

The Voice of Saint Anthony

DECEMBER 2019

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**Deadline for
January Newsletter is
Friday, 27 December**

**Please send to:
frchris@saint-anthonys.org OR
newsletter_church@aol.com**



Reverend Father Peter Stratos, Pastor

Reverend Father Christopher Retelas, Associate Pastor

778 S. Rosemead Boulevard, Pasadena, CA 91107

(626) 449-6943 Office (626) 449-6974 FAX

www.saint-anthonys.org

PRIEST'S MESSAGE

Dear Faithful,

It's the most _____ time of the year.

How would you fill in the blank? Those of us who have had Christmas music playing in our cars and homes perhaps would answer with "wonderful." However, it doesn't require much pondering to maybe put a different adjective in that spot. Stressful? Expensive? Cold? Divisive?

Thank God, this time of year is filled with family gatherings, decorations, delicious foods, nostalgic traditions we hold dear in our homes, donating our time and money to charities, gift giving and so much more that engender what we commonly call "the Christmas Spirit." Yet, at the same time, we find ourselves worrying about so many other worldly and foolish things like holiday coffee cups, bills, nonsense articles about paganism and Christmas and the so-called "war on Christmas."

With this in mind, we need to take time to reflect on this time of the year, especially the whole month of December, which is filled with celebrating so many wonderful and beloved Saints: St. Barbara (4th), St. Savas (5th), St. Nicholas (6th), St. Spyridon (12th), St. Eleutherios (15th), St. Anastasia (22nd), and St. Stephen (26th). However, our main cause for celebration this month is the Feast of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior, Christmas Day, December 25th. Instead of us trying to fight back in this pseudo "war on Christmas" by trying to say "put Christ back into Christmas" I will instead remind us, as Fr. Andrew Stephen Damick says:

"Jesus is not part of the story of Christmas. Christmas is part of the story of Jesus... It is the moment when the God-man Jesus, Who has been growing for nine months already as man, is now revealed to the world through His birth. What was hidden, secreted away in the pure womb of the Virgin, is now openly presented. Angels sing the announcement. Shepherds tell of this moment. Wise men begin a journey from the East to worship Him. Our God and Savior is born into human history."

I invite you to read his beautiful article found here:

blogs.ancientfaith.com/asd/2016/12/18/jesus-not-part-christmas-story/

Indeed, these days are holy! They are cause to further celebrate, adore, and worship our God who loves us and takes on flesh for us. Our focus is not on what this world has continued to secularize or take away the holiness of this Feast, but rather Who our God is who had brought true Godliness and Holiness into our lives, so that we too can be partakers of His Heavenly Kingdom!

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Fr. Chris



STEWARDSHIP

ST. ANTHONY STEWARDSHIP UPDATE

OUR STEWARDSHIP GOAL: **\$425,000**

288 PLEDGES TOTALING: **\$371,254**

COLLECTED AS OF 9/25/19: **\$309,152**

AVERAGE PLEDGE GOAL: **\$1,500**

CURRENT AVERAGE PLEDGE: **\$1,289**

Breakdown of Stewardship/Annual Giving to the Church		
Total Annual Giving to the Church	Pledges/families	% of Pledges Breakdown
\$0 - \$1,499	212	74%
\$1,500 - \$1,999	24	8.3%
\$2,000 - \$2,999	26	9.0%
\$3,000 - \$4,999	12	4.2%
\$5,000 - \$7,999	8	2.8%
\$8,000 - \$9,999	1	0.3%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	4	1.4%
\$15,000 - \$99,999	1	0.3%
TOTAL ANNUAL PLEDGES	288	100%

\$425,000 (goal)

\$371,254
Amount Pledged
(87% of goal)

\$309,152
Amount Collected
(73% of goal)

*NOTE: Our current stewardship goal is \$1,500 per steward/family
RIGHT NOW, 74% OF OUR STEWARDS ARE UNDER THAT GOAL*

NEWS FROM THE LOFT

Our Associate Director and her adorable assistant

We wish to publicly acknowledge and thank Katerina Lynch, who conducted the choir at the director's podium in October during Jim's absence. Our community is indeed fortunate and blessed to have this talented and musically knowledgeable individual as an associate director of our church choir and capable instructor for our growing youth choir. Her presence helps to insure the uninterrupted participation of the choir in our weekly divine services.

Katerina holds a masters degree in music composition. Additionally, she comes from a family well versed in ecclesiastical music as her mother and aunts make up the renowned chant group "Eikona." Additionally, her maternal grandparents, Dr. and Mrs. James Maniatis, are the long-time director and organist of the The Assumption of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Cathedral Choir of Denver, Colorado. As seen here, Katerina is already paying the church music tradition forward as she directs our choir with her infant son Isaiah Christopher experiencing the Divine Liturgy from "the best seat in the house."

Thanks again Katerina for everything you and Patrick do in the loft and at the chanter stand to enhance our worship experience at Saint Anthony.



NEWS FROM THE LOFT (CONTINUED)***She Now Sings With the Angelic Host***

On November 8, our choir family was heartbroken to learn that our dear friend and fellow chorister, Demetra (Litsa) Stavropoulos had departed this life at Methodist Hospital of Southern California.

Litsa and her family were long-time members of our Saint Anthony community where she participated in many aspects of parish life. In addition to being an enthusiastic member of our church choir for many years, Litsa was also a Greek School teacher and member of the Panagia Philoptochos Chapter, for which she served two terms as president.

Our choir family has a tradition of having annual holiday gatherings to enjoy hors d'oeuvres and rehearse Christmas carols. Litsa could always be counted on to volunteer her beautiful home as a venue for this happy occasion.

Her angelic soprano voice, lovely smile, and positive attitude will be greatly missed. We wish to extend our sincere condolences to Litsa's sons Peter, William, and their families. May her memory be eternal.



