



THE FEAST OF FEASTS ~ 2025

A TIME TO CONNECT IN PARISH LIFE

ST. NEKTARIOS SPECIAL EDITION



*“Come, receive the light from the never-setting Light,
and glorify Christ, who is risen from the dead.”*



IN HIS SERVICE AT ST. NEKTARIOS

*Where we all belong and grow in the faith through
Worship, Service, Witness and Fellowship*

**Thank you for your generous offerings
in His Service as we celebrated the Feast of Feasts.**

Richer Worship

Being active participants in the sacramental
and prayer life of the church.



Vibrant Fellowship

Integrating our Faith with daily life,
“dwelling in unity.”

Loving Service

As Christ came “to serve”, we glorify God by loving
and offering good works to his Church and mankind.



Brighter Witnessing

Displaying the light of Christ
is a witness of our faith.

Orthodox Faith is Active

The St. Nektarios community has been in service to God and mankind for more than a quarter of a century.
Each of us is called to put our Orthodox faith and ministries into *action*.

Faith is a continuous transformative practice of our walk to be in union with God.

**Throughout our Journey to Pascha, we connected with each other
to enrich our faith, our family and our Community.**

This special issue includes a sampling of how we shared our God-given gifts.

OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA — 40 DAYS OF LENT

Memorial Services & Saturday of Souls

Saturday is the traditional day of the week reserved for those who have fallen asleep. One of the two Saturdays of Souls falls on the Saturday before Meatfare Sunday. The next two Saturdays in remembrance of the Ascetics and the Miracle of the Kollyva, Divine Liturgy is followed by a memorial service. Our faithful bring kollyva as we pray for their reposed brothers and sisters.



Clean Monday

On Clean Monday, our clergy, staff and ministry leaders came together for teaching, prayer and strength for the fast. Each found a quiet place within the sanctuary to pray the Jesus Prayer separately and came back together to discuss our thoughts.



Forgiveness Vespers

Before we entered the Lenten fast, we were reminded that there can be no true fast, no genuine repentance, no reconciliation with God, unless we are at the same time reconciled with one another.



On the evening of the Sunday of Forgiveness, the Church conducted the first service of the Great Fast. This service directs us further on the path of repentance and helps us to acknowledge our need for forgiveness from God and to seek forgiveness from our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Weekly Services

The first week of Lent had an intensified service schedule with daily compline and the reading of the Canon of St. Andrew. The weeks that followed Great Compline services were held on Monday evenings; Presanctified Divine Liturgy on Wednesdays evenings and Friday noon; and Small Compline with Salutations to the Theotokos on Friday evening.





IN HIS SERVICE

FELLOWSHIP

Integrating our Faith with
daily life, "dwelling in unity"

Breaking Bread Together We shared our Lenten recipes, our international cuisines and hours of culinary skills

- ◆ Wednesday Night Lenten meals —when many families lovingly labored to prepare homemade soups and provided side dishes to share
- ◆ Thursdays Lent, Lunch and Learn
- ◆ Friday light Lenten lunches following Presanctified Liturgy
- ◆ Third Sunday of Lent—our Middle Eastern Families generously hosted Fellowship Coffee Hour
- ◆ Breaking the fast after the Resurrection service with gallons of handmade lamb soup
- ◆ Agape picnic with buffets overflowing with hand made Pastitsio, roasted lamb, Greek potatoes, Spanakopitakia, salad, Grecian chicken, lamb off the spit, plus the dessert station to satisfy all.



OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA — SUNDAYS OF LENT



Sunday of Orthodoxy — March 9th

“Orthodoxy is what Christ taught, the apostles preached and Fathers kept.” - St. Athanasius the Great

On the first Sunday of Lent, we commemorated the restoration of the holy and venerable icons. As everyone processed around the church on this beautiful day, they joyfully displayed their special icons from home. We venerated the icons in honor of the holy men and women of God who suffered and died for the truth of the gospel so that we might come to the knowledge of Christ.



Our friendly neighborhood geese, (nicknamed Lucy & Ricky by Sofia N. in the office) also joined in the procession.



OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA — SUNDAYS OF LENT



Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas March 16th

“The light of Christ illumines all.”
- St. Gregory Palamas

Known as the champion of the Jesus Prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.”



