

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 19, Issue 9 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

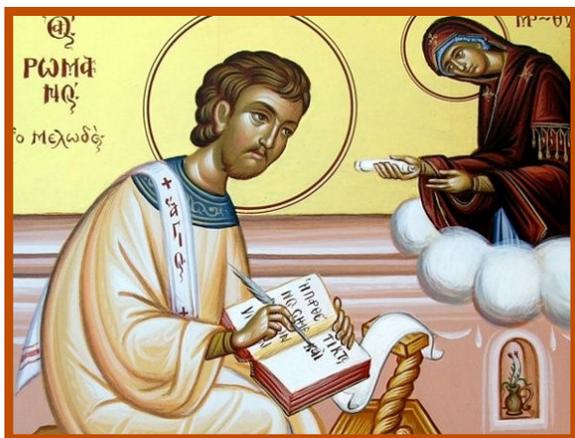
October 2021

From
Father
John

Beloved in Christ:

I am most grateful to Christ our God for the loving and selfless service of our dedicated Parish members and friends who volunteered at our recent Greek Food Festival: It is by God's grace and your willingness to work long hours that we enjoyed a successful – or more accurately, a fruitful – event. From the perspective of faith, we do not measure fruitfulness merely by the amount of funds we net from an event such as the Festival: Rather, as members of the Body of Christ we must go deeper – and seek to reap the spiritual rewards which come about through our cooperative labors of love, offered willingly for the good and the growth of our Church. When we understand that our stewardship of time and talents is for God's glory and our personal sanctification, and moreover when we witness new members joining our Church as a result of our holy work, only then can we profess that the Lord blessed us with a fruitful return.

On October 1 the Orthodox Christian Church commemorates a great Steward of the Faith, St. Romanos the Melodist, who is the patron of all Church Musicians and whose icon is placed in the front right exedra of our Church (appropriately over the Sound Room). St. Romanos was born in the fifth century in the Syrian city of Emessa. Having moved to Constantinople, he became a Church attendant in the Great Church of Agia Sophia (The Holy Wisdom) and spent his nights alone at prayer in a field or in the Blacharna Church just beyond the city. Admittedly, Romanos did not initially have the talent for reading and or singing: This was a cross he patiently bore, praying to the Holy Mother of God to help him serve faithfully regardless of his poor natural abilities. One year, on the Eve of the Nativity of Christ, Romanos read the Orthros hymns known as the *kathismata* so poorly that another



reader had to take his place, and the clergy made fun of him. Rather than becoming discouraged, this young saint progressed in the virtues of patience, humility, longsuffering, and forgiveness.

After a tearful all-night vigil before the icon of the Theotokos, the Holy Mother appeared to St. Romanos in a dream, gave him a scroll and commanded him to eat it. Through his obedience, he received the threefold gift of theological understanding, musical composition and a beautiful voice: This occurred and was manifested immediately on the Day of Christ's Holy Nativity. St. Romanos chanted in a wondrous voice his first Kontakion:

“Today, the Virgin bears Him Who is transcendent, and the earth presents

the cave to Him Who is beyond reach. Angels, along with shepherds glorify Him. The Magi make their way to Him by a star. For a new child has been born for us, the God before all ages.” We continue to sing this theologically rich and much-loved hymn, along with the 24 stanzas that follow, for the Feast of our Lord's Nativity. *(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 3/*2nd Sunday of Luke/
Dionysios the Areopagite, Bishop of Athens*
National Church Music Sunday
Orthros: Tone Six (Second Plagal)
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:1-12
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:6-15
Gospel: Luke 6:31-36
Memorials: Mattina Marchelos Brennan (40 days);
Louis Koutsulis (6 months); Departed Choir
Members and Chanters

Sunday, October 10/*3rd Sunday of Luke/
Ss. Evlampios and Evlampia/St. Theophilos the
Confessor*
Orthros: Tone Seven (Grave)
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:13-35
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:1-10
Gospel: Luke 7:11-16
Memorial: Phillip Daskalos (40 days); Karl
Constantine Beeman (1 year)

Sunday, October 17/*Holy Fathers of the Seventh
Ecumenical Council/Hosea the Prophet*
Orthros: Tone Eight (Fourth Plagal)
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:36-53
Epistle: Titus 3:8-15
Gospel: Luke 8:5-15
Artoclasia: *Offered by Papas Family for St. Luke*
Memorial: Carrie Manolis

Wednesday, October 20/
*St. Gerasimos of Cephalonia/
St. Artemios the Great-Martyr*
8:00 am Orthros
9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: 2 Timothy 2:1-10
Gospel: Luke 9:23-27



Saturday, October 23/*St. Iakovos (James),
the Apostle and Brother of the Lord*
9:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Iakovos
Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19
Gospel: Matthew 13:54-58

Sunday, October 24/*6th Sunday of Luke/
St. Arethas the Great Martyr/St. Sebastiane
the Martyr*
Orthros: Tone One
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:1-10
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 9:6-11
Gospel: Luke 8:27-39
Memorial: Ekaterina Shevchenko (40 days)

Tuesday, October 26/*St. Demetrios the Great
Martyr and Myrrh-Streamer*
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 31/*5th Sunday
of Luke/Holy Apostle Stachys,
First Bishop of the City of
Byzantium (38-45 AD) and
Ordained by the Apostle Andrew*
Orthros: Tone Two
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:11-18
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 11:31-33, 12:1-9
Gospel: Luke 16:19-31
Memorial: Departed Members of Philoptochos



*“May the Lord direct your hands to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.”
(2 Thessalonians 3:5)*

From Father John (Continued from Page 1)

For his selfless and faithful stewardship, St. Romanos was ordained to the Holy Diaconate and moreover became a composer of ecclesiastical hymns and a teacher of chant: He composed nearly one thousand hymns up until his repose in 556. St. Romanos is depicted iconographically holding a hand-censer (*katzion*) in his right hand and clothed in the vestments of a Deacon: In his left hand he is shown holding up a small Church for his hymns and prayers allowed him to become a pillar in Orthodox worship.

The Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America designates the first Sunday of October – on or near the Feast of St. Romanos – as “National Church Music Sunday,” to honor the contributions of choir members, chanters and music educators who serve our Parishes through our holy hymnography. As we honor our Church musicians, may we be also mindful that in whatever manner we serve the Community of St. John the Baptist through our devoted stewardship of time and talents, all glory is ultimately given to God and has an immeasurable impact in the life of our Holy Church. Even if we think we do not have much to offer, God will receive our meager offering, transform and multiply it – as He did with the five loaves and two fish in the wilderness, along with St. Romanos and countless Orthodox Saints!

With Love and in the Service of Christ our God,




ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Las Vegas, NV 89118

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Philoptochos: Bernadette Anthony

Stewardship & Community Outreach:
Justina Szukiewicz

Choir: Athena Mertes

Chanters & Youth Choir:
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School: Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers: Father John

GOYA:

Anne Pantelas & Maha Habiba

Orthodox Family Fellowship:
Imtisal Amy Khuri & April Rivera

Young Adults:
Fr. Seraphim

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas

Greek School: Paula Kelesis

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

Kali Parea: Demetrios Asim

Adult Basketball:
Nick Kelesis

Forerunners: Victoria Xikis

Orthodox Bookstore:
Paraskevi Santamaria

Greek Food Festival: Gus Flangas

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

Photography & Live-Streaming:
Bill & Erin Bruninga



*“Six Classes on the
Orthodox Faith”*

*Please join us for this
popular six-week course!*

*Continuing Every Wednesday through
October 20, 6:30 ~ 8:00 pm in Kokkos Hall*

*We welcome Orthodox Christians, Catechumens,
Seekers, and those curious to learn more about
the ancient Apostolic Faith.*

*For more information, please contact
Father John or Father Seraphim.*

Parish
Council
Report

Greetings to all our Saint John the Baptist Family. After the challenges of 2020, the disappointment of not being able to hold live Church services for months and not being able to host our annual Greek Food Festival, 2021 has offered us a road back to normalcy. What a wonderful sight it was to see our grounds full of happy Festival goers who welcomed the opportunity to participate in their favorite cultural event once again.

The road to hosting the Festival this year cannot be described as smooth. While the dates were planned early in the year, there was no guarantee we would be able to hold it. Many were concerned if people would come out into a crowd; others were convinced that the community would be clamoring to once again get out and enjoy themselves, and we are blessed that they did indeed come out in droves. To see the smiling faces on all our guests as they returned to our grounds was gratifying indeed.

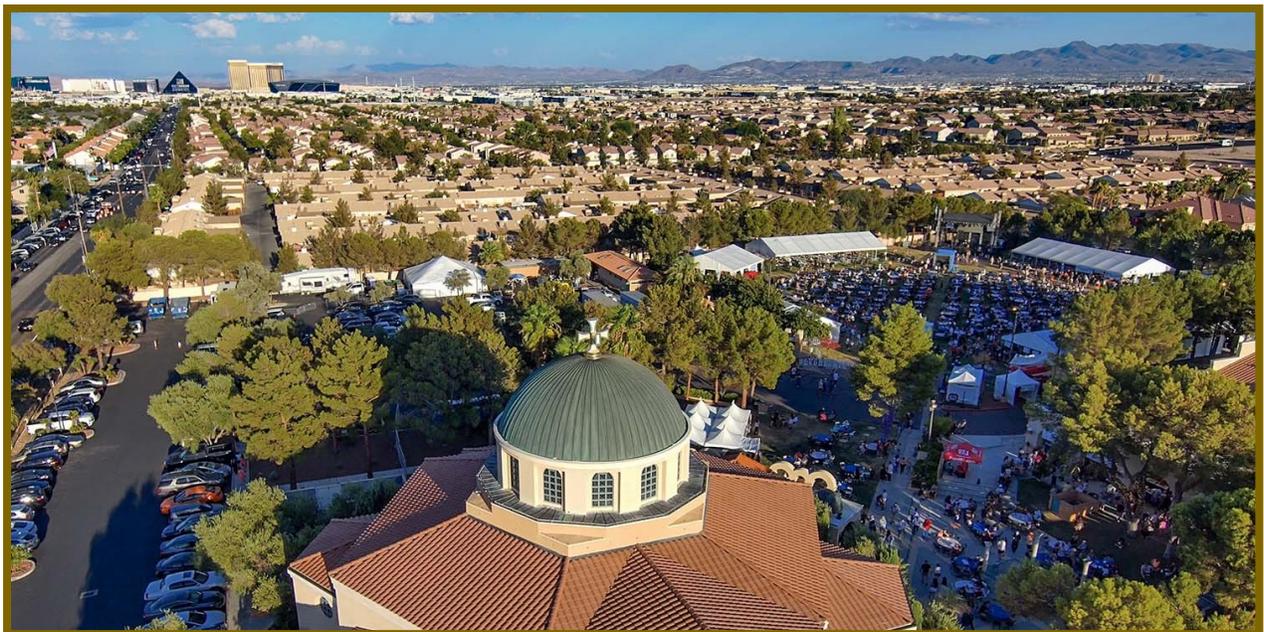
It takes a huge effort to host this event, and I would like to begin by recognizing Gus Flangas for his vision, faith and tireless efforts to ensure that the event would indeed take place this year. Despite the obstacles and doubts, Gus remained faithful and steadfast in his efforts to host a successful Festival: All of us are grateful for his ongoing leadership in this community.

