



THE LOGOS

Nativity of The Virgin Mary

November 2017, Volume 1, No. 8

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James Pternitis
Baptism
October 21st

So Many Blessings to Thank God for...

My beloved in Christ,



We are already into the month of November and people begin to get into the holiday mind set. Christmas tree sellers, colored lights and decorations seem to be everywhere you look. Our Orthodox faith prepares for the coming of the Lord through a 40 day fast that begins on November 15th. The Nativity fast will be talked about in more length elsewhere in this month's Logos. In brief, I would like to give praise to a great Feast that we celebrate together as citizens of these United States – Thanksgiving.

from Him; blessings of life, health, prosperity, family and the great gift of friendships. We gather as communities and families. It is a day where even a stranger is invited to our home for a feast. It is a feastday where we ultimately acknowledge God's unending goodness. It is always good to give thanks to God, to praise Him through our actions and kindness towards each other.

The Church in its Wisdom has accepted this holiday as part of our Orthodox way of being here in America. Giving thanks is theological in nature and from the time of the first wave of Greek immigrants coming to this country it was celebrated and received as a sacred day. On this day the head of a family gives a prayer on behalf of all present. The following is a prayer that can be used on Thanksgiving:

On the fourth Thursday of the month we celebrate Thanksgiving. We thank God as a nation, at Thanksgiving we are one family. The thanks we give to God are for all the blessings we have received

(Continued on page 3)

Our Unsung Hero: Freda Nicozisis

Interview on Page 10

Visit our Website:

www.nativitygochurch.org
For announcements, monthly calendar, photos and more!

St. Theophan the Recluse - On Prayer

Part 3 of 4 homilies.
See Page 7



Parish Priest
Rev. Father Nick Marcus
 Cell (616) 328-3143
 frnickmarcus@gmail.com

Pastoral Assistant
William Smith, M.DIV
 Cell (586) 942-6625
 ws147135@gmail.com

Services
 Sunday
 8:45am Orthros
 10:00am Divine Liturgy

Wednesday
 7:00pm Paraklesis

Office
Kathy Kyriacou, Admin
 Office (734) 420-0131
 secretarynvm@yahoo.com
 Monday - Friday, 10am to 2pm

**Nativity Bookstore
 & Fr. George Vaporis
 Library Hours**

Tuesday - Saturday, 10am to 2pm
 Tuesday & Thursday, 6pm to 8pm
 Sunday, 12noon to 2pm
 Closed Monday

**NATIVITY OF THE VIRGIN MARY
 GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH**
 39851 West Five Mile Road
 Plymouth, Michigan
 www.nativitygochurch.org

Parish Council News

By Pete Tsaprazis

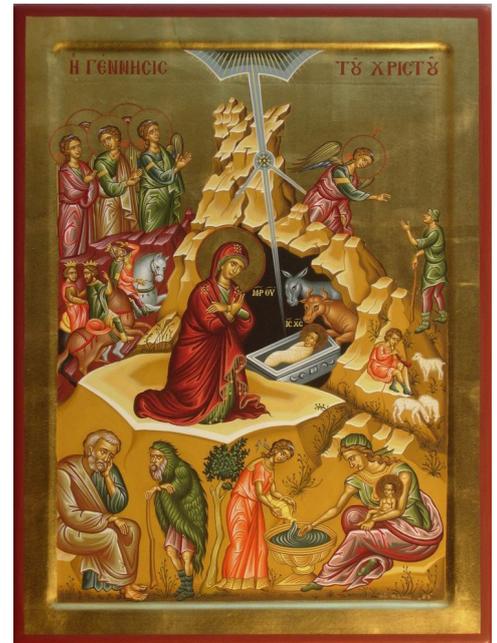
The Parish Council met on October 10 to discuss several maintenance and capital improvement proposals along with an approach for funding these actions. The discussion was framed as a follow-up to our Strategic Planning retreat held in April. Agreement was reached to repave our parking lot and road area from the church office going north up to 5 mile road. Quotes for the re-paving will be pursued with a likely project start up in the spring following Pascha. Exterior cleaning of the church was recently completed and the results are being evaluated. Replacing leaky windows inside the church was also discussed along with the potential construction of a pole barn for storage to replace our aging trailer.

The parish council also discussed mortgage debt reduction options as well as a proposal to construct a Pantocrator within the church ceiling without disturbing the existing church roof.

