

# The Desert



# Messenger

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

*Volume 19, Issue 8    St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV    September 2021*

**From  
Father  
John**

Beloved in Christ:

I pray you and your loved ones enjoy the abundant grace of our Trinitarian God as we begin the *New Ecclesiastical Year on September 1*. On that date we will celebrate the Divine Liturgy and, for those who are present, we will hear these powerful and prophetic words of our Lord Jesus Christ, as recorded by the Holy Evangelist Luke: *"He opened the book (of the Prophet Isaiah) and found the place where it was written, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' And He closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. And He began to say to them, 'Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.'"* (Luke 4:17-21)



Please ponder this: If people, including St. Luke, were not present on that day in the synagogue to see and hear Christ proclaim that the prophecies are fulfilled in Him, there would not have been hearts and minds that would have been opened to following Him!

The same holds true in our time: If we are not present in the Church for our Divine Services – especially in the Holy Liturgy – we deprive ourselves of seeing and hearing the Word of God, and moreover tasting the very Body and Blood of Christ for the remission of sins and Life eternal. For it is only in the active and in-person Life of the Church that we, who are humble of spirit, actually *hear* the good news, experience *release from the captivity* of sin and death in our Resurrected Lord, receive the *recovery of sight* from our spiritual blindness, and partake of the true *liberty* offered freely to us through the Holy and Life-giving Mysteries.

This New Ecclesiastical Year affords us the opportunity again to proclaim for ourselves, personally and as a community of faith, that we are intent on making it *"The Year of the Lord"* – and without any excuses! The Lord's Banquet is open to all who desire to partake (and I am not simply talking about the Greek Food Festival or the return of Fellowship Hour, as good as these are): We must be committed to making the Lord's Day truly His Day, and stop making excuses as to why we are not showing up – because these excuses will not fare well for us when we meet Him face to face at the time of our departure from this fleeting life. Further, when we make excuses why we are not receiving Holy Communion, we are sadly depriving ourselves of the physical, emotional and spiritual benefits from partaking of *"the Bread of Life"* (John 6:35) and *"the Medicine of Immortality."* (St. Ignatios of Antioch)

*(Continued on Page 3)*

## WORSHIP SCHEDULE

*Sundays: 8:45 am Orthros ~ 10:00 am Divine Liturgy*  
*Church School follows Holy Communion (Starting Sunday, September 19)*

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

Wednesday, September 1/*Beginning of the New*

*Ecclesiastical Year/St. Simeon the Stylite*

*8:00 am Orthros ~ 9:00 am Divine Liturgy*

Epistle: Philippians 2:5-11

Gospel: Luke 4:16-22

Sunday, September 5/*11th Sunday of Matthew/*

*St. Zacharias the Prophet and the Righteous*

*Elizabeth, the Parents of St. John the Baptist*

Orthros: Tone Two

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 21:14-25

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:2-12

Gospel: Matthew 18:23-35

Memorials: Antonia Pappas (2 years) and Christina Rich (2 years).

Wednesday, September 8/*Nativity of the Theotokos*

*8:00 am Orthros ~ 9:00 am Divine Liturgy*

Epistle: Philippians 2:5-11

Gospel: Luke 10:38-42; 11:27-28

*5:30 pm Sacrament of Holy Unction*

Sunday, September 12/*Forefeast of the Holy Cross/*

*Leave-taking of the Nativity of the Theotokos*

*Festival Worship Hours:*

*8:30 am Orthros ~ 9:30 am Divine Liturgy*

Orthros: Tone Three

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

Epistle: Galatians 6:11-18

Gospel: John 3:13-17

Tuesday, September 14/*Universal Elevation of the*

*Holy and Life-Giving Cross (Strict Fast)*

*8:00 am Orthros*

*Procession of the Cross at Doxology*

*9:00 am Divine Liturgy*

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:18-24

Gospel: John 19:6-11, 13-20, 25-28, 30

Sunday, September 19/*Sunday After Holy Cross/*

*Holy Martyrs Trophimos, Sabbatios and*

*Dorymedon*

Orthros: Tone Four

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

Epistle: Galatians 2:16-20

Gospel: Mark 8:34-38; 9:1

*Blessing of New Church School Year*

Sunday, September 26/*The Falling Asleep of the*

*Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian*

Orthros: Tone Five (First Plagal)

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Mark 16:9-20

Epistle: 1 John 4:12-19

Gospel: John 19:25-27, 21:24-25



*Hail, most blessed*  
*Virgin Theotokos,*  
*the Lord is with you.*  
*Blessed are you among women, and*  
*blessed is the fruit of your womb,*  
*for you have given birth to*  
*the Savior of our souls.*



*From Father John (Continued from Page 1)*

I am aware that some parish members are still not comfortable returning to Church in a crowd: However, we do have options, as this month we will offer *three weekday Divine Liturgies (September 1, 8 and 14 at 9:00 am) and the Sacrament of Holy Unction (September 8 at 5:30 pm)*. There is the ongoing option of making an appointment with one of our priests during the week to receive the Eucharist – in the Church or at your home – so that the grace of God continues to be operative in our life. If we are honest with ourselves, there is really no excuse!

May this New Year of the Lord be a time for our spiritual renewal – personally and as a community – and may we, like the Holy Theotokos, make every effort to be blessed by hearing and receiving the Word of God in the Divine Services and the Holy Sacraments.

