

The Promise

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

WESTFIELD ✦ NEW JERSEY



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The Hierarchy of Prayer

It is clear from Scripture that prayer is vitally important and that we are to pray for one another and carry each other's burdens. Yet, even with something as essential as prayer, there exists a hierarchy within it. Personal prayer is a powerful spiritual tool, but it is dependent on corporate prayer for its fruition.

**“Carry each other's burdens,
and in this way, you will fulfill
the law of Christ.”**

— Galatians 6:2

Perhaps you've heard the saying, “no man is an island”? This applies to prayer as well because prayer is not a form of isolation but a connection to things greater than the self. And yet while private or personal prayers are important and necessary, they do not rise to the

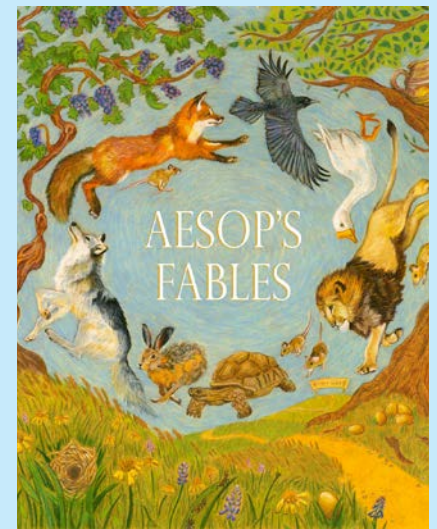
level nor do they contain the power that we find in the Church with corporate, or better stated, Sacramental prayers.

The Lord's words, “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20) shows that Sacramental prayer is the higher form of prayer.

The Orthodox Church has maintained our Lord's teaching of the importance of coming together in prayer. Thus, we understand that God's grace is transmitted to the Church through the divine Sacraments and not through personal prayer. This view rests on the fact that the Sacraments are a gift particular to the New Testament. As private prayers and preaching are invaluable, the Church does not share the Protestant view that these hold the highest positions in ecclesiastical life. There exists a hierarchy and the pinnacle of prayer is reached sacramentally when God's grace is imparted to the community of believers.

The Orthodox Church today is very much like the early Church in that the main reason for believers to come together is to celebrate a Sacrament. Think about it, when do we come together

Continued on page 2 ➔



The Fables of Aesop as a Preparation for the Gospel

PART TWO

In the January edition of *The Promise*, an article appeared about Aesop's Fables as being one of humanities' first ways to express truth, teach virtue, and demonstrate the consequences of human behavior. We conclude with part two of this article showing the human pursuit of the truth fulfilled in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

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Dates in the Life of Our Church

February – March 2026

FEBRUARY

8 St. Theodore the General	9:00 AM Divine liturgy
8:15 AM Orthros	11:00 AM Baptism
9:30 AM Divine Liturgy	22 Cheese Fare Sunday
10 4:00 PM Greek School	Mission Sunday
7:00 PM Philoptochos Board Mtg.	8:15 AM Orthros
7:30 PM Parish Council	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
11 9:30 AM TOTs	23 Great Lent Begins
12 4:00 PM Greek School	5:00 PM Great Compline
13-16 Music Dance Festival in Philly	24 4:00 PM Greek School
14 1st Saturday of Souls	5:00 PM Lenten Vespers
9:00 AM Divine Liturgy	8:00 PM NNJYC State Mtg.
15 Meat Fare Sunday	25 9:30 AM TOTs
8:15 AM Orthros	6:30 PM Presanctified Liturgy
9:30 AM Divine Liturgy	8:00 PM Theosis
16 Office Closed – Presidents' Day	26 4:00 PM Greek School
17 4 PM Greek School	27 6:30 PM Akathist Hymn
18 7:00 PM Theosis	28 3rd Saturday of Souls
19 4 PM Greek School	9:00 AM
21 2nd Saturday of Souls	11:00 AM Baptism

