

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 17, Issue 5 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

May 2019

**From
Father
John**

Beloved in Christ:

Χριστός Ανέστη! Christ is Risen!

By the grace, love and mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we have been blessed to journey together through a moving Holy Week – witnessing His Holy Passion, Crucifixion, Death and Burial . . . and worshiping His glorious third-day Resurrection on the Feast of feasts, Holy Pascha! Now that we have reached the empty Tomb of our Lord and received the light from the unwaning Light – as we chanted wholeheartedly, “Christ is Risen” – where do we go from here? Have we taken the “good news” of the Resurrected Christ to heart, making every effort to keep our baptismal grace aflame in our lives? Have we been spiritually renewed, to the point where we no longer wallow in the darkness of our old sins and instead walk as children of light? (*Ephesians 5:8*) Or, like so many, did we quickly flee from His Presence soon after receiving the light from the Priest for our Paschal candles – returning back to our ways of spiritual darkness?

We did not just jump quickly into Holy Week: There were a few preparatory weeks leading us into the 40 day fast of Great Lent, so that we might be fully immersed in the Season of Repentance – that is, a lengthy period devoted to “changing our minds” and returning to the Lord. Only after 52 days of laying a spiritual foundation were we ready to embark on the holiest of all weeks: Yet even then, those who labored from the first hour as well as those who arrived at the eleventh were equally invited to “savor the banquet of faith (and) relish the riches of His goodness.” (*Paschal Homily of St. John Chrysostom*) A New Life in Christ is a gift freely offered to all, and our Holy Orthodox Church continues freely giving His gifts of grace even after Pascha.

The week after Pascha, rightly called Renewal Week, is treated as one continuous day – “the eighth day,” the day without end: The services throughout this week are a repetition (or rather, an extension) of the Resurrection service, and even the doors to the Holy Altar remain open, to emphasize that we have entered the Age of God’s Kingdom. As Christ the Bridegroom is with us – who are, as members of the Church, the Lord’s Bride, united with Him through the Holy Mysteries – there is no need for fasting this week. (*Mark 2:19*) This should not be mistakenly interpreted as permission to become gluttonous: Rather, this week is an invitation to partake more freely and more joyously in our renewed spiritual walk, and receive liberally (without fasting) and continuously the Holy Eucharist.

For the next 50 days, until Pentecost Sunday, the Church will remain brightly lit and there is no kneeling permitted, to remind us that our Risen Lord has freed us from the bonds of sin and death – themes that will be emphasized in the Sunday Gospel passages during this season of renewal. Even after 40 days, with the Feast of our Lord’s Ascension, when we no longer chant “Christ is Risen,” we continue to live in spiritual anticipation of receiving the Gift of the Holy Spirit on Holy Pentecost, knowing that He will fulfill His promise of not leaving us “as orphans.” (*John 14:18*)

Just as Lent was the Season of Repentance, the 50-day Paschal period is the Season of Renewal: And as the Lord is with us, granting us New and Eternal Life right here and now, we must therefore make every effort not to abandon Him in our hearts, our minds, our souls and our actions. Let us keep our love and faith in the Risen Lord ever alive and burning with holy fervor!

With Love in the Risen Christ,

Father John



WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sundays: 8:45 am Orthros ~ 10:00 am Divine Liturgy
Church School follows Holy Communion (Commencement on Sunday, May 19)

Friday, May 3/ *Our Most Holy Lady Theotokos,
the Life-Giving Spring*

8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Acts 3:1-8

Gospel: John 2:12-22

Sunday, May 5/ *Sunday after Pascha:*

Holy Apostle Thomas

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

Epistle: Acts 5:12-20

Gospel: John 20:19-31

Sunday, May 12/ *3rd Sunday of Pascha: The Holy
Myrrh-Bearers, St. Joseph of Arimathea and*

St. Nicodemus/Apostle James, Brother of St. John

Orthros: Tone Two

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

Epistle: Acts 6:1-7

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

Sunday, May 19/ *4th Sunday of Pascha:*

The Paralytic

Orthros: Tone Three

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

Epistle: Acts 9:32-42

Gospel: John 5:1-15

Church School Commencement

Tuesday, May 21/ *Ss. Constantine and Helen,
Equal to the Apostles*

8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Acts 26:1, 12-20

Gospel: John 10:1-9

Sunday, May 26/ *5th Sunday of Pascha:*

The Samaritan Woman

Orthros: Tone Four

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

Epistle: Hebrews 7:26-28, 8:1-2

Gospel: John 4:5-42



SUNDAY SCHEDULE

MAY 5

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

Fellowship: Pan-Arcadians and Greek Language School

MAY 12: HAPPY MOTHERS DAY!

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

Memorials: William Liaos (40 days); and Elisabeth Pouridis (40 days)

Fellowship: Liaos and Pouridis Families, in Memory of their Loved Ones

MAY 19: CHURCH SCHOOL COMMENCEMENT

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

Memorials: Mary Bartsas and Departed Family Members; and Katina Soto (5 years)

Fellowship: Philoptochos Society, in Memory of Mary Bartsas, Benefactor

MAY 26

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

Memorial: Zaharias Pertsinides (3 years)

Fellowship: Forerunners -Seniors of St. John the Baptist

CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY, HE IS RISEN!