Sunday of St. John Climacus March 30th

“Humility is the only virtue that no devil can imitate. If pride made demons out of angels, there is no doubt that humility could make agens out of demons”
- S.t John Climacus.

The author of the Ladder of Divine Ascent, teachings us to stay on the ladder of our spiritual life.

Sunday of the Veneration of the Holy Cross - March 23rd

“For the Cross is the salvation of the Church; the Cross is the boast of those who hope in it; the Cross is reconciliation of enemies to God and conversion of sinners to Christ.”

St. John Chrysostom



On the third Sunday of Holy Lent, the Orthodox Church commemorated the Precious and Life-Giving Cross of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Services included a special veneration of the Cross, which prepared the faithful for the commemoration of the Crucifixion during Holy Week. In the midpoint of Lent, the Cross helps us to remain strong in our faith, continue our fast, and look forward to the Feast of Feast.

Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt April 6th

Having been a sinful woman, you became a Bride of Christ through repentance. Having attained the angelic life, you defeated demons by the weapon of the Cross; therefore, O most glorious Mary you are a Bride of the Kingdom. — Kontakion
Stresses the importance of seeking repentance.



OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA — MARCH 25



Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos —

“Hail, O favored one, the Lord is with you.”

Luke 1:26-39

The Feast commemorates the announcement by the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of God, would become incarnate and enter into this world through her womb.

Clergy and lay faithful from the region gathered to celebrate the great feast of the Annunciation at the eponymous parish in Winston-Salem for Great Vespers. At St. Nektarios, the community was treated to a fish luncheon in honor of all who were celebrating including our Evelyn Klund “Evangelia”.



OUR JOURNEY — SATURDAY OF LAZARUS

Saturday of Holy, Righteous Friend of Christ, Lazarus A Day of Worship, Witness, Fellowship and Service

The Church commemorates the miracle of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ when he raised Lazarus from the dead after he had lain in the grave four days. The Church bears witness to the power of Christ over death and exalts Him as King before entering the most solemn week of the year, Holy Week.

A Day of Worship and Witness — offering gifts to God in preparation for Holy Communion

It is our annual tradition to offer a Special Teaching Divine Liturgy on this day. Early during Orthros, Fr. Andreas brings the holy gifts out onto the Solea. Our parishioners gather around as they witness, close-up, what happens in the altar at each Liturgy. Father explains the seal on the prosfora and how it is prayerfully cut in to small portions to prepare for Holy Communion.



A Day of Service and Fellowship

1000+ Palm Crosses

Following the Divine Liturgy, members of our Young at Heart hosted a hearty pancake breakfast for all. Adults and youth offered their time and talent to prepare the more than 1000 Palm Cross needed for the next day.



The members of the Ladies Philoptochos spent the afternoon setting up for their annual Palm Sunday luncheon.



IN HIS SERVICE

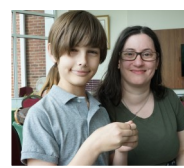
**Serving Humanity
in the Name of our Lord**

*"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served,
but to serve . . ." Mark 10:45*

We honor and glorify God by loving and serving humanity in His name. For Orthodox Christians, service to God and community is a way of living one's faith.

Glory to God

- For the helpful hands making the palm crosses
- For our Alms-giving on the Sundays of Lent
- For our volunteers on Palm Sunday to raise funds for the
- St. Nicholas Benevolence Fund
- For our volunteers who made meal packs for the homeless
- For our volunteers who sorted food for the hungry
- For our visits to our shut-ins, sharing Pascha baskets
- For our parish family offering the best of each's ability



OUR JOURNEY AND GOOD WORKS

SUNDAYS OF ALMSGIVING

“COME, LET US PURIFY OURSELVES BY ACTS OF CHARITY...”

At St. Nektarios Church, the five Sundays of the Great Fast have served as focal points, harnessing the collective giving spirit of our faithful parishioners. Each Sunday was dedicated to support a particular philanthropic ministry.

\$6K+ Raised

MARCH 9 ST. ANASTASIA MEDICAL ASSISTANCE

A ministry of the parish which provides aid to members of the community with serious financial needs, requiring immediate action, as a result of significant medical issues.

