

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 20, Issue 1 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

January 2022

**From
Father
John**

Beloved in Christ:

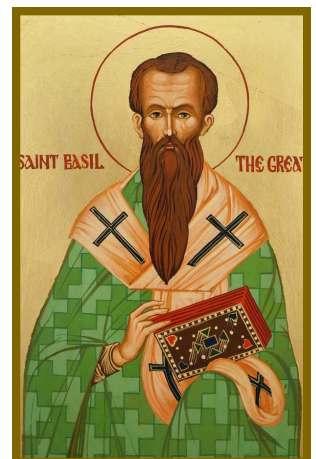
Christ is Born! Glorify Him! As we enter the New Year during “the twelve days of Christmas,” it is fitting that we continue in the joy of the life-changing event of the Birth in the Flesh of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. My earnest prayer is that we begin 2022 by thanking God for our abundant blessings from the depths of our souls – despite these challenging times. These holy days should awaken us to the truth that our Lord came into the world at a time when people sat in darkness, to grant hope and life to us all: Knowing that with God all things are possible, let us allow His loving and merciful Presence to be the Source of our peace, our confidence, our faith, our unity, our restoration, and our life. As the Birth of Christ allows for our union with God, may we cooperate with His grace and *do our part as His instruments* in ending the fear, divisiveness, and insanity we have increasingly experienced and witnessed in the world.



The twelve-day celebration culminates with the *Great Feast of Holy Theophany on January 6*, which commemorates the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan River at the hands of St. John. How amazing that our Lord condescends to become a Man (while remaining fully God), humbles Himself yet again at the age of thirty to be Baptized by a man, and all with the intent of uniting us humans with Him through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism! In the words of St. Paul, *“For as many of you as were Baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Galatians 3:27)* As Baptism is the means of our rebirth, the celebration of Holy Theophany becomes the annual renewal of our Baptismal grace – particularly with the *Great Blessing of the Water*, which mirrors the rite of Baptism. For this reason, Theophany is also called “the Feast of Lights,” as it spiritually revitalizes each of us who initially received “Illumination” (the deifying Light of God) through Baptism.

St. Basil the Great, whom the Orthodox Church commemorates *on January 1*, describes in the fifteenth chapter of his classic theological treatise, *On the Holy Spirit*, just how Baptism fulfills Jesus’ words (*John 3:5*) about being born again in the water and the Spirit: “Our Lord made a covenant with us through Baptism in order to give us eternal life. There is in Baptism an image both of death and of life, the water being the symbol of death, the Spirit giving the pledge of life.

“The association of water and the Spirit is explained by the twofold purpose for which Baptism was instituted, namely, to destroy the sin in us so that it could never again give birth to death, and to enable us to live by the Spirit and so win the reward of holiness. The water into which the body enters as into a tomb symbolizes death; the Spirit instills into us his life-giving power, awakening our souls from the death of sin to the life that they had in the beginning. This then is what it means to be born again of water and the Spirit: We die in the water, and we come to life again through the Spirit.



(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>*

Saturday, January 1/ *Circumcision of Christ/
St. Basil the Great and His Mother St. Emelia*
8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am *Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great*
Epistle: Colossians 2:8-12
Gospel: Luke 2:21-20, 40-52
Artoclasia (Eliades and Szukiewicz Families)

Sunday, January 2/ *Sunday Before Theophany/St.
Seraphim of Sarov/St. Sylvester Pope of Rome*
Orthros: Tone Three
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:36-53
Epistle: 1 Timothy 3:13-16, 4:1-5
Gospel: Matthew 3:1-6
Memorials: Cliff and Audrey Morrison (40 days);
Kristina Takev (2 years)

Wednesday, January 5/ *Eve of Theophany
(Strict Fast)*
6:00 pm *Vespertal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
and Great Blessing of the Water*
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27
Gospel: Luke 3:1-18

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

Friday, 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
*Fellowship hosted
by Philoptochos*



Sunday, January 9/ *Sunday After Theophany/
St. Polyeuctos the Martyr*
Orthros: Tone Four
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:1-10
Epistle: Ephesians 4:7-13
Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17
*Parish Council Oath and Community Vasilopita
St. John the Baptist Name Day Brunch*

Sunday, January 16/ *12th Sunday of Luke/
Veneration of the Chains of Holy Apostle Peter*
Orthros: Tone Five (First Plagal)
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:11-18
Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11
Gospel: Luke 17:12-19

Memorials: Steve and Linda Manios (1 year).
Fellowship: Hosted by Nikki Kanelos in memory of
her mother, Andromahi Kanelos

Monday, January 17/ *St. Anthony
the Great*
8:00 am Orthros
9:00 am *Divine Liturgy*
Epistle: Hebrews 13:17-21
Gospel: Luke 6:17-23



Tuesday, 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 23/ *14th Sunday of Luke/
Hieromartyr Clement of Ancyra/St. Agathangelos
the Martyr*
Orthros: Tone Six (Second Plagal)
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:19-31
Epistle: 1 Timothy 1:15-17
Gospel: Luke 18:35-43
Memorials: Mary Evelyn Xikis (1 year); Constantine
and Kyriaki Xikis, and Gregory Xikis

(Continued on Page 3)

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

(Continued from Page 2)

Tuesday, 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

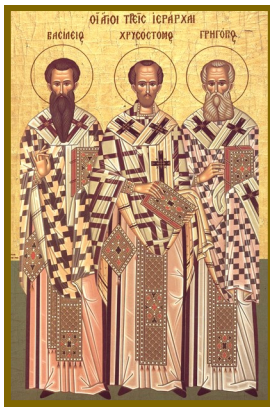
Sunday, January 30/*15th Sunday of Luke/ The Three Holy Hierarchs: Ss. Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian and John Chrysostom*

Orthros: Tone Seven (Grave)

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

Epistle: Hebrews 13:7-16

Gospel: Matthew 5:14-19



From Father John (Continued from Page 1)

“To signify this death and to enlighten the Baptized by transmitting to them knowledge of God, the great Sacrament of Baptism is administered by means of a triple immersion and the invocation of each of the three Divine Persons. Whatever grace there is in the water comes not from its own nature but from the presence of the Spirit, since Baptism is not a cleansing of the body, but a pledge made to God from a clear conscience.

“As a preparation for our life after the resurrection, our Lord tells us in the Gospel how we should live here and now. He teaches us to be peaceable, long-suffering, undefiled by desire for pleasure, and detached from worldly wealth. In this way we can achieve, by our own free choice, the kind of life that will be natural in the world to come.

“Through the Holy Spirit we are restored to Paradise, we ascend to the Kingdom of Heaven, and we are reinstated as adopted sons. Thanks to the Spirit we obtain the right to call God our Father, we become sharers in the grace of Christ, we are called children of light, and we share in everlasting glory.”

