

# HOLY CROSS

## CROSSROADS

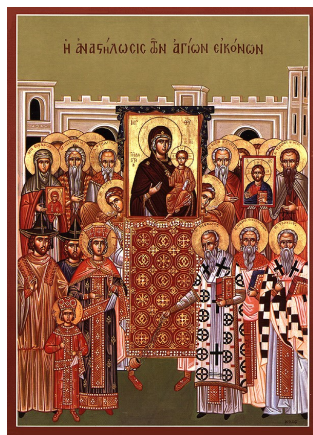
Beloved Members and Friends of Holy Cross,

**Christ is in our midst! He is and shall always be!**

LENT HAS COME! Let us greet this period of sacrifice and personal struggle with joy! So many blessings we have experienced this past month - ordination of our beloved Deacon to the holy priesthood, house blessings, baptisms, Triodion—Saturday of the Souls, and a successful GOYA Basketball Tournament. Our spiritual cup runs over with gratitude and joy. “Great are You O Lord and marvelous are Your works and no words are sufficient to hymn Your wonders!”

Each week of the Lenten season gives us an opportunity to deepen our understanding and appreciation for the Orthodox Faith to which we belong. St. Athanasius the Great stated, “Orthodox is what Christ taught, the apostles preached, and the Fathers kept.”

**The first week of the Fast is dedicated to the triumph of the Orthodox icons.** We have talked much about icons as we are involved in our current iconography project to beautify and finish the interior of the Church.



**MARCH 2025**

*Continued pg. 4 →*

# OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2025

*Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)*

SUNDAYS	THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
<b>Cheesefare</b> <b>MARCH 2nd</b> FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY	 <b>Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise!</b> <b>FORGIVENESS SUNDAY</b> Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
<b>1st Sunday of Lent</b> <b>MARCH 9th</b>	 <b>GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS</b> <b>SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY</b> Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
<b>2nd Sunday of Lent</b> <b>MARCH 16th</b>	 <b>ST GREGORY PALAMAS</b> Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
<b>3rd Sunday of Lent</b> <b>MARCH 23rd</b>	 <b>VENERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS</b> <b>HALF WAY TO PASCHA!</b> Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
<b>4th Sunday of Lent</b> <b>MARCH 30th</b>	 <b>ST JOHN of the LADDER</b> Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
<b>5th Sunday of Lent</b> <b>APRIL 6th</b>	 <b>ST MARY of EGYPT</b> Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
<b>FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY!</b> <b>APRIL 13th</b> GREAT WEEK BEGINS	 <b>GREAT AND HOLY WEEK</b> <b>ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM</b> Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
<b>GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY</b> <b>APRIL 18th</b>	 <b>GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY</b> <b>JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS</b> CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
<b>FEAST OF FEASTS!</b> <b>APRIL 20th</b> NO FASTING!	 <b>BRIGHT WEEK</b> <b>HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!)</b> Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!



# Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church

123 Gilkeson Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15228

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Under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and His Eminence Metropolitan SAVAS of Pittsburgh

The mission of Holy Cross is to keep and proclaim, pure and undefiled, the Orthodox Christian faith and traditions in conformity with the doctrine, canons, worship, discipline and customs of the Church.

**Fr. Michael Kallaur, Presiding Priest**

**Fr. Daniel Korba, Presbyter**

**Fr. Frank Dickos, Presbyter**

**Elias Diamond, Pastoral Assistant**

**Philip Yamalis, Cantor**

**Nena Jovonovich, Secretary**

Website: [holycrossph.org](http://holycrossph.org)

Office (412) 833-3355 FAX (412) 833-3357

Community Center Phone:(412) 854-6001

**Office Hours** Monday-Friday 9am-5pm

## \*Services:

Sundays: 8:15am Orthros

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Mondays: 6:30pm Paraclesis

Wednesdays: 7 pm Bible Study and [via Zoom](#)

Weekdays: 8:30am Orthros

9:30am Divine Liturgy

Saturdays: Vespers 5pm

\*See monthly calendar for all services.

## Funeral/Memorial information:

**For Kollyva**, you may bring your own or contact Denise Melis directly (412) 341-9264.



Use of the Community Center is available for parishioner funeral lunches at no charge. Parishioners may contact any caterer they choose to purchase and prepare their **Makaria** (Mercy Meal).

Church School	Elias Diamond	(412) 833-3355
Philoptochos Pres.	Thea Manos	(412) 600-8640
Phil. Membership	Adrienne Dickos	(412) 833-4980
Circle of Angels	Carol Halkias	(412) 276-5002
	Christine Peters	(724) 693-9290
	Dina Hartlep	(412) 720-9383
Landscaping	Frank Kalogeris	(412) 855-4155
	Rebekah Krakora	(412) 728-4842
Greek School	Dena Yamalis	(412) 343-8355
Junior Dance	Marina Bouzos	(412)-736-7455
Senior Dance	Rachel Facaros	(412) 323-6298
Choir		
First Steps	Sophia Alfamas-Melainis	(412) 251-3209
JOY	Elias Diamond	(412)413-7427
Young Adults	Elias Diamond	(412)413-7427
GOYA	Denise Melis	(412) 341-9264
Golden Club	Cynthia Kostelnik	(412) 833-9423
	Rene Koett	(412) 831-3142
Bookstore	Mary Portellos	(724) 941-8699
House Committee	Constance Zotis	(412) 736-7145
Building Comm.	Michael N. Zervos	(412) 833-6843
Sts. Mary & Martha	Adrienne Dickos	(412) 833-4980
Interior Design Committee	Laura Zervos	(412) 287-5679

**Coffee Hour** fellowship is an extension of our Divine Liturgy! Please gather with family, koumbari or friends to sponsor/prepare one Sunday. See the calendar on website for open dates, and call the church office to confirm.



## Parish Council 2025

President: Nicholas Ambeliotis

Vice President: Rachel Kartofilis

Fin. Secretary: Socrates Zacharias

Treasurer: Anthony Cuneo

Secretary: Stephen Yamalis

Bryan Elderkin

George Liadis

Eleni Maneta

Sophia Milinkovic

Tom Mourtacos

Jim Mustakas

Jordan Nicholas

Ted Sofis

Sadie Stang

Constance Zotis

Christ is God incarnate in whom and by whom all things were made. He is the Icon in whom Man was made as male and female (Gen. 1:26-27). The restoration of the icons proclaims the restoration of personal communion with God in the triumph of the Icon, Jesus Christ, over the devil and death. Eden has been opened again and we may enter to become partakers and gardeners of the divine nature.

In the Light of Christ who illumines all, we take up the cross of the Fast and follow Christ from the Jordan river and His baptism into the wilderness of our soul, to the tomb of Lazarus – who calls us to “come forth” from death and follow Him into the Resurrection and the Garden of Eternal Life.

**The second week of the Fast commemorates the great champion of prayer and communion with God through the Uncreated Light of God, St. Gregory Palamas.**

“The Light of Christ illumines all.” The incarnate Lord and Jesus Christ, the second person of the Holy Trinity told His disciples, “I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the Light of Life” (John 8:12). Each of us is called to prayer and intimacy with God. We must cultivate a place and a time for this prayer daily. Communion with God is necessary so that we might conquer the darkness within ourselves and become a reflection of the Light of Christ to the world.



**The third week is dedicated to the Holy Cross.** “For the Cross is the salvation of the Church; the Cross is the boast of those who hope in it; the Cross is reconciliation of enemies to God and conversion of sinners to Christ.” (St. John Chrysostom). The Cross reminds us where we are headed. In the midst of the Great Fast, we remember what our Lord endured for our salvation and what little sacrifice we offer Him. The Cross gives us insight into the sacrificial love of God and His extreme humility for our salvation.



**The fourth week is dedicated to the great monastic teacher – St. John Climacus (of the Ladder).** St. John outlines for us thirty steps to help us climb the spiritual ladder toward salvation. St. John writes, “Humility is the only virtue that no devil can imitate. If pride made demons out of angels, there is no doubt that humility could make angels out of demons.” The temptation to compare ourselves to others during Lent is a weapon of the devil. The devil wants us to be prideful of our fasting and good deeds. We fall into the trap of losing our humility when we judge others and do not keep focused on our own personal struggles. If we accomplish any good thing, it is only by the grace of God who helps us. This is the thought that keeps us humble.



**The final and fifth week of the Lenten journey is dedicated to the great saint of repentance, St. Mary of Egypt.** We read her life in full at the Compline service (on Monday) following her Sunday. Lent is our journey of repentance. This lifelong journey helps us renew our baptismal garment and draws us ever closer to the Lord Himself. The saints are especially helpful in finding our path toward salvation. In the life of St. Mary of Egypt, the Panagia guides her and protects her from the attacks of the devil. St. Mary is only discovered at the end of her earthly life by a monastic named – Zossimas. Zossimas was overwhelmed by the holiness of St. Mary and humbled by her desire and intensity of love for God. St. Mary became an angel in the flesh through a life filled with repentance.

May we also find this desire and intensity to love and serve God and our neighbor.

Wishing you a profitable Lenten journey!  
Kalh Sarakosti !

