



**A publication of  
Annunciation Greek  
Orthodox Cathedral  
Houston, Texas**

---

---

# The Annunciator

Volume 27, Issue 2

Holiday Issue 2017

## Thank You God for All Things!

Each Sunday we gather to worship God and to give Him thanks. During this time of the year (Thanksgiving/Christmas), we have holidays in which we are easily reminded about the virtue of being thankful. The main focus of the Divine Liturgy is the Eucharist (Eucharistia), which means, “to be thankful.” In the middle of each Liturgy, the priest turns to the people and says, “Let us lift up our hearts. Let us give thanks to the Lord.” Following this call to gratitude, the priest prays a prayer which enumerates all for which we should thank God, including our very existence, our salvation from sin, our entrance into His Kingdom, the promise of eternal life, and for every blessing seen and unseen.

There is a beautiful story about Abraham Lincoln. One day a woman made an appointment to see the president. When she entered his office, he welcomed her and asked, “How may I help you?” The woman responded, “Mr. President, I know that you must be very busy. I didn’t come to ask anything of you. I simply came because I heard that you liked cookies, and I decided to bake some for you.” After she gave them to him, she got up to leave. However, she could see that there were tears in the president’s eyes. He smiled at her and said, “Madam, I thank you for your gift. I must tell you that during all the years of my presidency, many people have come into my office asking for favors and even demanding that I help them in various ways. But

you are the first and only person to come into my office and ask for nothing, but instead to bring me a gift of thanksgiving. I thank you, and promise that I will never forget your act of love.”

How often do we ask or demand things from God, and from those around us, while we don’t take time to thank God and others for all they have already done for us? When did we last express gratitude to our parents, our spouse, our family, our friends and others around us? Do we thank God each day for our health, the food we have, the home we live in, the job we have, the opportunities of life we experience, and all His rich blessings of love, joy, peace, hope and eternal salvation? Or instead, do we simply focus on what others have and we don’t have?

Too often, people turn to God when they are in trouble, or have a certain need, but when all is going well, they forget about God. Many times, when bad things happen to us, we become angry and question God, “Why me Lord?” However, when life is going well, and we are happy and content, do we stop and again ask, “Why me Lord?” Why do I deserve so many good things?

Always remember a very important spiritual truth. The inability or forgetfulness of expressing gratitude reflects a spiritual sickness. Pride is lurking within us. We do not thank others, because by thanking them, we have to acknowledge that they have done something special for us.

*(continued on page 4)*

### Inside this Issue

|                                   |       |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Thank You God for All Things .... | 1     |
| Reflections.....                  | 2     |
| Don’t Drown in Technology .....   | 3     |
| Religious Education .....         | 5     |
| Greek School.....                 | 7     |
| Philopectochos .....              | 9     |
| Cathedral Expansion .....         | 10-12 |
| Senior Citizens .....             | 13    |
| Young Adult Conference ....       | 14-15 |
| Cathedral Calendar.....           | 17-18 |
| Registry .....                    | 19    |

### Sunday, December 24

(Martel Hall)

8:15 am Orthros

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

5:00 pm Great Vespers

### Christmas Day, December 25

(Martel Hall)

8:15 am Orthros

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

## Reflections on the Incarnation

*"He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless...  
To adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself"—Eph 1:4, 5*

As we approach the feast of our Lord's Nativity, the coming of our Savior, let us reflect on the great mystery of the Incarnation and its fundamental role in our salvation. Contemplating on the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ, we assume that God's plan was to redeem us from the fall, to reconcile us to Him. Yet, he had a much greater plan for us. St. Paul tells that from the foundation of the world his intent was that we should "*be holy and blameless... to adoption as sons of God,*" through union with Jesus Christ; that is, theosis (deification). By virtue of the Incarnation, being conceived by the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit, our humanity was united with His divinity. For this reason, St. Athanasius can say "God became man so that man might become god." If we choose Christ, if we grow in His likeness by imitation and become *like* Him, then we can become "gods" by His great love for us and His grace. Furthermore, because of God's great mercy and love for us we were "made alive *together*, raised us up *together* in the heavenly place...for by grace you have been saved through faith." (Ephesians 2:5, 6, 8) In other words, through His Incarnation, Passion, death, Resurrection, and Ascension He deified us, reconciled us to God the Father, and returned us back to Him.

During this Advent period, let us invite Him to come into our lives and become vividly aware of His presence in our souls. Receive Him with love, and rejoice together with the angels singing along with them:

"Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace, goodwill toward men." (Luke 2:14)

Glory, praise and thanks be to God!

+*Fr. Demetri*

---

This Christmas night, peace was bestowed upon the whole world; so let no one threaten. This is the night of the Most Gentle One; let no one be cruel. This is the night of the Most Humble One; let no one be proud. Now is the day of joy; let us not revenge. Now is the day of goodwill; let us not be mean. In this day of peace let us not be conquered by anger. Today the Beautiful One impoverished Himself for our sake; so you rich ones, invite the poor to your table. Today we received a gift for which we did not ask; so let us give alms to those who implore us and beg. This present day's fast opens the heavenly door to our prayers. Let us open our door to those who ask our forgiveness. Now the Divine Being took upon Himself the seal of humanity, in order for humanity to be decorated by the seal of Divinity.

*St. Isaac the Syrian*

## Don't Drown in the Sea of Technology

In Silicon Valley, you will find huge tech companies like Apple, Google, Microsoft, Facebook and thousands more. Each company has a myriad of young tech gurus thinking and designing applications that they hope will generate them millions of dollars. These applications bring tech companies a stream of revenue that is unimaginable. Can you imagine life now without a smart phone, a computer or even a tablet? Do you recall the days when you had to go to the library and spend hours researching something you were looking for? Not any more, it's all available to us at our finger tips. In the palm of our hands we carry the most sophisticated phone/computer in the world. We can now enjoy pictures, video and have access to information that goes beyond what we can imagine.

