

Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church



The Voice

**Mar.
2024**





The Voice is published monthly by
Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church
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Meetings

Parish Council

3rd Tuesday
 7:00 PM

Philoptochos

2nd Saturday
 10:00 AM

Bible Study

Every 2nd & 4th
 Wednesday
 10:30 AM

Addiction Support

Every 2nd & 4th
 Monday 7PM

Kali Parea

1st Tuesday
 10:00 AM

GOYA

last Sunday
 12:00 noon

Adult

Dance Classes

Every 1st & 3rd
 Saturday @ 3:30

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St Nicholas Greek
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Πρόσχωμεν - Let Us Be Attentive

Dear Friends,

This month, we will enter the most special season of the ecclesiastical year. Monday, March 18, marks the beginning of Great Lent, a period of repentance and restoration. We seek to return to what is most important in the life of a Christian — unity with God.

We can lose sight of the need for repentance if we constantly pursue earthly pleasures. They are abundant, and the world surrounds us with temptation and the empty promise of happiness through transient celebrations. We celebrate the Super Bowl, Valentine's Day, Halloween, the World Series, sports playoffs, the Oscars, and the Emmys. These are but a few of the events that we are led to believe will bring satisfaction to our lives. However, they are passing pleasures and even bring sadness for some.

The true and lasting meaning our hearts seek is that which brings comfort to our souls. This cannot be found in earthly pleasures; it can only be found in Christ who is eternal. He knows our innermost needs and desires, and He waits for us to choose between Him and everything else.

Our Apostolic heritage, which is unbroken from the Apostles to whom He gave His Word, is a living faith. We have a connection through the many generations of saints who lead us by their example.

This year, make the Lenten period your compass. It can guide you to a life that surpasses all other promises of happiness and will bring you the joy that doesn't end. It will bring you into communion with God Himself. Let this be our purpose and hope this year.

In Christ,
+Father John



**“We fought the good fight,
We finished the race, and
We kept the faith”**

Thank you to **ALL** for another successful
Greek Festival!

Chairperson; Dimitrios Diamantopoulos and co-chairman; Dean Sfikas, would like to extend their very warm heartfelt gratitude of appreciation for your participation and support in making our 2024 Greek Festival a wonderful and successful event.

Our event is part of the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church's community engagement and those who attended, thoroughly enjoyed the Greek foods, music, dancing, pastries, and church tours, etc.

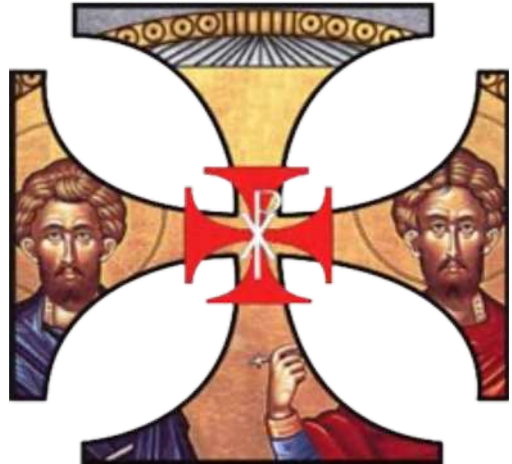
All of you parishioners and volunteers worked extremely hard to share our Greek culture with our guests and greeted all with kindness. The marvelous feedback on social media (Facebook) is incredibly positive, encouraging, and delightful with their comments of the wonderful Greek festival experience.

It was truly a pleasure working with you all on the 44th annual Greek Festival. We appreciate your kind donations of time, money, hard work, and sacrifices. We did it even on a very rainy day. We look forward to working with you all again, GOD willing. Bravo!!

“Well done good and faithful servants!”

With thankful regards,
Dimitrios Diamantopoulos (Greek Festival Chairman)
Dean Sfikas (Greek Festival Vice-chairman)

Philoptochos



Greetings,

In the month of February Philoptochos did not hold their monthly meeting due to the preparation for the 2024 Festival. It was a busy time but there were many who came to help. Philoptochos offers a sincere "ThankYou" to all who helped prepare our table.

