

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 8, Issue 1 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

January 2010

**From
Father
John**

“For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men.” (Titus 2:11)

Beloved in Christ:

A happy and blessed New Year to all of you and your loved ones! In the Orthodox Christian Church we continue celebrating the holiday season well into the New Year, for from the early days of Christianity the Birth of Jesus Christ in the flesh, His circumcision according to the Jewish Law, His presentation to the Temple forty days after His Birth and His Baptism by John in the Jordan River were understood as a *Theophany*, or “shining forth” of God to the world.

Each of these revelatory events were in time separated into various feasts, and more specifically, Holy Theophany as the commemoration of Christ’s Baptism was seen as the fulfillment of His Nativity – just as Pentecost completes the Paschal season. The characteristic feature of Theophany, which literally means the shining forth, or manifestation of God (and indeed, God as Trinity), is the *Great Blessing of the Water* which follows the Divine Liturgy both on the Eve of Theophany on January 5 and Holy Theophany on January 6. The prayers of this service clearly draw the connection between the Nativity of Christ and His Baptism: *“For in the previous feast we saw You an infant; in this present one we see You complete, perfect, manifested from the perfect God. . . . Today the waters of the Jordan are turned into healing by the presence of the Lord.”* As the Son of God becomes Man, so that all humans might become the children of God, Christ also humbles Himself to be Baptized so that all who are Baptized into Him may have their sins washed away and enter Paradise – and this truth is proclaimed in the readings for the feast, as well as in the prayer of St. Sophronios for the Blessing of the Water: *“Today the Master hastens toward Baptism so as to raise mankind to the heights.”*

Theophany, which is also called the “Feast of Lights,” has many parallels to the Holy Mystery of Baptism and therefore serves to remind the faithful of the relationship between Christ’s Baptism and ours. Baptism from the earliest times has also been called “Holy Illumination,” and at every Orthodox Baptism service the priest offers these petitions to the Lord: *“For him who now comes to Holy Illumination, and for his salvation . . . that he may prove to be a child of light, an inheritor of eternal blessings.”* According to Orthodox theology, which is supported by Holy Scriptures, salvation is not guaranteed with Baptism, but rather, this Mystery marks the beginning of a new life in Christ, through which the illumined one continuously receives grace upon grace, in order to share eternal communion with God in His Kingdom. And it is in the Church, the mystical Body of Christ, where we renew that Baptismal grace – through participating in the annual commemorations of our Lord’s saving acts (such as His Baptism in the Jordan), fasting, continuous repentance, prayer, the constant reading and hearing of the Word of God, frequently receiving the Holy Mysteries, coming together often to worship the Trinitarian God, and through being *“careful to apply (ourselves) to good deeds.” (Titus 3:8)*

I encourage you to please attend the divine services during the first week of the New Year, and especially to join us prayerfully for the Great Blessing of the Water, so that Christ will again sanctify us and all creation by His Presence and that we might receive the indwelling grace of the Life-giving Spirit as a renewal of our Baptism. I hope you will invite me, as your father in Christ, to sanctify your home, your family and – especially in this economic recession – your place of business. May we all be well on our way to a genuine Year of the Lord!

Love in Christ,

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

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

Friday, January 1/ *The 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

Sunday, January 3/ *Sunday before Theophany/
Prophet Malachi and Martyr Gordios*
Orthros: Tone Five (First Plagal)
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:11-18
Epistle: 2 Timothy 4:5-8
Gospel: Mark 1:1-8
*Blessing and Cutting of Community Vasilopita
Parish Council Oath of Office*

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

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

6:00 pm *Great Vespers of St. John the Baptist*

Thursday, January 7/ *Synaxis of St. John the
Baptist - Our Parish Feast Day*
8:00 am Orthros
9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Acts 19:1-8
Gospel: John 1:29-34
Artoclasia (Blessing of the Five Loaves) follows

"Behold, the Lamb of God!" (John 1:29)

Sunday, January 10/ *Sunday after Theophany/
St. Gregory of Nyssa and St. Dometianos*
Orthros: Tone Six (Second Plagal)
Resurrection Gospel: John 20:19-31
Epistle: Ephesians 4:7-13
Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17