Speaking of a successful Festival, we were able to donate back to the community: \$2,534.75 went to the Las Vegas Chapter of Suicide Prevention; \$2,534.75 to the Johnny Crisstopher Foundation which supports those afflicted with childhood cancer; \$2,000 to Families for Effective Autism Treatment; and lastly, \$2,000 worth of fresh produce was donated to the Las Vegas Rescue Mission which serves meals every single day to those people experiencing the effects of homelessness in our city.

The other individuals who contributed to this event are too numerous to mention as I will invariably omit names if I start; but to all of the leadership and volunteers, whether you spent weeks working on planning, days in the kitchen cooking beforehand, or volunteered to work the Athenian plate, bar, specialties, souvlaki, taverna, salad, loukoumathes, gyro, soda, pastries, kaffenion, count room, kitchen – or wherever you worked – we appreciate that you devoted your weekend to join us in hosting this wonderful event. None of this would have been possible without you!

In addition to the volunteers, we have staff members who go over and above their job duties and descriptions to work tirelessly during this event, and we would like to thank Church secretary Karen Rawlinson and bookkeeper Michelle Eugenio, who always do whatever is asked of them no matter how much is already upon their plates. We thank Alexandra Demoleas for her assistance in the office during our busiest time. Make sure that you thank them for their efforts whenever you see them! Finally, Constantin Petruc put in countless hours leading up to, during, and after the Festival, and we are grateful for his tireless efforts.

In Christ, John Matsis, Parish Council Vice President



**Philoptochos
News**

Dear Father John, Father Seraphim, Ladies of Philoptochos and fellow Parishioners,
Many thanks to all of you for your hard work on the 48th Greek Food Festival! No one knew quite what to expect with all that has happened in our world the last 18 months. What a fantastic surprise it was to see the support and attendance of our Las Vegas community! For three days they ate, shopped, danced, and enjoyed music! Good times are back! Now it is time to return to our beloved St. John the Baptist and getting back to our life as a Parish.

The Ladies Philoptochos Society held its first General Meeting on Tuesday, September 21, and it was terrific to see familiar faces and some new ones. We discussed all the upcoming events, fundraisers, and social service projects for the near future.

With all these wonderful activities on the calendar we would like to invite all women of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church to the *Membership Brunch on Sunday, October 3 following Divine Liturgy* in the East Room of Panos Hall. Please come and hear about the Faith, Fun, and Fellowship that is the Ladies Philoptochos Society. We are asking for an RSVP so that we can prepare the brunch, but all women are welcome.

These are some busy times that are coming up, and we ask that you please look in your heart and see what your passion is: Is helping those in need or reaching out to the homebound? We have Social Service and Outreach committees. Is it helping children? We will be having a Kid's 'N' Cancer project. Is it learning more about our Faith? We have a Liturgical committee with wonderful women who are willing to share their love of Orthodoxy.

Las Vegas holds a unique place for Greek Orthodox Christians. So many of us have come from other parishes in the USA and have the experiences and expertise of what other communities do. Some of us have converted from other faiths and are just learning not only Orthodoxy, but those traditions and culture. It will be our pleasure to welcome each and every one of you!

Now to our most generous St. John the Baptist friends, we are very happy to announce three Holiday fundraising opportunities to give you advance notice.

* The Annual Holiday Pastries is back this year! Please make your giving lists, as we will be only making enough for PRE-SALES! (I know we say that every year, but this year we mean it due to the rising costs of EVERYTHING).

*For the first time we will have live Christmas Wreaths and décor that will make amazing gifts; these are available by pre-order only and will be directly shipped to you.

*The St. John the Baptist Community Christmas Card will be available to send your well wishes to the community.

Look for more information on all these events. As always, the success of each project is due to the support that we receive from our wonderful St. John the Baptist Community. We look forward to the new future, along with the challenges we all face due to the pandemic and the changes it has given us. However, with Faith, Hope and Love all is possible!

Finally, please join us as we remember our beloved *Departed Philoptochos Members in the Memorial Service* following the Divine Liturgy *on Sunday, October 31*.

If you have any questions or need more information, please let me know.

Your Sister in Christ, Bernadette Anthony, Philoptochos President



From Father Paul:

Presvytera Ilean and I would like to thank all of you who were a part of the Lighting of the Torch at the Greek Food Festival.

May God Bless You!

Love in Christ, Father Paul Eyler





The 2021 Annual
Ladies Philoptochos Society
Christmas Pastry Sale

Delicious and traditional Greek Christmas Pastries
lovingly baked and packaged in a decorated box for \$25.

Due to the on-going COVID 19 Pandemic, quantities are limited.

**Guarantee your order by pre-ordering and pre-paying by
November, 13, 2021.**

Complimentary logo for those who order 40 boxes or more.

Send your order and check made payable to:

Ladies Philoptochos Society, attention Christmas Pastry Sale
5300 El Camino Rd. Las Vegas, NV 89118

Name _____

Day _____ Cell or Evening Phone _____

Email _____

Number of boxes _____ x \$25 _____

Check enclosed _____

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

Orders will be ready for pickup at St. John Church on Sunday, December 5, 2021,
following Divine Liturgy.

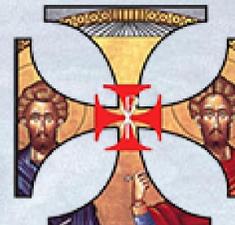
Your generous contribution is greatly appreciated. It benefits the many ministries we
support at St. John Church, the Las Vegas community at large, and around the world.

Thank you!



THE LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY THANKSGIVING & CHRISTMAS FUNDRAISER

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



*Fresh
Garland*

**FROM
\$54.95**



*Center
Pieces*

**FROM
\$47.95**



*Fresh
Wreaths*

**FROM
\$49.95**



Philoptochos will
receive 15% of all
orders. Orders can
be placed now with
delivery as soon as
November 1st.

