

MOSAIC

Coming together, we form an icon of God's Kingdom

Vol. 8, No. 8

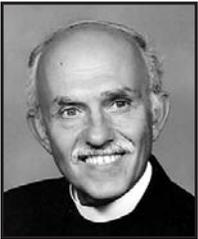
Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church 2501 S. Wolf Rd. Westchester, IL.

December 2003

(708) 562-2744

www.holyapostleschurch.com

From Father Bill...

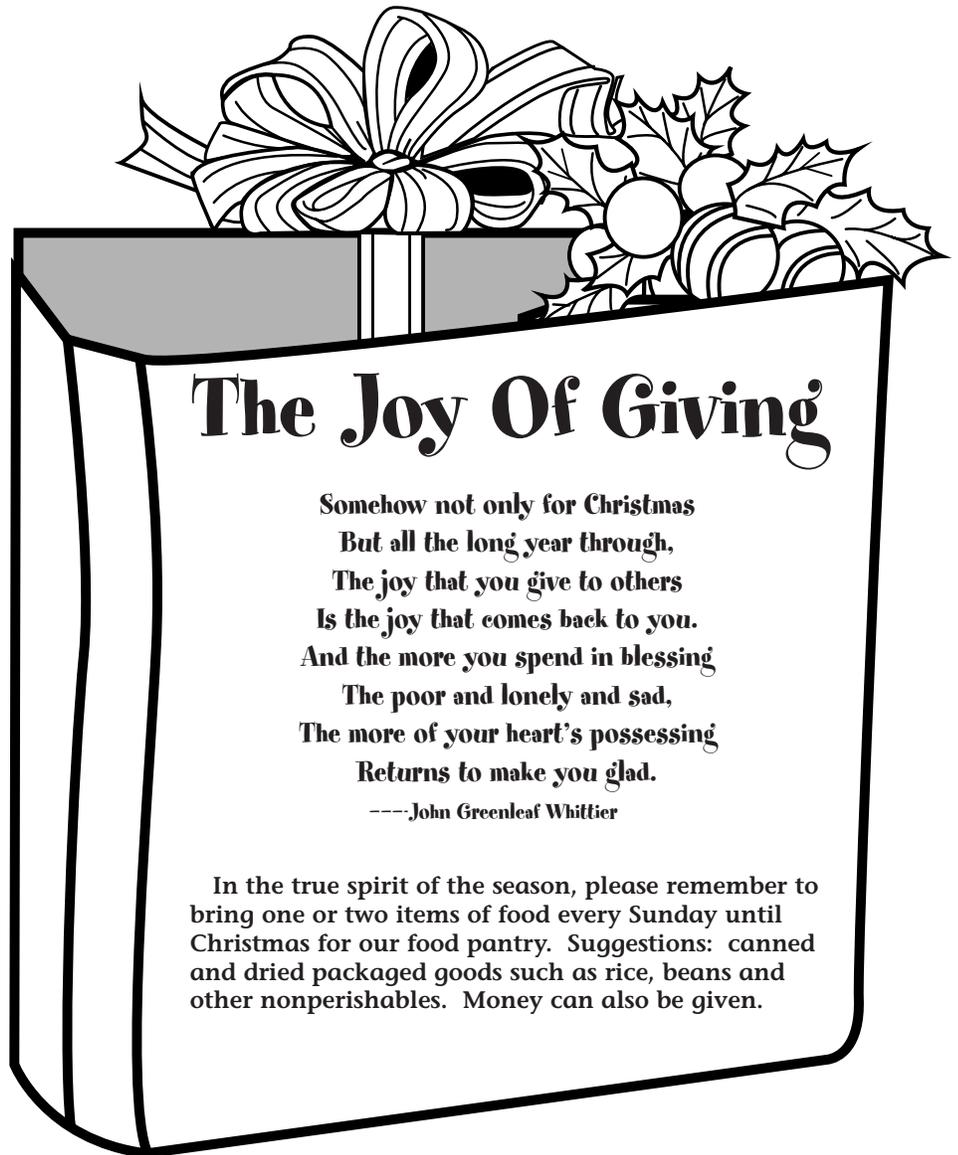


God
is close
to us

"They hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger." (Luke 2:16) If the Messiah had been born in a palace, the shepherds wouldn't have been able to get near him. Even if he'd been born in the high priest's house, they would have been turned away, for shepherds were considered unclean and untrustworthy. If they'd gone to the inn, they would have heard the same response Joseph and Mary had heard earlier, "No room." But Jesus, the Savior of the world, was born in a manger, a place so humble that anyone could come to him. Although we did not know it at the time, God was close to us. Christmas invites us to recapture what it means to have Almighty God as our God; this God can and will make a difference in our lives. Again and again the Christmas story reminds us of the mighty power of God to act on our behalf. The Lord God extends mercy, scatters the proud, and fills the hungry with good things.

