

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 22, Issue 5 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

May 2024

*From
Father
John*

Beloved in Christ:

Καλή Ανάσταση! Blessed Resurrection!

No one does Pascha like the Orthodox Christian Church! Standing in the dark Church at the Vigil of the Resurrection, waiting to receive and light our Paschal candles from the Priest's "light that is never overtaken by night," singing "Χριστός Ανέστη . . . Christ is Risen" with all our hearts, partaking of Holy Communion in the wee hours of the morning, and hearing these timeless words from the Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom: "Whoever may be spent from fasting, enjoy now your reward . . . The Master is gracious: He accepts the last even as the first; He gives rest to those of the eleventh as well as to those who have labored from the first . . . So all of you, enter into the joy of our Lord: First and second, share the bounty."

We are reminded of God's generosity each and every Pascha. When we hear St. John's sermon, we get it: Those who come into the picture much later receive the same glory and are even rewarded the same as we who toiled and sweated with our faith from the start. At the time it seems all right, often because we are tired, hungry and our feet hurt. It is only as time goes on and we tire of singing, "Christ is Risen," when our candles have been snuffed out for good and put away, that the words of the homily lose their power. We again start thinking and complaining that life is not fair, especially in the Church. And we definitely do not find comfort by hearing that the Lord rewards the last as the first.

I ask that you keep this column around and re-read it a couple of weeks after Pascha, and again a month later. Hopefully, it will inspire you to chase away the post-Paschal blues. Here are some tips to remaining joyful long after we have cracked our last red egg.

Be thankful. Our life is a gift, bought for the immeasurable price of our Lord Jesus Christ's Blood on the Cross. Moreover, the gift is well worth its cost. By the Resurrection of Christ, we become again, by grace, the children of God. Christ is Risen, and so are we!

We must not be selfish with the life God gives us. As Baptized and Chrismated members of the Body of Christ – that is, His Church – we are "born again" and equipped with the Holy Spirit so we may labor with the Lord in His vineyard for our own spiritual growth and to help produce a healthy harvest of members for His Kingdom. You read this right: Although salvation is a gift, we still have to put in our effort together with Him. The Lord said that those who labored from the last hour shall receive the same wages as those who labored from the first. The key word here is "labor" – and it is clear that slackers and video-gazers will not be rewarded!

(Continued on Page 3)



WORSHIP SCHEDULE

*Sundays: 8:45 am Orthros - 10:00 am Divine Liturgy
Church School follows Holy Communion (through May 19)*

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

Palm Sunday Evening, April 28

*7:00 pm First Bridegroom Service with
Metropolitan Gerasimos*

Holy Monday, April 29

7:00 pm Second Bridegroom Service

Holy Tuesday, April 30

*7:00 pm Third Bridegroom Service
(Hymn of Kassiani)*

Holy Wednesday, May 1

*9:00 am Presanctified Liturgy
7:00 pm Sacrament of Holy Unction
(Anointing with Holy Oil)*

Holy Thursday, May 2

*9:00 am Vespertal Liturgy of St. Basil
7:00 pm Holy Passion of our Lord
(Twelve Gospel Readings)*

Holy Friday, May 3

*10:00 am Royal Hours
3:00 pm Descent from the Cross
(Children's Procession)
7:00 pm Lamentations
(Procession of the Epitaphion)*

Holy Saturday, May 4

*9:00 am Vespertal Liturgy of St. Basil
11:00 pm Resurrection Vigil*

Sunday, May 5/GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA

*12:00 am Resurrectional Orthros and
Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*

Resurrection Gospel: Mark 16:1-8

Epistle: Acts 1:1-8

Gospel: John 1:1-17

Blessing and Distribution of Red Eggs

12:00 pm Agape Vespers and Agape Picnic

Gospel (Various Languages): John 20:19-25

Monday, May 6/ Great Martyr George/Holy

*Prophet Job/Holy Father Seraphim the Struggler
of Mt. Domvu/St. Sophia of Kleisoura*

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

Epistle: Acts 12:1-11

Gospel: John 1:18-28

Friday, May 10/ Theotokos of the Life Giving

*Spring/Holy Apostle Simon the Zealot/
St. Laurence of Egypt/St. Isodora of Egypt*

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

Epistle: Acts 3:1-8

Gospel: John 2:12-22

Sunday, May 12/Second Sunday of Pascha/Sunday
of Holy Apostle Thomas/Holy Martyrs Emmanuel,

*Theodore, George, Michael and the other George
of Samothrace/St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Cyprus/
St. Germanos, Patriarch of Constantinople/
Removal of the Sacred Relics of Saint Joachim*

