

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 22, Issue 1 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

January 2024

From
Father
John

“In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was Baptized by John in the Jordan.” (Mark 1:9)

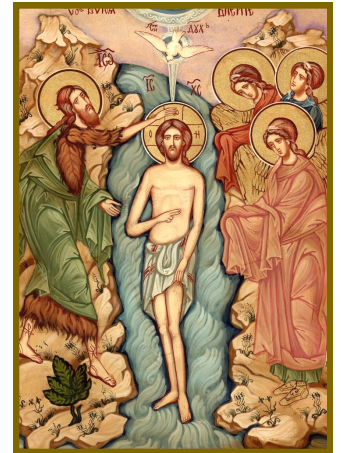
Beloved in Christ:

In the prayer for the Great Blessing of the Water on Holy Theophany written by St. Sophronios, Patriarch of Jerusalem, the Priest says: “Today the uncreated One is by His own will touched by the creature. Today the Prophet and Forerunner approaches the Master, but pauses in awe, seeing God’s condescension toward us.” In the Great Feast of our Lord Jesus Christ’s Nativity in the Flesh, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Incarnation of the Son of God, Who *“emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant.” (Philippians 2:7)* Twelve days later, our Holy Church commemorates the Baptism of Jesus Christ by the hands of St. John the Baptist *on January 6*: At the age of thirty, the Incarnate Son of God began His public ministry by again humbling Himself as a servant, this time going down into the Jordan River as the New Adam. Through this act of condescension, Christ regenerated the water in preparation for our Baptism into His Body – the Church – allowing us through this Holy Mystery to die to the fallen self, to become by grace a new creature, to be reconciled to Him and thereby partakers of His eternal Kingdom.

The petitions and prayers of the Great Blessing of the Water which is conducted on both the Eve of and the Feast Day of Holy Theophany mirror many of the words that are included in the Holy Mystery of Baptism: “That this water may be sanctified by the manifestation, power and effective indwelling of the Holy Spirit . . . that this water may become a source of immortality, a gift of blessing, a loosing from sins, for the healing of soul and body, and to fill every true need . . . Great are You, O Lord, and marvelous are Your works, and no word will suffice to praise Your wonders.” This connection is intentional, for we are reminded annually in this service that these waters provide for us a renewal of our Baptism – cleansing us, protecting us from evil, sanctifying us (both the temples of our bodies and our houses), illumining us with the Holy Spirit, and thus becoming a source of God’s mercy toward us. From ancient times, the Church has referred to Baptism as “Holy Illumination” and, emphasizing the connection between both, Theophany has been called “the Feast of Lights.”

As the Orthodox Church opens the floodgates for our spiritual renewal from the beginning of the New Year with this glorious Feast, we must also do our part. St. James wisely wrote, *“God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (James 4:6)* How can we expect to become people who are pleasing to God, and moreover sanctified, unless we humble ourselves before Him and others, just as He did? St. Paul offered practical words on how we can acquire the virtue of humility, in imitation of Christ: *“Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:3-4)* Admittedly, most of us have much to learn about what it means to be humble. However, as we strive to humble ourselves as Christ Himself did, we will by grace acquire many, many more virtues and become the holy people – namely, the “saints” – that He created us to be.

With Much Love for You – and Gratitude for God’s Mercy,



WORSHIP SCHEDULE

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

*All our Sunday Divine Services are Available on Live-Stream!
Access the Live-Stream on <http://youtube.com/vegasgreekorthodox>*

Monday, January 1/*The Circumcision of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ/St. Basil the Great/ St. Emmelia, Mother of Ss. Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, Makrina, and Peter of Sebaste/ St. Gregory, Bishop of Nanzianzos, Father of St. Gregory the Theologian*

9:00 am Orthros

10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

Epistle: Colossians 2:8-12

Gospel: Luke 2:20-21, 40-52

Friday, January 5/*Eve of the Theophany of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ/ Holy Martyrs Theopemptos and Theonas/Righteous Syncretike of Alexandria/St. Gregory of Akrita (Strict Fast)*

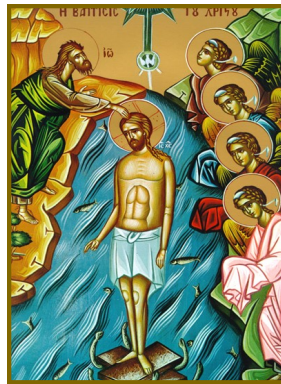
8:00 am Royal Hours

9:00 am Vespertal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

and Great Blessing of Water

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Gospel: Luke 3:1-18



Saturday, 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 and Great Blessing of Water

Epistle: Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7

Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17

Sunday, January 7/*Synaxis of St. John the Baptist: Our Parish Feast Day/Afterfeast of the Theophany of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ*

Orthros: Second Plagal Tone

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

Epistle: Acts 19:1-8

Gospel: John 1:29-34

Parish Council Oath of Office

Cutting of the Community Vasilopita

Fellowship: Philoptochos - Vasilopita

Sunday, January 14/*Leave-taking of Theophany of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ/ Holy Fathers Martyred at Sinai and Raitho/ Holy Martyr Agnes the Virgin*