With Much Love in Christ,




## *“Six Classes on the Orthodox Faith”*

*Please join us for this popular six-week course!*

*Starting Wednesday, September 15  
6:30 ~ 8:00 pm, in Kokkos Hall.*

*We welcome Orthodox Christians, Catechumens,  
Seekers, and those curious to learn more about  
the ancient Apostolic Faith.*

*For more information, please contact  
Father John or Father Seraphim.*



*For our Church School, our Greek School,  
and our Adult Study, and for those who teach  
and those who are taught, and their families;  
for the sponsors and benefactors and the  
Parish Council, and all who take care that our  
classes function according to God’s will,  
let us pray to the Lord.*

### ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

5300 S. El Camino Rd.  
Las Vegas, NV 89118

Rev. Father John Hondros  
frjohn@vegasgreekorthodox.com

Rev. Father Seraphim Ramos  
frseraphim@vegasgreekorthodox.com

Karen Rawlinson  
Administrative Assistant

Michelle Eugenio  
Bookkeeper

Mara Braun  
Catering & Events

Constantin Petriuc & Ramona Tasios  
Maintenance & Grounds

#### *Office Hours*

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

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

Parish Council: Gus Flangas

Philoptochos: Bernadette Anthony

Stewardship & Community Outreach:  
Justina Szukiewicz

Choir: Athena Mertes

Chanters & Youth Choir:  
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School: Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers: Father John

#### *GOYA:*

Anne Pantelas & Maha Habiba

Orthodox Family Fellowship:  
Imtisal Amy Khuri & April Rivera

Young Adults:  
Fr. Seraphim

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas

Greek School: Paula Kelesis

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

Kali Parea: Demetrious Asim

Adult Basketball:  
Nick Kelesis

Forerunners: Victoria Xikis

Orthodox Bookstore:  
Paraskevi Santamaria

Greek Food Festival: Gus Flangas

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

Photography & Live-Streaming:  
Bill & Erin Bruninga



# LAS VEGAS GREEK FOOD FESTIVAL

## 3 EXCITING DAYS

SEPT. 10TH, 3PM-11PM  
SEPT. 11TH, 3PM-11PM  
SEPT. 12TH, NOON-10PM

*Located and sponsored by*  
**ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST  
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**

**5300 S. EL CAMINO RD.  
LAS VEGAS, NEVADA 89118**  
*Cross streets Hacienda & Jones*

## BUY TICKETS NOW

**PURCHASE AT THE FESTIVAL GATE  
OR BUY ONLINE AT OUR WEBSITE.**

**GRAND RAFFLE TICKETS NOW  
ON SALE. ENTER FOR CHANCE TO  
WIN \$25,000.**

**702-221-8245  
LVGFF.COM**

## FAMILY EVENT

**LIVE MUSIC & DANCE  
GREEK CUISINE  
GREEK PASTRIES  
BYZANTINE ARCHITECTURE  
GREEK FOLK DANCE  
RIDES & GAMES**

*Plenty of free parking.  
Uber/Lyft drop-off.*



## Parish Council Report

The Greek Food Festival will definitely be a go this year. The dates are *Friday, September 10 through Sunday, September 12*. We will be open *on Friday and Saturday from 3:00 pm to 11:00 pm and on Sunday from noon to 10:00 pm*.

Although there are some who may have reservations about us having the Festival given the present status of the pandemic, we are going forward with Faith and Confidence, and truly believe we will have a tremendous event. We are in high gear, ready to offer our guests the total “Greek Experience” filled with high quality food, high quality music, efficient and courteous service, and a very “high energy” and “Festive” atmosphere replete with our Greek Culture that resonates with all ages and all kinds of guests.

Putting on the Festival is a monumental undertaking that requires us all to give of our time, talents and treasures – most especially, our time and talents. Many of us have already been working hard to make the Festival a momentous success; however, we are now at the point where we need everyone to pitch in and help. Although much of the planning was completed many months ago, due to the events of the last 18 or so months and the ensuing uncertainty, we are left to having to operate within a limited time frame to go from planning to execution. Where we would normally have four to five months, we have been relegated down to just two. Planning wise, we are in a pretty good place; getting people to help, we are somewhat behind; however, it is picking up and we truly believe our Parish and friends will come through.



How to help? First and foremost, please sign up to help in any area of the Festival where you feel you can best contribute. We will have sign-up stations after Liturgy on Sundays, or you can call the Church Office at any time during the week. We want to make the Festival an effort of love and make it fun for our Church Members and friends to be a part of. Working the Festival should be a great time for us to work together and get to know one another better. It should be a positive experience for all involved. The more people that sign up and pitch in to help, the better it is for everyone involved. If enough people volunteer, no one should have to work more than one or two shifts, except for people in key leadership positions. This will leave plenty of time for everyone to also attend the Festival as participants and not just as workers.

Other ways to help? We need help with Pre-Sales. Pre-Sales are comprised of Raffle Tickets, Coupon Books, Souvenir Magazine Ads, and Vendor Leasing. They provide the “seed” money for the Festival. We have many necessary expenditures prior to the Festival. The Church accounts are usually low during summer months and it puts a tremendous stress on our Parish finances to fund the Festival. Also, on the first day of the Festival we need to have \$40,000 to \$50,000 on hand to fund the “bank,” which allows us to fill the cash drawers at each booth. More importantly, good strong pre-sales could conceivably fund up to 40% or more of the nut going into the Festival. In addition, the greater the pre-sales, the lower the risk for us in the event of inclement weather or other intangibles. We need to strive to have \$200,000 in pre-sales. By obtaining this goal, we can cover almost 40% of the nut; and moreover, we could conceivably have all our expenses covered by the end of Friday night and be into profit going into Saturday.

The Raffle is comprised of 1,000 tickets being sold for \$100 per ticket: First prize is a chance to win \$25,000 in cash. The raffle also includes five \$1,000 cash prizes, three big screen TVs, and host of other prizes with a value greater of \$100. Your chances are around 1 in 25 chance of winning something. Also, 10% of the proceeds of the raffle will go directly to help a few charities in the Las Vegas area: This year it will be Suicide Prevention and for the Johnny Crisstopher Foundation. The Coupon Books are a \$32 value selling for \$25: They include four \$6 dollar coupons for food and an \$8 dollar admission ticket. For the Souvenir Magazine, we sell ads in various sizes. Please help us in this effort by buying and or selling the various items. Each of them is a great value and really helps the Church.