With love in Christ,  
Fr. Michael

**Gerasimos Papadopoulos:  
Bishop of Abydos,  
the Wise Abba of America**

Published 8/16/98

*Dr. Stylianos G. Papadopoulos*

**Early Family Life**

He was born on October 10, 1910 in the town of Bouzi (today called Kyllini) in the province of Corinth. The poor and inaccessible town lies above the lake of Stymphalia on the slopes of Mount Tzereia at an altitude of 1300 meters.

There are few fields and multitudes of sheep and goats. His father was Ioannis Papadopoulos, with the nickname Bazdinias. He was a tall and unsubdued man who lived from his teenage years (without paternal support) with his flock in the mountains or in the winter quarters. He was quick tempered, impatient and strict with all things and all persons. But he had a rare integrity and could see far into life, and he was always ready to make any sacrifice for his children - ten in number.

His mother, Athanasia, was of a different character. She was a meek and prudent person, charismatically patient and pious, industrious and dedicated to her family. She was illiterate, but in her soul she had so much love that she could love God and all those around her as well. Her fourth child, Elias, later to be named Gerasimos, received from his father a sense of honor, an unsubdued spirit and the ability to endure hardships. From his mother, in turn, he received the spirit of patience, piety, love and prudence.

The young Elias differed from all his siblings. He did not fight with them, and they, without being aware of it, treated him differently from other children. The same was true with his parents. They rarely had to discipline him. Shortly before completing elementary school his father told him: "Elias, you see that we are many; you will have to go away to make a living. I want you to become a priest. And I will help you." But young Elias was startled and, knowing the town priest to be a tall and erect man, he muttered: "But I am so short!" Then his shepherd father, who had a rare sense of humor bequeathed also to his son, explained: "Priests are not made by the yard!"

His mother's brothers, the Brilaioi, who were merchants, craftsmen and farmers in Nemea, and one a civil servant in Patras, opposed the idea of Elias becoming a priest, and his father relented which was something rare for him.

**Elementary School - The Young "Pappou"**

In four years Elias had completed elementary school in Bouzi. For Hellenic school he needed three more years during which he had to go back and forth by foot to Kalliani, a larger nearby town. This was more than two hours walking every day for three years. There everyone, teachers and pupils, saw Elias in a different light, without being conscious of anything in particular. It was due to his prudence which made him appear a mature young man, to his intellectual capacity to understand and, in particular, to his disposition which brought calm and peace to the students, shepherd boys inclined to running unrestrained in the mountains. During that time,





his fellow students, whenever they would speak about him, would refer to him as the *pappou* (grandfather). "Let's ask *pappou*," they would say. One day a student insisted that what he had written on the blackboard was correct. And when the teacher asked why he insisted, the student retorted: "*Pappou* told us to write it this way!"

### **Grocer Boy and Clerk**

At the age of thirteen Elias completed Hellenic school. It was summer and his mother sent him high up the mountain to take some food to his father at the sheepfold. There the father told Elias that he wanted to see him become a merchant and would now send him to Nemea to work wherever he could. The young boy did not object, and in 1923 Elias went to the Town of Nemea to work. He became a grocer boy at first and later worked as an apprentice to a shoemaker. In 1925 his uncle decided to send him to Patras. There he worked in various shops and, for a longer period, in a forge until 1928.

### **Novice at the Mega Spelaion Monastery**

It was during this time in Patras that God spoke decisively. A friend of his, also a young worker, took him to an evening sermon given by the then young and fiery archimandrite Gervasios Paraskevopoulos. During this same period he read the Life of St. Alexios the Man of God. Whenever he listened to the preacher or read the book he was simply pleased. He felt something strange. He felt as if everything was already inside him and was just now being uncovered, being raised to his consciousness: love for the Church, total devotion to God. It was then that Elias received the Sacrament of Confession for the first time in his life, and this event indeed marked him decisively.

For three years he cultivated in his mind and in his heart the great issues, that is, what shall he do in his life regarding the Church and God. His own family knew nothing at all. Archimandrite Gervasios, who had surmised a great deal about the significant things happening in the soul of the adolescent Elias Papadopoulos, advised him to study at the Theological School of Arta, but the necessary funds for such an undertaking were not available to Elias.

Meanwhile he heard a little and read even less about monasteries and monasticism. He constantly had the feeling that a life devoted absolutely to God was something that appealed to him. He would not say anything to anyone. Fr. Gervasios had suspected it and tried to dissuade him. He was a zealous worker and a shepherd absolutely devoted the work of preaching. That whole region was deeply indebted to him. But Elias did not delay in making his great decision to abandon worldly things, the usual joys and the usual problems.

In 1928 at the age of 18 he left everything - work and relatives who knew nothing - and arrived at the famous Monastery of Mega Spelaion. He surrendered himself to monastic life without any expectations. He knew only obedience and service as a novice under the abbot and *geronta* of the monastery. He was drawn by the liturgical life. While he did not understand much in the Services or the Divine Liturgy, nevertheless, everything pleased him profoundly.

The months passed at the monastery and the Elder was pleased; his novice was making progress. Everything seemed good, except for an inner-most disturbance, which was beginning to grow in the soul of the novice Elias. There was a growing desire in his soul for a more austere, a higher form of spiritual life.

### **On the Holy Mountain - The Skete of St. Anna**

For months this inner turmoil troubled his being. Before completing two years in Mega Spelaion, he had decided to go up to the peaks of Orthodoxy, the acropolis of monasticism, the Holy Mountain - Mount Athos.

With strange coincidences, which can only be explained as divine interventions, he set his destination for the Skete of St. Anna. There he served as a novice monk under the guidance of the Monk Chrysostomos Kartsonas, who lived in the *kalyva* - cell - dedicated to the Presentation of the Theotokos to the Temple. He stayed there only because it was the first *kalyva* on Mt. Athos in which he had ever entered. He considered it the will of God that he stay there.

His Elder, Fr. Chrysostomos, who treated him very well, was very meticulous with his monastic duties. But he had no special training nor was there anything extraordinary about him. On the contrary, he was of a difficult character. And from the novice Elias a lot was expected. But he did not complain. Elias tried to meet other more advanced Elders and to draw from them like a bee anything extraordinary that they had acquired through their many years of prayer and the practice of obedience. Within the skete, also under the direction of his Elder, there were others who could help Elias learn the monastic life. In another *kalyva* of the Skete there were two brothers who were famous iconographers and excellent monks. A little above the Elder's *kalyva*, in the *Kalyva* of the Theophilaioi, there lived another monk, a fellow countryman from Kalliani by the name of Anthimos. He became a great ascetic and a famous Spiritual Father Confessor, and with persistence acquired a great theological education by reading patristic and ecclesiastical books. Ultimately Elias was tonsured a monk receiving the name of Gerasimos.

At the Skete of St. Anna, the monk Gerasimos made speedy progress in his spiritual life. He developed the virtue of obedience and became very dear to all the Elders of the Skete. They so valued his virtue and his prudence that they all accepted - except for one - his peace-keeping intervention. His Elder, contentious as he was, had quarreled with most of the monks of St. Anna. His obedient young monk managed in three or four years to make peace among all of them.

The virtue of peacemaker would accompany him all of his life. It would be practiced as the work of a Father Confessor, who brings peace to souls that are deeply troubled. This too is one of his charismas, one of his gifts to the world. Whenever I would ask him what it was that he received from the Holy Mountain, he was disarming in his response. There he had learned to believe deeply and absolutely, to live the Tradition of the Church, as he found it and as it was being lived by all the generations of believers. This explains the form of his subsequent aspirations, his ventures into philosophy, his research and broader studies in European and American universi-



ties. They all had the conscious purpose of confirming the simple and unquestioned faith of the monks of the Holy Mountain, of demonstrating that the serious seeker in high theology and philosophy must attain the piety of a simple monk. He often said that he believed and communicated with God as his illiterate mother and as a simple Hagiorite monk. But then he would explain that he studied, taught, and celebrated the Divine Liturgy that he might know more consciously and more deeply the truth that his mother believed with simplicity.

### **Theological Seminary - Corinth**

In early Spring of 1934 he left the Garden of Panagia, the Holy Mountain, filled with hopes of finding answers to his questions. Immediately, his inner struggle was linked with his interest in attending the Theological Seminary of Corinth, about which his brother George, a teacher, had spoken to him. As a monk, he owned little and had economic difficulties - he could not afford to attend the seminary. These were overcome by his father who provided some funds and by Metropolitan Damaskenos of Corinth who provided him with a small scholarship (from the Monastery of Panagia of the Rock of Nemea, where he had to be enrolled as a member of the monastic community for ecclesiastical reasons). There he began a six year course of study at the Theological Seminary of Corinth. To receive his diploma from the Seminary he went to the Seminary of Arta toward the end of the academic year 1938, where the present Archbishop Seraphim of Athens and all Greece also completed his studies and with whom they had maintained a friendship.

### **Ordination to the Priesthood - The Orphanage in Vouliagmeni**

The German occupation began and everything was overthrown. At the end of May 1941, with the breakdown of the front in the Greek-Bulgarian boundary, he was ordained - although he never considered himself worthy of it - a priest by Metropolitan Michael of Corinth. He now had the Priesthood for which he never considered himself worthy. However, he did everything that he could for an entire lifetime to honor it.