Orthros: Grave Tone

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 21:1-14

Epistle: Ephesians 4:7-13

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17

Fellowship: Parish Council - Name Day Luncheon

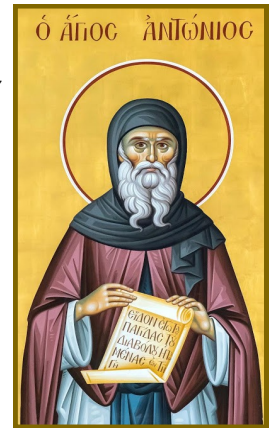
Wednesday, January 17/*St. Anthony the Great/ St. Anthony the New of Veria/ St. George the New Martyr of Ioannina/St. Theodosius the Emperor*

8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Hebrews 13:17-21

Gospel: Luke 6:17-23



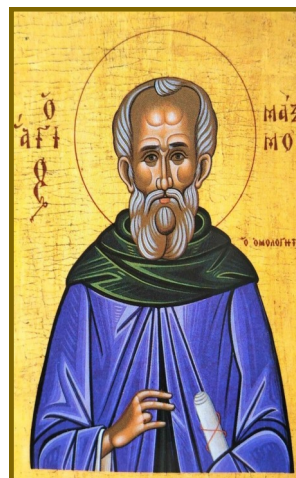
Thursday, January 18/*Ss. Athanasios and Cyril, Patriarchs of Alexandria/Holy Martyr Zenia*

8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Hebrews 13:7-16

Gospel: Matthew 5:14-19



Sunday, January 21/*12th Sunday of St. Luke/ St. Maximos the Confessor/ Holy Martyr Neophytos of Nicaea*

Orthros: Fourth Plagal Tone

Resurrection Gospel

(Orthros): John 21:14-25

Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11

Gospel: Luke 17:12-19

Memorial: Maverick

Leonidas Bombard (1 year)

Fellowship: Kali Parea

WORSHIP SCHEDULE (Continued from Page 2)

Sunday, January 28/15th Sunday of St. Luke/
Zaccheos Sunday/St. Ephraim the Syrian/
St. Isaac the Syrian, Bishop of Ninevah/
St. James the Righteous

Orthros: Tone One

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

Epistle: 1 Timothy 4:9-15

Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

Memorial: Giannoula Brogalias (40 days)

Fellowship: Philoptochos - in Memory of Giannoula Brogalias

Tuesday, January 30/Synaxis of the Three Holy Hierarchs: Ss. Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom/

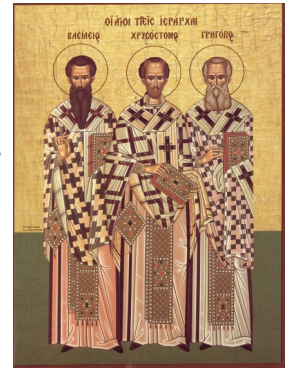
St. Hippolytos, Pope of Rome/Holy Martyr Athanasia and her three daughters

8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Hebrews 13:7-16

Gospel: Matthew 5:14-19



You are Invited to Join in
a Six Week
Adult Study with
Father John and Father Florin



*The Holy Mysteries:
A Scriptural, Theological and Liturgical Overview*

Wednesdays, January 10 - February 14
6:30 - 8:00 pm in Kokkos Hall

REQUEST FOR HOUSE OR BUSINESS BLESSING

Name _____ Phone (____) _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____ Email _____



*Please return the completed form to Father John or Karen.
We will contact you to schedule!*

For the blessing, please have a bowl of bottled water, a sprig of basil or rosemary, an icon or cross, and votive candle.

*If you or anyone in your household feels sick prior to the blessing,
please call to reschedule.*

**Parish
Council
Report**

Dear Father John, Father Florin, Deacon John, Ministries and Parishioners,
Happy New Year! Let us give thanks and pray that the upcoming New Year is blessed with happiness and good health.

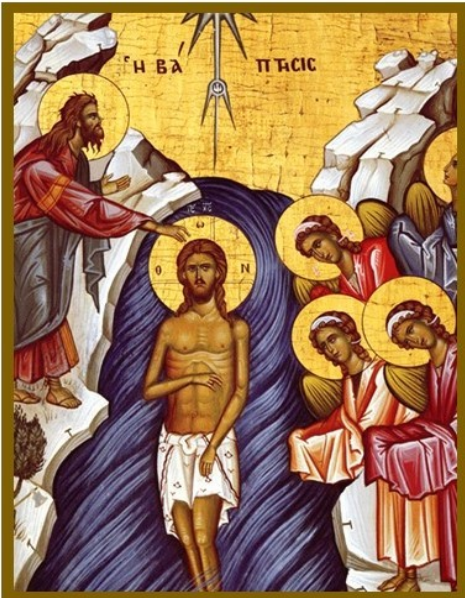
I want to thank every member of the Parish Council – past, present, and those who ran – for the support I was given throughout the year. Our newly elected members for 2024 are Telly Eliades, George Bochanis, Alexia Conger, Alex Mavros, and Steve Tzelalis, along with me. May God guide us in the right path and cast his blessings on our Church and Clergy. I pray that the entire congregation will continue to offer their services and support to the Parish Council and Clergy.

