GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY

God Rest ye merry gentlemen
let nothing you dismay,
for Jesus Christ our Savior
was born on Christmas Day,
to save us all from Satan’s power
‘e re we have gone astray,
O tiding of comfort and joy,
comfort and joy,
O tiding of comfort and joy.

This beautiful Christmas carol, like so many of the traditional Christmas carols, summarizes the essence of Christmas. Sometimes, I like to reflect on these meaningful old carols. Here’s the carol again in contemporary language:

May God give rest to all people
and let nothing worry us or lead us to dismay
for Jesus Christ our Savior was born on Christmas day
to save us all from the darkness and evil of the world before it leads us astray
Good News of comfort and joy, comfort and joy, O Tidings and Good News of comfort and joy!

That’s what Christmas is all about – Good News of comfort and joy! No matter what’s happening in the world, and no matter how much it seems like darkness and evil may be all around us, WE’RE REMINDED NOT TO BE AFRAID! There may be terrorism, random shootings, and what feels like uncontrollable events all around us, but we don’t need to live in fear. Be careful of listening to the politicians and media who play off current events and stoke people’s fears. Instead, listen to the Good News of Christmas when the angel proclaimed to the shepherds, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY which will be FOR ALL PEOPLE. For there is born for you this day a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

The darkness of the world, and the threats of violence and danger have always been in the world. That is why the author of God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen wrote these words 250 years ago, and the angel proclaimed the good news 2000 years ago. Our fallen world doesn’t change too much – the sins and shortcomings, the darkness and evil, the violence and self-centeredness of the world is still present. But with Christmas, we remember that a light has shined in the midst of darkness!

The Jews understood this throughout their history of suffering and waiting centuries for the coming of their Messiah. They waited under oppression and injustice. They waited in poverty and hunger.
The mission of Sts. Constantine and Helen Church is to proclaim the Good News of Salvation through the Orthodox Christian Faith for the glory of our Triune God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

We are a community of believers who journey towards our Lord Jesus Christ and one another through our WORSHIP, FELLOWSHIP, SPIRITUAL GROWTH, WITNESS, and SERVICE. We invite all people to join us on this journey in the Kingdom of Heaven.

We are under the jurisdiction of
His Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew
His Eminence, Archbishop Demetrios of America
His Eminence, Metropolitan Methodios of Boston

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GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY FOR TODAY

They waited in confusion and fear. They waited centuries, yet they never lost hope! God promised a Messiah, Christ, the Anointed One to come and reign in a new kingdom. So they waited with hope and in faith under extremely difficult and dark circumstances.

The event of Christmas fulfilled their wait! As St. Paul explained, “When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son...we may receive adoption as His children!” The fullness of time had come, and God decisively acted!

In times of uncertainty and fear, like times of today, Christmas reminds us that God has not forgotten us, nor has He abandoned us. In fact, God has come to us, and even become one of us! The unfathomable mystery of our faith is how Almighty God, the Eternal One, the Creator of heaven and earth accepted to become human, a humble creature, and entered a fallen world where evil prevailed. He tasted the darkness of life - as a refugee, as a poor villager, as an oppressed people. He witnessed the suffering of the masses. He faced violence, oppression, and death itself. He understood the evil that our world can produce – He tasted it, He confronted it, and ultimately, He overcame it!

Christmas is about “GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY” – and the good news is that Jesus not only showed us the way to live under a different reign than the kingdom of this world, but He promised to WALK WITH US, to BE IN US, and to HELP US LIVE THAT DIVINE PATH OF LIGHT. While others choose to live in darkness, we live in the light of God. While other choose a path of violence, we act as agents of peace. While others are tempted by greed, we live in love and charity. While others choose to live under the delusion of power and authority, we live in simplicity and humility. While others choose to live with hatred and vengeance and violence, we live in mercy and forgiveness and grace. While others choose to live in the fear of death, we live life to its fullest, never fearing death, because we know that death is not the end!

The “GOOD NEWS OF GREAT JOY” that Christmas brings is nothing less than a new way of living, a new way of becoming truly human in the deepest sense of the word. The Christian path means becoming human as Jesus was human – lifting humanity to a new level, the original level it was meant to be lived. St. Athanasios summed this up by saying, “God became human that we may become divine.” God became one of us, so that we could become united to Him and live in Him!

When we look around at the darkness of our world – the violence, the extremism, the greed, the impurity, the superficial and empty claims to fame – we must realize that these images on the internet are only one side of the human story. We can choose to follow these paths of evil and end up in similar disappointment, despair and emptiness, or we can choose to follow a completely different road, with an entirely different ending. Christmas, and the coming of Christ reveals to us a radically new path in life that He invites us to follow – the way of divine love, the way of mercy and forgiveness, the way of humility and service, the way of meaning and purpose, the way of abundance that leads to eternal life.

