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Front Cover Image:
Garden of Gethsemane
©Joanne Pugliani
JOY/GOYA LENTEN OVERNIGHT RETREAT

Begins Friday, April 7th 6:30pm
JOY & GOYA Members will make Prosforo, have a lesson, and enjoy a pasta dinner with option to stay overnight.
For more information, contact Fr. Pat.

Saturday, April 8th 9:30am
Saturday of Lazarus (All English Liturgy)
Youth Breakfast and Palm making following Services.

Sunday, April 9th 9:30am
Palm Sunday Divine Liturgy
The pinnacle of our spiritual life revolves around one fantastic event. Pascha is the one moment in our history which has not only secured our future but also inspires our present. It is the Resurrection of Jesus that secures for us a place in a world far beyond our imagination and unseen by even the most advanced telescope ever invented. It is a world of love and beauty which far surpasses our greatest and most vivid experiences. It is the world of everlasting salvation.
This “resurrectional” world seems foreign to us, but yet is spoken of and referred to in both New and Old Testament writings. We know through our life experience and witness to our faith that this world awaits, but we have only clues and promises to guide us. This is where our faith is challenged. Jesus often references those who have not seen and yet believe. This, then, is our test of faith. The Resurrection of our Lord is generally spoken of with awe, fear, and amazement. We are no different from the disciples of Christ, who also experienced the same feelings and confusion. They also did not fully comprehend the events that took place, and found themselves scattered and, in the case of the Apostle St. Peter, in denial. But this would change.

The women approaching the tomb, out to perform their burial duties in one account, worry about the removal of the giant stone from the entrance of the tomb, only to discover the stone has been rolled away and the body of Jesus missing (Mark 16:1-8). In the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 28, Mary Magdalene and another Mary approach the tomb and discover an angel who proclaims that “He is Risen,” and invites the women to see where He had been laid, only to find the place empty. The angel then instructs the women to return to the disciples, and they, with “fear and great joy,” run to tell the disciples only to meet up with Jesus along the way who instructs the women to tell the disciples to travel to Galilee where they will see Him. It is not foreign to us then to be in a state of confusion or shock, for we have not seen and are asked to accept and believe the events which took place.

This is why I often refer to the events of Holy Week and the Resurrection as a journey. It is an overall event to be experienced, and it does take the entire week of exposure to help define our conclusion. It is a challenging life experience. Like the sainted Apostles, we hear, but are not convinced. We are told, but do not comprehend. We can see, but still remain skeptical. We can even find ourselves there and still be in denial. This is the world where our faith must take hold. This is the basis of our salvation, that we know and accept the Resurrection, and that we allow the Spirit to guide us through the week, to experience all the pain, anguish, disappointments, denial, and suffering, as well as the joy, surprise, commitment, and witness of the Event that has transformed our future. The Resurrection truly is an all-encompassing experience. It is also the test of faith we must confront individually.

Our goal in life should be to build a relationship to God in order to attain a peaceful passage into the world of the heavens. Holy Week and the Resurrection are our tickets to life. We are Orthodox Christians, and this is our way!
In order to help us along this journey, this issue of the Testament will include some thoughts and prayers to help us along this path. It is far from complete. My goal is to provide some help and guidance to inspire us to do more, become more involved in our future, and secure our Christian reward. It is sometimes difficult for us to admit, but we are responsible for our future, and we are the bearers of the Seal of the Spirit and inheritance of the Christian realm.

We must remember that our place in the Kingdom of heaven must be earned. There is no guarantee that any of us will be allowed to pass into the world of everlasting life without applying ourselves and developing a relationship with Jesus. It is simply not as easy as we may think. For some, it may be an incident of selfless sacrifice, but for the majority of us, it is a lifetime achievement award of committing and sharing in the Lord's thinking, doing, and following his teachings and exhortations, and then believing in and accepting Him as King and God.

May the story of our Lenten preparation, the passion and joy of Holy Week, the sharing in the remarkable Ascension, and later the inspiration of Pentecost be our inspiration to experience our life and growth in the Church and help to lead us in our journey to the glorious Resurrection. The choice is ours. Have a blessed and inspired Resurrection.

THOUGHTS AND MEDITATIONS TO HELP US IN OUR PERSONAL MEDITATION TO LIVE THE TRIODION-2023

We pick up our Journey where we left off last issue with the Fifth Sunday of Great Lent and end our meditation process with the event of Events, and with the king of Kings, the Resurrection. May these humble insights and prayers help us to focus and maintain our commitment to Christ, our God. I am thankful to all the writers, hymnologists, and theologians who have contributed much of the insights herein used to describe for us the Great Lenten Period and Holy Week.
Saint Mary is one of the most famous penitents in Christian history. Leaving her life in Alexandria, she made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to attend the celebration of the Feast of the Holy Cross. Arriving at the site of St. Helen’s notable find, however, Mary found herself unable to enter into the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, unlike other pilgrims, until she vowed to make changes to her life and improve her manner of living. She accepted her fate with true humility and decided to pass the remainder of her life living in repentance across the Jordan River and in the harsh environment of the Jordanian Desert. There she lived for over fifty years and became famous everywhere for the renunciation of worldly pleasures. We are called to remember her sacrifice and to remind ourselves of the call to repentance as the end of the Holy Fast approaches. We are reminded of her spiritual change and commitment to Jesus, and are called upon to emulate her example and to repent sincerely for our own misgivings and misdoings in our life.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

The power of Your Cross, O Christ, our God
Has worked wonders for Mary of Egypt,
For she had been a harlot and now has become an example and ideal of the austere life.
Casting off the weakness of nature, she has bravely fought Satan.
Now, as a saint in heaven, she has obtained the prize of victory, Intercede for our souls.

