



GREEK ORTHODOX
METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY



Rev. Protopresbyter Nicholas P.
Petropoulakos

SAINT DEMETRIOS PARISH NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2026

41-47 WISTERIA STREET, PERTH AMBOY, NJ 08861
(732) 826-4466
REV. PROTOPRESBYTER NICHOLAS P. PETROPOULAKOS

Philoptochos Vasilopita Luncheon
Rescheduled for Sunday, February 1, 2026
(Proceeds to benefit St. Basil's Academy and other youth ministries.)

Philoptochos
APOKREATIKO GLENDI
Saturday, February 21, 2026

Spanakopita & Pastitsio Sale! Order by 2/1/26!
(See flyer for details!)

FEBRUARY 2026 LITURGICAL CALENDAR

Sunday	February 1	Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee Triodion begins Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday	February 8	Sunday of the Prodigal Son Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Saturday	February 14	1 st Saturday of Souls Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday	February 15	Meatfare Sunday Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Saturday	February 21	2 nd Saturday of Souls Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Sunday	February 22	Cheesefare Sunday – Forgiveness Sunday Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.
Monday	February 23	Clean Monday - Great Lent begins
Wednesday	February 25	Presanctified Liturgy 7:00 p.m.
Friday	February 27	1 st Salutations to the Virgin Mary 7:00 p.m.
Saturday	February 28	3 rd Saturday of Souls Orthros 8:45 a.m. Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

NOTES:

The week following the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee (February 2nd thru 7th) there is no fasting.

SATURDAYS OF SOULS

February 14th, 21st, & 28th

Saturdays of Souls are special days in the Orthodox for commemorating the dead, praying for their forgiveness and rest, and remembering all departed loved ones.

On each of the Saturdays of Souls we remember the names of our departed family members, relatives, friends and acquaintances by sending their names to the church. Names sent will be read each of the three Saturdays.

It is customary to bring a bowl of kollyva (boiled wheat), or a prosphoro (church bread) to the Divine Liturgy on the Saturday which you attend.

Orthros 8:45 a.m. Diving Liturgy 10:00 a.m.

Saturday of Souls forms will be available on the Pangari, or please request a form from a member of the Parish Council or the office secretary.



FATHER NICK AWAY FROM THE PARISH

Father Nick will be away from the Parish from Monday, February 2nd thru Thursday, February 12th.

The Orthros and Divine Liturgy of Sunday, February 8th, will be celebrated by Father Joseph Samaan. Please welcome Father Joseph at antidoron and at the Coffee Fellowship.

If you are in need of a priest during this period, please contact the Parish Office.



HOUSE BLESSING 2026

Since no formal announcement was made about house blessings, Father Nick would like to ask anyone who would like their house blessed to call the Parish Office. Father will then schedule a time and date during the last two weeks of February.

Make Your Heart Like The Heart of the Publican

The ministry of Jesus had as its goal to transform people's hearts in order to help them gain entry into His Kingdom. His life, death, and resurrection ushered in a completely new way of relating to God: the way of grace. One of the best examples of Jesus shifting paradigms comes in His parable of the Publican (Tax Collector) and the Pharisee, found in Luke 18:10-14:

"Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people—robbers, evildoers, adulterers—or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

'I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.'"

It is time to open our hearts and allow the Spirit to guide us to live life more like the tax collector than the Pharisee. Let's allow Him to lead us to a life lived in the new covenant of grace. This is why our Holy Orthodox Church has placed this Parable at the beginning of the Triodion. It is the first lesson for us as we prepare for the Great Lenten Season each year.

In the time of Jesus, God's people were completely starved for relationship with Him. Judaism had become a religion of regulations, a legalistic theology, rather than relationship. God's people believed that their lives were totally based on their works, placing the religious Pharisees at the top of the totem pole stretching up to God. The Pharisees believed they were justified before God because of their works, as if they could earn their way into right standing with God.

So, imagine the shock of Jesus' listeners when He says that the tax collector, the most hated of all Jews, went home justified before the Lord as the result of his humility. Imagine the shock and anger of the Pharisees in learning that all they had worked for, all the rules and regulations they had lived by, actually placed them lower in stature than any other Jew in the sight of God.

The Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee offers mind-blowing news for each of us. The principle Jesus teaches here in [Luke 18](#) is that the greatest attitude of our heart is one of humility, not perfection. The way to God is not one of works, but of grace. Jesus teaches that whatever weakness we have, whatever sin we struggle with, all God asks of us is that we come before Him and ask for His mercy. All He requires of us is a repentant heart.