FROM OUR CHOIR FAMILY TO YOURS,

WE WISH YOU ALL A VERY BLESSED ADVENT SEASON AND MERRY CHRISTMAS!

NEWS FROM THE LOFT (CONTINUED)

Our Choir in action..



CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS

CHURCH SCHOOL—A PLACE YOUR CHILDREN WANT TO BE!



The featured class this month is Grades 4/5. They are studying **The Holy Mysteries**. They were asked how they feel about Church School.

"Not only are we learning the seven mysteries and what they are, but we are also learning the security that these mysteries bring at keeping us safe in this crazy world!"

-Tessa Grafos

"This class makes me feel like I'm making progress in my faith."

-Thanos Mitis

"It really comforts me, that unlike regular school where the teachers are often very interested in the mind, God is very interested in the inside heart and real man."

-Elias Mowrey

"We are constantly learning new things I didn't know like how the seven sacraments help humble us and keep us safe and also help us make spiritual progress."

-Maria Syrengelas



CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS (CONTINUED)

My name is John Vagenas. My wife, Georgia and I have been teaching Church School for five years. It is hard to pin down what I love most about teaching my class. If I were to be really honest, I would have to say that it's a second chance at teaching these beautiful, guileless innocent 4th and 5th graders things I was too busy to teach my own kids (may God forgive me).

May He grant the children His grace to come to know Him and our Faith beyond the knowledge base of my own generation. The "Phronema" (mindset) of the Orthodox Faith takes time to learn and our children need this very real faith to survive and make sense of this very difficult life.



YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT NEWS

Greek Dance Practice



YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT NEWS (CONTINUED)



What is HOPE and JOY?

- It is a ministry of the church
- It is an opportunity to provide fellowship among our young faithful of the church
- It is an opportunity to share common interests with those of similar ages
- It integrates four elements: Worship, Fellowship, Service and Witness

Is there a membership fee?

- No
- Occasionally members will be asked to bring something for a community outreach
- We may ask for monetary donations to cover expenses as needed

What are the ages?

- HOPE (Hellenic Orthodox Primary Explorers): 4 ½ to 7 years old
- JOY (Junior Orthodox Youth): 8 years old to 10 years old

Meeting dates and times:

- First Sunday of the month
- Begins 10 minutes after Church School is dismissed
- Schedules are flexible and announced well in advance

Volunteer Opportunities?

- Adult supervision is always welcomed
- Youth volunteers are needed

Coordinator: Irene Albeck- mcmg2a@aol.com / 626-792-8122

Please leave completed form in Room 1A or eMail the following information to Irene:

First and Last name of child/children:

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

Name of Parents: _____

eMail: _____

Two phone numbers including an emergency number:

1. _____ 2. _____ (ice)

I want to volunteer! _____ yes _____ maybe _____ ask me later

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

SPOUPER SUNDAY...

On Sunday, November 24th, our **4th Souper Sunday** raised \$8,000 for our neighbors at the Pasadena Bad Weather Shelter. It was great fun! We thank Samantha, Mary and Sophia for stepping up and making this happen. Thank you to the members of our Saint Anthony community for their generous donations and extra special thanks to our talented chefs. We are grateful for the all the chefs, delicious soups, and for all the participation.

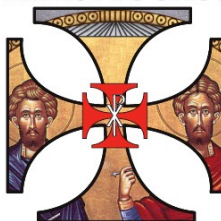
CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON...

Our **Christmas Benefit Luncheon and Fashion Show** on December 7th, at the Langham Hotel in Pasadena, is **SOLD OUT!** We look forward to a spectacular event and we thank everyone for their continued support!

PHILOPTOCHOS CHRISTMAS PARTY

On **Sunday, December 15th**, at 5:00pm, we will be having our **Christmas Party** at Cameron's Seafood Restaurant located at 1978 Colorado Blvd., Pasadena. Please join us for some Christmas fellowship and cheer. For reservation and more information, please contact Maria Kypreos: makypreos@gmail.com (626) 272-2720.

PHILOPTOCHOS



PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS (CONTINUED)

***“You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land.”
Deuteronomy 15:11***

Union Station Homeless Services

In 1973 a group of community volunteers opened Union Station as a simple hospitality center to serve poor and homeless men in downtown Pasadena. Since then, Union Station has grown..

Under the guidance of Philoptochos for over 25 years our community has participated once a month (rain or shine, holiday or no holiday) providing and serving hot meals for about 50-60 individuals fulfilling what is written in **Hebrews13:16**:

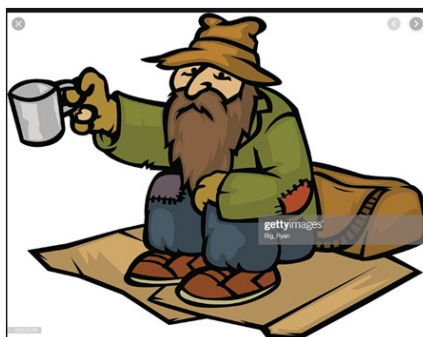
“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.”

Food is prepared in our kitchen, and then delivered to the center. Other necessities will be purchased and taken to the facility.

Members of our church and our youth groups are encouraged to sign up for one or more month to serve. It only takes one and a half hour of your time.

Contact:

Stephanie Soewers	szanglis@aol.com	818-209-5026 (home)
Sophia Angelos	sangelos2000@gmail.com	626-795-0848 (home)
Irene Albeck	mcmg2a@aol.com	626-792-8122



VIP NEWS

The VIPs have been very busy.

On November 12th we had our monthly meeting followed by a pizza lunch.

