



Beloved Members and Friends of Holy Cross,

**Christ is born! Glorify Him!**  
**Χριστος Γενναται! Δοξασατε!**

For three hundred years the voice of prophecy had been silent in Israel. “There is no longer any prophet”, lamented the Psalmist (74:9). Was God silent? Was He not to speak to His people any more? After 300 years God finally breaks the silence. He sends another Prophet – John the Baptizer. In him God spoke again through “the voice of one crying in the wilderness.” In St. John’s message people recognized the voice and the authority of the prophet of God. They came to be baptized by him, “There went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem.” He came as the last and the greatest of the Old Testament prophets. He came out to point out Him whom all of Israel expected: The Messiah, The Savior, The Light of the world, The Lamb of God. Of all the prophets to proclaim the Messiah, St. John was the only one privileged to point to Him and say, “Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world.” That is why St. John’s icon is given a position of honor next to Christ on the iconostasis. In him the entire Old Testament bears witness to Christ as the promised Savior. St. John goes on to suffer martyrdom at the hands of Herod the Tetrarch. St. John descends into Hades to prepare the souls who had been waiting for the Messiah and to bring the Good News. The Christ, The Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, The Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world has been born and is now fulfilling the plan of salvation for the world. Prepare to receive Him, prepare to open your hearts to His

*continued p.4 →*

## **Holy Cross General Assembly Meeting ~ January 25, 2026**

Dear Parishioners:

There will be a General Assembly Meeting on Sunday, **January 25, 2026** after the Divine Liturgy following a light lunch provided by Parish Council. Please make every effort to attend.

### **AGENDA:**

- (1) Opening Prayer
- (2) Elections of Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson for that Assembly
- (3) Reading of minutes of previous meeting
- (4) The Priest's Report
- (5) The annual report by the President of the outgoing Parish Council
- (6) The annual report of the Board of Auditors, including the annual financial statement for the year ended, certified by the Board of Auditors. [list current members and when their terms end]
- (7) A report by the Vice President of the outgoing Parish Council regarding the Stewardship/Pledge Program
- (8) A report by the President of the new Parish Council
- (9) Approval of the budget recommended by the new Parish Council
- (10) A report of the Building Committee. [list current members and when their terms end]
- (11) Consider changes in the Constitution and By-Laws. [list current members of the By-Laws Committee and when their terms end]
- (12) Election of four of the five-member Nominating Committee (every third year)
- (13) Election of Long-range planning committee
- (14) Old Business
- (15) New Business
  - Report of the Chairman of Building Committee - Michael Zervos
  - Report of the Chairman of Iconography Committee - Vasso Paliouras
  - Report of the Chairman of Landscaping Committee - Frank Kalogeris
- (16) Closing prayer

Yours in Christ,

Fr. Michael H. Kallaur  
Economos

Nicholas Ambeliotis  
Parish Council President



# Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church

123 Gilkeson Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15228

*Crossroads, published monthly Volume 26 Issue 1*

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**

**Deacon Elias Diamond**

**Philip Yamalis, Cantor**

**Nena Jovonovich, Secretary**

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

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

Community Center Phone: (412) 854-6001

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

## **Organizations & Committees**

Church School	Elias Diamond	(412) 833-3355
Philoptochos Pres.	Dina Hartlep	(412) 720-9383
Phil. Membership	Christine Picard	(412) 951-7258
Circle of Angels	Carol Halkias	(412) 276-5002
	Christine Peters	(724) 693-9290
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 Alfaras-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) 559-1721
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.



## **\*Services:**

Sundays:	8:15am Orthros
	9:30 am Divine Liturgy
Mondays:	6:30pm Paraclesis
Wednesdays:	7 pm Bible Study and <a href="#">via Zoom</a>
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).

## **Parish Council 2026**

Angela Athanas  
Anthony Cuneo  
Bryan Elderkin  
Eleni Maneta  
Rita Manganas  
Sophia Milinkovic  
Tom Mourtacos  
Jordan Nicholas  
Ted Sofis  
Sadie Stang  
Zachary Stevens  
Mark Urso  
Stephen Yamalis  
Socrates Zacharias  
Constance Zotis

mercy, love, and forgiveness. Repent, be born from above and do not think in human terms, in logical explanations. Trust in the message of God and have faith that Jesus is the Messiah and humble yourselves. When we are converted and receive Him into our hearts, we are then are commanded to carry our Faith to all those around us. The Great Commission (Mt. 28:18-20) – “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always to the close of the age. Amen.” Jesus has given us this responsibility of witnessing and pointing to Him in our own life – as our Lord and Savior – the Savior of the world.

My brothers and sisters in Christ, we are so blessed to have a God who completely identifies with us in our fallen condition. Our Lord underwent baptism to remind us that we must be born from above! This happens in the baptismal waters as a physical and spiritual reality, but this also must happen to us continually on a daily basis, as we see ourselves connected with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We rise each day, asking our Lord for His blessing and guidance as we seek to fulfill His mission for our life.

Let us be attentive to this time of renewal in the Feast of our Lord’s Nativity and also in the Feast of His Theophany. His revelation of the Holy Trinity - the Voice of the Father, the Son in the flesh humbly submitting to be baptized by St. John, and the Light of the Holy Spirit descending and resting upon Christ, all together, revealing the desire of our Heavenly Father to save His creation and all of us through the mission (humility and obedience) of His Only Begotten Son. May we embrace our calling, may we renew our Faith in the holy waters of the Jordan River given to us as Holy Water on the Feast of Theophany. Let us partake and be renewed. Let us sprinkle it generously in our homes and at work. All is given to us by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for His purposes and for our salvation.

