



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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THEOPHANY: A REVELATION OF GOD

The Feast of the Holy Theophany of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ, also called Epiphany, is celebrated each year on January 6th. Both names are correct, with "Epiphany" simply meaning "revelation, manifestation" and "Theophany" meaning "the revelation of God". Theophany commemorates the baptism of Christ and the divine revelation of the Holy Trinity. At Christ's baptism, all three Persons of the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—were made manifest. This feast day holds profound significance in the Orthodox Christian faith, marking a pivotal moment in God's plan for our salvation and celebrating Christ's first miracle at Cana.

Significance of Theophany

Theophany is one of the Great Feasts of the Orthodox Church. It reveals the Most Holy Trinity to the world through the Baptism of the Lord. Theophany is so named because, at the baptism of Christ, the Holy Trinity appeared clearly to mankind for the first time—the Father's voice is heard from Heaven, the Son of God is incarnate and standing physically in the Jordan, and the Holy Spirit descends on Him in the form of a dove.

Theophany is viewed as the spiritual illumination of mankind. The origin of the Feast of Theophany goes back to Apostolic times, and it is mentioned in The Apostolic Constitutions (Book V:13). From the second century, we have the testimony of Saint Clement of Alexandria concerning the celebration of the Baptism of the Lord and the night vigil before this Feast. There is a third-century dialogue about the services for Theophany between the holy martyr Hippolytus and Saint Gregory the Wonderworker. In the following centuries, from the fourth to the ninth century, all the great Fathers of the Church: Gregory the Theologian, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, John of Damascus, commented on the Feast of Theophany.

Theophany is not merely a commemoration; it is a celebration of Jesus Christ's baptism in the Jordan River. This event marks the manifestation of God as the Holy Trinity to the world, providing a profound revelation of Divine truth that resonates with believers. Theophany stands as a pivotal point where heaven meets earth. God is Light and has appeared to illumine "those who sat in darkness," and "in the region of the shadow of death" (Mt. 4:16), and to save the fallen race of mankind by grace.

Celebrating Theophany

The celebration of Theophany begins on January 5th, a day known as the Forefeast of Theophany. Depending on the day of the week, this could be an evening service with Vespers followed by the Liturgy of Saint Basil or a morning service with Matins and the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. Following the service on January 5th, the service of the Blessing of the Waters is conducted. Prior to the evening or morning service, the

Continued on next page

Royal Hours with the Typika are said. On January 6th, the day of the Feast, the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom is conducted, preceded by Matins.

Blessing of the Waters

The Blessing of the Waters is conducted twice, once following the service on January 5th and again following the Divine Liturgy on January 6th. While often conducted in the church, in many places throughout the world, services are conducted near open bodies of water. As a sign of blessing, as Christ blessed the Jordan, holy water is poured into the body of water. An associated tradition has been the tossing of a cross into the water to be retrieved by divers.

The holy water from the church is given to the faithful to consume and to use in blessing their homes. In the weeks following the Feast, clergy visit the homes of parishioners and conduct a service of blessing using the holy water that was blessed on the Feast of Theophany. Many Orthodox communities also practice the tradition of throwing a cross into a body of water for someone to retrieve. This act signifies Christ's baptism and serves as a public declaration of faith.

Traditions Associated with Theophany

The services of Theophany are arranged similarly to those of the Nativity. (Historically, the Christmas services were established later.) The Liturgy of the feast begins with psalms of glorification and praise instead of the three normal Antiphons. And the baptismal line from Galatians 3:27 replaces the Thrice-Holy.

For as many as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ: Alleluia.

The Gospel readings of all the services tell of the Lord's baptism by John in the Jordan River. The epistle reading of the Divine Liturgy tells of the consequences of the Lord's appearing, which is the divine epiphany. Since the main feature of the feast is the blessing of water.

The Royal Hours are read, and the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great is served with Vespers on the eve of the feast. The Vigil is made up of Great Compline and Matins. On the morning of the feast, the Divine Liturgy is served.