Beloved, may we all eagerly partake of the water of regeneration on Holy Theophany, paving the way for us to “walk as children of light” (*Ephesians 5:8*) throughout the New Year – through an active prayer and Sacramental life in Christ’s Holy Church.

Love in Christ,

REQUEST FOR HOUSE OR BUSINESS BLESSING

Name _____ Phone (____) _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____ Email _____



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

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

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

Parish Council Report

Καλά Χριστούγεννα και Ευτυχισμένος ο Καινούριος Χρόνος! I wish everyone a Blessed Christmas and a great New Year.

This will be my final column as President of the Parish Council. It has been a great run these past six years. I sincerely enjoyed my service and am proud of what we accomplished. I want to thank everyone who has contributed so much to the success of our Parish over these last six years. Your contributions have been phenomenal. I also want to specifically thank our Clergy. We have been truly blessed with tremendous Clergymen who have given so much of themselves to tend not only to our Parishioners but also to many, many others throughout the Community.

We had our ups and downs over the years, especially with the challenges foisted upon us by the Pandemic; but, through Faith, Hope, Courage and help from God, we overcame the obstacles put before us and were ultimately successful in our endeavors. I can say with confidence that things are certainly looking up as we move forward and can also say our Parish is getting better every day. Although we accomplished much these past six years, there is still much more to do as we continue building for the future and ensuring the viability of our Church. I have taken the liberty to set forth some of my comments to hopefully help provide a framework for building upon what we have all done since the inception of our Church, and to help realize the ultimate goal of building a better future.

Building for the future needs to include continuing to build and improve our Stewardship Program; strengthening the ties we all have to the Church; reaching out to the many people who for one reason or another have become disconnected from the Church and their Faith; promoting our Faith and Culture to the Las Vegas Community; promoting Church social events and Fellowship; and most importantly, engaging and connecting our youth and strengthening their Faith through religious education, the varied ministries and Church activities, dance groups, sports, and various social functions. Doing these things will ensure that our Church will be here for years to come, and then some. The importance of connecting and maintaining the connection our young people already have to the Church cannot be overstated. Over the years, there has been a lot of effort given by many to engage our youth, and it has been truly gratifying to see more young people getting involved in all facets of our Church, including leadership roles. We need to continue with and strengthen these efforts.

Building for the future also includes addressing the challenges we are facing with having to fix and upgrade our facilities, as they have aged significantly. As I see it, in the next couple of months, we need to refinish the floors in Panos and Kokkos Halls and paint the interiors. This is a must if we are going to continue using both halls for revenue-generating events. Also, by the end of the year, we need to resurface the parking lots and re-stripe them. This too is a must, not only because the many cracks and faded striping are eyesores, but also because the cracks are growing in width and will eventually become tripping hazards for people walking on the lots, especially during the Festival. In the next year or two, we need to repair the stucco and paint the exteriors of the Church and the Community Center. The stucco on the planter on the south side of the Church is in dire need of being completely redone because it has water damage behind it, which is causing it to buckle and break off. In the next several years, we will have to replace a good portion of our HVAC. We are good for at least two more years, but after that, their operation will become dicey and less than consistent. A few less important items to add to the list of projects that will need to be completed include re-staining the concrete in front of the Church, replacing many of the landscape lights, and refurbishing the fountains. To complete these capital projects is clearly daunting, but with planning, strong Stewardship contributions, donations, successful Festivals, and working together, we can make it happen.

As most of you are aware, we recently held our Parish Council elections. Congratulations to Telly Eliades and Alex Mavros on their reelection to the Council, and congratulations to Alexia Conger, Eleni Filios, John Fotopoulos and Ted Zaferatos on their election to the Council. We wish the new Parish Council the best, and with God's Blessing, we hope they will all do great things for the Church. In addition, we wish to thank Stacy Mavrantonis, Peter Papas and John Matsis, for all their hard work and service to the Church. They will truly be missed, and we fervently hope that they will continue to serve in other capacities. The new Parish Council will take the Oath of Office during the Divine Liturgy *on Sunday, January 9*. Following the Dismissal, the new Parish Council will remain in the Church to elect Officers. *(Continued on Page 5)*

Parish Council Report *(Continued from Page 4)*

Also, please mark your calendars for our annual St. John the Baptist Parish Name Day observance. We will be celebrating the event with a Brunch *following the Liturgy on Sunday, January 9*. There will be plenty of food and beverages for all, and of course, Mimosas. Please join together in Fellowship to celebrate the Patron Saint of our Parish whose name adorns our Church.

We have selected the dates for the 2022 Greek Food Festival. It will be held *on Friday, September 23 through Sunday, September 25*. Please help us with this very important event. As stated many times, the Festival is showcase of our Church and Greek Culture to the Las Vegas Community, and it takes us all working together to make it happen.

In closing, we want to again thank the various Church ministries and organizations, and the many individuals for all the work they do. It clearly takes a lot of work from the entire community to maintain our Church. Please step forward whenever you can and pitch in to make our Church better. May God Bless!

In Christ, Gus Flangas, Parish Council President



Please join us for our . . .
***St. John the Baptist
 Name Day Brunch
 Sunday, January 9, 2022
 Following Divine Liturgy
 Panos Hall***

*Menu: Scrambled Eggs and Feta, Pancakes,
 Hash Browns, Sausage and Bacon,
 Vasilopita and Orange Juice Mimosas*

\$10 minimum per person

Proceeds benefit St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Philoptochos News

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:
The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)*

Dear Father John, Father Seraphim, Members of Philoptochos, and Brothers and Sisters of our St. John the Baptist Church,

Let us say hello to 2022 and prayerfully enter a new, wonderful year filled with health and happiness for all. I would like to offer a final thank-you for the amazing support from the entire community in all the projects and events of the Ladies Philoptochos Society throughout 2021 and especially at the holidays. We still have a few more Raffle tickets for the gorgeous Cross, blessed Nativity Icon and the Raiders Basket. We will have the drawing *on Sunday, January 9 at the St. John the Baptist Name Day Brunch following Divine Liturgy*. Please think about purchasing a ticket now or another one for good luck!



The St. John the Baptist Name Day Brunch will be a lovely celebration complete with a full breakfast buffet, and what brunch would be complete without mimosas? We will need about 8-10 helpers with the buffet and a couple mixologists for the mimosas. Please let me know if you can help.

Please come to our next meeting *on Sunday, January 16, following Divine Liturgy* to find out about the Social Service projects and other things going on. There will also be a short, fun but spiritually informative talk on the “12 things I wish I had known” which can also be the “12 things my YiaYia did not tell me” about Orthodoxy. You might be surprised!

Please mark the following dates down in your calendar: You will not want to miss these days!

