

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 7, Issue 4 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

April 2009

**From
Father
John**

Beloved in Christ:

Having sailed across the great sea of the Fast, we now approach the harbor of Great and Holy Week, where we will be both eyewitnesses and participants in the Holy Passion, Crucifixion, Death and Resurrection of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. We began the Fast with the acknowledgement that, like Adam, we were exiled from Paradise through sin – tasting the bitter fruit of suffering, strife and death. We now look to the Pioneer of our salvation, Jesus Christ, Who came in the flesh to deliver us from the bondage of sin and death. St. Paul boldly identified Christ as “the New Adam,” an association also made by many Church Fathers, and confessed: *“For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive.” (1 Corinthians 15:22)*

Beginning on Palm Sunday, the faithful of St. John the Baptist will for the 50th year gather in large numbers for Holy Week services – again this year we will be blessed with the presence of His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos for the services of Saturday evening Palm Sunday Vespers, Palm Sunday morning Orthros and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy and the First Bridegroom (*Nymphios*) that evening. Given that most of us set apart this week to attend the many Church services that are very dear to our hearts and an integral part of our Orthodox Faith, I wonder if we are truly attentive to the powerful words of the hymns we hear throughout this week. From early in the week, we will be reminded that our Lord takes up His Cross *for our sake*: *“Having come, O faithful, to the saving Passion of Christ our God, let us glorify His inexpressible forbearance; so that in His compassion He may raise us up, deadened by sin, for He is good and loves mankind.” (Ainoi, Palm Sunday Evening)*

Our victory in Christ begins at Golgotha (“the place of a skull,” the burial place of Adam), where our Lord voluntarily submits to Crucifixion, so that by His sacrifice our sins will be nailed to death once and for all. Following Jesus’ Death in the flesh, His subsequent Descent into Hades illustrates the magnitude of God’s love toward us: Who else but Christ is willing to go to the bowels of Hell to save His unworthy and ungrateful children? Christ the Light overcomes the darkness by vanquishing Death and Resurrecting on the third day (*Kyriaki*, “the Lord’s Day”), making it possible for all of us to be restored as the living icons of God and reconciled with Him in the true Paradise – the Kingdom of God – which we were created to enjoy eternally.

While thousands will come to Church late Holy Saturday night for the Resurrection (*Anastasi*) Service in order to receive the light for their Paschal Candles (*Lambathes*), most will have departed by the beginning of the Divine Liturgy. Do we realize that through the Liturgy we experience in a spiritual manner the Ultimate Sacrifice of Christ and we participate mystically in His Glorious Resurrection and New Life in God’s Kingdom as we receive Holy Communion? In the Eucharist we are able, as St. John Chrysostom declares in his Paschal Sermon, *“to savor the banquet of faith (and) relish the riches of His goodness.”* My prayer is that many more will remain to break the fast by partaking of the Banquet of the Lord’s Table . . . and then enjoy the customary lamb!

Holy Week reaffirms for us each year why we must love God – *because He first loved us, even with our many sins*. As love, mercy and forgiveness are the heart of Holy Week and Pascha, we must celebrate this Feast of Feasts as God intends – by not being content to indulge in foods that perish, but seeking satisfaction in the Real Meal and, equally important, by sharing His holy gifts of love, mercy and forgiveness with others.

Kali Anastasi . . . Blessed Resurrection! Love in Christ,

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

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

Wednesday, April 1

6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy

Friday, April 3

7:00 pm The Akathist Hymn

Sunday, April 5/5th Sunday of Lent/

St. Mary of Egypt

Orthros: Tone One

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:19-31

Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14

Gospel: Mark 10:32-45

Monday, April 6

6:30 pm Great Compline

Wednesday, April 8

6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy

Saturday, April 11 - Saturday of Lazarus

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

6:00 pm Great Vespers of Palm Sunday

with Metropolitan Gerasimos

Sunday, April 12/ Palm Sunday

with His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos

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 12

7:00 pm First Bridegroom Service

with Metropolitan Gerasimos

Holy Monday, April 13

7:00 pm Second Bridegroom Service

Holy Tuesday, April 14

7:00 pm Third Bridegroom Service/

Hymn of Kassiani

Holy Wednesday, April 15

9:00 am Presanctified Liturgy

7:00 pm Holy Unction/*Anointing with Holy Oil*

Holy Thursday, April 16

9:00 am Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil

7:00 pm Holy Passion of our Lord/

Reading of the 12 Gospels

Holy Friday, April 17

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 18

9:00 am Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil/*Descent into Hades*

11:00 pm Vigil of the Resurrection

Sunday, April 19/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

Wednesday, April 22/ St. George the Great Martyr

5:00 pm Orthros - 6:00 pm Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Acts 12:1-11

Gospel: John 1:18-28

Thursday, April 23/ St. George (Liturgy on 4/22)

Friday, April 24/ Theotokos, The Life-Giving Spring

8:00 am Orthros - 9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Acts 12:1-11

Gospel: John 3:1-15

Sunday, April 26/ 2nd Sunday of Pascha/ St. Thomas

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

Epistle: Acts 5:12-20

Gospel: John 20:19-31

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos will visit our parish on Saturday, April 11 for Great Vespers at 6:00 pm and on Palm Sunday, April 12 for Orthros at 8:45 am, the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am, and the First Bridegroom Service at 7:00 pm.

**President's
Column**

Another month has passed and we find ourselves nearing the end of the Lenten season. Attendance at Liturgy has been great and it's wonderful to see so many of us taking part in this wonderful event of faith.

