



THE ORTHODOX ORACLE

Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church
Greensboro, NC
January 2026

OUR VISION: FAITH. FAMILY. COMMUNITY.

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The Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ
The Baptism of Jesus Celebrated on January 6th



*For as many as been baptized into Christ
have put on Christ: Alleluia!!!*

HAPPY
New Year
2026

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

Rev. Fr. Sarantis P. Loulakis

Office Hours:

Mon – Fri 9:00am – 1:00pm

Sunday Church Worship

8:55am Orthros

10:05am Divine Liturgy

Weekly Services 9:00 – 10:30am

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Shadi Zeidan – Vice-President

Madalina Body – Treasurer

MaryAnn Contogiannis – Asst.

Treasurer

Brandon Covey – Secretary

Members:

Ted Angeles, Pete Graham,

Michael James, Julia Macovei,

Martin Ross, Shane Rivers, Ellen

Scaturchio

Dormition Church Website

www.dormition.nc.goarch.org

Metropolis of Atlanta Website

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Archdiocese Website

www.goarch.org

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Altar Servers Ministry – Matthew Beckett

Bible Study Ministry – Fr. Sarantis Loulakis

Music Ministry – Fr. Sarantis Loulakis, Michelle Gilliam

Camp - Stephen's Summer Camp

St. Stephen's Summer Camp - Greek Orthodox Metropolis of

Atlanta - Atlanta, GA (atlmopolis.org)

Cantors/Music – Michelle Gilliam (Rhonda)

Dance Group (s) – Barbara Vaughan, Mary Ann

Contogiannis, Emily Mihelich, Erin Blindenbacher

Daughters of Penelope – Su Peterson

Orthodox Fellowship (50+) – Maria Cropper

Greensboro Urban Ministry – Shane Rivers

Greek Festival - Shadi Zeidan

Narthex Ministry - Terry Kokenes

Myrrh-bearers Ministry – Brittany Beckett

Youth Ministry – Matthew Beckett (Director)

Church Beautification - Chris Mandaleris

Philoptochos – Nicki Smith, President

GOYA – Abeer Ma'ayeh, Liaison-Matthew Beckett

Youth Director - Matthew Beckett

Stewardship – Pete Graham

Sunday School – Madalina Body

Website Ministry - Martin Ross



Ministry Prayer

Heavenly Father!

We praise You for Your church. For the way You place us to work together to spread the Gospel love of Jesus Christ. The calling to pour out Your love on others is humbling and fulfilling. Your plan is perfect, and we are all a part of it. Thank You for the church we serve in. We know it's no accident that You have placed us here: even in moments of boredom or fatigue, we know that when we seek to hear Your voice above all others, we will find reassurance and encouragement. Amen!

A SPIRITUAL MESSAGE

Fr. Sarantis P. Loulakis

“When Thou, O Lord, was baptized in the Jordan the worship of the Trinity was made manifest...”

My Beloved Spiritual Family of Dormition of the Theotokos,

I greet you and yours with the spirit of renewal of a blessed New Year 2026. With the grace of God, indeed, we entered the New Year. It is fitting and with an enormous joy that on behalf of Presvytera Norma, President of PC John McQueary and the entire Parish Council, the Ladies of Philoptochos Society, and our Youth to convey to each and every one of you and your families a blessed, peaceful, prosperous, and healthy New Year 2026!

Tradition, as we all know, is very important to all Orthodox Christians! In fact, the Holy Bible is part of the Orthodox Faith and Tradition, aka the unwritten bible. As Orthodox Christians, on January 1st and with the first minutes after midnight it is tradition to start the New Year with the tradition of *Vasilopita* cake blessing (St Basil's cake - A cake that has a coin inside). Many of us, if not every household, will have the vasilopita tradition in remembrance of the St. Basil story, looking forward to the excitement of “who is going to get the “gold” coin. Another tradition that we faithfully do in January is the Throwing of the Cross in the Waters. On the Sixth of January each year we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany or more accurately, Theophany, which is the manifestation of the Trinitarian God. (Three Persons, One God). At Christ's baptism in the Jordan river, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descended on Christ's Head, the Son of God, and the Voice of God, the Father, was heard: And a Voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son, with you I am well pleased.” (Mark 1:11) No one present at the event could dispute it. For all Orthodox Christians around the world, it is called the Blessing of the Waters Day. This event is not just a commemoration of a historical event in the life of Jesus, because in the Christian Faith everything is happening now, present, here and now, just as our Lord Jesus Christ is with us here and now. It is Christ who we call upon to sanctify the water, humanity, and all creation. In the Lord's Epiphany, all creation renews itself and becomes good again the way God Himself made it.

For this reason, in honor of the baptism of Christ, water is blessed in church and distributed

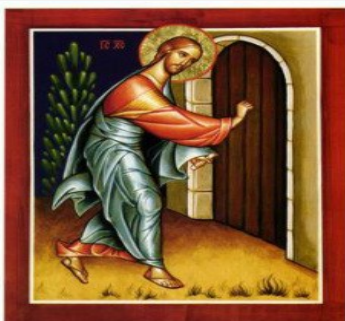
among the faithful in small bottles to take home. Furthermore, in most countries this feast day is followed by the blessing of waters and immersion of a cross in seas, lakes and rivers... whatever is easily accessible to the Parish church. The hymn of the Feast – speaks of the holy event - is chanted three times: *“When Thou, O Lord, was baptized in the Jordan the worship of the Trinity was made manifest!, glory to Thee”* and the cross is then thrown into the water. Many young boys and men, who have been patiently waiting for the signal, then dive into the water to retrieve the cross, and he who finds it first is considered to be blessed for that year. In our community, a few years ago we began this annual Blessing of the Waters tradition at a near lake in Summerfield on September 14 (Feast of the Holy Cross) so we will have our children participate in warmer waters and times. We believe through this tradition that He who is God immerses himself in His creation and sacrifices it and the waters turn back. The water of the Jordan needed His presence to become sanctified and to become an agent for cleansing us. We too partake of this sanctification in the waters of our own baptism. Above all, it constitutes the Holy Sacrament of Baptism.

My-beloved,

May this tradition and the blessing of Epiphany continue to eternity and furthermore to bring to all of you and your families a peaceful, prosperous joyful and healthy New Year and beyond. God bless you! Happy and blessed New Year 2026 to all! See you ALL in church for more blessings!