Sunday, February 6 – Go Red for your Heart: The National Philoptochos Project to bring Heart Health Awareness to all women. Please wear red for the annual Philoptochos Membership Photo. And there is still time to join the Ladies Philoptochos Society for 2022! This year LPS will be celebrating 90 years of being friends of the Poor. Please see Christina Snow for information.

Tuesday, February 8 – General Meeting: Planning session for Lent and Pascha. Light supper at 6:00 pm, with meeting at 6:30 pm. We need a couple of volunteers to help with the supper.

Sunday, February 20 – Kids ‘N’ Cancer Fundraiser Fellowship following the Divine Liturgy. We are so happy to be able to participate once again in raising funds for one of the most wonderful causes. The Metropolis Philoptochos of San Francisco sponsors four Camp Agape participants every year. The last two years were virtual, but this year they are hoping to be back to an in-person experience for this healing ministry. The Metropolis Philoptochos Board and members are looking forward to bringing the normalcy of summer camp to kids who have cancer: To be able to give them campfires and crafts, songs and silliness, hikes and health – for one short week a year they will get to be just kids. Litsa Smith is the chair and is looking for helpers.

Dear friends, the world may have taken a pause, but let us remember that we must keep on living: It is His Will and Plan for us all. If anything life has shown us, it is how we can adapt and move on!

Your Sister in Christ, Bernadette Anthony, Philoptochos President



*“None of us is judged for what he does not know,
any more than one is counted blessed because he is learned
and possesses knowledge. It is rather in regard to these
questions that each faces judgment:
Whether he has kept the faith and
sincerely observed the commandments.”
(St. Anthony the Great)*



GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA
GREEK ORTHODOX LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY, INC.

THE NATIONAL PHILOPTOCHOS DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
IS SPONSORING A CONFIDENTIAL



**TELEPHONE CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP
FOR ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS**



Are you caring for a loved one who is elderly, has a chronic or life-threatening health condition or who is disabled? Do you wish you could talk to others who are facing the same challenges as you? Do you wish you had someone with whom to share your thoughts, concerns and questions and who understands our faith, our culture and community? Are you so overwhelmed you're not even sure what or who could help?

If you answered yes to some or all and would like more information, please join the
PHILOPTOCHOS TELEPHONE CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP

Facilitated by professionals knowledgeable in caregiving and aging services, the support group will "meet" over the telephone on eight consecutive Thursday evenings. Access will be available to Orthodox Christians throughout the United States.

In a **confidential and safe environment**, we will discuss best practices to help you manage the physical needs of your loved one; dealing with stress, guilt and exhaustion; the importance of self-care; financial concerns; family dynamics and decision-making; balancing your multiple roles; asking for help and finding resources to help you cope; long-distance caregiving; preparing for the future; spiritual resources to help you find strength and build resilience, and more.

Eight consecutive Thursday evenings:

Dates: **JANUARY 13th, 2022 – MARCH 3rd, 2022**

Time: **7:00 pm – 8:00 pm • Eastern Standard Time**

Pre-registration Required

Call-In phone number will be provided upon registration

For more information and to pre-register, email supportgroup@philoptochos.org

SPACE IS LIMITED – PLEASE DON'T HESITATE! EMAIL US TODAY.

NATIONAL PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY • 126 EAST 37TH ST. • NEW YORK, NY 10016 • CONFIDENTIAL SOCIAL WORK #: 212.977.7782

Stewardship and Community Outreach

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Ευτυχισμένος ο Καινούριος Χρόνος! Happy New Year!

Yes, another calendar year has arrived, giving us yet one more opportunity to renew ourselves in our Orthodox Faith. A short time ago we celebrated the greatest act of giving, the greatest act of Stewardship, the greatest act of LOVE in the history of the world: The Birth of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ. He came into the world as Man to save mankind by reopening the path to the Father and His Heavenly Kingdom.

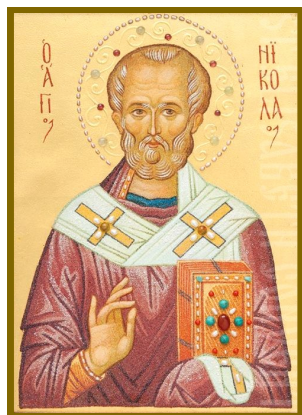


During this first month of the new calendar year, we celebrate two major events in the life of Jesus: *On January 1* we commemorate *His Circumcision*, and *on January 6* we celebrate *Holy Theophany* – His Baptism at the hands of St. John the Baptist, our Parish Patron.

Each step of the way Jesus Christ is fulfilling the Old Testament Law and step-by-step paving the way for our return to His Kingdom, the Heavenly Realm. Of course, we know that this will lead us to His greatest acts of LOVE: His Passion, Death, Descent into Hades, Resurrection, Ascension into Heaven, and shortly thereafter, Pentecost and the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon His Apostles – the birth of His Church on Earth.

Through each of these events in His life, the Lord Jesus Christ is giving Himself to us, showing us His unconditional LOVE for each one of us. He is giving us His all, His very life, for our salvation: *“Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” (John 15:13)* In return, *we must give our all back to Him.*

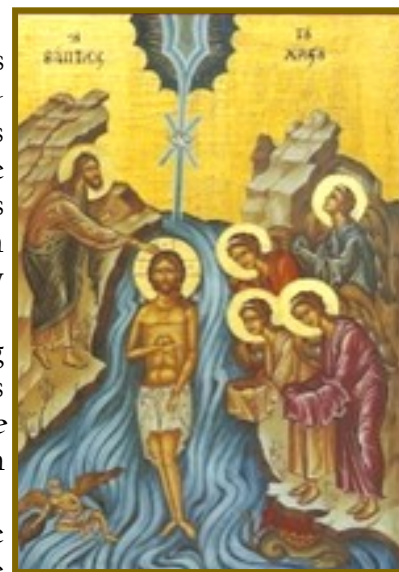
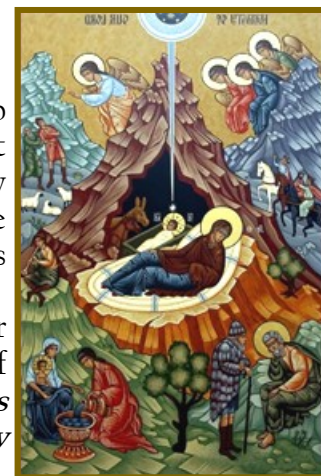
So, how do we LOVE Him, give our all back to Him? How do we show the depth of our faith? Throughout the Gospels He has shown us the way of LOVE, through giving completely of ourselves back to Him and one another. In the Parable of the Judgment (*Matthew 25:33-40*), He talks about feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, clothing the naked, taking in strangers, and visiting the sick and those in prison. He concludes with the following, *“inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.”* Elsewhere, Jesus also tells His Disciples and us to *“love one another as I have loved you.” (John 15:12)* This last statement by Christ is remarkable because we not only have to love our friends, but – as He has done – we must also unconditionally love those who have caused us great pain, sorrow and suffering. He showed us this when, on the Cross, He said, *“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” (Luke 23:34)*



May we reflect on the words of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra in Lycia: *“When Christ’s Spirit fills the heart of a disciple, we joyously want to imitate our Lord’s example by giving all that we have to help others. True joy comes through giving. True meaning in life comes from helping and serving others. And the generosity of our giving reflects the maturity of our faith!”*

Praying that everyone has a blessed 2022!

