



The Light To Φως



Greek Orthodox Parish
of Loudoun County

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

A Message from Father George Alexson

*"Turn not Your face from Your child,
for I am afflicted; hear me speedily.
Give heed to my soul and redeem it" (Psalm 68:17)*

My beloved brothers and sisters,

On Monday, March 14th we began our Great Lenten journey; yet another opportunity given us by God for spiritual renewal. The prokeimenon for Vespers on Sunday evening leading us into Lent, is taken from Psalm 68, quoted above. In this verse, the psalmist pleads with God not to turn His face away from him. When I think about these words, I am compelled to ask, why would God do such a thing? Would God do to us what we so readily do to one another? How often we turn away from each other in anger or discord, because we are unwilling to treat each other charitably, and with humility offer forgiveness for wrongs committed. As I contemplate the verse on a deeper level, I come quickly to a sorrowful conclusion: it is not God who turns away, but I. No, the psalmist didn't get it wrong. He does well in his request, for he now realizes that upon returning to the Father, he is compelled to beg His forgiveness for the pride and rebellion that stole him away from His loving embrace. The merciful Father is called upon by His disobedient child to show, once again, the true meaning of love that saves, transfigures and repairs our broken humanity.

We are invited by the Church during Lent to engage in an earnest struggle for the integrity and well-being of our soul and body. We accomplish our ascetic endeavors by means of fasting, prayer, charity, and, most importantly, examination of our life, our failings, the weight of our sins and transgressions. It is for this purpose that our Lord instituted through His church the Holy Sacrament of Repentance or Confession. Unfortunately, too often we ignore the need for this sacrament, either from ignorance, pride or shame. But, as the Fathers of the Church warn us,

"Do not say: 'I have sinned much, and therefore I am not bold enough to fall down before God.' Do not despair. Simply do not increase your sins in despair and, with the help of the All-merciful One, you will not be put to shame. For He said, 'he who comes to Me I will not cast out.' (John. 6:37) And so, be bold and believe that He is pure and cleanses those who draw near to Him. If you want to accomplish true repentance, show it with your deeds. If you have fallen into pride, show humility; if into drunkenness, show sobriety; if into defilement, show purity of life. For it is said, 'Turn away from evil and do good' (1 Pet. 3:11) (St. Gennadius of Constantinople, The Golden Chain, 87-89). And again, 'Every sin that is left without repentance is a sin unto death, for which if even a saint shall pray, he shall not be heard' (St. Mark the Ascetic, Homilies, 2.41).

The need for repentance and confession is a daily experience in the life of the Christian sincerely struggling for perfection. The following counsel assures us of that: 'A young monk said to the great ascetic Abba Sisoës: 'Abba, what should I do? I fell.' The elder answered: 'Get up!' The monk said: 'I got up and I fell again!' The elder replied: 'Get up again!' But the young monk asked: 'For how long should I get up when I fall?' 'Until your death,' answered Abba Sisoës' (Sayings of the Desert Fathers).

How should we prepare ourselves for confession? A guide for this can be found at our parish or on the internet. Following is a useful list of instructions as to how we should approach the sacrament of forgiveness and healing, and how and what it is we ought to confess:

- ◆ First, we do not blame others for our sins, refer to them by name, or confess the sins of others. We accept responsibility for our sins and avoid making excuses.
- ◆ Second, we avoid lengthy accounts and descriptions. We should be concise and to the point.
- ◆ Third, we do not confess in generalities and with vagueness (for example, "I am a great sinner;" "I am guilty of every sin," etc.). We refer to those sins we have committed and that have separated us from the love of God.
- ◆ Fourth, there is no need to make reference to our good deeds or our (non-existing) virtues.
- ◆ Fifth, there is no need to refer to sins we have confessed in the past, unless we have repeated them.
- ◆ Finally, we do not hide anything, lest we make a mockery of the Holy Sacrament

(from the book: "Repentance and Confession," the Holy Metropolis of Argolidos).

Inside this issue:

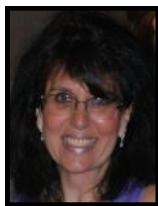
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Highlights:

- Philoptochos Tsourekis Sale, order by April 3 at <http://greekorthodoxloudoun.org/philobake.html>.
- GOYA Visit to Agia Skepi Monastery, April 9 and 10
- Annual Church Spring Cleaning to prepare for Holy Week, April 16 from 9:00am-1:00pm
- Hope & Joy Making Palms, April 23 after the Liturgy
- Palm Sunday Fish Dinner Take Away, April 24 — Orders accepted until Apr. 18 Order at church or contact Ergini Marnishn: ergini@aol.com.

Continued on page 3...

Message from the Parish Council President – Marina Blair



"Kindness softens and opens up the heart as oil opens a rusty lock. When someone gives his heart to God, then the mind of this man is also seized by the love of God. He is indifferent towards worldly things and continually thinks about the Heavenly Father and being divinely in love, he glorifies his Creator day and night like an angel."
(St. Paisios of Mount Athos)

Greetings in the Name of our Lord,

As we walk the solemn path of Great Lent in anticipation of the Passion of our Lord and Savior and His glorious Resurrection, we need to turn and look deep within our hearts and our minds. Do we have the kindness and the love St. Paisios preached about? Do we have the love that strengthens and solidifies our soul on our continuous journey following our Lord's path? He walked to Golgotha, He endured unimaginable sufferings, and He was crucified because of His endless love for us. If we love our neighbor through our actions, we love our God. If with hearts full of love we can feed the hungry, provide drink to the thirsty, and clothe the naked, we show our love to our Lord. If we take the time to listen to broken hearts, if we patiently and quietly sustain those with troubled minds, if we offer a warm embrace to the lonely and alone, we show our love to our Lord.

