

CROSS CURRENTS

Monthly Newsletter
January/February 2007



Focus on the Kingdom

by *Father Peter G. Salmas, Pastor*

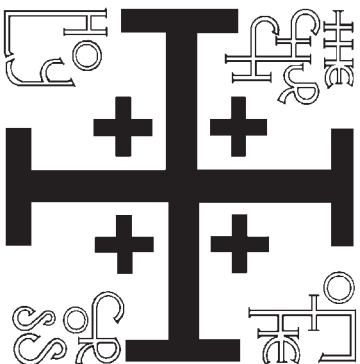


The Golden Gala is a distant but vivid memory of celebration and remembrance. Congratulations and thank you to **Gary and Arleen Brenner** and **Don and Kathy Craighead** as co-chairs of the Golden Gala and their committee. I also wish to thank **Jenny Cladis** and her 50th Anniversary Committee for a well organized year of celebrations commemorating the founding of our parish fifty years ago. The time and talent offered by so many parishioners during this past year reflects the love and commitment of so many to our Lord and His Church of the Holy Cross.

As we begin the Great and Holy Lent, may our Lord continue to bless us as a parish and guides us in the decisions we make as bearers of His Holy Name. *Kali Sarakosti, Kali Dynami!*

“And you shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants; it shall be a jubilee for you, when each of you shall return to his property and each of you shall return to his family... For it is a jubilee; it shall be holy to you...” (Leviticus 25:10,12)

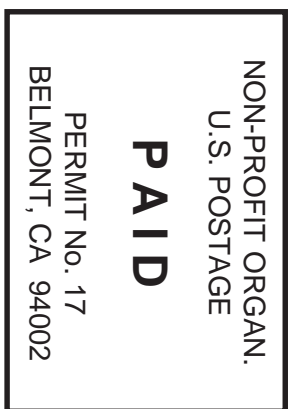
The requirements for this scriptural holy jubilee observance were extensive and were spelled out by God through Moses in the verses of Leviticus chapter 25. Taken together, these instructions were a blueprint for liberation and reconciliation, charity and social justice. This was God’s prescription for the ideal society, and it was to be kept in mind by its periodic observance.



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The Monthly Newsletter of the Church of the Holy Cross
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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)

The prophet Isaiah later reveals God's foretelling of the Messiah and how His coming would bring about these same conditions which had, from of old, been required for the jubilee.

"The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor . . ." (Isaiah 61:1-2)

This "year of the Lord" proclaimed by the Prophet Isaiah is the arrival of the Messiah, and with Him, the great liberation and release marked in earlier times by observance of the Old Testament jubilee. It is appropriate that we should celebrate our jubilee during this time of the liturgical year as we commemorate the Holy Incarnation and Birth of the Messiah, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *This* liberation is more profound and complete, as it speaks of the assurance that even slaves to sin and captives to guilt will be granted salvation with the

coming of the Messiah, that even we will be granted by the Messiah this salvation from our own sinfulness. Herein lies the source of the vision of a church community.

We, being no exception but rather the recipients of this salvific message, must remember that we are called to, invited if you will, to participate in the kingdom of Heaven, the place where God dwells, a dynamic place, never a stagnant place, for Our Lord is the same yesterday, today and forever, and we are the bearers of His Words to us.

This image of the "kingdom of heaven" is visualized in many places in the Holy Scriptures. As a church community we are given the opportunity to participate in this kingdom when we attend the Divine Liturgy and receive the focus of our worship in the Holy Eucharist.

I dare say that this focus is not always apparent to us. In fact, most of us do not realize this as our goal but I believe that, whether or not we acknowledge it, we are genetically wired to move toward the "kingdom." It is one of the benefits of our spiritual genetic make-up . . . the fact that we are created in His image and His likeness. Even though our freedom is intact, like the pull of gravity, we are drawn toward God and the place where He resides.

This spiritual path, that enjoins both the Church Militant and Church Triumphant, is marked by churches and monasteries along the way that help us remember our vision and goal as individuals that make up the body of Christ. We owe to our "founders" a debt of gratitude for helping to mark this path to the "Kingdom" by establishing our church communities.

As Holy Cross stewards, we remember with great love and gratitude the men and women like Gus and Penny Folas, George and Eva Catomer, Angelo and Frances Simotas, Andrew and Panagiota Vlasis, Mike and Francis Bouskas, Andrew Chrisafis, Sam Pappageorge, Nick Poulos, Spike Papangellin, Chris Pelekoudas, George Tzantos, John Athanasiou, John Vasil and John Metropoulos who envisioned a community of believers that would proclaim the Gospel and the Kingdom of God. Each of them, and many others who are unnamed at this moment, now understand the reality as they have been called by God . . . may their memory be eternal.

I take this moment to remember one of their children, who grew up here at Holy Cross. Dennis Simotas died only a few days ago. He was the first parishioner to respond upon receiving the invitation for this Golden Gala celebration. The day before he died, he called to make sure all was ready for him and the guests whom he would bring. He had just purchased a new suit for the occasion. He wanted to be here with his brothers because of his love for the community and our church, but especially because of his parents, Angelo and Francis, who gave so much in every way to Holy Cross.

And yes, the clergy that helped bring to reality this vision, Fathers Marcantonis, Dellas Xintaris, Katsaris, Koutoufas, Stevenson and Contos to name only a few, each of whom kept the vision clear and in focus.

And there are many others, clergy and laity, too numerous to mention to you now, but who have been remembered in our written history and must be remembered in our hearts and by the actions we undertake to emulate their efforts.

It was fifty years ago, on September 14, 1956, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, that the history of our parish began with the first Divine Liturgy celebrated here on the Peninsula. It was a day of great power and a day that was to leave a lasting imprint on us all.

Fifty years later, to the day, and equally as powerful, through God's providence and the prayers of many, a holy relic of the precious and life-giving Cross of our Lord was gifted from the brotherhood of the Skete of Saint Anna on Mount Athos to our church community. And through this gifting we have truly become the Church of the Holy Cross. The presence of our Lord's Cross has enormous implications and responsibilities as well as many great and abundant blessings for all of us.

