

VOICE

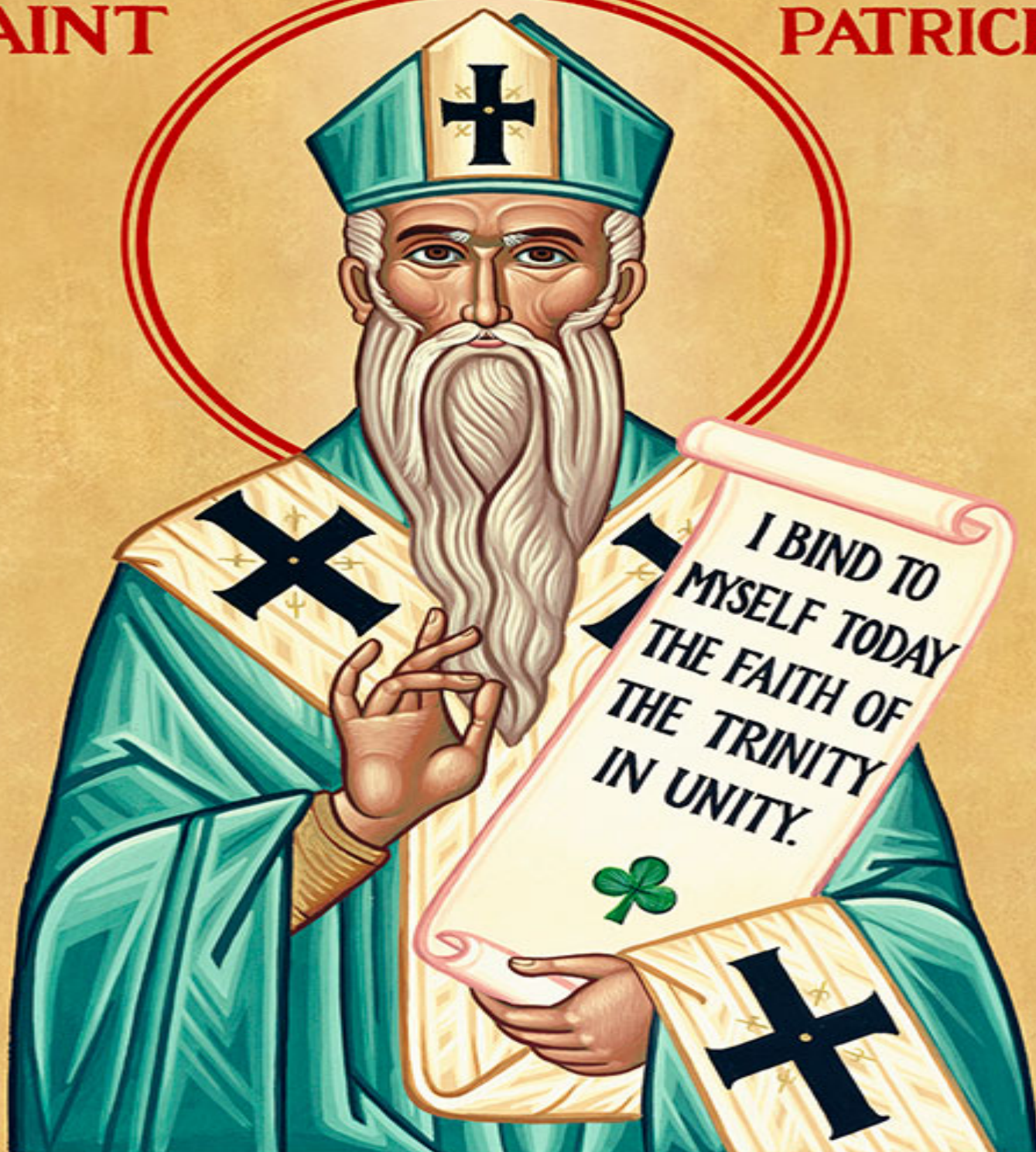
ANNUNCIATION GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH



March - April 2024

SAINT

PATRICK



St. Patrick of Ireland - March 17th

Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church
Rev. Fr. Dean Nastos, Presiding Priest
Fr. Deacon John Howard

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VISIT US ON FACEBOOK

Annunciation GOC Fort Myers

Annunciation Greek Orthodox Parish of Fort Myers Mission Statement

The mission of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church Parish is to proclaim and live the Orthodox Christian Faith in its fullness as faithful brothers and sisters in Christ, and to welcome all who are seeking the truth of the Lord's presence, mercy and grace. We must focus as a family of believers in order to reach salvation in and through Jesus Christ. This sacred mission is fulfilled in the Holy Spirit by living our faith through worship, teaching, witness, outreach, service and fellowship. All Parish activities will succeed if only done for the glory of God. By using our own God-given gifts of Time, Talents, and Treasures we will accomplish this divine sacred work.

Message from our Priest

MARCH & APRIL 2024

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

When God has completed His magnificent work of creation, He looked upon it with joy and saw that it was good. He then created us in His own image and according to His likeness and made us caretakers of all of creation. In this account from the Book of Genesis, we realize the beginnings of what we call Stewardship. Stewardship is your expression of love and gratitude to God and His Church. It is a profound action which conveys your heartfelt appreciation to God and His Church for His many blessings to you and your family. Stewardship is the means by which you support your Parish in order to perform her sacred ministry as well as to preserve and cultivate our Orthodox Faith.

