

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 21, Issue 1 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

January 2023

From
Father
John

*"The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,
the desert shall rejoice and blossom." (Isaiah 35:1)*

Beloved in Christ:

By the grace of God, the desert rejoices and blossoms again with the hope of the New Year 2023, allowing us yet another opportunity for our spiritual renewal and sanctification, for in the words of St. John the Baptist, *"The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand."* (Mark 1:15) NOW is the time for us to take heed resolutely to the charge of our Parish Patron and make every effort to *"Repent, and believe in the Gospel!"*



The first week of the New Year provides us with a "Mini Holy Week" of Divine Services – starting with the first day of January, the Eve of Theophany, the Holy Theophany of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Feast Day of our Parish, St. John the Baptist: Please refer to the Worship Schedule and Calendar for a listing of service dates and times. Along with the opportunity to receive the Holy Eucharist four times in the first week of 2023, the doors to our sanctification will remain completely open with the Great Blessing of the Water which follows the Divine Liturgy on the Eve of Theophany and the Great Feast of Holy Theophany.

Theophany – which is celebrated **on January 6** and literally means "the manifestation of God" – completes the Feast of Our Lord's Nativity in the Flesh: Unlike the Christian expressions of the West, which celebrate the Adoration of the Magi on this date, the Orthodox celebration of Theophany commemorates the Baptism of Christ by the hands of the Forerunner in the River Jordan. St. John spent his life in the wilderness preparing for the coming of the Messiah through fasting, prayer, baptizing and calling all he encountered to "Repent!" and "Prepare the way of the Lord!" The Baptizer preached to all who went into the Jordan River that the One Who was coming after him would be mightier, and baptize *"with the Holy Spirit and with fire."* (Matthew 3:11)

When Jesus appeared to the Forerunner and asked to be baptized, he initially resisted, but at the Lord's word he consented: *"And when He came up out of the water, immediately he (St. John) saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove; and a Voice came from heaven, 'You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.'"* (Mark 1:10-11) At Christ's Baptism there was a full manifestation of the Trinitarian God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. With His Baptism all those present, including the Angels and the River Jordan, were in awe by both the Lord's Presence and His deep humility. By going down into the water, Jesus prepared the way for our "new birth," that is, our union with Him through the Holy Mystery of Baptism. And through His Baptism the nature of the water was sanctified, becoming a vessel of healing and grace.

Holy Theophany is also called the "Feast of Lights" – of life, illumination, revelation and regeneration – and should be approached as an opportunity for us Orthodox Christians to renew our own Baptism. It is therefore intentional that the priestly petitions for the Great Blessing of the Water mirror those of the Baptismal service: The priest supplicates our Lord "that this water may be sanctified by the manifestation, power and effective indwelling of the Holy Spirit . . . that the purifying virtue of the Trinity, which is above all being, will come upon these waters . . . that there may be sent upon them the grace of redemption, the blessing of the Jordan . . . and that this water may become a source of immortality."

(Continued on Page 3)

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

*Sundays: 8:45 am Orthros ~ 10:00 am Divine Liturgy
Church School follows Holy Communion (Except January 1 and 8)*

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

Sunday, January 1/*The Circumcision of Our Lord Jesus Christ/St. Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea and His Mother Emmelia*

9:00 am Orthros

10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

Orthros: Fourth Tone

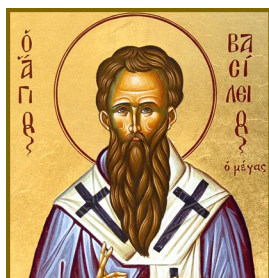
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros):

John 20:1-10

Epistle: Colossians 2:8-12

Gospel: Luke 2:20-21, 40-52

No Fellowship



Wednesday, January 4/*Eve of Theophany (Observed)*

6:00 pm Vespertal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great & Great Blessing of Water

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Gospel: Luke 3:1-18

Thursday, January 5/*Eve of Theophany (Strict Fast) - Liturgy on the preceding evening*

Friday, January 6/*Holy Theophany of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ*

8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom & Great Blessing of Water

Epistle: Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7

Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17

Saturday, January 7/*Synaxis of St. John the Baptist: Our Parish Feast Day*

8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy and Artoclasia

Epistle:

Acts 19:1-8

Gospel:

John 1:29-34



Sunday, January 8/*Sunday after Theophany/Holy Father George the Chozebite/Holy Mother Domnica/Holy Fathers*

Atticos and Cyros, Patriarchs of Constantinople

Orthros: Plagal First Tone

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros):

John 20:11-18

Epistle: Ephesians 4:7-13

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17

Parish Council Oath of Office

Cutting of the Community Vasilopita

Fellowship: Philoptochos



Sunday, January 15/*12th Sunday of Luke/The Ten Lepers/Holy Father Paul of Thebes/St. John the Cave Dweller*

Orthros: Plagal Second Tone

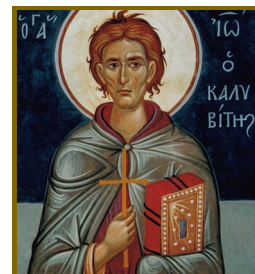
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros):

