



GREEK ORTHODOX
METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ST. ATHANASIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΑΘΑΝΑΣΙΟΥ

THE GOOD NEWS

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VOLUME 14, ISSUE 9,10

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2026



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Dear Parishioners,

THE FAITH WE SEE Our Prayer Rising to God—Why Do We Use Incense?

Have you ever noticed how the fragrance of incense fills our church during the Divine Liturgy? The priest censes the holy icons, the altar, and the people gathered for worship. For many of us, incense is a familiar part of Orthodox Christian life. But have we ever stopped to ask why we use it? Other than incense being a pleasant fragrance, it is also very much a biblical expression of prayer, worship, reverence, and the presence of God. From the worship of Israel in the Old Testament to the heavenly worship described in the Book of Revelation, incense reminds us that our earthly worship participates in something greater: the worship of God in heaven.

The use of incense in worship goes back to the Old Testament. God instructed Moses to construct an altar of incense in the Tabernacle, where fragrant incense would be offered before Him (Exodus 30:1–8). This was not an arbitrary ritual. Incense belonged to the sacred worship of God's people, expressing reverence and the offering of something precious to Him. The Psalms give us an especially beautiful image of what incense means, “Let my prayer be set forth before You as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.”— Psalm 140:2 Just as incense rises upward, so our prayers rise before God. The fragrance fills the space around us, reminding us that prayer should fill our lives. When we gather in church, we are both attending a service and offering ourselves to God in prayer, thanksgiving, repentance, and love, while the priest performs these rituals.

This image appears again in the Book of Revelation, where the twenty-four elders fall before the Lamb, each holding golden bowls full of incense, “which are the prayers of the saints” (Revelation 5:8). Later, an angel offers incense with the prayers of God's people before the heavenly altar (Revelation 8:3–4). In other words, incense connects our worship on earth with the worship of heaven. When we gather for the Divine Liturgy, we are not worshiping God in isolation. We join the angels and saints in glorifying Him.

During the Divine Liturgy, the priest censes icons, the altar, and the congregation. Each action reminds us of the sacredness of what is taking place. We cense the icons because they represent Christ, His Holy Mother, and His saints. The honor we offer before an icon is directed to the person depicted, not to the object itself. The incense expresses reverence for those who have been glorified in Christ. But why does the priest cense us? The people gathered in church are not an audience—we are the Body of Christ. Every person is created in the image of God and called to become a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. When the priest censes us, he honors the people as members of Christ's Body and reminds us of the holiness to which we are called. The incense surrounds the entire worshiping community because the whole Church—clergy and laity, living and departed—are united in Christ.

Orthodox worship also engages our entire being. We hear the hymns and prayers, see the icons and liturgical actions, make the sign of the Cross, bow, and receive the Holy Eucharist. We also experience the fragrance of incense. Thus our worship of God involves our entire existence—our minds, our bodies, our senses, and our whole lives. Incense helps draw our attention away from the distractions of the world and toward the holiness of God. Yet the fragrance itself is not the goal. We can stand in a church filled with incense and still allow our minds to wander. We can witness every liturgical action without offering our hearts to God.

The purpose of these outward practices is to lead us toward an inward reality. The incense reminds us to pray; the censuring draws our attention toward God; and the beauty of worship awakens in us a desire for holiness. Along with the incense our hearts are rising toward God along with it.

So, as we enter the season of preparation for the Nativity of Christ, the meaning of incense becomes especially beautiful. In the Old Testament, incense was offered in the worship of God. In the New Testament, we encounter the Magi, who traveled from the East to worship the newborn Christ. Among their gifts was frankincense, a precious aromatic resin traditionally used in worship. Their gift points us toward the mystery of the Nativity—the Child—the eternal Son and Word of God, who has taken flesh for our salvation. The God whom His people worshiped in the Temple has now come among us in the flesh. The One to whom incense was offered is revealed to us in the humility of a newborn Child.

This is the beauty of Christmas, God does not remain distant from His creation. He enters our world, takes on our humanity, and comes to dwell among us. As we prepare for the Nativity, the incense in our churches can remind us to prepare something more important than our homes or holiday celebrations. We must prepare our hearts to receive Christ. Our prayers, repentance, forgiveness, and acts of love become an offering to Him.

So the next time we see the priest censuring the church, take a moment to reflect on what is happening. Remember the prayers of the saints rising before God, the worship of heaven, and the gift of the Magi offered to Christ. Most importantly, when the priest censes us, allow the incense to remind us to pray, respond by making the sign of the Cross and offer our prayers to God. Let that brief moment remind us that we are standing in His presence and are called to offer Him our entire life.

May our prayers rise before God like incense, not only when we stand in church, but throughout our daily lives. And as we approach the feast of the Nativity, may we prepare our hearts to welcome the One who came down from heaven for our salvation. May Christ find in each of us a heart ready to receive Him.



Η ΠΙΣΤΗ ΠΟΥ ΒΛΕΠΟΥΜΕ—*Η προσευχή μας που ανεβαίνει προς τον Θεό — Γιατί χρησιμοποιούμε θυμίαμα;*

Έχετε προσέξει ποτέ, πώς το άρωμα του θυμιάματος γεμίζει τον ναό μας κατά τη Θεία Λειτουργία; Ο ιερέας θυμιάζει τις άγιες εικόνες, το Ιερό Βήμα και τους πιστούς που έχουν συγκεντρωθεί για να λατρεύουν τον Θεό. Για πολλούς από εμάς, το θυμίαμα είναι ένα γνώριμο μέρος της ορθόδοξης χριστιανικής ζωής. Έχουμε όμως σταθεί ποτέ να αναρωτηθούμε γιατί το χρησιμοποιούμε; Το θυμίαμα δεν προσφέρει μόνο μια ευχάριστη ευωδία, αποτελεί επίσης μια βιβλική έκφραση της προσευχής, της λατρείας, της ευλάβειας και της παρουσίας του Θεού. Από τη λατρεία του λαού του Ισραήλ στην Παλαιά Διαθήκη έως την ουράνια λατρεία που περιγράφεται στο βιβλίο της Αποκαλύψεως, το θυμίαμα μάς θυμίζει ότι με την επίγεια λατρεία μας συμμετέχουμε σε κάτι μεγαλύτερο: στη λατρεία του Θεού στους ουρανούς.

