



THE MESSENGER



FEBRUARY 2026

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“O Christ our God, give peace to Your commonwealth in troubled times”

—From the Kontakion of Presentation of Our Lord



Presentation of Christ in the Temple - 17th century in Meteora, Greece

The Five Tasks of Our Parish Vision

Hear
Pray
Grow
Serve
Share



Presentation of Our Lord Worship Schedule

Sunday, February 1, Eve of the Presentation of Our Lord
5:00 p.m. – Great Vespers

Monday, February 2, The Presentation of Our Lord
8:30 a.m., Orthos – 9:30 a.m., Divine Liturgy

(Complete worship schedule for February on the next page)

Our Life Together

Baptisms

A baptism and chrismation service was held at St. Mary's on Saturday, December 20. The following were received into the Church that day:

Through Baptism:

Auston Alvarez
Ayla Alvarez
Jeffrey Constantine Yang
Quinten Gjerde
Selim Youssef Abdulnaby
Ginger Gordon
Mason Wittenberg

Through Chrismation:

Melany Alvarez
Luigi Colaianni
Solveig Colaianni
Adam Colaianni
Thomas Lillquist
Maha Shehata

Adrian

Parents:
Andrew & Megan Twito
January 3, 2026

Marriage

Mary Haddad to Joseph Karos
December 28, 2025

Katherine Olson to Andrei Anicescu
January 10, 2026

Deaths

Bill DeMoss
December 3, 2025

Mark Janavaras
December 14, 2025

George Pollnow
December 15, 2025

Katherine J. Boosalis
December 20, 2025

Matina Houck
December 20, 2025

George Dendias
December 23, 2025

Mary Anderson
December 28, 2025

Nick Chresand
January 1, 2026

Share Your Shelf

February's recipient is
SIMPSON FOOD PANTRY

IMMEDIATE NEEDS:
Peanut butter

Sunday, February 1

Canned meal – large cans
(e.g. chili, pork and beans)

Sunday, February 8

Peanut butter

Sunday, February 15

Pancake mix & syrup

Sunday, February 22

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

www.simpsonfoodpantry.org



Donate Online
Visit the site, then,
"Donate"

Weekly Worship Schedule

Saturdays

Great Vespers – 5:00 p.m.

Sundays (live-streamed)

Orthros – 8:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Sunday, February 1:

Eve of Presentation

Great Vespers – 5:00 p.m.

Monday, February 2:

Presentation of Our Lord

Orthros – 8:30 a.m.

Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Friday, February 6:

Saint Photios

Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Tuesday, February 10:

Saint Haralambos

Divine Liturgy – 9:30 a.m.

Saturday, February 14:

First Saturday of Souls

Divine Liturgy – 10:00 a.m.

Saturday, February 21:

Second Saturday of Souls

Divine Liturgy – 10:00 a.m.

Sunday, February 22:

Forgiveness (Cheesefare) Sunday

Forgiveness Vespers – 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, February 25:

Lenten Wednesday

Presanctified Liturgy – 5:30 p.m.

Friday, February 27:

Lenten Friday

Salutations to the Theotokos – 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, February 28:

Third Saturday of Souls

Divine Liturgy – 10:00 a.m.

Prayer for Those in Need:

Christ, Who is alone our Defender: Be mindful, Lord, of the young and the old; orphans and widows; the sick and the suffering, the sorrowing and the afflicted, all captives, and the needy poor; upon them all send Your mercies, for You are the Giver of all good thing



Lenten Worship Schedule

Begins Wednesday, February 25

Wednesdays

4:00 p.m. – Holy Confession (No appointments taken)
5:30 p.m. – Divine Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts
6:45 p.m. – Lenten Dinner and Youth Activities
7:00 p.m. – Choir Rehearsal

Fridays

4:00 p.m. – Holy Confession (No appointments taken)
6:00 p.m. – Salutations to the Theotokos

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

Andrew LeRoy

Secretary

Justin Theodotou

Treasurer

Cristina Nicklow

Assistant Treasurer

Athena Mihas

Members

Benjamin Amundgaard

Jennifer Coin

Vasilios (Billy) Daravingas

Louis Ellis

Andrew Gatchell

Chrissie Hoffman

Heather Koutroupas

Thank You...

