

THE EPISTLE

St. Luke Greek Orthodox Church

Rev. Father Christ Kontos, Protopresbyter

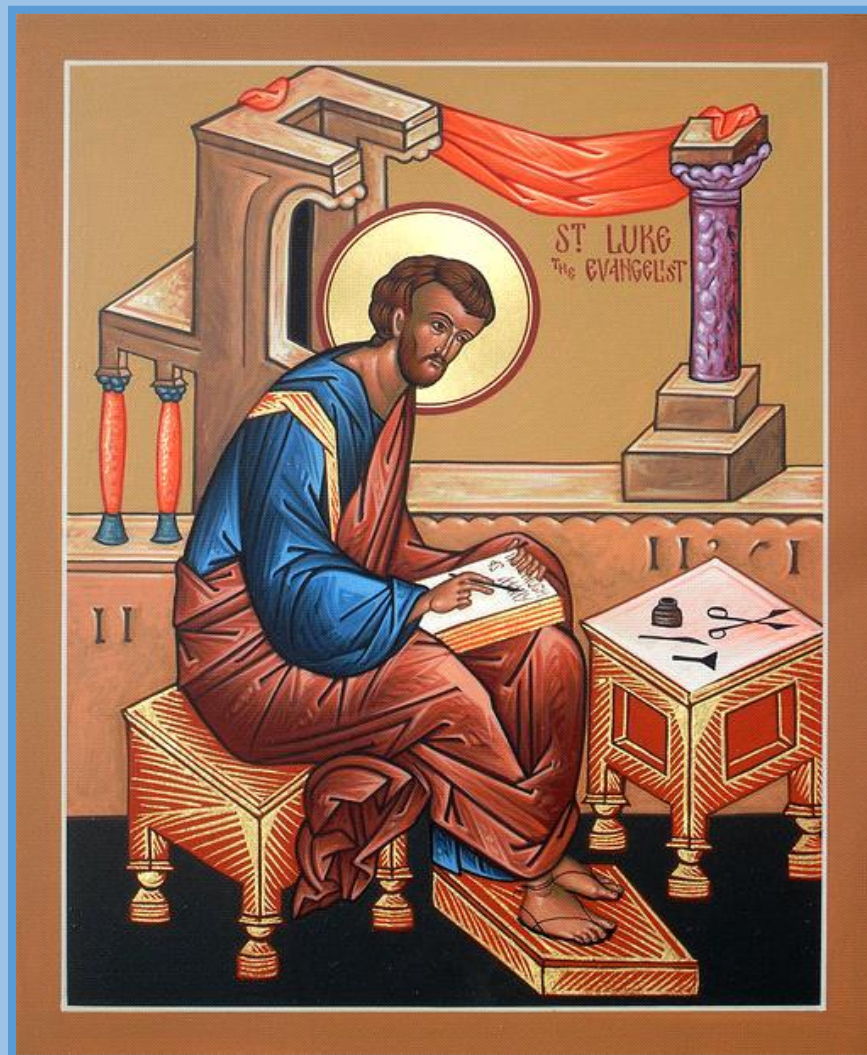
35 North Malin Road

610-353-1592

Broomall, PA 19008

www.st-luke.org

December 2019 and January 2020



December 2019 Ecclesiastical Calendar

Sunday, December 1st

14th Sunday of Luke

Nahum the Prophet; Philaret the Merciful of Amnia

9:00am Orthros and 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Friday, December 6th

St. Nicholas the Wonderworker; Nicholas the New Martyr

9:00am Orthros and 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Sunday, December 8th

10th Sunday of Luke

9:00am Orthros and 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Thursday, December 12th

Spyridon the Wonderworker; Peter the Aleut

9:00am Orthros and 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Sunday, December 15th

Eleutherios, Bishop Illyria; Susannah the Deaconess

9:00am Orthros and 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Sunday, December 22nd

Sunday before Nativity; Anastasia the Great Martyr

9:00am Orthros and 10:00am Divine Liturgy



Services for the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Eve of the Nativity of Christ, Tuesday, December 24th

Orthros & Great Hours 10:00am

Christmas Eve, Tuesday, December 24th

Great Vespers, Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great at 6:00pm

Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

Midnight Service

Tuesday evening the 24th into Wednesday morning the 25th

Orthros at 11:00pm followed by the
Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom into the
Midnight Hour of Christmas Morning

Sunday, December 29th

Sunday after Nativity

14,000 infants (Holy Innocents); Righteous Marcellus

9:00am Orthros and 10:00am Divine Liturgy

January 2020 Ecclesiastical Calendar

Wednesday, January 1st

St. Basil the Great; Circumcision of Jesus Christ

Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great TBA

Sunday, January 5th

Great Forefeast of Epiphany

10:00am Orthros & Divine Liturgy, Great Agiasmos

Monday, January 6th

Holy Epiphany/Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

9:00am Orthros and 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Great Blessing of the Water/Agiasmos

Tuesday, January 7th

Synaxis of St. John the Baptist and Forerunner

9:00am Orthros and 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Sunday, January 12th

Sunday After Epiphany/Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

9:00am Orthros and 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Friday, January 17th

St. Anthony the Great; Anthony of Berropas; New Martyr George of Ioannina

9:00am Orthros and 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Sunday, January 19th

12th Sunday of Luke

9:00am Orthros and 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Sunday, January 26th

15th Sunday of Luke

9:00am Orthros and 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Thursday, January 30th

Synaxis of The Three Hierarchs:

Sts. Basil, Gregory and John Chrysostom; Hippolytos, Pope of Rome

9:00am Orthros and 10:00am Divine Liturgy

December 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 Fourteenth Sunday of Luke 9am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy Philoptochos Basket Raffle Sale	2	3 Senior Men 10am Greek School 5pm Elements of Theology 6:30pm Parish Council Meeting 7pm Men's Volleyball 7:30pm	4 Adult Bible Study 11am	5 Play Group 9:30am Senior Men 10am Greek Dance 7pm	6 Nicholas the Wonderworker 9am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy Senior Men 10am Joy and Hope Christmas Party 4pm	7 Boutiques and Greek Treats 10am
8 Tenth Sunday of Luke 9am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy Pageant Rehearsal Greek School Vasilopita Sale	9 Philoptochos Board Meeting 6:30pm	10 Senior Men 10am Greek School Christmas Program 5pm Elements of Theology 6:30pm Men's Volleyball 7:30pm	11 Adult Bible Study 11am FTIN Cook 6pm	12 Spyridon the Wonderworker 9am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy Play Group 9:30am Senior Men Luncheon Greek Dance 7pm	13 Senior Men 10am	14 Philoptochos Vasilopita Baking GOYA - FTIN Gift wrapping 5pm
15 Eleventh Sunday of Luke 9am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy Pageant Rehearsal Greek School Vasilopita Sale Parish Council Elections 12pm	16	17 Senior Men 10am Greek School 5pm Elements of Theology 6:30pm Men's Volleyball 7:30pm	18 Adult Bible Study 11am	19 Play Group 9:30am Senior Men 10am Greek Dance 7pm	20 Senior Men 10am	21
22 Sunday before Nativity 9am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy Christmas Pageant Greek School Vasilopita Sale	23	24 Christmas Eve Orthros and Great Hours 10am Great Vespers, Divine Liturgy of St. Basil 6pm St. John Chrysostom Orthros 11pm Followed by Divine Liturgy	25 Christmas Day	26 NO Play Group Senior Men 10am Senior Women 10am NO Greek Dance	27 Senior Men 10am	28
29 Sunday after Nativity 9am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy	30	31 New Year's Eve				

St. Luke Greek Folk Dance Practices: *Ellinakia* 2nd and 3rd graders practice from 7:00pm-8:00pm on Thursdays
 4th, 5th, and 6th graders practice from 7:30pm-8:30pm on Thursdays
All Olympians practice from 7:00pm-8:30pm on Thursdays

January 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 St. Basil the Great; Circumcision of Christ TBA	2 Play Group 9:30am Senior Men 10am Greek Dance 7pm	3 Senior Men 10am	4
5 Great Forefeast of Epiphany 10am Orthros & Divine Liturgy, Great Agiasmos	6 Holy Epiphany/Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ 9am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy Great Blessing of the Water/Agiasmos	7 Synaxis of St. John the Baptist and Forerunner 9am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy Senior Men 11am Greek School 5pm Elements of Theology 6:30pm Men's Volleyball 7:30pm	8 Adult Bible Study 11am FTIN Cook 6pm Philoptochos Vasilopita Cutting Social 6pm	9 Play Group 9:30am Senior Men 10am Senior Women 10am Greek Dance 7pm	10 Senior Men 10am JOY Vasilopita and Movie Night 4pm	11
12 Sunday After Epiphany/Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ 9am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy Vasilopita Sunday Oratorical Festival Meeting 12pm	13 Philoptochos Board Meeting 6:30pm	14 Senior Men 10am Greek School 5pm Elements of Theology 6:30pm Men's Volleyball 7:30pm	15 Adult Bible Study 11am	16 Play Group 9:30am Senior Men 10am Senior Men Luncheon 12pm Greek Dance 7pm	17 St. Anthony the Great 9am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy Senior Men 11am	18
19 Twelfth Sunday of Luke 9am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy Oratorical Festival Meeting 12pm	20 VFW Eleftheria 11am	21 Senior Men 10am Greek School 5pm Elements of Theology 6:30pm Men's Volleyball 7:30pm	22 Adult Bible Study 11am	23 Play Group 9:30am Senior Men 10am Senior Women 10am Greek Dance 7pm	24 Senior Men 10am	25
26 Fifteenth Sunday of Luke 9am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy Oratorical Festival Meeting 12pm Philoptochos General Assembly 12pm	27	28 Senior Men 10am Greek School 5pm Elements of Theology 6:30pm Men's Volleyball 7:30pm	29 Adult Bible Study 11am	30 Synaxis of The Three Hierarchs: Sts. Basil, Gregory and John Chrysostom 9am Orthros 10am Divine Liturgy Play Group 9:30am Senior Men 11am Greek Dance 7pm	31 Senior Men 10am	

St. Luke Greek Folk Dance Practices: *Ellinakia* 2nd and 3rd graders practice from 7:00pm-8:00pm on Thursdays
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DO YOU WANT TO HELP DURING SUNDAY DIVINE LITURGY????

If the answer is yes then join our "Diakonia Ministry"

The Diakonia Group was created in January 2003. The purpose was and is to help during our important Sunday Divine liturgies. We currently have 30 members and are looking for anyone who would like to join in helping our beloved St. Luke Church. The responsibilities of a member are the following and you will be scheduled about once every 5-6 weeks:

- Greeting and welcoming parishioners and visitors as they arrive to church
- Helping behind the candle stand (pangari)
- Passing trays and helping total the donations
- Assisting parishioners by directing them with any needs they may have

If you are interested in joining the Diakonia group please contact Ellena Vaganos at evaganos@aol.com or at 610-356-8173.

St. Luke PRAYER GROUP



There is nothing more powerful than the power of prayer. The Prayer Chain email list is up and running. This prayer chain allows us to communicate with anyone who wishes to be on it. Once a person in need comes to our attention, each member on that list will be contacted and asked to pray for the one in need.

