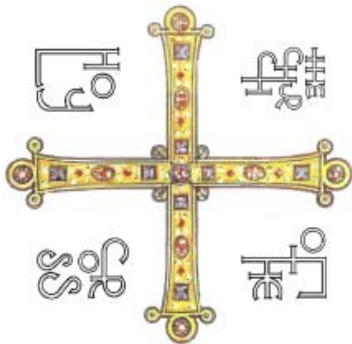


900 Alameda
BELMONT CA 94002-1604



CROSS CURRENTS

Church Newsletter
December 2009

CHRISTMAS, 2009

by *Father Peter Salmas, Pastor*

The angel said to them, "Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign to you: You will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger."



Luke 2:11-12

The Birth of our Savior, His Incarnation, is inexplicable! Even though we speak about God taking on human form to save mankind, it is incomprehensible for our minds to fathom why an eternal being would become a finite entity.

We learn from the very first chapter of Saint Matthew's genealogy of Jesus, that the Son of God so identifies with the human condition that He takes it all on, both the righteous and the wicked, faithful followers and deceivers, Jews and Gentiles, kings and peasants, believers and non-believers . . . all of humanity for all time.

The Nativity of Our Lord Jesus Christ is not really about good and bad but about God and His love for all of us. God is determined to find a way to rescue us from death and the clutches of the Evil One, despite our frailty. Yet with the coming of Christ, new life brings new opportunities, new hope and a restarting of our relationship with God, our merciful Creator.

The secularization of our world has all but destroyed this new vision that God has for us. Yet, we do not need to fall victim to the deceit of this



CROSS CURRENTS

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world if only we reach out to our Lord and take His Hand. After all, our life is not about temporal desires but is about our need for the eternal Love of our Lord.

The story of Christmas embraces the child in each of us for it is this “child,” our very soul within us, that stills hears the small voice of God, still gazes into the night sky with wonderment, still focuses on the Star, still hopes for help and rescue as it cries, “Lord, have mercy” and still looks to our Lord and prays, “Our Father.”

Christmas is about the inexplicable wonder of God’s love and how He will use every means possible to save us without compromising our free will. Christmas is about God becoming like us, His creation, so that we might become, like Him, eternal.

A joyous and blessed Christmas to you and your family.



REFLECTIONS REFLECTIONS

5:36 PM

by *Konstantine Salmas*



The Russians called. We answered. The Kursk root icon will be here in twenty minutes. Kursk root icon? I never heard of it?

I hand Hilton his DVDs as he lays out this month’s *Cross Currents*. The Kursk root icon? Maybe the Greek school parents know about this icon? Dads stand at the corner of the library, waiting to pick up their kids. They are a cluster on the corner of the Contos library. No time to ask them. **Fr Pete** the Younger calls me in. **Fr Stefan** is bringing the Kursk root icon, he says to me. Fr Peter is sending out a note on his daily study.

This is all so sudden. My mind is already full. I’m finally expelling cash for clunkers from my mind, trying to remember to get a link on the website for the selling of Pascha lambades by the Greek School, and I’ve given up trying to blow off the table of my psyche the two purple trees uprooted on Holy Tuesday.

The story that accompanies the icon is how long people in Kursk waited to kiss their icon. This was quite a homecoming. People waited as much as twenty hours to kiss the icon. Here, we have received the Kursk Root icon twice. One lady waited in Kursk for 20 hours to venerate this icon from 1295. Yes, then, it is a big deal that the icon was here twice, even if we only had an hour to prepare for a one to two hour visit. This is the perfect place for the icon to visit. These are the kinds of events that happen at a place of pilgrimage, which is what the Church of the Holy Cross is.

The story of this place is different than the other stories of history. The gifting of the relic of the Cross, the gifting of the relic of Saint John of San Francisco, the receiving of the myrrh streaming icon from Hawaii, the receiving of the Kursk Root icon won’t show up in the history textbook for Ralston Middle or Serra High School. The textbook will have the history of

Spain. Students will read how the veneration of the bodies of a king and queen are tied into the birth of Spain. The textbook will have the history of Queen Elizabeth. Students will read how Elizabeth wore armor when England fought off the Spanish Armada. World history is marked by armor and gender, redrawing county lines, and the design of computer chips.



