

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 17, Issue 1 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

January 2019

**From
Father
John**

Beloved in Christ:

I greet you all as fellow pilgrims with a heartfelt prayer that our Trinitarian God will bless you with a New Year replete with His abundant grace.

Just a few weeks ago I was blessed to lead a spiritual pilgrimage of 35 faithful disciples to the Holy Land: Actually, I was the spiritual leader on paper, but in all truthfulness the leaders who really made this an amazing pilgrimage were the tour organizers as well as the brilliant tour guides, bus drivers, bishops, priests, deacons and monastics with whom we were blessed to encounter on each day of our itinerary.

This spiritual journey had so many highlights – too many to mention in this month's letter – but given the approaching *Feast of Theophany on January 6*, my mind is drawn to the place of our Lord's Baptism by St. John, the Forerunner and holy patron of our beloved parish. Traveling south of the fertile and beautiful landscape of the Sea of Galilee – from which the Jordan River flows – the topography soon changed into a brown and arid wilderness that bordered the winding river. Our comfortable coach continued southbound, making a couple stops, first at the base of the Mount of Temptation (where our Lord underwent the temptations of Satan, and where our pilgrims were also tempted to buy fresh dates and Bedouin wares at the "Mall of Temptation"), and then at the Church of St. Elisha in the ancient 10,000 year-old city of Jericho (where we also saw the iconic sycamore tree that Zaccheus climbed to see the Lord).

Eventually we reached the day's highlight, the professed site of our Lord's Baptism, which had been off limits to pilgrims until the mid 1990s due to territorial wars – although the barbed wires and land mine warning signs still abound along the border between Israel and Jordan. The parking lot was full of tour busses and, yes, flies – yet that did not impede our mission to reach the river bank: I put on my epitrahilion (priestly stole), grabbed my new blessing cross which I purchased at the monastery in Capernaum for this event, and led our group down the path while chanting the festal hymn of Theophany. Swatting flies all the way down, we finally arrived . . . to murky waters! I blessed each pilgrim with the waters from the Jordan River, while also cautioning them to *not drink* the water they collected in their bottles, even as we witnessed large groups of people donned in white robes descending into the river to be baptized. On the way back to our coach, through the swarm of flies I observed a flock of white doves – and this was the only site where I witnessed such during our entire pilgrimage – which was somewhat of an epiphany that something extraordinary must have happened here.

Admittedly, this was one of the rare times during our awesome and overall life-changing pilgrimage when I was somewhat disappointed: I had anticipated taking some of the actual water home from the Jordan for blessing on Holy Theophany and each Baptism, but the raw waste floating in my vial deterred me from doing so. With further reflection, I have since deduced that these polluted waters, just like the defilement of our fallen human nature, point to the very reason why our Lord Jesus Christ came in the flesh, was Baptized, voluntarily Crucified and Resurrected from the dead: Specifically, to purify and liberate us from the murkiness of our sins, to show mercy and forgive us, and especially to raise us up from death itself.

(Continued on Page 3)



WORSHIP SCHEDULE

*Sundays: 8:45 am Orthros ~ 10:00 am Divine Liturgy
Church School follows Holy Communion*

Tuesday, January 1/*Circumcision Christ/
St. Basil the Great*
9:00 am Orthros
10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
Epistle: Colossians 2:8-12
Gospel: Luke 2:20-21, 40-52

Saturday, January 5/*Eve of Theophany
(Strict Fast)*
8:00 am Orthros
9:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
and Great Blessing of Water
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27
Gospel: Luke 3:1-18

Sunday, January 6/*Holy Theophany of Our Lord,
God and Savior Jesus Christ*
Orthros: Festal
Morning Gospel: Mark 1:9-11
Epistle: Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7
Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17
*Blessing of the Waters follows the Divine Liturgy
of St. Basil the Great*
Parish Council Oath of Office
Parish Name Day Luncheon

Monday, January 7/*Synaxis of St. John the Baptist:
Our Parish Feast Day*
8:00 am Orthros
9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Acts 19:1-8
Gospel: John 1:29-34

Sunday, January 13/*Leave-taking of Theophany/
Martyrs Hermylos and Stratonikos*
Orthros: Tone Eight (Fourth Plagal)
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros):
John 21:14-25
Epistle: Ephesians 4:7-13
Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17
Cutting of the Community
Vasilopita



Wednesday, January 16
5:00 pm Orthros
6:00 pm Divine Liturgy (St. Anthony the Great)
Epistle: Hebrews 13:17-21
Gospel: Luke 6:17-23

Thursday, January 17/*St. Anthony the Great
(Celebrated preceding evening)*

Friday, 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

Sunday, January 20/*12th Sunday of Luke/
St. Evthymios the Great/Hieromartyr John*
Orthros: Tone One
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Matthew 28:16-20
Epistle: 2 Corinthians 4:6-15
Gospel: Luke 17:12-19

Friday, January 25/*St. Gregory the Theologian*
8:00 am Orthros
9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Hebrews 7:26-28; 8:1-2
Gospel: John 10:1-9

Sunday, January 27/*15th Sunday of Luke/
Zaccheos Sunday/Translation of the Relics of
St. John Chrysostom*
Orthros: Tone Two
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Mark 16:1-8
Epistle: Hebrews 7:26-28; 8:1-2
Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

Wednesday, January 30/*The Three Holy
Hierarchs: Ss. Basil, Gregory and John Chrysostom*
8:00 am Orthros
9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Hebrews 13:7-16
Gospel: Matthew 5:14-19



*"The first among all evils is ignorance;
next comes lack of faith."
(St. Mark the Ascetic)*



