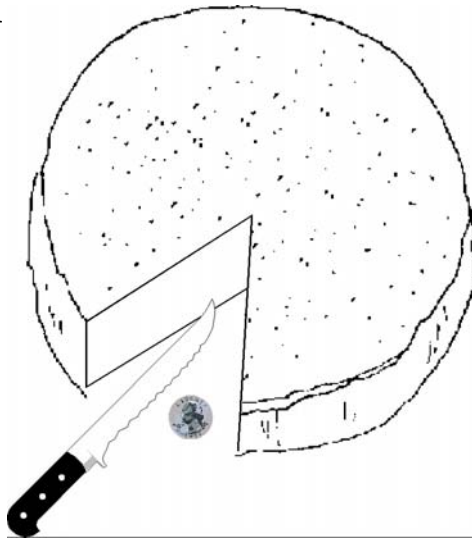


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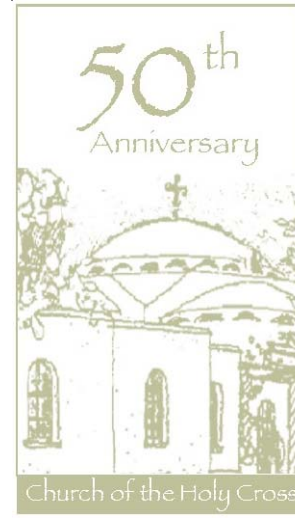
ΚΑΛΗ
ΧΡΟΝΙΑ



Cutting of the Vasilopeta Sunday, January 7

Following Divine Liturgy.
Join us for a delicious luncheon.
\$12 for adults, \$8 for children (6-10),
FREE for 5 and under.
Maximum of \$35 for a family (household).

Your donations help support
Saint Basil Academy for Children.



CROSS CURRENTS

Monthly Newsletter
December 2006

What Gifts Do You Bring?

by **Father Peter G. Salmas**, Pastor

Christmas, 2006



... and wise men came from the East . . . saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews, for we have seen His star in the East and have come to worship Him." And when they had come into the house, they saw the young Child with Mary His mother, and fell down and worshiped Him. And when they had opened their treasures, they presented gifts to Him: and they offered Him gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh. (Matthew 2:1,2,11)

In a few short weeks we will once again celebrate the birth of our Lord . . . God becoming flesh. We will spend the next few weeks scurrying around looking for gifts for our spouses, office staff, family members, close friends, and special people in our lives. All of this effort because we have been raised in a society that has taught us that giving is what we do at Christmas time. There was a time that we also gave because our Lord gave to us His greatest of all gifts, His Son. But unless we are in Church during services or open our Bibles to read about this miracu-

CROSS CURRENTS

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Articles and ads for *Cross Currents* are due on the 15th of the month prior to the month of desired publication.

(continued from front cover)

lous birth, nothing in the world we live in, even during this time, shares with us this joyous news. Christ's birth has been relegated to folklore and is treated like any other story of ancient history. Be honest, how often do you think Christmas to be the celebration of Christ's birth . . . rather than, "just twenty two days until . . ."

Slowly, ever so slowly, we have allowed those who do not believe to remove from Christmas every connection to Christ. We have allowed the few, the very few, to reform Christmas from the Birth of Christ to just another holiday that we do not understand or care to know about. We have allowed the few who feel that our society should be more inclusive to place Christmas in the same category as Hanukah, which at least is a religious celebration and as Kwanzaa, a cultural fabrication which has no religious significance whatsoever, something invented just a few years ago. How have we arrived at such a cross-

roads in our country, when the birth of the Savior of Mankind has the same ranking as an invented cultural celebration?

This has occurred because we are not true to our convictions and feel uncomfortable with our beliefs. The Magi came across the deserts of Persia and Arabia because they saw a star in the heavens and had come to learn through their study of the heavens that a savior would be born. More importantly, the visit of the magi fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament: Balaam prophesied about the coming Messiah marked by a star: "I see him, though not now; I behold him, though not near: A star shall advance from Jacob and a staff shall rise from Israel . . ." (Numbers 24:17). Psalm 72 speaks of how the Gentiles will come to worship the Messiah: "The kings of Tarshish and the Isles shall offer gifts, the kings of Arabia and Seba shall bring tribute. All kings shall pay Him homage, all nations shall serve Him" (72:10-11). Isaiah also prophesied the gifts: "Caravans of camels shall fill you, dromedaries from Midian and Ephah; all from Sheba shall come bearing gold and frankincense, and proclaiming the praises of the Lord" (Isaiah 60:6).

