

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 6, Issue 4 *St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV*

April 2008

From Father John

Beloved in Christ:

Having passed the mid-point of Lent our focus now shifts toward Golgotha – “the Place of a Skull,” where our Lord voluntarily suffered Crucifixion. Our fast finds meaning only in the sacrificial and redemptive works of Jesus Christ, the King of Glory, on the Cross – our minimal effort at abstaining from certain foods or activities is really not sacrificial at all, for He alone gave up what was necessary to give up . . . His life for our sins.

Shortly before our Lord’s Passion, the mother of two of His Disciples, James and John, came forward and requested a favor of Him: *“Command that these two sons of mine may sit, one at Your right hand and one at Your left, in Your kingdom.” (Matthew 20:21)* One of the Holy Monday Bridegroom Service hymns reflects on this: *“Lord, unable to grasp the ineffable mystery of Your dispensation, the mother of Zebedee’s sons asked of You to grant them the honor of a temporal kingdom.”* Her question and Jesus’ response demand that each of us examine our own hearts and our motives. Even in the Church, if the intent of what we do, both in prayer and in service, is not to glorify God, then what spiritual benefit is it to us – or to anyone for that matter?

How foolishly bold we are, as the mother of James and John, to think that our menial efforts of spirituality – whether it be changing our diets, offering prayers at our convenience, forcing ourselves to lend a hand, or showing up at Church services a little more – will alone commend us to God. In words and especially in deeds, Christ teaches us that, apart from truly loving God and each other, all of our so-called spiritual actions are self-centered and, in the end, futile: this kind of spirituality will get us nowhere near His Kingdom. Let us take heed to Christ’s final response to this woman, her sons and all His Disciples, which offers the direction we need: *“...the Son of man came not to be served, but to serve...” (Matthew 20:28)* We are not here – in this life, where we live, and with the people God has placed in our midst – to be served; rather, in imitation of Christ, we are commanded to serve the Lord and each other.

In His saving works – which constitute the essence of Holy Week – our Lord lovingly bears the marks of divine glory in His humility, forbearance and, ultimately, forgiveness. Beloved, just as Christ loves us, we need to at least make an attempt to love one another, accepting each other’s shortcomings, just as Christ did ours on the Cross. We must forgive each other, as Jesus bid His Father to forgive us before He died. We must be willing, with God’s help, to break down the walls of the devil – the walls that our Savior shattered by His Resurrection on the third day. The devil’s walls serve no other purpose but to separate us from God and each other, inevitably shutting us out of the Kingdom. Let us approach Holy Week and Pascha in the right spirit this year so that the 40-day Lenten journey may prove that it was not taken in vain, but as God willed it. My prayer is that, as we raise our candles on the Feast of Our Lord’s Resurrection, we will be profoundly grateful and basking in resplendent joy knowing that just as Christ is Risen, we too have been delivered from sin and death, and have been granted abundant life.

Kalo Pascha. Love in Christ,

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

*Sundays: 8:45 am Orthros ~ 10:00 am Divine Liturgy
Church School follows Holy Communion*

Wednesday, April 2

6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy

Friday, April 4

7:00 pm 4th Salutations to the Theotokos

Sunday, April 6/ *4th of Lent/St. John Climacos*

Orthros: Tone Four

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Matthew 28:16-20

Epistle: Hebrew 6:13-20

Gospel: Mark 9:17-31

6:00 pm Lenten Vespers at St. Simeon

Monday, April 7

6:30 pm Great Compline

Wednesday, April 9

6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy

Friday, April 11

7:00 pm The Akathist Hymn

Sunday, April 13/ *5th of Lent/St. Mary of Egypt*

Orthros: Tone Five (First Plagal)

