At this time of year, just after the holiday of Thanksgiving, we find ourselves turning our attention to the beautiful Season of Christmas. And depending upon our attitude, demeanor, and outlook, we can look upon this time with joy and anticipation, or with dread and agony. Many children have already written, or are just sitting down to write, their letters to Santa. It’s exciting trying to fit all our wishes into one well worded little note. Listen to some of the letters to Santa from last year that were collected by the Post Office:

----Dear Santa…..Please give me a doll this year. I would like her to eat, walk, do my homework, and help me clean my room. Thank you, Jenny.
----Dear Santa….Thanks for the race car you brought me last year. Can I have another one, only this time, can you make this one faster than my best friend’s race car? Thanks….Ricky.
----Dear Santa…I wish you could leave a puzzle under the tree for me. Can a toy for my sister, too? Then, she won’t want to play with mine, and I can have it to myself. Merry Christmas, Cassie.
----Dear Santa...You can send me one of everything from the boys’ section of the Sears catalog. But nothing from the girls’ section. I can’t wait for Christmas to come. Signed…..Kent
----Dear Santa... Could you come early this year? I’ve been really super good, but I don’t know if I can last much longer. Please hurry. Love, Jordan.

Doesn’t that sound familiar? To children, Christmas seems to take forever in coming. And it is so hard trying to be good while you wait for Santa to come. Like little Jordan, we are tempted to ask Santa to hurry up and get here earlier, before we break under the strain of all that unnaturally good behavior.

Waiting for Christmas is like the days of the Early Church. The Christians in the Early Church were waiting for Jesus to return. They were excited. They were ready. But days passed, then months, and then years. And like them, we are still waiting as well. Back then, in the days, months, and years following the resurrection of Christ, people around them began to mock their Christian Faith. False teachers infiltrated the Early Church and filled their minds with doubt.

“So, where’s this Jesus you’re waiting for? Do you think He forgot about you?” They went so far as to suggest that God no longer worked in human history. Maybe God just set this world in motion, and then went out to lunch, and never came back. And sadly, many Christians started to believe them. Maybe Jesus isn’t returning, they thought. Like little children at Christmas time who get tired of being good, some of these Early Believers gave up hope and went back to their old ways of life.

So, Simon Peter, a follower of Jesus, writes in one of his Epistles, words to reassure the believers in the Early Church. He writes, “But do not forget this one thing, my dear friends: With the Lord, a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping His promise, as some understand slowness. But rather, He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

continued on page 2
Making the Most Out of Christmas

But, the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with His promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

So then, dear friends, since you are looking forward to this, make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with him . . ."

In hearing these words of Simon Peter, waiting for Christ's return became an important element in Christian life. The final chapter in God's love affair with humanity has not yet been written. Christ is coming again to take us unto himself.

Simon Peter knew what the people of his day were like. They were doubters and were prone to fall away when tempted. The society of his day didn't want to believe him either. But the Bible tells us very clearly that some day Simon Peter will be proved right. And we need to ask ourselves, will any of us be ready for that day?

Phillips Brooks, the 19th century Christian leader who composed the beautiful Christmas carol, "O Little Town of Bethlehem," once wrote: "The coming of the Lord has been the inspiration of the Christian world. The power of any life lies in its expectancy."

And those are very true words, "The power of any life lies in its expectancy." What about each of us as Orthodox Christians? What are we expecting this Christmas season? Are we expecting crowds of people, jam-packed schedules, family tensions, stress-filled shopping expeditions? Are we expecting a big Christmas bonus, or one fun-filled Christmas party after the other? Or, are we expecting to meet Jesus?

THE POWER OF EXPECTANCY STARTS WITH SEEING LIFE THROUGH GOD'S ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE. If you and I are discouraged, downhearted, dispirited, it is quite possible because we are looking at the world through human eyes and not Divine eyes.

There is a story about a priest who counseled a young woman who was deeply disillusioned with her life. This woman had bought into society's concept of who and what she should be. She had done all the things that her friends were doing. And yet, she was miserable. She cried, "I've lost my virginity. I've lost my sense of value. I'm twenty-one years old, and I'm just tired. I don't want to live like this anymore. I thought it was going to be so good."

