



GREEK ORTHODOX  
METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

# THE SAINT THOMAS APOSTOLIC TIMES

GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF SAINT THOMAS

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΗ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΑ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΘΩΜΑ



# SUMMER 2026

SAINT THOMAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

# ICONOGRAPHY

"FOR THE AGES"

TWO ICONS REMAINING



ST. COSMAS THE POET



ST. PORPHYRIOS

INTERESTED? BE A PART OF HISTORY  
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Rev. Protopresbyter Georgios Oikonomou  
 Πρωτοπρεσβύτερος Γεώργιος Οικονόμου,  
 Ιερατικώς Προϊστάμενος - Parish Priest

## THE SAINT THOMAS APOSTOLIC TIMES

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ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΗ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΑ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΘΩΜΑ



Cherry Hill, June 15, 2025

### **My beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, members of St. Thomas!**

God has blessed us abundantly by granting to the Orthodox Church the spiritual leadership of our Ecumenical Patriarch, His All-Holiness Bartholomew, since October 22, 1991. As he celebrates thirty-five years of fruitful and blessed Patriarchal ministry, we give thanks to God for this luminous and wise shepherd of the Church. He is a true spiritual father whose leadership has already left an indelible mark upon contemporary Church history. We pray that God may grant him many more years of health, strength, and blessing. Every word he speaks reflects wisdom, and his teachings will remain a precious inheritance for generations to come.

On the eve of his Name Day, June 10, 2024, during the blessing of the newly renovated Maraslis Patriarchal Urban School in Constantinople, His All-Holiness reflected on the historic role of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in preserving the identity of our people. He reminded us that the Patriarchate literally safeguarded our spiritual and cultural identity through the establishment of schools and academies, through the selection of wise teachers, and through the educational and transformative life of the Church itself. Divine worship, faith in the God of love, love for our neighbor, spirituality, and social witness all contributed to forming generations of faithful Christians.

School and Church worked together to instill in students the conviction that belonging to the radiant tradition of Orthodoxy is both a privilege and a responsibility. Education was never merely the transmission of information; it was the formation and transformation of the whole person—a true healing of the soul.

The Patriarch also observed that throughout Asia Minor, Eastern Thrace, and Pontus, Greek schools were often among the most impressive and symbolic buildings in a community. They represented a vision of education rooted in human dignity, culture, and spiritual purpose. Even today, older school buildings often communicate something transcendent and inspiring, while many modern educational facilities focus exclusively on practical utility.

His All-Holiness further noted that contemporary education frequently neglects the spiritual dimension of the human person while encouraging excessive individualism and self-centered fulfillment. A system that seeks only to satisfy personal desires cannot ultimately lead to true happiness. Rather, authentic education must help human beings transcend self-interest and discover their relationship with God and with one another.

The future belongs to an education that offers an escape from the narrow confines of self-absorption and indifference toward others. At the heart of Christian education lies relational freedom, community, openness to our neighbor, and solidarity. Christian ethics remind us that education is not simply about acquiring skills but about cultivating values and forming virtuous human beings.

These reflections have particular significance for Orthodox Christians throughout the world, especially for those of us living in the diaspora. The Ecumenical Patriarchate preserved our spiritual and cultural identity during some of the most difficult periods of our history by investing in schools, academies, and the life of the Church. Together, Church and School transmitted the conviction that it is both a great privilege and a sacred responsibility to belong to the living tradition of Orthodoxy.

Today we find ourselves at a critical crossroads. The challenge before us is whether we will preserve our spiritual and cultural identity for future generations. The dangers of assimilation and forgetfulness are real and should concern all of us. The path forward is the same path that the Ecumenical Patriarchate has always shown us: strengthening our schools, supporting our educational institutions, and nurturing the life of the Church.

Here in the blessed land of America, we have been given remarkable opportunities. Our communities have established Hellenic schools, and our Archdiocese has founded Hellenic College Holy Cross to educate and prepare future clergy and leaders. Yet we must never take these blessings for granted. The fact that previous generations sacrificed greatly to build and sustain these institutions does not relieve us of our responsibility. They require our ongoing support, vigilance, and love. They must remain vibrant not only as educational institutions but also as living witnesses to the truth of our Orthodox faith.

School and Church, united inseparably, share the sacred mission of passing on the radiant tradition of Orthodoxy to our children. As Saint Kosmas the Aetolian taught, our goal is that children may possess both “a soul and Christ.” If we neglect education, we risk losing our faith; if we neglect faith, education loses its deepest purpose.

Education is a permanent treasure that can never be taken away. A person may lose material possessions, wealth, or status, but true education remains forever. As Greeks and Orthodox Christians, we have inherited a unique spiritual treasure: the harmonious synthesis of classical Greek learning and the wisdom of the Holy Fathers. This sacred inheritance has shaped our identity for centuries.

Let us therefore strive to instill in our children a love for learning, intellectual growth, spiritual cultivation, and authentic education. If we succeed, we can be confident that the next generation will become even better than our own. Such an education, as described by our Ecumenical Patriarch, is profoundly humanistic. It overcomes selfishness and self-interest and opens the heart to love and service of others because it is rooted in the Christian ethos.

This is the education for which we must work together with all our strength. We must support our parish Hellenic schools, establish new educational opportunities whenever possible, and seek the very best teachers. We must also continue to support Hellenic College Holy Cross, through which future priests will be prepared to serve the People of God with knowledge, faith, and dedication.

In this regard, I would like to express my sincere appreciation for the St. Thomas Hellenic School, where truly remarkable work is being accomplished. I warmly thank and congratulate our parents, commend our principal and teachers, express gratitude to our PTO, and acknowledge all our parishioners whose generosity and support make the continued growth and success of our school possible.

As we conclude these reflections, Presvytera Anastasia and I extend to all our beloved parishioners our heartfelt wishes for a blessed, peaceful, and spiritually fruitful summer.

**With paternal love in Christ,  
Protopresbyter Georgios Oikonomou**

Ο καλός Θεός μας ευλόγησε, ώστε από τις 22 Οκτωβρίου 1991 μέχρι σήμερα να προΐσταται της Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας ο Οικουμενικός μας Πατριάρχης, κύριος κύριος Βαρθολομαίος, συμπληρώνοντας και εορτάζοντας 35 χρόνια αγλαόκαρπης Πατριαρχίας. Ο Πατριάρχης μας είναι ένας άνθρωπος φωτεινός, σοφός, αληθινός πατέρας. Μία εκκλησιαστική προσωπικότητα, που ήδη αφήνει ανεξίτηλη τη σφραγίδα της πνευματικής του ηγεσίας στη σύγχρονη εκκλησιαστική ιστορία και προσευχόμαστε ο Θεός να του χαρίζει έτη πολλά και ευλογημένα. Κάθε λέξη του στάζει σοφία και τα λόγια του θα αποτελούν πάντα μια πολύτιμη παρακαταθήκη για τις επόμενες γενιές.

Θα δανειστώ κάποια δικά του λόγια, που εκφώνησε παραμονή της ονομαστικής του γιορτής, στις 10 Ιουνίου 2024, τελώντας Αγιασμό στην Πατριαρχική Αστική Σχολή Μαρασλή, ύστερα από την ανακαίνισή της. Μιλώντας για την προστασία της παιδείας του γένους από τη Μεγάλη Εκκλησία τόνισε: «Το Οικουμενικό Πατριαρχείο έσωσε κυριολεκτικά την πνευματική και πολιτισμική ταυτότητά μας με την ίδρυση σχολείων και Ακαδημιών, με την επιλογή σοφών διδασκάλων, αλλά και με το μορφωτικό και μεταμορφωτικό έργο που επιτελεί η ίδια η ζωή της Εκκλησίας, η θεία λατρεία, η πίστη στον Θεό της αγάπης και η αγάπη προς τον πλησίον στην αδιάσπαστη ενότητά τους, η πνευματικότητα και η κοινωνική μαρτυρία. Σχολείο και Εκκλησία σφυρηλατούσαν στους μαθητές την πεποίθηση, ότι αποτελεί μέγα προνόμιο να ανήκουν στην ολόφωτη παράδοση της Ορθοδοξίας, ότι αποτελούν φορείς αυτής, που οφείλουν να αγωνισθούν για τη διάσωση και την καλλιέργεια των πολυτίμων αξιών της. Εδώ η εκπαίδευση δεν ήταν απλώς μετάδοση γνώσεων, αλλά μόρφωση και μεταμόρφωση, «θεραπεία ψυχής», ανθρωποποιία.

Είναι χαρακτηριστικό ότι στη Μικρά Ασία, την Ανατολική Θράκη και τον Πόντο, τα σχολεία μας είναι παντού κτίρια μεγαλοπρεπή και εμβληματικά, αφού εκπροσωπούν το ιδεώδες της παιδείας, που ταυτίζεται με τον «ανθρωπισμό» και τον υψηλό προορισμό του ανθρώπου. Το βλέπουμε αυτό σήμερα και σε πολλά μέρη της Ελλάδος. Τα νέα σχολικά κτίρια είναι απλώς χρηστικά, ενώ τα παλαιά σχολεία έχουν κάτι πνευματικό, κάτι που εκφράζει τιμαλφή ιδεώδη, που υπερβαίνει το απλώς χρήσιμο.

Δυστυχώς, η σύγχρονη παιδεία παραμελεί την πνευματική φύση του ανθρώπου, ενώ διογκώνει το εγώ του και τις ιδιωτικές επιθυμίες του. Με την έννοια αυτή, το λεγόμενο «σχολείο των ευτυχισμένων παιδιών» μάλλον δεν προετοιμάζει τη νέα γενιά για την ευτυχία, αλλά για μια αδιέξοδη δουλεία στις εξ ορισμού ακόρεστες ανάγκες του ανθρώπου. Ο προσανατολισμός στον εαυτό μας και στην ικανοποίηση των ατομικών αναγκών σημαίνει συρρίκνωση της ύπαρξής μας.

Το μέλλον ανήκει σε μία παιδεία, η οποία προσφέρει στον άνθρωπο διέξοδο από τους λαβυρίνθους της κλειστής αυτοπραγμάτωσης και της αδιαφορίας για τον συνάνθρωπο. Το χριστιανικό ήθος βρίσκεται στον πυρήνα αυτής της ιδέας της παιδεύσεως, αφού εμπερικλείει την ιδέα της σχεσιακής ελευθερίας, την κοινωνικότητα, την ανοικτοσύνη προς τον συνάνθρωπο και την αλληλεγγύη. Δεν είναι τυχαίο ότι «αγωγή» και «αξία» έχουν ετυμολογικά την ίδια ρίζα.»

Μεταφέροντας την ουσία των παραπάνω λόγων στις ανάγκες της Ελληνικής Ορθόδοξης Εκκλησίας ανά την οικουμένη και ιδιαίτερα στην ομογένεια μπορούμε να διδαχτούμε ορισμένες πολύ σημαντικές αλήθειες. Το Οικουμενικό μας Πατριαρχείο έσωσε και διασώζει την πνευματική και πολιτισμική μας ταυτότητα σε καιρούς χαλεπούς και μαρτυρικούς δίνοντας προτεραιότητα στην ίδρυση σχολείων και Ακαδημιών, επιλέγοντας σοφούς διδασκάλους και βέβαια με την ίδια την εκκλησιαστική ζωή, που έχει μορφωτικό και μεταμορφωτικό χαρακτήρα. Σχολείο και Εκκλησία σε αδιάσπαστη ενότητα μεταλαμπαδεύουν στους μαθητές

την πεποίθηση ότι είναι μέγα προνόμιο και τιμή να ανήκουν στην ολόφωτη παράδοση της Ορθοδοξίας.

Σήμερα, σε ένα κρίσιμο σταυροδρόμι, όπου η αναμέτρηση του παρελθόντος με το παρόν και το μέλλον είναι έντονη, καλούμαστε να σταθούμε με ιστορική ευθύνη. Το διακύβευμα είναι η διατήρηση ή όχι της πνευματικής και πολιτισμικής μας ταυτότητας. Ο ορατός κίνδυνος της αλλοτρίωσης και της λήθης δεν πρέπει να μας αφήσει αδιάφορους και χρειάζεται να έχουμε την καλή ανησυχία. Δεν είναι υπερβολή να πούμε ότι ο μοναδικός τρόπος να σταθούμε όρθιοι είναι να ακολουθήσουμε τον δρόμο, που υπέδειξε το Οικουμενικό μας Πατριαρχείο. Εδώ, στην όμορφη και ευλογημένη χώρα της Αμερικής, υπάρχουν οι δυνατότητες. Να ιδρύνονται σχολεία και Ακαδημίες. Και ήδη έχουν ιδρυθεί, καθώς κάθε Ελληνική Ορθόδοξη Κοινότητα φρόντισε να ιδρύσει μαζί και σχολείο. Αλλά και η Ιερά Αρχιεπισκοπή Αμερικής φροντίζοντας το μέλλον των κοινοτήτων και την στελέχωση των ιερατικών θέσεων ίδρυσε την Θεολογική Σχολή του Τιμίου Σταυρού. Όμως, αδελφοί μου, τίποτα δεν είναι αυτονόητο. Επειδή κάποιοι άνθρωποι αγωνίστηκαν σκληρά, πριν από δεκαετίες, για να τα ιδρύνουν και να τα παραδώσουν στις επόμενες γενιές δεν σημαίνει ότι μπορούμε να αδιαφορήσουμε. Χρειάζονται την ανύσταχτη φροντίδα και αγάπη μας. Χρειάζονται τη στήριξή μας. Όστε να παραμένουν ανοιχτά όχι μόνο ως προς τη λειτουργία τους αλλά και ως μαρτυρία και πρόσκληση στον σύγχρονο κόσμο που αναζητά την Αλήθεια με καλή προαίρεση.

Σχολείο και Εκκλησία αδιάσπαστα ενωμένα έχουν την ιερή ευθύνη να μεταλαμπαδεύσουν στα παιδιά την ολόφωτη παράδοση της Ορθοδοξίας. Να έχουν τα παιδιά, όπως έλεγε ο δάσκαλος του γένους Άγιος Κοσμάς ο Αιτωλός, «ψυχή και Χριστό». Αν αδιαφορήσουμε για την παιδεία, κινδυνεύουμε να χάσουμε και την πίστη και το αντίστροφο. Η παιδεία είναι αγαθό αιώνιο και αναφαίρετο, ακόμα και αν χάσει τα πάντα ένας άνθρωπος όσα απέκτησε στη ζωή του, την παιδεία δεν μπορούν να του τη στερήσουν. Και εμείς είμαστε ευλογημένοι ως λαός να έχουμε λάβει παρακαταθήκη έναν αληθινό πνευματικό θησαυρό. Ο θησαυρός αυτός είναι η αρχαιοελληνική παιδεία σε μία θαυμαστή ενότητα και αδιάσπαστη συνέχεια με την αγιοπατερική παράδοση και γραμματεία. Ας αγωνιστούμε υπεύθυνα να ενσταλάξουμε στα παιδιά μας την αγάπη για τα γράμματα, τη μόρφωση, την πνευματική καλλιέργεια, την αληθινή παιδεία. Αν το επιτύχουμε αυτό, μπορούμε να είμαστε βέβαιοι ότι τα παιδιά θα γίνουν καλύτεροι άνθρωποι από εμάς, μέσα από μία παιδεία βαθιά ανθρωπιστική, όπως την περιέγραψε ο Οικουμενικός μας Πατριάρχης. Μία παιδεία που γκρεμίζει τον εγωισμό και την ιδιοτέλεια και ανοίγεται αγαπητικά στον συνάνθρωπο, καθώς έχει στον πυρήνα της το χριστιανικό ήθος.

