

# The Desert



# Messenger

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

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Volume 9, Issue 4 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

April 2011

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**From  
Father  
John**

Beloved in Christ:

Having voyaged for forty days on the sea of the Lenten Fast, as we approach Great and Holy Week, I pray that each of us will make the necessary time and effort to attend these life-transforming services. By doing so, we will hopefully understand more fully that our Lord suffered all things – even unto His Death on the Cross – to heal the pangs brought about by the sins you and I commit against God, and consequently our human nature and the world we live in. Particularly at the Holy Thursday evening service, which commemorates the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, as we hear the twelve Gospel accounts surrounding His Last Supper, Agony in Gethsemane, Arrest, Trial and Crucifixion, it becomes painfully obvious that our all-powerful Creator and God knows first-hand the need to rectify the devastating effects of sin on mankind as well as on the entire cosmos, which has also been thrown off-kilter by the Fall. As the Holy Apostle Paul observes: *“We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves . . .” (Romans 8:22-23)*

Just recently, the entire world was shocked and saddened over how life changed drastically for thousands of people in Japan, as the result of the catastrophic earthquake and tsunami that struck on March 11. Regardless of the fact that this nation was prepared, technologically speaking, for such a disaster – and that it was one of the wealthiest countries in the world – nothing could stop the unimaginable destruction and death brought on by the 9.0 magnitude earthquake and the powerful tsunami that followed. Countless people lost their lives or are still missing, and those who survived and were forced from their homes continue to live in fear as a result of major aftershocks, tsunami warnings, fierce cold temperatures and in danger of radiation exposure from the nuclear plants that exploded and were crippled by the disaster.

Many may be quick to identify this tragedy as “an act of God,” or perhaps more crudely as His punishment, yet the events of Holy Week reveal something quite contrary. Although our Creator, if He so willed, had the ability to destroy everything He made, *He chose instead to save us* by taking upon Himself all the sins of our fallen nature and decaying world as He willingly submitted to His Crucifixion in the Flesh: *“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; upon Him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with His stripes we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5)* By His Death and subsequent glorious third-day Resurrection He fulfilled His promise that He would be with us always, removing once and for all the destructive power of sin over mankind and all of creation.

Beloved, Pascha assures us that, in spite of us, God’s love for us endures: This victory of the Light of Christ over all darkness is exactly what we must genuinely believe and proclaim as we hold up high our Resurrection Candles on the Feast of Feasts, Great and Holy Pascha! Therefore, not knowing when our journey in this world will end, let us make ready for it daily by willingly denying ourselves, taking up our crosses and following Him – so that we might be resurrected with Him into the unending joy of His Kingdom at the time of His glorious return.

Καλη Ανασταση ~ With love in our Resurrected Lord,

**WORSHIP SCHEDULE**

*Sundays: 8:45 am Orthros - 10:00 am Divine Liturgy*

*Church School follows Holy Communion (No Classes on Palm Sunday & Pascha)*

Friday, April 1

*4th Salutations to the Theotokos*

Sunday, April 3/ *4th Sunday of Lent/*

*St. John Climacos*

Orthros: Tone Four

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

Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20

Gospel: Mark 9:17-31

*6:00 pm Lenten Vespers at St. Paul the Apostle  
(St. George Romanian Church, Host)*

Monday, April 4

*6:30 pm Great Compline*

Wednesday, April 6

*6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy*

Friday, April 8

*7:00 pm The Akathist Hymn*

Sunday, April 10/ *5th Sunday of Lent/*

*St. Mary of Egypt*

Orthros: Tone Five (First Plagal)

Resurrection Gospel: Mark 16:1-8

Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14

Gospel: Mark 10:32-45

*6:00 pm Lenten Vespers at St. John the Baptist*

Monday, April 11

*6:30 pm Great Compline*

Wednesday, April 13

*6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy*

Saturday, April 16 / *Saturday of Lazaros*

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

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

Gospel: John 11:1-45

*Palm Tying and Lenten Breakfast*

*6:00 pm Great Vespers of Palm Sunday  
with His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos*

Sunday, April 17/ *Palm Sunday*

*His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos, Celebrant*

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

Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9

Gospel: John 12:1-18

*Blessing and Distribution of Palms*

*Palm Sunday Luncheon in Panos Hall*

**GREAT AND HOLY WEEK**

Palm Sunday Evening, April 17

*7:00 pm 1st Bridegroom Service  
with His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos*