*"Papoulakis" of Vatopaidi/St. Theodoros the
Righteous of Cythera/Mother's Day*

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

Epistle: Acts 5:12-20

Gospel: John 20:19-31

Fellowship: Mother's Day Breakfast by Young Adults

Sunday, May 19/3rd Sunday of Pascha/Holy Myrrh
Bearers/St. Patrick the Hieromartyr and Bishop of

*Prusa and His Fellow Martyrs Acacios, Menander,
and Polyenos/Our Righteous Father Memnonos
the Wonderworker/Holy Martyrs Theotima and
Kyriaki*

Orthros: Second Tone

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:1-12

Epistle: Acts 6:1-7

Gospel: Mark 15:43-47; 16:1-8

Memorial: Irene Valdez (40 days); Katerina Sotos

Fellowship: Kitchen Crew

*Christ is Risen! Truly, He is Risen!
Χριστός Ανέστη! Αληθώς Ανέστη!*

Bright Week: No Fasting All Week

WORSHIP SCHEDULE (Continued from Page 2)

Tuesday, May 21/*Ss. Constantine and Helen, Equal to the Apostles/ Righteous New Martyr Pachomios*

8:00 am Orthros
9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Acts 26:1, 12-20
Gospel: John 10:1-9

*“I am the door; if any one enters by Me, he will be saved.”
(John 10:9)*

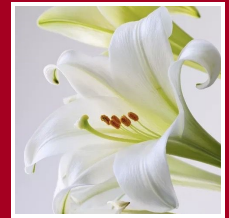


Sunday, May 26/*4th Sunday of Pascha/The Paralytic/Ss. Carpos and Alphaeos, Apostles of the Seventy/New Martyr Alexandros of Thessaloniki/ St. George the New of Sofia/St. Augustine, Archbishop of Canterbury*

Orthros: Third Tone
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:12-35
Epistle: Acts 9:32-42
Gospel: John 5:1-15
Memorials: Mia Paton (40 days); Mary Bartsas and Departed Family Members
Fellowship: Philoptochos - Bartsas Memorial



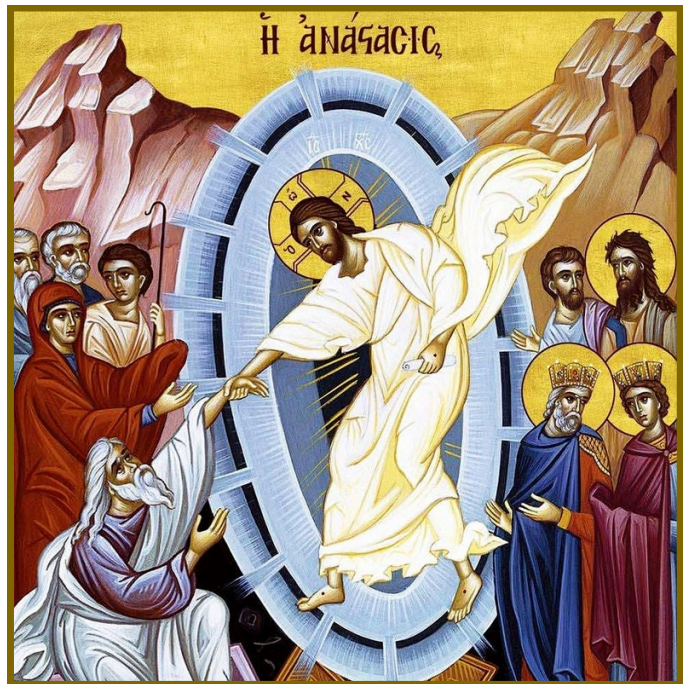
*Christ is Risen from the dead,
by Death, trampling down upon death,
and to those in the tombs
He has granted Life!*



From Father John (Continued from Page 1)

We should not be envious of or resentful toward those who become Church members later and yet receive the same reward as those of us who have been lifelong members. First of all, we do not know how long we will live, so if we do not unite ourselves with Him from early on, we may not find ourselves with Him when we depart from this life. Secondly, since true living is living in Christ, why would we prefer or choose a life apart from Him and His Church? Thirdly, if we know the greatest blessing we can receive is the free gift of eternal Life, then our joy should be complete as others join with us, through God’s immense grace and our meager efforts, and become sharers in His glory. Finally, by laboring from the first hour, we have that many more opportunities to repent for our many sins, our ingratitude, our selfishness and our envy.

