

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 15, Issue 5 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

May 2017

**From
Father
John**

Beloved in Christ:

Christ is Risen!

During the month of May, as the temperature rises in Las Vegas, we are encouraged to be water smart, conserving this most precious natural resource when we can. Living in the desert we are regularly reminded of the shortage of water. In the Biblical lands water supply and drought are also constant themes.

On the fourth Sunday after Pascha (May 14 this year), our Lord Jesus Christ directs our attention to where the wells run deep. He has a profound and revelatory encounter, in the Gospel of St. John, with a Samaritan Woman at Jacob's Well: Our Lord, wearied and hot from a long journey, enters a long and life-changing dialogue with this woman who has come to draw water, requesting her to *"Give Me a drink."* (John 4:7) The woman is amazed that Jesus speaks to her, for the Jews had no dealings with Samaritans – and He replies to her questioning, *"If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."* (4:10) Christ then teaches this woman that He is not speaking of the water that is drawn from this or any earthly well, but rather that those who partake of *"the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."* (4:14)

As we have chanted in the Paschal Canon, Jesus Christ is the Fountain of Life: *"Come, let us partake of a new drink: not one miraculously brought forth from a barren rock, but a spring of immortality, welling up from Christ's tomb, from which we draw strength."* (3rd Ode) The Lord, speaking through the Prophet Jeremiah, admonished Ancient Israel for rebelliously committing these two evils: *"They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns, that can hold no water."* (Jeremiah 2:13) Yet our loving and merciful Lord, through His Crucifixion has forgiven all of us sinners who have forsaken Him, and by His glorious Resurrection has restored and reconciled us to Him, so that we can become "new cisterns" – that is, a new creation – partaking of eternal life.

Most assuredly, Christ foretells of the Baptism into Him which would begin on Pentecost Sunday, fifty days after His Resurrection – for His reference about the living water also reveals the activity of the Holy Spirit in the life of the faithful. Speaking to the Samaritan Woman about the life in the Church that would embark with the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Apostles, He says, *"The hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth."* (John 4:23) As we are Baptized into the Orthodox Church, we enter into Communion with the Living God, we are taught and we uphold the True Faith, and through worship and the Holy Mysteries we partake of His Kingdom, glorifying the Holy Trinity.

Upon hearing and understanding our Lord's words, this woman repented of her sins and, following His Resurrection, became equal to the Apostles in her witness of Christ. This woman – known as St. Photini – was eventually martyred in Rome, where the pagan emperor Nero had her thrown into a well. Still today, Christ is reaching out to all of us, even in our sinfulness, and calling us to become renewed in Him and witnesses of His Truth, especially in the face of false teachings and godlessness. May we, by His grace, become worthy cisterns of the living water!

With love in the Resurrected Lord,

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

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

Sunday, May 7/*Sunday of the Paralytic*

Orthros: Tone Three

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:13-35

Epistle: Acts 9:32-42

Gospel: John 5:1-15

Wednesday, May 10/*Mid-Pentecost*

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

Epistle: Acts 14:6-18

Gospel: John 7:14-30

**Sunday, May 14/*Sunday of the Samaritan Woman/
Martyr Isodore of Chios***

Orthros: Tone Four

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:1-10

Epistle: Acts 11:19-30

Gospel: John 4:5-42

*"For a whole year they met with the Church,
and taught a large company of people; and
in Antioch the disciples were for the first
time called Christians." (Acts 11:26)*

**Sunday, May 21/*Sunday of the Blind Man/
Ss. Constantine and Helen***

Orthros: Tone Five (First Plagal)

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:11-18

Epistle: Acts 26:1; 12-20

Gospel: John 9:1-38

Church School Commencement

**Wednesday, May 24/*Holy Ascension of Our Lord
(Observed)***

5:00 pm Orthros - 6:00 pm Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Acts 1:1-12

Gospel: Luke 24:36-53

**Thursday, May 25/*Holy Ascension of Our Lord
Liturgy on the preceding evening***

**Sunday, May 28/*Holy Fathers of the First
Ecumenical Council***

Orthros: Tone Six (Second Plagal)

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

Epistle: Acts 20:16-18, 28-36

Gospel: John 17:1-13

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

MAY 7

Ushers: Kouli Pouridis, Skip Ruffner, Bessie Stavropoulos, George Bochanis, Demetrious Asim and Pete Tsolis

Memorials: Father Constantine Raptis (40 days); Spiro Simos (1 year); Margaret Carras (3 years).

Fellowship: Sons of Pericles

MAY 14 - HAPPY MOTHERS DAY!

Ushers: Gus Flangas, Mike Beeler, Mark Karris, Stacy Mavrantonis, Justina Szukiewicz and John Koutsulis

Fellowship: Forerunners, Seniors of St. John the Baptist

MAY 21 - CHURCH SCHOOL COMMENCEMENT

Ushers: Bessie Stavropoulos, George Bochanis, Demetrious Asim, Kouli Pouridis, Skip Ruffner and Mark Karris

Memorials: Mary Bartsas and Departed Family Members; Gospodin Tsvetkov (40 days).

Fellowship: Ladies Philoptochos Society - Mary Bartsas Memorial

MAY 28

Ushers: John Koutsulis, Pete Tsolis, Justina Szukiewicz, Mike Beeler, Gus Flangas and Stacy Mavrantonis

Fellowship: Daughters of Penelope

Parish Council Report

Christos Anesti! We just completed a very beautiful and spiritual Holy Week and Pascha, culminating with our Agape Picnic. There are many, many people to thank who stepped up with their time and talents to ensure a phenomenal experience for everyone: Our clergy, whose guidance and energy throughout the many services was inspiring; Parish Council members and other volunteers, led by Demetri Asim, who all worked together to keep things running smoothly and efficiently for parishioners before, during and after services; our Philoptochos for their many contributions, including the flowers for the Epitaphion and the pastries for the Agape Picnic; Ernestine Kachikis for assisting and coordinating the floral decorations; Andrea Takas for spearheading the egg dyeing effort; Eileen Koutsulis for organizing the Myrrh Bearers; Adam Bieker for his leadership in organizing and coordinating a very successful and tremendous Agape Picnic; Steve Likourinou and his employees for their amazing contributions of time, expertise and equipment to provide an outside overflow area for worshipers that included an incredible high-tech audio-visual experience for people attending the Holy Friday and Resurrection services, and for providing the music for the Agape Picnic; Full Circle Events for donating a large tent for the outside overflow area; and Sam Koutsulis, Steve Tzelalis and their work crews for cooking and preparing the food for Palm Sunday and the Agape Picnic. Lastly, thank you to all the many people who helped in making everything great.

