



THE MESSENGER

FEBRUARY 2024

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Presentation of Christ in the Temple



Our Mission Statement

TO PROCLAIM, CELEBRATE, AND SHARE
THE GOOD NEWS OF SALVATION IN
JESUS CHRIST IN ACCORDANCE
WITH THE ORTHODOX TRADITION.

The Five Tasks of Our Parish Vision

Hear
Pray
Grow
Serve
Share



METROPOLIS
OF CHICAGO

This feast, celebrated on February 2, is known in the Orthodox Church as **The Presentation of Christ in the Temple**. Another name for the feast is **The Meeting of our Lord**. The Feast of the Presentation concludes the observances related to the Nativity of Christ, a period that opened on November 15 with the beginning of the Nativity fast. The story of...

(continued on page 3)



Coffee Hour Hosts Needed

Are you interested in hosting a Sunday coffee hour? Several upcoming Sundays are available. You don't need to host in conjunction with Memorial Prayers, do it just for the fun of it! The available Sundays are: February 18 and 25 and March 3. Please contact David in the Church Office if you'd like to serve or want more information.

Our Life Together

Baptisms

The Cash Family:

Brock, Christina, Milena,
and Constantine

December 17, 2023

Walter

Parents: Paul and Krisanthi
Sommerstad

December 30, 2023

Memorial Prayers

Sunday, February 11

Sophia Mihas (1 year)

Aristides Apostolou (10 years)

Thank you...

The clergy and staff of St. Mary's wish to thank everyone for your cards and gifts shared with us this past Christmas season. Your thoughtfulness at this time and throughout the year is so much appreciated! May God bless you richly in 2024.

Thank you...

Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry (OCPM) at the Men's Prison at Lino Lakes
Thanks to Barb Leschisin, Todd Pilincinski, Carol Karos, JoAnn Lucs, Kay Wakaruk, Karen Schwebach, Toni Miller, Sara Pogorely, and Dcn. Philip for participating in a wonderful Typica service at the Lino Lakes Medium Security Prison on Sunday, December 31. Over 50 prisoners signed up a week ahead and attended the service! Special thanks to Sara for directing the choir, especially the Christmas hymns that the men appreciated and to Dcn. Philip for a message emphasizing how the promised land that Christ seeks is not a sliver of land, but our very bodies, souls and hearts. You can find out more about this ministry by visiting the web site www.orthodoxprisonministry.org or contacting Dcn. Philip Wagner at either wagne003@umn.edu or 651.587.3657

Share YourShelf

February's recipient is
SIMPSON FOOD PANTRY

IMMEDIATE NEEDS:

Peanut Butter

Sunday, February 4

Canned Meal – large cans
(e.g. Chili / Pork and Beans)

Sunday, February 11

Peanut Butter

Sunday, February 18

Pancake mix & syrup

Sunday, February 25

Hygiene items (toothpaste, soap,
shampoo, conditioner; razors)

"It is not enough to be compassionate;
you must act."

~ the Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, 1992

www.simpsonfoodpantry.org



Donate Online,
Visit the site, then
select "Donate"
in the navigation

Office Closure

The Church and Office will be closed on Monday, February 19, in observance of Presidents' Day.



Worship Schedule Weekend

Saturdays

Great Vespers – 5:00 p.m.

Sundays (live-streamed)

Orthros – 8:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Weekday

Thursday, February 1

Eve of Presentation

Great Vespers – 6:00 p.m.

Friday, February 2

Presentation of Our Lord

Orthros – 8:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Saturday, February 10

Saint Haralambos

Divine Liturgy – 10:00 a.m.

Saturday, February 17

Saint Theodore the Recruit

Divine Liturgy – 10:00 a.m.

Fellowship and Study Groups

Intercessory Prayer

Wednesday, February 7 and 21
11:00 a.m.

Nave Chapel

Koinonia

Thursday, February 22

6:30 p.m.

Meeting Room 1

Men's Fellowship

Friday, February 2, 7:00 a.m.

Judges 3-4

Fireside Room

Friday, February 16, 7:00 a.m.

Psalm 17 (16 in LXX)

Fireside Room

Saturday Bible Study

Every Saturday, 9:00 a.m.

Fireside Room (and on Zoom)

Women's Bible Study

Wednesday, February 7 and 21
11:30 a.m.

