



KOINONIA

NEWSLETTER OF
ST. DEMETRIOS CHURCH
North Wildwood, NJ

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ST. DEMETRIOS YOUTH



On Saturday, December 14, Father Michael and the children of the parish enjoyed a fun day together. The children also received instruction on certain religious issues and topics.





a letter from

FR. MICHAEL L. PASTRIKOS
PROTOPRESBYTER



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you a very happy, healthy and blessed new year. I'm very thankful for all the other gentlemen who serve on the Parish Council with me, and I want to thank them as well as Father Michael for a job well done. Without the leadership of these individuals our Church would not function. To have all of them as well as the Ladies Society Members, Greek School mothers, teacher, and students, Cantors, and Choir members, and of course our Atler Boys is truly what makes our community successful.

This year we are facing many maintenance issues on our buildings and request any of the Stewards of our Church to step forward to either donate their time, talent, or fortune to accomplish these tasks. Some of them include replacement of heater, windows, repairs to flooring, painting and plastering of the Community Center, as well as window replacement in the Church to name a few. Anything that anyone of you can do to help this cause would be deeply appreciated.

Let's work together to make our Church the very best it can be.

Prayer

God give to us the simple faith
That little children know,
The faith to look for miracles
Upon this earth below.
Give us the faith to recognize
The goodness in each heart,
Give us the faith to build again,
When hopes are torn apart...

God, give us the simple faith
That little children find,
The faith to hope, the faith to see
That clouds are silver-lined.
Give us the faith to dream
bright dreams,
Upon the darkest day,
And most of all give us faith,
To clasp our hands and pray...

For if we pray as children do,
We who have journeyed far
May find the warm reflection
of a glowing splendid star.
And if we wear this simple faith
Wrapped like a cloak around us,
We will be blessed as children are
And know that peace has found us.

~Margaret E. Sangster



LOOKING FORWARD TO THE FUTURE OF St. Demetrios

My fellow parishioners, as we look to the future most of us here are aware that as a parish, we are small and strong but we are also not as strong as we could or should be.

Of course no parish is perfect, and the people also of the parish are not perfect. During the past year we have been blessed to experience some good things as a parish that should give us reason to have hope. We had 6 Baptisms and the one was an Adult Baptism. We had two Weddings, and one Chrismation, while sadly we also commended 2 souls at funerals to the mercy of God with the hope of eternal life. In the future we hope to have more sacraments in the church so we can continue to grow as a parish.

We also experienced a lot of growth in the participation of church attendance. I was really proud to see the majority of our parishioners attend church committing themselves to Christ through the partaking of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ through the Sacrament of Holy Communion. But in order for us to continue this growth we need to keep having transparency and good communication with in our “Stewards” of the Church. I promised that to the Members of the Parish Council when I first took over the spiritual responsibility of the Church. So far, we have done that as a parish. Every day we are learning new things from each other and we are elevating the spiritual level of the parish. I have said this before to all of you that we are blessed with beautiful parishioners who truthfully give their Time, Talents, and Treasures to the church. We should be proud that even though we are a seasonal church, we have been blessed with parishioners, who really care about their

church and as I stated before, we are one of very few parishes in our Metropolis that stands by and believes that “STEWARDSHIP” should be the main source of income to support the church. I would say that 90 percent of the monies collected are solely from the Stewardship Pledges. We need to continue this great achievement as we grow as a parish.

I’m sure that in the future we will begin to formulate other events and fundraisers in the church that will bring more income, but that income will only go towards the Building projects and other needs of the church such as Outreach programs, and giving alms to the needy and less fortunate. As a parish we need also to look into and search for our parishioners who have left the church for one reason or another and bring them back to their spiritual home. This is what Outreach means, to help those who really need the help and our attention.

We should always continue to better ourselves to need greater participation in parish life. We need more people



to continue to come up to the Holy Communion line and participate in receiving the Body and Blood of our Lord and our other sacraments. As a small but mighty community, we need more workers and volunteers, in order to be able to meet our future goals and achievements. When people have the compulsion to hold on to their possessions they are like the kind of



LOOKING FORWARD TO THE FUTURE OF St. Demetrios

person Jesus referred to when He said; “He who lays up treasures for himself, is not rich toward God”. How we handle our money reveals much about the depth of our love and commitment to Christ. This is a true fact-One sixth of the Gospels including one out of every 3 three parables relates directly to “STEWARDSHIP”. Jesus wasn’t a fundraiser but He does understand our needs for survival in this world. In our parish, we still lack in the number of dedicated workers willing to take up tasks necessary for the financial and operational benefit of the Parish.

We always seem to ignore the primary reason we work for the church is not to have controlling interest, but for the glory of God. If we want the services of the Church and are not prepared to support it to the best of our means, with Time, Talents, and Treasure, what does that say about the importance of the Church to all of us.

In order to have a healthy parish, we need much more than to give and raise more money, we need people to recognize the need to be in church on a regular basis, to praise and thank God for the blessings of life; we need parishioners who come to church not as spectators or out of sense of duty, but to commune and have a better relationship with God. I truly believe that the answer to any financial needs will be resolved when more people deepen their personal spiritual life and come to the realization that regular participation in the Divine Services of the Church is what makes for a healthy Orthodox Christian. When we get more people’s hearts in the right place then the material needs of the church will be realized. It is really as Christ said; “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Since we are coming into the New Year 2024, I wish to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have actively participated in the life of the church. Special thanks to the Members of the Parish Council who through their love and commitment to Christ and His church continue to work hard in accomplishing the many duties and tasks that the church presents throughout the year. To our faithful Ladies and Men who praise God every Sunday through their beautiful chanting that always uplifts the people in the church. To our Greek School and Sunday school Teachers and Students. They are the ones who lay the foundation of Orthodox Knowledge for our youth. Thanks also to the Members of our Greek School.

P.T.A. and the parents of the children who attend both the Greek School Classes and Sunday school classes. To our young but active youth group who every month attends the religious classes that Fr. Michael instructs. They are learning to grow into responsible Orthodox Christians by serving the Altar and other areas of the Church. To our wonderful Ladies of the Philoptochos Society for their continued hard work that they perform for the benefit not only the church but mostly for the less fortunate people of the world. I want to encourage more of our Ladies to join the activities that they encounter throughout the years. I want to thank our beautiful parishioners and “Stewards” of the church, who without their love and financial support, we would not be as successful as we are today. Many thanks to our “Kitchen Crew” for their continued commitment in helping the church grow through the many events that have taken place throughout the years.

May our Incarnate Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in the coming of the New Year 2024 bring to you and your families much Love, Peace, Harmony, Health, Joy, and Happiness.

*Wishing all of you a Happy and
Blessed New Year 2024.*



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

CHRISTMAS 2023

Χριστὸς γεννᾶται· δοξάσατε. Χριστὸς ἐξ οὐρανῶν· ἀπαντήσατε», ψάλλει ἡ Ἐκκλησία μας κατ' αὐτὴ τὴν ὥραία ἐκκλησιαστικὴ περίοδο, καλώντας καὶ προτρέποντας ὅλους μας νὰ βιώσουμε ὡς προσωπικὸ γεγονός καὶ ἐμπειρία ἐσωτερικῆ, καρδιακῆ, τὸ μυστήριον τῆς παρουσίας τοῦ Θεανθρώπου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ στὴ ζωὴ μας.

«Θεὸς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκὶ» διὰ τοῦτο δὲν πρέπει πλέον νὰ ζοῦμε μέσα στὸ πηχτὸ σκοτάδι τῆς ἁμαρτίας καὶ στὸν παγετῶνα τῶν παθῶν πού μᾶς ἀπομακρύνουν ἀπὸ τὴν φάτνη τῆς Γεννήσεως τοῦ Σωτῆρος Χριστοῦ. «Θεὸς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκὶ» διὰ τοῦτο πρέπει νὰ προσέλθουμε μετὰ δώρων ὅπως οἱ Μάγοι ἐνώπιον τοῦ Θεανθρώπου προσκομίζοντες ἀντὶ γιὰ χρυσό, λίβανο καὶ σμύρνα τὴν μετάνοια, τὰ δάκρυα καὶ καθαρὰ καρδιά. «Θεὸς ἐφανερώθη ἐν σαρκὶ» διὰ τοῦτο ἂς προσευχηθοῦμε ἐκ βάθους καρδίας ἢ εἰρήνῃ τοῦ Χριστοῦ νὰ βασιλεύσει στὶς καρδιές τῶν ἀνθρώπων γιὰ νὰ εἰρηνεύσει ὁ ταραγμένος κόσμος ἀπὸ τὰ πάθη, τοὺς πολέμους καὶ τὶς αἱματοχυσίες.

Καλὰ Χριστούγεννα καὶ εὐλογημένο τὸ νέον ἔτος 2024

“Christ is born, glorify Him! Christ has come from the Heavens, come meet Him!” Chanting these words throughout this beautiful ecclesiastical season, the Church calls and urges all of us to experience personally and within our hearts the mystery of the God-Man Jesus Christ coming into our lives.

“God has appeared in the flesh,” therefore, we no longer have to dwell in the thick darkness of sin and the frost of the passions that distance us from the manger of Christ the Savior’s Birth. “God has appeared in the flesh,” therefore we, like the Wise Men of old, must come before the God-man bearing our gifts — not gold, frankincense, and myrrh, but repentance, tears, and a pure heart. “God has appeared in the flesh,” therefore let us pray from the depths of our heart that the peace of Christ may reign in the hearts of men so that our world, rocked by suffering, wars, and the shedding of blood, may at last find peace.

Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year 2024!

With Paternal Love and Blessings,

Metropolitan Agostolos
† APOSTOLOS
Metropolitan of New Jersey



Prot. No. 828

Patriarchal Encyclical for Christmas

+ B A R T H O L O M E W

**By God's Mercy, Archbishop of Constantinople-New Rome
and Ecumenical Patriarch to All the Plenitude of the Church
Grace, Mercy, and Peace from the Saviour Christ Born in Bethlehem**

Most honorable brother hierarchs,

Beloved children in the Lord,

With the grace of God, we are once again this year celebrating in chant, hymn, and spiritual song the Nativity according to the flesh of the pre-eternal Son and Word of God, namely the manifestation of the mystery of God and humankind. According to St. Nicholas Cabasilas, what occurs in the Divine Liturgy is “the mystagogy of the Lord’s incarnation,” while its introductory acclamation “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” is evidence “that it is through the Lord’s incarnation that people first learned that God is three persons.”¹ The same saintly Father proclaims that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was the first and only to demonstrate the authentic and perfect human being, concerning His ethos, life, and everything else.”²

The assumption of human nature in the person of the Son and Word of God, along with the opening of the way of human deification through grace, add unsurpassable value to humankind. Forgetting this truth leads to the diminishment of respect for the human person. The denial of the supreme destiny of human beings does not only liberate them, but also leads to diverse reductions and divisions. Without being conscious of their divine origin and their hope for eternity, humans struggle to remain human and are unable to handle the contradictions of the “human condition.”

¹ *On the Divine Liturgy XII*, PG 150.392D.

² *On the Life of Christ VI*, PG 150.680C.



The Christian perception of human existence provides a solution to problems created by violence, war, and injustice in our world. Respect for the human person, peace, and justice are gifts from God; however, establishing the peace that comes from Christ demands the participation and cooperation of human beings. The Christian view on the struggle for peace lies in the words of Christ our Savior, who proclaims peace, addressing His disciples with the greeting “Peace be with you” and encouraging us to love our enemies.³ The revelation in Christ is called the “gospel of peace.”⁴

This means that, for us Christians, the way to peace is through peace and that non-violence, dialogue, love, forgiveness, and reconciliation have priority before other forms of resolving differences. The theology of peace is clearly described in the Ecumenical Patriarchate’s document *For the Life of the World: Toward a Social Ethos of the Orthodox Church* (2020):

“Nothing is more contrary to God’s will for His creatures fashioned in His image and likeness than violence one against another . . . We may justly say that violence is sin *par excellence*. It is the perfect contradiction of our created nature and our supernatural vocation to seek union in love with God and our neighbour. . . Peace is a real revelation of the still deeper reality of creation as God intends it and as God fashioned it in his eternal counsels.”⁵

Peace cannot be taken for granted; it is not self-evident. It is an obligation, an achievement, and an incessant struggle to preserve it. There are no automatic solutions or permanent recipes. In the face of ongoing threats to peace, we need to have vigilance and willingness to resolve problems through dialogue. The great heroes of politics are the champions of peace. As for us, we continue to underline the peacemaking role of religion. This is during a time when religions are criticized for nurturing fanaticism and violence “in the name of God” instead of being forces of peace, solidarity, and reconciliation. However, this indicates an alienation of religious faith and not an integral part of it. Genuine faith in God is the harshest critic of religious fanaticism. Religions are the natural allies of all human beings who strive for peace, justice, and the preservation of creation from human destruction.

