WINTER • 2013

SAINT MARK



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#### SAINT MARK HOSTS 100 GOYANS IN "BURNING BUSH" RETREAT PAGE 4





PHILOPTOCHOS HOLDS
ANNUAL CHRISTMAS
LUNCHEON
PAGE 5





# MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM SAINT MARK!

very December brings with it joyful tidings and cheerful celebrations. However 2013 brought with it even more reason to celebrate. On Thursday December 19th, the iconography project was brought to a completion and the scaffolding in the church was removed. A few days later on Christmas Eve hundreds of our faithful filled our sanctuary to worship the birth of Christ and to behold the beauty of our newly adorned sanctuary.

Along with the spectacular new iconography, the shipment of new liturgical items arrived just in time for Christmas and are still on display in the Exo-

Narthex until they are donated. Thanks to the devotion of our parishioners, it will not be long before we will begin using these new pieces in our worship services as many of these items were generously paid for within the first few days of their arrival! There are still many opportunities to contribute if you have not had a chance to do so yet. We thank you and all those who have supported the interior beautification campaign. Your offerings are truly a blessing and will make a truly worthy tribute to our community as we prepare for the new year and the Consecration of our Holy Church.











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, Rev. Fr. Alexander Leondis, Rev. Fr. Steven Klund, Rev. Dn. John Christakis, MD

#### Office Staff:

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#### Office Volunteers:

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Church School: Helen Lang

Youth Choir: Virginia Barnes

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**Photography:** Constantine Mukasa & Irina Giakouminakis

The Message: Fr. Steven Klund

# 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; Orthodox Hierarchs and Monastics kidnapped; natural disasters such as the typhoon in the Philippines; 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

#### CHRISTMAS BRINGS WITH IT NEW BELIEVERS TO SAINT MARK

The Church Fathers are unanimous in saying that there is much rejoicing in the Kingdom of Heaven when a new believer is brought into the Church! Such is the case with our two newest members of the Body of Christ, Andre (Panagioti) Gonzalez and Joe (Joseph) Pores.

Andre, Chrismated on Sunday December 8th during the Divine Liturgy in front of the entire community. In a beautiful moment, Fr. Mark paused the Liturgy where Andre then confessed his faith and led the congregation in the recitation of the Creed. Very similarly, Joe was Chrismated during the Vesperal Divine Liturgy on Christmas Eve in front of a full house of worshippers.

The paths that Andre and Joe took to arrive at their Chrismations could not have been more different. Andre, a 16 year old high school student





began his search on his own and had just started coming to Saint Mark during Great Lent last spring. Joe, meanwhile, has long been an active member of the parish with his family, serving on many committees. We pray that Christ our Lord will always find them, and us, worthy of this high calling as Children of the Kingdom of God. Axioi!!!!

#### PARISH COUNCIL UPDATE 2013

#### ······ SUBMITTED BY JOHN KOUTSOUPIS, PRESIDENT

This past year has been a very busy year at Saint Mark and on behalf of the Parish Council, I extend my gratitude for all of your support. Below please find a year-end report for the 2013 Parish Council.

**2013 FESTIVAL** — The 2013 Festival was a tremendous success. We express our thanks to Pat Anthony, Steve Giakouminakis, Mark Rados — for Co-chairing the Festival. The final 2013 net income for the Festival was \$115,488.

**CLERGY/LAITY** — We successfully hosted the Clergy-Laity Assembly and Philoptochos Conference. It was a tremendous success with over 200 people, representing 70 Churches attending. We thank all of the committee members who worked day and night for our Metropolis. A special "Thank You" to Helen Ballerano for all of her work on chairing the Philoptochos Conference. It was a beautiful weekend.

**ORDINATION** — At the conclusion of the Clergy-Laity, His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios ordained Fr. Steven to the Holy Priesthood. It was a meaningful service and we thank our Metropolitan for assigning Fr. Steven to Saint Mark. A special Thank You to Pam Parent and Philoptochos for sponsoring the Ordination Luncheon.