Wishing you a healthy, prosperous, and spiritually renewed new (calendar) year!

Καλη Χρονια!

With love in Christ,

Fr. Michael

## Word for Theophany

10 January 2022 - Archimandrite Zacharias Zacharou

Through His coming, the Lord filled the whole world with His divine grace and spread His creative energy on all the earth. He descended into Jordan, not in order to sanctify Himself, but to sanctify the waters and the whole creation, so that we may receive baptism and be clothed with His glorified human nature, wherein 'dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily' (Col. 2:9). He descended into the waters 'to draw up with Himself bright sons from the streams of Jordan' and make them citizens of His eternal Kingdom.

The first humble Appearing of the Lord became a prophetic event, wherein 'the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath been poured forth upon all' (Tit. 2:11).

The first humble Appearing of the Lord became the preparation for His glorious Appearing, which is to come at the end of time. To all those that loved His first appearing (2 Tim. 4:8), the Lord will give the 'new heavens and the new earth' (2 Pet. 3:13) that He shall bring in that day.

For those that loved His first humble Appearing, the Lord became Himself the Prophet and Forerunner of His Second glorious Appearing, when He shall come to receive His own, both living and fallen asleep, from all the ends of the earth, so as to lead them into His heavenly Kingdom. There, together with the angels, they shall ever glorify the Saviour and Redeemer of our souls for His infinite love that He showed through His voluntary Passion for the salvation of the world.

In 2019, His Beatitude Patriarch John X and the Holy Synod of Antioch released an important pastoral letter entitled *Family, the Joy of Life*. This important letter was blessed, authorized and published by the Patriarch and Holy Synod and proclaims the teaching of our Orthodox Faith on family life. As such, it is a great help to all Orthodox faithful to understand the teaching of the Holy Church with regards to family life and so many of the issues that we face in the world today.

There is much confusion in contemporary culture about sexuality, marriage, and parenthood. The most basic assumptions of morality and religion about the relationship between man and woman are being called into question severely. In order for Orthodox Christians to live faithfully in today's context, we must remember how the Lord often used the wedding feast as a sign of the heavenly kingdom (e.g., Matt 22:1-14) and also turned water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1-11). As St. Paul taught, the relationship between husband and wife is a sign of the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:21-33). Marriage is so spiritually profound that the consummation of the heavenly kingdom is described as the wedding feast of the Lamb in St. John's Apocalypse (Rev. 19:6-9).

The use of such marital imagery is not accidental, for the original "one flesh" union of man and woman in Paradise was shattered by their disobedience as a paradigmatic sign of the fall. The narratives of the Old Testament, the pastoral challenges addressed by St. Paul, and common human experience to this day all bear witness to the tragic brokenness of this relationship. As the New Adam, the Lord made possible the healing of this troubled union at the request of the Theotokos, the New Eve, at the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee. With His blessing, marriage has been restored as a path for man and woman to return to Paradise and as a sign of the salvation of the world.

In the Orthodox wedding service, the bride and groom are crowned in the Name of the Holy Trinity. Their union is not merely a legal contract or social institution, but a vocation to grow in communion with Christ in every aspect of their common life. Joined together as "one flesh" in the Body of Christ, they are called to the martyrdom of dying to the slavery of their passions through their sacrificial, faithful love for one another. The desires of their hearts are purified as they learn to love and serve Christ through and in one another. The many petitions for the blessing of children in the marriage ceremony reflect the expansive nature of the love of God in which they participate as embodied persons. The opportunities for healing from the passions through the ascetical struggles of submitting to one another, caring for their children, putting the interests of the family before their own, and conveying the hospitable mercy of the Lord to their neighbors are virtually endless. As the pastoral letter of our Antiochian Patriarchate *Family, the Joy of Life* states, "Conjugal love is not exclusively expressed in sexual relations, but in everyday mutual love and respect and self-giving that touches upon every aspect

of life, bestowing upon it its glorious splendor” (paragraph 33). St. John Chrysostom taught that husbands and wives who respond faithfully to the opportunities for growth in holiness through marriage may attain a level of “perfection [that] will rival the holiest of monks” (Homily 201).

As implied by the petitions for childbearing in the marriage service, Orthodoxy does not teach that sexual marital intimacy is in any way sinful. Neither does the Church teach that intercourse in matrimony is merely tolerated for the sake of conceiving children, as does the Augustinian tradition of western Christianity. Nowhere in the New Testament does one find a denigration of sex in marriage or the view that it requires justification through procreation. St. Paul does warn, however, against excessive abstinence from marital relations: “Do not deprive each other, except by mutual consent and for a time, so you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again, so that Satan will not tempt you through your lack of self-control” (1 Cor. 7:5).

The discipline of marital fasting in Orthodoxy should be embraced freely by mutual agreement between the spouses in light of their current state of spiritual maturity, not as a matter of rigid law. Especially in this most intimate dimension of married life, misguided ascetical strictness may have disastrous consequences that are counterproductive to the healing and wellbeing of all concerned.

While children are certainly one of the great blessings of marriage and the Church encourages couples to “be fruitful and multiply,” there are no canons in the Church that forbid the use of non-abortionifacient means of birth control by married couples—and some barrier method contraception was known in antiquity. The canons of the Church have detailed descriptions of sexual offences, but none limiting births apart from the condemnation of abortion. What some identify as the rare patristic condemnations of contraception reflect the identification of them with abortion considering the limited medical knowledge of those times. As *Family, the Joy of Life* teaches concerning family planning, “each family prayerfully makes its own decision in consultation with the family’s spiritual father or parish priest on the basis of its spiritual, health, economic and social circumstances” (paragraph 33). Doing so reflects the freedom of the spouses as persons who together offer themselves to God as best they can in light of their spiritual maturity and the practical challenges that they face.

