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# The Annunciator

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Great Lent 2016

## Stagnation or Transformation in our Life

During the earthly life of Jesus Christ, there were very few joyful, luminous moments. God was Incarnate and came into this world in order to plunge into our darkness and to share our sorrow and everyday human existence. It was for this reason that the Lord spent so much time among sinful people who were in need of purification, enlightenment, and salvation. It was for this reason that the Lord chose for Himself the way of the Cross, suffered for people, was rejected by them, accepted spitting and disgrace, and died on the Cross and descended into Hades, so as to fill with His Divinity and light all the space where evil had reigned before His coming.

In the Gospel there are recorded only a few cases in which Christ's Divinity was visibly revealed to people. For example, this took place during the Baptism of Jesus, when the voice of God sounded forth from Heaven: "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). Another such moment was the Transfiguration, when the Lord, taking three of His closest disciples, ascended a high mountain with them and, when He prayed, "His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light." And the voice of the Father again sounded forth: "This is My beloved Son... hear Him."

While the vision was still underway, one of his disciples, Peter, said: "Lord, it is good for us to be here: if Thou wilt, let us make three tabernacles; one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias". Moses and Elias appeared to Jesus and spoke with Him about His departure, that is, about His death on the

Cross (Matthew 17:1-9). The Apostle Peter's words were the natural human reaction to God's presence, to His sudden appearance, to His unexpected visitation from above. "It is good for us to be here", that is, it would be good if all this continued, if this moment of glory and light never ended. But after the ascent of Jesus upon the mountain came his descent, when He was met by many people in need of healing. After descending from the mountain, the Lord was once again plunged into our human darkness, in order to share it with us. And then came the Garden of Gethsemane and Golgotha.

Each one of us passes through different states. Sometimes we are on a high mountain, and sometimes we find ourselves on Golgotha. Sometimes the presence of God is so clear that we would like this time to never end. But sometimes God withdraws from us, leaving us in darkness, alone with ourselves, with our problems and sins. But in such moments it is especially important to remember His presence and that He enlightens our human darkness from within with His divine light.

But why does the Lord visit us with His divine light? Not just to flash forth brightly, and then quickly disappear, leaving us in the darkness. The Lord visits us so that, having beheld His light, we might be transformed by it, that our whole life might change, that there might take place with us that of which the Lord Himself spoke: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Which is in Heaven

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## The Power of Prayer

*“Pray for one another, that you may be healed”—James 5:16*

We have already begun, and have passed mid, Holy and Great Lent. We have embarked into yet another spiritual journey to *Pascha* during which we are preparing ourselves, by the triad pertaining to the period: of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, in order to be ready to meet our Savior at His Resurrection.

Prayer is one of the most fundamental and vital aspects of Christian life. Jesus Himself prayed frequently. Many times he would withdraw to the mountain and prayed. It is through prayer that we communicate to God our fervent faith and trust in Him. According to St. Paul, this takes place through the Holy Spirit. When we pray, it is our spirit (small’s), the ‘inner man,’ who speaks and communicates with the Holy Spirit within us. We have the Holy Spirit inside us. When did we receive Him? For humanity in general this occurred at creation when God breathed His Holy Spirit (*pneuma*, spirit) into man: “God formed man (*anthropos*) out of dust from the ground, and breathed in his face the breath (*pneuma*, spirit) of life; and man became a living soul.” (Genesis 2:7) For us individually, it was at Baptism when we were anointed and sealed with Chrism/the Holy Spirit, uniting us to Christ. Of Course, our Lord also breathed His Holy Spirit upon His disciples after the Resurrection in the Upper Room, and when the Holy Spirit descended upon them at Pentecost establishing the earthly Church.

Prayer is so important that in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (Matt 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4), Jesus told us how to pray. What did Christ say? All of us know it. It is the first prayer we ever learned, and that we recite in just about every circumstance, occasion, and service—The Lord’s Prayer! We are called to pray both in secret and together, in communion, for we are a corporate faith. We are to pray for ourselves and for others; for everybody, good or bad, those we love and those we do not. It is in the Universal (Catholic) Epistle of St. James (5:10-20), where St. James tells us some specific circumstances for prayer, and points out the power of prayer. Just as importantly, it tells us that through fervent faith and prayer can come healing, and praying for one another can bring healing (Jam 5:16):

[Note: all underlining is mine for emphasis]

v.13: Is any one among you suffering? Let him pray.

[So, if we are suffering, we should pray. But if] any one is cheerful, let him sing psalms.

To this day, the priests/presbyters of the church are called upon the sick to pray over them and anoint them with Holy Healing Oil—Holy Unction:

v.14: Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders [that is; the priests, short for presbyters] of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord;

v.15: and the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up; and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

v.16: Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man has great power in its effects.

It is clear from St James’ epistle, then, that we are to pray for ourselves, for one another, alone and together, corporately as a Church, the Body of Christ, for the health and well being of not only ourselves, but others as well; especially, in times of suffering and/or illness. It is equally clear that prayer is powerful and can be effective. Moreover, it seems that it is particularly effective when many are praying with single mind. I mentioned some years ago, that in a study conducted by Harvard University as part of its program on Spirituality in Medicine, prayer improved significantly the patients who were the object of prayers done on their behalf by people across the nation, and unknown to them. Around that same time, I read Templeton’s obituary. It stated that it was his belief that science was indeed compatible with religion and belief in God. He gave millions of dollars for research in an effort to bridge the seeming gap between science and religion. This included the effects of prayer, and similar results were found.

However, we as Orthodox Christians know that. Many of us have experienced or know of the power of prayer. In this community there have been tremendous improvements in illnesses as well in healing through and by prayer. Those of you that come to my Bible Study sessions know that we ask that each one place a name or names of people in need

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## Mount Up Y'all: it's fixin' to be one wild ride



*"At your rebuke, God of Jacob,  
both horse and chariot lie still."*

*-Psalm 75:7*

Anyone who has ever ridden a spooked horse before understands the excitement, fear and chaos that comes with being in the saddle of a wild horse, a real *caballo diablo*. Oftentimes, the first few moments atop a bucking horse seems exhilarating, a sheer rush of adrenaline shoots through the body and it is somewhat of a euphoric feeling. The moment that the rider strikes the ground, the adrenaline quickly dissipates and the bone-chilling pain sets in.