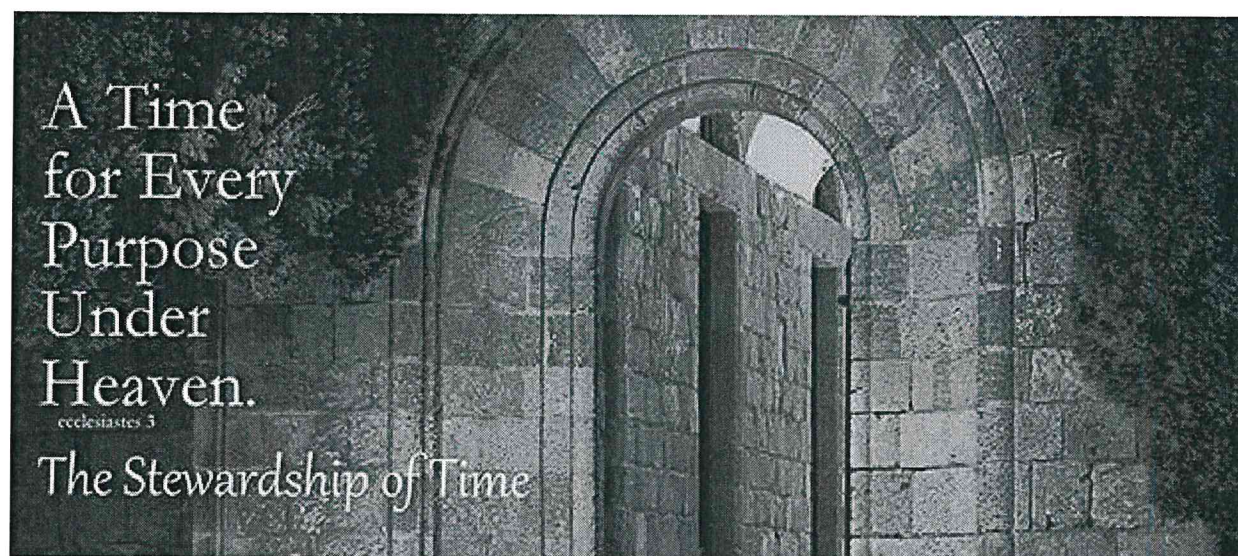
Imagine someone suffering and 10, 50, 100, 200 or 500 people praying for them that same evening. Truly friends, there is nothing more powerful than prayer.

How do I register?

Email Presbyteria Michele at micheleakontos@gmail.com



St. Luke Stewardship



“Teach us to number our days that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” Psalm 90:12

The first long-term Orthodox Christian missionary priest from America to East Africa was sent by Archbishop Iakovos in mid-1980s. As he gradually assimilated into the local culture, he found the local concept of time to be a most difficult adjustment, and upon his return to the America, liked to quote the Kenyans who loved to tell him, “White men have watches. We have time.”

Our brief time on earth is God’s gift. As faithful Christians, we are accountable for our stewardship of this precious gift. The American scientist, Thomas Edison said, “Time is not a commodity that can be stored for future use. It must be invested hour by hour or else it is gone forever.”

“Man is like a breath; his days are like a fleeting shadow.” Psalm 144:4

Our lifetime is a small bit of eternity – “...a fleeting shadow....” (Psalm 144) which we receive as stewards. Time is a precious gift that we dare not waste. Like the three stewards in the Parable of the Talents, one day God will call each one of us to give account of how we have used the time entrusted to us.

“...a time for every purpose under heaven.” Ecclesiastes 3:1

There is “a time for every purpose,” as the verse from Ecclesiastes instructs us: “...a time to plant, a time to reap...” the challenge is to appropriately allocate our time to the various purposes that make claims on it. The passage teaches us to make the most of God’s great gift of time.

The Gift of Time

"The greatest gift I ever received," said a young attorney, "was a gift I got one Christmas from my dad. He gave me a small box with a note inside that said, 'Son, this year I will give you 365 hours, one hour every day after dinner. We'll talk about what you want to talk about, go where you want to go, play what you want to play.'"

The young attorney continued, "My dad not only kept the promise of his gift, but he renewed it every year – and it's the greatest gift I ever had in my life. I am the result of his time."

The most personal, most appreciated and most unique gift that you can give is the gift of time – Your time. That valuable 24 hours a day that only you can spend. Depending on your profession, your time may be worth hundreds of dollars an hour. But the time you give to another person and the Church is priceless.

Our children need our time, helping shape their lives by word and by example. The time we give to our children is an investment in their lives that is not wasted.

Spending Time with God

As Christians it is also important to value the time we spend at church, in worship, service and activities. Every member of the Body of Christ plays a role, according to their gifts, in the life of the local church. The church is not a social club, but rather a place where people of faith gather for worship, fellowship and service.

Most importantly, we gather together in worship, praising and thanking God for the blessings in our lives and hearing His Word. Of the 168 hours in every week with which we have been blessed, we offer back the short time we spend in church on Sunday morning, gathered together as the Body of Christ. We are united in prayer and united in Holy Communion. We become his hands and feet carrying out His work in the world. As we offer ourselves and our time as His Church, we are part of something much bigger than we can imagine – much bigger than the project we support, the service we provide, the prayer we offer.

The Great Feast (Luke 14)

In the Gospel of Luke we read of the man who planned a great feast and invited many people. When it was time to serve the dinner, they were all too busy – one with his farm, one with his bride, another with his oxen. We can become *so busy* making a *living* that we forget to make a *life*. God gets crowded out of our lives over the most unimportant things.

At the first Christmas when Jesus was born, there was no room at the inn. And today we still have no room for Jesus. We crowd Him out with so many things.

In *The Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis shows how the devil captures us, *not* by preventing encounters with God, but by whispering in our ear that we are "*just too busy right now. We'll get to that soon. But just not right now.*"

Resetting Our Priorities

Just as we budget our financial resources to reflect our priorities, we can re-set our allocation of time. We are all busy, but not all of that busy time is well-spent. We may need to say no to certain demands on our time, opening our schedule to God's prompting. We can live each day anticipating the opportunities he places in our path to offer our gift of time.

As of November 21, 2019, a total of \$571,674 was committed by 521 stewards.

The average pledge is \$1,097 and the median is \$700.

In order to cover our operational expenses, we suggest \$1,400.

122 (23%) stewards pledged greater than \$1,400

27 (5.2%) stewards pledged the suggested pledge of \$1,400

286 (55%) stewards pledged \$750 or under

124 (24%) stewards pledged \$300 or less

Pledges range from \$50 to \$12,000

We thank our stewards for their Stewardship of Treasure and we are looking forward to the 79 stewards who have not pledged.

If you have any questions about Stewardship, please contact Ginny Markos, Stewardship Chair, at (215) 962-3758 or ginnymarkos@gmail.com.

To maintain your financial confidentiality, your pledge should continue to be directed to Dee Karras (deekarras@verizon.net).

HOSPITAL VISITATIONS



.. are Father Christ's priority. If a loved one or family member is hospitalized, please notify the Church office. All hospitals do not notify parishes of hospitalized parishioners.

PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15TH



All stewards of St. Luke are encouraged to take part in the election of Parish Council representatives and the Board of Auditors. Voting will take place on Sunday, December 15th, following church services and continuing until 3pm. Voting location is the Library in the Education Building Social Hall.

The St. Luke Family Play Group

READY, SET, PLAY....

Our playgroup sessions for the months of December and January will be held on

Thursdays, December 5th, 12th and 19th
and

Thursdays, January 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th
from 9:30 am - 11:30 am on the
top floor of the Education Building, Room #208.

A great opportunity for fellowship & fun for our children and their parents!

Any questions or ideas, please contact:

Alexa Angelakos at lex2618@gmail.com

If you would like your email added to our contact list, please let us know.

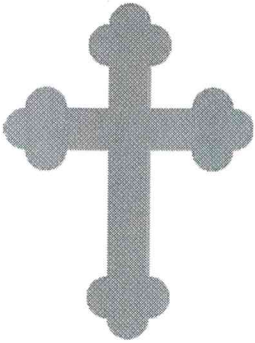
REGISTER YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS

Register your email address online at st-luke.org/register-contact to receive timely emails from Fr Christ on Church and Parish Life. You can also use your QR/Barcode scanner from your mobile device by scanning the code below.



Parish Life

Forty-Day Blessings



On November 10, 2019, Father Christ offered the Forty Day Blessing for **Voula Yurick** and son, **Gabriel Yurick**. *Congratulations to Voula and Kevin as we anticipate the Baptism of their son!*

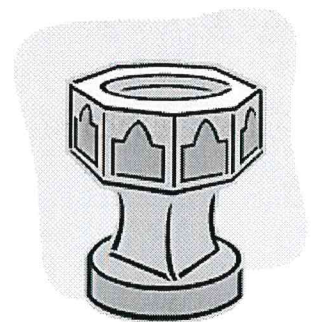
On November 23, 2019, Father Christ offered the Forty Day Blessing for **Elena Lamb** and son, **Peter Andreas Lamb**. *Congratulations to Elena and Peter as we anticipate the Baptism of their son!*

On December 8, 2019, Father Christ offered the Forty Day Blessing for **Auburn Nikolos** and sons, **Christos and Leonidas Nikolos**. *Congratulations to Auburn and Kosta as we anticipate the Baptism of their sons!*

Baptisms

The daughter of **Adriana and Dimitri Gouliaberis** was baptized in the Holy Mother Church on November 2, 2019. Her sponsor, **Vasiliki Gouliaberis**, baptized her with the name **Gabriela**. May Our Lord continue to bless you, Gabriela Sofia.

The daughter of **Jaclynn and George Psitos** was baptized in the Holy Mother Church on November 16, 2019. Her sponsor, **Nicholas Hahalís**, baptized her with the name **Olympia Vasiliki**. May Our Lord continue to bless you, Olympia Vasilik .

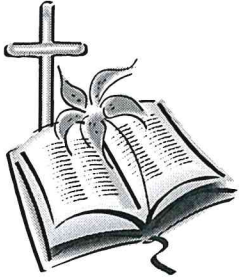


The son of **Perry and Sarah Vlahos** was baptized in the Holy Mother Church on November 16, 2019. His sponsor, **Demetrios Vlahos**, baptized him with the name **Theodore**. May Our Lord continue to bless you, Theodore Michae .

The son of **Allie and Michael Magruder** was baptized in the Holy Mother Church on November 30, 2019. His sponsor, **Melissa Martell**, baptized him with the name **Alexander**. May Our Lord continue to bless you, Marshall Alexander.

The daughter of **Adrian and Dana Smith** was baptized in the Holy Mother Church on December 8, 2019. Her sponsors, **Michael Athanas Tucker and Grace Athanas Smith**, baptized her with the name **Veronica**. May Our Lord continue to bless you, Charlotte Grace.

Funerals



The servant of God, **Nicholas Poulos**, fell asleep in the Lord on November 25, 2019. His funeral service was held on December 2, 2019. We extend our condolences and prayers to his family.
MAY HIS MEMORY BE ETERNAL.

The servant of God, **Paula Criston**, fell asleep in the Lord on November 28, 2019. Her funeral service was held on December 5, 2019. We extend our condolences and prayers to her family.
MAY HER MEMORY BE ETERNAL.

Printed Orthros Services in Greek & English

Beginning soon, printed Orthros services in Greek and English will be provided to parishioners during weekday and Sunday services. The services of the Orthodox Faith are rich with beauty and instruction. Within the hymns and prayers, our entire theology is expressed. Look for these printouts in the narthex during the day of the services. “eMatins powered by Ages” is the resource for these texts.

If you have any questions, please contact Noel Kelly at NoelKellyhc@gmail.com or Father Christ at fatherck@gmail.com.