We will again be hosting a 26.2 mile Torch Run: Proceeds will go toward the treatment and cure for Autism. The Torch Run begins with a short prayer at 2:00 pm on the Friday of the Festival at Tivoli Village, and culminates at 7:00 pm with the lighting of the Festival Torch on the Festival Grounds.

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## Parish Council Report *(Continued from Page 5)*

We need runners and sponsors for the run. Each runner gets to run one mile with the Torch. We can schedule each runner one mile at a time and place along the route which is convenient. After you run your leg, we can transport you back to your car. We also urge groups to run together. On several legs of the route, we have groups of around 10 kids running together. This is a fun event that brings a lot of attention to the Festival and our chosen charity. Please call the Church Office if you are interested in running a one mile leg and/or sponsoring a mile. Runners will receive a T-Shirt and Coupon Book.

This year we have made some significant changes to the entertainment with a band comprised of musicians gathered from all over the Country and from Greece. These musicians are some of the best and we are excited to have them perform. We will also have some surprise entertainment events that should contribute greatly to the energy of the Festival.

In closing, if we all pitch in together, we will have a great event. We will be the first of our kind of event to take place in a long time. People in Las Vegas are chomping at the bit to participate in an outdoor event, and we fully expect to have a large crowd. Please pray for good weather, and a great Festival. May God Bless Us!

In Christ, Gus Flangas, Parish Council President

### Philoptochos News

Dear Father John, Father Seraphim, and Ladies of the Philoptochos Society,

With a sigh of relief, it finally seems that we are back together again, to Worship, to Pray, to join in Fellowship! And what a better way to begin than with the Feast of the Dormition of the Theotokos. The flowers that surrounded the Icons of the Panagia were spectacular and showed our love and honor to the namesake of our chapter – the Panagia. There was a fantastic meal and turnout for the Panigyri Luncheon. Many thanks to everyone who shopped, cooked, decorated, served and cleaned up! Everyone looked so happy to be visiting again!

Please mark these dates on your calendars:

**Friday, September 10 – Sunday, September 12: Greek Food Festival!** Philoptochos loves to serve. Where will you be helping? The Philoptochos Society will also have a booth to promote our ministry.

**Saturday, September 18 – Metropolis of San Francisco Philoptochos Virtual Fall Spiritual Conference.** Held as a Zoom conference from 9:00 am to 12:00 noon. This is a fantastic opportunity to learn more about the Metropolis programs and meet more like-minded women. We will be organizing a viewing party, or you can watch from your home. More details to follow.

**Sunday, September 19 – Sunday after the Elevation of the Cross.** The Philoptochos will take up a collection benefitting Hellenic College Holy Cross, and the Anthony Family will sponsor the Fellowship following the Divine Liturgy.

**Tuesday, September 21 – Kickoff General Meeting at 6:30 pm in Kokkos Hall.** At that time there will be a presentation on the different categories that members can participate in this year. A light supper will be provided. All women of the Church are welcome. Please email [Bernadette.anthony@gmail.com](mailto:Bernadette.anthony@gmail.com) if you have any questions.

Your Servant in Christ, Bernadette Anthony, Philoptochos President



*“Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in health;  
I know that it is well with your soul.” (3 John 2)*



### *Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisoun!*

Christina (Danielle) Bjorklund (Adult Baptism)  
on June 26, 2021. Godparent: Efthimia Eliades Lekar.

Nicholas (Jack), son of Justin Geronsin and Danielle Bjorklund,  
on June 26, 2021. Godparent: Elias Rivera.

Magdalini (Ruby), daughter of Justin Geronsin and  
Danielle Bjorklund, on June 26, 2021. Godparent: April Rivera.

Jordan (Ares), son of Kristian Thomas and Eleni Demoleas, on June 28, 2021.  
Godparents: Jonathan and Crystal Pantelas-Hemmers.

Cristiana (Clara), daughter of Parker and Maria Luke, on July, 31, 2021.  
Godparents: Gilda and Cristian Velciu.

Paraskevi (Clara), daughter of Anthony and Zoe Haug, on July 31, 2021.  
Godparent: Diane Koutsulis.

Emmanuel (Yohan), son of Tesfu and Mehret Tewolde, on August 1, 2021.  
Godparents: Biniam Woldemariam and Helen Abraha.

Stavroula, daughter of Annette Lexis, on August 7, 2021. Godparent: Reni Georgieva.

Maria (Galya) Miteva (Adult Baptism) on August 7, 2021. Godparent: Galia Gantcheva.

James (Dakota), daughter of John and Erin Dakin, on August 21, 2021.  
Godparents: John and Ellyn Nixon.

### *Chrismation*

Nicole (Annette) Lexis on August 7, 2021. Sponsor: Reni Georgieva.

### *Marriage: Na Zisete!*

Alexander Szukiewicz and Jaden Alicata on June 26, 2021. Koumbaros: Samuel J. Koutsulis.

Kristian Anthony Thomas and Eleni Demoleas on June 28, 2021. Koumbaros: Nicholas Demoleas.

Thomas Loney and Chrysi Poutouliaki on June 30, 2021. Koumbara: Evangelia Kanellopoulos.

Samuel Rella and Gabriela Beni on August 20, 2021. Koumbara: Eleana Murphy.

### *Fallen Asleep in the Lord*

William Gialketsis on July 8, 2021. Funeral on July 23.

Petru Hoadrea on August 15, 2021. Funeral on August 24.

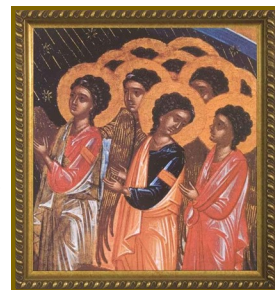


### *Notes from the Choir Loft*

Thank you to all who have joined us on Sundays for Liturgy!  
It is so wonderful to hear your voices again.