As Orthodox Christians living in this fallen world, it may seem as though we too are in the saddle of a horse bucking wild, for a while we may even enjoy it. The horse, like the world, can offer such peace and beauty, but moving forth through life without Christ at the center of our existence is like jumping hog-wild on a mustang.

As we witness a troubled world in decay, it is easy to fall victim to despondency and hopelessness or other snares of the Evil One, but Christ Himself reveals, *"These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you. Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming back to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father,' for My Father is greater than I."*

This Great and Holy Lent, let our Lord quench the fiery darts of the Evil One which are so cunningly cast against us. As we pray in the Small Compline, *"Grant us, O God, a watchful mind, pure thoughts, a sober heart and a quiet rest free from every vision of the Evil One. Raise us up again at the hour of prayer, strengthened in Your precepts and holding within us steadfastly Your commandments."*

Offer your entire life and existence back to God as a pleasing and sweet smelling incense, as your greatest offering. The world may enjoy the ride atop a bucking horse, but as for us, let us give the reigns of our life to our Lord and He will protect us and grant us His peace. In all that we think, do and say we ought to first and foremost offer glory to Christ through our pious and devout lives for as scripture reveals, *"Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness."*



*"Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor reap nor gather into barns;  
yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"*

+ Fr. Christopher





# YOUTH MINISTRY

It is amazing to see how our young children and teens can be transformed from one single Church event. The Church's youth events give our young parishioners the opportunity to strengthen their relationship with God. These events are created with the mind and heart to bring each participant closer to God. It also allows them to learn about the life of the Church, to participate in her sacramental life and to build a relationship with the priest. But this cannot happen without the presence of our youth. This leads me to my deepest concern.

- April 15-17** GOYA Southern Region Lenten Retreat  
**22** GOYA help make Palm Sunday Crosses at 6:30  
**23** HOPE and JOY Lazarus Saturday Retreat  
 Liturgy at 9:30AM followed by Lenten Activities  
**24** Palm Sunday  
**April 25 – 30** Holy Week  
**May 1** Pascha  
**May 13** GOYA Karaoke Night  
**May 21** HOPE and JOY End of Year Party  
**May TBA** Seniors Gathering  
**June 12-18** Camp Emmanuel Juniors  
**19-25** Camp Emmanuel Seniors

**Ionian Village** Session One June 19 – July 8  
**Ionian Village** Session Two July 17 – August 5

**Senior GOYA** (Greek Orthodox Youth of America):  
 High School Grades 9-12

**Junior GOYA** (Greek Orthodox Youth of America):  
 Middle School Grades 6-8

**JOY** (Junior Orthodox Youth): Grades 4-5

**HOPE** (Holy Orthodox Primary Education): Grades K-3

*For more information about our Youth Ministries please contact  
 Fr. Gabriel Gadah at [frgabriel@agoc.org](mailto:frgabriel@agoc.org).*

Recently, we have faced a decline in participation in our youth events. This decline in participation scares me. It scares me to think that our children are living in a darkened world surrounded by earthly things that take them away from the Body of Christ. The world weighs us down with burdens and stresses. We are engulfed in various sporting events and tons of homework. The family dinner has diminished to a quick drive thru at the local fast food joint as we shuffle the children from one event to the next. As the 8th grade religion teacher at AOS, I often see the effects of this hectic world that our children live in. They fall asleep in class, stress over exams and class assignments and oftentimes don't know which direction they are going.

My dear brothers and sisters let's not let the world get the best of our children. We need to get them back home. The Church awaits with open arms to welcome them in. Christ's home is never too full. Our youth ministry

programs are in need of God's children. I hope and pray that you will consider taking time out of your busy schedules to attend the youth events, retreats or even Camp Emmanuel. + **Fr. Gabriel**

***"When your children are still small, you have to help them understand what is good.  
 That is the deepest meaning of life." + Elder Paisios***

## Religious Education It Is That Time of Year Again...

*Irene Cassis, Director of Religious Education*

March 14, the first day of Great Lent. It is a very special time for Orthodox Christians. Great Lent precedes the most important celebration in the church, the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Great Lent begins forty days before Palm Sunday and lasts until the evening preceding Palm Sunday. Holy Week is a special fast in honor of our Lord's Passion and lasts from the evening of Palm Sunday through Holy Saturday. We wait for it with great anticipation.

Saint Paul in Romans writes, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect." Great Lent. This is the time that many search to find meaning in these words. It is especially at this 50-day fasting period, more than any other time that we seek renewal and transformation. To one degree or another we follow the fast and try to listen to that still Voice of God.

This year perhaps we can take our Lenten journey through the Book of Psalms. In the Psalms we find our own pleading to God and God's promises to us. "The Lord is near to all who call upon Him..." (Psalm 145:18). "...The Lord my God will enlighten my darkness." (Psalm 18:28). "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him..." (Psalm 37:7). "Trust in the Lord, and do good..." (Psalm 37:3). "Offer to God thanksgiving... Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you..." (Psalm 50:14-15). "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path..." (Psalm 119:105). "Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth..." (Psalm 141:3). "Create in me a clean heart, O God..." (Psalm 51:10-12). "Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good..." (Psalm 34:8).

"The Psalter of St. David, the Prophet and King" (The book of Psalms) is a wonderful book to acquire for our personal library (Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 800-227-1629). "Since a time well before Christ, the Book of Psalms has been the great hymnal of the Jews, and subsequently of Christendom" (The Reader's Digest Bible, p.360). The monks at Holy Transfiguration write: "...the first services of the Church in New Testament times were composed almost exclusively from the psalms..." As a matter of fact, most of our services today begin and end with the psalms.