**BATHROOM RENOVATION** — The two hall bathrooms were renovated with the original bids came in at \$40,000 for both bathrooms. Riad Boulos and Steve Giakouminakis were able to complete the bathrooms for under \$16,000.

**SCAFFOLDING** — Went up in late Sept. and came down Dec. 19. We thank Tony Nicolaides and Riad Boulos for their efforts. The interior of Saint Mark is almost complete.

**ROOF** — Original roof and in different locations are starting to leak. Ultimately, we will need to replace the entire roof in the near future. We are doing it in sections so that it is affordable for us. We replaced two major components of the roof in 2013.

**EXTERIOR BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE FORMED** — Under the auspices of the Parish Council, an Exterior Beautification Committee has been created with Fr. Mark, Riad Boulos, Bill Cocose, Jim Dovas, Steve Giakouminakis, Tony Nicolaides.

**POWER WASHING** — After getting quotes up to \$14,000 for power washing the entire campus and Church we were able to secure the project for \$3,000. We thank Bill Cocose and the newly formed Exterior Beautification Committee for making this happen.

**STEWARDSHIP** – The 2013 Stewardship Campain, under the Chair of Penelope Douglas Maloney was successful. It is so important for all of us to get our Stewardship in and increase every year. Inflation happens everywhere – even our Saint Mark parish.

**PLAYGROUND** — The playground has been out of commission for the past month due to broken pieces. The Exterior Beautification Committee has been looking into alternatives to fix or to replace. Expect some big changes in the coming year.

**DOME** — The Exterior Beautification Committee has been working to bring the shine back in our dome . . . it will shine again in 2014.

**BOOKSTORE** — The Council decided it was time to upgrade the floors in the Bookstore. New floors were put in and once again, due their hard work, the cost was less than \$2,000. The Bookstore has been re-modeled – stop by and learn more about your Faith.

**THE BELLS** — Due to the hard work of the Parish Council, the bells are ringing again. We thank them for all of their hard work.

**FACILITY MAINTENANCE** — Look around the facility — and you will notice that there is a Spring Cleaning all year round. We thank Yosban and Tim for their efforts. They are truly making a difference at Saint Mark.

**COMEMORATIVE CONSECRATION ALBUM** — The Council and the Festival Committee will be taking on the Commemorative Album for the Consecration. Keep your eyes out for information — very soon.

**2014 FESTIVAL** — And we are back to the Festival — the biggest fundraiser in our Church. Please contact Pat Anthony or Debbie Fread and get involved . . . we need everyone to make it a tremendous success.

## House Blessings

#### Happy New Year!

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 2014 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 begining of January in the weeks before the Saint Mark Greek Festival. Below are the dates in which our clergy will devote to making these visits:

- January 7 (Tuesday)
- January 8 (Wednesday)
- January 9 (Thursday)
- January 14 (Tuesday)
- January 15 (Wednesday)
- January 16 (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.



# SAINT MARK WINTER MINISTRIES



#### **GOYA - ANNA SAIGER**

Saint Mark hosted an Advent District GOYA Retreat November 23 and 24th. Catering to 8 South Florida parishes, this retreat centered around "The Burning Bush" where we discussed the miracle of Moses and the Burning Bush and how that represented the Virgin Mary's conception of Christ. It was a blessing have this weekend as a chance to meet and interact with our brother and sister GOYANs here in Florida.

After the morning sessions at the Church we all headed to the Embassy Suites Hotel in Deerfield Beach. There we held a Vespers service on the beach and then ate delicious Mahi Gyros at sunset. We finished the evening off with group discussions and a midnight Liturgy at the Hotel.

The next day, we all woke up bright and early for beakfast and a wrap-up session. Then we all hurried upstairs, put our bathing suits on and enjoyed the beautiful day that was ahead of us; the weather, the pool, the ocean and the people. We all had an amazing time that weekend and it was really hard saying goodbye to all of our new friends. However, I know that all of us who attended came away from the weekend feeling inspired and ready "to preserve the fire within each of us." We at Saint Mark want to thank all of the Chaperones, as well as all the participants from our neighboring parishes who participated and gave us their time and attention to make this weekend possible.







