

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 7, Issue 1 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

January 2009

**From
Father
John**

Beloved in Christ:

One scene of our recent Church School Christmas Pageant impressed me particularly, which powerfully captured the fullness of our Orthodox theology both visually and musically. As the Youth Choir chanted beautifully in Greek the first Kathisma in the Christmas Orthros – “Come, o faithful, let us see where Christ is born (Defte idomen pisti)” – the other children gradually went on stage as shepherds and the Magi, joining the space that also included a tent-cave, a large Nativity Icon painted by our youth on the back wall and, of course, a huge star; at front stage was a hand-painted image of Bethlehem, which eventually became the backdrop to a large banner carried by two more that proclaimed, “Glory to God in the Highest,” and finally, appearing behind the banner, the young actors portraying the Virgin and Child. I was impressed not only by the excellent direction and execution of this iconographic scene, but more importantly how through activities like this we teach and carry on the Tradition of our rich Greek Orthodox Faith to both young and old alike.

Beginning with this New Year, we can now rejoice that for 50 years we have been blessed at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church with countless Christmas Pageants, youth and seniors activities, Name Day Celebrations, adult and children’s religious classes, Greek classes, Folk Dance practices and performances, Philoptochos and Parish Council meetings and projects, Greek Food Festivals, and many more activities that can be listed here. Beyond this, just think of how many through this parish have been brought into the Body of Christ – as infants, teens or adults – through the Holy Mysteries of Baptism and Chrismation. Most significantly, the fullness of our Orthodox Faith has been manifested with every single Divine Liturgy celebrated in this community, officially since 1959, uniting all the faithful with our Lord Jesus Christ through the partaking of the Holy Eucharist.

What began as a loving labor of faith and vision by a handful of Greek families to establish a Church and to be served by priest has, by the grace of God, evolved into a large diverse community and magnificent facilities, in which we worship, teach, learn, serve and share fellowship. Just as that scene of the Christmas Pageant a few weeks back brought to light, we have been worshipping the same Liturgies, venerating the same icons and chanting the same hymns as our Orthodox forebears have done for over 2,000 years, and by God’s grace our once-tiny parish has drawn more and more to the Truth of Jesus Christ as revealed and fulfilled in the Orthodox Church.

The Year 2009 is a Golden Anniversary for St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Las Vegas and we should believe, without a doubt and regardless of the challenges we face from time to time, that we all share *“a faith more precious than gold.” (1 Peter 1:7)* Beloved, let us properly celebrate our 50th Anniversary by allowing this year to be one in which all of us strive to deepen our faith, grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord, pass the torch of our Holy Tradition and, in all circumstances, welcome the Body of the Faithful to increase by the transparent love and unity we share in Christ.

Love in Christ, 

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

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

Thursday, January 1/ The Circumcision of Our Lord/St. Basil the Great
9:00 am Orthros
10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
Epistle: Colossians 2:8-12
Gospel: Luke 2:20-21, 40-52

Sunday, January 4/ Sunday before Theophany
Orthros: Tone Four
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:1-10
Epistle: 2 Timothy 4:5-8
Gospel: Mark 1:1-8
Blessing and Cutting of Community Vasilopita
Parish Council Oath of Office

Monday, January 5/ Eve of Theophany (Strict Fast)
8:00 am Royal Hours
9:00 am Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27
Gospel: Luke 3:1-18
Great Blessing of Water follows Liturgy

Tuesday, January 6/ The Holy Theophany of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ
8:00 am Orthros - 9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Festal Gospel (Orthros): Mark 1:9-11
Epistle: Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7
Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17
Great Blessing of Water follows Liturgy

6:00 pm Great Vespers of St. John the Baptist
'I have seen and have borne witness that this is the Son of God.' ~John 1:34

Wednesday, January 7/ St. John the Baptist
8:00 am Orthros - 9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Acts 19:1-8
Gospel: John 1:29-34

Sunday, January 11/ Sunday after Theophany
Orthros: Tone Five (First Plagal)
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:11-18
Epistle: Hebrews 13:7-16
Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17

Saturday, January 17/ St. Anthony the Great
8:00 am Orthros - 9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Hebrews 13:17-21
Gospel: Luke 6:17-23

Sunday, January 18/ 12th Sunday of Luke/10 Lepers/ Ss. Athanasios & Cyril of Alexandria
Orthros: Tone Six (Second Plagal)
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:19-31
Epistle: Hebrews 13:7-16
Gospel: Luke 17:12-19

Sunday, January 25/ 15th of Luke/Zaccheos/ St. Gregory the Theologian
Orthros: Tone Seven (Grave)
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 21:1-14
Epistle: Hebrews 7:26-28; 8:1-2
Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

Friday, January 30/ The Three Holy Hierarchs
8:00 am Orthros - 9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Hebrews 13:7-16
Gospel: Matthew 5:14-19



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"

REQUEST FOR FR. JOHN TO BLESS YOUR HOUSE OR BUSINESS

Name _____ Phone (____) _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____ We'll call you to schedule!

