



# THE MESSENGER

DECEMBER 2025



## Inside This Issue

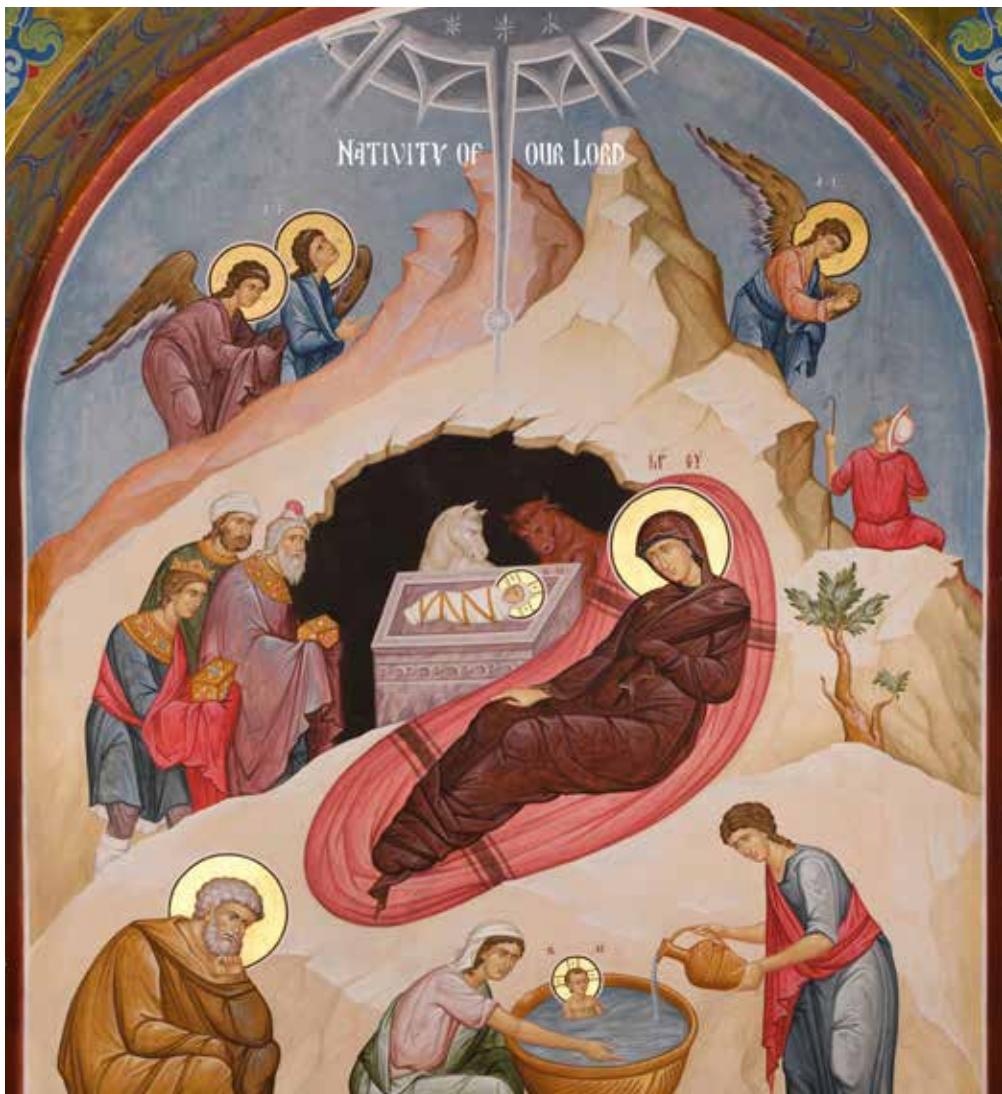
Bookstore .....	7
Council Corner .....	5
Our Life Together .....	2
Parish News and Events .....	3
Philoptochos .....	6
Youth News .....	10
Worship Schedule .....	2

## 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



**GOD BECOMES HUMAN TO SHOW US THE WAY.**

*See page 2 for details on the worship schedule for the Nativity of Christ >>*



METROPOLIS  
OF CHICAGO



ST. MARY'S GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

*Celebrating*  
**125 YEARS**

*See highlights from the Anniversary Event on page 8 >>*

# Our Life Together

## Baptisms

### Alice

Parents:  
John Kresser and  
Leah Schouten-Kresser  
October 11, 2025

### Nefeli

Parents:  
Peter & Jacqueline Economou  
October 25, 2025

### Mila

Parents:  
John & Emilia Paulson  
October 25, 2025

### Eleni

Parents:  
Benjamin & Matina Laiti  
October 25, 2025

## Study Groups

### Saturday Bible Study

Saturdays, December 6 and 13  
9:00 a.m., Fireside Room

### Men's Fellowship

Fridays, December 5 and 19  
7:00 a.m., Fireside Room

### Senior Citizens' Bible Study

Tuesdays, December 2 and 16  
11:30 a.m., Fireside Room

### Parish Night

Wednesday, December 10  
6:00 p.m., Terrace Room

### Koinonia

(Tia Muchulas, coordinator)  
Thursday, December 11  
6:00 p.m., Fireside Room

## Share Your Shelf

December's recipient is  
**Community Emergency Service  
(CES)**

### IMMEDIATE NEEDS:

pasta sauce, ground coffee, canned fruit  
(peaches, mixed fruit), individually wrapped  
toothpaste, toothbrush, bar soap, razors,  
shampoo)

