



Beloved Members and Friends of Holy Cross,

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

As the summer quickly approaches and the academic year comes to a close, we rejoice with those who have fulfilled their requirements for graduation. Much hard work, time, and money have been invested in our educations. Understanding how much effort goes into our intellectual development, we also are cognizant of the fact that our spiritual development needs constant attention as well. At all times and in all places, the Church calls out to us to remember that we belong to Christ. The disciples were simple fishermen, yet they were able to ascend to the heights of spiritual blessings. We also must use the knowledge and talents given to us for the glory of God. We must ask the Holy Spirit to guide us as we make decisions that will impact our careers, our spouses and children, and our homes.

The following has been written by St. Nicholas Velimirovic: "After all that they (the disciples) had seen and learned, they could not keep their hearts and minds from the Lord who had gone away from their sight, but who was, because of this (resurrection and ascension), even more firmly implanted in their souls. He dwelt in their hearts with power and glory, and they cried out in praise and blessing to the Lord. And so He was back with them sooner than they expected. He had not returned to be seen of their eyes, but had come to dwell in their souls. He did not, though come alone into their souls, but came with the Father, for the Lord had said of any who loved Him: "I and My Father will come unto him, and make our abode with him" (John 14:23). It was necessary only for the Holy Spirit to come and make His abode in them for them to be perfected men, in which the image and likeness of the Triune God is renewed. On account of this, the coming of the Holy Spirit, the disciples had to wait in Jerusalem. Ten days after His Ascension the

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THE 2026 PITTSBURGH SUMMER GREEK FESTIVALS GUIDE

It's a great tradition, and it's here again: 39 days of Greek Festivals in the greater Pittsburgh region, so plan well and you can eat Greek all summer! Post this schedule on your refrigerator and share copies with others. Bring your family and friends! We look forward to serving you!

LOCATION

DATES

- ☐ St. Nicholas (Pittsburgh/Oakland) May 5-10
- ☐ All Saints (Canonsburg) June 8-12
- ☐ Holy Trinity (Steubenville) June 10-12
- ☐ Holy Cross (Pittsburgh/Mt. Lebanon) June 15-19
- ☐ Kimisis Tis Theotokou (Aliquippa)..... June 11-13
- ☐ Holy Dormition (Oakmont)..... June 26-28
- ☐ All Saints (Weirton) July 10
- ☐ St. Spyridon (Monessen) July 10
- ☐ Holy Trinity (Ambridge)..... July 14-18
- ☐ Presentation of Christ/Ypapanti (East Pgh.) July 23-25
- ☐ Holy Trinity (Pittsburgh/North Hills) September 3-6

SEE BELOW FOR FESTIVAL HOURS & HOST PARISH WEB SITES. CHECK FOR UPDATES.

THE 2026 PITTSBURGH SUMMER GREEK FESTIVALS: ALL THE DETAILS

Don't cook tonight...go Greek! Please pass copies on to your friends! Greek food is always enjoyed best with good company!

Parish	Dates	Address	Phone	Website	Hours
Saint Nicholas (Pittsburgh/Oakland)	May 5-10	419 S. Dithridge St., Pittsburgh	412-682-3866	www.StNicksPgh.org	Tue-Thu: 11a-9p; Fri: 11a-10p; Sat 12-10p; Sun 12-8p
All Saints (Canonsburg)	June 8-12	601 West McMurray Rd., Cburg	724-745-5205	www.AllSaintsCbg.org	Mon-Fri: 11a-9p
Holy Trinity (Steubenville)	June 10-12	300 S. 4th St., Steubenville	740-282-9835	www.holytrinitystb.org	Wed-Fri: 11:00a-9:00p
Holy Cross (Pittsburgh/Mt. Lebanon)	June 15-19	123 Gilkeson Rd., Pittsburgh	412-833-3355	www.HolyCrossPgh.org	Mon-Thu: 11a-9p, Dinner til 9p; Fri: 11a-10p, Dinner til 9p
Kimisis Tis Theotokou	June 11-13	2111 Davidson St., Aliquippa	724-375-5341	www.Theotokou.org	Thu-Sat: 11a-8p
Holy Dormition (Oakmont)	June 26-28	12 Washington Ave., Oakmont	412-828-4144	www.DormitionPgh.org	Fri-Sun: 12p-11p Dinner until 9p
All Saints (Weirton)	July 10	3528 West St., Weirton	304-797-9884	allstswv.org/greek-festival	Fri: 11a-9p
Saint Spyridon (Monessen)	July 10	1207 Grand Blvd., Monessen	724-684-5411	stspyridon.pa.goarch.org	Fri: 11a-9p
Holy Trinity (Ambridge)	July 14-18	2930 Beaver Rd., Ambridge	724-266-5336	www.htgoc.org	Tue-Sat: 11:30a-8:30p
Ypapanti/Presentation of Christ	July 23-25	1672 Electric Ave., E Pittsburgh	412-824-9188	www.ypapanti.net	Thu-Sat: 11a-9p
Holy Trinity (Pittsburgh/North Hills)	Sep. 3-6	985 Providence Blvd., Pittsburgh	412-366-8700	HolyTrinityPgh.org/festival	Thu-Sun: 11a-9p

Thank you for enjoying our great Greek food, music and culture. Take a church tour and ask about the timeless Orthodox Christian faith while you're there, too! Also, want to help us feed, minister to and provide health care for the hungry and needy of the Pittsburgh area? Support the Neighborhood Resilience Project, an Orthodox Christian philanthropic ministry united in faith and joined by a desire to provide action-oriented and sustainable solutions for poverty-and-trauma-affected communities in the region. Find out more or donate at neighborhoodresilience.org.

This free guide is provided as a public service of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church (Pittsburgh/North Hills). Please share it with your friends! Find it online at HolyTrinityPgh.org/pittsburgh-greek-festivals-guide.

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church

123 Gilkeson Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15228

Crossroads, published monthly Volume 26 Issue 6/7

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

Fr. Michael Kallaur, Presiding Priest

Fr. Daniel Korba, Presbyter

Deacon Elias Diamond

Philip Yamalis, Cantor

Nena Jovonovich, Secretary

Website: 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	Dina Hartlep	(412) 720-9383
Interior Design Committee	Laura Zervos	(412) 287-5679

*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).**

Parish Council 2026

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

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.



power from on high (i.e. The Holy Spirit) sanctified the first Christian Church, never to leave Christ's Church to the present day, and until the end of time.

We praise and bless the Lord who, by His Ascension, opened our understanding to see the path and goal of our life. We praise and bless the Father, who responds to our love of the Son with His love, and makes His abode, together with the Son, in all who hold and confess the Lord's commandments. And we keep the Father and the Son constantly in mind, praising and blessing them – like the apostles in the city of Jerusalem – waiting for the power from on high: the Spirit, the Comforter, to come upon us. He who comes upon us all at our Baptism, but who leaves us because of our sins. May the whole primal, heavenly man be renewed in us. May we, like the apostles, be made worthy to receive the blessing of our glorified and ascended Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be glory and praise together with the Father and the Holy Spirit – the Trinity consubstantial and undivided, now and forever, through all time and all eternity. Amen."

As the Lord continues to send down His blessings upon us, let us open our hearts and minds to the guidance and wisdom of the Holy Spirit. Allow the Holy Spirit to direct our lives to something more than material concerns and passions. May the Holy Spirit help us produce the fruits of His grace; love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, knowledge, self-control, gentleness, and faithfulness.

Again we congratulate all our graduates and their families. May the Lord help us to be faithful servants of His Church.

Opportunities for our children to grow spiritually:

Summer Camp -

June 21st - 27th (2nd-4th grade) / June 28th - July 4th (5th-7th grade)

July 5th - July 11th (7th-9th grade) / July 12th - July 18th (10th-12th grade)

*****SCHOLARSHIPS ARE AVAILABLE-please contact Church Office*****

Our Vacation Church School: July 27th - July 31st - "Summer Pascha."

Your support for VCS is very much needed and appreciated.

Please take advantage of the opportunities our parish and the Metropolis provides for the spiritual development of our youth during these summer months. Scholarships are always available.

With love and prayers,

Fr. Michael

There is Hope for us All: **Homily on Sts. Peter and Paul**

by Fr. Philip LeMasters

None of us can tell the story of our lives without pointing to particular persons we have known and who have shaped us. In our families and friendships, people are not interchangeable, for we are all unique in our relationships with one another and with God. We play particular roles that are colored by our character, personal history, and distinctive blend of strengths and weaknesses. That is also how it is in the life of the Church. Particular people matter.

