

The Desert



Messenger

“Behold, I send My messenger before Your Face, who shall prepare Your way...” (Matthew 11:10)

Volume 6, Issue 2 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

February 2008

From Father John

Beloved in Christ:

St. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, converted countless among the uncircumcised to Jesus Christ, and one such person was Titus, whom Paul appointed as the first Bishop of Crete. St. Titus not only faced theological challenges on that beautiful island, but also a culture that was hostile toward the Church. In this setting, Titus was commissioned to set the Church in order and ordain others to oversee the many areas of the vast island. Writing to the Bishop of Crete, St. Paul drew the connection between *Orthodoxia* (correct faith) and *Orthopraxia* (correct actions) – a theme that is carried in all the great spiritual writings of the Church – when defining the characteristics of proper candidates for bishops.

Included in this “job description” that begins the Letter to Titus, St. Paul asserts that a bishop – and priest, leaders of the Church, and all Christians as a matter of fact – must be a *“master of himself.”* (*Titus 1:8*) The Greek word used here is *“sofrona”* which also translates as *sober-minded, orderly and restrained in all the relations of life.* During this month, as we enter the *Triodion* period (referring to the book of hymns used for the Great Fast) in preparation for Lent, one Sunday will be dedicated to the reading of the Parable of the Prodigal Son (*Luke 15:11-32*). *Prodigality* – in Greek, *“asotos”* – is the opposite of *“sofrona”* and this parable is nothing less than a brilliant exploration of the human mind which is at war with God.

In this parable, we are introduced to the younger son, who demands his birthright (which traditionally would have been given at the time of the father’s death) and *“not many days later...gathered all he had and took his journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in loose living.”* (*Luke 15:13*) If this parable were written in our times, it would speak to our tendency – in a practical sense – to go over our heads in our spending, our investments, our gambling, our loans, our status-oriented or peer influenced consumption, our pleasure and so on. Spiritually speaking, the former list is an honest and somber reflection of the inner self, and prodigality refers to our propensity to overindulge in the passions, in worldliness, and in the flesh. Both practically and spiritually, prodigality leads us eventually into *“a far country”* away and apart from God. Just as we have witnessed a record numbers of foreclosures because our culture conditions us to be anything but temperate, our souls equally risk spiritual bankruptcy when we fail to be, with God’s help of course, masters of ourselves.

However, this powerful parable teaches that there is hope for all of us: that is, if we are willing, like the Prodigal Son, to *come to ourselves and change our minds* – in Greek, *metanoia*, commonly translated as *to repent.* Jesus Christ our God, Who resurrected from the dead, provides the way for our release from the worldly enslavement that keeps our bodies, minds and souls in captivity: specifically, by commanding us to desire the heavenly riches, the acquisition of virtues and the many gifts of the Holy Spirit – all of which are the equivalent to the *“pearl of great price”* that, as our Lord teaches, once found, we never want to relinquish! (*Matthew 13:46*)

Love in Christ,

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sundays: 8:45 am Orthros - 10:00 am Divine Liturgy

Church School follows Holy Communion

Weekdays (Unless Noted): 8:00 am Orthros - 9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Saturday, February 2/ *The Meeting of Our Lord in the Temple*

Epistle: Hebrews 7:7-17

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40

Sunday, February 3/ *16th Sunday of Matthew (Parable of the Talents)/Ss. Simeon and Anna*

Orthros: Tone Three

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Mark 16:9-20

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:1-10

Gospel: Matthew 25:14-30

Sunday, February 10/ *17th of Matthew (Canaanite Woman)/St. Haralambos the Hieromartyr*

Orthros: Tone Four

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:1-12

Epistle: 2 Timothy 2:1-10

Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28

Sunday, February 17/ *16th of Luke (Publican and Pharisee)/St. Theodore of Tyre*

Orthros: Tone Five (First Plagal)

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:13-35

Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15

Gospel: Luke 18:10-14

Triodion Begins: *No Fasting This Week*

Sunday, February 24/ *17th of Luke (Prodigal Son)/ Finding of the Head of St. John the Baptist*

Orthros: Tone Six (Second Plagal)

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:36-53

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:6-15

Gospel: Luke 15:11-32

Fast on Wednesday and Friday This Week

"He was lost, and is found." (Luke 15:24)

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

February 3

Ushers: William Carrico, Sam Koutsulis, John Karas, John Nicholas, George Kakavulias, George Nikols

Memorial: James Nikols (40 days); Mercury Peronis (1 year),

Jeremy Hein (1 year); Peter Kachikis (1 year); George Karas.

