

# The Desert



# Messenger

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

Volume 20, Issue 2

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

February 2022

From  
Father  
John

*The Word Who humbled Himself even to the form of a servant,  
showed that humility is the best path to exaltation.  
Every man, then, who humbles himself according to the Lord's example,  
is exalted on high.  
(Canticle Four, Orthros, Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee)*

Beloved in Christ:

In the previous two Great Feasts – Christmas and Holy Theophany – we celebrated the humbling of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, through His Incarnation by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and, 30 years later, through His Baptism at the hands of St. John the Forerunner. In both His Nativity and Baptism, our Lord – by these acts of holy humility – paved the way for each of us to become partakers of His Divine Nature: In the words of our Holy Church Father, St. Athanasios, *"the Son of God became man so that we might become god."*

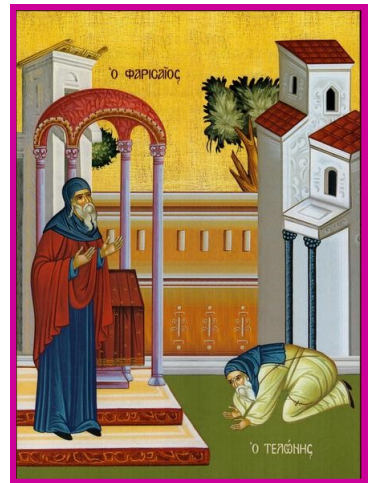
In the upcoming Great Feast of the *Meeting of Our Lord*, celebrated on February 2, we see once again that Jesus humbled Himself, as Mary and Joseph *"brought Him up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the law of the Lord, 'Every male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord') and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the law of the Lord."* (Luke 2:22-24) Jesus Christ, Who is the second Person of the Holy Trinity, IS the Lawgiver and yet He remained obedient to the Law in every way in order to fulfill the Law for our salvation! Indeed, in the beautiful words of the Holy Apostle Paul, Christ *"humbled Himself and became obedient (to the Father) unto death, even death on a cross."* (Philippians 2:8)

On Sunday, February 13, Orthodox Christians throughout the world will enter the period of the *Triodion* – when we follow the liturgical texts so named in the few weeks leading into Lent, throughout the 40 days of the Great Fast, and Holy Week. The Triodion fittingly begins with our Lord's parable of "The Publican and the Pharisee," which contrasts the self-righteous and boastful Pharisee – who prayed with himself – and the genuinely contrite tax collector who begged of God's mercy in the Temple. Jesus ends the brief, powerful parable with this message: *"Every one who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."* (Luke 18:14) The Church, in obedience to our Lord's own example and words, teaches us straightforwardly that we cannot prepare for this holy period of fasting – moreover, live a truly Christian life – without humility.

Humility is the greatest of all virtues, for it is from God; however, pride is the worst of all sins, because it comes from, and indeed is the essence of, the devil. Our fasting will only be fruitful to the extent that it is rooted in Jesus Christ – *"in Spirit and truth"* (John 4:24) – and we make a heartfelt (even if not perfect) effort to be humbly obedient to the Lord and His Church. On the same note, we must avoid – and this is most difficult – being eagerly submissive to our prideful will and impulses. May God grant all of us His strength, grace, and love to imitate His humility and obedience, both now and always!

Love always in Christ,

*Father John*



## 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>*

Wednesday, February 2/*The Meeting of Our Lord  
and Savior Jesus Christ in the Temple*

8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Hebrews 7:7-17

Gospel: Luke 2:22-40

Sunday, February 6/*17th Sunday of Matthew/  
Sunday of the Canaanite Woman/St. Photios the  
Great, Patriarch of Constantinople*

Orthros: Tone Fourth Plagal

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

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

Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28

Fellowship: Eleni Eliades

Wednesday, February 9/*Hieromartyr Haralambos  
(Observed)*

4:00 pm Orthros

5:00 pm Divine Liturgy

*Artoclasia offered by Lekar and Eliades Families*

Epistle: 2 Timothy 2:1-10

Gospel: John 15:17-27; 16:1-2

Thursday, February 10/*Hieromartyr Haralambos*

Sunday, February 13/*Sunday of the Publican and  
the Pharisee/Triodion Begins/Aquilla and Priscilla  
the Apostles/St. Martinianos the Righteous*

Orthros: Tone One

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

Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15

Gospel: Luke 18:10-14

Fellowship: Folk Dance Preview and Chili

*Triodion Begins: No Fasting This Week*

Sunday, February 20/*Sunday of the Prodigal Son/  
St. Leo, Bishop of Cantania/St. Agathon, Pope of  
Rome*

Orthros: Tone Two

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

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

Gospel: Luke 15:11-32

Memorials: Teresa Zavatsky (40 days) and  
Evangelia Solomou (1 year).