### Sunday, December 7

Individually wrapped bars of soap

### Sunday, December 14

Diapers (Size 5)

### Sunday, December 21

Hygiene items (Individually wrapped  
toothpaste, soap, shampoo, conditioner,  
razors)

### Sunday, December 28

Individually wrapped toothbrushes

[www.cesmn.org](http://www.cesmn.org)



Donate Online  
Visit the site, then,  
"Make Donation"

Community Emergency Service transforms lives by serving neighbors, sharing resources, and becoming a community - a place where people come hungry and leave hopeful.

## Weekly Worship Schedule

### Saturdays

Great Vespers – 5:00 p.m.

### Sundays (live-streamed)

Orthros – 8:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

### Thursday, December 4:

#### Saint Barbara

Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

### Saturday, December 6:

#### Saint Nicholas

Divine Liturgy – 10:00 a.m.

### Tuesday, December 9:

#### The Conception of the Theotokos

Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

### Friday, December 12:

#### Saint Spyridon

Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

### Monday, December 15:

#### Saint Eleutherios

Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

### Wednesday, December 17:

#### Saint Dionysios; Prophet Daniel and the Three Holy Youths

Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

### Wednesday, December 24:

#### Eve of Nativity

Royal Hours – 9:00 a.m.;  
Vesperal Divine Liturgy –  
5:00 p.m.

### Thursday, December 25:

#### Holy Nativity

Orthros – 9:00 a.m.  
Divine Liturgy – 10:00 a.m.

### Saturday, December 27:

#### Saint Stephen

Divine Liturgy – 10:00 a.m.

Learn about the  
symbology of the  
Nativity of Christ  
Icon. Scan the  
code to watch a  
short video.



## Note from the Office

In observance of Christmas, the office will close at noon on Christmas Eve and will be closed on Christmas. The church and office will be closed on Thursday, December 26. A blessed Nativity to all!

# Parish News & Events

## St. Mary's Church Staff

### Proistamenos

Fr. Timothy Sas

### Associate Priest

Fr. Jason Houck

### Deacons

Fr. Paul Kalina

Fr. Luke Twito

Fr. Stephen Wehr

### Office Manager

David Mertesdorf

### Office Assistant

Giulia Chatfield

### Communications & Marketing

Nikolas Kouzes

### Finance

Michael Rakes

### Ministry Support

Doria Saros

### Youth Director

Scott Rudquist

### Church School Director

Dena Tortorelis

### Chanter

Joseph Karos

### Choir Director

Emily Skoutelas

### Building and Grounds

Dean Psychogios

## St. Mary's Parish Council

### President

Nicholas Santrizos

### Vice President

Louis Tiggas

### Secretary

Elisabeth (Libby) Cheolis

### Treasurer

Cristina Nicklow

### Assistant Treasurer

Athena Mihas

### Members

Benjamin Amundgaard

Jennifer Coin

Alex Dascalos

Louis Ellis

Andrew Gatchell

Andrew LeRoy

Sophia Rouman



## With Gratitude from the Sheraton Minneapolis West

We absolutely loved hosting the St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church 125th Anniversary Celebration — your group brought such joy and warmth to the hotel, and we're truly grateful for your business. We'd be honored to partner with you again soon. Wishing you a wonderful holiday season!



## Year-End Giving

Electronic donations, via online giving or Venmo, must be made by **Friday, December 26**. Online contributions can take 3-5 days to process. Contributions made after December 27 cannot be guaranteed to be recorded as a 2025 contribution. Please plan ahead when making your year-end contributions. Contributions placed in the offering tray on Sunday, December 28, will be credited as 2025 contributions.



## Christmas Card and Flowers Donations

Our annual collection for the parish Christmas card and Christmas decorations begins today. A form and envelopes are found in the narthex. The Christmas card (**deadline is December 7**) is to send greetings from you to fellow parishioners and the flowers donation (**deadline is December 21**) can be made in memory of departed loved ones. Drop your envelope in the stewardship box. This year the form is double-sided – one side is for the card and the other for the flowers!



## Summer Camp Staff

Summer Camp Staff Applications will be open from November 1 – December 31.

For details, visit: [www.stmaryscamp.com/summer-camp/](http://www.stmaryscamp.com/summer-camp/)



## Seniors Citizens' Christmas Party

**Tuesday, December 9**

Saint Mary's Senior Citizens' Christmas party will be held on Tuesday, December 9, 11:00 a.m., in the Terrace Room. A delicious salmon lunch will be catered by Tony Nicklow.

