



The Herald

Newsletter of the Greek Orthodox Church of the Archangels • 1527 Bedford St., Stamford, CT 06905

April 2015

Holy and Great Week

In the Orthodox Church the commemoration of the last week of Christ's life is officially called **Holy and Great Week**. Each day has its own particular theme. The theme of Monday is that of the sterile **fig tree** which yields no fruit and is condemned. Tuesday the accent is on the vigilance of the wise virgins who, unlike their foolish sisters, were ready when the Lord came to them in the middle of the night. Wednesday the focus is on the **fallen woman** who repents. Great emphasis is made to contrast the woman, a sinful harlot who is saved, to Judas, a chosen apostle who is lost. The first gives her wealth to Christ (by anointing him with very expensive perfume) and kisses his feet; the other betrays Christ for money with a kiss.

A portion of the Gospel story of Jesus is read at each Matins service (which we celebrate the evening before by anticipation) that are called the "*Bridegroom*" services because the general theme of each of these days is the *end of this age and the judgment of Christ*. Here is the key hymn for Sunday – Tuesday evening: "Behold, the bridegroom comes in the middle of the night and blessed is the servant whom he shall find watching, and unworthy the servant whom he shall find heedless. Take care then, O my soul, and be not weighed down by sleep so that you will not be given over unto death and shut out from the Kingdom. But rise up and call out: Holy, Holy, Holy are you, O God, through the Theotokos have mercy on us!"

The vigil on the eve of **Holy Thursday** (celebrated Holy Wednesday evening) is dedicated exclusively to the **Passover Supper** that Christ celebrated with his twelve apostles. The main theme of the day is the meal itself at which Christ commanded that the **Passover of the New Covenant** be eaten in remembrance of himself, of his body broken and his blood shed for the remission of sins. In addition, Judas' betrayal and Christ's washing of his disciples feet is also central to the liturgical commemoration of the day. Here is the key hymn: "When your glorious disciples were enlightened at the washing of their feet before the supper, then the impious Judas was darkened by the disease of avarice, and to the lawless judges he betrayed you, the Righteous Judge. Behold, O lover of money, this man because of greed hanged he. Flee from the insatiable desire that dared such things against the Master! O Lord who deals righteously with all, glory to you!" The Liturgy of St. Basil is served on Holy Thursday morning in connection with Vespers. The long gospel of the Last Supper is read after portions from Exodus, Job, Isaiah and 1st Corinthians. The key hymn is: "Of your mystical supper, O Son of God, accept me today a communicant, for I will not speak of your mystery to your enemies; neither like Judas will I give you a kiss, but like the thief will I confess you: Remember me, O Lord, in your Kingdom!"

Orthros of Holy Friday is celebrated on Thursday night. The main feature of this service is the reading of **twelve selections from the Gospels**, all of which are accounts of the passion of Christ. These Gospel readings are placed between the various parts of the service. The hymnology is all related to the sufferings of the Saviour and borrows heavily from the Gospels and the Old Testament Psalms and Prophets. On Holy Friday morning, the Royal Hours repeat the Gospels of Christ's passion with the addition at each Hour of readings from Old Testament prophecies concerning our redemption, and from letters of St. Paul about our salvation through the sufferings of Christ.

The first service belonging to **Holy Saturday** – called in the Church the **Blessed Sabbath** – is the Vespers of Good Friday. It is usually celebrated in the mid-afternoon to commemorate the burial of Jesus.

Before the service begins, a symbolic "tomb" (κουβουκλιον in Greek) is set up in the middle of the church and decorated with flowers. During the service, a special icon cloth (θρηνην in Greek) depicting Christ as dead is processed around the church and placed inside this tomb. A key hymn is: "The noble Joseph, when he had taken down your most pure body from the Tree, wrapped it in fine linen and anointed it with spices, and placed it in a new tomb."

The Orthros of Holy Saturday is celebrated on Friday night. Although popularly called "The Lamentations" (in Greek), it more properly is "The Praises" since the high point of the service involves singing three stanzas of hymns before the symbolic Tomb which praise and glorify Christ's death since his tomb alone is life-giving rather than death-dealing, as everyone holds a lighted candle. As one hymn expresses: "When you descended to death, O Life Immortal, you slew hell with the splendor of your divinity! And when from the depths you raised the dead, all the powers of heaven cried out: O Giver of Life, Christ our God, glory to you!" In the person of Jesus Christ is the full union of the perfect love of humans toward God and the perfect love of God toward humans. It is this divine human love that is contemplated and praised over the tomb of the Savior who has risen from the dead. The congregation then forms a funeral procession around the outside of the church, led by the altar boys, clergy, Tomb and choir. This procession bears witness to the total victory of Christ over the powers of sin, evil and death. Everyone re-enters the church for the final portion of the service by passing under the raised Tomb. The hymns and commemoration also teach us that this particular Saturday on which Christ lay dead is the most **blessed Sabbath** or **seventh day**, when Christ rests from his work of recreating the world. All through the services the victory of Christ is contemplated and the resur-

rection is proclaimed. For it is indeed only in the light of the victorious resurrection that the deepest meaning of the events of Christ's passion and death can be genuinely grasped, adequately appreciated and properly glorified and praised.

