

The Desert



Messenger

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

Volume 18, Issue 10 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

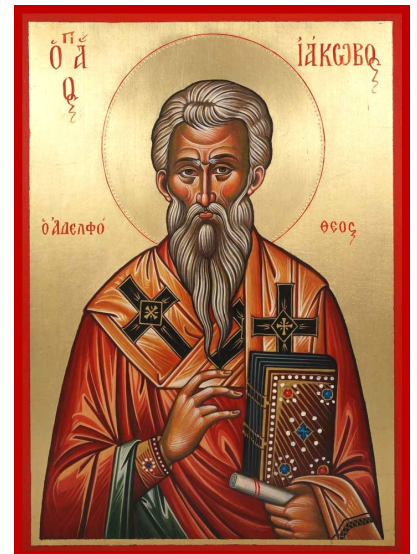
October 2020

From Father John

Beloved in Christ:

As we sail into the fall of 2020, we continue to face a barrage of tempests – in the form of the COVID 19 pandemic, the restrictions put upon us regarding public gatherings (although thankfully as of this month we are allowed more people in the Church), raging fires and hurricanes and floods, violent and destructive rioting, and hateful words and attacks that continue to divide us. Now more than ever we must look to the example of truly God-loving people – rather than self-proclaimed saviors – so that we may effectively ford these stormy seas and arrive into the harbor of His Kingdom.

One such righteous God-pleasing man was *St. Iakovos (James)*, the first Bishop of Jerusalem and the brother of our Lord Jesus Christ, whom the Orthodox Church commemorates *on October 23*. Iakovos was from Judea and was the son of Joseph through his first marriage: As the Holy Gospels attest, when Joseph was betrothed to Mary, the Theotokos, she remained a virgin before, during and after giving birth to Jesus Christ. As recorded in *The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church (October)*, Iakovos was righteous from birth and “showed mastery over all his senses and members . . . His eyes were directed only to good things, and he was vouchsafed divine mercy. His ears were opened to soul-saving readings, and his mouth delighted in the law. His right hand was ever ready to reach out in almsgiving, and he was sympathetic to all. . . . He subsisted on bread and tears. From his prostrations, his knees were worn to the bone . . . (and he) would pray and labor ceaselessly.” (pp. 566-7) Iakovos, by his authentic holiness, was held in high esteem by *both* the pious and the pagans!



Iakovos was chosen by Christ and His Holy Apostles to be the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and professed that as a hierarch he was *“a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” (James 1:1)* Together with his epistle written “to the twelve tribes in the Dispersion” which is included in the New Testament, he also authored the Divine Liturgy which bears his name: It is among the oldest Eucharistic services and is celebrated each year on his feast day. St. Iakovos’ epistle, although ancient, has many timeless spiritual teachings for all of us who genuinely want to please, serve and grow into union with Christ – and a sampling of his precious words are included below for our edification.

“Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. . . . Blessed is the man who endures his trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love Him.” (James 1:2-3, 12)

“Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted by God.’; for God cannot be tempted with evil and He Himself tempts no one; but each person is tempted when he is lured and tempted by his own desire.” (James 1:13-14)

(Continued on Page 3)

WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Sundays: 8:45 am Orthros ~ 10:00 am Divine Liturgy

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

**Sunday, October 4/2nd Sunday of Luke/
St. Hierotheos Bishop of Athens
National Church Music Sunday
 Orthros: Tone Eight (Fourth Plagal)
 Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:36-53
 Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:6-18; 7:1
 Gospel: Luke 6:31-36
 Memorial: Departed Choir Members**

**Sunday, October 11/4th Sunday of Luke/
*Holy Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council/
 Holy Apostle Philip/St. Theophanes the Branded*
 Orthros: Tone One
 Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:1-10
 Epistle: Titus 3:8-15
 Gospel: Luke 8:5-15
 Memorial: Robert Joseph Fischer (40 days)**

**Sunday, October 18/Holy Apostle and Evangelist
Luke/St. Marinos the Martyr
 Orthros: Tone Two
 Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:11-18
 Epistle: Colossians 4:5-11, 14-18
 Gospel: Luke 10:16-21
 Memorial: Departed Members of Neocleous Family
 Artoclasia: *Offered by the Papas Family in honor
 of St. Luke***

**Tuesday, October 20/St. Gerasimos of
Cephalonia/St. Artemios the Great-Martyr
 8:00 am Orthros
 9:00 am Divine Liturgy
 Epistle: 2 Timothy 2:1-10
 Gospel: Luke 9:23-27**

**Friday, October 23/St. Iakovos (James),
the Apostle and Brother of the Lord
 9:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Iakovos (James)
 Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19
 Gospel: Matthew 13:54-58**

**Sunday, October 25/6th Sunday of Luke/
*Ss. Marcianos and Martirios the Martyrs/
 St. Tabitha the Merciful*
 Orthros: Tone Three
 Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:19-31
 Epistle: Galatians 1:11-19
 Gospel: Luke 8:27-39
 Memorial: Christine Schildmeyer (40 days)**

**Monday, October 26/St. Demetrios the Great-
Martyr and Myrrh-Streamer
 8:00 am Orthros
 9:00 am Divine Liturgy
 Epistle: 2 Timothy 2:1-10
 Gospel: John 15:17-27; 16:1-2**

Farewell Message

Since August 1963, Michael and I have attended St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church. Now, our two families are leaving Las Vegas and our Church family we have grown to love. Father Adams and Father Dean, both of blessed memory, Father Jim, Bishop Nikolai, Metropolitan Ilia, Father Paul, Father Matthew, Father Seraphim, and especially Father John have blessed us, confessed us and made our lives complete. Although we will be miles apart, we will only be a prayer away.