Our Parish has been in service to our Lord for many years. During this time, we have continued to build the Parish's ability to establish and promote ministries of wide interest, to expand the spiritual, religious, educational and social awakening and understanding. As you can see, when put in its proper perspective, Stewardship is much more than just another means of financial support; it is our response to the Lord's calling to be "the caretakers of the things of God." Whether those things are material or spiritual, public, or personal, all that we possess and whatever we have become are gifts from God.

This month we complete the first quarter of 2024. In prayer and in good conscience, consider the best amount that you can offer in Time, Talents, and Treasures for our Parish. Good Stewardship is generous and sacrificial.

Our Stewardship goal for 2024 was increased by \$40,000. If you have already pledged, we thank you and if possible, we ask that you consider increasing your pledge to help meet our goal. Remember, every little bit helps. Can we count on you?

In Christ's Service,

Fr. Dean

Message from the Parish Council President

A Letter to my Annunciation family,

First, I would like to thank Cheryl Haught for the leadership she demonstrated over the last two years, as she navigated the Council through some challenging times. Thank you, Cheryl.

Thank you to John & Olympia Ruppe for the leadership shown in the planning and execution of our Greekfest, even in the rain. The Council members and Parish family who stepped up,
Thank you!

I'm looking forward to working with Council members and you, my family, in all the responsibilities there are in the operational aspects of our Parish. However, and more importantly, we are here to support Father Dean in fulfilling our mission statement...

"To proclaim and love the Orthodox Christian Faith in all its fullness as faithful brothers and sisters in Christ, and to welcome ALL who are seeking the truth of the Lord's presence, mercy and grace."

Soon we will be embarking on our Lenten journey. We pray to stay in the prayers and reverence of this season, as we should throughout the year.

Thank you to the Council members for this opportunity to help guide all of us through good and challenging times, together, and to the glory of God.

Blessings to all,

Heidi Kubiak
Parish Council President

2024 SACRAMENT, BLESSING & RITE REGISTRY

BAPTISM

Georgia Neskes was baptized in our Parish on February 4th. Her parents are Dimitri and Victoria Neskes. Her Sponsors was **Cassie Leon**. Her Grandparents are Nomiki Neskes and Rich & Georgia Kline. May our Lord continue to bless her and grant her many years.

WEDDING

Thomas Martinez and Kerri Foley were united marriage in our Parish on February 24th. Their Sponsor is Jordan Brevileri. Congratulations to Thomas's parents Orlando and Kalotina and to Kerri's parents Robert and Theresa. They live in Fort Myers. May our Lord continue to bless them for many years as they begin their life united in Christ.

FELL ASLEEP IN THE LORD

Martha Bugella fell asleep in the Lord on December 28, 2023. She is survived by her son, Marcus and daughter, Maria. Martha was 96 years old. She was one of the founding members of our Parish and was a very active member of our Philoptochos. We offer our prayers and sympathies to his **son Marcus and daughter Maria** and to the rest of his family. May her memory be eternal and may life be unto the family.

Philoptochos Ministry

Dear Annunciation Family,

I pray this communication finds you well, and you are rested from the Fest.

Thank you to all who supported our **Wear Red** for Women's Heart Health on **February 11**.



Next General Membership Meeting:

Join us for our next general membership meeting on **Monday, March 11, at 6:00 pm, in the Education Building**. We are looking forward to seeing you as we discuss our upcoming volunteer events with the Ronald McDonald House, Gladiolus Food Pantry, Community Co-Op (feeding the hungry and homeless of SWFL), IOCC, and I AM F.U.S.E. (human trafficking victim assistance).

Upcoming Events:

Now through April 28: Please support our **Spread the Love** Peanut Butter & Jelly drive to help feed hungry children in our area during the summer months. Bring plastic jars of peanut butter (or any nut butter) and jelly to the church by **April 28**. Call Doreen Turnas (407) 222-6197 if you have any questions. Keep a close eye on the Buy One Get One Free deals offered at grocery stores.

March 24 Fellowship: Following the vespers for the Feast of the Annunciation, join us for a **Lenten** fellowship hosted by the Philoptochos. Please call Christina Lazar (239) 850-3373 if you'd like to bring something to share.

April Bake Sale: Stay tuned for more information on upcoming Easter Bread (tsoureki)/Bake Sale scheduled for April 20, 21 & 28. Christina Lazar and Nicki Constantelo are our co-chairs.

May 3: We will be decorating the church for Good Friday at **9 am**. Please call Doreen Turnas (407) 222-6197/Tiffany Williams (239) 298-0270 if you'd like to help. We encourage all to attend as this is a beautiful dedication of time and talent to prepare our church and decorate the kouvouklion for Good Friday and Pascha.

Have a blessed Lenten Journey – Kali Sarakosti!

Yours in Christ,
Angela Esler, Philoptochos President

PS: Eric and I thank you all for your overwhelming welcome for my brother, Bishop Constantine of Sassima. He was truly humbled and grateful for all your expressions of kindness and love.

Religious Education Ministry

March/April Voice

AGOC Religious Education

The past few weeks were relatively quiet for the AGOC Religious Education students and teachers. After busy holidays and the Christmas break, classes continued as usual, with dance practice for the Greek Festival afterwards.

Thank you to the children who decorated “Welcome Your Grace Bishop Constantine” flyers for Bishop Constantine. According to his sister, Angela Esler, he was very appreciative of your message.

The Oratorical Festival is planned for March. Grades 8-12 will prepare a short presentation that may be shared with our parish in March. Children in grades 5-8 will also be presenting brief thoughts on special topics in March. Children in grades Pre-K through grade 4 will be coloring pictures that will be on display in the church hall.