Tickets are \$10.00 for Senior Citizen Club members and \$35.00 for non-members or \$30.00 for membership sign up and party ticket. RSVP to Don Vanover by Sunday, November 30.



## AHEPA Children's Christmas Party

**Saturday, December 13**

The AHEPA Children's Christmas Party at St. Mary's is planned for Saturday, December 13. Please see the enclosed flyer for details and registration information.

# Parish News & Events



## Vasilopeta Sales

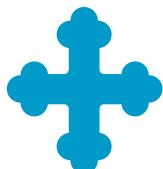
Vasilopeta sales will begin after the Liturgy on **Sunday, December 21**, and **continue through Sunday, January 11**, or until the loaves are all sold. The price again this year will be \$15. The blessing will take place on Sunday, January 11, after Liturgy.



## Prosforo Workshop

A prosforo workshop is planned for **Friday January 23, 6:00 p.m.** in the church kitchen. All ingredients will

be provided. Please bring a sfragida (seal) if you have one. There are sfragides for sale in the church bookstore if you like to purchase one. However, we will have plenty for your use at the workshop. Fr Jason will join us at the beginning of the session to offer prayers and share with us a few words regarding the importance of prosforo in the Liturgy. You may register at the Philoptohos table after the Liturgy on Sundays or call the church office. Please call Toni Bazakos at 612.554.7861 if you have any questions or email at [antigone.bazakos@gmail.com](mailto:antigone.bazakos@gmail.com)



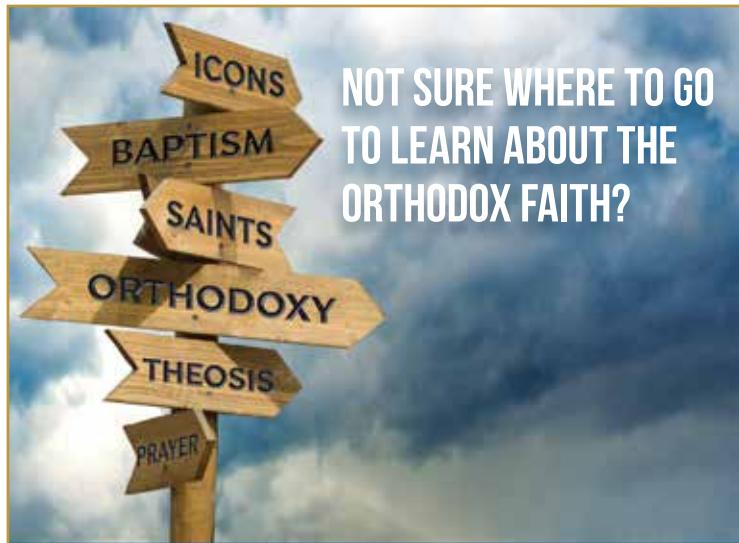
## Holy Land Pilgrimage 2026

Tom and Mary Rudquist from St. George Antiochian Church in West St. Paul are planning a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the fall of 2026. The pilgrimage will include visits to the Holy Sites in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jericho, Galilee, and Nablus. The tentative dates for the pilgrimage are August 29, 2026, to September 7, 2026. If you are interested, please contact Tom Rudquist by phone or text at 651.890.6817 or by email at [abousean@yahoo.com](mailto:abousean@yahoo.com).



## Update from Agate Housing and Services

Dear Friends at St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church, Agate Housing and Services in Minneapolis is very happy to share that our new women's shelter opened in November. The Valiance is a thoughtfully designed building. The architects took feedback from people with lived experience of homelessness, resulting in shelter spaces and permanent apartments that have community in mind. One of the immediate needs for not only The Valiance, but for our downtown shelter at First Covenant Church, are groups to prepare bag lunches for both shelters.



**NOT SURE WHERE TO GO  
TO LEARN ABOUT THE  
ORTHODOX FAITH?**

## SEEKER SUNDAY

**December 14, 2025 • 12:00-1:00 p.m.  
Fireside Room**

For those seeking to become an Orthodox Christian, we are here to help guide the way. Join clergy for a monthly Q&A session. Grab some refreshments in the Great Hall after Liturgy, then meet in the Fireside Room.

QUESTIONS? Contact Linda Stanton: [mnlas@msn.com](mailto:mnlas@msn.com)

**LOOKING FOR SOMETHING WORTH  
DOING ON YOUR PHONE?**

**PRAY.**  
THE ENCOUNTER

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

- Daily Orthodox prayers, and Gospel & Epistle lessons read aloud
- Byzantine and Choral Sacred Music
- Readings, videos and hymns for the Saint of the Day

When the digital world feels overwhelming, The Encounter helps you stay rooted in Christ—with just a tap.