Now, this way of Jesus is not an easy path! It is a way that begins in a humble cave in a simple manger in the poor village of Bethlehem, continues in a life of sacrifice and service to others, and ultimately ends on a Cross. Yet if we choose, in our own lives, to walk this narrow and difficult path of Christ, we are choosing to live with the Christmas spirit throughout the year. We will live a life of wonder and joy because we will miraculously be transformed by the truth that “God is with us.” As Archbishop Anastasios writes, “Our lives will be transfigured in a joyous feast breathing and moving in the atmosphere that “God is with us.”

Don’t ever be anxious or afraid. The feast of Christmas proclaims to us loudly that God has acted decisively in the world, and if we choose – it’s up to us – if WE choose to invite Christ to be born anew in our hearts, and live under HIS REIGN and in His kingdom, than we can be assured that “God is with us” and He will help us remain victorious over any and every dark evil that the world offers. There is never anything to be afraid of, for God is with us.

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

+Luke
I hope you all had a wonderful Thanksgiving!

I have many things to be thankful for, but I am very blessed to have been able to visit the Holy Land last month. Initially, I was nervous about all the turmoil in the world, but I reminded myself of thoughts I had when going to Project Mexico in 2009. “If I'm going, God will keep me safe.” While planning for this trip my husband did all the research, booked the tour, made the reservations, and was so excited. I hadn't really thought too much of what I was going to see and honestly, I didn't think the impact would be what it was.

One of our stops on the first day was at the Sea of Galilee, at the same spot where Jesus gave his Sermon on the Mount (with the Beatitudes - Matthew 5:3-12). Our tour guide asked me to read these from the Bible. As I read "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" and so on, I realized that I was standing where Jesus stood. I was reading what HE said in the same place!!! I was overwhelmed with emotion to the point where I could feel the lump in my throat and my eyes beginning to burn with tears.

The rest of that day was almost a blur, I looked at sites, heard the tour guide speak, but felt I was in a dream. I stood in the water of the River Jordan saying to myself "This is where Jesus was baptized!"

The next two days were more intense than the first. In Jerusalem we visited the Church of the Holy Sepulchur. This is the holiest sight for all Christians around the world! I stood before the area where the Crucifixion took place, where they prepared Jesus' body for burial, and where Christ was actually buried, and then resurrected from the dead!

Again, my heart and soul were filled with emotion. And it was not just me, but everyone there. I looked around at the variety of people from all over the world and I felt that we all were having the same feelings. Many of us knelt in prayer putting our hands on the stone in the area where Jesus laid. Tears filled many eyes.

As we continued through Jerusalem we went to the Western Wall (also known as the Wailing Wall). This wall is the holiest place for Jews where Jews and Christians are permitted to pray. People gathered close to this wall, so close that they were hugging the wall, saying prayers, and even writing prayers on paper and slipping the papers in between the cracks in the rocks.

Beyond the wall is the Temple Mount, which is the holiest site for Jews and Muslims. Muslims now control the Temple and can enter the Temple to pray at any time. There are very limited times during the week when Christians and Jews may visit the area outside of the Temple and in doing so, it can only be as a "tourist". You are forbidden from praying or showing any signs of religious display. Can you imagine coming to our Church standing in the parking lot, and NOT being able to pray or enter the...
Church. Or even show signs of praying? No moving your lips, no whispering prayers, or NOT even being able to make the sign of the cross! While we were there, Israeli police guarded (with machine guns!) a group of Orthodox Jews, to protect them from the Muslim guards, and remind them of the restrictions while at the Temple Mount.

Directly under the Temple Mount and inside the walls of the Western Wall, there are tunnels that go throughout the entire area. At one spot directly under the Temple Mount, I stopped to read the following:

**YOU ARE STANDING AT THE POINT CLOSEST TO THE SITE OF THE HOLY OF HOLIES ON THE TEMPLE MOUNT. ACCORDING TO TRADITION THIS IS THE PLACE FROM WHICH THE WORLD WAS CREATED.**

**THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE THE BINDING OF ISAAC TOOK PLACE AND WHERE ABRAHAM WAS COMMANDED “LAY NOT THY HAND UPON THE LAD.”**

**THIS IS THE PLACE WHERE THE TABLETS OF THE COVENANT WRITTEN BY GOD ON MOUNT SINAI WERE KEPT; THE PLACE WHERE PRAYERS ARE GATHERED AND FROM WHERE THEY RISE TO HEAVEN.**

**THE HIGH PRIEST WOULD ENTER THE HOLY OF HOLIES ONLY ONCE A YEAR, ON YOM KIPPUR, TO PLEA FOR THE ENTIRE JEWISH NATION.**

**JEWS FROM ALL CORNERS OF THE GLOBE CAME TO THIS PLACE DURING THE LONG 2000 YEARS OF EXILE TO SHARE THEIR SORROWS WITH THE DIVINE PRESENCE. TO PRAY FOR ITS RETURN TO ZION, AND FOR JERUSALEM TO RENEW ITS DAYS AS OF OLD.**

**AS YOU STAND HERE AT THIS SACRED SITE, YOUR PRAYERS JOIN AN ETERNAL CHAIN OF FAITH AND PRAYER.**

I wish you a joyous Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year!

