

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 22, Issue 2 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV February 2024

*From
Father
John*

“And it had been revealed to (Simeon) by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. And inspired by the Spirit he came into the temple; and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said, ‘Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word . . .’” (Luke 2:26-29)

Beloved in Christ:

On February 2, the Orthodox Christian Church celebrates the Great Feast of **Υπαπαντή** – literally, the *Meeting of Our Lord in the Temple* (known in Western Christendom as the “Presentation of Our Lord”). The Greek word, as utilized in the Orthodox Church, emphasizes the *encounter* which took place, by the prompting of the Holy Spirit – as recorded in St. Luke’s Gospel – between our Lord Jesus Christ and the Elder Simeon and the Prophetess Anna. Forty days after Jesus’ Nativity in the Flesh, the Holy Virgin Mary and the Righteous Joseph took Him to the Temple in Jerusalem, to consecrate Him to God and to purify His Mother according to the Law (*Leviticus 12:2-7, Exodus 12:2*) – and although neither action was necessary, for Christ was Divine and she was All Pure, they were obedient to the Mosaic Law, which He had given.

The Elder Simeon who encountered the Christ-Child was among the famous Seventy who translated the Holy Scriptures from Hebrew into Greek about three-hundred years before the Nativity of our Lord. When translating the Prophecy of Isaiah, as Simeon attempted to scratch out the word “Virgin” and replace it with “young woman” in the verse about the Messiah’s Birth (*Isaiah 7:14*), an Angel of God appeared to him and told him to leave the prophecy as written and, moreover, that he should not depart from this life until he witnessed it fulfilled. As a VERY old man, the Elder Simeon was inspired by the Holy Spirit to meet the Virgin Mary and her Divine Son at the moment they entered the Temple, with a humble offering of two young pigeons (indicative of their poverty), and thus prayed, *“Lord, now let Your servant depart in peace!”*

This ancient Tradition of the Forty Day Blessing of the mother and infant continues in the Orthodox Christian Church, allowing the mother to be blessed so that she may enter the Church again and receive the Holy Mysteries (Sacraments) and the newborn child to be brought by the Priest before the Holy Altar, with the same prayer of St. Simeon, in preparation for Holy Baptism. Yet this Great Feast also speaks to an awesome experience we share in our Faith: When we are obedient to the Holy Teaching and Traditions of our Church, when we pray the ancient prayers of our Faith, and when we gather as God’s people for worship and to receive the Holy Mysteries, we, like St. Simeon and the Prophetess Anna – by the grace of the Life-Creating Spirit – have an encounter with the Lord!



(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>*

Friday, February 2/*The Meeting of Our Lord and Savior in the Temple/St. Gabriel the New Martyr of Constantinople/St. Jordan the New Martyr/St. Agathodoros the Martyr of Cappadocia*
9:00 am Orthros
10:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Hebrews 7:7-17
Gospel: Luke 2:22-40

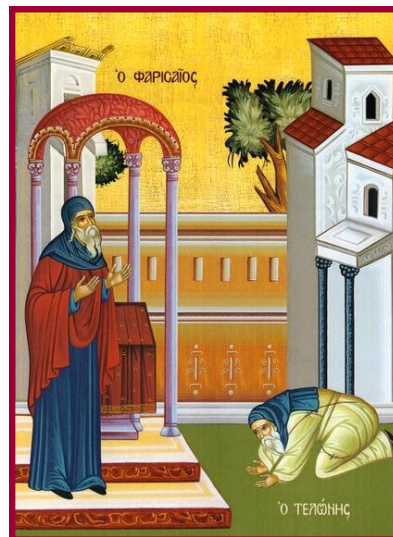
Sunday, February 4/*Fifteenth Sunday of Matthew/St. Isidore of Pelusium/St. Nicholas the Confessor/Hieromartyr Abramios/St. John the Righteous, Bishop of Irenopolis/St. Theodosios the Righteous/St. Joseph the New Martyr of Aleppo/Afterfeast of the Meeting of Our Lord and Savior in the Temple*
Orthros: Second Tone
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Mark 16:1-8
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:6-15
Gospel: Matthew 22:35-46
Fellowship: Greek School

