



KOINONIA

NEWSLETTER OF
ST. DEMETRIOS CHURCH
North Wildwood, NJ

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VESPERS SERVICE AND RECEPTION



*St. Demetrios Vespers Service and Reception.
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a letter from

FR. MICHAEL L. PASTRIKOS
PROTOPRESBYTER



A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

The feast of the Nativity of our Lord is upon us. Soon we will gather in the Church on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day to celebrate this glorious feast. Yet, year after year we find ourselves poorly prepared for this celebration. So what I want to ask all of you is this; “ARE YOU READY FOR CHRISTMAS?”

Normally when this question is asked we can point to a number of things that would get us ready for Christmas. Do we have our tree out and decorated? Are all the decorations and lights hung? Is our shopping completed? Did we send our Christmas Cards? Did we wrap all the presents? Did we buy enough food and drinks for the Holiday? Did we invite all the family and friends? It's like in everything we do there is always the stage of level of preparation. I'm sure everyone has a list like the one mentioned above, and like a good manager we check off the list as we go on. However, this is not what I am referring to when I asked this

question? “ARE YOU READY FOR CHRISTMAS?” I am referring to the spiritual aspects of the season not the entertaining aspect. In human terms, we are so prepared in our lives to accept this Holiday season as a way to entertain ourselves with material things instead of concentrating on the real issue here. It's great to have a good time, with family over for dinner, being generous with our decorations, with the different variety of foods that your family will enjoy this Holiday season. So much to see, so much to do in just a short time. But we are forgetting something very important that this whole Holiday season is about one person, and that is celebrating the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ. Did that ever cross your mind? Remember the word Christmas - it has the name of Christ, “who is with us.” If you wanted to translate this word in Greek it means the “Birth of Christ.”

So this so called Christmas Holiday is not all about us, but it is about Christ. It is His birthday that we are celebrating and not for our own selfish convenience. When John the Baptist came into the picture he gave a message to all the people. He said “We need to get ready for the coming Messiah.” He didn't say get ready to have a good time with family and friends. John the Baptist preaching in the desert of Judea said “Repent for the Kingdom of heaven is near.” This is He who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah. A voice of one calling in the wilderness, “Prepare the way of the Lord, and make straight paths for Him.” But people today even Christians when asked “Are you ready for Christmas?”, they immediately think about the Christmas tree, the lights and decorations, the shopping for gifts, and other non essential items that have nothing to do with this serious question? This question refers to, “Are you producing the right fruit in keeping with the word repentance?” To define the word repentance, it means that we need to change our ways, in order to keep from making the same mistakes that we do year after year. We have gotten ourselves into a constant maze that we can't get out of. We think Christmas is to bring excitement and pleasure for ourselves. If you think like that then you are not

a letter from

FR. MICHAEL L. PASTRIKOS
PROTOPRESBYTER

CONTINUED...

truly celebrating Christmas in the right way. If we read in Galatians 5: “True confession and repentance leads to love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self control flowing out of our lives. “

How many of you have ever met a person who called himself a Christian and yet was mean, bitter, unhappy, and unpleasant. Have we forgotten that Christmas is not primarily about us, our family, friends, and buying presents. BUT IT IS ABOUT CHRIST? Isn't it easy to get wrapped up in the celebration that we forgot what it is we are supposed to be celebrating. We teach our children every year about Santa Claus, about presents under the tree, about reindeers and having a good time, but we forget what our true purpose of what Christmas is all about. It's about being with Jesus on His birthday. We have birthday parties for our children, our parents, our relatives and friends, and we always find the time to share the beautiful moments together. But when the Lord's birthday comes every year most of us are never there to worship Him and to thank Him for all the great things that are happening in our lives. We like receiving the great gifts and blessings that the Lord gives to us, but we never repay Him with our presence at His home on Christmas Eve and Christmas day. Yes, we can all give the excuse that the Christmas season is extremely busy, filled with much care and running around to get everything that we need in order. But often not with much thought for the One whose birth we will be celebrating on the 25th of December.

Let us use this time and date wisely, concentrating on what we are going to give to Christ on Christmas day. He doesn't want your wealth, but He would love it very much if we would come to Church with our family and give Him the greatest present meaning “You.” Let's not forget that the Advent period is a reminder that this feast is about a spiritual reality. Let us make an effort by coming to Church on Christmas Eve, or Christmas Day preparing to receive Holy Communion with your family members. This is what Christmas is all about. It's not about us. It's about Christ.

In closing, I hope and pray during this Holiday season that we make the right choices and make the right decisions to correct our old ways. Let's start our lives in Christ on the right foot, and head to a course that will truly bring us love, joy, and happiness. If we stay on this course, we will experience and see many more Christmas futures. Just remember the recipe; FASTING, PRAYER, ALMSGIVING, SACRAMENTAL LIFE, AND FORGIVENESS Your final key that will truly open the door to Paradise for everyone.

God Bless everyone, and may you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.





In memory - In honor

Please contact the church at
609-522-0152. or email
frmichaelstdemetrios@gmail.com with
your memorial information and donator



Greek Corner

WE'VE ALL HEARD THE
EXPRESSION, "THE GREEKS
HAVE A WORD FOR IT". LOOK
FOR TIDBITS IN UPCOMING
ISSUES OF THE KOINONIA
THAT WILL REVIVE YOUR
GREEK ROOTS!



directory

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***ALL SUBMISSIONS FOR THE KOINONIA MUST BE
RECEIVED BY THE 20TH OF THE MONTH PRIOR***



St. Demetrios Vespers Service and Reception





The Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Flesh **December 25**

COURTESY OF THE ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA WWW.GOARCH.ORG



INTRODUCTION

The Feast of the Nativity of Jesus is one of the most joyful days of the Orthodox Church. It ranks next to the greatest holiday, the Resurrection of Jesus. The Feast of the Birth of Jesus is also known as the “Incarnation of Christ.” This means that Jesus became a man and came into the world to save us. We also refer to this joyous feast as Christmas.

BIBLICAL STORY

The story of the Nativity of Christ is beautifully told in the Holy Scriptures. The story is found in Matthew 1:18-25 and in Luke 2:1-20. No matter how often the Birth of Jesus is told, we realize that it is an important event.

As the story is told by the Apostles, the Roman Empire was powerful. The Romans had conquered much of the then known world. Judea and Samaria, what we know today as Israel, were included in their conquests. Emperor Augustus ordered that a census be taken in all his lands. He

needed to know how many people lived in the empire so he could tax them. Everyone had to go to the town of their family’s origin to register for the census. This meant that Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem. They were descendants of King David and Bethlehem was the City of David.

Mary and Joseph lived in Nazareth and it was a great distance from Bethlehem. It was about 100 miles over very rugged roads. Moreover, Mary was expecting the baby and it was almost time for her to give birth. Bethlehem was a small town and there were many descendants of David who had come to register for the census. By the time Mary and Joseph arrived in Bethlehem there was no place for them to stay. Joseph tried very hard to find a place to sleep that evening. There was no room at the inn. Finally, Joseph found a cave-like place where they could rest. This place was used by shepherds to protect their sheep in stormy weather. It was here that Mary gave birth to Jesus. The baby was wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in the straw in the manger.

Now, that night the shepherds were out in the fields guarding their sheep. Suddenly, there was a bright light which startled the shepherds. The light was so bright that it turned the night into daylight. Of course, the shepherds were frightened. Nothing such as this had ever happened. Soon an angel appeared and calmed them. The angel said:

“Fear not for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior; which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you: You shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger” (Luke 2:11-12).

Then a larger group of angels appeared. They praised and glorified God and sang, “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men” (Luke 2:14). When the angels finished singing, they disappeared and the light began to fade. It became dimmer and dimmer until

it was dark again. The shepherds were awed. They didn’t know what to do. Finally, they decided to leave their flocks of sheep and go to Bethlehem. They decided that they wanted to see for themselves what the angels had told them. When they got to Bethlehem, they found Mary, Joseph, and the infant Jesus. They fell to their knees and adored Jesus.

Some Wise Men came from the East for they knew of the coming of Jesus. They had seen a star that told them that a new king had been born to the Jews. They followed the star and were looking for the child. At this time the governor of Judea was King Herod. He was a wicked man and was feared and hated by the people. When Herod heard about the Wise Men looking for the child, he invited them to his palace. Herod asked the Wise Men to find the child so that he, too, could worship Him. But Herod was lying. He did not want anyone to take his place. The Wise Men went on to look for Jesus. The Star led them to Jesus and Mary. When the Wise Men found Jesus, they fell to their knees and worshipped Him. They gave Jesus gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The Wise Men left but did not return to Herod. They had a dream that warned them that Herod wanted to harm Jesus. Instead, they returned to their native country by a different route.

ICON OF THE FEAST

The icon of the Nativity tells the story of Christ’s birth from the Scriptures. It also shows that all creation is taking part in Christ’s birth. The angels give thanks with their song; the heavens give the star; the Wise Men give their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The poor, humble shepherds give their praise and amazement; the earth gives the cave, and humanity gives the Virgin.

This Holy Icon is an icon with many scenes. First, it stresses the importance of the Theotokos, the Mother of Jesus. She is placed in the center and is the largest figure in the icon. In this icon, she is



The Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ in the Flesh **December 25**

CONTINUED...

kneeling with crossed arms, looking at the Christ child. The three stars, denoting her virginity before, during, and after the Nativity, are on her garments. The Christ Child, in the center of the icon, is in swaddling clothes and is lying in the manger. In the background is the dark cave where He was born. In the cave are an ox and a donkey guarding the newborn Babe. Even though the Gospels say nothing of the cave, this information is from Holy Tradition. Neither do the Gospels speak of the ox and the donkey, but all icons of the Nativity include these animals. Including the animals in the icon fulfills the prophecy of Isaiah 1:3, "The ox knows his master, and the donkey his master's crib; but Israel does not know me, and the people have not regarded me." The long ray of light from the star points directly to the cave. This ray comes from the star and travels to all parts of the world. It teaches that this bright star is an astronomical happening, and is a messenger from heaven announcing the birth of Jesus.

