

# The Desert



# Messenger

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

Volume 18, Issue 1 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

January 2020

**From  
Father  
John**

Beloved in Christ:

As we enter by God's good grace a new decade, I offer my heartfelt prayer that each and every one of us may be granted a Blessed New Year! May 2020 bring us a renewed and clearer vision for what is truly important in this life – especially in a world that has lost its spiritual and moral focus. To greatly assist our 2020 vision, our holy Orthodox Church provides us the perfect way to begin the New Year: For our spiritual benefit, let us make every effort to attend and participate in the divine services on January 1 (Circumcision of Christ and St. Basil), January 5 (Eve of Theophany), January 6 (Holy Theophany) and January 7 (St. John the Baptist, our Parish Feast Day) – as well as those offered for the many Saint's days this month. Most of the services during the first week focus on the commemoration of the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Jordan River by the hands of our Parish patron, St. John the Forerunner.

In the Orthodox Tradition, the Feast of our Lord's Nativity in the flesh is indelibly linked to the Feast of His Baptism. Following a 40 day Advent fast, the Church calendar prescribes a fast-free period from December 25 through January 4, with a one-day strict fast on January 5 in preparation for the Feast of Theophany on the following day. Moreover, the prayers for the Great Blessing of the Waters on Holy Theophany also underscore the unity of these two Major Feast Days: *"We glorify You, only begotten Son of God, born of the Father without a mother, and of a mother without father. For in the previous feast we saw You an infant; in this present one we see You complete, perfect, manifested from the perfect God."* (Prayer of St. Sophronios, Great Blessing of Waters at Theophany)

The Feast of our Lord's Baptism is appropriately called Epiphany (Greek for *appearing, revealing or manifestation*) or, more accurately, *Theophany* (*appearing of God*) – for this event, as recorded in the Gospels, constitutes the beginning of Jesus' public ministry and through His Baptism all those present, including the angels, were in awe of the revelation of the Trinitarian God: *"In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. And when He came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove; and a Voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.'"* (Mark 1:9-11)

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."

I pray each of us will make a determined effort to attend these many services in early January, that through the Holy Eucharist and the added blessing of the Holy Water, we may receive Christ, Who is our Font of immortality, Gift of sanctification, and Remission of our sins.

With love and in the service of our Lord,

*Father John*

## WORSHIP SCHEDULE

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

Wednesday, January 1/*Circumcision of Christ/  
St. Basil the Great*

*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

Thursday, January 2/*St. Seraphim of Sarov*

*8:00 am Orthros*

*9:00 am Divine Liturgy*

Epistle: Hebrews 5:4-10

Gospel: John 3:1-15

Sunday, January 5/*Eve of Theophany  
(Strict Fast)*

*8:45 am Orthros*

*10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom  
and Great Blessing of Water*

Orthros: Tone Four

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:1-10

Epistle: 2 Timothy 4:5-8

Gospel: Mark 1:1-8

*Parish Council Oath of Office*

Monday, January 6/*Holy Theophany of Our Lord,  
God and Savior Jesus Christ*

*8:00 am Orthros*

*9:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great and  
Great Blessing of the Water*

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

Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17

Tuesday, 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

Sunday, January 12/*Leave-taking of Theophany/  
Martyr Tatiana/Hieromartyrs Basil and John*

Orthros: Tone Five (First Plagal)

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:11-18

Epistle: Ephesians 4:7-13

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17

*Cutting of the Community Vasilopita*

*St. John the Baptist Name Day Luncheon*

Friday, January 17/*St. Anthony the Great*

*8:00 am Orthros*

*9:00 am Divine Liturgy*

Epistle: Hebrews 13:17-21

Gospel: Luke 6:7-23

Saturday, January 18/*Ss. Athanasios and Cyril,  
Patriarchs of Alexandria*

*8:00 am Orthros*

*9:00 am Divine Liturgy*

Epistle: Hebrews 13:7-16

Gospel: Matthew 5:14-19

Sunday, January 19/*12th Sunday of Luke/St.  
Makarios the Great of Egypt/St. Mark of Ephesus*

Orthros: Tone Six (Second Plagal)

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

Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11

Gospel: Luke 17:12-19

Saturday, January 25/*St. Gregory the Theologian,  
Archbishop of Constantinople*

*8:00 am Orthros*

*9:00 am Divine Liturgy*

Epistle: Hebrews 7:26-28; 8:1-2

Gospel: John 10:9-16

*5:30 pm Great Vespers*

Sunday, January 26/*15th Sunday of Luke/  
Zaccheos Sunday/Translation of the Relics of  
St. John Chrysostom*

Orthros: Grave Tone

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

Epistle: 1 Timothy 4:9-15

Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

Wednesday, January 29/*The Three Holy Hierarchs:  
Ss. Basil, Gregory and John Chrysostom*

*5:00 pm Orthros*

*6:00 pm Divine Liturgy*

Epistle: Hebrews 13:7-16

Gospel: Matthew 5:14-19

Thursday, January 30/*The Three Holy Hierarchs  
(Observed 1/29)*

*“Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away  
the sin of the world!” (John 1:29)*

## *SUNDAY SCHEDULE*

### *JANUARY 5: EVE OF THEOPHANY - PARISH COUNCIL OATH OF OFFICE*

Ushers: Gus Flangas, Skip Ruffner, Telly Eliades, Spiros Filios, Demetrious Asim  
and John Koutsulis

Fellowship: Folk Dance Ministry

### *JANUARY 12: COMMUNITY VASILOPITA*

Ushers: Stacy Mavrantonis, Alex Mavros, Mark Karris, Justina Szukiewicz, John Matsis  
and Peter Papas

