



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

Volume 20, Issue 10 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

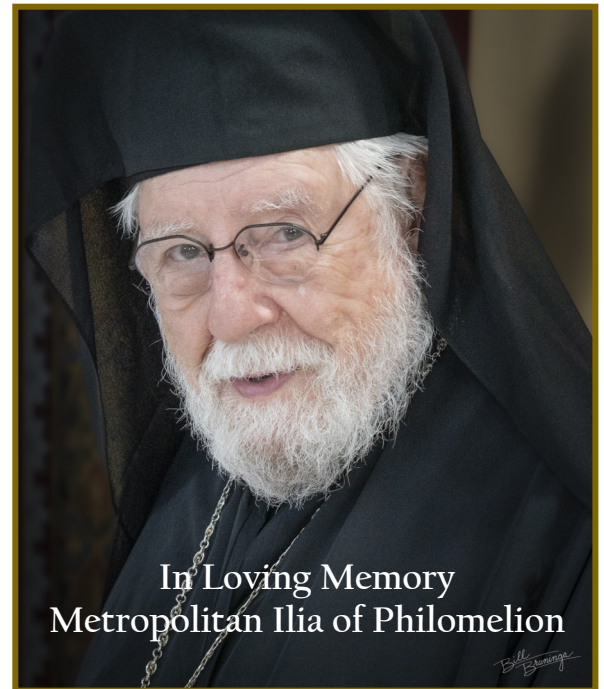
November 2022

**From
Father
John**

Beloved in Christ:

On Thursday, October 6, 2022, His Excellency Metropolitan Ilia reposed in the Lord suddenly, although to be honest, he had not been feeling well since last year. Yet, consistent with his priestly character for over 60 years, he continued to push himself to be at the service of the Church. As a dedicated man of God, he heeded the words of the Apostle Paul: *"Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."* (2 Timothy 2:1)

Metropolitan Ilia was much loved and respected wherever he served, and especially so in our Parish – even with the title "Your Excellency," many here still affectionately called him "Bishop" or "Father Katre." When he was "home" last, it was for a brief while in early September. Although he was tired and not feeling well enough to serve, knowing it was the first day of Church School and seeing that the Church was packed with the most kids we had seen in over two years (with the pandemic), he was moved by the Holy Spirit to offer the Blessing of the Water for the New School Year. Metropolitan Ilia came out of the Holy Altar and enthusiastically faced all the children who were gathered before him and offered the service. After sprinkling the children with Holy Water, he directed me to bless the rest of the faithful throughout the



In Loving Memory
Metropolitan Ilia of Philomelion



Church. As I did so, I could hear him speaking with the children, using this as an occasion to teach: "Now what is going on here? Can you tell me why we bless this new Church Year?" He used every opportunity to teach, again fulfilling the directive of St. Paul: *"Preach the Word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching."* (2 Timothy 4:2) Metropolitan Ilia was a great scholar and had a brilliant Orthodox theological mind – which he would never admit – and

indeed he could speak, read and write eloquently in English, Greek and Albanian. Even so, he was a pastor at heart, speaking with clarity at the level of children or whomever he was addressing, for the spiritual edification of all.

(Continued on Page 3)

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>*

Tuesday, November 1/*Holy Unmercenaries Cosmas and Damian the Wonderworkers, and their mother, Theodota/St. David of Evia*

8:00 am Orthros ~ 9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 12:27-31; 13:1-8

Gospel: Matthew 10:1, 5-8

Sunday, November 6/*7th Sunday of Luke/Holy Father Paul the Confessor and Archbishop of Constantinople*

Orthros: Fourth Tone

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

Epistle: Galatians 2:16-20

Gospel: Luke 8:41-56

Memorials: Departed Philoptochos Members; Kalliope Malpee (1 year); Victoria Harris (4 years)

Fellowship: Philoptochos

Tuesday, November 8/*Synaxis of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel and All the Bodiless Powers*

8:00 am Orthros ~ 9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Hebrews 2:2-10

Gospel: Luke 10:16-21

Wednesday, November 9/*St. Nectarios the Wonderworker/Holy Martyrs Onesiphoros and Porphyrios/Holy Mother Matrona/Holy Mother Theoctiste*

8:00 am Orthros ~ 9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Ephesians 5:8-19

Gospel: Matthew 4:25; 5:1-12

Sunday, November 13/*8th Sunday of Luke/Holy Father John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, and his mother, St. Anthousa*

Orthros: First Plagal Tone

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 21:14-25

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

Gospel: Luke 10:25-37

Memorials: Metropolitan Ilia of Philomelion (40 Days); Departed Members of Chagares Family

Fellowship: Greek Folk Dance "Chili"

Nativity Fast: November 15 through December 24

Sunday, November 20/*9th Sunday of Luke/Forefeast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple/Holy Father Gregory of Decapolis/Holy Father Proclus, Archbishop of Constantinople*

Orthros: Second Plagal Tone

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

Epistle: Ephesians 2:4-10

Gospel: Luke 12:16-21

Memorial: Presv. Ilean Catherine Eyler (1 year)

Fellowship: Philoptochos Autumn Bake Sale
Parish Assembly follows Liturgy

Monday, November 21/*The Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple*

8:00 am Orthros ~ 9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Hebrews 9:1-7

Gospel: Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28

Wednesday, November 23/*Thanksgiving Liturgy/Holy Father Clement, Bishop of Rome/Holy Hieromartyr Peter, Archbishop of Alexandria*

5:00 pm Orthros

6:00 pm Divine Liturgy and Artoclasia

Epistle: Philippians 3:20-21; 4:1-3

Gospel: Luke 18:31-34

Sunday, November 27/*13th Sunday of Luke/Great Martyr James the Persian/Holy Father Nathaniel/Holy Fathers Gregory of Sinai and Gerasimos/Holy Father Arsenios of Rhaxos*

Orthros: Grave Tone

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Mark 16:1-8

Epistle: Ephesians 2:14-22

Gospel: Luke 18:18-27

Fellowship: The Koutsulis Family

Wednesday, November 30/*Holy Apostle Andrew, the First-Called*

8:00 am Orthros ~ 9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16

Gospel: John 1:35-52

From Father John (Continued from Page 1)

I first met “Father Katre” in January 1983 upon arriving at the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. I had flown from sunny San Diego to a blizzard in Boston, and I had rarely experienced snow. He was there to welcome the newly arrived Seminary students at night, and immediately I was impressed by his unique gift of personally reaching out to and connecting with people. He drove me and another new seminarian to the Albanian House, where he provided me with sheets and blankets, as I was ill prepared, and then took us both for a cup of hot coffee at Dunkin Donuts – he liked his coffee “Boston style,” with heavy cream and sugar. Father Katre worked for the Holy Cross Press and served as the Dean of Student Affairs, and he was always an advocate for us students. His sweet Presvytera Helen was a librarian at the seminary and embraced all us students as well: With her kind smile she would help us find the books we needed and gently shush us when we became boisterous in the reading room.

