



GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION  
YORK, PENNSYLVANIA  
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# THE LADDER

JANUARY 2026



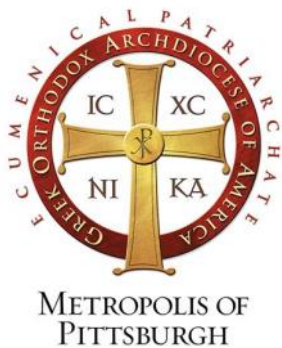
## ST. ANTHONY THE GREAT—JANUARY 17



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... all ages!
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Night

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# THE LADDER

Monthly newsletter of the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation.

*Submissions for consideration are due on the 15th of each month. Send to [annunciationyorkpa@gmail.com](mailto:annunciationyorkpa@gmail.com)*

## GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION

### MINISTRY TEAM

#### Clergy

Rev. Economos Fr. Andrew N. Tsikitas, Parish Priest

Rev. Deacon Thomas Shelley

#### Parish Council

President: Lola Lamnatos  
Vice President: George Karanicolas  
Secretary: Maria Skouras  
Treasurer: Kelly Sheasley

Nicholas Barakos Chris Barakos  
Roula Skouras Nicholas Agapis  
Apostolos Vainas Panagiotis Harmantzis  
Theodoros Koutsokostas

#### Church Staff

Chantors: Nick Karageorge  
Reader Mark Bittner  
Diaconissa Jan Shelley  
Office Administrator: Georgia Georgakopoulos  
Ladder Editor: Georgia Georgakopoulos  
Sunday Bulletin: Fr. Andrew Tsikitas

#### Schedule of Worship Hours

##### Sunday Services (and Weekdays)

8:30 AM Orthros  
9:45 AM Divine Liturgy

##### Sunday Church School

In person, after Holy Communion

#### Schedule of Church Events

Pastoral Visitations: By request  
Home & Business Blessings: By request

#### Departments, Ministries and Committees

Church Choir	Oratorical Festival Committee
GOYA	Grounds & Maintenance
HOPE & JOY	Tech & Security Committee
Sunday School	Stewardship Committee
Philoptochos	Scholarship Committee
Senior Citizens	Food Festival Committee
Social Committee	

*Anyone interested in serving on any of these organizations or committees, please contact the Church Office.*

*Thank you!*

## ARCHEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL FOR THE NEW YEAR

January 1, 2026

***O Redeemer, grant unto all a fruitful year! (Kontakion of the Indiction for the First of the New Year)***

Beloved sisters and brothers in the Lord,

In this New Year of 2026, we are encountering times and seasons of remarkable growth for our Church and for our personal lives and families. We pray that our efforts will be fruitful, and that they will bear many different kinds of harvests in our lives, both spiritual and material. The technological advances accelerating throughout our culture present many challenges, but also many opportunities. Now, more than ever, we need the wisdom of our Orthodox faith to guide our decisions for our families and for our Church, as to how to employ these advances for the good of our souls and for the good of the world.

With this in mind, I call on every member of our Sacred Archdiocese to become invested in the forthcoming Clergy-Laity Congress in Cleveland, Ohio (June 30 – July 2, 2026), where we will gather under the inspiring theme, “Rise and Build,” to heed the exhortation of the Prophet Nehemiah to the People of Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the Holy City:

*Ἀναστῶμεν καὶ οἰκοδομήσωμεν. Καὶ ἐκραταιώθησαν αἱ χεῖρες αὐτῶν εἰς ἀγαθόν.*

*Let us arise and build. And their hands were strengthened for the good work. (2:18)*

Whether in person or virtually, the Clergy-Laity Congress will address the needs and opportunities of our Institutions and Parishes. Among these, of course, is Saint Basil Academy, which has been forging ahead with innovative and exciting designs to bring its mission into even sharper focus. On this day, the First of the New Year, when we celebrate the memory of the Great Hierarch, Ascetic and Theologian of Caesarea, Basil the Great, let us all consider how we might support the Academy as it considers its future. May the intercessions of Saint Basil be with you all as you embrace the New Year of 2026, and may it bear fruit for you in your lives and in the lives of all those you love.

With paternal blessings in Christ,

† ELPIDOPHOROS Archbishop of America



## ON THE COVER

Saint Anthony, the Father of monks, was born in Egypt in 251 of pious parents who departed this life while he was yet young. On hearing the words of the Gospel: "If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell what thou hast, and give to the poor" (Matt. 19:21), he immediately put it into action. Distributing to the poor all he had, and fleeing from all the turmoil of the world, he departed to the desert. The manifold temptations he endured continually for the span of twenty years are incredible. His ascetic struggles by day and by night, whereby he mortified the uprisings of the passions and attained to the height of dispassion, surpass the bounds of nature; and the report of his deeds of virtue drew such a multitude to follow him that the desert was transformed into a city, while he became, so to speak, the governor, lawgiver, and master-trainer of all the citizens of this newly-formed city. The cities of the world also enjoyed the fruit of his virtue. When the Christians were being persecuted and put to death under Maximinus in 312, he hastened to their aid and consolation. When the Church was troubled by the Arians, he went with zeal to Alexandria in 335 and struggled against them in behalf of Orthodoxy. During this time, by the grace of his words, he also turned many unbelievers to Christ. Saint Anthony began his ascetic life outside his village of Coma in Upper Egypt, studying the ways of the ascetics and holy men there, and perfecting himself in the virtues of each until he surpassed them all. Desiring to increase his labors, he departed into the desert, and finding an abandoned fortress in the mountain, he made his dwelling in it, training himself in extreme fasting, unceasing prayer, and fierce conflicts with the demons. Here he remained, as mentioned above, about twenty years. Saint Athanasius the Great, who knew him personally and wrote his life, says that he came forth from that fortress "initiated in the mysteries and filled with the Spirit of God." Afterwards, because of the press of the faithful, who deprived him of his solitude, he was enlightened by God to journey with certain Bedouins, until he came to a mountain in the desert near the Red Sea, where he passed the remaining part of his life. Saint Athanasius says of him that "his countenance had a great and wonderful grace. This gift also he had from the Saviour. For if he were present in a great company of monks, and any one who did not know him previously wished to see him, immediately coming forward he passed by the rest, and hurried to Anthony, as though attracted by his appearance. Yet neither in height nor breadth was he conspicuous above others, but in the serenity of his manner and the purity of his soul." So Passing his life, and becoming an example of virtue and a rule for monastics, he reposed on January 17 in the year 356, having lived altogether some 105 years.



## THE VOICE OF OUR FAITH

### WED, NOT WET—DEACON THOMAS SHELLEY

Some months ago I endured a Funeral oration offered by an independent, fundamentalist, self-described “Bible believing” preacher. Although that cleric’s congregation does not profess the Symbol of our Faith its website contains page upon page of “our beliefs” with each section many paragraphs in length. Unsurprisingly the first page was a declaration about the authority of the Scriptures.

The Funeral oration included a description of the Passion of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ more graphic and detailed than even the most intense hymn chanted during our service of the Twelve Passion Gospels. While a few liberties were taken and a few augmentations extended the description was largely faithful to the Gospels, as one should expect from someone who purports to be “Bible believing”.

But suddenly there emerged a cognitive dissonance that could rival the great earthquake rendered at Golgotha. After describing the repentant versus the unrepentant thieves, the orator glibly added that the repentant one “went straight to Paradise *and he wasn’t even Baptized*”.

But that was just the rumble. Then came the cataclysm: “Baptism only makes you wet”. ... EXCUSE ME?

How can anyone who professes to be “Bible believing” so glibly gloss over Romans 6, the Epistle which we read at every Baptism? “Do you not know that all who have been Baptized into Christ have been Baptized into His death”

How can anyone who professes to be “Bible believing” so indifferently ignore Galatians 3, the “instead of the Trisagion” hymn sung at every Baptism? *As many of you who have been Baptized into Christ have put on Christ.*

How can anyone who professes to be “Bible believing” so casually cast aside the plain command of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ “make disciples of every nation: Baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” which we read not only at every Baptism but also at every 11<sup>th</sup> Sunday Orthros?

In these holy days we dare not forget the example of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, Who, in the words of the Great Dismissal of Theophany, “condescended to be Baptized by John”

We dare not forget that He Who had no sin became as a sinner to receive a baptism of repentance when He had nothing of which to repent.

We dare not forget that He Who stood side by side and shoulder to shoulder with sinners in the Jordan transformed a baptism of repentance into a bath of grace.

St. Ambrose wrote that Christ’s voluntary submission to baptism was to serve as an example:

*So that no one might escape the bath of grace, He, Christ, did not flee from the bath of repentance. So that no one may be called free from sins, He, Christ came to cure sins. If, for us, Christ was washed--moreover, if He washed us in His body---how much more must we wash ourselves from our own faults....*

*Alone He was immersed into the water, but He raised up all! Alone He descended, but in order that we all might rise again! Alone He took upon Himself the sin of all, but in order that in Him the sin of all might be cleansed!*

Christian Baptism doesn’t merely “make us wet”—Baptism makes us **wed**.

