



NEPSIS

Spiritual watchfulness and alertness. "Watch, therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming" (Matthew 24:42)

Saint Sophia's Greek Orthodox Church
325 Waring Road
Syracuse, New York 13224
Phone (315) 446-5222



THE FESTIVAL

It's time for the festival! As I walk around the church everyday, I find people preparing - bakers, dancers, setting up booths - activity galore.

I was speaking with a seasoned member of the parish, and she said how she liked the festival much more when it was more oriented toward culture and less toward food. "But what culture can be celebrated without celebrating it's food?" I asked. "And besides, the food makes all the money."

She laughed and agreed. Sure, you can go to a Greek festival and look at pictures of Santorini. But then you've got to go outside and have a gyro! Drink a beer and top it off with a baklava sundae! Nice.

I have to confess to you that I'm always surprised at how many people come to the church tours. Of course, our church is the most beautiful in Syracuse, that's why. But it tells me that this is much more than a food and dancing festival. This is an opportunity for us to let our faith shine. There are people in our parish today who converted to the Orthodox faith because of a church tour during a festival. That fact in itself is amazing.

It's like going to a NASCAR race and looking up close at one of the cars. You have to be impressed! So much has gone into the design, the construction, the technology. It is truly a work of art. But don't stop there! It's much more than a work of art! I use this illustration at the beginning of some of my church tours: the car, sitting in the pit, is extremely impressive. But what you really need to do is come and watch it roar. When you see a stock car race, then you know what all this "impressiveness" is all about. So it is with the Church. Come on a Sunday morning and *hear the roar!*

It's also a time to visit with old friends, isn't it? At every festival, someone approaches me who I haven't seen ... well, since last year's festival. For all of us, there are people we only see at the festival. What a great opportunity to reconnect! Clergy come from the area churches, old friends stop by, people come out of the woodwork. Thank God for the festival - we wouldn't see some of these people at all if it weren't for the gallons of tzatziki and mountains of feta calling them home.

And here's the other part of the festival - we get to work together on a project. When I did marriage counseling, I would sometimes suggest that couples work on a project together, the festival. As we work to prepare and "pull off" this massive undertaking, we are knit into a fellowship of love: love for our culture, love for our church, and love for one another.

Your affectionate servant,

Fr. David

June 2026

2026

Parish Council

Peter Manolacos
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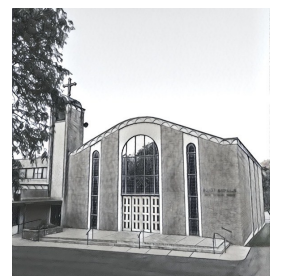
Christopher Shiomos,
OD

Honorary
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James Sakezles

**VISIT THE
PARISH
WEBSITE**

stsophias.org





PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Well here we are again. It is not raining and the sun is out. It's a balmy 63 degrees (when there is no wind), and people are at our church making baklava—trays and trays of baklava. It is Spring in Syracuse, and in a little less than three weeks our annual festival, Greek Fest, begins.

"What?" you ask, "so soon again". Yep, it is indeed that time again. For a few of us festival planning has been going on since February. But by April and May more of our volunteers appear: to set up, to bake, to cook, to slice, dice, and chop. And then the tent goes up and the pace accelerates. On Wednesday June 10, if all goes well, we will have put it all together, the town officials will have given us the go ahead and we will be ready.

People in the community say that it is Greek Fest, not Memorial Day, that is the harbinger of summer. Greek Fests all over the country are woven into local calendars. Patrons of all ethnicities come from near and far to enjoy the food, music, and dance. And when it is over, we at St. Sophia's will have amassed almost half of our annual operating budget. We need our festival to keep the doors of St. Sophia's open.

We are not unique in needing the proceeds of the festival to operate the church. But there are churches (and we were once one of them) that hold a festival but do not need the proceeds to keep the lights on. Now wouldn't that be wonderful.

How is this possible, you ask. Well, there are no miracles at play here. And you all have the answer to the question. If you said "we need to increase donations to the church, we need to double stewardship", give yourself a piece of that baklava because you are correct.