Fireside Room

Parish News & Events

St. Mary's Church Staff

Proistamenos

Fr. Timothy Sas

Associate Priest

Fr. Jason Houck

Attached Priest

Fr. John Kostas

Deacons

Fr. Paul Kalina

Fr. Luke Twito

Office Manager

David Mertesdorf

Office Assistant

Giulia Chatfield

Communications & Marketing

Nikolas Kouzes

Finance

Michael Rakes

Ministry Support

Doria Saros

Youth Director

Scott Rudquist

Music Director

Thespina Macres

Organist

Mark Macres

St. Mary's Parish Council

President

Jeannie Possis

Vice President

Louis Tiggas

Secretary

Elisabeth (Libby) Cheolis

Treasurer

Cristina Nicklow

Assistant Treasurer

Athena Mihos

Members

Benjamin Amundgaard

Alex Dascalos

Sam Hanna

Andrew LeRoy

Dean Psychogios

Sophia Rouman

Nicholas P. Santrizos



Come to Parish Night!

Wednesday, February 21

Come on out for these parish-wide events that occur once a month, on a Wednesday. The evening begins at 6:15 p.m. with a brief prayer service in the Nave, followed by dinner in the Terrace Room and breakout sessions for the adults and kids. Parish Night ends by 8:00 p.m. The theme is "Understanding the Liturgy." The remaining Parish Night for the season is Wednesday, March 13. Everyone of all ages is welcome!



Philoxenia Charities

Philoxenia Charities Presentation

Sunday, February 18, after Liturgy

Johnny Mangouris of Philoxenia Charities in Rochester, Minnesota, will be our guest on Sunday, February 18. Following the Liturgy, he will give a presentation on Philoxenia Charities and its work, its future needs, and the connection with the Mayo Clinic. As the limitations of the current housing continue to show themselves, the need for a larger campus vision becomes more urgent. A two-structure 100 unit housing complex is the goal. They will need to acquire property, secure funding, and supply staffing to make this vision a reality. Join us and find out more information and how we all can help this important ministry in Rochester.

Grief Support Group

The Grief Support Group continues to meet in the new year. If you have experienced a loss and are looking for support with other Orthodox Christians, join us for Grief Explorations at St. Mary's. This will be facilitated by Matushka Jenny Schroedel, a hospice chaplain specializing in grief support, along with Joni Snidarich. For the winter months we are planning a monthly drop-in session with the hope of offering the six week series in the spring. There is no requirement to attend all of the monthly sessions, just attend when you can. The upcoming meetings are scheduled for Tuesdays, January 23 and February 27, 2024, in the Fireside Room. Please RSVP to stmarysgriefgroup@gmail.com. You may also contact Joni Snidarich with any questions, 612.910.0855.



Pan-Orthodox Choral Workshop

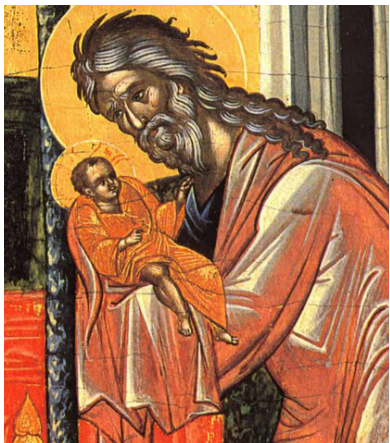
The Pan-Orthodox Choir Ministry (POCM) is hosting a choral workshop on February 23 and 24. A dinner and talk by Fr. Gregory Ealy will begin the weekend on Friday, February 23. Fr. Ealy's topic will be Koinonika (Communion Hymns), their history and placement in the Liturgy. Saturday's events begin at 9:30 a.m. with on technical skills as well as music reading sessions. The day wraps up at 3:30 p.m. Lunch will be provided. A donation of \$10.00 is suggested. Please register by February 17 at POCMinistry.com.

Presentation of Christ in the Temple

(continued from page 1)

the Presentation is told in Luke 2:22-29. Mary and Joseph were faithful Jews and observed their religious customs. An important custom was for the couple to take their first-born son to the Temple. The baby was taken to the Temple forty days after his birth and was dedicated to God. In addition, if the parents were wealthy, they were to bring a lamb and a young pigeon or a turtle dove to be offered as a sacrifice at the Temple. The custom provided that if the parents were poor, they were to offer two pigeons or two turtle doves for the sacrifice. Joseph and Mary were not wealthy, so they took two turtle doves with them to offer as a sacrifice at the Temple.

