

# TRANSFIGURATION OF OUR LORD GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 14, ISSUE 1

January 2011

Beloved in the Lord,

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation;  
old things have passed away;  
behold, all things have become new.  
(2 Corinthians 5:17)*



With every new year comes the inherent desire and need to begin anew, to let old things pass away, to forgive the past, and to make new commitments for change through new year's resolutions. However, for most, these new year's resolutions are quickly undertaken and fade, with the human zeal and strength that putters out with the passage of time. New year's resolutions rarely, if ever, come to fruition. Why? This is because they do not begin with God. "Every good and perfect gift comes from Above, coming down from the Father of heavenly lights, Who does not change like shifting shadows." as the world does. We hear this passage from the Epistle of St. James, 1:17, at the conclusion of every Divine Liturgy. This prayer becomes a worthwhile reminder to us, that as we have just received the Body and Blood of Christ, through the reception of Holy Communion, we do not leave the Divine Liturgy, alone, but united to Him, to continue the divine work of the people of God. In this way, only, can we accomplish what is according to His will in our resolutions.

St. Paul declares to us in First Corinthians 3:9, "for we are God's fellow workers (synergoi). You are God's field, God's building." What beautiful words of dignity which St. Paul offers to us, that we can become God's fellow workers, "synergoi". "Synergia" (synergy) IS the approach. . . to all things in this coming year. If we are to embrace His effort and grace to work with us, to yoke Himself to our lives, we not only fulfill a few of our holier new year's resolutions, but we become so much more. In this new year, when we come to Transfiguration Church and embrace its ministries and projects, as fellow workers, we are again, "His field" where He plants the

promise of new growth and a harvest of plenty, we are "His building" where He promises His abiding presence, as a rock, refuge, and foundation. As His co-workers, we join ourselves to His Trinitarian Life, "for in Him we live and move and have our being." (Acts 17:28)

The beginning of the new year offers us an opportunity to make a resolution that matters, that transcends the goals inherent in so many "new year's resolutions" and offers us a foretaste of the very Kingdom of God that, while yet to be fully revealed, is already fully present in the life of the Church at Transfiguration. It affords us an opportunity to pursue a new beginning, to transform our commitment and words into conviction and action, and to put our spiritual households into order, not only during the coming year but for the remainder of our lives. How do we do this? Only if it is a resolution of repentance, a reorientation of everything towards God can our new year's resolutions come to fruition, and our new year itself be sanctified and thus satisfying. "Let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life unto Christ, our God." (the Divine Liturgy)

We are blessed by God with the beginning of this new year. In thanksgiving, let us make our resolution one of repentance and interior change, aimed at "the one thing needful" - pursuing our lives in accordance with the will of God and the example of our Savior. Let us "lay aside all earthly cares" - and trivial "resolutions" - replacing them with a firm commitment to seek renewal in the Lord in our Church and its ministries. And let us resolve to remain vigilant in fulfilling this resolution, especially in times of temptation or distress - times when Our Lord is quick to hear our prayers for help, guidance, and direction. In so doing, we will discover that indeed the Lord is with us, "Emmanuel," at every moment and in every circumstance, giving us the resolve to grow in and with Him now and in the days to come.

With the love of Christ for a Bright New Year,  
*Fr. Vasileios*

Transfiguration of Our Lord Greek Orthodox Church  
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Phone: (512) 329-6363 Fax: (512) 329-6364  
Fr. Vasileios Flegas, Parish Priest (512) 574-1972

#### Parish Council

Stuart Yoder	Michael Glaros
Brandon Suehs	Elizabeth George
Sophia Khan	Peter Kangos
John Chronis- Treas.	Shelley Ebeling
Marko Bjeletich	Nick Spiropoulos

