

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 22, Issue 9

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

October 2024

From
Father
John

Beloved in Christ:

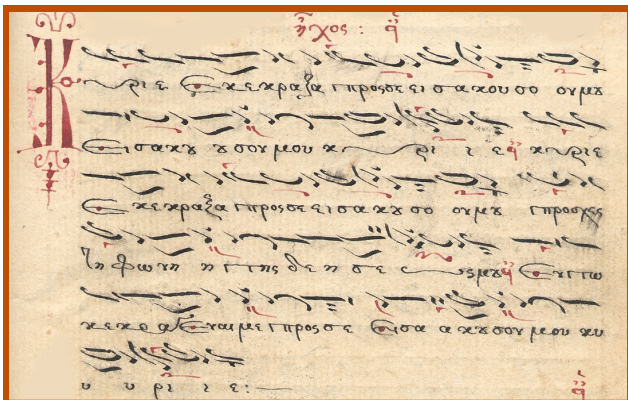
On the first Sunday in October, on or after the Feast of St. Romanos the Melodist (*commemorated on October 1*), all Parishes in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America celebrate National Church Music Sunday. Our liturgical music is an integral part of the worship in the Orthodox Church. Whether we serve in the ranks of the clergy, or as chanters or choir members, readers, or as the lay people praying in the pews, we gather as God's people to lift up our voices in praise and glorification of God and His Saints (*2 Thessalonians 1:10*) in all the divine services of our Church.

With practice, patience and prayer, along with God's grace, the execution of the hymns we experience in our worship is beautiful, edifying and uplifting. Admittedly, in some instances, due to our human frailties or vocal challenges, it can be a struggle, as it was for the monastic Deacon Romanos – that is, until he was visited by the Theotokos in a dream which changed his life's course, allowing him to be one of the most prolific hymnographers in our Orthodox Tradition. As we learn from the life of St. Romanos, when we make a focused effort *to be attentive to* the theological, scriptural and compositional depth of our Orthodox hymnography, and more importantly, *to participate in* chanting our Church hymns, we become “one voice and one heart” glorifying and praising – together with the ranks of the Heavenly Hosts – the most honorable and majestic Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

In the tradition of our Byzantine Orthodox music, there is a plethora of hymnographers who have composed and contributed to the vast treasury of appointed hymns for our many liturgical services. While we might not know about the many, many composers of our hymns, we most assuredly recognize that the Holy Spirit inspired and worked through these men and women as we listen to and chant the precious fruits

of their holy melodies. This is why we faithful are moved to sing along in our services, or to do so even when outside the Church. Our toddlers and young people are most malleable to picking up and singing the simple yet profound verses of our hymns, often at home or in the car. Our Church elders (some even more so than the clergy) know many of the more intricate hymns by heart and chant them aloud on Sundays and especially on our Feast Days: How often I am amazed when visiting our elderly in their homes or at care facilities, even among those who are declining physically and mentally, that they know our Church hymns by heart!

(Continued on Page 3)



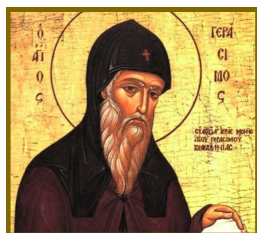
WORSHIP SCHEDULE

*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>*

Sunday, October 6/*Third Sunday of Luke/
Holy Apostle Thomas/Holy Martyr Erotheis of
Cappadocia/St. Makarios the Righteous of Chios*
Orthros: Second Plagal Tone
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:1-12
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:6-15
Gospel: Luke 7:11-16
Memorials: Metropolitan Ilia Katre of Philomelion (2
years), Dora Jorgovan (2 years)
Fellowship: Father Florin and Presvytera Alexandra,
for Alexander Stavros' First Birthday

Sunday, October 13/*Fourth Sunday of Luke/
Holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Synod /
Holy Martyrs of Pergamus: Carpos, Papylos,
Agathodoros, and Agathoniki/St. Benjamin the
Deacon/Holy Chryssi the New Martyr of Bulgaria/
St. Meletios of Pegas, Patriarch of Alexandria/
Holy Martyr Florentios of Thessaloniki/Holy
Hieromartyr Jacob of Hamatoura*
Orthros: Grave Tone
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:12-35
Epistle: Titus 3:8-15
Gospel: Luke 8:5-15
Fellowship: Kali Parea



Sunday, October 20/*Sixth Sunday of Luke/
St. Gerasimos of Cephalonia/Great Martyr of
Antioch/St. Matrona the Righteous of Chios/
Holy Martyr Andronicos the Righteous*
Orthros: Fourth Plagal Tone
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:36-53
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; 7:1
Gospel: Luke 8:26-39
Artoclasia: The Papas Family for Luka's Name Day
Fellowship: Greek Folk Dance

Wednesday, October 23/*Holy Apostle Iakovos
(James), the Brother of Our Lord and First Bishop
of Jerusalem/Holy Father Ignatios, Patriarch of
Constantinople*
9:00 am *Divine Liturgy of St. Iakovos*
Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19
Gospel: Matthew 13:54-58