It is told to us that wise men from the East brought Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Saint Irenaeus (d. 202), in his *Adversus haereses*, offered the following interpretation for the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh respectively: "King, God, and Suffering Redeemer as well as virtue, prayer, and suffering. Gold, the gift for a king; frankincense, the gift for a

What do we bring? What can we bring that would be acceptable and right? Is God interested in our money? Only insofar as it will spread His word and care for those in need. Is He interested in our talent? Only when used to attract the interest of others for the Gospel. Is He interested in our time? Only in prayer as our life should be like prayer in constant communication with Him. I believe God is interested in having our hearts and our minds. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." Luke 12:34.

Once we have given our heart to our Lord, then all other gifts reflect our complete submission to Christ our Savior. It is then we give everything to Him, out of love. And is this not the example His Father

set for us when He became flesh, a total submission to the world in order to save it.

May your Christmas be as meaningful and as holy as the one experienced by three wise men who had only seen His star in the East . . . they came before His manger and fell down to worship Him . . . and presented Him with gifts that acknowledged Him as their King and God, their Savior. May we follow their example, even as they followed the Star, even as they presented Him with their gifts, knowing Him to be our King and God and our Savior.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by *Gary Brenner, Parish Council President*



As the 50th year of our beloved Church comes to a close we have much to celebrate. Our Gala Ball is almost at maximum capacity and it will be an appropriate celebration. We will have a short program and a fun filled evening of food, fellowship and dancing. There will be an 8 to 10 minute film which is part of a longer DVD on the history of Holy Cross which will be provided to all those who attend sometime in 2007. Each family attending the event will also receive a commemorative gift as a memento of our 50th Anniversary.

Our 40th Anniversary celebration 10 years ago was a wonderful event. We had much to celebrate and we honored many of the pioneers of the Parish. However, when I reflect on the achievement of the past 10 years I am especially proud.

We have purchased a parsonage adjacent to the campus. It is a beautiful home that is worth a great deal more today than it was when we purchased it. The mortgage on that property is about \$600,000 and the payments are almost the same amount that we were paying rent on the home that we had rented for **Father Peter** and **Presbytera Nikki**. The mortgage on the church property is now down to approximately \$300,000 and the total for the Church and parsonage is well under a million dollars.

The first phase of our iconography project was completed without any debt to the parish. Many generous contributors came forward to finance this project. The beauty and inspiration of the icons are a centerpiece of our beautiful Church today. A new icon project which was recently begun behind the Altar is again the result of a gift from a parish family. We are indeed

blessed to have so many generous parishioners who come forward to finance projects so that the church does not incur debt.

In the next decade we hope that we will see more projects including an expansion of our school buildings. We will soon be looking for major contributors to kick-off a major capital campaign to finance school buildings to house our ever expanding Religious Education, Preschool, Greek School and activity space for all aspects of our parish life.

We have many challenges ahead but we will draw strength and inspiration from the founders of our parish. Those early families had great faith and gave generously to buy our property build our award winning church building. We will continue this tradition and build new facilities to expand our ministries.

We are truly blessed as a parish and I thank all of you who have come forward with generous anniversary gifts. I pray for a blessed Christmas and a prosperous New Year for all of you.

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

by *Tanya W. Spirtos M.D., Stewardship Chair*



CHRISTMAS CHEER

Memories of turkey dinners were still fresh in our minds when thirty youth and adults of Holy Cross descended on Santa Clara Valley Medical Center the Sunday after Thanksgiving. Less than two weeks before, the Medical Association was notified that due to budget cuts, 16 trees had been purchased for the lobbies but there were no funds for trimmings or decorating staff. The call went out through various channels and, through the combined efforts of **Father Peter**, **Konstantine Salmas** and **Kathy Roque-Albert**, the youth groups and dancers made ornaments and joined together in a Sunday afternoon of frenzied decorating activity. Joined by numerous members of our Church in a truly Christian effort to bring the message of this season to some of the sickest and poorest of the Silicon Valley, the lobbies were awash in gold ornaments, glittering ribbons and sparkling bows.