I would like to thank Ruth Plentzas, Glenda Eliakis, Amalia Dominguez, Susan DeWindt and Geri Kypreos for helping with the annual Lenten Retreat held at our Church in March. I am especially grateful for George Kakavulias for all the food preparations before and his help in the kitchen during the Retreat. It was great to see faithful members of our community come forward and offer their time and service to the Church. I also want to thank Sam Koutsulis and George Kakavulias who joined me in the kitchen preparing the Lenten Dinner following the Vespers on March 22; the Philoptochos Ladies did a wonderful job decorating and serving, and everyone had a great time.

As he promised, His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos will return this year to our parish on Palm Sunday weekend. On Saturday, April 11 he will celebrate Great Vespers and on Palm Sunday, April 12, Orthros and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy. Following services, the Metropolitan will break bread with us at the traditional Palm Sunday Fish Luncheon in Panos Hall. I hope to see our entire community come out and welcome His Eminence for these special services and the luncheon – the net proceeds will benefit the parish operations.

Soon we will celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, followed by the Agape Picnic. This is a joyful time for the Church, as we all come together and spend the time together. I look forward to seeing everyone at the picnic – we will have all the usual delightful treats, games for the kids, Easter egg hunt and delicious traditional Greek food. I will be in the kitchen cooking the lamb. Please come and enjoy this wonderful day; more details will follow.

Peter Kypreos, Parish Council President

Financial Status for Month of February 2009

<u>Bank Accounts</u>	<u>Beginning Balance as of 1.31.09</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Internal Bank Transfers Transfers In</u>	<u>Transfers Out</u>	<u>Balances as of 1.31.09</u>
General Operating	\$3,981.87	\$51,701.96	\$51,033.35			\$4,650.48
Building/Maintenance	\$35,908.35	\$2,005.53				\$37,913.88
Community/Education Ctr	\$3,917.93	\$1,000.00	\$1,230.62			\$3,687.31
Construction (Loan Paymts)	\$37,526.48		\$5,556.17			\$31,970.31
Food Festival	\$398.59		\$225.00			\$173.59
Icon Money Market	\$6,731.34	\$1,866.27	\$37.00			\$8,560.61
Library Checking	\$17,454.70	\$2.69				\$17,457.39
Construction Loan	\$704,857.97					\$703,324.91
Revolving Line of Credit	\$71,074.98					\$72,832.98



The Parish Council and Philoptochos cordially invite you to join His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos for the annual **Palm Sunday Fish Luncheon** Sunday April 12, 2009 Following the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy \$10 per person Net Proceeds Benefit the Parish Operations

**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*. Also, the dinner following the Lenten Vespers held at St. John was a great success, thanks to the combined efforts of the men and women of the Parish Council and Philoptochos. Finally, special *THANKS* to everyone who participated and supported the *Sunday of the Cross Fellowship*.

In April, we are once again working with the Parish Council to host the *Palm Sunday Luncheon* and also *sell pastries at the Agape Picnic*. Plan on attending our *last general meeting* scheduled *Tuesday, April 21 at 7:00 pm in Kokkos Hall*. We will have a short hands-on project to benefit the children of UMC and we will also be announcing the 2009-2011 Board Members. Finally, parents please plan on your kids attending the *PENNIES and PRAYERS Pizza Party*, after Church on *Sunday, April 26*.

We invite everyone to participate in our scheduled activities:

- April 12 – Palm Sunday Luncheon
- April 16 – Dye Pascha Eggs*
- April 17 – Decorate Kouvouklion (after Holy Friday Royal Hours)
- April 19 – Sell Pastries at the Agape Picnic (12:00 -5:00 pm)
- April 21 – Last General Meeting in Kokkos Hall (7:00 pm)
- April 26 – Pennies and Prayers Pizza Party (after Liturgy)

* All are welcome to bring their uncooked eggs to the kitchen bright and early on Thursday morning to participate in the cooking and dying process. For further information and exact times please contact *Effie Lekar* at agapi@cox.net or *Amalia Dominguez* at (702) 510-5114.

As a reminder, the lavender offering envelopes for Holy Week and Pascha flowers are available in the Narthex next to the pink baskets (with the white bows). To enhance the beauty of Holy Week, we greatly encourage your contributions to off-set the expenses 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

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

April 5

Ushers: George Bochanis, Gary Waters, John Karas, William Carrico, Peter Papas, Spiros Filios

Memorials: Jim Hernquist (1 year); Edward George Gatski (3 years).

Fellowship: Senior Forerunners

April 12 - PALM SUNDAY

Metropolitan Gerasimos celebrates the Hierarchical Liturgy

Ushers: Entire Parish Council

PALM SUNDAY LUNCHEON

April 19 - GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA

Ushers: Entire Parish Council

AGAPE PICNIC

April 26

Ushers: Pete Kypreos, Angela Coutris, Marina Adamy, George Kakavulias, Sam Koutsulis, George Nikols

Fellowship: 50th Anniversary Fundraiser

**Notice of Parish Assembly
Sunday, May 3
Following the Divine Liturgy**

AGENDA:

- Call to Order/Opening Prayer
- Election of Assembly Chair
 - Approval of Minutes
 - Audit Report
 - Financial Report
 - Stewardship Report
- Building and Maintenance
 - Old Business
 - New Business
- Closing Prayer/Adjournment

You must be a Steward in Good Standing for 2009 to participate and vote.

"Your Cross, Lord, is Life and Resurrection for Your people."

