

THE Message



SAINT
MARK

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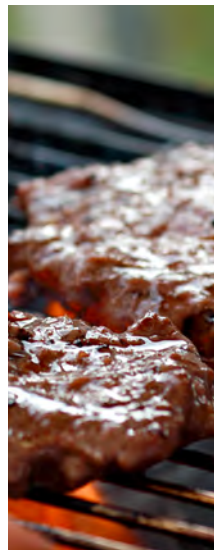
JUNE–JULY 2015



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SAINT MARK YEAR END CELEBRATION

PARISH PICNIC HONORS THE YEAR'S MINISTRIES

The 2014-2015 ecclesiastical year at Saint Mark has been a tremendously active one. In addition to a rich slate of worship services, the various parish ministries have offered an abundance of events and activities for our faithful to gather in faith, fellowship, witness and service. On Sunday May 24, at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy, the Saint Mark family held a picnic outside by the playground to celebrate the year. Thanks to our minisiry leaders, there was plenty of food, dancing and fun for all ages. We offer special appreciation to JOY director Angela Mitchell for coordinating the volunteer efforts for this joyful celebration. We look forward to starting these ministries back up in September.

2014-2015 Ministry Recap on Page 6

COL. ALAN MACAULAY IS HONORED IN D.C.



On April 29th, the Order of AHEPA awarded our very own Colonel Alan Macaulay the AHEPA Medal of Honor in Washington DC. Alan has been a major part of our Saint Mark Community and AHEPA Chapter since 1998 and he his wife Petitsea were joined by sixteen Saint Mark faithful at the AHEPA 41st Biennial National Banquet to honor Alan. The Saint Mark family is extremely proud of Colonel Macaulay for all of his accomplishments culminating in this prestigious award. Axios!

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*

2100 NW 51st Street
Boca Raton, FL 33431

Clergy:

Rev. Fr. Mark Leondis, Pastor
Rev. Fr. Steven Klund, Assistant
Rev. Fr. Alexander Leondis,
Protopresbyter
Rev. Dn. John Christakis, MD

Office Staff:

Dawn Riger, Parish Administrator

Church Maintenance:

Yosban Pazbalino & Tim Caldwell

Office Volunteers:

Kalle Andromidas, Lynn Athan,
Niki Core, Joann Haros, Marlene
Buettner, Pres. Mary Leondis,
Debbie Fread, Kay Poly,

Parish Council: Girard Mitchell

Philoptochos: Pam Parent

Choir: Virginia Barnes

Chanters: Ramona Bean,
George Demopoulos, Art Poly

Ushers: Tim Sharp

Acolytes: Brian Giusti & Tom Bean

Church School: Helen Lang

Youth Ministry:

Angela & Girard Mitchell, Erin &
Rick Kontos, Costa & Lynn Athan,
Dominique Cultrera, Claudia
Dovas, Irina Giakouminakis, &
Nicole Pelekanos

Seniors: Diane Paterakis

Syrtaki:

Mark Christakis & Jenny Saiger

Greek School: Anna Kaiser

Bookstore: Yvette Koutsoupis,
Barbara Tasiounes, Stella Pores

Welcome: Elaine Zographus

Readers: Vivian Jenetopoulos

Photography: Ted Vagelos
& Irina Giakouminakis

The Message: Fr. Steven Klund

PASTORAL MESSAGE

Rev. Fr. Mark Leondis



My Dear Faithful,

Christ is among us!

What a beautiful ecclesistical year we shared together at Saint Mark. Our parish ministries and educational programs have seen growth; our stewardship is on the rise; our faithful are responding by participating regularly at our liturgical services; we have become more focused administratively with our parish council committees; our Festival was the most successful in the history of our Church; we are seeing more and more families wanting to be part of our beloved Saint Mark Family.

Christ is among us! When we put aside our personal agendas, our pride and what “we want to see” for the Church and we focus on Jesus Christ and what “His will is for the Church” – His will can abound and thus, His blessings abound on us.

In John 14:16, Jesus Christ says, “I am the truth.” Christ not only spoke the truth, but is the truth. He is the eternal embodiment of truth. Truth is greater than facts and our limited knowledge. We can continue to fool ourselves about who we are, but down deep we can never find peace or contentment until we have come to know Jesus Christ as truth and Lord. He shares the truth only with those who are willing to yield to Him, deny themselves, and accept and follow Him as Lord of their life.

Christ is among us, only when Christ and His Will becomes our only and main agenda as a parish. When Christ is our focus, when Christ is truly dwelling among us only then do we grow and flourish as a family of God. Only then can we become the Truth and live the Truth! That’s when we die to the world and live for Jesus Christ.

Even during these summer months when we are more tempted to miss Church and may want to “take a break” from Sunday worship, push yourself! Recognize that true worship does not cease during the summer, but rather it is a time to re-energize our spiritual lives and place our priorities on the Truth. Use this summer not as a time to break away from the Church, but a time to come closer to the Truth.