When Jesus was forty days old, Mary and Joseph took Him to the Temple in Jerusalem. They were not wealthy, so they took two turtle doves with them to offer as a sacrifice at the Temple. As they arrived at the Temple, Mary and Joseph were met by a very old man named Simeon. He was a holy man and was noted as a very intelligent scholar. Simeon spent much time studying about the prophets of Israel. It was during his studies that he learned of the coming of the Messiah. The Jewish people were waiting for the Messiah to come and deliver Israel from their conquerors. From that time on, Simeon spent his time praying for the Messiah to come. He spent many years in prayer. Finally, while Simeon was praying, he heard the voice of God. God promised Simeon that he would not die until he had seen the Messiah.



When Simeon saw Jesus, he took the baby in his arms and blessed the Lord and said:

“Lord, now let Your servant go in peace according to Your promise, because my eyes have seen Your salvation which you have prepared before

the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory to your people Israel.”

Also, in the Temple was Anna the Prophetess. She had been a widow for many years. Anna was about eighty-four years old and spent her time in the

Temple worshipping, fasting, and praying. When she saw the Christ Child, she praised God and spoke of him to all who were awaiting the Messiah.

The Holy Icon of the feast shows that the meeting takes place inside the Temple and in front of the altar. The altar has a book or a scroll on it and is covered by a canopy. The Theotokos stands to the left and is holding out her hands in a gesture of offering. She has just handed her Son to Simeon.

Christ is shown as a child, but He is not in swaddling clothes. He is clothed in a small dress and his legs are bare. Jesus appears to be giving a blessing. Simeon holds Jesus with both hands which are covered. This shows the reverence Simeon had for the Messiah. Some biblical scholars say that Simeon



was probably a priest of the Temple or a Doctor of the Law.

Joseph is behind the Theotokos. He is carrying the two turtle doves for the sacrifice. Anna the Prophetess is also standing behind the Theotokos and is pointing to the Christ child.

Joseph offers the sacrifice of a poor family while Anna the Prophetess praises God and “speaks about the child to all who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem.” Luke 2: 38

The words Simeon spoke when he saw the Christ Child are known as “St. Simeon’s Prayer.” This prayer is sung daily at the evening Vespers services of the Orthodox Church.

In the Orthodox Church, both baby boys and baby girls are taken to the Church on the fortieth day after their birth. This is done in remembrance of the Theotokos and Joseph taking the infant Jesus to the Temple.

Please join us on **February 2** in celebration of this major feast of our Church.

Article courtesy of and adapted from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America

Youth News & Events

Parish Night

Wednesday, February 21, 6:15-8:00 p.m.

We start with prayer in the nave from 6:15-6:30, eat dinner from 6:30-7:00, Lesson from 7:00-7:45 (break out into different groups: HOPE/JOY, Jr. GOYA, Sr. GOYA, and Adults), and wrap up from 7:45-8:00. All are welcome to attend!



(birth through pre-K)

Saturday, February 24, 10:00 a.m.

Model Railroad Museum (www.tcmrm.org)

668 Transfer Road Saint Paul.

Please contact Fr. Jason to RSVP or if you have questions: frjason@stmarysgoc.org or 612.401.0660



HOPE (K-grade 2)
JOY (grades 3-5)

Wednesday February 21, 6:15 p.m.

HOPE/JOY at Parish Night - See above for details

February 24-25 - Lock in - RSVP on Realm

Join us for a fun-filled evening of games and friendship for children in grades 3 to 5. The event will kick off on Saturday, February 24, after Vespers (about 6:15 p.m.) and will conclude the following day at Orthros, which begins at 8:30 a.m. We look forward to having a great time together!



(grades 6-8)

Sunday, February 18

Making Bags of Blessings

11:45 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

The Junior GOYA will be making bags of blessing. In each bag will be winter essentials. Each bag will be stored in the children's family cars so when passing someone in need they are able to assist through the materials in this bag.

Wednesday February 21, 6:15 p.m.

Junior GOYA at Parish Night - See "Parish Night" blurb for details



(grades 9-12)

Wednesday, February 14

St. Valentine's Day Card

Making - 6:15-8:00 p.m.

We will be designing Valentine's Day cards for the VIP members of the church who are unable to venture outside or are currently hospitalized. We want to make their day extra special and let them know how much they mean to us.

Wednesday February 21, 6:15 p.m.