SUNDAY SCHEDULE

JANUARY 6: HOLY THEOPHANY - NAME DAY CELEBRATION

Ushers: Gus Flangas, Skip Ruffner, Bessie Stavropoulos, Spiros Filios, Demetrious Asim
and John Nicholas

Fellowship: St. John the Baptist Name Day Luncheon

JANUARY 13: COMMUNITY VASILOPITA

Ushers: Demetrious Asim, John Matsis, Mark Karris, Stacy Mavrantonis, Justina Szukiewicz
and John Koutsulis

Fellowship: Ladies Philoptochos Society

JANUARY 20

Ushers: Adam Bieker, Spiros Filios, Gus Flangas, Bessie Stavropoulos, John Nicholas
and Skip Ruffner

Fellowship: Pan-Arcadians

JANUARY 27

Ushers: Justina Szukiewicz, John Koutsulis, Adam Bieker, Stacy Mavrantonis, Mark Karris
and John Matsis

Fellowship: Daughters of Penelope

From Father John (Continued from Page 1)

For us Orthodox Christians, the Holy Mystery of Baptism is our participation in the Death and Resurrection of Christ – and the yearly Great Blessing of the Waters celebrated in conjunction with the Feast of Theophany is intended to be for each of us a renewal of that baptismal grace. Let us, as pilgrims journeying toward the Promised Land of God's Kingdom, eagerly approach these Spirit-filled waters for our spiritual regeneration and sanctification – to deliver us from the tides of murky temptations and sins which cling ever so closely.

With love in our ever-renewing Lord,



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 bowl of bottled water, a sprig of basil or rosemary, an icon and votive candle.

Parish Council Report

Greetings to all from the Parish Council as we enter the New Year!

The Parish Council Elections took place on December 16 with the following Stewards being elected to a two year term: Demetrious Asim, John Koutsulis, Mark Karris, Justina Szukiewicz, Skip Ruffner and Spiros Filios. We congratulate these newly elected council members and look forward to a successful term in steering our Parish through the next two years. They will be joining the returning members, Gus Flangas, John Matsis, Adam Bieker, Bessie Stavropoulos, Stacy Mavrantonis and John Nicholas. All Parish Council Members will be taking the Oath of Office on **Sunday, January 6** during the Divine Liturgy, and election of officers will follow the service.

January as always will be eventful in our Church, with the Great Blessing of the Water and our annual St. John the Baptist Name Day Luncheon taking place on the **Sunday of Theophany (January 6)**, and the annual Blessing and Cutting of the Vasilopita on **Sunday, January 13**. Please join us as we celebrate the Name Day of our Church with a delicious luncheon prepared lovingly by the members of our Parish.

The year 2019 will be huge in the history of our Parish. Information has been sent out about our 60 Year Anniversary Celebration, which will take place in November. This is a momentous occasion and we urge all Stewards to participate in this event. Specifically, all members are encouraged to pledge and help us retire our mortgage this year (see Pages 9-11). Further, as Gus Flangas recently announced in Church, our Parish's application to the IRS for 501c(3) status has been approved, and this is an instrumental part of completing the next phase of our Iconography. Now that this status has been granted, the Parish Council has submitted the requisite Visa applications that will allow the Iconographers to return to our community and complete Phase 3. With God's Grace, we anticipate that the completion of Phase 3 will be completed during the year, in time for the Parish's 60th Anniversary Celebration.

Yours in Christ, John Matsis, Parish Council Vice President



Please join us for . . .

St. John the Baptist Name Day Luncheon Sunday, January 6, 2019

***Following Divine Liturgy
& Great Blessing of Water***

Panos Hall

***Menu: Greek Salad, Chicken Gyro with Tzatziki,
Greek Fries, Galaktoboureko and Coffee ~ Cash Bar***

\$15 per Person ~ Benefits St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

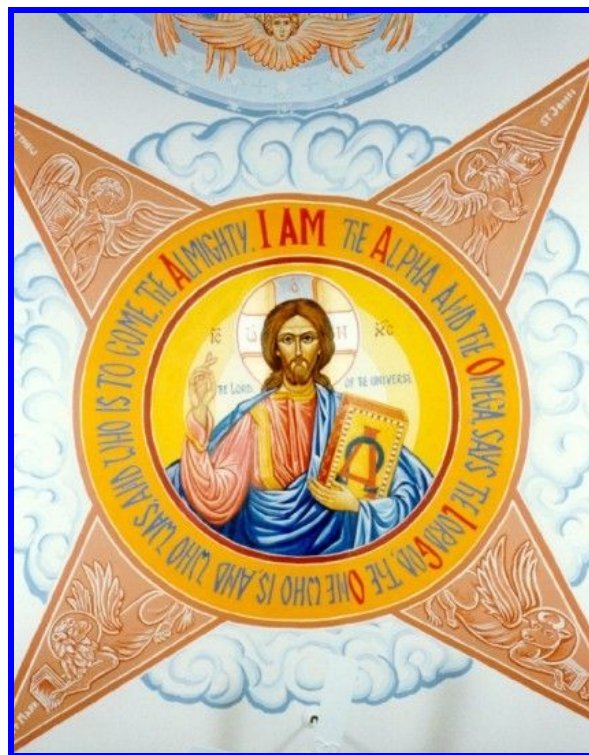
Tickets available at the door

For table of 10 (\$150), please see Karen at the Church Office

Stewardship and Community Outreach

Following hot on the heels of a joyous Nativity season and the afterglow of Theophany, perhaps we can pray a special prayer for St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church here in Las Vegas, Nevada during the Great Blessing of the Waters. Maybe those same blessed waters may be used for a cold splash in the face for stewards and non-stewards alike, reinforcing the message of the past year . . . softening us who are hard-hearted, ringing out to us who have ears but do not hear, and enlightening us who have eyes, but do not see.

