



GREEK ORTHODOX  
METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

# THE SAINT THOMAS APOSTOLIC TIMES

## GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF SAINT THOMAS

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΗ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΑ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΘΩΜΑ



# MARCH-MAY 2026



## SAINT THOMAS ICONOGRAPHY "FOR THE AGES"

LAST CEILING SAINT:  
Saint Cosmas the Poet  
\$20,000

LAST LOWER WALL SAINT:  
Saint Porphyrios  
\$15,000

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

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Rev. Protopresbyter Georgios Oikonomou  
 Πρωτοπρεσβύτερος Γεώργιος Οικονόμου,  
 Ιερατικώς Προϊστάμενος - Parish Priest

## THE SAINT THOMAS APOSTOLIC TIMES

“The Saint Thomas Apostolic Times” is a publication of Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church.  
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### Parish Council 2026

President: Anastasios Efstratiades  
 1st Vice President: Elias Iliadis  
 2nd Vice President (Agora): Efstathios Karadonis  
 3rd Vice President (Stewardship) Daniel Carrigan  
 1st Secretary (Recording): George Kleftogiannis  
 2nd Secretary (Corresponding): Georgia Flamporis  
 Treasurer: George Pappas  
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### Saint Thomas Organizations

PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY “ST. IRENE”  
 YOUTH MINISTRIES  
 ORTHODOX FAITH SUNDAY SCHOOL  
 HOPE  
 JOY  
 GOYA  
 HELLENIC SCHOOL  
 HELLENIC SCHOOL PTO  
 HELLENIC HERITAGE DANCE GROUP  
 SUMMER CAMP  
 SAINT THOMAS BOOKSTORE  
 MATURITY CLUB  
 KALI PAREA  
 SAINT THOMAS APARTMENTS  
 GREEN COMMITTEE  
 AHEPA CHAPTER 69  
 DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE

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 Ilias Kaliamouris  
 Leonardos Manousos  
 George G. Horiates  
 Diane Liakos & Denise Pappas-Sosi  
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## SAINT THOMAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΗ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΑ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΘΩΜΑ



Cherry Hill, March 1, 2025

### My beloved parishioners,

By the Grace of God and with the blessing of our spiritual father, His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey, I have now completed the first six months of my ministry at Saint Thomas. These months have truly been filled with God's blessing, with a rich liturgical life, and with many events and activities. Through all of this, I have gradually had the opportunity to get to know you personally, and I consider it a great honor. Each one of you is precious and significant as an image of God. As a priest, I am called to be a father to the entire community and to love everyone without distinction, following the example of our Lord, who shows no partiality, as Saint Paul reminds us in Romans 2:11.

During these six months, we experienced two wonderful blessings that will remain important milestones in the history of our parish. The first was the reception of the holy icon and sacred Epitachelion of Saint Iakovos of Evia, which filled our hearts with deep emotion. The second was the completion of the iconography of our church. Your sacrifices and hard work bore fruit, and a beautiful and original work has been entrusted to us, a precious legacy for future generations. Now every pilgrim and visitor, as well as we ourselves, are able to enjoy this spiritual joy and beauty.

And now, as fellow travelers in the spiritual journey of our holy Church, we are sailing through the sacred season of Great Lent with Holy Pascha as our destination. This period of the Triodion is like a garden filled with the colorful flowers of sacred hymns and prayerful services, strengthening us for our spiritual struggle. The Great Compline, the Presanctified Divine Liturgy, the Salutations to the Theotokos, the Holy Unction, the Saturdays of the Souls, and above all the Sunday Divine Liturgies offer us many opportunities for repentance and renewal. The effort of fasting may be small, yet the spiritual reward is great.

I thank you for your reverent participation in the services, and especially for your regular presence in church and the conscious involvement of your children. It is truly beautiful to see our children worshipping, receiving Holy Communion, attending Orthodox Faith Sunday School and Hellenic School, participating in GOYA and in the Hellenic Heritage Dance Group. These moments give hope and life to our parish.

I would also like to offer my heartfelt congratulations to the advisors and the dancers of HHDG who

represented our parish so beautifully at MDF, the annual festival of our Metropolis. More than a thousand children from across the Metropolis took part in this excellent event. With your help and support, I would like to set a goal for next year for Saint Thomas to have an even greater presence, with at least fifty children participating, so that as many of our young people as possible may experience this unique opportunity. At the same event, our parish choir, under the direction of our devoted Protopsaltis, Mr. Anastasios Fakinos, chanted the sacred hymns with devotion and excellence and received warm and commendable remarks from the judges.

Amid the many joys and blessings of life, there are also moments of sorrow. In recent days, we said farewell with deep sadness and emotion to our sister Zoe Kousoulis, a faithful member of our church whose life was closely connected to the life of our parish. We pray for her repose, as we do for all our brothers and sisters who have departed from this life and now rest in the embrace of Christ. In honoring their memory, we are establishing that each Saturday of the Souls, on the eve of Pentecost, we will offer memorial services and commemorate by name all our parishioners who have fallen asleep in the Lord from January 1st of the previous year until that Saturday of the Souls.

May you have a blessed remainder of Holy and Great Lent. May we be found worthy, by the grace of the Triune God, to venerate once again the sacred Passion and the holy Resurrection of our Lord.

**With love in Christ,**

**Protopresbyter Georgios Oikonomou**

**Αγαπημένοι μου εννορίτες!**

Με τη Χάρι του Θεού και την ευχή του Σεβασμιωτάτου Μητροπολίτη μας Νέας Ιερσής, κυρίου Αποστόλου, συμπλήρωσα τους έξι πρώτους μήνες της διακονίας μου στην εννορία του Αγίου Θωμά. Ήταν πραγματικά έξι μήνες πλημμυρισμένοι με την ευλογία του Θεού, με πλούσια λατρευτική ζωή, με πολλές εκδηλώσεις και δραστηριότητες. Μέσα από αυτά έχω την ευκαιρία σιγά σιγά να σας γνωρίζω προσωπικά και αισθάνομαι ιδιαίτερη τιμή για αυτό. Είστε όλοι πολύτιμοι και σπουδαίοι ως εικόνες Θεού και εγώ ως ιερέας καλούμαι να είμαι πατέρας όλης της κοινότητας και να αγαπώ τους πάντες χωρίς διακρίσεις ακολουθώντας το αγαθό παράδειγμα του Θεού, που μας αγαπά δίχως προσωποληψία (Ρωμ. 2, 11).

Σε αυτούς τους έξι μήνες είχαμε δύο θαυμάσιες ευλογίες, που καταγράφηκαν ως σπουδαία ιστορικά γεγονότα για την εννορία μας. Το πρώτο ήταν η υποδοχή της εικόνας και του ιερού επιτραχηλίου του Οσίου Ιακώβου εν Ευβοία, που γέμισε τις καρδιές μας με συγκίνηση. Το δεύτερο η ολοκλήρωση της εικονογράφησης. Ο κόπος και οι θυσίες σας έπιασαν τόπο και παραδόθηκε ένα έργο όμορφο, πρωτότυπο, πολύτιμη παρακαταθήκη για τις επόμενες γενιές. Έτσι, κάθε προσκυνητής και επισκέπτης και βέβαια εμείς οι ίδιοι απολαμβάνουμε αυτή την πνευματική χαρά και ομορφιά.

Και τώρα, όλοι μαζί ταξιδιώτες στο νοερό πνευματικό καράβι της αγίας μας εκκλησίας πλέουμε στο πέλαγος της Αγίας και Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής με λιμάνι προορισμού το Άγιο Πάσχα. Η περίοδος αυτή του Τριωδίου είναι ένας κήπος γεμάτος με πολύχρωμα άνθη τους ιερούς ύμνους και τις καταναυκτικές προσευχές, όπου οσφραινόμαστε οσμήν ευωδίας πνευματικής και παίρνουμε δύναμη για τον πνευματικό μας αγώνα. Μέγα Απόδειπνο, Προηγιασμένη Θεία Λειτουργία, Χαιρετισμοί της Θεοτόκου, Ιερό Ευχέλαιο, Ψυχοσάββατα και πάνω από όλα οι Κυριακάτικες Θείες Λειτουργίες. Μικρός ο κόπος της νηστείας, όμως μεγάλη η πνευματική ανταμοιβή με όλες αυτές τις πνευματικές ευκαιρίες.

Σας ευχαριστώ για τη συμμετοχή σας με ευλάβεια στη λατρεία και προ πάντων για τον τακτικό εκκλησιασμό και τη συνειδητή συμμετοχή των παιδιών σας. Είναι τόσο όμορφο να βλέπουμε τα παιδιά να λειτουργούνται και να κοινωνούν, να πηγαίνουν στο Κατηχητικό και το Ελληνικό Σχολείο, στη GOYA, στο χορευτικό.

Ήθελα να συγχαρώ μέσα από την καρδιά μου τους υπεύθυνους και τα παιδιά του ΗΗΔΓ που εκπροσώπησαν πολύ όμορφα την ενορία μας στο ΜΔΕ, την ετήσια γιορτή της Μητρόπολής μας, μία εκδήλωση στην οποία συμμετείχαν περισσότερα από χίλια παιδιά από όλη τη Μητρόπολη και ήταν μία εξαιρετική διοργάνωση. Θέλω να θέσω ως στόχο, με τη δική σας βοήθεια και υποστήριξη, τον επόμενο χρόνο η ενορία του Αγίου Θωμά να έχει ακόμα μεγαλύτερη εκπροσώπηση με τουλάχιστον πενήντα παιδιά, ώστε να έχουν όσο περισσότερα παιδιά μπορούν αυτή την μοναδική ευκαιρία και εμπειρία. Στην ίδια διοργάνωση και η χορωδία της ενορίας μας υπό τη διεύθυνση του άξιου Πρωτοψάλτη μας Αναστασίου Φακίνου απέδωσε θαυμάσια εκκλησιαστικούς ύμνους αποσπώντας ιδιαίτερα θερμά και επαινετικά σχόλια από την κριτική επιτροπή.

Ανάμεσα στις πολλές χαρές και ευλογίες πάντα στη ζωή υπάρχουν και οι λύπες. Έτσι τις προηγούμενες ημέρες αποχαιρετήσαμε με βαθιά λύπη και συγκίνηση την αδελφή μας Ζωή Κουσουλή, πιστό μέλος της εκκλησίας μας, που η ζωή της ήταν άρρηκτα συνδεδεμένη με τη ζωή της ενορίας. Προσευχόμαστε για την ανάπαυσή της, όπως βέβαια και για όλους τους αδελφούς μας, που δυστυχώς έφυγαν από κοντά μας και αναπαύονται τώρα στην αγκαλιά του Χριστού μας. Τιμώντας τη μνήμη τους καθιερώνουμε από φέτος κάθε Ψυχοσάββατο, παραμονή της Πεντηκοστής, να τελούμε ιερά μνημόσυνα μνημονεύοντας όλα τα ονόματα των ενοριτών μας, που κοιμήθηκαν από την 1η Ιανουαρίου του προηγούμενου έτους έως το Ψυχοσάββατο.

Καλό υπόλοιπο της Αγίας και Μεγάλης Τεσσαρακοστής, είτε να αξιωθούμε με την Χάρι του Τρισαγίου Θεού να προσκυνήσουμε και φέτος τα σεπτά Πάθη και την Αγία Ανάσταση του Κυρίου μας.

**Με εν Χριστώ αγάπη,**

**Πρωτοπρεσβύτερος Γεώργιος Οικονόμου**



## SAINT THOMAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΗ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΑ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΘΩΜΑ

### SAINT THOMAS PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE THE SAINT THOMAS MEDAL OF FAITH



#### Dear Fellow Parishioners,

As we approach the Paschal season our community is proud to have completed a nine year expansion and renovation of our Ekklesia, our house of worship. The term “Ekklesia” is an ancient Greek word meaning gathering. It is the primary place where the People of God gather to worship the Most Holy Trinity. Therefore, beautifying our Church is a paramount duty.

Since 1917, we did just that: We created the exonarthex (with the columns and the mosaic in the entrance. We added a dome in the middle of the Church, a belltower and a stone exterior. And lastly, we added prayerful iconography throughout the Church interior, following the theological guidance of our Orthodox faith. On April 19, as we celebrate the fest of Saint Thomas, we will proudly look at these accomplishments and give glory to God for guiding us to this joyful conclusion.

To celebrate the new beginnings of our community, we will institute this year the Sainbt Thomas Medal of Faith. The concept comes from the Gospel. It reminds us for the young apostle Thomas, who for one minute he asked for proof of the Risen Christ and the next minute he declared “my Lord and my God.” Thomas’ faith helped him overcome his questions. Isn’t this the story of every Christian? We often question our ability to achieve what seems unachievable, gut our faith in God brings us to the desired end.

We chose as the first recipients of this auspicious medal our parishioners George and the late Zoe Kousoulis. Their faith and their dedication to the Church has been an example for us all. They are the embodiment of Christ’s declaration to Thomas: “Blessed are those who did not see and believed.” George and Zoe were faced with the tragic death of their beloved daughter Danielle and yet they kept their faith in Christ and their dedication to the Church. As we were planning this event, the Lord called Zoe to His House. She fell asleep in the lord a few days before we unveiled the new iconography. Although she was not in the middle of the Church looking up to the Pantokrator whose Holy image she and George dedicated in memory of Dnielle, we know that she was up on the top of the dome with Him looking down on us. May her memory be eternal.

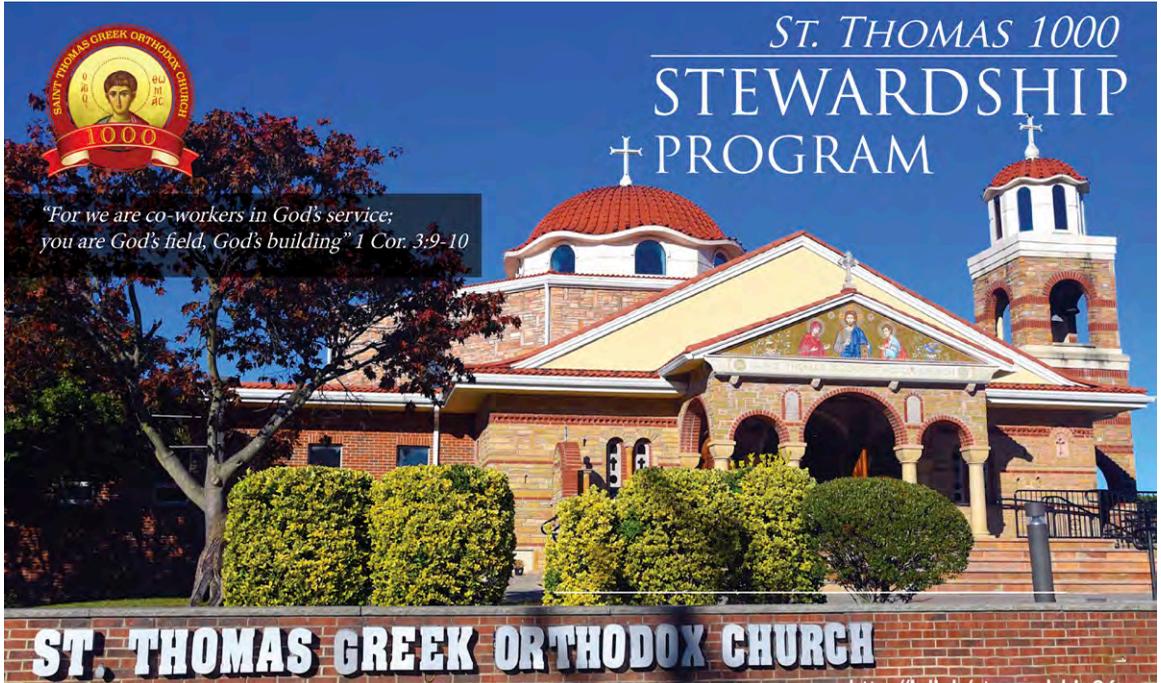
On the Sunday of Saint Thomas we will also celebrate another milestone in our parish: The ordination of our own Charles Sandilos to the Holy Diaconate. The ordination shows the spiritual maturity of our parish which did not only build one of the most beautiful byzantine churches in the United States, but it also produces stewards who serve Christ in every possible way, including through the ranks of the clergy.