Senior GOYA at Parish Night - See "Parish Night" blurb for details

Youth Feedback

If you have any comments, suggestions, or concerns regarding our youth program(s) please let us know. We have a new formal feedback process. Go to our St Mary's home page-Click on "Youth," then "Youth Program Feedback" Your comments will be forwarded to a member of the Parish Council and will be reviewed for follow up.



Follow the GOYAns on Instagram
@St_Marys_GOYA

Philoptochos

Philoptochos friends share the best of their faith.



February Meetings

Tuesday, February 20, 6:30 p.m.
Board Meeting – Fireside Room

Sunday, February 25, 11:30 a.m.
General Meeting – Terrace Room,

Upcoming Activities

Membership Drive is Underway Now through March 31

In January, all women of the parish received a letter inviting them to become a member of Philoptochos. For 91 years, Philoptochos has served as the philanthropic arm of the church. At St. Mary's, our chapter actively supports local, national, international, and Orthodox charities, and coordinates many hands-on activities throughout the year. We also support the parish in many ways, including decorating for different seasons of the year, hosting Pan-Orthodox and other events, and hosting the festival bake sale.

Stop by our table during the coffee hour on Sundays throughout the month to get more information, to drop off your membership form, and to volunteer for upcoming activities. Membership dues are determined by each individual, with the first \$22 going to our Metropolis and National Philoptochos and the remainder staying with our chapter.

Women's Book Club Discussion

Thursday, February 4, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

The book we will discuss is **The Greatest of All Sciences: To Know One's Self**. Copies of this book are in stock in the bookstore now. New or renewed interest in joining the Women's Book Club? Contact Katherine Boosalis (katherine@boosalis.net). (If you have declined a book club meeting invitation in the past, your email may have inadvertently been omitted in future invitations.)

Sweet Sunday/Membership Drive Sunday, February 11

Sweet Sunday is a Philoptochos fundraiser when we host the coffee hour after Liturgy and request a donation for a charitable organization. Philoptochos members are asked to volunteer at the event and to bring goodies to stock the Sweet Sunday tables. Learn more about the recipient this year in upcoming church communications, and thanks in advance for your generosity.

Sacred Baking Hands-On Workshops

One of the missions of Philoptochos is "to promote the Greek Orthodox Faith and traditions, in accordance with its doctrines, canons, discipline, divine worship, usages and customs." With that in mind, we are pleased to announce two workshops to teach how to make the food that is integral to Orthodox services:

Artoclasia (Blessing of Five Loaves) Workshop Saturday, February 24, starting at 11:00 a.m.

We will hold our hands-on Artos Making Workshop. You will learn the traditional techniques and significance behind crafting this blessed bread.

Koliva/Sitari Workshop

Friday, March 8, starting at 6:00 p.m.

In this hands-on workshop, you'll create a koliva/memorial wheat tray. Koliva is boiled wheat combined with ingredients such as almonds, walnuts, pomegranate seeds, raisins, parsley, powdered sugar. Koliva is used at the three Saturdays of Souls Liturgies leading up to the first Sunday of Great Lent. Koliva is also used during memorial services. Participants, please bring a small bowl or tray.

Thank You

Vasilopita

Thank you to Toni Bazakos and her baking team for the wonderful Vasilopita! Also, thank you to Cathy Forchas and her team for cutting the Vasilopita on January 7.

Budget Committee

Thank you for creating our 2024 Philoptochos budget.

Women's Book Club Chairs

Thank you to Katherine Boosalis and Alexandria Kalina for their work throughout the year.

Time spent with Philoptochos will change your life for the better.

In Christ,
Wishing you a warm winter in your hearts.

Please watch the weekly bulletin, webpage, and our table on Sundays for updates on events or needs.

Missions & Outreach

It is now February. There are more people for us to know. It is a privilege to welcome new friends, and St. Mary's has been very welcoming. An example was told to us this weekend that, while on vacation, they went to a church in that town and never, never felt so out of place. The Liturgy felt right and the same, BUT no one spoke to them to make this couple feel 'welcome.' Whether you are at a Parish or out doing errands, do reach out and be friendly (it is good practice).

An example: while waiting at the pharmacy, a fellow offered to arrange the chairs and table so that a customer could sit by his wife. He moves them around and we all were absolutely appreciative of this very thoughtful gentleman. This little thing made for a time of caring. Here were/are more caring events for you.