At this point we must emphasize that even when he became a bishop in 1962, he believed steadfastly that the priesthood is one. He believed that the bishop has nothing more than the priest, being only an archpriest, the first among priests. Primarily the bishop has the particular charisma from God to ordain other priests. The bishop as a hierarch is naturally the leader of the priests, who also celebrate the sacraments as validly as the bishop, once they have received the priesthood, the Sacred Tradition of the Church. It is understood of course that the priests must be united in faith with the bishop, who in turn also has the faith of the whole Church.

Once, when defending these opinions and explaining to me how and why he came these conclusions, he said: "How does the Eucharist which I celebrate as a bishop differ from the Eucharist which a priest of my diocese celebrates? Since there is no difference, we have the same priesthood."

At the beginning of the German occupation in 1942, Archbishop Damaskenos, who already knew and had helped him economically and morally and who continued to esteem him highly, appointed him to be Director of the Orphanage of Vouliagmeni. This responsibility offered nothing toward

his profound theological aspirations. Those years, however, were so difficult that he felt obliged to accept the position. For three years, under terribly unfavorable conditions, he cared for the orphaned children not only to survive but also to experience some nurturing love.

During the course of the war and the occupation, he helped many people to survive hunger and persecutions, while, at the same time, he pursued with his familiar thirst the meager spiritual activities of the period: lecture, lessons, meetings and conversations with spiritual people. Liturgical life with the tradition of the Holy Mountain constituted the strong foundation, while he sought further knowledge that would help him understand those things he believed. During the occupation, he often visited his professor Nikolaos Louvaris. He continued to do this even after the professor had been imprisoned at the end of 1944, because of his participation in the last occupational government of Athens (at the request of Archbishop Damaskenos himself to serve as Minister of Education for national reasons. Among these reasons was the extraction of a promise from the Germans to expel the Bulgarians from the Greek territories in the north.)

### **Chancellor of the Metropolis of Corinth**

Toward the end of 1945, Metropolitan Michael of Corinth offered him the position of Chancellor. With mixed feelings he accepted. He was concerned over this involvement in administrative matters, but being only thirty-five years old at the time he was daring enough to accept the post. He respected and highly esteemed his bishop Michael, who in turn loved and entrusted his Chancellor. Everything was going well, as long as he left most administrative matters in the hands of the secretaries of the Metropolis.

The ecclesiastical environment of Corinth included traditionalists, who were attached to the forms without understanding their essence, as well as certain hyper-nationalists and some liberals. He himself avoided all extremes, emphasized the need for understanding the essence of things, and worked diligently to establish a balanced view. In particular he wanted to be close to the priests, to create harmony among them, to support them, to point out to them that they should not be involved in the politico-ideological battles of the opponents in the Greek Civil War. Of course, he already held the opinion that Communism was an evil not only because it denied Christ, but also because it did not really care about man, and therefore could not help him essentially. But he never justified the crimes of the anti-Communists either.

### **Greece or America**

The sojourn in Germany was coming to an end. It was Spring of 1951 when the first invitations - completely unexpected - reached him to consider going to America. Metropolitan Michael was now Archbishop of North and South America and he wanted to have his former Chancellor, Gerasimos Papadopoulos, by his side. But things did not go well at first.

He went first to Greece, where strong ecclesiastical personalities, such as Metropolitan Agathonikos of Kalavrita and Aigialeias, Metropolitan Prokopios of Corinth and others, wanted him to stay in Greece, promising to make him a metropolitan. While certainly not scornful of this latter prospect, he was not much moved by it. The then Archbishop Spyridon offered



him the position of spiritual father at the large student dormitory of *Apostolike Diakonia*.

He accepted this responsibility, which lasted for only one academic year, but this proved to be a wonderful year for the students. In most such religious programs at this time, a spirit of moralism prevailed. Archimandrite Gerasimos Papadopoulos, however, was kindling in the souls of the students a love for Christ and opening their wings for flights into the life of the Spirit. He believed most steadfastly that the opening of the wings of the students had the greatest significance. He believed that with outstretched wings they could fly and find their way, even with some diversions they would reach their goal, they would mature, they would experience the true Christ. On the contrary, without wings at all, or with folded wings, they would never be able to fly; they would remain spiritually weak and immature infants throughout their lives. And if I have understood him correctly, it is in this that the deeper reason lies for encouraging the students then to study and pay attention to the teaching of Louvaris. While disagreeing with him on many points, he nevertheless appreciated how his writings helped the students to spread their intellectual wings. He broadened, rather than narrowed, the ways of the Spirit. He appreciated his work as the spiritual father of the students and had determined to stay in Greece.

#### **Father "G.U.L.F."**

His life at the Holy Cross School of Theology was not without difficulties. The spirit that motivated him was different from the spirit of the Dean, Fr. Ezekiel Tsoukalas, who had the unfortunate inspiration to name him sub-dean of the School. The conflicts were many. Archimandrite Professor Gerasimos refused to oppress the students through the school program. He confronted them with a different spirit. He would convince them to work, but freely, uncoerced. And the students would respond accordingly. They came to more than love Gerasimos, who quickly came to be known in the code language of the students as Fr. "G.U.L.F." - the initial letters for Gerasimos, Understanding, Love, Faith. These were the perennial issues he discussed with them, and that's why they had become his code name for many years.

With every opportunity and particularly at night his room would fill with students. There were never enough chairs and they would sit on the floor and in the hall. They made inquiries, carried on discussions, listened and were satisfied with much love and learning. It was what these young men were seeking, particularly in this situation, who would in two or three years be ordained into the priesthood.

He lived for the students, no more no less. He worked to acquire knowledge and he prayed for God to give him perseverance. Thus he overcame the crises and the disappointments coming from the Dean, who reached the point of first depriving him of his position as Sub-dean and then asking for his removal from the School. The Dean did not succeed in his latter plan, much to the delight of the students, who lost no opportunity to express their esteem and devotion for their professor, "Fr. G.U.L.F." This reaction served as the highest form of consolation for the professor, who found perseverance and persistence to continue the work of teaching and nurtur-

ing spiritually the students to the best of his ability.

During his tenure at Holy Cross it was necessary to teach courses beyond his own field and to undertake even the entire administration of the School, as Acting Dean, which he did not particularly like.

### **The Reality of Orthodoxy in America**

How quickly he came to understand the problems of the new world is obvious also in the fact that only several months after his arrival in America, he dealt with courageous realism the great problem of Greek Orthodoxy in America, the problem of the Greek language. He not only spoke about it, but he also wrote about it, and declared openly that if we want to teach Orthodoxy to our children, if we want them to want to come to our Church, and especially if we want them to be consciously Orthodox Christians, we must speak to them in English, but without this to mean that we should abandon the Greek language. He took this position in 1952 and 1953, when no one would dare approach this dramatic problem among the great multitudes of diaspora in America. He favored the introduction of some English in the Liturgy from that time, yet he still insisted until his end that no matter how many decades pass, no matter how many changes take place, no matter how little the congregation understands the Greek language, a portion of the Divine Liturgy, even a small portion, must continue to be in Greek, in the language of Scripture and our ancient Tradition. The teaching ministry of our Church, however, must be in the language of the people.

In order to more fully understand this, we must emphasize something else. In the innermost being of the Archimandrite Gerasimos of that period a real drama was unfolding. He, who had a real passion for the Greek philosophers and so loved their thought, was also and first of all a monk of the Holy Mountain. He experienced Orthodoxy upon its acropolis; he experienced it in the hearts of the ascetics, who lived consciously the Sacred Tradition of nineteen centuries of Orthodoxy. This is how Orthodoxy was planted into his deepest being. Orthodoxy led to salvation. Yet, Hellenism had also profoundly influenced his spirit. Fr. Gerasimos felt the obligation to give preference to one of the two. A violent inner struggle took place. He struggled to see if he could have both fully. It was impossible. He was disappointed and frustrated. The decision had to be made. The soul nurtured by the Holy Mountain took precedence. Salvation must come first, the Greek language can follow. Christian Orthodoxy is first, Hellenism follows.

### **Life as a Bishop**

His period of service in the Diocese of Boston would not continue for too many years. Certain difficulties in the Pittsburgh Diocese required the presence of Gerasimos of Abydos. As he began his ministry as a bishop, which continued administratively until 1977, he was fully aware of his own shortcomings, those of his flock and, naturally, those of his priests. He never liked absolute formulations, because they did not belong to the tradition, nor were they realistic. And in order to face the problems of the flock in an edifying manner, he followed a traditional principle: *economia* and flexibility on secondary matters, strictness on matters of faith.

### **Retirement**

At the age of 67, that is, in 1977, he retired from the administrative and

pastoral responsibilities of the Diocese of Pittsburgh. He had asked to retire in 1976. He wanted to find time for writing and for spiritual cultivation. He always considered very little that which he had achieved internally. Finally, his retirement was accepted on June 19, 1977. What impressive coincidences! He was ordained a deacon on June 17, 1935, the day of the Holy Spirit; he gave his spirit on June 12, 1995 on the day of the Holy Spirit.

The news of his retirement, for those who did not know him well, made an impression. He was still at the prime of his life, working many hours in the day, and people did not expect that he would retire. As a clergyman, a teacher *par excellence*, a writer, a reader and a spiritual father, this act of his was also perfectly understandable. And this is why for them the Bishop's retirement was a courageous act. This is why it was esteemed and marveled at from all sides.