If we needed a symbol to mark the church property on a map, there are many things that would be appropriate. We could submit a line drawing of a building with a dome; we could submit a cross. What I would like to see as a symbol on a map of Belmont to mark the area where Church of the Holy Cross resides is a book of the Gospels, the kind that Christ holds in many dome icons. And I wouldn't see the need in trimming off the jewels, or the look of gold, or the cross on the cover. Christ says in the gospels, Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is. He also says, Build up for yourself treasure in heaven, where rust and moths can't work. I would want anyone who opened a map of Belmont to see a gold and jewel encrusted gospel book with a cross on the cover. Why? Because on this site the message of the Gospel is spoken about, the message of the Gospel is the reason faithful come to gather here, and the foundation of the work that starts here and is accomplished here is a continuation of the work done by the Greek Orthodox Church in the first century, second, third, fourth, fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries.

Textbook stories aren't the most important. People wait for history textbook things to happen. This is how they mark their own lives, or life around them. But while this happens, the church history events are occurring, but go sailing by unknown, as if rolling across the horizon on a barge as it leaves behind the Golden Gate Bridge and the open mouth of the Bay.

YOUTH & PARENTS

CHRISTMAS IS ALL ABOUT DOING THE UNUSUAL

by *Fr. Pete Sotiras, Assistant Priest*



Our friends and peers (others our age) can have a huge influence on our decisions. So often, many of our choices are based on what our friends or peers will think about us because we want to be accepted by them. We avoid doing things that might make us seem unusual or weird to them. Are we wearing the right clothes, listening to the right music, hanging out with the right people? The answers to these questions are heavily influenced by what our friends and peers will say and think of us. However, sometimes the cost of pleasing our friends comes at a very high price.

You may have found yourself doing the following things to be accepted and not seem unusual: you may have stopped yourself from befriending someone who's not cool, because your friends would think you're weird. You may have starved yourself or are bulimic in order to have the right body image and to be accepted. You may have stopped hanging out with a life-long friend because your new group of friends doesn't embrace them. You may do drugs or get drunk because it's the only way to be part of you crew and get attention. You may have changed your personality and your interests and hobbies to fit in with the "in" crowd. You may have been silent about your faith in God because of being ridiculed. You may have laughed at someone because they have no fashion sense. These are just a few examples of the things you may have done so you could be accepted by your friends and not seem unusual or weird to them.

The above actions may make our friends happy, but they hurt God. Why? Because God knows that when we do these things, we will not like the person we've become. God knows that we won't feel good about what we've done, and we'll begin to feel empty inside. God doesn't want you to feel like this. To have the feelings God wants you to have, you need to do those things that you were created by God to do—love God and others. Only then will you truly feel good about yourself and your actions. You also have to be okay with potentially being considered weird or unusual by your “friends” and peers.

Believe it or not, the message of Christmas can give us comfort and encouragement to deal with our friends and peers. Christmas is all about God doing something that was considered highly unusual, weird and offensive to many people—He became a human being. This was unusual because God, who created EVERYTHING, who is all powerful, and immortal, freely chose to become mortal, and to experience pain, suffering, love, and everything else humans experience. Jesus' opponents could not and would not believe that God would do something so unusual and weird. It was not just God becoming a human that was unusual to people, but the things Jesus did while He was on earth, like hanging out with people who weren't part of the “in” crowd, that caused his opponents to get upset with Him.

Our God didn't let what others thought of Him stop Him from doing what He needed to do, even though it meant that some of His own people would consider Jesus unusual and weird. We too, should not be influenced by our friends just because they might consider us unusual or weird. Don't be afraid to befriend the person who is not popular; don't hurt yourself to have a certain body image; return to the personality and interests you had before you changed it to fit in (as long as your personality and interests are pleasing to God☺). Apologize to the person you ridiculed. If someone asks you why you don't sleep with your boyfriend or girlfriend, tell them that your Church wants you to have that special moment with the one who is willing to spend the rest of their life with you. You may be considered weird or unusual for doing these things, but you'll feel good about yourself because you're doing those things that God designed you to do.

Keep in mind that when you do those things that are pleasing to God but unusual to your friends, either your friends will learn to accept your decisions or they will not. There's a possibility that they may not want to be your friends anymore. If that's the case, then that would be really sad, but, I assure you, there are people your age who will embrace your God-pleasing decisions.

May the message of Christmas give you the strength and comfort to do those things that might seem unusual to your friends and peers but perfectly normal to God!

Merry Christmas!