³ Cf. Mt. 5:44

⁴ Eph. 6:44

⁵ § 42, 43 and 44.



This year, the world honours the 75th anniversary of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (December 10, 1948), constituting a summary of fundamental humanitarian ideals and values, “the shared standard, to which all peoples and all nations should aim.” Human rights, whose central point of focus includes the protection of human dignity with its individual, social, cultural, economic, and ecological conditions, are only understood in their original dynamics if they are acknowledged as the basis and criterion of global peace, associating it with freedom and justice. In this sense, the future of human rights and peace is also linked to the contribution of religions in the matter of respecting them and making them a reality.

With these thoughts and festive sentiments, in full conviction that the life of the Church in itself comprises resistance against inhumanity, wherever such inhumanity arises, we invite all of you to the good fight of constructing a culture of peace and solidarity, where people will see in the face of their fellow human beings a brother or sister and a friend, rather than a threat and enemy. Moreover, we remind you all, dear brother Hierarchs and children, that Christmas is a time of self-consciousness and thanksgiving, of the revelation of the difference between the God-man and “man-god,” of the realization of the “great miracle” of freedom in Christ and of the healing of the “great wound” of alienation from God. Finally, we kneel respectfully before Mary, the Mother of God, who bears in her arms the incarnate Word, and we convey to you the blessing of the Mother Holy Great Church of Christ, wishing you an auspicious, healthy, fruitful, peaceful, and joyous new year of the Lord’s favour.

Christmas 2023

+ Bartholomew of Constantinople

Your fervent suppliant of all before God

To be read in churches after the Gospel Reading during the Divine Liturgy on the Feast of Christmas.



Αριθμ. Πρωτ. 828

ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΙΚΗ ΑΠΟΔΕΙΞΙΣ
ΕΠΙ ΤΟΙΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥΓΕΝΝΟΙΣ

+ Β Α Ρ Θ Ο Λ Ο Μ Α Ι Ο Σ
ΕΛΕΩι ΘΕΟΥ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΟΣ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΥΠΟΛΕΩΣ – ΝΕΑΣ ΡΩΜΗΣ
ΚΑΙ ΟΙΚΟΥΜΕΝΙΚΟΣ ΠΑΤΡΙΑΡΧΗΣ
ΠΑΝΤΙ ΤΩι ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑΤΙ ΤΗΣ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ
ΧΑΡΙΝ, ΕΛΕΟΣ ΚΑΙ ΕΙΡΗΝΗΝ
ΠΑΡΑ ΤΟΥ ΕΝ ΒΗΘΛΕΕΜ ΓΕΝΝΗΘΕΝΤΟΣ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ
* * *

Τιμιώτατοι ἐν Χριστῷ ἀδελφοί Ἱεράρχαι καί πεφιλημένα τέκνα,

Ἄνωθεν εὐδοκία ἐορτάζομεν καί ἐφέτος ἐν ψαλμοῖς καί ὕμνοις καί ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς τήν κατὰ σάρκα Γέννησιν τοῦ προαιωνίου Υἱοῦ καί Λόγου τοῦ Θεοῦ, τήν φανέρωσιν δηλονότι τοῦ μυστηρίου τοῦ Θεοῦ καί τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Κατά τόν Ἅγιον Νικόλαον Καβάσιλαν, τά τελούμενα εἰς τήν Θεῖαν Λειτουργίαν εἶναι «τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως τοῦ Κυρίου μυσταγωγία», τό δέ ἐν τοῖς προοιμίοις αὐτῆς δοξολογικόν «Εὐλογημένη ἡ Βασιλεία τοῦ Πατρὸς καί τοῦ Υἱοῦ καί τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος» μαρτυρεῖ «ὅτι διὰ τῆς ἐνανθρωπήσεως τοῦ Κυρίου πρῶτον ἐμάνθανον οἱ ἄνθρωποι ὡς εἶη τρία πρόσωπα ὁ Θεός»¹. Ὁ ἱερός πατήρ διακηρύττει ὅτι ὁ Κύριος καί Σωτήρ ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστός «τόν ἀληθινόν ἄνθρωπον καί τέλειον καί τρόπων καί ζωῆς καί τῶν ἄλλων ἕνεκα πάντων πρῶτος καί μόνος ἔδειξεν»².

Ἡ πρόσληψις τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως ἐν τῷ προσώπῳ τοῦ Υἱοῦ καί Λόγου τοῦ Θεοῦ καί ἡ διάνοιξις τῆς ὁδοῦ τῆς κατὰ χάριν θεώσεως εἰς τόν ἄνθρωπον προσδίδουν εἰς αὐτόν ἀνυπέρβλητον ἀξίαν. Ἡ λήθη αὐτῆς τῆς ἀληθείας ὁδηγεῖ εἰς μείωσιν τοῦ σεβασμοῦ πρὸς τό ἀνθρώπινον πρόσωπον. Ἡ ἄρνησις τοῦ ὑψηλοῦ προορισμοῦ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ὄχι μόνον δέν τόν ἀπελευθερώνει, ἀλλά ὁδηγεῖ εἰς ποικίλας συρρικνώσεις καί διχασμούς. Ἄνευ συνειδήσεως τῆς θείας προελεύσεώς του καί τῆς ἐλπίδος τῆς αἰωνιότητος, ὁ ἄνθρωπος δυσκολεύεται νά παραμείνῃ ἀνθρώπινος, ἀδυνατεῖ νά διαχειρισθῇ τὰς ἀντιφάσεις τῆς «ἀνθρωπίνης καταστάσεως».

Ἡ χριστιανική κατανόησις τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ὑπάρξεως προσφέρει λύσιν τῶν προβλημάτων, τά ὅποια δημιουργοῦν ἡ βία, ὁ πόλεμος καί ἡ ἀδικία εἰς τόν κόσμον μας.

¹ Εἰς τήν Θεῖαν Λειτουργίαν, ΙΒ', PG 150, 392D.

² Περί τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ ζωῆς, ΣΤ', PG 150, 680C.



Ὁ σεβασμός τοῦ ἀνθρωπίνου προσώπου, ἡ εἰρήνη καί ἡ δικαιοσύνη εἶναι δῶρον τοῦ Θεοῦ, ἡ ἐγκαθίδρυσις ὅμως τῆς κομισθείσης ὑπὸ τοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰρήνης ἀπαιτεῖ συμμετοχήν καί συνεργίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων. Ἡ χριστιανική τοποθέτησις εἰς τό θέμα τοῦ ἀγῶνος διὰ τήν εἰρήνην συγκροτεῖται διὰ τῶν λόγων τοῦ Σωτῆρος Χριστοῦ, ὁ ὁποῖος εὐαγγελίζεται τήν εἰρήνην, χαιρετᾷ μέ τό «Εἰρήνη ὑμῖν» καί παροτρύνει τοὺς ἀνθρώπους νά ἀγαποῦν τοὺς ἐχθρούς των³. Ἡ ἐν Χριστῷ ἀποκάλυψις χαρακτηρίζεται ὡς «εὐαγγέλιον τῆς εἰρήνης»⁴. Αὐτό σημαίνει ὅτι δι' ἡμᾶς τοὺς Χριστιανούς, ἡ ὁδός πρὸς τήν εἰρήνην εἶναι ἡ εἰρήνη, ὅτι ἡ μή βία, ὁ διάλογος, ἡ ἀγάπη, ἡ συγχώρησις καί ἡ καταλλαγή ἔχουν προτεραιότητα ἀπέναντι εἰς ἄλλας μορφάς ἐπιλύσεως διαφορῶν. Μέ σαφήνειαν περιγράφεται ἡ θεολογία τῆς εἰρήνης εἰς τό κείμενον τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου «"Ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς". Τό κοινωνικό ἥθος τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας» (2020): «Τίποτε δέν ἀντιτίθεται περισσότερο στό θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ γιά τά πλάσματά Του πού ἔχουν δημιουργηθεῖ κατ' εἰκόνα καί καθ' ὁμοίωσίν Του, ἀπό τή βία πού ἀσκεῖται ἐναντίον τοῦ πλησίον... Μποροῦμε ὀρθά νά ἰσχυριστοῦμε ὅτι ἡ βία ἀποτελεῖ τήν κατ' ἐξοχήν ἁμαρτία. Πρόκειται γιά τήν τέλεια ἀντίθεση μεταξύ τῆς κτιστῆς μας φύσης καί τῆς ὑπερφυσικῆς μας κλήσης πρὸς ἀναζήτηση τῆς ἀγαπητικῆς ἕνωσης μέ τόν Θεό καί τόν πλησίον μας... Ἡ εἰρήνη ἀποτελεῖ μία πραγματική ἀποκάλυψη τῆς βαθύτερης πραγματικότητος τῆς δημιουργίας σύμφωνα πρὸς τό θέλημα τοῦ Θεοῦ, καί τῆς μορφῆς ὅπως τήν σχεδίασε Ἐκεῖνος κατὰ τίς αἰώνιες βουλές Του»⁵.

Ἡ εἰρήνη δέν εἶναι δεδομένη καί αὐτονόητος, ἀλλά χρέος, κατόρθωμα, διαρκῆς μέριμνα καί ἀδιάκοπος ἀγών διὰ τήν διατήρησίν της. Δέν ὑπάρχουν αὐτοματισμοί καί μόνιμοι συνταγαί. Ἀπέναντι εἰς τὰς ἐκάστοτε ἀπειλὰς τῆς εἰρήνης ἀπαιτεῖται ἐγρήγορις, βούλησις διὰ λύσιν τῶν προβλημάτων διὰ μέσου τοῦ διαλόγου. Οἱ μεγάλοι ἥρωες τῆς πολιτικῆς εἶναι οἱ ἀγωνισταί τῆς εἰρήνης. Ἡμεῖς συνεχίζομεν νά τονίζωμεν τόν εἰρηνοποιητικόν ρόλον τῶν θρησκείων, εἰς μίαν ἐποχήν κατὰ τήν ὁποίαν ἀσκεῖται κριτική εἰς τὰς θρησκείας, ἐπειδή, ἀντί νά ἀναδεικνύωνται δυνάμεις εἰρήνης, ἀλληλεγγύης καί καταλλαγῆς, τροφοδοτοῦν τόν φανατισμόν καί τήν βίαν «ἐν ὀνόματι τοῦ Θεοῦ: Πρόκειται περί ἀλλοτριώσεως τῆς θρησκευτικῆς πίστεως καί ὄχι περί συμφυοῦς μέ αὐτήν φαινομένου. Ἡ γνησία πίστις εἰς τόν Θεόν εἶναι ὁ αὐστηρότερος κριτής τοῦ θρησκευτικοῦ φανατισμοῦ. Αἱ θρησκείαι εἶναι οἱ φυσικοὶ σύμμαχοι ὅλων τῶν ἀνθρώπων, οἱ ὁποῖοι ἀγωνίζονται διὰ τήν εἰρήνην, τήν δικαιοσύνην καί τήν προστασίαν τῆς κτίσεως ἀπό τήν ἀνθρωπογενῆ καταστροφήν.

Ἡ ἀνθρωπότης τιμᾷ ἐφέτος τήν 75^{ην} ἐπέτειον τῆς Οἰκουμενικῆς Διακηρύξεως τῶν δικαιωμάτων τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (10 Δεκεμβρίου 1948), ἡ ὁποία ἀποτελεῖ σύννοψιν τῶν

³ Βλ. Ματθ, ε', 44.

⁴ Ἐφεσ. στ', 15.

⁵ § 42, 43 καί 44.