My condolences to Joey Gliniecki and his family, on the passing of Demetra O’Brien. “May Her Memory Be Eternal.”

To all those celebrating a special event, may God grant you many years.

As always, my prayers for all of you!!

Lisa
Christmas is before us. How will we choose to celebrate it? And what, by the way, are we actually celebrating?

For Christians, Christmas is the Great Feast of the Nativity according to the flesh of Our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ. With inspiring eloquence, St. John the Theologian writes: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (Jn 1:1).

The Word Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God and the door to the mystery of His Incarnation is opened by the Church’s beautiful hymnology. St. Joseph the Hymnographer chants: “The Son of the Father...has appeared to us...to give light to those in darkness and to gather the dispersed. Therefore, the far-famed Theotokos do we magnify.”

From St. John of Damascus: “A most glorious mystery is accomplished today: nature is renewed, and God becomes Man. What He was, He has remained; and what He was not, He has taken on Himself without suffering commingling or division.”

Using Orthodox theology as a springboard, we can harness the celebration of Christmas to live a more fulfilling life — to live in the spirit (cf. Gal 5:25).

Let us begin with a central tenet which has been experienced by, and passed down from, the Church Fathers: that God became man in order that man may become god — through grace and adoption (cf. Eph 1:5). The Incarnation of Christ invites us to be holy; it is not only to be experienced by a small number of people, beyond the grasp of regular folk — it is for everyone, in every part of the planet.

Orthodoxy is not an ideology, a philosophy or a legalistic, rigid set of rules. Moreover, God is not an abstract idea, a faceless Person with Who we have no possibility of communication.

The Orthodox Faith preaches a personal God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit — Three Persons, One Kingship. God reveals Himself to us through the God-
Man (Theanthropos, in Greek) Jesus Christ.

In a 1990 sermon delivered by the Abbot of the Holy Monastery of St. Gregorios of Mount Athos, the late blessed Archimandrite George echoes the Church Fathers: “The unapproachable God becomes approachable. The unknown God becomes known. The strange God becomes familiar and a friend.”

**On Christmas, we celebrate the destruction of the barrier that separated man from God.** And how do we know that this barrier has indeed been destroyed? Well, for one, through the Saints of the Church. The Saints show us that man can personally see and communicate with God.

“Saints,” according to the renowned 20th century theologian Fr. John Romanides, “is the name given to those who, through purification and illumination, reach glorification [theosis] and share in the glorifying energies of God.”

Thus, Orthodoxy is a positive science, the experience of revelation and not speculation. It is the experience of communicating with God through prayer, especially noetic prayer. It is the experiencing of communicating with God by doing His will, by fasting, giving alms, being humble and loving one another. It is the experiencing of communicating with God by living a Christ-centered life in the Church and by participating in the Holy Sacraments, especially confession/repentance and communion.

It is the experience of having true freedom, not the pseudo-freedom and trappings conferred by the world. **Contrary to many critics, authentic Christianity does not restrict man but the opposite, it gives man his freedom to live. It gives light to those in darkness.**

This is a life-long challenge, a ladder to climb one step at a time. And how do we know if we are making progress, if we are in fact living in the spirit? Well, for one, if we cultivate the fruits of the Holy Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (cf. Gal 5:22-23).

This is all made possible because of Christmas. Let us choose to celebrate it correctly
WHY DID GOD BECOME MAN?
Fr. Anthony Coniaris

Why did God choose to come to us in person? What were the reasons that compelled Him to visit us? They must have been awfully important reasons to make God empty Himself and take the form of a servant. Couldn’t He have sent someone else? Couldn’t He have ordered an angel or an archangel to come? Why did the Lord of the Universe Himself have to come?

We see an indication of why God would ultimately come to earth in the Old Testament, when we hear God say, “I have seen the affliction of my people and heard their cry... for I know their sorrows and sufferings and trials. And I have come down to deliver them” (Ex 3:7-8)

God came because He cared. He came in order to deliver us from the slavery of sin and death. He came because He loved us! We can summarize this best by quoting the Evangelist John “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.”

We do not believe in an absent God, an invisible, intangible, eternally elusive God. We believe in a God who, when humanity fell into the ocean of sin and was drowning, did not just stay in heaven and shout directions on lifesaving, but who jumped into the ocean to save us. We believe in a God who intervenes in our lives.

We believe in a God who came to seek and save the lost; who came not to be served but to serve; who came to give us the abundant life; who came as light that whoever believes in Him may not remain in darkness, who came not to judge the world but to save it!

Jesus Christ came at Christmas. He comes again this Christmas. He comes each day, waiting to enter into our lives!

