

The Veil

*A monthly publication of Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church
Oakmont, Pennsylvania*

January 2026

Volume 4, Issue 1



Saint Maximos Kavso-Kalyvia

January 13th

DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS

GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

12 Washington Avenue - Oakmont, Pennsylvania 15139

Church: (412) 828-4144 - www.dormitionpgh.org

Rev. Fr. Michael A. Gavrilos - Parish Priest

Janine Michael – Parish Administrator

Office Hours: Tuesday-Thursday 10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.

Parish Council Members

President – Christos Ioannou

Vice President – Christina Contes

Secretary – Dr. Michael Contes

Treasurer – Chris Aivaliotis

George Doas

Ted Ioannou

John Kamarados, esq.

Zoe Lardas

Bryan Romanelli

George Spiridonakos

Dimitri Tsambis

Service Times

Sunday Orthros – 8:00 a.m.

Sunday Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Please check our calendar for other services and times

Confession: By Appointment

If you would like an article, or photos in **The Veil**, submit them electronically to Fr. Michael (fmg@dormitionpgh.org) no later than the 15th of the month.

“Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.” -James 5:14

If you or your loved one is sick, in the hospital, or need a priest, please contact Fr. Michael so that he will be able to visit them.

2025 Stewardship

Thank you for all of your pledge campaigns for the past year!

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COVER ICON – Saint Maximos Kavsoakalyvia

January 13th

Saint Maximos Kavsoakalyvites was educated at the Church of the Most Holy Theotokos at Lampsakos. At seventeen years of age he left his parental home, became a monk, and passed his obedience under Elder Mark, the finest spiritual instructor in Macedonia. After the death of his teacher, the Saint pursued asceticism under the guidance of several desert fathers of extremely strict life. Arriving in Constantinople, Maximos was constantly at the Blachernae Church of the Most Holy Theotokos, as though he had taken up his abode at the entrance.

From his youth, Maximos had a great love for the Mother of God. He persistently entreated her to grant him the gift of unceasing noetic prayer. One day, as he was venerating her icon, he felt a warmth and a flame enter his heart from the icon. It did not burn him, but he felt a certain sweetness and contrition within. From that time, his heart began to repeat the Jesus Prayer continuously. In this way, the Virgin Theotokos fulfilled his request.

Saint Maximos fulfilled his obedience in the Great Lavra of Saint Athanasios on Mount Athos. In order to conceal his ascetic deeds of fasting and prayer, and to avoid celebrity, he behaved like a fool. One day, he had a vision of the Mother of God, who told him to ascend the mountain. On the summit of the Holy Mountain, he prayed for three days and nights. Again, the Most Holy Theotokos appeared to him surrounded by angels, and holding her divine Son in her arms.

Prostrating himself, the Saint heard the All-Holy Virgin speak to him, "Receive the gift against demons... and settle at the foot of Athos, for this is the will of my Son." She told him that he would ascend the heights of virtue, and become a teacher and guide for many. Then, since he had not eaten for several days, a heavenly bread was given to him. As soon as he put it in his mouth, he was surrounded by divine light, and he saw the Mother of God ascending into Heaven.

Saint Maximos told his vision to a certain Elder living by the Church of the Holy Prophet Elias at Carmel. He was skeptical, but the Saint turned his disbelief to belief. He pretended to be slightly crazy in order to conceal his prodigious ascetic deeds, privations, his hardship and solitude. Maximos did not live in a permanent abode, but wandered from place to place like a lunatic. Whenever he moved, he would burn his hut down. Therefore, he was called "Kavsoakalyvites," or "Hut Burner."

Those on the Holy Mountain, knowing of the extreme deprivations and sorrows of Maximos, for a long time regarded him with contempt, even though he had attained the height and perfection of spiritual life. When Saint Gregory of Sinai (August 8) arrived on Athos, he encountered the holy fool. After speaking to him, he began to call him an earthly angel. Saint Gregory persuaded Saint Maximos to stop behaving like a fool and to live in one place so that others might benefit from his spiritual experience. Heeding the words of Saint Gregory and the advice of other Elders, Saint Maximos selected a permanent dwelling in a cave near the renowned Elder Isaiah.