As your Parish Council President during 2023, I have grown closer to our Church by just knowing all of you. You have been genuine in offering your help and I am humbled. Our Ministries are strong under the direction of Father John, Father Florin and Deacon John. What a blessing it has been to have two newly ordained Clergy in one year! Our Ministry leaders are also some of the best in the Metropolis. I am proud to have served with their members. I again ask for forgiveness if I may have offended someone: Please know that it was not intentional – and know that you are all in my prayers daily.

Epiphany is upon us and the Name Day of our Church. There are some events scheduled, so please read your *Weekly Bulletin* to stay connected.

Again, thank you and may the Lord watch over St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Las Vegas!

Yours Always in Christ, with Much Love, John Fotopoulos, Parish Council President



Please join us for our . . .
***St. John the Baptist
Name Day Luncheon***
Sunday, January 14, 2024
Following Divine Liturgy
Panos Hall

Menu: Hamburgers, Hot Dogs, Assorted Chips

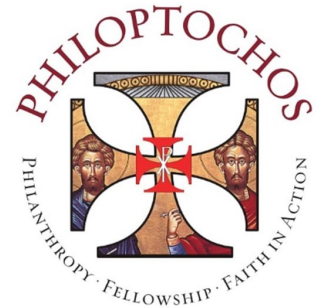
Dessert and Water

\$10 minimum per person

Proceeds benefit St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Philoptochos
News

“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” (John 14:27)



Dear Father John, Father Florin, dear Ladies Philoptochos Society Members, and fellow parishioners of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church,

Our Lord Jesus Christ has offered us His Peace. The reality of peace is that it is not the absence of chaos, but the presence of calm within the chaos. At this time in the world with so many horrific and terrible things that only men under the influence of the evil one can commit, we can only continue to pray, teach our children the True Faith, live as devoutly as we can and as you face the New Year, remember God has promised you, His Peace.

Once again, I would like to offer my sincere and deepest gratitude for the love and support that this entire Church Community has given to the Ladies Philoptochos Society and the many Christmas projects that go on from the last Sunday in October to the second Sunday in December. This year was a banner year for Christmas Pastry Sale, over 1000 boxes were sold! Whether you have sold, baked, cupped, packed, decorated and/or bought the pastries, the funds generated go back to support our Faith, Church – locally, regionally, nationally, and worldwide. We support our Church Ministries (as they have also supported us), we provide funds when needed for the Parish, local non-profits and of course, first and foremost, the traditions of our Faith.

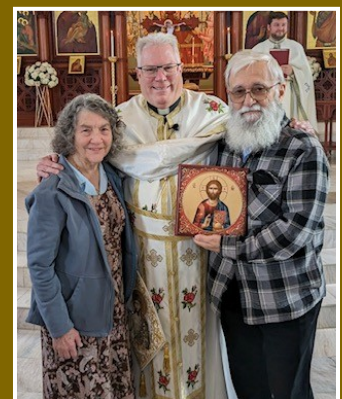
The first of these traditions will be *on Sunday, January 7, 2024*, with the Blessing and Cutting of the Community Vasilopita. We always look forward to seeing whom will receive the blessing for the coming year with the coin. Dear members, the Philoptochos will be hosting the Fellowship that day and we will be looking for Vasilopites to serve and sell after services. Do you have a secret family recipe? Do you bake a bread or a cake version? All are welcome to contribute to support St. Basil’s Academy, a nationally recognized school for Orthodox Students and those with other concerns. Look for more information in the *Weekly Word*.

For a full calendar of events and meetings for the Ladies Philoptochos Society, please contact me at bernadette.anthony@gmail.com or give me a call at (702) 218-3753. As always, please check out the *Weekly Word* emails for information and meeting dates. If you would like to learn more about the Ladies Philoptochos Society or would like to be a member or receive the *Weekly Word*, please join the Ladies Philoptochos Society – Panagia Chapter. We love to share our love our Faith, Traditions and Philanthropic works with you!

As we pray for Peace in the world, I pray for all of you to have Peace in your life in this coming year. And a little more Philoptochos of course!

Your Sister in Christ, Bernadette Anthony, Philoptochos President

With Gratitude to God for our Stewardship All-Stars: Demetrios Philippou, Peter Pappas and Cleopatra Wilson. And for the faithful servants, John and Marcie Karas.



Stewardship and Community Outreach

January already. Time for a fresh start. Opportunity for a new beginning. Time again when the Stewardship Committee figuratively has the Church's hat in its hands, pleading a 21st Century version of "Brother, can you spare a dime?" – a common request heard on the streets at the height of the Great Depression. Said plea was sent to you all via the 2024 Stewardship packets mailed last month.

Some ninety years later, that thin depression-era dime of 1933 has the equivalent purchasing power of about \$2.37, or in other words, today's measly \$1 bill could buy just four pieces of 1933 penny candy. Not entirely worthless, to be sure, but close to it! So, we need more than the support of one thin dime. In fact, I am going to go out on a limb and ask most of you for two thin dimes (or at least today's equivalent) because the Church must pay its bills using today's very, very thin dollars, and because "pennies worth" does not realistically pay for anything. However, since today's Church goes seldom deals in coins (or currency for that matter), I will switch to units of something most of us use daily – automobile fuel – and rephrase the plea to "Brother, can you spare a gallon?"