The sea of technology is ever changing like the waves of the ocean. For our children, specifically our young teens and teenagers, this technology is woven into their life. They can't live without this technology. We too, as adults, struggle to separate our work lives from our home lives. The dinner table no longer contains conversations but sits empty because we are constantly on the run from one event to the next. Our lives are no longer filled with love and conversations but rather with applications, codes and other social media applications that separate us from one another.

David Brooks, a columnist for the New York Times, on November 11, 2017 wrote a beautiful Opinion piece "How Evil is Tech?" In his article, David writes on how tech companies are destroying our lives and he highlights three critiques.

One is that they are destroying our teens' lives. Rather than creating social circles and learning how to communicate with one another. Technology has created a new form of teens who don't know how to communicate, who can't speak or write properly. David quotes some staggering statistics from Jean M. Twenge, a The Atlantic columnist (Have Smartphones Destroyed A Generation? September 2017 Issue.) Jean noted that "Eighth graders who spend 10 or more hours a week on social media are 56 percent more likely to say they are unhappy than those who spend less time. Eighth graders who are heavy users of social media increase their risk of depression by 27 percent. Teens who spend three or more hours a day on electronic devices are 35 percent more likely to have a risk factor for suicide, like making a plan for how to do it. Girls, especially hard hit, have experienced a 50 percent rise in depressive symptoms."

Secondly, the tech industry is out to make money and will do everything in its power to do so. They have studied the brain and created ways to seduce us into using their products. Some techniques are like games, giving us points for certain actions while others use "bottomless bowls" where one page leads to another and continues on and on. Social media sites create a compulsive addiction where we are always wanting to know who liked our post, how many people saw it, who commented on it and so on. When does it end?

Thirdly, these tech companies use their power to manipulate our lives. They invade our personal space. We no longer have private lives because our feelings, our thoughts and ideas are shared over all the whole World Wide Web (WWW). We come home from school or work and we continue peering into the lives of others while we continue to post things allowing others to peer into our own private lives. It's one thing to share a picture of your children or to share a happy event but not every event and not every thought needs to be broadcasted on the WWW.

In closing, let Christ and the Church throw you a life preserver and hoist you out of the raging sea. Putting down your phones and closing your computers are the first steps. Once that is done, now we need to focus on each other. Let us have conversations by returning to the dining room table. Let us sit together and watch TV. Let's go outside for a walk, or take the kids to a park and play. Let's communicate not by text but through a physical

*(continued on page 4)*

*(continued from page 3)*

embrace. “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that moves on the earth. So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” (Gen 1:26, 27) Note that God created us to have dominion over the things here on earth, not for the earth to have dominion over us. Let us control the technology before it drowns us in the sea and we plunge into its abyss.

**+Father Gabriel Gadah**

---

*(continued from page 1)*

## **Thank You God for All Things!**

Too many of us have a hidden pride which hinders this expression of gratitude. A wonderful example of this is found in the Gospel of Luke 17:11-19 when Jesus heals the ten lepers, and only one of the ten returns to give thanks for being healed of his terrible disease. God created us to be people who continually praise our Creator and thank Him at all times. When we forget or ignore this, we reject a fundamental purpose of our lives.

In the Psalms, King David and other writers thank God more than 60 times for His goodness, His love, and infinite blessings. One of the most beautiful passages comes from Psalm 103, “Bless the Lord O my soul, and do not forget all that he has done for me!” DO NOT FORGET! We must not forget the countless blessings of God, and we should express our gratitude to Him daily.

St. Paul also condemns the ungrateful in his letter to the Romans, when he writes, “Although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking.” (Rom 1:21) St. Paul does not chastise the Romans because they do not know God, he reprimands them because they know God but do not thank Him!

More than 50 times throughout his letters, St Paul admonished his readers to thank God! “Give thanks to God at all times” (Eph 5:20). “Give thanks to God in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus” (I Thess 5:18). “In whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God” (Col 3:17).

As I mentioned earlier, during this time of year we have special holidays in which we can focus on thanksgiving to God. When we come together and worship as a spiritual family, when we attend Divine Liturgy and the other services of the Church, we are acknowledging our thanksgiving to God. As we close out this year and enter into a New Year on January 1st let us make a more determined effort to develop our spiritual lives, because that is the most important thing we can do as Orthodox Christians. Let us take the time to thank those around us, our parents, our families for showing us love, our friends who stay near to us during our time of need, our teachers and other special people who have inspired us in our life. When we say thank you to God and to those around us, we are uttering very powerful, yet simple words. If a simple “thank you” brought tears to the eyes of President Lincoln, how much more joy it must bring to our Lord Jesus Christ when we give Him thanks!

Thank You,

**+Father Michael**



## **In Praise of Sunday Church School**

*By Rev. Dr. Tony Vrame Director of the Archdiocese Religious Education Department.*

### **Religious Education**

Sunday school is perhaps the single largest program in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. On a national level, assuming 550 parishes with an average of 30 students per Sunday school program (and that's probably a conservative number), on any given Sunday, there are 16,500 young people in a classroom. Assuming 5 teachers per parish, on any given Sunday, there are 2,750 adult teachers. Add the approximately 700 clergy in the Archdiocese, on any given Sunday there are almost 20,000 people involved in handing forward the Orthodox Christian Faith.