Knowing of his gift of clairvoyance, the Roman Emperors John Palaiologos (1341-1376) and John Kantakouzenos (1341-1355) visited him and were surprised by the fulfillment of his predictions. Theophanes, the abbot of Vatopaidi Monastery, wrote about Maximos: "I invoke God as my witness, that I myself saw several of his miracles. Once, for instance, I saw him travel through the air from one place to another. I listened as he made a prediction concerning me, that first I would be an abbot, and then Metropolitan of Ochrid. He even revealed to me how I would suffer for the Church."

Saint Maximos abandoned his solitude only just before his death, and settled near the Great Lavra of Saint Athanasios, where he surrendered his soul to the Lord at 95 years of age in the year 1365. After his death, as in life, Saint Maximos was glorified by many miracles.

January 2026

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|---|---|-----------|-----------------------------------|---|---|
| | | | | 1 (Offices Closed) | 2 | 3 |
| 4 Sunday before Theophany NO SUNDAY SCHOOL <i>Parish Council Affirmation of Of- fice</i> | 5 5:00 p.m. Royal Hours, Vespers Divine Liturgy, Agiasmos (Forefeast of Theophany) | 6 8:00 a.m. Orthros 9:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy, Agiasmos (Holy Theophany) | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 Sunday after Theophany <u>Vasilopita</u> <u>Sunday</u> NO SUNDAY SCHOOL | 12 | 13 5:30 p.m. Greek School | 14 | 15 9:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy | 16 GOYA Basketball Tournament -Hosted by Holy Trinity-Canton, OH | 17 GOYA Basketball Tournament -Hosted by Holy Trinity-Canton, OH |
| 18 12th Sunday of Luke Sunday School GOYA Basketball Tournament -Hosted by Holy Trinity-Canton, OH | 19 | 20 5:30 p.m. Greek School | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 |
| 25 15th Sunday of Luke Sunday School | 26 | 27 5:30 p.m. Greek School | 28 | 29 | 30 GOYA Basketball Tournament -Hosted by Annunciation- Akron, OH | 31 GOYA Basketball Tournament -Hosted by Annunciation- Akron, OH |

February 2026

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|-----------|--|-----------|-----------|--|--|
| 1 Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee Sunday School | 2 | 3 5:30 p.m. Greek School | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 8 Sunday of the Prodigal Son Sunday School | 9 | 10 5:30 p.m. Greek School | 11 | 12 | 13 GOYA Basketball Tournament <i>-Hosted by St. Demetrios – Warren, OH</i> | 14 GOYA Basketball Tournament <i>-Hosted by St. Demetrios – Warren, OH</i> |
| 15 Judgement (Meatfare) Sunday Sunday School GOYA Basketball Tournament <i>-Hosted by St. Demetrios – Warren, OH</i> | 16 | 17 5:30 p.m. Greek School | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 22 Forgiveness (Cheesefate) Sunday Sunday School | 23 | 24 5:30 p.m. Greek School | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |

SUNDAY SCHOOL UPDATE

Dear Church Family,

Sunday School has been incredibly busy, and we are overjoyed by the high attendance we see each week! It is a blessing to watch our youth grow in faith together.

Class Highlights & Faculty

Our program's growth is particularly visible in our **Pre-School class**, led by Allison Flynn and Stefanie Todd. As our largest group, their energy bodes well for the future of our church! We are also grateful to our dedicated teaching teams across all grade levels:

- **K-2nd Grade:** Lauren Michaels and Presvytera Maria (who has been teaching the children beautiful hymns in both English and Greek).
- **3rd-6th Grade:** Nancy Ioannou and Zoe Thompson.
- **7th-12th Grade:** Milt Constantine.

Recent Events & Looking Ahead

We had a fantastic Christmas Party on Sunday, December 7, and we are now looking forward to a wonderful second semester. Please note that **classes will recommence on January 18, 2026.**

The kids were thrilled to find their shoes loaded with oranges and goodies from Saint Nicholas!

Our oldest students have already begun preparing for the **Oratorical Festival** under the leadership of Milt Constantine. Additionally, Presvytera Maria is planning a school-wide program where every student will have the opportunity to prepare something special to share.