*Scan this QR code
with your phone
camera to order*



Stewardship and Community Outreach

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Glory be to God for all things. Every time we hear the word “Stewardship,” we immediately tend to say to ourselves: “Here we go again, the Church wants money.” While it is true that it takes the financial support of our parishioners to maintain the vibrancy of the sharing and living of our Faith, it is but one of three legs of the Stewardship stool. The other two being, of course, time and talents.

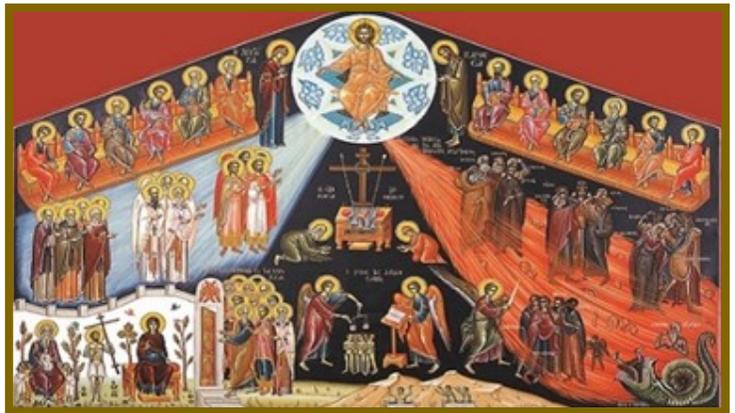
Having completed our Annual Las Vegas Greek Food Festival a few short weeks ago, where we encouraged everyone to give of their time to this endeavor, let us think about the time we are given by God in this life. How do we use it? Our brief time on earth is God’s precious gift to us. As faithful Christians, we are accountable for our stewardship of this precious gift, and we dare not waste it. Like the three stewards in the Parable of the Talents, one day God will call each one of us to give account of how we have used the time He entrusted to us.

There is *“a time for every matter under Heaven” (3:1)*, as the verse from *Ecclesiastes* instructs us: *“A time to plant, a time to reap.” (3:2)* The challenge for us is to appropriately allocate our time to the various purposes that make claims on it. There are 168 hours in a week and the most obvious claim on our time should be, first and foremost, the time we spend at Church in worship, praising and thanking God for the blessings in our lives and hearing His Word. When we are in Church, we are gathered together as the Body of Christ. We are united in prayer and in Holy Communion. Additionally, we should be setting aside time daily to read from the Holy Scriptures and to pray.

What do we do with the rest of the time the Lord grants us? Clearly, many of us are employed as a means to support our families. However, do we “steal” time from our employer by not giving our best and actually working less time than that for which we are paid? St. Paul addresses this in his letter to *Titus (2:9-10)*: *“Exhort bondservants to be obedient to their own masters, to be well pleasing in all things, not answering back, not pilfering, but showing all good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in all things.”*

What of the rest of the time we have in a given day or week? The most personal, appreciated, and unique offering we can give is the gift of our time. In a professional sense, our time may be worth hundreds of dollars an hour; however, the time we give to another person and the Church is PRICELESS: *“Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins.” (James 5:19-20)*

There are so many other ways we can be instruments of God’s Glory through the time He has given us. We can be involved in support groups for unwed mothers, single parents, battered wives, disabled children, etc. We can be a big brother or big sister to a fatherless or motherless child. We can show hospitality to the lonely, the widowed, the divorced, the aged, and the fatherless. We can visit and encourage those who are sick or confined in some way or visit those who are in prison. We can spend time feeding and giving drink to those who are in need while, at the same time, learning about their lives. We can give more time to our own families, growing together in love for each other and The Lord. The list is endless.



Let us pray that, as in the Parable of the Talents (*Matthew 25:14-28*), when we come before our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ on Judgment Day, He will look upon us and say: *“Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful”* in the time I have given you. *“Enter into the joy of your Lord,”* and spend the rest of the time of eternity with Me in My Heavenly Kingdom. In Christ, Stewardship and Outreach Committee



CONNECTION!

“ . . . that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us . . . ” (John 17:21)

CONNECTING WITH . . . CHRIST OUR CHURCH AND ONE ANOTHER

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

+++++

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

2021 CONNECTION

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 2021 of \$ _____.

Signed: _____

Signed: _____

Orthodox Christian: Yes No

Orthodox Christian: Yes No

Others sharing in the gift (children): _____

Ways to Leave a Legacy to St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox:

1. **Bequest in a Will:** While providing for your beneficiaries in your will, you can include a charitable gift for a specific amount, a percentage, or remainder of your estate to the Parish.
2. **Life Insurance Policy:** You can turn a life insurance policy into charitable support. By naming St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church as the owner or beneficiary of an existing or new life insurance policy, you can make a significant gift.
3. **Retirement Accounts:** Naming St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church as the beneficiary of your IRA, 401(k), Keogh, 403(b) or other qualified retirement plan can provide greater tax benefits to your heirs while maximizing the impact to Orthodoxy.
4. **Savings and Investment Accounts:** Naming St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church a beneficiary of your savings and investment account is an easy way to leave a legacy.
5. **Gift in a Trust:** St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church can be designated as a beneficiary of a revocable or irrevocable trust.
6. **Charitable Remainder Trust:** Cash, marketable securities or real estate may be placed into a charitable remainder trust. A Charitable Remainder Trust is a way to make a gift that allows you to retain income from your property for life or for a specific period of time that you specify.
7. **Charitable Lead Trust:** Provide a substantial gift over a period of years while ensuring that the property will ultimately return to the donor or to loved ones. The lead trust is one of the few ways to reduce or eliminate taxes that otherwise would be due on assets left to children or grandchildren.
8. **Real Estate:** You may donate residential, commercial or undeveloped property.
9. **Securities:** Giving long term appreciated securities saves capital gains tax and may serve you better than giving cash. The donor of stock donation receives a tax deduction for the stock's fair market value.