Fellowship: Philoptochos - Kids and Cancer

February 10

Ushers: Alleck Orlando, Peter Papas, Marina Adamy, Stephen Carabas, Angelo Stamis, Gary Waters

Artoclasia: Eliades and Lekar Families in Honor of St. Haralambos

Memorial: Diamando Savastou (1 year); Evangelia Collins (1 year);

Departed Members of Philoptochos.

Fellowship: Folk Dance Group Luncheon and FDF Performance

February 17

Ushers: John Karas, John Nicholas, William Carrico, Sam Koutsulis, George Kakavulias, George Nikols

Fellowship: Eleni Kakavulias and Family to Benefit Iconography Fund

February 24

Ushers: Marina Adamy, Stephen Carabas, Peter Papas, Alleck Orlando, Gary Waters, Angelo Stamis

Memorial: Andrew Fackos (40 days); Venea (Antonia) Poulos (5 years).

Fellowship: Senior Forerunners

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco
will visit our parish on Sunday, April 20, and celebrate the holy services of
Palm Sunday Morning (Orthros and Liturgy) and Evening (1st Bridegroom Service).

**President's
Column**

It is very difficult to write an article every month. The subjects get harder and harder to come up with. I usually tell you what needs to be fixed and how much more money we need this year than last.

This month I'm going to ask you all to just come to Church. Start fresh by coming to Church more, not just on Sundays but come also after work during the week. Check the Church Calendar and come to a class, a meeting or join a Church ministry or organization. Find out what goes on during the week; meet and get to know our employees. Take a walk around the grounds and check out how many light bulbs need to be replaced. When was the last time you were early for Church services on Sunday or attended a weekday Liturgy? Have you ever been in our Church during a sunset? You don't know what you're missing.

If you answered no or never to these questions - JUST COME TO CHURCH. George Nikols, Parish Council President

On behalf of the parish, we extend our condolences to George and his family at the recent falling asleep in the Lord of both his brother and aunt. We thank God for George's continued service on the Parish Council, even with these significant losses. Everlasting be their memory.



The Priests and 2008 Members of the Parish Council following the Oath of Office on January 6: (from left) George Kakavulias, John Karas, Alleck Orlando (Asst. Treasurer), Gary Waters, Peter Papas, Angelo Stamis, Fr. Paul Eyler, Fr. John Hondros, Fr. Dean Raptis, Marina Adamy (Secretary), Sam Koutsulis, George Nikols (President), John Nicholas (Treasurer), William Carrico (Vice President) and Stephen Carabas.

Name Day Dinner

Our St. John the Baptist Name Day Dinner was a great success. We managed to raise \$4,257 which benefits our Church. I want to thank those who helped me in preparation for and during the evening event, and those who attended. I greatly appreciate everyone's effort.

John Nicholas, Chairman

"Make holiness perfect in the fear of God." (2 Corinthians 7:1)

**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
GREEK ORTHODOX
CHURCH**

5300 S. El Camino Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89118

Rev. Father John Hondros

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Philoptochos: Amalia Dominguez

Choir: Faye Brown

Chanters/Youth Choir:
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School:
Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers:
Geo Nikols and Demetri Carabas

Stewardship Committee:
John Karas

Hellenic Historical Society:
Nitsa Filios

GOYA:
Effie Lekar
Tammy Chomakos

HOPE and JOY:
Jennifer Orlando and Christy Vino

Orthodox Family Fellowship:
Michael and Tami Stefanatos

Youth Ministries:
Eileen Koutsulis

Orthodox Connection Las Vegas:
Angela Coutris

Senior Forerunners:
Tessie Peterson and Aphy Nikitas

Greek Folk Dance:
Tina Liaos, Chair
Carla Cole and Bessie Stavropoulos

Greek Language Classes:
Para Pouridis, Coordinator
Phyllis Gousdovas,
Antonia Tzelalis,
Spiridoulla Vinieratos

Orthodox Bookstore: Costa Frangakis

**Philoptochos
News**

Hello Friends:
As planned, the ladies have kicked off an initiative in support of the Iconography Fund - *A RAFFLE...with all of the wonderful prizes donated by the fabulous ladies of Panagia!* The tickets are \$5 each, or 5 for \$20.