Spiritual Meaning of Theophany

Theophany is a time for reflection and renewal. It is an opportunity to look back on the past and forward to the future with a renewed sense of purpose and direction. Theophany calls us to consciously refocus ourselves on our relationship with God and our commitment to following Christ.

Christ's baptism publicly proclaims his identity as the Messiah, with the Holy Spirit descending upon him and the declaration from Heaven that this is God's beloved Son. It symbolizes the mystery of the Incarnation. Jesus is God, but because he is also fully human, he too needs baptism. He participates in this covenant with us and receives the Father's forgiveness.

Theophany marks the beginning of Christ's public ministry. Christ's baptism in the Jordan was a manifestation of God to the world, because it was the beginning of our Lord's public ministry. The theme of "manifestation" or "revelation" is also expressed in Scripture with the symbolism of light. In the hymn of the Feast, we sing, "Christ has appeared and enlightened the world."

Theophany is a "founding event" that establishes the continuing relationship between God and his people. Through baptism, we "put on Christ" and participate in his death and resurrection. This signifies a new beginning, a spiritual renewal, and a call to live in the light of Christ's teachings.

Sermons and Hymns

Sermons given on the feast day of Theophany often focus on the revelation of the Holy Trinity and the significance of Christ's baptism. One sermon, for example, emphasizes that everything Christ did in his earthly life was salvific and revealed divine truth. It highlights the importance of Christ entering the Jordan River, a plain and ordinary river that became a place of repentance and forgiveness through the baptism of John the Baptist.

Hymns - Hymns and chants sung on the feast day of Theophany celebrate the revelation of God and the coming of Christ. They often include themes of light, renewal, and the Holy Trinity. Here are two important hymns sung during Theophany:

Apolytikion (First Tone)

Lord, when You were baptized in the Jordan, the veneration of the Trinity was revealed. For the voice of the Father gave witness to You, calling You Beloved, and the Spirit, in the guise of a dove, confirmed the certainty of His words. Glory to You, Christ our God, who appeared and enlightened the world.

Kontakion (Fourth Tone)

You appeared to the world today, and Your light, O Lord, has left its mark upon us. With fuller understanding we sing to You: "You came, You were made manifest, the unapproachable light."

Icons

Icons associated with the feast day of Theophany typically depict the baptism of Christ in the Jordan River. These icons often include symbols of the Holy Trinity, such as the dove representing the Holy Spirit and a ray of light representing the Father's voice. They may also include other symbolic elements, such as angels, water spirits, and trees, which represent different aspects of the event and its spiritual significance.

For example, "water spirits" are often depicted in Theophany icons to represent the river Jordan (man pouring water from an amphora) and the sea (woman on a sea creature chariot). These figures depict the scripture, "The sea saw and fled, the Jordan turned back" (Ps 114:3). John the Baptist is shown in his characteristic blue camel haircloth garment, which has been slightly stylized as chainmail to remind us of the cloth of warriors. In the left lower corner, an iconographic tree with an ax reflects John's teaching and foreshadows his own martyrdom at the hand of Herod. "Even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire." (Mt. 3:10) It is an athlete's and warrior's reminder not to become spiritually lazy.

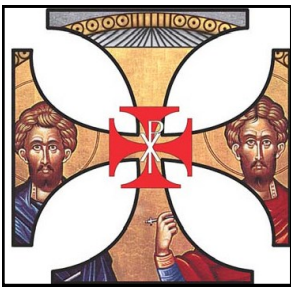
The mountains in Theophany icons represent the two heavenly and the earthly worlds, which Christ spans the divide between. The ax stuck in the small tree below John the Baptist symbolizes his words in Luke's and Matthew's Gospels: "Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree, therefore, that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Lk 3:9). This prophecy of John's is an eschatological prophecy, meaning that it looks towards the end of the world.

In Conclusion the Feast of Theophany is a profound celebration of God's revelation to the world. It is a time for reflection, renewal, and participation in the divine life. Through the waters of baptism, we are united with Christ, cleansed from sin, and empowered by the Holy Spirit to live as children of God. Theophany calls us to remember our own baptism and to live each day in the light of Christ's teachings, striving to bear good fruit and to be a light to the world. As we celebrate this feast, let us give thanks for the gift of salvation and the hope of eternal life that is offered to us through Christ.

