

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 21, Issue 5 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

May 2023

*From
Father
John*

Beloved in Christ:

Christ is Risen! **Χριστος Ανεστη!**

During the month of May, as the temperature rises in Las Vegas, we are yet again encouraged to be water smart, conserving this most precious natural resource in every way we can. Living in the desert we are regularly reminded of the shortage of water – especially as we see Lake Mead’s “bathtub ring” as a prophetic sign of the southwest states’ struggle with massive drought and chronic overuse of water from the Colorado River.

Similarly, in the arid lands where our Lord Jesus Christ lived and traversed, the concern over water supply and drought was readily in the minds of the desert dwellers, and He utilized this theme to draw His followers to a deeper understanding of the Trinitarian God. In His profound and revelatory encounter with the Samaritan Woman at Jacob’s Well – which is recorded solely in the Gospel of St. John and read yearly on the fourth Sunday of Pascha – our Lord directs our attention to where the wells infinitely run deep. In this account, Jesus is wearied and hot from a long journey, and enters a long and life-changing dialogue with this woman who has come to draw water, requesting her to *“Give Me a drink.” (John 4:7)* The woman is amazed that Jesus speaks to her, for the Jews had no dealings with Samaritans – and He replies to her questioning, *“If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give Me a drink,’ you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water.” (4:10)* Christ then teaches this woman that He is not speaking of the water, which is drawn from this or any earthly well, but much more meaningfully, those who partake of *“the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” (4:14)*



In the Paschal Canon which has been chanted since the Great Feast of the Resurrection, Jesus Christ is proclaimed as the Fountain of Life: *“Come, let us partake of a new drink: not one miraculously brought forth from a barren rock, but a spring of immortality, welling up from Christ’s tomb, from which we draw strength.” (Third Ode)* The Lord, speaking through the Prophet Jeremiah, admonished the Ancient Israelites for rebelliously committing these two evils: *“They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” (Jeremiah 2:13)* Yet our loving and merciful Lord, through His Crucifixion has forgiven all of us sinners who have forsaken Him, and by His glorious Resurrection has restored and reconciled us to Him, so that we can become “new cisterns” – that is, a new creation – partaking of eternal Life.

(Continued on Page 3)

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

***Sundays: 8:45 am Orthros - 10:00 am Divine Liturgy
Church School follows Holy Communion (through May 21)***

***All our Sunday Divine Services are Available on Live-Stream!
Access the Live-Stream on <http://youtube.com/vegasgreekorthodox>***

Sunday, May 7/*Fourth Sunday of Pascha: The Paralytic/Commemoration of the Precious Cross that Appeared in the Sky Over Jerusalem in 351/St. Cyril, Archbishop of Jerusalem*

Orthros: Third Tone

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:13-35

Epistle: Acts 9:32-42

Gospel: John 5:1-15

Fellowship: Fleischer, Howard and Koroni Families

Wednesday, May 10/*Mid-Pentecost/Holy Apostle Simon the Zealot*

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

Epistle: Acts 14:6-18

Gospel: John 7:14-30

Sunday, May 14/*Fifth Sunday of Pascha: The Samaritan Woman/Holy Martyr Isidore of Chios/Holy Hieromartyr Therapontos/Holy New Martyrs Mark and John/St. Leontios, Patriarch of Jerusalem/Commemoration of All Patriarchs of Constantinople/MOTHER'S DAY*

Orthros: Fourth Tone

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros):

John 20:1-10

Epistle: Acts 11:19-30

Gospel: John 4:5-42

Memorials: Ioannis

Apostolopoulos (1 year);

Filippos Diamantis (3 years);

Demetrios Dalacas (3 years)

Fellowship: Steve Tzelalis and the Kitchen Crew



Sunday, May 21/*Sixth Sunday of Pascha: The Blind Man/Ss. Constantine and Helen, Equal to the Apostles/New Martyr Pachomios*

Orthros: First Plagal Tone

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

Epistle: Epistle: Acts 26:1; 12-20

Gospel: John 9:1-38

Last Day of Church School

Memorials: Mary Bartsas and Departed Family

Fellowship: Philoptochos in memory of Mary Bartsas

Wednesday, May 24/*Holy Ascension of Our Lord (Observed)*

5:00 pm Orthros - 6:00 pm Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Acts 1:1-12

Gospel:

Luke 24:36-53

Thursday, May 25/*Holy*

Ascension of Our Lord (Liturgy on the Preceding Evening)



Sunday, May 28/*Seventh Sunday of Pascha: Holy Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council/Holy Martyr Eutychios, Bishop of Melitene/St. Nikitas, Bishop of Chalcedon*

Orthros: Second Plagal Tone

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

Epistle: Acts 20:16-18, 28-36

Gospel: John 17:1-13

Memorial: Anna Balason (4 years)

Fellowship: Pan Arcadians

CHURCH 360

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ, if you have not yet done so, we respectfully request you take the time to fill out the questionnaire we have prepared. This will enable the Parish to better communicate with you. Click [HERE](#) to access the questionnaire. The information you provide will only be used by the Parish to better serve the members of our community.

From Father John (Continued from Page 1)

Most assuredly, Christ foretells of the Baptism into Him which would begin on Pentecost Sunday, fifty days after His Resurrection – for His reference about the living water also reveals the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of the faithful. Speaking with the Samaritan Woman about the life in the Church that would embark with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, He says, *“The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth.” (John 4:23)* As we are Baptized into the Orthodox Christian Church, we enter into Communion with the Living God, we are taught and we uphold the True Faith, and through worship and the Holy Mysteries we partake of His Kingdom, glorifying the Holy Trinity.

Upon hearing and understanding our Lord’s words, this woman repented of her sins and, following His Resurrection, became equal to the Apostles in her witness of Christ. This woman – known as St. Photini – was eventually martyred in Rome, where the pagan emperor Nero had her thrown into a well. Still today, Christ is reaching out to all of us, even in our sinfulness, and calling us to become renewed in Him and witnesses of His Truth, especially in the face of false teachings and godlessness. May we, by His grace, become worthy cisterns of the living water!



