



## St. Demetrios Religious Education



SPRING - SUMMER 2024

Head: Fr. Evgenios Tsaramanidis

### Dear Parents and Parishioners,

Thank you so much for attending our end-of-year celebration! We are very happy to be sharing our latest news with you.

On March 3, our children were honored to welcome **His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos**. We offered him a hand-made gift, and our younger students conducted a brief presentation.

On March 9, our middle school and high school students visited **St. Michael's home for the elderly**, in Yonkers, NY. They performed for the residents and spent some enjoyable time with them.

All our classes worked on **Lenten activities** to learn about this most important period. We faithfully participated in the icon procession on **Sunday of Orthodoxy**, and venerated the Cross on the **Veneration of the Holy Cross**. We also worked on **service projects**. Following our Lord's command on Matthew 25:31-46, we sent Pascha greeting cards to Christian prisoners through the **Orthodox Christian Prison Ministry**. Additionally, we organized our first **Senior Fun Night**, where the children of our parish took care of our pappoudes and giagiades. It was an enjoyable evening of treats, games, and fellowship, and we look forward to doing it again next year.

We also took part in an **international Pascha Exchange**: We prepared greeting cards, videos, and little gifts, which we exchanged with children from other Orthodox communities around the world.

Religious education is not only for children! During Lent, our head and spiritual guide, Fr. Evgenios Tsaramanidis, started an **evening**

**adult Bible study class** which was very well attended. It will continue next year.

Our directors, catechists, and students were proud to take part in the **Greek Independence Day parade** on April 14, together with our other ministries.

On **Lazarus Saturday**, we helped prepare palm crosses for Palm Sunday. Our families were present at church throughout **Holy Week**. On Holy Friday, our Myrofores and a large group of Altar Servers did a wonderful job honoring the Epitaphios. We are really proud of them!

Finally, on **Mother's Day**, the children prepared a card honoring the Theotokos, to ask for her blessing for their mothers and thank them for their love and care.

We are very thankful for our older male students who have been diligently serving as **Altar Servers and readers**. Congratulations on a job well done!

During Lent, our co-director Natalia Tzobanakis-Theocharopoulou started attending the **chanter's stand** as an extension of her catechesis effort. She is grateful for the understanding and support of our community, as she is learning about this ministry which is entirely new to her.

We would like to **extend our heartfelt thanks** to the parents and grandparents who have been making every effort to bring the children to class on Sundays. It makes a great difference.

**May our Lord bless and guide us all, until we meet again in the fall!**



# A MESSAGE FROM OUR CATECHISTS

## **PREK-GRADE 1**

In our class, we have continued focusing on the basics: doing our cross properly, learning the Lord's Prayer, learning how to behave in church and about prayer. Most of the second half of the year dealt with Lent. We discussed how we can be better people and good Christians while we prepare for Pascha. The children enjoyed doing projects and counting down to the Resurrection. It was also fun to make a Mother's Day craft for our moms!

*Sophia Orphanidou-Koukoutsis & Popi Zavola*

## **GRADES 2-3**

During the whole year, we have been sharing a prayer bag: the students rotated taking it home for a week, using its contents to practice praying in different ways. The themes we have been exploring in the second half include: The Three Hierarchs. The Meeting of our Lord (Υπαπαντή). Great Lent, its meaning, duration, practices, and traditions - which we also presented to His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos. Lenten themes: holy icons, the Holy Cross, Holy Week, the Crucifixion, and Burial. The Annunciation and the role of the Theotokos in God's plan for man's salvation. The Resurrection, appearances of our Lord after the Resurrection, Ascension, and Holy Pentecost. We also exchanged Pascha greetings and little gifts with Orthodox parishes in Iowa, Canada, and Australia.

*Natalia Tzobanakis-Theocharopoulou & Irene Vlahos (assistant)*

## **GRADES 4-6**

Χριστός Ανέστη! - Αληθώς Ανέστη! Here is a snapshot of our lessons after January: We learned about Great Lent as the preparation period for Pascha and we presented it to our Metropolitan Apostolos! We experienced the Holy Week and the glorious Liturgy of the Resurrection. We exchanged Pascha cards and gifts with our new pen-pals in the USA and Australia. We learned about the Holy Emperors Constantine the Great and his mother Helen who contributed so much to the establishment of the Church. There is still much to learn about the history of the Church but we have to wait until the new school year. We hope that our students make the most of the summertime, have fun (consider attending Camp Good Shepherd!), and keep going to church.

*Despina Lachanaris & Lisa Bukvalas (assistant)*

## **GRADES 7-8**

Our 7th & 8th grade students have been journaling throughout the year to deepen their understanding of our faith and community. We have been exploring key biblical stories and saints discussing their relevance to modern life. Aside from our lessons, the students have been involved in various activities in our community. This year we also participated in our wonderful Pascha exchange with another Greek Orthodox church in Pennsylvania. Our group was excited to receive Pascha cards and share Pascha traditions with them. Overall, our 7th & 8th graders' Sunday school class has been a meaningful journey of faith, learning, and community, equipping the children with valuable insights and experiences that will guide them in their spiritual growth.

*Alexandra Barnat, Christine Drivas, Irene Papasavvas & Sarah Melachrinos (assistant)*

## **HIGH SCHOOL**

Our high school students spent the second half of the year discussing select topics from the Gospel of Matthew, such as parables and miracles. We also explored the lives of major saints like the three Hierarchs and St. John the Baptist, and elaborated on topics relevant to Great Lent, such as the meaning of each Sunday and the importance of almsgiving, fasting and prayer. We focused on the deeper meanings and insights of those themes, and extracted inspiration about how they could impact and benefit our everyday lives. Lastly, in an effort to serve others, we wrote Pascha cards for prisoners and organized a night of fun and fellowship for our older parishioners.

*Stephanie Nikitiades & George Theocharopoulos*

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*Our directors would like to thank the St. Demetrios community, and our advisor/parish liaison Irene Melachrinos, for always supporting our efforts. With love in Christ, Nikos Papadopoulos and Natalia Tzobanakis-Theocharopoulou*