Through their free cooperation with the gracious blessing of the Lord, every dimension of the relationship between husbands and wives may become an epiphany of the salvation of the world. With a common life oriented to the heavenly kingdom, spouses journey together along a path for the healing of their souls and the fulfillment of God’s gracious purposes for their children and their family members and neighbors. Those who embrace the struggles and joys of marriage in this way will prepare themselves to accept the invitation to become guests at the wedding feast of the Lamb.



# ORDINATION OF DEACON ELIAS DIAMOND















## Ordination Speech – Deacon Elias Diamond

Your Eminence,

As a boy growing up in this parish, there were certain moments of the liturgy which impressed themselves upon my mind in an especially vivid way. One such moment which I think of at the present time are the prayers we collectively recite prior to receiving the Eucharist, particularly the passage which reads: “How shall I, who am unworthy enter in the splendor of your saints? If I dare to enter into the bridal chamber, my clothing will accuse me, for it is not a wedding garment, and being bound up I shall be cast out by the angels. In your love Lord, cleanse my soul and save me.”

To be completely transparent, the first moment I really comprehended those words terrified me. The violence of the imagery, of being bound up and cast out was startling enough to my young mind, but what startled me even more was the fact that everyone around me, in the whole church, even the clergy, were declaring their unworthiness of entering into the splendor of the saints. If they were saying that, what hope could I have?

Yet, as I grew older, and grew in my faith, I eventually came to realize that the earlier timorousness I had felt had prevented me from grasping the key word in that passage: love. “In your love Lord, cleanse my soul and save me.” Understanding that struck me profoundly, for though we all are unworthy, fallen in sin as we are, nonetheless the love of God is so profound, that He allows us, all too human as we are, to intimately draw near to Him through the Eucharist and all the mysteries of the Church. To paraphrase Saint Augustine, this is the most beautiful and paradoxical mystery: that the infinite God whom nothing can contain, can nonetheless be contained in the heart of the believer who loves Him in return.

I think of this all today, because standing in the presence of the awesome mystery of ordination, I feel somewhat again like that young boy comprehending the pre-communion prayers, and yet, I have also been blessed to have glimpsed, though the Church, the great love of Christ for us. The walls of this Church bear witness to fact that we stand upon the shoulders of giants, the saints who in their devotion to Lord have become living vessels of the Holy Spirit, but their love does not stop at the walls, it permeates everyone who enters into the Church.

In my time here, I have been blessed to be involved in many different capacities of ministry. I have been involved in Vacation Church school where I have worked with kids from sixth grade all the way down to pre-school, the youngest of which are new even to walking and talking. I have also gotten to drive the van for our Golden Club, our members who are just a little bit older than the pre-schoolers, retirees who have been walking and talking for quite some time and who have many great stories. Between these there are the groups of GOYA, JOY, the YAL, and everyone else, and the blessing of parish life is to be afforded an opportunity to witness that God works in the lives of all, from the youngest to the oldest, from the joyous sacraments of weddings and baptisms, to even the sorrows that come with funerals, it has been a blessing to see the love of God working in so many ways in this community.

Your Eminence, as I have mentioned to you before, years before I went to seminary, I studied dramatic arts in Pittsburgh, with a particular focus on play-writing. I have always loved the works of great artists, poets, musicians, and filmmakers, because at their best, they can touch something very profound within our soul. However, there is one quote attributed to Aldous Huxley which I encountered long ago, which comes to me today. He wrote, "There comes a time when one asks even of Shakespeare, even of Beethoven, is this all?" As beautiful as the great works are, as much moral value as they may hold, they pale in comparison to that greatest mystery, that we who are unworthy, through the love of God, might somehow enter into the splendor of the saints. Unworthy as I am, my offering of myself here is in desire of service to God, the source of all Goodness, Truth, and Beauty, and I hope and pray that the Holy Spirit will make up what is lacking.

I am humbled with great gratitude to those who have taught me so much of the wonders of God's love. The members of this parish, who in their multitudinous ways have shown me what it means to serve, what it means to love, and what it means to be a Christian. There are not words sufficient to express my thanks, nor words sufficient to express my love. We are also blessed to have great leadership in this community of four great priests, The Beatles of Holy Cross, Father Michael, Father John, Father Frank, and Father Dan. All of them have shown such great mentorship to me for what it means to follow Christ and serve others. I cannot thank them enough for their love, patience, kindness, and zeal for the Church.

Of course, the earliest experiences with God often come to us through the family. My grandfather of blessed memory, Judge Gustave Diamond, who I simply knew as Papou, was a moral exemplar for me at a young age. His love for the Church, for knowledge, and his ever-present consideration for truth and goodness continue to inspire me to this day, though he has since departed from this earthly life. My grandmother, Emma Diamond, who is here today, remains one of the strongest, most-hardworking, and devout people I know. Her honesty, encouragement, and devotion to God throughout all of life's ups and downs is an amazing thing to witness.

My mother, Margaret Diamond, was given a great gift of music by God, and even before I was born she would write and perform songs praising God and perform them in various places. I have very early memories of waking late at night and sneaking out to the banister to listen to her playing these songs downstairs. She showed me how music can be used as to praise God. Finally, my wife Maria, my best friend, who teaches me everyday for her great depth of compassion, of resilience, of love, and of faith. Throughout the many ups and downs of life, I find solace in the love we have born of faith, and I am so grateful to her family, her father, mother, brother, her Yiayia, and the many members of her extended family who have made me feel as part of that family.

