

# The Desert



# Messenger

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

Volume 15, Issue 1 St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church, Las Vegas, NV

January 2017

From  
Father  
John

*“The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad,  
the desert shall rejoice and blossom.” (Isaiah 35:1)*

Beloved in Christ:

Blessings of the New Year 2017! Together with St. John the Baptist, our Parish Patron, may we desert-dwellers receive the Lord Jesus Christ in our hearts with anticipation, eagerness, joy, love and humility as we prepare to celebrate the *Feast of Holy Theophany on January 6*.

Theophany – which literally means “the manifestation of God” – completes the Feast of Our Lord’s Nativity in the Flesh: Unlike the Christian churches of the West, which celebrate the Adoration of the Magi on this date, the Orthodox celebration of Theophany commemorates the Baptism of Christ by the hands of the Forerunner in the River Jordan. St. John spent his life in the wilderness preparing for the coming of the Messiah through fasting, prayer, baptizing and calling all he encountered to “Repent!” and “Prepare the way of the Lord!” The Baptizer preached to all who went into the Jordan River that the One Who was coming after him would be mightier, and baptize *“with the Holy Spirit and with fire.” (Matthew 3:11)*

When Jesus appeared to the Forerunner and asked to be baptized, he initially resisted, but at the Lord’s word he consented: *“And when He came up out of the water, immediately he (St. John) saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove; and a Voice came from heaven, ‘You are My beloved Son; with You I am well pleased.’” (Mark 1:10-11)* At Christ’s Baptism there was a full manifestation of the Trinitarian God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. With His Baptism all those present, including the Angels and the River Jordan, were in awe by both the Lord’s Presence and His deep humility. By going down into the water, Jesus prepared the way for our “new birth,” that is, our union with Him through the Holy Mystery of Baptism. And through His Baptism the nature of the water was sanctified, becoming a vessel of healing and grace.

Holy Theophany is the “Feast of Lights” – of life, illumination, revelation and regeneration – and should be approached as an opportunity for us Orthodox Christians to renew our own Baptism: As such, an integral part of this Feast is the *Great Blessing of the Water* that immediately follows the Divine Liturgy. The petitions of the priest mirror those of the Baptismal service, as he prays “that this water may be sanctified by the manifestation, power and effective indwelling of the Holy Spirit . . . that the purifying virtue of the Trinity, which is above all being, will come upon these waters . . . that there may be sent upon them the grace of redemption, the blessing of the Jordan . . . and that this water may become a source of immortality.”

Following the Great Blessing, the entire Church and all those present are sprinkled with the Holy Water, and the faithful are invited to take a bottle home: Those who are Baptized may take a sip of the Holy Water, when fasted, for spiritual strength and renewal; it is also customary to invite the priest to our home during this season to offer special prayers and sprinkle our family members and dwelling with Holy Water, for Divine grace and protection. (Please see Page 4 for the House Blessing Request Form.)

Let us make a genuine effort to remain close to Christ and His Church this coming year, allowing Him to renew us by the Holy Mysteries, that we may rejoice and blossom continuously!

With much love in Christ,

**WORSHIP SCHEDULE**

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

Sunday, January 1/*The Circumcision of Our Lord Jesus Christ/St. Basil the Great/Sunday before Theophany*

*9:00 am Orthros*

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

Orthros: Tone Three

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): Luke 24:36-53

Epistle: Colossians 2:8-12

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

Wednesday, January 4/*Eve of Theophany (Observed)*

*6:00 pm Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great & Great Blessing of Water*

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27

Gospel: Luke 3:1-18

Thursday, January 5/*Eve of Theophany (Strict Fast)*

*Liturgy on the preceding evening*

Friday, January 6/*Holy Theophany of Our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ*

*8:00 am Orthros*

*9:00 am Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom & Great Blessing of Water*

Epistle: Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7

Gospel: Matthew 3:13-17

*6:00 pm Great Vespers of St. John the Baptist*

Saturday, January 7/*Synaxis of St. John the Baptist: Our Parish Feast Day*

*8:00 am Orthros*

*9:00 am Divine Liturgy*

Epistle: Acts 19:1-8

Gospel: John 1:29-34

Sunday, January 8/*Sunday after Theophany*

Orthros: Tone Four

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

Epistle: Ephesians 4:7-13

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17

*Parish Council Oath of Office*

*Cutting of the Community Vasilopita*

*Parish Name Day Luncheon*

Sunday, January 15/*12th Sunday of Luke/The Ten Lepers/St. Paul of Thebes*

*Youth Choir Chants*

Orthros: Tone Five (First Plagal)

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:11-18

Epistle: Colossians 3:4-11

Gospel: Luke 17:12-19

Tuesday, January 17/*St. Anthony the Great*

*8:00 am Orthros*

*9:00 am Divine Liturgy*

Epistle: Hebrews 13:17-21

Gospel: Luke 6:17-23

Wednesday, January 18/*Ss. Athanasios and Cyril, Patriarchs of Alexandria*

*8:00 am Orthros*

*9:00 am Divine Liturgy*

Epistle: Hebrews 13:7-16

Gospel: Matthew 5:14-19

Sunday, January 22/*15th Sunday of Luke/Zaccheos Sunday/Apostle Timothy of the 70*

Orthros: Tone Six (Second Plagal)

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 20:19-31

Epistle: 1 Timothy 4:9-15

Gospel: Luke 19:1-10

Wednesday, January 25/*St. Gregory the Theologian*

*8:00 am Orthros*

*9:00 am Divine Liturgy*

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

Gospel: John 10:9-16

Sunday, January 29/*Sunday of the Canaanite*

Orthros: Tone Seven (Grave)

