

THE GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO
39TH ANNUAL

Saint John Chrysostom Oratorical and Fine Arts Festival



George Bentley, 2022 1st Place, Iconography - Senior Division
Ascension of Our Lord, Lincolnshire, IL

Saturday, April 29, 2023

— Host Parish —

Ascension of Our Lord Greek Orthodox Church
Lincolnshire, Illinois



**39TH ANNUAL
GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF CHICAGO
ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ORATORICAL AND FINE ARTS FESTIVAL**

HOSTED BY
ASCENSION OF OUR LORD GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
LINCOLNSHIRE, ILLINOIS

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Furla

**HIS EMINENCE
METROPOLITAN NATHANAEL OF CHICAGO**



ASCENSION OF OUR LORD GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH



2023 Metropolis of Chicago St. John Chrysostom Oratorical and Fine Arts Festival

Beloved Friends & Faithful of the Holy Metropolis of Chicago,


Χριστός Ανέστη - Christ is Risen!

On behalf of the Ascension of Our Lord Greek Orthodox Church, I welcome all of you to the 2023 St. John Chrysostom Oratorical and Fine Arts Festival. We are truly honored to host this treasured event and thank you for traveling to Lincolnshire to witness all of the talents our Lord has bestowed on our youth across the Midwest. We offer our heartfelt congratulations to each and every one of the participants, as well as their families. May the Holy Spirit continue to enlighten each and every one of you as you continue to grow in your Orthodox faith.

In the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25: 14-30), Jesus encourages us to make the most of what He has given us. I commend all of today's participants for taking the time during Great Lent to reflect on your faith and then use your God-given talents to express the triumph of Orthodoxy through your voice, your writings and your art. I pray that through the intercessions of St. John Chrysostom, the Golden-mouth, you will be blessed with an ongoing desire to learn about Orthodoxy and through your example, teach it to others, just as Christ has commanded in the Great Commission when He tells his Disciples to "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations..." (Matthew 28: 19-20).

I wish to express my appreciation and gratitude to our Spiritual Shepherd, His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael for allowing us to host this remarkable event. Also, much thanks to Fr. Kosmas Kallis for continuing to champion the Oratorical Festival in our Metropolis. To the judges, parents and all of our volunteers, we collectively thank you for your dedication and time, as a program of this magnitude would not be possible without your efforts. Ascension also extends a very special thank you to Audrey Polite and Andrea Tsakopoulos for their tireless efforts, organized nature and truly enthusiastic approach to putting this Metropolis-wide event together. Last but not least, my gratitude to our Parish Committee led by Suzanne Saric for their efforts in making this day special. It has been a privilege and joy to collaborate with you!

In Our Risen Lord,



Rev. Fr. Sotirios P. Malamis
Parish Priest

ASCENSION OF OUR LORD GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH A BRIEF HISTORY



In the fall of 1997, a handful of families came together with the mission to bring a new “Greek Orthodox Church of Southern Lake County” to Illinois. With the blessings of His Eminence Metropolitan Iakovos of blessed memory, Father James Gordon became our founding Proistamenos, and Ascension held its first Divine Liturgy on January 11, 1998, with 30 families in attendance at Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire.

The following year, Ascension purchased a ranch house and five-acre property at its present site, 1207 Riverwoods Road, Lincolnshire, and after the land blessing, a temporary church addition was added. The parish celebrated its first Liturgy at the new site on our Feast Day in 2001, and the parish received its official charter from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese on April 24, 2002.



Under the spiritual guidance of Fr. Jim Gordon and faithful servants and volunteers, the parish flourished and ministries developed that served all age groups from infancy to seniors. At the same time, the first Capital Campaign, Architectural and Construction Committees began to map out long-term plans to build our permanent church home. When a two-acre parcel adjacent to our church became available, we purchased it, and shortly retired our debt.