Two days later... on November 14th we took a trip to Roger's Gardens in Corona del Mar to see their Christmas displays and beautiful plants and flowers. Then, all 17 of us had lunch at the Farmhouse restaurant.



Thanks to the generous donations that we received following Church services in November, we were able to present a check to Betty McWilliams, Executive Director of the Foothill Unity Center for \$1,000 (pictured below -- Athena Dallas, Betty McWilliams and Alik Haralambos). This is truly a wonderful organization "Helping People - Changing Lives."



*Coming up, our next meeting will be held on **Monday, December 9th at 10:00 a.m.**, at the Monrovia Restaurant. A breakfast buffet will be served following a short meeting. The cost is \$15. Please let me know if you would like to attend.*

*Please consider joining the VIPs - we meet on the second **Tuesday of the month at 10:00 a.m.** in the Trinity Ballroom.*

Merry Christmas 🎄

Helen Treantafelles, VIP President

Helen Treantafelles

htreantafelles@yahoo.com

SAINT ANTHONY BOOKSTORE

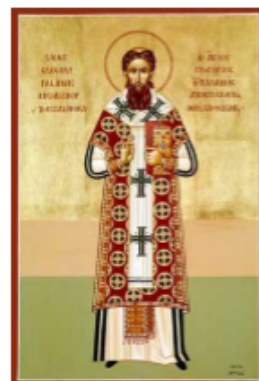
News from the Bookstore

ANNOUNCING:

Icon Clearance Sale Sunday 12/8/19

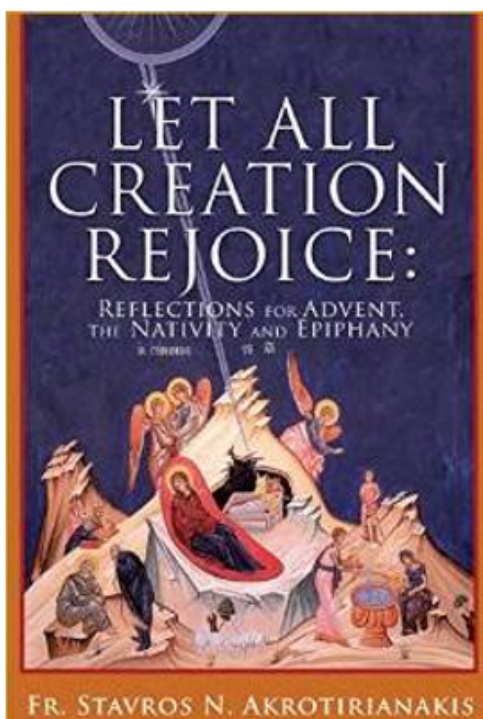


In case you missed our big 60% off sale earlier this year, you're in luck. There will be a special SUPER Clearance Sale on a large selection of icons in the Trinity Ball Room during Coffee Hour immediately after the Divine Liturgy on Sunday December 8th. All icons (already marked at a 60% discount) will be further reduced in price. You can take an additional 50% off the sales price when you make your purchase on Sunday. That's a grand total of **80% off the original price!**



Featured Item

Did you know our St. Anthony's Bookstore has LOTS of great devotional books to aid in your spiritual growth? Here is our featured book this month:



Has the Christmas season become the most stressful time of the year instead of the most wonderful time? We are all familiar with holiday words like "joy" and "glory." Have you ever wondered about their deeper meaning? The glory of the Lord (Luke 2:9) is not just part of the Christmas story but something we can experience in our own lives. Joy reminds us of the child-like innocence we used to have and can recapture. In Luke 2:20 we read "And the shepherds returned." The shepherds were still shepherds; witnessing the miracle of the Incarnation of Christ didn't change their status. It changed their hearts.

Let All Creation Rejoice: Reflections for Advent, the Nativity and Epiphany is a series of short daily reflections on the scripture readings of the season, to be read during the Advent and Nativity season. Spending a few minutes each day reading and reflecting on these scriptures will not change your status either, but it will change your heart. You will better understand the "good news of a great joy," and why "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us."

Father Stavros Akrotirianakis serves as priest at St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church in Tampa, Florida.

SAINT ANTHONY BOOKSTORE (CONTINUED)

Did you know our St. Anthony's Bookstore has LOTS of great **gift** ideas for your loved ones this Christmas Season? Check these out:

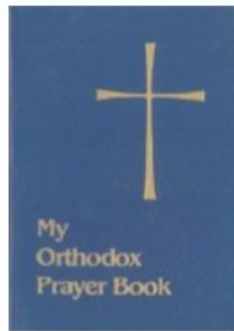
An Assortment of Orthodox Christmas Cards



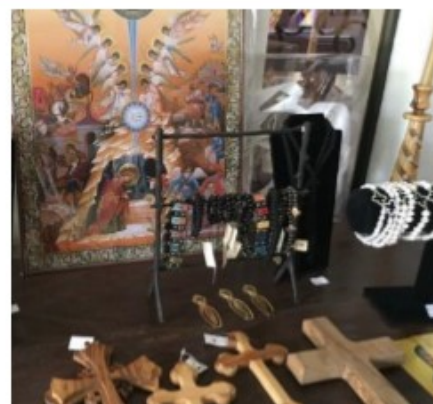
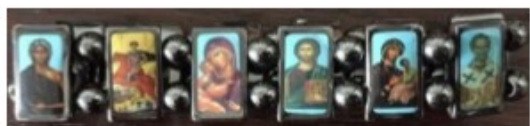
Bessie's Handmade Christmas Ornaments



Stocking Stuffer Ideas



Incense Burner (Thimiato), Icon Diptych, Pocket Prayer Book, Golden Bookmark, Hematite Prayer Bracelets, Pearl Prayer Bracelet, Incense (6 different scents available), Charcoal, Icon Bracelet, and MORE!