**All Parish Members are Cordially Invited to
St. John the Baptist Name Day Celebration**

Saturday, January 10, 2009

6:00 pm Cocktails & Appetizers

7:00 pm Dinner in Panos Hall

Caesar Salad

Fresh Lamb & Chicken Tenders

Green Beans Almandine

Oven Brown Potatoes

Coffee & Pastries

\$50 Adults ~ \$25 Children under 12 years

**Tickets available at Fellowship Hour on Sundays
or at the Church Office during the week**

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

January 4

Ushers: Entire Parish Council

Memorial: Stephen Coyle (40 days)

Fellowship: Philoptochos - Community Vasilopita

January 11

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

Fellowship: Pan-Arcadians to benefit Iconography Fund

January 18

Ushers: Marina Adamy, Gary Waters, Peter Papas, George Bochanis,
Spiros Filios, Angela Coutris

Fellowship: Cathy Markakis - 50th Anniversary Celebration Fundraiser

January 25

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

Memorial: Katherine Chachas, Christ Chachas, Ethyl Caras

Fellowship: Senior Forerunners

50th Anniversary

'A Faith More Precious Than Gold' (1 Peter 1:7)

Happy New Year! The planning committee and I wish everyone a very healthy and prosperous New Year. We would like to invite everyone to join us on *Sunday, January 18* after Liturgy for another Fundraiser. Mark your calendars: *Our 50th Anniversary Celebration will be October 17-18.*

Cathy Markakis, Chair
50th Anniversary Committee

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

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

Rev. Father John Hondros

To Be Determined
Business Administrator

Karen Rawlinson
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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:
Sam Koutsulis

Stewardship Committee:
John Karas

Hellenic Historical Society:
Nitsa Filios

Senior GOYA:
Effie Lekar and Eileen Koutsulis

Junior GOYA:
Tami Stefanatos
Tammy Chomakos

HOPE and JOY:
Jennifer Orlando
Sharon Katsaros

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
Bessie Stavropoulos and Carla Cole

Orthodox Bookstore:
Costa Frangakis

50th Anniversary Celebration:
Cathy Markakis

**President's
Column**

I hope everyone made it through the Holiday Season and had an enjoyable Christmas and a Happy New Year. My congratulations and thanks go to our newly elected Parish Council members, who have taken on a great responsibility and commitment to our Church and community. The Parish Council will receive the Oath of Office from Fr. John on *Sunday, January 4* during Liturgy and have their first meeting on *Monday, January 19*.

I would like to officially announce the name of our 2009 Festival Chairman: John Karas. John has stepped up and volunteered to lead us through our next Festival - Thank You, John. The 2009 Festival will be held *September 17-20*, and we need everyone's help again this year.

On *Saturday, January 10*, we will celebrate St. John Name Day with our annual dinner. Cocktails and Appetizers will be served at 6:00 pm, with Dinner at 7:00 pm. Adults \$50 – Children under 12 \$25. This year the Las Vegas Chapter of the Pan Arcadians will co-chair the event with the Parish Council. Tickets will be available every Sunday after services and at the Church Office during the week; you can also purchase tickets from any Parish Council member. Our year-long planning continues with ongoing fundraising to help support our 50th Anniversary Celebration which will take place October 17-18. Please help in every way possible. I'm sure it will be an event that we will long remember. For more information and to offer your assistance, please call *Cathy Markakis at (702) 254-2243*.

This past year we have made several improvements to our community. We have installed a new phone system; once everyone gets familiar with the new equipment, it will help the office deal with the large amount of calls and messages that we receive.

We have also replaced three computers with new units and moved some of the older but still useful units into the Library. With the better computers installed in the Library, we have been able to install the new software; this will allow our Library to be used by everyone and the newer computers should be more user-friendly than the older units.