Prizes include:

- 2 Round Trip Southwest Airlines Ticket Vouchers
- Dooney and Bourke Ladies Handbag
- Sonic Care Electronic Toothbrush with MANY accessories – \$300 value
- 2 \$100 gift certificates to Rosemary’s Restaurant
- 2 dinners for two at Marrakech Restaurant
- A Pizza Oven
- I-Pod Shuffle
- Basket of Salon Hair Products
- Dinner for 4 at the Rio Buffet
- Dinner for 2 at Frank & Fina’s Cocina

All proceeds will benefit the Iconography Fund. Please see a Philoptochos Board Member to purchase tickets. The drawing will be held on *Palm Sunday, April 20.*

Thanks again to everyone for their support and participation in the Vasilopita festivities. Through these initiatives Philoptochos was able to donate \$1,287 to St. Basil’s Academy.

We have no General Meeting in February as we prepare for our many activities associated with Lent. However, on *February 3* we will be hosting the fellowship for the benefit of Kids ‘n Cancer, a vital and important ministry of the Metropolis Philoptochos. In addition, we will pay our respect in honoring our departed Philoptochos members with a *Memorial Service on February 10.* Please join the women of Philoptochos on this Sunday in Church as we remember and cherish those who built the foundation upon which we stand.

Finally, we send many good wishes and best of luck to the FDF dancers and their amazing advisors!
Amalia Dominguez and the Board Members

AHEPA 2008 Scholarship

The Order of AHEPA, Las Vegas Chapter 314, announces the availability of scholarship applications for 2008. Worthy students are encouraged to submit applications for one of the two types of scholarships being offered for 2008.

The first scholarship offered is the “Journey to Greece.” This is a month-long study program starting on July 1 and ending on July 26. It is sponsored in conjunction with the University of Indianapolis, and takes place in Athens, Greece. Students may select two out of five courses, and upon completion will earn six transferable university credits.

The second scholarship is the standard academic scholarship for entering college, or continuing college students. It consists of an award to assists students in meeting their tuition and registration requirements.

Scholarship applications are available at the Church Office. Deadline is *March 1, 2008.*

Our Community Registry

Baptized into Christ : Na Mas Zisoun!

Alexander Scott,
son of Scott Young and Jennifer Hough,
on December 23, 2007.

Godparents: Randall Soterios Petas
and Shirley Galea.

Sophia Elizabeth,
daughter of Scott Young and Jennifer Hough,
on December 23, 2007.

Godparents: Randall Soterios Petas
and Shirley Galea.

Katerina, daughter of Elliot Karathanasis and
Jane Friedman, on December 24, 2007.

Godparents: Paschalis and Rayna Kaltsatis

Fallen Asleep in the Lord: Eternal Memory

Andrew Fackos on January 12, 2008.
Trisagion on January 15.

“Live as servants of God.” (1 Peter 2:16)

Orthodox Bookstore

Hello from your Bookstore.

Thank you, everyone, for your kind support of our Bookstore here at St. John the Baptist. Please come by and take a look at our great selection of books, beautiful chanting on CDs, icons, and much more. Don't be afraid to ask questions.

Many of us do not really know what we believe as Orthodox Christians. We go through life and to Church services without getting the full benefit of what God has done for us. The *absolute worst thing* that we can do in life is to pass up God's offer of salvation.

Let us investigate just a little and start to turn away from the world. Let's begin to embrace the joy that God has planned for those who want to love Him and are willing to try to walk toward Him. All of us have an opportunity to become Saints: Our Father in Heaven wants this for each and every one of us. Let us make an effort and seek to embrace God's love in our hearts. When we do, He will respond.

Until next month (GW) - ICXC NIKA, Costa Frangakis



Adult Study Group with Father John Hondros
Meets Every Wednesday (Unless Noted) ~ 7:00-8:30 pm in Kokkos Hall
Join us in "Learning Orthodoxy through the Gospel of John.
Bibles available in our Orthodox Bookstore

Orthodox Connection Las Vegas

Wow! Can you believe it has already been a year since OCLV's first get together? In February 2007 we met at Marie Callendar's on Flamingo and Decatur and discussed big plans for our new ministry.