Holy Monday, April 18

*7:00 pm 2nd Bridegroom Service*

Holy Tuesday, April 19

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

Holy Wednesday, April 20

*9:00 am Presanctified Liturgy*

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

Holy Thursday, April 21

*9:00 am Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil*

*7:00 pm Holy Passion of our Lord/12 Gospel Readings*

Holy Friday, April 22

*10:00 am Royal Hours*

*3:00 pm Descent from the Cross/Children's Procession*

*7:00 pm Lamentations/Procession of the Epitaphion*

Holy Saturday, April 23

*9:00 am Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil*

*11:00 pm Vigil of the Resurrection*

Sunday, April 24/ **GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA**

*12:00 am Resurrectional Orthros & Divine Liturgy*

Resurrection Gospel: Mark 16:1-8

Epistle: Acts 1:1-9

Gospel: John 1:1-17

*Blessing and Distribution of Red Eggs*

*12:00 pm Agape Vespers and Picnic*

Gospel (Various Languages): John 20:19-25

Monday, April 25/ *Great Martyr George/*

*Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark*

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

Epistle: Acts 12:1-11

Gospel: John 1:18-28

Friday, April 29/ *Theotokos, the Life-Giving Spring*

Epistle: Acts 3:1-8

Gospel: John 2:12-22

Christ is Risen! Truly, He is Risen!

Χριστος Ανεστη! Αληθως Ανεστη!

## Stewardship Report: “We are Members of the Body of Christ!”

In a recent Holy Liturgy, Father John Hondros outlined key works of Christians which, commanded by God, are components to “entry into Heaven.” As we listened closely, many in the Church were certainly surprised at the brief list, and that some of our most treasured practices and behaviors may not have been included.

Obviously, our Lord has established Holy Baptism, Holy Communion and Holy Confession as necessary to our participation in the life in God’s Kingdom. However, none of these sacraments were mentioned in the list of six things that God will look for on the Day of Judgment. Neither was attending Church on Easter or Holy Days . . . veneration of icons . . . fasting . . . or serving on the Parish Council or volunteering at the annual Greek Food Festival! Don’t be misled: These are essential and critical practices of Orthodox Christians, but apart from the six items are inadequate in terms of what God expects of us, as they do not address how we treat each other and how we act as stewards according to God’s commands.

So what are the six things God expects from all believers? That we feed the hungry . . . give drink to the thirsty . . . welcome the stranger . . . clothe the naked . . . visit the sick . . . and do not neglect the prisoner. (*Matthew 25:34-36*) Simply put, we cannot be a good steward for God unless we are also a good steward toward each other. This is a simple and powerful expectation, but one that we often neglect.

It was made plain to us that Sunday morning by Father John that, over and above the worship and community life we enjoy, God commands that we serve Him through charity and assistance to each other – in other words, through Stewardship – and that He will base our worthiness to enter eternal Heaven on these things which are not easy to do, and perhaps we even avoid to do. Being a Christian is often hard work!

However, Stewardship for God requires our active and full participation in the faith. We are called to do good to others, and consider doing so on behalf of God or perhaps even doing it *to* God. Stewardship, therefore, is a gateway to eternity. As a result, Stewardship is a way of life that becomes our purpose. “*The Lord will fulfill His purpose for me; Your steadfast love, Lord, endures forever.*” (*Psalms 138:8*)

Gary Waters and the 2011 Stewardship Committee

<u>2011 Stewardship Status (March 17, 2011):</u>		Stewardship Target – 2011	\$350,000
Stewardship Families Pledged	324	Stewardship Gifts Pledged	\$259,954*
Stewardship Gifts Received	\$98,554	Current Stewardship Deficit	\$90,046
Average Stewardship Pledge	\$781.38	Percentage of Goal Achieved	74%

\*Includes Families who have not yet filled out a Stewardship 2011 card, but are contributing toward Stewardship 2011 campaign.

<u>Pledge Range</u>	<u>Number of Families</u>		<u>\$ of Gifts Pledged</u>
\$1-\$999	229		\$ 78,584
\$1,000-\$2,499	75		\$ 95,180
\$2,500-\$4,999	11		\$ 34,640
\$5,000-\$9,999	6		\$ 33,200
\$10,000-\$14,999	1		\$ 10,000
	<u>2010</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>Difference</u>
Stewards Pledged	296	324	+ 28
Gifts Pledged	\$238,905	\$259,954	+ \$21,049
Gifts Received	\$78,803	\$98,554	+ \$19,751
Average Pledge	\$807.11	\$781.38	-\$25.73



## Adult Study: ‘The Lenten Scriptures’

On Wednesdays - 8:00-9:00 pm during Lent in Kokkos Hall  
 Father John Hondros, Instructor - Open to all

**Parish  
Council  
Report**

Lent is upon us and *Palm Sunday, April 17*, will be here fast! His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos will be joining us again for Palm Sunday and I ask that you take the time to join His Eminence and the rest of the parish at the Palm Sunday Luncheon. George Kakavulias and John Fotopoulos are the chairmen, and I would like to thank them for their hard work on this event and welcome all of you to join us.