Our next meeting will be on March 9th. I look forward to an enjoyable meeting filled with new ideas of ways to assist those in need which is our mission.

Dues of \$30 are being collected by Helen Fiorentinos, Treasurer.

With Love in Christ,
Sharon Colonis

***"When you are able to do a work of charity,
don't delay or put it off, for almsgiving
delivers us from death."***

St. Polycarp

AMAZING FACTS



**DID YOU KNOW THAT
\$200,000
IS NEEDED TO COVER WHAT
STEWARDSHIP DOES NOT?**

In 2023, nearly \$190,000 was donated to St. Nicholas for stewardship. We thank all those who fulfilled their 2023 pledges and submitted pledges for 2024.

Yet, that does not cover the total expenses our church has.

Your tax-deductible donation allows our church to continue attracting new parishioners and expanding our ministries, in addition to maintaining the beauty and functionality of our building.

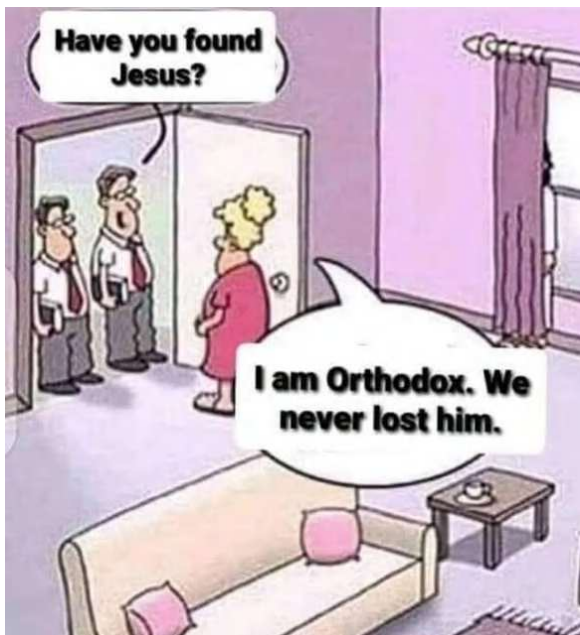
Submit your stewardship pledge today. You can easily set-up recurring payments by visiting the www.stnicholasfp.com and clicking on the STEWARDSHIP tab on the home page.

The perfect person does not only try to avoid evil. Nor does he do good for fear of punishment, still less in order to qualify for the hope of a promised reward. The perfect person does good through love. His actions are not motivated by desire for personal benefit, so he does not have personal advantage as his aim. But as soon as he has realized the beauty of doing good, he does it with all his energies and in all that he does. He is not interested in fame, or a good reputation, or a human or divine reward. The rule of life for a perfect person is to be the image and likeness of God.

- Clement of Alexandria

How we walk with the
broken speaks louder than
how we sit with the great.

**I made a paper
airplane. But when it
hovered in just one
spot like a helicopter, I
realized I used
stationary.**



Not everyday is a
good day, live anyway.
Not all you love will love
you back, love anyway.
Not everyone will
tell the truth,
be honest anyway.
Not all deals are fair,
play fair anyway.

ST NICHOLAS LIBRARY BOOK REVIEW

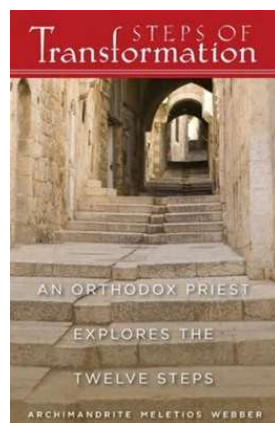
Some of the books reviewed here can be found in the St. Nicholas Bookstore or in our church library. Please let Fr. John know if you would like new titles to be added.