Join Us for Our
AGAPE PICNIC

Holy Pascha
Sunday, April 19, 2009

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
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 (702) 221-8245

CHRIST IS RISEN!
CHRISTOS ANESTI!

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

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

Rev. Father John Hondros

Karen Rawlinson
Administrative Assistant

Maria Kakavulias
Business Administrator

Janice Leavitt
Facilities and Catering Manager

Office Hours

Monday - Friday
9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Telephone: (702) 221-8245

FAX: (702) 221-9167

E-mail:

frjohn@vegasgreekorthodox.com
Website: vegasgreekorthodox.com

Parish Council: Peter Kypreos

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, Director

Orthodox Bookstore:
Costa Frangakis

50th Anniversary Celebration:
Rena Kalkas

50th Anniversary: 'A Golden Heritage'

Plans are falling into place and our committee is working hard to create several memorable events for all of us to enjoy in celebration of our 50th Anniversary on the weekend of *October 16-18*. Watch for detailed information in the May Desert Messenger.

The monthly fellowship luncheons will continue as fundraisers toward this event, and we look forward to seeing you there.

If you have any questions please call me at *(702) 367-1772*.

Rena Kalkas, Chairwoman, 50th Anniversary Committee

Notes From the Loft



The Choir has been diligently practicing for our Holy Week and Pascha Services. We will be singing the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy on Palm Sunday, April 12, presided by His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos. In addition, we will sing for the Bridegroom Services on Palm Sunday, Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday evenings and, of course, the Lamentations Service on Holy Friday and Midnight Resurrection Service and Liturgy.

Practices are Friday, April 3 at 5:30 pm, Wednesday, April 8 at 5:00 pm, Sunday, April 12 at 6:00 pm, Monday, April 13, Tuesday, April 14 and Wednesday, April 15 at 5:30 pm.

If you plan to sing in the Choir for any of these services, you are urged to attend practices. Faye Brown, Choir Director

"Remember us, O Lord, when You come into Your Kingdom."

Our Community Registry

Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisoun!

Yanit, son of Yonas Worku and Yodit Lemma, on February 22, 2009.
Godparent: Gilinesh Deressa.

Yiannis, son of Aristedes and Argiro Nikolopoulos, on March 1, 2009.
Godparent: Eleni Eliades.

Elias (Brent, Jr.), son of Brent Manning and Chris Martinaitis on March 7, 2009. Godparents: Louis and Audra Martinaitis.

Caleb, son of Alelegn and Tihitina Alene on March 15, 2009.
Godparent: Henock Akelom.

Marriages: Na Zisetel

Johnathon Michael Rojas and Stephanie Katherine Blancett on February 21, 2009. Sponsor: Maria Blancett

Stephen M. Strong and Karlie J. Conger on February 21, 2009.
Sponsor: Stephanie Skandros

Fallen Asleep in the Lord: Eternal Memory

Kristin Cicale on November 11, 2008. Trisagion on March 6.

Orthodox Bookstore

On the Purification of the Heart and Our Senses: Jesus said that those who have a pure heart are blessed because they will see God. This sounds like such a far-out concept. Can we really purify our hearts? Of course we can, and we have the testimony of countless Saints who have done so and have told us how wonderful it is to see God in everything. This is peace and rest and fearlessness: to know in your heart that the will of God governs all, and that this all-powerful God loves and cares for each one of us and desires for us to share in His Divine Life.

So, how do I acquire this purity of heart? To begin with, in addition to all the other things that the Church is, we must understand that it is also a therapeutic method. The Holy Mysteries of the Church are given to us by God for the healing of the soul. The prayers, iconography, lives of Saints, chants, etc. are medicines for our souls. How does this work? It has to do with what we feed our minds and souls. Everything that we perceive has the ability to draw us either toward or away from God. So if I attend a rock concert, for example, it is very difficult for my mind *not* to be drawn away from God. Or when I watch the evening news, most likely my mind is being pulled from therapeutic thoughts of God, and instead my soul has more of a chance to be damaged and hurt by what is perceived. Now on the other side, when I attend the Divine Liturgy, it is very difficult for me *not* to think about God. Or when I spend a few minutes just looking at a Byzantine icon, my soul is being soothed. The Church provides us with alternative sources of stimulation for our senses. What starts with our senses, works its way into the heart.

The Bookstore has many books, icons and CDs to help draw us closer to God. Also, to help you follow the services better, the *Holy Week and Easter* books will be available for \$25.

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

Orthodox Connection Las Vegas

On the Friday of "Bright Week," *April 24 at 6:00 pm*, we will continue to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord with a fast-free potluck at Costa Frangakis' home. Once again we will experience the Frangakis hospitality! You won't want to miss out. Bring your favorite dish and come and network with other Orthodox Christians. Please RSVP to *Costa Frangakis at (702) 338-9477 or Angela Coutris at (702) 497-2529* or orthodoxconnectionlv@gmail.com.



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

SPECIAL NOTICE

We present the second of seven excerpts of our Church History in the centerfold, for your enjoyment in anticipation of the . . . *50th Anniversary Celebration*. This history was compiled from personal interviews of founding members and other Church leaders, from articles written by longtime parishioners, from media publications and from a graduate thesis researched through scientific method. It is our goal to be accurate and we have made every effort to do so. If you feel there are any errors in the reporting of this established history we invite you to submit your information with supporting documentation.

WE NEED HISTORICAL INFORMATION FROM THE 1950s TO 1973.