Now more than ever, we need to give back to the community as a humble token of appreciation to our Savior for all the many blessings He has bestowed on us. So, as we prepare to celebrate the 10th anniversary of our beloved Parish, we offered a modest "chili for charity" lunch to those in need in the Lucketts Community and the Loudoun Homeless Services Center. A special thank you to our magnificent volunteers who traveled the distance and represented almost all of our ministries in this effort. This effort did not belong to any individual ministry, it belonged to our whole church. We went where the need was present. A heartfelt thank

you to Tim and Diane Boone for donating the funds for this endeavor and to Elina Dimitropoulos for donating all the bread that was needed. This gave us the opportunity to contribute the money we collected from our church to the school that the children of these families attend in order to support programs that are already in place. Thank you to Ava Walter for working diligently on the details of this endeavor.

The sky is brighter as our beloved Father Ted left this earth in the middle of February to join our merciful Lord and his son George in the Heavens. May Father Ted's Memory be Eternal.

Ergini Martnishn, our Sunday School Director spearheaded a gratifying event, honoring Presvytera Joanna Alexson for her enthusiastic and hard work as a teacher of the Greek language for many decades, and as a Presvytera for close to 50 years! Congratulations Presvytera! A beautiful presentation with Greek school and Sunday school students took place the same day honoring the Three Hierarchs.

We all marveled at Andreas Voyages' excellent presentation during the award ceremony for Excellence in Greek language which took place at St. George's on the occasion of the Three Hierarchs. Kudos to Andreas and his teacher Athanasia Dacey!

We had a great and very informative Heads of the Ministries, Committees and AHEPA meeting for this year. The results are posted in the church hall, as is information on all the events and liturgical services for the next several months. If you have any questions please ask 'yours truly'.

Our Greek school will continue to keep busy for the next few months. A special thank you to Ioanna Gisone, Independent Scentsy Consultant who is willing to hold a fundraiser on behalf of our Greek School, and donate 100% of her commission to our Building Fund!

Continued on page 3...



THE SPRING MARKET IS HERE!

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President's Message *continued...*

During the month of February and March, we enjoyed great fellowship at the Burke's home with some wine tasting; a lovely Mother-Daughter Tea gathering at the Economou's home; and a great family bowling event that Christy Liscandro put together. All three events were organized by the Stewardship Committee. Speaking of which, our Stewardship Sunday was one for the books, as our dear Kathy Sparkman was the guest speaker. Her testimonial touched all of our hearts. Thanks to Lia Economou, chairwoman and the Stewardship team for a job well done!

HOPE and JOY partnered with Philoptochos in supporting the Loudoun Animal Shelter. HOPE and JOY made beautiful Valentine cards that were sold to our parishioners donating the funds received to our Building Fund! What a wonderful opportunity to teach our little ones the importance of our church's vision to find a permanent home for our Parish.

The Philoptochos launched a bake sale publicizing the availability of their tasty spanakopitas and tiropitas, to the Loudoun Community. During the month of March the Philoptochos also launched a food drive to benefit the Inova Mobile Hope Unit, and collected money for the AGAPE Foundation, an exceptional organization that supports sick children who come from Greece to seek medical treatment.

The GOYAns once again supported our Building Fund by putting together four baskets that were raffled to the parish. A few weeks later our GOYANS had a very successful bake sale! I was privileged to attend the Yiayia and Pappou Talent Show organized by our GOYANS. I cannot begin to describe how proud I feel of our youth, their talented souls, and their love for Christ and our Theotokos. Congratulations to Sofia Kouroukidis, Lillian Funk and all the wonderful GOYA parents for their love, support and awesome cooking and baking!

We thank our Lord for the talents of our choir members who, with great devotion and spirituality, practice twice a month, and also every other chance they have in preparation for a magnificent Lent, Holy Week, and a glorious Easter.

PAREA was responsible for the Coffee Hour during the month of February and launched the 2nd annual "Because EYE care for YOU" drive. Thank you to all our parishioners who brought their used eyeglasses as they will be put to good use. We collected 74 pairs! A new record!

Greg Joiner is working diligently on our Parish's 10th anniversary Commemorative Album. Paul Orphanides offered his talent as our photographer, so our parishioners can provide good family pictures for the album. Thank you to all our Parishioners who, by submitting their photos and paragraphs, supported this celebratory event for our Parish.

And last but certainly not least, on March 13th our Parish was blessed with an excellent Oratorical Festival! Kudos to John Canakaris, our Oratorical Festival Director and to Ergini Martnishn, our Sunday School Director for organizing such an inspirational event. We are deeply appreciative for our judges and above all for our exceptional youth presentations of the day! Congratulations to Paris Economou, first place, Marlene Ortiz, second, Athena Lansdell third, and Anna Ortiz, Marina Ortiz, and Zoe Skuce for their honorable mentions. May our Lord bless you all as you continue always to stand for our Orthodox faith in every aspect of your lives!

I would like to encourage everyone to attend the magnificent Lenten services, the Salutations, and the Pre-sanctified liturgies. As spring is coming to our area and the snow has melted, we need to strive for our personal regrowth, leaving behind all the impurities of our emotional winter. Rejoice in His name as "those who trust in the Lord will find new strength, they will soar high on wings like eagles they will run and not grow weary."

Happy Easter to all our Parishioners! Καλή Ανάσταση!

