



# The O Logos

Issues 7 & 8 - July/August 2017

The official newsletter publication for the  
parish of Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox  
Church of Elgin, Illinois

## Have a Blessed Summer

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# THE ORTHODOX WORD

*Official Publication of Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church*

**Reverend Father Andrew G. Karamitos, Ekonomos**

**Deacon Zacharias Zaharis, Lay Deacon**

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**Please visit us at - [www.st-sophia.com](http://www.st-sophia.com)**

## Schedule of Religious Services

**Sunday Orthros Service: 8:00 am**

**Sunday Divine Liturgy: Immediately following Orthros**

**Weekday Orthros: 8:00 am**

**Weekday Divine Liturgy: Immediately following Orthros**

**Vespers Service: 7:00 p.m.**

## Parish Council 2017

### **Officers:**

**Mr. George Karas, President**

**Mr. Daniel Savas, Vice President**

**Mrs. Maria Jensen, Secretary**

**Mrs. Chrysoula Zannis, Treasurer**

**Mrs. Juliana Mourelatos, Assist.**

**Secretary**

**Mr. Peter Capps, Assist. Treasurer**

### **Members:**

**Mr. Spero Argyris**

**Mr. Jim Boytor**

**Mr. Joseph Calash**

**Mr. Kosta Caribacas**

**Mr. Tasos Kalamaras**

**Mr. George Kyriazis**

**Mr. Art Sbarounis**

## St. Sophia Education

### Sunday Church School

**Mrs. Janice Novick, Director**

**Mrs. Karen Karas, Music Director**

### Pericles Greek School

**Mr. Kosta Caribacas, Committee Chairman**

**Mrs. Anna Panagiotopoulos, Director**

## St. Sophia Organizations & Officers

### **Administrative Assistant**

**Mrs. Matina Caribacas**

### **Ladies Philoptochos Society**

**Mrs. Pat Kolodziej**

### **Youth Ministry**

**Ms. Natalie Wians, Director**

### **Stewardship**

**Mr. Spero Argyris**

### **Chanters**

**Mr. Jim Karonis**

**Mr. Harry Giannaris**

### **Choir**

**Mr. George St. Georges**

### **Golden Circle**

**Mrs. Andrea Karthan**

### **Agape Dance Troupe**

**Mr. Dimitri Kouretas**

## Scheduled Meeting Times

**Parish Council: 3rd Monday, Monthly - 6:45 pm - 7pm**

**Church School: Immediately Following Holy Communion**

**Hope: Wednesdays, Weekly - 9:30am**

**Faith~JOY~Jr GOYA & GOYA: Please Refer to Calendar for Dates**

**Pericles Greek School: Saturdays, 9am - 12:30pm**

**Agape Dance Troupe: Please refer to your email.**

**Golden Circle: Please Refer To Calendar for Dates ~ 11am**

# Ecclesiastical Calendar

## JULY- 2017 - ΙΟΥΛΙΟΣ

SUNDAY	KYPIAKH	JULY 2	4TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW – Δ' KYPIAKH TOY MATΘAIOY 8:00 ORTHROS, DIVINE LITURGY FOLLOWING ORTHROS EPISTLE: HEB. 9:1-7, GOSPEL: MATT. 8:5-13
SUNDAY	KYPIAKH	JULY 9	5TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW - Ε' KYPIAKH TOY MATΘAIOY 8:00 AM ORTHROS, FOLLOWED BY THE DIVINE LITURGY EPISTLE: ROMANS 10:1-10, GOSPEL: MATTHEW 8:28-34; 9:1
SUNDAY	KYPIAKH	JULY 16	6TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW - ΣΤ' KYPIAKH TOY MATΘAIOY 8:00 AM ORTHROS, 9:15 A.M. DIVINE LITURGY EPISTLE: TITUS 3:8-15, GOSPEL: MATTHEW 5:14-19
SUNDAY	KYPIAKH	JULY 23	7TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW - Ζ' KYPIAKH TOY MATΘAIOY 8:00 AM ORTHROS, FOLLOWED BY THE DIVINE LITURGY EPISTLE: ROM. 15:1-7, GOSPEL: MATTHEW 9:27-35
SUNDAY	KYPIAKH	JULY 30	8TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW – Η' KYPIAKH TOY MATΘAIOY 8:00 AM ORTHROS, FOLLOWED BY THE DIVINE LITURGY EPISTLE: 1 COR. 1:10-17, GOSPEL: MATTHEW 14:14-22

## AUGUST - 2017 - ΑΥΓΟΥΣΤΟΣ

SUNDAY	SUNDAY	AUG. 6	TRANSFIGURATION - ΜΕΤΑΜΟΡΦΩΣΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ 9TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW - Θ' KYPIAKH TOY MATΘAIOY 8:00 AM ORTHROS, FOLLOWED BY THE DIVINE LITURGY EPISTLE: 2 PETER 1:10-19, GOSPEL: MATTHEW 17:1-9
MONDAY	ΔΕΥΤΕΡΑ	AUG. 7	PARAKLESIS SERVICE 6:00 P.M. - ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΣΙΣ 6:00 M.M.
WEDNESDAY	ΤΕΤΑΡΤΗ	AUG. 9	PARAKLESIS SERVICE 6:00 P.M. - ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΣΙΣ 6:00 M. M.
SUNDAY	SUNDAY	AUG.13	10TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW - Ι' KYPIAKH TOY MATΘAIOY 8:00 AM ORTHROS, FOLLOWED BY THE DIVINE LITURGY EPISTLE: 1 COR. 4:9-16, GOSPEL: MATTHEW 17:14-23
TUESDAY	ΤΡΙΤΗ	AUG. 15	DORMITION OF THEOTOKOS - ΚΟΙΜΗΣΙΣ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ 8:00 ORTHROS, DIVINE LITURGY FOLLOWING ORTHROS EPISTLE: PHIL. 2:5-11, GOSPEL: LUKE 10:38-42, 11:27-28
KYPIAKH	KYPIAKH	AUG. 20	11TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW - ΙΑ' KYPIAKH TOY MATΘAIOY 8:00 AM ORTHROS, FOLLOWED BY THE DIVINE LITURGY EPISTLE: 1 COR. 9:2-12, GOSPEL: MATTHEW 18:23-35
KYPIAKH	KYPIAKH	AUG. 27	12TH SUNDAY OF MATTHEW - ΙΒ' KYPIAKH TOY MATΘAIOY 8:00 AM ORTHROS, FOLLOWED BY THE DIVINE LITURGY EPISTLE: 1 COR. 15:1-11, GOSPEL: MATTHEW 19:16-26

## JULY 2017 EVENTS

Wednesday, July 12, 2017  
Greek Fest set-up

Saturday, July 15, 2017  
Greek Fest '17

Monday, July 17, 2017  
Parish Council 6:30 p.m

Thursday, July 13, 2017  
Greek Fest set-up

Sunday, July 16, 2017  
Greek Fest '17

Friday, July 14, 2017  
Greek Fest '17

Monday, July 17, 2017  
Greek Fest Clean-up

## AUGUST 2017 EVENTS

Monday, August 21, 2017  
Parish Council 6:30 p.m

Monday, August 28, 2017  
Philoptochos Board mtg 7:00 pm

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### *Ask Father.....*

**Q. I have read in some evangelical Protestant books that, unless you give 10% of your income to the Church, God won't bless you. This seems to be an Old Testament ideology contrary to the spirit of the Gospels, in which God demands our love and not our offerings.**

I have no credit cards, no car payment, no cable television, and no retirement fund. I rent a small apartment, support two children who live with me, and pay child support for two others who do not. After I am done paying rent, utilities, student loans, the orthodontist, etc., I am left with far less than 10% of my take home pay, out of which has comes gas, food, and bare essentials for my children. I simply can't afford to give 10% unless I stop paying rent, paying child support, or buying food, etc.

Yet I have read that I must still give 10%, and that God will take care of the rest, and that if I do not do this, I will always struggle financially and will not be blessed. This does not seem right, yet I feel guilty that I am not able to

contribute, even though I know that I have little to give.

**A. 1. While tithing—giving 10% of our financial resources, or “treasures”**

— is an Old Testament imperative, it certainly is not inappropriate for Christians to set aside a tithe, or percentage of their income, for God's work. If one can contribute 10%, then let him or her do so; if one can contribute more, then let him or her do so. But if one can only contribute a smaller percentage, then let him or her do so, making no comparisons with others, and as a sign of thanksgiving for the blessings God has bestowed.

2. What is crucial is the fact that God indeed expects us to give of our treasures for His work. Your observation, that “God demands our love and not our offerings,” is not consistent with what is revealed in the New Testament, where it is clearly stated that “where your heart is, there also will be your treasure.” Further, the model for giving to the work of God through His Church is found in the story of the widow's mite.