Scan a QR code  
to download today:

The Encounter is brought to you by Faithtree Resources. [faithtree.org/the-encounter](http://faithtree.org/the-encounter)



## St. Mary's Parish Council

### President

Nicholas Santrizos

### Vice President

Louis Tiggas

### Secretary

Elisabeth (Libby) Cheolis

### Treasurer

Cristina Nicklow

### Assistant Treasurer

Athena Mihas

### Members

Benjamin Amundgaard

Jennifer Coin

Alex Dascalos

Louis Ellis

Andrew Gatchell

Andrew LeRoy

Sophia Rouman

# COUNCIL CORNER

## 125th Year Celebration

- The PC believed a "Special Glendi" away from the church hall and kitchen was essential so that everyone could relax and enjoy the memorable evening. Thank you to all who purchased a ticket and joined the festivities.
- Special thank you's to **Jenn Coin** for all her efforts in planning and organizing St. Mary's outstanding 125th Celebration and to **Kathy Boosalis, Steve Rakes, and Niko Kouzes** for MC'ing and programming the event. We also raise a glass to **Bill and Tiki Spell** for their generous wine donation. And to **Terri Leckas** for her stunning 'sweet' replica of our golden church.

## Metropolis Clergy-Laity Conference Recap

- What is the "Metropolis" - For new parishioners of St. Mary's, the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Chicago was founded in the early 1920's (yes, St. Mary's is 20 years older!) and is under the leadership of His Eminence **Archbishop Nathanael**, who most of us met this Summer on his extended stay in Minnesota and the surrounding Vicariate. The Metropolis serves to support its parishes like St. Mary's and the 57 other Greek Orthodox parishes in Minnesota, Illinois, Iowa, Indiana, Wisconsin and central Missouri, which allows them to minister to their faithful. All the clergy of the Metropolis of Chicago report to the Metropolitan, who in turn reports to the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople.
- On November 5, the Clergy-Laity Assembly convened in Rolling Meadows, Illinois (a bi-annual meeting). Nearly 300 clergy and lay leaders from across the Metropolis engaged in meaningful dialogue, exchanged insights, and shared best practices for church operations and ministries. This effort supports the Metropolis' Five-Year Vision which is, "A comprehensive roadmap designed to deepen sacramental life, expand ministries, grow Church membership, and empower clergy and parishes for sustainable growth."
- This year, the Assembly:
  - Voted and approved the Metropolis 2026 and 2027 budgets.
  - Held a spirited debate on the state of the St. Iakovos Retreat Center ("SIRC") which is a 137-acre facility located in Kansasville, Wisconsin, that hosts various Orthodox camps and events.
  - Approved the purchase of the new Metropolis Center building on the north side of Chicago, located in close proximity to Chicagoland Orthodox churches. Our own **Nick T. Boosalis** shared details of the financial feasibility of the purchase for the Assembly to make an informed decision.
  - Re-elected **Diakonissa Alexandria Kalina** and **Dean Tortorelis** to the Metropolis Council for another two-year term of service.

The Parish Council wishes you and your families a blessed Christmas season.

Yours in Christ,

Nick Santrizos

St. Mary's Parish Council President

[viewfromthepew@stmarysgoc.org](mailto:viewfromthepew@stmarysgoc.org)

# Philoptochos



## PHILOPTOCHOS MEETINGS

Board Meeting:  
**Wednesday, December 10 on Zoom**  
No General Meeting this month

## UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

### Decorate the Church for Christmas

**Saturday, December 6 – after Liturgy**

Every year, we feel deep gratitude for the joyful spirit our volunteers bring as they thoughtfully decorate our Christmas trees. We warmly invite anyone available on Saturday, December 6, to join us in decorating the trees in the Terrace Room, Foyer, and Sunday School hallway starting after the Liturgy. We anticipate finishing by 3:00 p.m. Whether you can stay for the entire time or just a portion of it, your presence will certainly brighten the occasion.

### AHEPA Children's Christmas Party Gifts

**Due on Sunday, December 7**

Children from Healing House are invited to the AHEPA Children's Christmas Party on December 13 at 11:00 a.m. Please have your wrapped gifts delivered to church by Sunday, December 7. At this festive event, they will wiggle through lunch as their anticipation grows for welcoming Santa and opening their gifts.

### Vasilopita Sales

**Starting Sunday, December 21**

This year, we will be selling Vasilopita on Sundays, December 21 and 28, at the Philoptochos table during coffee hour. These will be offered on a first, come first served basis at \$15.00 per loaf. We gladly accept cash, checks, and credit cards. Credit cards will have an additional charge for processing. All proceeds will benefit Saint Basil Academy in New York, whose mission is to provide a safe, supportive environment for our children and young adults, empowering them to grow into strong hopeful members of society.