PRAYER FOR THE WEEK

Glorious Mary of Egypt, you cast out the darkness of sin
And followed the light of penance;
You directed your heart to Christ, casting off the weakness of nature
And bravely fighting Satan.
Wherefore, you avoided sin and now live in the joyful company
Of the angels in heaven.
We have, on this day, arrived at the end of our personal 40-day personal struggle, self-examination, and penitential Fast. We now begin to Fast in commemoration of the Passions of our Lord. For the past five weeks, we have wrestled with our inner selves, and struggled to begin a lifetime change in how we live our lives. May we have succeeded and, through the Grace of God, discover our path to salvation. Today, we shall witness that which may one day be our own personal resurrection in the resurrection of St. Lazarus as we commemorate this day before Palm Sunday, in honor of the four-day rising from the dead of Saint Lazarus and friend of Jesus.

Jesus, as we should recall, reached the city of Bethany four days after the burial of Lazarus. Going to the home of Lazarus, Jesus comforted his sisters, Mary and Martha, distraught that Jesus had not arrived earlier. Our Lord then made his way to the tomb, where he outwardly showed emotion and wept. He then commanded that the stone in front of the tomb be removed, and lifting up His eyes to heaven and thanking God, He cried out in a loud voice, “Lazarus come forth.” Lazarus, wrapped in strips of his burial clothes, came out and was resurrected from the dead. This day serves as our own personal guarantee that at the time of the general resurrection, all who follow and believe in Christ shall also be resurrected.

**HYMN OF THE DAY**

O Christ God, when you raised Lazarus from the dead, before the time of Your passion, confirmed the resurrection of all. We too, like the children of old, carry before You The symbols of Your triumph and victory, and cry out to You, The Conqueror of Death: “Hosanna in the highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!”
The entrance of the Messiah into Jerusalem had been prophesied by Zacharias saying, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on the colt of a foal of an ass,... and he shall command peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the river to the ends of the earth” (Zacharias 9:9-10).

The contemporary Jews, at the time of Jesus, associated this prophecy with the coming of the Messiah. The news that Jesus was in Bethany, near Jerusalem, where He had recently raised Lazarus from the dead, provoked a general enthusiasm of acceptance. It also heightened the indignation of the High Priests who sought to kill Christ. The people, therefore, questioned if He would attend the Passover feast.

The central road leading from Bethany to Jerusalem passed just south of the Mount of Olives and reached Bethpage. It was there where Christ was given the colt to ride upon. A great swell of people had gathered and, with palm branches in their hands, spread their cloaks on the roadway, as a sign of respect and shouted, “Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel” (John 12:13). Jesus had entered triumphantly into the city of Jerusalem. The palm branches held in the church on this day symbolize Christ's victory over Satan and death. The meaning of “Hosanna” is, “We pray you save.” Let us proclaim, as we enter into the church on Palm Sunday morning fearlessly:

Wherefore, through Your indescribable mercy, O Christ,  
Grant us to overcome our beastly passions,  
And make us worthy to behold Your brilliant triumph over death, 
And Your illustrious and life-giving Resurrection, and have mercy on us.
O Christ our God, when You did raise Lazarus from the dead, before Your Passion, You did confirm the universal resurrection. Therefore, we like babes, carry the insignia of triumph and victory, and cry out to You, O Vanquisher of death, Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord.

A PALM SUNDAY LUNCHEON IS SCHEDULED IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING SERVICES AND, BY TRADITION, A FISH PLATE IS SERVED. Please look for the advertisement in this edition of THE TESTAMENT

HOLY WEEK BEGINS
PALM SUNDAY EVENING (Monday morning)*
APRIL 16, 2023
*Time leaps ahead 12 hours at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. Therefore night becomes day, and day becomes night.

THE SERVICE OF THE BRIDEGROOM
Our day begins with the first offering of the Bridegroom Service. The Holy Passion of our Lord begins with the Old Testament figures being brought to mind as “types” of our Savior. Joseph (he of the richly colored coat and interpreter of dreams) was the eleventh son of the Patriarch Jacob and the first child of his wife, Rachel. His brothers, however, plotted against their younger stepbrother, and when he interpreted a dream in which his brothers and parents would bow down to him one day, they sought to find a way to rid themselves of this “favorite” son. Eventually, his envious and jealous brothers succeeded and sold him into slavery to Ishmaelite merchants, who brought him to Egypt. He was later sold to Potiphar, who was an officer of Pharaoh and “captain of the guard.” He would eventually become head of all the servants, but rejecting the seductive advances of Potiphar's wife, she became enraged and accused him of rape, and he was tossed into prison. He was released from prison, however, because of his ability to understand dreams. The Pharaoh had experienced a strange dream which none of his advisors seemed to be able to solve, and Joseph was summoned. He promptly predicted that the dream of the Pharaoh predicted seven years of prosperity followed by seven years of famine and advised the Pharaoh to store up the surplus grain. He was appointed by the Pharaoh to carry out the suggested policy and was given a position of authority. The prediction came true, and Joseph would become the second most powerful man in Egypt and governor for his insight.
The famine also affected the land of Jacob, and once again, the brothers were sent on a mission, this time to buy grain from Egypt, with the exception of Benjamin. Arriving, they were sent to the powerful governor, but they did not recognize their brother, who accused them of being spies and cast them into prison. At the end of three days, he released them and sent all but Simeon, who was kept as a hostage, back home with their grain and told them to return with, the only other brother born of his mother Rachel, Benjamin. They returned and, after some gamesmanship and testing, Joseph was convinced his brothers had repented and, with surprise, revealed himself.

The story of Joseph is the “type” of Christ because he did not enslave himself to the pleasures of Egypt, and his soul remained dedicated to God. Joseph symbolizes the passion of our Lord and his glory, because, though the body was enslaved, his soul was free and pure.