θεμελιωδῶν ἀνθρωπιστικῶν ιδεωδῶν καί ἀξιῶν, «τό κοινόν ἰδανικόν, εἰς τό ὁποῖον πρέπει νά κατατείνουν ὅλοι οἱ λαοί καί ὅλα τά ἔθνη». Τά δικαιώματα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, κεντρικόν σημεῖον ἀναφορᾶς τῶν ὁποίων εἶναι ἡ προστασία τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης ἀξιοπρεπείας καί τῶν ἀτομικῶν, κοινωνικῶν, πολιτισμικῶν, οἰκονομικῶν καί περιβαλλοντικῶν ὅρων της, κατανοοῦνται εἰς τήν ἀρχικήν δυναμικήν των, ἐάν ἀναγνωρισθοῦν ὡς θεμέλιον καί κριτήριον τῆς παγκοσμίου εἰρήνης, τήν ὁποίαν συνδέουν μέ τήν ἐλευθερίαν καί τήν δικαιοσύνην. Ἐν τῇ ἐννοίᾳ ταύτῃ, τό μέλλον τῶν δικαιωμάτων τοῦ ἀνθρώπου καί τῆς εἰρήνης συνδέεται καί μέ τήν συμβολήν τῶν θρησκευτικῶν εἰς τήν ὑπόθεσιν τοῦ σεβασμοῦ καί τῆς πραγματώσεώς των.

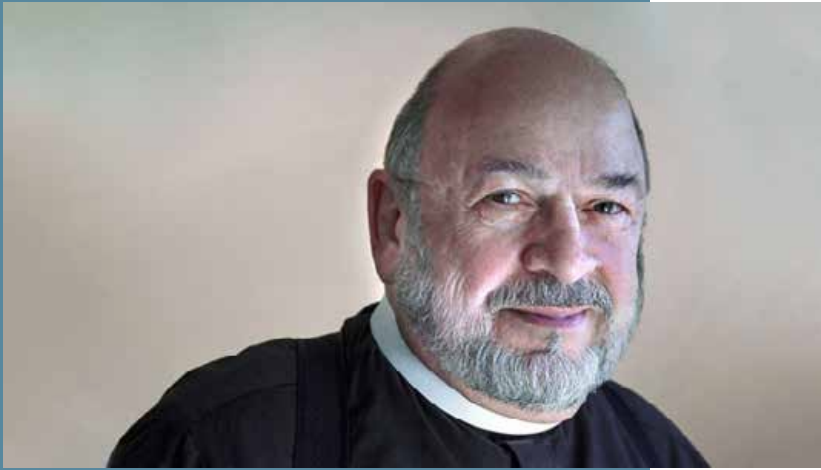
Μέ τοιαύτας σκέψεις καί ἐόρτια αἰσθήματα, ἐν πλήρει βεβαιότητι ὅτι ἡ ζωή τῆς Ἐκκλησίας καθ' ἑαυτήν ἀποτελεῖ ἀντίστασιν εἰς τόν ἀπανθρωπισμόν, ἀπό ὅπου καί ἄν αὐτός προέρχεται, καλοῦντες πάντας ὑμᾶς εἰς τόν καλόν ἀγῶνα τῆς οἰκοδομῆς ἑνός πολιτισμοῦ εἰρήνης καί καταλλαγῆς, εἰς τόν ὁποῖον ὁ ἄνθρωπος θά βλέπη εἰς τό πρόσωπον τοῦ συνανθρώπου του τόν ἀδελφόν καί τόν φίλον καί ὄχι τόν ἐπίβουλον καί τόν ἐχθρόν, καί ὑπενθυμίζοντες εἰς ὑμᾶς πάντας, ἀδελφοί καί τέκνα, ὅτι τά Χριστούγεννα εἶναι καιρός αὐτογνωσίας καί εὐχαριστίας, ἀποκαλύψεως τῆς διαφορᾶς μεταξύ Θεανθρώπου καί «ἀνθρωποθεοῦ», συνειδητοποιήσεως τοῦ «μεγάλου θαύματος» τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ ἐλευθερίας καί τῆς ἰάσεως τοῦ «μεγάλου τραύματος» τῆς ἀλλοτριώσεως ἀπό τόν Θεόν, κλίνομεν εὐλαβῶς τό γόνυ ἐνώπιον τῆς κρατούσης ἐν ταῖς ἀγκάλαις αὐτῆς τόν σαρκωθέντα Λόγον Θεομήτορος Μαριάμ, μεταφέροντες δέ πρός ὑμᾶς τήν εὐλογίαν τῆς Μητρός Ἀγίας τοῦ Χριστοῦ Μεγάλῃς Ἐκκλησίας, εὐχόμεθα αἴσιον, ὑγιερόν, εὐκαρπον, εἰρηνικόν καί εὐφρόσυνον τόν ἐπερχόμενον νέον ἐνιαυτόν τῆς χρηστότητος τοῦ Κυρίου.

Χριστούγεννα ,βγκ'
† Ὁ Κωνσταντινουπόλεως
διάπυρος πρὸς Θεόν εὐχέτης πάντων ὑμῶν

Ἀναγνωσθήτω ἐπ' ἐκκλησίας κατὰ τήν Θεῖαν Λειτουργίαν τῆς ἐορτῆς τῶν Χριστουγέννων, μετὰ τό Ἱερόν Εὐαγγέλιον.

a tribute to

FATHER
STEVEN VLAHOS



Father Steven Vlahos, who had been at the helm of St. Demetrios since 1992, was acknowledged for his outstanding contributions to the church and the community. In addition to his role as the church's spiritual leader, Father Steven holds the civil position of special deputy surrogate of Camden County. Over the years, he has overseen numerous educational, spiritual, and building enhancements, including constructing a sea wall by the State of New Jersey.

Father Steven's impact extends beyond the church walls, evident in his efforts to enhance the local infrastructure, attract summer vacationers, and foster the growth of the St. Demetrios community. Father Steven's family life includes his marriage to Presvytera Chrysi and their proud parenthood of son Demetrios Troy, daughter Anastasia (Joseph) DiAntonio, and their grandson Joseph Steven.

North Wildwood, NJ - In a heartfelt celebration, St. Demetrios Greek orthodox Church in North Wildwood, New Jersey, paid tribute to the remarkable quarter century ministry of Father Steven Vlahos on Saturday, November 4th. The occasion, set against the backdrop of the St. Demetrios feast day dinner service, was marked by a myriad of festivities, including the dedication of a portrait of Father Steven in recognition of his unwavering commitment.

The event attended by the parishioners and community members alike, was a testament to the parish's love and appreciation for Father Steven. The evening commenced with speeches from prominent figures, including parish council president Nicholas Konides and parish secretary William Mitchell. Special recognition was also extended to Parish Legal Counsel Marcus Karavan for his volunteer services.

The festivities unfolded with a delectable Greek dinner prepared by parish members, accompanied by homemade Greek desserts that added a touch of authenticity to the celebration. The joyous occasion reached its pinnacle with Greek music and dancing uniting the community to celebrate shared faith and camaraderie.

The recognition bestowed upon him during the feast dinner dance is a well-deserved tribute to a lifetime of service, dedication, and unwavering faith. In the words of St. John Chrysostom, "Priests have received a power which God has not given to angels or archangels." Through five decades of service, Father Steven Vlahos has exemplified this divine power, bringing spiritual guidance, community enrichment, and a legacy of love to St. Demetrios Church and beyond.





In memory - In honor

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



Greek Corner

Throughout the ages, mankind has had sayings, parables, and idioms which express thoughts and truisms which are didactic without addressing specific persons in conversation. The messages are universal occurring in many countries passed down from generation to generation, although the subjects may differ.

We offer some of these in our Greek culture that we have found interesting and invite you to submit those that are familiar to you from your Greek families.

Please submit them to Father Michael: frmichaelstdemetrios@gmail.com Thank you.

1. μαύρο τό γάλα, μαύρο! milk is black, black!

I'll just go along with what you say, although I don't agree.

If you say milk is black, then milk is black.

2. όπου ακούς πολλά κεράσια, μικρό καλάθη βάστα!

Where you've heard there are many cherries, carry a small basket.

Don't believe the hype, the exaggerations.

3. όπου ακούς πολλούς πετινούς, αργή νά ξυμερόση!

When you hear many roosters, the dawn is delayed.

Too many cooks, spoiled the food.

4. κάνε το καλό, καί ρήξτο στό γιαλό!

Do a good deed and toss it to the sea; forget about it, even if it harms you, don't expect anything in return.

5. τό «φ», τό κάνουν φύρα!

They create a whole word from one letter. Making a mountain out of a molehill! Much ado about nothing!



Epiphany of our Lord January 6

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



Introduction

The Feast of the Holy Theophany (Epiphany) of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ is celebrated each year on January 6. The Feast commemorates the Baptism of Christ and the divine revelation of the Holy Trinity. At the Baptism of Christ, all three Persons of the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—were made manifest. Thus, the name of the Feast is Epiphany, meaning manifestation, or Theophany, meaning manifestation of God.

Biblical Story

The story of the Nativity of Christ is The Biblical story of the Baptism of Christ is recorded in all four of the Gospels: Matthew 3, Mark 1:1-9, Luke 3:21-22, and John 1:31-34.

John the Baptist, the cousin of Jesus and the one chosen by God to proclaim His coming, was preaching in the wilderness and was baptizing all who would respond to his message calling for repentance. As he was doing this, John was directing the people toward the one who would baptize them with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11).

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. Initially, John would not do this, saying that Jesus should baptize him. Jesus said to John, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness (3:15). John consented and baptized Jesus.

When Jesus came up from the water, the heavens opened suddenly, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. The Bible records that the Spirit descended like a dove and alighted on him. When this happened, a voice came from heaven and said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." This was the voice of God the Father.

Christ's baptism in the Jordan was "theophany," a manifestation of God to the world, because it was the beginning of our Lord's public ministry. It was also a "theophany" in that the world was granted a revelation of the Holy Trinity. All three Persons were made manifest together: the Father testified from on high to the divine Sonship of Jesus; the Son received His Father's testimony; and the Spirit was seen in the form of a dove, descending from the Father and resting upon the Son.

The theme of "manifestation" or "revelation" is also expressed in Scripture with the symbolism of light. In the hymn of the Feast we sing, "Christ has appeared and enlightened the world." Thus, January 6 is also known as the Feast of Lights. The Church celebrates on this day the illumination of the world by the light of Christ.

Icon of the Feast

The Icon of the Feast of Theophany tells the story from the Gospels in images and color. On the left side of the icon we see John the Baptist who is dressed in camel's hair and has the appearance of one who lives in the wilderness. His arms are outstretched, showing an attitude of prayer and reverence, but also directing others to Christ. With his right hand he is conducting the baptism.

In the center of the icon is Christ being baptized in the Jordan. He is standing in the water wearing a waistcloth, and with His right hand He is blessing the waters of the Jordan. Above His head is the Holy Spirit descending as a dove upon Him. At the top

of the icon, a semicircle depicts the opening of the Heavens and the voice of the Father.

On the right side of the icon angels are shown with their heads bowed in reverence to Christ. They are prepared to receive Him as He comes out of the water.

The Orthodox Celebration of the Feast of Epiphany

The celebration of this Feast of our Lord begins on January 5, a day known as the Forefeast of Theophany. Depending on the day of the week, this could be an evening service with Vespers followed by the Liturgy of Saint Basil or a morning service with Matins and the Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom. Following the service on January 5, the service of the Blessing of the Waters is conducted. Prior to the evening or morning service the Royal Hours with the Typika are said.

On January 6, the day of the Feast, the Divine Liturgy of Saint John Chrysostom is conducted preceded by Matins and followed by the second Blessing of the Waters.

The Blessing of the Waters is conducted in the church; however in many places throughout the world services are conducted near open bodies of water. As a sign of blessing as Christ blessed the Jordan, holy water is poured into the body of water. An associated tradition has been the tossing of a cross into the water to be retrieved by divers.

The holy water from the church is given to the faithful to consume and to use in blessing their homes. In the weeks following the Feast, clergy visit the homes of parishioners and conduct a service of blessing using the holy water that was blessed on the Feast of Theophany.

Scripture readings for the Feast are the following: At the Vespers/Divine Liturgy on January 5: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27; Luke 3:1-18. At the Divine Liturgy on January 6: Titus 2:11-14, 3:4-7; Matthew 3:13-17.



St. Demetrios Happenings



Father Steven Vlahos and Presbytera Chrysi during the Gala where he was honored on November 4, 2023. His portrait is displayed on the wall of our community hall. Gala attendees pictured below.