You see, the Lord is always after your heart. All the works of the Pharisees were born out of their own pride. In their egotism they thought they could earn the right-relationship with the one, true, and holy God. All of their religious deeds were done not out of their love for God, but out of their love for their own status.

However, the Publican had nothing to boast about. He lived his life robbing his own people to fill the pockets of the Romans who enslaved them. He was made wealthy by stealing from his own people. But in his desperation he cried out to God for help, and God heard his cry.

Let us all understand that God hears our cries today when they come out of the reality of our need for Him. He answers our need for forgiveness and right-relationship with the overwhelming power of His presence. So, we must ask ourselves today, what do we value most? Do we value our own status or God's opinion? Are we living in light of God's grace or trying to

earn it? Are we going through the motions of religion in order to earn our way into the right-relationship with God, or are we living in response to the wealth of love we have freely received in Christ?

Wherever we are, understand that it is never too late to come before our Heavenly Father in humility. It is never too late to repent of any area in which pride has been our motivation and decide to live our lives on the foundation of grace. Christ came to usher in the path of grace, not of works. He came so that we might live in His strength, not our own. The price of His mercy is a humble heart. A very important lesson is that humility is the key that unlocks the depths of our souls to receive the free gift of His grace. If we will just cry out to Him and ask Him for His mercy for our sins and His love to satisfy our needs, He will fill our lives with the gift of His unending presence.

At the beginning of this year's Pre-Lenten season, let us form our hearts to be like that of the Publican every time that we pray. Let us follow his example of humility and then we will find the places in our hearts which need the blessing of God's love.

Kontakion of Sun. of the Publican and Pharisee (Fourth Tone)

"Let us flee from the boasting of the Pharisee and learn through our own sighs of sorrow the humility of the Publican. Let us cry out to the Savior, 'Have mercy on us, for through You alone are we reconciled.'"

A Blessed Triodion to all.

Father Protopresbyter Nicholas P. Petropoulakos



A Heartfelt Thank You

I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who participated in any way to make our Epiphany Celebration such a great blessing: donors, diners, cake and pastry bakers, cooks, servers, Council members and Philoptochos ladies, shore set up workers, altar servers, the students of the Sunday School and Greek School, the police, harbor patrol, EMTs, and everyone!

We want to congratulate our divers, from our Parish and St. George in Ocean, who braved cold wind and water to vie for the crosses: Lucas, Emalee, Constantine, Jacier, Madeline, Vasilios, Gerilena, Angelo, Sophia and Christian.

Congratulations to Constantine and Emalee, the blessed winners of the dive for the crosses.

It was a great day for our Parish, and His Eminence Apostolos, Father Gregory and Father Symeon were very happy to be with us for this annual event.

God bless! - Father Nick



FEBRUARY 2026 ZOOM BIBLE STUDY

Each Wednesday at 7:30 p.m.

Sign-in: 88085372002

Password: Padre

There will no Bible Study classes on February 4th and 11th. Classes will resume on February 18th.

Hope to see you there for study and fellowship.

FATHER NICK'S DAILY MESSAGES ON FACEBOOK

If you would like to read these messages, please ask Father to friend you on FACEBOOK.

Father publishes a spiritual message early every morning.



President's Message ~

Four years have passed since I had the honor to serve our beloved community as the Parish Council president. Thanks to your support and the abundant support of all the Parish Council members, we were able to reach most of our goals but most importantly we balanced the budget. Together we have experienced a few rough spots, but we re-emerged gloriously.

As my last message to you as the Parish Council president, I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome the newly elected Parish Council which is made mostly from existing members with the additions of: Maria Karanikas, who accepted the position of Assistant Secretary; Andrew Pakis who volunteered his time and expertise during the community center renovation and promised to continue with the church's maintenance needs; and George Koutsoubis, who grew up in and has always supported this community.

I also want to thank Fr. Nick who was able to adapt to our community in zero time, became our friend along with his beloved family, and guided us with his spiritual wisdom through the Sunday services as well as the Wednesday Bible Study.

In conclusion, I wish Nick Giannakopoulos (who helped me tremendously on multiple church-related projects) good luck as our new P.C. president who in turn, I will offer my unconditional help as per need basis.

