

# The Desert



# Messenger

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

Volume 7, Issue 11 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

December 2009

**From  
Father  
John**

*"And she gave birth to her first-born son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn." (Luke 2:7)*

Beloved in Christ:

The Christmas season is upon us again and the Orthodox Church, through the hymns, iconography and Scriptural readings for this holy feast, offers us the opportunity to reflect on the great mystery of our Lord's Nativity in the flesh. Especially in our post-modern times, when Christmas has become secularized and the majority of Orthodox Christians are very familiar with popular carols but admittedly unfamiliar with our ancient, theological and beautiful hymns for the feast, it is imperative that we make an effort to acquaint ourselves with the Word of God and do so with the mind of the Church.

Although at first glance it might seem matter-of-fact, the above quoted beloved passage from the Gospel of St. Luke recounts for us the life-changing event of the Nativity of Jesus Christ. If taken at face value, we might conjure up a sweet image of the Birth of baby Jesus much like that described in the Lutheran cradle hymn, "Away in a Manger" (though credited to Martin Luther, he never penned it). Furthermore, without instruction in the Church, we could erroneously conclude that Mary gave birth to more children as we read the words in St. Luke's account that Jesus was *"her first-born son."*

We must read this passage on the Nativity with reference to the first chapter of Luke's Gospel, which is in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy, to clearly embrace the truth that Mary was a Virgin before and during the Birth of Christ – that the Holy Spirit overshadowed her and she conceived (*Luke 1:35*). Moreover, Mary remained a Virgin even after giving birth, for from the Cross Jesus entrusted her to His beloved disciple, John (*John 19:26-27*), which would have been unnecessary if she had other children. Our Orthodox iconography of the *Theotokos* (*God-bearer*) supports this theological truth, portraying her with three cross-like stars on her forehead and shoulders to emphasize that she remained a Virgin before, during and after the Birth of Christ. For the ancient Jews, the *"first-born son"* was the primary heir and recipient of patriarchal blessings (refer to the classic account of Jacob and Esau in *Genesis 27*) – however, Jesus Christ, as *the only-begotten Son of God*, not only received all things from His Father, but became Man that everyone who believes in Him might, by grace, be heirs of His Kingdom.

Every parent can relate to the image of the Virgin wrapping her son in swaddling cloths – an action allowing a smooth transition for the newborn infant from the nurturing security of the placenta to the warm comfort of material. However, so much more is revealed here about the mystery of the Incarnation: The pre-eternal Son of God is clothed fully in our humanity out of love for us; as St. Paul says, *"For our sake, He made Him to be sin Who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God."* (*2 Corinthians 5:21*) The fact that Jesus is laid in a manger, which is literally a feeding trough for animals, is yet another illustration of the extreme humility of our Savior. In the Orthodox Nativity Icon the cave appears as a tomb and the manger looks like a coffin, so that the faithful can understand that Christ comes in the flesh to die on the Cross, and lay in the Tomb, in order to Resurrect from the dead for our sake!

Even though there was no room for Him at the inn, the Lord's Nativity took place in the humble cave that would receive Him! And He came to save all mankind, knowing that He would face rejection by some, even among the chosen ones; but for those, like the welcoming cave, that genuinely invite Him and believe in His Name, *"He gave power to become children of God."* (*John 1:12*) May we, His beloved children by grace, allow Christ to be born anew in our hearts and our lives this holy season and always!

With love in the Incarnate Lord,

*Father John*

**WORSHIP SCHEDULE**

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

Sunday, December 6/*10th Sunday of Luke/*  
*St. Nicholas of Myra, the Wonderworker*

Orthros: Tone One  
 Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:1-12  
 Epistle: Hebrews 13:17-21  
 Gospel: Luke 13:10-17

Saturday, December 12/*St. Spyridon of*  
*Trimythous, the Wonderworker*

*8:00 am Orthros*  
*9:00 am Divine Liturgy*  
 Epistle: Ephesians 5:8-19  
 Gospel: John 10:9-16

Sunday, December 13/*11th Sunday of Luke/*  
*Ss. Efsttrios, Afxentios, Evgenios & Loukia*

Orthros: Tone Two  
 Resurrection Gospel: Luke 24:13-35  
 Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11  
 Gospel: Luke 14:16-24; Matthew 22:14

Sunday, December 20/*Sunday before the Nativity*

Orthros: Tone Three  
 Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:36-53  
 Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10, 32-40  
 Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25

Thursday, December 24/*Eve of the Nativity of Jesus*  
*Christ*

*6:00 pm Vespereal Liturgy of St. Basil*  
 Epistle: Hebrews 1:1-12  
 Gospel: Luke 2:1-20