No matter how busy the Christmas season gets, Presvytera and I always try to make time for one special holiday tradition. Whether in our own church, at home or at Symphony Hall, we listen together with rapt attention to a presentation of Handel's musical masterwork, *Messiah*. There's something about Handel's *Messiah* that makes Christmas complete for the two of us. We love this composition because it brings together the human and divine of this holy event. Manger scenes merge with prophecy.

At a season of the year when we focus on the earthly life of Jesus, I find myself wondering what He was really like. Through the brush of iconographers, we think we know



The Joy Of Giving

Somehow not only for Christmas
But all the long year through,
The joy that you give to others
Is the joy that comes back to you.
And the more you spend in blessing
The poor and lonely and sad,
The more of your heart's possessing
Returns to make you glad.

---John Greenleaf Whittier

In the true spirit of the season, please remember to bring one or two items of food every Sunday until Christmas for our food pantry. Suggestions: canned and dried packaged goods such as rice, beans and other nonperishables. Money can also be given.

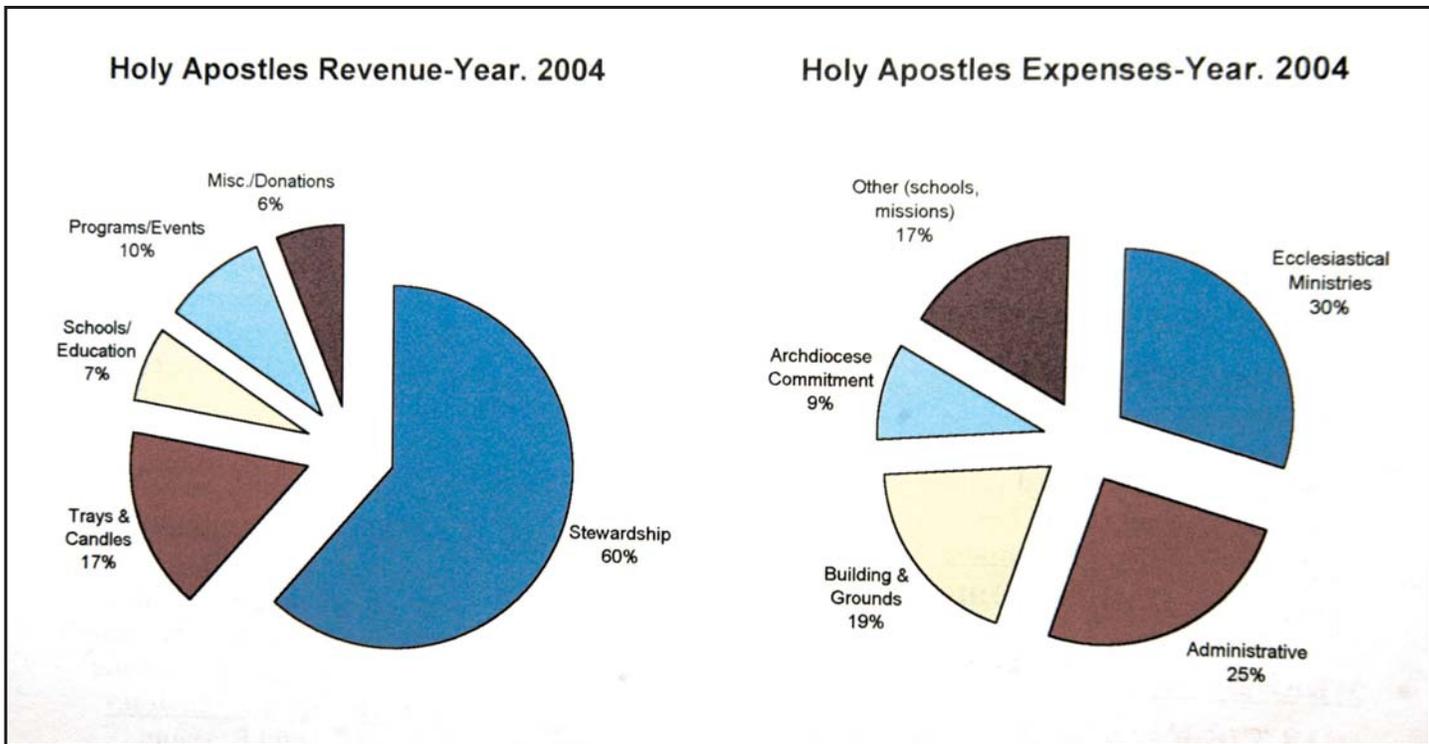
what He looked like. But the truth is the Gospels don't give us any details about His appearance. John the Baptizer even admitted he never would have recognized Jesus apart from special revelation (John 1:31-33). According to Isaiah, we cannot point to anything in His physical appearance that would