Recognize Christ as the Truth in your lives. Pray for His presence throughout your daily life. Make the Truth a living reality in your homes. Experience Christ fully and your life will abound.

Let us continue to put Christ first and place our true focus on our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Christ is indeed among us!

See you in Church,

Fr. Mark Leondis

OUR COMMUNITY REGISTRY

MAY 2014 – APRIL 30 2015

BAPTIZED INTO CHRIST

May 25 - Stella Weaver:
Daughter of Matthew and Nadia Weaver

July 13 - Dalano Lalla

July 27 - Vanessa Trsifitopoulos:
Daughter of Prodrimos M. Trsifitopoula
and Ingrid Rginberg

August 10 - Gabriella Pappas:
Daughter of Demitrios and Renee Pappas

August 10 - Renee (Sophia) Pappas

November 16 - Giorgos Charoudis:
Son of Christos Charoudis and Penelope
Mendoza

January 03 - Joey Kaselis-Kandil:
Son of Catherine Kaselis

January 03 - Ariel Kaselis-Kandil:
Daughter of Catherine Kaselis

January 03 - Orion Reneir Kjos:
Son of Demitri and Iske Kjos

February 28 - Rafaella Lombardo:
Daughter of Vince and Helen Lombardo

March 16 - Easton Polenta:
Son of Stavros Polenta and Natalie Meek

March 16 - Manolis Polentas:
Son of Stavros Polenta and Natalie Meek

March 22 - Selena Huck

March 22 - Eleni Tzelepopoulas:
Daughter of Panos and Damaris Tzele-
popoulas

March 30 - Natalya Graff

March 30 - Emanuel Koyenov:
Son of David Koyenov and Natalya Graff

April 25 - Alexios Andreadis

CHRISMATED INTO CHRIST

September 07 - Rosalee Castleberry

December 30 - Caitlain Rose Vomastek

April 12 - Sean Gibson

MARRIAGES

May 31, 2014 - Nicholas Costas Tratoros
and Evangelia Markella Haskopoulos

September 27, 2014 - Emil Christofakis
and Tassia Kostopoulos

FALLEN ASLEEP IN THE LORD: MAY THEIR MEMORY BE ETERNAL!

May 07 - Efthymia Kokkonos

May 14 - Frank Muccio (Saint Catherine)

June 02 - Geraldine "Jeri" Horaitis

June 20 - Grace Gramatiki Georgia Glaros

August 24 - John Gregoriou

August 24 - Constantine Spiros Pyshos

September 13 - Charles Triglianios

October 18 - John Staurulakis (Md)

October 08 - Chris K. Zoley

October 26 - Kostas "Gus" Spyridon

January 08 - Athena Irene Sperantas

January 28 - Jack D'Ambrosio (MD)

February 14 - Angene Rafferty

February 25 - George Marks

February 26 - Elliot "Butch" Nanos

March 12 - Theodore Draper

March 22 - John A. Peterson

March 25 - Steve Papamichael

April 13 - Ann Babic

SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT

A Church goer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. "I've gone for 30 years now," he wrote, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons, but for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them so, I think I'm wasting my time and the priests are wasting theirs by giving sermons at all."

This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" column. Much to the delight of the editor, it went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher: "I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this... They all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work." He went on to say "If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!"

Not all Sunday sermons are memorable, and that's alright. We do not come to Church to listen to a story, or even to receive knowledge. We come on Sunday mornings to receive spiritual nourishment, the Body and Blood of Christ.

St. John of Kronstadt writes "The Divine Liturgy is *the supper*, the table of God's love to mankind." All who partake in Holy Communion, are partakers in God's love and grace.

This, like our family dinners, provides us with nourishment and strength to continue on in our spiritual journeys. But unlike our daily meals, this heavenly banquet never runs out, and never spoils. This is a *lasting* meal, that gives us a taste of the everlasting life in the Kingdom.

"The holy sacraments are called the divine because they are given to us by the Lord freely, for nothing, undeservedly on our part" St. John says. "Instead of punishing us for the numberless sins we commit every day...the Lord, in the holy mysteries, forgives us, and cleanses us from all our sins, hallows us, and grants peace to our spiritual powers, healing and health of soul and body, and every blessing, simply in accordance with our faith."

Does this sound like something you can go a week without?

SAINTS PETER & PAUL: EMBRACING WEAKNESSES

..... ADAPTED FROM DYNAMIS PUBLICATION VOL 5. NO. 6

"...I pleaded with the Lord three times that it [a thorn in the flesh] might depart from me. And He said to me, 'My Grace is sufficient for you; for my strength is made perfect in weakness.'"