MARCH

I Sunday of Orthodoxy	9:30 AM Divine Liturgy
8:15 AM Orthros	9 9:00 AM Presanctified Liturgy
9:30 AM Divine Liturgy	7:30 PM Marriage Prep
3 11:00 AM Trinity Circle	10 4:00 PM Greek School
5:00 PM Lenten Vespers	5:00 PM Great Compline
4 5:00 PM Sights Judging	7:30 PM Parish Council Mtg.
6:30 PM Presanctified Liturgy	11 9:30 AM TOTs
8:00 PM Theosis	6:30 PM Presanctified Liturgy
6 6:30 PM Akathist Hymn	8:00 PM Theosis
7 Sights & Sounds	12 4:00 PM Greek School
8 St. Gregory of Palamas	13 6:30 PM Akathist Hymn
8:15 AM Orthros	

Hierarchy of Prayer

⇨ *Continued from page 1*

as a Holy Trinity family? Sundays for the Divine Liturgy or other happy Sacramental occasions such as a baptism or wedding. In celebrating the Eucharist, the community is unified through Christ. In the Sacraments, God's grace is imparted to us.

Certainly, the Orthodox Church teaches the faithful about the importance of private prayer and the power it possesses. Everyone is called to develop a daily prayer ritual and follow it in a systematic way. But we should understand that it is not through personal prayer that we receive God's sanctifying grace.

We encounter the manifestation of the Church, in all its glory, through Sacramental prayer. And it is this prayer that transcends the corruptible world and the vanity of human things. Through Sacramental prayer we become participants in such a supercelestial world that the hearts and eyes of our souls are lifted up, and our minds are elevated beyond the sensibilities of this world so that we are made capable of communicating with Almighty God.

The concept of prayer in the Orthodox Church is of immense importance, since the very celebration of the Sacraments is for the most part nothing but prayer. But it is not empty prayer. It has attached to it a community whose goal is receive God's divine grace. The Sacraments happen when the Body of Christ, or the Church, comes together to prayer collectively. And the Sacraments derive their validity from the sacrifice on Golgotha and constitute channels for the communion of the Holy Spirit.

Perhaps an effective way to look at private prayer is to understand it as the way through which we prepare ourselves for the reception of divine Grace.

Perhaps an effective way to look at private prayer is to understand it as the way through which we prepare ourselves for the reception of divine Grace and for worthy participation in the Sacraments. Personal prayer also guards and strengthens us after receiving divine Grace in the Sacraments. Thus, it helps to preserve in us that which is transmitted through the Sacraments. For personal prayer to be effective, its core must consist of nothing more than humility and repentance. Compunction of sins brings us to an inner reality where we see the disfigurement of our soul in all its corruptive nature. There is nothing celebratory in sin. True compunction can only be attained through humility. Our Lord says, "Everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." – Matthew 23:12 ❖



Trinity Circle Events

Trinity Circle is a thriving and exciting ministry of Holy Trinity GOC that welcomes and celebrates every senior of our parish. Trinity Circle now has over 90 members who meet monthly to socialize, organize, and share a luncheon. We also offer many informal programs presented by our Program Director Steve Xenakis. Consider joining Trinity Circle if you haven't already. Members share good company and memories while enjoying the support of old and new friends. Luncheons are often donated in memory of a cherished loved one. Membership is open to all seniors with a cost of only \$15 per person. Please save the first Tuesday of every month and come at 11:00 am to join the Trinity Circle group.

In January, Trinity Circle celebrated the New Year by attending the Divine Liturgy of Epiphany and then the cutting of the Vasilopita. This year, Lefteri Ioannou, was blessed to receive the coin. Xronia polla to him as he receives an additional blessing. January's luncheon was donated in memory of Gus Zades by Marie Mastorakis. ❖



SAVE THE DATE: MARCH 28

Holy Trinity/Philoptochos is sponsoring a meal packaging event with "Rise Against Hunger"

We need YOUR helping hands

On Saturday, March 28th from 10AM - 12 PM
Please come & help prepare soup bags
(no cooking or supplies are needed)

We need volunteers of all ages.
Any donation is appreciated to offset cost

Sign-up and Donation page coming soon.
Thank you in advance!