Today we celebrate two of the most glorious Saints of the Christian faith. They are both pillars of the Church, apostles, and martyrs whose unique personalities and experiences have made decisive and permanent contributions to the Body of Christ. Saint Peter was the head disciple whose confession, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God," is the rock on which Christ, our true foundation, has built His Church. The gospels describe Peter's presence at so many crucial moments in the ministry of the Lord, including at His arrest when Peter, who had so clearly confessed Him earlier and vowed never to abandon Him, denied Him three times. Of course, the risen Christ restored Peter by asking him three times if he loved Him and giving him the command to feed His sheep as a shepherd of the flock of Christians. And in the book of Acts, we see Peter boldly proclaiming the good news, performing miracles, and playing a key role in welcoming Gentiles into the Church. After serving as the first bishop of Antioch, where the disciples were first called Christians, then he went to serve in Rome. Peter was crucified there upside down for his faith in Jesus Christ, for by Peter's own request he was unworthy to die in the same way as His Savior.

St. Paul plays a glorious role in the formation of the faith is obvious to anyone who knows the New Testament, for he wrote so much of it. He traveled for decades founding and supporting churches, especially among Gentiles. Paul himself was Jewish and had been a strict Pharisee who had persecuted Christians. But on the road to Damascus, the risen Lord appeared to Him in a blinding light and called him to repentance and the shocking ministry of bringing Gentiles into the Body of Christ through faith, not circumcision and obedience to the Old Testament law. Perhaps more than anyone else, Paul made clear that the Christian faith is not a sect of Judaism primarily for people of a particular ethnic and religious heritage, but instead good

news for all people, regardless of their ancestry.

As today's epistle passage reminds us, Paul's ministry was not easy by any stretch of the imagination. He was beaten, imprisoned, humiliated, and ultimately martyred in Rome for his faith in Jesus Christ. He knew both the heights of spiritual ecstasy and the chronic challenge of a "thorn in the flesh" that God did not remove, despite his three-fold request. Whatever that thorn may have been, Paul learned through his sufferings the sufficiency of God's strength for him. God's "strength is made perfect in (Paul's) weakness." As the apostle said of himself, "For when I am weak, then I am strong."

When we study the lives of these two great saints, we do not see people who made no mistakes or who were rich, famous, or without problems. These were real human beings who fell short, repented, grew over time in their understanding, and faced such opposition that both suffered capital punishment at the hands of the pagan Romans. They gained absolutely no worldly advantages by their faithful ministry, but their selfless service strengthened the Church in ways too numerous to count. We are here today as Orthodox Christians because of what God did through them and so many other lesser known apostles, martyrs, and evangelists across the ages.

In order to celebrate worthily the feast day of Sts. Peter and Paul, we must go beyond praising them with our words. We must participate personally in the holiness so evident in them. In other words, we must become like them in a way appropriate to our particular calling and location. For just as God used a fisherman and a Pharisee with given sets of strengths and weaknesses to His glory, He intends to do likewise with each of us. The first century is long gone, but there is plenty of time left in the twenty-first century for us to hear and respond to the same risen Lord who called Peter to feed His sheep and Paul to become a missionary to the Gentiles. Like the Ephesians to whom Paul wrote, we too have become "fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone..." (Eph. 2:19-20)

Each generation is like a new story added to the building or a new branch growing on a tree. Even as we find our personal history in the previous generations of our families, we take our spiritual life from the living history of what the Holy Spirit has done through each generation in the life of the Church. We are called to make present in our day the same faithfulness that we see in those who have gone before us, but we do so as unique, unrepeatable persons called to grow in the divine likeness and to find the fullness of our identity through

union with the Lord like an iron left in the fire. Just as a fisherman and a Pharisee became radiant with the divine energies through their repentance and steadfast dedication to Christ, the same can be true of us.

We may think, however, that we are simply too sinful to achieve such spiritual heights. We know that we fall short and may be ashamed even to think of becoming like these great saints. Remember for just a moment, however, that Peter denied Christ three times at His arrest and Paul persecuted Christians to the point of death. If they can repent, follow Jesus Christ faithfully, and have such exalted roles in the life of the Church, who are we to excuse ourselves from whatever God wants of us in our families, our parish, our work, or whatever it might be? In all likelihood, we will live and serve in obscurity and face obstacles much smaller than the brutal persecution these great saints endured.

As well, we may be tempted to think that they were so much stronger than we are. Remember that St. Paul found God's strength precisely in his weakness, in his infirmities and pains that opened his life to the gracious power of God. St. Peter must have felt weak when the Lord said "Get behind me, Satan" to him when he tried to explain to Christ that He would not be rejected and killed. And could there be any greater moment of weakness than when the disciple who boasted that he would never abandon the Savior did so at his arrest by denying Him three times?

Our moments of weakness are probably less dramatic, but they are no less real. We find it hard to do the basics of the Christian life: forgive our enemies; pray each day and fast regularly; attend the Divine Liturgy and other services of the Church whenever possible; take Confession on a regular basis and especially when we have a guilty conscience about a grave sin; give generously to the poor; visit the sick and lonely; and guard our hearts and minds from the moral decay that permeates our culture.

When we are aware of our weaknesses, we are in the perfect place to follow in the way of the fisherman and the Pharisee who in humble repentance found a strength that makes up what is lacking, heals infirmities, and even conquers sin and death. Let us not use a false sense of humility to excuse ourselves from true discipleship as we celebrate the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul. Instead, we must follow their example as the unique people we are, with all our strengths, failings, and peculiarities, for from the very beginning of the faith, that is the only way that anyone has become a saint.

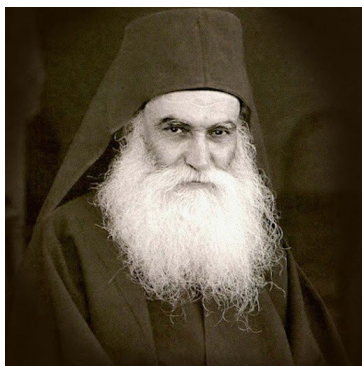
Saint Ephraim of Katounakia

Birthday: 06.12.1912

Holy Monastery:

The Monastery of Great Lavra

Saint Ephraim of Katounakia was a great figure of Athonite monasticism. His paternal affection and profound teachings left an indelible mark not only on the monastic community but also on the faithful who consider his ascetic life as a model of holiness. Many people turn to him for protection and spiritual guidance.



The Life of the Saint ~ Early Years (1912–1933)

Saint Ephraim was born on December 6, 1912, in Abelochori of Boeotia. He came from a deeply religious family. His grandfather, Nikitas, was a priest, and both of his parents, Ioannis Papanikitas and Victoria, eventually embraced the monastic life after their son retired to Mount Athos. His secular name was Evangelos.

He was one of four siblings. He spent his childhood in Thebes, where they moved while the saint was still in primary school.

Upon finishing his studies and seeking his path in life, Evangelos quickly realized that his faith and love for God would guide his choices. His encounters with the elders Ephraim and Nikephoros, whom he met in Thebes, played a crucial role in shaping his spiritual journey.

Moreover, his mother had received a divine revelation concerning her son's monastic vocation. Saint Ephraim appeared to her in a dream and spoke of her child's spiritual gift, the will of God, and the obedience she was called to show by offering her son to Him.

Monastic Life (1933–1998)

Evangelos entered [Mount Athos](#) on September 14, 1933, beginning his monastic journey at the hermitage of Saint Ephraim of Syros. From the very start, [Katounakia](#) became the place where his grace and asceticism took root and flourished.

Within six months, he became a monk and was given the name Longinus. In 1935, he took the great schema, receiving the name Ephraim. A year later, he became a priest.

Saint Ephraim was first introduced to [monastic life](#) by the elder Nikephoros. With his blessing, however, he soon came into close relation with [Saint Joseph the Hesychast](#), who became his great spiritual father and teacher. Under Saint Joseph's guidance, he was taught the mental prayer and unceasing devotion to God. Through this deep commitment to Christ, Saint Ephraim learned to purify his mind from all passions and to receive divine grace.

The bond between the two saints was profound and sincere. Remarkably, even after his repose, Saint Joseph continued to appear to Saint Ephraim in dreams, offering him guidance and spiritual support.

When the elder Nikephoros passed away in 1973, Saint Ephraim assumed responsibility for the brotherhood, guiding and caring for the community. In 1980, he established his own brotherhood, serving as a spiritual elder and offering instruction and counsel to the young monks who were beginning their ascetic life in

Mount Athos.

In 1996, at the age of 84, he suffered his first stroke, which left him paralyzed. A second stroke followed in February 1998, leading to his repose. He was buried in the courtyard of his cell.

On March 9, 2020, Saint Ephraim was officially announced as a saint by the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. His memory is celebrated annually on February 27.

The Spiritual Character of the Saint

The profound spirituality and radiant inner light of Saint Ephraim were immediately evident to those who came into contact with him. His presence inspired awe and reverence, revealing the depth of his communion with God.

The saint was endowed with the gift of foresight. He often anticipated events and recognized people and names he had never seen before. There are many testimonies, especially from laypeople and children, recounting how the saint would spontaneously call them by names they would later receive upon entering the monastic life, long before they had even considered such a path.