The clergy and staff of St. Mary's wish to thank everyone who remembered them with prayers, thoughts, cards, and gifts during this past holiday season, as well as throughout the year. Your thoughtfulness is so much appreciated!



Sitari (Memorial Wheat) Workshop

February 13, 2026

A sitari workshop is planned for Friday, February 13, 2026, beginning at 6:00 p.m. in the church kitchen. There is no charge to attend. All ingredients will be provided by St Mary's. Please bring a shallow 9-inch bowl to use for making your tray. If anyone can assist with the preparations and set up, please let Toni Bazakos know at bazakos@gmail.com and plan to arrive around 3:00 p.m. on Friday, February 13.



Bingo Prizes Needed for Basketball Tournament!

Saint Mary's is excited to host this year's Western Region Basketball Tournament on January 30-February 1. As a part of the fun weekend, we will be having a Family Bingo event on Friday evening. To make this event a success, we are seeking donations for our bingo game prizes. We are looking for new or unused items like:

- Gift cards
- Pop: 2-liter bottles or 12 packs of pop
- Toys, card games, board games, and puzzles
- Sports equipment
- Art and craft supplies such as markers, coloring items, and kits
- Self-care items such as warm socks and lotions
- Snack items
- Fitness Items such as insulated water bottles, travel mugs, and yoga mat
- Lap blanket and candles
- Anything else you'd like to donate

You can drop off your items in the marked donation box by the Courtyard doors or contact Elena or Sean Gabor at 952.288.3011. THANK YOU in advance for making the event a success.

Parish News & Events

Welcoming Mother Gabriela to Saint Mary's



Sunday, March 8

We are honored to welcome Mother Gabriela, Abbess of Dormition Monastery in Rives Junction, Michigan, to Saint Mary's Greek Orthodox Church on Sunday, March 8. Mother Gabriela will offer the sermon at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, and we look forward to sharing this meaningful day with our Orthodox Christian community.



SAINT OLYMPIA
* THE DEACONESS *

A Ministry for Girls! **Grades 3-12**

Saint Olympia Ministry Events

Mark your calendars for upcoming events:

- Friday, February 13: 6:00-9:00 p.m.**
Sitari (Memorial Wheat) Workshop in the church kitchen. Bring mom and/or a friend. Sign up at the Philoptochos table on Sundays or call the church office, 612-825-9595, during the week.
- Sunday, February 22**
After Church School, meet in the church to hang the purple drapes for the beginning of Lent.

More dates and activities to come. We are looking forward to another year of serving our parish.



January 30 – February 1, 2026

Hosted By  **ST. MARY'S**
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

[Scan to Visit the Website](#)

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

SEEKER SUNDAY
February 8, 2026 • 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

Philoptochos



PHILOPTOCHOS MEETINGS

Board Meeting:
Tuesday, February 17, 6:30
on Zoom

General Meeting:
Sunday, February 22, 11:45 a.m.
Terrace Room

UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

Spring Fillo and Coffee Sale
Sundays, February 1-22

Fresh fillo is the best fillo, and it's even better with a cup of fresh roasted coffee! Place your order for fresh fillo and coffee by stopping at the Philoptochos table after church in February or by sending an email to Andrea Tiggas at adtiggas@msn.com. Your orders will be available for pickup on Sunday, March 1, at the Philoptochos table after Liturgy

Membership Drive Is Underway
Now Through March 31

In January, all women of the parish received a letter inviting them to engage with Philoptochos as new or returning members. For 92 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, while coordinating numerous hands-on activities throughout the year. We also contribute to the parish by decorating for seasonal events, hosting Pan-Orthodox and community gatherings, and organizing the Festival bake sale. Visit our table during coffee hour on Sundays to learn more about Philoptochos, submit your membership form, or sign up to volunteer for upcoming activities. Membership dues are self-determined, with the first \$22 supporting our Metropolis and National Philoptochos, and the remainder directly benefiting our local chapter.