Resurrection Gospel (Orthros): John 21:1-14

Epistle: 2 Corinthians 6:16-18; 7:1

Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28

Monday, January 30/*The Three Holy Hierarchs: Ss. Basil, Gregory, and John Chrysostom*

*8:00 am Orthros*

*9:00 am Divine Liturgy*

Epistle: Hebrews 13:7-16

Gospel: Matthew 5:14-19

*"For waters shall break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert." (Isaiah 35:6)*

***SUNDAY SCHEDULE***

***JANUARY 1 - HAPPY NEW YEAR!***

Ushers: Entire Parish Council  
No Fellowship

***JANUARY 8 - COMMUNITY VASILOPITA & NAME DAY LUNCHEON***

Ushers: Entire Parish Council (Oath of Office & Election of Officers)  
Memorials: Bill Constantine (40 days); Dimitri Panagopoulos (40 days); Nick Exarhos (1 year);  
and Concetta Stella Michaelides  
Fellowship: St. John the Baptist Name Day Luncheon

***JANUARY 15***

Ushers: Bessie Stavropoulos, Gus Flangas, Mike Beeler, Demetrious Asim, Stacy Mavrantonis, Skip Ruffner  
Fellowship: The Raptis Family, in honor of Father Dean's Birthday

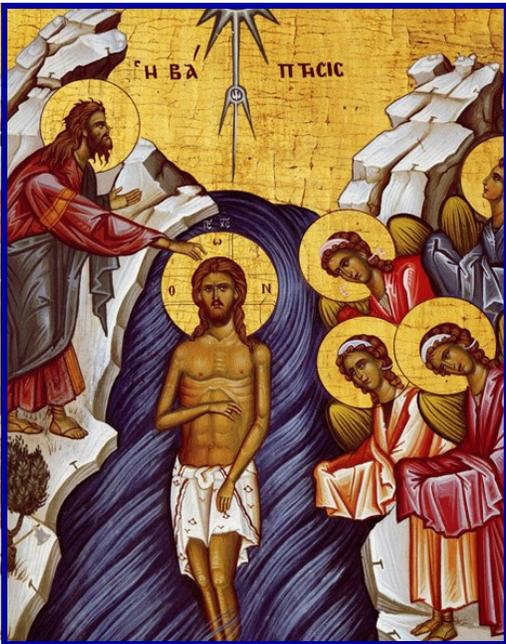
***JANUARY 22***

Ushers: John Koutsulis, Pete Tsolis, Mark Karris, Skip Ruffner, George Bochanis, Justina Szukiewicz  
Fellowship: Forerunners - the Seniors of St. John the Baptist

***JANUARY 29***

Ushers: Demetrious Asim, Stacy Mavrantonis, Gus Flangas, John Koutsulis, Pete Tsolis, Kouli Pouridis  
Fellowship: Daughters of Penelope

Please join us as we celebrate our Parish Feast Day



***St. John the Baptist  
Name Day Luncheon***  
***Sunday, January 8, 2017***

***Following Divine Liturgy &  
the Vasilopita Cutting***

***Panos Hall***

***Menu: Greek Salad, Chicken, Rice Pilaf,  
Green Beans, Lokaniko,  
Dessert & Coffee ~ Cash Bar***

***\$15 per Person ~ Benefits St. John the Baptist Church Operations***

***Purchase your tickets on Sundays from Parish Council Members  
and on Weekdays from Karen at the Church Office***

**Parish  
Council  
Report**

Happy New Year! As a Church, we have been truly blessed this past year and we hope to do even better going forward into the New Year. We would like to thank Dean Chomakos, John Fotopoulos and John Karas for their service on the Parish Council. Their work on behalf of the Church has been tremendous and we are truly grateful for their efforts and contributions. We would also like to congratulate Justina Szukiewicz, Mike Beeler and Mark Karris on their election to the Parish Council, as well as George Bochanis, Demetrious Asim and John Koutsulis on their reelection. We all look forward to working hard together in the coming year to make things better in the Community. We would also like to thank the Tzelalis Family for putting on the wonderful luncheon recently after Church; their fasolada was outstanding.

As many of you are aware, there are many things needing attention on the grounds of the Church. At the last Parish Council Meeting, we set forth several priorities for the next several months in getting things fixed: This includes making sure the roof of the Church is in good order and repair before starting the Iconography, refinishing and resurfacing the floor in Panos Hall, repairing and resurfacing the parking lots, repairing the stucco and painting in certain areas around the Fountain Courtyard, and getting the kitchen into pristine condition. In accomplishing these tasks, we are very fortunate to have Ramona Tasios volunteering her time and talents to manage the facilities and oversee the work, Eddie Howard volunteering his time and talents to repair things, and Constantin Petriuc working as our maintenance engineer. Between the three of them, a tremendous amount of work is getting accomplished and our grounds are improving immensely. We really appreciate their efforts.

We urge you all to attend and help celebrate our *St. John the Baptist Name Day Luncheon on Sunday, January 8*, right after Liturgy and the Vasilopita Cutting. Also, we have selected the dates for the *2017 Greek Food Festival: September 15 - 17*. Please mark your calendars and help us with your time, talents and treasures to make the 2017 Festival the best ever. The Iconography is in full gear and should start soon. Lastly, I urge everyone to get involved with the Church's efforts to help the homeless in Clark County. Father Matthew has been organizing members of our Church to donate their time serving meals at the Las Vegas Rescue Mission. This is a beautiful undertaking and we urge you all to help out. We are sponsoring food drives during the holidays, so again, please help out.

