



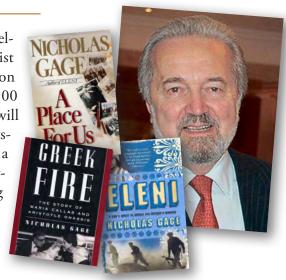
SAINT MARK WELCOMES NEW PARISH COUNCIL FOR 2015

n January 18, 2015, Father Mark offered the "Oath of Office" for our 2015 Parish Council. Following Liturgy, the Council convened to elect their 2015 Officers. These council members (newcomers and veterans) will undoubtedly serve and govern the parish with reverence and love. We are blessed with many faithful members here at Saint Mark, and our parish council is no different.

On February 14, following the Saturday of the Souls Divine Liturgy, our entire Parish Council will be meeting for our first Retreat day at Saint Mark. We will review the mission of our Saint Mark parish, as well as our ministries and organizations.

NICHOLAS GAGE: "A WRITER'S ODYSSEY"

he Saint Mark parish will welcome distinguished journalist and author Nicholas Gage on February 28, 2015. That evening at 6:00 pm in the Fellowship Hall, Mr. Gage will offer his presentation "A Writer's Odyssey," along with refreshements and a question-and-answer segment following the lecture. This evening is being sponsored by our newly formed cultural committee. This is sure to be yet another interesting presentation, and wonderful event for Saint Mark.



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:



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 Patti Ali, Bookkeeper

Church Maintenance: Yosban Pazbalino & Tim Caldwell

Office Volunteers:

Pat Anthony, Niki Core, Joann Haros, Evelyn Lamia, Marlene Buettner, Pres. Mary Leondis, Debbie Fread, Kay Poly, Kalle Andromidas

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 Choir: Virginia Barnes

JOY: Angela & Girard Mitchell, and Erin & Rick Kontos

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: Constantine Mukasa & Irina Giakouminakis

The Message: Fr. Steven Klund



My Dear Faithful,

"Rejoice in the Lord always, again, I say rejoice!" (Philippians 4:5)

The Saint Mark parish held it's 34th Annual Greek Festival from January 22-25, 2015. What a glorious 4 days . . . the weather was perfect; the volunteers were plentiful; thousands entered through our gates; and once again, we showcased our Faith and culture to those whom we welcomed.

While the Festival is the largest annual fundraiser at Saint Mark, it is so much more. It is an opportunity for our faithful to rejoice together in the love we have for God and each other. Lead by our co-chairs Steve Giakouminakis and Joe Pores our Festival Executive Committee (Pat Anthony, Bill Cocose, Manny Manos, Jim Dovas, John Koutsoupis, Dawn Riger) convened on a weekly basis to make important decisions about the lay-out, food, vendors, publicity, marketing, etc.

In early December, the DOP, lead by Connie Pilallis, made over 100 pans of pastichio and moussaka; the Pores family made approximately 1,500 meatballs; our Philoptochos members made over 5,000 pieces of dessert. Our volunteers spent countless hours preparing for the Festival. During the four days, we saw hundreds of volunteers, young and old, offering their time and talent to Saint Mark. Our Saint Mark hospitality shown bright to the over 15,000 people that celebrated with us.

You see, the Festival is so much more than a fundraiser . . . it is about coming together and spending time with each other . . . it's about the Saint Mark Family!

When we come together as a family offering our gifts and talents to our Lord, we gain so much more in return than we put in . . . more than we ever could imagine!!! Our Lord is so great; so wonderful; so powerful! His love for us endures forever and thus allows us to grow with each other as a family in Christ.

We thank our Lord for His rich blessings that He bestows upon us. We rejoice in our Saint Mark Family, knowing that together, we can accomplish anything. May we always put Christ first and may serving Him be our first priority. "Rejoice in the Lord always, again, I say rejoice!" (Philippians 4:5)

With profound gratitude for the Saint Mark Family, I remain,

Fr. Mark Leondis

+ Fr. Much by Leonds



ENTER THE DESERT

o here we are in the midst of Great Lent. It is like no other period of the year . . . it is a journey, a God-filled experience, a 40-day period given to us by our Church, to come closer to our Lord. We flee from the busy, hectic and chaotic world we live in and "enter the desert."