Moreover, everyone knew that Bishop Gerasimos was not seeking honors and authoritative positions, thrones and acclamations. But precisely because he did not seek thrones or authorities, he was truly enthroned in the hearts of the people. And he remained enthroned there, where he still is and will always be. In Pittsburgh, a farewell banquet was organized in his honor, and the greetings and farewell wishes expressed that evening constitute a monument of gratitude and profound estimation for the departing bishop. Representatives of the clergy and of the communities, of the national Greek-American Associations, and of the faithful people of the Diocese spoke most affectionately and with great admiration for their beloved bishop. Naturally, of course, the Archbishop also spoke to honor Bishop Gerasimos.

Before, during and after the farewell banquet, Bishop Gerasimos felt various conflicting emotions: What had been completed in his life? Should it have come to an end? What was to begin now? Had forty-two years of intensive preparation and activity as a clergyman received their seal of completion, or would they find some worthy continuity? And what form will such continuity take? He had thought about everything a year before. Now, however, he was pressured emotionally by these thoughts. And the pressure was considerable. Most of all he was sad over his separation from the people he loved and who loved him. His consolation was that a new bishop, younger in years, would be able to offer more for them and would love them just as much. He believed that people ought not to grow too old in these positions.

Immediately after his retirement, he traveled to Greece. He went back to the Holy Mountain. His cell at St. Anna was now in ruins. A thought he had about living there the rest of his life took flight when he looked upon his ruined cell and the little chapel, where he lived and prayed for four years in simplicity, with frugality - a characteristic virtue and mark of his entire life.

### **America Asks for a Spiritual Father**

While there were many signs indicating that Bishop Gerasimos would prefer to settle in Greece, and particularly in Athens, to be near the libraries, the clear and fervent voice of the Greek Orthodox faithful of America moved him and won him over. Messages would come to him in Greece, informing him that he was wanted and needed there in America. I remem-

ber how the now Metropolitan Silas (Koskinas) had come then to conjure me: "Do not pressure your uncle to remain in Athens, we need him in America! We need a spiritual father to talk to, our priests especially and even we the bishops."

### **The Abba of America - Living the Sacred Tradition**

But above and beyond all these things that have been related, the blessed Bishop Gerasimos was also something else: he was an *Abba* - a Father. He was a teacher to whom the young and the old would run at every difficulty with strictly theological issues. He was also the spiritual Father, the Abba, the comforter, the counselor. A whole world lived in the School and even a greater one far from it. But everyone knew that up there on the hill, a little beyond the chapel of the Holy Cross, there lived a wise and holy Elder. In his simple quarters he prayed and studied alone and was always ready to receive all. The very certainty that there lived such a man was itself a consolation. The students would pass by his window and would feel secure. From the central buildings and the classrooms the professors and administrators knew that at any difficult time the wise Elder had something prudent and helpful to say to them. The pain and the crossroads of life, the falls and the sins of spiritual people would take the path toward the room of the wise and holy Elder. Innumerable people, clergymen and laymen and laywomen, placed before him, again and again, the failures they experienced in their upward spiritual journey. He in turn would share their pain, but would also share their joy wherever they had succeeded well. With or without the stole over his neck, the blessed Bishop always served as an *Abba*, as a spiritual Father, as a Father confessor and comforter. And everyone - indeed everyone - would leave his cell always, more or less, strengthened and renewed in spirit.

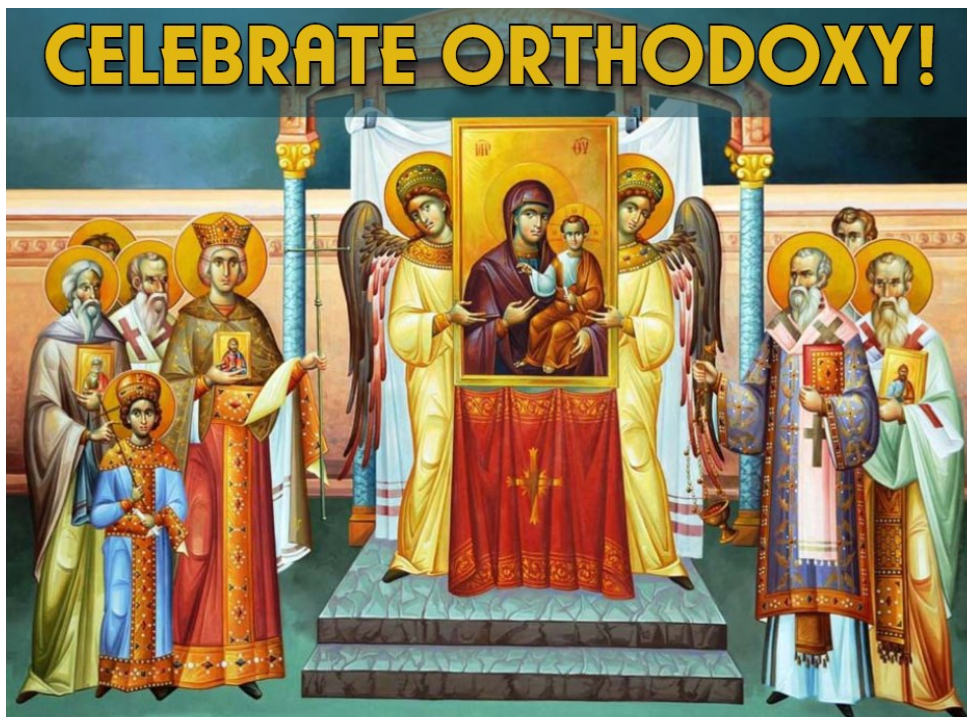
This is why until the very last hours of his life he continued to renew himself, to live with prayer and worship the truth, the mystery of Christ and of life, as he loved to remark. This was so because Bishop Gerasimos, although surrounded by the greatest universities of the world, lived with the daily prayer services as a simple monk. These nurtured him; through them he was "rebaptized" and lived. Early in the morning and every evening he was present, as in the old days on Mt. Athos, in the Chapel of the Holy Cross. And he loved to be the celebrant of the Divine Liturgy, as a simple priest, even more frequently than the young clergymen who loved to serve.

It was enough for the students to see him in the Chapel without fail as an old man of so many years to be silently but consciously instructed, nurtured and edified. With or without saying it, they felt certain of the fact: the Tradition lives! Bishop Gerasimos was the Tradition! No one could tell them that the Tradition had been lost, that it was only in the past. They had the Tradition alive before them! This is the great contribution of the blessed Bishop. This is perhaps the reason why he had to live the faith and to continue his ascetic struggle in America, in "our Theological School," as he loved to say.

*Taken from the book:*

*Agape and Diakonia: Essays in Memory of Bishop Gerasimos of Abydos*





THE ORTHODOX CLERGY BROTHERHOOD OF GREATER PITTSBURGH  
INVITES YOU TO THE PITTSBURGH AREA

**PAN-ORTHODOX SUNDAY OF  
ORTHODOXY CELEBRATION  
SUNDAY, MARCH 9, 2025 AT 4:30 PM  
HOLY CROSS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
123 GILKESON RD, PITTSBURGH 15228**

**PRESIDING HIERARCH AND HOMILIST:  
HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN SAVAS OF THE  
GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF PITTSBURGH**

Following the service, light refreshments will be served during fellowship time. Local representatives from Orthodox philanthropic ministries will be there with information on how to get involved. Also, icons and other Orthodox Christian gifts and handmade items will be available to purchase from the Nativity of the Theotokos Monastery (Saxonburg).

## Man of Resurrection

by His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

**+Anastasios Yannoulatos, Archbishop of Tirana and All Albania**, stands as a unique and extraordinary contemporary witness of the Orthodox faith. His approach to life was always grounded in the principles of faith, which shaped his every decision. A man of knowledge and action, prayer and evangelism, tradition and openness, he exemplified a rare combination of humility and courage. He preserved the treasure of faith while loving God's creation.

Despite facing immense challenges, he remained steadfast in bearing and transmitting the Christian witness until his last breath. He preserved this witness with a joyful demeanor and genuine smile radiating from the peace of his soul which was indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

I was fortunate to accompany him for five days during his visit to the Patriarchate of Antioch in 2000. Though I did not know him previously, his humility, joy, and profound connection with people left a lasting impression. My admiration for him grew as I learned more about his remarkable service, including stories shared by his bishop, John, who accompanied him on that visit.

Archbishop Anastasios believed that Christ is the Head of the Church and regarded himself as merely the servant of the Lord and His Church. This profound humility allowed him to utilize the abundant gifts God had granted him to achieve extraordinary miracles. In Albania, he literally resurrected a church from near extinction, building it from the ground up and transforming it into a vibrant and organized church.

During his earlier missionary work in Africa, he ordained 62 readers and catechists from eight African tribes, translated the Divine Liturgy into four local languages, organized 150 Orthodox parishes and missions, and built several churches, school, and health centers.