On the left hand side of the icon is another scene. The Wise Men, who were led by the star, are riding horses to bring their gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh to Jesus. The Wise Men are of various ages. One is without a beard. In those days, young men did not wear beards. The other Wise Man has long hair and a long beard, which indicates that he is much older. These details teach that regardless of age and appearance, the Good News was given to each and everyone.

Opposite the Wise Men is the scene with the humble shepherds. An angel proclaims the glad tidings. A young shepherd plays a reed instrument. This scene reveals that the music of the humans was added to the hymn of the angels. Across from the shepherd's scene is the heavenly choir of angels. They are giving glory to God. The angels serve two purposes in the Nativity of Christ. They give glory to God and announce the good news to all mankind.

The background shows a very rugged terrain. This is not a true representation of

the land in this area. Joseph could not find room in Bethlehem, so they went outside of Bethlehem to a cave. This rocky mountain formation only serves as a background for the event.

In the lower part of the icon are two more scenes. In the right hand corner are the two women Joseph brought to take care of the Christ child. They are bathing Him just as any baby is bathed. The humanity of Jesus is clearly shown in this setting.

Opposite the bathing of Jesus scene sits a sad and worried Joseph. He is not part of the central group the Christ Child and the Theotokos. Joseph is not the natural father. Joseph is troubled and despondent. There is an old man talking to Joseph. The old man is Satan. Satan can appear in many forms. Here he is as an old man who is tempting Joseph and disturbing him. Satan is telling Joseph that virgin birth is impossible. He's telling Joseph that he's a fool if he believes this. This story comes to us from Holy Tradition. The sad Joseph shows us not only his personal predicament but the dilemma of all mankind the difficulty of accepting that which is "beyond words or reason."

The tree, which is in the middle of the lower part of the icon, is a symbol of the Tree of Jesse. This tree refers to Isaiah 11:1-2, "But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom. The spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him." King David was often mentioned as the son of Jesse and Jesus was from the House of David.

The Holy Icon of the Nativity reminds one to praise and glorify the Birth of Christ. The celebration of Christmas each year serves to remind each and everyone of us that Christ came for you and me.

THE ORTHODOX CELEBRATION OF THE FEAST OF THE NATIVITY

As with Pascha, or Easter, the Feast of the Nativity begins with a period of preparation. It is preceded by a fast corresponding to Lent and lasting for forty days. The fast begins on November 15.

On the Sundays immediately before December 25, special commemorations emphasize the link between the Old Covenant and the New. On December 20 the Forefeast of the Nativity is commemorated, and the daily liturgical texts are directed toward the Feast itself. On Christmas Eve, services include the Great or Royal Hours, the Great Vespers, and the Liturgy of Saint Basil.

On Christmas Day the service commemorates the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, the adoration of the Shepherds, and the arrival of the Wise Men with their gifts. The service held on this day is the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom.

The days following Christmas are associated with the Theotokos and Joseph. December 26 is the Synaxis of the Mother of God, and the first Sunday after the Feast commemorates "Joseph the Betrothed." December 29 commemorates the Massacre of the Innocents, and January 1 the Circumcision of our Lord. The Nativity season concludes on December 31, but the spirit of the festival extends to the celebration of Theophany (Epiphany), the feast commemorating the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan River.





HOW DO WE PREPARE FOR CHRISTMAS

This is the time of the year when everyone starts getting ready for Christmas. The stores are packed with people buying gifts. The houses are decorated with light and trimmings, and yards become the showcase of Christmas splendor. And yet, we still don't have any idea what Christmas really means. We do not tremble when we think of Christmas, we are not always struck with the wonder of Christ's Birth. Instead, we buy gifts, and plan parties, catching a glimpse of the joy of the Feast but without a heart immersed in it's wonder.

All these preparations are a wonderful expression of emotions, but how does God want us to prepare ourselves for Christmas. We have gone away from the true essence of why we celebrate the Birth of our Lord. An essential part of preparing for Christmas involves re-arranging. Just as we arranged our homes, schedules and other aspects of our daily lives. God would like us to focus on what Christmas is all about. It's not about fun and entertainment. It's not about going to a party or a bar and getting intoxicated. It's not about going to the Department stores and buying expensive gifts for your family and friends. Christmas is about Christ.

We see the struggles that people face day to day to preserve the Christmas Spirit. Look at the unemployment rate in this country. People are loosing their jobs, their homes, and their livelihood. People are borrowing money that they can't repay. The prisons are filled with inmates that tried to beat the system and failed. Our Political system and Government are failing us. They have gotten us into so much debt, that our children and grandchildren will be suffering for years to come to pay the enormous debt that they have put us through. But what can we do as simple people to correct this problem.

The answer to this question is quite simple. We must make sacrifices and personal decisions that will correct the past mistakes.. If we put Christ "First" in our lives then, everything will work out alright and our spirit will surely be filled with love and hope. Once we cleanse ourselves and accept Christ as our true Saviour, then you will see many things that will change in our lives. As Christians, we need to get back to the basics and the old times where Christ came first in our lives. Today, we have Him on the back burner. Think of Christmas as a Holy Day, where we can make this day a special day in our lives. Let's change the usual way we celebrate Christmas, and reflect on a special receipe that I will perscribe.

If you follow this receipe this will bring happiness, peace, and love to everyone. Ther are 4 things to this receipe.

No. 1 – **FASTING:** During this period of the Nativity Fast, it is a period of preparation for our souls and bodies. It's benefits are enormous. It is a blessed tool that brings us closer to our self awarness and self evaluation. It opens our eyes to show us who we really are, and where we are heading. It is the key that will open the door to our spiritual destination.

No. 2 – **PRAYER:** By using this method, prayer is a weapon that releives all the stress, and pressures of this world. Prayer gives us the inner spiritual strength to battle the problems that we face daily. Prayer is a vessel of communication that links us to God and others. And it also brings peace to our souls and minds.

No. 3: – **FORGIVENESS:** This is the weapon that beats Satan at his game, and delivers us back to God refreshed and renewed. If we could put a steady diet of this spiritual receipe in our daily experiences, then we have a good chance to get back to the reality of what Christmas truly is.



St. Demetrios Fall “Glendi” Dance



St. Demetrios celebrated their 55th Annual Fall “Glendi” Dinner Dance on Saturday, November 4th.





St. Demetrios Fall “Glendi” Dance





*His Eminence
Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey*

*Cordially invites you
to the*

**2023 DELAWARE VALLEY REGION
AMBASSADOR AWARDS BANQUET**

on

Sunday, December 10, 2023

at

“The Adelfia”

1750 Clements Bridge Road, Deptford, NJ 08096

Your presence will be greatly appreciated

Cocktail Hour: 4:00pm

Program and Dinner: 5:00pm

Tickets: Adults: \$100.00, Children: \$50.00

Please contact and make checks payable to your local
parish to purchase tickets.

RSVP by November 27, 2023

The Nicene Creed

(with scriptural references as it is based on the Bible)

I believe in (Romans 10: 8-10; 1 John 4: 15)

ONE God, (Deuteronomy 6: 4, Ephesians 4: 6)

the Father (Matthew 6: 9) **the Almighty**, (Exodus 6: 3)

Creator of Heaven and Earth, (Genesis 1: 1)

and of all things visible and invisible. (Colossians 1: 15-16)

And in ONE Lord, Jesus Christ, (Acts 11: 17)

the only-Begotten (John 1: 18; 3: 16) **Son of God**, (Matthew 14: 33; 16: 16)

Begotten of the Father before all ages. (John 1: 2)

Light of Light; (Psalm 27: 1; John 8: 12; Matthew 17: 2,5)

True God of True God; (John 17: 1-5)

begotten, not created, (John 1: 18)

of one essence with the Father (John 10: 30)

through whom all things were made; (Hebrews 1: 1-2)

For us and for our salvation (1 Timothy 2: 4-5)

He came down from heaven, (John 6: 33,35)

and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary (Luke 1: 35)

and became man. (John 1: 14)

And He was crucified for us (Mark 15: 25; 1 Corinthians 15: 3)

under Pontius Pilate, (John 19: 6) **and He suffered**, (Mark 8: 31)

and was buried. (Luke 23: 53; 1 Corinthians 15: 4)

on the third day He rose, according to the Scriptures, (Luke 24: 1 1 Corinthians 15: 4)

He ascended into heaven, (Luke 24: 51; Acts 1: 10)

and is seated at the right hand of the Father; (Mark 16: 19; Acts 7: 55)

He will come again in glory (Matthew 24: 27)

to judge the living and the dead. (Acts 10: 42; 2 Timothy 4: 1)

His kingdom will have no end. (2 Peter 1: 11)

And in the Holy Spirit, (John 14: 26)

the Lord, (Acts 5: 3-4) **the Giver of Life**, (Genesis 1: 2)

Who proceeds from the Father; (John 15: 26)

Who together with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified; (Matthew 3: 16-17)

who spoke through the prophets. (1 Samuel 19: 20; Ezekiel 11: 5,13)

In one, (Matthew 16: 18) **holy**, (1 Peter 2: 5,9) **catholic**, (Mark 16: 15)

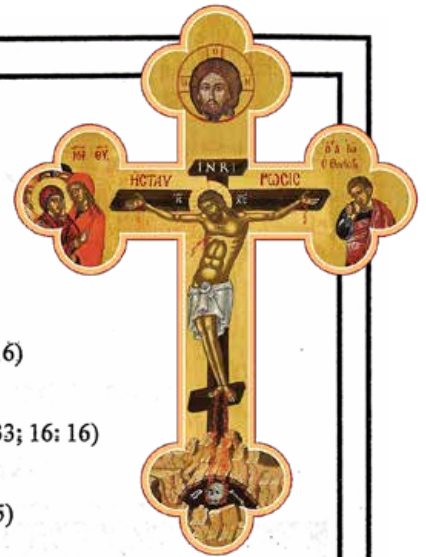
and apostolic Church. (Acts 2: 42; Ephesians 2: 19-22)

I acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. (Ephesians 4: 5; Acts 2: 38)

I expect the resurrection of the dead, (John 11: 24; 1 Corinthians 15: 12-49; Hebrews 6: 2; Revelation 20: 5)

and the life of the age to come. (Mark 10: 29-30)

AMEN. (Psalm 106: 48)





Parish Council Elections

Sunday, December 10th

Dear Parishioners,

“ELECTION FEVER” is beginning to grip our Country. During the month of November we will be voting for officials that we elect every four years. I hope that all of you will participate in this Democratic process. Also another election will be taking place in December of this year. It is the election of the members of the St. Demetrios Parish Council. I hope that this also gives us some Election Fever to vote for the new members of the Parish Council. This election will impact our church and Community and the spiritual life of the men and women we elect to help the Parish Priest in the administration of the parish. Are we prepared to give it the same thought effort and consideration as we give the National Elections?