Jim and **Joanne Fetsco**, loaded with more ornaments than Target itself, decorated trees in all red and trees in all gold and still had enough for a few more. A patient, hospitalized for more than three months, and her sisters joined them in decorating and then **Eva** and **Chris Canellos** provided

a little impromptu concert in her hospital room celebrating the songs of this holiest season. Side-by-side with fourteen dancers and instructors from Saint Nicholas Church, children and parents loaded the trees with candy canes and icicles. **Todd** and **Nadia Elliott** gathered another crew together on the third floor where they were joined by a group decorating a breast cancer awareness tree and a group hanging picture ornaments of physicians practicing there. And the lobby itself sported four charming trees: a Mardi Gras theme, Greek culture and landmarks, sealife, and traditional baubles. The youth fashioned postcard ornaments of the Greek islands and of themselves dancing at FDF; sporting blue and white candy canes, the tree flew a Greek flag right next to the star on top. Since **Khara** and **Dan Kalamaras** had just returned from Thanksgiving in Florida, their luggage was packed with decals of colorful fish, tiny sand dollars and flamingos; with a hot glue gun, they spent several hours converting a Christmas tree into an underwater paradise. And at the end, **Nikki Salmas** looked over the yards of ribbon and decorations left and said “too bad there aren’t more trees!”



Stewardship of time and talent and treasures involves not just our own Church facility and family, but the wider world in which we are involved. The opportunities—to reach out and help someone in need of assistance or cheer—arise around us each day and, if we keep our eyes and hearts open to the call for help, we can make such a big difference in another’s life. When the call first came through to **Debbi Ricks** of the Medical Association Alliance, she spent two sleepless nights worrying before she reached out and found so many willing stewards.

You never know how much good you can do until you try; and, what may look overwhelming or insurmountable at the first call, may be a glad-some task when undertaken by so many smiling and joyous helping hands.

Giving Our Gifts with Faith in Christ

The Stewardship Ministry in 2007 focuses on the one miracle included in all four gospels, and compares it to Christ multiplying the very gifts we lay before him today in our stewardship as Orthodox Christians. There are two very important messages in the miracle of the loaves and fishes: first, no matter how little each of us may think we have, we always have enough to share; and second, Christ will take whatever we have and transform those humble gifts to give back to us in abundance.

In the miracle, Christ has given the people both food for the soul (his words of teaching) and food for the body (the bread and fish). Calling upon God, from whom all things come, He passes the food to his disciples who handle the miracle. The five loaves represent the five books of Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. The two fish stand for the teachings of the “fishermen”: the Epistles and the Gospels. In nourishing the five senses, he feeds the 5000 and there is an overabundance of twelve baskets so all twelve disciples remember the lesson.

Our Christian philosophy consists of both word and deed: that is, we ought not to speak without doing, nor do without speaking the word. In 2006, Stewardship Ministry encouraged us to “bear fruit, by witness and service”; this next year’s message again admonishes us to focus on both word and deed (witness and service) in the gifting back of the very gifts granted to us in abundance, both the gifts of scripture (food for the mind) and the gifts of sustenance (which we acknowledge as all things coming to us from God). And the miracle in our lives is that those words and deeds will be multiplied to provide for people around us bereft of the knowledge and hospitality we take for granted.

Many times throughout this next year we will celebrate a special service of Artoclasia, in which we offer loaves of bread to be blessed and shared with each other, memorializing Christ's miracle of the loaves. As we offer the Artoclasia, may each of us remember to also ask our Lord to multiply our stewardship (our giving of time and talent and treasure), so that the little we give as stewards may be multiplied to nourish the minds and bodies of the thousands who need our help.

Hiding Your Talent

In a recent Gospel reading from Matthew, our Lord spoke a parable concerning the man who gave his servants talents (five or two or just one) and then asked for an accounting when he returned. Those servants who had invested the five and two talents were praised but not the servant given just one talent.

“He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, ‘Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.’ But his master answered him, ‘You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away.’”