Gauging our 2023 charitable efforts by those of 1933, the sad fact we must face is that 90% of our Stewards committed an average of just 0.419 gallon per day (less than one 1933 dime). A sadder fact is that there are hundreds choosing to be engaged with our Church (to the extent of being on the mailing list) who did not commit to any 2023 giving, one thin dime or otherwise; and sadder still is the fact that there are thousands of Orthodox Christians living in the valley choosing to disregard the Church entirely unless a once-in-a-lifetime Sacrament (Baptism, Wedding, or Funeral) is desired, limiting support to small rare-occasion nominal fees.

Right then. Significant room for improvement. New Year, fresh start. Dream of a Church Community capable of funding its operating expenses solely through Stewardship. Dream of being able to apply Food Festival net proceeds wholly to site maintenance and improvements. Dream of surpluses large enough to cancel the need for annual fundraising drives! Supporting our Church with a commitment of four or five dollars (one gallon of gas) a day is surely within the capability of most household budgets. Dream on this: Using 2023 numbers, if those 90% (discussed above) raised their average commitment from 0.4 to 1.0 gallon per day equivalent, annual Stewardship would reach between \$887,943 and \$1,034,673. And, if the hundreds of mailing list non-participants will choose to engage and commit something equitable this year, the range would jump to between \$1.25 and \$1.5 million. Add in the potential of re-engaging those thousands of others in the valley, such that they desire to join the rest of us Stewards, and the mind boggles.

January is a time of new beginnings. It is a time when we can reflect on the past year and make changes for the future. It is also a time to fill up our tank and get ready for the journey ahead. Brother, can you spare a gallon?

Please prayerfully consider your 2024 Stewardship Commitments, fill out your forms and return them to the Church soon. Thank you.

Mike Beeler, for the Stewardship and Outreach Committee

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

5300 S. El Camino Road
Las Vegas, NV 89118

Rev. Father John Hondros
frjohn@vegasgreekorthodox.com

Rev. Father Florin Ristache
frflorin@vegasgreekorthodox.com

Rev. Deacon John Nixon
deaconjohn@vegasgreekorthodox.com

Karen Rawlinson
Administrative Assistant

Michelle Eugenio
Bookkeeper

Claudia Kasiotis
Housekeeping

Office Hours

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

Telephone: (702) 221-8245
www.vegasgreekorthodox.com

Parish Council: John Fotopoulos

Philoptochos: Bernadette Anthony

Stewardship & Community Outreach:
John Karas

Building & Maintenance:
Eleni Filios

Choir: Athena Mertes

Chanters & Youth Choir:
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School: Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers: Father John

GOYA:

Fr. Florin Ristache & Maha Habiba

Orthodox Family Fellowship:
Fr. Florin Ristache & April Rivera

Young Adults: Fr. Florin Ristache

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas

Mr. & Mrs.:

Fr. John & Presv. Maria,
Fr. Florin & Presv. Alexandra

Kali Parea: Demetrious Asim

Forerunners: Paula Kelesis

Orthodox Bookstore:
Paraskevi Santamaria

Greek Food Festival: Gus Flangas

Hellenic Historical Society:
Nitsa Filios, Cheryl Pandelis &
Susan Stamis

Photography & Live-Streaming:
Bill & Erin Bruninga

Building and Maintenance Committee

Blessed New Year and Xronia Polla! The month of December proved to be a busy one for sure. I am ecstatic to report that the new AC Units were finally delivered and installed. We can now have heat to keep us warm during these upcoming winter months as well as cool in the summer. But most importantly, provide a cost savings in our monthly electric bills. The crumbling wall above the Kouvouklion, as well as exterior columns, wall behind Pangari and most visible interior dome cracks were repaired (\$900). Eleven trees were removed, three additional donor trees were replaced (\$2700) along with 9 toilets and the baptismal font leak were also fixed (\$1200).

I wanted to make you all aware of the homeless problem we have had on property. As many of you noticed they had left a hospital bed along Hacienda, but we have found them squatting in the Pavilion area using the power outlets and starting fires to stay warm. We have cleaned up after them, turned the power off to the Pavilion, locked the panel and have contacted Michael Naft, our Commissioner as well as Metro about the problem. If you should see them on property, please do not engage them and let Father John know so that we can notify the police and have them trespassed.

Looking back on 2023, it is mind boggling to consider how much we have accomplished through your generous donations to the Building Committee Fund. Since my tenure, over \$350,000 in capital improvements were completed not including general maintenance items and landscaping (\$100,000). An additional close to \$54,000 of in-kind donations from personal contractor contacts were also procured coming to a grand total of **\$445,226.28**.