— 2 Corinthians 12:8-9

Beloved brethren, we follow a Lord Who treasures men and women who will sever their ties to the world's sources of strength and cast themselves entirely on His "spiritual" might. Let us reflect on what it means to take up this challenge from the Lord by considering the examples of the Apostles Peter and Paul. They both chose to embrace virtues which their opponents considered as weaknesses (vs. 21-23). They promoted unpopular truths, associated with weak and struggling people, and embraced lifestyles of real, personal limitations.

Many consider gentleness, humility, service, love, forgiveness and the refusal to dominate to be truly noble ideals. In practice, however, the great majority of people view such virtues as weakness actually, especially in the day to day struggle in a world of self-aggrandizement, personal advancement, and the ruthless drive to win at all costs. In fact, these evangelical virtues require enormous spiritual strength, as the lives of Christ and the Apostles demonstrate.

True Christian virtues leave no room for the "give-and-take" of the secular, 'real' world. It is a form of rationalization that relegates Christian virtues to second place. Take, for example, the ministries of these two blessed Apostles.



Life in Jerusalem in the first century did not mix with the Apostolic mission. The opponents of the Apostles drew subtle strength from their rabbinic tradition (vs. 23). They lived a largely an arrogant, self-serving, unloving, and unforgiving style of living. These enemies of the Gospel argued that the Lord's ministry should be reserved for "God's people" (Mt. 15:24), and they greatly opposed recruiting the Gentiles. Forty stripes, beatings, and being stoned were the price that St. Paul paid, and the horror of being crucified upside down that St. Peter endured for welcoming Gentiles and for clinging to the Lord's "weak" strengths to minister faithfully.

In this world, to champion majority prejudices and popular programs gains support, and to stand for what is despised does not. All 'successful' politicians know this well. Sts. Peter and Paul could not have chosen a worse stance than adopting the Lord's all-inclusive Gospel of love. They welcomed in Gentiles to the Faith all while not requiring them to adopt Jewish practices. This "brand" of Christianity rejected socio-political safety, thereby creating hostility among the majority of Jews and Gentiles. The Apostles' honest stance was the harbinger of the Church's two-century-long rejection by the world, and a persecution that lasted until St. Constantine put a stop to the slaughter of Chris-



tians. Nevertheless, Sts. Peter and Paul embraced the weakness of a true, but unpopular way of life, and did so willingly knowing that it led to greater glory:

"These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold—though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise and glory and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world." - 1 Peter 1:7

These Apostles served the struggling communities that they planted. Neither dominated them, but unflinchingly shared their defeats and efforts. Their opponents, however, tried to "use" the new communities for personal advantage. Thankfully for the sake of the Church, these holy men embraced the "weakness" of service. O Holy Apostles, "plead that the Church may preserve your good confession unto her last breath."

Finally, let us mention their physical ailments. St. Paul speaks of his "thorn in the flesh," (whatever that may have been). Theories range from poor eyesight, headaches, to epilepsy. Like the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane, Paul asked three times that it might be removed, but then he accepted the physical weakness as the will of the Lord. God does use our weaknesses if we will embrace them, offer them to Him, and let His power be displayed through them. Saint Paul's opponents even ridiculed his physical problems, pointing to them as a "sure" sign that he was outside God's favor. Nonetheless, Christ strengthened him, along with St. Peter in the face of all afflictions and trials.

PENTECOST SUNDAY

..... VERY REV. FR. ALEXANDER LEONDIS

"If I go not the Comforter will not come to you; but if I go I will send him to you." — John 16:7

Jesus, the eternal Logos, the Son of God, said these words while instructing His disciples about the Holy Spirit. He became incarnate for man's salvation to restore man once again to his pre-fallen state by the power of the Holy Spirit. We recently relived the events which made this possible — the Lord's Crucifixion, Passion, the Resurrections and Ascension.

The Lord's promise of sending the Comforter is realized on Pentecost Day, ten days after the Ascension. On this day, the Holy Spirit descends on the disciples 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 men, drawing people into the nets of the Church.

The Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity, continues the work of Christ on earth by enabling and empowering the disciples and the church through the centuries to lead us to salvation. The New Adam, Christ, replaces the old Adam. Man is no longer subjected to the desires of the flesh, as he was with the old Adam. In Christ we are able to soar to the heavens and participate in the life of Paradise once again. A new aeon and a new creation commences.

By choice, man no longer walks in the darkness of evil and ignorance, but in the light of God. Man belongs not only to this world, but also 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. The Holy Spirit now is man's companion, giving him the strength to free him from the bondage of evil and to live for the Lord.

Man is once again found in God's grace as he was before the fall in Eden. The Holy Spirit, received at Chrismation or Confirmation, grants him the 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 for the asking. What great comfort the Comforter bestows on us?

Love is given first place in the gallery of God's gifts. 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 love is lacking from our soul, then all virtues are in danger of being lost.