Fellowship: St. John the Baptist Name Day Luncheon

### *JANUARY 19*

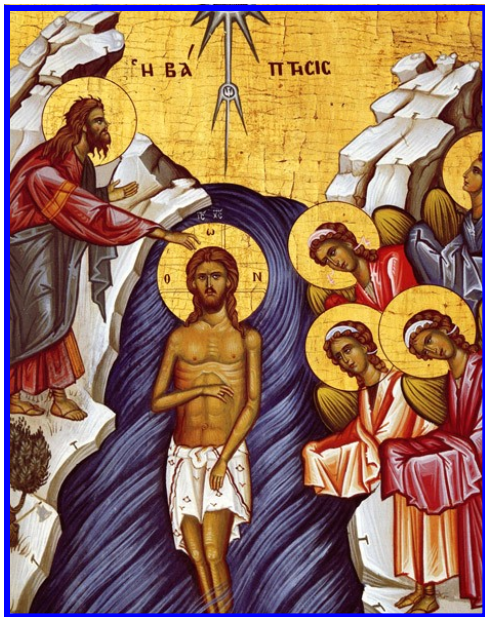
Ushers: Telly Eliades, Demetrious Asim, Gus Flangas, John Koutsulis, Spiros Filios and Skip Ruffner

Fellowship: Daughters of Penelope

### *JANUARY 26*

Ushers: Peter Papas, Justina Szukiewicz, Alex Mavros, Stacy Mavrantonis, Mark Karris  
and John Matsis

Fellowship: Forerunners, Seniors of St. John the Baptist



Please join us for our . . .

## *St. John the Baptist Name Day Luncheon*

*Sunday, January 12, 2020*

*Following Divine Liturgy*

*Panos Hall*

*Menu: Greek Salad, Chicken Gyro with Tzatziki,  
Greek Fries, Baklava and Coffee  
Cash Bar*

*\$15 per Person ~ Benefits St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church*

*Tickets available at the door*

*For table of 10 (\$150), please see Karen at the Church Office*

## Parish Council Report

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. As we come to the end of the year and enjoy the Christmas Holidays, it is time to be thankful for all the Blessings bestowed upon us and our Church Community. We sincerely hope that your Christmas Holidays are filled with happiness and laughter and in the upcoming year, and may God Bless you, keep you protected and in good health.

Moving forward into 2020, while realizing how far we have come in the past 60 years, it is vital that we continue with a solid vision for the future. To cultivate and advance this vision, we are going to have “**Town Hall Parish Vision Meetings**” in the new year to receive input from everyone for developing and implementing a coherent and sustainable **Vision**, harmonious with our Faith, to ensure the future of our Church Community. To help us in this effort, we will have support from the Metropolis at one or two of these meetings to help us engineer and bring into existence our **Vision**. This is an extremely critical undertaking and we fervently hope that those who have a stake in our future will attend and contribute their feedback.

Of particular note, going forward with a vision starts with **Stewardship**. In addition to our Faith, Stewardship is a major foundation upon which our Church is based, and is the key to the operation of our Church. In contemplating your Stewardship contributions, please remember the many Blessings you have received and thoughtfully look to “Giving Back,” with your time, talents and treasures. Stewardship provides us with a place to worship in our Faith, a place to enjoy and participate in the Sacraments, a place to enjoy Fellowship, a place to enjoy and participate in the Ministries, and a place to have a sense of Community. As you look at your 2020 Stewardship Pledge, please pray and look into your heart, and contribute not only with your time and talents, but also with your treasures. It takes contributions from everyone to keep our Church going.

Although this has been communicated over and over, it still bears repeating: Stewardship contributions of treasures should cover 100% of the Church’s operating budget, and to state the obvious, it most definitely has not. Although for 2019 we had the best year ever in terms of Stewardship contributions, and although we passed a minor Stewardship milestone of covering over 50% of our operating expenses with Stewardship, we still have very far to go. We absolutely need to get to 100%. The simple truth is that over the last 20 to 25 years, because of the perpetual shortfalls in Stewardship contributions, we have had to apply funds to cover these shortfalls, which should have used for capital expenditures. Because capital funds were used to cover these operating account shortfalls, there was little left to cover much needed repairs and maintenance of our facilities and grounds. For too many years we have essentially been putting band-aids on gushing wounds, on a piecemeal basis, to keep the facilities and grounds functioning. However, we can no longer continue to sustain this effort in the same manner. Fixing and maintaining our facilities and grounds need to be part of our **Vision**, and it plainly starts with Stewardship. Getting our Stewardship to cover 100% of our operating expenses will free up much needed funds initially earmarked for capital expenditures; in turn, this will allow us to address head-on the many immediate needs affecting the viability of our facilities and grounds, which have been neglected over the years due to inadequate funding.

To put it all into perspective, let us look at what specifically needs to be done. In the coming year, we will absolutely need to put a new roof on the Church before our Iconography and other portions of the interior are ruined. We have managed to keep the roof in fairly decent working order over the past several years through a series of repairs; however, we are rapidly coming to the point where these types of repairs will no longer fill the bill. Because our facilities are aging, in the very near future we will need to accomplish many other tasks, including but not limited to: painting the exteriors of the Church and Community Center; fixing and painting the interiors of the Church and Community Center; repairing and striping the parking lots; replacing much of the roof on the Community Center; refurbishing the floors in Panos and Kokkos Halls; stripping the floors in the kitchen and applying an industrial grade sealant; repairing and overhauling the fountains; refinishing the stained concrete at the entrance to the Church; replacing the post lights near the entrance to the Church; and completely redoing and replacing the irrigation system for the landscaping. Regarding the last item, we estimate we are losing several thousand dollars a year due to our irrigation system leaking underground.

*(Continued on Page 5)*



## Parish Council Report *(Continued from Page 4)*

Also, in the next few years, we will need to look at replacing the HVAC: We have managed to keep the HVAC working, but it is only a matter of time before the system will simply have to be replaced. It is utterly mind boggling to consider how much has to be done. Having Stewardship covering 100% of the operating expenses will allow us to get most of these things done over the next two to three years. Please keep this all in mind when you ponder your “Gift” of Stewardship.

We just had our Parish Council elections and we want to thank all those who ran for a seat on the Council. We had nine people running for the six available seats on the Council. This was really great to see because it clearly shows that more and more people are becoming involved in the many facets of our Church, and we certainly hope this trend continues. Reelected to Council are Gus Flangas, John Matsis and Stacy Mavrantonis. Newly elected to the Council are Peter Papas, Telly Eliades and Alex Mavros. The Parish Council *Oath of Office* will be **on Sunday, January 5** during the Divine Liturgy. We would like to thank and acknowledge our departing Council Members – Bessie Stavropoulos, Adam Bieker and John Nicholas – for their many contributions and selfless hours: We really appreciate their service and look forward to working with them on other projects in the coming year.