On September 1, 2014 we bid Father Jim and Presbyteria Nasia an emotional goodbye and welcomed Father Sotirios Malamis and Presvytera Stefanie to the Ascension family. As the new Proistamenos and Spiritual Shepherd of Ascension, Fr. Sotiri fostered vibrant growth in the life of our parish. On Sunday, September 10, 2017, Ascension of Our Lord broke ground on its permanent home and held its historic Site Blessing (Agiasmos) service. Site

construction began the very next day and the parish celebrated Divine Services at nearby Daniel Wright Middle School until June 5, 2019, when His Eminence Metropolitan Nathanael blessed our new sanctuary and presided over Ascension’s historic Thyranoxia (Opening of the Doors) and Great Vespers on the eve preceding the church’s Feast Day.



Our dream to build a Greek Orthodox Church in Lincolnshire began more than 25 years ago and with God’s providence and the tireless dedication and generosity of its stewards, Ascension opened the doors of its newly constructed Orthodox church, chapel, and fellowship building debt-free, after a successful capital campaign.



Ascension is celebrating its 25th anniversary with several commemorative events throughout 2023. The church’s celebratory theme, *Honoring Our Past | Embracing Our Present | Cultivating Our Future*, represents the tremendous progress Ascension has made in its short history while also strengthening its mission to be a beacon of light, hope and salvation to the Orthodox faithful.



2022 HONOREES

SPEECH

Junior Division

1st Chris Zouras
2nd Blaise Dalianis
3rd Georgia Haidos

Ascension of Our Lord
SS. Constantine & Helen
Holy Cross

Lincolnshire, IL
Wauwatosa, WI
Justice, IL

Senior Division

1st Demetra Feradouros
2nd Peter Nicklow
3rd John Vranas

SS. Constantine & Helen
St. Mary
St. Nicholas

Palos Hills, IL
Minneapolis, MN
Oak Lawn, IL

ESSAYS

Junior Division

1st Kosta Pappas
2nd Nick Ray
3rd Alexis Petros

St. John the Baptist
St. Nicholas
Ascension of Our Lord

Des Plaines, IL
St. Louis, MO
Lincolnshire, IL

Senior Division

1st Angelo Karadimas
2nd Anna Andretich
3rd Sophia Saric

St. John the Baptist
All Saints
Ascension of Our Lord

Des Plaines, IL
Joliet, IL
Lincolnshire, IL

POETRY

Junior Division

1st Sophia Ketchum
2nd Beatrice White
3rd Nicholas Frangopoulos

Kimissis Tis Theotokou
Annunciation
Annunciation

Racine, WI
Kankakee, IL
Milwaukee, WI

Senior Division

1st Evanthia Fotopoulos
2nd Nikolas Karadimas
3rd Sophia Anast

St. George
St. John the Baptist
Ascension of Our Lord

Schererville, IN
Des Plaines, IL
Lincolnshire, IL



2022 HONOREES

ICONOGRAPHY

Junior Division

1st Maria Grigorakos
2nd Sophia LaGalbo
3rd Katerina Tsiakopoulos

St. John the Baptist
Annunciation
St. George

Des Plaines, IL
Milwaukee, WI
Schererville, IN

Senior Division

1st George Bentley
2nd Marianna Angelopoulos
3rd Kalina Zheleva

Ascension of Our Lord
SS. Constantine & Helen
St. Nicholas

Lincolnshire, IL
Palos Hills, IL
St. Louis, MO

VOCAL SOLO

Junior Division

1st Maria Malamis
2nd Tara Mastorakos
3rd Vasilios Malamis

Ascension of Our Lord
Holy Cross
St. Demetrios

Lincolnshire, IL
Justice, IL
Elmhurst, IL

Senior Division

1st Panayiotis Malamis
2nd Alexander Ketchum
3rd Kyriaki Karavasis

St. Demetrios
Kimissis Tis Theotokou
St. Sophia

Elmhurst, IL
Racine, WI
Elgin, IL



2023 PARTICIPANTS SENIOR DIVISION

SPEECH

Kirubel Birhane
Jacob Cash Baffes
Gabiella Earth
Aleksandra Gvozden
Emily Hattling
Jack Houston
Demetri Kouriabalis
Leo Petropoulos
Elena Stavros
Caroline Vranas
Chris Zouras

St. Mary
SS. Constantine & Helen
SS. Constantine & Helen
St. Andrew
St. George
St. Athanasios
St. Demetrios
St. Sophia
Holy Cross
St. Nicholas
Ascension of Our Lord