explain His attraction (Isaiah 53:2).

Jesus' personality was even more elusive. He spoke with extraordinary tenderness to sinners, yet the religious legalists only received harsh rebukes. He socialized with half breeds, as well as women and children, yet laid claim

...See Fr. Bill on P. 5

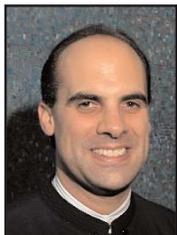
Your stewardship makes it happen at Holy Apostles



Have you ever wondered what the expenses of our church are, or where the revenue to meet those expenses comes from? The graphs provide a snapshot answer to those questions.

There is no better way to celebrate the 45th anniversary of Holy Apostles Church than to make a special stewardship pledge for 2004. In the true spirit of devotion, please pledge your fair share.

From Father Nicholas



Preparing for Christmas

Last week I rushed to the mall to take advantage of JC Penney's "Biggest Sale of the Year". After I found some sweaters that I needed, I walked to the seasonal section and was surprised to find Christmas decorations! Trees, ornaments, tinsel, gift wrap and stockings were already on the store shelves. Stores begin preparing for Christmas in October! Pretty soon stores will be packed with people buying gifts. Parents will go to stores three hours before they open to secure the latest and greatest gift for their children. All of the lovely Christmas decorations will be unpacked and put up all over the house. Parents will spend hours hanging lights and decorating the outside of the house. Yards will be filled with toy reindeer and Santa's sleigh. So much time is spent preparing the inside and outside of our homes for Christmas. How much time do we spend preparing our hearts and souls for the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ?

How do we prepare spiritually for Christmas? Every year our house undergoes a

massive cleaning and reorganizing effort. Just as we clean our homes, we should cleanse our hearts to prepare for Christmas. The Gospel of Matthew reminds us "blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." How can we become pure in heart?

The Church gives us some wonderful tools that we can utilize during the Advent season. Fasting, praying, reading the Holy Scriptures and consistently participating in the beautiful church services are tools that will aid us in cleansing our hearts. We can pray to God, as David did, to "create in us a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within us." (Psalm 50)

Rearranging is an essential part of Christmas. Just as we reconfigure our homes, the Lord wants us to rearrange our hearts. The Lord's desire is for us to make more room for Him in our hearts. If we make the Lord the center of our lives, we will be complete. The Gospel of Matthew reminds us to "seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

Sometimes we get so busy celebrating the

holidays that we forget the reason for the season. We get so caught up in finding all of the best gifts that we forget the Lord's greatest gift, Himself. We cannot be prepared to welcome the Lord into this world if our priorities are not in order. If we make room for Him, he will adorn and decorate our lives with blessings and a peace that transcends all understanding.