On Holy Saturday morning itself, we celebrate the Vespertal Liturgy of St Basil, a service that really belongs to the **Easter Sunday (Christian Passover)**. There are actually 15 Old Testament readings (we usually only do a few) that relate to God's work of creation and salvation that is fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah. The epistle reading is from Baptism (*Roman 6:3-11*). Then we chant the verses of Psalm 82: *Arise O Lord and judge the earth, for to Thee belong all the nations*. This Gospel reading is also from Baptism. Instead of the usual Cherubic Hymn before the Great Entrance, we sing this unique hymn:

"Let all mortal flesh keep silent and in fear and trembling stand, pondering nothing earthly-minded. For the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords comes to be slain, to give himself as food to the faithful. Before him go the ranks of angels: all the principalities and powers, the many-eyed cherubim and the six-winged seraphim, covering their faces, singing the hymn: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!" Christ's tomb – which still stands in the center of the church – is shown to be, as the Liturgy calls it: the **fountain of our resurrection**. Originally this Liturgy was the Easter baptismal liturgy of Christians. It remains today as the annual experience for every Christian of his own dying and rising with the Lord.

Then comes the Easter Vigil on Holy Saturday night that begins with a **Nocturne** service.

After a sermon, all lights are extinguished before the main celebrant emerges in bright vestments with a single candle to joyfully proclaim Christ's resurrection to all and then spread this light throughout the church. A procession goes up to the balcony as we sing: "Angels in heaven, O Christ our Savior, sing of your resurrection. Make us on earth also worthy to hymn you with a pure heart!" This procession of the Christians on Easter night recalls the original **baptismal procession** from the darkness and death of this world to the light and life of the God's Kingdom. It is the **holy Passover** of all of us from death unto life, from earth unto heaven, from this age to the age to come which will never end. Following the Gospel reading of the empty tomb, everyone sings many times the greatest hymn of the Church: "Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down upon death, and to those in the tombs, he is bestowing life!" The procession returns to the altar as we sing the Orthros that contains magnificent hymns of Christ's Resurrection, most

of which were written by St John of Damascus (died 749) one of the greatest hymn writers of the Church. Here is one jewel: "It is the day of resurrection, let us be radiant for the feast! Pascha, the Passover of the Lord! From death to life, and from earth to heaven has Christ our God led us, who sing the victory song: Christ is risen from the dead!" The Paschal Liturgy is then celebrated with the greatest joy. The Gospel passage takes the faithful back again to the beginning, and announces God's creation and re-creation of the world through the living Word of God, his Son Jesus Christ:

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God... all things were made through him... In him was life and the life was the light of men. ...

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us full of grace and truth... we have beheld his glory, glory of the only-begotten Son of the Father, and from his fullness have we all received grace upon grace" (*John 1:1-17*). Toward the end, the celebrant proclaims the famous Easter Sermon of St. John Chrysostom (died 407), one of the greatest preachers.

In the Orthodox Church the feast of Easter is officially called **Pascha**, the word that means **Passover**. It is the new Passover of the new and everlasting covenant foretold by the Prophets of Old Testament. It is the eternal Passover from death to life and from earth to heaven. It is ultimate **Day of the Lord**, "the day which the Lord has made" for his judgment over all creation, the day of his final and everlasting victory. It is the Day of the Kingdom of God, the day "which has no night" for "its light is the Lamb" (*Revelation 21:22-25*). The celebration of Easter in the Orthodox Church, therefore, is not an historical reenactment of the event of Christ's Resurrection as narrated in the gospels. Nor is it a dramatic representation of the first Easter morning." And it is celebrated in the first dark hours of the first day of the week in order to give us the experience of the "new creation" of the world, and to allow us to enter mystically into the **New Jerusalem** which shines eternally with the glorious light of Christ, overcoming the perpetual night of evil and destroying the darkness of this mortal and sinful world: "Shine! Shine! O New Jerusalem! The glory of the Lord has shone upon you! Exult and be glad O Zion! Be radiant O Pure Theotokos, in the Resurrection of your son!

— Abbreviated and adapted from the Orthodox Church in America web site oca.org

— Fr. Harry

PASTORAL QUESTION & ANSWER

Question: Why does our church begin the Easter Vigil at 11 pm instead of 12 midnight since midnight is the traditional time that most parishes still follow?