A rich man enters the temple and offers his tithe—10%—which fulfills the Old Testament “law,” with little regard for the spirit behind the law; he gives not out of love, but out of duty and pride, and he could well afford to offer even more, given his means. Meanwhile, a poor widow enters the temple and offers two coins—hardly a great sum of money, but it was the sum total of all that she possessed. Our Lord praised her, rather than the rich man who fulfilled the “law” by offering 10%, for she gave all that she had, expecting nothing in return, and surely not expecting to be praised by others.

3. The principle found herein is that we must recognize that all we have is a gift from God, that we are called to be wise “stewards,” or “managers,” of His gifts, and that ultimately, we must give all that we have to Him. This does not mean that we are to ignore our own needs. To the contrary, we are urged to offer a portion of our treasures to God and to set aside our gift to God through His Church before paying our other expenses. Whether this represents 5%, or 10%, or 20% is a secondary matter; the point is to give the “first portion” of what we have for God’s work, as did Able, who offered the first portion and the best portion of his harvest to God, unlike his brother Cain, who offered God his “leftovers.”

4. You mention that you have read certain things in evangelical Protestant books on tithing. Some things found in some evangelical writings are not exactly consistent with the teaching and practice of the Orthodox Christian faith. I know from personal experience,

and from the experiences of many other Orthodox Christians who have committed themselves to “first portion giving,” that God indeed blesses us if we give willingly and joyfully. Yet I also know that some [but not all, certainly] evangelical Protestants preach what is known as the “Gospel of prosperity”—that by giving a tithe, God will bless us with material wealth, and that material wealth is, in fact, a sign of being blessed by God. This is not “THE Gospel,” and Our Lord Himself warns against “laying up treasures here on earth.” Giving of our treasures out of the desire to acquire material goods, rather than out of pure, simple, and innocent love is hardly Christian. Some [but not all] TV preachers who proclaim the “Gospel of prosperity” and live lavish lifestyles, projecting themselves as icons of God’s blessings as evidenced by their wealth, are hardly preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. I know of at least two mega-churches that require their members to submit their tax forms in order to calculate the precise 10% tithe that they are then expected to give—a practice that violates the very principle of giving in secret, not letting the right hand know what the left hand is doing.

5. There indeed are a number of Orthodox Christian resources which talk about “first portion giving,” about setting aside a percentage of our income for the Church before tackling the the phone bill, the orthodontist bill, or the car payment. If you visit the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese web site, [Goarch.org](http://Goarch.org), and visit the Stewardship tab, you will find resources on Christian stewardship and first-portion giving. Here you will find a number of resources that discuss how we are to

be stewards/managers of God's gifts, recognizing that, ultimately, everything we have belongs to God, and that we can only offer back to Him that which He has given us, as we say in the Liturgy: "Thine own of Thine own, we offer unto Thee, in behalf of all and for all."

6. The bottom line is this: God does expect us to give; it is not an "option" for Christians, any more than prayer and fasting and almsgiving and worship are options or personal preferences. Our Lord says, "when you give," "when you fast," "when you pray," not "if" you give, fast, and pray. He expects us to offer to Him first, not after we have satisfied our personal needs and bills. He does demand our love, as you note, but He expects us to reveal our love in concrete ways—one of which is by returning to Him a portion of the gifts with which He has blessed us. And, I might add, that this does not only involves our treasures, but our time and talents as well, for these are also gifts from God. Hence, in addition to offering of our financial resources, we are expected to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the sick and imprisoned, and minister to "the least of the brethren," recognizing in others the very image and icon of our Savior Himself. If we are of limited material means, we should still give something, while also giving all the more generously of our time and talents to minister to others through the Church—and I don't know an Orthodox parish that is not constantly looking for volunteers to do everything from teaching Sunday School to collecting food and clothing for the needy or ministering to the homeless or battered or forgotten or visiting the parish shut-

ins, to name just a few essential ministries entrusted to all of God's people, and not just the clergy. And, as Christ clearly spells out, we are expected to give of our time, our talents, and our treasures joyfully, not worrying about what others may or may not be doing, nor with the intention of being "seen" or "lauded" by others. We are taught that Our Lord is the only one Who needs to see our compassion and charity and generosity, whether they be offering our time, our talents, or our money; it is for His sake, and His sake alone, that we do these things, that in all things "God may be glorified," as Saint Paul writes.

Is it not possible, despite your limited income, to set aside a portion of your resources for the Church before setting aside money for rent and food and the orthodontist? As Christ challenges us, look at the birds of the air

— do they worry about how they will eat; and to look at the lilies of the field—even Solomon in his finest garb could not compare to the beauty in which they have been clothed by their Creator. So too, setting aside \$20, or \$40, or even \$100 weekly or monthly—or even just two coins, if that is all we have—before setting aside money for other things may at first be a bit difficult or awkward, but it is consistent with what we are taught by Jesus Christ. And those who do this find that they still have plenty left over for themselves. As a priest, I have never met anyone who has gone bankrupt because they have given to the Church! And I have met plenty who, in thanksgiving for how God spares us, have made the commitment to give Him more than their "spare change."

# Η ΜΕΤΑΜΟΡΦΩΣΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ

Αν μελετήσουμε με προσοχή τα Ιερά Ευαγγέλια θα διαπιστώσουμε πως οι μαθητές του Κυρίου φωτίζονταν σταδιακά και κατανοούσαν το τι ήταν πραγματικά ο Διδάσκαλός τους. Έπρεπε να απαλλαγούν από τις λαθεμένες περί Μεσσία ιουδαϊκές προσδοκίες και να οδηγηθούν στην επίγνωση του Υιού του Θεού. Σε αυτό συνέβαλλε ουσιαστικά ο Κύριος με τις κατ' ιδίαν διδασκαλίες Του, τα θαύματά Του, τις συζητήσεις. Σε αυτή την προοπτική εντάσσεται και το γεγονός της Μεταμορφώσεως.

Λίγο πριν το πάθος Του ο Κύριος κάλεσε τους μαθητές Του και τους ρώτησε τι λέγει ο κόσμος γι' Αυτόν, αλλά και τι πιστεύουν και αυτοί για Εκείνον. **«Τίνα με λέγουσιν οι όχλοι είναι; Οι δε αποκριθέντες είπον' Ιωάννην τον Βαπτιστήν, άλλοι Ηλίαν, άλλοι δε ότι προφήτης τις των αρχαίων ανέστη. Είπε δε αυτοίς' υμείς δε τίνα με λέγετε είναι;»** (Λουκ.9,18-19). Ο ενθουσιώδης Πέτρος εξ' ονόματος των έντεκα ομολόγησε ευθέως στον Χριστό: **«Συ ει ο Χριστός ο Υιός του Θεού του ζώντος»** (Ματθ.16,16). Αυτή η σωτήρια ομολογία χαροποίησε ιδιαίτερα τον Κύριο, ο Οποίος τους διαβεβαίωσε πως πάνω σε αυτή την πίστη και την ομολογία για το πρόσωπό Του θα οικοδομηθεί η Εκκλησία Του.

Έξι ημέρες μετά από αυτό το γεγονός ο Χριστός θέλοντας να στηρίξει έτι περισσότερο την πίστη τους, εν όψει του πάθους Του και του σταυρικού Του θανάτου, πήρε του τρεις πρόκριτους μαθητές Του Πέτρο, Ιάκωβο και Ιωάννη και ανέβηκαν σε κάποιο υψηλό βουνό, το οποίο η χριστιανική παράδοση ταυτίζει με το όρος Θαβώρ, που υψώνεται περήφανο πάνω από την μαγευτική πεδιάδα Εσδρελών, σαν μια τεράστια πυραμίδα, στα όρια της χώρας Ζαβουλών και Νεφθαλείμ. Η ώρα της αναβάσεως ήταν εσπέρα, πιθανότατα Σαββάτου, σύμφωνα με την περιγραφή του Ευαγγελιστή Λουκά (9,32). Όταν έφτασαν στην κορυφή ο Κύριος ενώ προσεύχονταν μεταμορφώθηκε ενώπιον των τριών μαθητών Του. Το πρόσωπό Του έλαμψε ως ο ήλιος και τα ενδύματά Του έγιναν στιλπνά και λευκά σαν το χιόνι (Μάρκ.9,3). Ταυτόχρονα περιβλήθηκε αίγλη ουράνιας υπερφυσικής λαμπρότητας, σαν το χιόνι, σαν το πιο λαμπρό φως που είχαν αντικρίσει ποτέ, σαν την πιο φωτεινή αστραπή.

Την ίδια στιγμή, άλλο παράδοξο και θαυμαστό θέαμα είδαν τα μάτια τους. Δύο μεγάλες σεπτές μορφές της Παλαιάς Διαθήκης φάνηκαν εκατέρωθεν του Ιησού, ο Μωϋσής και ο Ηλίας, **«οφθέντες εν δόξη»** (Λουκ.9,31). ως εκπρόσωποι του Νόμου και των Προφητών, να συνομιλούν με Αυτόν για τα μέλλοντα, που θα συνέβαιναν στα Ιεροσόλυμα, όπου ήταν ο τελικός προορισμός Του (Λουκ.9,31).