Saturday, February 10/*Holy Hieromartyr Haralambos/St. Anastasios, Patriarch of Jerusalem/Holy Martyrs Porphyrios and Baptos*
8:00 am Orthros
9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: 2 Timothy 2:1-10
Gospel: John 15:17-27; 16:1-2

Sunday, February 11/*Sixteenth Sunday of Matthew/Hieromartyr Blaise of Sebastia/St. Theodora the Empress/St. George the Serbian*
Orthros: Third Tone
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Mark 16:9-20
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:1-10
Gospel: Matthew 25:14-30
Memorials: Maria Giannos (40 days); Erikos Paschalis (40 days), Niki Hadgimichael (3 months), and Agis Paschalis
Fellowship: Folk Dance Groups

Sunday, February 18/*Seventeenth Sunday of Matthew/The Canaanite Woman/St. Leo the Great, Pope of Rome/St. Agapetos the Confessor, Bishop of Sinai/St. Flavian the Confessor, Patriarch of Constantinople*
Orthros: Fourth Tone
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:1-12
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; 7:1
Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28
Memorials: Father Paul Eyler (6 months); and Vivian Berendji (1 year)
Fellowship: Nikki Kanelos, in Memory of Andromahi, Chris and Tom Kanelos

Sunday, February 25/*Triodion Begins/Sixteenth Sunday of Luke/The Publican and the Pharisee/St. Tarasios, Patriarch of Constantinople/St. Reginos, Bishop of Skopelos/Holy Martyr Alexander of Thrace/St. Markellos, Bishop of Apamea*
Orthros: First Plagal Tone
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:13-35
Epistle: 2 Timothy 3:10-15
Gospel: Luke 18:10-14
Fellowship: Philoptochos Society, benefitting Kids 'N' Cancer



Let us flee the Pharisee's exalted parlance; let us learn the Publican's humble demeanor, and with sighs unto the Savior cry out and say, "To us be gracious, O only forgiving Lord." (Kontakion, Publican and Pharisee)

From Father John (Continued from Page 1)

Now, more than ever in the past, with the advent and prevalence of Artificial Intelligence (AI), there is a trend to de-personalize our relationships and rely even more on our “devices.” With our increasing dependency on the Machine, which has been happening for nearly two decades, we will continue to struggle with a reliance on one another and – worse yet – God Himself: It will be much easier to have a Machine which is agreeable with our thoughts and desires rather than struggling with imperfect human beings – and to be obedient to and trust a Creator Whom we cannot hold in our hands and control. The trend that began by worshiping via live streaming will continue to grow exponentially as we find more satisfaction in communing with the Machine rather than in congregating together in the Church for worship and receiving the Divine Mysteries: Moreover, AI will become the new spiritual guide, feeding us what we want – rather than what we need – to hear, allowing us to experience a new (and yes, demonic) enlightenment.



What can the Holy Feast of the Meeting of the Lord teach us in our times? First, we must engage more in a living, in person, relationship with the Trinitarian God and one another. Secondly, we must rely more on physical prayer books, the physical Holy Bible, and physical spiritual books by the Holy Fathers, Mothers and Saints of the Orthodox Church. Thirdly, in person worship and participation in the Holy Mysteries cannot and must never be replaced by an online or televised version, or a Machine driven device. Finally, we must continue to allow our souls to be directed and nurtured by the Holy Spirit in order to have an ongoing encounter and relationship with the Living God – that we might become sanctified, as He wills, and live a life to His glory, in preparation for our eternal communion with Him and the Saints in His Kingdom.

With Love in Christ,

-With gratitude to Father Jeremy for his article, “AI and the Religion of the Future” on his blog, Orthodox Road.

Holy Theophany 2024





Liondaria

Asteria

Aetopoula

Please Join Us For Our Annual FDF Preview & Glendi!

Dinner and Dancing

*With a Showcase of our Folk Dance Groups and
Live Special Musical Guests from Greece*

Saturday, February 10, 2024 at 6:00 p.m.