In His Everlasting Mercy,

Marina A. Blair

Parish Council President

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

Fr. George's Message *continued...*

We should remember that the examination of our conscience is for our own benefit. Indeed, God knows our sins and failings. The point is: are we prepared to acknowledge them and seek forgiveness and healing. In the words of St. Isaac, "Whoever hates his sins will stop sinning; and whoever confesses them will receive remission. A man can not abandon the habit of sin if he does not first gain enmity toward sin, nor can he receive remission of sin without confession of sin. For the confession of sin is the cause of true humility" (St. Isaac the Syrian, Homilies, 71).

Let us, my beloved friends, not lose this opportunity for repentance and transfiguration, as we make our way to the goal of our Lenten struggle: the victory of our Lord and Savior over sin and death. May our Lord bless us with courage, conviction and strength to endure the labors of the spiritual arena. May His peace and love be with us all always!

Fr. George



*GOPLC Wine Night held on Feb. 20 at the home of
Chad and Julie Burke*

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Stewardship

It's been a busy time for the Stewardship Committee! Thank you to the Committee members for all their hard work in planning the events for our parish: Kristina Ayoub, Bill Bakopanos, Marina Blair, Julie Burke, Christy Liscandro, and Nick Spyros.

We sponsored the GOPLC Wine Night on February 20. A special thanks to Chad and Julie Burke for hosting the event at their lovely home, and for all the delicious food the Committee members brought. It was wonderful night of fun and fellowship, and of course great wine! Cheers to everyone who came!

On February 28 the Stewardship Committee sponsored our first Stewardship Sunday of the year. Our presentation began with an update on our Stewardship program. As of February 21, 2016, Stewards pledged \$120,800 and of that amount we collected \$33,525. We have 70 families who submitted pledge cards and our goal is over 120 families, so please turn in your 2016 pledge card if you have not done so already. You can find one on our website and in this newsletter.

A special thank you to Kathy Kastrenopoulos Sparkman who gave her personal testimonial for Stewardship Sunday. Kathy has been on a remarkable journey since learning of her cancer diagnosis in 2012 and making her recovery. There wasn't a dry eye in the church after hearing about her struggle. Kathy's message of hope and love was inspiring, as was her encouragement to be a part of the church and give of your time and talents to help it thrive and help others. For those who missed it, we have included a copy of Kathy's testimonial in this newsletter.

I had the privilege of hosting the 3rd annual Mother-Daughter Tea on March 6 at my home. It was a wonderful time for the mothers and even yiayias to catch up while our daughters and granddaughters played. A special thanks to Julie Burke and Elpida Skuce for helping coordinate this event. Overall we had almost 30 people. It was a nice way to enjoy the sunny afternoon together.

Our last Committee planned event in March was the GOPLC Family Bowling at Bowl America in Sterling on March 13. Fortunately there was no snow this time! We had 30 bowlers, some who were "regulars" and even brought their own bowling balls. One Steward enjoyed it so much he commented, "Can we do this more than once a year?" We thank all the families who came and Christy Liscandro for coordinating this event.

Our church is so grateful to have faithful Stewards who continue to be involved in our parish and parish events. I pray you all have a Holy Pascha.

In God's Service,

Lia Economou

Chair, Stewardship Committee

liaecon@comcast.net



The daughters of the 3rd annual Mother-Daughter Tea held on March 6 at the home of Lia Economou

STEWARDSHIP PLEDGES

Shown below is a list of individuals and families who have made their Stewardship pledge for 2016 as of **March 13**. Thank you for your financial commitment to our parish. If you have not submitted a pledge for 2016, 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	Bill and Kathy Kendrat
Tom and Pattie Ayers	Maria Kitromilis
John and Kristina Ayoub	Matthew Knudson
Vasilios Bakopanos	George and Helen Kontzias
Ronald and Mina Baldinger	Nikolaos and Sofia Kouiroukides
George and Karen Banks	Michael and Effie Koutsourais
Alexia Blair	Mariana Korulaki
Robert and Marina Blair	Helen Kyriazi
Tim and Diane Boone	Alexandra Lampros and Hal Hallett
Chad and Julie Burke	Bret and Deise Lansdell
Deacon Harry and Maria Chelpon	Nikoleta Lelis
Bill and Smaro Caras	John and Christy Liscandro
Mikhail Chelpon	Angelike Maoury
Greg and Marilena Cherpes	Pete Margaros and Kiki Georges
Ed and Alexis Cleveland	Steve and Ergini Martnshn
Dean and Maria Couloupoulos	George and Debra Mokhiber
Panayiotis and Athanasia Dacey	Paul and Lisa Orphanides
Georgia Dimitras	Panayiotis (Peter) and Cynthia Panagopoulos
Aristos and Anna Dimitriou	Maria V. Pappas
Art Dimopoulos	Jerry and Helen Pollatos
Craig and Marianna Dodson	Pete Pontikis
David and Susan Dorn	Terry and Christine Poulias
John and Maria Drapas	Despina Psomiades
Dean and Lia Economou	Vladimir and Galina Repin
Paris Economou	James and Mary Rigas
Vasilis and Joan Fotopoulos	Thomas and Elpida Skuce
Cookie Freire	Jeff and Cynthia Smith
Gary and Lillian Funk	Constantine Sofologis
John and Patricia Galanis	Nicholas and Liba Spyros
John and Patti George	Paul Spyros
Angeline Gillas	Sarah Spyros
Juan and Ioanna Gisone	Moska Stratis
Michael and Eleni Hadjimichael	Dwayne and Irene Thomas
Nicholas and Asha Ioanou	Maria Tsapos
Neil, Alexandra, and Christopher Jesuele	Lou Turilli
Greg and Ashley Joiner	Todd and Ava Walter
Andrew and Vasiliki Kaffes	Maria Zangos
Themis Kalaris	Nicholas and Carol Zangos
Mercina Karagiorgis	Christos Zirps
Nicholas and Constantina Kass	



The mothers of the 3rd annual Mother-Daughter Tea held on March 6 at the home of Lia Economou



Stewardship Sunday Parishioner Testimonial, Kathy Kastrenopoulos Sparkman

Good morning everyone!