Each year, the Orthodox Church gives us a special 40-day period to prepare us for the Resurrection of our Lord, Pascha (Easter). This period is called Holy and Great Lent and begins forty days before Holy Week. The Church asks us to pay extra special attention to our lives during this period, so we can become closer to our Lord.

The number "40" is a powerful symbol in scripture: Noah built his ark when it rained for 40 days and 40 nights (Genesis 6–9); Moses spent 40 days and 40 nights on the Mountain (Mount Sinai) when receiving the "law from God" (the 10 Commandments – Exodus 24:18); Jesus spent 40 days and 40 nights fasting in the wilderness being tempted by the devil (Matthew 4:1-11).

During the forty-day period, the Church asks us to enhance our spiritual lives by fasting, praying and giving alms of mercy. Whatever level you choose is up to you . . . but do something different.

The time is now . . . today . . . to begin your Lenten Journey. Make this year's 40-day journey something different, something unique. Make these next 40 days something special and I guarantee you will experience the resurrection of our Lord in a new and exciting way. Enter the desert...



DISTRICT GOYA

his Lent we will be travelling down with our GOYA to Saint Sophia for our annual district lenten retreat. This year, however, will be a special treat! We will be taking the GOYANs on the water in the afternoon with "Shake-a-Leg Miami," where they will kayak, pontoon, and even sail around the Miami harbor.

The retreat will be led by guest ambassadors from Holy Cross, Chris and Kalliope Retelas; as well as our Archdiocese Youth Director Steve Christoforou. The retreat will last all day from 9am to 5pm, and will help equip the GOYANs to navigate the turbulent waters of the lenten season. Please talk to Fr. Steven or email districtgoya@gmail.com to sign up for the retreat. But hurry, spots are running out!

GREAT LENT 2015

The Journey to Lascha

Blessed Lent!

The season of Great Lent is the time of preparation for the coming Resurrection of Christ. It is a chance for all believers to renew their devotion and commitment through increased prayer, fasting, and almsgiving (acts of mercy). Great Lent is a penitential time, but not a morbid one. We should joyfully rededicate our lives according to Christ and His teachings, and most of all, re-apply ourselves to the Great Commandment of loving God and our neighbors.

Saint Mark offers an array of opportunities to help us grow closer to God during this season. We encourage frequent participation in our services, as well as the Sacrament of Confession. If you are interested in participating in this blessed sacrament, call Dawn Riger at the Church Office (561 994 4822) in order to schedule an appointment with Fr. Mark.

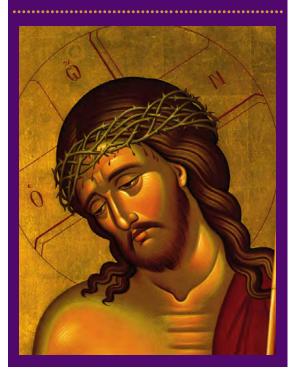
The other lenten ministries that we are offering are:

Wednesdays

- 5:30 pm Synaxis: "Ladder of Divine Ascent"
- 6:30 pm Pre-Sanctified Liturgy

Fridays

- 6:00 pm Chanting Class
- 7:00 pm Salutations to the Theotokos
- 8:00 pm Lenten Dinner



GROWTH & PLANNING COMMITTEE

In the past thirty five years, our Saint Mark Greek Orthodox Church has grown from a parish of fifty families to almost six hundred families. It has been an exciting journey that we continue to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the teachings of our Orthodox Faith.

The objective of the Growth and Planning Committee of Saint Mark is to put a strategic plan in place that will guide the continued growth of our Church. We will make recommendations to the Parish Council and Parish Assembly for the best use of our current land, the most useful additions, enhancements and address the needed repairs to our facilities.

As we continue to grow, it is important that we engage in short and long range planning and set the stage for the next thirty five years of growth at Saint Mark.

If you are interested in participating on the Growth and Planning Committee, or to ask a question or offer a suggestion, please contact:

> Father Mark - 561.994.4822 or our Committee Chair Pat Sourlis - 561-483.8517.