After our houses are ready for Christmas, we rush to the stores to buy gifts for our loved ones. The Wise men brought Christ gifts. What gift could we possibly offer the Lord? Ourselves. The Book of Proverbs challenges us: "My child, give me your heart, and let your eyes observe my ways."

As we prepare our homes for Christmas, we can also prepare our hearts. Maybe our hearts need to be cleansed. We may have to rearrange our priorities to make room for the Lord. This year Christmas can come alive for us if we open our hearts to the Lord and allow Him to prepare us for Christmas. I hope that you all have a blessed and joy-filled Christmas. Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Holy Apostles Happenings

Upcoming Events

December 7
General Assembly meeting

Adventure Theater, "Christmas in Hawaii" and Luncheon

Junior Choir Concert

December 10
Adult Christian Fellowship
Christmas Party

December 13
Communion Breakfast

December 14
Christmas Pageant

December 16
Philothonos Christmas Party

December 21
Greek School Kalanda

December 27
Prayer Breakfast

Synaxis

Synaxis will attend the Apollo Chorus performance of Handel's Messiah on Sunday afternoon, December 21, at 3 pm at the new Harris Theater of Music and Dance at 205 E. Randolph Street in Chicago's Millennium Center. Ticket prices are \$25, \$35, and \$45. Call Peter and Connie Kates at 708-246-5699 if you would like to attend or for more information.

Someone you should know

The Orthodox Church reveres St. Joseph as a Saint, preferring to call him a 'Protector of the Virgin Mary', but scarcely more than that because although he was chosen by God to be the husband of the Virgin Mary, he became a surrogate parent, so to speak, of the Son of God who was born of the Virgin Mary through the will of God.

It is to his everlasting credit that Joseph not only obeyed the word of God, but went beyond an unfulfilled marriage to assure compliance with the law and remained at the side of Mary throughout as a protector and keeper.

Matthew refers to Joseph as being a 'just man, unwilling to put her (Mary) to shame'. Joseph was more than just, as evidenced by his subsequent piety and reverence for both the Virgin Mary and the Son of God. Nevertheless, Orthodoxy does not place Joseph on the same level of sainthood that would give him stature with the highest; nor does it appear that, after nearly 2,000 years, there will be a council in the future to make any changes. For that matter, it was not until 1621 that Pope Gregory XV declared a feast day of obligation for Joseph after which the name of Joseph became popular, which is hardly the case in Orthodoxy. With all due respect for a man chosen by God, a man who was rightfully "just" in the Holy Bible, there is a small number of Orthodox Christians bearing the name of Joseph; and a church of Saint Joseph is almost nonexistent.

Although the name of Joseph is scarce among Orthodox Christians, it is well to remember that the Christmas Vesper hymn contains the words "Verily, Joseph the Betrothed saw clearly in his old age, that the foresays of the prophets had been fulfilled openly."

The reference to Joseph in his old age implies that he might have outlived the Savior which is the western belief; but since Orthodoxy considers Joseph to have been well advanced in years when he heard the voice of the angel, the Eastern belief is that Joseph died at about the time Jesus was about thirteen years of age. His absence during the missionary days of the Messiah and the fact that he was not a companion of the Virgin Mary at the site of the crucifixion indicates that Joseph had long since departed the Earth.

Joseph's memory is commemorated on December 16, together with his famous ancestor, King David.



Presvytera Michelle holds a poster of an icon of Jesus and the Children, which she produces for her Orthodox Gifts enterprise.

Photo by Fr. Nicholas

Bringing Orthodoxy to children is Presvytera Michelle's mission

When she and Father Nicholas were living in Raleigh, N.C., and the Boston area, Presvytera Michelle worked as a computer trainer. Now, years later, she is using those skills to spread the word of Orthodoxy. And, with some luck, you may read the fruits of her work in children's books. From her home, Presvytera produces greeting cards, holiday cards, laminated cards, even posters and book marks—all with Orthodox icons or themes. She calls the enterprise Orthodox Gifts. Now, she is moving ahead with plans to take her effort one step further to produce children's books that carry stories and lessons of Orthodoxy. "Having such a short time on earth, I feel I need to get the word of Orthodoxy into the hands of the children," Presvytera said. "I'm just trying to do what I can."