MCCL

(Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life)



March for Life was held on Monday, January 22, 2024, with a 10:30 prayer service at the Cathedral of Saint Paul, St. Paul. After the Prayer Service, everyone walked over to the Minnesota State Capital. It is hoped that this Orthodox group assembled and that many from St. Mary's were able to attend this very moving service for all the 'unborn children.'

Again, as an annual reminder that over 60 million unborn tiny human lives have been lost. This caring reminder brings to light thoughts about respect and protection for all the 'unborn children and their mothers.' In previous years, the crowds have been made up of mostly younger people and a great many had signs: "I Regret Lost Fatherhood," "I Regret My Abortion," "Protect Life." Even though it may be cold out, this gathering is very, very touching. Photo from MCCL website, 2023.

Simpson House Dinner

January 16, 2024



It felt good to be able to provide and serve meals (thank you to the wonderful cooks) to those who are without a home at this time in their life. The meals are a meaningful way to care. One volunteer especially would like to help with each meal St. Mary's serves at Simpson House. Thank you to each of the volunteers.

Isn't it great to see the joy in being a volunteer to help with a meal. (The photo is from the 2023 dinner served at Simpson)

St. Mary's Mixer

Sunday, March 10, 2024



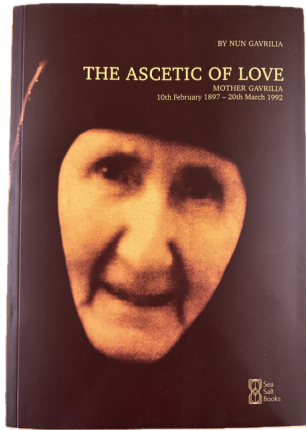
What a blessing to see thirteen new to St. Mary's attendees in last October's Mixer.

And a "Thank You" to the Ambassadors who welcome newcomers with this delightful one-on-one way to get to know each other, make new friends and "place names with new faces" and a good way to learn about volunteer opportunities.

In the Bookstore

By Rebecca Myerly

bookstore@stmarysgoc.org



The Ascetic of Love is a book by and about the newly canonized (October 3, 2023) Saint Gavrilia (February 10, 1897–March 20, 1992). This book is a combined autobiography and biography of Saint Gavrilia, with additional sections including her words of wisdom and letters, transcriptions

of her speaking, and tributes to her. Photos of her are sprinkled throughout. Quite a compendium—this book is a treasure.

The life of Saint Gavrilia reads like a travelogue as her life was dedicated to following God's call to wherever and whomever He led her. Born in Constantinople, she grew up in Greece and completed her formal education in England where she lived and worked until after World War Two when she returned to Greece. Trained as a physiotherapist, she was a nurse to many in body, mind, and spirit. She lived her life washing the feet of others, both literally and metaphorically.

Saint Gavrilia described the day her mother died, March 24, 1954, as “the most painful, the most significant, the most definitive day” (35) in her life. She explained:

The day of our parting, the day of my inner crisis, severed the last tie that had kept me bound to normal, material life on this earth Suddenly, I was dead... I was dead to the world. The only course that lay open before me now, urged me to take the decisive step: ‘Go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor’, then ‘Come and follow me’! But where? The Call came quite unexpectedly: INDIA...That was it! (35)

She went to India. Her experiences and adventures there are well documented in this book, both biographically and autobiographically. She said:

The Lord took me to India moneyless, so that I might behold His magnificence and His glory; so that I might witness how He cares for us when we leave ourselves completely in His hands...I saw all that with my own

eyes, I saw it at every one of my steps all those years in India. Since then and to this day I have not ceased, not for a single moment, to marvel at His Works. (43-44)

Her special call in India was to serve people in leper colonies, and she traveled broadly ministering to those in need, staying in most places only for weeks or months. Many of her stories are remarkable—some are miraculous. Her faithful abandonment to God was amazing throughout her life. The time she spent in India was an especially grace-filled period as she lived according to God's call and direction while living amongst people of different faith traditions. One of the graces given to her was seeing the gifts and goodness in people of other traditions while being firmly rooted in her Orthodox faith.

On August 4, 1959, Saint Gavrilia left India to enter monastic life in Bethany where she was a novice for three years. Even while she was staying at the monastery, she had a remarkable missionary outreach. From there it would not be an exaggeration to write that she traveled the world as a monastic missionary of, for, and to Christ. She went where the need was, serving all with His love. Some of her “assignments” were small while others were large, and she accepted all with grace and gratitude. In her later years she served God in Greece, where she reposed on the island of Leros.