My name is Kathy Kastrenopoulos Sparkman, and I am a member of this parish. My parents, sister, and I immigrated to the US from Greece in November 1976. We settled in Annandale where I spent all of childhood, and a few early adult years. We attended Saint Katherine's throughout those years and after relocating to Loudoun County in 1996.

In 2006, my husband, son, and my parents became part of this church when a fellow parishioner, Myrianthi Anthony informed us of a church establishment in Loudoun County. We were super excited and joyfully attended services, seated on wheeled office chairs, in a conference room, held out of the Holiday Inn Conference Center in Sterling. God has certainly blessed us as we have come a long way; but our efforts and journey do not end here.

I am thankful for the families and individuals that pioneered the journey by embracing the idea and dedicating themselves to make it happen. It is a blessing to be part of our parish community. Our church is more than just a building and icons on the walls. Our church is life; she lives and breathes through the support and volunteer efforts of our parishioners. The Lord invites us to act, to the best of our ability, to prosper His house through the continued commitment set forth by our founding families to keep our church alive.

The Lord calls upon us to give freely from the heart, knowing our abilities and circumstances better than we know them. God knows where, when, and how we can fulfill our duty as His faithful servant. He blesses us with gifts; it should be with a joyful heart we return these gifts by donating our time, talents, and financial contributions towards the life and prosperity of our church. We shall give as we receive.

Our Ministries offer several opportunities to serve our church and everyone can help. My son and I both have been involved in many ways. Both of us served with the Greek Festival, Taste of Greece, Stewardship, and Easter preparations. Additionally, last summer I had the privilege to serve as one of the teachers for our VCC Summer Camp program...which was a rewarding experience to say the least, and we had so much fun! This year I joined the Easter Flowers Committee. Dimitri has served as a Sunday School aide, coaches GOYA Basketball, and now serves in the Alter. The Parish Council, Philoptochos, Stewardship, Catecheti-

cal/Greek & Sunday School, GOYA, Hope & Joy, PAREA, and AHEPA exist because of individuals such as you and I am willing to serve at any capacity. And just as we serve these Ministries, they in turn serve us and the community in so many ways. As our Ministries receive so shall they give; and I experienced this firsthand.

Most of you know that I had a challenge with a cancer that nearly killed me on three separate occasions. Diagnosed with Hodgkin's Lymphoma on February 17, 2012, I went through a challenging 32 months. I spent 22 months in aggressive treatment involving several chemotherapy regimens, radiation, alternative medicine, hospitalization, and two stem cell/bone marrow transplants. Then I faced an additional 10 months of health complications due to the extensive treatment.

During this time, I was mostly incapacitated and weak due to treatment, weight loss, and malnutrition from being sick. Although at times I was barely hanging on in body, God upheld me in mind and spirit, surrounded by the unconditional love, prayers, and support from my church family through thought, word, and deed. Dimitri became the communication link between our parish and me; updates, prayers, countless meals, and extended offerings. None of that would have happened if our church did not exist. The community response was humbling and left me in awe. And although nothing I say can express or capture my gratitude for the love and support that came out of this church, know that I was praying and continue to pray for each of you. As you prayed for me, I prayed for you. As I receive so shall I give.

The church lives and breathes through the support and volunteer efforts of our parishioners. Without this support, we have no church. Without our church, we have no community. It is vital we continue our journey supporting and expanding our church, not just for today but also for future generations.

I will leave you with a quote I read the other day: "What we do for ourselves dies with us. What we do for others and the world remains and is immortal." Let us keep this in mind as we fulfill our commitments and continue our journey in 2016.

Thank you and God Bless.

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

2016 STEWARDSHIP PLEDGE (ALL PLEDGES THROUGH DECEMBER 2016) 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

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Sunday School

In celebration of the feast of the Three Hierarchs our Sunday School presented a brief ceremony dedicated to these three Holy Fathers on January 31, 2016.

As we all know the Three Hierarchs feast is associated with the Celebration of Greek Letters. «This long association of Greek Letters with the Three Hierarchs highlights the emphasis these holy fathers gave to learning, intellectual ability and discipline, as well as to their use of the Greek language and thought for the message and mission of the Church and the Gospel of Christ».

During this celebration the Sunday School teachers and students had the opportunity to honor our Presvytera Ioanna for her dedication to Orthodoxy and Hellenism. Presvytera Ioanna has served as a Sunday and Greek School teacher for 30 years and has been a Presvytera for 47 years.

We really have been blessed with Presvytera Ioanna's presence at our GOPLC!

Kali Sarakosti,

Ergini B. Martnishn

Sunday School Director

703-652-4426, ergini@aol.com

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

Sophia Tsangali's letter on Presvytera Ioanna – St. Katherine's

Νοιώθω μεγάλη χαρά για την τιμητική διάκριση της Αγαπητής και Σεβαστής Πρεσβυτέρας Ιωάννας Αλεξοπούλου, λαμπρό παράδειγμα αφωσίωσης και προσφοράς στην Ομογένεια, σ' όλες τις κοινότητες που ο Σεβαστός πατήρ Γεώργιος υπηρέτησε και υπηρετεί.