Our Stewardship Committee, our Parish Council, and our Priests have spent much of the past year reminding, exhorting, cajoling, and pleading with parishioners regarding the state of our community's stewardship versus the ongoing struggles to meet basic Church operating expenses and addressing much needed facility maintenance, repairs, and security upgrades. Of course, the stewardship message is oft repeated but there has been a special focus this year to highlight our funding struggles and we have spent the past year pounding the stewardship drum. Every. Single. Month.



Well, a year has come and gone with little real progress. A few major contributors were lost, and a few were gained but on the whole, very little headway was made regarding getting more people to participate at what the Archdiocese would deem minimal, let alone acceptable, levels based on current parish regulations.

In a healthy Church, paid stewardship should cover all basic operating expenses. Ideally, it should generate even more funds, in order to entertain growth opportunities regarding facilities, ministries, staff, etc. However, reviewing the numbers Gus recently shared in Church clearly indicates stewardship levels are leaving our Church finances far from healthy. Using the final 2017 basic operating expenses of \$992,084 and stewardship of \$380,826 we can divide and translate that to a calendar to see that last year, our stewardship would have only kept the Church running from January 1 through May 20. Using the latest (November) 2018 stewardship numbers compared to last year's basic operating expenses indicates we are doing a smidgeon better: Our stewardship would have kept the Church running from January 1 through May 27. Both are a far cry (in the wilderness) from December 31!

In his epistle, St. James asks, *"What does it profit . . . if someone says he has faith but does not have works?"* and then answers shortly thereafter, *" . . . faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."* (James 2:14, 17) In the Revelation to St. John, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself (referenced here as *"the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God"*) warns the Church at Laodicea (and us today) that our faith ought not to be lukewarm. *"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth."* (Revelation 3:15-16) The accompanying study notes which follow these harsh words, explain that "The Laodiceans were lukewarm in spiritual fervor and good works; their lack of commitment is revolting to the Lord, who would have them go one way or the other." (Orthodox Study Bible)

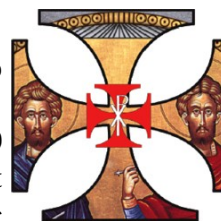
Friends, let us all make a commitment in 2019 to turn back to the Lord, increasing in both spiritual fervor and good works such that it will be evident that our faith (and community) is neither dead nor dying. The time to live our faith is now. The time to enact our good intentions is now. The time to demonstrate that St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Las Vegas, Nevada is capable of being a strong, vibrant, and growing community is now. Let us remove the tarnish our hard hearts have become encompassed by and become the "Jewel in the Desert" God is calling us to be.

Mike Beeler, Stewardship and Outreach Committee

Philoptochos News

Dear Philoptochos Sisters and Brothers,

Another fresh New Year is here . . . another year to live! To banish worry, doubt and fear, to love, laugh and give!



Christmas Pastry Sale: This year we prepared 900 packages of delicious Greek pastries. The pastry boxes turned out beautiful with different colored ribbons and ornaments. A special thank you to the committee members of the Christmas pastry sale: Amanda Flangas, Bernadette Anthony, Dora Hart and Geri Kypreos. We sold all the pastries and we are grateful to all our volunteers – men, women and children – who came and helped with baking, packaging and decorating, as well as to all those who purchased them! It was a group effort in an atmosphere of wonderful energy and love.

Annual Christmas Party: This year the Philoptochos Christmas Party was held at The Martini restaurant. It was a beautiful event, filled with a room of



50 women and a few men in an atmosphere of laughter, Christmas spirit, fellowship and love. We were very happy to have Mr. Robert Youshok as Santa Claus, who spent the evening greeting us, delivering gifts and taking pictures with every one of us, adding to the Christmas giving spirit. We collected donations for Smith's gift cards that will be given to the people in need in our community. I would like to express our appreciation to Jelena Boskovic for being our gracious chairwoman. Thank you also to her daughter, Vasilija, for her participation and enthusiasm. She is a wonderful, talented and smart young lady who is always eager to help and entertain us.



St. John Community Christmas Card: Over 125 people participated in the Community Christmas Card this year, which has been mailed to each and every family in our community expressing the Christmas message and wishes to everyone. Our appreciation to Andrea Takas, who once again this year chaired this wonderful project, as well as to Bill Bruninga, our photographer, and Bessie Stavropoulos, our designer.

JANUARY EVENTS:

● **Sunday, January 6 (Holy Theophany) – St. John Name Day Luncheon.** Please join us in celebrating the Name Day of our Church, for the Divine Liturgy and the Luncheon hosted by the Parish Council. We also need eight women to help serve food, coffee, desert and sell tickets.

● **Sunday, January 13 – Community Vasilopita and Fellowship.** In celebration of St. Basil, Philoptochos provides large Vasilopites (sweet New Year's breads) made by Dora Hart. Father John will bless, cut and together with Father Seraphim distribute the bread in Church. Each loaf has a coin, and it is a special blessing to receive the coin. Every ministry and person present will receive a piece: Upon receiving your piece, please make a monetary donation. All proceeds will be sent to support St. Basil's Academy. During Fellowship we will also be selling homemade Vasilopites.

● **Sunday, January 20 – General Meeting.** Following the Divine Liturgy, Philoptochos will have its first General Meeting of 2019 in Kokkos Hall.