SUNDAY CHURCH SCHOOL - HELEN LANG

As our Church School teachers teach the weekly Gospel Lessons of Great Lent, our students are reminded to prepare themselves through prayer, fasting, and giving of themselves to those less fortunate. Our activities during Great Lent begin by inviting all of our students to participate in the Sunday of Orthodoxy procession within the Sanctuary on Sunday, March 1st. Parents, please remember to bring your icons!

Our fourth grade class, which is taught by Mrs. Katherine Skoundridakis and Mrs. Lisa Stabile, will serve to coordinate a Saint Mark Food Drive during the months of February and March. Collection boxes will be placed in the outer narthex, and the food donations will be delivered to the Caring Kitchen Food Pantry. Please discuss with your child the gift of giving of themselves, as during Great Lent.

We will once again collect monies for those less fortunate through the OCMC Coin Box Campaign. Every little bit helps, and your contributions truly make a difference. Please look for the 'coin box' to arrive at your home with your Church school student, and plan to fill with your loose change.

Our, lessons, crafts and hymns during Great Lent will reinforce the preparation of our students for Pascha. Please make prioritize your children's spiritual education, by taking every opportunity to bring them to Church School during the coming weeks and months.

ORATORICAL FESTIVAL

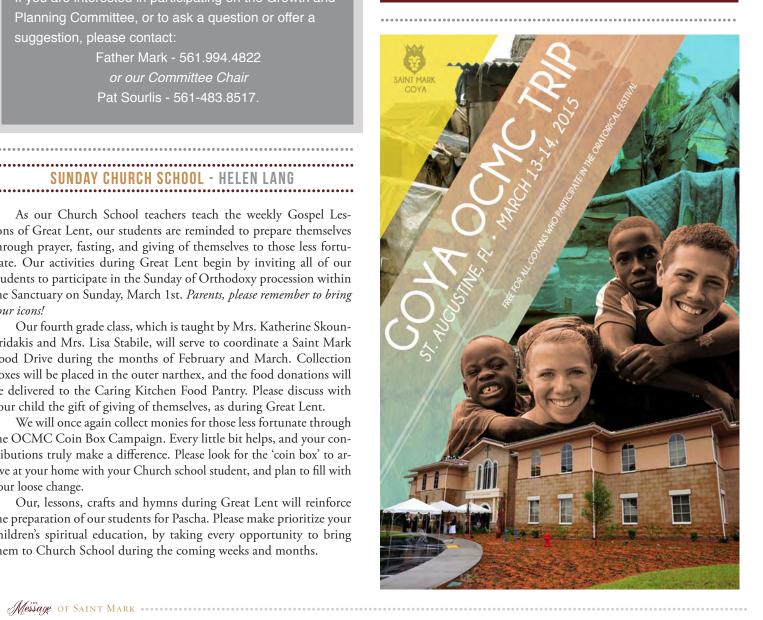
Calling all Saint Mark Middle School & High School students... Are your speeches written?

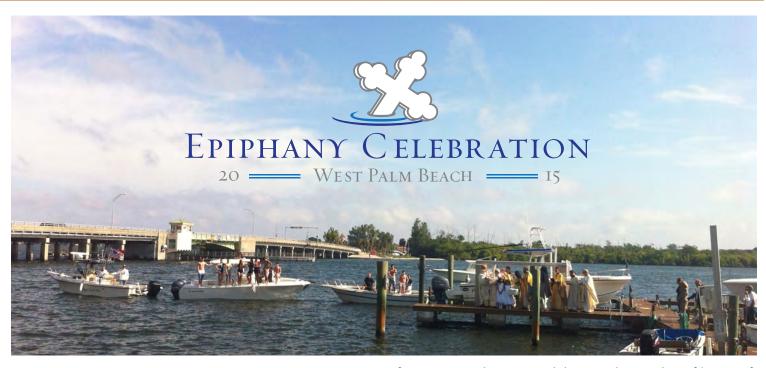
Participating in the Saint Mark Oratorical festival is an excellent opportunity to develop and perfect your self expression of our faith, and your public speaking talent! The Saint Mark Oratorical Festival is March nn, 2015. Please see Father Steven, Mrs. Joanne Lindholm, Mrs. Helen Lang, or your Church school teacher for more information on topics, and preparation!



All GOYANs who participate, and also help the "Support A Mission Priest" program, will get to attend our yearend trip to OCMC in St. Augustine for FREE!