On *Wednesday, February 27* let's reminisce and plan once again to meet at Father John's Adult Study in Kokkos Hall, 7:00 pm-8:30 pm, and then follow each other to Marie Callendar's for a snack. Join us at Adult Study, or meet us at Marie Callendar's shortly after class (8:45 pm). Again, please spread the word and thanks for your support! For information, contact me at (702) 497-2529, or acourtris@hotmail.com - Angela Coutris

*"Be exalted, O God, above the heavens!
 Let Your glory be over all the earth!"
 (Psalm 57:5, 11)*

Parish Directory

It's that time again . . .

Bill Flangas and Stephen Carabas will be putting together a new Parish Directory - and we need your help. We will be taking photos of all individuals and families after Liturgy every Sunday, beginning March 16 through April 13. We ask that on one of these Sundays you set aside a little extra time to be a part of this endeavor.

We will have information cards available in the Narthex and in the Church Office throughout February and March. Please fill them out ahead of time to expedite the photo session, as we will need that information as well as the photo for the directory; please bring them when you have your photo taken.

We will also have a business section where you will be able to advertise. The first directory proved to be a very helpful addition to our parish and we are hoping for 100% support from everyone. If you have any questions or suggestions, please contact either Bill or Stephen. We thank you in advance.



Notes From the Loft

During the month of February, Choir rehearsals will continue on Wednesdays from 5:00 to 6:30 pm. After the first Wednesday in March, because of Lent, rehearsals will be held before Salutations on Friday from 5:30 pm until 7:00 pm. Many parishioners commended the choir for their beautiful hymns sung on Christmas Eve, keep up the good work. **Faye Brown, Choir Director**

Youth Ministries

Church School

Hi Everyone! Good luck to all of our students participating in the Folk Dance Festival (FDF). Have a great time! On Sunday, February 17 we will have Family Worship Sunday, so there will be no classes.

We are back in the swing of things after three weeks off. We will be collecting for our Pennies and Prayers starting in March. It is never too early to start your prayer jars at home; your loose change benefits new mission parishes in our Metropolis. This is a wonderful project that the Church School does every year. Let's try to collect even more than we did last year!

We are still missing some registrations. If you are not sure if you have registered, then please see your child's teacher, who will give you the proper paperwork. It is important that we have a registration on every child. If you are new to our Church, it is never too late to enroll your children in Church School. We accept newcomers all year long. Just remember, your child needed to be 4 years-old by September 30, 2007, to start and we go all the way up to high school. Please call me if you have any questions or concerns.

In Christ, Eileen Koutsulis (702) 521-6516

Greek Folk Dance

The Greek Folk Dance Groups and the Youth Choir have been very busy preparing for competition at the Folk Dance Festival (FDF) in Ontario, California. This year it will be held over President's Day weekend, February 14-17, 2008. Practices have been longer and more frequent so that the dancers can polish up their dances. With the addition of one more dance group this year, attendees from St. John parish will have quite a show that weekend. Everyone is welcome to attend this event. If you would like more information on the FDF weekend, go to www.GOFDF.org.

Our annual Luncheon is scheduled for *Sunday, February 10*. This will give the community an opportunity to see our children perform the suites they will dance in their competition the following weekend. Tickets will be on sale each Sunday after Church services beginning January 27 - and at the Luncheon we'll have "singles" on hand for exchange to shower over our dancers during their performances.

A *Mandatory Meeting for all Parents and Argonaftes Dancers* participating at FDF will take place on *Tuesday, February 5 at 6:00 pm*. We will have information on the schedule for FDF weekend which will be especially helpful for parents that have never gone to FDF before. We will also outline our expectations for all participants (parents and dancers) from St. John for that weekend.

Also, please note that our fabulous Competition Youth Choir (those participating at FDF) will perform their competition music in Church the Sunday after FDF. This group has more than doubled from last year and they have been working especially hard. You are in for a treat!

Lastly, we want to thank all of you that have supported our fundraisers and have contributed to the Folk Dance Groups. It is with your support that we are able to keep this beautiful ministry alive!