Father Peter discussed this gospel reading during his sermon but it occurred to me that there was yet another way to look at this parable from the aspect of stewardship. Consider, as your one true talent, the Orthodox faith into which you were born and chrismated; in His final accounting, our Lord may ask each of us what did we do with that awesome gift, for we did nothing to earn the gift except the happenstance of birth, and He expects us to be responsible for an accounting of that one talent. Any individual who says: “I was so afraid of you, Lord, that I hid my faith so others could not question it, prayed in secret, and now here is my faith without blemish or tarnish” may be making a very serious mistake. According to the parable above, living

and dying as an Orthodox Christian, without “bearing fruit, through witness and service” is a mistake, likened to a vine barren of fruit.

If the faith into which we are born is our one and true talent, it is expected that we will use every opportunity to behave responsibly and fruitfully during our sojourn as stewards on this earth.

50TH ANNIVERSARY

“AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL
SERVE THE LORD” JOSHUA 24:15



MEMORY LANE

-- 50 YEARS AGO : UPDATE

by *Ella Stamates, 50th Anniversary Committee*



The Church of the Holy Cross is the focal point of a very vibrant, active Orthodox Christian community as administered to by **Father Peter Salmas** since August 1, 1988. Father Peter activated many new programs which has enabled our community to further mature in helping others in need within our city and county. One such program is Outreach which collects and distributes money and food throughout the year through the Samaritan House. Through the years, dedicated Outreach volunteers, ably led by **Virginia Coppock**, have been recognized by the Samaritan House for their countless hours of selfless giving. Outreach completes each year of “reaching out” with the Family Sharing Program during the Christmas Advent and includes the giving of groceries and gifts to families in need. Other programs were added and saw increased growth; Youth activities including the Youth Choir, Bible Study, Religious Education, and Spiritual Retreats are amongst them. Also, realizing remarkable growth, our festivals became a source of greater financial support and most especially gave the parish a venue to work together in fellowship in order to share our Orthodox Christianity and Greek cultural heritage with the community at large. In addition, the Ladies of the Philoptochos Society continue to be vital in offering help to those in need through their programs such as Kids ‘n’ Cancer, Pennies and Prayers, Family Sharing, Benevolence and countless other charitable causes.

Since celebrating our 40th Anniversary 10 years ago, some very important developments have taken place that have enhanced the fabric of our church community. The very successful Holy Cross Preschool has reached its 10th year. From the earliest planning stages, excellent leadership from Parish Council members **Chris Canellos** and **Nick Peros** along with accomplished teachers has produced quality instruction, respect from the community it serves, and a full complement of students with highly satisfied parents. Teaching materials and equipment match the high quality of instruction. Enhancing the foundation laid by the others has been the leadership of **Tom Mavrakakis** who has overseen many changes and new innovations. We look forward to providing an important service to the community for many years to come.

The last 10 years has also seen an expansion of the Holy Cross Greek School to 5 days a week. Aably led by **Theodora Kounalakis**, **Kleon Skourtis** and **Katerina Chiotis**, classes can be taken from pre-school through adult level teaching. The hours from 4:30 to 6:30 PM are busy each day with active learning taught expert language teachers.

A distinctive addition to the church community is the Three Hierarchs Bookstore which was established in the year 2000 by then Assistant Priest **Father Christopher Flesoras** and **Presvytera Nikki Salmas**. It has become a great source of information and enlightenment for those seeking to understand Orthodox Christianity and wishing to pass it along to their children and families.

Iconography inside the church became a vital objective. The goal was to install mosaics in the nave to include the four columns with capitals followed by the dome. Parishioners were given the opportunity to sponsor saints, prophets of the Old Testament and/or the Pantocrator (the head of Christ). The leadership for this project began with **Jenny Hatzopoulos** and **Jim Gerakaris** and was followed by **Jim Smith** who brought a committee of people together to work out the details and conduct the necessary fundraising. **Sirio Tonelli** was the chosen artist whose work is truly inspiring and the Pantocrator is found to be exceptionally compassionate in the dome. Other iconography is also planned for in the future.