The writings of the Holy Fathers are also a priceless source in seeking to observe the Great Lent period by incorporating not only fasting, but prayer, good works and integrity in our daily lives. St. John Chrysostom writes:

"Abstinence from food, after all, is undertaken for this purpose, to control the exuberance of the flesh and bring this beast under control. The person fasting ought most of all keep their anger in check, learn the lesson of mildness and kindness, have a contrite heart, banish the flood of unworthy passions, keep before one's eyes that eye which never sleeps and that incorruptible tribunal, avoid becoming enthralled by money, be lavish in almsgiving, drive all ill-will to one's neighbor from the soul. This is real fasting..."

Do you see, dearly beloved, what true fasting really is? Let us perform this kind, and not entertain the facile notion held by many that the essence of fasting lies in going without food till evening. This is not the end in view, but that we should demonstrate, along with abstinence from food, abstinence from whatever is harmful, and should give close attention to spiritual duties."

Great Lent is also observed by attending more church services, reading the lives of the saints and the Bible, praying, and avoiding social events. The important thing we must keep in mind is to repent, have a change of heart, and make an effort at breaking our old sinful habits. As Marilyn Rouvelas writes in her book entitled "Greek Traditions and Customs in America, "The challenge is to recover the image of God within oneself (theosis). Lent and Easter offer each of us that opportunity.

**The Parish Saint John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival:  
A Golden Opportunity for the Youth of Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral  
to Share their Orthodox Faith!**

**An excerpt St. John Chrysostom addresses to Parents:**

*We spare neither labors nor means in order to teach our children secular sciences, so that they can serve well the earthly authorities. Only the knowledge of the holy Faith, the service of the Heavenly King are a matter of indifference to us. We allow them to attend spectacles but we care little whether they go to Church and stand within it reverently. We demand an*

*(continued on page 6)*

*account from them of what they learned in their secular institutes—why do we not demand an account from them of what they heard in the Lord's house?*

The 2016 Annunciation Cathedral St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival twenty-five participants in the Junior and Senior Division shared their understanding and love of their Faith on February 21 and 28. The first place presenters from the junior and senior division will represent our Cathedral at the Denver Metropolis Oratorical Festival which will be hosted by Saints Peter and Paul Church in Boulder, Colorado, April 8-10, 2016. Two students will be competing from the junior and senior divisions and may advance to the National Oratorical Festival hosted by the Metropolis of Atlanta and the Parish of St. Nektarios in Charlotte, North Carolina on June 10-12. At each division the students will compete for financial rewards and college scholarships.

The judges for the parish Junior Division were: Andrew Giannakakis, Jeannie Mavritsakis, Dr. Constantina Michalos, Rocky Stevens, and Carol Vartian. Senior Division parish judges were: John Anaipakos, Tony Georgas, Greg Halvatzis, Dr. Vasilios Mathews, and Nancy Nalence. Timekeeper: Kosta Georgetown. Photographer: Poppy Padley.

The **Junior Division** (Grades 7-9) winners are: **Georgia Elgohary** (1st Place) discussed how Jesus fed 5,000 with five loaves and two fish. She challenged us that “even if we only have a little to give, we should still give everything we can to others.” She quoted St. Slovan the Athonite: “My brother is my life.” **Irene Zavitsanos** (2nd Place) described the plight and massacre of Christians, especially Orthodox in the Middle East and around the world. She shared her awareness of the desecration of Orthodox Churches and how they are being used for profit. **Evi Dewey** (3rd Place) discussed taking time and to find silence and prayer in our daily lives. She reminded us to use technology to expand our Faith with something as simple as downloading and using the Goarch Daily Reading.

**Georgia Elgohary** will be representing Annunciation Cathedral at Denver Metropolis Oratorical Festival at Saints Peter and Paul Church in Boulder, CO, April 8-10.

The **Senior Division** (Grades 10-12) winners are: **Alexandra Kakadiaris** (1st Place) discussed the 20-30million people around the planet caught in human trafficking. One person every 12 minutes is captured or sold into slavery. She described how two such victims found safety and release through the Church just as St. Mary of Egypt found her freedom through God. As God's feet on earth we must grow in our awareness and be prepared to help to stop this epidemic. **Diamantis Zavitsanos** (2nd Place) reminded us that when questioned about our Faith sometimes it is much more important to say nothing and live our Faith than to try to explain. “Faith is better caught than taught.” **Christina Tsoukalas** (3rd Place) discussed how we must recognize the victims of human trafficking and spread awareness. In the life of St. Mary of Egypt, it was her Faith in God that turned her life from a prostitute to a Saint.

**Alexandra Kakadiaris** will be representing Annunciation Cathedral in the Senior Division of the Metropolis Oratorical Festival at the Saints Peter and Paul Greek Orthodox Church in Boulder, CO. April 8-10.

The Elementary St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festivals were held March 6 (Grades 5-6); March 20 (Grades 3-4); and March 27 (Grades K, 1, 2).

Many thanks go to the Elementary Oratorical Festival Chair, **Poppy Padley** and the Oratorical Festival Chair, Junior and Senior Division, **Maria Georgetown**.

### **VBS: The Brightest Week of the Summer!**

2016 VBS Cave Quest, Following Jesus, The Light of the World. Ages 4 through Grade 6, June 6-10, 9:30 – 12:30 pm, at St. George Orthodox Church. At Cave Quest VBS children don't just hear about God's love, they see it, touch it, sing it, taste it, and put it into action through God Sightings. As they travel from station to station, they go deeper into their understanding of God and God's Son, Jesus. Most importantly, children learn that because Jesus loves us, he died for us so we could live with God forever.

We welcome adults and mature teens to be considered for leadership positions. George Katrib, VBS Chair, 713-689-4970; Irene Cassis, VBS Co-Chair 832-242-9262.

April 24      Return to Sunday Church School with your **CARDBOARD CHURCH** filled to the brim with coins ready to go to the ORTHODOX MISSION CENTER to help them accomplish their task of taking the love of Christ to all nations.