MARCH 16 PHILOPTOCHOS - CHILDREN'S MEDICAL FUND

A national Philoptochos initiative to raise funds to distribute as grants to pediatric programs, facilities and research.

MARCH 23 PHILOPTOCHOS - HELLENIC COLLEGE/HOLY CROSS

A national Philoptochos commitment to support our theological school that prepares students for the holy priesthood or for lay vocations in which they can put their faith into action.

MARCH 30 CHILD OF GOD ACADEMY & FEEDING PROGRAM

A ministry of the parish assisting the Metropolis of Kenya to support the Academy which provides education, food and clean water to orphans and disadvantage children in the slums of Nairobi.

APRIL 6 HUMAN TRAFFICKING TASKFORCE

Made up of vetted service providers agencies that work with victims every day in Mecklenburg County.

Thank You!

800+ Packages

Philoptochos Packed Meals for those served by Roof Above



32 Man Hours

Mission & Philanthropy Volunteers sorting canned goods in two hours to stock 40 regional pantries.



42 Deliveries

of Pascha Baskets to our Shut-in families



PREPARATIONS FOR WORSHIP



IN HIS SERVICE PREPARING The beauty of His House

Preparations beyond providing wine, oil, and prosfora.

- Cleaning liturgical item under the tent
- Tables, linens, going from purple during the week to bright for Sunday
- Changing the icons in the Narthex frames
- Preparing the Narthex sand boxes between services
- Placing the drip holders on the 1500 candles
- Printing service booklets
- Glass votives for the blessing of the oil. One sits in a bed of flour which is then used to make the prosfora for Holy Thursday morning Liturgy,
- Holy Thursday --- Solea vigil candle lighting
- Ironing the cloth to receive the icon of the Body of Christ from the cross
- Dyeing eggs – and then wiping them down before the resurrection service
- Luminaries to light the path of Holy Friday Procession
- Rose water for sprinkling

Flowers

- Adorning the icon of the Theotokos for the weekly salutations
- Yellow carnations for the Veneration of the Cross
- Palm Sunday — Palm arrangement and palm crosses
- Bridegroom icon
- Wreath for the Cross for our Lord's Passion and bouquet at His feet.
- Adorning the Kouvouklion for Friday night
- Flower petals for Holy Saturday Morning
- Transforming the sanctuary to white for the glorious resurrection.



HOLY WEEK



Palm Sunday

Palm Sunday, one of the most joyous feasts of the year, is the commemoration of the Entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem following His glorious miracle of raising Lazarus from the dead. Having anticipated His arrival and having heard of the miracle, the people went out to meet the Lord and welcomed Him with displays of honor and shouts of praise.

We commemorate the **only day**, in the earthly life of our Lord when he was publicly offered "perfect praise" and proclaimed as the Messiah by those uniquely qualified to offer it...the children (Mark 10:13-16). Thus, the children cried out . . . **"Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!"**

At St. Nektarios, we too offer displays of honor and shouts of praise. This year we were honored to have His Eminence Metropolitan Sevastianos join with us in celebration of this day. We experienced a beautifully rich hierarchical service. His Eminence took the opportunity of this pastoral visit to tonsure many of our Acolytes. He read a prayer over our Chanters. He blessed the girls of the St. Phoebe Ministry. He bestowed upon Presbyter



Panayiotis Steel the rank of Exomologos (Father Confessor). Axios!

These uplifting moments were followed by the blessing of the Palm Crosses. Then our Palm Sunday procession began with Fr. Panayiotis carrying the Holy Gospel followed by His Eminence and clergy carrying their specially crafted Palm crosses. The youth of the community lined the front steps waving frons as the procession went by and continued around the temple. His Eminence distributed the Palm Crosses to the congregants at the conclusion.



The palms are the "symbols of victory" as it says in the hymn for the feast day (see below), which is sung repeatedly throughout the service. This victory is not only our Lord's victory over death, but also any personal victory over one's sinful passions, which was the hope and purpose of Lent.

“. . . Therefore, like the children of old, we also carry symbols of victory, and to You, the Victor over death, do we cry out: Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord.”