We recently had our annual All-Star Luncheon to kick off our 2020 Stewardship drive and to honor three Parishioners who have contributed significantly to our Church over the years. This year we were privileged to honor three amazing Parishioners – Constantinos Fountas, Sophia Konsolakis and Efstathios “Steve” Tzelalis – for all they have done and continue to do.



Please keep in mind that we have the *St. John the Baptist Name Day Luncheon* scheduled for **Sunday, January 12**, immediately following the Liturgy and the Cutting of the Community Vasilopita. We look forward to seeing you all there.

We recently have undertaken an effort to put together a new Parish Photo Directory. We truly believe that this is something very important to the Community. It is being spearheaded by Bill and Erin Bruninga, who have generously volunteered their time and efforts to make this a reality. All sittings for your pictures will be in Panos Hall after Liturgy on Sundays. To help with this process, we will be sending you a link around one to two weeks prior to your sitting to schedule your sessions. It should only take around five minutes of your time to have your pictures taken. Please support this effort and do not wait until the last minute to have your photos taken.

In closing, we want to again thank the various Church ministries and organizations, and the many individuals for all the work they do and have done to help us secure the future of the Church. It clearly takes a lot of work from the entire community to maintain our Church. Please step forward whenever you can and pitch in. Thank you and may God Bless.

**In Christ, Gus Flangas, Parish Council President**

## Philoptochos News

My Dearest Sisters of Philoptochos and the St. John Community,

As 2019 comes to an end, let us cherish the memories and great accomplishments we have enjoyed. True happiness is obtained through acts of kindness filled with love that we share with our family, friends and neighbors. May this New Year be filled with many blessings to each and every one.

**Christmas Pastry Sale:** This year we prepared 905 packages of delicious Greek pastries. The pastry boxes turned out beautiful with a variety of beautiful ribbons. We are grateful to all our volunteers – men, women and children – who came and helped with baking, packaging and decorating, as well as those who have purchased them! It was a group effort in an atmosphere of wonderful energy and love. A special thank you to our pastry sales committee, Vicky Palivos and Dora Hart. So far we have sold approximately 710 boxes of pastries and feel confident we will sell the remaining boxes. Please reach out to Vicky, Dora or me if you would like to purchase pastries. The pastries make a wonderful gift and a beautiful addition to any dinner table for the holidays, while also supporting our Philoptochos charities.

**Annual Christmas Party:** This year the Philoptochos Christmas Party was held at Bonefish Grill. It was a beautiful and well attended event, filled with laughter, Christmas spirit, fellowship and love. This year we not only had our very own Mike Beeler as Santa Claus but we were double excited to have Carolyn Beeler as Mrs. Santa Claus – thank you both! Mr. and Mrs. Claus were a special addition to our evening, and we took a lot of great pictures with them. We had Greek trivia as well as a fun raffle with great gifts. We collected donations for gift cards that will be given to the people in need in our community. I would like to express our appreciation to Jelena Boskovic for being our gracious chairwoman, as well as her daughter, Vasilija, for her participation and enthusiasm. We were honored to present Presvytera Olenka with a gift card for the upcoming birth of the third Ramos child.



**Community Christmas Card:** Thank you to the 115 people who participated in our Christmas Card, which is currently in production. The card will be mailed along with the Church Calendar to every family in our community – please keep a lookout for the beautiful card! Many thanks to Bill Bruninga and Bessie Stavropoulos for offering their talents annually for our card, as well as to Andrea Takas and Tami Stefanatos, for spearheading this project. Our sincere appreciation also to Karen Rawlinson for her willing assistance.

Following are our January events:

**Sunday, January 12 – Community Vasilopita and St. John Name Day Luncheon.** In celebration of St. Basil, Philoptochos provides large loaves of Vasilopita (sweet bread with a coin inside) made by Dora Hart and friends. Each year our priests bless the loaves, which are then distributed to all our ministries and organizations, and to all present at the end of the service. It is customary for each person receiving a piece to offer a donation benefitting St. Basil's Academy. Following Liturgy and the Vasilopita service, please join us for a Luncheon celebrating the Name Day of our Church and hosted by the Parish Council. We will need eight women to help serve food, coffee and dessert at the luncheon; please text or email me if you are available to assist.

*(Continued on Page 7)*

## *Stewardship and Community Outreach*

*For want of a nail the shoe was lost. For want of a shoe the horse was lost.  
For want of a horse the rider was lost. For want of a rider the message was lost.  
For want of a message the battle was lost. For want of a battle the kingdom was lost.  
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.*

Big things were accomplished by our community in 2019. Among them were the Phase III Iconography and Mortgage Retirement projects, both completed ahead of our Parish's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration. Accomplishing these projects would never have happened without setting goals, making plans, and taking actions.

To accomplish big things, we must set desired goals for our community. To reach goals, we must take productive steps in the right direction. To take steps, we must create an achievable plan and chart a course of action. To create a plan, we must have a supportive budget which can drive those actions; and to have a budget, we must have strong stewardship support. This sounds a lot like the old proverb, "For want of a nail . . . the kingdom was lost" – doesn't it? Ignoring seemingly unimportant things might have grave consequences.

Friends, we must realize and acknowledge that our stewardship "nails" of time, talent, and treasure can provide vital support for God's Kingdom here in Las Vegas, Nevada. Having robust stewardship commitment levels will help address many things, perhaps some seemingly unimportant, but all contributing toward having a beautiful campus, maintained facilities, and vibrant parish community for ourselves *and* for future Orthodox faithful of the next sixty years and beyond.

In the coming months, we will be working on future goals for our community through a series of planned Vision 2020 meetings. Please watch for future announcements. In the meantime, I'll close with an appeal to all those who have been caught up with the busyness of the season and have not yet submitted a completed 2020 Stewardship Pledge (or paid 2019 pledges in full): Please do so at your earliest convenience – for most assuredly, God's Kingdom is a kingdom we don't wish lost.

