

SAINT DEMETRIOS PARISH NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2025

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REV. PROTOPRESBYTER NICHOLAS P. PETROPOULAKOS

PTO WELCOME BACK "PICNIC" COFFEE HOUR
Sunday, September 21, 2025

September 21, 2025
Sunday School & Greek School
Registration and
1st Day of Sunday School

A letter from Rev. Protopresbyter Nicholas P. Petropoulakos ~

Dear Members of our St. Demetrios Parish Family,

Greetings in the Lord!

His Eminence, Metropolitan Apostolos, has assigned me to be your liturgical leader and community Proistamenos/Pastor. I have humbly accepted this assignment, and I look forward to a full ministry of worshipping the Lord at this beautiful Spirit-filled Parish.

Let me introduce myself to you.

I and Presvytera Patricia were born in Lowell, MA. I attended Hellenic College and Holy Cross School of Theology, graduating in 1974. I was ordained to the Diaconate in 1973 and the Priesthood in 1974.

I have been a Priest of the Holy Archdiocese for 51 years, recently serving the Parish on Staten Island for 28 years. At the end of June 2024, I retired from full ministry and began my journey as a substitute liturgical Priest whenever and wherever I was needed. The door to service in the Metropolis was opened to me earlier this year and this prompted His Eminence to ask whether I would accept this assignment. Knowing you and, with my family's encouragement, it was an easy decision. I thank His Eminence for his confidence in me and his entrusting St. Demetrios to me.

Presvytera and I have been married for 53 years and have two children, Peter (Elise), grandchildren, Nikolas and Liam of Little Rock, Arkansas and Stacey (Daniel), grandchildren, Zoe, and Ian of Staten Island.

Presvytera, Stacey, and grandchildren, Zoe and Ian, have felt very welcomed by everyone and have become very comfortable, deciding to make St. Demetrios their spiritual home. I now follow them, knowing that this is the blessed place for us as a family. Praise God for bringing us back together in our worship life. God bless all of you for your open hearts.

Over the past year, I have come to know that St. Demetrios is a shining gem of our Holy Orthodox Church and the Holy Metropolis of New Jersey.

I look forward to serving the St. Demetrios family, continuing the work which you, the members of this Church family, have kept alive in the name of our Lord and our patron, St. Demetrios.

In Christ ~ Rev. Protopresbyter Nicholas P. Petropoulakos

Father Nick's Message

SEPTEMBER – HOLY CROSS MONTH

On September 14, the Orthodox world rejoices as we celebrate the Exaltation of the Holy Cross.

There are three historical events that contributed to the establishment of this holiday. **First was the** discovery of the wood of the Holy Cross, in the year 326, by St. Helen, mother of the Emperor Constantine the Great. When the Cross of the Lord was discovered near Golgotha, it was miraculously identified as the true Cross of Christ.

Second, St. Helen laid the foundations of the Church of the Resurrection of the Lord over the site of the Holy Sepulchre. It was completed in the year 335. On September 14 of that year, the Elevation of the Holy Cross was held in the middle of the Church and everyone rushed to worship the Holy Cross with deep emotion and reverence.

Lastly, after three centuries, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross was repeated once again. This is because, when the Persians invaded and conquered Jerusalem in 614, they stole the Holy Cross from the Church of the Resurrection and held it for 14 years. In 628, the pious and faithful Emperor Heraclius, defeated the Persians and returned the Holy Cross to Jerusalem. On September 14, 628, Emperor Heraclius, barefoot and in plain clothes, ascended to the Church of the Resurrection in a procession carrying the Holy Cross on his shoulders and handed it over to the Patriarch of Jerusalem Zacharias. The Patriarch received the Cross with deep emotion and raised it in the middle of the Church triumphantly, while all the faithful started singing together the hymn: "*Save the Lord Your people and bless Your inheritance ...*" Since then, it was designated to officially celebrate the Exaltation of the Holy Cross throughout the Church, in both East and West.