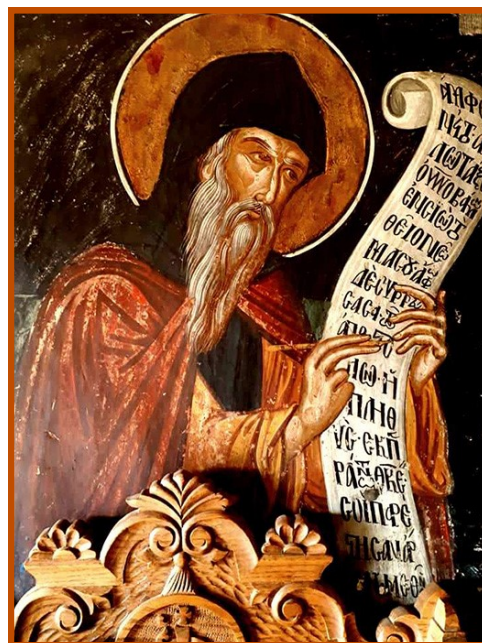
Saturday, October 26/*Great Martyr and Myrrh-
Streamer Demetrios of Thessaloniki/
Commemoration of the Great Earthquake in
Constantinople (740)*
8:00 am *Orthros*
9:00 am *Divine Liturgy*
Epistle: 2 Timothy 2:1-10
Gospel: John 15:17-27; 16:1-2

Sunday, October 27/*Seventh Sunday of Luke/
Holy Martyr Nestor of Thessaloniki/
St. Kyriakos, Patriarch of Constantinople/
St. Procla, Wife of Pontius Pilate*
Orthros: First Tone
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:1-10
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11
Gospel: Luke 8:41-56
Fellowship: Yolanda Franco, in Memory of Francisco



From Father John (Continued from Page 1)

One of the most beloved hymns of the Orthodox Church, chanted in every service including the Divine Liturgy, is this poetic song to the Mother of God: *More honorable than the Cherubim, and beyond compare more glorious than the Seraphim, without corruption you gave birth to God the Logos. We magnify you, the true Theotokos.* This well-known composition, which is included in the “*Axion Estin (It is truly right to bless you . . .)*”, was penned by St. Kosmas the Poet in the eighth century, whom the Greek Orthodox Church commemorates *on October 14*. Orphaned at an early age, St. Kosmas was adopted by Sergius, the father of St. John of Damascus. Sergius entrusted the education of the two brothers to a monk also named Kosmas, who taught them every form of divine and human wisdom. Eventually, the two brothers went to Jerusalem to become monks at St. Savvas Monastery: Together they defended the Church against Iconoclasm, and both wrote an abundance of notable hymns, while living in strict asceticism. Both were ordained to the Holy Priesthood and Kosmas was eventually ordained as Bishop of Maiuma, the port of ancient Gaza. Both Saints Kosmas and John are considered to be the best representatives of later Byzantine hymnography – and together they developed the *Octoechos*, the liturgical book containing a repertoire of hymns according to the eight tones.



We have the legacy of hymns from St. Romanos dating from the sixth century and St. Kosmas from the eighth century – along with the grace-filled melodies from countless others – which we continue to chant today in the Orthodox Church. Yet our worship and hymnography are not relics from the past. Then as today, our divine worship and Church music reach far beyond our linear understanding of space and time: Our praises and voices bring us in the presence of the Living God and will continue even in His eternal Kingdom! (*Revelation 14:6-7*) Regardless of our theological or vocal expertise, it is essential that we make every effort to learn and excel in the practice of singing the hymns of our Church, as did our ancestors – not merely for the continuation and beautiful execution of our worshiping Tradition, but in preparation as participants in the eternal choir of the Kingdom of God.

With Love in Christ,

Father John

Byzantine Chanters and Choir

The first Sunday of October is National Church Music Sunday. It falls on or near the Patron Saint of music, St. Romanos the Melodist (*October 1*); his icon adorns our Church appropriately above the sound room. This particular Sunday is dedicated to all the musicians who enhance and uplift our liturgical worship with their voices.

I would like to acknowledge all the singers who participate: The Youth and Adults, and the Chanters who have stepped up to the front to sing praises to God so beautifully. Thank you so much for your commitment.

We practice on Sundays after Divine Liturgy every week for about 15 minutes. If you are interested in joining our ranks, please step up. We would love to have you!

Love in Christ, Presvytera Maria

Parish Council Report

Dear Father John, Father Florin, Deacon John, Ministries and Parishioners,

Congratulations goes out to all who offered their support of the Greek Food Festival! The Festival Committee is also to be congratulated as we all know that this event demands many hours of sacrifice and dedication. In addition to attending to Festival preparation, we were challenged with obstacles that could have caused us to negate the venue.

We were confronted with water lines that needed repair in the parking lot and gas leaks in the kitchen, and an outside gas leak related to the torch. Many thanks to Spiros Filios who spearheaded the task of correcting these issues. Subcontractors were called in and the whole repair process was under way. This could have been devastating in regard to the timelines concerning our Festival. Again, thank you Spiros and the support of the Building Committee for your dedication to the needs of our Church. I also want to applaud the efforts of Steve Tzelalis for attending to the day-to-day repairs that need constant attention.

Because of the costs we are confronted with concerning Church repairs, I ask that all of our parishioners please complete your Stewardship Pledge. With the outstanding balance of pledges, your attention to completing your support for the Church will allow us the ability to cover the major costs incurred for these and future repairs.

The first day of Church School was a major success, and thanks go out to Eileen Koutsulis and her supporting staff of Teachers for giving their time for this very important ministry.