OUR JOURNEY THROUGH HOLY WEEK

The Bridegroom Services

Beginning on the evening of Palm Sunday and continuing through the evening of Holy Tuesday, the Church observes the Service of the Bridegroom. With His Eminence Metropolitan Sevastianos' visit on Palm Sunday, we were honored that he was able to remain with us for the service that night.

The name of the service is from the figure of the Bridegroom in the parable of the Ten Virgins found in Matthew 25:1-13. Christ is the divine Bridegroom of the Church. We are instructed of our need for spiritual vigilance and preparedness, watching and waiting for the Lord, who will come again to judge the living and the dead. The troparion (hymn of the service) conveys this expectation:



"Behold, the Bridegroom cometh in the middle of the night, and blessed is that servant whom He shall find watching; and again unworthy is he whom He shall find heedless. Beware, therefore, O my soul, lest thou be overcome with sleep, lest thou be given up to death, and be shut out from the Kingdom. But rouse thyself and cry: Holy, Holy, Holy art Thou, O God, through the Mother of God, have mercy on us."



Sacrament of Confession

"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

(Acts 2:37-38)

Our clergy were available three times during Holy Week for "walk-in" confessions. The line formed in the narthex and the fathers positioned themselves, one in the Family Room and one in the St. Nektarios Chapel ready to receive the penitent.

Repentance is an act of reconciliation into the Body of Christ. It denotes a change of mind, a transformation. We confess to God before a priest who becomes our spiritual advisor/father. We offer our sins and brokenness to God who lifts us up.



On Great and Holy Wednesday, the Sacrament of Holy Unction is conducted. It is offered for the healing of soul and body and for forgiveness of sins. At the conclusion of the service, the clergy anoint the body with oil. The grace of God, which heals infirmities of soul and body, is called down upon each person.

The biblical basis for the Sacrament is found in James 5: 14-16:

"Is any among you are sick, let him call for the presbyters of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; and the prayer of faith will save the sick man, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed."

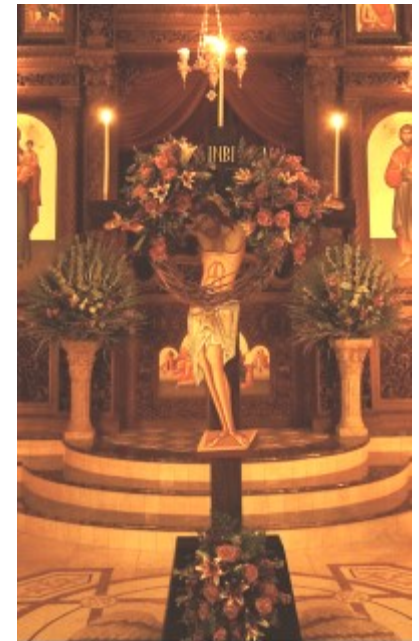


Holy Thursday

In the morning at the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil, two pieces of Prosfora representing Lambs are consecrated. The first is for that service. The second piece of Prosfora Lamb is for the Reserved Sacrament which is used especially to give communion to the sick during the next year.

At St. Nektarios, a congregant offers flour to be placed around the oil that is blessed during the Holy Wednesday Unction Service. This flour is then used to make the Prosfora to be used during the Thursday morning Liturgy.

At the evening Passion Service from the 12 Gospel reading, several events are commemorated: the washing of the disciples' feet, the institution of the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper, the agony in the garden of Gethsemane, the betrayal of Christ by Judas, and our Lord's crucifixion.



During the procession, we hear from the Antiphon,

"We worship Your Passion, O Christ. Show us also Your glorious Resurrection."

After the Procession of the Cross of Christ, the congregation prayerfully and solemnly comes forward to light a candle at the Cross and venerate the icon of the crucified Christ.



OUR JOURNEY THROUGH HOLY WEEK

Holy Friday Morning and Afternoon


In the morning, the services of the Royal Hours are observed, a time of solemn celebration and narration of the Passion of Christ. The afternoon vespers, called *Apokathelosis* or *Taking Down from the Cross*, are a continuation of the Royal Hours.

During this service, the icon of the Body of Christ is removed from the Cross. Then, icon is wrapped with a white sheet, mimicking the actions of Joseph of Arimathea.

The youth from the Afternoon Holy Friday retreat assisted in *taking the icon of the body of Christ from the cross*.