CALL THE CHURCH OFFICE OR LOG ON TO GOARCH.ORG TO FIND THIS YEAR'S TOPICS





EPIPHANY CELEBRATION - ZACHARY COTRONAKIS

Two years ago, I watched the cross dive in Palm Beach for the first time. Watching in awe from the sidelines, I didn't have the slightest clue I would be diving for the cross exactly 1100 days later. In the short time I spent with my fellow divers-I didn't know who I was diving with until the very day-I developed a bond with not only the three other representatives from Boca, but the other seven divers from South Florida. The dive itself was filled with confusion, laughter, and suspense. The cross, contrary to what we were told (and what had occurred for the last fourteen consecutive years) sank under the surface of the intercoastal. Prior to the jump, all the divers, including myself, were preparing for a cold, vigorous aftershock

after jumping in the intercoastal during mid-winter, but I felt none of what was expected. I felt a sense of refreshment, renewal, and excitement. I realized what it meant to be baptized. As a baby, it is impossible to fully grasp the amazing importance of what is going on at your baptism. I now realize what every GOYAN needs to experience in their lifetime, a feeling of renewal and freedom. It was a true blessing to have the opportunity to dive for the cross, and I am looking forward to diving again next year!

COMING UP...

FEB. 7 - GOYA PAINTBALL @ HOT SHOTS (8AM-12PM)
FEB. 13 - MIDDLE SCHOOL MADNESS (7:30PM)
FEB. 15 - High School Goya @ TBD (5PM)
MAR. 7 - VOYAGE THROUGH LENT @ ST SOPHIA
MAR. 13 - 14 GOYA OCMC TRIP TO ST. AUGUSTINE

JOY - ANGELA MITCHELL

The holiday season was complete for the JOY ministry with caroling and ice skating as our main events. In December, the children, along with their families, visited the homes of elderly people who are no longer able to leave their homes. In singing carols to the "shut ins," not only did the children spread a little joy to the elderly, but learned something more meaningful about the Christmas spirit and what it means to give something of yourself during a very busy time of year.

Before heading back to school in January, we had our annual ice skating outing to celebrate our "winter" in South Florida. If you have not registered your 1st through 5th grader in JOY yet, and would like to do so, please contact the church office.

church office.

GOYA - MINISTRY TEAM

GOYA concluded a fantastic 2014 in grand fashion! Saint Mark proudly hosted the "Advent UP" District GOYA Retreat at a high ropes camp site in Lake Worth. During the 2-day retreat, the kids got to experience an all new way to "ascend" by tackling a dizzying obstacle course dozens of feet in the air! We concluded the year by watching the Florida Panthers beat the Buffalo Sabres in hockey after the feastday of Saint Nicholas. While 2014 has come and gone, our youth group looks forward to a whole new year of spiritual formation and fun! Bring on 2015!!!







Justagram

FOR EVERYTHING SAINT MARK



FOLLOW @SAINTMARKBOCA ON FOR ALL NEWS ON GOYA. JOY AND MORE







SENIORS OF SAINT MARK - DIANE PATERAKIS

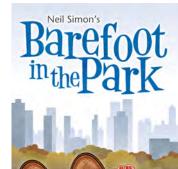
Happy New Year, and what a blessing it has been! December 11th was our Christmas Luncheon. We held it at the Delray Beach Marriott this year. We were a little afraid of trying a new hotel, but we were pleasantly surprised, as the accomodations for the luncheon were better than ever! The room was beautiful, the service was lovely, and (most importantly) the food was excellent.

Our trip to Naples and Fort Meyers was cancelled. We didnt get enough members to fill the bus, and we will try again next year.

It's Theater Time! Sunday March 8th, we have tickets to see the "Florida Follies" at Olympic High School on Lyons Boulevard. Tickets are \$28. We will see a great show with entertainers who were professionally preforming on Broadway and in the Catskills. Then, on Saturday, March 28th we will be going to the Delray Beach Playhouse to see a Neil Simon musical called "Barefoot in the Park." Tickets re \$25. We encourage you all to get your tickets now becasue we only have 20 seats available for both of these exciting shows.