Δίπλα του πιστή σύζυγος, στοργική μητέρα στα παιδιά της, δασκάλα ξεχωριστή στο Ελληνικό και Κατηχητικό σχολείο, βοηθός στη GOYA, πνευματική αδελφή και μητέρα στην Κοινότητα! Είχα την ιδιαίτερη τιμή να συνεργαστώ για τεκατέσσερα χρόνια μαζί της και να διακρίνω το πολύπλευρο ως Πρεσβυτέρα και εκπαιδευτικός έργο της.

Στήριγμα ατράνταχτο στον πατέρα Γεώργιο στην δύσκολη, πνευματική της ιερωσύνης του πορεία!

Σαράντα εφτά χρόνια αφωσιωμένη, πιστή Πρεσβυτέρα! Δεν είναι λίγα. Ολόκληρη ζωή! Ζωή θυσιαστική! Πάντα πρόσχαρη, ειλικρινής, καλωσυνάτη, τρέχει να βοηθήσει στην κοινότητα όλους. Μεγίστη η προσφορά της! Πού θέλετε να την δείτε; Στο Ελληνικό Σχολείο τριάντα χρόνια προσφοράς; Στη Φιλόπτωχο να φτιάχνει γλυκά για το φεστιβάλ ή για να τα διανείμει στους φτωχούς ή στους αρρώστους, στα νοσοκομεία;

Αυτό που ιδιαίτερα με συγκινεί στην Πρεσβυτέρα Ιωάννα είναι η αρετή της απλότητας και σεμνότητάς της, η καλωσύνη της, η ευγένεια και η μεγαλωσύνη της καρδιάς της!

Εύχομαι να συνεχίσει την μεγάλη της προσφορά στην κοινότητα και να είναι πάντα άξιο το έργο της προσφοράς της, φωτεινό παράδειγμα προς μίμηση σ' όλους στην κοινότητα.

Να είστε πάντοτε καλά, Πρεσβυτέρα μου, να συνεχίσετε να προσφέρετε με επιτυχία το θαέρεστο έργο σας, για να είναι φωτεινό παράδειγμα προς μίμηση σε όλους, μικρούς και μεγάλους!

Ευχαριστώ!



Three Hierarch event - Honoring Presvytera Ioanna

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GOPLC ORATORICAL FESTIVAL ON MARCH 13, 2016

Dear Parishioners,

Many of you attended our GOPLC Oratorical Festival organized by our GOPLC Sunday School, which took place on Sunday 13, March 2016.

Our Sunday School orators, Paris Economou, Marlene Ortiz, Athena Lansdell, Anna Ortiz, Marina Ortiz and Zoe Skuce presented fantastic homilies indeed!

God Bless,

As I was listening to our orators' speeches, the following thoughts went through my mind:

- 1) How many times our Father George has told us that the Orthodox Church throughout the ages has maintained a continuity of faith and love with the apostolic community which was founded by Christ and sustained by the Holy Spirit?
- 2) How many times, Father George, during his sermons, has stressed that it is in the Church that the Christian Faith is proclaimed and maintained? It is through the Church that all individuals, especially the young ones, are nurtured in the Faith?
- 3) How many times my Beloved Sunday School Teachers and Choir Instructors have included similar messages in their Sunday School lessons or sang beautifully hymns that include such ideas?

Well, during our Oratorical Festival on March 13, by God's Grace, we realized that Father George's sermons as well as our Sunday School efforts and our chanters' endeavors found "fertile ground"!!!

All of our excellent orators, offered to our GOPLC audience, speeches with clear main point and organized in such a way that kept all of us listening attentively; these speeches really moved all of us!!!

I was personally impressed by our Zoe, Anna, Marina, Athena, Marlene and Paris because their presentations were a) rooted in the Bible, b) composed in a way according to which the message was not their own opinion so much but rather a Word from God that has the authority, c) written with humility and expectancy that it is the Holy Spirit that did a great work through them, and d) delivered in humble fashion like all our choir members.

The excellent speeches of these six young ladies is a direct response to the prayers of our Father George as well as a reflection of the superb job that all of our GOPLC entities and GOPLC various ministries are doing, and the great examples they offer to our youth every day.

Our GOPLC Sunday School students, Paris Economou and Marlene Ortiz will represent our parish at the district level; Athena Lansdell is an alternate. Kali Sarakosti.

Ergini B. Martnishn
Sunday School Director



From the GOPLC Oratorical Festival

OPPORTUNITIES TO HELP OUR GOPLC SUNDAY SCHOOL

- ◆ **Substitute Teaching**
- ◆ **Driving the Future** (Help to organize Sunday School parents/teachers/friends gatherings and discussions on our youth's preparation to cope with the world ahead)
- ◆ **Prosfora Drive** (Visit Aghia Skepi Monastery; spend a wonderful day with the nuns, pick the prosfora and bring them to our church)
- ◆ **Chanting and Performing Group** (Help with our Sunday School efforts to create and maintain a group that will participate in GOPLC events as well in other events organized by the Greek Orthodox communities in the greater metropolitan area of Washington)
- ◆ **Preschoolers Gatherings** (Help with our Sunday School efforts to sponsor an early childhood education class focusing on Orthodoxy and Greek language.)

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Greek School

Hope and pray you and your families are well and are enjoying the beautiful weather. Cannot believe Lent will be starting soon. I would like to thank from the bottom of my heart Ava Walter for being the Greek School liaison for the past year. Her commitment, love and devotion for our Greek School was and will continue to be endless. She will continue to be the liaison for another ministry, Hope and Joy, which I know she will do great. At this time, I would like to take the opportunity and introduce and welcome, the new Greek School liaison, Nick Kass, to our Greek School ministry.

