+ St. Catherine Greek Orthodox Church in Ithaca, New York +

50th Anniversary  1965-2015  Official Church Charter

+ ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE +
+ Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America +
+ Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Detroit +
Saint Catherine’s Church was originally designed by William Henry Miller, who studied under the renowned Cornell University professor of architecture, Charles Babcock. First built in 1884 for the First Congregational Society of Ithaca, which relocated to Cayuga Heights in 1960. The building then housed Ithaca College’s schools of music and ballet from 1960 to 1966. The local Greek American community purchased the historic property from IC shortly after the College moved to its current location on South Hill, and started celebrating services downtown in 1967, having previously held services at the rectory of St. John’s Episcopal Church, and then at the old Cosmopolitan Club on Bryant Avenue.

Saint Catherine’s was initially a mission of the Annunciation Church in Endicott, which has since relocated to Vestal. Greek Americans had been settling in the Ithaca area since the late 19th Century. By the 1950’s, they pushed for a parish of their own, and drew straws to determine who could name their new church. The late Peter Poulos, owner/operator of the former Pop’s Place in Collegetown, won the lot and named the church in honor of his mother’s memory. Since then, Saint Catherine’s has proudly produced four graduates of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Boston: the late Metropolitan Epiphanios Perialas, longtime professor at Ithaca College; Mr. Poulos’ son John, who currently serves as the Very Rev. Seraphim Poulos at Saints Nicholas, Constantine & Helen Church in Roseland, New Jersey; Rev. Steve Dalber, pastor of Saint Nektarios Church in Charlotte, North Carolina; and Evan C. Lambrou, a graduate of Washington University in St. Louis, who still chants services at Saint Catherine’s today.

Saint Catherine’s Church is a canonically established parish of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America – an eparchy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople. The church became a fully incorporated member parish of the Archdiocese in 1964, receiving its official church charter in 1965. Saint Catherine’s Church today serves Orthodox Christians of various and diverse backgrounds who reside in its locality and surrounding area.
The Life of the Saints and Ecclesiology of the Church
A Theological and Historical Address by Rev. Dr. George D. Dragas

November 21, 2015

WELCOME
Rev. Dr. Athanasios Parthenakis
Pastor, St. Catherine’s Church

PRESENTATION OF MAYORAL PROCLAMATION
Hon. Joseph Murtagh, Alderman, 2nd Ward, City of Ithaca

INTRODUCTION
Evan C. Lambrou, Event Organizer

GUEST SPEAKER
Father George Dragas
Professor of Patrology/Patristics and Church History,
Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology

PARISH HALL RECEPTION
Graciously Hosted by St. Catherine’s Church Philoptochos Society
Rev. Dr. George D. Dragas  
B.D., M.Th., Ph.D., D.D., D.Th

A protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Father Dragas is one of most eminent Orthodox Christian theologians and scholars in the world. He has represented the ancient Patriarchates of Constantinople, Antioch and Jerusalem in scores of interfaith dialogues at the ecumenical and international level for more than 35 years. An expert on the Fathers of the Early and Byzantine Church, he has lectured at universities and religious institutions across the globe.

Born and raised in Athens, his post-graduate mentors were the late Tom Torrance at Edinburgh University in Scotland and the late Father Georges V. Florovsky at Princeton University, where he had earned his B.D. and Th.M., respectively. He earned his Ph.D. at Durham University in England. Professor Torrance characterized his massive doctoral thesis on *St. Athanasius Contra Apollinarem* as an “epoch-making work in Patristic research.”

A leading authority on the theology of the Alexandrine Fathers, Father Dragas taught Patristics and Orthodox Theology at Durham from 1974 to 1995; then went to Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in Boston, where he has served as dean and professor of Patristics and Church History. He is also a visiting professor with the Saint John of Damascus Faculty of Theology at Balamand University in Lebanon; Sherbrooke University in Montreal; Laval University in Quebec; and Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Seminary in Jordanville, New York. And he teaches a course on the Theology of Saint John Chrysostom at Boston College.