Fifty years ago, on this date, I was seven years-old and growing up in the San Fernando Valley, Southern California. My family had just started to attend a new church on the other side of the Hollywood Hills in Van Nuys, CA. And although we enjoyed the recently opened Saint Sophia Cathedral as our home parish, the Golden Valley Auditorium became our new temporary spiritual home and Father Photios Pentikis our new spiritual father. Fathers Leonidas Contos, Anthony

Kosturos, and Homer Demopoulos still have a very special place in our lives and have had a profound affect on my life, personally. Both Fathers Contos and Kosturos also played a pivotal roll in my life when by God's grace and providence I was be assigned to Holy Cross.

One other priest was also to have a great influence on me and be connected to my life here at Holy Cross . . . Father Spencer T. Kezios. In the late fifties, Father Spencer was considered for a newly formed parish in a place called San Mateo, California. Alas, he was instead assigned to the parish in Granada Hills and brought to fruition his well founded and expertly executed vision of the kingdom in Northridge.

Growing up in the Valley, I have memories accompanying my parents and siblings to the Golden Valley Auditorium early Sunday mornings to help clean up the hall from the partying that went on the night before. The distinct scent of beer and the bottles we had to pick up would become an etched memory, in years to come, as we readied the hall for Divine Liturgy. This liturgical setting was a far cry from the grandeur of Saint Sophia Cathedral but our new home would offer new opportunities, new friendships and the unique opportunity to participate in the life and growth of a church community from its founding years. And so with those whose memories are inextricably wound with the growth of our beloved Holy Cross community in Belmont.

Tonight you heard from a few of the many that remember similar circumstances. Although there are many similarities that become obvious when parishes compare notes, what becomes most apparent is the importance the Church to those families who call their church their spiritual home. This gathering of the faithful has been occurring since our Lord met with His disciples and instructed them in the Holy Scriptures and charged them to go out and preach His good news, His Gospel. We are the heirs of this charge.

Little did I know that 500 miles north of where I lived in Southern California, in a small community south of San Francisco, another new parish was just setting down roots. The stewards first met in a small hall on B Street in San Mateo. Peter Evangel eventually made a portable altar that housed all of the altar items for the Divine Services. They set up the altar on Sunday mornings for worship. They soon

moved to larger quarters at the Masonic Lodge. Eventually they bought property and broke ground to build a beautiful new Church.

And now, in marking our jubilee, we must envision and work to fulfill a vision which I feel must include utilizing every means possible to educate, to share the treasure of our Eastern Orthodox heritage, to see it as a lamp that will shine as a city set on a hill. All of us may not understand our faith and why it is important to share it with others. But understand we must, so that we learn to live our faith. Our Lord did not ask us to understand our faith . . . he asked us to live our faith. And not superficially, but with boldness, even with abandon, thereby authentically expressing our confidence in our Lord and Savior.

Yes, we have set goals yet to be accomplished : a new classroom building to house our growing Preschool, Greek language education, future parochial school, and adult education programs; to continue this “vision of the kingdom” within the walls of our church through mosaic iconography; and to provide a place of common residence for our seniors, that they may enjoy in their remaining years the comfort and the fellowship of those who share a common faith and heritage. But this must all be done with a steadfast mindfulness to the context which is our goal . . . the vision of the kingdom . . .

Living the faith is what many of our founders did daily. In the living of their faith they laid a foundation upon which Holy Cross is built. As we have done to now, may we continue to live the faith by focusing our lives on Christ and His kingdom so we can stand in confidence as we say the words . . .

“As for me and my house . . . we will serve the Lord.” Joshua 24:15

ON FASTING

by *Metropolitan Maximos*

Fasting, in our days, has become one of the most neglected spiritual values. Because of misunderstandings regarding the nature of fasting, because of confused and reversed priorities in its use, many of today's Orthodox Christians fast very little, or disregard fasting altogether.

The Great and Holy Council of the Orthodox Church which is scheduled to be convened in the near future has placed the problem of fasting as one of the first items on its agenda. It is hoped that through this Council the age-old practice of the Church to use fasting as one of the important means of spiritual growth will regain its proper place in the life of the Church.

Fasting was practiced by the Lord Himself. After prayer and fasting for forty days in the wilderness, the Lord victoriously faced the temptations of the devil (Matthew 4:1--11). The Lord himself asked the disciples to use fasting as an important spiritual weapon to achieve spiritual victories (Matthew 17:21; Mark 9:29; Luke 2:37). The example of the Lord was followed by His disciples (Acts 14:23; 27:9; 1 Corinthians 7:5; 2 Corinthians 6:5, 11:27, etc.). What is fasting? Why is it so important? Why does fasting precede such important feasts such as Easter and Christmas?

The importance of fasting depends on its meaning. Many of the Fathers have written on fasting. Among others, St. Basil has left us with most inspired comments on fasting. St. Basil tells us that fasting is not abstaining from food only; it is first of all, abstaining from sin. Grounded in the teaching of the Fathers, the Church in its hymnology describes fasting as the mother of chastity and prudence, as the accuser of sin and as the advocate of repentance, the life worthy of angels and the salvation of humans (The Lenten Triodion, trans. Kallistos Ware, London 1978, p. 195). Fasting becomes all of these when observed in the proper spirit.

First of all, fasting is abstinence from food. By detaching us from earthly goods and realities, fasting has a liberating effect on us and makes us worthy of the life of the spirit, a life similar to that of angels. Second, fasting, as abstinence from bad habits and sin, is the mother of Christian virtues, the mother of sound and wholesome thinking; it allows us to establish the proper priority between the material and spiritual, giving priority to the spiritual.

Fasting is the advocate of repentance. Adam and Eve disobeyed God; they refused to fast from the forbidden fruit. They became slaves of their own desires. But now through fasting, through obedience to the rules of the Church regarding the use of spiritual and material goods, we may return to the life in Paradise, a life of communion with God. Thus, fasting is a means of salvation, this salvation being a life we live in accordance with the Divine will, in communion with God.