Basic Overview: (Building Fund Big Ticket)

Pews:	\$50,000
Carpets:	\$50,000
Parking Lot:	\$51,025
Roof:	\$31,875
AC Units	\$98,351
Gates:	\$6,900
Fountains	\$14,143
Bollards:	\$21,000
Conex:	\$7,000

General Operating Account

MISC REPAIRS \$47,452.73

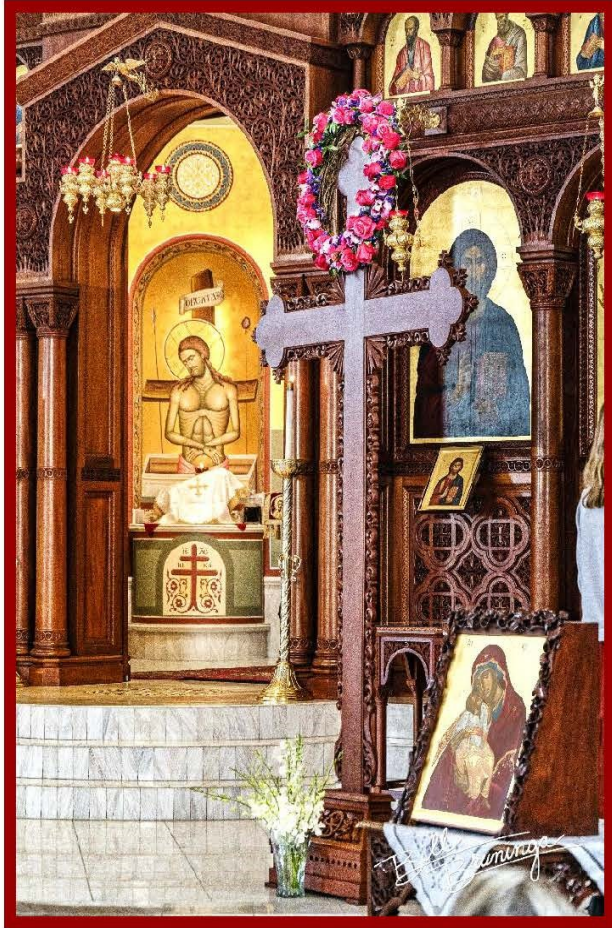
LANDSCAPING \$48,143.95

*****LABOR FOR EMPLOYEES IS NOT INCLUDED*****

The Building Committee's responsibility is and has been for capital improvement projects. The Committee's future focus will be: Exterior painting and stucco repair of the Hall, replacing the cork flooring in Panos and Kokkos Halls, and repainting the Church. Cost estimate for these much-needed projects is \$300,000 to \$500,000. Of the above mentioned projects, the repainting of our Hall and Church exteriors are the priority as we have never done so since we built both buildings in well over 30 years. The Hall bids themselves are coming in around \$125,000 alone. It is something that we desperately need to do. With that said, I would encourage you to think of donating to this project moving into the new year. As you all can see, it takes a lot of monies and time to keep our Church and its grounds and buildings looking their best. I hope that the New Year is filled with health, happiness and continued blessings for all of you and your families.

In Christ, Eleni Filios, Building Committee Chair

“With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.” (Isaiah 12:3)



Stewardship 2024

LET GOD'S LOVE GUIDE US

Let Us Love One
Another, That With One
Mind We May Confess.

Please detach and return to St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

+++++

Please Print Name(s), Address, Phone and Email

“Let God’s Love Guide Us”

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
Las Vegas, Nevada

As a blessed member of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, I/we commit to \$ _____
per week/month, with the total amount for the year 2024 of \$ _____.

Signed: _____

Signed: _____

Orthodox Christian: Yes No

Orthodox Christian: Yes No

Others sharing in the gift (children): _____

Ministry News

Church School



Hi Everyone! Christ is Born: Glorify Him! Happy New Year! Many blessing to you in 2024!

Just as a reminder, we are not accepting any new enrollments until the Fall at the start of the new school year. We had a great time with our Nativity Craft Day. A special thanks to all of our helpers. Please remind your children when they go up to receive Holy Communion to give their Baptismal name to the Fathers. I also would like to mention that the Divine Liturgy starts at 10:00 am, so please make it a point to come to Liturgy and not just Church School.

Family Worship Sunday: Sunday January 7, 2024, for the Community Vasilopita.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

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

Combined Youth and Parish Event

Dear Kids, Teenagers, and Parents,

Thank you all, including parents, who joined us for our Parish Christmas Tree decorating last month! And thank you also for all the delicious food we shared together!

This month we are planning on having fun by going *ICE SKATING!* Please, join our Youth Advisors, Maha Habiba and April Rivera, *on Friday, January 5 starting at 5:00 pm at The Rock Rink at Downtown Summerlin* for an evening of fun!

As customary, we will also take down the Parish Christmas Tree! Everyone is invited – all youth, their families and anyone else from the Parish who wants to help – to join us *on Friday, January 19, starting at 6:00 pm in Panos Hall.* We will put the Christmas Tree and all the ornaments back in their boxes, and back into storage – until we use them again at the end of the year. As usual, we will have great fellowship, with food, activities and discussions.

If you would like to contribute by bringing anything to the event, please contact Maha and April, our Youth Advisors.

For questions or to RSVP, please contact Fr. Florin at frflorin@vegaskgreekorthodox.com.

With Much Love in Christ, Father Florin, Maha Habiba and April Rivera, Youth Advisors



“Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.” (Philippians 2:12-13)

Greek Folk Dance

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! We had a very busy December! First off, our Adult Dance lesson was a hit! We had a fun night learning Kalamatiano from our very own Bessie Stavropoulos. We are planning on holding another lesson in January: Keep a look out in the *Weekly Bulletin* for an exact date.