Η χρήση του θυμιάματος στη λατρεία ανάγεται στην Παλαιά Διαθήκη. Ο Θεός έδωσε εντολή στον Μωσή να κατασκευάσει θυσιαστήριο θυμιάματος στη Σκηνή του Μαρτυρίου, όπου θα προσφερόταν ενώπιόν Του ευωδιαστό θυμίαμα (Εξοδος 30:1–8). Δεν επρόκειτο για μια τυχαία τελετουργία. Το θυμίαμα αποτελούσε μέρος της ιερής λατρείας του λαού του Θεού και εξέφραζε ευλάβεια και την προσφορά προς Εκείνον κάποιου πολύτιμου δώρου. Οι Ψαλμοί μάς δίνουν μια ιδιαίτερα όμορφη εικόνα της σημασίας του θυμιάματος:

«Κατευθυνθήτω ἡ προσευχή μου ὡς θυμίαμα ἐνώπιόν σου· ἔπαρσις τῶν χειρῶν μου θυσία ἑσπερινή.» — Ψαλμός 140:2 (κατά την ἀρίθμηση των Ο΄)

Όπως το θυμίαμα ανεβαίνει προς τα πάνω, έτσι και οι προσευχές μας ανεβαίνουν ενώπιον του Θεού. Η ευωδία γεμίζει τον χώρο γύρω μας και μάς θυμίζει ότι η προσευχή πρέπει να γεμίζει τη ζωή μας. Όταν συγκεντρωνόμαστε στον ναό, δεν παρακολουθούμε απλώς μια ακολουθία προσφέρουμε και τον εαυτό μας στον Θεό με προσευχή, ευχαριστία, μετάνοια και αγάπη, μαζί με τον ιερέα που τελεί, ως εκπρόσωπος όλων μας την ιερή λατρεία.

Η ίδια εικόνα εμφανίζεται και στο βιβλίο της Αποκαλύψεως. Οι είκοσι τέσσερις πρεσβύτεροι πέφτουν ενώπιον του Αρνίου, κρατώντας ο καθένας χρυσές φιάλες γεμάτες θυμιάματα, «αἱ εἰσιν αἱ προσευχαὶ τῶν ἁγίων» (Αποκάλυψη 5:8). Αργότερα, ένας άγγελος προσφέρει θυμίαμα μαζί με τις προσευχές του λαού του Θεού ενώπιον του ουράνιου θυσιαστηρίου (Αποκάλυψη 8:3–4). Με άλλα λόγια, το θυμίαμα συνδέει τη λατρεία μας στη γη με τη λατρεία των ουρανών. Όταν συγκεντρωνόμαστε για τη Θεία Λειτουργία, δεν λατρεύουμε τον Θεό μόνοι μας· ενωνόμαστε με τους αγγέλους και τους αγίους για να Τον δοξολογήσουμε.

Κατά τη Θεία Λειτουργία, ο ιερέας θυμιάζει τις εικόνες, το Ιερό Βήμα και τους πιστούς. Κάθε πράξη μάς θυμίζει την ιερότητα όσων τελούνται. Θυμιάζουμε τις εικόνες επειδή απεικονίζουν τον Χριστό, την Παναγία Μητέρα Του και τους αγίους Του. Η τιμή που αποδίδουμε μπροστά σε μια εικόνα απευθύνεται στο πρόσωπο που εικονίζεται και όχι στο ίδιο το αντικείμενο. Το θυμίαμα εκφράζει την ευλάβειά μας προς εκείνους που έχουν δοξαστεί εν Χριστώ. Γιατί όμως ο ιερέας θυμιάζει κι εμάς; Οι άνθρωποι που συγκεντρώνονται στον ναό δεν είναι θεατές· είμαστε το Σώμα του Χριστού. Κάθε άνθρωπος δημιουργήθηκε κατ' εικόνα Θεού και καλείται να γίνει κατοικητήριο του Αγίου Πνεύματος. Όταν ο ιερέας θυμιάζει τους πιστούς, τιμά τα μέλη του Σώματος του Χριστού και μας υπενθυμίζει την αγιότητα στην οποία είμαστε όλοι καλεσμένοι. Το θυμίαμα περιβάλλει ολόκληρη τη λατρευτική σύναξη, επειδή όλη η Εκκλησία —κλήρος και λαός, ζώντες και κεκοιμημένοι— είναι ενωμένη εν Χριστώ.

Στην ορθόδοξη λατρεία συμμετέχει ολόκληρος ο άνθρωπος, ψυχή και σώμα. Ακούμε τους ύμνους και τις προσευχές, βλέπουμε τις εικόνες και τις ιερές πράξεις, κάνουμε τον σταυρό μας, προσκυνούμε και μεταλαμβάνουμε τη Θεία Ευχαριστία. Αισθανόμαστε επίσης την ευωδία του θυμιάματος. Έτσι, λατρεύουμε τον Θεό με ολόκληρη την ύπαρξή μας: με τον νου, το σώμα, τις αισθήσεις και όλη μας την ύπαρξη.

Το θυμίαμα βοηθά να απομακρύνουμε την προσοχή μας από τους περισπασμούς του κόσμου και να τη στρέψουμε προς τον Τριαδικό Θεό. Ωστόσο, η ευωδία από μόνη της δεν είναι ο σκοπός. Μπορούμε να στεκόμαστε σε έναν ναό γεμάτο θυμίαμα και παρ' όλα αυτά να αφήνουμε τον νου μας να περιπλανιέται. Μπορούμε να βλέπουμε κάθε ιερή πράξη χωρίς να προσφέρουμε την καρδιά μας στον Θεό.