Because of the liberating effect of fasting, both material and spiritual, the Church has connected fasting with the celebration of the major feasts of our tradition. Easter is, of course, our main feast. It is the "feast of

feasts." It is the feast of our liberation from the bondage of sin, from corrupted nature, from death. For on that day, through His Resurrection from the dead, Christ has raised us "from death to life, and from earth to heaven" (Resurrection Canon), Christ, "our new Passover," has taken us away from the land of slavery, sin and death, to the promised land of freedom, bliss and glory; from our sinful condition to resurrected life.

It is most appropriate to prepare for this celebration through a liberating fast, both material and spiritual. This is the profound meaning that fasting takes during the Great Lent. Let us allow ourselves to take advantage of the spiritual riches of the Church. Let us use the precious messianic gifts offered to us through its sacramental life, through its celebrations of the central mysteries of our salvation in Christ. Let us use the spiritual weapons,

to fight the good fight, to walk the way of fasting, to crush the heads of the invisible dragons, to prove ourselves victorious over sin, and without condemnation to reach our goal of worshiping the Holy Resurrection (Prayer of the Presanctified Liturgy).

This is the challenge of the Great Lent: to use fasting to obtain the resurrected life, to unite with the Risen Lord. Who could refuse to accept this challenge?

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by **Gary Brenner**, Parish Council President



In completing my first year as President of the Parish Council it could not have ended on a higher note. Our 50th Anniversary Golden Gala was an unqualified success when 400 of us joined together for an evening for remembrance, celebration and fellowship. We are truly blessed to have so many loyal parishioners show their love for Holy Cross with their gifts and presence at this historic event. We recently elected officers for the 2007 year and I am again honored to serve as President. It is a privilege to serve on the Executive Committee with outstanding stewards of our church like **Chris Canellos** as Treasurer, **Jenny Cladis** as Secretary and **Jim Smith** as Vice President.

We also welcome two new members to the Parish Council who will be serving their first term in **Leo Maheras** and **Harry Breeze**. We also welcome back to the Parish Council our IT wizard **Gorge Milanos**.

We have many challenges ahead of us in 2007. We must regroup to plan for the expansion of our facilities.

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We need more classroom space for Religious Education, Greek School, Preschool and general activity space for parishioners of all ages. The General Assembly has already approved expansion; we will be providing more information on this capital project in the coming months.

Congratulations to the respective committees which organized the February 3 Apokreatiko Glendi and the March 3 Crab Feed. Both events were well-attended.

Congratulations, too, to our dance groups and their directors who performed impressively at the recent FDF in Ontario, CA! Look for details about their successes in the Youth section of this *Cross Currents*.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT (given at the Spring General Assembly)

What is the purpose of the President's Report? I suppose there are past presidents of the Parish Council who have ideas about the report that are different from mine. In my opinion the report should include the state of the Parish from the view of the Board of Directors, our Parish Council, those of us who have been elected to conduct the business of the church. I also believe that it should include a vision for the future of the church and to give a realistic appraisal of the challenges which we face short term and long term. Furthermore this must be done in 5 minutes or less.

The year 2006 was a milestone year for the church of the Holy Cross. There was much planning, there were many meetings and handwork by a select group in the parish. We set the bar high for the events we planned and the funds which we hoped to raise. Our timing was off on just one event but from the Spiritual Odyssey early in the year to the Golden Gala Ball at the end of the year it was a grand success. You, the parishioners of our church responded in a big way. You participated in the events we planned and you responded beyond our expectations in the funds that we raised. If you only attended one event or you were only able to give a small but heartfelt donation we appreciate all that you did to contribute to our celebration of the 50th year of our beloved parish.

It would be impossible for me to thank everyone who worked so hard last year so I will single out a few. First and foremost **Father Peter's** inspiration, spiritual guidance and vision for the 50th year was indispensable. **Jenny Cladis** who had just served 2 terms as Parish Council President stepped up again and chaired the Steering Committee. We met 19 different

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times and there were countless e-mails and phone calls and through it all Jenny kept us focused and on track. There was one member who planned, who executed and who supported us financially in a very big way. Thank you, **Tanya Spirtos**.

Our Preschool is thriving and profitable. We have a wonderful staff and a waiting list. If we had larger facilities we could increase the size and the profit significantly.

Our Greek School is the largest and most respected Greek School in Northern California. They would also benefit from larger facilities.

Our Sunday School and our Youth ministries are growing. It was a beautiful site on Sunday of Orthodoxy to see our youth on the dais of the church holding and in some cases dropping their icons.

We must expand our facilities to accommodate them and the generations after them.

When I hear of the financial challenges of many Greek Orthodox Churches in the Bay Area and elsewhere I am pleased with the financial condition of our Church. Our Stewardship is steady, our debt is manageable and our facilities are generally in good condition.

However, the challenges we face require that we increase our stewardship and contribute to capital campaigns to maintain and operate our beautiful church our campus and our parsonage.

Our Buildings and Grounds committee has identified and prioritized at least 20 projects on the campus that need attention. We do not have the funds to address most of these projects. If we delay, the cost of repair and construction will increase. We have difficult decisions and we need the Parish Community to support us financially to meet these challenges.

We have rekindled the fire to start planning the building addition approved by the General Assembly in the year 2000.

We are reviewing our plans and seeking impute from parish leaders and organizations. As with all capital campaigns we will seek key gifts to finance our building but we must have the support of this project from the parish at large. The project was overwhelmingly approved by the General Assembly and I pray that all of you will again support us as we regroup to make this project a reality.

In closing, there is one area that I would ask that we try to improve. I think we must be more proactive in welcoming new members and families to our parish. Our coffee hour is a time for fellowship with our close friends and family but sometimes we don't venture outside of our comfort zone to meet and greet new prisoners. I include myself as one who does not do

enough to welcome new members. Please take time to say a word of welcome and continue to embrace their presence as one of us.