So many people seem to be highly critical or doubtful about this mainstay of parish life. So it might seem counterintuitive to praise Sunday Church school. The cures for what ails the program are many, ranging from dropping it altogether to finding ways to make teachers and students accountable for what's being taught and learned there. There's room for debate about the best way the Church can hand forward its Faith and Way of Life to another generation. There's room for discussion about what's important for someone *to know, to believe, and to do* (three classic educational categories) as a member of the Church. Scholars in the academic discipline of religious education study and discuss these questions. So do clergy, pastoral leaders, seminarians, and the teachers who minister in the program, as well as the parents of the students themselves.

But as the discussion continues – and this discussion has been going on for decades – consider some of what Sunday Church school provides.

Sunday Church school builds a community and advances the parish and wider Church. Sunday Church school prepares a group of Orthodox Christians to work together by building their relationships with one another. It provides the learners with a place to study and hold conversations that matter about topics of Faith, moving beyond feelings and into reasoned discussion that revolves around the sources of Orthodoxy: Scripture, liturgy, theological writings. In a regular and systematic manner, these sources are introduced into the lives of learners. It can raise questions that will last for a lifetime.

Sunday Church school is a model of hospitality for the rest of the parish to emulate. Dedicated teachers, usually parents of students, welcome children and teenagers into their classes, even if they have not been in attendance the week before, or for weeks at a time (unfortunately, this is common). We say that parishes should be welcoming environments. We even try to teach hospitality! But hospitality *is* being modeled Sunday after Sunday.

Sunday Church school continues to teach liturgical awareness and sacramental participation. Many years ago, Orthodox religious educators began to teach that children and families should be attending the divine services, paying attention to what was going on in those services, and participating in the sacraments as often as possible. It's been a huge success, to the point that we complain about the long lines and have now witnessed the development of the diaconate, if only to shorten those lines (and we are now learning that deacons can do so much more than administer Holy Communion).

Sunday Church school is a place where one's Orthodox Christian identity can be informed, formed, and transformed. The "given-ness" of one's religious identity cannot be taken for granted. In a "classroom," and I put this in quotes to remind us that there are many places where we learn, information can be shared and experiences can be explored. Simply, a classroom is a good place to discuss, "this is *what we do* and this is *why we do it*, making us *who we are*."

There are issues, of course. Parental involvement needs to be increased. We need to better equip those who

teach. As parents are often teachers, more efforts at adult education are needed. Even a regular discussion between the priest and teachers would be a good place to start.

There are issues related to “losing” our youth. Some of them are demographic. There have been fewer children born into our families. But there have been over 160,000 baptisms in the last twenty-five years in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, meaning that there is a potential pool of that many young people under 25 or so in our parishes. There are issues with younger people in the US generally abandoning organized religion. The question is, how can we engage young people in Church life over a lifetime? On this point, there needs to be recognition that there is no magic bullet for retaining people in our parishes, building a congregation of faithful, and advancing the mission of the Church in the world. Camp, more videos, or technological use are effective but still can’t replace sustained face-to-face work.

The discussion should continue about the ways we teach, the resources we use, and more involving critique and edification so that we may successfully hand forward the Orthodox Faith and Way of Life.

## 2018 Religious Education Calendar

|               |  |
|---------------|--|
| January 1     | New Year’s Day/St. Basil/Circumcision of Jesus Christ  |
| January 6     | Feast of Epiphany (Theophany) of Christ  |
| January 7     | Sunday Church School   |
| January 12-15 | GOYA Basketball Weekend, Dallas, Texas   |
| January 14    | <b>Break/No Sunday Church School</b>   |
| January 21    | 5-7 pm, Sex, God & Me (Fr. Gabriel Gadah) – Guest Dr. Philip Mamalakis   |
| January 28    | Sunday Church School – Godparent/Godchild Sunday<br>+Triodion Begins...Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee<br>+5-7 pm, Sex, God & Me (Fr. Gabriel Gadah)                 |
| February 4    | Sunday Church School – Sunday of the Prodigal Son<br>+Parish St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival (Grades 7-9)<br>+3-5 pm, Sex, God & Me (Super Bowl) (Fr. Gabriel Gadah) |
| February 11   | Sunday Church School-Sunday of the Last Judgment (Meat-fare)<br>+Parish St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival (Grades 10-12)<br>+5-7 pm Sex, God & Me (Fr. Gabriel Gadah)  |
| February 18   | Sunday Church School – Forgiveness Sunday (Cheese-fare)<br>+Elementary Oratorical Festival (Grades K-2)  |
| February 19   | Beginning of Great Lent...10-3 pm, Clean Monday Retreat  |
| February 25   | Sunday Church School – Sunday of Orthodoxy<br>+Elementary Oratorical Festival (Grades 3-4)   |
| March 4       | Sunday Church School – Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas<br>+Elementary Oratorical Festival (Grades 5-6)   |
| March 9-11    | 2018 Metropolis of Denver St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival<br>Hosted by St. Anna Parish, Cottonwood Heights, Utah   |
| March 11      | Sunday Church School – Sunday of the Holy Cross  |
| March 18      | Sunday Church School – Sunday of John Climacus   |
| March 25      | Sunday Church School – Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos  |
| April 1       | Sunday Church School – PALM SUNDAY (Western Easter)  |
| April 8       | PASCHA   |
| May 20        | Last Day of Sunday Church School – Attendance Honors, Graduate Honors  |
| June 4-8      | 9:30 – 12:30 pm, <b>Vacation Bible School</b> , St. George Orthodox Church, George Katrib ( <a href="mailto:gkatrib@gmail.com">gkatrib@gmail.com</a> )                       |

(continued on page 16)

# ANNUNCIATION GREEK LANGUAGE & CULTURE SCHOOL

*Katerina Kontogeorgaki, Director*  
*katerinakonto@agoc.org*

Dear Parishioners,

Our school continues its successful year filled with academic excellence and wonderful cultural events. The school year started on September 15 with the blessing from our priests. Our children's program has grown significantly over the last two years and we are happy to have exceeded 100 students. The program starts with the kindergarten classes and continues up to the sixth grade. In addition, we have a wonderful program for Adults with all levels, from Beginners to Advanced.