Minneapolis, MN
Palos Hills, IL
Merrillville, IN
Chicago, IL
St. Paul, MN
Aurora, IL
Chicago, IL
Elgin, IL
Justice, IL
Oak Lawn, IL
Lincolnshire, IL

ESSAY

Konstantina Anagnopoulos
Ana Arzoumanidis
Angelo Karadimas
Alexander Ketchum
Vasiliki Koutsis
Julia Kroll
Alexia Louras
Billy Panos
Yianni Sarolas

Holy Cross
SS. Peter & Paul
St. John the Baptist
Kimissis Tis Theotokou
St. Nicholas
St. Sophia
St. Demetrios
Assumption
St. George

Justice, IL
Glenview, IL
Des Plaines, IL
Racine, WI
Oak Lawn, IL
Elgin, IL
Elmhurst, IL
Chicago, IL
Chicago, IL

POETRY

Shaun Canas
Evanthia Fotopoulos
Victoria Holcomb
Nikolas Karadimas
Sophia Ketchum
Tara Mastorakos
Nikolas Milak

St. George
St. George
St. Demetrios
St. John the Baptist
Kimissis Tis Theotokou
Holy Cross
Holy Apostles

St. Paul, MN
Schererville, IN
Chicago, IL
Des Plaines, IL
Racine, WI
Justice, IL
Westchester, IL

ICONOGRAPHY

Evanthia Fotopoulos
Elena Gerick
Athena Litsogiannis
Kalina Zheleva

St. George
St. John the Baptist
Holy Cross
St. Nicholas

Schererville, IN
Des Plaines, IL
Justice, IL
St. Louis, MO

VOCAL SOLO

Tara Mastorakos
Marina Matson

Holy Cross
Kimissis Tis Theotokou

Justice, IL
Racine, WI

VOCAL CHANT

Georgios Fotos
Lucas Hanna
Panayiotis Malamis
Vasilios Malamis
Georgios Vasilakis

Holy Cross
St. Mary
Holy Trinity
St. Demetrios
St. Sophia

Justice, IL
Minneapolis, MN
Chicago, IL
Elmhurst, IL
Elgin, IL



2023 PARTICIPANTS JUNIOR DIVISION

SPEECH

Susanna Brown	St. Nectarios	Palatine, IL
Constantine Chipain	Assumption	Homer Glen, IL
Xenia Dalianis	SS. Constantine & Helen	Wauwatosa, WI
Catherine Fitzmaurice	St. Nicholas	St. Louis, MO
Georgia Haidos	Holy Cross	Justice, IL
Lydia Houck	St. Mary	Minneapolis, MN
Elizabeth Ketchum	Kimissis Tis Theotokou	Racine, WI
Nicholas Kiriklakis	SS. Peter & Paul	Glenview, IL
Athanasios Lambrou	St. Athanasios	Aurora, IL
Maria Malamis	Ascension of Our Lord	Lincolnshire, IL
Andreas Petropoul	St. Spyridon	Palos Heights IL
Anna Pitsavas-Wakely	St. George	St. Paul, MN
Evan Skoulikaris	St. John the Baptist	Des Plaines, IL

ESSAY

Peter Fotos	Holy Cross	Justice, IL
Nicholas Frangopoulos	Annunciation	Milwaukee, WI
Katerina Giannopoulos	St. Demetrios	Chicago, IL
Markos Maier	St. George	St. Paul, MN
Panagiotis Mattingly	St. George	Schererville, IN
Evan Pappas	St. John the Baptist	Des Plaines, IL
Alexis Petros	Ascension of Our Lord	Lincolnshire, IL
Vasili Sarolas	St. George	Chicago, IL
Angelica Siozios	Assumption	Chicago, IL

POETRY

Eleni Anagnopoulos	Holy Cross	Justice, IL
Dina Anteliz	Ascension of Our Lord	Lincolnshire, IL
Luke Davidson	SS. Peter & Paul	Glenview, IL
Ioanna Gerick	St. John the Baptist	Des Plaines, IL
Leonidas Mattingly	St. George	Schererville, IN
Epaminontas Stamus	St. Spyridon	Palos Heights, IL