This day is also dedicated to the barren fig tree, which bore no fruit, and was cursed by Christ. The fig tree, which was beautiful, had green leaves, but was barren of fruit. The tree represents the Council of the Jews at the time of Jesus, who were devoid of righteousness and virtue. Since the tree bore no fruit, Jesus stripped it of every spiritual grace.

Note: The Service of the Bridegroom, also celebrated Monday and Tuesday night, symbolizes the fact that Christ, the Bridegroom (Nymphios), is to be taken away from us and that the days of Fasting and sorrow are ahead of us. The Bridegroom hymn, inspired by the Parable of the Ten Virgins, exhorts us to arouse ourselves and worship the true God!

WE SING

Behold, the Bridegroom comes in the middle of the night;
And blessed is the servant whom he shall find watching,
And again unworthy is he whom he shall find careless.
Beware! therefore, O my soul,
Lest thou be borne down with sleep,
Lest thou be given up to death,
And lest thou be shut out from the kingdom.
Wherefore, rouse thyself and cry:
Holy, Holy, Holy art Thou, O God;
Through the intercessions of the Theotokos, save us!
MONDAY EVENING (TUESDAY MORNING)  
APRIL 10, 2023  

We commemorate, on this day, the Parable of the Ten Virgins. Five were prepared to receive the bridegroom and had oil to trim their lamps, while five were ill-prepared and had no oil and found themselves locked out of the wedding celebration. This conforms to our personal preparation and wakefulness to be aware and prepared for the coming of the Lord at any time and constitutes the foundation of our committed faith, for one day, He will come. Will we be ready?

RECITE THE FOLLOWING  
Why are you indifferent, O wretched soul?  
...work most diligently with talent, which has been confided to you. Both watch and pray.

TUESDAY EVENING (WEDNESDAY MORNING)  
APRIL 11, 2023  

We commemorate on this day the anointing of the Lord with myrrh by the woman who was a sinner. Our acceptance of repentance is demonstrated by the act of this woman who, in preparing the Lord for His crucifixion, repents her sinful way by washing the Lord's feet with precious myrrh and with her penitent tears and then dries them with her hair. This sinful yet repentant woman gives of herself and is contrasted with Judas, who will betray Jesus. One seeks forgiveness for her deeds, while the other shows himself as a perverse and blind traitor who will forget what he has been taught by the Master, and sell his soul with blind avarice to those who will demand His crucifixion.

Our lesson this evening is to understand that the evil within us can be forgiven on the one hand, and on the other hand, it teaches us how easy it is for us to lose our way and be drawn away from God and to evil. The inspiring and moving Hymn of Kassiani will also be chanted this evening as a lamentation of humble contrition.

WE SAY  

It is a good thing to confess to the Lord,  
And to sing praises to Your name, Most High.  
To proclaim Your loving kindness in the morning, and Your truth by night.
WEDNESDAY EVENING
THE SACRAMENT OF HOLY UNCTION
APRIL 12, 2023

A Bridegroom Service might also be offered this evening; however, it is our custom to offer the Sacrament of Holy Unction. This Sacrament is celebrated for the spiritual healing of our souls and for the physical healing of our bodies. There are seven Epistles, and seven Gospels offered to us as lessons in Christian living and should be read and meditated on before receiving this Blessed Sacrament.

THEY ARE

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<tr>
<th><strong>EPISTLES</strong></th>
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<td>Matthew 10:1, 5-8</td>
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<td>2 Corinthians 1:8-12</td>
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<td>Galatians 5:22-6:2</td>
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<td>1 Thessalonians 5:14-24</td>
<td>Matthew 9:9-13</td>
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WE CHANT

Blind of spiritual eyes, I come to You, O Christ. As did the blind man from his birth, In repentance crying to You: Have mercy upon me, You who illuminates With exceeding brightness them who are in darkness.

Pictured:
Display of Cross with thorn crown at the Prison of Jesus Christ
©Paul Pugliani
We celebrate, this evening, the holy Passion of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. This is probably the longest single service our Holy Fathers have ever written, but it is also probably the most dramatic of all our services. The entire evening service seems to be dark and emotional. It begins, however, with one of the great discourses of Jesus to his Apostles as rendered by the Evangelist and Apostle John. This is a very moving farewell teaching as the Lord attempts to prepare his Apostles for the upcoming events, which will take place very quickly. Eventually, they will make their way to the other side of the Kidron valley, where lies the Garden of Gethsemane. This night will bring us to the brink of destruction and disappointment. Judas has already betrayed the Lord. All that is needed for Judas to do is to identify Jesus to the Jewish leaders.

We shall experience the agony of Gethsemane and Jesus’ final acceptance of fulfilling the Scriptures. He will be identified, arrested, chained and fettered, jailed in solitary confinement, and literally dragged from one end of Jerusalem to the other. He will appear lastly before Pontius Pilate, the Roman Prefect, who seemingly has the authority to free or condemn Christ. Instead, the notorious Barabbas will be set free, and Jesus will be condemned to death by crucifixion. We will be with the Lord on His entire emotionally charged date with the “Tree of Life” (the cross). This night, He will endure the scourgings and be whipped mercilessly. He will be spit on, harassed, and made to seemingly play the joker for the Roman soldiers. They will cast lots for his clothing, play games of chance, and revile the Lord. Then, they will lead Him out to Golgotha to crucify Him with common criminals flanking him. Unlike the thieves, with whom He is crucified, He will not be tied to the cross with ropes but secured to the Cross with spikes driven through his hands and feet. We shall experience all of the terror, narrow-minded thinking, and horror of this event. We shall thirst with Him and witness the forgiveness only God can grant.

Yes, we shall live through this harrowing event in person and be with Him and not betray our love nor cower in our commitment. Eventually, we shall all, with tender sorrow, hear the words that none of us ever wish to say, “It is finished,” as He gives up His spirit.