### SUNDAY TABLE COVERAGE REMINDER

We ask for your assistance in ensuring that the Philoptochos table remains staffed after Liturgy each week. We're looking for a minimum of two members to manage the Sunday table, providing updates on current volunteer opportunities and addressing general inquiries about mission and membership. Ideally, this should be one board member and one general member to manage the table, providing updates on current volunteer opportunities and addressing general inquiries about our mission and membership. Please consider joining us after the Liturgy and committing approximately one hour to this vital task. Your help is greatly appreciated.

## LITTLE ORTHODOX LIBRARY

If you have Orthodox books to donate, please bring them to the Philoptochos table after Sunday Liturgy or bring them to the church office during the week.

## THANK YOU...

...to **Carol Smith** for leading Operation Classroom's Winter Clothing Drive for Bancroft Elementary School! Thank you to all who generously donated coats, boots, gloves, mittens, socks, and underwear in addition to your monetary donations!

...to **Andrea Tiggas** for once again organizing the annual filo and Yiayia and Papou coffee products!

...to all the volunteers for organizing Philoptochos Sunday and to all who donated to the special collection for the Ecumenical Patriarchate!

...for those representing Philoptochos at the Ministry Fair Sunday!

...participants who attended Clergy Laity Conference, **Connie Kouzes**, and **Kathy Wendland**.



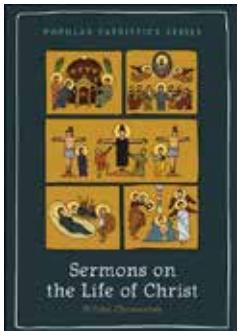
Follow Saint Mary's Philoptochos on Social Media



# In the Bookstore

By Rebecca Myerly

[bookstore@stmarysgoc.org](mailto:bookstore@stmarysgoc.org)



**Sermons on the Life of Christ** is a collection of Saint John Chrysostom's festal homilies. This compilation includes sermons he preached on feast days, including Christ's Nativity, Baptism (Epiphany), Pascha, Ascension, and Pentecost. In addition, there are sermons on Holy Thursday and Good Friday and one on the Resurrection that appears to not have been preached on a feast day.

Saint John Chrysostom (347-407) often preached on the life of Christ. Robert G.T. Edwards, the translator of this book, notes in his introduction what distinguishes this collection as a compilation of festal homilies:

The sermons in this volume form a distinct group of sermons preached at feasts, in which the feast is the main focus—the main topic treated in the sermon. In them, the preacher explicitly mentions the festal occasion and sets about using Scripture to interpret...Although these sermons are highly exegetical (and sections of them read like biblical commentary), it is not Scripture that is the primary object of interpretation, but the feast itself... In almost all these sermons Chrysostom is intent to provide his audiences with the "reasons for the feast(s)." The preacher understands his role as not only laudatory of Christ's salutary actions, but also didactic... Chrysostom provides explanations not only of the feasts themselves, but also of certain liturgical traditions associated with them...In a couple of these sermons, the preacher also employs Scripture to reflect more generally on the nature of Christian feasting. (xix-xxii)

The translator also notes:

There are at least two other characteristics that provide an overarching unity to these festal sermons...they are theological or mystical. The first is John's invocation of what has been called the "liturgical today," but which, in John's preaching, takes on a more mystical character. John's festal preaching speaks to a mystical unity between the events in the economy of salvation and the feast days themselves. (xxiv)

In one of his homilies in this collection, Saint John Chrysostom explains:

It is always a feast for us. And so that you might learn that it is always a feast, I will tell you the reasons for the feasts, and you will know that every day is a feast. Therefore, for us, Epiphany is the first feast. And what is the reason for the feast? That God appeared on the earth and lived with men, since God, the Only-begotten of God, was a child among us. But this is always the case: for it says, Behold, I am with you every day until the consummation of the world. Therefore, it is possible to keep Epiphany every day! The feast of Pascha: who would

like to know what is the reason for the feast? It is at this time we proclaim the Lord's death—and this is Pascha. But we do not do this at a fixed time. For Paul, wanting to set us free from the necessity of times, shows us that it is always possible to keep Pascha: As often as you eat this Bread and drink this Cup, you proclaim the Lord's death. Therefore, since we are always able to proclaim the Lord's death, we are always able to keep Pascha... And so that you might learn that it is always possible for us to celebrate, that the time is not fixed, and that we are not confined by the necessity of time, hear what Paul says, Therefore, let us keep the feast...He shows that it is not the time, but a pure conscience that makes a feast. For a feast is nothing other than spiritual gladness. And nothing makes spiritual and intellectual gladness but a conscience of good deeds...The one who has a good conscience and such deeds is always able to feast. (206)

**Sermons on the Life of Christ** is a feast of spiritual nourishment.



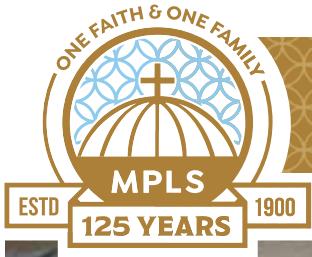
## ST. MARY'S BOOKSTORE

**Sermons on the Life of Christ  
is available now.**

Stop in to get this featured book and explore a wide selection of Orthodox Christian literature, icons, and gifts. Sundays, after the Liturgy until 1:00 p.m.

