



The Light To Φως



Greek Orthodox Parish
of Loudoun County

Volume 6, Issue 6
November-December 2013

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

A Message from Father George Alexson



*"Working a great wonder, the Master saved the people
Of old when He made dry the sea's swelling water.
And now He is born of His own will from a Maiden,
Making us a path that leads unto Heaven:
Him we glorify, equal in essence with the Father and with mortals."*

— Nativity Orthros, Iambic Canon, composed by St. John of Damascus

Christmas Lent is always a challenge, not for the fasting, which is not as intense as Great Lent; nor for the increase in liturgical services, again in comparison with Great Lent. It is a challenge, because the goal of Nativity Lent is so easily obscured by the "spirit" of the season. Unlike Great Lent, Christmas Lent is not permeated with a spirit of "joyful-sadness." Rather, in the words of a popular secular "Christmas" song, "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year." According to the lyrics, what makes Christmas so wonderful is, "kids jingle-belling," "holiday greetings," "marshmallow roasting," "parties for hosting," etc. The only reference to Christmas in the song is the line, "tales of glories of Christmases long ago."

Unfortunately, Christmas carols with religious content, sung "Christmases long ago," are no longer popular in our secularized society. Indeed, most department stores and schools have banned them. Carols that refer to our Lord's birth are considered inappropriate in our multi-cultural, multi-religious society. Gaudy decorations in public are acceptable; manger scenes are definitely out. Never mind that the majority of Americans are Christians for whom Christianity would be meaningless without the theological content attached to this holy day. But they are expected to accept this offensive desecralization while at the same time spending millions to keep our merchants in the black.

I doubt that much can or will be done to "put Christ" back into Christmas in the public square. It is, therefore, incumbent upon churches and believers to focus on what is truly important in this celebration. That is why I am sharing with you the magnificent hymn above composed by St. John of Damascus. St. John emphasizes the genuine "wonder" of the Christmas season by reminding us of God's plan to repatriate us to His Kingdom.

The Incarnation of our Lord is the beginning of our salvation from bondage to evil and death. The same God who parted the Red Sea to free the enslaved Israelites, now makes way through the Virgin for the birth of His Son. The Chosen People were led from Egypt to the Promised Land; the Incarnation leads us from death to eternal life. For this reason, we are summoned to "glorify" the Son, who though equal with the Father is also equal with us mortals (except for sin, as the Fathers are careful to note).

This, my friends, is what makes Christmas the "Most Wonderful Time of the Year!" "In what does the greatness of man consist," asks St. Gregory of Nyssa, "according to the doctrine of the Church? Not in his likeness to the created world, but in his being in the image of the nature of the Creator." God loves us so much that He made us in His image and likeness. His bountiful love could not bear watching us languish in sin, alienation and death. And so, He spared not even His Son to return us to our proper place in relationship to Him. Is there in all of human history any deed more remarkable than the story of Christ's birth, whereby the Eternal Son of God becomes man, so that man can become a partaker of the life of the Holy Trinity (Phil. 2:6-11)?

For this reason, the Church begins our preparation for the feast of Christmas with a Lenten fast. We need to feel, soul and body, a deep hunger for union with God the Father through the Son by the grace of the Spirit. For this reason, beginning with the celebration of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple, the church turns our attention to the birth of Her Son by chanting during Orthros the beautiful canon (katavasia) which bids us to give praise where it truly belongs:

Christ is born, give ye glory. Christ is come from Heaven, receive ye Him. Christ is on earth, be ye exalted. Sing unto the Lord all the earth and sing praises in gladness, O ye peoples; for He has been glorified.

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Highlights:

- Place your order for Tsoureki and Vasilopita before December 15th!
- 8th Annual Christmas Pageant will take place Sunday, December 15th
- Save the Date — Taste of Greece is January 24th — 26th!



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President's Message



It's hard to believe 2013 is almost over.

I would like to thank all those involved with our various ministries, for all your hard work and support. Greek School, Catechetical School, Hope/Joy/GOYA, Men's bible study, and PAREA are all doing a fantastic job of nurturing our youth, as well as bringing together those of us with a few years beyond our youth.

GOYA is putting together a basketball team. Coach Dimitri Stratakos and coordinator Kathy Kendrat have already started the ball rolling. With this new undertaking it means rental of a facility to practice as well as some basic equipment. The plan is to start in early January and rent a local gym from January to April. In order to use our rental time to our fullest advantage, we will also utilize it for dance practice of our dance teams prior to basketball practice.

Our ultimate goal is to participate in the GOYA basketball tournament competitions, offered through our Archdiocese, which take place in the spring. Our players are excited about this new endeavor. They are looking forward to the competition involved but most importantly to the relationships they will develop with each other that will last a lifetime!

Greek School

Hope everyone had a Happy Thanksgiving with their loved ones.

A special thank you to the families that have enrolled their children in our Greek School afternoon program. Amongst your busy schedules and/or the workload that your child might have, it's very rewarding to see the children of different ages (4 - 14) attend our one of two classes, on a weekly basis.

This year, we re-introduced the Greek language to the younger children starting at age 4. We thank and welcome the new families who enrolled their children and also became stewards of our church. I'm pleased to say there is a high demand for this age group. Even though the children are young and are starting their routine in the school environment: writing, reading, paying attention; I must say, I'm proud of all of them. It's amazing how fast they grasp the information, recite the various words, phrases, songs and most of all remember what was taught. It's priceless when they raise their little hands to say the answer and their faces literally light up. They even enjoy completing their homework! Indeed they are like sponges. All the students in the different levels are excited to come to our school, are eager to learn and share what they've learned with their families. The students have taken several tests and everyone's efforts show. We assess them periodically.