*Artoclasia offered by the Koutsulis Family*

Fellowship: Philoptochos Kids 'n' Cancer

*Fast on Wednesday and Friday*

Saturday, February 26/*1st Saturday of Souls/St.  
Porphyrios, Bishop of Gaza/St. Photini the  
Samaritan Woman and Her Sisters*

8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy and Memorial

Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17

Gospel: Luke 21:8-9, 25-27, 33-36

Sunday, February 27/*Meatfare Sunday/The Last  
Judgment/St. Prokopios the Confessor/St. Raphael  
the Bishop of Brooklyn*

Orthros: Tone Three

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Mark 16:9-20

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-13; 9:1-2

Gospel: Matthew 25:31-46

Memorial: Phillip Daskalos (6 months)

Fellowship: Forerunners

*Abstain from Meat this Week*



*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.*

## Parish Council Report

Reverend Fathers, Parish Council Members, Church Ministries and Beloved Members of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church:

I am once again humbled and honored to serve as your Parish Council President of our wonderful Church. Titles, such as president, really are just titles. We are all charged with doing whatever possible in making our house of worship a place for all of us to find the spiritual growth needed in moving our parish forward. We are all important. All of us have something to offer, whether it is financial support or, more importantly, offering our God-given talents in support of the Church.

Our forefathers worked very hard to establish a Church that we are all proud of and have handed us the task in keeping the Church vibrant. The past council members under the direction of Gus Flangas accomplished and further expanded our ability to succeed. We now must continue to work hard in keeping that momentum of accomplishments going and uphold and build upon what has already been done.

Congratulations to the newly elected members of the Parish Council: Alexia Conger, Eleni Filios, Ted Zaferatos, Alex Mavros and Telly Eliades. I have been elected as your new Parish Council President, Alexander Mavros as Vice President, Alexia Conger as Secretary, John Koutsulis as Treasurer and Nick Barbarino as Assistant Treasurer. Together, I know that we will carry on the tradition of giving of ourselves in growing our community. Please join me in congratulating the newly elected officers. I am thankful as well for our members who continue to serve. I also want to acknowledge Marina Adamy for stepping up and fulfilling the remainder of June Likourinou's term on the council. June decided to resign due to her demanding schedule at work. We know that we can count on her as we move forward in helping us where she can.

I ask that all our parishioners please come to us with any concerns or questions regarding the Church. Working together and bringing your thoughts to the council is the only way to be transparent in solving issues that you may have or accolades when things are going well. Moreover, keeping any issues concerning our feelings within ourselves stifles harmony in our congregation. We pray and know that God is always present to help us through whatever benefits our parish.

I will leave you with this message: I appreciate the support you have shown all our council members, priests and parishioners, and pray that God gives us the opportunity in continuing to be one family in Christ.

With Much Love in Christ,

John Fotopoulos, Parish Council President

## Are You Interested in Hosting Fellowship?

Please contact Karen at the Church Office to be put on the Sunday Fellowship Calendar. Don't be hesitant if you have never hosted - Karen will put you in touch with people to guide you.



## ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

Rev. Father John Hondros  
fjohn@vegaskgreekorthodox.com

Rev. Father Seraphim Ramos  
frseraphim@vegaskgreekorthodox.com

Karen Rawlinson  
Administrative Assistant

Michelle Eugenio  
Bookkeeper

Mara Braun  
Catering & Events

Constantin Petriuc  
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:

Anne Pantelas & Maha Habiba

Orthodox Family Fellowship:  
Imtisal Amy Khuri & April Rivera

Young Adults:  
Father 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



## Philoptochos News

Dear Father John, Father Seraphim, Sisters of the Ladies of Philoptochos Society, and members of the St. John the Baptist Community:

February is here and the Hearts are all around us! Please mark these dates down on your calendars.

**Sunday, February 6 – Go RED for Your Heart!** The Ladies Philoptochos Society will recognize the fact that heart disease of all types is the largest killer of women. There are many studies showing that the beginning of heart disease can actually start in puberty and all through the journey of a woman's life. Diet, genes and lifestyle all add up to the fact that women need to take care of that most tender of all organs: Our Hearts! The American Heart Association hosts "Go Red for Your Heart" and we invite all women of St. John to "Wear Red" to the Divine Liturgy **on Sunday, February 6** to support the cause of Heart Awareness! We will take a group photo of everyone at Fellowship.



**Tuesday, February 8 at 6:00 pm – General Meeting.** We will have a Valentine theme, so wear your favorite Heart! As Orthodox Christians we give with our hearts and our hands. We will have a social services project to show our love and open our hearts to those in our community who need our help. We will have a light supper and meeting to discuss the upcoming Lenten projects as well.

**Sunday, February 20 – Kids 'n' Cancer Collection and Fellowship.** Give your Heart to a Child! We are so happy to announce that the Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos will be hosting Camp Agape in person again this year!

The mission of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos Kids 'n' Cancer/Camp Agape Ministry is dedicated to providing support for children afflicted with cancer and their families. This beloved ministry offers a compassionate and caring environment, exemplary of Christ's unconditional love, along with an opportunity to shape meaningful friendships and create precious memories. A side note: In addition to donations, there are volunteer opportunities to work the camps in various positions. Health care professionals are always welcome, but it is not necessary to be a volunteer. See me for more information.