With Much Love in the Resurrected Lord,

Father John

Parish Council Report

Dear Father John, Father Florin, Ministries and Parishioners,
Χριστός Ανέστη!

I want to begin by thanking all our ministry leaders who attended the recent Parish Ministries Meeting. We have heard your concerns – please know we are acting upon them to better serve our Church and its leaders! Your input was well received: Please let me know how we can better address and help to grow your ministry.

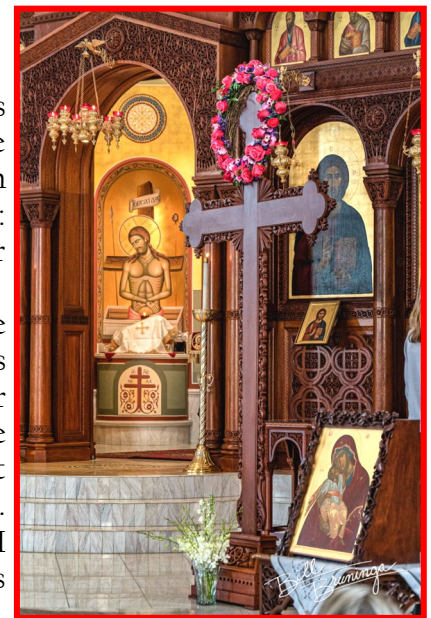
Beginning with Palm Sunday and throughout Holy Week, we experienced – better than ever – parishioner involvement. The food was amazing and participation by all was greatly appreciated. Moreover, as for the Agape Picnic, thanks to all who stepped up to help from set-up to the actual day of Holy Pascha. I am humbled and so grateful to all. Again, great job on the food that was served and the overall spirit of our parishioners. Amazing! It was truly an expression of love for our Resurrected Lord – and I pray this continues for events to come. I would need a book of several pages to list everyone who helped make this day a spiritual and festive success.

Our Holy Services and Liturgies – including the expressions of love for the Theotokos during Lent and the heartfelt prayers and hymns for God’s sacrifice during Holy Week – were beautiful, thanks to Father John, Father Florin, Presvytera Maria and our Church Choir. May God bless them and keep them in good health. We are very blessed.

Without further adding to this month’s *Desert Messenger*, I want this column to be just an overwhelming thank you from the bottom of my heart.

May God continue to bless St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church.

Truly He is Risen! John Fotopoulos, Parish Council President



Philoptochos News

Dear Father John, Father Florin, Ladies of the Philoptochos Society and Fellow Parishioners of St. John the Baptist,
Christos Anesti!

The Blessed Day of the Resurrection of Our Lord Jesus Christ was once again a joyous celebration of our Faith! Since Stavros, the girls and I have been members of St. John the Baptist, we have spent every Pascha with our Church family. This time of year was my dear father's favorite time to visit Las Vegas as well. I can still see him in the Carson Avenue kitchen with Venea Poulos eating all her broken hard boiled red eggs. Sweet memories are the best.

The Agape Picnic was absolutely perfect this year! The weather, the food, and the fellowship! The Pastry Sale chaired by Amalia Dominguez and her fabulous family – hubby Eric, daughter Ava and sister Donna Maland – was a great success. Many thanks again to the Philoptochos members who baked, wrapped and sold the pastries!

The Wine Wagon, chaired by Christina Snow and assisted by Benita Beeman, Juliana Likourino and Mary Hamilton, was another huge success! Thanks to the Kypreos Family for the huge and amazing wine donation, George Bochanis for his specialty wines for the extra giveaways, and all the members for their donations. Congratulations to John Matsis who won the wagon this year!

While we are all taking a much-needed breather, we are planning the President's Dinner *on Tuesday, May 16, starting at 5:30 pm*, at Giuseppe's. This dinner happens at the end of the two-year term and is always a great celebration. On that evening, we will also have a meeting to elect our Board for the next two-year term.

We will be hosting the Bartsas Memorial *on Sunday, May 21*, to pay our respects to Mary Bartsas and her family who have donated to the Social Services for many years. Social Services will be back and doing some activities for the summer, please look in the *Weekly Word* for more information.

The *Weekly Word* is emailed to members of Philoptochos. If you are a member and we have an email and you are not receiving it – please check your spam/junk file. Please remember to add lasvegasphiloptochosstjohn@gmail.com to your contacts. If you are still not receiving it, please let me know.

I would like to personally thank all the devoted, loving women who served on the 2021-2023 Panagia Chapter Board. They have shared their time, talents and love for our Faith over and over again. There is not enough space for me to sing their praises individually – just know that each one is near and dear to my heart and I am truly grateful that they have been a part of the journey the last two years.

Vicky Palivos – 1st Vice President, Christine Snow – 2nd Vice President, Eileen Koutsulis – Recording Secretary, Dora Hart – Treasurer, Tina Liaos – Corresponding Secretary, Benita Beeman – Past President, Geri Kypreos – Social Service Chair, Ellyn Nixon – Outreach Chair, Maha Habiba, Rahel Kiflezgi, Sharon Katsaros, Amanda Flangas, Stephanie Snow Rosenthal, Paula Kelesis and our very own Presvytera Maria Hondros.

Thank you to all the members of St. John the Baptist Church as well for supporting the Ladies Philoptochos Society and all our many ministries, outreach, social service projects, fellowships and special projects. As I come to the close of this term, I would also like to thank my husband Stavros for all his love and support.

**With the love and strength of our Beloved Panagia to guide us all,
Bernadette Anthony, Philoptochos President**



Stewardship and Community Outreach

Christos Anesti!