Sweet Sunday
Sunday, February 8

Sweet Sunday is a cherished Philoptochos fundraiser where we host coffee hour after Liturgy and invite donations to support a charitable organization. Members are encouraged to volunteer and contribute baked goods or treats to fill our Sweet Sunday tables. Please sign up in advance for the treat you'd like to bring, and please wear red for the occasion! Stay tuned for upcoming church communications to learn more about this year's beneficiary. Thank you in advance for your kindness and support!

Koliva/Sitari Workshop

Sunday, February 8

Save the date for Friday, February 13, if you are interested in our Koliva/Sitari making workshop. 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 during the first Saturday of Lent and the two Saturdays of Souls services prior to the start of Lent. Koliva is also used during memorial services. There is no charge for attending. All ingredients will be provided by St Mary's. Please bring a shallow 9-inch bowl to use for making your tray. If anyone can help with the prep and set up please let Toni Bazakos know at antigone.bazakos@gmail.com. Plan to arrive around 3:00 p.m. on the Friday, February 13. **Registration for the sitari workshop closes on Sunday, February 8.**

Women's Book Club

We will not be meeting in February but will continue our discussion of **Time and Despondency** in March. Please watch for dates and times. If you're interested in joining or reconnecting with the group please reach out to Katherine Boosalis at katherine@boosalis.net. (Please note: If you previously declined a meeting invitation, your email might have been inadvertently omitted from future invitations.)

THANK YOU...

Vasilopita – Thank you to Toni Bazakos and her baking team for the wonderful Vasilopita! Also, thank you to those who helped with the cutting of the Vasilopita for distribution.

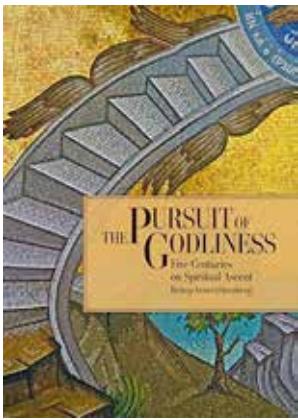
Watch for more postings of events in the parish weekly bulletins and sign up to attend!

Follow Saint Mary's Philoptochos on Social Media



In the Bookstore

By Rebecca Myerly
bookstore@stmarysgoc.org



Bishop Irenei Steenberg of London and Western Europe, formerly Matthew Steenberg (St. Olaf Class of '01), has written **The Pursuit of Godliness: Five Centuries on Spiritual Ascent**. He explains why he wrote this book:

It has seemed to me useful to consolidate together some of the most essential teachings of the Holy Fathers on the attaining of a Godly life, since we find ourselves sojourning in a world increasing bereft of, or rather, antithetical to, the pursuit of Godliness. (1)

To do this, Bishop Irenei writes:

I have found it...useful to adopt the format of “centuries,” or collections of one-hundred short expositions, in order to make more readily accessible the thoughts of our Fathers and the traditions of our Church that are spread across hundreds of volumes spanning two millennia.* (3)

He does this very effectively in five chapters: “A Century on the Kingdom of God and Its Attainment,” “A Century on Love,” “A Century on the Acquisition of Knowledge,” “A Century on the Church,” and “A Century on Worship and Prayer, and the Ascent of Humanity to God.” Within each chapter he elaborates on topics pertinent to the overarching theme of each century.