Along with supporting the Camp Agape ministry, our chapter also supports Camp Cartwheel for children with cancer and their families in Southern Nevada. Please make your plans to stay after Divine Liturgy for this special fundraiser.

The Ladies Philoptochos members are known to be the "heart" of the Church: If you have not joined yet, please see Christine Snow to be a part of the "beat."

Faithfully yours, Bernadette Anthony, Philoptochos President



## Community Vasilopita



With gratitude to Dora Hart and Yiota Lieblen for baking the Vasilopites!

Photos by Bill Bruninga

Please join the  
Ladies Philoptochos Society  
on Sunday, February 20, 2022  
to Celebrate the Return of



The mission of the Kids 'N' Cancer/Camp Agape Ministry is dedicated to providing support for children afflicted with cancer and their families. This beloved ministry offers a compassionate and caring environment, exemplary of Christ's unconditional love, along with an opportunity to shape meaningful friendships and create memories.

## **GIVE YOUR HEART TO A CHILD**

Please make your plans to attend the Fellowship following Divine Liturgy and support this most worthwhile ministry.





## 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 Community Outreach

This year, February starts with a major feast, the Presentation (or Meeting) of Our Lord on the 2nd, moves into the Triodion, and ends with what some have called the “last feast,” Judgment Sunday, on the 27th.

We are fortunate the Church revisits parables to refresh our memories with important lessons on living the good Christian life, with a focus on prayers for humility (The Publican and the Pharisee), repentance in our relationship with God (The Prodigal Son), and the inevitable standing before God in the final Judgment (The Judgment of Works, or The Sheep and the Goats).

There is, however, another parable which gets “bumped” to accommodate the Triodion in 2022: The parable of The Good Steward. (*Matthew 25:14-30*) You remember this one: One steward gets five talents and returns ten; one steward gets two talents and returns four; and another gets one talent and returns just one. The first two hear from the Master, *“Well done, good and faithful servant . . .”* and enter into the joy of their Lord, while the third hears, *“You wicked and lazy servant . . .”* and is cast into the outer darkness.

With this parable’s focus on stewardship, one can see that the master-steward relationship is a simple two-party proposition; the Kingdom of Heaven is not likened to the average of what everybody is doing. There is no mention of teamwork, no mention of committees, no mention of market forces. No indeed. The bottom line of this two-way relationship is individual ownership, responsibility, and accountability. The Master owns everything and the good steward is responsible and accountable to be fruitful and multiply. To make a good job of it, the good steward must learn the Master’s instructions, then make their best decisions which honor said instructions while fully expecting to answer to the Master when He returns.



Jesus does not pull any punches when trying to enlighten us about the Kingdom of Heaven through His parables and other instruction. Note carefully in *Matthew 25*, Jesus shifts gears between likening the Kingdom of Heaven to this or that, and bluntly pointing out facts about the final Judgment. The language concerning the Judgment of Works (*Matthew 25:31-46*) is unambiguous: The word *“will”* occurs eleven times in this text, ending with the sobering verse, *“And these (the cursed) will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”*

Ever since the Fall, the natural inclination of man has been to shirk personal responsibility and to shift blame. Eve blamed the Serpent, Adam blamed Eve, and so it continues to this day. This did not fool God then, and it does not fool Him now. We will all be called to account individually. Ignoring this truth will not make it go away. We cannot see gravity and ignoring its truths can lead to our peril. We cannot see electricity and ignoring its truths can lead to our peril. Likewise, we cannot see the Kingdom of Heaven and ignoring its truths can and will lead to our peril as Jesus points out.

This season, as we work through the Triodion and into Great Lent, we all have the opportunity to better discern God’s will for us; to acknowledge our individual responsibility to make better decisions which honor Him with our time, talents, and treasure; and to acknowledge our individual accountability for these decisions.

*“Hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole man. For God will bring every work into judgment, including everything that has been overlooked, whether it be good or evil.” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14)*

