ continues to dwell among us through His Church, His sacraments, and His presence in the hearts of believers.

We are called to live the Incarnation in our daily lives, to embody Christ's love and compassion in our interactions with others. We are invited to participate in the ongoing renewal of creation, to be agents of healing and reconciliation in a broken world.

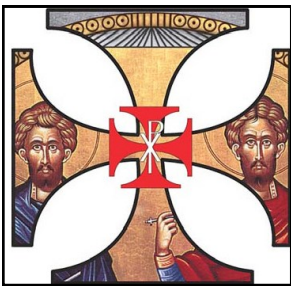
The Nativity of Our Lord is a beacon of hope, a reminder of God's infinite love and mercy. Through the lens of Saint Athanasios' profound treatise, we can gain a deeper appreciation for the significance of this event and its transformative power in our lives. As we celebrate the birth of Christ, let us also celebrate the renewal of humanity and the promise of eternal life offered through His Incarnation.

+Very Rev. Archimandrite Christodoulos Margellos



December 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 14th Sunday of Luke Fast Day 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy	2 Saint Porphyrios of Kavokalyvia Fast Day 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy	3 Fast Day	4 Strict Fast Day 11:00 a.m. Adult Religious Education Class 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice 7:00 p.m. Parish Outing for Greek Heritage Night at the Bucks	5 Fast Day 8:30 p.m. Virtual Adult Religious Education Class	6 Strict Fast Day Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy	7 Fast Day
8 10th Sunday of Luke Fast Day 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School/Creek School Parish Council elections Saint Nicholas Luncheon	9 Fast Day	10 Fast Day	11 Strict Fast Day 11:00 a.m. Adult Religious Ed Class 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice	12 Fast Day 8:30 p.m. Virtual Adult Religious Education Class	13 Strict Fast Day	14 Fast Day (Oil & Wine Permitted) Russian Mission 5:30 p.m. Youth Family Night Gingerbread House and Christmas Cook- ie making
15 11th Sunday of Luke Fast Day (Oil & Wine Permitted) 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School/Creek School Christmas Pro- gram	16 Strict Fast Day	17 Strict Fast Day Saint Dionysios of Zakynthos 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 Strict Fast Day	20 Strict Fast Day	21 Fast Day (Oil & Wine Permitted)
22 Sunday before the Nativity Fast Day (Oil & Wine Permitted) 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy	23 Strict Fast Day	24 Strict Fast Day Christmas Eve 8:30 a.m. Royal Hours of Christmas 4:00 p.m. Vespers Liturgy With Christmas Concert by our AGOC Choir	25 Nativity of our Lord 8:00 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy	26 Fast Free Day	27 Fast Free Day	28 Russian Mission Ethiopian Mission
29 Sunday after the Nativity 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy	30	31				



FOCUS ON PHILOPTOCHOS HELP US TO HELP OTHERS

AGAPE FORWARD, DECEMBER, 2024

According to our national Philoptochos our goal is the promotion of "charitable, benevolent and philanthropic outreach; to preserve the sanctity of life and family; and to perpetuate and promote our Orthodox faith and traditions."

Our local chapter just completed our biggest fundraiser of the year, Baklava Plus. Thanks to all of our support and collective effort, we will be able to continue meeting our local, national, and international commitments and our national goal.

We would like to take this moment to express our deep thank you to everyone who supports us in our work. May our Lord's Blessings be with all of us during this Christmas Season.

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday, December 17, via ZOOM. An email with the link will be sent out prior to the meeting.

As always, feel free to reach out with any questions, concerns, and wonderful ideas.

In Sisterhood,

Maria Molzahn





ASSUMPTION

Christmas Cookie Night

DECORATE SUGAR COOKIES,
WATCH A CHRISTMAS MOVIE, &
LEARN ABOUT THE NATIVITY ICON!



Saturday December 14th, 4:30pm - 7pm



*Wear your
favorite
Christmas pj's!*



YOUTH CORNER



Happy December Sunday school families,

As we enter the month of December there are many things happening for Sunday school. There are also fun Christmas events happening in the Madison area if families are interested in going. Please mark your calendars!