**Upcoming Book Fair  
Sunday, December 7**

The bookstore will have a book fair for church school families, all grandparents, and friends on Sunday, December 7, in the hallway between the narthex and the church office. Please come to find Christmas gifts that are truly meaningful for the children God has blessed you to have in your lives.



## Saturday, November 8, 2025 Sheraton Minneapolis West Hotel



Credit: Mark Macres



Credit: Mark Macres



Pictured on this page:

### Event Speakers

Nick Santrizos  
Steve Rakes  
Kathy Boosalis  
Paulette Hastings  
Fr. Paul Kalina  
Fr. Tim Sas

### Clergy

Fr. Stephen Wehr  
Fr. Paul Kalina  
Fr. Tim Sas  
Fr. Jason Houck  
Fr. Luke Twito



ST. MARY'S GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
*Celebrating*  
**125 YEARS**

Saturday, November 8, 2025

ST. MARY'S GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

*Celebrating*  
**125 YEARS**



Credit: Mark Macres

View more pictures from the Anniversary event and watch the presentation video. **Scan the code or visit: [www.stmarysgoc.org/125-anniversary/](http://www.stmarysgoc.org/125-anniversary/)**

Photos by Gus Wiltse, unless noted



# Children and Youth News



## FOR ALL YOUTH Parish Night: On Orthodox Ethics in the Modern World

**Wednesday, December 10  
6:00-8:00 p.m.**

Please join us for the monthly Parish Night! The event will commence with a prayer service, followed by a meal and educational sessions surrounding the Orthodox Ethics in the Modern World. Attendees will split up for the educational sessions into the following groups, adults, high school students, middle school students (grades 6-8), and grades K-5. We hope you can join for this night of prayer, fellowship, and learning!



**Sunday, December 7  
5:30-8:00 p.m.**

### Christmas Party

Join us for a joyful Christmas party at St. Mary's! We'll have dinner, games, a white elephant gift exchange, and plenty of festive fun together. Please remember to bring a wrapped white elephant gift to swap.



**Thursday, December 4  
6:15-8:00 p.m.**

### Christmas Party

Join us for a joyful Christmas party at St. Mary's! We'll have dinner, games, a white elephant gift exchange, and plenty of festive fun together. Please remember to bring a wrapped white elephant gift to swap.



**Tuesday, December 2  
5:15-7:00 p.m.**

### Christmas Party

Join us for a joyful Christmas party at St. Mary's! We'll have dinner, games, a white elephant gift exchange, and plenty of festive fun together. Please remember to bring a wrapped white elephant gift to swap.



## Church School News

### Sunday, December 7

We will celebrate the feast day of St. Nicholas. Please bring a \$10-15 gift/toy. We will process in the Great Entrance and offer the gifts to St. Nicholas to donate to an underprivileged child. Please arrive on time for Liturgy - 9:30 a.m.! The students will place their shoes outside of their classrooms in the hopes that St. Nicholas will leave them a gift and perhaps visit them in class. Be sure to wear nice socks!

### Wednesday, December 17

Rehearsal for Christmas program and party to follow at church. Watch for more details and time (evening).

### Sunday, December 21

All student Christmas Program in the Nave for the parish following Divine Liturgy.

### Sunday, December 28

No Church School class.

## Our Children and Youth Mission Statement

To cultivate a safe and welcoming environment for kids by nurturing healthy relationships within the church family. We will teach the youth by building a strong foundation of knowledge, and together, we will experience the Orthodox tradition by following the four circles of youth ministry: Liturgia (Worship), Diakonia (Service), Martyria (Witness), and Koinonia (Fellowship), leading our youth to develop, by their own free will, a personal relationship with God and to pursue union with Him.



Follow the GOYAns on Instagram  
**@St\_Marys\_GOYA**

## 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.

JOIN US FOR THE ANNUAL...



# CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PARTY

SAINT MARY'S GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

**Saturday, December 13, 2025**  
..... 11:00 a.m. ....

Santa's visit and keepsake photo, caroling with Kally, and lunch highlight this special St. Mary's Community event, sponsored by Minneapolis AHEPA!

Just \$12 per child (Free for ALL Adults and Mpls AHEPA/DoP members and their children)  
For information contact [mark.alevizes@gmail.com](mailto:mark.alevizes@gmail.com) or 612.990.4211 – RSVP by 12/07/25

..... TO RSVP, COMPLETE THE FORM AND MAIL IT TO THE ADDRESS LISTED BELOW BY DECEMBER 7, 2025. ....

PARENTS ATTENDING: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

CHILDREN'S NAMES:	BOY   GIRL	AGE
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____



#### PAYMENT:

Make checks out to **AHEPA** and mail along with this form. Payment can also be made through Venmo by scanning the code. Type “*Christmas Party*” in the memo.