If you would like to join us for either event, or if you want more information on the Seniors of Saint Mark, please call:

> Bess Hatsis - (561) 495-9492 Diane Paterakis - (561) 368-3728



SAINT MARK GREEK SCHOOL



St. Mark Greek School **Trip to Tarpon for** Greek Independence Family of 2: \$300 Family of 3: \$325 **Day Parade**

March 21st-22nd 2015 Depart St. Mark Saturday 7:30 am Return Sunday 10pm Trip includes: Bus ride, Pirate ship

ride, Hotel, Brunch, Pizza Sunday night



COST PER FAMILY IN 1 ROOM

Family of 4: \$350

12:30: Arrive Clearwater Beach Marina: grab quick bite or pack lunch (on your own)

1pm: Walk over Captain Memo® Pirate ship: Ship departs at 2pm returns at 4pm (Sodas, lemonade, beer and wine, music, games, face painting all included)

5:30pm: Embassy Suites Tampa: enjoy happy hour and snacks, and breakfast included

6:45 pm: Depart hotel for those who want to go to Tarpon springs for dinner. Dine on your own, and enjoy some shops.

9:45pm Bus leaves tarpon to get back to hotel

Sunday morning we depart to attend church in Tarpon Springs. After church we will provide light brunch.

4pm Bus departs tarpon Springs

5:45 Arrive at Pizza Hut (Pizza, and sodas included)

10pm Arrive back at Saint Marks.

SOFTBALL - JOHN KOUTSOUPIS

The Saint Mark Adult Softball Team has been practicing regularly and are in the midst of their season in the COBRA (Community of Boca Raton Athletics) Church League. Our first game was against St. Gregory Episcopal Church and we defeated them 13-2. Come out and watch the fun on Saturday evenings (times listed in the calendar) -- it is a family affair.



AHEPA - TIM SHARP

Attention Greek-American high school juniors: Don't miss your chance to be a part of the AHEPAcademy class of 2015!

> Session Dates: June 21, 2015 - June 27, 2015 Early action application deadline: March 1, 2015 Extended application deadline: April 1, 2015

Apply for the opportunity to be one of a small, select group of Greek-American high school students selected from all over the country to participate in AHEPAcademy, an interactive leadership and professional development program to be held at George Mason University outside Washington, DC. AHEPAcademy is a leadership and professional development program that identifies, educates, inspires, mentors, advances, and networks exceptional Greek-American high school students as they progress through their high school, college, graduate and professional careers.

> Applications for AHEPAcademy are now available at: www.AHEPAcademy.com

Contact your local AHEPA Chapter and AHEPAcademy to indicate your interest in applying to participate in the program and to see if you are eligible for any scholarships that may be available.



SAINT MARK GREEK WEEK SUMMER CAMP 2015

Even though Lent has yet to arrive, we are already gearing up for the 15th annual Saint Mark Greek Week Summer Camp. This year we will focus on Iconography and how they give us a glimpse into the heavens. If you are interested in helping us develop summer camp for our children please speak with Fr. Mark or Fr. Steven, or contact us at the Office (561) 994 4822, or office@saintmarkboca.net

PHILOPTOCHOS - PAM PARENT

Philoptochos and the faithful of Saint Mark rang in the New Year by celebrating our annual Epiphany Luncheon and Vasilopita cutting. Many of our faithful were honored with a slice of Vasilopita for their service to our church. Both Assimo Kitsos and Angela Mitchell (her son Demetri receiving on her behalf) were the blessed recipients of the coin for 2015. Our Greek School children performed the Kalanda for us and we all enjoyed a delicious meal donated and catered by Zorba's Greek Taverna. Thanks also to the GOYA youth who served our meals efficiently and professionally. It was a true family effort.



No sooner did we finish cel-

ebrating Epiphany, then we began our baking for the Festival. For days the delightful aroma of baking koulourakia, kourabiethes and finikia filled the community center. The classrooms were filled with women rolling out and shaping the over 5,000 cookies prepared for the Festival. A very special thank you to Val Petroff who has organized our bakers for the past twelve years. She keeps track of all the pastries sold, and can tell you on which day we sold out of each item down to the very hour. She works very hard and is dedicated to the success of the Festival. Thank you Val! We also thank the women behind the scenes in the kitchen who mix the dough and bake the various pastries to perfection. This year the team consisted of Maria Pokrajak, Assimo Kitsos, Ann Nichols and Sophia Arbes. Together the women of Philoptochos make a dedicated team who serve our church and community.