While the success of our festival and other fund raising activities has provided us with funds to address much needed maintenance projects, our ability to fund longer term church expansion and beautification/iconography needs to be addressed. The input of our parishioners is always appreciated and the parish council is continuing to study our options for our long term expansion.



Congratulations to the newly illumined Thalia "Vasiliki" Georvassilis, daughter of Gregory and Chelsey Georvassilis. Godfather - George Georvassilis (not pictured).



Congratulations to Anastasia "Tasi" Newton & Ethan Collins and family. Koumbara - Anna Marcus (not pictured).



Congratulations to the newly illumined James (Demetrios) Pternitis and family. Godparents Jerry and Mary Takis.

The Nativity Fast

By Williams Smith



On November 15th we begin the Nativity Fast and the Holiday season officially begins for all Orthodox Christians. Drawing nearer to Christmas we may find ourselves increasingly preoccupied with shopping and planning parties, but we should also focus energy on nurturing the tools that lean toward salvation. Such as following the commandments, reading the bible, praying, giving alms, and going to confession. As we complete our check lists of shopping and planning, we should also remember to complete our check list for God. When done prayerfully and with thanksgiving, all these tools can serve to focus us and bring us closer to God.

I remember one of my favorite activities when I was at the seminary was going with a group of classmates to a soup kitchen on Monday nights and serving dinner to those in need. We served about one hundred people and gave them bags filled with non-perishable items, canned goods, and beverages. We arrived early and prepared their meals. It was a lot of work and preparation but at the end the people were so grateful and thankful for what we did. I had a wonderful feeling in my heart after feeding those in need.

On November 15th we begin the forty day Nativity Fast where our attention is drawn to the great mystery of the Incarnation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We hear this word Incarnation - what does it mean? Incarnation refers to Jesus Christ coming and comes from our reading in John 1:14, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us." God did an incredible work by sending His only begotten Son into the world and providing us with salvation that we did not deserve. By our fasting we are reminded that this is not simply the birth of any baby, but God being united with man. It is the moment when the unchangeable God himself is joined, eternal life, with mortal life. He who holds the universe in His hand and created all things becomes flesh for our salvation.

The Nativity Fast is the starting point for a spiritual journey to the day of this great joy. This journey is one that requires us to develop greater humility so we can fully appreciate the gift God has given us through the incarnation of His only begotten Son. It is a journey that lovingly guides us to Him by freeing us from the bondage



of our worldly life and allowing a more meaningful relationship with Him. As we surrender our souls to the will of God throughout the fast, we relinquish control over the journey and approach with awe Him whose birth we will soon celebrate.

Furthermore, the Nativity Fast is unique in that we have two periods encompassing the fast. The first period is from November 15th to December 11th. The second is from December 12th to Christmas Eve. In the first period, the Church instructs us to maintain the usual strict fast on Wednesdays and Fridays while abstaining from meat and dairy on all other days - instead allowing fish, wine, and oil. The second period is a strict fast with wine and oil allowed on Saturday and Sunday.

Lastly, as we prepare to receive Christ at Christmas - through fasting, reading the Bible, praying, giving alms, and going to confession - we must remember that true repentance is also needed. Both in our private prayers and the sacrament of confession, we repent by honestly confessing our sins and asking for the Lord's mercy as we resolve to make a new beginning in our spiritual life. Yes, we must cooperate with our Lord's mercy and grace by doing the best we can to live faithfully; but most of all, we must rely on God's mercy and love to fulfill in us what we are unable to accomplish on our own. In fact, the more we grow in holiness, the more we begin to see clearly the gravity of our sins and how far we are from Christ. The closer we grow to him, the less we will think of salvation as a reward for good behavior, and more a gift of God's love for us. Regardless, we must never despair, give up, or walk away. Instead we should unceasingly pray, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner," placing our faith and hope in God and knowing that His will for us is to find salvation. Amen.

(Fr. Nick from page 1)

Master, Lord, God Almighty, we have gathered together to praise Your majesty, to bless You, to glorify You, the only true God, and to offer thanks to You with a grateful heart for all the blessings You have bestowed upon us, known and unknown.

God of our fathers, as we are about to sit down and partake of these gifts You have set before us, we raise up our hands to You and ask You to accept our prayer of thanksgiving, along with people of every faith in this land. We unite our prayer together with every American, thankful for freedom we enjoy.

We are especially thankful, Almighty God, for Your ineffable love toward us. Gratefully we unite our voices and we pray to You:

*Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. Amen*

As we gather as one family on the day of Thanksgiving I pray that all of us will be thankful for the great gifts and blessings the Lord has bestowed upon us.