Here is a young woman who made the mistake of living life with an "earthly perspective". She bought into the lie of the good life that is promoted so successfully in our movies and magazines and commercials. She thought, as we sometimes wrongly teach our children, that the purpose of her life was to "grab all the gusto" she could get. And, at just twenty-one, she is already tired and hurt and disillusioned. She is not alone, is she? Nope, she isn't, because we see that on the faces and in the actions of many people around us. There are many people in this world, and especially among our young adults, who have given up on achieving a fulfilling life. They are afraid of meaningful and lasting relationships. They live as virtual loners. They've done it all and yet, have nothing left to show for their experience, except a bad case of disillusionment.

These are exactly the people that Saint Peter is talking to in his second Epistle. The followers of Jesus Christ started out as Christ-followers. But the ways of the world looked so attractive to them. The modern day phrases like, "Come on, everybody's doing it.", and "If it feels good, do it.", and "Life is short, Play hard.", or "All the beautiful people do it.", lack one important thing: Jesus Christ, because it looks at the world only through human eyes.

But, you may ask, how do we take on an eternal perspective? How do we see the world as God sees the world? We do it, my dear brothers and sisters, by acknowledging that everything in this world will eventually perish, except God. Nothing, and I emphasize, nothing in

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Making the Most Out of Christmas

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this world is permanent. Our favorite car will rust out. Our nice house will eventually crumble. Our best pair of pants will fray and fade. Our money will be passed on to our heirs and the IRS. And, when Jesus returns to claim His kingdom, everything we strive for and hold dear will be destroyed. Everything! Only the soul is eternal, and it is all Christ is interested in! As Saint Peter says, "Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?"

Some time ago, Journalists Bill and Judith Moyers did a documentary on death and dying in the United States. They discovered that many of the terminal patients they interviewed found peace in the face of death. In fact, many of them found greater meaning and beauty in life after learning that they would die. One man lived four years past his doctor's prognosis. In that time, he learned to cherish every moment of life. He said, "If you are told you will never see Spring again, and you indeed DO live to see Spring, Spring takes on a whole new life."

My dear brothers and sisters, nothing focuses our priorities quite like the knowledge of our own mortality. Christmas Advent and the anticipation of the Birth of Christ is not a season for focusing on a morbid subject like death. But it is a season for looking beyond the present moment to the eternal, and then evaluating our life in the perspective of eternity.

As we are well into the month of December and are on our road to Christmas, it is a perfect time to have us pause and ask, "What do you want to do with your life?" For the Christian, there is only one answer: to live in a loving relationship with God and with everyone else with whom we share this planet. THAT'S WHAT ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS ARE ABOUT: CLAIMING THE MOMENT AND TAKING TIME TO NURTURE THOSE RELATIONSHIPS THAT MATTER MOST TO US ALL.

Finally, the Christmas season, as most of us experience it, seems almost designed to distract us from God-centered living. There is so much pressure to shop, shop, shop and rush, rush, rush and spend, spend, spend. And all for what purpose? How many of us remember all the Christmas presents we got last year? The gifts of Christmas are temporary, but the message of Christmas is eternal. The Almighty God came to earth in the form of a man. Christ lived among us and shared our suffering and pain. And, as we know, because we are sinners, He died a horrible death in order to save us from our sins. In giving up His earthly life, He opened up the way to eternal life for us. And someday, He will come again to establish His perfect and Eternal Kingdom here on earth. But until that day comes, our job is to share the love of Jesus Christ with everyone we know.

I’m sure you have all heard of Louis Pasteur, the pioneer of immunology. Dr. Pasteur lived at a time when thousands of people died each year of rabies. Pasteur had worked for years on a vaccine. Just as he was about to begin experimenting on himself, a 9-year-old boy, Joseph Meister, was bitten by a rabid dog. The boy's mother begged Pasteur to experiment on her son. Pasteur injected little Joseph for ten days with his new rabies vaccine, and the boy lived. Decades later, of all the things Pasteur could have had etched on his headstone, he asked for three words: JOSEPH MEISTER LIVED. Our greatest legacy we leave etched in God’s heart will not be our wealth or brains, or power, or influence. It will, however, be the about lives of those who know God's love because of our efforts.

So, whose life will be transformed because we shared with them the love of Jesus? If we can’t answer that question, we definitely have a problem. But we should not be dismayed because there is still time! Claim this moment for God. Let that be the true present you give this Christmas. The present of a life lived out unselfishly in service to God and service to others.

