Greetings Brothers and Sisters:

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

After the period of preparation in the Advent Fast, we have now embarked on the twelve (12) days of Christmas—a period of feasting and rejoicing. We pray that our joy be in receiving the gift of Christ our Lord, born in the flesh, and not in any fleeting material gift of this world.

We ring in the New Year by celebrating our Father and Hierarch St. Basil the Great as well as the Circumcision of our Lord on January 1st. According to secular traditions, many develop resolutions for beginning the new year. Let us resolve to become more Christ-like by deepening our involvement in the life of His Holy Church. This includes more frequent and full participation in Sunday Divine Liturgy, reception of the Holy Eucharist, Holy Confession and Holy Unction as well as the various ministries and programs of our parish.

As always we had a busy December with the Philoptochos Holiday Fair and Advent Luncheon as well as the Hellenic Foundation Awards. Please see photos from these events inside our newsletter.

We strict fast on January 5th in order to prepare for the Great Feast of Theophany/Epiphany—the Baptism of our Lord by John in the Jordan River. This Feast of Lights (Ta Phota) has great meaning and significance for our lives, one of which is the renewal of our human nature. Every year we pray that Christ blesses and sanctifies the waters of creation, and we take that Holy Water (Agiasmos) and sprinkle it and drink it at church and at home for the sanctification of our souls and bodies.

This year we will have our first annual Outdoor Water Blessing Service (Agiasmos) on Saturday January 6th, 2024. Two services will occur. 1) 2:00pm at Gallery Fountain on west side of lake. 2) 3:00pm at Gilson Beach, Wilmette (on Lake Michigan) 101 Lake Ave, Wilmette IL 60091. Parking adjacent to beach. Proceed to water’s edge straight out from beach house. Please join us for these brief but meaningful services. Morning services are at the church.

If you wish to have your home blessed, please email me to schedule a date/time. Please be sure to have the following items ready: icon, candle, incense and charcoal, large serving bowl with water and a sprig of basil or evergreen. The Blessing of Homes service consists of petitions and prayers with the sprinkling of the holy water throughout the home.

The Winter/Spring Catechism Course will be Monday evenings 7-9pm, beginning January 8th extending 12 weeks. These classes are open to everyone: seekers, inquirers, curious, catechumens, and already Orthodox. Please help...
## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### JANUARY 2024

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<tr>
<th>SUNDAY</th>
<th>MONDAY</th>
<th>TUESDAY</th>
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### COMING IN FEBRUARY

- 2 Meeting of Our Lord
- 4 God Parent / Child Sunday
- 10 ST. HILAIRENIOS
- 19 Presidents Day Holiday
- 20 OCC Winter Social
- 25 THESONIO BORNS
- 29 Leap Year
His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago and the Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos
cordially invite you to the
63rd annual Metropolis Wide
Vasilopita Celebration
To benefit Saint Basil Academy

Sunday, January 14, 2024
6:00 PM
Hosted by Holy Taxiarhai & Saint Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church
7573 N. Caldwell Ave. · Niles, Illinois 60714

Parish reservations may be made
by calling the church office at (847) 647-8880
or emailing office@stharalambosgoc.org

Please RSVP by Monday, January 8, 2024

For Emergencies Only: Please call the main office number and access Fr. Rick’s voicemail. Leave a message stating your emergency. If you do not receive a call back within 15 minutes, call again and leave a brief message.
PASTORAL MESSAGE

CONTINUED...

spread the word. We have a great cohort of teachers. We look forward to a great group of students. Learning is a life-long endeavor, especially when it comes to the Faith in Christ. Please pray with us for peace in the Holy Land. IOCC has reconfirmed that our staff in Gaza and Jerusalem remain safe. Safety protocols are always in place, and programs continue as security conditions allow. IOCC provided food and water, hygiene items, and mattresses for hundreds of displaced people in Gaza. As the situation continues to change, IOCC is monitoring developments and is in close communication with partners. Teams across the Middle East continue working with the US-based team to determine the most urgent needs and how we can best assist. A gift today to IOCC’s Middle East Relief Fund will allow IOCC to quickly and effectively respond to the needs of our brothers and sisters in these difficult times.

God’s guidelines for giving is the tithe (10%). He gives us everything but only asks for ten percent in return. That’s a pretty good deal. With a total (operations & capital) annual parish budget of $1.7M we encourage everyone to strive towards tithing (10%) but suggest a minimum of four percent (4%) annual giving.