In Christ, Mike Beeler, Stewardship and Outreach Committee



Through our 2020 Stewardship Pledge, let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God! Please return your 2020 Pledge Card to benefit your Church and your soul. Thank You!

## *Philoptochos News (Continued from Page 6)*

**Sunday, January 19 – General Meeting.** Our first General Meeting in 2020 will follow the Divine Liturgy in Kokkos Hall, and all Parish women are invited to attend. We are very excited to welcome our new members who can bring in fresh ideas and energy to our already talented and wonderful ladies.

Coming up in February:

**Sunday, February 2 – Go Red for Women!**

**Sunday, February 9 – Departed Members Memorial.**

**Sunday, February 23 – Kids 'N' Cancer Presentation and Collection.**

**Saturday, February 29 – Apokreas Mardi Gras at 6:00 pm in Panos Hall.**

I express my sincerest thanks to our wonderful board, our chairwomen, and all our members for your efforts, time, donations and participation, which contribute to the success of all our efforts. Together we can accomplish so much in 2020! With Love in Christ, Benita Beeman, Philoptochos President





The Church Music Ministry of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of  
San Francisco Presents:

## THEOTOKOS, THE HOPE OF CHRISTIANS

A weekend-long Church Music Institute for Youth and Adults focusing  
on the hymnography of the Presentation of the Lord into the Temple.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, LAS VEGAS  
JANUARY 24-26, 2020

### Featuring

Masterclass by John Michael Boyer  
Workshops by Samuel Herron

### Theological reflections

Fr. John Hondros and Fr. Seraphim Ramos

**Registration:** \$75/Adult  
\$30/Under-18

Registration Form: <https://tinyurl.com/y54xzflm>

*Self-Accommodations. For More Information, visit [sfchurchmusic.org](http://sfchurchmusic.org).*

*This CMI has been funded in part by the generous support of the National Forum of  
Greek Orthodox Church Musicians.*







Please Join us for an Evening of  
Dinner and Dancing at our

# Glendí

Featuring Live Musicians from Greece

\$20

Kids Under 5 are Free

Panos Hall

Saturday, February 8, 2020 at 6:00 pm.

Cash Bar

All Proceeds to Benefit Greek Folk Dance Ministry

## Youth and Family Ministries

### Church School

Christ is Born! Glorify Him! Happy New Year and a Very Blessed 2020!

We are having a great year so far, and learning a ton of new things along with the Creed. Our classes are full and the students have learned so much about our wonderful Faith. We are still accepting registrations, so please have your kids join our classes.

*We will have Family Worship Days (no Church School) on Sunday, January 5 for the Eve of Holy Theophany and on Sunday, January 12.* On January 5 we encourage families to worship together for the Divine Liturgy and the Great Blessing of the Water. On January 12, following Liturgy we will have the annual Blessing and Cutting of the Community Vasilopita (St. Basil's Bread). Please worship as a family on these dates and participate in these ancient Orthodox traditions.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

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

### Youth Choir News



Blessings for a Healthy and Happy New Year! We hope you all enjoy the 12 days of Christmas leading up to Holy Theophany!

The Youth Choir will chant the Divine Liturgy *on Sunday, January 19*. Please be at the front right side *promptly at 9:45 am* so we can start the Doxology with a full group.

We are excited to host in our Parish a Church Music Institute *on January 24 – 26*, which is open to all Church musicians, including the Youth Choir, and anyone else who is interested! The workshops will focus on the hymns of the Feast of the Entrance of the Lord into the Temple, which is celebrated on February 2. (See flyer on Page 8.)

I strongly encourage all of our Youth Choir members to participate. Please refer to the flyer on Page 8 or contact me for more information.

With Love in Christ, Presvytera Maria

### Greek Folk Dance

Happy New Year!

We want to thank all the wonderful families who opened up their homes for our annual Christmas Caroling and those who made generous donations. The kids who participated had a delightful time and we truly appreciate all the support for our ministry. We also want to thank the Tzelalis, Taxopoulos and Eliades families for donating and cooking the wonderful fasolada and fresh bread for our December Fellowship. Everyone agreed it was delicious!

We will be hosting a *Glendi* with LIVE GREEK MUSIC *on Saturday, February 8* in Panos Hall (see flyer on Page 9). This is always a fun event and gives us all the opportunity to dust our dancing shoes and celebrate our culture! Tickets are only \$20 for dinner and entertainment, and will go on sale starting in January. There will also be a cash bar. Please plan on attending as we would love to see Panos Hall full!

We continue to prepare for FDF and we look forward to sharing our hard work with everyone at our annual *Preview Luncheon*, which will be *on Sunday, February 9* in Panos Hall following Liturgy.

With Much Gratitude, The Folk Dance Board



## GOYA ~ For Teenagers

Happy New Year!

We want to thank you for your amazing work in December setting up and decorating our Parish Christmas Tree and for serving the children suffering from the effects of homelessness in our community at the Rescue Mission. We will cap off the year with a wonderful *Christmas Party on Friday, December 27 at 6:00 pm* at the Likourinou Home!



This month we will have *GOYA Night on Sunday, January 19 from 5:00 to 7:00 pm* in Panos Hall. Along with a meal and spiritual discussion, we will take down and store our Christmas Tree until next year.

We will also be joining the OFF Ministry for some ice skating fun at the *Las Vegas Ice Center* (9295 W. Flamingo Rd. #130, Las Vegas) *on Sunday, January 26 from 1:00 to 3:00 pm*. Skate rental is \$10 for two hours which is the "Free Skate" slot in the ice schedule for Sunday afternoon. There are concessions available for food and drinks as well. We should arrive at the Las Vegas Ice Center *by 12:45 pm* to try on and rent ice skates, and to fully enjoy the two hour session. We hope to see you at both events, and look forward to a beautiful year of 2020.

With Love in Christ, June Likourinou and Kouli Pouridis, GOYA Advisors

## Orthodox Family Fellowship

May 2020 be blessed for all of you! We ended another successful calendar year filled with many fun OFF events we organized – and we are especially grateful for our wonderful Christmas meal and gift exchange at Amy's home.