**Wed** to Jesus Christ, the only-Begotten Son of God.

**Wed** to Him by Baptism into His death.

**Wed** to Him by being clothed in His holiness.

**Wed** to Him by being enlisted into His mission to make disciples of all nations.

May we “walk wet” and “walk wed” throughout this new year—and every new year which our Lord graciously grants us!

*The true Light has appeared and bestows illumination on all.  
Christ is baptized with us, even though He is above all purity;  
and thus He infuses sanctification into the water, which then becomes  
the purifying agent of our souls.*

*What is seen belongs to earth;  
but what is understood transcends the heavens.  
By means of a bath comes salvation;  
by means of water comes the Spirit;  
by means of immersion does our ascent to God come to pass.  
How wonderful are Your works, O Lord! Glory to You! - Idiomelon from the Praises, Orthros of Theophany*

## ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY: THE CHURCH & THE SACRAMENTS—FR. THOMAS HOPKO

The new and abundant life given by God to man through Christ and the Holy Spirit in creation and redemption is the life of the Christian Church. The life of the Church is the life originally willed for man and his world by God. It is the life of God Himself originally given in creation. It is the spiritual life.

One should not think of the spiritual life of the Church as some particularly special kind of “religious life” different from life itself as we have received it in our creation by God. There are not “two lives,” one “natural” and one “religious.” There is only one life that is real, genuine and true. It is life with God, the life of the Church. Any other life is not life at all: it is the way of death.

What differentiates the life of the Church from the life of “this world,” also called life “according to the flesh,” is only evil and sin. Everything positive is created life, which God has called “good . . . very good,” is what is saved and sanctified in the life of the Church. Only falsehood and wickedness are excluded, certainly not creation itself.

In the Orthodox tradition, the Church is called the Kingdom of God on earth, “the re-creation of the world” (Saint Gregory of Nyssa, 4th c., *On the Canticles*). In the New Testament it is also called the “new creation” (2 Cor 5.17), the Body and Bride of Christ Himself (Rom 12.5; 1 Cor 12.27; Eph 5.23ff; Rev 21.1ff).

*. . . God has put all things under the feet of Christ and has made Him the head over all things for the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (1 Tim 3.15).*

The Apostle Paul also refers to “the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth” (1 Tim 3.15).

Genuine life, true and real life in perfection and abundance, is found only in the Church of Christ. People who are not formally in the Church are living truly and genuinely only to the extent that they follow the law of God “written on their hearts” by the Spirit of God in creation (Rom 1.12–16), which is the same law clearly revealed and given in Christ and the Church. And those people who are formally members of the Church are living truly and genuinely only to the extent that they actually live the life of the Church. For the sad fact exists that one may be formally a member of the Church and still live according to the law of the flesh, the law of sin and death, and not of Christ. The spiritual life, therefore, consists in actually living the life of the Church.

The spiritual life of the Church is given to men in the sacraments. The sacraments are called the holy mysteries, and the entire life of the Church is considered to be mystical and sacramental.

The new life in Christ, the genuine life of God, is given to man in baptism, the new birth and new creation of man in Christ by the Spirit of God. In baptism the person who rejects Satan and all of his evil works and accepts Christ and the gift of eternal life, dies and rises again with Jesus to “newness of life.”

*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? We were buried therefore with Him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. . . . So you also must consider yourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Rom 6.3–11; cf. also Col 2–3, Gal 3).*

The new life in Christ Jesus given in baptism—a perpetually dying and rising daily with Jesus—is made possible in man by “the seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit” in the mystery of chrismation (cf. 2 Cor 1.22, Eph 1.13). Chrismation follows baptism, and is essentially connected to it, as the Holy Spirit comes with Christ, Pentecost comes with Easter, and life comes with birth. There is no new life in the new humanity of divine childhood in Jesus without the life-creating Spirit of God. It is the Holy Spirit in chrismation who makes possible and powerful the spiritual life into which men are born in Christian baptism.

The new life in Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Church is nourished and sustained in the mystery of the eucharist—Holy Communion. The “mystical supper of the Son of God” is the center of the spiritual life. For Christians there is no life at all without it:

*I am the bread of life . . . if any one eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh.*

*Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you; he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is food indeed and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so He who eats Me will live because of Me . . . he who eats this bread will live forever (Jn 6.32ff).*

When a person falls away from the life of God in the Church, he or she may be reunited to Christ by the mystery of reconciliation through penitential confession. The abundant mercy of God abides in the Church by the presence of Christ, and

the Lord who “desires not the death of a sinner” but that he might “turn from his wickedness and live” (Ez 18.32, 33.14) will forgive those who come to Him in repentance (cf. Jn 6.37). Continual repentance for sin is a central element in the spiritual life of men who choose life in God, but continue, inevitably, to sin.

*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, Christ is faithful and just, and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us (1 Jn 1.8).*

In this life still bound by the sin of the world, man inevitably suffers and dies. His outward nature is wasting away while his new nature in Christ is being perfected. The mystery of the anointing of man’s suffering soul and body is the sanctification of man’s “perishable nature” that his “mortal nature” might “put on immortality” (1 Cor 15.51ff). Through holy unction a person is given the grace of the Spirit to make his suffering and death an act of victory and life.

*If we have died with Him, we shall also live with Him; if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him . . . (2 Tim 2.11; cf. Jas 4.13ff).*

In this life as well, God has created human beings in His divine image and likeness as male and female. The union in love between one man and one woman forever is the created expression of the perfect love of God for His creatures. The mystery of marriage is the human image of the “great mystery” of “Christ and the Church” (Eph 6.21–33). In the sacrament of marriage, human love is made eternal and divine by the grace of Christ’s Spirit. There is no parting in death, but fulfillment in the Kingdom of God.

All of the sacramental mysteries of the Church are effected in the Church through the sacrament of the ordained priesthood. The bishops and priests are the ministers within the community who guarantee the reality of the mystical life of the Church in all times and places. Through the ordained ministers within the communion of the Church, Christ Himself is present and powerful in the fullness of His saving activity.

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## THE BLESSING OF WATER—HOLY-TRINITY.ORG

In the Book of Genesis, we read that creation began when the Spirit of God moved over the face of the waters. (Gen. 1:2) Throughout the Bible, water plays an important and a ‘mystical role’ in human existence and in man’s relationship with God the Creator.

Water has the capacity to produce death, as recounted in the story of Noah and the ark (Gen. 6); or to produce life, as noted in the story of Moses’ striking the rock in the desert to produce water for the parched wanderers (Numbers 20). While the waters of the Red Sea parted to allow the Hebrews to pass over in safety (and thus preserve life), the same waters came rushing upon the Pharaoh and his army drowning them.

In the New Testament, we see water becoming the means by which the Trinity was revealed during the Baptism of Jesus, which we celebrate on the Feast of Theophany on January 6 each year. In the Baptism of Jesus, at the hands of John the Baptist, the spiritual significance and potential of water as the source of life is again revealed and reaffirmed just as in Genesis, the first book of the Bible.

In a sermon on Theophany, St. John Chrysostom says: “On this day Christ was baptized; through His Baptism He sanctified the element of water. There let us all draw of the water and store it in homes, because on this day the water is consecrated.”

In blessing water on the Feast Day, we ask and pray that the original purpose of water, as a source of life, blessing and holiness be revealed to us as we drink it. In the Garden of Eden, Adam enjoyed a unique and lordly relationship with Creation. After the Fall as he was expelled from Paradise, he heard the words, “Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.” (Genesis 3:17) From that point Adam would be subject to Creation, and not a master. Yet through Christ, the curse is lifted, just as the curse of death is lifted from the human race through the Resurrection. Because of Christ’s coming and His work of salvation and redemption (as the hymns say, “dispensation”), Man and Creation are reconciled. Creation is able once more to meet not only the physical needs of man, but the elements of creation can be, and are, sources of grace and healing as we worship the Lord of Life.

When we bless water – or any other material object – and when we celebrate the Mysteries (Sacraments) of the Church, we reverently and gratefully proclaim that Christ Himself (in the words of the Divine Liturgy) “offers and is offered” blesses and sanctifies the world (cosmos) as the Great High Priest.

The celebration of the Great Blessing of Water is an affirmation that through Christ’s own baptism, He who is our loving Lord has lifted the curse of Adam’s sin, and given the creative goodness of God’s creation back to mankind once again.