We must explain that the Cross does not carry any power by itself. It receives all its value from Jesus Christ, who voluntarily was nailed to the Cross, upon which He shed His Holy Blood and sanctified it, thus making it a bearer of His Grace.

We, therefore, celebrate the great feast of the Holy Cross, and the whole congregation of the Church is enlightened and filled with rays of divine joy. The Cross is elevated, and together it elevates the whole of humanity, which had fallen due to its sins. The Cross is a source of millions of blessings for us. The Cross is the hope of Christians, the savior of the desperate, a haven for those in difficult circumstances, a doctor for the sick; it removes sinful passions and sustains the Faith.

The Cross is a ladder that ascends to Heaven. The Cross protects us from temptations, saves us from dangers, comforts us in sorrows, helps us in every need. The Cross protects widows and orphans. He who gazes at the Cross is filled with courage and drives away cowardice.

My spiritual children, since the Cross of the Lord provides us with all these and so many other blessings, let us grasp it and let us invoke its grace and power, in every need. Let us make the sign of the cross when we get up in the morning, thanking the Lord who blessed us to see the light of a new day. Let us begin and end our work with the sign of the cross. For every mercy we receive from God, let us thank Him by making our cross. Moreover, in every one of our needs let us appeal for the help and protection of our Lord by making the sign of the cross; and let us rest assured that we, like many others, will see miracles in our lives.

Let us celebrate this most blessed month – September, the month of the Holy Cross.



President's Message ~

Sad to say, summer is almost over, and fall is just around the corner. I'm hoping you had the opportunity to take a vacation, enjoy your time with your kids, grandkids, and or relatives, either locally, in another state, or abroad.

A special thanks goes out to all the parishioners who participated and supported our church services during these lazy summer months.

This summer, by the order of our Metropolis, Father Philotheos was reassigned. His spiritual guidance, easy-going personality, and heart-warming smile will be missed. In the interim, the new Chancellor Reverend Ekonomos Father Gregory Gilbert, along with Father Nicholas Petropoulakos, Father Samuel, and others, helped fill in until a new priest for our parish could be found.

Fortunately, the Metropolis recently informed us that, starting on September 7th, our new permanent priest will be Fr. Nicholas Petroupoulakos. Most of us met Father Nick during the church's Festival. I had the privilege to talk extensively with Father Nick, Presvytera Patricia, and his family who fell in love with our church and our St. Demetrios family. Judging from these lengthy conversations, I am positive that Father Nick and his family will be a wonderful addition to our community.

Also over the summer, our church hall/community center was renovated! It looks bigger and brighter, and the electrical systems have been updated/modernized. Thanks to multiple volunteers, the project is complete.

Therefore, I am inviting you all to celebrate new beginnings in our newly renovated community center on September 7th. Come and welcome Father Nick officially, meet up with friends you haven't seen in a while, and discuss our programs and plans for the new ecclesiastical church year.

One most important event on the horizon is the next General Assembly Meeting where there will be Parish Council elections. The General Assembly will take place in November. Please make plans to be at this important event. Also, let us know if you are interested in joining our Parish Council.

Thank you,

George Kane
Parish Council President

Summertime Events:

George Kane presented an Appreciation Plaque Award to Father Philotheos for his love, devotion and dedication to all of us at St. Demetrios for the past 2-1/2 years. He will be sorely missed!



FESTIVAL BY THE BAY 2025

The final net profit from our 2025 Greek Festival is \$52,126.00. Regardless of the higher number of tents, tables, chair rental fees, Saturday's rainy weather, we netted higher profits compared to last year's festival.