BRING CHRIST INTO YOUR HOME—EPIPHANY 2026



As You were baptized in the Jordan, O Lord, then the worship of the Trinity became manifest, for the voice of the Father bore witness to You, naming You the Beloved Son; and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the certainty of the word. O Christ God, who appeared and illumined the world, glory to You! The Feast's Hymn

As it is the liturgical aspect and the Orthodox tradition, at Epiphany the priest blesses water for use of the faithful, and it takes place during the celebration of Epiphany Divine Services on (January 5th and 6th). The blessing of our homes with the Holy Water (*from the service of January 5th is used for sprinkling/drinking while the January 6th is for drinking only*) of Epiphany is a meaningful way to begin the New Year with the Lord's blessing. This beautiful tradition of our Orthodox Church allows us to start the year off in a most holy way by sanctifying our homes – the place where we spend most of our time.

When Fr. Sarantis visits your home for this blessing, please have in place on a table an icon, (Christ and the Theotokos / Epiphany icon or any saint icon) a list of (Baptismal) names of the living members of your family next to a bowl filled half-way with water. Holy Water will be added into the bowl from the service of the Lesser Blessing (*Agiasmos/ January 5th*) service. Please know that Fr. Sarantis will visit and bless all the homes and business by invitation only. Blessings will take place normally from noon every day until 6:00 in the evening, except Sundays in the months of January (and February if needed.) You are respectfully requested to call the church office to offer day(s) and time(s) that may be convenient to you, or simply call Fr. Sarantis direct at (516) 526-1475. We will do our best to accommodate the time and day. It is exceedingly encouraged that most of the family members to be present.

Kindly requesting for those who are interested, they may choose to complete the lower portion of this flyer as the PREFERABLE date and time and return it to the church office. Thank you.
Kali hronia and a blessed New Year 2026!

Name:

Address:

Town: Time:

Phone: Day for Visit / Blessing:

Questions & Answers

What You Really Need to Know About Holy Water

On the first Sunday of the New Year, we celebrate the service of Theophany (also called Epiphany). This service marks the Baptism of our Lord and the physical revelation of His place in the Holy Trinity.

‘And when Jesus was baptized, immediately He went up from the water, and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on Him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased”’ (Matthew 3:16-17, ESV).

The service of Theophany includes the blessing of the waters, a tradition which represents Christ’s blessing of the Jordan through *His full immersion* in it.

But why do we continually bless water when God has already redeemed all matter through His life? Isn’t Theophany one of the best examples of a service which tells us as Orthodox Christians that God’s promise has already been fulfilled?

The blessing of the waters is as important as the blessing of food or the blessing a priest gives to those who approach him. Holy Water in Greek is *Agiasmos* which also can be translated to mean sanctification. It is through the service of Theophany that the waters are sanctified. “*Agiasmos* is not merely water of spiritual significance, but a new being, a spiritual-corporeal being, an intertwining of heaven and earth, of grace and matter. This is why the great *Agiasma* (according to the church canons) is viewed as a kind of lower degree of Holy Communion”. This spiritual-corporeal link between the Holy Spirit and holy water can be observed throughout both the Old and the New Testaments.

As early as the first chapter of Genesis, scripture tells us that “The Spirit of God was moving over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:2), which signifies the importance of water. These same waters are said to be the source of life on earth: ‘And God said, “Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the firmament of the heavens”’ (Gen. 1:20).

Later in Genesis, Noah witnessed the biggest and perhaps most challenging event of sanctification by water in Biblical history—the Flood. This cleansing was followed swiftly by a dove that signified a new promise. Even in the New Testament we see this sanctifying effect of the Spirit on water. The Nicene Creed bears witness to this: “Who for our sake and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary.” The Holy Spirit sanctified the waters of the Virgin’s womb through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. But although these biblical examples do present to us the importance of water, it is only

fully realized and revealed in the appearance of our Lord and Savior at Theophany. The blessing of the waters is an important part of the Orthodox calendar and provides a physical example of how the Holy Spirit sanctifies.

Holy water is meant to be consumed in simple ways. It is known that Orthodox Christians may bless themselves with holy water by drinking it. It can be also sprinkled on items that are necessary for spiritual growth, shelter and stability. The place we reside can be home to many spiritual powers. Holy water, through the blessing of a house by a priest, is a means of cleansing a house from evil spirits.

Day-to-day use depends on the person and how they feel compelled. Perhaps a person who loves cooking would use it in their meals. A person who has children may give holy water to their children to drink before an exam or a big event as we do for the start of the festival, the new school year, etc.

The key to its use is through love. Love of other people through the giving of Holy Water to them, and love of oneself out of personal care and faith of healing. Most importantly, love of God by the faith that holy water *will* sanctify our souls and bodies.

It is important to see holy water as medicine both physically and spiritually. It is used to sanctify those who are personally subject to it (through personal consumption) or indirectly (blessings of houses and land). It’s really important to not trivialize holy water. The general rule is to treat holy water as a healing ointment (as opposed to general food).

For this reason we are to keep your Holy Water in good condition throughout the year:

- Ensure the bottle it is stored in is clean to start with and able to be sealed so it may not be wasted.
- Keep the bottle near your home iconostasis.
- Dispose of Holy Water in the garden, **not down the sink**.
- **Renew your supply at least once a year.**

I hope that during the liturgical year you may be blessed through your holy water, that this water may be for the bestowing of sanctification; for the remission of sins; for the healing of soul and body; and for every expedient service.



HAPPY AND BLESSED NEW YEAR 2026!

2026



**The Ladies of Philoptochos Society—St Philothea Chapter
Cordially invites you to attend**

The Vasilopita Luncheon and Auction

Sunday, January 11th, 2026

immediately following the Divine Liturgy at the fellowship hall.

Proceeds to benefit our Archdiocese orphanage, St Basil Academy in NY.



**FROM OUR FARM —
→ TO YOUR DOOR**

SCAN ME



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produce—grown through regenerative
farming practices.

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A very special thank you to our members and parishioners who generously supported our **Christmas Project for Children and Families in Need**. On December 15th Catherine Stuman delivered the **32 donated gift cards totaling \$800** to Doris Henderson Newcomers School. The school's Social Worker, Lauren Dacal, was extremely grateful for the kindness and generosity given to the children and their families this Christmas. Your compassion for the students at Newcomers School helped to provide a special holiday for children and their families who have so little.