Other non-Stewardship ways to support St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church:

1. **Targeted Cash Donation:** Donate cash to St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church for specific projects, for example:
 - a. Roof repairs;
 - b. Air Conditioner Replacement;
 - c. Repaving parking lot;
 - d. Purchasing equipment to support the Annual Food Festival;
 - e. Etc.
2. **Amazon Smile:** Log into your Amazon account with www.smile.amazon.com, once logged in, search for St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, as the charity you support. When you purchase anything on Smile Amazon, the Parish will receive a donation. There is **NO ADDITIONAL COST** to anyone for supporting a charity.

Our legal title is St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Our Federal Tax ID number is: 88-0096637



Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisi

Dimitri, son of Lambros Agouridis and Erika Constantino, on September 25, 2021. Godparent: Panagiota Agouridis.

Fallen Asleep in the Lord

Phillip George Daskalos on September 3, 2021.
Funeral on September 15.

Sotirios Giouzelis on September 8, 2021.
Funeral on September 20.



Marriage: Na Zisete!

Cody Zambrano and Catherine Carrico,
daughter of William and Alexandra Carrico,
on August 21, 2021
at St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Seattle WA.
Koumbara: Christina Tsapouklis

Notes from the Choir Loft



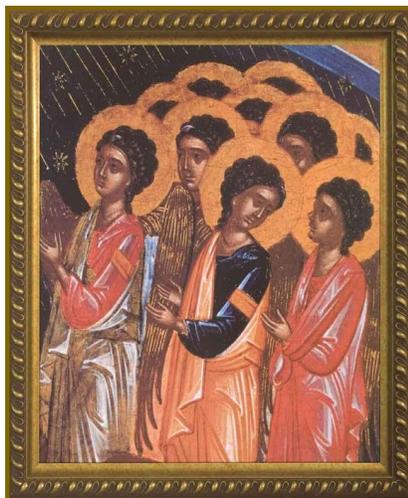
Sunday, October 3 is Church Music Sunday. We will be offering a Memorial for all the Departed Choir Members and Chanters of our Parish. Additionally, a special prayer will be offered by Father John and Father Seraphim for all those who sing for the Glory of God.

Thank you to all who have joined us on Sundays for Liturgy! It is so wonderful to hear your voices.

Now with Church Music Sunday upon us, we look forward to having more singers joining our ranks. We especially encourage new members, including our youth!

Thank you!
Much Love,
Athena Mertes, Director

“Let everything that has breath praise the Lord!” (Psalm 150:6)

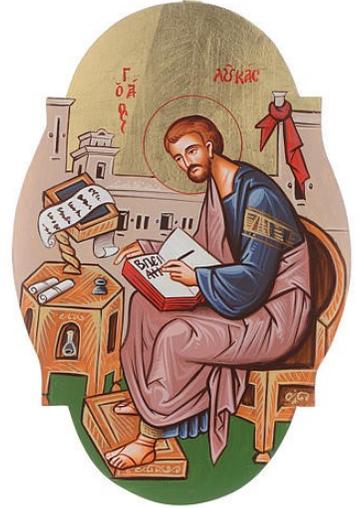


*“And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”
(Acts 2:47)*



From Father Seraphim

From ancient times there has been a question that has plagued readers of the New Testament: “Just who was the ‘disciple’ who walked with Cleopas on the way to the village of Emmaus on the day of the Resurrection?” (*Luke 24:13-35*) This passage is so poignant a narrative, so important and visceral that the two sides are split over whether the unnamed traveler that met a disguised and Risen Jesus – Who opened their minds to understand “*all that was in the Scriptures concerning Him,*” (*Luke 24:24*) – is indeed Luke himself or some other disciple. In the twelve massive volumes of *The Great Synaxaristes* – the compilation of the lives of all the Saints of the Orthodox Church – on the *Feast Day of St. Luke (October 18)* there is a footnote in which the compilers cite St. Nicodemos of the Holy Mountain (1749 -1809), who investigated precisely into this question which had lingered up until this day! Acknowledging the different and contrary opinions, he accepts the unidentified Apostle as none other than Luke himself, the author of both the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles in the New Testament.



Just who was this wonderful man? Luke was interestingly not a Jew, but born in Syria, in Antioch, and as an adult he heard about the miracles and preaching of Christ (again, there are differing traditions concerning the timeline of his conversion and call by Christ as a member of “The 70”). He traveled to Judea to find out about the man named Jesus, and once he met the Lord he was compelled to follow Him. Luke was highly educated by first century standards, and his Greek is the purest and most professional of the evangelists. He was a physician by trade, as St. Paul notes calling him the “*beloved physician*” (*Colossians 4:14*), as well as an historian and iconographer. St. Luke (as mentioned above) was also an eyewitness of the Resurrected Christ on two different occasions.

Although all the Gospels have similarities (the Synoptic Gospels in particular), Luke has so much unique information in his rendition of the account and narrative of the life and ministry of Christ. Only in Luke do we hear about the conception of St. John the Baptist, our Parish Patron (*Luke 1:5-25*). He alone writes incredibly in depth about the birth narrative of our Lord and His meeting in the temple with Saints Symeon and Anna. (*Luke 2:22-38*) Luke records the greatest number of parables in the teaching of Jesus (more than the other three Gospels), and many of the most beloved parables are only found in Luke: Such as the Good Samaritan (*Luke 10:25-37*) and the Prodigal Son (*Luke 15:11-32*). Without Luke’s Gospel we would not have known about Zaccheus (*Luke 19:1-10*), the raising of the widow’s son at Nain (*Luke 7:11-17*), or the deep insight we enjoy into the early history of the newborn Church without Luke’s firsthand account of the Acts of the Apostles.