Our camera surveillance system also underwent an upgrade and is back in working order, keeping an eye on our beautiful grounds. I am glad we were able to make these technical and electronic improvements that will help all of us in our parish. Thank You ALL for your support and commitment.

A Healthy and Happy New Year to All! **George Nikols, President**

**Philoptochos
News**

Happy New Year!
We welcome 2009 with the annual Cutting of the Community Vasilopita on *Sunday, January 4*. This is an opportunity to showcase your talents by baking a Vasilopita and bringing it to Fellowship on that date. All funds raised will be donated to St. Basil's Academy. Marcie Karas is coordinating this effort and would truly appreciate your assistance.

We sincerely THANK those who offered their hands and hearts throughout 2008 and appreciate all of the support! It could not have been done without you.

2009 brings lots of new opportunities to join us in Philoptochos and to participate in all of our endeavors; all are welcome. Please join us for the first General Meeting of this year on *Tuesday, January 13, 7:00 pm*, in Kokkos Hall.

Amalia Dominguez and the Board

Notes From the Loft



The Winter Business Meeting for the Church Musicians Federation will be held on *January 23-24* at St. Anthony Church in Pasadena, California. Hopefully, we will send a couple of Choir members to represent us.

The Summer Conference for the Federation will be held on *June 25-28, 2009*, at Sts. Constantine and Helen Church in Cardiff-by-the-Sea, California. His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos will be attending, as well as adult and youth choir members and psaltis (chanters). More information will be forthcoming. Let me know if you would like to attend.

Faye Brown, Choir Director

"The water I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" ~ John 4:14

Senior Forerunners

The Senior Forerunners wish to thank everyone who joined us in making "The Shoebox Project" such a success. Because of your generous donations, we were able to deliver over 100 shoeboxes filled with all sorts of items that a teenager would need. Additionally, we delivered large boxes of socks, underwear, hats, scarves, gloves, blankets and food.

Thanks to the generosity of the Ladies Philoptochos Society, Panagia Chapter, we were able to purchase 130 gift cards to local department stores. We will continue to deliver whatever is donated. So, from the bottom of our collective hearts: THANK YOU.

On December 16 the Forerunners held a very enjoyable Christmas Party with music, a raffle, white elephant gift exchange and a delicious lunch. "Thank You" to Sam Koustulis, Pete Kypreos, Mike Markakis and George Kakavulias, who were our chefs! Everything was delicious.

Thanks also to Janice, Karen, Art and Olivia for their help throughout this past year.

Our next meeting will be on *Tuesday, January 20*. Watch the Sunday Bulletins for more details. On *Sunday, January 25* we will host the Fellowship Hour. Please bring your goodies early so we can set up before Divine Liturgy. Thank you.

Ruth Plentzas

"The person who loves God values knowledge of God more than anything created by God, and pursues such knowledge ardently and ceaselessly."
~St. Maximos the Confessor

Orthodox Bookstore

Hello from the Bookstore and Xronia Polla!

On prayer: Prayer is, very simply, our connection to God. God is all around us and knows all things, but through prayer, we connect to Him. We may pray for specific things or for God do something for us, but this is not the greater purpose of prayer. Prayer to God is not meant to change the world around us, but to change US! Through prayer, we acknowledge Who God is and His power; at the same time, we acknowledge who we are, and our powerlessness.

Correct prayer to the Holy Trinity is a medicine that cures our souls little by little. The more we pray, the more healing we will receive, which is imperceptible at first. As we continue to force our minds to pray, we will begin to notice changes in our demeanor and start to see our own faults that we never even knew we had.

We have several Orthodox prayer books available in our Bookstore. Come and see.

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

Orthodox Connection Las Vegas

Hello . . . and Happy New Year 2009! Can you believe we are coming up on our 2nd year anniversary as a ministry of St. John the Baptist Church? It has been such a pleasure to meet and "connect" other Orthodox Christians in the Las Vegas Valley. We have a contact list of just over 60 individuals who are part of our group. If you are not on our email list, please respond and we'll invite you to our next get-together.

Our next gathering will be on *Wednesday, January 28*, following the Adult Study with Fr. John. We will meet shortly after 8:30 pm at Jasmine Thai Restaurant on Buffalo, just south of Flamingo; there will an email invitation coming soon!