We will start off 2020 by gathering at the *Las Vegas Ice Center on Sunday, January 26 from 1:00 to 3:00 pm* – please arrive *by 12:45 pm* so we can maximize our time together. This particular venue is minutes from our Church and is one of most popular activities. Where else to spend winter in Vegas if not on the ice? We look forward to seeing you, your children and your friends there.

In Christ, Amy Khuri and Jelena Boskovic



## Greek Language Program



Happy New Year! Καλή Χρονιά!

The kids had a fun Christmas Party and book exchange on the last day of the first semester of Greek School. We will resume classes *on Tuesday, January 7*. We are all looking forward to another semester!

Paula Kelesis, Greek School Director (702) 249-4740

*"Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted." (Galatians 6:1)*



# Adult and Young Adult Ministries

## *Young Adults*

Blessed New Year of 2020!

We look forward to a great year together going forward and pray that all of our YA members will continue to participate, grow in friendship, and most importantly grow in Christ. We want to thank John and Eileen Koutsulis, who will open their home for our *Young Adult Christmas Party on Saturday, December 28 at 6:00 pm!*

In January we will be having a nice pizza dinner together at Sammy's Woodfired Pizza (7345 Arroyo Crossing Pkwy. #100, Las Vegas) *on Saturday, January 11 at 6:00 pm.* Please RSVP with Father Seraphim so we can give the restaurant a headcount. Please come ready for an engaging discussion and some great food.

In Christ, Niko Asim and Melissa Fleetwood, YA Advisors

## *Mr. & Mrs. - A Couples Fellowship*



Dear M&M's,

To kick off the New Year we will be heading to Thomas and Melissa Fleetwood's home *on Saturday, January 18 at 6:00 pm.*

Please bring a side dish, drinks, dessert, or salad to share – and RSVP with the Fleetwoods or Father Seraphim for directions.

Yours in Christ, Father John, Father Seraphim, and their Presvyteres

## *Kali Parea - "Good Company" for the 40+ Crowd*

For the month of January, Kali Parea is joining the fellowship of our brothers and sisters in Christ at the *St. John the Baptist Parish Name Day Luncheon on Sunday, January 12*, following Divine Liturgy and Vasilopita Cutting. The luncheon is \$15 per person, and we are hoping to purchase a table or two: Please see Demetri on Sundays or Karen during the week.

Our Parish will also be hosting the *Church Music Institute on January 24 – 26* (see flyer on Page 8). Please come out and show your support. Further details will be announced in the *Weekly Bulletin*.

Love in Christ, Lydia Joy Wolfenbarger for Kali Parea

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

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Santa Claus arrived at St. John Church for our Forerunners Christmas Party – in the form of Nick Katris. We thank Nick immensely for doing this for many years and contributing to the success of our party. We were also very fortunate to have with us one of the original dueling piano players, who performed Christmas Carols for us. Our sumptuous feast was absolutely delectable, and we are grateful for our superb culinary crew. Our gift exchange was also fun, adding to the joy of our holiday party.

Our next luncheon will be *on Monday, January 13* – and we will celebrate the New Year 2020 by cutting our Vasilopita. Please also note that the Forerunners will host Fellowship *on Sunday, January 26*. Please remember to bring goodies for all to share and help out.

January is also our membership month, and to meet our rising costs our dues will increase to \$20 per year. Cynthia Alford is our membership chairwoman and will be collecting your dues. If you will be paying by check, please leave the pay to line blank as we have a special stamp for our ministry.

Ruth Plentzas in Canada and Dina Delalis in Chicago send everyone their very best for the holiday season.

Our prayers, love and wishes go to all our homebound and hospitalized friends.

With Love in Christ, Victoria Xikis for the Senior Forerunners

## Notes from the Choir Loft



This month we will host a Church Music Institute at our Parish! It will be held *from January 24 to 26* (please see flyer on Page 8). Adult Registration is \$75 and Youth (under 18) is \$30. Please take advantage of this great opportunity!

For more information, visit [sfchurchmusic.org](http://sfchurchmusic.org). You can register for the Church Music Institute at: <https://tinyurl.com/y54xzflm>.

Have a Blessed New Year!

Athena Mertes, Director



## Adult Study with Father John Sunday Epistle and Gospel Readings and

## Churchianity vs. Christianity

By Metropolitan Anthony Bloom

Join us every Wednesday (except New Year's Day),  
7:00 - 8:30 pm, in Kokkos Hall.

All are Welcome.

Bibles and Metropolitan Bloom's book are available  
in our Bookstore.

## Church Photo Directory

Much has changed in the life of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in the last decade. As our last Church Photo Directory was published in 2008, we have embarked on the effort to produce a more updated face of our Parish with the publication of a new Photo Directory this year.

With the full support of this endeavor by our Priests and Parish Council, Bill and Erin Bruninga are taking family and individual photos of our Parish Stewards and Friends on Sundays after Divine Liturgy in Panos Hall. *Please look to the Weekly Bulletin and emails for more details on your scheduled photography sittings.* The sessions will only take five minutes of your time and there is no charge to have your photo taken for our Directory.

## ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

Rev. Father John Hondros  
[frjohn@vegaskgreekorthodox.com](mailto:frjohn@vegaskgreekorthodox.com)

Rev. Father Seraphim Ramos  
[frseraphim@vegaskgreekorthodox.com](mailto:frseraphim@vegaskgreekorthodox.com)

Karen Rawlinson  
Administrative Assistant

Michelle Eugenio  
Bookkeeper

Mara Braun  
Catering & Events

Constantin Petriuc & Ramona Tasios  
Maintenance & Grounds

### Office Hours

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

Telephone: (702) 221-8245  
[www.vegaskgreekorthodox.com](http://www.vegaskgreekorthodox.com)

Parish Council: Gus Flangas

Philoptochos: Benita Beeman

Stewardship & Community Outreach:  
Justina Szukiewicz

Choir: Athena Mertes

Chanters & Youth Choir:  
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School: Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers: Father John