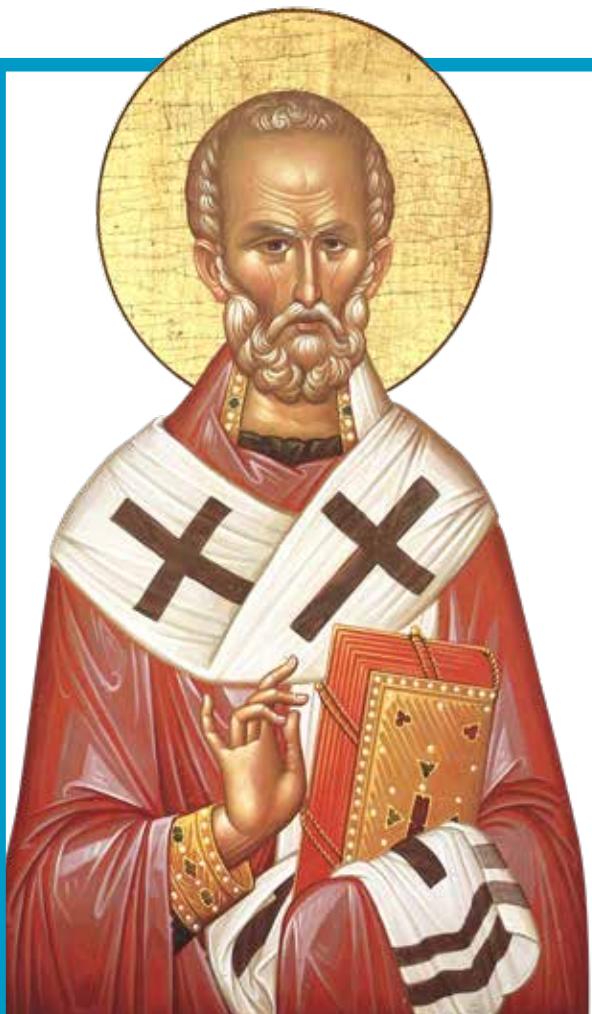
#### MAIL TO:

St. Mary's Greek Orthodox Church  
AHEPA Children's Christmas Party  
3450 Irving Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55305

Saint Mary's Greek Orthodox Church  
3450 Irving Avenue South  
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55408

Non-Profit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Twin Cities, MN  
Permit #3735

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



**"The giver of every good and perfect gift has called upon us to mimic Gods giving, by grace, through faith, and this is not of ourselves."**

Saint Nicholas of Myra

Saint Nicholas  
is Commemorated on December 6

## THE MESSENGER

DECEMBER 2025

The Messenger is published monthly by Saint Mary's Greek Orthodox Church.

### PUBLICATION DEADLINES

#### The Messenger

First Sunday of each month

#### Sunday Bulletin

Preceding Monday, 4:00 p.m.

### CONTACT

3450 Irving Avenue South  
Minneapolis, MN 55408  
[stmarysgoc@stmarysgoc.org](mailto:stmarysgoc@stmarysgoc.org)  
612.825.9595 | 612.825.9283 Fax

**[stmarysgoc.org](http://stmarysgoc.org)**





## Women of St. Mary's: A Look Back at 125 Years of History

by Paulette G. Hastings

As a child of St. Mary's, I am honored to share a little history about the women who came before me, the women who helped shape our parish into what it is today.

- The first of these women arrived in Minneapolis in 1896.
- By 1900, when the church was established, there were two women here.
- Ten years later, in 1910, their numbers had grown to seven, and they founded the first known women's service organization of St. Mary's called Elpis, which means Hope.
- Elpis welcomed new immigrant Greek women to the church and taught them how to live in their new home – how to ride the streetcar, shop for groceries, see a doctor, and so on.

These women also performed many other critical roles in the church, such as:

- Baking Prosforo and Vasilopita
- Making Koliva for memorials
- Providing flowers and sweet basil for services
- Sewing altar cloths and acolytes robes
- Cleaning the church
- Cooking parish dinners
- And, when informed by the priest, tending to parishioner needs with service, money or food.

Through the decades, women served even as Elpis changed its name, expanded its scope to the community at large, and chose to become a chapter in the national Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society in 1945. Their efforts are highlighted in the display in the church office hallway, and I encourage you to stop by to learn more next time you are at St. Mary's.

Now I'd like to offer 3 examples of St. Mary's women having significant impact on the parish.

The first relates to unity. Back in 1922, divisive politics in Greece divided the Minneapolis parish, too, between the Royalists, who supported the monarchy, and Republicans, who backed the Prime Minister. The division here was so deep that Royalist sympathizers purchased a former Protestant church, brought in a Royalist priest, and began worshipping apart from the Republicans of St. Mary's. Throughout the years of separation, the women of Elpis continued their philanthropic work, and eventually convinced the two factions to start talking.