Following the "Burning Bush" retreat, our GOYA had another busy month. On December 9th we took our annual trip to visit the children at the "Baby House" (*Pictured Left on Top*). As always the sight of "Saint Nicholas" and the sound of Christmas carols brightened up the faces of these precious young people. They in turn, humbled and touched the hearts of our GOYANs and advisors.

That next weekend we took our singing talents on the road and went caroling to several of our parish's shut-ins and elderly (*Pictured Left Middle*). It was such a fantastic opportunity to spread some Christmas cheer to our brothers and sisters in Christ, and a really great way to ready ourselves for the upcoming Nativity of our Lord.

Lastly, we broke the mold of your typical December youth events by spending the day Kayaking up north in Peanut Island (*Pictured Left on Bottom*). It was the first time kayaking for many of our youth in attendance was made evident by the large quantity of capsized kayaks and frantically swiming GOYANs. We would especially like to thank Rich Brochu and his company "Florida Fishing Academy" for completely gifting our GOYA this fantastic day on the water with his equipment.

As we get ready for 2014 we cannot help but look back on a terrific year we just completed. We thank God for all of His blessings as we thank all of our clergy, advisors, and parents for their guidance and support. If you are interested in signing yourself or someone else up for GOYA please call the Church office at (561) 994 4822.

#### THANKSGIVING FESTIVITIES

This year for Thankgiving we were especially thankful for all of God's blessings, for while the rest of the nation was being blasted by blizzards we were able to have a post-liturgical Softball game. Following the Divine Liturgy, which is the original Thanksgiving meal, we had close to thirty men and women walk next door to Patch Reef Park and play seven innings of America's pastime. After a very competitive game featuring a number of highlights from our youth and our adults the game ended and the players went off to enjoy their family meals.



#### ..... CHRISTMAS PAGEANT - VIRGINIA BARNES

The annual Saint Mark Christmas Pageant and party was held Saturday, December 14, 2013. Due to the scaffolding in the sacntuary at the time, the performance was moved into the fellowship hall. Despite the change in venues the show went on without a hitch, thanks to tremendous solo acts and ensemble productions from our talented Saint Mark family.

The theme of this year's show was "Heralds for Christ." After the opening overture the students presented the life of Saint Basil. Next the church, portrayed the story of Saint Nicholas and the Three Maidens. Just like the angels who announced the good tidings to the shepherds and wise men, both Saint Basil and Saint Nicholas were faithful heralds for our Lord, proclaiming His good news to all of creation.

Finally we finished with the Nativity story, expressed in scripture and song. After the pageant, the cast and audience stayed in the hall and had dinner and a wonderful time at our Christmas party. Many members of the Saint Mark community, from every ministry, put their love and enthusiasm into this event making it a memorable night.













#### CHRISTMAS EVENTS - PHILOPTOCHOS

On Monday December 2, 2013 the Saint Mark Ladies Philoptochos Society had their annual Christmas Party Luncheon. The luncheon was generously hosted by Tasso and Agatha Orfanos (Pictured Below Right) at their condominium in Highland Beach. The lunch was fantastic and the room was beautifully decorated with Christmas cheer





and even boasted a view of the ocean. After an opening prayer from Fr. Mark, and a few welcoming remarks made by Pam Parent, all those at the luncheon broke into song joyfully singing many popular Christmas carols.

The holiday spirit started earlier than that for our Philopotochos members as the week before the Christmas party, a group of devoted women went out to help prepare and serve food at the Delray Caring Kitchen for those in need. Yet, this was not a one-time holiday event as the women of Philoptochos gather together here to serve the hungry

If you are interested in helping out in this fantastic cause, Fran Papamichael heads this outreach program and is always looking for volunteers. You can call the Church office (561 994 4822) and we can put you in contact with her and the Philoptochos Society for future events.