This book is replete with stories and anecdotes about people whose lives Saint Gavrilia touched and who touched her life, all in and with God's love. The tape recordings of her transcribed in this book together with the letters from her and tributes to her flesh out her life so the reader can better appreciate this amazing woman of God. The section with her quotes is filled with 392 gems, which offer the reader much to ponder. One example is: “If you want things to be just the way you want them, stop wanting. Accept everything and everyone, as if granted either by God's will or by God's permission.” (305) Saint Gavrilia's life, as documented in **The Ascetic of Love**, reveals what this wisdom looks like lived with joy in God.



Christ is in our Midst!
In 2024, we are continuing our stewardship theme of "Ownership, Engagement and Generosity: Commit to St. Mary's." We thank the many parishioners who have already submitted their Time and Talent pledge forms for 2024. Thank you for committing to Christ and His Church!

Below is a beautiful testimony from one of our parishioners, Benjamin Amundgaard, who shared his message following the Liturgy on November 12, 2023, and highlighted what "Generosity" means to him.



I've been asked to speak this morning on the topic of generosity. As I thought through how to approach this topic, I realized that at first generosity might seem fairly obvious. A generous person is someone who gives a lot, usually money. But the more I thought about it, the more I realized that there are several different senses of generosity.

First is the most obvious and common way we use the word. We say that a person is generous. That usually means that they give a lot of their money or time. Generally, more than they have to give. If

you said "that person is so generous," the immediate assumption is that she gave a lot of money to some cause. The implication being that they didn't have to give anything.

Second, we may use the word generous to refer to the actual thing that is being given. For example, you might be at a restaurant and ask the server how big the salad is, and they respond "oh, it's a pretty generous portion, easily enough for two people." Here, it's not the person making the food that is generous or even the restaurant itself. It's the amount. Here too, though, it means "more than you would expect."

Third, we may say someone is generous of spirit. This is generally meant to mean that the person is gracious and accepting. They make you feel comfortable in their presence. Like with the first two definitions, this has the implication of being more than expected.

Fourth, we might use it to talk about giving someone the benefit of the doubt. Someone might say "well that was a generous interpretation!" This is generally used when someone says or does something that could be interpreted or received in a negative way, but the hearer/receiver finds in it the seeds of a more positive interpretation and, until further evidence suggests otherwise, gives them the benefit of the better interpretation.

I'm sure we could think of other ways that the word generosity is used, but this probably gets at the main ones. Even though these different uses of generosity are all slightly different, there is a common theme: generosity has to do with offering more than is anticipated or expected. But not everything that is more than expected is generous. For example, you don't say "I was so generous with Xcel Energy last month" when your bill is much higher than anticipated. Likewise, Xcel doesn't think you are being generous for paying

them what you owe them even though it was more than you expected. So, I'd say another element of generosity is that it's freely given. Not only is it more than expected, it's entirely unexpected.

And yet...when we come to the New Testament, and the teachings of the fathers, we find that generosity is expected. In his first letter to Timothy, chapter 6, Paul is giving Timothy instructions on how to teach the church. In verse 18, talking about the rich, he says "Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share." In the first letter of John, chapter 3, John says to the church: "If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?"

In one of his baptismal lectures, in a section titled "Prayer and Almsgiving Are Powerful Means for Keeping the Baptismal Robe Bright," John Chrysostom says:

"Along with prayer goes generosity in almsgiving, which is our crowning good deed and the means of our soul's salvation. Prayer together with almsgiving can furnish us with countless good things from above; they can quench the fire of sin in our souls and can give us great freedom."

This seems to be the opposite of what we generally think of as generosity as I outlined above. Generosity is expected of the Christian. It is a sign that God's love is in us, it is a means to defeat sin, and it is a source of true freedom. But why? Why are Christians expected to be generous? It is precisely because God has been generous to us. Generosity is rooted in the doctrine of the incarnation.

This is most clearly expressed in Philippians 2 when Paul says:

"Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." I'd say that's pretty generous in every way.

In encouraging the Corinthian Christians to give, Paul uses this as the basis for their giving:

"For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich."