At the end of 2003, an opportunity arose for the parish to purchase a home on Kimmie Court. Numerous parishioners contributed to this special project in order to make a down payment on the house. The 30 year-old house needed work; so, contractor and parishioner **Don Craighead** stepped forward to oversee the necessary remodeling in which parish volunteers also helped. Father Peter and Presvytera Nikki and their family were able to

move in by March of 2004 even though the kitchen was still in the process of being remodeled. The Salmas Family has made the most of being so close to the church and the opportunity it provides to offer hospitality to our parishioners.

In the course of our 50th Anniversary Celebrations, the church community was blessed to receive relics of the Holy Cross on which Christ was crucified. They were gifted by the Brotherhood of the Skete of Saint Anna, located on Mount Athos, in time to be venerated during the vespers and liturgy of our name day, the Elevation of the Holy Cross, on September 13 and 14, 2006, that coincided with 50 years to the day when the first Divine Liturgy was celebrated in San Mateo. Many priests and hundreds of faithful were present at these holy rituals as the relics were received by Father Peter on behalf of the church community.

Many highlights are a part of our church life and so we also look to the future with special projects to further enlighten us. Two projects are realized to be most important that would provide necessary services to Orthodox Christians. One is to make plans to build new school rooms in order to better serve our burgeoning Religious Education program and other youth activities; and, to also make room for an elementary school to benefit the church community and the community at large. The second and equally important project it to develop senior housing for which there is great need. We look forward to seeing these projects come to fruition with God's blessings. As stewards of our Holy Cross community, we are aware of the significance of our religious heritage and our responsibility to share our Orthodox Christian faith with those within our church community and with the greater community beyond us.

CALLING ALL PHOTOS!

As part of Holy Cross 50th Anniversary celebrations, we would like to create a photo archive of the many moments, both large and small, that have taken place at our church. We would like to create a pictorial record of the baptisms, weddings, chrismations, and other sacraments that have taken place at our church. We would also like to see pictures of the many events that have taken place at our church. We also want pictures from all of the organizations in the church.

If you have photos of any of these events or occasions that have taken place at our church, please send or bring them to the church office. We are asking that all photos be clearly labeled with a post-it note. The note should state the **people** in the photo and the **name of the event and/or organization** and the **date**. Please place pictures in a letter size envelope (9" x 12") to ensure that they will be returned to you. Please label the envelope **Holy Cross Photo Archive, 50th Anniversary** with RETURN: your name.

Please take the time to send these photos. They will be an invaluable part of our church's 50th Anniversary celebrations this year and for always.

LEAVE YOUR MARK in the 50th Anniversary Photo Directory!

This is a once-in-a-decade opportunity to advertise your business, remember a loved one, or send a personal message to the community by taking out an ad in the Holy Cross 50th Anniversary Photo Directory.

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½ page - \$200 - 4" x 7"

Full page - \$350 - 6.25" x 8.50"

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PHILOPTOCHOS

PHILOPTOCHOS IN THE NEW YEAR

We hope that you have had a joyous Christmas filled with health and happiness for you and your families. Christmas is indeed a time to focus on what is important. Some of us in the Philoptochos have had the honor to visit some of our ladies and gentlemen who are no longer able to get out and share the excitement of the season. Speaking personally, I cannot tell you the joy I felt when I visited a wonderful lady whose face lit up when she saw me with my poinsettia and dish of kourambiedes. It was simple for me, but I think meant much more to her.

As we enter the New Year, our organization has some wonderful activities planned that will enable us to continue to do what we can to help others less fortunate. On **January 7**, after Church, we will celebrate the cutting of the **Vasilopita** with a delicious lunch prepared by our ladies. The proceeds of this event go to support the children of Saint Basil Academy, a home and a shelter for children and families who are experiencing life-changing obstacles. This was one of the original ministries of the Philoptochos.

Also, on **January 27**, we will hold a **Women's Wellness Luncheon**. This event is being jointly sponsored by our own Philoptochos and the Greek American Professional Women's Society. Medical and health professionals will be presenting information on diet and insulin resistance, exercises made for women, menopause, osteoporosis, ADHD in children and much, much more. We will serve a delicious, healthy lunch and have lots of time for fellowship and questions. Look for the flyer very soon in the mail.