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Mark 16:1-8

Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14

Gospel: Mark 10:32-45

6:00 pm Lenten Vespers at St. Paul

Monday, April 14

6:30 pm Great Compline

Wednesday, April 16

6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy

Saturday, April 19/ *Saturday of Lazaros*

8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Hebrews 12:28-29, 13:1-8

Gospel: John 11:1-45

Palm Tying and Lenten Breakfast follow Liturgy

Sunday, April 20/ *Palm Sunday*

Festal Gospel (Orthros): Matthew 21:1-17

Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9

Gospel: John 12:1-18

Blessing and Distribution of Palms

GREAT AND HOLY WEEK

Palm Sunday Evening, April 20

7:00 pm 1st Bridegroom Service

Holy Monday, April 21

7:00 pm 2nd Bridegroom Service

Holy Tuesday, April 22

7:00 pm 3rd Bridegroom Service/Hymn of Kassiani

Holy Wednesday, April 23

9:00 am Presanctified Liturgy

7:00 pm Holy Unction/Anointing with Holy Oil

Holy Thursday, April 24

9:00 am Vespersal Liturgy of St. Basil

7:00 pm Passion of Our Lord/

Reading of the 12 Gospels

Holy Friday, April 25

10:00 am Royal Hours

3:00 pm Removal of Christ from the Cross/

Children's Procession

7:00 pm Lamentations/Procession of the Epitaphion

Holy Saturday, April 26

9:00 am Vespersal Liturgy of St. Basil/

The Descent into Hades

11:00 pm Vigil of the Resurrection

Sunday, April 27/GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA

12:00 am OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION

Resurrectional Orthros

Gospel: Mark 16:1-8

Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

Epistle: Acts 1:1-9

Gospel: John 1:1-17

Blessing and Distribution of Red Eggs

12:00 pm Agape Vespers and Picnic

Monday, April 28/ *St. George the Great Martyr*

8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Acts 12:1-11

Gospel: John 1:18-28

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos 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**

During Lent and Holy Week we have many opportunities to be at Church and participate in this joyous period in our religious lives. I would like to remind you of some special dates that you should plan on attending.

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos visits our parish on Palm Sunday, April 20 and will celebrate the Hierarchical Liturgy and bless and distribute Palms after service. There is also a Palm Sunday Fish Luncheon planned that afternoon following services and the entire community is invited. His Eminence will also worship with us for the first Bridegroom Service of Holy Week on Palm Sunday evening at 7:00.

The Agape Picnic, a community tradition, follows the Agape Vespers on *Easter Sunday, April 27* at 12:00 pm. The Vesper Service and the Picnic are held on the Church grounds every year and are wonderful events for your entire family.

Please make every attempt to share with us and your families these traditional community events – hope to see you there.

George Nikols, Parish Council President

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

April 6

Ushers: Angelo Stamis, Gary Waters, John Karas, Stephen Carabas, Peter Papas, Alleck Orlando

Memorial: Demetra (Toula) Mavrantonis, Theofanis (Frank) Mavrantonis, Christos Nichols, Vasilios (Bill) Nichols, Athanasios Nichols; Rebecca Berdos, Kostandinos Pouridis.

Fellowship: Orthodox Family Fellowship

April 13

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

Memorial: Virginia Turner (40 days); Serafim Dounis (6 months); Antoinette Wadlow (1 year); Peter Tsouras (1 year);

Edward Gatski (2 year).

Fellowship: Folk Dance Group

April 20 - PALM SUNDAY

Metropolitan Gerasimos celebrates the Hierarchical Liturgy

Ushers: Entire Parish Council

PALM SUNDAY LUNCHEON

April 27 - GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA

Ushers: Entire Parish Council

AGAPE PICNIC



Adult Study Group with Father John Hondros
Meets Every Wednesday in Kokkos Hall: 8:00-9:00 pm During Lent
(No Class on Holy Wednesday, April 23)
“Learning Orthodoxy through the Gospel of John”
Bibles Available in Our Orthodox Bookstore

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

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

Rev. Father John Hondros

To Be Determined
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Parish Council: George Nikols

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:
Ruth Plentzas

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**

Greetings!

Philoptochos is committed to working closely with other ministries of our Church in order to make a larger impact on a common goal. Last month our Church School children initiated the solicitation efforts to support our Metropolis Pennies and Prayers program, which benefits mission parishes. Also, the Vesper Dinner held at St. John was a great success, thanks to the combined efforts of the men and women of the Parish Council and Philoptochos. In April we are working with the Youth Ministries in a collective effort to benefit the Sartini Senior Center. Also, this month we will be assisting the Parish Council to *welcome His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos* and host the *Palm Sunday Luncheon on April 20*.

We invite everyone to participate in our scheduled activities:

- April 20 – Palm Sunday Luncheon (setting up and assisting Parish Council)
- April 24 – Dye Easter Eggs (after morning Church service)
- April 25 – Decorate Epitaphion (after morning Church service)
- April 26 – Wrap Easter Eggs
- April 27 – Sell Pastries at the Agape Picnic (12-5pm)

As a reminder, the lavender offering envelopes are available in the Narthex next to the pink baskets (with the white bows). If you are interested in making a contribution toward the purchase of the Epitaphion flowers please use these envelopes and deposit your donation in the pink baskets. Many thanks and God Bless. **Amalia Dominguez and the Philoptochos Board**

Senior Forerunners

The Senior Forerunners welcome Ruth Plentzas as our new President. We invite you to attend the Lenten Potluck Luncheon on *Tuesday, April 15* at 11:30 am. Please bring a Lenten dish for everyone to enjoy; all we ask is a \$5 donation. For more information please contact Ruth Plentzas at (702) 221-0989 or Aphy Nikitas at (702) 873-9370.