Many thanks to the many food donations made to the Backpack Beginnings Food pantry. Maria Mandaleris and Lula Culler delivered **189 pounds of non-perishable food** items on December 10th. In addition, we had donations of children's clothes for their clothing closet, and personal care and household cleaning donations for their family store.

Thank you to Gwen Varsamis for sharing her time and talents to decorate our Hall for the Christmas season. The Fellowship Hall looks so festive!

Thank you to Maria Colozzi, Catherine Stuman, Elaine Gay and everyone who helped with setup and clean up for the coffee hour for our youth Christmas Play! Your help is much appreciated by our youth families!!

Our Philoptochos Christmas Gathering was well attended by members, spouses, and friends on Sunday, **December 7th at the home of Hamp and Lula Culler**. We thank them for inviting us into their lovely home and for their warm hospitality. It was a wonderful way to begin our holidays and the many in attendance enjoyed delicious food and great fellowship.

Upcoming Events:

January 4 through February-Philoptochos 2026 Membership Drive. We would love to welcome new members to our philanthropic and charitable organization. Current members may pay their annual Membership dues, \$30 during this period.

Sunday, January 11th-Annual Blessing and Cutting of Vasilopita in church, Vasilopita Auction and Luncheon. We invite you to join us after the Vasilopita Blessing Service in the Fellowship Hall for our Annual Vasilopita Luncheon and Auction. Proceeds from this event will be donated to Saint Basil's Academy and youth programs, and charities supported by Philoptochos. **If you wish to bake a Vasilopita to be cut in church or auctioned,** please contact members of our Circle of Friendship, Kiki Tarasidis at kikitarasidis@yahoo.com or Catherine Stuman at 336-392-4264 or email ccstuman@yahoo.com.

Sunday, January 18th - Philoptochos General meeting. If you are not a Philoptochos member, we invite you to join us and learn about the many wonderful philanthropic and charitable programs and projects we support throughout the year.

Saturday, January 31st- Pre-Lenten Retreat with Father Barnabas 9:00am-3:00pm. To register, please see Regina at the table in the Fellowship Hall or register online through the link in the bulletin.

January 2026-Koulourakia baking for our pastry sales and church festival will begin. Dates will be posted in Sunday bulletins and in Philoptochos emails.

Ways to Help our Greensboro Community:

January 2nd - February 7th Our Philoptochos chapter encourages you to donate adult's or children's gently used coats, any size, to **A Cleaner World, Give a Kid a Coat Campaign**. A Cleaner World cleans and repairs if needed and gives donated coats to the Salvation Army for distribution to those in need.

January-February Food Bank donations will be delivered to The Blessed Table Food Pantry. Our Food Bank is in desperate need of replenishing after the holidays! A faith-based area food pantry, staffed by various church volunteers, provides food to struggling families in the Greensboro area. Please remember to bring non-perishable food items each Sunday you come to church or to a weekday meeting.

The following items are of great need: *canned meats, tuna, vegetables, fruits, pastas, chili, soups, instant oatmeal, cereal, powdered milk, bagged beans, rice, and boxed pastas and crackers, plastic jars of peanut butter and jelly. The Blessed Table accepts brown paper grocery bags, soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, and toothpaste.*

A monetary donation is appreciated if you are unable to shop for the items. Checks payable to Philoptochos, with "Food Bank" on the memo line may be given to Regina Reece, Treasurer or Terry Kokenes, Assistant Treasurer, and a Philoptochos member will shop on your behalf.

Fellowship Hour Reminders:

There is a new 2026 Sign Up Sheet for Fellowship Hour posted in the Hall.

Coffee Hour hosts are reminded that coffee, powdered cream, sugar, sweeteners and coffee cups are provided by the church. However, in addition to refreshments, *hosts will need to bring plates, napkins, utensils, if needed, and a cold beverage. Instructions are posted on the wall for making coffee.* If help is needed making coffee on a Sunday or cupping koliva following a memorial service, please contact, in advance, the church office Monday through Thursday, 9am to 12noon, so a Philoptochos member may be notified and available to assist.

As a general reminder, our church does not have staff employed to clean up after coffee hours or weekday events. When using the church hall or kitchen, please wash, dry, and put away any coffee pots or kitchen items used. In addition, hosts also need to clear off the tables of any garbage left on them and, if needed, a quick wipe down of the tables.

2026 STEWARDS

Fr Sarantis & Pr. Norma
Loulakis
John & Katherine McQueary
John & Lindy Bakatsias
Austin & Jessica Call
Brandon & Allison Covey
Hamp & Lula Culler
Mike Dolianitis
Elizabeth Gardner & Josh
Pardue
Violet Hanna
Chris & Maria Mandalieris
Elias & Maha Matar
Faris Matar
Sam & Emily Mihelich
Peter Pappas
Peter & Phyllis Poulos
Regina Reese
Shane & Katie Rivers
Ardele Sakellaris
David Valavanis
Yianni & Effie Varitimidis
Kimmon & Gwen Varsamis
Shadi and Maureen Zeidan

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Dear Faithful Fellow Parishioners,

Happy New Year! As we begin the month of January and step into a new calendar year, I offer my warmest wishes for a year filled with health, peace, and the blessings of our Lord. May 2026 be a year of continued growth, not only in our parish ministries, but especially in our love for Christ and one another.

As we begin this new year, I encourage everyone to submit their 2026 stewardship pledge as soon as possible, if they have not already done so. Stewardship is the foundation of our ability to maintain the life and ministries of our parish. Every pledge and gift plays a part in supporting our church family.

One of the greatest blessings we've seen in recent months is the number of visitors and inquirers joining us on Sundays and feast days. Many have shared how welcoming our community feels. That is a sign of God's love working among us. Let's continue to grow in that spirit. If you see a new face or someone you don't recognize, please introduce yourself. A warm greeting can make a world of difference to someone looking for a spiritual home.

As we begin this new year together, may we recommit ourselves to prayer, service, and love for one another. Thank you for being part of this parish. I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to serve alongside all of you.

P.S. I went to extend my gratitude and appreciation to Joy Dascalakis, James Cropper, and Mike Dolianitis as their term on the Parish Council ended in December. Their faithful service to our community has been vital and I am honored to have served with them.