I was ordained in March 1987 and assigned to Holy Trinity in Phoenix, Arizona – and I learned a year later that Father Katre was also in the Metropolis of San Francisco, having left Holy Cross to serve at St. John the Baptist in Las Vegas, Nevada. We met up personally again at the Folk Dance Festival Oakland, and meeting Presvytera Maria for the first time, he took us out for lunch, as was always his custom. He and I were on a different level now: He was no longer my Dean, I was no longer his student; his interactions made it clear that now we were brother priests and moreover friends. On another occasion, he picked my wife and I up during a visit to Las Vegas, brought us to the



newly built Church in the middle of the desert, then picked up Presvytera Helen and treated us to dinner. We were blessed with their friendship and were very saddened when Presvytera Helen reposed in 2001.

For fourteen years, you loved him as your Parish Priest, and for over two decades he has been a highly revered hierarch of the Albanian Orthodox Church: He paved the way and oversaw the building of our magnificent Church and Community Center in Las Vegas; he shepherded the Albanian Church in the US and ministered as needed in Albania; he participated in theological dialogues in the States as well as overseas; he also served as the Acting Abbott at the Monastery of St. Irene Chrysovalantou in Astoria, New York, and was instrumental in restoring integrity and unity to that community.

For nearly 40 years, and especially during the past 20 years of my service in this Parish, Metropolitan Ilia has been my beloved friend, bishop, concelebrant, confidant and brother. As we all mourn his repose, we most assuredly have faith that he has been received into our Lord's Kingdom: *“Well done, good and faithful servant.” (Matthew 25:21)*

With Love in Christ,

Father John

Concelebrants at the Funeral of His Excellency Metropolitan Ilia of Philomelion on October 13, 2022: His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco, His Grace Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos, His Grace Bishop Ioannis of Phocaea, His Grace Bishop Spyridon of Amastris, Archmandrite Luke Kontgas, Reverend Fathers John Hondros, Martin Ritsi, Photios Dumont, Mark Doku, Paul Zuniga, Kostandin Tuda, Emmanuel Lemelson, Gregory Rubis, Milan Unkovic, Matthew Swehla, Seraphim Ramos, Andrew Rubis, and Archdeacon Dionysios Papiris. Chanters: Presvytera Maria Hondros and Christopher Hondros.

Metropolitan Gerasimos' Eulogy at the Trisagion for Metropolitan Ilia

I look out into this beautiful Church this evening and the love that emanates from everyone gathered together is palpable, and truly demonstrates how we are all feeling as our common prayers are offered for the repose of the soul of the Lord's servant, His Excellency Metropolitan Ilia of Philomelion.

The person I got to know was simply, Father Katre. We worked together at Hellenic College Holy Cross, and he took over the position of Dean of Students from me. The relationships he formed during his time in Brookline were far beyond just that of Dean and student. He got to *know* the students, he supported their spiritual journeys, he guided them in the faith, and he set an expectation of behavior that he emulated in his priesthood. His beloved Presvytera Helen, of blessed memory, also made her impact on campus, working in the Library for over two decades. The two of them really were a "dynamic duo" and they each had a profound impact on the development of future clergymen in our Archdiocese.

Metropolitan Ilia was not one to recite the many esteemed positions he held throughout his ministry, and dare I say that the beautiful story of his life that was published this week would make him chuckle and he would be dismissive of all the attention. In Metropolitan Ilia's world, there was only one person deserving of attention, and that is God.

Metropolitan Ilia was raised in the faith along with his twin brother, nurtured as a young boy, and he listened attentively to that voice in his heart when the Lord called him to be His servant. Next month this community was going to gather and celebrate Metropolitan Ilia's 60 years of service as an ordained clergyman. I encourage you to still celebrate his life, because anyone who knew him, knows that this Trisagion and tomorrow's Funeral are not somber occasions, but these are times to rejoice. There were so many hallmarks in his ministry, and each one is worth mentioning, but the most important aspect was that each and every step he took, whether as a Deacon, Priest, Bishop or Metropolitan, were all about bringing Glory to God!

Of course, I know your hearts are sad, for we have all lost someone special in our lives. His children, Mark and Eugenia, have lost their father. His grandchildren have lost their papou. His spiritual children have lost a mentor and guide. And this beloved community of Saint John the Baptist weeps for they also lost someone special with whom they shared many years. We know that Metropolitan Ilia built this Church – not just physically but spiritually – which stands as the Jewel in the Desert, not just because of its vibrant exterior and beautiful grounds, but because it is a place filled with people of faith, a Church filled with believers, and a congregation that endeavors to fulfill God's will for their lives and spread His message beyond the boundaries of this campus.

It is only fitting that Metropolitan Ilia is back here at Saint John the Baptist for his final earthly farewell. This parish is his home. This congregation is an extension of his family. And while he lies here in our midst, we know that his soul is with the Lord, and that he has been granted his well-deserved crown of righteousness. And almost 21 years to the day, when he lost his beautiful Presvytera Helen, they are united again for eternity. Even following her passing and in his grief, he never lost hope because he knew the Resurrection was meant for all of us. That message, my beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord, is why we have hope. That is why we do not fear death. Metropolitan Ilia lived a full and rich 85 years. He knew that each and every day was a gift from God and an opportunity to preach His Good News.