John 20:19-31

Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11

Gospel: Luke 17:12-19

Fellowship: Greek Folk Dance



Tuesday, January 17/*Holy Father Anthony the Great/St. Anthony the New of Veria/Holy New Martyr George of Ioannina*

8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Hebrews 13:17-21

Gospel: Luke 6:17-23

Wednesday, January 18/*Ss. Athanasios and Cyril, Patriarchs of Alexandria*

8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Hebrews 13:7-16

Gospel: Matthew 5:14-19



(Continued on Page 3)

Worship Schedule (Continued from Page 2)

**Sunday, January 22/15th Sunday of Luke/Zaccheus
Sunday/Holy Apostle Timothy of the 70/Holy
Martyr Anastasios the Persian/Holy Father Joseph
the Sanctified**

Orthros: Grave Tone

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

Epistle: 1 Timothy 4:9-15

Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

Fellowship: Mark Karris and Family

**Sunday, January 29/17th Sunday of Matthew/The
Canaanite Woman/Removal of the Relics of the
Holy Hieromartyr Ignatios the God-bearer/Holy
Father Ignatios and Nicandros of Sinai/St.
Lawrence of the Kiev Caves**

Orthros: Plagal Fourth Tone

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 21:14-25

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; 7:1

Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28

Memorials: Socrates Thomas (40 days); Panagiotis
Taronis (3 years)

Fellowship: Helen Soursos, in Memory of Socrates

**Monday, January 30/ The Three Holy Hierarchs:
Ss. Basil, Gregory, and John Chrysostom**

8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy and Artoclasia

Epistle: Hebrews 13:7-16

Gospel: Matthew 5:14-19



Holy
Forerunner,
Prophet
and
Baptizer
John,
Intercede
to Christ
Our God
for the
Salvation of
Our Souls!

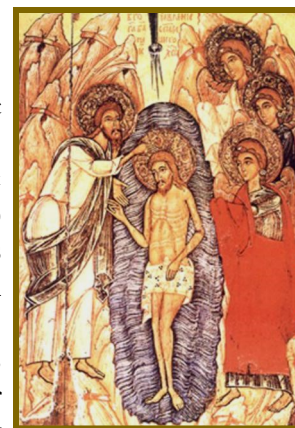
From Father John (Continued from Page 1)

Following the Great Blessing, the entire Church and all those present are sprinkled with the Holy Water, and the faithful are invited to take a bottle home. Those who are Baptized and Chrismated Orthodox Christians may take a sip of the Holy Water, when fasted, for spiritual strength and renewal. Moreover, it is also customary in the Orthodox Tradition to invite the priest to our home during this season to offer special prayers and sprinkle our family members and dwelling with Holy Water, for Divine grace and protection.

Beloved, by God's grace, we are still living in the flesh for the time He allots us – and so, NOW is the time for us to prepare for the imminent Second Coming of our Lord! With genuine love and gratitude for His endless mercy, may we seize every occasion to gather together to worship and serve our Saving Lord, to be nurtured by the Word of God, to be renewed and sanctified by His Holy and Life-giving Mysteries, so that we may rejoice and blossom continuously as His beloved children!

With Much Love in Christ,

Father John



Parish Council Report

Dear Father John, Florin, Ministries and Parishioners,

I pray that everyone had a wonderful Christmas and a Blessed New Year's Day. As we all know, our Church's Name Day is January 7. Let's all plan on being present for this special day. Chronia Polla to all who celebrate – and a special Chronia Polla to Father John.

I personally want to thank Nick Barbarino for his contribution to serving the Lord's House while on the Parish Council. As I have always said, we do not need titles to offer service to our God. Welcome to our newly elected Parish Council members, and members who continue to serve. I pray that they pick up the torch and bring fresh ideas to further grow our Church.

As we all know, Stewardship is on top of our priority list. By God's grace we had a record-breaking year in 2022 in Stewardship Gifts – thank you to all who made this possible. Moving forward, we ask the entire congregation to present their ideas to the Parish Council so we can continue to have favorable results in growing our Stewardship ministry.

I would like to establish a team of council members and interested parishioners, to explore various avenues on how to achieve advancing our Stewardship position. One way of putting us on the right path could be engaging Bill Marianes, from the Archdiocese Stewardship Ministries, to visit our Parish and offer one of his dynamic presentations. Bill is gifted by God with guiding Parishes to create a vision, build up ministries and grow Stewardship. Many of us have heard Bill's words in the past – yet he has updated his presentation and I am sure our Parish would greatly benefit from it.

Along with inviting Bill to our Parish, we should also consider having a glendi/dance to follow on the evening of the presentation. All current Stewards would be encouraged to invite a family member or friend who has not been fully engaged. Let's all come up with some thoughts and input concerning Stewardship renewal. If we are honest, many of us have not taken growing our Stewardship as seriously as we should; implementing special presentations and events toward this goal will help. Now, with a new year ahead of us, it is time to put forth the effort and not totally rely on a Food Festival to pay for the many needs of our Parish. More to come on this topic.

I hope all of you have a wonderful and healthy 2023. May God continue to bless our Parish and Stewards. **John Fotopoulos, Parish Council President**



REQUEST FOR HOUSE OR BUSINESS BLESSING

Name _____ Phone (____) _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____ Email _____



*Please return the completed form to Father John or Karen.
We will contact you to schedule!*

For the blessing, please have a bowl of bottled water, a sprig of basil or rosemary, an icon or cross, and votive candle.