Service Project: Winter Coat Drive

We are currently collecting new or gently used **coats, hats, and gloves** for the Neighborhood Resilience Project. We haven't received many donations yet, so we ask that you please check your closets! We plan to drop these off during our upcoming bowling outing in January. Your generosity helps keep our neighbors warm.

A Heartfelt Thank You

We extend our deepest gratitude to **Philoptochos** for providing pizza for our Christmas party and for the generous gift cards given to our teachers. Finally, thank you to everyone – parents, volunteers, and parishioners – who makes our Sunday School successful each week.

God bless you all!



FESTIVAL UPDATE

This year's festival activities including the Gyrofest and Half Pan Sale have generated \$254K in profits for our church treasury.

Many thanks to all who helped prepare for and/or volunteered their time to make these events a huge success. Without the commitment and hard work of the entire church community we could never host these events with the operational efficiency and financial success that we do.

Food Festival 2026 is June 26-27-28, planning starts in January and cooking/baking starts in February. Think about getting involved, we need everyone's help and ideas to ensure the success of our annual food festival.

Again, thanks to all who work hard to make our festival activities a huge success.

Andy & Chris

GREEK DANCE UPDATE

Junior Grecian Stars

The Junior Grecian Stars have been preparing all year, and are excited to perform for Vasilopita Sunday.

The group practices on Sundays after church for about 30 minutes, and will continue to do so leading up to the festival in June. If your child is in kindergarten - sixth grade and wants to get involved, please contact directors Eleni Wyrick and/or Lauren Michaels or find one of us at coffee hour!

Grecian Stars

The Grecian Stars is our Church's GOYA dance group. They perform bi-annually at Vasilopita and the Greek Food Festival. The group has been under the direction of the amazing Alecia Denillo for the past 20 years, and we are so thankful for all that she has done. Now, Alecia is looking to pass on the torch (*please read her letter below that she sent to the dancers*). If anybody is interested in directing the church's 7th-12th graders, or in joining the group, please reach out to Alecia, Eleni Wyrick, or Fr. Michael. We will do our best to ensure a smooth transition into the new year!

Dear Grecian Stars Dancers & Parents,

After much reflection, I want to share that I have made the difficult decision to step down from my role as Director of the Grecian Stars. At this time, life is shifting in ways that require more attention on my end. I care deeply about this group and believe our dancers deserve a leader who can be fully present with them – in practices, performances, and beyond. After a lot of thought, I realized I cannot give the level of time and energy that the group deserves right now.

I also want to reassure everyone that this decision doesn't come from any hardship or concern. I simply realized I need to slow down a bit and create more balance and space in my life. This decision comes from a place of care, respect, and deep appreciation for each of you. The memories, the performances, the laughter, and the shared pride in our Greek culture will stay with me always. I am incredibly grateful for the trust families have given me over the years, and for the effort, talent, and heart each dancer has poured into this group.

Teaching the Grecian Stars since 2004 has been one of the greatest honors of my life. Whether I have known you for years or just recently welcomed you, each of you has had a meaningful impact on this community. I am deeply grateful for the trust, enthusiasm, and heart that every family brings to the group. Watching so many dancers grow, learn, and carry our traditions forward has been incredibly important to me.

Although I am stepping away for now, I hope to stay connected and supportive in whatever ways make sense. Once life stabilizes, I would be more than happy to revisit the possibility of returning in the future.

Because I care so much about the dancers and the traditions we hold, I want to make sure the group continues to be supported. We will do our best to find someone who can step in and guide the kids with the attention and presence they deserve.

Thank you, sincerely, for allowing me to be a part of your children's lives and for the many beautiful years we have shared together. I am blessed to have had this opportunity.

With appreciation and love in Christ,

Alecia

PHILOPTOCHOS UPDATE

Annual Philoptochos Brunch | December 6

The Annual Philoptochos Brunch was held on December 6 at a new venue this year. Guests enjoyed mimosas and a lovely brunch catered by John Marshall catering. We extend our sincere thanks to our gracious hosts, **Susan Spiridonakos** and **Allison Sadlowski**, who thought of every detail and created a warm and welcoming event. The much-anticipated gift exchange at the end of the gathering brought many laughs and smiles. Thank you to all who attended and to Susan and Allison for their time, thoughtfulness, and organization.