Για αυτήν την παιδεία οφείλουμε να αγωνιστούμε όλοι μαζί και με όλες μας τις δυνάμεις. Στηρίζοντας τα ελληνικά σχολεία των κοινοτήτων μας, ανοίγοντας καινούργια, διαλέγοντας τους καλύτερους δασκάλους. Και βέβαια, επίσης, στηρίζοντας με όλες μας τις δυνάμεις την Θεολογική Σχολή του Τιμίου Σταυρού, μέσα από την οποία ευελπιστούμε ότι θα αποφοιτήσουν εφοδιασμένοι με όλες τις απαραίτητες προϋποθέσεις οι ιερείς, που πρόκειται να διακονήσουν τον λαό του Θεού. Ήθελα ιδιαίτερα να αναφερθώ στο Ελληνικό Σχολείο του Αγίου Θωμά, όπου γίνεται πραγματικά μία θαυμάσια δουλειά. Ευχαριστώ και συγχαίρω τους γονείς, επαινώ τη Διευθύντρια και τις δασκάλες μας, τον Σύλλογο Γονέων αλλά και όλους τους ενορίτες μας, που με την αγάπη και τη γενναιοδωρία τους στηρίζουν την απρόσκοπτη λειτουργία και πρόοδο του σχολείου. Ολοκληρώνουμε τις σκέψεις μας απευθύνοντας σε όλους τους αγαπημένους μας ενορίτες από τα βάθη της καρδιάς μας θερμές ευχές για ένα πολύ ευλογημένο καλοκαίρι.

**Με εν Χριστώ αγάπη,  
Πρωτοπρεσβύτερος Γεώργιος Οικονόμου.**



## SAINT THOMAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΗ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΑ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΘΩΜΑ



### Parish Council President Message

#### **Dear Fellow Parishioners,**

As we start the summer season, I want to wish you on behalf of the Parish Council an enjoyable season with you families and friends. Our parish is thankful for all that you have done this year in order to make Saint Thomas one of the most successful parishes in the Metropolis of New Jersey. With the completed construction and iconography, we have become a destination for Greek Orthodox from all over the country. The summer started with a major event at St. Thomas! On June 21, 2026 our parish welcomed seven (7) new members to the Orthodox faith. On that Sunday, Father Georgios and Father Florin baptized four young persons and chrismated three more. Our new brothers and sisters join the rest of us in glorifying God and asking for our enlightenment through the intercessions of Saint Thomas the Apostle. The event is proof that our parish has moved beyond building edifices and installing holy icons (all of which are important parts of our faith). Now, using what we built to teach our faith, we are adding new souls in our midst. When we start the new ecclesiastical year in September, we will begin focusing on providing even more services for the people of God.

- We will celebrate the founders of this parish with a Founders Day on Sunday October 4. Remembering those who came before us is an important part of acknowledging who we are.
  - We will expand our Hellenic educational programs. In addition to our excellent afternoon Hellenic school, we will start a “mom and me” class for toddlers, we will continue our Greek for adults class and the Elliniki Folia advanced Greek language, and we will be introducing a class of Ancient Greek Language, to help those who want to understand our liturgical Greek. I have decided to teach that class myself.
  - The parish will also expand its religious and cultural events: Father will continue his wonderful call on explaining our icons and we will start a St. Thomas cultural series with four lectures per year.
- When we return in the fall, we will have to put together another great festival, AGORA 2026, to show our neighbors our culture and raise funds for our Church. And, let’s not forget our raffle tickets, which will support our building fund: We still have \$650,000 mortgage to pay. As you remember, last year we borrowed additional money in order to replace the roof of all our facilities, which was done.

Thank you all for the continuing support of our parish! I wish you a great summer!

**Anastasios Efstratiades**  
**Parish Council President**

## Αγαπητοί ενορίες,

Καθώς ξεκινά η θερινή περίοδος, θα ήθελα, εκ μέρους του Εκκλησιαστικού Συμβουλίου, να σας ευχηθώ να περάσετε ένα όμορφο καλοκαίρι με τις οικογένειες και τους φίλους σας. Η ενορία μας σας ευχαριστεί για όλα όσα προσφέρατε κατά τη διάρκεια αυτής της χρονιάς, ώστε ο Άγιος Θωμάς να αποτελεί μία από τις πιο επιτυχημένες ενορίες της Ιεράς Μητροπόλεως Νέας Ιερσής. Με την ολοκλήρωση των κατασκευαστικών έργων και της αγιογράφησης, ο ναός μας έχει πλέον καταστεί προορισμός για Ορθοδόξους χριστιανούς από ολόκληρη τη χώρα.

Το καλοκαίρι ξεκίνησε με ένα σπουδαίο γεγονός στον Άγιο Θωμά! Στις 21 Ιουνίου 2026, η ενορία μας υποδέχθηκε επτά (7) νέα μέλη στην Ορθόδοξη πίστη. Εκείνη την Κυριακή, ο π. Γεώργιος και ο π. Φλωρίν βάπτισαν τέσσερις νέους και έχρισαν άλλους τρεις. Οι νέοι αυτοί αδελφοί και αδελφές μας ενώνονται μαζί μας στο να δοξάζουμε τον Θεό και να αναζητούμε τον φωτισμό Του με τις πρεσβείες του Αγίου Αποστόλου Θωμά. Το γεγονός αυτό αποτελεί απόδειξη ότι η ενορία μας έχει πλέον προχωρήσει πέρα από την ανέγερση κτηρίων και την τοποθέτηση ιερών εικόνων — όλα βεβαίως σημαντικά στοιχεία της πίστεώς μας. Τώρα, αξιοποιώντας όσα χτίσαμε για να διδάξουμε την πίστη μας, προσθέτουμε νέες ψυχές ανάμεσά μας.

Με την έναρξη του νέου εκκλησιαστικού έτους τον Σεπτέμβριο, θα επικεντρωθούμε στην παροχή ακόμη περισσότερων διακονιών προς τον λαό του Θεού.

- Θα τιμήσουμε τους ιδρυτές αυτής της ενορίας με μια Ημέρα ή Κυριακή Ιδρυτών στις 4 Οκτωβρίου. Η μνήμη εκείνων που προηγήθηκαν αποτελεί σημαντικό μέρος της αναγνώρισης της ταυτότητάς μας.
- Θα επεκτείνουμε τα ελληνικά εκπαιδευτικά μας προγράμματα. Πέρα από το εξαιρετικό απογευματινό Ελληνικό Σχολείο μας, θα ξεκινήσουμε ένα πρόγραμμα “μαμά και παιδί” για νήπια, θα συνεχίσουμε το μάθημα ελληνικών για ενήλικες και το πρόγραμμα προχωρημένης ελληνικής γλώσσας «Ελληνική Φωλιά», ενώ θα εισαγάγουμε και μάθημα Αρχαίας Ελληνικής Γλώσσας, για να βοηθήσουμε όσους επιθυμούν να κατανοήσουν καλύτερα τη λειτουργική μας γλώσσα. Αποφάσισα να διδάξω προσωπικά αυτό το μάθημα.
- Η ενορία θα επεκτείνει επίσης τις θρησκευτικές και πολιτιστικές της εκδηλώσεις. Ο π. Γεώργιος θα συνεχίσει την υπέροχη πρωτοβουλία του να ερμηνεύει τις ιερές εικόνες μας, ενώ θα ξεκινήσουμε και μια πολιτιστική σειρά του Αγίου Θωμά με τέσσερις διαλέξεις τον χρόνο.

Όταν επιστρέψουμε το φθινόπωρο, θα χρειαστεί να οργανώσουμε ακόμη ένα εξαιρετικό φεστιβάλ, το AGORA 2026, ώστε να παρουσιάσουμε τον πολιτισμό μας στους γείτονές μας και να συγκεντρώσουμε πόρους για την Εκκλησία μας. Και βέβαια, ας μην ξεχάσουμε τα λαχεία μας, τα οποία θα στηρίξουν το οικοδομικό μας ταμείο. Εξακολουθούμε να έχουμε υποθήκη ύψους 650.000 δολαρίων προς εξόφληση. Όπως θυμάστε, πέρυσι δανειστήκαμε επιπλέον χρήματα για να αντικαταστήσουμε τη στέγη όλων των εγκαταστάσεών μας, έργο το οποίο ολοκληρώθηκε.

Σας ευχαριστώ όλους για τη συνεχή στήριξη της ενορίας μας! Σας εύχομαι ένα υπέροχο καλοκαίρι!

**Αναστάσιος Ευστρατιάδης**  
**Πρόεδρος Εκκλησιαστικού Συμβουλίου**

## Holy Week and Pascha 2026

**H**oly Week and Pascha 2026 were a blessed and moving time in the life of Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church. From Palm Sunday through the joyful proclamation of the Resurrection, our parish family gathered in large numbers to walk with Christ through His Passion, Burial, and glorious Resurrection.

The week began on Palm Sunday, as the faithful filled the church to hear the Gospel of our Lord's entrance into Jerusalem. Parishioners received palms prepared with care and devotion, carrying the joy and solemnity of the feast into their homes. From that day forward, the services of Holy Week led us step by step into the heart of our faith.

On Holy Wednesday, the church was once again filled for the Sacrament of Holy Unction. As the faithful were anointed with the blessed oil for healing of soul and body, the service reminded all of Christ's mercy and the need for prayerful preparation as the Passion of the Lord drew near.



A special blessing came on Holy Thursday evening, when His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey visited Saint Thomas and presided at the Service of the Twelve Gospels, the solemn service of the Lord's Passion. His Eminence had served earlier that day in Wilmington before continuing to Cherry Hill as part of his Holy Week schedule. His presence brought added grace and solemnity to one of the most sacred evenings of the year.

On Holy Friday morning, the Saint Irene Philoptochos Society lovingly decorated the Kouvouklion, preparing a beautiful resting place for the Lord. The services of the day drew the parish more deeply into the sorrow and awe of Christ's Burial. The youth of Saint Thomas also participated in many aspects of Good



Friday, offering a beautiful witness to the life of faith being passed on to the next generation. Their presence was a reminder of our Lord's words: "Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 19:14)

That evening, the faithful gathered in overwhelming numbers for the Lamentations before the Holy Sepulcher. The beauty of the hymns, the solemnity of the Epitaphion, and the devotion of the congregation made this one of the most memorable evenings of the year.



The procession moved throughout the Saint Thomas complex in Cherry Hill, with the faithful following the Epitaphion in prayer and reverence. The sight of so many parishioners gathered with candles in hand, united in worship, was deeply moving. As the Church chanted, “The earth shuddered and the sun hid itself, when Thou, O Christ our Savior, the unwavering Light, didst in the flesh sink down into the grave,” all were drawn into the holy sorrow of the day.

On Holy Saturday night, the sorrow of the Tomb gave way to the radiant joy of the Resurrection. As the church stood in darkness, the faithful prepared to receive the Holy Light and to hear once more the life-giving proclamation of victory over death. When the Holy Light was shared from the altar and spread throughout the congregation, the church was transformed from silence into joy. Together the faithful proclaimed, “Christ is Risen!”, and answered with one voice, “Truly He is Risen!” The Resurrection service and Divine Liturgy were celebrated with great beauty and joy, as Saint Thomas entered once again into the Feast of Feasts.

The joy of Pascha continued on Easter Sunday at the Agape Vespers, where the Gospel of the Resurrection was proclaimed in multiple languages by our GOYANS and adult parishioners. This beautiful tradition remains one of the clearest expressions of the universality of the Resurrection and the living witness of our youth. This year’s readers were Maria Katsikis in Greek, Dominic Eleftheriou in English, Vasiliki Horiates in Sign Language, Tony Elias in Arabic, Alexander Salgau in Romanian, Georgie Kokolis in Latin, Zoe Docimo in Italian, Valentina Malo in Spanish, Leo Docimo in German, Zoe Tripolitis in French, and Zachary Van Meter in Irish. We are grateful to Fr. Georgios Oikonomou for his love and guidance, and we are proud of our youth for carrying forward this meaningful tradition.

As our parish looks back on Holy Week and Pascha 2026, we do so with gratitude to God for the many blessings He granted our community. We are thankful for the presence of His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos, for the leadership of Fr. Georgios Oikonomou, and for the devotion of our parishioners, Philoptochos, youth, organizations, and many volunteers who helped make these sacred days so beautiful.

Holy Week at Saint Thomas was not simply a series of services. It was a shared journey through repentance, sorrow, hope, and finally the joy of the empty tomb. In that journey, our parish was renewed once again in faith, unity, and the light of the Risen Christ.



## Saint Thomas Weekend 2026

### A Blessed Celebration of Our Patronal Feast

Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church in Cherry Hill was greatly blessed during Saint Thomas Weekend 2026, as clergy, parishioners, and visitors from across the region gathered to celebrate the feast of our patron saint during the radiant days of Bright Week. This year's celebration was made even more memorable by the visit of His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey, the elevation of Fr. Simeon Williams to the dignity of Archimandrite, and the ordination of Michael Sandilos to the Holy Diaconate.

The weekend began on Bright Saturday, April 18, with the celebration of Hierarchical Great Vespers for the Feast of Saint Thomas. Presiding over the service, His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos joined the clergy and faithful of the parish on the eve of Saint Thomas Sunday, also known as Antipascha, when the Church recalls the appearance of the Risen Lord to the Apostle Thomas. Parishioners and guests came together in prayer to begin the feast, and a reception afterward offered the community an opportunity to welcome His Eminence and rejoice together as Saint Thomas Weekend commenced.

The celebration continued on Sunday, April 19, 2026, with the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy for the feast day of Saint Thomas. The church was filled as the parish marked its patronal feast with prayer, thanksgiving, and great joy. Fr. Georgios Oikonomou welcomed His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos upon his arrival, together with clergy of the Metropolis, members of the Parish Council, and faithful who had come to share in the celebration.

This year's feast day carried added significance, as the Divine Liturgy included two especially meaningful moments in the life of the Church. During the service, His Eminence ordained Charles Sandilos to the Holy Diaconate with the name Michael. A longtime parishioner, steward, Parish Council member, and Archon of the community, Deacon Michael has faithfully served Saint Thomas for many years, and his ordination marked a joyful new chapter both in his own ministry and in the life of the parish.

In his address, Metropolitan Apostolos reflected on the deep significance of the feast and of the Paschal season in relation to ordination. He reminded the faithful that, after His Resurrection, Christ bestowed upon His Apostles the grace needed for ministry to His people. In that same apostolic continuity, the ordained ministry of the Church continues today through bishops, priests, and deacons. His Eminence spoke of the responsibility now entrusted to the newly ordained Deacon Michael: to serve the Church faithfully and to assist Fr. Georgios in the sacred ministry of the parish.

Following the Divine Liturgy, His Eminence also elevated Fr. Simeon Williams, Director of Youth Ministries for the Metropolis of New Jersey, to the rank of Archimandrite, recognizing his years of devoted service in a variety of ministries, especially among the youth of the Metropolis. This additional moment of honor gave the feast day still greater joy and importance, as the parish witnessed both the recognition of faithful service and the beginning of a new ordained ministry.