On this upcoming Pascha, let us thank the Lord for the gifts he has given us and let us pray for the strength and faith of Saint Thomas to continue our mission to serve our community in South Jersey and through it to serve Christ.

**Kali Anastasi!**

**Anastasios Efstratiades  
Parish Council President**

## STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM 2026



*"For we are co-workers in God's service;  
you are God's field, God's building" 1 Cor. 3:9-10*

Saint Thomas has been blessed with many good stewards who have been giving in order to proclaim the message of Christ. We all support our Church from the gifts that God has bestowed upon us. Some provide financial support, others contribute in kind from their talents, but most give both their talent and treasure. This is the true meaning of "Yours from Your Own," our 2026 Stewardship Campaign. We all give from what God gave us. For that reason, we encourage you to continue being a steward of Saint Thomas or, if you are not a steward yet, to join this flock of Christ which has been growing and serving His Church.

All Orthodox Christians are united with Christ through the sacraments, or mysteries, of the Church and through our faithful offering of our entire selves to Jesus Christ. The Parish is a community of Orthodox Christians, an "Ekklesia" (which in Greek means "gathering"). We all gather together to worship. In order to keep

the Ekklesia alive we need material resources to meet the needs of the many ministries that the Church supports.

St, Thomas needs for everyone to increase the stewardship level so we can meet the ever-increasing expenses of keeping the doors of the Church open. Please keep in mind that monetary stewardship donations are kept in the strictest of confidence. We rely upon pledges to better plan our annual operating budget (the 2026 budget approved by the General Assembly for fair share is \$530,000).

To that end, we developed a more flexible 2026 Stewardship Program to provide parishioners with new ways to meet and increase their commitment. Below are suggested amounts of stewardship. Of course, if you can contribute a higher amount we will appreciate it.

**The Saint Thomas Stewardship Committee**

## ***How do we get to 1000 Stewards?***

*Pass this message along to your family and friends ! Each of you is a steward of Saint Thomas. Reach out to all within your circles...to keep them in the fold, to bring others back, to introduce, reintroduce and to reinforce that Saint Thomas is the protector of each of us, our loved ones , families and friends.*

***Be apostles. Each of us play an integral roll in stewardship.***

*Take a program from the narthex and a card and give to a loved one.*

*Forward this brochure on your cell phones and social media.*

*Explain the great works we do as an extension of the body of Christ.*

***STEWARDSHIP FAIR SHARE: \$1,000 or \$85 per month***

- In order to meet our financial obligations, the suggested minimum contribution is \$1,000.

***SPONSOR FOR A DAY: \$3,000 (Average Daily Operating Expense)***

- Sponsor a unique 2026 calendar day (or half day) to honor a loved family member's Name Day or Memorial. Your name and honoree will be presented In the Weekly Bulletin.

***PAYMENT PLAN DIRECT PAY:***

- Many of you give annually and others periodically. For those who wish to make periodic payments, any amount can be set up as a monthly payment made directly from your bank by going online by scanning the following QR Code.
- You can always send a check payable to Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church to the Church Office

**<http://b.link/stewardship26>**



## LITURGICAL SCHEDULE - MARCH 2026

Κυριακή 1 Μαρτίου Sunday March 1 <sup>st</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΗΣ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΙΑΣ SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Δευτέρα 2 Μαρτίου Monday March 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Μ. ΑΠΟΔΕΙΠΝΟΝ COMPLINE SERVICE	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Τετάρτη 4 Μαρτίου Wednesday March 4 <sup>th</sup>	ΠΡΟΗΓΙΑΣΜΕΝΗ Θ. ΛΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΑ PRESANCTIFIED D. LITURGY	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Παρασκευή 6 Μαρτίου Friday March 6 <sup>th</sup>	Β' ΧΑΙΡΕΤΙΣΜΟΙ 2 <sup>nd</sup> SALUTATIONS	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Κυριακή 8 Μαρτίου Sunday March 1 <sup>st</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΑΓ. ΓΡΗΓΩΡΙΟΥ ΠΑΛΑΜΑ SUNDAY OF ST. GREGORY PALAMAS	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Δευτέρα 9 Μαρτίου Monday March 9 <sup>th</sup>	Μ. ΑΠΟΔΕΙΠΝΟΝ COMPLINE SERVICE	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Τετάρτη 11 Μαρτίου Wednesday March 11 <sup>th</sup>	ΠΡΟΗΓΙΑΣΜΕΝΗ Θ. ΛΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΑ PRESANCTIFIED D. LITURGY	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Παρασκευή 13 Μαρτίου Friday March 13 <sup>th</sup>	Γ' ΧΑΙΡΕΤΙΣΜΟΙ 3 <sup>rd</sup> SALUTATIONS	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Κυριακή 15 Μαρτίου Sunday March 15 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΠΡΟΣΚΥΝΗΣΕΩΣ SUNDAY OF HOLY CROSS	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Δευτέρα 16 Μαρτίου Monday March 16 <sup>th</sup>	ΙΕΡΟΝ ΕΥΧΕΛΑΙΟΝ HOLY UNCTION	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Τετάρτη 18 Μαρτίου Wednesday March 18 <sup>th</sup>	ΠΡΟΗΓΙΑΣΜΕΝΗ Θ. ΛΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΑ PRESANCTIFIED D. LITURGY	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Παρασκευή 20 Μαρτίου Friday March 20 <sup>th</sup>	Δ' ΧΑΙΡΕΤΙΣΜΟΙ 4 <sup>th</sup> SALUTATIONS	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Κυριακή 22 Μαρτίου Sunday March 22 <sup>nd</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ ΚΛΙΜΑΚΟΣ SUNDAY OF ST JOHN CLIMACUS	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Δευτέρα 23 Μαρτίου Monday March 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Μ. ΑΠΟΔΕΙΠΝΟΝ COMPLINE SERVICE	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Τετάρτη 25 Μαρτίου Wednesday March 25 <sup>th</sup>	Ο ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΣΜΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ THE ANNUNCIATION OF THE THEOTOKOS	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Παρασκευή 27 Μαρτίου Friday March 27 <sup>th</sup>	ΑΚΑΘΙΣΤΟΣ ΥΜΝΟΣ AKATHIST HYMN	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Κυριακή 29 Μαρτίου Sunday March 29 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΘΣΙΑΣ ΜΑΡΙΑΣ ΑΙΓΥΠΤΙΑΣ SUNDAY OF ST MARY OF EGYPT	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Δευτέρα 30 Μαρτίου Monday March 30 <sup>th</sup>	Μ. ΑΠΟΔΕΙΠΝΟΝ COMPLINE SERVICE	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm

# LITURGICAL SCHEDULE - APRIL-MAY 2026

Τετάρτη 1 Απριλίου Wednesday April 1 <sup>st</sup>	ΠΡΟΗΓΙΑΣΜΕΝΗ Θ. ΛΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΙΑ PRESANCTIFIED D. LITURGY	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
<b>APRIL 4-19: SEE HOLY WEEK AND BRIGHT WEEK SCHEDULE</b>			
Τετάρτη 22 Απριλίου Wednesday April 22 <sup>nd</sup>	ΕΣΠΕΡΙΝΟΣ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΤΡΟΠΑΙΟΦΟΡΟΥ (ΣΤΟΝ ΙΕΡΟ ΝΑΟ ΑΓ. ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ ΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΕΙΑΣ) VESPERS OF GREAT MARTYR AND TRIUMPHANT ST. GEORGE (AT ST. GEORGE CATHEDRAL, PHILADELPHIA)	Ακολουθία Service	6:45pm
Πέμπτη 23 Απριλίου Thursday April 23 <sup>rd</sup>	ΑΓΙΟΥ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΤΡΟΠΑΙΟΦΟΡΟΥ ST. GEORGE GREAT MARTYR AND TRIUMPHANT	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Κυριακή 26 Απριλίου Sunday April 26 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΩΝ ΜΥΡΡΟΦΟΡΩΝ SUNDAY OF MYRRH BEARING WOMEN	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Τετάρτη 29 Απριλίου Wednesday April 29 <sup>th</sup>	ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ PARAKLESIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	Ακολουθία Service	6:45pm
Κυριακή 3 Μαΐου Sunday May 3 <sup>rd</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΡΑΛΥΤΙΚΟΥ SUNDAY OF THE PARALYTIC	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Τετάρτη 6 Μαΐου Wednesday May 6 <sup>th</sup>	ΤΕΤΑΡΤΗ ΜΕΣΟΠΕΝΤΗΚΟΣΤΗΣ MID-PENTECOST	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Κυριακή 10 Μαΐου Sunday May 10 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΗΣ ΣΑΜΑΡΕΙΤΙΔΟΣ SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Τετάρτη 13 Μαΐου Wednesday May 13 <sup>th</sup>	ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ PARAKLESIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	Ακολουθία Service	6:45pm
Κυριακή 17 Μαΐου Sunday May 17 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΟΥ ΤΥΦΛΟΥ SUNDAY OF THE BLIND MAN	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Τρίτη 19 Μαΐου Tuesday May 19 <sup>th</sup>	ΑΠΟΔΟΣΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΠΑΣΧΑ ARODOSIS OF PASCHA	Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	6:30pm
Πέμπτη 21 Μαΐου Thursday May 21 <sup>st</sup>	ΤΗΣ ΑΝΑΛΗΨΕΩΣ-ΑΓΙΩΝ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΕΛΕΝΗΣ HOLY ASCENSION-STs CONSTANTINE & HELEN	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Κυριακή 24 Μαΐου Sunday May 24 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΩΝ ΑΓΙΩΝ ΠΑΤΕΡΩΝ SUNDAY OF THE FATHERS OF THE 1 <sup>st</sup> COUNCIL	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Τετάρτη 27 Μαΐου Wednesday May 27 <sup>th</sup>	ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ PARAKLESIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	Ακολουθία Service	6:45pm
Σάββατο 30 Μαΐου Saturday May 30 <sup>th</sup>	ΨΥΧΟΣΑΒΒΑΤΟΝ SATURDAY OF SOULS	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Κυριακή 31 Μαΐου Sunday May 31 <sup>st</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΗΣ ΠΕΝΤΗΚΟΣΤΗΣ HOLY PENTECOST	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45

# HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE 2026

## APRIL 4-12

### APRIL 4 SATURDAY OF LAZARUS

Orthros & Divine Liturgy 08:45 AM

### APRIL 5: PALM SUNDAY

8:45 - 11:30 AM ♦ Orthros & Divine Liturgy

7:00 - 8:30 PM ♦ The Service of The Bridegroom

### April 6: HOLY MONDAY

7:00 - 8:30 PM ♦ The Service of The Bridegroom

### April 7: HOLY TUESDAY

7:00 - 8:45 PM ♦ The Service of The Bridegroom (Hymn of Kassiani)

### April 8: HOLY WEDNESDAY

9:00 - 10:30 AM ♦ Pre-sanctified Divine Liturgy

6:00 - 8:45 PM ♦ The Sacrament of the Holy Unction,  
The Service of the Sacred Washing of Feet and the Mystical Supper

### April 9: HOLY THURSDAY

6:30 - 8:30 AM ♦ Holy Communion

8:30 - 10:30 AM ♦ Vespers Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil (Holy Communion)

6:30 - 9:45 PM ♦ The Service of the Holy Passion (Twelve Gospels)

ARCHPASTORAL VISIT OF HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN APOSTOLOS OF NEW JERSEY

### April 10: HOLY FRIDAY

10:00 AM -12:00 noon ♦ Great and Royal Hours

12:00 noon - 1:30 PM ♦ The Apokathelosis Service

7:00 - 10:00 PM ♦ The Burial of the Lord - Service of the Lamentations.

### April 11: HOLY SATURDAY

8:45 - 11:00 AM ♦ Great Vespers of the Resurrection &  
Divine Liturgy of St. Basil (Holy Communion)

11:00 - 11:45 PM ♦ Pre-resurrection and the Great Canon Service

11:45 PM - 1:30 AM ♦ Resurrection followed by the Paschal Divine Liturgy

### April 12: EASTER SUNDAY

10:00 AM -11:00 AM ♦ Great Paschal Vespers of Agape

BRIGHT WEEK AND  
SAINT THOMAS WEEKEND  
SCHEDULE

April 17-19

APRIL 17: BRIGHT FRIDAY

THEOTOKOS OF THE LIFE-GIVING SPRING

8:45 - 11:00 AM ♦ Orthros & Divine Liturgy

APRIL 18: BRIGHT SATURDAY

6:30 PM - 8:00 PM ♦ Hierarchical Great Vespers for  
the Feast of Saint Thomas the Apostle Presided over by  
**His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey**  
(Reception to follow)

APRIL 19: SUNDAY OF SAINT THOMAS

Orthros 8:45, Archpastoral Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Archpastoral Divine Liturgy Presided over by  
**His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey**

(Luncheon to follow for all in attendance)

# EVENT SCHEDULE

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March 2026

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**SUN**  
**08**

**General Assembly**  
@Danielle Kousoulis Cultural Center following the D. Liturgy

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**SUN**  
**08**

**Saint Thomas Telethon And Talent Show**  
6:00 PM  
@Danielle Kousoulis Cultural Center

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**SAT**  
**14**

**Walking with Christ, Metropolis Fundraiser**  
11:00am @St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church  
467 Grandview Ave, Wyckoff, NJ 07481

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**SAT**  
**21**

**Greek Orthodox Metropolis Of New Jersey**  
**Sights + Sounds** Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral,  
808 N Broom St, Wilmington DE

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**WED**  
**25**

**AHEPA**  
**Special Greek Independence Day Presentation in Honor of**  
**the 250th Anniversary of the United States of America**  
**by George G. Horiates, @Danielle Kousoulis Center**  
Dinner: 6:00pm, Presentation: 7:00pm

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**THU**  
**26**

**Saint Thomas Hellenic School**  
**Greek Independence Day Celebration 4:30pm**  
@Danielle Kousoulis Cultural Center

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**FRI**  
**27**

**Service of Akathist Hymn**  
**Potluck hosted by Youth Ministries**  
After the Service @ St. Irene Hall

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# EVENT SCHEDULE

April 2026

**SAT**  
**04**

Saturday of Lazarus  
Saint Thomas Youth Ministries Retreat  
Following the D. Liturgy

**SUN**  
**12**

Easter Sunday, Vespers of Agape @ 10:00am  
The Gospel of Agape read in different languages by Saint Thomas GOYAnS

**FRI**  
**17**

The Saint Thomas Gala  
Honoring George and Zoe Kousoulis  
7:00pm @ Luciens 81 W White Horse Pike Berlin, NJ

**SAT-SUN**  
**18-19**

**SAINT THOMAS WEEKEND CELEBRATIONS**  
Saturday 6:30 PM Hierarchical Great Vespers  
Sunday 8:45, Orthros and Archpastoral Divine Liturgy  
*Presided over by*  
*His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey*  
(Luncheon to follow for all in attendance)

**FRI-SUN**  
**24-26**

**2026 PHILADELPHIA GREEK PARADE**  
Friday 12:00 noon: Flag Raising Ceremony  
Saturday 5:00pm: The Eleftheria Gala  
Sunday 1:00pm: Philadelphia Greek Parade  
<https://phillygreekparade.com/>

May 2026

**WED**  
**13**

Saint Irene Philoptochos 46th Annual Bid-n-Buy  
5:30 pm @ Danielle Kousoulis Cultural Center

**THU**  
**21**

Saint Thomas Golf Tournament 2026  
1:00 PM  
@Pennsauken Country Club

## “For the Ages”: Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church Celebrates Completion of Sacred Iconography



By Cosmos Philly Staff , February 20, 2026

After three years of prayerful anticipation and sacrificial devotion — and nearly a decade of vision and planning — the faithful of Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church gathered for a sacred and historic evening celebrating the completion of the interior iconography of their beloved church, a work truly “For the Ages.”