**With Much Love, I Remain Yours in Christ,
John Fotopoulos, Parish Council President**



***“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of Wisdom.”
(Proverbs 9:10)***

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Philoptochos: Bernadette Anthony

Stewardship and Community Outreach:
George Bochanis

Maintenance: Steve Tzelalis

Building Committee:
Eleni Filios & Steve Tzelalis

Byzantine Chanters and Choir
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School: Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers: Father John & Mark Stransky

GOYA: Father Florin & Maha Habiba

Orthodox Family Fellowship:
Father Florin & April Rivera

Young Adults: Father Florin

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas

Greek Language:
Paula Kelesis

Mr. & Mrs.:
Father John & Presvytera Maria,
Father Florin & Presvytera Alexandra

Kali Parea: Demetrious Asim

Forerunners: Paula Kelesis

Orthodox Bookstore: Paraskevi Santamaria

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

Greek Food Festival:
Angelo Stamis

Photography and Live-Streaming:
Bill & Erin Bruninga

Philoptochos News

*"A New Day will dawn on us from above because our God is loving and merciful."
(Luke 1:78)*

Dear Father John, Father Florin, Deacon John, Parish Council, the Amazing Ladies of the Philoptochos Society and Fellow Parishioners,

We have adopted the previous passage as our inspiration for the newest event for the Ladies Philoptochos Society. Philoptochos, with the incredible generosity of the Kypreos Family, will be hosting "A Champagne Supper to benefit A Refuge for Women". This organization provides housing and support for the victims of Human Trafficking which has become an epidemic on our society. While being hosted by the LPS, we encourage our members to invite one or two friends outside the Faith, who will be interested in learning about this organization. Of course, what would be an event, if we did not have a little fun too? Yummy food, bubbles (adult and not), and we have some awesome opportunities for some great raffles. The invite went out to the entire community in mid-September by email and we will also be including it in the *Weekly Word* for the next few weeks. Please do not delay as space is limited: Please make your reservation today!

Being part of the National Ladies Philoptochos Society has given us the opportunity to participate in a new Social Services Caregiver Support Service program. We were notified a little late for the first program but there is another one beginning *on November 12*. These Caregiver Programs are geared to the Greek Orthodox Faith and will be offered on Zoom for one hour a week for six weeks. We have attached the information to our *Weekly Word*. If you are not receiving the *Word*, please let me know at bernadette.anthony@gmail.com – and I will be happy to send it to you. You will have to pre-register for the Caregiver Program, as space is limited.

Save the Dates:

Sunday, October 6 – following Divine Liturgy: General Meeting for all LPS members or those interested in our upcoming projects.

Saturday, October 12 – 5:30 – 8:30 pm: Champagne Supper to Benefit A Refuge for Women.

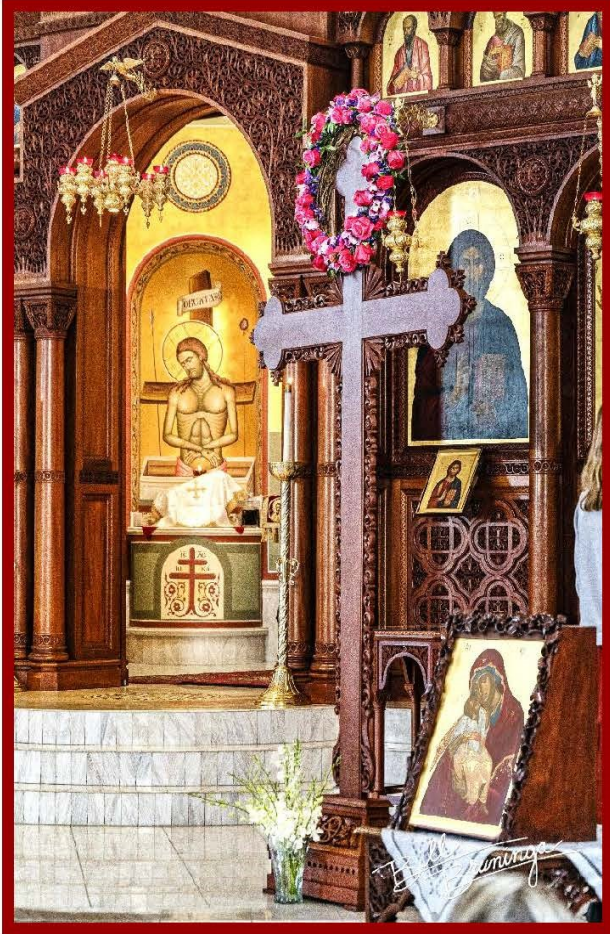
Detailed information of all our events and projects is available to LPS Members by way of the *Weekly Word* emails. Please contact Chris Snow, VP – Membership, at snowy4000@gmail.com to be on the email list.

As always, thank you for supporting the Ladies Philoptochos Society and all our projects.

With Deep Gratitude, Bernadette Anthony, Philoptochos President



*Universal Elevation of the Holy Cross
on September 14.*



Stewardship 2024

LET GOD'S LOVE GUIDE US

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

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

+++++

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

“Let God’s Love Guide Us”

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

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

Signed: _____

Signed: _____

Orthodox Christian: Yes No

Orthodox Christian: Yes No

Others sharing in the gift (children): _____

Stewardship and Community Outreach

St. Thomas – Stewardship in a Nutshell

This month's Stewardship reflection focuses on the Apostle Thomas, whose feast day falls *on October 6*. St. Thomas is found several times throughout the Gospels – his “mentions” in Scripture might be thought to describe the Christian lives many of us are living today: Often we are just going through the motions, perhaps hanging around the periphery and avoiding meaningful engagement with the community. For Thomas, these “mentions” seem something akin to roll call, as for someone who is just present with the others (*Matthew 10:3, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:15, John 21:2, and Acts 1:13*). However, when Thomas fully engages with the Lord, Jesus uses Thomas as a lesson for us all. In fact, these interactions, found in the Gospel of St. John, might be thought of as an excellent model in Christian Stewardship.

Time – A Call to Commitment

In John 11:16, Thomas demonstrates his commitment to Jesus by urging the Disciples to accompany Him to Judea, despite the potential dangers. Thomas says, *“Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”* This passage underscores the importance of dedicating a portion of our time to God's work, even when it requires sacrifice. As stewards of our time, we are called to prioritize our relationship with God and to serve others, trusting in His guidance and protection.