I pray for our parish and for a wonderful Pascha for all of you.

50TH ANNIVERSARY

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



OUR GLORIOUS 50TH CELEBRATION

by **Jenny Cladis**, 50th Golden Jubilee Chair



This truly has been an exciting year for our Holy Cross community! It has been a momentous year for all of us! We have come a long way these past 50 years. We enjoyed many commemorative events and capped-off the celebration with the Golden Jubilee Gala Ball that was held December 29th at the Westin Hotel. The word “stupendous” perfectly describes our Gala Ball. Over 400 people attended the Ball, exceeding our greatest expectations. Among the people sharing our joy were his **Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos**, many Priests and Presbyteres, parishioners and guests from far-away places. The food was delicious; the music great, the ambience outstanding – but the over-riding presence was the sentiment of love and accomplishment that permeated the air. The talks of our parishioners of the history of our church, starting with the struggles of our church founders and ending with our student’s appreciation of our existing facilities, were particularly heart-felt.

We greatly thank the steering committee member and the event chairs for their hard work during the year. The steering committee members were **Gary and Arleen Brenner, Chris Canellos, Don and Kathy Craighead, Nick Peros, Dr. Tanya Spirtos, Jim Smith, Ella Stamates** and our many thanks to **Father Peter** for his Spiritual guidance - The event chairs were **Kathy Roque-Albert, Peter Economus, Emmy Denton, Irene Fotinos, Khara-Maria and Dan Kalamaras, Johanna Manley, George Milanos, Mark Simon and Vangelis Hytopoulos**. We thank **Father Peter** for his many contributions and spiritual guidance throughout this effort. And no

one will forget the gorgeous amaryllis centerpieces prepared by **Diane Stephanos** and the heart-warming 50th Anniversary Hymn written by **Steve Cardiasmenos**.

Mark Simon, who did a wonderful job taking over as MC, stated “It was such a successful year because all of us had the opportunity to deepen our faith and our understanding of our relationship with God and Christ through our church”.

We need to start preparing for our 60th anniversary! At that time we hopefully will have completed some of the many projects that are on the drawing board: the new class rooms for our elementary school and for Greek studies; the Iconography projects for which money has already been donated; senior-citizen housing; the pay-off of the remaining loan for the building fund; the pay-down of the existing loan on the Rectory; and perhaps to acquire a van to transport our senior citizens to outside events. The above and much more can be accomplished if we would all put our time, talents and tithing into Christian Orthodox giving.

Ke sta exinta hronia.

PHILOPTOCHOS

PHILOPTOCHOS

NEWS

Save the date! **Saturday, May 5** will be our annual fashion show. The theme is still under wraps, but be prepared for an exciting day. You will be transported to a romantic place, entertained by fabulous fashions and will enjoy food lovingly prepared by our ladies. Until then . . . *Bonjour! Sayonara! Ciao!*

And . . . if you have not sent in your membership pledge for 2007, please send what you can. If you have lost your tri-fold brochure, you may send your membership pledge directly to the church office and mark “Philoptochos” on the outside of your envelope. Thank you so much!

“CIRCLES OF FRIENDS”

Please join us at the **Visas’** home, 5 May Lane, Los Altos, CA -- 917-0827 - - and learn to make blankets and scarves. Our next meeting will be Saturday, April 21, 1-3 PM. We will meet the third Saturday of the month.

Proposed Schedule:

May 19, Jun 16 , Jul 21, Aug 18, Sep 15, Oct 20, Nov 17, Dec 15

BOOK CLUB

Attention all women of Holy Cross. The Philoptochos Society sponsored Book Club Study continues **April 12**. The book we will be reading is *Encountering Women of Faith - Saint Catherine’s Vision* - Collection, Vol. 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.

VASILOPITA, 2007 – Happy New Year!

Thank you to the chairs of the delicious Vasilopita luncheon, **Arleen Brenner**, **Sonia Risting** and **Kathy Simon**. Close to 200 people attended! Thank you to all the Philoptochos Board who helped set-up, serve and clean-up. The rice was prepared by **Roxanne Koston** who also made the large Vasilopita. **Helene Nemchik** was in charge of the salad. A huge thank you goes to **Marika Tsardoulis** who made the vasilopites at the tables and helped in the kitchen and **Gabrielle Nemchik** who helped with the salad and the serving. **June Droutsas**, thank you for running and refilling the table. We cannot forget the guys in the bar, **Gary Brenner** and **Kent Risting**. And, of course, the event was able to raise funds to send to Saint Basil Academy in New York whose mission it is to house and nurture at-risk children. Thank you to everyone who donated by attending, by placing donations in the envelopes and by generously giving on behalf of our Church organizations. Happy New Year!

REFLECTIONS REFLECTIONS

SUNRISE, SON RISE

by *Chris Canellos, Parish Council*

A Gala To Remember

The Airport Westin Hotel was an unusual venue for a Church gathering. But perhaps this place which serves as a crossroads between earth and sky was just the right place for a magical evening where the Holy Cross community would celebrate its 50 years together. We beheld a confluence of young and old, clergy and laity, history and future, song and dance, the earthly and the spiritual, current friendships and memories of those who have gone before us. Four hundred of those who had given their best to our beloved Church over the past half-century donned their finest as we all reminisced and witnessed the dawn of our second 50 years. We sat at beautifully decorated tables with amaryllis centerpieces from **Diane Stephanos** and individual gifts of chocolate inscribed with a likeness of the Holy Cross logo provided by **Michael** and **Thalia Hohenthal** of Go To Chocolate. We were blessed to have **His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos** and many local clergy and presvyteras in attendance, including crowd favorites **Fr. Chris** and **Pres. Krissy Flesoras** who trekked from Roseville to be with us.