ST. NICHOLAS

Wonderworker, Archbishop of Myra December 6th



'The truth of things hath revealed thee to thy flock as a rule of faith, an icon of meekness, and a teacher of temperance; for this cause, thou hast achieved the heights by humility, riches by poverty. O Father and Hierarch Nicholas, intercede with Christ God that our souls be saved.'

Kontakion

'Saintly One, (St. Nicholas) in Myra you proved yourself a priest; for in fulfilling the Gospel of Christ, venerable One, you laid down your life for your people and saved the innocent from death. For this you were sanctified as One learned in divine grace.'

Biography

St. Nicholas lived during the reign of Saint Constantine the Great, a time of major change for Christianity. Thus, he lived to see the sanction of Christianity as the official religion, the first ecumenical council, and the ending of Christian persecution. As a young man, he traveled to Jerusalem, where he devoted himself to prayer and a solitary life. God revealed to him that he should return home where he would in God's service. He returned to Myra (Asia Minor), and was ordained bishop.

St. Nicholas attended the first ecumenical council at Nicea in 325. This council of 318 church fathers was convened to address the heresy of Arius, namely that Jesus was not the son of God. While Arius was explaining his theology, St. Nicholas struck him on the face. The church fathers considered disciplinary action against St. Nicholas in accordance with orthodox canon. However, that night Jesus and the Theotokos appeared to certain bishops, explaining that St. Nicholas has acted out of love and piety. No further action was taken.

St. Nicholas is always passionate about truth in the Church. He appeared to St. Nektarios (1846-1920) in Athens in a dream: he embraced St. Nektarios and explained that God would exalt him. This happened more than 1500 years after the repose of St. Nicholas. St. Nicholas loved St. Nektarios because St. Nektarios had greatly beautified the Church of St. Nicholas in Cairo, and because St. Nektarios was a champion of truth and humility, despite his accusers in Alexandria. So much so that God made his glory and his power known to the people and church after his death. St. Nektarios was recognized as a saint less than 50 years after his death. Perhaps, God chose St. Nicholas to comfort St. Nektarios during difficult times, because St. Nicholas is too a champion of mercy, alms, truth and humility.

St. Nicholas was famous for his abundant mercy, his love of truth, his provision for everyone in need, and for his support of those wrongly accused. He is the patron of all

travelers, especially sea-farers. St. Nicholas is one of the best known and best loved Saints of all time. He fell asleep in the Lord in 330.

Commentary

The life of St. Nicholas is the victory of a human being in the spiritual struggle. The Greek roots of the Nikolaos are 'nikos' as victor and 'laos' as people. So, in this saint, we have a life that is true to his name. His obedience to God's purpose is clear. His victory brought him to theosis, the ultimate achievement of the spiritual way.

This example applies to each of us, and sparks questions such as:

what is the spiritual way or 'odos'? what are the stages along this way?

what are the pitfalls? what are the spiritual practices or habits that facilitate spiritual progress?

The life of St. Nicholas inspires the Christian pilgrim to examine the spiritual way so that through prayer, study, faith and good works every pilgrim may come home...

....Home to Paradise. Home to God. Home to the eternal life that is meant for each of us. 'Saint Nicholas, we pray that you will intercede for us unceasingly before God.'

Saint Nicholas throughout the Church Year

February 3rd: Nicholas, New Martyr of Chios; Nicholas, Archbishop & Enlightener of Japan

February 4th: Nicholas the Confessor

February 14th: Nicholas the New Martyr of Corinth

March 2: Our Holy Father Nicholas of Plana

May 9: Monk-martyr Nicholas who lived in Vuneni, of Larissa in Thessaly

May 16: Nicholas the Mystic, Patriarch of Constantinople

May 16: New Martyr Nicholas of Metsovos

June 20: Nicholas Cabasilas

July 27: St. Nicholas of Novgorod, the fool-for-Christ

August 23: Our Righteous Father Nicholas of Sikelion

September 23: Nicholas the New Martyr

October 28: Angelis, Manuel, George, & Nicholas, New Martyrs of Crete

October 31: Nicholas the New Martyr, Epimarchos of Alexandria

November 29: Our Righteous Father Nicholas, Archbishop of Thessalonica

December 16: Nicholas, Patriarch of Constantinople

December 23: Nicholas & John the New Martyrs

St. Luke Annual Giving Tree

We are celebrating our 20th anniversary! Small evergreen trees have been placed in the narthex of the church. The trees have tags which list the name, age and gender of a child. Please take a tag and purchase a gift for the child. Return the gift, wrapped with tag taped securely to the outside of the package or gift bag.



Please make sure that the gift is returned to the church by Sunday, December 15th. You may leave the gift in the room across from the church office or in the narthex of the church. Thank you for your continued generosity



Wanted:

Old and tattered American flags

The Flag Codes states that it should be destroyed "with dignity, preferably by burning."

VFW Eleftheria Post will collect old, worn, faded or soiled American flags to properly dispose of them.

Please bring your flags to church and leave them in the copier room next to the church office.

Saint Luke Greek Folk Dance Groups

On Thursday evening, December 12th, at 7:00pm, our Ellinakia Dance Group will perform for residents of the Broomall Rehabilitation and Nursing Center. Dancers will celebrate following the performance with a Christmas party at Saint Luke!

Please wish our Olympian Dance Group "good luck" as they prepare to dance at the Hellenic Folk Dance Festival held in Annapolis, Maryland on January 18th and 19th!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of our Saint Luke Dancers and Families!

For more information about the Saint Luke Greek Folk Dance Groups, please contact Cynthia Costanzo at ckarakantas@gmail.com.



We Venerate Your Birth, O Christ!

He who holds the whole creation in the hollow of His Hand
Today is born of the Virgin
He whom in essence none can touch
Is wrapped in swaddling clothes as a mortal God,
He who in the beginning founded the heavens lies in a manger
He who rained manna down on the people in the wilderness
Is fed on milk from His Mother's breast
He who is the Bridegroom of the Church calls unto Himself the Magi
The Son of the Virgin accepts their gifts -- *We venerate Your Birth, O Christ!*
We venerate Your Birth, O Christ! -- We venerate Your Birth, O Christ!
Show us also Your Divine Epiphany!
---From the Great Hours of Christmas

What does Christmas mean to you and your family?

Christmas means that:

He descended that we might ascend (John 6:38, 14:3).
He became poor that we might become rich (2 Cor. 8:9, Jas. 2:5).
He was born that we might be born again (John 1:14, 3:2,7).
He became a servant that we might become sons (Phil. 2:7; Gal 4:6).
He had no home that we might have a home in heaven (Mt 8:20; Jn 14)
He was hungry that we might be fed (Matt. 4:2; John 6:50).
He was thirsty that we might be satisfied (John 19:26).
He was stripped that we might be clothed (Matt. 27:28; Gal. 3:27).
He was forsaken that we might not be forsaken (Matt. 27:26; 28:20).
He was sad that we might become glad (Isa. 53:3; Phil. 4:4).
He was bound that we might go free (Matt. 27:2; John 8:32-36).
He was made sin that we might be made righteous (2 Cor. 5:21).
He died that we might live (John 5:24, 25).
He came down that we might be caught up (1 Thess. 4:16, 17).

The Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ



The birth of Jesus Christ of Nazareth has split history in two so that each calendar is reckoned before or after His birth. The year in which He was born marks the period known as Anno Domini, and the years before that as BC. ('Before Christ')

Our Lord's Nativity is observed on December 25. The early church fathers made the birth date of our Lord deliberately to coincide with and offset the pagan celebration of Saturnalia, that festive pagan day of celebration in which the sun crossed the imaginary line

drawn on the later-day maps as the equator.

To the pagans it signified a rebirth of the sun, now returning to the north to assert its full power and bring on the spring season; but to the Christians it marked the birthday celebration of Jesus Christ, the Son of God who had created not only the sun, but all the other stars and planets of the universe. Jesus Christ who on more than one occasion said simply, "Follow me," leaving no chart but that which lies in the true Christian heart and which requires no formula beyond that which we call "love."

The Old Testament abounds in testimony of the coming Messiah, long anticipated by the prophets, who were aware that the original sin of man who was stained by evil in the Garden of Eden could only be cleansed by the blood of a Messiah sent by God. The theological recognition of God as representing universal love also recognized that God chose to share love with man, and for that purpose was man and woman created.

A second premise is that man has it within his grasp to find happiness; and a third, that in doing so he glorifies God in whose image he was created. That placed man in harmony with God and nature; but this harmony was shattered by Adam and Eve who, in the disobedience of God in paradise, lost their membership in the alliance and were at the mercy of nature, as well as the mercy of God.

Man had fallen from grace and had no mastery over nature; but God, in his infinite mercy, was not about to obliterate that which was cast in His own image. Therefore, He saw to it that with the ascendancy of a sun in winter He gave to the world His only begotten Son. The Christian soul has been spared because on December 25 the Savior was born, and God so loved the world He had created that He sacrificed his Son thirty-three short years later for the redemption of all mankind. The star that shone over Bethlehem on the eve of the Savior's birth to light the way for the Wise Men of the East still shines as an eternal beacon in the hearts of all those who have Jesus Christ in their hearts.

*from Orthodox Saints, v. 4,
Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Fr George Poulos*



SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

Hello Sunday School Students and Families,

Below is the Sunday School Calendar for December 2019 and January 2020:

DECEMBER

December 1: Worship and Classes

December 8: Worship and Classes- Pageant Practice following Sunday School

December 15: Worship and Classes- Pageant Practice following Sunday School

December 22: No Classes, Christmas Pageant immediately following the Divine Liturgy

December 29: No Classes

JANUARY

January 5: Worship and Classes

January 12: Worship and Classes, Kick-Off Meeting for Oratorical Festival following Sunday School

January 19: Worship and Classes

January 26: Worship and Classes

The St. John Chrysostom Parish Oratorical Festival Kick-off meeting will be held on January 12, 2020 in the Social Hall after Sunday School. To learn more about the writing and speech preparation processes, please use the following link to view the 2020 Participant Packet, which includes all of the Junior and Senior Division Topics, Tips and Resources:

https://www.goarch.org/documents/32058/5077519/sjcof_2020_participant_packet.pdf/89a834d7-7171-4902-9364-622454301918

The Parish Festival is scheduled for Sunday, April 5, 2020, and several of the Sunday School teachers have already integrated Oratorical Festival topics into their weekly lessons in order to inspire their students to participate. For further information, please contact one of the Oratorical Festival co-chairs, Jane Kelly, njkelko@gmail.com, or Art Karros, akarros@gmail.com.

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

SANTA CLAUS vs. SAINT NICHOLAS



All Christians contemplate at some point how to “juggle” these two men that have become such a part of the Christmas season. The most common way I have found parents dealing with it is to not teach anything about Saint Nicholas but everything about Santa Claus.

Many Christian parents wonder what to tell their children about Santa Claus. Some feel uncomfortable with the image of a Santa Claus during the season where we celebrate the Birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Others view him as a delightful fantasy that can do no harm.



But have you ever thought that Santa can provide a springboard for reinforcing young minds with the true meaning of Christmas?

