



Coming Together In Our Hearts and Homes, We Form An Icon Of God's Kingdom



from Fr. Nicholas

The Light of Theophany

A doubting young boy embarks on an incredible train journey to the North Pole in the Polar Express Christmas movie, where he discovers more about himself and his beliefs.

"Seeing is believing but sometimes the most real things in the world are the things we cannot see" the train conductor shares.

This month we celebrate Theophany or the appearing and manifesting of God, the Holy Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

"Come, O Faithful, having enjoyed the Master's hospitality, the Banquet of Immortality in the lowly manger, let us run to the Jordan, there to see a strange mystery, revealing the Light from on high." (Prefeast of Theophany).

We cannot see God, even though He was revealed on that day. The blind man we read about in the Gospels had the same problem and immediately asked for God's healing help. He fervently cried out in utter desperation: *"Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of David, have mercy on me"*.

The man refused to give up and continued to cry out in repentance. **Healing results from his repentance. Without repentance spiritual vision is impossible.** Despite his physical blindness, St. Porphyrios

(continued, pg. 3)

Parish Vasilopita Celebration - January 12

Holy Apostles will have the cutting of the Vasilopita on Sunday, January 12, 2025. Philoptochos welcomes you to join their hosted coffee hour with Vasilopita after the Divine Liturgy in the multipurpose room.

Special thank you to Wanita & Paul Loupakos for hosting the Philoptochos sponsored Vasilopita Celebration and to Eleni Poteres for baking the Vasilopita for the blessing in the nave.

Philoptochos sends its best wishes to the Holy Apostles Community for a blessed new year.

In the fourth century, Saint Basil the Great established various philanthropic institutions, and distributed money to the poor in a discreet manner by placing gold coins in the sweetened bread. The recipients cutting the bread were surprised to find the gold coin, which



provided them with material sustenance. These special loaves became known as the bread of St. Basil or Vasilopita.

VASILOPITA RECIPE

- 1 cup butter
- 2 ½ cups sugar
- 7 eggs, separated
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 3 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 3 cups flour
- 3 teaspoons baking powder

DIRECTIONS:

Cream butter and sugar for 10 minutes, add egg yolks and flavorings. Add remaining ingredients, except egg whites. Beat egg whites until stiff in a separate bowl. Fold in stiffly beaten egg

whites. Blend well. Grease baking pan (round 14" pan). Pour in batter and tuck coin (thinly wrapped in aluminum foil) into batter, then hand lay whole blanched almonds around perimeter of surface. (You can also spell out the current year in the middle of cake). Bake at 350 degrees for 45 minutes.

Note: For a smaller cake, prepare half of recipe, and bake in a 10" round greased baking pan for about 30 minutes.

Breakfast with Santa

Thank you to co-chairs Tina & Nia Dillon, all the wonderful chefs and volunteers for making the Christmas Breakfast on December 15th such a wonderful and memorable event for all families! And a special thank you to Santa for taking time out of his busy schedule to come visit us!!



◀ Tina & Nia Dillon



▲ Chefs (l to r) – Zach Chiganos, Steph Chiganos, TJ Chiganos, Nick Chiganos & Tom Shubalis



The Light of Theophany *(continued)*

possessed great spiritual sight and deep perception. He was referred to as a spiritual television because of his extraordinary spiritual vision.

"Only a person who is repentant, who has humility, receives gifts from God; he attributes them to God and uses them for His glory," Porphyrios said.

As we begin a new year, some of us are spiritually blind and cannot see God because we are looking at ourselves. The Pharisees did the same as they congratulated themselves for following God's rules and regulations.

Despite being teachers of the Mosaic Law, they did not live by the principles they taught. **People solely focused on themselves cannot see God. By following the Beatitudes, we can overcome this:**

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8). Becoming pure in heart helps us see God. The heart is our entire being, essence and inner character.

The pure in heart go beyond moral purity and stand before God with honesty and no pretense. *"Our greatest protection is self-knowledge and the avoidance of the delusion that we are*

seeing ourselves when we are really looking at something else," St. Gregory of Nyssa shared.

We take off the mask that conceals our true identity and honestly recognize our strengths and limitations, allowing Christ's light to enter every aspect of our lives.

Orthodox Christians are blessed with so many spiritual disciplines that are designed to focus and reorient us toward God and take us away from sin.

