

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 17, Issue 4 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

April 2019

From Father John

Beloved in Christ:

Beginning with *Palm Sunday on April 21*, Orthodox Christians will make a spiritual pilgrimage from near and far for the services of Great and Holy Week. These wonderful services lead us on a spiritual journey through the Passion and Death of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and finally to the magnificent apex of the entire Lenten season and Holy Week – His glorious third-day Resurrection!

As most of you know, I was blessed to lead a pilgrimage of 35 faithful to the Holy Land toward the end of last year. This pilgrimage was crowned by our visit, or rather our ascent to the ancient Queen City, Jerusalem, where we literally walked the roads and venerated – and in the most awe-inspiring occasion, even worshipped – at the holy sites where our Lord instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper, prayed in agony before His betrayal, stood trial, carried His Cross, was Crucified, laid in the Tomb and Resurrected from the dead.

Months later, I can clearly remember arriving back to our hotel at 4:00 am, still very much wide awake following an amazing Midnight Divine Liturgy with Archbishop Theophanes, nine priests (six Greeks, a Russian, a Romanian and this beardless Greek American) and two deacons (including Archdeacon Evlogios who has visited our Parish) at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. Although we were in the midst of the Nativity season, the experience felt more like Pascha – and I was truly blessed to participate in this holy service: The Archbishop and my fellow celebrants were extremely kind and this Liturgy was an experience of genuine brotherhood in Christ around the Altar where Christianity – and our salvation – has its roots.



During the Doxology we processed from the enormous Altar in the Catholikon to the tiny, intimate Altar that was placed before the opening of our Lord's Tomb. The Proskomide (service of Preparation) was conducted on the "Agio Tafo" – and breaking from the normal protocol, as a humble gesture of the unity of the Priesthood in Christ, the Archbishop invited each priest to offer his commemorations on the paten, which required each of us, one at a time, to kneel as we did so. It was humbling and awesome to commemorate both the living and the departed – my hierarchy, my brother priests, my family and the members of our beloved Parish – at the holy site of our

Lord's Entombment and Resurrection. Admittedly, this holy vigil was the most powerful and spiritually life-changing experience for the thousands of pilgrims who were present, clergy and laity alike: Prior to the service all of us were given the opportunity to prayerfully venerate on our knees the Tomb of Christ and, moreover at the Liturgy, we were united with our Resurrected Savior and one another as we received His precious and Life-giving Body and Blood in the Holy Eucharist.

(Continued on Page 3)

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

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

Monday, April 1

6:30 pm Great Compline

Wednesday, April 3

6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy

Friday, April 5

7:00 pm 4th Salutations to the Theotokos

Sunday, April 7/ *4th Sunday of Lent/*

St. John Climacos

Orthros: Tone Four

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

Epistle: Hebrews 6:13-20

Gospel: Mark 9:17-31

5:00 pm Lenten Pan-Orthodox Vespers at

Ss. George and Dimitri Romanian Church

Monday, April 8

6:30 pm Great Compline

Wednesday, April 10

6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy

Friday, April 12

7:00 pm Akathist Hymn

Sunday, April 14/ *5th Sunday of Lent/*

St. Mary of Egypt

Orthros: Tone Five (First Plagal)

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Mark 16:1-8

Epistle: Hebrews 9:11-14

Gospel: Mark 10:32-45

Monday, April 15

6:30 pm Great Compline

Wednesday, April 17

6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy

Saturday, April 20/ *Saturday of Lazaros*

8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Hebrews 12:28-29; 13:1-8

Gospel: John 11:1-45

Palm Tying and Lenten Breakfast

5:00 pm Great Vespers of Palm Sunday

with His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos

Sunday, April 21/ *Palm Sunday*

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos, Celebrant

Festal Gospel: Matthew 11:1-11, 15-17

Epistle: Philippians 4:4-9

Gospel: John 12:1-18

Blessing and Distribution of Palms

Palm Sunday Luncheon in Panos Hall

7:00 pm 1st Bridegroom Service

with His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos

Holy Monday, April 22

7:00 pm 2nd Bridegroom Service

Holy Tuesday, April 23

7:00 pm 3rd Bridegroom Service/Hymn of Kassiani

Holy Wednesday, April 24

9:00 am Presanctified Liturgy

7:00 pm Sacrament of Holy Unction

Holy Thursday, April 25

9:00 am Vespertal Liturgy of St. Basil

7:00 pm Holy Passion of our Lord/12 Gospel Readings

Holy Friday, April 26

10:00 am Royal Hours

3:00 pm Descent from Cross/Children's Procession

7:00 pm Lamentations/Procession of the Epitaphios

Holy Saturday, April 27

9:00 am Vespertal Liturgy of St. Basil

11:00 pm Vigil of the Resurrection

Sunday, April 28/ *GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA*

12:00 am Resurrectional Orthros & Divine Liturgy

Resurrection Gospel: Mark 16:1-8

Epistle: Acts 1:1-8

Gospel: John 1:1-17

Blessing and Distribution of Red Eggs

12:00 pm Agape Vespers and Picnic

Gospel (in various languages): John 20:19-25

Monday, April 29/ *St. George the Great Martyr*

8:00 am Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy

Epistle: Acts 12:1-11

Gospel: John 1:18-28

SUNDAY SCHEDULE

APRIL 7

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

Memorials: Raymond Ruffner (40 days); Paul Kachikis (1 year); Kostantinos Pouridis and Rebecca Berdos.

Fellowship: Pan-Arcadians

APRIL 14

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

Memorials: John Eliakis (1 year); Alexander Plentzas (1 year); Troy Michael Eden (3 years); and Constantine Psihountas.

Fellowship: Forerunners, Seniors of St. John the Baptist

APRIL 21: PALM SUNDAY

Ushers: Entire Parish Council

PALM SUNDAY FISH LUNCHEON

APRIL 28: GREAT AND HOLY PASCHA

Ushers: Entire Parish Council

AGAPE PICNIC

HOLY CONFESSION DURING LENT

Father John is available for Confession by appointment only during the weekdays of Lent. Do not delay, as Confessions will not be heard Holy Week.

From Father John (Continued from Page 1)

Great and Holy Week is the closest we get to that Holy Sepulcher experience I have described: Each year, we Orthodox Christians participate in and witness, both mystically and literally, the life-saving Passion and Resurrection of our Lord – through our senses, the beautiful hymns, powerful readings and stirring liturgical actions of each Holy Week service. However, for this spiritual pilgrimage to have its dynamic renewing effect in our lives, each and every one of us must forego our mundane and normal activities and, instead, make a concerted effort to immerse ourselves fully in the divine services of the Church. To learn about the significance of each day and service of Holy Week and Pascha, the Feast of all feasts, please read the article on pages 4-5.