The next day begins Holy Week; please join us Holy Saturday night for the Resurrectional Orthros and Divine Liturgy on *April 23* and the Agape Picnic on *Pascha Sunday, April 24*. Stephanie Demoleas has taken the lead on the Agape Picnic and she will need a lot of help. If you have not made plans for Easter, come to the Agape Picnic and spend some time with your community – *or*, if you can, **PLEASE HELP OUT** all of us on the Parish Council, who will be lending a hand to Stephanie. Let’s not forget to invite our “American” friends as well! This is a nice event and less crowded than the Food Festival.

At this time I would like to remind everyone that we on the Parish Council understand that sometimes your patience wears thin during some of the long services, especially for those of us with small children, but *please, please, please* follow the direction of the ushers during services as this will speed things up for *all* of the parishioners.

Again, God Bless St. John Church! Spiros Filios, Parish Council President

*Financial Status for Month of February 2011*

<u>Bank Accounts</u>	<u>Beginning Balance as of 1.31.11</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Internal Bank Transfers</u>		<u>Balances as of 2.28.11</u>
				<u>Transfers In</u>	<u>Transfers Out</u>	
General Operating	\$9,089.93	\$53,547.23	\$47,773.73			\$14,863.43
Building/Maintenance	\$30,646.87	\$3.52	\$3,276.17			\$27,374.22
Community/Education Ctr	\$2,424.05	\$4,773.93	\$3,789.54			\$3,408.44
Construction (Loan Paymts)	\$41,163.30		\$5,268.48			\$35,894.82
Food Festival	\$46,043.63	\$230.00	\$2,650.10			\$43,623.53
Icon Money Market	\$5,975.67	\$1,020.19	\$37.00			\$6,958.86
Library Checking	\$15,594.96	\$1.79				\$15,596.75
On-Line Donations	\$700.09					\$700.09
Bookstore Checking	\$100.00		\$16.00			\$84.00
Construction Loan	\$662,959.65					\$661,210.12
Revolving Line of Credit	\$0.00					\$0.00
Term Loan (5 year loan)	\$0.00					\$0.00

**SUNDAY SCHEDULE**

April 3

Ushers: Marina Adamy, John Fotopoulos, Sam Koutsulis, George Kakavulias & Spiros Filios  
Fellowship: Orthodox Family Fellowship

April 10

Ushers: Demetrios Philippou, Jim Monoyudis, Stephanie Demoleas, George Bochanis, Darrick Cole  
& Demetrious Asim

Memorial: Antoinette Wadlow (4 years); Edward G. Gatski (5 years);

Costandinos Pouridis, Rebecca Berdos

Fellowship: Daughters of Penelope

April 17

PALM SUNDAY

Ushers: Entire Parish Council  
PALM SUNDAY LUNCHEON

April 24

GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA

Ushers: Entire Parish Council  
AGAPE PICNIC

**Philoptochos  
News**

Hello Ladies!

April is here and it is one of our busiest times of year for Philoptochos. Here is a list of our upcoming commitments – please take a look and see which events you are able to participate in, as Philoptochos always needs helping hands in order to achieve our mission of assisting those in need:

- Lenten Vesper Dinner is on *Sunday, April 10* at 6:00 pm; we need ladies to serve.
- The Palm Sunday Luncheon is on *April 17*, and His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos will be present. Philoptochos is responsible for serving and clean-up as well as ticket sales. We will also take a collection in Church for the Epitaphios flowers. To assist, please contact me at (702) 808-2410.
- On Holy Thursday, *April 21*, we will be dyeing the red eggs, following the morning Liturgy. Please contact Andrea Takas at (702) 283-3121 to sign up.
- The decoration of the Epitaphios will take place on Holy Friday, *April 22*; please contact Geri Kypreos at (702) 378-7900.
- Pascha is on *Sunday, April 24* and we will need ladies to help with pastry sales; please contact Amalia Dominguez at (702) 510-5114 to sign up.

To offer your help, please contact one of these ladies, or just show up. We welcome any and all volunteers.

A General Meeting has been added to the calendar for *Tuesday, April 12*, in order to approve the new board of officers for next term. Please mark this date down, as it is not on your yearly calendar. We look forward to seeing you at one or several events.

Yours in Christ, April Karalis and the Philoptochos Board

The Parish Council and Philoptochos  
cordially invite you to join  
His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco  
for the annual



**Palm Sunday  
Fish Luncheon  
Sunday, April 17, 2011**

Following the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy  
\$15 Adults ~ \$10 Children 12 years & under