We had a couple of students transfer from another Greek School and it's rewarding to hear positive feedback about ours. Even though it has only been a month since classes started, the parents have seen a difference in their child/ren of how much they've learned in a month as well as a difference in the teachers. There is a lot of preparation before class, during class till the next lesson. The children are learning the fundamentals and building up. We strive for a strong foundation.

In October, Father George had the Agiasmo (Blessing) for our Greek School students. It was nice to see the parents taking part of this special blessing. We thank you, all of you! Kuria Ioanna, from Cyprus, had contacted me to wish us a great school year! She is doing well and gives her warmest regards to everyone.

Thank you and keep warm! Wishing you and your families a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year!

Vasilia Ravaris
Greek School Director

I would like to solicit the business owners from our parish to sponsor the GOYA Basketball team. Look at this as an investment in our youth and future parish leaders. Seeing as this is a new endeavor, balls, uniforms (great chance to advertise your business) and gym rental fees, as well as funds to be able to pay for the tournament fees, are all needed. If you are interested in sponsoring the team by providing equipment, or wish to make a donation, please contact Kathy Kendrat at kmkendrat@aol.com, for more details.

The Men's Bible Study Group has kicked off its second year. An update is provided within this newsletter. Please contact Father George or Nick Spyros at nlspsyros@yahoo.com for more information.

And last but not least, SAVE THE DATE for our annual Taste of Greece event on January 24-26, 2014. We had to change the dates from the previous newsletter due to firehouse availability. Chairman Bill Aubin will be assembling his team and coordinating volunteers for what will be another successful event at the Ashburn Volunteer Fire Department Founders Hall.

In His service,

Con Sofologis
Parish Council President

Sacraments Performed

Ioannis, the son of Vasilios and Paraskevi Lagadinos, was baptized on October 6, 2013. God-parents, Vasilis and Joan Fotopoulos. May God grant him good health and life. Na sas zisi!

Sophia Konstantina, the daughter of Efthemios and Jessica Marie (Pappas) Drosos, was baptized on November 10, 2013. God-parent, Anthony Drosos. May God grant her good health and life. Na sas zisi!

Upcoming Events

- ◆ **PAREA** - Dec. 3, 11:30am, lunch at Amphora's Diner Deluxe
- ◆ **Men's Bible Study** - Dec. 3 and 17, 7:00-8:30pm at church
- ◆ **Christmas Lecture Series** - Dec. 4, 11, and 18; 7:00-8:30pm at church
- ◆ **Coffee and Cupcakes for new parishioners** - Dec. 8, 3:00-4:30pm at home of Robert and Marina Blair
- ◆ **Hope and Joy** - Dec. 6 Meeting and Christmas Potluck Party at church, Dec. 15 Visit to Youth Homeless Shelter
- ◆ **Christmas Pageant** - Dec. 15 after Liturgy
- ◆ **AHEPA** - Dec. 16 Chapter Meeting; 7:30pm at church
- ◆ **Orthodox Book Club** - First & third Friday of each month, 6:00-7:30pm at church
- ◆ **Christmas Eve service** - Dec. 24, 6:00pm Orthros, 7:15pm Divine Liturgy
- ◆ **Christmas Day service** - Dec. 25, 8:15am Orthros, 9:30 am Divine Liturgy



Stewardship

Thank you to all our wonderful Stewards for another great year. Because of you, our church was able to offer for the first time a Men's Bible Study, Orthodox Book Club, Christmas Lecture Series, and a new AHEPA chapter. The following Ministries were also very active:

Stewardship Committee - planned several fellowship events for existing and new parishioners, sponsored 2 Stewardship Sundays with Steward testimonials.

Sunday School - over 100 children registered from pre-K to 12th grade, participated in St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival, the Parish Christmas Card and Christmas pageant.

Greek School - over 30 children enrolled from ages 4 through middle-school, classes offered Wednesdays and Thursdays from 5-6:45pm.

Hope/Joy - for children ages K-6, organized several social events, participated in county-wide homeless shelter walkathon, performed Christmas carols and brought gifts to a local youth shelter.

GOYA - our teenagers made lunches for a homeless shelter and coordinated a food pantry, held several events and fundraisers, decorated the church for the holidays, and hosted Annual Talent Show for Yiayias and Pappous.

Greek Dance - children ages 6 and up performed at the Taste of Greece.

PAREA - up to 30 parishioners attended the monthly lunches at various restaurants, sharing in fellowship and celebrating special occasions in PAREA's second year.

Philoptochos - organized gift card drives, family events, tsoureki and vasilopita sales, fashion show luncheon, Taste of Greece Bake Shop, and trips to Agia Skepi.

As we approach Christmas we are reminded that the classic Christmas story of Jesus born in a manger is filled with many Stewardship messages:

Lesson from Infant Jesus - There is no shame in being poor. When we look down upon the poor we look down upon the infant Jesus himself.

We must give and serve to those who need assistance.

Lesson from the Shepherds - We all have gifts to give, just as the shepherds brought only themselves and their sheep. Even if all we have is our caring and our time, those are important gifts we can give of ourselves.