We are blessed to have twelve very qualified, talented, and dedicated teachers: Mrs. Elissavet Vrettos, Mrs. Poppy Padley, Mrs. Elena Papadopoulou, Mrs. Dimitra Tsioufi, Mrs. Alexandra Mavrikou, Mrs. Deena Metaxas, Mrs. Roula Orfanou, Mr. Panagiotis Statiras, Mrs. Maro Yuanidis, Mrs. Kali Magionos, Mrs. Valia Geis, and Mrs. Katerina Kontogeorgaki. Our wonderful teachers, along with our music teacher Mrs. Tatiana Zakolikou, work tirelessly to provide our students with the best education in the Greek language and culture.

On Friday October 27th, we celebrated **OXI Day** honoring the heroic stance of Greece during World War II. The celebration started with a students' parade and a presentation about the historical events of the day. The event was well attended and we all had the opportunity to honor the Greek History and feel proud of our children and our heritage. During the celebration, we also honored the students who received the Certification of Attainment of Modern Greek, levels B and C: Christiana Avouris, Christos Georgiadis, Despina Georgiadi, Georgios Mikos, Mary Mikos, and Georgios Tataris.

Our school is an official examination center for the **Certification of Attainment of Modern Greek**. The registration starts in February and the exams for this year will be held on May 15-17. Our school offers preparation classes for all levels. Please, contact me for more information.

Our school had the **Christmas celebration on Friday, December 15, at 6.30pm**. The students sang the traditional Greek carols as well as other Christmas songs. We had a potluck dinner and fun activities, all organized by our PTO. Every year, the PTO supports our cultural events and raises important funds to support the school in so many ways: books, supplies, scholarships, music and dance workshops. I would like to thank the PTO board for their support and dedication: Mrs. Pam Papadopoulos (president), Mrs. Evy Pappas, Mrs. Elise Dale, Mrs. Angie Barut, Mrs. Andrea Caracostis, Mrs. Afentra Allen, Mrs. Chrisoula Hasouris, Mrs. Maria Polakis, and Mrs. Sophia Tsakiri.

Please mark your calendars for our **big fundraising event: The Three Hierarchs Celebration on Saturday January 27, 2018**. All families and friends are invited to an evening filled with music, dance, excellent food, prizes and a live auction. This is the best way to support our school and our efforts to keep the Greek language and culture alive in our beloved community.

Also, please, note that **the spring semester for the Adults Modern Greek Language classes starts on January 30, 2018**, for all levels. The classes meet every Tuesday at 6:30pm. We encourage everyone to attend our classes and see how exciting it is to learn the Greek language.

Please, contact me at [katerinakonto@agoc.org](mailto:katerinakonto@agoc.org), or 832-242-9257 for more information about the children and adult programs, our cultural events, and different ways to help and support our Greek School.

Καλά Χριστούγεννα και Ευτυχισμένος ο Καινούργιος Χρόνος!

## OXI Day Celebration



*The students singing the national anthems.*



*The students with director, Mrs. Katerina Kontogeorgaki.*



*Congratulations to the students who received the Certificate of Attainment in the Greek Language.*



*Mr. Ioannis Stamatekos, Consul of Greece in Houston, with the teachers and school director.*



## *Annunciation Cathedral Philoptochos*

*Martha Stefanidakis, President*

This past summer the 2017-2019 Annunciation Cathedral Philoptochos Board met to plan an exciting year in anticipation of the 100th Anniversary of our beloved Cathedral. We all know that by the end of August an unwelcome visitor named Harvey changed the direction of those well laid out plans. Our focus changed but not our commitment to do “good works.”

Our members, along with many in our community, lost homes and businesses, but the Houston Strong motto, changed to AGOC strong immediately! IOCC was on the ground, our local members were helping one another and National Philoptochos put out a call for donations of money and gift cards and chapters across the country responded by donating over \$40,000 which will be distributed to those parishioners whose homes were damaged.

Our chapter is now moving forward to raise funds for our many National, Metropolis and local ministries and to come together in fellowship. Our bake sale was a success and on December 9th we celebrated the birth of our Lord, with a Festival of Tables and concert by the well-known Fort Bend Boys Choir. We will again visit our homebound parishioners with delicious koulourakia and tsourekia, and answer the call of those in need.

An exciting new project this year will be to all join together to lay wreaths on the graves of departed veterans at the Houston National Cemetery. On December 16th at 11:00 we will participate in the short service and commence to honor those who faithfully served our country.

On December 19th we will gather at the newly reopened Cleburne Cafeteria at 6:30 pm for our first meeting of the term. Following a Dutch Treat dinner, we will pass the 2018 budget and review our calendar and ministries for the upcoming year. In the true spirit of Christmas, we ask you to bring a gift for a child at the Home of Tiny Treasures and an ornament to exchange with one another.

Each year, our Annunciation community is the forerunner in the National Vasilopita appeal for Saint Basil's Academy in Garrison, New York. Over the last ten years, we have donated over \$250,000 to this effort and invite all our parishioners to join us on January 7, 2018, in the Festival Center, as we once again work to support the children whose lives are forever changed by this ministry.