Net proceeds benefit the Parish Operations

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

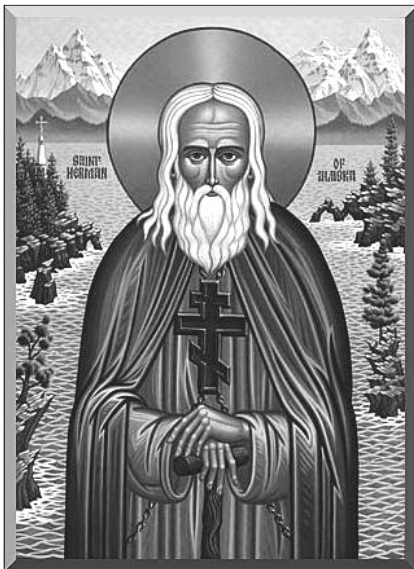
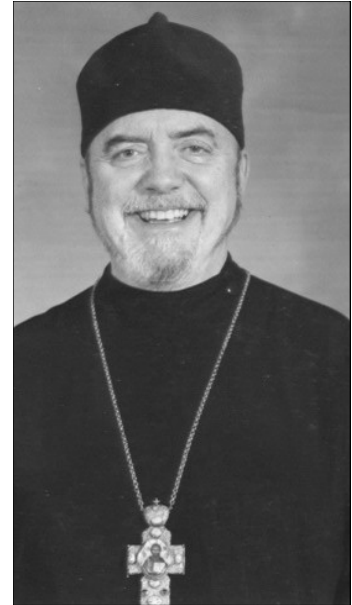
## Lenten Retreat

*Saturday, April 9, 2011*

*At St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church  
5300 South El Camino Road, Las Vegas ♦ (702) 221-8245*

Rev. Father Michael Oleksa,  
Retreat Speaker

“The Saints of Alaska and  
the Mission of Orthodoxy Today”



### Program

- |          |  |
|----------|--|
| 9:00 am  | Morning Prayer   |
| 9:30 am  | Continental Breakfast  |
| 10:00 am | St. Herman: The Witness of One Prayerful Man                                       |
| 11:00 am | St. Innocent: The Need to Know Our Faith and Grow in Our Understanding of It       |
| 12:00 pm | Lenten Lunch   |
| 1:15 pm  | St. Jacob: The Centrality of the Resurrection in the Orthodox Christian Life       |
| 2:30 pm  | Alaskan Martyrs: The Willingness and the Necessity for Self-Offering and Sacrifice |
| 3:45 pm  | Alaskan Women Saints: Faithful in Little Things and Set Over Much                  |
| 5:00 pm  | Great Vespers and Veneration of Relics   |

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

*Please register by Friday, April 1; make checks payable to St. Paul Church, Memo: Lenten Retreat*

After 41 years in Alaska, Father Michael Oleksa is convinced the 49th State has a mission to the rest of the Church, just as the Church has considered Alaska a mission field for over 200 years. Father Michael is well known for his widely-acclaimed four-part PBS series, “Communicating Across Cultures.” He has published four books: Alaskan Missionary Spirituality, Orthodox Alaska, Another Culture/Another World and Conflicting Landscapes. He has been the recipient of various awards, including honors from the University of Alaska Board of Regents and the Alaska State Legislature, and currently serves as acting chancellor of Sitka, Anchorage and Alaska, rector of St. Alexis Toth Orthodox Church in Anchorage and on the faculty of St. Herman’s Seminary and Alaska Pacific University.

Please Join Us For Our  
**AGAPE PICNIC**

**Holy Pascha**  
**Sunday, April 24, 2011**  
**Agape Vespers at 12:00 noon**

**Dinner served immediately following Vespers**

- ◆ Traditional Roasted Lamb Dinner and Ala Carte Menu
- ◆ Greek Pastries and Dessert Items
- ◆ Greek Music and Dancing, Covered Seating
- ◆ Easter Egg Hunt and Sports Activities
- ◆ Agape Tickets can be used for all food and beverage items



**Agape Tickets \$20**

May be used for  
One Lamb Dinner Plate  
or 4 items from the  
ala carte food menu

*(Tickets also accepted for  
beverage orders or packaged  
dessert orders of \$20 and over)*

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

Tickets available on Sundays from Parish Council Members  
or during the week at the Church Office.  
For information, please call (702) 221-8245

**Christ is Risen! Christos Anesti!**

## Youth Ministries

### Church School

Hi everyone! I hope you all have a beautiful and blessed Lenten season. At this time we will not be taking any more enrollments, but we hope to see you in the fall!

We are still collecting loose change for Pennies and Prayers, which supports mission parishes in our Metropolis; our last day to collect will be on Palm Sunday. We are also collecting items for our annual Homeless Outreach Project: All students are asked to donate new washcloths for those in need. Additionally, we would appreciate your donation of new or gently-used business attire for newly-released felons, primarily men, who are trying to find jobs in the workforce. A collection bin is located outside the Church Office.

We will be palm tying on *Lazaros Saturday, April 16*. Please bring your children in for the Divine Liturgy at 9:00 am that day, and after we will have a light Lenten breakfast followed by palm-tying in Kokkos Hall.

As always, we will have our annual Egg Hunt at the *Agape Picnic on April 24* on the Church grounds. We are asking you to donate filled eggs for the hunt. Don't have time to fill? You can send in empty plastic eggs, bags of candy or a few dollars so we can shop for eggs: But please, no chocolate, though M&Ms are okay.

