

# Pastoral Message from Fr. George for 9.8.23

## September 3: 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday of St. Matthew

7:45 Orthros

9:00 Divine Liturgy

10:15 Blessing of Five Loaves &  
September Commemorations

## September 4: Labor Day

## September 8: Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos

9:00 Divine Liturgy

## September 9:

9:00 Philoptochos Ministry - Making Koulourakia

1:00p 2nd Annual Pan-Orthodox Cross Dive

## September 10: Sunday Before Holy Cross

7:45 Orthros

9:00 Divine Liturgy

10:15 Update from GreekFest Committee

11:00 Religious Education Classes (for all ages)

12:00 Parish Council Meeting



## How to Benefit from the Liturgy (Part I)

**1) Attend early: be on time.** Do not come after the gospel or even after the first reading. Would you arrive late to work? Could you arrive late to work? The later you arrive, the less the grace of God and heavenly blessings will permeate your soul and the less time you'll have to spend in that short and precious two hour window into heaven.

**2) Sing passionately: do not stand there like a statue.** Do not fail to offer God due reverence and honor through singing the grace-filled hymns of the

church composed by our saintly ancestors. Sing when the congregation sings. Sing when it is your side's [turn] to sing. Do not deceive yourself as benefiting from the service without singing. St Theophan the Recluse says, "All of our liturgical hymns are instructive, profound and sublime. They contain the whole of our theology and moral teaching, give us Christian consolation and instill in us a fear of the Judgment. He who listens to them attentively has no need of other books on the Faith."

**3) Be reverent: one of the best ways to do this is to do the sign of the cross reverently, consciously, attentively, neither too fast nor too slow, during the countless times we say "Lord have mercy" in the liturgy.** This may initially be awkward, make us become fearful of what others think and lead us to develop prideful thoughts because we think we are holy. Hence isolate yourself somewhere quiet in the altar or somewhere isolated in the pews or first practice reverence in quiet weekday liturgies. Other examples of reverence are prostrating when everyone prostrates, responding with the congregation, raising our hands in prayer formation, closing our eyes and lifting our head up slightly to the heavens. Just like body language is such a profound aspect of effective communication between humans, so is bodily reverence a profound aspect of communicating with God and acquiring His grace.

**4) Pray the prayer before and after Holy Communion:** do this in every liturgy without fail. We learn this from the life of St John of Kronstadt. There is no saint in the history of the church who united himself the most to God in the liturgy than St John (his life story is incredibly amazing). He said that if there was little time and he would have to shorten other prayers, he would still never fail to pray the prayer before and after Holy Communion. Preparation for anything always increases our benefit. [Source: *The Art of Orthodoxy*]

# How to benefit from liturgy

- 1) Attend early
- 2) Sing passionately
- 3) Be reverent
- 4) Pray the prayer before and after Holy Communion
- 5) Listen carefully to the readings
- 6) Enjoy the sermon
- 7) Pray the Jesus prayer
- 8) Have faith in the liturgy
- 9) Choose quality over quantity







## 9/1: NEW CHURCH YEAR

On Friday, September 1, we gathered for Divine Liturgy and the Doxology of the New Ecclesiastical Year. Likewise, we prayed for the protection of God's natural environment. What a blessed way to begin our new church year. We prayed for our world, for our parish family, and we thanked God for those celebrating their Name Day (including those named Athena, Penelope, Thaleia, Ourania, & Margarita... part of the 40 Virgin-Martyrs and their teacher the Priest-Monk Ammon the Deacon in Thrace). Afterwards, we enjoyed brunch fellowship at Broadway Diner where Steve Theodorakis surprised us with a complimentary lunch "on him" in honor of Steve and Pamela's daughter Thaleia's Name Day.

## 13<sup>th</sup> Sunday of St. Matthew, September 3



In our lives on earth, even today, God continues to send us holy people to enlighten and guide us. They might be clergy, they might be monastics (monks and nuns), and they might be lay people such as our next-door neighbor. God also gives us signs that we are walking on the wrong side of the road instead of toward salvation. Why? Because He wants all of us to be saved and united with Him.