Friday, December 25/*The Nativity of Jesus Christ*  
*9:00 am Orthros*

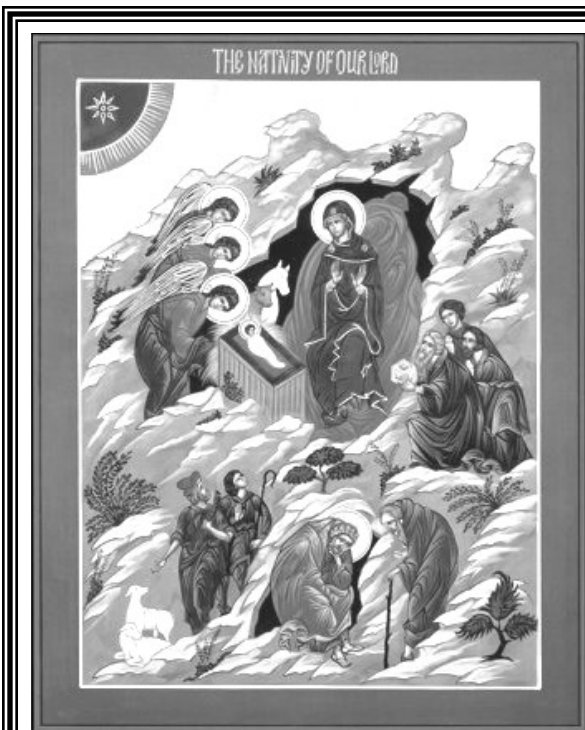
Festal Gospel (Orthros): Matthew 1:18-25  
*10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*  
 Epistle: Galatians 4:4-7  
 Gospel: Matthew 2:1-20

Sunday, December 27/*Sunday after the Nativity/*  
*St. Stephen the First Martyr*

Orthros: Tone Four  
 Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:1-10  
 Epistle: Acts 6:8-15; 7:5, 47-60  
 Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23

Friday, January 1, 2010/*Circumcision of Our Lord/*  
*St. Basil the Great*

*9:00 am Orthros*  
*10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil*  
 Epistle: Colossians 2:8-12  
 Gospel: Luke 2:20-21, 40-52



**Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Liturgies**

Thursday, December 24

*Eve of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ*

*6:00 pm Vespereal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great*  
*(Please fast from 1:00 pm)*

Friday, December 25

*Nativity of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ*

*9:00 am Orthros*

*10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*

*As these are distinct Liturgies, you may prepare to*  
*receive Holy Communion at both.*

*Please be sure to attend at least one and hopefully both*  
*Liturgies with your family and loved ones.*

**President's  
Column**

I hope that everyone enjoyed their Thanksgiving with their loved ones; now looking to December, I would like to mention a few things. First, please remember to vote for six new members for your Parish Council for the 2010 – 2011 term. Elections will be held on *Sunday, December 6*. All Stewards in good standing are encouraged to vote.

Secondly, as we approach the end of the year I would like to stress the importance of fulfilling your Stewardship pledge. If you are able, please consider increasing your pledge.

Lastly, as this is the Christmas season, I want to wish you and your family a very blessed holiday. Please be sure to join us for the Nativity services on *Thursday, December 24 and Friday, December 25*. May God bless you and yours.

Peter Kypreos, Parish Council President

***Financial Status for Month of October 2009***

<u>Bank Accounts</u>	<u>Beginning Balance</u>		<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Internal Bank Transfers</u>		<u>Balances</u> <u>as of 10.31.09</u>
	<u>as of 9.30.09</u>	<u>Income</u>		<u>Transfers In</u>	<u>Transfers Out</u>	
General Operating	\$130.05	\$64,217.07	\$141,076.16			\$-76,728.14
*On November 2, Parish Council made a deposit of \$84,955.78 (\$76,375 came from Festival account)						
Building/Maintenance	\$39,199.25	\$6.14	\$3,099.00			\$36,106.39
Community/Education Ctr	\$14,617.27	\$11,557.25	\$18,439.56			\$7,734.96
Construction (Loan Paymts)	\$133.21	\$61,800.00	\$6,022.53	\$61,500.00		\$55,910.68
Food Festival	\$189,826.00	\$17,716.68	\$64,495.84		\$61,5000*	\$143,046.84
*Transferred \$61,500 from Festival acct. to Construction acct. to cover mortgage payments for the next 12 months						
Icon Money Market	\$31,349.15	\$5,644.53	\$5,372.32			\$31,621.36
Library Checking	\$26,060.65	\$4.29	\$105.15			\$25,959.79
Construction Loan	\$690,740.83					\$689,019.72
Revolving Line of Credit	\$77,122.98					\$77,122.98