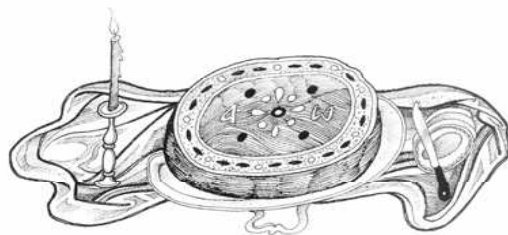
## THE MEANING AND PRACTICE OF CUTTING THE VASILOPITA

With the beginning of every new year, comes the celebration of a new beginning and the wish that the year be blessed with health, happiness, love and the protection of God. Households with elaborately decorated dinner tables, filled with platters of homemade foods and sweets are opened to family and friends. And the cutting of the Vasilopita (va-see-lo-pee-ta) placed in the middle of the table brings everyone together. Although every family may have a slightly different tradition as to how the Vasilopita is cut and distributed, the spirit is the same. As is the case with all Orthodox feasts, such ceremonies do not merely commemorate an historical event (documented in our children's story this month), but celebrate the loving incarnation of the Son of God, the sanctification of the new year, and the Church in her saints.

The Vasilopita, as a bread, reminds us of our Lord's teaching: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." (*John 6:51*) Of course the Lord is speaking specifically of Holy Communion, however, the Vasilopita reinforces this blessing for us.

The Vasilopita is a sweet tsoureki (or cake, depending on the local traditional recipe) to remind us that the presence of the Lord makes our lives sweet—"Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!" (*Psalms 34:8*)—and easy, "For My yoke is easy and My burden is light." (*Mt. 11:30*.)

Everyone receives a piece from the one bread to show that we are all united in Christ, members of His One Body, and are all remembered by Him, as we seek His blessed will for our lives. The ritual of the cutting of the Vasilopita begins with the head of the household. Making the sign of the cross, he begins by praying to God that He come and bless the household, guests, and finally the food and drink that will be served. Then he lifts the Vasilopita, kisses it, and makes the sign of the cross over it with his knife and proceeds to cut. The first piece traditionally is cut for Christ, teaching us that we offer to the Lord, the first fruits of His blessings upon us. The second piece is cut for the Mother of God, the Virgin Mary, and the third for St. Basil. The next piece is cut for the entire household hosting the event, and then a separate piece is cut for each family member and guest. Each person feels special and appreciated, having individually been remembered, receiving a portion of the blessed bread. Finally, a piece is always cut for the poor, reminding us to always keep a portion of our blessings for those who are in need. Hidden within one of the pieces of the Vasilopita is a coin or a small piece of jewelry. The person who receives the piece with the coin receives a special blessing. There is a strong connection between the piece of Vasilopita which is cut for St. Basil and the one that is cut for the poor. It is believed that the person who finds the coin in his piece of Vasilopita will not only come into God's good fortune for that year, but that he will also be in a position to care for the poor, widows, and orphans. This connection is found in the teachings of the saint. "He who works ought not to work to serve his own needs but to fulfill the Lord's commandment, which says, 'I was hungry and you gave me to eat.'" (*Mt. 25, 35*) As we are fed by the salvific love of our Savior this blessed season, may our new year be blessed with every good gift from above, especially the gift of giving.



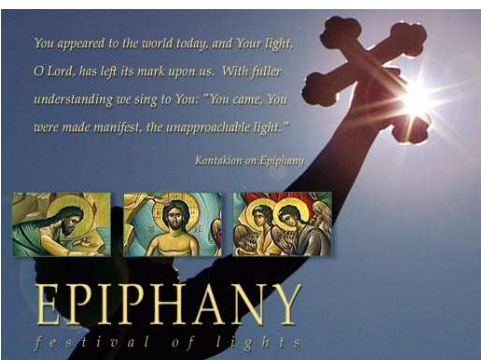
## Theophany at Barton Springs in Zilker Park

**Blessing of the Waters & Diving for the Cross**  
~ Pan Orthodox Service ~

**The St. Elias Antiochian Orthodox Church has invited our parish to participate in the annual Pan Orthodox Agiasmo and Diving for the Cross.**