**Lord, Jesus Christ
Have mercy
upon me
a sinner.**



**Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church
Great Lent, Begins on February 23**



Examples of Fables and Theological Correspondences

The Wolf and the Lamb – Injustice and Innocence

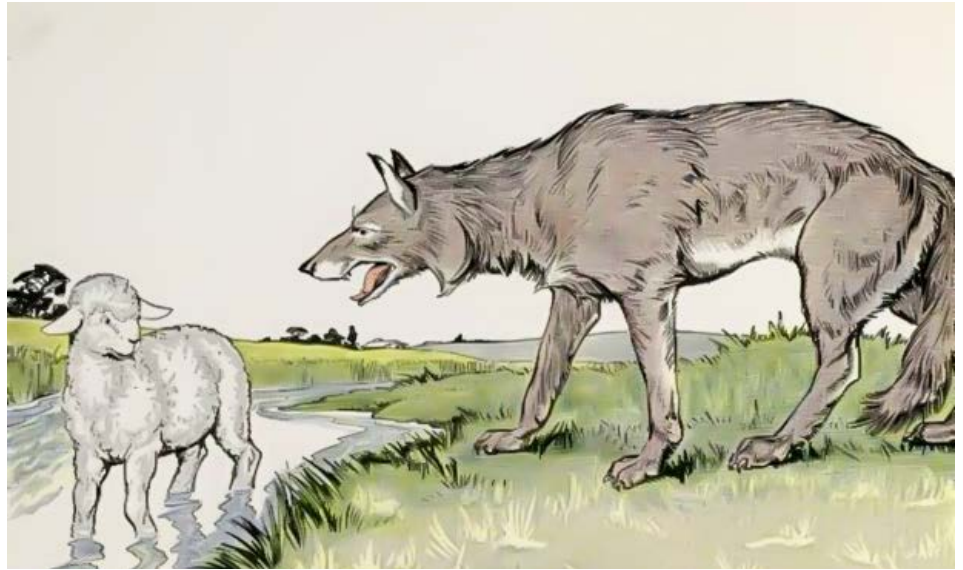
This fable exposes the mechanism of violence disguised in pseudo-rational justification and highlights the injustice of power and the abuse of authority. The strong fabricate causes to justify injustice. The wolf invents false accusations to legitimize his violence. This is an image of fallen human authority.

The Old Testament speaks of Christ: “Like a lamb before its shearer is silent” (Isaiah 53:7).

St. Gregory the Theologian writes that the fable depicts a world without redemption, while the Gospel reveals redemption through sacrifice, interpreting Christ’s silence as a free act of love (Oration XLV, PG 36, 632). The hymnography of Holy Week transforms this silence into ecclesial experience. This image directly refers to Christ as the “blameless Lamb,” who endured unjust judgment without retaliation.

St. Gregory the Theologian emphasizes that God’s true power is revealed not in violence, but in voluntary sacrifice and love: “He was led as a silent lamb, not as one powerless, but as one willing.” “He is wronged and remains silent, in order

to heal our injustice” (Oration XLV, On Pascha, PG 36, 632). The Church sees in the fable a tragic image of the world without Christ, while in the Gospel the victory of innocence is revealed through the Resurrection.



The Fox and the Grapes – Self-Deception and Spiritual Blindness

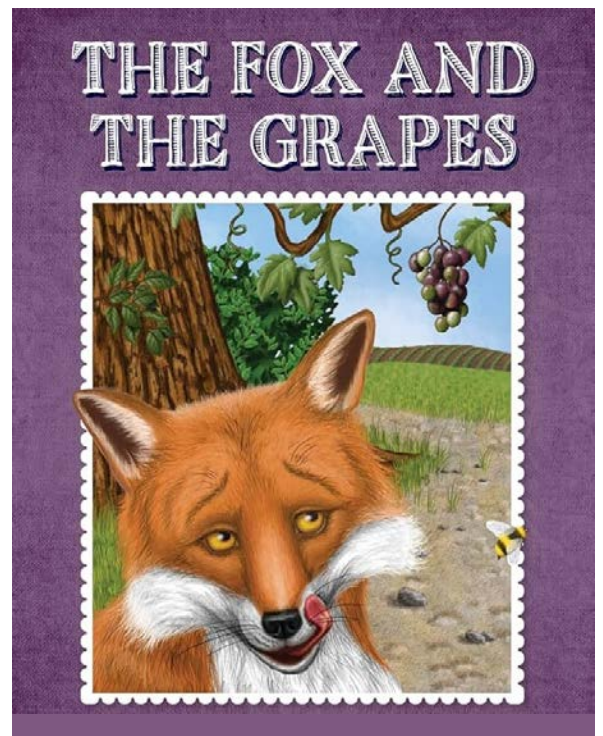
This fable reveals humanity’s tendency to turn failure into contempt in order to protect ego. This mechanism is deeply spiritual.

