



# Christian Light

February 2022 — Vol. 34



## Fr. Philip's February Message

### ***"Christ is the Great Lover"***

***The Need for a Christianity that can Reconnect  
with its Forgotten Affirmation of Life***

In this issue of "Christian Light," we host part of an important interview with Chrysostom Stamoulis, Dean of the University of Thessaloniki School of Theology and Professor of Systematic Theology. The full interview is available on the April 24, 2019 issue of *Schedia*.



You have said that the Incarnation of the Word of God is the par excellence example of "immigration." What do you mean by this?

The Incarnate Divine Word of God takes on the foreign, the other, that which is entirely different. This is a voluntary migration, through which He became a foreigner and an outcast, in order to express a love that ultimately ends up on the cross. *Christ is the great lover.* His sojourn on earth was tragic. He was considered a foreigner by his own people, to the extent that they hated him and ultimately killed him as a rejected outcast. He was not totally understood by his disciples, his mother, or even by creation as a whole. He even was a stranger to life and death itself, which he conquered forever. We are called to imitate the way of the Divine Word and to be open to relationships outside of the boundaries set by national, ethnic, racial or religious criteria. The embracing, the full acceptance of - and not merely the "tolerance" of - the foreigner and the stranger is the true realization of ascetical love. Of course, many wrongly think that the Church is made up only of ritual practices and the adherence to "religious" rules and regulations. Thus we are confronted frequently with attitudes and mentalities centered around a sort of idealistic, legalistic "purity" that

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morphs into an "Orthodox idolatry" and "spirituality," where God and spirituality are so distant that they are unable to relate to human beings and the world. This ultimately is the ailment of an ideological Christianity that ignores the true human being. This leads to a sterile activism that randomly identifies with anything that satisfies a sort of psychological autism where the other is actually entirely absent and not seen as the meeting point of the individual self with the many. Rather, it becomes an opportunity for an inward-looking savior syndrome.

**You have said that when she forgets her nature the Church has a problem with love. What do you mean by this?**

The quality of a civilization can only be measured by its stance on love and death. These are ultimate realities, and when they are damaged the sum total of life is mortally traumatized and true life is alienated. The stance of Orthodox theology and the Church on the foundational subjects of love, sexuality, desire and pleasure has sometimes in the past, and even to this day, become the Achilles heel of Orthodoxy. Sexuality often was incriminated and demonized. These positions come straight from ancient Greek thought (Plato and Stoicism), Hellenistic Judaism, gnosticism and Syrian monasticism; the great tragedy is that modern Orthodoxy often baptizes such positions as "tradition." The result of all this is a violation of the very essence of the Gospel and this distorts the ecclesial event into a closed system, a desert place inhabited by loveless, confused beings who can only project guilt regarding their created identity.

**Why has the theologically problematic notion that Christianity sees the body and matter as corrupt gotten so much traction?**

The greatest sin is that in the history of the Church we have often been tempted to "spiritualize" and "soul-ize" the human being to the detriment of his physical reality, and this is something that is contrary to the Gospel. Actually, it would be accurate to say that there is no greater materialism than true Christianity precisely because it bestows eternity upon the flesh through the resurrection. Any other kind of materialism that ends up in the grave is lacking and faulty. Unfortunately, under the influence of a later bizarre form of gnosticism, Christianity sometimes tended not to accept the human being as is. There has been a proclivity to assume that the human



being is really the human being minus his nature; an estranged body and soul imprisoned within the ideology of “original sin”. That’s why we see this attitude toil to create another kind of human being, which certainly has nothing to do with the mystery of the Incarnation and the real human being created by the love and philanthropy of God. One of the best examples of this is the case of women, which during the time after they give birth and during their menstrual cycle are wrongly barred from communion, isolated and considered unclean in body and soul.

### **The Mystery of Life**

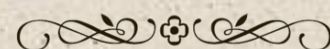
**You have stressed that the “exile of death” is a prevalent ailment of our society. What do you mean by this?**

We have a tendency to shove death under the rug and to build a life without death, so much so that we are unable even to articulate the denial of death that we strive for. Today it is well known that the illegitimate child, the “elephant in the room,” of our technological civilization is death. It has become the object of social denial, a subject matter prohibited by good manners. A tangible example of this exile of death evident in the horizon of people’s lives today is the distancing of the dead from domestic space such as the home immediately after their death, their storage in specially fabricated places up to the moment of their burial, as well as the geographical exile of the cemetery from the center of cities and villages (i.e., the centrally located church graveyard of the olden days has all but disappeared). The excuse that this is for health or hygienic reasons is often cited, but today we know that the real issue is the denial of the sacramental character of death. The result of this inability of contemporary man to accept death is, without doubt, connected directly to his inability to accept life! The alienation of death together with all ailments and illnesses is really the alienation of life. Indeed, this denial of life, which presupposes and is not only the result of the denial of death, is always done in the name of life! It’s done in the name of

a sick earthly “immortality,” which boils down to the absolutization of the moment and the studious dismissal of all vistas that point to the eschaton.

**Don’t we often hear the opposite in Christianity, i.e., an overemphasis of death?**

If the first way we commit a disservice to death is by denying it, the second way is by “naturalizing” it and accepting it as normal in the context of an extremist morbid “asceticism” and a “denial of the flesh.” Death in this case prevails depressingly over life, which it, in the end, snuffs out. What is claimed in this distortion is that the only things that are of value are connected with the “other life” and that our historical life in the here and now is an illusionary sinful dream that has to be overcome so the idolized “life beyond” can prevail. According to this view the only meaning of life is to prepare for death. This attitude can’t grasp that the healthy “memory of death” and death itself are crucial for participation in the mystery of life. The permanent concern of this distorted view is if there is life after death, but it never considers if there is life *before* death! It’s as if there are two totally unrelated lives: one here now and one somewhere else over there later. For Christianity, however, life is one and a continuum. Therefore, the extent to which one lives his life here as dynamically as possible, so much so will he live in the age to come. The human being is made for incorruptibility and life. Death cannot be accepted by anyone, and especially by a Christian, because it is a defeated entity. The great poet Kiki Demoula once told me: “I don’t think I’m a Christian because I can’t accept death.” “But that’s exactly why you *are* a Christian!” I responded. Death certainly is ferocious because it splatters to smithereens the unity of life. Who can accept within himself that the relations he had with people during his life have an expiration date? As my father was ailing with cancer I asked him: “Do you fear death?” He thought about it a little and answered: “No, the only thing I am concerned with is if we will be together.”





## «Ο Χριστός είναι ὁ μέγας ἐρωτικός»

Τὴν ἀνάγκη γιὰ ἕναν χριστιανισμό πού θά ἐπανασυνδεθεῖ μὲ τὴ χαμένη του ἐρωτικότητα καὶ τὴν ἐπιθυμία γιὰ ζωή, ἐπισημαίνει ἕνας καταξιωμένος θεολόγος.

Στὸ τρέχον τεῦχος τοῦ *Χριστιανικοῦ Φωτός* φιλοξενοῦμε μέρος μίας πολὺ σημαντικῆς συνεντεύξεως τοῦ Χρυσόστομου Σταμούλη, καθηγητοῦ Συστηματικῆς Θεολογίας καὶ Κοσμήτορα τῆς Θεολογικῆς Σχολῆς τοῦ Ἀριστοτελείου Πανεπιστημίου Θεσσαλονίκης. Ἡ πλήρης συνέντευξη πρωτοδημοσιεύθηκε στὸ περιοδὶο *Σχεδία* στίς 24 Ἀπριλίου τοῦ 2019.