**Thursday, January 6, 2011 at 1:30 pm**  
**Location: Barton Springs in Zilker Park**

**We need young men to dive for the Cross!**  
**Please see Father Vasileios for more details.**



## **House Blessings**

### **Living Theophany (Epiphany) in the Orthodox Christian Home**



In the Orthodox Church, we remember the amazing revelation of God's nature and the resanctification of creation every year with the Feast of Theophany, January 6<sup>th</sup> (the Greek word, theophaneia means "to show God"), and confirm our belief in both the Holy Trinity and our life in the world to come every time we say the Creed or make the sign of the Cross!

The blessing of homes is the central sign of God's resanctification of the whole world, and a confirmation of our hope to work toward salvation here on earth. The priest visits all members of the Church to pray with them in the place where they live - house, apartment, or dorm room - to bless their surroundings with Holy Water. He asks God to have mercy on the house, to rid it of every evil and to fill it with every blessing. Our homes, together with every person in the family, are "filled with all the fullness of God".

Beginning in early January, after the Feast of Theophany, Fr. Vasileios will be blessing the homes of the members of our Parish. He will take the Holy Water from the Church and use it to bless our lives in every way possible. He will bless us, our homes, our cars, our yards, and by extension all of creation. Not only do we receive a special blessing from God, but through that blessing, God enables us to see His creation in a redeemed way, as a means toward union and communion with Him.

*\*What should you expect in terms of the House Blessing?*

Fr. Vasileios will offer a short prayer service in front of your home altar and then proceed through the home sprinkling it with Holy Water, while chanting the Dismissal Hymn of Theophany.

*\*What should you have ready?*

Make a list of the first names of those family members you wish to pray for. Have your home altar/icon corner ready and accessible for Fr. Vasileios. You should have a wide bowl ( a little larger than a cereal bowl) for the Holy Water, a bunch of fresh basil tied at the stem for Father to use in sprinkling Holy Water, and a lit candle or a kandyli. Turn on at least one light in each room and turn *off* all TVs, stereos and computers.

\* Blessings will begin in January, and will continue until they are completed--sometime in February.

\*We will make an effort to schedule several house blessings in one area or neighborhood on the same day, to make it easier on Fr. Vasileios.

**Please contact the church office at 329-6363 to discuss scheduling your house blessing; or fill out the house blessing form below and turn it in to the office. If you have had your home recently blessed by Father Vasileios you do not need to have it blessed again.**

Dismissal Hymn of Theophany:

*When Thou wast baptized in the Jordan, O Lord, the worship of the Trinity was revealed; for the voice of the Father bare witness to Thee, calling Thee His beloved Son. And the Spirit in the form of a dove confirmed the certainty of the word. O Christ our God, Who hast appeared and hast enlightened the world, glory be to Thee.*

## **EPIPHANY HOUSE BLESSING FORM**

If you would like Father Vasileios to bless your home for the New Year, please return this form to the Church Office as soon as possible.

Please indicate your preferred days of the week and time of day: \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Numbers \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions please call the Church Office at 329-6363.

# Parish Announcements

## SUNDAY SCHOOL ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Happy New Year!*

Sunday School is in session throughout January (beginning on January 2!)

It's time to begin preparing for the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival! If your child is in Middle or High School, it is time to select a topic and begin to formulate ideas. All new this year -- Transfiguration's Online Oratorical Festival Resource! Drop in anytime to find topics, tips and resources online at <http://tgcatorical.blogspot.com>

A meeting of all Sunday School teachers will be held at 10am on January 8. Please plan to attend -- and to bring an appetite!