St. Demetrios Parish Council enjoying a special night out with Father Michael.



Election day at St. Demetrios - December 10, 2023 and the Election Committee.



On Saturday, December 14, Father Michael and the children of the parish enjoyed a fun day together. The children also received instruction on certain religious issues and topics.



Two local families celebrated 40 day blessings.



The Sunday School children enjoying their weekly lesson.



St. Demetrios Youth Christmas Caroling





GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

ARCHEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL

Prot. No. 363/2023

Archepiscopal Encyclical on the New Year 2024

January 1, 2024

Ὅστε εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ καινὴ κτίσις· τὰ ἀρχαῖα παρῆλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονε καινὰ τὰ πάντα.

(Πρὸς Κορινθίους Β΄ 5:17)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation! What's past has passed.

Behold! Everything is new!

(II Cor 5:17)

Unto the Most Reverend and Right Reverend Hierarchs, Pious Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, Presidents and Members of Parish Councils, Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Members of Leadership 100, the Day and Afternoon Schools, Philoptochos Societies, the Youth, Greek Orthodox Organizations, and the entirety of the Christ-named Plenitude of the Holy Archdiocese of America:

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

On this first day of the New Year of 2024, let us embrace the newness in Christ, which He has appointed for our renewal and salvation. The Apostle Paul reminds us that we are, in fact, new creations! And that whatever has transpired is beyond us, forgiven and even forgotten. For every new year — whether this civil one, or the Ecclesiastical New Year on September 1 — is a call and opportunity to begin again. Why? Because in Christ, “everything is new.”

This is the truest and the best optimism. Neither a false hope for the future, nor a denial of mistakes in the past. We press forward in Christ, Who is an ever-flowing fountain of love, mercy, compassion and forgiveness. This is how we are called to live — in the dynamic flow of God's grace through the Holy Spirit. Whether it is by our participation in the Sacred Mysteries of the Church, or by applying the teachings of our Savior in our everyday lives. When we pray, “give us this day our daily bread,” it is much



more than an invocation of the Eucharist, as precious and profound as it is. We are affirming that the gift of life itself is a constant source of God's nourishing love and care.

Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, let us embrace 2024 with the optimism that is grounded in the truth of God. And as we base our hopes in the promises of His Grace, let us remember the Saint of this Day, and the sacred institution of our Archdiocese that bears his righteous name. Saint Basil Academy is a literal incarnation of new beginnings. It is a place of God's love and His promise where newness of life flourishes. Let us always generously remember the Academy and its mission. And may the New Year of God's grace bestow upon you and all those you love the blessings of good health of body and soul, and the newness of life that propels you to reach for even greater spiritual heights.

With much paternal love in Christ,

† ELPIDOPHOROS
Archbishop of America

Note: To be read in every parish of the Archdiocese on Monday, January 1, 2024.



ΙΕΡΑ ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΗ ΑΜΕΡΙΚΗΣ

ΑΡΧΙΕΠΙΣΚΟΠΙΚΗ ΕΓΚΥΚΛΙΟΣ

Αριθμ. Πρωτ. 363/2023

Αρχιεπισκοπική Έγκύκλιος για τὸ νέο ἔτος 2024.

1 Ιανουαρίου 2024

Πρὸς τοὺς Σεβασμιωτάτους καὶ Θεοφιλεστάτους Ἀρχιερεῖς, τοὺς Εὐλαβεστάτους Ἱερεῖς καὶ Διακόνους, τοὺς Μοναχοὺς καὶ τὶς Μοναχές, τοὺς Προέδρους καὶ τὰ Μέλη τῶν Κοινοτικῶν Συμβουλίων, τοὺς Ἐντιμολογιωτάτους Ἀρχοντες τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριαρχείου, τὰ μέλη τῆς Ἡγεσίας τῶν 100, τὰ Ἡμερήσια καὶ Απογευματινὰ Σχολεῖα, τὶς Φιλοπτώχους Ἀδελφότητες, τὴ Νεολαία, τὶς Ἑλληνορθόδοξες Ὄργανώσεις καὶ ὁλόκληρο τὸ Χριστεπώνυμο πλήρωμα τῆς Ἱερᾶς Αρχιεπισκοπῆς Ἀμερικῆς.

«Ὡστε εἴ τις ἐν Χριστῷ καινὴ κτίσις· τὰ ἀρχαῖα παρῆλθεν, ἰδοὺ γέγονε καινὰ τὰ πάντα» (Πρὸς Κορινθίους Β΄ 5:17).

Προσφιλεῖς ἀδελφοὶ καὶ ἀδελφές ἐν Χριστῷ,

Αὕτῃ τὴν πρώτη ἡμέρα τοῦ νέου ἔτους 2024, ἃς ἀνανεωθοῦμε ἐν Χριστῷ, ὅπως μᾶς ἔδειξε τὸν δρόμο τῆς σωτηρίας ὁ ἴδιος μὲ τὴν ἐνανθρώπισή του. Ὁ ἀπόστολος τῶν ἐθνῶν Παῦλος μᾶς ὑπενθυμίζει, ὅτι στὴν πραγματικότητα εἴμαστε νέα δημιουργήματα! Καὶ ὅ,τιδήποτε κακὸ ἔχει συμβεῖ, ἃς μείνει πίσω μας, συγχωρεμένο καὶ ξεχασμένο! Γιατὶ κάθε ἀρχὴ νέου ἔτους, εἴτε αὐτὸ εἶναι ἐκκλησιαστικό, τὴν 1^η Σεπτεμβρίου, εἴτε πολιτικό, ὅπως ἡ σημερινὴ ἡμέρα, ἀποτελεῖ μία μοναδικὴ εὐκαιρία γιὰ ἐπανεκκίνηση. Γιατὶ ἄραγε; Διότι «ἐν Χριστῷ γέγονε καινὰ τὰ πάντα»!

Αὐτὸ ἀκριβῶς σημαίνει νὰ εἶσαι ἀληθινὰ αἰσιόδοξος. Οὔτε ψεύτικες ἐλπίδες γιὰ τὸ μέλλον, οὔτε ἄρνηση τῶν λαθῶν τοῦ παρελθόντος. Προχωροῦμε μπροστὰ μὲ τὸ Χριστὸ ὁδηγό, ὁ ὁποῖος εἶναι ἡ ἀστείρευτὴ πηγὴ τῆς ἀγάπης, τοῦ ἐλέους, τῆς συμπόνιας καὶ τῆς συγχωρήσεως. Γιὰ αὐτό, ὡς χριστιανοὶ καλοῦμαστε νὰ ζήσουμε ἔχοντας στὴ ζωὴ μας τὴ χάρη τοῦ Θεοῦ διὰ τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος, εἴτε μὲ τὴ συμμετοχὴ μας στὰ ἱερά μυστήρια τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας, εἴτε μὲ τὴν ἐφαρμογὴ στὴ ζωὴ μας τῆς διδασκαλίας τοῦ



Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. Ἡ ἐπίκληση στήν κυριακή προσευχή «τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον», εἶναι κάτι περισσότερο ἀπὸ μία πολίτιμη εὐχαριστηριακὴ ἐπίκληση! Ἐπιβεβαιώνουμε μὲ αὐτὸ τὸν τρόπο ὅτι αὐτὸ τὸ μοναδικὸ δῶρο τῆς ζωῆς ἀποτελεῖ σταθερὴ πηγὴ τῆς θρεπτικῆς ἀγάπης καὶ φροντίδας τοῦ Θεοῦ πρὸς ἐμᾶς.

Ἐπομένως, ἀγαπητοί μου ἀδελφοί, ἄς ὑποδεχοῦμε τὸ 2024 μὲ αἰσιοδοξία, ἡ ὁποία θεμελιώνεται στήν ἀλήθεια τοῦ Θεοῦ. Καθὼς στηρίζουμε τὶς ἐλπίδες μας στήν ἐμπερία τῆς Θείας Χάριτος, ἄς θυμηθοῦμε καὶ τὸν ἅγιο τῆς ἡμέρας καὶ τὸ καθίδρυμα τῆς Ἀρχιεπισκοπῆς μας ποὺ φέρει τὸ ὄνομά του. Ἡ Ἀκαδημία τοῦ Ἁγίου Βασιλείου εἶναι πραγματικὰ ἡ ἐνσάρκωση τῆς νέας ἀφετηρίας. Ἀποτελεῖ τόπο τῆς ἀγάπης τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ τῆς ὑπόσχεσής του γιὰ τὴν ἀνθιστὴν νέας ζωῆς. Ἄς θυμηθοῦμε γεναιόδωρα τὴν Ἀκαδημία καὶ τὴν ἀποστολὴ της καὶ εἴθε ἡ νέα χρονιά μὲ τὴ χάρη τοῦ Θεοῦ, νὰ φέρει ὑγεία ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος μὲ πολλὰς εὐλογίες σὲ ἐσᾶς καὶ σὲ ὅλους ὅσους ἀγαπᾶτε, προσεγγίζοντας ἀκόμη ὑψηλότερα πνευματικὰ ὕψη!

Μετὰ πολλῆς ἐν Χριστῷ πατρικῆς ἀγάπης,

† ὁ Ἀμερικῆς Ἐλπιδοφόρος

Σημείωσις: Νὰ ἀναγνωσθεῖ σὲ ὅλες τὶς ἐνορίες τῆς Ἀμερικῆς τὴν Δευτέρα, 1 Ἰανουαρίου 2024.



The Blessings Of The Homes ~ Αγιασμός των Οικιών

Οι προσευχές της Ακολουθίας των Θεοφανείων μας προτείνουν να αγιάσουμε τα σπίτια μας, και τους αγρούς μας, με τον Μεγάλο Αγιασμό προς ένδειξιν της πίστεώς μας, προς τον Πανάγαθο Θεό και των όσων αγαθών μας έχει χαρίσει και ακόμη για να έχουμε καλή και υγιή χρονιά. Παρακαλείστε όλοι να συνεχίσετε την παράδοση και να αγιάσετε τις οικίες σας με τον Μεγάλο Αγιασμό που θα λάβετε από την Εκκλησία στις 6 Ιανουαρίου. Παρακαλείτε λοιπόν, όποιος επιθυμεί να αγιαστεί η οικία του από τον Πατέρα Μιχάλη να συμπληρώσει το παρακάτω έντυπο και να το επιστρέψει στο γραφείο της εκκλησίας. Παρακαλούμε να επικοινωνήσετε με τον Πάτερ μέσω τηλεφώνου ή ηλεκτρονικής διευθύνσεως για να κανονίσετε τις λεπτομέρειες. Σας ευχαριστούμε και Ευτηχισμένο το Νέο Έτος!

The prayers of the Epiphany Service indicates to the faithful to bless their homes with the Holy Water as an expression of faith to God that He grants them a prosperous and healthy New Year. Everyone is encouraged to continue this tradition and bless their home with the Holy Water that they receive from the Church on January 6th. Those parishioners who wish for Father Michael to visit their home so that it may be blessed, are asked to fill out the information below and return this form to the Church office. We also please ask you to contact Father Michael via telephone or email to make the necessary arrangements. Thank you and have a Happy New Year!

Name/Όνομα

Address/Διεύθυνση

Telephone Number/Αριθμός Τηλεφώνου



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.

directory

PROTOPRESBYTER | FR. MICHAEL PASTRIKOS
CHURCH SECRETARY | TBD

PARISH COUNCIL:

PRESIDENT | NICHOLAS D. KONIDES
VICE PRESIDENT | DR. GEORGE KOUMARAS
TREASURER | THEODORE KATSIKARIS
SECRETARY | WILLIAM MITCHELL

MEMBERS OF COUNCIL:

KOSTA BILIOS
SPIRO KELLIS
GEORGE MALLOUS
GEORGE TSAMIS
GEORGE PAPAGEORGIOU

ATTORNEY: MARCUS KARAVAN, ESQ.