Dearest brothers and sisters, let us genuinely rejoice that even latecomers are rewarded. Jesus did not come in the flesh, go to the Cross and descend into Hell to save just you and me. He is the Lord and Savior of all! While Great and Holy Pascha gives us yet again a reason for renewal and to celebrate our Life in Christ, it cannot stop there. This Feast of Feasts must be the impetus for us, as members of His Holy Church, to bring others to savor the banquet of our ancient and Apostolic Faith – and to relish the riches of His benevolence, goodness and love.



Christ is Risen! Χριστός Ανέστη!

Father John



Please Join Us for Our
AGAPE PICNIC

Holy Pascha Sunday, May 5, 2024

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

12:00 noon to 4:00 pm

(Agape Vespers at noon, followed by the Picnic)



*Tickets are \$30
for either Traditional
Lamb or Chicken Meal,
or Specialties:
Spanakopita, Tyropita,
and Pastitsio*

- ♦ *Greek Pastries and Bar*
- ♦ *Greek Music*
- ♦ *Children's Egg Hunt at 2:00 pm*
- ♦ *Table Reservations are Available and Encouraged*

Χριστός Ανέστη! Christ is Risen!

*For tickets and table reservations, please call
Karen at the Church Office (702) 221-8245*



**Parish
Council
Report**

Dear Father John, Father Florin, Deacon John, Ministries and Parishioners,
Kali Anastasi!

I want to thank everyone who participated in making His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos' Palm Sunday visit a beautiful and wonderful show of love. Our Church always acknowledges and appreciates our Spiritual Shepherd's commitment in leading us prayerfully for the Holy Services of Palm Sunday weekend.

A special Thank You to Steve Tzelalis for his cooking talents and his willingness to serve his Church during our Holy Days and throughout the year! Also, those who helped, which are too many to acknowledge: Thank You!

As we prepare for the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, please be mindful to reserve your place at the *Agape Picnic on Sunday, May 5*, by letting Karen know how many of your loved ones and friends will be attending. This is important so we have a better idea of how many people we will be serving. Thank you in advance for your cooperation and support.

Regarding the Agape Picnic, we will also need folks to help in the serving lines and other tasks set out by the committee planning this special day. Please let Karen or Steve know of your willingness to help.

Meetings have commenced concerning our annual Greek Food Festival, scheduled for *September 27, 28 and 29*. Your participation is necessary, as there is much planning involved making this a successful event. Not only is this a revenue producer, but it also showcases our Church, our Orthodox Faith, and our willingness to reach out to those who seek the Lord's guidance. It is easy to lose sight of the importance, and of course including myself first, as to the biggest reason of having such a large event in our city. I pray for Christ's help and our involvement as we undertake our 51st year.

In closing, I want to wish everyone, Blessed Anastasi and Kalo Pascha!

Yours Always in Christ, John Fotopoulos, Parish Council President

*All creation was transformed by awe as it beheld You hanging on a Cross. The sun went dark, and the Earth was shaken to its very foundations. All things suffered with Him Who is the Maker of all things. Lord, You suffered willingly for us. Glory to You.
(Holy Friday Afternoon)*

KOKKOS SCHOLARSHIP

The Scholarship Committee for the Kokkos Scholarship Fund is pleased to announce that applications are now 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 Friday, May 10*. Late and/or incomplete applications will not be considered.

The eligibility requirements were established by Fofa 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 Fofa Kokkos; therefore, this is also a factor in evaluating the applicants.

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

**Philoptochos
News**

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

CHRISTOS ANESTI! CHRIST IS RISEN! “The Resurrection made possible the miracle of the Church, which in every age and generation proclaims and affirms God’s plan for the universe, the ultimate divinization of man and the created order.” (goarch.org)



It has been a blessed Lenten period, and the Ladies Philoptochos Society was instrumental once again in the Traditions of the Faith and those of our own Parish. This is the mission and purpose of the Ladies Philoptochos – to serve our Faith, Church, Ministries, and those in need. Throughout the past forty days your Philoptochos sisters have embraced each project, fellowship, and activity fully and with love in their hearts.

To recap the last few weeks: The LPS hosted two Fellowships back-to-back for worthwhile causes and thanks to the generosity of the St. John’s Parish we were able to send donations to the Holy Cross Seminary and the International Orthodox Christian Charities from you. We would like to thank Georgia Alcalá, who chaired the Holy Cross Fellowship, along with Vicky and John Kelesis from Vicky’s Diner who donated the soup. It was a complete lunch with soup, salads, desserts, bread and beverages. The IOCC Fellowship was chaired by Christine Tijiboy, with help from Janet Bryant and Helene Soursos and other LPS members. It was a successful fellowship for IOCC and the table was replete with Lenten treats. Many thanks to everyone!

