



# THE Message



SAINT  
MARK

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DEC 2017 – JAN 2018



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## AXIOS! ARCHON JOHN KOUTSOUPIS

*"Based on the gift each one has received, use it to serve others, as good managers of the varied grace of God." - (1 Peter 4:10)*

Saint Mark's own John Koutsoupis was recently installed as an Archon of the Order of Saint Andrew by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America on Sunday, October 22, at the Holy Trinity Archdiocesan Cathedral in New York City. This is an extremely distinguished patriarchal honor for outstanding service to the Church, and exceptional lay leadership in the Orthodox Christian community. We can say whole-heartedly that John is a worthy recipient in deed. *Axios, Axios, Axios!* Continued in "First Fruits" on Page 2...

## PREPARING FOR THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD

Once again, we are approaching the Nativity of our Lord and the joyful celebration of the Christmas season. We will be decorating our sanctuary with beautiful Christmas Poinsettias. All parishioners will have an opportunity this month to donate a Poinsettia in honor of a loved one. Additionally we will be sending out our parish Christmas card. With a \$25 donation you will be supporting the work and ministries of Saint Mark, all while helping to spread the joyful tidings of the birth of Christ throughout our community. The Christmas card will be mailed to the entire list of Saint Mark stewards, and will contain the names of all those who choose to donate.



*Parishioners will be able to find the order form for both Poinsettia and the Christmas Card donations in the weekly email blast, and in the Sunday Worship Guide during December.*

*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:



**Saint Mark**  
Greek Orthodox Church

#### **Clergy:**

Rev. Fr. Mark Leondis, Pastor  
Rev. Fr. Steven Klund, Associate  
Rev. Fr. Alexander Leondis,  
Protopresbyter  
Rev. Dn. John Christakis, MD  
Rev. Dn. Bryan Giusti

#### **Office Staff:**

Dawn Riger, Parish Administrator  
Ana Voicu & McKenzie Marsch

#### **Church Maintenance:**

Yosban Pazbalino

#### **Office Volunteers:**

Lynn Athan, Sophia Hamrick,  
Marlene Buettner, Pres. Mary  
Leondis, Debbie Fread, Kay Poly,  
Kalle Andromidas

**Parish Council:** Girard Mitchell

**Philoptochos:** Niki Core

**Choir:** Virginia Barnes

**Chanters:** Art Poly, Ramona  
Bean, George Demopoulos

**Ushers:** Tim Sharp

#### **Acolytes:**

Tom Bean, Sean Gibson  
& Constantine Mukasa

#### **Church School:**

Helen Lang & Julie Vagelos

**JOY:** Despina Hantzaridis, Vivian  
Lazaridis, and Erin & Rick Kontos

**GOYA:** Dominique Cultrera, Elaine  
Cotronakis, Lynn & Costa Athan, An-  
gela & Girard Mitchell, Jim & Claudia  
Dovas, Nicole Pelekanos

**Seniors:** Diane Paterakis

#### **Syrtaki:**

Jenny Saiger & Tasia Christakis

**Greek School:** Anna Kaiser

**Bookstore:** Yvette Koutsoupis,  
Barbara Tasiounes, Stella Pores

**Welcome:** Elaine Zographus

**Readers:** Ted Vagelos

**The Message:** Fr. Steven Klund

#### **Live Streaming:**

Ted Vagelos & Nick Csakany

**Audio:** Tom Spiliopoulos

# FIRST FRUITS

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

**R**ecently John Koutsoupis (pictured on front cover) and Elaine Zographus (pictured below right) were honored with prestigious ecclesiastical recognitions. John was installed as an Archon of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, while Elaine was elected as a recipient of the Metropolis of Atlanta Archangel Michael Award for her decades of service and excellence in lay ministry at Saint Mark.

On Sunday, October 15, the Clergy of Saint Mark presented Archon-Elect **JOHN KOUTSOUPIS** to the faithful worshipping at Saint Mark. A few weeks later, upon his return from the investiture in New York, the clergy officially acknowledged his new office during the Liturgy on Sunday November 5.