Talents – Seeking Understanding

In John 14:5-6, Thomas questions Jesus about the way to where He is going, to which Jesus reveals, *“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”* Thomas' inquiry reflects a desire to understand and follow Jesus more closely. This passage reflects the value of seeking wisdom. As stewards of our talents, we are encouraged to seek wisdom and use our God-given abilities to further His Kingdom.

Treasure – Faith and Belief

In John 20:24-29, the encounter between Jesus and Thomas is perhaps the most memorable tableau following the Resurrection. Thomas, initially doubting Jesus' Resurrection, declares his belief upon seeing and touching Jesus' wounds. Jesus responds, *“Because you have seen Me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”* This passage highlights the treasure of faith, which is more precious than any material possession. As faithful stewards, we are called to invest a portion of our treasure in our faith and support the ministries of the Church, trusting in God's provision and blessings.

We learn from St. Thomas that Christian Stewardship is a journey of faith, marked by the responsible management of our time, talents, and treasure. The encounters between Jesus and Thomas offer valuable insights into how we can live out this calling. By dedicating our time to God's work, nurturing our talents, and investing in our faith, we honor God and contribute to the flourishing of His Kingdom. Let us adopt St. Thomas as our model of “stewardship in a nutshell” and adjust our mindsets from being “present” to making presents of portions of our time, our talents, and our treasure.

Mike Beeler, for the Stewardship Committee



“Do not speak evil against one another, brethren. He that speaks evil against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law . . . There is only one Lawgiver and one Judge, He Who is able to save and to destroy.” (James 4:11-12)

From Father Florin

St. Symeon the New Theologian was born in 949 in Galatai, Paphlagonia, in Asia Minor, into a provincial noble family. While he was still young, he moved to Constantinople to complete his education and enter the Emperor's service. However, he did not feel attracted by the civil career that awaited him. Under the influence of the inner illumination he was experiencing, he set out in search of someone who would guide him in the period of doubt and perplexity he was living through and help him advance on the path of union with God. He found this spiritual guide in Symeon the Pious, a simple monk of the Studite Monastery in Constantinople who advised him to read St. Mark the Monk's treatise, "The Spiritual Law." St. Symeon the New Theologian found in this text a teaching that made a deep impression on him: *"If you seek spiritual healing, be attentive to your conscience. Do all that it tells you and you will find what serves you."* From that very moment, he never went to sleep without first asking himself whether his conscience had anything with which to reproach him.

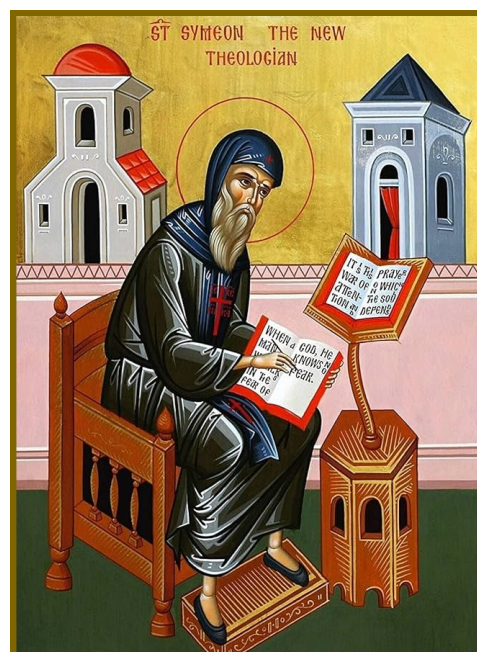
St. Symeon entered the Studite Monastery where, however, his mystical experiences and extraordinary devotion to his spiritual father caused him some difficulty. He moved to the small convent of St. Mamas, also in Constantinople, of which three years later he became Abbot. There he embarked on an intense quest for spiritual union with Christ which gave him great authority. It is interesting to note that he was given the title of the "New Theologian," in spite of the tradition that reserved this title for two figures, St. John the Evangelist and St. Gregory of Nazianzus. St. Symeon suffered misunderstandings and exile but was rehabilitated by Patriarch Sergius II of Constantinople.

St. Symeon the New Theologian spent the last stage of his life at the Monastery of St. Marina where he wrote a large part of his opus, becoming ever more famous for his teaching and his miracles. St. Symeon reposed on March 12, 1022, but since this always falls in the Great Fast, his Feast is kept on October 12. The best known of his disciples, Niceta Stethatos, who collected and copied St. Symeon's writings, compiled a posthumous edition of them and subsequently wrote his biography. St. Symeon's opus consists of nine volumes that are divided into theological, gnostic, and practical chapters, three books of catechesis addressed to monks, two books of theological and ethical treatises and one of hymns. Moreover, his numerous Letters should not be forgotten. All these works have had an important place in our monastic tradition to our day.

St. Symeon focused his reflection on the Holy Spirit's presence in the baptized and on the awareness that they must have of this spiritual reality. *"Christian life,"* he emphasized, *"is intimate, personal communion with God, Divine grace illumines the believer's heart and leads him to a mystical vision of the Lord."* Along these lines, St. Symeon the New Theologian insisted that true knowledge of God does not come from books but rather from spiritual experience, from spiritual life. Knowledge of God is born from a process of inner purification that begins with conversion of heart through the power of faith and love. It passes through profound repentance and sincere sorrow for one's sins to attain union with Christ, the source of joy and peace, immersed with the light of His presence within us. For St. Symeon this experience of Divine grace did not constitute an exceptional gift for a few mystics but rather was the fruit of Baptism in the life of every seriously committed believer.