The Parish Council and Philoptochos cordially invite you to join His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos for the annual
**Palm Sunday
 Fish Luncheon**
Sunday April 20, 2008
 Following the Hierarchical Liturgy
 \$10 per person
 Children 12 years and under free
 Net Proceeds Benefit the Parish Operations

Orthodox Bookstore

Hello from your Bookstore!

It's always a good time to do spiritual reading, but especially so during Lent. When we fast, we start to learn things about ourselves that we never knew before. We start to see some of our weaknesses. We start to learn what things we cannot live without, but at the same time, it is a pleasant surprise to see the things that we CAN live without. When we start to live without certain foods or change certain habits during this fast, we witness something amazing – that we never really needed those things in the first place. There is so much that we can live without, if we just try, we realize that most of the things that we think we “need” are not needs at all, but habits and addictions. We also can begin to understand obedience. We don't have to fast, but when we submit ourselves to the Church and stop following our own rules for a time, we can gain a great perspective.

Please be aware that we have the service books for *Holy Week and Pascha* available for sale in the Bookstore. Until next month (GW) - ICXC NIKA, Costa Frangakis



Notes From the Loft

We are looking forward to *welcoming His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos on Palm Sunday*, and we look forward to singing at the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy on this Great Feast. The Choir will again be singing throughout Holy Week: Bridegroom services on Palm Sunday evening with His Eminence, Holy Monday, and Holy Tuesday, and Lamentations on Good Friday. Come join us for these beautiful services.

Practices will be before Salutations on Friday's at 5:30 pm and before services on the evenings of Palm Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Practice schedules are available.

The Church Musicians Federation Conference will be held in Long Beach on June 26-29. The hotel designated for the conference is the Westin Long Beach on Ocean Boulevard. Deadline is June 5 and room rate is \$139. More information can be found on their web site at www.assumptionlb.org/choir.

Faye Brown, Director



Don't miss this exciting event:
World Odyssey - May 3, 2008

Be sure to send in your registration.

The World Odyssey event is twofold: First, a day time Symposium will be held and we will be privileged to hear presentations from four outstanding speakers: His Grace Bishop Ilia of Philomelion, Stavros Anthony, Phd., Mr. Peter Tsouras and Thymios Carabas, Phd.

We will enjoy breakfast, lunch and wonderful fellowship with members of Hellenic Historical Societies from other communities within our Metropolis.

Second, during the evening Banquet we will enjoy the *World Odyssey* presentation in addition to an address from both His Grace Bishop Ilia and our own Reverend Father John Hondros.

Your attendance will help to ensure the success of this World Odyssey event and the future success of the Hellenic Historical Society in our community.

Hope to see you May 3 in Panos Hall.



ST. JOHN GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
5300 SOUTH EL CAMINO ROAD
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89118
(702) 221-8245

SMILE

SUNDAYS
IN MARCH

16TH
23RD
30TH



SUNDAYS
IN APRIL

6TH
13TH

Please attend Church on one of the Sundays listed above and be a part of our "New" Parish Directory.

"Photos will be taken after Liturgy in Kokkos Hall"

To expedite your time, fill out the bottom portion and bring it to your photo shoot...

Personal Information

Business Information

NAMES

Parents: _____

Children: _____

Address: _____

Phone #'s:

Home: _____

Cellular: _____

Additional Information: _____

BUSINESS NAME

Type of Business: _____

Address: _____

Phone #'s:

Main: _____

Cellular: _____

Additional Information: _____

Join Us for Our
AGAPE PICNIC

Holy Pascha
Sunday, April 27, 2008

Beginning with Agape Vespers
12:00 noon to 5:00 pm

Greek Salad
Traditional Roasted Lamb
Rice
\$20 per plate
(Dinner served until 4:00 pm)

Greek Music & Dancing
Greek Pastries
Games & Easter Egg Hunt for the Kids

On the Grounds of
St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
(Hacienda between Jones and Torrey Pines)

For information, please call 221-8245

CHRIST IS RISEN!
CHRISTOS ANESTI!

Youth Ministries

Church School

Hi Everyone! I would like to thank all of you who have donated toward our Pennies and Prayers project, which supports mission parishes in our Metropolis. This is such a wonderful cause. The last day the children will be collecting is Palm Sunday, April 20. I would like to raise a minimum of \$1,300 to beat last year's number of \$1,250. I know that we can do it with everyone's help.

We will also be collecting filled Easter Eggs for our Agape Picnic. You can fill them and give them to any teacher. Please no chocolate! Not that we don't love it – it just makes a mess baking in the sun. We will be collecting right up until Holy Week.