When we pray, fast, confess, receive Holy Communion, and meditate on the Holy Scriptures, we are changing our hearts and opening them to the presence of the living God! The pure in heart shall see God as they truly experience Christ's presence in their lives.

"Let streams of tears exhaust our eyes, let us cleanse the filth of our souls, O believers. We shall see Christ, the light from the Three-fold Light, coming to be baptized. The Father will bear witness from heaven, and the Holy Spirit will come in the form of a shining dove." (Prefeast of Theophany).

+Fr. Nicholas

PLEASE JOIN THE PHILOPTOCHOS AS THEY HOST THE

Godparents' Luncheon

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 2
Following Liturgy

RSVP TO:
HTTP://WWW.TINYURL.COM/HAPHILO2501
312-501-1533 OR MARIANNA.BANNOS@GMAIL.COM
BY JANUARY 26

CATERED BY GREEK ISLANDS
PHOTOBOOTH FUN

\$10 FOR AGES 4 AND OLDER
FREE FOR AGES 3 AND YOUNGER

Philoptochos General Meeting

Tuesday, February 18th
Details coming in weekly emails & bulletins.



◀ scan to join

It's NEVER too late to join Philoptochos! We welcome new and returning members. For more information or to request a volunteer form, please contact Membership Chair Kathy Obmascik at iwrite4u@comcast.net. Membership fees can be paid online at www.tinyurl.com/haphiloptochos.



METROPOLITAN FAMILY SERVICES HOLIDAY SHOPPE

We collected and donated a little over \$4,000, which was used to purchase gift cards, winter gear and toys and delivered to Metropolitan Family Services for families to "shop" – free of charge – for Christmas presents. THANK YOU to all who donated, volunteered, and shopped for this wonderful cause!



PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NOVEMBER 2024 PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

PC SECRETARY: VAL DRANIAS

Norm Pomrening called the meeting to order at 7:38 pm. Father Dokos led the opening prayer. Norm Pomrening recited the mission statement. Val Dranias moved to approve the October 17, 2024 PC Minutes; Sandy Pihos seconded the motion. Unanimously approved.

Correspondence: Val Dranias – we received thank you’s from Nick Paloumpis for our donation to the Choir Federation and from Fr. Panagiotis Boznos for our hosting the Metropolis Vision Dinner; YAL sent out info on their 2025 Young Adult League Conference and a request for sponsorship – Nick Kirkeles moved that we make a \$1000 donation to the YAL Conference, Lena Theotikos seconded. Unanimously approved. We also received several letters from the Metropolis: 1. There will be a Special Metropolis Assembly by zoom on Wed. 2/6/25. We will need to have 4 representatives: Parish Priest, President of the Parish Council and 2 members of the Parish elected by the Parish Assembly 2. Informing of us that our 2025 contribution to benefits funding will be \$22,235. 3. Informing us of our Commitment Allocation in 2025 of \$119,909. Also that we have a \$5,399 cushion amount still owed to the Metropolis. The cushion amount is being questioned and investigated.

Ecclesiastical Report: Father Dokos presented a video by Abbot Tryphon from a monastery in Washington state about Fasting. Fasting is about making way for the Lord, Don’t just hunt for foods that substitute. The better way is to limit the amount of food plus use simple food. Discussion followed. Fasting has been part of our faith for thousands of years.

Ministries

Finance: Steve Milak reported that as of Oct. 31, 2024: Capital Accounts total is \$539,980; Operating Accounts total is \$661,510; total is \$1,201, 491.

Stewardship & Welcoming:

- Plans for Stewardship Sunday: Norm Pomrening stated that as usual the PC members are asked to bring their 2025 pledge up front as will the clergy and any stewards who wish to do so.
- Parish Council Stewardship Commitment: Steve Milak suggested a 2% pledge increase by each PC member as an example to the parish. Discussion followed – lack of consensus.
- 2024 Results: Sandy Pihos

Metric	Oct 2023 YTD	Oct 2024 YTD	% Change
Number of Pledges	650	690	6%
Total Pledged	\$774,879	\$860,267	11%
Amount Collected	\$709,320	\$800,396	13%
Median Pledge	\$600	\$600	0%
Average Pledge	\$1,192	\$1,247	5%

Sandy also reported on the social plans for 2025.