We should be extremely grateful to the Men and Women who have served the Parish Council in past years. With God's blessing their hard work, dedication and sacrifice has given us a Church and facilities that is known far and wide for its beauty and Christian environment. We cannot thank them enough for all they have accomplished. Now if you look carefully at these men who have dedicated their

whole life to this Community, you will see that some of them are in their 30's 40's 50's 60's 70's and 80's. So we do have a wonderful group of members that are serving presently, and hopefully in these coming elections, we will be able to add more people to the Parish Council.

I have always said that it is time for the younger generation to step up to the plate, and get involved in the administration of the parish and learn from these dedicated individuals. Our faith is not a spectator sport without action, involvement, dedication, sacrifice, and commitment.

These Elections will take place on Sunday, December 10, 2023. Mark this date on your calendars and come to church ready to vote for the new members of the Parish Council.

Respectfully,

Fr. Michael L. Pastrikos
Protopresbyter





St. Demetrios

NEW WEBSITE!



Check out St. Demetrios Church's new website for a variety of information, stewardship and donations, bulletins and newsletters, links, and more!

www.stdemetriosnewjersey.com

Sponsor a Coffee Hour

Attention All Parishioners:

We have resumed the coffee hour following the Divine Liturgy on Sundays. Please consider sponsoring a coffee hour in memory of a loved one, for the health of your family, or in honor of our St. Demetrios Church.

Please call the office at 609-522-0152 to schedule. Thank you.



upcoming events

JOY (AGES 8-10)

HOPE (AGES 3-7)

TWO SATURDAYS PER MONTH

PHILOPTOCHOS

1ST SUNDAY OF EVERY MONTH

AFTER DIVINE LITURGY

GREEK SCHOOL

EVERY FRIDAY NIGHT FROM

4:30 - 7:30 P.M.

PARISH COUNCIL

DECEMBER:

SATURDAY 2ND

PARISH COUNCIL MTG 4:00 PM

SUNDAY 3RD

CHURCH ELECTIONS 12:00





liturgical calendar

DECEMBER

Sunday - December 3- 14th Sunday of St. Matthew Orthros 9:00 am

Divine Liturgy 10:00 am

Sunday - December 10: 10th Sunday of St. Matthew Orthros 9:00 am

Divine Liturgy 10:00 am

Sunday - December 17: 11th Sunday of St. Matthew Orthros 9:00 am

Divine Liturgy 10:00

Sunday - December 24: Sunday before the Nativity of Christ: Orthros

9:00 am Divine Liturgy 10:00 am

Sunday Evening December 24: Christmas Eve Service 7:00 pm

Church services will not be held on Monday morning since we celebrated the Birth of Christ in the evening hours.

Sunday - December 31: Sunday before the Feast of Epiphany Orthros

9:00am Divine Liturgy 10:00 am

On behalf of the Parish Council, Fr. Michael, Presvytera Dimitra, the Church Staff, and the entire family of our Community, we would like to wish everyone in the Parish a "MERRY CHRISTMAS" AND A HAPPY "NEW YEAR" FILLED WITH MUCH LOVE, JOY, HAPPINESS, HEALTH, AND PROSPERITY.





**ANNUNCIATION / ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΣΜΟΣ
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΣ ΕΝΟΡΙΑ
ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΣΜΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ**

Rev. John L. Johns, Presiding Priest



Monday, November 13, 2023
Memory of St. John Chrysostom

Dear Father Pastrikos

On behalf of our Spiritual Life Ministry, I am happy to inform you that, with the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Apostolos, our community is hosting our annual Advent Retreat on

Saturday, December 16, 2023,

presented by Archimandrite Fr. Sergius, Abbot of St. Tikhon's Monastery in South Canaan, Pennsylvania. Fr. Sergius will speak to us about his book:

**ACQUIRING THE MIND OF CHRIST
Embracing the Vision of The Orthodox Church**

We are pleased to invite you and your congregation to attend this retreat. Please notify your parishioners by posting the enclosed poster on your community bulletin board and including it in your church publications and website.

We are also happy to share that Abbot Sergius will bring the Miraculous Myrrh Weeping Icon of St. Anna that you will have the opportunity and blessing to venerate.

Fr. Sergius, originally from California, is a convert to Holy Orthodoxy and a St. Tikhon's Orthodox Theological Seminary graduate. Fr. Sergius dedicated most of his service to the teaching of future priests. After many years of prayerful service as a humble monk, Fr. Sergius was ordained to the Holy Diaconate and the Holy Priesthood in December 2008, and was installed as the 16th Abbot of St. Tikhon's Monastery on Saturday, January 23, 2010.

We look forward to hosting you and your parishioners on December 16. If you have any questions, please call the Annunciation Church office (215) 635-0316, or our Spiritual Life Ministry leader Barbara Louridas (215) 429-9605.

Wishing you and your family and community a blessed Advent,

Rev. Efstathios John L. Johns,
Proistamenos

**GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY OF PHILADELPHIA
ΕΛΛΗΝΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΗ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΑ ΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΕΙΑΣ**

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GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΗ ΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΟΣ ΕΝΟΡΙΑ
ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΣΜΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΘΕΟΤΟΚΟΥ

Rev. John L. Johns, Presiding Priest



ANNUAL ADVENT RETREAT

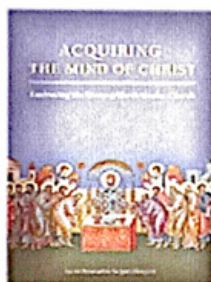
SATURDAY, DEC 16, 2023

ARCHIMANDRITE FR. SERGIUS ABBOT OF ST. TIKHONS MONASTERY

Fr. Sergius will speak to us about his book

ACQUIRING THE MIND OF CHRIST

Embracing the Vision of the Church



Abbot Sergius will bring the Miraculous Myrrh Weeping Icon of St. Anna that you will have the opportunity and blessing to venerate.

9:00 - Registration & Lenten Breakfast

10:00 - Intercessory Prayers & Veneration of The Weeping Icon of St Anna

10:45 - Session 1 with Q & A

12:15 - Lenten Lunch

1:30 - Session 2 with Q & A

3:00 - Closing Prayer

If you have any questions, please call the Annunciation Church office (215) 635-0316, or our Spiritual Life Ministry leader Barbara Louridas (215) 429-9605.

Free-will donations are welcomed at <https://www.anngoc.org>, or the door.

GREEK ORTHODOX COMMUNITY OF PHILADELPHIA
ΕΛΛΗΝΟΡΘΟΔΟΞΗ ΚΟΙΝΟΤΗΤΑ ΦΙΛΑΔΕΛΦΕΙΑΣ

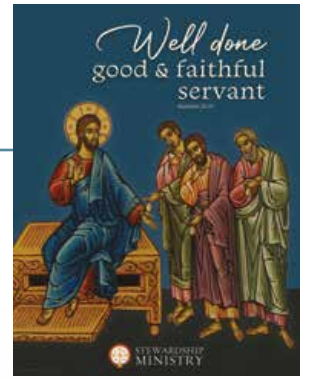
Serving Christ and the Greater Philadelphia Area Since 1901

7921 Old York Road, Elkins Park, PA, 19027, USA.
Tel.: 215-635-0316. Fax: 215-635-8301. www.anngoc.org



stewardship letter

Dear Parishioner:



We are on the last leg of 2023, and before we realize it, the new year of 2024 will be upon us. As we enter into another productive year, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. As a community we have a lot of work to do, the groundwork has been started, and we must work even harder to promote a better Christian environment for ourselves and our children. God has blessed our community with parishioners like you, who have supported the church throughout the years. But to continue this success that we have experienced, we need to focus on something very important. We need to understand what "STEWARDSHIP" means.

Our main concern in writing this letter is to have a better communication with the members of our St. Demetrios family. Somewhere down the line we have forgotten what it means to be a Good Standing Member of the Church. At the care of any Stewardship Program, the main characters and pillars of the church are the Stewards. A good steward is neither a miser nor a spendthrift person. A good steward is not one who economizes but one who is a good manager of what has been entrusted to him/her.

Some of us have forgotten what it means to be a Good Standing Member of the Church. As members of our St. Demetrios Parish, we have by our own choice undertaken a responsibility to become a good member of the Church. That means we must love it, care for it, be concerned about it, support it, and promote its Christian work and mission. How well we are going to accomplish these major tasks, it is solely up to all of us as Christian Stewards.