Answer: Out of regard for the older members of our Church who simply cannot stay up as late at night anymore (and they are the most faithful worshippers in our parish!). Several years ago, a few dedicated Seniors complained that a midnight start was too late and appealed for me to do something to accommodate them. This was easy for me to do since I had learned, over many years, the real history of our Church's Paschal celebration (Christian Passover). From the very start, Christians would worship at night to observe Easter, with our services evolving over centuries. In pre-Western cultures without clocks & watches, this did not begin at any specific time; it simply took place at night to distinguish Christian observance from our Jewish roots (Judaism begins its Passover celebration at sundown). Ironically, the 1st Resurrection Liturgy, now celebrated on Holy Saturday morning, was the older Paschal Vigil, celebrated at night but displaced by the current services that developed in the Middle Ages. Furthermore, in the Bible, as in our Church still to this day, the new day begins not at midnight, as in Western culture, but at sundown. Although midnight only in recent centuries became customary (and for us Orthodox, this is considered a late development), it was never a hard and fast rule. For example, in Greece still to this day, when rural clergy must serve more than one parish, they move from church to church to celebrate only the first part of the Easter Vigil (the Resurrection service) at different times well before midnight. In America, a few Orthodox churches must begin the Vigil as early as 9 pm so that parishioners can take the last public transportation home at 1 am. So, for those who insist that "Christ is risen" cannot be declared before midnight, the actual track record of the Church disagrees. Even if midnight is widespread, there has always been flexibility. Our modern preoccupation with time is simply not reflected in previous eras and cultures of the Church, as well as the Biblical and ecclesial understanding of time itself.

Donations for Palms, Flowers & Easter Reception

We are accepting donations toward the purchase of palms, flowers – for icons, the Funeral Canopy, and church – along with meat, cheese, etc., for the Reception Easter Night. Please contact Jane in the office at 203-348-4216.

PARISH COUNCIL

PASTORAL ASSISTANT

Following a proposal from Fr. Harry, the Council voted unanimously to add a full time Pastoral Assistant to our staff. This responds to the critical need to expand professional ministerial service to our parish, in particular to our youth and young adults who are facing increasing difficulties and challenges as Christians in our culture. Other responsibilities will include: chanting, assisting with Church and Greek School programs, working with Youth Ministry leaders, and various other administrative and pastoral tasks. Qualifications: Master's degree in Orthodox theology strongly preferred (but not required), sincere faith in Jesus Christ and growing knowledge of the Orthodox Tradition, passion for youth ministry and building relationships for the long term, team player, and leadership skills. Applicants can apply on-line through a job posting on OrthodoxJobs.com, or by contacting Fr. Harry (hpappas@svots.edu or 203-348-4216). So far there are 9 applicants. Fr. Harry will be assisted by several Parish Council members and parents to screen applicants, and present the finalist to the Council for hiring. Application deadline is May 15. The starting salary of \$40,000, along with benefits, will be entirely funded by reduced expenses in the Office, along with a very generous, anonymous donation that is open-ended into the future. It is expected to involve no additional expense to our Operating Budget.

TREASURER

Statements for the March quarter will be ready in mid-April. Responsibilities in the office have changed. As of this month, Basil Vanech, Office Assistant, will be handling all financial matters – paying bills, recording income, preparing monthly statement, tracking stewardship and contributions. Jane will assist as needed but focus more on parish records and beginning work on a history of the parish for posterity. Contact: George Khouri

STEWARDSHIP

We had a wonderful Wine & Cheese party on March 21st. It was a good opportunity to meet new members of the Church, as well as to connect with existing Church members. Phil Costas once again prepared the event and did a great job. Stewardship cash pledges totaled \$154,000 and pledges made totaled \$298,000. As always, please remember to make your cash pledges throughout the year and especially during the lean summer months. Contact: George Khouri

ADDITIONAL 2015 STEWARDS

Alexander Amarilios
Mr. & Mrs. Angelo Aravidis
Mr. & Mrs. Pantelis Athanasiadis
Mr. & Mrs. Dimitris Begetis
Mr. & Mrs. Lee Bitzonis
Thalia L. Cardel
Helen Chochos
Mr. & Mrs. Louis Chochos
Paula Condos
Elissabet Constantine
Mr. & Mrs. Matthew DeVito
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Fornaciari
Mr. & Mrs. Pantelis Gasparakis

Katherine Maskaleris Glynn
Mr. & Mrs. Paul Jordanopoulos, Jr.
Mr. & Mrs. Panagiotis Kakouros
Mr. & Mrs. Gabriel Karamanis
Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Kyriakos
Mr. & Mrs. Robert MacFarland
Mary Michailidis
Mr. & Mrs. Christopher P. Nanos
Penny Nanos
Nicholas Nikas
Mr. & Mrs. Theodore Panagiotopoulos
Georgette Perimenis/Brian Irizarry
Katherine Perimenis

