

The Light

To Φως



Greek Orthodox Parish
of Loudoun County

Volume 8, Issue 2
March — April 2015

The bi-monthly newsletter of the Greek Orthodox Parish of Loudoun County

A Message from Father George Alexson



Entering the Arena or the Difference between Spectator and Participant

Several weeks ago, as we stood on the threshold of Great Lent, we heard this invitation at Matins of Cheese-fare Sunday, “The arena of virtues has been opened. Let all who wish to struggle now enter, girding themselves for the noble contest of the Fast.”

The concept of Christian life as “agonas,” usually translated as “spiritual warfare,” within the “stadion” (arena) of life is deeply rooted in the spiritual consciousness of the Church. St. Paul, for example, questions the Christians of

Corinth, “Do you not know that in a racecourse (stadion) all those running compete, but only one receives the prize. So run that you may obtain it” (I Cor. 9:24)

Quite simply, only those who enter the arena as participants have a chance at winning the prize; spectators need not apply. They may have paid the entrance fee to gain access to the stadium, but they enter as spectators and so remain, prize-less.

Throughout His earthly ministry, our Lord summoned people to participate in His life, in the sense of engagement so remarkably captured by the Greek word, “aravona” (2 Cor. 1:22). In the Gospel reading for the first Sunday of Lent we heard the call, “Come and see:” that is, if you really want to know Who I Am, come, spend time with Me. And, on the third Sunday of Lent, “Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me” (Mk 8: 34). An unmistakable invitation to actively pursue a life of grace and transfiguration.

It is never enough to simply watch Jesus take up His cross. The Greek verbs used in the verse from Mark—deny and take-up—are in the aorist imperative, which indicates either instantaneous action or action that is to begin at once. Action, with no time to spare. “Follow Me,” however, is in the present imperative which indicates continuity. Thus, when I finally make my decision to deny myself and take up my cross, I must decide, every day, for or against Him (Matt. 12:30). Either I deny Him or, I deny the “(my)-Self” that sets itself in opposition to His life and Gospel. Truly, the gift of freedom instilled in our nature at creation must be used wisely. It will help us live the difference between Judas, who denied Him and hanged himself for it, and those who remained with Him to the end.

Beginning on Lazarus Saturday, and throughout Holy Week and Pascha, we are offered an exceptional opportunity through the liturgy of the church, to reap the benefits—in a deeply personal sense—of the life-giving events recounted in the anaphora prayer in Chrysostom’s liturgy: “the cross, the tomb, the resurrection on the third day, the ascension into heaven, the enthronement at the right hand of the Father, and the second, glorious coming.” The liturgical services commemorating these sacred events must not be viewed as pious recollections of Gospel narrative. Rather, as one theologian explains, “The frequent use in worship of expressions denoting present time (e.g., “today”), manifest an existential recreation on the part of the congregation of events within the divine economy. This is not about historical recall of past events. All these things took place ‘once and for all’ [Rom. 6:10], within a concrete and unrepeatable historical process. Their re-creation [in a liturgical setting] indicates the possibility, provided by God’s grace, for the faithful to live them as though they were present when they took place, and to receive from them the grace that pours forth from them....Christ is the center of history and, because of that, He is at the same time and across time, the Lord of history” (Prot. G. Metallinos, “The Theological Witness of Ecclesiastical Worship,” in Greek).

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Highlights:

- GOPLC Adult Night, Sat. April 25 at 7pm, Nick’s Taverna in Ashburn
- Chick-fil-A Spirit Night Fundraiser, Tues. May 5 from 5-8pm, Dulles Crossing Plaza
- Vacation Church Camp, June 22-26, 10am-1:30pm each day

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Message from the Parish Council President – Marina Blair



*"Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God."
- Romans 15:7*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As the ever-deepening union of each one of us with our Lord is a powerful and continuous inner process during this Lenten season, I pray that this letter finds all of you, our church family, in good health.

With the swearing in of our newly elected Executive Committee and Parish Council, I am deeply humbled to serve as the new Parish Council President of our great church community. I thank our Lord for all His blessings. I would like to thank our spiritual father, Fr. George, and Presvytera Joanna for their daily sacrifices, kindness and love for our parish. I would like to thank all of you, our parishioners for your deep devotion, and love for our church. It is your steadfast support and everyone's unwavering faith that gives all of us in the Parish Council the force to move forward and serve you and our beautiful parish to the best of our abilities. Lastly, I would like to thank my family, Robert, Alexia and George for their patience, love and support.

While our hearts and minds are focused with great anticipation on our Lord's Passion and Resurrection, the work of this new Parish Council started immediately the day after the elections. For this, I need to express my gratitude and appreciation to the members of the current Parish Council for all the extra hours of work that they have donated to the parish. Below, in no particular order, are some simple examples of the work we have been doing.

On February 13th, we had the opportunity to convene an emergency Parish Council meeting to address a potential land opportunity. Please, read the Future Planning Committee's article for more information about the Committee's

work. Parish Council Vice President Andrew Kaffes and Paul Orphanides are our Future Planning Committee and Building Fund dynamic duo! Thank you Andrew and Paul! Andrew is also the liaison for HOPE and JOY.

Craig Dodson is our Parish Council Treasurer. It is my strong belief that all our parishioners should be aware of the status of our Parish's finances at any given time, so I have asked Craig to post a simple, but comprehensive financial statement on the Parish Council board in the Church Hall starting in May for your perusal. Thank you Craig for your commitment to our parish!

Nick Spyros is busy with his obligations as our Parish Council Secretary. In addition to serving as the liaison to and President of AHEPA, Nick is also a Sunday School teacher and Men's Bible Study Group coordinator. Further, we occasionally seek Nick's opinions on legal matters. Thank you Nick!

Maria Zangos and Tom Skuce are working hard on updating our website. Maria is the liaison to and Treasurer of the Philoptochos, and also serves as the Assistant Director of the Sunday School. Tom will also be busy as the Assistant Treasurer, the liaison to GOYA and the liaison to the Choir, in which he also participates. Thanks to both of you! I am sure our website will become even more informative and welcoming due to your efforts.

Greg Cherpes is the co-chair of and liaison to our Festival Committee. Along with the rest of the Festival committee, he is working hard to find a new venue for our Fall Taste Of Greece Festival, since our "permanent" Ashburn Fire-house venue is being renovated and will not be available for some time yet. Thank you Greg!