## Η ΚΛΙΜΑΞ

### ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΙΚΗ ΕΓΚΥΚΛΙΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΠΡΩΤΟΧΡΟΝΙΑΣ

1 Ιανουαρίου 2026

**«Αντρωτά, εὐφορον πᾶσι τὸ ἔτος χορήγησον» (Κοντάκιον τῆς Ἰνδίκτου).**

Προσφιλεῖς ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἀδελφές ἐν Χριστῷ,

Εἰσερχόμενοι στὸ νέο ἔτος 2026, ἀναγνωρίζουμε μία νέα περίοδο δυναμισμοῦ καὶ ἀναπτύξεως, τόσο γιὰ τὴν Ἐκκλησία μας ὅσο καὶ γιὰ τὴν προσωπικὴ καὶ οἰκογενειακὴ μας ζωὴ. Εὐχόμαστε οἱ κόποι μας νὰ ἀποδώσουν ποικίλους καρποὺς στὴ ζωὴ μας, πνευματικοὺς καὶ ὕλικους. Οἱ τεχνολογικὲς ἐξελίξεις, οἱ ὁποῖες ἐπιταχύνονται σὲ ὅλο τὸ φάσμα τοῦ πολιτισμοῦ μας, θέτουν πολλὰς προκλήσεις, ἀλλὰ καὶ μεγάλες εὐκαιρίες. Περισσότερο ἀπὸ κάθε ἄλλη φορά, χρειαζόμαστε τὴ σοφία τῆς ὀρθοδόξου πίστεως νὰ καθοδηγεῖ τὶς ἀποφάσεις μας, γιὰ τὶς οἰκογένειές μας καὶ γιὰ τὶς κοινότητές μας, γιὰ τὸ πῶς θὰ ἀξιοποιήσουμε αὐτὰ τὰ ἐργαλεῖα γιὰ τὸ καλὸ τοῦ κόσμου καὶ τὴ σωτηρία τῆς ψυχῆς μας.

Μὲ αὐτὲς τὶς σκέψεις, καλῶ κάθε μέλος τῆς Ἱερᾶς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς μας νὰ συμμετάσχει ἐνεργὰ στὴν προσεχῇ Κληρικολαϊκὴ Συνέλευση, ἡ ὁποία θὰ πραγματοποιηθεῖ στὸ Κλίβελαντ τοῦ Ὁχάϊο (30 Ἰουνίου – 2 Ἰουλίου 2026). Ἐκεῖ θὰ συγκεντρωθοῦμε μὲ τὸ ἐμπνευσμένο θέμα «Ἐγείραι καὶ οἰκοδομήσουν», ἀνταποκρινόμενοι στὴν προτροπὴ τοῦ Προφήτου Νεεμίας πρὸς τὸ λαὸ τῆς Ἱερουσαλὴμ νὰ ἀνοικοδομήσει τὰ τεῖχη τῆς ἁγίας Πόλεως,

*«Ἀναστῶμεν καὶ οἰκοδομήσωμεν. Καὶ ἐκραταιώθησαν αἱ χεῖρες αὐτῶν εἰς ἀγαθόν» (Νεεμ. 2,18).*

Εἴτε μὲ φυσικὴ παρουσία εἴτε διαδικτυακά, ἡ Κληρικολαϊκὴ θὰ ἀσχοληθεῖ μὲ τὶς ἀνάγκες καὶ τὶς εὐκαιρίες τῶν Ἱδρυμάτων καὶ τῶν Κοινοτήτων μας. Ἀνάμεσα σὲ αὐτά, βεβαίως, ξεχωρίζει ἡ Ἀκαδημία τοῦ Ἁγίου Βασιλείου, ἡ ὁποία προχωρεῖ μὲ τόλμη καὶ δημιουργικότητα, ἀναπτύσσοντας καινοτόμα καὶ ἐλπιδοφόρα σχέδια, γιὰ νὰ καταστήσει τὴν ἀποστολὴ τῆς ἀκόμη σαφέστερη καὶ ἀποτελεσματικότερη. Τὴν ἡμέρα αὐτή, τὴν πρώτη τοῦ νέου ἔτους, ὅταν τιμοῦμε τὴ μνήμη τοῦ μεγάλου ἱεράρχου, ἀσκητοῦ καὶ θεολόγου τῆς Καισαρείας, τοῦ ἁγίου Βασιλείου τοῦ Μεγάλου, ὅς σκεφθοῦμε ὅλοι πῶς θὰ μπορούσαμε νὰ στηρίξουμε τὴν Ἀκαδημία, καθὼς αὐτὴ σχεδιάζει τὸ μέλλον τῆς.

Εἴθε οἱ πρεσβεῖες τοῦ Ἁγίου Βασιλείου νὰ μᾶς συνοδεύουν, καθὼς ὑποδεχόμαστε τὸ νέο ἔτος 2026, ὥστε νὰ εἶναι καρποφόρο γιὰ ἐσᾶς καὶ γιὰ τὶς οἰκογένειές σας.

Μετὰ πατρικῶν ἐν Χριστῷ εὐχῶν,

† ὁ Ἀμερικῆς Ἑλπιδοφόρος

### ΑΓ. ΑΝΤΩΝΙΟΣ Ο ΜΕΓΑΣ—17 ΙΑΝΟΥΑΡΙΟΥ

Ο Μέγας Αντώνιος γεννήθηκε το 251 μ.Χ. στην Ἄνω Αἴγυπτο ἀπὸ πλούσιους καὶ ἐνάρετους γονεῖς, τοὺς οποίους ἔχασε σὲ νεαρὴ ἡλικία. Συγκεντρώνει ὁμῶς τὴν προσοχὴ τοῦ στὴν μυστικὴ θεωρία τῶν μοναχῶν τῆς ἐρήμου καὶ στὴν φροντίδα τῆς μικρῆς ἀδελφῆς του. Γρήγορα αποφασίζει νὰ εγκαταλείψει τὰ ἐγκόσμια καὶ ἀναχωρεῖ γιὰ τὴν ἐρήμο, ἀφοῦ πρῶτα τακτοποίησε τὴν μικρότερη ἀδελφὴ του καὶ μοίρασε τὴν μεγάλη πατρικὴ περιουσία στους φτωχοὺς τῆς περιοχῆς του. Στὴν ἐρήμο پاίδευσε τὴν ψυχὴ του καὶ τιθάσευσε τὰ πάθη του φθάνοντας στα ἀνώτατα ὅρια τῆς ἀσκήσεως ὥστε ἡ ψυχὴ τοῦ ἁγίου μπορούσε νὰ ἐξέρχεται τοῦ σώματός του ἐνὼ βρισκόταν ἀκόμη ἐν ζωῇ. Γίνεται τὸ πρότυπο τῶν ἀσκητῶν. Πολλοὶ ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐφθάναν στὴν ἐρήμο γιὰ νὰ τον ἀκούσουν καὶ νὰ τον συμβουλευθοῦν. Παρέδωσε τὴν μακάρια ψυχὴ του στὸν μισθαποδότῃ Θεῷ σὲ ἡλικία 105 ἐτῶν. Ἀν καὶ, ὅπως λέγει ὁ Μέγας Ἀθανάσιος, μία ἀπὸ τὶς τελευταῖες ἐπιθυμίες τοῦ Οσίου Αντωνίου ἦταν νὰ μείνει κρυφός ὁ τόπος τῆς ταφῆς του, οἱ μοναχοὶ ποὺ μόναζαν κοντὰ του ἔλεγαν ὅτι κατεῖχαν τὸ ἱερό λείψανό του, τὸ ὁποῖο ἐπὶ Ἰουστινιανού (561 μ.Χ.), κατατέθηκε στὴν Ἐκκλησία τοῦ Ἁγίου Ἰωάννου τοῦ Προδρόμου στὴν Ἀλεξάνδρεια καὶ ἀπὸ ἐκεῖ ἀργότερα, τὸ 635 μ.Χ., μεταφέρθηκε στὴν Κωνσταντινούπολη.



## ΝΥΜΦΕΥΜΕΝΟΙ ΟΧΙ ΒΡΕΓΜΕΝΟΙ—ΔΙΑΚ. ΘΩΜΑΣ SHELLEY

Πριν από μερικούς μήνες, υπέμεινα μια επιτάφια ομιλία που εκφώνησε ένας ανεξάρτητος, φονταμενταλιστής, αυτοαποκαλούμενος «πιστός της Βίβλου» ιεροκήρυκας. Αν και η εκκλησία αυτού του κληρικού δεν ομολογεί το Σύμβολο της Πίστεώς μας, ο ιστότοπός της περιέχει σελίδα προς σελίδα «τις πεποιθήσεις μας», με κάθε ενότητα να έχει πολλές παραγράφους σε μήκος. Όπως ήταν αναμενόμενο, η πρώτη σελίδα ήταν μια δήλωση σχετικά με την αυθεντία των Γραφών.



Η επιτάφια ομιλία περιελάμβανε μια περιγραφή των Παθών του Κυρίου, Θεού και Σωτήρος υμών, Ιησού Χριστού πιο παραστατική και λεπτομερής από τον πιο έντονο ύμνο που ψάλλεται κατά τη διάρκεια της τελετής μας των Αγίων Παθών της Μεγάλης Πέμπτης. Ενώ ελήφθησαν κάποιες ελευθερίες και επεκτάθηκαν μερικές προσθήκες, η περιγραφή ήταν σε μεγάλο βαθμό πιστή στα Ευαγγέλια, όπως θα περίμενε κανείς από κάποιον που ισχυρίζεται ότι «πιστεύει στη Βίβλο».