**With much love and appreciation,
 Michael and Tami Stefanatos and family and David and Joanne Hetzel**



From Father John (Continued from Page 1)

"Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights . . ." (James 1:17)

"For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy; yet mercy triumphs over judgment." (James 2:13)

"So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." (James 2:17)

"And the tongue is fire. . . . (No) human being can tame the tongue – a restless evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who are made in the likeness of God." (James 3:6, 8-9)

"For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, without uncertainty or insincerity. And the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace." (James 3:16-18)

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. . . . Humble yourselves before the Lord and He will exalt you." (James 4:7-8, 10)



St. Iakovos emphasized in his epistle the powerful divine grace present in prayer among the faithful and in the Holy Mysteries: *"Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the Church, and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord . . . Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects."* (James 4:14, 16)

The righteous Iakovos was revered by the Holy Twelve Apostles, including St. Paul: His divinely inspired pastoral judgment prevailed at the Apostolic Council which was convened to address the circumcision of Gentiles – *"We should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God. But we should write to them to abstain from the pollutions of idols and from unchastity . . ."* (Acts 15:19-20) – and St. Paul later visited him and the elders in Jerusalem to declare *"one by one the things that God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry . . . (and) they glorified God."* (Acts 21:19)

Incited by the Jewish High Priest Annas, the Pharisees and Scribes – who were hearers, but not doers of the Mosaic Law – implored St. Iakovos to ascend to the parapet of the Temple on Passover, so that he would be easily seen as he instructed the people. After Iakovos courageously gave witness to the divinity of Christ and His impending Second Coming, he was seized and cast off the Temple, and when he would not expire the ungodly ones stoned him: Holy Iakovos, just like our Lord Jesus Christ and St. Stephen, prayed, "Lord God and Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Through the prayers of St. Iakovos, may Christ our God turn the hearts of us sinners back to His ways, that our souls may be saved from death.

With Love in Christ,

Father John

Parish Council Report

Greetings All!

What a quiet September this has been. As I write this, we would normally be holding our Greek Food Festival on this weekend, and in this year's case, we would be reporting on the lovely weather that we had during our scheduled days of September 11-13 that hopefully would have contributed to a successful event. But of course, this is 2020, and nothing is normal. We have been stating for years that the proceeds from the Festival are supposed to go to maintaining our campus and to the building fund for capital improvements. But as we know, our Stewardship pledges have never been enough to fund the general operations of our Parish, and the Festival account has evolved over time into an overdraw protection account when our expenses exceed our income from Stewardship, trays and candles.

It was only a year ago that many of us were disappointed because the Festival made a lower profit than anticipated; all it took to sink it was a couple of days of 40-plus mile-per-hour winds to leave us in a precarious financial state. As disappointed as we were, who would have dreamed one year ago that there would be no Festival in 2020, and no income to help us with our expenses? And had we known that we would have a fraction of our candle and tray donations, all of us might be crying doom and gloom. How can this Parish survive without candle, tray and Festival funds? Yet during these trying and unprecedented times, I am happy to say that many of you have been more generous with your pledges and we are ahead of where we were the past several years in October. It will still be a struggle to get through the rest of the year, but through Stewardship and some generous gifts from anonymous parishioners, the doors are still open, thank God. Although there is a separate Stewardship column, I implore you all to pay your pledges and offer more if you can. Every day that goes by puts us one day closer to normalcy, and how glorious it will be to worship together with no restrictions and the Church is able to provide the ministries to help our Parish grow and flourish.

On September 9 and 10, along with Father John, it was my honor to represent our Parish as a delegate to the Biennial Clergy Laity Conference. Of course the meetings were virtual and considering that there were 1,200 participants, the process and platform went very smoothly. While most of the agenda dealt with Archdiocesan financial matters, one very positive item that I learned is that Saint Nicholas Shrine in New York, destroyed on September 11, 2001, is scheduled to be completed next year, God willing.

Back on the home front, we know that these times have been challenging for families with school-aged children. This is a reminder that all the youth groups, including GOYA, OFF and Young Adults meet monthly via Zoom. If your children have not been participating, please encourage them to do so. I am also happy to announce that *weekly in-person Church School is beginning on Wednesday, October 7 at 5:00 pm*. The classes will be limited to 15 students, and the teens will be instructed by Father John and Father Seraphim. They will be offering the *Faithtree Relationship Project*, a program promoted by our Metropolis and designed to focus on the spiritual and emotional health of our teens. As difficult as the pandemic has made our lives, it has been even worse for many teenagers throughout the country, so please encourage your children to attend.