Despite a bout of illness, our Mistress of Ceremonies, Channel 4's lovely news anchor **Vicki Liviakis**, elegantly introduced the first half of our program. Her "show must go on" spirit reminded us that during times of our own adversity, when the Church needed us, we would still answer the call. We were treated to the inspiring voice of our own opera star **Layna Chianakas-Haddad** who led us in singing the Star-Spangled Banner followed by **Niko Manetas** and our Youth Choir directed by **Khara-Maria Kalamaras** singing the Greek National Anthem. The Adult Choir then offered their gift of song, including a moving choral tribute written and directed by **Steve Cardiasmenos**. We were greeted by 50th Anniversary Committee chair **Jenny Cladis** and by Gala chairs **Don** and **Kathy Craighead** and **Gary** and **Arleen Brenner**. **Nick Peros** treated us to a ten-minute "trailer"

of his soon-to-be-released DVD of the history of our Church, including an opening message from **Ann Konstantelos**, some beautiful photographs taking us from the first open-air services at our Belmont campus through the most recent installation of iconography and the historical recollections of several Past Presidents of the Parish Council.

Best of show was **Tyke Stamates**, "I started as President and worked myself down to janitor."

Halfway through the program, our own most capable **Mark Simon** assumed MC duties on very short notice with great grace and skill, which reminded us of those times when many of us were called to "step into the breach" to do the work of the Church. He introduced a highlight of the evening, a series of speakers representing a broad cross-section of the parish. There was **Peter Evangel** telling the story of how the great rock supporting the altar table came to be, and his eloquent daughter, **Vickie Buonocore**, and granddaughters, **Annie** and **Lea**, each contributing vivid memories of what it has been like growing up at Holy Cross. **Frank Catomer** recalled his uniquely wonderful parents, George and Eva Catomer, and their selfless service to the Church. "Once Dad changed the locks so quickly that Fr. Philip was locked out." **Nick Sarles** reflected on his Sunday School days, including a sweet story about my mom, and gave a great litany of the first names of many parishioners who have served so generously over all these years. **Anastacia Stamates** compared Holy Cross to her ideal small town of the past, where we all know and support each other and described the spiritual beauty of seeing her two-year-old Godson "do his Cross" for the first time. The ever-present **Xandra** and **Gabby Nemchik** described the myriad of experiences they have had in the Church. **Alex Spirtos** and **Jason Craighead** shared their memories by creatively shifting us forward in time to our 100th anniversary, projecting many young people of today into important leadership roles in our Church 50 years from now. I can just imagine my son **Christian** as Parish Council President and **Fr. Peter's** grandson serving as our Parish Priest. May your vision of a Church prospering under such enlightened leadership come to pass.

Major speeches were given by Philoptochos President **Mary Peros** and Parish Council President **Gary Brenner**. Mary tenderly celebrated the



Philoptochos' loving role within our Church family, fondly expressing her best wishes in Greek and English. Gary, in what Mark described as "perfect Southern," honored his parents who celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on this evening. With great humility, he challenged us to keep the dream alive, to build additional classroom facilities, begin an elementary school, establish senior housing facilities and provide additional iconography. "I pray that the future anniversary celebrations of our parish in 2016 for the 60th and 2031 for the 75th will remember us for our vision and achievements, as we remember those who contributed to our successes in the first 50 years." He concluded by reciting the final verse of **Steve Cardiasmenos'** Fifty Year Tribute. "No one can say what's in store for us someday, but we might insure our future with this thought: We could pass on to the children yet to come the bright spirit that was born at Holy Cross."

Fr. Peter spoke of the spiritual dimension of the 50th Anniversary, which is referred to in the Bible as the Jubilee year (Lev. 25). He recalled the service of many great parish priests who have served us well and drew parallels between his youth in the developing community of St. Nicholas in the

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San Fernando Valley and the early years of Holy Cross. He also congratulated the community for offering over \$250,000 in donations honoring our 50th anniversary. Many of these gifts were directed by donors to provide additional iconography and kick-start future building efforts. Please join the nearly 200 families who have generously offered their gifts to the Church.

Metropolitan Gerasimos, with great love and grace, paid tribute to our community. He impressed upon us the importance of belonging to a church family where personal relationships are cultivated and valued, at a time when many people are more connected to their computers and video games than other human beings. He urged us to continue efforts to reach out and be a safe harbor for those in need, and quoting also from Steve's song, to "work full-steam" toward achieving our dreams.

Following the benediction, it was time to dance the night away with the Martini Brothers and the sounds of **Alexander "the Great" Mallas**. Beautiful gifts of an inscribed tray and iconographic scroll were given to the guests as they left. It was a wonderful and memorable evening, and many thanks go to the Gala Chairs, the Craigheads and Brenners, 50th Anniversary Chair **Jenny Cladis**, Program Chair **Tanya Spirtos**, DVD-meister **Nick Peros**, all the great speakers, everyone who worked to make the event a success, and all who attended the event!

Then it was time to return to our homes, knowing that our Herculean efforts over these past five decades had been greatly appreciated and celebrated. And that a bright flame continues to shine from our special city on a hill. May that flame light our path to continued service to our Lord and all His people.

PEEKING IN THE BOOKSTORE

by *Konstantine Salmas*

Often, reading is superfluous because it has to do with history, with what came before. I would even submit most of us were turned off in high school to reading anything substantive. Moreover, I would also submit that many feel we know enough to evaluate our own experience on a day to day basis. The affairs of the moment require planning, organizing, and executing. Rarely, can books add anything substantive to our life. Right? Owning them gives off a certain air, an air that often is weightier than reading them.



Skepticism about books combined with busy-ness in life combine to steer us away from reading for extended knowledge about lengthy subjects. Like literature, history, philosophy, Church is something we understand, kind of. After one or two sentences, our mouth fails us. There are phrases, and single words, but rarely are we able to communicate an idea when asked a question.

Reading is a sure-fire way fix this difficulty. Reading a book like *Galatians*, by Fr. Paul Nadim Tarazi, can do several things. Our ability to speak on topics of faith will expand and our appreciation for Scripture as a written form will also heighten. We will see a discussion that shows that the Church does as much thinking on the topic of Jesus Christ as the institutions who provide the material for popular culture magazine articles and television programs that cast doubt on the word of God. Fr. Tarazi's word forces other words about Jesus to go back inside and put their hands over their heads.