As we make our spiritual ascent to the Heavenly Jerusalem during Holy Week, I pray that each of us will arrive with anticipation and joy at the empty Tomb of our Savior and experience a glorious Pascha and Resurrection! **Καλο Πασχα και Καλη Ανασταση!**

With love in the Crucified and Risen Christ,



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Maintenance & Grounds

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

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

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

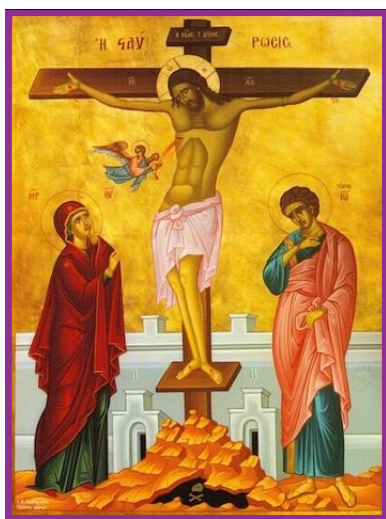
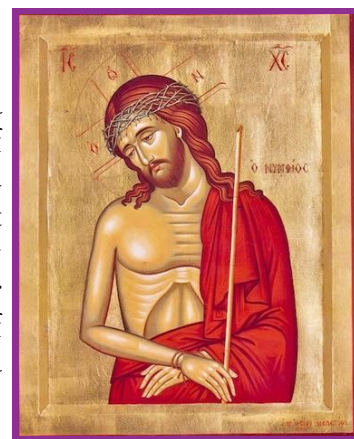
Hellenic Historical Society:
Nitsa Filios, Cheryl Pandelis &
Susan Stamis

Photography: Bill Bruninga

Great and Holy Week Services

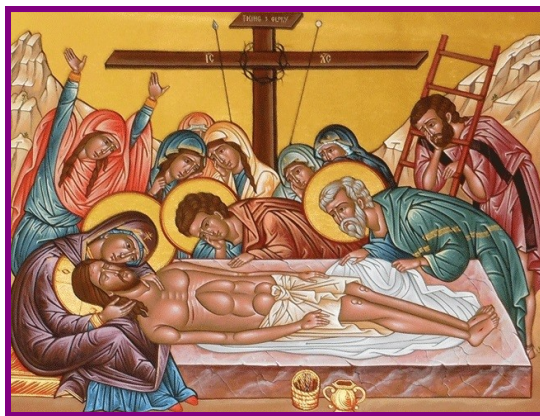
During Palm Sunday weekend – *April 20–21* – our Parish will be blessed with the presence of His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos for the services of Saturday evening Palm Sunday Vespers, Palm Sunday morning Orthros and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy and the First Bridegroom (*Nymphios*) Service that evening. Great and Holy Week actually begins with the Orthros of Holy Monday – known as the Bridegroom Service – on Palm Sunday evening: For three nights we have our eyes fixed on the icon of Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom of the Church, in the center of the Soleas – although this is an image of our Lord clothed in a scarlet robe, crowned with thorns, hands bound, and holding a reed. The hymns and readings of these services set the stage for our Lord's Passion, while simultaneously making us mindful of His imminent Second Coming: ***“Behold, the Bridegroom approaches in the middle of the night, and blessed is the one He finds awake and waiting.”***

In the Greek Orthodox practice, the Sacrament of Holy Unction is placed mid-week and, as a service of healing, its link to Christ's Passion is indisputable: We humans are sick – physically, emotionally and spiritually – as a result of Adam and Eve's Fall and the perpetual sinfulness of each generation. In the seventh and final Gospel reading of the service, the Lord's words are directed to each of us: ***“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.” (Matthew 9:12)*** All of us are in desperate need of the healing and redemption of our Great Physician, Jesus Christ, and as we shall see within a day, ***“with His stripes we are healed.” (Isaiah 53:5)***



Holy Thursday is the turning point of Holy Week: Although the services become more powerful and admittedly much longer, the saving works of our Lord accelerate rapidly – within twelve hours we witness in hymns, readings and liturgical actions our Lord Jesus Christ washing the feet of His Disciples, instituting the Mystical Supper (the Eucharist), as well as His betrayal by Judas Iscariot, His agony in the garden of Gethsemane, His arrest, trial, mocking and scourging, His death sentence and, at the climax, His voluntary Crucifixion for the salvation of the world. That evening, after the fifth of twelve Gospel readings, the priest carries the Lord's Cross, just as Simon of Cyrene, and after placing the Crucified Lord in the midst of the faithful, he solemnly intones, ***“We worship Your Passion, O Christ. Show us now Your glorious Resurrection.”***

On the most solemn day of the year, Holy Friday, our faithful are encouraged to take an additional day off from school and work to be present for the beautiful and spiritually stirring services. At the mid-afternoon service the priest reads the long Gospel passage recounting the Lord's Crucifixion and Death, and toward the end he pauses to bring the narrative home: He goes before the Cross, prostrates himself and then solemnly removes our Lord, wraps Him in a linen shroud, and places Him in the Altar, which becomes His Tomb. Shortly after, the priest processes the *Epitaphios* (the cloth icon of the Entombed Lord) around the Church and then gently lays Him in the Sepulcher. That night, the faithful gather in the Church for the Funeral of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with candles in hand all chant the Lamentations: ***“In a grave they laid You, O my life and my Christ; and the armies of the angels were quite amazed, as they sang the praise of Your submissive love.”***



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Parish Council Report

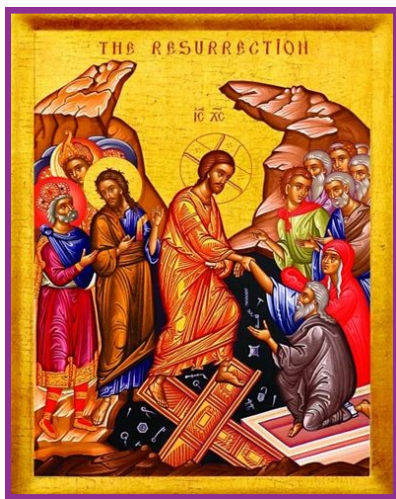
KALO PASCHA! Visas Approved! We recently received word that the Visas for the Iconographers were approved. As previously stated, the light at the end of the tunnel is growing bigger and brighter. The Iconographers presently have appointments scheduled with the US Consulate in Greece on April 11, 2019, and should receive their Visas within a couple days thereafter. Once they receive their Visas, they are free to travel here immediately to complete their work. We anticipate they will be here before Palm Sunday, and will be working through Holy Week and thereafter. Finally, the scaffolding will soon be coming down! We especially want to thank Kosta Fountas for all his hard work as our Immigration Attorney in getting these Visas approved.

We want to thank all the many volunteers who are stepping up with their time and talents to help with Holy Week and all the related activities, such as the Palm Sunday Luncheon and the Agape Picnic. Your efforts, as always, provide a beautiful and meaningful experience for all during this most important holiday season in our Church, and we greatly appreciate it. We are looking forward to a tremendous Holy Week and joining together to worship in our Faith. We are also pleased and honored that Metropolitan Gerasimos will be here over the Palm Sunday weekend to worship and celebrate with us. Please keep in mind that the Palm Sunday Luncheon will be held on April 21 following Church Services and the Agape Picnic will be held on Pascha, April 28, starting at noon. These are great events for fellowship so please come and join us. You can purchase tickets for the Agape Picnic through the Church Office or in Panos Hall during Fellowship on Sundays.