The message of the first Christmas is that "Peace on Earth" comes to everyone when we allow Christ to enter into our lives. The birth of Christ came about or took place in what our Gospel calls the "fullness of time", or in other words, when the failure and alienation of man from God had reached a seemingly insurmountable impasse, or, as Saint Gregory of Nyssa says, "when sin had finally reached the lowest point of its own decrepitude". And the result of that brilliant Nativity was that the course of human history was forever changed, and that man again found his way back to that communion with God, which had once been destroyed.

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The message we are given this Christmas is one of love, one of comfort, one of awe. We are told today that Christ comes into our world to lift us up to a higher level, to a level that will bring us peace with God.

My dear children in Christ, it is my continual prayer that this year, Christmas Day may be a new beginning and a new point of departure for our lives committed to the new-born, and in the Life of Christ, and in the life of the Church. Let us rejoice with the words: “Joy to the World” “Christ is Born” “Let us Glorify Him.”

+ A M E N

**Parish Council President...**

*President’s Report*

By Andrew Kanel

This past October, Father Timothy and several members of the Parish Council and Philoptochos attended the 2011 Clergy, Laity and Philoptochos Assembly in Champaign, IL. The days were busy and filled with meetings. We were fortunate to meet with His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew via Skype. His All-Holiness sent the delegation a brief, heartfelt message wishing us well during our deliberations.

I was able to attend two workshops during the conference. The first workshop was "Orthodoxy and Youth Ministry in a Digital World". I was truly enlightened by this presentation, but uneased to learn of the many challenges that exist for our youth and their parents. In our highly technological society comes a price tag of security and well being for our youth. The second workshop I attended was “Parish Leadership – A New Perspective”. This was geared to our communities and the changing dynamics each of our churches is faced with. How do we keep our church doors open? One of the key focuses for every community should be Stewardship. The topic of Stewardship comes at a perfect time of year, a time that all churches are challenged with creating their annual budget and many, struggle to find a way to present a balanced budget to their General Assembly. As we quickly approach the holiday season and close of another calendar year I ask you each to look deep into your hearts when creating your own financial goals for 2012 look at the percentage you contribute to our community and look for ways to increase your contribution. Become more active in Charitable Giving in Panagia’s honor and reach out and see where your time and talent can be used in our ministry and outreach programs. Without your love, dedication and participation we would not be able to function. Attending a forum like this allows you to see we are not alone and that other communities are faced with many of the same challenges we have. We have been blessed again this year to have an active Sunday School and while our main church may seem sparse at times St. Catherine’s is filled with parents and young, smiling faces that make your heart fill with joy. Many thanks to Christina Arvanites for her leadership and dedication of our Sunday School.

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On November 5, Plato Hall was once again packed with families of all ages to celebrate the fall harvest. Many thanks to Ted and Kathy Pappas, George, Christina, Leah and Marissa Arvanites, Pat Laggas, Rose Marie Stewart and Dr. Evelyn Maggos for setting up, shopping, great games and entertainment.

Did you ever wonder who is responsible for providing us fresh, hot coffee on Sunday? Many thanks to two men who make sure we receive our caffeine fix Spero “Scotty” Skuteris and Jim Tsiolis - these gentlemen are better than Starbucks and Caribou combined. Recently, they learned how to operate our new machines under the guidance of Christine Simms. On the Sundays that no one sponsors the fellowship hours Rose Marie Stewart makes sure that we have something to tide us over until lunch. Thanks to all of you for making it happen.

Before we are in full Christmas fervor, we still have a busy November ahead of us. I look forward to seeing everyone at St. Catherine’s vespers on Thursday, November 24th as well as the following day. It will be a great way for all of us to reduce our calorie intake on Thanksgiving Day and let you sleep later as opposed to shopping all night. In addition, I look forward to everyone coming together to transform our hall into a winter wonderland on December 3.

Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

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Philoptochos...

A Word or Two from Our President
By Nancy Pilafas

It is hard to believe we are approaching the end of another year. This year has been a busy one for Philoptochos, helping the less fortunate with many service projects. Our recent fundraiser, "Your Kind of Night", proved to be an enjoyable and fun evening and we sincerely thank those who attended, supported the raffle, purchased patron ads, and made donations. Macular Degeneration Research was the recipient of proceeds from the evening. A special note of thanks is extended to Dr. Peter Panton who enlightened the audience with a brief but very informative explanation of Macular Degeneration, a condition of the eye affecting so many.