Tina Liaos, Dance Board Chair

GOYA

Senior and Junior GOYA will have its annual Pre-Lenten Retreat on *March 7-8*, again this year at our Church. We will start after school on Friday, around 4:00 pm and conclude Saturday afternoon at 3:00 pm. Please bring your sleeping bags, pillows and, yes, even air mattresses. It will be a great time to be together and focus on our Lenten Journey. We will have confessions, group sessions, activities, food and fun. Please sign-up before March 3 with the GOYA Advisors: Effie Lekar (702) 768-5500 or Tammy Chomakos (702) 338-4671.

Youth Choir News



Hi! We will chant the Divine Liturgy on *Sunday, February 10*. Since we have gotten so big (great news), we will chant from our new location in the front right exedra. It gives us more room. Please be there at *9:45 am sharp*.

Keep up the good work. Thanks for your cooperation.
Love, Presvytera Maria

FDF: Remembering Why We Go

I have the privilege of serving of the Folk Dance Festival Board this year, at the appointment of His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos. His Eminence has visited the regions of our vast Metropolis regarding FDF, and I have had the opportunity to attend two of these meetings with parents and dancers, the most recent of which took place in Scottsdale, AZ. As Las Vegas is part of the Southwest region, yet still quite a distance to travel on a weeknight, I would like to recap the message of His Eminence and the FDF Board. 2008 will be the year that FDF seeks to rediscover her roots.

While FDF is unquestionably one of the largest and most successful ministries of the Metropolis, thanks to the vision of the late-Metropolitan Anthony, the size and popularity at times clouds the reason for this annual festival, which had its humble beginnings in San Diego in the mid-1970s (and which was attended from the start by our parish). From the start, this event was organized to offer our young people - through folk dance - the opportunity to gather together in the unity of their Orthodox Faith and to preserve the Greek Culture. What has changed . . . and how can we get back to the roots of FDF?

St. Paul writes: *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind.” (Romans 12:2)* It is in the spirit of St. Paul, reflecting on the words of His Eminence, I offer the following message:

While the competition is used as a means to aspire to our best, the driving force behind this festival should not be “to win.” As Orthodox Christians, our desire should be to be crowned for God’s Kingdom; in other words, in all we do, we should seek to please God and give Him the glory. While we live in a competitive, cut-throat world, this does not mean we should bring this attitude to FDF or any Church event. We are “winners” when we have behaved as God wants, have respected those who teach us, done our best at each rehearsal, and shown the fruits of our hard work in our performance. It is inappropriate for any dancer (or parent!) to be reduced to tears of disappointment when “the medal of choice” has not been awarded, or even worse, to take on an arrogant attitude when receiving, in our minds, our “due reward.”

Although FDF has become somewhat of a Hollywood spectacle, and at this point may have more “stars, shining lights and cameras” than the Oscars themselves, we should not allow our young ones to get caught up in the trappings of “red carpet” behavior. As this is a Church event, our dress during the weekend, and particularly at the Sunday Banquet, should be age-appropriate and modest, and we definitely should not look at Hollywood role models for how to dress and behave. We should dress appropriately and act like real, not phony, human beings made in God’s beautiful image.

Regarding appropriate behavior, this year’s FDF will be a “dry” event, which means that no alcoholic beverages will be sold or permitted on the premises where the activities are taking place. “Partying,” whether in the rooms or offsite, will not be tolerated, and there will be spot checks to enforce this. Any dancer in our parish caught drinking (those under 21), abusing drugs or engaging in sexual or inappropriate activity will be asked to leave immediately - this is not a new policy for our parish, by the way. Let’s go to FDF to have fun . . . but in a Christian Orthodox way, and in a manner reflecting the integrity of our Greek Culture, and always mindful that each of us are representing St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Las Vegas. Let’s Be Our Best . . . for God, ourselves and our parish!

I personally want to thank all of our dancers, directors, board members, parents and chaperones for your commitment to Christ and His Church. As always, all of you have my love, support and encouragement. **In Christ, Father John**

Greek Food Festival News

Well, we're on our way! I am pleased at how many of our parish family members have already signed up to participate in our Greek Food Festival, which will be *September 18-21*. I will be in the Panos Hall most every Sunday for Fellowship to answer any questions and receive comments and suggestions you might have. You can also take the opportunity to sign up and make your pledge to participate.

I say "participate," because we are earning a future for our Church: to have all our bills paid, but equally so to expand our wonderful programs for the growth of our Faith and heritage. The latter motivation is most important, as it lays a solid foundation, especially for the youth of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church.