St. Luke accompanied St. Paul on his second missionary journey and was among the company of the first Christians in Greece. As a constant travel companion of St. Paul, Luke was also probably a witness to his martyrdom in Rome under the tyrannical persecution of Christians by the Emperor Nero beginning in 64 AD: “*The time for my departure is near . . . only Luke is with me . . .*” (*2 Timothy 4:6, 11*) Luke wrote both his Gospel account and the Acts of the Apostles while in Rome under the direct supervision of St. Paul, and in careful conversation with the other Apostles during the time when Paul was first imprisoned there for two years. After the death of Paul (circa AD 67) Luke continued to preach and teach in Boiotia, central Greece, and even traveled to Egypt to ordain the second bishop of the Church that the Apostle Mark started there. At the age of 84, while teaching as the Bishop of the city of Thebes in Greece, St. Luke was martyred after torture by crucifixion to an olive tree.

(Continued on Page 13)

“It is not for you to know the times or seasons which the Father has fixed by His own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses . . . to the end of the earth.” (Luke 1:7-8)

From Father Seraphim (Continued from Page 12)

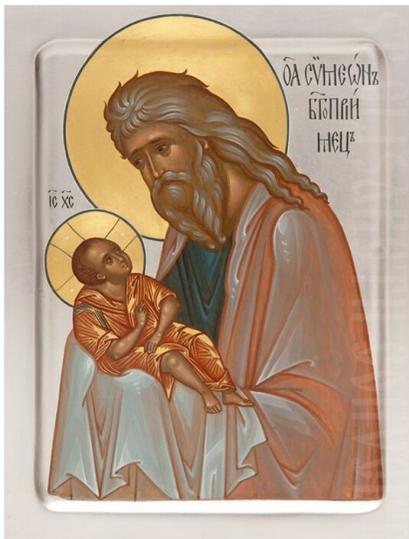
As we read the account each Sunday of this man's words concerning our Lord, God, and Savior Jesus Christ, bound in gold and placed upon the Holy Altar – let us strive to be doers of the word and not hearers only. Just as Luke's heart burned hearing the Voice of Jesus explaining the Old Testament Scriptures and prophecies to him, so too if we take up the Holy Gospels and read them, we will feel the fire of God's love burning in our hearts. As a physician, iconographer, and friend of God, may we have St. Luke's intercession that we too may walk with the Lord, for healing, and for salvation.

With Love in Christ,

Father Seraphim



*“Lord, now let your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for the revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to Your people Israel.”
(Luke 2:29-32)*



Benefitting the Nevada Childhood Cancer Foundation

* The Ladies Philoptochos Society is asking for donations of diapers for the Nevada Childhood Cancer Foundation. This diaper drive will begin on October 1st and run thru October 31st.

Diapers can be dropped off at the church office and, of course, cash and gift card donations are also accepted and very much appreciated.

Please help make this diaper drive a success.

For more information, contact:

Amanda Flangas - 702-461-7894

Tina Liaos - 702-335-2876





ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH 2021-2022 CHURCH SCHOOL REGISTRATION

Please Write Legibly - Use One Form Per Child

Church School Classes begin on Sunday, September 19.
Pre-Kindergarten (4 years by September 30) through High School.

*Let's show our children how to be committed to Christ by bringing them to
the Divine Liturgy and Church School each week!*

Student Name: _____ Birth Date: _____

School Grade (2021-2022 school year): _____

Special Needs, Allergies, Medications: _____
(e.g. "Autism Spectrum," "Peanuts," "Insulin Dependent")

Patron Saint and Date of Commemoration: _____

PARENT/GUARDIAN OR OTHER RELATIVE (Relationship: _____)

Name: _____ Name: _____

Phone: _____ Phone: _____

E-mail: _____ E-mail: _____

Home Address: _____
Street City ZIP

Student Cell Phone: _____ Student E-mail: _____
If you DO NOT want your child to be contacted by phone/text or by e-mail, please leave one or both of these blank.

I give my child permission to take part in all Church School activities and
will support this ministry through my annual Stewardship.

Signed, Parent or Legal Guardian: _____

Many hands ease the load! Please let us know in which way you would like to help our children:

____ Classroom Cleanup ____ Crafts

Please return this registration form to Karen at the Church Office before classes start.

Ministry News

Church School

Hi Everyone! How wonderful to see all our students back in Church and excited for Church School. We started with the annual tradition of the Blessing of the Waters, which as always was a special treat for our students.

Please make sure that your child is registered (*using the Registration Form on Page 14*), as it is a requirement for participating in our ministry. I have had some parents reach out to me to see if we have any needs: Please ask the Church School teachers personally what they need for their classes. Snacks and small bottles of water are always appreciated! If you like to bring snacks, please make sure that they are individually packaged.

As always, please make sure your child stays home if he or she, or anyone else in your household is not feeling well. Finally, please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns.

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



Greek Folk Dance

Hello all! With Fall upon us, we are falling back into our dance routine! Registration is still open until mid-October. We welcome all dancers ages 4 (by September 30, 2021) to participate in wonderful fellowship and learn to dance traditional Greek Folk dances.

Registration fees are \$125 for each dancer (\$100 for siblings) in our competitive groups and \$75 for each dancer in our youngest, non-competitive group. The youngest, non-competitive group practices Sundays, 12:30 – 1:15 pm, and the competitive groups practice Sundays, 1:00 – 3:00 pm, outside in our beautiful courtyard.

We would love to grow our ministry and welcome new families. Questions? Please feel free to email stjohngreekdance@gmail.com.

Much Gratitude, Folk Dance Board

OFF and GOYA Event

As the weather cools into the most beautiful month of the year here in Las Vegas we are going to take advantage and participate in a wonderful hike in the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area and walk the *Calico Hills Trail*. This trail runs along the base of the Calico Rocks from Calico Basin to Sandstone Quarry. The distance is variable since the trail can be accessed at either end or from either of the two Calico parking areas.