Book Review

Steps of Transformation: An Orthodox Priest Explores the Twelve Steps (Ancient Faith Publishing)

By Archimandrite Meletios Webber

Fr Webber wrote this over 20 years ago and it has lost none of its relevance. The foreword written by Metropolitan Kallistos Ware emphasizes that “membership in AA in no way contradicts or undermines membership in the Church.” AA is not a substitute but an invaluable device for those caught in the chains of addiction.



The need for this text and other similar writings is not to state the obvious but to clarify that “traditional methods of spiritual encouragement with addicts and alcoholics is usually fruitless and may actually do more harm than good.”

Countless individuals have been helped through the 12 steps of treatment and no other program has been found to be as successful in helping the addict to change his or her life.

Denial of one’s addiction is nothing more than an aversion of reality. As the author says, “all addictions are dangerous and can be fatal.” We have only to begin to investigate data and the extent of addiction becomes obvious and frightening.

This book will open your eyes to understanding the nature of addiction and to the positive steps which can be taken to find healing. Highly recommended!

Reclaiming the Great Commission (Ancient Faith Publishing)

By Father Evan Armatas

Fr Evan wrote this book to record his efforts to 'start from scratch'. He describes his journey having left a larger parish to undertake the struggle to organize a mission parish from humble beginnings. He is clear in his intention to fulfill the admonition of Jesus Christ to make all people the children of God- to reclaim the great commission.

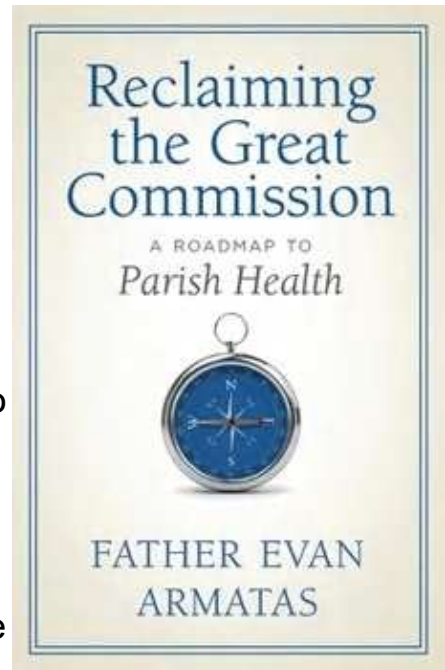
Along the way, challenges arise as a new church comes into existence and preconceived notions must be overcome to identify and pursue a clear purpose.

Many of the obstacles he encountered are the same difficulties experienced in more established churches. His answer is to emphasize good leadership and planning which are key to developing and pursuing a clear mission.

He recommends using the model ORCA: an organizational commitment to **open, respectful, curious, and accountable** deliberations and behavior. This allows and promotes honest assessment of priorities and will encourage new ideas.

Fr Evan did not build his community alone but sought guidance and assistance from experienced outsiders who were knowledgeable about organizational development. His message is built on optimism, "We must believe that there are no strangers in our spiritual family- only brothers and sisters we haven't met."

An encouraging read!





Reflections on the Meaning of Love

A group of professional people posed this question to a group of 4 to 8 year-olds, "What does love mean?" The answers they got were broader, deeper, and more profound than anyone could have ever imagined!

"When my grandmother got arthritis, she couldn't bend over and paint her toenails anymore... so my grandfather does it for her all the time, even when his hands got arthritis too. That's love." Rebecca - age 8

"When someone loves you, the way they say your name is different. You just know that your name is safe in their mouth." Billy - age 4

"Love is when a girl puts on perfume and a boy puts on shaving cologne and they go out and smell each other." Karl - age 5

"Love is when you go out to eat and give somebody most of you French fries without making them give you any of theirs." Chrissy - age 6

"Love is what makes you smile when you're tired." Terri - 4

Love is when my mommy makes coffee for my daddy and she takes a sip before giving it to him, to make sure the taste is OK." Danny - age 8

"Love is what's in the room with you at Christmas if you stop opening presents and just listen." Bobby - age 7 (Wow!)