An Archon is one who offers good works and deeds of faith, by the Grace of God. Further, Archons defend and promote the Orthodox Christian faith and tradition, as well as humanity's inalienable rights wherever and whenever they are violated - especially when concerning the well-being and general welfare of the Christian Church.

This honor extended by the Ecumenical Patriarchate carries with it grave responsibilities, deep commitments, and sincere dedication. Consequently, it is of utmost importance that this honor of obligation be bestowed upon individuals of proven Orthodox Christian character, who conform faithfully to the teachings of Christ and the doctrines, canons, worship, discipline, and encyclicals of the Church.

Those selected to serve as Archons have demonstrated

a commitment greater than average toward the stewardship of time, talent and treasure for the betterment of the Church, Parish, Metropolis, Archdiocese and the community as a whole.

**ELAINE ZOGRAPUS**, meanwhile has also exhibited admirable faith and service to Orthodoxy. Her years welcoming faithful into the Church and assisting other's in growing closer to Christ has borne immeasurable fruit in Christ's vineyard. At Saint Mark Elaine has been an active leader serving on both the Parish Council and Philoptochos Board.

Since 1998, the Metropolis family comes together in Atlanta near the Feastday of the Archangels Michael and Gabriel to bestow one worthy recipient from each parish. These men and women must be living examples of the Orthodox Christian life. By extension, this special Metropolis feast also serves as the annual Metropolis celebration and thanksgiving for all devout stewards of the faith, giving their time and talent.

*We are so proud of both John and Elaine in their lifelong service and faithfulness to our Lord. May their dedication be an inspiration to all!*



### ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM ORATORICAL FESTIVAL

The Oratorical Festival is coming up fast! While the speeches aren't given until the Spring, the best speeches are the ones that are started in the Fall. Get started today. This is an excellent opportunity to practice and perfect essential, public speaking skills.

**Saint Mark Oratorical Festival - March 4, 2018 after Liturgy**  
**District Festival - March 10, 2018 at St. Demetrios Before District Lenten Retreat**

**YOUR SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHERS WILL BE HANDING THE TOPICS AND DETAILS SOON**



PASTORAL MESSAGE  
*Rev. Fr. Mark Leondis*



My Dear Faithful Stewards of Saint Mark,

Christ is Born; Glorify Him!

During this past year, we have experienced many trials and tribulations, sufferings, sickness and devastation both here at home and throughout the world. Uneasiness in the Middle East with thousands of Orthodox Christians being persecuted; devastating natural disasters including hurricanes and earthquakes; terror attacks both at home and abroad; sickness and death within our own community, to name just a few.

Yet, despite the sufferings, sorrows and injustice in the world, during this Nativity Season, joy comes to us once again. Our Heavenly Father, sending His only begotten Son into the World, dispels the darkness and fills our hearts with hope, love, peace and joy.

This miraculous event reveals to us our Lord's love and care for all humanity. While we are awed by the great miracle of God becoming man, we allow the Christ-child to be born in our hearts and lives. God, the creator of all, becomes man, and as Saint John Chrysostom writes, "He took on our flesh to make us holy, and gave us His Spirit so that we can be reconciled with our Creator and enter into eternal life with Him".

Christmas is not about presents, vacations and parties . . . it is about the Christ-child being born into the world for the salvation of all humanity.

As we gather in Church this Christmas, let us pause and reflect that amidst the sufferings and pains of this life, we are given an opportunity to "take a break" from the world, and celebrate the birth of our King.

Take a break from the world . . . Join us on Christmas Eve and on Christmas Day to celebrate the birth of our King, our Lord, God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

May the newborn Christ-child be born in your hearts and bring you the everlasting peace.