ADDITIONAL PHILOPTOCHOS DATES FOR 2019:

Sunday, February 3 – Go Red for Women/Carnations and Membership Event

Sunday, February 10 – Departed Members Memorial

Sunday, February 24 – Kids 'N' Cancer Fellowship and Collection

Saturday, March 2 – Mardi-Gras Gala, sponsored by Philoptochos and Pan-Arcadians

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Philoptochos News *(Continued from Page 6)*

ADDITIONAL PHILOPTOCHOS DATES (Continued):

Monday, March 11 – Lent Begins

Sunday, April 21 – Palm Sunday Luncheon

Thursday, April 25 – Red Egg Dyeing

Friday, April 26 – Holy Friday and Epitaphios Decorating

Sunday, April 28 – Pascha Sunday and Agape Picnic: Wine Wagon and Pastries Sales

Sunday, May 12 – Mother's Day

Sunday, May 19 – Bartsas Memorial

Monday, May 20 – President's Dinner



As we continue celebrating the glorious Feast of the Nativity through Holy Theophany, I would like to express my gratitude to our wonderful board, our chairladies, and all our members for their efforts, time, donations and participation to make our Philoptochos programs, projects and events a success.

I wish you and your families a very Happy and Healthy New Year.

With Love in Christ,

Vicky Palivos, Philoptochos President



Our Community Registry

Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisi

Evangelos Gabriel, son of Jesse Hernandez and Panagiota Vinieratos, on December 15, 2018.

Godparents: Andrew and Stephanie Vinieratos.



Adult Study with Father John

The Acts of the Apostles

Resumes Wednesday, January 9

7:00 - 8:30 pm in Kokkos Hall

Bring Your Bibles (RSV Preferred)

“Do not be anxious about unclean thoughts.

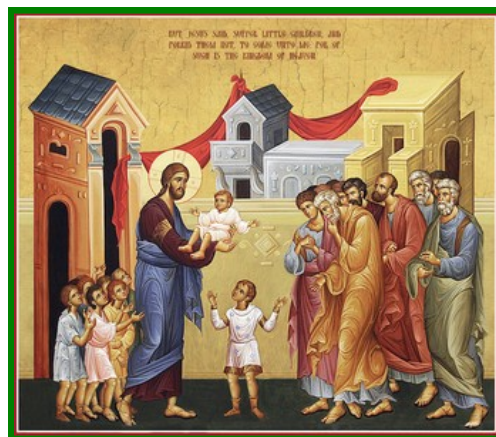
Consider a basket full of wet clothes.

If we leave the clothes in the basket for a long time, they will surely rot; the same will happen to our thoughts. If we do not put them into action, they will disappear by themselves in the course of time.

(St. Poemen the Great)

From Father Seraphim

There is a striking absence of 30 year-olds in our Church. The latest research reports that a staggering 60 percent of teens will leave our Church in their adolescence and by their 20s will no longer identify as Orthodox Christians. I have met many of our young people who fit into this age category and no longer attend Church services or actively practice their Faith. Some I met at the Greek Food Festival, others at Monday Night Basketball or a Young Adults ministry event like ice-skating or a dinner gathering. Speaking in an atmosphere of openness and love, never condemning – but seeking to truly understand them I have been able to ask, “Why don’t you come to Church on Sunday morning?” The answers vary. Some sense being judged by an older generation for piercings or how they dress, some experience comments when they do go about their infrequent attendance, and some even admit plain laziness. Faith or belief in God is not necessarily absent, but they do have serious questions: “How does faith square with science and evolution? What about the homosexual and transgender community? Why is sex before marriage wrong? Aren’t there errors in the Bible? Is smoking marijuana or getting drunk really a sin? The people in Church are hypocrites, one way in Church and then outside they just gossip or criticize so why go there?”



Subconsciously acknowledging the growing absence of this demographic from our Church, we know that we have a serious problem and need to fix it: So we bring on a youth director/pastoral assistant or ask the Bishop to send us a second Priest. The main job description is, “The Youth,” while this person is surely learning the ins and outs of parish ministry as well. Without trying to shirk any responsibility, and entirely dedicated to connecting our children, teens, and young adults to the living Christ, I must say this is an inadequate solution. The problem is simple mathematics: I get to spend a few hours a month with the youth in our parish. On the other hand, kids spend 8-16 hours a day in schools, on the internet/inhabiting social media websites, around friends, and in a culture/society, that is very secular and increasingly hostile to traditional Christian morality, practice and belief.

A different solution is for every mother and father to know that their primary responsibility concerning their children is not to make sure their child makes it into a prestigious college and goes on to perform well in a lucrative career. We parents must ensure that from their earliest days, our children are placed on a path and way of life we ourselves have embraced. We can forget that Christianity is not just a belief system we subscribe to or a box we check to make sure we go to heaven. Orthodoxy is fundamentally a way of life, practicing actions of love and virtue that form a character and transformed personality: We actually become holy like Christ. Just coming to Church on Sundays or having been baptized into the true Faith cannot be something we tack on to a secular way of life. If parents have not taken the time to know why they are Orthodox Christians and how to live as Orthodox Christians, we can be sure the children will not easily find the path to salvation simply by going to monthly ministry events at Church.

The percentage of 20 and 30 year-olds leaving our Church drops dramatically to just 10 percent and lower in families where both parents actively practice Christianity (praying with their children, fasting as a family, attending the Divine Liturgy together weekly and on weekdays and major feasts, reading the lives of the saints and the Gospel, and speaking openly and frequently about difficult moral issues facing their kids every day, such as abortion, pornography, drugs, etc.). We can still have a youth pastor and parent volunteers running ministries to increase and build upon our family’s already existing identity as Orthodox Christians: But this should not substitute for our own example as the primary teachers for our kids about how important God, the Church, Faith, prayer, confession, and reading the Scriptures is. If we neither pray, nor fast, go to Church infrequently nor read spiritual books – how could we expect our children to become serious, faithful Orthodox Christians?