"If you want to learn to love better, you should start with a friend who you hate." Nikka - age 6 (we need a few million more Nikka's on this planet!!!)

"Love is when you tell a guy you like his shirt, then he wears it every day." Noelle - age 7

"Love is like a little old woman and a little old man who are still friends even after they know each other so well." Tommy- age 6

"During my piano recital, I was on a stage and I was scared. I looked at all the people watching me and saw my daddy waving and smiling. He was the only one doing that. I wasn't scared anymore." Cindy - age 8

"My mommy loves me more than anybody. You don't see anyone else kissing me to sleep at night." Clare - age 6

"Love is when Mommy give Daddy the best piece of chicken." Elaine - age 5

"Love is when Mommy sees Daddy smelly and sweaty and still says he is handsomer than Robert Redford." Chris - age 7

"Love is when your puppy licks your face even after you left him alone all day." Mary Ann - age 4

"I know my older sister loves me because she gives me all her old clothes and has to go out and buy new ones." Lauren -age 4

"When you love somebody, your eyelashes go up and down and little stars come out of you." (what an image!) Karen - age 7

"Love is when Mommy sees Daddy on the toilet and she doesn't think it's gross..." Mark - age 6

"You shouldn't say 'I love you' unless you mean it. But if you mean it, you should say it a lot. People forget." Jessica - age 8

And the final one: The winner was a four year old child whose next door neighbor was an elderly gentlemen who had recently lost his wife. Upon seeing the man cry, the little boy went into the old gentleman's yard, climbed onto his lap, and just sat there. When his mother asked what he had said to the neighbor, the little boy said. *"Nothing, I just helped him cry."*

- Fr. Luke Veronis



March

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday
3 Sunday of the Prodigal Son Orthros - 9:00 AM Divine Liturgy - 10:00 AM GOYA Meeting - 1:00 PM	4 Catechism Class #2 - 7PM	5 Kali Parea - 10:00 AM	6
10 Judgement Sunday (Meatfare Sunday) Orthros - 9:00 AM Divine Liturgy - 10:00 AM Memorial: Todor Mohan (5 yrs.)	11 Addiction Support Group - 6:00 PM Catechism Class #3 - 7PM	12	13 Bible Study - 10:30
17 Forgiveness Sunday (Cheesefare Sunday) Orthros - 9:00 AM Divine Liturgy - 10:00 AM Forgiveness Vespers - 11 AM Souper Bowl -GOYA - 12 noon	18 Clean Monday Compline - 6:00 PM Catechism Class #4 -8:00 PM	19 PC Meeting - 7:00 PM	20 Presanctified Liturgy Lenten Dinner - 7:00
24 Sunday of Orthodoxy * Orthros - 9:00 AM Divine Liturgy - 10:00 AM Proclamations - 11:00 AM	25 Annunciation of the Theotokos Orthros - 9:00 AM Divine Liturgy - 10:00 AM Addiction Support Group - 6:00 PM Catechism Class #5 - 7PM	26	27 Bible Study - 10:30 Presanctified Liturgy Lenten Dinner - 7:00
31 Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas Orthros - 9:00 AM Divine Liturgy - 10:00 AM			
*Sunday of Orthodoxy Vespers - Annunciation Church - (North Miami)	12 Miami) 5:00PM		

h 2024



Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 Chant Practice - 6 PM	2
	7 YAL Event - 6:00 PM	8 HOPE/JOY - 5:30 PM Chant Practice - 6 :00 Adult Greek School 6:00PM	9 Saturday of Souls Orthros - 9:00 AM Divine Liturgy - 10:00 AM Philoptochos - 11:00 AM Baptism: Adrienne & Katherine Polyzois - 1:00 PM
10:30 AM	14	15 Chant Practice - 6 :00 PM	16 Baptism: Melina Stratis –2 PM
Liturgy - 6:00 PM r - 7:00 PM	21	22 Salutations- 6:00 PM Adult Greek School 6:00PM	23 Oratorical Festival - 12:00 noon Adult Dance Class - 3:30 PM
10:30 AM Liturgy - 6:00 PM r - 7:00 PM	28 St Stephen's Camp Registration - 12:00PM	29 Salutations- 6:00 PM	30 District Oratorical Festival - 11:00 AM
		13	

Parishioner Happenings



Maria Isabel Mamangakis, daughter-in-law of Fr. John and Pres. Melissa, received naturalization as a U.S. citizen.



