

# THE Message



THE  
RESURRECTION  
OF CHRIST

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MAY – JUNE 2018



**Saint Mark Feeds 20,000  
Hungry Children!**

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## CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY HE IS RISEN!

### SAINT MARK CELEBRATES THE FEAST OF FEASTS

*Though You went down into the tomb...You rose as the victor, O Christ our God; and You called out "Rejoice" to the Myrrh-bearing women, and gave peace to Your Apostles, O Lord who to the fallen grant resurrection. - Kontakion of Pascha*

It's hard to believe that it has almost been 40 Days after Pascha. Over the course of Holy Week, thousands of faithful came to glorify our Lord's Passion, Crucifixion, and Resurrection at Saint Mark. We pray that the risen Lord may continually shine His Light on our Saint Mark family and the Orthodox faithful everywhere!

Photos from Holy Week 2018 on the Back Page

## THE FEASTDAY CELEBRATION OF SAINT MARK



On Wednesday, April 25, at 9:00 am, we celebrated a Divine Liturgy for our annual Feastday of the Apostle and Evangelist Mark, the patron saint of our Church. The preceding evening we held a Great Vespers in honor of the feast, with a beautiful reception prepared by our dedicated Philoptochos members. We pray that the Lord will continue to grant our Saint Mark family many more years of Christian ministry. *"O Holy Apostle and Evangelist Mark, intercede to Christ our God to have mercy on our souls!"*



*The Message* is an in-print outreach to the Orthodox Christian community of Boca Raton and the greater South Florida region. This publication aims to inform, edify, and serve as a witness to its readers of the Truth of Jesus Christ as confirmed in the Holy Gospel.

*The Message* is a ministry of:



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Greek Orthodox Church

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**Welcome:** Elaine Zographus

**Readers:** Ted Vagelos

**The Message:** Fr. Steven Klund

**Live Streaming:**

Ted Vagelos & Nick Csakany

**Audio:** Tom Spiliopoulos

# FIRST FRUITS

On Sunday, April 29, volunteers from the entire Saint Mark family banded together in an effort to provide life-saving nutrition to thousands of local malnourished children. Over one hundred volunteers stayed after Liturgy to help pack 20,000 meals in our Fellowship Hall. Included below is a first-hand recap from one of our volunteers, James Constantine.

What a great day at Saint Mark! It began with a beautiful Divine Liturgy officiated by His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios (who delivered a powerful and passionate sermon), and ended with more than 100 parishioners assembling 20,000 meals for the hungry. The event was a remarkable opportunity for community service, and gave our parish a tangible way to make a significant difference here in South Florida. The event was made possible thanks to our partner "Feeding Children Everywhere," who provided the materials, training, and then organized the distribution of the meals through Boca Helping Hands.

We also must thank our own Frank Rekas, who acted as the chairperson for the event. His incredible work and devotion helped make this amazing day possible for all of us, and most importantly, all of the children who will benefit from these meal packages.

After the hour-and-a-half of packing, all of



our volunteers were treated to some of Boca Raton's finest Pizza from Renzo's along with some great fellowship. I couldn't help but notice the satisfied expression on the faces of all of our volunteers as they were enjoying the pizza after a morning of service to others. Their content faces were not a result of the pizza (though it was delicious), but in the realization that so many thousands of children will have full bellies thanks to their efforts.

On behalf of the entire Saint Mark Family, I would like to thank all who participated and contributed to help make this outreach initiative a big success!



## "PAVE THE WAY" PARKING RENOVATIONS BEGINNING SOON!

Starting later this month, our long-awaited "Pave the Way" parking lot renovation will begin construction! We anticipate that the work will be completed before the beginning of the new ecclesiastical year (Sept. 1), and we ask that everyone be mindful of their surroundings when moving about our parking lot during those months. Thank you in advance for your patience in this process.

PASTORAL MESSAGE  
*Rev. Fr. Mark Leondis*



My dear faithful,

Christ is Risen!