As we go into the New Year, we cannot over-emphasize the importance of Stewardship. The perpetual shortfall in our Stewardship continually and significantly limits what our Church can do going forward in the way of capital improvements, greater funding for our ministries, maintaining and repairing our facilities and fulfilling our visions for the future. This absolutely has to be the year where we get Stewardship fully on track and start realizing our goals. Please step up with your contributions. Everyone has to get behind this effort.

In closing and as usual, we want to again thank the various Church ministries and organizations, and the many individuals for all the work they do and have done to help us secure the future of the Church for ourselves and most importantly, our children. It clearly takes a lot of work from the entire community to maintain our Church. Please get involved as we move forward to make our Church better. May God Bless.

Gus Flangas, Parish Council President

**REQUEST FOR HOUSE OR BUSINESS BLESSING**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ We will call you to schedule!

*For the blessing, please have bowl of bottled water, a sprig of basil or rosemary, an icon and votive candle.*

**Philoptochos  
News**

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him,  
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”  
(Romans 15:13)



Dear Respected Fathers, Parish Council Members, Lovely Ladies of the Philoptochos and Wonderful Members of the St. John the Baptist Parish,

Happy New Year! On behalf of all the respective chairs of the many events and projects that took place during December for the Feast of the Nativity, we thank everyone for their participation and patronage that made all of these overwhelmingly successful.

- **Christmas Pastry Sale:** We sold every single package, made more and sold those! Thank you to Amanda Flangas, Tammy Flangas and Geri Kypreos for all your hard work.
- **Christmas Card:** The gorgeous card sent Blessings of the Nativity to all the members of the Church. Thank you to Tami Stefanatos, Bessie Chachas, Bessie Stavropoulos, Stella Myers, Andrea Takas, our past chair, and Bill Bruninga, our photographer, for the sales, creation and mailing of this exquisite greeting.
- **Christmas Party:** This was a lovely event with music, dancing and a touching new twist on a longstanding tradition of giving. Thank you to Jennifer Chanos, Cheryl Pandelis, Vicky Palivos and Dora Hart for an elegant event.

January will begin as with our tradition of the **Cutting of the Vasilopita** in Church following the Divine Liturgy. It will be a week later, **on Sunday, January 8.** This year everyone will receive a piece of the Vasilopita as they exit the Church. Many thanks to Dora Hart for providing the delicious Vasilopites.



The first **General Meeting** of Philoptochos will be on **Tuesday, January 10 at 6:30 pm** in the Kokkos Hall. Please join us for light refreshments as we review our past projects, and discuss future events.



We have a fun, off-property opportunity to volunteer at “Babies and Booties,” a baby shower for Active Duty military and their spouses. This activity is on **Saturday, January 14** and we will be asking for a firm commitment if you are able to attend. Please contact Geri Kypreos for more information.

Las Vegas has always had a transient population: Some come and go so quickly, while many of us plant our roots for a lifetime. One thing that is unique about our Philoptochos Chapter is the camaraderie and loving way in which we all join together: Some offer their ideas and talents for a short time, while others have made long-standing friendships and participated over the years in our traditional projects, events and faith-based activities. Whether you are here for the short or long haul, women of all ages, talents and interests can find a place in the Panagia Chapter of Philoptochos.

In January we begin our Membership Year: Alexia Chandrinos, Membership Chair, will be sending out forms for women to complete and return. We invite all women to attend our annual **Membership Tea on Sunday, January 22** in Panos Hall following the Divine Liturgy. This year we invite you to bring your favorite tea cup and saucer; take this opportunity to wear a fun hat and gloves if you have them.

Looking into February: Get your filo and feta ready! Start looking for your favorite recipe for the annual **Las Vegas Best Spanakopita Contest on Super Bowl Sunday, February 5, following Divine Liturgy.** New this year: There is **no entry fee** to compete. We do need to have a sign up form so we know how many competitors to expect. More information will appear in the *Weekly Bulletin*.

Wishing you joy, love, peace and energy for the New Year.

Your Sister in Christ, Bernadette Anthony, Philoptochos President

## Stewardship and Community Outreach

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Glory to God for all things! As we enter the new calendar year let us take a moment to reflect on our commitment to one another and the Lord's Church. In *Luke 12:16-19* the Lord tells us the following parable: *"The land of a rich man brought forth plentifully; and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' And he said, 'I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones; and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul you have ample goods laid up for many years; take your ease, eat, drink, be merry.'"*

This parable describes a lot of people in our country and says a lot about our American culture in general. This man had achieved what we consider to be the "American Dream": He worked hard, applied his God-given time, talents and treasures to accumulate great wealth and then put it into a "new larger barn" so he could kick back and enjoy the good life for his remaining years. While this man was rich by his own standards, was he rich by God's standards? Of course not, for the Lord said, *"Fool! This very night your soul is required of you and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?" So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."* (*Luke 12:20-21*)



This man had a great deal of wealth and he stored it all up for himself. He clearly did not understand that everything he had belongs to God and that he was supposed to glorify God with everything he had, including his wealth. He should have used his time, talents and treasures to not only take care of himself and his immediate needs, but also to help those in need, to visit and comfort the sick, and visit those in prison. This was the mission God gave him with his wealth, and he failed the mission! Had he fulfilled his mission, the Lord would have said to him, *"Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."* (*Matthew 25:34*)

Another way of understanding this parable is in terms of *our mission* – as individual Orthodox Christians and as a Parish. As individuals, we may do a lot of reading of the Scriptures and the Church Fathers to deepen our understanding of the Faith, we may have a beautiful collection of iconography, or do wonderful philanthropic works with the gifts the Lord has given us. We may even tithe to our Parish and give to other charities to support those in need. We may be those who comfort the downtrodden, those who uplift their suffering. We may be among those starting new ministries, bringing the Orthodox Faith to others, or spending long hours working in our Parish to raise funds, teach, lead or administer. If we do any one or more of the above things, we would have reason to tell ourselves we did a good job.