In closing, I – like all of you – look forward to the day very soon when the pandemic will be one for the history books and we are all able to worship and socialize together once again.

John Matsis, Parish Council Vice President

Starting October 1, 2020, our Church is open for the scheduled Divine Services, on a first come/first served basis. You no longer need to call in advance to reserve. Once our Church has reached capacity, per the State of Nevada health regulations, our Parish members will be directed to Panos Hall. There will be no Fellowship Hour or Kollyva until the restrictions are lifted. For the health and safety of all, please follow the posted guidelines.

Philoptochos News

Dearest Sisters and Brothers of the St. John the Baptist Community,

The Ladies Philoptochos Society recently made an appeal for donations to benefit Hellenic College/Holy Cross School of Theology. Our sincere thanks to the community for your generosity in response to our request! HCHC is one of the principal national ministries which is supported by all Philoptochos women throughout the Archdiocese. Hellenic College's curricula in the liberal arts and pre-professional studies prepare students for careers in which they can serve both Church and society. Holy Cross offers graduate courses and degrees in Orthodox theology and is the only Greek Orthodox Seminary in America.

This fall and winter, the Ladies Philoptochos will be continuing the tradition of our Annual Christmas Pastry Sale. Delicious and traditional Greek Christmas Pastries will be lovingly baked and packaged in a decorated box by our own faithful women. The price will remain the same at \$25, and quantities are very limited this year. You can guarantee your order by pre-ordering and pre-paying *by November 1*. Please see the order form *on Page 6* in this issue. Orders will be available for pick up appropriately *on December 6*, the Feast Day of St. Nicholas the Wonderworker.

With Love in Christ, Benita Beeman, Philoptochos President

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Rev. Father John Hondros
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Rev. Father Seraphim Ramos
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Michelle Eugenio
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Mara Braun
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Constantin Petriuc & Ramona Tasios
Maintenance & Grounds

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

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

Parish Council: Gus Flangas

Philoptochos: Benita Beeman

Stewardship & Community Outreach:
Justina Szukiewicz

Choir: Athena Mertes

Chanters & Youth Choir:
Presvytera Maria Hondros

Church School: Eileen Koutsulis

Altar Servers: Father John

GOYA:
Kouli Pouridis & June Likourinou

Orthodox Family Fellowship:
Jelena Boskovic & Amy Khuri

Young Adults:
Fr. Seraphim

Greek Folk Dance: Sia Dalacas

Greek School: Paula Kelesis

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

Kali Parea: Demetrios Asim

Adult Basketball:
TBD

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



Baptized into Christ: Na Mas Zisoun!

George (Owen), son of Nathanael and
Jennifer Fenlason, on September 5, 2020.
Godparents: Anna Chkhikvishvili and
Michael Zmina III.

Alexander (Sean) Atkins on September 11, 2020 (Adult Baptism).
Godparent: John Kakavulias.

Brigid (Taylor) Webb on September 12, 2020 (Adult Baptism).
Godparent: Elizabeth Arbuiso.


Kassiani (Kassandra), daughter of Joshua and Sevasti Miller,
on September 26, 2020.
Godparent: Michaela Alyce Wheeler.

Marriage: Na Zisete!

Pete John Georgis and Keshia Katerina Cacal on September 19, 2020.
Koumbaros: Elias Pete George.

Fallen Asleep in the Lord: Eternal Memory!

Robert Joseph Fischer on August 30, 2020. Funeral on September 4.
Dina Delalis on September 19, 2020. Funeral in Chicago, IL on September 23.



The 2020 Annual Ladies Philoptochos Society Christmas Pastry Sale

Delicious and traditional Greek Christmas Pastries
lovingly baked and packaged in a decorated box for \$25.

Due to the COVID 19 Pandemic, quantities are limited.
Guarantee your order by pre-ordering and pre-paying by November 1!

**Complimentary logo for those who order 40 boxes
or more, as well as 10% discount and free delivery.**

Send your order and check made payable to:

Ladies Philoptochos Society, attention Christmas Pastry Sale
5300 El Camino Road, Las Vegas, NV 89118

Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Number of boxes _____ x \$25 _____

Check enclosed _____

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

Orders will be ready for pickup at St. John the Baptist Church
on Sunday, December 6, following Divine Liturgy.

Your generous contribution is greatly appreciated. It benefits the many ministries we
support at St. John Church, the Las Vegas community at large, and around the world.

Thank You!



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

2020-2021 CHURCH SCHOOL REGISTRATION

Please Write Legibly - Use One Form Per Child.

Church School Classes Begin Wednesday, October 7, 5:00 – 6:00 pm.

Please Arrive 15 Minutes Early and Pick Up Your Child Promptly After Class.