Parish Council Report

Christos Anesti! We just completed a very beautiful and spiritual Holy Week and Pascha, culminating with our annual Agape Picnic. There are so many people to thank for their efforts in ensuring an absolutely phenomenal experience for everyone during the entire Paschal celebration.

We would like to first thank our clergy, whose energy and devotion to our Faith was truly inspiring. We would like to thank His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos for joining us in celebration of the Palm Sunday weekend; the Members of the Parish Council and other volunteers, led by Demetri Asim, who helped keep the services running smoothly; Demetri again for all his hard work in putting together the Palm Sunday Luncheon; our Ladies Philoptochos for their many contributions, including flowers for the Epitaphion and Pascha, helping with the various events and for providing and selling the Pastries for the Agape Picnic; Adam Bieker for his leadership in organizing and coordinating a very successful and tremendous Agape Picnic; Steve Likourinou and his staff for their amazing contributions of time, expertise and equipment to provide an outside overflow area for worshipers that included an incredible high tech video and audio experience for people attending the services on Good Friday and the Resurrection, and for providing the sound system and music for the Agape Picnic; Sam Koutsulis, Steve Tzelalis, Telly Eliades, and their crews for cooking and preparing the food for the Palm Sunday Luncheon and Agape Picnic; Eileen Koutsulis for organizing the Myrrh Bearers and the Egg Hunt; our excellent Altar Servers who were present for every service of Holy Week and Pascha; our faithful Chanters, led by Presvytera Maria; our great Choir, directed by Athena Mertes and her assistants, and Youth Choir, directed by Presvytera Maria; John Matsis for organizing the Epitaphion Bearers; Andrea Takas and Effie Lekar for spearheading the egg dyeing effort; and the many, many people who helped with their time, talents and treasures in making everything awesome. We should also be grateful for our excellent staff who worked overtime to meet our many needs, and that the grounds and facilities were prepared and continuously maintained for Holy Week and Pascha.

On another great note, our Iconographers are here and working hard. They hit the ground running, working all through Holy Week, and have positioned enough of the Iconography to give everyone a fairly good idea of what it will look like when completed. Seeing a Church being adorned with Iconography is a once in a lifetime and spiritual experience, and we urge you to take the time and watch what the Iconographers are doing. It is truly amazing.

Last year at this time I wrote about the rash of Church shootings plaguing our Nation, the various incidents of theft from our Church, and the several incidents of vandalism we have experienced. In addressing these very important issues, I wrote about the need for a detailed and comprehensive security plan to protect our Church and Parishioners. Since that time, we have installed a sophisticated high tech video surveillance system, instituted common sense security measures, instituted a system for providing immediate armed response in the event of an incident, and required the use of armed commercial security officers for special events in our Church. We are still working on and refining the security plan, and doing those things in a continuing effort to keep our Church safe. However, it bears mentioning that even with all the measures we presently have in place, it is still up to everyone to use common sense and to be vigilant at all times, to make things safer for all of us.

On a brighter note, we are working hard and steady on the Greek Food Festival and, as always, our mission is to provide a very “high energy” and “festive” event, replete with the sights, sounds, tastes and aromas of Greece. The dates for the Festival this year are *Friday, September 27 through Sunday, September 29*. We will soon start having Festival Meetings following Liturgy on designated Sundays to make it easier for people to attend. Also, we are gearing up to start the pre-sales and really need everyone’s help. Pre-sales are primarily comprised of Raffle Tickets, Coupon Books, and Souvenir Magazine Ads; they provide the seed money for the Festival and ultimately contribute to the bottom line. Strong and aggressive pre-sales make for a great event and take a lot of the risk out of the equation in putting on the Festival.

We have a lot of very positive things happening with our Church and we are on a good path; however, we all really need to work together on Stewardship. As we have stated many times, over and over, Stewardship is the life blood of our Church. As we move into the summer months, contributions to the Stewardship Program are extremely critical.

(Continued on Page 4)

Parish Council Report *(Continued from Page 3)*

Although we are doing better with Stewardship so far this year, we are still way below where we need to be, and it will become extremely difficult to pay the operating expenses beginning in late May and early June. If we do not get a bump in Stewardship pledges and contributions soon, we will have to spend the next several months creatively moving funds around from account to account that have to be paid back, and possibly have to borrow from our line of credit. It would be a shame to have to use 2019 Festival revenues to cover the operating expenses even before the Festival begins. Having to cover operating expenses with Festival funds makes it virtually impossible to properly maintain our facilities. The importance of Stewardship cannot be overstated, especially now; so, we ask each and every one of you to continue contributing and working toward building up our Community.

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. We know a lot of things are always happening, but each ministry and event is extremely important. Please step forward whenever you can and pitch in, and get involved as we move forward to make our Church better.

May God Bless! Gus Flangas, Parish Council President



Our Community Registry

Chrismations

Christine Simpson on April 7, 2019.
Sponsor: Eleni Havadjia.

Katherine (Katie) Kanis on April 14, 2019.
Sponsor: Kassiani Bieker.