On February 3, 2018, Philoptochos will sponsor the 100th Anniversary Kick-Off Glendi at the Martel Hall, with an evening of music, good food, fellowship, reminiscing and maybe a surprise or two. More information will follow in the bulletin and by mail. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend.

Our membership tea will be held on January 28, 2018 at the home of Kris and Richard McGee, and we invite all ladies to join in this God blessed ministry. The ladies of Philoptochos respond to need whenever and wherever it arises. As our National president has so eloquently stated, “Service to our church, our community and our world was our past, it is our present, and it will be our future.”

In the words of our Lord, “I came to earth not to be served, but to serve.” This is the heart of Philoptochos. Please join us on our journey.

## AGOC Expansion and Renovation - "Expanding our Future"

The expansion construction of our Cathedral is progressing well. We continue to be on schedule and on budget, with our first liturgy in our new Cathedral expected in late- September 2018. On November 18<sup>th</sup> a significant milestone was achieved with the raising of the dome. After Father Michael gave a brief blessing, the 625-ton crane lifted the 100,000 pound dome and placed it on top of the steel structure that had been erected over the past several months. It was a sight to see, as over 150 parishioners came out to witness this spectacular achievement. Some photos of the dome raising are shown below:



Construction continues with additional steel erection on the Kipling side of the building and the removal of the Nave roof and walls of the original structure. The dome will feature a roof made of stainless steel treated with Titanium Nitride, which will begin installation in January. Exterior masonry walls of the building will consist of cast stone and the same limestone as the front of the church from the exact same quarry! Major masonry work will begin in March 2018 and last throughout the summer.

We are also pleased to report that our iconographer, Manoli Kavallaris, has obtained his work permit and has started his work at the Holy Archangels Greek Orthodox Monastery in Kendaia, TX. Manoli met with Father Michael and the iconography committee on November 29<sup>th</sup> to present his "meleti" proposal, which was enthusiastically accepted. Photos of Manoli at the monastery are shown below.



Our next big event for the community to participate in will be the signing of a steel beam on Sunday, December 17<sup>th</sup>. Sunday School students and parents, and anyone that has made a pledge will have the



opportunity to sign their names on a 60-foot long beam that will be installed in the church. Look for details of this event in the bulletin and via email communication.

We currently have 361 pledges for the expansion and we ask you to consider making a pledge if you have not done so already. This project is for our future! Please go to [www.agoc2017.org](http://www.agoc2017.org) to make your pledge. We are still honoring our match offer where for every \$4 that is pledged, an extra \$1 will be matched, increasing the impact of your gift.

Latest renderings of the exterior and interior are shown below:

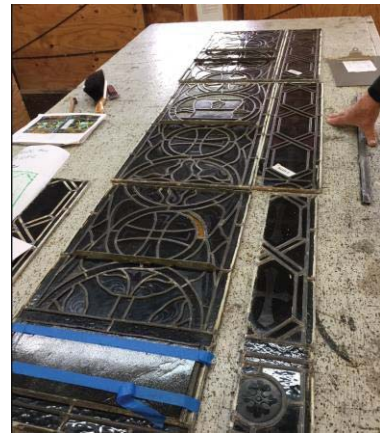


## AGOC Expansion and Renovation - "Preserving our Past"

As we expand and renovate the Cathedral, we are taking great care to "preserve our past". All of our original stained glass was carefully removed and is now in the process of being cleaned, repaired and restored before eventual re-installation into the new structure. Some photos are shown below:







We also took great care in removing all of the iconography from the church prior to beginning construction. The older icons were in pretty poor condition, so we have hired a company to clean and lightly restore many of them. The larger icons from the iconostasion have been finished and will eventually go back in the Cathedral on the walls outside the iconostasion and on the second floor at the top of each of the stairwells. New Byzantine icons are being prepared for the iconostasion by Manoli Kavallaris, who will also be preparing the iconography for the dome, pendentives and behind the altar. The Platytera will remain as is, with a careful cleaning scheduled for next summer. Shown below are some photos of the removal of the icons and ones that have already been cleaned and restored.





## SENIOR CITIZENS

*Kiki Pantazis & Paula Phocas*

Hi everyone.

I hope you all are doing well after the flood.

Now that summer and Greek Festival are over it is time to think about the Christmas holidays!!!

As we start our new year I like to thank all our sponsors of last year. We all appreciate what you do for our Senior and with your help we are able to provide a nice program for them and of course wonderful meals and activities and let us not to forget the love and respect we all have for our Seniors.

Also, with a lot of sadness, I would like to remember all those who we lost this year. We will miss each and every one. May their memory be Eternal.

It was nice to see all of you come back and start the new year again together with a big BANG! Mike Pantazis' 90th birthday!! It was a great celebration and to top it all his book STAVRODROMI (CROSSROADS) finished the same time!! Two big milestones!! We are very grateful for all of you been part of our lives and celebrate such an important day with us.

We had the annual, wonderful Santikos luncheon. We also held our annual memorial for our Seniors who are no longer with us and our Thanksgiving luncheon which was sponsored this year by Cynthia Kostas and her sister Georgia Kostas Nichols who said they are going to keep the tradition their parents had started many years before. So besides the turkey and the trimmings we have a lot to be THANKFUL for. We are so lucky to live in this wonderful community who care so much for our Senior citizens

**Here is the schedule for December 2017 through March 2018 and the luncheon hosts:**

**DECEMBER 5 Bessie Melas and Maria Melas / memory of their loved ones**

**DECEMBER 19 Jim/Angela Boockholdt / (Christmas)**

**2018**

**JANUARY 16 Vlahakos /Demeris / memory of their loved ones**

**FEBRUARY 6 Maria Moore**

**FEBRUARY 13 Pappas family / memory of their loved ones**

**FEBRUARY 19 LENT BEGINS**

**MARCH 6 Katherine & Andy Veletsos**

**MARCH 20 Chris & Tasia Xintaris**

We serve good tasty meals. We work with you to create a menu that you like. Our Lenten meals are great and very tasty too. We always look for sponsors and if anyone is interested for the next year 2018-2019 please contact Kiki Pantazis at: 713-340-1113 or Paula Phocas at 713-222-7805. We can celebrate any occasion - birthdays, anniversaries or the memory of loved one.