Family Worship Sunday will be *April 17 and April 24*, due to the Holy Days. Please don't hesitate to call or email me if you have any questions or concerns.

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

### Youth Choir News



We are coming onto the homestretch for Lent and Holy Week. Here is the schedule for April:

On Fridays, *April 1 and April 8*, we will chant the last two Salutation Services to the Theotokos. Practice will be at 6:15 pm on April 8 *only*. On Sundays we are still rehearsing at 12:15 pm up in the loft.

We will be chanting the responses to the Pan-Orthodox Vespers on *Sunday, April 10* at our Church, and we will meet at 5:00 pm for practice. The music tends to be challenging, so we need everyone there to practice ahead of time.

On *Palm Sunday, April 17*, we will sing with the Adult Choir. His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos will be celebrating the Liturgy that day. Please be upstairs by 9:45 am.

Our favorite service of the year is on *Holy Saturday Morning, April 23*. The Liturgy begins at 9:00 am, so please be there at 8:45 am *sharp*.

Since spring break is the same week as Holy Week again this year, I also invite all of you to participate on some of the other services when available, especially on Saturday of Lazaros and the morning services during Holy Week. We could use your voices for some chanting and reading of the Psalms.

Thanks and Kali Anastasi! Love, Presvytera Maria

### *Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian*

*Lord and Master of my life, cast away from me the spirit of laziness,  
idle curiosity, love of power and vain talk.*

*But grant me, Your servant, the spirit of moderation, humility, patience and love.*

*Yes, Lord and King, grant me to see my own faults  
and not to judge my brothers and sisters.*

*For You are blessed forever. Amen.*

## ***Palm Tying***

Please join us on *Saturday of Lazaros, April 16*, following the Divine Liturgy for our annual Palm Tying and Lenten Continental Breakfast. We need many hands to make the palm crosses in preparation for Palm Sunday. Looking forward to seeing you there!



## ***HOPE and JOY***

Please join us for palm tying on *Lazaros Saturday, April 16*. We will also have a springtime craft, making a beautiful flower garden for the window sill. This will involve play-dough, water colors and a lot of creativity. Please RSVP with Sharon at (702) 292-0850 or Jenn at (702) 631-0111.

Your Sisters in Christ, Sharon Katsaros and Jenn Orlando

## ***Attention, 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](mailto: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 in JPG format!

## ***Greek Folk Dance***

Another exciting year of Greek Folk dance just ended and we are already planning for the upcoming dance year. Registration will begin on *May 1*. A table will be set up during Fellowship on Sundays the first few weeks or you can mail your registration to the Church Office. The registration fee is \$75 per dancer if paid *by July 31*. The registration fee will be \$150 if turned in between August 30 and September 27.

Registration is open to all children who have been baptized and/or chrismated in the Orthodox Church, and who are at least 4 years old as of December 31, 2011. Proof of such must be turned in at the time of registration; if you do not have a copy of your baptismal certificate, you should get on top of this ASAP. Dancers must attend Divine Liturgy on Sunday on a regular basis and those who are of age (4-17) must be a regular participant of Church School. Also, parent(s) must be a Steward of St. John Church for 2011.

We are excited that our Stavroforoi dancers have been invited to perform and participate in a Pan-Pontic Cultural weekend in Atlanta, Georgia in June. We will hold a special meeting for those dancers wishing to attend the event and it will be mandatory that one of their parents be present at the meeting. Emails will be sent out to the dancers regarding the date and time of this meeting. We are hoping to be able to do some fundraising to help defer the cost of attending this exciting event.

Tina Liaos and the Folk Dance Board

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos will visit our parish on Palm Sunday Weekend.  
*Please welcome His Eminence, join us in worship and receive his blessing.*

Saturday, April 16 - 6:00 pm Great Vespers of Palm Sunday

Sunday, April 17 - 8:45 am Orthros - 10:00 am Hierarchical Divine Liturgy  
*Palm Sunday Luncheon follows*

7:00 pm 1st Bridegroom Service

# GOYA

Hello GOYAns! We had an amazing overnight Lenten retreat on March 18-19 and enjoyed every minute with our teen friends from St. Paul the Apostle Church. The youths of all the Orthodox Churches in Las Vegas teamed up on Saturday morning at St. Michael Church to prepare 390 meals and then went to the streets and fed the homeless people. 'Thank You' to all the clergy, youth, families and chaperones that gave of their time to make this a spiritually-rewarding and memorable weekend.

Please join us on *Saturday of Lazaros, April 16* for Divine Liturgy at 9:00 am. Following services, we will be tying the palms in Kokkos Hall. We will have a Lenten breakfast and a craft for the very young children (please bring an egg carton for craft).