Our Lord will die tonight, and we, the few who have spent the evening with Him, will not abandon him, nor deny him, nor run from him. We will stay until the end. The day which started out with a “farewell discourse” and promise of things to come, will end in death and darkness, but take courage. A new day will dawn, and with the dawn will come the Light.
GOSPEL READINGS

2). John 18:1-28
3). Matthew 26: 57-End
5). Matthew 27: 3-32
6). Mark 15: 16-32
7). Matthew 27: 33-54
9). John 19: 25-37
10). Mark 15:3-End
11). John 19:38- End

WE CHANT

Today is hung upon the Tree He Who suspended the land in the midst of the waters.
A crown of thorns crowns Him, Who is King of the Angels.
He is wrapped about with the purple of mockery, Who wrapped the Heavens with clouds.
He received buffetings, Who freed Adam in the Jordan.
He was transfixed with nails, Who is the Son of the Virgin.
We worship Your Passion, O Christ.
Show also to us Your glorious Resurrection!

HOLY FRIDAY MORNING

HOURS/TAKING DOWN FROM THE CROSS/LAMENTATIONS

APRIL 14, 2023

Great and Holy Friday is a day filled with sadness, awe, and responsibility. The early morning service of the Hours consists of the reading of the four Royal Hours in which we chant and recite psalms and readings from both the Old and New Testaments, which prophecy the coming of the Messiah (Christ). The “kouvouklion” will then be decorated with flowers for the afternoon and evening services.

Holy Friday afternoon is a vesper service in which we commemorate the unnailing and taking down from the Cross Jesus by Joseph of Arimathea and the placement of the Epitaphios in the Kouvouklion (Tomb of Christ). This Service is generally attended by many of our children who are unable to attend and withstand the rigors of the evening Service, which begins later in the day.
The procession of the Epitaphios takes place around the church, and we kneel in awe, thanking God for life. Join us as we chant: When Joseph of Arimathea took You, the life of all, down from the Tree dead; he buried You with myrrh and fine linen; and he yearned with desire, in his heart, and on his lips, that Your pure Body might be enshrouded; wherefore hiding his fear, he cried to You, rejoicing: Glory to Your superiority, Merciful Master.

WE CHANT

All creation was changed by fear, when it saw You, O Christ, hanging upon the Cross; The sun was darkened, and the foundations of the earth were shaken.
All things suffered with the Creator of all things.
O Lord, Who for us did willingly endure, glory to You.

THE SERVICE OF THE LAMENTATIONS

We celebrate this very moving service with devotion and awe and are witness to not only the Burial but to the descent of our Lord and Savior into Hades. Although we lament and are saddened by the recent events, we do not grieve for the suffering of the crucified Christ. Rather, we lament our sinful nature and for our sins which remove us from the presence of God. This unique Service is not simply about the beautiful psalms, readings, and hymns we shall hear and recite, but to our transformation in becoming holy in soul and body, in strength and in weakness, and in thought and will, as we elevate our image to the likeness of God.

A procession of the Epitaphios in the beautifully decorated and fragrant Kouvouklion will take place around the church as the entire congregation processes with lighted candles while chanting the thrice-holy hymn:

*Agios O Theos, Agios Ischyros, Agios Athanatos, eleison imas!*
*Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, Have mercy on us!*

May our strong faith and commitment to our Lord help us this day to fully examine our dedication to the Lord and guide us to repentance and confession as we prepare ourselves for the final day of our journey to the Resurrection and to our personal salvation.
WE CHANT IN UNISON

You, O Christ the Life, was laid in the tomb, and armies of Angels were amazed, and they glorified Your condescension.

FOLLOWED BY

It is meet to magnify You, the Giver of Life, You Who did extend Your hands upon the Cross, and shatter the power of the enemy.

AND LASTLY

All generations offer adoration to Your Entombment, O Christ. The myrrh-bearers, with forethought, prepared myrrh and came to You. Now, let us come, with all creation and bring triumphal hymns to our Creator. By Your Resurrection, give peace to the world, and salvation to Your people.

HOLY AND GREAT SATURDAY MORNING
APRIL 15, 2023

Today, we shall celebrate the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great. Prophecies from the Books of Genesis Jonah, and Daniel will remind us of what was told, what was predicted, and what shall happen. Immediately following the Epistle reading for the day, the great and exuberant and loud exit of the Lord Jesus Christ will usher in a new era for us as the bonds and fetters, locks, and dark abyss will be shattered as “Hades cries out groaning.” Adam and Eve shall be resurrected and death, as it was known, shall be destroyed. And we shall proclaim with great conviction and joy: Arise O God, and judge You the earth; for You shall take all heathen to Your inheritance!

Today is a day of strict Fasting. Today is also the Day that we will truly learn the meaning of the words first read at our Baptism that, “We are dead to sin, but alive to Christ Jesus, our Lord.”

Later in the evening, the pinnacle of Holy Week will find us in a church all aglow and bathed in light as a continuation of the earlier morning service. As midnight approaches, all light will be extinguished, and we shall begin the...
SERVICE OF THE RESURRECTION

We now anticipate with great quiet excitement the culmination of all the events we experienced throughout the Great Lenten Period and witnessed Holy Week. We have reached the Moment every Orthodox Christian anticipates and are about to receive a Gift that will define our lives. Jesus, the Son of God, Who earlier freed Adam and broke the bonds of Hades, releasing the souls trapped throughout the centuries, will fulfill that which was foretold.