Please continue to sing with us and of course, we always  
welcome new members, including our youth. Thank you!

Much Love, Athena Mertes, Director





## Stewardship and Community Outreach

September starts a New Ecclesiastical Year and like all new years it provides an opportunity to pause and reflect on the year gone by as well as ponder the potential of the year to come. Ecclesiastical and calendar years are similar in this regard. Both may also be viewed from a life-cycle perspective: The former begins with the *Nativity of the Theotokos (September 8)* and ends with her *Dormition (August 15)*, while the latter is often depicted as a baby coming in on New Year's Day and an old man departing on New Year's Eve. Both New Years provide an ideal opportunity for personal reflection, for renewed commitment, and for a fresh start.

Focusing on Mary at the beginning and end of each Church Year is quite fitting, for if ever there was a positive role model for having a good relationship with Jesus, it would be the Theotokos. She epitomizes how we should all say "Yes" to God: She said "Yes" and opened the path of salvation for all mankind through her Son Jesus; she continued saying "Yes," living a Christian life so pleasing to God that all of creation rejoices in her; she continues saying "Yes" through her intercession and thus spreads her protective veil across the faithful, keeping us strong in our faith, keeping us healthy in body and soul, and keeping us at peace through God's grace.

Contrasting the excellent example set by the Theotokos versus the reality of our own recently completed individual Church Year will always indicate there is room for improvement on our part. Let us not be discouraged, though, but rather end our introspection by making a fresh start with renewed zeal to work perhaps a little harder at our Christian living this new year by saying "Yes" to God: "Yes," we will engage a little more fully in our community; "Yes," we will commit to support the beautiful campus and wonderful ministries of our Church; "Yes," we will offer our time, our talents and our treasures not just during this month's Greek Food Festival, but throughout the year.

By saying "Yes" to God in these ways, it could be viewed that we will individually and collectively be spreading a protective veil of Stewardship across our beloved St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church – keeping it strong in community, keeping it healthy in facility and finances, and keeping it at peace through God's grace.

In Christ, Michael Beeler, Stewardship and Outreach Committee



### *Congratulations to Our Kokkos Scholarship Recipients:*

*2020*

*Sonia Agrebi  
Alexandria Bucy  
Sophia Tsiralidis  
Anna Zapata*

*2021*

*Nicoletta Filios  
Cassandra Thanos*





## CONNECTION!

*“... that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You;  
that they also may be one in Us...” (John 17:21)*

## CONNECTING WITH ... CHRIST OUR CHURCH AND ONE ANOTHER

Please detach and return to St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church.

+++++

Please Print Name(s), Address, Phone and Email

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## 2021 CONNECTION

St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church  
Las Vegas, Nevada

As a blessed member of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, I/we commit to \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
per week/month, with the total amount for the year 2021 of \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Orthodox Christian: Yes No

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Orthodox Christian: Yes No

Others sharing in the gift (children): \_\_\_\_\_

## *From Father Seraphim*

At the end of each and every liturgical service served by a priest or bishop in the Orthodox Church there occurs a sequence of prayers called “The Dismissal.” The dismissal is ultimately a petition for mercy and salvation to Christ invoking the prayers and blessing of a list of intercessors for us. First and foremost in the list before any of the Saints or Angels, we invoke our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, then directly His Holy Mother, who is the greatest of all the Saints in Heaven and higher even than the Angels; then immediately third in this list is the subject of my reflection: “*The Power of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross.*” The three descriptive adjectives pronounced in blessing and intercession over every Orthodox Christian concerning the Cross are worthy of investigation separately.

First, we speak of the Cross of Christ as an instrument of power (Greek: δύναμις). What power does the Holy Cross possess? St. Paul gives us a helpful beginning in our understanding in his first letter to the Corinthians, “*For the word of the Cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*” (1 Corinthians 1:18, 24-25) Truly Jesus seemed scandalously weak hanging there dying upon the Cross to many in the ancient world. This for Christians however was not weakness, but was the greatest show of force – the all-victorious humble force of forgiveness and love which overcomes the full strength of hate, injustice and murderous death. Christ’s command for all who desire to follow Him is to “*take up your own cross daily and follow after Me*” (Luke 9:23) – and this is among the paradoxical Christian truths. When we willingly die for each other in a life of self-sacrificial love – even for our enemies – out of love for God, we truly “*find our life for everlasting life.*” (Matthew 16:25) We Christians possess the unique power as our Crucified Lord: The very power to overcome evil and death through bearing willingly the Cross of forgiveness and love, thus acquiring our own experience of the power of our Lord’s Resurrection.

*(Continued on Page 11)*

## PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY LAND



You are invited and encouraged to join  
Metropolitan Ilia of Philomelion and Very Reverend Father John Hondros on  
**A Spiritual Pilgrimage to the Jordan River for the Feast of Holy Theophany and throughout  
the Holy Land, including Petra in Jordan and St. Catherine’s Monastery at Mt. Sinai in Egypt  
January 13 - 27, 2022.**

All inclusive price is \$5,265 per person in double occupancy.