As a Parish, we may have some great ministries and great people. We may have a wonderful display of the history surrounding the Church that was founded many decades ago. We may have beautiful and new Iconography or have wonderful Outreach programs to support and care for those in the community. We may be a Parish that has great leadership, a heavenly choir that draws people to the Church. We may even be a Parish where we take care of one another, marry our children to others in our Parish. As a Parish, if we have one or more of these characteristics, we would have every reason tell ourselves we did a good job.

Therein lies the problem: When, as individual Christians or as a Parish, we get to the point of being satisfied with our situation or with what we have accomplished, and we feel we are done with all the hard work, we become like the rich man in the parable. When we feel we can now "eat, drink and be merry" and take it easy, we in essence believe that our mission is complete. But is it?

As with the Lord, our mission is never complete. No matter how many good works we do with faith and love for the Lord, it is never enough. I pray that when the Lord calls on each of us to do certain works, or our Parish leaders reach out to us with needs for the Church, or we see a need within our Parish or the greater community . . . we will answer the Lord's call, saying, *"Here am I! Send me."* (*Isaiah 6:8*)

In Christ, John G. Karas, Stewardship Committee Member

*"They shall see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God." (Isaiah 35:2)*

## *From Father Matthew*

January marks the beginning of the new calendar year. And as happens every four years, it is also the start of a new presidential term. On January 20, 2017 President-Elect Donald Trump will be sworn into the office of the President of the United States of America with much pomp and circumstance. He will strive to guide this great nation through the next four years of uncertainty.



Regardless of your political viewpoint, we can all agree that this is a major transition, from the presidency of Barack Obama to that of Donald Trump. For some it is a cry of anguish, for others a sigh of relief. However I do not wish to enter the political debate. Rather I would like to ask a question: What are we, as Orthodox Christians, to do? How do we play our small part in the direction of this nation?

As followers of Christ, we must first and foremost ask for God's intercession at all times. We must remember that our Lord is not distant. He is *not* far away in the heavens, watching things play out in His creation, leaving us to our own devices. There are some who believe that God created the world and then just left us to ourselves – that the only ones who can fix anything are we humans, because God is basically absent. This is not our Faith! As we learn from our Lord's Incarnation, He is very much active in our lives and in our world. His Holy Spirit dwells in each one of us (to varying degrees) and works in and through us.

Our central role as Christians is simple: Pray. God hears our supplication, He responds to our prayers. And His effect upon the political realm is *far greater* than anything we can accomplish with our own actions. (This does not mean that we abstain from action; however the starting point is always fervent prayer.) In the Divine Liturgy we pray for our president and civic leaders on three separate occasions. This means that we have been praying for President Obama for the last eight years, and that on January 20 we will begin praying for President Trump for the next four years. How many of us can pray for both of these presidents in sincerity? Yet this is the example that our Church lays before us. We *must* pray for our civic leaders. No matter who they are, they are our leaders and they need our prayers – they need God to work in and through them more fully.

So what does this mean for our elected leaders? It means that God knows who the president is, and He works through that president – to varying degrees – whether he (or she) is liberal, conservative, reactionary, good, or bad. While we would not say that God has “ordained” the president, we do believe that He has allowed for or permitted him. Through God *“all things work together for good,” (Romans 8:28)*. And if we have a bad president, then all the more we need to pray that God softens his heart and grants him wisdom from on high.

So my last question is the opposite: What is *NOT* our role in political life? It is not our role to be ruled by the passions. *“Avoid foolish . . . disputes, knowing that they generate strife.” (2 Timothy 2:23)* What are we doing when we debate with coworkers or get into Facebook arguments or when we watch the TV news and become agitated, angry, frustrated, or depressed? What does it accomplish to be wrapped up in political debate and opinion? Too often we imagine we have control over things, that our political views can somehow be exerted upon others with great effect. We expend our energy trying to convert people to our views, plying at their ears and eyes. Yet God alone can work in their hearts. If we focus our energy on prayer and keep away from arguments, we will have far greater effect upon others, including our civic leaders and our president.

As we approach another presidential inauguration, let us remember to keep our leaders in prayer, whether we like them or not! And may God guide, protect, and grant peace to our president – the current one and the next!

*Father Matthew*

Your Sponsorship is encouraged . . . for a name day, birthday, anniversary or in memory of a loved one: \$100 - The Desert Messenger, \$50 - Weekly Bulletin.

## Youth and Family Ministries

### Church School

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

I hope everyone is enjoying the wonderful Christmas holiday with family. I know everyone enjoyed the Christmas Pageant: The kids had a great time and loved singing the beautiful songs for the Christmas season. Thank you to everyone that supported this annual event – we really appreciate it.