Atheanna Svenning, daughter of Peter and Helen, married Leon Daley.



Deepest Sympathy



Sending thoughts of peace and comfort
today and in the days to come.

Theodora Pourakis, mother of John, passed away.
Brian Rahm, husband of Marianne, passed away.



Cypriana Fisher, daughter of Anna & James, received her 40 days blessing.

On March 24th, the eve of Annunciation the PanOrthodox Clergy of South Florida will celebrate vespers for the Sunday of Orthodoxy at Annunciation Church in North Miami at 5pm. All are invited to attend.



January 28th the Philoptochos hosted a New Year Luncheon at Tutto Fresco.



2024 St Nicholas Parish Council



Mia Mary Sweetland
was
baptized.

**Irene, Pres.
Melissa &
Melinda** lead the
congregational
singing.





Deepen your youth's understanding of our relationship with God and His church.

Learn what it means to live in the Orthodox faith.

Join a network of families from our church with children in grades K-5.

Pray and have dinner with your fellow Orthodox friends.

As we embark on the sacred season of Lent, our hearts are called to reflect on the profound act of sacrifice. **Join JOY on March 8th** as our youth gather to delve into sacrifice and its significance in our lives.

During this special event tailored to our youngest parishioners, we will explore the lesson of sacrifice through discussions and engaging activities. We aim to deepen our understanding of sacrifice, strengthen our faith, and foster a sense of togetherness within our youth group.

Come join us as we prepare our hearts for the Easter season:

Date: March 8th

Time: 5:30

For more information, please contact Lauren Gieseler at 352-262-3160



Annunciation of the Theotokos

(March 25)

Six months after John the Forerunner's conception, the Archangel Gabriel was sent by God to Nazareth, a town of Galilee, unto Mary the Virgin, who had come forth from the Temple a mature maiden (see Nov. 21). According to the tradition handed down by the Fathers, she had been betrothed to Joseph four months. On coming to Joseph's house, the Archangel declared: "Rejoice, thou Full of Grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women." After some consideration, and turmoil of soul, and fear because of this greeting, the Virgin, when she had finally obtained full assurance concerning God's unsearchable condescension and the ineffable dispensation that was to take place through her, and believing that all things are possible to the Most High, answered in humility: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word." And at this, the Holy Spirit came upon her, and the power of the Most High overshadowed her all-blameless womb, and the Son and Word of God, Who existed before the ages, was conceived past speech and understanding, and became flesh in her immaculate body (Luke 1:26-38).

Bearing in her womb the Uncontainable One, the blessed Virgin went with haste from Nazareth to the hill country of Judea, where Zacharias had his dwelling; for she desired to find Elizabeth her kinswoman and rejoice together with her, because, as she had learned from the Archangel, Elizabeth had conceived in her old age. Furthermore, she wished to tell her of the great things that the Mighty One had been well-pleased to bring to pass in her, and she greeted Elizabeth and drew nigh to her. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, she felt her six-month-old babe, Saint John the Baptist, prophesied of the dawning of the spiritual Sun. Immediately, the aged Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and recognized her as the Mother of her Lord, and with a great voice blessed her and the Fruit that she held within herself. The Virgin also, moved by a supernatural rejoicing in the spirit, glorified her God and Savior, saying: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour," and the rest, as the divine Luke hath recorded (1:39-55)