For example, when a child asks, "Is Santa real?" A mother or father can answer by introducing and connecting St. Nicholas with Santa Claus by saying, “You know, Santa Claus and St. Nicholas are the same. He lived hundreds of years ago and gave gifts to others in need because that is what Jesus taught him to do. He was born in A.D. 280, and when he was still just a boy his parents died, leaving him great wealth. Early in his life he devoted himself to serving God. Later, as a bishop in Asia, he gave away much of his wealth to the poor -- especially to children. Even when he was poor he would share the little that he had with others before he would eat. He believed that giving to the needy was the same as giving to Jesus and that's what the Bible teaches us to do.”

THE MEANING OF THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS CAROL

1st Day: The partridge in a pear tree is Christ Jesus upon the Cross. In the song, Christ is symbolically presented as a mother partridge because she would feign injury to decoy a predator away from her nestlings. She was even willing to die for them.

The tree is the symbol of the fall of the human race through the sin of Adam and Eve. It is also the symbol of its redemption by Jesus Christ on the tree of the Cross.

2nd Day: The "two turtle doves" refers to the Old and New Testaments.

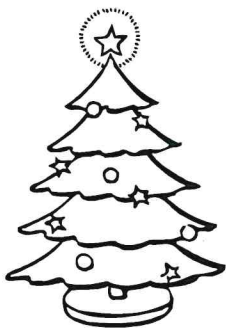
3rd Day: The "three French hens" stand for faith, hope and love—the three gifts of the Spirit that abide (1 Corinthians 13).

4th Day: The "four calling birds" refers to the four evangelists who wrote the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—which sing the song of salvation through Jesus Christ.

5th Day: The "five golden rings" represents the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

6th Day: The "six geese a-laying" is the six days of creation.

7th Day: The "seven swans a-swimming" refers to the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord.



8th Day: The "eight maids a milking" reminded children of the eight beatitudes listed in the Sermon on the Mount.

9th Day: The "nine ladies dancing" were the nine fruits of the Holy Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

10th Day: The "ten lords a-leaping" represents the Ten Commandments

11th Day: The "eleven pipers piping" refers to the eleven faithful apostles.

12th Day: The "twelve drummers drumming" were the twelve points of belief expressed in the Creed: belief in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, that Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, made man, crucified, died and arose on the third day, that he sits at the right hand of the father and will come again, the resurrection of the dead and life everlasting.

12 DAYS OF CHRISTMAS IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH DODEKAIMERON

1st day of Christmas, December 26th the church honors the Mother of Jesus.

2nd day of Christmas, December 27th the Church remembers Saint Steven as the first Martyr for Christ.

3rd day of Christmas, Dec 28th we remember the 20,000 martyrs of Nicomedia who were martyred in the year 303 on Christ's birthday.

4th day of Christmas, December 29th, the church remembers the babies that were slaughtered by King Herod in Bethlehem in his attempt to kill the baby Jesus.

5th day of Christmas, December 30th, the Church remembers the Holy Righteous Martyr St. Anysia.

6th Day of Christmas, New Year's Eve, we celebrate the "leave taking" or Apodosia of Christmas where we chant the full hymns of Christmas day.

7th day of Christmas, January 1st, we commemorate the baby Jesus' circumcision on the 8th day. It is also the feast of St. Basil.

8th day of Christmas, January 2nd, we have the forefeast of Theophany (Epiphany) as we prepare to celebrate the Baptism of Jesus. We also remember Sts. Sylvester and Seraphim of Sarov.

9th day of Christmas, January 3rd, we commemorate the last of the 12 minor Prophets of the Old Testament who foretold of the coming of Christ.

10th day of Christmas, January 4th, we commemorate the Holy 70 Apostles who went out and preached the word of God to every city and land.

11th day of Christmas, January 5th, we commemorate the Eve of Theophany (Epiphany). It is a high holy day which we fast regardless of the day of the week in preparation of our Lord's Baptism in the River Jordan.

12th day of Christmas, January 6th, we celebrate the Holy Theophany (Epiphany) of Our Lord, and God, and Savior Jesus Christ which took place at the beginning of our Lord's 30th year by St. John the Forerunner/the Baptist.



Greek School News

As we look toward the end of 2019 and the beginning of the New Year of 2020, we have many things to be thankful for at our Greek School at St. Luke.

On November 12th we had our Greek School **Open House**, the teachers opened their classrooms for parents to gain a glimpse of the magic that happens on Tuesdays during Greek School. This year, our Greek School is expanding a new program by including additional classrooms to modernize their learning experience. The children seem to love the new combination of traditional reading and writing mixed with playing online games in Greek.

We also had our first **Greek School PTO meeting** on November 12th; with a great turn out of old and new families. With so many active parents, we are excited about the opportunities we can bring to our Greek School Family. Here is a glimpse of what's to come:

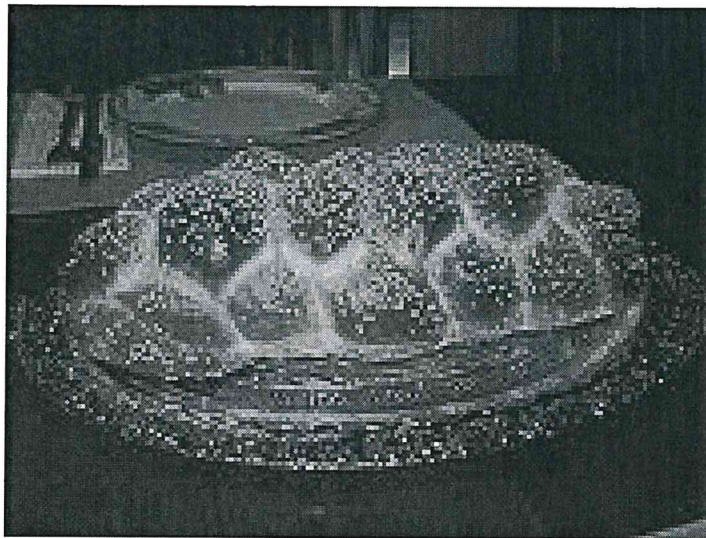
- Tuesday, December 3 – Fundraiser @ Freddy's in Broomall from 4-8 pm
- Tuesday, December 10 - Christmas Program and Celebration
- Sunday, December 15 - Singing Kalanta in church
- Tuesday December 17 – Singing Kalanta at Whitehorse Village
- Saturday, Dec 28 - Field Trip, Cirque Dream Holiday
- January 26/February 2 – Feast of the Three Hierarchs and Greek Letters Day

We thank our dedicated teachers for inspiring our children and sharing with them their love for the Greek language and culture. Our school aims to keep our Greek faith and traditions alive for generations to come.

Χρόνια Πολλα και καλές γιορτές!!!

Greek School PTO

Vasilopita Sale



\$16.00 donation

St. Luke Greek Language School PTO will be selling Vasilopita breads after Liturgy on December 1st, 8th, 15th and 22nd.

Baked by Katina Dollos!

Each Vasilopita is \$16.00.

To pre-order breads

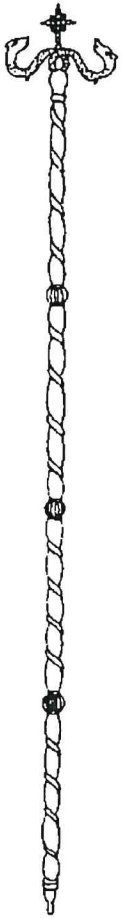
please contact

Maria Pousatis at 610-858-9581 or mpousatis@yahoo.com.

Thank you for your support!

SAINT BASIL THE GREAT

JANUARY 1



Basil's name means "royal," but never in his life did he conduct himself in a royal manner. Humbly doing his Christian duty was his daily rule. Basil was born in Caesarea, which was a town in the district of Cappadocia. The area is located in present-day Turkey and is one of the roughest terrains on earth. Rough as the terrain was, so were its people--uncouth, tough, abrupt, biting and scheming. Basil, however, did not share these traits. His Christian mother, Emilia, molded him into one of the gentlest souls that ever lived. The contrasts do not end here. Although God endowed him with a sharp mind, enhanced later by eight years of secular studies at Constantinople and Athens, in addition to a lifetime of study of the Holy Scripture, he used all of his knowledge, not for his vanity, but for the spiritual interest of the people for whom he accepted responsibility.



When the Church elevated him to the Episcopal office, his daily manner remained till death, that of a truly humble leader. It was his soul that was royal--kind, loving, forgiving, persevering, sensitive, sympathetic, always struggling to shine forth in word and deed the beauty of putting Christ's teaching into action. Basil's deep love for Jesus Christ and for the people of his diocese made him their vigilant guardian. That meant fighting heresy whenever and wherever it subtly and insidiously sought to infiltrate the Church.

He waged a successful, gallant fight--not hesitating to include among his enemies the Arian heretical Emperor Valens and his prefect Modestos.

Saint Basil's response when he was threatened with what would be done to him:

"Is that all? Not one of these things troubles me. From him who owns nothing, no goods can be confiscated. Banishment I cannot know, for everywhere on God's earth I am at home. Torture cannot touch me, for I have no longer a body. Death however is welcome to me, for it will bring me more swiftly to God. Furthermore, I am, for the most part, already dead and have been hurrying to the grave." Somewhat confused, the prefect replied, "No one ever spoke to me in such manner until now." "No doubt" responded Basil. "You probably never met a bishop until now." Astounded by such a heroic stand, prefect and emperor divined that any further effort to intimidate the brave hierarch would be useless. He wrote many books. It is this outpouring of his mind that is his spiritual and intellectual legacy to us. His topics include almost everything--from dogma to morals, and from ecclesiastical rules to worship--a Divine Liturgy.

Basil's Divine Liturgy is a masterpiece of brief and long invitational and supplicatory prayers and is celebrated ten times a year. His monastic rules, on the other hand, even though written so long ago, have remained the guiding fundamental rules of monastic life to this day. Philanthropy was regarded by our divine Lord as a most basic Christian virtue, and was another priority in the life of this celebrated bishop. A famine occurred in 368 AD in the city of Caesarea. He immediately founded a home for the needy where food, shelter and clothing were always in plentiful supply. This establishment eventually became so large that it resembled a city within Caesaria. Later generations named it "Basiliias," a just honor for its venerable founder. St. Basil fell asleep in the Lord on January 1, 379.

For Those In Need

We would like to thank everyone who participated in this year's Annual Holiday Cook!

We received 18 cooked and carved turkeys and freshly prepared trays of mashed potatoes, sweet potato casserole, string bean casserole, baked apples in cinnamon, brown sugar and butter, mixed veggies, salad and cranberry chutney. Once again, Tiffany Bakery donated numerous freshly baked pies and Country Squire Diner donated several turkeys along with gravy, cranberry sauce and mashed potatoes.

We whole-heartedly thank the many volunteers that came out hugely supporting this effort. In addition, this year our Christmas Shoppers purchased a total of 120 children's Christmas gifts to be donated to families in great need. We can't thank our GOYA enough for beautifully wrapping all the gifts before they are distributed. Without everyone's support & participation this annual event would never be accomplished.

FTIN would like to wish all of our family here at St Luke a very Merry Christmas and a Happy & Healthy New Year!!

In Christ's love and with great appreciation,
The FTIN Family

As always, we are looking for volunteers.

Please contact:

Cynthia Telegadis at ctelegadis23@yahoo.com 804-334-7647 or

Alan Pcsolyar at apcsolyar@comcast.net 610-457-6033

and let us know if you are willing to assist with this monthly ministry.

We always need extra hands!

THE ICON OF EPIPHANY

THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

January 6th

“And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: and there came a voice from heaven, saying, thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mark 1) From the Gospel read at the Matins of the day.)