Please continue to register your children for Church School: The teachers will continue to hand out a blank registration form to your child if we do not have one on record. Please help us out by filling out the form so we can have important information on the children you have entrusted to us. The form can always be dropped off with Karen during the week.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

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



### Youth Choir News



Happy New Year! May 2017 bring all of us good health and many blessings from our Lord!

The Youth Choir will chant the Divine Liturgy on *Sunday, January 15* – please be on time at *9:40 am* in the front pew. Let us all begin the New Year being on time with many voices, not just a few. We are open for new singers and for those who wish to learn – come join our ranks!

With Love in Christ, Presvytera Maria



### GOYA ~ For Teenagers

This month GOYA will have two events. We will have our *Sunday Night Meeting on Sunday, January 15, 5:00-7:00 pm*. Come for lots of games, some dinner, and a discussion!

Then it is time to head to the snow! We will have a *Snow Day on Saturday, January 21*. Join us for sledding and other activities in Lee Meadows on Mt. Charleston! Bring your sleds, snacks, hot cocoa and camera. We are praying for lots of snow. But snow or no snow, we will still have a lot of fun on the mountain! We will meet at *10:00 am SHARP* at the Jack in the Box at Durango and 95 (7741 N. El Capitan Way, Las Vegas, NV 89143). See you there!

In Christ, Kouli Pouridis and June Likourinou, GOYA Advisors

*At your Baptism in the Jordan River, O Christ, the worship due to the Holy Trinity was made manifest.*

## Orthodox Family Fellowship

January is snow time! This month we will have a *Snow Day on Saturday, January 21*. Join us for sledding and other activities in Lee Meadows on Mt. Charleston! Bring your sleds, snacks, hot cocoa and camera. We are praying for lots of snow. But snow or no snow, we are still going to have a lot of fun on the mountain! We will meet at **10:00 am SHARP** at the Jack in the Box at Durango and 95 (7741 N. El Capitan Way, Las Vegas, NV 89143). See you there!

In Christ, Elaine Bucy and Timi Zondiros, OFF Advisors

## Greek Folk Dance

Wishing you all a Blessed New Year!

THANK YOU to all that invited us to your homes for Christmas Caroling and to the many that gave donations. A *special thank you* to the Bochanis Family and the Baldwin Family for hosting us each night – we are quite the crowd! We are extremely grateful to all for your generosity and hospitality.

THANK YOU to the Tzelalis Family – Steve, Vaso and Antonia, for hosting our Fasolada Luncheon on December 18. The fasolada and fresh baked bread were delicious and not a drop was left! Your continued love and support of this ministry is much appreciated!

Our *Annual FDF Preview Luncheon* will be held on *Sunday, February 12*, following Liturgy in Panos Hall. Come see our groups perform their competition rounds from the regions of Thrace, Samos, Naxos and Epirus, as well as a special performance by our little non-competitive dancers!

As we turn the corner into the New Year, we ask for full attendance at dance practices as competition will be only six weeks away!

Blessings for a Happy, Healthy and Prosperous 2017!

The Folk Dance Board [stjohngreekdance@gmail.com](mailto:stjohngreekdance@gmail.com)

## Moms & Tots



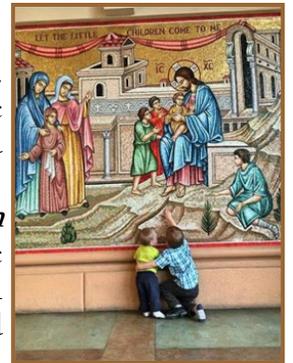
Happy New Year! We are excited for our two January events. First, our regular meeting time has changed. Based on the feedback we received, we decided to move our morning meetings to the second Tuesday of every month.

Please join us this month on *Tuesday, January 10 from 10:30 am to noon*. If you are a mom of a young child who is in school at this time, you are welcome to join us by yourself! We would love to be a support to you as well. You will find us in Kokkos Hall for a discussion with one of our priests, followed by snacks and fellowship.

Later in the month, we are hosting a different kind of event. We have made a reservation for our first Moms Night Out! Please join us on *Friday, January 27 at 7:30 pm* for dinner at Brio Tuscan Grille in Town Square. Each person will be responsible for paying their own bill. We need you to RSVP for this event, so that we can be sure to have an adequate table. You can do so by texting Presvytera Annie at (702) 686-3899.

We pray that our St. John Community of moms and little ones will grow in the coming year.

In Christ, Presvytera Annie Swehla and Cassie Bieker



## Greek Language Program

The kids had a fun Christmas party last month. We will resume classes on *Wednesday, January 11*.

I have been approached by a gentleman who is interested in teaching a weekly adult conversational Greek class, minus the grammar. If you are interested, please contact me at (702) 249-4740. I need to know if there is interest for this class as well as a consensus on the preferred day and time.

Paula Kelesis, Greek School Director

## Adult and Young Adult Ministries

### *Young Adults*

Thank you, Pete, for hosting a wonderful White Elephant Party, at your home. It was a great time!

Join us this month as we celebrate the New Year on *Sunday, January 29 at 7:00 pm* at Dean and Tammy Chomakos' Home (and home of George and Dino too) for a wonderful dinner gathering, fellowship and some fun!

In Christ, Nicholas Asim and Anthony Kunard, YA Advisors

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

Happy New Year! Kali Parea is coming together to celebrate our Parish Name Day at *the Luncheon on Sunday, January 8* following Liturgy in Panos Hall. The menu looks great: Greek Salad, Chicken, Rice Pilaf, Green Beans, Lokaniko and Dessert! We have reserved a table for Kali Parea, and tickets are \$15 per person. Contact Demetri or Joy for ticket information at [KaliParea@outlook.com](mailto:KaliParea@outlook.com).