On *Saturday of Bright Week, April 30*, at 10:00 am, GOYA will be visiting children of St. Jude's Home. The GOYAns need to bring a new book and stuffed animal to give to a child. Look for details in the Weekly Bulletin and reminder emails will be sent.

Looking into May, we have a walk-a-thon from 6:00 pm on May 20 to 6:00 am May 21 at Desert Oasis High School. This is benefiting the American Cancer Society and we need everyone's participation. Details will be forthcoming.

Wishing all a good Lent and a joyous Pascha!

Love in Christ, Effie Lekar (702) 768-5500 and Tammy Chomakos (702) 338-4671



*Worship,  
Confession,  
Workshops,  
Recreation,  
Service, Charity,  
Fun and Friends!*

*Photos by  
Tammy Chomakos*



***Orthodox Teen Retreat  
“We are Members of the Body of Christ!”  
At St. John the Baptist Church ~ Homeless Feed at St. Michael Church***



***From the Metropolis of San Francisco Youth Office*****“Casting Out the ‘Devil’ with Rays” ~ By Rev. Deacon Niko Bekris**

About five years ago when I was still attending our seminary in Brookline, Massachusetts, a visiting group of priests came from various parts of the country to hold meetings at the school, and I bumped into one of them in the cafeteria. I asked the priest in what part of the country he served, and he told me that he had come from St. Petersburg, Florida. My sports-addled mind then responded with, “Oh, isn’t that where the Tampa Bay Devil Rays play?” To which he replied with, “Well, they try to.”

And who could blame the man? Prior to their first ever World Series appearance in 2008, the Tampa Bay Devil Rays were the joke of baseball, and maybe even the joke of professional sports. The team was created in 1997, and had never, not even once, posted a winning record, quite often losing 100 games a year. They had very little money, and even less support from their fans, who barely ever filled their less-than-spectacular Tropicana Field. With both the Yankees and Red Sox in their division, it’s a miracle the Devil Rays didn’t lose 150 games a year.

And then all of a sudden, as of 2008, for reasons which were never really clarified, the organization chose to drop the word “Devil” from their name and rename the franchise the “Tampa Bay Rays.” With plenty of talented young players and a new manager, the first year the newly-minted “Rays” came into existence was also the first year the team ever made the World Series. It was a remarkable achievement, and in 2008 the Tampa Bay Rays were the turnaround story in all of sports. Was this a coincidence? Probably, but who knows? Having made the playoffs again last season, and with baseball’s opening day once again upon us this month, the Rays are poised to continue the momentum of the last few years since having dropped the word “devil” from their name.

This month, we as Orthodox Christians are entering the final stretch of the season of Great and Holy Lent, and we, too, every year during this season, attempt to cast out the devil from our lives. As we all remember, the Church prescribed this season of spiritual rigor not only to prepare us for the Feast of Feasts, but also to remember Jesus’ 40 days of fasting and prayer in the wilderness. While in the desert for 40 days prior to His life-saving Crucifixion and Resurrection, the Lord also cast out the devil three times during three moments of temptation, each time quoting Scripture (from chapters 6 and 8 of the book of Deuteronomy, specifically, which God gave the Hebrews as an instructional book on how to live their lives in relationship with their God). In being tempted but never sinning, the Lord showed us that we can also resist temptation, despite being imperfect human beings. Even though we’re not always inclined to do so, I know each of us can attest to the tremendous benefit our lives receive when we commit ourselves to this season’s prayer and fasting, following the example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

It is this spirit that we are called to carry into Great Lent, and it is this spirit that reminds us of Jesus’ ultimate victory over sin and death, when He rose from the dead. Even though the word “devil” is not mentioned in the hymn of Easter, “Χριστος Ανεστη,” there is a reason that the main icon of the Resurrection, where Jesus is shown radiating rays of God’s light and lifting Adam and Eve out of their tombs, that we often see a black figure - the devil - tied up and being trampled underfoot. Easter is the ultimate victory of victories, the Feast of Feasts. The amazing lesson that we can take from the Easter story, and (metaphorically) from the story of the Tampa Bay Rays, is that when we cast the devil out of our lives, then by God’s grace, we, too, can do things we’ve never done before. Let us remember this as we enter the remaining weeks of Lent, and as we enter Holy Week and Easter. The Lord was tempted and cast out the devil first, and because He is with us, we can overcome temptation, as well, and experience the life-giving power that He has given each of us, as we share in His love, and His glorious rays of light.



## *Orthodox Connection Las Vegas*

Greetings from the OCLV!

I would like to thank Philoptochos and all those who helped in the preparation of additional meals to feed the homeless at Las Vegas Rescue Mission.

For the month of April we will be focusing on the fast and preparation for Holy Week. To help us with this I encourage all to attend the Lenten Retreat on *Saturday, April 9* at St. John the Baptist Church. Please see the flier in *The Desert Messenger* for further information.