This month is a very exciting time for many of the young people in our Saint Mark Family. Over twenty of our young people will be graduating from High School, our Sunday Church School and youth activities, and continuing their journey toward adulthood. This is indeed a major accomplishment. We the Clergy, are ever so proud of each of you and your dedicated families, who have participated in our Christ-centered programs at Saint Mark. We are especially proud that during these formative years of your life, you have placed your spiritual life at the center. The countless hours that you have come for religious instruction, education and worship is indeed exemplary — and we thank you for your excitement and desire to grow closer to God.

Our Saint Mark parish is quite active in our youth ministry with over 200 young people participating. The ministry year is winding down and we are soon about to begin our summer vacations. While we take vacations during this time of year, it is important that we do not take a vacation from God. Staying close to Christ and His Church is not just for a few months out of the year — we are encouraged to be active always in our Faith through fasting, prayer and helping those in need. Here are a few helpful tips for remaining close to God this summer:

1. Continue to participate in the Sacramental life of the Church - Come to Church regularly
2. Pick up your Bible and read one Chapter each day
3. Volunteer at a local community center; outreach program
4. Stop by the bookstore and pick up a spiritual book for your summer reading
5. Join our Prayer Ministry Team — praying for those in need

The Faith is something that we should never “take a break from”, but always striving to be more active. Use this summer as an opportunity to deepen your relationship with Christ and His Church. Feel free to speak to one of the Priests should you need any help during this time to draw closer to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. We love you and are here for you!

Praying you have a blessed and enriching summer,

*+ Fr. Mark Leondis*

Father Mark



## STEWARDSHIP



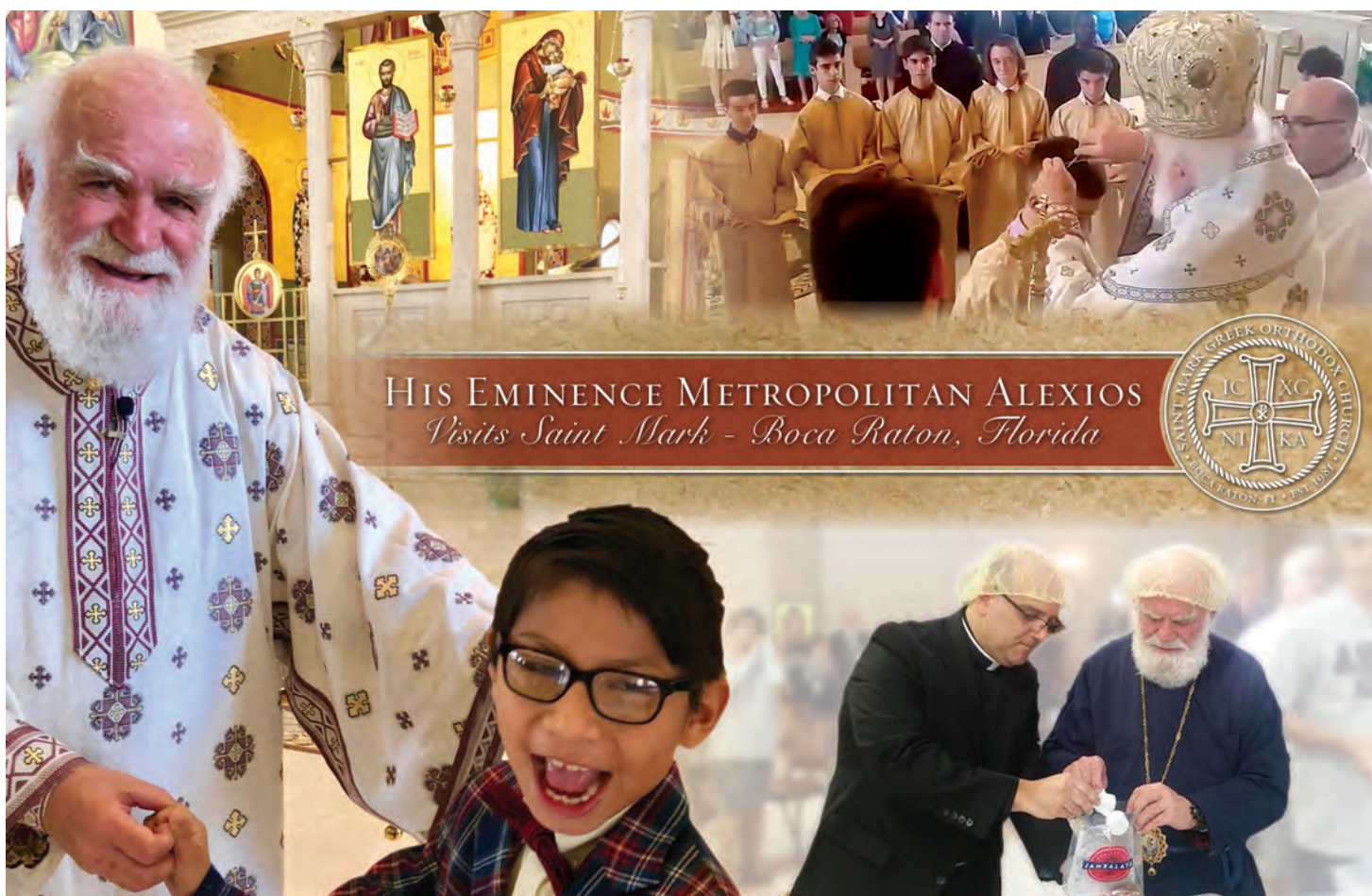
Life on earth is a gift. The work we do is also a gift if we see it as an opportunity to serve God and others. Saint Paul instructs us, “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men...” (Colossians 3:23). When we see our work in this way, we are able to become Christian stewards of our work.