### GOYA LUNCHEON

GOYA will be sponsoring the monthly luncheon on **January 9** to help raise funds for the students attending the 2011 Metropolis Basketball Tournament in Oklahoma City on Jan. 14 - 17

Many thanks to Crissi Gianakopoulos and Cynthia Price who are planning a scrumptious spaghetti lunch with all the trimmings including salad, bread and dessert!

**The many different expenses for this event add up quickly!**

**Please support your youth and plan to attend this luncheon with a generous heart!**



### Agape Choir

The Children's choir is underway! What a beautiful performance they gave us with the Nativity Pageant. Practice will start up again this month (January); so keep your eyes open for the time and place announcements! Please contact Lainie Horwedel if you would like for your children to join this beautiful ministry!  
[mymommysings@gmail.com](mailto:mymommysings@gmail.com)

### Greek School

The Greek school will resume on the January 11th. Classes begin at 6:30pm.

### OCF/UT

#### Orthodox Campus Fellowship

All college students are invited to join us for our regular weekly meetings on Tuesday evenings beginning on Jan. 18th. We meet at 6:30pm at the Episcopal Center on the UT Campus - 209 W. 27th at University Ave. Questions? contact Andrea Gaspar- 713-962-4641 or by email - [agaspar.amg@gmail.com](mailto:agaspar.amg@gmail.com)

### YAL (Young Adult League) Events

This is a list of our planned events in January:

**Friday, December 31— New Year's Eve Party at Maria's house! Call Maria for information and directions—826-0956**

**Thursday, January 13** – Watch video of St. Basil & discuss – Maria Miller's house (7:30PM – 9:30PM)

**Saturday, January 22** – Vespers at Transfiguration (6PM) and dinner TBD.

**Thursday, January 27** – Begin book study with Fr. Vasileios – Location TBA (7:30PM-9:30PM).

Please contact Maria Miller ([mariamiller26@yahoo.com](mailto:mariamiller26@yahoo.com)) or Jessica Makdsi ([jmakdsi@gmail.com](mailto:jmakdsi@gmail.com)) with any questions.

### GOLF (Greek Orthodox Ladies Fellowship)

GOLF is a weekly meeting, open to all women, where we study our faith in a casual setting and encourage each other through fellowship.

We meet on Tuesday mornings beginning on Jan. 11th at 9:30 in the fellowship hall. Children are welcome.

We would love for you to join us at our next meeting!

For questions and further information please contact Whitney Papadatos at [wpapadatos@hotmail.com](mailto:wpapadatos@hotmail.com).

### Chrismations

*Congratulations to these people who were welcomed into the Orthodox Faith through Chrismation.*

Jackie Randol on December 12 - Her sponsor is Diann Dow.

Pam Minnick on December 19 - Her sponsor is Diana Angelo.

Jason Carr on December 19 - His sponsor is Xenphon Nikas.

***God grant you many years!***

### Men's Fellowship

The men will begin a study of Fr. Arseni— Priest, Prisoner, Spiritual Father in January. They will meet on the 3rd and the 17th at 6:30pm in the conference room.

Contact Fr. Vasileios if you would like to attend.

### Sympathy

Our deepest sympathies to David, Irene and Gabriel Omer on the passing of David's mother, Ardath Koebel on December 11th.

***May her memory be eternal.***

### Philoptochos News

- Happy New Year everyone! Philoptochos will try to do even more than we did last year with our support for those who are in need. Please let us know if there is someone who you know in our community that could use our help.
- Happy Birthday to our January birthday girls: Angie Burks– Jan.5, Anita Jones– Jan. 17, Liz Strong– Jan.12
- Wouldn't it be great if this year we could help Santa out by purchasing a brand new appliance for our kitchen? Something that we could move into our newly renovated kitchen. We could really be like Santa's helpers! All of us...yes, you know how this could happen...**by buying scrip cards!** Yes!! If just 10 of us would buy a \$100 HEB card for our weekly groceries every Sunday during the new year, we would have over \$1000.00! *But surely we would have more than 10 people who can buy groceries weekly using scrip cards.* Wouldn't it be great to be able to purchase a beautiful new appliance? Stop by our table and get this week's cards. We also have: Macy's, Starbucks, Barnes & Noble, Panera's, Old Navy and Home Depot that give us even more of a percentage than HEB does.
- Our bookstore has many beautiful books available as well as items for weddings and baptisms. We also have children's items. Stop by and take a look!