You can get the registration form and full itinerary  
at [www.mgatours.com](http://www.mgatours.com), or by contacting Victoria Xikis at (702) 419-5294  
or Paula Kelesis at (702) 249-4740. **ONLY 6 SPOTS LEFT!**

**Deadline to register and pay is September 15, 2021.**



## *From Father Seraphim (Continued from Page 10)*



The second term used in description of the Holy Cross is *precious* (Greek *τίμιος*). *Τίμιος* in Greek means “honored” or “expensive” like “precious stones,” which are rare and difficult to acquire. The Cross for us is precious not because it is a cross in general – but rather all crosses subsequently receive their sanctity, this unique *preciousness*, from the very Cross upon which the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ was transfigured with nails. The Blood which flowed from the hands, feet, and side of the Incarnate Lord forever sanctified that Wood: It became the symbol inextricably linked to the Person of Jesus and subsequently all of His followers who identify themselves as Christians. St. Gregory the Theologian said of this Blood shed on the Cross, that a single drop of it was precious and powerful enough to recreate the entire universe. (*Oration 45 – On Pascha*). It is no surprise then that this Holy Wood, on which the Son of God was willingly sacrificed, has been venerated by Christians in every age and place. Some very large pieces of it are preserved in monasteries and Churches throughout the world, especially at Xeropotomou on Mt. Athos. It is always cherished, even a single sliver of the precious Wood in reliquaries. These relics of the Cross are distributed as precious treasures which are infinitely beyond any monetary value and remain in this world the ever-present signs of God’s love for us.

The final epithet we hear in the dismissal is *life-giving* (literally *life-making/creating*; Greek: *ζωοποιός*). Why should we declare that an instrument of torturous death is indeed “life-creating?” In the Paschal Hymn repeated every single Sunday morning by the Priest before the Great Entrance (“*Having beheld the Resurrection of Christ . . .*”), we hear a phrase of paramount importance: “*Through the Cross Joy has come into all the world.*” Ultimately the Cross cannot be understood outside of the certainty of the Resurrection. The Cross and Resurrection are two aspects of a single reality: In the words of St. Paul, it was there on the Cross that “*Christ having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us, He destroyed it, having nailed it to the Cross. He disarmed principalities and powers, and made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in the Cross.*” (*Colossians 2:15*) The Cross of Christ is vital for us because it is the defeat of sin as well as the defeat of the opposing demonic powers! No longer can the demons bring the writing or list of all our sins and take us down to Hades when we die. Moreover, through Holy Confession we participate in the act of Christ tearing up that handwriting of our sins and nailing it to His Cross on which we are cleansed by His Blood and those accusing demons are literally disarmed and defeated. This is the eternal Life given to us through the Cross.

The Cross is not only symbolically life-giving, but actually has been for centuries: One of the very first accounts comes to us from the life of St. Helen who uncovered from the earth the True Cross in Jerusalem. A deceased woman was placed upon the wood of the Cross and she immediately arose from the dead! We all need to conscientiously wear our Cross and never take it off for any reason, for we received it at our Baptism as a tangible reminder that we are claimed for Christ forever. If for some reason you do not want to lose an expensive or meaningful Cross, we have plenty of affordable options in our Bookstore. We must all strive to make the sign of the Cross more often and with a greater reverence over ourselves and our children, when we get into our cars, over the food and drink we consume to the glory of God, and most especially at any time of human or demonic attack. To not use one of the most important and greatest weapons we have in the spiritual life against the devil is to enter the arena of salvation without the proper armor.

This *September 14*, may we all gather in our Holy Church to bow down in reverence before the Throne of the King of Glory, the precious and life-giving Cross of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

With Love in Christ,

*Father Seraphim*



# ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

## 2021-2022 CHURCH SCHOOL REGISTRATION

*Please Write Legibly - Use One Form Per Child*

Church School Classes begin on Sunday, September 19.  
Pre-Kindergarten (4 years by September 30) through High School.

*Let's show our children how to be committed to Christ by bringing them to  
the Divine Liturgy and Church School each week!*

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_

School Grade (2021-2022 school year): \_\_\_\_\_

Special Needs, Allergies, Medications: \_\_\_\_\_  
(e.g. "Autism Spectrum," "Peanuts," "Insulin Dependent")

Patron Saint and Date of Commemoration: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT/GUARDIAN OR OTHER RELATIVE (Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
Street City ZIP

Student Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Student E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_  
If you DO NOT want your child to be contacted by phone/text or by e-mail, please leave one or both of these blank.

I give my child permission to take part in all Church School activities and  
will support this ministry through my annual Stewardship.

Signed, Parent or Legal Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Many hands ease the load! Please let us know in which way you would like to help our children:

\_\_\_\_\_ Classroom Cleanup \_\_\_\_\_ Crafts

*Please return this registration form to Karen at the Church Office before classes start.*



## Ministry News

### Church School

Hi everyone! Well, it is finally happening: By the Grace of God, Church School will be starting in person *on Sunday, September 19* – one week after the Greek Food Festival. Please make sure that if your child (or anyone in your household) is not feeling well to stay home.

On the first day of Church School, we will receive Holy Communion with our families and after, the students and teachers will head to the front of the Church for the Blessing of the Waters. After receiving the blessing, we will head to the Community Center and into our classrooms.

Please try to register before the first day of class. **The Registration Form is on Page 12.**

We will be primarily be following the Church Calendar and the same curriculum that Karen was emailing last school year called *Orthodox Journeys*.

Here is the list of our incredible teachers offering their time and talents to bless, instruct, and model the Orthodox Faith for the young people in our Parish:

*Pre-K: Romina Chomakos and Taylor Webb*

*K/1<sup>st</sup>: Lexi Demoleas*

*2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup>: Sharon Katsaros*

*4<sup>th</sup>/5<sup>th</sup>: Sonia and Vivian Merritt*

*Middle School: Eileen and Sam Koutsulis*

*High School: Dr. John Nixon*

*Class will end at 12:15 pm.* Please reach out to me if you have any questions, concerns or if you would like to offer anything.

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

### Greek Language Program



I cannot wait to see all of you for another wonderful year! As always, the classes are free for current Stewards of St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church. If you are not a Steward, please see Karen in the Church Office to become one or you will be assessed a \$200 fee. There is a onetime supply fee of \$10 for every student.