### GOYA:

Kouli Pouridis & June Likourinou

Orthodox Family Fellowship:  
Jelena Boskovic & Amy Khuri

Young Adults:  
Nicholas Asim & Melissa Fleetwood

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas

Greek School: Paula Kelesis

### Mr. & Mrs.:

Fr. John, Fr. Seraphim & Presvyteres

Kali Parea: Demetrious Asim &  
Joy Wolfenbarger

Adult Basketball:  
Nate Dallas

Forerunners: Vicki Xikis

Orthodox Bookstore:  
Constantine Frangakis,  
Paisios & Mary Pursell

Greek Food Festival: Gus Flangas

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

Photography: Bill Bruninga

## From Father Seraphim

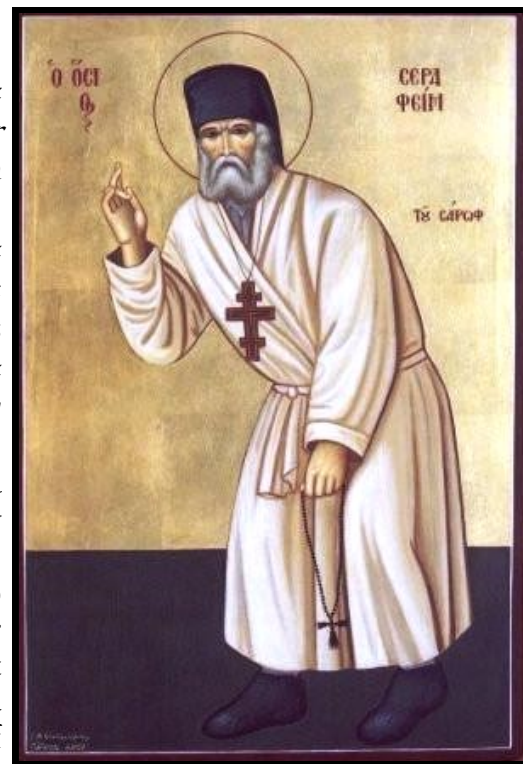
“In what lies the power of St. Seraphim? What is his *podvig*? He strove to realize the commandment of Christ: *‘Be ye perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.’ (Matthew 5:48)* He labored to restore in himself the first-created image of man, corrupted as a consequence of sin. St. Seraphim reached his goal: He overcame sin and became a saint; he truly became the likeness of God. We cannot see the invisible God. But the Lord gave us to see Himself in those like unto Him, in His saints. And so, one of these likenesses was St. Seraphim. In him we see restored human nature, freed from slavery to sin. He is the incarnate personification of eternal victory over the transitory, sanctity over sin, good over evil.” (St. John Maximovitch)

*January 2* is the Feast of the wonderworker, recluse and ascetic, St. Seraphim of Sarov – my patron Saint. He introduced my soul to the Orthodox Church in a way no argument ever could have. At age sixteen I was engaged in intellectual discovery, seeking to find the truth with my family about the Orthodox Church, after having become disillusioned by the ever-changing Protestant landscape in America. I had grown up as a Protestant Christian and now beginning to read about the history of the early Church, of which I had been previously ignorant. I was being defeated by the facts, such as: “Christianity did not begin with Martin Luther saving it from the Roman Catholic Church in the 16<sup>th</sup> Century,” and “Christ formed a community of believers that has been consistently identifiable in an unbroken tradition in every century and age up to the present day.” While these and many other facts about Orthodox Christianity are true and can be mentally convincing, I was lacking a conviction of the heart – but then I came upon a book about a humble Russian monk named Seraphim, and everything changed.

In evangelical, non-denominational Churches, we do not have, venerate, or pray to saints; we do not have icons; we do not venerate the Mother of God; and we did not know about the Jesus Prayer. As Protestants, we believed that we needed to say the “Sinner’s Prayer” and once we did so, God forgave us of our sins and we were “saved.” What I found as I began turning the pages of this spiritual biography was a much different vision of salvation. I saw a normal human life gradually become transfigured by the grace and light of God. I did not know that in this life we can actually overcome our passions, our self-destructive addictive behaviors – because Orthodox Christianity is essentially an ascetic and worshiping experience of God’s healing, mercy and love. I did not know about the word, “theosis,” which means we really get to be transformed and God comes to live within us here and now. I had always thought of heaven as somewhere you go after you die, but St. Seraphim was living heaven here and now.

This saint was the son of merchant parents who lived in the city of Kursk. His father actually built Churches and he was raised in piety in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Around age eighteen the young Prochorus (his name before becoming Seraphim at his monastic tonsure) took the blessing of his mother who gave him a brass cross he wore for the rest of his life. He left to become a monk and went first to the Kiev caves where a saint named Dosifei gave him the following advice which he obeyed for the rest of his life: “Go child of God, and remain there (Sarov Monastery). With God’s help that place will be for your salvation. That is where you will also complete your life’s journey. Only try to acquire the constant remembrance of God by continuously calling upon the Name of God in this way: ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ Let all your attention and training be focused on this: walking and sitting, at work and standing in Church, everywhere, in any place, coming in and going out let this unceasing cry be on your lips and in your heart; with this prayer you will find peace, you will acquire spiritual and bodily purity, and the Holy Spirit, the well-spring of every good, will dwell within you, and direct your life in holiness, in all devotion and purity.”

*(Continued on Page 15)*





### *From Father Seraphim (Continued from Page 14)*

He would go on to become a monk at Sarov Monastery, and just some of the incredible things about his life are that he took a vow of silence for three years – only saying the words of the Divine Liturgy. He was



ordained as a deacon and then a priest in the monastery and then got permission to live some miles away in a small hut or cabin in the woods coming back for services. There he knelt on a rock saying the Jesus Prayer for a thousand days and nights; he fed a wild Grizzly bear he nicknamed 'Misha' because he had returned to the state of Adam before the fall and was at peace with nature. There he was found by three robbers while chopping wood; he did not defend himself when attacked, but allowed himself to be beaten almost to death and forgave and prayed for his assailants. After this experience he walked with a cane for the rest of his life as his back was broken. Of all the miracles and visitations of grace, there is one encounter that epitomizes St. Seraphim of Sarov – and that was his conversation with a man named Nicholas Motovilov.