Student Name: _____ Birth Date: _____

School Grade (2020-2021 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.

PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED. NO WALK-IN PARTICIPANTS.
CLASSES ARE LIMITED TO 15 STUDENTS - YOUR REGISTRATION IS YOUR COMMITMENT
TO MAKING SURE YOUR CHILD OR TEEN IS IN CLASS EVERY WEEK.

Our Kindergarten through 5th Grade will follow the *Orthodox Journeys* Program -

Our Teen Class will follow the *Faithtree Relationship Project*.

CLASSES OFFERED: KINDERGARTEN/1ST, 2ND/3RD, 4TH/5TH GRADES AND TEEN CLASS.
All students are required to wear face masks (we can provide) and practice social distancing.

Signed, Parent or Legal Guardian: _____

First come - first served: Please return this registration form to Karen at the Church Office ASAP.

Ministry News

Church School

Hi Everyone!

I hope you are all well and staying safe. I know that CCSD school year at-home learning has its challenges and that you are in the swing of things. With that said, we are so excited that we will be starting in-person Church School classes *on Wednesdays, beginning October 7, from 5:00 to 6:00 pm*. Due to the current restrictions by our Governor on gatherings in places of worship, it is not possible at the time to offer classes on Sundays.

If you have not done so, please register your child or teen for Church School (*see Page 7*). We will offer four different grade level classes – K-1, 2-3, 4-5 and 6-12 – and each class size will be limited to 15 students. Pre-registration is required to participate in Church School – no walk-ins permitted. Students will be socially distanced and wear face masks.

Father John and Father Seraphim will teach the teens, following the *Faithtree Relationship Project*. Our younger groups will focus on the Church calendar. We will be using a new program from *Orthodox Journeys* (visit orthodoxjourneys.com to learn more about our curriculum). We are excited to use it, as it has some great content that we cannot wait to share! We look forward to seeing you *on October 7 at 5:00 pm – please arrive 15 minutes early*. Any questions, please call or email me at (702) 521-6516 or vivaleenie@cox.net. Love in Christ, Eileen Koutsulis, Church School Director

Orthodox Family Fellowship



We will continue with our monthly Zoom meetings for fellowship and spiritual growth *on Sunday, October 25 at 3:00 pm*. This is the day before the Feast of St. Demetrios of Thessaloniki, who is one of the most popular and beloved Saints of the Orthodox Church. We will have the chance to explore his life, miracles, and celebration in his great city.

We would also like to invite you to sign up for our new time and day of Church School Classes! We will be restarting in-person classes *on October 7 at 5:00 pm*. We will require pre-registration and follow the appropriate guidelines for classroom safety. Please sign up and join us as we grow in our Holy Faith together!

God Bless You! Amy Khuri, Jelena Boskovic and Father Seraphim

Young Adults

HEY YOUNG ADULTS...

It is time to regroup and rebuild! Most of the Young Adults who were actively participating in the YA ministry in our Parish have left Las Vegas due to career, marriage, or educational reasons. This includes our last three YA Advisors!

However, there are many young people in our Parish who have recently graduated High School and are in College, while still living in Las Vegas – and we invite you to connect with our YA ministry. It is a perfect time to join this wonderful ministry with other people in the college and after-college/early career stage of life. We will have a Young Adult Zoom meeting to meet and greet as we start a new chapter in our Young Adult Ministry *on Sunday, October 18 at 3:00 pm*. We will also have a chance to hear about the Apostle James, the Brother of the Lord and first Bishop of Jerusalem in the early Church, and his teaching on controlling our tongue in how we speak.

Please either email me at frseraphim@vegasgreekorthodox.com or call/text me at (702) 768-7480 if you would like to be a part of the rebuilding of our YA ministry here at St. John the Baptist Church!

Yours in Christ, Father Seraphim

Ministry News

GOYA - For Teenagers

Dear GOYANs of St. John the Baptist Church,

We want to thank all of you who have continued to participate in our GOYA ministry throughout the seven months of this pandemic, during which we have not been able to meet in person. In previous years we have been able to do some wonderful activities together: Our Overnight Lenten Retreat, Camping up in Ely, and volunteering at the Las Vegas Rescue Mission serving food, to name just a few.

For the time being we are still unable to hold our monthly GOYA Night where we come together for food, discussion, prayer, games and fellowship; instead we have been convening a monthly GOYA Zoom fellowship meeting with spiritual and communal/relational elements in each meeting. This month we will have our Zoom meeting *on Sunday, October 25 at 5:00 pm* and will discuss the amazing life of St. Demetrios the Myrrh-flowing in Thessaloniki.

Another opportunity for renewal and Christian growth is a brand new ministry for teens in our Parish: *The Relationship Project*, will begin *on Wednesday, October 7 at 5:00 pm* and recur weekly. Each participant will receive three workbooks (\$45 value), which are a hybrid journal and program guide as we discuss mental health, emotional wellness, and intimacy from an Orthodox perspective. Our workbooks were generously donated in loving memory of Daniel Larson.

