A New Year: Continued Expectations

Luke 2: 41-52

Very Rev. Timothy G. Bakakos

As we have again found ourselves on the threshold of a New Year, we are looking at a new chapter of blank pages that are yet to be written. The year 2013 is fresh, and awaits our contribution and impact upon it as we are given the opportunity to offer our talents and gifts to God in a productive and constructive manner.

The Gospel Reading that is read during the Divine Liturgy on January 1st, is one that focuses upon relationships within the family. Specifically, in this instance, we are given the story about the time Mary and Joseph misplaced Jesus. It certainly must have been embarrassing. Saint Luke writes that Mary and Joseph were on their way home from visiting the temple in Jerusalem for the Passover celebration. They were among a large crowd of pilgrims traveling together, and Joseph and Mary thought Jesus was with the other children. They were probably unnerved to realize that somehow, he had been left behind.

Well, when Mary and Joseph realized that Jesus was not with them, they hurried back to the Holy City, and after three days of searching, finally found their bright 12-year-old son in the temple in deep discussions with the Rabbis.

“Did you not know,” Jesus said, “that I must be about my Father’s business?”

We should assume and note here that Jesus was a good kid. While theologically, we know and accept that He is God. He did come down to earth and take on humanity (human form), and we also see that the writers of the New Testament go to great pains to emphasize that Jesus was also a 'real person'. When He came into the world, He took on, in addition to His unique divinity, humanity in order to experience and become as we are subject to all of the temptations, heartaches and hurts you and I are capable of. We need to understand that, although Jesus was God, he was also a real 12-year-old boy.

The question I am occasionally asked is, “Did Mary ever have to discipline Jesus?” If He took on humanity, we would have to answer yes to that question, just like all loving parents are forced to discipline their children from time to time. Jesus was a good kid, but he still was a kid. Maybe that is why there is no record of His teen years.

So read the words that Saint Luke writes in this Gospel Reading as Jesus approached His 12th birthday: “And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was on him.”(v. 40) And here is what Saint Luke says about Jesus’ teen years: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.” (v. 51)

As we certainly would expect, Jesus was a good kid. We are also blessed to have so many good kids around our blessed Parish of Panagia. There are some boys and girls and young people in our own Congregation who are growing in favor with God and with their family and friends.

Parents certainly know that children have their own personalities and identities. And, every parent knows how

continued on page 2
difficult it is to ease up on the apron strings, not because we do not trust our young people, but because there is so much to fear.

Jesus was at that age in Jewish life when a boy begins taking on some of the responsibilities of adulthood. He was not trying to hurt his parents when he stayed behind at the Temple. He was simply following his heart, and sometimes following your heart can pose some real problems for those who love you and feel responsible for you.

I think we should notice that this story does have a happy ending. Mary and Joseph found Jesus in the temple; He came back home with them; and then, Saint Luke tells us, "he grew in favor with God and man."

Why did the story have a happy ending? It is the same reason most of the young people in this Church will turn out to be fine, responsible adults. Jesus knew Mary and Joseph cared about Him. And He knew God loved Him. This is a story of a family filled with love. They were devoted to one another, and to God.

Jesus was a child like each of us were......at least from the humanity part. He knew that his parents loved Him. That love was with Him all the way to the Cross. Jesus was a good kid, but even a good kid can make a parent sick with worry. Every parent in this Church knows what I am talking about. But fortunately, the story has a happy ending.

As we welcome this New Year of 2013, as responsible Orthodox Christians, we should take stock of what we have, where we are, and what we have accomplished. We are all blessed with abilities and talents and treasures that have been given to us by God. What we do with them, how we use them, and where we channel our energies for the glory of God, is something that is expected of each of us. We need to more seriously understand our faith, and continue to take a Christian-like approach to our beloved Parish of Panagia, to our parishioners, to our employees, and yes, to continue to respect our priests and hierarchy, who are servants and representatives of God. We need to know that our gifts and service to the Church are directly related to giving ‘back to God as we feel we have been blessed’.