The Traditions of the Holy Week were taken care of with the love and care of the following LPS chairs and their volunteers: Agape Picnic Baking – Eleni Kakavulias; Palm Sunday Luncheon Set Up and Servers – Nana Allen; Agape Picnic – Amalia Dominguez; and Wine Wagon – Christina Snow.

Now that we are in May, it is time to celebrate and have a little fun. Mark your calendars for **Saturday, May 18, 5:30 pm, at Geri Kypreos’ home**. Please join us for a wonderful evening!

Mary Bartsas Family Memorial – **Sunday, May 26**, immediately following the Divine Liturgy. For those interested the National Clergy-Laity and National Ladies Philoptochos Society Convention will be in San Diego **on June 30 through July 4**.

The work of the Philoptochos is year round, the summers do seem a little quieter, but we will keep you on your toes and plan an activity or two.

Christos Anesti! Your Sister in Christ, Bernadette Anthony, Philoptochos President



Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisi!

Michael Vigil (Adult Baptism) on April 20, 2024. Sponsor: John G. Karas.

Chrismation

Paraskevas Ioakim Spanos on March 31, 2024. Sponsor: Demetrious Asim.

Fallen Asleep in the Lord

Irene Valdez on April 8, 2024. Funeral on April 22.

Mia Paton on April 16, 2024. Funeral on April 23.

Panagiotis Doukakis on April 16, 2024. Funeral on April 23.



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

MOTHER'S DAY BRUNCH

CELEBRATING MOMS

Sunday, May 12

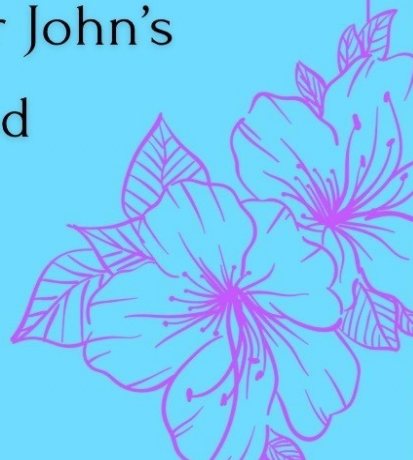
following Divine Liturgy

Breakfast and Mimosas

\$5 minimum

Proceeds benefit Father John's

Discretionary Fund



Stewardship and Community Outreach

Christos Anesti!

It is tough to talk about finances after celebrating the most holy and revered period in our community.

However, the sobering truth is that our Parish is not immune from the everchanging financial landscape that is occurring in our world today. We as Stewards have the obligation to ensure the financial stability of our Parish going forward.

Stewardship takes many forms, however. We can give of our time, our treasure or our talents.

Stewardship comes from the compound Greek word (not surprising) “oikonomos,” which means “the management of the household.” The word, “oikonomos” or “stewards,” is used throughout Scriptures on Stewardship to refer to many different things – Stewardship can take many forms and is not always about finances. However, it is important to give, with love, by doing what you feel God wants you to do with the resources you have been given.

The various ministries within our Parish can always use your time and talents! Hosting a Sunday Fellowship, helping to bake for our various events, assisting our Dance Ministry, helping during Church Services or at our Church School, along with working with our Seniors, can bring joy to all involved. Calling to check in on Parishioners who are ill, or who cannot make it to Services, would also be a part of being a good Steward, and is much appreciated.

As of April 29, gifts pledged to our Parish total \$513,393 (our goal is \$600,000), although we have received \$249,958. We do have 356 Stewards pledged (our goal is to increase the number of pledged Stewards in 2024). The average pledge is \$1,442 (median pledge is \$800); but to cover basic operating expenses based on the current number of families pledged, we would need \$3,101 per Steward just to meet our expenses!

It is apparent that we could fall short of our goal, but the Stewardship Committee is committed to reaching out to members of our community who have yet to offer a pledge and to those who have pledged in prior years but have not yet pledged for this year. Stewardship in its many forms is at the forefront of our efforts. We welcome any ideas or suggestions to help our Parish reach its goal of 600 families.

However, even with 550 families, the average pledge would need to be \$2,007. As you can see, it is a tremendous goal but one we feel can be achieved with continued support from our Parishioners.

We must ask ourselves are we truly giving an amount that will help keep our Parish financially healthy? Breaking it down, \$2,007 per year is approximately \$5 per day.

Could we give up that latte, dinner out, fast food or streaming service and put that toward Stewardship? Perhaps we could spend our time helping at the various Ministries (*The Desert Messenger* lists our Ministries and their events) or offering our talents to our beautiful Church? Are you skilled in finances, in the building trades, computer science, or event planning? As Orthodox Christians we are called upon to serve, not only the Church but others as well.