Sunday, January 17/ *15th Sunday of Luke/Zaccheos/
St. Anthony the Great*
Orthros: Tone Seven (Grave)
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 21:1-14
Epistle: Hebrews 13:17-21
Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

Sunday, January 24/ *16th Sunday of Luke/The
Publican and the Pharisee/St. Xenia the Deaconess*
Orthros: Tone Eight (Fourth Plagal)
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 21:14-25
Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15
Gospel: Luke 18:10-14

Triodion Begins: *No Fasting this Week*

Monday, January 25/ *St. Gregory the Theologian*
8:00 am Orthros
9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Hebrews 7:26-8:2
Gospel: John 10:9-16

Saturday, 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

Sunday, January 31/ *17th Sunday of Luke/The
Prodigal Son/Holy Unmercenaries Kyros and John
St. Stephen the First Martyr*
Orthros: Tone One
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Matthew 28:16-20
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20
Gospel: Luke 15:11-32

Fast on Wednesday and Friday this Week



Adult Study: 'Beginning to Pray'

*On Wednesdays - 7:00-8:30 pm - in Kokkos Hall
Fr. John Hondros, Instructor - Open to all*

**President's
Column**

Xronia Polla! I hope everyone had a blessed Nativity season. Even though 2009 was a challenging year, we managed to get through it. I feel we did a lot to benefit our Church, including having some of our parish members cook for various ministry events to save our community a considerable amount of money. Think of other areas where we can keep down expenses, and offer your help.

I want to thank the outgoing Parish Council Members for their time and service to our community: John Karas, George Nikols and Peter Papas. I also want to congratulate our newly elected Parish Council Members: Marina Adamy, Darrick Cole, George Kakavulias, Sam Koutsulis, Demetrios Philippou and Alex Sparkuhl. We look forward to a new year of improving our Church and Community.

Finally, I want to remind everyone of our St. John Name Day Dinner on *Saturday, January 9*. Cocktails begin at 6:00 pm, followed by dinner at 7:00 pm. Adults \$35 and Children (2 - 10) \$15. Please purchase your tickets from any Parish Council Member or at the Church Office during the week. Hope to see you there! Peter Kypreos, Parish Council President

Financial Status for Month of November 2009

<u>Bank Accounts</u>	<u>Beginning Balance as of 10.31.09</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Internal Bank Transfers Transfers In</u>	<u>Transfers Out</u>	<u>Balances as of 11.30.09</u>
General Operating	\$(76,728.14)	\$123,877.88	\$45,419.69	\$76,375.00		\$1,730.05
Building/Maintenance	\$36,106.39	\$56.15	\$750.00			\$35,412.54
Community/Education Ctr	\$7,734.96	\$4,023.00	\$2,442.19			\$9,315.77
Construction (Loan Paymts)	\$55,910.68		\$5,571.05			\$50,339.63
Food Festival	\$143,046.84	\$4,183.00	\$77,725.00		\$76,375.00*	\$69,504.84
*Transferred \$76,375 from Festival account to General account to cover operating costs.						
Icon Money Market	\$31,621.36	\$575.45	\$537.00			\$31,659.81
Library Checking	\$25,959.79	\$4.42				\$25,964.21
Construction Loan	\$689,019.72					\$687,404.83
Revolving Line of Credit	\$77,122.98					\$77,122.98

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

January 3

Ushers: Entire Parish Council

Fellowship: Philoptochos - Community Vasilopita

January 10

Ushers: George Bochanis, Pete Kypreos, William Carrico, Alex Sparkuhl, George Kakavulias and Darrick Cole

Memorial: Georgiana Meleshes (1 year).

Fellowship: Folk Dance Group

January 17

Ushers: Angela Coutris, Alex Sparkuhl, Marina Adamy, Spiros Filios, Sam Koutsulis and Gary Waters

Fellowship: Forerunners, Seniors of St. John the Baptist

January 24

Ushers: Sam Koutsulis, Darrick Cole, Demetrios Philippou, George Bochanis, William Carrico and Marina Adamy

Fellowship: Demetria Kalfas Gordon, in memory of her sister, Sofia Kalfas

January 31

Ushers: George Kakavulias, Demetrios Philippou, Spiros Filios, Gary Waters, Angela Coutris and Pete Kypreos

Fellowship: Pan-Arcadians

**Philoptochos
News**

Xronia Polla! I hope you all had a very Merry Christmas!