May you have a blessed Thanksgiving and Nativity Fast,

Fr Nick

Parish News Reel

- Congratulations to Bill Smith for being named Pastoral Assistant. It is a paid position with many responsibilities assisting Fr. Nick to the glory of God.
- The Nativity's Got Talent show was held on Friday, October 6th in the fellowship hall. There was music, singing, dancing, comedy and even more comedy! Thanks to Peggy Collias for hosting and everyone who attended. See photos on page 14.
- The algae and moss was cleaned from the exterior of the church structure on October 17th by Hatfields Softwash Solutions. The cleaning cost \$1000.
- Two new wireless microphones for Fr. Nick and visiting clergy were purchased last month. Two more microphones will be purchased this month to bring the total to four microphones. Each microphone cost \$750.
- The festival wrap up meeting was held on Tuesday, October 17th. Much was accomplished yet more volunteers are needed to take on chair positions as preparations for the 2018 festival are set to begin early next year. Volunteers are needed to head up the following committees: Festival Co-Chairs, Set Up and Tear Down, 50/50 Raffle, & Signage. Please contact the church office to help. Many improvements and much assistance are needed to secure the future success of our festival!
- Sunday School has begun, please register your children if you haven't already. Contact Religious Education ministry leaders Jerry Takis or Michelle Hunsinger with any questions.
- The Fall General Assembly will be held on Sunday, December 3rd following the Divine Liturgy in the social hall. Please make every effort to attend.
- Over three consecutive Sundays in October, the 2nd tray passed raised \$2083 for hurricane relief! The parish matched the amount raised donating \$4166 to the International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) for hurricane relief. May the Lord comfort and assist all hurricane victims and their families.
- Our community needs more volunteers for the sacred task of baking Proskhoron. The bread is our offering to God which along with the offered wine mystically transforms into the Body of Christ every Sunday. Please see Fr. Nick for recipe and instructions if needed.
- Empty bottles and cans from the festival that need recycling remain in bags behind the church. Please help by removing a bag at your earliest convenience and recycling at home.
- Nativity is participating in the Kroger Com-

- minuty Rewards Program. Register online today using your Kroger plus card.
- The 26th Annual Christmas Auction sponsorship forms are now available! Please help by sending a check or item to be auctioned to the church by November 30th. Sponsor levels are: Gold \$300, Silver \$200, and Bronze \$100 which include your name listed in the program.
- The Philoptochos Community Christmas Card registration has started. Cost is \$10 per family and forms are now available at church.
- Congratulations to the newly elected 2017/2018 GOYA leaders! Sophia Zervos (President); Melina Varlamos (Vice President); Roy Hunsinger (Treasurer); Irmgard Pallas (Secretary); Irini Marcus (Social Media).
- The Nativity Bookstore is holding a Grand Re-opening and holiday sale! Get 10% off all purchases through Nov. 18th. Visit the store to see many new items added.

FINANCE CENTER as of October 1st, 2017

2017 Budget: \$360,000
Monthly Budget: \$30,000

Parish Offerings*

June: \$17,508
YTD: \$220,027

Stewardship

Pledged: \$193,628
Pledges: 163
Families 268
Members: 550

Mortgage (4% APR)

Paid Monthly: \$1557
(\$1057 + \$500 principal)
Balance: \$109,357.56

Festival 2017

Net Income: \$104,227
Attendance: 7153

*includes candle offerings

Additional Services

9am Orthros
10am Divine Liturgy

- Wed, Nov 8th.....Synaxis of the Archangel Michael
- Thurs, Nov 9th.....St. Nektarios the Wonderworker
- Mon, Nov 13th.....St. John Chrysostom
- Tues, Nov 21st.....Entrance of the Theotokos
- Sat, Nov 25th.....St. Katherine the Great Maryr

Small Paraklesis

- Wed, Nov 1st.....7pm
- Wed, Nov 8th.....7pm
- Wed, Nov 15th.....7pm
- Wed, Nov 22th.....7pm
- Wed, Nov 29th.....7pm

Upcoming Events

- Movie Night.....6:30pm Fri, Nov 3
- GOYA Meeting.....12:30pm Sun, Nov 5
- Monastery Visit.....9am Tues, Nov 7
- Men's Club Dinner.....7pm Tues, Nov 7
- Orthodox Faith Class.....7pm Thu, Nov 9
- Veterans Day.....Sat, Nov 11
- Seniors Meeting.....noon Tues, Nov 14
- Nativity Fast Begins.....Wed, Nov 15
- Choir Practice.....6:30pm Wed, Nov 15
- Family Night.....6pm Fri, Nov 17
- Thanksgiving.....Thu, Nov 23
- Office Closed.....Nov 23 & Nov 24
- Orthodox Faith Class...7pm Thu, Nov 30
- General Assembly.....noon Sun, Dec 3
- Christmas Auction.....6:30pm Fri, Dec 8

Please call the church office for more information.