The fable vividly describes the mechanism of self-justification and hypocrisy. The fox devalues what it cannot obtain. When a person cannot attain something, they disparage it. This attitude stands in opposition to Christian sincerity and repentance. The Fathers of the Church repeatedly warn against spiritual delusion - human attempts to justify passions instead of healing them: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves” (1 John 1:8).

St. Maximus the Confessor analyzes self-love as the root of this delusion: “When the mind cannot acquire virtue, it invents justifications for the passions.” “Self-love gives birth to delusion, and

delusion justifies the passions” (Chapters on Love, II, 8, PG 90, 964).

Liturgically, the spirit of self-accusation is expressed in the Prayer of Saint Ephrem the Syrian: “Yea, Lord and King, grant me to see my own transgressions...” The liturgical life, especially during Great Lent, systematically dismantles this delusion through prayer and self-reproach. The fable reveals a psychological mechanism; the Church reveals healing through repentance. Patristic thought deepens the fable, showing that self-deception is not merely a moral flaw, but an obstacle to salvation.



The Cicada and the Ant – Providence, Work, and Spiritual Watchfulness



The cicada lives in the present without concern for the future. Its negligence leads to impasse. The fable teaches responsibility and foresight, addressing accountability toward time.

The Apostle Paul connects work with responsibility: “If anyone is unwilling to work, let him not eat” (2 Thessalonians

3:10). St. John Chrysostom teaches that work is a means of pedagogy, not merely subsistence. He links work with spiritual vigilance: “Not work alone, but a provident disposition saves a person” (On 2nd Thessalonians, PG 62, 485).

The hymnography of Great Lent calls for vigilance: “My soul, my soul, arise; why are you sleeping?” (Great Canon of Saint Andrew of Crete). The fable functions as a call to spiritual watchfulness; the present prepares eternity.

The Lion and the Mouse – Mercy and Humility

The small mouse saves the mighty lion. The fable overturns the worldly concept of power: the small saves the great.

Holy Scripture proclaims that grace is given to the humble: “God gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). St. Basil the Great emphasizes that true power is not a natural magnitude but a gift of God: “Power lies not in size, but in the grace of God” (Homily on Humility, PG 31, 529).

The Orthodox Church has never categorically rejected pre-Christian thought. On the contrary, it subjected it to discernment, distinguished it, and made use of it. The Fathers saw in Aesop’s fables a preparatory discourse; a natural morality that prepares humanity to receive the light of the Gospel.

The classic Patristic formulation of this stance belongs to St. Basil the Great, who characterizes “external education” as preparation for life in Christ: “External wisdom is a kind of preparation for the life according to Christ.” This wisdom does not save, but prepares. It does not transform, but educates. In his well-known address to the youth, the Saint exhorts them to gather from secular wisdom whatever

leads to virtue, just as the bee takes only the nectar from the flower: “As bees take only what is useful from flowers, so we also from secular writings” (Address to the Youth, PG 31, 564).

Aesop’s fables, therefore, can be viewed as preparation: they cultivate conscience, enabling humanity to be receptive to the light of the Gospel. Thus, Aesop’s fables are not adversaries of the Gospel, but servants of its pedagogical preparation. What Aesop suggests, Christ reveals. What natural morality teaches, the Church transforms into a path of salvation. The Church unites the two, leading humanity from knowledge to deification.

Natural morality is not abolished, but

finds its fulfillment in Christ, where the word becomes life and teaching is transformed into salvation. Aesop’s fables do not save; they teach. The Gospel does not merely teach; it transforms. Thus, Aesop speaks to conscience, Christ speaks to the heart, and the Church leads the whole human person to salvation and deification.