This year, as I prepare to celebrate Theophany, I am reminded of the time I witnessed the Blessing of the Waters at a local lake. The sight of the priest processing towards the water, the cross being cast into the depths, and the faithful plunging into the icy water to retrieve it was a powerful reminder of the transformative power of baptism and our connection to Christ. It was a moment of profound spiritual renewal and a reminder of the joy and hope that Theophany brings.

+Very Rev. Archimandrite Christodoulos Margellos





FOCUS ON PHILOPTOCHOS HELP US TO HELP OTHERS

Agape Forward, January, 2025

2024 brought great and small wonders, joys, and sorrows to all of our lives, on both personal and communal levels. For many of us, our personal happiness was shadowed by the sadness of our wider community. In reflecting on the multitude of lessons this past year afforded us, I found the Philoptochos Prayer as a grounding force. I pray the words of this prayer resonate with all of you:

O Lord, Jesus Christ, we bow our heads before You, and with humble hearts we give thanks to You for the abundant blessings, which You have poured forth upon us. We praise You for gathering us together as members of the Ladies Philoptochos Society in the service to Your Holy Church. We bless You for the selfless sacrifice of countless generations of women who have faithfully fulfilled the philanthropic mission entrusted to them. Through Your ineffable wisdom and Your Divine power, You have enabled us to minister to those who are in need of Your Love, Your comfort, and Your care.

Make us instruments of Your peace and of Your hope, O Lord. Where there is pain and suffering, may we bring Your healing and comfort. Where there is loneliness and isolation, may we bring the fellowship of Your Holy Church. Where there is despair and discouragement, may we inspire hope and faith in You. Where there is hatred and strife, may we be peacemakers producing the fruits of love and reconciliation.

We also ask You, O Lord, to guide our deliberations, our decisions, our fellowship, and all our labors, so that in all we do, or say, we may bring glory to Your Holy Name, of the Father and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

Moving forward our Philoptochos will be hosting our annual Vasilopita Luncheon on Sunday, January 12. Please link here: [Vasilopita Luncheon RSVP](#) to let us know how many meals to prepare for.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 19, after church. We will have a ZOOM link available for this meeting as well.

As always, feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns at philomadison@gmail.com

Best,

Maria

**His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago
and the Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos**

Cordially invite you to
the 64th Annual



Vasilopita Celebration

To Benefit St. Basil's Academy &
Youth and Young Adult Ministries

JANUARY

12

Start 6 PM

Hosted by St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church
10301 S. Kolmar Ave, Oak Lawn, IL, 60453

Rsvp by January 6

Parish Reservations can be made
by calling or emailing:

708-636-5460

saintnicholasoffice@gmail.com

YOUTH CORNER

January

Happy New Year Sunday School families,

We hope you all had a wonderful winter break and a blessed start to the new year. May this new year bring you all more joy, peace, and good health.

Events happening in January:

1. Sunday school classes resume **Sunday January 5th**
2. **Sunday January 12th** After Liturgy at 1:30 pm the parish will go to Lake Monona for the blessing of the water.
3. **Sunday January 12th** in the evening at 5 pm there will be a family outing to go ice skating at The Edgewater Hotel.
4. **Sunday January 12th** children will be making Godparent day invitations to give to their Godparents. Parents please help your kids reach out to their Godparents, so they can send them the invitation for an event happening in February!

Below are pictures from the events we had during 2024, we can't wait for all the exciting events that will happen in the new year! We encourage all parents to continually bring their kids to church and all the fun activities that we have, so they continue learning about the faith and build friendships that last a lifetime.



COMMUNITY NEWS

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: Will be held on Tuesday, January 21st at 7:00 p.m.

PHILOTOCHOS MEETING: The Next meeting will be on Sunday, January 19th following Liturgy in the conference room.

ADULT RELIGIOUS EDUCATION CLASS: We will begin A.R.E. classes January 22nd. We will be continuing the Gospel of John. Classes are on Wednesday's at 11:00 a.m. Everyone is welcome to join us.