The celebration began with a solemn Paraklisis service to the parish’s Patron Saint, the Holy Apostle Thomas. The service was led, on behalf of His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey, by the Very Rev. Archimandrite Christoforos Oikon-

omides, who conveyed the paternal blessings and heartfelt love of the Metropolitan. In his remarks, he emphasized that His Eminence played an integral role in the realization of the iconography project and that without his guidance, encouragement, and unwavering support, this sacred endeavor would not have been possible.

Clergy of the Delaware Valley joined in prayer, filling the church proper alongside Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, officials of the Metropolis of New Jersey, Philoptochos members, Parish Council representatives, donors, neighboring parishioners, and many faithful who came to witness this milestone in the life of the community.

challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, which temporarily slowed progress. Yet the vision endured.

## A Vision Born in 2017

In remarks delivered by Archon Anastasios Efstratiades, President of the Parish Council, the community was reminded that this journey began in 2017, on the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Church, when the faithful overwhelmingly resolved to complete the church and enhance its architectural integrity in accordance with Byzantine tradition.



During the consecutive presidencies of George Horiates, Stathis Karadonis, and Dimitri Rozanitis — under the guidance of then-Proistamenos Very Rev. Archimandrite Christoforos Oikonomides — the renovation plan was conceived and the first stage completed: the construction of the exonarthex, adorned with columns and a portico.

The entrance was beautified with a mosaic of Christ, flanked by the Panagia and Saint Thomas.

Plans for the Dome, Bell Tower, and exterior stonework were finalized in 2018. In 2019, Mr. Efstratiades assumed the presidency of the Parish Council and, with the support of Father Christoforos, building committee chair George Horiates, and the faithful, brought the construction phase to completion.

As soon as that work concluded, the parish turned its focus to iconography — only to face the unexpected

In 2023, under the presidency of George Horiates and the guidance of the new Proistamenos, the Very Rev. Archimandrite Avgoustinos Psomas, the iconography project resumed with renewed determination. With the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos, the parish engaged the world-renowned iconographer, Georgios Giariskanis of Thessaloniki.



## Theology in Color: The Sacred Work Unfolds

Mr. Giariskanis' reputation spans the globe, and his work at Saint Thomas reflects the theological order and prayerful tradition of the Orthodox Church.

The first phase brought to life the majestic Pantocrator in the Dome, surrounded by angels, prophets, and the righteous of the Old Testament — executed in strict accordance with Orthodox theological tradition. As Mr. Efstratiades reminded those gathered: “In the Orthodox Church, our architecture, our painting, our music — they are not art; they are prayer.”

The second phase included more than sixty saints depicted along the lower walls — perhaps one of the largest synaxes of saints in any Orthodox church in the United States.

The final phase completed scenes from the New Testament across the ceiling, restored original icons dating back decades, and culminated in a singular and unprecedented work: a large rear panel dedicated to the life of Saint Thomas.



Created through deep study of Scripture and Holy Tradition — much like the early iconographers — the panel depicts the baptism of a prince in India, Saint Thomas teaching the people of India, and his holy martyrdom. This original composition exists nowhere else and will indeed remain for the ages.

## A Witness of Faith and Memory

Particularly moving was the recognition of the first and largest benefactors of the iconography project — George and the late Zoe Kousoulis — who sponsored the Pantocrator in loving memory of their daughter, Danielle Kousoulis, who tragically lost her life in the September 11 attacks at the World Trade Center.

The community had previously renamed its cultural center in Danielle’s memory.

As Archon George Horiates, Chairman of the Iconography Committee, spoke, he also addressed the family’s recent sorrow: Zoe Kousoulis had fallen

asleep in the Lord just days prior, as she prepared to come to Church and chant in the choir. For their unending faith through unspeakable tragedy, George and Zoe were selected unanimously to be honored by the community with its first ever “Saint Thomas Medal of Faith” this coming April. With emotion and compassion, he offered condolences to her son, Peter, who was seated in the front pews, speaking of the heavenly reunion now shared by mother and daughter.

As the interior was revealed in its fullness, the Pantocrator gazed down from the Dome with compassion while many lifted their eyes heavenward in reverent awe of the iconography, the recent events and of divine providence.

“Only the Name of the Holy God is Glorified”  
When Mr. Giariskanis was invited forward, the congregation responded with heartfelt applause. Trembling with emotion, gratitude, and holy awe, he expressed that he felt the blessings of the Apostle Thomas and the intercessions of Iakovos of Tsalikis, the patron saint of the Metropolis of New Jersey.

In humility he declared:  
“The church is revealed. The ego of the artist has no place... Only the name of the Holy God is glorified.”



## A Legacy for Future Generations



Protopresbyter Georgios Oikonomou concluded the evening with profound gratitude to His Eminence

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Metropolitan Apostolos for his vision, paternal care, and leadership. He thanked the faithful who labored tirelessly and sacrificially to bring the project to fruition.

“They sought what was best,” he said. “They did not choose painters, but true masters reflecting the dignity of the house of God — a house that future generations will enjoy.”

Indeed, what now adorns Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church is more than paint and plaster. It is theology proclaimed in color, prayer expressed in form, and faith preserved for generations yet to come.

A vision begun nearly a decade ago now stands complete — a sacred inheritance, a testament of unity, and a gift truly “For the Ages.”



## **Georgios Giariskanis' Address at the Official Presentation of the Completed Iconography of St. Thomas Greek Orthodox Church, Cherry Hill, NJ**

Your Eminence, Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey,

My beloved Father Georgios,

Reverend Fathers,

Dear and honorable President Archon Anastasios Efstratiades,

Esteemed members of the Parish Council,

Beloved members of the Greek Orthodox Church of Saint Thomas,

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ!

What unites us Greeks when we are far from our homeland is our love for our mother country and our shared faith in God our Father. This gives us strength, courage, hope, and a vision for life.

The great Nobel laureate, George Seferis, once said something that perfectly expresses who I am as a man of labor and dedication who has been close to the Church since birth: "I do not know if I would have been the same person had I not been born Greek and Orthodox." This is my personal confession, which I present to you today.

At this moment, my heart trembles with emotion, gratitude, and holy awe. I stand before you not merely to present a work of art, but to fulfill a vow, to offer an act of prayer, faith, and obedience to God's will.

This church was not painted only with colors and gold. It was painted with toil, tears, patience, and trials, and, above all, with the Grace of God and the protection of our Panagia, the most Holy Theotokos.

It was an achievement, a true feat. It was a difficult journey filled with obstacles and moments when one

could have easily given up. Yet we arrived safely at the harbor. Not because we were strong. But because we were not alone.

We always felt the blessing of the Apostle Thomas, guiding and sanctifying our hands as we adorned his holy temple. We felt the intercession of Saint Iakovos Tsalikis, the patron Saint of the Holy Metropolis of New Jersey, whose sacred icon we recently painted. Through him, we experienced the miracle of his coming among us.

God went before us.  
The Panagia held our hand.  
All of you walked beside us.

You strengthened our hands so that we could complete this masterpiece, which we now humbly place in your care.

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude and respect to our Metropolitan, His Eminence Apostolos of New Jersey. Our relationship is not merely formal. It is fraternal and was born years ago in the blessed Monastery of Saint Anastasia in Thessaloniki. Your support, Your Eminence, your understanding, paternal love, corrections, and observations, have been an invaluable foundation for me and our community.

I would also like to thank Fr. Avgoustinos Psomas, the former priest of the community, for making the initial contact and inviting me to undertake the iconography of this holy temple.

Special thanks go to Fr. Georgios Oikonomou, the Proistamenos of this parish, a man of empathy and love for all. It is no coincidence that he is my fellow Thessalonian. He embodies the virtues of a Greek who holds Christ and Greece in his heart and faithfully fulfills his sacred duty. His cooperation with us was fraternal and blessed, and I will always remember it.

I thank the president of the community, Archon Anastasios Efstratiades, with deep appreciation. He is a man with a capital "M." He stood by our side from the very beginning until the completion of this

sacred task. I would also like to thank the chairman of the iconography committee, Archon George Horiates, who was tireless and ever-present, a truly invaluable collaborator. Their kindness, integrity, and dedication will remain unforgettable to us. From the first day of our work together, you embraced us with love, respect, and trust. Your character and ecclesiastical ethos set an example for us.

The art we serve is not merely a profession. It is tradition. It is responsibility. It is a witness. It is a sacred mystery.

We remain faithful to the Byzantine tradition by selecting the highest quality materials because these works belong not only to today, but also to tomorrow and the generations yet to come. We are perfectionists, not out of pride, but out of reverence.

By worldly standards, the cost of our work may not appear "competitive." However, we do not produce mass-produced religious items. We don't create commercial images. We create sacred works that are guaranteed to be of enduring quality and faithfulness.

This church presented us with a unique artistic challenge. We were tasked with uniting the existing Dodekaorton (the Twelve Feasts) icons, painted by another artist, with our new work. We had to seamlessly merge two different techniques so that the transition would be undetectable to the eye. We preserved what existed with respect, intervened where necessary, renewed backgrounds, added new gilding and Byzantine inscriptions, and consciously altered elements of our personal style in certain sections. All to serve the harmony of the whole. In the church, after all, the iconographer is not what is displayed. The church is revealed.

The ego of the artist has no place here. Only the name of the Holy God is glorified.

For this project, we used a rare, time-tested material: chemical gold, which is especially suited to the United States' climate and ensures long-term preservation and durability. Future generations will understand the value of this choice. They will see and admire the sacred inheritance you have left behind.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank all those who generously contributed, whether they were great or small benefactors, because without your sacrifices, this work could not have been completed.

Special thanks to the St. Irene Philoptochos Society; the melodious chanter, Mr. Tasos Fakinos; our beloved secretary, Maria Krontiris; and Mr. Louis Centeno, the church's tireless helper, who stood by us daily with practical assistance, kind words, and acts of love.

I also thank my collaborators and assistants, both those who traveled with me and those who worked from Greece. Without companionship, art becomes isolation. Trust, unity, and faithful execution brought about this harmonious result.

Please allow me to speak as a husband and father as well. I would like to thank my wife, Stella, who has been my companion through the easy days and the difficult ones. I thank my sister, Eleni, and her husband, Kostas. I thank my children, Petros, Fotis, and Anastasia. They are my strength, my silent prayer, and the love that sustains me on this demanding yet sacred artistic journey.

I also feel the blessing of my parents. My late father, Fr. Petros, blesses me from the heavenly altar, and my elderly mother's prayers accompany every step I take.

Finally, Your Eminence, my good Metropolitan and worthy shepherd of this sacred stronghold, I ask for your prayers. May God grant me and my collaborators health and blessings so that we may continue to serve the Church with works that glorify God and bring consolation and spiritual rest to the faithful souls who entrust us with such holy responsibilities.

Glory to God for all things!

**Georgios Giariskanis**

## **Fr. Georgios' Address on the Presentation of the Sacred Iconography of Saint Thomas Cherry Hill, New Jersey**

Your Eminence,

Reverend Fathers, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

Today is a day of celebration and doxology to our Thrice-Holy God for the great blessing of delivering to the devout faithful of Saint Thomas the completed work of iconography. This is a project envisioned by faithful and pious parishioners who, through the proper ecclesiastical procedures of the Parish Council and the General Assembly, and above all with the blessing of our Holy Metropolis, resolved to bring it to fruition.

As befits the history, the present, and the future of this community, they sought what was best. They did not choose painters, but true masters. They did not choose the cheapest option, but that which reflects the dignity of the house of God and a work that future generations will enjoy and say with pride in Christ, "This was accomplished by our parents and grandparents."

Therefore, they selected the distinguished master iconographer, Mr. Georgios Giariskanis, and his collaborators. Not only because he is internationally renowned, accomplished, and recognized, but because upon seeing his work they discerned that it was the most beautiful and fitting choice for Saint Thomas. I would like personally to thank all those who, through their vote in the administrative bodies of the parish, and above all through their love and generosity, contributed to the realization of this sacred project.

This work is the holy and precious inheritance you leave to your children. When they come here to worship, to bring their infants for the forty-day blessing, to baptize and marry their children, and to pray for the repose of their loved ones, they will rejoice in this beautiful and sacred iconography.

Beyond the high aesthetic beauty of the result, these holy icons also serve another very important purpose. They are a testimony, a living and missionary proclamation to every person of good will who enters our church as a visitor. During the past six months, since I was given the honor and blessing by our spiritual father, His Eminence

Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey, to serve the parish of Saint Thomas, many visitors from other Christian denominations have approached me when attending a sacrament here. All have spoken with admiration and awe about these holy icons. We do not know how the Grace of God works, and perhaps the beauty of these icons will lead new brothers and sisters to Orthodoxy. I must personally confess that I feel especially blessed to celebrate the Divine Services in a church so beautifully adorned.

At the first General Assembly after I assumed my duties, a parishioner raised an important point, saying that while the icons are very beautiful, it would be beneficial to understand their content and symbolism. By the Grace of God, we therefore began a weekly series of lectures every Wednesday interpreting the holy icons. We are very happy that, with these new iconographic compositions, we now have rich material to continue this catechetical journey for a long time.

Before writing this address, I tried to choose one icon to say that it was my favorite, but I could not distinguish one above the others, for each possesses a unique and unrepeatable beauty.

In closing, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to our spiritual father and Metropolitan of New Jersey for his spiritual guidance and leadership, his high vision for our Holy Metropolis and each of its parishes, and his paternal care for every aspect of ecclesiastical life. I thank the President of the Parish Council, Archon Anastasios Efstratiades, and all the members of the Parish Council, the Iconography Committee under the Chairman Archon George Horiates, the General Assembly, and all the members of the parish. From the bottom of my heart, I thank the donors and all who contributed in their own way to the completion of this historic project. Your financial generosity, and above all the generosity of your love and hearts, inspire us to envision even greater works for the good and progress of our parish.

Through the intercessions of the Holy Apostle Thomas and by the prayers of our holy shepherd, His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey, may God bless you, your families, your children, the community of Saint Thomas, and the entire world.

With love in Christ,

**Protopresbyter Georgios Oikonomou**

**Λόγος εις την παρουσίασιν της ιεράς εικονογραφήσεως  
Αγίου Θωμά,**

**Τσέρι Χιλλ, Νέας Ιερσέης**

Σεβασμιώτατε, σεβαστοί πατέρες, αγαπητοί αδελφοί,

Σήμερα είναι ημέρα γιορτής και δοξολογίας προς τον Τρισάγιο Θεό μας για τη μεγάλη ευλογία να παραδίδεται στον ευλαβή λαό της κοινότητας του Αγίου Θωμά ολοκληρωμένο το έργο της εικονογράφησης. Ένα έργο, που οραματίστηκαν οι πιστοί και ευσεβείς ενορίτες και μέσα από τις εκκλησιαστικές διαδικασίες του Ενοριακού Συμβουλίου, της Γενικής Συνέλευσης και πάνω από όλα της ευλογίας από την Ιερά μας Μητρόπολη αποφάσισαν να υλοποιήσουν. Όπως ταιριάζει στην ιστορία, το παρόν και το μέλλον αυτής της κοινότητας αναζήτησαν ό,τι καλύτερο. Δεν διάλεξανμπογιατζήδες αλλά μάστορες. Δεν διάλεξαν την φθηνή επιλογή αλλά αυτή που ταιριάζει στην ευπρέπεια του οίκου του Θεού και ένα έργο, που θα μπορούν να απολαμβάνουν οι επόμενες γενιές και να λένε με εν Χριστώ υπερηφάνεια «αυτό το έργο έγινε από τους γονείς και τους παππούδες μας».