As we move forward from Pascha, it is imperative that we work together on Stewardship. There is so much more we need to do to get Stewardship on track. In talking about Stewardship, it is often thought as merely covering the expenses of the Church and to a certain extent that is true. However, we need to understand that Stewardship is so much more. It is about giving back for the many blessings bestowed upon us and becoming active participants in the Church. It is about having a vision both in the present and in the future. Stewardship is the life blood of our Church. One of its primary purposes is to promote spiritual growth and strengthen our Faith. It not only provides for our place of Worship, our Clergy and our Ministries, but it also provides for the future of our Church by bringing and keeping our youth in the Faith. The importance of Stewardship cannot be overstated. So we ask each and every one of you to work toward building Stewardship and contributing to the Church's vision.

On another note, as stated in this column last month, Father Matthew and his family will be leaving us next month to become the priest of another parish, St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Beaverton, Oregon. We are going to miss him and Presvytera Annie tremendously. Please join us on ***Sunday, June 4 for a Farewell Luncheon.*** Father Matthew's replacement is a soon-to-be-graduate of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Seminary, named Seraphim Ramos. As previously stated, he is married and has a baby daughter, and has been described as being energetic and pious, yet down to earth. Seraphim is due to visit our Church May 12-16; we look forward to meeting and welcoming him into our parish. His Ordination, which will take place here in our Church, is presently in the works and should be formally announced soon.

Pertaining to the Iconography, there has been some limited movement. We are told that the long awaited on-site inspection by the Immigration Office out of Southern California is not too far off and should occur in the next 30 to 45 days. Once this takes place, we are told it should only take about a month to get the appropriate papers for the iconographers to come here and complete the Iconography. Realistically, we are looking at somewhere around the end of July or early August. We will try to keep everyone informed with the latest information as it becomes available to us.

To keep you further informed, projects we are presently working on include completing the massive landscaping project undertaken last summer, completing the painting of the outdoor bathrooms, and painting the barbeque and outdoor oven areas. We will also be reworking the floors in Panos Hall and Kokkos Hall: There seems to have been a problem with the epoxy so the floors need to be re-sanded and a new coat of epoxy applied. We are also hoping to start fixing the parking lots soon. We would like to thank Ramona Tasios and Constantine Petriuc for their efforts in getting these projects done. Please take the time to look around the Church grounds and see the many improvements. We are also working on getting C&E organized and profitable: Many thanks to Jim Monoyudis and Mara Braun for getting this done.

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Parish Council Report *(Continued from Page 3)*

It is now time to kick the Greek Food Festival into high gear – the *Festival dates are September 15-17*. We are fully immersed in the planning process and have already started laying bands, equipment and other time-sensitive items. The first Festival meeting will be held on *Wednesday, May 3 at 6:00 pm in Kokkos Hall*. We are already selling Souvenir Book Ads and Raffle Tickets. Please help us in this effort.

In closing and as usual, we want to again thank the various Church ministries and organizations, and the many individuals for all the work they do and have done to help us secure the future of the Church for ourselves and, most importantly, our children. It clearly takes a lot of work from the entire community to maintain our Church. Please step forward whenever you can and pitch in. We know a lot of things are always happening, but they are extremely important. Please get involved as we move forward to make our Church better. May God bless.

Gus Flangas, Parish Council President

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*:

- 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!



Our Community Registry

Baptized into Christ: Na mas zisi!

Zacharie, son of Zachary Franzi and Alicia Naumann on April 7, 2017.
Godparent: Alexis Sanchez.

Marriages: Na zisete!

Michael Wagner and Nina Ioakimidis on April 22, 2017.
Koumbaros: William Marianes.

Thomas Fleetwood and Melissa Reyes on April 23, 2017.
Koumbaros: George Mathews.

Fallen Asleep in the Lord: Eternal Memory!

Rev. Father Constantine Raptis on March 31, 2017.
Funeral on April 5.



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Stewardship & Community Outreach:
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Chanters & Youth Choir:
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School: Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers: Alex & Eric Szukiewicz

GOYA:

Kouli Pouridis & June Likourinou

Orthodox Family Fellowship:
Jelena Boskovic & Amy Khuri

Moms & Tots:

Presv. Annie Swehla & Cassie Bieker

Young Adults:

Nicholas Asim & Anthony Kunard

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas

Greek School: Paula Kelesis

Mr. & Mrs.:

Fr. John, Fr. Matthew & Presvyteres

Kali Parea: Demetrious Asim

Adult Basketball: George Chomakos

Forerunners: Marie & Gary Setian

Orthodox Bookstore:
Constantine Frangakis

Greek Food Festival: Gus Flangas

Hellenic Historical Society:
Cheryl Pandelis and Susan Stamis

Bill Andrews Library: Susan Stamis

Photography: Bill Bruninga

Stewardship and Community Outreach

Χριστὸς Ανέστη!

With Pascha, Western Easter, and Spring Break all coinciding this year many people were traveling in mid-April. All that travel got me thinking about the marketing of loyalty programs and how they try to persuade consumers into limiting their purchasing choice to a particular airline, rental car company, or hotel chain. Exclusive awards, deep discounts, short lines, special lounges, color-coded status cards or other preferential treatment often await those with high frequent-flier mileage or point balances. These programs are not just limited to travel; you can also find them at gas stations, grocery stores, retail stores, and yes, even casinos.