Greek School has been sponsoring the Coffee Hour for the month of March. Thank you to all who contributed! On March 27th, our students performed for Greek Independence Day. They recited traditional poems and songs. The students worked very hard along with their teachers. As every year, it truly is a heart touching performance and it reminds us of our proud Greek Heritage!

I would also like to thank Father George and the Board for approving my request to change the date of Greek School Graduation to June 12th, Sunday. This change was made under consideration due to snow days, conflicts and for not having classes for two weeks due to Spring Break and our Holy Week, which would have been close to the original Graduation date. We look forward to continuing teaching the students till mid June. More details regarding year end program for our Graduation will be announced closer to the date.

Reminder: We will not have class the week of April 25th due to the Orthodox Holy Week.

On April 1st, our students will be participating in the Pre-sanctified Liturgy — The Salutation of the Theotokos to honor the Virgin Mary in a procession and Hymns. Also, on April 27th, the Greek School students will attend Holy Unction, as a group. Hopefully, a majority of you will be able to attend.

Enclosed are a few pictures from various events: Agiasmo, Blessing of our Greek School; when our students sang a variety of traditional festive Christmas Carols. The majority of our students also participated in the Sunday School Christmas Pageant and performed their special roles; Angels, Shepherds and Wise Men; parents and students attended a special blessing by Father George and discussion on the meaning and history of Saint Basil, Vasilopita, and a lot more.

Lastly, a dear friend and Greek School parent, Ioanna Gisone, is an Independent Scentsy Consultant in her spare time. She is willing to hold a Fundraiser on behalf of our Greek School. She has offered to donate 100% of her commission towards the Church Building Fund. I thank her for her willingness, kindness and generosity. To preview the variety of products that Scentsy offers, please visit her personal website <https://happyscents.scentsy.us>

More details to follow regarding ordering through her Fundraiser.

As always, thank you for supporting our Greek School.

Vasilia Ravaris (vasilia@live.com)
Greek School Director



Greek School



Poem About Greece

This poem is dedicated to all the Greeks who left our beloved Greece and built their lives in America. Written in 1992 by Marina Blair

Αυτό το ποιήμα είναι αφιερωμένο σε όλους τους Έλληνες και τις Ελληνίδες που έφυγαν από την αγαπημένη μας Ελλάδα και έφτιαξαν τις ζωές τους στην Αμερική. Γραμμένο το 1992 από την Μαρίνα Blair

Περπάτησα στην άκρη των ονείρων μου
και κάπου εκεί σε είδα,
μέσα σε γκριζογάλανο αχνό
ατέλειωτης απόστασης,
να κείτεσαι με μάτια κλειστά
και σε πήρα αγκαλιά,
καλή μου Ελλάδα,
και σε νανούρισα για άλλη μία φορά
με τον δικό μου τρόπο.
Το κυματάκι με χτυπάει στον αστράγαλο
καθώς κοιτώ την απεραντοσύνη.
Αλλά δεν είναι το δικό σου κυματάκι
ούτε η δική σου η αμμουδιά
Σε λίγο ο ουρανός θα φέρει τον ίδιο ήλιο
που ανέτειλε στους κατάμαυρους βοστρύχους σου
ώρες νωρίτερα
Και εγώ πάντα θα σε κρατώ αγκαλιά
και πάνω στην καρδιά μου θα σε βάζω
καλή μου Ελλάδα να κοιμάσαι.



Fr. George speaking to the Greek School students

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GOYA

Kali Sarakosti!

Our amazingly talented GOYAns put a successful 5th Annual Talent Show to honor Yiayias and Pappous of our church. We are grateful for all GOYA Parents who happily prepared delicious dishes and desserts that day. Fr. George offered a prayer to open the program and blessed our luncheon.

Yanni Kouiroukidis and Angelo Dacey were the MC of the Ceremony and ran the Talent Show very smoothly. They also directed a spiritual game where icon ornaments were given to Yiayias and Pappous who had the correct answer. Later on, Annamaria, Christina and Luke Kendrat set a spiritual tone for the program by singing the Panagia Hymn. Vangeli Hadjimichael amazed us with some of his Tae Kwon Do moves, Zoe Skuce impressed us with her Irish Step Dance and Anastacia Puertas astonished the audience with her Movie Make Up demo. Luke Poulias pleased us with his guitar playing and a brief talk on how he benefited from Boy Scouts. Raymond Abousamra shared with us his ambitious dream about Karate and how it gave him inner strength. Alexandros Kouiroukidis inspired us with a report on Saint Theodore and brought tears to our eyes as he dedicated it to our beloved and Father Ted, Deacon Harry's father. The program ended with a beautiful piece sang by a young guest, Sophia Abousamra, who touched our heart with her angelic voice as she sang "Clouds" by Zack Sobiech.

Bravo to all the participants and the organizers! Thank you to all the Yiayias and Pappous who attended the event even though they lived far or had a busy schedule. A special thank you goes to Kyrio Yanni, one of our church Chanters, who was not able to attend, but wrote an inspiring letter to the GOYAns. This letter was read in Greek and translated to English by Athanasia Dacey. Kyrio Yanni's words of wisdom and valuable spiritual advice will always remain ringing in our youth's ears. Last but not least, GOYA is forever grateful to the continued support from Fr. George, Presvytera and Marina Blair who happily attended the entire program.

The GOYAns' endeavor to contribute to our church's Building Fund, IOCC, GOYA Basketball, and Agia Skepi Monastery continues as they successfully raised \$500.00 from the Theme Basket Fundraiser and \$350.00 from the Bake Sale Fundraiser. We thank you, our amazing parishioners and GOYA Parents for your continued support. We really appreciate your continuing enthusiasm for our work and we pray that our Lord Jesus Christ bless and protect our church and its community always!