Panos Hall

\$25 per person (Children under 5 are free)

Cash Bar

Raffle

All proceeds to benefit our Folk Dance Ministry

Parish Council Report

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

Xronia Polla! I pray everyone has enjoyed the holidays and especially the Name Day of our Church. I want to congratulate our newly elected officers of the Parish Council: George Bochanis, Vice President; Kouli Pouridis, Treasurer; Alex Mavros, Assistant Treasurer; and Alexia Conger, Secretary. As President, I am honored to work with these members, as well as all participating members, and humbly look forward to supporting the Church's many needs moving forward.

We have started assigning committee duties and hope we can rely on our Parishioners to help by offering to be a part of our upcoming projects, committees and Ministries. Please let me know if you would like us to address issues that can help benefit our Church's growth. We will put out a list of the committees once they are defined. It is then that you as contributors can offer your services to those respected groups. The involvement of our Parishioners is crucial to the advancement of our community goals and development as one Body serving Christ.

We can also plan events to promote fellowship. Your ideas are welcome – and I have had the opportunity to visit other Parishes, where I have received some ideas, such as Glendi Dance Night, sports events viewing as a community with hamburgers and hot dogs, and wine tastings, to name a few.

I would like to especially thank our Ladies Philoptochos for stepping up last year and supporting and staffing several events throughout the year. Once again, their Holiday Bake Sale was a major success in funding their humanitarian outreach. Other ministries such as the Senior Forerunners, Hellenic Historical Society, Church School, Greek Folk Dance, and Stewardship went the extra mile to ensure that goals were met.

I am honored to be a part of this community of wonderful Parishioners. We truly have the best of the best in Churches and Liturgical offerings of any in the US! Thank you for being who you are, and I remain,
Yours Always in Christ, John Fotopoulos, Parish Council President



2024 Parish Council Members: Telly Eliades, Kouli Pouridis (Treasurer), Alex Mavros (Assistant Treasurer), John Koutsulis, Marina Adamy, Alexia Conger (Secretary), Mary Hamilton, George Bochanis (Vice President), Spero Demoleas and Steve Tzelalis. Not pictured: John Fotopoulos (President) and Mark Karris.



The Tridion Begins on Sunday, February 25.

Have a Blessed Journey through Lent and Holy Week to Pascha!

Philoptochos News

*“How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity.”
(Psalm 133:1)*

Dear Father John, Father Florin, Deacon John, and Parishioners of St. John the Baptist,

It is with the Unity of all of us here at St. John the Baptist that provides the Ladies Philoptochos Society the joy and strength to be ready to take on the events, projects and duties for our beloved Greek Orthodox Faith, our Parish, and Ministries and for the community at large.

We are looking forward to the upcoming February events and invite you all to participate with us:

Tuesday, February 13 at 6:00 pm – Philoptochos General Meeting in Kokkos Hall.

Sunday, February 18 – The Go Red for Your Heart Photo Op will take place in the Church, immediately following Divine Liturgy.

Sunday, February 25 – Kids ‘N’ Cancer Fellowship, hosted by the KNC Team, who will be asking your support for this sweetest of all ministries – to support Camp Agape for children with childhood cancer. To quote Cheryl Pandelis, past Chair of our Kids ‘N’ Cancer fellowship: “Camp Agape affords children afflicted with Cancer and their families to spend a week together at a summer camp – participating in swimming, archery, games, dancing, singing, eating, taking pictures, planting trees etc. – thereby giving the parents of these kids a degree of security. There are medical staff on site to meet any necessary immediate medical needs. All this in a caring and compassionate environment with unconditional love, along with an opportunity to shape meaningful friendships, and create precious memories with other children like themselves.”



Additionally, we will be conducting a campaign asking you to contact your friends and family if they would like to support Kids ‘N’ Cancer. We will also be supporting Camp Cartwheel and the Nevada Childhood Cancer Foundation Camp here in Southern Nevada.

The Metropolis Ladies Philoptochos Kids ‘N’ Cancer event will happen earlier this year due to the late date of Pascha. Please mark **Sunday, April 14** at the Newport Beach Country Club in your calendar.

The Outreach Committee under the chair of Diakonissa Ellyn Nixon will be adding an email Prayer Circle Group. We all have experienced a time in our lives where we can use the love and prayers of one another. How it will work is that you or a family member or friend will notify the Church Office or Diakonissa Ellyn with your requested name for prayers. Once a week she will email the names to the prayer circle group volunteers, who will offer Orthodox prayers for healing on the appointed day and time. If you would like to volunteer, we will have the sign-up form available at our General Meeting. You can also leave a message for Diakonissa Ellyn at the Church Office.