The celebration concluded with a festive reception in the community hall in honor of the visit of Metropolitan Apostolos and the ordination of Deacon Michael. Family, friends, parishioners, and guests gathered in a spirit of joy and gratitude, offering congratulations to the Sandilos family and giving thanks for the blessings of the weekend. It was a fitting close to a celebration that united the annual feast of Saint Thomas with events of lasting spiritual significance for the parish.

Saint Thomas Weekend 2026 was, in every sense, a blessed celebration: a joyful witness to the Resurrection, a heartfelt honoring of faithful service, and a powerful reminder of the grace of God at work in the life of His Church. Our parish gives thanks to His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey for his pastoral love and presence, to Fr. Georgios Oikonomou for his leadership and care, to all the clergy who participated, and to the many volunteers and parishioners whose efforts helped make the weekend so beautiful.

May the Apostle Thomas continue to intercede for our parish, and may God grant many years to our newly ordained Deacon Michael and to Archimandrite Simeon in their sacred ministries.

Axios! Axios! Axios!



# Inaugural Saint Thomas Gala Honors Zoe And George Kousoulis

By the Cosmos Philly Staff

Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church in Cherry Hill, New Jersey, holds a unique place within the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. As the only parish dedicated to the Apostle Thomas, it is also the largest church in the world bearing his name. The parish celebrates Antipascha, commemorating the Gospel account of Christ's appearance to the Apostle Thomas eight days after the Resurrection, with what has become the largest Antipascha celebration of its kind.

On Friday, April 17, 2026, the Saint Thomas community launched this year's celebration with its inaugural Saint Thomas Gala at Lucien's Manor in Berlin, New Jersey. The evening was graciously hosted by the Kolovos and Baroody families and brought together clergy, parishioners, and supporters in a spirit of faith and unity.

The gala honored George Kousoulis and the late Zoe Kousoulis for their decades of service to the church and broader community. Just days after accepting the honor, Zoe fell asleep in the Lord. Despite this profound loss, the family chose to continue with the tribute, transforming the evening into a moving testament to both faith and legacy. For more than 60 years, George and Zoe dedicated themselves to the Saint Thomas community. After the tragic loss of their daughter Danielle in the September 11 attacks, they remained steadfast in their faith. They became instrumental supporters of the rebuilding of Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church at Ground Zero, now known as the Saint Nicholas National Shrine, helping raise significant funds in collaboration with the Philadelphia Federation.



Their commitment extended deeply into their home parish. The Saint Thomas community center was re-named in memory of their daughter, Danielle Kousoulis. They established a golf tournament that funds annual scholarships for Haddon Township High School and Saint Thomas graduates, and later introduced an annual comedy event held in the Danielle Kousoulis Center. Their continued generosity supported major parish projects, including the church façade, dome, bell tower, and the commissioning of the Pantocrator as part of the church’s renowned “For the Ages” iconography program.

The evening featured a moving musical tribute by the School of Byzantine Music of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, joined by the Saint Thomas Choir—of which Zoe was a lifelong member—and accompanied by the Politikon Ensemble.

Master of Ceremonies George G. Horiates guided the program, inviting Parish Council President Tassos Efstratiades, Gala Chair Dr. Elias Iliades, and Proistamenos Fr. Georgios Oikonomou to offer heartfelt remarks. His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos presented George Kousoulis with the Saint Thomas Medal of Faith, noting the profound significance of faith as the foundation of both the award and the lives of its recipients.

George’s children, Peter and Eleni, offered touching reflections as the community responded with deep admiration and appreciation. The evening concluded with a video tribute and the heartfelt acclamation: “Axios George Kousoulis. Eternal Memory Zoe Kousoulis.”



# Building Mortgage Update & Greek Agora Raffle

Over the past seven years, Saint Thomas has undertaken its largest renovation ever—a new dome, refreshed façade, accessible ramp, and gleaming bell tower. Thanks to your generosity—whether through individual gifts, our annual Winter Telethon, or participation in the Greek Agora Raffle—we’ve paid down our \$3 million project to just \$635,000 remaining!



## Where We Stand

- Original project cost: \$3,000,000
- Additional borrowed for roof replacement: 175,000
- Current mortgage balance: \$635,000

## Fundraising vehicles:

- Winter Telethon
- Greek Agora Raffle

**SUPER 50/50**

**SAINT THOMAS**  
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

**OCTOBER 11, 2026**

**SUPER 50/50**

**GREEK AGORA**

**Grand Prize 20 %**

2nd Prize 10%

(10) 3rd Prizes 2% each

**\$50**

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON REVERSE SIDE OF TICKET. PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT SAINT THOMAS CHURCH BUILDING FUND, 615 MERCER ST. CHERY HILL, NJ 08002, WWW.GOC-STTHOMAS.COM GOC.STTHOMAS@GMAIL.COM, (856) 665-1731, NJ LGCCC ID #99-1-11348 Mun Lic.No:RA-23-0036 PLEASE MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO ST. THOMAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

First/Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

NJ LGCCC ID #99-1-11348 Lic. No: RA-23-0036

Our goal this year is to reduce the mortgage by 20%—that's \$100,000! Every raffle ticket you sell or purchase brings us closer to being debt free.

### *How to Participate*

#### 1. **Buy Tickets**

- Cost: \$50/ticket
- Where: After services in the Narthex, or from any Parish Council member
- Online: Visit <https://b.link/AGORA-RAFFLE>

#### 2. **Sell Tickets**

- Ask family, friends, and co workers to support our Church
- Return sold tickets and payment to the church office by September 15, 2026

#### 3. **Committee Volunteers**

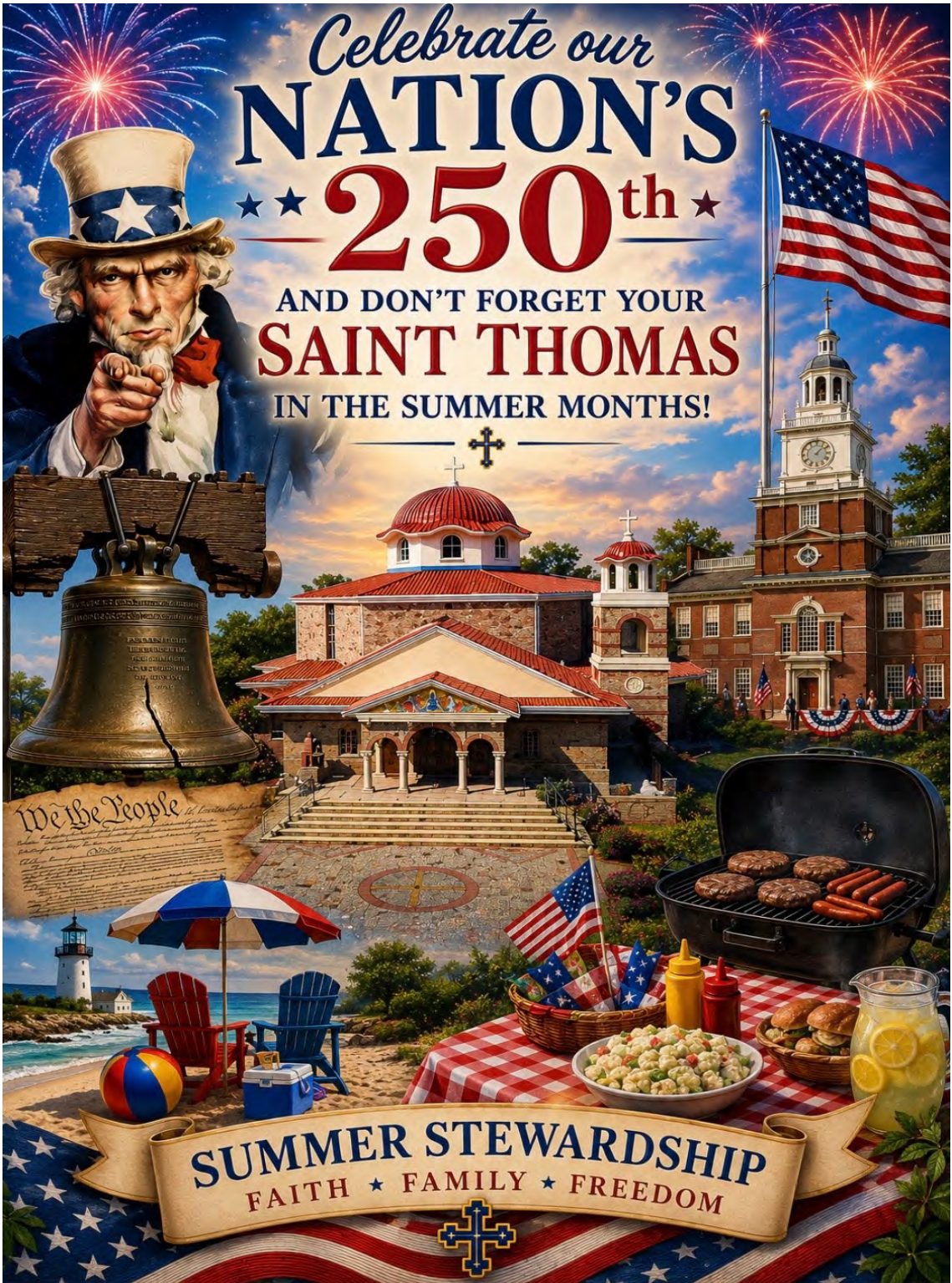
- Interested in helping organize or sell tickets?
- Please contact Fr. Avgoustinos or Parish Council President Tassos Efstratiades.

Let's Finish Strong!

Your efforts make a direct impact on our spiritual home. Let's work together to retire this mortgage and dedicate the saved funds to future ministries and outreach.

Thank you for your support—and good luck in the raffle!





Celebrate our  
**NATION'S**  
 ★★ **250**th ★★

AND DON'T FORGET YOUR  
**SAINT THOMAS**  
 IN THE SUMMER MONTHS!



*We the People*

**SUMMER STEWARDSHIP**  
 FAITH ★ FAMILY ★ FREEDOM

## SUMMER LENT STEWARDSHIP CAMPAIGN APPEAL

*Dormition Fast | August 1–15 One Day Sponsored | 14 Remain*

### Stewardship

In the life of the Church, Stewardship is a sacred response to God’s abundant blessings. It is how we actively participate in the life of the parish, offering our time in service, our talents in ministry, and our treasure in support of Christ’s mission. St. Thomas is our spiritual and cultural center, a place like no other, rooted in faith. It nurtures joy and a deep sense of purpose in giving. Our parish remains a vibrant spiritual home thanks to your faithfulness.

**For 2026, our parish Stewardship goal is \$560,000.**

To date, the faithful have paid approximately \$251,000 (45% of goal). This leaves a sizable gap as we seek to fully fund the ministries and mission entrusted to us.

### Summer Lent Stewardship Campaign Appeal

In the Orthodox Church, the first fifteen days of August form a sacred and spiritually rich period known as the Dormition Fast. This season is sometimes called the “Summer Lent,” as it is marked by fasting, prayer, and preparation for the Feast of the Dormition (Falling Asleep) of the Theotokos on August 15.

The commemoration of the Dormition of the Theotokos and the preparation for the Feast begin on August 1. Parish Council seeks Stewardship sponsorship for each day August 1-15.

Take a leap of faith to move forward. Please consider sponsoring a Summer Lent day for \$3,000 (Average Daily Operating Expense) (or half day) to honor a loved family member’s Name Day or Memorial. You can increase your current paid Stewardship to sponsor a day. Your name and honoree will be presented In the Weekly Bulletin.

### Sponsored Days

**Aug 1-14 Available**

**Aug-15 Dormition of the Theotokos | Pamela & Daniel Carrigan**

### SPONSOR A DAY

**\$3,000 Full Day**

**\$1,500 Half Day**

SCAN TO GIVE ONLINE



<http://b.link/stewardship26>

Or complete below:

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

Honoree: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone / Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount:

\$3,000    \$1,500

Increase current

Stewardship

**Call the Church Office at (856) 665-1731 or fill out and send this form to  
goc.stthomas@gmail.com**

## ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΑΚΟΛΟΥΘΙΩΝ - LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

ΙΟΥΝΙΟΣ - JUNE	Δευτέρα 1 Ιουνίου Monday June 1 <sup>st</sup>	ΔΕΥΤΕΡΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΠΝΕΜΑΤΟΣ MONDAY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT	<b>HOLY TRINITY, WILLMINGTON DE HIERARCHICAL LITURGY</b>	
	Τετάρτη 3 Ιουνίου Wednesday June 3 <sup>rd</sup>	ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ PARAKLESIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	Ακολουθία Service	6:45pm
	Κυριακή 7 Ιουνίου Sunday June 7 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΩΝ ΑΓΙΩΝ ΠΑΝΤΩΝ THE SUNDAY OF ALL SAINTS	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
	Τετάρτη 10 Ιουνίου Wednesday June 10 <sup>th</sup>	ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ PARAKLESIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	Ακολουθία Service	6:45pm
	Κυριακή 14 Ιουνίου Sunday June 14 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ Β' ΜΑΤΘΑΙΟΥ 2 <sup>nd</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
	Τετάρτη 17 Ιουνίου Wednesday June 17 <sup>th</sup>	ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ PARAKLESIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	Ακολουθία Service	6:45pm
	Κυριακή 21 Ιουνίου Sunday June 14 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ Γ' ΜΑΤΘΑΙΟΥ 3 <sup>rd</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
	Τετάρτη 24 Ιουνίου Wednesday June 24 <sup>th</sup>	ΓΕΝΕΘΛΙΟΝ ΤΟΥ ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΟΥ NATIVITY OF THE FORERUNNER JOHN THE BAPTIST	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
	Κυριακή 28 Ιουνίου Sunday June 28 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ Δ' ΜΑΤΘΑΙΟΥ 4 <sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
	Δευτέρα 29 Ιουνίου Monday June 29 <sup>th</sup>	ΠΕΤΡΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΠΑΥΛΟΥ, ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΩΝ PETER & PAUL THE HOLY APOSTLES	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45

ΙΟΥΛΙΟΣ - JULY	Κυριακή 5 Ιουλίου Sunday June 5 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ Ε' ΜΑΤΘΑΙΟΥ 5 <sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
	Κυριακή 12 Ιουλίου Sunday June 12 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΣΤ' ΜΑΤΘΑΙΟΥ 6 <sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
	Κυριακή 19 Ιουλίου Sunday June 19 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΤΩΝ ΑΓΙΩΝ ΠΑΤΕΡΩΝ SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FATHERS	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
	Κυριακή 26 Ιουλίου Sunday June 26 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ Η' ΜΑΤΘΑΙΟΥ 8 <sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45