*If you or anyone in your household feels sick prior to the blessing,
please call to reschedule.*



Stewardship 2023

WALK IN LOVE

*“Walk in love, as Christ loved us
and gave Himself up for us,
a fragrant offering and
sacrifice to God.”
(Ephesians 5:2)*

Connecting in Love
with Christ,
Our Church
and One Another
Throughout the Year!

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

+++++

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

“Walk in Love”

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 2023 of \$ _____.

Signed: _____

Signed: _____

Orthodox Christian: Yes No

Orthodox Christian: Yes No

Others sharing in the gift (children): _____

Stewardship and Community Outreach

Happy New Year! Chronia Polla!

With the start of the New Year, we have the opportunity to take stock of our lives, and look to improve our relationship with family, friends, but most of all, with our God.

In January, we celebrate Theophany, the divine manifestation of God's appearance to man. After St. John the Forerunner baptized our Lord, the Heavens were opened, and the Spirit descended in the form of a dove upon Him Who was being baptized; and the Voice was heard from the Heavens giving witness that this was the beloved Son of God. (*Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:1-22*) The great mystery of the Holy Trinity was revealed, and Jesus then began His earthly ministry, which would eventually lead Him to the Cross and His Glorious Resurrection! In our Holy Church, the main feature of this Feast is the Great Blessing of the Water – the blessing verifies that mankind and all creation, was fashioned to be filled with the sanctifying Presence of God.



Father Anthony Hughes, of St. Mary's Orthodox Church in Cambridge, MA, offers this reflection: "On the Sunday after the Feast of Theophany we read from St. Matthew's Gospel about how the people *'who sat in darkness have seen a great light.'* A more literal interpretation tells us that Jesus brought the Light of Love into the darkest corners of the world. Going a little deeper, we know that our responsibility as followers of Christ is to take the light we have received into the dark place in our families, communities, and society. Jesus says that we will be judged if we do not care for the *'least of the brethren'* who are listed as the sick, the hungry, the naked, and those in prison."

Stewardship teaches us how to carry that Light into dark corners and how to care for family, community and society – and the best way to start that endeavor is to care for our own local Holy House. The proceeds of Stewardship – which include time, talents and treasures – helps our Church community meet the needs of us all, beginning with literally keeping the doors open so we may participate in the Divine Liturgy every Sunday as well as other festal services, for our priests to visit the sick and counsel the hurting, to provide ministries for young and old within the Church and for the greater community of Las Vegas. As long as the physical Church is here, we have a place where we can gather to be filled with the sanctifying presence of God.



This month we also celebrate the Synaxis of the Holy Hierarchs – St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian and St. John Chrysostom. This feast honors these holy men and their great works for our Holy Church. Whether through their charity/almsgiving (St. Basil) or their writings on how to live a sanctified life (St. Gregory) or the gift of the Divine Liturgy (St. John Chrysostom), each one offered their first fruits to God, and we are still receiving the benefit of their efforts – and of their stewardship! What will we do with this New Year to bring hope and life and help to our Holy House?

In Christ, Marina Adamy,
Stewardship and Outreach Committee

*The Voice of the Lord thunders over the waters, saying, "Come, all, receive the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of the fear of God, of Christ revealed."
(Hymn by St. Sophronios, for the Blessing of the Water, in Fourth Plagal Tone)*

Philoptochos News

Dear Father John and St. John the Baptist Parishioners:

The Ladies Philoptochos closed 2022 successfully with an amazing Holiday Pastry Sale that for the first time ever, did not have one box over the amount that was projected. Many thanks to those of you who pre-purchased your pastries, you made our task that much easier. Vicky Palivos and Dora Hart chaired this project: A big thank you ladies for all your hard work. Many thanks to Eleni Kakavulias and her dedicated baking team: We would not have been able to do this without you. To all those who came out to package and wrap: You did a great job this year and in record time! Thanks to Amanda Flangas and her talented team of wrappers!

The Church Community Christmas Card – always a popular way to send your greetings to your friends in the Parish – was another success. Many thanks to Jennifer Santamaria and her dedicated team for reminding folks to put their names in the card.

Our gorgeous holiday wreath, centerpiece and tree selections were back for the second year. What a fantastic, easy way to send your love and greetings of the season to those who may live elsewhere – and did I mention that we get 15 percent? Thanks to Christina Snow for this idea – I love the smell of the fresh pine!

Looking forward to 2023 . . .

The Blessing and Cutting of the Community Vasilopita will be *on Sunday, January 8*. On that date, the Ladies Philoptochos will be sponsoring the Fellowship. We are asking for all who are celebrating their Name Days on the Feast of St. Basil to help provide the goodies that day. The proceeds will be earmarked for St. Basil's Academy and other projects.