— the —
**RELATIONSHIP
PROJECT**

This program was prepared by Orthodox Christian mental health professionals, theologians and priests, teachers and professors, parents and counselors to be an engaging and transforming journey into the heart of our Faith as we discover our true identity in Christ. This program deals with many of the pressing issues affecting teens today: Self-image and identity, social media (and everything that goes with it), substance abuse, peer pressure, suicide and despair. We encourage you to sign up and come as we meet in Kokkos Hall! We will be following the relevant distancing and CDC guidelines. This new ministry, which will replace our teen Church School for the time being, is a combination of reading through the workbook, dialogue and discussion, private journaling and reflection, and interactive videos designed by *Faithtree Resources* – a pan-Orthodox design team focused on Youth Ministry programming, based in California. His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos has endorsed *The Relationship Project* for every Parish in our Metropolis, so please do not miss out on this life-changing opportunity for our GOYA-aged youth.

Please email me at frseraphim@vegasgreekorthodox.com or call/text me at (702) 768-7480 if you would like to participate!

Love in Christ, Father Seraphim

Greek School

I have missed you and hope you and your families are staying well. For the time being we will not have Greek School. However, the publisher of our textbooks, Papaloizos Publications, has many resources and education materials available for both children and adults in book form and online. Please check out www.greek123.com. If you need any help with ordering a book please contact me (702) 249-4740 and I will gladly help you. Please keep looking in *The Desert Messenger* or for email blasts with updates on Greek School here at St. John the Baptist Church. Paula Kelesis, Director

Notes from the Choir Loft

I miss all of you dearly and think of you often! Singing without you is just not the same. *On Sunday, October 4, National Church Music Sunday*, we will have a memorial for our Choir members who have reposed in the Lord. Much Love, Athena Mertes, Director





FAITHTREE.ORG

METROPOLIS OF
SAN FRANCISCO

—the—
**RELATIONSHIP
PROJECT**

GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF SAN FRANCISCO
INITIATIVE ON TEEN MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS
IN COLLABORATION WITH FAITHTREE RESOURCES

Who could have imagined that 2020 would have changed our world so much? It feels surreal. With all these changes and challenges, our teens have been affected the most. This is a time in their lives when connection with others is so important, and the isolation brought on by the pandemic has been devastating.

But, we have a solution!

If you are a teenager or young adult, this is for you!

The Metropolis of San Francisco has gifted this program to each parish in our Metropolis. Faithtree Resources developed *The Relationship Project*, a six-month program divided into three areas – Understanding Identity, Understanding Intimacy, and Understanding Mental Health. The Metropolis Family Wellness Ministry will support the implementation of this life-changing program.

Check with your priest for the schedule of when the program will begin at your parish and for more details to connect you to this incredible opportunity!

METROPOLIS FAMILY
WELLNESS MINISTRY

Faithtree

What is Faithtree Resources?

Faithtree Resources is a nonprofit organization that works with dozens of Pan-Orthodox hierarchs, clergy, professionals and faithful to create uniquely Orthodox resources to supplement parish ministry. Faithtree specializes in articulating the fullness of the Orthodox Christian Tradition in a language people can understand and apply. The materials inspire dialogue and relationship building in the context of small groups. Through this work, we help people grow in the Faith, grow closer to each other, and grow closer to God.

Read more about how you can participate in [The Relationship Project](#), and learn about this and other programs developed by [Faithtree Resources](#).

Stewardship and Community Outreach

“But the Lord answered her, ‘Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things; one thing is needful.’” (Luke 10:41-42)

“The one thing needful evidently is that which Mary chose – that good part which should not be taken away from her. Very clearly this was to sit at Jesus’ feet and hear His word. This and nothing less, this and nothing more.” (Charles Spurgeon, Homily on October 15, 1871)



Whether in 1st Century Bethany with Martha and Mary, or 19th Century London with Charles Spurgeon, or 21st Century Las Vegas with you and me, it is needful that we discern the Truth. We are meant to resist the deluge of worldly messages from “influencers” and choose instead to focus on the Truth – to have God’s pure living water permeate our souls – while rejecting the contaminants, impurities, and toxins of sin back into the wastewater stream where they belong. It is as if our souls are like that special membrane in those fancy reverse osmosis water treatment systems.

Of course, this is not necessarily easy these days – especially with the flood of information coming at us from all quarters, and exacerbated by the COVID-related restrictions which have resulted in increased isolation and a reliance on internet-based connections. There was a YouTube statistic from 2019 which reported that 500 *hours* of video were being uploaded *every minute*. To put that into perspective, a typical 2 ½ hour live Sunday service uploaded from St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church would compete against 75,000 *hours* of video uploaded during that same service; or, in other words, one 24-hour day of uploads result in 82 *years* of video which one person could watch. Yikes! YouTube is just one of well over one billion websites out there on the internet, all clamoring for your attention. Worst of all, most of these websites are filling the Cloud with all manner of ugly, pornographic, useless, false, and crazy content.