St. Symeon calls us all to pay attention to our spiritual life, to the hidden presence of God within us, to the sincerity of the conscience and to purification, to conversion of heart, so that the Holy Spirit may really become present in us and guide us. Indeed, if rightly we are concerned to care for our physical, human, and intellectual development, it is even more important not to neglect our inner growth. This consists in the knowledge of God, in true knowledge, not only learned from books but from within and in communion with God, to experience His help at every moment and in every circumstance.

(Continued on Page 9)



From Father Florin (Continued from Page 8)

Basically, it is this that St. Symeon describes when he recounts his own mystical experience. Already as a young man, before entering the Monastery, while at home one night immersed in prayer and invoking God's help to fight temptations, he saw the room fill with light. Later, when he entered the Monastery, he was given spiritual books for instruction but reading them did not provide for him the peace that he sought. He felt, he himself says, as if he were a poor little bird without wings. He humbly accepted this situation without rebelling, and it was then that his visions of light began once again to increase. Wishing to assure himself of their authenticity, St. Symeon asked Christ directly: "Lord, is it truly You Who are here?" He heard the affirmative answer resonating in his heart and was supremely comforted. "That, Lord," he was to write later, "was the first time that You considered me, a prodigal son, worthy of hearing Your voice."

This experience remains particularly important for us today if we are to find the criteria that tell us whether we are truly close to God, whether God exists and dwells in us. God's love develops in us if we stay united to Him with prayer and with listening to His word, with an open heart. Divine love alone prompts us to open our hearts to others and makes us sensitive to their needs, bringing us to consider everyone as brothers and sisters and inviting us to respond to hatred with love and to offence with forgiveness.

To conclude, we may sum up the teaching and mystical experience of St. Symeon the New Theologian in these words: In his ceaseless quest for God, even amidst the difficulties he encountered and the criticism of which he was the object, in the end he let himself be guided by love. He himself was able to live and teach his monks that for every disciple of Jesus, it is essential to grow in love; thus, we grow in the knowledge of Christ Himself, to be able to say with St. Paul: "*It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me.*" (Galatians 2: 20)

Fr. F. J. Pistache.

*Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisoun*

John (Jaden) Enbysk (Adult Baptism) on August 24, 2024.

Godparent: Demetrious Asim.

Seraphim (Dale) Weishar, Jr. (Adult Baptism) on September 7, 2024.

Godparent: Adam Porphyrios Prestage.

Alexander (Zev), son of Trevor Milazzo and Alexa Karacostas, on September 21, 2024. Godparent: Zoe Harris.

Chrismation

John (Jonathon) Krikie on September 1, 2024.

Sponsor: Gust Soteropulos.

Marriage: Na Zisete

Dion Hardge and Zoe Metsoviti on September 17, 2024.

Koumbaros: Kosmas Tsiralidis.

Fallen Asleep in the Lord: Eternal Memory!

Georgene Arvanites on August 23, 2024. Funeral on September 4.

Ministry News

Church School



Hi everyone! We are off to a great start for the school year. We have about 90 students enrolled. Please make sure your children are enrolled and your family is a Steward of the Church. To register, please see me on Sunday or Karen during the week. The last day we will be accepting registrations will be **November 10**.

Please make sure you are bringing your children to the Divine Liturgy and receiving the Sacrament of Holy Communion. It is very important that you and your children understand the spiritual necessity of coming to Church and not just Church School. Moreover, it is very disruptive to have the students come in late and interrupt the teachers and students.

Thank you all for helping us with a smooth school year so far. We truly appreciate your children and their willingness to learn about our wonderful Faith. If you are interested, please ask the teachers if they need anything: Snacks, mini bottles of water, paper, or craft ideas.

Please reach out with any questions or concerns. Please remember that **October 27** falls on Nevada Day weekend and will be a **Family Worship Sunday**.

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



Greek Folk Dance

We are in the final push of registration for all dance groups. We are pleased to announce we will have four (4) groups this year. In addition to our youth groups from ages 4 and up, we are adding an advanced senior group for our young adults 18 and over. This is a wonderful opportunity to get involved, meet some new members of our community, and preserve our beautiful cultural heritage! Please see Karen for a registration form!

Practices are Sundays and Tuesday evenings (for competitive groups only). Finally, the Metropolis of San Francisco has announced that the annual Folk Dance Festival will be held in Anaheim, California, **on February 13-16, 2025**.

Please join us **on Sunday, October 20**, as we host Fellowship in Panos Hall after Liturgy.

Much gratitude, Folk Dance Board

Youth Greek Language Classes

Our Youth Greek Class has begun with 13 students! Registration is closed for this year; we hope you will join us next year. Once again, a big thank you to Katerina Katelouzos.

Paula Kelesis, Greek School Director



Adult Greek Language Classes

Our Adult Greek Classes have begun with eight (8) adults registered. A big thank you to George Kouris. Classes meet on *Mondays at 4:30 pm.*

For those unable to come on Monday, we will be adding *Tuesdays from 6:00 to 7:30 pm.* Please reach out to George if you are interested in the Tuesday class at (702) 686-6914. Registration Fee is \$120.

Paula Kelesis, Greek School Director

Altar Servers

We welcome Acolytes from the past and new young men 8 years and older to join us in serving in the Altar for our Divine Services and beyond! There are many holy services and your willingness to assist would be greatly appreciated and pleasing to God. Please contact Father John in person or at frjohn@vegasgreekorthodox.com if you are interested, and he will give you his blessing to serve.

Yours in Christ's Service, Father John



All Youth Event

Dear Kids, Teenagers, and Parents,

Thank you all for volunteering at our Soda Booth during the Greek Food Festival. Your help was huge and was very much appreciated by everyone, as every year!