Nick Kass is taking on a new role within the Parish Council as the Fundraising Chairman. This is a position that has not been occupied for some time. I hope that we can all support our new Fundraising program, not only financially, but also with new ideas and innovative approaches to improve our

Continued on page 3...

FOR SALE: Belmont Country Club, Ashburn



Belmont Country Club, Golf Course



Belmont Country Club, Golf Course

RECENTLY SOLD: Belmont Country Club, Ashburn & Potomac Falls



Belmont Country Club
Master's Series
\$1,499,000

Potomac Falls
Estate Series



TTR

Sotheby's
INTERNATIONAL REALTY
McLean, VA 22101

dianeboone.ttrsir.com
703-216-9999

DIANE BOONE



President's Message Continued

church and increase our building fund in a strong and positive way. Thank you Nick!

Ava Walter is the driving force in so many events that happen around our church. Currently, she is a Sunday School teacher and the liaison to the Greek School. She also keeps the ushering schedule for our Parish Council. Ava is also deeply devoted to HOPE and JOY as one of its Directors. Thank you Ava!

As for yours truly, in addition to serving as the Parish Council President, I am honored to be the chair of and liaison to PAREA, as well as the liaison to the Sunday School and the Orthodox Book Club.

On behalf of the Parish Council I would also like to extend my appreciation to Con Sofologis, the previous President and Parish Council member, and to Jeff Smith, our Parish Facility Manager, who recently resigned from their positions. We thank them for their contributions to our Parish for all these years.

On March 7th, a very productive meeting took place with the Heads of our Ministries, Father George and myself in an effort to improve communication, growth and understanding among and between the Ministries and the Parish Council. All our Ministries are working very hard in the name of our Lord and of our Parish. I would like to express my deep appreciation and gratitude to Presvytera Joanna, Sofia Kouiroukides, Elpida Skuce, Lia Economou, Ergini Batistatos-Martnishn, Alexis Cleveland, Maria Zangos, Andrew Kaffes, Nick Spyros, Ava Walter and Helen Hadjimichael for attending the meeting and for all their hard work!

HOPE and JOY brought true hope and joy to the residents of the Tall Oaks Assisted Living Center in Herndon! The children sang several songs in concert with the angelic voice of our Choir Director, Elpida Skuce. It was a beautiful and very touching afternoon! We promised to return soon! Thank you to Helen Hadjimichael, Ava Walter and everyone who participated.

March 8th was a great day for our Sunday School, as five of our students participated in the Oratorical Festival! Congratulations to all the participants! Luke Kendrat, Marlene Ortiz and Anna Maria Kendrat are moving on to the District level of competition in Fredericksburg. Thank you to Ergini Martnishn our Sunday School Director and to Nick Zangos for supporting the Oratorical Festival.

On March 8th, I was blessed to be a part of, and deeply impressed by our GOYANS as they exhibited their talents and performed for the Pappous and Yiayias of our church! Kudos to all who participated and cooked the delicious Lenten meals. Thank you Sofia Kouiroukides and Lillian Funk!

Special thanks in random order to Nick Grivas and all our chanters; to Smaro Karakatsanis, our talented Greek Dance Troupe Coordinator; Christine Poulias and Greg Joiner, our top Newsletter experts; the devoted John Emch and all the Altar Boys; to Ana Balan our devoted coordinator of the Orthodox Book Club; Bill Aubin, our experienced Festival Committee chair; Dimitri Stratakos and Kathy Kendrat, our dedicated GOYA Boy's Basketball Team coach and coordinator respectively; to Marianna Korulaki, our hard working Epitaphios Committee chair; Effie Koutsourais, our diligent Prosfora Committee chair and her team; and last but not least, my awesome PAREA Vice Chair, Kristina Ayoub! Your hard work is deeply appreciated!

Deacon Harry and Sub-deacon Michael, we thank you for your deep devotion to our church.

On Saturday, 21 March, for the first time, we had a wonderful, spiritual, and well-attended Lenten luncheon with a lecture from Father George. Thank you Father, and thank you to all who came and participated.

On Sunday, 22 March, our Greek school's presentation made our hearts proud! Kudos to our Greek School Director Vasilia Ravaris and our devoted

Greek language teacher Athanasia Dacey! Bravo to all the children who participated!

On Sunday, 22 March, for the first time, our Parish officially participated in the Greek Independence Day celebration at St. Katherine's as an event co-sponsor. Thank you to Andreas Voyiatzis for representing us! We are all very proud of you!

Mercina Karagiorgis and Presvytera Joanna lovingly sewed much needed and beautiful new covers for the candle table in the Narthex and the collection tray baskets. A special thank you for offering their talents, and to PAREA for donating the funds for the material.

As your Parish Council President, it is my strong desire to maintain an open channel of communication with all of our parishioners. Please feel free to contact me, or any of the other members of the Parish Council with your questions, concerns, and suggestions.

As we approach the end of the Lenten season, we are all preparing ourselves to walk with our Lord through the solemn days of Holy Week and our Lord's Passion. Let's all try to attend as many of the Services that are provided to us as possible, and illuminate our hearts with sacred and spiritual worship.

May our God keep you under His protective Hand.

Kali Anastasi! Happy Easter!

In His Service,

Marina A. Blair

Parish Council President

blairmarina@gmail.com

(703-349-1842)

All the members of our church family who have no other plans for the celebration of Easter are welcome to join the Blair and Walter families for a **potluck Easter celebration on Easter Sunday, April 12th at 3:00pm.**

Please RSVP to Marina Blair, (703-349-1842) if you would like to attend. Marina and Ava's homes are located adjacent to each other at 47753 and 47761 Allegheny Circle, Sterling, VA 20165.

Sacraments Performed

Chrismations

Isabella Alexis Gagliano was chrismated into the Orthodox Church on Feb. 14, 2015. Her Sponsor was Victoria Mitkovitser. May God grant her many years!

Kimberly Anne Godfrey was chrismated into the Orthodox Church on Feb. 21, 2015. Her sponsor was Presv. Joanna Alexson. May God grant her many years!