The fables of Aesop and the teaching of Christ meet at the level of moral formation and the cultivation of human ethos. The fables show the path of natural virtue; the Gospel reveals the path of salvation. The Fathers of the Church bridge these two worlds, showing us that every true teaching finds its completion in the light of Christ. ❖



Holy Trinity Cultural Committee

The Holy Trinity Cultural Committee had the distinct honor of hosting Ms. Iphigenia Kanara, Consul General of Greece in New York, on Thursday, January 15, 2026, for a special event entitled: ***Celebrating Hellenic Heritage and Community Diplomacy: Where Greece Stands Today and the Role of the Consul General.***

The event welcomed more than one hundred attendees and was received by the community as an overwhelmingly enthusiastic, informative, and deeply meaningful evening of dialogue and reflection. Among the honored guests were His Eminence Apostolos of New Jersey, as well as board members of Pan Gregorian, who generously sponsored the evening's reception.

As Consul General, Ms. Kanara leads one of Greece's most significant diplomatic missions. A seasoned career

diplomat, she has held senior positions in international relations, multilateral diplomacy, and public affairs. Her work emphasizes cultural diplomacy, diaspora engagement, and the advancement of Greece's strategic, economic, and cultural priorities. She is also a strong advocate for women in diplomacy and inclusive global leadership.

Ms. Kanara opened the evening by sharing thoughtful reflections on her professional journey, the experiences that led her to join Greece's diplomatic corps, and the core values that continue to guide her service. She then led a dynamic and engaging conversation on ***Women in Diplomacy, Greece's Foreign Policy, and Consular Outreach***, offering insights that resonated deeply with the audience.

The program also included a short recital of "Ithaka" by poet C.P. Cavafy, presented in both Greek and English by

three members of our GOYA, as well as a special recognition by the Cultural Committee marking the first occasion on which a foreign diplomat was formally hosted at the parish. The evening culminated in a vibrant fellowship and networking reception.

In the weeks following the event, members of the Cultural Committee and Father Peter received numerous messages of appreciation, highlighting the Consul General's warmth, openness, and the care and depth with which she addressed questions from those in attendance. The evening was also widely praised for its excellent organization, welcoming atmosphere, and the spirit of meaningful engagement it fostered across the community.

Finally, a very big thank you to all the volunteers who helped make this the hugely successful event that it was ❖



Greek School Vasilopita





Holy Trinity Sacraments and Rites

February 2025 – December 2025

FUNERALS

2/7/2025	+Meropi Koukos Constantine	8/4/2025	+Sam A. Koliopoulos
2/10/2025	+Despina Anastasiou	8/5/2025	+William L. Stroh
3/5/2025	+Anastasios (Tom) Markos	8/5/2025	+Katherine (Kay) Panagos
3/4/2025	+Eraklis Polihros	9/20/2025	+Angeliki (Kiki) Anderson
4/16/2025	+Gordon Jolly	10/1/2025	+Ilias Riginos
5/6/2025	+Bessie Vardas	10/16/2025	+James Balatsos
7/9/2025	+Constance (Connie) Thomas	11/10/2025	+Sylvia A. Kalamaras
7/21/2025	+Theodore Panagopoulos	11/28/2025	+Stella Provel

WEDDINGS

5/24/25	Alexandra Agathis and Andrew Winn, Sophia Anna Agathis as sponsor	9/28/25	Antigoni (Annie) Zourzoukis and Ryan Burgess, Vickie (Zourzoukis) Weber as sponsor
6/12/25	Laurelle McInerney and Brett Anton, Anne Hyde as sponsor	11/8/25	Christina Efthimion and Philip Siler, Charles J. Efthimion as sponsor
6/29/25	Alexa Xenios and Joao Pedro Santos, Alexandra Early as sponsor	11/11/25	Jaclyn Elena Szafran and Daniel Pires Stephanie Crane as sponsor Jaimie L. Szafran and Robert Page, Russell Crane as sponsor.
7/27/25	Samantha Afendoulis and Jordan Mc Hugh Alexandra Panagiota Afendoulis as sponsor		