ICONOGRAPHY

Thanasi Maglaras	Ascension of Our Lord	Lincolnshire, IL
Alexander Mastorakos	Holy Cross	Justice, IL
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Lia Weening	Assumption	Homer Glen, IL

VOCAL CHANT

Maria Malamis	Ascension of Our Lord	Lincolnshire, IL
Vasileios Yannoulis	St. John the Baptist	Des Plaines, IL



2023 TOPICS

SENIOR DIVISION

TOPIC 1

The Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople is the highest seat and the Mother Church of Orthodox Christians. The Ecumenical Patriarch is the spiritual leader of 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide. Discuss how the Patriarchate has been a symbol of unity, a source of missionary growth, an advocate of dialogue among Christians, and a defender of the historical Orthodox Faith.

TOPIC 2

During times of crisis, our faith is tested. How are Orthodox Christians taught to understand and manage pain and suffering?

TOPIC 3

The Christian message in C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* has influenced many believers of Christ. How has another work of fiction inspired people to seek Jesus Christ?

TOPIC 4

We have lived through a pandemic and emerged with deep societal divides. How can our faith in Christ heal us and take us forward together?

TOPIC 5

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ both transforms the relationship between God and humanity and alters the course of history. How would you explain its significance to someone who has not heard about it or is unsure if God exists?

JUNIOR DIVISION

TOPIC 1

Orthodox tradition teaches that the Saints remain spiritually active beyond their earthly life. Discuss how we ask the Saints to intercede and pray for us and why.

TOPIC 2

Orthodox Christians honor the Virgin Mary, the Most Holy Theotokos. What does the Orthodox Church believe about her and her role in our salvation?

TOPIC 3

The sacraments are the mysteries of the Church through which God gives us His grace through actions, words, and material objects (for example, oil, wine, and bread). Pick one sacrament and explain its meaning.

TOPIC 4

Jesus models and teaches humility throughout His life and ministry. Discuss the challenges of living according to Jesus' teachings in a society that does not necessarily emphasize humility.

TOPIC 5

Consider and discuss why and how icons are central to our faith and Orthodox practice.



2023 PLANNING COMMITTEE AND JUDGES

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His Eminence Metropolitan NATHANAEL of Chicago

METROPOLIS CHAIRMAN

Rev. Kosmas Kallis

HOST CLERGY

Rev. Fr. Sotirios P. Malamis, Proistamenos

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Lisa Karkazis • Debbie Katsulis • Patti Kazas • Patty Metropoulos • Sophia Metropoulos
Katherine Schreiber • Mary Beth Theodore • Katerina Tori

A special thank you to Ascension of Our Lord Greek Orthodox Church Philoptochos Chapter

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SENIOR SPEECH

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JUNIOR SPEECH

Theo Covello • Jon Mantis • Nicolette Polite

SENIOR ESSAY

Rev. Fr. Simeon Johnson • Penny Deligiannis • George Pontikes

JUNIOR ESSAY

Marilyn Tzakis • Peter Vichos • Mary-Tina Vrehas

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TALLY JUDGES/TIMERS

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2023 PARISH CHAIRPERSONS

Patti Frangopoulos	Annunciation	Milwaukee, WI
John Anton	Ascension of Our Lord	Lincolnshire, IL
George Demas	Assumption	Chicago, IL
Dorothy Michalarias	Assumption	Homer Glen, IL
Toni Milak	Holy Apostles	Westchester, IL
Jenelle Mallios	Holy Cross	Justice, IL
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Maria Earth	SS. Constantine & Helen	Merrillville, IN
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Chrysanthe Agos	St. Demetrios	Chicago, IL
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Penelope Antonopoulos	St. George	Chicago, IL
Anastasia Mastorgiorgis	St. George	St. Paul, MN
Toula Wondolowski	St. George	Schererville, IN
Christine Mantis	St. John the Baptist	Des Plaines, IL
Alexandria Kalina	St. Mary	Minneapolis, MN
Peter Vichos	St. Nectarios	Palatine, IL
Dan Biesiada	St. Nicholas	Oak Lawn, IL
Renee Vleisides	St. Nicholas	St. Louis, MO
Sophia Anton	St. Sophia	Elgin, IL
Maria Baltsas	St. Spyridon	Palos Heights IL



2023 CONTRIBUTORS

On behalf of His Eminence Metropolitan NATHANAEL of Chicago and the Metropolis of Chicago
St. John Chrysostom Oratorical and Fine Arts Festival Committee,
thank you to all who have contributed their time, talents, and treasures to this ministry!