Our 5th -12th grade children will have the opportunity to participate in Holy Week readings. Signups will take place in April. Girls ages 4 and up will participate as Myrrh Bearers during Holy Friday evening service. Information will be sent home in April.

Our Spring Service project will be announced in the next few weeks. Please watch for information in the weekly church bulletin. Proceeds will go to the Children’s Light Foundation.

Information about our end of the year celebration, May 19th, will be shared with students and parents as soon as plans are confirmed.

Anyone interested in helping with AGOC Sunday School, please contact Fr. Dean Nastos in the church office or Mary Sue Gladis, marys828@comcast.net.



Stewardship Ministry

What a beautiful example of the tenants of stewardship were observed during our Greekfest. So many gave! Whether it was time, talents or treasure, our family came together and we held Fest #49! The rich tapestry of our Greek culture, traditions, food and faith were on display. So many people enjoyed our Church tours, our dancers, our vendors and of course, our food. Thank you, again!

As for Stewardship numbers, from our Stewardship drive, and thru mid February, we have 104 pledged families, and 25 non pledged. Pledges total almost \$126,000 while our budgeted goal was \$200,000 suffice it to say, we have work to do! The Stewardship committee will be coming together soon, any ideas are always welcome. These numbers are just a bit lower when compared to last year, but we understand our current economy is different from last year! Thank you to those who pledged and to those still praying about it, we appreciate you!

With love and prayers,
Heidi Kubiak
Stewardship Chair

CHEESEFARE SUNDAY

On this day we commemorate the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. The Fathers of the Church set aside the anniversary of the exile of Adam and Eve from the paradise of bliss on this day to show us be deed as well as by word what a great benefit that accrues to man by fasting; and on the contrary, how great the harm that comes from destructive gluttony and from disobedience to the Divine Commandments. They also wished to emphasize that the first commandment given to men was the commandment of fasting, which, since our first created ancestors disobeyed, not only did they not become gods, as they imagined, but lost the life of happiness and bliss which they enjoyed, falling into the pit of corruption and death, and trasmitting these to the whol human race.

2024 ANNUNCIATION EVENTS CALENDAR MARCH - APRIL 2024 ***

Sat., Mar. 9th - 1st Saturday of Souls Liturgy – 9:30 AM
Mon. Mar. 11th - Philoptochos Meeting - 6:00 PM
Tues., Mar. 12th - 4th Inquirers Class - 6:00 PM
Wed., Mar. 13th – GOYA Meeting – 5:30 PM
Sat., Mar. 16th - 2nd Saturday of Souls Liturgy - 9:30 AM
Sun., Mar. 17th - Parish Oratorical Festival
Mon., Mar. 18th - GREAT LENT BEGINS
 - 5th Catechism Class - 6:00 PM
Wed. Mar. 20th - 1st Presanctified Liturgy - 6:00 PM
Thurs., Mar. 21st - 5th Inquirers Class - 6:00 PM
Fri., Mar. 22nd - 1st Salutations - 6:00 PM
Sat., Mar. 23rd - 3rd Saturday of Souls Liturgy - 9:30 AM
Sun., Mar. 24th - 1st Sunday of Lent - Sunday of Orthodoxy
 - Vespers for Annunciation - 6:00 PM
 - Annunciation Feastday Luncheon following Liturgy
Mon., Mar. 25th - Annunciation Liturgy - 9:00 AM
 - 6th Catechism Class - 6:00 PM
Tues., Mar. 26th - 6th Inquirers Class - 6:00 PM
Wed., Mar. 27th - 2nd Presanctified Liturgy - 6:00 PM
Fri., Mar. 29th - 2nd Salutations - 6:00 PM
Sun., Mar. 31st - 2nd Sunday of Great Lent – Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas
Mon., Apr. 1st - 7th Catechism Class - 6:00 PM
Tues., Apr. 2nd - 7th Inquirers Class - 6:00 PM
Wed., Apr. 3rd - 3rd Presanctified Liturgy - 6:00 PM
Fri., Apr. 5th - 3rd Salutations - 6:00 PM
Sun., Apr. 7th - 3rd Sun. of Lent – Sun. of Veneration of Holy Cross
 - Parish General Assembly Meeting Following Liturgy
Tues., Apr 9th - 7th Inquirers Class - 6:00 PM
Wed., Apr. 10th - 4th Presanctified Liturgy - 6:00 PM
Fri., Apr. 12th - 4th Salutations - 6:00 PM
Sun., Apr. 14th - 4th Sunday of Lent – St. John of the Ladder
Wed., Apr. 17th - 5th Presanctified Liturgy - 6:00 PM
Fri., Apr. 19th - Akathist Hymn - 6:00 PM
Sun., Apr. 21st - 5th Sunday of Lent – St. Mary of Egypt
 - Parish Spring General Assembly Meeting
Wed., Apr. 24th - 6th Presanctified Liturgy - 6:00 PM
Sat., Apr. 27th - Saturday of Lazarus Lit. & Palm Making – 9:30 AM
Sun., Apr. 28th - 6th Sunday of Lent - Palm Sunday Luncheon
Sunday, Apr. 28th – May 5th - HOLY WEEK – SEE SPECIAL SCHEDULE