In Christ’s Service, Stewardship and Outreach Committee of
St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church





CHURCH 365

“Let Us Exalt His Name Together!” (Psalm 34:3)

CONNECTING WITH
CHRIST,
OUR CHURCH
AND ONE ANOTHER
THROUGHOUT THE YEAR!

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: _____

Orthodox Christian: Yes No

Signed: _____

Orthodox Christian: Yes No

Others sharing in the gift (children): _____

STEWARDSHIP AND OTHER GIVING OPTIONS

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

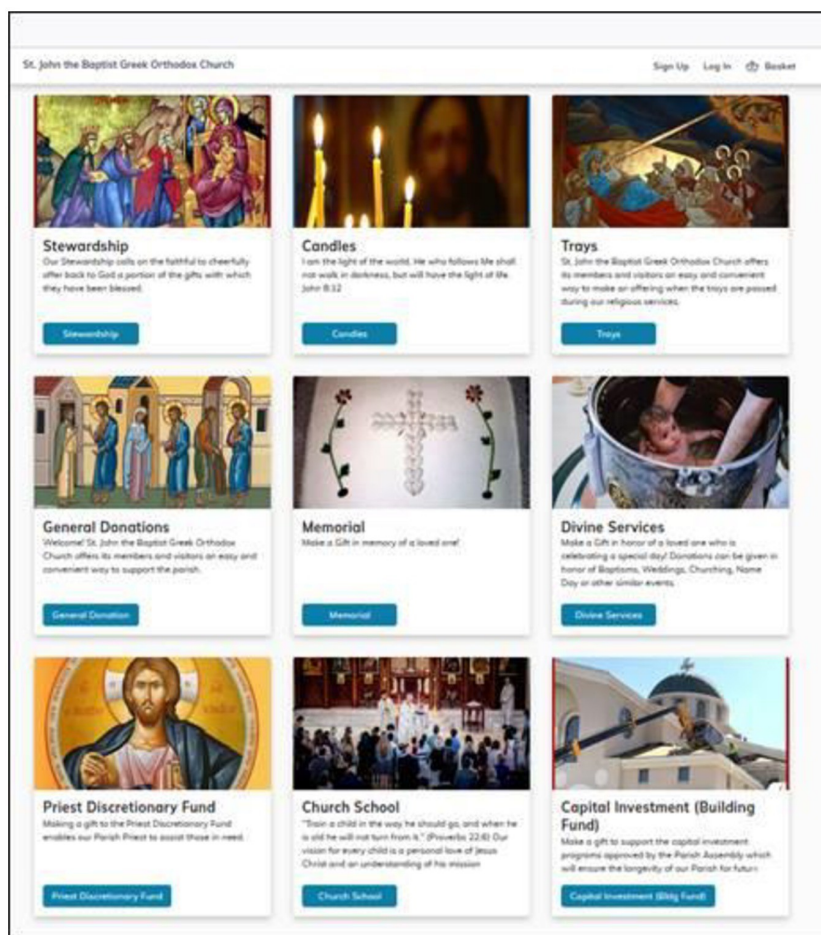
On behalf of Fr. John, Fr. Seraphim and the Parish Council, we would like to thank you for your ongoing support to our Parish.

For 2022 the Parish is launching a new way for our faithful members to offer their Stewardship and other donations. This new way is via VANCO for making our electronic offerings, be it Stewardship, trays, candles and so on. Our goal is to centralize where our members go for their generous support to St. John and to protect your personal credit card or banking information.

In past years the means of making your blessed offerings has been via PayPal, giving the Parish your credit card or banking information to set up your automatic payments, by personal check or cash. However, as of December 31, 2021 PayPal will no longer be available and we will not be requesting your personal credit card or banking information to set up your individual donations. Of course, written personal checks and cash will still be an option.

We pray for your continued support and respectfully request you set up your own account in VANCO for your generous financial support to St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church. You can click on this link (<https://secure.myvanco.com/L-YZYE/home>) to go to our Parish VANCO account to set up your personal account.

Should you need any assistance in setting up your account in VANCO, please contact John Karas via email (jkaras@vegasgreekorthodox.com) and he will be more than happy to assist you. Below you can see what our Parish VANCO website looks like.





Philoptochos Holiday Raffle

Sunday, January 9, 2022

Following Divine Liturgy

Prizes include . . .

Icon of the Nativity, Gorgeous Diamond Cross,
and Raiders Gift Basket with 2 Tickets!

Raffle tickets are \$50.

Please see a Philoptochos Member
to purchase your ticket.

Proceeds benefit Philoptochos Charities.



Marriage: Na Zisete!

David Smith and Amanda Massiha on December 4, 2021.
Koumbaros: Rony Mansour.

Fallen Asleep in the Lord

Kalliope Malpee on November 5, 2021. Funeral on December 3.

James Papadakis on October 25, 2021. Funeral on December 7.

Helen Kogianes on November 6, 2021.

Funeral in Kingman, AZ, on December 17.

Mihail Lupsa on December 13, 2021. Funeral on December 22,

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

Rev. Father John Hondros
frjohn@vegaskgreekorthodox.com

Rev. Father Seraphim Ramos
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

Parish Council: TBD

Philoptochos: Bernadette Anthony
Stewardship & Community Outreach:
Justina Szukiewicz

Choir: Athena Mertes

Chanters & Youth Choir:
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School: Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers: Father John

GOYA:
Anne Pantelas & Maha Habiba

Orthodox Family Fellowship:
Imtisal Amy Khuri & April Rivera

Young Adults:
Fr. Seraphim

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas

Greek School: Paula Kelesis

Mr. & Mrs.:
Fr. John, Fr. Seraphim & Presvyteres

Kali Parea: Demetrious Asim

Adult Basketball:
Nick Kelesis

Forerunners: Paula Kelesis

Orthodox Bookstore:
Paraskevi Santamaria

Greek Food Festival: Gus Flangas

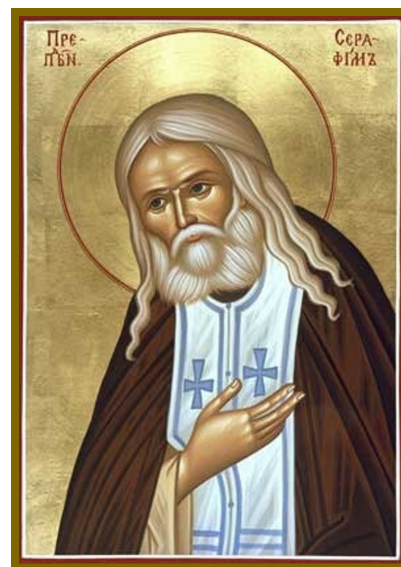
Hellenic Historical Society:
Nitsa Filios, Cheryl Pandelis &
Susan Stamis