Thank you to all who have given of your time, treasure, and talent to our Parish.

We truly appreciate your efforts and together we can continue to make strides.

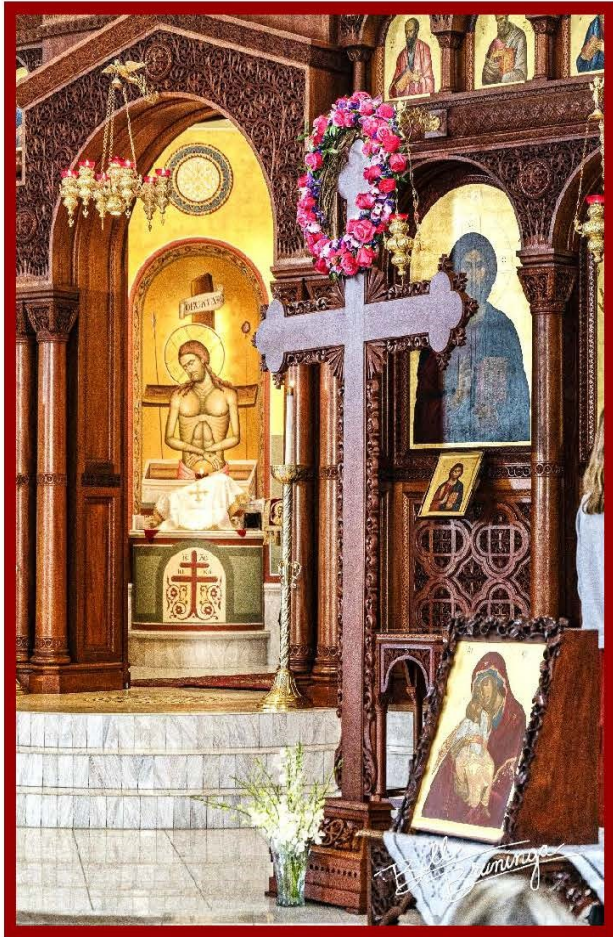
Yours in the Risen Christ, Alexia Conger, Stewardship and Outreach Committee

Byzantine Chanters and Readers

Christos Anesti! A HUGE THANK YOU to all the Readers and Chanters, young and not so young, for your presence and assistance at the Chanter's Stand during Lent and Holy Week. It is so nice to have such a group of beautiful voices to read, sing and pray together.

I would like to continue to offer some lessons – time and date to be determined with Father John. In the meantime, please continue to come up to the Chanter's Stand – do not wait for me to call you up!

With Love in the Risen Lord, Presvytera Maria



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

The Orthodox Church venerates as Saints several warriors who served in the Roman army. When Christians were under the persecutions, they preferred eternal glory and the unfading crown of martyrdom over worldly military glory, publicly confessing their faith in Christ and not denying it, even if it cost them their lives.

Great Martyr George lived during the time of Emperor Diocletian, an emperor who worshipped the pagan gods. His persecutions against Christians were possibly the cruelest and longest. Later in his life, he became mentally ill, starting to believe that he was threatened continuously with murder. Therefore, he left his palace on the Dalmatian Coast and lived in isolation, never receiving anyone, except his guards. He died all alone, after living in the horror of all his fears, which gave him no peace.

But during his persecutions, St. George decided to confess his faith in Christ. He came from a wealthy family, was therefore well educated, and his parents were Christians. He was very handsome and one of the bravest fighters. Because he was so gifted and distinguished in battle, Diocletian very quickly promoted him and made him Commander of the Imperial Guard. But one day, while the Emperor was presiding in the Senate, St. George entered and started talking about his faith in Christ as the King. He said that he preferred to serve Christ rather than the emperor of a pagan Empire. He confessed before all that he was ready to receive a Martyr's death.

The Emperor ordered St. George to be arrested. He was put in prison, and he was given over to all kinds of tortures, becoming one of the most tormented martyrs: His feet were locked in red-hot iron sandals with nails, he was put on the wheel and thrown into the sea with a stone around his neck. But God gives His martyrs a special spiritual strength. Usually, they do not feel any suffering and continue to confess God, blessing their tormentors.

And the fact that the Martyrs do not deny God, many of those present at the tortures repent and become Christians themselves. This was and continues to be a service to Christianity. Therefore, we say that the blood of the Martyrs is the seed of Christianity. The more Christians were tortured and killed, the more came out of their blood. Their eyewitnesses saw their steadfastness, the power of God, the miracles, and they repented.