The Project 150 Las Vegas Prom Closet is now taking donations. We have information on the specific items that they need, and we are so proud of Tina and Jim Liaos and their Post Net Store for being an official drop-off zone for Project 150. We also ask about providing volunteers for the distribution days.

To unify – to merge, to bring together – I only look to how our Church Family does unify in our Parish, through our worship, causes, events, prayer and fellowship. All these things give me the positive assurance that what we do makes a difference.

Many thanks to all of you! Have a wonderful February filled with love and unity!

Your Sister in Christ, Bernadette Anthony, Philoptochos President

*Community
Vasilopita 2024*



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



Stewardship and Community Outreach

On February 2, we celebrate the Feast of the Meeting of our Lord in the Temple. As told in *Luke 2:22-29*, Mary and Joseph bring their first born Son to the Temple forty days after His Birth to dedicate Him to God, as was the custom of the faithful, along with a pair of turtle doves or two young pigeons for sacrifice as what the Law required. Their first thought in their joy was to remember God for His goodness. This is the essence of Stewardship!

There is another part of this story that may be even more important. On that day, again according to Luke, an old, devout man called Simeon was also present. Through Divine revelation, Simeon knew he would not die before seeing the Christ. When he sees Jesus, he recognizes Him as the Lord, and he exclaims that he can now joyfully “depart in peace” after having seen the Light of Salvation. This is Stewardship’s ultimate goal: Having lived a life in recognition of and contribution to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we too will see the Light of Salvation!

When the commitment of our life of Stewardship becomes difficult and we become discouraged, let us remember the reward of Simeon that awaits the faithful Steward. This remembrance should help us increase our labors of love for God and the Church for we know that we are not doing it for any other purpose than unity with God for all eternity. This is the great goal of our Christian lives.

In Christ, Marina Adamy,
Stewardship and Outreach Committee



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Michelle Eugenio
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Claudia Kasiotis
Housekeeping

Office Hours

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

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Parish Council: John Fotopoulos

Philoptochos: Bernadette Anthony

Stewardship & Community Outreach:
George Bochanis, Richard Acovino, Marina
Adamy, Mike Beeler & Alexia Conger

Parish Council Building & Maintenance:
Steve Tzelalis, John Koutsulis & Mark Karris

Choir: Athena Mertes

Byzantine Chanters:
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School: Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers: Father John

GOYA:

Father Florin & Maha Habiba

Orthodox Family Fellowship:
Father Florin & April Rivera

Young Adults: Father Florin

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas,
Strati Katopodis, Eleni Payan, Elaine Pytitakis
& Antonia Tzelalis

Mr. & Mrs.:

Father John & Presvytera Maria,
Father Florin & Presvytera Alexandra

Kali Parea: Demetrious Asim

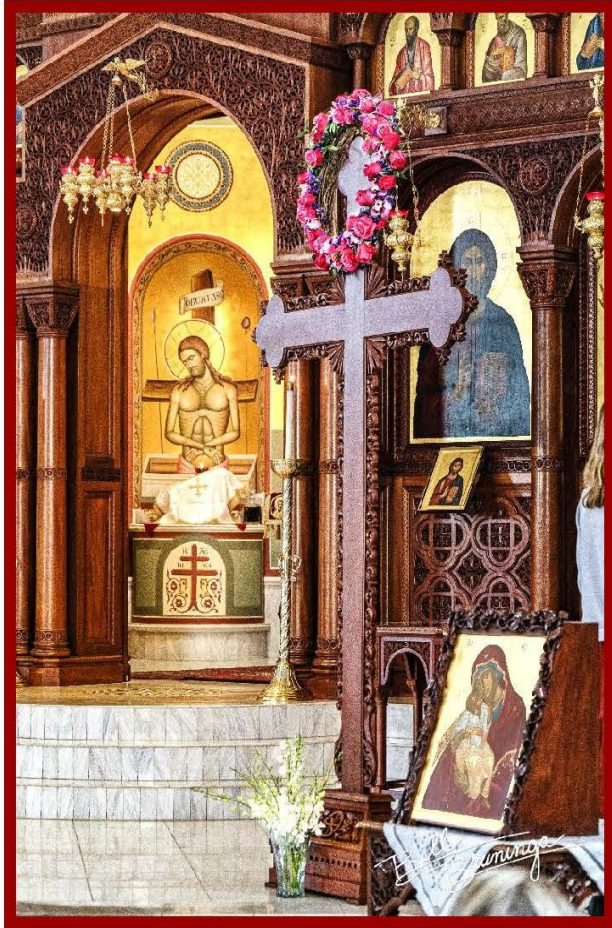
Forerunners: Paula Kelesis

Orthodox Bookstore:
Paraskevi Santamaria

Greek Food Festival: TBD

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

Photography & Live-Streaming:
Bill & Erin Bruninga



Stewardship 2024

LET GOD'S LOVE GUIDE US

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

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

+++++

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

“Let God’s Love Guide Us”

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

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

Signed: _____

Signed: _____

Orthodox Christian: Yes No

Orthodox Christian: Yes No

Others sharing in the gift (children): _____

From Father Florin

On February 10, we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Hieromartyr Haralambos. St. Haralambos was born in Magnesia, Asia Minor, near Ephesus, in the year 89, while the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John was still living there. He was a priest and lived for 113 years, until the year 202. With the sanctity of his life and his Apostolic zeal, he brought many pagans to Christ in his homeland. This became known to the pagan governor of the region and, during the persecution unleashed by Emperor Septimius Severus in the year 202, he was arrested.

Despite his extremely old age, he suffered dreadful tortures aimed at forcing him to renounce his faith in Christ. He faced them all with trust in God, patience, forgiveness toward his tormentors and with humility. While he was being tortured, miraculous events occurred: The blind regained their sight, the lame walked, the possessed were cleansed of their evil spirits and those suffering from incurable diseases were healed. Then, when asked if he was Christ, because of all the miracles performed by him, St. Haralambos simply replied: "I'm a servant of the Lord Christ and these miracles are performed by His grace." When Severus was told about the Saint and that he was performing miracles every day, he said to him: "From what I've heard you can even raise the dead." The Saint was not at all troubled by any thoughts of pride on hearing these flattering words from the Emperor and answered immediately: "No human person can do that. Only the Lord Jesus Christ."

A humble outlook – this is the basis of sanctity. We should feel like that too, as Christians and followers of Christ. Especially us, the Priests. We know we can do nothing by ourselves. If we do anything good, it comes from God and to Him is due the praise for it. *"Not to us, Lord, not to us but to Your Name give glory."* (Psalms 113:9) This humble outlook characterized the Holy Apostles. Let us recall the reaction of the Apostles Paul and Barnabas in Lystra, when, after the miraculous cure of a man lame from birth, the people around wished to worship them as gods: They tore their clothes and rushed out into the crowd, shouting: *"Friends, why are you doing this? We too are only human, like you. We are bringing you good news, telling you to turn . . . to the living God."* (Acts 14:14-15)

Unfortunately, we often forget God's assistance and attribute our successes exclusively to our own efforts. To one such proud person, St. Paul poses the following question: *"What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?"* (1 Corinthians 4:7)

Such arrogant behavior is an insult to God and has destructive consequences for the people who exhibit it. We see it in the case of Herod. We read in the *Acts of the Apostles (12:21-23)* that, dressed in his fine royal clothing, he spoke to the people with such excellence that they were all impressed and praised him: *"God's talking, not a human being."* And because he consented to being glorified as a god and did not give the praise to God, he was filled with worms and died. So, when we feel pride because of the praise of other people, or self-satisfaction for our successes, let us recall the words of Gospels and give God the glory rather than seeking praise for ourselves.

None of this means, of course, that we Christians should not feel joy over something we have achieved in life through our best efforts. A student will be happy at passing an exam, a scientist at some breakthrough, an entrepreneur at the growth of a business. But all of us should not neglect the fact that, in the end, everything is a gift from God. For us, the Orthodox Christians, the motive for our achievements is to make spiritual progress and to give glory to God. This is precisely what St. Paul means when he says that whatever it is that we do, we should do it to the glory of God.