Photography & Live-Streaming:
Bill & Erin Bruninga

*You appeared today to us on earth, O Master,
and Your light was signed on us who cry aloud to You
and say with understanding, O Christ our God:
You came and shone forth, O Light unapproachable.
(Kontakion of Theophany, translated by Father Seraphim Dedes)*

From Father Seraphim

Every *January 2* we celebrate the life of St. Seraphim the Wonderworker of Sarov (1754-1833). As a young boy named Prochoros growing up in the city of Kursk in Southwestern Russia, he was the son of merchant class parents. His father Isidore Moshnin built Churches and ran a hardware store of sorts together with his mother, Agathia. They were pious and attended the Divine Services regularly, but young Prochoros was reserved, serious, and did not play too often with the other children of the village – preferring rather to spend long walks in silence in the woods and in prayer. While accompanying his father on a construction site, the future saint was blown by a strong gust of wind off a very high belltower on a Church. Isidore and the workers rushed down expecting to find the mangled corpse falling at such a distance, but Prochoros was unharmed and had been safely carried down by his Guardian Angel. Another miraculous occurrence



cemented the providential care of God over his whole life beginning in childhood: Having fallen quite ill and responding to no treatment, the family had given up hope for recovery for the young boy. Lying on a bed in fever and being unable to get up they awaited his end. A Church procession that was passing through the village with priests and deacons, faithful pilgrims, incense, Crosses and banners, together with a miraculous icon of the Mother of God (The Kursk Root Icon) was diverted during a downpour from the main road into the Moshnin's front yard. Agathia immediately carried her sick and dying son outdoors, and the Icon passed over his body laid out on the ground as a blessing – and after this the boy was straightaway healed and made a full recovery.

At the age of 18, the saint departed his parents' home with their blessing, together with some other monastically inclined friends, and having received a brass Cross from his mother which he wore on his chest for the rest of his life, he set off on the relatively short journey from Kursk for the city of Kiev and the great monastic establishment of the Kiev Caves Lavra. Once there the young men requested an audience with the great clairvoyant elder Dositheos to get a blessing and guidance. Prochoros and Dositheos spoke a long while. And finally, Dositheos told him, *"Go, child of God, to the Monastery of Sarov, and stay there. That place will be to you for salvation. With God's help, there you will finish your human wanderings on earth. Only, struggle to acquire the unceasing remembrance of God. Continuously call upon His Name, saying: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner!'"* The young monastic aspirant received the advice as the will of God and set off immediately for the Monastery of Sarov, located southeast of Moscow, where he enrolled as a novice.

He was quickly put to work doing all the regular tasks of the difficult monastic way. He chopped wood, tended the garden, worked in the kitchen preparing food and washing dishes, singing in the Monastery choir, and fulfilling his prayer rule in his cell while attending all the Church services lasting eight to ten hours a day depending on the season or festal period. After eight years he was tonsured and given the name Seraphim, meaning "flaming one" from the sixth chapter of Isaiah, where the angelic beings surrounding the throne of God and having six wings in Hebrew are called "burning" – with love for God. Later he was ordained as a deacon and while participating in the Divine Liturgy he fell into ecstasy upon seeing the Living and Risen Christ appear and come out from the icon in the Icon Screen. He was unable to speak for some hours and when he came back to himself, he could not describe in words the joy of the soul in the experience of the vision of God. He was finally ordained as a priest and would serve the Divine Liturgy every day.

(Continued on Page 13)

From Father Seraphim (Continued from Page 12)



After some years in the cenobitic, or communal life of the Monastery, St. Seraphim felt called to further ascetic struggles. He was given the blessing to go into the forest surrounding the monastery and live during the week in a small cabin preserving silence and ceaseless prayer, cultivating a garden, and living in peace with the animals like another Adam in Paradise; he would return to the Monastery for the Divine Services on the weekends. During this time he increased his devotion to God reading the entire New Testament every week. He would sleep and eat very little because that left less time for prayer and the enjoyment of singing the Church services and reading the Scriptures. St. Seraphim befriended a wild grizzly bear he nicknamed Misha, and would name different landscapes around his hermitage places from the Gospels like Golgotha, Mt. Tabor, the Jordan River etc. In this way he always kept his mind focused on God.

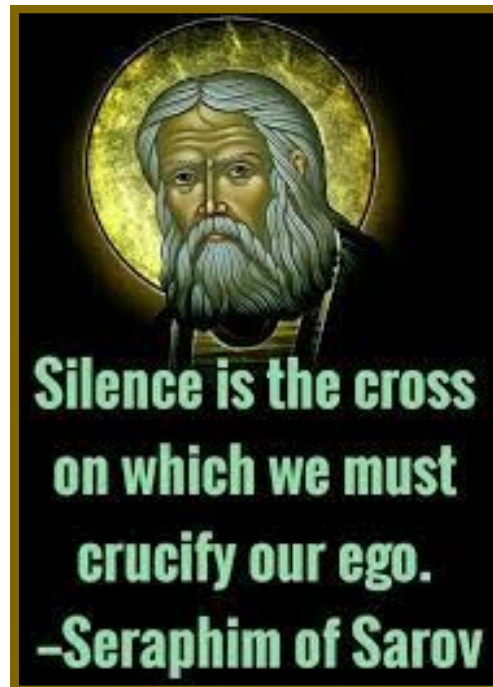
He received in all twelve visitations by the Mother of God during his life and had an unceasing devotion to her. He spent three years in absolute silence guarding his tongue and his mind and speaking no words outside the words of the Divine Liturgy. He knelt once for 1,000 days and nights on a rock in the forest, in rain and cold, night and day saying the Jesus Prayer, and asking for God's mercy – waging war on the presence even of one demonic thought within himself. He was thus given by God the grace to work miracles and see into the hearts and minds of men. St. Seraphim suffered much at the hands of robbers who beat him half to death and broke his spine permanently, causing him to be bent over and walk with a cane or stick to lean on the rest of his life. Yet again, the Mother of God healed St. Seraphim and later commanded him to open the doors of his cell in the Monastery, which he moved back into, to all the people who would come to him to be healed, to confess their sins, and to receive a word of salvation.