PREPARING FOR FDF JANUARY 14-18

by *Kathy Roque-Albert, Dance Program Director*

Our dancers, directors, advisors and parents, are hard at work preparing for the Greek Orthodox Folk Dance and Choral Festival, which will be held in San Jose, CA over the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday weekend, **January 14-18**. This will be the 34th annual FDF. Typically, the event, which draws over 2,500 young people and their families and friends, is held over the Presidents' Day weekend. However, because Pascha in 2010 will fall on **April 4**, FDF will be held approximately one month earlier.

Everyone's support is greatly appreciated with our fundraising events and donations to help offset some of our costs for costumes and t-shirts.

Our dance groups practice on Tuesday evenings. **Ta Asteria** (5 to 8 year olds) directed by **Xandra** and **Gabby Nemchik** practice from 6:45 to 7:30 PM. **Dynami** (9 to 12 year olds) directed by **Andreas Najjar** and **Irene Koulouris** practice from 6:30 to 8 PM. **Epithia** (High School age) directed by **Maria** and **Lia Farantos** practice from 6:00 to 7:30 PM and **Enomenoi** (Adult group) directed by **Peter Kalafatis** practice from 7:30 to 9:30 PM.

ATTENTION ALL HIGH SCHOOL BOYS!

by *Ilya Frangos*

The 2010 OYAA YOUTH BASKETBALL SEASON is about to begin!

The Church of the Holy Cross invites ALL high school boys to join the High School Basketball Team and represent their church in the OYAA Youth League. Any and all players are invited and encouraged to come out and play for the team!

The team will be coached by 26-year old **Ilya Frangos**, who has been playing OYAA Basketball since he was 12 years old. He is currently playing basketball in the Adult A League where he has been an OYAA Champion 6 times in the past 8 years. Ilya enjoys playing basketball and welcomes every player to play, whether they are trying to stay fit, want to learn about the rules of the game and how to play, or just want to have some fun playing basketball!

If you have any questions, or are interested in playing, please send Ilya an e-mail at IFRANGOSESQ@gmail.com. Thank you!

GREEK SCHOOL NEWS

On October 25, Greek School sponsored the coffee hour in honor of the “OXI Day”. Thank you to everybody who came and supported Greek School. Our students sang wonderful patriotic songs, reminding us of the bravery of the Greek soldiers who fought against the superpowers of Italy and Germany. In the words of Sir Winston Churchill, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom: “Hence we will not say that Greeks fight like heroes, but that heroes fight like Greeks.”

With the holidays fast approaching, our students are getting into the spirit of the season, by learning Greek Christmas traditions, reading Christmas stories, singing songs, and making beautiful crafts. They even learn about the traditional recipes for kourabiedes and melomakarona! Greek school students will take part to the Sunday’s School Christmas celebration on **December 13**, by singing Greek Christmas carols and songs. We are

looking forward to celebrating the holidays together with the Sunday School students.

Best wishes for joyful and peaceful Christmas and a Happy New Year from all of us at Greek School.

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PRESCHOOL BUILDING BLOCKS

by *Miss Chris, Preschool Director*

One cold and foggy San Francisco morning, when I was 4 years old, my mother and I dropped my three older brothers off at school, and instead of heading home, we headed to a place that lives in my memory as one of the most magical places on earth. After a short drive, we parked the car, and my mother explained to me that it was finally time for me to go to “my school.” Excitedly, I jumped out of the car and saw before me a little brown house with an enormous play-yard and a sandbox as big as my front yard. I could hardly wait to get inside. We walked up the path to the front door where a beautiful woman named Miss Brown met us. She had ebony colored skin, which I had never seen before, curly black hair, and the kindest smile you can imagine. She took my hand and led me into a room filled with toys and books and dolls and blocks. It was noisy and busy and accented with little furniture that was just my size. There were low shelves, a kitchen with a miniature white refrigerator, small tables and even smaller chairs that when sat in, allowed my feet to rest securely on the ground. Most importantly, the room was filled with lots of new friends. My mother confidently left me in Miss Brown’s capable care, and I was encouraged to play. That very first school experience in that little brown house in San Francisco is what ultimately has brought me to Holy Cross Preschool. The days I spent there are engraved in my memory. I can see the dark, log cabin-type walls, smell the musty classroom air, and taste the graham crackers and orange juice which were our everyday snack. Most of all, however, I remember the feeling of importance; not that going to preschool was important, but that I was important in this magical new place. I could do anything!