Funeral

Theodore Alevromagiros passed away on Feb. 3rd and was buried from our church on Feb. 6, 2015. May our Lord grant him eternal rest, and peace and comfort to his beloved family. Aionia I mnimi avtou!



Stewardship

Stewardship is caring for the needs of others. Stewardship is offering one's self to God as He offered Himself to us. Stewardship is what a person does after saying "I believe..." as proof of that belief.

- Williams and McKibben in Oriented Leadership

The Lenten season is a special time for recommitment to our Lord, a time to reevaluate all aspects of our lives - where we spend our time, how we allocate our resources, how we love, how we extend our compassion to others.

During this Lenten season, let us remember to care for others, offer ourselves to God, and show our belief in Him by supporting His church.

How can you care for others?

Call someone you haven't spoken to in a while and reconnect, reach out to an elderly person and offer assistance, invite another family for Easter. There are many parishioners who will not be with family this Easter. How wonderful to include them in your family's celebration of Pascha!

How can you offer yourself to God?

We must pray and worship year round, not just during Easter! Come to church each Sunday, listen to our amazing choir under the new direction of Elpida Skuce. I promise you the hymns will move you. Hear the wonderful sermons of Father George and the inspiring parishioner testimonials on Stewardship Sunday. Celebrate the Lord with us and open your heart to Him.

How can you support His church?

****GET INVOLVED!** Have kids? Help our Sunday School, Hope and Joy, GOYA, or our GOYA Boys' Basketball team. Want to learn more about our faith? Join the Orthodox Book Club or attend Men's Bible Study. Looking to give back to the community? Be a part of our Ladies Philoptochos Society. Yearning for more fellowship or networking? Come to a PAREA lunch or AHEPA meeting, or help the Stewardship Committee plan fun parish events. **There is something for everyone! Now is the time to get involved and make a difference in your life, the lives of others, and the life of the church.**

****CONTRIBUTE!** Submit a 2015 Pledge Card and make a financial promise to support our church. So far we have received 70 pledge cards but our goal is over 100. Consider pledging a minimum of \$1,500 which is the average amount it costs our church to operate per family. Already giving more than \$1,500? Increase your pledge by 10%. Every little bit helps us reach our goal of moving to a permanent worship facility.

Our church is so grateful to have faithful Stewards and to continue to grow in amazing ways. Resolve to change your life and the life of your family by becoming more involved in our church and offering yourself to God. I pray you all have a Holy Pascha.

In God's Service,

Lia Economou
Stewardship Chair
liaecon@comcast.net

STEWARDSHIP PLEDGES

Shown below is a list of individuals and families who have made their Stewardship pledge for 2015 as of March 15, 2015. Thank you for your financial commitment to our parish. If you have not submitted a pledge for 2015, please complete the pledge card in this newsletter and return it to the church. Questions can be directed to Lia Economou at liaecon@comcast.net.

Fr. George & Presv. Joanna Alexson	Mercina Karagiorgis
James and Frances Apostolas	Nicholas and Constantina Kass
Bill and Nancy Aubin	Bill and Kathy Kendrat
John and Kristina Ayoub	Dimitri and Jolanda Kesari
Vasilios Bakopanos	Nikolaos and Sofia Kouiroukides
Daniel and Angela Bell	Michael and Effie Koutsourais
Robert and Marina Blair	Alexandra Lampros and Hal Hallett
Tim and Diane Boone	Nikoleta Lelis
Penelope N. Broening	John and Christina Lisciandro
Greg and Marilena Cherpes	Angelike Maoury
Ed and Alexis Cleveland	Steve and Ergini Martnishn
Dean and Maria Coulopoulos	George and Debra Mokhiber
Constantin and Viorica Curelaru	Olivia Morris
Aristos and Anna Dimitriou	Paul and Lisa Orphanides
Michael and Aspacia Dintini	Elias Panagiotis Papisavvas & Christine Bump
Craig and Marianna Dodson	Maria Pappas
David and Susan Dorn	Jerry and Helen Pollatos
William and Penny Douskalis	Terry and Christine Poulias
John and Maria Drapas	Despina Psomiades
Dean and Lia Economou	Keith Pullman
Vasilis and Joan Fotopoulos	Raul and Lisa Puertas
Ms. Frehiwot	Vladimir and Galina Repin
James and Christine Freire	Matthew Skuce
Cookie Freire	Thomas and Elpida Skuce
Gary and Lillian Funk	Jeff and Cynthia Smith
Bill and Evelyn Gacis	Constantine Sofologis
John and Patti George	Nicholas and Liba Spyros
Angeline Gillas	Paul Spyros
Jim and Cynthia Glakas	Sarah Spyros
Evangelia Gonzales	Moska Stratis
Marek Hejmo & Charikleia Zouridaki	Dwaine and Irene Thomas
Greg and Ashley Joiner	Angelo and Anna Tjoumas
Nicholas and Helen Jougras	Todd and Ava Walter
Andrew and Vasiliki Kaffes	George and Timea Zangos
Pete and Sylvia Karageorge	Maria Zangos



Mother Son Bowling

Mother-Son Bowling was delayed a day due to the snow, but everyone who came on February 16 had a lot of fun! Thanks to Christy Lisciandro for coordinating this event at Bowl America in Sterling.



Everyone had a great time at the Mother Son Bowling event at Bowl America in Sterling!

GOPLC Memorial Building Fund Hits \$100K, Property Vetted

The Future Planning Committee (FPC) has made progress on two main fronts since the committee presented to the General Assembly in November.

Thanks to a flurry of generous donations and pledges, the GOPLC Memorial Building Fund reached \$100,000 in February, eclipsing our “Stage 1” goal of meeting that mark by April 1. Thank you, donors! We should all be proud! Going forward, the FPC has set an ambitious “Stage 2” goal of reaching \$250,000 by March 31, 2016. In addition, the FPC finalized the necessary communications tools needed to embark on this task. These tools include:

- ◆ donor pledge form;
- ◆ GOPLC’s “Statement of Purpose” – a narrative that concisely explains where we’ve been, our Vision, and next steps, including fund raising goal; and
- ◆ the ability to donate online to the Fund at <http://www.greekorthodoxloudoun.org/futureplanning.html>.