Name Day of Saint Barbara | December 7

On December 7, we celebrated the Name Day of Saint Barbara, for whom our Philoptochos chapter is named. Saint Barbara is remembered for her steadfast faith, courage, and devotion to Christ, qualities that are reflected in the giving and hardworking spirit of Philoptochos women today. We are grateful to the many hands who made this celebration so special. Thank you to **Barbara Lafferty** for preparing the Artoclasia, **Aleka Batis** for making the Koliva, and **Rosalyn Denillo** and **Christopher Doas** for making the Loukoumathes. It was a beautiful celebration and a wonderful example of what can be accomplished when many hands come together.

Monthly Meeting | December 14

Our December Philoptochos meeting took place on December 14, despite snowy weather and the busy holiday season. Please keep an eye out for the meeting minutes from **Joyce Diacopoulos**, who consistently keeps us organized and informed. Thank you, Joyce.

Christmas Card Fundraiser

The Annual Christmas Card Fundraiser was a great success. Thank you to all parishioners who participated and supported this effort. A special thank you to **Olympia Arthur** for organizing and producing a beautiful Christmas keepsake that was truly appreciated by all.

Important Meeting Update

Please note that the Philoptochos meeting originally scheduled for **January 11** has been rescheduled due to the Vasilopita celebration taking place the same day. The January and February meetings will be combined and held on **January 25, following Divine Liturgy**.

!! Upcoming Events !!

Covered Dish Luncheon | February 15, 2026

Thank you to **Joyce Diacopoulos** and **Maria Kopsahilis** for serving as chairpersons and coordinating sign ups for our upcoming Covered Dish Luncheon on February 15, 2026.

- All parishioners are encouraged to sign up to bring your best dish to share
- Philoptochos members are asked to help with setup, serving, last-minute needs, and cleanup
- All hands are needed to ensure the success of this event

This Covered Dish Luncheon is always a fun and well-attended gathering shared with all parishioners, and we are happy to host it once again.

Koulourakia Fundraiser | Volunteers Needed

In February 2026, volunteers will be needed to help prepare Koulourakia, a beloved and popular Philoptochos fundraiser. The confirmed baking date will be shared as soon as it is finalized. Please consider lending your time and talents to support this important effort.

Birthday Luncheon Group | January 14

The Philoptochos Birthday Luncheon Group will meet on **January 14** at 12:00 PM at **Knead Café**. Please RSVP to Rosalyn Denillo at 412-798-0104.

Save the Date | International Women's Day Event

Please save the date for **March 12, 2026**, when Philoptochos will host a celebration for International Women's Day at **6:00pm in the church**, with refreshments to follow in the hall. More details will be shared as plans are finalized.