A specialist on Saints Athanasios the Great and Cyril of Alexandria – the “Canon and Seal of Orthodoxy,” respectively – Father Dragas is responsible for updating and adding critical introductions to the University of Athens reprint of Migne’s *Patrologia Graeca* (161 volumes, now complete). He has authored, translated and edited many theological texts, and has received honorary doctorates from Saint Clement National University of Sofia in Bulgaria (D.D., 2000) and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece (D.Th., 2005).
City of Ithaca Proclamation

Whereas, the local Greek American community has enjoyed a presence in the Ithaca area since the late 19th Century, and realized that, in order to more effectively preserve their cultural way of life, they needed a place of their own to gather and freely worship;

Whereas, Saint Catherine Greek Orthodox Church in Ithaca first started as a mission of the Annunciation Church in Endicott, and eventually became an incorporated parish under the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of North & South America in 1964;

Whereas, the Saint Catherine’s Church community acquired their sacred property, which was originally designed by William Henry Miller – who studied under renowned Cornell University Professor of Architecture Charles Babcock – from Ithaca College which, in turn, had previously purchased it from the First Congregational Society of Ithaca;

Whereas, the Saint Catherine’s Church community reconverted their historic edifice in downtown Ithaca back into a house of worship – its originally intended use in 1884 – and received their official church charter from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese in 1965;

Whereas, the Apostle Andrew founded the Holy Mother Church of Constantinople almost 2,000 years ago; the Archdiocese is an eparchy of the Mother Church; and Saint Catherine’s Church in Ithaca is this year celebrating the 50th anniversary of her charter; and

Whereas, Saint Catherine’s Church in Ithaca commemorates the memory of her patron saint each year on November 25th, and now serves Orthodox Christian faithful of diverse ethnic backgrounds, fully reflecting America’s inclusive multi-cultural society,

Now, therefore, I, SVANTE L. MYRICK, Mayor of the City of Ithaca, do hereby proclaim November 25th, 2015 as:

Saint Catherine Greek Orthodox Church Day
In the City of Ithaca, New York

and urge all citizens of Ithaca and the surrounding area to observe this great day, and to participate fittingly in its observance.

In Witness whereof, I have hereto set my hand and caused the great seal of the City of Ithaca to be affixed on this, the 21st Day of November, in the Year Two Thousand and Fifteen.

___________________________
Svante L. Myrick, Mayor
HIS ALL HOLINESS BARTHOLOMEW I
Archbishop of Constantinople & New Rome and Ecumenical Patriarch

ΠΡΩΤΟΣ ΜΕΤΑΞΥ ΙΣΩΝ, PRIMUS INTER PARES, FIRST AMONG EQUALS
269th Successor of Saint Andrew the First-Called Apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ, and spiritual leader of the world’s 250 million Orthodox Christians.
HIS EMINENCE ARCHBISHOP DEMETRIOS OF AMERICA

EXARCH OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH AND PRIMATE OF THE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA
Reverend and Dear Father Athanasios, Distinguished Guests, Members of the Parish Council and Faithful of the Church of Saint Catherine,

I greet you on this meaningful day in the life of your community, when you celebrate the 50th anniversary of the establishment of your community as a parish of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

For the last 50 years, you have gathered humbly and joyfully before God in prayer. You have proclaimed the Gospel with power and conviction. You have taught the precepts of the Orthodox Christian faith, through your words and deeds, to each generation. As an inspired parish, you have initiated works of love and philanthropy, and have provided a vibrant witness of faith to the broader community.

As a parish of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Detroit under the omophorion of His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas of Detroit – and within the canonical jurisdiction of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, which is an eparchy of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople – you share in a sacred history as an ecclesial community of the Great Church of Christ. On this day, when the Rev. Dr. George D. Dragas will be addressing your community, I pray that you will be enriched by his knowledge and strengthened in the understanding of the direct and unbroken link the Greek Orthodox Church shares with the Holy Apostles themselves.