Joy Wolfenbarger and Demetrious Asim, Kali Parea Advisors

### *Mr. & Mrs. - A Couples Fellowship*



Thank you Dean and Tammy Chomakos for hosting the December M&Ms dinner. It was delicious!

For the New Year, *Bill & Erin Bruninga are hosting on Saturday, January 14 at 6:00 pm*. Please bring a dish to share and your significant other. RSVP with Bill, Erin, or Father Matthew.

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

### *Forerunners - The Seniors of St. John the Baptist*

Santa Claus made a surprising appearance at our Christmas Party. Not only did Santa show up but stayed with us, gave out presents to all, and enjoyed our Christmas meal as well. Thanks to Atria Senior Living for their donation of our Christmas meal. If you were there, and you did not recognize Santa, it was our own St. Nick - Nick Katris. Thank you all for coming dressed in very cheery Christmas colors and lots of bling. We had so many great raffle prizes, and therefore ran late showing our Christmas movie.

January 2017 is around the corner, and time to renew our membership dues to the Forerunners. Also there will be a new schedule to our Luncheons every month. We will now be meeting on each second Tuesday of the month. Our January Luncheon will take place on *Tuesday, January 10*.

We thank Marie and Gary for chairing The Forerunners these past six years. As they do travel back East each year during the summer months, they are looking for someone to take over the reins. We have so many talented Seniors in our parish, and we sincerely hope that one of you will step up to the plate and take over this super group of people with the same compassion, care and love that Marie and Gary have shown us.

We send our prayers and good wishes to all our homebound seniors, and we thank our Lord for all the blessings that are bestowed upon us. Birthday Wishes go out to Tina Zoumboulis for her very, very special Birthday.

In closing, through every moment of this Christmas Holiday and every day of the New Year, may the Good Lord bring you all Peace, Good Health, and Happiness.

Victoria Xikis for the Forerunners

*Lord, bless with Your goodness the crowning of the year. (St. Basil the Great)*

## Our Community Registry

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

Efstathia (Arya), daughter of Timothy Manning and Chanelle Smothers, on December 10, 2016. Godparent: Christina Smothers.

### *Chrismation*

Kiriaki (Shannon) Markakis on November 27, 2016.

Sponsor: Kiriaki Markakis.

### *Marriage: Na Zisete!*

Robert Paisios Pursell and Mary Loire on December 10, 2016.

Koumbara: Justina Szukiewicz.

### *Fallen Asleep in the Lord: Eternal Memory!*

George John Arvanites on December 7, 2016. Funeral on December 13.

Nick Karitsiotis on December 16, 2016. Funeral on December 23.

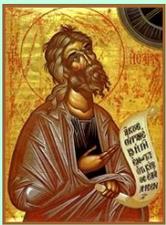
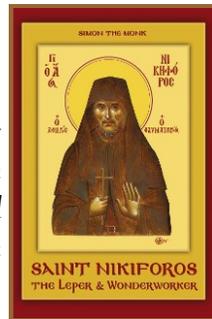
## Orthodox Bookstore

Greetings of the New Year from the Bookstore!

This month we are featuring a new publication by the Greek Orthodox Monastery of the Theotokos, The Life Giving Spring in Dunlap, CA. *Saint Nikiforos, the Leper and Wonderworker* is the first book in English recounting the Saint's exemplary life and many miracles, and is supplemented with numerous photographs and icons.

"My children, do you pray? And how do you pray? Pray with the Jesus Prayer, 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.' This is how you should pray. This is the right way." (Saint Nikiforos)

ICXC NIKA, Constantine Frangakis, Bookstore Director



"And a highway shall be there,  
and it shall be called the Holy Way;  
the unclean shall not pass over it,  
and fools shall not err therein."  
(Isaiah 35:8)

"I know My own and My own know Me."  
(John 10:14)

Please prayerfully fill out and return your  
2017 Stewardship Pledge Card.



## ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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

Rev. Father John Hondros  
fjohn@vegasgreekorthodox.com

Rev. Father Matthew Swehla  
frmattthew@vegasgreekorthodox.com

Karen Rawlinson  
Administrative Assistant

Rebekah Black  
Bookkeeper

Mara Braun  
Catering & Events

### *Office Hours*

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

Telephone: (702) 221-8245  
Fax: (702) 221-9167

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: Alex & Eric Szukiewicz

### **GOYA:**

Kouli Pouridis & June Likourinou

Orthodox Family Fellowship:  
Elaine Bucy & Politimi Zondiros

### **Moms & Tots:**

Presv. Annie Swehla & Cassie Bieker

### **Young Adults:**

Nicholas Asim & Anthony Kunard

### **Greek Folk Dance:**

Sia Dalacas

Greek School: Paula Kelesis

### **Mr. & Mrs.:**

Fr. John, Fr. Matthew & Presvyteres

Kali Parea: Demetri Asim &  
Joy Wolfenbarger

Adult Basketball: George Chomakos

Forerunners: Marie & Gary Setian

Orthodox Bookstore:  
Constantine Frangakis

Bill Andrews Library: Susan Stamis

Greek Food Festival: Gus Flangas

Hellenic Historical Society:  
Cheryl Pandelis and Susan Stamis

Photography: Bill Bruninga

### Notes from the Choir Loft



Happy New Year! Thank You to the Choir members for offering your voices for both Christmas Eve and Christmas Day Liturgies – we look forward to your beautiful singing! We hope to continue to gain new Choir members this year. We strongly encourage all Youth Choir members to join us every Sunday in the Choir Loft.

