

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 22, Issue 11 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

December 2024

From
Father
John

Beloved in Christ:

I pray that each of us are taking the spiritual journey during this holy fasting season, together with the Righteous Joseph and the Holy Virgin Mary, which leads to the manger in Bethlehem – and that along the way we are also reflecting on the great mystery of Jesus Christ’s Nativity in the Flesh. I find it helpful during this season to read the Nativity narratives of the Gospels – my personal favorite is the account of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist Luke. St. Luke’s seemingly simple descriptive narrative is replete with profound theological meaning: *“And she gave birth to her first-born Son and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.” (Luke 2:7)*



What a wondrous mystery that Mary gave birth to the Incarnate God! The Holy Spirit overshadowed the Holy Virgin, and she conceived the One Who is inconceivable – yes, the pre-eternal God, through the flesh of Mary, became the God-Man. This glorious Birth was foretold seven hundred years earlier by the Holy Prophet Isaiah: *“Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel (‘God is with us’).” (Isaiah 7:14)* The Evangelist Luke emphasized that Jesus (which means, “God saves”) was Mary’s first-born Son – so that believers in every age would know that she was a virgin *before and during* His Birth. Our Holy Tradition further upholds that Mary remained a virgin *after* – throughout the remainder of her life – which is also supported in Holy Scripture, as Christ entrusted her to the Apostle and Evangelist John from the Cross, for she had no other children. *(John 19:26-27)*

After giving birth to the Christ-child, the Virgin Mary wrapped Him in swaddling cloths: Due to the cultural influence of popular non-Orthodox portrayals, we tend to envision the Birth of Jesus in a somewhat romantic fashion, as if the sweet little blue-eyed, blonde curly-haired baby had been wrapped in a receiving blanket in a soft bed of hay! However, our Orthodox Christian Iconography depicts the full glory and truth of this event – specifically the swaddling cloths resemble, in a prophetic way, the burial linen in which our Lord would be wrapped following His removal from the Cross. Far from the cradle of our Nativity sets, the Orthodox Icon reveals the manger as a coffin – and so the imagery of the cloths and the manger drives home the point that Jesus Christ was born in the Flesh for one reason: To die for our sins!

When we read that there was no place for Joseph and Mary at the inn, although we might have the tendency to romanticize this detail as well, St. Luke’s account foretells these very words our Lord would later use during His public ministry: *Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His Head.” (Matthew 8:20)* Christ came into the world because the world had drifted far, far away from God and, indeed, had rejected Him – just as we read in St. John’s prologue, *“He came to His own home, and His own people received Him not.” (John 1:11)* However, the hope and joy of this Holy Season is that all of us will become spiritually renewed by focusing on the real meaning of Christ’s Nativity and therefore willingly receive Christ in our hearts and minds – just as the Virgin and the manger received Him, so that we all might become, by His grace, the children of God.

With Love in the Incarnate Lord,

Father John

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

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

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

Nativity Fast continues through December 24

*Sunday, December 1/Fourteenth Sunday of Luke/
Holy Prophet Naoum/St. Philaret the Merciful/
St. Ananias the Persian/Holy Father Theocletus
the Wonderworker/Holy Fathers Ananias and
Solocho, Archbishops of Ephesus*
Orthros: Second Plagal Tone
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Matthew 28:16-20
Epistle: Ephesians 2:4-10
Gospel: Luke 18:35-43
Memorial: Michael A. Pappas (6 months)
Fellowship: Andrea Katotakis and Family in Memory
of Michael A. Pappas

*Monday, December 2/St. Porphyrios of
Kavsokalyvia*
*8:00 am Orthros - 9:00 am Divine Liturgy and
Artoclasia*
Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 2:20-3:8
Gospel: Luke 20:27-44

*Friday, December 6/St. Nicholas the
Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra*
8:00 am Orthros - 9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Hebrews 13:17-21
Gospel: Luke 6:17-23

*Sunday, December 8/Tenth Sunday of Luke/
Forefeast of the Conception by St. Anna of the
Most Holy Theotokos/
St. Patapios the Righteous/
Holy Apostles Sosthenes,
Apollo, Cephas, Tychikos,
Epaphroditos, Caesar and
Onesiphoro of the Seventy*
Orthros: Grave Tone
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros):
Mark 16:1-8
Epistle: Ephesians 2:14-22
Gospel: Luke 13:10-17
Fellowship: Elias and April
Rivera



*Thursday, December 12/St. Spyridon of
Trimythous the Wonderworker*
8:00 am Orthros - 9:00 am Divine Liturgy
Epistle: Ephesians 5:8-19
Gospel: John 10:9-16

*Sunday, December 15/Eleventh Sunday of Luke/
Holy Forefathers/Holy Hieromartyr Eleftherios
and His Mother Anthia/Holy Martyr Susannah the
Deaconess*
Orthros: Fourth Plagal Tone
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Mark 16:9-20
Epistle: 2 Timothy 1:8-18
Gospel: Luke 14:16-24; Matthew 22:14
Memorial: Giannoula Brogoli (1 year)
*Artoclasia for Health of John and Marcie Karas
Parish Council Elections follow Liturgy
Stewardship All Stars Luncheon follows Elections*

*Sunday, December 22/Sunday Before the Nativity
of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ/Holy
Ancestors/Holy Prophet Daniel and the Three
Youths/Great Martyr Anastasia/Holy Martyrs
Chrysogonos, Theodota, Evodias and Eutychianus*
Orthros: First Tone
Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:1-12
Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-10, 32-40
Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25
Fellowship: Folk Dance Fasolada Luncheon

*Tuesday, December 24/Eve of the Nativity of
Christ/Holy Martyr Eugenia the Righteous of
Rome*
6:00 pm Vespertal Liturgy of St. Basil the Great
(Please fast from 1:00 pm to receive Holy Communion)
Epistle: Hebrews 1:1-12
Gospel: Luke 2:1-20

*Wednesday, December 25/Holy Nativity of Our
Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ*
9:00 am Orthros
10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom
Epistle: Galatians 4:4-7
Gospel: Matthew 2:1-12

WORSHIP SCHEDULE (Continued from Page 2)

No Fasting through January 4

Friday, December 27/*Holy First-Martyr Stephen*

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

Epistle: Acts 6:8-15; 7:1-5, 47-60

Gospel: Matthew 21:33-42

Sunday, December 29/*Sunday after the Nativity/
Holy 14,000 Innocents/Holy Father Marcellus/
Holy Father Thaddeus the Confessor/Afterfeast of
the Nativity/St. George, Bishop of Nicomedia*

Orthros: Second Tone

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:12-35

Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23

Wednesday, January 1, 2025/*The Circumcision of
our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ/
St. Basil the Great*

9:00 am Orthros

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

Epistle: Colossians 2:8-12

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

*Christ is Born!
Glorify Him!*

*God's Blessings for
Peace in the New Year!*



**Parish
Council
Report**

Dear Father John, Father Florin, Deacon John, Ministries and Parishioners,

On behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to wish all of you a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year!

Please plan to attend the All-Star Luncheon *on Sunday, December 15*. The cost for the luncheon is \$15 per person. We will be celebrating our overperformers' dedication to our Parish. Our All-Stars this year are Michael Beeler, Eileen Koutsulis and Presvytera Maria Hondros. AXIOI!

Elections for the Parish Council will be held *on Sunday, December 15*. We appreciate all Stewards who have agreed to run. We are all winners when it comes to serving our Church. I want to thank those who have completed their term and look forward to welcoming our new Council members.

Please also support our Philoptochos Bake Sale. These assortments of pastries make great gifts for neighbors, family and business partners. The most important reason to purchase your baked goods is that the money collected goes to philanthropic organizations supported by our Philoptochos throughout the year.

Last, I want to thank my Parish Council for the support they have shown me throughout the year. In fact, the love the Parishioners shared has not gone unnoticed. Many of you offered valuable advice that were helpful to our decision making on important issues. I will remain on the Council; however, I will be passing the gavel to the next elected member who will serve as your President.