As we leave this church tonight, the sky may be darkened but our hearts should be full of light – the light of Christ. During Great Lent in the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts we say, Φως Χριστού φαίνει πάσι – the Light of Christ enlightens all. It is this light that Metropolitan Ilia shared throughout his ministry, knowing that the light of Christ illuminated even in the darkest corners of the world.

You could see the light of Christ in the twinkle of the eyes of Metropolitan Ilia. He loved the Lord, and he was not shy about telling you that. He also loved to travel – not to take exotic vacations – but to take people on pilgrimages to the Holy Land and the places where Christ preached, where He was born, where He was Crucified, and where the Saints carried the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Now, Metropolitan Ilia is on his final pilgrimage. He is not just visiting the sites where the Lord walked, he is *with* the Lord, in His Heavenly Kingdom, and is embraced in His loving arms for eternity.

May his memory be eternal! (Offered on October 12, 2022)

Archbishop Elpidophoros' Eulogy at the Funeral for Metropolitan Ilia

Today we bid adieu to one of the most humble and hard-working Hierarchs of the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the United States, the beloved and ever-memorable Metropolitan Ilia, late of Philomelion. I am sure that each of you has a favorite memory and a story of this remarkable churchman, and I hope that, in the coming days, you will take the time to share these stories with one another, for they give comfort in times loss such as this. And it is meet and right that we do so, for the memory of the just is praiseworthy, and Metropolitan Ilia was a righteous servant of Christ.

Such a life as his cannot be summed up with any amount of words, because his service to the Church, his family, our Theological School, the Ecumenical Patriarchate, and the precious Albanian Diocese was so varied and multi-talented, that the prospect of enumerating all his gifts is truly exhausting. But even with such a daunting task as this, we must mention a few precious reminders of his noble service.

He was a devoted husband and family man, who lost his beloved Presvytera far too soon, for she was his right hand a true soul-mate, and life without her was a sorrowful burden that he carried for the rest of his days.

He was a dedicated servant of Hellenic College and Holy Cross, loved by students and faculty alike. Always quick with an encouraging word, he was a ready guide and spiritual father to many clergyman through the decades of his presence in and around the School.

He was a devoted son of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, with a constant concern for the restoration of the Albanian Orthodox Church on its native soil, and for the Albanian communities of the Diaspora.

When he lost his beloved Presvytera Helen, and as then a widower became eligible to rise to the episcopate, he was chosen by His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew to lead the small but dynamic Albanian Diocese under the Mother Church in America. His service and leadership in this regard was exemplary. He connected with the Autocephalous Church of Albania, under His Beatitude Archbishop Anastasios. He reached out across jurisdictional lines to the Albanian communities in the OCA. He participated vigorously in SCOBA, and later the Assembly of Bishops. And with all these new responsibilities, he never surrendered his devotion to the Theological School, for which he always felt such great love.

For all of these aspects of ministry and his inimitable personality, he was honored by the Mother Church of Constantinople and elevated with the title, "Metropolitan."

This was most fitting, as the word "Metropolitan" contains the word "mother," and he truly ministered to his flocks with a mother's love, and with a father's care and provision.

As we bid him farewell this day, let us do so with gratitude for his many years of service and his many gifts that he freely offered to the Church.

We commit his precious soul to God, and we commit the remembrance of his life and ministry to every heart and mind who hold the recollection of his love in a special experience, unique to each.

The life and ministry of Metropolitan Ilia is not easy to encapsulate in a single encomium, no matter how eloquent it might be. But one thing is certain – he was a true "guide of Orthodoxy" to all those whose lives he touched.

He was a good shepherd to the flock of Christ entrusted to him. Whether they were students at the *Scholi*, or the parishioners and clergy who commemorated his name in the Divine Services, Metropolitan Ilia followed the example of our Lord, and was always willing to sacrifice his ego, his goals, his wishes, for the life and the benefit of his rational sheep.

Now, my beloved Christians, like his namesake and patron Saint, the Great Prophet Elias, his journey is heavenward. He disappears from this world so that he may appear in the next. We do not yet know who will inherit his mantle of concern and love for his Albanian flock, but we do know that it will be in accordance with the will of God, and with the paternal love of the Great Church of Christ.

Therefore, my beloved Christians, dear friends, and family:

Let us pray that his ascent to the Mansions of the Saint, to the Bosom of Abraham, and to the Tabernacles of the Righteous, is in the fiery chariot of God's love. May the Holy Angels carry his soul to rest, even as we carry his mortal remains to their final resting place, next to beloved Presvytera Helen.

May his memory be eternal. Αἰωνία ἡ μνήμη αὐτοῦ. (*Offered on October 13, 2022*)

Parish Council Report

Dear Father John, Florin, Ministries and Parishioners,

As we all mourned the loss of His Excellency Metropolitan Ilia, as a Parish we all came together as one body to honor his legacy. All our ministries worked very hard to make sure this event would be one that is never forgotten. Many of our Parishioners gave of their time and resources to honor his memory. I was very fortunate to hear what a dynamic Parish we have from the Hierarchs and Priests who attended. Memory Eternal.

Please mark your calendars: **On Sunday, November 20**, after Church services, we have planned our Parish Assembly meeting in Panos Hall. For those Parishioners who have not yet fulfilled their Stewardship commitment for 2022, please do so in order to participate and vote at this meeting. We have a full agenda and topics to share that should be of interest to you. We as a community voice have always been instrumental in guiding our Parish in the right direction.

We will be completing the re-upholstering of our pews and beautification of our most sacred Church this month. We will be setting more of a timeline on other maintenance issues as we move forward.

In keeping this month's message brief, I want to wish you and your families a most blessed Thanksgiving and pray that all of you travel safe wherever you celebrate!

May God Continue to Bless Us!