Please note that the Youth Choir will be singing on January 15. No rehearsals are scheduled for the month of January. If you need any assistance with the music, please let me know and we can arrange a time!

Athena Mertes, Director

*“And the ransomed of the Lord shall return,  
and come to Zion with singing;  
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads.”  
(Isaiah 35:10)*

Αρχιμηνιά κι αρχιχρονιά  
ψηλή μου δεντρολιβανιά,  
κι αρχή - κι αρχή καλός μας χρόνος,  
εκκλησιά - εκκλησιά με τ' άγιο θρόνο.

Αρχή που βγήκε ο Χριστός  
άγιος και πνευματικός,  
στη γη - στη γη να περπατήσει  
και να μας - και να μας καλοκαρδίσει.

Άγιος Βασίλης έρχεται  
και δεν μας καταδέχεται  
από - από την Καισαρεία  
είσαι αρχό - είσαι αρχόντισσα, κυρία.

Βαστάει εικόνα και χαρτί  
με το Χριστό το λυτρωτή,  
χαρτί - χαρτί και καλαμάρι,  
δες και με - δες και με το παλικάρι.

# SAVE THE DATE!

## Saturday, February 11

## Panos Hall

# GLENDI with LIVE music featuring musicians from Greece!

More details  
to come...





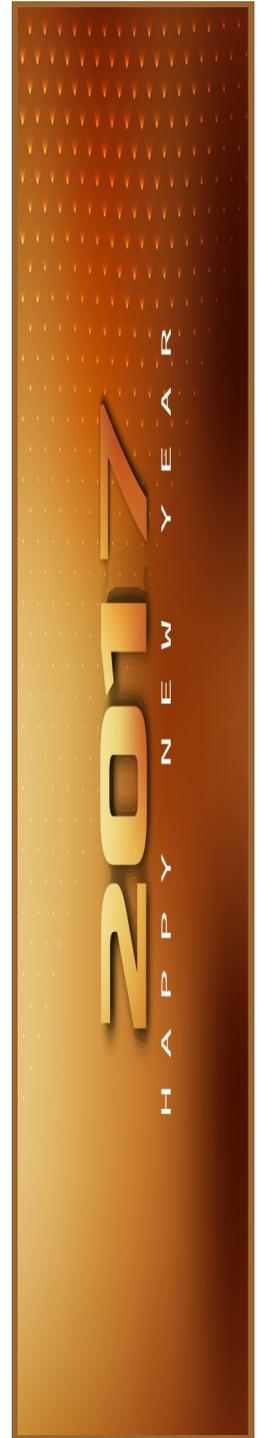
Are you ready to get that favorite recipe for  
Spanakopita out?

The 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Las Vegas Best Contest will be all about  
the Feta and the Phyllo!

Who will come out with the bragging rights for the  
best Spanakopita in Las Vegas? Whether you are a  
triangle person, a round pan or square pan baker – all  
are welcome.

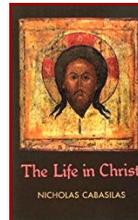
Date of the throw down –  
Super Bowl Sunday, February 5,  
following Divine Liturgy in Panos Hall.

Details will be available every Sunday in January or  
Text or call Melissa Fleetwood at 707-367-5807  
to enter.



*Adult Study with Father John:  
“St. Paul’s Letters to the  
Corinthians”*

*Resumes Wednesday, January 11  
Meets weekly 7:00 - 8:30 pm in Kokkos Hall  
Bring your Bible  
(RSV preferred - Available in the Bookstore)*



*Thursday  
Morning Study  
with Father Matthew:  
The Life in Christ,  
by St. Nicholas Cabasilas*

*Resumes January 12 at 10:30 am  
Meets weekly in the Library*

# LOVING GOD AND ONE ANOTHER: STEWARDSHIP 2016

## 2016 Stewardship Report (as of 12/20/16)

Stewardship Gifts Pledged: \$396,958 (\$377,637 total in 2015)

Stewardship Gifts Received: \$366,374

Unfulfilled Pledge Balance: \$30,583

Stewardship Families Pledged: 438 (437 total in 2015)

Average Pledge: \$906\* (\$864 in 2015)

Average needed based on current Pledged Stewards to pay basic bills: \$2,008\*\*

\* Every month this number decreases as the year progresses

\*\* To cover basic expenses of \$879,860 (excluding Food Festival, Church Fundraisers, and C&E)

### A Note from the Treasurer

In order to apply your donations accurately, when writing checks please indicate on the memo line if it is for Stewardship, candles, etc. This will greatly help in the accounting department. If you do ever find any errors with how your funds have been designated, please call the Church Office.