In Christ, Mike Beeler, Stewardship and Outreach Committee

## STEWARDSHIP AND OTHER GIVING OPTIONS

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

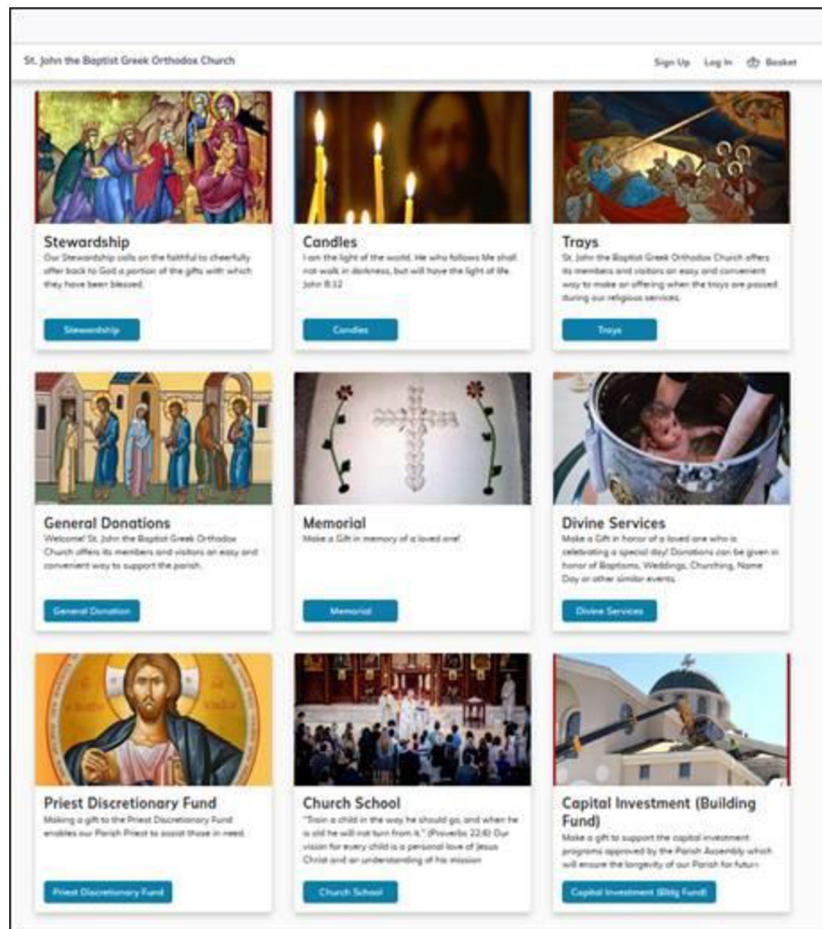
On behalf of Fr. John, Fr. Seraphim and the Parish Council, we would like to thank you for your ongoing support to our Parish.

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](mailto:jkaras@vegasgreekorthodox.com)) and he will be more than happy to assist you. Below you can see what our Parish VANCO website looks like.





## Ministry News

### Church School

Hi everyone! Since we entered the New Year, our weekly attendance has been light. With that said, we really appreciate that you are staying home if you or a family member are not feeling well – this keeps our teachers, students and members of our parish safe.

Please reach out to me and I can email you the *Orthodox Journeys* lesson plans that we are using. Our curriculum follows the Church calendar, and there is a new lesson every week. I get them emailed to me several weeks in advance and I am happy to email them to you.

If you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to me. This month we will have *Family Worship on Sunday, February 20* due to FDF.

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

### GOYA ~ Our Teen Ministry

This month we will have our *GOYA Night on Sunday, February 6 at 5:00 pm in Panos Hall*. Come ready for games, a meal, prayer, and a wonderful time! If any parents would like to help coordinate with dinner, please contact either of our GOYA Advisors, Anne Pantelas Hemmers or Maha Habiba, or Father Seraphim at [frseraphim@vegasgreekorthodox.com](mailto:frseraphim@vegasgreekorthodox.com).

Much Love in Christ, Father Seraphim

### Orthodox Family Fellowship (OFF) and GOYA Combined Event

Dear Youth of St. John the Baptist,

This month we will come together and play indoor soccer! Please join us *on Sunday, February 27 from 3:00 to 5:00 pm at Indoor 5 Soccer* (7770 Dean Martin Drive, #307, Las Vegas [Inside Phase I]) for some exercise, friendly competition, and a few special challenges.

Moreover, as the venue is owned by a parishioner, we will even experience a business blessing with Holy Water before we play!

More information is available at <https://indoor5.com/>. We hope to see you there!

Love in Christ, Father Seraphim

### Greek Folk Dance



Our dance groups are busy finalizing their suites for the upcoming *Folk Dance Festival* to be held in Phoenix, Arizona *on February 17-20*. This year, we will be sending three groups to FDF. Our dedicated directors – Nick Barbarino, George Karvounidis, Gabi Payan, Kyriacos Philippou, Demetri Pouridis and Niko Pouridis – have been working hard to prepare the dancers and we appreciate all their efforts.

The dance groups will be performing their suites at our annual *Preview Day Chili Luncheon on Sunday, February 13 following the Divine Liturgy in Panos Hall*. 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

Young Adults will not meet this month. We are looking for someone to host in March – please let me know if you would be interested in doing so. God bless you!

In Christ, Father Seraphim

### *Mr. & Mrs.*

Dear Married and Engaged Couples of St. John the Baptist,

This month we will meet at John and Ellyn Nixon's home *on Saturday, February 26 at 5:00 pm*. You are invited to bring your favorite side dish, drinks, dessert or salad. Please RSVP with John, Ellyn, or Father Seraphim. We hope to see you there!

Love in Christ, Father Seraphim and Father John

### *Kali Parea - For the 40-Plus Crowd*

Everyone is invited to join us at McMullens Irish Pub (4650 W. Tropicana Ave) *on Saturday, February 26 at 1:30 pm*. Please RSVP with me at (702) 210-4056 *prior to February 23* so I can make the reservations.

God Bless, Demetrious Asim

### *Forerunners - Our Seniors Fellowship*

Greetings Forerunners!

Due to safety concerns, we did not meet in January. However, we have rescheduled our reunion for *Monday, February 14, Valentine's Day!* Vasilopita cutting and a great luncheon and fellowship are on our agenda.