Thank you to all the ladies who participated in our December activities and to all who purchased pastries. We would not be able to accomplish our goals without your help. Your efforts are truly appreciated.

On *Sunday, January 3*, there will be in Church the annual Cutting of the Vasilopita (St. Basil's Bread), which is lovingly baked each year by Elizabeth Goddard. Philoptochos will be hosting the Fellowship directly after, so please see Marcie Karas if you'd like to assist with baking the Vasilopites for this.

On *Thursday, January 7*, Philoptochos will be sponsoring the Fellowship after Liturgy honoring the Name Day of our Parish, St. John the Baptist. Please contact Diane Weisman if you'd like to participate.

On *Sunday, February 7*, we will have our Kids 'n' Cancer collection, and Chloe Nickolson is kindly coordinating this. Lastly, our Departed Members Memorial will also be on that same day. If you'd like more information please see Andrea Takas.

There will be no meetings in January, so please mark your calendars for our next General Meeting on *Tuesday, February 9*. Let's begin 2010 with the same love and enthusiasm we enjoyed in 2009!

April Karalis and the Philoptochos Board



Notes from the Loft

The Church Music Federation's Winter Business Meeting will be held in San Jose, California in conjunction with the Folk Dance and Choral Festival on *Friday, January 15 and Saturday, January 16, 2010*. If anyone is interested in attending as a delegate or representative of our Choir, please contact me for further information. Rooms at the Fairmont, San Jose will only be held for the Federation until January 4.

More than a Happy New Year with songs and good cheer, the St. John Choir wishes you peace for 2010 with health and joy all year.

Faye Brown, Choir Director

Our Community Registry

Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisoun!

Zaharoula (Olivia), daughter of Zachary and Petra Armijo on November 21, 2009.

Godparent: Keriake Britten.

Ioannis (Ryder), son of Yianna E. Likos on November 29, 2009.

Godparent: Aikaterini Lykou.

Zenia, daughter of Tony and Lorie Simos on December 5, 2009.

Godparent: Carlos Ocampo, Jr.

Fallen Asleep in the Lord: Eternal Memory

Konstantinos Kontogeorgis on December 1, 2009. Funeral on December 8.

**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

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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

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 & Appetizers

7:00 pm Traditional Lamb Dinner

\$35 Adults

\$15 Children (Gyro & Fries) ~ 10 years and under

Tickets available from Parish Council Members or the Church Office

Orthodox Bookstore

Xronia Polla from the Bookstore!

This month, please check out a book by Father Alexander Schmemmann entitled *For the Life of the World*. In this book, Father Schmemmann (who has since reposed) discusses our sacramental world view. In other words, since God created our universe and everything in it, including us, then everything we do is related to God indirectly or directly. This is a good read for anyone who is looking for a better understanding of our Orthodox Christian Faith.

Our Bookstore also has available the *2010 Daily Readings, Fasting, and Lives of the Saints Calendar*.

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

Orthodox Connection Las Vegas

Happy New Year!

In 2010 OCLV may be taking on some changes – however, only with the grace of God. Please join us as we begin our 4th year as a ministry at the home of Sophocles Frangakis on *Saturday, January 23* at 7:00pm. “Come and See” and be a part of the next chapter of this ministry with like-minded Orthodox Christians.

OCLV is a Pan-Orthodox ministry for individuals in their 20s, 30s and 40s. For more information contact Angela.

Yours in Christ,
Angela Coutris (702) 479-2529
or evangelia07@gmail.com.

REQUEST FOR FR. JOHN TO BLESS YOUR HOUSE OR BUSINESS

Name _____ Phone (____) _____

Address _____

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

Youth Ministries

Greek Folk Dance

The Greek Folk Dance and Choral Festival (FDF) is just days away and our kids are working hard and have been practicing for hours each week to perfect their competition performances. In addition, since our St. John the Baptist Youth Choir won the Sweepstakes award at FDF 2009, they have the honor of performing at Cultural Night, at which both Metropolitan Gerasimos and Archbishop Demetrios will be in attendance.