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ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH 60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

October 15, 2018

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

By God's Grace, the Ladies Philoptochos Society Panagia Chapter is pleased to announce the **60th Anniversary Celebration of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church** in Las Vegas, Nevada. Please mark your calendars for the weekend of **November 8, 9 and 10, 2019**.

Our Church Family has experienced many blessings over the past six decades:

- 1959 - We worshipped in a meeting room at the *Elwell Hotel* and at *Christ Episcopal Church*
- 1969 - 1993 - We were baptized, married and buried in our sweet little *East Carson Avenue Church*
- 1971 - *Burning of the Mortgage, Carson Avenue Church*
- 1973 - *First Greek Food Festival*
- 1990 - *A New Beginning*, groundbreaking on El Camino Road for our new Church Campus
- 1992 - *Raising of the Dome*
- 1992 - *Thyranoixia*, Opening of the Doors
- 1997 - *Burning of the Mortgage, El Camino Road Church*
- 2003 - *Jewel in the Crown Grand Opening* of St. John the Baptist Community and Education Center
- 2005 - *Sacred Consecration* of our beloved Church
- 2005 - 2006 - *Iconography - First and Second Phases*
- 2009 - *Our Golden Heritage*, the 50th Anniversary of our Church Community

Sixty years! Those of us who were here from the beginning, those of us who arrived mid-way, and those of us who are new to the community are blessed with the joy of worshipping in His magnificent Byzantine Church and enjoying fellowship in our Community Center and beautiful park-like grounds.

The cost of this remarkable project has been Eight Million Dollars (\$8,000,000.00). In 2005, the outstanding mortgage on the St. John the Baptist Community and Education Center was \$800,000. 13 years later, we still owe \$300,000. It is time that we, as a Church Family, unite in purpose to pay our debt.

The Ladies Philoptochos Society has been entrusted with the chairmanship of the **60th Anniversary Celebration of November 8, 9 and 10, 2019**. As a forerunner to the 60th Anniversary Celebration and in order to pay our outstanding mortgage in full, we are presenting a **"\$300,000 One Year Plan"** so that a year from now we can also celebrate being debt-free. With a generous heart, please review the enclosed packet explaining how you may receive the blessing of participation.

On behalf of the Ladies Philoptochos Society Panagia Chapter.

Your sisters in Christ,

Vicky Palivos, President
Ladies Philoptochos Society
Panagia Chapter

Nitsa Filios, Chairwoman
702 595-6888
nitsalv@aol.com

Cheryl Pandelis, Chairwoman
702 338-1601
cheryl.pandelis@outlook.com



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

\$300,000 ONE YEAR PLAN

SUGGESTED DONATIONS

Please choose one

Plan 1:	\$1,000	_____ pay in full or _____ \$83.33 per month for 12 months***
Plan 2:	\$2,000	_____ pay in full or _____ \$166.67 per month for 12 months
Plan 3:	\$5,000	_____ pay in full or _____ \$416.67 per month for 12 months
Plan 4:	\$7,500	_____ pay in full or _____ \$625.00 per month for 12 months
Plan 5:	\$10,000	_____ pay in full or _____ \$833.33 per month for 12 months
Plan 6:	\$15,000	_____ pay in full or _____ \$1,250.00 per month for 12 months
Plan 7:	\$25,000	_____ pay in full or _____ \$2,083.33 per month for 12 months
Plan 8:	\$50,000	_____ pay in full or _____ \$4,166.67 per month for 12 months

*****300 Contributors participating in Plan 1: \$1,000 over the course of 1 year,
or \$83.33 per month for 12 months, would abolish our \$300,000 debt!
Please think about what \$83.33 per month represents to you and
find a way to help make it happen!**

These are "SUGGESTED" donation plans, however

ALL DONATIONS ARE WELCOME

FOR ASSISTANCE IN DESIGNING A PERSONALIZED PLAN

OR TO SET UP A MONTHLY PAYMENT SCHEDULE

please call or email

Cheryl Pandelis 702 338-1601
cheryl.pandelis@outlook.com

Nitsa Filios 702 595-6888
nitsalv@aol.com

THANK YOU!



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
60TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

\$300,000 ONE YEAR PLAN

Please fill out and return this form to St. John Church in the enclosed envelope

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE: _____ MOBILE: _____

EMAIL: _____

DONATION AMOUNT: \$ _____

IN FULL: \$ _____ **OR 12 MONTHLY PAYMENTS OF \$ _____ EACH**

CHECK* Number: _____ Date: _____

CREDIT CARD** AMEX _____ VISA _____ MC _____ OTHER _____

Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____

SIGNATURE: _____ DATE: _____

**Please make check payable to St. John Greek Orthodox Church*

***If you prefer, please call Karen directly at the Church Office 702-221-8245 with your credit card information*

ALL DONATIONS ARE WELCOME

FOR ASSISTANCE IN DESIGNING A PERSONALIZED PLAN

OR TO SET UP A MONTHLY PAYMENT SCHEDULE

please call or email

Cheryl Pandelis 702 338-1601
cheryl.pandelis@outlook.com

Nitsa Filios 702 595-6888
nitsalv@aol.com

THANK YOU!

Youth and Family Ministries

Church School

Christ is Born! Glorify Him! Happy New Year and a Very Blessed 2019!

The Christmas Pageant was very sweet as usual. We are so blessed to have our children participate in our annual Pageant and for our parish members to enjoy this in our beautiful Church. Thank you, Presvytera Maria, for all your hard work.

There will be no Church School on *Sunday, January 6* for Holy Theophany and we are encouraging families to worship together for this Feast Day. There will also be no Church School on *Sunday, January 13*, as we are encouraging families to participate in the Community Vasilopita after Liturgy.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

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

Youth Choir News



Happy New Year! We hope you all enjoy the 12 days of Christmas through Holy Theophany!