Cancer patients receiving treatment at Loretto Hospital received lap blankets hand crocheted by an anonymous angel. Thank you to Jean Kribales and Rita Pietrzyk for delivering the blankets to Sister Maureen at Loretto.

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A Word or Two from Our President
By Nancy Pilafas
A Word or Two from Our President
By Nancy Pilafas

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Three delegates, Cathy Ferguson, Pat Karabas, and myself attended the Metropolis Clergy/Laity/Philoptochos conference in Champaign, Il., October 5-8. A report will be given at our November meeting/Membership Tea on the 19th.

Philoptochos and the Parish Council joyfully celebrated the ordination of Fr. Athanasios and served a delicious luncheon in his honor to welcome him and his lovely Presbytera Catherine to our church family.

In September, the sweets booth at our Labor Day festival proved to be very successful. I thank EVERYONE who gave of their time, talents, and treasury for the whole weekend and prior, as we prepared hundreds of sweets to be purchased at our booth. Once again, our thanks to the Woods family for their help with the loukoumades.

The feast day of Panagia and vespers the night before saw hundreds of worshippers visit our beautiful church. Philoptochos prepared and served refreshments and a light lunch. We extend a heartfelt thank you to Anita Panapane for her generosity in underwriting the luncheon. We are so very grateful to her for her kindness and support.

Our annual visit to the Greek American Rehabilitation and Care Centre last June was another example of Philoptochos reaching out to others. Our refreshments were thoroughly enjoyed by the residents, however, it was the time spent conversing that meant so very much to them. We encourage you to join us in June when we visit once again.

December 3rd will find us at Greek Islands Restaurant in Lombard enjoying a delicious lunch and singing Christmas Carols as a church family.

To end the year, we will serve a hot lunch to the hungry and homeless at Annunciation Cathedral on December 13th. Please consider joining us that day as we experience the TRUE definition of Philoptochos.

Sadly, last May, we suddenly lost our dear friend, treasurer, and hard-working sister, Eleanor Georgalas. May her memory be forever eternal.

As we quickly come to the end of another year, we reflect on the many joys we shared as we helped the less fortunate. On behalf of myself and the Philoptochos board, we wish each and every one of you a most joyous Christmas and a healthy and Happy New Year.

Save the Date - February 19, 2012
The Assumption Philoptochos Appocretario Glendi
A Family Celebration
Youth Ministry...

*Helping Others During Christmas*
*By Father Athanasios*

Each year we celebrate the Christmas season, greatly anticipating the gifts we hope to receive. Everyone has a list of what they want. Some want the newest video game, others may want the newest CD. The lists go on and on.

No matter what gift is in our heart, it will never match the gift God has given us – the gift of Jesus Christ. We celebrate Christmas not just because Jesus was born, but because he is THE present. All other gifts fall behind the gift of Christ.

No human being can ever put into words what God has given us in Jesus Christ. The Lord is born and we glorify him!

One of the hardest things we as Christians have to comprehend is the simple fact that Christ is born in us. On the day of our baptism we put off the old Adam and put on Christ. So in essence Christ is born on the day of our baptism! He enters the world so that he can enter into us. Think about that for a second. Every Christian has the seed of Christ in him. Baptism is for us the special day that we received Christ. So the call for everyone is let that seed grow. Christ is in everyone, but is everyone in Christ? Just as we tend to forget people’s birthdays, we tend to forget the promise of our baptism.

Christmas, then, is a reminder of that special gift given to us. We are to take that birth of Jesus Christ, which takes place into us, and let Him grow in us. And how do we let Jesus grow in us? By prayer, by helping others, by going to Church and by taking part of the sacraments of confession and communion. Every day we are to grow in Christ. Jesus called himself the light of the world, and anyone who continues to let Jesus grow in him lights up the lives of those around him. God’s plan for us is to light up the whole world with the Holy Spirit. We do that by living Godly lives. We do this by celebrating not only the birth of Christ in us, but also by celebrating the growth of Christ in us.

Sometimes it’s easy to lose track on what Christmas is all about. Christmas isn’t about receiving gifts, but by gifting people with love in the name of Jesus Christ. They say that Christmas time is a time where we, as a people, come together. But they also say that of all the times during the year, people are most depressed during Christmas! How can the celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ be depressing?