For more information on Orthodox Connection Las Vegas, please contact *Angela Coutris at (702) 497-2529* or email at orthodoxconnectionlv@gmail.com. OCLV is a ministry for Orthodox singles in their 20s, 30s and 40s.



2008 has come and gone, and we now are looking forward to 2009 with hope for peace, health, happiness and prosperity all around us.

The Hellenic Historical Society is anticipating its participation in the 50th Anniversary of our Community. It will be a memorable event for our Church. We will keep you informed about our presentation, and we ask for your support and participation.

Eftixismenos o kainourgios xronos! Nitsa Filios

Youth Ministries

Church School

Hi Everyone! I hope you had a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year. We will have Family Worship Sunday on *January 4* due to the Cutting of the Community Vasilopita. We will *resume classes on January 11*. If you have not registered your children, please do so.

I would like to say “many thanks” to everyone who helped make our Christmas Pageant so lovely. I would also like to thank the Church School children who donated items for our Advent Outreach Project. It was a great success!

Please call or e-mail me with any questions or concerns.

Eileen Koutsulis, Director (702) 521-6516 or vivaleenie@cox.net

Youth Choir News

Happy New Year, Youth Choir! The group will chant the Divine Liturgy on *Sunday, January 11* - I promise this time! Please be at the front right side in the usual spot by *9:40 am*. You sang beautifully for both the Christmas Pageant and the Divine Liturgy on Christmas Day. Everyone appreciated your voices and I am looking forward to another stellar year in song!

Love, Presvytera Maria



HOPE and JOY

Let's get together on *Sunday, January 11*, right after Church School (12:30 pm), in Kokkos Hall. We will have pizza and play our favorite board games. A variety of games will be offered; you can also bring a favorite game from home to share. A \$3 donation will be requested to help pay for pizza and drinks. Please *RSVP by January 10* for this fun event.

Your Advisors, Sharon Katsaros (702) 242-2457 and Jennifer Orlando (702) 631-0111

Junior and Senior GOYA

Rejoice! Christ is Born! Hope everyone had a blessed Nativity and a Happy New Year!

We are having our first outing on *Saturday, January 3*. Please meet us at 12:00 pm at Town Square's California Pizza Kitchen for lunch; we will then go to a movie. We are looking forward to enjoying the afternoon all together – both Junior and Senior GOYANs, and hopefully new members, too!

Senior GOYA is for 9th-12th graders, and Junior GOYA is for 6th-8th graders of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church. This is a Youth Ministry of the Church; any questions, please contact one of the advisors. In Christ, Eileen Koutsulis (702) 521-6516 and Effie Lekar (702) 768-5500, Advisors



January 1: St. Basil the Great

“Your teaching has spread over the whole world, for it has accepted your words that gave a divine explanation of doctrine. You have made clear the nature of things and set a rule of life for all. Royal Priest and Holy Father, intercede with Christ God that He may save our souls.”

~Apolytikion for the Feast

Greek Folk Dance

HAPPY NEW YEAR! Now that the holidays are behind us, our dancers are getting more and more excited as the Folk Dance Festival draws near.

SAVE THE DATE - Our Annual Luncheon will be on *Sunday, February 8*. As with every year, our dancers will perform for the community on that date all the dances they have learned for FDF. Tickets will go on sale toward the end of January.

VOLUNTEER SEAMSTRESSES NEEDED - We are looking for seamstresses that would be willing to volunteer their time and skills in helping to sew some of our costumes. We will provide the materials. Please contact a dance board member if you can help us out.

PRACTICES - We can't stress enough how important it is for our dancers to be at every practice right now. As new material is introduced to the dancers, it holds everyone else back when a director has to spend extra time to bring up to speed a dancer who has missed practice. We really don't have much time before FDF is here! As a reminder, practice times are as follows:

Liondaria - Tuesday 5:30-6:15 pm and Sunday 1:30-2:30 pm

Hrisi Thisavri - Tuesday 6:00-7:45 pm and Sunday 1:00-2:30 pm

Stavroforoi - Tuesday 6:15-8:00 pm and Sunday 1:00-2:30 pm

Please note that practice times are subject to change and additional practices may be added as we get closer to FDF. Please check your email frequently as that is our main method of communication.

SEE'S CANDY BAR SALE - Our candy bar sale continues. If you have sold all your candy, please return the money in the envelope provided to Tami Stefanatos. We have additional boxes available if you think you can sell more. This will be a very profitable fundraiser if we sell all the candy.

FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL - *FDF is February 12-16*. If you didn't register *by December 31*, then you missed out on the *early registration savings*. An email was sent to everyone on our email list informing you that you can now book your hotel room through the FDF website www.yourfdf.org. If you haven't already booked your room, please do so as soon as possible because the rooms will sell out. Although you are welcome to stay where you chose, our parish stays at one of the two Ayres locations. They are within yards of each other and we use of the hotels as a meeting place to fix costumes and hold extra practices before heading over to the Convention Center. If you are not receiving emails, please let me know so we can add you to the list, or check that we have the right email address.

ADULT GREEK DANCE CLASS - Our classes are held on the third Tuesday of each month in Kokkos Hall. So put on some comfortable shoes and join the next class on *Tuesday, January 20*, 6:30-7:30 pm. For more information or to be added to our email list for reminders, please contact *Jennifer Orlando* at (702) 355-0260 or via email at FamilyOrlando@yahoo.com.

We wish you all a very Happy and Healthy New Year!

Tina Liaos, Greek Folk Dance Board Chair

AHEPA 2009 Scholarships

The Order of AHEPA, Las Vegas Chapter 314, announces the availability of scholarship applications for 2009. Worthy students are encouraged to submit applications for one of the two types of scholarships being offered for 2009.

The first scholarship offered is the *"JOURNEY TO GREECE."* This is a month-long study program starting July 20 and ending August 12. It is sponsored in conjunction with the University of Indianapolis, and takes place in Athens, Greece. Students may select two out of six courses, and upon completion will earn six transferable university credits.

The second scholarship offered for 2009 is the standard *ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP* for students entering college, or continuing college students. It consists of an award to assist students in meeting their tuition and registration requirements.

Additional information and applications for both scholarships are available at the Church Office.

From the Metropolis of San Francisco Youth Director**“Athletes for Christ”**

By Deacon Niko Bekris

It seems like year after year I find myself in the same situation during the month of January. I welcome the New Year and the time off of school or (these days) work that comes with it, then after going through my usual routine each week, I welcome a restful sleep on Friday night, and a day off on Saturday. On the first Saturday of the month, I wake up and come to the startling and very welcome realization: “Football.” If you’re a football fan you know that the NFL starts its playoffs every January on Saturdays and Sundays, all of which culminate at the end of the month in the largest spectacle in all of American sports, the Super Bowl. What this means for avid NFL fans like myself is high excitement, high entertainment, and a celebration of human athleticism that people have enjoyed since the contests and battles of the ancient world.

Legends and superstars are created during Super Bowls and other championship games, and rightfully so. These legends often become our role models, too, in many cases, because we admire what they do during their games and we want to be like them. Often they have very good traits to imitate- their ambition, their determination, perhaps even their good will towards their teammates or the other team. However, often these same athletes possess qualities that make them very poor role models. This is where our “Christian lens” comes in that I’ve talked about before.

One year ago, Plaxico Burress of the New York Giants caught a beautiful, over-the-shoulder touchdown catch that defeated the New England Patriots in one of the greatest Super Bowl upsets ever. One month ago, Plaxico Burress was arrested in a night club, where he was found possessing an illegal firearm and a gunshot wound in his leg (he was suspended from the team for the rest of the season). Although we’re not clear on all the details, it became apparent that this man was in a place he wasn’t supposed to be, and he clearly wasn’t acting like a responsible role model. As you probably already know, he isn’t the only one who doesn’t. Whether it be Kobe Bryant cheating on his wife, Jose Canseco making money off a book about steroid usage in baseball, or any number of other stories, there are many athletes in sports who don’t act like role models or even like adults.

I love how so many of the hymns in our Orthodox worship that refer to martyrs talk about how they are “athletes of Christ.” Many of these hymns (mostly sung during Orthros or Vespers) use terms like “winning the prize,” “running the race,” “being crowned,” and many other images that relate to athletics. If you’re wondering why the hymns have this kind of language, it’s because in reality, life is a contest- it requires endurance, perseverance, strength, and patience- the same things that we admire about professional athletes. But what’s different about the martyrs’ victories is that they won prizes that are eternal and are truly more important than any other trophy- salvation. Our relationship with Christ is more important than any championship ring, cool-looking tattoo or highlight reel. The saints of our Church often endured fierce competition, often coming from lions, Roman soldiers or Soviet concentration camps. Let’s make sure that in our love of sports and other heroes of our culture, we don’t lose sight of those heroes who have achieved something really meaningful. Sports are great, but just because someone’s great at sports doesn’t mean they’re great.