With much love, I remain yours in Christ, John Fotopoulos, Parish Council President

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Services



Tuesday, December 24

Eve of the Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ

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



Wednesday, December 25

Nativity of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ

9:00 am Orthros

10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

Please be prepared to receive Holy Communion at both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Liturgies.

The Clergy, Parish Council and
Stewardship and Outreach Committee of
St. John the Baptist Invite You to the Annual

Stewardship



Luncheon

*Honoring Michael Beeler,
Presvytera Maria Hondros,
and Eileen Koutsulis*

Sunday, December 15

Following the Divine Liturgy in Panos Hall

*Menu: Marouli, Gemista with Rice,
Roasted Potatoes, Fresh-Baked Bread,
Halvah, Coffee and Lemonade*

\$15 per Person



Parish Council Elections - 2025-26 Term

Sunday, December 15 - following Liturgy
Panos Hall Foyer

Six available positions - Our Nominees are:



Richard Acovino



Marina Adamy



Nick Barbarino



Dean Chomakos



Stephanie Demoleas



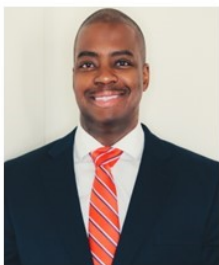
Spiros Filios



John Koutsulis



Mark Karris



Thomas Magee



Kouli Pouridis



Angelo Stamis

*All 2024 Parish Stewards are eligible to vote!
For current Stewards unable to be present on Election Day,
please call Karen for an Absentee Ballot. Absentee Ballots must be returned
to the Church Office by Friday, December 13, 2024 at 12:00 pm.*

Philoptochos News

Joy, Peace, Philanthropy, Faith, Hope, and Love

Dear Father John, Father Florin, Deacon John, Lovely Ladies of the Philoptochos and All Our Wonderful Parishioners,

These six words sum up what we aspire to during this time of year when we celebrate the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As Philoptochos members these words are what keep us motivated all year long to faithfully fulfill the needs of our Church community, and the other philanthropic needs of Southern Nevada – and when needed, to answer the pleas of assistance to others. While we celebrate and enjoy our family and friends, we do stay cognizant of the unfortunate needs of those who surround us. As a Philoptochos chapter, we can feed the body and give our assistance to those who need it, by supporting Father John’s Discretionary Fund. The challenge at this time of year is to remember and reach out to those individuals who need our love, an ear to listen, someone to pray with or keep company with. Not just as a group but individually. There are those who suffer silently and privately so I challenge you to pay attention to your heart – and you will be able to feel who needs a smile, a touch of the hand, or a hug. Like Marley, the neighbor in *Home Alone* said to Kevin, “You can say hello when you see me. You don’t have to be afraid.” (You never know when you might need a neighbor to lend a hand.)

As we start December, I would like to thank the fabulous ladies who chaired the Autumn Bake Sale, Sonia Merritt and Diana Tsouras, along with all the wonderful ladies who shared their time and talents providing the yummy goodies! A special shoutout to Steve Tzelalis and his baking team who provided all the loaves of bread! It was an extra special addition.

Which leads me right into all the Holiday Activities that are coming up. Our Holiday Pastry Sale is still going on! Count how many friends, business acquaintances, and neighbors you need a gift for and complete the form!

- **Baking Days:** *Thursday, December 5 at 9:00 am, and Friday, December 6 at 10:00 am*, following Divine Liturgy. Baklava cupping is *December 6 at 10:00 am* as well.
- **Packing Day:** *Saturday, December 7 at 8:00 am for set up and 9:00 am for packing.* We need some strong young guys to help with the trays on all the days!



Please don’t forget if you need a present to be sent – try the Lynch Creek Farms! Fresh and fabulous wreaths, centerpieces and décor. Use the QR code included on the form.

After all the work, our ladies are invited to celebrate the holidays together at the Philoptochos Christmas Party *on Wednesday, December 11, at the Suncoast Hotel!* It is going to be an elevated event, and we are looking forward to having well deserved fun! Please make your reservation today. Also, please let us know if you have any food allergies as this will be a plated dinner.

In closing, on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Ladies Philoptochos Society, Panagia Chapter, we wish you all

a Blessed and Peaceful Nativity Feast. We extend our thanks for all your support for the many projects that the LPS puts forth each month and year. Our Church Family is what gives us the reason to continue.

Merry Christmas! Bernadette Anthony, Philoptochos President



Ladies Philoptochos Society

Quantities are limited

Your generous contribution is greatly appreciated. It benefits the many ministries we support at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, the Las Vegas community at large, and philanthropic and humanitarian programs in the US and around the world.

2024 Annual Christmas Pastry Sale

Place your order today!

Delicious and Traditional Greek Christmas Pastries – lovingly baked and packaged in a decorated box for \$30.00

Guarantee your order by pre-paying by November 25, 2024

Order

Send your order and check made payable to:

Ladies Philoptochos Society
Attention: Christmas Pastry Sale
5300 El Camino Rd. Las Vegas NV 89118

Name _____

Phone (____) _____ - _____ Day/Evening

Email _____

No. of Boxes _____ X \$30.00 = \$ _____

Check enclosed _____

Or please call Karen at the Church Office (702) 221-8245 to pay by credit card.

To pay by Zelle: lvphiloptochos.stjohn.treasury@gmail.com

Orders will be ready for pick-up at St. John Church on Sunday December 8, 2024, following Divine Liturgy.

The Ladies Philoptochos Society cordially invites you to the
Annual Christmas Party

December 11, 2024 - 5:30 pm
SunCoast Hotel and Resort
9090 Alta Dr, Las Vegas, NV 89145

As we are grateful for all our blessings, we should not forget those less fortunate. This Christmas, more than ever, your donation will provide food for those in need in our community. Please offer an additional donation in support of this worthy cause for: \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: ___ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ email: _____

Please reserve _____ seats at \$60 each for the Christmas Party \$ _____

Total Amount Enclosed \$ _____.

If paid by check mail to:

Ladies Philoptochos Society
Saint John Greek Orthodox Church
5300 El Camino Rd, Las Vegas, Nevada 89118

If paid by Zelle - lvphiloptochos.stjohn.treasury@gmail.com

If paid by credit card please call Karen at church - 702-221-8245

Please R.S.V.P. by December 5th with your payment.



THE LADIES
PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY
THANKSGIVING &
CHRISTMAS FUNDRAISER



Lynch Creek Farm handcrafts traditional and decorated Christmas wreaths, fresh centerpieces, and other beautiful holiday gifts of exceptional quality.



*Fresh
Garland*

STARTING AT
\$59.95



*Center
Pieces*

STARTING AT
\$49.95



*Fresh
Wreaths*

STARTING AT
\$49.95

Your choice will make great client and family gifts. Ship directly to your recipients on the date you select, as early as November 1.

Scan this QR code with your phone to order.



Philoptochos will receive 15% of all orders.

FAMILY WINTER CAMP

Snow Play | Campfires | Family Prayer
Monastery Visits | Arts & Crafts | Hikes & more!

December 27-30, 2024

ST. NICHOLAS RANCH & RETREAT CENTER
DUNLAP, CALIFORNIA



METROPOLIS OF
SAN FRANCISCO

Registration & Information
www.gosfyouth.org

YOUTH &
YOUNG ADULT
MINISTRIES

Orthodox Bookstore

Blessed Nativity from the Bookstore!

New from St. Innocent Press this month is a novel by David R Smith, a Priest of thirty-three years who currently serves at St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church in Syracuse, New York. From the back cover of *The Saint Outside the Gate*:

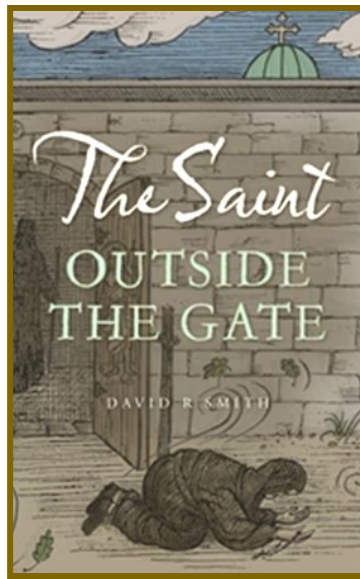
A few words in a sermon ignite a spiritual fire in the twelve-year-old Helena, a flame which both cauterizes her passions and purifies her through a life of suffering. The Grace of the Holy Spirit lovingly – and very unpredictably! – shepherds her across the decades through the political upheaval of 6th and 7th Century Syria and a maze of personal struggles. Join her remarkable spiritual journey of sanctification through a life fervently devoted to Christ.