*+ Fr. Mark Leondis*

Father Mark

## BE SURE TO PLEDGE FOR 2018

you filling out your stewardship pledge envelope each and every year, we cannot exist. Everything we possess are gifts from God and they ultimately belong to Him. They are given to us — by Him. 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)

75% of the Saint Mark budget comes from Stewardship. Without

## Merry Christmas...

We invite you to join us in the celebration of our Lord and Savior's birth. We are offering a wealth of services (*listed below*) during this Nativity season. You can also see our full parish schedule on our website for more services and events. [www.saintmarkboca.net](http://www.saintmarkboca.net)

- **Wednesday, December 6, 9 am**  
Divine Liturgy - Saint Nicholas
- **Tuesday, December 12, 9 am**  
Divine Liturgy - Saint Spyridon
- **Friday, December 22, 9 am**  
Nativity Royal Hours
- **Sunday, December 24**  
Orthros - 8:45 am, Liturgy - 9:45 am  
Vespertal Liturgy - 6:00 pm
- **Monday, December 25, 9 am**  
Divine Liturgy - Nativity of Our Lord

## ...and a Happy New Year!

### HOUSE BLESSINGS

As January rings in the New Year, the Church carries on the Tradition of celebrating the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ (Jan. 6) and in turn blessing the houses of our families with that same water. It is important that we begin 2018 in the right way, by giving thanks to God and asking for His blessings and protection to abide with us.

Fr. Mark and Fr. Steven will be making house visits in the beginning of January in the weeks before the Saint Mark Greek Festival. Below are the dates that our clergy have devoted to making these visits:

- **January 8 (Monday)**
- **January 9 (Tuesday)**
- **January 10 (Wednesday)**
- **January 11 (Thursday)**

Please call Dawn Riger at the Church Office (561 994 4822) in order to request a house blessing. Due to the large size of our community, we will be scheduling house visits in groups nearby each other. After calling the office we will notify you of when a priest will be coming to your home. This is a service that we offer to our faithful stewards of Saint Mark.

# BACK TO BETHLEHEM

THE REVEREND ALEXANDER G. LEONDIS



At this time every year, we journey back to Bethlehem to witness once again God's dispensation, God's act of love for mankind, the incarnation of the eternal Word, the birth of our Lord God and Savior Jesus Christ.

We go back through the centuries, almost twenty of them, to hear once again the angelic proclamation: "to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord." We go back to relive and rededicate ourselves to him as our Lord and King. We go back to offer him our hearts, that he might be born anew in them.

We return to the venerable cave of Bethlehem to behold the pristine beauty of mankind in Eden. We kneel before the manger in amazement, unable to comprehend how the Creator and King of all, lies in a lowly manger. Is this he, who in the beginning created the world and "formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" and man became a living being?

The same Creator and King comes again to breathe into man's nostrils the "breath of life." He comes in the form of man, in the form of a creature; the eternal, limitless and infinite God is born an infant for our salvation.

By this second act of creation, the work of God's hands, sinful, corrupt and unfaithful man is returned to Eden to fellowship with God, for which he was originally created. God comes down to earth, to raise man to heaven. The King descends from his lofty throne to elevate his subjects to this Kingdom. How paradoxical and strange is the divine plan of salvation? The laws of nature are disrupted. Philosophical truths are overridden. Reason and logic are replaced by the phenomenon of faith. Normality comes to an end when God put on our flesh.

Awake from apathy. Arise above your human limitations. Strange and mysterious things are being revealed. Newness of life is at hand. Life, far beyond the limitations of this life is available; a life of faith, a life of abundance, a life in God, a life everlasting.

We are called to become citizens of heaven. We are called to taste what we will be in our life after death. We are called to transform the entire world into an all-embracing mystical union with Christ, to convert all mankind into the mystical Body of Christ.

By faith we see the paradoxes unfolding. By faith light is revealing new, eternal and permanent values. By faith we participate in the higher code of law, God's law and not man's. By faith we already live the life of the Kingdom in the Church and by the Holy Spirit.

Let us, by beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, return this Christmas to that wonderful, peaceful, beautiful, holy and solemn night, to the grassy slopes outside the city of Bethlehem. Let us hear the words of God's angels to the shepherds: "I bring your good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior who is Christ the Lord."