Lesson from the Wise Men - Just coming to church each Sunday and worshipping Jesus is not enough. The wise men not only came to Jesus but also brought gifts. We must also bring our gifts and our talents to church.

There are so many ways you can give of your Stewardship: fulfill you 2013 pledge or if you've already done so, make a pledge for 2014, support the church with a Christmas donation, or sign up for a shift at the Taste of Greece in January. All of these opportunities allow you to give of your time, talents, and treasures and truly fulfill your Stewardship to our church.

During this joyous Christmas season let us be like the shepherds and the wise men and give to our church the gifts and blessings God has bestowed upon on us.

In God's Service,

Lia Economou
Stewardship Chair

Fr. George's message continued

I pray that our preparation for Christmas and its celebration will be a truly life-changing spiritual event that transforms our hearts into a mystical Bethlehem where the Lord can live and reign always. May the peace, love and grace of this Advent season embrace us all with hope for ourselves, our families and our world.

Fr. George

2014 STEWARDSHIP PLEDGE GOPLC

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2014 STEWARDSHIP PLEDGE - 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, Virginia.

Out of our love and gratitude for all His blessings, we would like to pledge AN HOUR'S PAY PER WEEK (i.e. 2.5% of annual household income) or the amount of \$_____ for the year 2014.

This amount will be paid as follows:

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“Finding Our Religious Home” by Lisa and Paul Orphanides —Presented to the Parish on Stewardship Sunday



I was raised in the Methodist faith and have always had a strong belief in God. When I was dating Paul, who was baptized and raised Greek Orthodox, we would occasionally attend services at St. Sophia or St. Katherine, usually for the holy days. I found orthodoxy interesting, but really didn't understand what it was all about. Paul's father was very active in his church and we would have lively discussions about religion, but I still didn't quite “get” Orthodoxy.

After Paul and I were married, we decided to make our home in Arlington. We were blessed with four daughters and all of our children were christened at St. Katherine. Three were christened by Father George.

We moved to Loudoun County in 1992. Our youngest daughter was just over one, and our work and raising four daughters made a weekly trip on Sunday to St. Katherine or St. George difficult. I would take the children to the Methodist church on a semi-regular basis to receive some religious instruction, but I never felt a sense of belonging to the church we attended.

In 2008, Paul discovered that a Greek Orthodox parish had been formed here in Loudoun County. He and one of our daughters attended services several times. Paul realized that he missed the church and began to attend on a regular basis. We would go as a family for the holy days, but I continued to attend the Methodist church.

Paul asked me to help with the Taste of Greece in 2010. I was happy to give my time. After all, this was the primary fund raising for the Parish. I thought it was really great that people from other Orthodox churches would volunteer their time to make the event such a success. The camaraderie was wonderful, not to mention the food. I'll never forget that during cleanup on the last day, one parishioner asked if I was Orthodox, as he hadn't seen me at church. I said that I was Methodist and thought I could split my “faith time” between the two religions. His response surprised me – “you really can't be both. Orthodoxy is a path that is straight and doesn't deviate with popular culture or thought”.

As I became more involved, I decided to take the classes on Orthodoxy. The instruction allowed me to gain an understanding of Orthodoxy that I didn't have before and I realized that I had found my religious home and that sense of belonging I had been looking for. I was chrismated last year, in time for the Easter celebration.

By the way, Father George not only married Paul and me in the faith, but also one of our daughters that he christened. She is expecting her first child in December and wants to have Father George christen him. The circle of life.

Paul and I continue to volunteer for the fundraisers and other functions the Parish has held and we have developed very good friendships. Paul is a member of the Parish Council and AHEPA, and I have joined the Philoptochos. We are very dedicated to the growth of our Parish and the building of our church, which will accommodate the spiritual needs of all Orthodox parishioners in our county.

So, all of this background brings us to Stewardship. As many of you know, Paul is in real estate and that can be a financial roller coaster. But when financial times are good, we try to give a little more so each year our pledge can grow. When times are tough we don't scale back, but continue to make the church a priority.

Given my story, I have always noticed how very dedicated many people are to our Parish. Each week I see more new people attending services and we continue to get the word out that there is a place for all people of Orthodox faith to practice their religion. This growth means that we need everyone's help to ensure that our Parish remains strong and available to minister to everyone's spiritual needs. We will soon outgrow our current space. There is no way to candy-coat the fact that it takes money to build a new vibrant church in Loudoun County. In addition to whatever you can financially afford to give, we also need your time and expertise to achieve our goals.

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Catechetical School

I would like to share with you the accomplishments and expectations of our Catechetical program. This year we have approximately 100+ students registered. This is an approximation since there are some that are still in the process of registering. Even just recently, we had a Bulgarian Orthodox family register 2 children; one in 3rd and one in 7th grade. Our overall attendance has been quite astonishing; between 60-80% on any given Sunday.

We have a total of 17 teachers, assistants and substitutes helping out each Sunday; we have 3 in Pre-K, 2 in K, 2 in 1st grade, 2 in 2nd grade, 2 in the combined 3rd-4th grade, 2 in the combined 5th-6th grade, 2 in the combined Junior grades 7th-9th and 2 in the combined senior grades 10th-12th, along with myself and my daughter Maria as the assistant director making up this year's roster. This year, as in previous years, the teachers are teaching using various methods and modalities; including arts and crafts, songs and prayers for the younger grades to Bible stories, scripture reading (Old and New Testament), learning about our Orthodox Saints and Holy Feast days, along with the Sacraments and Traditions of our Orthodox faith. In the older grades the children are learning about social norms and moral values taught through our Orthodox beliefs.