St. Seraphim had the discernment to say to people, *“Whatever I say to you is from the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit does not tell me anything to say to you, I will not speak.”* After many decades of fasting, prayer, disciplining his body, Church services, fighting the devil and his passions, and suffering for the sake of Christ, St. Seraphim became a source of guidance, miracles, and comfort for the whole Russian land. Czars, generals, businessmen, mothers, peasants, and people of all ages, professions, and walks of life journeyed to Sarov to encounter God in the face of His Saint. He reposed on his knees with his candles burning and the Gospel book opened having said: *“When I am dead, come to me at my grave, and the more often the better. Whatever is in your soul, whatever may have happened to you, come to me as when I was alive and kneeling on the ground, cast all your bitterness upon my grave. Tell me everything and I shall listen to you, and all the bitterness will fly away from you. And as you spoke to me when I was alive, do so now. For I am living and I shall be forever.”*

When I read the life of this holy man when I was 16 years old my life changed, and I fell in love with both St. Seraphim and the Orthodox Church. I pray that in this New Year we all can take the time to attentively read one full length book of a Saint's life and perhaps fall more in love once again with our Holy Orthodox Faith and our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ.

With Love in Christ,

Father Seraphim



Ministry News

Church School

Hi All! Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Thank you to all parents who have registered their children for Church School. We really appreciate it. We accept new students all year long, so please do not hesitate to enroll and bring them to class. For Pre-K, they must be 4 by September 30, following the CCSD calendar.

We are still using the Orthodox Journeys curriculum. If you are interested in having it emailed to you, please let me know. The lessons are sent to me weekly so I am happy to pass it along to you. It is really a wonderful program and we are happy to have it available to us.

If you are interested, we love snacks in our classroom. Please reach out to your child's teacher and ask what their needs are. Thank you for the parents that have donated: We appreciate it so much.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns. We love having your children and teaching them about our wonderful faith.

Happy 2022!

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

Orthodox Family Fellowship (OFF) and GOYA Snow Day

Thank you to those families who participated in our movie and gift exchange night in December! This month we are planning to head up to the SNOW! All Youth and their families are invited to gather *on Saturday, January 22 at 9:00 am* at the Mount Charleston Lee Canyon Snow Play Area for sledding, snowman building, and snowball fights! Please make sure to wear appropriate snow clothing and dress warmly.

We will be checking road and mountain weather conditions the week before our event, so stay tuned! Please also eat breakfast before arrival and bring a lunch with you, as we will have limited access to making a potluck available to everyone with the cold nature of the outing. Concessions are available for purchase.

The cost is \$25 per car and is first come – first served, so we need to arrive early! With any questions or to RSVP, please contact Father Seraphim at frseraphim@vegasgreekorthodox.com.

Love in Christ, Father Seraphim



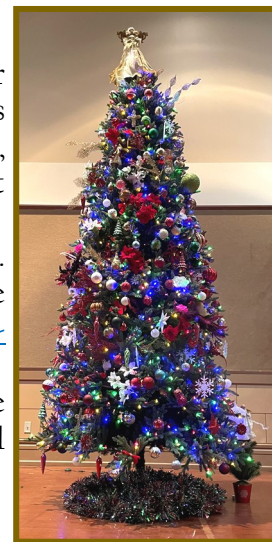
GOYA - Our Teen Ministry

As we enter another calendar year, we are grateful for your participation in our gatherings and fellowship events. Our GOYA Night to take down the Parish Christmas Tree will be *on Sunday, January 9 at 5:00 pm* – together with a meal, fellowship, prayer and some activities. If you would like to help sponsor the meal, please contact Anne Pantelas or Maha Habiba, our GOYA Advisors.

Secondly, we will be participating in the All-Youth Snow Day on Mt. Charleston *on Saturday, January 22 at 9:00 am*. Please see the information at the following link: <https://www.leecanyonlv.com/plan-your-trip/activities/winter-activities/foxtail>.

The cost is \$25 per car, and we need to arrive early and be well prepared for the cold weather conditions and dress appropriately. Please come join us for a wonderful time in the snow and bring your sleds, snowshoes, hats, mittens and scarves!

Much Love in Christ, Father Seraphim



Greek Folk Dance

Happy New Year!

We would like to start off by thanking everyone for supporting us in our annual Christmas Caroling fundraiser! The kids had a great time singing carols and all of the homes we visited were gracious and welcoming!

Our dance groups are busy practicing their dances for the upcoming Folk Dance Festival to be held in Phoenix, Arizona *on February 17-20*. The dance groups will be performing their suites at our annual *Preview Day on Sunday, February 13*. Please mark your calendars to show your support for ministry and send off the dancers with well wishes!

Thank you again for your continued support.

Much Gratitude, Folk Dance Board



Young Adults

Happy New Year!

We will start off the year with a “rebuilding fellowship” looking for your input on what activities to pursue as a ministry group in 2022. Alex and Jaden Szukiewicz have graciously agreed to open their home for a potluck fellowship and discussion *on Sunday, January 23 at 1:00 pm, following the Divine Liturgy*. Please bring a side dish, salad, dessert, or drinks to share. Please RSVP with Alex, Jaden, or Father Seraphim. We hope to see you there!

In Christ, Father Seraphim

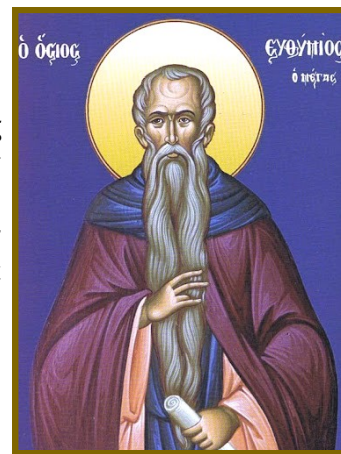
Mr. & Mrs.

Dear Couples of St. John the Baptist,

We want to thank those couples who attended our post-Christmas outing to a wonderful restaurant for great fellowship and conversation in the afterglow of the Nativity Feast.

This month of January we will gather at the home of Mike and Effie Lekar *on Saturday, January 22 at 5:30 pm* in honor of St. Euthymios, the Patron Saint of Effie (Efthimia). Please join us for a wonderful potluck meal and fellowship gathering and bring a side dish, salad, drinks or dessert to share. RSVP with Effie or Father Seraphim for directions and we hope to see you there!

Love in Christ, Father Seraphim and Father John



Kali Parea - For the 40-Plus Crowd

Kali Parea will participate in our St. John the Baptist Name Day Brunch *on Sunday, January 9, following the Divine Liturgy*. We will gather as a ministry and sit together at our own table.