Your Eminence, I stand before you and before this mystery of the diaconate with faith, love and the fear of God. There are so many others to whom I have a profound debt of gratitude for helping me along this journey of the Christian faith, but to sum it all up we cannot go it alone. Your Eminence, I ask for your prayers and for everyone's prayers here, even as I pray for you. Please forgive me my shortcomings, and may God guide and have mercy upon us all.



## JOY and GOYA Christmas Parties









# Philoptochos Christmas Party











# GREEK SCHOOL CHRISTMAS PARTY







# Holy Cross

Sun	Mon	Tue
<b>4</b> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy <b>Vasilopita</b> 2pm JOY Movie Matinee "David" @ South Hills Village	<b>5</b> Eve of Theophany <b>Blessing of Water</b> 8:30am Royal Hours 10am Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil 11:30am <b>First Water Blessing</b> <div>HOUSE BLESSINGS</div>	<b>6</b> Theophany 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy <b>Great Blessing of Water</b> 7pm GOYA Meeting Board Game Night
<b>11</b> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy 4pm YAL @Diamond Residence "Christmas in January"	<b>12</b>  8pm YAL Basketball	<b>13</b> 6:30pm Fellowship & Fitness Adult Pickleball
HOUSE BLESSINGS		
<b>18</b> Sts. Athanasius & Cyril 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	<b>19</b> 6:30pm Paraclesis	<b>20</b> 6:30pm Fellowship & Fitness Adult Pickleball <b>7pm Parish Council</b>
HOUSE BLESSINGS		
<b>25</b> St. Gregory the Theologian 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy <b>GENERAL ASSEMBLY</b>	<b>26</b> 6:30pm Paraclesis	<b>27</b> 7:30pm PickleYAL 
HOUSE BLESSINGS		



# January 2026

Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>1 St. Basil</b> 	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>  <i>Wedding</i> <b>NO Vespers</b>
<b>7 St. John the Baptist</b> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy  <b>4:30pm GREEK School</b> 6:30pm GOYA Basketball	<b>8</b>  6:30pm Fellowship & Fitness Adult Pickleball <b>7PM CATECHISM CLASS</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10 St. Gregory of Nyssa</b>   <b>5pm Great Vespers</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17 St. Anthony</b> 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Div. Liturgy  <div>GOYA BB @ Holy Trinity, Canton</div> <b>5pm Great Vespers</b>
<b>4:30pm GREEK School</b> 6:30pm GOYA Basketball	<b>7PM CATECHISM CLASS</b>		
<b>21 St. Maximos the Confessor</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy <b>4:30pm GREEK School</b> 6:30pm GOYA Basketball	<b>7PM CATECHISM CLASS</b>		<b>5pm Great Vespers</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30 Three Hierarchs</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>4:30pm GREEK School</b> 6:30pm GOYA Basketball	6:30pm Fellowship & Fitness Adult Pickleball <b>7PM CATECHISM CLASS</b>	8:30am Orthros 9:30am Div. Liturgy  <div>GOYA BB @ Sts. Constantine &amp; Helen, Cleveland Heights</div>	<b>5pm Great Vespers</b>

# NEW at Holy Cross

## Fellowship & Fitness *Adult Pickleball*

ALL levels welcome! See calendar for dates!

Questions? Contact Angela: [eapanos@verizon.net](mailto:eapanos@verizon.net)



*Please call the church office to volunteer to sponsor and host a coffee hour!*



## 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 NOW to download online at

[holycrosspgh.org](http://holycrosspgh.org)

-events - Holy Cross Philoptochos Philanthropy Award, in the narthex, Elaine Sofis, [esofis@comcast.net](mailto:esofis@comcast.net) or Denise Melis, [dmelis@comcast.net](mailto:dmelis@comcast.net), electronically.

The COMPLETE application is due by 9PM on Sunday, March 29, 2026. NO EXCEPTIONS!

The award is available to a PLEDGED 2026

Holy Cross family member who is a 2026 graduating high school senior.

Two philanthropy awards are a possibility to two Holy Cross high school graduating seniors.

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.

~Elaine Sofis 412.327.7017



After many years of planning, our parish of Holy Cross is extremely blessed to witness the installment of the majority of the iconography project. We are thankful to Fr. Michael, Fr. John, our Parish Council, Michael Zervos and the Building Committee and the Iconography Planning Committee for the tremendous amount of time, dedication and effort that went into bringing this incredible transformation to our sanctuary. Thank you to everyone who has donated towards the project and sponsored icons.

This project was under the heading of iconography, but it is important to note that approximately 50% of this project was maintenance of our church. The last time our church was painted, updates were made to the electrical system as well as other maintenance needs were taken care of was over 20 years ago with Challenge III. With the scaffolding in place for the icons, these very important "house keeping" needs were addressed.

As services have resumed in the church, parishioners have asked if donations are still needed for this project. The answer is Yes!

No donation is ever considered small. All commitments made can be paid in installments through the end of 2027.

**Following is a current update on icons available and amount needed for each:**

Eagle - \$16,000

Ox - \$24,000

Lion - \$25,000

Young Man - \$25,000

Nativity of the Theotokos - \$50,000

Assumption of Mary - \$47,000

St. Andrew of Crete - \$12,300

St. Cyril of Alexandria - \$25,000

St. Gerasimos of Abydos - \$5000

St. Innocent of Alaska - \$25,000

St. Raphael of Brooklyn - \$24,250

Thank you very much for your prayerful consideration of supporting this historic project. It is truly a blessing for the many future generations of Holy Cross.

# Sacraments

## Baptisms

October 4 ~ **Deliliah Jane**, daughter of George and Alana (nee Dunn) Frazier. Koumbaro is Micah Kusturiss.