The first two items are available on the Fellowship Wall. Please feel free to take one or more and share widely with family and friends. Also, more thorough information booklets are available to be shared during Fellowship Hour. Please locate FPC members Andrew Kaffes, Paul Orphanides, or Father George Alexson if you’re interested to learn more.

On a second front, the Parish Council took an important step in February. The Council vetted a property zoned for a church that straddled the City of Leesburg and Loudoun County. Although the property ultimately was deemed not viable after careful vetting, the experience proved beneficial for the Council going forward—not to mention even a little exciting. Had the Parish Council elected to proceed with the pursuit of the property, it would have brought it before the General Assembly for consideration.

The FPC is confident that together with our parishioners, we will continue moving forward toward making our Vision a reality.

Future Planning Committee

Circle areas of expertise or interest:

Youth Groups and Classes

- Hope & Joy
- GOYA
- Greek Dance Instruction
- Greek School
- Sunday School

Groups and Ministries

- AHEPA
- Altar Service
- Bible Study
- Choir
- Ladies Philoptochos
- Orthodox Book Club
- PAREA lunch group
- Parish Newsletter
- Social Events
- Stewardship Committee
- Visiting Elderly

2015 STEWARDSHIP PLEDGE (ALL PLEDGES THROUGH DECEMBER 2015) GREEK ORTHODOX PARISH OF LOUDOUN COUNTY

In faith, prayer and sacrifice, my family and I wish to share in the support and work of the Greek Orthodox Parish of Loudoun County. We would like to pledge the amount of

\$_____ for the year 2015 (through December 2015)

You may pay via cash, check or online using PayPal at www.greekorthodoxloudoun.org.

This amount will be paid as follows:

- Annually Semi-annually Quarterly Monthly Weekly

Name: _____

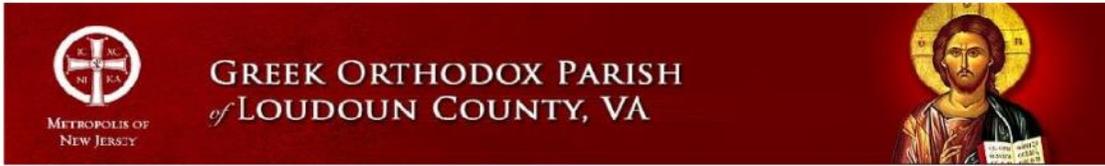
Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

E-mail: _____ Phone: _____

Your pledge is **strictly confidential**.

PLEASE Complete Other Side →



CAPITAL CAMPAIGN DRIVE



STAGE 1 GOAL COMPLETED!!!



\$100,000
→ Will Allow Us to Approach Donors
→ Vet potential land sites



\$75,000
→ Almost There!



\$50,000
→ A Great Foundation!

Stage 1 Goal:
\$100,000
By:
April 1, 2015
GOAL COMPLETED!

Balance w/ Pledges (as of 2/8/15):
\$100,000
8 Months Ago:
\$76,627

New/Recent Donors:

- The Blair Family
- Jim & Cynthia Glakas
- Paul Orphanides in names of Bill & Smaro Caras and Dave & Kathy Sparkman

Thank You!

STAGE TWO GOAL: \$250,000 by March 31, 2016

Building Our Future: A Permanent Home in Loudoun County



Stewardship Sunday (February 8, 2015) Testimonial – Bill Bakopanos



Hello, my name is Vasilios William Bakopanos, otherwise known as Bill. I was asked by the Stewardship Committee to give a testimonial as to how I became a member of this church and more importantly what it means to be part of this church and how faith in our Lord not only saved my life, but saved my spirit. Therefore, I will begin by giving you some context.

I was born in Montreal, Canada. I was Baptized and Chrismated when I was an infant. We moved to the United States when I was 8 years old. My mother used to take my sister and me to St. Katherine Greek Orthodox Church in Falls Church, VA when we were children. When you are 8 years

of age, you really have no choice but to go to church. At that age, I knew church was good and that Jesus was good, but I did not know or understand the meaning of faith.

As I grew older, I always believed in Jesus, I always felt a sense of protection, and that he was looking out for me especially when I needed him most. Nonetheless, I still did not truly understand the meaning of faith until recently.

In June of 2012, I attended a soccer game that my wife was playing. I was attending as a spectator. As I made my way to the field, I lost my footing on a small hill and broke my right ankle. I was in a cast for about six weeks. However, it's what happened next that forever has changed my life. When the cast was removed my ankle and foot were swollen almost twice their normal size. My doctor was concerned so he sent me to the hospital for testing.

After some testing at the hospital, the doctor at the hospital came out to share the results of the test and I could tell by the look on his face it was not good news. As it turns out I had multiple blood clots in my right leg and they were traveling. In fact, there was a large blood clot he referred to as the widow maker that had reached my pelvic region. The doctor at the hospital told me not to go anywhere and to call my family, as they needed to operate on me as soon as possible. This happened on a Friday afternoon.

At that moment, it dawned on me that this was serious, that my life was in jeopardy. I called my wife, my parents, my sister and my best friend. I could not reach any of them. I had a rush of emotions overwhelm me and I was frightened and did not know what to do. Finally, my sister called me back and as soon as I heard her voice, I started to cry and told her that I was at the hospital and it was serious. I remember telling her I don't want to die. She kept assuring me that I was not going to die and that everything was going to be okay.

Everyone finally arrived at the hospital and the doctors wheeled me in for surgery. After five hours of surgery, I was in recovery. The doctors indicated the procedure had gone well, but additional testing was necessary.

The ultrasound after my surgery detected three more blood clots in my right leg between my knee and groin. The hematologist came up to my room to share the news. When I saw her face, she had a look of despair. I asked her, am I going to die? She paused for about 15 seconds and said no, but it's serious. She indicated another procedure was required to remove the remaining clots. She told me to rest up, not think about it, and that I was in good hands.

All Saturday night I kept thinking about death. I was not ready to die. Then I started thinking about my spirit; what would happen if I died? I started to pray and I must have prayed almost all night to our Lord. I asked for forgiveness for every sin I had ever committed and that if this was my time, to take care of my wife and my family. Then it dawned on me, our Lord was a protector. He had always been there for me and maybe this was a test of my faith. Thus, I kept praying and began to believe all the lessons I learned in church when I was younger; not be afraid or discouraged because God is with me wherever I go.