***** Subject to change*****

OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA! 2024		
Created by Fr. Jonathan Bannon (ACROD)		
SUNDAYS	THEMES / GOSPEL READING	HOW TO PARTICIPATE:
Fast - Free Week FEBRUARY 25th	TRIODION WEEKS Publican and the Pharisee Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15 Gospel: Luke 18:10-14	Show compassion on the poor and distressed. Trust in God, not yourself and ask for His help before every task this week.
Normal Fast Week MARCH 3rd	The Prodigal Son Returns! Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Gospel: Luke 15:11-32	Schedule a Confession. Every morning say, "Today I will be humble." Use up/freeze meats this week.
Meatfare MARCH 10th FAREWELL TO MEAT TODAY	The Last Judgement Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46	Pray facing East this week. Christ is returning from the East and we wait for Him! Use up/freeze dairy this week.
Cheesefare MARCH 17th FAREWELL TO CHEESE TODAY	Adam and Eve are cast from Paradise! FORGIVENESS SUNDAY Epistle: Romans 13:11-14:4 Gospel: Matthew 6:14-21	Ask each other for forgiveness each evening this week before bed.
1st Sunday of Lent MARCH 24th	GREAT LENT BEGINS WITH FORGIVENESS VESPERS SUNDAY of ORTHODOXY Epistle: Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-12:2 Gospel: John 1:43-51	Bring an icon to church for a procession.
2nd Sunday of Lent MARCH 31st	ST GREGORY PALAMAS Epistle: Hebrews 1:10-2:3 Gospel: Mark 2:1-12	Bring a prayer rope to be blessed today! Use it and pray the Jesus Prayer each day this week.
3rd Sunday of Lent APRIL 7th	VERNERATION OF THE HOLY CROSS HALF WAY TO PASCHA! Epistle: Hebrews 4:14-5:6 Gospel: Mark 8:34-9:1	Wear your cross to church and kiss the cross each morning with a bow!
4th Sunday of Lent APRIL 14th	ST JOHN of the LADDER Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20 Gospel: Mark 9:17-31	Every time you climb stairs this week ask St. John to help you reach Paradise with the sign of the cross!
5th Sunday of Lent APRIL 21st	ST MARY of EGYPT Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14 Gospel: Mark 10:32-45	Ask the Theotokos to offer you and the world pure thoughts and ideas this week.
FLOWERY (PALM) SUNDAY! APRIL 28th GREAT WEEK BEGINS	GREAT AND HOLY WEEK ENTRY OF OUR LORD INTO JERUSALEM Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9 Gospel: John 12:1-18	Place your palm branches and pussywillows behind an icon at home and in your car!
GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY MAY 3rd	GREAT AND HOLY FRIDAY JESUS DIES ON THE CROSS CHECK WITH YOUR PARISH FOR ROYAL HOURS AND VESPERS SCHEDULE	Refrain from TV, Internet & Phones to honor Christ's Death.
FEAST OF FEASTS! MAY 5th NO FASTING!	BRIGHT WEEK HOLY PASCHA! (CHRIST IS RISEN!) Epistle: Acts 1:1-8 Gospel: John 1:1-17	Greet everyone with "CHRIST IS RISEN!" & say it before good morning and goodnight!



WELCOME NEW FAMILY MEMBERS

Our Ministry Team has grown with members Elaine Green, Cheryl Haught, Fran Goldner, Sultanna Kourpouanidis, Nike Constantelo, Athena Fisk, Nancy Koupelis, Doreen Turans, Voula and Mike Samaras and myself. You will see them in the area outside of the Narthex. If you bring a friend or family to worship, please fill out a WELCOME CARD. New guests visiting or moving to our area who are seeking Christian worship and fellowship. Fr. Dean will acknowledge the new families at the end of Liturgy.

We welcome this year 2024:

Adrianna & Mark Zaharis	Viktoriiia Tonkonoh & Family
Cheryl & Leo Sioris	Lois & Jerome Simon
Virginia Scarpelos	Iuliia Rybovalova & Family
Elena & Travis Dowhen	Andrianna Moustakas
Dr. Thomas & Karolyn Ladas & Family	
Peter Domer & Dr. Nanette Rumsey	John & Vicki Dimurro
Carole Farella & Family	Peggy & Jim Boytor
Jon & Peggy Kennedy	Lexi Patestos

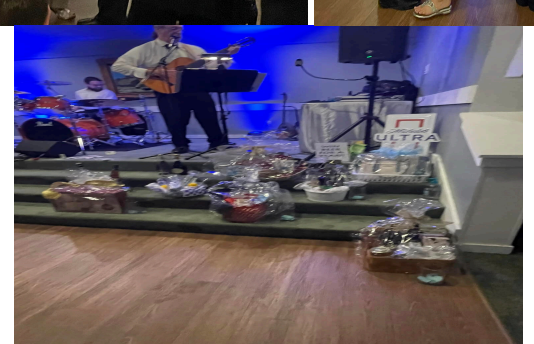
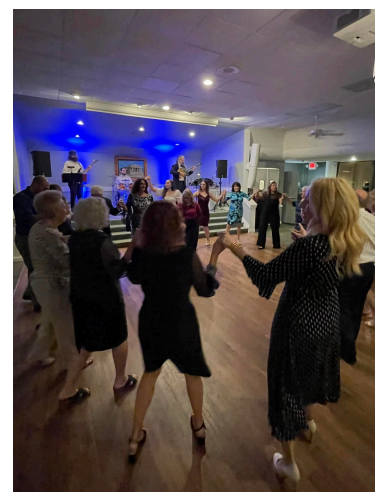
In His Service,
Presvytera Carolyn