***SUNDAY SCHEDULE***

**December 6**

**Ushers:** George Nikols, Peter Papas, John Karas, Angela Coutris, Marina Adamy and Pete Kypreos

**Memorial:** Nikolaos Avlonitis, Zaira Avlonitis

**Fellowship:** Orthodox Family Fellowship

***Parish Council Elections follows Divine Liturgy***

**December 13**

**Ushers:** Marina Adamy, Spiros Filios, William Carrico, Sam Koutsulis, George Kakavulias and George Nikols

**Memorial:** Ricki Chandrinos (40 days); The Semendrians

**Fellowship:** Folk Dance Group

**December 20**

**Ushers:** John Karas, Angela Coutris, Pete Kypreos, George Bochanis, Gary Waters and Peter Papas

**Fellowship:** Georgia Kourlos, for the Name Days of Christos and Eugenia

***Church School Christmas Pageant follows Divine Liturgy***

**December 27**

**Ushers:** George Bochanis, George Kakavulias, John Karas, Pete Kypreos, Gary Waters and Spiros Filios

**Fellowship:** Eleni Kakavulias and Family - Vasilopites on sale to benefit Building Fund

**ROAD CLOSURE ~ SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6:** Due to the Las Vegas Marathon, Hacienda Avenue will be closed 5:30 am-1:30 pm. On that date, please approach from the south on Russell Road, following the "Church Access" signs and arrows. Thanks for your patience!

**Philoptochos  
News**

Let me begin by saying a very big "Thank You" to all the ladies who donated their time and services in November. Our project to prepare the decorations for our Christmas pastry tins went smoothly and quickly. The same can be said for "In the Kitchen with Kiki" and our Autumn Bake Sale. The time you gave is sincerely appreciated.

Now on to December: Coming up, we have our pastry production. This is a large project that is made much lighter with many hands. Pastry production takes place on *Friday, December 4* at 9:00 am in Kokkos Hall. This project lasts all day, so if you can't make it in the morning, your help will be welcomed in the afternoon. We all have a lot of fun on this day so please feel free to bring a friend and join us.

Coming up after that is our annual Christmas Party on *Tuesday, December 8* at 6:00 pm! You should have received an invitation in the mail. This year our party will be held at Buca Di Beppo on Flamingo and Paradise. Please RSVP by December 1.

For our next December project, we will be stuffing the Community Christmas Cards on *Thursday, December 10*. Please see Bessie Stavropoulos for exact details.

On *Sunday, January 3*, we will have in Church the annual Cutting of the Community Vasilopita, which is lovingly baked each year by Elizabeth Goddard. For every piece received on behalf of a ministry or person, a donation is made to benefit St. Basil's Academy. Following services, Philoptochos will sponsor the Fellowship and serve the Vasilopites baked by our members. We need many people to bake (including men), and ask that you see Marcie Karas with your offer to assist.

One last note, there will be *no General Meeting in January*. We've had a change in the calendar and our next General Meeting will be on *Tuesday, February 9*. Wishing you all a safe and happy holiday season!

April Karalis and the Philoptochos Board

Please mark your calendars!

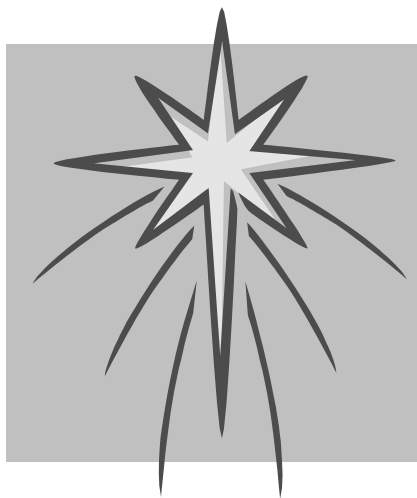
Friday, December 4, starting at 9:00 am . . .

Pastry packing in Kokkos Hall. Your hands are needed!

*The Entire Parish  
is Encouraged to Enjoy  
Our Annual Church School*

**Christmas Pageant  
Sunday, December 20  
After Liturgy,  
in Panos Hall**

*Don't forget your cameras  
and recorders!*



**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

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frjohn@vegaskgreekorthodox.com  
Website: vegaskgreekorthodox.com

Parish Council: Peter Kypreos

Philoptochos: April Karalis

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

Forerunners:  
Ruth Plentzas

Greek Folk Dance:  
Tina Liaos, Chair  
Bessie Stavropoulos, Director

Orthodox Bookstore:  
Costa Frangakis

Greek Language Classes:  
Thymios Carabas

The Ladies Philoptochos Society of  
St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church  
Proudly presents the  
27th Annual Greek Christmas Pastry Tin Sale

Two dozen delicious assorted Greek pastries lovingly baked and packaged  
by the Ladies of St. John  
in a beautifully decorated keepsake tin.  
Wonderful for hostess gifts, holiday parties or office gifts.  
Only \$27.00

Need something smaller?  
Back by popular demand the mini box of Greek treats.  
Ten pieces of pastry for \$12.00

Quantities are limited and sold by pre-order only.  
Sale starts October 25 and ends November 29, 2009.  
Send your check in today to guarantee your order.  
To: The Ladies Philoptochos Society  
5300 South El Camino Rd.  
Las Vegas, NV 89118

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Day Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell or Evening Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Tins: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$27.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Number of Mini boxes: \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$12.00 = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Free delivery of orders of \$400 or more, \$15 for all others = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Order Total = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Your order will be ready for pick-up at St. John Church  
on Sunday, December 6, following Divine Liturgy

Thank you for your order!