This month January we look forward to—St. Basil Chicago parish feastday (Dec.31 Vespers; Liturgy at SSPP Jan.1), Theophany/Epiphany Feast (Jan.5-6), St John the Baptist Des Plaines parish feast day (Vespers Jan.6), Parish Vasilopita (Sun. Jan.7), Catechism classes begin (Jan.8, on Monday evenings), St Athanasios Aurora parish feast day (Vespers Jan.17; Liturgy at SSPP Jan.18), Ministry Council mtg (Jan.23); Sanctity of Life service at Holy Apostles Wescoter (Jan.28).

An update on the clergy leadership training program: The first cohort including myself are finishing our first year in December. The format has changed for 2024, condensing to two years instead of four years, and three out of town trips, instead of four. The upcoming 2024 intensive topics are: Focus on Your Strengths & High Leverage Parish Experience (February), Missions and Values & Positive Parish Culture (June), and Team Recruitment/Development & Subtract and Scale (September). The Metropolis continues to provide 60% of funding, the parish 30% and the priest 10%. I thank you for the investment and support of everyone. I pray it benefits all of our community!

Related to leadership is the beginning of a Multi-source Feedback Process for myself and our parish. This is commonly known as a 360-degree evaluation but adapted for the priest-parish context. Metropolitan Nathanael went through this last year and we would be the first priest-parish in the Metropolis to do this process. The Metropolis has offered to fund 50% of the cost and the other half will come from the Fr. George Scoulas Memorial Endowment Fund. The planning phase will begin very soon. Look for more information very soon.

parishioners, and enjoyed a fabulous Advent brunch at Sunset Ridge. The brunch took place on December 9 and it was fun to reunite in this festive atmosphere and relax over a delicious meal with great company. Over 125 guests were in attendance and brought in nonperishable food donations for Project HOPE.

SANTA’S HELPERS

Santa’s Philoptochos Helpers visit some of our homebound parishioners and residents at the Greek American Nursing Home. Over 50 goody bags filled with sweets and treats were delivered two weeks before Christmas. Here are some of the highlights!

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, January 7 - Fellowship Hall – Parish Vasilopita Cutting
Thursday, January 18 – Fellowship Hall – Spanakopita and Tiropita Baking

And remember to keep bringing in groceries for Project HOPE. This is an ongoing Metropolis ministry, and we will continue to collect items throughout the year. Follow us on Instagram @SSPeterandPaulPhiloptochos.
PHILOPTOCHOS

HO HO HO! HOLIDAY FAIRE

Santa and his favorite helper, Kris Tsitsis, wish to thank the entire community and everyone who attended and/or supported our 63rd Holiday Faire for their help in making it a huge success. It takes a village to host this spectacular event, and because of you, we are able to continue helping those in need. Our new format, live entertainment, sponsorships, and drive-through dinner option added to the festivities. Attendance was the highest it has been in years and our bakery also set records in sales! A portion of our proceeds will benefit Misericordia and Project One Step, who offers summer camps to children battling cancer. Some of their representatives were in attendance at the Faire!

AND MORE!

And as if our Holiday Faire wasn’t enough to keep us busy, we also hosted a Sip and Stretch led by Chelle Cotissiannis on December 5, delivered gifts to the ladies living at St. Monica’s and our homebound departed loved ones in the year 2023. Evan Ypsilantis, Carma Gregory, Helen Bair, Argyro Roula Mantis, Christ Skafidas, Helen Karkazis, Fr. Angelo Artemas, Paul Chandiles, Maritza Schiffer, Jennie Maurides, Annette Starr, Dr. George Karkazis, James Betzelos, Demetra Phelus, Thalia Chrysanthakes, Patricia Kucharis, Nicholas Barkulis, Mary Stathopoulos, Nicholas Liapes, James Demosthenes Bolos, Stash Betzelos, John Ress, Paul Boidy, Athena Ames, Gloria Pappageorge, Katherine Nicolopoulos, Rommie Khalifeh, Olga Vlahakis, Frank Kucharis, Elizabeth Cox, William DeFotis, Mary Koulogeorge, and Stella Housakos. May their memory be eternal!

Blessed New Year and Theophany!
+Fr. Rick

PASTORAL MESSAGE

CONTINUED...

Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia

St. Basil the Great, born around 329 in Cappadocia, embraced asceticism influenced by his devout family. After studying, he chose a hermit’s life, defending Orthodoxy as bishop. Despite threats from Arians, including Emperor Valens, Basil stood firm. He prayed for Valens’ son’s healing, but after a broken promise, the child died. Basil miraculously avoided exile and died on January 1, 379, known for wisdom and eloquence. Commemorated on January 30th with Saints Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom.
OUR LIFE TOGETHER

SSPP receives hellenic foundation grant 12-14-2023

Faith Love Joy Gingerbread Night Dec 8th

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN COUPLES

ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN COUPLES

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Happy New Year from the OCC!