It can only depress people if we lose track of what it’s all about. Christmas isn’t about turning inward and counting the gifts you want. Christmas is about looking outside yourself and helping others.

Celebrate Christmas by helping others!

Volunteer Opportunity...

The parish has a new volunteer opportunity related to coordinating the production of the Assumption Church newsletter. The newsletter is produced six times a year and requires coordination for the submission of articles, layout of the newsletter in Microsoft Publisher (a standard Microsoft application) and submission to the printer via email. If you are a steward looking for a way to increase your involvement in our Church community and would like to learn more about this opportunity, contact Tina Sarantos, (708) 660-0154.
On October 13, 2011, our Panagia Community had the pleasure of hosting Dr. Ary Christofidis, Ph.D., for an informative lecture on “Living as an Orthodox Christian in Today’s World”. Dr. Christofidis’ lecture had two parts. The first part was a discussion of the many issues facing families today, while the second part dealt with Christ’s message on anxiety.

There are strong messages in today’s culture that convey self indulgent behaviors. “Just Do It” is the famous slogan of Nike which tells us to behave according to what makes one feel good. Also, we are getting over-extended. For example, parents and their children are involved in so many activities that it is difficult to have the whole family eat dinner together. Parents are so over-extended that they have less time to spend with family, keeping themselves fit and have more stress and anxiety. Parents today have more anxiety than parents ten years ago. Overall, we have a skewed view of what is important in life. Our spiritual life suffers since society doesn’t place emphasis on the need for a religious and spiritual life.

Dr. Christofidis reviewed various studies that show that significant use of social media can lead to becoming indifferent and callous to human suffering since people do not have time to experience and reflect on others’ feelings. Furthermore, it is a myth that that one can multi-task well. Dr. Ary said that the brain was not designed to function in this manner, even though our society tells us otherwise. How many of us drive, drink coffee, and talk on the phone at the same time? Our brain becomes over taxed. Also, studies show that children are not getting enough sleep, which leads to poor concentration, irritability, and poor performance in school.

Dr. Christofidis recommends that parents implement some rules with children. No television, computers and unrestricted internet access in children’s bedrooms. He recommends no cell phone use after an agreed upon time every night, since children’s sleep in affected by the use of cell phones.

During the second part of the lecture, Dr. Ary focused on Christ’s message on anxiety. He showed a clip of the 1978 TV movie, “Jesus of Nazareth”, quoting Jesus’ word on anxiety from the Gospel of Saint Luke in Holy Bible. In this passage, Jesus taught us to worry about what to eat, or drink or wear, but rather to “seek the kingdom of God and all these things shall be added to you” (Luke 12:31).

Dr. Christofidis also quoted words of wisdom from Saint John Chrysostom, who writes, “you should be ashamed when you sin, but not to be ashamed when you repent”. The Blessed Saint goes on to say that they are two things – sin and repentance: Sin is the wound; repentance is the medicine. Sin is followed by shame; repentance is followed by boldness. Dr. Ary explained to the audience that Satan has overturned this order and given boldness to sin, and shame to repentance. And, as a result, society is numbing us to the concept of taking care of our soul. Throughout Holy Scripture, as well as many Orthodox writings, we are reminded that pride and ego are two culprits, and that Holy Confession is the best medicine which leads us to a repented heart.

Finally, Dr. Christofidis recommended a few books that will help us in our prayer life as we continue our spiritual journey: “Spiritual Awakening”, and “With Pain and Love for the Contemporary Man”, by Elder Paisios; “A Night in the Desert of the Holy Mountain”, by Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos; “Wounded by Love”, by Elder Porphyrios; and “Concerning Prosperity and Happiness”, by the Blessed Elder Philotheos Zervakos.

** Dr. Ary Christofidis is a Licensed Clinical Psychologist and the Director of the Orthodox Christian Counseling Institute. After completing his bachelor’s degree from Hellenic College in Brookline, MA, Dr. Christofidis moved to Greece to study the Modern Greek Language, Byzantine music, and logged several pilgrimages to Mount Athos. Dr. Christofidis received his Masters and Doctorate degrees from the University of Pittsburgh. He also received clinical training in family therapy from Western Psychiatric Institute and Clinic’s Family Therapy Center. Dr. Christofidis conducts outpatient psychotherapy, primarily with Orthodox Christians through OCCI and is on staff as a part-time psychologist at the Cancer Wellness Center in Northbrook, Illinois.
Parish Happenings

Images from the Lecture:
Living as an Orthodox Christian in Today’s World
Dr. Ary Christofidis, Ph.D.,

[Images of Dr. Ary Christofidis during his lecture]
Parish Happenings

St. Jude “Give Thanks, Walk” - November 19, 2011

We are blessed to have and welcome back Eileen Papafotopoulos-Szubert who grew up at Assumption and who organized the “Assumption Warriors” members of the Assumption Community to participate in the Chicago-land walk-a-thon event to raise money for St. Jude children's Research Hospital. St. Jude helps children who are battling cancer and other catastrophic diseases.