# MOONLIGHT & listletoe

### BALL AND SILENT AUCTION







#### PAT SOURLIS

t was just two months ago that Irene Alexandrou and I agreed to do something unique for the community as well as something that could raise some funds for the Consecration of Saint Mark.

That is when we came up with the idea for The Moonlight and Mistletoe Ball and Auction. After discussing it with Father Mark, we went all-in, devoting the next several weeks of our lives to making it happen. It was quite a hectic time, securing a hotel, a band, and over one hundred and fifty auction items. I would like to thank all of those who helped find these auction items and to our many Table Hostesses who quickly put their tables together.

The days flew by and before we knew it, our idea became a reality. The day of the event the Table Hostesses were busy decorating their tables (a few of which, but sadly not all could be shown here), and the auction items were being carefully displayed. Then the first guest arrived and our night began.

And, oh, what a night it was....The anticipation before the event was soon a memory and the excitement overpowered the ballroom as over 300 guests entered the magnificent the ballroom. It was a joyous evening of mingling, dancing, fellowship and celebration in anticipation of the Christmas Season. This truly served as a night to remember for our Saint Mark Family.

I must give a sincere thanks to Irene Alexandrou for all of her work Co-Chairing this event, as well as to everyone who helped make this evening such a huge success for our Consecration.







#### THE SERVICE OF CONSECRATION

...... Part II .....

#### FR. MARK LEONDIS

rchbishop Demetrios and Metropolitan Alexios will arrive at Saint Mark, on Friday, February 20th with relics of holy martyrs of the Church. During a short service of preparation the relics are placed on a paten and covered with a veil and the holy table is stripped of all holy vessels. The Vespers of Consecration then begins with the Archbishop and Metropolitan Alexios assisted by area clergy.

On Saturday morning, the Orthros Service begins at 8 am followed by the Consecration Service at 9 am. After Psalm 143, prayers are offered and the processions around the

Church begin. The congregation follows the Bishops outside carrying the holy relics around the Church three times.

As the Archbishop arrives before the main entrance to the Church after each circling, he places the holy relics on a table. An Epistle and Gospel lesson are read before the entrance. The Archbishop raises the paten and two more processions will take place. Upon completing the third procession, the Archbishop offers a prayer petitioning God's protection over the new House of Worship,

which he founded, and that in it true glory and worship might be rendered to Him.

The processions set apart the Church from other buildings as a "sacred area" which serves to unite man with his Creator, the earthly with the heavenly world. The Church thus becomes God's abode on earth and the Church becomes heaven for us.

The Archbishop, representing Christ returning to heaven at the Ascension, commences a dialogue with a priest found inside the main doors. The Archbishop raps on the doors with his episcopal staff saying; "Open the gates and let them remain open forever and let the King of Glory enter." (Psalm 24)

The priest within the doors, represents an angel who is amazed at the Lord's question, because the Son of God was always present in heaven, even when he became incarnate. The angel, therefore, asks: "Who is the King of Glory?" The Archbishop, representing Christ responds: "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, the Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory."

The Archbishop raises the paten and



makes the sign of the cross before the doors. The doors are opened—the angelic hosts receive their Lord bodily into heaven. The Archbishop, symbolizing Christ, enters the Church carrying the Holy relics followed by all. Jesus Christ opened the heavens for us and thus we follow him into his Kingdom by entering his Church.

The second part of the Consecration Service is the "Deposition of the Holy Relics." The Archbishop enters the sanctuary, uncovers the paten and places the relics into a "pyx", a small metal box. He pours holy Chrism oil, used for Christmastion, over the relics. This symbolizes the unity of the martyrs with Christ, the Anointed One who gave the fullness of His grace to His martyrs.

In the early Christian period, the persecuted Christians performed the Eucharist in underground catacombs over the tombs of martyred saints. When Christianity ceased to be persecuted, this tradition was perpetuated by enclosing holy relics of martyrs in the altar table.

The Service of Consecration revolves

around the consecration or baptism of the altar table, for it represents the center or root of all sacraments and rites. The Archbishop places the pyx containing the relics into a cavity or crypt in the altar table where it will remain permanently... forever. He then pours wax-mastic over the relics, thus sealing them into the altar.