The children are participating in our Parish Christmas card drawing; which is having our talented catechetical school students compete in our Church's Christmas card drawing contest. Of course, our lovely and talented children will also be involved in this year's Christmas pageant.

In the spring we will once again be participating in the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival, in which over the last 4 years we've managed to win the Virginia district finals and send one, and at times two, of our children (Junior and Senior division) to compete in the Archdiocese level finals in New Jersey. This has been a tremendous accomplishment and has made us all proud, and many have noted that these children have "placed us on the map" as far as the Metropolitan is concerned. I'm hoping that this year, through all of our support, we will be able to send one and maybe two of our children to compete in the National Finals.

Finally, we are planning to get our children involved with an Orthodox mission outreach program through the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC). In the process we will be helping out missionary teams, priests and individuals involved in various lands. The OCMC is doing great works in Africa, South America, Asia, Eastern Europe, and other places throughout the world, and, we will all be participating in Jesus' great commission ... to spread His gospel to all the lands.

As always, thank you all for your continued support!

In God's service,

Nick Zangos
Catechetical School Director



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Christmas Pageant

Dear fellow parishioners,

This year, our 8th annual Christmas Pageant will take place on Sunday, December 15th, directly following the Divine Liturgy.

Each year, our children are very excited to re-enact the Nativity of our Lord for the whole parish. The Christmas Pageant is a wonderful way to remind all of us that

"Jesus is the reason for the season".

We hope that you will all be able to attend and help our children in singing the traditional Christmas Carols and the Greek 'Kalanta'.

Thank you in advance!

The Catechetical School Children and the Christmas Pageant Committee



Father George's Lecture Series on the Incarnation of Christ

The celebration of Christ's birth is an extraordinary event that has profound implications for all humanity. In this series we will discuss the teaching of the Church on the Incarnation and how the Word of God become flesh influences the theological and spiritual thought of the Church.

Our class will meet in the Church on the following Wednesday evenings from 7:00-8:30pm:

- ◆ November 20: Basic theology on the Incarnation in Scripture and the Church Fathers.
- ◆ December 4: The Incarnation and Christ's gift to us of the Eucharist, His Body and Blood.
- ◆ December 11: The Incarnation and the veneration of icons and relics: An Orthodox approach to holiness of matter and spirit.
- ◆ December 18: How can we respond to the reality of the Incarnation on a personal level? What does it mean to "put on Christ," as St. Paul commands?

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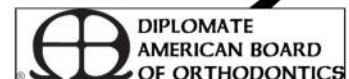
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GOYA

Dear GOYA members and parents,

Our young and energetic GOYA members have started the year and are moving ahead, with God's help, at a full speed.

After the blessing of the Officers by Father George on September 22nd, the GOYAns had their kick off meeting. During the monthly meetings, we discuss important topics published by Youth Worker Pulse. The topic of bullying generated a fruitful discussion. We talked about the importance of community and how the youth group is a no-tolerance zone for bullying and how the church is full of trusted individuals that will listen to our youth's concerns, discuss God's unconditional love and His own humiliation at the hands of those who He has come to save. It is certainly a subject we will revisit again in the near future.

In our second monthly meeting, we talked about our commitment to center our lives on Jesus Christ and His Church. We had a wonderful conversation about the topic of how to disconnect to reconnect and the impact of technology on human interaction. We shared a few suggestions on how to help young people disconnect with the world and reconnect with God and our neighbor.

The GOYA Advisors discussed the importance of community services in the college application process and encouraged members to start as early as middle school and continue throughout their high school years.

Currently, the GOYAns are working hard on the icon-making project for their Fall Fundraiser event. Their hope is to raise enough to offer some assistance to our church Summer Bible Camp School and our church's Altar Fund.

Looking ahead, we are excited to bring our former GOYA officers, Emily Kangelaris and George Daoud, as guest speakers on November 24th to talk about their college experience. In December, the GOYAns will be busy decorating the church for Christmas. In January, they will organize an IOCC Souper Bowl of Caring by preparing either school kits, health kits or baby kits (to be determined).

HOPE / JOY

Fall has been a busy time for Hope and Joy. We started out our year with the Walk for the Homeless in Leesburg. It was a fun, joyous event. Our children walked through Leesburg and the walk was followed by a hot dog lunch. There were also bounce houses for the children.

Our first general meeting was on October 18th, at the church, with our own dear Father George attending. We shared snacks, and then made fall wreaths as our craft. Father also gave our children a "mini" sermon!

Our second meeting was November 8th at the church, again with Father George attending. The theme of the meeting was Thanksgiving, and the children made beautiful turkey crafts.

Our next meeting is December 6th, from 6:00-7:15 pm, at the church. It will be a potluck. In December we will also go to the youth shelter to visit the children there and bring them cookies and gifts. We will also sing Christmas carols for the children. More details about this to come.

In January we will not have a formal meeting. We would like to have a winter outing. More information about this to be announced.

On February 21st we will have a general meeting at the church, from 6:00-7:15 pm. Snacks and drinks to be provided.