This historical fiction novel splendidly weaves the reality of first-millennium Christians living in the Eastern Roman Empire with enduring spiritual questions contemporary young adults regularly encounter. Peer into the daily life of another culture and reflect on the abiding concerns of every person of faith through the eyes of Helena.

Inspired by the lives of several different Saints of the Orthodox Christian Church, this page-turner illumines mature issues ever-present in the modern world with the light of faith.

An afterword by Hieromonk Macarius (Ruegemer) on “The Mystery of Suffering” provides a theological framework to examine the themes covered in the novel, making this an ideal text for a book club. Our festive Christmas Shop is open! Stop by for your copy or other devotional needs. We always look forward to seeing you!

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



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Rev. Father Florin Ristache
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Philoptochos: Bernadette Anthony

Stewardship and Community Outreach:
George Bochanis

Maintenance: Steve Tzelalis

Building Committee:
Eleni Filios & Steve Tzelalis

Byzantine Chanters and Choir
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School: Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers: Father John & Mark Stransky

GOYA: Father Florin & Maha Habiba

Orthodox Family Fellowship:
Father Florin & April Rivera

Young Adults: Father Florin

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas

Greek Language:
Paula Kelesis

Mr. & Mrs.:
Father John & Presvytera Maria,
Father Florin & Presvytera Alexandra

Kali Parea: Demetrious Asim

Forerunners: Paula Kelesis

Orthodox Bookstore: Paraskevi Santamaria

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

Photography and Live-Streaming:
Bill & Erin Bruninga

Byzantine Chanters and Choir

As always, a big THANK YOU to all who have participated in our group this year. Your support means very much to your community as well as your fearless leader.

We are quickly approaching the Nativity season; that being said, we will have a couple extended Sunday practices in December.

On December 1, 22 and 29, we will get a little snack at Fellowship hour after Divine Liturgy, then we will meet in Classroom 6 for about 45 minutes or so. We welcome all new voices!

Blessed Nativity to All! Love in Christ, Presvytera Maria

From Father Florin

St. Ambrose was born in 339 at Trier, son of the Pretorian Prefect of Gaul. There is a legend that, as a small child, a swarm of bees landed on his face as he lay in his cradle and left behind a drop of honey. His father took this as a sign of St. Ambrose's future eloquence and honeyed tongue. He studied Greek literature, law, and rhetoric. In 372, he was made the consular prefect of Liguria and Aemilia with headquarters in Milan, the second capital of Italy. St. Ambrose soon made a name for himself as an excellent administrator.

At this time in the Church, there were deep divisions between the Arians, who denied the divinity of Christ, and those who affirmed it. In 374, Auxentius, the Arian Bishop of Milan, died, and the Arians wanted one of their own as successor. St. Ambrose went personally to the cathedral, where the election would be held, to prevent a riot. During his speech, a voice which many claimed was that of a small child cried out: "*Ambrose for bishop!*" To his embarrassment, since he was not yet a Christian, the whole assembly took up the cry. In vain did he assert his ineligibility for the office. Yet, within one week he was Baptized and ordained Bishop. Under the guidance of his tutor, Simplician, St. Ambrose began the study of the Scriptures and the writings of Origen and Basil. He would become an influential promoter of their thought in the Western church. As bishop, he immediately adopted an ascetic lifestyle, distributed his money to the poor, gave away all his land, only making provision for his sister and entrusting his family to his brother.

He also encouraged monasticism and recommended the Theotokos as a patron and model for religious sisters. His influence on the conversion of Augustine in 386 is well known. St. Ambrose is said to have quickly brought Arianism to an end in Milan. For this, he used his knowledge of Greek (then rare in the West) to access Eastern theological writers and used this knowledge in his preaching. His speaking ability greatly impressed Augustine.

As Milan was the administrative capital of the Empire in the West, he played an important role in the political issues of the day, giving both advice and admonitions to various rulers. In 377, he wrote "On the Faith," for the young emperor Gratian to warn him against the Arian heresy, of which his Uncle Valens was protector. When Gratian was murdered, St. Ambrose persuaded the new Emperor, Maximus, to be satisfied with a part of the empire and leave the rest for Valentinian II. He also managed to prevent the restoration of the cult of the goddess of Victory. He refused to allow a Church in Milan to be used by Arians in the court and was once put under siege with his people in another Church for the same reason.

He reminded Valentinian that the Emperor was in the Church and not above or outside it. Soon afterwards, Valentinian fled for protection to Theodosius, the Emperor of the East, who had defeated and killed Maximus, and in effect became the ruler of the West as well. Despite his enormous power, St. Ambrose did not hesitate in threatening Theodosius with excommunication following a notorious massacre in Thessalonica, in 390, when an estimated 7,000 men, women and children were slaughtered in reprisal for the killing of the Roman Governor by rioters. St. Ambrose told Theodosius to imitate David in his repentance as he had imitated him in guilt. The Emperor was readmitted to the Eucharist only after several months of penance.

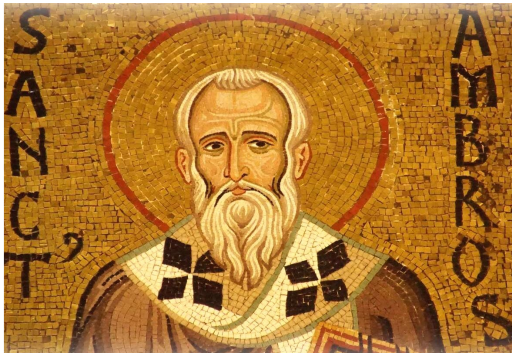
St. Ambrose reposed in 397, at the age of 58, and we commemorate him in the Orthodox Church *on December 7*. He was succeeded as bishop of Milan by Simplician. St. Ambrose's body may still be seen in the Church of Sant'Ambrogio in Milan, where it has been continuously venerated.

There is an interesting story in Augustine's Confessions about St. Ambrose: "*When [St. Ambrose] read, his eyes scanned the page and his heart sought out the meaning, but his voice was silent, and his tongue was still. Anyone could approach him freely and guests were not commonly announced, so that often, when we came to visit him, we found him reading like this in silence, for he never read aloud.*"

(Continued on Page 13)



From Father Florin (Continued from Page 12)



The striking point of this passage is that St. Ambrose could read silently, implying that hardly anyone else could do so at the time. It was felt that anything that was well written was intended to be read aloud in the ancient world. St. Ambrose had thus the habit of doing so.

Bishop Ambrose was and continues to be a genuine witness of the Lord. Let us thus conclude with the Bishop's most famous words, full of love for our Lord Jesus Christ: "To us Christ is all! If you have a wound to heal, He is the doctor; if you are parched by fever, He is the spring; if you are oppressed by injustice, He is justice; if you are in need

of help, He is strength; if you fear death, He is life; if you desire Heaven, He is the way; if you are in the darkness, He is light . . . Taste and see how good the Lord is: Blessed is the man who hopes in Him!"

Let us also put our hope in Jesus Christ, our Lord! Amen.

Fr. F. J. Ristache



Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisoun

Evmenios (Christopher) Tosado (Adult Baptism) on November 2, 2024.

Godparent: Efstathios Tzelalis.

Emilia (Kaitlynn) McAtee (Adult Baptism) on November 2, 2024.

Godparent: Paraskevi Baldwin.

Enoch, son of Evmenios and Emilia Tosado, on November 2, 2024.

Godparent: Gabriel Granillo.

Maria (Mia), daughter of Richard and Johana Landahl, on November 9, 2024.