It was wonderful to see so many attending Church, Holy Week, and the Agape Picnic last month. A concern with fluctuating attendance is that there might be a declining trend over time, since, these days, many people prefer to hide in anonymity: Hiding behind mirrored sunglasses, hiding behind the limo-dark window tint of their cars, hiding behind internet identities unlinked to any physical location, and hiding behind the high hedges or gated streets and guarded lobbies of their houses or apartments. Unfortunately, this preference for social withdrawal often carries over to being disconnected from their professed Church; and while it is indeed possible to hide from your Church, it is impossible to hide from God. Which brings to mind the old saying: *You can run, but you cannot hide.*

In this month's Stewardship reflection, I refer to a couple of Bible chapters where Jesus speaks directly about hiding; about being prepared Christians, about good Stewardship, and about the coming Judgment of us all – in the *Gospel of Matthew, Chapters 24 and 25*. They are a quick read. Please have a look now – I will wait. We read how Jesus desires His loyal followers to be prepared for His Second Coming, to be good stewards and to hide not what He gives us (time, talents, treasure) but to know well there will be a Final Judgment. These truths are among Christ's final teachings prior to entering Jerusalem. They are told in His very own words. They are not open to hedging or negotiation. It is apparent, then, that “*You can run, but you cannot hide*” applies to living a Christian life in general and to being a good Steward in particular.

Good Stewards are found behind all facets of Church life here at St. John the Baptist Parish: Participating, supporting, and leading worship services, education activities, philanthropic efforts, youth and adult groups, the annual Greek Food Festival, fundraising lunches, and a variety of other ministries. Each month, *The Desert Messenger* reports on many of these. These good Stewards cannot do it alone, however, and make a general appeal for you to join them. Active Stewards in their 60s, 70s, 80s, and yes, even 90s would like to encourage all the young “whippersnappers” in their 20s, 30s, 40s, and 50s to give thoughtful consideration toward becoming more fully engaged with the Church in 2023. There are abundant opportunities to assist, to clean, to cook, to lead, to volunteer, and/or otherwise reconnect with our Church – not just for a one-off Lenten (or perhaps Festival) exercise but for year-round, life-long growth as Orthodox Christians.

So, show of hands, would you rather hear, “*Well done, good and faithful servant*” and enter into the joy of your Lord, or “*You wicked and lazy servant*” and be cast into outer darkness while weeping and gnashing your teeth? There is no need for a tally, so I will simply close with an invitation to reflect on how you might best apply *your* time, talent, and treasure to further the Kingdom of God here in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Mike Beeler for the Stewardship and Outreach Committee





YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO
The President's Dinner

TUESDAY | 05.16.2023

5:30 PM | MIX & MINGLE

6:00 PM | DINNER

GIUSEPPE'S, 6065 DURANGO,
LAS VEGAS, NV. 89113

\$50.00 PER PERSON IN ADVANCE

PLEASE RSVP TO VICKY PALIVOS AT
VICKY.PALIVOS@GMAIL.COM.



His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos and the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos cordially invite you to attend



Agape

A Celebration of Love

"Whoever received one little child like this in My name receives Me." Matthew 18:5

Donations will be accepted **LIVE** during the event, or you may send in advance using the enclosed envelope, or make a secure donation at www.sfphiloptochos.org **TODAY!**

Camp Agape 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.

To benefit our Kids 'n' Cancer Ministry

Sunday, May 7, 2023

2:00 p.m. PDT

Newport Beach Country Club
One Clubhouse Drive | Newport Beach, CA 92660

RSVP Date: April 21, 2023

While enjoying an afternoon of fabulous music, delectable food, and good friends, guests will have the opportunity to purchase Mystery Hat Boxes filled with exciting gifts and participate in an Opportunity Drawing!



Kids n' Cancer
Camp Agape



A Ministry of the
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco
Ladies Philoptochos Society



Opportunity Drawing
The Louis Vuitton
OnTheGo MM Tote Bag

Register at www.sfphiloptochos.org or by calling 415-431-2600 by April 21, 2023



Cost: \$95 person

If you are not able to join us in person, please participate virtually via Zoom.



Bill Brumings

Building and Maintenance Committee

Christ is Risen! Christos Anesti!

I hope that everyone had a blessed Holy Week and Pascha. After hearing many of you express your concerns regarding the lighting in our parking areas, NV Illuminations came out to service and repair our parking lot lights. I was also able, after many phone calls and emails, to finally get County Public Works to come out and get all the streetlights along Mesa Vista, El Camino and Hacienda working again in time for Holy Week evening services. We are currently exploring replacing all the broken bollards and exterior perimeter wall cap lighting fixtures.

Earlier in April, we had a very constructive meeting with all the ministries regarding how we move forward with the use of our hall and kitchen facilities. Please note if you need any items or kitchen help, ministry leaders will need to place a formal request form with Karen, and your event will be placed on a community sharable calendar. Also, the Parish Council is currently working on reinstating a Catering and Event Committee so that we can begin hosting events for our parishioners. Guidelines and prices are currently being discussed and determined, but we hope to have it up and running in time for Fall.

We have recently noticed a lot of stains and waxy residue throughout the Church especially on the carpets and pews. Baptismal candles are only to be lit in the Narthex before Holy Communion and then extinguished. Let us please be respectful of our beautiful house of worship by avoiding food and drink consumption, except for water. We just had the pews and carpets redone and it was a very costly and tedious endeavor.

This month's repairs and improvements included: The parking lot lights (\$1,200), two new landscape valves (\$400), tree removal and reseeding of the field (\$1,640), men's bathroom plumbing (\$875), updating our Wi-Fi capability for the Food Festival (\$8,900), a minor roof leak in the classroom hallway (\$365), Choir loft cabinetry (\$2,380) as well as parts for the commercial dishwasher and disposal in the kitchen (\$1,500). It was an expensive month.

