

Dear Parishioners and Friends of Ss Nicholas, Constantine & Helen,

I pray and hope that this message finds you and your loved ones well. As we are starting a new Ecclesiastical year, it is truly a joy to see so many families returning after a difficult year and a half. I'm grateful to God for his many blessings for our community this past year. I am also deeply grateful to each and every one of you for your commitment and continued support for our beloved Ss. Nicholas, Constantine & Helen.

Dramatic events, like a global pandemic, are viewed from the perspective of the church and the scripture as an opportunity to reexamine our priorities and reorient our lives towards what is truly valuable. Even though the last year and a half, we had to cancel many activities, with God's grace, one thing we were able to maintain continually is the Liturgical Life. It is my sincere desire that all of us will make our new Ecclesiastical resolution to rededicate ourselves to prayer, church attendance, scripture meditation, and true Christian fellowship. There is a great saying in the church, "Without prayer, all things are madness." As the bible reminds us, if God does not build the house, we work in vain.

My goal this year is to concentrate on understanding and appreciating the liturgical tradition of the Orthodox Church. Beginning Wednesday, September 29th at 7:00pm, we will be offering an informal discussion group, once a month, focusing on exploring different aspects of the Divine Liturgy. All of us have to strive to be an active and conscious participant of Sunday Services. The discussion group will last 90 minutes. I will make opening remarks with the first 20-30 minutes. With the next 30 to 40 minutes, we will break up into small groups for our personal input and reflections. Then we reconvene for the rest of the time to share our input. This will be an in person meeting but we plan on making it accessible via Zoom. The theme of our first meeting is "Our earthly Liturgy and Our Heavenly Liturgy." You are encouraged to watch [this presentation](#) by Bishop Kallistos Ware on the same topic. [This](#) is also another great resource.

The presentation and discussion will be based on the Book *The Heavenly Banquet: Understanding the Divine Liturgy* by Fr. Emmanuel Hatzidakis.

I hope you will take advantage of this opportunity. I'm looking forward to seeing you in person or through the internet. Coffee and refreshments will be offered. Please kindly RSVP to frgeorge.khitiri@gcrmail.org or (973) 251-2920 so we can prepare accordingly.