"WHAT WE ARE MATTERS EVEN MORE
THAN WHAT WE DO WHAT WE
DO MATTERS CHIEFLY AS EVIDENCE
OF WHAT WE ARE"
-C.S. LEWIS

Rats in the Cellar

- C.S. Lewis

"We begin to notice, besides our particular sinful acts, our sinfulness; begin to be alarmed not only about what we do, but about what we are. This may sound rather difficult, so I will try to make it clear from my own case. When I come to my evening prayers and try to reckon up the sins of the day, nine times out of ten the most obvious one is some sin against charity; I have sulked or snapped or sneered or snubbed or stormed. And the excuse that immediately springs to my mind is that the provocation was so sudden and unexpected: I was caught off my guard, I had not time to collect myself. Now that may be an extenuating circumstance as regards those particular acts: they would obviously be worse if they had been deliberate and premeditated. On the other hand, surely what a man does when he is taken off his guard is the best evidence for what sort of a man he is? Surely what pops out before the man has time to put on a disguise is the truth? If there are rats in a cellar you are most likely to see them if you go in very suddenly. But the suddenness does not create the rats: it only prevents them from hiding. In the same way the suddenness of the provocation does not make me an ill-tempered man: it only shows me what an ill-tempered man I am. The rats are always there in the cellar, but if you go in shouting and noisily they will have taken cover before you switch on the light. Apparently the rats of resentment and vindictiveness are always there in the cellar of my soul. Now that cellar is out of reach of my conscious will. I can to some extent control my acts: I have no direct control over my temperament. And if (as I said before) what we

chiefly as evidence of what we are - then it follows that the change which I most need to undergo is a change that my own direct, voluntary efforts cannot bring about. And this applies to my good actions too. How many of them were done for the right motive? How many for fear of public opinion, or a desire to show off? How many from a sort of obstinacy or sense of superiority which, in different circumstances, might equally have led to some very bad act? But I cannot, by direct moral effort, give myself new motives. After the first few steps in the Christian life we realize that everything which really needs to be done in our souls can be done only by God. And that brings us to something which has been very misleading in my language up to now.

I have been talking as if it were we who did everything. In reality, of course, it is God who does everything. We, at most, allow it to be done to us. In a sense you might even say it is God who does the pretending. The Three-Personal God, so to speak, sees before Him in fact a self-centered, greedy, grumbling, rebellious human animal. But He says 'Let us pretend that this is not a mere creature, but our Son. It is like Christ in so far as it is a Man, for He became Man. Let us pretend that it is also like Him in Spirit. Let us treat it as if it were what in fact it is not. Let us pretend in order to make the pretense into a reality.' God looks at you as if you were a little Christ: Christ stands beside you to turn you into one. I daresay this idea of a divine make-believe sounds rather strange at first. But, is it so strange really? Is not that how the higher thing always raises the lower? A mother teaches her baby to talk by talking to it as if it understood long before it really does. We treat our dogs as if they were 'almost human': that is why they really become 'almost human' in the end."

- C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*, chapter 29

We all wear Designer genes.
- Peter Kreeft

Cultivating a Heart for Church

A Reflection by Fr. James Waltenberger

*“For the heart of this people has become insensitive...
They have closed their eyes lest they should see with their eyes,
and hear with their ears, and understand with their hearts,
and return, and I should heal them.” (Isaiah 6:10)*

The problem of people leaving the Church is not new; however, today's fast-paced culture and increased secularization appear to me to be a battle with *two* fronts. And this problem is not unique to our Orthodox faith.

We've all seen people leave the Church for various reasons. Death is one we can't prevent, but there are others. Parents change jobs. Someone has a disagreement with the priest. They may have been insulted or had their feelings hurt. Teenagers graduate high school, go to college, and may or may not remember their heritage in the faith. Many simply lose interest, or life's cares take up more and more time. Some who grew up in the faith marry outside it; others live too far away to do more than attend Sunday Liturgy. If children are involved in sports, they may have practice on Sundays, and Church becomes a secondary activity, rather than of primary importance.

Are we like the frog in a pot of water, with the temperature rising so gradually we don't notice?