From the vigil light, which has been kept aglow since the previous day of the Holy Resurrection, a new Resurrection candle will be lit, and Fr. Dennis and I shall exit from the Holy Altar and proclaim:

Come, and receive the light, from the Unwaning Light; and glorify Christ, Who has risen from the dead. Slowly, but methodically the church will grow in this Light as each candle is lit. From this moment on, we shall have all received the Light as a symbol of our acceptance of the Resurrection of Jesus, and this Light shall overcome the darkness. This will be followed by a procession to the entrance to the church as the choir, and the people sing, “The Angels in Heaven praise Your Resurrection, O Christ, our Savior; make us on earth worthy, with pure hearts, to glorify You.” This, in turn, will be followed by the Gospel Reading according to Mark in which the myrrh-bearing women approach the tomb and are greeted by a young man (angel) clothed in a white robe who will proclaim, “Do not be terrified. You are looking for Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. HE HAS RISEN. HE IS NOT HERE” (Mark 16:1-8). And we shall all proclaim joyfully His Resurrection by chanting, “Christ has risen from the dead, by death trampling upon Death, and to those in the tombs, bestowing life.”

The culmination of our sacrifice and unwavering faith will come to bear and our lives will be filled with the joy only one can imagine who has chosen the Lord to be their Savior. The beauty of the evening is the overwhelming acceptance and love which will fill the church. We shall become one with all Orthodox Christians throughout the world. The gloom and doom of the crucifixion will be replaced by the Light and the courage to move forward with our lives with a newfound confidence. Moreover, everyone will be included, whether we joined in the preparation from the beginning several weeks ago or if we just arrived at this moment. The end sermon of St. John Chrysostom, at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, shall echo our joy of acceptance and salvation.

This is our glorious day! The Lord has kept His promise. Death, the most feared bane of human existence, has forever been overcome. Life now has a new and exciting meaning. Death will not be an ending but a beginning, and our journey in life now takes on a new meaning.

CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY HE IS RISEN!
Palm Sunday Luncheon

Hosted by Saint Sophia Joy & Goya

April 9, 2023

Adults $15.00
Youth 6-17 $8.00
Children 5 and under free
Dear Fellow Parishioners,

Christ is in our midst.

For Greeks, our faith and our heritage are inextricably linked.

There is no more profound a symbol of that linkage than the white cross on Greece’s flag which represents our Orthodox Christian faith. And so, as I reflect on the past several weeks, I am again reminded of how both our faith and our heritage contribute to our identity.

This past weekend, children from both our Greek School and Sunday School programs helped commemorate Greek Independence Day with poems, readings and songs, and Saint Sophia’s dance group performed several traditional Greek dances to honor Greece’s independence from the Ottoman Empire in 1821.

Earlier in the month, on the First Sunday of Lent, parishioners of all ages — including our children — processed with icons to commemorate the Sunday of Orthodoxy, a seminal event in the history of our faith that restored the veneration of icons in 726.

And, finally, just a few days ago several of us joined His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros and Greek-American legislative leaders at this year’s Greek Heritage Celebration at the New York State Capitol honoring Greek Independence Day.

Our faith and our culture are inextricably linked.

What better way to showcase the pride we have in our faith and our culture than through our upcoming Greek Festival — May 19, 20 and 21.

I hope you will volunteer to help make this year’s festival a success. Whether you are a long-time volunteer or are looking to just-now get involved, I invite you to take part in helping deliver the Capital Region’s hallmark celebration of all things Greek! Please complete the volunteer form – available in this issue of The Testament – today.
Finally, please “save the date” – Sunday, June 11 – for this summer’s annual church picnic. I hope you can join us as we welcome summer!

As always, please contact me with comments or suggestions. I look forward to hearing from you.

I pray that you and your family have a Blessed Resurrection — Καλή Ανάσταση.

In Orthodoxy,

[Signature]

Above: His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America with Rev. Fr. Patric Legato, Parish Council President, Mike Christakis, Philoptochos President, Maria Sokaris, Stefan Kalogridis, and Diana Gianakos Ostroff
©Mike Christakis
ANNUAL
GREEK FESTIVAL
2023

MAY 19 | 6 PM - 10 PM
MAY 20 | NOON - 10 PM
MAY 21 | NOON - 6 PM

FOOD | DRINKS | LIVE MUSIC

440 WHITEHALL ROAD ALBANY, NY

WWW.STSOPHIAALBANY.ORG
Volunteers Needed!

We're looking for volunteers for this year's Festival. Please check off the days and times you are available and a committee member will contact you with more details. Please submit this form to the St. Sophia Church Office. Thank you!

Name

Email Address

Phone number

Please check all available days and times

☐ Week of May 15, Festival Set-up
☐ Friday, May 19th, Evening Shift
☐ Saturday, May 20th, Day Shift
☐ Saturday, May 20th, Evening Shift
☐ Sunday, May 21st, Day Shift
☐ Sunday, May 21st, Evening Shift
☐ Festival Break Down
Philoptochos

Kali Anastasi

Everyone,

I hope everyone is well and enjoying some warmer weather and mostly importantly preparing for Easter.

Philoptochos has a collection basket by the candles for the Epitaphio flowers. I’ve said this before, but every year Pia Lascaris and her crew do amazing job with decorating the Epitaphio. It is absolutely breathtaking. I look forward to seeing it on Good Friday again this year.

If you would like to donate please see me at the back of the church on Sundays or you can mail in the check to Philoptochos. Thank you to those that contributed already.

If you would like to place an order for tzourekia, please see Dora as soon as possible.

The cost per loaf is $8.00

Philoptochos would like to thank Elaine Sokaris for making a donation toward the bagged lunches. The kids enjoy preparing the lunches every other Sunday. A donation of $100 will provide 50 lunches for those in need.

With Spring being here, I always think of “spring cleaning”. If you are cleaning out your closet and come across any purses that you no longer need or want, please do not throw them away but instead bring them to us. Philoptochos is collecting gently used purses to fill with some feminine products and snacks. These purses will then be donated to a local woman’s shelter. If you have any questions please see Maria Sokaris.

Also, August 19th is our Garage Sale. Please bring all items to church after the festival. All proceeds will go the Double H Ranch and other local children charities. No electronics or furniture please.

Before you know it the Festival will be here. Please do not wait to be asked to work. All hands are needed in order to make this successful. Pick your favorite booths and ask how you can help.