I and many others have pointed out that our volunteers are ageing. So many who have worked for days are now no longer able to pitch in. While younger folks are stepping up to take over leadership roles, we see attrition in the number of volunteers showing up to work during the four-day event. Some who used to work all four days are now able to work for a few hours. We are so grateful to have all of our volunteers but, based on recent history, one might conclude that time is not on our side.

As Yogi Berra once said, "Predictions are hard, especially about the future". I have no doubt that our parishioners would step up with their donations if we had a crisis. They certainly did so during Covid. Yet those increased donations were, for the most part, one-time events. So I think that waiting for a crisis to motivate greater financial generosity is a dangerous plan. What makes more sense is for those who can to begin increasing their stewardship so that a crisis never arises.

I would suggest a different approach. Instead of looking to increase stewardship because we need to cover any festival shortfall, why not have as a goal to increase stewardship so that festival proceeds can be used to strengthen church ministries, to support our young people, to reach out to those in need, to be a beacon of Christ's love for all. Praise be to God.

See you at the Festival.

Yours in Christ,

Peter Manolakos

Parish Council President

May 2026
Sacramental Registry

Chrismations

Nathaniel and Stacy (Maria) Stark
May 10

Funerals

Stavros Tamoutselis
April 28 (died April 25)

June 2026
Memorials

- June 7** Stavros Tamoutselis (40 Days)
- June 14** Elpis Voutsinas (1 Year)
- June 21** Angelo Vastakis (1 Year)
- June 28** *None Scheduled*

Apostles Fast 2026: Monday, June 8 – Monday, June 29

Fish, wine and oil can be consumed throughout the fast, except on Wednesdays and Fridays which are strict fast days. This moveable fast is in honor of the Holy Apostles, who fasted in preparation for their missionary journeys.



Feast of SS Peter and Paul

Monday – June 29, 2026
9:00 am Orthros
10:00 am Divine Liturgy



The Orthodox Church has a beautiful presentation of the importance and prominence of the Apostles Peter and Paul with the icon that shows both Apostles standing together holding an image of the Church.

Both Apostles, being chosen by our Lord, were instrumental in the establishment and growth of the early Church through their boldness, spiritual strength, and wisdom. Thus they are recognized as "pillars" of the Church, having offered all even unto death for the sake of the Gospel of Christ.

In the icon, the Apostle Paul, the great missionary of the early Church, is holding a Gospel book, while the Apostle Peter offers a blessing with his right hand. At the top of the icon is the is a semicircle, representing the divine realm. Rays extend in the semicircle representing the blessings and presence of God upon His two chosen heralds of the True Faith.



BEHIND THE CHANT STAND

“An Invitation to Orthros”

When I first visited an Orthodox Church, I made sure I got there early. Divine Liturgy at 10am—arrive at 9:45am (I think I actually got there at 9:30am to be safe). Before having a toddler, I was always at least 15 minutes early to everything. My church routine was this: I would arrive my customary 15 minutes early, kneel in silence in my customary pew, and attempt to have a little bit of time alone with God. Little more than an hour later, the mass would be dismissed and I would be immediately off on my way. Obligation fulfilled, back to my life. Now imagine my surprise when I walked through the doors of the church and heard beautiful Byzantine chanting, indicating that a service that was already in progress, and had been going on long before I arrived. That phrase, “it had been going on long before I arrived”, was a defining phrase in my journey to the Orthodox Church.

I look back on that first moment as the time I first stepped into my new home and witnessed what would become my calling. It was challenging and unfamiliar: I didn’t know how to interact with the church (the candles, the icons, etc.) or understand half of the words of the service, but there was something about it—the chanting, the graceful liturgical movements of the priests, the way that the congregation just seemed to know what to do—that drew me in. I had walked in during Orthros (also known as Matins), which was an entirely new worship experience to me. At no point did a priest turn to the congregation to explain what was going on; he just said “Peace be with you all” several times and at one point brought forward the Gospel Book for people to kiss. There was no sign in the church with “Hymn Numbers for Today”, but it seemed like the chanters knew exactly what they were doing, and I would be hard-pressed to sing along. In fact, it didn’t seem like the service was *about me* at all! Rather, it was all about God and His Saints, and it was something I could be part of.

At Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Atlanta, GA, the beautiful mosaic-filled temple is graced with on average six well-trained chanters each Sunday. I immediately recognized a couple of facts: 1) these chanters were continuing a sophisticated and ancient tradition, with years of preparation and 2) it would take a lifetime to understand the depth of all the hymns being sung.

In my religious education, I spent a lot of time imagining what the worship in the Temple in Jerusalem would have been like. As a child learning about heaven, I wondered what the “choirs of angels” would sound like, and whether I would get sick of hearing them after a thousand years. Stepping into an Orthodox Church that day, I was immediately sure that I had found the heavenly worship, and that I needed to learn to be part of it. So, as I drew nearer and nearer to the Church, I started coming earlier and earlier, until I started training as a chanter and arrived 15 minutes before Orthros started. Around four years in, I’m still just beginning my chanting education, but it’s a huge part of my life and the best way I can think of to help the Church.

I share these anecdotes to show that there is something deep we can enter into when we go to Orthros. Orthros isn’t about fulfilling a Sunday obligation, or getting ready to receive communion, or getting a theological education. Rather, Orthros (just like Vespers and many other services in the Church) is about praising God as much as we can. It’s about praising God with the Psalms, the songs that express every human emotion, longing, frustration, hope. It’s about praising God in the early morning and at the setting of the sun. It’s about recounting the whole story of salvation – the Old and New Testaments, the Prophets, the Incarnation, the Cross, the women running to the empty tomb. It’s about communion with the saints whose hymns express timeless truth: John of Damascus, Kassiani, Romanos the Melodist.

(Continued...)



(Continued...)

Orthros is cyclical – almost never are two Sundays alike. There are eight musical modes (more on those next time) with a set of hymns for each of them rotating each Sunday, along with rotating Gospel readings about the Resurrection, feast days, and commemorations of saints. There’s a great depth of wisdom and beauty to be gained through this service, and to this day, I find new phrases in hymns each Sunday that help me to get to know our Lord and his saints better. In the congregation, you can find a holy moment of stillness while you sit and absorb the hymns that praise God in words we could never find by ourselves. Even if you don’t understand or grasp everything being sung, you’ll *get it* more each time you come. The chanters and clergy are happy to answer questions about our beloved Orthros too.

So, this is an invitation to Orthros. If you come late or just in time for the Divine Liturgy, try coming early. If your Sunday mornings are hectic and rushed, we have a livestream for you to listen to. Since we now consistently have four chanters – two Greek speaking, two English speaking – Orthros tends to be 50/50 Greek/English. There’s an app (GOA Digital Chant Stand) where you can read along if you like. You can even learn to chant if you like with many fantastic resources available, join our growing Byzantine choir, and find a calling that will last a lifetime.

Attending Orthros, you’ll find that “going to church” is not a 1.5-hour time block on Sundays we give to God, but a living, breathing tradition that draws you in the more you step forward. It doesn’t start when the Priest says “Blessed is the Kingdom...”; it started at the beginning of time and has been preserved by God’s people through the ages. It doesn’t end when the priest says “Let us go forth in peace,” but rather continues into eternity.

In Christ’s Service,

Nigel van der Woude

Parish Office Administrator, Chanter

Festival Setup Schedule —Volunteer Opportunities

Wed. June 3: 9am-12pm
Finikia syrup and dip

Thurs.-Fri. June 4-5 : 9am-9pm
Pastry cupping and boxing

Saturday, June 6: 9am
Tzatziki Making

Monday, June 8th: 11am-4pm
Electric & Gas Setup

Tuesday, June 9

9am-3pm **Pitas**

11am-4pm **Electric & Gas Setup**

3pm-9pm **Rice Pudding**

5pm **Outside Tent Setup**

Wednesday, June 10:

9am-3pm: **Pitas**

3pm-9pm: **Rice Pudding**

Sunday, June 14: 4pm-6pm

Breakdown



2026 Festival Volunteer Online Sign-up

WE WANT YOU FOR GREEK FEST



The 2026 St. Sophia's Greek Cultural Festival is coming — and we need YOU to help make it unforgettable! Our Festival thrives because of the amazing energy and talents of volunteers like you.