Upcoming we have our Membership Luncheon on Monday, February 9 at the Preserve Clubhouse. Thank you to Denise Alman for hosting this event. Members are encouraged to bring guests.

In March, the Saint Mark family will hold its Lenten Lecture Series and the Philoptochos will sponsor Mother Cassiana of the Protection of the Holy Virgin Orthodox Monastery. We thank our Philoptochos Ladies for all they do for our Saint Mark parish.

DOP - MARINA NICOLAIDES

As we begin 2015, we wish everyone a Happy and Healthy New Year! Our DOP chapter, Cassandra #372, has a very busy schedule as we enter the new year. We have already convened, together with our neighboring chapters in Fort Lauderdale and West Palm Beach, to meet our Grand President, Anna Helene Grossomanides. We heard an excellent speech outlining the progress of fundraising for the rebuilding of Saint Nicholas in New York City, and also further information on our national projects: Penelope House, Penelope Place - facilities which aid domestic abuse victims, Ataxia Research, the Sjogren's Syndrome Foundation and the University of Miami Sylvester Cancer Center.

Our Chapter is very interested in the Penelope House, started in 1978 by a chapter in Alabama, which provides safety and material aid to women who have suffered abuse and violence. Our chapter will be hosting an event in the near future to raise funds for this and our other national projects, as well as one in our own community. More about that next month.

We thank you for supporting our efforts and we will welcome you

SAINT MARK CHOIR - VIRGINIA BARNES

The choir enjoyed preparing for and performing in the Saint Mark Christmas Pageant. It is always so motivating to work together to celebrate the birth of Our Lord.

The Saint Mark Choir would like to welcome a new member, Vicky Varlas. Vicky sings soprano and is from Holy Trinity Church of Hicksville Long Island NY. She is one of the original choir members at that church and been singing in the choir from 1980 to the present. Vicky is an active member and supporter of the Federation of Choirs in New York. We are very glad to have her!

Anyone interested in joining the choir is always welcome to come to rehearsal on most Thursday nights at 7:30 pm in the choir loft.

CHANTING CLASS - INTRODUCTORY COURSE

We recently finished covering the basic elements of Vespers. As we are now entering in the pre-Lenten and Lenten periods, we will start offering these chanting courses on Friday at 6 pm, before the Salutations to the Theotokos services, and focus on thsi beautiful service of the Church.





As 2014 came to a close, our Mommy + Me group continued to grow and gain momentum. We look forward to picking up this year with our success from the last. We will continue our bi-monthly classes (starting February 9), and we hope to finally move into our own space in the Church Hall this month. 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











2015 GREEK FESTIVAL

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." Matthew 18:20

So now that the tents are down and the cleanup is complete we have an opportunity to reflect on what our festival really means to us. The countless hours of hard work and dedication by all of you is the greatest reflection of who we are as a community. Each and every one of us should be extremely proud and grateful that we have the opportunity to come together each day as part of the community of Saint Mark Greek Orthodox Church.

At every booth, the visitors to our community were greeted by people who were happy and proud to share for a few brief moments the greatness of our culture and more importantly our faith. Our visitors left our festival with a positive outlook on who we are and for some of them the question of how can they become a part of such a great community.

While there are many things that made this year extraordinary, one that stands out is the level of involvement of the youth of our community. The children of Saint Marks were there to make a gyro, take admissions, carry supplies, clean tables, run to get food for the take out line and to entertain our guests with the amazing dances from our Syrtaki. A true measure of our success as a community is the involvement of our young men and women because they are our future.

Our treasurer and his team are working hard to get our final numbers and we will share this information with you as soon as possible and the initial reports are very positive. Even without the final numbers, we can all be extremely proud of what we have accomplished.

We would like to thank the Aegean Duo and our amazing DJ for the fantastic job that they did this year. We thank all of our sponsors and vendors for supporting us year after year. We thank Father Mark and Father Steven for their leadership and guidance to us all. We thank our employees and those behind the scenes that keep everything moving and we thank all of you for your sacrifice and dedication because without you there is no festival. We thank God for all of the blessings that he bestows on all of us.