Look for more information coming out about our cooperation with the Forerunners, as our Ministry Leader, Demetri, has accepted a position as one of their officers. Forerunners will have their first luncheon for 2022 *on Monday, January 10 at 11:30 am* – please join us!

Happy New Year!

God Bless, Demetrious Asim

Forerunners ~ Our Seniors Fellowship

We hope you have enjoyed a Blessed Nativity, and are ready for 2022!

Please give a warm welcome to our new Director of the Forerunners, Ms. Paula Kelesis. Our first meeting in 2022 is scheduled for *Monday, January 10 at 11:30 am* – we will have lunch and then cut the Vasilopita.

For those unfamiliar with our ministry, the Forerunners meet once a month to enjoy fellowship over lunch. Our small treasury supports local charities voted on by the membership. Annual dues are \$20 per member and monthly lunches will be \$10 per member, and \$15 per non-member. Membership requirement is that persons be age 50 years-plus, with a good attitude. We welcome newcomers and new ideas.

We look forward to seeing you all again.

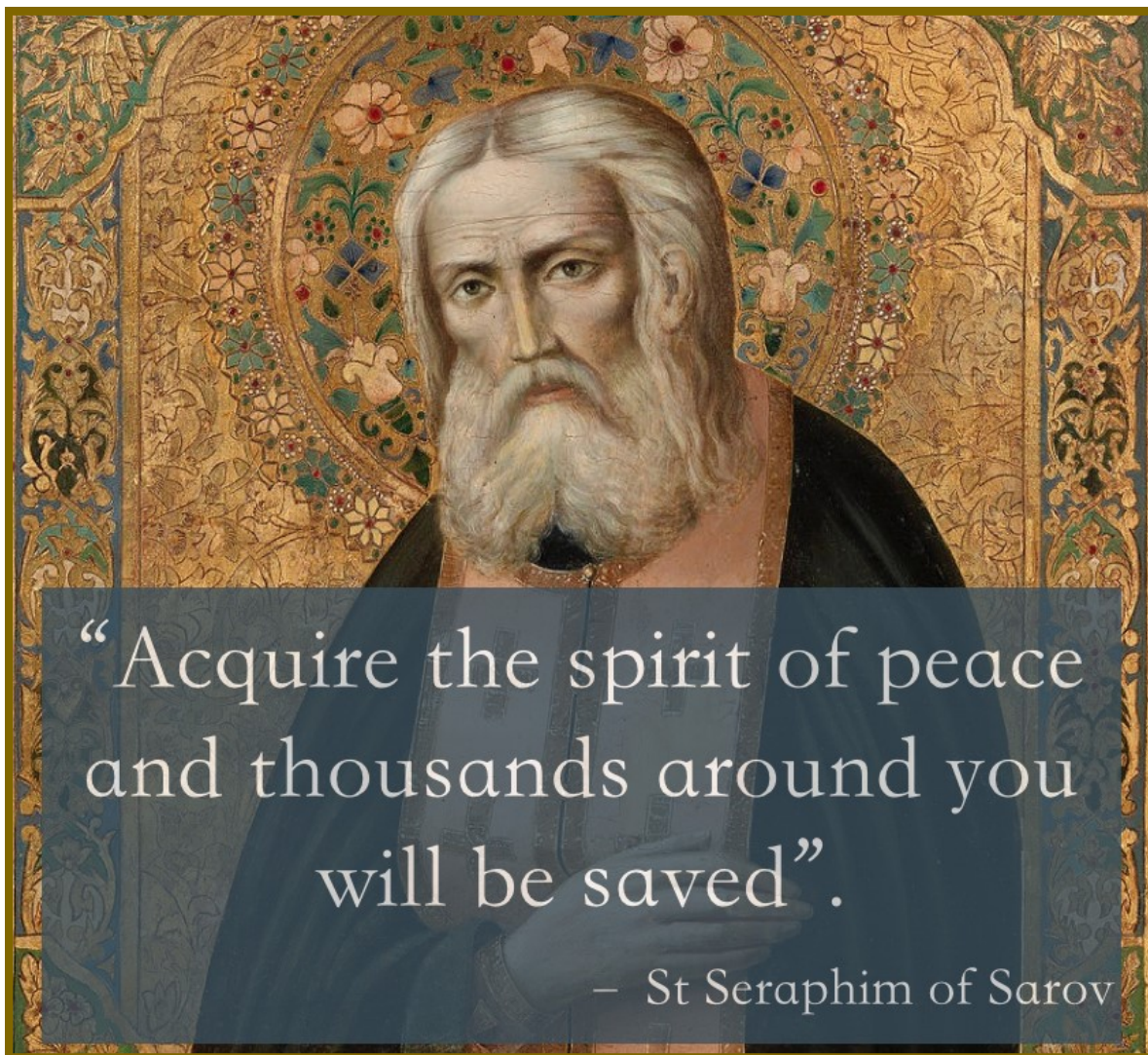
Love in Christ, Victoria Xikis, for the Forerunners

Adult Greek Language Class

Adult Greek Class will start *on Thursday, January 13, 2022, 6:00 – 7:30 pm, in the Library*. Face masks are required during the session. The class is free for Stewards, except for a small fee to cover copy paper. We will have registration forms available at the first class so please arrive 15 minutes early.

Please call Paula at (702) 249-4740 if you are interested in attending.

Paula Kelesis, Director



Orthodox Bookstore

Greetings from the Bookstore! God is revealed!

This month's featured selection, *Remember Thy First Love*, by Archimandrite Zacharias Zachariou focuses on the three stages of Christian spiritual life as conveyed by the recently canonized St. Sophrony of Essex (November 27, 2019), whose spiritual father was St. Silouan the Athonite.

Remembering one's first love is a difficult thing with the growing chaos and confusion in the world and the idea was stating that it was better to walk alone with God than to walk with a multitude who are without God. The latter walk was deemed easiest to do in a world increasing in its mockery of those presumed to be clinging to old "superstitions" as opposed to the realities of science and all things visible, earthly, or material. The former walk, under such challenging circumstances would likely need some encouragement, or more specifically, a "remembrance of thy first love" to power forward.