Whether you can give a few hours or a few days, your time makes a huge difference. We're looking for enthusiastic individuals to lend a hand in all areas. We encourage you to sign up for multiple shifts if you can!

Join us in creating another year of cherished memories, vibrant community, and Greek hospitality at its finest. Thank you for being such an important part of our Festival's success!



To volunteer for positions, please go to our volunteer sign-up website at:

<https://signup.com/go/ZDnZhHK>

A big thank you to Martina Auer for her work recreating the Festival Website.
Please check it out at
[syracusegreekfest.com](https://www.syracusegreekfest.com)

PHILOPTOCHOS COFFEE HOUR SERVICE



Philoptochos provides the coffee service during Coffee Hour on Sundays from September through May. During these months, please call the Church Office to schedule a sponsored coffee hour for a memorial.

Procedure to Schedule a Memorial Sponsored Coffee Hour Service:

1. Call the church office 315-446-5222 and schedule the memorial and sponsored coffee hour with Nigel van der Woude (Parish Office Administrator).
2. Choose one of the levels of Coffee Service below. Coffee Hour Service Fees to be paid ONLY by check made payable to Philoptochos (Memo line: include date of service & name of honored loved one.)

Mail check to: Attn: Philoptochos 325 Waring Road - Syracuse, NY 13224

Sponsored Coffee Service Options

=>Basic Coffee Service - \$50 includes the following:

Philoptochos provides and serves the coffee, milk, sugar, and juice.
Parishioner provides the pastries.

=>Super Plus Coffee Service - \$150 includes the following:

Philoptochos provides and serves the Pastries, coffee, milk, sugar, and juice.

Reminder: Dates not available to sponsor Coffee Hour service include; Stewardship Sunday, Godparents Sunday, and Cheese Fare Sunday. Please refer to the Church calendar for these dates.

***Summary Months of June, July and August:**

To sponsor a coffee hour during these summer months only Basic Coffee Service (\$50) is available. Philoptochos provides coffee, cups, sweetener, creamer, stirrers and set up the serving table. Parishioner provides: Pastries, set up the serving station and tables, serve the coffee hour and clean up service immediately following coffee service. During these summer months, please call either Coffee Coordinators of Coffee Service - Vivian Alexander 315-673-2880 or 315-430-6162 or Maria Allis.



The AHEPA Syracuse three entities serving the Syracuse Greater Area and Onondaga County held their annual elections for the year of July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027

*Help us promote the ancient Hellenic ideals of Philanthropy, Education, Civic Responsibility, Family and Individual Excellence
Join one of the entities by contacting any of the corresponding officers*

AHEPA Syracuse Chapter 37 Elected Officers

Peter Panels, President
George Nardone, Vice President
Evangelos Dentes, Secretary
Mike Labatos, Treasurer

AHEPA 37 Inc.- AHEPA Senior Housing at 100 AHEPA Cir. in Syracuse

George Nardone, President
Mike Labatos, Vice President
Ted Limpert, Secretary
Andrew Miledonis, Treasurer

AHEPA Syracuse Foundation Inc

James Telonis, President
Peter Frantzis, Vice President
Peter Demas, Secretary
Peter Peters, Treasurer