Both the water and power bills have also drastically increased with the new rates. With this said, it is one of the primary reasons we have kept Panos Hall at half capacity. I understand that it is "cozy" – however, when our power bill doubles and goes from \$3,500 to almost \$7,000 a month, we must do what we can to limit our power usage and try to stay within our budget.

As always, I am extremely grateful for all your continued support.

**Yours in Christ, Eleni Filios,
Chair of the Building and Maintenance Committee**



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Rev. Father Florin Ristache
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Karen Rawlinson
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Bruce Royal
Maintenance & Grounds

Office Hours

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

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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:

Fr. Florin Ristache & Maha Habiba

Orthodox Family Fellowship:
Fr. Florin Ristache & April Rivera

Young Adults:
Fr. Florin Ristache

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas

Greek School: Paula Kelesis

Mr. & Mrs.:

Fr. John & Presv. Maria,
Fr. Florin & Presv. Alexandra

Kali Parea: Demetrios Asim

Adult Basketball:
Nick Kelesis

Forerunners: Paula Kelesis

Orthodox Bookstore:
Paraskevi Santamaria

Greek Food Festival: Gus Flangas

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

Photography & Live-Streaming:
Bill & Erin Bruninga



Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisoun

Nectarios (Kingston), son of Daniel and Brianna Kouretas, on March 31, 2023.
Godparent: Demetrios Kouretas.

Andrew, son of Elias and Nina Rivera, on April 1, 2023.
Godparents: Paul and Evangelia Acovino.

Dhimitrios, son of Ilias Villatoro and Teuta Prifti, on April 22, 2023.
Godparents: Antoneta and Llambi Prifti.

Gabriel (Noah), son of Ilias Villatoro and Teuta Prifti, on April 22, 2023.
Godparents: Antoneta and Llambi Prifti.

Zoe, daughter of Ilias Villatoro and Teuta Prifti, on April 22, 2023.
Godparents: Antoneta and Llambi Prifti.

Marriage: Na Zisete

Andrew Massiha and Larisa Sophia DeFilippo on April 25, 2023.
Koumbaros: Rony Mansour.

Fallen Asleep in the Lord

Truly Kulas Dolfin on March 28, 2023. Funeral in Ely, NV, on April 6.

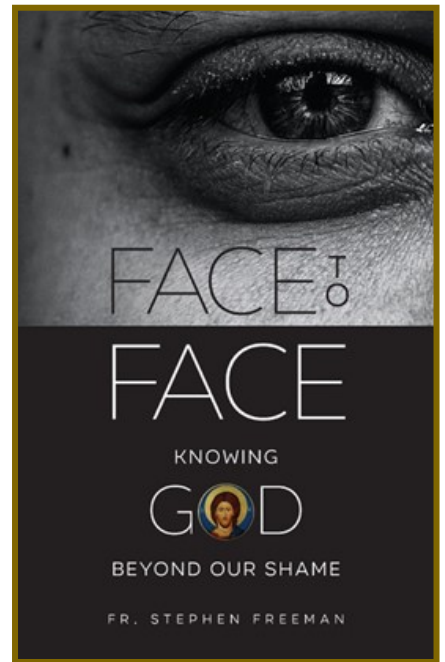


Orthodox Bookstore

Christ is Risen! Greetings from the Bookstore!

Featured in store this month is a new selection from Ancient Faith Publishing by archpriest Father Stephen Freeman entitled *Face to Face: Knowing God Beyond our Shame*. Father Stephen writes a lot in his popular blog, “Glory to God for All Things,” about shame as a most primal emotional feeling of “who I am” because it centers not around mere guilt over things once done, but of something much deeper with potential wounds and crippling feelings of unworthiness and “damaged identities.” It is probably no coincidence that the story of Adam and Eve quickly devolves to a cover up in fig leaves upon realizing they were “naked and ashamed.”

In his blog, Father Stephen asserts that we are neuro-biologically hardwired for shame and that when it becomes paralyzing, it usually stems from the experience of a set boundary. Without boundaries, he claims, we have narcissism and the resulting destruction from it. Yet, it is the very “mechanism that is essential to the recognition of boundaries . . . that is at work in creating shame,” he states. We can have healthy shame as a result of healthy boundaries or toxic shame that can come from abuse. A healthy balance and knowing our boundaries play into the very formation of our identities, which for Orthodox Christians is to be found in our lives in Christ.



From Father Stephen:

“I would describe much of what I am offering in this book as an exploration and expansion of St. Sophrony’s (of Essex) teaching. He made the ‘bearing of a little shame’ a key part of the spiritual life of his disciples and taught the world that the ‘way down is the way up.’ To a great extent, his language is centered in the word *humility* and the practice of that virtue. We will see as we go along that humility is the acceptance of *healthy* shame in a manner that allows us to see the truth of ourselves as well as the truth of God.”

Looking forward to seeing you in the Bookstore for your copy or for other of our many books, Icons, and gift selections!

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



From Father Florin

Christos Anesti!

May 21 is a festive day, as the Orthodox Christian Church commemorates St. Constantine, the founder of Constantinople, and his mother, St. Helen. Constantine and Helen are among the most popular names in Orthodox families.

Constantine was the son of Constantius Chlorus, the ruler of the westernmost parts of the Roman Empire, and his consort, Helen. He was born in 272 in Naissus of Dardania, a city on the Hellespont. In 306, when his father reposed, he was proclaimed successor to the throne. In the year 312, upon learning that Maxentius and Maximinus had joined forces against him, he marched into Italy, where, while at the head of his troops, he witnessed the words, “By this you shall conquer,” on a radiant pillar forming a Cross in the post-midday sky beneath the sun.