Dearly beloved, may we all realize that egoism and pride bring us into conflict with God and other people. To get closer to God, we must live in humility, and our best example is St. Haralambos. This is the way we can ensure the peace of our soul, our harmonious co-existence with others and the riches of the Grace of God in our life since *"God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble."* (James 4:6) Amen.



Fr. F. J. Ristache.

Ministry News

Church School



Hi Everyone! I hope your children are enjoying Church School. We have some fun curriculum this year. Ask the teacher to see if there is anything you can help with your child at home to learn more about our wonderful Faith.

Once again, we are not accepting any new registrations until the 2024-2025 school year.

I wish all the best to our FDF Dancers safe travels and a successful competition! Due to FDF weekend, we will not have Church School *on Sunday, February 18*. We will have Family Worship on that date.

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

Combined Youth and Family Event

Dear Kids, Teenagers and Parents,

Thank you all, including parents and grandparents, who joined us and helped take down our Parish Christmas Tree last month!

Since the majority of our youth are members of the Dance Group, which is very busy this month with practices and the FDF competition itself in Anaheim, CA, we will postpone our monthly fellowship.

Our next Youth and Family event will be *on Friday, March 1, from 6:00 to 8:00 pm*. We will all gather in Panos Hall, or outside, depending on the weather, for a basketball game. With the help of some of our Young Adults, it will be a blast – and we thank them for that! Of course, we will also enjoy tasty food and have a spiritual discussion. If you would like to contribute by bringing anything to the event, please contact Maha and April, our Youth Advisors.

For questions or to RSVP, please contact Father Florin at frflorin@vegasgreekorthodox.com.

With Much Love in Christ, Father Florin, Maha Habiba and April Rivera, Youth Advisors

Young Adults - 18 Years through Early 30s

Please join us *on Saturday, February 24, starting at 5:00 pm*, at Jeremiah's home for some board games. We will enjoy delicious food and spend time outside in the backyard around the firepit.

Please let Jeremiah or me know you are coming so we can better plan the event and please bring a dish to share with the others.

In Christ, Father Florin



Mr. & Mrs.

Dear Couples of St. John the Baptist,

Our gratitude to Deacon John and Diakonissa Elyn for hosting a lovely fellowship at their home in January.

Please mark your calendars for *Saturday, March 9, starting at 5:00 pm*, when we will meet at the home of Richard and Angela Acovino, whom we thank for generously opening their house to us. As Lent begins late this year *on March 18*, we will have the opportunity to enjoy a fast-free potluck meal!

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.

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

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law.” (Galatians 5:22-23)

Greek Folk Dance

Please join us at our *Annual FDF Preview and Glendi on Saturday, February 10 at 6:00 pm in Panos Hall!* Our Folk Dancers will show off their hard work and months of preparation! (Note: This year there will not be any event on Sunday after Liturgy.)

The Glendi will be a wonderful dinner event showcasing our youth and then celebrating our culture with LIVE Greek music from very talented musicians from Greece! We will also have a cash bar and a raffle with wonderful prizes.

Our dancers will be heading to Anaheim, California for *FDF weekend, February 15-18*. We will have two competitive groups and one exhibition group, with a total of 29 kids attending this year! We are so proud of all of our dancers and appreciate all your support this year!

Much Gratitude, Folk Dance Board



Forerunners - Our Seniors Fellowship

The Forerunners rang in the New Year with a delicious lunch. Thank you to our tireless kitchen helpers, Mike and Carolyn Beeler, Marika Lamancusa, and Demetri Asim. Our gratitude to Faye Brown and Sophia Leonis for helping decorate, to Peter Papas for donating the delicious salad and to Bea Rotas for picking it up for us.

The Vasilopita was blessed and cut by Father John. Marika Lamancusa and Christina Hondros received the lucky coins. A raffle was held, and bingo was played. Everyone had a great time!

Join us for our Valentine's Day Luncheon *on Monday, February 19 at 11:30 am in Kokkos Hall.*

Love in Christ, Paula Kelesis for the Forerunners

Kali Parea - For the 40+ Crowd

This month, we are planning on enjoying a brunch *on Sunday, February 25, 1:00 pm, at Mr. Mama's*, following the Divine Liturgy and Kids 'N' Cancer Fellowship. Please, let Demetri Asim or Karen in the Church Office know you are coming so we can make reservations ahead of time.