Ultimately they returned to a single parish under the St. Mary's dome during Holy Week of 1930. It's hard to imagine where we would be today if this rift wasn't repaired. And I challenge us to build relationships, to forgive, and to strengthen one another as we grow together in faith.

The second example relates to beauty in the church. Did you know that a woman founded our first choir in 1926? It consisted of eight 12-15 year old girls, and the raising of their sweet voices led to decades of beautiful music and an outstanding program that continues today. Additionally, altar flowers and decorations for Lent and Pascha, Dormition and Feast Day celebrations, and Advent and Christmas were routinely done by women. Philoptochos continues this tradition and welcomes all who wish to participate in these lovely acts of service.

Lastly, I want to call out a special group of women, our clergy wives, past and present, who lift up and support their husbands so that they can minister to us. Our Presvyteras and Diakonisas are role models for keeping Orthodoxy alive in ourselves and our families, all while supporting their own families and careers. They have had an outsized impact on the broader life of the parish, serving as educators, confidants, and ministry leaders, and through their gifts have touched the lives of people across the metropolis, the country and the world. I am so grateful for each of them and the service they have freely given to St. Mary's.

In closing, I encourage all women of St. Mary's to draw strength and inspiration from the women of our past who crossed an ocean, learned new customs, a new language, and served others. These strong, courageous, faithful, hard-working, fun-loving women made St. Mary's their home, just as we have made it our spiritual home. Know that however you arrived, as an immigrant, a third or fourth generation descendant, through marriage, another Orthodox jurisdiction, or through your own seeking, you are an important part of this community. May we all support one other in the same way the women of Elpis welcomed newcomers to this foreign land, and create a sisterhood of love and faith that sustains us and our future generations.

# *Parish Christmas Card*

Send holiday greetings to your family and friends at St. Mary's!

Simply fill out this form and return it to the Church Office  
with a contribution **no later than** Sunday, December 7.

Your name(s) as you want it listed in the card:

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Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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## *Christmas Decorations*

Name of Contributor(s): \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of:

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Amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*Contributions will be acknowledged in the Christmas bulletins.*

*Please return this form and your donation to the Church Office no later than Sunday, December 21.*

# December 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2 11:00am-Intercessory Prayer 11:30am-Sr. Cit. Bible Study 5:15pm-HOPE/JOYChristmas Party 6:30pm-Byzantine Chant Class	3 10:00am-Housekeeping 10:30am-FAITH Playgroup 6:30pm-Choir Rehearsal	4 <i>Saint Barbara</i> 9:30am-Divine Liturgy 6:15pm-Jr. GOYA Christmas Party	5 7:00am-Men's Fellowship	6 <i>Saint Nicholas</i> 9:00am-Bible Study 10:00am-Divine Liturgy after Liturgy-FAITH Playgroup Church Decorating 5:00pm-Great Vespers
7 <i>Tenth Sunday of Luke "The Messenger" Deadline</i> 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy Church School St. Nicholas Celebration 5:30pm-Sr. GOYA Christmas Party	8	9 <i>Conception of the Theotokos</i> 9:30am-Divine Liturgy 11:00am-Sr. Cit. Christmas Luncheon 6:15pm-Parish Council 6:30pm-Byzantine Chant Class	10 6:00pm-Parish Night 6:30pm-Choir Rehearsal	11 6:00pm-Koinonia	12 <i>Saint Spyridon</i> 9:30am-Divine Liturgy 6:00pm-Holy Unction (St. Mary's Romanian, St. Paul)	13 9:00am-Bible Study 5:00pm-Great Vespers
14 <i>Eleventh Sunday of Luke</i> 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy	15 <i>Saint Eleutherios</i> 9:30am-Divine Liturgy	16 11:00am-Intercessory Prayer 11:30am-Sr. Cit. Bible Study 6:30pm-Byzantine Chant Class	17 <i>Saint Dionysios Daniel &amp; the Three Holy Youths</i> 9:00am-“The Messenger” Mailing 9:30am-Divine Liturgy after Liturgy-Housekeeping 6:00pm-Christmas Program Rehearsal and Party 6:30pm-Choir Rehearsal	18	19 7:00am-Men's Fellowship	20 No Bible Study 5:00pm-Great Vespers
21 <i>Sunday before Nativity</i> 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy Church School Christmas Program	22	23 6:00pm-Royal Hours	24 <i>Eve of Holy Nativity</i> Church Office closes at Noon 5:00pm-Veseperal Divine Liturgy	25 <i>Holy Nativity</i> 9:00am-Orthros 10:00am-Divine Liturgy Church Office Closed	26 Church and Office Closed	27 <i>Saint Stephen</i> No Bible Study 10:00am-Divine Liturgy 5:00pm-Great Vespers
28 <i>Sunday after Nativity</i> 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy No Church School	29	30	31 <i>Leave-Taking of Nativity</i>			