November 15 ~ **Eleni Styliani**, daughter of Christopher & Elizabeth (nee Settineri) Gagianas. Koumbaroi are Zachary & Anastasia Moore.

November 22 ~ **Lucia Marie**, daughter of Alexander and Alexa (nee Kalogeris) Pantuso. Koumbaro is Nicholas Kalogeris.

## Chrismations

October 11 ~ **Daniel Frederick Hardwick**

Sponsor is Susan Spirodonakis

October 11 ~ **Gregory Matthew Hartlep**

Sponsor is George Spirodonakis

## Marriages

August 16 ~ **Matthew Brandt and Thespina Christulides**

Koumbaroi are Robert Jaquette and Renee Lamprinakos

September 6 ~ **Nicholas Kalogeris and Mikayla Ulizzi**

Koumbara is Samantha (Krelis) Murphy

September 20 ~ **George Loris and Kimpberly Yocum**

Koumbaro is Christine Kilgore

December 6 ~ **James G. Thiros and Jami Frances Pazuchanics**

Koumbaro is Mark Thiros

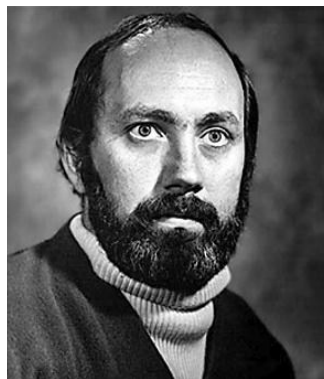
## Funerals

July 20 ~ **Catherine Scales** (age 85) survived by cousin Ted Gregory and his wife Karen of Plum as well as other cousins and friends.

September 9 ~ **Kathleen Kristakis** (age 89) beloved wife of the late Dino A. Kristakis, dedicated homemaker, wife and loving Mom to Annie Kristakis, Mike (Michele) Kristakis and John Kristakis.



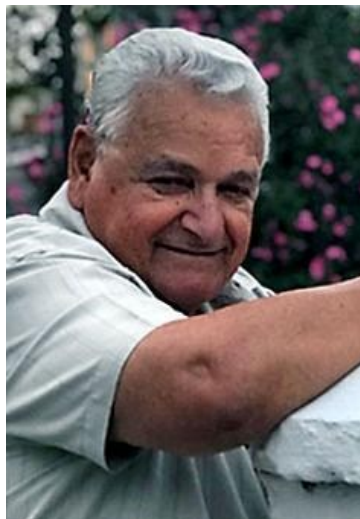
September 29 ~ **Damon Halkias** (age 88) survived by his loving wife of 62 years, Carol Papalas Halkias; his beloved children: daughter, Denise (David Chiodo) Halkias; son, George D. (Kelly Larsen) Halkias; daughter, Erika (Pete) Yucius; son, Fr. Nicholas (Pres. Anne-Charissa) Halkias; and by his cherished grandchildren: Lauren, Ryan, Nathaniel, Dallen (their mother Mary), Marianthi, Hope and Kyra Halkias; and by his brother, Anthony; and nieces and nephews: Sadie (Keith) Stang, Desiree Halkias, George A. (Kristin) Halkias, Michael (Suzi) Harris, Christine (Pete) Stavros; and many great-nieces and nephews, cousins and friends. He was preceded in death by his parents, George and Sadie Halkias; his brother, Michael; and his son, Nicholas Damon.



November 29 ~ **John Raymond Yurko** (age 18) survived by parents Ray and Mary Lynn, his maternal aunts and uncles, Crissy and Billy Andrejko, Kathy and Tom Cain, Uncle George Hronakes and Mike Dovalis, Ashley and Rich Paradise; paternal grandparents, Bernard and Marylou Yurko, Patricia Germanowski, and aunts and uncles Michelle and Tim Reid, Kim Williams.

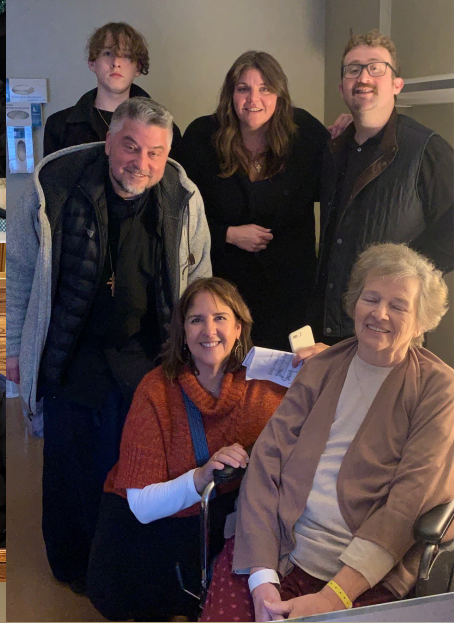


December 8 ~ **Jack Kyriakos Kalogeris** (age 90) preceded in death by his loving wife, Mary (Billirakis) Kalogeris and baby, Stergios Kalogeris (1965). Survived by his children, Rena (Vasile) Faklis, Stergios Kalogeris, Manuel (Kelly) Kalogeris; grandchildren, George and Kyriakos Faklis, Jake and Jacalyn Kalogeris; sister, Angeliki (George) Tsaga; sister-in-law, Popi Kalogeris; brother-in-law, Michael (Evelyn) Bilirakis; sister-in-law, Pat Bilirakis; and a large loving extended family of Godchildren, nieces and nephews, cousins as well as many friends and colleagues.