Membership Dues Reminder

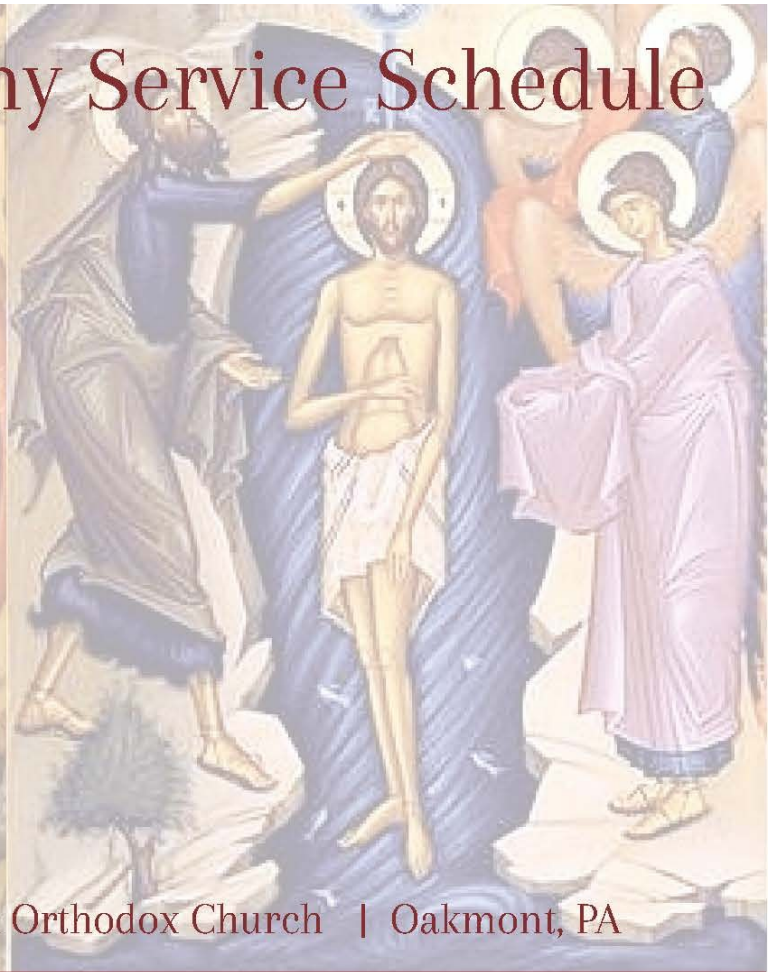
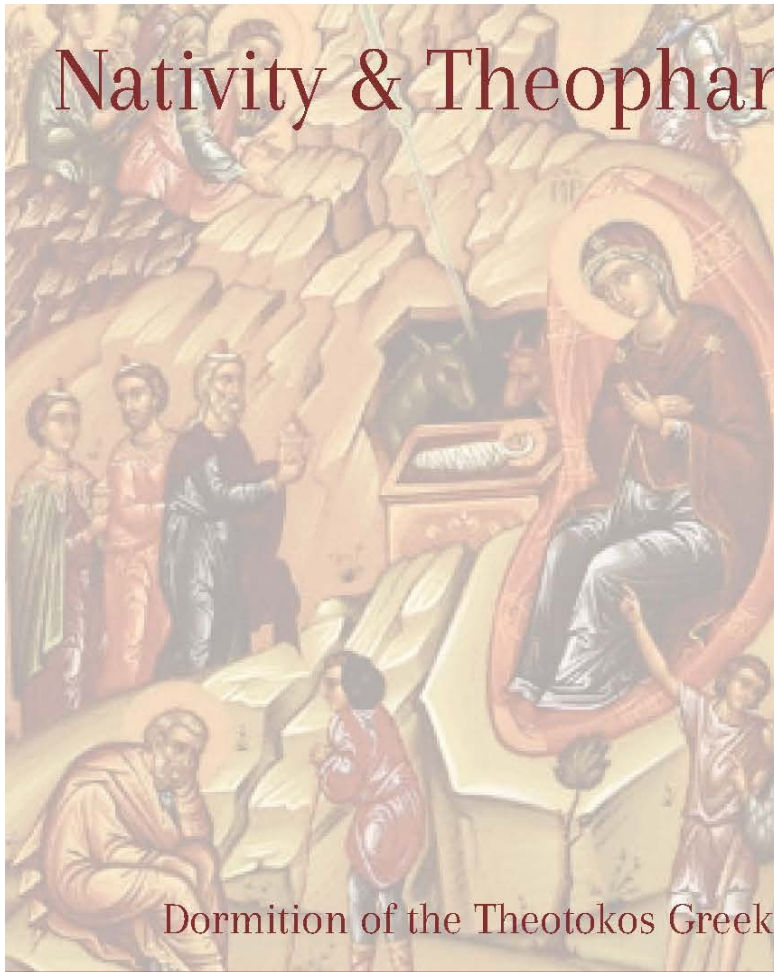
This is a friendly reminder that **Philoptochos membership dues are now due**. Annual dues are \$30. When submitting your dues, we kindly ask that you complete a short form. This information is available in the narthex, or you may see any Philoptochos member for assistance. Dues may be paid by cash, check, or online. For any questions regarding dues, please contact our Treasurer, **Diane Lingeris**, at 412-721-2608.

....Note

Philoptochos is active throughout the year, and participation is always welcome. Your involvement can be as much or as little as your schedule allows. Whether you are able to participate often or occasionally, all are welcome and every contribution is appreciated.