Jeremiah Courter is often available immediately after the Divine Liturgy in the bookstore to answer questions and to place an order for special-order items if necessary.



MINISTRIES

Saint Anthony Greek Orthodox Church

Reverend Father Peter Stratos

Reverend Father Christopher Retelas

2019 PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS

Officers

Pete Gallanis	President
John Vidalakis	1 st Vice President
Joseph Akrotirianakis	2 nd Vice President
Tashia Vagenas	Secretary
Tony Christopoulos	Treasurer

Members

Philip Ted Attalla	James Pappas
John Buzas	Sophia Syrengelas
Roberto Crespo	Mary Udria
Tom Grafos	Perry Vidalakis
Christos Ioannou	Vincent Zarian

OFFICE STAFF

Alma Vorgias – Office Administrator
Athena Serban – Events Coordinator (Trinity Ballroom)



CUSTODIAL STAFF

Carlos Sosa



CHOIR

Choir Director Jim Hronas

Sherese Akrotirianakis	Elias Kalivas
Dean Athans	Stavrula Kiotas
Tina Athans	Dr. Rodanthi Kitridou
George Babbes	Kathy Lucas
Christina Becronis	Claire Marotta
Tom Bouras	Liam McCann
Judie Christopoulos	Bess Mechalas
Leah Cokias	Elizabeth Moreno
Rebecca Courter	Iliana Orozco
Athena Dallas	Alexandra Patzakis
Jennifer Dobrinen	Gena Pegadiotes
Maria Ganis	Katerina Petrossian
Georgia Loutsos Grajeda	Nicole Schulman
Aliki Haralambos	+Litsa Stavropoulos
Maria Hronas	Pres. Aida Stratos

CHANTERS

Patrick Lynch
Katerina Lynch
Demetrios Baliotis
Mike Abi-Farah



READERS

Dr Nicholas Kokoris
Constantine Trigonis

YOUTH CHOIR

Katerina Lynch

CHURCH SCHOOL STAFF

Irene Albeck - Preschool
Nikolitsa Vagenas - Preschool
Kathy Tsigkounis - Kindergarten & 1st
Kyriaki Tsigkounis - Kindergarten & 1st
Fotene Trigonis - 2nd & 3rd
John Vagenas - 4th & 5th
Rebecca Russo/Stephanie Scolinos - Middle School/6th—8th
Pres. Aida Stratos - High School/9th—12th

Fotene Trigonis - Director



MINISTRIES (CONTINUED)**PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY****Panagia Chapter Board 2017-2019*****President***

Maria Kypreos

1st Vice President

Elizabeth Skandale & Lisa Xanthos

2nd Vice President

Judith Din & Konstantina Paziouros

Corresponding Secretary

Tanya Christodoulelis & Maria Grover

Recording Secretary

Fontaine Achilles Malisos & Mary Dewar

Treasurer

Maria Kokoris

Assistant Treasurer

Katherine Skandale

Beautification

Presbytera Aida Stratos & Esther Vavoulis

Community Outreach

Mary Dewar, Stephanie Soewers & Presbytera Aida Stratos

Fellowship

Athena Dallas

Publicity / Webmaster

Terese Caire & Nicolette Fuerst

Scholarship

Irene Albeck & Judith Din

Sunshine and Visitation

Jeanne Karaianoglou

Union Station

Irene Albeck

Welfare

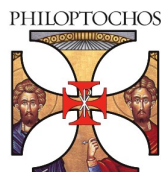
Presbytera Maria Mylonas

Advisor

Connie Becker

Spiritual Advisor

Father Peter Stratos

**ADDITIONAL MINISTRIES**

Acolytes

Fr. Christopher Retelas

Bible Study

Fr. Peter Stratos

Bookstore

Jeremiah Courter

GOYA

Fr. Christopher Retelas

GOYA Basketball

Anthia Lucas
Pana Gelt

Greek Dance Groups

Christine Pappas

Greek Festival

John Vidalakis
Nick Demopulos
Julie Balas

Greek Language School

Anastasia McClain

JOY/HOPE

Irene Albeck

Moms & Tots

Presbytera Kalli Retelas

Myrrh Bearers

Irene Albeck

Oratorical Festival

Nicole Schulman

Pasadena Golf Classic

Jimmy Christodoulelis
Roberto Crespo

Prayer Shawls

Aliko Haralambos

Vacation Bible School

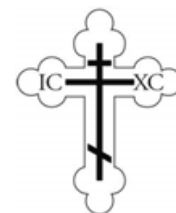
Sophia Syrengelas
Mary Udria

VIPs

Helen Treantafelles

Young Adults

Mike Abi Farah



COMMUNITY NEWS

THE CHRISTMAS FAST – ADVENT

Why do we fast before Christmas?

Question

I was wondering: why do we fast before Christmas? Also, what foods do we normally fast from during the Christmas fast?

Answer

We fast before the Great Feast of Christmas in order to prepare ourselves for the celebration of our Lord's birth. As in the case of Great Lent before Easter, the Christmas Fast is

about preparation, during which we focus on the coming of the Savior by fasting, prayer, and acts of charity towards others. By fasting, we "shift our focus" from ourselves to others, spending less time worrying about what to eat, when to eat, how much to eat, and so on in order to use our time for increased prayer and caring for the poor. We learn through fasting that we can gain control over things that we sometimes allow to control us—and for many people, food is a controlling factor in their lives. A symptom of this is that we now live in a society in which an entire TV network is devoted to food! However, while fasting from food is important, we must also remember that fasting is about developing purity of heart. During the Christmas Fast we are also challenged to fast from sin, from gossip, from jealousy, from anger, and from all those other things which, while well within our control, we all too often allow to dominate us and our relationships.