This conversation was recorded in Nicholas' journal, and then lost for many years. It was later found and published and is the teaching of St. Seraphim on *the Acquisition of the Holy Spirit*. Near the end of the conversation St. Seraphim is described to have changed – just like Jesus Christ did on the mountain of transfiguration – and his face became, "As bright as the sun illumining the glade in every direction for ten yards . . ." Nicholas experienced a heavenly fragrance, a divine warmth – even though it was snowing and winter in Russia. This experience of God's uncreated Light, this inner and outer transformation of the human person, our greatest potential in freedom from sin and death, was shown to me first by St. Seraphim. I had read the Bible, but I did not know we could experience the things written there in our lives: Specifically, that by grace we could become living manifestations of the Presence of God.

In closing, I will share some of the words of St. Seraphim which have always inspired me and helped me to pray: "Of course every good deed done for Christ's sake gives us the grace of the Holy Spirit, but prayer gives us this grace most of all, for it is always at hand, as an instrument for acquiring the grace of the Spirit. For instance, you would like to go to Church, but there is no Church or the service is over; you would like to give alms to a beggar, but there isn't one or you have nothing to give; you would like to preserve your virginity, but you have not the strength to do so because of your temperament, or because of the violence of the wiles of the enemy which because of your human weakness you cannot withstand; you would like to do some other good deed for Christ's sake, but either you have not the strength or the opportunity is lacking. This certainly does not apply to prayer. Prayer is always possible for everyone, rich and poor, noble and humble, strong and weak, healthy and sick, righteous and sinful."

With Love in Christ,

*Father Seraphim*

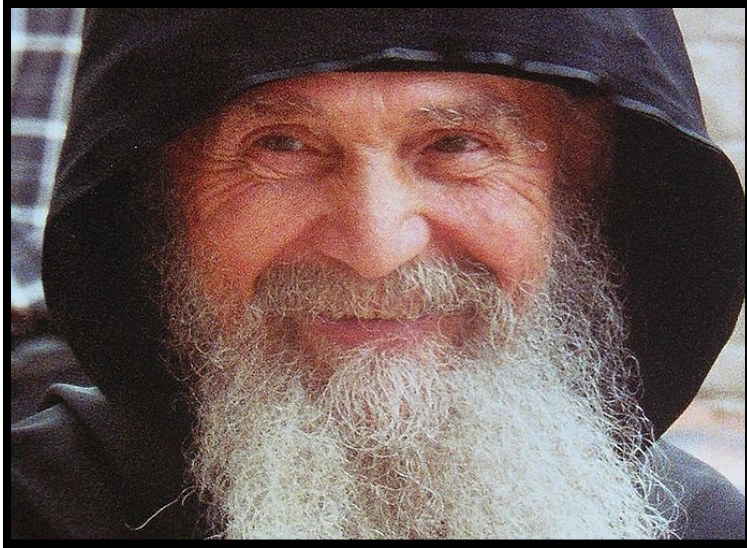


*"For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."  
(Galatians 3:27-28)*



*Orthodox Bookstore**Our Geronda Ephraim*

*On December 7, 2019*, Elder Ephraim of Arizona, and former Abbott of Philotheou Monastery on Mount Athos (known as “the Holy Mountain”) fell asleep in the Lord.



Our Elder was filled with God's love. He made everyone who came to him feel special, and every encounter with him was memorable and quite often miraculous. Those of us who met him and made pilgrimages to Saint Anthony's Monastery to see him and get his blessing knew that he was holy and that God and our Panagia were with him. He established 18 monasteries in America and Canada, in addition to the works he had done in Greece. I often thought of him as our Moses, whom God had sent to us to help lead us to His Kingdom.

Thousands of Orthodox people from all over the world would come to see him over the years, many traveling from faraway places. Although he was an unmarried priest-monk, he had thousands of spiritual children. At his passing, we were not filled with sorrow and dread, but rather holy joy. There was an outpouring of Godly love for our Geronda, our Father, and in my family we spent the day talking about him and shared our experiences about him. I know that this same scene played out in Orthodox homes around the world. He represented God's love to all of us. He was an example of Christ for all of us to see and hold and touch.

Now our Geronda has passed from this life and we KNOW that he is with the Lord, Whom he loved and served above all. We are joyous and happy for our Holy Elder Ephraim, who now after many difficult years of ceaseless toil and spiritual struggle has found his rest. And we know that he is even closer to us now, and that we can call on him in prayer.

Just as Elder Ephraim knew that his elder, Joseph the Hesychast, was a saint (and indeed he was proclaimed a saint in October of 2019), we know, as Archbishop Elpidophoros said in his funeral eulogy, that our Geronda Ephraim is truly a saint. Righteous Ephraim of Arizona, pray for us!

We have two books in our Bookstore written by Geronda Ephraim: *The Art of Salvation* and *My Elder Joseph*. Until next month, God willing, Constantine Frangakis and the Bookstore Team

### 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 bowl of bottled water, a sprig of basil or rosemary, an icon and votive candle.*



## 2020 VISION: CHRIST CHURCH COMMITMENT

*"Your eye is the lamp of your body;  
when your eye is sound, your whole body  
is full of light . . ." (Luke 11:34)*

### 2019 Stewardship Report (as of 12/18/19)

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$490,633 (\$416,617 in 2018)  
Stewardship Gifts Received: \$465,361 (\$368,555 in 2018)  
Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$25,272 (\$48,063 in 2018)  
Stewardship Families Pledged: 427 (441 in 2018)  
Average Pledge to Date: \$1,149 (\$945 in 2018)  
Average Pledge Needed: \$2,260 (427 Families)