Thank you all and hope to see you there!

In Christ, Demetrious Asim, Kali Parea Advisor

Byzantine Chanters

CALLING ALL SINGERS AND READERS!

Lent is quickly approaching and we would like to invite those interested, with the blessing of Father John, to join us at the Chanters' stand. We welcome all ages, so please join us!

Practices are yet to be determined for the upcoming services. If you are interested, please let me know.

Love in Christ, Presvytera Maria



Adult Study with Father John and Father Florin

*The Holy Mysteries:
A Scriptural, Theological and Liturgical Overview*

Join Us on Wednesdays, 6:30 - 8:00 pm,
in Kokkos Hall, through February 14

Orthodox Bookstore

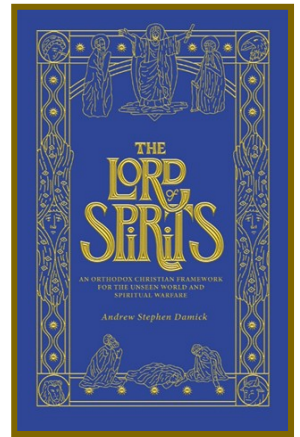
Greetings once again from the Bookstore!

Recently released from Ancient Faith Publishing is this month's featured selection, *The Lord of Spirits: An Orthodox Christian Framework for the Unseen World and Spiritual Warfare*, by Andrew Stephen Damick. Topics range from Angels and Demons to Sacred Cosmology and the Sons of God, thus providing the reader with a backdrop of the Church's understanding of Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition.

From the back cover: "The modern world does not acknowledge but is nevertheless haunted by spirits – Angels, demons, and Saints. In our time, many yearn to break free of the prison of a flat, secular materialism, to see and to know reality as it truly is. What is this spiritual reality like? How do we engage with it well? How do we permeate everyday life with spiritual presence? In *The Lord of Spirits*, Father Andrew Stephen Damick provides a distillation and expansion of the material in the popular podcast *The Lord of Spirits*, which he cohosts with Father Stephen DeYoung."

Also in store are other selections by both Fathers Stephen Damick and DeYoung. Looking forward to seeing you soon for your copy or other Bookstore needs!

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



Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisoun

Michaela (Mia), daughter of Yonathan Admasu and Lilia Ovcharenko, on December 30, 2023.

Godparent: Anna Iaremchuk.

Panagiota, daughter of Lambros and Anastasia Agouridis, on January 12, 2024. Godparent: Eleni Agouridis.

Leonidas, son of Pete and Keshia Georgis, on January 13, 2024.
Godparent: Constantine Georgis.

Sophia, daughter of Joshua and Sevasti Miller, on January 20, 2024.
Godparent: Efthimia Eliades Lekar.

Holy Chrismation

Anastasia (Erika) Agouridis on January 14, 2024. Sponsor: Eleni Agouridis.

Marriage: Na Zisete

Lambros Agouridis and Erika Constantino-Buendia on January 12, 2024.
Koumbara: Eleni Agouridis.

Frank Molina and Konstantina Angelopoulos on January 13, 2024.
Koumbaros: Anastasios Angelopoulos.

Steven Voegele and Victoria Markantonis on January 20, 2024.
Koumbara: Eugenia Doran.

Fallen Asleep in the Lord

Maria P. Giannos on January 5, 2024. Funeral on January 16.

**2024
Stewardship
Report
(as of 1/24/24)**

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$323,967 (\$378,484 in 2023)
 Stewardship Gifts Received: \$66,630 (\$71,999 in 2023)
 Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$257,037 (\$306,485 in 2023)
 Stewardship Families Pledged: 204 (202 in 2023)
 2024 Goal: \$600,000 . . . Keep the Pledges Coming!