**Bringing CHEER!  
Caroling & visiting  
dear parishioners at  
rehab, in nursing  
homes, and  
our shut-ins**







Today is the second Sunday before Christmas, and as such, we celebrate what is known as the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers. Who are the Holy Forefathers? Quite simply, they are the ancestors of Christ, His forefathers in the flesh. While it may seem obvious, if we take a moment to reflect on the significance of this feast day as we approach Christmas, we will find that this highlights an incredibly important and profound truth, which is that Jesus Christ, who is God Himself in the flesh, doesn't just simply appear out of thin air, but rather, He places Himself in the stream of history, connecting Him to the rest of us in a very profound and intimate way.

Both Matthew and Luke's Gospels place genealogical lists towards their beginnings, Luke in his third chapter and Matthew in his very first chapter. Matthew's genealogy begins with Abraham, the first father of the Jewish people, unto whom God makes a covenant that He will bless Abraham's descendants, if they uphold the Lord's commandments. This focus on Abraham and his descendants which become the people of Israel is significant, since Matthew was most likely writing for a Jewish audience. Luke on the other hand was most likely writing for a Gentile audience, basically the rest of humanity, and thus, his genealogy begins with Christ and works its all the way backwards to Adam, the forefather of all humanity.

While their focuses differ, Matthew and Luke's genealogies both, in their own way, reveal to us another important truth which we should reflect upon on this Sunday of the Forefathers: that is, that God has been working in history since the beginning. There was nothing accidental or arbitrary about Christ's Incarnation. It was intended from the beginning, and every detail of His birth constellated to bring about the Kingdom of God which humanity has awaited. Even in the ages before the Savior's birth, when humanity had fallen away from God and had no inkling of the great wonder of the Resurrection, even then, God was setting aside special people to point the way towards the event of Christ's coming, the central event of history.

Just like all of us, Christ came into this world as a small babe, held tiny of frail within His mother's arms. Furthermore, He didn't set Himself apart by choosing to be born in a palace or as some great opulent prince. No, rather He came as the prince of peace, humble, laid in a manger, and as such, he identifies Himself with the least amongst us, in spite of Himself being the King of Kings. Yet, this is the beauty of this Sunday of the Forefathers. For as we look at the genealogies of Christ, we find that his ancestors include both kings and ordinary, humble people, the highs and lows of society. In other words, within Himself, he contains all of humanity, not just one type of person, but multitudes, which is why we can look at the icons here of saints and see the great diversity of peoples who nonetheless found unity in Christ.

This is a beautiful Sunday, and it is further preparation for us as we draw nearer to the great feast of Christmas, the ultimate celebration of Christ's incarnation. God once said to Abraham, "'In thy seed shall all of the nations of the earth be blessed'" and today we are looking towards the fulfilment of that promise less than two weeks away. It's a beautiful thing, to recognize on this day Christ's full identification with humanity. Of course, we must also remember that this day is not simply about remembering the forefathers and ancestors of Christ's humanity, but also recognizing in this that the identification of Christ with humanity extends to us this day. God has always had a plan for history, and even after Christ's first coming, God continues to weave history with his plan of salvation, as expressed through the life and saints of the Church. So today we take another crucial step on the journey towards the Nativity of Christ.

Let us appreciate this day for all it means for us, so in less than two weeks we can say with all our hearts, "Christ is born, Glorify Him!"

~Deacon Elias Diamond











Proposed Budget to be reviewed at General Assembly, January 25, 2026

Budget vs. Actuals	Proposed
	2026 Budget
<b>Income</b>	
5020 CH Pledges - Previous Year	8,000.0
5025 Automatic Stewardship	190,000.0
5030 Pledges - Current Year	500,000.0
5110 Food Fair Income	435,000.0
5120 FF Food Fair Ad Book Income	47,000.0
5210 Candle Money	60,000.0
5230 Holy Week Envelopes	3,500.0
5310 Donations - Unspecified Use	
5341 Designated Donation	
5345 Endowment Income	
5346 Mission Income	
5350 Agape Fund Income	
5354 Outreach Income	
5355 Fundraising Income	40,000.0
5410 Christmas Card	
5430 Flowers/Communion Wine	2,500.0
5450 Greek School Registration	3,000.0
5460 Landscaping Income	
5470 Vacation Church School Donation	1,000.0
5505 Building Fund Donations	20,000.0
5509 General Bldg Fund	
Total 5505 Building Fund Donations	20,000.0
5545 Golf Outting	50,000.0
5700 Interest Income	8,000.0
5820 Hall Deposits-Current Year	1,800.0
5840 Rental Income	3,000.0
5900 Miscellaneous Income	1,500.0
Uncategorized Income	0.0
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>\$1,374,300.0</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
7000 Wages	
7010 Priest Wages	115,000.0
7010a Priest Housing Allowance	30,000.0
7010b FICA Reimbursement	24,738.4
7011 Deacon Salary	60,000.0
7013 Assistant Priest Wages	15,000.0
7130 Priest Medical Insurance	37,260.0
Deacon Medical Insurance	22,000.0
7141 Automobile Expenses of Priest	5,000.0
7142 Priest Car Payment	7,500.0
Deacon Car Payment	3,600.0
7150 Travel/Clergy Laity	5,000.0
Substitute Priests	1,200.0
<b>Total 7010 Priest Wages</b>	<b>326,298.4</b>
7015 Pastoral Assistant	
7020 Greek School Teachers Wages	5,500.0
7050 Secretary Wages	57,200.0
7070a Secretary Medical Insurance	15,000.0
7070b Pastoral Assistant Insurance	0.0
7071 Cantor	6,500.0
7072 Organist	
7073 Choir Director	6,500.0
7074 GOYA Advisor	6,500.0
<b>Total 7000 Wages</b>	<b>423,498.4</b>