Nativity & Theophany Service Schedule



Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church | Oakmont, PA

Wednesday 3:30 p.m. Hours of the Nativity; 5:00 p.m. - Vespersal Divine Liturgy
December 24th *Eve of the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ*

Thursday 8:30 a.m. - Orthros & Divine Liturgy
December 25th *Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ*

Sunday 8:00 a.m. - Orthros; 9:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy
December 28th *Sunday after the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ*

Wednesday 5:00 p.m. - Great Vespers, Orthros, Divine Liturgy
December 31st *Saint Basil the Great*

Sunday 8:00 a.m. - Orthros; 9:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy
January 4th *Sunday before Theophany*

Monday 5:00 p.m. - Royal Hours, Vespersal Divine Liturgy, Agiasmos
January 5th *Forefeast of Theophany*

Tuesday 8:00 a.m. - Orthros; 9:30 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Agiasmos
January 6th *Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ*

TOGETHER WE CAN HELP!

St. Barbara's Philoptochos is collecting these items to
bless others in need...

Please consider helping our mission!

SOCKS



*New socks of all sizes for
women, children and men
are needed for local shelters.*

CAKE KITS



*One cake mix, one container icing
and one can of soda in a
disposable cake pan is all it takes
to give supplies so someone can
celebrate a special day!*

Collection boxes located in the hall.

HYGIENE ITEMS



*Items for young men and
women who need help with
everyday supplies.*

STUFFED ANIMALS



*Cuddly teddies (or other
animals!) are given to
Neighborhood Resilience
Project for children in need
during traumatic times.*

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT OF BLESSING OTHERS!

DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS CHURCH, OAKMONT, PA





WINTER GEAR DRIVE

Coats | Hats | Scarves | Gloves | Boots

Our Sunday School is collecting new or gently used winter items to donate to the Neighborhood Resilience Project.

Please bring items to church by January 11!

Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church | Oakmont, PA



APOKRIATIKO COVERED DISH LUNCHEON

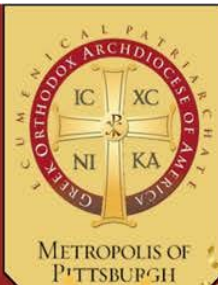
SPONSORED BY ST. BARBARA'S PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15th, 2026
FOLLOWING THE DIVINE LITURGY

All parishioners are asked to sign up
and bring something to share!
Philoptochos will be providing chicken.

Please sign up with Joyce or Maria before February 6th
Joyce Diacopoulos at (412) 828-4231
Maria Kopsahilis (412) 798-0917

Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church - Oakmont, PA

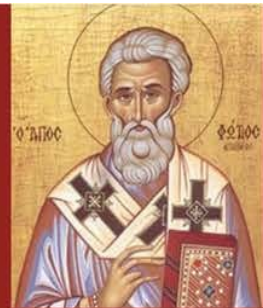


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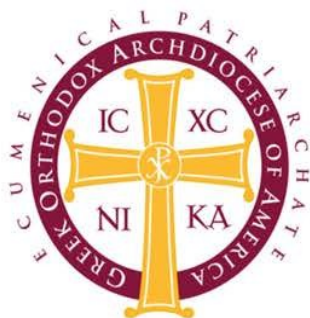
JANUARY 2026

A Good Word - Λόγον Αγαθόν

NEWSLETTER OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF PITTSBURGH



New Metropolis Center Progress - Dec 2025



**48th BIENNIAL
CLERGY-LAITY CONGRESS**

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

Join us in Cleveland, OH at the Huntington Convention Center



Mark your calendar for...

**Oratorical
Education Sunday!**



January 25, 2026

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

METROPOLIS OF PITTSBURGH CAMP

SAVE THE DATE

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



APPLY BY MARCH 1ST AT 11:59 PM!

Summer Camp

Staff applications open:
February 1 to March 1

GOYA Spring Retreat

Staff applications open:
February 15 to March 1

y2am.pittsburgh.goarch.org/campstaff





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

Senior Division Essay Topic 4

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Please consider donating to the Metropolis Scholarship Fund



PLEASE SUPPORT OUR METROPOLIS MINISTRIES!

It costs approximately \$1,000 per day to operate our Metropolis - including Metropolitan 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



Dormition of the Theotokos
Greek Orthodox Church
12 Washington Avenue
Oakmont, Pennsylvania 15139