*In the spirit of Lent, join us again for our Annual Outreach Ministry in support of the*



*And*

***Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral***

**Here's how you can participate:**

- Buy a pair of Shoes + Socks + Shoelaces (remember, these children are Infant thru Teen; and, it gets cold there); or, you can Donate \$25.00.
- And, be sure to Write a Special Note and place it inside the shoes – as it will be read to that child recipient at the Mission Trip in the fall.
- The Shoes can be placed in the Drop-Off Box at the Church throughout Lent and Easter (Pascha). Or, the checks, can be left in the Church office, or given to Eric McKiernen, Chair or The Sunday Church School office.
- Finally, remember to please pray for all the orphan children in the world, and thank God for the many blessings you have in your life.

~~ Thanks for your prayerful consideration ~~

**May 1 PASCHA, Egg Hunt** immediately following the 11 am Agape Service—Remember your Easter Basket!

**May 22-Last Day of Sunday Church School, Attendance Honors**

**June 5 WANTED: 2016 GRADUATES.** The Cathedral is honoring High School & University Graduates. Prior to June 5th, please email ([irenecassis@agoc.org](mailto:irenecassis@agoc.org)) the following information: name, address, cell #, email, school you are graduating from and your plans for the future, i.e. if you are a high school graduate, what university are you planning on attending in the fall?

## **Stagnation or Transformation in our Life**

*(continued from page 1)*

(Matthew 5:16). The divine light visits us to transfigure not only everything around us, but our own lives as well, that we might change, and that the light of God might begin to spread to other people through our example.

It is for this reason that the Church has the various feast days, that we might be transformed by Him through His Holy Church. But in order to allow for this transformation, we must live in accordance with the Gospel, so that through our good deeds, through our whole life, people might recognize Christ.

My dear fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, let us all strive to be transformed by Christ and His Church by putting true value on that which we publicly proclaim is important to us as Greek Orthodox Christians. Our Annunciation Cathedral is our foundation, it is our hope, and it is our home! We should not be satisfied with mediocrity or stagnation in our life in the Church. We should have a strong desire to be Christ-like. To humble ourselves before God, in order that he may use us as His servants, doing His will. Let this Holy Pascha be a renewal of our faith; let our parish home be a place where we offer our whole life to Him who showed us the ultimate example of transformation by willingly going to the Cross and being raised from the dead because of His great and unending love for us all.

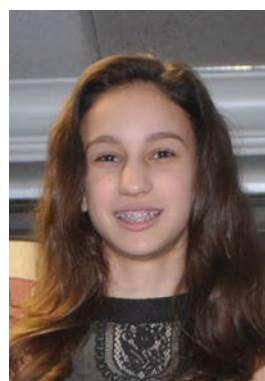
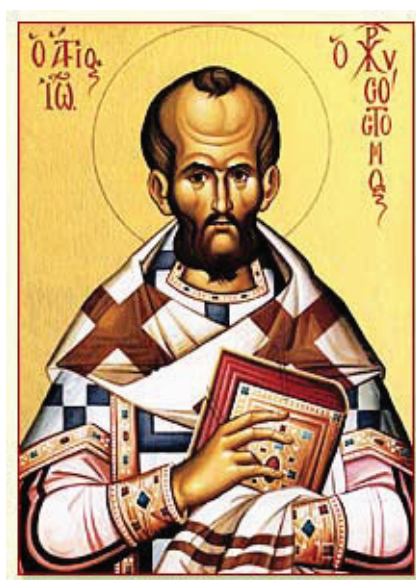
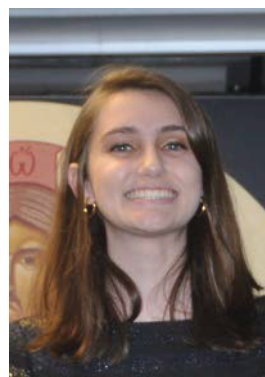
Χριστός Ανέστη!!

+*Father Michael*



# 2016 St. John Chrysostom Parish Oratorical Festival Finalists

## Senior Division



## Junior Division



## Sunday of Orthodoxy



Sunday of Orthodoxy icon procession with  
Acolytes and Sunday Church School students.  
March 20, 2016

## Annunciation Greek Language and Culture School News

*Katerina Kontogeorgaki, Director*

Dear Parishioners,

Our school continues to have another successful academic year filled with wonderful cultural events.

On December 18, we had the Christmas celebration. The students, all dressed with their festive clothes, walked into the Martel Hall holding their jingle bells. They sang the traditional Greek carols as well as other fun Christmas songs. Father Christopher blessed the celebration, and parents and students watched a short presentation about the meaning of Christmas and the Greek traditions. The students also watched a short animated movie. All the Greek School families and many friends enjoyed a delicious potluck dinner organized by the PTO. When *Agios Vasilis* (our own grandpa Savvas Tolias) walked into the hall it was a happy surprise for everyone. The children had the opportunity to take pictures with *Agio Vasili* say *Chronia Polla* and receive a special treat: a Greek chocofreta (think of kit-kat only much tastier!).

The New Year started with the cutting of the vasilopita and blessing by father Christopher. January also marks the **Three Hierarchs**, and the Greek letters day that our school celebrated with a festive dinner, dance, and silent auction on Saturday January 30. It was a great event attended by 240 guests who enjoyed an excellent dinner, music, dance and above all “kali pareia” (fellowship) in a friendly, family atmosphere. Our guests also had the opportunity to bid on the silent auction items and support our school financially. Thank you to the PTO Board for a job well done! Thank you all for coming and for supporting our school!

An important part of the Three Hierarchs event is the Scholarship awards. This year six qualified students were awarded merit scholarships for their academic performance: Alkiviadis Boukas, Artemis Kehribar, Sophia Tolias, Vera Fotopoulos, Chloe Diehl, and Marina Georgiadis. The scholarship funds were provided by the Macedonian Association, the Hellenic Cultural Center, the Hellenic Professional Society of Texas, the Pan-Cyprian Association and Mr. Giannitsopoulos. Thank you all for

your support and generosity!