The following night, Jesus Christ appeared to him in a dream and declared to him the power of the Cross and its significance. When he arose in the morning, he immediately ordered that a banner of victory be made in the form of a Cross, and he inscribed on it the Name of Jesus Christ. On October 28, he attacked and conquered Maxentius, who drowned in the Tiber River while fleeing. The following day, Constantine entered Rome in triumph and was proclaimed Emperor of the West by the Senate while Licinius, his brother-in-law, ruled in the East. However, out of malice, Licinius later persecuted the Christians. Constantine fought him once and again, and utterly destroyed him in 324. In this manner, he became monarch over the West and East. Under him, and because of him, all the persecutions against the Church ceased. Christianity triumphed and idolatry was overthrown.

In 324, in the ancient City of Byzantium, he laid the foundations of the new capital of his realm and solemnly dedicated it on May 11, 330, naming it after himself, Constantinople. Also in the year 324, Constantine sent Helen on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land in search of the “Holy Sepulcher” and the “True Cross.” In 325, St. Constantine called the First Ecumenical Council in Nicaea, to combat the heresy of Arianism which divided the Church. This Council established the initial part of the Creed of Faith in the Trinitarian God. Those not confessing the full divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ were excommunicated.

On this pilgrimage, Helen followed in the footsteps of Jesus by performing many acts of kindness and good works, such as giving money, food, and clothing to the poor, and also helping Churches with funds as well as other needs. After weeks of traveling, she finally made it to Jerusalem. With the help of Judas Cyriacus, a man selected at random and forced against his will to help, Helen was able to get closer than she ever had to finding the True Cross. They continued their search for days when their prayers were finally answered. St. Helen said it was then, “with sweet smelling dust and a flash of lightning” that she pointed to the place where she instructed Judas to start digging. Finally, they uncovered three crosses, one thought to belong to Jesus Christ, and the others belonging to the two thieves who died alongside Him. To test and see which one of these crosses truly belonged to Jesus Christ, they searched for a leper at the outskirts of Jerusalem. Once one was found, they returned to the site of Golgotha, the place of Jesus’ Crucifixion. The leper was instructed to touch each of the crosses one by one. He touched the first and second ones and nothing happened – and when touching the third, True Cross, the leper was instantly healed.

The Cross was then carried back to Constantinople, while a portion of it was placed in the hands of the Bishop of Jerusalem. When visiting the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, pilgrims can still today venerate the place of our Lord’s Crucifixion at Golgotha. After finding the Life-Giving Cross, St. Helen, in her zeal to glorify Christ, elevated Churches in Jerusalem at the sites of the Crucifixion and Resurrection, in Bethlehem at the Cave where Christ was Born, another on the Mount of Olives, where our Lord Ascended – among many Churches throughout the Holy Land and Cyprus.

Through the prayers of Saints Constantine and Helen, Lord Jesus Christ our God, have mercy on us and save us. Amen.

Fr. F. J. Ristade.



Ministry News

Church School

Christos Anesti! Christ is Risen!

I hope everyone enjoyed all the events for Holy Week. I was happy to see so many young faces during the services and the Agape Picnic. I would like to thank those that donated for the egg hunt. The kids had a great time and, thanks to you, there were plenty of eggs for them to get full baskets.

Thank you to our Myrrh Bearers. What a special opportunity for the young girls to be able to participate during Holy Week. I received so many compliments how beautiful they were and added to the services.



We are gearing toward the end of the year. Our last day of class will be *on Sunday, May 21*. This day will be a regular class day, and we will be honoring the students with certificates in their classrooms.

After classes, *from 12:30 to 2:30 pm*, we will enjoy a lunch of grilled hot dogs and a *Field Day* on the Church grounds. A special thank you to our Ladies Philoptochos Society for sponsoring the food for our celebration. If you are interested in helping for field day, please let me know. I would love the help and any fun activities ideas that you might have.

A special thank you to all our teachers, Karen, Claudia for keeping our rooms clean, class helpers, donors, Philoptochos, Parish Council, Presvytera Maria, Father John and Father Florin. This ministry cannot be successful without all of you.

With Extreme Gratitude in Christ,

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

All Youth Event

Christ is Risen!

Last month we celebrated our Lord's Resurrection, which is also Our Resurrection. Thank you all for responding positively to the Church's calling to be present at its services and also for helping at all our activities! Thanks to your help, everything went out smoothly last month, especially the Agape Picnic.

This month, we will be organizing an *All Youth Field Event on Sunday, May 21, from 12:30 to 2:30 pm*, following the Last Day of Church School Classes. We will barbecue hot dogs for lunch and then we will head over to the field to enjoy lots of activities



– including splashing each other with water balloons. All in all, we will have tons of fun. Please bring a change of clothes and plan on joining us for this event – at which we will officially say hello to the summer, embracing the long-awaited vacation. Thank you and hope to see you there!

In Christ, Father Florin, Maha Habiba and April Rivera, Youth Advisors

GOYA - Our Teen Ministry



Christ is Risen!

Thank you again all for being present and for helping at our services last month for Holy Week and the Resurrection of our Lord. Thank you for serving at the Agape Picnic, and thank you for being close to Church, which demonstrates your maturity and spiritual understanding regarding the Body of Christ and its mission on Earth.

Let us meet again this month, for our *GOYA Night on Sunday, May 7, in Panos Hall from 5:00 to 7:00 pm*. We will share a meal together and have our customary fellowship, prayer, games, and discussion. If you would like to help, please bring a dish to share! Thank you so much and hope to see you there!

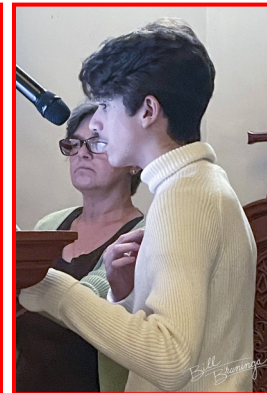
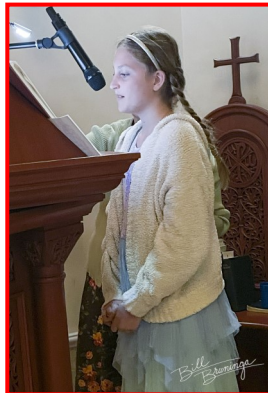
Love in Christ, Father Florin and Maha Habiba, GOYA Advisors

Youth Choir

Christos Anesti!