The amazing thing about this book on Saint Paul's epistle to the Galatians is that he can write about the epistle because he has read it over and over and over. This is his method: reflecting on what he has read in Galatians, with help from what he has read in the rest of Scripture. But reading of Scripture is his key and this is something we can all do.

This is important because it means that Scripture is more important than all the other sources people use to make conclusions about Jesus. In a society that prefers alternate sources and alternate theories, it seems odd to us that a legitimate filtering and editing process already happened; that all the candidates for telling what is most important about Jesus Christ had already been tested and given Pass Fail grades.

Galatians is a letter that presents the crucifixion as the crux of the gospel because of what it means, given the world's knowledge and experience of God to that point in history. A group of Jewish Christians were pressuring Paul's community to change. Circumcision, they said, makes you an even better Christian because it makes you Jewish. The question has to do with what Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection mean for the world. What kind of change does it effect?

Father Paul shows, in his commentary, that reading Scripture is worth as much as a trip to Hawaii or a new luxury sedan because of what he says about verse 15, without changing what the verse means. For us, he points out the bigger picture of the Galatian controversy, the bigger picture about himself as connected to his authority as an Apostle as legitimate as Peter and

John, and the bigger picture about the content of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Father Tarazi writes:

“In the new messianic community, Jew and Gentile were precisely on the same footing, the status of both being based solely on faith in Christ. In order to drive his point home, Paul himself became a reflection of what he was preaching among the Gentiles. He became as they were; “to those without the Law” he became “as one without the Law” (I Cor. 9:21), and so they could point to him himself as a sign of the veracity of the gospel proclaimed to them.”

The ability to speak and to write toward a point is difficult, sometimes impossibly so. Reading helps this because we see how people put one word after another and how they form an idea about something that happened. As Christians, understanding the gospel is important. As Orthodox Christians, learning is assessed in action. This is our tradition about the experience of God, a tradition that comes from Christ, is restated very, very clearly by Paul in the first chapter of his epistle to the Galatians, and witnessed to by Father Paul Tarazi in his book, *Galatians*.

NEWS

A WORD FROM THE TECH COMMITTEE

About computer donations to the church . . . Due to the rapidly changing face of personal computer technology, the Church can no longer use donated, older computers. Because modern electronics are considered hazard waste for disposal purposes, the church cannot accept the liability for donated older electronics. There are other organizations that will accept older electronics for re-use or recycling, and we ask that you make your older equipment available to these organizations.

FAMILY SHARING – ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR

by **Brenda Visas**, *Family Sharing Chair*

This year our Family Sharing Program was very different. Our Giving Tree was only up for one week before gifts were due to meet the delivery schedule for twenty five families which meant another deadline for already busy parishioners. School was in session the day we sorted items and we really missed the energetic help we usually get from our kids. Our food donation (cereals, peanut butter, pastas, etc.) was small and after sorting dated food we were really low. It all worked out wonderfully.

Vivi Sarantitis and **Kristina Gabor** worked throughout the morning sorting items, and when people stopped by to drop off items, each stayed just a few minutes to an hour and helped with whatever task was at hand. After sorting staples and discarding dated food, there wasn't much in the way of donations. **Lisa Lunday** used this opportunity to teach her boys **Tom** and **Clark** and their friend, **Max Plowman** about stewardship and responsibility. She gave each of the boys money and they were allowed to purchase food at the grocery store, within the allocated budget, learning to make "on the job" decisions about good nutrition and getting the best value for the money to help feed our families. **Mary Pappas** and **Eleni Hulman** performed a final check to make sure each gift was in the correct location before bagging up the items and sending them on their way. **Kathy Polychroniou** made clam chowder for our dinner and **Ella Stamates** managed the check in table and delivery assignments. We had a wonderful turnout for our Delivery Night, thank you to all of the drivers.

We delivered the following to each of our families:

- 1 Box of Pantry Stock: (Cereals, pasta, canned goods) donated by Holy Cross parishioners, Lunday and Plowman families
- 2 Bags of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables: (Bananas, Oranges, Broccoli, Lettuce, Tomatoes, Cucumbers, Potatoes, Onions) donated by Nob Hill Catering.
- 1 Turkey: Donated by Trag's Market
- \$75.00 Safeway Card for additional groceries (funds donated by Holy Cross parishioners)

41 Parents received 1 gift
1 Yia-yia received 1 gift
65 Children received 2 gifts

We appreciate and thank you for your kind donations, support of the Philoptochos Christmas Tea and Boutique. If you have never had the opportunity to deliver to a family it is truly magical. Many of our parishioners were given Christmas cards and lots of hugs and thank you's accompanied with the knowledge they were a catalyst for a happy, loving Christmas for all those families they came in contact with. If your New Year's Resolution is to get involved – we would love to have you join the Philoptochos.

50 BACKPACKS FOR FIFTY YEARS

by **Brenda Visas**, *Family Sharing Program Chair*

Was it a coincidence that Holy Cross was asked to fill and donate fifty backpacks during the year of our 50th Anniversary? As part of our Family Sharing Program this year, Samaritan House asked Holy Cross if we would include their Homeless Shelter in our giving program. These folks are often forgotten during the holidays. We were asked to provide 50 backpacks with toiletries and things to keep homeless men warm. **Gary** and **Derek Brenner** and **Mark** and **Alex Simon** delivered 55 backpacks, filled by our loving congregation, to a shelter in South San Francisco. **Dan Kalamaras** graciously donated new pants, designed and manufactured by Dan, for the residents as well. The recipients were extremely grateful; in fact, Gary mentioned it was like seeing kids on Christmas morning and urges other parishioners to sign up for deliveries next year. The experience was both touching and rewarding for all those in attendance.