The GOYAns enjoyed the Lenten Retreat with Fr. George on March 26th. Fr. George answered questions previously submitted by the GOYAns and all enjoyed a Lenten luncheon afterward prepared by Sofia Kouiroukidis and Lillian Funk.

God willing, the GOYAns will visit Agia Skepi Monastery the weekend of April 9th and 10th. We experienced an amazing feeling during our visit last year and we are looking forward to a peaceful retreat this year too.

We pray that our Lord Jesus Christ will guide and help us accomplish our plans to benefit our church and its community.

Sincerely,

Sofia Kouiroukidis (kkouirouk@gmail.com) & **Lillian Funk**

GOYA Advisors

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



From the GOYA Bake Sale



GOPLC lucky families who won the baskets from the GOYA fundraiser

GOYA continued...



GOYANs at the talent show



Fun fellowship at Chili for Charity!

Community Outreach—Chili for Charity

First, an enormous THANK YOU to all of our parish – those who offered their time to feed some of Loudoun's neediest residents, and to those who gave generously towards our efforts. The Lucketts Community Center, where we held our event, is located on route 15 (entrance and address is Lucketts Road) almost directly across from 2 trailer park communities. There is a temporary housing motel a little further south on 15 as well. The population is largely Hispanic and there are many, many children. Each of the 3 mentioned locations have 10-25 children that get on the bus at those stops every morning. Our family moved to a neighborhood in Lucketts in August and our daughter attends Lucketts Elementary. Volunteering there twice a week, I see first-hand the struggles of some of those children. They are decent, loving people. It is an incredible blessing to be able to give in the name of Christ to these families.

The kitchen at the Community Center had never hosted an event like this before. They rent out the kitchen to private parties but the advisory board met and decided to give it to our church rent-free Saturday March 12th because of our mission. The director, Hilary Cooley, is an amazing lady who helped put all the pieces of this event together. She holds a VA Health Department issued food preparation license and volunteered her time to be present during our entire event, so we were covered legally through her. She literally gave up her entire Saturday so we could do God's work.

In giving a background summary to all of you, I would be remiss if I didn't extend a special thank you to Tim & Diane Boone. They graciously offered to pay for our entire Chili for Charity event. This is amazing! While they did not do it for any recognition, only because of their generosity, the other funds that were donated to the church will be able to go towards the "Back Pack Program" at Lucketts Elementary - an initiative to stock needy children's back packs with non-perishable foods so that they can eat substantially over the weekend. We will be issuing a check to the school in the very near future. God bless them!

Although fliers were disseminated 2 weeks prior to the event in English and Spanish throughout the community, we found very few local residents actually seeking chili. A very special parishioner, Juan Gisone, who is a native Spanish speaker, walked to both trailer parks and spread the word about our event in Spanish. His natural disarming personality helped coax many reluctant folks across the street, where warm chili awaited them.

While we did not serve the 150 folks that we hoped to reach in Lucketts, all the leftover chili was delivered to a Leesburg homeless shelter, run by the charitable nonprofit "Volunteers of America". None was wasted, and the homeless residents were very happy to receive our chili. Marina Blair, our Parish Council President was even able to make connections at the shelter and has been promised opportunities for our parish to provide and serve warm meals in the future to the needy there. What an incredible blessing!

In Him,

Ava Walter





HOPE and JOY

Spring Happenings!

With Spring and Lent upon us, our children continue to inspire us! In February, the children of Hope & Joy were able to raise \$171.00 towards our building fund through our Valentine's card sales. Our collaborative donation drive with Philoptochos for the Loudoun County Animal Shelter was very successful and the kitties and pups thank all of you for your generous food & gifts!

We have many blessed activities lined up this season, such as Prosfora making on March 19, under the guidance and supervision of our beloved Presbytera Ioanna and our talented choir director Elpida Skuce. Our sweet children participated in the Salutations ceremony celebrated on March 25th; Hope & Joy provided the flowers. On April 1, we will meet at the church at 6:00 pm for a very special Resurrection Eggs activity hosted by Denise Lansdell. That evening we will also assemble Easter baskets for the youth at the Loudoun County Youth Shelter, (located at 16450 Meadowview Ct, Leesburg, VA 20175) which we plan on visiting the very next day, Saturday April 2 at 2:00 pm. Our supportive GOYA brothers and sisters will accompany us to the youth shelter to interact with residents and make everyone's favorite Lenten cookies – melomakarona. We will be assembling palms for Palm Sunday during Lazarus Saturday, April 23 after the Divine Liturgy is celebrated that morning.

A special thank you to Ashley Joiner, one of Hope and Joy's incredibly helpful parents, who has graciously redecorated our bulletin board – visit it in the front lobby and fill in your favorite thing about Spring on a flower petal. Ashley has also agreed to format and print our brochure for the Resurrection Eggs activity for April 1.

We are so blessed to be part of such a connected, faithful community. It takes a strong, God loving village to raise our children.

With Love in Christ,

Aspasia Dintini & Ava Walter
HOPE and JOY Co-Directors



Vacation Church Camp 2016

We are pleased to announce that the GOPLC will once again be offering our Vacation Church Camp for 2016! The camp will be from June 20 through June 24. Please see the details below.

When - Monday, June 20 - Friday, June 24, 10:00 am to 1:00 pm

Theme - "Behold the Light" concentrating on the Feasts of the Life and Ministry of Christ.

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 8th, so mark your calendars and keep an eye out for the VCC email.