Over the years, a lot of space in this column has been devoted to Stewardship and, as you all are aware, we are continuing with our relentless never-ending pursuit of fixing Stewardship. Many people complain that we are always asking for money and, the truth is, we are asking for money. Stating the obvious, it takes money to have a Church, and that money has to come collectively from the *prayerful* generosity of all our Parishioners through Stewardship. The reason it seems that we are always asking for money is because Stewardship in our Parish is broken, and has been broken for decades. Because Stewardship is and has been broken, the future of our Church is being adversely affected. For example, our facilities are aging, and we are unable to properly maintain and repair them, which will then make repairs in the future even more extensive and expensive.

(Continued on Page 6)

Great and Holy Week Services (Continued from Page 4)



The Vesperal Liturgy of Holy Saturday morning is replete with joyful anticipation, especially with the inspired and spirited chanting of our Youth Choir. Many prophecies from the Old Testament are read, prefiguring Christ's Resurrection on the third day and His power over Death. Just before the reading of the Holy Gospel, the priest sprinkles bay leaves all around the Church – as a symbol of Christ's victory – while chanting triumphantly: *“Arise, O God, and judge the earth, for You shall bring all nations to Your inheritance!”* Much later that night, thousands will assemble in the darkened Church and in the overflow section under the tent outside: If there is one service people will attend in a year, this is it, for all Orthodox Christians embrace Great and Holy Pascha as the Feast of all feasts.

At midnight the Royal Doors are quickly opened and the priest lights the large Paschal Candle from the solitary flame of the Altar vigil lamp, and then raises it before the faithful, – as a visual expression that our Risen Christ has overcome the bonds of Hades and Death – proclaiming in chant, *“Come, receive the light from the Light that is never overtaken by night and glorify Christ, Who is risen from the dead.”*

Καλή Ανασταση! Blessed Resurrection!

Father John

Parish Council Report *(Continued from Page 5)*

Moreover, because Stewardship is broken, it is virtually impossible to work on long term goals such as a school, or senior housing. We have been sounding the alarms about Stewardship for years; however, the alarms continue to fall on deaf ears with a large portion of our Parish. We all need to do something significant to fix Stewardship, and invest in the future of our Church. We can no longer continue with the status quo, and it is time to break the vicious cycle hampering our efforts to continue having a great place for worship.

Here are the facts about Stewardship. It takes \$973,000 a year based upon 2018 numbers to operate our Church. This includes expenses for the Archdiocese, Metropolis, Clergy, Mortgage Principal, Church Edifice/Building/Grounds, Administration, Church Fundraising, and Personnel. Pursuant to the Uniform Parish Regulations of the Archdiocese, we are supposed to *completely* cover the operating costs with Stewardship. Unfortunately, last year, like every other previous year, Stewardship only covered roughly 42% of the expenses, and left a shortfall of 58%. In dollars, the shortfall was around \$564,000. Other sources of revenue for the operating expenses are the Bookstore, candles, trays, general donations, religious services, Community Center rentals, and fundraisers. Even with all these other sources of revenue, there was still a shortfall of around \$283,000. To cover this remaining shortfall, we mostly had to use funds from the Food Festival, which in turn funneled money away from capital projects. Without money for capital projects, there was little to no money to cover repairs and maintenance of our buildings and grounds. As it stands right now, we need to repair the parking lots, paint the inside and outsides of the Church and Community Center, replace carpets in the Church, and repair the floors in the Panos and Kokkos Halls. In the near future, we will need to replace the roof on the Church, and eventually we will need to replace many of the heating and air conditioning units in the Church and Community Center. We cannot tackle these things without a fully functioning level of giving toward Stewardship. If Stewardship was working the way it should, we could begin fixing each and every one of these things, and also begin working toward long term goals, and ensure the future of our Church.

Here is where we stand today for 2019 on Stewardship: We presently have pledges of approximately \$360,000. This amount constitutes a present shortfall of \$613,000. As you can well see, we have a long way to go this year. The heartbreaking truth is that to fix Stewardship only requires 450 families to contribute an average of \$2,161 per year or 500 families to contribute an average of \$1,945 dollars per year. *(Please note that these are not the maximum suggested contributions, but are simply the average contributions necessary to have a fully functioning Stewardship program).* We have made it very easy to contribute. You can contribute with a lump sum payment or make monthly payments. Monthly payments can be deducted directly from your bank account or your credit card or both. You only need to contact the Church Office to make it happen. As we continue in this Lenten Season, please look into your hearts and be grateful for the gifts God has given you and please give back through Stewardship. Challenge everyone you know in our Church to help with Stewardship.

As a reminder, we have our Parish Assembly Meeting scheduled for **Sunday, March 31**, following the Liturgy. These meetings are held semi-annually and are for all Stewards in good standing. There is a lot of important information provided and important votes taken on many things that affect not only the operation of the Church but also the vision of the Church. We encourage all Stewards to attend and participate.

The dates for the 2019 Greek Food Festival are **Friday, September 27 through Sunday, September 29**. Planning has been going at full steam. As stated last month, the immediate priorities are to slot individuals into leadership positions, and to begin aggressively pursuing Pre-Sales, which primarily include selling Raffle Tickets, Souvenir Book Ads, and Coupon Books. Pre-Sales provide the “seed” money for the Festival and, more importantly, good strong pre-sales could conceivably fund up to 40% or more of the expenses going into the Festival, thus, minimizing our risk. The Festival is a community effort, so please step up and help when the time comes.

In closing, we want to again thank the various Church ministries and organizations, and the many individuals for all the work they do. Please get involved as we move forward to make our Church better.

May God Bless! Gus Flangas, Parish Council President

The Clark County Orthodox Clergy Association
Invites All Adults to Join Us for the

Annual Lenten Retreat

Face to Face: Christ's Journey into Our Shame and Our Journey Through It

Saturday, April 6, 2019

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

Rev. Father Stephen Freeman,
Retreat Speaker



Program

10:00 am	Registration
10:30 am	3rd Hour
10:45 am	The Shame of the Cross
12:00 pm	Lenten Lunch
1:00 pm	Shame: The Master Emotion
2:00 pm	Break
2:15 pm	The Path to God's Healing
3:30 pm	Conclusion

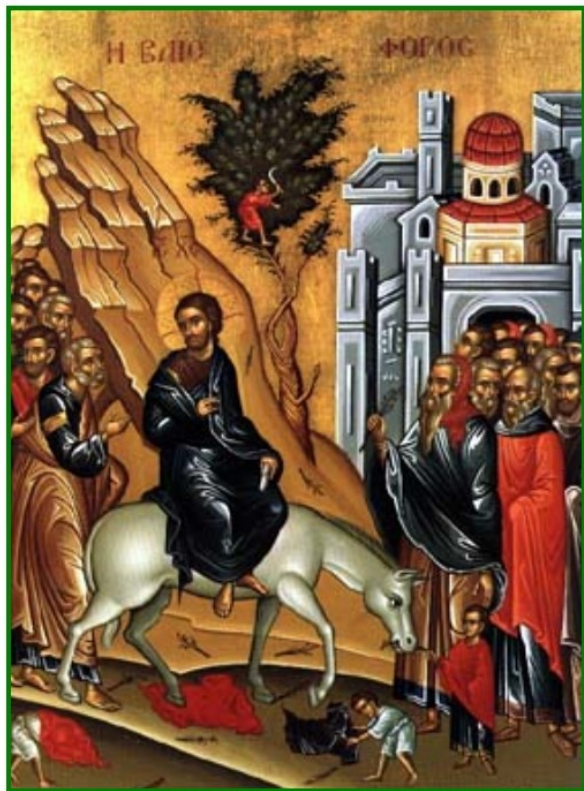
Father Stephen is an archpriest in the Orthodox Church in America and serves as pastor of St. Anne Orthodox Church in Oak Ridge, TN. He was educated at Furman University, Seabury-Western Theological Seminary, and Duke University. He is author of the popular blog *Glory to God for All Things* and of the weekly podcast *Glory to God on Ancient Faith Radio* as well as the author of *Everywhere Present: Christianity in a One-Storey Universe*. His work has been widely translated and published in Europe and Russia.