With love in Christ,

John McQueary
President, Parish Council

Dormition of the Theotokos Greek
Orthodox Church



STEWARDSHIP BLESSINGS

“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper...” (1 Corinthians 16:2)

Beloved Faithful,

We, the **Stewardship Team**, of our beloved church and community of **Dormition of the Theotokos** would like to express to you, the Stewards of our community, and yours an exceedingly **happy and blessed New Year 2026, filled with His blessings of peace, health, prosperity, progress, and joy!**

As we begin ***the first day of the January and of the New Year 2025***, all of us would like to start out our new year with the **“right foot forward,”** start the year right. First by praising and thanking the gracious Lord for all His blessings He has given us and as He will continue to give us throughout our lives. Indeed, we are all dependents of His blessings and we ARE grateful!

St. Paul’s message to the Corinthians: “On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper...” **is a sign of guidance for all of us to start our new year right and for ALL Of Us to be responsible for our community’s affairs and all of us to prosper.** “On the first day of every week” the Holy Apostle is referring of course to Sunday, the Lord’s day, in which, the weekly Divine Liturgy commemoration of the Holy Resurrection of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ, takes place, **it is the appropriate time chosen for setting aside and presenting our offerings to God, through His Church.**

We are reminded each Sunday of the great work of God for our salvation. Our hearts soar up to Him in thanksgiving for the life given to us through Jesus’ resurrection. And on that day, before the work begins of another week, ***we return to God what is His own, our offering of our hard-earned money,***

talents and time as our thanksgiving and appreciation. It is a formal way to say that God has made us stewards of all His church, the Dormition of the Theotokos to His glory.

These words of ***“each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper”*** is a way of giving. Please keep in mind that when we make our offering, it is not from what we have *left over from the last week*, but from what we are “to put something aside” from the current week, the first fruit of our labor – it is the *planned giving* back to God. ***It is as Abel did, (Genesis 4:4) given from his best and the first of his crops,*** and so as did Abraham (Genesis 22:2), it is also what we ought to do as Stewards of our beloved church of Dormition of the Theotokos, start the year out right! **Why?**

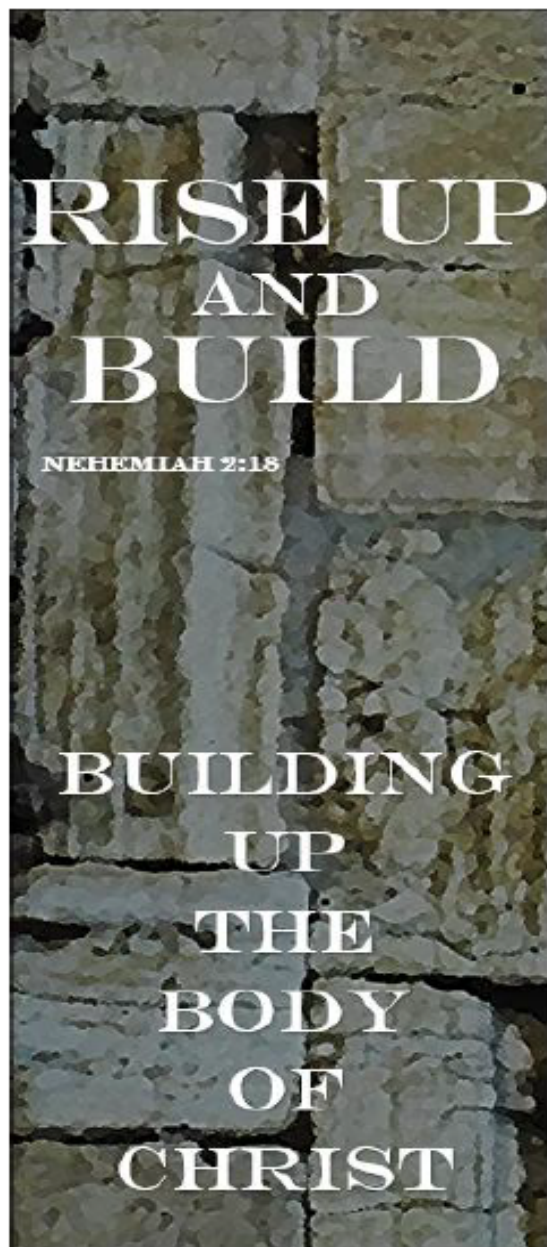
God our Father provided His First and only First and best He had for us: His own Son.

As we begin the New Year of 2026 let us give on the first day of the week, the first day of the month, the first day of the year, let us give the best of the best from which we were given: *Your own, of Your own, we offer to You, on behalf of all and for all,* my God, my Lord, and my Savior!

The Stewardship Pledge 2026 which were sent out to your homes a couple weeks ago. It is our hope that you complete it and mail / bring it to the church office at your earliest convenience as it is an essential element to **set our fiscal budget.** We thank you for your generosity and commitment to our beloved church of Dormition of the Theotokos. God bless you! Happy and blessed new year 2026!

The Stewardship Team

2026 Stewardship Campaign



RISE UP AND BUILD: Building Up the Body of Christ

Next year's stewardship theme, "*Rise Up and Build: Building Up the Body of Christ*," is inspired by the words of Nehemiah (2:19). In the Book of Nehemiah, the people of God are called to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem—not only as a physical project, but as a renewal of faith, unity, and purpose. Their story reminds us that true building begins in the heart.

As Orthodox Christians, we are called to this same work. Stewardship is not only about bricks and mortar; it is about strengthening the spiritual foundation of our lives and our parish. Through our faith, our prayers, our service, and our giving, we join together in building up the Body of Christ—here and now, in our own community.

This message holds special meaning for our parish as we look toward our own plans for building expansion. Just as Nehemiah rallied the people to rise and rebuild, we too are called to come together in faith—to dream, to give, and to build for the generations to come. With grateful hearts and willing hands, let us *rise up and build*, trusting that the same God who guided Nehemiah will guide and bless our work today.

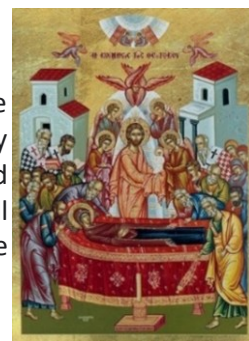
We invite all parishioners to learn more about our upcoming stewardship campaign and building plans .

Together, let us take the next faithful step in building up the Body of Christ—both in spirit and in the life of our parish.