During the pre-Christmas season when—in our materialistic culture dominated by consumerism—we are constantly told by advertising media that we should buy, buy, buy so that on Christmas day we can get, get, get, hundreds of millions of Orthodox Christians around the world are taught by this period of fasting that Christmas is a time for re-focusing on Christ, a time for self-discipline and compassionate service and outreach to those in need.

During the Christmas Fast, we are called upon to refrain from meat, dairy, fish, wine, and olive oil and challenged, within this framework, to fast to the best of our ability, and to do so consistently, for Christ does not see fasting as an option, but as a "must." In the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:16), the Lord Jesus says, "WHEN you fast, do not be like the hypocrites," not "IF you fast" or "IF YOU CHOOSE to fast." Fasting is not an option in the Christian life.

Finally, it seems quite odd that in our society—a society in which people gladly and freely spend huge sums of money for diets, most of which recommend that one refrain from red meats and dairy products—fasting is not more widely embraced. How odd that a Jenny Craig consultant or diet guru or physician will tell us to refrain from eating meat or cheese or butter and we will gladly embrace—and pay large sums of money for—his or her advice, while when the Church offers the same advice at no cost we tend to balk, as if we were being asked to do the impossible.

The Christmas Fast (Advent) begins on November 15th!
As you are preparing for Christmas,
please note the following guidelines for fasting:

Days	The Tradition of the Church specifies the following	
Sunday Monday Tuesday Thursday Saturday	Abstinence of: Meat & Meat Products, Dairy Products	No Abstinence of: Fish, Shellfish, Vegetables & Vegetable Products, Olive Oil, Fruit, Wine
Wednesday Friday	Abstinence of: Meat & Meat Products, Dairy Products, Fish, Olive Oil, Wine	No Abstinence of: Shellfish, Vegetables & Vegetable Products, Fruit
NOTE: During the Christmas Fast, from Dec. 18 to Dec. 24 inclusive, the Fast becomes stricter with no meat, dairy products or fish. We may eat olive oil and wine this week except on Wednesday and Friday and December 24 (but if December 24 falls on a Saturday or Sunday, wine and oil are eaten).		
Dairy Products: eggs, butter, milk, cheese, etc. Shellfish: oysters, shrimp, scallops, etc. Fish: sardines, tuna, trout, salmon, bass, etc. Wine: fermented, brewed, distilled or any other form of alcoholic beverages.		

COMMUNITY NEWS (CONTINUED)

ORTHODOXY 101 OVERVIEW

Monday nights, 7:00-8:00pm, Rooms 2 E/F

October 7th - December 16th, 2019

Class 7: December 2nd

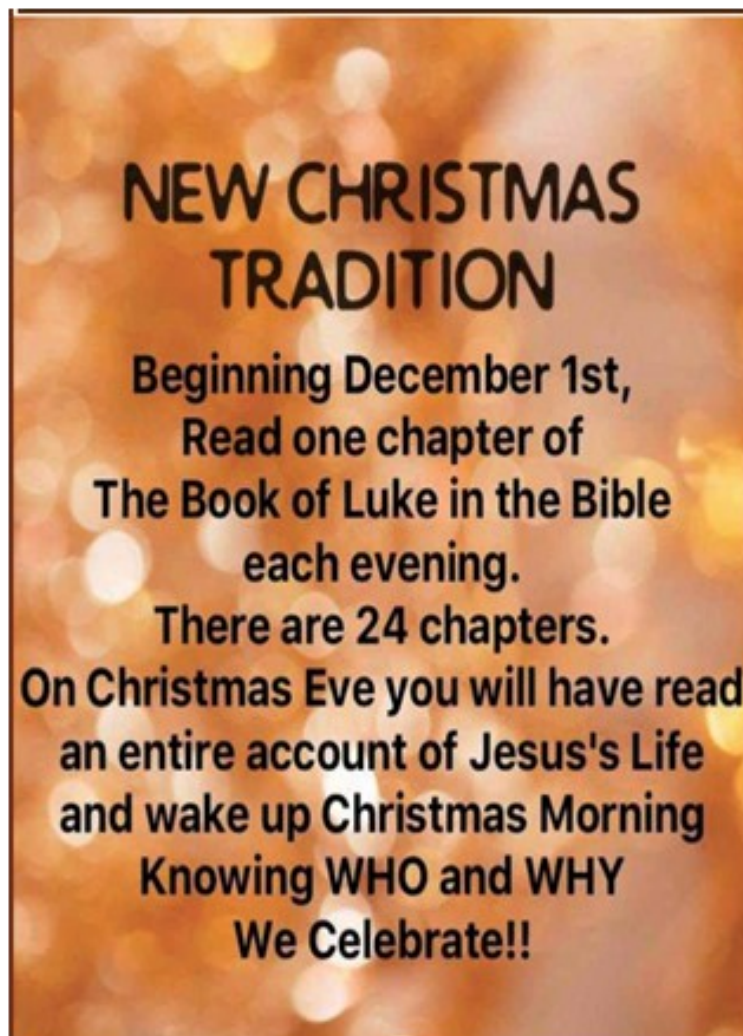
The Virgin Mary, Saints, & Icons

Class 8: December 9th

The Holy Mysteries (Sacraments)

Class 9: December 16th

Worship, services, architecture. Feasting & Fasting



COMMUNITY NEWS (CONTINUED)

St. John the Baptist
Greek Orthodox Church

GOYA Christmas Pan-Orthodox Glendi!

★ **DECEMBER 14th 7-10pm**

★ **Cost: \$10 + canned food donation**

★ **All Orthodox Youth, grades 6-12 welcome!**

★ **Come for Fellowship, Greek Dancing, and meeting new friends!**

(food donation will
aid the hungry via
Second Harvest
Food Bank of Orange
County)

Questions? Contact Eleni Kousoulas, or St. John Office: 714-827-0181



COMMUNITY NEWS (CONTINUED)

Saint Anthony's Greek Folk Dance

Let's Ring in the New Year
2020

Tuesday, December 31st, 2019
6:00 p.m.- 2:00 a.m.