PLATINUM LEVEL (\$1000)

AHEPA Chapter 78 (Merrillville, IN)
Anonymous

GOLD LEVEL (\$500)

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SILVER LEVEL (\$250)

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Dr. & Mrs. George Bakris
Metropolis of Chicago Philoptochos (Chicago, IL)
Saint Demetrios Philoptochos (Hammond, IN)
Saint John Damascus League of Chanters (Springs, IL)
Saint Nectarios Greek Orthodox Church (Palatine, IL)

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Ahepa Chicago Lakeshore 205 (Chicago, IL)
Annunciation Cathedral Philoptochos (Chicago, IL)
Assumption Chicago Philoptochos (Chicago, IL)
Holy Cross Philoptochos (Justice, IL)
Saint Andrew Philoptochos (Chicago, IL)
Saint Basil Greek Orthodox Church (Chicago, IL)
Saint Mary's Philoptochos (Minneapolis, MN)
Saints Peter and Paul Greek Orthodox Church (Glenview, IL)
Saint Sophia Greek Orthodox Church (Elgin, IL)
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Carole Yarovsky, in Memory of Jim Yarovsky
Tina Yarovsky

FESTIVAL FRIEND

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Donated by Dean, Joanne, Symeon, George, Lindsay, Dino and Ioanna Stavrakas
"In Memory of our parents and grandparents
George D. Chronis and Sam & Helene Stavrakas"



2023 HONOREES

SPEECH

Junior Division

1st Maria Malamis
2nd Lydia Houck
3rd Evan Skoulikaris

Ascension of Our Lord
St. Mary
St. John the Baptist

Lincolnshire, IL
Minneapolis, MN
Des Plaines, IL

Senior Division

1st Leo Petropoulos
2nd Jacob Cash Baffes
3rd Emily Hattling

St. Sophia
SS. Constantine & Helen
St. George

Elgin, IL
Palos Hills, IL
St. Paul, MN

ESSAYS

Junior Division

1st Alexis Petros
2nd Nicholas Frangopoulos
3rd Peter Fotos

Ascension of Our Lord
Annunciation
Holy Cross

Lincolnshire, IL
Milwaukee, WI
Justice, IL

Senior Division

1st Ana Arzoumanidis
2nd Vasiliki Koutsis
3rd Billy Panos

SS. Peter & Paul
St. Nicholas
Assumption

Glenview, IL
Oak Lawn, IL
Chicago, IL

POETRY

Junior Division

1st Dina Anteliz
2nd Epaminontas Stamus
3rd Ioanna Gerick

Ascension of Our Lord
St. Spyridon
St. John the Baptist

Lincolnshire, IL
Palos Heights, IL
Des Plaines, IL

Senior Division

1st Nicholas Karadimas
2nd Nikolas Milak
3rd Victoria Holcomb

St. John the Baptist
Holy Apostles
St. Demetrios

Des Plaines, IL
Westchester, IL
Chicago, IL



2023 HONOREES

ICONOGRAPHY

Junior Division

1st Thanasi Maglaras
2nd Anastasia Rihani
3rd Alexander Mastorakos

Ascension of Our Lord
St. John the Baptist
Holy Cross

Lincolnshire, IL
Des Plaines, IL
Justice, IL

Senior Division

1st Evanthia Fotopoulos
2nd Kalina Zheleva
3rd Athena Litsogiannis

St. George
St. Nicholas St.
Holy Cross

Schererville, IN
Louis, MO
Justice, IL

VOCAL SOLO

Junior Division

1st Amy Amnen Asfaw
2nd Lia Weening

St. Nicholas
Assumption

St. Louis, MO
Homer Glen, IL

Senior Division

1st Tara Mastorakos
2nd Marina Matson

Holy Cross
Kimissis Tis Theotokou

Justice, IL
Racine, WI

VOCAL CHANT

Junior Division

1st Maria Malamis
2nd Vasileios Yannoulis

Ascension of Our Lord
St. John the Baptist

Lincolnshire, IL
Des Plaines, IL

Senior Division

1st Vasilios Malamis
2nd Panayiotis Malamis
3rd Georgios Vasilakis

St. Demetrios
Holy Trinity
St. Sophia

Elmhurst, IL
Chicago, IL
Elgin, IL

ESSAY
FIRST PLACE • SENIOR DIVISION
ANA ARZOUMANIDIS

THE UNTOLD STORY OF SUFFERING IN THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN FAITH