An ongoing ministry starting in **January** is our own **Book Club**. The book we will be reading is "Encountering Women of Faith – Saint Catherine's Vision." The first meeting will be **January 11**. Look for details in the Sunday Bulletin.

For those of you who are interested in crafts, a **Crochet Circle** is also beginning in **January**. Check the Sunday Bulletin for details.

It is going to be an exciting year for us. Please join us. Membership flyers for 2007 will be sent soon. Our Board is only 16 women. There are

hundreds of women in our parish with amazing skills and talents who can help us with all our ministries. Look for a lady wearing a white Philoptochos badge on any Sunday in Church and offer to get involved!

To All, a Blessed New Year,
Mary Peros, Philoptochos President

"CIRCLES OF FRIENDS"

Coming soon in **January**, after the craziness of the holidays, the Philoptochos is sponsoring three wonderful new ways to share fellowship and have some fun instruction along the way. The first is a **Book Club**. This club will meet one Thursday evening a month in our Contos Library to discuss the critically acclaimed book, *Encountering Women of Faith – Saint Catherine’s Vision* by Kyriaki Fitzgerald. The group will be lead by **Fran Bibbes**. Second is a **Crocheting/Knitting Circle** that will meet once a month in the lovely home of Brenda Visas to learn how to create snuggly blankets for children in pediatric units, and perhaps a scarf or pair of socks along the way. Finally, we are trying to assess the interest in a “for-a-small-fee” set of **Greek Cooking Classes** under the leadership of chef extraordinaire **Roxanne Koston**. These classes will be hands-on. Imagine preparing an exotic dinner for your friends! Roxanne will teach you all the Greek secrets!

For information on the Book Club, see below! or please call **Fran** at 572-1026. For information on the Crochet Circle, call **Brenda** at 333-6223. And, if you are interested in the Cooking Classes, call **Roxanne** at 368-7891. For general information on any or all of these, you can also call **Mary Peros** at 347-6910.

PHILOPTOCHOS BOOK CLUB

Attention all women of Holy Cross. The Philoptochos Society is sponsoring a Book Club Study starting **January 11**. The book we will be reading is *Encountering Women of Faith - Saint Catherine’s Vision* - Collection, Volume 1.

This book is a composite of stories for women told by prominent Christian women who also share the stories of their lives. It is inspiring,

funny and sad, as the authors explore how the witness of these holy women have influenced their lives. This book brings alive some of the saints whose icons we venerate in our church.

Please contact **Fran Bibbes** at 572-1026 or **Mary Peros** at 347-6918 if you are interested and or have questions.

REFLECTIONS REFLECTIONS

SUNRISE, SON RISE

by *Chris Canellos, Parish Council*

Christmas 2006 is upon us! I hope your world is full of the love of your family and friends, the joy of seeing the happiness in a loved-one’s face, the sacred songs of this beautiful season and the knowledge that God loves you so much that He sent His own Son into the world as His special gift to you!

I took **Eva** and **Christian** to see the movie, “The Nativity Story.” While the movie took some liberties with the lives of Mary and Joseph and was brutally graphic in Herod’s attack on the children, crucifixions and birthing scenes, it did stay true to the Biblical text. Few moments on the wide screen have been as powerful as the Nativity scene itself. It is everything you would imagine it to be, Mary, Joseph and the Baby, the cave, the animals and the manger, the shepherds, the angels and the wise men and a powerful light from heaven.

And as each of the wise men knelt before Jesus and presented his gift, I was deeply moved. It was as though 2000 years and 10,000 miles had suddenly been bridged, and I was face to face with the Christ Child in Bethlehem. What is it that I can offer the Baby Who grew up to sacrifice Himself for my sins? What is it that I can offer the Baby Who is God Himself, the Creator of the Universe and the Source of all of my blessings? What is it that I can offer to the Baby Who stands with me every day and protects my family and will, some day, greet us all in His Kingdom?



Eva and Christian join me in wishing you the very brightest Christmas ever. May we all go forward in 2007 offering to our Lord our lives and our hearts and all good things that are pleasing to Him.

WORDS MEET THE MOUTH

by *Konstantine Salmas*



We can tell that the Holy Spirit is very very important because of what he does in Scripture. His activity in situations is crucial and the direction to which He points is always very specific.