BAPTISMS

2/8/25	Aristotle John Arethas, son of Stefanos and Allison Arethas was, Godfather is Godfather is Alexander Karanikolas	4/26/25	Roman John Karsos, son of Nikolas and Stefanie Karsos, Godfather is John Tsamutalis.
2/16/25	Ellie Sophia Durso, daughter of Nicholas Durso and Christina Philippou-Durso, Godmother is Vicki Zourzoukis.	5/3/25	Flora Loukas, daughter of Archdeacon Konstantinos and Diakonissa Athanasia Loukas, Godparents are Stylianos and Constantina Mastoras.
3/16/25	William Anthony Kritharis, son of George and Nicole Kritharis, Godfather is Nikolaos Kritharis.	5/4/26	Karly Ann Sonntag, daughter of Christopher and Jillian Sonntag, Godmother is Karen Coviello Waga.
3/29/25	Leo Constantin Cojocararu son of Razvan and Ioana Cojocararu, Godparents are Carla and Max Ca-ponegro.	5/10/25	Lauren Freedman, daughter of Wayne and Susan Freedman, Godfather is Stelios Ioannou.
3/29/25	Socrates Vasilatis Tzatzev son of Aleks Tzatzev and Ariane Vasilatis, was celebrated, Godmother is Antigone Zourzoukis.	5/16/25	Ramzey Alfie El-Far, son of Yazan and Christina El-Far, Godmother is Dana Habib Hamameh.

Sacraments and Rites

BAPTISMS (continued)

5/17/25	Peter John Skiadas, son of John and Helen Skiadas, Godfather is Dimitrios Vardas.	10/18/25	Theodore Loukas Asfour, son of Bishara and Marissa Asfour, Godparents are Kleopatra Kontogiannis and Nicholas Vasilakis.
6/21/25	Iris Elizabeth Biliouris, daughter of Konstantinos Biliouris and Yang Xu, Godfather is Charalambos Tsourakakis.	11/23/25	Zoey Dimitra Trikilas, daughter of Panagiotis and Natasha Trikilas, Godparents are Kyriakos and Kerri Likakis.
7/12/25	Melina Pavlakos, daughter of Paul and Demetra Pavlakos, Godparents are Gregory Vourloumis and Marika Papadopoulos.	11/30/25	Michael John Hefferon Jr and Ellie Rose Hefferon, children of Michael John Hefferon and Kristen Sue Pappas, Godparent is Christopher Gornall.
7/20/25	John Jackson Lesnewich, son of John and Laura Lesnewich, Godmother is Andrea Ehmann.	12/6/25	Penelope Nikitas Kasiotis and Eleni Nikitas Kasiotis, daughters of Nikitas Emmanuel Kasiotis and Rita Gonzalez Montesinos, Godparents are Ann and Emmanuel N. Kasiotis.
10/11/25	Elizabeth Anne Agathis, daughter of Nickolas and Alexandra Agathis, Godfather is William C. Agathis.		

NEW MEMBERS OF THE PARISH

1/1/2025	Mr. & Mrs. Jacob Thompson	5/5/2025	Mrs. Constance Spiliotes
1/10/2025	Mr. & Mrs. George Kritharis	6/2/2025	Mr. & Mrs. Konstantinos) Biliouris
1/31/2025	Mr. & Mrs. Douglas Haviaris	7/11/2025	Ms. Andrea Ehmann
2/25/2025	Mrs. Evon Kalamaras	8/4/2025	Mr Joseph Padin
2/27/2025	Mr. & Mrs. Kosta Demopoulos	8/21/2025	Mr. & Mrs. Philip Siler
3/12/2025	Mr. Aleksi Tzatzev & Mrs. Ariane Vasilatis	8/23/2025	Mr. Charles Efthimion
3/20/2025	Mr. Ryan Burgess & Mrs. Antigoni Zouzoukis	9/8/2025	Mr. & Mrs. Georgios Zavolas
3/31/2025	Mr. Brett Anton & Mrs. Laurelle McInerney	9/10/2025	Mr. Jacob Andreasson
3/31/2025	Ms. Madeleine Anton	9/24/2025	Mr. & Mrs. Nikitas Kasiotis
3/31/2025	Mr. William Anton	10/3/2025	Mr. & Mrs. Panagiotis Trikilas
3/31/2025	Mr. Stelios Ioannou	10/13/2025	Mr. Gianni Garyfallos
4/4/2025	Mr. Eugene Ioannou & Mrs. Lauren Freedman	10/22/2025	Mr. Michael Hefferon & Mrs. Kristen Pappas Hefferon
4/6/2025	Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Pavone	10/23/2025	Mr. & Mrs. Emanuel Kasiotis
4/18/2025	Ms. Sophia Agathis	10/29/2025	Mr. Anastasios Tzerachoglou & Mrs. Eirini Thanopoulou
4/24/2025	Mr. Yazan El-Far & Mrs. Christina Emseis	11/23/2025	Mr. & Mrs. Juan Ramirez
		11/23/2025	Mr. & Mrs. Samuel Starrett
		12/4/2025	Ms. Chloe Genakos