His spiritual grace was especially manifested within the sacraments of the church. Saint Ephraim spoke of experiencing realities that are not accessible to the average person. As he once confided to a fellow monk, from the very first Divine Liturgy he celebrated, he tangibly sensed the transformation of the Holy Gifts. He felt the presence of the Holy Spirit and perceived the angels who were celebrating alongside him. On one occasion, he even saw the very face of Jesus Christ in the chalice, and he could not keep his tears before the mystery of the divine sacrifice.

Saint Ephraim also experienced the divine fragrance that emanates from the holy relics. According to one testimony, when a group of pilgrims once asked him to describe this heavenly scent, he simply bowed his head in prayer. A few moments later, the entire area was filled with a cool and sweet fragrance. The saint then explained that he had asked God to reveal the fragrance to them, as it was beyond human description.

Among his many virtues, Saint Ephraim was known for his open heartedness. He approached those around him with gentleness, humility, and often a touch of humor. He shared stories, used allegories to express deep spiritual truths, and was not afraid to change his tone or voice to speak in an intimate and endearing way.

Even after suffering his first stroke, which left him nearly paralyzed, the saint retained his mental clarity and spiritual liveliness. Though he was in a state of almost total immobility, he continued to communicate with quiet responses. He would often smile in the company of others, moved by joyful memories, humorous stories he had once shared, or the cheerful news brought to him by visitors.

Teachings of the Saint

Saint Ephraim's teachings were marked by spiritual depth, clarity, and a strong emphasis on humility, self-awareness, and inner struggle. Some of his most memorable sayings include:

- *"As long as man lives, he must always strive. And the first battle is to conquer himself. Man's greatest enemy is not the devil, it is man himself. We are afraid of ourselves because we do not listen to others, we only listen to our own thoughts. Yet we have so many holy fathers to imitate through their writings, and still, our ego often overwhelms us. When a person conquers himself, he becomes a great martyr, a trophy-bearer, and victorious before God!"*

- *"You must submit to my passions, and you must submit to yours. That is how you will become a saint."*

- *"Who truly knows what will elder say? Only the devil knows what will elder say. Father Athanasios, the brother in the flesh and spiritual subordinate of elder Joseph, passed the feast of the Dormition of Theotokos at the New Skete. There used to live an old monk that I had the blessing to meet personally. The story I'm about to tell you, I didn't witness myself, but I heard it from the old monk."*

He had a subordinate, a simple brother, God rest his soul, who eventually came to the moment of his death. The day before he passed away, demons appeared to him.

They told him, "You are ours. Tomorrow, at three o'clock, we will come to take you to hell," and listed off various accusations that are typical demonic torments.

The young monk was upset. The elder entered the cell and said:

- "My child, why are you so troubled?"

- "I'm lost! The demons came. They told me they're coming tomorrow at three to take me away!"

- "Oh, my child," the elder responded, "you are under obedience. When the demons come, simply say to them: 'I have an Elder.'"

- "Blessed be!" the brother exclaimed.

That was it. He found peace. The next day, right on time, as the demons do, they came, trying to torment him, pulling at his tongue, tormenting his soul. The brother stood firm and said:

"Why do you come for me? I am under obedience. I have an Elder!"

At those words "I have an Elder" the demons vanished completely.

This is the power of obedience. This is what it means to have an Elder."

- *"Cultivate the gift of tears. Set before your mind the images and thoughts that move the heart to repentance. I would often recall the body of Elder Joseph as we laid him in the tomb; I would kiss him and think that soon I would be laid there too. Then I would wonder whether God would accept or forgive me."*

- *"Vary your spiritual 'diet.' Take up your prayer rope and pray steadily for an hour. When fatigue sets in, turn to something else, reading, chanting, or a bit of practical work. Changing the kind of mental food refreshes the soul."*

- *"God's mercy is vast. Elder Joseph taught us that not only through the Divine Liturgy but even through mental prayer alone a soul can be drawn out of hell."*

- *"The mental prayer gradually restores a person to the first grace of baptism."*

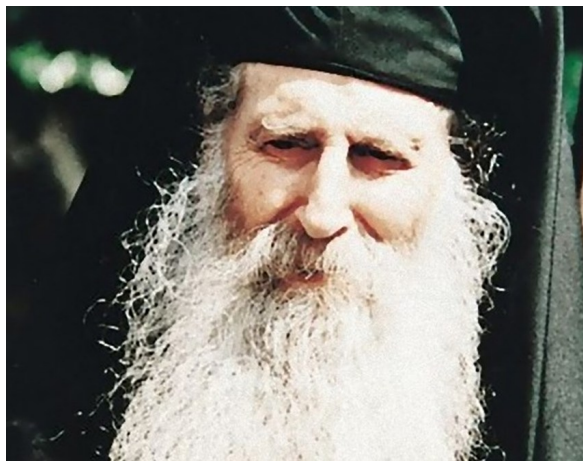
"In my own pain and hopelessness, I said nothing to my companion. Then I heard a thin, gentle voice within me: 'This is how God wants you to be.' At that, I drew a deep breath and answered, 'Blessed be Your will, Lord, only grant me patience, for I cannot bear this on my own.'"

Apolytikion

O newly-shining lamp-lighter of noetic prayer, as a dweller of Katounakia and a light of the Holy Mountain, who illumined all with the light of your virtues, O most-divine Ephraim, who proceeded to the heights of theosis, dispassion and nepsis: Do not cease to entreat Christ for us.

St. Iakovos of Tsliki

From a young age little Iakovos (which was his name even at baptism) loved the Lord and His Bride, the Church. Born in Livisi, in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey), he and his family were forced to immigrate to Greece during the exchange of populations. Eventually settling on the island of Evia, he lived with his family in a storehouse with other refugees, blankets separated the individual living



quarters. Little Iakovos would lift these blankets in order to “cense” his neighbours with the toy censor he made out of a roof tile. His holiness was noticed very early, though he wasn’t fully understood and suffered a great deal of derision; children would call him “geronda” and “father”. He would arise in the night for vigil, chant throughout the day, and was even entrusted with the keys to the village church since a priest came only twice a month to serve the divine services.

Throughout his life he lived in great poverty and fasting. As a young man he would chant in the church barefoot because he could not afford shoes. People ridiculed him but he often had visions of saints and angels which would comfort and strengthen him in his resolve to live for Christ. After serving in the Greek army and working to save enough money for his sister’s dowry, he was free to become a monk. Wanting to follow in his ancestors’ footsteps (seven generations of priest-monks, a bishop and a saint), he initially wanted to become a monk in the Holy Land. Before setting out he visited St. David’s Monastery for what he thought would be the last time and was instead spiritually persuaded to stay there by St. David himself. Through many hardships the elder increased in holiness and grace during his time at St. David’s, eventually becoming the abbot and receiving countless souls whom he guided and comforted. St. David was like his own spiritual father, appearing to him on many occasions and hearkening to his many prayers and supplications. The elder reposed on November 21, 1991, the Feast of the Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple. May we have his blessing!

Wise Counsel from the Elder: (from Precious Vessels of the Holy Spirit)

“We are not sanctified by the place in which we live, but by the way we live.”

“The faithful shouldn’t tell others of things they have confessed, of details of their life or their spiritual endeavour.”

“Chase away the bad thoughts and fantasies that the devil presents. Don’t even notice them.”

“Don’t hesitate [to come to confession]. Don’t be ashamed. Whatever you may have done, even the greatest of sins, the spiritual father has power from the Lord Christ Himself and from the Apostles to forgive you with his stole.”

“I asked God in prayer for the gift of discerning men’s hearts by looking at their faces, so that I might be able to help them; and God granted it.”

The Sanctifying Dimension, Part Two

His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

Some have attributed the decline of the sanctifying dimension in the lives of believers to the neglect of the clergy. Yet to place responsibility on priests alone while ignoring the responsibility of the faithful is not accurate. Not all clergy are saints, nor are all believers. There are many good priests, but they are often discouraged by the pressure placed upon them to be everything except sanctifiers. Thus, while the responsibility of the clergy is indeed great, there is also a great responsibility resting upon the faithful. In the previous article, I referred to the role of all of us, and to the importance of the home in spiritual formation.

For this reason, I would like to expand a little further on this topic and speak about prayer, its role, and some of the current obstacles, especially those caused by believers themselves. I hope to shed light on our shared responsibility, clergy and laity alike, for this absence of prayer, so that together we may rise to a more active life of sanctification.

Let us begin by speaking of the richness of the Orthodox rite, in particular the Byzantine rite. This rite is distinguished by its liturgical richness and by the way it liturgically embraces the full range of human life. The Church accompanies the believer with her prayers from conception to birth, to the child's first entrance into the church, then through Baptism, Holy Communion, and spiritual growth. She blesses life through the divine sacraments, blesses the home through the sanctification of water, and likewise blesses fields and possessions. She accompanies the faithful in sickness, travel, study, engagement, marriage, and even to the moment of departure from this life. Nor does she cease afterward, for she continues to pray for the repose of the soul.