Οι μέγιστες αυτές μορφές είχαν αποχωρήσει από τον κόσμο κατά τρόπον μυστηριώδη. Ο Μωυσής απέθανε και κανείς δεν είδε το θάνατό του, ούτε τον τάφο του (Δευτ.34,6). Ο Ηλίας δεν γεύτηκε θάνατο, διότι ο Θεός τον μετέστησε με πύρινο άρμα στον ουρανό ζώντα (Δ'Βασ.2,11). Το ίδιο μυστηριωδώς εμφανίστηκαν και πάλι στο όρος της Μεταμορφώσεως. Σύμφωνα επίσης με την Παλαιά Διαθήκη οι δυο αυτές μεγάλες προσωπικότητες είχαν την ύψιστη τιμή να δουν τη δόξα του Θεού ενώ ζούσαν. Ο Μωυσής στο όρος Σινά **«εισήλθεν εις τον γνόφον, ου ην ο Θεός»** (Εξοδ.20,21). Ο Ηλίας είδε την δόξα του Θεού στην **«φωνήν αύρας λεπτής»** (Γ'Βασιλ.19,12). Οι μαθητές έτρεφαν, ως πιστοί ισραηλίτες μεγάλη εκτίμηση σε αυτούς, διότι ο Μωυσής ήταν ο νομοθέτης του Ισραήλ και ο Ηλίας ο μέγιστος των προφητών. Τους ανεγνώρισαν προφανώς από τον διάλογό τους με τον Κύριο.

Ο ιερός Λουκάς μας λέγει πως την ώρα εκείνη της ουράνιας φωτοχυσίας ο Πέτρος και οι άλλοι δύο μαθητές **«ήσαν βεβαρημένοι ύπνω' διαγρηγορήσαντες δε είδον την δόξαν αυτού και**



τους δύο άνδρας τους συνεστώτας αυτώ» (Λουκ.9,32). Το παράδοξο θέαμα τους συντάραξε κυριολεκτικά. Η ευτυχία που ένοιωθαν ήταν απερίγραπτη. Δεν ήθελαν με κανένα τρόπο να διαταραχθεί εκείνη η μακάρια κατάσταση. Γι' αυτό μόλις είδαν να αποχωρούν οι δυο αρχαίοι άνδρες, ο Πέτρος παρακαλεί τον Ιησού να μείνουν για πάντα εκεί! **«Επιστάτα, καλον εστιν ημάς ώδε είναι' και ποιήσωμεν σκηνάς τρεις, μίαν σοι και μίαν Μωυσεί και μίαν Ηλία»** (Λουκ.9,33). Είναι χαρακτηριστικό το γεγονός πως για τους εαυτούς τους δεν ζητούν κατάλυμα, αλλά τους αρκεί η συγκλονιστική κατάσταση που βίωναν. Όμως συνεχίζει ο ιερός ευαγγελιστής **«μη ειδώς ο λέγει»**, συνεπαρμένος από την θεία ηδονή δεν ήξερε τι έλεγε. Ξαφνικά, ενώ έλεγαν αυτά, συνέβη και άλλο παράδοξο φαινόμενο. **«Εγένετο νεφέλη και επεσκίασεν αυτούς' εφοβήθησαν δε εν τω εκείνους εισελθείν εις την νεφέλην' και φωνή εγένετο εκ της νεφέλης λέγουσα' ούτος εστιν ο υιός μου ο αγαπητός' αυτού ακούετε»** (Λουκ.9,35). Ο Θεός Πατέρας από τον ουρανό επιβεβαίωνε για και ακόμα φορά, την θεία υιοθεσία! Η ουράνια φωνή που ακούστηκε μέσα από την φωτεινή νεφέλη προξένησε τέτοιο φόβο στους μαθητές, ώστε αυτοί έπεσαν πρηγείς στην βουνίσια χλόη και δεν μπορούσαν να σηκώσουν το κεφάλι από τη γη. **«Εν τω γενέσθαι την φωνήν ευρέθη ο Ιησούς μόνος, και αυτοί εσίγησαν»** (Λουκ.9,36). Η παράδοξη οπτασία είχε λήξει, η φωτεινή νεφέλη είχε διαλυθεί και οι ουράνιοι επισκέπτες είχαν εξαφανιστεί. Ο Χριστός ενδεδυμένος πλέον την συνήθη μορφή Του, ενθαρρύνοντας τους σαστισμένους και φοβισμένους μαθητές Του τους είπε: **«Εγέρθητε και μη φοβείσθε»**(Ματθ.17,8).

Εν τω μεταξύ είχε περάσει και η νύκτα και οι πρώτες ακτίνες του ηλίου έκαμαν την εμφάνισή τους στο όρος της Μεταμορφώσεως. Τίποτε δεν θύμιζε πια την συγκλονιστική νύχτα και μόνο οι ψυχές των μαθητών ήταν πλημμυρισμένες από θαυμασμό και θεία έκσταση. Ενώ κατηφόριζαν το δρόμο της επιστροφής ο Χριστός τους παρακάλεσε να μην αναφέρουν σε κανέναν το γεγονός, **«έως ου ο υιός του ανθρώπου εκ νεκρών αναστή»**(Ματθ.17,9, Μάρκ.9,9). Κοινοποίηση του γεγονότος στον ευρύτερο κύκλο των μαθητών θα προκαλούσε σύγχυση διότι δεν ήταν ακόμη ικανοί να κατανοήσουν τα μυστήρια του Θεού. Πολλώ δε μάλλον στον αμαθή όχλο, διότι θα προκαλούσε άκαιρους ενθουσιασμούς και θα έβλαπτε το υπόλοιπο έργο Του.

Οι τρεις μαθητές πράγματι διαφύλαξαν την εντολή του Κυρίου, μόνο που τους βασάνιζε το ερώτημα: **«τι έστι το εκ νεκρών αναστήναι»** (Μάρκ.9,10). Δεν μπορούσαν να καταλάβουν την ανάσταση του Δασκάλου τους, αφού είχαν την εσφαλμένη αντίληψη ότι **«ο Χριστός μένει εις τον αιώνα»** (Ιωάν.12,3) ως ο κραταιός εγκόσμιος βασιλεύς του Ισραήλ. Επίσης τους προβλημάτιζε το γεγονός της εμφανίσεως του Ηλία, διότι γνώριζαν πως η δεύτερη εμφάνισή του στον κόσμο σημαίνει την έλευση του Μεσσία και την αρχή της βασιλείας του (Μαλαχ.4,5). Αναρωτιόνταν, γιατί να μην κηρύξουν τα καλά νέα της ελεύσεως του Μεσσία και της βασιλείας του; Δεν άντεξαν και ρώτησαν τον Κύριο: **«τι ουν οι Γραμματείς λέγουσιν, ότι Ηλίαν δει ελθείν πρώτον;»** (Ματθ.17,10). Ο Χριστός τους απάντησε πως ο Ηλίας πράγματι ήδη ήλθε, αλλά οι Γραμματείς δεν τον ανεγνώρισαν και τον κακοποίησαν, όπως θα κακοποιήσουν και τον Υιό του Ανθρώπου. Οι μαθητές κατάλαβαν ότι τελικά μιλούσε για τον Ιωάννη τον Βαπτιστή, ο οποίος υπήρξε όμοιος στο θάρρος και στην πίστη με τον μεγάλο προφήτη.

Μετά την Ανάσταση οι τρεις μαθητές κατανόησαν το μεγάλο γεγονός της θείας Μεταμορφώσεως, όταν είδαν ξανά τον Κύριο δοξασμένο. Διηγήθηκαν στους υπόλοιπους αποστόλους την φοβερή οπτασία. Οι δύο μάλιστα από αυτούς κατέγραψαν στις επιστολές τους την συγκλονιστική εμπειρία της Μεταμορφώσεως του Κυρίου. Ο απόστολος Πέτρος στην Β' Καθολική Επιστολή του έγραψε τα εξής: **«Εγνωρίσαμεν υμίν την του Κυρίου ημών Ιησού**

Χριστού δύναμιν και παρουσίαν... επόπται γενηθέντες της εκείνου μεγαλειότητος, λαβών γαρ παρά Θεού Πατρός τιμήν και δόξαν φωνής ενεχθείσης αυτώ τοιάδε υπό της μεγαλοπρεπούς δόξης, ούτος εστιν ο υιός μου ο αγαπητός, εις ον εγώ ευδόκησα' και ταύτην την φωνήν ημείς ηκούσαμεν εξ ουρανού ενεχθείσαν, συν αυτώ όντες εν τω όρει τω αγίω» (Β'Πετρ.1,16-19). Ο απόστολος Ιωάννης στην αρχή του ευαγγελίου του αναφέρει ότι «εθεασάμεθα την δόξαν αυτού, δόξαν ως μονογενούς παρά πατρός, πλήρης χάριτος και αληθείας» (Ιωάν.1,14), αναφερόμενος προφανώς στο γεγονός της θείας Μεταμορφώσεως. Επίσης στην Α' Καθολική Επιστολή του υπαινίσσεται την εμπειρία της Μεταμορφώσεως του Κυρίου γράφοντας ότι «αύτη εστίν η επαγγελία ην ακηκόαμεν απ αυτού και αναγγέλλομεν υμίν, ότι ο Θεός φως εστι» (Α' Ιωάν.1,5).