**All Parish Members  
are Cordially Invited to**  
**St. John the Baptist  
Name Day  
Celebration**  
**Saturday, January 9  
2010**  
**In Panos Hall**  
**6:00 pm Cocktails**  
**7:00 pm Dinner**

**Parish Council Elections -**

**Vote on December 6**

Our annual Parish Council Elections for the 2010 - 11 term will be held on *Sunday, December 6*, immediately following Divine Liturgy until 2:00 pm. All Stewards in good standing with our parish for 2009 are encouraged to come and vote for *six* new members for the Parish Council.

The candidates are:

- Marina Adamy
- Darrick Cole
- Sharon Exharos
- Byron Georgiou
- George Kakavulias
- Sam Koutsulis
- Demetri Phillipou
- Alex Sparkuhl

*Christ is Born ~ Glorify Him!*



**Notes from the Loft**

In honor of Church Musicians Sunday the Choir met at Mezzo Restaurant for fellowship on November 1. Honored guests were Father John and Presvytera Maria, Father Dean, Father Paul and Presvytera Ilean and Dean Cero.

Choir practice for Christmas Eve services will be on *Wednesday, December 9 and Wednesday, December 16* at 5:30 pm. If you wish to join the Choir, please be present on those dates.

Faye Brown, Choir Director

***Our Community Registry***

***Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisoun!***

Sophia, daughter of Frank and Nancy Falcone on November 7, 2009.

Godparent: Evthalia Orlando.

Michael (Connor), son of Edward and Evangelia Clark on November 7, 2009.

Godparent: Gabriela Tevebaugh.

Sophie, daughter of Andrew and Stamatina Economon on November 7, 2009.

Godparent: Pauline Tsirigotis.

***Marriage: Na Zisetel***

David H. Tevebaugh and Gabriela Pechoska on November 6, 2009. Sponsor: Evangelia Papageorge.

***Fallen Asleep in the Lord: Eternal Memory***

Laura Ristick on October 25, 2009. Funeral on October 30.

Carol J. Pappas on October 22, 2009. Funeral on October 31.

Rosaline (Ricki) Chandrinos on November 8, 2009. Trisagion on November 15.

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

# Nativity Fast Retreat

***Friday, December 4 to Saturday, December 5, 2009***

*Sessions to be held at  
St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church,  
5400 Annie Oakley Drive, Las Vegas, Nevada*

**Father Harry Pappas, Retreat Speaker**

**“Ancient Wisdom for Modern Living”**  
***How the Old Testament Can Speak to Us Here and Now***



## Schedule

### Friday, December 4

6:00 PM Vespers  
7:00 PM Session 1  
8:00 PM Questions and Discussion  
8:30 PM Refreshments

### Saturday, December 5

8:00 AM 1st and 3rd Hours  
8:30 AM Continental Breakfast  
9:00 AM Session 2  
10:00 AM Questions and Discussion  
10:30 AM Session 3  
11:30 AM Questions and Discussion  
12:00 PM Closing and Lunch

*Father Harry Pappas is Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology at St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological School and bases his teaching of homiletics and pastoral theology on his seminary training at Holy Cross, graduate work in biblical studies at Harvard and Yale, and more than twenty years of pastoral experience. This retreat is sponsored by all the Orthodox Churches in the Las Vegas area. For more information, contact your parish priest or call St. Paul the Apostle Orthodox Church at (702) 898-4800. Information will be posted at the St. Paul website at [www.lasvegasorthodox.com](http://www.lasvegasorthodox.com).*

***\$15 per person, includes meals***

# Youth Ministries

## Church School

Hi Everyone! Well here we are, approaching this wonderful time of the year! As we prepare for the celebration of the Birth of our Lord, let's remember people who are less fortunate than we are.