As I was shopping for items to put into some of the backpacks, I asked a Manager at my local Rite-Aid about discounting sweatshirts since I was trying to stay within our budget. I explained what we were doing for the shelter. His reply "Before I got this job, I had \$24 dollars in my pocket. Without folks like you and your church, I would have gone hungry and cold. God Bless you and your church for the work you do." I got the discount and a deeper appreciation of what our efforts mean to those we serve.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM A JOYFUL DELIGHT!

We decked (The Oaks) hall and filled it, too, with numerous parishioners who enjoyed a beautiful celebration of Christ's birth at our annual Holy Cross Community Christmas Program!

Alex Spirtos and **Evan Tsigaris** were wonderful as the MC's for the evening. All the groups who offered their voices in song were fabulous: from the Choir to the Sunday School to the Greek School. Special carols were performed on piano by **Julia** and **Paul Zerebinski**.

The Drama Program presented a play called "The Christmas Bear Election." **Nicole Kowtko** read about the Old Testament Prophecies of Christmas. And the Sunday School presented the highlight, the awesome Nativity Scene featuring a beautiful baby "Jesus" (in reality, the angelic **Maria Fafita**).

The Christmas Carol Sing-along and Play-along featured **Anita Mottola** on piano, **Christina Kolotouros** on clarinet, and **Nicole Kowtko** on flute. And **Santa Claus** visited with all the kids and handed out beautiful ornaments and candy canes.

Many thanks to everyone who participated and attended. To next year!

SPOTLIGHT

HOLY CROSS PARISHIONERS HONORED

Congratulations to **Loula Anaston** who recently was honored by the Hellenic American Professional Society (HAPS). Loula was selected as a recipient of the Axion Award for her contributions to society in general and the Hellenic American community. She has raised thousands of dollars for Greek Orthodox seminarians, served as Diocese Philoptochos President and worked for many



years in education. Loula is a Holy Cross parishioner. She sings in the choir and chairs the annual Choir Luncheon.

HAPS also presented scholarships to two other Holy Cross choir members: **Andrew Cardiasmenos**, who is majoring in Music Composition and French at Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin, and **Yannis Paulus**, who attends Stanford University School of Medicine, studying to become an ophthalmologist.

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The last time we ran an item about **Jessica Malekos-Smith** she was just dubbed a "Rising Star" by the Peninsula Civic Light Opera and had appeared in PCLO's *Evita*. Now we're happy to report that Jessica, a sophomore at Mercy-Burlingame, just finished a very successful run, playing Anne Sullivan in Serra High School's Fall Play production of *The Miracle Worker*. Congrats, Jessica!



Jessica as Anne Sullivan
at the Keller Family's water pump ➤

ETC.

UPCOMING SERVICES

subject to change - please check your Sunday Bulletins or the website

Sunday Services are 8:30 AM, Orthros, 10 AM, Divine Liturgy
Saturday Vespers are at 5:30 PM

Saturday, March 24 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers
Sunday, March 25 – 8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy
Monday, March 26 – 7:00 PM, Great Compline

Wednesday, March 28 – 6:30 PM, Ninth Hour, 7 PM, Presanctified

Liturgy

Friday, March 30 – 8:30 AM, Ninth Hour, 9 AM, Presanctified Liturgy

Saturday, March 31 – Saturday of Lazarus, 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy

Saturday, March 31 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

+ = + = + **HOLY WEEK** + = + = +

April 1 – Palm Sunday - Divine Liturgy and Blessing of the Palms - 10:00 AM

April 1 – The Service of the Bridegroom - 7:00 PM

April 2 – Great and Holy Monday - The Service of the Bridegroom - 7:00 PM

April 3 – Great and Holy Tuesday - The Service of the Bridegroom - 7:00 PM

April 4 – Great and Holy Wednesday - Liturgy for Workers - 6:30 AM

April 4 – The Sacrament of Holy Oil - 3:00 PM

April 4 – The Sacrament of Holy Oil - 7:00 PM

April 5 – Great and Holy Thursday - Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great - 9:00 AM

April 5 – The Service of the Holy Passion - 7:00 PM

April 6 – Holy Friday - The Vigil of the Royal Hours - 9:00 AM

April 6 – Vespers of the Descent from the Cross - 3:00 PM

April 6 – The Service of the Lamentations - 7:00 PM

April 7 – Great and Holy Saturday - Divine Liturgy - 9:00 AM

April 7 – Resurrection Matins, the Paschal Liturgy - 11:00 PM

April 8 – Easter Sunday - Vespers of the Resurrection, "Agape" - 11:30 AM

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)

Second and Fourth **Tuesdays** of the month, 7 PM, Youth Groups (Classrooms)

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)

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

Thursdays, 7 PM, Byzantine Chant Class (Contos Library)

Sundays, following Liturgy, Youth Choir (Classrooms)

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

LENT & HOLY WEEK EVENTS

Saturday, March 31 -- Join us on **Saturday of Lazarus** for Divine Liturgy (starting at 9:00 AM) followed by community fellowship as we enjoy breakfast together and help our children fasten **palm crosses** for Palm Sunday.

Sunday, April 1 -- **Collection for the Epitaphios** - Please give generously.

Sunday, April 1 -- **ANNUAL PALM SUNDAY LUNCHEON** -- **Menu** : plakia, potatoes, vegetables, salad and delicious Lenten apple cake and halvah -- **Adults** : \$15.00; **Menu** : special fish sticks and fries -- **Children** (ages 12 and under) : \$10.00 -- Please join us in the Fellowship Hall after Palm Sunday services. -- Reservations accepted following Liturgy on Sunday or leave a message @ 650-368-3691 or e-mail to twsmdgyn@aol.com. Seating is LIMITED - reserve NOW!

Friday, April 6 -- Our annual **Youth Religious Education Holy Friday Retreat** -- Second through Twelfth Graders meet in church starting at 9:00 AM; Pre-K through First Graders meet in your classrooms starting at 11:30 AM. And, our Philoptochos will **decorate the Epitaphios** immediately after the Vigil of the Royal Hours.