\$15 per person, includes lunch

Please register by Friday, March 29, 2019

Make checks payable to St. Paul Orthodox Church, Memo: Lenten Retreat

You and your family are cordially invited
to join His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos
for the Annual



Palm Sunday Fish Luncheon

Sunday, April 21, 2019

Salad, Baked Fish,
Rice, Skordalia,
Pita Bread and Dessert

Following the Divine Liturgy in Panos Hall
Free Will Offering

Cash Bar: Beer and Wine

Net proceeds benefit the Parish Operations



Please join us for our
AGAPE PICNIC

Holy Pascha ♦ Sunday, April 28, 2019

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church
(On Hacienda between Jones & Torrey Pines)

12:00 noon to 4:00 pm
(Agape Vespers at noon, then the Picnic begins)



Tickets are \$25
for either one
Dinner Plate
(Lamb or Chicken)
or for Specialty Items.

- ♦ Traditional Roasted Lamb or Chicken Dinner
- ♦ Specialty Items and Greek Pastries
- ♦ Greek Music and Dancing
- ♦ Easter Egg Hunt and Sports Activities
- ♦ Covered Seating available
- ♦ Table Reservations are available and encouraged

Χριστός Ανέστη! Christ is Risen!

See Parish Council Members for tickets and reservations
or call Karen at the Church Office (702) 221-8245



From Father Seraphim

Last month I accompanied Father John and Justina Szukiewicz in traveling to our Metropolis of San Francisco Clergy-Laity Assembly at St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center. This was my first Clergy-Laity experience and I was enlightened, rejuvenated and educated. The main speaker was Father Evan Armatas, who has served at St. Spyridon Greek Orthodox Church in Loveland, Colorado since August 2007. He started with just six families in his Mission Parish there and today, just 12 years later, has a dynamic and growing community of several hundred families, a brand new Church filled with Byzantine Iconography, and an ever-evolving vision of “Parish Health” as a fundamental goal. He gave three inspiring and incredibly well thought-out presentations over two days. For this month of the *Resurrection*, I would like to reflect on one of his “Four Pillars of Parish Health”: In a healthy Parish, faith is translated into the daily lives of the Parishioners.

According to Father Evan, between 6,000 and 10,000 Christian churches in the US are dying each year. That means around 100-200 churches will close this week! One difference between dying parishes and communities that persist generation after generation is the ability to pass on the Faith successfully – not in the sense of ideas alone, but Faith also as a way of life with a particular practice (fasting, prayer, Feast Days, chanting, etc.). It can be tempting to blame the increasing secularization of America, church leadership, or national politics, but we must remember the greatest periods of growth, particularly in the first century, came during intense persecution amidst adversarial cultures. Perhaps we are not hindered by external forces as much as by our own lack of commitment and understanding of our Orthodox Tradition, as well as a disconnect between the Gospel and our daily lives.

At the heart of the Gospel and at the heart of our Faith is the empty Tomb of Jesus Christ. It is the culmination of the Birth narratives, the miracle stories and commandments, Passion-week, and the Death of the Messiah. Belief in the Resurrection is not so much a problem for Orthodox Christians: Indeed, on Pascha we love to sing, “Χριστός Ανέστη! Christ is Risen!” However, we need something more than a one day feast – something that Father Evan has identified as a veritable pillar of parish health. The good news of the Resurrection has to find its way into our daily grind, our relationships, and how we think and feel and act. We need the Resurrection of Jesus Christ in our hearts.

As beautiful as the Lenten season of buildup toward the Resurrection is, if Pascha is only one night for us – and then it is all over – we will have fasted and struggled in vain, or with no lasting effect. If we stop coming to Church in May and on through the summer because we have “put in our time” during Lent and, “now we need to rest,” then we will have missed the meaning and purpose of Lent and Pascha.

Pascha means “Passover” or “passage.” Lent, inseparable from the Resurrection toward which it leads, offers each of us a chance to pass from death to life: From one way of living, of being, of thinking, of acting – to a different one that is holy and renewed by God’s own Death for our sins. The extra prayer, the focus on God, confession of our sins and the fasting or ceasing from sinning which we take up as a discipline in preparation to see the Risen Lord does not go away after the Resurrection! On the contrary, the week after Pascha is called *Renewal Week*, when the renewed community of Christians walks in the Light of Pascha every day; and *then* we spend 50 whole days in celebration until Pentecost! I hope that we are all trying to adopt new life-habits, a renewed mindset and a Christ-like mode of being in the world as we learn from our Mother, the Church, how to walk on the paths of salvation these holy days.

Our own personal, ongoing, and ultimate connection to the Resurrection of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ is experienced every time we receive the Blood that was shed, and the Body that was broken – of the One Who died for the life of the world, and rose to renew us. Christ’s own Self-offering continues to be experienced by our St. John the Baptist community every Sunday (which is a mini-Pascha!), and all the major Feast Days in the Divine Liturgy. For we receive the *Risen* Lord in Holy Communion; we receive Divine Life from the Conqueror of death, sin, and the devil. As we stay united to Jesus Christ through Holy Communion and in His Church year-round, we will experience the gift of His own Presence in us each day of our lives, and by His grace even at the moment of our own death – which becomes our own personal pascha from this life and this world, to the Kingdom of God.

Father Seraphim



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

Dear Fellow Parishioners:

We pray that 2019 brings continued good health and many blessings to you and your families.

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 seven more months to bring this goal to fruition.

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

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.

On behalf of the Ladies Philoptochos Society Panagia Chapter

Your sisters in Christ,

Vicky Palivos, President
Ladies Philoptochos Society
Panagia Chapter

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AHEPA

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Berendji, Jim and Vivian
Chagaras, Kiki
Dalacas, Dimitri and Athanasia
Dimopoulos, Steve
Downis, 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
Hetzel, David and Stephanatos-Hetzel, 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 Eliopulos, Tina
Monoyudis, Jim and Julie
Murray, Christopher and George, Veneta
Nixon, John and Ellyn
Palivos, Peter and Vicky
Pandelis, Cheryl
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!

Philoptochos News

Dearest Sisters of Philoptochos,

We are in the Lenten period, which is a time of reflection, prayer, fasting and repentance, in preparation for the Great Feast of our Lord's Resurrection.