The substance and character of the gospel are revealed in these words: "a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." The way of Eden is once again restored to man by a Savior. The centuries-old Messianic hope is fulfilled: "Behold, a Virgin shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Emmanuel." (Isaiah 7:14)

"The good news of great joy" transforms this winter season into an inner warmth of joy, for God is now with us, God has become man to save us from sin and grant us eternal life.

No limit can be set on this joy. It is the joy of the ages. It is the joy of all people. The purpose of the Gospel is revealed in the outburst of the angelic host: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will."

The humility the Lord underwent on earth is proclaimed as glorious in heaven: "Glory to God in the

highest, for his mission to bring "peace on earth" and "good will to men" successfully began on that first Christmas back in Bethlehem. *I wish you a blessed Christmas!*

★  
"Christ is born, glorify Him. Christ comes from the heavens, receive Him. Christ is on earth, elevate Him. Sing to the Lord all the earth: and you nations praise the Lord with joy, for Christ has been glorified."



## SAINT MARK PARISH RETREAT - "TOOLS FOR THEOSIS"

On March 2-4, the Saint Mark Family will be hosting an Adult Retreat for our faithful. The theme of the retreat will be "Tools for Theosis" and will feature Mr. Dan Christopoulos (*pictured below*), as the Retreat Master. If you are interested in growing in your personal faith, this retreat is for you. It will help you better understand the tools necessary to live a life for Christ. The retreat schedule is as follows:

### Friday, March 2

7:00 PM Salutations to the Theotokos  
Opening Talk

### Saturday, March 3

9:00 AM – 1:00 PM  
Tools for Theosis

### Sunday, March 4

Guest Homilist/Liturgy



Dan is a native of Cheyenne, Wyoming and received a B.S. in Sociology from the University of Wyoming in 1979, where he was an All-Conference place kicker in football, and played in the 1976 Fiesta Bowl.

After receiving his Master of Divinity from Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology in 1983, he participated in parish ministry for 15 years. During that time he spent almost three years in the mission field in East Africa, and served in various communities in the United States as well as assisting to establish the Archdiocesan Office in Hong Kong.

He has also received a Masters in Social Work and managed several federal grants in the health field. He currently is the U.S. Country Representative for International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), having worked for the official humanitarian relief agency of Orthodox Christians in the United States since 2001. He is responsible for managing all aspects of IOCC's humanitarian activities in the United States, ranging from emergency response to development programs.

Dan has taught classes at the high school, junior college and university levels, as well as served as a consultant for governmental and non-governmental organizations. He and his wife Patty reside in Minneapolis, where she manages Light and Life Publishing Company.



## STEWARDSHIP - STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Last month we had Stewardship Sunday, where the Saint Mark Family offered their gifts to our Lord and pledged for the 2018 Ecclesiastical year. If you haven't sent in your pledge form for 2018, do so today!

As we listened to Helen and Lou Nicozisis offer an outstanding, Christ-centered talk on Stewardship, we learned not only the history

of Saint Mark, but also how when all of us work together, God blesses our efforts. Let us continue to offer ourselves in working for the Glory of God, and in doing so make Saint Mark a beacon of our Orthodox Faith in South Florida.

You will see in the graphic to the right, a quick status update for the 2017 Stewardship year.



### 2017 STEWARDSHIP PLEDGES:

**\$622,205.04**

### 2017 AMOUNT PAID:

**\$560,490.72**

**\$61,714.32**  
UNPAID

### TOTAL NUMBER OF 2017 STEWARDS:

**592 (HOUSEHOLDS)**





# AN INTERVIEW WITH OUR STEWARDS

FR. STEVEN INTERVIEWING COL. ALAN MACAULAY

*This week Fr. Steven had the chance to sit down with Col. Alan MacAulay in the latest installation of our series of interviews spotlighting some of our Saint Mark stewards. This is an invaluable forum in which we are able to learn from our brothers and sisters what being an Orthodox steward means to them.*

**FR. STEVEN (FS):** Good morning sir. First off, thank you for your decades of service not only to our country, but to our Saint Mark parish. Also, thank you for taking the time to do this interview. May I begin by asking how long have you been a member of the Orthodox Church?