John Fotopoulos, Parish Council President

Notice of Parish Assembly Sunday, November 20, 2022 Following the Divine Liturgy in Panos Hall

AGENDA:

- Call to Order/Opening Prayer
- Election of Assembly Chair
- Approval of Minutes (November 14, 2021)
- Stewardship Report & 2023 Stewardship Commitment Drive
 - Financial Review
 - Approval of 2023 Budget
 - Greek Food Festival Report
 - Internal Audit Report (for 2021)
 - CPA Audit Report (for 2021)
 - Election of 2023 Audit Committee
 - Elect Nominations/Election Committee
 - Nominations for Parish Council 2023-24
 - Closing Prayer/Adjournment

*Everyone is encouraged to attend, although only Pledged Stewards for 2022 may vote.
Please see a Parish Council Member, a Stewardship Committee Member
or call the Church Office to become a Steward.*

Philoptochos News

“Above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” (Colossians 3:14)

Dear Father John, Members of the Parish Council and Philoptochos Members,

Are you ready? Really ready for the full calendar of events that await us all the next two months? The Ladies Philoptochos Society has many activities, fellowships and fundraising projects that will keep us all on the go!

On Sunday, November 6 – The Philoptochos will offer a Fellowship and collection in honor of the Patron Saints of the Ladies Philoptochos, the Holy Unmercenaries Cosmas and Damian. On that same day we will offer an annual Memorial for our Departed Members. If you would like to join us in remembering these wonderful sisters, please join us in the front right pews.

This month we are starting pre-orders for our Annual Holiday Pastry Sale which is the largest fundraiser for the Ladies Philoptochos. This is how we provide the funds for the requests, and obligations throughout the year. Please make your list of how many boxes you will need. Please take the flyers to your friends and coworkers. Pre-orders will be taken **until November 27**.

Send your Holiday Greetings by putting your name or families name on the Annual St. John the Baptist Community Christmas Card (*see form below*). We also have again beautiful wreaths from Lynch Creek Farms, and a portion of each wreath sale goes back to Philoptochos.

Order forms for each of our projects are included in this issue of *The Desert Messenger*, and in the Community Center on the Ladies Philoptochos bulletin board across from the Bookstore.

On Sunday, November 20, Philoptochos will host the Autumn Bake Sale following Divine Liturgy. The fantastic ladies will show off their baking skills in time for Thanksgiving and all the company you will have. This is a once-a-year bake sale.

Please mark your calendar for Packing Day **on Saturday, December 3**. This is an all “hands on deck” day and we always have lots of fun.

The Social Services is responding to a request from Project 150 – to Spread the Warmth! This is a coat collection drive for High School students – because High School is tough enough! Bring your clean, gently used coats to Church **on Sunday, November 6**. Thank you for taking the time to care!

Philoptochos Members: To keep you up to date, look for an email called the *Weekly Word* every Monday. There you will be able to find what is going on that week with Philoptochos. We will have the contact information for the chairs or hostesses of the events, times and dates and changes if necessary. If you do not have email or do not wish to receive the email, please give me a call, or reply, “take me off the list.”

Thank you, dear fellow Parishioners, for all your support for these projects now and throughout the year. Now, you know we ARE ready for this!

Your Sister in Christ, Bernadette Anthony, President, Panagia Chapter



COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARD

2022 Christmas Card Submission Form

Name and Cell Phone Number:

Print Your Name as you wish it to appear on the card (names only - no greeting, please):

*Donation: \$25 per family. Deadline: Sunday, November 27, 2022.
Please submit form and payment to Philoptochos c/o St. John the Baptist Church.*



THE LADIES
PHILOPTOCHOS
SOCIETY
THANKSGIVING &
CHRISTMAS
FUNDRAISER



Lynch Creek Farm handcrafts traditional and decorated Christmas wreaths, fresh centerpieces, and other beautiful holiday gifts of exceptional quality.



*Fresh
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\$59.95



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Your choice will make great client and family gifts. You can ship your gifts directly to your recipients on the date you select, as early as October 31st!

Scan this QR code with your phone to order



Philoptochos will receive 15% of all orders.



Ladies Philoptochos Society

Quantities are limited

Complimentary logo for those who order 40 boxes or more, as well as a 10% discount and free delivery.

Your generous contribution is greatly appreciated. It benefits the many ministries we support at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, the Las Vegas community at large, and philanthropic and humanitarian programs in the U.S. and around the world.

2022 Annual Christmas Pastry Sale

Place your order today!

Delicious and Traditional Greek Christmas Pastries – lovingly baked and packaged in a decorated box for \$30.00

Guarantee your order by pre-paying by November 13, 2022

Order

Send your order and check made payable to:

Ladies Philoptochos Society
Attention: Christmas Pastry Sale
5300 El Camino Rd. Las Vegas NV 89118

Name _____

Phone (____) _____ - _____ Day / Evening

Email _____

No. of Boxes _____ X \$30.00 = \$ _____

Check enclosed _____

Or please call Karen at the Church Office (702) 221-8245 to pay by credit card.

Orders will be ready for pick-up at St. John Church on Sunday December 4, 2022, following Divine Liturgy

From Florin

The Angels in the Orthodox Church

“The [guardian] angel will not retreat from us, unless we drive him away by our evil deeds. As the smoke drives bees away, and stench the doves, even so our stinking sin drives away from us the Angel who protects our life.” (St. Basil the Great)

On the occasion of the *Feast of the Archangels, Angels, Cherubim, Seraphim, and all the Bodiless Heavenly Powers* – celebrated on November 8 – let us look at how our life is connected with the Holy Angels, which includes the Divine Worship of our Church. Angels were among the first part of God’s creation. In the Creed we say, *“I believe in one God. . . . Creator of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible.”* From *Genesis* we know that a Cherubim was placed with a flaming sword at the gates of Paradise after Adam and Eve were expelled. In the time of the *New Testament*, an Angel informed Zachariah of the conception of the Forerunner and the Virgin Mary the Theotokos of the Birth of Jesus. Angels announced the good news to the shepherds at the Nativity of our Lord and the Angels also informed the Myrrh-Bearing Women about His Resurrection.

In the words of St. John of Damascus: *“An Angel is an intelligent essence, in perpetual motion, with free will, incorporeal, ministering to God, having obtained by grace an immortal nature. The Creator alone knows the form and limitation of the angelic essence; but all that we can understand is that it is incorporeal and immaterial.”* Christ, in His love, united us with the Holy Angels through His sacrifice on the Cross. We became one spiritual flock of Christ (which is His Church), so the Angels participate in the Divine Worship of our Church. The Angels praise God ceaselessly in Heaven, and appear at every Altar of the Church, where the Sacrament of the Divine Eucharist is offered, with Christ Himself present.