Her first effort is the story of St. Helen, written by Presvytera and illustrated by Holy Apostles parishoner Jane Fotopoulos. After writing the text and scanning Jane's lovely water color images, Presvytera formatted the entire book, printed out the pages on her high resolution printer and brought it to a local print shop for binding.

She then sent the prototype to St. Vladimir's Press, an Orthodox publishing and resource company. She is expecting to receive the publisher's response soon.

If that venture is successful, Presvytera said she hopes to produce several more illustrated books for children, including one about the candles lit by parishoners before Liturgy and another about the conception of Mary. Presvytera also is working on a teaching manual for Orthodox pre-schools, something about which she is very familiar. She started an Orthodox pre-school at Ss. Peter and Paul Greek Orthodox Church in Glenview. "There's really nothing out there for you to use (to teach little children

about Orthodoxy)," she said, "and these children are starving to learn."

The seed of this venture was Presvytera's own frustration in trying to find feast day cards to send to family and friends. When she and her family moved to the Chicago area, she started producing the cards at home and advertising to local churches. She received a few phone calls for special projects and the enterprise took off. She makes cards of all types, which are available at HARC (Holy Apostles Resource Center). She isn't stopping there. "Orthodox Gifts was great," Presvytera said, "but I feel like it was almost a stepping stone for publishing the books."

HARC is great place to Christmas shop

It's December once again and that means our thoughts turn to Christmas and shopping. HARC invites you to stop in after Liturgy or during the week and browse among the many gift items.

There are many new books in stock for both adults and children; Christmas CD's as well as several different Divine Liturgy CD's and tapes; and numerous icons. This year we have three new Christmas cards, two of which were designed by Presvytera Michelle Georgiou; and a wide selection of ornaments, ranging from pewter to crystal to cloisonné. Also, check out the advent calendars and holiday candles.

Stop in and let the HARC staff help you make those special gift selections this year.



HARC staffers Carol Kusulas, Terri Kafkes, and Pat Montemurno are ready to help with Christmas purchases.

A Classic Revisited

'Twas the night before Jesus came and all through the house,
 Not a creature was praying, not one in the house.
 Their Bibles were lain on the shelf without care,
 In hopes that Jesus would not come there.
 The children were dressing to crawl into bed,
 Not once ever kneeling or bowing a head.
 And Mom in her rocker with a baby on her lap,
 Was watching the Late Show while I took a nap.
 When out of the East there arose such a clatter,
 I sprang to my feet to see what was the matter.
 Away to the window I flew like a flash,
 Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash!
 When what to my wondering eyes should appear,
 But angels proclaiming that Jesus was here.
 With a light like the sun sending forth a bright ray,
 I knew in a moment this must be THE DAY!
 The light of His face made me cover my head,
 It was Jesus returning just like He had said.
 And though I possessed worldly wisdom and wealth,
 I cried when I saw Him in spite of myself.
 In the Book of Life which He held in His hand,
 Was written the name of every saved man.
 He spoke not a word as He searched for my name,
 When He said, "It's not here," my head hung in shame.
 The people whose names had been written with love,
 He gathered to take His Father above.
 With those who were ready He rose without a sound,
 While all the rest were left standing around.
 I fell to my knees, but it was too late,
 I had waited too long and thus sealed my fate.
 I stood and I cried as they rose out of sight,
 Oh, if only we had been ready tonight.
 In the words of this poem the meaning is clear,
 The coming of Jesus is drawing near.
 There's only one life and when comes the last call,
 We'll find that the Bible was true after all!

—Author Unknown

Fr. Bill from p. 1

At Christmas, ponder who Christ is

to deity. On occasion He seemed lonely, yet other times He craved solitude. Often, He spoke in riddles, but other times He taught with such clarity and charisma that people sat for days, even without food, just to hear His riveting words. He was robust and strong, yet sensitive and intimate. Philip Yancey, whose down to earth works about Jesus writes in his book, *The Jesus I Never Knew*: "One day miracles seem to flow out of Jesus; the next day his power was blocked by people's lack of faith. One day he talked in detail of the Second Coming; another he knew neither day nor the hour. He fled from arrest at one point and marched inexorably toward it at another. He spoke eloquently about peacemaking, then told His disciples to procure swords. His extravagant claims about Himself kept Him at the center of controversy, but when He did something truly miraculous He tended to hush

it up. If Jesus had never lived, we would not have been able to invent Him. Even His most devoted followers were often confused. When Jesus calmed the storm, the disciples scratched their heads and wondered 'Who is this?' " (Luke 8:25).