A feeling of importance is what the teachers and I at Holy Cross Preschool strive to instill in our children every day. Whether it be listening to a child's story of the most amazing garbage truck that rattled down the street that morning or holding on tight to a tearful child as their Mommy or Daddy says goodbye, we want every child to feel that they are the most important person in the world at that moment in time and that we are honored to be with them. We feel that when children are afforded that sense of importance, when we respect where they are in their individual growth and development, when we provide an optimal environment in which to grow, that they will realize their full potential. Throughout our days together, we read books, count, sing, dance and play, but all with the mindset that what we are really doing is providing experiences that build memories that lead to a desire for more — more words, more books, more friends, and more learning ...for our important little ones.

Holy Cross Preschool priority registration for parishioners begins in January for the 2010-2011 school-year. Please call the preschool today to schedule a visit. We look forward to meeting you and your important little one.

NEWS

A HOLIDAY MESSAGE FROM THE PHILOPTOCHOS

by *Mary Peros, President*

At Thanksgiving time we all reflect on what is important in our lives. We in the Philoptochos hope that your Thanksgiving holiday has been blessed with good health, happiness and love.

As Christmas fast approaches, we can feel the excitement in the air. We look forward to decorating our homes, buying gifts and enjoying wonderful Christmas treats and bountiful feasts with our loved ones. We also look forward to the fellowship that we share with our friends and family here at Holy Cross as we prepare to celebrate the Birth of our Lord.

The Ladies in the Philoptochos are hosting our traditional Christmas Tea on **Sunday, December 13**, immediately following liturgy in the Main Hall. This year we are planning something very special. Instead of a buffet, we invite you to sit at uniquely decorated tables and enjoy a light brunch while listening to Christmas music and perhaps a caroler or two. We are bringing our homes to you. Each Board member is decorating her own table and we are asking some of our very respected members-at-large to decorate a table, too. Of course, the center of attention in the room will be the beautiful Christmas tree. The tree will have golden and bronze ornaments and will be the first of at least five prizes in our Raffle. Christmas baked goods and holiday items will be available for sale. Mailers have gone out with a flyer and raffle tickets. Please consider purchasing your tickets and joining us for the Tea. Everyone is invited. Tickets will be available at the door. We are asking for a minimum donation of \$5 per person with all proceeds going to Family Sharing.

A blessed Christmas to you and your family!

THREE HIERARCHS BOOKSTORE

With the Feast of Christmas nearly here, the Holy Cross Bookstore staff suggests that you consider meeting some of your gift-giving needs from the books, icons, CD's and other gifts available in our Bookstore. Several new titles have been added including the newest publication by **Johanna Manley**, *Odyssey Through the Psalms with Christ*. Designed to be read on a daily basis, each of the 150 Psalms are coupled with relevant passages from the New Testament and accompanying commentaries from the Fathers of the Church. Biographical books of both modern saints and those from the earlier centuries in the life of the Church are available as are many other books which enhance our understanding of our lives as Orthodox Christians. Children's books abound, including books specific to Christmas. A newer publication entitled, *St. Seraphim's Beatitudes..Blessings for Our Path to Heaven* is a book based on the life of the Wonderworker Saint Seraphim of Sarov. This story "delights with lavish, historically-accurate illustrations and inspiring stories that every young Christian will enjoy reading again and again." Children's Orthodox books from Greece (both in

English and in Greek) are also available. Potamitis Publishing has produced beautifully illustrated and well-worded books entitled, *My Prayer Book*, *Saint Dionysios of Zakynthos*, *Saint Catherine*, and *My Warrior Saints*.

We will also be offering for sale a variety of Christmas cards and ornaments, including porcelain Christmas ornaments whose designs are from the mosaics in our church. Do come early as selections will be limited. Please call the church office if you would like personal shopping time during hours other than after Divine Liturgy.

SIRIO AT WORK

We recently received these photos of Mr. **Sirio Tonelli** working in his studio in Pietrasanta, Italy, on mosaics for our Holy Cross sanctuary. The upper photo depicts Mr. Tonelli at a large work table with small bowls containing mosaic pieces for an icon depicting two angels holding an enshrined Cross. He is working on the details of the face of the angel which will be placed above the Platytera in our sanctuary. The two other photos show close-ups of the work in progress as well as the dimensions of this work. We are blessed as a community to be part of this great undertaking and to witness the installation of these magnificent icons. So many in our community have offered through prayer their financial contributions in support of this project. May our Lord continue to bless us in our efforts to bring glory to His Holy Name.