Κυριακή 2 Αυγούστου Sunday August 2 <sup>nd</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ Θ' ΜΑΤΘΑΙΟΥ 9 <sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Δευτέρα 3 Αυγούστου Monday August 3 <sup>rd</sup>	ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ PARAKLESIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Τρίτη 4 Αυγούστου Tuesday August 4 <sup>th</sup>	ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ PARAKLESIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Τετάρτη 5 Αυγούστου Wednesday August 5 <sup>th</sup>	ΕΣΠΕΡΙΝΟΣ ΜΕΤΑΜΟΡΦΩΣΕΩΣ GREAT VESPERS, The Transfiguration of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Πέμπτη 6 Αυγούστου Thursday August 6 <sup>th</sup>	Η ΜΕΤΑΜΟΡΦΩΣΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ The Transfiguration of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Πέμπτη 6 Αυγούστου Thursday August 6 <sup>th</sup>	ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ PARAKLESIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Παρασκευή 7 Αυγούστου Friday August 7 <sup>th</sup>	ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ PARAKLESIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Κυριακή 9 Αυγούστου Sunday August 9 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ Γ' ΜΑΤΘΑΙΟΥ 10 <sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Δευτέρα 10 Αυγούστου Monday August 10 <sup>th</sup>	ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ PARAKLESIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Τρίτη 11 Αυγούστου Tuesday August 11 <sup>th</sup>	ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ PARAKLESIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Τετάρτη 12 Αυγούστου Wednesday August 12 <sup>th</sup>	ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ PARAKLESIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Πέμπτη 13 Αυγούστου Thursday August 13 <sup>th</sup>	ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΣΗ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ PARAKLESIS TO THE THEOTOKOS	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Παρασκευή 14 Αυγούστου Friday August 14 <sup>th</sup>	ΕΣΠΕΡΙΝΟΣ ΚΟΙΜΗΣΕΩΣ GREAT VESPERS, The Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos	Ακολουθία Service	7:00pm
Σάββατο 15 Αυγούστου Saturday August 15 <sup>th</sup>	Η ΚΟΙΜΗΣΙΣ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ The Dormition of our Most Holy Lady the Theotokos	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Κυριακή 16 Αυγούστου Sunday August 16 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΙΑ' ΜΑΤΘΑΙΟΥ 11 <sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Κυριακή 23 Αυγούστου Sunday August 23 <sup>rd</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΙΒ' ΜΑΤΘΑΙΟΥ 12 <sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Πέμπτη 27 Αυγούστου Thursday August 27 <sup>th</sup>	ΑΓΙΟΥ ΦΑΝΟΥΡΙΟΥ Saint Phanourios the Great Martyr	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Σάββατο 29 Αυγούστου Saturday August 29 <sup>th</sup>	ΑΠΟΤΟΜΗ ΚΕΦΑΛΗΣ ΑΓ. ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ Beheading of the Holy and Glorious Prophet, Forerunner and Baptist John	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45
Κυριακή 30 Αυγούστου Sunday August 30 <sup>th</sup>	ΚΥΡΙΑΚΗ ΙΓ' ΜΑΤΘΑΙΟΥ 13 <sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF MATTHEW	Όρθρος – Orthros Θεία Λειτουργία Divine Liturgy	8:45 9:45

# FALL 2026 HELLENIC SCHOOL AND GREEK LANGUAGE PROGRAMS REGISTRATION

## HELLENIC SCHOOL



<https://b.link/HSCHOOL>

## ELLINIKI FOLIA



<https://b.link/EL-FOLIA>

## CONVERSATIONAL ADULTS CLASS



<https://b.link/CONVERSATIONAL>

**Sign Up This Summer!**



## SAINT THOMAS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΗ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΑ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΘΩΜΑ



Cherry Hill, June 3, 2026

Dear Parents,

The Hellenic School will begin on Thursday, September 10, at 4:30 PM with the Service of the Blessing of the Water (Agiasmos).

*The curriculum again will include the unique e-learning platform (Ellinopoula.com) designed to make Greek for kids exciting by integrating fun games, engaging videos, and thousands of interactive educational activities with Greek Mythology, History, and Culture among others*

*After careful consideration and after reviewing the concerns that were expressed regarding tuition costs, the Parish Council has decided to make the early registration rates permanent for this year's Hellenic School enrollment.*

*The registration fees are as follows:*

**First child \$900**

**Second child \$800**

**Third child \$700**



You can register through this link or by scanning the QR Code:

<https://b.link/HSCHOOL>

In addition, there are two additional financial features created to assist parents in the payment of tuition:

1. You may pay in three installments: First installment of **50%** will be **due by August 1**. Second installment of **25%** will be **due by September 1**. Third installment of **25%** will be **due by October 1**. For a child's enrollment to be completed the first two installments must have been paid. You can pay here: <https://b.link/installments>
2. We will provide 10 scholarships of \$500 each based on need only. A family who wishes to take advantage of this program must submit the attached application by email to Father Georgios directly at his email: [stinensoria@gmail.com](mailto:stinensoria@gmail.com). The application will be reviewed only by Father, the Parish Council president and the Treasurer who will make the award decisions.

Parents/guardians **MUST BE** members in good standing with their Stewardship pledge. Good standing means the Fair Share 2025 contribution is paid in full and Fair Share 2026 pledge must be received and fulfilled by a minimum of 2/3 the week before the beginning of Greek School.

**IT IS VERY IMPORTANT THAT YOU REGISTER AS EARLY AS POSSIBLE,  
SO WE CAN PROPERLY PREPARE FOR THE COMING SCHOOL YEAR.**

# ELLINIKI FOLIA



**E**lliniki Folia is a welcoming space where Hellenic School graduates build confidence in the Greek language, deepen their appreciation of their heritage, and strengthen their connection to the wider Hellenic world. Through engaging lessons in culture, history, and language, we prepare students not only for success in the Ellinomatheia exams, but also for a lifelong relationship with the Greek language and identity.

Η **Ελληνική Φωλιά** είναι ένας φιλόξενος χώρος όπου οι απόφοιτοι του Ελληνικού Σχολείου καλλιεργούν αυτοπεποίθηση στην ελληνική γλώσσα, γνωρίζουν βαθύτερα την πολιτιστική τους κληρονομιά και ενισχύουν τη σύνδεσή τους με τον ευρύτερο ελληνικό κόσμο. Μέσα από δημιουργικά μαθήματα πολιτισμού, ιστορίας και γλώσσας, προετοιμάζουμε τους μαθητές όχι μόνο για επιτυχία στις εξετάσεις Ελληνομάθειας, αλλά και για μια δια βίου σχέση με την ελληνική γλώσσα και ταυτότητα.

Anastasios Fakinos  
Certified Instructor/Educator,  
Hellenic Ministry of Education

# ELLINIKI FOLIA, Sample lesson titles



# ST. IRENE PHILOPTOCHOS

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**S**t. Irene Philoptochos continues to serve our Parish with dignity and respect and truly Philoptochos is behind or in front of every act of love, every value close to our hearts – faith, community, philanthropy and we strive to make a difference with a grateful heart.

In March we prayerfully continued our journey through Great and Holy Lent, a journey that provides us with many opportunities to participate in services and prepare ourselves for our Lord's Resurrection, after the Cross.

In addition to the beautiful Sundays Divine Liturgies, there's a lot of beautiful, solemn services... Great Compline - Απόδειπνο, Presanctified Divine Liturgy - Προηγιασμένη Θεία Λειτουργία, Holy Unction - Ιερό Ευχέλαιο, Salutations to our Most Holy Theotokos - Χαιρετισμοί στην Υπεραγία Θεοτόκο... In many ways Great Lent is meant to be a season of challenge, but it is meant to strengthen our faith and our spirit. Whether we are facing struggles or not, may we continue to walk with faith, knowing the resurrection is not far away.

**The Annual "Sunday of Orthodoxy" Loukoumades Sale** following worship services is a long-lasting tradition in our community. The proceeds from this sale benefit the many in-reach and outreach projects of St. Irene. Who can resist a bowl of louks? Golden, fluffy, and drizzled with sweet honey, loukoumades are such a mouthwatering treat - crispy on the outside, soft on the inside, and absolutely irresistible! Philoptochos is GRATEFUL for the support of the entire community! Because of this support and generosity and of all our volunteers, we can continue our philanthropic work! We extended our special thanks to the best loukoumades team, Dr. Panagiotis Kousoulis, Frank Landry, Lou Lagonik and all OUR AMAZING LADIES who always step up to help!

**Our Committee Chair ladies** worked hard every Sunday, during Lent "manning" the Philoptochos table, either in the St. Irene Hall or the "Danielle Kousoulis" Center. Our **Easter Tsourekia** were chaired by Stacy Chrysosofos & Kathy Kleftogiannis,

**Easter Koulourakia** chairs were Popi Stamatiades & Liz Loudon and **Easter Lilies**, Popi Stamatiades - these ladies made sure your orders were received and noted.

**The Annual Memorial Service** for the Deceased Members of the Hellenic Ladies' Society and St. Irene Ladies Philoptochos Society, 1955 to 2026, was held on Sunday, March 8th. It was a beautiful Memorial Service - Μνημόσυνο for all the sisters who are no longer with us, keeping them close in our hearts. May their Memory be eternal. Αιώνια σας η μνήμη. You will be in our hearts forever.

On **Tuesday, March 10th** we gathered for our **monthly meeting** where we reviewed our upcoming events and recapped our past activities. We thank all the Philoptochos ladies for the support and dedication they show to our community and to all those in need. We look forward to the continued growth and philanthropic support of our chapter! At the completion of our meeting, we assembled close to **200 Roasted Turkey & Cheese Sandwiches for "Cathedral Kitchen" in Camden**. Cathedral Kitchen's mission is to help people out of food insecurity and champion their pursuit of stability and prosperity. Together, we continue to serve with love, faith, and dedication. The following day, we delivered the sandwiches at Cathedral Kitchen and our friends were very thankful and appreciative. A job very well done by all the ladies who participated in the project!

The **2nd Biennial Metropolis of New Jersey "Walking with Christ" Seminarian Benefit Luncheon** was held on Saturday, March 14, and this time it was hosted at the church of St. Nicholas in Wyckoff, New Jersey, by the Metropolis of New Jersey Philoptochos. In addition to donating \$1,000 we had the honor to participate and represent our St. Thomas community in this wonderful event that raised approximately \$85,000 for the benefit of the Metropolis of New Jersey Master of Divinity students and Seminarians. It was a well-attended fundraiser and a very pleasant afternoon, the highlight of

# ST. IRENE PHILOPTOCHOS





which was the presence of the seminarians. The guest speaker for this year's luncheon was Dimitrios Konstantinou, a seminarian from the community of Sts. Constantine and Helen in Newport News, Virginia. While addressing the attendees, His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey, thanked the Metropolis Philoptochos President Mrs. Eleni Constantinides, all the clergy who supported this effort, the ladies Philoptochos, the benefactors, the host parish of St. Nicholas and all those who attended for their support to our Metropolis seminarians.

**The Philoptochos ladies do not rest!** Thank you to all the ladies who participated in the **Easter / Spring Cleaning at our church**. Your time, energy and cleaning skills to freshen up the church are greatly appreciated. A few days before Holy Week, the ladies got together and the church was ready for Holy Week and Pascha! Thank you Barbara Inglessis, Maria Lagonik, Vicky Christodoulou, Kathy Kleftogiannis, Ourania Melissaratos and Donna Kolodziejczak and we'd like to give an extra special shoutout to Barbara Inglessis for organizing the group! The ladies are not a professional cleaning group but they do know how to roll up their sleeves and help make our beautiful church shine!! When Philoptochos ladies come together, great things happen!

**Sunday, March 22nd**, found our Philoptochos ladies filling drawstring bags with essential, easy-to-make, nutritious food and snacks for the students at the **Delair Elementary School in Pennsauken**. A number of students in the school rely on school meals to stay fed and these bags will be given to those students to ensure they have access to food when school meals are unavailable – during the spring break. That was the second time we worked on that project for the students at Delair Elementary. This time we **prepared 110 bags with enough food and snack items for at least 4 days**. Items included mac and cheese, goldfish, Oreos, pretzel bags, applesauce, individual cereal boxes and apple juice boxes. Because no child should ever have to worry about being hungry, especially during the holidays! Thank you to Stacy Chryssofos for taking the lead on this very worthy project and everyone who participated and helped fill the bags! The school passed the bags

to the students on Friday, March 27 and our Board was invited to participate.

Our **baking group** spent the last days of March making, baking and **wrapping Koulourakia for our Annual Easter Bake Sale**. Shaped by hand, brushed with egg, and baked until golden - 48 delicious butter twist cookies in a beautifully wrapped container for \$25.00. Perfect for every Easter table or as gifts to family and friends. Pick-up was Palm Sunday, April 5th at the "Danielle Kousoulis" Greek Cultural Center.

**The Prayer Blanket Ministry** is beautiful ministry that brings comfort to the sick while sharing in fellowship consisting of a group of talented and generous ladies of the St. Irene Philoptochos. It touches not only the lives of those who receive the blankets but also the lives of those who make and distribute them. It started with the homebound members of our community and with Covid the need was greater and the ministry expanded to include parishioners who needed comfort from a loss, serious illness or who had undergone surgery. Each item is made with prayers for good health and then placed in a gift bag with a beautiful icon of St. Irene. We welcome you to join our Prayer Blanket/Shawl Ministry. Each volunteer works on their own. A pattern and yarn are provided, although new patterns and yarns are accepted. Since the day this ministry started, they have given out 48 blankets and shawls and the ladies have 14 items ready to distribute. **The ministry continues to bring great comfort to those in need and is made possible thanks to our knitters/crocheters, Christine Onken, Maria Lagonik, Alice Skinner, Barbara Inglessis, Eleftheria Birbilis, Kathy Kleftogiannis and Presvytera Irina Salgau (for knitting beautiful pairs of socks)**. Thank you ladies for your time and dedication to this important ministry. If you are interested in joining them regardless of your knitting/crocheting ability or if you would like one of these blessed blankets, please contact Barbara Inglessis at [barbi@frinton.com](mailto:barbi@frinton.com) or 609.922.0750. On Sunday, March 29, the ladies got together with Father Georgios and took a beautiful group picture.

Again this year, we were invited by the Ladies

Philoptochos Society of St. Luke, Broomall, to **“Rise Against Hunger” Meal Packaging Event on Saturday, March 28th, at the St. Luke Community Center.** It was a very rewarding morning-early afternoon where we gathered as a community of volunteers to package meals and box them up for delivery to the world’s most vulnerable people and also got the chance to meet and get to know Philoptochos sisters not only from the community of St. Luke’s but also from neighboring churches. The goal again this year was to package 20,000 meals. Our chapter contributed \$500 and two groups of our members traveled to St. Luke’s and participated in the meal packaging.

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)

**Holy Week – Μεγάλη Εβδομάδα:** Every day of this week – also known as Passion Week - brings us closer to the light of the Resurrection, as we follow Christ through His trials, His teachings, and His ultimate sacrifice. All the services are solemn and beautiful, reminding us of the depth of faith, love, and hope that leads us to the joy of Pascha. From Kali Anastasi to Christ is Risen – Xristos Anesti, Holy Week is a beautiful, prayerful and blessed experience for every Orthodox faithful.