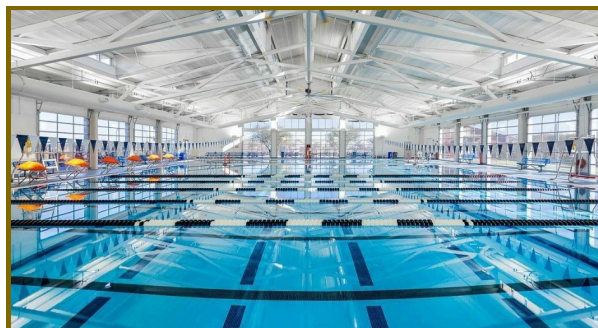
Registration Forms will be available soon: Look to the *Weekly Bulletin* for more announcements of when classes will start. If you would like to become a Greek School Teacher, please contact me at (702) 249-4740.

Paula Kelesis, Greek School Director

### Orthodox Family Fellowship

Happy Church New Year! We look forward to a wonderful fall season as we move forward with Church School and the Greek Food Festival this September.

This month due to the *GFF on September 10-12*, we will gather *on Saturday, September 4, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm, at the Aquatic Springs Pool!* (7025 S. Fort Apache Road, Las Vegas.) We have enjoyed swimming at this facility for the last few years as a Parish and we look forward to going back and enjoying exercise, fellowship and fun together – as well as a community potluck meal.



Please RSVP with Father Seraphim at [frseraphim@vegasgreekorthodox.com](mailto:frseraphim@vegasgreekorthodox.com). We hope to see you there! Love in Christ, Father Seraphim

## GOYA ~ Our Teen Ministry

Dear GOYANs,

Welcome back to School and Church School! Welcome back to a New Church Year, and welcome back to our Greek Food Festival! September will be a very busy month with the restarting of our Church School Program in person for all GOYANs in Middle School and High School. We will begin *on Sunday, September 19*, following the Divine Liturgy and Blessing of the Waters.

Please mark your schedules for our second GOYA Night of the Year *on Sunday, September 5 at 5:00 pm*. We will meet in Panos Hall and out on the Field for activities and games, and in the Church for prayer. Be prepared for a wonderful evening of fellowship!

Equally important, we need ALL GOYANs to take a shift at our *Soda Booth* at the *Greek Food Festival on September 10, 11 and 12*. This booth will be completely run by our teenagers, so all of us need to come together as a Parish GOYA and serve our beloved Church! In addition, this is a great way to get to know each other better. Sign up and volunteer willingly and with a smile, as people come to purchase water and soda. Maha Habiba will be heading up our volunteer sheet, together with Anne Pantelas Hemmers!

Please RSVP for both events at [frseraphim@vegasgreekorthodox.com](mailto:frseraphim@vegasgreekorthodox.com).

Much Love in Christ, Father Seraphim

## Greek Folk Dance

Hello all! We would like to welcome everyone back to our beloved Greek Folk Dance Ministry! We welcome all dancers ages 4 (by September 30, 2021) to participate in wonderful fellowship and learn to dance traditional Greek Folk Dances. Registration is still open, and forms are in this issue of *The Desert Messenger* (see Pages 15-16) and also with Karen in the Church Office. Please fill out one form per child. Registration fees are \$125 for each dancer (\$100 for siblings) in our competitive groups and \$75 for each dancer in our youngest, non-competitive group.

*The youngest, non-competitive group practices Sundays, 12:30 – 1:15 pm, and the competitive groups practice Sundays, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm.* Please look to the *Weekly Bulletin* and Folk Dance emails for additional practice days and times following the Greek Food Festival.

All groups will be practicing OUTSIDE in the courtyard. As the dancers are outside, masks are still encouraged, but not required. Please make sure your dancer has adequate water with them at practice. We will not be moving the groups inside to Panos Hall until the Governor's Directives and CDC Guidelines allow for this.

We would love to grow our ministry and welcome new families. Questions? Please feel free to email [stjohnsgreekdance@gmail.com](mailto:stjohnsgreekdance@gmail.com).

Much Gratitude, Folk Dance Board

## Young Adults

Dear Young Adults of St. John the Baptist,

Happy New Year! As everything is beginning again with our yearly cycle of Feasts and Fasting in the Church, we are also excited about coming together as a Church Community to put on our 2021 Greek Food Festival *on September 10-12*. In order to do this we are going to need all of our Young Adults to step up and emulate the tradition of hard work and excellence of those who built our Church and Community Center with their sacrifice dedication and love. Please volunteer at one of our many booths and pitch in!

In terms of our own fellowship, the demand was so high and the turnout so great (nine teams!) for our YA Pickleball last month in our own Panos Hall, that we will do a reprise with an even bigger experience: This month we are going to rent out the professional courts at the newly installed *Sunset Park Pickleball Complex* (2601 East Sunset Road Las Vegas). *We will meet on Friday, September 3 at 5:45 pm for our rental at 6:00-8:00 pm under the lights.*

We hope to see you at both events! In Christ, Father Seraphim



# ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

## GREEK FOLK DANCE MINISTRY

### 2021-2022 REGISTRATION FORM

*One Registration Form Required for Each Dancer*  
*Registration Deadline: September 26, 2021*

Dancer's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Birth Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Minimum Age: 4 years old by September 30, 2021

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_, Nevada Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Father's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Information (Please fill out completely and legibly):

Phone Numbers: Mother's Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Father's Cell: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dancer's Cell: \_\_\_\_\_ Home: \_\_\_\_\_

If you DO NOT want your child to be contacted by text message, please check this box: ☐

Email Addresses: Mother: \_\_\_\_\_

Father: \_\_\_\_\_

Dancer (if applicable): \_\_\_\_\_

If you DO NOT want your child to be contacted by e-mail, please leave this blank.