Our school held the **Greek Independence Day** celebration on Sunday March 27 at the Martel Hall. Our students, dressed in the traditional costumes, presented poems, dances, and songs. We all had the opportunity to honor the Greek History and feel pride for our children and our heritage.

Our next major fundraising activity is the **Tsourekia sale** (Easter Bread). Please, join the team of our wonderful volunteers during the Bake days on April 20 and 21(Wednesday and Thursday) at the Boozalis Festival Center and help prepare those delicious breads. Please, call or email Katerina Kontogeorgaki (at 832-242-9257 or [katerinakonto@agoc.org](mailto:katerinakonto@agoc.org)) to volunteer or place your order (tsourekia cost \$18 each). You can pick up your order on Friday April 22 between 2:00pm and 6:30 pm.

Our fundraising events are organized by the school's PTO. We try to raise important funds that will benefit the everyday operation of our school (books, supplies), as well as our efforts to achieve academic excellence through scholarships, teachers' education, and music and dance workshops for the children. For those reasons we greatly appreciate all your support, financial contributions, and participation in our events.

Finally, I would like to discuss our program for adults. We offer Modern Greek Language classes for every level: Beginners, Intermediate, and Advanced. The classes take place every Tuesday at 6:30pm. We encourage you to attend our classes and see for yourselves how exciting it is to learn the Greek language.

Please, contact me for more information about the children and adult programs, our upcoming events, and different ways to help and support the Greek School.

Best regards and *Kali Sarakosti*,

Katerina Kontogeorgaki,  
School Director [katerinakonto@agoc.org](mailto:katerinakonto@agoc.org)



# ANNUNCIATION GREEK LANGUAGE & CULTURE SCHOOL

## Christmas Celebration, December 18, 2015



The Greek school teachers: Mrs. Dhrako, Mrs. Vrettos, Mrs. Padley, Mrs. Yuanidis, Mrs. Liapis, and Mrs. Papadopoulou with the school director Katerina Kontogeorgaki and Father Christopher Xanthos.



Students singing the Christmas Carols.

Students singing “Τα Χριστούγεννα είναι Χαρά”



Students singing “Αστεράκια”

## Annunciation Greek Language & Culture School

### Three Hierarchs Celebration, January 30, 2016



The scholarship recipients: Maria Georgiadis, Vera Fotopoulos, Sophia Tolias, Alkiviades Boukas, and Artemis Kehribar with the school director Katerina Kontogeorgaki.



Student Chloe Diehl receiving the scholarship.

### Vasilopita Cutting, January 7, 2015



Students are waiting for their vasilopita piece.



## PHILOPTOCHOS....Privilege and Responsibility

*Marie Halvatzis, President*

In his Gospel, St. Luke writes, “For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask more.” (12:48). The Orthodox Study Bible footnote explains the verse saying, “The master requires not merely vigilant waiting, but also actively doing God’s appointed tasks.” The appointed task of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society is to minister to those in need. “Need” can take many forms, and we, as a group, endeavor to provide for a wide variety of needs. As members of the body of Christ, it is both our privilege and our responsibility to care for others.

In the book of Acts, we find examples of the earliest Christians acting “in community” caring for each other. Following that example, Philoptochos serves the parish by sponsoring events that provide for the benefit of the parish and for a feeling of community such as the Clean Monday Retreat, March 24th and 25th receptions honoring the parish’s Name Day, Palm Sunday Fish Dinner, as well as other events which arise periodically. We have a dedicated group of women who, for many years, have worked to make these events happen and who work out of love not for recognition.

While much of our work is for our local community, our reach is both national and international. Being an Archdiocesan wide organization, we pool resources with fellow sisters in Christ to expand that reach. In February, our Cathedral was privileged to host, for the first time, a meeting of the Philoptochos National Board. This group of women, from all over the United States, is responsible for setting the tone of our work. A highlight of the meeting was the project “Feeding Children Everywhere” in which the board members, our clergy, parishioners, and AOS students assembled 12,000 meal kits to be distributed through agencies in Houston to those in need of food. This project was supported financially by the national board and by our local chapter.

The visit of His Grace Bishop Neofitos from the African Orthodox Church of Kenya for our Clean Monday Retreat reminded us of the work being done in Africa to bring the message of the Eastern Orthodox Church to the people there. We can show love for others by providing for their physical needs. Our pillowcase dress project, supporting “Little Dresses for Africa” has been such a popular, hands on project that we are expanding it to include “Britches for Boys” which are made out of tee shirts. These dresses and shorts are distributed in Africa by Christian organizations. We need donations of pillowcases, tee shirts, and financial support to purchase notions and to pay for shipping. But, most of all, we need people to sew. For more information, please visit the Philoptochos table during the coffee hour or contact Harriett Semander who chairs this “Labor of Love” outreach project.

One of our ongoing ministries is to visit those parishioners whose health does not permit them to get out much. A dedicated group of women and men make visits and, at Christmas and Pascha, deliver gift and cards from Philoptochos and our AOS students. Kris McGee chairs this ministry and is always looking for additional volunteers to make visits.

If you are not already a member of Philoptochos, please consider joining our group and supporting the philanthropic arm of the Church. There is a place for women of all ages in Philoptochos. Please visit the Philoptochos table during the coffee hour for a membership form or contact Marie Halvatzis at mhalvatzis@gmail.com or 713-823-9168 for more information.

## Philoptochos “Feed Children Everywhere” Project



**At its winter meeting in Houston on February 5, 2016 the National Philoptochos Board packaged 12,096 meals to feed underprivileged children in Houston as part of National Philoptochos President Maria Logus’ 250,000-Meal “Feeding the Hungry” challenge. Approximately 50 National Board members worked together with Bishop Sevastianos, local Philoptochos members, Goyans and Fr. Michael, Fr. Christopher and Fr. Gabriel to package the meals in a little over one hour.**



**His Grace Bishop Sevastianos, Spritual Advisor for Philoptochos, with AGOC clergy at the “Feeding Children Everywhere” project during the National Philoptochos Board meeting in Houston.**

## Ordination to the Holy Priesthood



**Rev. Fr. Gabriel Gadah of Annunciation Cathedral was ordained to the Holy Priesthood by His Eminence Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver on February 28, 2016. The ordination took place at Fr. Gabriel's home church, St. Barbara Greek Orthodox Church, in Sarasota, Florida.**

L-R Dn. Paul Zaharis, Chancellor of the Metropolis of Denver; Fr. Michael Lambakis, Proistamenos, Annunciation Cathedral; Fr. John Bociu, Proistamenos, St. Barbara; His Eminence Metropolitan Isaiah of Denver; Fr. Gabriel and Presvytera Dorian Gadah; V. Rev. Archimandrite Frank Kirlangitis, Pastor Emeritus, St. Barbara.