The Triodion

Great Lent has its own liturgical book - *The Lenten Triodion*. It contains hymns and biblical readings for every day of the lenten season beginning with the Sunday of Publican and the Pharisee and ending with Vespers of Great and Holy Saturday...Very few people today know and understand the unique beauty of depth of this lenten hymnography. The ignorance of the Triodion is the principle cause of the slow transformation of the very understanding of Lent, of its purpose and meaning - a transformation which took place little by little in the Christian mentally and reduced Lent to a juridical "obligation" and a set of dietary laws. The real inspiration and challenge of Lent is all but lost today and there is no other way toward its recovery but by an attentive listening to the hymns of the Triodion. It is significant, for example, how often these hymns warn precisely against a "formal" and therefore hypocritical understanding of fasting. Throughout the whole Lent, the opposition of the Publican's humility to the Pharisee's boasting and self-glorification is stressed in hymns, while hypocrisy is denounced. But what then is the *real fast*? The Triodion answers: It is first of all inner purification. It is also a return to love, a fight against "broken life," against hatred, injustice and envy. How many people have accepted the idea that Lent is the time when something, which may be good in itself, is forbidden, as if God were taking pleasure in torturing us? For the authors of lenten hymns, however, Lent is exactly the opposite. It is a return to the "normal" life, to that "fasting" which Adam and Eve broke, thus introducing suffering and death into the world. Lent is greeted, therefore, as a spiritual spring, as a time of *joy* and *light*. Only those who "rejoice in the Lord," and for whom Christ and His Kingdom are the ultimate desire and joy of their existence, can joyfully accept the fight against evil and sin and partake of the final victory...Throughout the forty days, it is the Cross of Christ and His Resurrection, and the radiant joy of Pascha that constitute the supreme "term of reference" of all lenten hymnography, a constant reminder that however narrow and difficult the way, it ultimately leads to Christ's table and Kingdom.

--from Great Lent, by Alexander Schmemmann

Glendi Event, January 27th





Vasilopita, Jan. 7th

7 facts you must know about the *Divine Liturgy*

The most important moment is the Epiiclesis, when the priest invokes the Holy Spirit who transforms the bread and wine.

The bread and wine are not symbols, they are turned into the Body and Blood of Christ.

The Liturgy is a spiritual dialogue between the priest who serves and the faithful.

The answer "God have mercy" is the shortest and most concentrated prayer of the Church.

People chant during the service words spoken by angels ("Holy, Holy, Holy Lord of Sabaoth").

The antidoron that is shared is the leftover prosphora from which the Lamb was removed and it represents the Theotokos.

The faithful must keep quiet until they leave the church, because in the Holy Altar the Holy Mysteries are consumed and angels are present.

BASILICA.RO



GOYA GATHERING



Hope & Joy Gathering at Spinz



IOCC Dinner Gathering



THE PRESVYTERES Clergy Wives from Fort Myers, Boca Raton, Miami and Naples met for lunch and gathered as the Southeastern Conference of Florida met in January. Presvytera Carolyn represented Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church.



Troupe Dancers at FSW



Thank you note from IOCC



Dear Father Dean,

A brief note of thanks to you and your parish for the wonderful hospitality during our Field Volunteer Conference. The parish facilities worked out great and we've received very positive feedback from the participants.

May our loving Lord continue to bless and strengthen you in your ministry!

Adelphiwa,
Dr. Paul





Greek Fest 2024

We thank you for all your hard work and dedication. We worked hard together and got the job done. Get ready for next year for the 50th annual Greek Fest. Thank you for all your support.

**John and Olympia Ruppe
Co-Chairs**



**Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church
Ladies Philoptochos**



Community Cooperative is a local organization who feeds the hungry in Lee County. Your donations will provide needy Lee County children lunches this summer.

Please support the Annunciation Philoptochos by bringing the following items (plastic jars only) by April 28:

PLASTIC JARS ONLY

- Peanut Butter, Almond Butter, or Sunflower Butter
- Jelly
- Jam

Contact Doreen Turnas at (407) 222-6197 with any questions.

2024 GREAT LENT AND HOLY WEEK FLOWERS

Flowers always add beauty to whatever they adorn. It has always been a tradition among our Orthodox Churches to decorate Holy Icons with flowers when the Feast Day is being celebrated.

Please contact the **Church Office** and donate towards the flowers you would like as soon as possible. As always, this will be done on a first come, first serve basis. The names of those who donate the flowers will be listed in the Annunciation Voice the month **AFTER** the Feast day is celebrated. Thank you for your support in this project and may our Lord continue to bless you.