I understand and accept the following requirements for participation in the Greek Folk Dance Ministry:

1. The dancer must be Baptized or Chrismated in the Orthodox Church. Proof of Baptism or Chrismation must be provided for each dancer (or previously verified by Fr. John).
2. The parent(s) must be Steward(s) of St. John Church for 2021 **before their child(ren) attend any dance practice** and Steward(s) for 2022 by January 16, 2022. **Please check one box:**
  - ☐ I am already a 2021 Steward. (This will be verified with the Church Office.)
  - ☐ I am attaching my Stewardship Commitment Card to this registration form.
3. The dancer must **on a regular basis participate** in Divine Liturgy on Sunday, throughout the year, and in Church School (if he or she is of age), **September through May**. Infrequent participation is a basis for removal from the program.

(Continued)

4. The dancer must arrive to practice **on time** and be **respectful**.
5. The dancer and parent(s) are expected to participate in **all fundraising activities** of the Greek Folk Dance Ministry.
6. Dancers who have excessive absences may be subject to removal from the program.
7. The Folk Dance Festival (FDF) will take place Feb 16-21, 2022. Both the location and format are **unknown** at this time. The dancer and parent(s) must determine by October 31, 2021 if they will attend FDF. Dancers who elect not to go to FDF may only participate in dance practices through the end of December.
8. The dancer and parent(s) agree to meet all financial responsibilities assigned to the participants by the St. John Greek Folk Dance Ministry and FDF.
9. Registration fees are:
  - a. Competitive Dance Groups: \$125 per dancer, or \$100 for each additional sibling, due by **September 26**. *(No registrations will be accepted after this date.)*
  - b. Liondaria (non-competitive) Dance Group: \$75. *(Must be at least 4 years old by September 30.)*
10. Registration can **only** be accepted when all of the following are turned in:
  - a. Registration form
  - b. Non-refundable registration fee
  - c. Proof of Baptism/Chrismation (unless verified by Fr. John)
  - d. Stewardship Commitment Card (unless verified by Church Office)
11. Dancers from previous years must re-register. **Dancers are prohibited from practice until their registration is complete and until their parent(s) become Steward(s) for 2021.**

*First Folk-Dance Practice for All Dancers: Sunday, August 22, 2021  
Additional practice days/times TBA*

**\*\*\*Face masks are encouraged\*\*\***

For information on the St. John Greek Folk Dance Ministry, please contact the Folk-Dance Board at [stjohngrekdance@gmail.com](mailto:stjohngrekdance@gmail.com) or the Church at (702) 221-8245.

MAKE OUT CHECKS TO "ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH," WITH "FOLK DANCE GROUP" IN THE MEMO LINE.

Signature of Dancer

Signature of Parent or Guardian

Date

Date

FOR DANCE BOARD USE:

Payment Received On: \_\_\_\_\_ Check #: \_\_\_\_\_ OR Cash: \_\_\_\_\_

Stewardship Card Received: \_\_\_\_\_ Proof of Baptism/Chrismation: \_\_\_\_\_

## Mr. & Mrs.

Please grab your spouse, lovingly and respectfully of course, and volunteer for our 2021 Greek Food Festival *on September 10, 11 and 12!* Your labor of love for the Glory of God and the good of our Church is much needed and appreciated. You might just find out that making Loukoumades is your thing, among your many talents!

Look forward to returning to our monthly gatherings starting in October.

In Christ's Service, Father John



## Kali Pareia

Please come out and join in as we hold the Greek Food Festival *on September 10, 11 and 12* this year! We need all hands on deck: We have faith that our group will step up and meet the challenge.

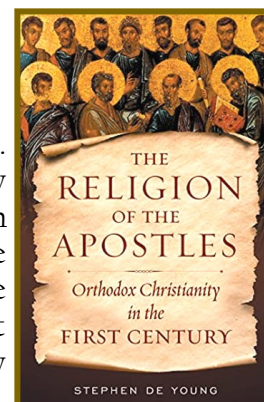
Look for a St. Demetrios Name Day gathering and party next month for our fearless Ministry Leader.

God Bless! Demetrious Asim and Catherine Manolakos

## Orthodox Bookstore

Greetings from the Bookstore!

This September marks again a new beginning of the Ecclesial Year in our Church. After a tumultuous year of an ongoing pandemic, polarizing politics, and seemingly general unease in our world, it is possible that some of us have felt unsettled – even regarding Church itself and have been “checking our footing,” so to speak, to ensure solid footing on the “correct” and unshakable Rock of Christ. It is natural to look to the origins of things in such cases in order to anchor oneself once again in mind and spirit amidst what we could call the philosophical or ideological quicksand constantly assaulting us from all directions.



Fortunately, in this month's featured selection, *The Religion of the Apostles: Orthodox Christianity in the First Century*, Rev. Dr. Stephen De Young takes us back in time to the earliest congregations founded and ministered to by the Holy Apostle themselves, born out of their first century Jewish worldview, and makes the case regarding the beginnings of our Faith Tradition and spiritual disciplines. Many today suppose, for example, that Orthodox Christianity and its liturgical rites and way of life evolved over time away from Apostolic teaching and practice. By contrast, De Young states and makes clear throughout the book that we did not “materialize from the Fathers of the Church after a disjunction from the living history in which the Scriptures were embedded.” Further, it was “not an innovation derived from the Church councils that came later. Rather, those councils explained, confirmed, and proclaimed that Faith, which had already existed for centuries preceding them.”