Please join us for the service of *Lazaros Saturday on April 19*. Afterwards will have a light Lenten breakfast followed by Palm Tying. Remember: "Many hands ease the load." We always have a blast!

There will not be class on Palm Sunday or Pascha. These will be Family Worship Days. *Please be sure to come to services early on Palm Sunday, April 20, so that your family has the opportunity to worship with His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos!*

Please call me if you have any questions or concerns.

Eileen Koutsulis, Director (702)521-6516

Myrrh-Bearers 2008

You are invited to participate as one of the Myrrh-Bearing Women for the services on Palm Sunday evening and Holy Week. You must be between the ages of 12-18 years-old and be able to participate all four evenings for the entire service. The dates and times are as follows:

April 20, Palm Sunday Evening	Be there at 6:30pm	Service at 7:00pm
April 24, Holy Thursday Evening	Be there at 6:30pm	Service at 7:00pm
April 25, Holy Friday Evening	Be there at 6:30pm	Service at 7:00pm
April 26, Saturday Evening-Anastasi	Be there at 10:30pm	Service at Midnight

Your active participation is vital for Holy Week, and it is a rich and beautiful experience not to be missed.

Myrrh-Bearer Attire: White dresses, or skirts and tops with short or long sleeves are required (nothing sleeveless). Skirts are to graze the knee, or they can be longer. White shoes with pale, sheer white stockings are mandatory (no "suntan" hose; no bare legs). Candles will be provided.

We will have a mandatory meeting on Sunday, April 13 following Church School. We look forward to your participation.

Please feel free to call us with any questions you may have. Marina Adamy (702) 364-8027 (day) or (702) 889-4876 (evening), and Eileen Koutsulis (702) 521-6516

Kokkos Scholarship

Applications are available at the Church Office for the Kokkos Scholarship, and *must be returned on or before April 1, 2008*. Late and/or incomplete applications will not be considered.

The eligibility requirements were established by Fofa Kokkos in her Last Will and Testament. The Scholarship Committee for the Kokkos Scholarship Fund administers this program under the guidance of Father John Hondros.

The Kokkos Will stipulates for two high school graduates of Greek descent within the St. John Community be selected for higher education to a college or university. The students must have an outstanding scholastic record and be in financial need. Also, parish involvement by the students at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church was important to Fofa Kokkos, therefore this is also a factor in evaluating the applicants.

Please contact the Church Office for more information at (702) 221-8245.

Youth Ministries Lenten Collection

Youth Ministries is joining Philoptochos in a Lenten Project to benefit the low-income Senior Citizens. YM is collecting *\$10 gift cards from the 99-Cent Store* to give to the Sartini Senior Citizens. One of the highlights for the seniors is a day out shopping at this store, and our generosity will surely put smiles on their faces!

Please give your cards or monetary donation to Tami Stefanatos or any Church School Teacher. We need to have all donations *by April 9*. Thank you for your support.

Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian (said daily during Lent):
Lord and Master of my life, cast away from me the spirit of laziness, idle curiosity,
love of power and vain talk.
But grant me, Your servant, the spirit of moderation, humility, patience, and love.
Yes, Lord and King, grant me to see my own faults
and not to judge my brothers and sisters.
For You are blessed forever. Amen.

Orthodox Family Fellowship

Orthodox Family Fellowship is holding a Lenten Potluck at the home of Michael and Tami Stefanatos on *Saturday April 12* at 1:00 pm. Orthodox Family Fellowship gives parents and children the opportunity to socialize and discuss important issues that affect us today as Orthodox Christians.

If the weather permits the children can swim. If not, there is plenty of room for football or jumping on the trampoline (the kids are welcome to join in!). Looking forward to seeing everyone and having a great time! For directions, please call Tami Stefanatos at (702) 458-0266 or (702) 491-2713 (cell).

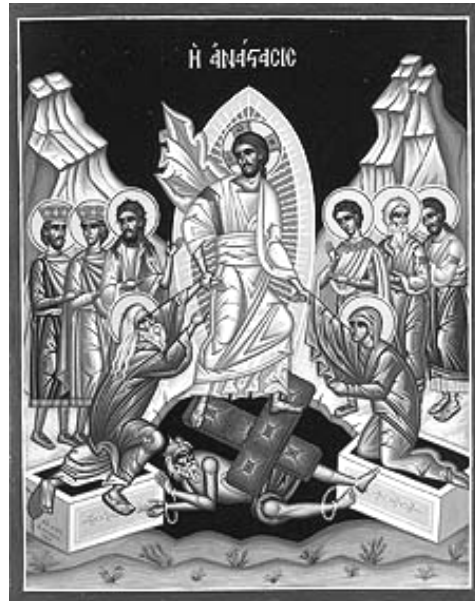
Youth Choir News

The Youth Choir has been chanting the responses to the Salutations to the Theotokos services on Friday evenings during Lent. You have been doing an excellent job; keep up the good work!