SUNDAY SCHOOL | SOPHIA KINIROPOULOS

GREEK SCHOOL | GEORGE PLAMANTOURAS

J.O.Y. | FR. MICHAEL PASTRIKOS

H.O.P.E. | FR. MICHAEL PASTRIKOS

PHILOPTOCHOS | DINA BILIOS

CHANTERS | FOTINI ANDY, RITA EFTHIMIOU, CATHY WOLFE

CHURCH: 1.609.522.0152

321 ST. DEMETRIOS AVE, NORTH WILDWOOD, NJ 08260

STDEMETRIOSNEWJERSEY.COM

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



liturgical calendar

JANUARY

***HAPPY NEW YEAR to everyone in the community.
May it be blessed with abundant health and prosperity.***

- Friday, January 5: Eve of Epiphany - Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 9:30 am (Strict Fast)
The Blessing of the Waters will take place at the end of the Liturgy.
- Saturday, January 6: Holy Epiphany Day: Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 9:30 am
The Blessing of the Great Waters will take place at the end of the Liturgy.
- Sunday, January 7: The (SYNAXIS) of St. John the Baptist Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 10:00 am
- Sunday, January 14: Sunday after Holy Epiphany: Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 10:00 am
- Sunday, January 21: 12th Sunday of St. Luke: Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 10:00 am
- Sunday, January 28: 15th Sunday of St. Luke (Zacchaeus) Orthros 9:00 am Divine Liturgy 10:00 am

On the 6th of January we celebrate the Holy Baptism (Holy Epiphany) of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is a Major Feast Day of the Church. We must all make an effort to come to church on this day to worship and glorify our Lord. Blessing of the Great Waters will take place near the end of the Divine Liturgy.

***** **Attention Everyone*******

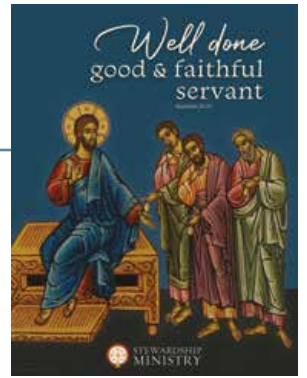
If the weather is good, we will also go outside on the (Great Wall) to do the Blessing of the Waters and also the Throwing of the Cross into the Ocean.





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.



help us grow with VANCO GIVING

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.

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

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 _____

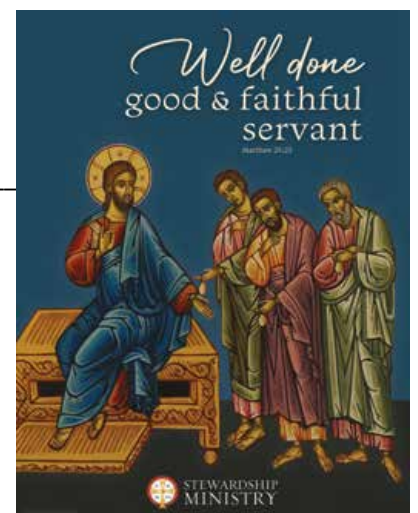
Single/Individual \$500.00

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 KNOW THAT GOD IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS?

REFLECTIONS ON WHY WE BELIEVE THAT THERE IS A GOD AND THERE IS ETERNAL LIFE AFTER DEATH.

If we look at the Disciples of the Lord, they were normal fisherman doing what they do every day. They had their families, their work, they had their homes- in fact everything was going very well for them. But then, how does a person give up all these things to follow a person who they don't even know. They met Him for the first time. This is a very good question? I will give all of you who are reading this article a simple answer. This man that they met, "WAS JESUS CHRIST" in all His Divine and Human natures. The Disciples upon meeting Christ must have felt His overwhelming power to attract men to Him. No one leaves his job, his family, his wife, and his children to follow someone that they don't know and trust. It has nothing to do with trust, but they were "CHOSEN BY GOD". That is the simple answer, and one by one they all accepted to follow Him.

Let's take another option or example: Andrew the first called Disciple, what did he see in this stranger. Peter who was somewhat the strongest of all the disciples, why did he follow Christ? Because when you see and hear of His teachings, His miracles, how can you not believe in God? When the disciples witnessed these events, they knew for

a fact that Christ was not just a normal man. He had Godly powers, and His preaching was all about love. So let's take the examples of the disciples, we don't have to go any further. They followed Him to their death. Would you leave everything behind especially your own flesh and blood to follow a person to your own death? I would doubt that very much. But they did(Why)? Because they had proof that He was the Messiah that the Old Testament and Prophesies were writing about. In His 33 years of Ministry on this earth Jesus taught, preached, that the Kingdom of God is at hand, and that we should repent for our sins and be baptized in Christ. There is so much history and truth that God does exist. We should all research and feel in our hearts that Christ is our true God and Savior. Let's take the examples of His miracles. He healed paralytics, Lepers, demoniacs, He raised Lazarus and others from their deaths. He fed the 5,000 people with 2 fish and 5 loaves of bread. He was crucified in front of hundreds of people including His disciples and all the people who followed to His death and yet He arose from death. After His death He went down to Hades and brought up those who heard His preaching and believed. We see that in the Icon of the Resurrection where He takes the hands of Adam and Eve and raises them up with Him. He proved to His disciples in the Upper Room, that He did truly resurrect, He proved it to Mary Madeline and others who went to the empty tomb. After 8 days Christ came



QUESTION & ANSWER:

HOW DO WE KNOW THAT GOD IS WHO HE SAYS HE IS?

CONTINUED...

back to Thomas to show him that He truly arose from His death. He also came back to them on Pentecost. He showed Himself to over 500 people after His death. How much more proof do we need to say that Christ is alive and His kingdom is open to all of us when we leave this earth.

Can you also imagine when Christ took Peter, James, and John to the Mountain of Tabor during His Transfiguration? Are you serious and you still don't believe?? Isn't that enough proving that God does exist? How much more proof does anyone need? There are thousands of writings in the Old Testament that proves that Christ does exist. How many devout Christians who have died because they followed Christ without even seeing Him. Who would give up their life enduring tortures, prison, beatings, thrown to Lions, and being beheaded just for the name of Christ? How many Christians who died by the sword, died by hanging, died by crucifixion, died in prison from tortures and they didn't see Christ but believed in Him. (WHO DOES THAT)? How can I plainly put this in writing, and still have critics that don't believe and are atheistic in their beliefs and they don't even have an inch of proof that Jesus Christ is not God. How can 2 thousand years go by with billions of Christians who believe in Christ not be true. This is not a fad, or a made up story that comes and goes. This is real- Jesus Christ does exist and He is our True God and Savior. Let's take another example, if we take the "SAINTS"

of the Church. Look what they have provided throughout the centuries expressing their faith and teachings for Jesus Christ. Why would thousands of Saints leave everything from this world to join Monasteries all over the world Demonstrating their faith and depriving themselves of the earthly riches and pleasures, and a good life, to live a life of isolation, and poverty? What changes a person to accept that kind of life to live their entire life solely for Jesus Christ? The thousands of stories in history of people who were healed from rare diseases, even today miracles still exist in this world that we live in. How do miracles happen? (Is it Magic)? Of course not? It's people that have faith in Christ, and that's how miracles happen. It's through their faith they receive their healing, and through the blessings of our Almighty God and Father Jesus Christ.

After reading this article, if you are still undecided if Christ's exists, I hope that what I wrote in this article can help those who are on the edge of believing or disbelieving.



church NEWS

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.

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!



HOW TO PROTECT YOUR KIDNEYS

Chronic kidney disease (CKD) in the United States is at a record high, with 37 million Americans living with the condition, including 7.7% of veterans.

Each year, about 13,000 veterans transition to maintenance dialysis in the more than 6,000 dialysis units in approximately 70 VA dialysis centers to treat their CKD.

In general, more male veterans (8.2%) have CKD than female veterans (2.7%), and compared to white veterans (6.9%), Black veterans have the highest rates of CKD (12.7%), followed by Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders (10.1%).

Kidneys filter extra water and waste out of your blood to make urine. When the kidneys are damaged and can't filter the way they should, this can cause wastes to build up in the body. For most people, kidney damage occurs slowly over many years, often due to diabetes or high blood pressure (CKD). You may also have a sudden loss in kidney function because of illness, injury or taking certain medications, called acute kidney injury.

Many with kidney disease don't see symptoms until the damage is advanced. Blood and urine tests are the most common way to diagnose it. Veterans who have diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease or a close family member with kidney disease may want to talk with their VA health-care provider about getting tested.

Lifestyle changes that can protect you from kidney disease include controlling your blood pressure, managing blood sugar, losing weight if overweight, quitting smoking, getting enough sleep, limiting alcohol intake, and stress-reducing exercises such as meditation, yoga and tai chi.

Cut back on salt and added sugars, and limit the amount of phosphorus and potassium in your diet, which can build up in your blood if you have CKD.

Being physically active can also make a difference. Researchers at the Washington (D.C.) VA Medical Center have determined that a veteran's fitness level affects the risk of developing kidney disease. Exercise guidelines recommend engaging in 150 minutes per week of a physical activity that feels moderately hard, like brisk walking, biking or jogging.

If you are diagnosed with kidney disease, you can continue to live a productive life working, enjoying friends and family, and staying physically active. But you may need to adjust your diet and lifestyle to help you live a healthier, longer life.



12 WAYS TO BOOST YOUR ENERGY

With less daylight coming in each day, many people feel less energetic and more prone to sitting on the couch, straying from healthy habits. Here are a dozen ways to increase your energy and make the most of your time:

Exercise daily. Exercise helps your cells burn energy and circulate more oxygen in your blood, making you more alert. The dopamine release not only elevates your mood, but improves movement, memory and focus.

Stay hydrated. Among the first signs of dehydration are fatigue and feeling lethargic. Make sure you're also getting enough electrolytes through water consumption; you need a balance of sodium and potassium.

Limit alcohol. It may make you sleepy initially, but alcohol is a major sleep disrupter. You may find you're waking up in the middle of the night and having difficulty falling back asleep. It also limits the amount of REM and deep sleep.

Reduce stress. Anxiety, fear and anger spike cortisol levels, creating inflammation and consuming a massive amount of energy. Seeing a therapist to work through anxiety and anger can have major benefits. Meditation, hypnosis and yoga are effective in cutting stress.

Cut unhealthy carbs. Processed foods high in carbohydrates can leave you feeling tired. Simple carbs - found in sugar and starchy, processed foods - provide a quick boost but are immediately followed by a crash from rapid spikes and drops in blood sugar levels.

Consider a vitamin B supplement. B12 supports energy production and maintains blood cell health. If you're deficient, an early sign can be low energy.

Take a nap. Research by the National Institute of Mental Health found afternoon naps improved cognitive function, especially alertness.

Go for a walk. If you feel sluggish, get up and move, especially after a meal. A brisk 10-minute walk improved energy with effects lasting up to two hours, in experiments conducted by California State University.

Be strategic about caffeine. A cup or two of coffee or tea can help enhance mental clarity. But to get the right benefits, consume caffeine judiciously. Chronically high consumption can lead to adrenal dysfunction, throwing energy and sleep cycles off.

Improve sleep quality. One-third of Americans don't get the amounts of regular uninterrupted sleep needed for our bodies to repair themselves. Head to bed earlier, and maintain a sleep schedule.

Cool it. Heat can make us more relaxed and sleepy. Try a cold shower, or even a cold plunge or ice bath. Lower the thermostat before bed; experts say 65 degrees is the perfect temperature for optimal sleep.

Get your labs checked. Thyroid issues, anemia, depression and certain medications may cause fatigue. If you're experiencing low energy levels, talk to your doctor to rule out any underlying conditions.



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY

ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

December 4, 2023

The Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy,
Esteemed Members of the Parish Councils, Philoptochos Sisterhoods and the PTO/PTA,
Directors/Principals and Teachers of the Afternoon Greek Schools of the
Delaware Valley Region of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey

My Beloved in the Lord,

I pray that my letter finds all of you well. It is with much joy and excitement that I write to Inform you that the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey will once again be celebrating Greek Letters and the Feast Day of the Three Hierarchs, St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom and St. Gregory the Theologian, the Ecumenical Teachers of our Holy Orthodox Faith and profound supporters of Education.

Therefore, please know that the Metropolis Three Hierarchs/Greek Letters Celebration for the Delaware Valley Region will take place on SUNDAY, JANUARY 28, 2024, AT 4:00 PM AT THE HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH IN WILMINGTON, DELAWARE. The beautiful program will include the students of the area Greek Schools, as they narrate various poems, sing songs, and Greek dance with great pride. Please know that all the Greek Schools of the Delaware Valley Region are invited to participate in this wonderful event, and I ask that the parish Greek schools please confirm your participation in this event by contacting the parish at 302-654-4446.