We are excited for what 2024 has in store for us, and we’re kicking things off right away. This January the OCC is hosting “Small Groups.” For those of you that have never attended a Small Groups session, these are group discussions hosted in a fellow parishioner’s home. The focus is on spending an evening with your spouse or partner, meeting other couples of our wonderful community, and allowing an evening of conversation to nourish both your marriage and your soul. The environment is casual and relaxed, and the evening sure to be enjoyable – you will not want to miss!

Dates for January Small Groups are all on Saturday this month, following Vespers:
- 1/13/2024 6pm
- 1/20/2024 6pm
- 1/27/2024 6pm

Please sign up here! — https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c044daedc2fa4ff2-46762029-occwinter/

A big thank you to everyone that attended our Fall Social at Hangar Two in November. It was so nice to get together, meet some new faces, and sample delicious beer flights! We’ll have another social event coming up in February, so we’ll be back in front of you with details on that soon!

If you are interested in getting more involved with the OCC and becoming a committee member, please reach out to occ@ssppglenview.org. Thank you!

Nassos family members took part in Project Mexico at various times over the years. Tass and his wife, Mary Ann, were there with an adult group in 2004. Their four children participated as well: Marc, Peter and Jonathan in 1992; Jonathan and Christin in 2003. Because of their own memorable, enriching experiences, they wish to assist future participants in having the same opportunity. Thank you Nassos family!

The family of Dr. Tassos Nassos has requested that proceeds from donations made to our church in his memory be used to establish the T.P. Nassos Project Mexico Fund. Beginning with next summer’s group, the Fund will help offset travel expenses for youths who want to participate in Project Mexico but may need some financial assistance to do so.
**PROJECT MEXICO FUND**

**NASSOS PROJECT MEXICO**

**READ BELOW**

T.P. NASSOS PROJECT MEXICO FUND TO HELP OFFSET TRAVEL EXPENSES FOR SOME PARTICIPANTS

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**OUR LIFE TOGETHER**

Our Church School students performed their annual pageant on Dec 17th to a packed house! Amazing job!

Thank you to all of our donors from our Dec 5th blood drive. Thank you for giving the gift of life. Inviting all parish family to join us on May 14th for our Spring drive.
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

I hope everyone enjoyed their break and had a wonderful Holiday season. The Saints Peter and Paul youth had a very busy month of December.

Our Hope group and our Faith, Love, Joy group had a fantastic time at our family gingerbread house night. Aside from all the cool gingerbread house creations, we had cookie decorating and a scavenger hunt. The Junior GOYAns wrote Christmas cards and decorated cookies to give to the Greek-American nursing home. Afterward, they had a gingerbread bread house contest.

The Senior GOYAns had an overnigher at the building, where we shopped at Target for gifts to give to underprivileged families at Christmas. We did a white elephant exchange and had our own cake wars.

We welcome back our GOYA Alumni—College kids on their winter break. We will be having dinner together at Papagalino’s on January 8th to reconnect with each other.

Project Mexico is happening on July 19-25th. Project Mexico provides an incredible chance for kids to bring their faith to life. Engaging in humanitarian efforts not only embodies the principles of charity and compassion but also offers an opportunity to make a tangible impact on the lives of others, contributing to their spiritual growth. “Don’t forget to do good and to share what you have because God is pleased with these kinds of sacrifices.” Hebrews 13:16. There will be a parent info meeting coming up, and an email will be sent out. If you have any questions or are interested, even in the slightest, please email me.

- Steven Thell

As we look ahead to 2024, we want to encourage everyone to renew their spiritual lives in the coming year. A great way to do this is to set aside a sacred space within your home for prayer and worship. This is commonly known in an Orthodox home as a prayer corner. We can help you with our beautiful selection of icons. Reading materials are also available for Orthodox Christians of all ages! Check out our picture books and graphic novels! We’re located just outside of Fellowship Hall and open every Sunday immediately following the Divine Liturgy. Hope to see you soon!

Please join us on Sunday, January 21st, following Holy Communion in the Youth Room for Coffee Connection: An Educational Ministry Open to All Adults

This Year’s Theme is: “The Orthodox Way and Other Faith Communities: Exploring The Truths Our Faith Holds, In Relation to Other Traditions”

We will be discussing:

Who’s in Charge?
- How are different churches (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant) organized?
- How does their leadership work?
YOUTH UPDATE

A MESSAGE FROM STEVEN

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

I hope everyone enjoyed their break and had a wonderful Holiday season. The Saints Peter and Paul youth had a very busy month of December.

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