Mr. & Mrs. Peter Poulos
Branka G. Shekhdar
Aristotle Sentementes
Mr. & Mrs. Sotirios Soulios
Mr. & Mrs. Demosthenes Speridakos
Mr. & Mrs. Curt Seaton
Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Sutherland
Mr. & Mrs. Demetrios Tsapralis
Mr. & Mrs. Haralambos Valassis
Mr. & Mrs. Steven Valassis
Mr. & Mrs. Argyris Vassiliou
Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Yoranidis

Ladies Philoptochos Society
*Annual Palm Sunday
Bake & Easter Bread Sale
Assorted Greek Pastries*

Sunday, April 5

Donated Baked Goods Appreciated

Bread Order Forms Available on Philoptochos Bulletin Board
Return to Philoptochos mail slot in church office

MASTER PLANNING

The committee held the first of three initial meetings with our architect. Together, we highlighted the key elements of our wish list, while editing out unwanted aspects. Our next meeting will likely take place just after Easter. Separately, we are putting together a marketing piece for parishioners that will nicely summarize the overall task at hand. It will include project highlights, data, frequently asked questions, some fun photos from years past, and proposed renderings for our future. Keep in mind, these will be new graphic renderings, not ones you may have seen near the beginning of the Master Planning process. The earlier renderings were simply there to get ideas and a dialogue going. Contact Jason Konidaris

CAPITAL CAMPAIGN

Jerry Minetos from the Archdiocese will be coming on April 16 for a second training session with the Capital Campaign Committee. At that meeting, the Committee will discuss with Mr. Minetos a timetable for the Campaign and the next steps to be taken. Contact: Elias Kulukundis

BUILDINGS & GROUNDS

After the horrific winter, we have encountered serious damage to our driveways and roadways. We are currently reviewing these pavements and will secure proposals to correct these conditions. Our Committee highly recommends to the Parish Council that serious consideration be given to replacing the boiler serving the Church, hall, and first floor classrooms. The boiler is decades old and costly emergency repairs were made this past winter to maintain reasonable comfort levels. We are disappointed with delays in the completion of the church windows project. You may all know that three of the dome windows were received damaged approximately four weeks ago. We were informed that the windows have been repaired and are being shipped by truck from Canada, where the stained glass company is located. We are anticipating delivery of the windows during the week of March 29. If, by any chance, the windows are not received in a timely fashion the scaffolding will be dismantled and reassembled by April 3 until after Holy Week at no additional cost to the parish. Over the past two weeks, we have been negotiating with a contractor (Hellas AC) to replace the air handler in the Stamford Athletic Club, which serves the ladies locker room, Glenn Colarossi's office, and Fr. George's office. Work will begin during the week of April 5. The floors in the Church Hall recently were stripped, sealed and waxed. Finally, the week of March 29 the main office (of Jane) will be thoroughly cleared, cleaned, and painted as we restructure and declutter this space. The entry level will be reconfigured with the photocopier and greater flexibility for work and visits. The upper, back level will become the office of Basil Vanech when, following Easter, a doorway is constructed. Contact: Peter Licopantis, Nick Aivalis or Gregg Demetros

MINISTRIES

HOLY WEEK LEAD CHANTER

Again this year we have secured a lead chanter (protopsalti) from Greece for Holy Week and Easter worship – Mr. Haralampos Kourgiantakis, a distant relative of Presvytera Kerry who, along with this wife, Christofora (who can also chant), lives and works on the island of Kerkyra (Corfu). They will arrive on Friday April 3, stay at the home of Fr. Harry, and then return home on Wednesday after Easter. Please join us in welcoming them back to our parish! In addition, Senior Seminarian Joshua Pappas, along with his wife, Joanna, will be with us Good Friday through Easter Sunday to assist with worship and ministry.

2015 HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

Sat, 4/4	9:00 am – Preparation of the Gifts – on the Solea with participation of people 9:30 am – Teaching Divine Liturgy – on the Solea 10:40 am – Children's Retreat – Stations & Activities; Plait Palms & Clean Church 12:00 pm – Lunch 2:00 pm – Conclusion
Sun, 4/5	8:45 am – Orthros – Palm Sunday 10:00 am – Divine Liturgy 11:45 am – Coffee Hour 7:00 pm – Bridegroom Orthros
Mon, 4/6	7:00 pm – Bridegroom Orthros
Tue, 4/7	7:00 pm – Bridegroom Orthros – with Hymn of Cassiane
Wed, 4/8	4:00 pm – Holy Unction 7:00 pm – Orthros of Last Supper with Anointing of Unction
Thu, 4/9	6:30 am – Divine Liturgy – Last Supper (note: Communion will only be distributed during Liturgy) 7:00 pm – Orthros of Christ's Passion – with Procession of Crucifix
Fri, 4/10	9:00 am – Royal Hours of Passion 10:30 am – Preparation of Symbolic Tomb (Kouvouklion) 12:00 pm – Retreat for Children – Lunch, Stations & Activities 2:00 pm – Vespers – Descent from Cross (children participate) 7:00 pm – Orthros – Praises before Tomb & Procession around Church
Sat, 4/11	9:00 am – 1st Resurrection Liturgy 10:30 pm – Vigil for Pascha 11:00 pm – Resurrection Service 11:15 pm – Orthros of Pascha
Sun, 4/12	12:00 am – Divine Liturgy of Pascha 1:15 am – Paschal Reception 11:00 am – Agape Vespers 12:00 pm – Easter Egg Hunt