We have the opportunity and the responsibility to help our St. Demetrios Community grow. But we have "Steward's" that for years have never made any attempts to send in their Pledge Cards.. We send out Stewardship information every three months to all our registered families, and along with that information, we also include a Pledge Card. It brings us to the question "WHY". Most of our parishioners were raised in the parish of St. Demetrios. You went to Greek School, Sunday School, Joy, GOYA, Dance Groups, and etc. talking to people in the parish, you hear stories about how proud they are to have grown up in the Church of St. Demetrios and that they also want their children to experience that same tradition that their parents felt growing up in the parish. Many of our young people, who are out of college, single, married and raising their families, are the groups that we need to communicate with, giving them the understanding that we truly need their help and support. Our young people need to step up to the plate and make their commitment to the church.

Remember when we give to God, we must give with the attitude of how much we can give... not with the attitude of how much should we give...or how much did John Doe give and so I will give. This is why it's called (fair share), because, everyone is part of the puzzle and everyone is responsible for their share.



It's through your contributions that we are able to carry on important work both spiritually and in our community. Electronic Giving –is the way to go today. It is also a convenient, easy way to support St. Demetrios.

help us grow with **VANCO GIVING**

BY GIVING ELECTRONICALLY YOU CAN:

- Give anywhere, anytime from your computer, cell phone or tablet.
- Donate easily for special projects of the Church.
- Give towards your stewardship pledge or other donations such as memorial, endowment and others.
- Set up reoccurring or one time pledges and you will never need to worry if you have your check book or cash on you. VANCO will store your information.
- It is important to note that if you are using a credit card, you may be able to accumulate rewards by your provider.

Show your support and try E-Giving through our VANCO QR Code (located below). Or you can find this code on our website under the DONATE TAB www.stdemetriosnewjersey.com and even easier.... There is a button that states “click here” that will take you directly to the VANCO page. It is as simple as that.

To use the QR code- open your camera on your phone and hover over the code. The VANCO website will appear and then tap on it.

Thank you for all you do to support our St. Demetrios family throughout the year. May God bless you and keep you well and strong.





Stewardship News

STEWARDSHIP PLEA 2023

Dear Parishioner,

We at Saint Demetrios are thankful to have you and your family here in our church. You are a vital part of our church community. **Unfortunately, the Parish is in great need of your financial help!!**

Your financial support provides the foundation for our parish ministries and our efforts in meeting the challenge of spreading Christ's Word and our Orthodox Faith.

Stewardship also means more than just making a monetary donation. Stewardship is an opportunity to examine our priorities and values, to express our thankfulness, to give of ourselves and to grow in grace. It allows us to participate in the vineyard of our Lord. Giving is not a substitute for commitment. It is an expression of your commitment.

Please note there are several ways to pledge: besides printing this form, our Stewardship Pledge forms are also in the Narthex, you may complete one and give it to Parish Council Secretary, William Mitchell. He can also be contacted at 609-425-4000. If you would like to mail your Stewardship Commitment, our mailing address is:

St. Demetrios
300 St Demetrios St
North Wildwood NJ 08260

If Stewardship payment has been made for 2023 please disregard this notice and except our gratitude.

Please respond out of faith and love and help keep our church vibrant for many years to come. **This is YOUR CHURCH! Please, if you have yet to send in your Stewardship, please do so now. Remember the Church is not just here when you need it! Its open every week! If we don't support the Church, who else will?**

Respectfully,
Fr. Michael & The Stewardship Committee

_____ Cut here _____

Please make checks payable to: Saint Demetrios Church

My Stewardship Commitment is \$ _____ Year _____

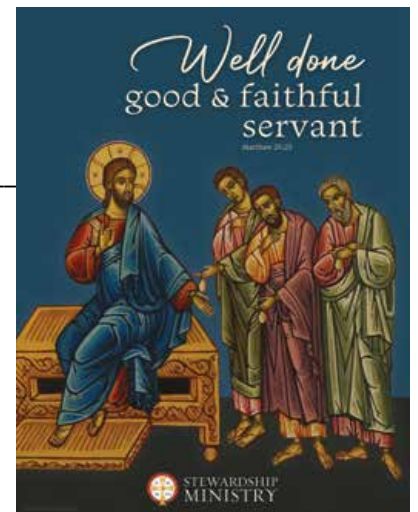
Single/Individual \$500.00

Family \$750.00

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ **Email** _____



SAINT DEMETRIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

321 Saint Demetrios Street – North Wildwood, New Jersey 08260

PARISH REGISTRY INFORMATION FORM

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

HOME PHONE _____

DATE OF BIRTH _____

PLACE OF BIRTH _____

DATE OF ORTHODOX BAPTISM/CHRISMATION _____

PROFESSION/OCCUPATION _____

BUSINESS NAME & ADDRESS _____

BUSINESS PHONE _____

SPOUSE'S 1ST NAME & MAIDEN NAME _____

SPOUSE'S DATE OF BIRTH _____

SPOUSE'S PLACE OF BIRTH _____

DATE OF ORTHODOX BAPTISM/CHRISMATION _____

SPOUSE'S OCCUPATION _____

BUSINESS PHONE _____

DATE & PLACE OF ORTHODOX MARRIAGE _____

NAME OF PRIEST WHO DID MARRIAGE _____

CHILDREN'S NAMES & DATES OF BIRTH _____



QUESTION & ANSWER:

HOW DO WE FIND CHRIST? HOW CAN WE CHANGE THE WAY WE LIVE TO COME CLOSER TO GOD?

Summer is over and we are in the fall season. Days will get shorter and the nights longer. There will be more darkness than light. But you and I know that Christ is the Light of the world and therefore we are not afraid of darkness.

One local Orthodox priest in his sermon said: "In the first centuries of Christianity, in times of persecution, the faithful prayed in the catacombs, hidden in the damp underground. Faithful Christians came to these catacombs to offer prayers despite the darkness, dampness, and frightful cold, away from their persecutors. If we are going to share and to bask in that light, we need to pay more attention to our spiritual lives.

Today in our churches, we have the right to pray and to exercise our religious freedom. We are able to peacefully sing hymns of praise, to discuss openly the issues of our faith and to partake freely of the Holy Sacraments of the Church. We are certainly taking good care of our physical lives and well being, but as a society we are also neglecting our spiritual well being.

What can this empty, sinful world give back to us? There is nothing more beautiful or perfect than God. The Word of Truth is in the church in the world outside of God we find emptiness, as well as dissension, hate, and instability. In the Christian world we find tenderness, truth, love and joy; which is real and stable at all times. Through Christ and the Church, we find the true oasis for our souls.

The question is always asked: "How do we find Christ?" "How can we change the way we live to come closer to God?"

The answer is very easy! We need to pray more and fast more. The other day I heard someone say, I don't believe in fasting, nor do I believe that we must pray in order to be better Christians. That you don't believe in what our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ teaches us? In today's society, we like to

pick and choose what we like or dislike about Christ's teachings. There is a tendency with people today to mold Christ into what we think He should be. Christ will always be the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. We cannot change Him to fit our ideas.

The value of wisdom is another important ingredient that we could use as a weapon to armor ourselves. Where do we find this wisdom? By reading the Holy Bible? The Holy Bible is filled with the wisdom of God. The church is filled with the wisdom of God. When society or even our own members go elsewhere to look for something more meaningful and substantive, it is often due to two things. First, whether we have failed as a church, and second, people's lives are not grounded here and wish to believe something else.

Today, we read the newspapers and magazine much more than we read the Holy Bible or the Lives of the Saints or other religious material. If you look at your bookshelf at home, how many religious books are found there? If there are more religious books on the shelves then we are running in the right direction. If not, than we are truly losing the race. We as Christians must focus more on the needs of our spiritual fulfillment than our physical well-being.

When was the last time we did something charitable? Give food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, clothing to the naked, visit the shut-in and helped at the church's fundraisers? These are the kind acts of Love that God wants us to be a part of.

Remember, all things, other than our faith, lead to death and nothingness. Only faith in Christ, in His church is eternal life. Instead, let us cling to our faith as the only real, tangible thing we can always carry with us.

(Psalms 117:2) "The truth endures forever."





church NEWS

philoptochos news

Philoptochos donated \$300 check to Lazarus House for Thanksgiving

Philoptochos donated \$300 check to Branches Outreach Center for Thanksgiving

Our 50/50 raffle winner was Letta Pappas (a check was sent to her for \$2295)

Philoptochos is taking donations for Poinsettias for the church if someone would like to donate

Our annual Christmas card drive begins soon.....see Dina Bilios or Roula Papaspanos
(\$25 to list your name on the church card)

Next Philoptochos meeting will be at Olive Branch Restaurant
5PM
(Bring \$25 Gift card for needy children)

* Flyers will be sent out to the homes

stewardship news

All our local and seasonal members and visitors are invited to register and enroll in our parish for the 2023 membership and join in weekly worship and to support of our parish "Stewardship Program" and ministries. The annual minimum enrollment offering is \$750 per family, and \$500 for single people. Please complete the parish membership registry forms that are available in the Narthex. Families that are in arrears are invited to reinstate their membership and participation in our parish life and ministries.

greek school

The PTA has decided to do the following for fundraisers:

- 1) Bake Sale- December 17, 2023 Sunday
- 2) Christmas Carolling to the homes and businesses
Saturday - December 16, 2023 starting at 3pm
and
Sunday - December 17, 2023 starting after church services
- 3) Christmas pageant with Christmas songs and nativity set- December 17
During coffee hour (Visit from Santa)

donation opportunity

The Parish Council would like to bring to your attention the Golden Leaf Giving Tree. Very few have participated in this memorable way to create **a lifetime tribute for generations to see and enjoy**. Please take the time to view this lovely Giving Tree and consider displaying your family's name, a remembrance of a loved one or an achievement. We would like to see the tree grow with more care and love!