Please Contact:

Nitsa Filios (702) 595-6888 Susan Stamis (702) 460-9954
Marina Adamy (702) 364-8027 Cheryl Pandelis (702) 338-1601

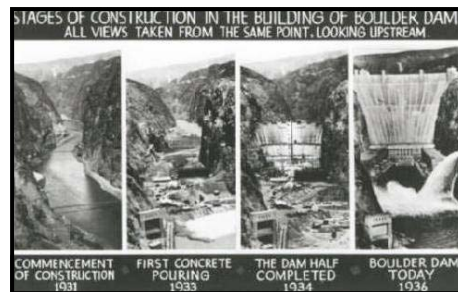
TO COMMEMORATE OUR 50TH ANNIVERSARY

A HISTORY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
GREEK OTHODOX CHURCH
LAS VEGAS NEVADA

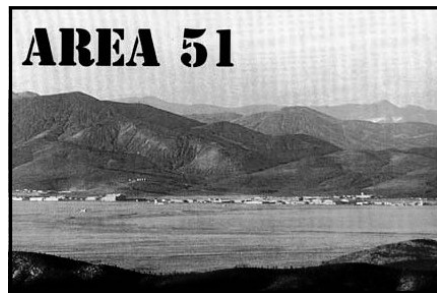
Part II of VII

POPULATION GROWTH

At the time, as in the rest of the country, the Las Vegas Valley was in the grip of the Great Depression. Exhausted and impoverished, workers and their families migrated in droves to work on the construction of the Boulder Dam (now Hoover Dam), completed in 1935. The Greek population of Las Vegas increased with every new employment opportunity.



Boulder Dam Construction Phases



With the outbreak of World War II, the defense industry came to the Las Vegas Valley, ideally located from a military standpoint because of its isolation, cheap energy, and plentiful water. Thousands of pilots and gunners trained at the Las Vegas Aerial Gunnery School (today known as Nellis Air Force Base), located on 3 million acres in the northeast section of the valley. Home to the Nevada Test Site and "Area 51," Nellis AFB has attracted the attention of the entire world.

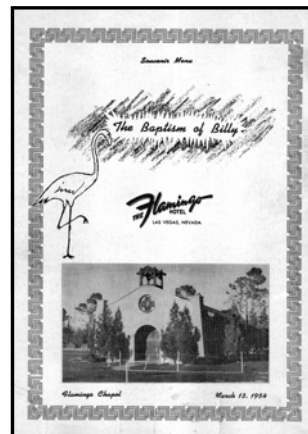
In 1941, lavish Strip hotels began making an appearance, eventually making the gambling industry the largest employer in Las Vegas and attracting many people seeking employment.



El Rancho Hotel, 1941

THE FIRST ORTHODOX CHURCH

Lacking a church or Orthodox priest, the handful of Greek families living in Las Vegas made do with holding informal services in their own homes for special holidays, followed by traditional celebrations. In order to baptize their children, these forerunners were compelled to travel to established Orthodox parishes in Salt Lake City and Los Angeles.



Baptismal Program for Billy Cosulas March 13, 1954

In 1954, Las Vegas residents, Virginia and Bill Cosulas, prepared to baptize their infant son. The sacrament was officiated by visiting Bishop Athenagoras Kokinakis and Fr. Anthony Kosturos. An article in the local paper announced the Greek Orthodox service would be held at the Episcopal Church. Many Orthodox faithful attended, and at the end of the service, Bishop Athenagoras requested a meeting with the ladies in attendance. He stressed the importance of establishing a Greek Orthodox Church in Las Vegas and convinced them that the most effective way to do so would be to first organize a local Ladies Philoptochos Chapter. The bishop donated \$10 to start the chapter and appointed volunteer Georgia Adras to lead the women's group.

In 1958, Dr. Ernest Searles, a newly appointed Professor of Economics at Southern Nevada University, (now University of Nevada Las Vegas) was walking through the casino of the Elwell Hotel on his way to religious services being held there at

the time. Impressed by the paradox of walking through a smoky path of clanking one-armed bandits en route to Divine Liturgy, Dr. Searles became impassioned with the idea of establishing a Greek Orthodox Church in Las Vegas. Immediately after services, he and Ted Michelas organized a lunch meeting with the members of the existing Greek community, and the process began.

Two weeks later, 27 Greek Orthodox men and women met at a dance school hall on Seventh Street, near Stewart Avenue. The organizing committee was chosen and at the first meeting, John Pappas was selected chairman. At the same meeting, Mr. Pappas, recognizing Ernie Searles' passion for the project and his familiarity with the procedures of the Church, asked to be replaced by him as chairman.

The first general assembly was held in March of 1959, specifically to elect a parish council. Dr. Searles became the first parish president; Tom Panos, vice-president; Marco Rosato, treasurer; and Patricia Robison, secretary. The additional council members were Ted Michelas, John Pappas, Venea Poulos, Helen Tsouras and Joseph Wright. On April 9, 1959, the Greek community was officially incorporated in the State of Nevada as the Eastern Orthodox Community of Las Vegas. All Orthodox faithful in the community, Greek and non-Greek alike, affiliated with this first Orthodox Church in Las Vegas.



First Parish Council

Also in 1959, Wilma Panos became the first duly elected Philoptochos president, and the chapter was official. Thus began the rounds of parties and Easter dinner dances that were the backbone of Philoptochos fund-raising. On September 6, 1959, the First Annual Religious Celebration Dinner Dance was held at the Las Vegas Municipal Golf Course Clubhouse. Subsequent parties were held at the Oddfellows Hall and the Thunderbird Hotel. With the money raised at these events, the Panagia Chapter of Philoptochos was able to finance the fledgling Church in Las Vegas.