### The Story Behind the Vasilopita (for Children)



The historical event upon which the cutting of the Vasilopita is based has many versions; however each story confirms the importance of standing firm in our faith and the remembrance of the poor.

Tradition says that a cruel nobleman of Cappadocia once sent his men to St. Basil, who was the bishop and leader of the city, demanding that he turn over the city's treasures. If this was not done, the nobleman threatened to besiege the city and take it. The Christian residents, who loved and trusted their bishop's leadership to protect them, brought him all their gold and jewelry. All through the night the bishop prayed that the city be saved. In the morning, the nobleman reached the city and encircled it with his army. Entering the city, he approached the Church and found the bishop waiting for him at the front doors, pale and weak from the vigil and his fasting. The nobleman demanded that he be given all the wealth of the city. St. Basil replied that the city's wealth was its poor and hungry, all the people who suffered through the heartlessness of the rich. The nobleman threatened to take all of St. Basil's personal possessions if he were not given what he wanted.

The bishop smiled and said, "If you think you can find any personal riches here, look all you want. All I have is the robe I am wearing."

"I will put you in chains and carry you away from your homeland."

"My homeland is in heaven."

"I will kill you."

"So much the better. You will send me there faster."

The nobleman, full of rage, ordered his officers to attack the city.

"Your greediness will destroy you," exclaimed the bishop. "the people of this city have not harmed you. Do not bother them. Here is the gold you want, waiting for you."

St. Basil showed him a large chest. But before the nobleman had a chance to open it, everyone saw a horseman in armor, bathed in radiant light, ride up with his army. The nobleman and his army suddenly retreated, never to return. It is said that the mysterious horseman who appeared miraculously with his army to defend St. Basil and the city was St. Merkourios.

Everyone glorified God for His love and protection. The bishop, however, was now in a difficult position. He had to return the gold and jewelry to the citizens of the city, but how would he do it, without allowing the opportunity for the townspeople to steal, be envious, or lie, over what was not theirs? After much prayer, St. Basil called his helpers from the poorhouse and told them to bake small loaves of bread putting a few pieces of jewelry in each loaf. He then distributed the loaves to the faithful with a blessing. When each family cut its loaf of bread, each miraculously received its personal possessions.

Many, who received their offerings, gave them back to St. Basil, in thanksgiving to their Heavenly King for saving their lives and village from the nobleman. St. Basil praised their offerings, utilizing them for the building of a hospital, a home for the elderly, an orphanage, and a hostel.

Every year, the Philoptochos sponsors the Church Vasilopita gathering, sending all proceeds to Saint Basil Academy—a home for children in need. It is the only Greek Orthodox licensed residential child-care institution for Orthodox children in America. For over 65 years, Saint Basil has provided a loving, safe, and warm Christian alternative home environment. This year the Philoptochos will host a live auction of the Vasilopitas and all traditional ethnic foods on Sunday, January 9th, during the lunch. See you there!

## Parish Announcements continued

### 2011 Parish Council

Congratulations to our newly elected and re-elected  
Parish Council members:

*Marko Bjeletich  
John Chronis  
Shelley Ebeling  
Brandon Suehs  
Stuart Yoder*

Our returning Council members are:

*Elizabeth George  
Michael Glaros  
Peter Kangos  
Sophia Khan  
Nick Spiropoulos*

### Coming in February....Godparent Sunday!

It is a tradition in many churches to celebrate godparents on or near the Feast of the Presentation of Our Lord.

Transfiguration is going to join in that tradition this year!