Stewardship of our time, our talents, and our treasures shows what we are as Christians. It defines how well we understand the call by our Lord to follow His commandments and do as He does. Your Church needs your help; so offer your time, your talents, and your treasures wherever you can. The Parish Council need you. The choir needs you. The Sunday Church School needs you. And our Ladies Philoptochos Society needs you. In 2013, find a Parish Ministry that you can excel in, and give your full effort for the glory of God. You will gain much from that act, and you will be further blessed by God, for as you do service in His Name, that act of love and support will not go unnoticed.

And as we enter this New Year of 2013, let us continue to give thanks to our Lord for the many blessings that He showers us with each and every day. We should ask Him to guide us and our families and friends and all people to righteousness. And then, we should use this opportunity and look forward to this New Year with real hope, with true expectation, and with all our love and faith to our Heavenly Father, to continue to minister and lead us and our loved ones.

Jesus Christ is our beginning and He is our end. May the New Year 2013 bring you an even deeper understanding and love for the Grace of our Lord, and may He bless you and keep you and your family safe always.

Paternally,
+ Fr. Timothy
Parish Council President...

President’s Report
By Andrew Kanel

For the past two years I have had the privilege to address you as president of our beloved Panagia community. It has truly been an honor to serve you. In retrospect, the time has gone by quickly and we have had some major accomplishments.

After many years of research and discussion, the community voted to move forward with an elevator. We received our permits the week after Thanksgiving and work began in the north tower to start the process. Thanks to Tom Collis and his committee for their commitment to this project. Also, in 2012, the church was in need of a new phone system and Diane Berbas took point to find us the appropriate system that aligned to our needs.

Jack Woods and his team reviewed and worked on internet streaming our church services to those who are unable to attend. Tom Demos worked on introducing our community to Social Media. Dean Maggos and Father Timothy worked closely to complete all facets of the remodel of St. Catherine’s chapel. It was determined at that time that the chapel had never been consecrated. Peter Panton and his committee took the initiative of having the chapel consecrated and planned a weekend of festivities.

Administratively, James Lakerdas continued to work closely with Loretto Hospital and the corporate office of AQS. Dean Sarantos and I continued to strengthen our relationship with the principal and staff of Plato AQS. Dean has also worked to ensure that our presence is known throughout the Austin community, by working with various organizations in the community.

Christina, along with her Sunday School staff are responsible for our wonderful Sunday School program.

Our events have been a great success, too. Christina Arvanites was the key force in making sure our Labor Festivals went off without a hitch and that they were a success. Ted Pappas made sure the kitchen was at full capacity, prior to, day of and post festival.

Dean Bastounes delivered 2 outstanding Smokers that will go down in the history books.

Rosemarie Stewart for her tireless work and for making sure we always have some type of treat after the liturgy.

Many thanks to the entire Parish Council for your support and dedication these past 2 years. To James Lakerdas, Peter Panton, John Vasiliades and Bill Vranas for sharing your guidance and experience with me over the last 2 years.

Nancy it has been a pleasure to work with you. Thanks to you and the ladies of our Philoptochos for always stepping up to assist.

Lou Malevitis, thank you for your continuous support and direction.

Tina Sarantos, thanks for for all of the efforts you put into the creating the newsletter.

Marika and Niko thank you for having the choir loft and Psalterio filled with voices.

Jim Tsiolis thanks for all of your contributions from coffee, to assistance at the festival, but especially for all the tickets you sell to make sure our Smoker is a success.

To Ray, Yanni, Gail and Georgia, thanks for being on point daily to keep our church operating.

To my mom, dad, Nick, Michelle Tia and Jim thanks for your love and support.

Father Athanasios I am glad you are a part of Panagia and I look forward to the programs you will continue to implement.

Father Timothy it has been an honor to work with you. You have not only been a spiritual advisor, but a leader and partner. I am grateful for the guidance you provided.

May you all have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!
Philoptochos…

Philoptochos News
By Ann Dervis

Once again our sisterhood has had a full schedule. On November 4 we offered Artoclasia for our community and in remembrance of our patron Saints Cosmas and Damianan. Following liturgy a second tray was passed and the collection was sent to our Patriarchate in Constantinople. We served coffee and sweets in Plato Hall.