We are so honored to be the advisors of such devoted and committed young men and women. They offer their time, energy and brilliant ideas for the benefit of the whole. Keep up the good work GOYAns!!!

Sofia Kouiroukidis (kkouirouk@gmail.com)

Lillian Funk (lilyfunk@hotmail.com)

Goya Advisors



Newly elected GOYA officers are sworn in after church by Father George. The new officers are (from left to right):

Alexandros Kouiroukidis, Secretary; Yanni Kouiroukidis, Historian; Lauren Funk, President; Alexandra Dacey, Vice President.

In March, there will not be a meeting due to Lent. We may participate in the Salutation services (procession into the church with flowers).

On April 12th, we will help make the palm crosses at church, after services (Lazarus Saturday).

May 9th will be our last meeting of the year. Back by popular demand, we will have a potluck dinner and family game night! We will meet at our usual time, from 6:00-7:15 pm.

It is not too late to sign up for Hope/Joy. If you have children in grades K-6, you can register by going to the Church website, or you can also find registration forms on the Hope/Joy bulletin at the Church. If you have questions about Hope/Joy, please contact either Maria Drapas at mar-kamaria@yahoo.com or Eleni Hadjimichael at eleniadamis@gmail.com.

Best regards,

Eleni Adamis Hadjimichael & Maria Drapas

Hope/Joy Co-Directors

On the next page, HOPE/JOY children enjoying a craft.



GOPLC Philoptochos Society Annual Bake Sale of Tsoureki & Vasilopita

Your purchase benefits Aghia Skepi Monastery and GOPLC Philoptochos

ORDER FORM (Pre-paid orders only)

	Quantity	Price each	Sub-total
Tsoureki (1 lb.) -		\$12	\$
Vasilopita (2 lbs.)-		\$22	\$
Total:			\$

Place your order by Sunday, December 15; pick up at church on Sunday, December 22.

* Cash, check, credit cards and Paypal accepted. Please make checks payable to GOPLC Philoptochos, (mention Holiday Bake Sale in the memo).

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Thank you for your order!



Orthodox Book Club

The Orthodox Book Club has been an amazing experience thanks to the participation of the wonderful people who attend the meetings, as well as the richness of the book we've been reading, "Elder Paisios of Mount Athos" by Hieromonk Isaac.

We meet twice a month, on Friday evenings. For each meeting, we read two or three chapters of the book. Through learning about one of today's holiest people, we get a chance to reflect on ourselves and grow as Christians. The Elder's kind, loving and eternally positive attitude is in itself a lot to learn from, and never ceases to amaze and humble all of us. We look at how Elder Paisios handled temptations, spiritual struggles, and the rewards of those struggles.

Many of his experiences inspire us to reflect on questions that are relevant to our own lives, such as: Is there something special about situations where we are poorly treated by others, that opens up a spiritual path for us? How can we tell if our efforts towards a seemingly noble goal are fueled by pride? How can we teach humility to our children in today's competitive society? When we meet, we discuss such questions, which often times leads to sharing our own stories. This way we form very special, enduring connections with each other.

I am grateful to all the members of the Club for their passion and dedication. I would encourage any of you who are interested in growing spiritually to come and participate in our lively discussions. We meet every first and third Friday of each month from 6:00-7:30 pm at our Church. If you would like to join this Club or learn more about it, please contact Ana Balan at ahnonay15@gmail.com.

God bless,

Ana Balan

Book Club Coordinator

Men's Bible Study

We are completing the first year of our Men's Bible Study and it is off to a wonderful start. We meet on the first and third Tuesdays of the month at our church from 7:00-8:30 pm with a brief hiatus over the summer.

The focus of the group is to read the Bible (The Orthodox Study Bible) and establish a fellowship among our brothers in Christ. We strive to improve ourselves by making us stronger Christian men.

Our sessions consist of discussing passages of the Bible. We read The Book of John and are currently reading The Acts of the Apostles (The Book of Acts). Father George leads these discussions and offers wonderful insights as the meaning of these passages brining in his knowledge of theology, history and language. The intricacies of historical reference and the proper translation of the Bible, accounting for the nuances of language, enable us to obtain a more complete understanding of these passages. Father George's leadership and access to his undivided time during these 90 minutes makes these sessions interesting, educational and fun.

During these sessions we also discuss issues we face as men and how these passages address our concerns. These discussions offer a blueprint to making us stronger Christian men and by default better husbands, fathers, friends, sons, brothers and members of our community. We invite the men of our parish to join and attend. Please consider joining our group or encouraging your husband to join our group.

Blessings to all,

Nick Spyros

Philoptochos

Warm holiday greetings to our GOPLC families and Ladies.

It is with mixed emotions that I write this last message as Philoptochos President. Personal joy, the birth of my second son, and family tragedy, the recent loss of my younger sister, this year has demanded my attention away from my beloved Philoptochos and its important work. Because this work is very dear to my heart and I realize that under current circumstances I cannot fully and adequately serve our chapter, I am stepping down from my position earlier than planned. The newly elected Board will serve the organization in the interim, and will have new officers in place early in the New Year, 2014.