While this book would be fruitful reading in any season, it is especially appropriate as a guide for reflection and meditation during Lent. Two examples illustrating this are from “A Century on the Kingdom of God and Its Attainment”:

The Christian’s mission to the world consists fundamentally in the transformation of his own heart. In that space are worked wonders that touch every corner of the cosmos. (26)

It is therefore in the power of every Christian to change the whole of creation and to touch the life of every other human being. None are isolated; none are far from the possibility of pastoral care and the exercise of redemptive compassion. Repent, attain the Spirit of Peace, and, as St Seraphim once said, “thousands around you will be saved”—and even beyond these, countless more whose lives are changed when the human race is healed in your heart. (26)

The Pursuit of Godliness shines light on the way of the Church Fathers and the saints throughout the ages:

Our approach to knowledge in the saints is...distinct from the purely worldly approach to the same: we do not merely analyze what they have said before, recorded in the annals of history, but we listen as they speak to us ever and always in the Church; and our ears are prepared for the hearing of their voices by the comportment of our lives. (73)

It is when the saints speak to the heart that we come to know the Holy Fathers; and it is by readying the heart for that encounter through repentance and a full life in the Church that we render ourselves open to such spiritual illumination. (73)

Bishop Irenei concludes:

Godliness is obtainable: it is the free gift of the Lord. Pursuing it should be our aim, our happiness, our struggle, and our salvation....Amen! (143)

*See the “In the Bookstore” article in the January 2026 issue of The Messenger for more about the centuries or “chapters” genre.



NEW AND AVAILABLE



The Ultimate Building Project: The Human Person
by Paul Karos, published by St. Vladimir's Seminary Press.



Icons of the mosaics of the Theotokos and Christ with the Theotokos at St. Mary's
photography and design by Patrick Wehr; made by Saint Paul's Icons.

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

Stewardship

Our stewardship theme for 2026, "Ownership, Engagement and Generosity," emphasizes offering our "First Fruits" (Proverbs 3:9). We thank the many parishioners who have already submitted their Time and Talent pledge forms for 2026. Thank you for committing to Christ and His Church!



Below is a beautiful testimony from one of our parishioners, **Kyrsten Theodotou**, who shared her message of Stewardship following the Liturgy on **November 18, 2025**

On Monday night as we were getting ready for bed, my five year old son was passing out his coins to his siblings. During that time he came up to me and said, "Mom, when I get older I'm going to get rich and then give all my money to the poor." A little later we were reading the daily readings after family prayers and the scripture was from Luke Chapter 12: "beware of all covetousness; for a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions...further do not be anxious about your life...consider the ravens yet God feeds them and of how much more value are we than the birds." The Gospel ended with, "your father knows that you need them, seek his kingdom and these things shall be yours as well"... During the reading, I paused and said to him, "Andrew, this is exactly what you were talking about, giving your money to the poor." He adamantly corrected me and reminded me by saying, "No mom, first I'm going to get rich, then I'll give all of my money to the poor." Of course, I laughed to myself, as kids do say the funniest things with the most innocent heart. And then it prompted me to think further about what does it really mean to give and to be a good steward. His comment reminded me, how far too often in my life, had I thought, "once we have ***, then we can do ***." Andrew's comment was a good reminder that we don't need "wait" for something to happen before we give. We have the woman from the Gospels who gave all she had, her one denari, and that was sufficient for Christ.

When I personally reflect on stewardship and what it means to give, I must be honest and say it wasn't, nor has it always been easy, nor should it be. It shouldn't be comfortable, and it should make us stretch ourselves a little bit more. Growing up, we learned to be stewards in the church community by attending services, preparing the liturgy books and readings. When you grow up in a small Orthodox mission parish, there aren't other people to "do the job"; it really falls on the people who are there. Admittedly, this sometimes fueled resentment as a selfish teenager, but when I look back, those small opportunities to be a

steward, even though it wasn't with my money at the time, were opportunities that allowed me to serve God and the Orthodox community with my time and talent.