In Albania, where the government had issued a decree declaring Albania a religion free state as of 1967, Archbishop Anastasios revived a church that had virtually ceased to exist. There were no churches, no monasteries, no heritage, and not even bishops. Only eighteen elderly priests had remained. Over the 33 years of his service as Archbishop, from 1992 to 2025, he built 150 new churches, reconstructed 160 others, restored 60 monasteries and churches, and established 70 ecclesiastical facilities, including schools, youth and medical centers, guesthouses, workshops, dormitories, soup kitchens, a theological academy, a seminary, a school for ecclesiastical music, and more. He also educated and ordained 168 priests. May his remarkable footsteps touch and inspire our blessed Archdiocese. This is a call from me to all capable and faithful members of our Archdiocese.

Through his extensive initiatives, Archbishop Anastasios brought the Albanian Church to financial self-sufficiency after starting with nothing. The Orthodox faithful of North America were blessed to contribute to many of his ecclesiastical and social projects through organizations such as IOCC and OCMC.

His efforts extended beyond ecclesiastical matters, as he worked to establish



the Church's presence in society and the state. He contributed to the development of Albania's infrastructure, including three hydroelectric power projects, the construction of roads and bridges, and the renovation of public schools, among other initiatives that are too numerous to list in a single article.

He launched publications in Albania, including Resurrection for adults, Joy for children, and Bells for youth, in addition to a radio station. He established projects that included a publishing house, a candle factory, carpentry and iconography workshops, and restoration facilities. He also fought tirelessly for the restitution of Church properties.

Archbishop Anastasios combined theological knowledge and research in the history of religions with missionary and pastoral service, all while remaining acutely aware of social needs. He authored 24 books and delivered hundreds of lectures. His work presented a radiant and courageous face to non-Orthodox Christians, as he contributed to modern Christian witness, inter-Christian understanding, interfaith dialogue, and peaceful coexistence among peoples and religions. His presence at the World Council of Churches was as influential as that of great Orthodox leaders of the past, such as St. Nikolai Velimirovich and Fr. Georges Florovsky.

He departed this life on the morning of the feast of St. Gregory the Theologian, a saint who similarly labored to strengthen and revive the faith. When St. Gregory became Patriarch of Constantinople, nearly all the city's churches were in Arian hands, except for one small chapel. After a few years of his leadership, nearly all the churches had returned to Orthodoxy. Known for his love of hesychasm and poetic spirit, St. Gregory eventually retired to a hermitage after completing his mission. In contrast, righteous Archbishop Anastasios continued his labors, enduring all kinds of hardships until the Lord called him home.

In his later years, Archbishop Anastasios was deeply grieved by the lack of unity in the Orthodox world. He was profoundly pained by the divisions that affected the Church and issued a prophetic call reminiscent of the Old Testament prophets. In his message, he emphasized the need for Orthodox consensus and warned against unilateral decisions, earning him the well-deserved title of "The Wise Man of Contemporary Orthodoxy." For him, Christ was always the priority—above all things, no matter how great—in service to Christ, not the other way around. He left us bearing the sorrow of a fractured Orthodox reality, but he also left behind a pure theology and a vision of the Church untainted by worldly passions.

His uniqueness was based on living his theology and embodying it both in his personal life and in his diverse ministry. He was a blessed man, freed by Christ from the various bonds of this world, soaring ever toward the divine realm and making the earth a reflection of that heavenly reality. He sought to fulfill the Lord's Prayer: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven." He was not a mere theorist or sophist but a living example of his faith and teachings. He was a light on this earth, living the Resurrection and naming all his new projects after it, including the magnificent Cathedral of the Resurrection in Tirana. His faith in and experience of the Resurrection fill us with hope as we bid him farewell, confident that he will intercede from above for the Church and the world he loved so fervently. May God hear his voice in eternity and have mercy on us through his prayers.

## **On Salvation: My Salvation and the Salvation of Others**

by His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

St. Sophrony recounts a conversation between St. Silouan and a hermit who, with a sense of satisfaction, remarked, "God will punish all atheists. They will burn in everlasting fire."

St. Silouan, with visible sorrow, responded, "Tell me, supposing you went to paradise, and there you looked down and saw somebody burning in hell-fire – would you feel happy?"

The hermit replied, "It can't be helped. It would be their own fault." With deep pain, St. Silouan said, "Love could not bear that... we must pray for all people."

From this conversation, I reflect on the nature of salvation—both in general and specifically concerning the salvation of non-believers. This question often arises in pastoral visits: What about the salvation of non-believers or non-Orthodox?

A short article cannot comprehensively address this complex topic, but I will offer a few essential points concerning our Orthodox faith on the matter.

Our Christian faith clearly affirms the Last Judgment at the end of time. The parable of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25:31-46 is explicit. What a person does during their earthly life leaves an imprint on their soul, carrying into life after death. The parable mentions that Christ will conduct the judgment, as salvation depends on faith in Him. Christ is the judge of all humanity on the last day.

We understand, however, that no single parable or verse can fully encapsulate the Faith. We rely on the entirety of Christ's teachings. For instance, we cannot conclude from the parable of the sheep and goats that faith is irrelevant to the final judgment just because the parable emphasizes works of love. Elsewhere, Christ says, "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (John 3:18). We must consider all divine words and understand the context of each passage, recognizing the danger of isolating verses to fit personal interpretations rather than divine intent.

The Orthodox faith preserves what has been handed down from the beginning, emphasizing that there is no salvation outside Christ, baptism, and the Church. This raises the question: What about non-believers?

In his discussion of salvation through the law, St. Paul says that those who have the law (the Old Testament) and follow it are justified. Meanwhile, those "who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts..." (Romans 2:14-15). Paul concludes that everything will be revealed openly on the last day, "when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus" (Romans 2:16). St. Paul does not explicitly affirm the salva-

tion or destruction of those without the law, leaving the matter to the divine judge who knows the depths of every heart.

From this, we understand that those who follow the path God revealed through Christ, preserved by the Church and illuminated by the Holy Spirit, walk the path of salvation—or, more accurately, toward salvation. Yet, this does not guarantee their salvation. No one can guarantee their own salvation, for it is God who grants salvation, not man.

If the great Apostle Paul refrained from declaring the fate of others, and even his own fate (1 Corinthians 9:27), how can we, as sinners, presume to distribute salvation or deny it to those we deem worthy or unworthy? Our role is to hope for our salvation and the salvation of the entire world. Let us hope for the salvation of all and refrain from acting as gatekeepers of salvation. This is not our task. As believers, our duty is to walk faithfully in the way of salvation given to us, hoping for the redemption of all souls.

The Orthodox spiritual teaching warns us against imagining that we have attained holiness and are thus assured of salvation. On the contrary, the Church emphasizes humility and repentance, and thus to consider ourselves unworthy to dwell in God's light. We know the path to salvation, laid out by God in the Church, and we walk it hoping for salvation but without presumption. Only God, who knows the secrets of every heart and mind, can determine who is worthy of salvation.

After enduring a severe spiritual trial, God told St. Silouan: "Keep your mind in hell, and do not despair." This means acknowledging that we are unworthy of the kingdom of heaven but never losing hope in God's mercy. This teaches humility and encourages us to persist in spiritual struggle, purifying our souls, and seeking God's presence ever more deeply.

Salvation belongs to God. Our role as believers is to hope for the salvation of all and to pray for it. For ourselves, we must work toward our salvation by following the path God has granted us in the Church. In humility, we become true witnesses to Christ, revealing Him to others through our example. At the same time, we fervently pray for the salvation of all people – even all creation.

*"For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies" (Romans 8:19-23).*



*By the Grace of God through the Apostolic Tradition of the Laying on of Hands  
by His Eminence Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh  
The Servant of God Deacon Photios Dickos was Ordained to the Holy Priesthood  
on the Feast of St. Photios Thursday February 6, 2025 at Kinitis' Tis Theotokou Greek Orthodox Church, Aliquippa, PA*















**General Assembly Speech**  
**Nick Ambeliotis, President**

Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus I humbly stand before you as this year's leader of the Parish Council.

I'd like to start with one of my favorite quotes from the Bible which is from MATHEW 18:20

*"For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."*

Each Sunday we come together to worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Several other days of the week we connect in fellowship whether it's through JOY, GOYA, Philoptochos, or Committees - we come together to work, to play, to bring about good deeds. Our faith unites us in the holy confines of our church.

The faith is also what guides my decisions which will be based on what is in the best interest of the church. The entire Parish Council and I are on the same page when I say that we are fully committed to putting and keeping our Holy house in order. That means that sometimes the decisions we will be making may be unpopular but as long as I am president we will always have the best interest of the church as our North Star.

Our mission this year is to take our Church to the next level. In some ways, we are still operating as a smaller community. But we are no longer so small...and our actions need to support what we have become.

We have reached an annual operating budget of \$1,285,000! We have experienced incredible growth over the last 4 years but that growth also extends to our expenses.

Our goals this year as a Parish Council are the following three:

**1. Unify the body of the church** – We are all one big Church family. Kind of like a Xorio (a small village in Greece) which can be difficult at times but in the end we are united for our common cause – Orthodoxy. You know the saying, "It takes a village." That rings more true today than ever. We will listen to everyone and make decisions as a united Parish Council.

**2. Improve communications** – With several activities and opportunities for involvement, we plan to focus on improving communications so that those not involved can feel more welcome and those involved can get the support they seek. Many hands make little work as they say but we need to communicate plans and needs while advertising ways to get more involved. This also builds a greater sense of community and a feeling of belonging.

The third and perhaps the most important...