In fact, the Priest, during the Small Entrance of the Divine Liturgy, while holding the Holy Gospel, enters the Holy Altar accompanied by the Angels and of course, the Angels come and stand around the Holy Table to concelebrate with the Priest. There have been cases where some holy Priests and Bishops have claimed to see Angels around the Altar and concelebrated with them.

The Divine Liturgy incorporates the hymns of the Angels, which are mentioned in the Bible or in the Holy Tradition. The response, *“Alleluia” (“Praise God”)* is what St. John the Evangelist heard the Angels sing in Heaven. (*Revelation 19:1*) The Trinitarian hymn, *“Holy, Holy, Holy Lord Sabaoth; the whole earth is full of His glory” (Isaiah 6:3)* was heard by the Prophet Isaiah during his vision of the Seraphim singing around the glorious Heavenly Throne of God. This hymn is combined with *“Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord.”* This is also the hymn of the children at the Triumphant Entry of the Lord into Jerusalem, which is sung in the middle of the Holy Anaphora in the Divine Liturgy. A similar hymn, suggested by an Angel to the Patriarch of Constantinople, St. Proclus (434-446), is the Trisagion Hymn chanted in every Divine Liturgy before the readings (and indeed is the beginning of all Orthodox prayers): *“Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal, have mercy on us.”* The Trisagion Hymn glorifies the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity. In the Divine Liturgy, our own voices are united with those of countless Angels: *“Together with these blessed Powers, merciful Master, Who loves mankind, we also proclaim and say: You are Holy and most Holy, You and Your Only Begotten Son and Your Holy Spirit.” (Prayer of the Priest during the Holy Anaphora)*



(Continued on Page 11)

Orthodox Bookstore

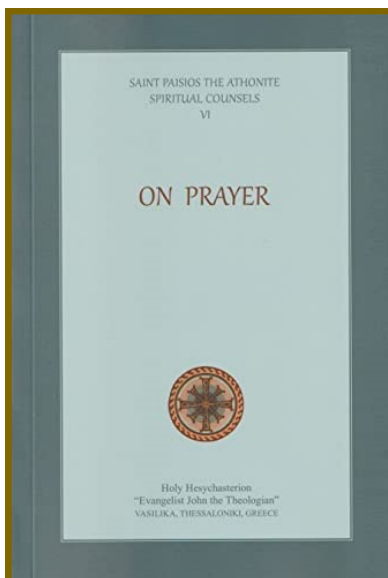
Greetings from the Bookstore!

Featured this month is the latest volume in the *Spiritual Counsels* series of St. Paisios the Athonite – Volume VI: *On Prayer*. This collection comes to us from the Sisters of the Holy Hesychasterion “Evangelist John the Theologian” in Thessaloniki, Greece, expounding upon all aspects of prayer by St. Paisios. The Holy Elder was once quoted: *“If you want to grab God’s attention so He’ll hear you during prayer, turn the dial to humility (for God always works in this frequency) then humbly ask for His mercy.”*

From Holy Cross Monastery: “Elder St. Paisios of Mt. Athos insisted that we understand prayer to be a necessity and earnestly sought to help those who had not learned to pray ‘to make a start in order to get their heart working on prayer.’ The book discusses prayer more generally, the hindrances that we encounter in prayer, the Mother of God and the Saints who pray for us, watchfulness, prayer in Church, and having constant doxology and thanksgiving toward God.”

Looking forward to seeing you in the Bookstore for your copy. We carry other volumes in the series as well. Come and see!

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



From Florin (Continued from Page 10)

The Tradition of the Orthodox Church teaches us that there is a Heavenly Hierarchy of Angels. This was documented earliest by St. Dionysius the Areopagite. In *On the Heavenly Hierarchy*, St. Dionysios explained the Angelic world as divided into nine ranks made up of three hierarchies, with three ranks each: Thrones, Cherubim and Seraphim – those closest to God; Dominions, Virtues and Powers; Angels, Archangels and Principalities – those closest to man.

Knowing that the Holy Angels are with us in the Divine Liturgy, may we be inspired by their reverence for God and participate carefully in what is happening. In doing so, we can worship our Holy Lord and God, united with the Angels, and in deep gratitude, heartfelt love and total devotion. Let us conclude with the hymn of the Angels in Bethlehem, when on the night of the Nativity of our Lord they sang: *“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, goodwill to men.” (Luke 2:14)* Amen.

With Love in Christ, Florin



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

Rev. Father John Hondros
frjohn@vegaskgreekorthodox.com

Florin Ristache, Pastoral Assistant
florin@vegaskgreekorthodox.com

Karen Rawlinson
Administrative Assistant

Michelle Eugenio
Bookkeeper

Marc Harvel
Maintenance & Grounds

Office Hours

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

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

Parish Council: John Fotopoulos

Philoptochos: Bernadette Anthony

Stewardship & Community Outreach:
John Karas

Choir: Athena Mertes

Chanters & Youth Choir:
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School: Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers: Father John

GOYA:

Florin Ristache & Maha Habiba

Orthodox Family Fellowship:
Florin Ristache & April Rivera

Young Adults:
Florin Ristache

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas

Greek School: Paula Kelesis

Mr. & Mrs.:
Father John & Presvytera Maria

Kali Parea: Demetrios Asim

Adult Basketball:
Nick Kelesis

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

Ministry News

Church School

Hi Everyone! We are going strong with our Church School year. I hope all the kids are enjoying their class and are learning about our wonderful Faith. Please make sure that your child is registered since we need a Registration Form for every student.

We continue to use our new program, *Orthodox Journeys: Living a Sacramental Life*. It is a great curriculum and I personally enjoy it. I have learned so many things along with my class. Please let me know if you would like me to email it to you.

Next month, we will have a special *Church School Nativity Event on Sunday, December 18*. On this day after Church School classes, we will be serving lunch to the students, followed by a fun craft. I will send out more details in the December issue of *The Desert Messenger* – but I wanted to give you a chance to put this on your calendar since I will need a head count for lunch and the craft.