Love is God working in us to draw us closer to himself. It takes two people to love. One offers love and the other receives it and returns it. Love makes the estranged reconciled, the unbelievers believers, the indifferent enthusiastic, the anxious meek and the proud humble. To love and not be transformed or transforming in not to love at all.

The joyous message of Pentecost is that God's love is among us through the Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit Christ is among us, now and for all eternity. The Feast of Pentecost and the love of Christ binds us together into his Body, our Saint Mark faithful. 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."



Feast of Holy Pentecost Fifty Days After Pascha

+ Pentecost is known as "the Descent of the Holy Spirit," and by Holy Tradition, is celebrated as the first day of the life of the Church.

+ It is an icon of bold colors of red and gold signifying the greatness of the event, and celebrating the presence of the Holy Spirit in the Church, then, today, and always.

+ As Christ promised before He ascended, the Holy Spirit is being sent, making the Holy Apostles members of the Risen Lord.

+ Tongues of fire are seen descending upon each of the Apostles, signifying the descent of the Holy Spirit.

+ This event occurred on the Jewish feast of Pentecost. This is when the first-fruits of harvest were brought to the Lord.

+ In our lives, we first receive the Holy Spirit through the sacrament of Holy Chrismation (for most of us, this is right after we are baptized).

+ The Holy Spirit gives us many gifts in our lives: He comforts us as we struggle against sin, He makes us one with God through His energy, and He bestows upon us many individual gifts, each useful for our salvation.



"Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." - Acts 2:38-39

+ The icon of Pentecost includes some who were not present on that day in the Upper Room.

+ The gathering is a representation of the Church rather than a historical depiction.

+ The Apostle Paul, who had not yet had his conversion on the road to Damascus is seated across from St. Peter. The evangelists St. Mark and St. Luke, each holding a Gospel book, are also shown.

+ We, like they, are called to receive the Holy Spirit, and to seek to use the gifts He gives us for God's glory and for our own salvation.

+ In the center of the icon below the Apostles sits a figure enshrouded in darkness.

+ Although crowned with earthly glory, this symbolic figure, Cosmos, represents all the people of the world living in darkness, sin, and ignorance of God.

+ The figure is shown in the act of receiving the teaching of the Apostles, signified by 12 scrolls upon an outstretched cloth.

+ After Pentecost, the Apostles carried the message of the Gospel to all parts of the world.



SAINT MARK FEASTDAY CELEBRATION

AND EXTERIOR SAINT MARK MOSAIC DEDICATION

On the Eve of the Feastday of Saint Mark, our sanctuary was filled during the Great Vespers service with faithful clergy and lay believers to honor the Apostle and patron saint. Im-

mediately following the service, those in attendance exited the sanctuary to conduct a special dedication service for our newly installed exterior mosaic icon of Saint Mark on Yamato Road. In attendance was the Zoley family who generously donated the icon this time one year ago. We thank them for their contribution to our evangelical efforts here in South Florida, and we ask that our Lord, through the prayers of Saint Mark, strengthen and guide us in those efforts for many years to come.



LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY - PAM PARENT

The mission of the Ladies Philoptochos Society is as follows:

To aid the poor, the destitute, the hungry, the aged, the sick, the unemployed, the orphaned, the imprisoned, the widowed, the handicapped, the victims of disasters, to undertake the burial of impoverished persons and to offer assistance to anyone who may need the help of the Church through fund raising efforts;

To promote the charitable, benevolent, and philanthropic purposes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, through instructional programs, presentations, lectures, seminars and other educational resources;

To preserve and perpetuate Orthodox Christian concepts and the Orthodox Christian Family, and through them, to promote the Greek Orthodox Faith and traditions, in accordance with its doctrines, canons, discipline, divine worship, usages and customs;

To promote participation in the activities of the Greek Orthodox community, with the cooperation of the Parish Priest and the Parish Council.

It is important to emphasize the goals of Philoptochos. We are there for our parishioners, our community our nation and our world. Locally we have paid utility bills, purchased groceries, paid for funerals, and provided comfort to the elderly and the ill. We provide scholarships to graduating seniors, Greek School students, and pay the fees for deserving Saint Stephen's Camp attendees.

We assisted financially in the development of the Mommy and Me program begun last fall at Saint Mark. Syrtaki also received a donation from Philoptochos in order to assist their dancers.

When the Festival rolls around, the women can be found baking and selling the delightful pastries that sell out every year.

Every month, a team of our women prepare and serve meals at the Caring Kitchen in Delray Beach. We appreciate the relief we get from GOYA during June and July.

When disaster strikes nationally and internationally, Philoptochos is there, providing clothing, medical kits, hygiene kits and much needed funds. Our most recent project involves collecting gently used children's clothing for children coming to South Florida from Middle Eastern refugee camps. We will be teaming up with our Saint Mark Greek Week Summer Camp program in order to collect this clothing (more information in the text box to the right).