## The Power of Prayer

*(continued from page 2)*

of our prayers so that at the end of the class we can pray for them. Without mentioning names, those in the classes know that, a few years ago, our collective prayer led to a tremendous improvement, and later, healing of a person. Of course, the effect of prayer is not confined to groups like Bible study. Let me share with you a personal experience. Some time ago, I visited a person who had undergone surgery. Two days later the person lapsed into virtual coma with dilated pupils – this is an ominous sign: impending brain death. For two weeks I visited the person almost daily, prayed over the person and anointed with oil just as written in verse 14 above. My family and the patient's family also prayed. By God's Grace, in a manner of days, the patient opened eyes, perked up and was lucid—well on the way to recovery. This was the result of corporate faith and prayer!

Finally, let us recall the events of Apollo 13 in 1970. On the way to the moon, there was an explosion that crippled the mission. The damage was so bad, that the odds of the crew making it back safely were miniscule. Yet the Congress of the United States called upon our citizens to pray for the crew. Moreover, the Pope and 50,000 people gathered outside St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, and Jews gathered in Jerusalem at the Wailing Wall, all praying for the crew's safe return. They, indeed, did return safely, and intact; another amazing result of corporate prayer, this time worldwide!

My brothers and sisters, faithful, fervent prayer works. Use it. Talk to God, communicate with him, have a relationship with him through and by PRAYER. In this Great Lent, and always, continue praying...and as St. Paul says, pray continuously. Amen

+Fr. Demetri



## Clean Monday Retreat with Bishop Neofitos of Kenya



**Philoptochos Clean Monday Retreat at Annunciation Cathedral  
with guest speaker Bishop Neofitos of Kenya.**

March 14, 2016



**Baby Blessing of Alexander Dean Enterline  
by Bishop Neofitos following Divine Liturgy  
at Annunciation Cathedral.**

March 13, 2016



## Senior Citizens

*Kiki Pantazis & Paula Phocas*

Hi everyone.

I hope you all are doing well

Now that all the Christmas holidays and the mild winter are behind us it is time to think about spring and Holy Easter.

Our holidays were very nice and a lot of fun except for the sad news of our sweet Elani's husband's sudden death. Our prayers are with her and their family. May God give her the strength and comfort she needs right now to go on and honor his memory.

I would like to thank all our sponsors who so faithfully support us. Each sponsor goes above and beyond the call of duty to do the best for our Seniors. There are not enough words that can express my gratitude to each one of them. THANK YOU ALL.

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 next year 2016-2017, I have only two openings left. Please contact me, Kiki Pantazis, at 713-340-1113 or Paula Phocas at 713-661-5017. We can celebrate any occasion – birthday, anniversary, or the memory of a loved one.

I hope you can attend all these meetings and have fun with us.

This is our schedule for the rest of the year:

**MARCH 18, our yearly outing. This year we went to the Museum of Natural Science & IMAX then we had lunch at Escalante's in Town & Country.**

**APRIL 5, lunch sponsored by the Grivon family.**

**APRIL 19, our sponsors are Damon & Cindy Diamantaras.**

**MAY 6, AHEPA & DOP hosting their annual Easter celebration for us.**

**MAY 17, our sponsor is Annunciation Orthodox School (AOS).**

**JUNE 7, our sponsor is Nick Voinis.**

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 713-661-5017

## AGOC Widows Outreach – His Touch Fellowship

### Widowhood & Great Lent

In Old Testament times, widows were defined as women who were alone, destitute and without means of caring for themselves. They could be young or old, with or without child, married, divorced or single. Whatever the circumstances that befell a widow, one thing was for certain - such women were under God's special care as seen in Psalm 68:5 "... a defender of widows." Time and time again, in the Old Testament, God reminded the Jewish people how much He cared for widows:

"... cursed is he who perverts the judgement of a widow." (Deut. 27:19), "...justify the widow."

(Isaiah 1:17), "Do not oppress or act ungodly toward the widow." (Jeremiah 22:3), and "You shall not afflict any widow..." (Exodus 22:21).

God's early Law of Moses on how to treat widows was hard to fulfill. The Jewish people did not have the willpower (or Holy Spirit) to keep all the laws of the Old Testament. These laws made them feel guilty, which then paved the way for Jesus to fulfill the Law.

The Gospels tell many stories of Jesus' love and support of widows. In Mark 12:43-44, Jesus watched as a poor widow gave all she had to the temple treasury while others gave of their abundance. Jesus noticed how much the others held back for themselves and praised the widow who, out of her poverty, put in her whole livelihood.

Another time, Jesus resurrected the body of a lonely widow's son because she would not have anyone to care for her. Jesus merely touched the open coffin and spoke life into her son (Luke 7:12-15). The Apostle Peter also spoke life into the lifeless body of a seamstress named Dorcas, a follower of Christ, who made clothes for poor widows in the town of Joppa.

"God will one day open all the graves and raise the dead." Ezk 7:1-14

In the early Christian church (Acts 6:3), there were problems determining who was considered a widow and who was to care for them. Grecian Jewish widows settled in Jerusalem from other parts of the Hellenized

world. Before long, there were complaints that they were not receiving as much food and attention from the Church as the Hebraic Jewish widows. Some commentaries believe this was not intentional, but was most likely due to a language barrier... not much different from what is happening in America today with non-English speaking migrants.