WOMEN'S SPIRITUAL MEETING: Women's spiritual zoom meetings will be on Thursday, January 18th 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.

BLESSING OF THE WATERS OF LAKE MONONA, SUNDAY, JANUARY 12H AT 1:30 P.M.: 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 12th 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.

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 22nd. This year we have gotten one of the suites for the game and cost will \$20 per person. It is also Team USA Bobblehead night. This will be a great game to attend with the whole family. Come cheer on our Madison Capitals to defeat the Youngstown Phantoms on February 22nd at 7:05 p.m. at the Bob Suter's Capital Aren

STEWARDSHIP 2025 APPEAL: At our Stewardship meeting, we have discussed the changes at Assumption. The church is in constant transition, and our aim is to anticipate the time, talent, and treasure needs of our community. We need to combine the Strengths of our heritage, our Orthodox Tradition, and our faith in God to encourage what we do now & toward the future. The Church needs the involvement of you and me, & with the Help of God, to shape our programs to meet the needs of our community & to reach out to others, outside of our community. Please volunteer this year your time and talents, for the good of the church. Nearly every committee has need of the talents and time of leaders & contributors.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR: On Sunday, January 12th, 2025, 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." Following dismissal from the day's worship services, the Philoptochos invites everyone to attend a luncheon in the Social Hall. Donation is \$15 for adults & \$10 for children. Please Click on the [LINK](#) to RSVP. All proceeds raised this day go to benefit Saint Basil's Academy.

PLEASE REMEMBER THE CHURCH IN YOUR WILL OR ESTATE PLANNING: As we begin this new year, please consider making a Planned Gift to the Church. A Planned Gift is an opportunity to leave a legacy that strengthens the Church and supports its vital ministries and will leave an impact that will be felt for years to come. It may also give you substantial current tax benefits as well as estate tax benefits. If you are interested in finding out more about the many ways that the Church can be included in your will or estate planning, please contact a Parish Council Member.

NEW CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT DRIVE: As a community we have always tried and succeeded in taking care of and upgrading our Sanctuary and facilities. We the spirit of continuously improving our church. We are beginning a long term Capital Improvement Fund Drive. We are looking at 3 particular future projects. These are the Broken Sewer pipe in our back parking lot, Replacing and upgrading our current church sound system and remodeling our kitchen. The months ahead we will be formally setting up a Capital Improvement Fund Drive Committee who will spearhead the entire process. We ask everyone to consider this in future giving, funeral memorials and in planned giving. If you are interested in giving a donation for the Capital Fund please put "Capital Improvement Fund Drive" on the memo line of the check or mark it on the envelope. Together we can get these projects finished.

Assumption Ice Skating Night

When: Sunday January 12th

Where: The Edgewater Hotel

Time: 5:00 - 7:00pm

Tickets to ice skate are sold for \$7
Rent ice skates for \$3, or bring your own!
There is food and drinks for purchase.