The clergy processed with the Epitaphion (embroidered cloth depicting the Body of Christ), to take the "Body of Christ" to the tomb.



IN HIS SERVICE

WORSHIP

Being active participants in the sacramental and prayer life of the church.



Thank you to the many who actively participated in worship services.

- | | | |
|----------------|---------------------|------------------------------|
| Chanters | Ushers | Kouvouklion bearers, |
| Readers | Acolytes | Myrrh bearers, |
| Parish Council | Greeters | Broadcasters |
| | St. Phoebe Maidens, | Security and Safety Monitors |

While the photos on these pages only show some of the many ways everyone helped, all are captured in our hearts.

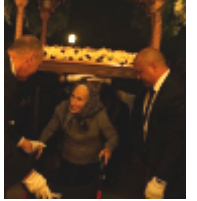


OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA

Holy Friday Evening

On the center of the solea stands the beautifully adorned Kouvouklion (carved bier) holding the Epitaphion (icon of Christ's crucified body). This is the Matins of Holy Saturday and serves as the funeral service for Christ. The theme for this evening is Christ's fulfilment of the Sabbath law by resting in the tomb, and his descent into Hades. Among the more notable features of this service is the singing of the encomia, hymns popularly known as "Lamentations". These are grouped in three distinct stanzas, each consisting of short hymns intercalated with the verses of Psalm 118.

At the end of the Great Doxology the Kouvouklion is processed out of the nave and around the exterior of the church, followed by the faithful holding candles. The procession finishes on the main portico, where the Kouvouklion is held aloft by our bearers while the faithful pass under it to re-enter the nave. At the completion of the service the Epitaphion is removed from the Kouvouklion and placed on the altar which represents the Tomb of Christ..



OUR JOURNEY TO PASCHA

Holy & Great Saturday

This year, on the morning of Holy and Great Saturday, our catechumens were baptized. This service was full of the coming Paschal joy. After the reading of the Epistle, the priests followed the custom of the tossing of laurel and flower petals, saying:

"Arise, O God, and judge Thou the earth: for Thou shall take all heathen to Thine inheritance".

Parishioners brought in baskets filled with their Paschal meal to break the fast after midnight. Tables of food were blessed at the end of the service.



Midnight Resurrection Service

Before midnight, the congregation gathered and sat in a dimly lighted sanctuary. A few minutes before midnight the sanctuary darkened. The Fathers come out with one candle singing: ***"Come ye and receive light from the unwaning life, and glorify Christ, who arose from the dead."*** The priests then lit the acolytes' candles and each acolyte lit the candle of the person at the end of the each pew until all candles were lit and the sanctuary was glowing with the joyous light of Pascha. At the end of the service we receive the red eggs and gather in the Spiritual Life Center for the Magaritsa to celebrate Our Risen Lord.



PROCLAIMING THE GOSPEL



Agape Vespers

Also called Vespers of Love, this service continues the celebration of Pascha. At this service the Gospel reading (John 20:19-25) depicts the first appearance of the risen Lord to his disciples and is recited in as many languages as are known by those present in our parish. This symbolizes that the glorious resurrection of Christ is proclaimed to all the nations of the world.

Thank You to our Readers

Languages listed in alphabetical order.

Sign Language Interpreter

Elizabeth Houpos,

Arabic

Emile Khuri

Armenian

Azad Khuri

Bulgarian

Oxana Kostadinova,

Coptic

Sammy Sedhom

French

Salma Qushair Muammar

Georgian

Aka Vashakidze

German

Madeleine Tekin

Latin

Presbytera Maria Dalber

Romanian

Radu Stoica

Russian

Tatiana Vladi

Spanish

Emilio Brambila

Turkish

Mary Tash

Ukrainian

Maria Siragusa



AGAPE PICNIC FOR THE FEAST OF FEASTS





IN HIS SERVICE WITNESS

We should strive to exemplify
the teachings of the Orthodox
Christian Faith

The church teaches us the truth so we may grow in faith and prepared to be His witness

Our opportunities to grow in our faith are many on the Journey to Pascha. We began with our little retreat on Clean Monday when all the participants reflected on the journey ahead and had a quiet time in prayer. On Sunday of Orthodoxy we heard from our forefathers as we read their proclamations on our sacred icons. We heard wonderful speeches from four participants at The Oratorica Festival. Our Kristina Nagorny advanced all the way to National to come in 3rd place.