Paula and I look forward to see more of you. I hope you attend all these meetings and have fun with us

### GUIDELINES:

Everyone who is 55 years and older and is a member of the Annunciation Cathedral please join us in the Seniors program and enjoy the fun and the fellowship our program provides.

TO ATTEND OUR OUTINGS you have to be a regular member of the Sr. Citizens, with the exception of out of town visitors who are VERY welcome at any time.

For more information call

KIKI PANTAZIS 713-340-1113 OR PAULA PHOCAS 713-222-7805

## Young Adult Conference, Houston, Texas

On November 9-11, 2017 over 200 young adults, representing 25 states made their way to Houston, for the new and improved, rebooted Young Adult League Conference. Our own Fr. Michael Lambakis, Fr. George Gartelos of Tulsa, Fr. Vasileios Flegas of Austin, Fr. Mario Giannopoulos of Ogden, Utah, and Fr. James Shadid of Houston were all in attendance leading the faith and fellowship.

It has been over 15 years since YAL has been active, and what was formerly a concentrated “nifi” convention now has a more social, spiritual and relaxed vibe. The planning committee battled obstacles like Hurricane Harvey, which wiped out the initial weekend causing it to be rescheduled to November, and a sudden explosion resulting in a fire at the host hotel, The Whitehall, prior to everyone checking in. After a few phone calls, the planning committee found the new site at the Magnolia Hotel.

Running on “Greek time,” due to the setbacks, Friday night was filled with laughter and fellowship, fueled by an impromptu fajita feast thanks to Chris Pappas and the wonderful people over at Pappasito’s. After dinner, Tasos Kritikakis & Katherine Bastie kicked off the night with icebreakers and everyone was instantly socializing. SoTiri’s musical rhymes had everyone out on the dance floor waving around Anna Kiappes’ life-size cutouts of goats and SoTiri’s face. Basile had jokes for days, reminding everyone what this weekend was really about...the quest for a “nifi.” He also expressed concern that after the flood, and the fire that this group endured, he hoped the locusts were not soon to follow. After the show, the night was closed out by JPapa Productions spinning the latest Greek music.

On Saturday, the group gathered together for a buffet breakfast and morning break-out sessions that were led by the participating Clergy. The Young Adults had the fortunate opportunity to meet with the clergy in small groups during the day. Topics included; Church A.D.D. Explore some of the realities of being distracted or losing focus in the Divine Liturgy & other Holy Services; The Church and how she prays for us in a modern society; Swipe Right: Navigating the social dating world as Orthodox Christians; Why Orthodoxy?; The End of Times: The Book of Revelation in a nutshell. After lunch and the afternoon breakout sessions, the Young Adults spent their time making disaster relief packets for IOCC. YAL donated over 300 packets to IOCC for Hurricane Harvey relief and the California Fires. That evening, after some downtime, the Young Adults put their boots on, and headed over to Daisy Dukes on Washington Avenue for an authentic, two-steppin’, hoedown throw-down. The group enjoyed traditional Texas queso, guacamole, brisket, and sausage from Demeris BBQ before trying out their skills on the mechanical bull. The Buck Yeager Band had everyone line dancing and two-steppin’. Between live-music sets, the young adults brought down the house with circles and circles of Greek dancing. Leave it to the Greeks to turn a Texas honkey-tonk into a bouzoukia!

Sunday wrapped up the weekend with a beautiful liturgy led by Fr. Mario and Houston’s own Fr. Michael followed by a farewell fellowship brunch. The Young Adults dined on southern biscuits and gravy while recapping the weekend, saying their goodbyes, exchanging information, and taking photos with the new friends they made. At the end of the weekend, Houston passed the baton over to Fr. Mario who announced his Greek Orthodox community of Ogden, Utah will host the 2018 YAL Conference in Salt Lake City over Labor Day Weekend!

## Young Adult Conference, Houston, Texas

While there were many hurdles, this did not slow down the momentum or the spirit of the Houston Greeks. In fact, without these challenges, without the Greek Houstonians in the community who came to support the event, and without the determination, strength and faith of the host committee, the weekend would not have been as successful as it was. Thank you to all of the people who donated their money, time and effort, as well as a big thank you to those who in the face of adversity and through the many obstacles, came together to make YAL Houston an unforgettable success! Cheers to Salt Lake 2018!

Alexis Argeroplos  
2017 Houston YAL Conference Chairman



*Two steppin' at the YAL Conference, Houston, Texas, November 11, 2017.*



*Greek Dancing, YAL Conference, Houston, Texas*



*Divine Liturgy held at Magnolia Hotel, Houston, Texas, during the YAL Conference, with Fr Mario Giannopoulos and Fr. Michael Lambakis officiating.*

(continued from page 6)

## A New Way to Learn the Bible

*By Steven Christoforou*

Do you ever struggle to understand the Scripture?

The Church has a rich tradition that can help us understand the Bible (after all, the Church wrote it). Yet, for many of us, the Scripture seems inaccessible and hard to connect with.

“Be the Bee” helped people engage with the deep and profound theology of the Church. And now we’re back with a new weekly series to help people connect with Scripture: “Live the Word.”