Philoptochos is strong in its membership and continues to increase, not only in numbers, but also in its philanthropic endeavors. I would like to thank those Philoptochos members for their prompt response to the stewardship notice. We are in the Philoptochos membership enrollment period, so once again I appeal to you, if you have never been a member, become a new member; if you have, please renew your stewardship. It is a great privilege and utmost responsibility of every Greek Orthodox woman – whether Baptized into the Faith as an infant, converted as an adult, or married to an Orthodox spouse – to be a Philoptochos member. Philoptochos women are blessed with Christ's light of peace, hope and strength, as we continue to help our brothers and sisters throughout the world. We internalize Christ's spirit of compassion and follow in His work of good will toward humanity.



On March 2, the Philoptochos and Pan Arcadians teamed up and hosted our Mardi Gras Gala, which was a successful and fun event. Thank you to our amazing Chairwoman, Geri Kypreos, and her committee for doing such a beautiful job! We truly appreciate her time, diligence and hard work. It was a wonderful event with great music, delicious food, dancing, performances and costumes. Additionally, our appreciation is extended to the others who made donations and devoted their time to the event, including John and Vickie Kelesis, George Kypreos, Steve Tzelalis, Steve Likourinou and Jon Caredis.

On March 17 we had the pleasure of hosting the Pan-Orthodox Vespers Dinner, which followed a beautiful service in our Church.

We are grateful to LeeAnn Eliakis for once again making and contributing the delicious lentil soup, Steve Tzelalis for making the flavorful salad, our Chairwoman Bessie Chachas for her time, decorations and Lenten cakes, and our board for bringing fresh fruit and helping with the set-up and serving.



APRIL EVENTS:

Wine Wagon: Please buy raffle tickets so you can have a chance to win a wagon full of very good wine, on Holy Pascha, at the Agape Picnic drawing. Anastasia Dallas is in charge of this fun event. Each raffle ticket is \$5, and the winner need not to be present. Please donate two bottles of wine of your preference, either red or white (no less than \$10 each bottle) and bring them to Church throughout Lent. The proceeds will benefit the Philoptochos charities.

Palm Sunday Luncheon on Sunday, April 21: His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos will honor us with his presence and celebrate Palm Sunday with us, and we encourage our community to join us for this very significant holiday. The traditional fish luncheon will be provided by the Parish Council, and Philoptochos will assist in decorating and serving. Philoptochos members and volunteers are needed on Saturday of Lazaros, April 20, following Liturgy (11:00 am) to set up and decorate in Panos Hall. Then on Palm Sunday, we request your help in serving at the luncheon.

Holy Week, Epitaphion and Pascha Flowers Collection: Please contribute through the envelopes provided in the Narthex – and place your offering in the pink baskets, along with names of departed loved ones for commemoration at the Resurrection Liturgy. Please make checks payable to the Ladies Philoptochos Society. On Palm Sunday, Philoptochos will take up a special collection for the flowers. The cost of flowers has increased considerably, so the contributions and generosity of members of the community is greatly appreciated.

(Continued on Page 15)

Philoptochos News *(Continued from Page 14)*

Red Egg Dyeing on Holy Thursday, April 25: Andrea Takas and Effie Lekar are again chairing the dyeing of the red eggs, which will *follow the Vespertal Liturgy at 9:00 am*. The eggs are provided by Philoptochos, and will be blessed and distributed at the Resurrection Liturgy and Agape Vespers. To assist, please contact Effie at agapi1993@icloud.com.

Decoration of the Epitaphion on Holy Friday, April 26: Ernestine Kachikis will again chair the decorating, *following the Royal Hours at 10:00 am (we will decorate at 11:30 am)*. Please come appropriately dressed and participate in the decoration of the Kouvouklion, as we prepare for the Epitaphion service that holy evening.

Agape Picnic Pastries Sales on Holy Pascha, Sunday, April 28: Amanda Flangas, Bernadette Anthony and Alis Dokakis will chair. Philoptochos assists the Parish Council for this annual event by handling the pastries. Freshly baked koulourakia and kourabiethes are needed for the Agape Picnic sale. Please contact Amanda at agflangas@cox.net or Bernadette at bernadette.anthony@gmail.com to offer your assistance.

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 help pay off the mortgage of our Church. 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**.

COMING UP IN MAY:

Sunday, May 12: Mothers Day

Tuesday, May 14: Philoptochos General Meeting at 6:00 pm in Kokkos Hall

Sunday, May 19: Bartsas Memorial

Monday, May 20: Presidents Dinner

May Christ continue to bless you and your families during this blessed season, which culminates in our Lord's Crucifixion and Resurrection!

With Love in Christ, Vicky Palivos, Philoptochos President



Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisi

Mary (Cynthia) Alford (Adult Baptism) on March 2, 2019.
Godparent: Marcie Karas.

Nektaria, daughter of Jeremy and Romina Chomakos, on March 23, 2019.
Godparents: Konstandinos Chomakos and Rebeka Pouridis.

Fallen Asleep in the Lord: Eternal Memory!

Barbara Peterson on March 8. Funeral on March 16.

Constantin Tselikis on March 9. Funeral on March 19.

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

Youth and Family Ministries

Church School

Kalo Pascha and Kali Anastasi!

Where has the year gone? Pascha is just around the corner. Please encourage your children to attend the services of Holy Week along with you. We are still collecting money for 'Missions Possible' *through Palm Sunday, April 21* (though I will not turn away money for our Mission Churches if you come to me later). There will also be a collection outside of the Church doors. I will be handing out treats in our classes for the students who bring their cups filled with coins (and dollars).

Here are a few important dates and some activities to get involved in: On *Saturday of Lazaros, April 20, after the 9:00 am Divine Liturgy* we will have a light Lenten breakfast followed by Palm Cross Tying. Every year we tie about 1,500 palms. Please come and help us continue this beautiful tradition: I love to see the generations tie crosses – sometimes we see three generations, like my own family. Later, *at 5:00 pm* we will have *Great Vespers for Palm Sunday with His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos*.

The following day is *Palm Sunday*, when His Eminence will celebrate the *Hierarchical Divine Liturgy*, then bless and distribute the palm crosses. The annual *Fish Luncheon* will follow Liturgy – we hope you can attend this event since Metropolitan Gerasimos will be our honored guest. Then *at 7:00 pm* His Eminence will preside at the *First Bridegroom Service* in our Church.

All youth are encouraged to join us on *Holy Friday, April 26 at 3:00 pm* for the annual *Children's Procession with the Epitaphios*. This is a beautiful Parish tradition, which includes a special discussion with Father John and Father Seraphim at the end of the service.

Please also join us for the *Agape Vespers and Picnic on Pascha Sunday, April 28 at noon*, for a lamb dinner followed by our annual Egg Hunt. If you would like to donate filled eggs, please drop them off to Karen or to your child's teacher *by Holy Thursday, April 25*.

Save the date: Church School Commencement is on Sunday, May 19.

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



The Triumph of Orthodoxy - Photo by Bill Bruninga

Myrrh Bearers

Kalo Pascha and Kali Anastasi!