This month, as announced previously, we will all gather on *Saturday, October 12, from 9:00 am, at Gilcrease Orchard* (7800 North Tenaya, Las Vegas). The tickets were purchased on September 14 and, unfortunately, there are *no onsite tickets for sale*. We will pick apples and pumpkins, and we will hang out with each other and have fun outdoors. Looking forward to seeing you there!

Love in Christ, Father Florin, Maha Habiba, GOYA Advisor, and April Rivera, OFF Advisor

Young Adults ~ 18 Years through Early 30s

I would like to thank each and every one of you for helping our Church during our Greek Food Festival! Your help did not go unnoticed and, as always, it was very much appreciated. Thank you all again for your dedication and hard work! You are an example for our youth!

This month, we will go out and play mini golf *on Saturday, October 19, starting at 5:00 pm at Pop Stroke*, located in Town Square (6617 South Las Vegas Blvd., Las Vegas). Get ready for an evening of fun and fellowship. Looking forward to meeting with you all.

With Love in Christ, Father Florin

"While bodily training is of some value, godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come." (1 Timothy 4:8)

Mr. & Mrs.

Dear Couples of St. John the Baptist,

We would like to thank Richard and Angela Acovino for graciously hosting an amazing dinner at their beautiful home in August. We enjoyed a wonderful meal, great fellowship and a lively discussion.

This month, we will meet *on Saturday, October 26, starting at 5:00 pm*, at the home of Tim and Janet Bryant. For their address and to let us know what you will bring, please contact Karen at the Church Office. Looking forward to seeing you there!

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

Kali Parea ~ For the 40+ Crowd

Please mark your calendars for the following:

On Sunday, October 13, will host Fellowship. Please bring your goodies for all to share.

At the end of the month, we will celebrate my Name Day at my house *on Sunday, October 27, starting at 1:00 pm*. We are looking forward to seeing you all there (adults and young adults) for an afternoon of discussions and a good time. For the address and other details, please contact me.

Thank you and looking forward to seeing you for both events!

With Love in Christ, Demetrious Asim (702) 210-4056

Forerunners ~ Our Seniors Fellowship

We hope you had a pleasant Summer and pray you are in good health. We thank all our Seniors who came out and volunteered for our Greek Food Festival.

The Forerunners will have their kick-off Luncheon *on Monday, October 14 at 11:30 am*. We are looking forward to fun, good food and games as we begin our monthly get-togethers. If you are able to donate a bottle of wine for our luncheons, please bring it with you. You are also encouraged to bring a friend.

Love in Christ, Paula Kelesis for the Forerunners



Greek Food Festival Preparation





Six Classes on the Orthodox Faith

**Wednesdays 6:30-8:00 pm
beginning on October 2
in Kokkos Hall**

**For inquirers, catechumens, and
Orthodox Christians who want to know
more about the ancient, Apostolic Faith**

We will cover...

- *Theology and Church History*
- *Sacraments and the Divine Liturgy*
- *Spirituality and Prayer*
- *and a “Show and Tell” in our magnificent Byzantine Church*

Greek Food Festival Report 2024

What an incredible and unforgettable Festival we've had—our 51st! This year's event was a resounding success, and none of it would have been possible without the countless hours, dedication, and generosity of our amazing community. We are deeply grateful to everyone who gave their time, talents, and resources to make the Festival a triumph. It's truly a labor of love that could not happen without the extraordinary efforts of so many.

While we cannot possibly name every individual who contributed, we want to extend special recognition to a few key people whose efforts stood out, with our deepest apologies if we've missed anyone. You all deserve heartfelt thanks for your commitment.

A huge thank you to:

- Steve Likourinou for his incredible stage production work, which brought our Festival to life.
- Susan Stamis, Cheryl Pandelis, and Nitsa and George Filios for their leadership on the Souvenir Magazine, a true reflection of our community's pride.
- Nicoletta Filios for her outstanding efforts in securing and coordinating all the publicity that brought so many guests to our event.
- Steve and Aliki Thompson and Family for flawlessly running the ever-popular Gyro Booth.
- Susan Stamis, Sophia Leonis, and Kiki Mavrantonis for preparing mouth-watering pastitsio, dolmathes, tzatziki, and bogatsa.
- The Tzelalis Family, whose dedication ensured the Loukoumades Booth was a sweet success.
- Telly Eliades and his team for their tireless work overseeing the kitchen and ensuring everything ran smoothly.
- Marina Adamy, Alexia Chandrinou, and Arlene Generales for their beautiful work on Festival decor and the Pastry Booth.
- Sonia Merritt and the Ladies of Philoptochos for their impeccable management of the Raffle and Information Booth.

We would also like to express our deep gratitude to:

- John Karas, who sold an astonishing number of raffle tickets and coupon books – your dedication did not go unnoticed!
- Erin Bruninga for expertly managing the Count Room.
- Demetri and Luanne Philippou and Eli Rivera for their fantastic work chairing The Grill.
- Tom and Sharon Katsaros, with Peter Brennan, for successfully leading the A La Carte Booth.
- Ken Bacon for his hard work coordinating vendors and Micheal Vigil in the Kids' Area.
- Presvytera Maria Hondros for her leadership of the Dinner Booth.
- Marcie Karas and Stavroula Halatsis-Williamson for their dedication at Admissions.
- Eleni, Nicoletta and Georgie Filios for running the Bar with efficiency and a smile.
- Maha Habiba for ensuring the Soda Booth ran smoothly.
- John Koutsulis for assisting with TV shoots that helped promote our Festival.
- Janet and Tim Bryant, along with Demetri Asim, for their outstanding management of our volunteers.
- Jen Santamaria for leading the Church Bookstore.
- Deacon John and Diakonissa Ellyn Nixon and Guy Monroe for sharing our history through Church Tours.
- Chris Kourafas for his excellent architectural work.
- Cheryl Pandelis and Jim Monoyudis as our wonderful Festival Hosts.
- George Belch and his team for running the outdoor oven with such skill.
- Catalina Magee for capturing the magic of our event in beautiful photographs and for her help with the festival website.
- Claudia Kasiotis, Rod Camacho, and Penny Fleischer for their incredible work managing the inventory of food and supplies.