When we do not receive God's love and messages from the ones sent to us by Him, we reject His love and grace. We become like the servants who tried to take away the vineyard for their own profit. On the other hand, when we realize that everything we are, everything we have, and the whole creation, are all gifts of God to us, we can do no other than to offer all things to Him. We receive His Word, His Son, and the ones who call us back to God when we go astray. The Lord is the vine; we are the branches. When we turn to Him, we become a beautiful and cultivated vineyard that bears fruit for His glory and our salvation. *[From Department of Religious Education]*







THANKS BE TO GOD  
FOR MY MINISTRY



+FGT





**George Tsahakis is with Marinda Tsahakis at Saint Christopher Hellenic Orthodox Church.**

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On this anniversary (9/3) of my ordination to the Holy Diaconate, I glorify our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who vanquished evil, sin, and death. He desires us to be part of His Holy Kingdom now and forever, through our faith, worship, communion, witness, and service to Him and His Body.

In today's Gospel we hear: "Have you never read in the scriptures: 'The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner; this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?'" (Mt. 21:42)

Christ is called a stone for two reasons. First, because His foundation is solid and no one who stands upon Him will fall victim to deceitful charms or be moved by the storms of persecution. Second, Christ is called a stone because in Him is the ultimate destruction of the wicked, for just as everything which collides with a stone is shattered while the stone itself remains intact, so also everyone who opposes the Christian faith will himself be ruined, but Christianity will remain untouched. This is the sense in which Christ is the great stone. (Chrysostom)

In Eastern Christianity, the Christogram is sometimes rendered as 'IC XC NIKA' (Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς νικᾷ), meaning "Jesus Christ Conquers". This assurance is a clear reinforcement of today's Scriptural lesson of Christ's ultimate victory from the Cross and against all of His enemies.

[The Rose of Sharon blossom and the buds and leaves pictured are from a shrub I purchased and planted last year from Historic Oakland Cemetery in Atlanta. We see God's power in this life and are assured of it in the life to come in His eternal Kingdom. Amen!]





**George Tsahakis is at Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta.**



4h · Atlanta · 🌐

Sharing a glimpse of the artistry and beauty of God's blessings as I leave my office today. Glory to God always.









PLEASE JOIN US FOR THE

# 2<sup>ND</sup> ANNUAL PAN-ORTHODOX CROSS DIVE

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2023

HOSTED BY

## HOLY CROSS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF MACON

IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE ATLANTA INTER-ORTHODOX PARISH ASSOCIATION (AIOPA)

- FELLOWSHIP ON THE BEACH AT LAKE TOBESOFKEE
- CROSS DIVE FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS
- BBQ DINNER AT THE UPPER PAVILLION
- HOTEL BLOCK FOR THOSE WHO WISH TO CELEBRATE THE DIVINE LITURGY WITH US SUNDAY MORNING




PURCHASE YOUR TICKET TODAY!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT  
[WWW.HOLYCROSSGA.ORG](http://WWW.HOLYCROSSGA.ORG)

## 2nd Annual Pan-Orthodox Cross Dive Event

- Saturday, September 9, 2023
- 1:00 PM - 6:00 PM
- Fellowship at Lake Tobesofkee Sandy Beach Park ([6800 Moseley Dixon Road, Macon, GA 31220](#))
- Cross Dive for High School students
- BBQ Dinner (\$15 per person; children 5 and under 5 are free)

## Looking ahead in Adult Religious Education

Apologetics is literally defense of the faith; the Greek word, “apologia” means “defense” as a lawyer gives at a trial. In every generation, people face the challenges, questions, and concerns of the Gospel message of the Christian faith.



**This Sunday, 9/10**, Fr. George will use the Nicene Creed to challenge our parishioners to explore how Orthodoxy compares with the tenets of other major non-Christian religions. *Join us as we consider the uniqueness of our faith in a diverse world.*