\$ A FOCUS ON FINANCES \$

THE POWER OF FIVE

TOP FIVE TIPS FOR STICKING TO YOUR FINANCIAL GOALS

What do you want to achieve? It's surprising how often people can't articulate that concept. Sometimes, even if they can, their goals are not driving their actions and behaviors. Ideally, your goals are the engine that keeps you making smart financial decisions. When faced with an easy out, they motivate you to do the right thing.

Follow these five tips to make your financial goals work for you:

Be specific with amounts and time frames. Too often, the goals I hear are vague aspirations. Follow the old SMART acronym (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, timebound) to set goals that drive you in the right direction.

Write them down. The written word is powerful. When it comes to goals, studies show that if you take time to write them down, you're more likely to make them happen.

Let your goals paint a picture. While the written word is critical, visualizing what you are writing—the vivid details and associated emotions—is critical. Whether it's a Caribbean vacation or living debt-free that fires you up, a detailed mental picture can power you through to the finish line.

Keep them front and center. Make your phone screensaver an image of your next vacation. Write an inspirational Post-it note to yourself and stick it in your wallet or mirror. Tape a picture of your next car to your dashboard. These are just a few examples of ways to keep your goals top-of-mind. You may have some cool ideas of your own.

Set waypoints. I encourage folks to have short-, medium- and long-term goals. Regardless of what you're working toward, it makes sense to set check-ins along the way. It could be as straightforward as breaking down your goal of paying off all your credit-card debt into smaller chunks. This approach will give you reason to celebrate your small successes on the way to your

final destination. Get going with your financial goals today, and make them stick.

FIVE REASONS TO GET LIFE INSURANCE

When you pass away, insurance death benefits could provide important resources to your family, including:

FINAL EXPENSES AND FUNERAL COSTS

Medical expenses incurred in the last weeks of life frequently range from \$5,000 to \$10,000. Memorial-service preparation and costs can also easily exceed \$10,000, often pushing total final expenses to more than \$20,000.

PAY DEBTS AND MORTGAGES

Payment of debts or a mortgage is a one-time expense. Depending on the amount of your mortgage, this could cost anywhere from a few thousand to hundreds of thousands of dollars.

LIVING EXPENSES FOR SPOUSE

The largest amount of insurance is typically purchased to provide both economic security and an investment that will add to the spouse's other annual income. A reasonable method is to estimate a 5% return on the investment. For example, if a spouse needed another \$25,000 of income over and above the amount paid by retirement funds, Social Security and other earnings, insurance equal to \$500,000 invested at 5% would produce this amount.

INHERITANCE FOR CHILDREN

Permanent insurance is frequently used as a way to provide an inheritance for children. Many parents who make substantial gifts to charity plan to use life insurance as a means of providing additional inheritance for children or other family members.

ESTATE TAXES

If your estate is large, there may be a substantial payment of federal or state estate tax. If you own a family business or other assets intended to be transferred to family, your estate could be subject to tax. Life insurance can be an excellent method for payment of estate tax. For larger estates the insurance is usually owned by an irrevocable life-insurance trust so the insurance itself is not subject to estate tax.





Η Θεία Κοινωνία Είναι Θεία Τροφή

Ἡ ζωὴ εἶναι μιὰ τρικυμιασμένη θάλασσα. Ἀδιάκοπες καταιγίδες μᾶς ἀπειλοῦν. Καὶ δὲν εἶναι λίγες οἱ στιγμὲς πού πέφτουμε σὲ ἔρημους βράχους καὶ ὁ κίνδυνος γιὰ τὴ ψυχὴ μας εἶναι ἄμεσος. Τότε ὁ Λυτρωτὴς μας μᾶς ἀνοίγει τὴν καρδιά. Του καὶ μᾶς καλεῖ νὰ τραφοῦμε ἀπὸ τὸ τίμιο Αἷμα Του γιὰ νὰ σωθοῦμε. Πόσοι λίγοι, δυστυχῶς, τό καταλαβαίνουν αὐτό! Γι' αὐτό μένουν ἀνίσχυροι στίς τρικυμίες τῶν παθῶν καὶ τοὺς τυφῶνες τῶν πειρασμῶν. Πρέπει νὰ καταλάβουμε ὅτι στὸν κόσμον αὐτό εἴμαστε στρατιῶτες. Καὶ μάλιστα στρατιῶτες πού πάντα ἀγωνίζονται. Μᾶς χρειάζονται, λοιπόν, μεγάλες ψυχικὲς δυνάμεις. Καὶ ἀπὸ ποῦ θὰ τίς ἀντλήσουμε; Ἀπὸ τὴ Θεία Κοινωνία.

Ξέρετε πιά εἶναι ἡ πρώτη φροντίδα ἐνὸς καλοῦ στρατηγοῦ; Ἡ διατροφή τῶν ἀνδρῶν του. Ἐνας στρατός πού πεινᾷ εἶναι ἀδύνατο νὰ πολεμήσει καὶ νὰ νικήσει. Καὶ μεῖς εἶναι ἀδύνατο νὰ νικήσουμε ἂν δὲν τρεφόμαστε ἀπὸ τὴν πηγὴ τῆς ζωῆς. Ἡ Θεία Εὐχαριστία θὰ μᾶς κάνει νικητές. Μὴν ἀφίνουμε, λοιπόν, τὴ ψυχὴ μας χωρὶς αὐτὴ τὴν πνευματικὴ ζωὴ. Νὰ τὴν ἐφοδιάζουμε συνεχῶς. Ὡς ἀκούσουμε ἀπὸ τὸ ἴδιο τὸ στόμα τοῦ Κυρίου ποιά εἶναι ἡ τροφή της: **"Ἄν δὲν φᾶτε τὴ σάρκα τοῦ Υἱοῦ τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου καὶ δὲν πιεῖτε τὸ αἷμα Του, δὲν ἔχετε ζωὴ μέσα σας. Αὐτός πού τρώει τὴ σάρκα μου καὶ πίνει τὸ αἷμα μου ἔχει ζωὴ παντοτινὴ καὶ ἐγὼ θὰ τὸν ἀναστήσω τὴν τελευταία μέρα. Ἐκεῖνος πού τρώει τὴν σάρκα μου καὶ πίνει τὸ αἷμα μου εἶναι ἐνωμένος μαζί μου, κι' ἐγὼ μαζί του"** (Ἰωάννου 6, 53-56). Γι' αὐτό καὶ ὁ κυριώτερος λόγος πού πηγαίνουμε στὴ Θεία Λειτουργία τὴν Κυριακὴ, ἢ ὅποιαδήποτε ἄλλη μέρα, εἶναι νὰ κοινωνήσουμε τὸ τίμιο Σῶμα καὶ Αἷμα τοῦ Χριστοῦ μας καὶ νὰ γίνουμε ἕνας μαζί Του. Πάντοτε ὅμως μὲ τὴν κατάλληλη σωματικὴ, ψυχικὴ καὶ πνευματικὴ προετοιμασία.

Τό Καλό Παράδειγμα

Καλὲς εἶναι βέβαια οἱ συμβουλές καὶ ὁρμήνιες πού δίνει ὁ σύζυγος στὴ σύζυγο, ἢ σύζυγος στὸν σύζυγο, κι' οἱ δύο στά παιδιά τους. Ὅμως, αὐτές δὲν θὰ μπορέσουν νὰ φέρουν ποτέ κανένα ἀποτέλεσμα ἂν δὲν συνοδεύονται ἀπὸ τὸ καλὸ παράδειγμα.

Γιατί κανένας δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ ἀρνηθεῖ ὅτι ἡ δύναμη τῶν ἔργων εἶναι πολὺ πιο μεγάλη ἀπὸ τὴ δύναμη τῶν λόγων. Μπορεῖς νὰ λές ὅσα θέλεις καὶ νὰ κηρύττεις ὅ,τι καλὸ καὶ ὠφέλιμο σοῦ ἀρέσει. Ἄν ὅμως δὲν ἐπικυρῶνεις τὰ λόγια σου καὶ τὰ κηρύγματά σου μὲ τὴν ἴδια τὴ ζωὴ σου, δηλ. τὸ παράδειγμά σου, δὲν βγαίνει τίποτε.

Εἶναι δυνατό νὰ μάθεις τὰ παιδιά σου νὰ μὴν καπνίζουν, νὰ μὴν πίνουν, νὰ μὴν χαρτοπαίζουν, νὰ μὴν πέρνουν ναρκωτικά, νὰ μὴν βρίζουν νὰ μὴν συναναστρέφονται μὲ κακὲς παρέες, νὰ μὴν νυχτοгуρίζουν, ὅταν ἐσύ ὁ γονιός τὰ κάνεις ὅλα ἢ καὶ μερικὰ ἀπ' αὐτά;

Εἶναι δυνατό νὰ μάθεις τὰ παιδιά σου νὰ ἐκκλησιάζονται τακτικά, νὰ προσεύχονται, νὰ εἶναι καλοὶ χριστιανοί, ὅταν ἐσύ ὁ γονιός δὲν πατᾷ στὴν ἐκκλησία, δὲν κοινωνᾷ, δὲν προσφέρει γιὰ τὴ συντήρησή της, δὲν προσεύχεσαι, δὲν ζεῖς χριστιανικὴ ζωὴ;

Εἶναι δυνατό ἐσύ ὁ Ἀρχιεπίσκοπος, ὁ Ἐπίσκοπος, ὁ Ἱερέας, ὁ κάθε κληρικός, νὰ κηρύττεις, καὶ νὰ ἀπαιτεῖς ἀπὸ τοὺς πιστοὺς σου, ἀγάπη, εἰρήνη, ταπεινοφροσύνη, συνεργασία, κατανόηση, φιλανθρωπία, γενναιοδωρία, δικαιοσύνη, ἰσότητα, ὑπομονή, καὶ ἐσύ νὰ κάνεις ἐντελῶς τὸ ἀντίθετο;

Ὡς ἀκούσουμε ἀπὸ τὸ ἴδιο τὸ στόμα τοῦ Κυρίου μας: **"Ξέρετε ὅτι οἱ ἡγέτες τῶν ἐθνῶν (τῶν εἰδολολατρῶν) ἀσκοῦν ἀπόλυτὴ ἐξουσία πάνω τους καὶ οἱ ἄρχοντες τὰ καταδυναστεύουν. Σὲ σᾶς ὅμως δὲν πρέπει νὰ συμβαίνει αὐτό, ἀλλὰ ὅποιος θέλει νὰ γίνῃ μέγας ἀνάμεσά σας πρέπει νὰ γίνῃ ὑπηρέτης σας· κι' ὅποιος ἀπὸ σᾶς θέλει νὰ εἶναι πρῶτος πρέπει νὰ γίνῃ δοῦλος σας."** Ὅπως κι' ὁ Υἱός τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου δὲν ἦρθε γιὰ νὰ τὸν ὑπηρετήσουν, ἀλλὰ γιὰ νὰ ὑπηρετήσῃ καὶ νὰ προσφέρει τὴ ζωὴ του λύτρο (ἀντάλλαγμα) γιὰ ὅλους" (Ματθαίου 20, 25-27).