Αλλά ξαφνικά εμφανίστηκε μια γνωστική ασυμφωνία που θα μπορούσε να ανταγωνιστεί τον μεγάλο σεισμό που έγινε στον Γολγοθά. Αφού περιέγραψε τον μετανοημένο έναντι των αμετανόητων κλεφτών, ο ρήτορας πρόσθεσε με επιμέλεια ότι ο μετανοημένος «πήγε κατευθείαν στον Παράδεισο και δεν είχε καν βαπτιστεί».

Αλλά αυτό ήταν απλώς η βουή. Τότε ήρθε ο κατακλυσμός, όταν είπε: «Το βάπτισμα μόνο σε κάνει βρεγμένο». ... ΣΥΓΓΝΩΜΗ;

Πώς μπορεί κάποιος που ισχυρίζεται ότι «πιστεύει στη Βίβλο» να παραβλέπει τόσο επιπόλαια το προς Ρωμαίους 6, την Επιστολή που διαβάζουμε σε κάθε Βάπτισμα; «ή αγνοείτε ότι όσοι έβαπτίσθημεν εις Χριστόν Ἰησοῦν, εις τὸν θάνατον αὐτοῦ ἐβαπτίσθημεν;»

Πώς μπορεί κάποιος που ισχυρίζεται ότι «πιστεύει στη Βίβλο» να αγνοεί τόσο αδιάφορα το προς Γαλάτας 3, τον ύμνο «αντί του Τρισαγίου» που ψάλλεται σε κάθε Βάπτισμα; «ὅσοι γὰρ εις Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε.»

Πώς μπορεί κάποιος που ισχυρίζεται ότι «πιστεύει στη Βίβλο» να παραμερίσει τόσο αδιάφορα την απλή εντολή του Κυρίου και Θεού και Σωτήρα μας Ιησού Χριστού «πορευθέντες μαθητεύσατε πάντα τὰ ἔθνη, βαπτίζοντες αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ Πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου Πνεύματος» που διαβάζουμε όχι μόνο σε κάθε Βάπτισμα αλλά και σε κάθε Ὁρθρο της 11ης Κυριακής;

Σε αυτές τις άγιες ημέρες δεν τολμούμε να ξεχάσουμε το παράδειγμα του Κυρίου και Θεού και Σωτήρα μας Ιησού Χριστού, ο Οποῖος, σύμφωνα με τα λόγια της Μεγάλης Απόλυσης των Θεοφανείων, «κατέβηκε να βαπτιστεί από τον Ιωάννη».

Δεν τολμούμε να ξεχάσουμε ότι Αυτός που δεν είχε αμαρτία έγινε ως αμαρτωλός για να λάβει ένα βάπτισμα μετάνοιας ενώ δεν είχε τίποτα για το οποίο να μετανοήσει.

Δεν τολμούμε να ξεχάσουμε ότι Αυτός που στάθηκε δίπλα-δίπλα και ώμο με ώμο με τους αμαρτωλούς στον Ιορδάνη μετέτρεψε ένα βάπτισμα μετάνοιας σε λουτρό χάριτος.

Ο Άγιος Αμβρόσιος έγραψε ότι η εκούσια υποταγή του Χριστού στο βάπτισμα έπρεπε να χρησιμεύσει ως παράδειγμα:

*«Για να μην ξεφύγει κανείς από το λουτρό της χάριτος, Αυτός, ο Χριστός, δεν έφυγε από το λουτρό της μετάνοιας. Για να μην αποκαλεστεί κανείς ελεύθερος από τις αμαρτίες, Αυτός, ο Χριστός ήρθε να θεραπεύσει τις αμαρτίες. Αν, για εμάς, ο Χριστός πλύθηκε - και αν μας έπλυνε στο σώμα Του - πόσο μάλλον πρέπει να πλυθούμε εμείς από τα δικά μας ελαττώματα....»*

*Μόνος βυθίστηκε στο νερό, αλλά ανέστησε όλους! Μόνος κατέβηκε, αλλά για να αναστηθούμε όλοι! Μόνος Του ανέλαβε την αμαρτία όλων, αλλά για να καθαριστεί σε Αυτόν η αμαρτία όλων!»*

Το χριστιανικό βάπτισμα δεν μας «βρέχει» απλώς — το βάπτισμα μας νυμφεύει.

**Νυμφευμένοι** με τον Ιησού Χριστό, τον μονογενή Υιό του Θεού.

**Νυμφευμένοι** με Αυτόν μέσω του Βαπτίσματος στον θάνατό Του.

**Νυμφευμένοι** με Αυτόν ντυμένοι με την αγιότητά Του.



**Νυμφευμένοι** με Αυτόν στρατευμένοι στην αποστολή Του να κάνει μαθητές όλα τα έθνη.

Εύχομαι να «περπατάμε βρεγμένοι» και να «περπατάμε νυμφευμένοι» καθ' όλη τη διάρκεια αυτού του νέου έτους — και κάθε νέου έτους που ο Κύριός μας μας χαρίζει ευγενικά!

*Τὸ ἀληθινὸν φῶς ἐπεφάνη, καὶ πᾶσι τὸν  
φωτισμὸν δωρεῖται. Βαπτίζεται Χριστὸς μεθ’  
ἡμῶν, ὁ πάσης ἐπέκεινα καθαρότητος· ἐνίησι τὸν  
ἁγιασμὸν τῷ ὕδατι, καὶ ψυχῶν τοῦτο καθάρσιον  
γίνεται·*

*Επίγειον τὸ φαινόμενον, καὶ ὑπὲρ τοὺς  
οὐρανοὺς τὸ νοούμενον· διὰ λουτροῦ σωτηρία,  
δι’ ὕδατος τὸ Πνεῦμα· διὰ καταδύσεως, ἡ πρὸς  
Θεὸν ἡμῶν ἄνοδος γίνεται. Θαυμάσια τὰ ἔργα σου  
Κύριε! δόξα σοι.*

## ΑΓΙΑΣΜΟΣ—ΥΠΟΒΛΗΘΗΚΕ ΑΠΟ ΤΟΝ ΝΙΚΟ ΚΑΡΑΓΕΩΡΓΟ

Μία από τās ιεράς ακολουθίας τῆς Ὁοθοδόξου Χριστιανικῆς λατρείας εἶναι καὶ ὁ Ἅγιασμος. Ἡ ἀρχή του ὑπάρχει εἰς τὴν εορτὴν τῶν Θεοφανείων, ποὺ ἐγένοντο καὶ αἱ βαπτίσεις τῶν κατηγουμένων. Ἀφοῦ καθηγιαζέτο τὸ ὕδωρ διὰ τὰς βαπτίσεις, ἐλάμβανον ἐκ τούτου οἱ χριστιανοὶ καὶ ἐρράντιζον τὰς οἰκίας, τοὺς ἀγρούς, τὰ φυτά, τὰ ζῶα, ἀλλὰ καὶ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους, πρὸς ἀποτροπὴν παντὸς ἐναντίου. Ἐτσι, λοιπόν, ἐπεκράτησε νὰ τελεῖται ἀκολουθία τοῦ ἁγιασμοῦ τοῦ ὕδατος διὰ τοὺς ἀνωτέρω λόγους καὶ ανεξαρτήτως τοῦ βαπτίσματος τῶν κατηγουμένων. Μὲ αὐτὸν τὸν τρόπον προήλθεν ἡ τελετὴ τοῦ Ἅγιασμοῦ.

Ὁ Ἅγιασμός, ποὺ τελεῖται σήμερον, εἶναι δύο εἰδῶν, ὁ Μέγας καὶ ὁ Μικρός. Ὁ Μέγας τελεῖται κατὰ τὴν ἐορτὴν τῶν Θεοφανείων μόνον καὶ ὄχι ἄλλην φορὰν κατὰ τὴν διάρχειαν τοῦ ἔτους. Ἐνα, μία ὥραία καὶ ἐντυπωσιακὴ ἀκολουθία, ποὺ τελεῖται τὴν ἡμέραν τῶν Φώτων, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν παραμονὴν οὐτῆς. Καὶ οἱ πιστοὶ λαμβάνουν με εὐλάβειαν τὸ ἡγιασμένον ὕδωρ, ἀπὸ τὸ ὑποῖον πίνουν διὰ τὴν ὑγείαν τὴν σωματικὴν καὶ τὴν πνευματικὴν, καθὼς ἐπίσης ραντίζουν μὲ αὐτὸ τὰς οἰκίας καὶ τὰ ἄλλα, ποὺ τοὺς ἐνδιαφέρουν, ἀγρούς κλπ. καὶ φυλάσσουν δὲ καὶ ἁγιασμὸν δι’ ἐκτάκτους ἀνάγκας καθ’ ὅλον τὸ ἔτος. Συνήθως, χρησιμοποιοῦν τὸ ὕδωρ τοῦ Ἅγιασμοῦ τῆς παραμονῆς καὶ κρατοῦν ἐκεῖνο τοῦ τῆς εορτῆς. Τὸ τελευταῖον δύναται νὰ χρησιμοποιηθῇ καὶ δι’ ἐτοιμοθανάτους, ποὺ δὲν δύνανται νὰ κοινωνήσου. Τότε ὁ ἱερεὺς τοὺς προσφέρει νὰ πίνουν Μέγαν Ἅγιασμόν.