Flowers for 1 st Salutations Icon - Mar. 22 nd	\$45.00
Flowers for Sunday of Orthodoxy Icon - Mar. 24 th	\$45.00
Flowers for Annunciation Icon - Mar. 25 th	\$45.00
Flowers for 2 nd Salutations Icon - Mar. 29 th	\$45.00
Flowers for St. Gregory Palamas Icon - Mar. 31 st	\$45.00
Flowers for 3 rd Salutations Icon - Apr. 5 th	\$45.00
Daffodils for 3 rd Sunday of Lent - Apr. 7 th	\$75.00
Flowers for Veneration of Holy Cross Icon - Apr. 7 th	\$45.00
Flowers for 4 th Salutations Icon - Apr. 12 th	\$45.00
Flowers for St. John Climacus Icon - Apr. 14 th	\$45.00
Flowers for Akathist Hymn Icon - Apr. 19 th	\$45.00
Flowers for St. Mary of Egypt Icon - Apr. 21 st	\$45.00
Flowers for Saturday of Lazarus Icon - Apr. 27 th	\$45.00
Palms for Palm Sunday - Apr. 28 th	\$100.00
Flowers for Palm Sunday Icon - Apr. 28 th	\$45.00
Flowers for Numphios Icon - Apr. 28 th	\$45.00
Flowers for Numphios Icon - Apr. 29 th	\$45.00
Flowers for Numphios Icon - Apr. 30 th	\$45.00
Oil for Holy Unction Service - May 1 st	\$10.00
Cotton for Holy Unction Service - May 1 st	\$5.00
Flowers for Last Supper Icon - May 2 nd	\$45.00
Flowers for Crucifixion Icon - May 2 nd	\$45.00
Wreaths (2) for Top & Bottom of Cross - May 2 nd	\$50.00 each
Candles for Candelabra - May 2 nd	\$75.00
Rose Petals - May 3 rd	\$20.00
Rose Water - May 3 rd	\$10.00
Flowers for Apokathelosis Icon - May 3 rd	\$45.00
Good Friday Candles - May 3 rd	\$25.00
Flowers for Resurrection Icon - May 5 th	\$45.00
Resurrection Candle for Priest - May 5 th	\$50.00
Pascha Red Eggs - May 4 th & May 5 th (30 Dozen)	\$30.00
LILLIES FOR PASCHA - May 5 th	\$20.00 A PLANT

2024 FLOWERS FOR FEAST DAY ICONS

Flowers always add beauty to whatever they adorn. It has always been a tradition among our Orthodox Churches to decorate Holy Icons with flowers when the Feast Day is being celebrated.

Please contact the Church Office and donate towards the flowers you would like as soon as possible. As always, this will be done on *a first come, first serve basis*. The names of those who donate the flowers will be listed in the "VOICE" Newsletter the month *after* the Feast Day is celebrated. Thank you for your support in this project and may our Lord continue to bless you. Please make your check payable to: ANNUNCIATION CHURCH

Flowers for Prodigal Son Icon - Mar. 3 rd	\$45.00
Flowers for Last Judgment Icon - Mar. 10 th	\$45.00
Flowers for Expulsion of Adam & Eve Icon - Mar. 17 th	\$45.00
Flowers for Sunday of Orthodoxy Icon - Mar. 24 th	\$45.00
Flowers for St. Gregory Palamas Icon - Mar. 31 st	\$45.00
Flowers for Veneration of Holy Cross Icon - Apr. 7 th	\$45.00
Flowers for St. John of the Ladder Icon - Apr. 14 th	\$45.00
Flowers for St. Mary of Egypt Icon - Apr. 21 st	\$45.00
Flowers for St. George Icon - May 6 th	\$45.00
Flowers for Sunday of St. Thomas Icon - May 12 th	\$45.00
Flowers for Sun. Myrrhbearing Women Icon - May 19 th	\$45.00
Flowers for SS. Constantine & Helen Icon - May 21 st	\$45.00
Flowers for Sunday of Paralytic Icon - May 26 th	\$45.00

2024 PARISH COUNCIL OFFICERS

On Wednesday, February 21st under the supervision of Fr. Dean the elected Parish Council members elected the Officers for 2024. Our entire Parish would like to thank Mike Martinjuk, Dr. Dirk Peterson and John Xouris for their dedicated service to our Parish as they leave the Parish Council. The Parish Council welcomes as new members **Sundy Gulu and Vasili Kourpouanidis**. We congratulate all of our Parish Council members for offering their Time, Talents and Treasures and pray the Lord will continue to bless them as they serve our Parish for the benefit of all members.

The 2024 Officers are:

President: Mrs. Heidi Kubiak

Vice-President: Mrs. Olympia Ruppe

Secretary: Mrs. Louise DiStefano

Treasurer: Mr. Mike Stamatopoulos

The remaining members are **Mary Sue Gladis, Cheryl Haight, Art Turnas and Dmitri Yusin**

ST. JAMES THE APOSTLE

APRIL 30TH

St. James was one of the sons of Zebedee and the brother of St. John the Evangelist. They were fishermen and one day while they worked, Jesus appeared on the shore and called to them; they left Zebedee and followed Him (Mark 1:20 & Matthew 4:21). In the lists of the names of the Apostles, the name of St. James appears before that of St. John, except in one instance; this may mean that he is the older of the two, the more so because we know that St. John was a young man.

St. James is mentioned in all the Gospels. He was present with Jesus on many important occasions. Once when they came to a Samaritan village which refused to receive our Lord, St. James wondered whether they should summon fire to destroy it, but Jesus answered him saying, "The Son of man has not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. (Luke 9:18).

St. James was present at the Transfiguration of the Lord (Matt. 17:1) and he was one of those with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane on the night of His arrest (Matt. 26:37). With the other Apostles, he witnessed Christ's Ascension (Acts 1:9 – 14).

About the year 43 AD, St. James was seized at Jerusalem and put to death with the sword, on the order of King Herod Agrippa. St. James is often represented with a sword, as a symbol of his martyrdom.

LENTON PRAYER OF ST. EPHRIAM THE SYRIAN

LORD AND MASTER OF MY LIFE, TAKE FROM ME THE
SPIRIT OF SLOTH, DESPAIR, LUST OF POWER, AND IDLE
TALK

BUT GIVE RATHER THE SPIRIT OF CHASTITY, HUMILITY,
PATIENCE, AND LOVE TO YOUR SERVANT
YES, LORD AND KING, GRANT ME TO SEE MY OWN
TRANSGRESSIONS AND NOT TO JUDGE MY BROTHER. FOR
YOU ARE BLESSED UNTO THE AGES OF AGES.
AMEN.