Building & Grounds: Chris Pepke

- Tracing Electrical Circuits – we have no idea what connects to what. It will cost \$15,000 to have the panel schedules done.
- Hail Guards for HVAC Units - \$4300 + \$1500 for labor
- Wolf Road Sidewalk Replacement Update concrete work for the sidewalk is being bid.
- South ADA Pad Replacement Update is also being bid,
- Monument Sign Update, Mechanical Enclosure Update; Office Remodel Update – all 3 will be designed by one architect.
- MPR A/V Project Update – will be \$120,000 with some extras
- Choir Carpet Install in early January

Technology: Steve Milak stated that there was an issue with livestream. Camera has been fixed.

Ushering: Ushering for Communion - Sandy Pihos suggested that an announcement that the kids go first. Especially needed for visitors.

Missions: Peter Bell – Feed6: if it's a 100,000 meal event, we are \$3,000 away from reaching goal. If it's a 200,000 meal event, we need \$40,000 more. Need volunteers for the event.

Greek School: Lena Theotikos – Meeting with SS took place with discussion over furnishings. 2 55" tvs were installed. Modular desks for rm. 108 were decided upon. Cost is \$4100. PC has voted to cover \$1000. The Apokreatiko Glendi is going forward.

Old Business:

Foundation: Patty Pappas reported that we had 14 applicants for Foundation directors. The Selection Committee did 13 interviews and 6 selections were made. Committee met with Fr. George and will meet with Fr. Nicholas next week. The committee will notify the candidates next week and then will notify the public. Heartfelt thanks to the Selection Committee.

Cemetery Plots: Patty Pappas reported that there was some movement on the plots exchange agreement this week. Patty Pappas moved to sign the two proposed contracts between Chapel Hill and Holy Apostles Church, in order to memorialize the exchange of plots. The contracts will include an amendment to indicate zero balance. The contracts will also include historical inventories of plots previously owned by HA but now sold, as well as plots currently owned by HA. The plots to be exchanged will be according to the attached list. Sandy Pihos seconded. Unanimously approved.

Anniversary Luncheon: Sandy Pihos at present we have 206 attendees.

Youth Worker Registration: Patty Pappas reported that the following must complete the Youth Worker Registration. They are candidates for the PC, Greek School teachers, SS teachers. PC candidates 5 out of 16 non-compliant; Greek school 2 non-compliant, SS teachers 10 out of 34 non-compliant. Also need to get the youth organization leaders, athletic coaches, etc. compliant.

Training for New Parish Council Members: Sandy Pihos will work with PC members to create an outline for training.

Candidates for Parish Council Election: Norm Pomrening reported that we have 15 candidates. Bio and Pic due by 11/28; Youth Worker Registration due by 11/28; Attend seminar with Fr. George on 12/5.

Directory Update: Norm Pomrening reported that companies are not doing Church Directories. Still looking for alternatives.

Office Reorganization: Jim Maragos reported that 2 different job descriptions have been completed – one for Lou and one for the part-time position. Father George would like the language to include that both positions are Orthodox Christians. Emilia Linardakis is concerned about the pool of candidates being limited. A motion was made to accept them as corrected. Passed with 1 Nay.

New Business:

Special Metropolis Assembly – 2/6

Special Holy Apostles Parish Assembly - 1/19

Next Meeting: 12/19

Key Dates:

Stewardship Sunday -11/24

Elections -12/8

Anniversary Luncheon – 12/29

Feed6 – 1/11

HA Special Parish Assembly – 1/19

Metropolis Special Assembly – 2/6

Closing Prayer: Father Dokos

Norm Pomrening adjourned the meeting at 10:17 pm

Philoptochos Christmas Party



On December 10th, over 70 ladies of Philoptochos enjoyed a wonderful, festive evening filled with music, food, dancing and friendship at The Butterfield Country Club!

Thank you again, to our wonderful hostesses for such a wonderful evening.