— What Is At the End of the Road? —

Where am I going? What's at the end of the road of life for me?

Jesus provides the answer in Matthew 25:31-46. Whether we know it or not — and we had better know it — we are all headed toward the second coming and the final judgment:

"When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, O blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world' Then he will say to those at his left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels' " (Matt. 25:31-41).

In view of this, how ought I to live? What ought to be the direction of my life?

— The Direction of My Life —

An extremely important question in life for all of us is: Where am I going? What is the direction of my life? What road am I following? Where does this road lead? Will it take me to where I want to go? Would I like to spend eternity there?

Jesus talked much about the direction of his life. For example, when He says, "Thou shalt," or "Thou shalt not," he is pointing us to a direction in life. When He says, "This do and you shall live," or "Follow me," or "I am the Way," He is pointing us to what ought to be the direction and purpose of life.

In the sermon on the Mount, He said, "You have heard that it has been said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy, but I say to you, love your enemies." In other words, the direction of our life — the purpose — should be toward loving people.

On the night He instituted the Lord's Supper, the disciples were quarreling among themselves about who should be the greatest among them. And so the Master girded Himself with a towel and washed their feet. Then He said to them, "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant." In other words, the direction of our life should be toward serving. How well we see this when we hear Jesus saying, "As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to Me. I was sick and you visited me. I was hungry and you fed Me"

The direction of my life should be toward serving others, toward daily repentance, toward giving, toward prayer, toward Church, toward a closer, more personal relationship with God. If it is, then the future for us will be as bright as the promises of God.





PHILOPTOCHOS



Ladies Philoptochos Society "Soterios" Chapter 1037

Saint Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church
321 Saint Demetrios Avenue, North Wildwood, New Jersey 08260

November 11, 2023

Dearest Friends and Family:

President

Konstantina Bilios
113B Seaview Court
N. Wildwood, NJ 08260

Vice President

Arigi Papaspanos
118 W. Jefferson Avenue
Wildwood Crest, NJ
08260

2nd Vice President

Despoina Katsikaris
102 Hawthorne Drive
Rio Grande, NJ 08242

Treasurer

Maria Kellis
4 Bottle Creek Drive
Cape May, NJ 08204

Secretary

Bessie Giouros
14 Cedar Meadow Drive
C.M.C.H., NJ 08210

Our annual Christmas card fundraiser has once again begun and we hope you will join us in spreading some holiday cheer!

Please send a \$25 donation to our church address above along with your information below.

WE THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

AND MAY GOD BLESS US ALL!!

Please make checks payable to
"Ladies Philoptochos of St. Demetrios G.O. Church"

Deadline is December 10, 2023

NAME TO PRINT ON THE CARD:

MAILING ADDRESS:



From the 3rd Homily of St. John Chrysostom on:

"Not To Despise the Church of Christ and the Sacred Mysteries"

What is the Church?

The Church never wears out, nor does she get old; not even our enemies, i.e. the demons, can hurt her.

How many kings and tyrants persecuted the Church of Christ?

All who fought her were vanquished and destroyed, and she was raised above the heavens. So great is the height and the magnitude of the Church.

When attacked, she wins!...When plotted against, she grows!...When reviled, she becomes more brilliant. She is wounded, but never falls from the wounds!...She is shaken, but never conquered! ... She is punched, but never defeated!

Let the sea roar, it cannot dissolve the rock!...Let the waves rise, they cannot sink the ship of Jesus!

O man, nothing is stronger than the Church. Stop your war against her, before she dissolves your strength away!

'Από τήν 3η 'Ομιλία τοῦ 'Αγίου 'Ιωάννου τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου στό θέμα:



"Νά μήν περιφρονεῖς τήν 'Εκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ, καί τά 'Αγία Μυστήρια"

ΤΙ ΕΙΝΑΙ Η ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ;

'Η 'Εκκλησία οὐδέποτε παλαιώνει, οὔτε γερνάει! Τήν 'Εκκλησία οὔτε αὐτοί οἱ ἐχθροί μας, δηλαδή οἱ δαίμονες, δέν μποροῦν νά τήν βλάψουν.

Πόσοι βασιλεῖς καί τύραννοι δέν πολέμησαν τήν 'Εκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ!

Καί ὅσοι τήν πολέμησαν, ἀφανίστηκαν καί χάθηκαν. Αὐτή δέ ἀνέβηκε πάνω ἀπό τοὺς οὐρανοὺς. Τί ὕψος ἔχει ἡ 'Εκκλησία τοῦ Χριστοῦ!

"Ὅταν πολεμᾶται, νικά!..."Ὅταν ἐπιβουλεύεται, μεγαλώνει..."Ὅταν ὑβρίζεται, γίνεται λαμπρότερη! Τραυματίζεται, ἀλλά δέν πέφτει ἀπό τίς πληγές!...Κλυδωνίζεται, ἀλλά δέν κυριεύεται!...Γρονθοκοπιέται, ἀλλά δέν νικάται!

"Ἀς βρυχᾶται ἡ θάλασσα, δέν μπορεῖ νά διαλύσει τό βράχο!..."Ἀς σηκωθοῦν τά κύματα, δέν μποροῦν νά βουλιάξουν τό πλοῖο τοῦ Χριστοῦ!...Δέν ὑπάρχει τίποτε πιό δυνατό ἀπό τήν 'Εκκλησία!

"Ἀνθρώπε, σταμάτα τόν πόλεμό σου ἐναντίον τῆς 'Εκκλησίας γιά νά μή σοῦ καταλύσει τή δύναμη.

ORTHODOXY: This is the Faith of the Apostles!

If you are an Orthodox Christian, your Church was founded in 33AD by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, officially beginning at Pentecost with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles. (Acts 2) The Orthodox Church is now 2000 years old, and has maintained an unbroken historical and doctrinal connection to the earliest Tradition of the Apostles.

If you are Lutheran, your religion was founded by Martin Luther, an ex-monk of the Catholic Church in 1517.

If you belong to the Church of England, King Henry VIII founded your church in 1530 because the Pope would not grant him a divorce with the right to remarry.

If you are a Presbyterian, your denomination was founded by John Knox in Scotland in 1560

If you are a Congregationalist, Robert Brown originated your denomination in Holland in 1582

If you are a Baptist, you owe the teachings of your church to John Smyth, who launched it in Amsterdam in 1606.

If you are Dutch Reformed, (i.e. Crystal Cathedral) you recognize Mitchlis Jones as founder because he originated your religion in New York in 1628.

If you are a Methodist, your religion was founded by John and Charles Wesley in England in 1774.

If you worship with the Salvation Army, your group began with William Booth in London in 1865

If you belong to one of the organizations know as Church of the Nazarene, Pentecostal, Gospel, Jehovah's Witnesses, your religion is one of the hundreds of new groups founded within the past 100 Years.

If you are Roman Catholic, your church shared the same rich apostolic and doctrinal heritage as the Orthodox Church for the first 1000 years of Christian history, but broke away from the other four apostolic Patriarchates in 1054 because the other four wouldn't consider the Pope to be infallible or their earthly boss. Besides, the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope did not come into the Roman Catholic Church until the year 1870!





The Komboschini (Prayer Rope)

Let us pause for a moment just to look at a little prayer rope, like this one made of black wool on Mountain Athos. It is a blessing from a holy place. Like so much that we have in the Church, it is a blessing prepared and given to us by a brother or father in Christ, a living witness to living tradition. It is black, the color of mourning and sorrow, and this reminds us to be sober and serious in our lives. We are taught that repentant prayer, especially the Jesus Prayer, can bring us what the Holy Fathers call joy-creating sorrow—in Greek "Harmolipi". We are sorry for our sins and our weakness and failings before God, our fellow men and ourselves; but in Christ, Who pours out His mercy and forgiveness on all who call upon His Name, this sorrow becomes a source of joy and comfort. This prayer rope is knotted from wool, that is, it has been sheared from a sheep, a reminder that we are rational sheep of the Good Shepherd, Christ the Lord, and also a reminder of the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world (see: John 1:29). And the cross likewise speaks to us of the sacrifice and victory of life over death, of humility over pride, of self-sacrifice over selfishness, of light over darkness. And the tassel? Well, you can use it to wipe the tears away from your eyes, or, if you have no tears, to remind you to weep because you cannot weep.

Besides, from the Old Testament times, little tassels have been a decoration for sacred vestments, a reminder of the sacred tradition in which we participate when we use the prayer rope.