Godparents: Silviu and Elena Briceag.

Romanos (Roman), son of Christina Kushnir, on November 16, 2024.

Godparents: Matthew Kushnir and Stephanie Rodriguez.

Anastasia (Mae), daughter of Christopher and Stephanie Rodriguez, on November 16, 2024.

Godparent: Jaroslav Kushnir.

Michael Lauchlan (Adult Baptism) on November 23, 2024.

Godparent: Demetrios Philippou.

Marriage: Na Zisete

Yonas Gebremariam Eyasu and Tigisty Kiflai on November 2, 2024.

Koumbaros: Yohannes Hagos.

Fallen Asleep in the Lord: Eternal Memory!

Peter Treska on October 30, 2024. Funeral on November 5.

George P. Daskalos on November 4, 2024. Funeral on November 13.

Eleni Simos on November 9, 2024. Funeral on November 18.

Ministry News

Church School

Hi Everyone! I hope everyone is enjoying their holiday season and had a wonderful Thanksgiving.

The school year has been going well. A shout out to all the teachers, who are doing such a great job with all the students. We are still following the same curriculum: Growing through Scripture. It is a wonderful program and I hope the students are learning a bunch!

On Sunday, December 22, we will be having our Nativity Craft right after Church School in Kokkos Hall. All students are invited to participate in a craft and pizza party.

Family Worship Sundays to Remember:

December 29 -Christmas Weekend.

January 5 -Eve of Theophany and Great Blessing of Water.

January 12 -Cutting of the Community Vasilopita.

Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions or concerns.

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



All Youth Event

Dear Kids, Teenagers, and Parents:

As we are all preparing for the Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who prepares our way to salvation, let us join together **on Tuesday, December 3 from 4:30 to 6:30 pm** to decorate our 12-foot-tall Parish Christmas Tree in Panos Hall. We will enjoy a discussion, a fast-friendly meal and we will be listening to Christmas music with our Parish friends. Please do not forget to bring an ornament or two to hang if you wish – and confirm your participation by email at frflorin@vegaskgreekorthodox.com.



Also, families of all ages are invited to the Metropolis Family Winter Camp **on December 27 – 30 at St. Nicholas Ranch**. This event includes lodging, meals, family activities and a visit to the Monastery of the Theotokos, the Life Giving Spring. Please direct any questions to April and Eli Rivera and see the flyer in this issue of *The Desert Messenger*.

In Christ, Father Florin, Maha Habiba, GOYA Advisor, and April Rivera, OFF Advisor



Greek Language Classes

The Greek School students will enjoy a Holiday Party **on Monday, December 9**.

This has been a wonderful first semester and the students are learning a lot and making great progress. A big thank you to Katerina Katelouzou and George Kouris for making the classes happen.

Καλά Χριστούγεννα!

Paula Kelesis, Greek School Director

Altar Servers

We welcome Acolytes from the past and new young men 8 years and older to join us in serving in the Altar for our Divine Services and beyond! There are many holy services and your willingness to assist would be greatly appreciated and pleasing to God. Please contact Father John in person or at frjohn@vegasgreekorthodox.com if you are interested, and he will give you his blessing to serve.

Yours in Christ's Service, Father John

Young Adults - 18 Years through Early 30s

I would like to thank Jeremiah Barrett for graciously opening his house for our Friendsgiving party last month! We all had a good time together, as we enjoyed lots of food and some interesting discussions. Thank you all for participating and for helping to organize the event!

This month, join us *on Saturday, December 14*, as we will ice-skate at *Las Vegas Ice Center (9295 W. Flamingo Road, Ste. 130, Las Vegas)*, starting at *3:00 pm*.

Then, we will all gather at *Christos Konstantelos' house* for a *White Elephant Party*. Please bring gifts between \$5 and \$10. For Christos' address and for any other questions, feel free to email me at frflorin@vegasgreekorthodox.com.

Thank you and hope to see you all there!
With Love in Christ, Father Florin



Mr. & Mrs.

Dear Couples of St. John the Baptist,

Once again, we are extremely grateful to Janet and Tim Bryant for hosting a lovely event at their home in October. We enjoyed a delicious and bountiful dinner as well as the great company and discussion.

We will meet again *on Saturday, January 4, starting at 6:00 pm*, at the house of Effie and Mike Lekar. We will start our evening by blessing their home, and then we will enjoy together a lovely meal and a discussion. For their address and to let us know what dish you will bring to share with the others, please contact our Church Office.

We are all looking forward to our next meeting that will complete a year of successful fellowships, while intently waiting to see what next year will bring for each one of us.

May God bless us all by His Divine Grace!

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



Kali Parea - For the 40+ Crowd

We had such a wonderful time celebrating my Name Day! Thank you to all who came out and made the day amazing!

On Sunday, December 1 at 2:00 pm, we will go see "Annie" at the Las Vegas Little Theater.

As it says in the name, the theater is little, so get your tickets asap at <https://www.lvlt.org/>.

With Love in Christ, Demetrios Asim (702) 210-4056

Greek Folk Dance

We would like to thank the community for the wonderful support during our recent fellowship fundraisers! We had a wonderful chili luncheon that was a great success and we could not have done it without the help of our dance families, and, of course, the cook – Steve Thompson! Our pancake breakfast was equally fantastic and we need to thank Jimmy Philippou and his sons for donating all the food and cooking it up for our community! Thanks so much!

We are continuing our annual tradition with our Christmas Caroling *on Saturday, December 7*. The dancers sing a medley of Greek and English Christmas Carols. Please consider having the dancers spread the Christmas cheer at your home or business for a donation. Forms are available in this issue of *The Desert Messenger* or with Karen in the Church Office.

Finally, *on Sunday, December 22*, we will be hosting our annual Fasolada Luncheon during Fellowship. Please join us and purchase a fresh loaf of bread for the holidays, too!

Our dancers continue to practice hard every week, getting ready to show off their moves at FDF in February! We look forward to performing our suites at the FDF Preview and Glendi *on February 8, 2025*, in Panos Hall. Please save the date!

Much Gratitude, Folk Dance Board

Forerunners - Our Seniors Fellowship

The Forerunners November Luncheon was a big hit! We had over forty people in attendance! It was great to see everyone again! We enjoyed a delicious fast-friendly lunch of pasta with shrimp, okra, homemade bread and spanakopita, prepared by Steve Tzelalis and Marika LaMancusa. Thank you, Angela, Diana and Demetri, for also helping.

Mark your calendars for our Christmas Party *on Monday, December 9 at 11:30 am* in Kokkos Hall. We will have a delicious lunch, bingo, raffle prizes and a Secret Santa gift exchange if you wish to participate (gifts no more than \$20).

The Forerunners had a great year, and we look forward to another year together.

We wish you Happy Holidays!

Love in Christ, Paula Kelesis for the Forerunners



Six Classes on the Orthodox Faith Draw Record Attendance!





Let's celebrate the spirit of Christmas!

Please invite us to your home or business to spread some Christmas cheer!

Christmas Caroling

We will sing traditional Greek and English Christmas carols on your front porch!

The program will last approximately 15 minutes.

