

family will come forward and offer their donation to the Operating or Building Funds.

I commend our parishioners for loving to celebrate and thank God for our blessings. Now, one Sunday each month, I invite you to share this opportunity together with your parish family.

Presbytera Marinda and I are hopeful that our brothers and sisters in Christ will volunteer to make the five Loaves (*artos*) and offer oil, wheat and wine for the Artoklasia Blessing. Presbytera Marinda volunteered to make the first months' *artos* and donate the wine, wheat, and oil. In December and the following months, let her know if you wish to make the *artos* and donations and she will schedule you so that every month is covered. We welcome your participation in offering the five loaves and donations and thank you in advance for your willingness to serve in this new ministry.

In short, "Parish Thanksgiving Sunday" is simple, easy, and will be scheduled in advance. If there are no family commemorations, we still want to offer the monthly "Blessing of the Five Loaves", so we are asking for volunteers to prepare and donate the five loaves of bread, along with the oil, wine, and wheat on behalf of our parish family each month. In our Orthodox tradition, it is customary for the family to

donate these items. If you prefer only to donate the *artos*, that is fine. We have families who are willing to donate the other items. If a family is willing to donate these items, this could be considered your thanksgiving offering instead of making another monetary gift.

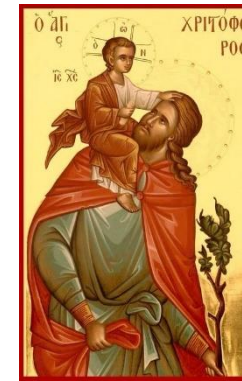
Anyone who wishes to learn how to make the artos, contact Presbytera Marinda and she can help teach you. She is hoping to offer a class one Sunday after Religious Education – let her know of your interest.



In closing, the custom of offering the Five Loaves monthly will remind us of the generosity and multiplication of the gifts of fish and bread that our Lord multiplied and shared with all present.

Through this Orthodox Service, we return thanksgiving to God for multiplying our own gifts and hence, the icon of this miracle has been selected as our logo for "Parish Thanksgiving Sunday"... ***the first Sunday of every month!***

***Faithfully yours,
Fr. George Tsahakis
October 15, 2018***



**St. Christopher Hellenic
Orthodox Church**

"Parish Thanksgiving Sunday"

Every fourth Thursday of November, we celebrate the American tradition of Thanksgiving Day. Beginning on Sunday, November 4th, and thereafter on the first Sunday of every month after the Divine Liturgy, we will schedule "Parish Thanksgiving Sunday".

My goal is to begin the first Sunday of every month with prayers of thanksgiving. At the same time, I have wanted to re-introduce a beautiful Orthodox practice that has become dormant in our parish. Its potential will increase the involvement of our parishioners and enable them to offer thanksgiving as Orthodox have done for many centuries.

Let me explain how!

On many Sundays, we are blessed with parishioners willingly offering a portion of the gifts that God has



bestowed upon them back to the Church. Whether it is a birthday, Name Day, or marriage anniversary, we are thankful that our parishioners are responding to the heart-felt appeal of our beloved sister of blessed memory, Helen Hayes, who in her lifetime encouraged us to give a monetary donation in thanksgiving for our birthday.

Now that we have grown, it's anybody's guess as to *who* is celebrating *what* on *any given* Sunday. In formalizing our current practice and designating gifts now be made on the first Sunday of each month, we will recognize this effort on our schedule and parishioners can be aware and plan accordingly. It's always been sad to me that someone will tell me in the Antidoron line, *"Fr. George, I was going to make a donation for my birthday and I was overlooked."* Our new practice will eliminate hurt feelings due to someone being in the restroom or nursery and missing the weekly call for birthdays, etc.

Scheduling also eliminates our youth from having to wait for their pre-Sunday School snacks at the end of church services. Coffee fellowship and Religious Education classes will start on time more consistently.

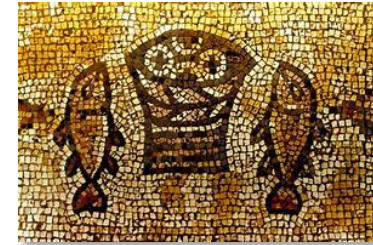
As far as I know, we are the only parish in our Metropolis that recognizes special anniversaries in the church before Coffee Hour. I'm thankful we have

grown to the point that we need it to be consistent and more organized. *I ask you to follow these guidelines and join in our monthly celebrations!*



Parishioners' comments gave me the idea of "Parish Thanksgiving Sunday" once each month. Knowing that our Orthodox tradition encourages us to offer the **Blessing of the Five Loaves, Oil, Wheat & Wine** when we wish to give thanksgiving to God for His gifts, I invite parishioners to set aside the first Sunday of every month to come forth, if they wish, to share their special commemorations that will occur during that month (e.g., birthday, Name Day, anniversary, or any other special event in which you wish to make a monetary donation). If you will be absent on the first Sunday or forget it one month, no worries... simply wait until the first Sunday of the following month when we will have the next "Parish Thanksgiving Sunday" commemoration. We want to include everyone so don't worry if you miss the month of your celebration. In fact, our parishioners have shared that with travels, they often miss their intended donation date and now they won't have to feel they are late.

The **Blessing of the Five Loaves of Bread** is a brief service of thanksgiving through which we express our



gratitude for all the blessings of life. Oil, wine, wheat, and the loaves of bread which are used in the service, are viewed as the most

basic elements necessary for life. The Blessing reminds us of the miracle of the multiplication of the bread and fish by which Christ fed the multitude. After the Service, the bread is cut and distributed to the congregation. Thus, in addition to birthday cakes or special treats that people wish to bring and share during coffee fellowship on "Parish Thanksgiving Sunday", we will have blessed "sweet church bread" to share as well!

Beginning November 4th, if you choose for me to recognize your special day that occurs anytime in November, after Holy Communion is distributed, if possible, kindly sit on the empty seats near the front so you're more easily accessible for recognition after the "Blessing of the Five Loaves" service. I will offer this service after the Divine Liturgy and ask God's blessings upon all celebrating special days in November. After its prayers, each person and their