WHY DID HE COME?
Fr. Anthony Coniaris and Pres. Emily Harikas

“But you Bethlehem, Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me, the One to be Ruler in Israel whose goings forth are from old, from everlasting.”
Micah 5:2

Christmas means that “the Word (the Eternal God) was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). In an attempt to capture the monumental humiliation God endured when He took on human flesh, C. S. Lewis likens it to our becoming a worm. Yet God did that for us in order to communicate His love to us.

Christmas means that Emmanuel has come; God is not an impersonal machine or a super power who runs the universe by remote control. He is a Person, “Emmanuel - God with us.” “And you shall call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins.” God is a Person who wants to establish a personal relationship with you. He is a Person to whom you can pray; a Person who cares for you; a Person who has reserved a place for you in heaven.

Christmas means that God has visited His people. But the word visit is inadequate if it means that He came to spend a few years with us and then leave us again. He came not just to visit but to stay: “Lor, I am with you always even unto the end of the world.” With us in our joys, with us in our sorrows, with us in our living, with us in our dying. He came at Bethlehem. He comes now. And He will come again at the end time to judge the living and the dead.
Frederic Beuchner, the well-known Protestant writer, once wrote a statement that encapsulates the Orthodox Christian belief about the Incarnation of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity at Christmas. He wrote, “He who dwells in the unapproachable light chose to come to us in diapers.” That is the unfathomable mystery of God’s love. Alleluia.

He did it to show how much He loves you. "No one has ever seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He (Jesus) has made Him known" (John 1:18). Elsewhere, the Apostle John writes, "These things were written that you may know that Jesus is the Son of God and that, believing, you may have life in His name."

Not just any kind of life but the resurrected life that endures to all eternity.

If this is God’s love for us...how will we respond?

Blessed Nativity!
FINDING ROOM FOR JESUS

Wally was nine years old and in the second grade. He should have been in fourth grade, but everyone knew that Wally had difficulty in keeping up. He was big and clumsy, slow in movement and mind.

Wally fancied the idea of being a shepherd in the Christmas pageant that year, but the play’s director, Miss Lumbard, knew that there were too many lines for Wally to memorize. So she assigned him the role of the Innkeeper who only had a few lines. For weeks he practiced his part and his lines. Miss Lumbard’s biggest concern for the play that year was that Wally didn’t mess his part up and therefore embarrass himself.

Church was packed the day of the pageant. No one was more caught up in the magic of the event than little Wally. Then the time came when Joseph appeared, slowly, tenderly guiding Mary to the door of the inn. Joseph knocked hard on the wooden door set into the painted backdrop. Wally the Innkeeper was there, waiting.

“What do you want?” Wally said, swinging the door open with a gruff gesture.

“We seek lodging.”

“Seek it elsewhere.” Wally looked straight ahead but spoke vigorously. “The inn is filled.”

“Sir, we have asked everywhere in vain. We have traveled far and are very weary.”

“There is no room in the inn for you.” Wally looked properly stern.

“Please, good innkeeper, this is my wife, Mary. She is pregnant and needs a place to rest. Surely you must have some small corner for her. She is so tired.”

Now, for the first time, the Innkeeper relaxed his stiff stance and looked down at Mary. With that, there was a long pause, long enough to make the audience a bit tense with embarrassment.

“No! Begone!” the prompter whispered from behind the curtain.

“No!” Wally repeated automatically. “Begone!” Joseph sadly placed his arm around Mary and Mary laid her head upon her husband’s shoulder and the two of them started to move away. The Innkeeper did not return inside his inn, however. Wally stood there in the doorway, watching the desperate couple. His mouth was open, his brow creased with concern, his eyes filling unmistakably with tears. It was right then that Wally realized exactly what had happened that night. And suddenly this Christmas pageant became different from all the others.

“Wait! Joseph, don’t go!” Wally cried out. “Bring Mary back.” And Wally’s face grew into a bright smile. “You can have my room.”

YOU CAN HAVE MY ROOM!

What an unexpected twist to a very familiar story. And yet, Wally’s actions leave us much to think about. What would WE have done 2000 years ago in Bethlehem? We can even ask, what do we do today when we are placed in a similar situation?

In the innkeepers’ minds in Bethlehem, they were fully justified. Business was bustling. Countless people were in town. This was their work, and they were busy. They didn’t have time to give their attention to some poor couple. They had to take care of all the people in their inn!

In today’s world, not too many people would fault them. They didn’t know that Mary would give birth to the Savior of the world. For all they knew, it was just another peasant woman giving
Birth to another child in this world. They were preoccupied with their own cares and lives!

Does that sound a little familiar?

How many of us don’t have time for Christ to enter into our lives at work? How many of us don’t have time for Christ to enter into our lives during our recreation? And what about with our families or in our marriages? How many of us don’t have time for Christ to interfere with our busy and important schedules. We have things to do, places to go, friends to see, work to perform, time to enjoy – all on our own, and without any interference from Christ.