On Sunday, February 6th we will have our very first Godparent Sunday. You may have your godchildren sit with you during church and you can take them to receive Communion.

Afterward, we will celebrate with our monthly luncheon. Make plans to be here with your godchildren!

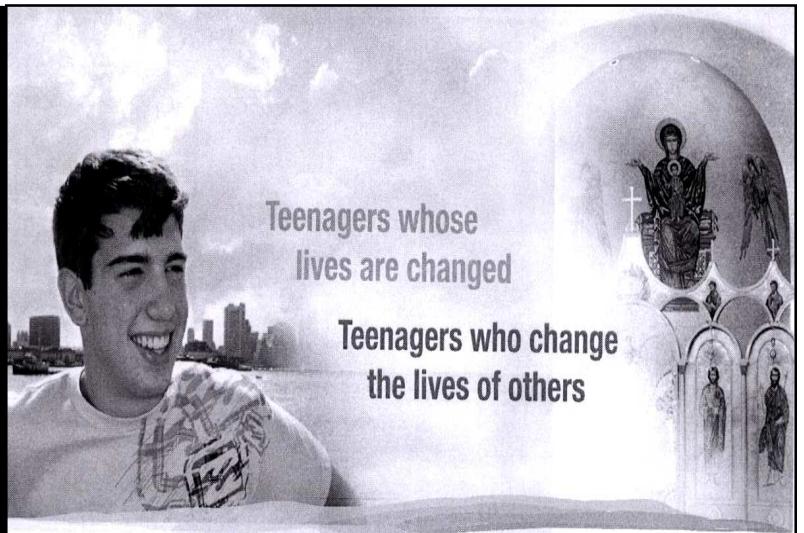
If you are interested in sponsoring the lunch for this Sunday, please contact Fr. Vasileios or the church office.

### The Three Hierarchs: Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, & John Chrysostom



This common feast of these three teachers was instituted a little before the year 1100, during the reign of the Emperor Alexis I Comnenus, because of a dispute and strife that arose among the notable and virtuous men of that time. Some of them preferred Basil, while others preferred Gregory, and yet

others preferred John Chrysostom, quarreling among themselves over which of the three was the greatest. Furthermore, each party, in order to distinguish itself from the others, assumed the name of its preferred Saint; hence, they called themselves Basilians, Gregorians, or Johannites. Desiring to bring an end to the contention, the three Saints appeared together to the saintly John Mavropous, a monk who had been ordained Bishop of Euchaita, a city of Asia Minor, they revealed to him that the glory they have at the throne of God is equal, and told him to compose a common service for the three of them, which he did with great skill and beauty. Saint John of Euchaita (celebrated Oct. 5) is also the composer of the Canon to the Guardian Angel, the Protector of a Man's Life. In his old age, he retired from his episcopal see and again took up the monastic life in a monastery in Constantinople. He reposed during the reign of the aforementioned Emperor Alexis Comnenus (1081-1118).



#### High School Junior & Seniors - Apply Now for Summer 2011

CrossRoad is a ten-day Orthodox Christian summer program in which participants focus on Christ and His calling for their lives. As a CrossRoad participant, you'll explore your vocation through:

- mini-classes taught by Orthodox Christian professors
- visits to Orthodox Churches in the Boston area
- community outreach projects
- excursions around the Boston area

*Due to overwhelming interest, CrossRoad now offers two sessions!*

CROSSROAD June: June 18 – 28, 2011

CROSSROAD July: July 5 – 15, 2011

Application deadline is March 1, 2011. Applications may be downloaded at the CrossRoad website: [www.crossroad.hchc.edu](http://www.crossroad.hchc.edu) or call 617-850-1309 for more information.

Through grants from the Lilly Endowment Inc., Leadership 100, and generous donors, each accepted applicant receives a full scholarship and is only responsible for travel costs to/from Boston.