We are looking for girls 6th-12th to participate in Holy Week services as Myrrh Bearers. They will participate in the First Bridegroom Service on Palm Sunday evening, Holy Thursday, Holy Friday and Holy Saturday Resurrection services. There will be a mandatory meeting after Church School on **Sunday, April 14** in Classroom 5. We will be going over the details, including what to wear and the times. If you are unable to make it to this meeting, please reach out to me so we can make other arrangements.

In Christ, Eileen Koutsulis, (702) 521-6515 or vivaleenie@cox.net.

Altar Servers

There is a mandatory Acolyte practice on **Sunday, April 14 at 12:15 pm**. All Altar Servers must attend this practice in preparation for the Hierarchical services with His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos on Palm Sunday weekend, as well as for Holy Week Services.

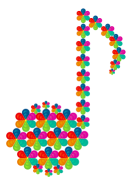
Yours in Christ, Father John and Father Seraphim

Egg Hunt

We will be having our annual Egg Hunt at the Agape Picnic again this year. We are looking for donations of filled eggs for the kids. Please leave your donations **by Holy Thursday, April 25** in Classroom 5 or the Parish Council Office on Sundays, or with Karen at the Church Office during the week. Any type of treats or candy (except chocolate, which melts) will be appreciated by the kids. Please let me know if you have any questions. With Gratitude in Christ, Eileen Koutsulis (702) 521-6516 or vivaleenie@cox.net



Youth Choir News



Kali Sarakosti – Blessed Lenten Season to All!

First of all, **Thank You** to all the kids who came **early** to chant for the Liturgy on Sunday, March 10. Hurray! It was wonderful and many people have commented on your efforts! The more we chant our new English Doxology, the easier it will get. We had cheese pizzas as our reward, and appropriately so on Cheesefare Sunday!!

Our Lenten schedule for April is as follows:

Fridays, April 5 and 12: Practices at 6:15 pm in the 4th and 5th Grades Classroom. Salutations to the Theotokos at 7:00 pm.

Saturday, April 27: Holy Saturday Morning Liturgy at 8:45 am. Holy Saturday Morning's service is when the Youth Choir shines chanting their favorite hymns commemorating the Three Youths.

This year, the Youth Choir will chant together with the Adult Choir **on Palm Sunday, April 21**. His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos will again join us for Palm Sunday weekend and will certainly enjoy hearing our Youth Choir participate.

Thank you so much to all the youth and parents who participate and support this wonderful ministry of our Parish. Love in Christ, Presvytera Maria

Greek Language Program

Greek Language Classes continue for both children and adults. The children recited poems and performed the Greek National Anthem on Sunday, March 24 after Liturgy, to commemorate Greek Independence Day in conjunction with AHEPA. The children were amazing and received praise from all present.

There will be no classes on Holy Tuesday, April 23, but we will resume on Tuesday, April 30.

Καλή Ανασταση! Paula Kelesis, Greek School Director



GOYA ~ For Teenagers

We look forward to the upcoming Orthodox Teen Overnight Retreat in late March, and we are sure everyone who attends will enjoy the fellowship and have a great and spiritually moving time!

Mark your calendars for GOYA Night on *Sunday, April 14, 6:00 pm*, in Panos Hall.

On *Saturday, April 20 – Saturday of Lazarus* – we will be meeting as a group *after Liturgy* in Kokkos Hall. This is a great time to hang out with your fellow GOYAns and help tie the palms that are blessed and distributed to our community on Palm Sunday. We encourage you to attend all the events and bring your brothers, sisters, cousins and friends.

Praying for you to have a joyous remainder of the Lenten Period and a Blessed Resurrection. Christ is Risen . . . Christos Anesti!

If you have questions or suggestions for upcoming events, please see Father Seraphim or any GOYA Advisor! Young Adult and Parent Volunteers are always appreciated and welcome.

Thank You, Father Seraphim and the GOYA Advisors, Kouli Pouridis and June Likourinou



Orthodox Family Fellowship



In March our children had an amazing time at our OFF Mini Retreat. Thank you to our Church School teachers, parents and priests for providing an atmosphere of fun and spiritual growth. And thank you to all our children for participating!

We will once again have the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos' presence for Palm Sunday weekend.

Mark your calendars for *Saturday of Lazarus, April 20*: We will attend Divine Liturgy at *9:00 am*, and then following have our annual Palm Cross Tying event. Come, have a bite to eat and learn how to tie crosses with us!

Finally, we will celebrate our Lord's Resurrection with our families at the *Agape Picnic on Sunday, April 28* – and participate in the Pascha Egg Hunt at the picnic! Join us for the great food and fun!

In Christ, Amy Khuri and Jelena Boskovic, OFF Advisors



Praise the Lord and exalt Him forever!

Adult and Young Adult Ministries

Young Adults

We are encouraging all our Young Adults to attend the *Annual Lenten Retreat with Father Stephen Freeman on Saturday, April 6, 10:00 am to 3:30 pm, at St. John the Baptist Church*. The retreat is \$15 per person and includes lunch. Payment is by cash or check (payable to St. Paul Orthodox Church – memo: Lenten Retreat).

This month we will be heading to the home of Melissa and Thomas Fleetwood for a Lenten Potluck Fellowship Dinner! We will gather on *Saturday, April 13 at 6:00 pm*. The Fleetwoods will be providing a lentil soup, a fruit platter, and some hummus and crackers, so please bring your favorite fasting side dish, drinks, dessert or salad to share and enjoy together! Please RSVP with Father Seraphim or Angeliki (Melissa) and we hope to see you there.

In Christ, Niko Asim and Elizabeth Arbuiso, YA Advisors

Kali Parea - “Good Company” for the 40+ Crowd

Great and Holy Pascha is on Sunday, April 28! So that we may attend all the services this month, Kali Parea will not formally meet in April. Please join us for the *Annual Lenten Retreat with Father Stephen Freeman on Saturday, April 6, 10:00 am to 3:30 pm, at St. John the Baptist Church*. The retreat is \$15 per person and includes lunch. Payment is by cash or check (payable to St. Paul Orthodox Church – memo: Lenten Retreat).

I have reserved a table for Kali Parea at *both the Palm Sunday Luncheon (April 21) and at the Agape Picnic on Holy Pascha*. Please see me for your tickets, so we can sit together – and please volunteer to help if you are available for the Agape Picnic, as we will need all hands on deck for this wonderful community-wide event!

In Christ, Demetrious Asim, Kali Parea Advisor

Mr. & Mrs. - A Couples Fellowship



This month we will not be meeting due to all the services of Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha. We are encouraging all our couples to attend the *Annual Lenten Retreat with Father Stephen Freeman on Saturday, April 6, 10:00 am to 3:30 pm, at St. John the Baptist Church*. The retreat is \$15 per person and includes lunch. Payment is by cash or check (payable to St. Paul Orthodox Church – memo: Lenten Retreat).

Our Mr. and Mrs. fellowship will reconvene next month *for Thomas Sunday on 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 Paschal season 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.