Έτσι επέλεξαν τον σπουδαίο μαΐστορα της εικονογραφίας, Γεώργιο Γιαρισκάνη και τους συνεργάτες του. Όχι μόνο γιατί ήταν διεθνούς φήμης, καταξιωμένος και αναγνωρισμένος. Αλλά γιατί βλέποντας τη δουλειά του έκριναν πως είναι η πιο όμορφη και καλή επιλογή για τον Άγιο Θωμά. Και θέλω προσωπικά να ευχαριστήσω όλους όσους με την ψήφο τους στα διοικητικά όργανα της ενορίας, μα πάνω από όλα με την αγάπη τους και τη γενναιοδωρία τους συνέβαλαν σε αυτό το έργο.

Το έργο αυτό είναι η αγία και πολύτιμη κληρονομιά που αφήνετε στα παιδιά σας. Ωστε όταν έρχονται να εκκλησιάζονται, να σαραντίζουν τα βρέφη τους, να βαφτίζουν και να παντρεύουν τα παιδιά τους αλλά και να προσεύχονται για την ανάπαυση των αγαπημένων τους προσώπων, να χαίρονται την πανέμορφη ιερή εικονογράφηση.

Όμως, εκτός από την υψηλή αισθητική του αποτελέσματος υπάρχει και μία ακόμα πολύ σημαντική λειτουργία αυτών των εικόνων. Είναι μία μαρτυρία, ένας λόγος ζωντανός και ιεραποστολικός προς κάθε άνθρωπο καλής προαίρεσης που βρίσκεται στην εκκλησία μας ως επισκέπτης. Τους τελευταίους έξι μήνες, που έχω την τιμή και ευλογία από τον πνευματικό μας πατέρα, Σεβασμιώτατο Μητροπολίτη Νέας Ιερσέης, κύριο Απόστολο, να διακονώ την ενορία του Αγίου Θωμά, με πλησίασαν αρκετές δεκάδες

επισκεπτών, οι οποίοι ανήκουν σε άλλα χριστιανικά δόγματα και βρέθηκαν εδώ για την τέλεση κάποιου μυστηρίου, και όλοι μίλησαν με ενθουσιασμό και δέος για αυτές τις εικόνες. Δεν γνωρίζουμε πως ενεργεί η Χάρης του Θεού και ενδεχομένως η ομορφιά αυτών των εικόνων να φέρει νέους αδελφούς μας στην Ορθοδοξία. Όπως και εγώ προσωπικά οφείλω να ομολογήσω ότι αισθάνομαι ιδιαίτερα ευλογημένος να ιεουργώ σε έναν ναό τόσο όμορφα ζωγραφισμένο.

Κατά την πρώτη Γενική Συνέλευση μετά την ανάληψη των καθηκόντων μου μία ενορίτισσα έθεσε ένα ζήτημα λέγοντας ότι οι εικόνες είναι πολύ όμορφες αλλά θα ήταν καλό να γνωρίζουμε το περιεχόμενο και τους συμβολισμούς τους. Έτσι ξεκινήσαμε με τη Χάρι του Θεού κάθε Τετάρτη μία σειρά διαλέξεων ερμηνεύοντας τις ιερές εικόνες και είμαστε πολύ χαρούμενοι, που πλέον με τις νέες εικονογραφικές συνθέσεις έχουμε υλικό, για να συνεχίσουμε για πολύ καιρό ακόμα.

Πριν γράψω την ομιλία αυτή προσπάθησα να επιλέξω μία εικόνα, για να πω ότι μου άρεσε περισσότερο από όλες αλλά δεν μπόρεσα να ξεχωρίσω καμία, καθώς η καθεμία έχει μοναδική και ανεπανάληπτη ομορφιά.

Κλείνοντας, θα ήθελα να ευχαριστήσω με τη σειρά μου τον πνευματικό μας πατέρα και Μητροπολίτη μας για την πνευματική καθοδήγηση και ηγεσία, τους υψηλούς οραματισμούς του για την Ιερά Μητρόπολη και κάθε ενορία και την πατρική φροντίδα για κάθε θέμα της εκκλησιαστικής ζωής. Τον Πρόεδρο του Ενοριακού Συμβουλίου, Αρχοντα Αναστάσιο Ευστρατιάδη, και όλα τα μέλη του Συμβουλίου, την επιτροπή εικονογράφησης υπό τον Αρχοντα Γιώργο Χωριάτη, τη Γενική Συνέλευση και όλα τα μέλη της ενορίας. Ευχαριστώ μέσα από την καρδιά μου τους δωρητές και όλους όσους συνέβαλαν με τον δικό τους τρόπο στην ολοκλήρωση αυτού του ιστορικού έργου. Η οικονομική σας γενναιοδωρία, μα πάνω από όλα η γενναιοδωρία της αγάπης και της καρδιάς σας, μας εμπνέουν να οραματιστούμε και άλλα έργα για το καλό και την πρόοδο της ενορίας.

Διά πρεσβειών του Αγίου Αποστόλου Θωμά και δι'ευχών του αγίου δεσπότου ημών, Σεβασμιωτάτου Μητροπολίτου Νέας Ιερσέης, κυρίου Αποστόλου, ο Θεός να ευλογεί εσάς, τις οικογένειές σας, τα παιδιά σας, την κοινότητα του Αγίου Θωμά και όλο τον κόσμο.

Με εν Χριστώ αγάπη,

**Πρωτοπρεσβύτερος Γεώργιος Οικονόμου**

## **Anastasios Efstratiades' Address at the Official Presentation of the Completed Iconography of St. Thomas Greek Orthodox Church, Cherry Hill, NJ**

Your Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey,

Rev. Protopresbyter Georgios,

Reverend clergy,

Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate,

Members of the Parish Council,

President and Members of the St. Thomas Philoptohos,

Dear Fellow Parishioners and Friends of Saint Thomas,

Today is a great day in the history of this parish. After three years of work, the iconography of the main Church has been completed.

In times like this we first must pay tribute to those who came before us and built this house of God, which we were given the blessed opportunity to adorn.

The Hellenic Community of this area was organized in the neighboring city of Camden, New Jersey since the 1920s, approximately 100 years ago. First, they were crossing the river and attending services at St. George Cathedral in Philadelphia. Later they were given permission to celebrate the Liturgy at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Camden. Finally, in 1967, 59 years ago, they purchased this property and built this Church, which was dedicated to Saint Thomas the Apostle. Those early founders of this Church, the "κτίτορες", as we refer to them in Greek were not rich. They were working families who made a small wage every week. However, they all signed the mortgage personally, and from their weekly salary they

would put away a few dollars to make the mortgage payment for their home, St. Thomas.

Those faithful individuals and families we commemorate today.

The original Church was a simple building with a flat roof. However, the foresight of our predecessors commissioned the icons of the Eortologio in the 1970s, which you see in the surrounding walls.

In 2017, on the 50th anniversary of the opening of the Church, the community overwhelmingly decided to complete the Church building and add architectural elements to make this Church conforming to Byzantine tradition. During the consecutive presidencies of George Horiates, Stathis Karadonis and Dimitri Rozanitis, and the guidance of the then Proistameno Very Rev. Archimandrite Christoforos Oikonomidis, the renovation plan was conceived and the first stage of the construction, the exonarthex was completed (that is the area in the front of the Church with the columns and the portico). The entrance was adorned with a mosaic of Christ with Panagia on the one side and St. Thomas on the other. In 2018 we finalized the plans for the Dome, the Belltower and the covering the exterior walls with stone. God through the intercession of St. Thomas gave me the strength to serve as president of the Parish Council in 2019 and complete this work with the support and guidance of our Proistameno Father Christoforos, the invaluable assistance of the building committee chair, George Horiates and the support of all the parishioners.

As soon as we completed the construction we set our eyes to the iconography. Then, COVID came in our midst and slowed down our plans.

However, in 2023, under the presidency of George Horiates and the guidance of our new proistameno the Very Rev. Archmandrite Avgoustinos Psomas, we started planning again the iconography project. In 2023 with the Blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos, we proceeded with engaging Mr. Georgios Giariskanis, a renowned iconographer from Greece to proceed with the iconography. In.

2024, George Horiates became chair of the iconography committee and I succeeded him as Parish Council President. George did an amazing job fundraising for this wonderful project. The first and largest donor was the couple of George and the late Zoe Kousoulis who pledged the icon of Pantokrator in memory of their daughter the beloved Danielle. Zoe fell asleep in the Lord last Sunday as she was getting ready to come to Church and chant in the choir. May her memory be eternal.

Mr. Giariskanis' reputation is worldwide. Having studied in the Athoniada School of Iconography, the most renowned institution for byzantine iconography, located in Mty. Athos (Agion Oros), he has beautified churches in Greece, Germany and the United States. He sits on the committee of the Church of Greece that approves the iconography of every Church building. Mr. Giariskanis was faced with an enormous task. An octagonal Church with a large ceiling has a tremendous amount of work.

He did it methodically:

- First he completed the Pantokrator, surrounded by the angels and then the prophets. At the lower part he put the Just of the old Testament. All that was done in accordance with the Church's theological order. In the Orthodox Church, our architecture, our painting, our music they are not art, they are prayer. And prayer is performed not just by words, but also by the actions of the architect, the iconographer, the chanter.

- The second phase of Mr. Giariskani's work was the icons of more than 60 saints in the lower walls of the Church. This is probably the largest synaxix of Saints in the United States.

- Then came the last phase, which was the painting of scenes from the New testament in the ceiling and the restoration of the original icons surrounding the Church from the 1070s.

- This last phase included the most unique work the panel in the back of the Church dedicated to the life of St. Thomas. This original work does not exist anywhere and our iconographer. Mr. Giariskanis had to create the scenes by studying the

scriptures and holy tradition the same way the early Christian iconographers did. The scenes on the panel depict, first on the right the baptism of a prince in India, in the center Thomas teaching the people of India and on the left the martyrdom of the Saint. This unique work is going to remain for the ages.

The project was not without challenges. We had many obstacles along the way. However, I want to thank you His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey for his continuing support, advice and encouragement from the beginning of this project, so that this Orthodox community keep the faith, continue the fight and reach the end of the road today.

I want to thank the person who did all the fundraising for the project, George Horiates. Without his tireless efforts we would not have been able to fund this project.

Also, I am grateful to the Parish Council, the Philotohos, the Church ministries, the Saint Thomas office staff, and so many friends of St. Thomas who contributed in time, talent and treasure to make our iconography a success.

Since I was given the blessing to preside over the construction and the iconography work, something that I was not worthy spiritually to handle, I want to thank the Proistamenoï who gave me spiritual guidance in the process, Father Christoforos, Father Avgoustinos and Father Georgios. Although Father Georgios came at the end of this process he has proven to be a very spiritual person and a good administrator, whose wise advice has been of great help to us.

One special thank you goes to our patron and protector, St. Thomas: A young man who followed Jesus Christ and has often been forgotten for all he did. We know that Saint Thomas watched over us to see this project to its completion, and I am sure he is happy to see us honor him in such a special way.

At the end and above all let us give Glory to God for allowing us to see this beautiful prayer to Him completed through the intercessions of His Holy Mother the Theotokos, His Apostle Thomas and all the Saints that surround us.

## SAINT THOMAS MEDAL OF FAITH GALA

On Friday, April 17, 2026, Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church will celebrate years of love, faith, dedication, and progress at Lucien's Manor.

The Gala will honor **George and the late Zoe Kousoulis**, who have dedicated their time, talent, and treasure over the years—first as founders and later as benefactors of Saint Thomas Church. They helped finance the renovation of the Cultural Center and humbly allowed the renaming of the Cultural Center to the Daniele Kousoulis Hellenic Cultural Center in honor of their daughter, who tragically lost her life in the events of



September 11, 2001, in the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City. George and Zoe opened the doors to the newly renovated façade, leading to the restoration of the church itself, and provided a substantial contribution to that effort, including the donation of the Pantocrator in the new dome.

This year's Gala will be bittersweet, as our beloved Zoe Kousoulis passed away on February 15, 2026. She will always be remembered for her warmth, dedication, and tireless service to our church community. Zoe was a longtime member of the Saint Thomas Choir, the St. Irene Philoptochos Society, and the Daughters of Penelope. She worked tirelessly for the annual Agora Festival, and alongside her many commitments to the church, she supported George in his business and raised a loving and beautiful family.

The Parish Council determined the Medal of Faith will be awarded to a parishioner who has shown profound love, faith and dedication to the Orthodox faith and our Saint Thomas parish and community. It is a way to honor those who have gone beyond the normal bounds for the life of our parish.

The evening will feature a **special musical tribute** in honor of the Kousoulis family, presenting a rich and immersive program rooted in the sacred and cultural traditions of Hellenism. This commemorative program will be offered by the School of Byzantine Music of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Choir, the Saint Thomas Choir, and The Politico Ensemble. Blending the solemn beauty of Byzantine hymnology with the vibrant spirit of traditional Greek and Asia Minor folk music, the program will reflect the breadth of Hellenic musical heritage—from Constantinople and the islands to the mainland and beyond—celebrating both faith and culture in a unified artistic expression.

The Gala will be held on April 17, 2026, at Lucien's Manor. For more information and to reserve a table, please call the church office at (856) 665-1731 or speak with a Parish Council member.



# *The Saint Thomas Gala*

Honoring George and Zoe Kousoulis  
with the first  
Saint Thomas Medal of Faith Award

*April 17, 2026 at 7:00pm*

Featuring a Musical Tribute by  
The School of Byzantine Music  
of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America Choir,  
the Saint Thomas Choir  
& The Politico Ensemble



LUCIEN'S

81 W White Horse Pike, Berlin, NJ 08009

Tickets: \$200

[HTTPS://B.LINK/GALA26](https://b.link/gala26)

For more information, call the  
Saint Thomas Church office  
at (856) 665-1731





# *The Saint Thomas Gala*

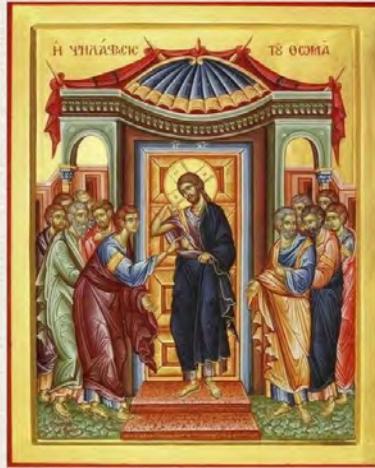
## SPONSORSHIPS

- **Bronze Sponsor:** \$5,000 (includes 6 tickets)
- **Gold Sponsor:** \$10,000 (includes 1 table of 10)
- **Platinum Sponsor:** \$25,000 (includes 2 tables of 10)
- **Diamond Benefactor:** \$50,000 (All benefits of Platinum, Address at Banquet with commemorative Icon)
- **Grand Benefactor:** \$100,000 (All benefits of Diamond plus 1 extra table of 10, Address at Banquet with commemorative Icon)

For more information, call the  
Saint Thomas Church office  
at (856) 665-1731



GREEK ORTHODOX  
METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY



BY THE GRACE OF GOD AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE  
APOSTOLIC TRADITION OF THE LAYING ON OF HANDS

HIS EMINENCE  
**METROPOLITAN APOSTOLOS**  
OF NEW JERSEY

Will Ordain

**CHARLES PETER SANDILOS**

To The Holy Diaconate

ON THE FEAST DAY OF SAINT THOMAS  
**SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 2026**

SAINT THOMAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
615 Mercer Street, Cherry Hill, NJ 08002  
**ORTHROS 9:00 AM, HIERARCHICAL DIVINE LITURGY 10:00 AM**



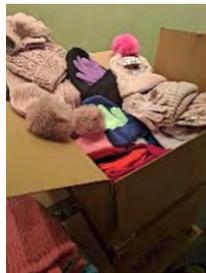
You are cordially invited to attend as your presence at the Sacred Sacrament of Ordination will be an honor and a blessing, and your prayers will strengthen Charles as he begins his service to our Lord, to our Sacred Archdiocese and to the Metropolis of New Jersey.