Ἔχετε σημειώσει ὅτι ἡ ἐνανθρώπηση τοῦ Λόγου τοῦ Θεοῦ Πατέρα εἶναι ἡ κατεξοχήν μετανάστευση. Πῶς ἐρμηνεύετε αὐτὴ τὴ θεολογικὴ ἀνάγνωση τῆς μετανάστευσης;

Ὁ Θεὸς Λόγος σαρκούμενος προσέλαβε τὸ ξένο, τὸ ἄλλο, τὸ ἐντελῶς διαφορετικὸ. Πρόκειται γιὰ μίαν ἐθελοντικὴ μετανάστευση, ὅπου ἐγινε ὁ ἴδιος ξένος καὶ ἀλήτης, ἔτσι ὥστε νὰ φανερώσει τὸ μυστήριό τῆς ἀγάπης πού φτάνει μέχρι τὸ Σταυρό. Ὁ Χριστὸς εἶναι ὁ μέγας ἐρωτικός. Ἡ ἐπὶ γῆς πορεία τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ὑπῆρξε τραγικὴ. Ξένος γιὰ τοὺς ὁμόφυλους ξένους, πού τὸν μίσησαν καὶ τὸν θανάτωσαν σὰν ξένο. Ξένος γιὰ τοὺς δικούς του μαθητές, τὴν ἴδια του τὴ μητέρα, γιὰ τὴν κτίση ὁλάκερη, γιὰ τὴ ζωή μὰ καὶ τὸ θάνατο, τὸν ὁποῖο νίκησε μίαν γιὰ πάντα. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος καλεῖται νὰ μιμηθεῖ τὸν τρόπο τοῦ Θεοῦ Λόγου καὶ νὰ ἀνοίξει τίς σχέσεις του πέρα ἀπὸ τὰ ὅρια πού θέτουν κριτήρια ἔθνους, φυλῆς, φύλων ἢ θρησκείας. Τὸ ἀγκάλιασμα, ἡ ὁλοκληρωτικὴ πρόσληψη καὶ ὄχι ἀπλὰ ἡ ἀνοχή τοῦ ξένου καὶ τοῦ ἄγνωστου φανερώνει τὴν ἀληθινὴ διακονία τῆς ἀσκητικῆς ἀγάπης. Βέβαια, γιὰ κάποιους, ἡ Ἐκκλησία περιορίζεται σὲ πράξεις τελετουργικῆς, σὲ μίαν κάποια διεκπεραίωση. Βρισκόμαστε, ἔτσι, συχνὰ ἐνώπιον ἀντιλήψεων καὶ νοοτροπιῶν καθαρότητας πού εἰσάγουν μίαν κάποια «ὀρθόδοξη εἰδωλολατρία» καὶ «πνευματικότητα», ἐκεῖ ὅπου ὁ

Θεὸς ἀδυνατεῖ νὰ σχετιστεῖ μὲ τὸν κόσμον καὶ τὸν ἄνθρωπο. Καὶ ἂν αὕτῃ εἶναι ἡ ἀσθένεια ἑνός, ἐντέλει, ἰδεολογικοῦ χριστιανισμοῦ, πού ἀγνοεῖ τὸν ἴδιο τὸν ἄνθρωπο, συναντοῦμε συχνὰ τὴν ἀσθένεια ἑνός στεῖρου ἀκτιβισμοῦ, πού ταυτίζεται ἀδιάκριτα μὲ ὅτιδήποτε ικανοποιεῖ τὸν ψυχολογικὸ του καθωσπρεπισμό, καὶ ὅπου ὁ ἄλλος εἶναι πάλι ὁλοκληρωτικὰ ἀπῶν, καθὼς δὲν ἀποτελεῖ τὸ σημεῖο συνάντησης τοῦ ἐγὼ στὸ ἐμεῖς, ἀλλὰ τὸν τόπο φανέρωσης τῶν ἰδιοτελῶν συνδρόμων τοῦ εὐεργέτη καὶ τοῦ σωτῆρα.

Ἔχετε ἐπισημάνει ὅτι «ὁ ἔρωτας βάζει δύσκολα στὴν Ἐκκλησία. Ἐβαζε στὸ παρελθόν;... τὸ κάνει καὶ Σήμερα;». Τὶ ἐννοεῖτε;

Ἡ ποιότητα ἑνός πολιτισμοῦ δὲν μπορεῖ παρὰ νὰ μετρίεται ἀπὸ τὴ στάση πού αὐτὸς κρατᾷ ἀπέναντι στὸν ἔρωτα καὶ τὸ θάνατο. Πραγματικότητες ὀριακές, πού ὁ τραυματισμὸς τοὺς τραυματίζει θανάσιμα τὸ σύνολο τῆς ὑπαρξης καὶ ὁδηγεῖ στὴν ἔξοδο ἀπὸ τὴν πραγματικὴ ζωή. Ἡ στάση τῆς ὀρθόδοξης θεολογίας ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς Ἐκκλησίας ἀπέναντι στὰ θεμελιακὰ θέματα τοῦ ἔρωτα, τῆς σεξουαλικότητας, τῆς ἐπιθυμίας καὶ τῶν ἡδονῶν ἀποτελεσε στὸ παρελθόν, ἀποτελεῖ καὶ σήμερα τὴν ἀχίλλειο πτέρνα τῆς Ὀρθοδοξίας. Ὁ ἔρωτας ἐνοχοποιήθηκε καὶ δαιμονοποιήθηκε. Πρόκειται γιὰ θέσεις πού προέρχονται ἀπὸ τὰ σπλάγχνα τῆς ἀρχαίας ἐλληνικῆς σκέψης (Πλάτων, Στωϊκοί), τὸν ἐλληνιστικὸ ἰουδαϊσμό, τὸν γνωστικισμό καὶ τὸν συριακὸ μοναχισμό, καὶ ἐδῶ βρίσκεται ἡ μεγάλη τραγωδία τῆς σύγχρονης Ὀρθοδοξίας: στὴν πίστη πῶς ὅλη αὕτῃ ἡ παραχάραξη τοῦ Χριστιανικοῦ μηνύματος ἀποτελεῖ παραμονή στὴν πιστότητα τῆς χριστιανικῆς παράδοσης. Συνέπεια, ὅλων τῶν παραπάνω, πού εἶναι βιασμὸς τῆς ὀντολογίας τοῦ Εὐαγγελίου, ὑπῆρξε σὲ ἀρκετὲς περιπτώσεις ἡ μετατροπὴ τοῦ ἐκκλησιαστικοῦ γεγονότος σὲ κλειστὸ σύστημα, σὲ ἔρημη χώρα πού κατοικεῖται ἀπὸ ἀνέραστους ἀνθρώπους, ἀνθρώπους μπερδεμένους πού φέρουν πάντα ἐπάνω τους τὴν ἐνοχὴ τῆς φυσικῆς τους ἀλήθειας

Ὅντως, ἔχει καλλιεργηθεῖ ἡ αἴσθηση ὅτι ὁ χριστιανισμὸς εἶναι μίαν θρησκεία τῆς πνευματικότητας πού στέκεται ἀπέναντι στὴ σωματικότητα καὶ τὴν ὑλικότητα, πού θεωροῦνται διεφθαρμένα.