In addition, I ask that all those wishing to attend this beautiful celebration please R.S.V.P. by contacting the Holy Trinity parish office at 302-654-4446 no later than Friday, January 19, 2024 so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

Praying that our loving Lord continues to bless you and all the devout faithful of our sacred Metropolis with every good and perfect gift from above, I remain

With paternal love and blessings,

F. Metropolitan Apostolos

† APOSTOLOS

Metropolitan of New Jersey



**His Eminence
Metropolitan Apostolos of New Jersey
Cordially invites all the dedicated Faithful
of the Delaware Valley Region to the Annual**

2024 Greek Letters Day Celebration

Honoring the Three Hierarchs of our Orthodox Church



St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil the Great & St. Gregory the Theologian

Sunday, January 28, 2024 at 4:00 pm

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church

808 N. Broom Street, Wilmington, DE 19806

Please RSVP to the Parish Office at 302-654-4446

by January 19, 2023



Ο Σεβασμιώτατος Μητροπολίτης Νέας Ιερσέης
κ. ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ

Σας προσκαλεί να συνεορτάσουμε
«Την Εορτή των Τριών Ιεραρχών
και την Ημέρα των Ελληνικών Γραμμάτων»



Κυριακή 28 Ιανουαρίου 2024, ώρα 4:00 μ.μ.

Ιερός Ναός Αγίας Τριάδος
808 N. Broom Street, Wilmington, DE 19806

Παρακαλούμε RSVP στο γραφείο του Ναού
(302-654-4446) έως τις 19 Ιανουαρίου 2024

JANUARY 30

THE THREE HIERARCHS



The eleventh-century Christian appears to have been much more deeply concerned about his religion than the generations which preceded him and those which have followed. He enjoyed a greater freedom of expression than the predecessor who worshipped Jesus Christ at the peril of his life, and his life was not crowded with the

social changes brought on by the invention of the printing press and the machine age. Unencumbered by ideologies spawned in revolution and knowing only one Mother Church, his popular topic of conversation was religion, which invariably came down to a debate about who was the greatest figure in Christian history. These rather innocent and well-intended arguments, which by today's standards appear ill-considered, very often assumed serious proportions, to the point that a formal consideration was necessitated and resulted in the rather unusual celebration of three of our greatest theologians on the same day.

There are heroes galore in the Christian Church, any one of whom could be selected as a favorite, and of the favorites that cropped up in private or public discussion there were three that were most commonly mentioned. These three, who had the remarkable coincidence of serving the Lord in the fourth century, were St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. John Chrysostom. The debates that began in the home or market-place soon spread into the Church and its councils and found their way into the upper echelons of the hierarchy, not out of proportion but out of an evolution of ideas wholly natural to the eleventh-century Christian structure.

With an absolute state rule there was little challenge for the brighter minds of the time in government, civil service, as a result of which the intellectuals as well as the dedicated found themselves

drawn to the Church. The tax collector commanded little respect, but the cleric was a man very highly esteemed, and it was to this spiritual servant that the average citizen turned for many services, some of which were outside his sphere of authority. It was quite natural then that a religious question would be brought to the priest and that the controversy would pyramid beyond him to the highest and most respected prelates.

Honored as "Doctors" of the Church, Sts. Basil, Gregory, and John were intellectual giants of equal stature, serving God and man with an equally high level of devotion and spirit. They were theologians and philosophers of the highest order, as well as gifted educators, orators, and spiritual leaders whose influence was such that seven hundred years after they appeared they were still so highly esteemed as to touch off a dispute as to who just might be greatest. After years of polemics, the burning issue reached a climactic conclusion in 1081, during the reign of Emperor Alexios, and then only by what would appear to be the result of divine intervention.

One of the most highly respected prelates of the day was Bishop John of Galatia, known throughout the Byzantine Empire for his considerable wisdom and spiritual integrity, a man who had refused to be drawn into an argument which by then divided the Christian community into three different camps in a sorry display of ill-advised but unavoidable dispute. Some of the greatest minds of the Church became involved in a matter that was spinning out of control and which posed a serious threat to the solidarity of the Faith.

Bishop John of Galatia received a vision in which the Three Hierarchs in question appeared to him to deplore the current disagreement and to ask him to step into the breach with an announcement of their visit and their admonition that the three were equal in the sight of God. Whoever disputed this would, therefore, dispute God. The elated Bishop John went to Constantinople to announce the divine visitation and the tumult was transformed to quiet accord when this relatively simple solution to what up until then had been an uncompromising strife was revealed. Almost overnight harmony was restored. A formal declaration of the equality of the three saints was issued and January 30 was designated as the feast day celebrating the equation of St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory the Theologian, and St. John Chrysostom.

THE HISTORY OF THE VASILOPITA

In the middle of the table during New Year's, a Vasilopita bread is placed in honor and tribute and eternal memory of St. Basil the Great. Every year a gold coin is placed in the Vasilopita for good luck to whoever receives it. The history of the vasilopita has two versions. The first version is explained like this:

In the time of the Roman Emperor Julianos, somewhere in the East, when traveling towards Persia, he passed through the city of Caesarea. On hearing of his arrival, Bishop Basil (a long time friend and student buddies in Athens) came out to greet him, along with the people of the city.

The Emperor demanded that royal gifts be brought to him, because that was the tradition when royalty came to visit. Bishop Basil was poor he had nothing expensive to offer to the Emperor, so he offered him three loaves of bread. As a thank you, the Emperor instructed his servants to repay the bishop with plain hay from the fields. The Bishop did not leave without an answer to the injustice and embarrassment that he received from the Emperor.

"Your Majesty, we the people offered to you what we had and what we traditionally eat, and you returned the favor with an insult."

The Emperor became angry and said: "Now accept my gift and when I return victorious from battle, I will burn down your city and I will imprison your people because even the gods that I worship, you and your people are against."

St. Basil returned to the city and invited his people to give him information concerning the Emperor's decision and said: "Don't worry, let's all gather up our coins together in one place, and when we hear that the Emperor is coming, we will throw them in the street as he is coming and from this act of love he will be satisfied and he will forget the threats that he made to us. Everyone did as the Bishop advised them to do. He then separated the gold, the silver, the stones and gems and placed them in a safe place. The Bishop then to be fair wrote down all the names of the people who gave. When the King came back with his army of soldiers, the Bishop told everyone to fast for 3 days and they were all told to travel to the Twin Hills of Caesarea where the church of the Mother of God was located. The Bishop then told them to pray to the Virgin Mary so she could change the murderous mind of the King.

At that time, the Bishop saw a vision of soldiers surrounding the area. He saw the Virgin Mary sitting on a large throne with angels guarding her. He heard her say: "Call upon Merkourios". In an instant, Merkourios the Great Martyr showed up with his armor and weapons and She gave the command to defeat the King. Then She called upon St. Basil and gave him a book describing the creation of the world. St. Basil then wrote the translation of the six days that God took to create the world. When it came for him to write about mankind, the vision disappeared into the heavens. His brother, St. Gregory of Nyssa added to the theme.

After that scene, St. Basil then left and came down to the city and visited the church of St. Merkourios. He realized that the Holy relic of the Saint was gone and it was placed on the hilltop to calm the worries of the people. "Let us all glorify God my brethren, King Julianos is dead. Come and receive back the gold pieces that you gave to save the city", said the Bishop. The people said in response, "we were giving this money to the king and we can't deny the heavens who protected us from death." St. Basil complemented them on their faith and he gave them back one-third of their gift. The remaining amount was used to build hospitals, nursing homes, orphanages and hostels. This event then became a tradition as well as historical for the people of Caesarea.

Now there is another version of the story that is expressed differently from the previous version.

Once upon a time in the land of Caesarea, there was once a ruler

who sent his servants to the Bishop of Caesarea asking for the treasure of the city and if the Bishop refused he would send his army to capture and imprison all of the people of the city. The Christians, who truly loved their Bishop, after hearing what the ruler demanded, went to their homes and collected all the gold, and silver that they had to offer as their gift to the Bishop so he can repay the ruler. During the night, the Bishop began to pray to God for the protection of the city. In the morning the armies of the ruler surrounded the city. The ruler asked to see the Bishop; the people told him that he was waiting for him in the front entrance of the church. The ruler came to the Bishop and told him to give up all of the treasures of the city.

The Bishop just stared at him and said, "The only treasure that this city has is its poor, hungry and the suffering."

"Let's leave that aside", said the ruler, "tell me where you hid the gold."

"The gold is for the poor", the Bishop said, "there is no surplus."

The ruler got angry and said, "If you don't give me all the gold, I will take yours."

The Bishop smiled and said, "You can look all you want but the only thing you will find is the clothes and vestments that I am wearing."

The ruler said to him, "I will exile you and send you in chains to another country"

The Bishop then said, "My country is in heaven".

Then the ruler said, "I will kill you."

"Even better", said the Bishop. "That will give me the opportunity to reach heaven above sooner."

The ruler became angry, he was frustrated and he wanted to do harm to the bishop. So, he commanded the soldiers to attack him. The Bishop answered, "Your greediness will finish you. Don't hurt the people of the city, because they caused you no harm. If you desire your gold, it's here waiting for you." At that moment, he showed him a large bag, but before the ruler had a chance to get a closer look, a man on a horse was descending from the heavens above and was battling the soldiers of the ruler. This man was as bright as the sun.

In that instant, the ruler's army turned to dust. They vanished. The man on the horse was St. Merkourios who rode down with angels and defeated the army. When this miracle happened, the residents of the city were glorifying God. Now that the city was saved, the Bishop was now put into a difficult position because he was thinking of what to do with the gold that the people offered. He had a dilemma. He thought about inviting everyone together to give them back their gold, but he was afraid that his people would be greedy and start another chaos. So, the Bishop took council in prayer and asked the Lord to give him some insight on this dilemma.

The next day the Bishop invited all the servants from the house of the poor and asked them to bake small loaves of sweet bread and to place or insert some gold coins in them. Afterwards, the bishop then distributed the sweet bread to each resident of his city. Some of them questioned "the gift" of bread given to them by their beloved Bishop.

What kind of a gift was this? They didn't know what to make of it. But later as they gathered in their homes, each family cut the small sweet bread and what should they find, but the pieces of gold hidden inside. This was a blessing because everyone was satisfied with the gold pieces they received.

From then on, this became an annual tradition and it has been passed down from generation to generation. And on New Year's Day as we celebrate with our families the cutting of the sweet loaf of bread or as it has become known as the "Vasilopita" named so in honor of St. Basil the Great, we too look forward to finding the lucky "coin" in the hopes that we too will be blessed in the coming year and years to come.

**Happy New Year and May God and
Agios Vasili Bless all of us!**



Η ΙΣΤΟΡΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΒΑΣΙΛΟΠΙΤΑΣ

Στη μέση του πρωτοχρονιάτικου τραπέζιού φέγγει η ευλογία του αγίου και μεγάλου Βασιλείου, η βασιλόπιτα, ο εορτασμός του άρτου. Το φλουρί που κρύβει, σημάδι της τύχης, μας παρηγορεί στην ανθρώπινη αδυναμία μας για τ' άγνωστα μελλούμενα.

Πως έμεινε στα έθιμά μας;

Ο Ιουλιανός ο Παραβάτης, Ρωμαίος αυτοκράτορας στην Ανατολή, πηγαίνοντας για την Περούσια, πέρασε κοντά από την Καισάρεια. Τον προϋπάντησε τιμητικά ο παλιός συσπουδαστής του στην Αθήνα, ο Επίσκοπος τώρα Βασίλειος, μαζί με το λαό.

Ο Αυτοκράτορας απαίτησε δώρα βασιλικά κατά τα ήθη και τ' αξιώματά του. Ο ασκητής επίσκοπος δεν είχε τίποτε, κι έτσι του πρόσφερε τρία κριθίνα ψωμιά. Ο βασιλιάς διέταξε τους υπηρέτες του να δώσουν στον επίσκοπο, σαν αντιδώρημα, χορτάρι σκέτο απ' τους αγρούς. Αλλά ο άγιος δεν άφησε αναπάντητη την άδικη καταφρόνηση:

—Εμείς, βασιλιά, σου προσφέρουμε από 'κείνο που τρώμε, καθώς εξήγησες. Η βασιλεία σου μας αντάμειψε, καθώς αρμόζει από εκείνο που τρώγει.