All of this is done to encourage a deeper affinity and a stronger bond with a particular company. However, should you reduce your purchases or spread them around to several different companies, penalties are exacted: status may never reach a “preferred” level, points may expire, awards may drift further out of reach – with the result being that you find yourself excluded from the lounge, in the long line, at the crummy table, or in the small room with no view. There is freedom of choice, but there is also reward and punishment based upon how the company judges your loyalty.

So what do these successful marketing programs have to do with Stewardship? These programs are quite popular. These programs are very effective. These programs are familiar to nearly all of us in one form or another. On the other hand, our Stewardship program is not very popular and often not very effective.

However our Church (through Scripture, Tradition, the writings of the Church Fathers and the lives of the Saints) does, in a way, have something like a loyalty program: guidelines laying out the benefits of the program; description of benefits to be gained or lost; and mention of special perks. The guidance is all there, the invitation remains open, our names are already on file, a response is requested and awaited. What remains is for us to choose wisely.

Businesses have some customers who choose to remain faithful, some customers who choose to turn away, and some customers who choose to return. Changes in the relationship are dependent on how they individually exercise their freedom of choice, occasionally self-evaluating their behavior with respect to the loyalty program. Likewise, in Church God has those who choose to remain faithful, those who choose to turn away (sin), and those who choose to return (repent). Changes in the relationship are dependent on how they individually exercise their freedom of choice, occasionally self-evaluating their behavior with respect to their Lord and Savior.

This Paschal season we celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus Christ and the astounding offer made available to all. Jesus takes the judgment we deserve for our sins, and allows Himself to be sacrificed on the Cross. His Death gives us hope of God’s forgiveness. God accepts Jesus’ sacrifice. He is resurrected and breaks the bonds of sin, death and hell. His Resurrection gives us hope of eternal life. However, should we choose not to participate in this special offer but rather to “take our business elsewhere,” our souls would not be delivered from sin, death and eternal separation from God.

In this ultimate of loyalty programs, our attention is drawn to the certainty of judgment (punishment or reward) with the words spoken in every Divine Liturgy service: “With the fear of God, with faith and love, draw near.” In this loyalty program, we are each allotted one lifelong “special promotional period” in which to “act now.” Now is the time to draw near with faith and love. Draw near to our Church community. Draw near to practicing all facets of good Stewardship. Draw near to living according to the tenets of the Orthodox Faith. Perhaps spending just a few more hours helping at Church might move us closer to the sheep and further from the goats come Judgment Day (*Matthew 25:31-46*). Perhaps spending just a few more dollars supporting of our Church and its mission might move us further from the rich man suffering in torment on the wrong side of the great chasm (*Luke 16:19-31*). Perhaps spending just a few more moments praying each day, spending just a few more days attending worship services each month, and spending just a few more months living with a Lenten attitude each year might multiply our “pilgrimage mileage points” as we trek along the Way (*John 14:6*).

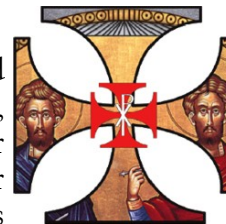


(Continued on Page 6)

Philoptochos News

Christos Anesti!

As the Scriptures tell us, it was the women first who found the Tomb of our Lord Jesus Christ empty and proclaimed that, "Truly He is risen!" And now, as then, it is the women of our Church that bear the traditions that help carry us through Lent and on to Pascha and our Savior's Resurrection! Many thanks to all the wonderful women of the Ladies Philoptochos Society and faithful of St. John the Baptist that stepped up and made all the traditions and activities run so smoothly.



It is that time for the President's Dinner and Presentation of the Kairos Award. All are welcome to the ***President's Dinner on Tuesday, May 9 at 6:00 pm in Panos Hall.*** This is will be a lovely dinner celebrating all the amazing accomplishments that the Ladies Philoptochos Society achieved the last two years. And of course looking to the future, we will elect the new Board of Directors of the Ladies Philoptochos Society. Our Election Chair, Joanne DeMangus, is looking for interested, energetic women who would like to share their talents as members of the Panagia Chapter Board. Please contact Joanne at (702) 461-2566 or rjdemangus@aol.com for more information. There is room for many fresh faces and familiar faces as we look forward to the next two years. The Ladies Philoptochos Society, like all organizations, is only as strong and viable as the members want it to be. Now is the time for you to share your voice on the direction of the Panagia Chapter.

As the outgoing President, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the women who have been on the Board the last two years: Bessie Chachas, First Vice President; Tami Stefanatos, Treasurer; Erin Speer, Recording Secretary; Andrea Takas, Corresponding Secretary; Alexia Chandrinos, Membership Chair; Geri Kypreos, Social Services Chair; Jennia Szukiewicz Outreach Chair; Dora Hart, National Philoptochos Representative; Carolyn Beeler, "the banker"; and Vicky Palivos, Dianne Bacon and Tamara Flangas as Board Members at-large. I would like to thank Marcie Karas and Joanne DeMangus for their time on the Board as well. With your steadfast devotion to Philoptochos and our Church, it was an amazing two years. Thank you!



I would like to thank the members of the Ladies Philoptochos Society for your help, whether it was in the kitchen baking cookies, stuffing envelopes, serving on a dinner line, making soup, selling tickets, or contributing when asked. You have continued the many projects that are traditions of our Chapter – the Autumn Bake Sale, Christmas Pastries, Community Christmas Card, the Wine Wagon, and the Las Vegas Best Contest. In addition to helping our Church community, we have helped children, the hungry and the seniors of Southern Nevada. We have provided sleeping bags for the homeless, helped cancer-stricken children and their families at Kids 'n' Cancer Camps, and contributed toward the rebuilding of the magnificent St. Nicholas Shrine at the World Trade Center. You are all wonderful and should be very proud of what we have accomplished.

It has been my honor and privilege to be a part of this talented team. God bless you all!

Your Sister in Christ, Bernadette Anthony, Philoptochos President

Stewardship and Community Outreach (Continued from Page 5)

No mention is made in the Bible of status cards to put in our wallets showing our name and the phrase "Good and Faithful Servant." But the risen Christ does tell us, *"In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also."* (John 14: 2-3)

Now that is a room comp worth working toward! Ἀληθῶς Ανέστη!