Christmas invites us to recapture what it means to have Almighty God as our God; this God can and will make a difference in our lives. Again and again the Christmas story reminds us of the mighty power of God to act on our behalf.

I know that for Presvytera and me, Christmas will be a richer celebration because of the insight we shall gather from our annual Christmas tradition. As we listen to Handel's *Messiah*, we will hear with new ears the truth personified in Isaiah's prophecy and know God is close to us.

The HARC CORNER

Saints, Lives & Illuminations

By Ruth Sanderson

A beautifully illustrated picture book depicting the lives of 40 saints. From the first to the tenth century, each saint is brought to life in a simple biographical sketch. Martyrs, scholars, hermits, miracle workers, and evangelists - they were all pioneers of the early church and a spiritual example for all.

Hardbound, \$20.00

Nicholas Wins the Prize

By Helen Iakovos-Dalalakis

A wholesome book which introduces children to the sacrament of Confession. Because Nicholas cheated in a school spelling contest, he went to Confession which was shown in a loving and healing way. Nicholas may not have won the contest, but find out how he won much more.

Softbound, \$14.00

Reviewed by Pauline Franks

December Registry

Baptisms

Sonia Cortez (adult)
 Sponsor: Mara Gracanian

Anna Sofia, daughter of
 Tanja & Chris Chulos
 Sponsor: Inkeri Herranen

Weddings

Sonia Cortez & Milan Gracanian
 Sponsor: Rudy Madera

Helen Rasho & Emmanuel Brillaklis
 Sponsor: Costas Nikolaou

Philoptohos hosts Christmas events

BY CYNTHIA STATHOPOULOS

Communion Breakfast

All children and their families are invited to attend the annual Christmas Communion Breakfast on Saturday, December 13th. Nine o'clock Liturgy is followed by a pancake breakfast, and a special guest from the North Pole will visit with each child. Families are asked to bring a new unwrapped toy to place under the tree in the Narthex. The toys will be sent to the DuPage County Family Shelter Service Holiday Shop, to create a brighter Christmas for children of abused mothers. Thanks to Mary Velisaris, who will chair the breakfast. For reservations, please call Maria Kallis (630) 455-1688 or stop by the reservations table following Sunday Liturgy.

Christmas Party

The Philoptohos Christmas Party will be held on Tuesday, December 16th at 7pm. Festivities include refreshments, musical entertainment, and an optional \$5.00 grab bag gift exchange. Come and share the blessings of the holiday season with us.

The Philoptohos Board extends heartfelt wishes for a Blessed Christmas and Joyful Holiday Season with your family and friends.



Left to right, Georgia Kouimelis, Liberty Poteres, and Carol Doukas make diples for the annual bake sale.

Arts and Crafts show a success

Thank you to Liz Dorner, for chairing another successful Arts & Crafts Show and Bake Sale last month. Thanks also to Phillip

Dorner who prepared a scrumptious meal for the Saturday crowd, and to all the volunteers who baked, set-up, and helped with the sale.

Greek School kids sing Christmas carols

To celebrate these joyous and holy days, and to feel the deeper meaning of Christmas, our school children will sing the traditional Greek Christmas Carols (Kalanda) after the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, December 21.

On behalf of the teaching staff of our school, I wish all the members of our community, the parents, and the students Merry Christmas and a happy, joyous and prosperous New Year.

by Mando Gouvas

A Prayer

"I am too blessed to be stressed!"
The shortest distance between a problem and a solution is the distance between your knees and the floor. The one who kneels to the Lord can stand up to anything. Love and peace be with you forever, Amen.



Senior Tragouthia

Seniors Social members meet for a singalong and fellowship at church. The repertoire included popular Greek and American songs.