THE LOGOS

Nativity of The Virgin Mary

Next Deadline: Nov. 15

Please submit all schedules, events, information and photos by **November 15, 2017** for December edition to:
nativityvmvoice@gmail.com

~ Tuesday Group Invitation ~

We invite you to please consider joining the *Tuesday Group*. Following Bible study the group enjoys lunch, fellowship, fun, and playing cards. This gathering is for and about fellowship. There is no cost to you! Stop in for as long as you are able. We have a lot of laughs and this is a great opportunity to get to know each-other better. We look forward to seeing you there! God Bless you!

~ EVERY TUESDAY ~
11am..... Bible Study
Noon.....Fellowship Lunch

Fr. Nick and Presbytera Liza



~ Basketball Golf Outing Results ~

With great weather fun was had by all! Congrats to all the participants, contest winners, and Nativity basketball.

Winning Team

Jackie, Mike, and Steve Garris

Closest to the Pin

Tim M., Roy Hunsinger,
Mathew Mansour

Closest to the Pin 2nd Shot

Paul Geragosian, Cam Chemello,
Nondo Basoukeas

Longest Drive Men

Mathew Monsour

Longest Drive Women

Brook Schrauben

NATIVITY PRAYER LIST

Please Pray for:

Fr. George Vaporis
Soula Metropoulos
Sandy Zembylas
Nick Zembylas
Georgia Theophelis
Jacob Espinosa
Elaine Galbraith
Katherine Beeny
Cleo Demetriou
Alexander Nichoff
Steve Kaplantzes
Gus Photsios
Sheri Wilkins
Aristotle Zarkin
Vasiliki Biselas
Eva Kocoves Fink
Taylor Zembylas
Anastasia Kyriazako
Evangelos Bourouris
Maria Espinosa
Maria Kalas
Eleni Vrahnos
Theodora Bageris
Nick Kyriakou
Michali Malfis
Angeliki Dellas
Andrula Loisodes
Jody Stockdale
Bessie Shell
Nick Morakeas
Mia Grace Zembylas
Catherine Dillon
Panagiotis Korellis
Catherine Vardouniotis
Carlo Nichoff
Gail Koumariotis
Anna Kyriakou
Helen Photsios
Maria Rifat
Freda Nicozisis
Parthena Papadopoulou
William Fitzgerald
Frank Maroudis
Presbyteria Jenny Newlin
Project Mexico Team
Metropolitan Paul
Archbishop John
(call the office to be added)

Wisdom of the Saints

“It is necessary first to be purified, then to purify; to be made wise, then to make wise; to become light then to enlighten; to approach God, then to bring others to him; to be sanctified, then to sanctify”

St. Gregory the Theologian

“Do not demand love from your neighbor, because you will suffer if you don’t receive it; but better still, you indicate your love toward your neighbor and you will settle down. In this way, you will lead your neighbor toward love.”

St. Isaac the Syrian

“If someone has repented once of a sin, and again does the same sin, this is a sign that he has not been cleansed of the causes of the sin, wherefrom, as from a root, the shoots spring forth again.

St. Basil the Great

“Only God can satisfy the soul’s thirst.”

St. John of Kronstadt

“Repress the feelings of irritation in your soul with love, deaden the powers of the senses with temperance, and let the power of thought soar with prayer. Then, the light in your soul will never dim.”

St. Maximos the Confessor

“Troubles are usually the brooms and shovels that smooth the road to a good man’s fortune.”