Ἡ μεγάλη ἁμαρτία εἶναι ὅτι ψυχοποιήσαμε, πνευματοποιήσαμε τὸν ἄνθρωπο, κάτι πού βρίσκεται



σὲ ἀντίφαση μὲ τὸ Εὐαγγέλιο. Στὴν οὐσία, δὲν ὑπάρχει γνησιότερος ὕλισμός ἀπὸ τὸν χριστιανικό, διότι δίνει στὴ σάρκα αἰωνιότητα. Ὅποιοσδήποτε ἄλλος ὕλισμός ποὺ τελειώνει στὸν τάφο εἶναι λειψὸς καὶ ἀνάπηρος. Δυστυχῶς, κάτω ἀπὸ τὶς ἐπιδράσεις ἐνὸς ὄψιμου καὶ ιδιόμορφου γνωστικισμοῦ, ὁ χριστιανισμός δὲν δέχθηκε σχεδὸν ποτὲ τὸν ἄνθρωπο ὡς ἔχει. Πίστεψε καὶ ἐξακολουθεῖ νὰ πιστεύει πῶς ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἶναι αὐτό ποὺ εἶναι μεῖον τῆ φύσης του, ἓνα σῶμα καὶ μία ψυχὴ φυλακισμένα στὴν ἰδεολογία τοῦ προπατορικοῦ ἁμαρτήματος. Γι' αὐτὸ ἀναλώθηκε στὰ ὅρια τῆς ἀνθρωπολογίας του – ὑπόλογης πάντα στὸ μυστήριο τῆς σάρκωσης, ὅπου ὁ Θεὸς προσλαμβάνει τὸν ἄνθρωπο στὸ σύνολό του – στὴ δημιουργία ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ἄλλου, ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου ποὺ σίγουρα δὲν εἶναι ὁ ἄνθρωπος ποὺ ἔπλασε ἡ ἀγάπη καὶ ἡ φιλανθρωπία τοῦ Θεοῦ. Κλασικότερη περίπτωση ὅλων ἡ περίπτωση τῶν γυναικῶν, οἱ ὁποῖες κατὰ τὴν περίοδο τῆς λοχείας τους, ὅπως ἐξάλλου καὶ κατὰ τὸν καιρὸ τῆς ἐμμήνου ρύσεώς τους, θεωροῦνται σωματικὰ καὶ ψυχικὰ ἀκάθαρτες!

#### ΤΟ ΜΥΣΤΗΡΙΟ ΤΗΣ ΖΩΗΣ

**Ἔχετε τονίσει ὅτι ἐκεῖνο ποὺ κυριαρχεῖ στὶς μέρες μας εἶναι ἡ «ἐξορία τοῦ θανάτου». Τὶ ἀκριβῶς σημαίνει;**

Ὁ ἄνθρωπος φοβᾶται τὸ θάνατο καὶ χτίζει ἔτσι μία ζωὴ χωρὶς θάνατο, ποὺ τοῦ ἀφαιρεῖ ἀκόμη καὶ αὐτὴ τὴ δυνατότητα νὰ τὸν ἀρνηθεῖ. Εἶναι κοινὰ ἀποδεκτὸ σήμερα πῶς ὁ θάνατος ἀποτελεῖ τὸ ἀποπαῖδι τοῦ τεχνικοῦ πολιτισμοῦ. Ἀντικείμενο ἀπαγόρευσης καὶ κοινωνικῆς ἀρνήσεως ποὺ ἐπιβάλλει ὁ καθωσπρεπισμός. Ἀπὸ παράδειγμα τούτης τῆς ἐξορίας τοῦ θανάτου ἀπὸ τὸ πεδίο τῆς ζωῆς τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀποτελεῖ ἡ ἀπομάκρυνση τῶν κεκοιμημένων ἀπὸ τὸν οἰκεῖο χώρο, τὸ σπῖτι, ἀμέσως μετὰ τὸ θάνατό τους, ἡ φύλαξή τους σὲ εἰδικὰ διαμορφωμένους χώρους μέχρι καὶ τὴ στιγμὴ τῆς κήδευσής τους, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡ τοπικὴ ἐξορία τοῦ κοιμητηρίου ἀπὸ τὸ κέντρο τῶν πόλεων καὶ τῶν χωριῶν. Συνήθως, ἡ πρόφαση γιὰ τούτη τὴν ἀπομάκρυνση τῶν νεκρῶν ἀπὸ τὸν χώρον τῶν ζώντων σχετίζεται μὲ λόγους ὑγείας καὶ ὑγιεινῆς, ἀλλὰ ὅλοι σήμερα γνωρίζουμε ὅτι τὸ μεῖζον πρόβλημα εἶναι ἡ ἀφαιμάξη τοῦ μυστηριακοῦ χαρακτήρα τοῦ θανάτου. Ἀποτέλεσμα τούτης τῆς ἀδυναμίας τοῦ σύγχρονου ἀνθρώπου νὰ ἀποδεχθεῖ τὸ θάνατο ἀποτελεῖ, δίχως ἄλλο, καὶ ἡ ἀδυναμία του νὰ

ἀποδεχθεῖ τὴ ζωὴ. Ἡ ἀπώθηση τοῦ θανάτου, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῆς ἀσθένειας, τῆς ἀρρώστιας, συνιστᾷ στ' ἀλήθεια ἀπώθηση τῆς ἴδιας τῆς ζωῆς. Βέβαια, τούτη ἡ ἀρνήση τῆς ζωῆς, τῆς ὁποίας προϋπόθεση καὶ ὄχι ἀπλὰ ἀποτέλεσμα εἶναι ἡ ἀρνήση τοῦ θανάτου, γίνεται πάντα στὸ ὄνομα τῆς ζωῆς. Στὸ ὄνομα μίας νοσηρῆς ἐπίγειας «ἀθανασίας», ποὺ ταυτίζεται μὲ τὴν ἀπολυτοποίηση τῆς στιγμῆς καὶ ἀγνοεῖ ἐπιδεικτικὰ τὴ δυνατότητα τῶν ἐσχάτων.