After a long break in December, we need to get back to our "singing routine" again! We will chant the Divine Liturgy on *Sunday, January 13*. Please be in the front right pew *by 9:40 am*. We will have Sunday rehearsals on *January 20 and 27 at 12:15 pm*, following Church School in the 4th-5th Grades Classroom.

May God bless us with a Happy and Healthy 2019! Love in Christ, Presvytera Maria

Greek Folk Dance

Happy New Year to all! Many thanks to those who opened up their homes and businesses for our annual Christmas Caroling! It was wonderful to share the Christmas spirit with our community. As we are making our final preparations in advance of the annual Folk Dance Festival, we have a few final events.

First, we are hosting a *Macaronada Glendi on Saturday, February 9, 2019 in Panos Hall at 6:00 pm*. Please bring the whole family to this fun event, which will feature live musicians from Greece! It will be an evening of dinner, dancing and fellowship. Tickets are only \$20 and will be available during Fellowship. Kids under 5 are free. You can also reserve a table of 10 for \$200.

Secondly, we look forward to sharing our hard work with everyone at our annual Preview Brunch, to be held on *February 10, 2019 in Panos Hall* during Fellowship.

Much Gratitude, The Folk Dance Board

From Father Seraphim (Continued from Page 8)

It is not the Church's job alone to raise the youth to be Christians, for our sanctification begins in the sacred spaces of our homes. Some ways to keep our kids connected could be: to spend less time with our televisions and phones and replace that time with reading the lives of the saints to our kids; praying as a family with incense and candles in front of our icons daily; or, while driving around (to work, school, or anywhere) listening to Orthodox homilies, Byzantine Chant or the Holy Scriptures.

I hope and pray for a grace-filled New Year of 2019 and look forward to working together with our parents and youth for a deeper relationship with Christ and His Church.

With Love in Christ,

Father Seraphim

Orthodox Family Fellowship

Happy 2019!

We are so grateful to Amy (Imtisal) Khuri for hosting our December potluck and gift-exchange, and to all who came and contributed! A great time was had by all.

In January we invite you to join us for a movie night at the Church! *We will be showing the Prince of Egypt and eating popcorn on Sunday, January 20 at 6:30 pm in Panos Hall.* We have a new sound system that will come handy during this event and many more to come!

Bring a dish if you can and come to celebrate another day united with Christ.

We look forward to seeing you there!

In Christ, Amy Khuri and Jelena Boskovic, OFF Advisors



GOYA ~ For Teenagers

Happy New Year GOYANs! January 2019 is packed with amazing events and fellowship:

Sunday, January 13 at 5:00 pm: Taking Down the Christmas Tree Party in Panos Hall!

Friday, January 18 at 7:30 pm: Ice Skating at the Las Vegas Ice Center (9295 W. Flamingo Road, Suite 130).

Friday, January 25 at 4:30 pm: Serving Dinner to the Homeless at Las Vegas Rescue Mission.

Please note the calendar for all of the wonderful January Liturgies and services. Blessed Name Day to all who celebrate their Name Day on January 7 (St. John the Baptist)!

GOYA Parents, please see Father Seraphim, June Likourinou or Kouli Pouridis if you are able to assist with sponsoring or co-sponsoring a GOYA Sunday meal.

Lastly, as a group we will be going to the first session of Summer Camp at St. Nicholas Ranch *July 7 – 13*. Please contact Father Seraphim if you are either planning to travel in the van together or carpooling with anyone else.

Have a blessed month! With Love in Christ, June Likourinou and Kouli Pouridis, GOYA Advisors



Greek Language Program



Happy New Year! Καλη Χρονια!

The kids had a fun Christmas Party and book exchange on the last day of the first semester of Greek School. We will resume classes on *Tuesday, January 8*. I want to thank the teachers for taking care of things while I have been away. We are all looking forward to another semester!

Paula Kelesis, Greek School Director

Adult and Young Adult Ministries

Young Adults

We look forward to being together at the home of Niko Asim for our annual Christmas Party. In the New Year we will be hosted by Pete Tsolis on *Saturday, January 26 at 6:00 pm* at his home for an evening of dinner, fun and fellowship. Please bring a dish to share and RSVP with Father Seraphim or Pete for directions or with questions!

In Christ, Niko Asim and Elizabeth Arbuiso, YA Advisors

Kali Parea - "Good Company" for the 40+ Crowd

Happy New Year!

Thank you to Pete Papas for hosting us at his restaurant and an amazing meal after Christmas! This January we will be participating in the St. John the Baptist Name Day Luncheon on *Sunday, January 6*. Please come for the services, including the Great Blessing of the Waters, and join us for the celebration afterwards. See you there!

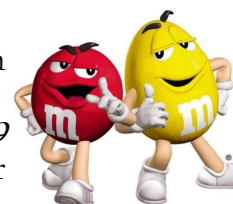
In Christ, Demetri Asim

Mr. & Mrs. - A Couples Fellowship

We extend a heartfelt thank you to Thymios and Roulla Carabas for hosting us in December and welcoming our Folk Dance Groups as they sang Christmas carols as well.

This month we will meet at *Mike and Effie Lekar's home on Saturday, January 19 at 6:00 pm* for dinner, spiritual discussion and fellowship. Please RSVP with Father Seraphim for directions and to let us know what dish you will bring to share.

God's Blessings in the New Year! Father John, Father Seraphim, and their Presvyteres



Forerunners - The Seniors of St. John the Baptist



A Blessed and Joyous New Year to All! May 2019 bring us peace, joy, happiness, love and good health.