Another important ongoing project involves the collection of sample-size toiletries for the Caring Kitchen in Delray Beach. These items will be made into kits and distributed to those in need. We are collecting toothpaste, soap, deodorant, combs, lotion, etc. A large box is located in the hall near the kitchen for this purpose.

We have sponsored cultural events, such as the hosting of Author Thea Halo, and Mother Cassiana. We also assisted with the reception for Nicholas Gage, as well we prepared the reception for Saint Mark Vespers, and co-hosted the mortgage burning party with the Parish Council.

It has been our privilege and pleasure to work closely with our parish, our priests and our Parish Council for the glory of God betterment of Saint Mark Greek Orthodox Church. We look forward to continuing this important ministry.



GW15 - CLOTHING DRIVE TO BENEFIT REFUGEES

Today there are approximately 11 million people living in refugee camps in the Middle East. The International Rescue Committee (or the "IRC") is an organization that looks to help re-locate and assist these families. The IRC reports that, to date, there have been over 700 refugee families that have been processed to live in this country, 70 of whom have been re-located here in South Florida.

These families arrive with nothing but the clothes on their backs. The Saint Mark Philoptochos is holding a clothing drive to help assist these families (many of whom are Orthodox Christians). We are asking for our families to *donate lightly used young children's clothes*. We will be working in conjunction with the Saint Mark Greek Week Summer Camp program to collect and distribute them. Please drop off any clothing donations in the boxes in the Church Outer Narthex *before June 9th*.

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE CONTACT HELEN LANG FOR MORE INFORMATION: HELENLANG@BELLSOUTH.NET

SUNDAY CHURCH SCHOOL YEAR REVIEW - HELEN LANG



The Church School Ministry has completed an exciting school year, as we welcomed the contribution of new teachers and volunteers to our stellar staff! Under the prayerful guidance of Father Mark and Father Steven, our 'new' teachers, in Kindergarten, Mrs. Chapman, and Mrs. Tratoros, First Grade, Mrs. Farsedakis, and Second Grade, Mrs. Mukasa, joined Mrs. Mitchell, Mrs. Kontos, Mrs. Valladares, Mrs. Matthews, Mrs. Bothers, Mrs. Skoundridakis, Mrs. Stabile, Dr. Copulos, Mr. Douglas, Diakonissa Stephanie, and Dr. Cucuras. Our record enrollment had our 6th grade, 7th-8th grade, and high school classes, 'bursting at the seams', with eager students on Sundays!

Our curriculum was enhanced by Mrs. Giakouminakis providing a craft project for the K-2nd grade students, adding to the bi-weekly instruction and practice of singing and interpreting hymns, as taught by Mrs. Barnes. You will notice how well our students participate in singing the hymns in Liturgy, thanks to Mrs. Barnes!

Our children participated as angels, sheep, shepherds, and wise men, in the Christmas Pageant, learned how the Orthodox Ministries, (OCMC) serve the faithful around the world, through their special lessons on 'Mission Sunday', and brought home coin boxes to fill, (and return), as a Lenten lesson. Our Lenten Food Drive, which filled the cabinets of the Food Bank Home Pantry Program of the Caring Kitchen, was

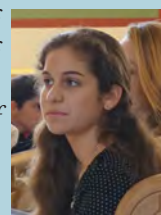
initiated by our 4th grade class, with their artful decorating of the food donation boxes.

Our children participated in the Saint John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival, as we heard inspiring speeches from elementary through high school grade students, thanks to the encouragement and instruction of their teachers, parents, and our clergy!

As we look forward to the summer break, to rest and renew, we encourage you to join the Church School Ministry, when you return with your children in the fall. Please consider serving as a volunteer in the classroom, or serving as a substitute. And last but by no means least, 'thank-you' to the volunteers and substitutes, Presbytera Anastasia, Melissa Desai, Agelika Doukides, Stephanie Cocores, Debbie Fread, Greg Christakis, and Fay Averkiou, who stepped in throughout the 2014-2015 school year, to ensure our students had weekly church school lessons this year!

SUNDAY CHURCH SCHOOL - ANASTASIA GAVRILOS

This year, I had the opportunity to be part of Dr Cucuras' high school class. This was one of the best years I've had due to our interesting discussions, intense dissection of the gospel, and *of course* donuts every Sunday. I am so blessed to be able to learn more and more about my faith and the allegorical meanings behind parables and other events in the weekly gospel readings we studied together as a class. We truly developed an enriched knowledge on every aspect of the words and actions of Christ, something unparalleled in most Christian environments. Even the times we went off on a bit of a tangent were always beneficial because we had the opportunity to ask and answer difficult questions that always provided interesting discussion. I am so thankful for the eventful year we had as a class and I look forward to the next three years to come.