READERS FOR HOLY WEEK

For anyone interested in offering any of the readings during Holy Week services (Psalms, Old Testament passage & New Testament epistles), a brief meeting will be held on Sunday, April 5 after the Divine Liturgy. Children age 12 and up and all adults are encouraged to attend. Readers are especially needed for:

- Wednesday Unction service at 4 pm
- Friday Royal Hours 9 am
- Saturday 1st Resurrection Liturgy at 9 am

Contact: Presvytera Kerry - pappaskk@msn.com or 914-874-6146.

2015 ΠΡΟΓΡΑΜΜΑ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΕΒΔΟΜΑΔΟΣ

Σαβ, 4/4	9:00 πμ – Προσκομιδή των Δωρων – στον Σολεα μπροστα ολους 9:30 πμ – Διδακτική Θεία Λειτουργία – στον Σολεα 10:40 πμ – Προγραμμα για τα Παιδια; Βαία και Καθαρισμα Εκκλησίας 12:00 μμ – Μεσημεριανό 2:00 μμ – Καταλήξη
Κυρ, 4/5	8:45 πμ – Ορθρος – Κυριακή Βαίων 10:00 πμ – Θεία Λειτουργία 11:45 πμ – Δεξίωσις 7:00 μμ – Ορθρος του Νυμφίου
Δευ, 4/6	7:00 μμ – Ορθρος του Νυμφίου
Τρι, 4/7	7:00 μμ – Ορθρος του Νυμφίου – υμνος της Κασσιανής
Τετ, 4/8	4:00 μμ – Θείον Ευχέλαιον 7:00 μμ – Ορθρος του Μυστικού Δειπνού – με Ευχέλαιον
Πεμ, 4/9	6:30 πμ – Θεία Λειτουργία του Μυστικού Δειπνού
Παρ, 4/10	9:00 πμ – Βασιλικαί Ωραι των Παθών 10:30 πμ – Προετοιμασία του Κουβουκλίου 12:00 μμ – Προγραμμα για τα Παιδια – Μεσημεριανό, δραστηριότητες 2:00 μμ – Εσπερινός της Αποκαθλώσεως 7:00 μμ – Ορθρος του Εγκαινίων
Σαβ, 4/11	9:00 πμ – Πρώτη Αναστάσις Θεία Λειτουργία 10:30 μμ – Αγρυπνία του Πάσχα 11:00 μμ – Ακουλουθία της Αναστάσεως 11:15 μμ – Ορθρος του Πάσχα
Κυρ, 4/12	12:00 πμ – Θεία Λειτουργία του Πάσχα



Girls perform at Annunciation/Greek Independence Program (March 22)



Boys perform at Annunciation/Greek Independence Program (March 22)



Older girls perform at Annunciation/Greek Independence Day program (March 22)



Gathered crowd at Annunciation/Greek Independence Program (March 22)

SENIORS

On Wednesday March 11, the Seniors held their monthly meeting with a Lenten luncheon. During our brief business meeting, Fr. Harry informed us of a number of current matters in the parish – such as the window replacement project in the church, the capital campaign for our building & ministry renovation, those who are ill or recovering from surgery, and the new Seniors group that has started at Annunciation Church that typically meets the week after our group does. Fr. Harry was also our speaker for the day, and talked about preparing for encountering Christ during Holy Week by intentionally increasing prayer, fasting, works of mercy to the poor, sick, and shut-in. Even we Seniors can grow in practicing these, and attending as many Holy Week services as possible. The April meeting will be held on Wednesday April 15 (tax Day). A movie will be shown, “Captain Corelli’s mandolin,” depicting a romance between an Italian Military Captain, and a Greek Maiden, on a Greek Island. As usual, a delicious lunch will be served. Contact: George Hasapis

LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS SOCIETY

Our April meeting was held on March 31st because of Holy Week. Please join us for the annual Mother’s Day luncheon to be held at the Norwalk Inn on Saturday, May 16th. Reservation information will be shared over the next few weeks. Membership dues for 2015 are still being accepted. Out of the \$25 dues for Senior and \$35 for Junior Philoptochos Membership, we give back \$21 to National and District Philoptochos as required. In addition to these membership dues, many ladies include an extra donation to support our chapter’s philanthropy. The rest of the funds we raise for charity come from our fundraisers, including the Palm Sunday Bread and Bake Sale. We also have monthly obligations to National and District for specific charities, such as Holy Cross, the Cancer Fund, St. Michael’s, Autism, Retired Clergy, etc. Last year, National Philoptochos donated more than \$1,345,000 to charities. One category we support is called Social Service. Requests for assistance are vetted and documented and, last year, a total of 181 individuals were assisted, ranging in age from 13 to 106. Assistance was needed to address such issues as housing, major illness, burials, elder services, child sexual assault, and emergency relief. The amount awarded was \$115,118. As the second largest women’s philanthropic organization in the United States, Philoptochos plays a major role in offering relief to needy people in the U.S., Greece and around the world. Please help us expand our mission by becoming a member, donating, helping, and supporting our fundraisers. If you wish to have a more details concerning what Philoptochos supports, please contact Marion Vanson at 914-234-9420. Kali Anastasi!



Preschool children learn how to make a prostration



Preschool children: group hug!

CHURCH SCHOOL

Congratulations to our Church School and Greek School children for a lovely celebration that commemorated the Great Feast of the Annunciation and Greek Independence Day! A very special congratulations to Mrs. Diane Sierpina and the preschool children for their art exhibit and reciting a beautiful prayer and to Nico Zoumboulis for representing Gr. 7 & 8 in reading the Holy Gospel. We especially congratulate Aphrodite Haralabidis for her Oratorical speech on "Women Saints and Their Meaning for Today" after Liturgy on March 22. She will now compete at the next level of competition for our Region at Annunciation Church on April 25. The Church School Program invites all families to attend our Children's Holy Week Retreat which will consist of two parts: Lazarus Saturday Retreat from 9 am – 2 pm and Good Friday Afternoon Retreat from 12-3 pm. We hope this programming will allow for more families to participate in this special opportunity to walk through Holy Week together as a community of faith. Please complete the retreat registration form and RSVP to Evelyn Biliadis @aol.com by April 2, 2015. Emily Skoutelas will lead our Music Ministry on April 19th. A Blessed Holy Week & Easter to all! May the Light of Christ illumine our hearts and rejuvenate our spirits! Contact: Evelyn Biliadis

GREEK SCHOOL

Our combined Annunciation and GID Performance was on Sunday, March 22nd. Some children performed skits of the Annunciation while the others performed their traditional poems and dances that reminded us of all the battles the Hellenes fought in for their freedom in 1812. Our GS raffle winners were:

- Printer - Perry Sentementes; Cuisinart Keurig Coffee Machine - Aravides Family; Wine Basket - Vicki Kyriakos
- Restaurant Gift Certificates: Boulevard 18 - Eugene (Pinehill Deli Friend), Columbus Park - Nick Aivalis Family Basket of Toys - Pissanidis Family; Pinehill Deli - Dina Glekas

On March 25 th, the flag-raising at the Government Center was held. Easter Lambadhes (candles) and Lord & Taylor gift certificates will be available for sale this month. All proceeds benefit the Archangels Greek School. Kalo Pascha! Contact: Rebecca Kelesidis Rebecca@Kelesidis.com



GOYans from Archangels & Annunciation at Food Bank (March 21)



GOYA service project at Lower Fairfield County Food Bank (March 21)



Preschool children learn about the Cross



Preschool children venerate the Cross

GOYA

This month, GOYAns participated in the Lenten Family retreat held on March 7, and made some new friends from Saints Peter & Andrew Coptic Orthodox Church. They also attended the annual district GOYA scavenger hunt at the Museum of Natural History in New York City. They joined 75 other GOYAns and discovered interesting facts about natural history while working as a team. Archangels placed 2nd in this event. Lunch followed at the Central Park Boathouse. On March 21st, the GOYAns from both Stamford parishes (Annunciation and Archangels) joined the Food Bank in Glenbrook to prepare foods for shipment. All GOYAns are urged to participate in the upcoming Holy Week Retreats – on Saturday, April 4, and on Good Friday, April 10. Thank you to all who donated canned/boxed foods for this cause. Contacts: Bill Giantomidis at Billgiant1@yahoo.com or Diane Skoparantzios at 203-550-6824.