**Δὲν συναντοῦμε, ὅμως, καὶ τὸ ἀντίθετο στὸν χριστιανισμό; Μία ἀποδοχὴ τοῦ θανάτου;**

Ἐὰν ὁ πρῶτος τρόπος μὲ τὸν ὁποῖο συντελεῖται τὸ ἔγκλημα ἐνάντια στὸ θάνατο εἶναι ἡ ἀρνήσή του, ὁ δεύτερος τρόπος εἶναι ἡ «ἀποδοχὴ» του, μέσα ἀπὸ τὸν ἀπολυτοποιημένο «ἀσκητισμό» καὶ τὴν ἀρνήση τῆς σάρκας. Ὁ θάνατος στὴν περίπτωσή αὐτὴ κυριαρχεῖ καταθλιπτικὰ πάνω στὴ ζωὴ, τὴν ὁποία, ἐντέλει, ἀφανίζει. Τὰ πάντα εἶναι ἄλλοῦ καὶ ἡ ἱστορία μία παραισθητικὴ ἁμαρτία ποὺ πρέπει νὰ ξεπεραστεῖ προκειμένου νὰ κυριαρχήσει τὸ εἰδωλοποιημένο ἐπέκεινα. Τὸ μόνον νόημα τῆς ζωῆς συνίσταται στὴν προετοιμασίαν γιὰ τὸ θάνατο. Σὲ μία συνεχῆ ἀπουσία ποὺ ἀγνοεῖ πῶς ἡ μνήμη τοῦ θανάτου, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ ἴδιος ὁ θάνατος, ἀποτελεῖ τὴ μόνη δυνατότητα γιὰ μετοχὴ στὸ μυστήριο τῆς ζωῆς. Ὁ μόνιμος καημὸς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας εἶναι ἂν ὑπάρχει ζωὴ μετὰ τὸ θάνατο, ἀλλὰ δὲν ἀναλογιστήκαμε ποτὲ ἂν ἐντὸς τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, πλέον, ὑπάρχει ζωὴ πρὶν ἀπὸ τὸ θάνατο. Ὑπάρχει ἡ αἴσθησις ὅτι ὑπάρχουν δύο διαφορετικὲς ζωές: μία ζωὴ ἐδῶ καὶ μία ζωὴ μετὰ. Γιὰ τὸν χριστιανισμό, ὅμως, ἡ ζωὴ εἶναι μία καὶ συνεχῆς. Ἄρα, ὅσο πιὸ δυναμικὰ ζεῖ κανεὶς ἐδῶ τὴ ζωὴ, θὰ ζήσει καὶ τὰ ἔσχατα. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἶναι φτιαγμένος γιὰ ἀφθαρσία καὶ ζωὴ. Τὸ θάνατο δὲν μπορεῖ νὰ τὸν ἀποδεχθεῖ κανεὶς, καὶ κυρίως κανένας χριστιανός. Εἶναι μία νικημένη πραγματικότητα. Μοῦ εἶχε πεῖ κάποτε ἡ Κικὴ Δημουλᾶ: «Νομίζω ὅτι δὲν εἶμαι χριστιανή, γιατί δὲν μπορῶ νὰ ἀποδεχθῶ τὸ θάνατο». «Μὰ γιὰ αὐτὸ εἴστε πραγματικὰ χριστιανή», τῆς ἀπάντησα. Σίγουρα, ὁ θάνατος εἶναι μία ἀγριότητα, καθὼς σπάει τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς ζωῆς. Ποιὸς μπορεῖ νὰ δεχθεῖ μέσα του ὅτι οἱ σχέσεις του μὲ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους ποὺ ἔχει στὴ διάρκειά τῆς ζωῆς του ἔχουν ἡμερομηνία λήξης; Ἐφευγε ὁ πατέρας μου ἀπὸ καρκῖνο καὶ τοῦ λέω: «Φοβᾶσαι τὸ θάνατο;». Σκέφτηκε λίγο καὶ μοῦ εἶπε: «Ὁχι, τὸ θέμα εἶναι ὅτι ἔχω ἀγωνία ἂν θὰ εἶμαστε μαζί».



# February 2022



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2 PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD 8am Orthros 9:15am Divine Liturgy  4:30 to 6pm Online Greek School	3  4:30 to 6pm Online Greek School	4	5
6 SUNDAY OF THE CANAANITE 8am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy  Vasilopita Sunday Sunday School	7  7pm to 8:30pm Zoom Adult Class Seminar Aeschylus' Masterpiece "The Persians"	8	9  4:30 to 6pm Greek School  7pm Parish Council	10  4:30 to 6pm Greek School	11	12
13 SUNDAY OF THE PUBLICAN AND THE PHARISEE (Triodion Begins) 8am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy  Sunday School GOYA Meeting	14  7pm to 8:30pm Zoom Adult Class Seminar Aeschylus' Masterpiece "The Persians"	15	16  4:30 to 6pm Greek School	17  4:30 to 6pm Greek School	18	19
20 SUNDAY OF THE PRODIGAL SON 8am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	21 Church Office Closed  7pm to 8:30pm Zoom Adult Class Seminar Aeschylus' Masterpiece "The Persians"	22	23	24	25	26 1st SATURDAY OF SOULS 8am Orthros 9:15am Divine Liturgy  St. Spyridon's Apokriatiko Glendi @ Wyndham Newport Hotel, Middletown, RI 6pm Cocktails 7:30pm Dinner
27 JUDGMENT SUNDAY (Meatfare Sunday) 8am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy  Sunday School General Assembly	28  7pm to 8:30pm Zoom Adult Class Seminar Aeschylus' Masterpiece "The Persians"					



Assumption of the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church  
97 Walcott Street, Pawtucket, Rhode Island  
**UPDATED NOTIFICATIONS**

## **CHURCH SERVICES WILL CONTINUE TO TAKE PLACE**

**Masks are required at all time in the Church, Community Center, Church Office**

Greek School (Classes will remain online for the first week of February)  
(Teachers will contact Greek School families with updated information)

Sunday School (Classes will resume on February 6th)

Coffee Hours (Will resume on February 6th)

Choir (Will resume on February 6th)

Community Center and Church Office (Access will resume on February 1st)  
(You can also contact the Church Office at 401-725-3127 or [secretary@assumptionri.org](mailto:secretary@assumptionri.org)  
Envelopes can be placed in locked mailbox outside the doors to the Community Center)

Vasilopita Sunday (Scheduled to take place on February 6th)

GOYA Meeting (Scheduled to take place on February 13th)

General Assembly (Scheduled to take place on February 27th)

Assumption of the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church has adopted an across the board indoor masking requirement in our church building at all times and during all church services as well as in our Community Center and Church Office at all times. Our Assumption masking requirement will remain in effect until further notice.

May God Bless all of you,  
Rev. Fr. Philip Zymaris

Visit our Assumption Church website:

<https://www.assumptionri.org/>

Click "**VIRTUAL CANDLE**" to light a candle  
Click "**VIRTUAL TRAY**" to make an offering

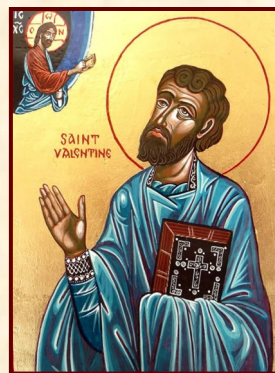
Thank you for your continued support!!!



## THE HISTORICAL & ORTHODOX ST. VALENTINE

*(from [blogs.goarch.org](http://blogs.goarch.org) — An internet ministry tool of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America)*

Now a commercialized holiday celebrating modern Western courtship and romance, the ancient Christian origins of Saint Valentine's Day are largely forgotten. The actual Orthodox liturgical Feast Days of Valentinus (Greek) / Valentinus (Latin) commemorate two Early Christian saints, Saint Valentine the Presbyter of Rome (July 6th) and Hieromartyr Valentine the Bishop of Interamna (Terni), Italy (July 30th). Although the historical records for these two saints are not complete, and what we do know about their lives has often been subjected to considerable confusion, their martyrdoms are well known to us. Because of their refusal to renounce their faith in Christ, both Valentines were imprisoned, tortured, and executed around 270, during the persecution of Christians under the Roman Emperor, Claudius II.



Because they shared the same name, were contemporaries, resided near each other in central Italy, and ultimately, shared similar fates, the two Valentines' personal histories were intermingled and conflated over the centuries, producing inconsistencies and puzzlement in many accounts of their lives. What most sources indicate, however, is that Bishop Valentine was renowned during his lifetime as a healer of the sick and blind, while Valentine the Presbyter would become notable in the historical memory of Christians, originally both Eastern and Western, as a courageous steward of marriage. Indeed, because of his connection to the sacrament of marriage, it would be the latter Valentine, the Presbyter from Rome, who would serve as the inspiration for the Late Medieval Western literary foundations for what would by the nineteenth century evolve into today's popular, secular Valentine's Day.