A big thank you to all the members who performed at the Greek Independence Day Celebration - AHEPA appreciated your participation.

We will continue to chant on Friday evenings, *April 4 and 11*, with rehearsals starting at 6:00 pm. The Youth Choir's favorite service is on *Holy Saturday Morning, April 26* - please be at the front right pew at 8:45 am. We are also preparing the Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten and First Graders in the Church School classes to chant the responses for Holy Friday afternoon's service at 3:00 pm.

Kali Anastasi and thanks again.
 Love, Presvytera Maria



**Christ is Risen from the dead,
 by Death He has trampled down death,
 and to those in the tombs
 He is bestowing Life.**

Orthodox Connection Las Vegas

Our adventures continue . . . Last month a small group of us drove out to Red Rock Canyon for an invigorating hike. Our leader Demetri Haritopoulos, turned into a mountain goat, jumped from rock to rock, and led us on one of the most memorable hikes any of us have ever been on! We will definitely plan another hike when more can attend – we promise to stay on the trail next time.

Our next get-together will be after Pascha at Agave Mexican Restaurant on *Thursday, May 1* (during Bright Week) at 7:00 pm. Agave is located on West Charleston and 215. \$25 includes food, drink, tax and tip.

OCLV is a pan-Orthodox ministry for singles in their 20s, 30s, and 40s. For more information contact Angela Coutris at (702) 497-2529 or acoutris@hotmail.com.

Our Community Registry

Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisoun!

Alexander, son of Mark and Maria Goodin, on February 23, 2008.

Godparents: John and Mary Manos.

Gabrielle, daughter of Kevin and Deborah Woods, on March 1, 2008.

Godparent: Tamara Santumo.

Georgios, son of Yianni and Keri Rouvas, on March 2, 2008.

Godparent: Katerina Eliades.

Athanasios, son of John and Georgia Ross, on March 9, 2008.

Godparent: Georgia Perivoliotis.

Ioannis (Sean) Yiorghos, son of Constantine Savagios and Stephanie Kirsch on March 15, 2008

Godparent: Voula Balason.

Alexandra, daughter of Givargés and Marina Younani, on March 22, 2008.

Godparents: Christopher and Alexis Pappas.

Theodore Joseph, son of Christopher and Diana Tsouras, on March 22, 2008.

Godparents: Peter and Patricia Tsouras.

Peter Christopher, son of Christopher and Diana Tsouras, on March 22, 2008.

Godparents: Peter and Patricia Tsouras.

Ifigenia, daughter of George and Eleftheria Goumas on March 23, 2008.

Godparents: Demetrios and Mina Nteve.

Chrismation

Michael Sirhan on March 11, 2008.

Sponsor: Fr. John Hondros

Marriage: Na Zisete!

Anthony Michael Katselis and Karin Dionysia Hamilton on February 23, 2008.

Sponsor: Alexios Katselis

Fallen Asleep in the Lord: Eternal Memory

Evangelos Livadaros on February 25, 2008. Funeral on March 5.

Henry Milonas on February 29, 2008. Funeral on March 4.

Robert Walford on March 4, 2008. Funeral on March 15.

Virginia Turner on March 5, 2008. Funeral in Houston, Texas.

**The Clark County Orthodox Clergy Association Invites
All Orthodox and Interested Seekers to a**

Lenten Retreat

Speaker: Fr. Jonah Paffhausen

Saturday, April 5, 2008

8:00 am Divine Liturgy

9:30 am Breakfast

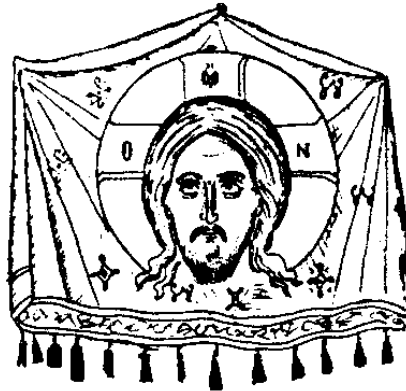
10:30 am—4:30 pm Retreat

4:30 pm Dinner

6:00 pm Vespers

***At St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church,
5400 Annie Oakley Drive, Las Vegas, Nevada***

“Be still and Know that I am God”



\$10 per person (includes meals)

Igumen Jonah Paffhausen is the abbot of the Monastery of St. John of Shanghai and San Francisco located in Manton, California. It is one of the fastest growing monastic communities in the United States and is under the omophorion of His Grace BENJAMIN, Bishop of San Francisco and the West of the Orthodox Church in America. Fr. Jonah lectures extensively throughout the United States.