Have a wonderful Easter and enjoy the Spring weather.

Xristos Anesti

Maria Sokaris
President, Philoptochos

PURSES

with a purpose

The Philoptochos is collecting gently used purses to fill with personal care items to donate to those less fortunate.

Please give your gently used purses to Maria Sokaris by May 15th

P U R S E S

with a purpose

The Philoptochos is collecting gently used purses to fill with personal care items to donate to those less fortunate.

Please give your gently used purses to Maria Sokaris by May 15th
We are celebrating Easter April 16th, and have been singing each Sunday, while preparing to sing the most beautiful Byzantine hymns ever written for choir. I hope that everyone takes the opportunity to hear our choir sing beginning with Palm Sunday, April 9th.

As we progress through Holy Week there are two hymns that are very special at St. Sophia. Holy Tuesday's Hymn of Kassiane.

This extremely beautiful hymn was written sometime in the ninth century by Nun Kassia. She was a Byzantine abbess and composer of liturgical chants and hymns. Kassia is the only woman poet to come down to us from the Byzantine Greek. Considered the most important woman hymnographer of the Byzantine era, she composed 49 liturgical chants, and as a poet, 261 secular verses and moral sentences. In 843, she became the abbess of her monastery in Constantinople, composing music for the services in her convent and writing liturgical and secular verses. "The Fallen Woman", "Troparion Tis Kassianis is a poem about Mary Magdalene (Luke 7:36-50).

Our Choir's next hymn is sung on Holy Thursday. To me, this service and the Crucifixion hymn should be sung before hundreds of parishioners. The reenactment of the Crucifixion of Jesus is the primary purpose for Celebrating the Resurrection.

Our choir sings the arrangement written by the late Spiro Takes, former choirmaster at St. Sophia. It was for Good Friday (sung Holy Thursday evening), during the Lenten season, that Takes composed his most widely performed composition, “The Crucifixion.”

“Today is hung upon the cross, he Who suspended the Earth amid the waters (3 times). A crown of thorns crowns Him, Who is the King of Angels. He, Who wrapped the Heavens in clouds, is clothed with the purple mockery. He, who freed Adam in the Jordan, received buffetings. He was transfixed with nails, Who is the Bridegroom of the Church. He was pierced with a lance, Who is the Son of the Virgin. We worship Your Passion, O Christ. Show us also, Your glorious Resurrection.'

I assure everyone—you will not ever witness this most beautiful resurrection service anywhere else but at St. Sophia. This version of “The Crucifixion Hymn”, was written by our former Choir Director, Spiro Takes, father of Faith Takes. This version, our choir, and the entire reenactment at Golgotha in our beautiful church, is worthy of your presence so that we can all celebrate His Resurrection. Please come!

If you would like to sing with our choir, please contact me, Harry Ermides (text 518 573-7003) or email hermides92@gmail.com.
ΠΟΛΛΑ ΚΑΤΑΠΛΗΚΤΑ ΚΑΙ ΑΞΙΟΘΑΥΜΑΣΤΕ ΠΕΡΙΣΤΑΤΙΚΑ ΔΙΑΒΑΖΕΙ ΚΑΝΕΙΣ ΣΤΟΥΣ ΒΙΟΥΣ ΤΩΝ ΑΓΙΩΝ ΠΟΥ ΕΞΗΣΑΝ ΕΝ ΕΡΗΜΙΑΙΣ ΚΑΙ ΟΡΕΣΕΙ ΚΑΙ ΣΠΗΛΑΙΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΑΙΣ ΟΠΑΙΣ ΤΗΣ ΓΗΣ.

Εννοούμεν τους ασκητάς και οσίους οι οποίοι, κάτω από τον ισχυρόν πόθον της σωτηρίας της ψυχής των, δεν αρνήθηκαν απλώς τον κόσμων, δεν ειθυσίασαν περιουσίας και αξιώματα, δεν υπεβλήθησαν απλώς σε νηστείες και σε κατηρέσεις, ούτε αφιερωθήκαν σε ολοκληρείς μόνον προσευχές και ούτε απλώς έχυσαν πολλές φορές στην συνείδηση τους, θανάτου της μετάνοιας των και επότισαν με αυτά τους ερημικούς και αγόνους τόπους στους οποίους έζησαν, Ο ακατανίκητος πόθος της θανάτου της ψυχής των, τους ανάγκαζε οιτές πολλές φορές να προβαίνουν σε κατηρέσεις, που από τον πολύν κόσμον υπεβλήθησαν απλώς σε ενέργειες, και τον οποίον θεωρούσαν μωρία και τρελλά. Αυτοί όμως ενεργούσαν πάντα και στις δυσκολότερες πνευματικές ασκήσεις με επίγνωσι, διότι ήθελαν να βασανίσουν και να εξουθενώσουν τη σάρκα, που είναι της αμαρτίας το όργανο, και εξαΰλώσουσαν όσο μπορούσαν περισσότερο την αθάνατη ψυχή τους. Μέσα σ΄αυτές τις θαυμαστές μορφές των οσίων ανήκει και ο άγιος Θεόδωρος ο Τρίχινας τον οποίον σήμερα τιμά η Εκκλησία μας. Για την ιδιωτική του ζωή δεν γνωρίζουμε σχεδόν τίποτα. Η Ιερά Παράδοσης αναφέρει, ότι υπήρξε ένας από τους μεγάλους αγωνιστές της ερήμου, ο οποίος έφθασε σε σημείο να τύραννη του σώμα του με αφάνταστη σκληρότητα. Το χειμώνα έμεινε γυμνός στο ύπαιθρο, για να αισθάνεται δριμύτερα το φοβερό ψύχος. Και το καλοκαίρι έμεινε συνέχεια στον καύσωνα της ερήμου και μάλιστα ντυμένος με βαρεία τρίχινα ρούχα, γι’αυτό και ο λαός που εθαύμαζε την αγιότητα του και εδέχετο τις θαυματουργικές του ευλογίες, τον ονόμασε Τρίχινα και έτσι είναι γνωστός στο Αγιολόγιον της Εκκλησίας μας. Αλλά τέτοιες θαυμαστές μορφές είναι δυνατόν να μη χαρτώνονται από τον θεόν και να μη στεφανώνεται με το αιώνιο στεφάνι της αγιότητος.
Among the least known yet most venerated of our many saints was Pachomios, whose obscure life was such that his distance from man placed him closer to God, and yet he served both. Pachomios was one of the first monastics and the founder of communal monasticism.