We sincerely pray we will be able to enjoy fellowship and are eager to see all of your smiling faces. Our prayers are always with our seniors who are hospitalized or convalescing at home.

Love in Christ, Victoria Xikis, for the Forerunners



### *Adult Greek Language Class*

Adult Greek Classes are postponed until further notice due to lack of interest. We hope to pick up again in the Fall. Paula Kelesis, Director



New 5 Week Adult Study  
with Father John and Father Seraphim

### *The Art of Prayer*



*Join us every Wednesday, February 2 - March 2  
6:30 ~ 8:00 pm in Kokkos Hall*

*February 2: What is Prayer?*

*February 9: The Jesus Prayer*

*February 16: The Fruits of Prayer*

*February 23: The Kingdom of the Heart*

*March 2: War with Passions*

*The Art of Prayer is available in our Bookstore*

## Orthodox Bookstore

Greetings from the Bookstore!

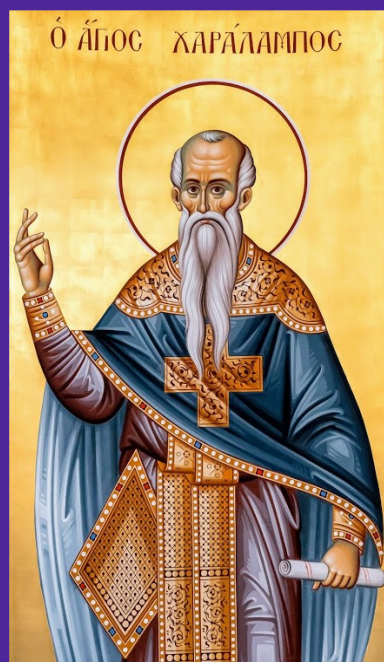
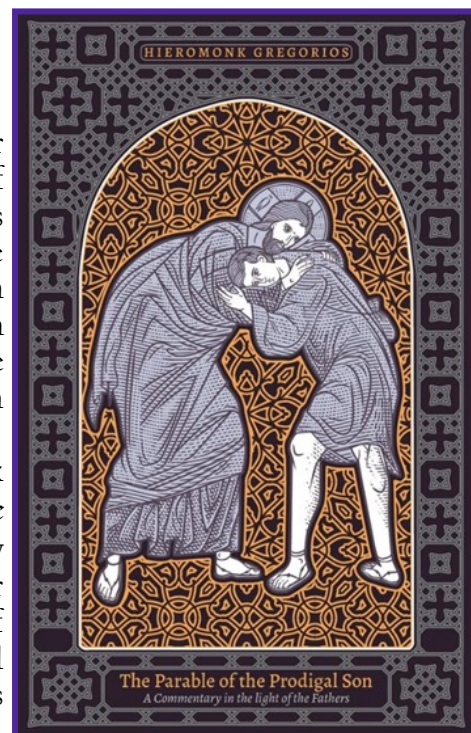
It's February and Great Lent will soon be upon us. In our Orthodox Church, the three weeks leading up to the commencement of the spiritual journey toward Holy Pascha are referred to as the "weeks of preparation" in which each week has its own theme expressed in the Gospel readings appointed for the Divine Liturgies. The "weeks" begin with the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee (*Luke 8:9-14*) and then we turn our attention in the following week to the Parable of the Prodigal Son (*Luke 15:11-32*), claimed by some to be the Gospel within the Gospel.

The Bookstore is featuring a selection this month by Hieromonk Gregorios on this themed week of preparation called *The Parable of the Prodigal Son: A Commentary in the Light of the Fathers*. Published in 2020 by Newrome Press and a brief read, it serves as a nice spiritual forerunner heading into the great fast and period of repentance or "changing of mind." The author views the parable and its meaning as a teaching tool for turning inward, as evidenced by the following passage from his chapter, *The Beginning of Repentance is the Awareness of Sin*:

"When man lives in sin he is, spiritually speaking, outside of himself. He tries to fill the emptiness that he feels inside of himself by chasing fleeting pleasures, without realizing that this way of life worsens his situation. In order to begin the journey back to his Father's Home, man must come to himself. Then he realizes that, 'Indeed I became entirely out of myself, since I feed on the savagery of senseless pleasures and I deprive myself of the food of salvation.'"

Each short chapter follows along with various segments of the parable and offering thoughtful commentaries along the way from the younger son, the elder son, and everything in between. Stop by the Bookstore for your copy in addition to any other needs you may have for your prayer corner as we embark upon Great Lent 2022!

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



*Holy Priest  
Martyr  
Haralambos,  
Pray to Christ  
Our God for  
the Salvation  
of Our Souls!*



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

Elpida, daughter of Dimitrios and Helen Ioannou,  
on December 28, 2021. Godparent: Sofia Ioannou.

### *Marriage: Na Zisete!*

Connor Rickerson and Alexandra Kilgore  
on January 8, 2022.  
Koumbaros: Richard Kilgore.