Being a steward is about becoming a good caretaker of all that God has given us. God has given each of us special and unique gifts. And through Holy Scripture He teaches us all that we have is a loan. He lends everything to us, and reminds us that one day He will ask us to give a detailed accounting of what we have done with the gifts He has given us. Archbishop Anastasios of Albania has noted that “we find ourselves by offering ourselves.” Have we learned the blessedness of generously giving to others of all we have?

That is the measure of Christian Stewardship, not giving merely an expendable portion, but giving the *best* of what we have, and who we are. We are called to give back to God from the “first fruits” of our labor. We support our parish and her ministries in an intentional way and not with only what is left after everything else has been taken care of.

75% of the Saint Mark budget comes from Stewardship. Without you filling out your stewardship pledge envelope each and every year, we cannot exist. If you haven't filled out your 2018 stewardship pledge envelope — please, do so today (they are located in the pews). “God loves a cheerful giver.” - (2 Cor. 9:7)





HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN ALEXIOS  
*Visits Saint Mark - Boca Raton, Florida*



## *The Saint Mark Family Welcomes* HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN ALEXIOS

*"Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching." - 1 Tim 5:17*

During the last weekend of April, the Saint Mark family welcomed our Chief Shepherd and Spiritual Father, His Eminence Metropolitan Alexios of Atlanta to Boca Raton.

On Sunday April 29, His Eminence led us in the celebration of the Divine Liturgy at Saint Mark in remembrance of the Sunday of the Paralytic. After the service Altar Co-Captain Sean Gibson, along with 10 acolytes, were tonsured to the rank of "Reader" by His Eminence.

Once the faithful were dismissed from the sanctuary, they then made their way to the Fellowship Hall to take part in the "Feeding Children Everywhere" project. His Eminence joined over 100 volunteers from

our parish in preparing 20,000 meals for malnourished children here in South Florida! Without a doubt, this weekend will be one that is long remembered and cherished by all who were present. *Visit our Saint Mark Facebook page for photos of the weekend.*

Last week we received a letter from His Eminence expressing his gratitude for the invitation to visit us. His Eminence writes: "I thank you for welcoming me with such gracious and warm hospitality during my

most recent visit to your parish...When I entered the hall after Divine Liturgy, and saw so many people—men, women, and children of all ages—diligently preparing thousands of meals for the needy, truly, it filled my heart with emotion. I am thankful that God has given me the opportunity to serve, and work alongside with such wonderful and considerate people."