Hardship is inevitable. Every single person on this planet has experienced significant pain at some point in their lives. In the face of this suffering, it is incredibly easy to feel alone, isolated, as if the entire world and its contents is pitted against us. At times, this pain can even prompt us to question our faith, God Himself, and whether or not He is even there for us. Whether or not He even exists. These thoughts are dangerous, causing us to stray away from our faith and God. Alternatively, God proposes that we interpret pain and suffering through a lens of graciousness and manage it by looking towards him to bring out the best versions of ourselves.

Before understanding how God intends we manage pain and suffering, it is important to grasp why it is inflicted upon us in the first place. Suffering is the opposite of God: it is the separation from Him. Hence, it causes us to have harmful thoughts and stray away from Him. Sin, as first practiced by Adam and Eve, is the precursor to suffering. It opened up the door to Satan's influence on Earth. Thus, it is more beneficial to perceive suffering as a tool that God does not inflict on us, but rather allows to happen, in order to test our faith and ensure that we are on track to reach ultimate salvation.

Rather than resentment, the Orthodox Christian faith teaches us to embrace suffering and deploy it to ameliorate our relationship with the Lord. In Romans 5:2-5, St. Paul the Apostle states that "[w]e also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance...character, [and] hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." The act of embracing suffering in the manner of the Orthodox Christian faith requires us to trust in the Lord and His ultimate judgment, which is much easier said than done. Taking this leap of faith, believing in the Lord and His wishes, acknowledging that He knows what is best for us in the heat of the moment, serves as the ultimate test of our faith as Orthodox Christians. In this sense, pain and suffering serve as our optimal weapon against Satan's harmful influence, providing us with the necessary strength and adversity to overcome him and continue on the path towards God.

The meaning of pain and suffering is commonly misinterpreted. It is incredibly easy to forget why we must suffer in the first place, as God can feel incredibly distant during these times. Not only does pain serve to strengthen us, but it also allows us to experience for ourselves a fraction of the suffering Jesus overcame through His ultimate sacrifice of crucifixion. As Orthodox Christians, we must resist the temptation to give up during tough times, but rather deploy our hardships as opportunities to grow in our faith and ultimately closer to God. By understanding suffering in this way, we can reciprocate the Lord's grace and appreciate every part of our short lives as part of a broader path towards salvation.

POETRY
FIRST PLACE • SENIOR DIVISION
NIKOLAS KARADIMAS

MY LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

During times of crisis my faith is tested,
As I try to figure out if God and my problems are connected.

Orthodox Christians look to the heavens above,
To ease the pain and feel His love.

Through prayer and fasting I persevere,
Trusting in Jesus to dry every tear.
Accepting suffering as part of life's plan,
I walk with faith and hope in hand.

Through Holy Confession, I shed tears of repentance,
I feel lighter and lighter through every sentence.
The sacrament of Holy Communion illuminates me,
I shine so bright, that even others can see.

With church and the bible as my guides I find strength,
To conquer the challenges no matter the length.
In the end my faith strong will remain,
God and the Saints radiate and alleviate the pain.

ICONOGRAPHY
FIRST PLACE • SENIOR DIVISION
EVANTHIA FOTOPOULOS



SPEECH

**FIRST PLACE • SENIOR DIVISION
LEO PETROPOULOS**



VOCAL CHANT

**FIRST PLACE • SENIOR DIVISION
VASILIOS MALAMIS**



VOCAL SOLO

**FIRST PLACE • SENIOR DIVISION
TARA MASTORAKOS**



ESSAY
FIRST PLACE • JUNIOR DIVISION
ALEXIS PETROS

THE MOST HOLY THEOTOKOS AND OUR SALVATION

Do you know how crucial the role of the Theotokos is to the Orthodox Church? Orthodox Christians deeply honor the Most Holy Theotokos as the vessel for Jesus to become Incarnate because of her holiness, purity, and obedience to God. She holds a special place as the Mother of the Church, and we pay tribute to her in our services, hymns, icons, and feast days. The Theotokos intercedes to her Son on our behalf, and her powerful prayers provide us with protection, comfort, and help for our salvation.