6:00-7:30 p.m. Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great

7:30-9:00 p.m. Appetizers/Cocktails

9:00 p.m. Dinner & Blessing of the Vasilopita

Saint Anthony Greek Orthodox Church

The Trinity Ballroom

778 South Rosemead Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107

Adults: \$75.00

Teens/Young Adults (13-24) \$55.00

Kids 5-12 \$35.00

Under 4 FREE

RSVP by Dec. 23rd, 2019

Pauline Voyagis (714) 321-5427 or pvoyagis@yahoo.com

Make checks payable to Saint Anthony's Greek Dance

Mail checks to church address:

778 South Rosemead Blvd., Pasadena, CA 91107

Attn: Kathy Tsigkounis

Tables of 10 will be assigned on first come basis and table paid in full

FEASTS & SAINTS OF THE MONTH

Saint Barbara

4 December

Saint Barbara was from Heliopolis of Phoenicia and lived during the reign of Maximian. She was the daughter of a certain idolater named Dioscorus. When Barbara came of age, she was enlightened in her pure heart and secretly believed in the Holy Trinity. About this time Dioscorus began building a bath-house; before it was finished he was required to go away to attend to certain matters and in his absence Barbara directed the workmen to build a third window in addition to the two her Father had commanded. She also inscribed the sign of the Cross with her finger upon the marble of the bath-house, leaving the saving sign cut as deeply into the marble as if it had been done with an iron tool. (When the Synaxarion of Saint Barbara was written, the marble of the bath-house and the cross inscribed by Saint Barbara were still preserved and many healings were worked there.) When Dioscorus returned, he asked why the third window had been added; Barbara began to declare to him the mystery of the Trinity. Because she refused to renounce her faith, Dioscorus tortured Barbara inhumanely and after subjecting her to many sufferings he beheaded her with his own hands, in the year 290.

Saint Nicholas

6 December

This Saint lived during the reign of Saint Constantine the Great, and reposed in 330. As a young man, he desired to espouse the solitary life. He made a pilgrimage to the holy city Jerusalem, where he found a place to withdraw to devote himself to prayer. It was made known to him, however, that this was not the will of God for him, but that he should return to his homeland to be a cause of salvation for many. He returned to Myra, and was ordained bishop. He became known for his abundant mercy, providing for the poor and needy, and delivering those who had been unjustly accused. No less was he known for his zeal for the truth. He was present at the First Ecumenical Council of 318 and in 325 at Nicaea ; upon hearing the blasphemies that Arius brazenly uttered against the Son of God, Saint Nicholas struck him on the face. Since the canons of the Church forbid the clergy to strike any man at all, his fellow bishops were in perplexity as to what disciplinary action was to be taken against this hierarch whom all revered. In the night, our Lord Jesus Christ and our Lady Theotokos appeared to certain bishops, informing them that no action was to be taken against him, since he had acted not out of passion, but extreme love and piety. The Dismissal Hymn for holy hierarchs, *The truth of things hath revealed thee to thy flock ...* was written originally for Saint Nicholas. He is the patron of all travelers and of sea-farers in particular. He is one of the best known and best loved Saints of all time.

FEASTS & SAINTS OF THE MONTH (CONTINUED)***The Conception of the Holy Theotokos******9 December***

According to the ancient tradition of the Church, since Saint Anna, the Ancestor of God, was barren, she and her husband Joachim remained without children until old age. Therefore, sorrowing over their childlessness, they besought God with a promise that, if He were to grant them the fruit of the womb, they would offer their offspring to Him as a gift. And God, hearkening to their supplication, informed them through an Angel concerning the birth of the Virgin. And thus, through God's promise, Anna conceived according to the laws of nature, and was deemed worthy to become the mother of the Mother of our Lord .

Saint Spyridon***12 December***

Spyridon, the God-bearing Father of the Church, the great defender of Corfu and the boast of all the Orthodox, had Cyprus as his homeland. He was simple in manner and humble of heart, and was a shepherd of sheep. When he was joined to a wife, he begat of her a daughter whom they named Irene. After his wife's departure from this life, he was appointed Bishop of Trimythus and thus became also a shepherd of rational sheep. When the First Ecumenical Council was assembled in Nicaea, he also was present and by means of his most simple words stopped the mouths of the Arians who were wise in their own conceit. By the divine grace which dwelt in him, he wrought such great wonders that he received the surname 'Wonderworker.' So it is that, having tended his flock piously and in a manner pleasing to God, he reposed in the Lord in the year 350, leaving to his country his sacred relics as a consolation and source of healing for the faithful.

About the middle of the seventh century, because of the incursions made by the barbarians at that time, his sacred relics were taken to Constantinople, where they remained, being honored by the emperors themselves. But before the fall of Constantinople, which took place on May 29, 1453, a certain priest named George Kalokhairetes, the parish priest of the church where the Saint's sacred relics, as well as those of Saint Theodora the Empress, were kept, took them away due to the impending peril. Travelling by way of Serbia, he came as far as Arta in Epirus, a region in Western Greece opposite to the isle of Corfu. From there, while the misfortunes of the Christian people were increasing with every day, he passed over to Corfu in the year 1460. The relics of Saint Theodora were given to the people of Corfu but those of Saint Spyridon remain, according to the rights of inheritance, the most precious treasure of the priest's own descendants and they continue to be a staff for the faithful in Orthodoxy and a supernatural wonder for those who behold him; for even after the passage of 1,500 years, they have remained incorrupt, and even the flexibility of his flesh has been preserved. Truly wondrous is God in His Saints!