St. Basil the Great

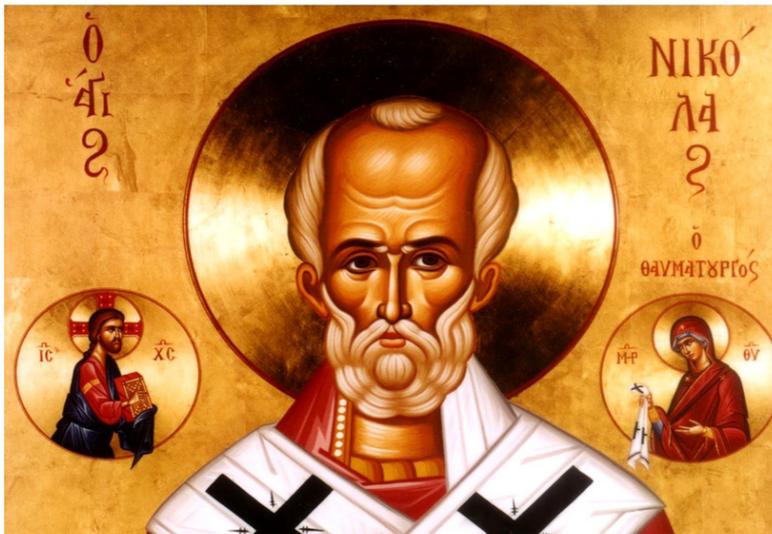
“A person should never make great leaps and bounds in the spiritual life. He should always move towards God progressively; little by little, but consistently. It is the middle way that is the royal path.”

St. Sergei of Vanves

“Fasting is wonderful, because it tramples our sins like a dirty weed, while it cultivates and raises truth like a flower.”

St. Basil the Great

OPEN HOUSE AND RECEPTION
FOR THE FEAST OF
SAINT NICHOLAS



The Metropolis of Detroit Council and the Metropolis of Detroit Ladies Philoptochos invite you to an open house and reception celebrating the Feast of Saint Nicholas and the Nameday of HIS EMINENCE METROPOLITAN NICHOLAS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 3, 2017

1:00PM - 5:00PM



METROPOLIS OFFICES - 2560 CROOKS ROAD - TROY, MI 48084
248.823.2400 - OFFICE@DETROIT.GOARCH.ORG



SAINT SPYRIDON

FEAST DAY CELEBRATION

His Eminence Metropolitan Nicholas, along with the Metropolis Council and Metropolis Philoptochos, invite you to join us for the Feast of Saint Spyridon, patron saint of the chapel at the Metropolis Offices.

<p>MONDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2017 6:30PM</p> <p>Hierarchical Great Vespers and Reception to Follow</p>	<p>TUESDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2017 10:00AM</p> <p>Hierarchical Divine Liturgy and Reception to Follow</p>
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2560 CROOKS ROAD - TROY, MI 48084
248-823-2400

2017 ELLINOMATHEIA



**CERTIFICATES
PRESENTATION**



Nativity of the Virgin Mary
Greek Orthodox Church
39851 Five Mile Road
Plymouth, Michigan 48170



Sunday, November 19, 2017

Immediately following the Divine Liturgy

Presentation of the 2017 Ellinomatheia Certificates of Attainment to 15 students of The Metropolis of Detroit Greek Schools

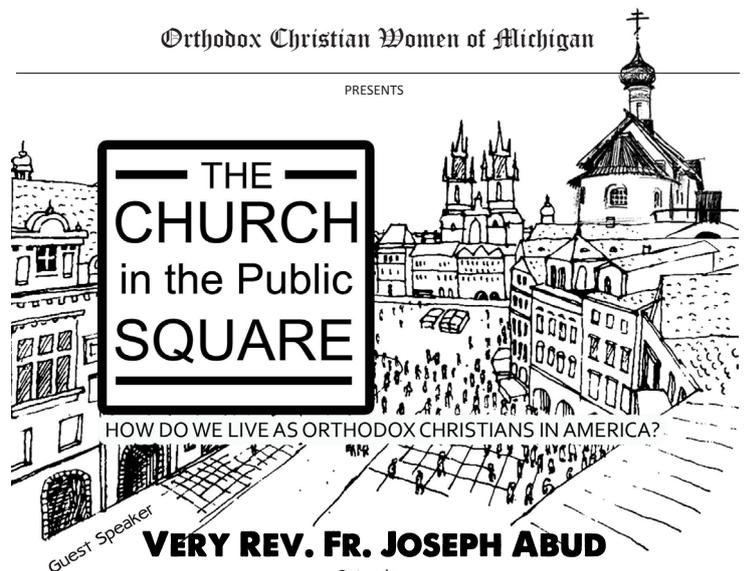
A light lunch hosted by the Stassinis Family will be served in the Fellowship Hall immediately following the awards ceremony

Sponsored by:

The Foundation for Modern Greek Studies, University of Michigan Modern Greek Program, Greek Language and Culture Committee Metropolis of Detroit, Greek Independence Day Parade Committee and Hellenic Museum of Michigan

Orthodox Christian Women of Michigan

PRESENTS



HOW DO WE LIVE AS ORTHODOX CHRISTIANS IN AMERICA?