7125 Insurance	18,000.0
7160 Payroll Taxes	14,000.0
7165 Property Taxes	3,500.0
<b>7200 Utilities</b>	
7210 Columbia Gas	27,500.0
7220 Electric	32,000.0
7230 Water & Sewage	20,000.0
7231 Trash Removal	2,000.0
 7232 Telephone & Internet	 6,000.0
7274 Telephone (Priest cell phone)	1,800.0
7276 Website Maintenance	2,200.0
<b>Total 7232 Telephone &amp; Internet</b>	<b>10,000.0</b>
 7233 Security	 15,000.0
7240 Landscaping	17,000.0
7241 Snow Plowing & Salt	5,000.0
<b>Total 7200 Utilities</b>	<b>128,500.0</b>
 7266 Major Improvements Funded	 25,000.0
7270 Maintenance & Repairs	10,500.0
7275 Maintenance Contracts	5,700.0
<b>7300 Church/Office Expenses</b>	
7301 Archdiocese Stewardship	94,680.0
7302 Metropolis of Pgh Stewardship	7,920.0
Archdiocese Clergy / Laity Donation (June 2026)	4,000.0
7302.1 New Metropolis Donation	10,000.0
7303 Archdiocese Priest Pension	36,000.0
7309 Communion Wine & Incense	3,500.0
7318 Background check	1,000.0
7320 Candles	17,000.0
7330 Ecclesiastical Supplies	2,500.0
7341 Finance Charges	500.0
7350 Flowers Expense	5,000.0
7351 Publications & Printing	500.0
7352 Office Supplies	20,000.0
7353 Postage	1,700.0
7358 Computer Software/ Outside Help	6,000.0
7359 Office Equipment	0.0
7360 Greek School Expenses	2,000.0
7361 Socials-Feast Day-Easter-Picnic	4,500.0
7362 Youth - GOYA/YAL/JOY/Accolyte	20,000.0
7363 Visiting Clergy/Meetings	1,000.0
7365 Seniors Expenses	1,000.0
7366 Memberships/Dues	0.0
7370 Sunday School Expenses	1,000.0
7372 Supplemental Cleaning	7,000.0
7375 Golf Outing Expense	26,000.0
7379 Outreach	20,000.0
7380 Vacation Church School Expenses	700.0
7381 Bank Charges	5,000.0
7382 Professional Fees	10,000.0
7385 Payroll Processing Fees	3,000.0
7384 Late Fees	0.0
<b>Total 7300 Church/Office Expenses</b>	<b>311,500.0</b>
 7327 Vestment Expenses	 0.0
7376 Fundraising Expenses	16,000.0
7387 Interior Design	
7400 Agape Fund Expenses	

*Continued  
next page*





Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church

Budget vs. Actuals

**Proposed**  
**2026 Budget**

**7800 Hall/Event Expenses**

7311 Advertising	1,000.0
7315 Bookstore	1,500.0
7802 Custodian Wages	80,000.0
7803 Maintenance cell phone reimb	
7804 Columbia Gas	13,500.0
7806 Electric	9,000.0
7807 Exterminating	2,000.0
7808 Water & Sewage	9,800.0
7809 Telephone	600.0
7810 Trash Removal service	1,000.0
7816 Landscaping	13,000.0
7817 Snow Plowing	15,000.0
7819 Medical Insurance	21,000.0
7820 Food Fair Expenses	194,801.6
7820.5 Ad Book Expenses	6,300.0
7821 Credit card machine fees	12,000.0
7823 Insurance	6,000.0
7824 Property Taxes	2,000.0
7825 Maintenance & Repairs	24,000.0
7828 Cleaning Supplies	5,000.0
7833 Website	300.0
7864 Sound System	
7881 Permits, Licenses & Fees	300.0

<b>Total 7800 Hall/Event Expenses</b>	<b>418,101.6</b>
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**Unapplied Cash Bill Payment Expense**

<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>1,374,300.0</b>
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<b>Net Operating Income</b>	<b>(0.0)</b>
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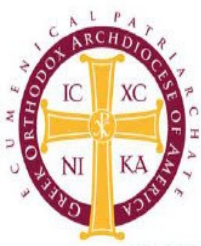
**Net Income**







### New Metropolis Center Progress - Dec 2025



48th BIENNIAL

CLERGY-LAITY CONGRESS

SAVE THE DATE! - JUNE 30-JULY 2, 2026

Join us in Cleveland, OH at the Huntington Convention Center

Mark your calendar for...

**Oratorical  
Education Sunday!**



**January 25, 2026**

Sunday School programs are encouraged to utilize their class time to review and dive deeper into the topics offered. Students can also begin working on drafts and sharing past experiences!

METROPOLIS OF PITTSBURGH CAMP

**SAVE THE DATE**

Staff applications for GOYA Spring Retreat & Summer Camp 2026 are opening soon!



APPLY BY MARCH 1ST AT 11:59 PM!

**Summer Camp**

Staff applications open:  
February 1 to March 1

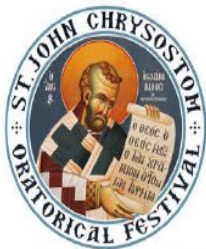
**GOYA Spring Retreat**

Staff applications open:  
February 15 to March 1

[y2am.pittsburgh.goarch.org/campstaff](https://y2am.pittsburgh.goarch.org/campstaff)







## Spotlight on 2025 Metropolis of Pittsburgh St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival Winners

### Senior Division Essay Topic 4

*"While every church building is different, there are specific guidelines and practices that describe how and why they are built the way they are. Research them, and then explain their theological significance."*

#### Senior Division Essay Winner - Anthony Asmis, St Paul Greek Orthodox Church, North Royalton, Ohio

The Orthodox Christian church is deeply rooted in architecture, theology and tradition, with every element of its design reflecting key aspects of Orthodox belief and worship. The structure and layout of an Orthodox church are not merely aesthetic but serve to guide worshippers into a deeper spiritual experience. The basic layout consists of a three-part structure of the Narthex, the Nave and the Sanctuary. Most Orthodox churches follow this three-part design because each element has both biblical and theological principles but are also rooted in more traditional design styles.