Sunday school events:

1. Starting the month of December, we will be collecting food items for the River Food Pantry. The last day to donate will be on **Sunday December 22nd**. You can leave your donated items in the bin when you enter from the church entrance.
2. **No Sunday school on December 1st** for Thanksgiving break classes resume on December 8th.
3. **Sunday December 8th and 15th** please have your children come to church at 10am and to meet in the church hall to practice rehearsing for the Christmas pageant. We will go back into church for Holy communion and have Sunday school afterwards.
4. **Saturday December 14th from 4:30-7 pm** will be our first Christmas sugar cookie decorating, please join us for some family fun! There will be food and yummy sweets with hot cocoa and a Christmas movie being played while kids are decorating Christmas sugar cookies. Children are encouraged to come dressed in their favorite Christmas pajamas for this event!
5. **Sunday December 15th** will be the Sunday school and Greek school Christmas pageant - children please come dressed in Christmas outfits! There will be a short Sunday class before the pageant.
6. There will be no school on **Sunday December 22nd** and **Sunday December 29th** for Christmas break. **Classes will resume on January 5th.**

Madison Christmas events:

1. **Friday November 29th** from 3-6 pm is the annual Christmas tree lighting at The Edgewater.
2. **Thursday December 5th** from 3-7 pm at the Chazen Museum of Art there will be a Sip and Shop Holiday Art Market.
3. The weekend of **December 6th - 8th** is the Christkindl Market at New Glarus
4. **Saturday December 7th** is a Free Christmas Carol concert at the Overture Center from 11am-12pm.
5. The weekend of **December 13th-15th** is the Seven Acres Dairy Company Christkindl Market.

We want to wish you all a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year. May the spirit of Christmas and the beginning of the new year bring you all more love, joy, and good health!

In Christ,
Susu Akkawi
Director of Sunday school

COMMUNITY NEWS

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

PHILOPTOCHOS MEETING: The Next meeting will be on Tuesday, December 17th at 6:30 p.m. via Zoom.

PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8TH: Parish Council elections will be held Sunday, December 8th following Divine Liturgy. Voting will be going on until 1:00 p.m. Please make sure to take a moment and vote today. God Bless!

SAINT NICHOLAS DINNER SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8TH: Our Parish Council will be hosting a luncheon Following Liturgy on Sunday, December 7th following Liturgy. There is no charge for the meal and we are leaving it to a Free Will Offering. I hope you all can join us.

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT: The Annual Sunday Church School & Greek School Christmas Pageant will be held on Sunday, December 15th, immediately following the Divine Liturgy. Students have been given their assignments and have been practicing. Please see our Sunday School and Greek School Staff more information.

RIVER FOOD PANTRY COLLECTION: Starting the month of December, we will be collecting food items for the River Food Pantry. The last day to donate will be on Sunday, December 22nd. You can leave your donated items by the front door of the church entrance. As a church community we can make a world of difference to those in need the most.

ALTAR BOY WORKSHOP SUNDAY, DECEMBER 22ND: We are hosting a workshop for our current Altar Boy & for anyone wanting to join the ranks. We will be going over proper procedure and order for services and processions. Anyone who would like to join the Altar boys is Welcome but must be at least 8 years old. Come join our blessed tradition of serving God.

CHRISTMAS CARD: Each year, our Church prepares a Christmas card that is mailed to our entire community. Your participation through our Church Christmas Card will not only convey your warmest and personal regards, but also frees you from mailing personal cards to many families. This is savings to you and a benefit for our parish. To include your name on this year's Christmas card please complete the flyer that has been emailed to you and included in the bulletin, or you can pick one up at the candle stand in the Church. Please return completed forms and payment to the church no later than December 9th.

2025 STEWARDSHIP COMMITMENT: Assumption Greek Orthodox Church depends on the love and gratitude of its members in order to perform its sacred ministry. Each member is asked to support the church by annually setting his or her own level of giving, in proportion to his or her earnings. This year, we ask you to search your heart and conscience, and to seriously consider the many needs of our Church, as you determine your Stewardship Pledge of Commitment for 2025.

Your giving should be a profound spiritual action, coming as an expression of your love and gratitude to God and his church, which blesses you and your family, and preserves and cultivates our Orthodox Christian Faith. To be meaningful, your Stewardship Commitment should not be simply a token offering from your surplus resources, but should be a true sacrifice, giving a feeling that "I gave something valuable in order to help my Church," a GOOD FEELING.

Our 2025 Parish Budget is counting on drawing \$188,000 from Stewardship. This represents about two-thirds of our anticipated expenses. The Parish Council figures our budget to be \$310,000 for next year. Please realize that every Stewardship Pledge of Commitment should represent conscientious support of our Church for ONE FULL YEAR! To meet our expenses, Assumption needs an average of about \$2,000 from each pledging member in 2025. So you can see how important your contribution is! Some stewards can give more than this; some will give less. We hope and pray, that every steward can give at least twenty dollars (\$20.00) a week more or One Thousand forty dollars (\$1040.00) over their pledge of last year.

How do you become a Steward? In prayer and good conscience, consider the best amount that you can commit in support of your Church. Good Stewardship is generous and sacrificial. Then complete and submit your Stewardship Pledge Card to the church office. Your thoughtfulness and generosity as always, is greatly appreciated..