## *From Father Seraphim*

When we look at the Valentine's Day activities that are promoted by our modern culture, they are the same ones that are encouraged for every other holiday. Christmas, Fourth of July, Easter, Thanksgiving, Super Bowl Sunday: All are essentially the same in the way we celebrate: Eat good food and lots of it, gather with friends and family, decorate your house, and spend money. Christmas is only different in the element that we spend even more money on gifts for each other, and Valentine's Day varies from the routine in the fact that mixed into the celebrations there is an element of sexuality present (although this provocative element could be found in advertisements and commercials during each of these holidays).

In the Orthodox Church, each of our Feast Days are uniquely different and both approached and celebrated in meaningful and varying ways. We know that besides our distinctively Orthodox Feasts – such as Theophany (with the blessing of homes with Holy Water and the whole extensive service of the Blessing of the Waters), Dormition (with a 14-day fast and daily Paraklesis services), and Annunciation (with a fish meal in the heart of Lent, together with the Akathist each Friday) – we have much more intentional and Christian ways of celebrating the Great Feasts of Christmas and Pascha (Easter) than the secular world. Traditions and practices are available for our use in preparation: Holy Confession, forty days of fasting, increased prayer and Church services, acts of mercy and almsgiving. These actions are intended to transform the person, and guide one by the grace of the Holy Spirit to becoming what we call “truly human.”

In the US, Orthodox Christianity has adopted Thanksgiving – perhaps the most compatible specifically “American” holiday with our Faith – and made it more than just a filling meal shared with family and friends. Many parishes celebrate using the Akathist of Thanksgiving or undertaking a turkey meal drive to poor families in the local community through donations, and this of course is added to the truest expression of our Thanksgiving to God – the Eucharist (Greek *εὐχαριστία* literally meaning “thanksgiving”) received in the Divine Liturgy and encouraging our daily gratitude to God and His saints. This could serve as a model of taking what is good in a culture or a society and bringing what is holy inherent in it into the life of our Church.

What then should we, as Orthodox Christians, do with the “holiday of love” called Valentine's Day? We have an invitation to make it more than candies shaped like hearts, and sexualized dates (especially if we are not married). Rather we should take what is good from this day and focus on *true* love.

One example of *“love stronger than death”* (*Song of Solomon 8:6*) is the life of St. Valentinus. The historical data for the martyrdom of the priest Valentinus is incomplete, mostly because during the time of his death, there was nearly a daily burial of new martyrs in the catacombs for several decades of intense persecution. The Saint's memory was established by the Church in 496 and his relics are today in Athens in the Church of Saints Francis and Clara's Italian community. Despite historical variations of his life, we know for certain that St. Valentine's love for Christ was something we should imitate. One of the charges against Valentine was that he did not adhere to the command of the emperor which stated that men who had not fulfilled their military obligations were not allowed to marry. Placing Christ's laws on marriage over the emperor, the saint blessed the marriage of young Christian soldiers with their wives before and during their service so that they would not be living in sin.

Perhaps something we can do as Orthodox Christians in veneration of the true foundation of this modern holiday is to remember the loving laws Christ has given us, regarding relationships. If we find ourselves unmarried and living in sexual relationships, we can come to the Sacrament of Holy Confession and again devote ourselves to the life our Lord asks us to live. If we are married, we can examine our wedded lives and make sure we are living a Christian union where the goal is neither financial nor material but spiritual. Are we daily helping our spouse grow closer to Christ through prayer for them and together with them?

This is the Orthodox way, as St. Basil the Great writes, *“To be like a bee, taking what is sweet and ignoring that which is rancid.”* We do not reject fallen culture outright but seek to elevate it. When our children lose their teeth, we can promote a prayer to St. Antipas (a patron of tooth aches) instead of a wealthy fairy.

*(Continued on Page 13)*

## *With Gratitude to God for Our Pledged Stewards in 2022*

*If you wish to become a Parish Steward, please fill out Pledge Form and return to Karen*