We are involving the Church School in our Youth Ministries Advent Collection for the Homeless and we are asking for the following items:

Pre-K: Toothpaste

Kindergarten: Toothbrushes

1<sup>st</sup> Grade: Baby wipes and individual packages of cookies

2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> Grade: Soap and individual packaged peanut butter/cheese crackers

4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup> Grade: Gloves and individual packaged trail mix

Middle School: Beanies and Socks

High School: Cases of Bottled Water and Sliced Bread (please bring this closer to our packaging date)

You can drop these items off to your child's teacher *by Friday, December 18.*

Our annual *Christmas Pageant* will be on *Sunday, December 20.* We will start out with a rehearsal on *Saturday, December 19* from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. This is required if your child has a part in the program.

We will follow the rehearsal with our Christmas Party at 1:00 pm. We will be having a pasta luncheon sponsored by the Church. Please let me know if you will be coming, since we will need to know how much food to prepare - and please bring a dessert to share. As always, this event will be a lot of fun. We ask that you have your child dress in their "Christmas Best" for the Pageant.

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

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

## Orthodox Family Fellowship

Orthodox Family Fellowship (OFF) will once again be collecting items to be given to the homeless. We will meet in Kokkos hall on *Saturday, December 19* at 9:00 am to put the gift bags together, and then drive to Salvation Army to hand them out to the homeless.

Please look to the Church School article above, which has listed the needed items. Most of all the items can be purchased from the Dollar Store, except the blankets. Last year we were able to hand out 270 gift bags, which also included a sack lunch. Our goal for this year is 300 gift bags. I know times are extremely difficult for us all, but Christ calls upon us to look deep into our hearts and help those less fortunate and this is a great opportunity to teach our children the importance of giving. Look for the brightly decorated trash can by the Church Office or call *Tami at (702) 491-2713.*

In Christ's Service, Michael and Tami Stefanatos

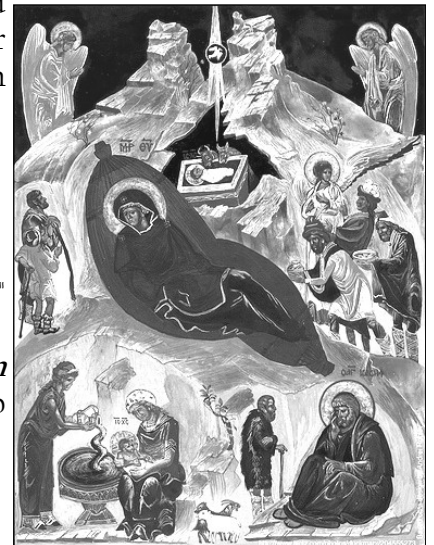
## HOPE and JOY

We had a great time playing games in Kokkos Hall on "Game Day." Now it's time to look forward to another wonderful Christmas season.

We will be getting together at our annual *Christmas Party on Saturday, December 19* at 1:00 pm in Panos Hall. Please bring a dessert to share. See you there!

Your sisters in Christ,

Sharon Katsaros and Jenn Orlando, HOPE and JOY Advisors



## GOYA

Hello Everyone! Christmas is fast approaching and we have a lot planned!

On *Wednesday, December 2* at 5:30 pm we will meet in Panos Hall to decorate the Christmas Tree (refreshments will be served)!

Please also join us *Saturday, December 19* for our annual Advent Project from 9:00 to 11:00 am, followed by the Pageant Rehearsal, and our Youth Ministry Christmas Party. On that date, for our homeless project we are asking Junior GOYA members to bring beanies and socks, and Senior GOYA teens to bring a case of water and bread. Please look to the Church School article on page 8 for more information.

May you all have a very Merry Christmas, and a safe and Happy New Year in Christ!

Effie Lekar (702) 768-5500, Eileen Koutsulis (702) 521-6516 (Senior GOYA Advisors)

Tammy Chomakos (702) 338-4671, Tami Stefanatos (702) 491-2713 (Junior GOYA Advisors)

## Youth Choir News

The Youth Choir will be chanting the Divine Liturgy on *Sunday, December 13*. Again, I ask that you be there *early* at 9:40 am in your usual spots. Last month you sounded very nice; keep up the great singing. Have a blessed Nativity and a great 2010.

Love in Christ, Presvytera Maria



## Greek Folk Dance

On behalf of the Greek Folk Dance Ministry, I want to thank everyone in the St. John community that supported the following events and fundraisers, especially in this tough economy: Our Horepse Dance Workshop and Glendi, as well as our Rummage Sale, See's Candy Sale and Pancake Breakfast in November.

**CHRISTMAS CAROLING:** This year, we will be caroling on *Saturday, December 12 and Friday, December 18*. If you are interested in having carolers come to your home on one of those nights, please complete the form on page 10 of *The Desert Messenger* and return it to the Church Office. The kids have a great time singing and the people whose homes we visit also enjoy it.

**LOUKOUMADES SALE:** We'll be selling hot, freshly-made Loukoumades on *Sunday, December 13* after Liturgy.

**ADULT GREEK DANCE CLASS:** We are offering another Adult Greek Dance Class taught by Carla Cole on *Tuesday, December 15*, 6:30 - 7:30 pm in Kokkos Hall.