Ο Κύριος ημών Ιησούς Χριστός είναι ο Υιός και Λόγος του Θεού, το «απαύγασμα της δόξης και χαρακτήρ της υποστάσεως αυτού, φέρων τε τα πάντα τω ρήματι της δυνάμεως αυτού» (Εβρ.1,3). Ο αιώνιος και άναρχος Θεός, ο «ήν εν αρχή προς τον Θεόν» και «Πάντα δι' αυτού εγένετο, και χωρίς αυτού εγένετο ουδέ εν ο γέγονεν» (Ιωάν.1,2-3).

Αυτός χάριν της σωτηρίας του ανθρωπίνου γένους «σάρξ εγένετο και εσκήνωσεν εν ημίν» (Ιωάν.1,14). Έγινε, συνάμα με τη θεία Του φύση, αληθινός και τέλειος άνθρωπος, δηλαδή Θεάνθρωπος, για να είναι σύμφωνα με τους Πατέρες της Εκκλησίας μας, η σωτηρία μας πραγματική και βεβαία. Ταπείνωσε τόσο πολύ το θεανδρικό Του πρόσωπο, ώστε ήρθε στον κόσμο ως ένας άσημος άνθρωπος. Το ίδιο άσημος έζησε σε ολόκληρη την επί γης ζωή Του. Καταδέχτηκε και βίωσε την ανθρωπινή κακοδαιμονία στο έπακρο.

Όταν άρχισε τον δημόσιο βίο Του κάλεσε με απλότητα τους συνεργάτες Του αποστόλους, για να τον πλαισιώσουν στο έργο της σωτηρίας του κόσμου. Το ίδιο άσημοι υπήρξαν και αυτοί. Όλοι τους ήταν ολιγογράμματοι ψαράδες της Γεννησαρέτ. Οι ισχυροί και οι σοφοί του κόσμου ήταν γεμάτοι με έπαρση και άρα ακατάλληλοι να συμβάλλουν στο έργο της σωτηρίας του κόσμου.

Οι μαθητές του Κυρίου δεν ήταν απαλλαγμένοι από την ιδιότυπη εθνικιστική πίστη των υπολοίπων Ιουδαίων για τον Μεσσία. Τον περίμεναν ως έναν εθνικό κραταιό ηγέτη, προικισμένο με υπερφυσικές ιδιότητες, ο οποίος θα ανάσταινε τον ένδοξο θρόνο του Δαβίδ και θα εγκαθιστούσε παγκόσμιο βασίλειο με συγκυβερνήτες τον «περιούσιο λαό»! Αυτό ήταν και το μεγαλύτερο σκάνδαλο του Χριστού απέναντι στο ιουδαϊκό έθνος!

Μέσα στα ιερά Ευαγγέλια έχουμε σαφείς μαρτυρίες και εκδηλώσεις των μαθητών αυτής της περιέργης πίστεως. Τρανταχτό παράδειγμα η περίπτωση των υιών Ζεβεδαίου, οι οποίοι λίγο πριν το πάθος του Ιησού του ζητούσαν πρωτοκαθεδρίες στην μελλοντική βασιλεία Του (Ματθ.20,17-28). Επίσης ακόμα και μετά την ανάσταση το σύνολο των μαθητών «συνελθόντες επηρώτων αυτόν λέγοντες' Κύριε, ει εν τω χρόνω τούτω αποκαθιστάνεις την βασιλείαν τω Ισραήλ;» (Πράξ.1,6). Ο Κύριος δεν παρέλειπε σε κάθε περίπτωση να τους δώσει να καταλάβουν ότι σφάλλουν και πως ο ίδιος δεν ήρθε στον κόσμο, να κυριαρχήσει, ούτε να διακονηθεί αλλά «διακονήσαι και δούναι την ψυχή Του λύτρον αντί πολλών» (Ματθ.20,28).

Το σπουδαιότερο γεγονός, το οποίο ανέτρεψε την λαθεμένη αντίληψη των κορυφαίων μαθητών για το Χριστό και το έργο Του υπήρξε η θεία Μεταμόρφωση. Είναι ασφαλώς μια προσπάθεια να απαγκιστρωθούν, τουλάχιστον οι κορυφαιοί απόστολοι, από τις παχυλές μικροεθνικιστικές αντιλήψεις, να μνηθούν στα μυστήρια του Θεού και να γίνουν μάρτυρες της θείας δόξας. Μόνο χάρη σε αυτή την συγκλονιστική εμπειρία θα μπορούσαν να αντιμετωπίσουν τη μεγάλη δοκιμασία και το σκάνδαλο του σταυρού. Μόνο έτσι δεν θα λύγιζαν μπροστά στο πάθος και τον θάνατο του Χριστού. Μόνο έτσι θα μπορούσαν να πιστέψουν στην ανάσταση του Κυρίου, διότι



Εκείνος που μεταμορφώθηκε μπροστά τους και περιβλήθηκε την θεία δόξα θα μπορούσε να αναστηθεί από τους νεκρούς!

Το λαμπρό γεγονός της Μεταμορφώσεως του Κυρίου μας έχει επίσης και άλλες σπουδαίες διδακτικές παραμέτρους. Οι άγιοι Πατέρες της Εκκλησίας μας άντλησαν από αυτό σπουδαίες αλήθειες της χριστιανικής μας πίστεως. Η Ορθόδοξη θεολογία μας έχει αφιερώσει ολόκληρα κεφάλαια στο μεγάλο και θαυμαστό αυτό γεγονός και αντλεί θεμελιώδεις αλήθειες από αυτό.

Η προσωπική μεταμόρφωση του Θεανθρώπου Κυρίου μας, αποτελεί τον προάγγελο και της δικής μας μεταμορφώσεως. Αυτό μας το βεβαιώνει ο αληθής λόγος του Κυρίου μας: **«ημείς δε οι πάντες ανακεκαλυμμένω προσώπω την δόξαν Κυρίου κατοπτριζόμενοι την αυτήν εικόνα μεταμορφούμεθα από δόξης εις δόξαν, καθάπερ από Κυρίου Πνεύματος»** (Β' Κορ.3,18). Όλοι οι πιστοί του Χριστού, ως **«συμμόρφους της εικόνας» του Θεού** (Ρωμ.8,29), θα μεταμορφωθούμε και εμείς και θα συνδοξασθούμε με Αυτόν. Τόσο μεγάλο είναι το μέγεθος της φιλανθρωπίας του Θεού, Οποίος τόσο πολύ μας αγαπά, ώστε θέλει να μας χαρίσει μέρος της δικής Του δόξας!

Τα ιερά Ευαγγέλια αναφέρουν πως μαζί με το πρόσωπο Κυρίου μεταμορφώθηκαν και τα ενδύματά Του και έγιναν **«στίλβοντα, λευκά λίαν ως χιών, οια γναφεύς επί της γης ου δύναται ούτω λευκάναι»** (Μαρκ.9,3). Αυτό σημαίνει πως μαζί με μας τους υιούς του Θεού (Ρωμ.8:14) θα μεταμορφωθεί και ολόκληρη η δημιουργία. Ο απόστολος Παύλος τονίζει σαφέστατα την μελλοντική της μεταμόρφωση. **«Και αυτή η κτίσις ελευθερωθήσεται από της δουλείας της φθοράς εις την ελευθερίαν της δόξης των τέκνων του Θεού»** (Ρωμ.8,21). Η ιερά Αποκάλυψη, το ευαγγέλιο του τελικού θριάμβου της Εκκλησίας μας, ομιλεί για την εσχατολογική δημιουργία καινούριου ουρανού και καινούριας γης, διότι **ο «πρώτος ουρανός και η πρώτη γη απήλθον»** (Αποκ.21,1). Η παράδοση εμφάνιση του Μωυσή και του Ηλία κατά την μεταμόρφωση του Κυρίου επιβεβαιώνει περίτρανα την χριστιανική πίστη στην μετά θάνατον ζωή. Ο Μωυσής είχε ζήσει περισσότερα από χίλια τριακόσια χρόνια πριν από την γέννηση του Κυρίου και ο Ηλίας πάνω από οκτακόσια. Και όμως εμφανίστηκαν ζωντανοί μπροστά στους έντρομους και δύσπιστους μαθητές **«συλλαλούντες τω Ιησού»** (Μαρκ.9,4). Ο ίδιος ο Κύριος είχε πει πως ο Θεός **«ούκ έστιν ο Θεός Θεός νεκρών, αλλά ζώντων»** (Ματθ.22,33). Με την ζωφόρο ανάστασή Του έγινε **«πρωτότοκος εκ των νεκρών»** (Κολ.1,18, Αποκ.1,5), απαρχή της αναστάσεως όλων των πιστών σε Αυτόν ανθρώπων, καθότι **«δει το φθαρτόν τούτο ενδύσασθαι αφθαρσίαν και το θνητόν τούτο ενδύσασθαι αθανασίαν... κατεπόθη ο θάνατος εις νίκος»** (Α' Κορ.15,54). Αυτή είναι η πιο χαροποιός και ελπιδοφόρα πίστη της ανθρωπότητας!