I hope you will share my excitement for this year's Festival. In Christ, **John Koutsulis**

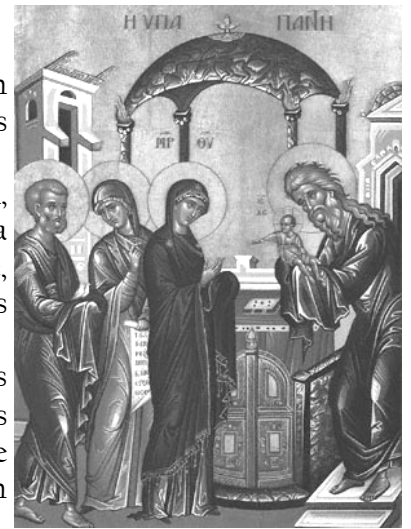
February 2: The Meeting of Our Lord

This Festival, known in the West as the Presentation of Christ in the Temple or the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, in the East bears the title 'Meeting' - the meeting, that is of Christ with His people.

Our Lord, brought to the Temple by His mother, and by Joseph, now meets His chosen people in the persons of Simeon the Elder and Anna the Prophetess. This feast forms the conclusion of the Nativity sequence, which opened some eighty days earlier with the beginning of the Christmas fast.

At the Meeting, as at Christmas and Theophany, the Church thinks about *kenosis*, the deep self-emptying of the Incarnate Word. He Who is Giver of the Law is Himself obedient to the Law: 'Today He Who once gave the Law to Moses on Sinai submits Himself to the ordinances of the Law in His compassion becoming for our sakes as we are' (*Vespers, Lity*).

The texts for this day are based for the most part upon Simeon's Song, "Lord, now let Your servant...": they speak of the salvation that Christ has come to confer, of the glory and light of revelation that have been granted through His Incarnation. - *The Festal Menaion*



February 10: St. Haralambos, the Hieromartyr



This great saint was bishop in Magnesia (Asia Minor), and suffered for Christ at the age of 113. When a violent persecution broke out under the Emperor Septimus Severus, the aged Haralambos (*literally, 'Joyful Light'*) did not hide from his persecutors, but freely and openly preached the Christian faith.

He endured all tortures as though not in the body, and when they flayed the living flesh from him, the godly saint said to the Emperor's soldiers: 'Thank you, my brethren, for scraping off the old body and renewing my soul for new and eternal life.' He performed many wonders and brought many to the Faith. Even the Emperor's daughter, Gallina, repudiated the paganism of her father and became a Christian.

Condemned to death and led to the place of execution, St. Haralambos raised his arms to heaven and prayed for all men, that God would give them bodily health and salvation of soul, and that He would grant them the fruits of the earth in abundance: 'Lord, You know that men are flesh and blood; forgive them their sins and pour out Your blessing on all.' After praying thus, the saintly elder gave his soul to God before the executioner had laid his sword to his neck. He suffered in 202. Gallina took his body and buried it.

- *The Prologue from Ochrid, Volume I*

Stewardship Report: "Commit to Christ"

<u>2007 Stewardship Status (December 31, 2007):</u>		Stewardship Target – 2007	\$400,000
Stewardship Families Pledged	504	Stewardship Gifts Pledged	\$394,508
Stewardship Gifts Received	\$354,857	Current Stewardship Deficit	\$ 5,492
 <u>2008 Stewardship Status (January 15, 2008):</u>		Stewardship Target – 2008	\$470,500
Stewardship Families Pledged	253	Stewardship Gifts Pledged	\$228,465
Stewardship Gifts Received	\$N/A	Current Stewardship Deficit	\$242,035
Average Stewardship Pledge	\$903.02	Percentage of Goal Achieved	48.56%

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ;

Our 2008 Stewardship Drive has encountered some *noticeable headwinds*. As noted above, 253 stewardship families have pledged a total of \$228,465 or 48.56% of our goal. As of January 15, 25 fewer families have pledged than at this time in 2007 and the total gifts pledged is running \$10,571 behind.

With a Stewardship target of \$470,500, established by the Parish Assembly for 2008, it is of the utmost importance that all of us make a strong commitment to His Church. Please remember that this target is the minimum required in order to maintain a balanced budget for 2008 in accordance with the audit committee's recommendation.