**3. Being fiscally responsible** – Under fiscal responsibility there are 3 areas I'm going to address:



- a. Fundraising
- b. Stewardship
- c. Philanthropy / Outreach

We need to minimize expenses and streamline where we can. The COVID years of free money are long gone. We need to be thinking to the right of the decimal and become more exact as we sharpen our pencils.

This means that some of us on the Parish Council will be designated to focus on analyzing and aligning various activities such as employees, maintenance, and the purchasing of supplies and food items.

- a. **Starting with Fundraising** - We all need to be involved in some aspect of fundraising. Our community is blessed with incredible people who have many talents. We have top-shelf financiers, accountants, lawyers, creatives, restaurateurs, consultants, entrepreneurs, doctors, nonprofit leaders, and much more.

We must have more fundraisers this year. We are way too reliant on festival profit to meet our financial goals every year. One bad weather day will be detrimental to meeting our expenses.

For those of you in the room today, ask yourself how can I contribute to maximizing every area of potential growth in our Church community? It can be small contributions or big ones - bring your ideas, put your time in, and know that the money we raise through new fundraisers will add up. Since we are so reliant on our Festival, maximizing festival profits with a buying group of local restaurateurs such as Jim Moustakis, Dimitri Tacos, and myself is an example of putting our heads together for one common goal. Success.

We need to be thinking about the long-term and building our endowment in addition to the short-term activities of simply covering our annual expenses.

- b. **Next, Stewardship** – As you can see by the chart over there our stewardship goal has increased by 11% and we need to raise \$690,000 which means our pledges need to increase by at least that same percentage.

EVERY PERSON in this room should consider themselves a member of the stewardship committee, by starting with yourself. Please consider increasing your pledge this year if you can.

We have many repairs that need to be made to our infrastructure. As Mike Zervos recently pointed out to me the Building Committee has not received any funds for projects approved by the Parish Assembly since March of 2023. This is not because the Parish Council did not want to distribute those funds, it's because we haven't had them.

Our monthly operating expenses are over \$80,000!

*Continued pg. 18 →*

And as your previous financial secretary, I can tell you that cash flow is definitely an issue at times. At the current rate of giving, the money we receive is NOT enough to replenish our monthly expenses. Our surplus begins in June after the festival and every month our cash flow gets smaller and smaller. By February we are counting the days until the next festival. Every aspect of our expenses is up, utilities, maintenance, diocese commitment, Everything is up.

We ONLY have 3 months of reserves on hand. In fact, we are already off budget with snow removal and broken equipment in the kitchen.

We must repair our Church first. Without a house to worship in, to host our festivals and fundraisers—to gather our community and our youth *we have no future*. We literally have to get our house in order this year.

- c. Last but not least the third part of fiscal responsibility is Philanthropy/Outreach** - This is the first year that our Outreach budget is quite small. It's only \$5,000. Again this is not because of the lack of desire it's due to the lack of funds. Of course, we want to continue to support various causes and crises that occur but without the funds, we simply can not.

We plugged a large number in the income category of pledges and the festival just to meet the current budget. Anything beyond that will go to our infrastructure repairs via the Building Committee. And then Outreach.

This summer we will adorn our church with sacred icons of Orthodoxy. To date, we have raised just about \$1,000,000 in a short period of time. We will glorify our sacred temple, the Church, with the images of our savior, disciples, saints, and holiday depictions.

We also have a major successful landscaping project well underway.

This has all come together through hard work and FAITH, commitment, and love for our Church. It can be done if we believe, work, and trust.

Just like it says in 1 Corinthians 1:10

*"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, that all of you agree with one another in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you."*

We are stronger—**united**. It is our collective responsibility to fortify the fiscal and physical **foundation** of our church home as a way to glorify Jesus Christ. Together I know we can.



**T**oday, is a very important day, and I'm not just talking about Godparent/ Godchild Sunday. Today, marks the beginning of a period in the Church's life known as the Triodion period. "What is a Triodion?" some might ask, and quite simply, the Triodion is the name of a book, book that contains the various hymns, prayers and readings for the the three weeks preceding Lent, as well as for all of Great Lent itself, as well as all of Holy Week with the exception of Pascha. Today, the Church opens the book of the Triodion. In these Sundays preceding the start of Lent, we will hear of various lessons which will help guide us and prepare us as we approach the start of the fast.

Today gives us our first lesson, a parable found exclusively in the Gospel of Luke, known simply as the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. Christ describes two men to us. The first, is a Pharisee, part of the religious elite of Christ's day. The Pharisee stands in the Temple to pray to God, thanking the Lord that he is "not like other men, extortioners, unjust adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get."

The other man that Christ describes, and whom the Pharisee already mentioned, is a Publican, a tax collector, men who were often considered traitors to their country and their God, and often engaged in extortionary practices with those they were called to tax, trying to take as much money as possible for themselves. This man does not stand proudly like the Pharisee, but rather, he is not even able to lift his eyes to heaven. He beats his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!"

Now of these two, the Pharisee would be the one that the world saw as a holy man, and, on the other hand, the Publican would be the one the world would see as a grave sinner and unworthy. But Christ reveals to us the spiritual truth that is to be found beyond the external form of things. He tells us at the conclusion of the parable that, in regard to the publican, the tax collector, that "this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Very soon, we will begin the Lenten fast, with the intention of that fast bringing us closer to God. However, this lesson tells us that our fasting will mean nothing if it serves to increase our pride. No matter if we fast with the utmost strictness and discipline, it will not be pleasing to God if we at the same time look down upon and judge those others who may not keep the fast so strictly. Fasting is a means to an end. It can be transformative certainly, but not if it is done in a spirit of pride, for pride is the root of all sin. Pride after all is what caused Satan, the first sinner, to fall from God's grace.

We should rather fast in a spirit of humility, like the Publican. Unlike the Pharisee, the Publican does not look down on others, nor laud his spiritual accomplishments, but rather he counts himself chief among sinners, similar to a notion expressed in our pre-communion prayers. This is the kind of humility we need, and to reinforce this notion, this is a fast free week. On most weeks we fast on Wednesday and Friday, but in the parable we just heard, the Pharisee boasts of how he fasts twice a week! We may enjoy the fast free week for other reasons, but really it is a reminder to us, before we enter the Great Forty Day Fast, that without humility, our fasting will come to naught. So, on this first day of the Triodion period, let us begin the process of preparing ourselves, preparing ourselves for the Great Fast, and ultimately, preparing our hearts to stand witness to the Lord's Resurrection at Pascha.

~Elias Diamond

# HOLY CROSS

Sun	Mon	Tue
Save the dates for Vacation Church School: Monday, August 4 - Friday August 8		
<b>2</b> Cheesefare Sunday 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy <i>*No memorials</i>	<b>3</b> Clean Monday <i>Lent begins</i>  6:30pm Great Compline	<b>4</b>
<b>9</b> Sunday of Orthodoxy 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy  4:30pm Vespers @ Holy Cross	<b>10</b> Clergy Retreat 10am~1pm @Holy Cross  6:30pm Great Compline	<b>11</b> <div>CLERGY RETREAT</div>  <b>8pm YAL Basketball</b>
<b>16</b> St Gregory Palamas 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	<b>17</b>   6:30pm Great Compline	<b>18</b>  11am Golden Club Luncheon  7pm Sts. Mary & Martha
<b>23</b> Veneration of the Holy Cross 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy <i>*No memorials</i> <b>GREEK SCHOOL PROGRAM</b>	<b>24</b>   6:30pm Great Vespers	<b>25</b> Annunciation of the Theotokos 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy  7:30pm YAL Pickleball
<b>30</b> St. John Climacus 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	<b>31</b>   6:30pm Great Compline	<b>1 April</b>

# MARCH 2025

Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			<i>1 Saturday of the Souls II</i> 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Div. Liturgy 5pm Vespers
<i>5</i>  4:30PM GREEK SCHOOL 6pm Presanctified Liturgy followed by Lenten Potluck	<i>6</i>  7PM CATECHISM CLASS	<i>7</i> 9am Presanctified Liturgy  6:30pm Salutations I	<i>8 Saturday of the Souls III</i> 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Div. Liturgy  5pm Vespers & Confessions
<i>12</i>	<i>13</i>	<i>14</i> 9am Presanctified Liturgy 10:30 am First Steps of Christ 6:30pm Salutations II	<i>15</i>  5pm Vespers & Confessions
AT ANTIOCHIAN VILLAGE			
4:30PM GREEK SCHOOL 6pm Presanctified Liturgy followed by YAL Dinner	7PM CATECHISM CLASS		
<i>19</i>  4:30PM GREEK SCHOOL 6pm Presanctified Liturgy	<i>20</i>  7PM CATECHISM CLASS	<i>21</i> 9am Presanctified Liturgy  6:30pm Salutations III	<i>22</i> Noon~4pm HOPE/JOY Lenten Retreat © St Nicholas, Oakland 5pm Vespers & Confessions
<i>26</i>  4:30PM GREEK SCHOOL 6pm Presanctified Liturgy followed by Lenten Potluck	<i>27</i>  7PM CATECHISM CLASS	<i>28</i> 9am Presanctified Liturgy  6:30pm Salutations IV	<i>29</i>  5pm Vespers & Confessions
<i>2</i>  4:30PM GREEK SCHOOL 6pm Presanctified Liturgy	<i>3</i>  7PM CATECHISM CLASS	<i>4</i> 9am Presanctified Liturgy  6:30pm Akathist 8pm Parish Oratorical Festival Presentation	<i>5</i>  5pm Vespers & Confessions



We are extremely grateful for the outpouring of love and support for our

### Holy Cross Iconography project!

Thank you to the many who have pledged partial and full support to the icons. We prayerfully ask you to consider supporting this project and creating a legacy. All donation amounts are appreciated and can be contributed to the overall project or join with others for a specific icon. May you and your family be blessed for what you can offer.