At that moment, I started to better understand what having faith in our Lord really means. In addition, I knew that He was with me because on Sunday morning, there was a religious program on the television. I was barely awake, my eyes closed, but my ears were attuned to the voice on the television. The tele-evangelist, said that God is listening if we ask. God is listening to all our prayers if I just ask. He also said that I would know when God is speaking to me. At that moment, I was at peace because I believed in my faith and I believed the Lord was listening to me and He was telling me that He is my salvation.

As Monday approached and I was being prepped for the second surgery, my father came to me and gave me small icon of the Theotokos. He asked that I place it under my pillow and that everything would be okay. The icon of the Theotokos he gave me was the one he had with him when he had quadruple bypass surgery on his heart. It had served to protect him and now he was giving it to me for protection.

Sure enough, the surgery was a success. Upon hearing the good news, I thanked our Lord. More importantly, the experience of praying and believing opened my eyes and made me realize that maybe our Lord had a plan for me. Thus, I vowed I would start attending church and nurture my faith in our Lord. That is when I had the fortune of finding this parish.

Coming to this parish in 2012 was one of the best decisions I ever made. Prior to coming, I could not even recite the Lord's Prayer by memory, now I can. I also did not understand many of the rituals during the Divine Liturgy, which now I appreciate a lot more. One of my favorite parts of the liturgy each Sunday is the Gospel that Father George delivers.

Also by attending church, I've had the privilege of meeting some of you in this parish and I am absolutely grateful for meeting such wonderful people. The warm and inviting spirit of this church is nothing like I have ever experienced before.

Since I began attending this church, I've joined the Stewardship Committee, I volunteered for the Taste of Greece, I am a member of the Audit Committee for the church, I recently joined AHEPA, and I also attended a few Bible studies. I am overjoyed in how much more enriched I am with this church in my life.

In addition, I have three close friends from college that I have stayed in touch with over the last twenty years and the four of us have grown together spiritually over the last two years. In fact, when we get together, I get very excited when I have an opportunity to share with them a lesson or an experience I received from this church.

The last two and a half years have not been easy for me. My medications had some serious side effects that caused me a lot of pain and grief. There have been many times when I asked our Lord, why me? Why do I have to endure such pain and suffering? I realized, however, that this is a test of my faith and anytime a new obstacle appears in my life as much pain or suffering I might endure, I thank the Lord for saving my life in that hospital in July of 2012 and that with His strength I can endure anything.

That is why above all, the most important aspect of coming to this church is to continue to nurture my faith in our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. I am delighted to acknowledge that I am a faithful member and proud Steward of this parish. Without this church, I am not sure where I would be. Therefore, I encourage all of you to contribute to the church, as you never know whose spirit you might be saving, as the church did for mine.

Thank you, God Bless you, and God Bless our church.



GOPLC ADULT NIGHT

WHEN

Saturday
April 25, 2015
7pm

WHERE

Nick's Taverna
42395 Ryan Road Rd.
Ashburn, VA 20148
703-327-7844



**SPONSORED
BY THE GOPLC
STEWARDSHIP
COMMITTEE**

**Please join us for a
night of fun , food,
and laughter with
good friends from
our parish.**

**There will be light
mezedakia provided.
Cash bar and dinner
menu available.**

**We look forward to
seeing everyone
there!**

**Please RSVP by April
19th to:**

**Kristina Ayoub at
KAyoub76@gmail.com**

or

**Lia Economou at
liaecon@comcast.net**



Easter Flowers

Beloved Parishioners & Friends,

The Epitaphio Committee Members are in charge this year again for decorating our Church for these beautiful and inspiring Lenten / Holy Week / Easter services. Decorating our Church during this special Easter season is a very important and quite sentimental tradition carried through the years by all Greek Orthodox Christians. It helps us to open our hearts, to feel our Lord's Passion and rejoice for His Resurrection.

We are once again kindly asking you for your generous donations to adorn our Church with beautiful floral arrangements for the celebration of this Paschal Holy Season. Please consider making a donation to help us decorate our Church during Lent, Holy Week and Easter. Your contribution will be greatly appreciated and will be TAX DEDUCTIBLE too! Your check can be made out to GOPLC (Greek Orthodox Parish of Loudoun County).

You are all invited to join us on Holy Friday morning to decorate the Epitaphio.

If you have any questions please contact Mariana Korulaki at (571) 432-7678.



Flowers for Great Lent & Easter



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Names will be given to Fr. George for special prayers that will be read on Holy Friday night.

Thank you for your Support and Generosity!



Sunday School

ORATORICAL FESTIVAL: On March 8th we had our St Chrysostom Oratorical Festival. Dr. Makrodimitris – from St Sophia, Mrs. Vretea – from St Katherine’s and Mrs. Lambros from our GOPLC were our Judges; they were very impressed with our young orators, Alexandros Kouiroukidis, Marlene Ortiz, Luke and Anna-Maria Kendrat.

ANNUNCIATION AND GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION: In response to a special invitation from the organizers of the Greek Independence Day Celebration at St Katherine’s Greek Orthodox Community on March 22, Our GOPLC Sunday School student, Andreas Voyatzis, recited the poem ANNUNCIATION and HELLENISM (ΕΥΑΓΓΕΛΙΣΜΟΣ-ΕΛΛΗΝΙΣΜΟΣ). With this poem, we highlighted that Orthodox Christianity and Hellenism have been walking together, hand in hand, through the ages.

Blessings,

Ergini B. Martnishn

Sunday School Director

<http://greekorthodoxloudoun.org/catechetical.html>



Scout Sunday

On Sunday, March 8, we observed Scout Sunday. Many of the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Leaders of our parish attended service in uniform in honor of a Scout’s commitment to their faith.



Men’s Bible Study

The Men’s Bible Study meets on the first and third Wednesday of the month from 7:00 - 8:30pm from September through June. We gather for spiritual fellowship and for discussions as to proper interpretation of the Bible factoring both the proper translation and the historical reference. Please feel free to contact either Father George or Nick Spyros at nlspyros@yahoo.com with any questions.