**CROSSROAD**

ORTHODOX YOUTH TAKE THE CHALLENGE

[www.crossroad.hchc.edu](http://www.crossroad.hchc.edu)



## 2011 STEWARDSHIP *(Updated as of 12/26/2010)*



<b>Fr. &amp; Presv. Vasileios Flegas</b>	Mr. & Mrs. Joe Draina	Drs. Lucas & Jenny Jacomides	Mr. & Mrs. Tom Papadatos
Mr. & Mrs. Roderick Ambrose	Mr. & Mrs. Michael Ebeling	Mr. Ronald Jernigan	Ms. Gretchen Papazis
Dr. & Mrs. Jacob Angelo	Mr. & Mrs. Rich Edwards	Mrs. Gwen Elizabeth Jerome	Ms. Valli Pappas
Mr. & Mrs. Dan Appling	Mr. John Esper	Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Jones	Mr. & Mrs. John Peet
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Bakiris	Mr. & Mrs. Jed Fogdall	Mr. Ted Kalenterides	Mr. & Mrs. Denis Phocas
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Benas	Mr. & Mrs. Creed Ford III	Mrs. Nici Kalogirou	Mr. & Mrs. Ken Pon
Ms. Kristie Benner	Mr. & Mrs. Creed Ford IV	Dr. & Mrs. Peter Kangos	Mr. & Mrs. Jamal Qatato
Dcn. & Presv. George Bithos	Mr. & Mrs. Jason Garwood	Ms. Elsie Karvelas	Mr. & Mrs. William Robertson
Mr. & Mrs. Marko Bjeletich	Mrs. Pat Gatlin	Ms. Demetra Keah	Mr. Peter Romell
Mr. & Mrs. Ed Boudreau	Mr. Ilias Georgakopoulos	Mr. & Mrs. Tahseen Khan	Ms. Pat Shotwell
Dr. & Mrs. Jerry Burks	Ms. Mary Georgantonis	Mr. & Mrs. Kevin Koriath	Mr. & Mrs. George Simbles
Mrs. Despina Carter	Ms. Demetra Anna Georgantonis-Keah	Mr. & Mrs. Antonio Latto	Mr. & Mrs. Nicolaos Spiropoulos
Mrs. Catherine Christ	Mr. & Mrs. James George	Mr. & Mrs. Lee Leatherwood	Mr. & Mrs. Harry Stamatis
Mr. & Mrs. John Chronis	Mrs. Kaliopi Gialusis	Mr. & Mrs. Trey Leonard	Mr. Timotheos Strategakos
Dr. & Mrs. William Colovas	Mr. Demetri Giannopoulos	Mr. Steve Levendakes	Mr. & Mrs. Michael Strong
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Courtney	Mr. & Mrs. Michael Glaros	Ms. Jessica Makdsi	Ms. Debbie Tindle
Mr. & Mrs. Brian Crenshaw	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Gouris	Mr. & Mrs. Archie Meador	Mr. & Mrs. Joshua Trevino
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Daskalantonakis	Mr. & Mrs. Christopher Harris	Ms. Maria Miller	Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Tsihlias
Mr. & Mrs. Chris Delvizis	Mrs. Vickie Hicks	Mr. Nicholas Mirialakis	Mr. & Mrs. Allen Wynn
Mr. & Mrs. Alex Demetriades	Dr. James Hitt	Mrs. Patricia Mitchell	Mr. & Mrs. Stuart Yoder
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph DeRossi	Mrs. Virginia Hobbs	Mr. & Mrs. Xenophon Nikas	Mr. & Mrs. Elias Zachos
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Dow	Mr. & Mrs. David Horwedel	Mr. & Mrs. David Omer	
		Mr. & Mrs. Ioannis Ousaklidis	

### STEWARDSHIP

an excerpt from: **ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP- A Way of Life**

Stewardship is our response to God's grace and moves us from grace to gratitude. Just as we love because God first loved us (I John 4:14), we give because God first gave to us.