So, the ultimate act of generosity is God becoming man in Jesus Christ. Giving up all so that we might have fullness of life. And based on Christ's true act of generosity, the Christian is expected to be generous. As an imitator of Christ, who gave everything, we are expected to give everything. I find this concept very difficult in my own life. I don't like to be expected to be generous not necessarily because I don't want to be generous but because I want to take credit for my generosity. However, if I am compelled to do it because of God's generosity, I can't really take much credit ... Does that mean Christian generosity is like the Xcel Energy bill I mentioned earlier? Not at all. Our debts have been paid. We don't have bills. However, our faith is more than just a one-time transaction. It is about growing and becoming more like Jesus Christ. No one is forcing us to do that. We have to choose. Part of that is a choice to be generous in everything that we are and everything that we have. We are to be generous in every sense of the word.

—Benjamin Amundgaard

Stewardship

St. Mary's 2023 Stewardship Campaign Update

OWNERSHIP, ENGAGEMENT, GENEROSITY

Thank you for your participation in our 2023 Stewardship Campaign and your on-going support of St. Mary's through your gifts of time, talent, and treasure.

We received a total of \$1,392,941 in Stewardship Offering payments in 2023.

- This represents 105% of this year's budget for ministries and operating expenses
- We exceeded the Annual Budget by **\$60,541**.
- The goal is to cover 100% of ministry and operating costs each year with Stewardship Income rather than relying on rental and festival income. **This is the first time we have successfully covered the Annual Budget with Stewardship Offering income.**

2023 Offering Income YTD vs Annual Budget

Offering Income as of Dec 4	2023 YTD Actual	2023 Annual Budget	YTD % of Budget
Payments Received	\$1,392,941	\$1,332,400	105%
Exceeded Budget By:			
\$60,541			

2023 Offering Income vs Prior Year

Offering Income As of Dec 31	2023 YTD Actual	2022 YTD Actual	Increase vs. Prior Year
Payments Received	\$1,392,941	\$1,061,046	\$331,895
Average per Week	\$26,787	\$20,405	\$6,383
Average per Month	\$116,078	\$88,421	\$27,658



Please take a moment to prayerfully complete a 2024 pledge form and return it to the church office as soon as possible. 2023 pledged members should have received their 2024 Stewardship packet. If you need a form, it is available online (scan the code), or contact the church office.

Please remember that to be considered a Steward in good standing for 2024, you must return your pledge forms to the church office by March 31.

Pledge Forms Completed for 2022, 2023, and to Date 2024

Thank you to all parishioners that made a financial commitment for 2023 and have already completed and submitted a pledge form for 2024. We had a significant increase in 2023 compared to prior years in the number of pledge forms completed as well as the dollar amount of pledges. Here is an update:

Pledges To Date	# of Pledges	Pledges to Date	% of Budget
2024	181	\$652,243	48.6%
2023	351	\$963,307	72.3%
2022	154	\$432,738	34.1%
Increase vs. Prior Year	197	\$530,569	

With gratitude,
—The St. Mary's Stewardship Committee



Thursday, Feb. 8

Event Program 6:30 PM - 8:00 PM



Featured Speaker:

Nathan Hoppe

*OCMC Missionary Serving in Albania &
OCMC's Longest Serving Missionary*



Latest OCMC Updates By:

Dan Christopulos

*OCMC Development Director
OCMC's First Missionary*

SCAN THE CODE TO DONATE



OR VISIT US ONLINE AT:
[OCMC.ORG/MINNEAPOLIS](https://ocmc.org/minneapolis)



St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church

3450 Irving Ave S. | Minneapolis, MN 55408

**Valentine's Day Dessert Buffet will be provided
FREE WILL OFFERING ENCOURAGED**

(Proceeds will benefit OCMC ministries around the world.)