I am proud and deeply thankful to have served alongside an exceptional group of kind-hearted, level-headed, dedicated, and extremely capable Ladies during my service. With their help and tireless work, since May 2012, when I began my term, our chapter has embarked on an ambitious agenda of increasing membership and donations, both of which quadrupled in the last year from the year before. In addition to putting the chapter's affairs in order, we have also executed an ambitious range of activities and events, ranging from monastery pilgrimages, to bake sales, to our most successful Fashion Show to date. Thanks to the support of our members we have also given generously to the Loudoun County Abused Women's Shelter (LAWS), to Orthodox survivors of Hurricane Sandy in New York and New Jersey, and mostly to families in need in our parish and to our church itself. I have every confidence that the next Board will continue to build on this chapter's growth and find new and improved ways to serve the Philoptochos mission.

With the Holiday Season under way, Philoptochos will again be conducting a Vasilopita and Tsourekaki bake sale to benefit Aghia Skepi monastery and our Philoptochos chapter. Order forms will be available at church.

If you have missed our Membership Drive, now is the time to start or renew your membership. Again this year we will have a drawing among new and renewed memberships, paid during the membership drive period, and the prize will be a Philoptochos cross pendant. Our goal again this year is 100% participation from our parish families.

Your dollars directly benefit an increasing number of our Orthodox brothers and sisters in need primarily at our church. All contributions to Philoptochos are confidential, tax deductible, and greatly appreciated. I sincerely hope that you will choose to support your Philoptochos chapter and join us.

With deepest gratitude and best wishes for blessed Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays,

Loula Lagadinos

GOPLC Philoptochos Preseident

Loula@angelic.com

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GOPLC

PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink,
I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me,
I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.

Matthew 25:35

MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

OCTOBER 6, 2013 - APRIL 30, 2014

Submit one form per family

Please sign me up for the following:

\$_____ **\$30.00 Philoptochos membership** (valid for one year)
— includes National Philoptochos Society membership card

\$_____ **Additional gift membership** at \$30.00 for _____ (name)
— includes National Philoptochos Society membership card

\$_____ **Additional donation to the GOPLC Philoptochos Society**
A suggested amount is **\$150** per family but any amount is welcome and appreciated. All funds raised directly benefit our church's philanthropic activities for fellow Orthodox Christians and are 100% tax deductible.

\$_____ **TOTAL** Please make your checks payable to **GOPLC Philoptochos Society**

--- OR ---

Charge the total to my credit card: (circle one) VISA / MC / DISCOVER (no AmEx)

Card Number: _____ CCV#: _____ Expiration: _____

Name on Card: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____ ☐ Please contact me regarding meetings and ways that I may volunteer with Philoptochos.

Please give membership form to Loula Lagadinos or send form and check to:
Greek Orthodox Parish of Loudoun County Philoptochos Society
Attention: Membership, 21580 Atlantic Blvd. Building D, Unit 160, Dulles, VA 20166

For questions regarding Philoptochos membership contact Loula Lagadinos at Loula@angelic.com

All memberships submitted during the Membership Drive will be entered in a drawing for a Philoptochos cross pendant. Drawing will take place after April 30, 2014. Please use this form to be included in the drawing.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT OF GOPLC PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY!



GOPLC

PARISH CHRISTMAS PROJECT

"CHEER A CHILD at CHILDREN's HOSPITAL"

December 1-15th, 2013

What happens when some sailors under the guidance of Fr. John Kalantzis want to boost the morale of some sick children during Christmas? Fr. George and our Parish offer to help out!

At Children's National Medical Center, in D. C., there is a Ronald McDonald Room on the Hematology/Oncology floor for families to take a break. It is close to their children but, a quiet place to have a coffee and snack. The room is always in need of individually wrapped snacks and microwaveable single serve foods.

As a Parish, we will be collecting donations from December 1-15th to bring to the hospital along with the cheery Christmas cards from the sailors on the USS Truman. And GOYA is preparing some treat bags for us to include as well.

How can you help brighten a sick child and their family during the holidays? Consider donating some of the suggested food items below.

Recommended donations: (all must be individually wrapped)

Peanut Butter crackers, Rice Krispie Treats, Microwave popcorn, applesauce, canned fruit, juice boxes/pouches, macaroni and cheese, Ramen noodles, oatmeal, Goldfish, granola bars, Fig Newtons and fruit snacks

Please place your donations in the baskets under the coffee stand. If you have questions, please see Cynthia Smith, Alexis Cleveland or Debbie Kangelaris.

Below is the link, if you are interested in more information on the Ronald McDonald Room:

<http://rmhc.greaterdc.org/what-we-do/family-room/>



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF NEW JERSEY
ΙΕΡΑ ΜΗΤΡΟΠΟΛΙΣ ΝΕΑΣ ΙΕΡΣΕΗΣ

November 6, 2013

To the Very Reverend and Reverend Clergy of
the Holy Metropolis of New Jersey

My Beloved,

It has come to my attention that the Rev. Fr. Rafael Melendez has established the so called Holy Theotokos Orthodox Christian Chapel in Red Bank, New Jersey.

This so called chapel was established without the canonical permission of the canonical Metropolitan and Chief Shepherd of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey. Therefore, clergy are not permitted to visit or to participate in any services that are taking place there. Also, please announce to your parishioners that they should not visit or attend services at this so called chapel. In addition, Fr. Rafael Melendez is no longer permitted to serve at any parish in the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of New Jersey

Praying that our merciful Lord continues to bless you and your ministry to His Church, I remain

With Paternal Love and Blessings,



† EVANGELOS
Metropolitan of New Jersey



AHEPA

New Ashburn Chapter (Provisional) ORDER OF AHEPA

Efforts are well underway to realize a new AHEPA Chapter for Loudoun County, Virginia. The response so far has been very positive, with many parishioners of the Greek Orthodox Church in Loudoun County who are AHEPA brothers in various chapters, as well as individuals not yet initiated, filling out applications to join the new AHEPA Chapter. Efforts are continuing by the coordinating committee to ensure the maximum participation in the new Chapter.