The concern of the Church is to embrace and spiritually nourish the human person, so that he may become a citizen of the heavenly Kingdom, receive the saving and salvific gifts of God, and have the abundant life (John 10:10) which Christ came to give.

For this reason, the Orthodox rite has been enriched with salvific events and with events of daily life that the Church has baptized and clothed with a Christian character, so that they may become spiritual windows contributing to the salvation of the faithful. Thus, the feasts of our Lord, of the Mother of God, and of the saints are distributed throughout the year. There is scarcely a day without one feast or more. Each feast has its own liturgical texts, scriptural readings, and beautiful devotional hymns, though they differ in length, importance, beauty, and popularity.

In addition, this rite has been enriched with many prayers that bless

the believer in every aspect of life. There is a prayer for everything. We may mention, for example, the prayers of blessing that encompass one's circumstances, intentions, work, and possessions. There are also blessings for occasions recognized worldwide that may be given a Christian dimension, such as the Day of the Environment, Teacher's Day, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and so forth.

Nor should we forget the daily prayers distributed throughout the yearly liturgical cycle: the compunctionate services of Great Lent, Holy and Great Week, the canons of supplication to the saints, and the prayers of entreaty.

Metropolitan Kallistos (Ware), in his book *The Orthodox Church*, writes: "The richness of Orthodox services requires the believer to possess a small library of some twenty important volumes. Though difficult to use at first, these volumes are among the greatest treasures of the Orthodox Church."

In the face of all this richness — which fills dozens of volumes — one cannot but be surprised by the lack of liturgical practice currently found in parish churches, and that the overwhelming majority of believers do not know what exists within their own Church. If we set aside the well-known services of Great Lent and Holy Week, we find that most believers do not know anything of the Church's abundant richness and beauty other than the Divine Liturgy.

Let us consider a few examples.

To my knowledge, most churches in cities and smaller parishes have one or two chanters celebrate Orthros every Sunday morning. How many faithful actually participate in it? Compare the numbers attending Orthros with those attending the Divine Liturgy.

As for Great Vespers on Saturday evening, which carries all the meanings of the Resurrection we commemorate every Sunday, how many pray it together with the priest in the churches where it is served every week? Once, I attended Saturday evening services in Kyiv and another in Moscow. The Slavs celebrated both Vespers and Orthros on Saturday evening, entirely chanted. I was astonished to see the churches full of faithful standing as there were no pews in their churches. Those who did not participate in these services would not approach Holy Communion on Sunday morning, even if they had made their confession that night.

Let us take another example: the daily prayers. How many offer them? Among those who practice confession and seek spiritual guidance, how many raise the obstacles they encounter in their prayer life? From my experience as a confessor, especially when I was serving as a parish priest, I rarely heard complaints about prayer other than distraction of mind. The greater struggle for the overwhelming majority of

penitents was perseverance in offering prayer morning and evening, no matter how small or brief the personal rule given to them by their spiritual father.

Observers note greater participation in services that are followed by some social gathering, especially food. For example, attendance at the Presanctified Liturgy celebrated on Wednesday evening is much higher in parishes that offer an agape meal afterward. Is this response rooted in a love for prayer, or does gathering around the table play the stronger role in motivating participation? The answer is up to each person, for our role is not to condemn or judge, but to observe and to awaken.

What would an outside observer understand when invited to witness the celebration of baptism or marriage? Are not social appearances often dominant over the spiritual dimension, sometimes to the point of obscuring it entirely? Are not the music, clothing, flowers, decorations, festivities, and invitations considered the most important things—the ones given time, attention, and even money? What does this mean except that, in our deepest part of our conscience, we often assign little weight to the spiritual reality the Church provides for us, while giving priority to social appearances?

The presence of a bottle of holy water and another of blessed oil on the icon shelf in the home remains common among Orthodox Christians. Anointing the sick with blessed oil is still a natural practice among the faithful, sought for blessing and healing.

Our grandparents were accustomed to setting aside a place for God in their homes: the icon corner and the lamp kept burning before it. This is an authentic and foundational Eastern Christian tradition. Where is it today? How many homes still light the lamp on Saturday evenings or in times of trial and distress? Where has the censuring of icons gone? Or the use of incense in family prayer? Do not such traditions cultivate a tangible sense of God's presence—or more than that, a spiritual presence permeated by the divine presence—which becomes planted in the hearts of children and is never erased from their memory?

What do we conclude from these examples? Where is the spiritual practice of the people? Why do so many fail to respond to spiritual activities? If we are honest, should we not say that many do not grant them the same importance they give to social demands? Does the responsibility here rest on the clergy alone? Where is the role of true Christian formation? Where are our spiritual homes that live in piety, fear of God, fidelity to the Gospel commandments, and prayer—and that hand these things on? Where is our role as fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers, priests and faithful? ❧



THE ENCOUNTER

LOOKING TO REDEEM THE SCROLL?

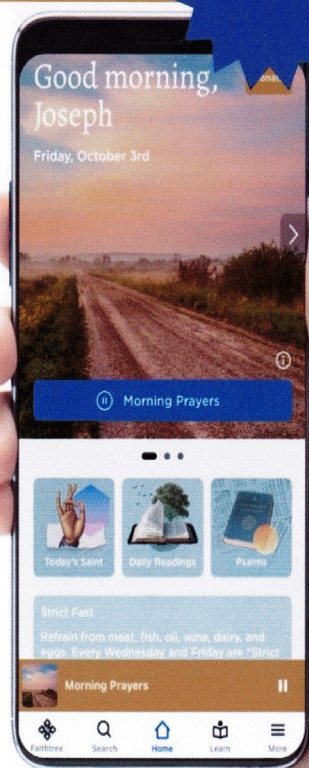
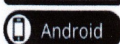
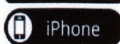
Major app
update!

Join thousands of Orthodox Christians around the world praying daily with **the Encounter app**—now with a fresh look and new features to deepen your prayer life.

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The Sanctifying Dimension, Part Three
By His Eminence Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

A True Story for Reflection

After I told one of my friends the story related below, he asked me, “Why do we not meet priests of this kind?” I will leave the answer to the reader.

While browsing an Orthodox website one day, I came across this story, rich with spiritual lessons for anyone willing to reflect. I wanted to share it briefly with my dear readers because I found in it a practical answer to what I had presented in the [previous two articles](#).

This story appeared in a recently published electronic book in Moscow, issued in Russian, English, and French, titled [Everyday Saints](#). It contains real stories as well as symbolic ones. Among them is the story of “the novice bishop.” The word “novice” here refers to monastic novitiate. (We have received a great blessing from this man in this Archdiocese, because he served as a bishop for several years in America.)

The story centers on Bishop Basil Rodzianko, who fell asleep in the Lord in 1999. He was born into a Russian aristocratic family. His grandfather was the president of the Imperial Duma, which forced the family into exile in 1920, when the bishop was still a child.

They ended up in Serbia. There he grew up, was educated, and came to know great church figures, among them the one who later became archbishop and then Saint John Maximovitch. Basil married a young woman whom he loved deeply, chose the priesthood as the path of service to his people, and took Saint Vladimir as his patron. After the communists came to power during and after the Second World War, he refused to leave Serbia, even though he faced the real danger of arrest as a priest.

And that is exactly what happened. Once the new Yugoslavia had become established, persecution against the Church intensified. He was sent to a prison camp for eighteen months. But the conflict that arose between the leaders of Russia and Yugoslavia at that time, Stalin and Tito, led Tito to release all the “White Russians” from the prison camps and expel them from the country.

Father Vladimir chose Paris because his spiritual father, the holy Archbishop John Maximovitch, was there. Saint John received him with joy and, after a time, sent him to London to serve a small Serbian parish. Father Vladimir was highly intelligent and distinguished himself in teaching and evangelism. He also knew Russian, Serbian, French, English, Bulgarian, and a little Romanian, which qualified him to present a weekly Orthodox religious program in Russian on the BBC.

In the 1960s, he passed through a painful period. After losing his wife, his grief drove him to vodka, to the point of addiction. The effects of alcohol did not outwardly appear on him because his physical strength enabled him to continue fulfilling his duties without visible failure. But one day, his wife appeared to him in a dream, reproached him sternly, and showed him her sorrow over what he was doing. He awoke from the dream and gave up alcohol once and for all, overcoming his human grief.

After the death of his previous spiritual father, he chose Metropolitan Anthony Bloom, the well-known Metropolitan of London, famous for his spiritual depth, as his new spiritual father. In time, Metropolitan Anthony recommended him to become a bishop in North America, since he had proven to be a successful missionary. According to Russian Orthodox tradition, a bishop must be a canonical monk before his episcopal consecration. And so it was.

When he made his confession before his monastic tonsure, he said to his spiritual father, "I understand well how I will live the vows of chastity and poverty, but I still do not understand how I will live the vow of obedience. A bishop is the one who gives directions, guidance, and instructions. He is the one who is obeyed."