Dance Luncheon – Sunday, January 10, 2010 is the date of our Annual Luncheon. You're in for a real treat when you see our dancers perform the dance suites they have learned and will be performing at FDF. Tickets are \$10 per person and can be purchased on Sundays after Liturgy. This event sells out each year, so we recommend that you buy your tickets early.

Practice Dates and Times – All parents should have received an email from Jenn Orlando with the new, revised practice times as well as a calendar with all the upcoming practice dates. Please keep these handy, so you have your children at each practice and on time.

The Dance Board would like to thank the St. John community for all their support throughout year. Even in these tough economic times you are there to give your support event after event, fundraiser after fundraiser . . . and we really appreciate it.

We're always looking for new dancers, so look for registration information in *The Desert Messenger* sometime in the Spring or send an email to Jtlia@aol.com for more information.

Tina Liaos and the Folk Dance Board

Youth Choir News

Happy New Year! Let's thank God for our 24 members (yes, we are a big group) of the award-winning FDF Youth Choir, who have been diligently working on their upcoming Sweepstakes performance along with their competition performance. The amount of chants and folk songs learned in such a short span of time has been nothing short of amazing!



The Sweepstakes performance, titled "Chapters," will be presented during Cultural Night of the FDF in San Jose, CA. Metropolitan Gerasimos and Archbishop Demetrios, along with other dignitaries, will be in the audience.

The same choir will join other youth in chanting the responses to the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy on the Sunday of FDF. Our Youth Choir is honored to perform and chant at this event.

We will perform our show to the community during the evening of the St. John Name Day Dinner on **Saturday, January 9**. Please come to the dinner, support the parish and watch our show!

All the Youth Choir, including the members not in FDF choir, will be chanting the Divine Liturgy on **Sunday, January 10**. Again, *please* arrive at 9:40 am so we can start the Doxology as one big group!

We will open Youth Choir for new members at the end of January. I will be going around to the Church School Classes to announce and recruit new members. Thank you so much for your patience. New members: now is your opportunity to join our ranks! Looking forward to all new voices in the New Year!

With love always in Christ, Presvytera Maria Hondros

HOPE and JOY

Happy New Year! Since we will be busy starting off the year with the Folk Dance Festival, we will wait until February for our next event. Please mark your calendars for **Saturday, February 20** and look in next month's *Desert Messenger* for more details. We wish our dancers the best of luck at FDF!

Your Sisters in Christ, Sharon Katsaros and Jenn Orlando, HOPE and JOY Advisors

Church School

Hi Everyone! Happy New Year!

It was a wonderful Christmas season for Church School: Our party was so much fun and we really had a great turn-out for our pageant rehearsal. The pageant was beautiful and the children did a wonderful job reading and singing. I was so glad to see our children looking so beautiful in their festive outfits.

There are several people I need to thank for all of their hard work. Thank you to Tanja Nobert for making our program again – you always do a great job. To our sweet Saint Nicholas, who made a surprise appearance at the Christmas Party – you were the best! The children loved your presence, and it made the afternoon even more special. Thank you to Tami Stefanatos for taking care of our Outreach Project – you have an incredible heart! I also need to thank all of my dear friends that donated a centerpiece for our party – they were all so wonderful. Thank you to all of our teachers – your dedication to our program is amazing. Lastly, thank you to Father John and all of the parents for all of your support.

We will have Family Worship Sunday on *January 3 (Vasilopita) and 17 (FDF)*. I look forward to seeing everyone in 2010.

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

GOYA

Hi GOYAns! Happy New Year!

We hope everyone had a great Christmas. Thank you to all who helped pack up the great bags for the homeless. Our next event will be on *Sunday, January 31*: Following services and Church School, we will be having fun in the snow at Mt. Charleston. Caroline Lekar will send out a text with more information.

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)

From the Metropolis of San Francisco Youth Director

“Bless Them, O Lord” By Rev. Deacon Niko Bekris

“Everlasting God, those who were divided You brought into oneness, setting for them an unbreakable bond of love; You blessed Isaac and Rebecca and made them heirs to Your promise. Bless these Your servants, guiding them into every good work.”