Applications should go to St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church and are available online at the parish website www.lasvegasorthodox.com. Payment is to: Clark County Orthodox Clergy Assoc. See your parish priest for more details and applications need to be submitted by March 30, 2008.

Stewardship Report: “Commit to Christ”

<u>2008 Stewardship Status (March 15, 2008):</u>	Stewardship Target – 2008	\$470,500
Stewardship Families Pledged 351	Stewardship Gifts Pledged	\$291,496
Stewardship Gifts Received \$93,663	Current Stewardship Deficit	\$170,004
Average Stewardship Pledge \$830.47	Percentage of Goal Achieved	61.95%

<u>Pledge Range</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>	<u>\$ & % of Gifts Pledged</u>
\$1-\$999	251	\$ 90,976 – 31.21%
\$1000-\$2499	79	\$103,580 – 35.53%
\$2500-and higher	20	\$ 96,940 – 33.26%

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Our 2008 Stewardship Drive continues to run behind the 2007 campaign. As noted above, 351 Stewardship Families have pledged a total of \$291,496 or 61.95% of our goal. As of March 15, 17 fewer families have pledged than at this time in 2007 and the total gifts pledged is running \$19,801 behind last year’s pace.

When the Lord was asked which were the first of all the commandments, He responded, *“The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There are no other commandments greater than these.” (Mark 12:29-31)* During this Lenten season we are called upon to make greater efforts to achieve these two commandments through loving prayer, fasting, humbling ourselves and offering alms to those less fortunate of the Lord’s children.

Today we have the saying that actions speak louder than words. St. James the Just tells us in his epistle (2:18) that *“I by my works will show my faith.”* The apostle’s works were works of love as told to us by the Lord in St. Mark’s Gospel. We too must perform these works of love, for on Judgment Day:

- The Lord will not ask us what fancy restaurants we went to; He will ask us how many of His children we fed.
- The Lord will not ask us what wines or beverages we had in our homes; He will ask how often we took care of the thirst of His children.
- The Lord will not ask us about the clothes we had in our closets; He will ask us how many of His children we clothed.
- The Lord will not ask us how many friends we had; He will ask us how many of His children we befriended.
- And the Lord will not ask us what medical insurance plan we had; He will ask us how many of His children we visited when they were sick, suffering or in captivity.

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ, I hope and pray that each and every one of us will be able to glorify the Lord through our works to the benefit of His Church and His children. May you be blessed in this Lenten season and attain the joy of His Kingdom, and may everything we do be for His Glory. Χριστός Ανέστη – Christ is Risen!