Given this incredible amount of content, not to mention similar floods from other mass media outlets such as print, radio and television, mindful discernment absolutely needs be exercised. Instead of becoming overwhelmed or developing an unhealthy fear of missing out, let us – in the words of St. Ambrose (+AD 397) – “strive to have what no one can take away from us, so that not careless but diligent hearing may be granted to us. For even the seeds of the heavenly Word itself are likely to be taken away if they are sowed by the wayside. Let the desire for wisdom lead you as it did Mary. It is a greater and more perfect work.”

Yes, let us strive to live better Christian lives by sitting at His Feet and listening to His Words. Let us strive to be better Stewards of the Church by discerning what is required of us to actually be, make, and grow Disciples of Christ. Let us strive to calmly filter this modern world flooding us with electronic effluent, literally streaming to our devices and recall the one needful thing. This and nothing less, this and nothing more. In Christ, Mike Beeler Stewardship and Outreach Committee

The AHEPA Las Vegas Chapter 314

We hope everyone is safe and well. We will not be meeting this month due to meeting restrictions. We are looking for volunteers to assist with a Membership Drive and we need Brothers to assist with this endeavor. We are currently looking for Board Members to assist with the redevelopment of the Chapter.

For dues and information please see the newly created site <https://ahepa-314-las-vegas.square.site/> and follow us on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/LVAHEPA314/?notif_id=1598590020581280¬if_t=page_invite_accept&ref=notif.

If you are interested in a Board Position or assisting with this very important organization please contact me.

Thank you, Kouli Pouridis, Acting Chapter President

pouridis5@cox.net (702) 604-0885

From Father Seraphim

There are many different seasons in the Orthodox Church. One of these yearly cycles is the pattern of how we read the four Gospels, with passages assigned for every single day of the year. After the feast day of the Elevation of the Holy Cross on September 14 we begin reading the Gospel of Luke. Thus, in the month of October we find ourselves at the beginning not only of the Fall Season, but also at a new season in the Church.

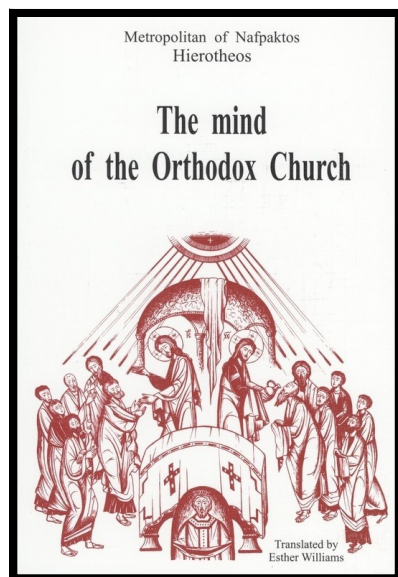
Although all the Gospels have similarities, St. Luke has so much unique information! He alone writes incredibly in depth about the Birth narrative of our Lord and His Meeting in the Temple with Saints Symeon the Elder and Anna the Prophetess. Again, only in Luke do we hear about the Conception of St. John the Baptist, our Parish Patron. Luke records the greatest number of parables (more than the other Gospels), and many of these beloved parables are only found in Luke, such as the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. As an educated Hellene-turned-Christian of the first century, Luke follows a pattern of antithesis that he employs throughout his entire Gospel narrative. For instance, it is Luke who immediately opposes the Beatitudes with the Woes (*Luke 6:20-26*). It is Luke who elaborates in detail the difference between the Pharisee and the woman who came into his house (*7:44-47*). It is Luke, likewise, who contrasts the two men who went up to the temple to pray (*18:9-14*), the two sons of the same father (*15:27-32*), the rich man and the pauper (*16:19-22*), the faithful and unfaithful servants (*12:35-40*), the thankful leper and his nine companions (*17:17-18*), and the rich donors and the poor widow (*21:1-4*). Luke's opposition between the two thieves on the cross (*23:39-43*) is then the climax in a lengthy series of contrasts – a unique and intriguing detail of his own personal narrative style. Without Luke's Gospel we would not have known about Zaccheos, the raising of the widow's son at Nain, or his own personal encounter with the risen Lord on the first Sunday of the Resurrection as he journeyed from Jerusalem on the road to Emmaus with Cleopas (who like St. Luke was one of the 70 Apostles). Finally, we would not have the deep insight we enjoy into the early history of the newborn Church without Luke's firsthand account of the Acts of the Apostles – called by some scholars the "Gospel of the Holy Spirit."