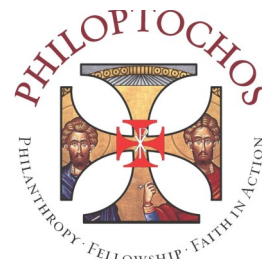
The Philoptochos Membership Brunch will be *on Sunday, January 15*, following Divine Liturgy. Faith, Fun and Fellowship describe the Ladies Philoptochos Society, and we look forward to seeing all the women of the Parish, including teens, college-age, young moms, working women and YOU! Christina Snow is our Second Vice President/Membership Chair. Please see the flyers for more info regarding the event.

The New Year will also bring projects and events to provide help to Southern Nevada nonprofits. We are always in need of many hands for these projects; Geri Kypreos is the Social Services Chair. Please let us know if you hear of a cause that we should consider helping.

We also look forward to all the activities of the Lenten Season and Pascha – our Traditions of our Faith. Projects, Fellowships, Traditions of the Faith – this is your Panagia Chapter, this is the Ladies Philoptochos Society.

As always, the promise of a New Year fills us all with great expectations, hopes and dreams. We can only pray that some portion of these comes true and that our families are healthy and happy! Wishing you and yours a Very Blessed and Happy New Year.

Bernadette Anthony, Philoptochos President



DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE

wish one and all a happy, healthy New Year!

Καλή χρονιά! Χρόνια πολλά! Με υγεία και καλή τύχη!



Building and Maintenance Committee

Blessings for a Happy and Healthy 2023!

Moving into the New Year, there are many projects we hope to accomplish. Because our facilities are aging, some of these consist of replacing the cork floors in Panos Hall, painting the exteriors of the Church and Community Center, as well as repairing and restriping the parking lot areas. Our first priority is the HVAC units for the Church. We have managed to keep them working by band-aiding them with parts over the last decade; however as most of you have noticed when attending services, the Church is not staying warm. These units are over 30 years old, and Trane no longer makes the parts to keep these units going. We are actively seeking bids for replacement and, as you can imagine, they are extremely costly. Bids are coming in between \$90,000 and \$115,000. We would greatly appreciate your generosity with this much needed repair.

We are also working on putting together new guidelines for the use of Panos Hall and Kitchen for events. As you all know, we no longer have a catering manager, and we would like to start holding events for the use of our parishioners for baptisms, weddings, and funerals. With this said, the need for these new guidelines is to minimize the abuse of our facilities. As I mentioned in my last report, we have a limited cleaning crew and if we wish to continue ensuring our facilities and grounds are presentable, it is important that we are considerate. It is paramount that we are picking up after ourselves and placing items back where they belong when used. This also includes limiting bringing food and drinks into the Church. We just reupholstered the pews and had new carpets installed and it cost well over \$100,000. We would like to ensure that we can continue to maintain the beauty of our Lord's House for years to come.

We would also like to ask parents to please supervise their children. There are many instances when we have found kids running in the kitchen, letting water run in the restrooms, kicking the walls, climbing on trees and running in the parking lot with cars leaving the grounds. The last thing any of us would want is for one of our children to be injured. I am very thankful for your continued efforts and support and hope that with your help we can accomplish many of the above mentioned projects together.

In Christ, Eleni Filios, Chair of the Building and Maintenance Committee

Orthodox Bookstore

Greetings from the Bookstore!

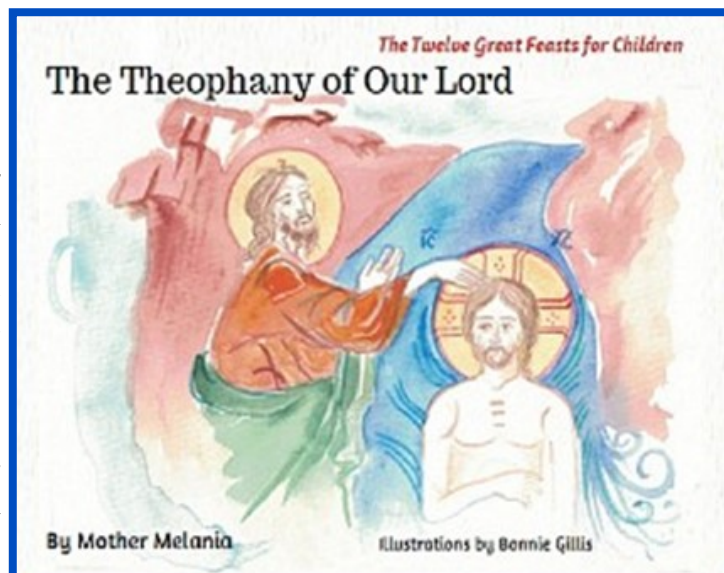
New to the Bookstore for children this month is *The Theophany of Our Lord*, by Mother Melania of Holy Assumption Monastery in Calistoga, CA. It is Book 9 of her Twelve Great Feasts for Children Series and arrives in perfect time for Holy Theophany. Beautifully illustrated, it makes a wonderful teaching tool for our young ones to learn about this and other Feasts of the Church.

From Mother Melania: "Join John the Baptist in the River Jordan as the Lord and Master comes to be baptized to heal the world of sin and reveal the mystery of the Trinity!"

Be glad! Be glad! For on this day
The sins of man are washed away
Forever in the Jordan's stream
By Christ Who comes here to redeem!"

Hope to see you in the Bookstore soon for your copy!