Fallen Asleep in the Lord: Eternal Memory!

William Liaos on March 29. Funeral on April 9.

Minas George Markantonis on April 14. Funeral on April 23.

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Catering & Events

Constantin Petriuc & Ramona Tasios
Maintenance & Grounds

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Parish Council: Gus Flangas

Philoptochos: Vicky Palivos

Stewardship & Community Outreach:
Justina Szukiewicz

Choir: Athena Mertes

Chanters & Youth Choir:
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School: Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers: Father John

GOYA:
Kouli Pouridis & June Likourinou

Orthodox Family Fellowship:
Jelena Boskovic & Amy Khuri

Young Adults:
Nicholas Asim & Elizabeth Arbuiso

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas

Greek School: Paula Kelesis

Mr. & Mrs.:
Fr. John, Fr. Seraphim & Presvyteres

Kali Parea: Demetrious Asim

Adult Basketball:
Nate Dallas

Forerunners:
Vicki Xikis

Orthodox Bookstore:
Constantine Frangakis,
Paisios & Mary Pursell

Greek Food Festival: Gus Flangas

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

Photography: Bill Bruninga



AHEPA Las Vegas Chapter 341

Christos Anesti! Christ is Risen!

I hope you all had a blessed Holy Week and Pascha!
This month we will meet *on Tuesday, May 7 at 6:30 pm in Kokkos Hall*. We are actively seeking to fill

ALL Executive Board Positions: President, Vice
President, Treasurer and Secretary.

Thank you, Kouli Pouridis, Chapter President

pouridis5@cox.net or (702) 604-0885

Philoptochos News

Dearest Members of Philoptochos,

Χριστός Ανέστη! Christ is Risen! We all received the joyous light of Pascha, the Light of the Resurrection, which illumines the world proclaiming the Glory of our Risen God. The light that shines over the darkness of our sins; the light of truth, peace, love, life and redemption; the light which is irrevocable proof that our God is a living, loving and saving God, Who wants the joy and happiness of all people who trust in Him and remain in Him.



On *Palm Sunday*, we were honored once again with the presence of His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos celebrating the weekend with us. The Great Vespers service, the Sunday morning Divine Liturgy, and the First Bridegroom Service on Sunday evening – together with his message of humility, love and unity – were uplifting and inspiring. Thank you to Presvytera Maria and all of our volunteers for making the Palm Crosses for everyone to receive on Palm Sunday. Sincere thanks to Demetri, James, Geri, Kiki, Farolyn, Carolyn, Rahel, Sara, Jesse, Marcie, Andrea, Jennifer, Bessie, Cheryl, Christina, Bernadette, Tasia and all the Philoptochos members and volunteers for their help during the luncheon on Palm Sunday, which was a well-attended community celebration. The quality and abundance of the delicious food was superb.

On *Holy Thursday*, we dyed the Red Eggs. Much appreciation to Effie Lekar and Andrea Takas and their committee for once again completing the task of coloring the beautiful red eggs. A special thank you to Effie for donating all the organic brown eggs.

On *Holy Friday*, we decorated the Epitaphion. We are especially grateful to Ernestine Kachikis for her many years of dedication and commitment in chairing the decoration of the Kouvouklion: Her genuine love is expressed in its beautiful design and magnificent look. Furthermore, we extend our gratitude to Ernestine for coordinating the decoration of the Icon of the Virgin Mary every Friday of Lent for the Salutations services.

Our appreciation to the many people who responded to the appeals for donations for the Epitaphion and Anastasi flowers. Thank you to our dear Marcie Karas for collecting all the envelopes every Sunday from the pink baskets.

On *Holy Pascha*, we celebrated the Resurrection of our Lord with the annual Agape Picnic, which was a delightful community event with great food and fellowship. Amanda Flangas, Bernadette Anthony and Alis Dokakis chaired the Pastry Sales at the Agape Picnic. The boxes were beautifully decorated full of koulourakia, baklava, kourambietes and tsoureki. Thank you to all the people who baked and donated all the delicious pastries. All proceeds from the pastries were donated to the Church. We also had our Wine Wagon raffle during the picnic. Thank you to Anastasia Dallas for chairing this fundraiser and also a big thank you to Christine Poulos for always selling tickets and promoting Philoptochos!

Project 150 was started in 2012 by a group of observant adults who identified 150 homeless high school students. Today, this organization provides food, clothing, counseling and moral support to the over 10,000 registered homeless high school students currently residing in Las Vegas. The Panagia Chapter has been closely involved in supporting this worthwhile organization. The students were instrumental in helping us package our Christmas cookies years ago. Since then, food, assorted clothing – including our current undergarment campaign – 72 pairs of shoes and money to pay for cap and gowns for graduates are just a few examples of how Philoptochos has embraced and provided support. Their gratitude has humbled us in ways we never expected. We look forward to continuing our support of this fine charity. Thank you so much to Bessie Chachas for chairing the project this year, and to all the ladies for their generous donations!