2023 SAINT NICHOLAS LUNCHEON & PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS

**On Sunday December, 8th, 2024 following Divine Liturgy
our Parish council is hosting the Saint Nicholas Luncheon
They will be having a Spaghetti Lunch with Salad**

There is no set price only a free will offering

**We also will be holding our Parish Council Elections this
day.**

**So Set aside some time Sunday, December 8th and enjoy a
great dinner and fellowship with our Spiritual Family**





2024 Annual Community Christmas Card

**We are now accepting names to be submitted for the
2024 Community Christmas Card**

In order for our Christmas Card to be successful, we need your cooperation. Please approach your family and friends who may not be aware of this program, to see if they would like to be a part of our Family Christmas Card.

*****Deadline*****

Monday, December 9th, 2024

Please use this form and send it along with your donation
Free Will Offering but suggested donation is \$25. Please send to:

Assumption Greek Orthodox Church

11 N. Seventh Street

Madison, WI 53704

Please print your name below, clearly and EXACTLY as it should appear in the card.

Name: _____

**May the forthcoming Christmas Season bring to you and your family
the Lord's blessings of Joy and Good Health!**

Thank you for your support of our Assumption Church.

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 7th at Brittingham Beach at 701 W Brittingham Pl 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 12th,
2025 at 1:30 p.m.

Where: Brittingham Beach on
Lake Monona. 701 W. Brittingham
Pl. Madison, WI





FANARI CAMPING MINISTRY EVENTS 2024-2025

OCT 4-6, 2024

Fall Camp

NOV 22-24, 2024

High School Girls Retreat

DEC 30, 2024

Reunion Dance
at Ascension of Our Lord

JAN 17-20, 2025

Winter Camp

MAR 22, 2025

Lenten Retreat
Locations TBD

JUN 15-21, 2025

Summer Camp:
Session 1

JUN 21-28, 2025

Lighthouse

JUN 22-28, 2025

Summer Camp:
Session 2

JUN 29-JUL 5, 2025

Summer Camp:
Session 3

JUL 6-12, 2025

Summer Camp:
Session 4


JUL 13-19, 2025

Summer Camp:
Session 5



WWW.FANARI.CAMP

 @fanari.camp.official



Greek Orthodox
Metropolis of Chicago
St. Iakovos Retreat Center
Kansasville, Wisconsin



Community Christmas Celebration

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2024
4:00 PM - 7:00 PM

The Carlisle
435 E. Butterfield Road.
Lombard, IL 60148

APPETIZERS & REFRESHMENTS WILL BE
SERVED

HELP US PROVIDE WARMTH TO THOSE IN NEED BY DONATING
NEW HATS, SCARVES, GLOVES, OR GIFT CARDS TO PROVIDE
BEDDING FOR THE PHILOXENIA HOUSE LOCATED IN
ROCHESTER MINNESOTA

WWW.PHILOXENIACHARITIES.ORG/ABOUT.HTML

"Love each other with a warm love that comes from the heart."

1 Peter 1:22

2025 Parish outing to the Madison Capitol's Hockey Team

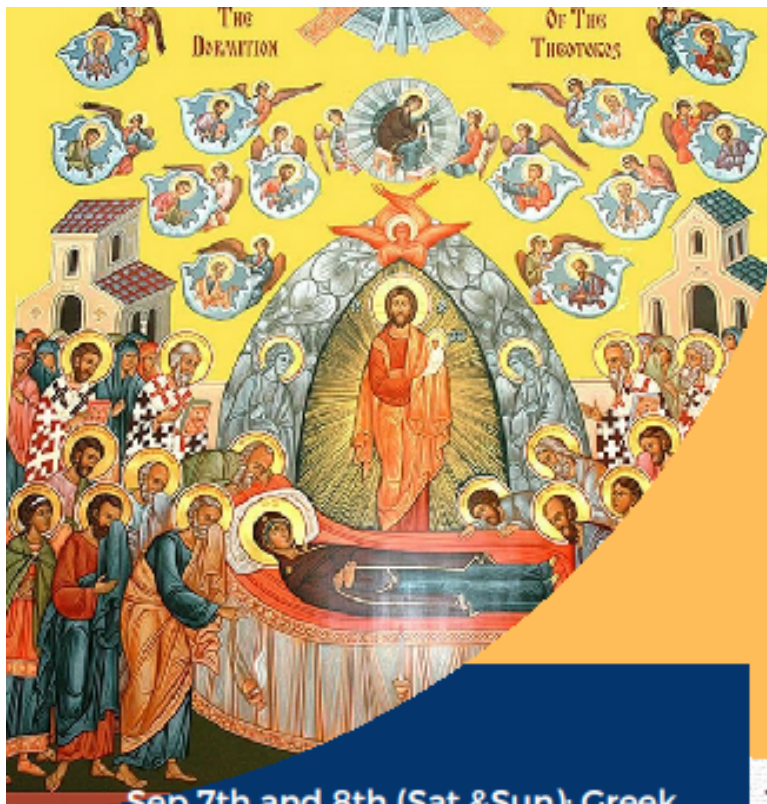


**On Saturday, February 22nd 2025 we will have a Parish
Outing to the Madison Capitol's Hockey Game vs the
Youngstown Phantoms**

**This year we have one of the Suites reserved for the
church. This means we will only have 30 tickets available.
The cost is still pending.**

RSVP with Fr. Christodoulos

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



SAVE THE DATES

Assumption

Sunday School 2024-2025 Events

Mark your calendars for the different Sunday school events for the new school year!