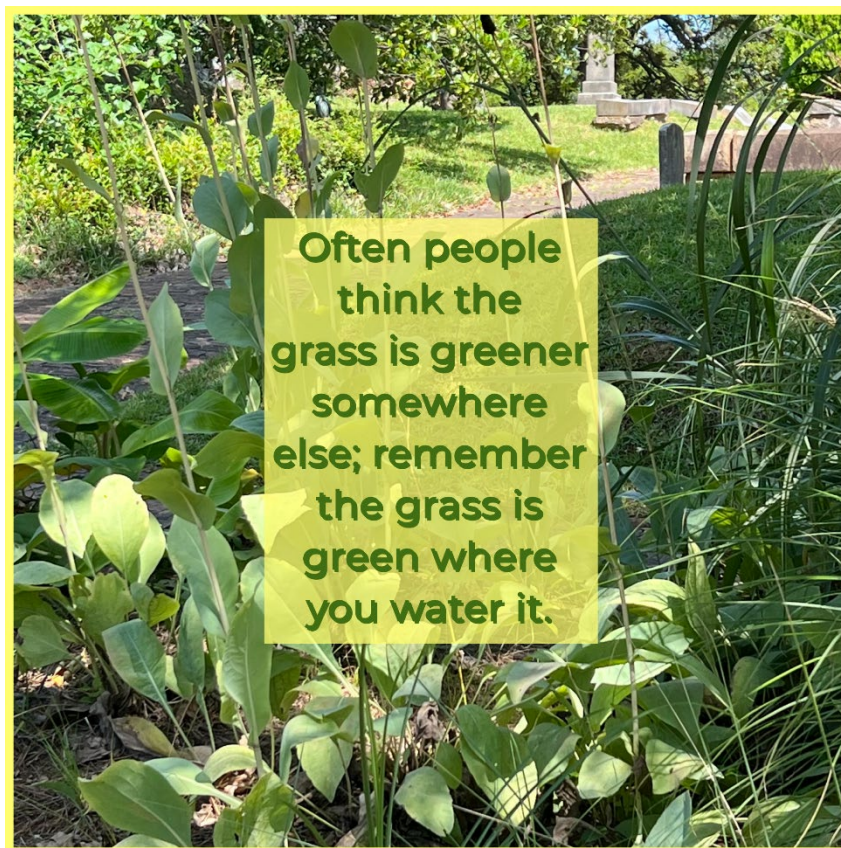
**Next Sunday, 9/17**, Fr. George will seek to debunk common myths and stereotypes of Christian beliefs. *Join us to uncover the truth and apply it to our lives.*

**Note:** *No advanced reading is required but come prepared to engage with your classmates with in-class readings and discussion to help us “defend” our Christian faith in today’s world.*



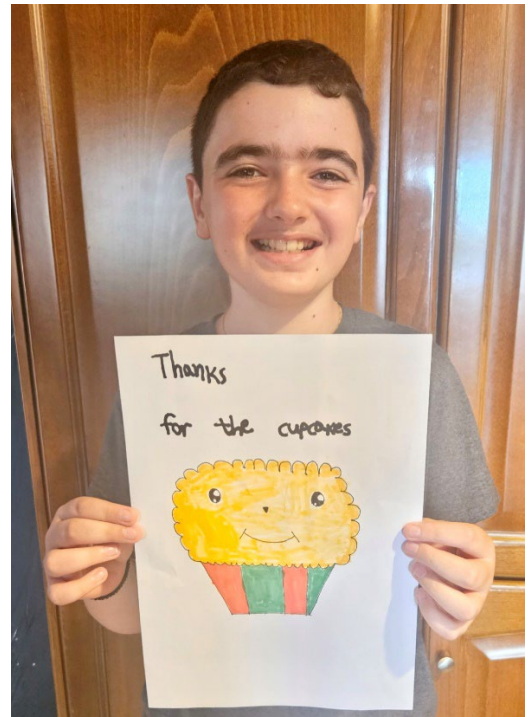


Send Fr. George your suggestion for a caption for the above photo by [clicking here](#). Include the names of those you see if you recognize them.



## Our Sweets Have Crossed the Atlantic

Today, Fr. George received the nicest message from Kirk and Dedee Panayis who are visiting Kirk's mother, brother, sister-in-law and nephew & Godson in Rethymnon, Crete, Greece. They arrived safely yesterday afternoon and delivered the special cupcakes Presbytera Marinda made in honor of my ordination anniversary this past Sunday. They are called "Preacher's Cake" and are used by some Protestant Christians to serve when their "preacher" is invited over. They were made with coconut, walnuts, and almonds topped with a cream cheese frosting. Maria, Vasili, Effie, and Jason included their thanks and Jason added his artwork in the photos below. What a nice surprise to receive. Kirk wrote, "Even though your cupcakes were a little 'bruised' from the transportation, we enjoyed them. Thank you again." Often, the littlest gestures speak the loudest.



**Thank you and prayers for safe travels, Kirk, Dedee, and family.**