The Narthex is the first of the three main parts of the Church. The Narthex represents the fallen world and the place of preparation before entering the presence of God. Its theological significance is for it to be a place of preparation, and repentance. Before Christians enter the church, the Narthex serves as a place to get ready to partake in God's teachings. That means Christians can clear their minds of all negative thoughts before asking forgiveness from God. It also serves as a practical part of the church for the lighting of candles. Candles in the Orthodox Church, serve as prayers towards God. One other thing that can be found here is the Baptismal Font. It is placed in the Narthex to symbolize the entrance into the Church through baptism.

After preparing in the Narthex, the Nave is the next part of the Church. The Nave, which is the main worship area, represents the kingdom of God on Earth. This is where the faithful gather to participate in the Church service. The Nave typically consists of a seating area for the people, iconography, and the central dome. The central dome depicts the image of Christ as the center of activity. He is put there to represent the ruler of all. The shape of the dome is also important, because it represents the union of Heaven and Earth as one. This reinforces the idea that the Church is a place to be closer to God. In more traditional Orthodox churches, Byzantine churches for example, the layout of all the icons and architectural features such as pillars, point your eyes upward, symbolizing the ascension of our souls into Heaven. On the walls of the Nave, one can find a myriad of iconography. These icons depict Christ, the Theotokos, various Saints, and important biblical events. The icons are not decoration but serve as theological teachings and things to be venerated.

The last of the three parts of the Church is called the Sanctuary and is the location of the altar. The altar is where all the services take place, and Divine Liturgy is performed. The altar represents Heaven, where God's presence is strong, and sacrifices takes place. Outside of the altar, stands the Iconostasis. This is the wall of icons that separates the Nave from the Sanctuary. It serves as a representation of the separation between Heaven and Earth, and its icons are a window into Heaven. The royal doors in the center symbolize Christ as the mediator between God and man. Orthodox churches are always built to face East. Facing East symbolizes how Christ's second coming will be the rising sun of righteousness.

Orthodox church architecture is not merely functional but profoundly theological. Every aspect of its design from the dome to the Iconostasis, reinforces Orthodox beliefs about salvation, the Incarnation, and the Kingdom of God. Worship in an Orthodox church is meant to be a transformative experience, immersing the faithful in the reality of God's presence.

**Please consider donating to the Metropolis Scholarship Fund**



### PLEASE SUPPORT OUR METROPOLIS MINISTRIES!

It costs approximately \$1,000 per day to operate our Metropolis - including Metropolitan Sava's Archpastoral visitations, preparations for summer camp and GOYA retreats, our vital registry, and more.

Please consider sponsoring a day in the life of the Metropolis:

Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh, 5201 Ellsworth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15232

412-621-5529 (Main) 412-465-0460 (Camp) 412-621-8543 (Youth)

[pittsburgh.goarch.org](http://pittsburgh.goarch.org) [info@pittsburgh.goarch.org](mailto:info@pittsburgh.goarch.org)



*Please don't forget to  
return your 2026  
Stewardship card!*



HOLY CROSS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, 123 GILKESON ROAD, PITTSBURGH, PA 15225

**2026 STEWARDSHIP PLEDGE CARD**

*In gratitude for God's blessings, I/we make the following commitment to the ministries of Holy Cross.*

2026 NEW Total Pledge Commitments: \$ \_\_\_\_\_ OR Keep same as last year: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Signature(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Emergency Fundraising Appeal

A major gas leak was recently discovered under our church as many of you have already heard. Replacing the entire gas line cost **over \$216,000**, fully depleting our cash reserves.

We have launched an **Emergency Fundraising Campaign** and ask everyone to consider a special donation to help restore our financial footing. Every gift matters—and we are grateful to those that have contributed thus far!

## St Nicholas delivers gifts during Sunday school





## House Blessings

Every year, on the Feast of Epiphany, Orthodox Christians around the world have a blessing of the waters to celebrate the Baptism of Christ as well as the revealing of the Holy Trinity to mankind. We then received the blessing of this Holy Water to renew ourselves in Christ and to remind ourselves that through Christ all things are again made clean. We also extend that blessing to the homes in which we live, to wipe away temptations and attacks that might lead us away from Christ.

If you wish to have Fr. Michael come and bless your home, please complete this form and return it to the Church office at your earliest convenience. Please **PRINT** clearly.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please suggest THREE (3) dates and times for your house blessing

**STARTING JANUARY 5TH**

(You will receive a call confirming date and time of blessing.)

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

*Please prepare the following, to the best of your abilities, for the blessing:*

- 1) Make an effort to have the entire family present.
- 2) Set out an Icon in a central area of the house where the prayer service will begin.
- 3) Write two lists of names, one of the living and one of the departed family members for whom you would like the Priest to pray during the house blessing.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to fill out and return this form, either in the basket in the narthex or to:

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church  
123 Gilkeson Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15228



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

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Permit No. 2412  
Pittsburgh, PA

*Monday, January 5 **Eve of Theophany***

**Blessing of Water**

8:30am Royal Hours

10am Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil

11:30am **First Water Blessing**

*Tuesday, January 6 **Theophany***

8:15am Orthros

9:30am Divine Liturgy

**Great Blessing of Water**