**DANCE PRACTICE:** We are getting closer to FDF and it is very important that dancers attend all practices. When a dancer is absent and new material is introduced in a session, this often results in holding up the rest of the group at the subsequent practice when the director takes the time to work with an individual to catch up.

**SAVE THE DATE . . .** for the Annual Dance Luncheon on Sunday, January 10, 2010! Our parish members enjoy a delicious lunch, while our folk dancers perform their FDF suites. Tickets will go on sale in December.

**FOLK DANCE FESTIVAL:** If you haven't registered or booked your hotel for FDF yet, please visit the FDF website ([www.yourfdf.org](http://www.yourfdf.org)) to do so.

Tina Liaos and the Folk Dance Board

*"When they saw the star they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy;  
and going into the house they saw the child with Mary His mother,  
and they fell down and worshiped Him.*

*Then, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts,  
gold and frankincense and myrrh." ~ Matthew 2:10-11*



In the upcoming celebration of our Lord and Savior's Birth, we would like to wish you and your families a very blessed holiday season. The Hellenic Historical Society deeply appreciates and thanks all the parishioners in our community for their participation in our World Odyssey Exhibit and 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary pictorial display. It is important that we continue our efforts in preserving our Hellenic heritage and community history. We hope to bring many more new displays in the future and hope that we may continue to receive your support.

Χρονια Πολλα  
Καλα Χριστουγεννα και Ευτυχισμενος ο καινουργιος Χρονος 2010

God Bless,  
The Hellenic Historical Society

### *Forerunners - The Seniors of St. John the Baptist*

Our November donation to the Homeless Youth provided 30 gift cards for meals for those who have no home on Thanksgiving Day; several warm blankets were donated as well. As I have said in the past, we cannot fix everything, but we can help some. Thank you.

Forerunners enjoyed a great time at the Rio International Buffet and we continue to collect donations for a successful Shoebox Project for the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth. We will be delivering our donations on *Thursday, December 17*, so be sure to get them all in by then! *Everyone* is invited to participate in this wonderful charity. Thanks in advance for your kindness generosity to those in need.

Our next meeting will be on *Tuesday, December 15* - our Christmas party! We will have wonderful food, great entertainment, a raffle, and a gift exchange. Please bring a wrapped gift, valued at no more than \$10, and do not put your name on the gift!

We now have 61 paid members! What can we do as a group? The possibilities are endless. Bless each and every one of you! See you at the Christmas Party.

Yours in Christ, Ruth Plentzas

I would like to receive the *Greek Folk Dance Christmas Carolers* at my home on:

Check one:  Saturday, December 12  
 Friday, December 18  
 Either day



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_

*Please fill out and return this form to the Church Office by December 7. Thank You!*

## Orthodox Connection Las Vegas

Hello, Orthodox Connection Las Vegas! It's time for our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Christmas Party. Our group has been lying low, so to speak, with social activities so we hope you can join us for our get-together on **Saturday, December 19 at 7:00 pm** at the home of Adam Bieker. As in the past, our Christmas Party will be a "fast-friendly" potluck. Please RSVP to *Adam (702) 321-7611 or Angela (702) 497-2529* and we will give you directions.

Most importantly, as you may know, The Forerunners – Seniors of St. John the Baptist, are continuing their work on a service project for homeless youth. They are collecting personal items to be put in shoeboxes. We would like to ask for *your* participation as well. Your entrance to the Christmas Party should be items we can donate to this important project. Of course, monetary donations will also be accepted.

So mark your calendars for this OCLV get-together, bring items for the Shoebox Project, and prepared to have a great time.

With love and respect for our Lord Who brings us together by His grace,  
Angela Coutris [evangelia07@gmail.com](mailto:evangelia07@gmail.com)

## Orthodox Bookstore

Hello from the Bookstore.

We have Orthodox Christmas Cards available, so please come by and take a look.

This month we are featuring the book, *The Mountain of Silence, A Search for Orthodox Spirituality*. The book is essentially a series of conversations about the spiritual life between the author and Father Maximos, a monk on Mount Athos. (Father Maximos was actually Father Athanasios, who is now Metropolitan Athanasios of Limasol, Cyprus).