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



The Crucifixion

2008 Parish Stewards and Contributors: "Commit to Christ"

Adamy, Marina	Dalacas, Eleni	Hondros, Fr. John and Presv. Maria	Mezilson, Evangeline
Agnos, Dimitrios and Angeline	Dalacas, Nick and Georgia	Hoover, Patrick and Pauline	Miller, Mary
Alex, Jim and Renee	Delalis, Dina	Iracleanos, Sonia	Milonas, Henry †
Alexander, Eleni	Demas-Goodin, Maria	Jacobs, Joseph	Miralles, Jean
Andraktos, Manuel	Demolas, Ilias and Jodi	Kachikis, Paul and Ernestine	Mirich, Kyle and Melissa
Andrews, Andrew	Demolas, Maria	Kakavulias, Christine	Molina, Patricia
Andrews, Catherine	Demoleas, Grace and Spero	Kakavulias, George and Helen	Monoyudis, Jim and Julie
Andrews, Presv. Helen	Demoleas, Stephanie	Kakavulias, John	Montisano, Jon
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Arcamuzi, Georgia	Depelchin, Serge and Melissa	Kalkas, John and Rena	Murphy, Karen and Terry
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Asim, Demetrious	Diamantis, Filippos	Kanellis, Ann	Neocleous, Plato
Athens, Ann	Dominguez, Eric and Amalia	Kanoles, Helene	Newell, Eric and Devona
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Balason, Voula	Economys, Peter	Karas, James	Nicholas, James and Myrna
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Barngrover, Andrew and Kathleen	Eliades, Peter and Janet	Katsaros, Thomas and Sharon	Nikolopoulos, Peter and Pelagia
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Bauck, Jeremy and Amy	Eliakis, Peter and Glenda	Kelly, Tess	Nikols, Rita
Berendji, Jim and Vivian	Eliakis, Varthie and Lee Ann	Kokenes, Katherine	O'Brien, William and Chris
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Borzekas, Stephen and Katharina	Flangas, Gary and Amanda	Kourafas, Chris and Trish	Papas, Nick and Pauline
Bratta, Georgene	Flangas, Gus and Tamara	Kouretas, Daniel	Papas, Peter and Rita
Brilis, Christie	Flangas, Peter and Wanda	Kouretas, Demetri and Amanda	Pappas, Constantine and Karina
Brilis, George and Satoko	Fokas, Elene	Kourlos, Georgia	Pappas, Peter and Libby
Britten, Ronald and Carol	Foskaris, Nicholas and Dana	Koutsulis, John and Eileen	Paschalis, Evangelos and Maria
Brown, Faye	Foskaris, Thomas and Iryna	Koutsulis, Sam and Effie	Payne, Peter
Bucy, Brent and Elaine	Frangakis, Costa	Kover, Barbara	Pendelton, Patricia
Cahill, Michael and Irene	Frangakis, John	Kratky, Frank	Pentogenis, Michael and Katherine
Capadalis, Tim and Marling	Frangopulu, Christina	Kypreos, Peter and Geri	Petas, Randy and Galea, Shirley
Captain, Nicholas and Maria	Frantzen, Robert and Margery	Kyprianou, Gilbert and Alexis	Peterson, Barbara
Carabas, Stephen and Linda	Franzi, Jack	Lakis, Antoinette	Peterson, Tessie †
Carabas, Thymios and Sotiroulla	Fuson, Aglaia	Lambiris, Justin and Amy	Petro, Aleko and Georgia
Caredis, Jon and Marjorie	Gear, Darius and Bessie	Latelle, George and Penny	Philoppou, Demetrios and Luanne
Carrico, William and Alexandra	George, Elias	Lawrence, Vicki	Piña, Jose and Doris
Carson, Michele	Georgis, John and Kaliopi	Lazarakis, John and Panagiota	Platis, Anna
Carter, Maria	Gialketsis, Babe and Terry	Lekar, Michael and Effie	Plentzas, Spiros and Ruth
Cero, Dean	Gialketsis, Barbara	Leone, Stephen	Polimerou, Angeline
Chachas, Bessie	Gialketsis, Bill and Shelli	Leonis, Tishe	Poulsen, Nicholas and Brenda
Chachas, James	Gialketsis, Julie	Leventis, Nicholas and Christina	Pouridis, Kouli and Para
Chaltas, Barbara	Gialketsis, Steve	Lewis, Foula	Prather, Moses and Dina
Chandrinos, Alexia	Giouzelis, Anastasia	Liaos, Jim and Tina	Prud'homme, Edwin and Pennye
Chandrinos, Ricki	Goddard, Elizabeth	Liaos, Steven and Francine	Pullano, Rena
Chanos, George	Goldman, Love	Liaos, William and Irene	Radosta, Athena
Chanos, Jennifer	Gortsilas, Nikolas and Stefania	Likourinou, Angie	Raptis, Fr. Dean and Presv. Evonne
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Chomakos, George and Nikki	Grillas, Vasilios and Roula	Lucky, Jason and Shawna	Rigas, Anthony and Mary
Christou, Andreas and Toni	Haddad, Zeyad and Alisar	Lymberopoulos, Mary	Rodes, Anne
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Should Faith Matter When Dating?

By Pete Sotiras, Metropolis of San Francisco Youth Director

During many of the discussions I've had with teenagers about dating, I always ask them: does the other person's faith matter? Is it a prerequisite that they're an Orthodox Christian before you start dating them? Most of the time, the answer is, "I'm young, I'm not thinking about marriage, so someone else's faith really isn't on the top of my priority list." Some of you might be in the same boat. You may feel as though someone's religion isn't important until you are considering marriage; right now though, you tell yourself, it's not critical. I'd like to offer you a different way to view the issue of faith and dating.

One of the key aspects of a solid relationship is common goals and beliefs. The person that you'll date in the future or are dating now should have the same goals as you do about life. The goal of dating for us as Orthodox should be the same as the goal of marriage: striving for the Kingdom of God. If members of an orchestra are not playing their instrument at the right time, or are off key, then the piece of music is going to sound horrible. If a couple is dancing and one of them is not moving to the right beat, then the other person suffers (and might be a bit embarrassed). Here's the point: you have to be on the same page about the important things in life with the other person and nothing is more important than your relationship with God—in other words, the goal matters, otherwise, you'll stumble.

