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St. Catherine's Newsletter

Assumption Greek
Orthodox Church

September 2009

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Lord, Save Your People

*Hymn sung on Feast Days of
the Holy Cross*

Save O Lord Your People
And bless Your inheritance.

Grant victory to the faithful,

Against the adversaries of
the Faith,

And protect Your people
through Your Holy Cross.

Feast Day of the Elevation of the Holy Cross, September 14th

This feast day is one of the most important celebrations of the Orthodox Church. We pay special tribute to the Precious Life-giving Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the year 325 the Roman Emperor Constantine the Great became victorious after seeing a vision of the Christian cross in the sky and the words "En Touto Nika" which means, "In this sign conquer." He sent his mother, the saintly Helen, to the Holy Land to search for the true Cross of Jesus Christ. Accompanied by a small band of soldiers, she searched for many months. She came upon an abandoned area where a strange, fragrant flower was growing. This flower is now called Vasiliko, or basil, which means the flower of royalty, and is the official flower of the Orthodox Church. She ordered the soldiers to dig in this area. They found three crosses buried there—the ones Jesus and the two thieves were crucified on. St. Helen wanted to find out which was the true cross of Jesus. A sick person was



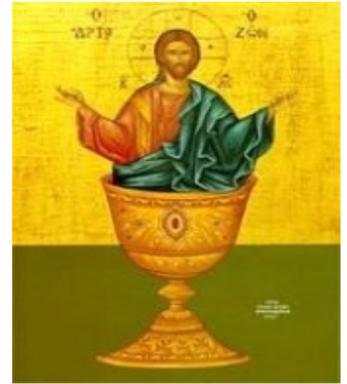
brought to the area and laid upon each cross. When the sick person was placed on the third cross he was immediately cured. This is how they found the True Cross of Christ.

Unfortunately the Cross was stolen away by enemies for many years. In the year 628 A.D. the Byzantine Christian Emperor Heraclitus joyously returned the Cross to Jerusalem and the Church of the Holy Sepulcher. On this feast day we venerate the Cross with joy. It reminds us of Christ's victory over death!

Source: Lives of the Saints and Major Feast Days by Rev. Fr. George Poulos.

PREPARING FOR HOLY COMMUNION *by Christen Massouras*

When Father Timothy and Father Athanasios are ready to give communion to the congregation, they always says, "Remember, in order to receive Communion you must be an Orthodox Christian and must be prepared to receive Holy Communion." But how can we be prepared for Communion? There are certain things we must do to be prepared spiritually, physically, and mentally.



You should start preparing about a week before you will receive Holy Communion. The first way to prepare for communion is by preparing spiritually through self-examination. St. Paul says, "Let a man examine himself and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup". What St. Paul meant is that you should look into yourself and if any sins are separating you from God, you should seek out your priest and receive Holy Confession. Holy Confession is when you talk to your priest about all of your sins, and ask forgiveness from God. I remember when I went to Fanari with Marika Maggos and we had to take Confession the day before Holy Communion. I think that we had Confession the day before because it cleaned our souls to be ready for Holy Communion. Also, another way to prepare spiritually is by praying to God at home. By praying to God you can have a closer connection to Him and understand the meaning of Holy Communion more.

The next part of preparing for Communion is preparing physically. When you physically prepare you are fasting. Why do we fast? We fast because it's a way to imitate Christ when he fasted for us. Different priests and people have different opinions on how to fast, so we should ask our priest what they feel is the best way to fast. But you have to remember that fasting is a discipline for giving up something to get closer to God, and it shouldn't be a punishment.

Another important part of preparing for communion is preparing mentally. When you are mentally preparing you are trying to think good thoughts and do good things. By doing these things you can get closer to God and it will prepare you for Holy Communion. When you think good thoughts, you should not gossip, put anyone down, or say bad words. Also, mentally preparing for communion means that we shouldn't hit or hurt anyone on purpose.

**"With the awesome fear of God,
with faith and with love, draw
near."**

One of the final ways to prepare for communion is by knowing what to do when you receive it. First, you should know you are prepared to receive it. If you are not prepared you should not receive it and should wait for another time when you are ready. If you are prepared, you should think good thoughts while going up the aisle to receive communion and be serious about it. Remember, you are receiving the Blood and Body of Jesus Christ our Lord. When it is your turn, you should first do your cross, put the cloth under your chin so that nothing spills, and open your mouth wide. When the priest says, "Servant of God" you should speak your baptismal name clearly and loudly so that the priest can hear you. Once you receive communion wipe off your mouth with the cloth, do your cross and receive the andithero from the altar boy.