# SAINT IRENE PHILOPTOCHOS

To say that the St. Irene Ladies Philoptochos have been busy during the past couple months and always is an understatement! From the Agape Outreach (Homebound and Seniors Ministry), to the “Feed the Hungry” casserole making, to the Angel Tree for Covenant House, the parish Christmas card, the beautiful poinsettias that decorated our beautiful St. Thomas for Christmas and the Vasilopitas- prepared with prayers and blessings of the Sisters of Agia Skepi - we celebrated Christ-mas the happiest and most special feast, the birth of our Savior with reverence and joy! And let’s not forget the mailing – church stewardship and important documents mailing plus our St. Irene Philoptochos mailing – 2026 membership, Easter fundraisers and the upcoming Bidn-Buy flyers. A shout out to all the St. Irene ladies - board and members - for their constant commitment and LOVE to our Blessed Ministry, our parishioners and community for their support and last but not least, our Spiritual Advisor, Father Georgios for his sincere encouragement and dedication!

“Hats, Mittens / Gloves & Scarves” Drive: The beginning of December found St. Irene Philoptochos wrapping up the “Hats, Mittens / Gloves & Scarves” Drive that was held in November! THANK YOU to all our members and parishioners who donated items. We appreciate everyone who contributed to this effort. Your kindness makes a real difference! These donations help the students at H.B. Wilson School and The Martha F. Wilson Early Childhood

Development Center – both in Camden, New Jersey - stay warm during the cold winter months. St. Irene Philoptochos Board Member, Helen Gioulis, stepped up to help with this year’s drive logistics and coordination, and work together with our fellow parishioners, Koula Kotsedakis and Angela Boldurian, who teach at these schools. There were enough beanies and gloves for all the kids in both schools. The Martha F. Wilson Early Childhood Development Center students received most of the scarves and the items for the H.B. Wilson School students were organized in boxes by class based on the numbers provided.



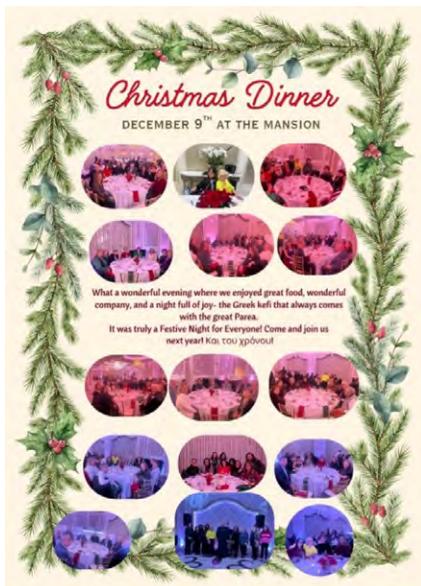
Martha F. Wilson Early Childhood Development Preschool and Kindergarten has 376 students and the H.B. Wilson Elementary School - Kindergarten to 8th grade has 400 students. 776 students received beanies and gloves that were age appropriate. Additionally the Early Childhood Development Center kids also received 173 scarves. Our parishioners generously provided beanies, scarves, gloves for 230 stu-



dents. St. Irene Philoptochos provided 548 students with beanies, scarves, hats and also provided each school with \$150 worth of supplies, such as Lysol wipes, bottles of hand sanitizer, tissue boxes, and fragrance-free wipes. These supplies were suggested by the two teachers to help the kids get through winter colds, and to help prevent the spread of colds and flu.

**Christmas Dinner:** Our Annual Christmas Dinner was held on Tuesday, December 9th at the Mansion. It was a wonderful evening and everyone who came enjoyed the great food, the wonderful company, and a night full of joy- the Greek kefi that always comes with the great Parea. This year's chairpersons were Roula Criaris and Peggy Christis who made sure everything was well planned. DJ Maki entertained us with festive and Greek music and we had the honor and the pleasure to share the night with the best Agios Vasilis – Father Georgios! HOHOHO!!!

We extend our sincere gratitude to Mrs. Kolovos and Mrs. Baroody and their staff for taking such great care of us. We also acknowledged our Philoptochos Ambassador Award Honoree, Mrs. Sophia Hanos and presented her with an icon of our Chapter Patron Saint, Agia Eirini. It was truly a Festive Night for Everyone! Come and join us next year! Και του χρόνου!



**AGAPE Outreach Ministry:** Our “Agape Outreach” Philoptochos members gathered - a few days before Christmas - to prepare Christmas gift bags for our parishioners who are homebound, in assisted living, are residing in long term care facilities and the Greek residents at the St. Thomas Senior Apartments. The bags included a small festive box with some melomakarona and kourabiedes, a Christmas card with handwritten Christmas wishes, and a goodie bag with some essential items. Father Georgios visited them and delivered the bags personally. A small action of love, concern and comfort and a reminder that they remain in our hearts.

The day we prepared the gift bags, we had the great pleasure to WELCOME Presvytera Anastasia to St. Irene Philoptochos whose assistance with preparing the gifts and her cheerful personality are such a great addition to our Ministry!





**Angel Tree for Covenant House:** The 2025 Angel Tree included 88 tags. All of them were claimed and all gifts came back. Such a great blessing! Two full carloads of gifts! We can't thank our members and parishioners enough for giving to such wonderful causes. Some of our Sunday School students made beautiful Christmas cards to go with the gifts! We are deeply grateful to our community for your support.



**Feed the Hungry Program:** It is a great blessing for our Philoptochos to be able to continue the "Feed the Hungry" initiative – a very worthy program. On Tuesday, December 16, we gathered to support our neighbors and make casseroles, a small act of kindness to feed the hungry and warm their hearts. No one should go hungry. With the continuous assistance of the Kali Parea and Parish Council members, we made 110 that included chicken in red sauce, penne pasta, vegetables and cheese. These casseroles help feed the homeless men who shelter or visit St. John's Hospice and rely on the goodness of others for their food, clothing and prayers. SJH goes through 80 casseroles each day to serve over 250 individuals. One casserole provides a hot meal to 6-8 members of our community.

Again, on Friday, January 23, we were able to prepare 97 casseroles. Preparation started Friday morning when some gentlemen of Kali Parea/Maturity Club and Parish Council got together to prepare the chicken, sauce, vegetables and pasta. 97 casseroles means that 776 meals will be served at St. John's Hospice.

Did you know that between 2023 and 2024, homelessness increased by 9.8 percent in Philadelphia, and the number of people who were unsheltered increased by 38.2 percent? Saint John's Hospice provides emergency shelter for up to 30 individuals every night of the year.



**Learn more @ <https://saintjohnshospice.org>**



It is a great blessing for our Philoptochos to be able to continue the "Feed the Hungry" initiative – a very worthy program. On Tuesday, December 16, we gathered to support our neighbors and make casseroles, a small act of kindness to feed the hungry and warm their hearts. No one should go hungry. With the continuous assistance of the Kali Parea and Parish Council members, we made 110 that included chicken in red sauce, penne pasta, vegetables and cheese. These casseroles help feed the homeless men who reside or visit St. John's Hospice and rely on the goodness of others for their food, clothing and prayers.



SJH goes through 80 casseroles each day to serve over 250 individuals.

One casserole provides a hot meal to 6-8 members of our community.

A big **SHOUT OUT** to all those who assisted and were a part of this compassion in action. Additionally, on Friday, January 23 we prepared 97 casseroles -this means that 776 meals were served at St. John's Hospice.



**Christmas Poinsettias:** One of our Christmas fundraisers is the Poinsettias. The beautiful red and white plants that decorate our beautiful St. Thomas for Christmas were delivered on Friday, December 19. Poinsettias are one of the most iconic holiday plants, loved for their bright colored leaves and they are also a symbol of positivity, goodwill, hope and other virtues.

We are so thankful for all our generous St. Irene Philoptochos members and parishioners who donated poinsettias In Honor of or In Loving Memory of beloved family members and friends this holiday season. Thank you to our chairperson, Popi Stamatiades.

**Parish Christmas Card:** The annual parish Christmas card is a great way to extend Christmas greetings to all our friends in our St. Thomas community, and it is also very convenient and much less costly. The person in charge was Darlene Mastrodemas, and the proceeds of this project are offered to the long list of all the charitable, philanthropic and benevolent endeavors of the St. Irene Philoptochos.

**Vasilopitas:** This year's Vasilopitas – New Year's Bread (with the lucky coin) were prepared with the love, care, prayers and blessings of the Sisters at the Agia Skepi (Holy Protection) Monastery at the Poconos. Thank you to our chairs, Stacy Chryssos and Tulla Sandilos and all those who purchased Vasilopitas and supported St. Irene Philoptochos!

**Parish Vasilopita Celebration:** St. Thomas Parishioners came together on January 11 to celebrate with a Vasilopita blessing and celebration following Divine Liturgy. Father Georgios with the assistance of Father Florin, cut the Vasilopita and offered a piece for each of the ministry leaders, church organizations, affiliated civic societies and passed pieces of Vasilopita to all the faithful at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. It was indeed a beautiful day and a cherished tradition that our St. Irene Philoptochos has been sponsoring for many years in our parish. All monetary donations collected were sent to the National Philoptochos Vasilopita Fund that benefits St. Basil's Academy and the Youth and Young Adult Program of the Archdiocese.

**... MORE FESTIVE PROJECTS!**



**Decorating our beautiful church with the red and white Christmas poinsettias!**



**Mailing of the Parish Christmas Card!**



**Again, this year's Vasilopitas – New Year's Bread (with the lucky coin) were prepared with the love, care, prayers and blessings of the Sisters at the Agia Skepi (Holy Protection) Monastery at the Poconos.**



**Parish Vasilopita Celebration - we did the prep work!**

**Cherry Hill Food Pantry Session:** Tuesday evenings- January 20 & 27 - 5:00-7:30 pm / Thursday mornings - January 22 & 29 - 10:00am-1:00 pm. Our volunteers braved the extremely cold weather and freezing temps and served at the food pantry to sort and pass out food to those in need. We are incredibly grateful for the new volunteers who have stepped up to help - your kindness warms the season more than you know!

**AGAPE Outreach – Bingo & Pizza:** Did you say B-I-N-G-O? On Thursday, January 29 we gathered for Pizza, Bingo and Fellowship at the Senior Apartments next door. That was a wonderful evening that started with pizza and the blessing and cutting of the Vasilopita - by the Parish Council Presidents, Tassos Efstratiades - to kick off the new

year and went on with Bingo and fun – some good laughs were shared! Between the fun and the excitement of great rounds of bingo, we were grateful to spend the evening with our friend residents of the apartments, and we can't wait to return soon! Bingo winners were rewarded with small gifts of chocolate! Valentines for Veterans: February was a month full of love and heart! We celebrated the Month of Love by preparing Valentines for Veterans at the transitional program of the Veterans Haven South facility

in Sewell, NJ. On Sunday, February 8, we created 100 treat bags filled with thoughtful items to be delivered to our veterans - a meaningful way to share gratitude and care. Our gratitude goes to Vicky Christodoulou who chairs our Veterans Program. We also celebrated “Go Red Sunday”, coming together to raise awareness about cardiovascular disease and honor Heart Month. From service to celebration, St. Irene Philoptchos ladies are showing what it means to care with purpose, faith, and heart!



**Founders Day Dinner:** On February 10th, we got together to celebrate our chapter's 56th birthday! We thought it would be a wonderful way to pay a small tribute to our Founders, who started the St. Irene Philoptochos back in 1970. Philoptochos is the hope and the heart of our church and we believe in the power of giving back. Kudos and thank you to our chairs for the evening, Liz Loudon and Christina Korinthios for an event that everyone enjoyed and will remember!



**Baby Items Collection for Newborn in Need, Burlington Chapter:** We collected baby items for Newborn in Need charity, the Burlington chapter for the whole month of January and two weeks of February. Drive was very successful and again we are indebted to our community for the support to all our endeavors! Thank YOU!!



**NEWBORNS IN NEED**  
*One heart one mission*

*Burlington County, NJ Chapter*

25 Brainerd Street, Mt. Holly, NJ 08060

Mail packages to: PO Box 164, Lumberton, NJ 08048

[www.newbornsinneed.org](http://www.newbornsinneed.org)

[burlingtoncounty@newbornsinneed.org](mailto:burlingtoncounty@newbornsinneed.org)

February 20, 2026

St. Irene Ladies Philoptochos Society  
c/o Rania Pappas  
615 Mercer St.  
Cherry Hill, NJ 08002

Dear Society Members:

Thank you for your generous donation to Newborns in Need! We greatly appreciate your donation of 14 wash/lotion, 34 pack of wipes, 1,080 diapers, 67 new clothing items & 7 mommy/baby gifts, 15 sleepers, 2 blankets, and 56 accessories (bibs, washcloths, and burp cloths.) We truly appreciate your continued support.

Our chapter, here in Burlington County, began in April of 2011. We rely solely on donations to provide gift bags of essentials to new moms in need throughout the South Jersey area. We distribute these bags to area hospitals and clinics that know of new moms that are in need and can benefit from the items provided. It is people like you that allow us to continue to provide support to those less fortunate.

Very truly yours,  
S/Linda G Myers  
Linda G. Myers

For: Erika Estok, Director

Sent by email only to [pappasrania@aol.com](mailto:pappasrania@aol.com)

*We believe that you CAN make a difference!*

**Easter Fundraisers:** Our Easter fundraisers include our famous Easter Koulourakia, Tsourekia with the prayers and blessings of the sisters at the Agia Skepi (Holy Protection) Monastery and Easter Lilies. We have also planned Loukoumades sale on Sunday of Orthodoxy, March 1 and Palm Sunday, April 5th.



THE ST. IRENE LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY  
of St. Thomas Greek Orthodox Church

We are now accepting orders for:



**Koulourakia - \$25.00** (our famous homemade Butter Twist Cookies)  
48 pieces beautifully wrapped in a decorative bowl  
Perfect for your holiday table or as a gift!!

To place your order, please complete the order form below  
and send with your check made payable to St. Irene Philoptochos to:  
St. Irene Philoptochos, 615 Mercer St., Cherry Hill, NJ 08002.

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

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Koulourakia: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**The deadline for ordering is March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

**Pick-Up Date is Palm Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 Noon - 1:30 p.m.**

In the "Danielle Kousoulis" Greek Cultural Center

**With questions or further information, please contact:**

**Popi Stamatiades - (609) 313.2849**

**Liz Loudon - (609) 238.7784**



THE ST. IRENE LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY  
of St. Thomas Greek Orthodox Church

Place your orders now for:



**Tsourekia / Easter Bread from Agia Skepi**  
Large Round Braided - \$20.00 each  
Small Braided - \$15.00 each

To place your order, please complete the order form below  
and send with your check made payable to St. Irene Philoptochos to:  
St. Irene Philoptochos, 615 Mercer St., Cherry Hill, NJ 08002.