When we follow sports stories, let’s try to remember those athletes who do good things with their fame - Kurt Warner thanking Jesus after his Super Bowl victory in 2000, Jamie Moyer’s charity organizations, or Michael Redd of the Milwaukee Bucks who bought his dad (a pastor of a church) a new church building with his first contract. Let’s also remember the real athletes of our world, the saints and martyrs, who have won victories for God and have provided us with true examples of role models. We need to always make sure salvation in Christ is our ultimate goal. Let’s keep our eyes on the prize, and become athletes for Christ.

“I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness . . .” ~John 8:12

Stewardship Report: "Strengthened by Christ and His Church"

<u>2008 Stewardship Status (December 15, 2008):</u>		Stewardship Target – 2008	\$470,500
Stewardship Families Pledged	479	Stewardship Gifts Pledged	\$374,100
Stewardship Gifts Received	\$303,500	Current Stewardship Deficit	\$ 99,400
Average Stewardship Pledge	\$781.00	Percentage of Goal Achieved	79.51%

<u>Pledge Range</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>	<u>\$ & % of Gifts Pledged</u>
\$1-\$999	356	\$127,910 - 34.20%
\$1000-\$2499	99	\$130,435 - 34.87%
\$2500-\$4,999	15	\$ 48,800 - 13.04%
\$5,000-\$9,999	6	\$ 34,955 - 9.34%
\$10,000-\$14,999	3	\$ 32,000 - 8.55%

<u>2009 Stewardship Status (December 15, 2008):</u>		Stewardship Target – 2009	\$411,000
Stewardship Families Pledged	171	Stewardship Gifts Pledged	\$138,159
Stewardship Gifts Received	\$N/A	Current Stewardship Deficit	\$272,841
Average Stewardship Pledge	\$807.95	Percentage of Goal Achieved	33.62%

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Ευτυχισμένος Ο Καινούριος Χρόνος! Happy New Year!

Our 2008 Stewardship Goal of \$470,500, approved by the Parish Assembly, was not met. As of December 15, we had 23 less families pledged as compared to last year, the total gifts pledged was \$16,084 behind and we came up short of our goal by nearly \$100,000. Additionally, our 2009 Campaign is off to a noticeably slow start. Compared with last year, we currently have 23 fewer families pledged, and the sum pledged is \$54,899 behind. While there is plenty of time to catch up, we all need to prayerfully consider our personal situations and give back to the Lord a portion of the wonderful gifts He has blessed us with.

As we enter the New Year, having just celebrated the joyful Birth in the Flesh of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we must not forget the very reason why He humbled Himself to become Human, like us, except without sin. He did this so that He could become the *perfect sacrifice* needed to lift mankind back up and to show us the pathway back to God. Why did God give up His Son to His enemies? As stated so clearly in the most famous quote in the Bible, He did this out of pure love: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life."* (John 3:16).

If God so loves us, does it not stand to reason that He will do anything for us in His Son's Name? As stated in the *Epistle to the Romans (8:32)* *"He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, will He not also give us all things with Him?"* The significance of this should make us realize the extent of the love that God has for His children. As St. John Chrysostom so movingly put it, *"If He gave His own Son, and not merely gave Him, but gave Him to death, why doubt anymore about the rest (everything else), about the chattels (earthly goods/possessions), when thou has the Lord? For He that gave the greater thing to His enemies, how shall He do else than give the lesser thing to His friends?."*

I hope and pray that 2009 will be a year of love and spiritual growth for each and every one of us and 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

How to use the enclosed Daily Bible Reading Guide: Next to the date, the first column represents the designated Epistle reading, and the second the Gospel reading for the day. On January 1, for example, you will see Col 2:8-12, which means St. Paul's Letter to the Colossians, Chapter 2, Verses 8-12; for the Gospel, it is Lk 2:20-21, 40-52, which means the Gospel of St. Luke, Chapter 2, Verses 20-21 and Verses 40-52 in the *same* chapter. The abbreviations are usually listed in the front section of your Bible.