Ο βασιλιάς εθύμωσε και είπε:

—Τώρα, δέξου το δώρο και όταν επιστρέψω νικητής, τότε την πόλη σου θα κάψω και θα αιχμαλωτίσω τον ανόητο λαό που εξαπατάς, διότι και τους θεούς που προσκυνώ περιφρονούν, όσο για μένα, θα λάβεις την πρόπουσα αμοιβή.

Ο άγιος επέστρεψε στην πόλη και κάλεσε το λαό να τον πληροφωρήσει για τις απειλές του αυτοκράτορα και τέλος είπε:

—Μη λυπηθείτε, αδελφοί μου, τα χρήματά σας, φροντίστε μόνο τη ζωή σας. Συγκεντρώστε τα λεπτά σας σ' ένα μέρος. Όταν ακούσετε πως έρχεται εκείνος, θα τα ρίχνουμε σωρούς στο δρόμο, κι όπως είναι φιλοχρήματος, αυτά θα κλέβουνε την προχοσή του και θα τον κάνουν να ξεχάσει τις απειλές του.

Οι χριστιανοί έκαναν όλοι όπως τους είπε. Εκείνος σύναξε το χρυσάφι, το ασημί, τους πολύτιμους λίθους, όλα, μέσα στο σκευοφυλάκιο κι έγραψε τ' όνομά του καθενός και ό,τι καθένas έφερε.

Όταν μαθεύτηκε πως επιστρέφει ο βασιλιάς με το στρατό του, ο άγιος είπε σ' όλους να νηστεύουμε τρεις μέρες κι όλοι μαζί ανέβηκαν μετά στο όρος Δίδυμο της Καισαρείας, όπου βρισκόταν ο ναός της Θεοτόκου και με πόνο άρχισαν να δέονται στην Παναγία ν' αλλάξει τη βουλή του αυτοκράτορα. Είδε τότε ο άγιος Ιεράρχης ουράνια στρατιά να κυκλώνει το όρος. Θρόνος στη μέση ψηλός, όπου καθόταν δοξασιμένη η Κυρία των αγγέλων—η Παναγία. Την άκουσε να λέει:

—Καλέσατέ μου τον Μερκούριο.

Φάνηκε τότε ο μεγαλομάρτυρας Μερκούριος με τα όπλα του κι εκείνη του έδωσε προσταγή να αφανίσει τον Ιουλιανό. Μετά κάλεσε τον Άγιο Βασίλειο και του παρέδωσε βιβλίο με τη δημιουργία της Κτίσης γραμμένη μέσα. Στην αρχή υπήρχε η επιγραφή "είτε" στο τέλος, όπου η θέση της πλάσης του ανθρώπου, έγραφε "τέλος". Κι αλήθεια, αργότερα, ο Άγιος Βασίλειος έγραψε ερμηνεία στην εξαήμερο δημιουργία του Θεού. Όταν όμως ήταν να γράψει για τον άνθρωπο, έφυγε στους ουρανούς. Ο αδελφός του Άγιος Γρηγόριος, ο επίσκοπος Νύσσης, συμπλήρωσε γι' αυτό το θέμα.

Μετά, λοιπόν, απ' αυτήν την οπτασία, ο Άγιος κατέβηκε μόνος στην πόλη και πήγε στο ναό του Αγίου Μερκουρίου. Διαπίστωσε ότι το λείψανο του μάρτυρα έλειπε κι ανέβηκε πάλι στο Δίδυμο να ησυχάσει το λαό:

—Δοξάστε το Θεό, αδελφοί μου! Ο Ιουλιανός δεν υπάρχει πια. Ελάτε να παραλάβετε τα χρήματά σας. Και τους εξήγησε. Αλλά εκείνοι είπαν:

—Θα τα δίνουμε στον ασεβή βασιλέα και θα τ' αρνηθούμε στον ουρανό, που μας έσωσε τη ζωή; συγκινημένος, την προθυμία τους, έδωσε στον καθένα το ένα τρίτο των όσων πρόσφερε και με τα υπόλοιπα έκτισε νοσοκομεία, γηροκομεία, ξενώνες, ορφανοτροφεία.

Το ιστορικό αυτό γεγονός πέρασε στις παραδόσεις του λαού. Η συλλογική του μνήμη το μεταπλάθει, το εξαιρετικό και άγιο θέλει να το κάνει απλό και οικείο, κι έτσι το φέρνει μέσα στην καθημερινότητα του. Να τι λένε:

Μια φορά, ένας σκληρός άρχοντας της Καππαδοκίας έστειλε

ανθρώπους στο Δεσπότη της Καισαρείας και του ζήτησε θησαυρούς, αλλιώς θα πολιορκούσε την πόλη, είτε, να την πάρει ολόκληρη. Οι χριστιανοί, που αγάπησαν πολύ τον επίσκοπό τους, πήγαν αμέσως στα σπίτια τους και του έφεραν τα χρυσασφικά τους. Όλη τη νύχτα ο άγιος Δεσπότης της Καισαρείας προσευχόταν να σώσει ο Θεός την πόλη. Το πρωί κατέβηκε ο άρχοντας με το στρατό του, που αμέσως περιζύγλωσε την πόλη. Μπήκε με την ακολουθία του μέσα κι αναζήτησαν το Δεσπότη. Του έδειξαν το ναό. Πλησίασε και τον βρήκε στη θύρα να τον περιμένει, χλωμός και αδύνατος από την αγρυπνία και τη νηστεία.

—Δώσε μου λοιπόν αυτής της πόλης το χρυσάφι. Του είπε.

Εκείνος τον κοίταξε με λύπη και του απάντησε:

—Βλέπεις σ' αυτή την πόλη τίποτε πολύτιμο, που να προδίδει πλούτο;

—Δεν μπορεί παρά να υπάρχει.

—Πλούτος αυτής της πόλης είναι οι φτωχοί και πεινασμένοι, οι χτυπημένοι από την απονία των πλουσίων.

—Άσε τα λόγια, Δέσποτα, και πές μου που έχεις κρύψει το χρυσάφι.

—Το χρυσάφι άρχοντα είναι για τους φτωχούς. Κανενός δεν περισσεύει.

Ο άρχοντας θύμωσε τότε και του λέει:

—Αν δεν μου δώσεις το χρυσάφι, θα πάρω το δικό σου.

Ο Δεσπότης χαμογέλασε ελαφρά.

—Όσο κι αν ψάξεις δεν θα βρεις άλλο από το ράσο που φορώ.

—Θα σε στείλω αλυσοδεμένο μακριά από την πατρίδα σου.

—Η πατρίδα μου έμένα είναι ο ουρανός.

—Θα σε θανατώσουν.

—Καλύτερα, γιατί θα με στείλεις πιο γρήγορα εκεί.

Ο άρχοντας κόντεψε να σκάσει από το κακό του και διατάζει τους αξιωματικούς του να επιτεθούν. Τότε ο επίσκοπος του λέει:

—Η πλεονεξία σου θα σε αφανίσει. Μην πειράξεις τους ανθρώπους αυτής της πόλης, που δεν σε πείραζαν. Εδώ είναι το χρυσάφι και σε περιμένει.

Και του έδειξε ένα μεγάλο σεντούκι. Αλλά πριν προλάβει να το πλησιάσει είδαν όλοι ένα λαμπρό καθαλό να ρομιάει με το στρατό του, που έλαμπε κι εκείνος. Άρχοντας και στρατός έγιναν σκόνη. Έφυγαν κι ακόμα φεύγουν. Ήταν ο Άγιος Μερκούριος με αγγέλους, λένε.

Δόξασαν όλοι το Θεό. Μα ο Δεσπότης βρέθηκε σε δύσκολη θέση μετά. Πως να μπορέσει να μοιράσει πάλι τα χρυσασφικά στους κατοίκους της πόλης του. Να τους καλέσει, φοβήθηκε ότι θα τους πιάσει η πλεονεξία και καθένas θα κοιτάξει να πάρει τα καλύτερα κοσμήματα. Προσευχήθηκε και ο Θεός τον φωτίσε τι να κάνει.

Κάλεσε τους υπηρέτες και διακόνους από τα πτωχοκομεία και τους είπε να ζημώσουν μικρά ψωμάκια και σε κάθε ψωμάκι να βάλουν κι από μερικά χρυσασφικά. Μετά τα μοίρασε σαν δώρο στους πιστούς του κι αυτοί τα πήραν παραξευμένοι. "Τι δώρο είναι αυτό από το δεσπότη μας;" ρωτούσαν ο ένας τον άλλον. Μα όταν κάθε οικογένεια έκοβε το ψωμάκι, βρήκε τα χρυσασφικά της.

Από τότε φτιάχνουμε τη βασιλόπιτα με το φλουρί, την πρώτη μέρα του χρόνου. Έτσι λείει αυτή η παράδοση.

Τον Μέγα Βασίλειο συνηθίσαμε να τον βλέπουμε σαν ευχάριστη φιγούρα της πρωτοχρονιάς, σαν ροδομάνουλο ασπρογένη κι ασπρομάλλη παππού με τα δώρα. Για τα παιδικά μας χρόνια, ταιριάζει, αλλά αργότερα, ας τον γνωρίσουμε όπως είναι: Ωχρό, ασκητικό, με σοφία και δύναμη. Και η αγάπη του επίσης εκδηλώνεται με δύναμη και αγιότητα. Τα έργα του τότε, και η γνώση του ως τώρα, μας χαρίζουν την αληθινή του όψη. Βλαστάνουν λόγο χλωρό ως σήμερα, όπως λένε ατλούκα και κάποια κάλαντα:

"Ο άη-Βασίλης έρχεται από την Καισαρεία,

Βαστάει πέννα και χαρτί, χαρτί και καλαμάρι

Και το ραβδί του ακούμπησε να πει τ' αλφαβητάρι

Και το ραβδί του ήτο ξερό, χλωρούς βλαστούς επέτα..

Κι επάνω στους χλωρούς βλαστούς περδίκια εκκακαριώντα...."

Μια ευχή (για εφέτος και για κάθε χρόνο) Η βασιλόπιτα να μας ενώνει πάντα γύρω από το πρωτοχρονιάτικο τραπέζι...και το νόημα κι οι συμβολισμοί που τη συνοδεύουν αιώνες τώρα να φαιτίζουν το νου και τις πράξεις όλων των ανθρώπων...και ν' ανοίγουν το δρόμο μας προς το μέλλον με υγεία, πρόοδο και ανθρωπιά.

Basil the Great, Archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia

Saint Basil the Great was born about the end of the year 329 in Caesarea of Cappadocia, to a family renowned for their learning and holiness. His parents' names were Basil and Emily. His mother Emily (commemorated July 19) and his grandmother Macrina (Jan. 14) are Saints of the Church, together with all his brothers and sisters: Macrina, his elder sister (July 19), Gregory of Nyssa (Jan. 10), Peter of Sebastia (Jan. 9), and Naucrati. Basil studied in Constantinople under the sophist Libanius, then in Athens, where also he formed a friendship with the young Gregory, a fellow Cappadocian, later called "the Theologian."

Through the good influence of his sister Macrina (see July 19), he chose to embrace the ascetical life, abandoning his worldly career. He visited the monks in Egypt, in Palestine, in Syria, and in Mesopotamia, and upon returning to Caesarea, he departed to a hermitage on the Iris River in Pontus, not far from Annesi, where his mother and his sister Macrina were already treading the path of the ascetical life; here he also wrote his ascetical homilies.

About the year 370, when the bishop of his country reposed, he was elected to succeed to his throne and was entrusted with the Church of Christ, which he tended for eight years, living in voluntary poverty and strict asceticism, having no other care than to defend holy Orthodoxy as a worthy successor of the Apostles. The Emperor Valens, and Modestus, the Eparch of the East, who were of one mind with the Arians, tried with threats of exile and of torments to bend the Saint to their own confession, because he was the bastion of Orthodoxy in all Cappadocia, and preserved it from heresy when Arianism was at its strongest. But he set all their malice

at naught, and in his willingness to give himself up to every suffering for the sake of the Faith, showed himself to be a martyr by volition. Modestus, amazed at Basil's fearlessness in his presence, said that no one had ever so spoken to him. "Perhaps," answered the Saint, "you have never met a bishop before."