Icons of the baptism of the Lord are an exact reproduction of this Gospel testimony, with the addition of details corresponding to the divine service of the day, as for instance, angels and allegorical figures at the feet of the Savior.

The Baptism of Christ has two fundamental aspects: on this day, the full dogmatic truth of God in three Persons was revealed to men. “Our God, the Trinity, has this day revealed Himself to us indivisibly; for the Father bore witness to His Parenthood with manifest testimony, the Spirit descended from the heavens like a dove, and the Son bowed His most pure head to the Forerunner and was baptized...”

In accordance with the Gospel text cited above, in the upper part of the icon there is a segment of a circle symbolizing the opening heavens “which Adam had closed for himself and his descendants, just as he had closed the Garden of Eden by the flaming sword”. This segment of a circle signifies the presence of God, which sometimes is emphasized still more by a hand, blessing. Thence are shed upon the Savior rays of light, with the Holy Spirit descending in the form of a dove. Unfortunately, this most important detail has been obliterated by time in our icon. In general, it is depicted in the same manner as in the Nativity of Christ, except that a white dove takes the place of the star.

The holy Fathers of the Church explain the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove at the Lord’s Baptism by analogy with the Flood: just as then the world was purified of its iniquities by the waters of the Flood and the dove brought an olive branch into Noah’s Ark, announcing the end of the Flood and peace returned upon earth, so too now the Holy Spirit comes down in the form of a dove to announce the remission of sins and God’s mercy to the world. “There an olive branch, here the mercy of our God”, says St. John of Damascus.

To sanctify the waters for our purification and renewal, He Who has taken upon Himself the sins of the world “is covered by the waters of Jordan”, according to the hymns of the festival. In the symbolical language of the icon this is expressed by the fact that the Savior is represented standing, as it were, against a background of water, as though in a cave.



This gives us to understand that not part of His body, but His whole body is immersed in token of His burial, for Baptism signifies the death of the Lord (Col.ii,12). As a sign of the fact that here the initiative belongs to Him, that He, the Master, came to the servant and asked to be baptized, the Saviour is almost always represented as walking or making a movement towards John the Forerunner, at the same time bending His head beneath John's arm. With His right hand He blesses the waters of Jordan, which cover Him, sanctifying them by His immersion. From then onwards water becomes an image not of death but of birth into a new life. This is why in the great majority of images of baptism in the catacombs the person baptized, not excluding the Savior Himself, is depicted as a child. Although some images show the Saviour with a cloth binding His loins, the majority of icons show Him quite naked, in accordance with the texts of the Divine services. This also emphasizes the Kenosis of His Divinity. "He strips Himself, Who clothes the heavens with clouds." It also shows the purpose of this kenosis for, by stripping His body, He thereby clothes the nakedness of Adam, and with him that of the whole of mankind, in the garment of glory and incorruptibility.

The icon of the Baptism is one of those that have the greatest number of analogies with Old Testament prefigurations. Thus, in addition to those already mentioned, two small figures are usually represented at the feet of the Savior, among the fish swimming in the waters of Jordan. One of them is that of a man, naked, turning his back to Him; the other that of a woman half-naked, usually running away, at times riding a fish.

These details illustrate the Old Testament texts, which enter into the divine service of the festival and are a prophetic prefiguration of Baptism. "The sea saw and fled: Jordan was turned back" (Ps. cxiii, 3).

The male figure - an allegory of Jordan - is explained by the following text: "Elisha turned back the river Jordan with the mantle, when Elijah had been taken up, and the waters were divided hither and thither; and the bed of the river was to Elisha a dry pathway, as a true type of Baptism, by which we pass through the changing course of life." The female figure is an allegory of the sea and refers to the other prefiguration of Baptism - the crossing of the Red Sea by the Jews.

St. John the Forerunner officiates, his right hand placed on the head of the Savior. This sacramental gesture has always been part of the ritual of baptism. In his left hand he sometimes holds a scroll, the symbol of his preaching, or, as in our icon, makes a gesture of prayer to express the trembling, which seized him. "... I do not dare to hold Thy most pure head: sanctify Thou me, O Lord, by Thy divine manifestation."

Angels take part in the holy ritual. Texts of the Divine services, mentioning their presence, speak of their state: "The choirs of angels were full of wonder, fear and joy." But they do not speak of the role they played. So, their role is often understood and represented differently. Sometimes, especially in later icons, they hold cloaks in their hands, evidently playing the role of attendants during Baptism and ready to cover the body of the Lord as He comes out of the water. But as a rule, here, as in the icons of other feasts, their role of service is merely reverence before Him Whom they serve. Their number varies: two, three or more.

HISTORICAL INFORMATION ON EPIPHANY/THEOPHANIA

In the Orthodox calendar the feast of the Epiphany is called 'Theophany' (Theophania), the manifestation of God. Epiphany is the most ancient feast, after Easter, relating to the Lord and is observed by the entire Christian Church on January 6. The first evidence attesting to the feast of the Epiphany comes from Clement of Alexandria who died about 215. He relates that a Gnostic group observed the Baptism of our Lord on January 6 believing that it was at the time of Baptism that Divinity took the flesh in Christ. The date of January 6 was selected because according to some ancient reckoning the day began to grow longer on that date and so it was celebrated by pagans as the day of victory of light over darkness. In Rome, though, the day of the birth of the Invincible Sun was celebrated on December 25. In both East and West and practically at the same time, these two pagan festivals were replaced by a Christian feast signifying the epiphany (manifestation) 'of the sun of justice' and 'of the true light of the world.' The 25th of December began to be celebrated in Rome as the day of the Epiphany (Nativity), while in the East January 6 remained as the Epiphany day including both the Nativity and Baptism of our Lord.

By the end of the 4th century, the 25th of December as the day of the Nativity was adopted in most of the East, and January 6 remained as the feast of our Lord's Baptism. When the Eastern Epiphany day was introduced in the West, the already celebrated Nativity on December 25th remained as such and January 6th, although accepted as the day of Baptism, took the character of manifestation of Christ's Divinity to the pagan world. Hence the Magi, figuratively representing the entire heathen world, were taken to be the recipients of the saving grace of the newly manifested Christ. It is only the Armenian Church in the East that still celebrates the Nativity and Epiphany together on January 6.

The most characteristic feature of the Orthodox day of Epiphany, or Theophania, is the sanctifying of waters by invoking the Spirit that appeared in the form of a dove over Christ at the time of His Baptism. The Orthodox receive sanctified water at the end of the special service of Epiphany and with it sanctify their homes, gardens, and other possessions while some preserve it for the entire year partaking of it at times of illness and other personal or family adversities. The twelve days between the Nativity of our Lord, December 25th, and the day of the Epiphany, January 6th, is called Dodekaemeron (twelve festal days) and is considered to be one continuous festive period. On December 26th, the Virgin Mary who gave birth to our Lord is honored, and on January 1, the day of the Circumcision of our Lord is celebrated. The festive character of the period is observed by abolishing all kinds of fasts, apart from the day prior to the Epiphany when the service of the Great Blessing of the Waters/Agiasmos is celebrated.

THE BLESSING OF THE WATERS

The Orthodox Church has Seven Sacraments through which is granted, transmitted, given and bestowed the sanctifying grace of the Holy Trinity to the people. In addition to these, the Church has established several other services called “μυστηριοειδεις” or “sacrament like” which do not have the force of the sacraments but mystically contain, in some measure, the grace of the Holy Spirit. They are actions through which grace, blessing, healing and benefits are granted to the faithful and all creation, but do not save in the sense that the sacraments do. Among these services is the *Blessing of the Waters*. The clergy, together with the people, who constitute the Body of Christ, the Church, invoke the power and energy and descent of the Holy Spirit upon the water. They pray that it may be sanctified, assume a cleansing power and energy and become a gift of sanctification, a remover of sins, a healing of souls and bodies, a defense against every threat from visible and invisible enemies, and fit for every benefit. Thus, those participate in it can use it for the blessing of homes, the sanctification of souls and bodies and to receive, in general, the grace of the Holy Spirit.

There are two services of the Blessing of the Waters. The *Great Blessing of the Waters*, performed only twice a year, on the eve of the Epiphany (January 5) and the Epiphany (January 6). The *Lesser (Small) Blessing of the Waters*, is performed on various occasions. It can be done on special occasions such as the beginning and ending of school years, the blessing of homes, vehicles, the beginning of any new undertaking, the laying of foundations of any building or a business.

THE HISTORY OF THE SERVICES The oldest information we have about the blessing of the waters does not go beyond the 4th century. For example, we have the testimony of St. Epiphanius (310-403 AD) who relates an instance of blessing water and using it for the removal of magic and demonic spells. The case involves Josephus, a Jew who converted to Christianity during the reign of Constantine the Great (312-337 AD). He wanted to erect a church but was prevented by magic spells. So, he took a container of water, sanctified it by blessing it with the sign of the cross, invoked the name of Jesus, sprinkled the ground, removed the evil spell and built the church. Theodoritos of Cyrus (393-460 AD), who lived after Chrysostom, also relates that his contemporary, Bishop Markellos of Apamia, wanted to raze a huge pagan temple built of huge stones tied together with iron bands. When the expert he hired to do the job failed because of demonic spell, the Bishop took a container of water, prayed fervently, made the sign of the cross over it and ordered Deacon Ekitios to sprinkle the building. It collapsed forthwith. In another instance, Theodoritos relates that the ailing horse of King Wallace was healed with blessed water. These examples speak of water blessed through the prayers of holy men and not through an established service with priests, invocations, prayers, hymns, etc. as the Church does today.

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SERVICES

The oldest information about the blessing of water and oil is found in the Apostolic Ordinances (said to have been written by Clement of Alexandria) dealing with the practice of the Church in the 3rd and 4th centuries. There we see an ordinance attributed to the Apostle Matthias stating: "I, Matthias, ordain that the water and oil must be blessed by the Bishop; if no Bishop is present, by the Presbyter in the presence of the Deacon..."

Later, at the end of the 4th century (480-495 AD), we find information about the Blessing of the water in the sermon of St. John Chrysostom (347-407 AD) "On Holy Baptism". According to Chrysostom only one blessing of water was performed, at midnight of the feast of the Epiphany (January 6). The faithful drew from this blessed water in glass containers and took it home where they kept it for days, months or years using it for their occasional needs, and that it remained clear and fresh no matter how long it was kept. In the 6th century we have the testimony of Paul Silentiarios, a high official of Emperor Justinian and poet, who relates in verse the blessing of the water as it happened at St. Sofia at midnight of the feast of the Epiphany.

Until the end of the 5th century (484 AD), only one Blessing of the water was performed, at midnight of the feast of the Epiphany. This, however, was not convenient for the people so Peter Gnafeus the monophysite, who captured the patriarchal throne of Antioch through a coup in 484 AD, moved the blessing of the water to the evening of the eve of the Epiphany (January 5) for the convenience of the faithful. This practice was accepted wholeheartedly by the Church.

How, then, do we have two blessings of the water on the eve of the Epiphany and one on the feast of the Epiphany?

The Blessing of the water on the Epiphany (Jan. 6th), in addition to that on the eve was established some years later by the Church of Jerusalem as a convenience for going to the Jordan River and blessing its waters after the Liturgy of the Epiphany. Thus, until the 8th century we have evidence of one and the same blessing of the water performed twice a year, on the eve and on the day of the Epiphany.

The first information we have about the Lesser or Small Blessing of the water comes from patriarch Nikiphoros of Constantinople (806-815 AD), who states that this service preceded him.