I have had parents and grandparents reach out asking how they can help. We are always in need for snacks and mini bottles of waters. The teachers and students would really appreciate it.

Finally, *on Sunday, November 27*, we will have Family Worship Day.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to me with any questions or concerns.

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



All Youth Family Event



Dear Kids, Teenagers, and Parents,

We are organizing an All Youth and Family Harvest Fun Event *on Saturday, November 5, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm*. We will meet at Church, where we will paint on pumpkins and celebrate the harvest season. Please bring your own pumpkin. We will also play basketball and enjoy some food, so in the spirit of Thanksgiving, please bring your favorite dish.

Please let us know how many will be there! Of course, we will also have time for a spiritual discussion and prayer. Please confirm your participation at florin@vegasgreekorthodox.com.

Feel free to contact me, April or Maha if you have any questions.

With Love in Christ, Florin, April and Maha

GOYA ~ Our Teen Ministry

Dear GOYANs,

We are looking forward to our next GOYA Night *on Sunday, November 13, from 5:00 to 7:00 pm*. We will meet in Panos Hall, where we will finish the canvases we started and then head out to the field for some activities. After that, we will go into the Church for prayer and discussion.

We will also plan a date in early December to put up and decorate the Parish Christmas Tree in Panos Hall. If you have questions or suggestions, please contact Maha or me – and please remember to RSVP at florin@vegasgreekorthodox.com. Thank you and see you soon!

Love in Christ, Florin and Maha

Let us, who mystically represent the Cherubim and who sing the thrice-holy hymn to the life-creating Trinity, now lay aside every worldly care so that we may receive the King of all.

Greek Folk Dance

Our 2022 Greek Folk Dance season is in full swing with three groups! We have over 45 dancers registered and we are so excited! Our two competitive groups are directed this year by Niko Pouridis, Demetri Pouridis, Nick Barbarino, George Karvounidis and Kyriacos Philippou. Our youngest, non competitive group, is directed by Gabi Payan and Alyssa Liaos. We are so thankful for their commitment and efforts. We are also thankful for the community's continued support in keeping our vibrant ministry alive!

Folk Dance will be hosting a *Chili Luncheon on Sunday, November 13*. We look forward to seeing everyone in Panos Hall for fellowship and good food! Also, looking ahead to December, we will be continuing our annual tradition with our *Christmas Caroling on Saturday, December 10*. The dancers sing a medley of Greek and English Christmas Carols. Please consider having the dancers spread the Christmas cheer at your home or business for a donation. Forms are available in this issue of *The Desert Messenger* or with Karen in the Church Office. Finally, *on Sunday, December 18*, we will be hosting our annual *Fasolada Luncheon*.

Much Gratitude, Folk Dance Board

Young Adults ~ 18 Years through Early 30s

Please join us *on Thursday, November 17, starting at 6:00 pm*, for a *Friendsgiving Dinner* in Panos Hall. This will be an opportunity for us to get together and for me to become acquainted with you and your interests. Our intent is to have a vibrant Young Adult Ministry that meets our social and spiritual needs. Please, let me know what side dishes you wish to bring and, of course, let me know also who wants to bring the turkey.

Although we all have busy schedules, I believe this fellowship will be worthwhile, and allow us to start an energetic and meaningful gathering of Young Adults each month. Please let me know you are coming by contacting me at florin@vegasgreekorthodox.com. I look forward to meeting with you this month!

Thank You, Florin

Mr. & Mrs.

Dear Couples of St. John the Baptist,

Our next potluck gathering of Mr. & Mrs. will be *on Saturday, November 12, starting at 6:00 pm* at the home of John and Ellyn Nixon. We thank them and all who generously offer to host our monthly fellowship – please let Father John or Florin know if you are interested in hosting in the future.

Please contact Karen for the Nixon's address, and to let us know what you will bring. We are looking forward to seeing you all there for a lively discussion and for an amazing dinner. See you soon!

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



Forerunners ~ Our Seniors Fellowship

The Senior Forerunners will be meeting *on Monday, November 14 at 11:30 am in Kokkos Hall*. Please join us for fun, food and fellowship with a raffle and bingo.

We look forward to seeing our Seniors again for our monthly "get-togethers"!

Love in Christ, Faye Brown

Youth Choir

Calling all Children, Second Grade and up, who are interested in singing:

After a 2 ½ year hiatus, we are in the process of reorganizing our beloved Youth Choir that has been an instrumental part of the music ministry at St. John the Baptist for so many years. Our young ones learn the various hymns of our Orthodox Faith with the primary goal of chanting the Divine Liturgy in its entirety once a month, along with other special services throughout the year.

We are forming an interest group of young singers with the hope of starting practices after the holidays in mid-January 2023. Please see me on Sundays after Liturgy or call Karen at the Church Office to add your child's name(s) on our list. Looking forward to having new and returning voices joining our ranks!

With Love in Christ, Presvytera Maria

Kali Parea - For the 40+ Crowd

This month we will gather at the home of Demetrious Asim, our fearless leader, to celebrate his belated Name Day. Please join us *on Saturday, November 5 at 4:00 pm*. Get ready for an awesome dinner, hosted by Demetri, and a Power Point Presentation by Florin on the Monasteries in Romania.

Thank you, Demetri, for your generous invitation! We are all looking forward to the event! And Happy Name Day!

In Christ, Florin, on behalf of Kali Parea



AHEPA continues to look for new and former members who would like to assist in revitalizing the chapter. The QR code will link you to the site where you can pay your dues by credit card and/or contribute to AHEPA 314 Scholarship Fund. If you have any questions, please contact me.

Thank you, Steve Liaos ahepa314@gmail.com (702) 518-8018



“Six Classes on the Orthodox Faith”

Please join us for this popular six-week course!

*Continuing every Wednesday
through November 9
6:30 ~ 8:00 pm in Kokkos Hall.*



*We welcome Orthodox Christians, Catechumens, Seekers,
and those curious to learn more about the ancient Apostolic Faith.
For more information, please contact Father John or Florin.*



Let's Celebrate the Spirit of Christmas!

Please invite us to your home or business to spread some Christmas cheer!