So just who was this wonderful man? Luke was interestingly not a Jew, but born in Syria, in Antioch, and as an adult he heard about the miracles and preaching of Christ. He traveled to Judea to find out about the man named Jesus, and once he met the Lord he was compelled to follow Him. Luke was highly educated by first century standards, and his Greek is the purest and most professional of the four evangelists. He was a physician by trade, as St. Paul notes (*Colossians 4:14*), a historian and an iconographer – indeed, it was he who painted the very first icon of the Theotokos! St. Luke was also an eyewitness of the resurrected Christ on two occasions. St. Luke also accompanied St. Paul on his second missionary journey, and was among the company of the first Christians in Greece. As a constant travel companion of St. Paul, Luke was also probably a witness to his martyrdom in Rome under the tyrannical persecution of Christians by the Emperor Nero: *"The time for my departure is near . . . only Luke is with me . . ."* (*2 Timothy 4:6, 11*) Luke wrote both his Gospel account and the Acts of the Apostles while in Rome under the direct supervision of St. Paul, and in careful conversation with the other Apostles during the time when Paul was first imprisoned there for two years. After the death of Paul (AD 67) Luke continued to preach and teach in Boiotia, central Greece, and even traveled to Egypt to ordain the second bishop of the Church which the Apostle Mark established. At the age of 84, while teaching as the bishop of the city of Thebes in Greece, St. Luke was martyred after torture by crucifixion to an olive tree.

(Continued on Page 12)



Orthodox Bookstore



Greetings from the Bookstore!

As you all know, we are now one month into the New Ecclesiastical Year of our Holy Orthodox Church and beginning the journey anew, so to speak, into the heart and mind of Jesus Christ. By contrast, our country remains embroiled in conflict often depicted on our screens as another type of heart and mind – the ever changing one of the world – punctuated by varying views or opinions on how to save it next month. Therefore, it seems only fitting at this time to feature *The Mind of the Orthodox Church*, another selection by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos in which he makes the refreshing claim: “We do not strive to save the Church, because the Church, which is the Body and Blood of Christ, does not need saviors, but we struggle to be saved as we remain in the Church.” No voting or debating necessary. Thank God!

From *The Mind of the Orthodox Church*:

“The orthodox-ecclesiastical mind is not connected with emotional states, but with real experiences and the regenerated life which is experienced in the heart. This is attained through deep and complete repentance, through the prayer of the nous in the heart.” For your copy, and to explore the wider range of topics covered in the book, please call Karen for an appointment to make a purchase.

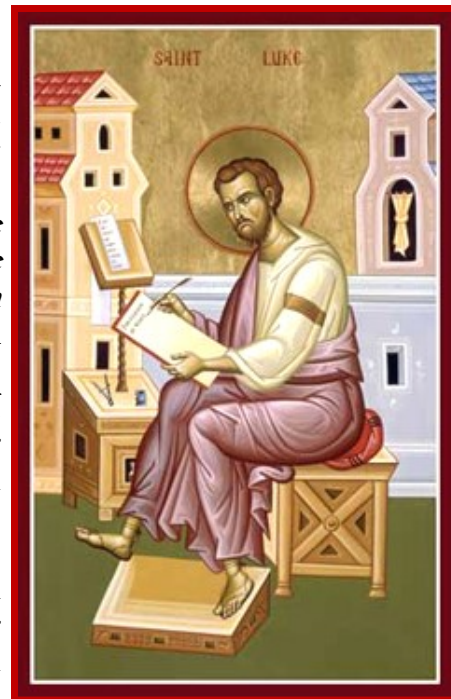
Serving you with Love in Christ, Paraskevi Santamaria, Bookstore Director

From Father Seraphim (Continued from Page 12)

What lesson can we take from this tireless preacher of the Good News of Jesus Christ? As a professionally trained Greek physician and a cultured man of means who wrote his Gospel to a similarly wealthy Gentile-convert community, Luke shows us what he learned from St. Paul: *“Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for Whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.” (Philippians 3:8)* Our Greek Orthodox Christian community in America is similarly wealthy according to every recent religious demographic survey. St. Luke offers us a challenge in the eternal words of His Gospel which shall endure forever (*Matthew 24:35*), to be better Stewards of our material wealth, education, and earthly prosperity which the Lord has blessed us with as Orthodox Christians here in America. Perhaps we cannot match Luke’s immense love and radical dispassion, leaving everything he knew and owned to follow the Teacher from Nazareth and to tell others about Him – eventually losing his own life for the sake of Jesus Christ. We can however, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, listen attentively to this holy doctor of souls and bodies as we receive the holy words he wrote down for our salvation, which are encased in gold upon our Altar, and which we can encase and live out in the altar of our hearts.

With Love in Christ,

Father Seraphim



LIGHTING A CANDLE FOR YOU:

Your Priests are here to light a candle for you and your loved ones on a request basis. Please call Karen at the Church Office with your request. Any offering you can make during these challenging times, though not required, will be most appreciated.