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Philoptochos News *(Continued from Page 5)*

Missions Possible is a Metropolis Philoptochos commitment, which is handled in our Parish by Eileen Koutsulis and the students of our Church School. The proceeds from Missions Possible are sent to the Metropolis of San Francisco and used to foster Parish growth, educate the faithful, potential converts, and inactive Orthodox Christians, consonant with the Great Commission of Christ. Funds are also used to start bookstores in mission Parishes and, when needed, to assist mission or small Parishes with clergy expenses. We appreciate the efforts of Church School in collecting donations for Missions and Evangelism, a most worthy ministry.

Philoptochos Membership: As we are still in the Philoptochos membership enrollment period, I appeal to you to please renew your stewardship or, if you have never been a member, you are invited and encouraged to become a steward. All ladies and gentlemen are welcome to join our wonderful organization for the support of our charities.

We are also pleased to announce the ***60th Anniversary Celebration*** of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Las Vegas, NV. Each of us is called to participate and prayerfully give from our precious resources to assist in paying off the mortgage of our Church. Our Church is the place where we worship God, hold fast to our ancient Faith, are healed and renewed by the Sacraments, and maintain our culture. Please contact the Chairwomen, Cheryl Pandelis and Nitsa Filios, to offer your pledge! ***Please also mark your calendars for the weekend of November 8, 9 and 10 for our 60th Anniversary Celebration events.***

Upcoming Events:

Sunday, May 12: Mothers Day.

Tuesday, May 14: Philoptochos General Meeting at 6:00 pm in Kokkos Hall. This is going to be the last Philoptochos business meeting, and we will have our elections. All Philoptochos members are asked to attend to review and discuss our projects for the year. It is important for everyone to have input and participation.

Sunday, May 19: Bartsas Memorial. This is a day to remember and express our appreciation for the benefactor of our chapter, Mary Bartsas. Her generous donations, which continue through her family, support the ongoing benevolent outreach of our Social Services.

Monday, May 20: President's Dinner at 6:00 pm in Kokkos Hall.

Last but not least I would like to thank Dora Hart and Geri Kypreos for all their hard work during my absence.

With Love in Christ, Vicky Palivos, Philoptochos President

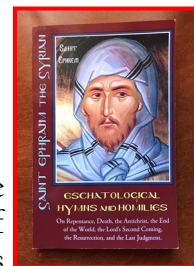
Orthodox Bookstore

Christos Anesti from Saint John the Baptist Bookstore!

This month we are featuring *Saint Ephraim the Syrian's Eschatological Hymns and Homilies.*

"In those days, great will be the necessity from the many tribulations inflicted by the serpent, from terror and earthquake and raging of the sea, from hunger and thirst and bites of beasts. And all who have received the seal of Antichrist, and have worshipped Antichrist as the good god, will have no part whatsoever in Christ's kingdom; rather they will be cast into hell together with the serpent. Blessed is he who will show himself holy and faithful, whose heart is given over incontrovertibly to God – for he will fearlessly repulse all the serpent's offers, disdaining both his tortures and illusions. But before all this will come to pass, the Lord, according to His mercy, will send Elias the Thesbite and Enoch, in order that they might proclaim to the human race the reverence of God, and boldly preach right knowledge to all, instructing them not to believe in the tormentor from fear."

Until next month, God willing, ICXC NIKΑ – Constantine Frangakis, Bookstore Director



Stewardship and Community Outreach

Christos Anesti!

Pascha week, Bright week, Renewal week – no matter which name we use for the week following Pascha, we just feel a little better and things just look a little brighter don't they? We have contended through another Lenten season, reminding us that with God's help, our resolve to live a Christian life is strengthened; we have seen the bay leaves scattered again, reminding us that Christ has achieved victory over death; and we have enjoyed another Agape Picnic, reminding us that, yes, many foods taste better than lentils!

As we celebrate the Resurrection throughout early May we can also celebrate wrapping up our long-delayed Iconography project. After a couple of years, it is almost shocking to imagine seeing the scaffolding come down from the exedras. The preparation, anticipation, and excitement surrounding our new Iconography has been handsomely rewarded – it is a beautiful improvement to our worship space. How appropriate it is that our sanctuary has been renewed alongside the spiritual lives of parishioners during this Lent.

Preparation, anticipation, and excitement also surround another local project just a few miles away from this very sanctuary – the new home for the NFL's Raiders – where stadium construction is underway with scheduled completion prior to the 2020 football season. The projected budget is a mind boggling \$1.8 billion, but the new Las Vegas Stadium is not some isolated extravagance. By 2020, 26 of the league's 32 teams will be playing in 24 stadiums which were *each* built for hundreds and hundreds of millions, with several of the newer stadiums easily exceeding a billion dollars. (It is also worth noting that by 2020, only six teams will be playing in stadiums older than our relatively young sanctuary, which was completed in 1992.) To help place that \$1.8 billion construction budget into perspective, if we could wave a magic censer and apply an equivalent dollar amount to all of the 144 Greek Orthodox facilities West of the Mississippi, we could spend \$50 million rebuilding *every* large Cathedral or Monastery, \$20 million rebuilding *every* larger Church or smaller Cathedral, and \$5 million rebuilding *every* smaller Church or Chapel and *still* have \$15 million left over to contribute toward building the St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine in New York. Mind boggling indeed. Now might be an appropriate time to recall Jesus' words: *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."* (Matthew 6:21)