happy God Parent

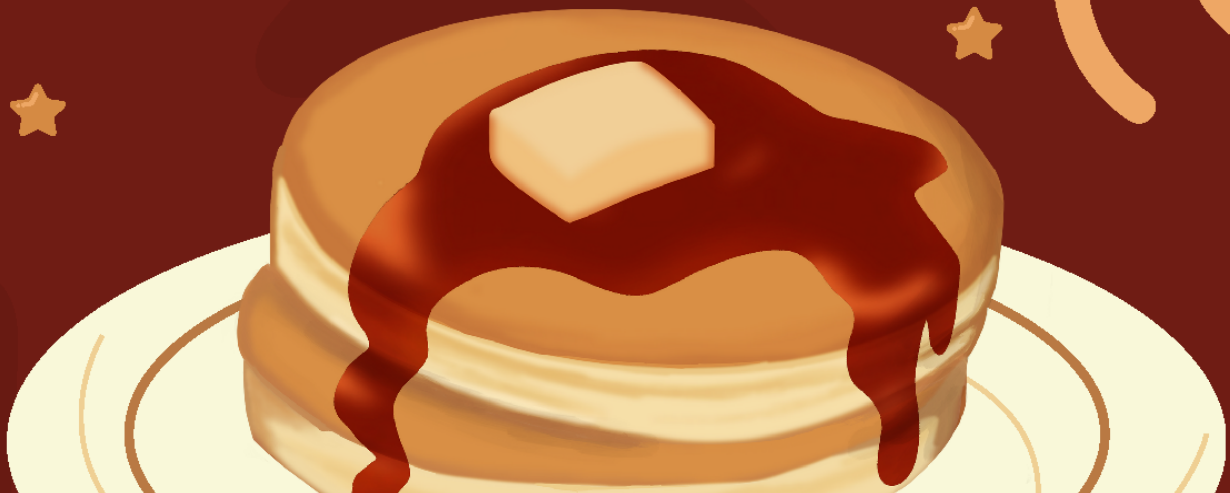
day

February 2nd, 2025

Come join us for pancakes to celebrate God Parent day
with your God children!

Sunday school students will sit by their God parent/s during
liturgy and take Holy Communion together. Then during
coffee hour there will be a breakfast celebration with
delicious pancakes!

There will be a basket for free will offering.
Donations will go towards Sunday school.



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 12th 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



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 @fanari.camp.official

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

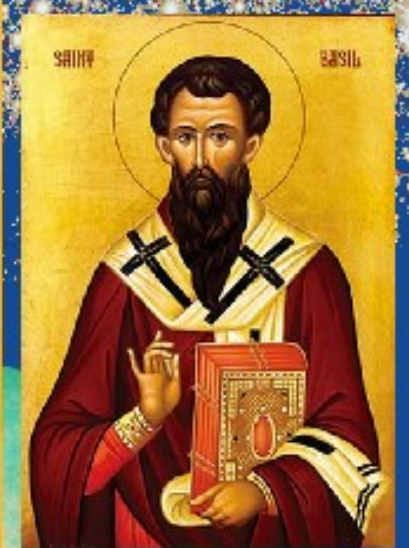
καλή χρονιά

Happy New Year

Join us for
our annual

Vasilopita Luncheon and raffle

Net proceeds go to Philoptochos beneficiaries:
St. Basil's Academy, Orthodox Christian
Fellowship, Hellenic College/Holy Cross,
International Orthodox Christian
Charities (IOCC)



Adults - \$15
Children - \$10

After liturgy

Sun. Jan. 12, 2025

Please RSVP by Jan. 6, 2025 so we can have
a headcount. Payment will be collected day
of luncheon. Follow [THIS LINK](#), or scan the
QR code with you phone camera.



Eastern Orthodox Ethnic Baskets 2025

Win 1 of 2 Large RAFFLE Baskets! EACH has items from this Exciting List!

Tickets: \$7.00 for 1, \$20.00 for 3 – Available at the door

USA

Giannis Antetokounmpo Black Jersey

Ancient Faith Note Cards

Book No Meat? No Problem, meatless Mediterranean dishes, Cookbook compiled by the St. Athanasios Philoptochos, of Aurora IL.

Greece

Tassos Organic Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Tassos Extra Virgin Olive Oil

Organic Greek Oregano from Mt Olympus

Korres Olive Oil & Sea Salt Shower Gel

Korres Greek Yoghurt Foaming Cleanser

Gift certificate Freska Mediterranean Grill

Gift certificate Parthenon Gyros restaurant

Lebanon

Maamoul Date Stuffed Butter Cookies

Ethiopia

Yirgacheffe Ethiopian Coffee

Russia

C.D. "Galina Ustvolskaya Chamber Music" - reclusive composer, St Petersburg native, pupil of Shostakovich, recognized as a pioneer of 20th century neo-classical music.

Egypt

Chocolate Covered Medjoul Stuffed Butter Cookies

Pure Date Molasses "Honey" Syrup

Fine Egyptian Chamomile Tea

Book Woman At Point Zero by Dr. Nawal El Saadawi; physician, activist, feminist writer whose writings focused on the Arab society's systematic brutalization of women.