Sep 7th and 8th (Sat & Sun): Greek Fest +

Sep 15th (Sun) : First day of Sunday school

Oct 20th (Sun): Pumpkin patch and corn maze family outing

Nov 10th (Sun): Chili cook off fundraiser

Nov 15th (Fri): Kolyva Night

Dec 1st (Sun): No Classes Thanksgiving break

Dec 13th (Fri): Ginger bread night

Dec 15th (Sun): Christmas Pageant

Dec 22nd & Dec 29th: No Classes Christmas Break

Jan 12th (Sun): Ice Skating at Edgewater

Feb 2nd (Sun): God Parents Day Breakfast fundraiser

Feb 17th (Mon): Family bowling night

Mar 3rd (Mon): Lent Starts

Mar 30th (Sun): No Classes Spring Break

Apr 12th (Sat): Lazarus Retreat

Apr 13th (Sun): No Classes Palm Sunday

Apr 20th (Sun): No Classes Pascha

May 4th (Sun): Family picnic outing

May 18th (Sun): Last day of Sunday school

Jun 1st (Sun): Graduate Sunday Celebration

HOPE

Humanitarian Outreach & Philanthropic Engagement



**Greek Orthodox
Metropolis of Chicago**



Mission Statement

Through Humanitarian Outreach and Philanthropic Engagement (HOPE) our mission is to support children, families, and individuals by partnering with Metropolis of Chicago Parishes and local networks to help achieve food security and stable housing.

**1,600,000
MEALS**

Complete meal kits with shelf stable food items provided via boxes/bags

**3,000
NIGHTS**

Shelter provided through Northside Housing & Supportive Services

**12,500
KITS**

Winter accessories, hygiene and other basic care necessities

Beneficiaries

Children, families, and individuals within our parishes remain the primary targets, as well as members in need within our local communities. Anonymity is maintained for all beneficiaries and their private information will never be shared nor used for public consumption

Our Outreach

- 50+ Greek Orthodox Families
- Abused & Battered Women's Shelters
- Senior & Assisted Living Communities
- Homeless Teen Shelters
- Low Income Families
- Underserved Communities

Ways you can help



Meet with your HOPE Liaison in your church



Identify those in need within your parish and community



Hot meal, food and/or kit prep for distribution



Provide a space for prep and/or distribution



Enlist parish members to help collect & distribute

chicago.goarch.org/ministry/hope

projecthopeomc@outlook.com



Assumption Greek Orthodox Church 2025 Stewardship Pledge Form

As you plan for 2025, would you prayerfully consider what you can offer of your time, talent and treasure? Every gift, no matter the amount, is so very appreciated.

Name(s):

Address:

Primary Phone:

Email:

Treasure

The 2025 operating budget for our church is \$310,998.

In gratitude for God's blessings, we commit to Christ and his Church the following in 2025:

- \$1,500 (\$125/month)
- \$2,600 (\$217/month)
- \$3,900 (\$325/month)
- \$5,200 (\$433/month)
- Other _____

I/we will fulfill this in:

- [] weekly
- [] monthly
- [] quarterly
- [] annual payments.

I am interested in making a planned gift or including AGOC in my/our will or estate plan.

I/we have set up automatic stewardship payments with my bank account or credit card.

To set up automatic giving

Visit <https://tinyurl.com/Give2025>.

Or scan this QR Code with the camera on your phone.



Time & Talents

We invite you to let us know if you are able to serve the church through any of the following ways. Thank you! Please circle each ministry, or area within each ministry, which you or a family member would be interested in helping with.

- Offer administrative support to the church office
- Gardening and Landscape
- Maintenance and Repairs, Cleaning, Seasonal Decorations.
- Serve on the Parish Council
- Join the Women's Philoptochos or AHEPA
- Organize or serve in outreach to the community
- Help us with fundraising through special events, Baking, Greek Fest planning or join our Stewardship committee.
- Sacred Baking - Prosforo, Koliyva
- Join our Choir or serve as a Chanter
- Be a reader or assist with altar duties in Liturgy
- Serving as a greeter or usher
- Other _____

Thank you for your continued participation and support of our parish!