Metropolitan Anthony was silent for a moment, then answered, "Always consider yourself a novice monk, and obey everyone who asks you for a service that you are able to fulfill." Father Vladimir took this counsel as a law of obedience and strove to live by it for the rest of his life. He was tonsured a monk, taking his new name from his new patron saint, Basil.

He used to visit his homeland, Russia, many times during his years as a bishop. On one occasion, he met an elderly woman on a street in Moscow. As soon as she saw him, thinking he was a priest, she said, "Please, father, bless my little home. For three years now I have been asking the priest of my parish to bless it, and he has not answered my request."

He accepted her request immediately based on his vow of obedience. His companion tried to dissuade him, saying he was under no obligation to do this. So, he asked her, "Where is your home?" She replied, "Not far. We take the bus from the outskirts of Moscow for only forty minutes!" Yet they were in the center of Moscow, which meant they first needed to take the metro for at least half an hour, and then the bus. Still, the bishop did not change his answer. First, they all went to the church to get the vestments needed for the house blessing. Then, they went to the woman's home, which consisted of one room, eight square meters in size, on the ninth floor of a large, old building.

On the way, she told the bishop that her children and grandchildren never called her and paid no attention to her. After the blessing of the house, she served tea and cake to the bishop and his companion, and he accepted from her an old ruble, so as not to wound her feelings. She thanked him and said, "Now I can depart in peace, after my home has been blessed!"

Does not this elderly woman, who grew up under harsh religious persecution and was raised on atheist propaganda in school and society, show a profound and moving sense of holiness and reverence? And should not priests like this bishop abound in proportion to the many families who possess this sanctifying awareness of the importance of divine blessing?

In 1990, during another visit, Bishop Basil met a young priest who had graduated from the theological faculty with distinction, yet did not continue on to higher studies because he chose instead to serve a neglected parish in a village in the Kostroma region and restore its crumbling eighteenth-century temple. This priest asked the bishop to bless his church by celebrating the Divine Liturgy there. As usual, the companion tried to prevent the bishop from accepting. This time, the distance between where they were and the church in question was much farther—only six hundred kilometers! The bishop obeyed. He set out with the priest and his companion by car, after obtaining the episcopal vestments.

After several hours of travel, traffic came to a halt because of an accident between a motorcycle and a truck. The bishop learned that the motorcyclist had died. He got out of the car and went to the site of the accident, where he found a young man weeping bitterly over his dead father. He said to the young man, "I am an Orthodox priest." Then he asked him, "Was your father a believer, so that I may read the

prayers for him?" The young man replied, "Yes, yes, certainly. Please read the necessary prayers. My father was a very faithful Orthodox man, and he had a spiritual father. But he did not go to church."

Bishop Basil asked in surprise, "How could he have a spiritual father and yet not go to church?" The young man answered, "My father had been an atheist. But he listened regularly to the weekly spiritual talks of Father Rodzianko (Bishop Basil himself) on the BBC. Through him, he came to faith, and he obeyed everything that this priest said, considering him his spiritual father."

Tears streamed from Bishop Basil's eyes as he put on his epitachelion and began to pray for the soul of his spiritual son, who until that moment had been unknown to him.

Who could have imagined that God had arranged this meeting so that this man would not be deprived of the blessing of his spiritual father? These are the hidden purposes of God. They may not be revealed to us quickly every time, but the fact that they remain hidden does not mean that God is not following us in the details of our lives, leading us toward the salvation for which we hope.

O Lord, grant Your Church priests like these righteous ones. Forgive, and do not allow us to justify, our shortcomings. ✠



THE ORTHODOX CLERGY BROTHERHOOD OF GREATER PITTSBURGH
GATHERED AT HOLY CROSS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH IN MOUNT
LEBANON, PA TO CELEBRATE THE LEAVETAKING OF PASCHA.



HOLY CROSS

GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

What a month it has been. We have celebrated the Paschal season and rejoiced in His ascension. Pentecost is right around the corner where we will glorify the Holy Spirit descending upon the Apostles. This also marks the spiritual birth of the church.

This is the perfect time to reflect on the **vision** of our parish and to what we aspire. As our church vision states, "to apprehend the mystery of our Faith that is found in Jesus, our lives are both Christ-centered and Spirit-inspired.... Believing that a church on a hill cannot be hid, we always let our light shine before the world, so that it may see our good works and give glory to our Father Who is in Heaven."

The Holy Spirit is within us and we need to shed our light before the world. What powerful words!

Some **values** to guide us can include:

- 1) Glorify God in all we do.
- 2) Strengthen our sense of community. We are the Body of Christ. Build relationships based on trust and respect. None of us is as strong as all of us.
- 3) Use honesty, accountability, transparency, and boldly support each other's growing faith and well being.
- 4) Practice wise stewardship of time, talent, treasure, and influence.

Which leads us to the **goals** proposed by the Parish Council:

- 1) Strengthen our sense of community while at the same time growing closer to Jesus through serving others by using our time, talent, treasure, and influence.
- 2) Stewardship - cover ALL operating expenses with stewardship alone by 2031.
- 3) Endowment - Have 75 people/families commit by our 75th anniversary (2029).
- 4) Emergency Fund - Reestablish 3 months operating expenses.

If we meet the goals above, we will be able to shine our light even stronger to the whole oikoumene (universe), as we're called to do in our church vision.

One way to get involved is through the **food fair** which will take place on **June 15th-19th**. You can still help with preparations and of course with volunteering during the festival.



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GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Our next **Gyro Thursday** will take place on **August 20th**. Thanks to all that volunteered for the last gyro Thursday on May 14th. We were able to net over \$7,000!

Our 2nd annual **Glendi** will take place on **Saturday, September 26th**. Save the Date!

The **Fall Festival**, hosted by the Philoptochos, will be on **October 14th and 15th**. This is a major fundraiser for the Philoptochos where all proceeds are donated to outreach.

The **Golf Outing** is scheduled for **October 12th**. This is a great time to build community even if you're not a golfer. Stop by for dinner and take part in the gift basket silent auction.

Our **stewardship campaign** is ongoing. We're slightly behind where our goal is for the year, so we have some work to do as a community! We are asking all parishioners to consider increasing their stewardship by an average of 10% per year until the year 2031. This would allow us to use stewardship alone to cover all operating expenses for the church, freeing up fundraising monies to go towards facility improvements, re-establishing our emergency fund, and outreach.

Lastly, please consider making a planned gift to Holy Cross to support our **endowment**. Planned giving is charitable giving to a non-profit that will occur in the future. It is a gift to support a cause you care about both during or after your lifetime. These gifts are typically wills, trust, gift annuities, and life insurance. Thank you for your consideration with doing this!

With love in Christ,

Anthony Cuneo

President of Holy Cross Parish Council

Please mark your calendars for upcoming events planned for 2026:

June 15-19: Food Fair

8/20/26: Gyro Thursday

9/26/26: Glendi

October 14th-15th: Fall Festival

10/12/26: Golf Outing

11/5/26: Gyro Thursday

11/8/26: November General Assembly

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HOLY CROSS

GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Dear Holy Cross Family,

It is crazy to sit back and think that we are just about half-way through 2026 already! It has been an amazing year so far within our community, and as we head into the summer months, we have several opportunities to come together both at services and beyond, including with the Greek Food Festival in June. Opportunities like this allow us to grow as a community by sharing our faith, our culture, and engaging in fellowship. We also rely on such fundraisers to make up approximately 30% of our annual operating budget, so the Festival plays a pivotal role in the sustainability and future of our parish, and we hope to see you there lending a hand in whatever way best suits your talents—there is a role for everyone!

The other 70% of our operating budget relies on stewardship, which is the foundation of how our community functions. We support the parish by actively participating not only as Orthodox Christians in prayer and services, but also in the various ministries our church offers. Additionally, we are responsible as a community for financially growing our parish through contributing funds towards stewardship.

Our parish bylaws define our membership simply as **annually** signing a Stewardship card. There is no minimum pledge amount, and we are reminded to only give within our means. This makes you an "official" pledged member for the year. As of 5/20/2026, we currently have 219 pledged members for 2026, out of an expected 500+ members. We prayerfully request you to help us reach our full membership potential **by the end of June!** Please join us in acknowledging our membership and stewardship of our Holy Cross community.

If you have not already, please take a moment to pick up a Stewardship Card this Sunday from the Narthex or request an account to pledge in Realm today. Simply fill out the card, sign, and submit in the Narthex or via mail to the Church office to be an "official" member for 2026.

In order to pledge via Realm, an invitation to create an account must be accepted. To request an invite to Realm, to check if you have pledged yet for 2026, to make any adjustments to your pledge, or to ask any other questions, please contact me at the email address listed below or a Stewardship Committee member. Please help to spread the word to your family and friends.

Thank you!