Nick Spyros

nlspyros@yahoo.com

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Greek School

A warm and special thank you to the families who brought their children to attend the Presanctified Liturgy; The Salutations to the Theotokos, at our church on March 13th. It was very touching to see our young students and two of our teenagers be part of the procession and to stay for the beautiful and meaningful service; even though they had a long day at school, and finally a full week due to no snow!!

Thank you to: Christina and Luke Kendrat, Dimitrios Kospanos, Sofia and Vasilis Panagopoulos and Nikolaos Ravaris. I would also like to mention that Luke Kendrat read The Prayer to Our Lord. His voice was angelic. Thank you and God Bless everyone.

Vasilia Ravaris
Greek School Director
vasilia@live.com



Father George's Message Continued...

As Great Lent draws to its conclusion, we anxiously anticipate the resplendent services celebrating those salvific events that changed the world. Even here we must pause, by necessity, to mark the difference between spectator and participant. In what spirit, then, shall we approach Holy Week? Like television viewers flipping from one channel to the next, choosing arbitrarily this or that program (i.e., service), because it appeals to us aesthetically rather than ascetically? Or, are we prepared to struggle day by day with one of the most important questions posed by Christ to His disciples and to us: "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with" (Mk 10:38)? Without this cup and baptism, what can we expect to draw from Golgotha and the empty tomb? If I am not crucified with Him, I remain an empty, graceless tomb. But if I die with Him I shall live life as joyful expectation, "For...to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philip. 1:21).

It is never too late to begin the journey. The doors of the arena remain open. "Behold the Bridegroom comes in the midst of the night, and blessed is the servant whom He shall find watching...Beware, therefore, my soul, lest you be borne down with sleep, lest you be given up to death, and lest you be shut out from the Kingdom."

With my sincerest prayers for a blessed and joyous Pascha,

Fr. George

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Hope / Joy

Our Hope & Joy youth group enjoyed decorating Valentine's prayer boxes at our February meeting. In March we attended a Salutation service to honor the Theotokos and the children placed roses near her icon to venerate her during Lent. The children learned Orthodox songs at our March meeting and then met at the Tall Oaks Assisted Living nursing home to recite them. The seniors were so happy to see the children's smiling faces again! One resident, Helen, who attended our Parish before being admitted into the facility, was wheeled down from her room just to hear us perform. She sang along as our children sang "Christos Anesti" and there was not a dry eye among us. It was truly special.

In April, our children will meet the Saturday of Lazarus (April 4) after the Liturgy service to assemble palm crosses, along with the GOYA volunteers. It is a very special annual event. On April 17th, we will have our April meeting. This is a potluck dinner. Eleni Hadjimichael will send out a reminder e-mail to Hope & Joy families in April. We ask that families "reply all" so that everyone knows what food items will be brought, to avoid duplicates. During our April meeting, the children will be writing thank you letters to soldiers serving overseas. We will be emphasizing the importance of spreading God's love through encouragement and thanks to those who sacrifice so much. Writing materials and envelopes will be provided.

Thank you,

Eleni Adamis Hadjimichael & Ava Walter

Hope/Joy Co-Directors

<http://greekorthodoxloudoun.org/hopejoy.html>



Hope / Joy members entertaining the residents of the Tall Oaks Assisted Living Nursing Home in Reston.

GOYA

Dear GOYA Parents and Parishioners,

It has been a rather challenging winter, but with God's grace everything falls into place as He planned.

Lent period is always a wonderful opportunity to remind us all of important virtues in our lives such as prayer and alms giving. Our Goyans attended Liturgy at The Nativity of Our Lord on March 1st and met with the Coordinator of their program "Feed the Hunger". She spoke to them on how their program started from a tiny seed and grew to feed so many families in their area twice a week all year long. It was great that our Goyans got to meet their Goyans too.

The weather cooperated and GOYA's Fourth Annual Talent Show finally took place on March 8th. It was a chance for all of us to gather in a relaxing environment and enjoy the wonderful Lenten dishes and desserts prepared by our GOYA parents. The Goyans humbly showed their talents in honor of Yiayias and Pappous of our Parish. They all performed amazingly well singing, playing piano, guitar or trombone, reading a Testimonial in Greek or displaying and talking about creative Art Work. This event has become a symbol of love, honor, respect, obedience and thankfulness. Indeed they are all virtues that our Lord asks us to acquire. We thank all Yiayias and Pappous for all what they have done and continue to do to help our Goyans grow and mature physically, emotionally and most importantly spiritually.

As a Lenten Retreat, the Goyans spent the weekend of March 14th at Agia Skepi Monastery in Pennsylvania. They also attended a spiritual retreat led by Fr. George on March 21st from 1pm to 3pm at church. They participated in the reading of the Fourth Salutation of the Theotokos on March 20th and plan to help with Palm Folding on Saturday, April 10th.

Our GOYA Monthly meeting will take place March 29th after Sunday school. All Goyans are strongly encouraged to attend as we need to make important decisions on events planned for the rest of this year such as Annual Bake Sale, Mother's Day & Father's Day Favors, Elections of new GOYA Officers and also our End of the Year Party.

Due to previous snow cancellations, GOYA Bake Sale event is postponed to April 26th after Liturgy. The baking will take place at Sofia Kouiroukidis' house on Saturday, April 25th at 2pm. A portion of the money raised will be donated toward the Building Fund of our future parish.

Kali Sarakosti! Have a great Lent!

Sofia Kouiroukidis (kkouirouk@gmail.com)

Lillian Funk (lilyfunk@hotmail.com)

GOYA Advisors

<http://greekorthodoxloudoun.org/goya.html>

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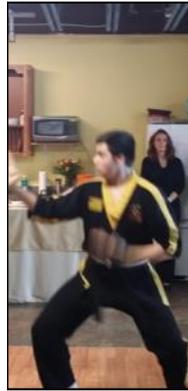
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Fourth Annual GOYA Talent Show



GOYAns performing for their Yiayias and Pappous at the Fourth Annual GOYA Talent Show.



The Greek Orthodox Parish of Loudoun County is partnering with Chick-fil-A Dulles Town Crossing (in the Sam's Club & Lowes Shopping Center) for a fundraiser! We will hold our spirit night on Tuesday May 5th from **5:00 pm through 8:00 pm** at the restaurant, which is located at 45440 Dulles Crossing Plaza Sterling, VA.