FEASTS & SAINTS OF THE MONTH (CONTINUED)**Prophet Daniel****17 December**

The Prophet Daniel and the Three Children were all descended from the royal tribe of Judah. In the year 599 before Christ, in the reign of Joachim, who was also called Jechonias (I Chron. 3:16, and II Chron. 36:8), these righteous children were led away as captives into Babylon together with the other Jews by Nabuchodonosor. He singled them out from among the other captives to serve him, and renamed them thus: Daniel was named Baltazar; Ananias was named Sedrach; Misail was named Misach; and Azarias was named Abednago. They were reared in the royal court and taught the wisdom of the Chaldeans; after the passage of three years, they surpassed all the Chaldean sages (Daniel 1).

Thereafter, Daniel, being still a lad, interpreted a mysterious image seen by Nabuchodonosor in a dream. It was an image that was composed of different metals, but was shattered and ground to dust by a certain stone which had been hewn out of a mountain without the hand of man. This vision clearly portrayed through the mountain the height of the Virgin's holiness and the power of the Holy Spirit which overshadowed her. Through the image of the Stone, Christ was portrayed, Who was seedlessly born of her, and Who by His coming as the God-man would shatter and destroy all the kingdoms of the world, which were portrayed through the image; and He would raise them who believe in Him, into His Heavenly Kingdom, which is eternal and everlasting.

Thereupon, he signified in prophecy the time of His appearance in the Jordan, the beginning of His preaching of the Gospel, the time of His saving Passion, and the cessation of the worship according to the Mosaic Law. He portrayed most excellently the majestic and dread image of His second coming, presenting by means of words, as with living colors, the fiery throne which shall be set, the Eternal Judge Who shall sit thereon, the river of fire that shall flow forth before Him, the calling to account before the impartial judgment seat, the opened books of each one's deeds, the thousands upon thousands of them who minister to Him, and the ten thousands of them who stand in His presence.

Daniel (whose name means "God is judge") was called "man of desires" by the Angels that appeared, because he courageously disdained every desire of the body, even the very bread that is necessary for nourishment. Furthermore, he received this name because, in his longing for the freedom of those of his tribe and his desire to know their future condition, he ceased not supplicating God, fasting and bending the knee three times a day. Because of this prayer, he was cast into the den of lions, after he had been accused by his enemies as a transgressor of the decree issued through the proclamation of the king, that no one should worship or ask for anything from God or from men for thirty days, but only from the king. But having stopped the mouths of the lions by divine might and appearing among them as though he were a shepherd of sheep, Daniel showed the impious, the might of godliness.

Prophet Daniel continued on next page...

FEASTS & SAINTS OF THE MONTH (CONTINUED)

As for the Three Children, Ananias ("Yah is gracious"), Misail ("Who is what God is?") and Azarias ("Yah is keeper").. since they refused to offer adoration to Nabuchodonosor's image, they were cast into the furnace of fire. They were preserved unharmed amidst the flames, even their hair was untouched, by the descent of the Angel of the Lord, that is, the Son of God. Walking about in the furnace, as though in the midst of dew, they sang the universal hymn of praise to God, which is found in the Seventh and Eighth Odes of the Holy Psalter. And coming forth there from, without even the smell of the fire on their clothes (Daniel 3), they prefigured in themselves the Virgin's incorrupt giving of birth; for she, on receiving the Fire of the Godhead within her womb, was not burned, but remained virgin, even as she was before giving birth.

Therefore the Church celebrates the Three Children and Daniel on this day, on the Sunday of the Forefathers, and on the Sunday before the Nativity of Christ, since they prefigured and proclaimed His Incarnation. Furthermore, they were of the tribe of Judah, wherefrom, Christ sprang forth according to the flesh. The holy Three Children completed their lives full of days. As for the Prophet Daniel, he lived until the reign of Cyrus, King of Persia, whom he also petitioned that his nation be allowed to return to Jerusalem and that the Temple be raised up again. His request was granted. He reposed in Peace, having lived about eighty-eight years. His prophetic book, which is divided into twelve chapters, is ranked fourth among the greater Prophets.

Anastasia**22 December**

This Saint, the daughter of Praepextatus and Fausta, was from Rome and was a most comely, wealthy and virtuous maiden. It was her mother who instructed her in the Faith of Christ. The Saint was joined to a man named Publius Patricius, who was prodigal in life and impious in disposition, but she was widowed after a short time. Henceforth, she went about secretly to the dwellings of the poor and the prisons where the Martyrs of Christ were, and brought them whatever was needed for their daily subsistence. She washed their wounds, loosed them from their fetters and consoled them in their anguish.



FEASTS & SAINTS OF THE MONTH (CONTINUED)**Nativity of Christ****25 December**

The incomprehensible and inexplicable Nativity of Christ came to pass when Herod the Great was reigning in Judea; the latter was an Ascalonite on his father's side and an Idumean on his mother's. He was in every way foreign to the royal line of David; rather, he had received his authority from the Roman emperors and had ruled tyrannically over the Jewish people for some thirty-three years. The tribe of Judah, which had reigned of old, was deprived of its rights and stripped of all rule and authority. Such was the condition of the Jews when the awaited Messiah was born and truly thus was fulfilled the prophecy which the Patriarch Jacob had spoken 1,807 years before: *"A ruler shall not fail from Judah, nor a prince from his loins, until there come the things stored up for him and he is the expectation of the nations"* (Genesis 49:10).