The Greeks of Las Vegas began holding Orthodox services in Christ Episcopal Church,, whose minister,

The Reverend Neville Tinker, welcomed them into the facility after his regular services on Sundays. The liturgies were conducted by the Right Reverend Sugman Sergei Irtel and, as the Rev. Irtel spoke little Greek and English, the services were in Russian, with Dr. Searles chanting in Greek. In June of 1959, the Very Reverend Archimandrite Arcadios Arcadiou, remembered by those who knew him as a gentle man, arrived as the first parish priest and although on temporary assignment, served for 3 years until 1962.

NAMING THE CHURCH

In September 1959, in Greek tradition, the community held an auction to name the new church. John Pappas, as highest bidder, chose St. John the Baptist, the patron saint for whom his son was named. Providentially, the railroad water boy who had passed through Las Vegas as a child in 1909 had, 50 years later, become the honored "Godfather" of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church.

The next two years were spent searching for a suitable property upon which it was intended to build a church. A 2 ½ acre lot was purchased but ultimately sold in 1961 in order to finance the acquisition of an old Jewish Synagogue at Maryland Parkway and Carson Avenue in the downtown area of Las Vegas. The synagogue was converted and dedicated. The modest interior was painted almost entirely in white, including the icon screen, altar, pulpit, bishop's throne and pews. The gold-accented, white interior and a row of stained glass windows lent provincial charm and coziness to the sweet little church.



Carson Avenue and Maryland Parkway, Interior

The parish membership continued to grow. Fr. Arcadiou was reassigned and in 1962 the Rev. Fr. James Adams, with his Presvytera, Evelyn, came to serve in Las Vegas as the first permanent parish priest. Having left the Polar climate of Anchorage, Alaska, Fr. Adams may actually have uttered the words "Jornada de Muerte" at least once during his first summer in the Las Vegas Valley.

End Part II—Look for Part III of St. John History in the May Desert Messenger!

Youth Ministries

Church School

Pennies and Prayers collections are going strong. Our last day to collect for the benefit of Mission Parishes in our Metropolis will be Palm Sunday. To honor of all our hard work for raising money for Pennies and Prayers, Philoptochos will host a Pizza Party for the Church School on *Sunday, April 26*.

We will be collecting cases of bottled water for Street Teens through Palm Sunday, *April 12*. This is a much needed item for the homeless teens as the warmer months will be upon us shortly, please help us collect water.

Join us for our Lazarus Saturday Liturgy on *April 11*; we will follow with a light Lenten breakfast along with Palm tying . . . "Many hands help ease the load!" This is really a fun event for the whole family. Please let me know if you have any questions.

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

HOPE and JOY

April Showers bring May flowers! Let's create our own flower garden on *Sunday, April 26* at 12:15 pm in Kokkos Hall. This will involve watercolors, play dough and lots of fun. We will start right after Church School; and hear stories about the Saints while our watercolor creation dries.

Please RSVP with your HOPE & JOY Advisors, *Sharon Katsaros at (702) 242-2457 or Jenn Orlando at (702) 631-0111*.

Junior and Senior GOYA

Hi Everyone! We had a great time at our Retreat. Thank you to everyone who participated. During Lent, we were able to feed Street Teens a wonderful pasta dinner. The GOYAnS really made a difference by feeding about 30 homeless teenagers.

Our next big event will be held on *Saturday, April 4*, when we will meet at the Church for Field Day from noon to 4:00 pm. This will be a day where Junior and Senior GOYAnS can have a great day hanging out at the Church doing various outdoor activities. Please bring a Lenten sack lunch.

Your Advisors, Eileen Koutsulis (702) 521-6516 or Effie Lekar (702) 768-5500

Myrrh-Bearers

If you are a girl in 7th-12th grades and would like to like to be a Myrrh-Bearer, please let me know. You must commit to the Holy Week services on the evenings of Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Holy Friday and Holy Saturday. We will have an informational meeting on *Sunday, April 5* right after Church School in the Middle School Classroom. Please call or text me to let me know you would like to participate.

Eileen Koutsulis (702) 521-6516

Altar Servers

Attention Altar Servers: There will be a mandatory practice on *Saturday, April 4*, 10:30 am in the Church. We will review how to serve at a Hierarchical Liturgy, in preparation for the visit of His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos on Palm Sunday weekend. We will also review our role in the many services of Holy Week. The practice will end in time for the GOYA Field Day. See you there!

Sam Koutsulis, Altar Captain

"You were crucified for me, to become the source of my salvation." ~ Holy Thursday Eve

Youth Choir News



Some members of the Youth Choir have had the honor of chanting the responses to several Pan-Orthodox Vespers this year; these services gave this group an opportunity to sing in other Churches. Along with the regular music that the group is familiar with, they were able to execute some new and very difficult chants; I am certainly proud of their effort and achievement.

On *Palm Sunday, April 12*, we will be joining in full force with the Adult Choir as we chant the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, presided by Metropolitan Gerasimos. Please be here early at 9:40 am in the Choir Loft in black and white. We also are looking forward to our favorite service, Holy Saturday Morning, April 18. Please be *early* at 8:45 am, as our favorite hymns are chanted in the beginning (and not in the middle) of the service!

Thank you and Kali Anastasi! Love, Presvytera Maria

Kokkos Scholarship

The Scholarship Committee for the Kokkos Scholarship Fund will have Applications available at the Church Office on *April 1*. The applications must be returned on or before *May 1*. 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.