The question of the Psalmist "What shall I give to the Lord in return for all His benefits towards me?" (Ps 116:2), is answered in every liturgy when the celebrant calls us to "offer ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God."

One January day, nearly 20 years ago, a young parish council president was just getting accustomed to his new duties when someone placed a stack of checks in front of him to be signed. As he quickly signed each check, he was suddenly stopped by the sight of a check that had been placed before him for his signature. It was the salary check for his priest – the priest who had baptized him, for whom he served as an altar boy, to whom he had gone for confession and whom he loved and respected as his spiritual father.

It was one of the most humbling experiences of his life. And the amount of the check seemed ridiculously small in consideration of the effect that this priest had on the lives his parishioners.

This is the same feeling we should have when we make our stewardship offering to the Church – humility, appreciation, thanksgiving, joy, respect, and love.

#### THE EARLY CHURCH

In his book on the Eucharist, Fr Alexander Schmemmann explains that in the early church, the Eucharistic sacrifice was offered by all the members of the church. Each person coming to the gathering of the Church brought with them everything they could spare for the needs of the Church. This meant for the sustenance of the clergy, widows and orphans, for helping the poor, and for all the good works of the Church. This is the Church that we as Orthodox Christians claim to be.

We also learn about the early Church in Acts 2:(43-47): "Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles. And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; and they began selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.

Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord was adding to their number day by day those who were being saved."

As Orthodox Christians, we see the world as God's gift, as a sacrament of God's presence and a means of communion with Him. And so we are able to offer the world back to God as thanksgiving as we say in every Divine Liturgy "Thine own of Thine own we offer to thee..."

**We will have a second Stewardship Sunday on January 23<sup>rd</sup>. You can pick up a stewardship card in the foyer of the Narthex or call the church office and we can send one to you. Let's remember the words of the Psalmist:**

*"What shall I give to the Lord in return for all His benefits towards me?"*

TRANSFIGURATION  
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
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AUSTIN, TEXAS 78746

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*TRANSFIGURATION GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
JANUARY NEWSLETTER*

*SCHEDULE OF SERVICES*

*SATURDAY GREAT VESPERS:  
6:00PM*

*SUNDAY SERVICES:  
ORTHROS - 8:45AM  
LITURGY - 10:00 AM*

SACRAMENT OF CONFESSION

Call to schedule

MEMORIAL SERVICES & 40 DAY BLESSINGS

Please call the church office to schedule all memorial services and 40 day baby blessings.

The memorial services are normally read at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy.

The 40 day blessings are read after Orthros and before the Liturgy begins.

FEAST DAYS & FAST DAYS

CIRCUMCISION OF OUR LORD, ST. BASIL: FRIDAY, DECEMBER 31  
ORTHROS 5:00PM; DIVINE LITURGY 6:00PM

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 5: FOREFEAST OF THEOPHANY  
VESPERAL LITURGY 6:00PM  
BLESSING OF THE WATERS

THURSDAY, JANUARY 6: HOLY THEOPHANY  
ORTHROS 9:00AM; DIVINE LITURGY 10:00AM  
BLESSING OF THE WATERS

DIVING FOR THE CROSS AT BARTON SPRINGS FOLLOWING

FRIDAY, JANUARY 7: SYNAXIS OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST  
ORTHROS 8:00AM; DIVINE LITURGY 9:00AM

MONDAY, JANUARY 17: FEAST OF ST. ANTHONY  
ORTHROS 8:00AM; DIVINE LITURGY 9:00AM

TUESDAY, JANUARY 18: FEAST OF STS. ANTHONY & CYRIL  
ORTHROS 8:00AM; DIVINE LITURGY 9:00AM

TUESDAY, JANUARY 25: FEAST OF ST. GREGORY  
ORTHROS 8:00AM; DIVINE LITURGY 9:00AM