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

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Large Round Braided Tsourekia: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of Small Braided Tsourekia: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**The deadline for ordering is March 15, 2026**

**Pick-Up Date is Palm Sunday, April 5<sup>th</sup> from 12:00 Noon - 1:30 p.m.**

In the "Danielle Kousoulis" Greek Cultural Center

**with questions or further information, please contact:**

**Stacy Chrysofos (856) 816-7456 / Venimo @Anastasia-Chrysofos**

**Kathy Kleftogiannis (609) 440-5340**



St. Irene Philoptochos

**DONATE EASTER LILIES**

for the beautification of our St. Thomas Church

**YES, I WOULD LIKE TO DONATE \_\_\_\_\_ EASTER LILIES AT \$10 EACH.**

PLEASE MAKE YOUR CHECKS PAYABLE TO:

ST. IRENE PHILOPTOCHOS AND RETURN TO:

ST. IRENE PHILOPTOCHOS, 615 MERCER ST., CHERRY HILL, NJ 08002

**BY PALM SUNDAY - APRIL 5TH.**

IN MEMORY OF / ΕΙΣ ΜΝΗΜΗΝ: \_\_\_\_\_

FOR THE WELL-BEING OF / ΥΠΕΡ ΥΓΕΙΑΣ: \_\_\_\_\_

DONATED BY / ΠΡΟΣΦΕΡΕΤΑΙ ΑΠΟ: \_\_\_\_\_

Donations are also needed for floral arrangements and other items  
for the Salutations, Holy Week and Sunday of St. Thomas.

Please contact Rania Pappas @ (856) 316-8914 for further information.



**Elaine Kyriacou Memorial Scholarships:** St. Irene Philoptochos is offering scholarship opportunities to graduating high school seniors who are pursuing higher education, to post-secondary school students, and to graduate school students. The Elaine Kyriacou Scholarship Fund was established to honor the memory of the late Elaine Kyriacou, the great benefactress of St. Irene Philoptochos. Elaine generously bequeathed a sizable annuity which the St. Irene Philoptochos Society is pleased to share as educational scholarships. The scholarship awards will be based on a student's scholastic achievement, church and community participation, and financial need. Deadline to submit a completed application packet is May 18, 2026. To request an application packet or for additional information, please contact Barbara Cheston at [barbaracheston@verizon.net](mailto:barbaracheston@verizon.net) or Helen Gioulis at [hg1818@comcast.net](mailto:hg1818@comcast.net)

**Bid-N-Buy:** This year marks our 46th Annual Bid-N-Buy and since it is our nation's 250th birthday, our theme is "America the Beautiful". The date is Wednesday, May 13th and tickets are selling very fast. If you are looking for admission tickets, please contact Popi Stamatiades or Vicky Christodoulou. We are also raffling a beautiful Louis Vuitton designer bag the "Drop GM Monogram Leather". Tickers are on sale now and you can get them by contacting Barbara Inglessis or Chrysanthe Simsir. We are also raffling a Yeti wheeled cooler – red – to match the theme colors – red, blue and white! Tickets for the Yeti will be forthcoming!

The St. Irene Ladies Philoptochos Society  
of St. Thomas Church

**Louis Vuitton Grand Raffle**  
Drop GM Monogram Leather - Retail Value \$2,850



**Donation \$20 per ticket**  
ID#: 99-3-31877 \*\*\*\*\* License No: RA-25-0074

Drawing to be held on Wednesday, May 13th, 2026  
At the 46th Annual Bid - N - Buy "America the Beautiful"  
All proceeds benefit the St. Irene Philoptochos charitable endeavors  
\*\*\*\* Winner need not be present \*\*\*\*

For tickets and information, you can contact:  
[Barbara Inglessis @ 609.922.0750](mailto:Barbara.inglessis@stirene.org)  
[Chrysanthe Simsir @ 919.414.4668](mailto:Chrysanthe.simsir@stirene.org)  
**Cash, check and Venmo accepted**

Checks to: St. Irene Philoptochos Society / Venmo @Anastasia-Chrysofos

**ST. IRENE PHILOPTOCHOS**

**46TH ANNUAL BID-N-BUY**

**AMERICA THE BEAUTIFUL**

**WEDNESDAY, MAY 13 @ 5:30PM**

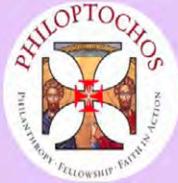
**ST. THOMAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**  
DANIELLE KOUSOULIS CULTURAL CENTER  
678 MERCER STREET, CHERRY HILL NJ 08002

**\$40 DONATION**  
(INCLUDES ADMISSION & FULL COURSE DINNER)

**FOR TICKET RESERVATIONS PLEASE CONTACT:**

**POPI STAMATIADES - (609) 313-2849**  
**VICKY CHRISTODOULOU - (215) 421-4879**  
**(CASH, CHECK & VENMO ACCEPTED)**  
**VENMO @ANASTASIA-CHRYSSOFOFOS**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
**250**  
ANNIVERSARY



# Important Dates and INFORMATION



## St. Irene Philoptochos UPCOMING DATES & EVENTS



SUN 02/01	Triodion begins - <u>Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee</u> . -Godparents Sunday & Brunch.	SUN 02/22	- <u>Forgiveness / Cheesefare Sunday</u> - Spanakopita & Tyranita Sale.
TUE 02/02	- Presentation of our Lord to the Temple (Yioaganiti). - Membership & BNB mailing - starting at 11:15am	MON 02/23	<u>Clean Monday</u> Great and Holy Lent begins
TUE 02/03	- FOR St. Irene Board. BNB and Board Meetings 6:30pm	TUE 02/24 WED 02/25	- <u>Lenten Paximada &amp; Koulourakia Baking</u> 9:30am-2:00pm
SUN 02/08	<u>Sunday of the Prodigal Son</u> Philoptochos <u>Valentines for Veterans</u> during Coffee Hour	FRI 02/27	- <u>1<sup>st</sup> Salutations to Theotokos</u> - Parish Oratorical Festival
TUE 02/10	<u>Founders' Day Dinner</u> The Bistro at Haddonfield 6:00-9pm	SAT 02/28	<u>Saturday of Souls</u>
THU 02/12	<u>Tsiknopempti</u> (Fat Thursday)	SUN 03/01	<u>Sunday of Orthodoxy &amp; Loukoumades Sale</u>
SAT 02/14	<u>Saturday of Souls</u>	TUE 03/03	FOR St. Irene Board BNB and Board Meetings 6:30pm
SUN 02/15	- <u>Meatfare / Judgment Sunday</u> - <u>Spaghetti Luncheon</u>	FRI 03/06	<u>2nd Salutations to Theotokos</u>
SAT 02/21	<u>Saturday of Souls</u>	SUN 03/08	- <u>Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas</u> - <u>Annual Memorial Service</u> for St. Irene Philoptochos.



## St. Irene Philoptochos UPCOMING DATES & EVENTS



TUE 03/10	<u>St. Irene Philoptochos Monthly Meeting 7:00pm</u>	SUN 03/29	<u>Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt</u>
FRI 03/13	<u>3rd Salutations to Theotokos</u>	SAT 04/04	<u>Saturday of Lazarus</u>
SUN 03/15	<u>Sunday of the Holy Cross</u>	SUN 04/05	<u>Palm Sunday</u>
FRI 03/20	<u>4th Salutations to Theotokos</u>	SUN 04/12	<u>Pascha</u>
SUN 03/22	- <u>Sunday of St. John Climacus</u> . - <u>Snack &amp; Meal Packs Project</u> for Delair Elementary School (right after the DL)	FRI 04/17	<u>St. Thomas Gala</u> Honoring George & Zoe Kousoulis
MON 03/23 TUE 03/24	<u>Easter Koulourakia Baking</u> 9:30am-2:00pm	SAT 04/18	<u>St. Thomas Vespers &amp; Reception hosted by St. Irene Philoptochos</u>
WED 03/25	<u>Annunciation</u>	SUN 04/19	<u>Sunday of St. Thomas</u>
THU 03/26 FRI 03/27	<u>Easter Koulourakia Baking</u> 9:30am-2:00pm	TUE 04/21	FOR St. Irene Board BNB and Board Meetings 6:30pm
FRI 03/27	<u>Akathist Hymn</u>	SUN 04/26	<u>Greek Independence Day Parade in Philadelphia</u>

# SAINT THOMAS TELETHON & TALENT SHOWCASE



Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church successfully hosted its annual Telethon on Sunday, March 8, 2026, bringing together parishioners and friends for an evening of faith, fellowship, and community celebration.

This year's Telethon featured a special "Saint Thomas Got Talent" showcase, highlighting the diverse gifts and talents within the parish. The program included a wide range of presentations from both youth and adult participants, reflecting the vibrant and multi-generational spirit of the Saint Thomas community.

Young parishioners shared their abilities through participation in the Oratorical Festival, musical performances on instruments such as piano and bouzouki, vocal selections, and impressive demonstrations of skill such as Rubik's Cube solving. Their enthusiasm and dedication were a testament to the strong foundation of faith, learning, and creativity being cultivated within the parish.

The evening also featured a special segment by Theologos Horiates, who presented Lenten culinary traditions and recipes, offering both a practical and meaningful reflection on this sacred season of the Church.

The program was hosted by Makis Melissaratos, with the participation and blessings of Fr. Georgios Oikonomou. Remarks and support were also offered by Parish Council President Anastasios Efstratiades and Assistant Treasurer George G. Horiates, whose presence underscored the importance of the event to the life of the parish.





Broadcast live, the Telethon gave viewers near and far the opportunity to engage with the life of the Church while supporting its ongoing ministries and initiatives. More than a fundraiser, the event served as a celebration of faith, creativity, and the enduring commitment of the Saint Thomas community.

As in past years, the Telethon plays a vital role in sustaining the Church's mission—supporting its liturgical life, educational programs, youth ministries, and outreach efforts. The generosity of participants and donors ensures that Saint Thomas continues to thrive as a spiritual and cultural center for future generations.

The parish extends its heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed, participated, and supported this year's Telethon, making it a memorable and meaningful success.





# ST. THOMAS YOUTH MINISTRIES

## GOALS

To deepen and strengthen the faith of our youth. We aim to give them opportunities to understand, experience, and appreciate God's Love and blessings. We hope they'll share their faith with peers and community members. Through service, fellowship, witness, and worship, we pray they will own and live their faith and share their faith with the world.

## EMAIL CONTACTS

Youth: St.ThomasGOCyouthministries@gmail.com  
 GOYA: St.ThomasCherryHillGOYA@gmail.com  
 JOY: St.ThomasJOY@gmail.com  
 HOPE: SaintThomasHOPE@gmail.com

**OFSS: Orthodox Faith Sunday School**  
**ALL youth, Tot - 12th Grade**  
**Meets following Holy Communion**

**HOPE: all Youth PreK - 2nd Grade**

**JOY: all Youth 3rd - 6th Grade**

**GOYA: all Youth 7th - 12th Grade**

## BE IN THE KNOW

Make Sure You are on BAND for all Calendar Invites, Events, Updates, & News!

**This BAND is for ALL ages to stay informed**  
 (Please use full name when creating profile)

<https://band.us/n/a8a5AbmaC3z5G>



## DIRECTORS & ADVISORS

GOYA Parent Advisor: Ms. Karoline Kokolis  
 JOY Parent Advisor: Ms. Stephanie Docimo  
 JOY YA Advisor: Zachary VanMeter  
 HOPE Parent Advisor: Ms. Olympia Anagnostou  
 OFSS + Youth: Ms. Varah LK Kappatos

We need HOPE advisors for 26-27 year!



← FAMILIES W/  
 PRE K - 2<sup>ND</sup> GRADERS

FAMILIES W/  
 3<sup>RD</sup> - 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS →



FAMILIES  
 W/ 7<sup>TH</sup> - 12<sup>TH</sup>  
 GRADERS →



← 7<sup>TH</sup> - 12<sup>TH</sup> GRADERS PARTICIPATING IN ORATORICAL FESTIVAL



← GOYA BOYS BASKETBALL

BOYS AGES 8 & UP →



**SAVE THE DATES:****MARCH:**

MON. FEB. 23

- CLEAN MONDAY - LENT BEGINS

FRI. FEB. 27

- FIRST SALUTATIONS & LOCAL ST JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ORATORICAL FESTIVAL + RECEPTION

**SUN. MAR. 1**

- SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY **\*BRING ICON\***

**SAT. MAR. 7**

- DVYC REGIONAL SJCOF (@ST THOMAS)

**SAT. MAR. 14**

- BIBLE BOWL (JOY + HOPE)

SAT. MAR. 21

- DVYC SIGHTS + SOUNDS @ HOLY TRINITY WILMINGTON
- (SEE GOYA CALENDAR FOR DETAILS)

**SUN. MAR. 23**

- SUN OF THE HOLY CROSS **\*BRING CROSS\***

**FRI. MAR. 27**

- AKATHIST HYMN TO PANAYIA (7PM)
- LENTEN POTLUCK - BRING AN ITEM

**APRIL:****SAT. APR. 4**

- SATURDAY OF LAZARUS DL
- PALM CROSS MAKING + RETREAT?

**SUN. APR. 5**

- PALM SUNDAY

**MON. APR. 6 - SAT. APR. 11**

- HOLY WEEK

**FRI. APR. 10**

- HOLY FRIDAY RETREAT?

**SUN. APR. 12**

- PASCHA !!

**SAT. APR. 18**

- ST THOMAS VESPERS + RECEPTION

**SUN. APR. 19**

- SAINT THOMAS SUNDAY

**MON. APR. 27**

- DEADLINE TO REGISTER GRADUATES FOR RECOGNITIONS
- SEE FLYER

**ST. THOMAS  
YOUTH MINISTRIES****MAY:****SUN. MAY. 3**

ST THOMAS COMMUNITY FAMILY NIGHT

**SUN. MAY. 17**

- DEADLINE TO REGISTER FOR OFSS END OF YEAR CERTIFICATES (SEE FLYER)

**SAT. MAY. 23 - SUN. MAY. 24**

- METROPOLIS GOYA OLYMPICS

**FRI. MAY. 29**

- HOPE & JOY END OF YEAR PARTY
- 6TH GRADE SENDOFF

**JUNE:****SUN. JUN. 7**

- OFSS GRADUATION + PICNIC

**SUN. JUN. 14TH.**

- SCHOLARSHIPS AND GRAD RECOGNITIONS

Tot &amp; Me: Mr. Chris Kotsakis &amp; Ms. Carina Olivas

Pre K: Ms. Jackie Compton

Kdg: Ms. Janet D. Kotsakis, Ms. Marina Pappas, Ms. Ellena Anagnostis

1<sup>st</sup>: Ms. Stephanie Docimo, Mr. Zachary Van Meter, Ms. Evelyn Buonamici2<sup>nd</sup>: Ms. Rena Panagos, Ms. Kelly Papacristos, Mr. George Papadopoulos3<sup>rd</sup>: Ms. Zoe Tripolitis, Ms. Georgia Boyle4<sup>th</sup>: Ms. Margarita Z Vrettos & Ms. Karin B Hippel5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>: Ms. Minnie Tripolitis & Mr Angelo Horiates7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup>: Ms. Varah LK Kappatos9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup>: Ms. Kalliroi Landry11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup>: Ms. Olympia Anagnostou

Always welcoming new Teachers, Assistants, or Substitutes! please contact YM office if interested



*YM Invites you to:*  
**COMMUNITY LENTEN POTLUCK**  
*after the Akathisto to Panayia*

**FRIDAY, MARCH 27<sup>TH</sup>**

- Honor Panayia in the Akathisto
- Lenten Potluck & Fellowship to follow
  - QR Code below to sign up for a Lenten dish

Sign Up to Bring an Item Here:



Volunteer for Retreat Here:



JOIN OFSS BAND:



\*\*\* Dear Families \*\*\*

Attention: We know the Holy Friday Retreat and Saturday of Lazarus Retreat are beloved. We would love to offer these opportunities to our young people again this year. Nothing can happen without volunteers. If we are able to fill out the needed volunteer rosters, we will be happy to host these meaningful events. However, to put together these youth-wide events, during such a Holy and Reverent time, while understaffed – takes away from the purpose and point of the day. These events will be TBD until we are able to confirm we have enough volunteers to make it smooth. Please sign up on BAND for an aspect of the events by March 15<sup>th</sup>, so we can schedule and promote them. (QR code above) Unfortunately, if we don't have the help – we must cancel them. We appreciate your assistance in supporting the faith of our young people and families! We are sure this will come together!