A huge Thank You to the Youth Choir members who participated in *both* Saturday of Lazaros and Holy Saturday Morning services. Your voices were outstanding and many parishioners in the congregation enjoyed your enthusiasm. We will take a small break for now. However, if any of you wish to join me at the chanter's stand, please come up and sing!

Love in the Risen Christ, Presvytera Maria



Young Adults - 18 Years through Early 30s

Christ is Risen! Christos Anesti!

First, I would like to thank all our Young Adults for being active and for helping at our services during Holy Week and during the Agape Picnic. Your presence was valued by everyone in our community, who look up to all of you as future pillars of the Church, the Body of Christ.

This month, we will go *Bowling at Suncoast on Sunday, May 21, at 3:00 pm*. Please join us for an afternoon of games and fun. I thank you all once again for your dedication and hope to see you there!

Yours in the Risen Lord, Father Florin

Mr. & Mrs.

Christ is Risen!

This month, we will be gathering for our fellowship *on Saturday, May 20, starting at 5:00 pm*, at the home of Angela and Richard Acovino, whom we thank for generously opening their house to us.

Please contact Karen for their address, and to let us know what you will bring. As always, we are looking forward to seeing you all there for an amazing dinner and lively discussion.

Love in the Risen Lord, Father John, Presvytera Maria, Father Florin and Presvytera Alexandra

Kali Parea - For the 40+ Crowd

Christos Anesti!

This month, we will be enjoying a breakfast together *at Mr. Mama's on Sunday, May 28, after the Divine Liturgy, starting at 12:30 pm*. Please have in consideration in advance the payment of the bill, as it might be difficult to split it. Thank you and hope to see you there,

In Christ, Demetrious Asim

Forerunners - Our Seniors Fellowship

Christos Anesti!

Our next luncheon will be *on Monday, May 8 at 11:30 am* in Kokkos Hall. We will enjoy a delicious meal, lots of fun and great fellowship as always. It will be a luncheon you will not want to miss!

We will recess over the summer and not convene again until October after the Food Festival. Please volunteer your services when you are able. We encourage Seniors in our community to join us and enjoy good food and fellowship.

Love in Christ, Faye Brown for the Forerunners



Kokkos Scholarship

The Scholarship Committee for the Kokkos Scholarship Fund is pleased to announce that applications are available at the Church Office. If you wish to receive your application via email, please contact Karen at karen@vegasgreekorthodox.com. The applications must be returned *on or before Tuesday, May 30*. Late and/or incomplete applications will not be considered.

The eligibility requirements were established by Fofo Kokkos in her Last Will and Testament. The Scholarship Committee for the Kokkos Scholarship Fund administers this program under the guidance of Father John Hondros. The Kokkos Will stipulates that two high school graduates of Greek descent within the St. John Community be selected, who are enrolled for higher education to a college or university. The scholarship amounts this year are \$1,500. The students must have an outstanding scholastic record and be in financial need. Also, Parish involvement by the students at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church was important to Fofo Kokkos; therefore, this is also a factor in evaluating the applicants.

Please contact the Church Office for more information at (702) 221-8245.

Attention, Graduates!

We want to share the good news of your commencement in the June issue of *The Desert Messenger*! If you (or your child) will be graduating soon from high school or university, please email the following to frjohn@vegasgreekorthodox.com by *May 15, 2023*:

- School from which you are graduating,
- The degree you will receive, including honors,
- What your plans are, and what you will study if pursuing further education, and
- Most importantly, a photo of you in JPG format!





*With Gratitude to God for Our Pledged Stewards in 2023
If you wish to become a Parish Steward, please call Karen for a Pledge Form*