Attention All Graduates!

We want to share your good news in the May issue of *The Desert Messenger*! If you (or your child) will be graduating soon from High School or University, please email the following to frjohn@vegasgreekorthodox.com by *May 15*.

- School from which you are graduating
- The degree you will receive, including honors
- What your plans are, and what you will study if pursuing further education
- And most importantly, a photo of you!



Adult Study Group with Father John Hondros
Meets Every Wednesday ~ During Lent at 8:00 pm, After Pascha at 7:00 pm ~ Kokkos Hall
Join us in "Learning Orthodoxy through the Gospel of John"

TSOUREKI (\$12 per loaf)
 and KOULOURAKIA (\$6 per dozen):
 Please contact the Church Office to pre-order,
 and join us for baking on Saturday, April 4 at 9:00 am.

*"On this very day You declared
 the thief worthy of Paradise.
 Enlighten me, too, Lord, by the
 wood of the Cross, and save me."
 ~ Exapostellarion, Holy Thursday*

Stewardship Report: “Strengthened by Christ and His Church”

<u>2009 Stewardship Status (March 15, 2009):</u>		Stewardship Target – 2009	\$411,000
Stewardship Families Pledged	357	Stewardship Gifts Pledged	\$269,391
Stewardship Gifts Received	\$86,723	Current Stewardship Deficit	\$141,609
Average Stewardship Pledge	\$754.60	Percentage of Goal Achieved	65.52%

<u>Pledge Range</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>	<u>\$ & % of Gifts Pledged</u>
\$1-\$999	262	\$ 89,551 - 33.25%
\$1000-\$2499	75	\$ 93,520 - 34.73%
\$2500-\$4,999	14	\$ 47,500 - 17.64%
\$5,000-\$9,999	5	\$ 28,720 - 10.67%
\$10,000-\$14,999	1	\$ 10,000 - 3.71%

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

This past month, our 2009 campaign has shown signs of improvement. We currently have 6 more families pledged compared to last month. Although the sum pledged continues to be *behind* by \$22,205, this is an improvement over last month when we were *behind* \$36,480.

During the Lenten season, Orthodox Christian are called upon to increase almsgiving, spend more time in prayer and to fast. While prayer and fasting are personally between each of us and the Lord, almsgiving is something we do *to the Lord*. What do I mean by this? If we refer to the *Gospel of Matthew (25:31-33)*, we read the Lord’s words concerning the Day of Judgment when He will separate us into two groups: the sheep and the goats. The sheep are those who demonstrated their love for the Lord through their good stewardship, including almsgiving. They will be the ones who *“will inherit the kingdom” (Matthew 25:34)* because they fed the hungry, gave drink to those who thirsted, took care of strangers, the naked, the sick and those who were in prison. The Lord tells us, *“As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25:40)* The goats, on the other hand, are those who will be cast *“into everlasting fires” (Matthew 25:41)* because of their failure to lovingly care for those in need.

Many of us wonder how we can possibly give alms when we are working hard trying to make ends meet in our everyday lives. St. John Chrysostom suggests the following: *“And let us make a little chest for the poor at home; and near the place at which you stand praying, there let it be put: and as often as you enter in to pray, first deposit your alms, and then send up your prayer; and as you would not wish to pray with unwashed hands so neither do so without alms.” (Homily 43 on 1st Corinthians)*

In this Lenten season leading to Pascha, I pray we will all strive through our almsgiving, prayers and fasting to support the needs of our fellow brothers and sisters to the glory of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Χριστός Ανέστη – Christ is Risen!

John G. Karas (702) 219-5057, Stewardship Chairman

Senior Forerunners

The Senior Forerunners of St. John the Baptist met on March 17 for a St. Patrick's Day Lenten get-together. Lunch was prepared by Manny and was delicious. We also enjoyed two very informative talks: Capt. Stavros Anthony of the Las Vegas Police Department educated us about "Identity Theft," and Dr. Filippos Diamantis spoke on personal wellness and how we can avoid illnesses by eating properly and exercising daily. Our members were very generous in their donations of food items for the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth.

We discussed the possibility of a trip to Laughlin shortly after Pascha, and maybe a trip to Kyle Canyon in May. Please look to the Weekly Bulletin for updates.

Our membership is open to all seniors of our parish. Membership is \$10 per year. For more information call *Ruth Plentzas at (702) 221- 0989*.