Prayer ropes are made in keeping with a tradition whose origin is lost in antiquity. Perhaps one of the earliest forms was simply gathering small pebbles or seeds and moving them from one spot or container to another as one said his prayer rule or did his rule of bows or prostrations. The story is told of a monk who decided to make knots in a rope, which he could use in carrying out his daily rule of prayer. But the devil kept untying the knots he made in the rope, frustrating the poor monk's efforts. Then an angel appeared and taught the monk a special kind of knot that consists of ties of interlocked crosses, and these knots the devil was unable to unravel.

Prayer ropes come in a great variety of forms and sizes. Most prayer ropes have a cross woven into them or attached to mark the "end", and also have some kind of marker after each 10, 25, or 50 knots or beads. There are many forms of prayer ropes, some knotted of wool or silk, or other more elegant or simpler materials. Others are made of beads or the dried flower of a plant called "Tears of the Mother of God."

The prayer rope is one of the items given to an Orthodox Christian monk at the time of tonsure: it is given to him as his spiritual sword with which he, as a soldier of Christ, must make war against our spiritual enemy, the devil. This sword is wielded by calling on the name of our Lord and God and Savior Jesus Christ in a plea for mercy on me a sinner. This prayer can be said in a shorter form, such as: "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me"; or in a longer form, as: "By the prayers of the Most Holy Theotokos and all the Saints, Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me."

Other short prayers: the prayer of the publican: "God be merciful to me a sinner" (see: Luke 18:13), the prayer to the Mother of God: "Most Holy Theotokos save us", or other short prayers to the Guardian Angel, to individual saints or to all the saints can also be offered with the assistance of the prayer rope. A common form of such a prayer is: Holy Guardian Angel—or Saint (name)—pray to God for me. By changing the words of these short prayers and saying: "have mercy on us", or "pray for us", or by including the name or names of persons we want to pray for, we can also use the prayer rope for intercessory prayers. This also applies to those already departed this life: "Give rest O Lord to the soul of Thy servant."

When monks carry the prayer rope in their hands, it serves as a reminder of their obligation to pray unceasingly. In keeping with the commandment of the Holy Apostle Paul to "pray without ceasing." Anyone can keep a prayer rope in a pocket or some other discreet place where it can be easily used unnoticed when in situations where it is better to pray or remember prayer in secret, without attracting the attention of others. The prayer rope can also be placed over the head of our bed, in an automobile, with a small cross or icon, or in other appropriate places as a reminder of prayer and a kind of blessing and a holy and godly presence in our lives.



Τι Είναι Μετάνοια;

"Μετάνοια είναι ή πόρτα από την οποία μπαίνουμε μέσα στη Μεγάλη Σαρακοστή, πού είναι ή αρχή του ταξιδιού μας προς τό Πάσχα. Τό νά μετανοείς σημαίνει πολύ περισσότερο από του νά λυπάσαι τόν έαυτό σου, ή από μάταιη θλίψη για περασμένα στραβά. 'Η λέξη 'μετάνοια' σημαίνει 'αλλαγή σκέψης': τό νά μετανοήσεις είναι νά γίνεις καινούργιος, νά μεταποιηθείς στην έσωτερική σου αντίληψη, νά αποκτήσεις ένα νέο τρόπο του νά βλέπεις τή σχέση σου μέ τόν Θεό καί τούς άλλους.

Τό σφάλμα του Φαρισαίου είναι ότι δέν θέλει νά αλλάξει τή σκοπιά του· είναι αὐτάρεσκος, δηλαδή, ικανοποιημένος μέ τόν έαυτό του, καί έτσι δέν αφήνει χώρο για τόν Θεό νά ενεργήσει μέσα του.

Ο Τελώνης, όμως, πραγματικά ποθεί νά αλλάξει τήν προοπτική του· δέν είναι ικανοποιημένος μέ τόν έαυτό του, είναι θλιμμένος, καί όπου υπάρχει αυτή ή σωτήρια ανικανοποίηση μέ τόν έαυτό, εκεί υπάρχει καί ο χώρος για τόν Θεό νά ενεργήσει.

Αν δέν μάθουμε τό μυστικό τής έσωτερικής φτώχειας του Τελώνη, δέν θά μπορέσουμε να μετάσχουμε στην Σαρακοστιανή άνοιξη.

Τό θέμα τής ήμέρας μπορεί νά ανακεφαλαιωθεί μέ τό ρητό των Πατέρων τής Ερήμου, 'Καλύτερα ένας άνθρωπος πού άμάρτησε καί ξέρει πώς άμάρτησε, και μετανοιώνει, παρά ένας πού δέν έχει άμαρτήσε καί θεωρεί τόν έαυτό του δίκαιο'".

– Επίσκοπος Διοκλείας Κάλλιστος

"Πραγματική μετάνοια είναι νά σταματήσεις νά άμαρτάνεις" – Άγιος Άμβρόσιος

What Is Repentance?

"Repentance is the door through which we enter Lent, the starting-point of our Journey to Pascha. And to repent signifies far more than self-pity or futile regret over things done in the past. The Greek term 'Metania' means 'change of mind': to repent is to be renewed, to be transformed in our inward viewpoint, to attain a fresh way of looking at our relationship to God and to others.

The fault of the Pharisee is that he has no desire to change his outlook; he is complacent, self-satisfied, and so he allows no place for God to act within him.

The Publican, on the other hand, truly longs for a 'change of mind'; he is self-dissatisfied, 'poor in spirit', and where there is this saving self-dissatisfaction there is room for God to act.

Unless we learn the secret of the Publican's inward poverty, we shall not share in the Lenten springtime. The theme of the day can be summed up in a saying of the Desert Fathers: 'Better a man who has sinned, if he knows that he has sinned, and repents, than a man who has not sinned and thinks of himself as righteous.'"

–Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia

"True repentance is to cease from sinning". –St. Ambrose



thoughts from

EVA LALLAS



JESUS IS THE REASON

During recent years we have all observed the overwhelming emphasis on the secular aspect of the Christmas holiday. The commercialization of this holiday begins in early autumn, when even advertisements on childrens' TV programs implant in their young minds what they will want on their "wish" lists. Would it not be more valuable for the children if, along with this year's "hot" toy or electronic game, they were told about the Baby Jesus: the Gift we all receive at Christmas?

When we begin hearing, "Only- - - days before Christmas" the implication is that there are only so many shopping days remaining. Would it not be more significant for us if the message heralding Christmas were, "Advent has begun; let us prepare for the birth of Jesus the King?" If it were not for the anticipation of mounting "Black Friday" Christmas sales putting the retailers in the black for the year, it appears that the trend would be to obliterate this major religious holiday.

In America the shift away from the religious core of the holiday toward the commercial emphasis has been occurring rather gradually; a subtle attempt to hijack the real meaning of Christmas: public schools no longer close for Christmas, but for the "Winter break" (similarly "Spring break" at Easter). This trend has been apparent in the public schools' music concerts at which religious Christmas Carols are avoided; giving way to musical compositions extolling the joys of the winter season. Thusly, youngsters are influenced in their formative years.

Generic greetings of "Happy Holidays" abound instead of "Merry Christmas" identifying the holiday that we are honoring. Some have even taken to substituting "Xmas" for Christmas. The shift of Christmas merrymaking has fled from the twelve days following Christmas through Epiphany to party time beginning early in December and all but forgotten on December 26th. As the late Very Rev. Fr. George Gallos of the Annunciation Church in Baltimore had noted in a sermon, "It is almost impossible to hear Christmas Carols on the day after Christmas." Sadly the elaborately decorated live Christmas trees that graced homes are too often seen in trash cans by December 27th. Unfortunately, most of us have simply accepted these trends not realizing that they serve to erode Christianity in our nation and perhaps in

the hearts and souls of "Christians". How could this be since America was founded on Judeo-Christian principles assuring each of us freedom OF religion not freedom FROM religion.

On a brighter and positive note however, we are now beginning to witness a surprising and pleasant turnaround during the Christmas season. Although commercialism still appears to dominate this holy season, the greeting which some major retailers are once again incorporating is "Merry Christmas". This is primarily due to the public outcry made known by many Christian churches. Likewise, the programs at a few of our public schools are including Christmas Carols and religious themes. The author notes that in observance of Advent the date of the annual Christmas dinner party of a Greek Orthodox senior group that had been traditionally held before Christmas was changed to January. As Orthodox Christians we should follow the teachings of our Church and become more active in reinstating Christian observances whenever or wherever we can. Can we afford to remain passive, taking our religion for granted? If we are devout Orthodox Christians, each of us has an obligation to proclaim, defend, and preserve Christianity. Of course, we must first LIVE our Orthodox faith following the principles set for us by Christ our Lord and Savior, our teacher, and role model. We must stand united in a secular world defending all of our high holy days such as Christmas.

Just as we prepare and decorate our homes to receive Christ externally, as Orthodox Christians we must prepare our hearts to receive Him. Coming close to Him should head our "Wish List" as we pray, attend, and participate in religious services, and follow dietary abstinence as prescribed by the Church. All the hype of our Christmas observances should not simply be done in a pagan style to brighten the darkness of winter days or in anticipation of the material gifts that we are about to give and receive. The giving of Christmas gifts should remind us that this tradition is in remembrance of our joy in receiving God's greatest gift His Son Jesus our Lord and Savior. The use of Christmas lights to welcome Jesus should remind us that we are about to receive the True LIGHT of the World. Displaying the crèche in our homes should remind us of Christ's HUMILITY; our Savior was born in a manger among the farm animals, not in a royal palace fit for a king. Showing kindness and sharing with others, especially at this time of the year, should serve to reinforce in us the life that Jesus led: shunning no one, walking among and mingling with the common folk, not the select few of a certain upper class, while teaching and living His message of LOVE. Sending greetings and contacting others at Christmastime give us the opportunity to extol our joy that Christ the King is born! Our traditions should aid in warming our hearts and enriching our celebration of Christmas - - - the fulfillment of God's plan as prophesied in the Old Testament: the coming of His Son, the Messiah to save us from our sinful ways.