ST. PATRICK – ENLIGHTENER OF IRELAND

MARCH 17

His name is Magonas Sucatus Patricius; the world knows him as St. Patrick, Enlightener of Ireland. St. Patrick was not Irish by birth, but Roman, a native of Roman Britain. He was the son of the Deacon Calpurnius and grandson of the Priest Potitus. He lived in Southern Britain. So it was that the young Patrick was taken from his home, at age 16, by Irish pirates in a coastal raid in the early 400's.

Though from a clergy family, he was not particularly pious. Yet, there, in the deep shadows of the Irish mountains, he slowly came again to faith and recovered a sense of fervent dedication to the Son of God. He also had a young man's sense of adventure and felt God calling him to flee his servitude and return home. One night, he heard an insistent voice say, "See, your ship is ready!" Believing this to be a summons from God, he took flight (even though he risked death by doing so). The ship, however, waited far away – almost two hundred miles distant. St. Patrick found a ship setting for Gaul (now France) and the captain eventually allowed him to work for his passage. At length he came to Gaul and then to the famous monastery at L'rins. Having learned the ascetic traditions of the monastic fathers, he finally returned home, to Britain.

At this time the Lord had other plans for St. Patrick. The young man, now tempered by suffering, was to take his place with other Orthodox evangelists down through the ages. St. Patrick obeyed the heavenly call and returned for a time to the continent (Ireland) to prepare himself for his mission. So the evangelists began a tireless trek through Ireland which would last several decades, crossing and recrossing the broad land returning to revisit his new converts and their clergy and to strengthen them in the Orthodox Faith. His evangelistic strategy was to negotiate with the local chieftain for a grant of land for his Church and monastery, and then work to establish and train the clergy to staff it, so that his many converts might have adequate pastoral care.

There were many adventures that brought danger to St. Patrick. The stories told about his tales illustrated his main characteristics, which won him the respect and admiration of all the Irish; his unflinching courage. Nothing could turn him from his path or persuade him to surrender his holy mission – not threats against his life, nor capture, nor exhausting journeys, nor homesickness for his native land. St. Patrick was kept at his post by one more thing – the love he had for his new Irish people. He referred to them as "sons and daughters," as "the Lord's sheep," as "Christian brothers."

Exhausted by his journeys in about 451 AD at the age of about 75, the spiritual father of Christian Ireland gave his soul to Christ.

The Triodion and Paschal Cycle in the Orthodox Church (19 weeks)

Week before the Preparation

Zaccheus or Canaanite Woman

Preparation for the Great Fast

1. Pharisee and Publican
2. Prodigal Son
3. Meatfare – Sunday of the Judgment
4. Cheese fare – Sunday of Forgiveness

Great Fast begins on Monday

- 1st Sunday – Orthodoxy Sunday – Restoration of the Holy Icons
- 2nd Sunday – St. Gregory Palamas – Defense of Orthodoxy
- 3rd Sunday – Holy Cross
- 4th Sunday – St. John of the Ladder
- 5th Sunday – St. Mary of Egypt
 - 5th Saturday – Raising of Lazarus
- 6th Sunday – Palm Sunday

The Great and Holy Week

Monday and Tuesday -- Theme of the Bridegroom
Wednesday -- Holy Unction
Thursday -- Mystical Supper/Institution of the Holy Eucharist
Friday -- Passion of Christ and Placing on the Cross
Saturday -- Placing in the Tomb and Descent into Hades

Pascha – the Glorious Resurrection of our Lord and Savior

Bright or New Week

Paschal Liturgies everyday

Sundays after Pascha

- 2nd Sunday of Pascha – Thomas
- 3rd Sunday of Pascha – Myrrh-bearing Women, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus
- 4th Sunday of Pascha – Paralytic
- 5th Sunday of Pascha – Samaritan Woman
- 6th Sunday of Pascha – Blindman
 - Ascension Thursday
- 7th Sunday of Pascha – Holy Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council

Pentecost Sunday

All Saints Sunday

ORTHODOX FASTING GUIDELINES 2024

During the forty (40) day period of Great Lent, which began on Clean Monday (**March 18, 2024**) and the Christmas Fast, which always begins on **November 15**, all Orthodox Christians are called upon to undertake the spiritual exercises which will allow them to properly prepare themselves to meet the Lord at His Resurrection at Pascha and in the flesh at His Nativity. The Church offers us these spiritual exercises so that we may prepare our soul and body in order to rejoice at the Resurrection. The Spiritual exercises are as follows: **increased prayer, the increased reading of Holy Scripture and other religious materials, the greater participation in Holy Confession and Holy Communion, the increased offering of our Time, Talents and Treasures (Stewardship) to the Parish and upon those in need and fasting from foods.** Let us commit ourselves to keeping the Great Lent and Christmas Fast all forty days and not just one or two weeks.

The word “fast” means “not eating all or certain foods.” As Orthodox Faithful, we can fast completely at certain times of great importance, like Great Lent and the Christmas Fast, and especially each time before receiving Holy Communion. Usually, fasting means limiting the number of meals and/or the type of food eaten. The purpose of fasting is to remind us of the Spiritual teaching, “**Man does not live by bread alone.**” The needs of the body are nothing compared to the needs of the soul. Above all else, we need God, Who provides everything for both the body and the soul. Fasting teaches us to depend on God more fully.