Acovino, Richard and Angela	Dominguez, Eric and Amalia	Kostas, James	Polimerou, Angeline
Adamy, Marina	Doskas, Athanasios and Anastasia	Kountanis, Panagiota	Politis, Pantelis and Dimitra
Alexander, Eleni	Dramitinos, Mary	Kouris, Demetris and Terry	Poulos, Christine
Alford, Cynthia "Mary"	Earl, Christine Michaelides	Koutsulis, John and Eileen	Pouridis, Kouli and Para
Allen, John and Denise	Eliades, Aristotelis and Caroline	Koutsulis, Sam and Effie	Powers, Russell and Rebecca
Anastasakis, Mark and Elaine	Eliades, Gregory and Maria	Kypreos, Peter and Geri	Ramos, Fr. Seraphim and
Andrews, Catherine	Eliakis, Peter and Glenda	Lakkis, Christina	Presv. Olenka
Anthony, Stavros and Bernadette	Eyler, John and Elizabeth	Lambros, Kyriakos and Mary	Rigas, Anthony and Mary
Aristides, George and Diana	Filos, George and Nitsa	Latelle, Penny	Rihani, Gary and Linda
Bacon, Ken and Dianne	Filos, Spiridon and Eleni	Lavine, Frederic	Robison, Diane and Patricia
Balason, Voula	Fitzgerald, Norman and	Leong, Marissa	Rodis, Dimitri
Baldwin, Richard and Vivi	McCullen, Sandra	Liaos, James and Tina	Rotas, Beatrice
Balodimas, James	Flangas, Marilyn	Malamatos, Kindina	Ruffner, Skip and Kathy
Barbarino, Dee and Nick	Flangas, Wanda	Manolakos, Catherine	Santamaria, Jennifer and Robert
Beeler, Mike and Carolyn	Foster, Kyle and	Markakis, Catherine and Joseph	Savvas, Savva
Berendji, Jim and Vivian	Pierro, Maria Elena	Markakis, Sandy Kiriaki	Sehremelis, Andy and Leslie
Bieker, Adam and Cassie	Fotopoulos, John and Barbara	Martinaitis, Louis	Setian, Gary
Bieker, Georgea	Fountoulakis, Vasileios	Mavrantonis, Stacy and Kiki	Simpson, Bryan and Julie
Bledsoe, Lori	Gauvin, Chad and Marissa	Mavros, Alex and Jen	Skalkotos, Nikolas and Georgia
Bochanis, Aris	Gekakis, George	McManus, Jeanette	Soursos, Helene
Bochanis, George	Geranios, John	McKinney, Michael and Mersene	Spataro, Savannah
Booth, Alina	Ghebreab, Daniel and	McSweeney, Farolyn	Staubs, Douglas and Anastasia
Britten, Ronald and Carol	Ghermay, Selam	Menegatos, James	Stenos, Louis
Brown, Faye	Gordon, Victor and Demetria	Meyers, Evon	Szukiewicz, Joseph and Justina
Brown, Mark and Alyssa	Gutierrez, Connie	Minas, Arthur and Ewa	Tafoya, Steven and Irene
Bucy, Brent and Elaine	Hamilton, Mary	Moffett, Todd and	Tanguay, Steven and Elizabeth
Carahalios, John and Constance	Hastings, Teri	Eliopulos, Tina	Theros, James and Kathryn
Caredis, Jon and Marjorie	Herman, Martin and Diane	Monoyudis, Jim and Julie	Thompson, Maggy
Carrico, William and Alexandra	Hertberg, Jennifer	Neocleous, Plato	Tijiboy, Christine
Carter, Maria	Hondros, Christina	Nicholas, John and Estella	Tohme, Tony and May
Chachas, James	Hondros, Christopher and Darlene	Nichols, George and Tereza	Tsiralidis, Kosmas and Katerina
Chagares, Kiki	Hondros, Fr. John and	Nikitas, Milissa	Tsolis, Panagiote
Chamie, Elie, Emil and	Presv. Maria	Nixon, John and Ellyn	Wadlow, Nicholas and Pamela
Claudine	Hondros, Marissa	Paikos, Tom and Elizabeth	Wagner, Sophye
Chandrinis, Alexia	Hristopoulou, Spiridoula	Palivos, Peter and Vicky	Walter, Vernon and Alice
Chanos, Jennifer	Iteen, Robert and Sophia	Pallis, Paul	Ward, Angeliki
Chomakos, Dean and Tammy	Kakavulias, George and Helen	Papalois, John and Maria	Webb, Taylor
Chondrakis, Dimosthenis and	Kanis, Constantinos and Katie	Papas, Christian and Nicole	Wilkerson, Chuck and Kristina
Kragerud, Kaaren	Kapetanios - Fountoulakis, Maria	Papas, Peter and Rita	Wilson, Clyde
Collins, David	Karas, James	Pappas, Rita	Wilson, Steven and Cleo
Conger, William and Alexia	Karas, John and Marcie	Paschalis, Evangelos and Maria	Womack, Karl
Cotsilis, Jenny	Karvounidis, George	Pavlicas, Connie	Womack, Kimberly
Crist, Adam and Kanistra	Kasiotis, Nicholas and Claudia	Payan, Luis and Eleni	Xerogianes, Nick and Nikki
Dalacas, Dimitri and Athanasia	Katris, Nick and Theana	Pendleton, Tricia	Xikis, Victoria
Demas, Spiro and Rita	Kirchner, Gary "Barlaam"	Peterson, Todd and Diane	Zaferatos, Ted
Demoleas, Spero and Grace	Kleanthis, George and Zanetta	Petrou, Jim and Penelopi	Zarkos, Nick and Dina
Demoleas, Stephanie	Kokkines, Peter and Jennifer	Pierro, Joe and Rhonda	Zimmerman, Paul
Demopoulos, Dimitrios and Selina	Koliambas, Eleni	Pitts, Anton and Athena	
Demopoulos, Vasiliki	Kontos, Diana	Platis, Anna	

### *From Father Seraphim (Continued from Page 12)*

We can teach about St. Nicholas instead of Santa Claus; and when the 14<sup>th</sup> of February comes around, perhaps we can stand before God as couples and single people and renew our devotion to taking up His Cross in our lives as Christians. Rather than succumbing to the tidal wave of modernity, may Christ's unchanging commandments and the firm rock of our Orthodox Faith maintain our zeal for Heaven this Valentine's Day!