**St. Irene Philoptochos – Agape Outreach members** - welcomed April preparing the gift boxes and gift bags for the homebound parishioners and the senior residents at the St. Thomas Apartments. The ladies

prepared the bags that included a colorful box filled with our homemade Easter koulourakia, a card with a beautiful message, items packaged with a lot of care and love to remind those who will receive them that they are deeply valued members of our community. Father Georgios, with the assistance of Frank Landry and Charles Sandilos, visited our homebound parishioners and the residents at the senior apartments to deliver the gifts and offer communion to those who had wished to receive. Please continue to keep our homebound parishioners in your prayers. If you know of someone who needs special support and strength or is facing a health challenge, please contact the church office @ 856.665.1731 or reach out to St. Irene Philoptochos @ [st.irenephiloptochossociety@gmail.com](mailto:st.irenephiloptochossociety@gmail.com)

We had our **Annual Loukoumades Sale on Palm Sunday – April 5.** Who can resist to them? Crispy, golden dough balls soaked in warm honey syrup a classic Greek sweet loved for generations. We are thankful for the support of everyone who purchased louks on Palm Sunday! We also appreciate the contributions of those who volunteered without hesitation to prepare them, mix them, pour syrup, sell them and foresee all the details. Thank you to Yiota Rotsides and her two assistants, Frank Landry and Lou Lagonik who by now have become professional loukoumades makers! The loukoumades were exceptional!! Thank you!

As we mentioned before, the beautifully wrapped, **48 pieces of our famous Easter koulourakia** – a staple for every Greek Easter table were available for pickup on Palm Sunday, April 5th following the church services in the “Danielle Kousoulis” Center. Thank you to this year’s chairs Popi Stamatiades and Liz Loudon for making sure all orders were pre-packaged and ready for everyone who had placed an order and we also thank everyone who assisted on that Sunday. Special Thank YOU to Popi, our Baking Chair!

The delicious **Easter Tsoureki from Agia Skepi (Holy Protection Monastery)** arrived just in time for Pascha and was ready for pickup on Palm Sunday. We also had some extras available for to accommodate last-minute requests. The Tsoureki is





PIC • COLLAGE

made by the sisters at the Agia Skepi Bake House, located at the Holy Protection Monastery in White Haven, Pennsylvania. This traditional sweet bread is part of the Pascha celebration, and the sisters at the monastery make each loaf with prayer and thanksgiving. Thank you to our Chairs, Stacy Chrysofos and Kathy Klefogiannis who also drove up to the monastery to pick up all the orders! And Tulla Sandilos who helped with that, because two cars were not enough to fit all orders!!

**The beautiful Easter lilies came on Holy Saturday morning** and we decorated the church nave, the solea and the narthex right after the service of the proti anastasi. Why do we use lilies to decorate our church on Easter? As Christians, we believe that all of creation sings God's glory. And during the Easter season, the Easter lily sings it quite loudly. The flower itself is a symbol of resurrection – it emerges from a bulb buried in the ground, mirroring how Christ rose from the tomb. Their trumpet-like shape symbolizes our loud proclamation of Christ's triumph over death. The white color represents the purity of Jesus. We use these flowers to remind us that life has conquered death. The Easter lily is more than just decoration — it is an active participant in proclaiming God's glory, representing new beginnings, hope, and rebirth. Thank all to our members and our entire community for supporting our Easter Lilies Fundraiser. Your support not only helps us raise funds so we can offer assistance to those in need, but also makes it possible to adorn our beautiful church with the lilies for all the Paschal worship services!

Every year, our Philoptochos **hosts the dyeing of the Easter eggs**. These red eggs were offered as a blessing on the night of the Resurrection to all the faithful who gathered to celebrate the Divine Eucharist. Ladies prepare the red eggs, place them in small sachets, tie them and add a small tag that says “Christ is Risen! – Χριστός Ανέστη!” Again this year, this project was chaired by Ourania Melissaratos. We would like to THANK Ourania and ALL THE LADIES who dyed over 400 eggs! Egg-cellent job ladies! Peggy Christis, Vicky Christodoulou, Roula Criaris, Olga Diamantis, Athanasia Hatzinakis, Sophia Horiates, Maria Kappatos, Donna Kolodziejczak,

Tasia Koutsogiannis, Maria Lagonik, Liz Loudon, Anna Markakis, Darlene Mastrodimas, Ourania Melissaratos, Rania Pappas, Milia Pouloupoulos and Popi Stamatiades. Special Thanks to Ourania, and the two Marias (Kappatos and Lagonik) for tying all the labels on the sachets on Holy Saturday morning! Traditionally, we dye our eggs red on Holy Thursday. On Easter Sunday, we crack our red eggs with family and friends. The person whose egg does not crack wins and will be blessed throughout the year from God. The red eggs symbolize the renewal of life -victory over death - and the red dye the blood of Christ.

**On Saturday, April 18 we celebrated the Great Vespers for the Sunday of Thomas**, when we welcomed His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey along with clergy from the Delaware Valley Region. Following the Vespers service, St. Irene Philoptochos hosted the bountiful dinner reception at the St. Irene Hall for His Eminence, the visiting clergy, the esteemed guests and all our parishioners. Truly an evening of joy that initiated the two-day celebration of St. Thomas weekend.

**April 19 was a truly memorable day for our St. Thomas community.** In addition to marking our parish's feast day, we were honored to witness the Ordination to Holy Diaconate of Deacon Michael, formerly known as Charles (Efstratios) Peter Sandilos, our longtime fellow parishioner and friend, member of the Parish Council, past Parish Council President, former Sunday School Catechist and Archon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, presided by His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey. Deacon Michael has been appointed to assist Fr. George in this sacred ministry and serve our parish, a community he has already served in many different ways, with love, respect and humility for many years. AXIOS! Congratulations! Following the Divine Liturgy and the Ordination, a celebratory reception was held in the “Danielle Kousoulis” Greek Cultural Center in honor of St. Thomas Sunday and Deacon Michael's ordination.

The weekend's preparations was a tremendous effort and many hours of hard work for the St. Irene Ladies Philoptochos and we are very grateful to all

our members and everyone who contributed in any way to make it happen! **We are very appreciative to Father Georgios for his love and gratitude to our Philoptochos – his beautiful words of encouragement and praise after every project are a true blessing for our Ministry. Thank you Father for your love and support!**

We are humbly grateful, as with God's grace we were able to prepare **133 casseroles that will feed over 900 guests at St. John's Hospice shelter – on Friday, April 24.** Thank you to all our members for your ongoing support, and a heartfelt expression of gratitude to the "Men" who always come together to help prepare the food to make our efforts easier. It is such a great blessing that St. Irene Philoptochos has the means and resources to provide for the "Feed the Hungry" Program, and we pray that we can continue our mission to help and care for those in need with love and compassion.

**We contributed \$1,500 and participated in the CTNNB1 Dinner & Basket Auction Fundraiser-April 25.** CTNNB1 is a rare genetic disorder, with just over 500 individuals diagnosed worldwide. Many, like our own Alexander O'Mara, son of Diana Pappas O'Mara, struggle with this disorder. CTNNB1 affects motor function, causes learning disabilities/cognitive delays.

The long anticipated **Greek Independence Day Celebration**, the culmination of which is the Sunday parade was held a bit late this year. The celebrations started on Friday, April 24th with the flag raising at the Philadelphia City Hall, continued with the Eleftheria Gala, on Saturday, April 25th - at the Convention Center - and ended with Doxology at St. George Cathedral and the parade on Sunday the 26th, a celebration that brings together many parishes, schools, Greek American, cultural organizations, civic groups, the Evzones – our palikaria, hundreds of families, and members of the Greek-American community from across the region. The weather did not disappoint and we all enjoyed marching down the Ben Franklin Parkway, wearing our Greek pride and waving our Greek and American flags. Ζήτω η Ελλάδα!

**Pizza, bingo and a little fun along the way.** We

had such a wonderful time spending time with our friends and fellow residents **on April 30.** Everyone walked away a winner, and the fun, laughter, and fellowship made it extra special. A big thank you to all who joined us - and if you missed it, don't worry! Be sure to come out and join us next time for more pizza, games, prizes, and good company. Always a good time with our senior residents and we love B-I-N-G-O! **Another great evening for the Agape Outreach ladies!**

**On Tuesday, May 5, 2026, we gathered at The Merion in Cinnaminson for the Annual Metropolis of New Jersey Clergy-Laity Congress and Metropolis Philoptochos Convention.** As every year, the congress opened jointly for all the representatives of the parishes, both the Parish Council members and the Philoptochos Delegates with prayer offered by His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey who welcomed everyone, and of course, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America and thanked him for his presence. After the benediction and breakfast, the Philoptochos delegates convened in the upstairs banquet hall to start their meeting. A lot of interesting items on the agenda of the day, that was the hard work of the Metropolis Philoptochos Board under the guidance of the President, Eleni Constantinides. The agenda included reports on the Walking with Christ Fundraiser for the HCHC Seminarians, the 2027-2028 budget, the National Convention, various committee reports and presentations on Operation Classroom and Hunger & Homeless. The convention ended with a hands-on service project that will benefit Cradles to Crayons non-profit in Pennsylvania. **St. Irene Philoptochos was represented by Stacy Chrysofos, 1st Vice President and Rania Pappas, President.**

The month of May is often linked to renewal, beauty, and new beginnings. Some characteristics we see in May are mild to warm weather, blooming gardens and colorful landscapes, longer daylight hours, spring festivals and celebrations, graduation ceremonies and the end of many school years. In literature and poetry, May is often portrayed as a joyful and lively month symbolizing growth, love, hope, and the transition from spring toward summer. Several well-known holidays and observances occur



in May, including Mother's Day and Memorial Day.

**St. Irene Philoptochos celebrated Mother's Day offering Mocktails and Mimosas** to all the mothers, grandmothers and ladies of our parish - including some of the gentlemen! Thank you to our young adults who served as our bartenders.

**The N.J. Seaside Stride is a fun**, family-oriented event hosted by New Jersey families working to raise awareness and research funds for Friedreich's Ataxia (FA). The event benefits the Friedreich's Ataxia Research Alliance (FARA), and it features a beautiful walk along the boardwalk, delicious lunch, and an exciting gift auction. Because of support from events like the N.J. Seaside Stride, FARA is able to fund research leading to new insights in FA and the development of innovative treatment approaches. The first treatment was approved in 2023, and the FA community made many significant contributions to the advancement of that research. The commitment from the FA community has also led to significant strides in genetic medicines, natural history research, neuroimaging, and pediatric FA initiatives. This year, the weather held out, there were over 200 attendees, great food, lots of great auction items and over \$65,000 raised! **St. Irene Philoptochos contributed \$1,500 and members participated in the walk.** It turned out to be a beautiful day despite the weather forecast!

**The 46th Annual Bid-N-Buy "America the Beautiful" was a sold-out event with over 400 guests attending!** After months, weeks and many hours of hard work and preparations, on Wednesday, May 13, we welcomed hundreds of guests to our 46th Annual Bid -N - Buy - America the Beautiful - our chapter's major fundraising event of the year. The "Danielle Kousoulis" community center was decorated with red, white and blue colors to commemorate and celebrate our Nation's 250th Anniversary! As attendees entered the foyer of the center, they were greeted by (the portrait of) George Washington himself - the Father of our Nation. Everyone enjoyed the patriotic atmosphere, that was highlighted by Makis Melissaratos' impersonation of Uncle Sam, a delicious pastichio dinner, "The Betsy Ross" signature cocktail, fellowship - the

great paraea that we all enjoy and look forward to every time, and the opportunity to bid on hundreds of prizes. The event was run and powered by many volunteers who handled everything from décor and prize preparation to the full meal served to the guests. Proceeds support the many charitable outreach efforts of the St. Irene Philoptochos, which provides assistance to individuals and families in need throughout the region and around the world.

Thank you to our donors, businesses and individuals, all our volunteers and everyone who joined us! We look forward to next year's event, and we do hope you will be able to join us!

**We had a great final meeting on Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, with meaningful fellowship, inspiration, and connection. We are honored to welcome special guest speakers representing the various outreach organizations we support.**

We hosted **Jennifer Williams** - Covenant House; **Chief Tori Hill**, Superintendent and **Sherraya Scott**, Intake Coordinator - Veterans Haven South; **Rosalyn Lawrence** - Principal, Delair Elementary School; **Rich Burke** - President and **Janet Giordano**, Board of Directors - Cherry Hill Food Pantry; **Nicole Harrigan**, Principal and **Angela Boldurian**, Educator - H.B. Wilson Elementary School and **Koula Kotsedakis, Educator** - Martha F. Wilson Early Childhood Development Center. Each and every one of them expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the support and compassion St. Irene Philoptochos provides to their respective institutions and organizations and the incredible impact Philoptochos makes - a blessed work indeed!

**Covenant House** shelters fight human trafficking and relentlessly support young people facing homelessness, committed to helping young people get back on their feet and onto their next chapters. St. Irene Philoptochos currently supports the organization - we work with the one in Atlantic City, NJ - through the Angel Tree Christmas giving, monetary donations to the facility's Sleep-Out fundraisers and whenever the facility reaches out for assistance. In the past, we contributed a walk-in refrigerator, sweatpants and sweatshirts for the teens that shelter in the facility, a considerable amount

of bed-in-a-bag, hats-mittens-scarves, coats and jackets to name a few.

**Veterans Haven South** is a Transitional Housing Program for Homeless Veterans, located in Winslow, NJ. Since we started supporting this New Jersey State-operated facility for homeless veterans, we have contributed TV sets, household appliances – such as toaster ovens, toasters, coffee makers, microwaves, crockpots, sets of dishware-silverware-glassware-kitchen utensils. Following the National Philoptochos initiative, we offer our donations to our Veterans close to Veterans Day in November. We have also launched the “Valentines for Veterans” project where we provide treat and chocolate bags for Valentine’s Day in February to be given to the veterans that are transitioning in the facility.

We started supporting **Delair Elementary School** in Pennsauken, NJ a few months ago – in November of 2025, before Thanksgiving - when we came together to fill 100 bags with essential meal items for the economically challenged students. There’s a considerable number of students in the school rely on school meals to stay fed and these bags will be given to those students to ensure they have access to food when school meals are unavailable – during the holiday break. Late March of 2026, we prepared 110 bags with enough food and snack items for at least 4 days. Items included mac and cheese, goldfish, Oreos, pretzel bags, applesauce, individual cereal boxes and apple juice boxes.

**Cherry Hill Food Pantry’s** mission is dedicated to supplying groceries and related social services to needy families and individuals in Cherry Hill and the surrounding communities. It currently serves close to 1,000 families. St. Irene Philoptochos started supporting the CHFP a long time ago by providing volunteers every quarter - to assist the “shoppers” shop and select what they want from different categories of food items, providing quarterly contributions and also monetarily supporting the Pantry’s Raffle Fundraiser every year.

**H.B. Wilson Elementary School and Martha F. Wilson Early Childhood Development Center** are the two school we support under the “Operation Classroom” National Philoptochos program. We

have been working closely with the two educators from our parish, Angela and Koula to make sure the students at their respective schools receive items they need. We have provided various essential items – from basic school supplies, such as notebooks, pens, pencils, erasers etc. to noise cancelling headphones and headphones, bins filled with crayons and drawing paper, dry-erase boards and we contribute hats-mittens-scarves, as well as holding a drive for both schools in November every year.

With God’s Grace and a grateful heart, we were able to provide each representative with a small honorarium that will be used towards the needs of each institution.

**Barry Martin**, the representative from **St. John’s Hospice** got tied up at the shelter and unfortunately could not make it to our meeting. But we are praying and hoping that in the upcoming fall season we will be able to have it as our special guest to talk to us about this outreach ministry who serves and assists those experiencing homelessness and poverty in the community.

We have scheduled our **End of the Year Dinner Social for Tuesday, June 2<sup>nd</sup> at the Adelfia** and we have invited all the ladies – and gentlemen - of our parish to join us for that last social gathering where we will enjoy for one last time before the summer break, the great para of each other. Come and Join us!