How did it come about? The distinguished clergyman Constantine Callinicos, of blessed memory, explains: As soon as any service is established and matures in the Church, another smaller one crops up as an offshoot of the first. So, much as we have the Great Vespers and the Small Vespers, the Great Compline and the Small Compline, the Great Unction and the Small Unction, likewise we have the Great Blessing of the Waters and the Small blessing of the waters. It was also conveniently used to combat the pagan practice of "Nouminia", the celebration of the new moon, on the first of each month. For that reason, some Churches have the blessing of the waters at the beginning of every month. The practice of "Nouminia", was celebrated by starting fires in front of their homes, and by filling a jar with salt water and placing personal items such as rings, ear rings, etc., in it. Then a young girl was dressed as a

bride and asked to pull out these items and tell the owner of each his/her fortune. On the following day they all marched, with the girl, to the sea, or river dancing to the beat of drums and songs, and filled their containers with water and sprinkled their homes for good luck. This practice was forbidden by the 65th canon of the 6th Ecumenical council (681 AD). However, it appears that some remnants of this celebration continued to be practiced by the Christians and the Church, wanting to discourage it, it was ordained that on the first of each month the Small blessing of the water was to be performed in the churches (or in the homes of the faithful) where the Christians were to receive the blessed water to bless themselves and their homes, instead of running to springs and wells and rivers to “see” their luck.

This Small Blessing of the water is performed not only on the first of each month but for illnesses and any other need of the faithful. The Great Blessing of the water, on the other hand, is performed only twice a year, in the evening of the eve of the Epiphany in a subdued manner, and on the feast of the Epiphany in a bright and festive manner.

Is there a difference between the Great and Small Blessing of the Water?

There are some that believe that the Great Blessing is much superior than the Small Blessing of the water. In fact, come consider it almost equal to Holy Communion. This is not true. Both of them are blessed water. The difference between them is that the Small Blessing is more recent and shorter than the Great Blessing and is performed much more frequently than the Great Blessing which is only performed twice a year.

Is there a difference in the value or effect between the two Great Blessings of the water, one on the eve of the Epiphany and the one on the day of the Epiphany?

None Whatever! The only difference between the two services is that the one on the eve is more subdued than the one on the feast of the Epiphany, and the prologue of one of the prayers is not read in the service of the eve of the Epiphany.

Unfortunately, many questions and superstitions have arisen concerning the use of the blessed water (Great Agiasmos) from the two Great Blessing of the Waters services, such as:

The Great Agiasmos from the eve of the Epiphany can be used throughout the year, but the one from the feast of the Epiphany, once taken home and placed on our icon shelf, cannot be moved.

Can we keep Great Agiasmos in our homes and use it whenever we need it?

Must we use all of it on the day of the Epiphany, when we receive it, and have nothing left?

If there is any “old” Agiasmos left, must we return it to the church or drink it ourselves before we get the “new”, or can we mix them?

Since the Great Agiasmos is kept on our icon shelf, if we need it can we move it ourselves or should we call a priest to move it for us?

The answer to all of these questions is simple. Listen to the words of the prayer that the priest reads to bless the water: *“therefore, O King who love mankind, come now through the descent of your Holy Spirit and sanctify this water and grant it the grace of redemption, the blessing of Jordan. Make it a fountain of incorruption, a gift of sanctification, a remover of sins, a protection against infirmities, a destroyer of demons, unassailable by hostile powers, filled with angelic strength. So that those who draw and partake of it may receive it for the cleansing of souls and bodies, for the healing of passions, for the sanctification of homes, and for every need.”* There is no “old” or “new” Great Agiasmos, because the grace of the Spirit does not age. Whether it comes from the eve or the day of the Epiphany it can be kept in the home, it can be moved, can be drunk, can be sprinkled, can be used for any need, can be mixed with fresh Agiasmos (great or small) or fresh water to be replenished. All this is true about the Small Agiasmos as well, because both the Great Agiasmos and the Small Agiasmos possess the same sanctifying grace.

Is fasting necessary before drinking Agiasmos (Great or Small)?

An opinion circulates among the faithful that in order to receive and drink Great Agiasmos on the day of the Epiphany you must practice a strict fast on the day before. This is not true. How, then, did the fast on the eve of the Epiphany come about? The first explanation comes to us from the Teachings of the Apostles, a book written about 70 AD, which states that if someone were to be baptized, along with the catechism he should prepare with prayer, repentance and fasting: *“Before baptism, both the one to be baptized as well as the one who will do the baptizing and any others who can should fast; however, it should be recommended to the one to be baptized to fast for one or two days before the baptism”*. Since great numbers of catechumens were baptized on the eve of the Epiphany and they had to fast in preparation for their baptism, the baptized Christians fasted along with them out of collegiality.

Here is another explanation: The fast we keep on the eve of the Epiphany has absolutely nothing to do with the drinking of the Great Agiasmos on the following day. The fast on the eve is a “remnant” of the preparatory fast that was practiced in anticipation of the observance of the three great fasts that our Church celebrated on January 6th: the Birth, the Circumcision and Baptism of the Lord. When the celebration of the Birth was moved to December 25th the preparatory fast became the 40-day fast before Christmas. Thus, for the Epiphany, because no fast is permitted for the twelve days after Christmas, only one day of fast was left, the eve of the Epiphany.

Finally, what is the relation between Great Agiasmos and Holy Communion?

There are some who believe that the two are interchangeable or of equal benefit. Nothing could be further from the truth! Absolutely nothing can be remotely compared to Holy Communion. Communion is the very Body and Blood of our Lord. Agiasmos is not sacramental, it is simply blessed water.

Saint Luke
Designer

save the date ladies

Handbag Bingo



February 29, 2020

Saint Luke Community Center

35 N. Malin Road, Broomall PA

Doors Open at 6:00 PM

Games Begin at 7:00 PM

Enjoy a fun Girls' Night Out with your friends
while playing for fabulous purses
by the designer brands you love and should own!

Tickets go on Sale January 12

\$30 each or \$200 for a table of 8 players

Tickets will be available online at
<https://saintlukedhbb.eventbrite.com> or at **Coffee Hour**

John the Holy Glorious Prophet, Baptist, & Forerunner January 7th

Apolytikion *The memory of the just is celebrated with hymns of praise, but the Lord's testimony is sufficient for thee, O Forerunner; for thou hast proved to be truly even more venerable than the Prophets, since thou was granted to baptize in the running waters Him Whom they proclaimed. Wherefore, having contested for the truth, thou didst rejoice to announce the good tidings even to those in Hades: that God hath appeared in the flesh, taking away the sin of the world and granting us great mercy.*

Kontakion *The Jordan accepted Your presence in the flesh and reversed its course in fear. John, fulfilling the spiritual ministry, fell back in awe. The ranks of Angels, seeing You in the flesh, baptized in the river, were amazed, and all who were in darkness were filled with light, praising You who appeared and enlightened all.*

Commentary Saint John the Baptist is the great prophet who was sent to us as a forerunner to prepare the way for Christ (Luke chapter 1), as prophesied by Isaiah (Mark chapter 1). In the Orthodox Church, we celebrate his conception on September 23rd and his nativity on June 24th. Our Lord compared him to the great prophet Elijah of the Old Testament. John's message was one of repentance as a requisite to spiritual salvation, and he baptized believers in the Jordan. He clearly preached that he was the forerunner to Christ who would baptize believers not with water but with the Holy Spirit. Saint John baptized Christ, the Epiphany/Theophany that is celebrated in our church on January 6th. As depicted in the icon of this event, the Holy Trinity was manifested: God the Father (voice from heaven), the Son (baptized Christ), and the Holy Spirit (the dove). Thus, this is known as the theophania or the appearance of God. Saint John was imprisoned by King Herod who later had our saint beheaded to satisfy a promise he made to Salome. This tragedy is remembered in our church on August 29th. The earthly life of this great clearly shows how humanity is unprepared for the message and the coming of the messiah. Saint John's message is relevant in every spiritual life. Each of us must truly repent and experience a change of mind or metanoia as a requisite to draw closer to the Holy Trinity. That is part of the reason why repentance or metanoia is embedded as a sacrament of confession in our church, since it is a divine mystery that provides a mechanism for true, profound and complete spiritual repentance. It is this true repentance and, as a consequence, faith that shine in so many of our Lord's miracles e.g. the daughter of Jairus (Luke chapter 8); the healing of a woman with hemorrhage (Mark chapter 5). Yes, true metanoia, as in the parable of the prodigal son (symbolic of every one of us), is the great message and relevance of Saint John's message. True repentance brings peace and serenity to every troubled soul, and prepares every soul for the advent of its bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ. True continuous repentance engenders a virtuous existence, a life that radiates the kingdom of God here on earth in everyday life. True repentance ushers into the soul an abundance of spiritual gifts such as watchfulness, peace, love, guarding of the heart, ceaseless prayer, and a proximity to God. The neptic ('awake' or 'vigilant') fathers of our orthodox church live this life as they have described in the philokalia and the practice of silence or hesychia. Yes, reflecting on and writing about the message of Saint John quickly leads to every great spiritual virtue and practice in our church and tradition. It's clear why God sent the great prophet to announce this message not only then but now to each of us: repent, turn your heart to God, and prepare for his coming. God so loves each of us that he sent not only the great Saint John the Baptist and Forerunner, but also his son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to make spiritual health and salvation possible for every one of us, regardless of past or present choices and circumstances. This great prophet spoke to us then and speaks to us here and now in our lives in this world. May God grant that each of us understand, implement and live this message! ***Saint John, intercede for each of us before the Holy Trinity.***

THE VASILOPITA TRADITION

The most popular New Year's custom is the cutting of the Vasilopita (bread for St. Basil). Everyone hopes to get the coin baked inside the *pita*.

LEGEND OF THE VASILOPITA

The Vasilopita commemorates a miracle performed by St. Basil while serving as a bishop. The legend varies as to how St. Basil became the guardian of the gold, silver, and jewelry of the people of Cesearea. Some say thieves had taken the valuables from the village, and they were recovered. Others say it was a tax the government asked St. Basil to collect, but then decided to cancel. In either case, St. Basil became responsible for returning the riches to the people. However, they could not agree on the rightful owners. St. Basil suggested that the women bake the valuables inside a large *pita*. When he cut the *pita*, each owner miraculously received the right valuable. Today a single coin is baked inside each loaf to honor this miracle, and the recipient's good luck for the coming year.

CUTTING THE VASILOPITA

Traditionally, Orthodox Christians enjoy the Vasilopita for most of the month of January. They cut the first *pita* at midnight on New Year's Eve with their families and repeat the ritual at social occasions and community functions throughout January. At St. Luke, we will be celebrating the annual Vasilopita observance on Sunday, January 7th.

In homes, the head of the household makes the sign of the cross on the *pita* with a knife while saying, "In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Amen." Pieces are cut in a specific order. Protocol varies, but the first piece is always for Christ. The second and third pieces are usually for the Virgin Mary and St. Basil, and the fourth for the poor. The family then begins receiving their pieces according to their ages, including those members who are not home. Then pieces should be cut for guests that are present. The person cutting the Vasilopita wishes each recipient, Many Years (*Chronia polla*) and a blessed/good year (*Kali chronia*), while distributing each piece

At a public Vasilopita observance, Christ, Mary, St. Basil, and the poor are recognized before the members of the community. Then those of highest esteem are mentioned, such as the Archbishop, priest's wife and family and the Church group organizations.