Σκοπός αυτών των εξωτερικών πράξεων είναι να μας οδηγήσουν σε μια εσωτερική κατάνυξη. Το θυμίαμα μάς θυμίζει να προσευχόμαστε· η θυμίαση στρέφει την προσοχή μας προς τον Θεό· και η ομορφιά της λατρείας ξυπνά μέσα μας την επιθυμία για αγιότητα. Μαζί με το θυμίαμα, ας ανεβαίνουν προς τον Θεό και οι καρδιές μας.

Καθώς μπαίνουμε στην περίοδο προετοιμασίας για τη Γέννηση του Χριστού, η σημασία του θυμιάματος γίνεται ακόμη πιο όμορφη. Στην Παλαιά Διαθήκη, το θυμίαμα προσφερόταν στη λατρεία του Θεού. Στην Καινή Διαθήκη συναντούμε τους Μάγους, οι οποίοι ήρθαν από την Ανατολή για να προσκυνήσουν το νεογέννητο Χριστό. Ανάμεσα στα δώρα τους ήταν και ο λίβανος, μια πολύτιμη αρωματική ρητίνη που χρησιμοποιούνταν παραδοσιακά στη λατρεία (Ματθαίος 2:11). Το δώρο τους μάς οδηγεί στο μυστήριο της Γεννήσεως: το Παιδί είναι ο αιώνιος Υιός και Λόγος του Θεού, ο οποίος προσέλαβε σάρκα για τη σωτηρία μας. Ο Θεός που λατρευόταν από τον λαό Του στον Ναό ήρθε τώρα ανάμεσά μας με σάρκα. Εκείνος στον οποίο προσφερόταν το θυμίαμα φανερώνεται μπροστά μας με την ταπείνωση ενός νεογέννητου Παιδιού.

Αυτή είναι η ομορφιά των Χριστουγέννων: ο Θεός δεν παραμένει μακριά από τη δημιουργία Του. Έρχεται στον κόσμο μας, προσλαμβάνει την ανθρώπινη φύση μας και κατοικεί ανάμεσά μας. Καθώς προετοιμαζόμαστε για τη Γέννηση του Χριστού, το θυμίαμα στους ναούς μας μπορεί να μας θυμίσει να ετοιμάσουμε κάτι πιο σημαντικό από τα σπίτια μας ή τις γιορτινές μας εκδηλώσεις. Χρειάζεται να ετοιμάσουμε τις καρδιές μας για να δεχθούμε τον Χριστό. Οι προσευχές μας, η μετάνοια, η συγχώρηση και οι πράξεις αγάπης γίνονται προσφορά προς Εκείνον.

Την επόμενη φορά που θα δούμε τον ιερέα να θυμιάζει τον ναό, ας σταθούμε για λίγο και ας σκεφτούμε τι συμβαίνει. Ας θυμηθούμε τις προσευχές των αγίων που ανεβαίνουν ενώπιον του Θεού, τη λατρεία των ουρανών και το δώρο των Μάγων προς τον Χριστό. Και κυρίως, όταν ο ιερέας θυμιάζει κι εμάς, ας αφήσουμε το θυμίαμα να μας θυμίσει να προσευχηθούμε. Ας κάνουμε τον σταυρό μας και ας προσφέρουμε τις προσευχές μας στον Θεό. Αυτή η σύντομη στιγμή ας μας θυμίσει ότι στεκόμαστε ενώπιόν Του και καλούμαστε να Του προσφέρουμε ολόκληρη τη ζωή μας.

Ας ανεβαίνουν οι προσευχές μας ενώπιον του Θεού σαν θυμίαμα, όχι μόνο όταν στεκόμαστε στον ναό, αλλά σε όλη την καθημερινή μας ζωή. Και καθώς πλησιάζουμε τη μεγάλη εορτή της Γεννήσεως, ας ετοιμάσουμε τις καρδιές μας να υποδεχθούν Εκείνον που κατέβηκε από τους ουρανούς για τη σωτηρία μας. Είθε ο Χριστός να βρει στον καθένα μας μια καρδιά έτοιμη να Τον δεχθεί.

Γιατί θυμιάζει ο ιερέας εσάς; Όταν ο ιερέας θυμιάζει προς το μέρος σας κατά τη Θεία Λειτουργία, δεν πρόκειται απλώς για μια χειρονομία σεβασμού. Η θυμίαση μάς θυμίζει ότι κάθε άνθρωπος δημιουργήθηκε κατ' εικόνα Θεού και καλείται στην αγιότητα. Ως μέλη του Σώματος του Χριστού, συμμετέχουμε στη λατρεία της Εκκλησίας· δεν είμαστε απλοί θεατές. Όταν ο ιερέας σας θυμιάζει, κάντε τον σταυρό σας και προσφέρετε μια προσευχή στον Θεό. Αφήστε αυτή τη σύντομη στιγμή να σας θυμίσει ότι στέκεστε ενώπιόν Του και καλείστε να Του προσφέρετε ολόκληρη τη ζωή σας. Οι Μάγοι πρόσφεραν στον Χριστό χρυσό, λίβανο και σμύρνα. Αυτά τα Χριστούγεννα, ποιο δώρο θα Του προσφέρουμε εμείς; Πέρα από τα δώρα που ανταλλάσσουμε μεταξύ μας, ας προσφέρουμε στον Χριστό τις προσευχές μας, τη μετάνοια, τη συγχώρηση και την αγάπη μας. Αυτά είναι δώρα που μπορούν να μεταμορφώσουν την καρδιά μας και να μας προετοιμάσουν να Τον υποδεχθούμε ξανά.

PARISH COUNCIL

Dear Parishioners:

As we continue working to preserve and improve our facility, we are asking our parishioners to help support our **Restoration Fund**. One of our important priorities is addressing the roof of the **Christos M. Cotsakos Community Center**. Maintaining this building is essential to the many activities, ministries, and events that bring our parish community together throughout the year. As the aging roof has developed some leaks this year, we are prioritizing raising funds to prepare for the replacement of the roof. This needs to be done before we can start improving the building's interior. Every contribution, regardless of size, helps us move closer to accomplishing this important project.

We encourage all parishioners to consider making a donation toward this effort. Please consider sponsoring materials as shown on the next page or you can contribute directly to the Restoration Fund by clicking or visiting <https://onrealm.org/stathnj/give/restoration>.