2009 Stewards and Contributors: "Strengthened by Christ and His Church"

Adamy, Marina	Delalis, Dina	Hastings, Audra	Mavrantonis, Stacy and Kiki
Agnos, Dimitrios and Angeline	Delalis, Pete and Alysondra	Hastings, Teri	Mavroidis, Demetrios and Debra
Alsup, Trever and Kelly	Demolas, Ilias and Jodi	Hemmers, Oliver and Pantelas, Anne	Mavros, Michael and Debbie
Anastasiou, Andrew and Kathleen	Demolas, Maria	Hernquist, Jim † and Angela	McNear, Elizabeth
Andraktos, Manuel	Demoleas, Helen	Hetzal, David	McPherson, Robert and Marie
Andrews, Catherine	Demoleas, Stephanie	Hondros, Catherine	Menegatos, Jim and Dana
Andrews, George	Demopoulos, Tommy and Vasiliki	Hondros, Christina	Mezilson, Evangeline
Andrews, Presvytera Helen	Demetriou, Demetrios and Bessie	Hondros, Fr. John and Presv. Maria	Miller, Mary
Anthony, Stavros and Bernadette	Depessa, Gilinesh	Hoover, Patrick and Pauline	Millet, Jennie
Arcamuzi, Georgia	DeWindt, Dennis and Susan	Howard, Willie B.	Milonas, Henry
Aristides, George and Diana	Diamantis, Filippos	Johnson, Stephen	Miralles, Jean
Athan, Sofia	Dominguez, Eric and Amalia	Kachikis, Paul and Ernestine	Mirich, Kyle and Melissa
Athens, Ann	Doppe, Victoria	Kakavulias, Christina	Moffett, Todd and Eliopoulos, Tina
Attard, Constantine and Sofia	Doskas, Athanasios and Anastasia	Kakavulias, George and Eleni	Monoyudis, Jim and Julie
Augousti, Michael and Helene	Dougan, Linda	Kakavulias, John	Montisano, Jon and Jennifer
Bacon, Ken and Dianne	Doukakis, Panagiotis and Chrisi	Kakavulias, Maria	Morgan, Brian and Adrienne
Bagatelos, Michael	Edmunds, Paul and Barbara	Kalfas, Domna	Mulopoulos, George
Bakalas, Estella	Eliades, Artemis	Kalkantzakos, Pete and Misty	Murphy, Karen and Terry
Balason, Anna	Eliades, Gregory and Maria	Kane, Larry and Irene	Neocleous, Plato
Balason, Voula	Eliades, Harry and Agapi	Kanelis, Ann	Newell, Eric and Devona
Baldwin, Richard and Vivi	Eliades, Peter and Janet †	Kanoles, Helene	Newell, Ronald and Maria
Balodimas, Dr. James	Eliakis, John and Atsuko	Kanoles, Konstantine	Niarkos, Evgenia
Bartzos, Sam and Eugenia	Eliakis, Peter and Glenda	Karalis, Gianni and April	Nichlas, Arthur
Bauck, Jeremy and Amy	Eliakis, Varthie and Lee Ann	Karas, James	Nicholas, James and Myrna
Berendji, Jim and Vivian	Eliopoulos, Goldie	Karas, John and Marcie	Nicholas, John and Estella
Berta, Irene	Ene, Ovidiu and Mira	Karas, Vasiliki	Nikitas, Rigas and Aphrodite
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Bledsoe, Lori	Eyler, Fr. Paul and Pres. Ilean	Katris, Nick and Kathy	Nikolopoulos, Nick and Dimitra
Bochanis, George	Eyler, John and Elizabeth	Katsaros, Thomas and Sharon	Nikols, George and Christine
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Bratta, Georgene	Fanandakis, George and Helen	Kelesis, John and Vicki	Orlando, Alleck and Jennifer
Brillis, Christine	Filios, George and Nitsa	Koliambas, Eleni	Osborn, Pearl
Brillis, George and Satoko	Filiou, Spiridon and Eleni	Kolinas, Claire	Ostis, Sotirios
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Brown, Andrew and Christina	Flangas, Bill and Marilyn	Konsolakis, George	Pandelis, Cheryl
Brown, Faye	Flangas, Gary and Amanda	Kotonias, George and Patricia	Pantos, James
Boulamatsis, Akaterine and Abernathy, Gordon	Foskaris, Nicholas and Dana	Kourafas, Christopher and Trish	Papas, Christian
Bucy, Brent and Elaine	Foskaris, Thomas and Iryna	Kouris, Anastasios	Papas, Peter and Rita
Bullivant, John and Jana	Fotinos, Cleopatra	Kouretas, Demetri and Amanda	Pappas, Constantine and Karina
Capadalis, Tim and Marling	Frangakis, Christos and Anastasia	Kouretas, Valdean	Pappas, Rita
Captain, Nicholas and Maria	Frangakis, John	Kourlos, Georgia	Pearson, Jeff and Adrienne
Carabas, Stephen and Linda	Frantzen, Robert and Margery	Kountanis, Dennis and Pat	Pelletier, Michael
Carabas, Thymios and Sotiroulla	Franzi, Jack	Koutsulis, Sam and Effie	Pendelton, Patricia
Caredis, Jon and Marjorie	Fronimos, John and Margaret	Kover, Barbara	Pentogenis, Michael and Kathy
Carrico, William and Alexandra	Fuson, Aglaia	Kypreos, Peter and Geri	Peronis, Fay
Carson, Michelle	Fyssakis, Kathy	Kyprianou, Gilbert and Alexis	Petersen, Todd and Diane
Carter, Maria	Gear, Darius and Bessie †	Lakis, Antoinette	Petro, Aleko and Georgia
Castillo, Matthew	George, Pete and Georgia	Latelle, Penny	Philippou, Demetrios and Luanne
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Chachas, James	Gialketsis, Babe and Terry	Lekar, Michael and Effie	Polimerou, Angeline
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Chandrinou, Peter	Gialketsis, Bill and Shelli	Leone, Stephen	Pouridis, Kouli and Para
Chandrinou, Ricki	Gialketsis, Julie	Leonis, Tishe	Prather, Moses
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Daskolos, George and Voula	Harris, Melty and Angeline	Martinaitis, Louis and Audra	Scott, Ann
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			Skandros, Georgia