Mike Beeler, Stewardship Committee Member

From Father Matthew

Dear Beloved Brothers and Sisters,

Christ is Risen!!! It has been a beautiful and blessed time for me and my family here at St. John the Baptist Church. Nearly four years ago we arrived on a hot July evening and spent our first night in Vegas at the Excalibur! We settled into our home, then I showed up as a deacon to serve on the last two Sundays in July 2013. From those first encounters, we experienced the warm embrace of the people in this community.

It has been some eventful years! First was the annual Greek Food Festival. What an extravaganza! I remember walking around the Church grounds, conversing with all of you in your appointed stations, then going to the stage to watch our kids dance – including my own son this past year! Then there was all of the excitement and commotion of having thousands

of people stream through our gates, many of whom took a few minutes to attend a Church Tour. (I met some of you, our recent converts, for the first time at those Church Tours.)

Another major event each year was the experience of Holy Week, Pascha, and the Agape Picnic. We sang many beautiful hymns together, held candles together, and processed around the Church. And we have celebrated our Lord's Resurrection by breaking bread – and slicing lamb – together as a community at the Agape Picnic. This last Agape Picnic will be a fond memory for me and my family.

It has been a special blessing to work with the youth in our parish. In the four years, I have watched high school freshmen become seniors who will go off to college this fall. I have seen little kids grow taller, while they grow stronger in the Faith. And I have shared a night at the Church each spring with our teens on the annual Lenten Retreat. We did lots of hikes and outings. We played tug-of-war on the field and capture the flag under cover of night. And we had many volleyball practices – and many more Folk Dance practices!

A special joy for me has been our Young Adults group. Each month we have had a dinner and discussion together. From the first meetings, held at our home, to the recent gatherings of 20 or more people, I have watched these young adults grow from a group of individuals into an interconnected circle of friends. I pray that they continue to grow in Christ and in their relationships with each other.

Beside our youth and young adult groups, there are many other ministries to mention: I have had the joy of getting to know so many of you, in Philoptochos and Mr. & Mrs., in the Forerunners and Kali Parea, in Thursday Morning Study, and in many other settings.

Leaving here is harder than I would have imagined; the roots have grown deeper than I ever realized. Our kids have made friends – young and old – with many of you. (Some of you have “offered” to keep our kids here in Las Vegas!) Presvytera Annie has felt the love that pours out toward us, especially during her pregnancy. We have even brought a little boy into the world here at St. John Church, born in Las Vegas and baptized in our Church.

Just as God has brought us here to Las Vegas – and now brings us away – so too He will guide the transition as you welcome a new young priest into your community. I have known Seraphim Ramos since I was in seminary, and he is an outstanding person, full of zeal and God's grace. You will get to know him in the coming months, and you will see the positive attributes that he brings to our community.

Thank you for the opportunity and blessing to be a part of your lives, and for being such a big part of our lives! I am confident that God has brought us together for this time so that we may grow closer to Him, that we may all one day share in an eternal union in heaven.

God bless you all!

Father Matthew



Youth and Family Ministries

Church School

Christos Anesti!

I hope everyone enjoyed Lent, Holy Week and Pascha. It was wonderful to see so many of our youth involved. It was an amazing experience to spend Palm Sunday weekend again with Metropolitan Gerasimos. As always, he had a nice connection with the kids. We were happy that he was able to spend some time with them. A special thanks for our Altar Servers and Myrrh-Bearers. They do an incredible job. I love this time of year when the girls can participate in the beautiful Holy Week services. Thank you to the parents who donated filled eggs. The egg hunt at the Agape Picnic is a super popular event. What fun to see how happy the kids get by running out to grab those eggs!



The school year is coming to an end, and what a great school year we had. We are growing and growing in class size, thanks be to God. We will have **Commencement on Sunday, May 21**. Please mark the date down so your children can participate and you can share their achievement. The end-of-year celebration will immediately follow commencement.

With Love in the Risen Lord,

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

Youth Choir News



Christos Anesti!

A BIG THANK YOU to everyone who sang on Holy Saturday morning service. We were indeed a spirited bunch!

The Youth Choir will *practice* Pascha music on **Sunday, May 7 after Church School at 12:15 pm** in the 4th/5th Classroom; snacks will be provided. We will *chant the Divine Liturgy on Mother's Day, Sunday, May 14*. Please be on time at the front right row by 9:40 am. Our moms, theas, yiayias and nounas will appreciate our wonderful voices.

With Love, Presvytera Maria

GOYA ~ For Teenagers

Dear Teens,

Christ is Risen! We hope you are enjoying this wonderful Paschal season.

It is hard to believe that we have come to the end of another school year! Church School will end on May 21, and we would like to celebrate this with all of the youth and with Father Matthew (this will be his LAST youth event).

Join us on **Sunday, May 21** for an outdoor party to celebrate the end of the year, immediately following Liturgy and Church School Commencement. We hope to see all of you there!

With Love in Christ, June Likourinou and Kouli Pouridis, GOYA Advisors

Orthodox Family Fellowship

Christos Anesti! Christos Voskrese! Al-Masih Kam!

What a beautiful Holy Week and Pascha! We hope you all enjoyed the Agape Picnic and Egg Hunt!

This month we will celebrate the end of the school year with an outdoor party after Church School Commencement on **Sunday, May 21**. Join us for fun, games, and food, at the last youth event that Fr. Matthew will attend. See you there!

In Christ, Amy Khuri and Jelena Boskovic, OFF Advisors

Moms & Tots



Christ is Risen!

We hope that you had a blessed Holy Week and Pascha. We saw some of you at the services with your kids. Good job! We know how hard it is to bring our kids to Church; but God blesses every effort.

This month Moms & Tots will meet on **Tuesday, May 9, 10:30 am to noon in Kokkos Hall**. We hope to see you there! (This will be Presvytera Annie's last Moms & Tots gathering before she moves with her family to Oregon.)