#### Saints:

Icons still available include:

The Four Evangelists: St. Mark\*

The Old Testament symbols for each evangelist:

Eagle ● Ox ● Lion ● Young Man

St. Haralambos

St. Andrew of Crete\*

St. Cyril of Alexandria

St. Gerasimos of Abydos\*

St. Nicholas Velimirovich

St. Innocent of Alaska

St. Raphael of Brooklyn\*

Large Icons: Pentecost

Please contact Vasso Paliouras @[vassopaliouras@gmail.com](mailto:vassopaliouras@gmail.com) or 412-606-4314 or with questions or specific requests.



## Holy Cross Online Art Auction

**Friday, March 28 - Sunday, April 6th**

in support of the Holy Cross Iconography project

### **FAQs:**

- 1. What is the Holy Cross Online Art Auction?** Artists from Holy Cross and in our Diocese have donated their creations for an auction that will be featured on the bidding platform, Bidding Owl.
- 2. Will I be able to see the pieces in-person?** Yes, pieces will be on display during coffee hour on Sunday, 3/30 and before bidding closes on Sunday, 4/6.
- 3. Do I have to pay with a credit card?** No. Winners will have the option to pay with cash, check or through the Holy Cross Square credit card account.
- 4. I am an artist & would like to contribute. Is there still time?** Yes, we welcome all artists in our parish and Diocese to be included. Please contact Vasso at [vassopaliouras@gmail.com](mailto:vassopaliouras@gmail.com) for details.

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

As approved during the February General Assembly, we are pleased to announce the commencement of Phase 2—the final phase—of our iconography project within the sanctuary. You can find a rendering for this phase included in your bulletin and displayed in the Narthex.

Completing this project at this time presents an opportunity for significant cost savings. By proceeding now, we can avoid the substantial expense associated with renting scaffolding on two separate occasions, along with the effects of rising costs in general.

We kindly request your prayerful consideration in making a commitment to support the icons for this phase. Our deadline for commitments of phase 2 icons, only, is March 15, 2025. Like phase 1 icons, all contributions can be arranged as payments through December 31, 2026.

With love and prayers,  
Vasso Paliouras  
Iconography Project Fundraising Chairperson



**HOLY CROSS**  
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH



DONOR OPPORTUNITY	DONATION
<b>CHOIR LOFT – LEFT SIDE</b>	
<b>A</b> Nativity of the Theotokos	<b>\$50,000</b>
<b>B</b> Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple	<b>\$50,000</b>
<b>C</b> St. Kosmas the Poet holding a scroll which says, “You are a mortal woman, but yet the apostles miraculously see you as the immaculate Mother of God.”	<b>\$20,000</b>
<b>CHOIR LOFT – CENTER</b>	
<b>D</b> Mosaic icon of the Dormition	<b>\$100,000</b>
<b>CHOIR LOFT – RIGHT SIDE</b>	
<b>E</b> Assumption of Mary - At the empty tomb, the apostles stand around it wondering. In the midst of them is Thomas. He is holding the belt of the Panagia and showing it to them. Above them, in the sky, the Virgin rises on clouds into heaven. Thomas, again, near her in the clouds, takes the girdle from her hands.	<b>\$50,000</b>
<b>F</b> Panagia and Elizabeth greeting one another after the Annunciation	<b>\$50,000</b>
<b>G</b> St. John of Damascus holding a scroll which says “You are worthy to be received living into heaven, Holy Virgin, and appear in the heavenly tabernacles.”	<b>\$20,000</b>

*May you and your family be blessed for what you can offer this important project. All donation amounts are appreciated and can contribute to the overall project or join with others for a specific icon.*

*Please contact Vasso Paliouras, Fundraising Chairperson, with any questions or specific requests at 412.606.4314 or [vassopaliouras@gmail.com](mailto:vassopaliouras@gmail.com).*



# YAL Christmas in January at the Diamond residence



**\*Tuesday,  
March 11**

Basketball in the  
Community Center gym  
from 8 pm to 9:30 pm

Fellowship and food at  
Primanti's in Mt. Lebanon  
starting at 9:30 pm



# GYRO THURSDAY





# First Steps of Christ gathered on Valentines Day







## Crafts and singing





# GOYA Basketball-York, PA

Weekend cut short due to inclement weather.







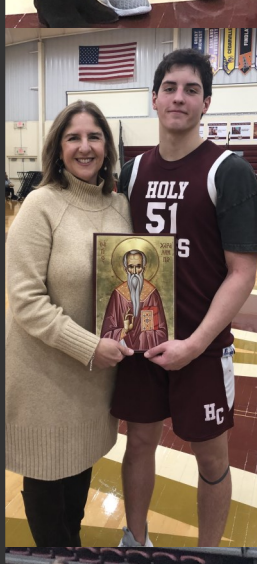




GOYA Basketball-Canton, OH



















# **Saints Mary & Martha Women's Fellowship 2024-2025 God's Plan For Creation**

**Tuesday, March 18, 2025**

**Man's Relationship to the Created World**

Speaker: Fr. George Callas

Hostess: Irene Zotis, 76 Woodland Drive, Pgh 15228 RSVP 412-721-0146

**Tuesday, April 29, 2025**

**Ecology and the Orthodox Church**

Speaker: Elias Diamond

Hostess: Vasso Paliouras, 114 Hoodridge Dr Pgh 15228 RSVP 412-606-4314

**Tuesday, May 20, 2025**

**Created Matter and Worship. How the two go together.**

Speaker: Fr. Michael Kallaur

Hostess: Pres. Eleni Kallaur, 3100 Eastview Road Bethel Park 15102

RSVP 412-443-5873

NOTES:

7pm Fellowship/7:30-8:30 Program

8:30-9pm Fellowship

All above subject to change. Thank you.

Pascha is April 20, 2025.

Adrienne Dickos, Chair

412-833-4980 call

412-400-4290 text

[akdickos@verizon.net](mailto:akdickos@verizon.net)



## **ATTENTION HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS and PARENTS:**

The application for the Popi Hagelios Memorial Philanthropy Award of the Philoptochos Society of Holy Cross Church is available in the narthex, Elaine Sofis, [esofis@comcast.net](mailto:esofis@comcast.net) or Denise Melis, [dmelis@comcast.net](mailto:dmelis@comcast.net) electronically.

The application is due by Sunday, March 16, 2025.

**NO EXCEPTIONS!**

The award is available to a PLEDGED 2025 Holy Cross family member who is a 2025 graduating high school senior.

A similar application is available from Mt. Lebanon High School.

You may apply to both philanthropy awards, but will only be eligible for one \$1500 award.



## GOLDEN CLUB MEMBERS:

Please join us in the community center on Tuesday, March 18, at 11:00 a.m. for the annual Lenten covered dish luncheon. Following lunch, we will be treated to a presentation by Laura Zervos on topics of nutrition and health.

Categories for the Lenten smorgasbord include salads, pasta, vegetable dishes, fruits and desserts which are dairy-free.

Please RSVP no later than March 12th to Rene (412.559.1721 and call only cell, no home #) , or Cynthia (412.722.9512).

We will continue to collect dues of \$10.00 for those who were unable to attend our last event.

# Metropolis Regional Lenten Mini Retreats

Open to all HOPE and JOY Children (K-6th Grade)

**Central Region: March 22, 2025 from 12 pm - 4 pm**

**Location:** St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church  
419 S Dithridge St, Pittsburgh, PA 15213

**Contact:** Alyssa Kyritsis at [akyritsis@pittsburgh.goarch.org](mailto:akyritsis@pittsburgh.goarch.org)

**Registration Link:** *Coming soon*

General Assembly  
luncheon  
provided by  
Parish Council



# SPRING YOUNG ADULT RETREAT



THIS RETREAT IS PRESENTED BY THE AMERICAN  
CARPATHO-RUSSIAN ORTHODOX DIOCESE, THE  
GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF  
PITTSBURGH Y2AM, THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN  
AMERICA, AND THE UKRAINIAN ORTHODOX  
CHURCH OF THE USA.

SPEAKER: FR. TIMOTHY PAPROSKI

AT CAMP NAZARETH

## "LIVING THE LITURGY"

JOIN FR. TIMOTHY AND OTHER YOUNG ADULTS  
(AGES 18-35) AS WE DISCUSS WHY IS THE DIVINE  
LITURGY SO IMPORTANT IN THE ORTHODOX  
SPIRITUAL LIFE? HOW CAN WE "LIVE THE LITURGY"  
OUTSIDE THE WALLS OF OUR CHURCHES AND  
SHARE THE KINGDOM WITH OTHERS?



RETREAT DETAILS

## MARCH 14TH - 16TH, 2025

CAMP NAZARETH, 339 PEW ROAD, MERCER, PA 16137

REGISTER NOW!