According to the most common narrative, Presbyter Valentine, a priest in Rome, drew the ire of Emperor Claudius by ignoring the imperial ban against allowing men who had not fulfilled their military obligations to the Empire to marry. Remaining loyal to his moral commitment and beliefs as a Christian priest, Valentine refused to compromise the sanctity of marriage to the will of the state. In defiance of imperial edict, Valentine continued to unite and bless Christian couples, which were legally barred from marrying. This association with young Christian beloveds became the muse over several centuries for an increasingly fictionalized, romantic expropriation and reconstruction of Saint Valentine in the West, one that has led to the modern Saint Valentine's Day. Indeed, the memory of Saint Valentine became so distorted and uncertain over the centuries, that the Roman Catholic Church ended its commemoration and veneration — traditionally associated with mid-February in the West — of him as a calendar saint in 1969, effectively surrendering the historical Valentine to his appropriation and exploitation by Western popular culture.

As in other matters of reverence and faith, the Orthodox Church's veneration of Saint Valentine remains immutable. Secularization in the West accounts in large part for the Papacy's move to discard the memory of Saint Valentine's martyrdom in the face of commerce and frivolity, but Orthodoxy still honors Saint Valentine, the Presbyter from Rome, for his martyrdom — and as for all its saints, the Orthodox Church honors St. Valentine as a model of the life in Christ.

For Orthodox Christians, Saint Valentine's Day is most fully understood as a celebration of romantic love and of God's love. Indeed, Valentine was willing to sacrifice his life not for Eros but in order to sanctify and make whole the union of young couples through the blessing of God's love. Demonstrating our love for God and reaching our fulfillment in Christ through our relationships with our spouses, families, and communities, is a way of life that is at the heart of Orthodoxy. By living a life in emulation of Christ, Saint Valentine shared this fundamental truth of Orthodox Christianity with the world, one that is more beautiful and lasts longer than flowers and cards — it is eternal.

***Dr. Alexandros K. Kyrou is Professor of History at Salem State University, where he teaches on the Balkans, Byzantium, and the Ottoman Empire.***



# AESCHYLUS' MASTERPIECE "THE PERSIANS"



Adult Class Seminar via Zoom  
Mondays from 7 to 8:30pm  
February 7th thru April 11th  
(an 8-week class)

Following our study, "Aspects of Greek Civilization", we will continue with the reading of Aeschylus' classic masterpiece, "The Persians" — This tragedy is based on the historic events of the Persian defeat in the battles of Marathon and Salamis. Although it is a celebration of the Greek victory, Aeschylus describes the universal experience of suffering caused by the wars from the perspective of one of the losers and shows sympathy and compassion towards those who lost their beloved ones. — Due to the continuation of the pandemic, classes will be conducted online via Zoom.

If interested in joining the class or for more information, please call  
John Lyssikatos 401-728-4452





METROPOLIS of BOSTON CAMP

# WINTER CAMP '22

FEBRUARY 19-21

REGISTRATION OPENS AT 7PM ON...

1/3 FOR GRADES 11 & 12 | 1/5 FOR GRADES 9 & 10 | 1/6 FOR GRADES 6-8

M E T R O P O L I S O F B O S T O N C A M P . O R G



FAITH | HERITAGE | FELLOWSHIP | SPORTS | ARTS | NATURE | MORE!

## COMMUNITY

OVER 100 YOUNG PEOPLE GATHER EVERY YEAR FOR MBC WINTER CAMP TO HAVE DEEP CONVERSATION ABOUT FAITH AND LIFE WHILE EXPERIENCING AN UNFORGETTABLE WEEKEND OF FUN

## FIELD TRIPS

FOR DECADES, MBC HAS BEEN VISITING PAT'S PEAK IN HENNIKER, NH FOR SKIING, SNOWBOARDING, AND TUBING! THIS YEAR, WE ARE ADDING AN ADDITIONAL FIELD TRIP FOR THOSE WHO WOULD PREFER A WARMER OPTION!



## GREAT OUTDOORS

MANY OF OUR CAMPERS RAVE ABOUT THE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPERIENCE THE GREAT NH OUTDOORS! THIS YEAR, NH FISH & GAME WILL BE TEACHING OUR KIDS HOW TO ICE FISH ON BOTH OF OUR BEAUTIFUL LAKES!

## FRIENDSHIP

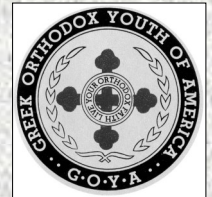
CAMPERS LEAVE MBC WISHING THEIR WEEKEND LASTED A WHOLE WEEK. THE BONDS THEY FORM WITH THEIR PEERS LAST BEYOND THE WEEKEND AND EXTEND TO A LIFETIME OF FRIENDSHIP. THERE ARE NO FRIENDSHIPS QUITE LIKE MBC FRIENDSHIPS!



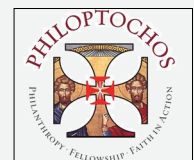


Congratulations to the new and returning  
Assumption GOYA Officers for 2021-2022!  
Elections for GOYA were held in November

President:	Joe Bunch
Vice President:	Katerina Lazouras
Treasurer:	George Mastin
Social Chair:	Ellie Dafulas
Corresponding Secretary:	Alana Zervas
Recording Secretary:	Vacant



## *2021 Philoptochos Donations*



St. Barbara Philoptochos Society provides donations and financial support to many organizations in need throughout the year. With help from all of you, we are able to continue our philanthropic work. The following is a list of donations made in 2021.

### **National Philoptochos and Metropolis of Boston**

Vasilopita  
 Social Services  
 Cancer Fund  
 Autism  
 St. Photios Shrine  
 Orthodox Christian Mission  
 Support a Mission Priest  
 Hellenic College/Holy Cross Lenten Event  
 St. Basil School  
 IOCC  
 75th Anniversary Founders Fund  
 Orthodox Christian Fellowship  
 Hellenic College/Holy Cross Scholarship Fund  
 Retired Clergy Widow Presbyteres Benevolent Fund  
 National Philoptochos Emergency Fund  
 Patriarchate Fund  
 National Sisterhood of Presbyteres  
 Unicef  
 General Medical Fund

Attleboro Senior Center of the Elderly  
 Philoxenia House  
 Metropolis of Boston Camp — 2 Children  
 Hellenic Nursing Home  
 Meeting Street School  
 Amos House  
 Multiple Sclerosis of RI  
 Crossroads  
 The Samaritans  
 RI Food Bank  
 Leukemia & Lymphoma Society of RI

### **Assumption Greek Orthodox Church**

Church Decorations for Easter  
 Easter Egg Bags  
 Church Decorations for Christmas  
 Landscaping

**Total Donations for the Year 2021: \$6050.00**

Provided 10 Koliva -- January thru November 2021

We would like to thank everyone in our community for their dedication, talent, and support of the Philoptochos Society. May 2022 be a Healthy, Happy, and Successful year for all of us.

## *Cemetery Fund*

Assumption Church is in the process of having work performed by landscapers on our grounds at Walnut Hill Cemetery on Armistice Boulevard in Pawtucket.

It would be greatly appreciated if you would consider making a donation to help with the upkeep and beautification of the grounds where so many of our deceased loved ones are buried. If you have not already done so, please contribute to the Cemetery Fund so that completion of the work can take place. Thank you to those parishioners who have already made donations.