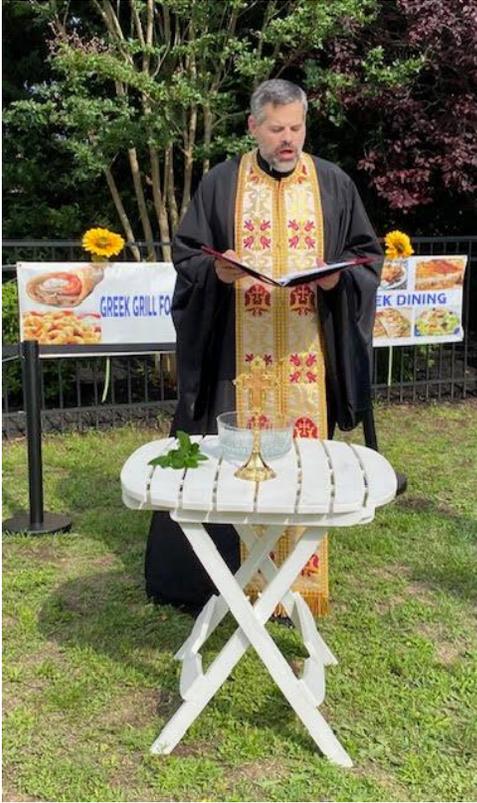
We were able to keep expenses to a minimum thanks to the multiple and generous donors. As an observation for improvement and looking ahead for next year, additional help will be needed for initial set-up, food line workers, and breakdown/clean up on Sunday evening. I also need to express my gratitude to all the volunteers regardless of the services provided. Some donated a tray of pastitsio, others 10 trays, some donated a sack of onions, some donated all the vegetables, some donated 5 hours of physical help and others more than 50. Your help and your involvement - big or small - were deeply appreciated.

Plans for Festival 2026 will be starting in September by the New Festival Committee. Date and time will be provided to all shortly.

Thank you,

George Kane
Parish Council President

FESTIVAL PICTURES



Father Philotheos officially opened the Festival with a Blessing.



Mayor Helmin Caba spent time at our Festival visiting with some of our volunteer workers and Father Philotheos.



St. Demetrios GOYA Dancers

Father of the Year!

Gary Seitis was honored by the PTO as our Father of the Year 2025. Gary was surrounded by his proud family, Father Gregory Gilbert, George Kane and Diana Regan, PTO President. The award ceremony, plaque presentation, and lovely reception were sponsored by our St. Demetrios PTO.



PTO NEWS



Hello everyone! I hope all have enjoyed a fun and relaxing summer and are looking forward to the start of the new school year!

To start off the 2025-26 Sunday School and Greek School year, please join us for our

PTO “Welcome Back, Picnic-Themed” Coffee Hour

Sunday, September 21st

following church services and First Day of Sunday School!

Parents, Teachers and parishioners, we need your donations! An email will be sent to our PTO list (Parent and Teacher email list). However, even if not a parent or teacher, please anyone who can and would like to make a donation to the PTO, we can use the funds (for this and future events during the school year) as well food, drink and dessert items for this Welcome Back “Picnic”.

Please reach out to me directly, and I’ll be happy to let you know what we need! dianapregan@gmail.com/ 732-861-9575

Thank you, God Bless all, and looking forward to seeing everyone!

**Diana Regan
PTO President**

GOYA News

Welcome Back! With much anticipation and excitement, we are ready to kick off another fun-filled year of GOYA! We are looking forward to our yearly kickoff BBQ, where we will elect our 2025-2026 officers. September 28th is the annual Diving of the Cross in Asbury Park. We are looking for some GOYAns to represent Perth Amboy. September 26th is the Harvest Dance hosted by Holmdel.

Before we even know it, we will be attending the Mr. & Miss Pageant Dinner at the Hanover Manor on Sunday, October 19th. Luca Regan and Emalee Rizitis will be representing Perth Amboy. We are supporting them in preparation of their interviews. If you are interested in attending the dinner, RSVP with the church office or Jen Simatos. Adult tickets are \$80 and children 18 and younger are \$60. Checks should be made out to the NJ State Youth Committee. All profits to benefit the Youth Scholarship. Our recent graduates Luka Simatos, Alena Ortiz- Albino, and Layna Ortiz-Albino will receive scholarships this year.

The GOYA enjoyed a fun-filled summer week.



Beach Day at Bradley Beach followed by pizza.



Playing golf at Top Golf with some of our new friends and finding new talents.



Monday we went to the American Dream Mall. We played in the arcade, won prizes, enjoyed a giant pizza, and explored the grand mall.