Our final 2007 Stewardship drive data is also noted above. Although we managed to get to 98.63% of our pledge target, a very notable achievement, the pledges received fell significantly short by a total of \$39,651 or 10.05% of the gifts pledged. This level of shortfall has a significant effect on the management of the Church's budget requiring the utilization of funds from other sources, such as the Food Festival, which have been earmarked for maintenance and capital investment.

Our Stewardship Pledges are statements of intention made in good faith to share the gifts the Lord has bestowed upon us of time, talents and treasures. Our commitment is not a legal obligation but a Promise to God. It is understood that from time-to-time situations arise that impact our ability to fulfill our pledges. Should such an event occur we should contact the Church Office or Fr. John so that a proper adjustment may be made to our pledge.

When submitting payments to the Church please be sure to identify how these payments should be applied. If making a payment by check make sure to specify in the memo section whether the payment is for stewardship, candles, iconography, and so on. If a cash payment is being made and you wish to have it credited to your account, it would be best if you place it in an envelope with your name and its intended application.

I hope and pray that all of our parishioners will step up and make a commitment to support the Lord's work. May everything we do be for His Glory. Glory be to God – Δόξα Σοι ο Θεός.

With Love in Christ, John G. Karas (702) 219-5057, Stewardship Chairman



**The Alea Chapter of the Pan Arcadian Federation of America
Invites You to Attend a . . .**

"Macaronada!"

March 1, 2008

6:00-10:00 pm

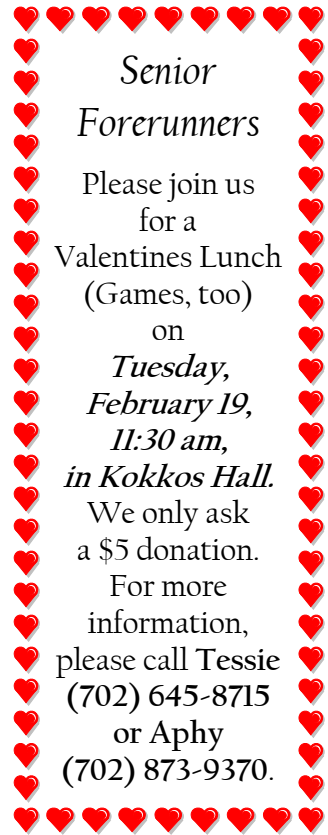
Panos Hall

Dinner and Dancing: Adults \$30, Children 12 and under \$15

Reserved seating may be purchased in advance during Fellowship on February 10, 17 and 24

2008 Parish Stewards and Contributors: "Commit to Christ"

- | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Adamy, Marina | Fanandakis, George and Helen | Luckey, Jason and Shawna | Stefanatos, Michael and Tami |
| Agnos, Jim and Angeline | Filios, George and Nitsa | Lymberopoulos, Mary | Stefanatos-Hetzel, Dr. Joanne |
| Andraktos, Manuel | Flangas, Bill and Marilyn | Malamatos, Kindina | Stephanos, Stanley and Aspasia |
| Andrews, Catherine | Fokas, Elene | Malpee, Mack and Kalliope | Stika, Arthur and Melinda |
| Andrews, Presvytera Helen | Foskaris, Nicholas & Dana | Mamasis, Dena | Struzas, Maria |
| Arcamuzi, Georgia | Foskaris, Thomas and Iryna | Mamasis, Tessie | Szukiewicz, Joe |
| Aristides, George and Diana | Frangakis, Costa | Manakides, Tom and Ginger | Szukiewicz, Joseph and Jennia |
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 for a

 Valentines Lunch

 (Games, too)

 on

 Tuesday,

 February 19,

 11:30 am,

 in Kokkos Hall.

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THE DESERT MESSENGER

The Way of the Lord

“Let the gate of heaven be opened today:
for He Who is without beginning, the Word of the Father,
has made a beginning in time without forsaking His divinity,
and as a babe forty days old He is of His own will
brought by the Virgin His Mother as an offering
in the temple of the Law.
The Elder received Him in his arms,
crying as a servant to the Master:
‘Let me depart:
for my eyes have seen Your salvation.’
Glory to You, O Lord,
Who has come into the world to save mankind.”
Doxastikon, Great Vespers, The Meeting of Our Lord in the Temple