Thus, our Savior was born in Bethlehem, a city of Judea. Joseph had come from Nazareth of Galilee, taking Mary his betrothed, who was great with child. According to the decree issued in those days by the Emperor Augustus, they must be registered in the census of those subject to Rome. Therefore, when the time came for the Virgin to give birth, and since because of the great multitude there was no place in the inn, the Virgin's circumstance constrained them to enter a cave which was near Bethlehem. Having as shelter a stable of irrational beasts, she gave birth there and swaddled the Infant and laid Him in the manger (Luke 2:1-7). From this, the tradition has come down to us that when Christ was born He lay between two animals, an ox and an ass, that the words of the Prophets might be fulfilled: *"Between two living creatures shalt Thou be known"* (Abbacum 3:2). *"The ox knoweth his owner & the ass his master's crib"* (Esaias 1: 3).

But while the earth gave the new-born Savior such a humble reception, Heaven on high celebrated majestically His world-saving coming. A wondrous star, shining with uncommon brightness and following a strange course, led Magi from the East to Bethlehem, to worship the new-born King. Certain shepherds who were in the area of Bethlehem, who kept watch while tending their sheep, were suddenly surrounded by an extraordinary light and they saw before them an Angel who proclaimed to them the good tidings of the Lord's joyous Nativity. And straightway, together with this Angel, they beheld and heard a whole host of the Heavenly Powers praising God and saying: *"Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth, good will towards men"* (Luke 2:8-14).



FEASTS & SAINTS OF THE MONTH (CONTINUED)

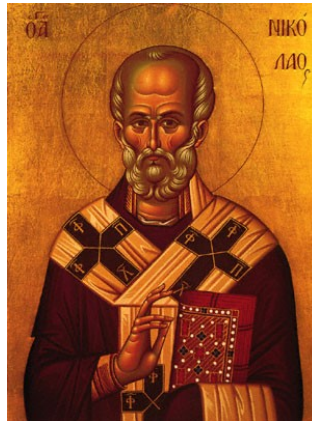
Saint Stephen

27 December

Saint Stephen was a Jew by race and, as some say, a disciple of Gamaliel, the teacher of the Law mentioned in Acts 5:34 and 22:3. He was the first of the seven deacons whom the Apostles established in Jerusalem to care for the poor and to distribute alms to them. Being a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, he performed great signs and wonders among the people. While disputing with the Jews concerning Jesus and wisely refuting their every contradiction, so that no one was able to withstand the wisdom and the spirit whereby he spoke, he was slandered as a blasphemer and was dragged off to the Sanhedrin of the elders. There with boldness he proved from the divine Scriptures the coming of the Just One (Jesus), of Whom they had become the betrayers and murderers and he reproved their faithless and hardheartedness. And finally, gazing into Heaven and beholding the divine glory, he said: *"Lo, I see the Heavens opened and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God."* But when they heard this, they stopped up their ears, and with anger cast him out of the city and stoned him, while he was calling out and saying, *"Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."* Then, imitating the long-suffering of the Master, he bent his knees and prayed in a loud voice for them that were stoning him, and he said, *"Lord, lay not this sin to their charge,"* And saying this, he fell asleep, thus becoming the first among the Martyrs of the Church of Christ. (Acts 6 & 7)



Saint Barbara



Saint Nicholas



The Conception of the Holy Theotokos



Saint Spyridon































**Prophet Daniel
and the Three Youths**

Saint Stephen



Orthodox Calendar

DECEMBER 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
 1 14th Sunday of Luke 8:45am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy 12:30 Dance Practice	 2 4pm Monday Greek School 7pm Orthodoxy 101	 3 7:30pm AHEPA Meeting	 4 Saint Barbara 5pm Greek Dance Practice 6pm Greek Dance Practice 7pm Philoptochos Union Station	 5 7pm Choir rehearsal 7pm Vespers for Saint Nicholas	 6 Saint Nicholas 9am Liturgy for Saint Nicholas at Saint Nicholas Chapel, Rose Hills 4pm Friday Greek	 7 11am Greek Dance Practice
 8 10th Sunday of Luke 8:45am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy 11am Church School 12:30 Dance Practice	 9 Conception of Holy Theotokos 10am VIP Meeting/Breakfast 4pm Monday Greek School 7pm Orthodoxy 101	 10 10am VIPs 7pm Parish Council	 11 5pm Greek Dance Practice 6pm Greek Dance Practice 7:15 Philop.Board	 12 Saint Spyridon 9am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy 7pm Choir rehearsal	 13 4pm Friday Greek School 6:30pm Fellowship Friday	 14 11am Greek Dance Practice
 15 11th Sunday of Luke 8:45am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy 11am Church School 12pm Greek School Christmas Carols 12:30 Greek Dance	 16 4pm Monday Greek School 7pm Orthodoxy 101	 17 Prophet Daniel	 18 5pm Greek Dance Practice 6pm Greek Dance Practice	 19 7pm Choir rehearsal	 20 4pm Friday Greek School 6:30 Greek School Christmas Party	 21 11am Greek Dance Practice
 22 Sunday before Nativity Saint Anastasia 8:45am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy 12:30 Greek Dance	 23	 24 6pm Vespers for the Nativity of our Lord	25 Christmas Nativity 8am Orthros 9am Divine Liturgy	26 7pm Choir rehearsal	27 Saint Stephen	28 11am Greek Dance Practice
29 Sunday after Nativity 8:45am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy 12:30 Dance Practice	30	31 Liturgy for Saint Basil 5pm Orthros 6pm Divine Liturgy 6pm Greek Dance New Year's Eve Party				
		Strict Fast 	Fish Allowed 	Wine and Oil Allowed 	Dairy, Eggs, and Fish Allowed 	Fast Free

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TO EXPLAIN HUMAN
SUFFERING, OR TO
ELIMINATE IT. RATHER, HE
CAME TO FILL HUMAN
SUFFERING WITH HIS
PRESENCE."

FATHER GEORGE CALCIU