Stewardship is time, talent and treasure. I learned to give of my time and talent as a younger child. As I became an independent young adult, I really needed to learn what it meant to give of my treasure; treasure which I thought I didn't have of course just starting out. It continues to be a topic of discussion with my spiritual father and I am so grateful for his guidance on tithing. He would frequently share with me that the purpose of tithing is to build trust in God, something I continue to work on to this day. He would say to me, "God doesn't need our money, he needs us to trust Him." Tithing and/or being a steward is for the benefit of our souls because it forces us to give all what we have, whether it be time, talent, or treasure and trust God to work in our lives. It forces us to look outside of our own needs and give all of our worldly cares to God.

In our office/clinic, we have a quote on the front desk that says, "Where God guides, He provides." This continues to stick with me. Even this week, I was reminded that God provides. After a few months of being uncomfortably slow at work, in one day, we exceeded what we had done in the last 2 months. I felt humbled, grateful, and was reminded that God really does provide.

I am thankful for the opportunity to have shared a little bit with you on what stewardship has meant to me and my family through the years. And it is in the voices of the youngest children, who are closest to God, that remind us that we can give "all of it to the poor" and it is our job to teach through example that we don't need to "wait" for something to happen before we give of our time, talent and treasure. God meets us where we are at and He wants us to trust in Him that he will work through us and provide for us because He loves us.

**Need a new Time,
Talent, and Financial
Pledge Form? Scan
the Code.**



Children and Youth News



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

**Wednesday, February 4
6:00-8:00 p.m.**

Please join us for the once 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!



**Friday, January 30–
Sunday, February 1
All Weekend**

Located in the Twin Cities. For more details, visit the website.



Scan to
Visit the
Website



Friday, February 13: Pre-Lenten Bowling Party 6:00-8:00 p.m.

We will mark the final week before the fast with fellowship and friendly bowling (location TBD). This event is open to both Junior and Senior GOYA. Parents are responsible for transportation to and from the venue.



Wednesday, February 25: Lenten Mini Meeting 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Following the Wednesday Presanctified Liturgy we will have a Lenten mini meeting.



CHURCH SCHOOL

No class on Sunday, February 1, due to St. Mary's hosting the Western Region Family Basketball Tournament.

Looking ahead: Start writing your speeches and creating your art projects for the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical and Art Festival to be held **Sunday, March 1.**

Save the Date – Vacation Church School: June 15-19, 2026



Wednesday, February 4: GOYA Night 6:00-8:00 p.m.

A prayer service, followed by an open Youth Room gathering.

Friday, February 13: Pre-Lenten Bowling Party 6:00-8:00 p.m.

We will mark the final week before the fast with fellowship and friendly bowling (location TBD). This event is open to both Junior and Senior GOYA. Parents are responsible for transportation to and from the venue.

Wednesday, February 25: Lenten Confession 7:00-8:00 p.m.

Following the Liturgy, priests are available to offer confession for the high schoolers.