If you would like to have the carolers come to your home, please fill out the following and return to any Folk Dance Board Member or the Church office by December 2, 2024

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____ Email: _____

Saturday, December 7, 2024

****You will be contacted 3 days prior in order to confirm the time we will arrive****

Questions? Contact Sia Dalacas at aeconomy@hotmail.com or 951-285-4970

ALL PROCEEDS TO BENEFIT THE GREEK FOLK DANCE MINISTRY

YOUR SUPPORT IS GREATLY APPRECIATED

With Gratitude to God for Our Pledged Stewards in 2024

Abreema, Tibeets
 Acovino, Richard and Angela
 Adamatopoulos, Alejandro and Mariana
 Adamy, Marina
 Adondakis, George and Kim
 Agouridis, Lambros and Erika
 Alcalá, Georgia
 Alexander, Eleni
 Alford, Cynthia "Mary"
 Alhayek, Areen and Majd
 Allen, John and Nana
 Allen, Darin and Vasiliki
 Anastasakis, Mark+ and Elaine
 Andrews, Chris and Pamela
 Andrews, George
 Andricopulos, Margo
 Anthony, Stavros and Bernadette
 Antoniou, Elias and Glorielys
 Aristides, George and Diana
 Asim, Demetrios
 Assemaw, Meseret
 Atkins, Sean and Christine
 Avdoulos, Pagona and Chryssa
 Ayalewu, Membe
 Balaouras, Panos and Helen

Balason, Voula
 Baldwin, Richard and Vivi
 Balodimas, James
 Barbarino, Demetra and Nicholas
 Barrett, Jeremiah
 Bartel, Ioanna and Robert
 Beeler, Mike and Carolyn
 Behne, Almas
 Belojevic, Marija
 Berendji, Dimitrios
 Bieker, Adam and Cassie
 Bieker, Georgea
 Birtas, Helen and Ann
 Bizuayehu, Banchi
 Bjorklund, Danielle and Geronsin, Justin
 Bland, James and Sherry
 Blume, Michael
 Bochanis, Aris and Spataro, Savannah
 Bochanis, George
 Boehm, Alexy and Cone, Jayme
 Booth, Alina
 Bowman, Jennifer
 Britten, Ronald and Carol
 Brown, Faye

Brown, Mark and Alyssa
 Bruninga, William and Erin
 Bryant, Timothy and Janet
 Bucy, Brent and Elaine
 Carabas, Sotiroulla
 Carahalís, John and Constance
 Caredis, Jon and Marjorie
 Carrico, William and Alexandra
 Carter, Maria
 Castoro, Mariane
 Chachas, Bessie
 Chagares, Kiki
 Chamie, Elie, Emil and Claudine
 Chandrinós, Alexia
 Chanos, Jennifer
 Chio, Napoleon
 Chomakos, Dean and Tammy
 Chomakos, George
 Chomakos, Kostas
 Chondrakís, Dimosthenis and Kragerud, Kaaren
 Christou, Toni
 Coll, Patrick and Anita
 Collins, David
 Collins, James
 Conger, William and Alexia

Conklin, Demetra
 Cooper, Eirene
 Costacos, John
 Costuros, George and Marsha
 Cotsilis, Jenny +
 Crist, Adam and Kanistra
 Dalacas, Dimitri and Athanasia
 Dalacas, Eleni
 Dalacas, Georgia
 Damascus, Peter
 Daskalos, George+ and Voula
 Davis, Matthew and Christine
 Deep, Joe and Alexi
 Demas, Spiro and Rita
 Demolas, Maria and Nour, Reza
 Demoleas, Alexandra
 Demoleas, Eleni and Thomas, Kristian
 Demoleas, Spero and Grace
 Demoleas, Stephanie
 Dhamo, Edion and Byzyka, Juliana
 Dhamo, Ioanna Eriketa
 Diktakis, Gregory
 Dimitri, Martha and Janet

Stewardship and Community Outreach

“Where is He Who has been born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him.” (Matthew 2:1) Just as the wise men came to believe the Messiah had arrived in their lives, we too are blessed with reliving this event every year on the Feast of the Nativity. Upon setting their eyes on the Child and His Mother, they came to believe that He truly was the Savior of this world. They chose not to return to Herod as directed but departed for another country. *(Matthew 2:11)* The wise men had found a true belonging in Christ, even though He was only a Babe. Likewise, when we come to believe, we find our belonging in His Church, where we become yoked to Him.

On December 6 we celebrate the feast of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker. We are reminded of his many ascetic labors, acts of mercy, and charitable works. Although St. Nicholas is known for his many charitable works, he is also very known for concealing these works during his life and did not *“let his left hand know what his right hand is doing.” (Matthew 6:3)* St. Nicholas serves as a glorious example of what it means to love God and our neighbor – he also displays the spiritual fruits of embracing God’s love.

With the themes of this month and the Nativity, the Stewardship Committee warmly asks you to join us in bringing these themes into the new year with our mission to *Believe*, to *Belong*, and to *Be Loved*.

In Christ, Richard Acovino, Stewardship Committee



BELIEVE. BELONG. BE LOVED. STEWARDSHIP 2025!

