



## Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church

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### December 22, 2019: Sunday before Nativity

#### How to Not Eat Each Other Alive While Fasting

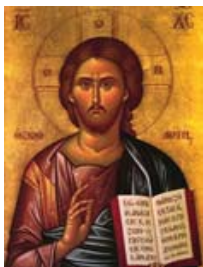
I have been talking with people of the Church live and on social media for quite a few years now, and I noticed that the attitude towards the culinary part of the fast varies greatly between two extremes: One is to fast up to such a state when you are so starved that the wind makes you sway and black dots flicker in your eyes. Another is to follow the motto *The most important thing is not to eat each other alive*, easily discarding all other food restrictions prescribed by the Church. I guess the truth is somewhere in the middle. However, even these extremes have some useful lessons. I remember my very first, neophyte fasts, when I made myself completely exhausted so that my legs were tilted from weakness. We were building our church then, and I worked as a stonemason. I was climbing a ladder in the blizzard, pressing a stack of icy bricks to my chest with one hand. Not only did I understand, but I could also feel it on a physical level that if it wasn't for the Lord, I wouldn't be able to take one step in such conditions, let alone do the work. The power of God indeed is manifested through human weakness. Such a rabid fasting is a great opportunity for a young and healthy body to open the way for this power and to let it act where you are used to doing everything yourself. One more point about these two extremes. "Don't eat each other alive." Of course, that's true, no one would argue about it. The irony is that it is much easier not to eat each other when you are thoroughly full of something else. For example, after three portions of a good kebab, I look at any person with such affection that I just see him as an Angel of God. After a couple of well-roasted pork chops, I'm ready to forgive anybody. And if you polish the whole thing with a savory dessert – well, then I become an angel myself. And I won't eat anybody – neither a friend nor an enemy. But if I have to eat sauerkraut soup and plain potatoes for a few days... Well, stay away from me! I promise you, nobody will be able to go unharmed. Of course, I won't eat you, but I'll ... **(Cont. on the back)**



**EPISTLE READING:**  
**St. Paul's Letter to the**  
**Hebrews 11:9-10; 32-40**

BRETHREN, by faith Abraham sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. For he looked forward to the city which has foundation, whose builder and maker is God. And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets - who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. Women received their dead by resurrection. Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life. Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated - of whom the world was not worthy - wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

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**GOSPEL READING:**  
**Matthew 1:1-25**

The book of the Genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, and Judah the father

of Perez and Zerah by Tamar, and Perez the father of Hezron, and Hezron the father of Aram, and Aram the father of Amminadab, and Amminadab the father of Nahshon, and Nahshon the father of Salmon, and Salmon the father of Boaz by Rahab, and Boaz the father of Obed by Ruth, and Obed the father of Jesse, and Jesse the father of David the king. And David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah, and Solomon the father of Rehoboam, and Rehoboam the father of Abijah, and Abijah the father of Asa, and Asa the father of Jehoshaphat, and Jehoshaphat ...**(Continued on the back)**



Vasilopita/Tsoureki pick up is TODAY.  
Philoptochos wishes everyone a blessed Christmas and New Year.

## YOUTH GROUP



**HOPE (ages 5-8) and**  
**JOY (ages 9-12)**

**Saturday, January 4**

**Time to be announced**

**Loudoun County Special Olympics' Annual Basketball Tournament, Independence High School in Ashburn**

Cheer on the incredible athletes that are competing! Contact Ashley Joiner (ashleydjoiner@gmail.com)

**GOYA (ages 13-18)**

**New Years Party at the Drapas Home**

**Sunday, Jan. 12, 5:00–8PM**

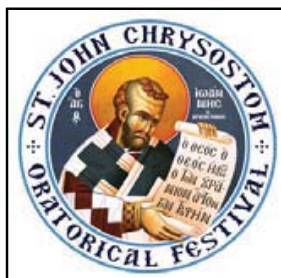
All teens are invited!