### Church Account Summaries - November 2019

Nevada State Bank Accounts	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$29,155.14	\$82,815.62	\$1,121.81	\$30,681.56	\$68,921.52	\$13,489.49	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$4,520.10	\$500.00		\$2,000.00		\$3,020.10	Transferred \$1,000 to FF to cover bills
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$102,523.47	\$3,426.50	\$5,463.00	\$103,523.87	\$2,381.66	\$5,507.44	
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$158,153.41	\$5,445.00	\$16,697.31	\$2,865.45	\$1,295.50	\$176,134.77	
Folk Dance Group	\$18,348.07	\$1,667.00		\$128.68		\$19,886.39	
Hellenic Historical Society	\$3,300.94					\$3,300.94	
Mortgage Account	\$0.00					\$0.00	Mortgage Balance \$0.00
Designated Funds	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Bookstore	\$4,193.07	\$1,655.00		\$1,965.45	\$1,295.50	\$2,587.12	Transferred \$1000 to FF cover bills
Ornaments	\$1,087.41					\$1,087.41	
Restricted Funds	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
ICON	\$139,267.76					\$139,267.76	
Library Account	\$1,470.77					\$1,470.77	Account owed \$21,000. Funds used to make payroll and pay bills in 2015
Miscellaneous	\$0.00					\$0.00	
Giving Tree	\$0.91					\$0.91	
Building Fund	\$3,079.17	\$3,790.00	\$6,000.00			\$12,869.17	
\$300,000 One Year Plan	\$0.00					\$0.00	Transferred Balance to Building Fund
60th Anniversary Funds	\$0.00		\$10,697.31			\$10,697.31	
Youth Choir	\$2,989.18					\$2,989.18	
Church School	\$1,306.37					\$1,306.37	
Three Priests	\$2,684.49					\$2,684.49	
Roof Appeal	\$1,422.68			\$900.00		\$522.68	Mold Ebatement/Renovations
Baptismal Water Heater	\$69.24					\$69.24	
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
GOYA	\$142.36					\$142.36	
<b>Designated, Restricted, and Other Total</b>	<b>\$158,153.41</b>	<b>\$5,445.00</b>	<b>\$16,697.31</b>	<b>\$2,865.45</b>	<b>\$1,295.50</b>	<b>\$176,134.77</b>	
Other Funds	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$67,990.45					\$67,990.45	
<b>November 2019 Candles</b>	<b>\$5,131.00</b>						
<b>November 2019 Trays</b>	<b>\$4,184.00</b>						
<b>Total November Candles &amp; Trays</b>	<b>\$9,315.00</b>						





*Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisoun*

Nikolaos (Nico), son of Vassilios and Charlene George,  
on November 30. Godparents: George Filios and Nicoletta Filios.

Eliana, daughter of Vassilios and Charlene George, on November 30.  
Godparents: George Filios and Nicoletta Filios.

*Marriages: Na Zisete!*

Kyriacos Philippou and Christine Simpson on November 30, 2019.  
Koumbaros: Philippos Philippou.

Dimitri Rodis and Angelina Marcus on December 6, 2019.  
Koumbaros: John G. Karas.



*“The Lord bless you and keep you:  
The Lord make His Face to shine upon you,  
and be gracious to you:  
The Lord lift up His Countenance upon you,  
and give you peace.”  
(Numbers 6:24-26)*



**The AHEPA Las Vegas Chapter 341**

I hope you all have a wonderful Christmas and a very Happy New Year!  
We will not be meeting this month, but look for a meeting notice for February 2020.

We will be holding a Membership Drive and we are looking for Brothers  
to assist with this endeavor.

We are currently looking for Board Members to assist with the redevelopment  
of the Chapter. If you are interested in a Board Position or assisting with this very  
important organization please contact me.

Thank you, Kouli Pouridis, Acting Chapter President  
[pouridis5@cox.net](mailto:pouridis5@cox.net) (702) 604-0885



# JANUARY 2020 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD

*Sunday*

*Monday*

*Tuesday*

*Wednesday*

*Thursday*

*Friday*

*Saturday*

			<b>1 Circumcision of Christ/ St. Basil the Great</b> 9:00 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy <i>Church Office Closed</i>	<b>2 St. Seraphim of Sarov</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5 Eve of Theophany (Strict Fast)</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy <i>Great Blessing of Water</i> Parish Council Oath	<b>6 Holy Theophany</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great <i>Great Blessing of Water</i>	<b>7 St. John the Baptist</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 5:00 pm Greek Language Classes 6:30 pm Folk Dance Practice	<b>8</b> 7:00 pm Adult Study in Kokkos Hall	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b> 6:00 pm Young Adults at Sammy's Woodfire Pizza (7345 Arroyo Crossing)
<b>12</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy <i>Community Vasilopita</i> <b>St. John Name Day Luncheon in Panos</b>	<b>13</b> 11:30 am Forerunner Luncheon in Kokkos Hall	<b>14</b> 5:00 pm Greek Language Classes 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting in the Library 6:30 pm Folk Dance Board Meeting 6:30 pm Folk Dance Practice	<b>15</b> 7:00 pm Adult Study in Kokkos Hall	<b>16</b>	<b>17 St. Anthony the Great</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	<b>18 Ss. Athanasios and Cyril</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:00 pm Mr. and Mrs. At Fleetwood's Home
<b>19</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy <i>Youth Choir Chants</i> 12:00 pm Philoptochos General Mtg in Kokkos 5:00 pm GOYA Night in Panos Hall	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> 5:00 pm Greek Language Classes 6:30 pm Folk Dance Practice	<b>22</b> 7:00 pm Adult Study in Kokkos Hall	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25 St. Gregory the Theologian</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 5:30 pm Great Vespers
<b>26</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 1:00 pm OFF/GOYA at Las Vegas Ice Center	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> 5:00 pm Greek Language Classes 6:30 pm Folk Dance Practice	<b>29</b> 5:00 pm Orthros 6:00 pm Divine Liturgy <i>(Three Holy Hierarchs)</i> 7:30 pm Adult Study in Kokkos Hall	<b>30 Three Hierarchs (Observed 1/29)</b>	<i>Church Music Institute Conference 1/24-26</i>	
				<b>31</b>		

# *The Desert Messenger*

*St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church  
5300 South El Camino Road  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89118-1922*

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THE DESERT MESSENGER

## *The Way of the Lord*

*The memory of the just is mentioned with praise. As for you,  
O Forerunner, the Lord's witness is enough; indeed you  
were greater than the prophets, since you were found  
worthy to baptize in the waters the One they could but  
announce. You have fought for the sake of the truth and  
have proclaimed to those in hades that God, Who appeared  
in the flesh, has taken away the sins of the world and  
bestowed His great mercy upon us.*

*(Apolytikion of St. John the Baptist - Celebrated January 7)*