## *Updated List of Christmas Offerings and Donations*

Mr. Andre Alix  
Dr. & Mrs. Vasili Amfilo  
Mrs. Athena Bras  
Ms. Katherine Brathas  
Ms. Helen Bucó  
Rev. Fr. & Presbytera George Economou  
Mr. & Mrs. George Fackos  
Mr. Leonidas Foussekis & Miss Samantha Arredondo  
Mr. & Mrs. William Gaza  
Mrs. Eve Gouras  
Mr. Charles Johnson  
Ms. Stavroula Kalivas  
Mr. & Mrs. Roger Lemire  
Mr. John Lyssikatos  
Mr. Paul Microulis  
Mrs. Evanne (Papás) Mirabile  
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Mudge  
Dr. & Mrs. Constantine Pagonis  
Ms. Denise Panichas  
Mrs. Harriet Pappas  
Dr. & Mrs. Angelo Pharmakidis  
Mrs. Marion Pollock  
Ms. Elaine Sioras  
Mrs. Emily Soukas  
Mrs. Dorothy Stergis  
Mrs. Frances Sterpis

Mrs. Pashalia Strekouras  
Mr. & Mrs. Evangelos Tsakonas  
Mrs. Eftehia and Ms. Fotini Tzaferis  
Mrs. Penelope Vartanian  
Miss Anastasia Vellopoulou  
Mrs. Joanne Wright

Mrs. Georgette Ferrucci (Flowers for Nativity Icon #1 in loving memory of George G. Skoutas and Michael Ferrucci)  
Mrs. Georgette Ferrucci (Christmas Offering in loving memory of George G. Skoutas and Michael Ferrucci)  
Mrs. Betty Missirlis (Christmas Offering in loving memory of husband George and parents Achille and Martha)  
Ms. Patti Panichas (Christmas Offering in loving memory of her parents Peter & Helen)  
Mrs. Dorothy Skoutas (Flowers for Nativity Icon #2 in loving memory of George G. Skoutas and Michael Ferrucci)  
Mrs. Dorothy Skoutas (Christmas Offering in loving memory of George G. Skoutas and Michael Ferrucci)  
St. Barbara Philoptochos Society  
(Poinsettias for decorating the Church)  
Mrs. Joanne Wright (Christmas Flowers)





# *Let Us Help Our Endowment Fund Grow*

As church membership dwindles in many places while ever-growing maintenance fees rise, many parishes are establishing endowment funds to meet their needs and secure their financial survival. Here at Assumption in Pawtucket, thanks to the foresight and vision of past parishioners and parish councils, we are blessed because we already established such an endowment fund many years ago.

We are also blessed here at Assumption in that, having established our Endowment Fund, many parishioners generously contributed to it in the past and to this day. Indeed, some parishioners were even kind enough to endow sizable funds through their wills to our community in order to guarantee the continuity of our beloved parish. We are where we are today thanks to such people and we should never let their generosity be forgotten.

Our Endowment Fund's value is \$790,071.58 as of January 28, 2022. As our community's By-Laws stipulate, half of our Endowment Fund's annual return goes towards the budget expenses of our community and the other half is re-invested.

In realizing the needs of our community and sharing the great vision of these benefactors, it behooves us to imitate them and to make whatever contribution we can – small or great – to continue their tradition and to help the fund grow. In this way we will secure the future of our beloved Assumption Church. For this purpose, each month we will include this new column dedicated to the Endowment Fund in our monthly newsletter. We will be posting the current value of the fund to keep you abreast regarding its growth and we will list the names of past parishioners as well as new donors who contribute to the fund in memory of loved ones. For the sake of confidentiality, names will be included but not the monetary amounts.

Let us all honor our benefactors by imitating them, sharing in their dreams for the future and by fostering with them the continuation of our church into perpetuity.

## *Recent Donations to the Endowment Fund*

**Assumption Church Choir  
in Loving Memory of  
Virginia Skodras**

**Mrs. Pashalia Strekouras  
in Memory of Eviginia Skodras**

***Consider including the Endowment Fund in your will and be a supporting pillar to secure the Assumption's survival in perpetuity.***

# Updated Stewards in Good Standing 2021

Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Aguiar  
 Mr. & Mrs. Walter Almeida  
 Dr. & Mrs. Vasili Amfilo  
 Mr. & Mrs. Richard Amoling  
 Mr. & Mrs. Anastasios Andrikopoulos  
 Mrs. Vasiliki Andrikopoulos  
 Mr. & Mrs. Elias Antonakas  
 Mr. & Mrs. Ioannis Apostolakis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Emmanouil Apostolidis  
 The Augoustakis Family  
 The Avramis Family  
 Mrs. Sophia Balamas  
 Mr. Arthur Bassis  
 Ms. Elaine Bassis  
 Mr. & Mrs. James Belliveau  
 Mr. & Mrs. Kenneth Bianchi  
 Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Bitsakis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Kosta Bitsis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Fred Boccelli  
 Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Botsford  
 Mr. & Mrs. Charles Boyle  
 Mrs. Athena Bras  
 Mr. & Mrs. Michael Bras  
 The Brathas Family  
 Ms. Helen Buco  
 Mr. & Mrs. John Bunch  
 Mrs. Nancy Cacicio  
 Mr. & Mrs. Willian Campos  
 Mr. & Mrs. Alexandros Chrisidis  
 Mr. & Mrs. John Chrisidis  
 Ms. Maria Anna Chrisidis  
 Ms. Zoe Chrisidis  
 The Christodoulou Family  
 Mr. & Mrs. Christy Christopoulos  
 Mr. & Mrs. George Cicma  
 Mr. & Mrs. Peter Colantonio  
 Mrs. Eleni Dafulas  
 Mr. & Mrs. George Dafulas  
 Mr. & Mrs. John Dafulas  
 Mr. Nicholas Dafulas  
 Mr. & Mrs. Haralambos Daniel  
 Mrs. Joan Metaxas Dauria  
 Mr. Demetrios Delivos  
 Mr. & Mrs. Rocco Deluca, Sr.  
 Mr. & Mrs. Emmanouel Demetroules  
 Mr. & Mrs. George Demopulos  
 Mrs. Tina Demopulos  
 Mr. & Mrs. Matthew Dion  
 Dr. Fotini Dionisopoulos  
 Dr. Paul Dionisopoulos  
 Mr. & Mrs. Konstantinos Dokos  
 Ms. Cyriake Doukas  
 Rev. Fr. & Presbytera George Economou  
 Mr. & Mrs. George Fackos  
 Mr. Steven Fackos  
 Mrs. Georgette Ferrucci  
 Mr. & Mrs. Richard Forest