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



From Florin

St. Anthony the Great was born in Egypt in 251 of pious parents who departed this life while he was still young. After his parents reposed, his life changed when he heard these words of the Gospel: *“If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me.” (Matthew 19:21)* St. Anthony immediately put the Lord’s words into action. First, he entrusted his sister to pious virgins and provided the funds needed for her care. Then, distributing to the poor all he had, and fleeing from all the turmoil of the world, he departed to the desert and began his ascetic life outside his village of Coma in Upper Egypt, studying the ways of the ascetics and holy men there, and perfecting himself in the virtues of each until he surpassed them all.

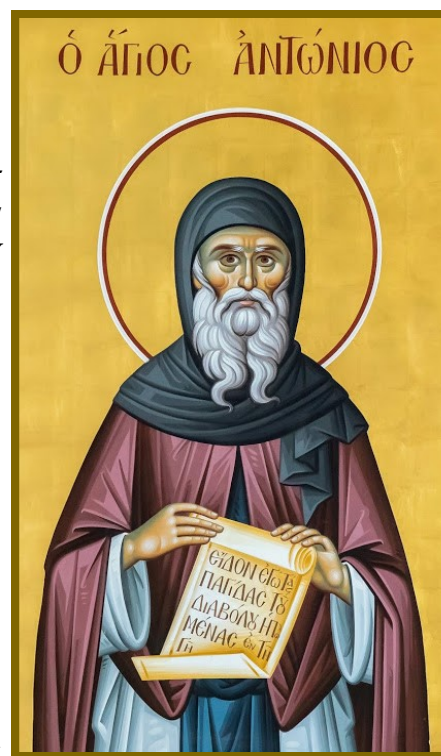
Desiring to increase his labors, he departed into the desert, and finding an abandoned fortress in the mountain, he made his dwelling in it, training himself in extreme fasting, unceasing prayer, and fierce conflicts with the demons. He remained here for about twenty years. St. Athanasios the Great, who knew him personally and wrote about his life, says that he came forth from that fortress “initiated in the mysteries and filled with the Spirit of God.” (*The Life of Anthony*) Afterwards, because of the press of the faithful, who deprived Anthony of his solitude, he was enlightened by God to journey with certain Bedouins, until he came to a mountain in the desert near the Red Sea, where he spent the remaining part of his life.

The manifold temptations he endured continually are incredible. Anthony used to say, “Whoever has not experienced temptation cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Without temptations no one can be saved.” His ascetic struggles by day and by night, whereby he mortified the uprisings of the passions and attained to the height of dispassion, surpass the bounds of nature. The reason he constantly fought was to avoid the death of the soul: “If we make every effort to avoid death of the body, still more should it be our endeavor to avoid death of the soul. There is no obstacle for a man who wants to be saved other than negligence and laziness of soul.” Of course, the report of the Saint’s deeds of virtue drew such a multitude to follow him that the desert was transformed into a city: He became, so to speak, the governor, lawgiver, and master-trainer of all the citizens of this newly formed “city of ascetics.”

The cities of the world also enjoyed the fruit of his virtue. When the Christians were being persecuted and put to death under Maximinus in 312, Anthony hastened to their aid and consolation. When the Church was troubled by the Arians, he went with zeal to Alexandria in 335 and struggled against them on behalf of Orthodoxy. During this time, by the grace of his words, he also turned many unbelievers to Christ.

St. Athanasios writes of his Spiritual Father, Anthony: “His countenance had a great and wonderful grace. This gift also he had from the Savior. For if he were present in a great company of monks, and anyone who did not know him previously wished to see him, immediately coming forward he passed by the rest, and hurried to Anthony, as though attracted by his appearance. Yet neither in height nor breadth was he conspicuous above others, but in the serenity of his manner and the purity of his soul.” So, passing his life, and becoming an example of virtue and a rule for monastics, he reposed on January 17 in the year 356, having lived altogether some 105 years.

Let us conclude with the following words of St. Anthony the Great, the Father of Monastics: “Men are often called intelligent wrongly. Intelligent men are not those who are erudite in the sayings and books of the wise men of old, but those who have an intelligent soul and can discriminate between good and evil. They avoid what is sinful and harms the soul; and with deep gratitude to God, they resolutely adhere by dint of practice to what is good and benefits the soul. These men alone should truly be called intelligent.”



Ministry News

Church School

Christ is Born! Glorify Him! Wishing everyone a Blessed and Happy 2023! We are still going strong in Church School. As a reminder, please make sure that your children are registered since we require a form for every student in the classroom.

Thank you to all who participated in our first Nativity Craft and Discussion. Florin offered an excellent lesson about the Icon of Our Lord's Nativity. I appreciate the support of our Parish and families that made the event successful.

We will not have class *on Sunday, January 8, 2023*. Please make sure you bring your children to Church that day since we will have the beautiful Greek Orthodox tradition of Blessing and Cutting the Vasilopita. It is personally one of my favorite traditions.

We are still using our curriculum about the sacramental life. I hope your children are enjoying them and learning about our wonderful Orthodox Faith.

Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns.

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

All Youth Family Event

Dear Kids, Teenagers, and Parents,

Thank you all, including parents, who joined us for our Parish Christmas Tree decoration last month! And thank you also for all the delicious food we shared together!