As busy as the innkeepers in Bethlehem were, our contemporary society is infinitely busier – running 24/7. We aren’t necessarily busier with more important things, but nonetheless, we fill our times with busyness. We Americans even take pride in how busy we can be. The busier we are, the more important we feel.

And yet, in the midst of our busy lives, will we have the eyes to see Christ, when he comes unexpectedly. I’m not only talking about making time for Jesus as a part of our schedule. For sure, we need to begin there. And some of us do that by setting aside an hour and a half Sunday morning to meet Christ. Hopefully some of us also find time to encounter Jesus each day through our prayers and quiet time.

But then, what about during the unexpected times when Jesus surprises us? The Christmas story, from the perspective of the innkeepers, is more about having the eyes to see the Christ even when we are busy, extremely busy, and He comes at an inconvenient time. Will we see Jesus in each and every person whom we meet day by day. Our Lord said, “Whatever you have done to the least of these my brothers and sisters, you have done to me.” Every person is created in the divine image of God. Can we see that? Will we notice that?

When a simple, poor, peasant couple come to our busy inn on our busiest night of the year, will we simply dismiss them and justify ourselves by saying, ‘we have no room?’ Or will we look into the eyes of the person, and realize that there may be something here more important that all our busyness. Will we have the eyes to see Christ, looking for a place to be born, looking for a place to lay His head?

Wally may have mixed up his lines in the Christmas pageant, but he surely revealed the true spirit of Christmas to all those who were watching.

“Wait! Joseph, don’t go!” Wally cried out. “Bring Mary back.” Wally’s face grew into a bright smile as he proudly proclaimed, “You can have my room.”

This Christmas, may each of us reflect upon how we can offer our own room, the many rooms of our own lives, to be available for our Lord Jesus Christ to come and be born anew, again and again, whenever he chooses!

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!
THANK YOU to Angelo & Eleftheria Moutoudis and Sandi Kunkel and Park ‘n Shop for donating 40 Turkeys and for all the others who gave 25 Thanksgiving Baskets!

PAINT NIGHT AT THE CHURCH
ANNUAL CHRISTMAS RETREAT

Two Talks:
Presenting Ourselves to Christ &
How the Church Gets Ready for Christmas

9:00am-12:00pm
Saturday, December 3

Our Guest Speaker
FR. THEODORE PETRIDES

Born in Worcester, MA, Fr. Ted grew up in the suburbs of Philadelphia, PA. He attended Washington & Lee University in Lexington, VA majoring in Drama. Reading the Holy Scriptures the way he had been trained to read a play script, he found that God was the greatest dramatist of all and had an awakening to the Lord and to the Orthodox Christian Faith of his childhood.

A parish priest for 23 years, he has served Holy Cross Church in Stroudsburg, PA, been past president of the HC/HC Alumni Association board and the former eastern region coordinator for the Clergy Syndesmos of the Metropolis of Pittsburgh. He occasionally writes plays, for ministry purposes, and regularly travels in America as well as Greece (especially the Holy Mountain), Cyprus, and the Holy Land as a pilgrim, guide, and speaker. He and Pres. Cristen have six children ages 30 to 17.

Congratulations to Sam Pappas for his induction into Barlett High School’s Hall of Fame. Sam was a star soccer player and graduated in the Class of 1972.
THE GIVING TREE

We are collecting gifts for 35 children for families in need. Please see Mary Seferi to receive slips on the “Giving Tree.” Return the suggested gifts (less than $25) to the Church by December 13th. We also welcome anyone else who may want to donate $25 or $30 gift cards or super market cards. We have numerous families that ask for help during this season!

Heaven and earth are united today, for Christ is born! Today God has come upon earth and we have gone up to heaven. Today all can see the One is who by nature invisible. Let us give glory and praise Him.

Hymn from Christmas Vespers

“I bring you great tidings of good news… A Savior has been born!”

CHRISTMAS YOUTH EVENTS

Sunday, Dec 11 - St. Nicholas Celebration in Sunday School and After Liturgy. Christmas Caroling to Nursing Homes and Some Homebound Parishioners

Sunday, Dec, 18 - Christmas Pageant

Dec 24 - Christmas Eve Service

Dec 27 - Ice Skating
SIGN UP FOR PROJECT MEXICO 2017

625 spots for working at Project Mexico next summer were filled within 30 minutes after registration opened on Oct 17th. Our Church reserved 20 SPOTS for July 21-27, 2017

For anyone with questions, or if you are interested in participating in building a home for Project Mexico next summer, contact Fr. Luke

To reserve a spot for this incredible experience, you will need to give a $100 deposit by December 18th.

Christmas Poinsettia

THANK YOU for the 16 Christmas Poinsettias that were donated in loving memory of DEMETRA O’BRIEN from Joey Gliniecki.