<https://tinyurl.com/2z7kjpvh>

# METROPOLIS OF PITTSBURGH SUMMER CAMP 2025

WEEK 1 (2nd-4th grade): June 15th-21st

WEEK 2 (5th-7th grade): June 22nd-28th

WEEK 3 (7th-9th grade): June 29th-July 5th

WEEK 4 (10th-12th grade): July 6th-July 12th

Campers will attend the week of the grade level they  
are completing. Registration will open Spring 2025.

More information:

[y2am.pittsburgh.goarch.org/summercamp](http://y2am.pittsburgh.goarch.org/summercamp)

## IN MEMORIAM

### 10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

*Protopresbyter Thomas Hopko*



ORTHODOX MONASTERY  
OF THE TRANSFIGURATION

831 MONASTERY LANE  
ELLWOOD CITY PA 16117



MARCH 20, 1975 - MARCH 19, 2015

SATURDAY, MARCH 22, 2025

9:30 am - Divine Liturgy followed by Memorial Service

12 noon - Memorial Luncheon

1:30 pm - Reflections and Remarks

Serge Schmemann V. Rev. Alexander Garklavs

3:30 pm - Great Vespers with Procession of the Holy Cross

Services and Reflections & Remarks  
will be live streamed on the  
monastery's YouTube channel  
[EllwoodCityChapel](http://EllwoodCityChapel)



## WALK OR RUN WITH TEAM IOCC

At the Pittsburgh Marathon Weekend

Saturday, May 3, 2025

Help change lives around the world!

Choose a Race as a Solo Participant or Form Your Own Team!

5K ★ Kids Marathon ★ Toddler Trot ★ Pet Walk  
4-Mile Fitness Challenge ★ Champions Mile

SIGN UP NOW AT

[ioccc.org/pgh](http://ioccc.org/pgh)



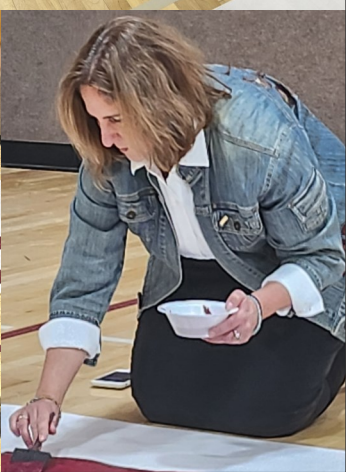
IOCC®

INTERNATIONAL ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN CHARITIES

Questions? Contact Dean Stambolis at [DeanStambolis@verizon.net](mailto:DeanStambolis@verizon.net) or 412.874.9572

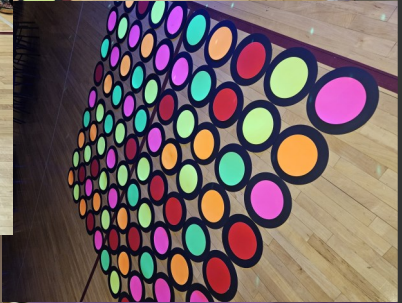


# Holy Cross Tournament Prep





# Holy Cross Tournament



















Thank you and may God bless the kindness of all those who so quickly and generously responded to the request of donations for the **Light of Life Rescue Mission**. Fr. John and Pres. Sandy Chakos delivered the clothing, towels, and personal care items on the evening of January 22. During this time, the Executive Director of Light of Life, Rev. Jerrel Gilliam, was conducting a 24-hour, outdoor vigil to bring awareness to the plight of the growing homeless population in Pittsburgh. The staff at the Mission were thrilled and very grateful when they saw the donations from Holy Cross fill two long tables. To learn more about the important, life-saving work of this faith-based organization, visit <[lightoflife.org](http://lightoflife.org)> .

*Donations from Holy Cross filled  
2 long tables. →*



*Rev. Jerrel Gilliam held a  
24-hour outdoor vigil in  
freezing weather.*





Dear Holy Cross Family,

A heartfelt THANK YOU for your tremendous generosity during the **Emergency NRP FOOD PANTRY Drive!**

As always, our Holy Cross community came through with flying colors when called and we are so proud to be a part of this church family. Sofia and I are very grateful to each of you. Pictures below of just one of the rounds we took down yesterday.

**Please stay tuned for our major Lenten donation drive which will start Monday March 3rd and end Monday March 31st!!!**

We will be collecting for our annual BUS (Belts, new Underwear, new Socks) DRIVE along with another round of food pantry non-perishable items. List to follow!

**Kind reminder that we can only collect what specifically we ask for due to space and time constraints at NRP.**

When unexpected items show up at the church, someone there becomes responsible for dealing/disposing of them so please try to avoid this in the future.

Thank you!!

Love,

Ponny and Sofia Jahn





Campagna

Jahn

Campagna

Dubreil

## Four earn recognition in arts, writing contest

Four Upper St. Clair students earned recognition in the 2025 Regional Scholastic Art & Writing Awards competition. Awardees included Sofia Jahn and Frankie Dubreil as well as siblings Julia and Matthew Campagna.

Jahn received the program's highest honor, a Gold Key, for her poem, "Unavailable." Entries that win a Gold Key are automatically considered for national honors, including gold and silver medals as well as scholarship awards. A list of all of the national medalists is published at [artandwriting.org](http://artandwriting.org) each spring.

Jahn also earned an Honorable Mention for her poem, "1, 2, 3, 4."

A senior, Jahn is a member of National Honor Society, Natural Helpers and the girls varsity tennis team.

Dubreil earned two Silver Keys in the categories of Poetry and Portfolio for entries, "ISN'T PRETTY FUN?" and "That Certain Combination" respectively. In addition, she earned an Honorable Mention for the Personal Essay & Memoir, "Of Allergies & Advocacy."

This past fall Dubreil was named a National Merit Commended student. A senior, she was a member of the planning

team for the high school's Global Education Week.

The Pittsburgh Playhouse on Point Park University's campus will host the 2025 Pittsburgh Region Scholastic Writing Awards recognition ceremony on March 22.

In the arts, the Campagna duo each earned Honorable Mention for their submissions.

Julia competed in the Fashion category with her entry, "Rink Bag."

A junior, she is a member of the Pantherette Guard with the USCHS marching band, Spanish Club and stage crew. In addition, she competes with the Western Pennsylvania High School Figure Skating Team.

Matthew's "College Cat Portrait" was entered in the Mixed Media category.

A seventh-grade student at Fort Couch Middle School, he receives instruction from art teacher Joshua Criswell. Matthew also participates in Fort Couch Esports Super Smash Bros Team, USC inline hockey and Odyssey of the Mind.

An exhibition and awards ceremony will be held March 9 at Carnegie Mellon University's College of Fine Arts & Kresge Theater. Artwork will be on display from Feb. 26

"BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD"

PSALM 46:10

METROPOLIS OF PITTSBURGH CAMP

## GOYA SPRING RETREAT

APRIL 4-6, 2025

FINDING **STRENGTH** IN THE CHAOS

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: NITSA KAMBOUROGLOS

REGISTRATION WILL OPEN  
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 17 AT 7:00 PM

[y2am.pittsburgh.goarch.org/retreats](http://y2am.pittsburgh.goarch.org/retreats)

○ Lord and Master of my life, take from me the spirit of sloth, despondency, lust for power and idle talk. But grant unto me, Thy servant, a spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love.

Yea, ○ Lord and King, grant me to see mine own faults and not to judge my brothers and sisters. For blessed art Thou unto ages of ages.

Αmen



## SATURDAY OF THE SOULS

FEBRUARY 22

**MARCH 1**

MARCH 8

Memorial services for the dead may be offered at any time. However, the Church has designated certain days of the year for special prayer services for the dead, such as the three Saturdays before Meat Fare Week, Cheese Fare Week and the First Sunday in Lent. The church honors all of the Saints on these days and also those who have died.

Why have the Church Fathers designated Saturday for the Memorial Services? Saturday is actually the Jewish Sabbath and the word itself means "termination" or "the end." Everything was ended on this day, and every person was to turn his attention only to meditation and prayer. In the Orthodox Church during the weeks of pre-Lenten and Lenten period, the truths of judgment day are emphasized during service. Everything ends at the time of judgment, therefore the Church Fathers have designated Saturday for special services for the dead. It was also on Saturday after the Crucifixion of Christ that He descended into Hades and preached to the dead. If you would like Fr. Michael to remember your departed Loved Ones, please submit the names to the church office.

**NO TRISAGION OR MEMORIAL SERVICE  
PERMITTED ON FOLLOWING SUNDAYS:**

MARCH 2, 9 AND 23

APRIL 13 AND 27

WE PRAY

FOR THE SOULS OF THE SERVANTS OF GOD,  
ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS DEPARTED THIS LIFE:

PLEASE PRINT

**HOLY CROSS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
**123 GILKESON ROAD**  
**PITTSBURGH, PA 15228**

**Return Service Requested**

**PAN-ORTHODOX**

**SUNDAY**

**OF**

**ORTHODOXY**  
**CELEBRATION**

**SUNDAY, MARCH 9, 2025**  
**AT 4:30 PM**

**HOLY CROSS**  
**GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
**123 GILKESON RD**  
**PITTSBURGH 15228**

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