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

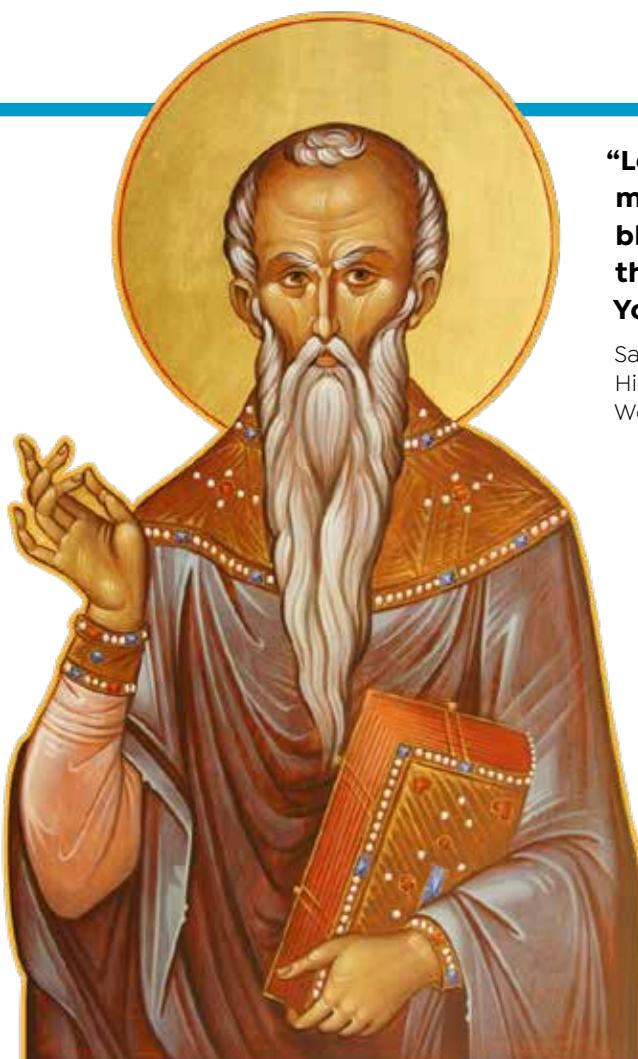
Youth Feedback

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.

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

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



**"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 2026

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Greek Orthodox Church.

PUBLICATION DEADLINES

The Messenger

First Sunday of each month

Sunday Bulletin

Preceding Monday, 4:00 p.m.

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stmarysgoc.org



February 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Publican and Pharisee Triodion Begins "The Messenger" Deadline 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy <i>Basketball Tournament</i> 5:00pm-Great Vespers	2 Presentation of Our Lord 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy	3 6:30pm-Byzantine Chant Class	4 10:00am-Housekeeping 6:00pm-Parish Night/GOYA Night 6:30pm-Choir Rehearsal	5	6 Saint Photios 7:00am-Men's Fellowship 9:30am-Divine Liturgy	7 9:00am-Bible Study 5:00pm-Great Vespers
8 The Prodigal Son Philoptochos Sweet Sunday 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy 11:30am-Curriculum Mtg. 12:00noon-Seekers' Meeting	9	10 Saint Haralambos 9:30am-Divine Liturgy 6:15pm-Parish Council 6:30pm-Byzantine Chant Class	11 6:30pm-Choir Rehearsal	12	13 6:00pm-Sitari Workshop 6:00pm-GOYA Pre-Lent Bowling Party	14 Saturday of Souls 9:00am-Bible Study 10:00am-Divine Liturgy after Liturgy-FAITH Playgroup Event 5:00pm-Great Vespers
15 Judgment Sunday (Meatfare) 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy after Liturgy-Pancake Brunch	16 Presidents' Day <i>Church and Office Closed</i> 6:00pm-Greek Dance Practice	17 6:30pm-Byzantine Chant Class	18 9:00am-"The Messenger" Mailing 10:00am-Housekeeping 6:30pm-Choir Rehearsal	19	20 7:00am-Men's Fellowship	21 Saturday of Souls 9:00am-Bible Study 10:00am-Divine Liturgy 5:00pm-Great Vespers
22 Forgiveness Sunday (Cheesefare) 8:30am-Orthros 9:30am-Divine Liturgy 11:45am-Philoptochos Mtg. 11:30am-Curriculum Mtg. 5:00pm-Forgiveness Vespers followed by Sacrament of Confession	23 Clean Monday <i>First Day of Great Lent</i>	24	25 4:00pm-Confession 5:30pm-Presanctified Liturgy 6:45pm-Lenten Dinner 6:45pm-HOPE/JOY Mini Mtg. 6:45pm-Sr. GOYA Confession 7:00pm-Choir Rehearsal	26 7:00pm-Stewardship Com.	27 4:00pm-Confession 6:00pm-Salutations to the Theotokos	28 Saturday of Souls 9:00am-Bible Study 10:00am-Divine Liturgy 5:00pm-Great Vespers