Tuesday we flipped, dogged, and jumped at Urban Air.



Wednesday we had a day at the pool. Thanks to John and Jen Kanellidis for letting us use their backyard. We had amazing food from Evan's Restaurant!



We have 16 GOYAns so far this year and are always welcome to add more! If you know anyone 12 years or older who is interested in joining, please contact the advisor Jen Simatos, at 732-343-2266 or any of the GOYAns. Dance practice begins on Monday, September 29th from 7:30 pm-9:00 pm.

We can't wait to see what this year holds for us!

GREEK SCHOOL NEWS

Dear Perth Amboy Community,

We hope you are all well and had a beautiful summer filled with quality time with your families! The new 2025-26 school year is quickly approaching and we couldn't be more excited! As we kick off the year, please join us for the annual PTO Picnic on Sunday, September 21st to register your children/grandchildren in the Youth educational and recreational programs this year.

IMPORTANT NOTE! Greek School classes will now be held on THURSDAYS!

This year's Greek School will formally start with our first lesson on Thursday, September 25th from 4:30-6.30 pm. We look forward to reuniting with all of our children again and wish every one of our families a blessed school year!!



SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Our Sunday School Graduation was a very special day to celebrate the achievements and accomplishments of our wonderful children and our dedicated teachers. Awards for best attendance and appreciation of our altar servers were also presented.

It was an exciting day for everyone involved!





(Teachers Pictured: Irene Dimitratos, Helen (Coutros) Horan, Helen Catelanos, Father Philotheos, Mary Lou Rivera, Mike Koudis, Angelique Tsivelis, Diana Regan
(Not pictured: Kally Durso and Agapios Kyritsis)

Our Sunday School graduate, Luka Simatos, was given a special presentation to celebrate his completion of our Sunday School course of study!



He was also presented with memorial scholarships from the families of Byron and Eleni Stoimenides and Frank and Rose Marie Protonentis.



Every year, the Philoptochos gives out Bibles to those who are graduating high school, colleges/universities, or schools of continuing education. (Pictured: Mary Lou K Rivera, Philoptochos President, Dean Giannakopoulos, Domna Kakadelis, Alena Ortiz-Albino, Father Philotheos, Layna Ortiz-Albino, Kyriaki Kakadelis, Luka Simatos)

Welcome to our new Chancellor, Reverend Ekonomos Father Gregory Gilbert

Our Sunday School children welcomed our newly appointed Chancellor, Reverend Ekonomos Father Gregory Gilbert with a small handmade St. Demetrios Icon. He presided as our Parish Priest over the summer months while the selection of a permanent Priest was underway. Father Gregory was warmly welcomed to our Church!





CATCH THE EXCITEMENT!
SUNDAY SCHOOL IS STARTING!
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2025
11:15 AM - DIRECTLY AFTER HOLY
COMMUNION

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

It's exciting times for the Philoptochos! Elections were held for the next Philoptochos Board, and we are happy to have returning Board Members and thrilled to add a few new members into the mix!

2025-2027 Philoptochos Board Members

Irene Dimitratos – President
Cindy Giannakopoulos – Vice President
Callie Vosinas – Treasurer
Helen (Coutros) Horan – Corresponding Secretary
Marietta Khalil – Recording Secretary
Argiro Ahladianakis – Board Member
Peggy Cantor – Board Member
Helen Catelanos – Board Member
Julie Cosentino – Board Member
Aphrodite Kanellidis – Board Member
Anna Kyriakatos – Board Member
Evelyn Mariolis – Board Member
Irene Pakis – Board Member
Helen Suravlas – Board Member
Mary Lou K Rivera – Advisor

It is anticipated that our first General Meeting will be held in October. Updates on meetings, events, and special announcements will be included on the Philoptochos Bulletin Board, the Sunday Church Bulletin, and/or future emails. Please join us at these General Meetings so you can be a part of this great organization whose mission is:

To aid the poor, the destitute, the hungry, the aged, the unemployed, the orphaned, the imprisoned, the widowed, the handicapped, the victims of disasters, and to offer assistance as best as we can to anyone who may need the help of the church through fundraising efforts.