Your generosity will help us protect and ensure that our community center continues to serve our Parish for years to come. We are grateful to everyone who has contributed and to all those who continue to support our parish.

Fortunately, we have been able to fund some security related projects from outside sources. The next one to be completed, before the end of the year, you will notice the installation of new exterior doors for the church and community center buildings. This is being paid for through funds we secured from a Department of Homeland Security grant for target hardening. This will make our facility more secure and also be a needed aesthetic improvement.

We also invite everyone to explore our **revamped church website** at <https://stathanasiosnj.org/>. Our updated website makes it easier to stay informed about church news, upcoming events, youth programs, ministries, registration information, and opportunities to support our parish. We encourage you to visit, take a look around, and make it a regular resource for staying connected with everything happening at St. Athanasios. Check it out!

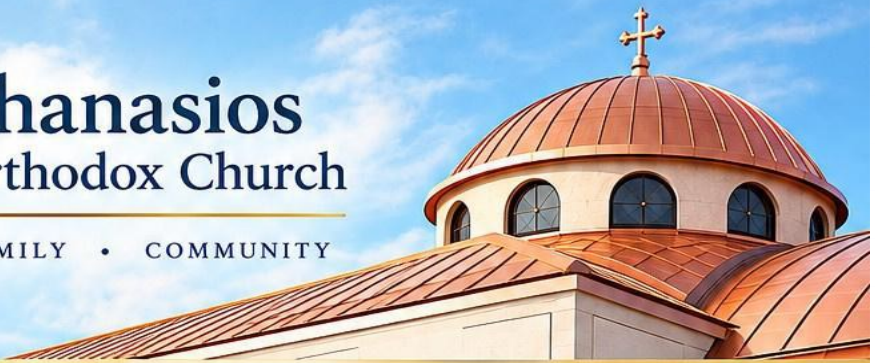
With the holiday season being just around the corner, we would like to wish you and your family with a Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas and much health and happiness in 2027.

Thank you,
Spero T. Leakas
Parish Council President



St. Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church

FAITH • FAMILY • COMMUNITY



RESTORATION FUND

PHASE 1: ROOF REPLACEMENT

Over the past several years we have experienced several leaks from the 3 Roof sections of the community center: main roof over gym, roof over kitchen/landing and roof over vestibule. Although several repairs have been made, the life span and present condition of the roof(s) will require total replacement in the near future.

For your reference, the main roof is 5,000 square feet, and requires the full replacement of the roofing material, insulation and possible decking repair. The estimated cost for the total project is over **\$100,000.00**. Before we begin any upgrades to the interior of the building it is critical that the roofing replacement be completed first.

*Help us protect our church
for generations to come!*



DONATION LEVELS

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| ☐ One Square Foot Roofing | \$50.00 |
| ☐ Coping Panel | \$100.00 |
| ☐ 5 Square Yards of Roofing | \$250.00 |
| ☐ 10 Square Yards of Roofing | \$500.00 |
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| ☐ Gold Donor | \$5,000.00 |
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PLEASE DONATE WHAT YOU CAN

Please make your check payable to St. Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church, Memo: Restoration Fund or use the link or QR Code to make your payment digitally, by credit card or ACH.



<https://onrealm.org/stathnj/give/restoration>

Donation Amount: \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

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*Together,
we can make
a difference!*



PRESERVING OUR CHURCH. BUILDING FOR TOMORROW.



GREEK NIGHT

Beefsteak Dinner & Dance

GREAT FOOD • FELLOWSHIP • MUSIC BY DJ YORGO • DANCING

SATURDAY
NOVEMBER 14

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GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

CHRISTOS M. COTSAKOS
COMMUNITY CENTER

51 Paramus Road
Paramus, NJ

7:00 PM – 11:00 PM

CASH BAR



AGES 19
AND UP

\$75

AGES 12
TO 18

\$50

AGES 5
TO 11

\$30

ENJOY A DELICIOUS BEEFSTEAK DINNER
WITH ALL THE FIXINGS, **MUSIC BY DJ YORGO** AND DANCING!



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CHRISTOS M. COTSAKOS
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RESTORATION FUND

*Preserving our facility today
for generations to come.*



FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT THE CHURCH OFFICE



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info@stathanasiosnj.org



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STEWARDSHIP

**THANK YOU TO OUR DAY SPONSORS FOR PLEDGING
AT LEAST A DAY'S WORTH (\$1,500) OF OUR CHURCH'S EXPENSES FOR 2026**

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***We thank the following parishioners who made their
stewardship contribution for 2026, as of 10/30/26***

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*Ευχαριστούμε τις οικογένειες που
εκπλήρωσαν την υπόσχεσή των για το 2026*

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Mr. & Mrs. Matthew Williams
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Mr. & Mrs. Angelo Zoumas

Is Your
Pledge
Up to Date?

PHILOPTOCHOS

ST. IRENE PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY

Dear Parishioners,

Welcome to autumn, with its beautiful colors and brisk mornings!

St. Irene Philoptochos began the new Ecclesiastical Year with the Project Classroom outreach. St. Irene Philoptochos donated school supplies to four classrooms at Dr. Leroy McCloud Elementary School in Englewood, NJ. The principal, Mr. Joseph Armental, was very pleased with the supplies and graciously thanked St. Irene Philoptochos for their generosity.

On Friday, September 11, and Saturday, September 12, St. Irene held its successful Rummage Sale. I would like to personally thank all the ladies who helped with the setup and cleanup for this event, especially Leah Carter and Angela Tsoucanos. Thank you also to our entire community for donating their gently used items and helping make this fundraiser a success.

On Tuesday, October 6, Dr. Anna Shoshilos, D.O., FACOG, provided a valuable, informative, and educational presentation on Hormone Replacement Therapy. A sincere thank you to her for generously donating her time and sharing her knowledge with our community.

November 1st is Philoptochos Sunday, the Sunday of the Good Samaritan. St Irene Philoptochos will hold a Memorial Service honoring all our departed members and an Artoklasia for the health and well-being of our current stewards. I hope all our stewards will join us for this special day of prayer, remembrance, and fellowship.