The wax-mastic contains wax, mastic, myrrh, aloe, incense, resin and laudanum. The altar table represents the holy sepulcher of our Savior. This act commemorates the fragrant spices used by Joseph of Arimathea and Nico-

demus to anoint the body of Jesus as a preparation for his burial.

Wax, as a binding and unifying agent represents the eternal bond between Christ and His martyrs, between Christ and all those who take up their cross and follow him, between Christ and us, the faithful of Saint Mark, His faithful followers.

# **Thursday, February 20**Gold Leaf Memorial - 6:00 pm Reception - 7:00 pm

Friday, February 21
Relics Arrival & Vespers - 6:00 pm
Reception - 7:30 pm



#### Saturday, February 22

Orthros - 8:00 am
Consecration Liturgy - 9:00 am
Reception - 12:30 pm
Consecration Banquet - 6:00 pm
at the Delray Beach Marriott

#### GOLD LEAF MEMORIAL FUND

AHEPA Chapter 487

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Pamela Parent

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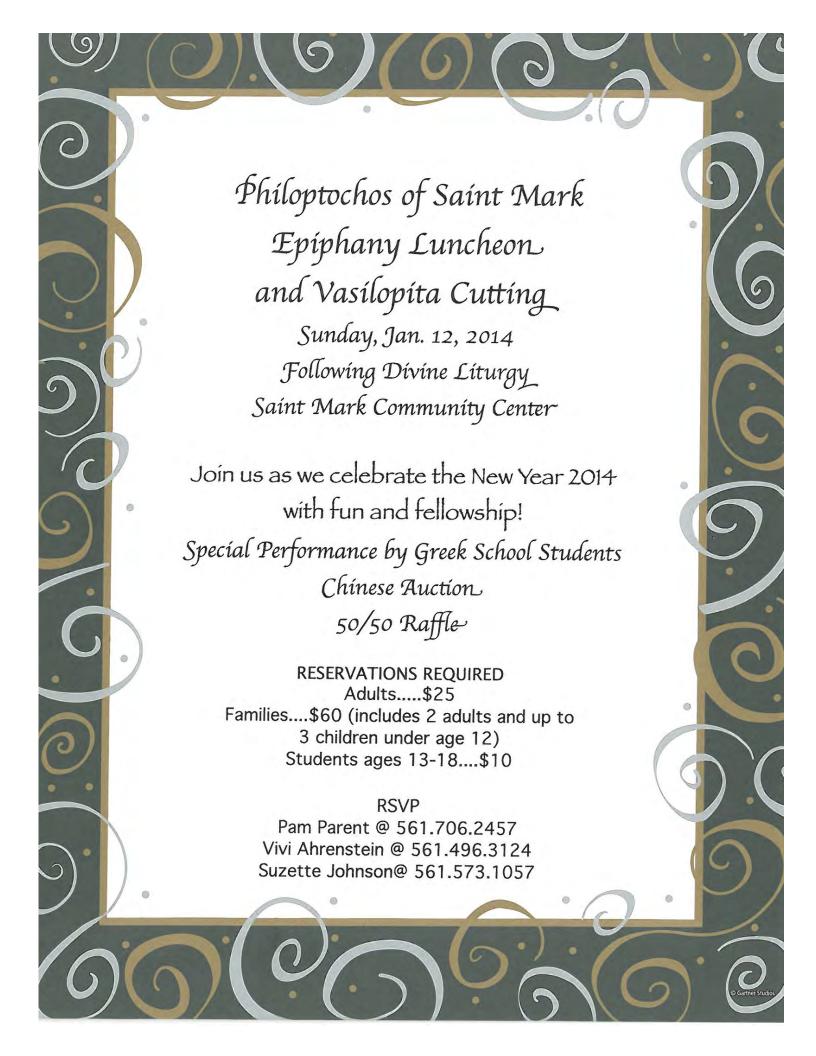
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