(Continued on Page 15)

Greek Food Festival Report (Continued from Page 14)

- Joe and Alex Szukiewicz for their diligence in ensuring our Festival's safety and security.

We are also incredibly thankful to Father John, Father Florin, and Deacon John Nixon for their unwavering spiritual leadership, which strengthens our community in every way.

Finally, we want to extend the deepest gratitude to three individuals who deserve special recognition: Eleni Filios, Spiros Filios, and Karen Rawlinson. Without the tireless work and dedication of these three, this Festival simply would not have been possible. Spiros dedicated countless hours before, during, and after the event, ensuring that everything from setup to cleanup went smoothly. Eleni and Karen worked behind the scenes for months, coordinating permits, supplies, meetings, and so many other vital details that made the Festival a success. Their contributions were simply invaluable, and we cannot thank them enough.

To everyone who played a role, no matter how big or small – thank you from the bottom of our hearts. You have truly made this year's Festival one to remember, and we are so grateful for each and every one of you.

Angelo Stamis, 2024 Greek Food Festival Chairman



Building and Maintenance

Dear Fellow Parishioners,

What a month it has been! Although we had hoped and prayed for a break from major repairs, this past month brought unexpected challenges. Many of you may have noticed the large underground water leak on the north side of the building. This leak had been slowly eroding the ground beneath, creating a cavern the size of a van. The cost to repair the leak was nearly \$10,000, with an additional \$6,500 needed to refill, compact, and re-asphalt the area.

Additionally, we discovered a significant gas leak in the kitchen attic, which required immediate attention. The repair cost \$3,700. A huge thank you to Mary Hamilton for connecting us with Southwest Gas leadership. Their help expedited the repair process, allowing us to avoid a special permit that could have delayed the work, potentially forcing us to cancel the Festival.

As if that wasn't enough, we also had to replace four irrigation valves, along with several fire sprinklers and a defective control valve in the fire system. The July heatwave caused a number of plants and donor trees to die, adding to our maintenance challenges.

Our facilities are over 30 years old and have not been painted since their original construction. The irrigation system needs replacement, as we are facing weekly repairs. The floors in Panos and Kokkos need attention, and several AC units in the administrative building are nearing the end of their lifespan. These are the realities of aging buildings, and such costly repairs are inevitable.

It's imperative that we develop a plan to avoid being overwhelmed by these expenses all at once. We must create alternative revenue sources to help offset these necessary repairs and deferred maintenance. We encourage your continued contributions to the Building Fund and invite you to attend the General Assembly Meeting in November, where we will discuss solutions for our community.

Thank you for your support and dedication.

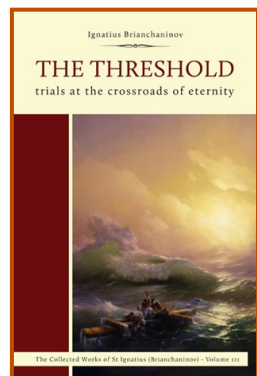
In Christ, Eleni Filios, Building Committee Chair

Orthodox Bookstore

Greetings from the Bookstore!

The latest volume in the writings of St. Ignatius Brianchaninov, *The Threshold: Trials at the Crossroads of Eternity*, is our featured selection this month. In this third volume of a Russian original from Holy Trinity Publications, "St. Ignatius examines the mystical boundaries that constitute for the Christian a threshold: On the one hand between life and death; and on the other, between the visible, physical realm and the invisible – but no less real – spiritual realm. He explicates the nature of the soul and the essence of incorporeal beings as he instructs the monks in his care on the profound mystery of Christianity that can transform humanity from a carnal to a spiritual state." (Holy Trinity Monastery; Pascha 2023)

From the back cover: Throughout human history the existence and nature of a world beyond that which is visible to our material eyes has been a subject of intense debate. In this third volume of St. Ignatius's collected works the Saint addresses the widespread lack of comprehension of this unseen realm and expounds the necessity of understanding it correctly in accordance with the Truth that is the Orthodox Faith. He draws deeply on the patristic teachings of Christian saints of the first millennium, in particular St. Basil the Great, St. Isaac the Syrian, St. John of Damascus, and St. John of the Ladder. He weaves in quotations from the Psalms and other Scriptural texts as well as liturgical hymns. He exhorts his readers to prepare themselves to cross the threshold into their final Heavenly home: To cross from earthly into eternal life.



Come visit the Bookstore for your copy as well as other devotional needs. As always, Anna and I look forward to seeing you!

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

FAMILY WINTER CAMP

Snow Play | Campfires | Family Prayer
Monastery Visits | Arts & Crafts | Hikes & more!

December 27-30, 2024

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YOUTH &
YOUNG ADULT
MINISTRIES

**2024
Stewardship
Report
(as of 9/23/24)**

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$602,665 (\$576,094 in 2023)
 Stewardship Gifts Received: \$443,806 (\$435,476 in 2023)
 Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$158,859 (\$140,618 in 2023)
 Stewardship Families Pledged: 428 (407 in 2023)
 2024 Goal: \$600,000 . . . Keep the Pledges Coming!