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 Sparkuhl, Alex and Antoinette
 Stamis, George and Effie
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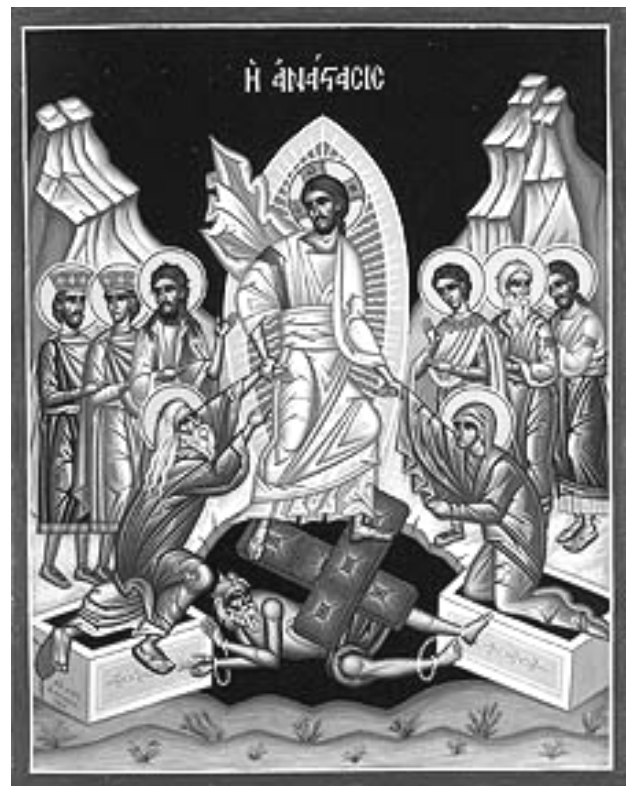
**37th Annual Greek Food Festival
 September 17 ~ 20**

Come one, come all . . . to the third general meeting of the 2009 Greek Food Festival. We will be providing an update on the latest status of the preparations for the Food Festival and will address any questions you may have.

If you are interested, we still have a few openings for key positions and are always in need of volunteers. Please contact me if you would be interested in heading up one of these key positions or would like to volunteer your time and talents. Additionally, if you are unable to volunteer your time and/or talents, please consider making a financial or material donation to support the Festival. For a list of what material items will be needed for the Festival, please feel free to contact either me or *Demetri Asim at (702) 210-4056*.

All previous chairmen, booth captains and anyone else interested in supporting our wonderful 37th Annual Greek Food Festival are encouraged to join us on *Tuesday, April 28* at 6:30 pm in Kokkos Hall to review plans.

**John G. Karas (702) 219-5057
 2009 Food Festival Chairman**



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

Daughters of Penelope

The Daughters of Penelope would like to thank the community of St. John for supporting our Cheesefare Luncheon on Sunday, March 1. The majority of the proceeds were donated to our Church to pay down the principle on our mortgage, and a separate amount was earmarked to help the priest's fund for the needy. **Julie Benincasa**

"We praise Your saving Passion, O Christ, and glorify Your Resurrection."

APRIL 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>
5 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:00 pm Lenten Vespers at St. Paul Church	6 6:30 pm Great Compline	7	8 5:00 pm Adult Choir 6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy 8:00 pm Adult Study: The Gospel of John	9	10	11 Sat. of Lazarus 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy Palm Tying and Lenten Breakfast 6:00 pm Great Vespers
12 PALM SUNDAY 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Hierarchical Liturgy w/ Met Gerasimos Luncheon follows Liturgy 7:00 pm 1st Bridegroom	13 Holy Monday 5:30 pm Adult Choir 7:00 pm 2nd Bridegroom	14 Holy Tuesday 5:30 pm Adult Choir 7:00 pm 3rd Bridegroom	15 Holy Wednesday 9:00 am Presanctified Liturgy 5:30 pm Adult Choir 7:00 pm Holy Unction	16 Holy Thursday 9:00 am Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil 7:00 pm Holy Passion of our Lord/12 Gospels	17 Holy Friday 10:00 am Royal Hours 3:00 pm Removal of Christ from the Cross Children's Procession 7:00 pm Lamentations	18 Holy Saturday 9:00 am Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil 11:00 pm Resurrection Vigil
19 HOLY PASCHA 12:00 am Resurrection Orthros and Divine Liturgy 12:00 pm Agape Vespers and Picnic Christ is Risen!	20 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">Bright Week: No Fasting All Week</div>	21 6:30 pm Parish Council Meeting 7:00 pm Philoptochos General Meeting	22 5:00 pm Orthros 6:00 pm Divine Liturgy (Feast of St. George) 7:00 pm Adult Study	23 St George (Liturgy on 2/22)	24 Theotokos, the Life-Giving Spring 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:00 pm OCLV Potluck at Costa Frangakis' Home	25
26 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 12:15 pm HOPE & JOY in Kokkos Hall	27	28 6:30 pm Food Festival Planning Meeting	29 7:00 pm Adult Study: The Gospel of John	30		

The Desert Messenger

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

The Way of the Lord

*Today a strange and fearsome mystery is witnessed.
The infinite One is held; the One Who loosed the curse of Adam is bound;
the One Who tries the inward heart of men is Himself tried;
He Who sealed the deeps is sealed in prison;
the One before Whom the powers of heaven stand quaking stands before Pilate;
the Creator is struck by the hand of the creature;
the One Who judges the living and the dead is judged for the Cross;
the One Who despoiled Hades is shut up in a tomb.
Lord of forbearance, enduring all out of love, and saving all from the curse, glory to You.*

- Hymn of Holy Friday Afternoon Vespers

To fill all things with Your glory, You dwelt in the bowels of the earth.

*For my kinship with Adam was no secret to You;
and being buried, loving Lord, You recreated me out of corruption.*

- Canon of Holy Friday Evening Lamentations Service