We are still also looking for donors for our outdoor Christmas Wreaths at $75 each

2016 Annual Church Family Christmas Card

Our Philoptochos Society will offer an opportunity for all our Church Family members to be a part of our annual CHURCH FAMILY CHRISTMAS CARD. The Christmas Card goes to the homes of all our parishioners wishing them blessings during the upcoming holiday season.

A minimum donation of $15 per family is greatly appreciated. All donations will support the various philanthropic ministries of the Philoptochos.

If you would like to be included, please give your donation and the names to Donna Cooney or Debby Raymond by Dec. 1st, or mail them to the Church Office, noting Church Family Christmas Card.

www.AncientFaith.com
The Light - December 2016

THANK YOU TO THE 2016 STEWARDS

To all the faithful Church Family members who have given a financial donation towards their 2016 Stewardship Offering as of Nov 20, 2016

As of November 20, 114 out of 170 Families have given towards their Stewardship Offering To Support our Beloved Church and Its Ministries.

Dhimitra/Angelo Adamopoulos
Ethel Angelo
Michael Angelo
Pauline Angelo
Rose Angelo
Gus/Ethel Anifantis
Sophie Apostol
Ted/Gail Aflas
Ann/Al Axtman
Tom/Mary Baxter
Eric/Rina Sgouritsas
Evelyn Belanger
Frederica Beno
Matt/Christa Benoit
Rich/Sophia Bethune
Athena Bilis
Arthur/Kathy Bilis
Frank/Connie Biondo
George/Debbie Carabina
Rita Carabina
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Athena Cooney
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Maria Econome
Mary Fatsi
Sophia/Stephen Foisy
Thomai/Vasili Gatsogiannis
Chris/Joan Geotis
Paul/Mona Geotis

Zachary/Barbara Gianaris
Zach Gianaris
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Lisa/Dan Healy
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Angeliki Karapanos
Ernest/Zorra Karapanos
George/Helen Kerbici
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Olympia Margaritidis
Alex/Chris Massie
Elizabeth/Ryan McCarthy
Lorna McWilliam
Helen Metropoulos
Celia Milios
Demetrios/Hariklia Milios
Vasili/Eudokia Milios
Del/Elia Monroe
Irene Mountzouris
Pauline/Carl Mueller
Neal/Charlotte Neslusn
George Nonis
Greg/Lindsey Panagiotou
Kosta Panagiotou
Ted/Gloria Panagiotou
Barbara Pappas

Emanuel Pappas
Helen Pappas
Olga Pappas
Sam/Evelyn Pappas
Glykeria Partsalis
Louise/Richard Pavlech
Jared/Stephanie Quill
Deb Raymond
Dan/Sue Rivelli
Jaime/Garry Ross
Nick/Mary Seferi
John/Eleni Sgouritsas
Dimitri/Effie Sidopoulos
Dorothy Sosnowski
Tina/James Sullivan
Eleanor Teguis
Stelian/David Thompson
Ted/Betty Tonna
Nick/Lois/Totolos
Helen Tsigaridas
Fr Luke/Faith Veronis
Nicholas/Susan Veronis
Edna Vogel
Tasi Vriga
Evangeline Wilson
Vasiliki Zahariadis
Helen/Bill Zenon
Tatyana/Yuri Zhuk
On Monday, December 5th we will have our annual Christmas party at Point Breeze. The cost is $20.00. Please give your name and payment to Marie McNally by December 1st. For those who want to exchange gifts please bring in a present of about $10.00. Also we will collect a donation for those who would like to donate to a charity of our choice. We will play a couple of games of Bingo to finish the evening. Hope all of you will attend. Bring a friend or some woman of our church who hasn’t been a part of Philoptochos. It is always an enjoyable evening.

We are still accepting donations for our Fall Bakeless Bake Sale for those that did not bake for the craft fair. Any donations will be deeply appreciated.

Sandi Kunkel is passing out baskets for Christmas. Please see her if you would like to fill a basket for Christmas for the needy.

Donna Cooney and Debbie Raymond are accepting names for our annual Community Christmas Card. It is $15.00 to put name in the Card. Please see them after church. They will set up a table to receive your names.

In January we will be having the Vasilopeta Dinner Sunday, January 15th. Eleni will make the breads for Father Luke for the church.

We will not have a meeting in January. We typically skip the month due to the cold and weather conditions.

Have a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! Have a happy and healthy holiday season!