Your relationship with God and with His Church is important because it provides the lens you use to view the world. How you view other people, how you conduct yourself, how you react to crises, what you value and what you care about are all grounded in our faith in God and in the Church. Dating someone who also has the faith as a foundation will make your relationship not only easier but stronger. If the other person has fundamental differences in these areas, it creates challenges and frustrations. Of course, just because someone is Orthodox doesn't mean that things will work out. It just means that you have the same solid foundation that could be built upon.

Being with someone who shares your faith is the greatest possible situation whether dating or married because you're both striving for the same noble and honorable goal. There's nothing more beautiful than to be with someone that also has a relationship with Christ and His Church. There's nothing better than to both be able to turn to Christ for help, for answers, and for consolation during times of difficulty. There's nothing better than to be able to praise Him and worship Him together. There's nothing greater than to be able to both participate in the sacraments. As followers of Christ, you both are lovers of truth. You both care about others and the world. You both put your hope in the Trinity knowing that *"not a hair on your head will be lost."* (Luke 21:18) By being with someone who also strives for the Kingdom of God, your relationship will not only have a strong foundation, but it will flourish.

[Youth and their families can contact Pete at: sfyouth@sanfran.goarch.org. Pete will be visiting our parish with His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos on Palm Sunday, April 20.]

2008 Parish Stewards and Contributors: "Commit to Christ"

Snow, Clifford and Christina
 Snowden, Robert and Niki
 Soper, Bobby and Maria
 Sotira, Dhimitra
 Spanopoulos, Elias
 Sparangis, Spyro and Eleni
 Sparkuhl, Alex
 Stamis, George and Effie
 Stankevich, Yura
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 Turman, Lucas and Maria

Vasos, Maria
 Vassiliadis, Athena
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APRIL 2008 - IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 5:30 pm Folk Dance Board Kok'os Scholarship Deadline	2 4:15 pm Greek/Youth Liturgy 6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy 8:00 pm Adult Study: The Gospel of John	3	4 5:30 pm Adult Choir 6:00 pm Youth Choir 7:00 pm 4 th Celebrations	5 8:00 am Liturgy & Lenten Retreat with Fr. Jonah Paffhausen at St. Paul Church
6 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:00 pm Lenten Vespers at St. Simeon	7 6:30 pm Great Compline	8	9 4:15 pm Greek/Youth Liturgy 6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy 8:00 pm Adult Study: The Gospel of John	10	11 5:30 pm Adult Choir 6:00 pm Youth Choir 7:00 pm The Akathist Hymn	12 11:00 am Altar Server Practice at Church 1:00 pm Orthodox Family Fellowship at Stefanatos' Home
13 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:00 pm Lenten Vespers at St. Paul	14 6:30 pm Great Compline	15 11:30 am Seniors Lenten Potluck in Kokkos Hall 6:30 pm Parish Council	16 4:15 pm Greek/Youth Liturgy 6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy 8:00 pm Adult Study	17	18	19 Saturday of Lazaros 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy Palm Tying and Breakfast
20 Palm Sunday 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Hierarchical Liturgy w Met Gerasimos Luncheon follows Liturgy 7:00 pm 1st Bridegroom	21 Holy Monday 5:30 pm Adult Choir 7:00 pm 2nd Bridegroom Service	22 Holy Tuesday 5:30 pm Adult Choir 7:00 pm 3rd Bridegroom Service	23 Holy Wednesday 9:00 am Presanctified Liturgy 7:00 pm Sacrament of Holy Unction	24 Holy Thursday 9:00 am Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil 7:00 pm Holy Passion of our Lord	25 Holy Friday 10:00 am Royal Hours 3:00 pm Removal of Christ/Children's Procession 7:00 pm Lamentations	26 Holy Saturday 9:00 am Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil 11:00 pm Resurrection Vigil
27 HOLY PASCHA 12:00 am Resurrection Orthros and Divine Liturgy 12:00 pm Agape Vespers and Picnic Christ is Risen!	28 St. George 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	29	30			
		Bright Week: No Fasting All Week				

The Desert Messenger

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
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THE DESERT MESSENGER

The Way of the Lord

“Something strange is happening — there is a great silence on earth today, a great silence and stillness. The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep.

The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and He has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began.

God has died in the flesh and Hell trembles with fear.

He has gone to search for our first parent, as for a lost sheep.

Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death,

He has gone to free from sorrow the captives Adam and Eve,

He Who is both God and the Son of Eve. The Lord approached them bearing the Cross, the weapon that had won Him the victory. At the sight of Him Adam,

the first man He had created, struck his breast in terror and cried out to everyone,

‘My Lord be with you all.’ Christ answered him, ‘And with your spirit.’

He took him by the hand and raised him up saying,

‘Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.’”

~ St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Cyprus (+403 AD), “*The Lord Descends into Hell,*”

Synaxarion of the Lenten Triodion and Pentecostarion