Thank you,

Steve Giakouminakis and Joe Pores

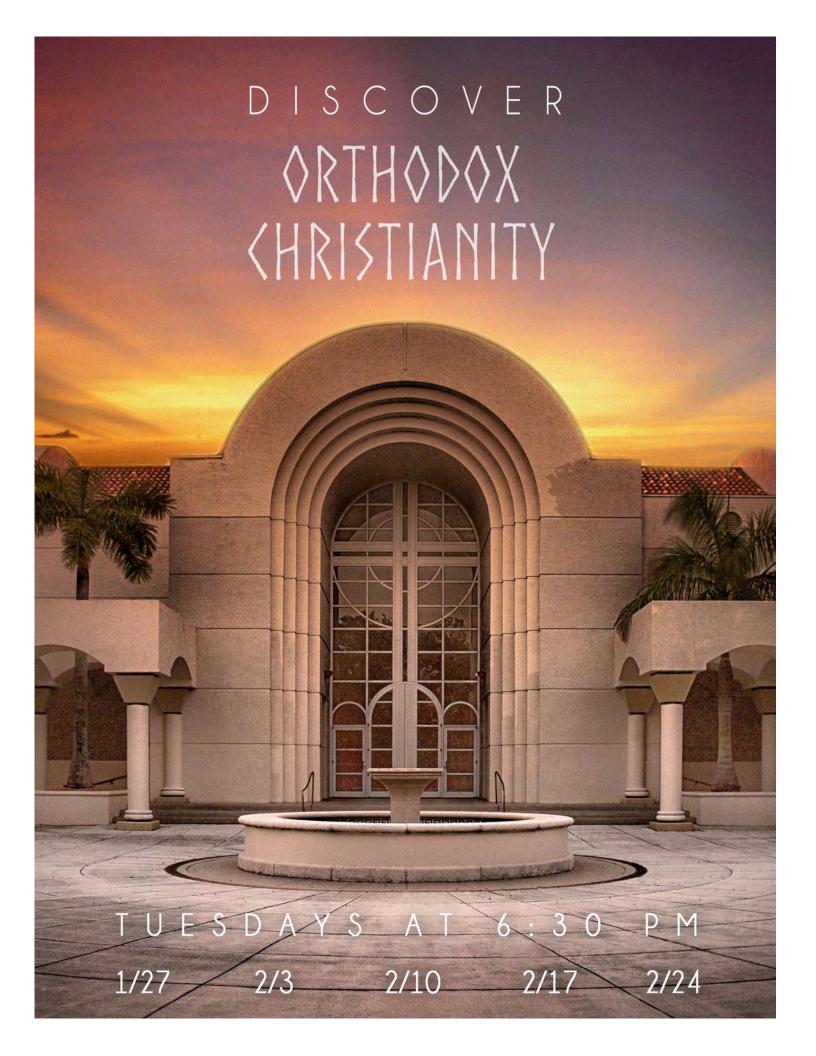














PASCHA (EASTER) CARD, EASTER LILIES AND HOLY WEEK ITEMS

If you would like to sign up for the Pascha card, donate an Easter lily in memory or honor of a loved one, or make a donation toward an item for Holy Week, please stop by the table in the Fellowship Hall following the Divine Liturgy.

HOLY WEEK AND PASCHA DONATIONS

Many parishioners ask to donate for Holy Week/Pascha items.

If you are so inclined, please fill out the form below and stop by the table in the hall.

15 you are so inclinea, please fill out the form below and stop by the table in the hall.		
Unction Supplies (oil, cotton balls, bags) - \$30		Floral Wreath (Thursday evening) - \$275
Holy Friday (Sheet for Christ's body) - \$40		Flowers for the Iconostasis - \$125
Charcoal - \$50	Paschal Candle (Priest) - \$100	Palms for Palm Sunday - \$180
Rose Water/Rose Petals - \$75	Easter Lilies - \$25	Case of Communion Wine (Commandaria) - \$140
Box of Charcoal - \$25	Box of Incense - \$30	Saint Mark Easter Card - \$25
n Memory of: In Honor of:		
Names as you would like them to appear:		
Name:	Phone Numb	er: Total:



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