St. Irene Philoptochos will hold its annual Christmas Party on Tuesday, December 8, from 6:30 to 10:00 p.m. at Seasons Catering in Washington Township. I have enclosed the party flyer with this newsletter. A big thank you to Mrs. Maria Kourkoulakos for chairing this event. Please contact her to make your reservations. I look forward to celebrating the Christmas season together!

Also enclosed is the flyer for the annual Christmas Bake Sale. I hope you will support this delicious fundraiser, which enables St. Irene Philoptochos to continue its charitable work within the parish and throughout our community.

During this beautiful season of gratitude and celebration, may God bless you and your families with a healthy, joyful, and blessed Thanksgiving and Christmas. Thank you for your continued generosity, dedication, and support of our Philoptochos mission. We look forward to serving alongside you in Christ's love.

In Christ's Service,

Aspasia Panagiotopoulos President,
St. Irene Philoptochos Society

**St. Irene Philoptochos Society of
St. Athanasios Greek Orthodox Church**

Thanksgiving Spanakopita Sale



Just in time for Thanksgiving! Get your delicious
homemade spanakopita in convenient full and ½ trays.

All orders must be pre-ordered and paid in full by

Friday, November 8, 2026

Pick-up Sunday, November 22, 2026 after Liturgy

Your check must be included with the order payable to:

St. Irene Philoptochos Society

51 Paramus Road

Paramus, NJ 07652

Contact:

Xanthippi Nakopoulos 201-887-8742 Rita Pavlou 201-805-5150

Order Form:

Name:		Telephone #:	
<u>Item</u>	<u>Price</u>	<u># Trays</u>	<u>Subtotal</u>
½ Tray	\$50.00		
Full Tray	\$75.00		
		Total:	

SAINT IRENE'S
PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY

INVITES YOU TO OUR

Christmas PARTY

*Good Food
Great Company
Holiday Cheer!*
♡

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 8TH, 2026

AT 6:30 PM



SEASONS CATERING

644 Pascack Road,
Township of Washington, NJ



DINNER



DJ



OPEN BAR

TICKET PRICE:

\$110 PER PERSON

RSVP TO

Maria Kourkoulakos

(201) 669-6697

or

Kathy Makris

(201) 647-1350

*Let's
Celebrate
the Season
Together!*
♡

Saint Irene Philoptochos Society

Annual Christmas Bake Sale

Featuring an Irresistible Variety
Of Scrumptious Homemade Greek Cookies and Pastries



For Pick-up Sunday, December 20, 2026

Immediately after Divine Liturgy

**All orders must be preordered and must be paid for in full by
Sunday, December 6, 2026**

Check must be included with the order and payable to:

St. Irene Philoptochos Society
51 Paramus Road, Paramus, NJ 07652

**Contact Person: Aspasia Panagiotopoulos 201-819-1545
Xanthippi Nakopoulos 201-887-8742**

Item	Quantity	Price	#Containers	Subtotal
Baklava	4 pieces	\$15.00		\$
Kourambiedes	10 pieces	\$15.00		\$
Melomakarona	10 pieces	\$15.00		\$
Koulourakia	20 pieces	\$15.00		\$
Tray mixed Glyka 12 koulourakia, 8 melomakarona 8 kourambiedes, 5 baklava	33 pieces	\$60.00		\$
				Total:\$

GREEK SCHOOL

Αγαπητοί μας ενορίτες και αγαπητές οικογένειες του Ελληνικού Σχολείου,

Καθώς διανύουμε τους μήνες Νοέμβριο και Δεκέμβριο, δύο μήνες γεμάτους ευκαιρίες για ευγνωμοσύνη, προσφορά, αγάπη και ελπίδα, ας θυμηθούμε τις αξίες που μας ενώνουν ως κοινότητα και ως Ορθόδοξοι Χριστιανοί.

Πρωταρχικός στόχος του Ελληνικού μας Σχολείου δεν είναι μόνο η εκμάθηση της ελληνικής γλώσσας και η διατήρηση της πολιτιστικής μας κληρονομιάς, αλλά και η καλλιέργεια του χαρακτήρα των παιδιών μας. Θέλουμε να μάθουν να δείχνουν καλοσύνη και σεβασμό προς τους άλλους, να προσφέρουν με χαρά, να μπαίνουν στη θέση του συνανθρώπου τους και να αντιμετωπίζουν κάθε άνθρωπο με ενσυναίσθηση, συμπόνια και αγάπη. Αυτές οι αξίες, βαθιά ριζωμένες στην Ορθόδοξη πίστη μας, αποτελούν αναπόσπαστο μέρος του προγράμματος σπουδών και των διδακτικών μας μεθόδων.

Η Ημέρα των Ευχαριστιών (Thanksgiving) μάς δίνει την ευκαιρία να σταθούμε για λίγο και να αναγνωρίσουμε όλα όσα έχουμε στη ζωή μας, εκφράζοντας την ευγνωμοσύνη μας για την οικογένειά μας, τους φίλους μας και τις ευλογίες που δεχόμαστε καθημερινά. Μας υπενθυμίζει, επίσης, πόσο σημαντικό είναι να μοιραζόμαστε όσα έχουμε και να προσφέρουμε ένα χέρι βοήθειας σε όσους το χρειάζονται.

Τα Χριστούγεννα, η μεγάλη γιορτή της Γέννησης του Χριστού, μάς θυμίζουν ότι η αγάπη του Θεού είναι για όλους μας και ότι η πίστη και η ελπίδα μπορούν να φωτίζουν τον δρόμο μας ακόμη και στις δύσκολες στιγμές. Είναι μια περίοδος που μας καλεί να ανοίξουμε τις καρδιές μας, να συγχωρούμε, να προσφέρουμε και να γινόμαστε καθημερινά καλύτεροι άνθρωποι.