We would also like to thank the community for the annual Christmas Caroling event! It was a huge success and we cannot underestimate our appreciation to all who welcomed us into their home and provided donations for our fundraiser. A special thank you to Antonia Tzelalis who works tirelessly with our dancers to help them learn the carols, in both Greek and English. Thank you also to the Tzelalis family for their help with our annual Fasolada Luncheon! It was delicious.

Finally, our dancers completed their Diakonia Service project by wrapping Christmas presents at the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth. It was a wonderful day of community and a lesson in service for our youth.

Our dancers continue to practice hard every week, getting ready to show off their moves at FDF in February! We look forward to showing our dance suites at the FDF Preview and Glendi in Panos Hall *on* Saturday, February 10, 2024! It will be a wonderful dinner event showcasing our youth and then celebrating our culture with LIVE Greek music from very talented musicians from Greece! Mark your calendars!

Much Gratitude, Folk Dance Board



“Let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ.” (Philippians 1:27)

Young Adults - 18 Years through Early 30s

Please join us *on Sunday, January 14, starting at 2:00 pm, at Suncoast Bowling Center, immediately after the Parish Luncheon.* We will go bowling and, at the same time, we will celebrate Jeremiah's Birthday!

Please let me know you are coming by contacting me at frflorin@vegasgreekorthodox.com. I look forward to meeting with all of you there!

In Christ, Father Florin

Mr. & Mrs.

Dear Couples of St. John the Baptist,

Blessed New Year! Please mark your calendars for *Saturday, January 27, starting at 5:00 pm*, when we will meet at the home of Deacon John and Diakonissa Elyn Nixon, whom we thank for their generous hospitality.

Please contact Karen for their address and to let us know what you will bring. As always, we are looking forward to seeing you all there for an amazing dinner and lively discussion.

Yours in Christ, Father John, Presvytera Maria, Father Florin and Presvytera Alexandra

Forerunners - Our Seniors Fellowship

Xronia Polla! The Forerunners enjoyed a delicious Christmas luncheon. We had a blast with our White Elephant Gift Exchange and Grand Raffle: Two \$100 gift prizes were awarded.

Please mark your calendars for the first luncheon of 2024 *on Monday, January 15 at 11:30 am in Kokkos Hall.* We will cut a Vasilopita together and ring in the New Year!

Love in Christ, Paula Kelesis for the Forerunners

Kali Parea - For the 40+ Crowd

Unfortunately, due to lack of tickets, we could not go to the "Elf - The Musical" last month.

This month we encourage everyone to participate as much as possible at the Liturgical Services in our beloved Church. It is a month full of important feasts for our Liturgical Tradition, that will unite us in the One Mystical Body of Christ.

We also encourage you to join us for the Parish Name Day Luncheon *on Sunday, January 14, following the Divine Liturgy.* Finally, we are asking for your assistance for the Kali Parea-sponsored Fellowship Hour *on Sunday, January 21.*

In February, we will resume our monthly gathering, so please stay tuned!

In Christ, Demetrious Asim, Kali Parea Advisor



DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE

wish one and all a happy, healthy New Year!

Καλή χρονιά! Χρόνια Πολλά! Με υγεία και καλή τύχη!

**Happy
New Year!**

From Father Florin

“According to the Fathers . . .” It is not uncommon in our Orthodox circles to start out a conversation with that line. But what do we really mean when we invoke “the Fathers?” It means that we are relying on a sacred and common thought. The Fathers spoke and acted in the same way. They are witnesses to Orthodoxy and their authority can secure the Orthodox Faith in all its aspects. There is a harmony amongst their writings that emerges as one becomes familiar with their writings, their lives, and the contexts in which they wrote. And in this harmony, the authority of the Fathers is expressed.

However, harmony is not the same as monotony. Each Church Father is as unique as you and I are, and their surrounding cultures, personal experiences, lifestyles, talents, and even preferences influenced what they said and did and how they said and did it. *St. Athanasios the Great, whom we commemorate on January 18*, is one of those Fathers whose life and words have shaped our Orthodox Faith. A few hundred words will never do any of our great Fathers justice, but their stories are inspiring us and by asking for their prayers, by reading their lives and exploring their works, we might also try to imitate them.

St. Athanasios was born around 298 in Alexandria, Egypt. A Coptic by birth, he received a classical Greek education in addition to a Christian education. He was influenced by the ascetic life of St. Anthony the Great and visited him and other desert monks throughout his life. As a teenager, he wrote two of his most famous books: *Against the Heathen* and *On the Incarnation*. In the first, he refutes the arguments of the pagans, and in the second and more famous work, he lays out the Christian story simply, describing man’s creation and fall and God’s response in the Incarnation, Death, and Resurrection of Christ.

Later, as an archdeacon, St. Athanasios became the foremost name at the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea among the defenders of the Christological position that Jesus Christ was *homoousios* or *of one essence* with God the Father. He held this claim in opposition to the Alexandrian presbyter Arius who emphasized the Divinity of the Father over the Son, claiming that there was a time before the Son was begotten, thus, the Son must have been created and was of a different essence than His Father and Creator. The Council of Nicaea, to affirm the Divinity of Christ, produced the Nicene Creed, the first official version of the Creed we recite today in every Divine Liturgy.