As far as getting into the stadium on game day, statistics report the average NFL league-wide ticket price exceeds \$100 per seat. Figure \$10 parking, \$100 entrance, \$5 program, \$30 food, \$20 drinks, \$30 hat, \$50 jersey, and it does not take long for a couple of fans to drop \$500 to attend just one Sunday game. Double that for a family of four and, all of a sudden, you're nearing \$1000 to enjoy a football game lasting a league average of 3 hours 8 minutes; the first few minutes of which begin with a kickoff . . . just as this article now turns into a kickoff for another Stewardship appeal: *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

Another Ecclesiastical Year is rapidly passing by, the clock is ticking, fourth down is looming, the slow summer season is just around the corner and we need to boost funds now more than ever. As you reflect on God's many blessings in your lives (including answered prayers for those looking forward to NFL contests being played locally) please support your Church as you might support your local team. Similar to enjoying three hours spent watching the game in a beautiful facility, we are fortunate to have a beautiful facility in which we can worship each week; where coincidentally, the average Sunday services of Orthros, Divine Liturgy, and perhaps a Memorial, last about three hours. However, at Church, just like at the stadium, it takes a lot of money to turn on the lights, to water the turf, and to air condition the space. Remember, when it comes to paying the bills, our Parish Council does not have the option to punt, so please consider raising your commitment by one game's expenses or more. Help us ensure the Church stays financially strong throughout the year, and be thankful we have not yet had to resort to implementing that latest scourge of stadium practice: The seat license. *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*

Mike Beeler, Stewardship and Community Outreach Committee



Youth and Family Ministries

Church School

Christ is Risen!

I hope everyone enjoyed Lent, Holy Week and Pascha and all of the other activities. It was wonderful to see so many of our youth involved in the many events during this holy period. One of my favorite services is the Descent from the Cross/Children's Procession on Holy Friday. With so many of the kids participating, it was a joy to see. Special thanks to our Altar Servers and Myrrh-Bearers and a huge thank you to the Parish members who donated filled eggs for our Pascha Egg Hunt at the Agape Picnic. This fun-filled event was a blast as always, thanks to all of the donations we received. The kids loved running out to the field to grab those candy-filled eggs!

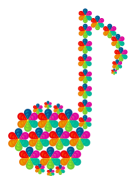


The Church School year is coming to an end. Another spiritually uplifting year and, God willing, the children will come out of this ministry knowing more about our wonderful Faith and willing to live in Christ more dynamically. Thank God, this past year we grew in class size.

We will have our annual Church School Commencement on Sunday, May 19, following Liturgy. Please mark the date down so your children can participate and you can share their achievement. An 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!

We had a wonderful group participating in all of the Salutations and Akathist on all of the Fridays during Lent, Palm Sunday with the Adult Choir and Holy Saturday Morning. I am blessed to work with great and enthusiastic kids. Thank You!

Our next practice will be on *Sunday, May 5 at 12:15 pm in the 4th/5th Grade Classroom.* We will also chant the Divine Liturgy on Mothers Day, Sunday, May 12. Please be on the right side of the Church at 9:40 am so we can chant our English Doxology on time! Soon we will be able to sing from our right exedra after the Iconography installment is finished. Hurray!

Love in the Risen Christ, Presvytera Maria

Greek Language Program

Christos Anesti! The Greek School Parents and Children will be helping the Pan-Arcadians host *Fellowship on Sunday, May 5.* This is the only fundraiser we have to procure monies for books and supplies. Your generosity is appreciated, all monies will help support the Greek Language Program!



It is hard to believe that another Greek Language School year is coming to a close. Our last day of classes is *on Tuesday, May 21.*

If you are interested in becoming a teacher please see me.

Paula Kelesis, Greek School Director

GOYA ~ For Teenagers

Hey GOYANs!

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.

Our last GOYA event of the school year before the summer will be *“Camping with Christ” on Friday, May 17 and Saturday May 18, outside on our Church Field.* Bring your tents and sleeping bags for a spiritual camping experience! We will gather *at 5:00 pm on Friday night* to pitch our tents, and wrap things up *at 11:00 am on Saturday.* Please bring your own lawn chairs, outdoor games, sleeping bags, flashlights, meat to BBQ, change of clothes, toiletries and be ready for an amazing time with your Church family! For this event, we are looking for cooks and for food donations. To help out, contact June Likourinou at likoujm@nv.ccsd.net. **PARENTS:** *Since this is an overnight outdoor event, a parent or designated chaperone is needed for every child.*

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



Memories from the Overnight Lenten Teen Retreat



Orthodox Family Fellowship

Christ is Risen!

We will be joining GOYA for an all-youth Overnight Campout on the Church Field *on Friday, May 17 and Saturday, May 18.* Please see the GOYA article above as well as the flyer in this issue for a description of the event and the list of what to bring! We look forward to seeing you there!

With Love in Christ, Amy Khuri and Jelena Boskovic, OFF Advisors

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!