Ὁ Μικρὸς Ἅγιασμός εἶναι ἀνάλογος πρὸς τὸν Μέγαν Ἅγιασμόν ἀκολουθία, συνεπτυγμένη καὶ μικροτέρα καὶ τελεῖται τακτικῶς κατὰ μῆνα, ἥτοι τὴν πρώτην ἐκάστου μηνός. Διὰ τὰς ἀνάγκας τῶν χριστιανῶν τελεῖται καὶ ἐκτάκτως, εἴτε ἐπὶ τῇ ἐνάρξει ἔργου, εἴτε δι’ ἄλλα γεγονότα, ὅπου οἱ πιστοὶ ἐπιθυμοῦν τὸν ἁγιασμόν τῶν ἔργων τῶν.

Ἡ τέλεσις τοῦ Ἅγιασμοῦ γίνεται με τὴν ἀνάγνωσιν τῶν σχετικῶν ευχῶν, τὴν σταυροειδὴ σφράγισιν τοῦ ὕδατος ὑπὸ τοῦ λειτουργοῦ καὶ τὴν τριττὴν κατάδυσιν καὶ ἀνάδυσιν τοῦ Σταυροῦ εἰς αὐτό.

Μετὰ τὴν τέλεσιν τοῦ Μεγάλου Ἅγιασμοῦ, ὁ ἱερεὺς ἀγιάζει τοὺς πιστοὺς προσφέρων πρὸς ἀσπασμόν τὸν Σταυρὸν καὶ ραντίζων αὐτοὺς εἰς τὸ μέτωπον. Ἐπισκέπτεται δὲ καὶ τὰς οἰκίας, ὅπου ραντίζει καὶ ἐκεῖ τοὺς χώρους. Ομοίως μετὰ τὴν τέλεσιν τοῦ Μικροῦ Ἅγιασμοῦ, ἀγιάζονται οἱ πιστοὶ καὶ λαμβάνουν ἡγιασμένον ὕδωρ.

Καθήκον τοῦ λειτουργοῦ ἱερέως εἶναι νὰ τελεῖ τὴν ἐν λόγῳ ἀκολουθίαν κατὰ τὸ τυπικὸν καὶ νὰ ἔχη καταστήσει τοὺς χριστιανοὺς ἱκανοὺς διὰ τὴν συμμετοχὴν τῶν εἰς τὴν τέλεσιν αὐτῆς. Κατὰ δὲ τὴν περιφορὰν τοῦ εἰς οἰκίας, ὁδοῦς, καταστήματα κλπ. ὁ ἱερεὺς ἐπιβάλλεται νὰ εἶναι προσεκτικὸς καὶ ἱεροπρεπὴς εἰς τὴν συμπεριφορὰν του, ὥστε ἀπὸ αὐτὴν νὰ διδάσκωνται οἱ πιστοὶ καὶ νὰ προάγωνται πνευματικῶς. Συνηθίζουν δὲ πολλοὶ χριστιανοί, νὰ προσφέρουν κατὰ τὸν ἁγιασμόν τῶν χρήματα. Εἰς αὐτὴν ἀπαιτεῖται μεγάλη προσοχή, μήπως ἀπὸ ατυχεῖς ἐνεργείας τοῦ ἱερέως καὶ γενικῶς ἀπὸ τὴν συμπεριφορὰν τοῦ σκανδαλισθοῦν ἀνθρώποι. Γνωστοῦ ὄντος, ὅτι ὁ διάβολος δὲν παύει νὰ πειράζει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ μάλιστα καὶ εἰς τὰς ἱερωτέρας στιγμὰς τῶν, διὰ τοῦτο δὲν πρέπει ποτὲ νὰ ἀτονῇ ὁ πνευματικὸς ἀγὼν.

Καὶ αὐτὰ μὲν διὰ τὸν τελούμενον εἰς τὸν ναὸν Ἅγιασμόν, τὸν Μέγαν καὶ τὸν Μικρὸν, τὸν κατὰ μῆνα τελούμενον. Δὲν εἶναι δὲ ὀλίγαι αἱ περιπτώσεις, ὅπου Ἐπίσκοποι περιώρισαν ἢ καὶ ἀπηγόρευσαν τὴν περιφορὰν,

μετὰ τὴν τελετὴν τοῦ Ἀγιασμοῦ, τῶν ἱερέων εἰς οἰκίας καὶ καταστήματα πρὸς ἁγιασμόν τῶν πιστῶν, διότι ὠρισμένοι ἐγένοντο πρόξενοι σκανδαλισμοῦ.

Ἡ ἑκτακτος τέλεσις τοῦ (Μικροῦ) Ἀγιασμοῦ, πού κυρίως γίνεται ἐκτὸς τοῦ ναοῦ, παρουσιάζει κάποιας ἰδιαιτερότητας. Χῶρος τελέσεως εἶναι οἰχία, ἢ κατάστημα, ἢ γραφεῖον, ἢ σχολεῖον, ἢ χῶρος ἀρζαμένου ἢ συντελουμένου ἔργου. Ἐδῶ, οἱ Χαλοῦντες τὸν λειτουργόν, πολάκις δὲν ἐνδιαφέρονται διὰ τὸν ἁγιασμόν, ἀλλὰ πράττουν τοῦτο ἐθιμοτυπικῶς καὶ καθηκόντως. Ἐν προκειμένῳ, εἶναι εὐκολώτερον νὰ προκληθῇ πνευματικὴ ζημία, Ὄχι βεβαίως, τόσον εἰς οἰκίας καὶ καταστήματα, ὅπου οἱ καλοῦντες εἶναι ἰδιῶται, ὅσον εἰς δημοσίους χώρους, ὅπου οἱ καλοῦντες εἶναι κρατικοὶ λειτουργοί, πού συμβαίνει νὰ μὴ ἐπιθυμοῦν τὴν τέλεσιν Ἀγιασμοῦ, ἀλλὰ πράττουν τοῦτο καθηκόντως. Εἰς αὐτὰς τὰς περιπτώσεις, οἱ ἱερεῖς χρειάζεται νὰ ὀπλίζονται περισσότερο με προσευχὴν, μὲ προσοχὴν, μὲ υπομονήν, μὲ ἀγάπην, διότι, ἐδῶ, αἱ μεθοδεῖαι τοῦ διαβόλου εἶναι περισσότερα. Οἱ καλοῦντες διὰ τὴν τέλεσιν, πού το ὀλιγώτερον πρέπει νὰ εἶναι ἀνεκτικοὶ καὶ εὐγενικοί, συμβαίνει κάποτε νὰ χάνουν τὴν ψυχραιμίαν των καὶ μερικοὶ ἀκόμη καὶ τὴν στοιχειώδη ἀνέκτικότητά των, ὥστε νὰ ἐκδηλώνονται ἀρνητικῶς πρὸς τὰ τελούμενα. Δὲν ἔλειψαν δὲ καὶ παραδείγματα, πού κάποιοι ἐπεχείρησαν ἀσεβῶς νὰ «διορθώσουν» τὰ κείμενα καὶ τὸ τυπικόν τῆς Εκκλησίας. Δι' αὐτό, ὁ λειτουργὸς αὐτῆς, νὰ προσεῦχεται καὶ νὰ ἐνεργῇ μὲ πολλὴν προσοχήν.

## ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΗ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙΚΟΤΗΤΑ: Η ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ—ΠΡ. ΘΩΜΑΣ ΧΟΠΚΟ

Ἡ νέα καὶ ἀφθονὴ ζωὴ που δόθηκε ἀπὸ τὸν Θεὸ στον ἄνθρωπο μέσω τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος στὴ δημιουργία καὶ τὴ λύτρωση εἶναι ἡ ζωὴ τῆς Χριστιανικῆς Εκκλησίας. Ἡ ζωὴ τῆς Εκκλησίας εἶναι ἡ ζωὴ που ἀρχικὰ θέλησε ὁ Θεὸς γιὰ τὸν ἄνθρωπο καὶ τὸν κόσμον του. Εἶναι ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ ἰδίου τοῦ Θεοῦ που ἀρχικὰ δόθηκε στὴ δημιουργία. Εἶναι ἡ πνευματικὴ ζωὴ.