Για την ορθόδοξη πνευματικότητα η Μεταμόρφωση του Κυρίου έχει ιδιαίζουσα σημασία. Στα βυζαντινά χρόνια τέθηκε ως πρόκληση από την δυτική αιρετική σχολαστική θεολογία κατά πόσον μπορεί ο άνθρωπος να προσεγγίσει και να βιώσει την θεία δόξα. Οι αιρετικοί δυτικοί υποστήριζαν πως η δόξα και το φως της Μεταμορφώσεως ήταν κτιστό φυσικό φως, μετεωρολογικό φαινόμενο, διότι εντελώς αυθαίρετα ταύτιζαν την ουσία με τις ενέργειες του Θεού. Αντίθετα οι ορθόδοξοι Πατέρες με προεξάρχοντα τον άγιο Γρηγόριο τον Παλαμά (1296-1359) στηριζόμενοι στην αγία Γραφή και την παράδοση της αρχαίας Εκκλησίας έκαμαν την διάκριση μεταξύ ουσίας και ακτίστων ενεργειών του Θεού και αποφάνθηκαν πως το φως και η δόξα της θείας Μεταμορφώσεως ήταν φάνερωση του ακτίστου θείου φωτός και των ακτίστων ενεργειών του Θεού. **Ο άνθρωπος μπορεί με την χάρη του Θεού και τον δικό του προσωπικό αγώνα να φτάσει να δει και να γίνει μέτοχος αυτού του ακτίστου φωτός και της δόξας του**

**Θεού και από αυτή τη ζωή.** Πρόκειται για το γνωστό πνευματικό κίνημα των Ησυχασμού, το οποίο μεσουράνησε τον 14<sup>ο</sup> αιώνα και το οποίο συντέλεσε στην αποκρυστάλλωση του ορθόδοξου δόγματος και την ανάπτυξη περαιτέρω της πνευματικότητας.

Για τον ορθόδοξο πιστό ο Θεός είναι «ψηλαφητός» δια των ακτίστων ενεργειών Του, διότι γινόμενος αποδέκτης και μέτοχός των βιώνει οντολογικά την ύπαρξη του Θεού. Δε χρειάζεται λογικές αποδείξεις για την ύπαρξή Του επειδή ο εσωτερικός του κόσμος είναι πλημμυρισμένος από τις άκτιστες θείες ενέργειες, οι οποίες του δημιουργούν μια απίστευτη πνευματική πληρότητα. Του είναι τόσο οικείος ο Θεός, όσο οι φυσικοί συγγενείς του! Μόνο στην ορθόδοξη πρακτική ο Θεός χαρακτηρίζεται ως πατέρας με τη βιβλική και χριστιανική έννοια, απαλλαγμένη από κάθε είδους συμβολισμών και εικόνων. Για τον ορθόδοξο πιστό ο Θεός είναι ο στενός συγγενής του, το δικό του αγαπητό πρόσωπο που μπορεί να το εμπιστευτεί και να του αναθέσει τη ζωή του, χωρίς να αίρεται η από μέρους του η συναίσθηση της υπέρτατης διαφοράς με το Δημιουργό του. Αυτό βεβαιώνεται ξεκάθαρα στο γεγονός της θείας Μεταμορφώσεως. Οι δύο προφήτες και οι τρεις απόστολοι στο θαβώριο όρος μετέχοντες των ακτίστων ενεργειών του μεταμορφωθέντος Κυρίου, αισθάνονταν ιδιαίτερα οικείοι με Εκείνον και ταυτόχρονα αναγνώριζαν τη διαφορετική τους φύση.

Η αιρετική σχολαστική δυτική διδασκαλία περί ταυτίσεως της ουσίας και των ενεργειών του Θεού συσσωρεύσε ανυπέρβλητα προβλήματα στις σχέσεις του ανθρώπου με το Θεό. Το φως της θείας Μεταμορφώσεως εκλαμβάνεται ως φυσικό κτιστό φως, όπως κτιστές εκλαμβάνονται και όλες οι ενέργειες του Θεού προς τον κόσμο. Αυτό πρακτικά σημαίνει πως ο άνθρωπος δε μετέχει του Θεού σε καμιά περίπτωση και άρα είναι ολότελα ξένος Αυτού. Η μόνη «μετοχή» του ανθρώπου με το Θεό είναι η δια του νου αναζήτησή Του. Αυτό υπήρξε η αφετηρία όλων των συγχρόνων κακοδοξιών κατά της ορθής πίστεως του Θεού. Οι τερατώδεις παπικές και προτεσταντικές περί Θεού αντιλήψεις δημιούργησαν ένα απίθανο ψηφιδωτό απαράδεκτων νοητικών εικόνων Του. Αυτό όπως είναι γνωστό, οδήγησε στην άρνηση της υπάρξεως του Θεού και ακόμη στη φρικτή δογματική θεώρηση του «θανάτου του Θεού», από τον παράφρονα εκπρόσωπο της ευρωπαϊκής διανόησης Νίτσε!

Το γεγονός της θείας Μεταμορφώσεως του Κυρίου πρέπει να καταυγάζει την ψυχή μας κάθε στιγμή της ζωής μας. Είναι ανάγκη να συνειδητοποιήσουμε ότι ο φιλόανθρωπος Θεός μας, εξαιτίας της άμετρης αγάπης Του για μας, μας δίνει το ύψιστο δικαίωμα να μετέχουμε και αυτής της ίδιας της δόξας Του, διότι εμείς οι πιστοί χριστιανοί δεν είμαστε οπαδοί θρησκείας, όπως οι οπαδοί άλλων θρησκειών, αλλά υιοθετημένα παιδιά του Θεού, μέτοχοι της θείας μακαριότητάς Του! Αυτή την μεγάλη τιμή δε θα τη συναντήσουμε σε καμιά άλλη πίστη. Γι' αυτό είναι ανάγκη να απαγκιστρωθούμε από τα σκύβαλα του κόσμου (Φιλιπ.3,8), να παραδώσουμε τον εαυτό μας στα χέρια του Θεού και να έχουμε οδηγό στη ζωής μας τον αιώνιο νόμο Του. Τότε το άκτιστο θαβώρειο φως θα καταυγάζει πλέρια την ψυχή μας, καθ' όλη τη διάρκεια της ακανθώδους επί γης πορείας μας και θα μας οδηγήει ασφαλώς στην σωτηρία, στην αιώνια ζωή και στη θέωση!

## ***FALLING ASLEEP OF THE THEOTOKOS***

***During the first 15 days of August, our Holy Orthodox Church commemorates the Falling Asleep of the Theotokos, the Mother of God on August 15<sup>th</sup>.***

***On August 4<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm, the Paraclesis Service will be chanted for the health of all those seeking intercession prayers.***

***At the end of this article please find the form which you may submit the names of your loved ones.***

Concerning the Dormition of the Theotokos, this is what the Church has received from ancient times from the tradition of the Fathers. When the time drew nigh that our Savior was well-pleased to take His Mother to Himself, He declared unto her through an Angel that three days hence, He would translate her from this temporal life to eternity and bliss. On hearing this, she went up with haste to the Mount of Olives, where she prayed continuously. Giving thanks to God, she returned to her house and prepared whatever was necessary for her burial. While these things were taking place, clouds caught up the Apostles from the ends of the earth, where each one happened to be preaching, and brought them at once to the house of the Mother of God who informed them of the cause of their sudden gathering. As a mother, she consoled them in their affliction as was meet, and then raised her hands to Heaven and prayed for the peace of the world. She blessed the Apostles, and, reclining upon her bed with seemliness, gave up her all-holy spirit into the hands of her Son and God.

With reverence and many lights, and chanting burial hymns, the Apostles took up that God-receiving body and brought it to the sepulcher while the Angels from Heaven chanted with them and sent forth her who is higher than the Cherubim. But one Jew, moved by malice, audaciously stretched forth his hand upon the bed and immediately received from divine judgment the wages of his audacity. Those daring hands were severed by an invisible blow. But when he repented and asked for forgiveness, his hands were restored. When they reached the place called Gethsemane, they buried there with honor the all-immaculate body of the Theotokos, which was the source of Life. But on the third day after the burial, when they were eating together, and raised up the artos (bread) in Jesus' Name, as was their custom, the Theotokos appeared in the air, saying "Rejoice" to them. From this they learned concerning the bodily translation of the Theotokos into the Heavens.