In Genesis we read about the Spirit moving over the face of the deep. There is a stirring up, something is happening and someone with a certain character is doing this. The key is to see what comes of this movement. We read on in Genesis about creation. If we don't pay attention to these early sections, we will get off on a bad foot in our understanding of God. The Spirit moves over the face of the deep and sets in motion the "days of creation."

Genesis is the foundation for understanding the Holy Spirit because here he is associated with the creation of the universe by God's word. The Spirit moves over the face of the water and then God says His memorable series of "Let there be . . ." In several of the prophetic books, there is also significant involvement by the Spirit. In Ezekiel, God's Spirit is understood as giving something or someone the ability to do something. In the third chapter of Ezekiel, the Spirit came on Ezekiel and moved him, either from the ground to his feet, or from his position to another place. In 3:12, we read, "Then the Spirit took me up, and I heard behind me the voice as of a great earthquake, saying, Blessed be the glory of the Lord." Further down in 3:23, we read, "Then the Spirit came upon me, and set me on my feet, and spoke to me, and said to me, Go in and shut yourself up in the middle of your house." The Spirit of God makes Ezekiel active; he always ends up in a different place than he began, because of the Spirit of God.

This is important to understand because it means God's Spirit acts a certain way and moves things in a certain direction, often to prepare someone to speak. The Spirit moves over Ezekiel the same way it moves over the face of the deep in Genesis. Then, Ezekiel speaks. Just as God speaks, "Let there be..." the Spirit tells Ezekiel he will say, "But when I speak with you, I will open your mouth, and you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord God;

he that will hear let him hear; and he that will refuse to hear, let him refuse; for they are a rebellious house."

Thus far we can say the Spirit in Genesis performs a similar function to the Spirit in Ezekiel. In the New Testament, the Spirit functions the same way. In Acts 13: 9-11, before Paul gives a speech to a proconsul, he is filled with the Spirit. A magician was trying to block the proconsul from hearing the word of God from Paul. We read, "But Saul, who is also called Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, "You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord?" At the end of this event, because of the work of the Spirit, one person comes to believe and another is blinded because he tried to block the person from hearing the word of the Lord. Again we read about the Spirit giving ability (Paul), causing belief (the Proconsul), and punishment (the magician), all through the words spoken by Paul. The Holy Spirit is a powerful force; He gives power to the words spoken by Paul, just as he preps the "deep" at creation and gives Ezekiel the words to say to the Hebrews coming out of exile.

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NEWS

BABY NEWS!

We welcome into the world, **Elpinike Eleni Thomas** (“Niki” for short), daughter of proud parents **Father Simon** and **Presbyteria Stephanie**. Niki was born the evening of October 12 weighing in at 7 pounds and 7 ounces and measuring 20 inches. We also congratulate the Thomas’ on their new ministry at the Santa Barbara parish, having transferred there just recently from Irvine. *Na sas zisi!*



NEW CHARITY GIVING OPPORTUNITY FOR SENIORS

by *Chris Canellos*

If you are 69 ½ and own an Individual Retirement Account (IRA), you should consult your tax advisor about a new way to give to charity. For calendar years 2006 and 2007, you may arrange to make charitable gifts directly from your IRA of up to \$100,000 per year. This transaction is neither reportable as

income nor as a tax deduction on your return. But if you made an IRA charity gift and reduced the cash you took from your IRA by an equal amount, instead of making your gift after taking your normal IRA distribution, you would pay less tax if

- You take the standard deduction,
- Have substantial medical expenses or
- Have an income between \$25,000 and \$44,000 and receive social security.

Those with higher income can benefit as well. The IRA charity gift also counts toward your minimum annual required distribution.

The Church of the Holy Cross would be happy to work with your financial advisor to assist you in arranging such a gift. Please call the church office if you are interested.

O CHRISTMAS TREE

Just as impressive as the turnout at the Valley Medical Center (see page 5) was the numbers that came together for our First Annual Christmas Tree Decoration Night. Our Youth Religious Education families were put into “committees” to gather and then help decorate our Holy Cross tree which commands a corner of The Oaks for the holiday season. Thanks to all who contributed your time, talent, and treasury of ornaments and decorations.