**Have a safe and relaxing summer and see you in September!** As a quick reminder... there will be no coffee and refreshments hour on Sundays, in July and August – with the exception of August 15 for Panagia. Sunday’s coffee hour social will resume on September 6. **Kalo kalokairi!**

# LOOKING BACK: HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE LAST THREE MONTHS

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## SAINT THOMAS HONORS GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY



On Monday, March 23, the children and families of the Hellenic School of Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church gathered to celebrate Greek Independence Day with joy, pride, and reverence.

The celebration began at Saint Thomas, where the children assembled before marching together down Mercer Street to Town Hall for the annual flag-raising ceremony. It was a beautiful sight to see our students, families, and teachers taking part in this tradition and honoring the 205th anniversary of Greece's independence.

At Town Hall, the group was warmly welcomed by Council Members DiRenzo and Hulnick, who greeted the children and presented a proclamation in recognition of this important day. Their presence added to the significance of the celebration and reminded all in attendance of the respect and appreciation shown for the Greek-American community and its heritage.

For our Saint Thomas community, Greek Independence Day is always more than a historical remembrance. It is an opportunity to teach our children about the faith, courage, and sacrifice that shaped the history of Greece, and to help them understand the deep connection between Orthodoxy and Hellenism. Events like this allow our young people not only to learn that history, but to experience it as part of their own identity.

We are grateful to the students, parents, and teachers of our Hellenic School for their participation and enthusiasm, and we thank the township officials for helping make the day so meaningful. It was a joyful and fitting way for Saint Thomas to honor this great anniversary and to continue passing on the memory of March 25 to the next generation.



# Saint Thomas Marks Greek Independence Day with an Evening of History and Fellowship



Saint Thomas marked Greek Independence Day with a meaningful evening program at the Danielle Kousoulis Cultural Center, bringing our parish community together in a spirit of remembrance, fellowship, and pride in our shared heritage.

Hosted by AHEPA Camden Chapter 69 on Wednesday, March 25, the event focused on the historic role that Philadelphia played in supporting the Greek Revolution. The evening began with a traditional Lenten meal of bakaliarios kai skordalia, prepared by local restaurateur Haralambos Pantelous, before moving into the program itself.

The featured presentation was offered by AHEPA Past Supreme President George G. Horiates, who spoke on “Philadelphia’s Role in Supporting the Greek Revolution.” His talk highlighted the strong sympathy and practical support shown in Philadelphia during the early years of the Greek War of Independence, when Americans saw clear parallels between their own struggle for liberty and that of the Greek people.

Among the many points he shared were the efforts of local committees to raise funds and organize aid, public gatherings held in support of the Greek cause, church collections, and even contributions from U.S. Marines, who donated the value of a day’s rations to help Greek fighters. He also noted that Philadelphia

became a point of departure for humanitarian aid sent to Greece during the Revolution.

For those in attendance, the evening was not simply a history lecture. It was a reminder that the story of Greek Independence has long been tied to the life of Greek-Americans in this region, and that the bonds between faith, freedom, and Hellenic identity continue to shape our communities today.

Saint Thomas was grateful to host and support such an evening, and to see parishioners gathered to reflect not only on the past, but also on the responsibility of carrying that memory forward. Events like this help strengthen our connection to the sacrifices of 1821 and remind us why the celebration of March 25 remains so important in the life of our parish.

We are grateful to AHEPA Camden Chapter 69, to George G. Horiates for his thoughtful presentation, and to all who helped make the evening both enjoyable and meaningful.



# Saint Thomas Hellenic School Celebrates Greek Independence Day



On Saturday, March 29, 2026, the Saint Thomas Hellenic School held its Greek Independence Day Celebration, bringing together students, teachers, and families for a beautiful program in honor of Greek Independence Day. The event opened with the parade of flags and students, the national anthems, and welcome remarks, creating a festive and proud beginning.

From Pre-K through Sixth Grade, each class took part with poems, songs, recitations, and theatrical presentations, giving the children the opportunity to honor the history and meaning of Greek Independence Day in their own way. The program clearly reflected the dedication of both the teachers and the students, and the result was moving for all in attendance.

The celebration concluded with traditional Greek folk dances, with each class presenting dances from different regions of Greece under the direction of Elina Gavras. This joyful final part of the program reminded everyone that our Hellenic School passes on not only language, but also the history, customs, and spirit of our heritage.

For Saint Thomas, events like this are a special blessing, as they bring together faith, family, education, and tradition in a living and meaningful way. The children made our community proud, and the entire celebration was a beautiful witness to the ongoing work of our Hellenic School.



## Saint Thomas at the Greek Independence Day Parade

Saint Thomas was proud to take part in the Philadelphia celebration of the 105th anniversary of Greek Independence Day on Sunday, April 26, along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway. The day brought together Greek-American parishes, schools, organizations, and families from across the region, and the presence of the Evzones of the Hellenic Presidential Guard made the celebration especially memorable.

Our own Saint Thomas community was beautifully represented by Fr. Georgios Oikonomou, Parish Council President Anas-tasios Efstratiades, members of the Parish Council, students of the Hellenic School, and the Hellenic Heritage Dance Group. It was a joy to see so many from our parish take part and represent Saint Thomas with such spirit and dignity.

This year's celebration was made even more special for our parish by the recognition of several of our own among the 2026 Greek Independence Day Parade Grand Marshals, as this year's Grand Marshals were all past Presidents of the Federation, honored for their leadership, dedication, and service through the years. From Saint Thomas, those honored were George G. Horiates, Efstathios Karadonis, and Dimitrios Rozanitis. Their recognition was a moment of pride not only for them personally, but for our entire parish community.

For us, Greek Independence Day is more than a parade. It is a chance to honor the faith, courage, and sacrifices of those who came before us, and to pass that memory on to our children. Seeing our students, families, and young people present in the celebration made that especially clear.

The weekend began with the official flag-raising ceremony led by His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey, and the parade day itself opened with the Doxology at Saint George Greek Orthodox Cathedral, bringing the wider Greek-American community together in both faith and celebration before the march down the Parkway.



We are grateful to everyone from Saint Thomas who participated and helped make our parish presence so strong and joyful. Days like this remind us that our church is not only a place of worship, but also a living center of faith, heritage, and community.



## Saint Thomas Honored for Supporting the Pioneers Fund

With great joy and gratitude, Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church continues to stand at the forefront in supporting the new Pioneers Fund of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey. This important initiative was established for the long-term support of the ministries of our sacred Metropolis and was unanimously approved by the Metropolis Council at its November 10, 2025 meeting held at Saint Thomas in Cherry Hill. Our parish was especially honored to see several faithful supporters from our own community recognized at a special event for their meaningful contribution and generous support of this important effort, in the presence of His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America and our beloved shepherd, His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey.

Those honored from Saint Thomas were Archon Anastasios and Maria Efstratiades, Archon Dr. Elias and Kathy Iliades, Archon George and Lisa Horiates, Archon George and Rania Pappas, Deacon Michael and Toula Sandilos, William and Connie Balis, and Dr. Georgios and Patricia Milili. We also note with pride that our own George Horiates serves as chair of the Pioneers program. May God continue to bless all those who support the ministries of our Holy Metropolis and help secure their future for generations to come.





## Blessing of Cars at Saint Thomas

This year, Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church began a beautiful new parish tradition with the Blessing of Cars on the feast day of Saint Christopher, the protector of travelers and drivers.

Families, children, and parishioners gathered together after the service as Father offered prayers for God's protection, safety, and guidance for all who travel. It was a joyful and meaningful moment in the life of our community, bringing together faith and everyday life in a simple but powerful way.

The blessing reminded all of us that even the ordinary parts of life — our daily driving, our family trips, our commutes, and our travels — are also placed in God's hands. Asking the intercessions of Saint Christopher, we prayed that Christ would guard and guide all who travel, keeping them safe on every road and in every journey.

As a first-time event at Saint Thomas, the Blessing of Cars was received with great warmth and enthusiasm, and it added yet another meaningful moment to the summer life of our parish.

May Saint Christopher continue to intercede for all who travel, and may the Lord always guide our steps in peace and safety.





## AHEPA Sunday at Saint Thomas



On AHEPA Sunday, observed throughout the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, Saint Thomas marked the occasion with prayer, fellowship, and remembrance.

This year's observance was made especially meaningful by a luncheon generously offered by the AHEPA family at Saint Thomas following the Divine Liturgy. The gathering brought parishioners together in a joyful spirit, but it also carried a deeper purpose: it served as a memorial tribute to the past members of AHEPA from our Saint Thomas community.

As families and parishioners gathered for the luncheon, the day became an opportunity not only to celebrate AHEPA Sunday, but also to remember with gratitude those members who served the Church and community faithfully over the years. Their dedication, leadership, and love for Saint Thomas remain part of the foundation on which so much of our parish life continues to stand.

The generous offering of the luncheon by AHEPA added to the warmth of the day and reflected the enduring spirit of service that has long characterized the organization. It was a fitting way to honor both the present and the past — to celebrate the work of AHEPA today while remembering those who helped build and strengthen our community through their own commitment and sacrifice.



# The Annual Saint Thomas Golf Outing



The Annual Saint Thomas Golf Outing at Pennsauken Country Club was once again a wonderful day of fellowship, generosity, and parish spirit. Even the strong rain at the start of the day did not discourage our golfers. In true Saint Thomas fashion, everyone stayed the course, and before long the rain gave way and the outing continued with great energy and good humor.

From the opening tee-off to the final round, the day reflected the strong support that this event continues to receive from our parish family and friends. The tournament was made possible by the generosity of our sponsors and participants, whose support helped make the day both successful and enjoyable.

The outing concluded with a beautiful awards dinner at The Pub, where everyone gathered to celebrate the day together. Special thanks go to the PTO sponsors of the prizes, whose support added greatly to the evening, and to Effie Matalbes for helping orchestrate such an enjoyable wrap-up. We also thank Vice President Dr. Elias Iliades, co-chair Nick Kostiou, our friends at Kast, and the many other sponsors and supporters whose generosity contributed to the success of the event.

Most of all, we thank all of the golfers, participants, volunteers, and sponsors who made the outing such a success. Congratulations to the winners, and heartfelt thanks to everyone who helped make the day memorable.



## Hellenic School Graduation at Saint Thomas



A joyful and moving graduation ceremony for the Saint Thomas Hellenic School took place on Sunday, May 31, the Sunday of Pentecost, as our parish came together to celebrate the graduates of the Class of 2026.

Parents, family members, and parishioners attended with great pride and emotion, joined by members of the Parish Council under the leadership of President Anastasios Efstratiades. The ceremony marked the completion of eight years of study for this year's graduates, who said farewell to their school with words of gratitude for their teachers, their parents, and all those who supported them along the way.

The Valedictorian of the Class of 2026 was Ioanna Christoforatu, while Nefeli Damotsidou and Sofia Katsiki were recognized as Salutatorians. The students received honorary distinctions from the local AHEPA, adding to the joy and significance of the occasion.

Also comprising the Class of 2026 were Ioannis Salman, Panagiotis Chatzikostas, Vasiliki Liatou, Nikolina Fiscetti, and Amalia Kappatou.



The ceremony was blessed by Fr. Georgios Oikonomou, who addressed the students with words of love, encouragement, and guidance. He also thanked the teachers and the school director for their devoted work, and expressed appreciation to the parents for the trust they continue to place in the Hellenic School of Saint Thomas.

School Director Mrs. Margarita Zografou-Vrettou also congratulated the students and their families, recognizing their perseverance and effort in preserving the Greek language and culture through the years.

For Saint Thomas, this graduation was more than the completion of a school program. It was a beautiful reminder of the importance of passing on our language, faith, and heritage to the next generation. We congratulate all of our graduates and pray that God will continue to guide and bless them in the years ahead.

### **A Message from Fr. Georgios to Our Graduates**

To view Fr. Georgios' special message to this year's graduates, please scan the QR code below or use the short link provided.

**<https://b.link/grads26>**



## The Saint Thomas Choir



One of the most memorable parts of the First Annual Saint Thomas Gala was the musical offering presented by the Saint Thomas Choir together with the Politikon Ensemble, under the direction of Georgios Theodoridis, Director of the Archdiocese School of Byzantine Music, and Anastasios Fakinos, Choir Director of Saint Thomas and instructor in the School of Byzantine Music.

What made this performance especially remarkable was not only its beauty, but also the level of preparation and commitment it required in a relatively short amount of time. The Saint Thomas Choir was asked to enter a musical world far removed from standard Western choral repertory and to do so with seriousness, discipline, and sensitivity. The program drew on traditional Greek songs associated with Constantinople and a musical style shaped over centuries, marked by modal thinking, microtonal intervals, and melodic movement deeply connected to the scales and ethos of Byzantine music.

For any choir, this kind of repertory demands much more than learning notes and rhythms. It requires listening differently, shaping phrases differently, and entering into a sound world that carries the memory of a long and living tradition. That the Saint Thomas Choir was able to prepare such music convincingly in a short period of time says much about the dedication of its members and their willingness to grow musically beyond the familiar.

It also says something important about the character of the choir itself. At Saint Thomas, the choir is able to serve faithfully in both Western and Byzantine musical settings, an ability that is by no means common and that reflects years of serious work, flexibility, and commitment. This dual capacity is one of the choir's great strengths and one of the reasons its contribution to the life of the parish is so significant.

The participation of the School of Byzantine Music Choir also gave the evening special weight and artistic depth. The work being carried out at that level is important not only for musical excellence, but also for the preservation and transmission of a tradition that remains central to the life of the Church. The School continues to form singers and musicians who are able to approach this repertory with understanding, discipline, and authenticity.

The Politikon Ensemble, though an independent group, has long maintained a close and fruitful collaboration with the School of Byzantine Music, and that partnership was once again evident in the quality and spirit of the evening's performance.

The result was a program that elevated the Gala well beyond a simple dinner event. It became an offering of culture, memory, and musical witness — one that reflected the richness of Hellenic tradition and the seriousness with which Saint Thomas approaches both worship and artistic expression.

The parish is deeply thankful to all who took part in this effort, and especially to the members of the Saint Thomas Choir, whose dedication, adaptability, and musical commitment were on full display throughout the evening.



## St. Thomas Greek Orthodox Church Welcomes New Members Through Holy Baptism and Chrismation

On Sunday, June 21, St. Thomas Greek Orthodox Church joyfully welcomed seven new brothers and sisters into the Orthodox Christian Faith through the Holy Mysteries of Baptism and Chrismation.

During the Divine Liturgy, Mercy, Jacob, and Justina were received into the Orthodox Church through Holy Chrismation, while Amir, Elisamuel, Brent, and Sean were illumined through Holy Baptism and became members of Christ's Holy Church. Through their reception into Orthodoxy, they received their Orthodox names: Elizabeth, Iakovos, Justina, Paisios, George, Germanos, and Palamas.

The services were a moving witness to the life of the Church, as family members, godparents, and the entire St. Thomas family gathered in prayer and thanksgiving. Surrounded by the love of the parish family, the newly illumined faithful received the Grace of the Holy Spirit and began a new chapter in their spiritual journey as members of the Orthodox Church.