"A Widow's Fast: Give the money that you would have used for your meal to a hungry person." Unknown

In 1 Timothy Chapter 5, Saint Paul warned the Church of false teachings, which included identifying true widows without family and outlining the Church's responsibilities towards widows, the poor, and the sick. The Church required widows to fill certain qualifications and lifestyles. For instance, a widow had to be over 60 years of age and must have been a faithful wife while married. Her life had to be full of good deeds such as bringing up children or sewing clothes for the poor. She could not claim to be a widow if she was divorced prior to her husband's death. Younger widows were encouraged to remarry. If that was not possible, widows were to trust God and continue their lives in supplications and prayers day and night. In other words, a widow's lifestyle was much like observing Great Lent year-around.

"Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: To look after orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." James 1:27

The most defining scene in the Bible concerning God's love and protection for widows comes at the Cross. In the last minutes on the Cross, bleeding and in excruciating pain, Jesus gasped to His devoted follower to care for His beloved mother, a widow:

"Woman, behold your son," and to the disciple, "Behold your Mother."

"From that time on, this disciple took her into his home." (John 19:26, 27)

# Cathedral Calendar

## May - June - July, 2016

### MAY

**Holy Pascha Sunday, May 1**

**Agape Vespers 11:00 am**

Easter Egg Hunt 12:30 pm, Courtyard

**Monday, May 2 - St. George**

**Orthros 8:30 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am,**

**St. George Chapel**

**Friday, May 6 - Feast of the Life-Giving Fountain**

**Orthros 8:30 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am**

Sr. Citizens Easter Celebration 10:30 am

Greek School 5:00 pm

**Sunday, May 8 - Sunday of St. Thomas**

**Mother's Day**

**ONE DIVINE LITURGY**

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

**Tuesday, May 10**

Philoptochos General Meeting 7:00 pm, Martel Hall

**Friday, May 13**

Greek School 5:00 pm

**Sunday, May 15 -**

**Sunday of the Myrrh-bearing Women**

**Orthros 7:45 am/Divine Liturgies 9:00 & 11:00 am/SCS**

**Tuesday, May 17**

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

**Friday, May 20**

Greek School 5:00 pm

Greek School Graduation 6:00 pm, Martel Hall

**Saturday, May 21 - SS Constantine & Helen**

**Orthros 8:30 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am**

HOPE & JOY End of Year Party 11:00 am,

Trophy Room, Gym, Playground

**Sunday, May 22 - Sunday of the Paralytic**

**ONE DIVINE LITURGY**

**Last Day of SCS - Attendance Honors**

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

**Saturday, May 28**

Journey of Marriage Seminar 9:00 am, Martel Hall

**Sunday, May 29 - Sunday of the Samaritan Woman**

**SUMMER SCHEDULE BEGINS - ONE DIVINE LITURGY**

**Orthros 8:15 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am**

**Monday, May 30 - Memorial Day**

Cathedral Office Closed

### JUNE

**Sunday, June 5 - Sunday of the Blind Man**

**Orthros 8:15 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am**

**Graduate Honors**

**Monday, June 6**

Vacation Bible School (VBS), at St. George Orthodox Church 9:30 am

**Tuesday, June 7**

VBS at St. George Orthodox Church 9:30 am

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

**Wednesday, June 8**

VBS at St. George Orthodox Church 9:30 am

**Thursday, June 9 - Holy Ascension**

**Orthros 8:30 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am**

VBS at St. George Orthodox Church 9:30 am

**Friday, June 10**

VBS at St. George Orthodox Church 9:30 am

**Sunday, June 12 - Fathers of the First Ecumenical Council**

**Orthros 8:15 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am**

Metropolis of Denver Camp Emmanuel - Junior Session (June 12-18)

**Saturday, June 18 - Saturday of Souls**

**Orthros 8:30 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am**

**Sunday, June 19 - Holy Pentecost**

Father's Day

**Orthros 8:15 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am**Metropolis of Denver Camp Emmanuel - Senior Session  
(June 19-25)**Friday, June 24 - Nativity of John the Baptist****Orthros 8:30 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am****Sunday, June 26 - All Saints****Orthros 8:15 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am****Monday, June 27**Greek Festival Preparation 9:00 am,  
Boozalis Festival Center**Tuesday, June 28**

Greek Festival Preparation 9:00 am

**Wednesday, June 29 - Apostles Peter and Paul****Orthros 8:30 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am**

Greek Festival Preparation 11:00 am

**Thursday, June 30 - Synaxis of the Twelve Apostles**

Orthros 8:30 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am

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**JULY**

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**Sunday, July 3 - 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Mathew****Orthros 8:15 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am****Monday, July 4 - Independence Day**

Cathedral Office Closed

**Saturday, July 9**

Greek Festival Preparation 9:00 am

**Sunday, July 10 - 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Matthew****Orthros 8:15 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am**

Greek Festival Preparation 11:00 am

**Monday, July 11**

Greek Festival Preparation 9:00 am

**Tuesday, July 12**

Greek Festival Preparation 9:00 am

**Wednesday, July 13**

Greek Festival Preparation 9:00 am

**Thursday, July 14**

Greek Festival Preparation 9:00 am

**Sunday, July 17 - Sunday of the Holy Fathers****Orthros 8:15 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am****Monday, July 18**

Greek Festival Preparation 9:00 am

**Tuesday, July 19**

Greek Festival Preparation 9:00 am

**Wednesday, July 20 - Elias the Prophet****Orthros 8:30 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am**

Greek Festival Preparation 11:00 am

**Saturday, July 23**

Greek Festival Preparation 9:00 am

**Sunday, July 24 - 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Matthew****Orthros 8:15 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am**

Greek Festival Preparation 11:00 am

**Monday, July 25**

Greek Festival Preparation 9:00 am

**Tuesday, July 26**

Greek Festival Preparation 9:00 am

**Wednesday, July 27 - St. Panteleimon****Orthros 8:30 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am**

Greek Festival Preparation 11:00 am

**Thursday, July 28**

Greek Festival Preparation 9:00 am

**Sunday, July 31 - 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Matthew****Orthros 8:15 am / Divine Liturgy 9:30 am**