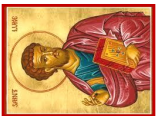
2020 Stewardship Report (as of 9/28/20)

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$446,592 (\$447,878 in 2019)
 Stewardship Gifts Received: \$385,472 (\$353,032 in 2019)
 Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$61,120 (\$94,847 in 2019)
 Stewardship Families Pledged: 392 (400 in 2019)
 Average Pledge to Date: \$1,145 (\$1,120 in 2019)
 Average Pledge Needed: \$2,552 (392 Families)

Church Account Summaries ~ August 2020

Nevada State Bank Accounts	July Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	August Ending Balance	Notes
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$23,858.10	\$101,097.43		\$10,711.92	\$54,115.96	\$60,127.65	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$5,527.68					\$5,527.68	
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$4,706.47			\$15.00		\$4,691.47	
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$253,651.44	\$4,006.00	\$6,450.00		\$63.29	\$264,044.15	
Folk Dance Group	\$17,966.00					\$17,966.00	
Hellenic Historical Society	\$3,292.94					\$3,292.94	
Designated Funds	July Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	August Ending Balance	Notes
Bookstore	\$10,596.58	\$1,506.00			\$63.29	\$12,039.29	
Ornaments	\$1,169.41					\$1,169.41	
Restricted Funds	July Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	August Ending Balance	Notes
ICON	\$140,217.76	\$100.00				\$140,317.76	
Library Account	\$1,470.77					\$1,470.77	
Giving Tree	\$0.91		\$2,000.00			\$2,000.91	
Line of Credit Reserve	\$28,000.00		\$4,000.00			\$32,000.00	
Faithtree	\$0.00	\$2,400.00	\$450.00			\$2,850.00	
Building Fund	\$25,169.26					\$25,169.26	
Landscaping	\$4.88					\$4.88	
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	\$3,041.22					\$3,041.22	
Baptismal Water Heater	\$69.24					\$69.24	
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
GOYA	\$142.36					\$142.36	
PPP Loan - W2	\$0.00					\$0.00	Transfer to GOA for payroll & associated expenses
PPP Loan - Fr John	\$0.00					\$0.00	Transfer to GOA for payroll & associated expenses
PPP Loan - Fr Seraphim	\$0.00					\$0.00	Transfer to GOA for payroll & associated expenses
Designated, Restricted, and Other Total	\$253,651.44	\$4,006.00	\$6,450.00	\$0.00	\$63.29	\$264,044.15	
Other Funds	Feb Ending Balance	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	August Ending Balance	Notes
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$70,650.45		\$8,359.47	\$1,500.00	\$9,304.43	\$68,205.49	Balance updated from January 2020

August 2020 Candles **\$3,075.00**
 August 2020 Trays **\$2,941.00**
Total August Candles & Trays \$6,016.00



OCTOBER 2020 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD



<i>Sunday</i>	<i>Monday</i>	<i>Tuesday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Thursday</i>	<i>Friday</i>	<i>Saturday</i>
				1	2	3
4 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	5	6 6:00 pm Philoptochos Board in Kokkos Hall	7 5:00 pm Church School Classes Begin	8	9	10
11 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy	12	13 6:00 pm Parish Council Meeting in Kokkos Hall	14 5:00 pm Church School	15	16	17
18 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 3:00 pm YA Zoom	19	20 St. Gerasimos of Cephalonia 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	21 5:00 pm Church School	22	23 St. Iakovos 9:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. Iakovos (James)	24
25 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 3:00 pm OFF Zoom 5:00 pm GOYA Zoom	26 St. Demetrios the Great Martyr 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy	27	28 5:00 pm Church School	29	30	31

The Desert Messenger

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

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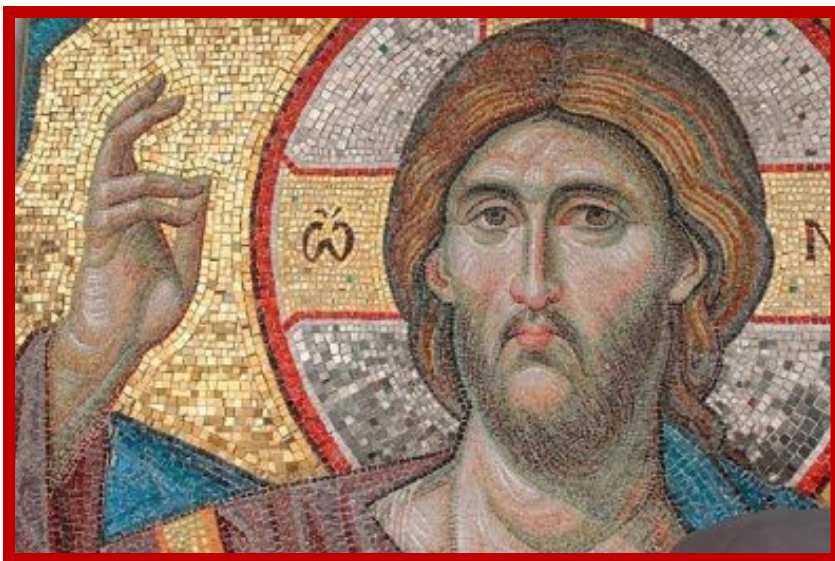
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THE DESERT MESSENGER

The Way of the Lord



*“Being asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God was coming, He answered them, ‘The Kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, ‘Lo, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ For behold, the Kingdom of God is within you.”
(Luke 17:20-21)*