In Christ, Presvytera Annie Swehla and Cassie Bieker

Greek Language Classes

Christos Anesti!

May will be the last month for Greek School. We will have an end-of-the-year picnic celebration out in the courtyard on **Wednesday, May 31**. A big thank you to parents and grandparents who brought their kids to class every week. We will start back up in September. And we are looking for teachers, so please contact me at (702) 249-4740 if you are interested in teaching.

Paula Kelesis, Greek School Director



Congratulations, Alex Szukiewicz!

On Thursday, April 13, Alexander Szukiewicz graduated from the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Academy. Alex is a native of Henderson, Nevada, and has been an active member of St. John the Baptist Church since he was a young child. He currently directs the Altar Servers, but has also served as a Church School teacher. We congratulate Alex and



his family, as we know he will be a valuable addition to the Metro Police.

CHRIST IS RISEN!
TRULY, HE IS RISEN!

ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ!
ΑΛΗΘΩΣ ΑΝΕΣΤΗ!

Your Sponsorship is encouraged . . . for a name day, birthday, anniversary or in memory of a loved one: \$100 - The Desert Messenger, \$50 - Weekly Bulletin.

Palm Sunday, Holy Week & Pascha 2017







Holy Friday 2017





Come, Receive
the Light!
Anastasi 2017



Christ is
Risen!

*Photos by
Bill Bruninga*



Adult and Young Adult Ministries

Young Adults

Christ is Risen, Young Adults!

This month's Young Adults gathering will be at the home of *John and Eileen Koutsulis on Saturday, May 20 at 7:00 pm*. We all hope to see you there for some great fellowship! This will be Fr. Matthew's last Young Adults gathering.

On behalf of myself and the rest of the Young Adults at St. John Church, we wish you only the very best up in Oregon, Father Matthew! Thank you for all you have shown and taught us!

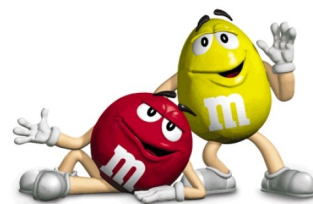
I hope to see you all on May 20. And please mark your calendar for next month's Young Adult gathering: Saturday, June 24, 7:00 pm, at the home of Rahel Kiflezgi.

In Christ, Niko Asim, Young Adult Advisor

Mr. & Mrs. ~ A Couples Fellowship

Christ is Risen!

Our April/May M&Ms dinner is hosted by *Bob and Cheryl Fischer on Sunday, April 30 at 6:00 pm*. Join us for some lively conversation and fellowship! Please bring your significant other and a dish to share, and RSVP with Father Matthew.



We are in the process of planning our June M&Ms dinner, which will afford us the opportunity to meet our new second priest and presvytera.

In Christ, Father John, Father Matthew, and their Presvyteres

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

Christos Anesti!

I would like to invite Kali Parea to my home on *Friday, May 12 at 7:00 pm* for a potluck dinner. Please bring a dish for everyone to share. We will have a nice evening of great food and fellowship. Please call me for directions. I look forward to seeing you there!

Demetrious Asim, Kali Parea Advisor

Forerunners ~ The Seniors of St. John the Baptist

Christ is Risen!

A tremendous Thank You to our beloved Priests, Chanters, St. John Choir and Youth Choir for making all the services during Holy Week so beautiful and meaningful. Kai tou chronou me to kalo!

Our Seniors are preparing two events. The first one is a *Movie Day on Tuesday, May 2 at The Orleans*. We will see *The Promise*, a movie depicting the Armenian people under the Ottoman Empire. All Senior members will be complimentary. Non-members will be \$5. Gary and Marie are waiting to determine the exact time we will meet and see the movie. Lunch will be on our own after the movie. Look for this information in the *Weekly Bulletin* on Sunday, April 30.

The second event will be our final *Senior Luncheon on Monday, May 8 at 11:30 am in Panos Hall*. We will be entertained by Teddy Kaye and his wonderful voice, as well as enjoying lunch and fellowship.

Please remember to sign up to volunteer for the Greek Food Festival – September 15, 16 and 17.

Our love and prayers to all our seniors who are home bound.

Kalo Kalokairi – a good summer to all! See you again in October.

Love in Christ, Victoria Xikis, for the Forerunners – the Seniors of St. John the Baptist

Notes from the Choir Loft



Christos Anesti!

Thank you to the Choir for their beautiful singing of the Holy Week and Pascha services! I appreciate your dedication, hard work and rehearsing during this busy season. Special gratitude to . . . George, our organist, for his assistance with rehearsals; Vicki, for her organization of events and correspondence; Faye for always filling in and helping out when we need it; and Presvytera Maria for helping us keep the services running smoothly! There will be no rehearsals for the month of May.

Athena Mertes, Director



"I know My own and My own know Me." STEWARDSHIP 2017

2017 Stewardship Report (as of 4/17/17)

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$300,028 (\$400,948 total in 2016)

Stewardship Gifts Received: \$144,248

Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$155,779

Stewardship Families Pledged: 326 (443 total in 2016)

Average Pledge to Date: \$928 (\$905 in 2016)

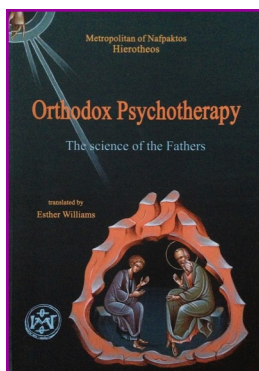
Orthodox Bookstore

Christ is Risen!

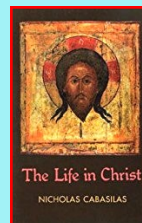
This month we are featuring *Orthodox Psychotherapy: The Science of the Fathers* by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos. Here is an excerpt from Chapter 3, "On the Soul":

"The ancient philosophers believed that the soul is at a specific place in the body, that the body is the prison of the soul and that the salvation of the soul is its release from the body. The Fathers teach that the soul is everywhere in the body. St. Gregory Palamas says that . . . the soul, as it sustains the body together with which it was created 'is everywhere in the body, not as in a place, nor as if it were encompassed, but as sustaining, encompassing and giving life to it because it possesses this too in the image of God.'"