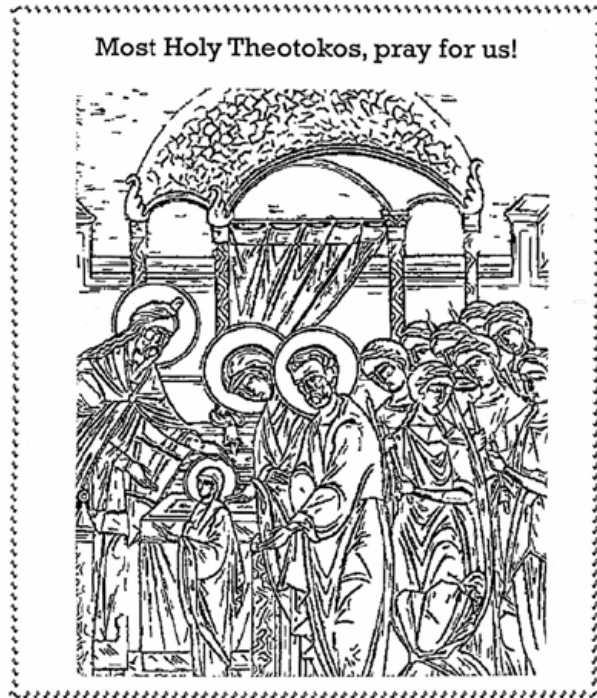
Lest we forget.....Jesus is the reason for the Christmas season.

*The staff of the Keironia wishes everyone a
blessed and merry Christmas!*

Children's Corner

More available on stdemetriosnewjersey.com!

Courtesy of Presvytera Alexandra Houck



The Children's Word is a weekly bulletin for Orthodox Christian young people. Copyright 2023 Alexandra Houck. Email is [orthodoxchildrensword\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:orthodoxchildrensword(at)gmail.com). Find it each week at myocn.net.

The Children's Word

"Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them, for to such is the Kingdom of Heaven." Mark 10:14

Sunday, November 19, 2023

Volume 11, Issue 47

A Ministry of the
Orthodox Christian Network
OCN

"More, please" or "Thank you"

What would you do if somebody gave you a whole lot of something you like very much? A whole bag of chocolate candy, maybe. Would you say "Can I have some more?" or would you say, "Thank you!"? Most of us wouldn't be so greedy to ask for more, would we?



Today we hear the parable in the Gospel about the greedy man who had everything. Instead of saying "Thank you" to God, to his workers, and to his family, he really thought, "How can I get more?" He wanted to pull down his storage bins and build bigger ones. Sometimes, we hear this story, and we might think, "I'd never be like that!"

This week, we celebrate Thanksgiving Day, when we thank God and each other for what we have. But really, that day should just be a reminder to say "thank you" more often. After all, God gives us so much all year long! How many times do we say "Can I have some more?" to our Lord, instead of just "Thank you!"

Right before the Gospel passage for today, we read, "Jesus said, 'Be careful and guard against all kinds of greed. A man's life is not measured by the many things he owns.'" When we have greedy hearts, we just want more. When we have grateful hearts, we can just say "thank you!"

WORD SEARCH

Can you find these words in the jumble?

CHOICE
ENTRANCE
GREEDY
MORE
STOREHOUSES
TEMPLE
THANKSGIVING
THANK YOU
THEOTOKOS
ZACHARIAS

U J M S P H Y Q C M U H B J T
G O M Y T Q B J U O N Y I O D
T S Y K B O F G K R W Q M R R
H N Y K A X R A R E A H E V F
Y S S W N H Z E Q E P J T J E
D J I Z J A T P H E E E X C S
F E P T G U H X O O M D I O A
Z D G S U A D T A P U O Y X I
S V G E V L V K L T H S M T R
F O E E Q X J E B C C J E Z A
G N I V I G S K N A H T Q S H
T H E O T O K O S H Z B F V C
E N T R A N C E H H L B F Z A
G V Z V P J K Y N V F V R K Z
E J J T Y M L J P I D P E L F

WHAT'S IN THE ICON?

Can you find the priest, Zaccharias, in this icon and the one on page 3?

Yes! The priest in the Temple was the same Zaccharias who had Saint John the Baptist as his son! Here he is in an icon with his wife, Saint Elizabeth, and baby Saint John.



GREAT PLANS

THE ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS INTO THE TEMPLE

Do your parents have big plans for you? Sometimes mothers and fathers do have big plans for their kids...maybe even before they are grown up! A basketball star, or a professor, or even a priest. Parents might even push their kids to follow their own plans!



On Tuesday, we celebrate one of the 12 great feasts of our Orthodox Church. It's the day when Mary entered the Holy Temple, to dedicate her life to God. Her parents, Saints Joachim and Anna, took their little girl there. They wanted her to be close to God—to love Him very much and to serve Him all her life. And Mary did, didn't she? Years later, God chose Mary to hold His own Son and to be His mother. She grew up to be the closest person to God—and that was more than her parents could ever wish for!

Mothers and fathers might be wishing that you'll grow up to be something special. But still, you have a choice. Let's always remember that we have a choice—just as Mary had a choice—if we want to live close to God. Our parents might make plans, or they might want one thing. But God gives us the choice to be near Him or to turn away from Him. It's up to you to make the right choice, just as Mary made the right choice too!

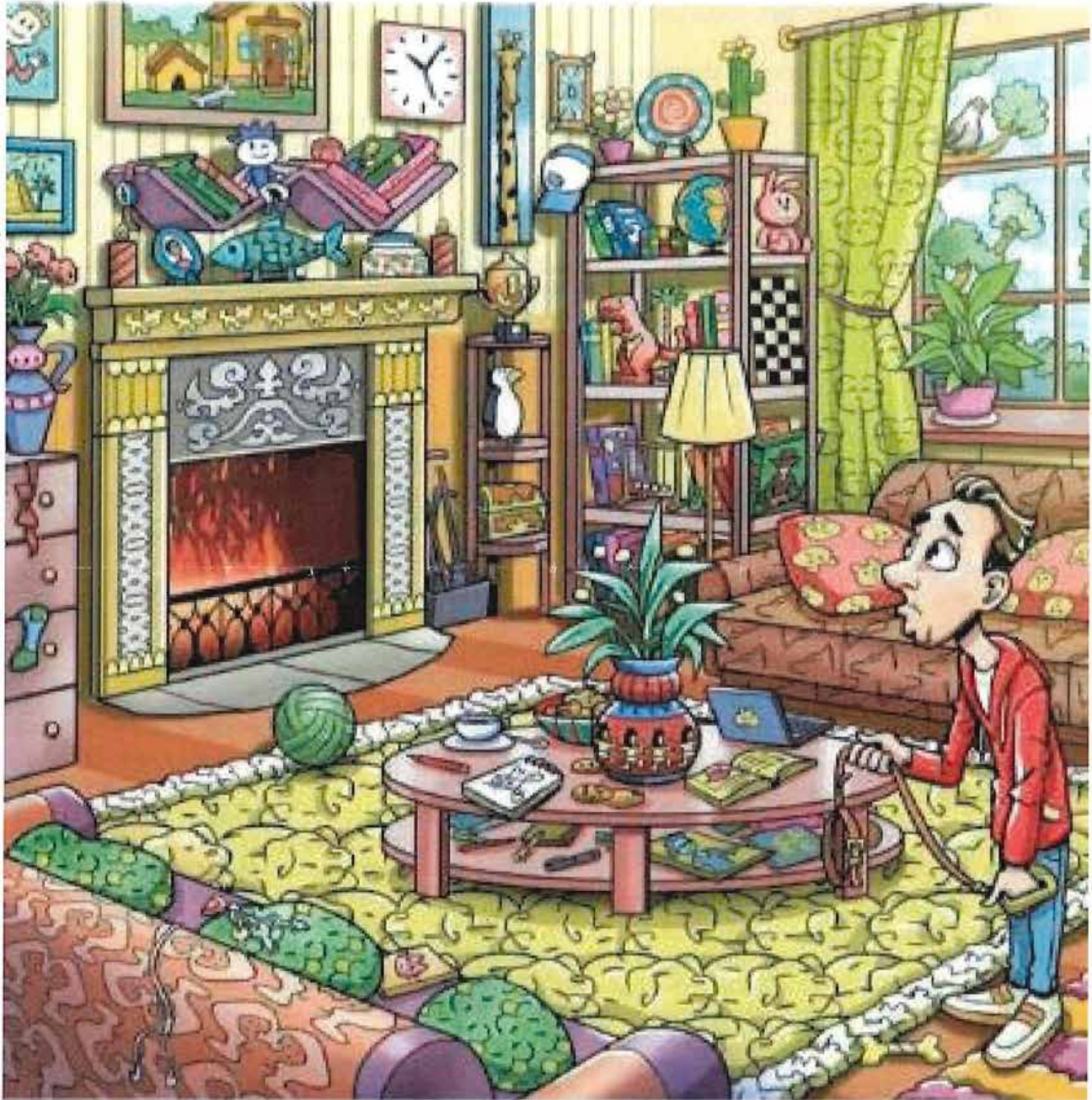
We celebrate this great feastday on Tues., Nov. 21st (OC: December 4th).

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Exercise Your Brain!

This one is very tricky, so take your time with it



Can you spot the hiding dog in this living room?

His Eminence
Metropolitan Apostolos Of New Jersey

& Kimisis Tis Theotokou
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CGS NJ: JUNE 23-29
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CGS VA SESSION 2: JULY 14-20

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