Dominguez, Eric and Amalia	Gutierrez, Daniel	Kougias, Daniel and Diana	Merritt, Devin and Sonia
Doskas, Athanasios and Anastasia	Habiba, Maha	Kougias, George and Teresa	Mesfen, Hiwot
Dounis, Georgia	Hagos, Yohannes and Mebrat	Kountanis, Panagiota	Meyers, Evon
Dounis, Kiki	Hailay, Gebremi	Koupais, Mario and Cheri	Mikelis, Nikolas and Angela
Dramitinos, Mary	Hailemichael, Harenet	Kouris, Demetris and Terry	Mitchell, Thomas+
Dunfee, Ekateri	Haileslase, Betel	Kouris, George	Monk, Theo and Marissa
Earl, Christine	Hamilton, Mary	Koutsulis, John and Eileen	Monolakis, Anthony
Eliades, Telly	Hamilton, Paul and Brandi	Koutsulis, Sam and Effie	Monoyudis, Jim and Julie
Eliades, Eleni and Garza, Everardo	Haney, Eleni	Krikie, Jonathan and Iryna	Mulopulos, George and Jenny
Eliades, Gregory and Maria	Haralambakis, Demetre and Dimitra	Kushnir, Stephanie	Murray, Christopher and George, Veneta
Eliades, Harry and Agapi	Haramis, John and Kitsios, Eugenia	Kypreos, George	Myers, Stella
Eliades, Katerina	Hastings, Teri	Kypreos, Lesley	Newell, Ronald and Maria
Eliades, Sia	Hollar, Michelle and DiGioia, Antonio	Kypreos, Peter and Geri	Nicholas, Christina
Eliakis, Peter	Hondros, Christina	Kypreos, Sophia	Nicholas, John and Estella
Eliakis, Varthie	Hondros, Christopher and Darlene	Kyriannis, Justin and Linda	Nichols, George and Tereza
Eyler, John and Elizabeth	Hondros, Fr. John and Presv. Maria	Kyriazopoulos, Constantine Jr.	Nicolas, Samer and Christine
Eyler, Reagan	Howard, Eddie and Willie	Lagomarsino, Victor and Sophia	Niforos, Helen
Failla, Jennifer	Howe, David and Ana	Laird, Blair and Leeann	Nikolopoulos, Nick and Dimitra
Feola, Richard	Hristopoulou, Spiridoula	Lakkis, Christina	Nikou, Volha
Fenlason, Nathan and Zmina - Fenlason, Jennifer	Hurey, Heather	Lamancusa, Lisa	Nixon, Deacon John and Diakonissa Ellyn
Filios, George Jr.	Ignadiou, Marios	Landahl, Richard and Johana	Noble, Maria
Filios, George and Nitsa	Ingraham, Leland and Victoria	Lavine, Frederick	Olmsted, Travis and Marilyn
Filios, Nicoletta	Iteen, Robert and Sophia	Lee, David and Alexandra	Osborn, Alexandra and Spotti, Peter
Filios, Spiridon and Eleni	Jandete, Johanna	Lekar, Caroline	Pahigiannis, Nikon
Fischer, Cheryl	Jaynes, Christine	Lekar, Michael and Effie	Paikos, Tom and Elizabeth
Fitzgerald, Norman and McCullen, Sandra	Jensen, Matthew and Michelle	Leong, Marissa and Elaine	Pajak, Scott and Angela
Flangas, Gary and Amanda	Kachikis, Ernestine	Leonis, Nick and Sophia	Palikrousis, Antonis
Flangas, Gus and Tamara	Kakavulias, George and Helen	Leonis, Tishe	Palivos, Peter and Vicky
Flangas, Marilyn	Kakavulias, John and Elizabeth	Leventis, Nicholas and Christina	Pallis, Paul
Fleischer, Bob and Penny	Kalkas, John and Rena	Liaos, James and Tina	Pan-Arcadians
Foldes, Peter and Jordan	Kambouris, Evangelia	Liaos, Steven and Francine	Pandelis, Cheryl
Foster, Kyle and Mia	Kanis, Constantinos and Katie	Likourinou, Angie	Panos, Jeanne
Fotopoulos, John and Barbara	Karakoli, Rula	Likourinou, Steve and June	Papas, Christian and Nicole
Fountas, Constantinos	Karalias, Petros and Constance	Litsos, Nicholas and Catherine	Papas, Peter and Rita
Fountoulakis, Vasileios	Karas, James	Loughton, Dustin and Rena	Pappas, Panagiotis and Andrea
Franco, Emilia	Karas, John and Marcie	Lucas, Nicholas and Linda	Paschalis, Evangelos and Maria
Frangakis, Christos and Anastasia	Karris, Mark and Suzanne	Magee, Thomas and Catalina	Payan, Luis and Eleni
Freund, Kyle and Katherine	Kasiotis, Nicholas and Claudia	Maggos, Kathryn	Pendleton, Tricia
Fukushima, Gabriel and Vasilou, Katina	Katopodis, Efstratios	Makris, Apostolos	Penev, Kamen and Miglena
Garanyants, Sergey and Markella	Katre, Ilia Sotir	Manakides, Alexis and Varonos, Nicholas	Peratikos, Tony
Gauvin, Chad and Marissa	Katre, Sotir Mark	Mangafas, Kyriakos and Elefteria	Peterson, Todd and Diane
Gebrehiwot, Kiros	Katris, Nick and Theana	Manolakos, Catherine	Petro, Aleko and Georgia
Gebretsadin, Berenti	Katsaros, Thomas and Sharon	Manos, Constantine and Michele	Petrou, Jim and Penelopi
Gebreybsus, Sador	Kaytia, Patricia and Little, Martin	Mansour, Muna	Philippou, Demetrios and Luanne
Geiger, Dan and Hart, Theodora	Kebreah, Millien	Margaretis, John and Lucila	Philoptochos Society
Gekakis, George	Kelesis, Paula	Markantonis, Demos and Kate	Pierro, Joe and Rhonda
Generales, John and Arlene	Kiflezgi, Rahel	Markantonis, George and Sarah	Pilatos, Emmanuel and Erica
George, Pete and Georgia	Kinard, Panorea	Martinaitis, Louis	Polimerou, Angeline
Georgia, David	Kirchner, Gary "Barlaam"	Martinez, Lioubov and Elisalde, Ramon	Politis, Pantelis and Dimitra
Georgis, John	Kirrollos, Michael and Molina, Adriana	Mavrantonis, Kiki and Stacy	Poulis, Chris and Francine
George, Pete and Keshia	Kleanthis, George and Zanetta	Mavros, Alex and Jen	Poulos, Christine
Ghebream, Daniel and Ghermay, Selam	Kokkinis, Peter and Jennifer	Mavros, Debbie	Pouridis, Kouli and Para
Gialketsis, Julie	Kokkinos, Christina	Mavroudis, Frank	Powell, Scott and Angela
Gialketsis, William and Rachelle	Kolev, Kristian	Maydanik, Inna	Powers, Russell and Rebecca
Giambi, Jason and Kristian	Koliambas, Eleni	Mazzorana, Vicki	Prestage, Adam and Courtney
Giouzelis, Sasa	Konsolakis, Eleni and Manoli	McCarty, David and Soesetyo, Grace	Pytikakis, Manos and Elaine
Girleanu, Nicolae-Radu	Konsolakis, George and Sofia	McKinney, Michael and Mersene	Raptis, Presvytera Evonne
Girmav, Mahder	Kontos, Diana	McManus, Jeanette	Rasmussen, Scott and Rebecca
Gordon, Victor and Demetria	Koroni, Tara	McPherson, Robert and Marie	Rey, Robert and Patricia
Grabovoi, Daphne	Kostopoulos, Georgia	McSweeney, Farolyn	Rigas, Anthony and Mary
Granillo, Gabriel		Mehas, Andrew and Samantha	Rigas, Evie
Gutierrez, Connie		Menegatos, James	Rihani, Gary and Linda
		Mersuli, Giannis and Vlahos, Melina	Ristache, Fr. Florin and Presv. Alexandra

Rivera, Elias and April	Sparkuhl, Alex and Antoinette	Tselikis, Nicholas and Jennifer	Williams, Anthony and Anna
Robison, Diane and Patricia	Spirtos, Nick	Tsige, Menchel	Williamson, Daniel and
Rodis, Dimitri and Angeline	Stamis, Angelo and Susan	Tsiralidis, Kosmas and Katerina	Stavroula Halatsis-
Rodis, Sophia	Stathopoulos, Hristos and	Tsobanakis, Chris and Robyn	Wilson, Cleo
Roselli, Augustine	Anastasia	Tsobanoglou, Niki and Paris	Wilson, Clyde
Rotas, Beatrice	Staubs, Douglas and Anastasia	Tsolis, Christos and Panagioula	Wilson, Kelly and Egi, Junichiro
Sakkas, Georgios and	Stavropoulos, Terry and Niki	Tsortanidis, Sophia	Womack, Karl+
Stavropoulos, Bessie	Stransky, Mark	Tsouras, Christopher and Diana	Womack, Kimberly
Salon, Janelle	Stransky, John and Rachel	Tsoutsikos, Costa	Xerogianes, Nick+ and Nikki
Salonikis, Valentinos and Sophia	Swartz, Noah	Tzelalis, Steve, Antonia and Vaso	Xikis, Victoria
Santamaria, Jennifer and Robert	Szukiewicz, Alex and Jaden	Varinos, Nick and Vasiliki	Yurkov, Andre and Kalina
Searles, Chrysoula	Szukiewicz, Joseph and Justina	Vervilos, James and Anna	Zaferatos, Ted
Sehremelis, Andy and Leslie	Tadich, Andrea	Vigil, Michael	Zakis, Pope
Sellen, Jeffrey	Tadich, Katarina	Voegele, Steven and	Zamir, Michelle and Talor
Setian, Gary	Tafoya, Steven and Irene	Markantonis, Victoria	Zapanti, Angela
Shipman, Chad and Anastasia	Tasios, Ramona	Vorgiatzidis, Gina	Zarkos, Nick and Dina
Shive, Brian and Mary	Tekle, Asli	Wagner, Sophye	Zaronis, Mary
Simos, Eleni+	Thanos, Nicholas and Victoria	Wainscott, Betty	Zarras, Nick and Chery
Simos, Tony and Lorie	Theros, James and Kathryn	Wallace, Robert and Katerina	Zekichev, Timothy and
Simpson, Bryan and Julie	Thompson, Maggy	Walter, Vernon and Alice	Morris, Alexandra
Sirhan, Michael and Imtisal	Thompson, Steven and Aliko	Waterhouse, David and	Zervas, Dionisios and Cacilda
Skalkotos, Nikolas and Georgia	Tijiboy, Ana	Aleighzja	Zimmerman, Paul, Angela,
Snow, Clifford and Christina	Tijiboy, Christine	Webb, Taylor	Christopher and Vangeli
Song, Adrienne	Tohme, Tony and May	Weishar, Dale	Zimmerman, Paul and Julie
Soteropulos, Gust and Rita	Torolopoulos, Eleni	Weldi, Mulugeta	Ziu, Eva
Sotiropulos, Chris and Jessica	Trebicka, Adrian and Paola	Welles, Brigitte	Ziu, Joana
Soursos, Helene	Tsarouhas, Maria	Wilkerson, Chuck and Kristina	Zmina, Stephen and Cynthia

Building and Maintenance

For those of you who were unable to attend the General Assembly meeting, we would like to update you on the Building Committee's plans moving forward. As many of you have seen in the Festival Final Report, it is evident that our community must find additional or alternative revenue sources to not only cover our overhead costs, but also to enable us to come together to celebrate important events.