AHEPA is the largest and oldest Greek-American association in the world with over 500 chapters chartered in the United States, Canada, Greece, and Cyprus, and sister chapters in Australia and New Zealand. It was established in 1922 by visionary Greek-Americans to protect Greek immigrants from prejudice and also to help Greek immigrants assimilate into American society. The mission of AHEPA is to promote Hellenism, Education, Philanthropy, Civic Responsibility, and Family and Individual Excellence.

AHEPA has evolved over the years, from helping Southern European immigrants to get started in the United States, to fighting bigotry against immigrants, to selling freedom bonds for the war effort in WWII (AHEPA sold more bonds than any other organization during WWII), to helping feed those in need, while also giving out millions in scholarships, charity, and community services. At least two US Presidents and many national officials have been proud to be members of AHEPA.

To our local church community, AHEPA has given generously for the Building Fund, scholarships, and in support of a number of ministries. In our greater community, AHEPA has supported in feeding the homeless, supporting our wounded warriors and the Fisher House, giving to the Red Cross and other charities and responding to the needs of disaster (tsunami, fire, hurricane, and earthquake) victims from Japan to Indian Ocean countries, to Greece and Latin America.

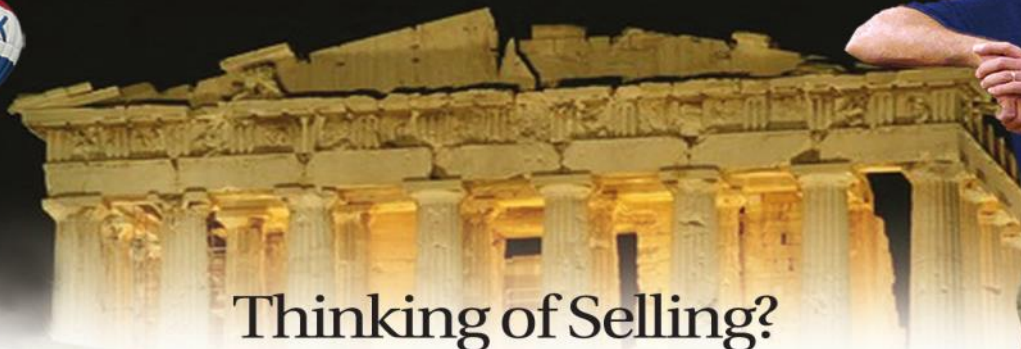
Our new AHEPA Chapter is well on its way to be officially established in the beginning of 2014. With our first provisional meeting held in November and another meeting tentatively scheduled for December 16, we will have met all the requirements for Charter. The key to that effort is to have maximum participation from our community. The \$100 annual membership fee is well worth belonging to this very distinguished fraternal order – the Ashburn Chapter of AHEPA.

All interested in joining our new Chapter, please contact any member of the coordinating committee. Their contact info is as follows: Vasilis Fotopoulos, 703 999-8568, fuhuaxi@gmail.com; Dean Economou, 703 597-4652, deaneconomou@ymail.com; Ben Conrey, 609 496-2083, Benjamin.conrey@gmail.com; Bill Lagadinos, 202 210-1710, bill513@gmail.com; and Nick Spyros, 703 357-7367, nlspyros@yahoo.com.

You can also get more information on the organization by visiting the AHEPA website: www.ahepa.org.

Vasilis Fotopoulos

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6th Annual

Greek Orthodox Parish of Loudoun County

TASTE OF GREECE

Ashburn Volunteer Fire Rescue Department, Founder's Hall
20688 Ashburn Road, Ashburn, VA 20147

FRIDAY

January 24

4:00PM – 9:00PM

SATURDAY

January 25

11:00AM – 9:00PM

SUNDAY

January 26

11:00AM – 8:00PM

(We will be serving snow or shine!)

FOOD - MUSIC - DANCE

Enjoy a variety delicious Greek dishes including:
Gyros, Souvlaki, Pastitsio, Spanakopita, Greek Salad, Baklava & more!
Kids meals available.



FREE ADMISSION – FREE PARKING
Dine In or Take Out

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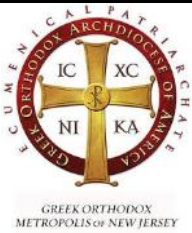
Call 571-246-3028 or 571-246-6584

Pre-order to-go meals. We will deliver to your car for easy pick-up.

Full menu can be found at www.greekfestivalloudoun.org.

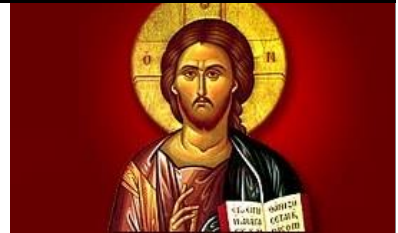
Park in the "CALL AHEAD" reserved parking area for easy pickup.