**COL. ALAN MACAULAY (AM):** Oh boy, I have to ask Petitsa for help on this [laughter]. I converted when we were married. So I'd have to say 55 years ago. That's a long time to forget! [More laughter]. I entered the Orthodox faith from the Lutheran church, and I have felt at home ever since.

**(FS):** What does Saint Mark, and Orthodoxy, mean to you and your family?

**(AM):** The main things that distinguish the Orthodox faith from any Western denomination is the adherence to the timeless Traditions of the faith, and the intimate communal environment shared by the parishioners. As other churches are moving away from time-honored Christian principles, Orthodoxy (and Saint Mark in particular) has remained true to the essential Christian values. This is clear when you see fellow parishioners helping each other during times of need, and even when just enjoying fellowship together. It is so encouraging to know that we have a home here at Saint Mark where we can all gather in the common understanding of our faith and Orthodox principles.

**(FS):** God has endowed us with personal talents and gifts. What is your greatest talent and how will you use it for the glory of God at our Saint Mark Parish?

**(AM):** [May it be noted that Col. MacAulay was reluctant to offer himself any praise, and even considered it an embarrassment to speak about his talents or accomplishments in the Church] I have always looked up to great leaders, and have always strived to be a leader myself. In the Church I tried to put my lead-

ership to use by helping our various organizations and ministries achieve their goals. I'd have to believe this was derived from my military career. I enlisted as a Private and served until I attained the rank of Colonel. That gave me a certain set of organizational skills, which benefited me during my three years as President of the Saint Mark AHEPA during its infancy. It also helped me in creating our tradition here at Saint Mark of honoring our veterans on Veteran's Day during the Liturgy. In the early 90's I called all of our parishioners and rounded up all of our veterans to be recognized during the Sunday services, and I am so proud that we are continuing it nearly three decades later. But I can't say that I have done anything extraordinary.

**(FS):** Well, sir I have to disagree! I'd hardly call any of your career accomplishments, or Church participation *anything BUT* extraordinary ... Speaking of which, can you elaborate on how your military service has compared to your service in the Church? Are there any significant parallels between the two?

**(AM):** I think you can perceive the obvious parallels in terms of valuing personal discipline, virtue, accountability, obedience, etc. But again, I have to emphasize the great sense of community in the two. Your fellow soldiers became your family, your superiors became your parents. That isn't too dissimilar to life in the Church with your brothers and sisters in Christ, and the parish clergy. In fact, Orthodoxy's communal nature helps support the individual families. When a soldier goes to serve overseas, the wife and kids are left at home behind. The Church is an incredible source of support for such families, and provide another positive influence for the children during their formative years. In both the Church, and the military you can always depend on each other.

Now, I can make another comparison, but you may not want to hear it! [laughter]

**(FS):** Is that right?! You have me curious...

**(AM):** ...Well, in the military there's a saying, that is also true in the Church: "DON'T VOLUNTEER!" [Laughter]. The most dangerous assignments are the ones they give to the volunteers. "Taking the enemy hill, fighting on the front line, etc." But these dangerous tasks are also generally the *most important* ones, and you would never want to risk leaving the most important assignments up to chance. You want the soldiers who want to serve, to be in charge of those situations. That's true in the Church as well. Often times, the hardest jobs in ministry are the most important. I remember I volunteered for the festival with **Mike Stamos**. The next thing I know, we're 40 feet up in the air hooking up all the electrical work around the entire parking lot! In both the Church and the service, you learn to work together and you learn to find joy in volunteering.

**(FS):** Can you suggest a ministry that you would like added, or maybe an existing ministry that we could improve upon?

**(AM):** The Seniors. I know that we have an active seniors ministry that Diane Paterakis does a great job with. But we can do more. We constantly hear about all the things that the youth is doing, or the great work of the Philoptochos, but very little about the seniors. I am not necessarily advocating for more events on the calendar, but more services for the seniors and more opportunities to get them involved in the life of the parish. I believe it has to start with identifying the seniors we have, and then seeing what their needs are. "Who needs a ride to Church? Who needs a hospital visit? Anyone need help carrying in their groceries? etc." But also, we should see what talents and interests they have. Do they want to make a quilting ministry. Can we make other events more senior friendly so they can join in? Those kinds of things. I just don't want to lose sight of such an incredible generation of believers.