### Church Account Summaries - November 2016

Nevada State Bank Accounts	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
General Operating Account (GOA)	\$25,575.97	\$28,224.56	\$26,961.41	\$23,164.26	\$41,637.54	\$15,960.14	
Community and Education (C&E)	\$11,379.04	\$7,200.00		\$9,270.47	\$1,908.97	\$7,399.60	
Greek Food Festival (GFF)	\$116,620.48	\$6,579.19	\$300.00	\$25,432.93	\$66,676.15	\$31,390.59	65K Transfer to Building Fund
Designated, Restricted & Other (DR&O)	\$331,250.46	\$1,500.00	\$66,101.00		\$76,356.22	\$322,495.24	\$73615.85 paid for Phase III Iconography
Folk Dance Group	\$11,995.20	\$6,264.00	\$2,248.00	\$1,405.61	\$738.47	\$18,363.12	
Mortgage Account	\$57,300.62			\$5,201.14		\$52,099.48	
Designated Funds	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Bookstore	\$2,690.54		\$1,101.00		\$614.91	\$3,176.63	
Ornaments	\$1,077.41					\$1,077.41	
Restricted Funds	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
ICON	\$320,582.05	\$1,500.00			\$73,615.85	\$248,466.20	\$73615.85 paid for Phase III Iconography
Library Account	\$1,470.77					\$1,470.77	Account owed \$21,000. Funds used to make payroll and pay bills in 2015
Giving Tree	\$450.91					\$450.91	
Building Fund	\$1,847.85		\$65,000.00		\$2,125.46	\$64,722.39	\$2125.46 to GOA for Expenses Covered.
Youth Choir	\$1,969.82					\$1,969.82	
Church School	\$1,206.37					\$1,206.37	
Misc. D & R Deductions	-\$535.26					-\$535.26	
Altar Servers	\$440.00					\$440.00	
GOYA	\$50.00					\$50.00	
<b>Designated, Restricted, and Other Total</b>	<b>\$331,250.46</b>	<b>\$1,500.00</b>	<b>\$66,101.00</b>	<b>\$0.00</b>	<b>\$76,356.22</b>	<b>\$322,495.24</b>	
Other Funds	October	Deposits	Transfers In	Withdraws/ Checks	Transfers Out	November	Notes
	Ending Balance					Ending Balance	
Kokkos Scholarship Fund	\$55,935.34					\$55,935.34	



JANUARY 2017 ~ IN THE YEAR OF THE LORD

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

<p><b>1 Circumcision of Christ/St. Basil</b> 9:00 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p><b>2</b> 7:30 pm Adult Basketball</p>	<p><b>3</b> 6:00 pm Philoptochos Board in Library</p>	<p><b>4</b> 6:00 pm Vesperal Liturgy &amp; Great Blessing of Water <b>(Eve of Theophany Observed)</b></p>	<p><b>5 Eve of Theophany (Strict Fast)</b></p>	<p><b>6 Holy Theophany of Our Lord Jesus Christ</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy Great Blessing of Water 6:00 pm Great Vespers of St. John the Baptist</p>	<p><b>7 St. John the Baptist Our Parish Feast Day</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy</p>
<p><b>8 Sunday After Theophany</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy <b>Parish Council Oath Community Vasilopita Name Day Luncheon</b></p>	<p><b>9</b> 7:30 pm Adult Basketball</p>	<p><b>10</b> 10:30 am Moms &amp; Tots in Kokkos Hall 11:30 am Forerunners Luncheon in Panos Hall 6:30 pm Philoptochos General Mtg. in Kokkos</p>	<p><b>11</b> 4:30 pm Greek Classes 7:00 pm Adult Study</p>	<p><b>12</b> 10:30 am Bible Study</p>	<p><b>13</b> 11:30 am Orthodox Clergy Mtg. in Library</p>	<p><b>14</b> 6:00 pm Mr. and Mrs. at Bruninga Home</p>
<p><b>15</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy <b>Youth Choir Chants</b> 5:00 pm GOYA Dinner and Discussion</p>	<p><b>16</b> 7:30 pm Adult Basketball</p>	<p><b>17 St. Anthony</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 6:00 pm Parish Council</p>	<p><b>18 Ss. Athanasios and Cyril</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 4:30 pm Greek Classes 7:00 pm Adult Study</p>	<p><b>19</b> 10:30 am Bible Study</p>	<p><b>20</b></p>	<p><b>21</b> 10:00 am GOYA and OFF Snow Day at Mt. Charleston</p>
<p><b>22</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 12:30 pm Philoptochos Membership Tea in Panos Hall</p>	<p><b>23</b> 7:30 pm Adult Basketball</p>	<p><b>24</b></p>	<p><b>25 St. Gregory the Theologian</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 4:30 pm Greek Classes 7:00 pm Adult Study</p>	<p><b>26</b> 10:30 am Bible Study</p>	<p><b>27</b> 7:30 pm Moms &amp; Tots "Moms Night Out" at Brio Tuscan Grille</p>	<p><b>28</b> 10:00 am Liturgy at Lake Havasu Mission</p>
<p><b>29</b> 8:45 am Orthros 10:00 am Divine Liturgy 7:00 pm Young Adults Dinner at Chormakos'</p>	<p><b>30 Three Holy Hierarchs</b> 8:00 am Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 7:30 pm Adult Basketball</p>	<p><b>31</b></p>	<p><b>Greek Folk Dance Practice Schedule:</b> Sundays: 12:45 - 1:30 pm <i>Liondaria</i>; 1:15 - 2:45 pm <i>Delfinia &amp; Eliniki Iperifania</i> Tuesdays: 6:00 - 7:30 pm <i>Delfinia &amp; Eliniki Iperifania</i></p>			

# *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*



*“With joy you will draw water from  
the wells of salvation.  
And you will say in that day: ‘  
Give thanks to the Lord,  
call upon His Name;  
make known His deeds among the nations,  
proclaim that His Name is exalted.  
Sing praises to the Lord,  
for He has done gloriously;  
let this be known in all the earth.  
Shout, and sing for joy,  
O inhabitants of Zion,  
for great in your midst  
is the Holy One of Israel.”  
(Isaiah 12:3-6)*