YOUTH ATHLETICS

Congratulations to the combined Varsity Girls Volleyball – “Stamford United” - representing both Archangels and Annunciation for winning the league, tournament, and season ending match with the league all-stars! We especially thank head coach, Larry Karipides, and assistant coach, John Skoparantzios (our Athletic Director) for their leadership. Well done, girls! Contact: John Skoparantzios



Stamford United Varsity Girls Championship Team, with head coach Larry Karipides, left, and Assistant Coach John Skoparantzios, right

HOPE/JOY

For our March event, children, parents, and grandparents of Hope & Joy were invited on another trip to the Lower Fairfield County Food Bank. Last year, the director, Kate Lombardo, provided our group with an informational session and a tour of the facility. This year, Kate put us all to work by helping out with various tasks such as stocking and organizing shelves. This service project was a wonderful way to give back to the community and teach the children about almsgiving, especially during the Lenten season. Let's remember to continue our support of the Food Bank throughout the year by bringing non-perishable food items each week to Church. Upcoming events include the two Holy Week Children's Retreats (Sat, April 4, and Good Friday, April 10) as well as Easter Sunday for Agape Vespers, followed by a visit from the Easter Bunny and our Annual Easter Egg Hunt. The bunny looks forward to taking photos, passing out gifts, and celebrating the holiday with all of the children. For more information or to get on our mailing list, please contact Chris and Luisa Nanos at cnanos@optonline.net or 203-609-0749.

LITTLE ANGELS

On Friday, March 13th, we held a mothers' coffee and planning meeting in which we discussed the following items: 1) How to best continue our welcoming of babies at their 40-day blessing, 2) How to adapt our approach to the Christmas party next year, 3) Whether to devise any fund-raising activities, 4) What Spring/Summer activities would be best for the group. Thank you to Leda Tsiomplikas and Megan Pasvankias for their input! Little Angels will run an Easter Egg Painting Craft at the Saturday of Lazarus retreat on April 4th for the smallest children. We have slotted our Yoga Instructor for a Family Yoga Event on Saturday, April 18th at 10 am at the Stamford Athletic Center's Yoga Studio. You must RSVP for this event. In May and June, we will likely set up a park play date and picnic and perhaps a group outing to the Beardsley Zoo in Bridgeport! As always, let us know your interest and ability to attend. Contact: Anastasia Valassis at avalassis@gmail.com



Preschool children listen to a story from Fr. Harry



Preschool children line up after Fr. Harry



Preschool children visit Miss Jane

PILGRIMAGE TO GREECE

On April 20, Fr. Harry will lead a group of 16 pilgrims from our parish to northern Greece in order to visit holy sites and communities in Thessalonica, Philippi, Berea, Mt. Athos, Ormylia, Meteora, and Corfu. He and Presvytera Kerry will return on Saturday, May 9. In his absence, Fr. George will cover pastoral emergencies, and a Seminary classmate, Fr. Charles Joanides, will lead worship on Sunday, April 26 & May 3. Please welcome Fr. Charles back to our parish and pray for a safe and spiritually rewarding pilgrimage for our group!

IOCC

The International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), with its church partner, the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Antioch and All the East (GOPA), continues to work on the ground in Syria assisting refugees struggling for survival. In February, for example, attackers burned homes and churches in Northeastern Syria and seized over 150 Christian men as hostages, prompting over 2,400 Christians living in the region to flee and seek refuge at Orthodox Christian Churches in the Syrian towns of Hasakah and Qamishli. IOCC representatives in both towns are now providing the refugees with food and clothing. The IOCC has 28 active offices in Syria and has provided relief to over 2.5 million Syrians since the civil war began in 2012. For additional information see the IOCC website at www.iocc.org. Contact our IOCC representative, Tim Hartch, at timhartch1@outlook.com.

STAMFORD ATHLETIC CLUB/ GREEK CULTURAL CENTER

There is a lot going on at the Center these days. Fr. Harry organized a meeting with various leaders of youth ministry to brainstorm with leadership of the Center to creatively think of more ways that the Church can utilize the Center for ministry since the Center is such a wonderful asset. One outcome is a Parent and Child Pool program. Swim instructor Nancy Mourtides is introducing a new fun Parent - Child Swim Class! In this three-session program, skills will be taught to make both children and parents comfortable in the water together. Nancy's instruction will focus on teaching parents how to develop their young child's self-esteem and confidence in the pool, while having fun in a safe swimming environment! Dates: Thursdays, May 7, 14 & 21, from 9:15 - 10:00 am. Children ages 6 – 18 months. Free sessions for all parishioners. For details, please call Nancy at 203 847-1870 or the SAC at 203 357-7555. Please take advantage of this wonderful program and spread the word!