FAMILY SHARING MONTH

This Christmas season we have the wonderful opportunity to share our blessings with our surrounding community. With your family, friends, and church community celebrate the Christmas season by getting involved.

- o Adopt a child or two from the Angel Tree.
- o Make a donation of food.
- o Make a monetary donation
- o Purchase toiletries for backpacks for homeless shelter
- o Deliver food and gifts on **Monday, December 21** at 6:00 PM



Please contact **Anastacia Stamates** at anastaciams@yahoo.com or 650-868-2569 for more information (or see me after church on Sundays!).

Help make our **Christmas** outreach program this year another success. Sunday collections will be going to this effort – please give generously. Remember! Delivery of backpacks and food and toys to our adopted families is set for **Monday, December 21** at 6:00 PM – please meet in The Oaks for a light meal.

THANK YOU!

We thank Tom & Pete's Produce (of Half Moon Bay) for their generous donation of pumpkins at Halloween time, and our Christmas tree in The Oaks and the trees which decorate our grounds.

EVENTS

CHRISTMAS TEA

The Annual Philoptochos Christmas Tea, benefitting the Family Sharing Program, will be held on **Sunday, December 13** following Divine Liturgy. Tickets will be available for purchase at the door for a \$5 minimum donation per person. Join the holiday festivities for a charity drawing, Greek pastries sale and holiday shopping boutique. Raffle tickets will be sold every Sunday during Coffee Hour in The Oaks.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM, DECEMBER 13

It happens only once a year! Join us for "Crossing into Christmas," the highly-anticipated, star-studded and always thrilling Holy Cross Community Christmas Program, **Sunday, December 13**, 6 PM in The Oaks.

Delight in the traditional story of Jesus' birth (nativity scene), plus an Academy Award-worthy drama play, beautiful music from our Choir and young people, and a "ho-ho-holly jolly" visitor from the North Pole!

Bring your musical instrument for the Christmas Carol Sing-along, too!

All Sunday School students should attend ONE rehearsal on **Saturday, December 12**, 10 AM, in The Oaks. For more information, contact Eva Canellos, cecanellos@aol.com or 529-0180.

SONGS AND STORY TIME

Our annual "Christmas Songs and Story Time" on the evening of **Saturday, December 19** following Great Vespers (which starts at 5:30 PM). Come in your p.j.s and enjoy hot chocolate and Christmas cheer as we sing songs and tell stories. Adult or child, this is the time to sit in the big chair and read your favorite Christmas story out loud! **This is for EVERYone, young and old!** The evening will end by 8 PM.

VASILOPETA

Join us for our annual traditional Vasilopeta luncheon. Immediately following Divine Liturgy, Sunday, **January 10, 2010**. Proceeds benefit Saint Basil Academy for Children.

SERVICES

subject to change - please check your Sunday Bulletins

Sunday Services are (regular schedule) 8:30 AM, Orthros, 10:00 AM, Divine Liturgy; (summer schedule) 8:15 AM, Orthros, 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy; Saturday Vespers are at 5:30 PM

Wednesday, December 9 – Conception of Saint Anna – 8 AM, Matins; 9 AM, Divine Liturgy

Saturday, December 12 – Saint Spyridon – 8 AM, Matins; 9 AM, Divine Liturgy

Saturday, December 12 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

Sunday, December 13 – 8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy

Tuesday, December 15 – Saint Eleftherios – 8 AM, Matins; 9 AM, Divine Liturgy

Saturday, December 19 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

Sunday, December 20 – Sunday before the Nativity – 8:45 AM, Orthros;
10 AM, Divine Liturgy

Thursday, December 24 – 8 AM, Office of Great Hours; 9 AM, Vespers
Liturgy of Saint Basil

Thursday, December 24 – Christmas Services – 8 PM, Orthros; 9 PM,
Divine Liturgy

Friday, December 25 – 10 AM, Christmas Divine Liturgy

Saturday, December 26 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

Sunday, December 27 – Sunday following the Nativity – Saint Stephen –
8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy

Wednesday, December 31 – Saint Basil the Great – 6 PM, Orthros; 7 PM,
Divine Liturgy

Saturday, January 2 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

Sunday, January 3 – 8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy

Tuesday, January 5 – Eve of Holy Theophany – 8 AM, The Royal Hours; 9
AM, Vespers Liturgy of Saint Basil (Lesser Agiasmos)

Wednesday, January 6 – Holy Theophany – 8 AM, Orthros; 9 AM, Divine
Liturgy of Saint Basil (Greater Agiasmos)

= + = + **Confession** + = + =

Wednesday, December 9, 3-5 PM

Friday, December 11, 3-5 PM and 7-9 PM

Wednesday, December 16, 3-5 PM

MEETINGS

Please check your Sunday Bulletins for the dates and times of all meetings.