**The Greek Orthodox Parish of Loudoun County**

21580 Atlantic Blvd., Building D, Unit 160
Dulles, VA 20166

www.greekorthodoxloudoun.org



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Coordinator: Christine Poulias (christine.poulias@gmail.com) **Designer:** Greg Joiner (gregjoiner@gmail.com)

Editors: Fr. George Alexson, Lia Economou (frgeorgeandrew@gmail.com, liaecon@comcast.net)

Advertising: Paul Orphanides (porphanides@myselectproperties.com) If you are interested in advertising in the next issue of The Light, please contact Paul Orphanides.

PAREA

Dearest Parishioners,

With God's grace we celebrated fellowship and friendship again around our PAREA table. During our October PAREA we were blessed with eleven new friends who came to meet us and enjoy our "Company of friends"!

We feel deeply humbled and blessed that we will be celebrating two full years of PAREA this coming December! Please come and join our anniversary festivities on Tuesday, December 3rd, at the Amphora's Diner Deluxe, (1151 Elden Street, Herndon, VA 20170) at 11:30 am.

As we all focus on the Birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, we reflect on the things that are important in our lives. Our Church, our family, our friends, our community. The friendships and the fellowship we share together, the joy that we bring to each other's hearts when we gather around. We all cherish the feeling of belonging to our church family, a feeling that multiplies every day!

On behalf of our precious PAREA, and all our friends, I wish you a blessed, healthy and beautiful Christmas with your family and friends! May the Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ keep you all safe and strong to continue His work every day! We wish you health and joy throughout the New Year!

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Καλά Χριστούγεννα και Ευτυχισμένος ο Καινούργιος Χρόνος!

In His everlasting mercy,

Marina Blair
PAREA Chair



Parishioners enjoying a meal during the October PAREA meeting at Opa Mezze Grill in Ashburn.





Member in the Spotlight—Galina Repin

I find it pretty difficult and embarrassing to write about myself. It is much easier and more fun to think or to talk about someone else - other people's lives seem to be straightforward open and regular. But as soon as we look back into the depths of our own years we gasp sometime in amazement, more often in disgust - Was that really me?

I am from Russia, the former Soviet Union to be more exact being born in Uzbekistan, the town of Fergana; received education in the town of Orenburg, Southern Urals, was working for 26 years as an English interpreter in Murmansk on parallel 69 North, lived in St. Petersburg together with my husband Vladimir and in 1997 we moved together to McLean, Virginia, U.S.A., (temporarily, as I thought those days). I was 53.

In Russia I left my 4 sisters, 6 nephews and nieces and 4 grand nephews and grand nieces (now the number 4 grew to number 12). Here in the States we are two in our family plus Vladimir's sister Natasha who lives in the Cathedral City, California.

It was 1944, the last year of the World War II when I was born in Fergana, Uzbekistan where my father was repairing military airplanes at a military plant. The damaged planes were brought from the front. We had a neighbor - a woman with a baby boy evacuated from the sieged Leningrad. There was a fear that the boy may die so weak and atrophied he was, so she decided to baptize him. Those days any approach to a church was severely punished so my mother had secretly agreed with the Leningrad woman that she would take her boy and me to St. Nicholas church to baptize us both.

In a few years another neighbor granny Masha took me to the same church for the liturgy service to receive communion. I was four years old and still remember some details of my naughty behavior hopping in the middle of the solemn service. Forgive me, o Lord!

My interests? - Reading mostly world classical literature, historical novels, and memoirs. I love helping people in some jammed, tough situations. I despise exaggerated gratitude for small services - it humiliates me. I equally reject people's cold indifference to other people and assimilate it with crime.

Parishioners in the Community

Mr. Brett Eastburn was born with no arms and no legs. In his book "I'm not missing anything" he writes: "I thank God every day for making me the way I am. I am different enough that people notice me wherever I go. My theme is No arms, No legs, No handicaps".

Our own Marina Blair, a Special Education Advisory Committee representative and strong supporter of excellence in Special Education in the Loudoun County Public schools, stated: "We invited Brett to give his inspirational speech at Dominion High during our "Walk in My Shoes, Discover My Abilities" Ability Awareness Week campaign. Brett mesmerized the over 1,200 students in the auditorium with his abilities! Brett is married, and throughout his life, he played basketball, football and baseball! He is an excellent swimmer, a fisherman and a hunter and he was ranked 4th in the nation in his weight class in wrestling! He has studied martial arts. He uses utensils to eat. Brett's unwavering faith in God, hard work and focus on his abilities and not his needs, gives him the strength to endure life's challenges. Brett Eastburn is an extraordinary example for us all!"

For ten and a half years I was a devoted member of St. Nicholas Cathedral of the OCA - Orthodox Church of America but in 2008 after a serious leg surgery and found it difficult to drive for 1 hour and 20 minutes to the church and after the service back the same time and distance. So a good friend of mine Victoria showed me the way here. My thanks to you, Vika, with my head bound for I feel absolutely at home among our parishioners like among my own family. Thank you all for being the way you are.

It is a pity but I am not permanently engaged in any activity at our church but I gladly join one or another event and prefer to take a heavy load, like dishwashing during Greek Fairs.

My strongest conviction is that we are able to build the new church under protection of the Holy Trinity and I dream of taking some place among you during

The service of Consecration one sunny day with bells chiming and announcing to people around - **CHRIST IS IN OUR MIDST!**



This month's Member in the Spotlight— Galina Repin and her husband Vladimir.



Brett Eastburn, Marina Blair, Alexia Blair.