Respectfully ~ George Kane

NEW PARISH COUNCIL

Nick Giannakopoulos – President
Spero Kalambakas – Vice President
Demos Simatos – Vice President
Ted Kaidas – Treasurer
Stan Suravlas – Assistant Treasurer
Matina Ganiaris – Secretary
Maria Karanikas – Assistant Secretary
Kateina Ganiaris
Zachary Giannakopoulos
Litsa Kaidas
George Kane
Afroditi Kanellidis
Dimitrios Michael Koudis
George Koutsoubis
Andrew Pakis
Mattheos Rizitis

PARISH COUNCIL NEWS

On Sunday, January 18, 2026, our newly elected Parish Council took the Oath of Office. Through this oath, members affirm their commitment to faithfully fulfill the duties entrusted to them. Serving on the Parish Council is both a ministry and a mission. It is an opportunity to use the gifts God has given to support and strengthen the life of our Church.



As a first order of business, officers were elected and committees were formed to ensure the continued operation of our parish and to foster growth within our community.

Committees Updates

Parishioners interested in serving are encouraged to join one of the following committees by contacting the committee chair:

- **Finance:** Ted Kaidas
- **Stewardship:** Kateina Ganiaris
- **Maintenance:** George Kane
- **Services:** Litsa Kaidas
- **Festival:** Demos Simatos
- **Fundraising:** Afrodite Kanellidis
- **Digital:** Matina Ganiaris

Ministry Liaisons

In addition, Parish Council liaisons have been assigned to support and collaborate with our parish ministries:

- **GOYA & PTO:** Demos Simatos
- **Sunday School:** Mike Koudis
- **Greek School:** Matina Ganiaris
- **Philoptochos:** Litsa Kaidas
- **Altar Servers:** Zack Giannakopoulos

We look forward to a productive and faith-filled term of service and collaboration.

**SAVE THE DATE! Our first General Assembly Meeting is
scheduled for Sunday, April 19, 2026**

Pastoral Visit of His Eminence, Metropolitan Apostolos Sunday, January 11, 2026

His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos graced us with his beautiful delivery of the Divine Liturgy and poignant sermon related to the meaning and symbolic events of the Epiphany, the manifestation of the Holy Trinity.



(photos courtesy of Helen {Coutros} Horan)





STEWARDSHIP MINISTRY

Dear Parishioners,

This year, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America invites us to reflect on the stewardship theme *“Rise Up and Build: Building Up the Body of Christ.”* As the people in the Book of Nehemiah came together in faith and purpose, we too are called to build and strengthen our spiritual home at St. Demetrios.

Stewardship is more than financial support. It is our spiritual response to God’s blessings through our **time, talents, and treasures**. Through stewardship, we sustain our worship, ministries, education, outreach, and the ongoing life of our parish.

Stewardship Sunday will be observed on Sunday, February 15, 2026. Parishioners who would like to learn more about stewardship and its meaning in our parish are encouraged to join us.

Ways to Give:

- Check payable to *St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church*
- Zelle: saintdemetriosperthamboynj@gmail.com

Thank you for your prayerful consideration and faithful support of St. Demetrios.

Stewardship Committee

My Commitment to St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church Our Spiritual Home

Giving to His Church is a way to thank God for His grace and generosity. The question is not, “How much do I give to stay in the club?” or “What are the dues?” but “How can I thank God for my many blessings?”

In gratitude for God’s blessings, I/We commit to Christ and His Church the following amount:

\$ _____ per ☐ year ☐ month ☐ week

Give online with Zelle to saintdemetriosperthamboynj@gmail.com

INFORMATION

NAME

NAME OF SPOUSE (IF MARRIED)

STREET ADDRESS

CITY / STATE / ZIP CODE

HOME PHONE

MOBILE PHONE

EMAIL

EMAIL OF SPOUSE (IF MARRIED)

Be Part of the 2026 Greek Festival!

Our St. Demetrios Greek Festival is set for May 29–31, 2026—and we need YOU to help make it a success!

Next Festival Meeting

Tuesday, February 17, 2026 • 7:30 PM

Areas We're Focusing On

If you can help—or know someone who can—please let us know! Here are some of our first planning needs:

- **Kitchen Help** – chefs, cooks, grill/taverna staff, prep teams, and food runners
- **Advertising** – spreading the word through local papers, bulletins, and announcements
- **Marketing** – social media, flyers, outreach, and promotions
- **Donations & Sponsorships** – connecting with businesses and community supporters
- **Volunteer Outreach** – bring in and welcome volunteers

2026 Festival Meeting Schedule

(Third Tuesday of each month)

- February 17, 2026
- March 17, 2026
- April 21, 2026
- May 19, 2026
- June 2026 – TBA (Recap meeting is held 1–2 weeks after the festival)

Interested or have questions?