The original intent of the Festival was that its proceeds would fund maintenance and new projects for the community. However, over the last decade and a half, these funds have predominantly been used to cover primary expenses like utilities and salaries. Having been raised in this community all my life, I fondly recall the many New Year's parties, Christmas pageants, Greek School programs, and dinner dances hosted by various ministries such as AHEPA, the Pan Arcadians, and the Pan Cretan groups. We need to return to those days when we gathered not just to work at the Festival, but to enjoy each other's company, have fun, and create lasting memories.

Over the next few months, our plan is to move forward with two major projects: Painting and stuccoing the Hall building, as well as replacing the floors in Panos Hall. We will also address some of the damage to the interior lower walls and columns through repainting. These two projects are estimated to cost approximately \$200,000. Thanks to the generous donation of \$100,000 from Angelo Stamis and Family, we have already raised \$145,000. Once the renovations are completed, we aim to reinstate the Catering and Event Committee to begin renting out the Hall, which will provide crucial revenue to help cover ongoing expenses. More importantly, it will help us host a variety of community events, which will be vital for maintaining everyone's connection to our Church. After the Hall renovations are completed, we are also planning to complete the remaining Iconography. The Iconographer who has worked on the previous renderings recently traveled to the US for another project, and we met with her to finalize the remaining Iconography for the Church.

None of this would be possible without your continued generosity. Your donations, both large and small, make all the difference. We appreciate your ongoing support as we work to complete these much-needed projects. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or thoughts to share. Wishing you all a very Happy and Blessed Christmas.

With Love, Eleni Filios, Building Committee Chair

*The Clark County Orthodox Clergy Association
Invites All Adults to Join Us for the
Annual Lenten Retreat*



Saturday, March 22, 2025

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church

**Father Tom and
Presvytera Pat Tsagalakis
Retreat Speakers**



**\$25 per Person or \$50 per Couple
Lenten Lunch Included
RSVP by March 15, 2024
Please register at the link below or scan QR code.**



Join Father Tom and Presvytera Pat Tsagalakis of the Family Wellness Ministry for a dynamic and interactive retreat focusing on cultivating life-giving relationships as we grow in faith, healing and love.

Register at the link below for the “Created for Connection” Retreat for couples who are dating, engaged, married or individuals seeking to be in a relationship.

**CLICK HERE:
[RETREAT - March 22, 2025](#)**

Program

8:00 am	Orthros
8:30 am	Divine Liturgy
9:30 am	Coffee and Refreshments
10:00 am	<i>Session 1</i>
12:00 pm	Lenten Lunch
1:00 pm	<i>Session 2</i>
3:00 pm	Wrap Up

Greek Food Festival Recap

Reflection on Greek Food Festival Sustainability

The 2024 Greek Food Festival brought to light several ongoing challenges that impact both attendance and profitability. Factors beyond our control, such as extreme weather, economic fluctuations, competing local events, and unexpected liabilities like equipment failures, significantly affect our success. These variables underscore the unpredictability of the festival's financial performance.

However, a deeper and more pressing issue has emerged: the aging of our core volunteer base. For decades, dedicated community members have played a vital role in chairing booths, preparing traditional foods, and passing down beloved recipes. Their tireless efforts have been the backbone of the festival.

Yet, we are now facing a reality where fewer new volunteers are stepping up to fill these essential roles, threatening the festival's long-term sustainability. Given these challenges, *it is increasingly evident that relying solely on the Greek Food Festival as our primary revenue source may not be viable for the future.* To secure the longevity of both the festival and our broader community activities, we must explore additional revenue streams. Here are several potential strategies:

Year-Round Cultural Experiences: Hosting smaller, regular cultural events like cooking classes, wine tastings, and music nights could engage a broader audience while providing ongoing revenue. WE NEED TO RE-ESTABLISH THE C&E COMMITTEE

Community Partnerships: Partnering with local businesses or organizations to co-sponsor events or share resources could alleviate financial and volunteer pressures while growing our reach.

Grants & Donations: Actively seeking grants aimed at cultural preservation or community engagement could provide financial support.

Attracting Younger Involvement: Investing in targeted outreach and mentorship programs could encourage younger members to step up, learn the recipes, and eventually lead the booths and festival operations

While the Greek Food Festival remains a beloved tradition that celebrates our heritage, these challenges emphasize the need to innovate and adapt. we can ensure that the festival not only survives but thrives for future generations. The time to act is now. Re-establishing a proactive approach through a revitalized Cultural & Events Committee and engaging the wider community in our mission are crucial steps forward. We must embrace these changes to preserve our traditions and support our community's goals, creating a lasting impact that extends well beyond the annual festival.

In Christ, Eleni Filios, 2024 Food Festival Co-Chair

2024 Greek Food Festival Financial Overview:

Sponsorship & Souvenir Sales:

- Sponsorships: \$61,000
- Souvenir Sales: Netted \$80,000, including \$21,225 from donations aimed at underwriting, in addition to sponsorships.
- Key Savings: Reducing contract costs by \$150,000 was instrumental in securing a strong financial outcome despite a significantly lower turnout.

Attendance & Financial Comparison (2022-2024):

Year	Attendance	Gross Income	Expenses	Net Total*
2022	18,549	\$923,821	\$810,846	\$112,974
2023	19,303	\$1,010,924	\$793,076	\$217,848
2024	11,075	\$732,414	\$630,871	\$102,091

*Net Total for 2024 includes a deduction of \$35,000 for United Rentals.

Key Factors Affecting Attendance:

- A significant drop in attendance with 8,228 fewer visitors compared to 2023.
- Challenges included excessive heat and economic factors, impacting overall turnout and revenue.

Additional Income & Pending Credits (Not Included in Final Net Total):

- Valet Reimbursement: \$650 (for keys taken by valet service).
- Sellable Inventory: \$35,000 (includes pita, fries, gyro meat, wine, and spirits, but excludes pastries and specialty items).
- Glaziers Alcohol Credit: \$600.
- Potential United Rentals Claim: The festival is pursuing reimbursement of \$70,000–\$100,000 for faulty equipment (generator failure) and lost revenue during Friday night's outage.

Financial Position Summary:

- Current Net Profit: \$102,091
- Pending Credits: \$1,250
- Unpaid Balance to United Rentals: \$35,000
- Final Adjusted Net (with Pending Credits): **\$138,091**
 - (This figure does not account for potential refunds from the United Rentals claim).

Inventory for Future Use:

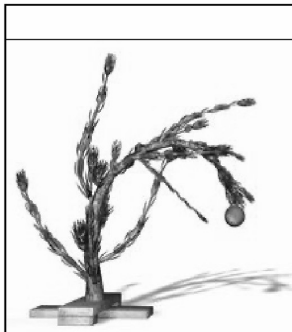
- Estimated Value: \$33,000
 - Includes gyro meat, pita, fries, and liquor.
 - This inventory can either be sold or utilized in future events to enhance profitability.

Notes:

The event faced a considerable challenge with the generator failure on Friday night, leading to a 2.5-hour loss of music and entertainment. This incident is under review for a potential reimbursement from United Rentals, which could significantly impact the final financial outcome. Despite some challenges, the festival was a financial success. With strong sponsorship support, impressive book sales, and careful management of contracts, we anticipate closing the year in a solid position.



DECEMBER BLASTS FROM THE PAST!