Mr. Leonidas Foussekis & Samantha Arredondo  
 Mr. & Mrs. George Foussekis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Brian & Elaine (Brathas) Froment  
 Mr. & Mrs. Robert Gallo  
 Mr. & Mrs. William Gaza  
 Mr. George Georgiadis  
 Presbytera Anastasia Georgiadis  
 Ms. Nancy Georgitsis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Theodore Georgitsis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Brian Gerace  
 Mrs. Maria Gialelis  
 Mrs. Laura Giannakas  
 Mr. Zackary Giannakas  
 Mr. & Mrs. Patrick Gilbert  
 Mr. & Mrs. Raymond Girard  
 Mr. & Mrs. Russell Golombiewski  
 Ms. Catherine Gordon  
 Mrs. Eve Gouras  
 Mrs. Zacharie Haseotes Vinius  
 Mr. & Mrs. George P. & Polyxeni Haseotes  
 Mr. Vasilios Haseotes  
 Ms. Athena Haseotes  
 Mr. Demetrios E. Haseotes  
 Mr. & Mrs. George & Kristen Haseotes  
 Mr. Ari Haseotes  
 Ms. Lily Haseotes Bentas  
 Ms. Kelly Stocker-Haseotes  
 Mr. & Mrs. Dimitrios Iatrou  
 Mr. Vasileios Izanidis  
 Mrs. Eleni Jabterakes  
 Mr. Elias Jabterakes  
 Dr. & Mrs. Philip J. Jameson  
 Ms. Zoi Kalaitzidis  
 Mr. & Mrs. George Kalantzis  
 Ms. Stavroula Kalivas  
 Mr. John Kanelakos  
 Mr. & Mrs. Michael Kapos  
 Mr. & Mrs. William Kapos  
 Mr. Nicolaos Kapouleas  
 Ms. Elizabeth Karageorge  
 Mr. & Mrs. Niko Karageorgos  
 George & Regina (Lyutkevich) Karageorgos  
 Mr. George Karalis  
 Mr. Joseph Karalis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Achileas Karalis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Karalis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Steve Karavasilis  
 Mr. Michael Karavolis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Athanasios Katsinas  
 Mrs. Eleni Katsios  
 Mr. & Mrs. Chris & Georgia (Katsios) Gray  
 Mr. George Ketinos  
 Mr. & Mrs. Aleko Kimbouris  
 Ms. Barbara Kiras  
 Mr. Sotirios Kitsilis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Kizirian  
 Mr. & Mrs. Mark Kology

Mr. & Mrs. Alexandros Kontoulis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Zafiris Kontoulis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Nick Korentis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Anastasios Koronios  
 Mr. & Mrs. Christos Kosivas  
 Mrs. Kostandina Kounavis  
 Mr. Theodore Kounavis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Georgios Kourkouliotis  
 Dr. & Mrs. Elias G. Koutros  
 Mr. & Mrs. George Koutsoukos  
 Miss Parris Kyriakakis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Kyriakakis  
 Mr. & Mrs. George Lambrakis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Michael LaTorella  
 Mr. & Mrs. Gerard Lavoie  
 Elizabeth Lazouras Family  
 Mr. & Mrs. Peter Lazouras  
 Mr. & Mrs. Charles Lehourites  
 Mr. & Mrs. Peter Lehourites  
 Mr. Christopher Lehourites  
 Mr. & Mrs. Roger Lemire  
 Ms. Constantina Lengas  
 Mr. & Mrs. Angelo C. Limnios  
 Mr. John Lyssikatos  
 Dr. Alexis Anastasia Mancini  
 Dr. & Mrs. Melvin J. Mancini  
 Ms. Gail Manickas  
 Mrs. Marion Manickas  
 Mr. Peter Manis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan Mastin  
 Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Matarazzo  
 Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan McNamara  
 Mr. & Mrs. George Michalopoulos  
 Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Michalopoulos  
 Mr. & Mrs. Theodore Michalopoulos  
 Mr. George Microulis & Mrs. Elizabeth Menges  
 Mr. Paul Microulis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Peter Microulis  
 Mrs. Evanne (Papas) Mirabile  
 Mrs. Betty Missirlis  
 Mr. George Moragemos  
 Ms. Georgia Moretti  
 Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Mudge  
 Ms. Bessie Nickerson  
 Mr. Andreas Nicolos  
 Mr. Dimitri Nicolos  
 Mr. & Mrs. Vassilios Nicolos  
 Dr. & Mrs. Nicholas Nikolopoulos  
 Mr. & Mrs. Charles Nikou  
 Mrs. Alexandra Nikou  
 Mr. & Mrs. Stefan Pagios  
 Dr. & Mrs. Constantine Pagonis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Peter Pagonis  
 Mr. Gilbert Pan  
 Mr. & Mrs. Peter Panagiotis  
 Ms. Lygere Panagopoulos  
 Mr. & Mrs. George Panagos



## *Updated Stewards in Good Standing 2021*

Mrs. Angela Panichas  
 Ms. Denise Panichas  
 Mrs. Eleanor B. Panichas  
 Mr. & Mrs. George T. Panichas, Jr.  
 Ms. Patricia Panichas  
 Mr. Peter Panichas  
 Mr. & Mrs. Haralambos Papavasiliou  
 Mr. & Mrs. Peter Papavasiliou  
 Mr. & Mrs. Vasileios Papavasileiou  
 Mrs. Harriet Pappas  
 Ms. Karen Pappas  
 Dr. Georgia Patsiopoulos  
 Mr. & Mrs. Costas Perdikakis  
 Mr. & Mrs. Saki Pitliangas  
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Dear Friends,

As we begin our new year 2022, we would like to ask all of you to reflect on the celebration of 100 years of AHEPA in the USA and the world! In an age when very few organizations have lasted more than 30 years, AHEPA is the voice of Hellenism in this country and the world with a strong service record for education, philanthropy, civil responsibility, community engagement and promotion of our Hellenic ideas! ***AHEPA is you, and you make AHEPA! The more together, the stronger we are and the more of an impact we have!***

## Let's get ready for District 7 Hellenic History Tournament!

Every year AHEPA (Yankee) District 7 organizes the Hellenic History Tournament (HHT). The Hellenic History Tournament is a competition for high school students about the 3500-year-long history of the Hellenes. It is open to students in grades **8-12 at competition time**. Participants have an opportunity to win a share of the \$3000 in prize money for the first team and \$1500 for the second team! The tournament takes place in late November at **St. Barbara Greek Orthodox Church, Orange, CT**, and it is conducted in English. All participants will receive an AHEPA signed certificate of participation. Your local AHEPA Chapter A121 is sponsoring our team's participation including any registration fees, books and notes. Last time our team joined many other teams from New England which met in CT for an amazing day of learning, growing experience, and Hellenic culture pride. **Our team in the past has won the first prize!** We plan to sponsor a team for this year as well. We are looking for high school students to learn about the 3500-year-long history of the Hellenes – our heritage. We are looking for 3 team members as well as 1-2 alternates. **For more information, please contact** Ioannis Apostolakis, [apos\\_main@outlook.com](mailto:apos_main@outlook.com) (please set subject HHT) Tel. (508) 261-1221.

## Byzantines knew about America before Columbus!



The history of America's discovery must be rewritten (anyway) if the following news is true: Inside the Cockaponset Forest in the south of the U.S. state of Connecticut is the oldest Christian Church in America, masterfully carved in stone. The on-site inscriptions prove its existence for 1500 years from today, made by Orthodox Christian monks of Byzantium! In this particular area there are many Greek cups (in the shape of a small cup) framed with purely Christian symbols or monograms of Christ, with baptistries, candlesticks. There are also a despotic throne (or episcopal cathedral) and a Bema. Similar masterpieces were found in an oasis of Morocco in north Africa.