What can we, as clergy, do? There are no easy answers, and no one-size-fits-all solutions. But we must try. First, I think we need to guard our own family and marriage; this is of utmost importance. Just as an ill person cannot care for another ill person, as ministers we need to be healthy both spiritually and physically so we can care for our flocks.

Second, we need to be vigilant against secular and amoral influences creeping into the life of the Church. We must educate the faithful, both cradle Orthodox and converts, and we can encourage our parishioners to model faith and worship in the home, complete with icons, prayers, music – vital when families are often in Church only two hours each week.

Finally, serving our local communities will give the Church a stronger presence, whatever that may look like: say, an open house, food bank, or clothing drive. This kind of service – something that IOCC is committed to fostering in our parishes – brings a tangible dimension to our faith. Organizing a group to volunteer with an IOCC Action Team, for instance, or involving youth in an IOCC kit drive is another opportunity to demonstrate that our faith is alive and hands on.

Each situation and parish is different. I believe that we must take stock and make a plan. Should one program not work, then we must regroup, rethink our goal, and try again.

If we can encourage our people to grasp the essence of Isaiah's vision – that God wants to heal us and send us to share His love – they may begin to understand the importance of their faith. Remember that some people walked away from Christ Himself. I don't think we can do any better than He did, but I believe it's worth trying.

May our gracious God and Savior Jesus Christ continue to bless our humble efforts in the building of His Kingdom. Glory to Jesus Christ. Glory forever.

*- Fr. James Waltenberger, Associate Priest
St. Thomas Eastern Orthodox Church, Fairlawn, Ohio*

If the heart is not occupied with study, it cannot endure the turbulence of the body's assault. - *St. Isaac the Syrian*

THE AGAPE FUND

During the first months of the year, it is a tradition to bless parishioners' homes and businesses. It is a joy for me to enter your homes and to bring God's special grace for the New Year. I thank you all for welcoming me warmly. Please call me to set up a time if you would like to schedule this.

Please know that it is my joy to come into your homes and bring the special blessing of our Lord. No monetary gift is ever expected, and if you give a gift, know that I do not keep it for myself. All the money I receive from House Blessings, as well as any money received from Sacraments (Baptisms & Weddings) or Memorials and Funerals goes into my "Agape Fund".

I use this AGAPE FUND as a discretionary fund to help a variety of people in need - this may include people within our parish, as well as others outside our Church Family. I also use some funds to help various Church ministries. I always welcome any donations made out to this special fund.

If anyone tells me of a special need, I will try to respond to it. Of course, any such help is always held in the utmost confidence.

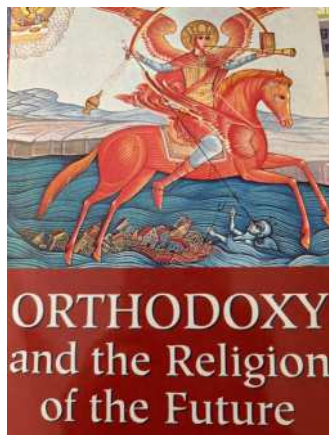
Fr John

Trouble comes to those who need it most.

- Joe Henry

Christ is knocking at the heart, and the devil is at the brains.

- St Paisios the Athonite



**Now available
in the Bookstore**



Do you know what time is the best for praying?
Around 4-5 at dawn, because the soul is sensitive
then and it is more receptive to messages.
- St Porphyrios of Kavso-kalyvia

Hell can't be made attractive, so the Devil
makes attractive the road that leads there.
- St. Basil the Great

The whole life of a person, wherever he lives,
is nothing but temptation.
- St Ambrose of Optina

Note to Parishioners:

We invite all parishioners to submit items of interest for our monthly newsletter,
The Voice.

This may include articles, stories that are relevant and important news in the lives
of our parishioners.

Please submit material to Father John before the 15th of each month for review
and inclusion in the next month's issue. Thank you.



Saint Nicholas
Greek Orthodox Church
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Always remember that even the Son of
God and all His friends entered His
kingdom through thorns and crosses.

- St Nikodemos the Hagiorite