November 10
We held a membership tea in Plato Hall. Our speaker gave a fun and informative program on dressing appropriately. A delicious luncheon was served.

November 15
The general meeting was held to make plans for upcoming events.

November 24 and 25
St. Catherine’s vespers and feast day. Metropolitan Iakovos was here both days. Our Philoptochos sisters served refreshments after both services. On the 25th women named Catherine were asked to pour or serve and receive congratulations on their feast day. Chronia Polla!

December 1
Our annual Christmas luncheon and sing-a-long was held at the Greek Islands Restaurant in Lombard.

December 11
Feed-the-Hungry at Annunciation Cathedral. Soula Boudros and Elaine Vassiliades were the chair persons.

December 16
is the Holiday Bake Sale. Come to Plato Hall after the liturgy and pageant and buy treats for the Christmas Holidays and then later in the day visit the Metropolis Open House on Burton Place.

Our best wishes to all for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Save the Date! March 10, 2013
Assumption Philoptochos Annual Apokreatiko Glendi

Remember to circle the date and plan to attend this enduring family event!

Go to the Assumption web page www.assumptionchicago.org to see photos from past events.
Youth Ministry...

Ringing in the New Year with New Ministries
By Father Athanasios Papagiannis

As the new year is upon, us I would like to express my gratitude for the people who have contributed to the formation of new ministries at Panagia’s. With respect to our children, we have formed both GOYA and Jr. GOYA program for our junior high and high school aged children; and starting in January we will begin the JOY program for children from kindergarten to fifth grade.

It’s interesting, whenever we think of stewardship, we tend to think of the donation of dollars, but real stewardship consists of giving our talents to the Church. It’s more than just paying our dues.

Stewardship is different that volunteerism. Whereas, people need to be asked to volunteer for things; stewards take it upon themselves and become involved. They see what God has done in Jesus Christ, and they are so moved that they contribute to this wonderful tradition of ours through the various ministries.

Stewardship is the appropriate response to God’s love.

The greater the number of stewards a parish has, the greater the possibility that the parish engages in what’s called a shared ministry, where the ministries are flowing from the people instead of solely the priests.

Churches need ministries and ministries need stewards. It’s as simple as that.

I’ve been greatly encouraged by the number of parishioners who fit this description of stewardship. These wonderful people inspire others and contribute to the life of the church in so many different ways. As we close the year and enter the new year, I would personally like to thank all those stewards whose work so often goes unnoticed.

May God continue to bless all of us in year to come and may He continue to bless the stewards of this parish and the ministries they contribute to.

In Christ:
+Fr. Athanasios

Sunday Church School ...

February 10th, Godparent’s Sunday Godparents are invited to attend service and visit their godchild’s classroom after liturgy. A light lunch will be provided in Plato Hall. Invitations will be provided to the children and distributed during the Sunday Church School classes during the first part of January.

St. John Chrysostom Oratorical and Fine Arts Festival The topics for the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical and Fine Arts Festival have been released and can be found on www.goarch.org. Registration forms and information will be distributed in Sunday Church School classrooms for the junior and senior divisions. Please contact the 7th &8th grade Sunday Church School teacher, Mrs. Tina Sarantos for information—t.sarantos@sbcglobal.net.
Parish Happenings...

Decorate the Hall Event, December 1, 2012

Members of the Assumption community gathered to decorate Plato Hall to celebrate the Christmas season. A Christmas tree was set up and decorated by the children, there were ornament and ginger bread crafts for the children. Dinner was served and a special guest appeared! It was fun for all.

The Assumption Grand Raffle Dinner 2012

Sunday Church School ...

Mrs. Christina Arvanites

Many thanks to all who generously supported our Loretto Toy Drive, with your help with were able to provide just over 90 gifts to the less fortunate children of the Austin community and bring a smile to their faces. A special thank you to Michelle Kanel and Helen Torchia for their help labeling/wrapping and bagging all the gifts and of course Fr. Athanasios and Yianni for delivering them.