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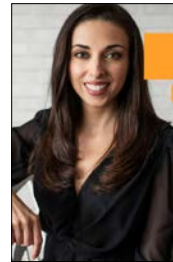
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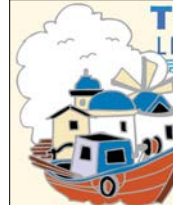
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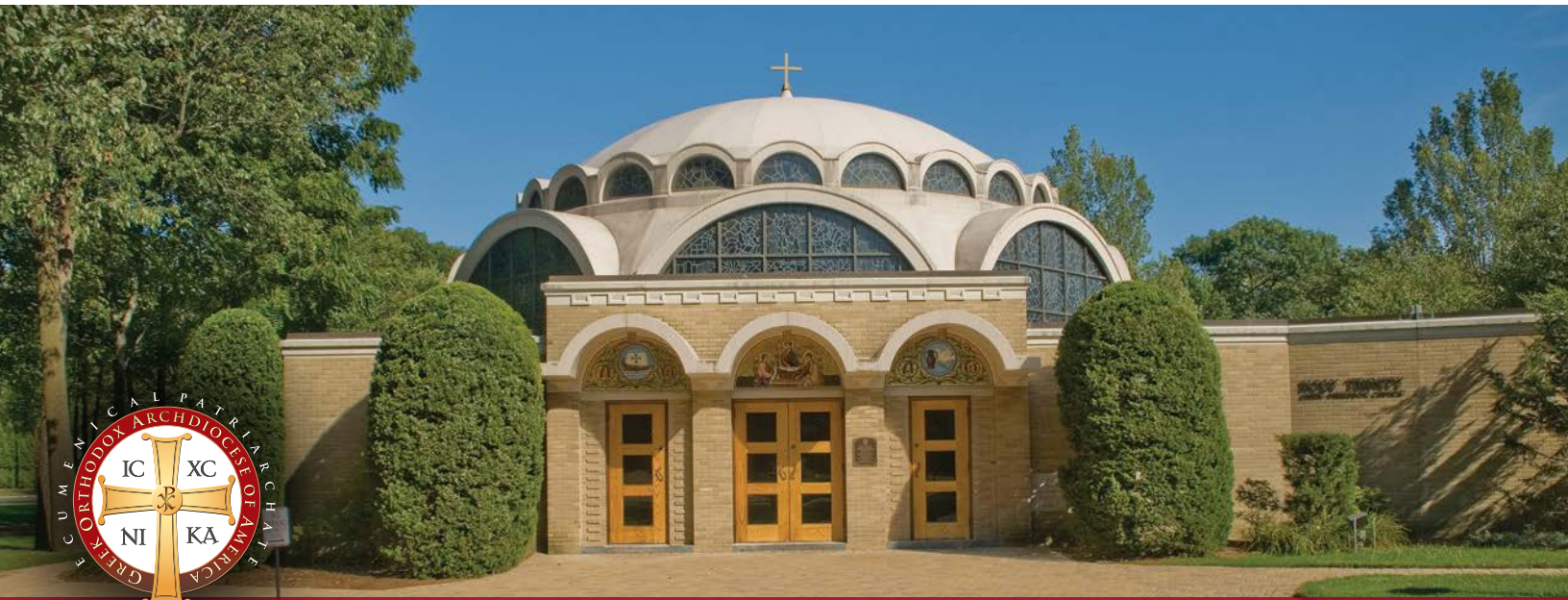
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<i>Divine Liturgy</i>	9:30 AM	9:30 AM

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