Δεν πρέπει νὰ σκεφτόμαστε τὴν πνευματικὴ ζωὴ τῆς Εκκλησίας ὡς κάποιο ἰδιαίτερα ἰδιαίτερο εἶδος «θρησκευτικῆς ζωῆς» διαφορετικῆς ἀπὸ τὴν ἴδια τὴ ζωὴ ὅπως τὴν ἔχουμε λάβει στὴ δημιουργία μας ἀπὸ τὸν Θεό. Δεν ὑπάρχουν «δύο ζωές», μία «φυσικὴ» καὶ μία «θρησκευτικὴ». Ὑπάρχει μόνο μία ζωὴ που εἶναι πραγματικὴ, γνήσια καὶ ἀληθινὴ. Εἶναι ἡ ζωὴ με τὸν Θεό, ἡ ζωὴ τῆς Εκκλησίας. Οποιαδήποτε ἄλλη ζωὴ δεν εἶναι καθόλου ζωὴ: εἶναι ἡ οδὸς τοῦ θανάτου.

Αὐτό που διαφοροποιεῖ τὴ ζωὴ τῆς Εκκλησίας ἀπὸ τὴ ζωὴ «αὐτοῦ τοῦ κόσμου», που ὀνομάζεται ἐπίσης ζωὴ «κατὰ σάρκα», εἶναι μόνο τὸ κακὸ καὶ ἡ ἀμαρτία. Ὅλα τὰ θετικὰ εἶναι κτιστὴ ζωὴ, τὴν ὁποία ὁ Θεὸς ἔχει ὀνομάσει «καλὴ... πολὺ καλὴ», εἶναι αὐτό που σώζεται καὶ ἀγιάζεται στὴ ζωὴ τῆς Εκκλησίας. Μόνο τὸ ψεῦδος καὶ ἡ ἀνομία ἀποκλείονται, σίγουρα ὄχι ἡ ἴδια ἡ δημιουργία.

Στὴν Ορθόδοξη παράδοση, ἡ Εκκλησία ὀνομάζεται Βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ στὴ γῆ, «ἡ ἀναδημιουργία τοῦ κόσμου» (Ἅγιος Γρηγόριος Νύσσης, 4ος αἰ., Περί τῶν Ἀσμάτων). Στὴν Καινὴ Διαθήκη ὀνομάζεται ἐπίσης «καινὴ κτίσις» (Β' Κορινθίους 5:17), τὸ Σῶμα καὶ Νύμφη τοῦ ἰδίου τοῦ Χριστοῦ (Ρωμ. 12:5· Α' Κορινθίους 12:27· Εφεσ. 5:23 κ.ε.· Αποκ. 21:1 κ.ε.).

... Ὁ Θεὸς ἔθεσε τὰ πάντα κάτω ἀπὸ τὰ πόδια τοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ Τὸν ἔκανε κεφαλὴ πάνω ἀπὸ ὅλα γιὰ τὴν Εκκλησία, ἡ ὁποία εἶναι τὸ σῶμα Του, τὸ πλήρωμα Ἐκείνου που πληροῖ τὰ πάντα σὲ ὅλους (Α' Τιμ. 3:15).

Ὁ Απόστολος Παῦλος ἀναφέρεται ἐπίσης στὸν «οἶκο τοῦ Θεοῦ, που εἶναι ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ ζωντανοῦ Θεοῦ, ὁ στύλος καὶ τὸ προπύργιο τῆς ἀλήθειας» (Α' Τιμ. 3:15).

Ἡ γνήσια ζωὴ, ἡ ἀληθινὴ καὶ πραγματικὴ ζωὴ σὲ τελειότητα καὶ ἀφθονία, βρίσκεται μόνο στὴν Εκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Οἱ ἄνθρωποι που δεν εἶναι τυπικὰ μέλη τῆς Εκκλησίας ζοῦν ἀληθινὰ καὶ γνήσια μόνο στο βαθμὸ που ἀκολουθοῦν τὸν νόμο τοῦ Θεοῦ «γραμμμένο στις καρδιές τους» ἀπὸ τὸ Πνεῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ κατὰ τὴ δημιουργία (Ρωμ. 1:12-16), ὁ ὁποῖος εἶναι ὁ ἴδιος νόμος που ἀποκαλύφθηκε καὶ δόθηκε σαφῶς στὸν Χριστὸ καὶ τὴν Εκκλησία. Καὶ αὐτοὶ οἱ ἄνθρωποι που εἶναι τυπικὰ μέλη τῆς Εκκλησίας ζοῦν ἀληθινὰ καὶ γνήσια μόνο στο βαθμὸ που ζοῦν πραγματικὰ τὴ ζωὴ τῆς Εκκλησίας. Διότι ὑπάρχει τὸ θλιβερό γεγονός ὅτι κάποιος μπορεῖ νὰ εἶναι τυπικὰ μέλος τῆς Εκκλησίας καὶ νὰ ζεῖ σύμφωνα με τὸν νόμο τῆς σάρκας, τὸν νόμο τῆς ἀμαρτίας καὶ τοῦ θανάτου, καὶ ὄχι τοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ἡ πνευματικὴ ζωὴ, ἐπομένως, συνίσταται στο νὰ ζοῦμε πραγματικὰ τὴ ζωὴ τῆς Εκκλησίας.

## TAX FORM REQUEST

To cut down on printing and postage of unwanted documents, please contact the church office  
by phone at 717-741-4200  
or email ([annunciationyorkpa@gmail.com](mailto:annunciationyorkpa@gmail.com))  
if you would like an end of year  
statement for tax purposes.

We can forward one to you via email or mail.



Για να περιορίσετε την εκτύπωση και την  
ταχυδρομική αποστολή ανεπιθύμητων εγγράφων,  
επικοινωνήστε με το γραφείο της Εκκλησίας  
τηλεφωνικά στο 717-741-4200  
ή email ([annunciationyorkpa@gmail.com](mailto:annunciationyorkpa@gmail.com))  
εάν θέλετε μια δήλωση τέλους έτους  
για φορολογικούς σκοπούς.  
Μπορούμε να προωθήσουμε ένα  
σε εσάς μέσω email ή μέσω ταχυδρομείου.

## ADULT GREEK DANCE CLASSES

# ADULT GREEK DANCE CLASSES

STARTS TUESDAYS 7PM-8PM  
JANUARY 13,20,27, 2026  
FEBRUARY 3,10,17, 2026



KALAMATIANO  
TSAMIKO  
IKARIOTIKO  
PENTOZALI  
ZEBEKIKO  
KRITIKI SOUSTA

COST \$50 - STEWARDS  
\$100 -NON STEWARDS

ALL ARE WELCOME

*To Register call or email the church office  
717-741-4200 or [annunciationyorkpa@gmail.com](mailto:annunciationyorkpa@gmail.com)*

*\*Payment due before or on the 1st day of class\**

*Cash or checks payable to "Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation"*



## MEMORIAL CANDLES

*Honor your passed loved one by purchasing a  
white devotional candle that will be lit on  
Holy Saturday during the Resurrection Service  
\$10 per candle*



*Τιμήσετε την μνήμη του αγαπημένου σας προσώπου αγοράζοντας ένα  
λευκό ευλαβικό κερί που θα αναφτεί το μεγάλο Σάββατο κατά τη  
διάρκεια της Λειτουργίας της Ανάστασης  
\$10 το κερί*

*Your Name:*

*In Memory of :*

*Number of candles: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \_\_\_\_\_*

*\*One candle per individual please, \$10 each\**

*Mail Checks to: Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation 2500 Pine Grove Rd - York, PA 17403*

## EASTER CARD

## Community Pascha Card - Κοινοτική Πασχαλινή Κάρτα

*It's that time of year when we as a Community come together and share our warm Pascha wishes through a Community Easter Card*



*Είναι αυτή η στιγμή του χρόνου που μοιραζόμαστε τις θερμές πασχαλινές ευχές μας μέσω της Πασχαλινής Κάρτας*

*\*\* Minimum Donation: Individual/Family \$25, Δωρεά \$25 \*\**

*\*\*Your donation will benefit our Camp Scholarship Program\*\**

***\*\* NO later than Sunday, March 8, 2026 -Προθεσμία Κυριακή, 8 Μαρτίου 2026 \*\****

*Make checks payable to :  
Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation*

***Thank you for your generous support! Σας ευχαριστούμε για την υποστήριξή σας!***

*Your Name/Όνομα: \_\_\_\_\_*

*Name as you would like it to appear in the Paschal Card*

*Το όνομά σας όπως θα θέλατε στην κάρτα*

*Please print clearly - Εκτυπώστε καθαρά*

## EASTER LILY DONATIONS



*Easter Lily Donations*  
*\$30 per plant*

*For those interested in making a donation to decorate the Narthex and Sanctuary for Pascha, please fill out the information below...*

*Deadline to order is: Sunday, March 30th*

*Please contact the office at 717-741-4200 or*

*Email: [annunciationyorkpa@gmail.com](mailto:annunciationyorkpa@gmail.com) with any questions or to place your order*

*We thank you for your support!*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

In Memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

For The Health of: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of plants: \_\_\_\_\_ Total: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail Checks to:  
Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation  
2500 Pine Grove Rd - York, PA 17403

## EASTER DONATIONS

The Great Lent and Easter Season is approaching quickly and once again  
we are asking for your contributions and donations towards  
the adornment of our Church during the Lenten and Pascha season.  
Your continuous support and generosity is greatly appreciated!