About a month ago I had the rare pleasure of going to a movie with my wife and two other friends of ours. I’ll just come out and say it: The movie was “New Moon” (the sequel to the ultra-popular “Twilight” movie and book series, in case you’ve been living under a rock the last year). There, I said it. Even though I can also say that it was definitely not tailored toward my target audience, I am still amazed at how popular this movie is with female fans of all ages (not just high school, as it turns out), and how this series is capturing American teenagers imaginations. The biggest reaction from these teenagers, though, was at the end of the movie (******stop reading here if you don’t want to know what happens******) when Edward says to Bella, “Marry me, Bella.” Like any successful teenage romance movie, love is *the* central theme of the movie, and much to the delight of everyone in the theatre, the perfect “happy ending” of many movies is mentioned at the end of this movie – marriage.

People love weddings. We love seeing two friends or family members tie the knot. We love seeing two characters that we’re attached to in a book, movie, TV show, song, etc, get married when they fall in love with each other. In every culture, in every country, in every time period, few events are more joyful than a wedding. The same held true for Jesus’ time, when His first miracle was turning the water into wine at the wedding of Cana (*John 2*), which once again affirmed the holiness of marriage in God’s eyes. The same is true in our time and in our faith today. It is a celebration of life and love. Marriage, in its purest form, is two people committing their lives to one another, before God, and allowing God to sanctify them and guide them through life – joy, sorrow and everything in between – to the Kingdom of God. (Continued on Page 8)

Forerunners - The Seniors of St. John the Baptist

The Forerunners enjoyed their annual Christmas Party in Panos Hall, with delicious food, raffle prizes, Christmas music, a gift exchange and entertainment by the "Happy Hoofers"! The Shoebox Project in support of the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth has been very successful, and Forerunners would like to thank each and every person who brought either personal items or donated money to this worthwhile project. Together we have made a difference in the lives of those less fortunate than ourselves.

Now we are into a brand new year . . . we will continue to meet on the 3rd Tuesday of each month, and will host coffee after liturgy once a month as well. Our next meeting is *Tuesday, January 19*, and we sponsor our next Fellowship on *Sunday, January 17*. Please mark your calendars.

We will be collecting the annual \$10 fee for our 2010 membership. I hope that all of our members and their families had a blessed Christmas, and that the New Year will bring peace, happiness and harmony to all!

Yours in Christ, Ruth Plentzas

Patriarch Bartholomew Featured on *60 Minutes*

New York — His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, the spiritual leader of 300 million Orthodox Christians who constitute the second largest Christian Church in the world, was featured December 20 on the CBS News program *60 Minutes* broadcast.

His All Holiness, in an impressive manner combining clear and firm positions with humility and unpretentious appearance, spoke frankly about the patriarchate's situation in the Republic of Turkey, the home of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and of countless ancient Christian sites, including the Cathedral of *Hagia Sophia* built by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian in 537 AD, as well as many of the most famous monuments and churches in Christendom including those of Cappadocia. A very important item preserved in the Mount Sinai Monastery of St. Catherine and presented during the interview, was a document signed by Mohammed himself, the prophet and founder of the Islamic Religion, in which he speaks about the right of freedom of belief and practice of the Christian Religion.

Ecumenical Patriarchate Bartholomew has been an outspoken supporter of Turkey's modernization and acceptance into the European Union. In the interview, he discussed his affection and commitment to his native Turkey, but also he indicated that the Turkish government had fallen short of its own ideals as well as the ideals of the international community. He cited characteristically the case of the forcible closure of the only local Orthodox Patriarchal Seminary (Halki) in 1971 by government authorities. It has not been re-opened since then, despite continued promises by the Turkish government, and despite the fact, as the Patriarch said, that the Seminary of Halki has trained a significant number of priests who became strong promoters of peace, unity and love among people.

When asked during the interview by veteran CBS correspondent Bob Simon, "Do you feel personally, Your All Holiness, that you have been crucified sometimes?" the Patriarch unhesitatingly answered, "Yes, I do!" But he had stated immediately before the question: "We believe in miracles . . . after the Crucifixion the Resurrection comes. We believe in the Resurrection."

"Bless Them, O Lord" (Continued from Page 7)

The sacrament of marriage is where love between two people finds its richest fulfillment in this life. In Jesus Christ, Who is God and Who is love, our love for another person is strengthened and made full. Even though we don't hear this message too often these days, I would urge all of us who are not yet married to focus on this beautiful sacrament. Allow God to guide you in His love to the right person He knows is best for you, even if it is a few years down the road. By doing so, you won't have to worry about feeling loved or feeling valued, because you will know you are. If we allow God to guide us to that right person, and center our relationship on Him, we will have that "unbreakable bond of love" in our life with our spouse.