We are excited for another year of VCC!

**Join us for Palm Cross making
Saturday of Lazarus after Liturgy!**



Hope&Joy activity



Hope&Joy activity



Loudoun Greek Dance Group

The dancers continue to practice every Sunday after Liturgy, and are learning many new dances by our wonderful instructors Maria Plevrakis and Jimmy Hontos! We are fortunate to have approximately 30 children participating, that we have established a younger group for children ages 5 to 9, and an older group for those aged 10 and up.

The dancers are gearing up for their last performance of the year, at the Greek Independence Day celebration on March 27, 2016. We are very excited to see them perform for our Parish!

We are also looking to see if there are any adults who are interested in learning how to Greek dance. Please contact me if you are interested.

Smaro Karakatsanis Caras (smaro.k@hotmail.com)

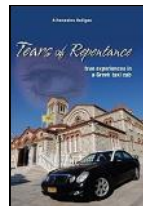
Greek Dance Group Coordinator

Orthodox Book Club

Kali Sarakosti!

The Orthodox Bookclub completed "Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives", The life and Teachings of Elder Thaddeus of Vitovnica. We celebrated with a dinner at Sofia's house while discussing the last two chapters. The Chapters covered important topics such as prayer, forgiveness from the heart, obedience, meekness, humbleness, repentance and confession.

Fr. George gave us the blessing to start our new book Tears of Repentance by Athanasios Katigas. This is your chance to go for a ride in Thanasi's cab through Thessaloniki's city streets and hear the remarkable accounts of how time after time God blessed a simple taxi ride to lead down an unexpected road where many were transformed by Tears of Repentance.



Here is an excellent opportunity to join our Orthodox Book Club as we are about to start a new book. Our First meeting for this book will be April 1st at 5pm at church. However, if you can't make the first meeting, do not worry as you will still benefit even from one meeting! Please contact Sofia Kouiroukidis at kkouirouk@gmail.com if you are interested to join.

Sincerely,

Sofia Kouiroukidis (kkouirouk@gmail.com)

Book Club Coordinator

Barakat

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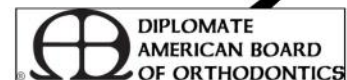
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Philoptochos

Winter has been busy for Philoptochos. We joined up with Hope & Joy and sponsored donations for the Loudoun County Animal Shelter. Thank you to everyone who made a contribution and a special thank you to Christy and Matthew Lisciandro for bringing all the donations to the shelter.

We had an Easter Spanakopita and Tiropita fundraiser. Several ladies and daughters got together on a Saturday afternoon to put together a number of pitas. Thanks to all who came out to help us and to everyone who purchased pitas. Enjoy!

In March we collected food donations to benefit the Inova Mobile Hope Unit. They attempt to improve the lives of children 24 years of age and younger who are at-risk, precariously housed or homeless in Loudoun County.

Soon enough you may begin to see signs posted around Loudoun County for Love Your Neighbor Feed Your Neighbor. It is a partnership effort by multiple, local, faith-based ministries to raise awareness and collect much needed food for those who are food insecure in our county. On April 3rd, the Philoptochos will be handing out food bags. We are asking everyone to please fill the bags with boxes of cereal and return them to church on Sunday, April 10th. Thank you for your generosity!

Finally, we are selling tsourekia to enjoy for Easter. The cost of each tsoureki is \$12.00 and will benefit the Agia Skepi Monastery and your Philoptochos. Please place your order by April 3rd and they will be available for pick-up on Sunday, April 24th. Order forms are conveniently available in the Narthex and online.

Please send in your 2016 stewardship if you haven't already done so. We thank you for your support!

Once again, Philoptochos thanks everyone for supporting all our efforts. We wish you all a blessed Easter.

Alexis Cleveland

President Ladies Philoptochos

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



The Philoptochos ladies preparing the pitas

PAREA

Beloved PAREA Family,

Blessings in the name of our Lord!

I would like to thank all the members of our PAREA family for supporting the February Coffee Hour with wonderful treats! Also, a heartfelt thank you to all our parishioners who supported the "Because EYE care for YOU" drive! We collected a fantastic 74 pairs of eyeglasses this year!

Our March PAREA luncheon was such a warm and fun gathering! We had the pleasure of meeting new friends who came all the way from Maryland to break bread with us! Because of the Loudoun school closing that day, we also had a good number of our youth joining us! Our April PAREA fasting potluck luncheon will take place at the Blair Residence. Please let Marina know if you will be coming!

As we are walking in the path of Great Lent and with a heart full of anticipation for our Savior's glorious Resurrection, we should unceasingly warm our hearts with almsgiving. We should never miss the opportunity to help, to feed, to dress and to listen to anyone who needs our support. We should always extend our hands and warmly embrace those in need.

On behalf of our PAREA family, our Vice Chair, Kristina Ayoub, and our Honorary Chair, Presvytera Joanna, I would like to wish all, a Joyous and Happy Easter.

Have a blessed and healthy New Year!

In His Everlasting Mercy,

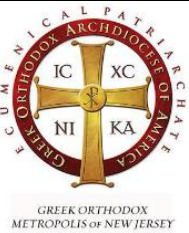
Marina Blair

PAREA Chair

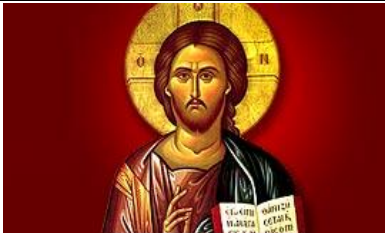
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From our March PAREA Luncheon at Olive Garden



The Greek Orthodox Parish of Loudoun County
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