## SAINT MARK GREEK REFUGEE CRISIS SUPPORT

Last month, the Saint Mark Ladies Philoptochos made a \$500 contribution to the Greek Refugee Crisis Relief Fund. Inspired by their generosity, Fr. Mark and the Parish Council decided to match that donation with a separate \$500 check on behalf of the parish! The funds specifically helped fund "Project SPORA" of the Metropolis of Nea Ionia in Greece, and assured the immediate delivery and prompt utilization of crucially needed medical supplies on the island of Mytilene. Pictured to the right is a copy of the note we received in appreciation for our contributions. If you feel compelled to offer additional support please visit the websites below to learn how:



[www.iocc.org/where-we-work/greece](http://www.iocc.org/where-we-work/greece)



[www.rescue.org/country/greece](http://www.rescue.org/country/greece)



## 2018 GREEK FESTIVAL - JOE PORES

The Saint Mark Greek Festival is upon us!!! We are less than two months away from welcoming all of South Florida through our doors during the weekend of January 25-28, 2018.

Preparations are under way, and have been since our first meetings back in the summer months. As always, we are depending on the dedication and hard work of all of our parishioners. Please

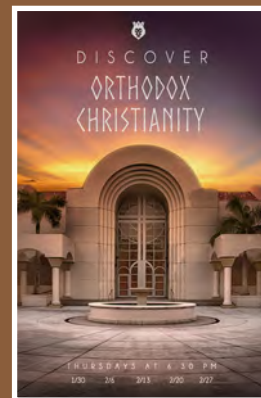


be on the lookout for more information in the coming weeks on how to volunteer. It is only because of our amazing Saint Mark family that we are able to put on this incredible event year after year.

We must realize that no matter how delicious the food tastes, or how beautifully the dancers perform, the real treasure we have to offer at our festival is our Orthodox faith and the warmth of our Saint Mark family. Each of YOU are what makes this place so special! Individually, we are all members of the same Body of Christ. Our common faith and the love that unites us is what all of our festival guests should marvel at. It is for this reason that in addition to the fantastic food, music and dancing, we also offer Church tours and invite all of our guests to return for a free introductory course on the Orthodox faith the weeks following the festival (*more details in the box below*). But we cannot do any of this without you. So join us as volunteers for the festival. And help us show all of South Florida what makes Saint Mark such an important place for all of us.

## DISCOVER ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY

We understand that the entire purpose of having a festival is to support the ministries of the parish and witness the faith to our surrounding community. Therefore Immediately following the 2018 Greek Festival we will be offering our "Discover Orthodox Christianity" adult catechism class. This course is designed to provide a short, but accurate introduction of the Orthodox faith to those outside the Church. This course is FREE and will be held every Tuesday night at 6:30 pm during the 5 weeks after the festival (Beginning Jan. 30, and ending on Feb. 27).



Please do your part to help spread our faith! Invite your non-Orthodox neighbors, coworkers, friends, etc. to come to the class. You can even offer to attend it with them. After all, this course is also a good "refresher" for all Orthodox believers as well!



**SAINT MARK**  
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
2100 NW 51ST STREET  
BOCA RATON, FL 33431

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## SAINT MARK

*Sunday, January 7, 2018*

Following Divine Liturgy in the Saint Mark Fellowship Hall

### *Epiphany Luncheon & Vasilopita Cutting*

SPONSORED BY PHILOPTOCHOS

#### RESERVATIONS REQUIRED

Adults – \$25

Families – \$60

*(Includes 2 adult tickets and up to 3 children under the age of 12,  
\$10 for students ages 13-18)*

Pam Parent – (561) 706-2457

Niki Core – (561) 989-3688

Suzette Johnson – (561) 573-1057