Ukraine

Gift certificate Touch of Ukraine Bar & Grill

Cyprus

Book The Fury by Alex Michaelides, British-Cypriot bestselling author & screenwriter.

Romania

Traditional Romanian Pattern Canvas Tote Bag

2025 Parish outing to the Madison Capitol's Hockey Team

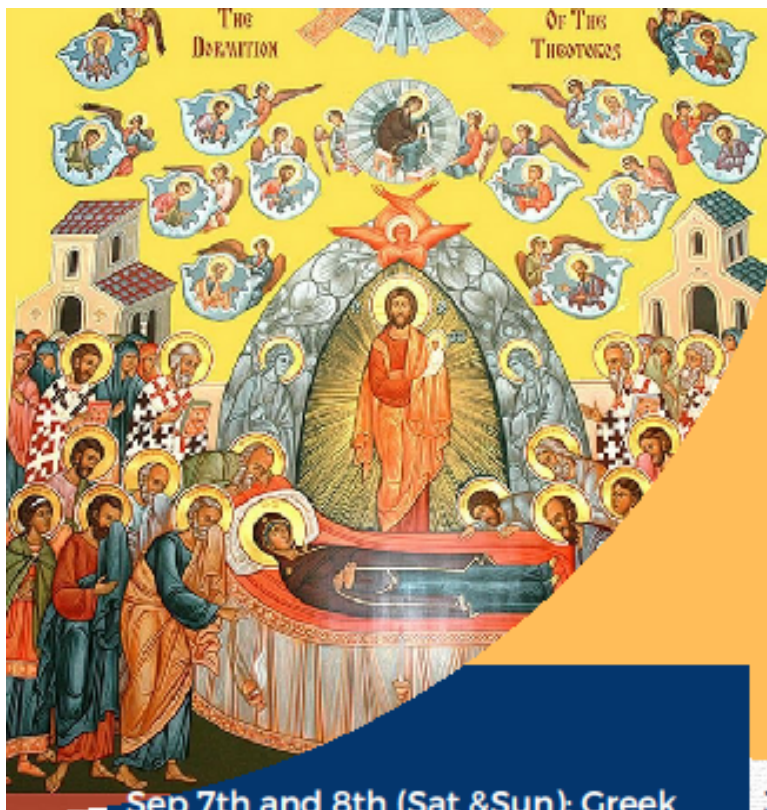


**On Saturday, February 22nd 2025 we will have a Parish
Outing to the Madison Capitol's Hockey Game vs the
Youngstown Phantoms**

**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

January 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
			Fast Free Day Happy New Year		Fast Free Day Royal Hours of Theophany	Russian Mission
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Sunday before Theophany Strict Fast Day 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy with Great Blessing of the Waters Sunday School/Creek School	Epiphany of our Lord 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Great Blessing of the Waters & Divine Liturgy		Strict Fast Day 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice		Strict Fast Day	Ethiopian Mission
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Sunday after Epiphany 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy/ Parish Vasilopita cutting and Vasilopita Luncheon Sunday School/Creek School 1:30 p.m. Blessing of Lake Monona 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. Assumption Ice Skating Night at Edgewater Hotel			Strict Fast Day 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice	Office Closed Fr. Christodoulos out of the Office	Strict Fast Day Saint Anthony the Great 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy	Russian Mission
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
12th Sunday of Luke 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy/ 5 Year Memorial Service For +Fr. Michael Vanderhoef of Blessed Memory Sunday School/Creek School Philoptochos Meeting		7:00 p.m. Parish Council Meeting	Strict Fast Day 11:00 a.m. Adult Religious Education Class 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice		Fast Free Day	Saint Gregory the Theologian, Archbish- op of Constantinople 8:00 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy Ethiopian Mission
26	27	28	29	30	31	
15th Sunday of Luke 8:30 a.m. Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy Sunday School/Creek School			Strict Fast Day 11:00 a.m. Adult Religious Education Class 7:00 p.m. Choir Practice	Synaxis of The Three Hierarchs: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, & John Chrysostom 8:30 a.m. Orthros followed by Divine Liturgy 7:00 p.m. Women's Spiritual Meeting		