The Emperor Valens himself was almost won over by Basil's dignity and wisdom. When Valens' son fell gravely sick, he asked Saint Basil to pray for him. The Saint promised that his son would be restored if Valens agreed to have him baptized by the Orthodox; Valens agreed, Basil prayed, and the son was restored. But afterwards the Emperor had him baptized by Arians, and the child died soon after. Later, Valens, persuaded by his counselors, decided to send the Saint into exile because he would not accept the Arians into communion; but his pen broke when he was signing the edict of banishment. He tried a second time and a third, but the same thing happened, so that the Emperor was

filled with dread, and tore up the document, and Basil was not banished. The truly great Basil, spent with extreme ascetical practices and continual labours, at the helm of the church, departed to the Lord on the 1st of January, in 379, at the age of forty-nine.

His writings are replete with wisdom and erudition, and rich are these gifts he set forth the doctrines concerning the mysteries both of the creation (see his Hexameron) and of the Holy Trinity (see On the Holy Spirit). Because of the majesty and keenness of his eloquence, he is honored as "the revealer of heavenly things" and "the Great."

Saint Basil is also celebrated on January 30th with Saint Gregory the Theologian and Saint John Chrysostom.



On January 6th

Today the grace of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove descended upon the waters.

Today the waters of the Jordan are transformed into healing by the coming of the Lord.

Today the transgressions of men are washed away by the waters of the Jordan.

Today Paradise has been opened and the Son of Righteousness shines down upon us.

Today we have been delivered from darkness and illuminated with the light of the knowledge of God.

Today the Master hastens toward baptism that He may lift man up to the heights.

Today the Master buries in the waters the sin of mortal man.

Today the Master receives testimony from on high, that He is the beloved Son.

Today the Master comes to sanctify the nature of the waters.

~Epiphany Prayer

Pastoral Thoughts

During the time in which Monastism was growing in Egypt, there lived a young orphan girl named Taisa.

When her parents died, they left her their inheritance but with one stipulation — that she continued to share it with the poor and needy of the area. They left her a huge house and money to live out her life comfortable.

Taisa had a great respect for the clergy and the monks of the area. Every time the monks would come to the city to sell their crafts she would open her house as an inn and take care of them.

After a few years went by the inheritance that she had started to dwindle. It was an expensive adventure because Taisa could take care of the needs of the hermits daily. But that didn't bother her a bit, she loved what she did.

As the finances started to decline certain evil people came into her life. Instead of being her friends, they manipulated the young immature girl and forced her to live a sinful life. They gave her the wrong impression but because she had depleted her money she became confused.

In order to accumulate more income they convinced her to become a prostitute.

When the monks found out what had happened to Taisa, they were astonished, they came together and decided that they needed to do whatever was possible to help Taisa to get back on track.

To help Taisa of her sinful passions and direction, the abbot decided that he would make the effort and went to her home to see if he could change her mind and bring her back to reality.

The abbot knocked at her door and her maid answered the door. He asked that he needed to see Taisa. The maid told him to leave at once and blamed the monks and him for the cause of her financial disaster and the outcome of her life.

The abbot was very patient....he continued to ask to see her and finally the maid showed him to her room. In the meantime Taisa was preparing herself for her next customer. As he came into her room, Taisa started to undress, she fixed her hair and put perfume on her body.

After seeing her, the abbot was shocked. He never anticipated that she could be that far gone. He looked at her and kept silent. Then he said with a soft voice, "Taisa....what went wrong? Why do you embarrass yourself in the eye of the Lord? How did you end up like this?" Then the abbot broke out in tears. Taisa felt his pain and respect and she asked him, "why are you crying?" The abbot responded, "how can I not cry when I see that the devil has overwhelmed you and has taken over your soul." Taisa was stunned. She started to feel his words and started to understand what really went wrong in her life. She stated, "but now it's too late for me to change," She explained, "nothing has remained standing in my life. I have given up everything, I really don't care that I'm living this way. I made my choice in life."

At that moment the abbot just froze, he crossed his arms and started to pray for the salvation of her soul.

Then after seeing the abbot praying she asked him, "why are you praying?" And he said, "for the Lord to strengthen your faith and for you to return back to a normal spiritual life."

Taisa asked, "is there salvation for me still even though I chose this life to live?"

"Yes", said the abbot, "the Lord always waits patiently for all His children."

The miracle that the abbot was waiting for....finally happened!



Pastoral ThoughtsContinued

Taisa immediately fell at his feet and tears started to flow from her eyes. She asked the abbot to take her away! She said, "please show me the road to salvation!" "Follow me", the abbot said. Without any delay or discussion Taisa got up and followed him.

She didn't care about her earthly or personal belongings nor did she give any care to her social or physical responsibilities. She was ready to give up her earthly life to embark on a new life committed to Christ.

So the abbot and Taisa started their journey. As they were traveling in the desert they grew weary and night was falling so they prepared for sleep.

The abbot told her that she needed rest and that in the morning they'd have a long journey to reach their destination.

After praying the abbot also felt tired and went across the way and fell asleep.

At midnight he awoke to check on Taisa.....at that time a vision came to his sight. It was coming from the direction where he left Taisa.



First, he saw a great light....this great light connected with heaven above. He saw angels taking a soul up to heaven. He started back to find Taisa. He called out to her, he got no answer. He came near her and pushed her lightly, she never answered....she had died.

With love and fear in his heart, he fell down in front of her body and started to shed his tears and prayed.

He realized that the vision that God gave him was true. And that Taisa finally went to the Lord.

It goes to show us that it doesn't take a long period of time, when a person truly commits his or her life to Christ that paradise is always within reach.

It takes just a small period of time of devotion or commitment for the soul to find it's salvation.

There is nothing impossible when you believe in Christ. Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand.

Use these words as your key to find salvation. May God Bless.



Translated by Father Michael from the Greek Gerondicon.

Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor,
and you will have treasure in heaven.
Then come, follow me.

Mark 10:21 NIV



thoughts from

EVA LALLAS

JANUARY - OUR FRESH START

Yes, the anticipation and preparations for our Christmas celebration have come and gone; Santa Clause has returned to the North Pole. As we hear “Αρχιμηνιά και αρχή χρονιά,” the Greek song welcoming the new year we are filled with a renewed outlook for our lives.

Each year we reflect on the previous year and make several resolutions for improving our physical being or correcting past decisions in hopes of creating a brighter future. Perhaps a resolution of high priority should be that of improving our spiritual selves...our relationship with Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior which would lead to a long term brighter future.

Let's start by attending church regularly to worship and thank God for His many blessings in His home as often as we can. In our Orthodox Church the Christmas season continues for twelve days, so let's be sure to attend the magnificent Theophany Liturgical service on January 6.

Can you imagine what those present at the River Jordan on that truly awesome day experienced when the Holy Spirit was manifested!?!?!...as John the Baptist, the Forerunner, who obeyed God's order was baptizing our Lord Jesus Christ, the **SON**....the heavens opening and hearing **GOD's** voice from above, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased"....as the **HOLY SPIRIT** in the form of a dove descended upon our Lord. Those witnesses saw the Holy Trinity and the startling Light of Christ before their very eyes; they saw



once again the love that God has for His people.

Being in church on the holy day of Epiphany will renew us as we begin the new year just as it may remind us of God's love for each of us through our own baptism.

Through baptism God bestowed His sanctifying Light upon us, delivering us from sin. It is our first step toward a righteous life. As we were baptized we received the Holy Spirit to guide and enlighten us. Our baptism has armed us so that we can follow God's path toward His Kingdom. Being ever mindful that we have the shield of our baptism within us to strengthen and embolden us, we can strive to live according to God's will.

Thusly, as we embark on a new year and celebrate the holy day of Christ's baptism may we allow the Light of our Lord to engulf and empower us.

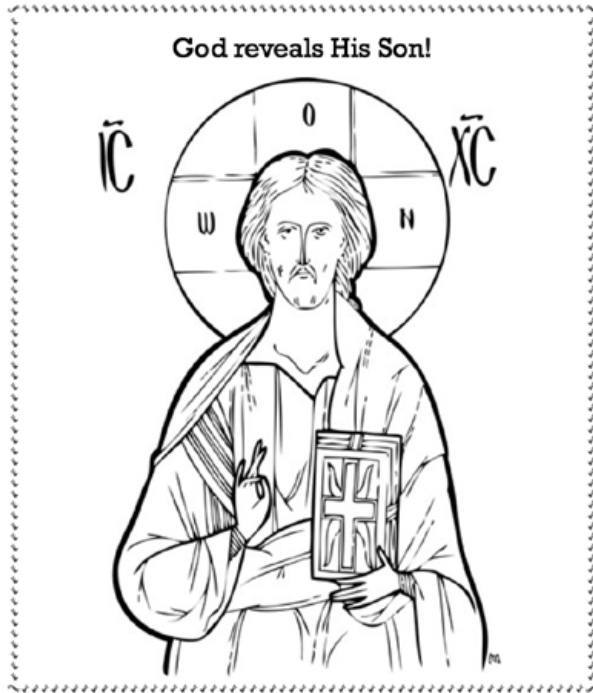
This will go a long way in making our new year a "happy" one!

*Happy New Year to abb from the
staff of the Koinonia!*

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, December 31, 2023

Volume 11, Issue 53

A Ministry of the
Orthodox Christian Network



I have finished the race!

Have you ever run in a race

before? How did you do? Do you remember how fast you ran? Do you think you could have done better?

We Christians are in a race too! Did you know that? We are in a race to grow close to God! In today's epistle, Saint Paul tells us how he was doing in this very special and very important race. "I am already on the point of being sacrificed; the time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Saint Paul knew that he had worked hard to be a strong Christian. He had worked hard to stay close to the Lord.



It's always a good idea to think about how we're doing in our race, the race to be close to God. But today is the very last day of the year, December 31st, so it's a *really* good time to think about how we can make changes. How did we do in our race last year? Could we have done better? What are we going to try to do differently in this new year?

Our Lord Jesus Christ loves us. He invites each one of us to be with Him. Let's think about how we're doing in the race, so that one day, we can say what Saint Paul said. "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

WORD SEARCH

Can you find these words in the jumble?

Epistle
Fight
Humility
Keep the faith
Melania
Race
Rome
Saint
Salvation
Theophany
Wealth
Wisdom

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

WHAT'S IN THE ICON?



If you ever go to Jerusalem, you can visit a little chapel of Saint Melania. That is where her relics (her body) is.

In this picture, you can see a priest with an icon of Saint Melania. Do you see how it is decorated with flowers for her feastday?

SAINT MELANIA, THE YOUNGER

THE NUN OF ROME

Have you ever ridden in some super fancy, super huge houses, and wondered what it would be like to live there?



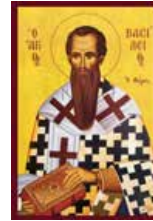
Today we celebrate Saint Melania, a person who *did* live in one of those kinds of houses, and she gave it all up. One historian wrote about her life, just a few years after Melania died. He wrote about how much money and land her family had when she was a child. "On one side lay the sea and on the other some woodland with animals for hunting, so that when she was bathing in the pool, she could see ships passing by and animals in the woods. The property also included 60 large houses, each with 400 servants." Wow! 60 houses, and 24,000 servants. Can you even imagine that?

But Saint Melania wasn't impressed! Saint Melania wanted to dedicate her life to Christ. When she was a young woman, she got married, but sadly, her two children died. She and her husband gave away all that treasure to the church and to the poor. Then they traveled far away from Italy, to Africa and later to the Middle East. They started convents and a church.

Sometimes when we have something, we might want to have more and more. Saint Melania didn't want to have more and more money. She wanted to have more and more of Christ's love! And isn't that a better thing?

We celebrate Saint Melania today, December 31st (OC: January 13th).

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***His Eminence
Metropolitan Apostolos
of New Jersey***

Cordially Invites you to the

**ANNUAL
METROPOLIS of NEW JERSEY
VASILOPITA CELEBRATION**

*Tuesday, January 9, 2023
6:00 - 9:00pm*

hosted by:

*St. George Greek Orthodox Church
1101 River Road
Piscataway, NJ 08854*



CAMP GOOD SHEPHERD

SAVE THE DATE!

CGS MD: JUNE 15-22

CGS NJ: JUNE 23-29

CGS VA SESSION 1: JULY 7-13

CGS VA SESSION 2: JULY 14-20

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SOON!

Faith!

Fun!

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