Blessed Resurrection! Father John, Father Seraphim, and their Presvyteres

Adult Basketball

Join us for a pick-up basketball game *every Monday at 8:00 pm, following Great Compline, in Panos Hall*. There will be no basketball on *Holy Monday, April 22*. We will resume on Monday, April 29 at 7:00 pm.

Please call *Nate Dallas at (347) 364-0313* for more information, or to be included in our Facebook group.



Καλή Ανασταση! Blessed Resurrection!

Forerunners - The Seniors of St. John the Baptist

Kalo Pascha!

Our March gathering was well attended and we enjoyed a delicious Lenten lunch of Briami by our very own Sam Koutsulis and his crew. For dessert we enjoyed delicious Lenten cakes made by Mary Pursell. We appreciate all our cooks! Thank you, Father John, for speaking to our group about Lent and other topics of interest to us. It was very informative.

Another thanks is in order to those who brought Lenten treats for the Parish to enjoy at the March Fellowship, which fell the day before our meeting. We will try to not schedule it back to back in the future.

This month our luncheon will be on *Monday, April 8 at 11:30 am*. We will enjoy another Lenten lunch and great fellowship. We will host Fellowship on *Sunday, April 14*. Please bring Lenten treats for all to enjoy again.

Our thoughts, prayers and love to all our hospitalized and homebound friends. May this holy season strengthen you in your faith and love.

Love in Christ, Victoria Xikis for the Forerunners

Byzantine Chant Class

Kali Anastasi!

I want to thank all the people who have stepped up to read the Psalms during our Lenten services. My voice and I appreciate it very much. Please continue to serve by reading for the rest of Lent and Holy Week.

Our Byzantine Chant Class will resume after Pascha in May on Wednesday evenings.

A Blessed Pascha to All! Presvytera Maria

Notes from the Choir Loft



Thank you to the Choir members for dedicating their extra time to attend rehearsals during Lent! As we continue to prepare for Holy Week and Pascha, there will be a change in the rehearsal schedule. We will not have Friday rehearsals in April – rather, our rehearsals will take place after Divine Liturgy on *Sundays, April 7 and April 14*.

Please mark your calendars and plan to attend these rehearsals. I apologize for the change in schedule and any inconvenience it may cause! Athena Mertes, Choir Director



Adult Study with Father John

Churchianity vs. Christianity

By Metropolitan Anthony Bloom (Available in our Bookstore)

*Join us every Wednesday 8:00 - 9:00 pm during Lent
(following Presanctified Liturgy) in Kokkos Hall*



The AHEPA Las Vegas Chapter 341 will not be meeting in April. We wish you all a Blessed Lenten and Pascha Season. We will be meeting in May with more information to follow. 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

Stewardship and Community Outreach

Kalo Pascha!

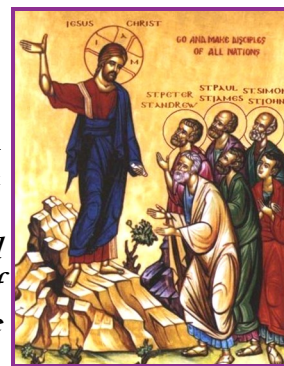
As we journey onward to our Lord's Passion and Holy Resurrection, I am taking a moment to pause and reflect on the recent Clergy and Laity Retreat I had the blessing to attend on behalf of our Parish faithful. Our theme was "The Great Commission in the Parish," and was based on Christ's words, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen."* (Matthew 28:19-20) The title and scripture reference is very much self-explanatory thus it will not be my primary point in this piece.

Instead I would like to focus on the Mission Parish representatives whom I encountered. It was very exciting to see that Orthodoxy is growing in our Metropolis, and that there are faithful folks in various areas that are willing to give it their all in helping establish a new Parish Church! My first question to one of these sweet souls was, "how often do you get have Divine Liturgy?" The response, "Two Sundays a month, if a priest is able to come." My next question, "Where will you celebrate Holy Week and Pascha?" (I did not even want to ask of the possibility of weekday Lenten services throughout the 40 day fast, as I am positive they do not exist). The answer to the Holy Week and Pascha question, "I don't really know . . ."

These points are what make me pause. Why? Because not one of us belonging to St. John the Baptist Parish in Las Vegas will have to worry about where we will worship. We are so extremely blessed to have the amazing Church that has grown and developed from its humble beginnings through much hard labor, and work of the Holy Spirit! Let us show our heartfelt gratitude by being more supportive in all the ways that a true Orthodox Christian must. Let us never fall in to the trap of assuming we can show up to 5300 South El Camino Road and that all will be in order presuming – "somebody else will have to cover the details, as my life is too busy, burdened with stress, and I just can't be bothered to worry with the Church's needs."

Let us be like those Mission Parish members that I met at the retreat – who know that if they do not step up and support "the mission" with 100% of their time, talent and especially treasures, that the Parish will not grow and be the spiritually healthy home where lives are transformed and healed and where they can find comfort in a Parish family worshipping Christ our merciful Lord.

Sincerely in Him, Justina/Jennia Szukiewicz, Stewardship and Community Outreach Committee



Orthodox Bookstore

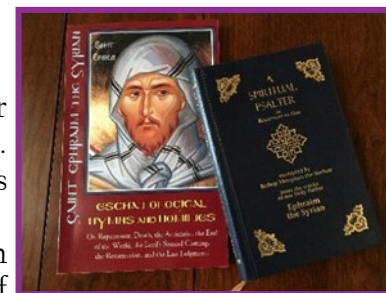
As Lent progresses, the Bookstore has many options to assist on your spiritual journey. In the spirit of Lent, we chose to feature books from St. Ephraim the Syrian, whose prayer we say during Lenten liturgical services (Lord and Master of my life . . .).

St. Ephraim was an early Church Father who is known for his role in the 1st Ecumenical Council in Nicea and is considered the "Saint of Repentance." He penned over 400 hymns, many homilies and biblical commentaries in prose. His works show his humility and are poetic. Our choice for April is this brand new book from St. Anthony Monastery, *Eschatological Hymns and Homilies*, by St. Ephraim the Syrian.

"My sinfulness is beyond words, nor could the sea wash me clean; yet this have I said, this do I say: That Thy Love is greater than my offenses. The waves of the sea are fewer than my sins; yet if weighed in the balance with Thy Love, they are as nothing."

We also carry Saint Ephraim's very popular *A Spiritual Psalter*. "If He was not flesh, who was crucified on the cross? And if He is not God, who shook the foundations of the earth?"

Until next month, God willing, ICXC NIKΑ - Mary Pursell and the Bookstore Team



Kokkos Scholarship

The Scholarship Committee for the Kokkos Scholarship Fund is pleased to announce that applications are available at the Church Office. If you wish to receive your application via email, please contact Karen at karen@vegasgreekorthodox.com. The applications must be returned *on or before Monday, April 15*. Late and/or incomplete applications will not be considered.

The eligibility requirements were established by Fofa Kokkos in her Last Will and Testament, which stipulates that two high school graduates of Greek descent within the St. John Community be selected, who are enrolled for higher education to a college or university. Two scholarships will be given, and the amounts this year are \$1,500 each. The students must have an outstanding scholastic record and be in financial need. Also, parish involvement by the students at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church is also a factor in evaluating the applicants. Please contact the Church Office for more information at (702) 221-8245.