This month we are planning on having fun playing in the SNOW! All Youth and their families are invited to join us *on Saturday, January 21 at 9:00 am* at the Mount Charleston Lee Canyon Snow Play Area for sledding, snowman building, and snowball fights. *Please make sure to dress up warmly.*

We will check the road and mountain weather conditions the week before our event, so stay tuned! Please remember to eat something before arrival and to *bring lunch with you*, as the outdoor conditions will not allow us to organize a potluck.

The cost is \$25 per car (\$5 for additional person over 4) and is first come – first served, so we have to arrive early! For other details, please see the information at the following link: <https://www.leecanyonlv.com/things-to-do/activities/winter-activities/foxtail>.

For questions or to RSVP, please contact Maha or Florin at florin@vegasgreekorthodox.com.

With Love in Christ, Florin, Maha and April

GOYA - Our Teen Ministry

Dear GOYANs,

Before Christmas, we had an All-Youth event for decorating our Christmas Tree at Church. Thank you all who came to help us! The tree was decorated in no time, and we had lots of fun.

This month, it is our custom as GOYANs to take down the Parish Christmas Tree. So, please join us for our GOYA Night *on Sunday, January 15, from 5:00 to 7:00 pm*, for fellowship, prayer, food and activities. If you would like to contribute by bringing food to the event, please contact Maha, our GOYA Advisor.

Secondly, we will be participating in the All-Youth Snow Day on Mt. Charleston *on Saturday, January 21 at 9:00 am*. For details, see the information above at our All-Youth Event Column. Please don't forget to RSVP at florin@vegasgreekorthodox.com. Thank you all and see you soon!

Love in Christ, Florin and Maha



Young Adults - 18 Years through Early 30s

Please join us *on Saturday, January 14 at 9:00 am* for a hike at White Rock Hills Loop Trail, located in Red Rock Canyon. I am sure we will all enjoy this 6-mile loop trail near Las Vegas, which is a moderately challenging route. This is a very popular area for backpacking, birding, and, of course, hiking.

The fee is \$15 per vehicle, so it would be preferable for us to carpool. Please let me know you are coming by contacting me at florin@vegasgreekorthodox.com. Please dress in layers, and bring a backpack with plenty of water and snacks for this three-hour hike.

I look forward to meeting with all of you there! Thank You, Florin

Greek Folk Dance

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! We would like to thank the community for supporting the annual Christmas Caroling event! It was a huge success, and we cannot underestimate our appreciation to all who welcomed us into their home and provided donations for our fundraiser. A special thank you to Antonia Tzelalis who worked tirelessly with our dancers to help them learn the carols, in both Greek and English. She is a true asset to our community, and we thank her for keeping our wonderful traditions alive. Thank you also to the Tzelalis family for their help with our annual Fasolada luncheon!



Our dancers continue to practice hard every week, getting ready to show off their moves at FDF in February! We look forward to performing our dance suites at the FDF Preview in Panos Hall *on February 12, 2023!* Mark your calendars!

As FDF approaches, we are in need of some assistance to help get our costumes ready. If anyone in the community has sewing skills, we would love help with some adjustments and repairs to the costumes we already have in our costume library. Please reach out to a Folk Dance Board Member if you can help!!

Much Gratitude, Folk Dance Board



Our GOYA and Greek Folk Dancers wrapped gifts on December 17 at the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth.

Youth Choir

Happy New Year and Happy New Beginnings!

As stated a couple months ago, we are in the process of reorganizing our beloved Youth Choir after almost a three year hiatus!

Our first meeting and practice will be *on Sunday, January 15, 2023 at 12:15 pm*, right after Church School. We will meet in Classroom 6. Snacks will be provided; we will discuss more about the practice times. Our goal is to learn the responses and hymns for the Divine Liturgy.

We welcome all interested children and teens from second grade and up to join our ranks. Please see me during Sunday Fellowship, or call Karen at the Church Office.

See you soon! Love in Christ, Presvytera Maria

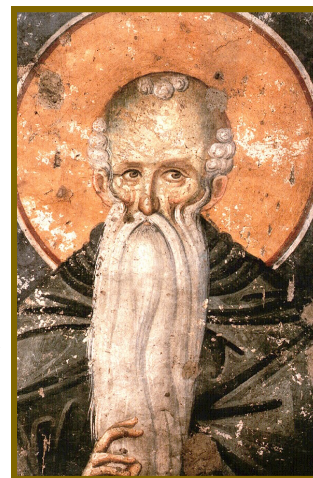
Mr. & Mrs.

Dear Couples of St. John the Baptist,

Please mark your calendars for *Friday, January 20, starting at 6:00 pm*, when we will meet at the home of Mike and Effie Lekar, whom we thank for generously opening their house to us. As their home is not child proof, this will be an adult-only event.

Please contact Karen for their address and to let us know what you will bring. We are looking forward to seeing you all there for a House Blessing, Artoclasia (for St. Efthymios), an amazing dinner and lively discussion.

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



Kali Parea - For the 40+ Crowd

Thank you to everyone who joined us to see the critically acclaimed and touching drama movie, *Smyrna*. As always, we enjoyed spending time together.