### Salutations to the Virgin Mary (4 icons) - \$60 each

Feb 27th \_\_\_\_\_ March 6th - **DONATED** March 13th \_\_\_\_\_ March 20th \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_ Flowers for the Sunday of Orthodoxy Icon - \$60
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flowers for the St. Gregory Palamas Icon - \$60
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flowers for the Veneration of the Holy Cross Icon - \$60
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flowers (loose) for Veneration of the Holy Cross - \$70
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flowers for the Annunciation Icon **DONATED**
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flower border for Annunciation Icon on Iconostasion **DONATED**
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flower border for Annunciation Icon in Narthex **DONATED**
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flowers for the St. John Climacus Icon - \$60
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flowers for the Akathist Hymn Icon - \$60
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flowers for the St. Mary of Egypt Icon - \$60
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flowers for the Saturday of Lazarus Icon - \$60
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flowers for the Palm Sunday Icon - \$150
- \_\_\_\_\_ (2) Altar Flowers in mache vases for Palm Sunday - \$150
- \_\_\_\_\_ Palms for Palm Sunday Crosses & Palm décor for Church - \$350
- \_\_\_\_\_ Vayia (bay leaves) for Palm Sunday & Holy Saturday morning - \$250
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flowers for the Bridegroom Icon **DONATED**
- \_\_\_\_\_ Potted plants for Bridegroom service - \$120
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flowers for the Last Supper Icon - \$60
- \_\_\_\_\_ Twelve candles for Twelve Gospels, Holy Thursday - \$120
- \_\_\_\_\_ Wreath for the Crucifixion - \$120
- \_\_\_\_\_ Flowers for the Crucifixion Icon - \$150
- \_\_\_\_\_ Potted flowers for Crucifixion (12 plants- \$120



## EASTER DONATIONS

Η περίοδος της Μεγάλης Σαρακοστής και του Πάσχα πλησιάζει  
και για άλλη μια φορά σας ζητάμε δωρεές για τον στολισμό της Εκκλησίας μας  
κατά την περίοδο της Σαρακοστής και του Πάσχα.  
Σας ευχαπριστούμε για τη γενναιοδωρία και υποστήριξή σας!

- \_\_\_ Flowers for the Apokathelosis Icon **DONATED**
- \_\_\_ Flowers for the Kouvouklion - \$2,500 / 25 donations of \$100 each
- \_\_\_ Rose Petals for Kouvouklion - \$60
- \_\_\_ Flowers for the Myrrh-Bearers Icon (April 11th morning) - \$60
- \_\_\_ Ruscus greenery garland for Iconostasion/Altar - \$200
- \_\_\_ (2) Altar Flowers in mache vases for Resurrection service - \$150
- \_\_\_ Flowers for the Resurrection Banner **DONATED**
- \_\_\_ Flowers for the Resurrection Icon **DONATED**
- \_\_\_ Wreath for the Resurrection **DONATED**
- \_\_\_ Flower border for the Christ icon for Iconostasion– Resurrection - \$130
- \_\_\_ Priest's Anastasi Candle and Incense - \$350
- \_\_\_ Altar Anastasi Candle - \$250
- \_\_\_ Flower border for the Christ Icon in Narthex - \$130
- \_\_\_ Flowers for the Theotokos of the Life-giving Spring Icon - \$60
- \_\_\_ Flowers for the St. Thomas Icon **DONATED**
- \_\_\_ Flowers for the Feast Day of St. George Icon **DONATED**
- \_\_\_ General Donation

Please call or email the Church office ASAP  
if you are interested in donating.

717-741-4200 OR [annunciationyorkkpa@gmail.com](mailto:annunciationyorkkpa@gmail.com)

Please indicate if your donation is "In Memory of" or "Health of" someone

**Items for donation are fulfilled VERY FAST!**

Thank you for your generosity!

# JANUARY 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				<b>1</b>  <b>Feast Day of St. Basil</b> 8:30 am Orthros 9:45 am Divine Liturgy Office Closed	<b>2</b> Office Closed	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b> <b>Sunday Before Epiphany</b> 8:30 am Orthros 9:45 am Divine Liturgy -Vasilopita Cutting	<b>5</b> Eve of Theophany Royal Hours 8:30am Vespers Divine Liturgy w/ Blessing of Waters 6:30pm	<b>6</b>  <b>Holy Theophany</b> 8:30 am Orthros 9:45 am Divine Liturgy	<b>7</b>  <b>Synaxis of John the Baptist</b> 8:30 am Orthros 9:45 am Divine Liturgy	<b>8</b> <b>Choir Rehearsal</b> 5pm-6pm	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b> <b>Sunday After Epiphany</b> 8:30 am Orthros 9:45 am Divine Liturgy - Philoptochos Meeting	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> <b>Parish Council Meeting</b> 6:30pm	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> <b>Choir Rehearsal</b> 5pm-6pm	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>  <b>St. Anthony the Great</b> 8:30 am Orthros 9:45 am Divine Liturgy
<b>18</b>  <b>12th Sunday of Luke</b> <b>Sts. Athanasios &amp; Cyril</b> 8:30 am Orthros 9:45 am Divine Liturgy	<b>19</b> <b>Martin Luther King Jr. Day</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> <b>Choir Rehearsal</b> 5pm-6pm	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b>  <b>15th Sunday of Luke</b> <b>St. Gregory the Theologian</b> 8:30 am Orthros 9:45 am Divine Liturgy	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> <b>Choir Rehearsal</b> 5pm-6pm	<b>30</b>  <b>Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs</b> 8:30 am Orthros 9:45 am Divine Liturgy	<b>31</b>

# Ιανουάριος 2026

Κυρ	Δευ	Τρι	Τετ	Πεμ	Παρ	Σαβ
				<b>1</b>  <b>Αγίου Βασιλείου</b> 8:30 πμ Όρθρος 9:45 πμ Λειτουργ.  Γραφείο Κλειστό	<b>2</b> Γραφείο Κλειστό	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b> Κυριακή πριν Θεοφάνεια 8:30 πμ Όρθρος 9:45 πμ Λειτ.  -Κοπή της Βασιλόπιτας	<b>5</b> Παραμονή των Θεοφανίων Βασιλικές Ωρες 8:30 πμ Εσπερινή Λειτουργία με Αγιασμό 6:30 μμ	<b>6</b>  <b>Αγ. Θεοφάνεια</b> 8:30 πμ Όρθρος 9:45 πμ Λειτουργ.  Μέγας Αγιασμός	<b>7</b>  <b>Αγ. Ιωάννου του Προδρόμου</b> 8:30 πμ Όρθρος 9:45 πμ Λειτουργ.	<b>8</b> Πρόβα Χορωδία 5μμ-6μμ	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b> Κυριακή μετά τὰ Φωτα 8:30 πμ Όρθρος 9:45 πμ Λειτ.  - Φιλόπτωχος Συνάντηση	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b> Ενοριακό Συμβούλιο 6:30pm	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> Πρόβα Χορωδία 5μμ-6μμ	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>  <b>Αγ. Αντωνίου του Μέγα</b> 8:30 πμ Όρθρος 9:45 πμ Λειτουργ.
<b>18</b>  <b>Κυριακή ΙΒ' Λουκά</b> Αγ. Αθανασίου και Κυρίλλου 8:30 πμ Όρθρος 9:45 πμ Λειτ.	<b>19</b> Martin Luther King Jr. Day	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> Πρόβα Χορωδία 5μμ-6μμ	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b>  <b>Κυριακή ΙΕ' Λουκά</b> Αγ. Γρηγορίου του Θεολόγου 8:30 πμ Όρθρος 9:45 πμ Λειτ.	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> Πρόβα Χορωδία 5μμ-6μμ	<b>30</b>  <b>Των Τριών Ιεραρχών</b> 8:30 πμ Όρθρος 9:45 πμ Λειτουργ.	<b>31</b>

## PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES

### **Parish Council Meeting: November 5, 2025**

**Present:** Father Andrew Tsikitas, Deacon Tom Shelley, Lola Lamnatos, Maria Skouras, Pete Harmantzis, Dr. Nick Agapis, Chris Barakos, Nick Barakos, Toli Vainas, Roula Skouras.