Kali Sarakosti, a Blessed Lent to all!

Questions? Email: [St.ThomasGOYouthMinistry@gmail.com](mailto:St.ThomasGOYouthMinistry@gmail.com)

# OFSS "Graduation Picnic"

## Sunday June 7th 2026

- ALL youth must RSVP in advance
  - using the form to the right ~>>>
- Please ensure your student(s) have been RSVP'd
  - with the proper spelling of their full name(s)
- Students unable to attend on 6.7 can opt to receive their certificate 5.24 or opt out of the certificate
- All Students who RSVP BEFORE May 10<sup>th</sup> will receive the 2026 End of Year Tee Shirt
- Perfect Attendance 91 - 100 %
- Outstanding Attendance 61% - 90 %
- Certificate of Completion 30 % - 60 %
  - \*Students on parenting schedules will be afforded the opportunity for Perfect/Outstanding based on their schedule - please reach out to confirm
- All questions should be emailed to:  
St.ThomasGOCYouthMinistry@gmail.com

RSVP here:



<https://forms.gle/7yYh739xmbcmPPFz8>



# Calling ALL Graduates



## Register to be recognized

- **DEADLINE TO REGISTER: Monday April 27th**
  - In order for a Grad to receive Recognition in the Bulletin / Booklet / at the Graduate Honors, they must be registered by 4.27.2026
  - Post Graduation Plans may be edited / updated until May 24th
- **All Graduates should register**
  - HIGH SCHOOL
  - TECH / TRADE SCHOOL
  - COLLEGE
  - GRADUATE DEGREES
- **Graduates will be recognized on June 14th**
- **All questions should be emailed to:**  
St.ThomasGOCYouthMinistry@gmail.com

Register here:



<https://forms.gle/o6bsRSzvEMo5mgm2A>

## HOPE & JOY End of Year + 6th Grade Sendoff



Friday May 29<sup>th</sup> : Keep an eye on BAND for details

SAINT THOMAS YOUTH MINISTRIES PRESENTS:

# FAMILY FUN NIGHT

**2nd Annual Family Night**

Make a craft, eat dinner, and play games. Join in the Fun and Fellowship with your Saint Thomas Family. Friendly Competition and Challenges for the whole family! Dress comfortably!

**ALL AGES ARE WELCOME!**

**SUNDAY MAY 3RD**

**5:00 - 8:00pm**

**RSVP on BAND App**

Please Check BAND App for RSVP + Sign Up for Dessert, Drink, or Service Hours

**Meet in Saint Irene Hall at 5pm**

Saint Thomas Cherry Hill

Direct Questions to:

[St.ThomasGOCYouthMinistry@gmail.com](mailto:St.ThomasGOCYouthMinistry@gmail.com)

# Nativity Retreat

We hosted the annual local HOPE & JOY Nativity Retreat & the DVYC GOYA Retreat on Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> following St. Nicholas Liturgy. We had wonderful presenters and helpers!



Fr. Georgios brought the house down with his thoughts and observations of the Retreat, the Nativity, and our youth.



Stavro was matching w/ Ms. Nitsa



Ms. Georgia led an edible craft to benefit the Bake Sale for Children's Cancer Research



Ms. Rena taught about St Romanos and everyone got a chance to chant the hymns of the Incarnation (w/ microphones!)



Ms. Nitsa dove into WHY we celebrate Christmas. The importance of Panayia's faith. And the stark contrast between secular Christmas and what Christmas truly celebrates.



Ms. Minnie helped everyone see the connection between the prophecies of the Old Testament and the way Jesus fulfilled them



12.6.2025



This year's Bake Sale was very successful! Thanks to all the people who made sweets, donated their time to sell them, bought them, and donated monetarily to this worthy cause.



We had donations from The Cake Boutique, Nothing Bundt Cakes,

and We even raffled one of "Yiayia Sofia's Famous Apple Cakes" which was a BIG hit! Thank you to Georgia Boyle and Evelyn Buonamici for co-chairing this event and doing such a great job! Olympia Anagnostou for chairing and setting the template and tone of this wonderful event for so many years! Thank you all for your hard work! We pray through these efforts we can get closer to a day when children aren't suffering with Cancer.

**Thank you to everyone who baked, donated, participated, and supported!**

In order to see all photos from the Nativity Retreat, or add your own - use this code.



In order to see all photos from the Bake Sale, or add your own - use this code.



In order to see all photos from the Nativity Pageant, or add your own - use this code.



# Nativity Pageant

This year, our youth, led by Kelly Papacristos and Janet Kotsakis, put on a lovely Pageant as they recreated the Nativity Icon.



Bravo to our young people on a beautiful performance! Thank you for helping to remind us of the events of Christmas.



Thank you to all the parent helpers and families who participated!



**IMPORTANT SERVICES - GOD WILLING, WE  
WILL SEE YOU ALL THERE!**

**MARCH:**

**SUN. MAR. 1**

- SUNDAY OF ORTHODOXY \*BRING ICON\*

**MON. MAR. 2**

- GREAT COMPLINE (7 PM)

**WED. MAR. 4**

- PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY (7 PM)

**FRI. MAR. 6**

- 2ND SALUTATIONS (7 PM)
  - MYRRH BEARERS PLEASE RSVP ON BAND

**SUN. MAR. 8**

- SUN OF ST GREGORY PALAMAS

**MON. MAR. 9**

- GREAT COMPLINE (7 PM)

**WED. MAR. 11**

- PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY (7 PM)

**FRI. MAR. 13**

- THIRD SALUTATIONS (7 PM)
  - MYRRH BEARERS PLEASE RSVP ON BAND

**SUN. MAR. 15**

- SUN OF THE HOLY CROSS
  - BRING YOUR CROSSES TO D.L.

**MON. MAR. 16**

- GREAT COMPLINE (7 PM)

**WED. MAR. 18**

- PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY (7 PM)

**FRI. MAR. 20**

- FOURTH SALUTATIONS (7 PM)
  - MYRRH BEARERS PLEASE RSVP ON BAND

**SUN. MAR. 22**

- SUN OF ST JOHN CLIMACUS (THE LADDER)

**MON. MAR. 23**

- GREAT COMPLINE (7 PM)

**TUE. MAR. 24**

- VESPERS OF ANNUNCIATION @ELKINS PARK

**WED. MAR. 25**

- DIVINE LITURGY FOR ANNUNCIATION (8:45 AM)

**FRI. MAR. 27**

- AKATHIST HYMN TO PANAYIA (7 PM)
  - MYRRH BEARERS PLEASE RSVP ON BAND

**SUN. MAR. 29**

- SUN OF ST MARY OF EGYPT

**MON. MAR. 30**

- GREAT COMPLINE (7 PM)



**ST. THOMAS  
YOUTH MINISTRIES**

**APRIL:**

**MON. APR. 1**

- PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY (7 PM)

**SAT. APR. 4**

- SATURDAY OF LAZARUS D.L.
  - PALM CROSS MAKING + RETREAT?

**SUN. APR. 5**

- PALM SUNDAY D.L. (9:45 AM)
- BRIDEGROOM SERVICE (7 PM)

**MON. APR. 6 - SAT. APR 11 : HOLY WEEK**

- MON - BRIDEGROOM - 7 PM
- TUES - BRIDEGROOM - 7 PM
- WED - PRESANCTIFIED LITURGY - 9 AM
  - MYSTICAL SUPPER 6PM
- THURS - VESPERAL D.L. - 8:30 AM
  - THE HOLY PASSION - 6:30 PM
- FRI - ROYAL HOURS 10 AM
  - APOKATHELOSIS 12 PM
  - BURIAL + ENGOMIA 7 PM
- SAT - VESPERS / D.L. 8:30 AM
  - PRE RESURRECTION 11PM
  - RESURRECTION + D.L. 11:45 PM

**SUN. APR. 12**

- PASCHA !!
  - VESPERS OF AGAPE 10 AM

**FRI. APR. 17**

- D.L. ZOODOCHOS PYGI 8:45 AM

**SAT. APR. 18**

- ST THOMAS VESPERS 6:30 PM

**SUN. APR. 19**

- SAINT THOMAS SUNDAY !!

**WED. APR. 22**

- ST GEORGE VESPERS @ CATHEDRAL 6:30 P

**THU. APR. 23**

- D.L. ST GEORGE GREAT MARTYR

**SUN. APR. 26**

- SUN OF MYRRH BEARING WOMEN D.L.

**WED. APR. 29**

- PARAKLESIS 6:45 PM

# OFSS "Graduation Picnic"

## Sunday June 7th 2026

- ALL youth must RSVP in advance
  - using the form on the QR code below
- Please ensure your student(s) have been RSVP'd
  - with the proper spelling of their full name(s)
- Students unable to attend on 6.7 can opt to receive their certificate 5.24 or opt out of the certificate
- All Students who RSVP BEFORE May 10<sup>th</sup> will receive the 2026 End of Year Tee Shirt
- Perfect Attendance 91 - 100 %
- Outstanding Attendance 61% - 90 %
- Certificate of Completion 30% - 60 %
  - \*Students on parenting schedules will be afforded the opportunity for Perfect/Outstanding based on their schedule - please reach out to confirm
- All questions should be emailed to:  
St.ThomasGOYouthMinistry@gmail.com

RSVP here:



<https://forms.gle/7yYh739xmbcmPPFz8>



# CAMP GOOD SHEPHERD NEW JERSEY



**July 12-18, 2026**

Camp Linwood MacDonald  
1 Flatbrook Rd, Sandyston, NJ 07826

Ages: 8-18 years old

Registration: \$675 Earlybird until May 31<sup>st</sup>

Regular price: \$750

**Register here!**



[www.nj.goarch.org/camp-good-shepherd](http://www.nj.goarch.org/camp-good-shepherd)



# Saint Thomas Hellenic School PTO

The Saint Thomas Hellenic School PTO has had a busy and rewarding year filled with gatherings, fundraising, and giving back to our community! We expanded our fundraising efforts to include Thanksgiving pie sales, Tiropita and Spanakopita fundraisers, and even a Bougatsa fundraiser. Thanks to these wonderful initiatives, the PTO has been able to give back to our students by celebrating OXI Day, hosting Christmas parties, Annual cutting of Vasilopita, commemorating Three Hierarchs Day, and providing various special treats throughout the year.



Hellenic School Vasilopita Tradition 2026



PTO Bougatsa Sale



In addition, the Saint Thomas Hellenic School PTO is excited to sponsor a school trip for our students this March to the Edelman Planetarium at Rowan University. None of these efforts would have been possible without the incredible support of our generous families — we are truly grateful!



On February 7, 2026, the Saint Thomas Hellenic School PTO proudly hosted its 30th Anniversary Annual PTO Dinner Dance. This year's theme, "The Nisiotiko Glendi," transported guests to the vibrant atmosphere of a Greek island celebration. This milestone event was attended by our current Saint Thomas Hellenic School students and their families, Father Georgios Oikonomou and his family, Parish Council members, the current PTO Board, Hellenic School Principal Kyria Margarita Vrettos and our teaching staff, past PTO Presidents and Board Members, and Hellenic School alumni.



## “THE ST. THOMAS “KALI PAREA” ENJOYS ITS 19th YEAR!”



The “Good Company” is a free-wheeling get-together of Greek-American men, mainly retirees, that meet once a week “cafe-style” to drink their coffee, and to share their pleasant company and discuss issues of interest. The language is Greek. Everyone is welcome, every Wednesday at 10am-12noon, especially new members, that are received with great pleasure! The “Kali Parea” (Καλή Παρέα) started 19 years ago in November, with three friends: Chris Vranas of Mt. Laurel, George Kousoulis of Haddonfield, and Chris Sivas of Cherry Hill, meeting for coffee at the Moorestown Mall.

They soon invited and attracted many more, and it was not long afterward that they moved their

“kafeneio” to a small room in the basement of St. Thomas Greek Orthodox Church at Cherry Hill, NJ. This get-together became so popular that the original meeting room was not large enough, so it was moved to its present location, at the St. Irene Hall of the same basement. At this unique social gathering, there thrives a culture of sharing historical perspectives, humorous jokes, educational tidbits, fond memories of Greece, and the experiences of becoming Greek-Americans.

Over the intervening years, this unique group has thrived, with the current number being 44 members. Each weekly gathering often exceeds 30 people, especially through the Fall through

Spring, when many return from their annual visit to “The Homeland, Greece.” Their roots come from throughout Greece, including the Ionian and Aegean islands, the mainland North and South, and the Peloponnese.

Most were born in Greece, and came to America as young men, seeking their fortune in the “New World,” met the difficult challenges of young immigrants, and became successful businessmen or professionals, family men, and community leaders. They love their mother country, but also share a deep affection for their second “Patrida,” the USA.

As is to be expected, as most members are of retirement age, over the passing years quite a number have been called to join their maker, and thus over 20 of the original group are fondly remembered. We are happy to have two of the founders, George and Chris, with us. Although the “Kali Parea” remains – on purpose – unofficial, so as to maintain its loose, free-wheeling “cafeneio style” existence, it has in

fact become a recognized and respected part of the Greek community. It is always a pleasure to be joined, at the Wednesday meetings, with St. Thomas' recently welcomed Priest, Fr. Georgios Oikonomou, who enjoys the company and contributes to the discussions.

Several of its members, with experience in restaurants, are part of the core of the volunteers that man the kitchen and/or serving at various community functions, including the annual “Agora” (Greek Food Festival,) the monthly Maturity Club's luncheons, and supporting and being members of other social organizations of the St. Thomas Church. The “Kali Parea” supports the Church itself, as well as to the various philanthropic societies such as the Philoptochos, and others. Together with the Maturity Club, the “Kali Parea” co-sponsored one of the Saints of the recently completed iconography project of St. Thomas Church at Cherry Hill.



## AHEPA Camden Chapter 69 Honors Anastasios Efstratiades as AHEPAN of the Year



By Cosmos Philly Staff, February 3, 2026

Camden Chapter 69 of the American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association hosted a testimonial dinner and dance on January 25, 2026, honoring Anastasios Efstratiades as AHEPAN of the Year. The event was held at the Adelpia Ballroom in Deptford, New Jersey.

Efstratiades, president of Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church in Cherry Hill, was recognized for his leadership, longstanding service to the community, and dedication to AHEPA initiatives, including the Journey to Greece program. He was also honored for his role in advancing the church's iconography project, a major undertaking that has reshaped the parish's spiritual and visual life.

The evening opened with remarks from Chapter President Tasos Malapetsas, followed by reflections from the Very Reverend Christoforos Oikonomides, formerly of St. Thomas and now serving at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church. Proistamenos Father Georgios Oikonomou of St. Thomas presented Efstratiades with an icon of Saint Iakovos of Evia in recognition of his lifelong service.

Federation President Harry Karapalides addressed the gathering with a tribute highlighting Efstratiades's commitment to Hellenic values and the Orthodox faith. District 5 Governor Lou Stefanou presented the official district commemorative plaque, followed by a chapter plaque from the brothers of Camden Chapter 69.

During the program, the chapter also marked the completion of its \$100,000 pledge toward the church's iconography project, a milestone that drew strong applause from attendees.

Additional tributes were offered by Past Supreme Presidents Savas Tsvicos and George G. Horiates, who both spoke to Efstratiades's decades of service to AHEPA and the broader Greek-American community.