As the presiding Hierarch for the 77 parishes throughout the Metropolis of Atlanta, His Eminence is constantly on the move visiting the faithful under his care. We are so appreciative of the time that His Eminence was able to set aside for us, despite his busy schedule. On behalf of our clergy, staff, Parish Council, Philoptochos society, and the entire Saint Mark Family, we thank His Eminence for visiting with us, and we look forward to his next trip to Boca Raton. *May God Grant Him Many Years!*





# THE FEAST OF PENTECOST

..... FR. ALEXANDER LEONDIS .....



*"It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Comforter will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you."*

**T**he eternal the Son of God, Jesus Christ becomes incarnate for our salvation to restore us once again to the pre-fallen state in Eden. We recently relived these saving events which brought these about; the Lord's Crucifixion, His Passion and His glorious Resurrections.

The Lord's promise of sending the Comforter is realized on Pentecost Day. On this day, the Holy Spirit descends on the apostles and the Church is established. The Church is given its essence, the real presence of God by the Holy Spirit, which transforms the disciples from fishermen to fishers of people, drawing all who believe into the nets of the Church.

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity, continues the work of Christ by enabling and empowering the disciples and the clergy through the centuries to lead all people to salvation. The New Adam, Christ, replaces the old Adam. We are no longer subjected to the desires of the flesh, as was with the old Adam, but in Christ we are able to soar to the heavens and participate in the life of Eden, life in Paradise once again. At Pentecost the new age and a new creation begins for all believers.

We no longer walk in the darkness of evil and ignorance as we did after the Fall, but in the light of God. We belong not only to this world, but simultaneously to the heavenly. Human nature is exalted, for the Lord resurrects our human body to a new spiritual body and places it on the right hand of the Father together with his own body.

The Holy Spirit now is man's companion, giving him the strength to free himself from the bondage of evil and to live in the Lord. All believers are once again found in God's favor as they were before the Fall in the Garden Eden.

The Holy Spirit, received at Chrismation, grants us the gifts or fruit of the Spirit. "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control." (Galatians 5:22-23) These beautiful gifts are ours. What great comfort the Comforter bestows on us!

Love is given first place in the gallery of God's gifts. Like beautiful pictures, they offer beauty to the soul they adorn. Love is considered the root of all Christian virtues. All virtues are nourished by love. If the root is cut from a tree, the tree will die. If the root of God's love is lacking from our soul, then all virtues are in danger of dying within us.

Love is God working in us drawing us closer to himself. It takes two people to love. God offers love and we receive it as a gift and in turn we offer love to the Lord and to others. Love reconciles the estranged, makes the unbelievers believers, the indifferent enthusiastic, the anxious meek and the proud humble. To love and not be transformed or transforming is not to love at all.

The joyous message of Pentecost is that God's love is among us through the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, "Christ is among us, he is and shall always be" now and for all eternity. As the Saint Mark parish, the love of Christ binds us together into his Body, the Church. As we grow in our love for Christ, we grow also in our love for each other.

*"If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit!"*





At Saint Mark, we love God and we love our children. JOY has been an organization that has brought our youth together and closer to the teachings of our faith. Through activities that are guided by Fr. Steven, our children learn the values of friendship, loyalty and respect for God and each other. We have had a successful game night that was centered around thankfulness and love for our blessings. The children have also strengthened their bonds and friendship with retreats held in the park and team centered games. Recently, during Holy Week, the children of JOY were able to participate in making the crosses out of palms for Palm Sunday, as well as the Sacrament of confession with Fr. Mark. It was such a blessing to learn about forgiveness and what Jesus sacrificed so that we can live our lives in the path of God. Finally, just last weekend we held our annual JOY Olympics, and we could not have asked for a better ending to the year!