Our Christmas Party in December was well attended. A big thank you to Faye Brown, my co-director, who in my absence got the luncheon set up with the other faithful volunteers. The delicious

lunch was prepared by our Master Chef, Sam Koutsulis, and his crew. We also enjoyed our dear Santa Claus (Nick Katris) who presented us with lovely gifts from our gift exchange. Teddy Kaye livened up our luncheon with live music and entertainment. Thank you to all! Everyone had a great time!



Our January luncheon will be on *Monday, January 14* – we will have another delicious lunch and cut our very own Vasilopita. If

you have not been to any of our luncheon gatherings, it is time you join us: We are a special group of people.

We never forget our seniors in hospitals, facilities or home bound – we have them in our thoughts and prayers. Love in Christ, Victoria Xikis, Forerunners Co-Chair



Please Join us For an Evening of
Dinner and Dancing

Macaronada Glendi

Featuring Live Musicians from Greece

\$20

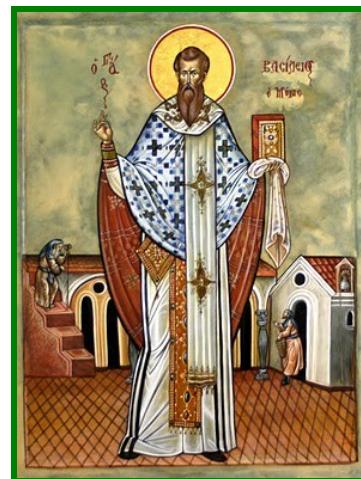
Kids under 5 are Free

Panos Hall

Saturday, February 9, 2019 at 6:00 p.m.

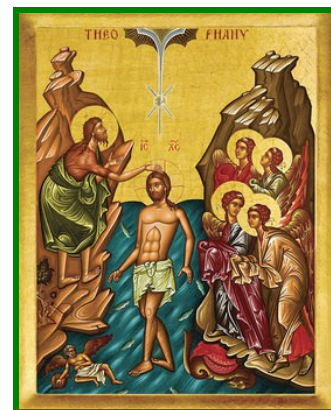
Cash Bar

All Proceeds to Benefit Greek Folk Dance Ministry



*Let us start the New
Year in Christ . . .*

*Please join us for the
Divine Liturgy on
Tuesday, January 1
at 10:00 am*



Orthodox Bookstore

Happy New Year from the Bookstore!

Copies of *The Daily Lives, Miracles and Wisdom of the Saints and Fasting Calendar* are here.

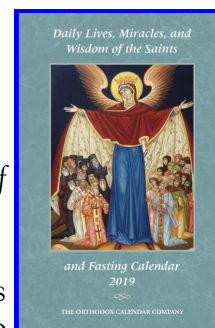
This month we are featuring *Precious Vessels of the Holy Spirit: The Lives and Counsels of Contemporary Elders of Greece*:

Elder George of Drama:

"Love all your fellow men, even your enemies. This is the most basic thing. Always love not only those who love us, but also those who hate us. Let us forgive them and love them all even if they have done us the greatest evil; then we are truly children of God. Then our sins are also forgiven . . . Always preach love. This is the most basic law of God: Love and love alone."

Also two more great books to check out: *Everyday Saints* and *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives*. You will certainly find spiritual benefit from these wonderful titles!

Until next month, God willing, ICXC NIKA - Constantine Frangakis and the Bookstore Team



Notes from the Choir Loft



Thank you to the Choir for their beautifully sung Liturgy on Christmas Eve! We will sing the Divine Liturgy for *Theophany on Sunday, January 6*. The Youth Choir will sing on *Sunday, January 13*. No practices will be held during the month of January. If you need help with any of the current music, please let me know. As always, we welcome new members.

Wishing everyone a happy, healthy and blessed New Year!

Athena Mertes, Choir Director

Byzantine Chant Class

Happy New Year! May 2019 be blessed with good health and happiness.

Thank you to everyone who attended the class this past fall. It was informative and enjoyed by all. We will continue our one-hour class on *Wednesdays, starting January 9 from 6:00 to 7:00 pm*. We will continue to work on Sunday Orthros hymns. After this, we will begin the explanation and music of the Lenten Services. Please join us!

In Christ, Presvytera Maria



The AHEPA Las Vegas Chapter 341

Happy New Year. Please mark your calendars: We will be meeting on
Tuesday, January 8 at 6:30 pm
in Kokkos Hall.

We will be discussing and planning our events for the 2019 calendar year.

Please let me know if you are interested in joining the AHEPA Chapter, either as a member or as Board Member (all positions are currently available – President, Vice President, Treasurer and Secretary) as well as several Committee Chair appointments.

Thank you, Kouli Pouridis, AHEPA Chapter President Pouridis5@cox.net or (702) 604-0885

TRADING ACCOUNT: ANOTHER WAY TO SUPPORT OUR PARISH

Looking for ways to financially support our Parish? Have you considered offering stocks, mutual funds, or cash from your IRA accounts as your Stewardship or a general donation to the Church? Doing so will benefit the Church and you can avoid paying taxes on any capital gains.

For this very purpose, the Parish Council has set up a trading account with UBS. If you are interested in offering a donation this way, please contact the Church at (702) 221-8245 and ask to speak to John Karas. He will work with you to get your generous Stewardship or general donation processed.

THE LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY
AND PAN ARCADIANs
INVITE YOU TO JOIN US FOR THE 2019

Apokreatiko Glendi

SAVE THE DATE!