— *The Stewardship Committee*

SUNDAY SCHOOL & YOUTH CORNER

Christ is born! *Glorify Him!* In 2026, I pray that all of our families and parishioners continue in the joy of the Nativity and Theophany of Jesus Christ our King and God. We have many exciting event coming in 2026. We will have the celebration of the Three Holy Hierarchs and preparations for the 2026 Saint John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival. This year our youth will be presenting their papers on the Three Holy Hierarchs on Sunday January 25th. This will be the Sunday before the celebration of the Three Holy Hierarch.



“Lord, when You were baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. For the voice of the Father gave witness to You, calling You Beloved; and the Spirit, in the form of a dove, confirmed the certainty of His words. Glory to You, Christ our God, who appeared and enlightened the world. (Apolytikion For The Feast of Theophany)”

YOUTH NEWS AND UPDATES

Youth Nativity Play – In December, we hosted our annual Nativity Play. All of our youth did a fantastic job this year memorizing lines and attending rehearsals. A special thanks to Madalina, Niveen, Erin, Emily, and Maureen in helping with preparations, practices, and the play.

Youth Christmas Party: On the 12/14, we had our youth Christmas Party for all students. Our students were treated to pizza, deserts, and games. We had games for all ages including contests and prizes for making Ginger Bread houses, Nativity Trivia, and a Christmas Carol Scavenger Hunt.

UPCOMING JANUARY SUNDAY SCHOOL SCHEDULE

- **January 4, 2026 – Sunday School**
Sermonette Sunday for Youth
- **January 11, 2026 – Sunday School**
- **January 18, 2026 – Sunday School**
- **January 25, 2026 – No Sunday School**
Youth Presentation for the Three Holy Hierarchs

UPCOMING YOUTH EVENTS FOR JANUARY

- **January 25th** - Presentations from Youth for the 3 Holy Hierarchs
- **January 25th** – Vasilopita for Youth
- **TBD** – Meetings with GOYANS for Saint John Chrysostom 2026 Oratorical Festival

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH

HELP Needed! If you would like to join a youth ministry team, please connect with Father Sarantis or Matthew Beckett. We are looking to fill ministry team positions for HOPE, JOY, and GOYA.

ACOLYTES: We have spots available to serve. Please contact Father Sarantis, Michael James, or Matthew Beckett if your son is interested.

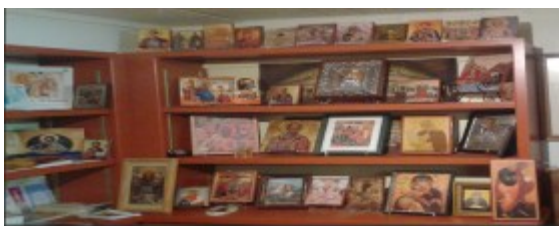
Myrrh-bearers: We are in need of girls to participate in our Myrrh-bearers Ministry. Please contact Father, Brittany Beckett, or Matthew Beckett to serve in this ministry.





BOOKSTORE

Open on Sundays - **COME & SEE!**
in the Fellowship Hallway



WORSHIP LIFE / JANUARY 2026 LITURGICAL CALENDAR

- Thursday, January 1st, 2026 - St. Basil / Orthros 9:00am - Divine Liturgy 9:30am – 10:30am
HAPPY, HEALTHY, PROSPEROUS AND BLESSED NEW YEAR TO ALL!
- Sunday, January 4th - Sunday Before Epiphany / Orthros: 8:55 am Divine Liturgy: 10:00+am
- Monday, January 5th **EVENING SERVICE** at 5pm – 7pm / Orthros: 5:00 PM Divine Liturgy 5:30PM The Blessings of Water Service 6:30pm — The Small Blessing of Water Service for **SPRINKLING** our homes and all and Drinking as well.
- Tuesday, January 6th – Feast of Epiphany / The Great Blessing of Waters Service / Orthros 9:00am - Divine Liturgy 9:30am – The Blessing of Waters Service 10:30+am
- Sunday, January 11th - Sunday after Epiphany / Orthros: 8:55 am Divine Liturgy: 10:00+ am
- Sunday, January 18th – 12th Sunday of Luke / St Athanasios & St Anthony (17) Orthros: 8:55 am Divine Liturgy: 10:00+ am
- Sunday, January 25th – 15th Sunday of Luke / Orthros: 8:55 am Divine Liturgy: 10:00+ am
- Friday, January 30th – **HOLY THREE (3) HIERARCHS** Orthros: 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 9:30am



Weekday Liturgies . . .
In addition to the regular Sunday services please make note of the following weekday services for the month of January. Unless otherwise indicated, the Weekly Divine Liturgy will begin at 9:00 am & most likely will finish by 10:30am+



Pre-Lenten Retreat with Father Barnabas Powell

(From Sts. Raphael, Nicholas and Irene Greek Orthodox Church in Cummings, GA)



**Saturday, January 31st
9:00a–3:00p**

Dormition of the Theotokos Greek
Orthodox Church

Click below to Register: ✓

**Registration - Pre-Lenten Retreat with
Father Barnabas Powell**

**“Be watchful–Be Sober:
St. Paul’s Wisdom for Spiritual
Maturity.”**

Pre-Lenten Retreat with Fr Barnabas Powell

- Saturday, January 31st from 9a–3p
- Registration October 12 – December 7
- Cost – \$35 per adult

Registration Form

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION IF ATTENDING THE RETREAT.

REGISTRATION COST IS **\$35 PER ADULT** PERSON, LUNCH INCLUDED.

PLEASE MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO ‘PHILOPTOCHOS.’

REGISTRATION IS OCT. 12–Dec. 7

NAME(S):

BEST EMAIL ADDRESS FOR CONTACT:

☐ CHECK THIS BOX IF YOU NEED CHILDSITTING SERVICE FOR YOUR CHILD (CHILDREN)
AND LIST THE NAME(S) OF YOUR CHILD (CHILDREN):



ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS **FOR LIFE**® DORMITION OF THE THEOTOKOS

Announcing Orthodox Christians For Life Ministry at Dormition of the Theotokos!

We are thrilled to announce the formation of a new chapter of **Orthodox Christians For Life (OCLife)** right here at our parish, Dormition of the Theotokos! We are especially proud to note that our parish is the **60th chapter** to join this vital national organization.

Why an OCLife Chapter?