## SAINT MARK Mommy + Me

TUESDAYS @ 10AM (BI-WEEKLY)

We are wrapping up our 2017-18 Mommy+Me classes. Next week, May 22, is our last class before Summer break and our "graduation" party. Though it doesn't seem like much, these young children are absorbing in the fundamentals of Orthodox Christianity every class. Every other Tuesday



at 10 am at Saint Mark, our parents and their children have gathered in the Church to light candles before heading next door to our "early education classroom." There we always begin with a short prayer service in front of a child-sized iconostasis. The class continues with story-time, music,

crafts and free-play time. During the play time, the parents are led by Fr. Steven in a spiritual discussion about parenting with Orthodox values in a modern world. If you are interested in joining "Mommy + Me" please email us at [office@saintmarkboca.net](mailto:office@saintmarkboca.net) or call us at 561-994-4822 for more details regarding the upcoming 2018-19 year.



On February 12 we celebrated our Valentine Membership Event, organized by Mary Gagliardi, at the Boca Bath and Tennis Clubhouse. Over 75 ladies shared an afternoon of delicious food and friendship, as well as an informative program about Philoptochos presented by Anita Kartalopoulos, a member of the National Board. If you have not done so already, please fill out a membership form to update our records and volunteer your talents. All membership dues should be paid before April 30 so we can send in our results to National. We already have 23 new members and are hoping to surpass the 200+ members we had last year. Men are also welcome to join as non-voting associate members (there are now five!). Please contact our membership Co-chairs Suzette Johnson and Kathi Sharp for more details.

The first Lenten dinner, prepared by Assimo Kitsos and Philoptochos volunteers, served 120 people - a wonderful start to our Lenten journey. We also once again sold dyed eggs and tsoureki before and during Holy Week, provided the flowers for the Epitaphio, and assisted with the Anastasi dinner, which was a beautiful way to share the end of our journey with family and friends.



During our March General Meeting, we had a special presentation by Thelma Sorrentino, who has helped prepare koliva for our parishioners for many years. She explained the meaning of this tradition in the Orthodox faith and walked us through the process step by step. If you are interested in helping with this prayerful ministry, please contact Thelma or a Board member.

In May 2017 our Philoptochos chapter awarded \$4,000 in scholarships to our high school graduates. This year we have an unusually high number of seniors and were blessed to help support those who applied.

Last year we applied for our 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status, and we were pleased to receive notification in February that our request had been granted. In addition to donors being able to deduct their contributions, we are also qualified to receive tax-deductible bequests, devises, transfers and gifts. We would like to thank Maria Spiliopoulos and Harry Mirabile for their assistance in helping us with this important project.

During the month of March, all Philoptochos chapters send in a donation for Hellenic College Holy Cross (HCHC). In their recent newsletter there was a special article acknowledging Philoptochos and their special relationship with the school. Philoptochos now has 26,000 members in 440 chapters, each of which raises funds for HCHC twice a year. "To date, Philoptochos has given over \$3.7 million to our school for everything from scholarships to technological improvements... We thank every one of these generous and hardworking women for helping us fulfill our sacred mission." So when you pick up your pastry and cup of coffee during coffee hour, remember to make a thoughtful and generous donation to our many worthy projects.

## SUNDAY CHURCH SCHOOL NEWS - JULIE VAGELOS

Its hard to believe, but our Sunday Church School Ministry will soon be finishing up a year filled with spiritual growth and education for a record number of over 180 registered students. On any given week we have lessons on the Cross, our Creed, Feast Days, Parables and the history of our Church. Our very young children learn through lessons, crafts and music. Our older middle and high school students learn through lessons and thought provoking discussions geared to their age group.

Once per month the younger students have a lesson and craft that is geared towards the current Feast Day or Gospel with Alexis Lindholm. All students in 1st to 5th grade have music lessons twice per month with Virginia Barnes to help them learn the music of the church.