From *The Religion of the Apostles*:

*“ . . . St. Paul understood the religion he practiced (and the gospel he proclaimed) after his encounter with Christ as a continuation of that which he had practiced his entire life. He did not perceive himself to have disembarked from that earlier religion and entered another. Rather, he understood his experience on the road to Damascus in terms of the religion that included the Hebrew Scriptures that had not yet been canonized into the “Bible” as we would recognize it today. He saw the Gentiles he baptized after becoming a servant of Christ to be entering the religion of his youth; worshipping Yahweh, the God of Israel; and becoming the children of Abraham. It is therefore completely appropriate to speak of ‘Old Testament Christianity,’ the religion that existed under the Old Covenant, as well as the Christianity of the New Covenant. These are, in fact, the same religion. This religion, the religion practiced by the Apostles and their successors, is the subject of this book.”*

For your copy or other devotional needs, stop by the Bookstore after Divine Liturgy on Sundays or call Karen during the week! Serving you with Love in Christ, Paraskevi Santamaria, Bookstore Director



*Our Church is fully open for the scheduled Divine Services.  
If you have been sick for the last 48 hours, please do not come  
to Church. If you are unable to come to Church,  
your Priests are here to light a candle for you and your loved ones.  
Please call Karen with your request.*



## 2021 Stewardship Report (as of 8/24/21)

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$429,213 (\$462,275 in 2020)  
Stewardship Gifts Received: \$341,384 (\$351,366 in 2020)  
Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$87,829 (\$110,909 in 2020)  
Stewardship Families Pledged: 367 (380 in 2020)  
Average Pledge to Date: \$1,169 (\$1,213 in 2020)  
2021 Budgeted Goal: \$500,000 . . . Keep the Pledges Coming!

## Church Account Summaries - July 2021

Nevada State Bank Accounts	June	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	July	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$169,024.48	\$56,891.10	\$2,044.43	\$15,910.30	\$56,175.52	\$155,874.19	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$15,853.01	\$1,850.00		\$1,000.00		\$16,703.01	
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$3,837.37	\$10,324.74		\$257.94	\$15.00	\$13,889.17	
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$242,359.84	\$3,285.00	\$1,772.87	\$1,504.70	\$2,153.00	\$243,760.01	
Folk Dance Group	\$17,958.00					\$17,958.00	
Hellenic Historical Society	\$3,284.94					\$3,284.94	
Designated Funds	June	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	July	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Bookstore	\$11,340.17	\$2,910.00		\$1,504.70	\$2,153.00	\$10,592.47	
Ornaments	\$1,169.41					\$1,169.41	
Restricted Funds	June	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	July	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
ICON	\$140,726.44	\$375.00	\$1,772.87			\$142,874.31	
Library Account	\$1,470.77					\$1,470.77	
Giving Tree	\$2,912.77					\$2,912.77	
Faithtree	\$1,626.39					\$1,626.39	
Building Fund	\$28,019.26					\$28,019.26	
Youth Choir	\$2,989.18					\$2,989.18	
Church School	\$1,306.37					\$1,306.37	
Three Priests	\$39,033.50					\$39,033.50	
Roof Appeal	\$11,183.22					\$11,183.22	
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
GOYA	\$142.36					\$142.36	
<b>Designated, Restricted, and Other Total</b>	<b>\$242,359.84</b>	<b>\$3,285.00</b>	<b>\$1,772.87</b>	<b>\$1,504.70</b>	<b>\$2,153.00</b>	<b>\$243,760.01</b>	
Other Funds	June	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	July	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$78,372.33	\$5,979.92				\$84,352.25	as of 7.31.21 statement

July 2021 Candles **\$3,505.00**

July 2021 Trays **\$2,812.00**

**Total July 2021 Candles & Trays \$6,317.00**



# SEPTEMBER 2021 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD



*Sunday*

*Monday*

*Tuesday*

*Wednesday*

*Thursday*

*Friday*

*Saturday*

			<b>1</b> <i>First Day of Church Year/ St. Simeon the Stylite</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	<b>2</b>		<b>3</b> 5:45 pm Young Adults Pickleball Tournament at Sunset Park	<b>4</b> 1:00 pm OFF at Aquatic Springs Pool
<b>5</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Folk Dance Practice 5:00 pm GOYA Night in Panos Hall	<b>6</b> <i>Labor Day</i> <b>Church Office Open</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> <i>Nativity of the Theotokos</i> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 5:30 pm Sacrament of Holy Unction	<b>9</b>		<b>10</b> 2:30 pm Candle Lighting and Prayers for Depression - Suicide Prevention <div>48th Annual Greek Food Festival</div>	<b>11</b> 2:30 pm Candle Lighting and Memorial for 9/11 Victims and Armed Forces
<b>12</b> 8:30 am Orthros 9:30 am Divine Liturgy <i>No Folk Dance Practice</i> <div>Greek Food Festival</div>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> <i>Elevation of the Holy Cross (Strict Fast)</i> 8:00 am Orthros <i>Procession of Holy Cross at Doxology</i> 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	<b>15</b> 6:30 pm Six Classes on the Orthodox Faith Class #1	<b>16</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>19</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy <i>Blessing and First Day of Church School</i> Folk Dance Practice	<b>20</b> 6:00 pm Adult Basketball	<b>21</b> 6:00 pm Parish Council in Library 6:30 pm Philoptochos General Meeting in Kokkos Hall	<b>22</b> 5:00 pm Philoptochos Outreach Training 6:30 pm Six Classes on the Orthodox Faith Class #2	<b>23</b>		<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>26</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy Folk Dance Practice	<b>27</b> <i>Church Office Closed</i> <i>Labor Day Observed</i> 6:00 pm Adult Basketball	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b> 6:30 pm Six Classes on the Orthodox Faith Class #3	<b>30</b>			

# *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*

*You Who were lifted on  
the Cross voluntarily, O  
Christ our God, bestow  
Your tender compassions  
upon Your new  
community to which  
You gave Your Name.  
Cause our faithful  
leaders to be glad in  
Your power, granting  
them the victories  
against their adversaries.  
And for an ally, Lord,  
may they have Your  
peace as their armor,  
the trophy invincible.*



*(Kontakion for the Elevation of the Holy Cross, translated by Father Seraphim Dedes)*