We will gather on Saturday, October 9 at 9:00 am sharp at the rendezvous point in the Albertsons Parking Lot at the intersection of Desert Hills and West Charleston Blvd. (11720 W. Charleston Blvd., Las Vegas). Please bring good hiking shoes and socks, lots of drinking water, sunscreen or a hat, and a mind and heart ready for a wonderful time in God's beauty and nature!

Love in Christ, Father Seraphim and the Advisors of OFF and GOYA

GOYA - Our Teen Ministry

Dear GOYANs and Parents:

First and foremost, we want to sincerely **THANK** those of you who did come out and support our Church at the Greek Food Festival. You contributed to our success through your selfless sacrifice, dedication and many hours of hard work at the Soda Booth in the hot sun, lugging cases of water and soda together with large bags of ice. The way you greeted so many members of the Las Vegas Community with joy, love and our Orthodox hospitality will truly be a lasting impression on the souls of so many – and I believe we grew closer together in these trenches of hard work!



This month we will have our *GOYA Night on Sunday, October 17 at 5:00 pm in Panos Hall and on the Church Field*. We will participate in a shared meal, spiritual discussion, games, and prayer together: We hope to see you there!

Much Love in Christ, Father Seraphim

Young Adults

Dear Young Adults of St. John the Baptist,

We would first like to thank the MANY members of our Young Adult population who came out and offered untiring love – *philotimo* – the unique nobility of soul tied up with self-sacrificial offering of blood, sweat and tears for the good of others – at the 2021 Greek Food Festival. This was an especially difficult year with many less volunteers and so the support offered by this age-group of persons in our Church Family and Community was truly a beautiful offering to Christ and His Church. God bless you all!

In the month of October we will be gathering to do some swimming and have an incredible time in the sun at *Nelson's Landing – Eagle Wash Beach Area at the Colorado River!* We will meet *on Sunday, October 24 at 1:30 pm sharp* at the Church parking lot, and depart together so that we can enjoy the cooling Fall weather and claim our spot in the afternoon by the water. Make sure you bring your sunscreen, towel, swimsuit, water, folding picnic chairs, and any food you want to enjoy. We plan to return in the early evening to Las Vegas.

Please contact Father Seraphim with any questions at frseraphim@vegasgreekorthodox.com or (702) 768-7480. We hope to see you there!

In Christ, Father Seraphim

Mr. & Mrs.

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

This month we are looking forward to gathering at the home of Eli and April Rivera for a wonderful evening of fun and fellowship! We will have a slightly different spin with wine and appetizers together with our spiritual discussion and dialogue. Please mark your calendars for *Friday, October 15 at 6:00 pm* and RSVP with Father Seraphim or the Riveras with what you will be bringing!



Looking forward to November, Bill and Erin Bruninga are organizing a private room at *Pinot's Palette at The District in Henderson* for fun, food, wine and a guided painting project, *on Saturday, November 6 at 6:30 pm*. Studio cost is \$30 each.

For both events, please RSVP with Father Seraphim at frseraphim@vegasgreekorthodox.com or (702) 768-7480. Come out and join your Church family for some guaranteed fun together!

In Christ's Service, Father Seraphim and Father John

Kali Parea

To all the members of our Kali Parea (singles 40+ fellowship group) that came out and worked so hard for the Greek Food Festival: God bless you and thank you so much for all the labor of love you offered to Christ and our Community of St. John the Baptist!

Looking to this Fall season and month of October, we will celebrate the Name Day of our Ministry Leader, Demetrios Asim! The Feast of St. Demetrios the Great Martyr and Myrrh-Streamer is on October 26: *On Sunday, October 24* after the Divine Liturgy, the Kali Parea Ministry will host an exquisite Fellowship honoring St. Demetrios. There will also be a presentation on the life of this Saint in the Panos Hall Foyer following the Fellowship. We hope to see you there!

God Bless! Demetrios Asim



Greek Language Program

For now, we will need to pause the Greek Language Program until we cannot get enough teachers to cover each grade level. In the meantime, please continue to utilize the website of the publisher of our textbooks, Papaloizos Publications. They have many resources and education materials available for both children and adults in book form and online. Please check out www.greek123.com.

If you would like to become a Greek School Teacher, please contact me at (702) 249-4740.

Paula Kelesis, Greek School Director

Greek Food Festival Church Tours 2021



Orthodox Bookstore

Greetings from the Bookstore!

After a very successful Greek Food Festival and my very first time overseeing Bookstore operations for the event, I would like to offer my heartfelt thanks to Farolyn McSweeney, Dani Yurkov, April, Eli and Evelyn Rivera, and Savva Savvas for their selfless service and thoughtfulness in ensuring that all things went over without a hitch. Farolyn kept us all well fed and hydrated (or caffeinated), Dani was baptized by fire on the register, and April and Evelyn stood in the blazing heat handing out coloring kits, bracelet kits, and word finds to numerous children entering the Festival. Finally, Eli and Savva had worked very long hours in other areas of the Festival before coming by at the end of the night to help cover and break down where necessary. Words cannot express my appreciation for all these actions that spoke louder than words. I am truly grateful for all who helped and offered of themselves so willingly.

I would also like to thank Benita Beeman for her willingness to train to pinch hit on the register in the event of a surprise COVID quarantine, Karen Rawlinson for her ongoing support and offer to pick up raffle tickets for me at the last minute, and to Steve Tzelalis who just days before the Festival heard me talking about buying plastic sheeting to cover the books and icons at night. He immediately offered what he had on hand at home (long rolls of the sort I was not thinking of buying) that turned out to be a blessing in disguise when the sky opened up on us that Friday. Thank you, Steve!