Στο Ελληνικό μας Σχολείο θα γιορτάσουμε αυτές τις δύο ξεχωριστές περιόδους τόσο μέσα στις τάξεις μας όσο και μέσα από τις κοινές μας δραστηριότητες και εκδηλώσεις. Θα δώσουμε στα παιδιά την ευκαιρία να γνωρίσουν βαθύτερα το νόημα των γιορτών και να βιώσουν έμπρακτα τις αξίες της ευγνωμοσύνης, της προσφοράς, της αγάπης και της αλληλεγγύης. Σας προσκαλούμε όλους να συμμετέχετε, να στηρίξετε τις προσπάθειές μας και να προσφέρετε το δικό σας χέρι βοήθειας. Με τη συνεργασία και τη συμμετοχή όλων μας, μπορούμε να δημιουργήσουμε όμορφες εμπειρίες για τα παιδιά μας και να τους δείξουμε ότι οι αξίες που διδάσκονται στο σχολείο αποκτούν πραγματικό νόημα όταν τις εφαρμόζουμε στην καθημερινή μας ζωή.

As we enter the months of November and December, we are reminded of the importance of gratitude, kindness, generosity, and hope. Our Greek School's priority is not only to teach the Greek language and preserve our cultural heritage, but also to instill respect, empathy, compassion, and love for others, reflecting the values of our Greek Orthodox faith.

Thanksgiving reminds us to be grateful and to give to those in need, while the Nativity of Christ teaches us that God's love is for all and that hope should guide our lives.

We will celebrate these meaningful holidays both inside and outside our classrooms. We encourage all our families to participate, lend a helping hand, and join us in creating meaningful experiences for our children.

Kalliopi Zanakis
Greek School PRincipal

SUNDAY CHURCH SCHOOL

St. Athanasios Church School: Growing in Faith Together!

As we begin another wonderful year of Church School at St. Athanasios, I am delighted to welcome our new students and warmly welcome back our returning students and their families! We are blessed to have 105 students registered for the 2026–2027 school year. Each child is a precious gift, and it is a privilege to help nurture their faith, deepen their understanding of our Orthodox Christian traditions, and strengthen their connection to our parish community.

Our Church School theme, Growing in Faith Together, reflects our vision of creating a welcoming and loving environment where children can learn about Christ, develop a deeper appreciation for our Orthodox faith, build friendships, and recognize that they are valued members of our church family.

Our Church School Staff

I am grateful to our dedicated teachers and ministry team members who generously share their time, talents, and love for Christ and our children.

- Pre-K/K: Ms. Dina Burke
- Grades 1–2: Ms. Eleni Civi
- Grades 3–4: Mrs. Georgia Abrunzo
- Grades 5–6: Mrs. Cleo Yannitsadis
- Grades 7–12 — Sunday Seminar: Fr. Niko Mataragas and Ms. Eleni Civi
- Church School Ministry Assistant: Mrs. Evy Dorizas
- Director: Dr. Dora Kontogiannis

Please join me in thanking our staff for their commitment to this important ministry. Their willingness to guide, encourage, and support our children helps make Church School a place where faith can take root and flourish.

Looking Ahead: November and December

The coming weeks offer many wonderful opportunities for our children and families to learn, serve, worship, and celebrate together.

November

- November 1: Sunday Church School begins its Food Drive in support of those in need.
- November 8: Sunday Church School and Sunday Seminar.
- November 15: Sunday Church School.
- November 22: Sunday Church School, Sunday Seminar, and class pictures.

December

- December 6: Sunday Church School and St. Nicholas Feast Day Celebration.
- December 13: Sunday Church School and Sunday Seminar.
- Saturday, December 19: Nativity Youth Lenten Retreat and Concert Rehearsal.
- December 20: Sunday Church School and our Christmas Nativity Concert in church. We look forward to celebrating the joy of Christ's Nativity together!
- December 27: Family Worship.

Please refer to the Church School calendar for the full year's schedule and additional details.

A Gentle but Important Reminder to Our Families

As parents, we make countless decisions about how to spend our children's time. Between schoolwork, sports, extracurricular activities, and other family commitments, our schedules can quickly become overwhelming. Yet, amid these many demands, I encourage every family to make Church School attendance a priority.

Our children are learning much more than Bible stories, prayers, and the traditions of our Greek Orthodox faith. They are learning who they are, where they belong, how to live with kindness and compassion, and how to build a lifelong relationship with Christ and His Church. These lessons are strengthened through consistent attendance, shared worship, meaningful conversations, and the friendships that develop within our church community.

Church School is not simply another activity on the calendar...it is an investment in our children's spiritual lives and their future in the Church. When families make attendance a priority, they send a powerful message about the importance of faith. I encourage parents to plan, make every effort to attend regularly, and remember that our children benefit most when learning and worship become a consistent part of their lives.

As we approach the beautiful season of the Nativity, may we also remember that we are planting seeds of faith that, with God's grace, will continue to grow throughout our children's lives.

Thank you to Fr. Niko for his unwavering spiritual guidance and support, our parents for entrusting us with your children, to our staff for their loving service, and to our parish community for supporting this essential ministry. Together, we can create a strong foundation of faith for the next generation.

May God bless our children, our families, and our entire St. Athanasios community as we continue growing in faith together!

With gratitude and blessings,

Dr. Dora Kontogiannis
Church School Director

Dear Greek School Families,

As we enter November, we are grateful for the wonderful community that makes our Greek School so special. Thank you for your continued support, participation, and commitment to keeping our Greek language, culture, and traditions alive for the next generation!

Welcoming Our New First-Grade Class and Teacher!

We are excited to celebrate the addition of our new First-Grade Greek School Class! Please join us in warmly welcoming our new Greek School teacher, K. Christiana Kandylioti. We wish her and our first-grade students a wonderful and successful school year filled with learning, growth, and fun!

Back-to-School Night Was a Success!

Thank you to all the families who joined us for Back-to-School Night! It was wonderful to come together as a school community and kick off another exciting year of Greek School. While parents had the opportunity to connect and enjoy iced coffee hosted by the PTO, our students enjoyed some special fun-time activities in the gym, supervised by PTO board members, GOYA volunteers, and other generous volunteers. A big thank-you K. Popi, our teachers, and to everyone who helped make the evening a success!