After the Council, the controversy of Arianism did not die quickly, and during his time as Bishop of Alexandria, St. Athanasios was exiled from his see five times for his theological position. During these times, St. Athanasios continued to defend the Orthodox understanding of Christ, and finally, in the last few years of his life, he was allowed to peacefully oversee the Alexandrian flock until he reposed in 373.

A few of St. Athanasios’ other contributions include numerous *treatises and letters* concerning Arianism, such as *History of the Arians* and *Against the Arians*; the first recorded *List of the 27 Books of the New Testament* as the Church uses them today; the *Biography of St. Anthony the Great*; a *Letter* describing the Christian usage of the Psalter.

In conclusion, some words of this great Father of the Church on our Lord Jesus Christ’s trampling down death by Death are revealing: *“The body of the Word, then, being a real human Body, in spite of its having been uniquely formed from a Virgin, was of itself mortal and, like other bodies, liable to death. But the indwelling of the Word loosed it from this natural liability, so that corruption could not touch it. Thus, it happened that two opposite marvels took place at once: The death of all was consummated in the Lord’s Body; yet, because the Word was in it, death and corruption were in the same act utterly abolished.”* (*On the Incarnation*, 49)

Fr. F. J. Pistache.



Orthodox Bookstore

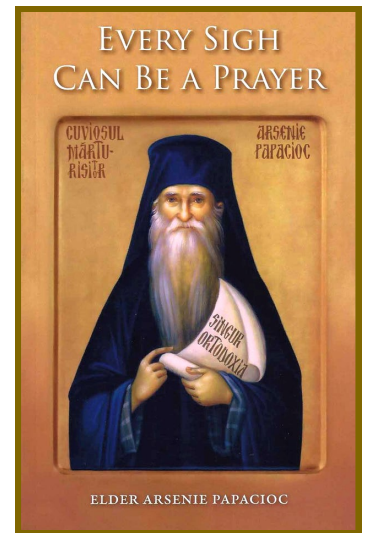
Happy New Year from the Bookstore!

Featured this month from St. Herman of Alaska Press, is *Every Sigh Can Be A Prayer* by Romanian Elder, Father Arsenie Papacioc. Published in 2023, this first edition is a collection of the Elder's teachings on the spiritual life.

From the back cover: Few people live life as fully as did Father Arsenie. Before his entry into monasticism at the age of thirty-two, he had been an athlete, artist, chemist, mayor, soldier, and political prisoner. Leaving behind all his worldly success, Father Arsenie dedicated himself to Christ as a monk and priest for over sixty years. He spent a total of fourteen years in the infamous Romanian prisons, being arrested over forty times in his life. Prison was a spiritual academy for him, a place where he learned of the intricacies and depths of man's soul, of the intrigues of the demons, and of God's presence in the intense suffering he experienced. After his release from prison, he spent a decade in various parishes and monasteries around Romania, bringing people back to the Church and feeding the faithful with his God-inspired wisdom.

Also in Bookstore about Father Arsenie is the title *Eternity in the Moment* by Sorin Alpetri. Looking forward to seeing you soon for your copy or other Bookstore needs!

Serving you with Love in Christ, Paraskevi Santamaria, Bookstore Director



Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisoun

Stavroula (Sahar) Lakkis (Adult Baptism) on December 15, 2023.
Godparent: Anastasia Giouzelis.

Efimia (Effie), daughter of Ben Thalrose and Annette Lexis,
on December 16, 2023. Godparent: Reni Georgieva.

James (Kevin) Bland (Adult Baptism) on December 22, 2023.
Godparent: William Vasilios Bruninga.

Holy Chrismation

Elizabeth (Jaden) Szukiewicz on December 17, 2023. Sponsor: Rahel Kiflezgi.

Yohannes Hagos on December 17, 2023. Sponsor: John G. Karas.

Fotini (Mebrat) Hagos on December 17, 2023. Sponsor: Marcie Karas.

Martha (Sherry) Bland on December 22, 2023. Sponsor: Erin Eleni Bruninga.

Marriage: Na Zisete

Paul Zimmerman and Julie Ann Mills on December 2, 2023. Koumbara: Janet Bryant.

**2023
Stewardship
Report
(as of 12/18/23)**

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$590,716 (\$547,321 in 2022)
 Stewardship Gifts Received: \$562,984 (\$516,758 in 2022)
 Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$27,732 (\$30,563 in 2022)
 Stewardship Families Pledged: 459 (418 in 2022)
 2023 Goal: \$600,000 . . . Keep the Pledges Coming!