The Assumption Community raised $1,000 and the Chicago-land walk raised $75,694 in total. Congratulations for all who completed the walk and thank you to Eileen for organizing the participants.

Assumption 6-th-8th Graders Participate in Diocese Basketball Program

Members of the Assumption-Holy Cross 6th-8th Grade Basketball Team who played on November 20, 2011. Go Team!

Sunday Church School...

Save the dates to visit your child’s classroom and see the work they are doing in Sunday Church School

SCS Open House Schedule:

January 15 - Preschool
January 22 - Kindergarten and High school
January 29 - First grade
February 5 - Second grade
February 12 - Third grade
February 19 - Fourth grade
February 26 - Fifth grade
March 4 - Sixth grade
March 11 - Seventh and eighth grade
A Choice: How We Fund Our Community
By Dean Sarantos

Did you know that our community has a choice as to how we fund our Church? Quite often in the past few years, a number of us in the Parish Council hear sentiments such as “Another fundraiser? I will try to be there to help, but I am already so busy with other activities, both in and out of the Church” and “Why does the ticket price for this event have to be so high?” We even increasingly hear, “Can I just write a check so we don’t have to do this fundraiser? I am just tired.” One reason we have such concerns is that currently, as well as in the past, a major portion of our funding ($133,100 in the 2011 budget) comes from these events. Another reason for these concerns is that in this day and age, like most Greek Orthodox communities and other denominations, parishioners face significantly increased pressures on their time.

Did you know that in 2010, only about $1 out of every $4 Assumption spent came from stewardship? The rest came from fundraising events, Plato Academy lease revenue (another $1 by itself), trays, appeals and a few other areas. Related to this relative amount of funding that comes from stewardship, some interesting statistics were shared in early October at the Metropolis Clergy-Laity conference in Champaign. A number of financial statistics were shared, including the percentage of 2010 funding (revenue) that stewardship comprised for each community. This is to illustrate how different things vary community to community, from a stewardship perspective. Here are some excerpts of the statistics shared at the Clergy-Laity conference:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2010 Stewardship</th>
<th>% of Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holy Apostles</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sts Peter &amp; Paul</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. John the Baptist</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St Andrew Chicago</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Basil</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumption Chicago</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Cross</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Trinity</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Others parishes not included due to space limitations)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolis Average</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is well understood that each community has different aspects of its demographics and situation which might drive differences in these numbers. However, we do have a choice, which can be adjusted over time, as to how we want to fund our activities in the combination of stewardship, fundraisers and other funding sources. Because we have a relatively small part of our budget paid for by stewardship, the Parish Council is essentially forced to fill part of the gap with fundraisers and appeals. Also, it is striking, when you think about it, that our Plato School lease payment is almost as much as our stewardship i.e. external funding of the Church is almost as high as stewardship pledges.

If we want less pressure on fundraising events, one of the first things we can do is look to increase our stewardship pledges and move more toward a model of stewardship funding our community.

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We should look to increase our stewardship level to represent more like 40-50% of our funding than the 28% it was in 2010. This also would also help make us less reliant on others, such as American Quality Schools (AQS) to pay for operations of the church.

As another calendar year comes to a close, many churches are wrestling with how to balance their 2012 budget and kick off 2012 stewardship campaigns, which all serve to fulfill the many valuable ministries they will continue into the New Year. It has been said the faithful don’t stretch their giving because of need to help make a budget, but rather because of their vision of how the money will be used for God’s purposes to reach people through the Church’s ministries. If we also have a vision of accomplishing this through less pressure on fundraising events and other external means, let us keep in that in mind as we make our 2012 stewardship pledges of time, talent and tithe.