Wednesday after Presanctified Liturgy and the Lenten meal, Fr. Andreas offered a weekly reflection. The Department of Adult Religious Education presented a weekly Lent, Lunch and Learn Program with our speakers below. Holy Friday brought the Youth Retreat when the children assisted "taking" the icon of Christ down from the Cross. And at the Agape Vespers service, our members of many languages proclaimed the Gospel for all to learn of our resurrected Lord.



Fr. Gregory Georgiou focused on utilizing our faith for those who suffer and are healing from broken hearts -- "The Lord from our Orthodox Faith Near to the Broken Hearted".



Fr. John Parker spoke on "How we can serve one another"



Gerry Clonaris spoke about Lent and why we practice the things we do.



Fr. Panayiotis Papageorgiou offered an interactive Presentation on "How do we know God Exists" and a showing a short film on St. Mary of Egypt.



Fr. Panayiotis Steele presenting the experience of active repentance through "The unique services of Lent and Holy Week"

DIRECTORY

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Father Andreas Houpos, Proistamenos
Mobile: 980-333-9563
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Father Panayiotis Steele, Ephemerios
Cell: 703-964-1112
Email: fr.panayiotis@stnektarios.org

Father Steve Dalber, Pastor Emeritus
Mobile: 704-451-6524
Email: frdalber@stnektarios.org

Father Paul Tsahakis, Presbyter
Mobile: (704) 608-1112
Email: frtsahakis@stnektarios.org

Parish Staff

Parish Administrator - Evelyn Klund
Administration Staff

Silva Awaimrin, Kim Braswell,
Sharon Koutroumpis, Sofia Nicolopoulos

Director of Youth and Young Adults -
Caroline Mellekas

Facility Manager - Marko Milich

Sexton - Jim Keown

Protopsaltis - Sam Herron

2025 Parish Council

President: Chris Mortis

Vice President: Andrew McCullough

Treasurer: Elie Azar

Assist. Treasurer: David Hanegraaff

Secretary: Gene Borowski

Assist. Secretary: Manal Choueiri

Members: George Bacogeorge, Zack Hair, Katherine Mason, Peter Reinhart, Patrick Taylor

Philoptochos Board

President: Madalina Lowen

1st Vice President: Deidre Lepkowski

2nd Vice President: Vacant

Recording Sect.: Laurel Bacogeorge

Corr. Secretary: Sharon Koutroumpis

Treasurer: Kathryn Cestrone

Ass't Treasurer: Evelyn Klund

Members: Helen Bakos, Renee Keretses, Janet Miller Rogers, Salma Qushair

Email: philoptochos@stnektarios.org

SUNDAYS AT SAINT NEKTARIOS

Worship on Sundays

Matins 7:45 a.m. and

Divine Liturgy 9:15 a.m.

Fellowship Coffee:

Following Divine Liturgy

Prospora

Please contact the church office or Christie Asimos at 704-756-1512 if you would like to provide or sponsor Prospora.

Coffee Hour

Please contact the church office if you would like to host or co-host a Coffee Hour on Sunday. Your Stewardship pays for the coffee hour refreshments provided by the Hospitality Ministry Team.

Flowers

You may donate flowers in honor of a family member's feast day, in memory of a loved one or friend, on the occasion of a holiday, or simply as a gift to the community of St. Nektarios. To donate flower arrangements to be placed at the Iconostasis, Chapel Shrines or in the Narthex for Sunday Services, please contact the church office to reserve a Sunday.

Sacramental Wine & Pure Olive Oil

You may make a financial gift to help defray the cost of the sacramental wine that is used for Holy Communion. Please note on the memo line of your check or on the envelope "Communion Wine". You may also donate a bottle or can of pure olive oil which is then blessed at the Shrine of St. Nektarios and is offered in the anointing kits. Please feel free to bring this with you to any of our services and give to an usher on duty. For additional information contact the church office.

UPCOMING DEADLINE

Newsletter & Bulletin Due Dates:

Information Due: July 23, 2025

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