Stephen Yamalis

2026 Vice President, Stewardship Chair

HolyCrossPgh.Stewardship@gmail.com

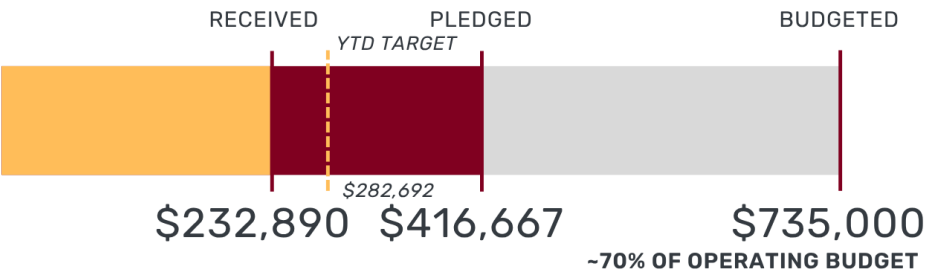
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STEWARDSHIP 2026 SNAPSHOT

AS OF 5/20/2026



219 PLEDGED MEMBERS
OUT OF AN EXPECTED 500+ MEMBERS

Membership status includes completion of **annual 2026 pledge**, via Stewardship Card or Realm. **To pledge on Realm, please request an account first** (see below).

Thank you to those who have pledged and/or contributed to our 2026 Stewardship campaign thus far! We are approx. **half-way** towards our goal, and targeting to have all 2026 pledges returned by **June 2026**, if possible.

If you have not yet returned your pledge, please drop off your Stewardship Card in the Stewardship box in the Narthex or complete your pledge on Realm.

For any questions or to request an invitation to Realm, please contact Stephen Yamalis at **holycrosspgh.stewardship@gmail.com**. To pledge and manage stewardship on Realm, an invitation and account creation are required.

ROAD TO 100%

Please join us on the **Road to 100%**, as we aim to cover 100% of the Operating Budget with Stewardship, by 2031, allowing other income sources to be dedicated to major projects, outreach, reserves, and more! To join in this effort, please prayerfully consider a **10% average annual increase** in your stewardship pledge/contributions.



HOLY CROSS

GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Dear Holy Cross Parish:

We would like to provide you with a financial report for the month of April 2026. Total income for the month was \$94K, of which \$54K was from stewardship. As a reminder, our monthly stewardship goal is \$62K.

Expenses for the month totaled \$99K, resulting in operating income of (\$5)K for the month of March. Our general account cash balance is \$100K, down from \$167K as of 12/31/25.

Below is a snapshot of the first four months of the year (Jan - Apr 2026). We look forward to continuing to provide the parish with more detailed financial updates. Please contact Socrates Zacharias, Financial Secretary, with any questions.

	Jan '26	Feb '26	Mar '26	April '26	YTD 2026
Stewardship	\$56,193	\$63,392	\$50,038	\$54,342	\$223,965
Other Income	9,117	18,878	12,223	39,485	79,703
Total Income	\$65,311	\$82,270	\$62,260	\$93,827	\$303,668
Expenses	\$72,377	\$76,362	\$103,041	\$99,241	\$351,021
Operating Income	(\$7,067)	\$5,908	(\$40,781)	(\$5,413)	(\$47,353)

Socrates Zacharias
2026 Financial Secretary
sgaz16@gmail.com
(412) 680-0735



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DID YOU KNOW ?

You can set up your **annual pledge online** if you have accepted an invite to create an account on **Realm!** You can track progress and make payments online or from the mobile app.

Have you completed your 2026 pledge yet? If not, you can request an account by contacting **HolyCrossPgh.Stewardship@gmail.com**.

Holy Cross Stewardship 2026



COME ENJOY THE HOLY CROSS

GREEK FESTIVAL

5 DAYS **JUNE 15-19** **5 DAYS**

MON THRU THR 11 AM - 8 PM | FRI 11 AM - 9 PM

 **SPECIAL LUNCH MENU STARTING AT \$10**

 123 GILKESON ROAD, MT. LEBANON (ACROSS FROM THE GALLERIA) | PITTSBURGHGREEKFESTIVAL.ORG



Deacon Elias' Sermon

Today, is as I'm sure you all know, Mother's Day. The name says it all. It is a day where we honor the mothers, grandmothers, godmothers, and all the other women in our lives who have taken on a mothering role. As you can tell by the image above the altar, of the Mother of God, mothers are very important to the Orthodox Church. We call this image the Platytera Ton Ouranon, the wider than the heavens, and we see her embrace wrapping all of us, and the whole world in love.

Is such an inspiring example of motherhood because, while the Church honors her in a grand fashion, the Church also always reminds us that she was human like the rest of us. Christ was divine and human, but Mary was cut from the same cloth as the rest of humanity. However, we honor her so greatly because she was about as stellar an example of Christian love, obedience, and faith, as anyone of us could aspire to, and so much of those virtues were expressed through her motherhood, how she nurtured, taught, and loved her son first, and then, became in a very real sense the mother of the whole Church.

In this church right now, in the people in these pews, in the community center, or watching from home, we have many many examples of the ways in which motherhood can become an ex-

pression of Christian love. At the same time, we should also pause to reflect on the fact that, quite often, our society idealizes motherhood in such a way that it can become a burden for both parents and children. Mothers, trying to live up to some fantastically unrealistic image of perfection, may feel like failures when they do so. Children, similarly, may feel disappointed in their parents for the same reason, choosing to see the bad things instead of the good.

This way of thinking is a trap. It is not in line with the Gospel, because the Gospel is good news, and the good news for mothers is this: you don't have to be perfect, because Christ loves you not if you perfect, but because you are made in his image. Father Michael spoke today of the Saint Photini, the Samaritan woman, whose Gospel reading we heard today, and what a great example she is of this point. She was a mother, yet she was far from perfect, she had many flaws and shortcomings, and Christ saw them all. Yet, He still called her to follow him, and in so doing, she became one who lifted up the whole community around them to show them the light of Christ.

On this day so often, we do fall into that trap of idealizing mothers, but I think its better to embrace the deeper truth that the Gospel teaches us. After all, motherhood is a tremendous gift, but also a tremendous challenge, and no one does it perfectly, just like none of us do life perfectly. But mothers, I encourage you to remember that Christ is with you, and the burdens of motherhood are something you do not have to carry alone. Christ is with you, and His Church is with you. We should not let the perfect be the enemy of the good - we will all miss the mark from time to time, but as long as we trust in the Lord and fight the good fight, we will be following after the example of His mother whose arms embrace us even now.

And for the children, this is important too. Learn to love your parents unconditionally. Children quite often think more about what they can get from their parents, but as the scripture tells us, it is more blessed to give than receive. On this day, recognize the challenges which motherhood brings, and take the time to give your love, attention, and care to your mothers. Let us strive to embrace one another in love, even as the Mother of God embraces us all.



Sun	Mon	Tue
	1 Monday of the Holy Spirit @ Holy Trinity, N Hills 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Div Liturgy 8PM BASKETBALL 	2 10AM MAKE FINIKIA
7 All Saints 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy GRADUATE SUNDAY 	8 6:30pm Paraclesis	9 7pm Parish Council
14 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy		
21 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy Father's Day	22 6:30pm Paraclesis	23
28 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	29 Sts. Peter & Paul 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Div Liturgy	30
	CLERGY/LAITY 7:30pm PickleBALL 	



Wed		Thu		Fri		Sat	
3		4		5		6	
7PM BIBLE STUDY		7PM CATECHISM CLASS		7:30pm Path of Miracles Concert (see pg. 47)		5pm Great Vespers	
10		11 St. Bartholomew 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Div Liturgy		12		13	
7PM BIBLE STUDY		7PM CATECHISM CLASS				5pm Great Vespers	
COME ENJOY THE HOLY CROSS EEK FESTIVAL JUNE 15-19 MON THRU THUR 11 AM - 8 PM FRI 11 AM - 9 PM 5 DAYS SPECIAL LUNCH MENU STARTING AT \$10 S FROM THE GALLERIA) PITTSBURGHGREEKFESTIVAL.ORG						20	
24 Nativity of St. John the Baptist 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Div Liturgy		25		26		27	
		7PM CATECHISM CLASS				Wedding/NO Vespers	
IN CLEVELAND							

HOLY CROSS

Sun	Mon	Tue
		2
	CLERGY/LAITY	
5 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	6 6:30pm Paraclesis 8PM BASKETBALL	7
12 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	13 6:30pm Paraclesis	14
19 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	20 6:30pm Paraclesis	21
26 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	27 St. Panteleimon	28 St. Irene Chrysovalantou
	VACATION CHURCH SCHOOL	
		7:30pm PickleBALL 

JULY 2026

Wed		Thu	Fri	Sat
1		2	3	4 <i>Independence Day</i>
IN CLEVELAND				
		7PM CATECHISM CLASS		
8	9	10	11	
	7PM CATECHISM CLASS		<i>Wedding/ NO Vespers</i>	
15	16	17 St. Marina 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Div Liturgy	18	
	7PM CATECHISM CLASS		5pm Great Vespers	
22 Sts. Mary Magdalene & Markella of Chios 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Div Liturgy	23	24	25	
	7PM CATECHISM CLASS		5pm Great Vespers	
29	30	31		
9am – Noon				

Holy Cross Ministries Fair







2026 ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN VACATION CHURCH SCHOOL AT HOLY CROSS



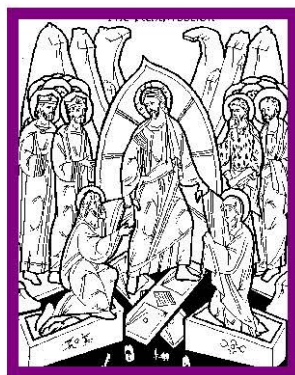
Bring your children to learn God's word at VCS!