Saturday, April 7 -- **Anastasi Reception** following Midnight services (starting at 11:00 PM) in The Oaks.

Easter Sunday, April 8 -- Join us for the Agape service (11:30 AM) and **Easter Agape Picnic**. Join us on the Church grounds. Bring your favorite dish to add to the community table ... or better yet, bring your barbeque and cook your favorite dish right there! The day will include an Easter Egg hunt, children's games, music, a raffle, and a wonderful picnic prepared by all and for all. Tables and chairs will be provided. There is no admission charge but donations are welcome. For details, call Jim Smith @ 650-261-9208.

Please consider carpooling to Holy Week services and events!

THANK YOU CROSS CURRENTS SPONSOR!



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YOUTH

HOPE AND JOY

continues to meet on the second and fourth Tuesdays of the month. Please contact advisors **Annette Vlahos** (595-2445) or **Katie Buehlmann** (367-6187) for details. If you haven't been receiving our mailings/meeting notices, please call the church office.

GOYA

Look for details on these upcoming GOYA events :

April: "Golden Gate Park" / "Oratorical Festival"

May: "Saint and Sea"

June: "Disneyland"

July / August: "Ionian Village" / "Saint Nicholas Ranch"

SUCCESS

by *Kettie Fotinos*

A year's worth of hard work, much dedication, and lengthy anticipation was finally repaid with great success at the annual Greek Orthodox Folk Dance Festival, February 15-18. The sun wasn't the only thing shining bright in Ontario throughout the weekend. Each group lit up the stage with outstanding performances and great enthusiasm. Holy Cross's youngest group at FDF, **Dynami**, competed for the first time this year with excellence. Middle school group, **Kamari Mas**, performed beautiful dances from Samos. **Epithia**, ages 14-16, rocked the stage with an excellent Macedonian round. The oldest group, **Enomeni**, brought home a 4th place medal for their Cretan and Anatoliki Roumeli suites. Also, the FDF committee presented a special achievement choir award to **Mia Hara** and a director's award to their devoted leader, **Khara-Maria Kalamaras**. With the accomplishments of FDF 2007, there is much excitement for next year. May the good times and great successes continue.

Dear Parishioners : We are considering a *Health and Family Wellness Program* here at Holy Cross. Please complete this survey and return it ASAP to the Church Office. It only takes a couple of minutes to do it, but your response will be the main factor in helping us decide.

1. I exercise regularly: (*regular is defined as an average of three times a week*)

- Yes No

2. I have a fitness club membership:

- Yes No

3. I pay attention to my nutritional habits:

- Yes No

4. I use prescription drugs:

- Yes No

If YES, please check the reason (*please check all that apply*)

- High blood pressure Heart problems
 Weight problems Orthopedic problems
 High Cholesterol Stroke

Other (please specify) _____

5. I keep up with an active lifestyle: (*active is defined as being able to keep up with a regular exercise routine for more than 3 months in a row*)

- Yes No

If NO, check the reason (*please check all that apply*)

- Job Stress Family obligations
 Activity is boring I don't have company
 Holidays I don't have extra money
 Summer

Other (please specify) _____

6. I would be interested in a church sponsored health and wellness program

(*from 1 to 10, one being not interested at all, 10 being absolutely interested*)

- 1 2 3 4 5

- 6 7 8 9 10

7. I would like this program to contain information on:

- Exercise counseling Lifestyle changes
 Nutrition Retail offering

Other (please specify) _____

8. I would like to receive ongoing support:

- Yes (*please check all that apply*) No

- Periodical newsletter Educational handouts
 Regular website updates

Other (please describe) _____

9. I would be interested in a periodical series of presentations about health and fitness:

- Yes No (*if no, please skip to question # 12*)

10. I could attend:

- Once a week Once every two weeks
 Once a month Once every 2 months
 Once every three months

Other (please specify) _____

11. The ideal duration for me would be:

- 60 minutes 90 minutes

120 minutes

Other (please specify) _____

12. The topics that would interest me most would be: *(please check up to 5 areas)*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Nutritional Habits | <input type="checkbox"/> Physical Activity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifestyle Choices | <input type="checkbox"/> Stress Reduction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Injury Prevention | <input type="checkbox"/> Weight Loss |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spiritual Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Mental Training |
- Other (please specify) _____

13. My gender is: Male Female

My age is: _____

14. My other hobbies include: *(please check all that apply)*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Computers | <input type="checkbox"/> Shopping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Photography |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reading | <input type="checkbox"/> Art/Design |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Writing | <input type="checkbox"/> Cooking |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Theater/Cinema | <input type="checkbox"/> Manual Labor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Investing | <input type="checkbox"/> Cars/Motors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traveling | <input type="checkbox"/> Video Games |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other Sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Take Classes |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Foreign languages |
- Other _____

Thank you very much for taking the time to tell us how the church can serve you best.

15. OPTIONAL :

_____ *your name*

_____ *your phone number*

Please return to the church office :
900 ALAMEDA, BELMONT CA 94002-1604

A BELATED CHRISTMAS WISH

We missed including some names in the recent Community Christmas card. We include them here with our best wishes for a happy and healthy new year.

Zafiro Antonakos
The Bangs Family
Vickie, Annamarie and Lea Buonocore
Frank & Patricia Catomer and Family
Kosta & Peggy Dedo
Nicholas & Stephanie Delis and Family
Michael Evangel
Chris Frangos
Demetrios and Yvonne Gavros
Malamati Gialis
George & Sandra Giobres
Mary Glafkides & Family
Elsie Gratton
The Hytopoulos Family
Peter Kanalakis & Family
Peter, Christina & Alexis Kolotouros
Pat Lagiss
Elise C. Lenox
John G. Maneatis
George & Celia Maneatis
Sophia Pappageorge
Irene Pappas
Nicholas, Mary, Jim & Lia Peros
Greg, Annette, Andrea & Justin Vlahos
John & Benita West
Charles & Nicki Zarganis