2019 Stewardship Report (as of 3/25/19)

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$352,806 (\$307,483 in 2018)
 Stewardship Gifts Received: \$155,503 (\$114,164 in 2018)
 Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$197,304 (\$193,319 in 2018)
 Stewardship Families Pledged: 310 (292 in 2018)
 Average Pledge to Date: \$1,138 (\$1,028 in 2018)
 Average Pledge Needed: \$3,112 (Decreases with More Pledges)

Church Account Summaries ~ February 2019

Nevada State Bank Accounts	January Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	February Ending Balance	Notes
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$40,305.06	\$49,026.29	\$14,018.13	\$19,757.08	\$39,841.10	\$43,751.30	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$7,060.51	\$1,000.00		\$1,000.00		\$7,060.51	
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$11,156.47					\$11,156.47	
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$326,184.02	\$15,247.00	\$2,257.31	\$2,349.91	\$7,063.92	\$334,274.50	\$10K deposit for roof
Folk Dance Group	\$15,608.51	\$7,404.00	\$513.90	\$8,256.00	\$60.00	\$15,210.41	
Hellenic Historical Society	\$3,200.94					\$3,200.94	
Mortgage Account	\$41,734.66				\$5,201.14	\$36,533.52	Monthly Mortgage Payment
Designated Funds	January Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	February Ending Balance	Notes
Bookstore	\$6,430.91	\$1,162.00	\$729.00	\$969.91		\$7,352.00	
Ornaments	\$1,077.41					\$1,077.41	
Restricted Funds	January Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	February Ending Balance	Notes
ICON	\$253,990.70	\$360.00		\$1,380.00	\$885.61	\$252,085.09	
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	\$1,117.08	\$400.00	\$100.00		\$1,425.00	\$192.08	Donation to Bill Flangas Memorial for Mortgage Account
\$300,000 One Year Plan	\$0.00	\$3,325.00	\$1,428.31		\$4,753.31	\$0.00	Funds collected/sent for Mortgage
Youth Choir	\$2,989.18					\$2,989.18	
Church School	\$1,306.37					\$1,306.37	
Three Priests	\$3,768.33					\$3,768.33	
Roof Appeal	\$45,000.00	\$10,000.00				\$55,000.00	
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
GOYA	\$142.36					\$142.36	
Designated, Restricted, and Other Total	\$326,184.02	\$15,247.00	\$2,257.31	\$2,349.91	\$7,063.92	\$334,274.50	
Other Funds	January Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	February Ending Balance	Notes
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$60,859.77					\$60,859.77	

Feb 2019 Candles **\$4,906.00**

Feb 2019 Trays **\$3,413.00**

Feb Candles & Trays **\$8,319.00**



APRIL 2019 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

	1 6:30 pm Great Compline 8:00 pm Adult Basketball	2 5:00 pm Greek Language Classes	3 6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy 8:00 pm Adult Study	4	5 6:15 pm Youth Choir Practice in 4th/5th Class 7:00 pm 4th Salutations to the Theotokos	6 10:00 am Adult Lenten Retreat with Fr. Stephen Freeman
7 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Adult Choir Practice follows Liturgy 5:00 pm Pan Orthodox Vespers at Ss. George & Dimitri Church	8 11:30 am Forerunners Luncheon in Kokkos Hall 6:30 pm Great Compline 8:00 pm Adult Basketball	9 5:00 pm Greek Language Classes	10 6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy 8:00 pm Adult Study	11	12 6:15 pm Youth Choir Practice in 4th/5th Class 7:00 pm The Akathist Hymn	13 1:00-4:00 pm LV Rescue Mission Service Project 6:00 pm Young Adults at Fleetwood Home
14 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Adult Choir Practice follows Liturgy 12:15 pm Acolyte Practice 12:15 pm Myrrh Bearer Meeting in 4th/5th Class 6:00 pm GOYA Night	15 Last Day to Return Kokkos Scholarship Applications 6:30 pm Great Compline 8:00 pm Adult Basketball	16 5:00 pm Greek Language Classes	17 6:30 pm Presanctified Liturgy 8:00 pm Adult Study	18	19	20 Saturday of Lazaros 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy Palm Tying Follows 5:00 pm Great Vespers with Met. Gerasimos
21 Palm Sunday 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Hierarchical Liturgy w/ Met. Gerasimos 7:00 pm 1st Bridgroom w/ Met. Gerasimos	22 Holy Monday 7:00 pm 2nd Bridgroom Service	23 Holy Tuesday 7:00 pm 3rd Bridgroom Service Hymn of Kassiani	24 Holy Wednesday 9:00 am Presanctified Liturgy 7:00 pm Holy Unction Anointing with Holy Oil	25 Holy Thursday 9:00 am Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil 7:00 pm Holy Passion of Our Lord Reading of 12 Gospels	26 Holy Friday 10:00 am Royal Hours Decorate Kouvouklion 3:00 pm Removal of Christ from the Cross Children's Procession 7:00 pm Lamentations	27 Holy Saturday 9:00 am Vesperal Liturgy of St. Basil Youth Choir Chants 11:00 pm Resurrection Vigil
28 Holy Pascha 12:00 am Resurrection Orthros and Divine Liturgy Blessing of Red Eggs 12:00 pm Agape Vespers and Picnic	29 St. George 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 7:00 pm Adult Basketball	30 5:00 pm Greek Language Classes	Bright Week ~ No Fasting All Week! Christ is Risen!			

The Desert Messenger

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

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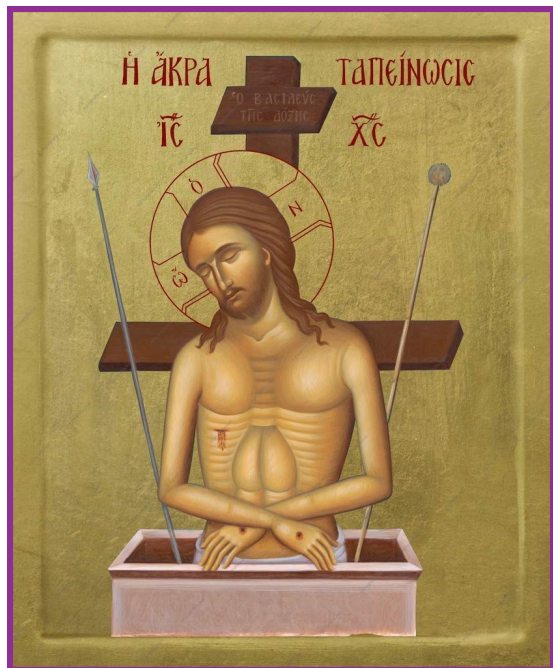
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THE DESERT MESSENGER

The Way of the Lord



Lenten Prayer of St. Ephraim the Syrian

*Lord and Master of my life,
cast away from me the spirit of laziness,
idle curiosity, love of power and vain talk.*

*But grant me, Your servant, the spirit of
moderation, humility, patience and love.*

*Yes, Lord and King, grant me to see my own
faults and not to judge my brothers and sisters.*

For You are blessed forever. Amen.

ΚΑΛΟ ΠΑΣΧΑ!