VCS is dedicated to teaching our young children about Orthodox Christianity in a fun and exciting atmosphere. It is an extension of the Sunday School experience that can greatly enhance a child's sense of belonging to the church, while providing our children with an opportunity to make life-long friends in the church community.

Activities include daily skits illustrating lesson, brief classroom instruction, religious music lessons, hands-on crafts relating to lesson, recreation time, snack & social time.

This year's theme is:

SUMMER PASCHA



Monday, July 27 thru Friday, July 31 from 9am~Noon

**Monday, July 27, children should arrive at 8:30 am*

**Welcoming all children age 3 years through entering 6th grade
High School students, parents, interested adults needed to volunteer.**

Nominal registration fee of \$20 per student

Please register early Online (QR code or link below) or use form →

so we can prepare nametags, snacks & crafts!

Make checks payable to Holy Cross VCS
and send to:

123 Gilkeson Road, Mt. Lebanon, PA 15228

Should you need financial assistance, please contact

Fr. Michael Kallaur (Holy Cross) at (412) 833-3355

[https://onrealm.org/HolyCrossGreekO/
PublicRegistrations/Event?](https://onrealm.org/HolyCrossGreekO/PublicRegistrations/Event?linkString=NjNkYTQ2MWEtNjg5My00ZTlxLWFMNjktYjQxZjAxMjk4YjRi)

[linkString=NjNkYTQ2MWEtNjg5My00ZTlxLWFMNjktYjQxZjAxMjk4YjRi](https://onrealm.org/HolyCrossGreekO/PublicRegistrations/Event?linkString=NjNkYTQ2MWEtNjg5My00ZTlxLWFMNjktYjQxZjAxMjk4YjRi)



Orthodox Christian Vacation Church School at Holy Cross

2026 Registration Form ~ Please print.

Child's First & Last Name	Age on July 30	Grade Entering Fall 2026	Allergy information (Food, Medicine, Other)

Parent's Name(s):
Home Phone:
Address:
Church Parish you belong to:
Mother's Cell Phone:
Father's Cell Phone:
Email address:

Emergency information, OTHER THAN parents

1st Emergency Contact: Name _____ Phone _____

2nd Emergency Contact: Name _____ Phone _____

Parental Consent: _____

I give my child(ren) listed above permission to participate in the Vacation Church School held July 27–31, 2026. I understand that my child(ren) will be responsible for obeying the rules and regulations of VCS as enforced by the directors, teachers, and staff. I hereby release Holy Cross church, its VCS teachers and staff from liability for the safety and/or conduct of my child (ren). I also give permission for emergency medical care to be administered to my child(ren) if necessary.

Signature of Parent _____ Date _____

For administrative use:

Date Received _____ Amt Rec'd/Check# _____ Amt Rec'd/Cash _____

Philoptochos in action!



Philoptochos thanks our Holy Cross family for your generous donations of diapers and baby supplies for the Orthodox Baby Shower. All items were delivered to the North Side Network of Life pregnancy resource center.

Thank you Anne Marie Aronson & Denise Raftis for coordinating the baby shower.

Thank you Dr. John Aronson and Josh Pachis for delivering the baby items.

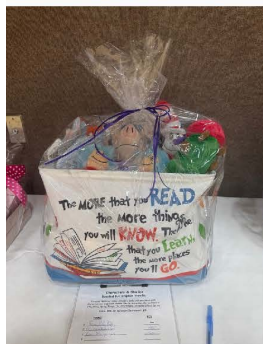




Philoptochos Afternoon Tea









Philoptochos members and friends of all ages having fun and doing good!



Thank You

Thank you to the following for helping us fold 2832 Tiropita triangles!

A special thank you to Angela and Ronnie. Couldn't have done this without you, especially on Tuesday, when we had a small (but mighty) team!

Thank you Angela, Katina, Barb, Ronnie, Nick E. and Bill for helping on both days.

Thank you also Kim, Beth, Chris, Stacey, Cindy, Rita, Mary Jo, Anthony, Nick D, and Stephen.

Last but not least, thank you to John Popovich and your kitchen team for making all of our mix and helping us every step of the way.

-Sophia Milinkovic and Dina Hartlep, Tiropita Co-Chairs 2026



WE ARE IN THE HOME STRETCH!! THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH, BUT WE ARE STILL IN DIRE NEED OF THE FOLLOWING:

- A person to work with Joan in the **Marketplace**
- "Baristas" to work with Georgia in the **Kafenio**
- A leader in the **Fry Station** in the mornings from 10 am to 3 pm
- We are still in need of a person to lead the **Online Pickup**. We are in jeopardy of not having that attraction at the festival.

**THANKS, DEMETRIOS
OPA!**

GALATOBOURIKO CREW





Welcome
Constantine,
son of
Christina
(nee Batis)
and
Alexander
McDeavitt



Mark Urso and Philip Yamalis
coordinate wearing their favorite
matching outfits for the May
General Assembly.



*Always great to see our
dear nonagenarian
Dina Petrakis at church and
enjoying coffee hour when
she's not visiting her children
and grandchildren! She sure
has logged in countless
hours volunteering in the
kitchen over the years!!*

FOOD FESTIVAL VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Holy Cross June Food Festival is quickly approaching!

June 15-19, Monday-Friday, 11am-8pm, until 9pm on Friday.

Food Line help is needed at Lunch, 10:45am-2:00pm or 4:00pm,
Lighter shift, 2:00pm-4:00pm, Dinner shift from 4:00pm-8:00pm,
until 9:00pm on Friday.

ANY of your time is appreciated! Choose your own time frame!

Food Runners are needed for the lunch shift, 10am-2pm or 4PM.
Dinner shift from 4:00pm – 8:00pm or 9PM on Friday. OR choose a
convenient time to run! Any of your time is appreciated!

Thank you for volunteering your time to make our festival a success!

Elaine Sofis, Food Line Chair

esofis@comcast.net cell 412 327-7017 home 412 344-7046



Golden Club trip to the Westmoreland Museum in Greensburg







Seeking New Leaders for the Golden Club!



Our beloved senior ministry, the Golden Club, is seeking one or two enthusiastic individuals (a co-leadership pair, friends, a couple, or anyone with a heart for serving the senior members of our parish community!), to take over its leadership. After years of wonderful fellowship, our current organizers are ready to pass the torch. The Club provides a vital space for our parish seniors, 50 years and over, to connect, socialize and grow in faith.



Responsibilities include planning outings, coordinating occasional speakers and organizing one or two seasonal luncheons. Currently, activities are planned in fall and spring (to avoid inclement weather). Current leadership will provide full training and notes for a smooth transition. If you feel called to keep this joyful ministry thriving, please contact Cynthia Kostelnik at 412-722-9512 or Rene Koett at 412-559-1721 with any questions.



Thank you for prayerfully considering this rewarding service for our church community.



Blessings!



Rene Koett



Cynthia Kostelnik



Coordinators



The Golden Club of Holy Cross Church



There will be a free concert of *Path of Miracles* at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church on Friday, June 5th at 7:30. Open seating. All are welcome. The choir Voces Solis will present *Path of Miracles*, Joby Talbot's acclaimed a cappella work depicting the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage.

Through four movements, the work traces a spiritual journey marked by separation, transformation, and connection, weaving together medieval chant and contemporary musical language. It has 17 voice parts, so it is musically riveting.

The text is about the Camino de Santiago, the most walked Christian pilgrimage in the world, including many Orthodox who venerate St. James at the goal point of the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. The text is from the Codex Calixtinus, which is a medieval collection of stories from the camino in 7 languages, including Greek, integrated in chronological order of when cultural groups first hiked the camino. The choir will move throughout the space to evoke the journey in an interesting way. <https://www.vocessolis.org/events>

Our own **Thespina Christulides** is featured, and AJ PrestoGeorge from Ypapanti is also involved.



HERE WE GO!