I pray that the remaining days of Lent are spent in strict fasting and prayer while we prepare for the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

In Christ, Adam Bieker (702)321-7611 [orthodoxconnectionlv@gmail.com](mailto:orthodoxconnectionlv@gmail.com)

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

Our monthly luncheon in March was well attended and we enjoyed a delicious Lenten meal featuring Fish Plaki prepared by our own great chef, Manny Andraktos.

Please join us on *Tuesday, April 12* at 11:30 am in Panos Hall for another Lenten luncheon and great fellowship.

The Forerunners presented a check to our Church at the Parish Assembly meeting on March 27 in the amount of \$2,000. This donation is double the amount of our past donations. We felt this to be very important in light of our Church's present financial status.

With that said I'd like to share something with you that is very important to me. My wife and I arrived in this parish 22 years ago; we attended services in a very small and humble well-worn building downtown. We saw pictures on display of a beautiful Church and hall which was in the dream and planning stage. Then we watched in an unbelievable short time this dream come true, thanks to the very hard work and dedication of our pioneers.

Many of this wonderful group have passed on and many are still with us. We seniors feel very strongly that it is up to us now to step up and be counted in this hour of financial help. Consider what we can do: What about \$2 in the Sunday collection plate instead of \$1? We have had a tendency for many years to think we have already pledged, so \$1 is enough. Our current \$1 is worth about half of its worth 20 years ago. What a great help we can be if we double our donations. For those who can afford it, let's exceed our pledge.

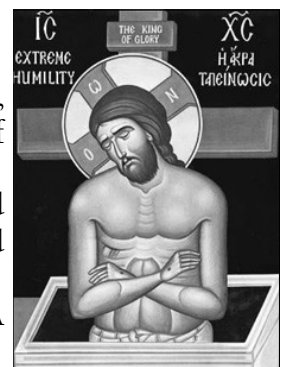
Charles Teed

## *With Gratitude*

**George C. Nikols:** It may have been his kind words, his hand shake, his hug, his smile, or his jokes - whichever it was that moved you to send your expression of sympathy, we, Christine, Rita and Geo, thank you.

Whatever George meant and was to you, he was first and foremost a husband and father; the memory you have of him, keep that thought in your heart with love and a smile.

'Thank You' to Father John and the various ministries, and especially AHEPA for organizing George's memorial.



## *Holy Confession during Lent*

*Lent is the season of repentance, when all are encouraged to go to the Sacrament of Holy Confession. Father John is available for Confession by appointment only during the weekdays of Lent. Please do not wait until Holy Week, as Father John will not hear Confessions that week.*



## Notes from the Loft

Holy Week and Pascha are quickly approaching, and the Choir is working diligently to prepare for the services. The Choir will be singing the Hierarchical Liturgy celebrated by His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos on Palm Sunday, the Bridegroom Services on Palm Sunday, Holy Monday and Holy Tuesday, as well as the Lamentations on Holy Friday and the Midnight Resurrection Service and Liturgy. It is extremely important that all Choir members attend rehearsals to ensure that we can provide beautiful, prayerful music for these great Feast Days.

Practices for Holy Week and Pascha will be as follows:

*Friday, April 1 at 5:30 pm*

*Friday, April 8 at 5:30 pm*

*Friday, April 15 at 5:30 pm*

*Monday, April 18 at 5:30 pm*

*Tuesday, April 19 at 5:30 pm*

*Wednesday, April 20 at 5:30 pm*

I look forward to working with everyone at rehearsals to prepare this wonderful music!

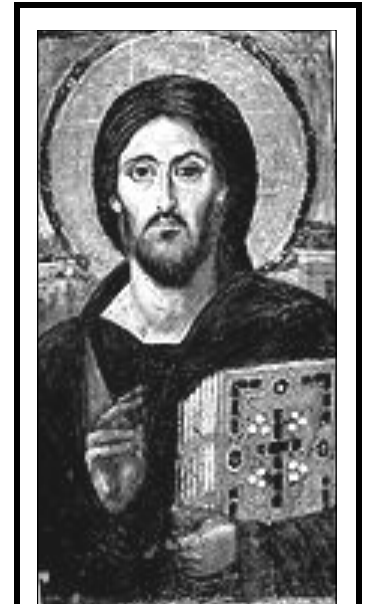
Athena Mertes, Choir Director



## Orthodox Bookstore

Blessed Lent! As we are well on the journey toward Our Lord's Passion and Resurrection, have you found the food to read and feed yourself spiritually? Come by the Bookstore and take a look around. We have CDs for those interested in getting more familiar with Church Services like the "Akathist Hymn" and "Lamentations." We will soon be receiving items for Pascha. Back in stock are the side-by-side Greek and English service books for Holy Week and Pascha for all those who requested.