Many Romanian fathers who were incarcerated during the Communist times developed a special and close connection between the Saints, the Martyrs, and themselves. They prayed to them to intercede to God for them and the Saints always helped them. Therefore, a spiritual unity is formed between a Saint and those who pray to him or her, and sometimes, by God's grace, many of the Saint's qualities can become ours as well. The Saint's presence has the capability to strengthen us through prayer. We can receive from God the spiritual protection we need, through a Saint's prayers. So, let us pray to the Saints, especially to those whose names we bear, and they will help us in times of sorrow, distress, sickness, and moments of joy: "St. George, my protector, pray to God for me, a sinner!" St. George and all the Saints are our advocates before God. Amen.

Christos Anesti!

Fr. J. Pistache.



*By Your Passion, O Christ, we have been set free of passions;
and by Your Resurrection freed from death, Lord, glory to You.
(Holy Saturday Morning)*

Ministry News

Church School

Christos Anest! I hope everyone had a wonderful Lent and is having a fulfilling Holy Week. I cannot wait to see everyone at the Agape Picnic. A special thank you to everyone who donated to the egg hunt. I am sure the kids will have a blast!

I cannot believe that the school year is almost over. Thanks to all of our teachers for their amazing commitment to the success of our program and thanks to the parents for bringing their children.

On Sunday, May 19, we will have our *Commencement* in Panos Hall after Church School. This will be the opportunity for them to get together as a class and we will recognize each student. This is a great photo opportunity. We will also be recognizing our High School Graduates. Please send your info to Karen so we know who to recognize.

After Commencement we will go outside for pizza and our annual *Field Day* event, which is such great fun for the kids. Please bring play clothes since it will be hot outdoors. We will have plenty of water but you can also bring your own water bottles. Parents, you might want to bring lawn chairs.

Again, thanks for a great year. Please reach out if you have any questions or if you want to help with anything.

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



Egg Hunt

We are looking for donations for the *Egg Hunt at the Agape Picnic on Sunday, May 5*. I will take plastic empty eggs, candy, stuffed eggs (preferred) or cash donations. Please drop them off at Classroom 5 *by Holy Thursday, May 2*. You can also drop them off at the Church Office during the week, or in the Parish Council Office during evening services.

Please reach out to me for details.

Eileen Koutsulis (702) 521-6516 or vivaleenie@cox.net



Youth and Family Events

Dear Parents, GOYANs, OFF and Church School Youth,

Christ is Risen! While celebrating our Lord's Resurrection this month, the Feast of the Feasts, we invite you to join us for our annual *Agape Picnic on Sunday, May 5, following the Agape Vespers at noon*. Our children will enjoy our *Egg Hunt at 2:00 pm on the Church Field*.

Then, *on Sunday May 19*, after the Divine Liturgy, we will all gather for the long-awaited *Church School Commencement and Field Day*. We will have pizza for lunch and then we will head over to the field to enjoy lots of activities, among which we cannot miss splashing with water balloons. All in all, we will have tons of fun. Please, do not miss this event in which we officially say hello to our Summer vacation.

We remind you to also check the other announcements, as your help is needed a lot during our services in this holy period of the year.

Thank you and hope to see you all there!

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

*Christ our Savior annulled the writ of our iniquities by nailing it to the Cross,
and abolished the sway of death. We worship His Resurrection on the third day.
(Holy Pascha Agape Vespers)*

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, 2024*:



- 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!

Young Adults - 18 Years through Early 30s

Christ is Risen! First, I would like to thank you all for being active and for helping at our services during this holy period of the year. I also want to thank all of you who plan to volunteer at the Agape Picnic. Your presence is 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 host a Mother's Day Breakfast and Mimosas *on Sunday, May 12*. We are asking a \$5 minimum donation to benefit the Priest's Discretionary Fund.

For our get-together, we will play volleyball *on Saturday, May 25, at 10:00 am at Sunset Park* (2601 East Sunset Road), and then we will enjoy a *Korean BBQ* (location to be determined). Please, join us for games, food and lots of fun.

I thank you all once again for your dedication and hope to see you there!

Blessed Resurrection! Father Florin

Mr. & Mrs.

Dear Couples of St. John the Baptist,

Christ is Risen! This month, we will be gathering for our fellowship *on Saturday, May 11, starting at 5:00 pm*, at the home of Eli and April Rivera, 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.

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

Kali Parea - For the 40+ Crowd

Christ is Risen! I would like to personally thank everyone who helped at the *Luncheon on Palm Sunday, April 28*, and who are planning to assist *on Holy Pascha, May 5, at the Agape Picnic*. These two major events of the year necessitate all our energy to be successful. Not to mention the fact that we are giving the best example we can by serving our neighbors, as our Lord asked us to.