Acovino, Richard and Angela	Crist, Adam and Kanistra	Giambi, Jason and Kristian	Kouris, Demitris and Terry
Adamy, Marina	Dalacas, Dimitri and Athanasia	Giouzelis, Sasa	Koutsulis, John and Eileen
Adondakis, George and Kim	Dalacas, Eleni	Gordon, Victor and Demetria	Koutsulis, Sam and Effie
Alcala, Georgia	Dalacas, Georgia	Grabovoi, Daphne	Krikie, Jonathan and Iryna
Alexander, Eleni	Damascus, Peter	Granillo, Abrahan	Kypreos, George
Alford, Cynthia "Mary"	Daskalos, George and Voula	Gutierrez, Connie	Kypreos, Peter and Geri
Allen, John and Denise	Davis, Matthew and Christine	Gutierrez, Daniel	Kyriannis, Justin and Linda
Alvarez, Kelly	Deep, Joseph and Alexi	Hagos, Yohannes and Mebrat	Lakkis, Christina
Anastasakis, Mark and Elaine	Demas, Spiro and Rita	Hamilton, Mary	Lamancusa, Lisa
Andrews, Catherine+	Demolas, Maria and	Hamilton, Paul and Brandi	Landahl, Richard and Johana
Andrews, Chris and Pamela	Nour, Reza	Haralambakis, Demetre and	Lavine, Frederick
Andrews, George	Demoleas, Alexandra	Dimitra	Lee, David and Alexandra
Andrews, Vasiliki	Demoleas, Eleni and	Haramis, John and	Lekar, Caroline
Andricopulos, Margo	Thomas, Kristian	Kitsios, Eugenia	Lekar, Michael and Effie
Anthony, Stavros and Bernadette	Demoleas, Spero and Grace	Hastings, Teri	Leong, Marissa and Elaine
Antoniou, Elias and Glorielys	Demoleas, Stephanie	Haynes, Maria	Leonis, Tishe
Aristides, George and Diana	Demopoulos, Dimitrios and Selina	Hemmers, Oliver and	Leonis, Nick and Sophia
Asim, Demetrious	Demopoulos, Vasiliki	Pantelas, Anne	Leventis, Nicholas and Christina
Atkins, Sean and Christina	Dimitri, Janet and Martha	Himaegiosca Goldie Family	Liaos, James and Tina
Balaouras, Panos and Helen	Dominguez, Eric and Amalia	Hollar, Michelle and	Liaos, Steven and Francine
Balason, Voula	Doskas, Athanasios and Anastasia	DiGioia, Antonio	Likourinou, Angie
Baldwin, Richard and Vivi	Doukakis, Panagiotis and Chri	Hondros, Christina	Likourinou, Steve and June
Balodimas, James	Dramitinos, Mary	Hondros, Christopher and Darlene	Litsos, Nicholas and Catherine
Barbarino, Demetra	Dudunakis, Michael	Hondros, Fr. John and Presv. Maria	Loughton, Dustin and Rena
Bartel, Robert and Ioanna	Earl, Christine	Hondros, Marissa	Makris, Apostolos
Bartzos, Eugenia	Eliades, Aristotelis and Caroline	Howard, Eddie and Willie	Malamatos, Kindina+
Beeler, Mike and Carolyn	Eliades, Eleni and	Hristopoulou, Spiridoula	Manakides, Alexis and
Beeman, Benita	Garza, Everardo	Iteen, Robert and Sophia	Varonos, Nicholas
Belch, George	Eliades, Gregory and Maria	Jandete, Johanna	Mangafas, Kyriakos and Elefteria
Belojevic, Marija	Eliades, Harry and Agapi	Jaynes, Christine	Manolakos, Catherine
Berendji, Jim and Vivian+	Eliades, Katerina	Jensen, Matthew and Michelle	Manos, Constantine and Michele
Birtas, Helen and Ann	Eliades, Sia	Kachikis, Ernestine	Mansour, Muna
Bjorklund, Danielle and	Eliakis, Peter	Kakavulias, George and Helen	Markakis, Sandy Kiriaki
Geronsin, Justin	Eliakis, Varthie	Kalkas, John and Rena	Markantonis, Demos and Kate
Blume, Michael	Eyler, John and Elizabeth	Kambouris, Litsa	Markantonis, George and Sarah
Bochanis, Aris and Savannah	Eyler, Fr. Paul and Nathan	Kanis, Constantinos and Katie	Matsis, John and Rebecca
Bochanis, George	Failla, Jennifer	Karas, George	Mavrantonis, Stacy and Kiki
Booth, Alina	Fenlason, Nathan and	Karas, James	Mavros, Alex and Jen
Britten, Ronald and Carol	Zmina-Fenlason, Jennifer	Karas, John and Marcie	Mavros, Debbie
Brown, Faye	Feola, Richard	Karas, Kevin and Elaine	Mazzorana, Vicki
Brown, Mark and Alyssa	Filios, Spiridon and Eleni	Karris, Mark and Suzanne	McKinney, Michael and Mersene
Bruninga, William and Erin	Fischer, Cheryl	Kasiotis, Nicholas and Claudia	McManus, Jeanette
Bryant, Timothy and Janet	Fischetti, George and Cassidy	Katopodis, Efstratios	McPherson, Robert and Marie
Bucy, Brent and Elaine	Fitzgerald, Norman and	Katre, Dhimitra and	McSweeney, Farolyn
Carahalis, John and Constance	McCullen, Sandra	Fry, Jesse	Mehas, Andrew and Samantha
Caredis, Jon and Marjorie	Flangas, Gary and Amanda	Katre, Sotir Mark	Melake, Nayel and Euxana
Carrico, William and Alexandra	Flangas, Gus and Tamara	Katris, Nick and Theana	Menegatos, James
Carter, Maria	Flangas, Marilyn	Katsaros, Thomas and Sharon	Merritt, Devin and Sonia
Chachas, Bessie	Fleischer, Robert and Penny	Kelesis, John and Vicki	Meyers, Evon
Chachas, James	Foster, Kyle and	Kelesis, Paula	Mikelis, Nikolas and Angela
Chamie, Elie, Emil and Claudine	Pierro, Maria Elena	Kiflezgi, Rahel	Minas, Arthur and Ewa
Chandrinis, Alexia	Fotopoulos, John and Barbara	Kirchner, Gary "Barlaam"	Monolakis, Anthony
Chanos, Jennifer	Fountas, Constantinos	Kirollos, Michael and	Monoyudis, Jim and Julie
Chomakos, Dean and Tammy	Fountoulakis, Vasileios	Molina, Adriana	Moore, Brenda
Chondrakis, Dimosthenis and	Franco, Yolanda	Kokkinis, Peter and Jennifer	Murray, Christopher and
Kragerud, Kaaren	Frangakis, Christos and Anastasia	Koliambas, Eleni	George, Veneta
Christou, Toni	Gancheva, Hrist	Kontos, Diana	Newell, Ronald and Maria
Coll, Patrick and Anita	Gauvin, Chad and Marissa	Koroni, Tara	Nicholas, John and Estella
Collins, David	Gekakis, George	Kostas, James	Nichols, George and Tereza
Conger, William and Alexia	Generales, John and Arlene	Kostopoulos, Georgia	Nicholas, Samer and Christine
Costacos, John	George, Pete and Georgia	Kountanis, Panagiota	Niforos, Helen
Costuros, George and Marsha	Georgis, Pete and Keshia	Kouretas, Daniel	Nikoloudakos, Georgia
Cotsilis, Jenny	Gialketsis, William and Rachelle	Kouretas, Spiro	Nixon, John and Ellyn

With Gratitude to God for Our Pledged Stewards in 2023
If you wish to become a Parish Steward, please fill out Pledge Form and return to Karen