With Love in Christ,

*Father Seraphim*

**2022  
Stewardship  
Report  
(as of 1/26/22)**

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

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$222,123 (\$305,511 in 2021)  
Stewardship Gifts Received: \$59,990 (\$79,652 in 2021)  
Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$162,133 (\$225,859 in 2021)  
Stewardship Families Pledged: 186 (195 in 2021)  
2022 Budgeted Goal: \$500,000 . . . Keep the Pledges Coming!

<u>Average Pledge</u>	<u>No. of Families</u>
\$1 ~ \$500	81
\$501 ~ \$1,000	34
\$1,001 ~ \$2,500	50
\$2,501 ~ \$5,000	14
\$5,001 & Above	<u>7</u>
Total Families	186

## Church Account Summaries - December 2021

Nevada State Bank Accounts	November	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	December	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$115,444.50	\$65,700.79	\$2,278.90	\$20,979.69	\$60,333.21	\$102,111.29	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$34,045.50	\$5,800.00				\$39,845.50	
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$108,013.99	\$190.00	\$456.00	\$248.89	\$58.13	\$108,352.97	
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$147,977.21	\$19,826.62	\$1,125.00	\$1,112.76	\$2,320.81	\$165,495.26	
Folk Dance Group	\$19,958.00	\$1,815.00				\$21,773.00	
Hellenic Historical Society	\$3,064.94					\$3,064.94	
Designated Funds	November	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	December	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Bookstore	\$19,552.57	\$7,262.00		\$1,112.76	\$2,279.55	\$23,422.26	
Ornaments	\$1,169.41					\$1,169.41	
Restricted Funds	November	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	December	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
ICON	\$1,318.68	\$1,300.00	\$125.00		\$41.26	\$2,702.42	\$143,000 Invested
Library Account	\$1,470.77					\$1,470.77	
Giving Tree	\$5,889.87	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00			\$7,889.87	
Faithtree	\$1,626.39					\$1,626.39	
Building Fund	\$38,793.88	\$264.62				\$39,058.50	
Youth Choir	\$2,989.18					\$2,989.18	
Church School	\$6,306.37					\$6,306.37	
Three Priests	\$57,094.51					\$57,094.51	
Roof Appeal	\$11,183.22					\$11,183.22	
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
GOYA	\$142.36					\$142.36	
Restricted Donation	\$0.00	\$10,000.00				\$10,000.00	Undesignated Donation
<b>Designated, Restricted, and Other Total</b>	<b>\$147,977.21</b>	<b>\$19,826.62</b>	<b>\$1,125.00</b>	<b>\$1,112.76</b>	<b>\$2,320.81</b>	<b>\$165,495.26</b>	
Other Funds	November	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	December	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$74,196.14		\$2,747.89			\$76,944.03	Change in Investment
Commonwealth Investments	\$142,711.70		\$1.21			\$142,712.91	Change in Investment

**December 2021 Candles** \$6,968.60  
**December 2021 Trays** \$5,018.00  
**Total December 2021 Candles & Trays** \$11,986.60





# FEBRUARY 2022 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> <i>The Meeting of Our Lord in the Temple</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:30 pm Adult Study 1	<b>3</b> 6:00 pm Folk Dance Practice	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Folk Dance Practice 5:00 pm GOYA Night	<b>7</b> 6:00 pm Adult Basketball	<b>8</b> 6:00 pm Philoptochos General Meeting in Kokkos Hall	<b>9</b> 4:00 pm Orthros 5:00 pm Divine Liturgy and Artoclasia ( <i>St. Haralambos Observed</i> ) 6:30 pm Adult Study 2	<b>10 St. Haralambos</b> 6:00 pm Folk Dance Practice	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>13 Tridion Begins</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy <i>Folk Dance Preview</i> <i>Chili Luncheon</i>	<b>14</b> 11:30 am Forerunners Luncheon in Kokkos Hall 6:00 pm Adult Basketball	<b>15</b> 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting in Library	<b>16</b> 6:30 pm Adult Study 3	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>20</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	<b>21</b> 6:00 pm Adult Basketball	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b> 6:30 pm Adult Study 4	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26 Saturday of Souls</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy and Memorial 1:30 pm Kali Pareia at McMullen's Pub 5:00 pm Mr. and Mrs. Potluck at Nixon Home
<b>27</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 3:00 pm OFF/GOYA at Indoor5 Soccer	<b>28</b> 6:00 pm Adult Basketball					

*Folk Dance Festival in Phoenix, AZ 2/17-20*

*Folk Dance Festival*

# *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*



*You sanctified the virginal  
womb by Your Birth, O Lord,  
and blessed the hands of  
Symeon fittingly, O Christ  
God; and even now You came  
and saved us. Now, give peace  
to our nation in time of war,  
and empower our leaders, so  
loved by You, the only One  
Who loves humanity.*

*(Kontakion for the Meeting of Our  
Lord in the Temple, translated by  
Father Seraphim Dedes)*