◀ Hostesses for the Philoptochos Christmas Party above from left were: Tina Kourafas, Litsa Lekatsos, Helen Kasimos, Patty Pappas and Georgia Kass (not pictured Elaine Papanton, Karen Anagnos & Effie Stojka)



Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church

JANUARY 2025

				<p>1 Feast Day of St Basil Office Closed 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Litrgy</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3</p> <p>9:00 am Great Hours of Theophany</p>	<p>4</p> <p>5:00 pm Vespers 6:00 pm Vespers Potluck Dinner</p>
<p>5</p> <p>8:15 am Orthros 9:30 am Divine Liturgy 11:30 am Fellowship Hour 5:00 pm Great Vespers of Theophany</p>	<p>6 Theophany 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>7 Feast Day: St John the Baptist Greek School Vasilopita Cutting 6:45 am Brtherhd: St Peter Apostle 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 4:30 pm Greek School 6:15 pm JOY 7:00 pm 65th Annvrsvy Wrapup Mtg 7:00 pm Philoptochos Board Meeting 7:15 pm ECM Webinar</p>	<p>8</p> <p>10:00 am TOTS 3:30 pm ECM Church Meeting</p>	<p>9</p> <p>1:00 pm Bible Study 4:30 pm Greek School 6:15 pm Neolea Dance Troupe</p>	<p>10</p>	<p>11</p> <p>9:00 am Feed 6 5:00 pm Vespers</p>	
<p>12 Vasilopita Celebration 8:15 am Orthros 9:30 am Divne Litrgy 11:30 am Fellowship Hour 11:45 am GOYA Brd</p>	<p>13</p>	<p>14</p> <p>1:00 pm Caregivers Support Meeting 4:30 pm Greek School 7:00 pm GOYA</p>	<p>15</p> <p>1:00 pm Bereavement Group 7:00 pm Jr. GOYA</p>	<p>16</p> <p>1:00 pm Bible Study 4:30 pm Greek School 7:30 pm Parish Council Meeting</p>	<p>17 Feast Day of St Anthony 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 10:30 am Small Paraklesis</p>	<p>18 Feast Day of St Athanasios 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Litrgy 10:30 am Choir Federation Board Mtg 5:00 pm Vespers</p>	
<p>19</p> <p>8:15 am Orthros 9:30 am Divine Liturgy 11:30 am Fellowship Hour</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21</p> <p>6:45 am Brotherhood of St Peter the Apostle 4:30 pm Greek School 6:15 pm JOY 7:15 pm ECM Cohort Meeting</p>	<p>22 Feast Day of St Timothy the Apostle 10:00 am TOTS 6:00 pm Evening Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>23</p> <p>1:00 pm Bible Study 4:30 pm Greek Schl 6:15 pm Neolea Dnce 7:15 pm Discoveries: Orthodox Spirituality Bldg on Our Baptism</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25 Feast Day of St Gregory the Theologian 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Litrgy 5:00 pm Vespers 7:00 pm Trivia Night</p>	
<p>26</p> <p>8:15 am Orthros 9:30 am Divine Liturgy 11:30 am Fellowship Hour 6:30 pm Sanctity</p>	<p>27</p>	<p>28</p> <p>4:30 pm Greek School 7:00 pm GOYA</p>	<p>29</p> <p>7:00 pm Stewardship Ministry</p>	<p>30 Feast Day of Three Hierarchs 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 1:00 pm Bible Study 4:30 pm Greek Schl 6:15 pm Greek School Staff Meeting 7:15 pm Discoveries in Orthodoxy: Orthodox Spirituality/Building on Our Baptism</p>	<p>31</p>		

HOLY APOSTLES GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
2501 S. Wolf Road
Westchester, IL 60154
(708) 562-2744

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MEMORIALS

DECEMBER

Helen Alex
Jody Alexander
Thomas Angelos
Anastasia Georgiou
Elaine Kalivas
Marika Karamatskos
Stelianos (Stanley) Korbellas
Nikolaos Labros
Konstandinos Mirmingos
Asimina Syregelas
George Syregelas
Francis Scott Willsey

JANUARY

Michael Christofidis
Gregory Tolios

FUNERALS

Known at time of publication:

Nicholas Christopher
Francis Scott Willsey
Mary Chiampas
Mary Ann Bissias
Nikolaos Kotsakos

WEDDINGS

Joseph Mendes & Sofia Colantuono
Sponsor: Desi & Michael Bakalis

George Vlahos & Madison Sturm
Sponsor: Steven Galanis



◀ Watch: Tarpon Springs, FL Epiphany
Cross Dive, 2023.

<https://youtu.be/pw4ePYSED3Q>