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	4:30pm Adventure Theater	9:45am TOTS 4:30pm Greek School 7:30pm GOYA Meeting	1:00pm Adult Christian Fellowship And Study Group 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	4:30pm Greek School	4:30pm Adventure Theater	FEAST DAY OF ST. NICHOLAS 8:00am Orthros 9:00am Divine Liturgy 12:30pm Adventure Theater Dress Rehearsal ('till 5pm)
	1	2	3	4	5	6
8:00am Orthros 9:15am Awaken To God 9:30am Divine Liturgy Jr. Choir Christmas Program General Assembly Adventure Theater Luncheon & Play	5:15pm The Way	4:30pm Greek School 6:30pm Sunday School Teachers Christmas Gathering	1:00pm Adult Christian Fellowship And Study Group Christmas Party 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	4:30pm Greek School	FEAST DAY OF ST. SPYRIDON 8:00am Orthros 9:00am Divine Liturgy 7:30pm YAL Christmas Party	8:00am Orthros 9:00am Divine Liturgy Christmas Communion Breakfast
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
8:00am Orthros 9:15am Awaken To God 9:30am Divine Liturgy Sunday School Christmas Pageant Fellowship Hour	5:15pm The Way Christmas Party	9:45am TOTS 4:30pm Greek School 7:00pm Philoptohos General Meeting & Christmas Party GOYA Christmas Party	1:00pm Adult Christian Fellowship And Study Group Singalong 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	4:30pm Greek School 7:30pm Parish Council Meeting		11:00am Adventure Theater Outing
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
8:00am Orthros 9:15am Awaken To God 9:30am Divine Liturgy NO Sunday School Greek School Kalanda Fellowship Hour 3:00pm Synaxis Outing		NO GREEK SCHOOL	CHRISTMAS EVE 9:00am Royal Hours 6:30pm Christmas Choir Concert 7:00pm Vespersal Liturgy 	CHRISTMAS DAY 9:00am Orthros 10:00am Divine Liturgy 		FEAST DAY OF ST. STEPHEN 8:00am Orthros 9:00am Divine Liturgy
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
8:00am Orthros 9:15am Awaken To God 9:30am Divine Liturgy Fellowship Hour NO SUNDAY SCHOOL		NO GREEK SCHOOL	NEW YEAR'S EVE 7:00pm Vespers at St. Basil's In Chicago	<p style="text-align: center;">Something to ponder</p> <p style="text-align: center;">What if the Three Wise Men had been the Three Wise Women? They would have asked directions, arrived on time, helped deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, made a casserole, and brought practical gifts.</p>		
28	29	30	31			

Byzantine School Of Music meets every Wednesday at 7pm

Memorials

*Theodora Patsavas
Demetri Vandarakis
Theodore Louckes
Constandina Kokkine
Vasiliki Postada
Stanley Malleris
Helen Sfikas
Michael Sfikas
James Niforatos
Neil Rembos
August Zarcone
Joseph Zarcone*

Funerals

George Maduros

Mosaic Deadline

The deadline for the January Mosaic is Monday, December 8.

Weekday Services

Feast Day of St. Nicholas

Saturday, December 6
8:00am Orthros
9:00am Divine Liturgy

Feast Day of St. Spyridon

Friday, December 12
8:00am Orthros
9:00am Divine Liturgy

Christmas Communion Breakfast

Saturday, December 13
8:00am Orthros
9:00am Divine Liturgy

Christmas Eve

Wednesday, December 24
9:00am Royal Hours
6:30pm Christmas Choir Concert
7:00pm Vespers Liturgy

Weekday Services

Christmas

Thursday, December 25
9:00am Orthros
10:00am Divine Liturgy

Feast Day of St. Stephen

Saturday, December 27
8:00am Divine Liturgy
9:00am Prayer Breakfast

New Year's Eve

Wednesday, December 31
7:00pm Vespers
at St. Basil's in Chicago

Plot Package

A parishioner needs to sell two burial plots including the complete package, consisting of vaults, a vesper light, and fees, at Chapel Hill West. For further details, call (630) 853-1424.

Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church
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