To begin with, the Theotokos, meaning “birth giver of God,” contained the uncontainable, and gave birth to our Lord Jesus Christ. The Theotokos, also called Panagia, meaning “All-Holy”, was unique because of her holiness, purity, and obedience to God. Her obedience is spoken of in Scripture. “Then Mary said, ‘Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word’,” (Luke 1:38). She is called the New Eve because St. Irenaeus says, “the knot of Eve’s disobedience was loosed through the obedience of Mary” (hellenicaworld.com). The Orthodox Study Bible notes “Mary is the most blessed woman to have ever lived because of her complete willingness to receive God’s grace,” (p. 1363). Therefore, the Theotokos was chosen among all women to bear Christ because the qualities she possessed were necessary for God to become Incarnate. Father Athanasios Mitilinaios explains her salvific nature stating, “She continues to save us because through her God communed with His Creation” (pantokrator.info/fr-athanasios-mitilinaios).

Furthermore, the Theotokos plays a role in our salvation as we ask for her intercessions, guidance, and protection. Jesus sits at the right hand of His Father, and Panagia sits to the right of Jesus as Queen Regent of the world. For this reason “we can ask her to speak to her Son to save us from eternal sin and death” (engageorthodoxy.net). She constantly prays for us and intercedes to God on our behalf. Her prayers are so powerful, that through them, God works miracles. In the Paraklesis and Salutations services, we ask her to help us overcome our passions and deliver us from evil. Also, we pray to her to acquire shelter and holiness.

In conclusion, the Most Holy Theotokos is the most pure, holy, and obedient Mother of God and the Church. We pray for her intercessions to God on our behalf for our salvation. Most Holy Theotokos save us!

POETRY
FIRST PLACE • JUNIOR DIVISION
DINA ANTELIZ

LOOK AT ME

Look at Me! Look at Me!
I go to Church every Sunday
Sing at chant and go to Fanari
I'm so great look at me!

Don't look at me! Don't look at me!
I go to Church every Sunday
I wear my fancy clothes and high heels
I wear them because I like them--no need to hear what everyone else feels!

Look at Me! Look at Me!
Watch me fast and eat the right foods
Watch me pray and sing out loud
I want to stick out in this crowd!

Don't look at me! Please don't look at me!
I fast in private and don't share my diet
In my heart I pray so no one else can hear
I pray to God so I don't live in fear.

Look at Me! Look at Me!
WHO DOES SHE THINK SHE IS with that hair, makeup, and clothes?
She has TOO MANY FRIENDS, Snapchat, and TikTok!
DON'T LOOK AT HER! LOOK AT ME! I'm so good!

Don't look at me! Please don't look at me!
I do not judge others
I show love and kindness to those around me
Don't look at me because **Jesus is the only one that needs to see!**

ICONOGRAPHY
FIRST PLACE • JUNIOR DIVISION
THANASI MAGLARAS



SPEECH
FIRST PLACE • JUNIOR DIVISION
MARIA MALAMIS



VOCAL CHANT
FIRST PLACE • JUNIOR DIVISION
MARIA MALAMIS



VOCAL SOLO
FIRST PLACE • JUNIOR DIVISION
AMY AMNEN ASFAW



WHO IS SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM?

Born in the ancient city of Antioch in 347 A.D. to a noble and pious family, Saint John Chrysostom was an exceptional student. He studied to be a lawyer but was led to a religious life where he devoted himself to spiritual growth. As a priest, Saint John had a rare quality of winning the hearts of his audience, even though many times he chastised them. He loved his people and would hold nothing back to reprove them into upright living.