I offer you my heartfelt best wishes for a festive 50th anniversary celebration, a spiritually uplifting feast day of your patron saint, Saint Catherine the Great Martyr, and an anniversary year filled with inner renewal and every blessing from God. With my prayers for your wellbeing and your continued good service to Christ and His Church, I remain…

Yours with paternal love in Christ,

+ Archbishop Demetrios of America

+ DEMETRIOS
Archbishop of America
8-10 E. 79th Street, New York, NY 10075
HOLY GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF DETROIT
SAINT CATHERINE GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

November 21, 2015

Dear Parishioners and Friends of St. Catherine Greek Orthodox Church,

Greetings to all who are participating in the 50th anniversary celebration of St. Catherine Church’s official charter, signed by the late Archbishop Iakovos (of blessed memory), then of North & South America, under the spiritual aegis of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Holy Mother Church of Constantinople, in September of 1965.

By doing so, we are honoring the faithful founders and benefactors of this holy church. We are also commemorating the sustaining efforts of the women of our local Philoptochos Society, the great charitable arm of the Church. Through their combined faithful efforts over the years, St. Catherine’s Church has established a vibrant presence in Ithaca, serving and offering sanctification to Orthodox Christians and sharing the holy Orthodox faith throughout the region, to include students and faculty at Cornell University and Ithaca College.

On behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to thank all those who brought this celebration to fruition, especially Evan Lambrou, who initiated, spearheaded, organized and managed the effort. It is through his connections, zeal and genuine love for our parish that we could bring such an eminent Greek Orthodox theologian and scholar, Rev. Dr. George Dion Dragas – protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Great Church of Christ – into our midst. Evan’s efforts truly personify the power of faith that can move mountains (Matthew 17.20).

Let us all enjoy this special 50th anniversary celebration as we commemorate the establishment of St. Catherine’s Church in Ithaca, and look forward to the fulfillment of its Christian missions locally, regionally, nationally and globally in the future. May God continue to bless and sustain our parish community and all of God’s children with faith, hope and love (1 Corinthians 13.13). And may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with all of you. In His Name and in His Service, I remain respectfully…

Yours in Christian Love,

Fr. Tom Parthenakis

Rev. Dr. Athanasios G. Parthenakis, Pastor
Saint Catherine Greek Orthodox Church
120 W. Seneca Street, Ithaca, NY 14850
His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas (left), Presiding Bishop of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Detroit, raising the hand of Rev. Dr. Tom Parthenakis (right), proclaiming him “AXIOS” (worthy) after Father Tom’s ordination to the Holy Priesthood at Saint Catherine’s Church on January 2, 2011. The event was well publicized at the time, and was the lead story on the front page of the Ithaca Journal’s January 3, 2011 edition.

The Metropolis of Detroit is part-and-parcel of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, and Saint Catherine’s Church in Ithaca is part-and-parcel of the Archdiocese’s Metropolis in Detroit. This currently places Saint Catherine’s under Metropolitan Nicholas’ direct hierarchical oversight.

Father Tom was a professor of American History at Gannon University in Erie, Pennsylvania for 36 years before retiring in 2007 to become a priest. He was 69 years of age when Metropolitan Nicholas ordained him. Saint Catherine’s Church is Father Tom’s first parish assignment, and the Saint Catherine’s parish family has been reinvigorated during his ministry.
Rev. Dr. Athanasios Parthenakis  
Saint Catherine Greek Orthodox Church  
120 West Seneca Street  
Ithaca, NY 14850  

Dear Father Tom, Members of the Parish Council, Parishioners and Friends,

It is an immense joy for me to offer my prayers and sincere congratulations on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the granting of your parish charter by His Eminence, the late Archbishop Iakovos of North & South America, in 1965, under the spiritual aegis of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Holy Mother Church of Constantinople.