Thank you and I am grateful to God for your presence.

In Christ, Demetrious Asim, Kali Parea Advisor

Forerunners - Our Seniors Fellowship

Christ is Risen! Our next luncheon will be *on Monday, May 13 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 Greek 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.

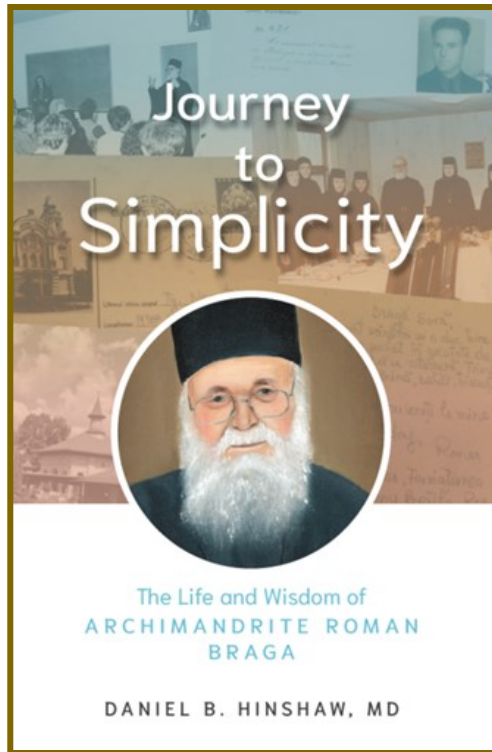
Love in Christ, Paula Kelesis for the Forerunners

Orthodox Bookstore

Christos Anesti! Greetings from the Bookstore!

A long-awaited publication from SVS Press is finally here and perhaps in time for a head start on Summer reading with this thick volume called *Journey to Simplicity: The Life and Wisdom of Archimandrite Roman Braga* by Daniel B. Hinshaw, MD.

From the back cover: The past century witnessed the greatest persecution of Christians in all of history. But the blood of the Martyrs is the seed of the Church, and great heroes of the Faith emerged. One such hero is Father Roman Braga (1922-2015). He suffered unimaginable cruelty of Romanian Communist prisons, yet through this suffering he was purified and discovered the Kingdom of Heaven within himself. *(Luke 17:21)* Dr. Daniel Hinshaw, one of his spiritual children, traces the story of Father Roman's life from his youth through his involvement in the Burning Bush movement, to his imprisonment and suffering under the Communist regime, to his later life in the west and his final years here in the United States. In this powerful story that unfolded on three continents, Christ's all-conquering love was manifest in Father Roman, who endured great evil and torture, yet without bitterness or rancor, responding to hatred and cruelty with love and forgiveness. He became a spiritual father who conveyed the love and grace of Christ to those who sought his counsel. We have much to learn from his life and teaching. This book is an invitation for others to encounter the life and wisdom of this humble servant of God.



Words of Father Roman regarding charitable giving in America: "There is something lost when you have no personal, and thus spiritual, connection with the people you help. Here you never even know the people you help, because your gift is given in the abstract. If you write your check for charity you can sleep well, even if in the hospital a person dies or your neighbor is in need. Maybe they do not need your money, but they do need your smile, your comfort. . ."

As always, Anna and I look forward to seeing you in the Bookstore for your copy and other devotional needs.

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

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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GOYA: Father Florin & Maha Habiba

Orthodox Family Fellowship:
Father Florin & April Rivera

Young Adults: Father Florin

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas

Greek Language:
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Father Florin & Presvytera Alexandra

Kali Parea: Demetrious Asim

Forerunners: Paula Kelesis

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

Greek Food Festival:
Angelo Stamis

Photography & Live-Streaming:
Bill & Erin Bruninga

Palm Sunday 2024



Photos by Erin Eleni Bruninga

“Blessed is He Who Comes in the Name of the Lord!”



*With Gratitude to God for Our Pledged Stewards in 2024
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*With Gratitude to God for Our Pledged Stewards in 2024
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**2024
Stewardship
Report
(as of 4/29/24)**

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$513,393 (\$533,905 in 2023)
 Stewardship Gifts Received: \$249,958 (\$256,368 in 2023)
 Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$263,435 (\$277,537 in 2023)
 Stewardship Families Pledged: 356 (345 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	143	\$ 38,130
\$501 - \$1,000	67	\$ 52,565
\$1,001 - \$2,500	98	\$149,197
\$2,501 - \$5,000	31	\$114,964
\$5,001 - \$9999	14	\$ 87,357
\$10,000 & Above	<u>3</u>	<u>\$ 71,180</u>
Total Families	356	\$513,393