Monasticism is not only one of the most sincere expressions of piety, but it is also one of the sturdiest pillars of the Christian faith. Monasticism is directed toward the attainment of the highest spiritual peace and serenity through prayer and meditation. The monastic thereby strives to attain likeness to God, in whose image all men are created. Those who look upon monastics as mere recluses seeking to avoid the harsh realities of life would do well to remember that without the strength of spirit and mind that the monasteries have provided, the light of Christianity would have been considerably dimmed, if not extinguished altogether.

Some of our greatest Christian stalwarts have been drawn from the monastic ranks. Their dedication to knowledge, wisdom, and faith in their eternal search for truth have been like those of the unheralded scientists whose microscopes have revealed the secrets that have helped mankind. The monk has often been the answer to both the apostate and the heretic.
The saint we honor for his endeavors in this much maligned but forceful and viable segment of Christianity is Pachomios. He was born during the reign of Constantine and was a soldier in the Byzantine army. Raised by pagan parents, he thoroughly enjoyed the military life with its pomp and splendor, but soon he discovered that he could perform greater service. He was not insensitive to his growing need for spiritual enlightenment and in an about-face he walked away from a life of conquest and riotous living, turning to one of the earnest meditation and prayer. Bidding his parents farewell, he left the urban comforts of his native country, exchanging them for the barren wastes of the desert of Tavennisis in Egypt, to which he confidently strode for an unheralded approach to God.

His seeming estrangement from society developed into a greater intimacy with God, and after many years in retreat his reputation as a man of God was spread throughout the empire. People were fascinated by the stories they eagerly would hear about Pachomios, the hermit, monk, intellectual, philosopher, and humble servant of God.

Within a decade, a total of twelve monasteries had been established in the desert by Pachomios. These monasteries were populated by those who followed him into the oppressive wasteland in search of God. The rules of monasticism laid down by him are still followed today. Such was his conception of the monastic approach to God that no one has ever sought to change it.

Although St. Pachomios would have preferred a complete isolation that he might give himself over totally to Jesus Christ, he fully realized that monasteries strategically located would lead to greater and more dedicated population of Christians who would see to more churches, since not all of Christianity could be wrapped up in tidy packages of humanity in cloisters. His full dedication to Jesus Christ did not bind him to the fact that the family unit was the nucleus of Christianity, but to supplement the work of priests there had to be the watchdogs but who were always on the alert to warn of danger.
These, then, were the monks, who, in spite of isolation were a driving force of Orthodoxy. They not only sat in on council sessions of importance, but some left their retreats to be ordained and rise in the hierarchy. St. Pachomios chose to stay with the cloister but his tremendous spirit went out into the land and we know him now as St. Pachomios the Great.

Many miracles came to be attributed to Pachomios; he attracted thousands who trekked mile after mile to be in his presence, to hear his counsel, and to receive his blessing. As a result, he was given the title of "Great" by the Fathers of the Church. Unlike the martyrs, Pachomios came to a peaceful end in his beloved desert on 15 May 395.

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In the Community

Easter and Lenten Donations

Donations for Good Friday Epitaphio flowers and lilies for the Resurrection Services are still needed. Also needed are donations for the carnations for the Good Friday Unnailing Service. Please call the church office if you would like to make a donation. Donors will be acknowledged in an upcoming Testament and can be “gifted” from you, your family, in memory of loved one, or simply anonymous.

Note: Philoptochos will also have a donation basket in the Exonarthex for Epitaphio flowers.

Save the Date

The 4th Annual "The Eleftheria Capital Region AHEPA Golf Outing" will take place on Wednesday, June 14th at Normanside Country Club in Delmar. There are several levels of sponsorships available. Please contact Chris Pappis at (518) 461-4608 if you have any questions. Flyer will be included in the next issue of the Testament.
May/April 2023 Class Schedule

Classes are in session:
- April 1st: Students will be baking Koulourakia!
- April 8th: Saturday of Lazarus- Students will be in church and then having Breakfast and making Palms after.

NO CLASS ON APRIL 15 FOR HOLY SATURDAY
- April 22nd, 29th
- May 6th, 13th

NO CLASS ON MAY 20 FOR GREEK FESTIVAL OR MAY 27 FOR MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND

Information

Gιατί τσουγκρίζουμε τα αυγά ... Εσείς ξέρετε;
Το τσουγκρισμα των πασχαλινών αυγών, συμβολίζει την Ανάσταση του Χριστού. Το αυγό συμβολίζει τη ζωή και τη δημιουργία που κλείνει μέσα του τη ζωή.

Why do we crack each other's eggs...Do you know?
The clinking of Easter eggs symbolizes the Resurrection of Christ. The egg symbolizes life and the creation that encloses life within it.

