



**St. Demetrios
Religious
Education**

FALL-WINTER 2023-24

Dear Parents and Parishioners,

The past few months have been a busy time for our Church School!

In the fall, we worked on a couple of school-wide projects: In September, our students created a **banner honoring the Holy Cross** that was displayed at the church entrance; in November, we made a **Thanksgiving decorative garland**, focusing on everything we are thankful for. We also decorated **one hundred placemats** that were donated to the Market Street Mission in Morristown. They were used at their "Dad and kids holiday brunch", adding a festive note to the meal.

For Christmas, we wrote and sent **greeting cards to Orthodox prisoners**, through the charity organization OCPM (Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry). We also organized a **Secret Santa** event for the elderly residents of **St. Michael's Senior Home** in Yonkers, NY. Our families graciously donated sweaters and hats, while our students created greeting cards and bracelets. Sunday School representatives visited the home to deliver the presents and spend time with the seniors. We had a wonderful time getting to know each other and singing traditional Christmas and New Year carols. We promised to visit again in the spring with our older students. Finally, we visited the **mayor of Union** to sing the traditional Greek kalanda to him and

his office staff, and we offered them a seasonal gift.

In January, we celebrated St. Basil and the New Year by cutting the **traditional Vasilopita**. Sincere thanks to the Philoptochos and the Greek School PTO for their support!

On **February 11**, we are very happy to be organizing **Godparents Sunday**. Godparents and Godchildren are invited to attend the Divine Liturgy and prepare to receive Communion together. After the service, our Sunday School will be treating everyone to breakfast in the church hall. Let us make this day a time to reflect on the blessings of Baptism and to nurture the holy relationship between Godparent and Godchild!

We are very proud of our older students who have been diligently serving our Lord and His Church as **Altar Servers and readers**. Congratulations for a great job!

We would like to **extend our heartfelt thanks** to the parents and grandparents who have been making an effort to bring the children to class on Sundays. Having a full classroom makes our catechists' voluntary work so much more meaningful.

May our Lord bless and guide us all as we go through the rest of the Church year!



A MESSAGE FROM OUR CATECHISTS

PREK-GRADE 1

We have several new kids in our Pre-K to Grade 1 class. Up to now, we have been focusing on the basics: doing our cross properly, learning the Lord's Prayer, learning how to behave in church, and about prayer. We do projects which the kids really enjoy and are so happy to show to their parents. The projects reinforce what we learn in class; being able to display or hang them in their room, the children can remember what we talked about.

Sophia Orphanidou-Koukoutsis & Popi Zavola

GRADES 2-3

We always try to do hands-on activities in our class. This year, we have been sharing a prayer bag: The students rotate taking it home for a week, and using its contents to practice praying in different ways (saying morning and evening prayers, praying for others, using a prayer rope, reading Scripture, lighting a vigil lamp, venerating icons.) The themes we have been working on in class include: the Holy Cross, prayer, Saints (types of Saints, our class Saints, St. Demetrios, St. Nicholas, St. Basil, the Three Hierarchs), the Theotokos' life and Great Feasts, Christmas, and Theophany. We are extremely proud of all the students who have been doing a wonderful job!

Natalia Tzobanakis-Theocharopoulos & Irene Vlahos (assistant)

GRADES 4-6

This year, our Grade 4-6 students will be learning the essentials of our Faith in more detail compared to their previous experiences. Here are some themes we have been working on: The importance of the Holy Cross and the Divine Liturgy in our life. How the holy Angels are around us and protect us. How the Saints, as the special friends of Christ, pray for us when we ask them to. How the Mother of our God is our ladder to heaven and our own Mother. How Saint John the Forerunner, who baptized our Lord, is considered the greatest man born of a woman according to the Church Fathers. We also learned beautiful prayers and now we have started to recite the Creed. We cannot wait to share everything with our Nona and Nono on Godparents' Sunday!!

Despina Lachanaris & Lisa Bukuvalas (assistant)

GRADES 7-8

The young people in seventh and eighth grade have been journaling as a creative way of learning, since the start of the year. We have been keeping in mind the Christian's purpose in life, especially that of our Orthodox Saints: Saint Demetrios to Saint Nektarios and even the Three Hierarchs. In the words of St. Gregory Theologian, "A man must himself become wise, that he may make others wise."

Alexandra Barnat, Christine Drivas, Sarah Melachrinis & George Theocharopoulos (assistant)

HIGH SCHOOL

In the high school class, we've been discussing the importance of prayer and forming good habits to support our spiritual growth. From the start of the year, we have been working on the Gospel of Matthew. Recently, we covered Jesus' many miracles and their significance. Our Lord performed miracles out of love for each and every one of us, never for His own glory or praise.

Stephanie Nikitiades & Irene Papasavvas

-
- *We welcome Fr Evgenios as our head and spiritual advisor, and wish him every blessing for a very long and fruitful time with our parish!*
 - *We would like to thank our long-time director, Mrs. Irene Melachrinis, for her selfless dedication to our Church School during the previous years. Irene stepped down from director this year, currently acting as advisor and parish liaison. We are grateful for her help and support.*

THE DIRECTORS: Nikos Papadopoulos and Natalia Tzobanakis-Theocharopoulos