**GOYA's Got Talent, Show and Luncheon**

**Sunday, February 2 after church.** All parishioners are invited! Details to come.

Contact Lia Economou (liaecon@comcast.net)



**St. John Chrysostom**  
**Oratorical Festival,**

**Sunday, March 1**

**After Liturgy at church**

Topics are available on the Archdiocese website:

goarch.org. Rehearsal is 2/15 and final draft of speech is due 2/20. Contact Mr. Yiannis Margetis (gerakas2@yahoo.com)

## UPCOMING EVENTS



### **Philoptochos First Meeting of the Year Sunday, January 12**

Immediately following the Liturgy



### **AHEPA Chapter 542 Meeting**

**Thursday, January 23**

**7:30-9:00PM**

**Home of Alex Kangelaris**

Look for an email with details in 2020.

### WEEKLY LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

\*Tuesday, Dec. 24 Christmas Eve Orthros, 6:30 PM.  
Liturgy, 8:00 PM

\*Friday, Dec. 27 St. Stephen Orthros, 8:15AM.  
Liturgy, 9:30AM

\*Wednesday, Jan. 1 Circumcision of our Lord, St.  
Basil Orthros. 8:45AM. Liturgy, 10:00AM

\*Monday, Jan. 6 Great Blessing of Waters Orthros,  
8:15AM. Liturgy, 9:30AM

## Special Events in February 2020

### **Annual Scout Sunday – Feb. 2, after Liturgy**

Join us for a brief presentation to celebrate the many Scouts in our parish, and showcase how Scouts live out their "Duty to God" which is pledged each week. All Scouts are encouraged to wear their uniforms and be recognized.

### **Godparent Sunday – February 9**

We welcome all Godparents and their Godchildren on this day dedicated to reconnecting Godparents and Godchildren as a spiritual family.



**Turn in your 2020 Stewardship  
Pledge Card today! Cards are  
available in the church hall and on  
our website.**

Today's Coffee Hour is sponsored by our  
**HOPE and JOY groups.** Thank you!



**SAVE THE DATE!**  
**PRESIDENT'S DAY WEEKEND**  
**FEB. 14-16, 2020**  
**Ashburn Firehouse**

[www.greekfestivalloudoun.org](http://www.greekfestivalloudoun.org)



Help support our Taste of Greece by **purchasing a section in our Taste of Greece Journal** and be seen by thousands, while helping us raise money for our church! Advertise a business, congratulate a graduate, submit your favorite recipe, or just send well wishes to the community. Go to our Taste of Greece website, or email Maria at [info@hagoc.org](mailto:info@hagoc.org) for more information.



**(Cover Message Cont.)** be so touchy and snap at the smallest trifles that it's better to avoid me at this time. That's when it becomes clear that the layer of my Christianity, spread out over the dark depths of my passions and sinful tendencies, is astonishingly thin and fragile. If you read *Lord have mercy* when your belly is full, no matter how many times - the result will be the same: you will realize with a sense of deep satisfaction that you gave God his due, and you can go on with your life. Whereas when you see with your own eyes that just a week of fasting turns you into a disgruntled and anxious person, those familiar words of the shortest Christian prayer will ring quite differently. If you want to let the power of God work in you, weaken yourself with fasting, understand your impotence in the face of your own passions. Only then will it become clear that believers are only capable of "not eating one another alive" on an empty stomach thanks to the grace of God. This grace reveals itself where you recognize your own weakness and call out in horror, *Lord have mercy!* (Pravmir. Alexander Tkachenko).

**(Gospel Reading Cont.)** the father of Joram, and Joram the father of Uzziah, and Uzziah the father of Jotham, and Jotham the father of Ahaz, and Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, and Hezekiah the father of Manasseh, and Manasseh the father of Amon, and Amon the father of Josiah, and Josiah the father of Jechoniah and his brothers, at the time of the deportation to Babylon. And after the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Salathiel, and Salathiel the father of Zerubbabel, and Zerubbabel the father of Abiud, and Abiud the father of Eliakim, and Eliakim the father of Azor, and Azor the father of Zadok, and Zadok the father of Achim, and Achim the father of Eliud, and Eliud the father of Eleazar, and Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob, and Jacob the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom Jesus was born, who is called Christ. So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations. Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child of the Holy Spirit; and her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel" (which means, God with us). When Joseph woke from sleep, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded him; he took his wife, but knew her not until she had borne a son; and he called his name Jesus.