Email us the festival team at pagreekfestival@gmail.com and we will be in contact!



With

From the PTO!

Wishing everyone a wonderful Valentine's Day and a month filled with love and joy!
On behalf of the PTO, I would also like to take this moment to express our heartfelt appreciation to our entire St. Demetrios family for the continuous support you show for our PTO activities.

Your kindness and generosity make everything we do possible — and way more fun! ❤️ ✨

Our next PTO sponsored coffee hour is Sunday, February 8th

Our next PTO Event will be
our Annual Easter Egg Hunt on Easter Sunday following morning service, April 12th



GREEK SCHOOL NEWS

Dear Parishioners!

On Sunday, January 11, our parish welcomed the Metropolitan of New Jersey Apostolos, for the celebration of the Epiphany. Immediately after the Divine Liturgy, the Blessing of the Waters and the throwing of the Cross followed, where the children of the youth dived to catch it in the icy waters of the Raritan River.

Our Greek School sang traditional Epiphany carols and made all those present applaud loudly with great joy.

We wish we celebrate this event next year with health!!



GOYA NEWS

January was a busy month for our GOYAns. It started off with a cold plunge into the Raritan River to celebrate the Annual Perth Amboy Epiphany Celebration. We had nine GOYAns from our church participating, as well as a youth from Piscataway.

Congratulations to Emalee Rizitis and Constantine Katsilis for retrieving the Cross and representing Perth Amboy. (Please see pictures in the Sunday School section.) Congratulations to all our youth for braving the freezing temperatures! They make us proud.

We have been working diligently for Sight and Sound coming up in March. We can't wait to show off our projects and performances at our annual Spaghetti Luncheon, which will be held on Sunday, March 8, 2026. Hope to see you there!



SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Sunday School's Welcoming of His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos

On a very cold, but bright and beautiful early morning of the Epiphany Feast Day celebration, our Sunday School students proudly welcomed His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos with a lovely floral bouquet and showered him with rose pedals while cheering "Axios".

After Divine Liturgy Services, our High School Students dove into the frigid waters of the Raritan Bay with the hopes of retrieving the Holy Cross that Metropolitan Apostolos tossed into the river. Emalee Rizitis and Constantine Katsilis were the lucky retrievers who received special blessings, as well as all the other divers.

Following our delicious luncheon, several students read a sonnet and Bible Verses related to the Epiphany while one of our youngest children, Viola Dimitropoulos, sweetly illustrated how the Dove may have appeared at the Baptism of Our Lord Jesus Christ symbolizing the Holy Spirit.

A special gift was offered to His Eminence from our Sunday School children to commemorate this wonderful, spiritual day. It was a large stained glass suncatcher of the Holy Spirit which he received with delight.

It is wonderful to celebrate and practice our culture, traditions, and customs with our youth who will, hopefully, continue them as they grow and develop into young adults and, then, parents themselves.



DIVING FOR THE CROSS



Sophia



Gerilena, Madaline, Fr. Nick, Emalee,



Emalee Rizitis



Jacier, Lucas, Constantine, Vasilios, Angelo, and Christian.



Constantine Katsilis

SUNDAY SCHOOL STUDENTS READ SONNETS AND BIBLE VERSES RELATED TO THE EPIPHANY.



Viola Dimitropoulos



SUNDAY SCHOOL GIFT TO HIS EMINENCE.

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

Due to a snowstorm, the Philoptochos **Vasilopita Luncheon** is rescheduled for **Sunday, February 1, 2026**, after church services. If you have not already done so, please contact Helen (Coutros) Horan (908-794-3065) as soon as possible to confirm your continued attendance. The proceeds from this luncheon will go to St. Basil's Academy as well as to other youth ministries.

SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, February 21, 2026

Philoptochos Apokreatiko Glendi

~ See attached flyer for details! Make your reservations today! ~

The next Philoptochos General Meeting is scheduled for **Saturday, March 21, 2026, at 1:00 PM** down in the church hall. Please join us to find out what events are upcoming, especially with Easter approaching (e.g. making palm crosses, dyeing and wrapping red Easter eggs, baking for the Bake Sale, etc.). We're always grateful when our members participate in these activities. Together we can do great things!

Another Save The Date: The Philoptochos is planning a bus trip to Agia Skepi on **Saturday, April 18th**. We would need 45 people (maximum) to reserve a bus. More details will follow, however, if you are interested in joining us on this trip, please contact Irene Dimitratos, Cindy Giannakopoulos, or Marietta Khalil (see attached flyer).