Stewardship List thru October 2011

MR JOHN ALEXANDER
MS PAULINE ALEXANDER
MR ORESTIS ALEXOPOULOS
MR & MRS ERNEST ANALITIS
H. ANAST
MS CONSTANCE ANDREWS
MS DEMETRA ANDREWS
MR JOHN ANDREWS
MRS GEORGIA APOSTOL
MR & MRS LOUIS APOSTOL
MRS FRIEDA ARAVOSIS
MS CAROL ARGYRAKIS
MRS HAIDO ARGYRIS
MR MICHAEL ARGYRIS
MS ASHLEY ARNOLD
MRS DIANE ARNOLD
MR DREW ARNOLD
MR & MRS GEORGE ARVANITES
MRS MARY ARVIS
FATHER TIMOTHY G. BAKAKOS
DR & MRS MICHAEL BAKALIS
MR & MRS JEREMY BAKER
MR JOHN BAKOSH
MS REBECCA BALABANIS
MR & MRS DEAN BASTOUNES

MR & MRS JAMES BECKER
MR & MRS MATTHEW BECKER
MR & MRS DEMITRIOS LIVADITIS BEJANIS
MR & MRS JOHN BELTRAMO
MR & MRS GEORGE BERBAS
MR & MRS DONALD BIANUCCI
MR & MRS BRIAN BIRKLAND
MR & MRS WILLIAM BLATHRAS
MR & MRS JAMES BOARDEN
MR & MRS STEVEN BOKIES
MR JAMES BOKIOS
MR WILLIAM BOLAS
MRS GARIFALIA BOLOS
MR & MRS MICHAEL BORKOWSKI
MR & MS NICK BOUDROS
MR & MRS JAMES BOUNARDJ
MR & MRS MICHAEL BOZNOS
MRS TOULA BOZNOS
MR & MRS CHRISTOPHER CAPRIO
MR & MRS DAN CARAS
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MRS ANN MAGGIO

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Parish Happenings

Visit to Johansen Farms in Bolingbrook
October 22, 2011

Assumption-Chicago  The Assumption Newsletter  Fifth Issue 2011 Page 15
The Monastery of St. Catherine ...

Prepared by George Dervis

The earliest writing that mentions The Holy Monastery of Saint Catherine appeared around 960-964 AD, produced by a Symeon Metaphrastes who included an account of both her life and the translation of her relics from Alexandria to Sinai following her martyrdom. Saint Gregory of Nyssa first introduced the Burning Bush as a metaphor for the virginity of Mary in the fourth century, who was likened to the Bush that burned without being consumed. In 1214, the monastery’s Typikon introduced Saint Catherine into the liturgy and established November 24 as the feast day for Saint Catherine and Saint Merkourios. In a recent study, it was explained that:

“Through the placement of a church dedicated to the Mother of God at the foot of Mount Sinai, the unifying theme of the entire site in its earliest years was one of theophany – the appearance of God to man. Thus, the place where God revealed Himself to Moses became associated, through the dedication of the church, with the Virgin.”

Located at the base of Mount Sinai (also known as Mount Moses or Djebel Mousa), lies the site of the biblical Burning Bush. Also located here is a walled monastery, which initially took the name, in Greek “tou Batou” (Virgin of the Burning Bush), which also relates to the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary, viz. several icons of the Holy Virgin are shown with the flames of the Burning Bush as a background. Sometime later, the main church within the monastery was officially dedicated to the Transfiguration of Our Saviour, when the large mosaic of the Transfiguration on the apse over the altar was installed during the mid sixth century. The monastery itself was re-dedicated once again, this time to Saint Catherine of Alexandria, once her relics were discovered at the summit of the highest peak in Sinai. This peak has since become known as Jebel Katrina, or Mount Saint Catherine and lies adjacent to Jebel Mousa, or Mount Moses.

Justinian I undertook the project to build this heavily fortified monastery in the mid 6th century, surrounding the Shrine of the Burning Bush. The original site of the Burning Bush is located directly behind the Altar of The Transfiguration Church. At this place, lies the Chapel of the Burning Bush with its own Holy Altar. The pilgrim enters this, the holiest place of the monastery, without shoes in remembrance of the commandment of God to Moses: “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereupon thou standest is holy ground” (Ex. 3:5). The Holy Altar of the Chapel does not contain or lie over any sacred relics of saints which is the conventional rule, but lies over the roots of the original Burning Bush. The descendant of the The Burning Bush continues to flourish since it was transplanted in order to build the Holy Altar over its original roots. Interestingly, it is the only bush of its kind that manages to grow in the Sinai Peninsula.