UPCOMING SERVICE & CHURCH HAPPENINGS

UPCOMING SERVICES

subject to change - please check your Sunday Bulletins

Sunday Services are 8:30 AM, Orthros, 10 AM, Divine Liturgy

Saturday Vespers are at 5:30 PM

Sunday, December 24 – 7 PM, Christmas Vespers

Monday, December 25 – Christmas Day - 8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy (*please note time*)

Wednesday, December 27 – Saint Stephen - 8 AM, Matins; 9 AM, Divine Liturgy

Friday, December 29 – 50th Anniversary Gala – Westin-Airport Hotel

Saturday, December 30 - 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

Sunday, December 31 – Saint Basil the Great – 8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy

Monday, January 1 – 8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy

Friday, January 5 – Eve of Holy Theophany - 8 AM, Hours; 9 AM, Vesperal Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil (Lesser Agiasmos)

Saturday, January 6 – Holy Theophany - 8 AM, Orthros; 9 AM, Divine Liturgy (Greater Agiasmos); 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

Sunday, January 7 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers - 8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy

Saturday, January 13 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

Sunday, January 14 – Sunday After Theophany

Wednesday, January 17 – Saint Anthony - 9 AM, Divine Liturgy

Thursday, January 18 – Saints Athanasios & Cyril - 9 AM, Divine Liturgy

Saturday, January 20 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

Sunday, January 21 – Sunday of Zacchaeus

Thursday, January 25 – Saint Gregory the Theologian - 9 AM, Divine Liturgy

Saturday, January 27 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

Sunday, January 28 – Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee

Tuesday, January 30 – Three Hierarchs - 9 AM, Divine Liturgy

MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Also, please check your Sunday Bulletins for the dates and times of all meetings

15th of the Month, 4 PM - Articles and ads due for *Cross Currents* and *Youth Currents* (church office)

Wednesdays, Noon - Memorials for the following Sunday are due

Fridays, Noon - Items for the following Sunday's Bulletin are due

Daily, 9-Noon - Preschool

Daily, 4:30- 6:30 PM - Greek School (Classrooms)

Tuesdays, 10:30 - Noon - Bible Study (Fireside Room, or the Contos Library when ORA meets)

First **Tuesday** of the month, 11 AM – ORA (Oaks)

First **Tuesday** of the month, 7 PM – Philoptochos Board (Classrooms)

First **Thursdays** of the month, 6:30 PM - Technology Committee (Contos Library)

Third **Tuesdays** of the month, 7:30 PM – Parish Council (Contos Library)

First three **Wednesdays** of the month, 7:30 PM, Choir (Loft)

Wednesdays, 5-7 PM, Adult Greek School (Fireside Room)

Wednesday, 7 PM, Studies in the Faith (Contos Library)

Fridays, 3:30 PM, Youth Choir (Loft)

*Please call the church office
if we missed your organization's meeting.*

MARK YOUR CALENDARS AND SAVE THESE DATES FOR 2007

Vasilopita Sunday, January 7
 Women's Wellness Luncheon Saturday, January 27
 Apokreatiko Glendi Saturday, February 3
 Crab Feed Saturday, March 3
 Spiritual Odyssey Friday/Saturday/Sunday,
 March 9, 10, 11
 Choir Luncheon Sunday, March 11
 Greek Independence Luncheon Sunday, March 25

HOUSE BLESSINGS

Each year, after the celebration of Epiphany (**January 6**), it is the Orthodox tradition to bless our homes with the Holy Water of Epiphany. Please fill out the form and return it to the Church Office if you would like to have Father bless your home.

===== ||
 Use this slip, the form that's available with the Sunday Bulletin, or transfer ||
 this info to a separate sheet of paper, and submit it to the Church Office in ||
 January. **Yes**, I would like to have Father bless our home in January : ||

DAY: (a weekday after Jan. 6) : January _____, 2007

TIME: _____ AM / PM (between 10 AM & 5 PM)

Name : _____

Phone (s) : _____

Address : _____

Directions from church (please indicate cross-streets /
 draw simple map if you think that would help) :

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**Alhana Greek 2007 Calendars should be available within the next
 two weeks, please stop by and pick up your FREE Calendar**