These things the Church has received from the traditions of the Fathers, who have composed many hymns out of reverence, to the glory of the Mother of our.

# Paraklesis of the Theotokos

August 4<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup>, 2017

For the Health of:

[illegible]

For the Health of:

[illegible]



# *The Perfect Plus Sign*

A father was driving his young daughter to pre-school. As they passed the local church the little girl asked, "Daddy, why is there a big plus sign on top of that house?"

Don't you just love the symbolism? Isn't the Cross of Christ the Perfect Plus Sign? Which reminds me of the story about a priest and a rabbi who are playing golf together for the first time. The rabbi soon discovers that the priest is an excellent putter. He also notices that before putting, the priest always makes the sign of the Cross. Halfway through the course, the rabbi is losing by ten strokes. And so he asks the priest if he thinks it will be all right if he too crosses himself. "Sure rabbi, go ahead," the priest says. "But it won't do you any good unless you also learn how to putt."

Indeed, for Christians, the Cross of Christ is our perfect plus sign. But it won't do us any good until we learn how to translate that most precious symbol of our faith into life. We cannot grow in the faith unless we learn how to translate our good intentions, into genuine, loving deeds.

Several years ago, in an interview, a well-known member of the clergy said that some of the meanest people he knew could quote the Bible forward and backward. "They are familiar with the facts," he said, "but they have never been able to translate fact into life." Once, Jesus speaks to a large crowd of followers and would-be followers about this very problem. He says, "Anyone who does not carry his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." To those assembled, this was a clear and direct call to action. And for us, this is a clear and direct call to translate mere words, into loving deeds.

The Evangelist Mathew clearly describes Jesus' life ministry in terms of His care and

concern for those who are victims of neglect. It is Jesus who touches lepers. It is Jesus who embraces and kisses the children, the orphans. It is Jesus who loves the sinners who are rejected by the self-righteous. It is Jesus who dies for the least among God's children, without exception. It is Jesus who tells the crowds; do not follow the example of the Scribes and Pharisees. Their words are bold but their deeds are few. "They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but will they lift a finger to help them? Not they" (Mt.23: 3-5).

Being Jesus' disciples means that we voluntarily accept the cost of discipleship's day-in and day-out dedication to hard work. It means we must be willing to do the heavy lifting in loving service to others. We need to remember that Jesus turned away many people who were not willing to pay the price-- not willing to report for work, each and every day.

People came to Jesus because they wanted the benefits. They wanted the healing, they wanted the excitement, and they wanted the comfort that came with discipleship. But when they began to make excuses for avoiding the inconveniences, the sacrifice, the hard work, the need to carry their crosses, Jesus simply said "No!"

He didn't say Go and do whatever else it is that you have to do and then we'll talk about following Me. Rather, He said, No! This is not for you. You're not ready for this.

No one is forced to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. You and I are free to accept His call or reject it. But when we accept it, part of the cost •• often the most expensive part -- is the matter of following in His footsteps by giving ourselves to others. Picking up our cross and doing for others,



even when it hurts. But, miracle of miracles, it is in the doing that we discover that this way of life-- this "Blue-Collar Christianity"-- is the most glorious life possible. And if some of us are not harvesting the blessed fruits of this Good Life in Christ, it's because we're following Him at too great a distance. Consequently, our view of what the Christian way of life is all about remains dim •• even grim.

However near, or however far from the Lord Jesus we may be at this moment, hopefully we're here today trying to close the distance. We're here to take a closer walk with the Lord. We're here to see Him more clearly. We're here to love Him more dearly. We're here to focus on the true meaning of Christian discipleship and, in the process, to discover the true meaning of our journey through life.

Jesus goes on to say, "If any man comes to Me without hating his father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters, yes and his own life too, he cannot be My disciple" (Lk. 14-26).

Understood in full Biblical context, the word hate as it is used here really means to love less. Jesus is saying, in effect, if you want to experience the glory of genuine discipleship, and if you want to experience life-enhancing relationships with your father, mother, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, and all others •• your love for them must be less than your love for God. Or perhaps better put, in order to be My genuine disciple, your life cannot be centered on other human persons •• not even your father, not even your brother or sister, not even your son or daughter, not even your husband or wife.

Millard Fuller, the founder of Habitat for Humanity, was a millionaire by the age of twenty-nine. He could buy his wife anything she possibly could want, he thought. But one day he came home to discover that she had left him. Millard

went searching for her and found her on a Saturday night in a hotel in New York City. They talked into the wee hours of the next morning as she poured out her heart and made him see that she wasn't interested in the things he was buying her. Her heart was empty and her spirit was burned out, she explained. She was dead inside and she wanted to live again. Kneeling at their bedside in that hotel room, Millard and Linda made a radical decision. They decided to sell everything they had and dedicate themselves to serving poor people and working for justice for the oppressed. The next day they found a church and went in to worship and thank God for their new beginning. They got to church early, met with the minister, and told him about what had happened and the decision they had made. To their surprise, the minister told them that such a radical decision was not really necessary. "He told us that it was not necessary for us to give up everything," Millard said. "He just didn't understand that we weren't giving up money and the things that money could buy. We were giving up a whole way of life that was killing us."

For all of us, there comes a time when we must give up the things that are killing us, and focus on the life-affirming work of loving others. But it is only because God has loved us first that we have the power to love other persons. Apart from God there is no true love. And if we truly love God, we cannot fail to love other persons, all other persons. If we truly love God we must be willing to give up everything, in a sense, and pick up our cross and follow him!

For Christians, the Cross of Christ is our perfect plus sign. But it won't do us any good until we learn how to translate this most precious symbol of our faith into life. In order to grow fully in the faith, we must translate our good intentions, into genuine, loving deeds.

**ΠΑΝΗΓΥΡΙΣ ΤΗΣ  
ΑΓΙΑΣ ΣΟΦΙΑΣ και των τριων ΘΥΓΑΤΕΡΩΝ,  
ΠΙΣΤΕΩΣ, ΑΓΑΠΗΣ και ΕΛΠΙΔΟΣ  
(Προστατιδες της Αγιας Εκκλησιας μας)**

**16, ΣΕΠΤΕΜΒΡΙΟΥ, 2017**

Μεγας Εσπερινος – στας 7:00μ.μ.

**17, ΣΕΠΤΕΜΒΡΙΟΥ, 2017**

Ορθρος και Θεια Λειτουργια – στας 9:00π.μ.



**Feast Day of Saint Sophia  
and Her Three Daughters,  
Faith, Hope and Love**

(Patron Saints of our Church)

**September 16, 2017**

Great Vespers at 7:00pm

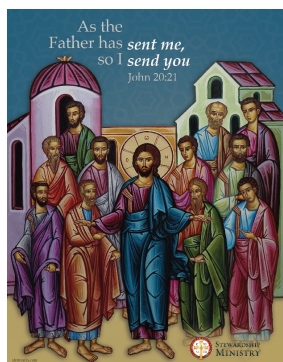
**September 17, 2017**

Orthros and Divine Liturgy begin at 9:00am

***Interstate 90 east or west to exit 31 north, 1<sup>st</sup> traffic light make left***

# What is Christian Stewardship?

July ~ August 2017



***Christian Stewardship is...***

...learning how to be a responsible and concerned caretaker of Christ's Church; it is learning how to enjoy Church life and be happy in Church work., for in Her dwells the fullness of the Spirit of God.

...our active commitment to use all our time, talent and treasure for the benefit of humankind in grateful acknowledgment of Christ's redeeming love.

...caring for the needs of others.

...offering one's self to God as He offered Himself to us.

...what a person does after saying "I believe...", as proof of that belief.

...devotion and service to God and His Church as persons, as families, as diocese/metropolis, as national Church and as Church universal.

## **Welcome**

**The Community of St. Sophia would like to welcome the following  
new stewards to our church family:**

**Susan Anderson-Kleif  
John Michael and Stephanie Bender  
Katherine Cappas  
Angela Garris  
Nicholas Kouretas  
Kathryn LaMantia  
Nicholas Lutsch  
Kosta Metropulos  
David Miner  
Zachary and Elaine Trella**

## **Financial Snapshot**

• 2017 Operational Budget.....	\$562,916
• Pledged.....	\$238,837
• Received.....	\$159,105
• Number of Stewards.....	252

***~ Please remember to submit your pledge commitment for 2017 ~***



# Philoptochos News

By: Kathleen Katrakis

## Congratulations to our new Philoptochos President and Board Members!!

President: Pat Kolodziej  
 1st Vice-President: Anna Panagiotopoulos  
 2nd Vice-President: Irene Arsoniadis  
 Recording Secretary: Juliana Mourelatos  
 Treasurer: Matina Caribacas  
 Asst. Treasurer: Vivian Baxter  
 Corresponding Sec: Karen Karas  
 Advisor: Polly Gorski

Board Members: Siree Bakakos  
 Peggy Boytor  
 Vasiliki Constantine  
 Artemis Kamaris  
 Kathleen Katrakis  
 Koula Magdalin  
 Georgia Sotos

May God bless our new Philoptochos President and new Board as they continue to fulfill the mission of Philoptochos in doing God's Work!