The Philoptochos will be resuming its weekly collection of non-perishable foods (this is different from the Thanksgiving collection which takes place in November). Please look for the bin near the Philoptochos collection box in the Narthex. Your donations will be given to various local pantries who provide food to individuals in need.

As always, your support is appreciated!

IMPORTANT NOTES!

- Please see attached flyers for information regarding IAN'S RUN, a fund-raising event to benefit Make-A-Wish New Jersey and bring awareness of Trisomy 13.
- The bank with whom we have accounts has become more strict about how checks are made payable to Philoptochos. Therefore, to ensure that future checks for memberships/events/donations, etc. are accepted by the bank, please note that checks should be payable as follows:

PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY 3 HIERARCHS OF ST. DEMETRIOS

OR

PHILOPTOCHOS SOC. 3 HIER. OF ST. DEMETRIOS

Thank you!!

In Christ ~ The Philoptochos of St. Demetrios

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS (CONT'D)

SWEARING IN OF NEW PHILOPTOCHOS BOARD



Pictured: Mary Lou K Rivera, Marietta Khalil, Irene Dimitratos, Irene Pakis, Argiro Ahladianakis, Helen Suravlas, Father Philotheos, Peggy Cantor, Helen (Coutros) Horan, Helen Catelanos, Evelyn Mariolis, Callie Vosinas, Afrodite Kanellidis, Cindy Giannakopoulos

(Not pictured: Julie Cosentino and Anna Kyriakatos)

Philotimo Report

Since the majority of large-scale contractors want to purchase the land versus a long-term lease, there are very few developers who will be interested in our project. George Koutsoubis and Spero Kalambakis have contacted and met with a couple of these parties of interest and are negotiating/vetting each individual group. The negotiation cycle is long, pivotal and critical since the developers are favoring heavily their own companies. George and Spero, as well as all the Philotimo members, will optimize any offer, massage it to favor our community, and inform the congregation when a preliminary agreement has been reached.

If you have any valuable ideas, information or simply a question, please contact the church's office during business hours.

Thank you,

Presented by George Kane, Parish Council President



COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS!

Do you have any announcements you'd like to share with the community...Milestone birthdays or anniversaries? Weddings? Births? Graduations? Special Awards?

If yes, please contact the church office (by phone, email, or drop by the office with the information), and it can be included in the next distributed Newsletter.



IAN'S RUN

Organizer's Description:

We're Steven and Alison Dimitratos, and we've started Ian's Run in the memory of our son, Ian Thomas Dimitratos. During our 20-week anatomy scan, we discovered Ian had some abnormalities. After further testing, we learned that Ian had Trisomy 13, a genetic disorder where there is an extra 13th chromosome. Unfortunately, Trisomy 13 causes the brain to not develop properly, and there is no cure. The doctors informed us that his chances of surviving birth were low, but we just continued to hope and pray to meet him. Ian was born on October 4, 2020, and he lived 7 hours before passing away peacefully.

Please come out and join us on **Saturday, October 11, 2025**, at RiverWinds Community Center, West Deptford, NJ, for our 5K run/walk in memory of Ian (**see attached flyer for more details**). By joining Ian's Run, you not only participate in an uplifting community event, but also contribute to a meaningful cause. All proceeds from this race go directly to Make-A-Wish New Jersey. Our wish is to bring awareness to Trisomy 13, while helping other families who need a glimmer of hope.

Race T-shirts will be available for pre-registrants until Sunday, October 5th. Awards will be given to the top three (3) male and female finishers across various age categories. Mark your calendar for this inspiring day of remembrance and community spirit!

The Kids Fun Run is for kids 10 and under and will take place right before the 5K. The event will be approximately a ½ mile run (or shorter for the younger ones!) and will finish at the Finish Line. The Kids Fun Run ensures a fun and engaging experience for our youngest runners, and all who participate will receive a finisher medal and T-shirt.