As a reminder, the Philoptochos will continue working with local food pantries to help feed the hungry, so please keep bringing in your non-perishable food items and leave them in the collection box located in the Narthex.

GENTLE REMINDER: The bank with whom we have accounts has become more strict about how checks are made payable to the 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
(You may abbreviate.)



Philoptochos



Apokreatiko Glendí!



Special Guests:

St. Demetrios GOYA Dancers

When: Saturday, February 21, 2026
Where: St. Demetrios Church Hall
Time: 5:00 pm
Cost: \$35 Adults/\$20 Children 10-18/Under 10 Free!

BYOB (Bring Your Own Bottle)
Beer & Wine Only

Bring your family and friends to enjoy a night of
good food, music and dancing,
basket raffles, 50/50, and door prizes!

Make your reservations by contacting:

Cindy Giannakopoulos
(732) 735-7531

Peggy Kantor
(908) 407-0251

Marietta Khalil
(732) 925-9699

RSVP by February 8, 2026

(Make Checks Payable to: Philoptochos Society 3 Hierarchs of St. Demetrios)

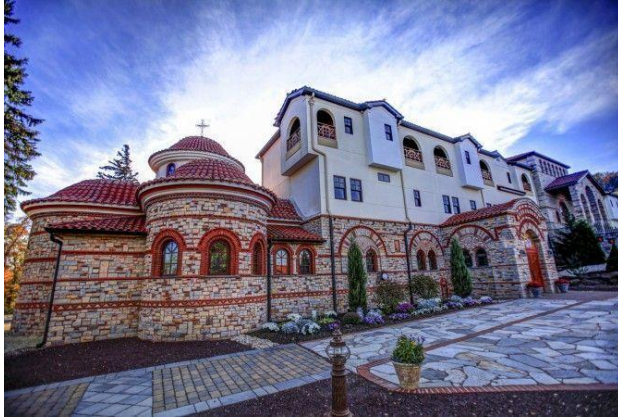
Feel free to wear a
costume!



Costumes
Welcome!

A VISIT TO AGIA SKEPI

HOLY PROTECTION MONASTERY OF THE THEOTOKOS



The Philoptochos of St. Demetrios invites you to join them on Saturday, **April 18, 2026**, to visit this beautiful monastery located on a mountain overlooking the Lehigh River Valley in the Poconos Mountains. (For more information on the Monastery, go to: www.holyprotectionmonastery.org)

Bus transportation will be provided if we can reserve 45 seats (maximum). Each ticket will cost *approximately* \$40, which covers the bus rides (2 hours each way). *Final price will be determined by the headcount.* The Philoptochos will provide water and snacks for the drive. You are welcome to bring your own snacks.

In order to finalize transportation details, we will need to get a headcount. If you are interested in going on this trip to Agia Skepi, please contact:

Irene Dimitratos/732-585-3585
Cindy Giannakopoulos/732-735-7531
Marietta Khalil/732-925-9699

As details are finalized, we will provide updated information.

Super BOWL 2026



Order your ½ tray of Spanakopita at \$30.00 or Pastitsio at \$40.00.

Please place your order by Sunday, February 1st with:

Afroula Kanellidis at: 732-423-7256

Litsa Kaidas at: 908-227-0822

Irene Dimitratos at: 732-585-3585

PICK UP is Saturday, February 7th between 12:00 PM and 2:00 PM or early on Sunday, February 8th the day of the Game, during the Coffee Hour.



A Special Thank You

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our Epiphany Celebration Committee, our dedicated volunteers who assisted with cooking, setup, cleanup, and service, all who baked desserts, and especially our youth. Your time, talents, and generosity truly reflect the spirit of our parish and were instrumental in making this celebration a success. We are also deeply grateful to our sponsors for their generous donations and continued support.

Epiphany Celebration Sponsors



Edison Diner

**101 US-1
Edison, NJ 08817
(732) 985-3335**



Sherban's Diner

**222 Front St
South Plainfield, NJ 07080
(908) 755-7427**



The Barge Restaurant & Bar

**201 Front St
Perth Amboy, NJ 08861
(732) 442-3000**



Fancy Cakes

**843 NJ-33
Freehold, NJ 07728
(201) 315-4243**



Flower Designs by Elena

**215 US Highway 22
Green Brook, NJ 08812
(732) 424-6230**

With Gratitude,

St. Demetrios Parish Council

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.