## SUMMER = GREEK FEST OPA!



### Greek Fest Baking

#### 2017 Greek Fest Baking Schedule:

- Tuesday, June 20th ---3:00 pm Diples
- Wednesday, July 5th--9:00 am Variety
- Thursday, July 6th -- 2:30 pm Koulouria
- Monday, July 10th --- 9:00 am Baklava
- Wednesday, July 12th---9:00 am Packaging

**NO Experience Necessary----Just come and join the fun!**

We are also in need of help to work the Sweets Booth during Greek Fest. Please contact Philoptochos President Pat Kolodziej to volunteer your services. **Greek Fest is a Church wide fundraiser and we NEED YOU!!!**



A Heartfelt Thank You to Siree Bakakos, Vivian Baxter and Vasiliki Constantine for co-chairing a fun filled Pot Luck Dinner as we thanked our beloved President Polly Gorski for her undying commitment and dedication these last four years as the St. Sophia Philoptochos President. She lead our Philoptochos with honor and love and we truly appreciate her effort! Thank You, Polly! Her presidency may be over, but she is not going anywhere!!



### Saint Sophia Philoptochos Commitments for July and August Include:

- 2 - St. Sophia Scholarships

**Upcoming Events – Mark Your Calendars**  
 Philoptochos Board Meetings – Monday, August 14, 2017 and Monday, August 28, 2017.


**Philoptochos General Meeting – Tuesday, September 5, 2017, 7:00 p.m.**

**St. Sophia Vespers and Feast Day – Saturday, September 16 and Sunday September 17, 2017.**

**Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos Annual Luncheon – Saturday, September 23, 2017; the Empress Banquets.**

# Church School Chronicles




 We pray that you are having a blessed summer!



Our end of the year commencement was on May 21. We honored all of our preschool students as they are just beginning their journey through our Church School program, our children who received gifts for commitment to our Church School program with attending 29 Church School classes or more, and our Oratorical Festival participants. We also honored our dedicated and committed teachers who show such love for their students to glorify Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church of St. Sophia. A special mention to Ms. Natalie Wians for helping with the curriculum, Mrs. Sophia Petratos for facilitating, organizing and implementing the Oratorical Festivals and our substitutes. We also presented seniors with an Orthodox Study Bible for their future endeavors. A huge thank you to Mrs. Maria Kroll for her many years of service as Church School director. We have thrived under her leadership and we are blessed that she will continue to teach our children. We are thankful for all of our students, families and staff, and for their fervor, commitment and desire to learn more about our Orthodox Faith through our Sunday Church School program.



 The Church School hosted Vacation Church School 2017: "Creation", June 12-16, 2017 from 9am to 12:30pm. Our field trip was on Wednesday, and we explored God's creations at the Chicago Botanic Gardens after a morning of classes. We had 55 3-year-olds to incoming 8th graders involved. It was a blessing to see

students and families every day for a week! Thank you to Elena Gjata and Sophia Gjata who wrote the curriculum for the week, and offered ideas for crafts and the field trip too. We are thankful and humbled by each of the volunteers who were needed as it takes an entire "metropolis" to plan and prepare a VCS program...a village is not big enough! A special and heart-felt thank you to Fr. Andrew for his vision and love that he has for the VCS program and for every one of our children!



In addition, the Church School will be hosting fellowship hour for the months of July and August. At that time, please stop by our registration table to register your children for the 2017-2016 Sunday Church School year. We will also be sending registrations through email to previously registered students. It is vital that all students are registered each year so we can update our records. There are no registration fees for Sunday Church School, however, we ask for a free-will donation to offset the costs of books and materials needed for the year. All children must be registered! We look forward to seeing you during the summer months. Please call the church office with any questions or email us at [stsophiachurchschool@gmail.com](mailto:stsophiachurchschool@gmail.com).



We look forward to starting another Church School year with you in September! Our 2016-27 school year will start on **September 24!** May the new 2017-2018 Sunday Church School year be again filled with God's rich and abundant blessings!

With love in Christ,  
Sunday Church School Staff



# PERICLES GREEK SCHOOL

## ΠΕΡΙΚΛΗΣ ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟ ΣΧΟΛΕΙΟ



Dear Parents/Guardians,

As we prepare for the upcoming 2017-2018 school year, the staff and I are looking forward to working with you and your child. We will continue to ensure that all the students acquire knowledge and understandings that will enable them to continue the enthusiasm for learning Greek as a second language and creating a feeling of love for the Greek culture and traditions. This will be able to be accomplished through our curriculum, our dedicated staff, positive home-school communication, and a safe/organized environment. Together, we can make this another outstanding school year!

Enclosed in this packet are all the forms you will need to complete registration. Please contact us if you have any questions.

The first day of school for students will be Saturday, September 9, 2017. Our school hours are 9:00 am to 12:30 pm. It is a requirement that your child attend school every Saturday unless there is a legitimate excuse for the absence.

Pericles Greek School is staffed by Greek/American bilingual teachers experienced in Greek language teaching. Students are placed in levels, based on both language experience and knowledge. This year again we will continue to enroll in the Preschool and Kindergarten classes. After extensive consideration, we have decided to host the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> levels for those interested in extending their education. For more information please contact the church office or the Director of Pericles Greek School Mrs. Anna Panagiotopoulos at [annio58@yahoo.com](mailto:annio58@yahoo.com).

Sincerely,

*Anna Panagiotopoulos*

Director of Pericles Greek School  
St. Sophia Church, Elgin, IL

# Pericles Greek School

**St Sophia Greek Orthodox  
Church**

**Elgin, IL 60123**

## **Mission Statement**

The Greek School at Saint Sophia is committed to teaching children and adult students of the parish and surrounding areas (non-parishioners) Greek as a second language.

The teaching of the language is focused on conversation, reading, and writing that are built around everyday family life and functions, Greek history, religion, culture and traditions of Greek people.

In doing so, our School aims to maintain and cultivate further the Greek American identity of our youth.

The Greek School at Saint Sophia is also committed to maintaining and supporting the dance troop for teaching and performing Greek dances by the children and adults.

Approved by the Greek School Committee on  
December 8, 2000

**St. Sophia Pericles  
Greek School  
Elgin, Illinois**

## **Tuition & Collection Schedule for 2017 - 2018**

### **Tuition:**

\$895.00 for 1 child  
\$1,640 for 2 children  
\$2,435 for 3 children

### **Payments:**

Please make checks payable to:  
**St. Sophia**

You can mail payments to:  
**St. Sophia  
ATTN: Greek School  
525 Church Road  
Elgin, IL 60123**

***The new school year will start  
on Saturday, September 10,  
2016.***

***Classes will be held on  
Saturdays from 9:00 a.m. to  
12:30 p.m. for all levels***

**PERICLES GREEK SCHOOL  
APPLICATION FOR ADMISSION TO  
PRESCHOOL THROUGH EIGHTH GRADE  
525 CHURCH RD., ELGIN, IL 60123  
(847) 888-2822 – Fax: (847) 888-2986**

**PLEASE SUBMIT \$100.00 NON-REFUNDABLE REGISTRATION FEE ALONG WITH THIS APPLICATION.**

**FAMILY LAST NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**STUDENT INFORMATION:**

(CHILDREN MUST BE 4 YEARS OLD BY SEPTEMBER TO ENROLL IN THE PRE-K SCHOOL CLASS, AND 5 YEARS OLD TO ENROLL IN THE KINDERGARTEN).

**1. STUDENT'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **GREEK NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(PRINT LAST) (PRINT FIRST)

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(CITY) (STATE) (ZIP CODE)

**BIRTH DATE:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ **AGE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **SEX:** M\_ F\_ **ENTERING GRADE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. STUDENT'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **GREEK NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(PRINT LAST) (PRINT FIRST)

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(CITY) (STATE) (ZIP CODE)

**BIRTH DATE:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_ **AGE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **SEX:** M\_ F\_ **ENTERING GRADE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**FAMILY INFORMATION:**

**FATHER'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-MAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE: HOME:** (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ **CELL:** (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

**MOTHER'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-MAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE: HOME:** (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ **CELL:** (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

**STATUS OF PARENTS:** MARRIED: \_\_\_\_\_ SEPARATED: \_\_\_\_\_ DIVORCED: \_\_\_\_\_

**PARENT SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
**OFFICE USE:** DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ AMOUNT RECV'D: \_\_\_\_\_

**PAYMENT TYPE:** CHECK # \_\_\_\_\_ OR CASH \_\_\_\_\_ **RCV'D BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PERICLES GREEK SCHOOL  
EMERGENCY FORM**

**FAMILY LAST NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**AUTHORIZATION TO ADMINISTER IN CASE OF EMERGENCY:**

\*In the event of an injury or illness, I authorize the Greek school personnel to take such emergency action as deemed necessary, including the transportation of the student to a hospital or medical center.