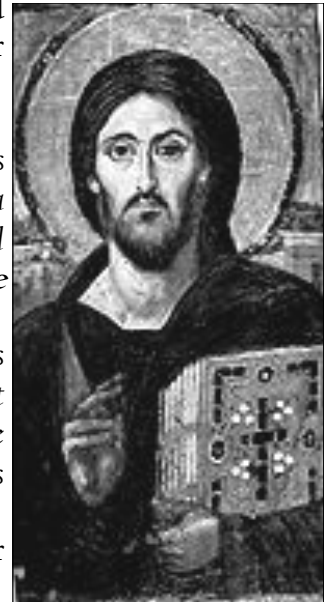
Following is an excerpt from *Chapter 4 - Knowledge of God*:

*"Therefore, those who yearn to see God cannot possibly do so through other means such as by reading Plato and Aristotle or by doing science. Great as their philosophy might be, it is not a way to God. It is only the cleanliness and purity of the heart that can lead to the contemplation and vision of God. This is the meaning,"* Father Maximos argued, *"of Christ's Beatitude, 'Blessed be the pure at heart for they shall see God.' (Matthew 5:8)*

*"Do you understand what that means? Those who wish to investigate whether God exists must employ the appropriate methodology, which is none other than the purification of the heart from egotistical passions and impurities. If people manage to cleanse their hearts and still fail to see God, then they are justified by concluding that indeed God is a lie, that He does not exist, that He is just a grand illusion."*

Please take the time to read our Orthodox books. They offer healing to our souls just by reading them!

Until next month, God willing - ICXC NIKA, Costa Frangakis, Director



*"And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth . . ." ~ John 1:14*



## Adult Study: 'Beginning to Pray'

*On Wednesdays - 7:00-8:30 pm - in Kokkos Hall*

*Fr. John Hondros, Instructor - Open to all*

Stewardship Report: “Strengthened by Christ and His Church”

<u>2009 Stewardship Status (November 15, 2009):</u>		Stewardship Target – 2009	\$411,000
Stewardship Families Pledged	496	Stewardship Gifts Pledged	\$335,016
Stewardship Gifts Received	\$272,707	Current Stewardship Deficit	\$75,984
Average Stewardship Pledge	\$675.44	Percentage of Goal Achieved	81.59%

<u>Pledge Range</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>	<u>\$ &amp; % of Gifts Pledged</u>
\$1-\$999	387	\$ 130,386 - 38.92%
\$1000-\$2499	87	\$ 112,860 - 33.69%
\$2500-\$4,999	16	\$ 52,950 - 15.81%
\$5,000-\$9,999	5	\$ 28,820 - 8.60%
\$10,000-\$14,999	1	\$ 10,000 - 2.98%

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Stewards Pledged	475	496	+15
Gifts Pledged	\$369,546	\$335,016	-\$34,530
Gifts Received	\$272,305	\$272,707	+\$402*
Average Pledge	\$777.99	\$675.44	-\$102.55

***\*PLEASE NOTE: The turn-around in gifts received is tremendous. We went from \$8,320 down to up \$402. This shows great commitment on the part of our parishioners and the fact that the Lord provides!***

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

***“Come and See!”***

Advent and Stewardship share much in common. Both are an invitation to “*come and see*” God and to say “*yes*” to Him. The Theotokos said “*yes*” to God and carried the Incarnate Christ in her for nine months. As stewards, we like the Theotokos are asked to say “*yes*” to God and carry Him within ourselves.

We like the shepherds and the three wise men are called to “*come and see*” God. The shepherds, who guarded the sheep that were sacrificed in the temple, were called to “*come and see*” the Lamb of God at His Birth. During this Advent Season we are called to come and look upon the Lord through worship and contemplation, and remember the sacrifice of love that He freely gave for each of us. We are called to imitate that love by joyfully giving a portion of ourselves for Him and for each other.

The three wise men were called to see “*the newborn King*.” In the giving of their gifts they recognized the King of kings and the Incarnate Son of God: Gold, a gift fit for a King . . . frankincense, burnt to worship God . . . and myrrh, which foreshadowed Christ’s voluntary Death for each of us. We too must offer Him our precious golden gifts of time, treasures and talents.

We are also called to “*come and see the newborn King*.” The shepherds and the wise men had to take the risk to “*come and see*.” They responded and made their offerings out of love, awe, and adoration. They went back to their daily lives changed and thankful.

During this season let us say “*yes*” to God and “*come and see*” Him - just like the Theotokos, the shepherds, and the three wise men. Through our stewardship, let us be willing to have an encounter with God as we celebrate His Nativity in the flesh.