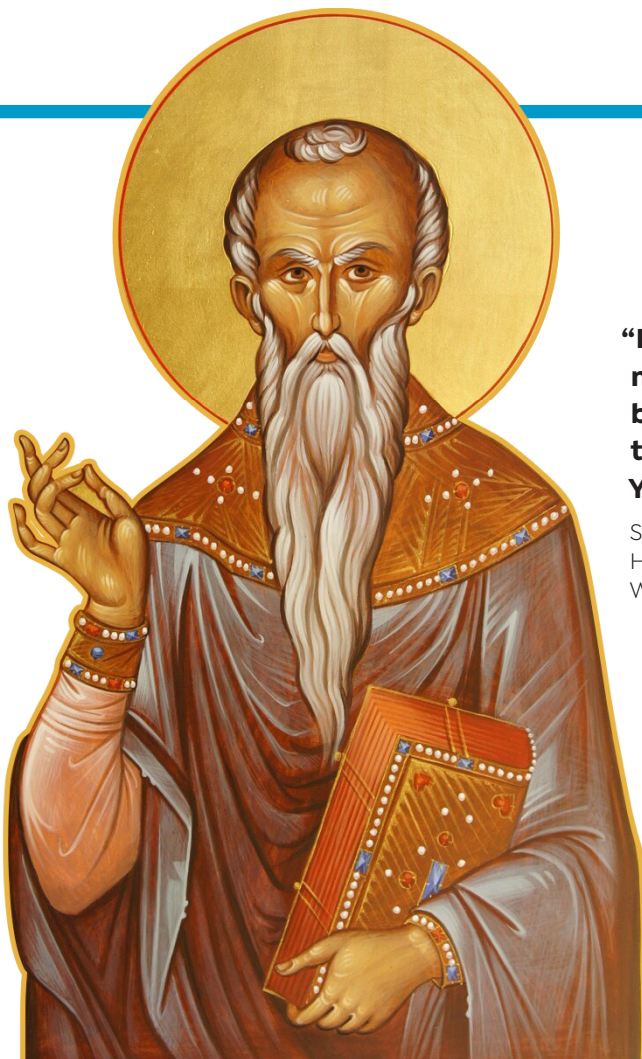
For questions, please contact:

Terri Lekas at terri@queen-of-cakes.com or
OCMC Events Coordinator, Elaine Drikakis,
at elained@ocmc.org

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**“Lord, You know that
men are flesh and
blood; forgive them
their sins and pour out
Your blessing on all.”**

Saint Haralambos the
Hieromartyr and Miracle-
Worker

*Saint Haralambos is
Commemorated on
February 10*



THE MESSENGER

FEBRUARY 2024

The Messenger is published
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PUBLICATION DEADLINES

The Messenger

First Sunday of each month

Sunday Bulletin

Preceding Thursday, 12:00 p.m.

CONTACT

3450 Irving Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55408
stmarysgoc@stmarysgoc.org
612.825.9595 | 612.825.9283 Fax

stmarysgoc.org



@stmarysgoc

February 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Eve of Presentation 9:30am-FAITH Play Group 6:00pm-Great Vespers after Vespers-Telos Divine Liturgy Course 7:00pm-Women's Book Club	2 Presentation of Our Lord in the Temple 7:00am-Men's Fellowship 8:30am-Matins 9:30am-Divine Liturgy <i>Basketball Tournament</i>	3 9:00am-Bible Study 5:00pm-Great Vespers <i>Basketball Tournament</i>
4 Fifteenth Sunday of Matthew "The Messenger" Deadline 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy <i>Basketball Tournament</i>	5 6:00pm-Greek Dance Practice	6 6:00pm-Adult Open Gym	7 11:00am-Intercessory Prayer 11:30am-Women's Bible Study	8 6:30pm-OCMC Fundraiser	9	10 Saint Haralambos 9:00am-Bible Study 10:00am-Divine Liturgy 5:00pm-Great Vespers
11 Sixteenth Sunday of Matthew 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy Philoptochos Sweet Sunday 11:30am-St. Olympia Event	12 6:00pm-Greek Dance Practice	13 9:30am-FAITH Play Group 6:15pm-Parish Council	14 6:15pm-Senior GOYA	15 6:30pm-Telos Divine Liturgy Course (YAL)	16 7:00am-Men's Fellowship	17 Saint Theodore the Recruit 9:00am-Bible Study 10:00am-Divine Liturgy 5:00pm-Great Vespers
18 Sunday of the Canaanite 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy after Liturgy-Philoxenia Charities Presentation 11:45am-Missions & Outreach 11:45am-Junior GOYA	19 Presidents' Day <i>Church and Office Closed</i> 6:00pm-Greek Dance Practice	20 6:00pm-Adult Open Gym 6:30pm-Philoptochos Board	21 9:00am-"The Messenger" Mailing 11:00am-Intercessory Prayer 11:30am-Women's Bible Study 6:15pm-Parish Night	22 6:30pm-Koinonia 7:00pm-Stewardship Com.	23	24 9:00am-Bible Study 5:00pm-Great Vespers 5:00pm-Grades 3-5 Lock In
25 Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee Triodion Begins 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy 11:30am-Philoptochos Mtg.	26 6:00pm-Greek Dance Practice	27 6:00pm-Adult Open Gym 6:30pm-Grief Support Group	28	29 6:30pm-Telos Divine Liturgy Course (YAL)		