The process of getting there may not be easy . . . but it will be blessed.

Stewardship Report: “Strengthened by Christ and His Church”

<u>2009 Stewardship Status (December 15, 2009):</u>		Stewardship Target – 2009	\$411,000
Stewardship Families Pledged	497	Stewardship Gifts Pledged	\$348,133
Stewardship Gifts Received	\$305,024	Current Stewardship Deficit	\$62,867
Average Stewardship Pledge	\$700.47	Percentage of Goal Achieved	84.70%

<u>Pledge Range</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>	<u>\$ & % of Gifts Pledged</u>
\$1-\$999	385	\$ 130,160 - 37.39%
\$1000-\$2499	88	\$ 112,365 - 32.28%
\$2500-\$4,999	17	\$ 55,788 - 16.02%
\$5,000-\$9,999	5	\$ 29,820 - 8.57%
\$10,000-\$14,999	2	\$ 20,000 - 5.74%

	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Stewards Pledged	479	497	+18
Gifts Pledged	\$374,00	\$348,133	-\$25,967
Gifts Received	\$303,500	\$305,024	+\$1,524
Average Pledge	\$781.00	\$700.47	-\$80.53

<u>2010 Stewardship Status (December 15, 2009):</u>		Stewardship Target – 2010	\$350,000
Stewardship Families Pledged	176	Stewardship Gifts Pledged	\$158,774
Stewardship Gifts Received	\$ N/A	Current Stewardship Deficit	\$191,226
Average Stewardship Pledge	\$902.12	Percentage of Goal Achieved	45.36%

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

During the New Year let us practice not only good Stewardship, but also its virtuous twin, ‘Philanthropia.’ According to Father Demetrios J. Constantelos, “*Philanthropia as a Byzantine concept is identified with agape and implies an active feeling of benevolence toward any person, independent of that person’s identity or actions. Byzantine philanthropia designates a deliberate, religious, and purposeful expression of love and compassion for humanity.*” (*Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare*, p. 3) Through philanthropia and stewardship we respond to Christ’s a call to care and support those around us.

The practice of stewardship and philanthropia need not be burdensome. When we offer a cup of cool water or a kind word to someone in need we are practicing philanthropia. We are reaching out to God by meeting the needs of our brothers and sisters, who are made in His image. Similarly, stewardship is caring for the needs of our Church through our time, talents and tithes.

Our Church returns this love through memorial services, prayers and the Holy Eucharist. By means of philanthropia, the soul benefits, even after our repose. Constantelos writes, when good is done on behalf of one who has departed this life, “*the philanthropist becomes the source of much happiness for the dead relative when he gives to the poor.*” (p. 25)

Practicing philanthropia and stewardship keeps us spiritually healthy, and prevents us from falling into the sin of apathy which is the absence of care. Apathy stops Christians from caring for those around them. It is prevalent in our culture because we allow the world to overwhelm us; in doing so, we forget that Christ has overcome the world with his love. Like Him, we Christians are called to overcome the world with His love. Through philanthropia and stewardship we can triumph over the despair of this world and participate in the saving work of the Church.

We are called to care and to serve now and in the life to come, and be stewards of what God has given us. We can do this in small and large ways as God provides. Throughout the New Year, let us reach out to those around us, pleasing and glorifying God by caring for others.

Anthony Willey and the 2010 Stewardship Committee

2010 Stewards and Contributors: "Come and See!"

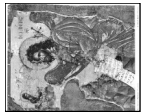
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| Adamy, Marina | Dominguez, Eric and Amalia | Lekar, Michael and Effie | Rifakes, John and Carol |
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| Arcamuzi, Georgia | Eliades, Katerina | Malamatos, Kindina | Scott, Ann |
| Aristides, George and Diana | Eliakis, Peter and Glenda | Maniatakos, Ted and Maria | Sinyakova, Szvetlana |
| Attard, Constantine and Sofia | Exarhos, Nick and Sharon | Manolakos, Catherine | Skandros, Georgia |
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| Carrico, William and Alexandra | Hamilton, Paul and Brandi | Nikitas, Rigas and Aphrodite | Teed, Charles |
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| Delalis, Pete and Alysondra | Kover, Barbara | Prather, Moses | |
| Demolas, Ilias and Jodi | Kypreos, Peter and Geri | Prokopis, Chris and Ritsa | |