From Father Seraphim

The Emperor and Saint Constantine the Great was born circa the 280 AD to Flavius Valerius Constantius, a high-ranking army officer, and his wife Helen, who is celebrated as a Saint in the Orthodox Church together with her son *on May 21*. Constantine was brought up in the Eastern Empire at the court of the senior Emperor Diocletian at Nicomedia – and would have witnessed the vicious persecution of Christians (begun anew by Diocletian in 303) as he grew up. In 293 his father was raised to the rank of Caesar, or deputy Emperor in the West, and Constantine received an excellent education in literature and philosophy as well as tactics and military training. In 305 both Roman emperors abdicated and Constantine was called upon by his father (who was now for a short time the sole Emperor in the West) to join him in fighting a campaign against northern British barbarian tribes. His father died in Eboracum (modern day York) and Constantine was proclaimed as the rightful Emperor of the West in 306 by his legions in Northern Britain. Intrigues ensued in both halves of the Roman Empire as a struggle for dominance played out with Constantine emerging victorious over several other candidates and rivals.

The greatest turning point in the life of Constantine the Great, and perhaps one of the greatest crossroads in the history of Western Civilization (along with the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ and the missionary journeys of the Apostle Paul), occurred when Constantine invaded Italy in 312. Here, before the famous Battle of the Milvian Bridge just outside of Rome (against a rival Emperor Maxentius with a much larger force), Constantine was granted a vision of the Holy Cross in the sky together with the words, “*ΕΝ ΤΟΥΤΩ ΝΙΚΑ*” (in this sign conquer). He immediately had the Cross painted on the shields of his soldiers and was then victorious over Maxentius who drowned in the Tiber River.

Now the sole Emperor of Rome in the West, this moment was for Constantine the beginning of his total conversion to Orthodox Christianity and together with Licinius (the Eastern Emperor) he quickly signed the Edict of Milan in February, of the year 313. This watershed imperial proclamation secured religious toleration for Christianity throughout the entire Roman Empire, and for the first time stopped nearly three centuries of relentless persecution. He would later make Christianity the official religion of the Empire and sent his mother, St. Helen, with the full backing of his imperial treasury, to build Churches in the Holy Land over the major sites where events took place in the life of Christ – many of which are still standing (perhaps in renovated form) to this day. Constantine also convened the First Ecumenical Council, escorting Christian bishops with imperial troops and money for their travel expenses. They met in 325 at Nicaea just outside his new capital, Constantinople, and the Emperor enforced the decisions of the Council against the heresy of Arianism, accepted the Nicene Creed, and oversaw the meetings as Ruler of Christian Byzantium and new Rome, both East and West.

Constantine was an earnest student of his new religion. In later years he commissioned new copies of the Bible for the growing congregations at Constantinople and built numerous magnificent Churches. He composed a special prayer for his troops and went on campaigns with a mobile Chapel in a tent. He issued numerous laws relating to Christian practice: For instance, abolishing the penalty of crucifixion and the practice of branding certain criminals; enjoining the imperial observance of Sunday and saints’ days; and extending privileges to the clergy. Constantine delayed his Baptism, possibly because his duties necessarily involved responsibility for actions hardly compatible with the baptized state (such as waging war and subjugating foreign hostile nations). While preparing for a campaign against Persia, Constantine fell ill at Helenopolis and soon after received Holy Baptism, putting off the imperial purple for the white robes of illumination; he reposed in 337.

Let us pray to this Emperor Saint to strengthen the many Christians who today are being persecuted, tortured and put to death for their faith by radical Islamic or Communist regimes. The Sri Lanka Easter bombings bear witness to just one publicized event out of the many thousands of daily attacks worldwide. May we educate our children about our fellow Christians abroad and pray for these modern day martyrs to be strengthened in faith and bear their cross. Let us wear our own cross and make the sign of the cross boldly, knowing that in this sign we too are victorious in Christ.

Father Seraphim



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

REMINDER - REMINDER - REMINDER

By God's Grace, The Ladies Philoptochos Society Panagia Chapter has been entrusted with the chairmanship of the
60th Anniversary Celebration of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, November 8, 9 and 10, 2019.

Last October, as a forerunner to the 60th you were presented with a

"\$300,000 One Year Plan"

which outlined the means by which our beloved Church Community can be debt free by November, 2019.

We have **SIX MORE MONTHS** to raise an additional \$125,000 to bring this goal to fruition.

We are most thankful to our fellow parishioners listed below who have so generously made their contributions.

With a generous heart, please review once again, the packet sent to you on October 15, 2018

and choose the plan best suited to you so that we may include your name on this list.