2009 Stewards and Contributors: Strengthened by Christ and His Church

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Adamy, Marina | Delalis, Dina | Kouretas, Demetri and Amanda | Roberts, Sofia |
| Agnos, Dimitrios and Angeline | Delalis, Pete and Alysondra | Kouretas, Valdean | Rodes, Anne |
| Anastasiou, Andrew and Kathleen | Demolas, Maria | Kourlos, Georgia | Rodis, Dimitri and Jennifer |
| Andraktos, Manuel | Demoleas, Helen | Koutsulis, Sam and Effie | Salvaris, Thomas |
| Andrews, Catherine | Demoleas, Stephanie | Kyprianou, Gilbert and Alexis | Santumo, Alfred and Tamarak |
| Andrews, Presvytera Helen | Demetriou, Demetrios and Bessie | Lakis, Antoinette | Savvas, Savva |
| Anthony, Stavros and Bernadette | DeWindt, Dennis and Susan | Lazarakis, John and Panagiota | Skalkotos, Nikolas and Georgia |
| Aristides, George and Diana | Doppe, Victoria | Liaos, Jim and Tina | Snow, Clifford and Christina |
| Augousti, Michael and Helene | Dougan, Linda | Liaos, William and Irene | Snowden, Robert and Niki |
| Bacon, Diane | Doukakis, Panagiotis and Chrisi | Lymberopoulos, Mary | Soper, Bobby and Maria |
| Bakalas, Estella | Edmunds, Paul and Barbara | Malamatos, Kindina | Sotira, Dhimitra |
| Balason, Anna | Eliades, Artemis | Manos, Patrica | Sotira, George |
| Balason, Voula | Eliakis, Peter and Glenda | Markou, Ann | Spanopoulos, Elias |
| Balodimas, Dr. James | Eliopoulos, Goldie | Matsukas, John and Ariadne | Sparkuhl, Alex |
| Bauck, Jeremy and Amy | Exarhos, Nick and Sharon | Mavrantonis, Stacy and Kiki | Stefanatos, Michael and Tami |
| Berendji, Jim and Vivian | Fanandakis, George and Helen | Miller, Mary | Stefanatos-Hetzel, Joanne |
| Berta, Irene | Filios, George and Nitsa | Miralles, Jean | Stephanos, Stanley and Aspasia |
| Bingham, Robert and Melissa | Filios, Spiridon and Eleni | Mirich, Kyle and Melissa | Szukiewicz, Joseph and Jennia |
| Bledsoe, Lori | Flangas, Bill and Marilyn | Moffett, Todd and Eliopoulos, Tina | Takas, Andrea |
| Borzekas, Stephen | Foskaris, Nicholas and Dana | Monoyudis, Jim and Julie | Taxiarchos, Andrew and Alexandra |
| Britten, Ronald and Carol | Foskaris, Thomas and Iryna | Morgan, Brian and Adrienne | Taylor, Frederick and Katherine |
| Brown, Faye | Frangakis, Costa | Mulopulos, George | Theros, James |
| Bullivant, John and Jana | Frangakis, John | Murphy, Karen and Terry | Thomas, Angie |
| Capadalis, Tim and Marling | Frantzen, Robert and Margery | Neocleous, Plato | Thompson, Maggy |
| Captain, Nicholas and Maria | Franzi, Jack | Nicholas, James and Myrna | Trebicka, Ardian |
| Carabas, Stephen and Linda | Gear, Darius and Bessie | Nikitas, Rigas and Aphrodite | Triffon, Cathy |
| Carrico, William and Alexandra | Giouzelis, Anastasia | Nikolopoulos, Nick and Dimitra | Tselikis, Nicholas and Jennifer |
| Carson, Michele | Goddard, Elizabeth | Nikols, George and Christine | Tsouras, Helen |
| Carter, Maria | Gousias, Elias and Maria | Nilalls, Rita | Tzelalis, Steve |
| Castillo, Matthew | Grillas, Vasilios and Roula | Orlando, Alleck and Jennifer | Vassiliadis, Athena |
| Cero, Dean | Haillemariam, Tesfa | Ostis, Sotirios | Vervilos, James and Anna |
| Chachas, Bessie | Hallis, Louis and Betty | Pantos, James | Walter, Vernon and Alice |
| Chachas, James | Hamilton, Mary | Nikols, Rita | Walters, Lane and Mary |
| Chandrinos, Alexia | Harris, Melty and Angeline | Papas, Christian | Walters, Gary and Susan |
| Chandrinos, Peter | Harrison, Angie | Papas, Peter and Rita | Willey, Anthony |
| Chandrinos, Ricki | Hondros, Fr. John and Presv. Maria | Pappas, Constantine and Karina | Wilson, Steven and Cleopatra |
| Chomakos, George and Nikki | Howard, Willie B. | Pearson, Jeff and Adrienne | Womack, Karl |
| Christopoulos, Ann | Kachikis, Paul and Ernestine | Pelletier, Michael | Womack, Kimberly |
| Cole, Darrick and Carla | Kakavulias, Christina | Pendelton, Patricia | Wronski, Chuck |
| Conger, William and Alexia | Kanellis, Ann | Pentogenis, Michael and Kathy | Xikis, Victoria |
| Costuras, George and Marsha | Karas, James | Peronis, Fay | Zoumboulis, James and Tina |
| Cotsilis, Peter and Jenny | Karas, John and Marcie | Philoppou, Demetrios and Luanne | |
| Dalacas, Dimitri and Athanasia | Koliambas, Eleni | Platis, Anna | |
| Dalacas, Eleni | Kolinas, Claire | Radosta, Athena | |
| DeCarlo, Frank and Nadine | Kotonias, George and Patricia | Rifakes, John and Carol | |