A tremendous advocate of social justice, he loudly proclaimed the equality of all people before God and constantly spoke of the great distance between rich and poor, laying the blame on wealthy tyrants and extortionists. He did not remain silent to camouflage injustice. At the age of forty-nine, he became Patriarch of Constantinople and from the pulpit became an outspoken critic of the imperial court, frequently denouncing the Empress Eudokia. After a series of exiles and returns, Saint John was banished from Constantinople in 403 and died two years later, while still in exile.

He earned the title, Chrysostomos, “golden mouth,” because of his dynamic preaching. The Divine Liturgy celebrated in our Churches most Sundays of the year bears his name. The feast of Saint John Chrysostom is celebrated on November 13th. We also honor him on January 30th, the Feast of the Three Hierarchs, together with Saint Basil the Great and Saint Gregory the Theologian.

The purpose of the Saint John Chrysostom Oratorical Arts Festival is to give young people an opportunity to learn about and express their beliefs, their Church, and their heritage which strengthens their understanding and appreciation of their identity as Greek Orthodox Christians. As a Church Father, and because of his bold eloquence, it is fitting and appropriate that the Oratorical Festival is named after the most celebrated preacher in the history of the Christian Church.

The Saint John Chrysostom Oratorical and Arts Festival is a program of the Department of Religious Education, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, 50 Goddard Avenue, Brookline, MA, 02445. <http://www.religioused.goarch.org/>



PASCHA CELEBRATED BY SAINT JOHN CHRYSOSTOM

“Whosoever is a devout lover of God let him enjoy this beautiful, bright Festival. And whosoever is a grateful servant, let him rejoice and enter into the joy of his Lord. And if any are weary with fasting, let him now receive his penny. If any have toiled from the first hour, let him receive his due reward. If any have come after the third hour, let him join in the Feast with gratitude. And he that arrived after the sixth hour, let him not doubt; for he too shall sustain no loss. And if any have delayed to the ninth hour, let him not hesitate, but let him come too. And he that has arrived only at the eleventh hour, let him not be afraid for reason of his delay; for the Lord...gives rest to him that comes at the eleventh hour as well as to him that toiled from the first...

“O Hades, where is your victory? Christ is risen, and you are annihilated. Christ is risen, and the evil ones are cast down. Christ is risen, and the angels rejoice. Christ is risen, and life is liberated. Christ is risen, and the tomb is emptied of the dead; for Christ, having risen from the dead, has become the first fruits of those that have fallen asleep. To Him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.”

*Excerpt taken from the Paschal Sermon of St. John Chrysostom
Archbishop of Constantinople*



SHIRLEY (SEVASTI) KONTOS 1949-1991

Born and educated in Chicago, Shirley showed great artistic promise from a very early age. Upon completing her education with a Bachelor of Arts Degree from the School of the Art Institute and the University of Chicago in 1972 and a Masters of Fine Arts Degree from Northwestern University in 1974, Ms. Kontos embarked upon a journey which ultimately brought her recognition in the field of Baroque/Rococo painting.

At a turning point in her life, she recognized the Archangel Michael as her personal guardian angel and turned to the art of Byzantine Iconography with a fervor that she had not felt in her own endeavors.

She struggled to learn and to grow in a male-dominated field and, with every commission, grew stronger and more confident in her abilities. She traveled to Greece where she studied under Evangelos Sorogos. She studied the icons of several Churches in Greece, as well as the various schools of Byzantine iconography, being careful not to overlook a single detail.

Her first full church commission was Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church in Justice, IL. She went on to paint several other Churches while continuing to paint portable icons. Her works are displayed from coast to coast and as far north as Alaska.

Her crowning achievement was the iconostasion which was used when Patriarch Demetrios, Ecumenical Patriarch of the Eastern Orthodox Church, celebrated the Divine Liturgy at Grant Park.

The Lord called her home on February 2, 1991, but her accomplishments will live forever in His Name. Shirley's icons are presented each year to the Junior and Senior Division winners of Iconography.

May Her Memory Be Eternal.

“There is no other virtue that He mentioned except the performance of works of charity, for charity comes from love, and love is the goal and meaning of Christianity.”

-St. John Chrysostom



Icon of the Virgin Mary and Child, written by Shirley Kontos, can be found at the community of SS. Constantine & Helen, Swansea, IL