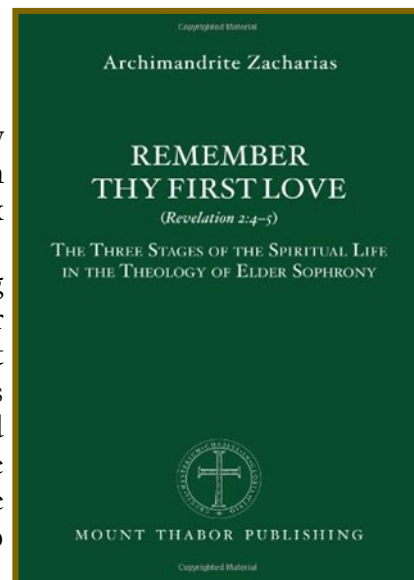
From *Remember Thy First Love*:

"Continually and from all eternity, God waits patiently at the door of man's heart, and when He finds a tiny opening, namely, a little humility and gratitude, He enters in, and of course, when He does, He makes a feast with man. The *Book of Revelation* calls this first visit of God our 'first love.' This is the beginning of our walk with God, and we must always be mindful of walking worthily. The Lord says to the Angel of the Church at Ephesus: *'I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen, repent and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.'* (Revelation 2:4-5)

"Indeed the early Church had known this great love, this first visitation of grace in all its depth. But evidently, owing to persecution and various other difficulties, the initial fervor had weakened. One way of rekindling our relationship with the Lord is to remember His first visitation. Father Sophrony loved this passage and would often say, 'Remember thy first love.'" (p. 107)

It is difficult enough in the toughest of times to remember or rekindle this first grace, but St. Sophrony is not stopping there at the first rung on the ladder, so to speak. He takes us on a progressive journey of the spiritual life to its ultimate conclusion, our final adoption as children, by which we become heirs of God and joint-heirs of Christ (*Romans 8:17*). St. Sophrony began this journey himself when over time, "Little by little it dawned on him that pure intellection, an activity of the brain only, could not advance one very far in the search for reality." *Remember Thy First Love* attempts to explain what is meant by this, and how it is fulfilled in our lives in Christ here in the Church.

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



At Your Baptism in the Jordan River, O Lord,
the worship due to the Holy Trinity was made manifest,
for the Voice of the Father bore You witness
by calling You, "Beloved Son,"
and the Holy Spirit in the form of a Dove,
confirmed the immutability of this declaration.
O Christ God Who appeared and illumined the world,
Glory to You!

*Our Church is fully open for the scheduled Divine Services.
If you have been sick for the last 48 hours, please do not come
to Church. If you are unable to come to Church,
your Priests are here to light a candle for you and your loved ones.
Please call Karen with your request.*



2021 Stewardship Report (as of 12/27/21)

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$495,048 (\$494,080 in 2020)
Stewardship Gifts Received: \$478,285 (\$472,057 in 2020)
Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$16,763 (\$22,023 in 2020)
Stewardship Families Pledged: 401 (413 in 2020)
Average Pledge to Date: \$1,234 (\$1,196 in 2020)
2021 Budgeted Goal: \$500,000 ... Keep the Pledges Coming!

Church Account Summaries ~ November 2021

Nevada State Bank Accounts	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$115,108.72	\$55,636.12	\$10,089.98	\$16,079.09	\$49,311.23	\$115,444.50	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$27,845.50	\$6,200.00				\$34,045.50	
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$113,704.22	\$3,071.86	\$1,778.00	\$10,069.20	\$470.89	\$108,013.99	
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$116,568.68	\$39,687.52	\$1,200.00	\$2,478.99	\$7,000.00	\$147,977.21	\$7000 Transferred to GOA
Folk Dance Group	\$19,233.00	\$725.00				\$19,958.00	
Hellenic Historical Society	\$6,284.94			\$3,220.00		\$3,064.94	
Designated Funds	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Bookstore	\$17,808.56	\$4,223.00		\$2,478.99		\$19,552.57	
Ornaments	\$1,169.41					\$1,169.41	
Restricted Funds	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
ICON	\$669.78	\$448.90	\$200.00			\$1,318.68	\$143,000 Invested
Library Account	\$1,470.77					\$1,470.77	
Giving Tree	\$4,889.87		\$1,000.00			\$5,889.87	
Faithtree	\$1,626.39					\$1,626.39	
Building Fund	\$30,779.26	\$8,014.62				\$38,793.88	Donation from a Parishioner
Youth Choir	\$2,989.18					\$2,989.18	
Church School	\$6,306.37					\$6,306.37	
Three Priests	\$37,093.51	\$20,001.00				\$57,094.51	Donation from a Parishioner
Roof Appeal	\$11,183.22					\$11,183.22	
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
GOYA	\$142.36					\$142.36	
Designated, Restricted, and Other Total	\$116,568.68	\$32,687.52	\$1,200.00	\$2,478.99	\$0.00	\$147,977.21	
Other Funds	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$74,196.14					\$74,196.14	Balance as of 09.30.21
Commonwealth Investments	\$143,000.00			\$288.30		\$142,711.70	Change in Investment

November 2021 Candles **\$6,678.95**

November 2021 Trays **\$4,105.05**

Total November 2021 Candles & Trays \$10,784.00



JANUARY 2022 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

							1 Circumcision of Christ <i>St. Basil the Great</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy and Artoclasia
2 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Folk Dance Practice	3 6:00 pm Adult Basketball	4	5 <i>Eve of Theophany</i> 6:00 pm Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil and Great Blessing of the Water	6 <i>Holy Theophany</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom	7 <i>St. John the Baptist</i> <i>(Parish Feast Day)</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	8	
9 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy <i>Parish Council Oath and</i> <i>Community Vasilopita</i> <i>Name Day Brunch</i> Folk Dance Practice 5:00 pm GOYA Night	10 11:30 am Forerunners Luncheon in Kokkos Hall 6:00 pm Adult Basketball	11	12	13 6:00 pm Adult Greek Language Class 6:00 pm Folk Dance Practice	14	15	
16 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 12:00 pm Philoptochos General Meeting in Kokkos Hall Folk Dance Practice	17 <i>St. Anthony the</i> <i>Great</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:00 pm Adult Basketball	18 <i>Ss. Athanasios and</i> <i>Cyril</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting in Library	19	20 6:00 pm Adult Greek Language Class 6:00 pm Folk Dance Practice	21	22 9:00 am All-Youth Snow Day at Lee Canyon 5:30 pm Mr. and Mrs. Potluck at Lekar Home	
23 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Folk Dance Practice 1:00 pm Young Adults Potluck at Alex & Jaden's	24 6:00 pm Adult Basketball	25 <i>St. Gregory the</i> <i>Theologian</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	26	27 6:00 pm Adult Greek Language Class 6:00 pm Folk Dance Practice	28	29	
30 <i>Three Hierarchs</i> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Folk Dance Practice							

The Desert Messenger

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

The Way of the Lord



*Will You also now, Loving King, be present
through the descent of Your Holy Spirit and
sanctify this water.*

*And give to it the grace of redemption, the
blessing of Jordan. Make it a fountain of
immortality, a gift of sanctification, for the
remission of sins, protection against infirmities,
destructive to evil forces, inaccessible to
opposing powers, filled with angelic might.*

*That all who draw from it or partake of it may
find in it purification of souls and bodies,
healing of infirmities, sanctification of houses,
every fit benefit.*

(Great Blessing of Water, Translated by Father Leonidas Contos)