Every Monday, we’ll cover the following Sunday’s Epistle and Gospel readings. We’ll end each episode with three challenging questions to help you work through what God has for you, in your life.

Every Thursday, we’ll post a short response to these questions, offering a vulnerable and personal look into how we struggle to know Christ and live Orthodoxy.

We’re also posting short intros to each New Testament book, to help guide your reading. For example, we’ve released videos on the Gospel according to Saint Luke and Paul’s 2nd Epistle to Timothy.

These videos are the perfect resource for youth and young adult groups, Bible studies, and family devotionals. They’re a great way to help you and the people in your life wrestle with Scripture and open your hearts to God’s guidance and grace.

And best of all, these videos will reflect on God’s Word as we hear it proclaimed in the Sunday Divine Liturgy.

Thanks to “Be the Bee” and “The Trench,” Christians of every generation connected with the Church’s theology like never before. Many converts even joined the Church because of the series!

We pray that God will bear even more fruit through our new series: “Live the Word.”

New episodes premiere every Monday and Thursday. Make sure you subscribe to our YouTube channel and turn on notifications so you never miss a video.

*Steven Christoforou is the Director of Y2AM.*

Want more from Y2AM? Subscribe to our email list and get weekly tips for your spiritual life every Monday! And you can support Y2AM even more by becoming a supporter. Your contribution can help us continue the work we’re doing.

---

Let us be satisfied simply with what sustains our present life, not with what pampers it. Let us pray to God for this, as we have been taught, so that we may keep our souls un-enslaved and absolutely free from domination by any of the visible things loved for the sake of the body. Let us show that we eat for that sake of living, and not be guilty of living for the sake of eating. The first is a sign of intelligence; the second, proof of its absence.

*St. Maximos the Confessor*



## Cathedral Calendar

### December 24, 2017 - February 19, 2018

**Sunday, December 24 - SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY**

**8:15 am Orthros / 9:30 am Divine Liturgy (Martel Hall)**

**5:00 pm Great Vespers - EVE OF THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST, (Martel Hall)**

**Monday, December 25 - NATIVITY OF CHRIST**

**8:15 am Orthros / 9:30 am Divine Liturgy (Martel Hall)**

**Tuesday, December 26**

Cathedral Office Closed

**Sunday, December 31**

**8:15 am Orthros / 9:30 am Divine Liturgy (Martel Hall)**

GOYA Basketball Practice

**Monday, January 1, 2018 -**

**St. Basil/Circumcision of Our Lord**

**Divine Liturgy 9:00 am at St. Basil the Great Greek Orthodox Church, 1100 Eldridge Parkway (77077)**

New Year's Day - Cathedral Office Closed

**Friday, January 5**

Greek School 5:00 pm

**Saturday, January 6 - HOLY THEOPHANY**

**8:30 am Orthros / 9:30 am Divine Liturgy & Service of the Greater Blessing of the Waters (Martel Hall)**

**Sunday, January 7 - St. John the Baptist**

**7:45 am Orthros / 9:00 am Divine Liturgy / SCS**

Philoptochos Vasilopita & Auction, following Divine Liturgy, Boozalis Festival Center

**Thursday, January 11**

Marathon Exchange Pastichio Dinner 7:00 pm, Martel Hall

**Friday, January 12**

Greek School 5:00 pm

Metropolis of Denver GOYA Basketball Tournament, Dallas, TX

**Sunday, January 14 -**

**Leavetaking of the Theophany of Our Lord**

**7:45 am Orthros / 9:00 am Divine Liturgy**

Metropolis of Denver GOYA Basketball Tournament, Dallas, TX

**Monday, January 15**

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - Cathedral Office Closed

**Tuesday, January 16**

Sr. Citizens Meeting & Lunch 10:15 am, Martel Hall

**Wednesday, January 17**

Bible Study 1:00 pm, Room 230

Bible Study 6:30 pm, Room 219

**Friday, January 19**

Greek School 5:00 pm

**Sunday, January 21 - 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Luke**

**7:45 am Orthros / 9:00 am Divine Liturgy / SCS**

Sex, God & Me 5:00 pm, Martel Hall

**Wednesday, January 24**

Bible Study 1:00 pm, Room 230

Bible Study 6:30 pm, Room 219

**Friday, January 26**

Greek School 5:00 pm

**Saturday, January 27**

Greek School Three Hierarchs Celebration 6:30 pm, Steve G. Caloudas Athletic Center

**Sunday, January 28 - Sunday of the Publican & Pharisee  
Triodion Begins - Godparent/Godchild Sunday**

**7:45 am Orthros / 9:00 am Divine Liturgy / SCS**

Philoptochos Membership Tea 3:00 pm, at home of Kris and Richard McGee

Sex, God & Me 5:00 pm, Martel Hall

**Wednesday, January 31**

Bible Study 1:00 pm, Room 230

Bible Study 6:30 pm, Room 219

**Friday, February 2**

Greek School 5:00 pm

**Saturday, February 3**

Philoptochos 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Kick-Off Glendi 7:00 pm, Martel Hall

**Sunday, February 4 - Sunday of the Prodigal Son****7:45 am Orthros / 9:00 am Divine Liturgy / SCS**

11:00 am - Parish St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival (Grades 7-9)

Sex, God &amp; Me 3:00 pm, Martel Hall

**Tuesday, February 6**

Sr. Citizens Meeting &amp; Lunch 10:15 am, Martel Hall

**Wednesday, February 7**

Bible Study 1:00 pm, Room 230

Bible Study 6:30 pm, Room 219

**Friday, February 9**

Greek School 5:00 pm

**Sunday, February 11 - Judgment Sunday (Meat-fare)****7:45 am Divine Liturgy / 9:00 am Divine Liturgy / SCS**

11:00 am - Parish St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival (Grades 10-12)