Our church will receive up to 15% of the total sales between **5:00 pm-8:00 pm**, so please bring your families for a great meal and support our church! Save your receipts and give them to either Nick Kass or Ava Walter.

Since we earn a percentage of sales for the three hours of this event, please use any coupons you may have on another occasion so that we can maximize our returns. Thank you!

*Don't forget to keep your receipts and hand them in to the GOPLC fundraising team, Nick Kass or Ava Walter!

Any questions, please e-mail Nick at: cnkass@hotmail.com or Ava at: avamwalter@gmail.com





AHEPA

The Molon Lave AHEPA Chapter 542 meets on the second Monday of every month at our church and we always welcome new members. Our meetings begin at 8:00pm but we gather at 7:30pm for a period of socializing while partaking in a lite snack.

AHEPA stands for American Hellenic Education Progressive Association. In addition to wonderful fellowship among its members, it offers a number of opportunities and benefits to members and community. Our chapter is honored to serve our church community and general community.

Our chapter and our church participated in the 194th Anniversary of the Greek Independence Day celebration hosted by the Hellenic Organizations of the Washington Metropolitan Area at St. Katherine's Greek Orthodox Church on March 22. It was a fabulous event. Please consider joining our chapter, which was elected Chapter of the Year last year for our district, which is District 3. Below is a sample of upcoming AHEPAN events:

Scholarships:

AHEPA offers a national scholarship to high school seniors. Deadline for applications is March 31.

AHEPA Metro Scholarship available to high school seniors. Deadline for applications is April 3.

AHEPA District 3 Scholarship available to high school seniors and college freshmen, sophomores, and juniors. Deadline for applications is April 15.

AHEPAcademy is a leadership and professional development program that identifies, educates, inspires, mentors, advances, and networks exceptional Greek-American high school students as they progress through their high school, college, graduate and professional careers. Deadline for applications is April 1.

Biennial Dinner featuring a list of distinguished guests is on April 29 at the Willard Intercontinental Hotel in Washington DC - cocktails at 6pm, dinner at 7pm. Such distinguished guests include ambassadors, members of Congress, and invitations to Vice President Joseph Biden and Speaker of the House of Representatives John Boehner. All are welcomed. We have sold enough tickets to fill one table and we are working on filling a second table.

First Annual Molon Lave AHEPA Chapter 542 Picnic is planned for Sunday, May 31, after church. Exact time and location will be forthcoming. Our chapter invites our church community to this picnic to show our appreciation to you and to demonstrate our delight to be part of our community. We are grateful for all your support and we are honored to sponsor this picnic.

Please contact any of our members on the Executive Committee or Board of Governors for more information regarding any of these events. by the Μολών Λαβέ Chapter 542 of the Order of AHEPA.

Nick Spyros

President Molon Lave AHEPA Chapter 542

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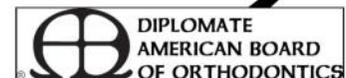
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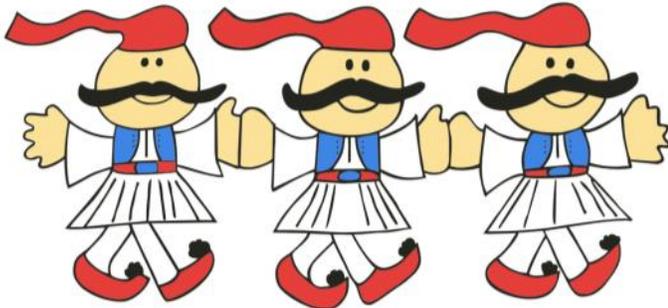




Greek Folk Dance Group

The GOPLC Greek Folk Dance Group is comprised of the many active children from our parish. Approximately 20 children, ages 6 through 15, participate in learning the many dances from all over Greece, including mainland, Thrace and the islands. The children are taught by the talented Jimmy Hontos and Maria Plevrakis.

Practices are scheduled directly before the Hope/Joy meetings the first Friday of every month at 5:30pm at the church. For more information, please contact Smaro Karakatsanis, dance group coordinator, at smaro.k@hotmail.com or 301.455.1531.



Vacation Church Camp



Dear fellow parishioners,

We are pleased to announce that the GOPLC will once again be offering our Vacation Church Camp for 2015! The camp will be from June 22 through June 26. Please see the details below.

When - Monday, June 22 - Friday, June 26, 10:00 am to 1:30 pm
Theme - "Going for the Gold" concentrating on Palm Sunday, Ascension, Pentecost, and Exaltation of the Cross.

Cost - \$40 for 1 child, \$75 for family of 2 children, \$100 for family of 3, \$125 for family of 4 (Family members include siblings only)

Volunteer to get a discount! Parent volunteers will get a 20% discount off the week's tuition. We are also in need of youth volunteers, ages 6th grade through high school.

The camp will provide a morning snack, camp materials, and lots of fun!

Registration forms will be available beginning Sunday, May 3rd, so mark your calendars and keep an eye out for the VCC email.

We are excited for another year of VCC!

In God's service,
 Lia Economou
 2015 VCC Director

Philoptochos

Wishing you all a Kali Anastasi!

Our Vice President, Lisa Orphanides kindly opened her home to us for our March meeting. We had a demonstration on making prosforo (holy bread). I hope some members will consider making prosforo in the future. If anybody would like to bake, our bookstore has for sale the seal that gets stamped on top of the bread along with incense burners and incense. We thank Lisa for a lovely and informative afternoon.

Mother's Day is coming up and the month of May brings our annual LAWS (Loudoun Abused Women's Shelter) fundraiser. We will be accepting monetary and/or gift card donations. They can be for any amount. The gift cards can be for gas, groceries or stores such as WalMart or Target. We appreciate your support for this worthy community cause.

We received the news of the passing of Fr. Matthew Baker with great sadness. Our Metropolis of New Jersey Philoptochos has set up a fund for Presbytera Katherine and children. Our Philoptochos is making a donation to the fund. If you would like to contribute, we will be accepting online donations in addition to checks. We deeply appreciate your support and we thank the members that have already sent in their generous donations.

Our membership drive continues through April 26th. Please consider becoming a member and helping us continue to support those in need. The membership form can be found on our website. Elections for the Philoptochos board are in June. If anyone is interested, please let us know.