Blessings for the New Year!!!

Our Community Registry

Baptized into Christ : Na Mas Zisoun!

Christopher George, son of Dimitri and Jennifer Rodis, on November 29, 2008.
Godparents: Andrew and Alexandra Taxiarchos.

Alexandra Eleni, daughter of Efstratios and Connie Katopodis, on December 12, 2008.
Godparent: Athanasios Katopodis.

Nicolette, daughter of Nicholas and Jennifer Tselikis, on December 13, 2008.
Godparent: Dimitris Diamandidis.

Marriage: Na Zisetel!

Efstratios V. Katopodis and Connie A. Harden on December 12, 2008. Sponsor: Athanasios Katopodis.

Fallen Asleep in the Lord: Eternal Memory

Sam Skokos on October 28, 2008. Funeral November 7.

Olympia Lynn Guerrero on December 2, 2008. Funeral on December 9.

JANUARY 2009 - IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD

<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
				1 Circumcision of Christ /St. Basil 9:00 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	2	3 12:00 pm GOYA @ CPK, Town Square
4 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Community Vasilopita Blessing and Cutting Parish Council Oath Family Worship Sunday	5 Eve of Theophany 8:00 am Royal Hours 9:00 am Divine Liturgy & Blessing of Water	6 Holy Theophany 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy & Blessing of Water 6:00 pm Great Vespers	7 Parish Feast Day ~ St. John the Baptist 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy Fellowship follows, hosted by Philoptochos	8	9	10 4:00 pm St. John Name Day Dinner in Panos Hall
11 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Youth Choir Chants 12:20 pm HOPE & JOY 1:00 pm on-Folk Dance Groups	12 6:30 pm Dance Board	13 4:30 pm FDF Choir 5:30 pm on-Folk Dance Groups 7:00 pm Philoptochos General Meeting	14 7:00 pm Adult Study: The Gospel of John	15	16	17 St. Anthony 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy
18 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 1:00 pm on-Folk Dance Groups	19 6:30 pm Parish Council Meeting	20 11:30 am Seniors 4:30 pm FDF Choir 5:30 pm on-Folk Dance Groups	21 7:00 pm Adult Study	22	23	24
25 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 1:00 pm on-Folk Dance Groups	26	27 4:30 pm FDF Choir 5:30 pm on-Folk Dance Groups	28 7:00 pm Adult Study 8:30 pm OCLV at Jasmine Restaurant	29	30 Three Hierarchs 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	31

The Desert Messenger

*St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
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THE DESERT MESSENGER

The Way of the Lord

“Today the uncreated One is by His own will touched by the creature. Today the prophet and forerunner approaches the Master, but pauses in awe, seeing God’s condescension toward us. Today the waters of the Jordan are turned into healing by the presence of the Lord. Today all creation is watered by mystical waters. Today men’s sins are washed away in the waters of the Jordan.

Today Paradise is thrown open to humankind, and the Sun of righteousness shines upon us. Today the water that the people under Moses found bitter, is turned into sweetness at the Lord’s presence.

*- Prayer of the Blessing of Waters on Theophany,
By St. Sophronios, Patriarch of Jerusalem*