*“LET
GOD’S LOVE
GUIDE US”*

<u>Average Pledge</u>	<u>No. of Families</u>	<u>Amount Pledged</u>
\$1 - \$500	67	\$ 17,328
\$501 - \$1,000	37	\$ 28,656
\$1,001 - \$2,500	69	\$105,549
\$2,501 - \$5,000	21	\$ 79,724
\$5,001 - \$9999	9	\$ 55,530
\$10,000 & Above	1	\$ 37,180
Total Families	204	\$323,967

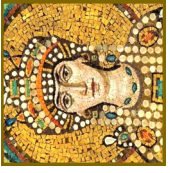
Church Account Summaries - December 2023

Nevada State Bank Accounts	November	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	December	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$41,663.38	\$74,916.66		10,756.45	\$55,618.39	\$50,205.20	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$22,335.49					\$22,335.49	
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$171,379.78	1,346.16		\$9,720.90	\$8,270.59	\$154,734.45	
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$264,796.34	\$30,843.44		\$677.20	\$7,806.56	\$287,156.02	
Building & Maintenance (B&M)	\$169,318.45	\$1,156.88		\$98,265.00		\$72,210.33	
Folk Dance Group	\$24,392.07	\$4,190.00		\$10.00		\$28,572.07	
Hellenic Historical Society	\$950.97		\$3,000.00	\$2,299.51		\$1,651.46	
Designated Funds	November	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	December	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Bookstore	\$37,482.18	\$4,069.00		\$677.20	\$1,406.56	\$39,467.42	
Restricted Funds	November	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	December	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
ICON	\$12,823.51	\$374.44				\$13,197.95	
Faithtree	\$1,626.39					\$1,626.39	
Youth Choir	\$2,989.18					\$2,989.18	
Church School	\$137,141.44					\$137,141.44	
GOYA	\$530.36					\$530.36	
Eyler Memorial Fund	\$20,090.15					\$20,090.15	
Emergency Fund	\$5,000.00					\$5,000.00	
Three Priests	\$46,673.13	\$26,400.00			\$6,400.00	\$66,673.13	Transfer to GOA for Stewardship/Philoptochos
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
Designated, Restricted and Other Total	\$264,796.34	\$30,843.44	\$0.00	\$677.20	\$7,806.56	\$287,156.02	
Building and Maintenance Funds	November	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	December	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Building Fund	\$31,071.03	\$1,156.88		\$2,913.50		\$29,314.41	\$2,848.50 expenses were used for the HVAC
Panos Flooring Repair	\$23,722.83					\$23,722.83	
Roof Appeal	\$10,283.22					\$10,283.22	
HVAC	\$95,351.50			\$95,351.50		\$0.00	HVAC Units
Giving Tree	\$8,889.87					\$8,889.87	
Lighting	\$0.00					\$0.00	
Building & Maintenance Funds Total	\$169,318.45	\$1,156.88	\$0.00	\$98,265.00	\$0.00	\$72,210.33	
Other Funds	November	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	December	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$68,144.26		\$3,218.57			\$71,362.83	as of 12.31.23
Commonwealth Investments (Icon)	\$127,993.65		\$6,654.45			\$134,648.10	Change in Investment

December 2023 Candles **\$10,167.81**
 December 2023 Trays **\$8,288.40**
Total December 2023 Candles & Trays **\$18,456.21**



FEBRUARY 2024 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

					1	2 Meeting of Our Lord in the Temple 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	3
4 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	5	6 4:30 pm Greek School 6:00 pm Philoptochos Board TBD	7 6:30 pm Adult Study in Kokkos Hall: The Holy Mysteries	8	9	10 St. Haralambos 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:00 pm FDF Preview & Glendi in Panos Hall	17
11 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	12 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting in Library	13 4:30 pm Greek School 6:00 pm Philoptochos General Mtg. in Kokkos	14 6:30 pm Adult Study in Kokkos Hall	15	16	Folk Dance Festival in Anaheim thru 2/18	
18 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	19 11:30 am Forerunners Luncheon in Kokkos Hall	20 4:30 pm Greek School	21	22	23	24 5:00 pm Young Adults Game Night at Jeremiah Barrett's Home	
25 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 1:00 pm Kali Pareia Lunch at Mr. Mama's	26	27 4:30 pm Greek School	28	29			

The Desert Messenger

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

The Way of the Lord



*“If anyone thirst,
let him come to
Me and drink.
He who believes
in Me, as the
Scripture has
said, ‘Out of his
heart shall flow
rivers of living
water.’”
(John 7:37-38)*