Olmsted, Travis and Marilyn
 Orlando, Ritsa
 Osborn, Alexandra
 Oustian, Juliette and Ararat
 Pahigiannis, Nikon
 Paikos, Tom and Elizabeth
 Palivos, Peter and Vicky
 Pallis, Paul
 Pandelis, Cheryl
 Panos, Jeanne
 Papas, Christian and Nicole
 Papas, Peter and Rita
 Pappas, Panagiotis and Andrea
 Paschalis, Evangelos and Maria
 Payan, Luis and Eleni
 Pendleton, Tricia
 Peratikos, Tony
 Peterson, Todd and Diane
 Petro, Aleko and Georgia
 Philoptochos Society
 Pierro, Joe and Rhonda
 Polimerou, Angeline
 Politis, Pantelis and Dimitra
 Poulis, Chris and Francine
 Poulos, Christine
 Pouridis, Kouli and Para
 Powell, Scott and Angela
 Powers, Russell and Rebecca
 Rasmussen, Scott and Rebecca

Reizakis, Yianna Albertson-
 Rigas, Anthony and Mary
 Rigas, Evie
 Rihani, Gary and Linda
 Ristache, Fr. Florin and
 Presv. Alexandra
 Rivera, Elias and April
 Robison, Diane and Patricia
 Rodis, Dimitri and Angeline
 Rodis, Sophia
 Rotas, Beatrice
 Sakkas, Georgios and
 Stavropoulos, Bessie
 Santamaria, Jennifer and Robert
 Savvas, Savva
 Sechrist, Carl and Christine
 Setian, Gary
 Simmons, John
 Simpson, Bryan and Julie
 Skalkotos, Nikolas and Georgia
 Skandros, Stephanie
 Snow, Clifford and Christina
 Soteropulos, Gust and Rita
 Sotiropulos, Christopher and
 Jessica
 Soursos, Helene
 Sparkuhl, Alex and Antoinette
 Sparkuhl, Andreas and Diana
 Staubs, Douglas and Anastasia

Stavropoulos, Terry and Niki
 Stenos, Louis
 Stransky, John and Rachel
 Stransky, Mark
 Szukiewicz, Joseph and Justina
 Tadich, Katerina
 Tafoya, Steven and Irene
 Temple, Voula
 Thanos, Nicholas and Victoria
 Theros, James and Kathryn
 Thomas, Anastasia Palivos-
 Thompson, Maggy
 Thompson, Steven and Alik
 Tijiboy, Ana
 Tijiboy, Christine
 Tohme, Tony and May
 Tsiralidis, Kosmas and Katerina
 Tsobanakis, Chris
 Tsobanoglou, Niki and Paris
 Tsolis, Christos and Panagioula
 Tsortanidis, Sophia
 Vervilos, James and Anna
 Villatoro, Luis and
 Prifti, Teuta
 Wagner, Sophye
 Waincott, Betty
 Wallace, Robert and Katerina
 Walter, Vernon and Alice
 Ward, Angeliki

Waterhouse, David and
 Aleighzja
 Webb, Taylor
 Williams, Anthony and Anna
 Williamson, Daniel and
 Stavroula Halatsis-
 Wilson, Clyde
 Wilson, Kelly and
 Egi, Junichiro
 Wilson, Cleo
 Wirtz, Aphrodite
 Womack, Karl
 Womack, Kimberly
 Xerogianes, Nick and Nikki
 Xikis, Victoria
 Yurkov, Andre, Kalina and
 Daniella
 Zaferatos, Ted
 Zakis, Pope
 Zarkos, Nick and Dina
 Zaronis, Mary
 Zarras, Nick and Chery
 Zervas, Dionisios and Cacilda
 Zimmerman, Paul, Angela,
 Christopher and Vangeli
 Zimmerman, Paul and Julie
 Zmina, Stephen and Cynthia



**2023
 Stewardship
 Report
 (as of 4/24/23)**

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$502,841 (\$476,302 in 2022)
Stewardship Gifts Received: \$252,880 (\$246,407 in 2022)
Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$249,961 (\$229,895 in 2022)
Stewardship Families Pledged: 341 (331 in 2022)
2023 Goal: \$600,000 . . . Keep the Pledges Coming!

**“WALK
 IN
 LOVE”
 (Ephesians 5:2)**

<u>Average Pledge</u>	<u>No. of Families</u>	<u>Amount Pledged</u>
\$1 - \$500	146	\$ 37,343
\$501 - \$1,000	71	\$ 55,705
\$1,001 - \$2,500	83	\$130,845
\$2,501 - \$5,000	22	\$ 83,764
\$5,001 - \$9999	13	\$ 78,964
\$10,000 & Above	<u>6</u>	<u>\$116,220</u>
Total Families	341	\$502,841



MAY 2023 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD



Sunday

Monday



Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

	1	2	3	4	5	6
7 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 5:00 pm GOYA Night	8 11:30 am Forerunners Luncheon in Kokkos Hall 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting in Library	9	10 Mid Pentecost 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	11	12	13
14 Mother's Day 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	15	16 6:00 pm Philoptochos Presidents Dinner at Giuseppes	17	18	19	20 5:00 pm Mr. and Mrs. at Acovino Home
21 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Last Day of Church School ~ All Youth BBQ and Games 3:00 pm Young Adults Bowling at Suncoast	22	23	24 5:00 pm Orthros 6:00 pm Divine Liturgy Holy Ascension of Our Lord (Observed)	25 Holy Ascension (Liturgy on 5/24)	26	27
28 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 12:30 pm Kali Parea Brunch at Mr. Mamas	29 Memorial Day Church Office Closed 	30	31			

The Desert Messenger

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

The Way of the Lord



*Christ is
Risen from
the dead,
by Death,
trampling
down
upon
death,
and to
those in
the tombs
He has
granted
Life.*