At that time, we still hadn’t moved into our downtown location, and held services at 301 Bryant Avenue, where we were very grateful and proud to finally have our own church recognized by all. When the charter was granted, we felt fulfilled that we could finally function as a parish with our own priest; that we could have a church in which to celebrate the Holy Sacraments; a Philoptochos and a GOYA, along with Greek and Sunday schools. Indeed, we felt truly blessed!

Since that time, most of the individuals responsible for helping establish our parish have left us. On this 50th anniversary, we honor all those members of the church who served with faith, zeal and dedication to our Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Church. May their memories be eternal.

By having Father George Dragas in your midst as you commemorate this great milestone in the history of Saint Catherine’s Church in Ithaca, I am confident you will celebrate your special event today with joy and gratitude, and build upon your spirit of dedication for the future.

Yours in Christ  

Father Seraphim Poulos  

Very Rev. Seraphim Poulos, Pastor  
Saints Nicholas, Constantine & Helen Church  
80 Laurel Avenue, Roseland, NJ 07068
SPONSORS

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Peter & Christina Stratakos
THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE
OF NORTH AND SOUTH AMERICA

under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the

ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE

And in accordance with the Holy Canons of the Greek Orthodox Church, hereby
certifies the parish of

St. Catherine in Ithaca, New York

has fully complied with the regulations and uniform parish bylaws of the Greek
Orthodox Archdiocese, and is thereby duly qualified to administer the rites,
sacraments and ecclesiastical functions of the Greek Orthodox Church.

In the Name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, this CHARTER is hereby
granted and affixed with the Official Seal of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of
North and South America.

Given under my hand this First Day of September in the Year of Our Lord Nineteen
Hundred and Sixty Five.

+ Archbishop Iakovos

Archbishop of the Greek Orthodox
Church in North and South America
THE LIFE OF SAINT CATHERINE, THE GREAT MARTYR OF ALEXANDRIA

Born in the late 3rd Century, Saint Catherine hailed from a wealthy aristocratic family. She was the daughter of Constas (Cestus), the governor of Alexandrian Egypt during the reign of the Roman Emperor Maximian. Living in Alexandria, the great cosmopolitan center of Hellenistic knowledge of the ancient world, and possessed of rare beauty and cultivated intellect, Catherine received an excellent education, studying the works of the great philosophers of antiquity under the best pagan teachers of her era.

Noble young men from all corners of the Empire sought her hand in marriage, but Catherine was not interested in any of them. She told her parents that she would enter into marriage only if someone surpassed her in nobility, wealth, comeliness and wisdom. She was clearly self-assured about her keen intellect, beauty, purity and social station.

Catherine’s mother, a crypto-Christian, sent the young maiden to a saintly elder living in a cave outside the city, for advice. The hermit told Catherine he knew of a Youth Who eclipsed her in everything: “His countenance is more radiant than the sun, and all creation is governed by His wisdom. His riches are freely distributed to all nations of the world, yet they never diminish. And His compassion is unequaled.”

The hermit’s description of the Heavenly Bridegroom generated an ardent desire in Catherine’s soul to see Him. The elder handed her an icon of the Virgin Mary, with the Christ Child in Mary’s arms, and told Catherine to pray fervently to the Theotokos. Catherine prayed all night, and she had a vision that the Mother of God told her Son, “Behold Thy handmaiden Catherine, how fair and virtuous she is.” But Christ turned His face away saying, “No. She is ugly and unbelieving. She is a foolish pauper, and I can not bear to look at her until she forsakes her conceit.”

Catherine returned to the elder deeply discouraged. He lovingly received her; instructed her in the Christian faith; encouraged her to preserve her purity and integrity, and to pray unceasingly. She was eventually baptized in the Name of the Holy Trinity, and again had a vision of the Theotokos with the Christ Child. This time, the Lord looked tenderly upon her, and gave her a wondrous ring, a token of her betrothal to the Bridegroom.