Weekdays - Preschool

Weekdays - Greek School

Mondays - 10 AM, Bible Study

Mondays - 7-8 PM, College Night

second Monday of the month - 7:30 PM, Executive Council

Tuesdays - evenings, Dance

first Tuesdays of the month - 11 AM, ORA

first Tuesdays of the month - 7 PM, Philoptochos Board

second & fourth Tuesdays - evenings, Hope/JOY

second Tuesday of the month - 7:00 PM, Youth Council

third Tuesdays of the month - 7:30 PM, Parish Council

Wednesdays, 7 PM - Studies in the Faith

First three Wednesdays of the month - Choir

Thursdays - 7-8:30 PM in The Oaks - BLAST (starting 9/17)

first Thursdays of the month, Daughters of Penelope

third Fridays of the month - service at the Samaritan House Kitchen

every other Saturday, after Vespers - Young Professionals



STEWARDSHIP 2010

Thank you

to those who have submitted
their 2010 pledge cards!

If you haven't yet, please return
your pledge cards to the church office as soon as
possible to help us with financial planning for next
year. (We'd *REALLY* appreciate them back by **De-
cember 22!**)

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. You will receive a call to confirm that Father is coming.

=====

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 :

DAY: (a weekday after Jan. 6) : January _____, 2010

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

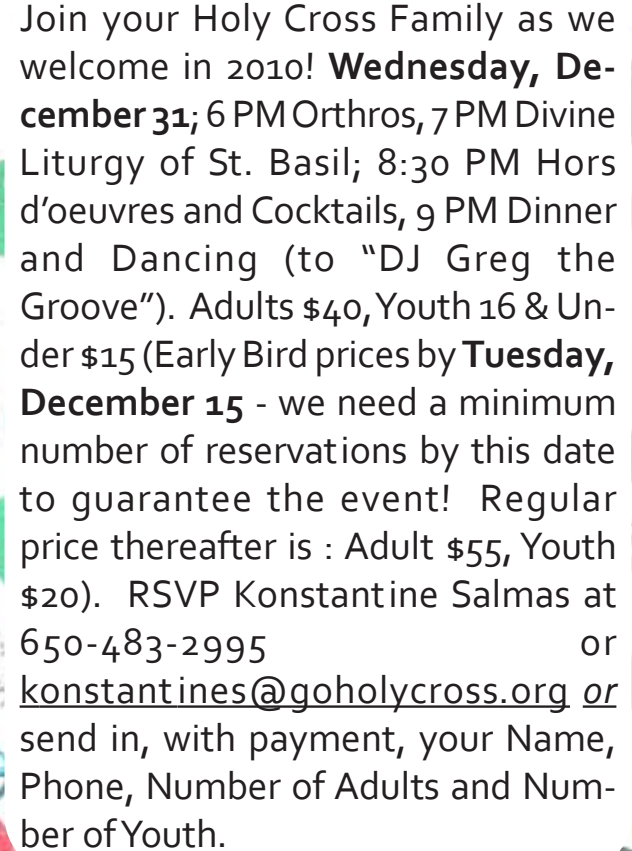
Name: _____

Phone (s): _____

Address: _____

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

RING IN THE NEW YEAR



Join your Holy Cross Family as we welcome in 2010! **Wednesday, December 31**; 6 PM Orthros, 7 PM Divine Liturgy of St. Basil; 8:30 PM Hors d'oeuvres and Cocktails, 9 PM Dinner and Dancing (to "DJ Greg the Groove"). Adults \$40, Youth 16 & Under \$15 (Early Bird prices by **Tuesday, December 15** - we need a minimum number of reservations by this date to guarantee the event! Regular price thereafter is : Adult \$55, Youth \$20). RSVP Konstantine Salmas at 650-483-2995 or konstantines@goholycross.org or send in, with payment, your Name, Phone, Number of Adults and Number of Youth.