**“WALK
IN
LOVE”
(Ephesians 5:2)**

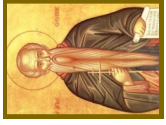
<u>Average Pledge</u>	<u>No. of Families</u>	<u>Amount Pledged</u>
\$1 - \$500	225	\$ 53,042
\$501 - \$1,000	89	\$ 70,504
\$1,001 - \$2,500	96	\$150,122
\$2,501 - \$5,000	27	\$ 96,504
\$5,001 - \$9999	15	\$ 91,634
\$10,000 & Above	7	\$128,910
Total Families	459	\$590,716

Church Account Summaries - November 2023

Nevada State Bank Accounts	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$43,759.04	\$68,701.62		18,556.44	\$52,240.84	\$41,663.38	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$22,335.49					\$22,335.49	
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$174,295.37	5,998.42		\$8,336.51	\$577.50	\$171,379.78	
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$264,477.00	\$4,750.41	\$220.00	\$118.77	\$4,532.30	\$264,796.34	
Building & Maintenance (B&M)	\$170,271.57	\$6.88		\$960.00		\$169,318.45	
Folk Dance Group	\$22,298.82	\$2,183.25		\$10.00	\$80.00	\$24,392.07	
Hellenic Historical Society	\$3,250.47			\$2,299.50		\$950.97	
Designated Funds	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Bookstore	\$36,704.25	\$4,426.00		\$118.77	\$3,529.30	\$37,482.18	
Restricted Funds	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
ICON	\$12,382.10	\$324.41	\$220.00		\$103.00	\$12,823.51	
Faithtree	\$1,626.39					\$1,626.39	
Youth Choir	\$2,989.18					\$2,989.18	
Church School	\$137,141.44					\$137,141.44	
GOYA	\$530.36					\$530.36	
Eyler Memorial Fund	\$20,090.15					\$20,090.15	
Emergency Fund	\$5,000.00					\$5,000.00	
Three Priests	\$47,573.13				\$900.00	\$46,673.13	Wall Repair
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
Designated, Restricted and Other Total	\$264,477.00	\$4,750.41	\$220.00	\$118.77	\$4,532.30	\$264,796.34	
Building and Maintenance Funds	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Building Fund	\$32,024.15	\$6.88		\$960.00		\$31,071.03	
Panos Flooring Repair	\$23,722.83					\$23,722.83	
Roof Appeal	\$10,283.22					\$10,283.22	
HVAC	\$95,351.50					\$95,351.50	
Giving Tree	\$8,889.87					\$8,889.87	
Lighting	\$0.00					\$0.00	
Building & Maintenance Funds Total	\$170,271.57	\$6.88	\$0.00	\$960.00	\$0.00	\$169,318.45	
Other Funds	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$63,670.97					\$63,670.97	as of 10.31.23
Commonwealth Investments (Icon)	\$118,663.82		\$9,329.83			\$127,993.65	Change in Investment
November 2023 Candles	\$5,867.65						
November 2023 Trays	\$4,527.00						
Total November 2023 Candles & Trays	\$10,394.65						



JANUARY 2024 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

	1 Circumcision of Christ/St. Basil the Great 9:00 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil	2 4:30 pm Greek School	3	4	5 Eve of Theophany 8:00 am Royal Hours 9:00 am Vespers Liturgy and Great Blessing of Water 5:00 pm All Youth Ice Skating at Rock Rink	6 Holy Theophany 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy and Great Blessing of Water
7 St. John the Baptist (Parish Feast Day) 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Parish Council Oath Community Vasilopita	8 11:30 am Forerunners Luncheon in Kokkos Hall 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting in Library	9 4:30 pm Greek School 6:00 pm Philoptochos Board TBD	10 6:30 pm Adult Study in Kokkos Hall: The Holy Mysteries	11	12	13
14 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Parish Luncheon 2:00 pm Young Adults at Suncoast Bowling Alley	15 11:30 am Forerunners Luncheon in Kokkos Hall 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting in Library	16 4:30 pm Greek School	17 St. Anthony 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:30 pm Adult Study in Kokkos Hall	18 Ss. Athanasios and Cyril 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	19 6:00 pm All Youth Christmas Tree Take Down in Panos Hall	20
21 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 12:15 pm Philoptochos General Meeting in Kokkos Hall	22	23 4:30 pm Greek School	24 6:30 pm Adult Study in Kokkos Hall	25	26	27 5:00 pm Mr. and Mrs. at Deacon Nixon's Home
28 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	29	30 Three Hierarchs 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 4:30 pm Greek School	31 6:30 pm Adult Study in Kokkos Hall	Folk Dance Practices: Liondaria ~ Sundays 12:30 - 1:15 pm in Foyer Primary ~ Sundays 12:30 - 2:00 pm, Tuesdays 6:00 - 7:30 pm in Kokkos Aetopoula ~ 1:00 - 2:45 pm in Panos, Tuesdays 6:00 - 7:30 pm in Panos		

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



*Incline Your ear, O Lord, and hearken to us,
Who condescended to be Baptized in the
Jordan and sanctified the waters. Bless us all,
as in the bowing of our heads we denote our
servitude. And count us worthy to be filled
with Your sanctification by partaking and
sprinkling of this water; and let it be for us,
Lord, for soundness of soul and body.*

*For You are the sanctification of our souls
and bodies, and to You we offer up glory,
thanksgiving and worship, as to Your Father
Who is from everlasting and Your all-holy,
good and life-giving Spirit, now and always
and forever and ever. Amen.*

*(Final Prayer, Great Blessing of Water on
Holy Theophany)*