Thank you for the generous donations for the food drive. On December 9 the food was packed into boxes for delivery to families and the Circle Ministry food pantry. Thank you to Voula Spyropoulos, Elizabeth Koulouris, Eileen Szubert, Chris Panos, Patty Laggas, Dean and Tina Sarantos,

We are happy to announce the addition of JOY for grades K-5. The first meeting will take place on Friday, January 4th at 7pm at the River Forest Community Center, 8020 Madison St. Please see Fr. Athanasios, Tom Demos, Erin Godellas or Georgia Tsaganos for more information or if you have any questions.
An active Orthodox Christian Steward is an active participant in the life of the Church. The parish encourages all who accept the Orthodox Faith to become practicing Stewards. Each year the Steward is expected to carefully review his or her personal circumstances and make a commitment of time, talent, and treasure to support the Parish and her Ministries, which in turn support the National Ministries of our Archdiocese, Metropolises, and institutions.

**Effective stewardship ministry** is not a single event or project. Rather, it is going out to our people wherever they are in their walk with Christ, listening to their concerns, helping them to realize their importance as branches of the True Vine and encouraging them to offer their gifts in His service. We use various resources to support our efforts, but unless we meet with our people personally, sincerely listen to their ideas and concerns, and share a vision for the future of the parish, our efforts will not reach their full potential.

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**A Special Thank You...**

Donation made to:
Holy Theophany Orthodox Chapel
Located in Walworth, Wisconsin

The Altar from St. Catherine’s at Holy Theophany

Archpriest Thomas Mueller
Fr. Protodeacon George Potym

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit…”
Matthew 28:19

To all at Assumption Greek Orthodox Church,
Holy Theophany cannot express our gratitude enough for the beautiful altar table that you gave us. It is the centerpiece of our modest little chapel and exudes the presence of the Holy Spirit and the spirit of your Church. We are blessed to have your help and support.

Yours in Christ,
Holy Theophany Orthodox Chapel

[Names of donors]
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Stewardship List thru November 2012...

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**Parish Registry October-November 2012**

**40 DAY BLESSING**

Daughter of Stacy and James Buonincontro

**BAPTISMS**

Son of Demitrios and Joanne Skoufis, was Baptized, taking the name William,
  Godparent: Demetri and Eleni Tsilimigras

**WEDDINGS**

Lefkothea Kappos and Ioannis Zografos were joined in Holy Matrimony.
  Sponsor: Chris Kappos
Katherine Askounis and Scott Thomas were joined in Holy Matrimony.
  Sponsor: Nicholas White
Andrea Georgiou and Jimmy Cios were joined in Holy Matrimony.
  Sponsor: Ioannis Ousoultzoglou

**FALLEN ASLEEP IN THE LORD**

+ Kay L. Politis
+ Haido Argyris
+ Ernest (Anastasios) Analitis
+ Spiro Skuteris

+ Frances L. Kuchuris
+ John C. Molls

**MEMORIALS**

**40 Days:**
Alexander Psarras
Haido Argyris
Spiro Skuteris
Ernest Analitis
Kay L. Politis
George L. Strike

Ethel (Athanasia) Gianoulis
Philip Giannopoulos

**3 Years:**

**5 Years:**
Nicholas Dallas

**2 Years:**
Peter (Panagioti) Ganios
Fifth Issue, 2012

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Important Upcoming Dates:

January 1, 2013
Feast Day of St. Basil

January 6
Feast Day of Holy Epiphany

January 7
Feast Day of St. John the Baptist

January 13
Assumption Annual Cutting of the Vasilopita
Metropolis Annual Cutting of the Vasiloptia - 6pm (St. Nectarios Church, Palatine, IL)

January 20
Annual Stewardship Brunch in Plato Hall

February 10
Sunday Church School
GodParent’s Sunday

March 10
Assumption Philoptochos Apokreatiko Glendi

March 18
Start of Great and Holy Lent

April 28
Palm Sunday
Annual Palm Sunday Luncheon in Plato Hall

March 18
The Feast of Pascha (Easter)