According to [The Orthodox Church: 455 Question and Answers](#) the last step in the preparation is this: 'Finally, one of the essential preparations for communion is to attend Divine Liturgy from the beginning, participating in all of its litanies, hymns, prayers, and liturgical symbols and movements. Do this consciously and prayerfully.'

Then, when the priest calls: "With the awesome fear of God, with faith and with love, draw near," you will be able to respond to the call knowing that you have, with God's help, prepared yourself fully to receive the precious Body and Blood of your Lord Jesus Christ.

Ask Father Timothy.....

Q - Why does our Orthodox Church view September 1st as the “new year” rather than January 1st?

For most of us, the month of September is associated with “new beginnings.” The vacation season has come to an end. Children return to their classrooms. Church school classes and other opportunities for spiritual formation are offered. Parish ministries and activities are intensified. Parish life also returns to “normal.” And in the workplace, the pace intensifies after the summer slowdown. As the days grow shorter, life returns to “normal.”

Our Holy Orthodox Church views the first day of September, and not January 1st, as the initiation of the new ecclesiastical year. If we look at our Church calendar, we get a better idea why. The annual cycle of feasts and fasts begins with September, and follows through in a chronological order as to “when” important events occurred in the life of Jesus and the Church. For example, we all know that Jesus was born on December 25th (Christmas Day). But the Panagia, the mother of Jesus, was born on September 8th. We celebrate the baptism of Jesus on January 6th, and we observe his being brought into the temple for his forty day blessing on February 2nd, exactly 40 days after His birth. As we proceed through the calendar, we observe His ministry on earth, His entry in to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, His Week of Passion, Crucifixion, and glorious Resurrection, all in chronological order as to when they occurred. And, as we all know, one of the major Feasts on our calendar takes place in August, with the falling asleep of the Panagia on August 15th. The Church Calendar revolves around the life of Jesus Christ and His Church, not as it does on the regular calendar.

How does that impact us? And what should it mean for us? The beginning of the ecclesiastical New Year once again invites all of us to enter the mystery of salvation. As Orthodox Christians, we understand that our rich tradition of liturgical worship is more than just a Sunday habit. It reveals to us the very notion that our ecclesiastical calendar is not something foreign, but does have an impact on our daily lives. With our entrance into the ecclesiastical New Year, the Church once again challenges us to discern and to put to wise use its treasury of liturgical worship.

May the beginning of this new ecclesiastical year mark a new beginning in our lives as individuals, as families, as a Parish — a new beginning by which we set aside, before all else, the time we need to grow spiritually and to respond to the call to live as wise and faithful stewards, not only of our talents and treasures, but of the precious gift of time.

Have a Great Sunday Church School Year **by Marika Maggos**

Summer is coming to an end and a new school year is beginning! Are you excited? Personally, I feel both eager and not ready to go back to school because even though I want to see my friends everyday and fill my head with knowledge, I also want to sleep in, not worry about studying for tests and doing homework, and having care free days. Regardless if we're ready to go back to school or not, we still have to try our best and learn new things.

Well, it's also a new Sunday church school year. Here are some ways to make the most of your Sunday church school year. Start off by coming to church as much as you can and coming on time so you get to celebrate the whole liturgy, and you hear the gospel reading, which is usually discussed a little in class. By coming to church frequently, you get to see the friends you've made that you only have the chance to see at church. Next, participate in the liturgy. For example, you can pay attention to the service, follow along with the liturgy book, serve as an altar boy if you are a boy, sing in the choir, pass the collection tray, and more. Also, participate during Sunday church school class by volunteering to read a paragraph or two when your class is reading something, raising your hand and answering questions, sharing your thoughts and questions, and lots more. Don't forget Sunday church school has lots of fun events such as the Lenten retreat, mini golfing, bowling, the Christmas Pageant, decorating the hall for Christmas, and other fun family events. In May we get to have some fun competing in the Metropolis Junior Olympics too!