Also: summer and bathing suit time is right around the corner. There is no better place to get in shape now for that summer vacation! Please visit the center for a tour and see how we can help you with your fitness goals! Contact: Glenn Colarossi



Family Lenten Retreat, as all gather after 3rd Hour Prayer in church (March 7)

FAMILY LENTEN RETREAT

On Saturday, March 7, Mrs. Melissa Tsongranis, Associate Director of the Archdiocesan Center for Family Care, led our Family Lenten Retreat with PowerPoint, engaging presentations to the adults in the morning and afternoon. George Hazlaris, Pastoral Assistant at Our Savior in Rye, led a session for GOY-Ans in the morning, and Evelyn Bilius Lolis led one in the afternoon. Luisa Nanos and Hannah Pappas worked with HOPE/JOY children. The day started with worship in church, concluded with prayer, and included lunch and fellowship. There were some wonderful results as relationships were established between children and adults of 3 different parishes – Our Savior in Rye, Saints Peter & Andrew Coptic Orthodox Church in Stamford, and ours. About 50 people attended, including Fr. Andrew Awad of the Coptic Church. A number of participants indicated how much they appreciated the event. Contact: Fr. Harry



Preschool children visit the Seniors



George Hazlaris (on right) leads GOYA discussion in library (March 7)

AREA FEAST DAYS

We are invited to join neighboring parishes for their patronal feast day celebrations:

- Zoodochos Peghe (Life-Giving Font) in the Bronx
~ Thursday, April 16, Great Vespers 7 pm, followed by reception
~ Friday, April 17, Divine Liturgy 10 am
- St. George in Norwalk
~ Wednesday, April 22, Great Vespers 7 pm, followed by reception
~ Thursday, April 23, Liturgy 10 am



Fr. Harry in-between Fr. Steve Tschlis (Irvine, CA) on left, and Fr. Paul Giannakos (Detroit, MI)



Gathered crowd at Annunciation/Greek Independence Program (March 22)



Melissa Tsongranis presenting to adults (March 7)



Philoptochos members bake kourambiedes (butter cookies with powdered sugar): Paula Glenges, Marion Vanson, Tessie Geas & Maryanne Kardaris (March 28)



Melissa presents to the adults (March 7)

FUNERAL OF FR. THOMAS HOPKO

Fr. Harry and Presvytera Kerry joined hundreds who gathered at the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City, PA (1 hour north of Pittsburgh) for the Funeral of Rev. Dr. Thomas Hopko, former dean of St. Vladimir's Seminary, on Monday, March 23. Seven Bishops and around 100 priests from all over America led the worship and fellowship. Fr. Tom has been one of the most influential Orthodox theologians and churchmen of the last half century. He was a prophetic voice who never shied away from speaking very honestly about the critical issues of our age, the actual spiritual condition of the Orthodox Church, and was always passionate about Jesus Christ and the Gospel. He influenced thousands through his dynamic public speaking and preaching. In addition to authoring such popular books such as the Rainbow series of Orthodoxy (4 slim volumes on the basics of the Church's Tradition, available in our bookstore), devotional commentaries such as *The Lenten Spring* and *The Winter Pascha*, and a classic booklet *If We Confess our Sins*, Fr. Tom recorded CD's on diverse subjects such as *The Word of the Cross*, *The Book of Revelation*, *Sin*, and, in the final few years of his life, produced hundreds of podcasts available through Ancient Faith Radio (<http://www.ancientfaith.com/>). He had a deep impact on Fr. Harry and hundreds of clergy. May his memory be eternal and may the good that Christ worked through him continue to inspire many more!



Funeral for Fr. Thomas Hopko @ Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City, PA (March 23). Large crowd squeezes into the main Chapel

PARISH NEWS

40 DAY CHURCHING

Ophelia Katsouras on March 29, with her parents Kelly & Gus.

PROMOTION & TRANSITION

Long time member and past Parish Council Secretary Ted Panagiotopoulos will be retiring from the Stamford Fire Department after serving for over 35 years as a Fire Fighter and Fire Marshal, in order to accept a new position on May 4 as the *Chief Fire Marshal for Mecklenburg County, Charlotte, North Carolina*. Ted and his wife, Jacky, will be relocating the last week of April, but Jacky will be traveling back and forth periodically until their Wilton home has been sold. They both look forward to establishing their new home in NC and settling in to an Orthodox parish there. We will miss you both and especially thank you, Ted, for all your contributions: the Lord bless you both!

AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

FOUNDATION FUND

The Foundation unanimously voted to make a contribution of \$10,000 to the Church as a charitable gift explicitly for the benefit of the family of the late Father Matthew Baker through the Fund established on their behalf by the Metropolis of Boston. The Board will next meet on May 13. Contact: Elias Kulukundis

AHEPA

Do you want to help rebuild St Nicholas at Ground Zero? Do you want to support our Greek Schools? Do you want to show your gratitude to the teachers of our Greek and Church schools who work hard to pass the torch of Hellenism and Orthodoxy to our youth? Do you want to take part in a great dinner/dance to the tunes of a live band at a very reasonable price? All you have to do is make reservations for the AHEPA fundraiser on Saturday, May 2nd at 6pm at the Norwalk Inn. To fortify your contribution, buy an ad in our commemorative album. Our last chapter meeting before the event is Thursday, April 16, at 7:30 pm at the church of the Archangels. Kali Anastasi! Contact Nicholas Nikas 203-554-5570 niketes@yahoo.com