***“LET
GOD’S LOVE
GUIDE US”***

<u>Average Pledge</u>	<u>No. of Families</u>	<u>Amount Pledged</u>
\$1 - \$500	183	\$ 46,655
\$501 - \$1,000	79	\$ 61,225
\$1,001 - \$2,500	111	\$172,273
\$2,501 - \$5,000	35	\$128,375
\$5,001 - \$9999	14	\$ 87,357
\$10,000 & Above	6	\$106,780
Total Families	428	\$602,665

Church Account Summaries - August 2024

Nevada State Bank Accounts	July Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	August Ending Balance	Notes
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$37,434.95	\$67,175.48	\$15,000.00	22,510.58	\$68,866.72	\$28,233.13	\$15K Transfer from Festival account to GOA cover Expenses
Community and Education (C&E)	\$22,925.49					\$22,925.49	
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$171,257.73	\$4,046.74		\$20,519.79	\$23,737.49	\$181,047.19	\$15K Transfer from Festival account to GOA cover Expenses
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$291,616.25	\$4,938.16		\$705.71	\$25,154.41	\$270,694.29	
Building & Maintenance (B&M)	\$143,842.54	\$44,912.20	\$20,000.00	\$137,095.00	\$3,764.40	\$67,895.34	Transfers from Eyler Fund & Church School to HVAC
Folk Dance Group	\$23,849.59	\$549.00		\$10.00		\$24,388.59	
Hellenic Historical Society	\$790.96					\$790.96	
Designated Funds	July Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	August Ending Balance	Notes
Bookstore	\$46,320.96	\$4,431.77		\$705.71	\$5,154.41	\$44,892.61	
Restricted Funds	July Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	August Ending Balance	Notes
ICON	\$14,183.06	\$406.39				\$14,589.45	
Faithtree	\$1,626.39					\$1,626.39	
Youth Choir	\$2,989.18					\$2,989.18	
Church School	\$136,013.52				\$10,000.00	\$126,013.52	Transfer to HVAC
GOYA	\$530.36					\$530.36	
Eyler Memorial Fund	\$20,190.15	\$100.00			\$10,000.00	\$10,290.15	Transfer to HVAC
Emergency Fund	\$5,000.00					\$5,000.00	
Three Priests	\$64,322.63					\$64,322.63	
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
Designated, Restricted and Other Total	\$291,616.25	\$4,938.16	\$0.00	\$705.71	\$25,154.41	\$270,694.29	
Building and Maintenance Funds	July Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	August Ending Balance	Notes
Building Fund	\$24,270.12	\$758.20		\$8,700.00	\$3,764.40	\$12,563.92	
Panos Flooring Repair	\$36,330.33					\$36,330.33	
Hall Painting	\$10,283.22					\$10,283.22	
HVAC	\$64,241.00	\$44,154.00	\$20,000.00	\$128,395.00		\$0.00	
Giving Tree	\$8,717.87					\$8,717.87	
Lighting	\$0.00					\$0.00	
Building & Maintenance Funds Total	\$143,842.54	\$44,912.20	\$20,000.00	\$137,095.00	\$3,764.40	\$67,895.34	
Other Funds	July Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	August Ending Balance	Notes
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$72,275.91					\$72,275.91	as of 06.30.24
Commonwealth Investments (Icon)	\$147,692.51		\$2,310.98			\$150,003.49	
August 2024 Candles	\$6,159.15						
August 2024 Trays	\$5,457.00						
Total August 2024 Candles & Trays	\$11,616.15						



OCTOBER 2024 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

		1	2 6:30 pm Six Classes of the Orthodox Faith: Class #1	3	4	5
6 Church Music Sunday 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Chanters/Choir Practice 12:15 pm Philoptochos General Meeting	7 4:30 pm Youth and Adult Greek School Classes	8	9 9:00 am Orthodox Clergy Meeting in Library 6:30 pm Six Classes of the Orthodox Faith: Class #2	10	11	12 9:00 am All Youth Fall fun at Gilcrease Orchard 5:30 pm Refuge for Women Philoptochos Event at Kypreos Home
13 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Chanters/Choir Practice	14 11:30 am Forerunners Luncheon in Kokkos Hall 4:30 pm Youth and Adult Greek School Classes	15 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting in Library	16 6:30 pm Six Classes of the Orthodox Faith: Class #3	17	18	19 5:00 pm Young Adults Mini Golf at Pop Stroke in Town Square
20 St. Gerasimos 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy and Artoclasia Chanters/Choir Practice	21 4:30 pm Youth and Adult Greek School Classes	22	23 Holy Apostle Iakovos (James) 9:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Iakovos 6:30 pm Six Classes of the Orthodox Faith: Class #4	24	25	26 Great Martyr Demetrios 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 5:00 pm Mr. and Mrs. at Bryant Home
27 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Chanters/Choir Practice 1:00 pm Kali Pareia Name Day Party at Demetri Asim's Home	28 4:30 pm Youth and Adult Greek School Classes	29	30 6:30 pm Six Classes of the Orthodox Faith: Class #5	31		

The Desert Messenger

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

The Way of the Lord

“One who is physically ill abhors the bitter medicines and painful operations. However, he endures patiently, knowing that the physician effects his health through these things. And when he gets well, he renders many thanks to the physician for the good which he did, and no longer remembers the pain because it has passed. We should also understand spiritual matters in the same way.

All the various afflictions make the one afflicted abhor them, but they result in the cure of the soul’s spiritual members. And if those afflictions had not been sent by God, the great Physician, that sickly member of the soul would have constantly grown worse, and then the soul would have been poisoned and suffered spiritual death, which is separation from God. Therefore, we ought to thank God in every situation so that we do not fall away from piety.”

(Counsels from the Holy Mountain: Selected from the Letters and Homilies of Elder Ephraim, “On Trials and Temptations”)