As Orthodox Christians, we believe that **every human being is created in the image and likeness of God**, possessing inherent dignity and infinite worth from the moment of conception until natural rest. Our faith compels us to actively defend and cherish this sacred gift of life.

The mission of Orthodox Christians For Life is to:

- **Witness to the sanctity of life** through prayer, education, and charitable work.
- **Support vulnerable mothers, fathers, and their children**, both born and unborn.
- **Encourage compassionate love** for all those wounded by abortion.
- **Educate our parish** on life issues from an Orthodox perspective.

What We Will Be Doing

Our chapter will focus on integrating pro-life awareness and action into the spiritual life of our parish. Initial activities we plan to undertake include:

- **Prayer Vigils and Services:** Organizing special services and prayer events for the protection of the unborn and support of new families.
- **Service Projects:** Coordinating efforts to support local pregnancy resource centers (e.g., diaper drives, clothing collections).
- **Educational Opportunities:** Hosting speakers, book discussions, and educational sessions to explore the Church's teachings on life issues, adoption, and ethical care.
- **Participating in the March for Life (or local equivalent):** Organizing parish participation in key events that witness to our faith.
- **Celebrating new life within our own community:** Organizing celebratory baby showers for expectant families in our parish.

Get Involved!

We invite every member of Dormition of the Theotokos to join us in this vital ministry. This is not just a ministry for one group; it is a call to action for the entire Body of Christ! For more information on Orthodox Christians for life, please visit ocliflife.org. Our initial leadership team consists of Katie Rivers, Susannah Rivers, Shane Rivers, and Michael Miller. If you are interested in joining, please see one of them or send an email to: DOTocliflife@gmail.com.

May the Theotokos, the Mother of Life, intercede for our new chapter as we strive to protect and affirm the precious gift of life given by her Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Special Appeal

Ephraim's Story

Ephraim McQueary is an extraordinary 11-year-old boy who has faced more challenges in his young life than most do in a lifetime. Diagnosed with autism and a rare genetic condition that affects his stomach and digestion, Ephraim's days are often marked by severe pain and discomfort. During flare-ups, his condition can leave him unable to eat normally, requiring him to receive vital nutrition through a G-tube. Yet through it all, he continues to show incredible courage, a desire to help others, and a joyful spirit that lights up every room he enters.

Despite his strength, the constant changes and medical hurdles have taken a toll on Ephraim's daily life. Simple activities that most children take for granted such as walking long distances, handling loud or crowded environments, or managing sudden sensory overload can become overwhelming or even impossible. **After careful evaluation, his doctors have recommended and prescribed a trained service dog to support him.** This service dog will not only help with his mobility during painful GI flare-ups but will also provide the grounding, comfort, and sensory regulation Ephraim needs to navigate the world more independently and confidently. *The cost of training and providing a specialized service dog is significant, and our family cannot do it alone.*

We are reaching out to our church community, friends, and anyone moved by Ephraim's story to help make this life-changing companion a reality for him. Every donation, no matter the size, brings us one step closer to giving Ephraim the comfort, safety, and independence he deserves. With your support, we can help him experience more days filled with laughter instead of pain and hope instead of uncertainty.

Thank you for helping us make a lasting difference in Ephraim's life. Together, we can give him the gift of a loyal friend and the freedom to live more fully each day.



The QR code goes directly to Ephraim's page at 4 Paws for Ability where you can give online. Checks should be made out to 4 Paws for Ability, with Ephraim McQueary in the memo line.

SCRIPTURE OF THE MONTH

¹⁶ *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,* ¹⁷ *so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.* 2 Timothy 3:16-18

General Comment

3:14-17 Having exhorted Timothy with the example of his own steadfastness (vv. 10–13), Paul now issues a reminder of the depth of Timothy's training, which combined both oral and written instruction (see [Mt 28:16–20](#); [1Co 11:2](#); [2Th 2:15](#); [3:6](#)). A part of this tradition is Scripture. Paul, of course, speaks of the OT, since the NT did not yet exist. Orthodox Study Bible

3:16 All Scripture.

In Paul's time the OT, but also the NT as it was being composed. The Bible both contains and is, in whole and in part, God's Word. God-breathed. Sometimes translated "inspired." The Greek word means given by the work of God's Spirit (see [2 Pet 1:20–21](#) and note). "The Holy Spirit spoke" in the writings of OT leaders and writers like David ([Acts 1:16](#); see [Acts 4:25](#)). By extension this applies to NT writings as well (see [2 Pet 3:15–16](#) and note on [3:16](#)). God has chosen to reveal himself not only in nature ([Ps 8:1, 3](#); [Rom 1:20](#)) and human moral awareness ([Rom 2:15](#)) but also supremely by spoken and written human language. This is the doctrine of inspiration. This doctrine does not downplay human action in Scripture's authorship but affirms Scripture's ultimate origin in God, who gave it. This makes it "useful for teaching" and related pastoral purposes, because it provides coherent, consistent, and reliable testimony to Christ ([Luke 24:27, 44](#); [John 5:39–40](#); [1 Cor 15:3–4](#)).

3:17 servant of God.

Or "man of God" (see [1 Tim 6:11](#) and note, the only other place in the NT the Greek term appears). The phrase is used over 60 times in the Septuagint (the pre-Christian Greek translation of the OT) to refer to figures including Moses, Samuel, Shemaiah, Elijah, Elisha, several unnamed prophets, and David. Like Timothy, these men were called to leadership through prophetic gifting ([1:6](#); [1 Tim 1:18](#); [4:14](#)). The expression would be meaningful to Timothy with his OT knowledge (v. 15), though it has application to all who know Christ (v. 15) and recognize the God who gives Scripture (v. 16). thoroughly equipped. Effective and faithful service thrives on secure Scriptural equipping.

14–17 Verses 16–17 are the strongest statement in the Bible about itself.

The word "Scripture" includes the NT, since [2Pe 3:16](#) cites the writings of Paul among the "Scriptures." The word translated "God-breathed" is more commonly translated "inspired," which is less awkward but also less accurate. The inspiration of Scripture is foundational to its usefulness.

The first use of Scripture Paul lists is doctrinal.