DISTRICT GOYA OLYMPICS - DEVON CULTRERA

The GOYA Olympics was a fantastic experience for all who attended but it's much more than just sports. It is an opportunity to bond together with surrounding parishes in our district for worship and fellowship. I made new friends that I am looking forward to seeing at the next District GOYA event. During the Olympics we played many games that involved teamwork including soccer, basketball, kickball and my favorite, the cup game. Every event was team based so if you scored a basket for example the whole team would celebrate and if you missed you were always rooted to try again and nobody judged you. The one thing that stood out to me was the kindness that all the kids

showed each other. The older kids worked together with the younger kids and no one was excluded. No matter who or what team you were on everyone was a winner. We worshipped our Lord together in prayer and sermon. Each of the seven teams acted out scripts from scenes in the bible. For example, my team, Panama acted out John 9:6, "Jesus Heals the Man Born Blind". To think it ended up being the sermon the following day in church. This was cool because I had the background knowledge. It also made me think that even though bad things happen to good people God will always be there to make it right.

If there is one thing I would like to share is that our GOYA events bring us together as young Orthodox Christians and we have a blast doing it.

DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE - MARINA NICOLAIDES



The Daughters of Penelope, the 10,000-member women's affiliate of Ahepa, honored the National Philoptochos society at a reception March 20. The DOP Grand President Anna-Helene Grossomanides and Grand Lodge Officers hosted the event.

"We honor the National Philoptochos Society for its implementation of philanthropic programs to benefit the community," said the Grand President of DOP Mrs. Grossomanides.

"We accept this award with humility and gratitude, mixed with the comfort and camaraderie that comes from the heritage and advocacy of worthy causes shared by our sister organizations. We are women working together to give back to our communities and prepare to make things better for those in need" answered the First Vice President Arlene Siavelis-Kahl on behalf of the National Philoptochos President Maria Logus and 26,000 stewards of the Society.

Bishop Sevastianos of Zela, the National Spiritual Advisor of Philoptochos represented Archbishop Demetrios and read a letter on his behalf.

Philanthropy is the key to the mission of both Philoptochos and Daughters of Penelope. Ms. Kahl commented on the initiatives shared by both organizations, such as helping victims of domestic violence, honoring and assisting those in need in time of national and international crises, honoring and assisting veterans, nurturing Saint Basil Academy and most recently building the St. Nicholas National Shrine in New York. Also she applauded the Daughters Of Penelope projects such as Penelope House in Alabama and Penelope's Place in Brocton, Mass. That provides shelter for victims of domestic violence. Also the University of Miami, Sylvester Cancer Research Center which is a world leader for cancer.

The reception also served as a fundraiser for the campaign to build the St. Nicholas National Shrine.

LENTEN COLLECTIONS - ADDITIONAL TRAY OFFERINGS

Since the Lord's mercy is often proclaimed during Lent, Orthodox faithful throughout the world look for opportunities to increase their charitable giving. Increased almsgiving reminds us that we ought not strive for earthly gain; but to rid ourselves of fleeting worldly cares and focus more intently on oneness with God.

The Saint Mark family did just that. In offering additional trays each of the 5 Sundays during Lent, our faithful took advantage of these opportunities to freely give to those in need. Listed below are the sum totals of how much money was collected and distributed each of those weeks.

DELRAY CARING KITCHEN	\$500
FR. MATTHEW BAKER	\$3,046
OCMC	\$934
PACE CENTER FOR GIRLS	\$500
VISITATION MINISTRY	\$800

SAINT MARK GREEK SCHOOL - ANNA KAISAR

Our Saint Mark Greek School has had a busy few months. On Friday, March 20, following the beautiful service of the Salutations of the Virgin Mary, we held our annual March 25 Greek Independence Day program. Our students respectfully and with gratitude recited poems and presented stories about Greek Heroes who fought for freedom from the Ottoman Empire. Following the program, we offered the Lenten Dinner for the faithful of our Saint Mark parish. We offer thanks to Father Mark, Father Steven, our parishioners, the Greek School PTA, parents, grandparents, students and our donors.

Our Greek School has been consistently among the top performing schools in the Greek Language Certification Exam (Ellinomatheias tests,) administered by the Centre for Greek Language in Thessaloniki, supervised and funded by the Greek Ministries of Education, Foreign Affairs, and Culture. Last year, ten of our students passed and this year, we have eleven students taking the tests in levels A1 (8-12 years old), A2, B1 and Γ1. We wish them good strength! Καλό Καλοκαίρι!