We fast from food, or a food item, as a reminder that we are to fast from sinning and doing evil. Fasting helps us pray more easily. Our spirit is lighter when we are not weighed down by too much food or food that is too rich. Through fasting, we also learn to feel compassion for the poor and hungry and to save our own resources so that we can help those in need.

Fasting is more than not eating food. St. John Chrysostom teaches that it is more important to fast from sin. For example, besides controlling what goes into our mouths, we must control what comes out of our mouths as well. Are our words pleasing to God, or do we curse God or our brother? The other members of the body also need to fast: our eyes from seeing evil, our ears from hearing evil, and our limbs from participating in anything that is not of God. Most important of all, we need to control our thoughts, for thoughts are the source of our actions, whether good or evil.

Fasting is not an end in itself. Our goal is an inner change of heart. The Great Lent is called “ascetic.” This refers to actions of self-denial and spiritual training which are central to fasting. Fasting is one of the spiritual exercises. It is not imposed or forced upon us. In the same way that true repentance cannot be forced upon anyone, each of us makes the choice to turn away from our sinful ways and go toward our loving forgiving Father in Heaven.

What are the spiritual benefits of fasting?

Fasting provides the strength to fight the many temptations which we face in life by helping us to subdue the passions and to control our self-will. These are lessons learned by the great ascetic Fathers of the Church who spent their entire lives focused on prayer and growing closer to God. They have taught that certain foods – or even too much of any food – can have a significant

effect on our spiritual well-being. For example, when we eat too much we get sluggish and instead of being alert for prayer, we get tired and sleepy. Other foods actually excite the passions and cause us to lose self-control in many areas of life, making it much easier for us to fall to the temptations that lead to sin.

Fasting from food also reminds us of our dependence upon God. When we fast we liberate ourselves from dependence on the things of this world and are able to concentrate our attention on the things of the Kingdom of God. The most important thing to remember about fasting is that its main purpose is to gain mastery over oneself and to conquer the passions of the flesh. Follow the fast closely and you will discover this for yourself. The positive effects of fasting are difficult to understand until you actually experience them. So, if you want to really understand how fasting can benefit your spiritual life, make a sincere effort to fast.

FASTING GUIDELINE FOR GREAT LENT & NATIVITY FAST

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday

The Church Guidelines for these days states that you may **NOT** eat meat, oil, dairy products, fish or wine (alcohol). Every Orthodox Christian is called upon to follow the guidelines offered by the Church through the entire Great Lenten Period and Christmas Fast. If this becomes too difficult and through "*Oikonomia*" (**Economy**), the Church allows the following fasting paths:

- Path 1.** During the entire Great Lent & Christmas Fast do not eat **MEAT** at the minimum on these days.
- Path 2.** During the entire Great Lent & Christmas Fast do not eat **MEAT** and also not eat **OIL** on these days.
- Path 3.** During the entire Great Lent & Christmas Fast do not eat **MEAT** and also not eat **OIL** and **DAIRY PRODUCTS** on these days.
- Path 4.** During the entire Great Lent & Christmas Fast do not eat **MEAT** and also not eat **OIL, DAIRY PRODUCTS** and **FISH** on these days.
- Path 5.** During the entire Great Lent & Christmas Fast do not eat **MEAT** and also not **OIL, DAIRY PRODUCTS, FISH** and **WINE(ALCOHOL)** on these days.

Whichever path you choose, 1,2,3,4,5 or all 5, remain faithful throughout the entire Great Fast. If it is not possible to fast the entire Great Fast, try a week or more. The goal is the entire Great Fast.

THESE GUIDELINES ARE ENFORCED EVEN IF YOU DO NOT PLAN TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION ON SUNDAY MORNING, AT A WEEKDAY LITURGY OR AT A PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY.

Saturday & Sunday

The Church Guidelines for these days states that you may **NOT** eat meat, dairy products and fish. On these days the fast is loosened and you may eat Oil and wine (alcohol). Every Orthodox Christian is called upon to follow the guidelines offered by the Church through the entire Great Lent & Christmas Fast. If this becomes too difficult and through "*Oikonomia*" (**Economy**), the Church allows the following fasting paths:

Path 1. During the entire Great Lent & Christmas Fast do not eat **MEAT** at the minimum on these days.

Path 2. During the entire Great Lent & Christmas Fast do not eat **MEAT** and also **OIL, DAIRY PRODUCTS, FISH and WINE(ALCOHOL)** on these days.

Whichever path you choose, 1 or 2, or all 2, remain faithful throughout the entire Great Fast. If it is not possible to fast the entire Great Fast, try a week or more. The goal is the entire Great Fast.

THESE GUIDELINES ARE ENFORCED EVEN IF YOU DO NOT PLAN TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION ON SUNDAY MORNING, AT A WEEKDAY LITURGY OR AT A PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY.

Do not eat or drink anything after midnight Saturday night. The first thing you should partake of on Sunday morning or at a weekday Liturgy is Holy Communion.

If you plan to partake of Holy Communion at a Pre-Sanctified Liturgy, you should not eat anything after 2:00 PM that afternoon. You may drink water after 2:00 PM but no other kind of liquid.

If you are taking medicine and need to take it in the morning you may do so and partake of Holy Communion. If you need to take your medicine with water or another liquid or with food, you may do so and partake of Holy Communion.

You may brush your teeth in the morning and you may spit.

If you have any questions about these guidelines, please contact Fr. Dean.