Church Account Summaries - March 2024

Nevada State Bank Accounts	February	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	March	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$86,553.86	\$62,898.94		82,188.53	\$14,368.96	\$52,895.31	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$22,335.49	\$300.00				\$22,635.49	
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$148,802.06			\$900.36		\$147,901.70	
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$289,140.24	\$3,207.34		\$1,374.46		\$290,973.12	
Building & Maintenance (B&M)	\$78,985.29	\$2,096.57	\$811.50	\$40.00		\$81,853.36	
Folk Dance Group	\$23,829.58	\$6,429.45		\$927.64	\$4,944.80	\$24,386.59	
Hellenic Historical Society	\$815.96			\$15.00		\$800.96	
Designated Funds	February	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	March	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Bookstore	\$41,353.14	\$2,818.50		\$1,374.46		\$42,797.18	
Restricted Funds	February	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	March	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
ICON	\$13,196.45	\$388.84				\$13,585.29	
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	\$20,190.15					\$20,190.15	
Emergency Fund	\$5,000.00					\$5,000.00	
Three Priests	\$66,673.13					\$66,673.13	
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
Designated, Restricted and Other Total	\$289,140.24	\$3,207.34	\$0.00	\$1,374.46	\$0.00	\$290,973.12	
Building and Maintenance Funds	February	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	March	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Building Fund	\$27,234.87	\$1,596.57	\$311.50	\$40.00		\$29,102.94	
Panos Flooring Repair	\$32,577.33	\$500.00	\$500.00			\$33,577.33	
Hall Painting	\$10,283.22					\$10,283.22	
HVAC	\$0.00					\$0.00	
Giving Tree	\$8,889.87					\$8,889.87	
Lighting	\$0.00					\$0.00	
Building & Maintenance Funds Total	\$78,985.29	\$2,096.57	\$811.50	\$40.00	\$0.00	\$81,853.36	
Other Funds	February	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	March	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$71,362.83		\$2,994.88			\$74,357.71	as of 03.31.24
Commonwealth Investments (Icon)	\$139,997.00		\$3,946.39			\$143,943.39	Change in Investment

March 2024 Candles \$5,690.88
March 2024 Trays \$5,062.40
Total March 2024 Candles & Trays \$10,753.28



MAY 2024 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

<p>Holy Week is April 28 ~ May 4. Great and Holy Pascha is May 5.</p>			<p>1 Holy Wednesday 9:00 am Presanctified Liturgy 7:00 pm Holy Unction</p>	<p>2 Holy Thursday 9:00 am Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil 7:00 pm Holy Passion of Our Lord Reading of 12 Gospels</p>	<p>3 Holy Friday 10:00 am Royal Hours 3:00 pm Removal of Christ from the Cross Children's Procession 7:00 pm Lamentations</p>	<p>4 Holy Saturday 9:00 am Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil 11:00 pm Resurrection Vigil</p>
<p>5 Holy Pascha 12:00 am Resurrection Orthros and Divine Liturgy Blessing of Red Eggs 12:00 pm Agape Vespers and Agape Picnic</p>	<p>6 St. George 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>7 4:00 pm Greek School</p>	<p>8</p>	<p>9 4:00 pm Last Day of Greek School</p>	<p>10 Theotokos the Life Giving Spring 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy Church Clean-Up</p>	<p>11 5:00 pm Mr. and Mrs. at Rivera Home</p>
<p>12 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Mother's Day Breakfast</p>	<p>13 11:30 am Forerunners Luncheon in Kokkos Hall</p>	<p>14 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting in Library</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>16</p>	<p>17</p>	<p>18 5:30 pm Philoptochos Dinner at Kypreos' Home</p>
<p>19 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Church School Commencement, Pizza Party and Field Day</p>	<p>20</p>	<p>21 Ss. Constantine and Helen 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>22</p>	<p>23</p>	<p>24</p>	<p>25 10:00 am Young Adults Volleyball at Sunset Park and Lunch</p>
<p>26 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>27 Memorial Day Church Office Closed</p>	<p>28</p>	<p>29</p>	<p>30</p>	<p>31</p>	

The Desert Messenger

*St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
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*CHRIST
IS RISEN!*



THE DESERT MESSENGER

The Way of the Lord

*A Pascha of delight, this
Pascha, the Lord's Pascha.
A most venerable Pascha
has dawned for us. In it let
us embrace one another
with gladness. O Pascha,
release from sorrow! For
shining forth this day as
from a bridal chamber,
Christ filled the women
with joy, telling them,
"Proclaim it to My
Disciples!"
(Apostichon,
Great and Holy Pascha)*