We extend our heartfelt congratulations to our newly baptized and chrismated brothers and sisters in Christ, and we thank their godparents, families, and catechists for their dedication, support, and example of faith throughout their preparation.

We also express our sincere gratitude to the Parish Council for its ongoing support of our catechetical and missionary ministries; to Deacon Michael for his faithful instruction of the catechumens throughout the year; to the St. Irene Philoptochos Society for generously covering the expenses associated with the baptisms and chrismations; to Moses for beautifully capturing these sacred moments through his photography; to Katerina for lovingly decorating the baptismal candles; and to our Narthex Committee for warmly welcoming all who visit our parish and seek to learn more about the Orthodox Faith.

Finally, we thank the entire parish family of St. Thomas for its living witness to Christ. These baptisms and chrismations are a reminder that evangelism is not the work of a few individuals but the calling of the whole Church. Through your prayers, kindness, hospitality, and faithful example, many hearts continue to be drawn to the beauty and truth of Orthodox Christianity.

May our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen them, guide them in His truth, and grant them many blessed years as faithful Orthodox Christians.

“As many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. Alleluia.”

Many Years to our newly illumined brothers and sisters in Christ!

With love in Christ,  
Fr. Georgios



## Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church Featured in Interview on Byzantine Iconography

The completed iconography of **Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church in Cherry Hill, New Jersey**, was prominently featured in a special interview with internationally known iconographer **George Giariskanis**, who used our parish as one of the central examples in speaking about the beauty, meaning, and spiritual mission of Byzantine iconography.

Throughout the interview, Saint Thomas was presented not simply as another completed project, but as a living example of how a parish can preserve the Orthodox tradition and pass it on to future generations through sacred art. Mr. Giariskanis spoke about the challenge of completing and unifying the iconographic program of the church, carefully bringing together older existing work with the newly completed upper sections, dome, and surrounding spaces so that the entire church would speak with one harmonious visual and theological voice.

His Eminence **Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey**, who also spoke during the program, referred to the deep importance of iconography in the life of Orthodox Christians in America. He emphasized that iconography is not simply decoration, but theology in visual form — a witness of faith that teaches, inspires prayer, and preserves our identity as Greek Orthodox Christians in the diaspora. Referring to Saint Thomas, he noted that the completed iconography now serves not only our own faithful, but also visitors, helping them encounter the Gospel and the life of the Church through what they see on the walls of the temple.

A moving recorded message was also offered by **Fr. Georgios Oikonomou**, who spoke with love and admiration for the people of Saint Thomas. He reflected on the sacrifices of earlier generations who built the parish and on the decision to complete the iconography not according to what was cheapest, but according to what would best serve the Church and the generations to come. He noted that the people of Saint Thomas undertook this work with vision, faith, and a desire to leave something lasting “for the ages,” and he also emphasized the missionary effect of the completed church, as many visitors are deeply moved by its beauty and spiritual presence.

The interview also included remarks from **Parish Council President Archon Anastasios Efstratiades**, whose leadership, together with the dedication of the parish, helped bring this great work to completion. His participation in the discussion reflected the strong sense that this achievement belongs not only to an artist or a committee, but to the entire Saint Thomas community.

What emerged from the interview was a powerful affirmation of what our parish has received. The iconography of Saint Thomas is not merely the completion of a long-awaited project. It is a sacred inheritance, a theological witness, and a visible expression of the love, sacrifice, and faith of a community that desired to build something beautiful and enduring for its children and for the generations yet to come.

For all of us at Saint Thomas, it was especially moving to see our parish held up in such a public way as an example of how the beauty of the Orthodox faith can be preserved, completed, and offered to the world with reverence and vision.



## Instructional Divine Liturgy for Our Summer Camp Children.

On June 24, as we celebrated the Nativity of the Honorable and Glorious Prophet, Forerunner, and Baptist John, we gathered for the Divine Liturgy with the participation of our St. Thomas Summer Camp children.

For educational and catechetical purposes, and while explaining the major parts of the Divine Liturgy, we celebrated the Holy Eucharist from the solea so that the children could better see, understand, and experience the beauty and meaning of Orthodox worship. It was truly a unique and blessed experience for everyone.

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to our camp directors, advisors, staff, campers, and their parents for the outstanding work they are doing. Thank you for helping create such a joyful, faith-filled, and enriching Summer Camp for our children.

In Christ,  
Fr. Georgios





# SAINT THOMAS GOYA



The Delaware Valley Youth Commission proudly celebrated Sights & Sounds 2026 on Saturday, March 21 at Holy Trinity Cathedral in Wilmington, Delaware. GOYA groups from across the DVYC, together with their clergy, gathered for a joyful day highlighting the incredible talents of our youth. From painting and sculpture to instrumental music, Greek and English plays, Choral Speaking, and more, the day was filled with creativity.

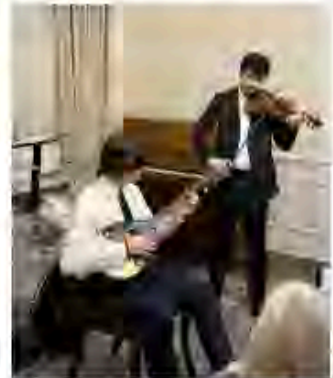
We are especially proud of the 51 GOYAns from Saint Thomas who participated and represented our community so beautifully:

Maria Anagnostou, Yannis Barbouletos, Angelina Bekas, Olivia Bekas, Adriana Buonamici, Eirini Christoforatos, Ioanna Christoforatos, Nicholas Cohen, Leo Docimo, Zoe Docimo, Dominic Eleftheriou, Georgios Frangos, Kyriaki Frangos, Maria Gavras, Ioannis Gerakios, Nikoletta Gerakios, Antonis Hadjitheocharous, Rafaella Hadjitheocharous, Nickolaos Hatzinakis, LEMONIA Horiatis, Vasiliki Horiates, Dimitrios Houtridis, Kaliope Houtridis, George Kalamouris, Alkeos Kanakis, Thano Kanakis, Yiannis Kantarakias, Amalia Kappatos, Maria Katsikis, Georgie Kokolis, Panayiota Konidaris, Stamatina Koutsogiannis, Frankie Landry, Maria Landry, Nikolaos Liolios, Alex Maltabes, Alyssa Manousos, Michael Nazirides, Zaphira Nitsolas, Arsenios Oikonomou, Louka Oikonomou, Truly Pasamihalis, Michael Poulathas, Simeon Poulathas, James Rengepis, Andreas Stabilopoulos, Nick Tripolitis, Anna Tripolitis, Olga Tsoplakis, Bobby Vrettos, and Kassandra Weicker.

Our parish earned **15 Sounds Awards and 61 Sights Awards!**

## Sounds:

- Maria Gavras – 1st place Ballet Jr, 2nd place Jazz Jr
- Dominic Eleftheriou – 3rd place Beginner Bouzouki
- Nikolaos Hatzinakis – 1st place Intermediate Bouzouki
- Yiannis Barbouletos – 1st place Advanced Guitar
- Eirini Christoforatos – 2nd place Advanced Violin
- Yiannis Kantarakias – 1st place Advanced Violin
- Simeon Poulathas – 1st place Beginner Piano
- Leo Docimo – 3rd place Intermediate Piano
- Rafaella Hadjitheocharous – 1st place Advanced Piano
- Yiannis Kantarakias & Dominic Eleftheriou – 2nd place Instrumental Duet



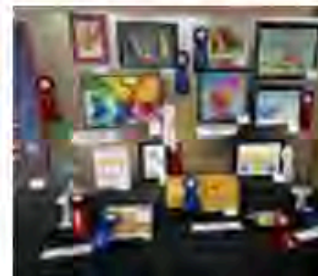
## Group Awards:

- 2nd place Choral Speaking
- 3rd place Group Dance
- 1st place Greek Play
- 3rd place English Play



## Sights:

- Adriana Buonamici – Essay 2nd place, Poster 2nd place, Sewing 2nd place
- Amalia Kappatos - Acrylic / Oil Painting 2nd place
- Andreas Stabilopoulos- Poem 2nd place, Cartoons 3rd place, Pencil 2nd place, Digitally Enhanced Photography 2nd place, Black & White Photography 1st place
- Antonis Hadjitheoharous - Digitally Enhanced Photography 1st place
- Dominic Eleftheriou Sewing / Quilting 1st place, Sculpture 2nd place
- Frankie Landry - Cartoons 2nd place
- Georgie Kokolis – Mosaics 1st place, Glazed Poured Ceramics 1st place. Sewing 3rd place, Black & White Photography 3rd place
- Ioanna Christoforatos - Papier-mâché 3rd place, Crochet / Knitting 3rd place
- James Rengepis – Pencil 3rd place
- Kassandra Weicker Ceramic Sculpture (3D) - 1st place
- Lemonia Horiatis – Essay 2nd place, Cartoons 1st place, Marker Drawing 2nd place, Mixed Media (2D) 2nd place, Color Pencil 3rd place, Pencil 2nd place, Water Color 1st place, Pen & Ink 1st place, Iconography 2nd place, Digitally Enhanced Photography 3rd place
- Maria Landry - Soft Sculpture (stuffed) 1st place, Black & White Photography 3rd place, Sewing / Quilting 1st place
- Nikoletta Gerakios - Ceramic Sculpture (3D) 2nd place, Ceramic Pottery 3rd place, Acrylic / Oil Painting 1st place, Pencil 1st place, Pastel 1st place, Crayon Drawing 2nd place, Marker Drawing 1st place, Color Pencil 1st place
- Olga Tsoplakis - Pen & Ink 2nd place, Water Color 1st place, Poster 1st place
- Panayiota Konidaris - Crochet / Knitting 1st place, Ceramic Pottery 2nd place
- Vasiliki Horiates - Mosaics 3rd place, Mixed Media (2D) 1st place, Crayon Drawing 1st place, Pastel 3rd place, Computer Assisted Design (2D) 2nd place, Poster 3rd place, Block / Linoleum Printing 3rd place, Pencil 2nd place, Marker Drawing 3rd place, Pen & Ink 1st place
- Yannis Barbouletos - Essay 3rd place
- Yiannis Kantarakias - Woodworking/Woodcraft 1st place
- Zaphira Nitsolas - Color Photography 1st place
- Zoe Docimo - Mixed Media (2D) 3rd place



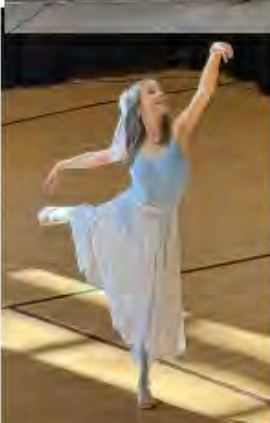
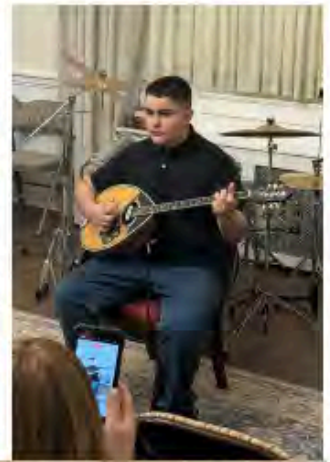
We extend our heartfelt thanks to:

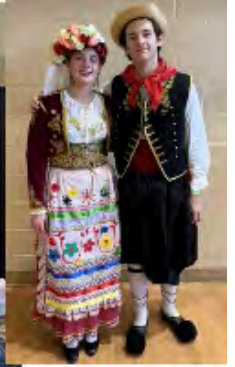
- Father Georgios for his love, encouragement, and spiritual guidance
- Our GOYAnS for supporting and cheering each other on throughout the day
- Our dedicated parents for their time, energy, and enthusiasm
- Sign Pros for generously providing the backdrop

And to our SightS & SoundS coaches, whose time and talents made this all possible:

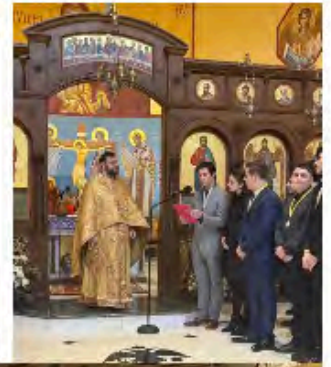
- Karoline Kokolis (St. Thomas Representative & Art Collection)
- Dean Tripolitis (Choral Speaking)
- Vaso Houtridis & Spiridoula Gerakios (English Play)
- Athena Poulathas & Joanna Stabilopoulos (Greek Play)
- Olga Tsoplakis & Adriana Buonamici (Group Dance)
- Kalliroi Landry & Christina Paxinos (Group Song)
- Taso Fakinos (Liturgical Choir)

Congratulations to all of our participants! Thank you to everyone who helped make this day such a meaningful and memorable celebration of our youth.











## 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.

### 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>



### SAVE THE DATES:

#### AUGUST:

**SUN. AUG. 23**

- DEADLINE: YOUTH AMBASSADOR AWARD NOMINATIONS

### 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**  
**After Holy Communion - until - 12:20pm**

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

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

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

### DIRECTORS & ADVISORS 26-27

GOYA Parent Advisor:

GOYA YA Advisor:

JOY Parent Advisor: Ms. Stephanie Docimo

JOY YA Advisor: Zachary VanMeter

HOPE Parent Advisor:

HOPE YA Advisor:

OFSS + Youth Director: Ms. Varah LK Kappatos

**\*\* ST THOMAS YOUTH MINISTRIES**

**IS SEEKING ADVISORS, TEACHERS,  
SUBSTITUTES, & TEACHER ASSISTANTS**

**FOR 2026-27 School Year \*\***

#### SEPTEMBER:

**SAT. SEPT. 5**

- DEADLINE: GOYA FRAPPE SHIRT DESIGN

**SUN. SEPT. 13**

- BLESSING OF THE YOUTH + SHORT OFSS CLASS

**SUN. SEPT. 20**

- FIRST FULL OFSS CLASS



# ST. THOMAS YOUTH MINISTRIES

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

Pre K: Ms. Jackie Compton

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

1<sup>st</sup> : Ms. Stephanie Docimo, Mr. Zachary Van Meter, Ms. Evelyn Buonamici

2<sup>nd</sup> : Ms. Rena Panagos, Ms. Kelly Papacristos, Mr. George Papadopoulos

3<sup>rd</sup> : Ms. Zoe Tripolitis & Ms. Georgia Boyle

4<sup>th</sup> Ms. Margarita Z Vrettos & Ms. Karin B Hippel

5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> : Ms. Minnie Tripolitis & Mr Angelo Horiates

7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> : Ms. Varah LK Kappatos

9<sup>th</sup> & 10<sup>th</sup> : Ms. Kalliroi Landry

11<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> : Ms. Olympia Anagnostou

SUBSTITUTES: Ms. Angeliki Kappatos, Ms. Christine Karageorgis, Ms. Ninita Birbilis, Ms. Joanna Stabilopoulos, Ms. Andreanna Katsikis, Ms. Yianna Klentzeris, and Ms. Athena Poulathas

Always welcoming new Teachers, Assistants, or Substitutes!