All in all, there are so many ways to make the most of your Sunday church school year. Therefore, we should take advantage of our opportunities and have a great year!

Where Did You Go This Summer?

St. Iakovos Camp and Retreat Center Trip by Marisa Arvanites



On July 18th our church went to the St. Iakovos Camp & Retreat Center. There was so much to do and see. We went on a hayride. We saw ponies, goats and even a llama. We took a train ride around, and saw all the trees and the beautiful lake. We had a great time swimming and had the best lifeguard, Father Athanasios. We also had a barbecue with burgers, hot dogs and lots of yummy desserts. It was so much fun and I was sorry to see it end. Thanks to Father Timothy, Father Athanasios and everyone that planned this trip. I hope we can go again!



Vacation Hot Spots 2009

By Theo Kozil and Luke Maggos

Lots of people took vacations this summer. Some people went to the beach, museums, amusement parks, mountains, famous monuments, and to see relatives. We surveyed 54 people from Sunday School to find out where they went this summer. Here are the results:

California	3 people
Florida	11
Illinois	3
Indiana	7
Iowa	2
Kentucky	1
Maine	3
Maryland	1
Michigan	15
Missouri	2
New Jersey	1
New Mexico	2
Ohio	6
Pennsylvania	1
Wash. DC	1
Wisconsin	12



World Travelers:

Albania	3	Greece	7
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You can see most people stayed in the Midwest, with Michigan at number one. George Sarantos wins for going to the most states this summer, seven! A lot of people did fun things in Chicago, too. No matter where you went, we hope you had a great summer.



FACES IN THE CROWD

by Niko G. Lakerdas



Strati Koulouris

Height: 6'2"

Weight: 215 lbs

School: Junior at Hinsdale Central high school.

Favorite Sport: Strati likes to play waterpolo. During his sophomore year, his team lost in the second round at sectionals. They were 5th in their conference. This year during the waterpolo season Strati is looking forward to receiving more playing time on the varsity team. Strati is also active on the school's swim team.

On the Weekends: When Strati finds freetime in his busy schedule, he likes to hang out with his friends over the weekend and go to Chipotle. He also likes to play basketball, and watch t.v.

Favorite Quote: "It is not the will to win, but the will to prepare to win that makes a difference."

Favorite Saint: St. Efstratios

Greek Roots: Sparta and Kerasia

Favorite thing you like about Church: Serving in the altar, and worshipping with my family.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Family Trivia Night

Teams of 8-10 people of all ages will compete to see who really knows the most about sports, geography, Greek culture, Bible facts, Orthodox faith, and much more. Get ready—form your alliance to win.

SATURDAY, OCT. 17



**WELCOME BACK TO
SUNDAY CHURCH SCHOOL CELEBRATION!!**
Sunday, September 13th

INFO

Assumption Greek Orthodox Church
601 S. Central Avenue
Chicago, IL 60644

Phone: 773-626-3113
Fax: 773-626-3141

HOURS
MATINS — 8:30 AM
DIVINE LITURGY—10:00 AM
SUNDAY SCHOOL LITURGY—
9:45 AM

We're on the web!
www.assumptionchicago.org

The St. Catherine's Newsletter was created in 2007 by a Sunday School student. It serves to inform, educate, and entertain the children of the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church community. All are welcome and encouraged to contribute to the newsletter.

If you are interested in writing an article, sending in a self written piece of work, or just for more information... PLEASE CONTACT:

Very Rev. Fr. Timothy Bakakos —
FrTimothy@assumptionchicago.org
or Dr. Evie Maggos — demags@aol.com



MAIL TO:

KID'S CORNER

Check out www.goarch.org for lots of fun Orthodox on-line games to play.

SAINTS alive! beta
Nick's Word Finder

The Twelve Feasts
TRANSFIGURATION
ANNUNCIATION
PRESENTATION
PALMSUNDAY
EXALTATION
CHRISTMAS
ASCENSION
PENTECOST
THEOPHANY
DORMITION
NATIVITY
ENTRY

P A N N W N M R O N G M L X T T
R P N V O C G Z O J I R T H R E
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H T N A H I A I T A V O H N N Y
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This is a beta version. We welcome comments and suggestions. To contact us, please email games@goarch.org.

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