Senior News

Senior Women

Skilled in dealing with unpredictable weather and the holidays with all that they entailed, the Senior Women were nevertheless able to meet, though not always on the scheduled date. Relaxing and relieved, we were able to enjoy each other's company as we shared holiday stories while sipping a cup of coffee. We are looking forward to meeting at our regular meeting time, the 2nd and 4th Thursday of the month as life settles down. Do join us!

Senior Men

The Senior Men's Club Christmas Party is scheduled for Thursday, December 12th at 12 pm. Please contact Kostas Bouikidis by Monday, December 9th if you are interested in attending.

Once again, the Senior Men's Club will be hosting a monthly luncheon here at St. Luke. The first one will be held on Thursday, January 16, 2020 at 12 pm. Stay tuned for more information.

Meetings continue on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday mornings, at 10:00am in the first-floor conference room of the Education Building. Please check the Sunday bulletins for updates.

The St. Luke Senior Men's Club
is hosting a
Monthly Luncheon

First Luncheon to be held
Thursday, January 16, 2020
12:00 pm
Social Hall of St. Luke Church
Meal Donation: \$3.00



These Luncheons will be held on the third Thursday of every month up until June.
Questions or concerns please contact the church office. 610-353-1592

Gregory the Theologian

Archbishop of Constantinople

January 25



Reading:

This great Father and Teacher of the Church was born in 329 in Arianzus, a village of the second district of Cappadocia, not far from Nazianzus. His father, who later became Bishop of Nazianzus, was named Gregory (commemorated Jan. 1), and his mother was named Nonna (Aug. 5); both are among the Saints, and so are his brother Caesarius (Mar. 9) and his sister Gorgona (Feb. 23). At first, he studied in Caesarea of Palestine, then in Alexandria, and finally in Athens. As he was sailing from Alexandria to Athens, a violent sea storm put in peril not only his life but also his salvation, since he had not yet been baptized. With tears and fervour he besought God to spare him, vowing to dedicate his whole self to Him, and the tempest gave way to calm. At Athens Saint Gregory was later joined by Saint Basil the Great, whom he already knew; but now their acquaintanceship grew into a lifelong brotherly love. Another fellow student of theirs in Athens was the young Prince Julian, who later as Emperor was called the Apostate because he denied Christ and did all in his power to restore paganism. Even in Athens, before Julian had thrown off the mask of piety; Saint Gregory saw what an unsettled mind he had, and said, "What an evil the Roman State is nourishing" (Orat. V, 24, PG 35:693).

After their studies at Athens, Gregory became Basil's fellow ascetic, living the monastic life together with him for a time in the hermitages of Pontus. His father ordained him presbyter of the Church of Nazianzus, and Saint Basil consecrated him Bishop of Sasima (or Zansima), which was in the archdiocese of Caesarea. This consecration was a source of great sorrow to Gregory, and a cause of misunderstanding between him and Basil; but his love for Basil remained unchanged, as can be plainly seen from his Funeral Oration on Saint Basil (Orat. XLIII).

About the Year 379, Saint Gregory came to the assistance of the Church of Constantinople, which had already been troubled for forty years by the Arians; by his supremely wise words and many labours he freed it from the corruption of heresy, and was elected Archbishop of that city by the Second Ecumenical Council, which assembled there in 381, and condemned Macedonius, Archbishop of Constantinople, the enemy of the Holy Spirit. When Saint Gregory came to Constantinople, the Arians had taken all the churches and he was forced to serve in a house chapel dedicated to Saint Anastasia the Martyr. From there he began to preach his famous five sermons on the Trinity, called the Triadica. When he left Constantinople two years later, the Arians did not have one church left to them in the city. Saint Meletius of Antioch (see Feb. 12), who was presiding over the Second Ecumenical Council, died in the course of it, and Saint Gregory was chosen in his stead; there he distinguished himself in his expositions of dogmatic theology.

Having governed the Church until 382, he delivered his farewell speech - the Syntacterion, in which he demonstrated the Divinity of the Son - before 150 bishops and the Emperor Theodosius the Great; in this speech he requested, and received from all, permission to retire from the sea of Constantinople. He returned to Nazianzus, where he lived to the end of his life, and reposed in the Lord in 391, having lived some sixty-two years.

His extant writings, both prose and poems in every type of metre, demonstrate his lofty eloquence and his wondrous breadth of learning. In the beauty of his writings, he is considered to have surpassed the Greek writers of antiquity, and because of his God-inspired theological thought, he received the surname "Theologian." Although he is sometimes called Gregory of Nazianzus, this title belongs properly to his father; he himself is known by the Church only as Gregory the Theologian. He is especially called "Trinitarian Theologian," since in virtually every homily he refers to the Trinity and the one essence and nature of the Godhead. Hence, Alexius Anthorus dedicated the following verses to him:

*Like an unwandering star beaming with splendour,
Thou bringest us by mystic teachings,
O Father, To the Trinity's sunlike illumination,
O mouth breathing with fire, Gregory most mighty.*

St. Luke's Orthodox Bookstore

Celebrate Christmas with a gift from your church bookstore.
All proceeds benefit St. Luke.

We carry:

Orthodox Books

- about the Saints
- of the history of the church
- children's stories



Orthodox Study Bibles both New and Old Testaments

Prayer Ropes and Prayer Bracelets

Christmas Ornaments

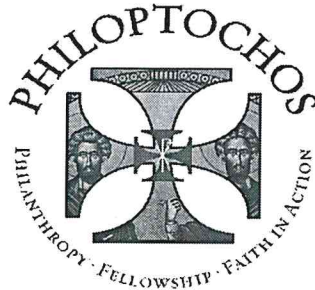
Icons

Censers and Charcoal

Prayer Cubes

Decals and more...

What's on your gift list?



Ladies Philoptochos Society News

SAVE THE DATES

5th Annual "Boutiques & Greek Treats"
Saturday and Sunday, December 7th and 8th, 2019

Vasilopita Cutting Social
Wednesday, January 8, 2020

General Assembly
Sunday, January 26, 2020

Apokriatiko Glendi
Saturday, February 22, 2020

5th Annual "Boutiques & Greek Treats" - Saturday and Sunday, December 7th and 8th, 2019.

Join us for food, shopping and fellowship just in time for Christmas! For more information and to volunteer, call, text, or email Christine Mandris Turner 610-246-7163 or boutiquesgt@gmail.com. Many thanks, to our bakers, chairs, volunteers, donors and shoppers. We are truly grateful for all of your support.

St. Luke Poinsettia Offerings- The annual St. Luke Poinsettia Offering fundraiser is underway. The **Poinsettia Offering** is a lovely way to honor and memorialize our loved ones, whose names will be remembered during the Christmas Eve Service, as well as to beautify the Church during the Christmas Season. The deadline for Poinsettia offerings is December 20. Poinsettia Chairlady: Alexandra Perrot. If you have any questions, please feel free to email Alexandra at: saintlukechristmas@gmail.com.

Vasilopita Cutting Social- On Wednesday, January 8, 2020 at 6 pm, all members are invited to join us for the traditional Vasilopita Cutting Social for holiday fun, great food, and fellowship. This is also a wonderful opportunity to invite a friend who would be interested in joining our Society. Please RSVP by December 31, 2019 by calling Eleni Evangelopoulos (Chairlady) at 610-574-7450, or emailing her at elenie@verizon.net.

Apokriatiko Glendi- Join us for a night of Greek dinner and dancing, Saturday, February 22, 2020 at 6 pm in the St. Luke Community Center. The evening will feature music by DJ Maki, a photo booth, and arts and crafts for children. For tickets, contact Anastasia Stoios at stlukeglendi@gmail.com or 610-529-0989. Please see the flyer found elsewhere in the Epistle.

Welcome and Appreciation Tea - What a delightful afternoon we had in the Social Hall on Sunday, October 6, 2019, as we gathered to celebrate the completion of the first term of Angelique Demetris' presidency, honor our members for their dedication and service to our Philoptochos, and welcome new and potential members. About 95 ladies joined us for an afternoon of camaraderie, tea, light lunch and desserts. Karen Kotapka welcomed everyone to the Tea and asked Father Christ to lead us in prayer. She continued by thanking everyone for attending, and particularly recognized Angelique for her leadership and her many accomplishments during her first term. The Committee, on behalf of the membership, presented Angelique with a bouquet of flowers and wished her continued success. May the Good Lord guide her as she embarks on her second term. We greatly appreciate all the donations and help we received from our members. We also thank Father Christ and Presvytera Michele for attending the event and for their continued support.
Chairladies: Joanna Mattis, Karen Kotapka, Maria Carafides and Katina Maltas

Philoptochos Charity Committee- The Charity Committee hosted two guest speakers at our first General Assembly of the year on October 23, 2019. Members present learned about the work being done for pre-school children with developmental challenges at The Arc of Chester County, and Friends Association's dedication to keeping homeless families together as they rebuild their lives towards independent living.

On Friday, November 1st, Angelique Demetris, Demetra Panidis, Alexandra Perrot, Sandie Liacouras, new member Roula Pikoulas-Malisianos, Alexis Limberakis and Karen Kotapka crafted with the women at Gloria's Place at People's Emergency Center through CHOP/Homeless Health Initiative's Art Program. Embellished frames, charming decoupaged baskets, decorated handbag-shaped wooden boxes and trays, and sparkly paper tree ornaments/gift tags were created. The women were thrilled with their finished products and eagerly await our next visit. Please let us know if you are interested in joining us in this rewarding activity. It always takes place on Friday mornings between 10 am and noon. The shelter is located in West Philadelphia.

Thank you for your participation in our Veterans Holiday Giving Project. Many bags filled with the requested items were delivered to the VA Hospital in Coatesville. These generous gifts, lovingly offered by our St. Luke parishioners, will be distributed by administrators to the delight of our national heroes! Watch for details on Bingo with the Veterans in March.

Warmest wishes to you and your family for a blessed Holiday Season and good health and much happiness in the New Year, Joanna Mattis and Karen Kotapka, Charity Committee co-chairs.

Ronald McDonald House- Our next date to cook for the families of the seriously ill children who are staying at the Ronald McDonald House will be Monday, February 17, 2020. All interested to help us cook please email Mary mmissiras@gmail.com or call 610-687-2013.

Correction: In the last edition of our Epistle we inadvertently left out the name of Katina Dollos, who also cooked with us. Sorry, Katina! Mary Missiras, Chair, Ronald McDonald Outreach MaryEllen Missiras, Co-Chair

Families Forward Philadelphia Outreach Program: Our Philoptochos will continue a "Cold Weather Drive" to collect winter apparel and holiday gifts for the PEC, which serves women and their children, and, also, Families Forward Philadelphia, which serves men, women and their families, both non-profit shelters. We are seeking **NEW** winter coats, hats, gloves, boots and **NEW** clothing, underwear, socks, pajamas etc. for boys and girls, including teens, as well as infant and toddler wear. Please keep in mind, donations are accepted all year long, for **NEW clothing, personal care items, school supplies, small household items, bedding, baby formula, diapers, baby furniture**, etc. as the need is ongoing. As the shelters do not have adequate storage space for clothing, St. Luke will no longer accept used clothing. **We thank you in advance for your generosity.**

National Human Trafficking Awareness and Prevention: In recognition of National HT Awareness Month in January, we are collecting **NEW items of women's underwear, leggings, deodorant and socks** to be donated to *The Salvation Army's "New Day to Stop Trafficking Program Drop-In Center."* A book that will raise your awareness on the issue of modern human slavery and human trafficking is: *Facing the Monster: How One Person Can Fight Child Slavery*, by Carol Metzker. Carol has spoken to our Philoptochos on two occasions on this serious and far-reaching humanitarian issue that occurs right in our own neighborhoods and towns. Carol has co-authored a second book along with Ann Marie Jones, a survivor of sex trafficking, to help parents, teachers and community members to protect kids and prevent new victims. The book is titled: *A Shield Against the Monster*. Both books are available on Amazon. Let us keep the victims, and those who are working to eradicate this humanitarian crisis, in our prayers and offer our help and compassion.