**Tuesday, February 13**

Sr. Citizens Meeting &amp; Lunch 10:15 am

**Wednesday, February 14**

Bible Study 1:00 pm, Room 230

Bible Study 6:30 pm, Room 219

**Friday, February 16**

Greek School 5:00 pm

**Sunday, February 18 - Forgiveness Sunday (Cheese-fare)****7:45 am Orthros / 9:00 am Divine Liturgy / SCS**

Elementary Oratorical Festival (Grades K-2) 10:45 am

**Monday, February 19 - GREAT LENT BEGINS**

Clean Monday Retreat 10:00 am, Martel Hall

---

Everything, except true love, is an illusion. If a friend behaves coldly, rudely, spitefully, insolently to you, say: "This is an illusion from the enemy." If a feeling of enmity arising from your friend's coldness and insolence disturbs you, say: "This is an illusion of mine, but the truth is, that I love my friend, in spite of everything, and I do not wish to see evil in him, which is an illusion of the demon, and which is in me also. I will be indulgent to his faults, for they are in me also; we have the same sinful nature.

*St. John of Kronstadt*

# REGISTRY

*March 13 - December 10, 2017*

## WEDDINGS

Martina da Silva Albino and  
Theophanes Basil Gaitanaros  
Sponsor: Nicholas Spartalis

Tiffany Carpenter and  
Thanos Papavasiliou  
Sponsor: Pavlos Papavasiliou

Myrna Orozco De La O and  
Stephen Gallos  
Sponsor: Angelique Roncal

Nicole Georgia (Tippit) Epley and  
Chase Austin Epley  
Sponsor: Travis Nicholas Tippitt

Kathryn Priakos Harrison and  
Dennis Timothy Williams  
Sponsor: Angela Caloudas

Constance Margaret Johnson and  
Nicolas Steven Cocavessis  
Sponsor: Minas Tektiridis

Maria Eleni Koinis and  
Chad Michael Soechting  
Sponsors: Nicole and George Postolos

Mary Olga (Ferguson) Lovett and  
John Charles Warren  
Sponsor: Constantina Boudouvas

Alexandra McMaken and  
Jon Andronis Kantalis  
Sponsor: Demetri Dale

Willow DeShon Myers and  
Peter Andrew Zotos  
Sponsor: Andrew Zotos

Christina Harris Pappas and  
William Anthony Boffa  
Sponsor: Mary Pappas

Christina Demetra Rogers and  
George Gostin Robertson  
Sponsor: Anna Schwartzel

Angela Panagiota Sklavos and  
Anthony Dexter Ham  
Sponsor: Hope Callas File

Anastasia Maria Thanos and  
George Plato Pappas  
Sponsor: Sophia S. Psillas

## BAPTISMS

Nicholas Lawrence  
Parents: Crystal and Kevin Camp  
Godparent: Vanessa Lazo

Andrew Philip  
Parents: Demetra and Andrew Curtner  
Godparents: Roula and Emanuel Kantis

John Christos  
Parents: Mitra and Demetri Economou  
Godparent: John Papasideris

Augustine Daniel (Augustinos)  
Parents: Joan and Javier Elizondo  
Godparents: Sylvia and John Wolf

Anastasia Rose Verven  
Parents: Cleopatra and Steven Janeway  
Sponsor: Nicole Epley

Athena Sofia  
Parents: Lindsey and Charles Kalas  
Godparent: Dean Zografos

Michael Torman  
Parents: Danice and Asimakis Karagiannis  
Godparents: Anatoli Symeonidis and  
Dimitri Andriopoulos

Bradley McMahan (John)  
Parents: Natalie and Bradley Kirklin  
Godparent: Cristina Stacy

Roman Elias  
Parents: Marianne and Ryan Nemer  
Godparent: Adriana Taseva

Thomas Athanasius  
Parents: Martha and Athanasius Servos  
Godparent: Patrick Thomas Servos

Charlotte Lea  
Parents: Eleni and Shelby Smith  
Godparent: Julia Amsler

Althea Rose (Athena)  
Parents: Whitney and Andrew Stetler  
Godparent: Alexandra Talios Stetler

# REGISTRY

*March 13 - December 10, 2017*

Asimina Elizabeth

Parents: Christina and Alexander Triantaphyllis

Godparents: Nicole and George Postolos

Calum

Parents: Kimberly and John Whitaker

Godparent: Martin Whitaker

Sofia

Parents: Samantha and Chad Zapalac

Godparent: Tasos Kritikakis

## CHRISMATIONS

Tiffany Elaine (Eleni) Carpenter

Sponsor: Evelyn Grivon Hritcko

Travis Ford (Luke) Holder

Sponsors: Marti and Andy Iatridis

Alexandra McMaken

Sponsors: Didi and Jeff Rushing

Joseph Daniel (Demetrios) Monk III

Sponsor: Pete Koinis

Zachary (Zachariah) Mucher

Sponsors: Christie and George Vlahakos

Willow Myers

Sponsor: Mary Minas

Jiselle (Alexandra) Vroulis

Sponsors: Maria and Christopher Pappas

## FUNERALS

Alexander Brailas

Renate Elgohary

Timothy John Gavrel

Thomas J. Lykos, Sr.

Chris Achilles Nickolas

Anastasia Kostas Papavasiliou

Mary Harris Pappas

Nicholas H. Pefanis

Dionysis (Dennis) Phocas

Effie Rombakis



ANNUNCIATION  
GREEK ORTHODOX  
CATHEDRAL

3511 YOAKUM BOULEVARD  
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77006-4388