Until next month, God willing, ICXC NIKA,
Constantine Frangakis, Bookstore Director



Thursday Morning
Study with
Father Matthew
The Life in Christ
by St. Nicholas Cabasilas



Weekly at 10:30 am in the Library

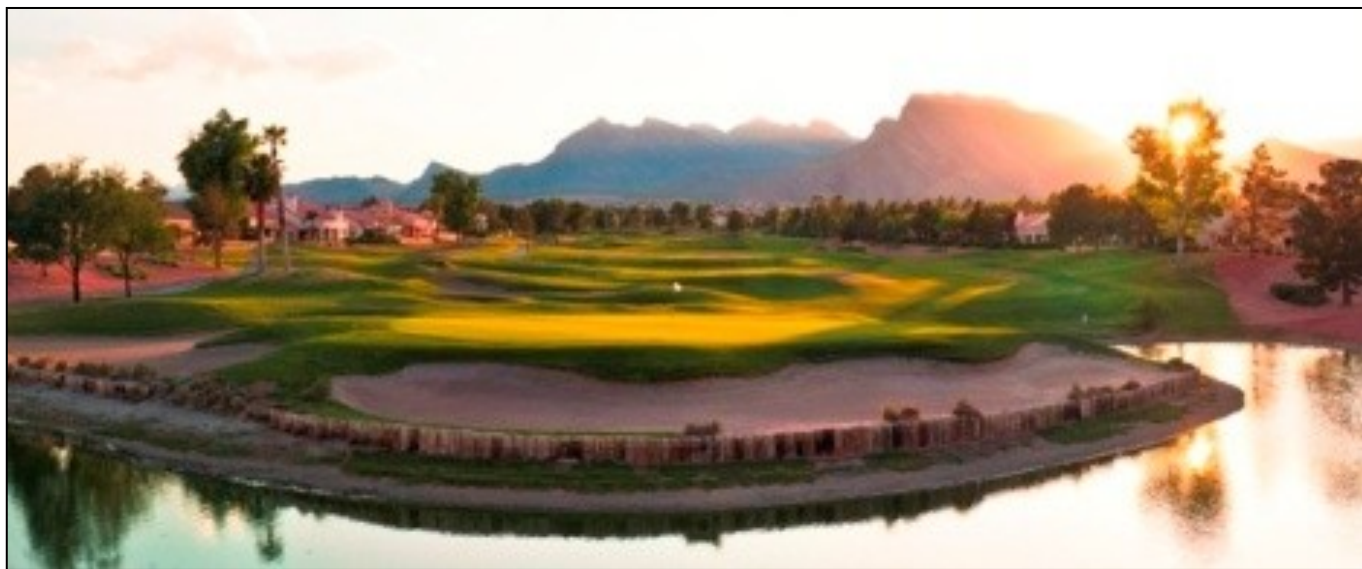


New Adult Study
with Father John:

A Spiritual Psalter
or Reflections on God by
St. Ephraim the Syrian
(Available in the Bookstore)

Wednesdays 7:00 - 8:30 pm
in Kokkos Hall

AHEPA CHAPTER 314 GOLF TOURNAMENT SAVE THE DATE: JUNE 24, 2017



*The Tournament will be held at the PALMS in Summerlin.
Golf Package - \$125: Green Fees, Lunch and Ticket for Raffle.
Shotgun Start at 7:30 am.*

*We are also looking for hole sponsors, donations and prizes.
For information on registration, sponsorships and donations please contact:
Jimmy Philippou (734) 260-4643 or Jim Liaos (702) 449-6716.*

"I know My own and My own know Me." (John 10:14)