\*In case of an emergency, the school staff will call 911 and make every attempt to contact a parent or a designated emergency contact.

**STUDENT'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **BIRTH DATE:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_  
(PRINT LAST) (PRINT FIRST)

Allergies/medical conditions: \_\_\_\_\_

Does your child have any special disabilities? If YES, please explain: \_\_\_\_\_

**FATHER'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-MAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** HOME: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ **CELL:** (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

**MOTHER'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **E-MAIL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** HOME: (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ **CELL:** (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

\*Family Doctor to contact in an emergency:

**PHYSICIAN'S NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **PHONE:** (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

**INSURANCE:** NAME & POLICY NO# \_\_\_\_\_

\*Please list two people we may call if the parent(s) cannot be reached in the event of an emergency.

**PERSON TO CALL IN CASE OF EMERGENCY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE** (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

**PERSON TO CALL IN CASE OF EMERGENCY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE** (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

\*As a parent/guardian, I do herewith authorize treatment by a qualified and licensed medical doctor of the above listed minor(s) in the event of a medical emergency which, in the opinion of the attending emergency room physician, may endanger his/her life, cause disfigurement, physical impairment or undue discomfort if delayed. This authority is granted only after a reasonable effort has been made to contact me.

**PRINT NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PERICLES GREEK SCHOOL  
PARENT/GUARDIAN WAIVER AND RELEASE OF LIABILITY  
AND PERMISSION FORM**

Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church and all affiliated ministries have published a web site on the World Wide Web {<http://www.st-sophia.org>}.

Frequently, we will be publishing important information about events and student accomplishments on the internet and through other media. Part of this publishing may involve displaying work and photographs of staff and students.

Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church and all affiliated ministries agree that the student's picture, art, written work, voice, verbal statements, portraits (video or still) shall only be published and used for public relations, public information, school or parish promotion, publicity, and instruction.

In an effort to promote church and ministry activities and provide a degree of security for students, no personal information about the student (such as last name, home address, or telephone number) will be disclosed by Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church and all affiliated ministries or published. If you agree to these terms, please sign and date this form and return it to Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church and its affiliated ministry. This form need only be signed once and permission can be revoked at any time by sending a note to the church office.

\_\_\_\_ Yes, I give my permission for my child's first name, photograph, or schoolwork to be published on the church web site and other media.

\_\_\_\_ No, I do not give permission.

Parent and/or Legal Guardian only:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
(PRINT LAST) (PRINT FIRST)

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
(PRINT LAST) (PRINT FIRST)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



GRECIAN CHICKEN

GYROS

SAGANAKI

MOUSSAKA

DIPLES

LOUKOUMADES

BAKLAVA

PASTICHIO

SOUVLAKI

GREEK CAFE

KID'S ACTIVITIES

GREEK MARKETPLACE

GRAND RAFFLE

St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church proudly presents

# Greek Fest 2017

**FRIDAY, JULY 14**

11am-1pm &amp; 5pm-11pm

**SATURDAY, JULY 15**

Noon-11pm

**SUNDAY, JULY 16**

Noon-10pm

**ENTERTAINMENT**

*Live Music!* John Linardakis and Hellenic 5 Bands,  
Riley Elmore from NBC's 'The Voice'  
season 11 finalist

*Greek Culture!* Orthodoxy at St. Sophia,  
Agape Dance Troupe, Learn to Greek Dance,  
Learn to Cook Greek

*DJ Music!* DJ Bobby Styles - Sounds of Greece

**AUTHENTIC GREEK CUISINE**

Grecian Chicken, Gyros, Souvlaki, Saganaki,  
Moussaka, Pastichio, Greek Fries, Greek Salad,  
Calamari, Hamburgers, Hot Dogs  
and our returning "Greek Burger!"

**KID'S ACTIVITIES!**

Come and see what we have in store for you!  
Euro Bungee, bouncy houses and games!

**Greek Fest Special!** Unlimited rides \$20 each  
or 2 for \$30 from 12pm-5pm on Sat and Sun!  
Not open Friday 11am-1pm

**GREEK PASTRIES & GREEK CAFE**

Baklava, Diples, Loukoumades and more  
under the "Sweets Tent." Greek Coffee,  
Frappes, Ice Cream Sundaes  
and more at the Kafenio!

**FULL BAR**

Experience our Festival Mai-Tais  
& sample Greek wines & beer!!!

**DRIVE THRU**

All weekend long!  
On site, just as hot and delicious!

**GREEK FEST MARKETPLACE**

Come inside the air conditioned exhibitor hall  
where you can see and purchase items from  
vendors of all kinds  
Not open Friday 11am-1pm

**THE GRAND RAFFLE**

Grand Prize of \$10,000.00!!!  
Call to buy your tickets early!!!

**525 Church Road Elgin, IL 60123 • Route 31 & I-90**For more information, visit [www.st-sophia.com](http://www.st-sophia.com) or call 847-888-2822

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

GREEK DANCING

GREEK WINE

# St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church Youth Ministry Program

The mission and goal of the St. Sophia Youth Ministry Program is to lead our youth into experiencing the Holy Orthodox Faith. By developing a personal relationship with our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ and becoming active sacramental members of the living Church, our young people will be equipped with tools necessary to assist them in their journey toward salvation.

Throughout all of our individual groups we focus on four main characteristics guided by our Archdiocese Youth Department:

**Liturgia ~ Worship      Koinonia ~ Fellowship**  
**Diakonia ~ Service      Martyria ~ Witness**

The Youth Ministry Program offers many opportunities for our youth to participate in different events and activities all guided and inspired by our four circles. Not only do we organize, promote and host family events, we further break out into age appropriate groups as well as an athletic program. Each group is structured with events, activities and fellowship geared toward each age group and the four circles as stated above. The entire program works to guide and strengthen our young people in the expression of their faith.

**Hope:** The Hope group is for children between the ages of 40 days up to 5 years of age. The goal of the Hope Ministry is to bring to the children of the Orthodox Faith a basic understanding of the Holy Church. Children and their parents or caregivers arrive at church, spend time socializing until they meet with Fr. Andrew in the church and discuss the topic of the day. Typical Hope gatherings include the opportunity for the children to create topic-related crafts, sing songs, have story time and go on special outings. This fellowship closes with snack and playtime to help encourage building long lasting and loving friendships.

**Faith:** The Faith group is for youth in Kindergarten through Second Grade. This group will meet both at St. Sophia and also have outings away from the church as well; we typically meet in conjunction with the JOY program.

**JOY:** The Joy group is for youth in Third Grade through Fifth Grade. This group will meet both at St. Sophia and also have outings away from the church as well; we typically meet in conjunction with the Faith program.

**Jr. GOYA:** The Jr. GOYA group is for youth in Sixth Grade through Eighth Grade. This group will meet both at St. Sophia and also have outings away from the church as well. We have both separate Jr. GOYA events and also Jr. and Sr. GOYA combined events.

**Sr. GOYA:** The Sr. GOYA group is for youth in Ninth Grade through Twelfth Grade. The Sr. GOYA members are led by their Executive Board members. Their Executive Board is nominated and voted on by their peers; the members of GOYA. Their role is to choose events, topics, and promote and encourage their peers to join in the fun. This group will meet both at St. Sophia and also have outings away from the church as well. We have both separate Sr. GOYA events and also Jr. and Sr. GOYA combined events.

**Jr. Olympics:** The Jr. Olympics Athletic Program is for youth age 7 through 18. The Metropolis of Chicago hosts the annual Jr. Olympics during Memorial Day Weekend. We have tournament events Friday evening, all day Saturday and Sunday afternoon. It is an exciting weekend full of koinonia (fellowship), martyria (witness), kefi (spirit) and agape (love). At St. Sophia we begin registration and practices in February. Each sport program has its own practice regimen and the expectation is that the youth participate in as many practices as possible in efforts to prepare for our annual competition. Please note that stewardship and regular involvement in Youth Ministry (and other youth programs at St. Sophia) will determine eligibility for participation in Jr. Olympics.

**Mission Team:** Every other year we are blessed to have a group of Sr. GOYA's join together in a team to offer their time, talents and treasure to those who are in great need. These youth work hard together to fundraise and organize their mission. Location and mission is chosen together as a team, they are led by a youth team leader and the Youth Director and all efforts are guided and supported by the Youth Ministry Program.

**We continuously pray that our Patron Saints: The Three Youths intercede for all of our youth.**

**Questions? Please ask Youth Director Ms. Natalie Wians    Call/text: 847-476-8131 or Email: [ymdirnatalie@aol.com](mailto:ymdirnatalie@aol.com)**





Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church  
525 Church Road  
Elgin, Illinois 60123

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