In his closing remarks, Efstratiades thanked his family, the parish of St. Thomas, and his fellow AHEPA brothers. Reflecting on his long involvement with the organization, he emphasized AHEPA's continued role in strengthening faith, heritage, and service within Greek-American life.





**March 25, 2026**

**Special Greek Independence Day**

**Presentation in honor of  
the 250th Anniversary of the  
United States of America**

***Philadelphia's Role in the Greek Revolution***

*By George G Horiates, Esq*



**Traditional Bakaliaros and Skordalia Dinner**

**Dinner at 6 pm Presentation at 7pm**

**Danielle Kousoulis Greek Center  
Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church**

*Donations accepted*

**Zito H Ellas !**

## District 5 Hosts Successful Hellenic History Tournament

On January 24, 2026, Camden Chapter 69 hosted its 10th annual Regional Hellenic History Tournament. The annual event was hosted in the Danielle Kousoulis Greek Center of Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church in Cherry Hill, NJ. District Governor Lou Stefanou and his lodge, along with the local chapter host officers led by their President Tasos Malapetsas were assisted by the Cherry Hill Daughters of Penelope, Nike Chapter 230.

Students and parents came from all over as thirteen teams came for a chance to win scholarship monies

and for the right to participate in the finals to be held at the AHEPA Supreme Convention this upcoming summer in Philadelphia, PA. The tournament organizer, PDG Steve Marmarou, welcomed the student participants after a complimentary breakfast. Thereafter, a total of seven different rooms in the complex were used in servicing the 13 teams in a round robin style. The finals of The Tenafly team, The Bergens were pitted opposite Holmdel's The Souvlaki Slayers. Alas, the Tenafly team prevailed. The Bergens and the Souvlaki Slayers will be competing in the world championship this summer at the Supreme Convention.

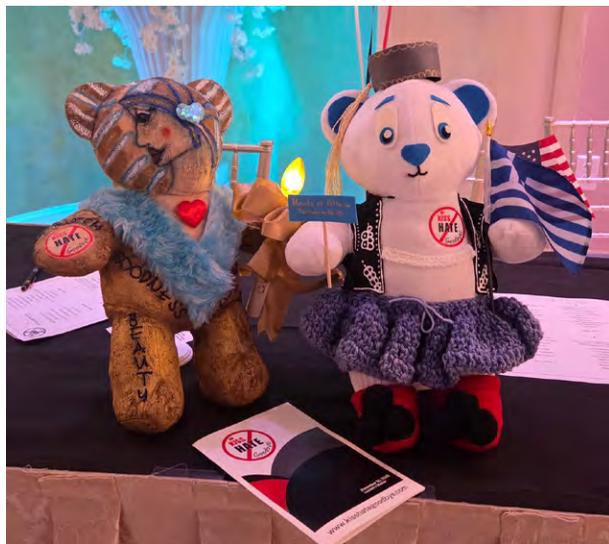


62  
**DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE –  
NIKE CHAPTER #230**

On November 20, Nike Chapter #230 participated in a first of its kind Fundraiser in South Jersey called Kiss Hate Goodbye. The event was attended by 500 members from various Charitable organizations who came together to support a cause, whose mission is to replace division with understanding and negativity with compassion. Nike sisters were joined by the Maids of Athena Demetra #33. Sisters and Maids beautifully decorated themed bears, which were part of the fundraiser raffle. Proceeds went to Kiss Hate Goodbye School Awards, ALS Hope Foundation, Foodbank of SJ, and SJ Breast Cancer Coalition.



L.PDG Eleni Boyadjis, Barbara Ingressis, Melissa Giambanis, PDG Kelly Papacristos, Terri Diamantoukos, Denise Pappas, Maria Pappas, Sandy Clark, MAV Ana Bousoulas.



On November 20th, we had the pleasure and honor to visit and meet one of our Nike #230 founders, Dorothy Sufas. It was a special visit with an amazing lady, who welcomed us with a warm heart. She spoke about the early beginning of our chapter, how the daughters organized Bingo Games and events to raise money for the St Thomas Church building fund and our support for so many other needs. Even though she moved to Florida for thirty years, she always kept her membership tied to our chapter. Thank you, sister Dorothy Sufas, for your dedication and contributions to Nike #230!



PMDG Martina Harris, Zoe Kousoulis, Bonnie Stylianos, Anna Marateo, Lola Gotzis, Christine Onken, Amani Mazahreh, Dorothy Sufas.



# AHEPA CIGAR SMOKER

Wednesday, May 6, 2026

Adelphia's



Clements Bridge Rd Deptford, NJ

Tickets: \$125

6PM

## **Includes:**

**Open Bar**

**Dinner**

**4 Cigars**

## **Contact:**

Taso Malapetsas  
609-813-0668

Pete Doulis  
609-364-7684

Bill Kalavrouziotis  
856-366-3818

Ari Dendrinis  
856-974-0254

SPONSORSHIPS: \$5,000 Platinum includes  
2 tables of ten, recognition on material  
\$2500 includes table of ten, recognition on material

SUPER RAFFLE GIFT PRIZES  
ARE AVAILABLE

*An AHEPA production of Cherry Hill and Vineland chapters*

# The Saint Thomas Choir



For more than fifty years, the Saint Thomas Choir has served the Divine Liturgy from the pews—not to perform, but to pray with the clergy and faithful. Our choir is made up of parishioners of every age, and every voice offered is a gift freely given to God.

This February, our choir had the blessing of participating in the Metropolis of New Jersey Music and Dance Festival (MDF), and we were honored with the Platinum Award in the Mixed Adult Choir category. We thank every choir member who committed time, attention, and heart to the preparation. In this issue we are also sharing photos from the performance, the award, and the ceremony—moments that captured not only the result, but the joy and unity behind it.

At the same time, our choir family has recently experienced a deep loss. We said farewell to Zoe Kousoulis, a devoted member whose steady presence and faithful spirit strengthened this ministry week after week. We will miss her greatly, and we ask all parishioners to remember Zoe and her family in your prayers. May her memory be eternal.

If you feel drawn to this ministry—whether you are experienced or a complete beginner—there is a place for you. Whether you're experienced or brand new, there's a place for you—your voice helps support the Divine Liturgy.



## Sacraments and Remembrances

In this section of our newsletter, we will be sharing important milestones in the lives of our parishioners—celebrating the sacraments of Baptisms, Weddings, and honoring those who have passed. We invite you to join us in offering your prayers and support as we celebrate these special moments of faith and remembrance within our Saint Thomas family.



### Baptisms

1/18/26- Amelia Monaco

2/19/26- Kimia Allami

### Chrismations

2/19/26- Meghan Oneil

2/22/26- Laura DiDonato

2/22/26- Thomas Michael King

### Weddings

1/17/26- George Armentani/Courtney Gutkowski

### Funerals

12/12/25- Evlambia ( Bea ) Patsaros

12/19/25- Augoustis I. Grimanis

12/23/25- Maria ( Mia ) Perez

1/30/26-Grace A. Konstantinides

2/25/26- Zoe Kousoulis



PHILADELPHIA  
**GREEK**  
INDEPENDENCE  
CELEBRATIONS  
**2026**

**FLAG RAISING**

**FRIDAY**  
**APRIL 24<sup>TH</sup>**

**12:00PM AT PHILADELPHIA**  
**CITY HALL | NORTH APRON**

**PARADE GRAND MARSHALS**  
**PAST PRESIDENTS OF THE FEDERATION**



The Federation of Hellenic-American Societies  
of Philadelphia and Greater Delaware Valley

[phillygreekparade.com](http://phillygreekparade.com)



PHILADELPHIA  
**GREEK**  
 INDEPENDENCE  
 CELEBRATIONS  
**2026**

*Eleftheria Gala*

ELEFThERIA MEDAL RECIPIENT | STEVE KONTOS  
 PARADE GRAND MARSHALS | PAST PRESIDENTS OF THE FEDERATION  
 MASTER OF CEREMONIES | MIKE EMANUEL

— SATURDAY, APRIL 25TH —

COCKTAILS 5PM | DINNER 6PM

PA CONVENTION CENTER  
 "GRAND BALLROOM"

1201 ARCH STREET, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19107

ENTERTAINMENT BY THE MARCANTONIS BAND  
 FEATURING GREEK INTERNATIONAL ARTIST

CHRISTINA MILIOU

SCAN QR CODE FOR TICKETS & SPONSORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



**The Federation of Hellenic-American Societies  
 of Philadelphia and Greater Delaware Valley**

[phillygreekparade.com](http://phillygreekparade.com)



**PHILADELPHIA  
GREEK  
INDEPENDENCE  
CELEBRATIONS  
2026**



**PARADE  
SUNDAY, APRIL 26<sup>TH</sup>**

**PARADE GRAND MARSHALS  
PAST PRESIDENTS OF THE FEDERATION**

**10:00 AM  
DOXOLOGY**  
SAINT GEORGE  
GREEK ORTHODOX  
CATHEDRAL

**1:00 PM  
FORMATION**  
22<sup>ND</sup> STREET  
& BENJAMIN  
FRANKLIN PARKWAY

**2:00 PM  
STEP-OFF/PARADE**  
MARCHING TOWARDS  
GRANDSTANDS AT 18<sup>TH</sup>  
& LOGAN CIRCLE



*The Federation of Hellenic-American Societies  
of Philadelphia and Greater Delaware Valley*

[phillygreekparade.com](http://phillygreekparade.com)



# PHILADELPHIA GREEK INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS 2026

## AFTER PARADE

SUNDAY, APRIL 26<sup>TH</sup>

DOORS OPEN AT 5PM

### UPTOWN BEER GARDEN

1500 JOHN F KENNEDY BLVD, PHILADELPHIA, PA 19102

#### TICKET PRICING

\$10 - AGES 16-20 | \$20 - AGES 21+ (PRE-SALE) | \$30 - AGES 21+ (AT THE DOOR)

*Must be 21+ to drink, ID Required. Food and Drink for Purchase and Cash Bar.*

*All proceeds are donations to the parade.*



The Federation of Hellenic-American Societies of  
Philadelphia and the Greater Delaware Valley

[phillygreekparade.com](http://phillygreekparade.com)

ST. THOMAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

# GOLF

TOURNAMENT 2026



**Thursday**  
**05.21.26**

FOR REGISTRATIONS/SPONSORSHIPS  
SCAN THE QR OR FOLLOW THE LINK

<https://b.link/GOLF26>

**1:00PM START**  
**SCRAMBLE**

## Pennsauken Country Club

3800 Haddonfield Rd #3700, Pennsauken, NJ 08109

AWARD CEREMONY & BANQUET INCLUDED

# SAINT THOMAS SUMMER CAMP 2026



June 22 -  
July 3rd

9:00 - 3:00

Religious Education, Trips, Fun Activities

Contact

[Stthomascamp@gmail.com](mailto:Stthomascamp@gmail.com)



**[CLICKABLE REGISTRATION LINK](#)**

# Music Synthesis Studio

Wanli Yu, MMus/Piano Performance

Unlock your child's musical potential with expert piano lessons in the Cherry Hill area, taught by a highly skilled and friendly teacher with a proven track record of students excelling in piano performance and overall musical development.

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[www.music-synthesis.com](http://www.music-synthesis.com)



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Exam Online!



## Hello, Saint Thomas Community! We recently opened our doors near you.

Stop by our new office and ask us about:

- Treatment Options for Sleep Apnea and Breathing Concerns
- Early Treatment and Promotion of Healthy Jaw Development in Children
- Comprehensive Airway/Sleep Evaluation
- Non-Surgical Palatal Expanders for Adults
- Traditional Braces and Invisalign (all ages)

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Board-Certified Orthodontist*

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info@airilyorthodontics.com



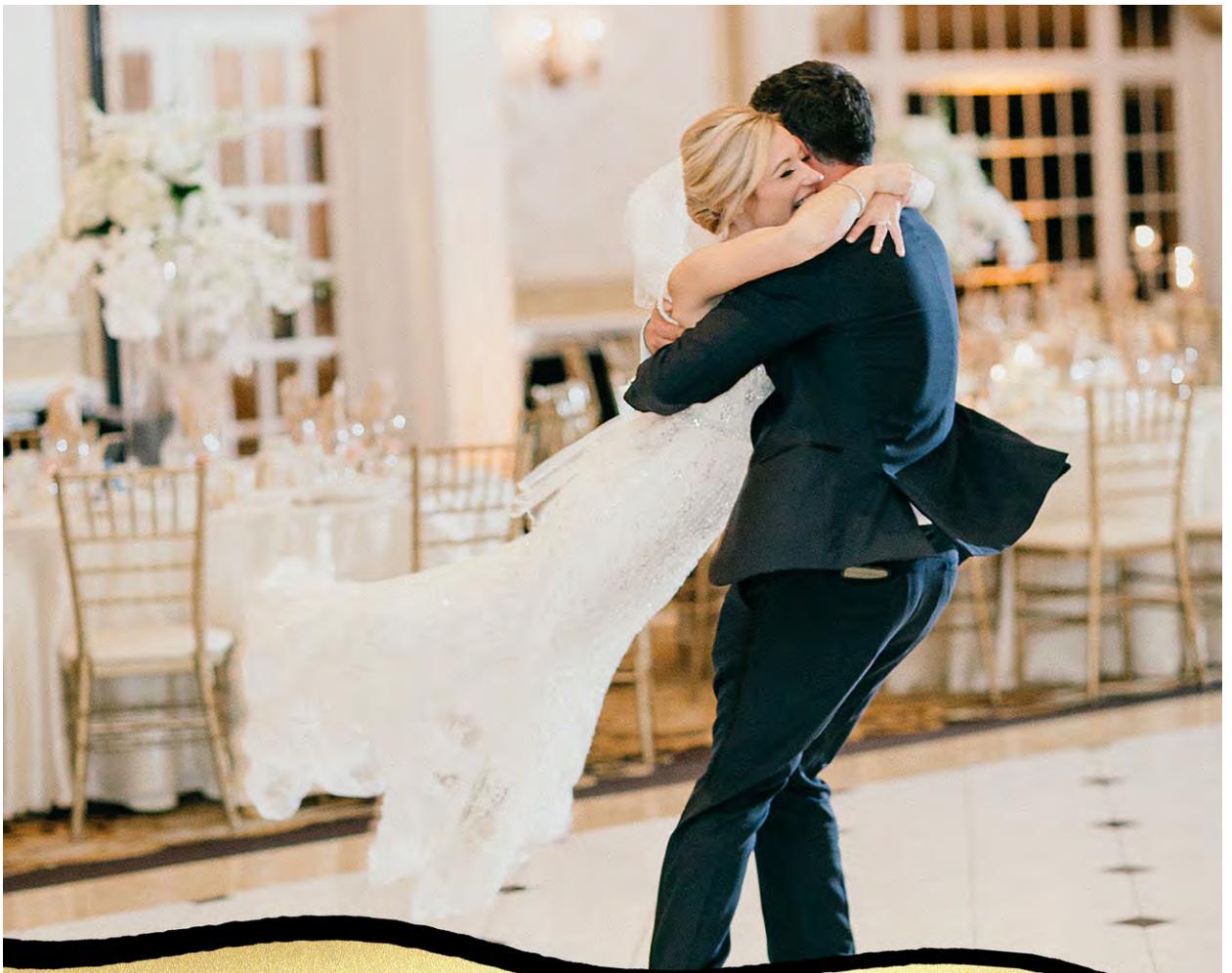
Put your *health*  
in *caring hands* at  
**VIP Rheumatology!**



*Ο ρευματολόγος ιατρός Νικόλαος Τυρής  
ομιλεί ελληνικά και μπορεί να σας εξυπηρετήσει στην ελληνική γλώσσα.*

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