AHEPA - TIM SHARP

On May 14th at Zorbas Taverna in Delray Beach AHEPA Chapter 487, along with the Daughters of Penelope held its installation dinner to induct our new officers and Board of Governors:

Officers:

President - Tim Sharp
Vice President - George Mellides
Secretary - Tom Fread
Treasurer - Nick Mitsinikos

BOG Members:

Tony Nicolaides
Chuck Diamantis
Gus Constantinou
Alan Macaulay

Since 1999 AHEPA Day has been established as the third Sunday of every May. AHEPA Chapter 487 celebrated AHEPA Day with breakfast for the Saint Mark community on May 17th in the fellowship hall. During the celebratory event AHEPA awarded five deserving students \$1,000 college scholarships. The students include:

Marianna Babioulakis
Sage Constantinou
Matthew Fread

Andrew Gonedes
Nicholas Riger

After taking off the summer, our chapter will reconvene in September where we will be starting our new year and will be recruiting new members to continue to make this chapter even better.

SAINT MARK Mommy + Me BEGINS AGAIN NEXT SEPTEMBER

We just wrapped up our first year of Mommy + Me. What started as monthly play dates, quickly developed into bi-weekly classes! We are looking forward to growing even more next fall! If you have children 0-4 years old, and are interested in joining us please contact the Church office at (561)994-4822 or office@saintmarkboca.net



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WHY ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS ARE NOT CREMATED

..... REV. FR. JOHN TOULOUMES

Cremation (burning the bodies of those who have died to the point of ashes) is a practice which is being "sold" as a cost-effective, space-conservative alternative to traditional burial of the body. Throughout her history, however, the Orthodox Church has prohibited this practice.

A GROWING PRACTICE & PROBLEM

In our country, cremation is increasingly being practiced. In part this is due to the influence of Oriental religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, but it is also a result of the eroding of traditional beliefs among non-Orthodox Christians. In many Christian denominations — or at least among their liberal preachers — it is no longer necessary to believe in the “empty tomb,” in Christ’s physical Resurrection. These teachers call the “empty tomb” a myth and reduce all the post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus to merely spiritual experiences. The Orthodox conviction that the Son of God was also truly Man and was raised in His whole human nature — body and soul — explains the Church’s traditional rejection of cremation, a practice which is diametrically opposed to the expectation of the resurrection of the dead in Christ. If the Resurrection is merely a legend or a beautiful metaphor, then as Saint Paul writes, “If Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain” (1 Cor. 15:17)

THE CHURCH’S HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

The Church throughout her entire history has stressed the importance of understanding that Jesus was born with an actual human body with the same attributes and needs of any other human body. In His ministry, Jesus makes it abundantly clear that the whole of our humanity — body as well as soul — has been called to salvation and eternal life. All of human nature has been raised by Christ’s Ascension to the right hand of the Father. Jesus gave us many proofs of this, but it is seen most clearly in Christ’s appearance to Thomas. In his “Commentary on Saint John,” Saint Cyril of Alexandria writes:

What need was there for the showing of His hands and side, if in accordance with the depravity of some, He did not rise with His own flesh? If He wanted His disciples to believe differently concerning Him, why did He not rather appear in a different and by putting the form of the flesh to shame, draw them towards a different understanding? But it was more important that He show Himself carefully at that time so that they should believe in the future resurrection of the flesh.

Saint Cyril adds that the Body of Christ had to be raised in order to vanquish death and destroy the power of corruption. Christ’s body, which Saint Thomas proved through touching to be real, gives clear witness to the future resurrection of our own bodies.

IN GOD’S IMAGE

The human person is created in the image and likeness of God. When we are baptized it is not only the soul which becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit, but also the Body. When we receive Holy Communion, we take the real Body and Blood of Christ into our bodies. In the mysteries of Chrismation and Holy Unction it is our bodies which are anointed with Holy Chrism. Particularly clear proof of the sanctity of the body is given by those saints such as Saints Spyridon, Paraskevi, Savas, Gerasimos and Dionysios, whose bodies remain incorrupt centuries after their physical deaths. The Church knows innumerable accounts of healing

occurring upon being blessed with the relics of a saint. These men and women lived the life in Christ so fully that not only were their souls taken to heaven but their bodies retain the sanctity and healing power of the presence of the Holy Spirit.

PREPARING THE BODY FOR BURIAL

The future resurrection of the believer’s soul and body, according to the truth which Christ revealed, dictates the nature of Orthodox traditions concerning the body at death. In an Orthodox funeral, “the mourners gather” as the “myrrhbearers to provide the last ministry to the Christian body in preparation for the Resurrection.” Anyone who has attended the Orthodox Great Friday services knows the sequence following Christ’s death: Joseph of Arimathea goes at great personal risk to beg Pilate for the body of Jesus. As our icons show, the Theotokos, Nicodemus, John the Apostle and the Myrrhbearing Women helped Joseph, covering the Most Precious Body with tears.