Christmas Caroling

We will sing traditional Greek and English Christmas Carols on your front porch!

The program will last approximately 15 minutes.

If you would like to have the carolers come to your home, please fill out the following and return to any Folk Dance Board Member or the Church Office by December 4, 2022

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Saturday, December 10, 2022

****You will be contacted 3 days prior in order to confirm the time we will arrive****

Questions? Contact Sia Dalacas at aeconomy@hotmail.com or 951-285-4970

ALL PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT THE GREEK FOLK DANCE MINISTRY

YOUR SUPPORT IS GREATLY APPRECIATED

Stewardship and Community Outreach

We have a modern-day tradition for giving thanks this month and, in fact, our Church calendar is replete with many days commemorating Saints and Feasts for which we may be truly grateful. For example, *on November 8* we celebrate the Synaxis of the Archangel Michael and Gabriel and the other Bodiless Powers; *on November 16* we celebrate Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist; and *on November 30* we celebrate Andrew the First-Called Apostle, to name just a few. Taking them in reverse order, we may find examples of divinely-inspired Stewardship at work in our lives today, influencing our bodies, our minds, and our souls.

Andrew had first been a disciple of John the Baptist and when the latter pointed out Jesus and said, *“Behold the Lamb of God!”* Andrew followed Christ and became His first Disciple. (*John 1:35-37*) Being the first Disciple, Andrew models for us today to end our search for a Messiah among false idols and to follow Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. The Kontakion (short hymn) for his feast, reads: *Let us praise the namesake of bravery, the divinely eloquent and first to be called of the Disciples of Christ, the kinsman of Peter, as he called out to him in days of old, so now he calls to us, “Come, we have found Him for whom we yearned.”* We may be thankful that St. Andrew was a good Steward for the Lord – declaring Jesus as our Savior, linking our humanity to His Divinity and our bodies to His Body (the Church) on earth for the benefit of our (corporate) body.

Matthew, called by Christ, became one of the Twelve Apostles and an Evangelist. He was the first to write the Gospel for the benefit of all future Christians, preserving the Good News.

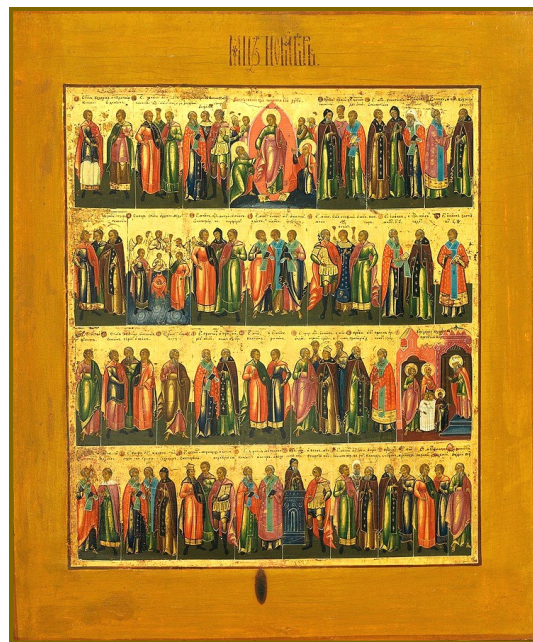
His Kontakion reads: *When you did cast away the publican’s balance and was united to the yoke of uprightness, then did you prove a merchant of great excellence, one that gathered in the wealth of the wisdom of Heaven; for this cause, the word of truth you did herald, O Matthew, and did arouse the souls of sluggish men by signifying the dread day of reckoning.* We may be thankful that St. Matthew was a good Steward for the Lord – documenting the Good News and thereby providing us a source of lifelong study, learning, and application for the benefit of our minds and souls.

All the Angels are ministering spirits, according to St. Paul, sent forth to minister to them who shall be heirs of salvation (*Hebrews 1:14*) and the *Orthodox Study Bible* elaborates further: “In the new covenant, they serve Him in His Humanity. Instead of ruling over man, Angels are partners in service with us, our Guardian Angels.” Their Kontakion reads: *Chief Commanders of God; ministers of divine glory; guides for men and leadership of the Incorporeal; as Chief Commanders of the Incorporeal, plead for our welfare and for great mercy.* We may be thankful that our Guardian Angels are good Stewards for the Lord – warding off demons, protecting us from harm, comforting us in times of distress, strengthening us against temptations, and much, much more for the benefit of our souls.

Good and faithful servants (Stewards) have been key to preserving the Faith and growing the Church for nearly two millennia and for all of them we may be truly thankful. The majority of these are now in the Church Triumphant (borrowing from St. John’s *Revelation* we might describe them as *“ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands”* of Angels). Now, however, it is up to us, the Church Militant, to do our best to ensure preserving the Faith and growing the Church for future generations. Lord, help us to become the best Stewards we can be and to engage fully with our community; and to avoid hiding our lamps under bushels or burying our talents in the ground.

In closing, and with gratitude, we may be thankful for the Stewards who have generously contributed to St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church this year. Thank you all.

In Christ, Mike Beeler, for the Stewardship and Outreach Committee





Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisoun

Anastasia (Jacqueline) Rivera (Adult Baptism) on September 30, 2022.
Godparent: Georgia Mourtsis.

Angeliki (Illusia Angelina), daughter of Christopher Sarantakos and Shaunyl Dollosa,
on October 1, 2022. Godparent: Panayiotis Louros.

Leonidas, son of Chad and Marissa Gauvin, on October 22, 2022.
Godparent: Juliana Likourinou.

Marriage: Na Zisete

Christos Nicolacopoulos and Denise Gonzalez on October 8, 2022.
Koumbaros: Andreas Nikolakopoulos.

Fallen Asleep in the Lord

Rev. Basil (William George, Jr.) Cosulas on September 22, 2022.
Funeral on October 7.

Metropolitan Ilia Katre of Philomelion on October 6, 2022.
Funeral on October 13.

“We give thanks to God always for you all, constantly mentioning you in our prayers, remembering before our God and Father your work of faith . . .” (1 Thessalonians 1:2-3)

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

+++++

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

CHURCH 365

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 2022 of \$ _____.