The researcher Frederick J. Pohl studying the inscriptions placed the arrival of monks in North America around 480AD at a time of great upheaval in north Africa. Until 430AD many bishops operated in north Africa (mainly Tunisia and Carthage) where, until today, temple ruins are preserved. It was at that time that the persecution of Christians by the Arianists began. Also, the monks in those areas had come into direct conflict with the monarchs who ruled north Africa, and as a result they were persecuted, mainly, in the desert and mountains of Eastern Libya. From there they fled by boat to present-day North America. The findings recorded in the Christian Church were the following:



- Manuscript of a monk who returned to north Africa in 534AD after the defeat of the barbarian monarchs by Justinian. The manuscript mentions the northwestern course of the monks as soon as they sailed from Morocco.
- Found 96 carvings with the monogram of Christ and the Virgin Mary, some of which have the shape of a fish with letters IXΘΥΣ (Christ God the Son of Sotir).
- A candlestick with 14 holes with the Byzantine letters IC engraved on it. Between the two letters is carved a Byzantine complex. The base of the candlestick is a small column in Greek Doric style!!
- Another drawing from a cup bears the Byzantine letters MP which refers to the word mother (i.e. the Virgin Mary).
- Two exceptional baptistries were found: a rectangular and a flame-shaped one (symbol of the Holy Spirit taken at baptism) with 9 holes for candles (The 8 symbolize the 8 days after the Crucifixion and the 9th symbolizes the Easter candle, symbol of Christ and the Resurrection.)
- There are also representations of waters and fish pouring into the Ocean, symbols of the newly baptized Christians known as "little fish" emerging from the waters of the century-old life after baptism.
- Finally, a carved throne was found next to the baptistery.

**DefenceNet Newsroom**

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15.01.2022 | 15:30

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## ***We Must Preserve the Legacy We Inherited!***

### ***We need you to join our AHEPA A121 (Pawtucket) Chapter!***

***We ask all of you to join and support your AHEPA Pawtucket chapter. You can get as much involved as you have time or desire. Please keep in mind, that just by becoming a member and through your yearly membership fee you help us to . . .***

- ***Support AHEPA activities and publications***
- ***Support our Chapter's activities and representation***
- ***Give strength to our Pawtucket chapter though membership counts***
- ***Provide academic and athletic scholarships***
- ***Make our voice heard for things that matter***
- ***Make a difference in every community and in the country as well***

***This is an invitation to everyone – we need all of you! Your opinion will always counts, whether you are attending our meetings in person, or you are submitting your ideas via email, phone, text or personal conversation. For membership information and/or applications, please see Yianni Apostolakis, Tom Andrikopoulos or Nick Bitsakis***

For more information, please visit [www.ahepa.org](http://www.ahepa.org).



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## ***Joy is extremely easy to come by!***

*Here we are! In the new year, 2022, with a pandemic going on and with so many adjustments to our daily lives! And yet there is hope, excitement for the new year and all the good moments we had waiting for it to arrive! We talk about fun and some of the fun things we did waiting and celebrating for the new year! The meals we shared, the outings we did, the presents we exchanged, the time we spent together with loved ones!*

*And yet, as each year goes by, a few things remain the same. People around us who need help are oftentimes overwhelmed by a feeling of loneliness, desperation, anxiety. And oftentimes we cannot help thinking that "I am only one – how can I help everyone in this world?"*

*IOCC gives you an opportunity to reach beyond our parish and community and by becoming a monthly donor IOCC can receive matching funds and truly make every dollar you donate count for six or seven! Even a \$10 monthly donation can reach so many people, where a bag of seeds for a farmer can be less than \$50! Then we will be able to speak not only of the fun things we do, but also of the joy of helping somebody in this world who thought that he was all alone! **Please visit [ioccc.org](http://ioccc.org) and become a monthly donor! It's worth it!***

## **A Chance to See**



*"I never imagined that she would be able to walk free without needing me to carry her," said Bahyah, whose daughter Leila faces multiple health challenges. Born in Irbid, Jordan, to a family who fled Syria, Leila was diagnosed with Down's syndrome at birth and soon developed cerebral palsy and a heart defect. Through an IOCC program, she received occupational therapy and special education, and worked with specialists on perceptual and cognitive abilities, plus motor and social skills. Leila's specialists soon discovered she also had a visual impairment, which an ophthalmologist recommended surgery to correct. While Leila awaits her surgery date, IOCC provided her with glasses — and the improvement was almost immediate. "She stopped crying all the time," Bahyah said. "She became more social and started playing with other kids." Today, at age 7, Leila's journey is far from over, but she and her family have new hope.*

## **IOCC Awareness Events**



### **Chestnut Ridge, NY**

ARAA-Otrada in Chestnut Ridge, New York, its St. Elizabeth Charitable Fund, and the scouts at St. George Pathfinders of America gathered to assemble hygiene kits. ARAA-Otrada dedicated funds from their charitable Belosselsky Fund to purchase the supplies needed to prepare these kits. Everyone laughed and worked together, and the final result was not only



the assembly of 500 health kits, but also boxing and preparing everything for delivery. *Our special thanks go to Boris Maltsev who organized this kit drive and to ARAA-Otrada, their staff, and the scouts from St. George Pathfinders of America, who made this possible.*



## **Pittsburgh, PA**

On Saturday December 11th, the youth of St. George Antiochian Cathedral of Pittsburgh gathered and assembled 504 health kits. Fr. Joshua Makoul led the group in prayer, followed by a brief explanation of how we come together in Christ's name to help our neighbors in need via IOCC. *Special thanks to the organizers of this event: Sub-Deacon Michael Janakis, Dr. Beth Ann Papas, and Nick & Maria Terezis, as well as to the amazing youth of St. George Antiochian Cathedral.*

### ***Here is How YOU Can Help More!***

- Become a monthly donor to IOCC
- Send a donation to IOCC for a cause that touches your heart!
- Give a donation to Ioannis Apostolakis, payable to IOCC, for any occasion you would like to make a difference!

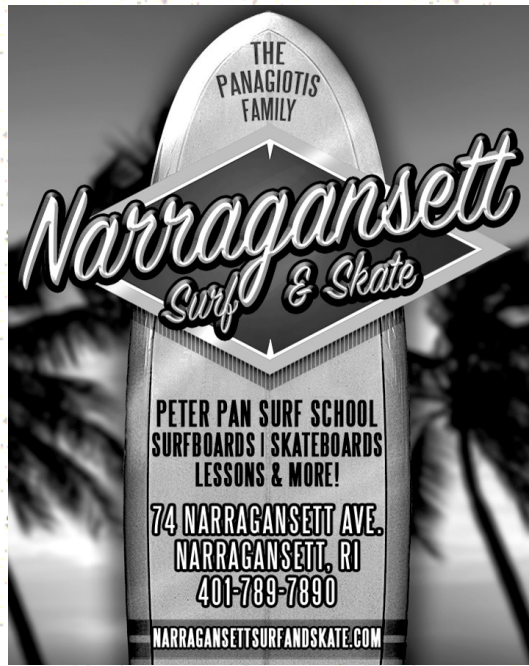
### ***Help Us Provide For Those in Need!***

*And remember, 92 cents of every dollar you give goes to our humanitarian work. The other 8 cents is for administration and fundraising costs. Charity Navigator gives IOCC a 4-star rating (highest possible) for financial health, accountability and transparency. Plus, every dollar you give helps us secure \$7 more in support from governments, foundations, and other sources.*

IOCC is the official humanitarian aid agency of the Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States. Since its inception in 1992, IOCC has delivered \$650 million in relief and development programs to families and communities in more than 50 countries. IOCC is a member of the ACT Alliance, a global coalition of churches and agencies engaged in development, humanitarian assistance and advocacy. To learn more about IOCC, please visit our website at [ioccc.org](http://ioccc.org).

Yiannis Apostolakis

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You can help to beautify our church grounds. Donations towards our church grounds are always very much appreciated so that our property can remain beautiful year round. Appreciation and many thanks to **Roula Vellopoulou, Nick Vellopoulos, Anastasia Vellopoulou, Ioanna Wright, and Charoula Xoulei Campos** who are our church gardeners spending endless hours cutting the grass, planting, watering, and trimming the beautiful flowers and shrubs surrounding our premises.





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