The Church has unequivocally taught since Christ’s Crucifixion that the proper way to treat the dead is a reverent burial of the body within the Church. We sing hymns and psalms to escort the dead on their way and to express gratitude to God for their life and death. We wrap the body in a new shroud, symbolizing the new dress of incorruption the person is destined to receive. We pour myrrh and oil on the body as we do at baptism. We accompany this with incense and candles, showing our belief that the person has been liberated from darkness and is going to the true Light. We place the body in the grave towards the east, denoting the Resurrection to come. We weep in our grief, but not unrestrainedly, as we know what happiness is to come. A Christian death means eternal life with Christ, where at the Last Judgement body and soul will be reunited and glorified together.

THE BRIDAL CHAMBER

A radiantly beautiful verse from the Orthros of Pascha concerning Christ’s bodily Resurrection from the grave encompasses the blessed hope He has given to each of us, saying:

Today, as from a Bridal Chamber Christ has shown forth from the Tomb and filled the women with joy, saying: Proclaim the glad tidings to the Apostles!

THE BROAD PICTURE

Acceptance of cremation, therefore, would represent a radical departure from an established practice for which there seems to be no adequate reason to institute a change. Thus the Church, due to a pastoral concern for the preservation of right beliefs and right practice within the Tradition of the Fathers, and out of a sense of reverence for its departed, must continue its opposition to this practice. Since cremation is prohibited by the canons, any such funeral will not be permitted in the Church. Naturally, an exception occurs when the Church is confronted with the case of some accident or natural disaster where cremation is necessary to guard the health of the living. In these special situations, the Church allows cremation of Orthodox people with prior episcopal permission and only by “economia.”

This article is a compilation drawn from the Orthodox journal, “Life Transfigured” a publication of the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City, and from “Contemporary Moral Issues” by Father Stanley Harakas.



CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES



BARBARA & CONSTANTINE CHRISTAKIS

Barbara & Constantine Christakis both graduated from Florida State University. Barbara with a bachelor in Biology, and Constantine with a bachelor in Psychology. Constantine is planning to pursue a graduate degree and is interested in public policy, while Barbara will be spending a year teaching English in Spain, before matriculating at FSU College of Medicine next year.

GEORGIA CHRISTAKIS

Georgia Christakis graduated from FSU Medical School and received her MD. After her marriage to Peter Eldridge in Crete this June, Georgia will begin her pediatric residency at Maria Fareri Children's Hospital, affiliated with New York Medical College, (her grandfather's alma mater.)



LUKE CHRISTAKIS

Luke Christakis, son of Dr. Paul and Sophia Christakis, graduated from Oregon State University with a bachelor in Computer Science. Luke is currently seeking a position in software development

JONATHAN CHAPEKIS

The son of George and Kathy Chapekis, Jonathan graduated from Nova Southeastern University College of Osteopathic Medicine. He will be doing research in orthopedic surgery prior to residency.



MATTHEW FREAD

Matthew Fread, the son of Tom and Debbie Fread, graduated from West Boca High School. Matthew will be attending the University of Central Florida this summer to begin pursuing a bachelor's degree in Mechanical Engineering.

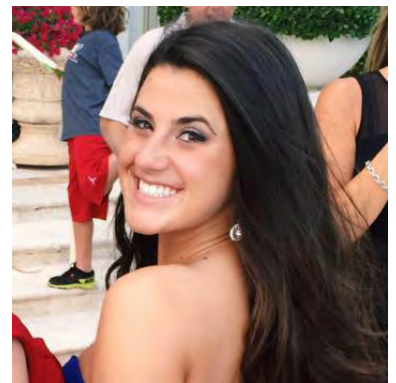
ANDREW GONEDES

Andrew is a National Honor Society member, AICE Diploma recipient and graduated from Boca Raton Community HS. He will be attending Nova Southeastern and plans to pursue a course of study in Neuroscience and become a PA (Physicians Assistant).



KRISTINA KOUTSOUPIS

The daughter of John and Yvette Koutsoupis, Kristina graduated from Spanish River high school and she's going to go to the University of North Florida to study nursing.





ANNA SAIGER

Anna Saiger, daughter of Pete and Jenny Saiger, recently graduated from North Broward Preparatory School, and will be attending Florida Atlantic University in the fall to pursue a bachelor's degree in speech pathology.



ELENI LANG

The daughter of Helen Lang, Eleni graduated from University of Michigan, Bachelor of Science in Engineering, (IOE), she will be relocating to Chicago in August to begin working for Ernst and Young, LLC, in Technology Advisory Services.



STEVEN PAPAMICHAEL

Steven received the AICE diploma from Boca Raton Community HS., and will be attending Florida State to peruse a career in Exercise Science.

MONICA SCHULTZ



Monica Schultz completed her Master of Music in Piano Performance at Florida Atlantic University this spring. Monica's father is a priest in the Serbian Orthodox Diocese and serves in St. Michael's in Huntsville, AL. Monica will be joining her parents in Alabama this coming fall, where she will pursue her Doctorate in Piano Performance at the University of Alabama.





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