This month we encourage everyone to participate as much as possible at the liturgical services in our beloved Church. It is a month full of important feasts for our Liturgical Tradition, that will unite us in the One Mystical Body of Christ.

In February, we will resume our monthly fellowships, so please stay tuned!

In Christ, Demetri Asim



Forerunners - Our Seniors Fellowship

The Forerunners enjoyed a delicious Christmas luncheon prepared by Steve Tzelalis, Michael Beeler and Marika LaMancusa. We had a blast with our White Elephant Gift Exchange and Grand Raffle: Two \$100 gift prizes were awarded.

Please mark your calendars for the first luncheon of 2023 *on Monday, January 16 at 11:30 am in Kokkos Hall*. We will cut a Vasilopita together and ring in the New Year!

Love in Christ, Faye Brown



Chrismation

Constantine Darren Lopez-Leon on December 18, 2022.

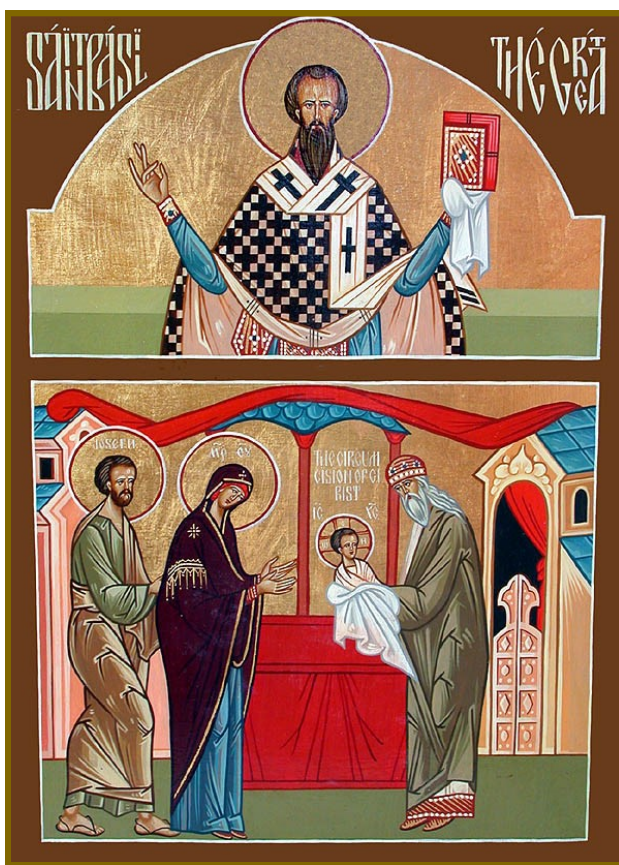
Sponsors: Vasilios and Eleni Bruninga.

*Hymns for January 1:
The Circumcision of Christ and St. Basil the Great*

In essence being God, most-compassionate Master, You assumed human nature without transmutation. Fulfilling the Law, of Your own will You accepted circumcision in the flesh, to bring an end to the shadow, and to remove the passions that cover us. Glory to Your benevolence, O Lord; glory to Your compassion; glory to Your inexpressible condescension, O Word. (*Apolytikion for the Circumcision, in First Tone*)

Your proclamation went forth into all the earth, for it accepted your word, through which you taught the dogmas befitting God, you expounded on the nature of all that is, and you arranged the morals of society. A royal priesthood! Devout father Basil, intercede with Christ our God, to grant us His great mercy. (*Apolytikion for St. Basil, in First Tone*)

As the Master over all has undergone circumcision, so He cuts away the sins of humankind in His goodness. On this day, upon the world He bestows salvation. And on high does the Creator's hierarch Basil now rejoice, for he is known as a most divine and light-bearing mystic of Christ. (*Kontakion, in Third Tone*)



**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST
GREEK ORTHODOX
CHURCH**

5300 S. El Camino Rd.
Las Vegas, NV 89118

Rev. Father John Hondros
frjohn@vegaskgreekorthodox.com

Florin Ristache, Pastoral Assistant
florin@vegaskgreekorthodox.com

Karen Rawlinson
Administrative Assistant

Michelle Eugenio
Bookkeeper

Marc Harvel
Maintenance & Grounds

Office Hours

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

Telephone: (702) 221-8245
www.vegaskgreekorthodox.com

Parish Council: John Fotopoulos

Philoptochos: Bernadette Anthony

Stewardship & Community Outreach:
John Karas

Choir: Athena Mertes

Chanters & Youth Choir:
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School: Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers: Father John

GOYA:

Florin Ristache & Maha Habiba

Orthodox Family Fellowship:
Florin Ristache & April Rivera

Young Adults:
Florin Ristache

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas

Greek School: Paula Kelesis

Mr. & Mrs.:
Father John & Presvytera Maria

Kali Parea: Demetrios Asim

Adult Basketball:
Nick Kelesis

Forerunners: Paula Kelesis

Orthodox Bookstore:
Paraskevi Santamaria

Greek Food Festival: Gus Flangas

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

Photography & Live-Streaming:
Bill & Erin Bruninga

**2022
Stewardship
Report
(as of 12/26/22)**

*"Let Us
Exalt
His Name
Together!"
(Psalm 34:3)*

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$550,076 (\$487,558 in 2021)
Stewardship Gifts Received: \$526,479 (\$464,513 in 2021)
Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$23,597 (\$23,045 in 2021)
Stewardship Families Pledged: 425 (401 in 2021)
2022 Budgeted Goal: \$500,000 ... Keep the Pledges Coming!