Given the major function of the **Pastoral Letters to address the problem of false teaching** in Ephesus and Crete, "rebuking" and "correcting" have obvious value and significance. There may be a sequence intended here: **First, refuting the false teaching** that Timothy was confronting, and **second, straightening everything out.**

The final item in the sequence is providing an ongoing "training in righteousness" ([2Ti 3:16](#)). Structurally, "teaching" stands at the head of this series, and **the purpose of Scripture is expressed in v. 17: "for every good work."**

Applying the Message | [2 Tim. 3:16](#) **Battle for the Bible**

Throughout its history, the church has encountered at least **three great theological battles**. Here are 3 of the great:

The first is the identity and nature of Jesus Christ. Was He just a man, or was He, indeed, the God-man, God in the flesh? That battle was won in the early centuries of the church, and we stand today as believers on the absolute deity of Christ. **The second great battle** concerned the nature of salvation. Are people saved by their own good deeds or by the merits of Jesus Christ who shed His blood at Calvary's cross? That theological controversy was resolved during the Reformation. **The Christian faith today teaches salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.** **The third great theological controversy concerns the nature of Scripture.** Is the Bible merely a human book, or is it the divinely inspired Word of God? Here is God's authoritative statement about the nature of the Bible: **"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God"** ([2 Tim. 3:16](#)). The Bible is the Christian's ultimate and final rule of faith and practice. Read it; study it; apply it.

THE CANDLE

Why do we light a candle in Church?

Anytime we enter a Church we always light a candle whether a service is going on or not. It is not out of habit; It has a meaning.

The candle is one small but powerful prayer. When we light a candle, it is like saying to God:

I remember You; I thank you ...

And as the candle burns, it reminds all of us that we as well must be burning with love ! We give something from ourselves. Yes, the small candle symbolizes our own prayer for others: When we light a candle for the sick, for our family, or for the souls who have repose to the Lord, it is as saying: Lord, give wisdom and help the ones I love.

And the *melting* of the candle has its own meaning. Just like a lamp by a window gives light and heat during the winter who ever walks by it, The candle gets smaller, but while it burns gives light and warms and guides those nearby, it is as we also give our time and our hearts to others.

So, light a candle when you enter the church!!!

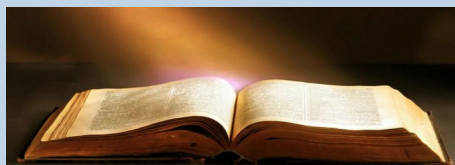


BIBLE STUDY

JOIN US EVERY WEDNESDAY EVENING

Paraclesis service at 5:45pm, followed by Bible Study at 6:30pm.

- The **1st Wednesday** of the month will be **BIBLE STUDY**.
- The **2nd Wednesday** of the month will be **ORTHODOXY 101** for beginners and 1st year catechumen only.
- The **3rd Wednesday** of the month will be **EXPLANATION** of the **DIVINE LITURGY**.
- The **4th Wednesday** of the month will be **OPEN FORUM**. You bring your questions and get answers!





COMMUNITY NEWS



Stewardship Year begins on January 1st and concludes on December 31st. We ask that you do not delay to complete the card and return it to the church office to join the **"Dormition of the Theotokos' Stewardship Ministry for 2026"** so that we can grow and become a stronger Church and minister to the people of God. The Church needs the support of its members year-round. Please consider giving as a way of showing your support and love to the Church. As you already know it costs thousands of dollars a month to operate the Church with the monthly utility and maintenance bills and salaries. **Please consider giving as much as your heart tells you to give – a little more than last year. You do not need to make your payment all at once. You can give quarterly, monthly, or weekly,** which makes it very easy and affordable. Electronic payment has also been set up for those who would like to use it. Thank you!

THANK YOU! Thank you to all for sponsoring Coffee Hours in the month of December: **The Moraru Family, The Sunday School & Youth, and The Kattan & Rizkallah Families.** THANK YOU!

BAPTISMS: **George Kattan & Manar Matar: The servants of God, Edward George Kattan & Christina Marie Kattan,** were received into the Holy Orthodox Church through the mystery of Baptism on **Saturday, December 13.** The Sponsors were **Faris Matar & Nicole E. Makhlof . May God grant them many years!**

CONGRATULATIONS to the newly elected Parish Council Members! **Julia Macovei, Ellen Scaturchio, Ted Angeles and Brandon Covey, God bless you!**

THANK YOU! Thank you to everyone who contributed to the **Community Christmas Card and Poinsettias for the church.** If any families were left off the card, please know we are grateful for your contributions!

A Reminder: God's House/Our Responsibility! We have been offering the **"God's House/Our Responsibility"** message to the students of our Church School, but that lesson is not just for kids! Please remember that every corner of the building - in the Church or not - is a part of God's house. **And we are the good stewards God has blessed to take care of it. So remember:**

- **When you use it, leave it as you found it (or better!)**
- **If you create or see trash, pick it up and throw it away.**
- **Be gentle! Careful not to dent and knock things up.**
- **Treat the place better than you own...it's God's!**

So whether that means clean it up, put it away, put it back, lock it up, wipe it off, close it or throw it away, don't give away the honor of taking care of God's house to someone else: do it yourself! Leave it as you found it or better, because when we moved in we committed to keeping the entire place in "Like New" condition. Only you can help make that happen. Thank you, good and faithful stewards of Christ!



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Aims & Goals of Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church

Purpose

"With God's blessing and presence, we desire to share the treasures of the Orthodox Christian faith, making them accessible to the people of Greensboro area and beyond in the English language, so that together we can experience union with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, now and forever."

Vision

Through the grace of God, the Dormition of the Theotokos Orthodox Church Mission exists to offer *in the English language*:

Worship, mission, pastoral care, catechism and growth in the Orthodox tradition. While our unity is in the Orthodox Tradition under the jurisdiction of Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the Metropolis of Atlanta, our strength lies in the diversity of a community that reflects the many cultures of the Orthodox Tradition.

- We value community and the richness of liturgical life.
- We express our diverse heritage through sharing and experiencing the spiritual gifts of our community thereby enriching all.
- We cherish the young as the inheritors and beneficiaries of our missionary zeal and commit to them through education, and the passing on of the rich and diverse wealth of Orthodox teachings, witness, culture and experience.
- We understand that spiritual labor is not only individual but also communal. Each member of our community is called to contribute to growing our community through example, skill and culture sharing, leadership, mentoring, evangelism and caring for each other.
- We desire for The Dormition of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Church to become a flourishing, English-language Orthodox community providing opportunities for spiritual growth through the sacraments, worship, education and pastoral care for all.