GOYA

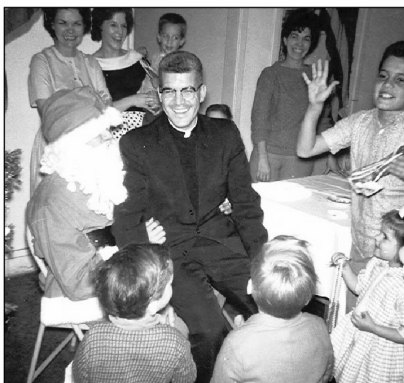
Greek Orthodox Youth of America

Christmas Caroling

1984

L. to R. Dean Lazarakis, Michael Mavrantonis, Eleni Eliades, Dino Katris (partially hidden) Leo Flangas, Vayia Filios, Effie Eliades, Leanna Colagiovanni, Niki Kanelos, Nicky Pandelis, Jason Bosnos, Mary Bosnos, Klearhia Dalacas

125 A



Fr. James Adams with Santa Claus



Santa Claus (George Thomas), Billy Adams, John & Sylvia Eliakis, Stacy Campbell



Santa Claus (George Thomas), Billy Adams, John & Sylvia Eliakis, Stacy Campbell



Fr. James Adams with Children



CHURCH SCHOOL

CHRISTMAS PARTY

December

1962

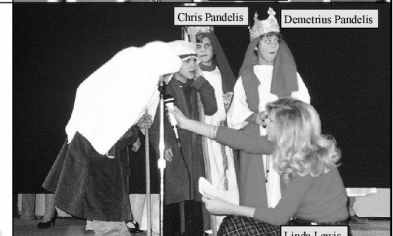
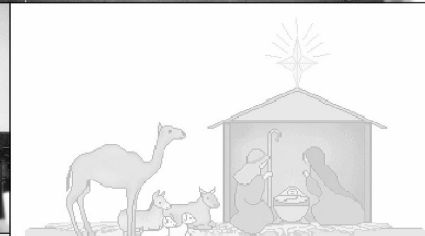
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CHURCH SCHOOL

CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

Carson Avenue

1985



L. to R. Veneta George, Eleni Eliades, Kelly Wilson, Danny Kalkas, Barbara Stamis



L. to R. Lee Ann Eliakis, Jimmy Stavropoulos, Christian Tsoumas, Stephanie Danos, Unknown

L. to R. John Rouvas, Unknown, Veneta George, Barbara Stamis, Kelly Wilson, Adam Becker

L. to R. Barbara Stamis, Kelly Wilson, Adam Becker, Danny Kalkas, Demetrius Pandelis, Paul Lewis, Linda Lewis

133 B



GREEK SCHOOL

Christmas Caroling

1986

Front L. to R. Jeremy Stamis, Dimitris Afentoulis, Bill George, Barbara Stamis, Dimitra Dalacas, Georgia Kalkas, Vivi Stavropoulos
Center L. to R. Niki Stavropoulos, Bessie Stavropoulos, Teddy Tzortzis, Danny Kalkas
Back L. to R. Sia Eliades, Veneta George, Dimitri Dalacas, John Kakavulias

138 F

**2024
Stewardship
Report
(as of 11/25/24)**

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$601,125 (\$594,961 in 2023)
 Stewardship Gifts Received: \$524,379 (\$527,011 in 2023)
 Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$76,746 (\$67,950 in 2023)
 Stewardship Families Pledged: 450 (449 in 2023)
 2024 Goal: \$600,000 . . . Keep the Pledges Coming!

*“LET
GOD’S LOVE
GUIDE US”*

<u>Average Pledge</u>	<u>No. of Families</u>	<u>Amount Pledged</u>
\$1 - \$500	202	\$ 49,583
\$501 - \$1,000	77	\$ 59,831
\$1,001 - \$2,500	113	\$176,492
\$2,501 - \$5,000	38	\$138,537
\$5,001 - \$9999	14	\$ 91,632
\$10,000 & Above	6	\$ 85,050
Total Families	450	\$601,125

Church Account Summaries - October 2024

Nevada State Bank Accounts	September	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	October	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$43,516.77	\$208,914.16		77,491.19	\$71,158.93	\$103,780.81	\$150K Transfer from Festival to cover GOA expenses & Annual Commitment
Community and Education (C&E)	\$22,925.49					\$22,925.49	
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$327,633.74	354,603.59		\$299,958.71	\$250,103.22	\$132,175.40	\$150K Transfer from Festival to cover GOA expenses & Annual Commitment
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$255,546.37	\$11,247.23		\$227.33	\$2,693.59	\$263,872.68	
Building & Maintenance (B&M)	\$64,601.77	\$1,125.00		\$1,946.71	\$2,471.86	\$61,308.20	
Folk Dance Group	\$26,166.59	\$1,747.00		\$29.95	\$2,862.60	\$25,021.04	
Hellenic Historical Society	\$790.96					\$790.96	
Designated Funds	September	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	October	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Bookstore	\$29,426.68	\$10,947.23		\$227.33	\$2,693.59	\$37,452.99	Transfer from Bookstore to cover GOA expenses
Restricted Funds	September	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	October	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
ICON	\$14,889.45	\$300.00				\$15,189.45	
Faithtree	\$1,626.39					\$1,626.39	
Youth Choir	\$2,989.18					\$2,989.18	
Church School	\$126,031.53					\$126,031.53	
GOYA	\$530.36					\$530.36	
Eyler Memorial Fund	\$10,290.15					\$10,290.15	
Emergency Fund	\$5,000.00					\$5,000.00	
Three Priests	\$64,322.63					\$64,322.63	
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
Designated, Restricted and Other Total	\$255,546.37	\$11,247.23	\$0.00	\$227.33	\$2,693.59	\$263,872.68	
Building and Maintenance Funds	September	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	October	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Building Fund	\$9,270.35	\$125.00		\$40.00		\$9,355.35	
Panos Flooring Repair	\$36,330.33					\$36,330.33	
Hall Painting	\$10,283.22					\$10,283.22	
Giving Tree	\$8,717.87					\$8,717.87	
Building & Maintenance Funds Total	\$64,601.77	\$125.00	\$0.00	\$40.00	\$0.00	\$64,686.77	
Other Funds	September	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	October	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$72,275.91		\$4,449.13			\$76,725.04	as of 09.30.24
Commonwealth Investments (Icon)	\$152,702.51			\$2,091.72		\$150,610.79	
October 2024 Candles	\$5,022.01						
October 2024 Trays	\$4,279.00						
Total October 2024 Candles & Trays	\$9,301.01						



DECEMBER 2024 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

1 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Chanters/Choir Practice 2:00 pm Kalia Parea at LV Little Theater "Annie"	2 <i>St. Porphyrios</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy & <i>Artoclasia</i> 4:30 pm Youth and Adult Greek School Classes 5:30 pm Candidates Mtg.	3 4:30 pm All Youth Parish Christmas Tree Decorating and Meal in Panos Hall 5:00 pm Stewardship 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting in Library	4 6:00 pm Candidates Mtg.	5 9:00 am Philoptochos Pastry Baking and Cupping	6 <i>St. Nicholas</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 10:00 am Philoptochos Pastry Baking and Cupping	7 9:00 am Philoptochos Pastry Packing 5:00 pm Folk Dance Caroling
8 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	9 11:30 am Forerunners Luncheon in Kokkos Hall 4:30 pm Youth and Adult Greek School Classes	10	11 5:30 pm Philoptochos Christmas Party at Suncoast Hotel	12 <i>St. Spyridon</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	13	14 3:00 pm Young Adults Ice Skating at Las Vegas Ice Center and White Elephant
15 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy <i>Parish Council Election & All-Stars Luncheon Follow Liturgy</i>	16 4:30 pm Youth and Adult Greek School Classes	17	18	19	20	21
22 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Chanters/Choir Practice 12:15 pm Church School Nativity Event 1:00 pm Dance Board	23 4:30 pm Youth and Adult Greek School Classes	24 <i>Eve of the Nativity of Christ</i> 6:00 pm Vespers Liturgy of St. Basil the Great	25 <i>Nativity of Christ</i> 9:00 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	26	27 <i>St. Stephen</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	28
29 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Chanters/Choir Practice	30 4:30 pm Youth and Adult Greek School Classes	31	Jan. 1, 2025 9:00 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Basil	Church Office Closed		

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

*He Whom nothing can contain
has been contained in a womb.*

*He is in the Father's bosom
and His Mother's embrace.*

*How can this be, but as He knows and willed
and was well pleased.*

Fleshless as He was, He willingly took flesh.

*And He Who Is became
what He was not, for us.*

*And while departing not from His own Nature,
He shared in our nature's substance.*

*So Christ was Born with dual Natures,
wishing to replenish the world on high.*

*(Kathisma from Orthros of the Nativity of Christ,
Translated by Father Seraphim Dedes)*