Socks for Souls Drive: Throughout the month of February, and into March, Philoptochos will once again conduct a drive to collect new socks for residents of the *People's Emergency Center* and *Families Forward Philadelphia*. The shelter's residents are men, women and children, so **NEW** socks are needed in **all sizes**. Please consider supporting this outreach project by dropping off your donation of socks in the board room across from the church office during the week, and collection bins in the Community Center on Sundays.

With heartfelt thanks and God's blessings to all. Questions on donations? Please contact Chair Alexis Limberakis at 215-643-3347 or email at caryalexis@aol.com

Coffee Hour Volunteers- We thank everyone who helped during coffee hour in October and November:

Anna Andreadis	Carol Crouse	Effie Guthrie
Sue Clark	Alexis Dahlin	Maria Pousatis
Cynthia Costanzo	Ani Marie Diakatos	Galene Pylaras
Martha DiCamillo	Anna Topalidis	Katrina Costas

Anna Topalidis and Toulia Nikolos, Coffee Hour Co-Chairs

Membership News-

We welcome our new member Roula Pikoulas-Malisianos!!

Sponsorship of Floral Décor

You may sponsor the decoration of any icon, provide the flowers for a particular service, make a donation towards floral decor, or have the icon of your patron saint decorated on his/her feast day. Available sponsorship dates include but not limited:

December 9 The Conception of the Theotokos

December 12 Spyridon the Wonderworker

December 15 Eleutherios, Bishop of Illyria

December 24 Eve of Nativity of Christ

December 25 Nativity of Christ

December 27 Stephen the First Martyr

January 1 St. Basil the Great

January 4 Great Forefeast of Epiphany

January 5 St. John Chrysostom; Great Agiasmos

January 6 Holy Epiphany/Theophany of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ

January 7 Synaxis of St. John the Baptist and Forerunner

January 17 St. Anthony the Great

January 18 Sts. Athanasios & Cyril, Patriarchs of Alexandria

January 20 Euthymius the Great

January 27 Relics of John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople

January 30 Synaxis of the Three Hierarchs: Sts. Basil, Gregory and John Chrysostom

February 2 Gabriel the New Martyr

February 3 Symeon and Anna the Prophetess; Stamatios, John and Nicholas

February 6 St. Photios, Patriarch of Constantinople; Bucolos, Bishop of Smyrna

February 10 Haralambos the Martyr; Anastasios, Patriarch of Jerusalem

Please contact Niki Tsetsekos at 610-989-3635 or ntsetsekos@gmail.com to make arrangements.

We thank both Dr. Debbie Lamprinakos and Niavi Pantelis for sponsoring the icon for The Entrance of The Theotokos into the Temple, Katina Maltas for her donation for the floral decoration of St. Nicholas icon and Vasiliki Bottas for her donation for the icon floral decoration of St. Eleftherios icon.

Thank you to Presbytera Michele Kontos for her kind donation for the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ icon decoration in honor of Father Christ's Name Day.

January is Philoptochos Membership Month!

As January is around the corner and it is the start of our Philoptochos' Stewardship Month, we would like to invite all the women of our community, 18 years of age and older, to join our St. Luke Philoptochos. We all have different talents and interests and we promise you will find a committee that will put your talents to use; keep in mind that many hands make light work.

Your involvement in our St. Luke Philoptochos is very important to the community and, with your support, we have accomplished a great deal. We make a difference in cases of national or international disasters, in providing research funds, and in direct aid to individuals. Locally, we distribute both funds and needed items to many diverse organizations. We also sponsor a scholarship to a deserving graduate each year. Last year alone, we distributed \$25,000 to Ryan's Case for Smiles, CHOP/HHI Art Program, Emmaus Home, Coatesville Veterans, Chester Charter Scholars Academy, The Arc of Chester County, Ronald McDonald, Covenant House, and Media Food Bank, just to list a few. None of this would be possible without your support!

In order to fulfill our charity mission, it is important to have the full support of our members. Our Philoptochos year begins in January and we would like to have collected everyone's stewardship by April 30th. The minimum stewardship amount is \$30 and your gracious offering above that amount will increase our effectiveness in the community and beyond. However, much you decide to give, please know that it will be put to good use supporting charities and philanthropic services and projects. Your checks can be made payable to "Ladies Philoptochos Society of St. Luke" with "Stewardship" written in the memo area.

We wholeheartedly thank you for your help in our mission to serve those in need. Please stop by our table every Sunday in January to get additional information, ask any questions, become a member, and/or pay for your 2020 stewardship. Or, if you are an existing member and are not sure if your stewardship is up to date, or if you would like to become a member, please contact **Carnation Karros, Membership chair at 215.917.5014 or email at falia@karrosfamily.com.**

The Three Great Hierarchs: Sts. Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John Chrysostom January 30th

Each of these saints has his personal feast day in the month of January: St. Basil on the 1st, St. Gregory on the 25th, and St. John Chrysostom on the 27th. The common feast we celebrate on January 30th was instituted in the 11th Century, in the time of the Emperor Alexius Comnenus. At one time there was a quarrel among the people about who was the greatest of the three. Some gave St. Basil the pre-eminence for his purity and courage, others St. Gregory for the unfathomable depth and height of his theological mind; still others St. John for the wonderful beauty of his speech and the clarity of his presentation of the Faith. So the first were called Basilians, the second Gregorians, and the third Johannites. But, by the providence of God, this dispute was resolved to the benefit of the Church and the yet greater glory of the three saints.



The Bishop of Euchaita, John (June 14), had a vision in his sleep, in which each of these saints appeared individually to him in great glory and indescribable beauty, and then all three together. They then said to him, "We are one in God, as you see, and there is no dispute among us...neither is there among us a first or a second." The saints also advised Bishop John to compile a common feast for them and to set aside for them a day of common commemoration. The quarrel was settled as indicated by the wonderful vision; January 30 was set aside for the common commemoration of the three hierarchs. The Greeks regard this feast not only as a church festival but as their greatest national and scholastic holiday.

Troparion, Tone 1

Let all who love their words come together and honor with hymns/ the three luminaries of the light-creating Trinity:/ Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian,/ and renowned John of the golden speech,/ who have enlightened the world with the rays of their divine doctrines,/ and are mellifluous rivers of wisdom/ who have watered all creation with streams of divine knowledge;/ they ever intercede with the Trinity for us.

GUIDELINES FOR RESPECTFUL WORSHIP

Please remember that the Church is the House of God. Reverence and good manners are required as an expression of awareness of the presence of the Lord, and in order not to disturb others. No irrelevant conversations should occur in the Church. As a courtesy to your fellow worshipers, please use the Cry Room if your children are disturbing others.

There are certain times during the services when no one should be moving about. If you arrive late for Liturgy, please remain in the narthex during the times listed below. Do not proceed to your seat or take votive candles to the front of the Church during these times:

- At the beginning of Liturgy, when the priest sings “*Blessed is the Kingdom...*”
- During any reading from Scripture or any procession with the altar servers
- While the Creed, Lord’s Prayer, and Pre-Communion Prayer are being recited
- During the offering of the Gifts—“*Take, eat...*” and the Consecration of the Gifts
- When the priest is giving the sermons (children’s and at the end of the Liturgy)

A general rule to follow is to stand reverently where you are whenever the priest or deacon is facing the people or outside the altar area (e.g., censing or giving a blessing). Do not stand in the aisle where the priest and altar servers pass during the Great Entrance.

Father Christ has asked the Parish Council
and volunteer ushers to see that these guidelines are observed.
Your cooperation is appreciated.



STEWARDSHIP PRAYER

Dear God, I resolve to put You first in my life.

I recognize that You have blessed me with all that I have and all that I am.

As Your steward, I resolve to sacrifice when necessary
but always to do so out of a spirit of sincere love,
just as Your Son, Jesus Christ, did for me.

I humbly accept the challenge to share from the top of my resources
rather than from the bottom.

I recognize that being a good steward is nothing more than being truly Christian.

Dear Lord, I resolve to be generous with my time, talent and treasure,
giving in proportion to the gifts I have been given.

I will confidently live each day with a spirit of true peace and joy
in knowing that I am doing Your will. Amen.

A Loving reminder to mail your 2020 Commitment cards at your earliest convenience.

The Story of Jesus Word Search

R	T	T	W	M	P	U	E	O	M	L	Q	R	I	Z	C
C	K	A	R	T	H	M	N	D	E	E	F	G	W	M	R
T	G	H	X	S	D	M	A	N	G	E	R	J	E	F	W
J	I	A	T	N	X	R	M	S	D	F	J	H	J	O	Y
W	O	R	S	H	I	P	Y	G	G	W	E	R	Y	W	J
N	W	W	C	L	J	Q	M	J	L	L	V	E	W	G	W
C	G	I	Q	D	G	O	O	T	H	W	K	X	L	E	X
A	N	V	S	U	M	Y	S	T	R	N	E	I	Q	V	E
X	H	O	Y	E	K	W	E	E	O	Q	P	I	H	R	M
N	F	N	L	C	M	B	W	D	P	X	Q	W	A	V	P
H	H	H	F	Z	N	E	W	Q	T	H	R	L	X	S	R
X	R	F	C	X	V	D	N	I	J	S	C	X	R	H	S
M	T	H	Y	S	W	T	C	T	C	A	J	O	G	E	W
E	Q	R	M	D	T	C	L	R	N	V	N	R	G	P	J
C	A	M	R	T	F	A	A	O	V	I	G	V	J	H	Q
M	I	I	H	K	Z	L	R	M	L	O	R	A	H	E	I
D	N	H	A	N	G	E	L	A	Z	U	Q	S	F	R	E
Z	R	K	V	B	F	J	N	N	D	R	J	C	M	D	N

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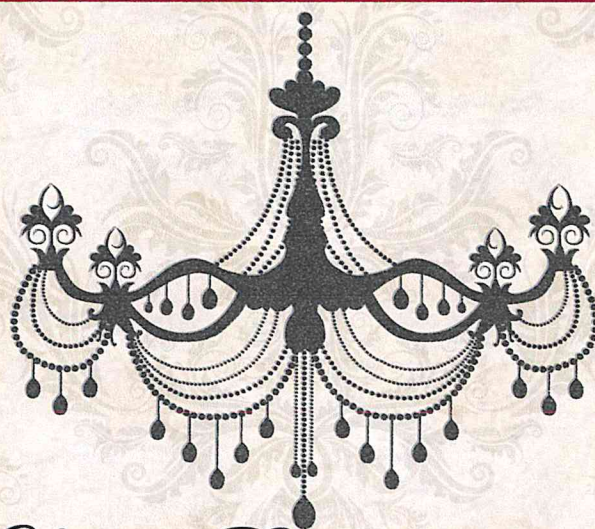
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