St. Sophia's Greek Orthodox Church — June 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
8:45 AM ORTHROS 10:00 AM DIVINE LITURGY SUNDAY OF ALL SAINTS			6:00 PM GREEK DANCE PRACTICE			5:00 PM GREAT VESPERS
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
8:45 AM ORTHROS 10:00 AM DIVINE LITURGY SUNDAY OF ALL SAINTS	<u>APOSTLES FAST BEGINS</u>			<u>GREEK FESTIVAL</u> <u>5-9 PM</u>	<u>GREEK FESTIVAL</u> <u>5-10 PM</u>	<u>GREEK FESTIVAL</u> <u>NOON-10PM</u>
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
8:45 AM ORTHROS 10:00 AM DIVINE LITURGY <u>GREEK FESTIVAL</u> <u>NOON-4PM</u>		6:00 PM AHEPA				10:00 AM ROMANIAN LITURGY 5:00 PM GREAT VESPERS
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
8:45 AM ORTHROS 10:00 AM DIVINE LITURGY FATHER'S DAY			9:00 AM ORTHROS 10:00 AM DIVINE LITURGY NATIVITY OF ST. JOHN THE FORERUNNER	6:00 PM CHOIR PRACTICE	6:00 PM CHOIR PRACTICE	
28	29	30				
8:45 AM ORTHROS 10:00 AM DIVINE LITURGY	9:00 AM ORTHROS 10:00 AM DIVINE LITURGY HOLY APOSTLES PETER AND PAUL					

St. Sophia's Greek Orthodox Church — July 2026

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
8:45 AM ORTHROS 10:00 AM DIVINE LITURGY	6	7 10:00 AM BIBLE STUDY	8	9 6:00 PM CHOIR PRACTICE	10	11 5:00 PM GREAT VESPERS
8:45 AM ORTHROS 10:00 AM DIVINE LITURGY	13	14 10:00 AM BIBLE STUDY	15	16 6:00 PM CHOIR PRACTICE	17	18 5:00 PM GREAT VESPERS
8:45 AM ORTHROS 10:00 AM DIVINE LITURGY SUNDAY OF THE HOLY FATHERS	20	21 10:00 AM BIBLE STUDY	22	23 6:00 PM CHOIR PRACTICE	24	25 9:00 AM ORTHROS 10:00 AM DIVINE LITURGY ST. ANNA
8:45 AM ORTHROS 10:00 AM DIVINE LITURGY	27 9:00 AM ORTHROS 10:00 AM DIVINE LITURGY ST. PANTELEIMON	28 10:00 AM BIBLE STUDY	29	30 6:00 PM CHOIR PRACTICE	31	



**JUNE
11-14**

53rd Annual
**ST. SOPHIA'S
GREEK FESTIVAL**

THURS. JUNE 11th 5 PM to 9 PM

FRI. JUNE 12th 5 PM to 10 PM

SAT. JUNE 13th Noon to 10 PM

SUN. JUNE 14th Noon to 4 PM

FOUR DAYS OF FLAVOR, FUN, & GREEK CULTURE!

Live Music | Dance Performances | Authentic Greek Cuisine | Shopping | Church Tours

325 Waring Road, Syracuse, NY

FOR MORE INFO VISIT **SYRACUSEGREEKFEST.COM**

RAIN OR SHINE | FREE PARKING | FREE ADMISSION | FREE SHUTTLE

2026 ST. TIMOTHY SUMMER CAMP

REGISTRATION IS OPEN!



sttimothycamp.org

THE DETAILS

When: August 9th - 15th, 2026

Where: Camp Oswegatchie - Croghan, NY

Who: 8 years old - High Schoolers

Scholarships Available

QUESTIONS?

youth@detroit.goarch.org



2026 College Graduates

We thank God for our brilliant young adults raised at St. Sophia's who have gone on to success in higher education.

Cleo Shiomos
Cornell University

Noelle Anthis
Wingate University

St. Sophia's Website & Mailing List

Visit the St. Sophia's website at www.stsophias.org. There is a wealth of information on the website with the most up to date calendar on services and events, color photographs from recent functions, electronic sacrament forms to easily fill out and submit, and an online chapel highlighting the days readings and hymns. Please subscribe to our mailing list to receive the latest information instantly. By subscribing to the mailing list you will be able to receive the electronic form of the Nepsis, the weekly bulletin, parish obituary announcements, and any other pertinent information. You may sign up by going to the website and clicking the tab titled "Subscribe to our Mailing List" or via this link: <https://www.stsophias.org/join-our-mail-list> It's that easy!

If you no longer require the paper copy of Nepsis through the mail, please notify Nigel in the office so that you may be removed from the mailing list.