With love and much gratitude,
Evelyn Pappas
Philoptochos President

Bill/Despina Condos
Nick Constantine
Maria Econome
Barbara Gianari
Jennie Manthos
Hariklia Milios
Evangelia Panagiotou
Helen Pappas
Olga Pappas
Vassy Tanko
Helen Tsigaridis
Edna Vogel

VISIT OR SEND A NOTE TO THE ELDERLY OF OUR CHURCH FAMILY THIS HOLIDAY SEASON
Lorraine Vesho - Webster Manor
John Nicholopoulos - St Francis Center
Pauline Angelo
Rose Angelo
Tom & Mary Baxter
COFFEE FELLOWSHIP:

Dec 4 - Marie McNally, Christa Benoit, Sandi Kunkel, Mary Seferi
Dec 11 - Kathy Bilis, Sara Darligian- nis, Marie Monroe, Charlotte Neslsuan, Carolyn Niemeck, Stephanie Quill,
Dec 18 - Thomai Gatsogiannis, Trish Lareau, Betty Tonna, Deb Raymond, Evangeline Wilson
Dec 25 – Donna Cooney, Athena Cooney, Leah Didonato, Jaime Ross

USHERS & GREETERS SCHEDULE

Dec 4 – Nicoleta Cojocaru, Zach Gianaris, Garry Ross, Jared Quill, George Kerbici
Dec 11 - Arthur Bilis, Del Monroe, Chris Geotis, Thomai Gatsogianis, Trish Lareau
Dec 18 - Marie McNally, Eric Beland, Matt Benoit, Lisa Healy, Nick Seferi
Dec 24 Neal Neslsuan, Mary Papageorge, Jimmy Karapanos, Cindy Johnson

EARLY RISERS BIBLE STUDY

7:00 am - 8:00 am
Saturdays
Come and Join Us.

WEDNESDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

10:00-11:00am
Wednesdays
All Are Welcome!

YOUTH EPISTLE READERS

Dec 4 - Zach Beaudry
Dec 11- Lily Mueller
Dec 18 - Maia Beaudry
Dec 24 Theodora Veronis
Dec 25 - Panayiota Veronis
Jan 1 - Olivia Neslsuan
Jan 8 - Gabriella Ross

WEEKDAY SERVICES

DIVINE LITURGIES
Dec 5 - 6:30pm Liturgy for St. Nicholas
Dec 12 - 9:15 Liturgy for St. Spyridon
Dec 20 - 9:15 Liturgy for St. Ignatius
Dec 23 - 9:00am Christmas Royal Hours
Dec 24 - 5:00pm Christmas Liturgy
Dec 25 - 10:00am Christmas Liturgy
Dec 27 - 9:15 Liturgy for St. Stephen
JUST IMAGINE

Imagine .. What would life be without our church. Ask yourselves as I have asked myself. What would we do? Where would we go to worship if our church no longer existed? This would mean that we, as a family of believers in Jesus Christ, would have to find a new place to worship. We would be like scattered sheep all going our own way.

Imagine… Where would our church family be to share our joy when our children are born, when they are baptized, married, or when we have grandchildren? The joy, love and support of our church family during these special moments in our lives are felt in a way others don’t understand.

Imagine… What would happen to our children without our church? Where would they go to learn about the Gospel of Jesus Christ? What would happen to the friendships that they have cultivated throughout the years? The church is the only place they can gather together and escape from the secular world even if just for one day.

Imagine… Where would we turn in times of illness? Who would pray for us? Who would anoint us with Holy Oil? Who would give us Holy Communion? Who would be there for us when we lose a loved one? All of us know the depth of pain and sorrow that comes when we lose someone we dearly love.

Imagine… What would happen to our happy, healthy, vibrant church if we all decided to work a little less for the church or not at all and to give a little less or not at all. Our church would slowly wither away and die.

JUST IMAGINE.

With Love,
Leah DiDonato
Remembering Our Church Family

**Important Dates in DECEMBER:**

Try to make a visit, give a call, or express your congratulations to members of our Church family who celebrate special days this month.

**BIRTHDAYS:**

Dec 4  Nicole Peterson
Dec 7  Evis Jordanoglou
Dec 8  Maria Mironidis
Dec 12 Helen Tsigaridas
Dec 22 Vasil Condos
Dec 22 Elise Purcell
Dec 23 Kenneth Peterson
Dec 25 Chris Geotis
Dec 26 Paul Geotis
Dec 29 Anestis Jordanoglou
Dec 31 Eric Beland
Dec 31 Emmanuel Pappas

**WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES:**

Dec 11 Arthur & Sara Darligiannis
Dec 26 Vasil & Despina Condos
Dec 31 Chuck & Misty Pappas

**NAMEDAYS:**

Dec 4  **St. Barbara**
Barbara Constantine
Barbara Desrosiers
Barbara Gianaris
Barbara Pappas

Dec 6  **St Nicholas**
Nick Adamopoulos
Nike Avlas
Nike Beaudry
Nicoleta Cojocaru
Nicholas Constantine
Nick Kiritsis

Dec 12  St. Spyridon
Spiro Pappas

Dec 16  St Eleftherios
Eleftheria Moutoudis

Dec 17  St Daniel the Prophet
Dan Rivelli

Dec 20  St Anastasia
Madison Anastasia McWilliams

Dec 25  Christmas
Christa Benoit
Chris Constantine
Chris Geotis
Chris Grzyb
Chris Milios
Emmanuel Pappas