Building a Better Greek School Experience Together

The PTO is working on several exciting initiatives to support our teachers, enrich our students' learning experiences, and improve our school's facilities. Some of the projects and activities we are planning and fundraising for include:

- **Additional Smart Boards:** Donating additional interactive smart boards to teachers who are interested and trained in the technology, to enhance classroom learning and give our students more opportunities to engage with educational technology.
- **Ellinopoula Program:** Funding the Ellinopoula educational program for interested teachers and students to support Greek-language learning and engagement with our heritage in the classroom and at home.
- **Entertainment at the Church Beefsteak Dinner:** Arranging children's entertainment so our younger guests can enjoy a fun experience while families participate in this important parish event. This fundraiser will help fund our critical roof replacement, so grab your friends and family and please make every effort to join the fun!
- **Student Events and Activities:** Organizing additional opportunities for our students to learn, connect, celebrate, and have fun together outside the classroom.
- **Essential School Improvements:** Organizing fundraisers to help address important school needs, beginning with the much-needed **roof replacement**, which must be completed before we can renovate classrooms.

These initiatives reflect our shared commitment to making Greek School an even better place for our children to learn, grow, and build lasting connections to their Greek heritage.

We invite all parents to attend our PTO meetings! Join the discussion, share your ideas, learn more about our plans, and help us decide how we can best support our students and school. Every family's voice and participation make a difference!

November Dates to Remember

- **Sunday, November 8** — PTO Coffee Hour: The PTO will host Coffee Hour after church. Two of our PTO board members will be unavailable, so we are in particular need for additional parent volunteers to help with setup, serving, and cleanup. Any assistance would be greatly appreciated!
- **Saturday, November 14** — Church Beefsteak: Please join us in supporting this special parish event!
- **Wednesday, November 18** — PTO Meeting: All parents are welcome to participate, share ideas, and help shape our school's future.
- **Wednesday, November 25** — No Greek School: There will be no classes in observance of Thanksgiving.

Our Luxury Raffle Is Coming Back!

By popular demand, the PTO is planning to bring back our ****Luxury Raffle****, following last year's fundraiser! We are excited to begin organizing another fantastic raffle featuring special luxury prizes for **him and her**.

Our tentative drawing date is Saturday, **February 20, 2027** — just in time for a little *bonus Valentine's Day gift!*

We greatly appreciate any prize donations! We are also looking for enthusiastic parent volunteers to help organize the fundraiser, brainstorm prize ideas, solicit donations, shop and select the exciting items that will make this year's raffle a success. If you are interested in helping organize the raffle or have creative prize suggestions or donations, please reach out to the PTO. We would love to have you involved!

Wishing You a Happy Thanksgiving!

As we approach Thanksgiving, we wish all of our families a wonderful holiday filled with love, gratitude, and precious time with family and friends. We are thankful to be part of such a caring community and look forward to continuing our work together in the months ahead.

With gratitude,

Kali A. Trahanas

H.O.P.E. / J.O.Y.



Hellenic Orthodox Primary Education & Junior Orthodox Youth

Dear Parishioners,

Our Hope and Joy ministry has grown so much this year with the addition of many new families!

In September, our meeting brought us together to discuss how the Orthodox Church received the Trisagion Prayer. We had a lovely time meeting on the church balcony to chant this beautiful hymn in English and Greek: ***"Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us."*** We ended our meeting with yummy icecream sundaes!

During our October meeting, we discussed how blessed we are as Orthodox Christians to receive a patron saint during our baptism, as well as the importance of our Name Day. Each child decorated an icon image of their saint with lovely pressed flowers as we usually see done to icons in church.

Upcoming Dates and Events

Sunday November 15: HOPE/JOY meeting during coffee hour

Sunday December 6: St. Nicholas Feast Day party during coffee hour

Saturday January 9: Vasilopita Baking/lesson; Families meet in the gym @1pm

Sunday February 21: HOPE/JOY meeting during coffee hour

With love in Christ,

HOPE & JOY Advisors – Mrs. Sandy, Mrs. Ana, and Presbyteria Arete

JOY@stathanasiosnj.org





ST. ATHANASIOS GOYA

*Growing in Faith. Building Friendships.
Serving Others.*

**GOYA
IN ACTION**

Join our GOYA
youth group!

GOYA NEWSLETTER | NOVEMBER & DECEMBER 2026

It's been a busy start to our GOYA year!

SEPTEMBER

September kicked-off with the **Blessing of Backpacks, Holy Cross Dive & our GOYA Car Wash** community fundraiser!

We came together to pray for a successful year, bless our students and the waters, and support our ministry through a fun and meaningful event. Congratulations to our divers **Sophia Kavrakis, Spyridon Mihalīs & Markellos Mavrianos**.



OUR FOUR PILLARS



WORSHIP



FELLOWSHIP



SERVICE



WITNESS

Faith • Friendship • Service • Impact



OCTOBER



MR. & MISS GOYA PAGEANT

Congratulations to Kostandinos Siderias, Mr. Paramus, and Angeliki Yannitsadis, Miss Paramus, who earned the honor of 1st Runner-Up.



TRUNK OR TREAT

We ended October with our Trunk or Treat, a give back to our younger community members.



Looking Ahead to November & December:



VASILOPITA FUNDRAISER

All Vasilopita orders are due by **December 1**.

\$25 each!



VOLLEYBALL & BASKETBALL PLAYOFFS

Our GOYA Volleyball and Basketball playoffs are scheduled for **December 5 & 6**.

Location to be determined.



**Come out to support
and watch us play!**



HOLIDAY GIVE BACK WITH I AM HOPE

Our GOYA youth group will be partnering with **I AM HOPE NJ** for our Holiday Give Back to the community.

All volunteers are welcomed.

**I AM
HOPE**

*"For where two or three are gathered in my name,
there am I among them."*

— MATTHEW 18:20 —

goya@stathanasiosnj.org

St. Athanasios GOYA

Vasilopita Sale

From the Holy Protection Monastery bakery to your family table.
Begin the New Year with sweetness and blessings!