The monastery complex has miraculously survived destruction in such a harsh natural environment, as well as under frequent threat of hostile attacks. It received a Proclamation of Protection from the Islamic Prophet Mohammed, which protected it down through to the present day. Also, the monastery’s priceless iconography and other artistic treasures were protected during the period of iconoclasm during the 8th and 9th centuries, owing to its isolation and location in the vast region of North Africa which was then under the control of Islam.

Architecturally speaking, the monastery features massive wall fortifications. Within this enclosure, lies the main church with its multi-story bell tower and the church’s precious mosaic of the Transfiguration in its apse. Also, it has its original carved wooden doors which were put in place by Justinian I in the mid sixth century.

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The Monastery of St. Catherine’s Chapel ...

Prepared by George Dervis

continued from page 15

The monastic complex also features a fully functioning mosque that serves the monastery’s local Islamic workers who have also acted, historically, as loyal defenders during frequent attacks. The monastery’s renowned library is also protected. The collection of over 3,000 manuscripts, books and documents is second only to the Vatican’s collection in terms of their religious importance. There exists an extensive system of passageways which provides secure movement within the complex. Also, one notices a number of overhanging enclosures that extend out from the walls, allowing

The monastery has a reliable supply of fresh water, as it is situated above an aquifer from which water is drawn through a system of wells. It also possesses sizeable gardens which lie adjacent to, but outside its walls. Newly built facilities to house visiting pilgrims are also located just outside the entrance. Recently, paved roads and parking facilities have been added to allow easy access to the monastery in order to accommodate the traffic that visits this site daily.

References used in this article:
Typikon: A book delineating administrating organization and rules of behavior of a coenobitic monastery, including instruction for religious services.
Consecration of St. Catherine Chapel
May 6, 2012

Twice
Once in the Lifetime of a Church

ASSUMPTION
Greek Orthodox Church of Chicago
601 S. Central Avenue • 773-626-3114
**BAPTISMS**
Daughter of George and Jennifer Vlahos, taking the name, *Despina*
   Godparents: Steve and Jane Vlahos
Daughter of Michael and Dena Boznos, taking the name, *Sophia*
   Godparents: Renee and Michael Haas
Daughter of Michael and Andrea Gekas, taking the name, *Sophia Anastasia*
   Godparent: Matthew Gekas

**WEDDINGS**
Nicole Riha and Constantine Vlahos were joined in Holy Matrimony.
   Sponsor: John Vlahos
Malinda Youroukos and Chris Turano were joined in Holy Matrimony.
   Sponsor: Andrea Brown
John Ryan and Cindy Gruner were joined in Holy Matrimony.
   Sponsor: Pericles Georgopoulos
Stavroula Stathopoulos and Athanasios Karoubas were joined in Holy Matrimony.
   Sponsor: Sotirios Karoubas

**MEMORIALS**

**6 Months: 5 Years:**
James P. Dimitrion
Eleanor Georgalas
Patricia Rombakis
William Kouvelis

**10 Years:**
John Economos

**26 Years:**
George Terovolas

**27 Years:**
Catherine Terovolas

**31 Years:**
George Baziotes

**9 Months:**
Stefanos Georgafentis

**1 Year:**
Tyki (Sam) Coston
Tess Baziotes
Nicholas Manos

**2 Years:**
Sophia Banakis

**4 Years:**
Nicholas Dallas

Submit articles to the Church Office or to Tina Sarants at t.sarants@sbcglobal.net or (708) 660-0154.
Fifth Issue, 2011

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Important Upcoming Dates:

December 11th
Sunday Church School Christmas Pageant

December 17th
Christmas Carol at Drury Lane

December 24th
Christmas Eve Great Vespers

December 25th
Nativity of Our Lord and Savior,
Jesus Christ
Orthros and Divine Liturgy 8:30am

December 30th
Youth Outing - Harlem Globetrotters

January 1st, 2012
Circumcision of Our Lord and Savior,
Jesus Christ
Feast Day of Saint Basil the Great
Orthros and Divine Liturgy 8:30am

January 8th
Annual Parish and Metropolis
Cutting of the Vasilopitas

January 15th
Complimentary Annual Stewardship Brunch
Following Worship Services