Dec 26  St Joseph the Betrothed
Joseph Gliniecki

Dec 26  St David the King
David Bilis

Dec. 27  St. Stephen
Stephen Foisy
Stephanie Quill

“Crown Them With Honor and Glory”

Congratulations to Travis & Caroline Marino for the Blessing of Their Marriage.
A PRAYER OF PRAISE

Today in Bethlehem
I hear sweet angel voices singing;
all glory be to God on high,
who peace on earth is bringing.
The Virgin holds more
than the highest heaven most holy,
light shines on what was dark before,
and lifts up the lowly.
God will bring peace upon the earth
and holy exultation, Sweet Babe,
I greet your Spotless birth
and wondrous Incarnation.
Today in Bethlehem I hear
even the lowly voices singing
with angelic voices
they pierce the sky.
All earth is ringing with joy.

St John of Damascus

HYMN OF CHRISTMAS

Your Nativity O Christ our God
Has shed the light of knowledge upon
the world. Through it those who had
been star-worshippers learned
through a star to worship You, O Son
of Righteousness, and recognize in
You the One who rises from on high.

HOLY SCRIPTURE
ON CHRISTMAS

But when the fullness of the
time had come, God sent forth
His Son, born of a woman, born
under the law.
Galatians 4:4

Behold the days are coming,”
says the Lord, “That I will raise
to David a branch of
righteousness; a king shall reign
and prosper, and execute
judgment and righteousness
on the earth.”
Jeremiah 23:5

Therefore the Lord Himself will
give you a sign; Behold, the
virgin shall conceive and bear a
Son, and shall call His name
Emmanuel.
Isaiah 7:14

The people who walked in dark-
ness have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in the land of
the shadow of death, upon them
a light has shone.
Isaiah 9:2

For to us a Child is born, unto us
a Son is given; and the govern-
ment will be upon His shoulder,
and His name will be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty
God, Everlasting Father, Prince
of Peace, of the increase of His
government and peace there
will be no end.
Isaiah 9:6-7
Thank You to those who sponsor our monthly bulletin!
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Sun</th>
<th>Mon</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov 28</td>
<td>Nov 29</td>
<td>30 St Andrew 8:30 Matins 9:15 Liturgy 10:00 Bible Study 6:30 Parish Council Seminar</td>
<td>Dec 1</td>
<td>Dec 2</td>
<td>De 3 No Bible Study 9:00-12:00 Christmas Retreat</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 4 8:30 Matins 9:30 Divine Liturgy 6:00 Vesperal Divine Liturgy for St. Nicholas 7pm AA</td>
<td>5 12 St Spyridon 8:30 Matins 9:15 Liturgy 6:00 Vesperal Divine Liturgy for St. Nicholas 7pm AA</td>
<td>6 St Nicolas Liturgy Monday Night 7 10:00 Bible Study 6:30 Parish Council Seminar</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10 7:00am Bible Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov 11 8:30 Matins 9:30 Divine Liturgy St Nicholas Celebration Christmas Caroling 7:00pm AA</td>
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<td>14 10:00 Bible Study</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17 7:00am Bible Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dec 18 8:30 Matins 9:30 Divine Liturgy Christmas Pageant 7pm AA</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>20 St Ignatios of Antioch 8:30 Matins 9:15 Liturgy 7pm AA</td>
<td>21 10:00 Bible Study</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23 9:00am Service of the Royal Hours for Christmas 4:00 Christmas Matins 5:00pm Christmas Liturgy</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 Christmas CHRIST IS BORN! 9:30 Matins 10:00 Divine Liturgy 7pm AA</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27 St Stephen 8:45 Matins 9:30 Liturgy Youth Winter Activity</td>
<td>28 NO Bible Study Fast Free Week</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>30 Fast Free Week</td>
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ONE SOLITARY LIFE

There is a man who was born in an obscure village, the child of a peasant woman. He grew up in another small village. He worked in a carpenter shop until He was thirty. Then for three years He was an itinerant preacher.

He never owned a home. He never wrote a book. He never held an office. He never had a family. He never went to college. He never traveled two hundred miles from the place He was born. He never did one of the things that usually accompany greatness. He had no credentials but Himself...

While still a young man, the tide of popular opinion turned against him. His friends ran away. One of them denied Him. He was turned over to His enemies. He went through the mockery of a trial. He was nailed upon a cross between two thieves. While He was dying His executioners gambled for the only piece of property He had on earth – His coat. When He was dead, He was laid in a borrowed grave through the pity of a friend.

Twenty long centuries have come and gone, and today He is the centerpiece of the human race and leader of the column of progress.

I am far within the mark when I say that all the armies that ever marched, all the navies that were ever built; all the parliaments that ever sat and all the kings that ever reigned, put together, have not affected the life of man upon this earth as powerfully as has that one solitary life.

(Adapted from a sermon by Dr. James Allan Frances)