Goals

To achieve our Vision, our goals are to:

1. Grow a thriving and prayerful English-speaking Orthodox community.
2. Support and encourage families to grow and be enriched through the Faith.
3. Grow a socially connected and supportive church community.
4. Create a committed *tithing community*.
5. Encourage vocations within our community.
6. Expand our present home to meet the needs.

Aim

To call peoples into a personal relationship with the Holy Trinity, to strive for the attainment of likeness to and union with God (*theosis*), each member of the community at their own pace under spiritual guidance...

... that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

— Ephesians 3:17-19

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP



The Dormition Men's Fellowship Group

is now hosting weekly book club discussions along with other events to help men grow not just in fellowship but spiritually as well.

Anyone interested in joining should reach out to: Shane Rivers, Shadi Zeidan, John McQueary or Martin Ross for more information.

NOTE: A printed Orthodox Oracle of the month can be found in the Narthex throughout the month.

If you wish to have a copy sent to you, we ask that you call the church office and we will send you one in the mail. Thank you for being a Steward of Dormition of the Theotokos church!



Church Office Note.....

You may visit or call the office **Monday—Friday from 9:00am—1:00pm.**

Fr. Sarantis will be in the office Monday & Thursday from 10am-2pm, Tuesday from 12pm—4pm & 4pm—6pm by appointment only for confessions and Wednesday from 12—7:30pm extending the office hours. You may also schedule a pastoral appointment with him at any time at home or at the office at your convenience.

Although on Fridays Fr. Sarantis is not in the office one may freely and at any time during the week communicate DIRECTLY with him via phone at (516) 526-1475, text or email at patersarantis@yahoo.com.

All calls & texts not answered before 7pm due to obvious reasons will be answered as soon as possible on the same day. All calls and texts after 7pm will be screened and they will be answered according to their urgency, so there may be time to respond to the day's emails, which they are ONLY checked 3 times a day (morning, noon and after 7pm) and they will be answered accordingly in order within 24 hours. We thank you for understanding!

IMPORTANT: For ALL emergencies ALWAYS CALL, do not text or email. GOD BLESS YOU!

HOSPITAL VISITATION POLICY

If you would like Fr. Sarantis to visit you in the hospital, please call him or have a family member call. Fr. Sarantis will not go unless he is asked by the family. This is in compliance with both HIPAA and patient privacy.

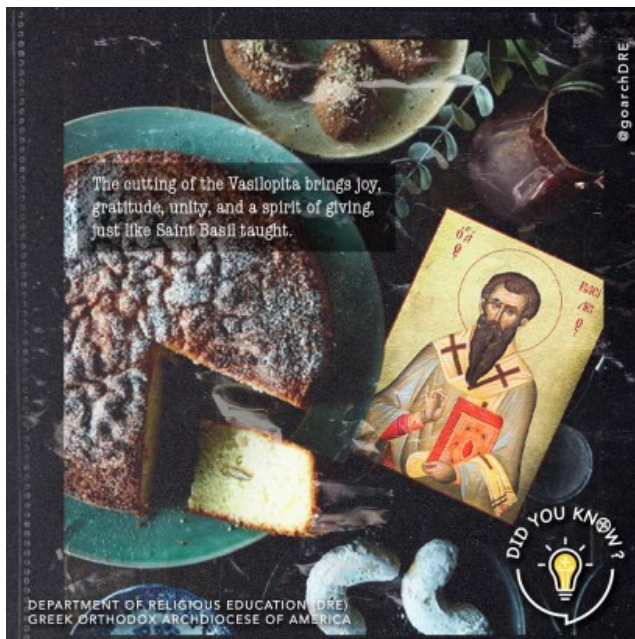




THE STORY BEHIND THE VASILOPITA

DID YOU KNOW?

Department of Religious Education (DRE)



Did you know a coin in a cake is linked to one of the Church's greatest Saints?

Each New Year, Orthodox Christians bake and share the Vasilopita (in Greek, Βασιλόπιτα), a special sweet bread or cake made in honor of Saint Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in the 4th century. But this beloved tradition comes from a story of humility, generosity, and a miracle.

According to tradition, a cruel ruler once demanded an unjust tax from the people of Caesarea. To protect the poor, Saint Basil asked the faithful to bring what they could: coins, jewelry, anything of value. But when the tyrant saw their peaceful unity, he was moved and canceled the demand.

Now faced with returning all the treasures, Saint Basil was at a loss. How could he return each item to its rightful owner? So, he prayed and baked the coins and jewels into loaves of bread. When each family received one, they miraculously found exactly what they had offered. From this act, the tradition of the Vasilopita, the "Saint Basil's bread," was born.

Today, a coin is placed in the bread before baking. The one who finds it is blessed. We believe that generosity brings grace and that Saint Basil continues to intercede for us. The cutting of the Vasilopita brings joy, gratitude, unity, and a spirit of giving, just like Saint Basil taught.

Send us your questions at: religioused@goarch.org or call Fr. Sarantis

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ORTHODOX ORACLE SPONSORS ...

Now that the ORTHODOX ORACLE has expanded to 20 pages, it provides a good opportunity for one to sponsor an ad for your business, friend's business or simply honoring a family member. Please seek out one of the Parish Council Members for assistance to become a sponsor or call the church office.

We thank our sponsors and we hope that you support them!

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Attention Organizations:

- In order to sustain proper emailing dates the *Cutoff Day* to submit your article for your organization is the **22nd** of the month. Printing and emailing the Orthodox Oracle is on or about the **28th** of the month.
- Email is the default contact type, but listings can be changed by text or phone if preferred. Email any changes to the Church Office at office@dormition.nc.goarch.org. It is the organization's responsibility to inform Jackie of any updates to your listing.

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NARTHEX and Welcome MINISTRY meets soon. Be part of it!

What *YOU* Can Do to Help Visitors Feel Welcome

Have you noticed new faces? We've had many visitors stop by lately. Some are Orthodox and visiting from other Parishes, some are returning to Orthodoxy after a long time away, and some are coming to check out Orthodoxy for the very first time. No matter how they come to us, let's make sure we say Hello!



"Welcome! I don't believe we've met yet. My name is (your name)" is a great start. Offer to walk with them to the Coffee Social. A personal connection goes far!

*"To be a welcoming community sharing
Christ's love through faith and service."*