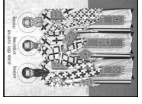
Blessing and Cutting of the Community Vasilopita on Sunday, January 3

The *Vasilopita*, or New Year's Bread, is named after Saint Basil whose feast day is celebrated on *January 1*. The 4th Century Saint had gold coins baked into the sweet bread that was made for the poor, as a means of giving them money without it looking like a hand-out. We continue this tradition today of baking the coin in the bread.

On New Year's Day the head of the household cuts the *Vasilopita*. The first slice is set aside for Jesus Christ, the next for the Theotokos, then St. Basil, and after, individual pieces for each member of the family. The one who finds the coin in his slice will have blessings for the entire year!



JANUARY 2010 - IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

<p>3 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Parish Council Oath <i>Community Vasilopita</i> 12:30 pm Liondaria 1:15 pm Delfinia/ Hrisi 4:00 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p>4 4:30 pm FDF Choir 6:15 pm Delfinia/Hrisi 7:30 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p>5 <i>Eve of Theophany</i> 8:00 am Royal Hours 9:00 am Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil & Great Blessing of Water 4:30 pm Delfinia 6:00 pm Great Vespers 7:00 pm Hrisi/Stavroforoi 7:30 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p>6 <i>Holy Theophany</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy Great Blessing of Water 4:30 pm Delfinia 6:00 pm Great Vespers 7:00 pm Hrisi/Stavroforoi 7:00 pm Adult Study</p>	<p>7 <i>Parish Feast Day ~ St. John the Baptist</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy & Artoclasia Fellowship follows 6:15 pm Delfinia/Hrisi 7:00 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p>8 4:00 pm FDF Choir 4:30 pm Delfinia 6:00 pm Hrisi Thisavri 7:30 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p>9 6:00 pm St. John Name Day Dinner in Panos Hall</p>
<p>10 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy <i>Youth Choir Chants</i> Dancers Luncheon and Performances</p>	<p>11 4:30 pm Greek Level 1 4:30 pm Delfinia 6:00 pm Hrisi Thisavri 7:30 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p>12 4:30 pm FDF Choir 5:30 pm Liondaria 6:15 pm Delfinia / Hrisi 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting 7:30 pm Stavroforoi</p>	<p>13 4:30 pm Greek Level 2 7:00 pm Adult Study</p>	<p>14 6:00 pm Adult Greek</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p>
<p>17 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>18</p>	<p>19 11:30 am Forerunners Luncheon in Panos Hall</p>	<p>20 4:30 pm Youth Greek Level 2 7:00 pm Adult Study</p>	<p>21 6:00 pm Adult Greek</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23 7:00 pm OCLV @ Sophocles Frangakis' Home</p>
<p>24 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>25 <i>St. Gregory the Theologian</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 4:30 pm Greek Level 1</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27 4:30 pm Greek Level 2 7:00 pm Adult Study</p>	<p>28 6:00 pm Adult Greek</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30 <i>Three Hierarchs</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy</p>
<p>31 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 1:00 pm GOYA @ Mt. Charleston</p>	<p>Folk Dance Festival in San Jose</p>					

The Desert Messenger

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

The Way of the Lord



“To believe in Christ is to *repent* — to change radically the very ‘mind’ of our life, to see it as sin and death. And to believe in Him is to *accept* the joyful revelation that in Him forgiveness and reconciliation have been given. In Baptism both repentance and forgiveness find their fulfillment. In Baptism man *wants* to die as a sinful man and he is given that death, and in Baptism man *wants* the newness of life as forgiveness, and he is given it. . . . Baptism is the forgiveness of sins, not their removal. It introduces the sword of Christ into our life and makes it the real conflict, the inescapable pain and suffering of growth. It is indeed after Baptism and because of it, that the reality of sin can be recognized in all its sadness, and true repentance becomes possible.”

- Father Alexander Schmemmann, *For the Life of the World*