Unlike the rich young ruler in the Gospel of Saint Luke (18.18-30), Catherine sacrificed everything to follow Christ. She gave up the wealth that came with her inheritance, as well as a very comfortable life of social privilege, and embraced a spiritual life devoted to faith in Christ, away from worldly care.

It was around that time, in the year 305 AD, that Maximian went to Alexandria for a pagan festival. The cries of sacrificial animals; the smoke and smell of animal sacrifice; the endless blaze of fires from pagan rituals; and the bustling crowds in the arenas assaulted people’s senses and defiled the city.

Human victims, people who confessed Christ, were also rounded up. They refused to deny Him even under torture, so they were burned alive, condemned to death by fire.
Catherine’s compassion for those unfortunate Christian martyrs, and her fervent desire to ease their suffering, compelled her to speak directly to the Emperor herself. Her beauty captivated the Emperor. She boldly confessed her faith in Christ, and refuted the errors of pagan thinking. In an impassioned effort to assert the “superiority” of secular wisdom, Maximian ordered 50 of the Empire’s most learned philosophers to dispute with her. But guided by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit, she silenced their voices. She used her great oratory skills in defense of her faith so convincingly, that all 50 pagan philosophers also started believing in Christ. They converted to the Christian faith, and then bravely accepted death for doing so (by order of the Emperor).

His soul unbridled, Maximian tried to entice Catherine with the promise of riches and fame. She rebuked him. So he ordered her to be tortured and thrown into prison. The Empress Augusta heard about Catherine, and went to visit her in prison. The Empress was deeply impressed by the young maiden’s courage and fortitude.

The next day, Catherine was brought before the Court where, under threat of being broken on the spiked wheel of torture, she was admonished to renounce Christ and offer sacrifice to the pagan gods. In response, she steadfastly confessed her Christian faith, and stoically approached the wheel. An angel shattered the instrument of execution, smashing it into pieces, as many pagan witnesses stood nearby.

Having beheld this astonishing turn of events, the Empress, Imperial Courtier Porphyrios and a contingent of 200 soldiers publicly confessed their faith in Christ, too, for which they were all beheaded. Maximian desperately proposed to Catherine, who again rejected him. Firmly confessing her fidelity to the Heavenly Bridegroom alone, and uttering a prayer to Him, she lay her head down on the executioner’s block, and thereby willingly received her crown of martyrdom.

Maximian’s reign thereafter was short-lived. His fall from grace was swift and hard. He tried to undermine Constantine the Great – whose share of the Roman Empire then consisted of Britain, Gaul and Spain – while Constantine was on a military campaign against the Franks in 310. When Constantine learned of Maximian’s treachery, he went quickly to southern Gaul, where he confronted Maximian in Marseille. Maximian was apprehended, reproved and stripped of all his titles. He then hanged himself – a customary punishment for treason at that time – and Constantine instituted a damnatio memoriae, destroying all inscriptions referring to Maximian and eliminating any public work bearing his image.

The fame of Saint Catherine’s devotion to Christ, on the other hand, spread far and wide. Her holy remains were discovered by monks on Mount Sinai – where the Church maintains they were transferred by angels – in the 6th Century. The famous Monastery of Saint Catherine, built on the site of the Burning Bush beheld by Moses (Exodus 3.1-4), still tends to the Burning Bush itself and guards Saint Catherine’s relics to this day. The site is considered sacred to all Christendom, and also to the adherents of Islam.
APOLYTIKION OF SAINT CATHERINE

Let us praise the most felicitous and renowned bride of Christ, Catherine, the divine protectoress of Sinai, our succor and our helper. For she hath brilliantly silenced the refinements of the impious with the Sword of the Holy Spirit. And now, crowned as a martyr of the Lord, she fervently asks His great mercy for us all.

KONTAKION OF SAINT CATHERINE

O ye who share an inspired love for the martyrs, bestir thysevles when honoring the most learned Catherine. For in the arena, she was the herald of Christ, trampling down the serpent by casting down the false wisdom of philosophers who the shameless emperor ignominiously pitted against her.