Adamy, Marina	Costuros, George and Marsha	Hadzoglon, Christos and Barbara	Lymberopoulos, Mary
Anastasakis, Mark and Elaine	Cosulas, Fr. Basil and	Hall, Elizabeth	Maddox, Thomas and Maria
Anastasiou, Andrew and	Presv. Samantha	Hamilton, Mary	Malamatos, Kindina
Kathleen	Cotsilis, Jenny	Hamilton, Paul and Brandi	Maland, Tim and Donna
Andrews, Catherine	Coutris, Angela	Harrison, Angie and	Malpee, Mack and Kalliope
Andrews, Chris and Pamela	Crescenti, Stephen and Katherine	Schildmeyer, Christine	Maniatakos, Ted and Maria
Andricopoulos, Margo	Crist, Adam and Kanistra	Hayes, Tulla	Manos, Constantine and Michele
Anthony, Stavros and Bernadette	Dalacas, Dimitri and Athanasia	Hetzel, David and Joanne	Mansour, Muna
Anton, Mike and Carol	Dalacas, Eugenia +	Hoadrea, Jimmy and Monci	Manteris, Arthur and Sue
Aristides, George and Diana	Daskalos, George and Carrie	Hondros, Christina	Margaretis, John and Lucila
Asim, Demetrious	Daskalos, George and Voula	Hondros, Christopher	Mavrantonis, Stacy and Kiki
Asim, Nicholas	Delalis, Dina	Hondros, Fr. John and	Mavrantonis, Theofania
Austgen, Harold Max	DeMangus, Joanne	Presv. Maria	Mavroidis, Demetrios and Debra
Balaouras, Panos and Helen	Demolas, Maria and Nour, Reza	Hoover, Patrick and Pauline	Mavros, Michael+ and Debbie
Balason, Anna	Demoleas, Spero and Grace	Houlis, Ila and Debbie	Mavroudis, Frank and Vess, Olga
Baldwin, Richard and Vivi	Demoleas, Stephanie	Howard, William and Willie	McClain, Gavin and Jaymee
Balodimas, James	Demopoulos, Vasiliki	Hristopoulou, Spiridoula	McManus, Jeanette
Barbarino, Demetra	Diamantis, Filippas	Ignadiou, Marios	McKinney, Michael and Mersene
Bartzos, Sam and Eugenia	Domiguez, Eric and Amalia	Iteen, Robert and Sophia	McSweeney, Farolyn
Bather, Crissie	Dornin, Christopher and Marcella	Kachikis, Paul and Ernestine	Melton, Donald and Susan
Bauck, Jeremy and Amy	Doskas, Athanasios and Anastasia	Kakavulias, George and Helen	Minas, Arthur and Ewa
Beeler, Mike and Carolyn	Doukakis, Panagiotis and Chrisi	Kakavulias, John and Elizabeth	Moffett, Todd and Eliopulos, Tina
Beeman, Karl, Sr. and Benita	Dounis, Dina	Kambouris, Litsa	Monoyudis, Jim and Julie
Beeman, Karl, Jr. and Ivana	Dounis, Georgia	Kanis, Constantinos and Katie	Moore, Brenda
Berendji, Jim and Vivian	Dounis, Kiki	Kanis, Georgios	Mulopulos, George and Jenny
Bernier, Micah and Alissa	Dramitinos, Mary	Kaptain, Catherine	Myers, Stella
Berta, Irene	Earl, Christine Michaelides	Karalias, Petros and Constance	Neocleous, Plato
Bieker, Adam and Cassie	Eliades, Artemisa	Karas, John and Marcie	Nestlebusch, Marissa
Bieker, Georgea	Eliades, Harry and Agapi	Karris, Mark and Suzanne	Newell, Eric and Devona
Birtas, Helen and Ann	Eliakis, John	Katopodis, Efstratios	Newell, Ronald and Maria
Bochanis, George and Enid	Eliakis, Peter and Glenda	Katris, Nick	Nicholas, John and Estella
Bratta, Georgene	Eliakis, Varthie and LeeAnn	Katsaros, Thomas and Sharon	Nichols, George and Tereza
Brilis, George and Satoko	Exarhos, Sharon	Katsikakis, Evangelos	Nikitas, Rigas and Aphrodite
Britten, Ronald and Carol	Eyler, John and Elizabeth	Kelesis, Paula	Nikolopoulos, Nick and Dimitra
Brown, Faye	Eyler, Fr. Paul and Presv. Ilean	Kiflezgi, Rahel	Nixon, John and Ellyn
Bruninga, Bill and Erin	Farren, Anthony and Maritsa	Kimball, Sarah	Ostis, Sotirios
Bucy, Brent and Elaine	Filios, Spiridon and Eleni	Koliambas, Eleni	Palivos, Peter and Vicky
Cahill, Irene	Fischer, Bob and Cheryl	Kostopoulos, Georgia	Pallis, Paul
Camel, Joseph	Fitzgerald, Norman and	Kotonias, Patricia	Pandelis, Cheryl
Campbell, Theodore and Cheryl	McCullen, Sandra	Kountanis, Pat	Panos, William and Jeanne
Capre, Julio and Betty	Flangas, Bill and Marilyn	Kourlos, Georgia	Papas, Peter and Rita
Carabas, Stephen and Linda	Flangas, Gus and Tamara	Koutsulis, John and Eileen	Papas, Christian and Nicole
Carabas, Thymios and Sotiroulla	Fleetwood, Thomas and Melissa	Koutsulis, Sam and Effie	Pappas, Antonia
Carahalios, John and Jillian	Flores, Michael	Kratky, Frank and Constance	Pappas, Constantine and Karina
Caredis, Jon and Marjorie	Foster, Kyle and Maria	Kunard, Derek	Pappas, Spiro and Libby
Carrico, William and Alexandra	Fotopoulos, John and Barbara	Kypreos, Peter and Geri	Patrick, Ernest
Carter, Maria	Frangakis, Christos and	Kyprianou, Gilbert and Alexis	Payan, Luis and Eleni
Cero, Dean	Anastasia	Kyriannis, Justin and Linda	Pelletier, Michael
Chachas, Bessie	Frangakis, Constantine	Lagomarsino, Victor and Sophia	Pendleton, Patricia
Chachas, James	Frangakis, John	Lakis, Antoinette	Pentogenis, Katherine
Chagares, Kiki	Frangakis, Sophocles	Lamancusa, Lisa	Pederera, Maria
Chandrinos, Alexia	Funk, Helen	Lambros, Kyriakos and Maria	Petro, Aleko and Georgia
Chanos, George	Garza, Evarardo and	Latelle, Penny	Petrou, James and Penelopi
Chanos, Jennifer	Eliades, Eleni	Lazarakis, John and Panagiota	Pierro, Joe and Rhonda
Chomakos, Dean and Tammy	George, Pete and Georgia	Lekar, Caroline	Pierro, Joseph and Christine
Chomakos, George and Nikki	Georgoulakis, Mary Ellen	Lekar, Michael and Effie	Pitts, Anton and Athena
Chondrakis, Dimos	Gialketsis, Barbara	Leonis, Nick and Sophia	Plentzas, Spiros + and Ruth
Christian, Clair and Chloe	Giouzelis, Anastasia	Leonis, Tishe	Polimerou, Angeline
Christou, Andreas and Toni	Goltsos, Andreas and Sofia	Leventis, Naomi	Politis, Pantelis and Dimitra
Ciulla, Anthony and Kleri	Goodman, Linda	Liaos, Jim and Tina	Poulos, Christine
Collins, David	Gott, C. Thomas and Kitty	Liaos, Steve and Francine	Pouridis, Kouli and Para
Cominos, Ted	Gousdovas, Nikos	Liaos, William and Irene	Powers, Russell and Rebecca
Conger, William and Alexia	Grillas, Roula	Likourinou, Steve and June	Prokopis, Ritsa +
Costacos, John	Gruber, Ernest and Zoe	Litsos, Nicholas and Catherine	Punsalan, Basil and Sophie
Costas, Charles and Louise	Gutierrez, Connie	Little, Martin and Kaytia, Patricia	Pursell, Robert and Mary

Please contact the Church Office or a Parish Council Member for a Pledge Card!