Anthony Willey, 2010 Stewardship Committee Member

*“Come, O faithful, inspired by God let us arise and behold the divine condescension from on high that is made manifest to us in Bethlehem. Cleansing our minds, let us offer through our lives virtues instead of myrrh, preparing with faith our entry into the feast of the Nativity, storing up treasures in our souls . . .” ~ Hymn, Christmas Eve Royal Hours*

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

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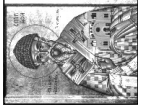
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 Zarkos, Nick and Dina  
 Zarras, Nick and Chery  
 Zimmerman, Paul and Angela  
 Zois, Christos  
 Zoitopoulos, Dimitrios and Pam  
 Zouboulis, James and Tina

"The heavens are  
 telling  
 the glory of God;  
 and the firmament  
 proclaims  
 His handiwork.  
 Day to day  
 pours forth speech,  
 and night to night  
 declares knowledge."  
 ~ Psalm 19:1



# DECEMBER 2009 - IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD



*Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday*

<p><b>6</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy <b>Parish Council Elections</b> 12:15 pm FDF Choir 12:30 pm Liondania 1:15 pm Primary/Hrisi 2:00 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p><b>1</b></p>	<p><b>2</b> 4:30 pm Youth Greek 5:30 pm GOYA Tree Decoration (No Adult Study)</p>	<p><b>3</b> 6:00 pm Adult Greek</p>	<p><b>4</b> 9:00 am Pastry Tin <b>Packing in Kokkos</b> 5:00 pm Primary Group/Hrisi Thisavri 6:00 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p><b>5</b></p>
<p><b>7</b></p>	<p><b>8</b> 4:30 pm FDF Choir 5:30 pm Liondania 6:15 pm Primary/Hrisi 6:00 pm Philop. Christmas Party @ Bucca Di Beppo 7:00 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p><b>9</b> 4:30 pm Youth Greek 5:30 pm Adult Choir Practice <b>7:00 pm Adult Study: Beginning to Pray</b></p>	<p><b>10</b> 6:00 pm Adult Greek</p>	<p><b>11</b> 5:00 pm Primary Group/Hrisi Thisavri 6:00 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p><b>12</b> <b>St. Spyridon</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy  Dancers Caroling</p>
<p><b>13</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy <i>Youth Choir Charis</i> 12:15 pm FDF Choir 12:30 pm Liondania 1:15 pm Primary/Hrisi 2:00 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p><b>14</b></p>	<p><b>15</b> 11:00 am <i>Forerunners Christmas Party</i> 4:30 pm FDF Choir 5:30 pm Liondania <b>6:00 pm Parish Council</b> 6:15 pm Primary/Hrisi 7:00 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p><b>16</b> 4:30 pm Youth Greek 5:30 pm Adult Choir Practice <b>7:00 pm Adult Study: Beginning to Pray</b></p>	<p><b>17</b> 6:00 pm Adult Greek</p>	<p><b>18</b>  Dancers Caroling</p>
<p><b>19</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy <b>Christmas Pageant</b> 12:15 pm FDF Choir 12:30 pm Liondania 1:15 pm Primary/Hrisi 2:00 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p><b>20</b></p>	<p><b>21</b></p>	<p><b>22</b> 4:30 pm FDF Choir 5:30 pm Liondania 6:15 pm Primary/Hrisi 7:00 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p><b>23</b> 4:30 pm Youth Greek <b>7:00 pm Adult Study: Beginning to Pray</b></p>	<p><b>24</b> <b>Eve of the Nativity of Christ</b> <b>6:00 pm Vespers</b> <b>Liturgy of St. Basil</b></p>
<p><b>25</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy <b>Christmas Pageant</b> 12:15 pm FDF Choir 12:30 pm Liondania 1:15 pm Primary/Hrisi 2:00 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p><b>26</b></p>	<p><b>27</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 12:15 pm FDF Choir 12:30 pm Liondania 1:15 pm Primary/Hrisi 2:00 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p><b>28</b></p>	<p><b>29</b> 4:30 pm FDF Choir 5:30 pm Liondania 6:15 pm Primary/Hrisi 7:00 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p><b>30</b> (No Adult Study)</p>
<p><b>31</b></p>	<p><b>31</b> 6:00 pm Adult Greek</p>	<p><b>31</b> 6:00 pm Adult Greek</p>	<p><b>31</b> 6:00 pm Adult Greek</p>	<p><b>31</b> 6:00 pm Adult Greek</p>	<p><b>January 1</b> Our Lord's Circumcision / St. Basil the Great 9:00 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil</p>

**Advent Retreat @ St Paul**

**Fr. John at Pan-Orthodox Clergy Retreat @ St Nicholas Ranch**

# *The Desert Messenger*

*St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church  
5300 South El Camino Road  
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THE DESERT MESSENGER

## *The Way of the Lord*

*“Rod of the root of Jesse,  
and a flower that blossomed from his stem, O Christ  
You have sprung from the Virgin.  
From the mountain overshadowed by the forest  
You have come, made flesh from her who knew no man,  
O God Who are not formed from matter.  
Glory to Your power, O Lord.”  
~ Ode 4, Katavasia of the Nativity of Christ*



*Holy Forefathers of Christ*

***Καλά Χριστούγεννα! A Joyous Christmas!***