METROPOLIS OF PITTSBURGH
SUMMER CAMP 2026

SELECT ONE:

➤ WEEK 1: JUNE 21 ST - JUNE 27 TH	2 ND - 4 TH GRADE
WEEK 2: JUNE 28 TH - JULY 4 TH	5 TH - 7 TH GRADE
WEEK 3: JULY 5 TH - JULY 11 TH	7 TH - 9 TH GRADE
WEEK 4: JULY 12 TH - JULY 18 TH	10 TH - 12 TH GRADE

"AS THE FATHER HAS SENT ME,
SO I SEND YOU."
JOHN 20:21

High School Graduates

Natalie Chapas, daughter of John and Christine Chapas, is graduating from Peters Township High School and will be attending Purdue University. Her intended major is Mechanical Engineering (with a focus on Aerospace).



Hudson Luke Diamant, son of Paul & Kate Diamant is graduating from Steel Valley High School and plans on going into the trades with the Steamfitters for HVAC or Electrician.



Christopher Friedel, son of Dina and Jeff Friedel is graduating from Mount Lebanon High School and intends to study Biotechnology at Penn State Schreyer's Honors College.



Alexa Kartofilis, daughter of Dino and Rachel Kartofilis is graduating from Oakland Catholic High School and will be studying Civil Engineering at The Ohio State University.

James Paradise, son of Ali and TJ Paradise, graduated from Upper St. Clair High School and will be attending Laurel Technical Institute to become an electrical technician.



John Paradise, son of Ali and TJ Paradise, graduated from Upper St. Clair High School and Parkway CTC and plans to further his education at the Culinary Institute of America to study Food Business Management.



Elizabeth Sokos, daughter of George and Denise Sokos, is graduating from Seton LaSalle Catholic High School and will attend Duquesne University pursuing a History major.



Noah Urso, son of Mark and Annie Urso, is graduating from South Fayette High School. He intends to study Mechanical Engineering at Penn State University.

College Graduates

Anastacia Antonucci, daughter of Chris and Sophia Antonucci, graduated from Penn State University with a degree in Supply Chain and Information Systems and will be taking a position with Lockheed Martin in Marietta, GA.



Jordan Paul, daughter of Maria Paul, graduated from Boston College and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Human-Centered Engineering. She plans on continuing her education in a post-baccalaureate program along with employment in Boston this fall.

Post-Graduate Degrees

Alexander Hanna, son of Dr. Harry & Maria Hanna, completed his Masters of Health Sciences from West Virginia University in December of 2025. Alexander will be pursuing his MD degree at West Virginia University School of Medicine in the class of 2030.





Graduate Sunday

June 7, 2026



HOLY CROSS ICONOGRAPHY PROJECT UPDATE

Icons still available for support...

- Eagle → \$9000
- Ox → \$24,000
- Lion → \$17,000
- Young Man → \$25,000
- St. Andrew of Crete → \$10,500
- St. Cyril of Alexandria → \$25,000
- St. Gerasimos of Abydos → \$6000
- St. Innocent of Alaska → \$24,000
- St. Raphael of Brooklyn → \$24,000
- Nativity of the Theotokos → \$50,000
- St. Luke the Surgeon → \$25,000
- Gold Leaf around the Platitera → \$20,000

Help us reach our goal!



A Good Word - Λόγον Αγαθόν
NEWSLETTER OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX
METROPOLIS OF PITTSBURGH



*Meetings of the National Philoptochos Convention will be held at the Hotel Cleveland.



YAL

**NATIONAL
CONFERENCE**

'26



JULY 1-5 2026

CLEVELAND, OH

*Join hundreds
of young adults for
a weekend full of
faith & fellowship!*

Rise & Build:

Claim Your Calling!





Hosted at the
Cleveland Marriott
Downtown!

Featuring:

Engaging speakers - Interactive service project
Themed evening events - Free time in Cleveland



 **Register Now!**

clergyalaity.org/yalconference

IG/FB @yalnationalconference
Questions? Email us at yal@goarch.org





YOUR NEW METROPOLIS CENTER



We invite you to join our mission
pittsburgh.goarch.org/pledge



2026 St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival & St. Romanos Music Festival

On Saturday, May 2 His Eminence Metropolitan Savas attended the Metropolis of Pittsburgh St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival and St. Romanos Music Festival at Presentation of Christ "Ypapanti" Greek Orthodox Church, East Pittsburgh, PA.

Young people from across the Metropolis gathered to share their faith through speech and hymn, leaving us all in awe of their poise and brilliance!

We are delighted to share those who will be representing us at the National Oratorical Festival on June 12-14 at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in Northridge, California:

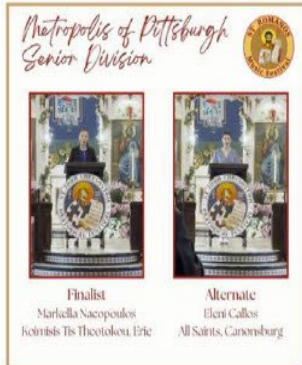
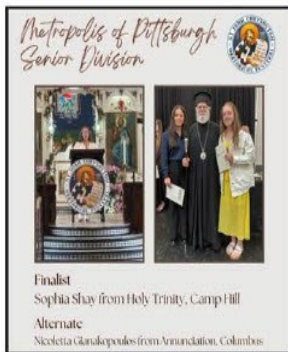
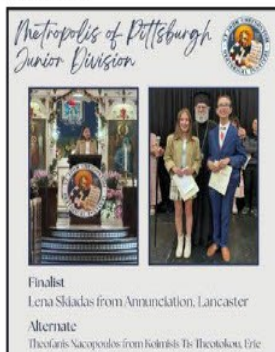
Junior Division Finalist: Lena Skiadas, Annunciation, Lancaster

Junior Division Alternate: Theofanis Nacopoulos,

Koimisis Tis Theotokou, Erie

Senior Division Finalist: Sophia Shay, Holy Trinity, Camp Hill

Senior Division Alternate: Nicoletta Gianakopoulos, Annunciation, Columbus



We also want to share the finalists from the St. Romanos Music Festival. This year, it goes as far as the Metropolis Level but next year, the prayer is to make it a National Ministry:

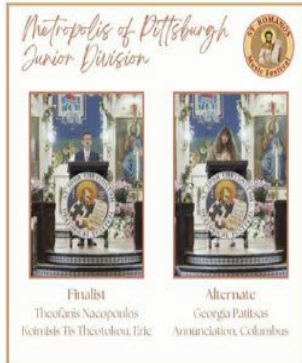
Senior Division Finalist: Markella Nacopoulos, Koimisis Tis Theotokou, Erie

Senior Division Alternate: Eleni Callos, All Saints, Canonsburg

Junior Division Finalist: Theofanis Nacopoulos, Koimisis Tis Theotokou, Erie

Junior Division Alternate: Georgia Patitsas, Annunciation, Columbus

Thank you to our Oratorical Chairwoman Ann Economou Ariano and our St. Romanos Chairwoman Amy Hogg for the time, patience and love they offered to both events. Glory to God!



PLEASE SUPPORT OUR METROPOLIS MINISTRIES!

It costs approximately \$1,000 per day to operate our Metropolis - including Metropolitan Savas'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 info@pittsburgh.goarch.org



Two Millenia of Women Saints



A free concert presented by :



**SAINT MIRIAM
BYZANTINE CHOIR**

In partnership with The Saint Constantine School of Pittsburgh

Friday, June 5, 2026 at 7:30 pm

In the Chapel of

The Saint Constantine School of Pittsburgh

934 Forest Ave. Bellevue, PA 15202

blessed and most pure and



**THE SAINT
CONSTANTINE
SCHOOL**

**St. Miriam Byzantine
Choir Spring
Workshop:**

Cultivating a Byzantine Choir

*Includes lunch, dinner,
instruction, & handouts*



presented by :



**SAINT MIRIAM
BYZANTINE CHOIR**

In partnership with:



**Saturday, June 6
8:30 am - 8:30 pm**

Cost: \$35

At St. Nicholas

**Greek Orthodox Cathedral
419 S Dithridge St,
Pittsburgh, PA 15213**

**Registration &
Schedule:**



Stewardship 2026

holycrosspgh.stewardship@gmail.com

**It's not too late to
turn in a 2026
Stewardship Card!**

Please use this card,
fill out, and return in
the Narthex this
Sunday!

Alternatively, you
may request an
account for Realm
at email above
to pledge online.

Already returned
your card for 2026?
Please pass this card
along to a friend or
family member to-
day. Not sure if
you've turned in
your 2026 card?
Send us an email to
the email address
above!

Please help us
receive all 2026
pledges by the
end of June!

HOLY CROSS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, 123 GILKESON ROAD, PIGH, PA 15228

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 Commitment: \$ _____ OR Keep same as last year: \$ _____

Signature(s): _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____

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

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COME ENJOY THE HOLY CROSS

GREEK FESTIVAL

5 DAYS **JUNE 15-19** **5 DAYS**

MON THRU THR 11 AM - 8 PM | FRI 11 AM - 9 PM

PITTSBURGHGREEKFESTIVAL.ORG