**Absent:** George Karanicolas, Kelly Sheasley, Terry Koutsokostas.

#### **1. Prayer and Father's Opening Remarks**

- The meeting began at 6:35pm with a prayer by Father Andrew. He reported that he is still trying to secure substitutes for when he is on sabbatical. Wanted to know what are expectations are as far as office hours, availability outside of church services, etc. Also need to know about housing. Right now they are looking into retired clergy, possibly from Northern Maryland.
- The Greek School Teacher attended the meeting to discuss the Greek School Program and the low attendance this year. She also reported that she did have a program scheduled for October 28 but many parents could not attend with their children therefore it was cancelled. There are plans on doing Christmas program along with the students from Sunday school on December 21st .

#### **2. Approval of Minutes for October 8, 2025**

- A motion was made by Pete H. to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Chris B. and the minutes were approved.

#### **3. President's Report**

- To be covered under social committee updates and new business.

#### **4. Treasurer's Report**

- Kelly reviewed the account balances. We will put \$50,000 into a 12 month CD, and the \$102,000 existing CD that is matured will be renewed for another 12 months.

#### **5. Grounds & Maintenance**

- The caulking of the windows in the church is supposed to start this week, not sure which day.
- Pete spoke to Bortner about getting the AC units serviced and getting a maintenance plan, he is waiting on a quote for each. Will also get a quote for installing radiators in the foyer as previously discussed.

#### **6. Food Festival Update**

- The October festival sales were down about 5% from last October, we think it is due to the festival being later in the month when other events were happening.
- Email reminders were sent out for the first time (209). Received many positive comments through the POS system, Square. Social media activity was up again.
- Some issues that came up were: the loukoumades containers not closing properly, some customer's sides for their sandwiches were missing, and some sandwiches were mixed up (beef, pork, chicken).
- Plan on adding online ordering for large orders (over \$150) in February. Also plan on having a schedule for people to work the registers at the next festival. Volunteers for this job must be at least 16 years old.
- Many commented on what a wonderful job Mike Rosario did as a greeter.
- Future festival dates: 2/20/26-2/22/26 and 9/25/26-9/27/26.

#### **7. Stewardship Committee & Social Committee Update**

- GOYA will be using the assembly room on 11/15 for a Friendsgiving gathering, anyone 12 years old and up is invited to attend.
- We were asked to host another GOYA tournament in 2027 and will work on getting that scheduled.
- Many GOYANS willingly participated in the October 28th program and would like to continue to participate in holiday programs, including the Christmas program and March 25th .
- Ann Marie S. volunteered to drive the kids to camp in her van, 8 have signed up to go. We will cover the cost of gas and a hotel room.
- The annual St. Nicholas breakfast will be on 12/7.



## PARISH COUNCIL MINUTES

### **Parish Council Meeting: November 5, 2025 Cont.**

#### **7. Stewardship Committee & Social Committee Update, Con't**

- The annual Woman's Dinner will be on 12/3 at The Great American Saloon.
- Lola will be purchasing tickets for the movie David, which will be showing on 12/21 at 5pm at Regal Cinema. She will prepurchase 25 and get 25 free for whoever would like to sign up to attend.
- HOPE/JOY had a movie night which was a great success.
- We are close to having a social committee, a meeting will soon be scheduled.
- Lancaster will be hosting the Senior Luncheon this year, Ann Marie has volunteered to drive anyone who is not able to drive. The luncheon is scheduled for 12/8.
- The Philoptochos fundraiser luncheon is this Sunday, please consider attending or making a donation.

#### **8. Tech and Security Update**

- There will be a fob available for whoever is on narthex duty to carry with them in case of an emergency, they would have to press and hold the button on the fob. The same may be done at any alarm panel if it is within reach.

#### **9. Old Business**

- Marble Restoration: we are still looking for someone who would be able to do this.
- Window Sealing in the Church: waiting to schedule a time for the work to be done.
- Moving Dishwasher: no updates
- Chair Lift: instructions on how to use have been placed in a binder in the narthex.
- Heat in the foyer: waiting on a quote from Bortner.

#### **10. New Business**

- The narthex duty list was distributed.
- Candles: the shipping cost to return the old used candles has increased again, and we are only getting about \$50 per year for doing this. We have to store the old candles until they are picked up once a year, therefore it was agreed that we just throw them away instead. We also got samples of some new candles that are less expensive but not as sturdy as the current candles, to test them out this week before we decide whether or not to switch to them.
- We will use Doceo to print our Christmas and Easter cards, they are less expensive than our current printers and also much closer. Will also look into getting prices from them for the festival flyers and envelopes when needed.
- Adult Dance classes have been scheduled for 1/13/26. Class will be on Tuesdays from 7pm to 8pm. The cost will be \$50 for members and there will be 6 weeks of classes.
- HOPE/JOY ornament day will be on 12/20 at noon.
- The social hall will be rented out for a baptism/reception on 4/25/26 at 4pm.
- The following parish council member terms will be up and they are up for re-election: Lola L, Kelly S, Chris B, Nick B and Pete H.

**Next meeting scheduled for Monday, December 8th, 2025 at 6:30pm.**

**The meeting ended at 8:20 pm with a prayer by Father Andrew.**

## PHILOPTOCHOS COOKBOOK

The Philoptochos Ladies are creating a new cookbook for our congregation.  
We need everyone's assistance in sharing your best recipes.  
The cookbook will have all recipes in both Greek and English

**RECIPE CARD** **PHILOPTOCHOS COOKBOOK**

**CATEGORY** **RECIPES IN GREEK AND ENGLISH**  
ΣΥΝΤΑΓΕΣ ΣΤΑ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΑ ΚΑΙ ΑΓΓΛΙΚΑ

**PREP TIME** \_\_\_\_\_  
**COOK TIME** \_\_\_\_\_  
**SERVES** \_\_\_\_\_

**DETAILS**

**Categories / Κατηγορίες**

- Appetizers / Ορεκτικά
- Salads / Σαλάτες
- Soups / Σούπες
- Main Meals / Κύρια Πιάτα
- Desserts / Γλυκίσματα
- Lenten / Νηστίασμα

**INGREDIENTS**

**DIRECTIONS**

Drop off recipes in church office  
or email by February 1, 2026  
janshelly58@gmail.com OR  
Philoptochosyork@gmail.com

Αφήσετε συνταγές στο γραφείο  
ή στείλετε με email  
πριν 1 Φεβρουαρίου, 2026  
janshelly58@gmail.com  
Philoptochosyork@gmail.com

Please follow these guidelines:

1) Recipes can be submitted in Greek or English.

2) Title: Need to have a name for the recipe.

Submit your name, both first and last name with the recipe title.

\*You may submit a recipe in “memory of a loved one” who taught you how to make the dish.

\*For example write by the title of the recipe: “in memory of Voula Katz”

3) Servings: List the number of people the recipe can feed.

4) Ingredient List: List all the ingredients in order of use with measurements.  
(such as tablespoons, ounces, cups, etc)

5) Preparation Time, Cooking Time, Total:

6) Step by step instructions: Include how long to cook and/or bake the recipe.

If you have any questions please contact:

Diakonissa Jan Shelley 717-880-0888 or Maria Skouras 717-793-7948.

Recipes can be submitted to the Philoptochos Mailbox in the office or email to philoptochosyork@gmail.com

## STEWARD UPDATE- ΑΝΑΠΡΟΣΑΡΜΟΓΗ ΟΙΚΟΝΟΜΩΝ, 2025 (AS OF DEC 18TH)

Dr & Mrs George Agapis	Ms Hrisoula Hioutis	Mr Demetrios Masgalas	M/M John Sterns
M/M John Agapis	M/M William Hondos	Dr Tassia Masgalas	M/M Thomas Stratis
Dr & Mrs Nicholas Apagis	M/M Florin Ionescu	Mr Tony Masgalas	M/M Alexandros Sullivan
Dr & Mrs Steven Agapis	M/M Phillip Kapsalis	M/M Thomas Meligakes	Mr Charley Talbert & Mrs Anna Papayannis
Mr Mitchell Angelos	M/M Nicholas Karageorgos	M/M Constantine Minetos	Mr George Touras
M/M Vasilios Anstine	Mr Vasilios Karageorgos	Ms Alisa Nicoara	M/M George Triantafyllou
M/M Anthony Anstine	Ms Irini Karambas	Dr & Mrs Nick Pandelidis	Ms Evgenia Tsaganis
Ms Anita Asimos	M/M George Karandrikas	Dr & Mrs Steven Pandelidis	Ms Kiriaki Tsaganis
Ms Lynnette Aughenbaugh	M/M George Karanicolas	M/M Dimos Papageorgiou	Father Andrew Tsikitis & Presvytera Katherine
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*Enter into the joy of your lord." - Matthew 25:21*



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Sunday, January 25th 4:00 PM  
 Games & contests for ALL ages!

**Diloti** **Backgammon** **Connect 4**  
+ ...and many more!

**Grab your friends & family — it's time to play!**  
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