Saturday, March 2, 2019 in Panos Hall

**FEATURING LIVE MUSIC
FAMILY STYLE MEAL WITH WINE
GREEK DANCING AND PERFORMANCES
COSTUME PRIZES AND MORE!**

All Proceeds Benefit the Mortgage Principal Payoff

Adult Basketball



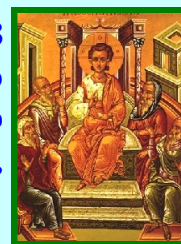
Join us for a pick-up basketball game *every Monday at 7:00 pm in Panos Hall*. Please call *George Karvounidis at (702) 339-8955* to be added to the basketball email list.



2018 Stewardship Report (as of 12/24/18)

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$403,581 (\$383,598 in 2017)
 Stewardship Gifts Received: \$380,426 (\$365,785 in 2017)
 Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$23,155 (\$17,813 in 2017)
 Stewardship Families Pledged: 440 (435 in 2017)
 Average Pledge to Date: \$917 (\$882 in 2017)
 Average Pledge Needed to Cover Operating Expenses: \$2,019

With gratitude to the number of Stewards who increased their 2018 Pledges to help us move closer to reaching our Stewardship Goal, as well as to those who have fulfilled their Pledges on time! Our faithful Stewardship allows us to continue worshiping and glorifying God in our beautiful Church, offering many ministries, and bringing others to the True Faith. God bless you!



Church Account Summaries - November 2018

Nevada State Bank Accounts	October Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November Ending Balance	Notes
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$20,179.99	\$35,330.38	\$34,135.61	\$22,676.83	\$57,986.69	\$8,982.46	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$1,635.76	\$3,108.60		\$1,000.00	\$383.85	\$3,360.51	
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$41,034.54	\$15,642.00	\$12,249.96	\$30,983.86	\$19,251.94	\$18,690.70	
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$280,801.38	\$6,001.00	\$16,793.66	\$2,011.45	\$29,183.96	\$272,400.63	
Folk Dance Group	\$17,316.13	\$2,909.00		\$50.00		\$20,175.13	
Mortgage Account	\$57,338.08				\$5,201.14	\$52,136.94	
Designated Funds	October Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November Ending Balance	Notes
Bookstore	-\$1,133.91	\$807.00	\$2,076.00	\$171.45	\$31.41	\$1,546.23	
Ornaments	\$1,077.41					\$1,077.41	
Restricted Funds	October Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November Ending Balance	Notes
ICON	\$255,958.20			\$1,840.00		\$254,118.20	4 Checks to Immigration-Iconographers
Library Account	\$1,470.77					\$1,470.77	Account owed \$21,000. Funds used to make payroll and pay bills in 2015
Giving Tree	\$5,450.91					\$5,450.91	
Building Fund	\$42.08					\$42.08	
\$300,000 One Year Plan	\$0.00	\$5,075.00	\$14,836.66		\$19,911.66	\$0.00	Funds collected/sent for Mortgage
Youth Choir	\$3,069.82				\$77.89	\$2,991.93	Funds from Holy Week goodies for choir
Church School	\$1,306.37					\$1,306.37	
Three Priests	\$12,977.37				\$9,163.00	\$3,814.37	Camera system & Altar Candles
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
GOYA	\$142.36					\$142.36	
Designated, Restricted, and Other Total	\$280,801.38	\$5,882.00	\$16,912.66	\$2,011.45	\$29,183.96	\$272,400.63	
Other Funds	October Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November Ending Balance	Notes
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$65,519.40					\$65,519.40	Account Value

Nov 2018 Candles **\$4,973.00**
 Nov 2018 Trays **\$3,303.68**
Total Nov Candles & Trays \$8,276.68



JANUARY 2019 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

		1 Circumcision of Christ/St. Basil 9:00 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil Church Office Closed	2	3	4	5 Eve of Theophany 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy Great Blessing of Water
6 Holy Theophany 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Great Blessing of Water Parish Council Oath Parish Name Day Luncheon in Panos 12:30 pm Folk Dance	7 St. John the Baptist Our Parish Feast Day 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	8 5:00 pm Greek Language Classes 6:15 pm Folk Dance 6:30 pm AHEPA meeting in Kokkos Hall	9 6:00 pm Byzantine Music Class 7:00 pm Adult Study	10	11	12
13 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Youth Choir Chants Community Vasilopita 12:30 pm Folk Dance 5:00 pm GOYA Night in Panos Hall	14 11:30 am Forerunner Luncheon in Kokkos Hall 7:00 pm Adult Basketball	15 5:00 pm Greek Language Classes 6:15 pm Folk Dance 6:30 pm Parish Council Meeting in Library	16 5:00 pm Orthros 6:00 pm Divine Liturgy (St. Anthony the Great) 7:30 pm Adult Study	17 St. Anthony (Celebrated 1/16)	18 Ss. Athanasios and Cyril 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 7:30 pm GOYA Ice Skating at Las Vegas Ice Center	19 6:00 pm Mr. and Mrs. at Lekar's Home
20 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 12:15 pm Youth Choir Practice in 4th/5th 12:30 pm Folk Dance 12:30 pm Philoptochos Meeting in Kokkos Hall 6:30 pm OFF Movie Nite	21 7:00 pm Adult Basketball	22 5:00 pm Greek Language Classes 6:15 pm Folk Dance	23 6:00 pm Byzantine Music Class 7:00 pm Adult Study	24	25 St. Gregory the Theologian 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 4:30 pm GOYA at Las Vegas Rescue Mission	26 6:00 pm Young Adults Dinner at Pete Tsolis Home
27 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 12:15 pm Youth Choir Practice in 4th/5th 12:30 pm Folk Dance	28 7:00 pm Adult Basketball	29 5:00 pm Greek Language Classes 6:15 pm Folk Dance	30 Three Hierarchs 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:00 pm Byzantine Music Class 7:00 pm Adult Study			

The Desert Messenger

*St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
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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 illumined the
world, glory to You.
(*Apolytikion of Theophany*)