# REGISTRY

*November 30, 2015 - March 31, 2016*

## WEDDINGS

Tassie Kalas Hewitt and  
Wesley Eugene Haney  
Sponsor: Celeste Patsouras

Kara Lynn Koinis and  
Alexander Ray Bergerson  
Sponsor: Kevin Koinis

## BAPTISMS

Alexander Steve  
Parents: Alexandra Balzer and  
Steve G. Caloudas III  
Godparent: Constantine Caloudas

Esther Marie Serafeim (Seraphima)  
Parents: Hannah and Christian Hauser  
Godparents: Maria and Kosta Georgetown

August Vietor (Augustine)  
Parents: Anne and Walker Kahle  
Godparent: Aristedes Tropoli

Sebastian Thomas (Sevastianos)  
Parents: Johna and Manuel Mercado  
Godparent: Georgia Charkalis

Theodoros Leonidas  
Parents: Athanasia and Forrest Milkowski  
Godparent: Manousos E. Lionikis

Elena Zoe  
Parents: Katina and Eduardo Robalino  
Godparent: Ioannis Psaltis

Anna Elizabeth  
Parents: Joanna and Michael Trout  
Godparent: Natalie Magoulas

Sybil Maria  
Parents: Elena and Andrew Trusty  
Godparent: Joseph Karisny

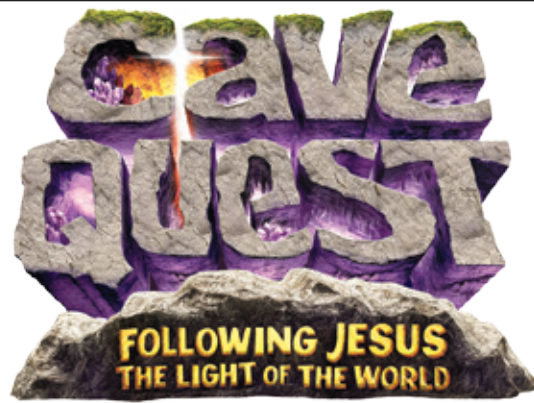
Natalia Olivia  
Parents: Antonina and Travis Tust  
Godparent: Danil Karasev

James (Iakovos) Walter Brummett  
Sponsor: William Venzke

Suzanne (Paraskevi) Dorfling  
Sponsor: Anastasia Zavitsanos

## FUNERALS

Diamantis (Dan) Cassis  
Frances Catsis  
James Catsis  
Rodamia Helen Christie  
Helen M. Coronis  
Ted William Harrison  
Georgia Andrews Littlejohn  
Christos Moudrizas  
Alexandra Simotas



## Dear Parents:

### Send your kids on an over-the-top underground adventure!

At Cave Quest VBS, kids explore the rock-solid foundation of Jesus' love. Cave Quest VBS is filled with incredible Bible-learning experiences kids see, hear, touch, and even taste! Sciency-Fun Gizmos™, team-building games, cool Bible songs, and tasty treats are just a few of the standout activities that help faith flow into real life. (Since everything is hands-on, kids might get a little messy. Be sure to send them in play clothes and safe shoes.) Plus, we'll help kids discover how to see evidence of God in everyday life—something we call God Sightings. Get ready to hear *that* phrase a lot!

Your kids will also participate in a hands-on mission project, through a program called Operation Kid-to-Kid™, that will let the kids in our community show God's mighty love to needy kids in the United States.

Parents, grandparents, and friends are invited to join us at Cave Quest Closing for each day at 12:15 p.m., a daily exploration of Jesus—the light of the world!

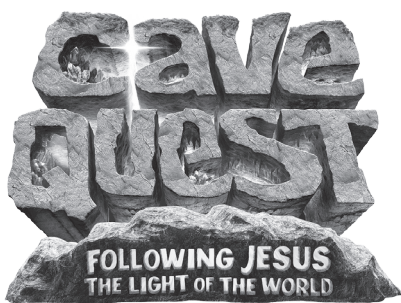
So mark these dates on your calendar: June 6 - 10, 2016

The fun starts at 9:30 a.m. and will end at 12:30 p.m.

Call this number George: 713-689-4970/Irene: 832-242-9262 to register your children for this life-changing adventure! Or use VBS P.R.O.® to register online!

Sincerely,

**Your Cave Quest VBS Director**



# Registration Form

(One Per Child)

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Child's gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's age: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Last school grade completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of parent(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Street address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Home telephone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/caregiver's cell phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_

Home email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home church: \_\_\_\_\_

Crew number or name (for church use only): \_\_\_\_\_

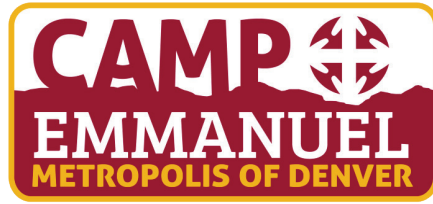
Allergies or other medical conditions: \_\_\_\_\_



In case of emergency, contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to child: \_\_\_\_\_



# 2016 CAMP EMMANUEL

Dates: Junior Session (ages 11-14 years): June 12-18, 2016  
Senior Session (ages 15-18 years): June 19-25, 2016



Location: Manzano Mountain Retreat  
Torreon, New Mexico

Registration Cost: \$375\* (\$355 for siblings in immediate family)

\*completed registrations prior to March 31 will receive a 10% discount

Registration Deadline:

- Early Bird: 11:59pm (mountain) March 31, 2016
- Regular: 11:59pm (mountain) May 6, 2016

Registration Link: <https://www.events.denver.goarch.org/index.php?controller=event&task=options&eventId=66>

If you have questions about registration, please contact [rsinos@denver.goarch.org](mailto:rsinos@denver.goarch.org).



ANNUNCIATION  
GREEK ORTHODOX  
CATHEDRAL  
3511 YOAKUM BOULEVARD  
HOUSTON, TEXAS 77006-4388