Upcoming Events:
- Greek Independence Day Parade Sunday, April 30th
- Greek School and Sunday School Graduation and Church Picnic Sunday, June 11th

email: greeklanguageacademy@stsophiaalbany.org
www.stsophiagreekschool.org
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>GREEK LANGUAGE &amp; CULTURE ACADEMY CLASSES IN SESSION</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>9:30 AM SUNDAY OF ST. MARY OF EGYPT LITURGY</td>
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<td>10:00 AM SUNDAY SCHOOL</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>7:00 PM AHEPA MEETING</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6:30 PM DAUGHTERS OF PENELope MEETING</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>9:30 AM PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>6:30 PM JOY/GOYA OVERNIGHT RETREAT</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>9:30 AM SATURDAY OF LAZARUS</td>
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<td>11:00 AM YOUTH BREAKFAST</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>GREEK LANGUAGE &amp; CULTURE ACADEMY CLASSES IN CHurch</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>9:30 AM PALM SUNDAY LITURGY</td>
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<td>10:00 AM SUNDAY SCHOOL</td>
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<td>11:00 AM PALM SUNDAY LUNCHEON</td>
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<td>6:30 PM SERVICE OF THE BRIDEGROOM</td>
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<td>6:30 PM SERVICE OF THE BRIDEGROOM</td>
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<td>6:30 PM HOLY UNCTION</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>8:30 AM LAST SUPPER LITURGY</td>
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<td>10:00 AM EPITAPHIOS DECORATING</td>
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<td>3:30 PM TAKING DOWN FROM THE CROSS</td>
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<td>6:30 PM LAMANTATIONS</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>8:30 AM HOURS</td>
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<td>10:00 AM LIFE-GIVING FONT LITURGY</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>9:30 AM FIRST RESURRECTION LITURGY</td>
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<td>11:00 AM ORTHROS RESURRECTION LITURGY</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>9:30 AM GREEK LANGUAGE &amp; CULTURE ACADEMY CLASSES IN SESSION</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>11:00 AM GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA AGAPE SERVICE</td>
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<td>FAMILY WORSHIP NO SUNDAY SCHOOL</td>
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<td>EASTER EGG HUNT</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>6:30 PM RELIGIOUS EDUCATION</td>
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<td>9:30 AM</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>GREEK LANGUAGE &amp; CULTURE ACADEMY CLASSES IN SESSION</td>
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# Holy Week Church Schedule

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<th><strong>Saturday</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>April 8</strong></td>
<td><strong>April 9</strong></td>
<td><strong>April 10</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lazarus Saturday</td>
<td>Palm Sunday</td>
<td>Holy Monday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Divine Liturgy 9:30 AM</td>
<td>Palm Sunday Liturgy 9:30 AM</td>
<td>Service of the Bridegroom 6:30 PM</td>
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<td>Youth Sponsored Breakfast 11:00 AM</td>
<td>Service of the Bridegroom 6:30 PM</td>
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<th><strong>Tuesday</strong></th>
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<td><strong>April 11</strong></td>
<td><strong>April 12</strong></td>
<td><strong>April 13</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Holy Tuesday</td>
<td>Holy Wednesday</td>
<td>Good Friday</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service of the Bridegroom 6:30 PM</td>
<td>Holy Unction 6:30 PM</td>
<td>Liturgy, Last Supper 8:30 AM</td>
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<td>Crucifixion Service 6:30 PM</td>
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<th><strong>Friday</strong></th>
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<td><strong>April 14</strong></td>
<td><strong>April 15</strong></td>
<td><strong>April 16</strong></td>
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<td>Good Friday</td>
<td>Holy Saturday</td>
<td>Great and Holy Pascha</td>
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<td>Hours 8:30 AM</td>
<td>Liturgy 9:30 AM</td>
<td>Agape Service 11:00 AM</td>
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<tr>
<td>Service of the Unnailing 3:30 PM</td>
<td>Resurrection Service and Divine Liturgy 11:00 PM</td>
<td>Easter Egg Hunt 12:00 PM</td>
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<td>Lamentations 6:30 PM</td>
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# May 2023

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<td><strong>GREEK LANGUAGE &amp; CULTURE ACADEMY CLASSES IN SESSION</strong></td>
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<td>9:30 AM SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH BEARING WOMEN DIVINE LITURGY</td>
<td>7:00 PM AHEPA MEETING</td>
<td>6:30 PM DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE MEETING</td>
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<td>9:30 AM SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC DIVINE LITURGY</td>
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<td>9:30 AM MID-PENTECOST DIVINE LITURGY NAME DAY OF THE CHURCH</td>
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<td>9:30 AM THE SAMARITAN WOMAN DIVINE LITURGY</td>
<td><strong>10:00 AM SUNDAY SCHOOL</strong></td>
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<td><strong>10:00 AM SUNDAY SCHOOL</strong></td>
<td><strong>6:00 PM ST. SOPHIA ANNUAL GREEK FESTIVAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>12:00 PM ST. SOPHIA ANNUAL GREEK FESTIVAL NO GREEK LANGUAGE &amp; CULTURE ACADEMY CLASSES IN SESSION</strong></td>
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<td>9:30 AM SUNDAY OF THE BLIND MAN DIVINE LITURGY</td>
<td><strong>12:00 PM ST. SOPHIA ANNUAL GREEK FESTIVAL NO GREEK LANGUAGE &amp; CULTURE ACADEMY CLASSES IN SESSION</strong></td>
<td><strong>10:00 AM LITURGY AT GRACELAND AND MEMORIAL SERVICE</strong></td>
<td><strong>5:00 PM TAKING LEAVE OF PASCHA</strong></td>
<td><strong>9:30 AM HOLY ASCENSION DIVINE LITURGY</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO GREEK LANGUAGE &amp; CULTURE ACADEMY CLASSES IN SESSION</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO GREEK LANGUAGE &amp; CULTURE ACADEMY CLASSES IN SESSION</strong></td>
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<td><strong>9:30 AM FIRST COUNCIL DIVINE LITURGY</strong></td>
<td><strong>10:00 AM LITURGY AT GRACELAND AND MEMORIAL SERVICE</strong></td>
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**PAGE 34 | CHURCH CALENDAR**
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