May we keep running the race - Matthew Castillo, Bookstore Director



**We are Members  
of the Body of  
Christ!**

**Please join us  
as we commit  
ourselves as  
Parish Stewards  
for the Year  
2011!**

## Tsoureki and Koulourakia Sale

TSOUREKI (\$12 per loaf) and KOULOURAKIA (\$6 per dozen): Please contact the Church Office to pre-order the traditional sweet bread and cookies for Pascha; the last day for orders is *April 15*. Please join us for baking on *Saturday, April 2* at 8:00 am. The Tsourekia and Koulourakia will be available for pick-up following Liturgy on *Palm Sunday, April 17*.

### *Our Community Registry*

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

Anastasia (Carrie) Daskalos (Adult Baptism) on February 27, 2011.

Godparent: Maria Moustakis.

Noah, son of Brett and Nancy Hutchings on March 12, 2011.

Godparent: Anthony Vamvakitis.

#### *Chrismation*

Kassiani Buckalew on March 20, 2011. Sponsor: Susan Waters.



# APRIL 2011 - 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>
					<b>1</b> 5:30 pm Adult Choir Practice 7:00 pm 4th Salutations to the Theotokos	<b>2</b> 8:00 am Koulerakia and Tsoureki Baking
	His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos Will Visit on Palm Sunday Weekend April 16-17					
<b>3</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:00 pm Lenten Vespers at St. Paul the Apostle	<b>4</b> 5:00 pm GOYA at Starbucks 6:30 pm Great Compline 8:00 pm Adult Basketball Practice	<b>5</b> 6:00 pm GOYA Volleyball	<b>6</b> 6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy 8:00 pm Adult Study	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> 5:30 pm Adult Choir Practice 6:15 pm Youth Choir Practice 7:00 pm The Akathist Hymn	<b>9</b> 9:00 am Lenten Retreat at St. John the Baptist with Fr. Michael Oleksa
<b>10</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 5:00 pm Youth Choir Practice 6:00 pm Lenten Vespers at St. John the Baptist	<b>11</b> 5:00 pm GOYA at Starbucks 6:30 pm Great Compline 8:00 pm Adult Basketball Practice	<b>12</b> 11:30 am Forerunners 6:00 pm Parish Council 6:00 pm GOYA Volleyball 7:00 pm Philoptochos General Meeting	<b>13</b> 6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy 8:00 pm Adult Study	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> 5:30 pm Adult Choir Practice	<b>16 Lazaros Saturday</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy <i>Palm Tying and Lenten Breakfast</i> 6:00 pm Great Vespers
<b>17 PALM SUNDAY</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Hierarchical Liturgy <i>Palm Blessing /Distribution</i> <b>Fish Luncheon</b> 7:00 pm 1st Bridegroom	<b>18 Holy Monday</b> 5:30 pm Adult Choir Practice 7:00 pm 2nd Bridegroom Service	<b>19 Holy Tuesday</b> 5:30 pm Adult Choir Practice 7:00 pm 3rd Bridegroom Service / <i>Hymn of Kassiani</i>	<b>20 Holy Wednesday</b> 9:00 am Presanctified Liturgy 5:30 pm Adult Choir Practice 7:00 pm Holy Unction/ Anointing with Holy Oil	<b>21 Holy Thursday</b> 9:00 am Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil 7:00 pm Holy Passion of our Lord / 12 Gospels	<b>22 Holy Friday</b> 10:00 am Royal Hours 3:00 pm Descent from the Cross/Childrens' Procession 7:00 pm Lamentations/ Epitaphio Procession	<b>23 Holy Saturday</b> 9:00 am Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil 11:00 pm Vigil of the Resurrection
<b>24 HOLY PASCHA</b> 12:00 am Resurrection Orthros & Divine Liturgy 12:00 pm Agape Vespers and Picnic <b>Christ is Risen!</b>	<b>25 St. George</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	<b>26</b> 6:00 pm GOYA Volleyball Practice	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29 Life-Giving Spring</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	<b>30</b> 10:00 am GOYA at St. Jude's Hospital
Bright Week ~ No Fasting All Week						

# *The Desert Messenger*

*St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church  
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Las Vegas, Nevada 89118-1922*

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THE DESERT MESSENGER

## *The Way of the Lord*

*“As Joseph, aided by Nicodemus, lowered You from the Cross,  
the One Who is clothed in light as with a garment, seeing You dead, naked, unburied,  
he took up a poignant lament and said grieving: ‘Alas, sweetest Jesus,  
just now the sun witnessed You hanging on the Cross and wrapped himself in darkness;  
the earth was surging in fear and the veil of the Temple was being rent asunder.*

*Yet now I see You undergoing death willingly for my sake.  
How shall I prepare You for burial, my God? How shall I wrap You in a shroud?*

*With what hands can I touch our spotless body?*

*What hymns can I sing at Your departure, O compassionate One?  
I magnify Your Passion; I praise in hymn at once Your burial and Resurrection,  
crying, Lord, glory to You.”*

*-Doxastikon of the Aposticha, Holy Friday Afternoon*