Please contact YM office if interested



← 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  
INTERESTED IN ORATORICAL  
FESTIVAL



BOYS AGES 8 & UP →



← GOYA  
BOYS  
BASKETBALL



← GOYA GIRLS  
BASKETBALL



ST THOMAS  
GRADS 18 - 35 →



← VOLUNTEERS FOR  
OUR YOUTH  
ALL ADULTS  
WELCOMED



# THANK YOU, KAROLINE!!

GOYA ADVISOR

We want to thank Ms. Karoline Kokolis for all she has done for our parish youth and the youth of the Delaware Valley. Most recently, as our GOYA Advisor, but also all the Youth Ministries she has supported and led over the years. Thank you for your time, dedication, organization, ideas, hard work, chaperoning, baking, communicating, and support- for the youth of Saint Thomas and beyond. From organizing and attending meetings, to FOCUS outreach, to trips, to Sights and Sounds, to baking and distributing Vasilopites, to caroling, to tournaments, to Fundraisers & Frappe sales and so much more - your tireless efforts have made a huge impact and will be greatly missed. We appreciate it all beyond words! LOVE,



SAINT THOMAS YOUTH & YOUTH MINISTRIES



# THANK YOU, OLYMPIA!!

HOPE ADVISOR

We want to thank Ms. Olympia Anagnostou for all she has done for our HOPE and JOY youth programs. From lessons and activities, to organizing Cookies 4 Kids Cancer Bake Sale, to Fall Outings, to Retreats, to hosting Godparents' Sunday and more - your donations of time, teaching, cooking, and organizing have been so valuable to our youth. We thank you and we will miss your guidance and talents tremendously!



LOVE, SAINT THOMAS YOUTH & YOUTH MINISTRIES



KNOW A TEEN WHO  
EXEMPLIFIES

# ORTHODOXY?

Scan the QR Code to nominate an exceptional  
teen for a Youth Ambassador Award Today!



[HTTPS://FORMS.GLE/TLJMQUMQZ96HNVDS5](https://forms.gle/TLJMQUMQZ96HNVDS5)

AWARDS FOR:

HOPE | PEACE  
WITNESS      FELLOWSHIP

FAITH | LOVE  
WORSHIP      SERVICE

DEADLINE:  
AUGUST 23

# Saint John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival

On February 27<sup>th</sup>, following the First Salutations to Panayia, we hosted our Local Oratorical Festival (SICOF). We had a wonderful event with many eager and well prepared participants.

## Elementary Participants:



Melina Colarulo



Anna Sophia Landry



Kyriakos Gavras



Nikolaos Lagonik



Ari Gavras



Joseph Docimo

## Junior Division Participants:



Zoe Docimo



Lemonia Horiatis



Maria Gavras

## Essay Entry:



Maria Landry

**1st Place: Maria Gavras\*, ID & Eleni Papadeas\*, SD**

**2nd Place: Zoe Docimo\*, ID & Maria Katsikis, SD**

**Runner Up: Lemonia Horiatis, ID & Leo Docimo\*, SD**

\*= represented St Thomas at Regional Festival

## Senior Division Participants:



Frankie Landry



Maria Katsikis



Leo Docimo



Eleni Papadeas



Adriana Buonamici



**BRAVO and  
THANK YOU  
to all of our  
speakers**

**Thank you to Reverend  
Father Georgios Oikonomou  
and all our Judges and  
Helpers**



**Thank you Alex Birbilis,  
Kelly Papacristos, Rena  
Panagos, Stephanie  
Docimo, and Zoe Tripolitis  
for making the evening  
smooth!**



## Our Representatives to the DVYC Oratorical Festival:

Maria Gavras

Eleni Papadeas

Leo Docimo

Zoe Docimo



### All Delaware Valley Participants

Everyone did a wonderful job. We heard many speeches, learned more about Saints and Theology and our Faith and we are so proud of everyone for making the effort and participating!



### The Delaware Valley Finalists who represented at the NJ Metropolis Festival on May 2<sup>nd</sup>



**Bravo to our  
Maria Gavras!!**

She represented Saint Thomas AND the Delaware Valley at the Metropolis of NJ Oratorical Festival with poise and faith!



Mr. Zach & Mr. Moses taught a lesson on how to chant the Hymn for the Sunday of The Holy Cross

Ms. Denise & Ms. Jacquelyn kicked off the Book Drive



Our St. Thomas Bible Bowl representatives

Annunciation EP hosted a great Bible Bowl



Scenes from Sights + Sounds



Scenes from Sights + Sounds





Bravo to all of our GOYans, Coaches, and Ms. Karoline for a successful Sights + Sounds!!

Theater, Vocals, Instrumentals, Artwork, Photography, and more!

So much hard work, so many skills and gifts on display - Glory to God!



Saturday of Lazarus Retreat

Hearing from Father Georgios



Decorating Lambades



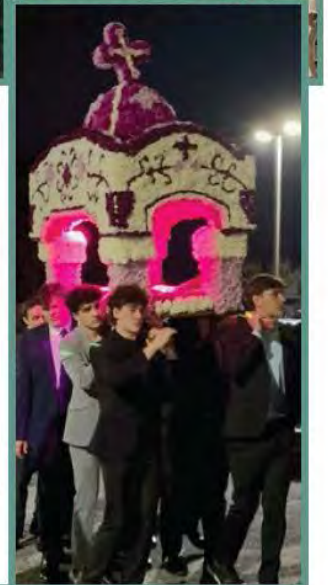
Folding Palm Crosses



Preparing Myrrh Bearer's Baskets



Holy Friday



# Saint Thomas Family Night



Taco Bar



Lenten Icon Challenge

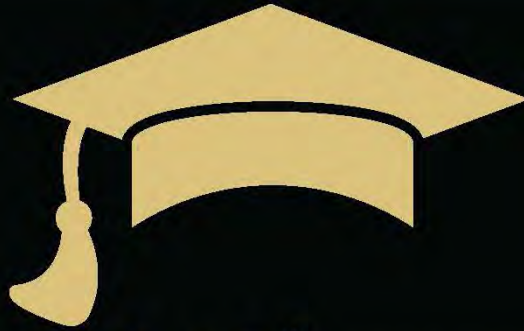


Mothers' Day Craft



Team Egg Hunt





*Saint Thomas  
Class of  
2026*

*May God Bless  
Your Paths*

*Colossians 3: 1. Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.*

To learn more about Saint Thomas' Class of 2026, join us June 14<sup>th</sup> to honor our grads after Divine Liturgy. Check out Bios by Scanning the Code or clicking the Online Bulletin link for Youth Ministry



## *Saint Thomas Graduates 2026*

### *High School Diplomas*

Dominic (Kyriakos) Eleftheriou . . . Cherokee H.S.  
 Sophia Fasnacht . . . . . Cherry Hill West H.S.  
 Mariella Gasparinatos . . . . . Pennsauken H.S.  
 Vasiliki Horiates . . . . . Pennsauken H.S.  
 George Kaliamouris . . . . . Pennsauken H.S.  
 Yiannis Kantarakias . . . . . Haddon Twp. H.S.  
 George Kappatos . . . . . Audubon H.S.  
 Maria Katsikis . . . . . Lenape H.S.  
 Giorgia Lavdas . . . . . Cherokee H.S.  
 Valentina Malo . . . . . Gateway Regional H.S.  
 Simeon Poulathas . . . . . Cherry Hill H.S. East  
 Yianna (Iouanna) Pratsinakis . . Moorestown H.S.  
 Zoe Rengepis . . . . . Kingsway Regional H.S.  
 Kristina Lillie Birbilis . . . . . Cherry Hill HS East

To learn more about all of our incredible graduates in the Saint Thomas Class of 2026, please join us on June 14<sup>th</sup> to honor them after the Divine Liturgy. Check out their Bios by Scanning this Code or by clicking the online link for Youth Ministry Updates

### *Saint Thomas College Graduates 2026* *Bachelor's Degrees*

Sofia Gray . . . University of MD, Baltimore County

Major: Psychology, Minor: Philosophy

Klio Irene Kokolis . . . . . Bucknell University

Major: Chemical Engineering, Minor: Chemistry,  
concentration: Biological Engineering

Lenor (Veronica) Mazahreh . . . Rowan University

Major: Biological Sciences; Pre-Med

Ioannis Oikonomou . . . Univ. of MD, Baltimore Cty

Major: Psychology; organizational/human behavior

Stella Oikonomou . . . . . Towson University

Major: Psychology, Minor: Spanish

Mihail Pantelous . . . . . Rutgers University

Major: Finance, Minor: Economics

Robert (Dionysios) Papadeas . . Gettysburg College

Major: Health Sciences, Minor: Business

Katherine Mary Pappas . . . . . Lafayette College

Major: Biochemistry, Minor: Bioengineering

Demetrios Tripolitis . . . . . Rutgers University

Major: Animation

Alex Christou . . . . . Villanova Univ.

Major: Statistics, Minor: Business



## *Class of 2026*



### *Saint Thomas Graduates 2026* *Higher Education*

Antigone Antonakakis . . . . . YALE University

MPH, Master of Public Health

Angeliki Kappatos . . . . . Rutger's University

MS-N, Master of Nursing

Michael Lazaropoulos . . Temple Univ., Lewis Katz

School of Medicine

MD, PHD: Biomedical Sciences, Molecular & Cellular

Biosciences

Natalie Mazahreh . . . . . Saint Joseph's University

MS-ABA, Master of Behavioral Analysis

**OFSS + YOUTH GROUP  
REGISTRATIONS  
FOR 2026- 27  
ARE OPEN**

**ONE FORM COVERS BOTH OFSS AND YOUTH GROUP  
SEE NEXT PAGE FOR QR CODES**

**IN ORDER TO HELP US PREPARE,  
REGISTRATION WILL CLOSE ON SEPTEMBER 1ST**

**DON'T MISS IT - REGISTER TODAY!!**



**TOT AND ME CLASS REGISTRATION  
FOR LITTLE ONES + THEIR ADULTS**



**3<sup>RD</sup> - 6<sup>TH</sup> GRADE REGISTRATION  
(OFSS + JOY IN ONE)**

**GOYA BASKETBALL  
(PREREQUISITE:  
OFSS REGISTRATION) →**



**REGISTER TODAY!**



**PRE-K - 2<sup>ND</sup> GRADE REGISTRATION  
(OFSS + HOPE IN ONE)**



**7<sup>TH</sup> - 12<sup>TH</sup> GRADE REGISTRATION  
(OFSS + GOYA IN ONE)**

# DESIGN THE AGORA TEE!

**\*ALL GOYANS WELCOMED TO SUBMIT AN IDEA\***



## **\*\* OFFICIAL RULES:**

**IN ORDER TO BE CONSIDERED, DESIGNS MUST MEET ALL CRITERIA!!**

- MUST USE EITHER A WHITE, GREY, OR ROYAL BLUE SHIRT AS BASE
- MUST BE EMAILED AS PDF TO:
  - [ST.THOMASCHERRYHILLGOYA@GMAIL.COM](mailto:ST.THOMASCHERRYHILLGOYA@GMAIL.COM)
  - [ST.THOMASGOCYOUTHMINISTRY@GMAIL.COM](mailto:ST.THOMASGOCYOUTHMINISTRY@GMAIL.COM)
- ONLY ONE DESIGN SUBMISSION PER GOYAN
- SUBMISSION MUST BE RECEIVED BY 10PM EST ON SEPT 1ST

## **\*\* VOTING:**

- VOTE WILL TAKE PLACE ON OPENING DAY OF OFSS
- ONLY YOUTH GRADES 7-12 MAY VOTE
- (FATHER + ADVISORS WILL ALSO GET A BALLOT)
- ONE BALLOT PER PERSON. MUST BE PRESENT TO VOTE
- THE WINNING DESIGN WILL BE WORN BY ALL FRAPPE STAND VOLUNTEERS





SAINT THOMAS



# GREEK AGORA FESTIVAL

2026



THE LARGEST WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL IN THE DELAWARE VALLEY

## OCTOBER 8-11

THURSDAY, FRIDAY & SATURDAY: 11.00AM-01.00AM  
SUNDAY: NOON-10.00PM



**ORDER ONLINE FOR PICK-UP  
OR GET DELIVERY  
NOW AVAILABLE IN YOUR AREA!**



**ORDER: [B.LINK/GREEKAGORA-ORDER](https://b.link/greekagora-order)**



MUSIC



FOOD



DANCE



WINE



SHOPPING

Saint Thomas Greek Orthodox Church, 615 Mercer Street, Cherry Hill, NJ 08003

[GREEKAGORAFESTIVAL.COM](https://greekagorafestival.com)

## HELLENIC HERITAGE DANCE GROUP

The Hellenic Heritage Dance Group was proud to march in the annual **Greek Independence Day Parade** in Philadelphia.



Following the parade, HHDG performed in front of the grandstand, alongside other groups from the Delaware Valley area, showcasing the beauty and tradition of Greek folk dance.



On **Mother's Day**, the Hellenic Heritage Dance Group distributed potted flowers to all the mothers of our parish, in honor of their special day! It is our treasured tradition every year.



### HHDG Scholarships

In 2014, our former beloved Dance Director, *Klio Kokolis*, and our former beloved President, *Liberty Zografos*, started scholarships to honor seniors dedicated to the dance group. Every year since then, HHDG has been offering scholarships to graduating seniors furthering their academic education.

In June, we will be acknowledging the eligible seniors, who met the criteria set forth by the HHDG Board.

Wishing our Parish a Happy and Healthy Summer!

## A Busy and Fruitful Year for the Daughters of Penelope, Nike Chapter #230



**N**ike Chapter #230 enjoyed a full and active season of fellowship, service, and charitable outreach, with members participating in a wide range of meaningful events and projects.

Among the highlights was the District 5 Festival of Tables on March 7, where the chapter was honored with the award for Best Presentation for its beautifully themed “Bridgerton Ladies” table.

The chapter also continued its strong commitment to charitable service. Members prepared 149 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for Forgotten Haven, assembled snack packs for Ronald McDonald House, and collected 2,000 books for BookSmiles, a project organized by Sister Denise Pappas-Sosi. In addition, the chapter supported the Walkathon fundraiser for Penelope Place and raised funds for the St. Penelope Iconography Project.

A particularly special moment this year was the recognition of Sister Christine Onken, who was honored for 27 years of devoted service through the Knitting Group in support of Healthy Start Baby Charity. Her long-standing dedication stands as a beautiful example of the spirit of service that continues to define the chapter.

Members also enjoyed opportunities for fellowship and community life, including attending a Flyers Game Night, which added a joyful social dimension to an already busy year.

Through all of these efforts, Nike Chapter #230 continues to reflect a spirit of generosity, friendship, and dedication to service. Its members remain actively engaged in supporting charitable causes, strengthening bonds within the chapter, and contributing in meaningful ways to the wider community.



Name: Christine Saxon  
Organization: Daughters of Penelope

- Impact:
  - Ms. Christine is part of The Daughters of Penelope which is a Women's organization of the AHEPA (American Hellenic Educational Progressive Association). They regularly donate first time parent kits to welcome their new baby which consist of knitted blankets, booties and hat, baby lotion, baby wash, bottle cleaner, and 2 outfits, sometimes bottles and diapers as well. We're able to provide these kits to families in our program which are helpful. In 2024, 14 kits were donated and in 2025 a total of 60 kits were donated.



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Exam Online!



**Hello, Saint Thomas Community!**  
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- Treatment Options for Sleep Apnea and Breathing Concerns
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- Comprehensive Airway/Sleep Evaluation
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ομιλεί ελληνικά και μπορεί να σας εξυπηρετήσει στην ελληνική γλώσσα.*

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