ANY AND ALL CONTRIBUTIONS ARE NEEDED AND WELCOME

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

AHEPA

Bacon, Ken and Diane
Berendji, Jim and Vivian
Chagaras, Kiki
Dalacas, Dimitri and Athanasia
Dalacas, Georgia
Dimopoulos, Steve
Dounis, Dina, Kiki and Georgia
Earl, Christine Michaelides
Filios, George and Nitsa
Filios, Spiros and Eleni
Flangas Memorial Fund, William "Bill"
Flangas, Gus and Tamara
Flangas, Marilyn
Fountas, Constantinos
Gialketsis, Babe and Terry+
Gialketsis, Julie
Hamilton, Mary
Hamilton, Paul and Brandi
Hart, Dora and Geiger, Dan
Hetzl, David and Stephanatos-Hetzl, Joanne
Hondros, Fr. John and Presv. Maria
Kakavulias, George and Helen
Kanis, Constantinos and Katie
Karas, John and Marcie
Karris, Mark and Suzanne
Katsaros, Thomas and Sharon
Kouretas, Daniel
Kypreos, George, Lesley and Athanasia
Kypreos, Peter and Geri

Ladies Philoptochos Society, Panagia Chapter

Makris, Apostolos
Maravic, Marija
Matsis, John and Rebecca
Moffet, Todd and Eliopoulos, Tina
Monoyudis, Jim and Julie
Murray, Christopher and George, Veneta
Nixon, John and Ellyn
Palivos, Peter and Vicky
Pan Arcadians
Pandelis, Cheryl
Panos, William and Jean
Papas, Christian, Nicole and Luka
Papas, Peter and Rita
Poulos, Christine
Powers, Russell and Rebecca
Ramos, Fr. Seraphim and Presv. Olenka
Rotas, Beatrice
Ruffin, Lee
Senior Forerunners
Setian, Gary and Marie
Smith, Litsa
Snow, Clifford and Christina
Stephanatos, Michael and Tami
Tsolis, Panagiot
Velimirovic, Nikolaj
Wilson, Steven and Cleo
Xikis, Vicki
Zaferatos, Theodore



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!

Adult and Young Adult Ministries

Young Adults

Christ is Risen!

On Monday, May 13 at 6:30 pm we will be meeting at the home of Bryan and Irene Taxopoulos for our May Fellowship and Potluck Dinner gathering! Please bring your favorite salad, side, drinks or dessert to share. Please also come ready for a discussion on some of the challenging issues of our day. We will keep the environment respectful and open as we seek to dialogue together in the context of the teaching of the Orthodox Church on our subjects. Come with questions, comments and an open heart to the Risen Christ!

In Christ, Niko Asim and Elizabeth Arbuiso, YA Advisors

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

Christos Anesti! Next month please look for details on our "escape the heat" event on Mt. Charleston!
In Christ, Demetrious Asim, Kali Parea Advisor

Mr. & Mrs. - A Couples Fellowship



Christ is Risen!

This month we will gather for a festive Paschal meal on *Thomas Sunday, May 5 at Yassou Greek Grill Cafe at 1:00 pm*. Peter Papas is graciously opening his restaurant to us to enjoy some great food and fellowship. The price is \$15 per person for a Resurrectional feast – and all the proceeds will go to benefit Father John's Discretionary Fund! Please RSVP with Father Seraphim so we can get a head count to Peter.

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

Forerunners - The Seniors of St. John the Baptist

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

We sincerely hope and pray that you are all enjoying a Blessed Pascha.

Our March and April Lenten Luncheons and Fellowships were a success. Thank you to Mary Pursell, who outdid herself again and made delicious Lenten cookies. Master Chef Sam and his crew prepared delicious Lenten menus, and we thank everyone who attended. We thank all those who also contributed many Lenten Sunday Fellowship goodies. It was most appreciated.

Our *Monday, May 13 Luncheon* will honor all women for Mothers Day. Sam is preparing a surprise meal. A short program will follow and then Bingo. At this meeting we will take a group photo, which will be put in our Forerunner ad for the Greek Food Festival Souvenir Magazine.

Our Fellowship will take place on *Sunday, May 26*. Please remember to bring in goodies, and to come and help us serve.

During the month of March, I was in Chicago and was thrilled that Dina Delalis and her son Peter drove in from Elgin to catch up with me when I attended services at the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church. We had a nice reunion: Dina and her son send their love to all at our Parish.

Our last luncheon and fellowship will be during the month of June. We will then take off for the summer and return for the new season in October. Please remember to sign up to help our Greek Food Festival during the weekend of *September 27, 28, and 29*.

Our seniors who are home bound or in hospitals or facilities would love to hear from you. Please take a few minutes from your busy schedule to call them or send them a cheery note, which will lift their spirits. The Forerunners always pray and send our love to all our brothers and sisters who are ailing.

Love in Christ, Victoria Xikis for the Forerunners



Byzantine Chant Class

Christos Anesti!

Just a small note to thank all the readers who have helped us in the Chanters Stand during Lent and Holy Week: Your participation enhanced and uplifted our spiritual participation in the services – and it helped us as well. It was very much appreciated!

We will let you know when we will resume our class.

In the Risen Lord, Presvytera Maria

Notes from the Choir Loft



Christos Anesti!

Thank you to the Choir for their hard work and dedication in preparing the music for Holy Week and Pascha!

No rehearsals will be scheduled for the month of May. If you need any assistance with the music, or would like to sing in the Choir, please let me know. New members are always welcome! Have a joyous Paschal season! Athena Mertes, Choir Director

Adult Basketball

Join us for a pick-up basketball game *every Monday at 7:00 pm.* Please call **Nate Dallas** at (347) 364-0313 for more information, or to be included in our Facebook group.