Orders & Payment due:
December 1st

Pick-up:
December 20th
(after liturgy)

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

No. of Traditional Vasilopites _____ x \$25.00 = \$ _____

No. of Nut & Seed Free Vasilopites _____ x \$25.00 = \$ _____

Cash or Check made payable to: St. Athanasios GOYA
Please submit order form with payment to the Church Office GOYA Mailbox.

Questions? Please contact Panayiota Mavrianos at (201) 519-3558



ST. ATHANASIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

HELP US SPREAD

Christmas Cheer

SUPPORT OUR COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARD

Please be part of the St. Athanasios family in offering holiday wishes during this Christmas Season.

The annual Christmas Card is a wonderful way of sharing joy and happiness with our fellow brothers and sisters during this holiday season.

Your donation will be greatly appreciated as it will help meet the needs of our beloved parish.



Name (as to appear on card): _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

In order for your name to be included on the card,
please return this form along with your donation to the

CHURCH OFFICE:

51 Paramus Road, Paramus NJ 07652
201-368-8881

Thank you for your generosity!

REGISTRY

BAPTISMS

September 6th - Oliver Gregory, son of Eleftheria and Peter B. Afarian.
The Godparents were Nikolaos & Maria Maritsas.

October 4th - Konstantina Maria, daughter of Angela and
Diamantis Kyriakakis.
The Godparents were George I. & Maria Bouboulis

October 12th - Matthew, son of Marisa and Emanuel Efstathios.
The Godparent was Joanne Glavas

October 24th - Dimitri, son of Nicholas and Yinabeth Tsouklidis.
The Godparents were Anastasios & Vasiliki Zoe Mirisis

October 25th - Sotirios, son of Tamas Gabor and Elena Laios.
The Godparent was Eleftheria Qua.

Na sas zisoun!

WEDDINGS

September 26th - Vasilios E. Vamvakidis and Kateryna Melnychuk.
The Koubaro was Apostolos Malatos.

October 3rd - David A. Dominguez and Eleftheria Mastoris.
The Koubara was Rigopoula Nasopoulos.

Na sas zisete!

FUNERALS

August 25th - John Tsapanos

October 19th - Michael Daniel

October 20th - Mary T. Zanetos

October 27th - James D. Grias

Our deepest sympathy to the families

IN MEMORIAM

It has become an accepted practice that at the death of a family member, the family requests that donations in memory of the departed, be made to St. Athanasios Church.

This month, we wish to thank:

**IN MEMORY OF
ASPASIA KAMVOSOULIS**

Ms. Ione Laios
Mr. & Mrs. Emanuel Scoullos

**IN MEMORY OF
MARY PETRAKIS**

Helen & Michael Saridakis

CHURCH WEBSITE

Visit our church website at www.stathanasiosnj.org for new information, daily updates and to learn more about our Greek Orthodox Faith.

CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

All church organizations are asked to submit their calendar, meetings, articles, announcements and information to the Church office by **Friday, December 11th**, for the **January / February** Newsletter

MEMORIALS and 40 DAY BLESSINGS

We ask all parishioners to notify the Church office at least one week before a Memorial Service or 40 Day Blessing

HOSPITAL / NURSING HOME VISITATION

Please notify the Church office if a family member is in the hospital, nursing home or a shut-in, so that Fr. Niko may visit them.

ΘΕΙΑ ΚΟΙΝΩΝΙΑ:

Εάν έχετε συγγενείς ή γνωστούς πού ευρίσκονται σε Γηροκομία, Νοσοκομεία η είναι κατάκοιτοι στο σπίτι και θέλετε τον πάτερ Νίκο για να τους κοινωνήσει, παρακαλούμε τηλεφωνείστε στο Γραφείο της Εκκλησίας μας.

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ATTORNEY AT LAW

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COMMUNITY FOOD PANTRY

We wish to thank all our parishioners and friends of St. Athanasios for remembering our Food Pantry. Our Food Pantry helps families that have a need for assistance. It is very important that we keep our food Pantry filled at all times. Please remember the bank for the needy is at the entrance of the Community Center.

ΑΠΟΦΗΚΗ ΤΡΟΦΙΜΩΝ:

Η Εκκλησία μας παρέχει τρόφιμα σε οικογένειες που έχουν ανάγκη. Ζητούμε συσκευασμένα τρόφιμα, επί καθημερινής βάσεως. Το ενοριακό αυτό πρόγραμμα θα συνεχίσει μόνο με την βοήθεια σας. Θά θέλαμε να ευχαριστήσουμε όλους τους δωριτές, με τα τρόφιμα για την ημέρα των Ευχαριστιών και Χριστουγέννων. Η γενναιοδωρία τους προς τους συνανθρώπους μας που βρίσκονται σε υλική ανάγκη είναι αποτέλεσμα της αγάπης τους προς τον Κύριο και Θεό μας.



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THE MINISTRIES OF ST. ATHANASIOS:

ALTAR BOYS	Fr. Nikolaos
BIBLE STUDY & CATECHISM	Fr. Nikolaos
EPISKEPSIS (Visitations)	Fr. Nikolaos
FOS (Outreach Parish Ministry)	Leah Carter
GOYA (ages 12-18)	Panagiota Mavrianos
GREEK DANCING	Anna-Maria Delardas
GREEK SCHOOL	Popi Zanakis, Principal
H.O.P.E. (ages 4-7)	Sandy Prassakos
J.O.Y. (ages 8-11)	
PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY	Aspasia Panagiotopoulos - President
PTO	Kali Trahanas
SUNDAY CHURCH SCHOOL	Dr. Dora Kontogiannis, Sunday Church School Director
DIAKONIA AGAPES (Help the needy-Food Pantry)	Maria Salemme / Peter Seremetis

DIAKONIA AGAPE

As part of our parish ministry, "Diakonia Agape" Food Pantry Ministry - "Feeding the Hungry", we are collecting non-perishable items. This is an on-going Parish Ministry. All donations can be placed in the designated box as you enter the Community Hall. All food items will assist needy families of our parish and food pantries of our neighborhood