Signed: _____

Signed: _____

Orthodox Christian: Yes No

Orthodox Christian: Yes No

Others sharing in the gift (children): _____

**2022
Stewardship
Report
(as of 10/25/22)**

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$530,082 (\$475,140 in 2021)
 Stewardship Gifts Received: \$458,443 (\$405,115 in 2021)
 Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$71,639 (\$70,025 in 2021)
 Stewardship Families Pledged: 409 (382 in 2021)
 2022 Budgeted Goal: \$500,000 ... Keep the Pledges Coming!

*"Let Us
Exalt
His Name
Together!"
(Psalm 34:3)*

| <u>Average Pledge</u> | <u>No. of Families</u> | <u>Amount Pledged</u> |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|
| \$1 - \$500 | 180 | \$ 49,827 |
| \$501 - \$1,000 | 90 | \$ 71,330 |
| \$1,001 - \$2,500 | 95 | \$ 148,471 |
| \$2,501 - \$5,000 | 26 | \$ 92,704 |
| \$5,001 & Above | 18 | \$ 167,750 |
| Total Families | 409 | \$530,082 |

Church Account Summaries - September 2022

| Nevada State Bank Accounts | August Ending Balance | Deposits | Transfers In | Withdraws/ Checks | Transfers Out | September Ending Balance | Notes |
|--|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|--|
| General Operating Account (GOA) | \$54,626.09 | \$83,268.18 | \$26,973.66 | \$18,822.75 | \$114,229.35 | \$31,815.83 | |
| Community and Education (C&E) | \$61,369.50 | | \$32,000.00 | | \$32,000.00 | \$61,369.50 | Transferred in/out of Festival account |
| Greek Food Festival (GFF) | \$127,794.82 | \$852,551.54 | \$76,574.00 | \$179,653.50 | \$57,820.90 | \$819,445.96 | |
| Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O) | \$255,238.63 | \$8,864.88 | \$7,244.00 | \$9,625.89 | \$4,829.76 | \$256,891.86 | |
| Folk Dance Group | \$20,192.30 | \$1,505.00 | | | | \$21,697.30 | |
| Hellenic Historical Society | \$365.47 | | | \$15.00 | | \$350.47 | |
| Designated Funds | August Ending Balance | Deposits | Transfers In | Withdraws/ Checks | Transfers Out | September Ending Balance | Notes |
| Bookstore | \$28,282.73 | \$6,358.00 | \$7,244.00 | \$543.93 | \$3,829.76 | \$37,511.04 | |
| Ornaments | \$1,169.41 | | | | | \$1,169.41 | |
| Restricted Funds | August Ending Balance | Deposits | Transfers In | Withdraws/ Checks | Transfers Out | September Ending Balance | Notes |
| ICON | \$4,767.81 | | | | | \$4,767.81 | |
| Library Account | \$1,470.77 | | | | | \$1,470.77 | |
| Giving Tree | \$7,889.87 | | | | | \$7,889.87 | |
| Faithtree | \$1,626.39 | | | | | \$1,626.39 | |
| Building Fund | \$102,892.56 | \$2,506.88 | | \$6,688.00 | \$1,000.00 | \$97,711.44 | \$6688 - Main water line repair; \$1000 supplies for the gate repair |
| Youth Choir | \$2,989.18 | | | | | \$2,989.18 | |
| Church School | \$5,510.38 | | | \$2,393.96 | | \$3,116.42 | TVs for Classrooms |
| Three Priests | \$52,535.51 | | | | | \$52,535.51 | |
| Roof Appeal | \$10,283.22 | | | | | \$10,283.22 | |
| Altar Servers | \$440.00 | | | | | \$440.00 | |
| GOYA | \$530.36 | | | | | \$530.36 | |
| Panos Flooring Repair | \$23,722.83 | | | | | \$23,722.83 | |
| Church Flooring Replacement | \$0.00 | | | | | \$0.00 | |
| Restricted Donation | \$5,654.00 | | | | | \$5,654.00 | |
| Live Streaming Equipment | \$473.61 | | | | | \$473.61 | |
| Designated, Restricted, and Other Total | \$255,238.63 | \$8,864.88 | \$7,244.00 | \$9,625.89 | \$4,829.76 | \$256,891.86 | |
| Other Funds | August Ending Balance | Deposits | Transfers In | Withdraws/ Checks | Transfers Out | September Ending Balance | Notes |
| Kokkos Scholarship Fund | \$64,467.37 | | | | | \$64,467.37 | as of 06.30.22 |
| Commonwealth Investments (Icon) | \$117,035.89 | | | | \$8,331.08 | \$108,704.81 | Change in Investment |

September 2022 Candles \$4,427.15
September 2022 Trays \$3,583.00
Total September 2022 Candles & Trays \$8,010.15



NOVEMBER 2022 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|---|---|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| | | | 1 Ss. Cosmas and Damian 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:00 pm Parish Council Budget Meeting in Library | 2 6:30 pm Six Classes on the Orthodox Faith Class #5 | 3 | 4 | 5 1:00 pm All Youth Family Harvest Fun Event in Panos Hall 4:00 pm Kali Pareia at Demetri Asim's Home |
| 6 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy | 7 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting in Library | 8 Synaxis of the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy | 9 St. Nectarios 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:30 pm Six Classes on the Orthodox Faith Class #6 | 10 | 11 | 12 6:00 pm Mr. and Mrs. at Nixon Home | |
| 13 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 5:00 pm GOYA Night | 14 11:30 am Forerunners Luncheon in Kokkos Hall | 15 Nativity Fast Begins | 16 | 17 6:00 pm Young Adults Friendsgiving in Panos Hall | 18 | 19 | |
| 20 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Parish Assembly Philoptochos Autumn Bake Sale | 21 Entrance of the Theotokos in the Temple 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy | 22 | 23 Thanksgiving Liturgy 5:00 pm Orthros 6:00 pm Divine Liturgy and Artoclasia | 24 Thanksgiving  | 25 Church Office Closed | 26 | |
| 27 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy | 28 | 29 | 30 St. Andrew 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy | | | | |

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

*“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under Heaven:
A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up
what is planted.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2)*