Christos Anesti! Nate Dallas



LV Rescue Mission Playground Renewal

Two dozen Parish members, young and old, gathered at the Las Vegas Rescue Mission last month for a service project benefitting homeless children. The Mission offers temporary shelter for homeless families, and the playground provides a safe area for the children. Our Parish volunteers came out to pick up litter and replace the grounds with new bark, which was donated by Star Nursery. This outpouring of love and charity appropriately coincided with the Lenten season.



CAMP WITH CHRIST!

**An Overnight Adventure
at St. John the Baptist Church
for all Parish Youth!**



- * Dinner & Discussion
- * S'mores 'round the Campfire
- * Breakfast & Games

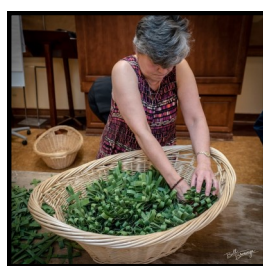
**Friday, May 17 at 5:00 pm
to Saturday, May 18 at 11:00 am.**

WHAT TO BRING: Sleeping bags, flashlights, folding chairs, outdoor games, meat to BBQ, change of clothes, toiletries and whatever else you need overnight. Tents are optional.

We are looking for cooks and food donations. Please contact June Likourinou at likoujm@nv.ccsd.net.

PARENTS: Since this is an overnight outdoor event, a parent or designated adult is needed for *EVERY* child.

Saturday of Lazarus and Palm Sunday 2019



Great and Holy Week 2019



Holy Thursday Egg Dyeing



Photos by Bill Bruninga -
For photos, please access these links:
2019 Great Lent: tinyurl.com/y32ltesg
2019 Holy Week: tinyurl.com/yyyypjaeb



Holy Friday



Holy Saturday and Pascha



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.



2019 Stewardship Report (as of 4/30/19)

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$380,609 (\$329,938 in 2018)
Stewardship Gifts Received: \$198,416 (\$153,288 in 2018)
Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$182,193 (\$176,650 in 2018)
Stewardship Families Pledged: 346 (328 in 2018)
Average Pledge to Date: \$1,100 (\$1,006 in 2018)
Average Pledge Needed: \$2,789 (Decreases with More Pledges)

Church Account Summaries ~ March 2019

Nevada State Bank Accounts	February	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	March	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$43,751.30	\$42,654.09	\$15,408.30	\$81,416.56	\$5,339.35	\$15,057.78	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$7,060.51			\$1,000.00		\$6,060.51	Recurring Le Royal Dreams
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$11,156.47					\$11,156.47	
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$334,274.50	\$8,591.00	\$4,768.35	\$6,653.18	\$11,610.98	\$329,369.69	\$9640 Check for Roof Repair Downpayment held in Bookkeeping Office
Folk Dance Group	\$15,210.41				\$527.18	\$14,683.23	CC Charges - Priest Participation FDF
Hellenic Historical Society	\$3,200.94					\$3,200.94	
Mortgage Account	\$36,533.52				\$5,201.14	\$31,332.38	Monthly Mortgage Payment
Designated Funds	February	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	March	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Bookstore	\$7,352.00	\$16.00	\$977.99	\$1,013.18	\$482.67	\$6,850.14	Purchases / CC Charges
Ornaments	\$1,077.41					\$1,077.41	
Restricted Funds	February	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	March	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
ICON	\$252,085.09	\$150.00		\$5,640.00		\$246,595.09	Payment to IRS 4 checks \$1400 @
Library Account	\$1,470.77					\$1,470.77	Account owed \$21,000. Funds used to make payroll and pay bills in 2015
Giving Tree	\$8,450.91					\$8,450.91	
Building Fund	\$192.08	\$650.00	\$321.80		\$750.00	\$413.88	Payment to Mortgage
\$300,000 One Year Plan	\$0.00	\$7,775.00	\$2,603.31		\$10,378.31	\$0.00	Funds collected/sent for Mortgage
Youth Choir	\$2,989.18					\$2,989.18	
Incorrect Funds Transfers	\$0.00		\$865.25			\$865.25	Lift & Stewardship incorrectly transferred to D&R. Reversed in April
Church School	\$1,306.37					\$1,306.37	
Three Priests	\$3,768.33					\$3,768.33	
Roof Appeal	\$55,000.00					\$55,000.00	
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
GOYA	\$142.36					\$142.36	
Designated, Restricted, and Other Total	\$334,274.50	\$8,591.00	\$4,768.35	\$6,653.18	\$11,610.98	\$329,369.69	
Other Funds	February	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	March	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$60,859.77					\$60,859.77	
March 2019 Candles	\$6,344.00						
March 2019 Trays	\$3,321.00						
Total March Candles & Trays	\$9,665.00						

Saturday

All-Youth Camping with Christ on Church Field

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

*It is the day of Resurrection,
let us be glorious in splendor for the
festival, and let us embrace one another.
Let us speak also, o brothers and sisters,
to those who hate us, and in the
Resurrection, let us forgive all things and
so let us cry: Christ is Risen from the dead,
by Death trampling down upon death, and
to those in the tombs He has granted Life.
(Doxastikon for Holy Pascha)*

***CHRIST IS RISEN!
TRULY, HE IS RISEN!***