Radosta, Athena	Simpson, Brian and	Szukiewicz, Joseph and Jennia	Weisman, Diane
Raptis, Fr. Dean+ and	Zacharias, Julie	Tafoya, Steven and Irene	Wheeler, Charles and Alyce
Presv. Evonne	Sinclair, Bill	Takas, Andrea	Wilcox, Thalia
Rifakes, John	Skalkotos, Nikolas and Georgia	Tasios, Ramona and Pete	Wilkerson, Chuck and Kristina
Rigas, Evie	Skarlatos, Nick	Thompson, Maggy	Williams, Anthony and Anna
Rihani, Gary and Linda	Smith, Kathleen	Thompson, Steve and Aliki	Wilson, Steven and Cleo
Robison, Diane and Patricia	Snow, Adrienne	Touroutoglou, Nikolaos	Wolfenbarger, Joy
Rodis, Dimitri	Snow, Clifford and Christina	Tsarouhas, Maria	Womack, Karl
Rodis, Sophia	Snowden, Robert and Niki	Tsolis, Panagiote	Womack, Kimberly
Rosenthal, Joseph and Stephanie	Sparangis, Spyro and Helen	Turman, Lucas and Maria	Wood, Nadine
Rotas, Beatrice	Sparkuhl, Alex and Antoinette	Tzortzis, Maria	Wronski, Chuck
Rouvas, John and Keri	Staubs, Douglas and Anastasia	Vafiadis, Victoria	Xerogianes, Nick and Nikki
Rudolph, Brandon	Stavropoulos, Bessie	Vervilos, James and Anna	Xikis, Victoria
Ruffner, Skip and Kathy	Stavropoulos, Terry and Niki	Vlahos, Thomas and Demas, Rita	Zaferatos, Ted
Santamaria, Jennifer	Stefanatos, Michael and Tami	Wadlow, Nicholas and Pamela	Zarkos, Nick and Dina
Savvas, Savva	Stenos, Louis	Wallace, Robert and Katerina	Zarras, Nick and Chery
Setian, Gary and Marie	Swehla, Fr. Matthew and	Walter, Vernon and Alice	Zimmerman, Paul and Angela
	Presv. Annie	Waterhouse, David and Aleighzja	



"I know My own and My own know Me." (John 10:14)
Please prayerfully fill out and return your
2017 Stewardship Pledge Card.

Church Account Summaries - March 2017

Nevada State Bank Accounts	February	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	March	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$52,354.80	\$35,443.23	\$23,799.23	\$16,584.74	\$69,296.47	\$25,716.05	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$1,319.87	\$6,357.00	\$14,319.55	\$10,763.82	\$2,093.06	\$9,139.54	
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$17,700.53			\$4,019.03	\$22.18	\$13,659.32	
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$324,645.83	\$3,790.00	\$2,841.00	\$8,553.22	\$5,865.29	\$316,858.32	
Folk Dance Group	\$9,681.74	\$695.00	\$5.00	\$162.50	\$451.80	\$9,767.44	
Mortgage Account	\$36,496.06			\$5,201.14		\$31,294.92	
Designated Funds	February	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	March	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Bookstore	\$4,524.12	\$25.00	\$1,541.00		\$29.05	\$6,061.07	
Ornaments	\$1,077.41					\$1,077.41	
Restricted Funds	February	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	March	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
ICON	\$260,453.28	\$3,540.00	\$300.00		\$291.88	\$264,001.40	Varnish Charges & Merchant Fees
Library Account	\$1,470.77					\$1,470.77	Account owed \$21,000. Funds used to make payroll and pay bills in 2015
Giving Tree	\$2,450.91		\$1,000.00			\$3,450.91	Ramona Tasios Donation
Building Fund	\$51,038.41	\$125.00		\$8,553.22	\$5,544.36	\$37,065.83	Floor Refinishings, Roof Leaks, Gas Valves
Youth Choir	\$2,469.82	\$100.00				\$2,569.82	
Church School	\$1,206.37					\$1,206.37	
Misc. D & R Deductions	-\$535.26					-\$535.26	
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
GOYA	\$50.00					\$50.00	
Designated, Restricted, and Other Total	\$324,645.83	\$3,790.00	\$2,841.00	\$8,553.22	\$5,865.29	\$316,858.32	
Other Funds	February	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	March	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$55,935.34					\$55,859.07	



MAY 2017 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

	1	2	3	4	5	6
	Christ is Risen!	TBD: Forerunners Movie Day at Orleans	6:00 pm Greek Food Festival Planning Meeting in Kokkos Hall 7:00 pm Adult Study	10:30 am Bible Study		
7	8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 12:15 pm Youth Choir Practice in 4th/5th Class	9 10:30 am Forerunners Luncheon in Panos Hall 6:00 pm Philoptochos President's Dinner in Panos Hall	10 Mid - Pentecost 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 4:30 pm Greek Classes 7:00 pm Adult Study	11 10:30 am Bible Study	12 7:00 pm Kali Parea Potluck at Demetri Asim's Home	13
14 Mothers Day 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Youth Choir Chants	15	16 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting	17 4:30 pm Greek Classes 7:00 pm Adult Study	18 10:30 am Bible Study	19	20 7:00 pm Young Adults at John & Eileen Koutsulis' Home
21 Ss. Constantine & Helen 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Church School Commencement 1:00 pm Youth Party on Church Grounds	22	23	24 4:30 pm Greek Classes 5:00 pm Orthros 6:00 pm Divine Liturgy (Ascension) 7:30 pm Adult Study	25 Holy Ascension Observed on 5/24 10:30 am Bible Study	25	26
28 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	29	30	31 4:30 pm Final Greek Class and Picnic 7:00 pm Adult Study			

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



“Behold, how good and pleasant it
is when brothers dwell in unity!
It is like the precious oil upon the
head, running down upon the beard,
upon the beard of Aaron, running
down on the collar of his robes!
It is like the dew of Hermon, which
falls on the mountains of Zion!
For there the Lord has commanded
the blessing, life for evermore.”
(Psalm 133:1-3)

CHRIST IS RISEN!!!