Here's to a bright and beautiful spring!

In God's Service,

Alexis Cleveland

President Ladies Philoptochos

<http://greekorthodoxloudoun.org/philoptochos.html>



Ladies making prosphoro at the March Philoptochos meeting at the home of the Vice President, Lisa Orphanides.



PAREA

March 3rd was a cold, dreary day. The weatherman was predicting freezing rain. As I was driving to Delia's for our March fasting PAREA luncheon, I was thinking that the weather would, rightfully so, deter many folks from coming to join our PAREA. With God's grace and to my great excitement, 28 parishioners and new friends attended our March PAREA luncheon! What a wonderful testimony of love and continuous support to this great Ministry! We are blessed!

Our PAREA is now deeply focused in the spirit of the Lenten season and almsgiving. PAREA donated the funds for the material used to provide a much-needed replacement for the coverings of the candle table in the Narthex.

With the God given talents of our devoted PAREA attendee Mercina Karagiorgis and Presvytera Joanna, the beautiful table coverings and the covers for the tray baskets were completed in no time. A special thank you to both ladies!

PAREA will not gather for the month of April, as April 7th is Holy Tuesday. With God's grace we will reunite again around our PAREA's table on Tuesday, May 5th at Amphora in Herndon. Please let Marina or Kristina know if you will be coming to join us.

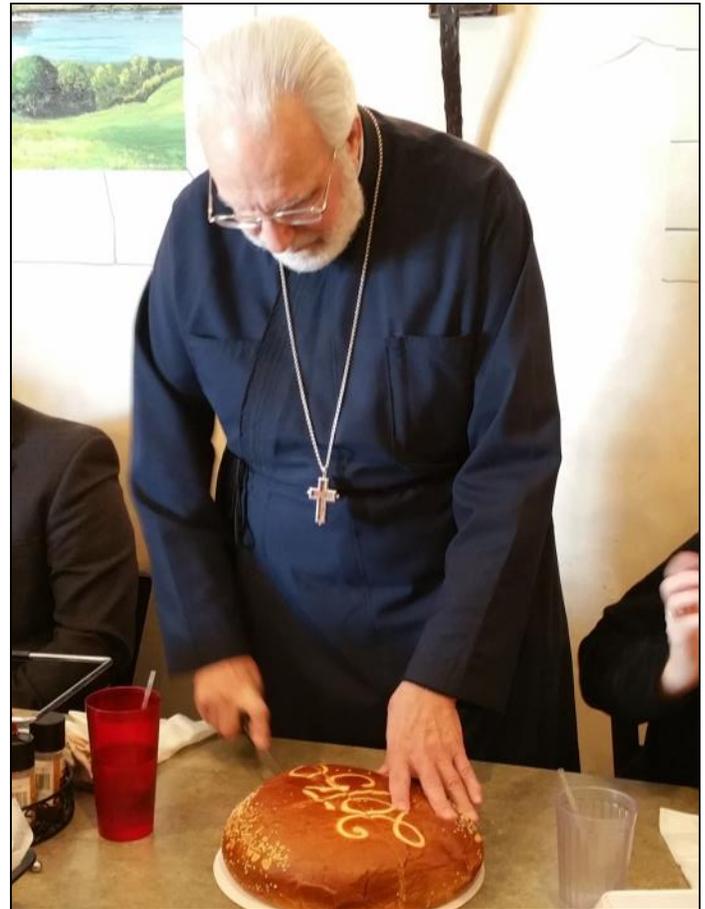
With a heart full of appreciation for all of you, let's all walk together and follow with our hearts and spirits our Savior's path to Golgotha and to His victorious resurrection.

Kali Anastasi and Kalo Pascha! Happy Easter!

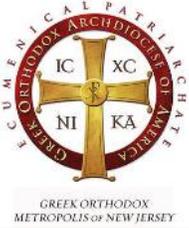
Marina Blair

PAREA Chair

blairmarina@gmail.com, 703-349-1842 (H)



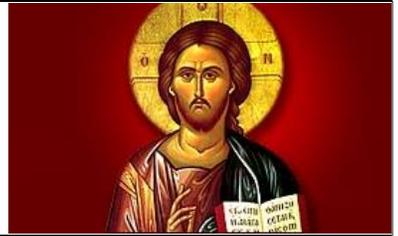
Elina Dimitropoulos was the winner of the "flouri" (the coin) from the cutting of the 2015 PAREA's vasilopita! Blessings!! Other photos are from Delia's (at right) and Pizzarama.



The Greek Orthodox Parish of Loudoun County

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www.greekorthodoxloudoun.org



The Light is published bi-monthly by the Greek Orthodox Parish of Loudoun County. The next deadline for content is May 15th. An archive of our newsletters can be found here: <http://greekorthodoxloudoun.org/newsletter.html>.

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Member in the Spotlight — Asha Ioanou



My background is a mix, my mother is white American and my father was born in Kabul, Afghanistan. My husband Nicholas' background is part Greek and part Slovak. Nicholas' father was born in Andros, Greece. I met my husband at their family restaurant in Falls Church, City Diner.

After we got engaged, I converted from Methodist to Greek Orthodox. My husband's grandfather was a priest in Long Island, New York. Father Nicholas Retselas was planning to marry us but he fell ill in the months prior to the wedding.

We got married at St Katherine Greek Orthodox Church in May 2008 and we now have 2 children, Ellie (6) and Athan (5). Both are enrolled in our GOPLC Greek School.

We moved to Ashburn last year and I started coming to GOPLC that February. I was excited to see all the young children at the church. I soon volunteered to help with Vacation Church Camp and I met some wonderful new friends. I am currently teaching pre-k Sunday School class and I attend the monthly Parea luncheons.

The Greek Orthodox Parish of Loudoun County is a family oriented, loving environment led by Father George who exemplifies Orthodoxy. My children and I look forward to Sunday service and having the chance to hear the beautiful choir and listen to the meaningful message. I am thrilled to have found such a perfect church with great women and men who lead our parish.

With regards to the future of our parish, I pray that we are able to build a church with ample space for our children's activities, meetings, and to host Greek festivals.

I look forward to meeting members of the church and I am grateful to all of those members that have been so welcoming to my family when we began coming to the church a year ago!



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