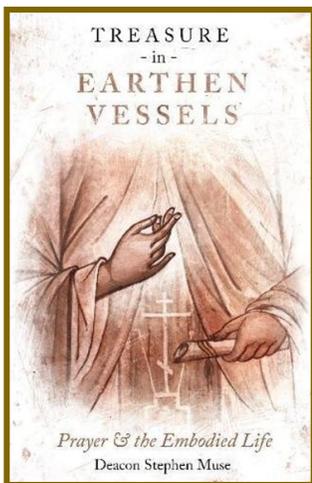
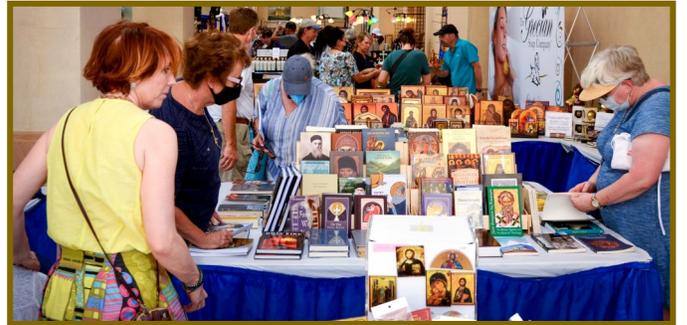
Lastly, thanks to those working the Philoptochos booth (Christina, Stephanie, Juliana, Dora, Vicki, the Lee girls) who assisted in attracting kids to the raffle giveaway and handing out coloring kits. It is the concerted effort of all of us coming together like this that makes a Church family functional, as opposed to a dysfunctional one, and the result was an enjoyable, successful event. To all those I have mentioned thus far (and forgive me if I left anybody out), thank God for your giving, loving, and service-oriented hearts.

The words of Deacon Stephen Muse in this month's featured selection, *Treasure in Earthen Vessels*, best sum up for me the display of service I just described: "The journey from kenodoxia (empty glory) to orthodoxia (true glory) is the movement out of the poverty of our fallen imaginary self-centered lives into the shared commonwealth of the Church (cosmos) where each of us has a unique and beloved place along with all the rest."

While Orthodox spirituality most definitely conveys a far greater depth beyond helping at a Food Festival, it is nevertheless sometimes the smallest actions or movements of the heart to serve that transcend any form of religious observation. These acts embody *philotimo* – the "love of honor" filled with self-sacrificial love – in holy and grace filled actions offered to Christ through giving of oneself for others. In short, there is great beauty in simplicity. No wonder our Lord looked first to everyday average fishermen to join Him in His mission. They did not have any hang-ups (no fishing pun intended) and were thus primed to begin a life of prayer and service that Muse calls the "embodied life."

Now that the Festival excitement and activity is behind us, consider picking up your copy today and learning how to shift focus to a quiet interior life of prayer that moves the heart toward loving and serving our neighbors around us and to "love the world through Me" (Christ) as Muse aptly titled a chapter in his book.

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



48th Annual Greek Food Festival

Photography by Bill Bruninga, Clark McCarrell and Brett Eaves







Well done, good and faithful servants of our Lord's Church!

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



**2021 Stewardship
Report
(as of 9/28/21)**

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$448,751 (\$472,075 in 2020)
Stewardship Gifts Received: \$378,755 (\$385,372 in 2020)
Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$69,995 (\$86,703 in 2020)
Stewardship Families Pledged: 376 (390 in 2020)
Average Pledge to Date: \$1,193 (\$1,210 in 2020)
2021 Budgeted Goal: \$500,000 . . . Keep the Pledges Coming!

Church Account Summaries - August 2021

Nevada State Bank Accounts	July	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	August	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$155,874.19	\$78,627.69	\$11,322.66	\$20,278.51	\$101,064.09	\$124,481.94	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$16,703.01	\$2,500.00				\$19,203.01	
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$13,889.17	\$47,479.14	\$12,450.00	\$17,597.68	\$7,129.14	\$49,091.49	
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$243,760.01	\$1,673.00	\$1,648.00	\$1,096.32	\$4,306.38	\$241,678.31	
Folk Dance Group	\$17,958.00			\$375.00		\$17,583.00	
Hellenic Historical Society	\$3,284.94					\$3,284.94	
Designated Funds	July	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	August	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Bookstore	\$10,592.47	\$1,273.00	\$357.00	\$1,096.32	\$2,366.39	\$8,759.76	
Ornaments	\$1,169.41					\$1,169.41	
Restricted Funds	July	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	August	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
ICON	\$142,874.31	\$300.00	\$291.00			\$143,465.31	
Library Account	\$1,470.77					\$1,470.77	
Giving Tree	\$2,912.77		\$1,000.00			\$3,912.77	
Faithtree	\$1,626.39					\$1,626.39	
Building Fund	\$28,019.26	\$100.00				\$28,119.26	
Youth Choir	\$2,989.18					\$2,989.18	
Church School	\$1,306.37					\$1,306.37	
Three Priests	\$39,033.50				\$1,939.99	\$37,093.51	
Roof Appeal	\$11,183.22					\$11,183.22	
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
GOYA	\$142.36					\$142.36	
Designated, Restricted, and Other Total	\$243,760.01	\$1,673.00	\$1,648.00	\$1,096.32	\$4,306.38	\$241,678.31	
Other Funds	July	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	August	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$78,372.33	\$5,979.92				\$84,352.25	as of 7.31.21 statement

August 2021 Candles \$6,506.00
August 2021 Trays \$4,772.00
Total August 2021 Candles & Trays \$11,278.00

The Desert Messenger

*St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
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Las Vegas, Nevada 89118-1922*

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THE DESERT MESSENGER

The Way of the Lord



*“Whatever you
do, in word
or deed,
do everything
in the Name of
the Lord Jesus,
giving thanks
to God
the Father
through Him.”
(Colossians 3:17)*