For our older students, we recently welcomed Father Luke Veronis over the OCMC Gala Weekend. Father Luke addressed our High School aged students (Grades 9-12) in a joint lesson that detailed his journey from college basketball player to his calling as a missionary that eventually led him to serving in the former communist country of Albania. Father Luke's fascinating story of service to our church was inspirational to all the students.



We also were very pleased to see such interest and thoughtfulness from our students during this year's Oratorical Festival. Out of the 9 speakers who presented topics at our parish festival, the top two finalists in each division were able to advance to the District round in Miami. The four finalists are pictured above (from left to right), John Dougals (sr.), Anastasia Gavrilos (sr.), Eireni Zaparegos (jr.), and Stephanie Vagelos (sr.). We are so proud of all of our speakers this year!

Please join us! While we are just days away from our final classes and Graduation (to be held on Sunday, May 20th), we are happy to speak to anyone interested in joining us for the next academic year. Each week, we welcome all school aged children of Saint Mark Stewards and love to have parent volunteers to help us with lessons, stories, substitute teaching, or crafts.

A special thank you to all our teachers, substitutes, craft and music teachers. We appreciate your devotion to our children of Saint Mark.

Please reach out to Julie Vagelos ([julie@vagos.com](mailto:julie@vagos.com)) or Helen Lang ([helenelang@bellsouth.net](mailto:helenelang@bellsouth.net)) to volunteer or with any questions.

## GREEK LANGUAGE SCHOOL - ANNA KAISAR

We are just a few days away from our final classes of the year! Our students have been wonderful this year, with many of them excelling in and outside of the classroom. During March we took our annual trip to Tarpon Springs for the Greek Independence Day Parade. It was a fantastic trip (including a trip to Legoland) with a large participation from our Saint Mark family. Our Greek School Graduation ceremony will be on Friday, May 25 at Saint Mark. We encourage all to come and celebrate the great work that our students and faculty have done this year!

## CHOIR BIDS FAREWELL TO SNOWBIRDS - VIRGINIA BARNES

We are wrapping up our year of choir ministry soon. Our members demonstrated great dedication and effort during the most beautiful (and challenging) time of the year during Holy Week. This year's renditions of the Hymn of Kassiani on Holy Tuesday, the deeply meaningful Stasis on Great and Holy Friday, and the triumphant Christos Anesti at midnight on Pascha were especially moving and spiritually uplifting. **Please note that enrollment in the Saint Mark Choir is ongoing.** Children in fourth grade and higher are welcome, as well as adults of any age!

*Now, on to the summer, I would like to highlight our members who will be heading north until next winter. Here they are in their own words:*

**GEORGE MANOS** "Having spent over forty-five years as choir director, it was important to me to find a way to continue my services after retirement. However, migrating every six months between New York and Florida, there was no way to participate in any of my former choirs.

The choir at Saint Mark in Boca Raton, FL has given me the opportunity to do just that. I was warmly welcomed by the Choir Director and its members and thus I am able to continue what I love to do the most: Offer my services to the Lord and help our community."



**PETER & CHRISTINE ANTHONY** "Christine and I have been coming and singing with the Saint Mark choir for several years. I started to sing with the Saint Mark choir in 1991 and later convinced my wife to also join the choir. We both are choir members at the Holy Spirit church, Rochester, NY. We also sing with the cathedral choir in Atlanta where our son is also a priest. I joined

the choir when I was 16 years old so that I could be near the girl who later became my wife. (We have been married for 59 years as of June 21) I have seen several advances made in the Saint Mark choir over the last three years. Several young girls have joined the choir and they all have great voices. I was very impressed how well they all sing. This puts the choir a few steps ahead of other choirs, including my home choir. These young ladies will someday be the future of the choir. Virginia, you have succeeded in increasing the core group to approximately 10 voices. What is even more impressive is that we have had as many as 25 voices singing on Sunday. We all like the advances you made with the use of the tablets. It was a great idea that I have passed on to our director back home. I know that this makes your job easier and our following the liturgy easier as well. God bless the Saint Mark choir!"







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