<u>Average Pledge</u>	<u>No. of Families</u>	<u>Amount Pledged</u>
\$1 - \$500	194	\$ 54,225
\$501 - \$1,000	86	\$ 68,331
\$1,001 - \$2,500	96	\$ 149,909
\$2,501 - \$5,000	31	\$ 112,086
\$5,001 & Above	18	\$ 165,525
Total Families	425	\$550,076

Church Account Summaries - November 2022

Nevada State Bank Accounts	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$22,617.69	\$39,941.79	\$97,727.20	\$87,058.84	\$52,132.69	\$21,095.15	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$61,369.50					\$61,369.50	
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$198,119.04	\$4,139.14	\$4,248.08	\$17,388.16	\$96,982.05	\$92,136.05	
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$261,381.24	\$4,704.05	\$74.00	\$2,395.58	\$1,908.86	\$261,854.85	
Folk Dance Group	\$22,861.30	\$7,342.00	\$50.00	\$5,197.00		\$25,056.30	
Hellenic Historical Society	\$335.47			\$15.00		\$320.47	
Designated Funds	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Bookstore	\$34,915.56	\$2,649.00		\$792.07	\$860.79	\$35,911.70	
Ornaments	\$1,169.41				\$568.08	\$601.33	Laptop for Pastry Booth
Restricted Funds	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
ICON	\$5,267.81	\$299.77				\$5,567.58	
Library Account	\$1,470.77					\$1,470.77	
Giving Tree	\$7,889.87					\$7,889.87	
Faithtree	\$1,626.39					\$1,626.39	
Building Fund	\$104,296.30	\$1,755.28	\$74.00	\$603.53		\$105,522.05	Plaques and Casual Labor
Youth Choir	\$2,989.18					\$2,989.18	
Church School	\$3,116.42			\$999.98		\$2,116.44	Church School TVs
Three Priests	\$52,535.51				\$479.99	\$52,055.52	Laptop for Streaming services
Roof Appeal	\$10,283.22					\$10,283.22	
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
GOYA	\$530.36					\$530.36	
Panos Flooring Repair	\$23,722.83					\$23,722.83	
Church Flooring Replacement	\$0.00					\$0.00	
Restricted Donation	\$5,654.00					\$5,654.00	
Live Streaming Equipment	\$473.61					\$473.61	
Designated, Restricted, and Other Total	\$261,381.24	\$4,704.05	\$74.00	\$2,395.58	\$1,908.86	\$261,854.85	
Other Funds	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$62,481.46					\$62,481.46	as of 08.31.22
Commonwealth Investments (Icon)	\$113,158.86	\$6,278.53				\$119,437.39	Change in Investment

November 2022 Candles **\$4,956.51**
November 2022 Trays **\$3,850.00**
Total November 2022 Candles & Trays \$8,806.51



JANUARY 2023 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

1 Circumcision of Christ/St. Basil the Great 9:00 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	2	3 6:00 pm Folk Dance Practice 7:30 pm Philoptochos Board Zoom Meeting	4 6:00 pm Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil the Great and Great Blessing of Water	5 Eve of Theophany (Services on 1/4) 5:30 pm Catechism with Florin in Library	6 Holy Theophany of our Lord 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy and Great Blessing of Water	7 St. John the Baptist (Parish Feast Day) 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy and Artoclasia
8 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Parish Council Oath and Community Vasilopita	9 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting in Library	10 6:00 pm Folk Dance Practice	11	12 5:30 pm Catechism with Florin in Library	13	14 9:00 am Young Adults Hike at White Rock Hills Loop, Red Rock Canyon
15 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Philoptochos Membership in Foyer 12:15 pm Youth Choir 5:00 pm GOYA Night in Panos Hall	16 11:30 am Forerunners Luncheon in Kokkos Hall	17 St. Anthony the Great 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:00 pm Folk Dance Practice	18 St. Athanasios and Cyril 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	19 5:30 pm Catechism with Florin in Library	20 6:00 pm Mr. and Mrs. at Lekar Home	21 9:00 am All Youth Snow Day at Lee Canyon
22 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	23	24 6:00 pm Folk Dance Practice	25	26 5:30 pm Catechism with Florin in Library	27	28
29 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	30 Three Holy Hierarchs 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	31 6:00 pm Folk Dance Practice				

The Desert Messenger

*St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
5300 South El Camino Road
Las Vegas, Nevada 89118-1922*

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THE DESERT MESSENGER

The Way of the Lord



*At Your Baptism in the
Jordan River, O Lord,
the worship due to
the Holy Trinity
was made manifest;
for the Voice of the
Father bore You witness
by calling You
“Beloved Son”;
and the Holy Spirit
in the form of a Dove,
confirmed the
immutability of this
declaration. O Christ
God Who appeared and
illuminated the world,
Glory to You!
(Apolytikion for Holy
Theophany, in First Tone)*