Guest Speaker

VERY REV. FR. JOSEPH ABUD

Saturday

November 18, 2017

10 A.M.

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH
20500 Anglin St. (at Eight Mile Rd.)
Detroit, MI 48234

ALL are welcome to join us in fellowship! Refreshments will be served.

Mary Ann Dadich, OCW President
586-775-4799
mdadich811@gmail.com
www.coccdetroit.org/ocw.html

Like our Facebook Page (and invite your friends):
Orthodox Christian Women of Michigan - OCW

We accept contributions for ZOE For Life!, Orthodox Detroit Outreach, & South Oakland Shelter.

St. Theophan the Recluse: On prayer, Homily 3

Delivered 29 November, 1864



I have explained to you briefly two aspects or two levels of prayer, namely: prayer which is read, when we pray to God with the prayers of others, and one's mental prayer, where we ascend mentally to God through contemplation of God, dedicating all to God, and often crying out to Him from our hearts. See the previous two homilies in this series: homily 1 and homily 2 (August and October editions of *The Logos*).

But this is still not all. There is a third aspect or level of prayer, which makes up true prayer, and for which the first two aspects are only preparation. This is the unceasing turning of the mind and heart to God, accompanied by interior warmth or burning of the spirit. This is the limit to which prayer should aspire, and the goal which every prayerful laborer should have in mind, so that he does not work uselessly in the work of prayer.

Remember how the Word of God talks about prayer: "Be vigilant and pray," says the Lord (Matt 26.41). "Be sober and bold," teaches the apostle Peter (1 Pet 5.8). "Be patient in prayer, and be bold in it" (Col 4.2). "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thess 5.17). "Pray with all prayer and petition at all times in the spirit" (Eph 6.18), the apostle Paul commands, explaining in other places the reason to be this way. "Because", he says, "our life is hidden with Christ in God, and because the Spirit of God lives in us, in which we cry, 'Abba, Father'." (1 Cor 3.16) From these instructions and commands it is impossible not to see that prayer is not something done once, and in an interrupted way, but is a state of the spirit, constant and unceasing, just like our breathing and heartbeat.

I will explain this to you by examples. The sun is in the middle, and all of our planets go around it, all are drawn in toward it, and all turn some side of themselves towards it. What the sun is in the material world, God is in the spiritual world - the rational sun. Bring your thoughts to heaven, and what will you see there? Angels, who, according to the word of

the Lord, ever see the face of their heavenly Father. All bodiless spirits and all saints in heaven are turned towards God, all direct their mental eyes toward Him, and do not wish to turn away from Him, because of the ineffable blessedness which flows from this vision of the face of God. But what the

Angels and saints do in the heavens, we should learn to do on earth: get used to the angelic, unceasing standing before God in our hearts. Only he who reaches this state is a true man of prayer. How can we attain this great good thing?

I will answer this briefly as follows: one must labor in prayer without hesitation, zealously, hopefully, trying to obtain a burning spirit through sober attention to God, as if it were the promised land. Work in prayer, and praying about everything, pray even more about this limit of prayer - a burning spirit - and you will truly attain that which you seek. We are assured of this by St. Makarios of Egypt, who labored and tasted the fruit of prayer. "If", he says, "you do not have prayer, work at prayer, and the Lord, seeing your labor, and seeing how you are patient in the labor and wholeheartedly desire this good thing, will grant you this prayer (Conversation 19)". The labor has this as its only end. When the fire is kindled, about which the Lord speaks: "I have come to bring fire upon the earth, and what is it to Me if it were already kindled?" (Luke 12.49) - then the work comes to an end. Prayer becomes easier and freer.

Do not think that we are talking about something very lofty which is an unattainable state for living people. No. It truly is a lofty state, but attainable by all. Does not everyone at some time feel warmth in their hearts in prayer, when the soul separates itself from all things and deeply enters into itself and prays hotly to God? This movement of the prayerful spirit, although it was once only temporary, must be made into a constant state, and it will reach the limits of prayer.

The means to this, as I have said, is the work of prayer. When one rubs two sticks together, they warm up and catch

fire. Similarly, when the soul is rubbed in the work of prayer, it eventually leads to prayerful fire. The work of prayer consists of a proper completion of the two types of prayer of which I have already spoken, namely - pious, attentive, and feeling completion of our usual prayers, and then training of the soul to frequently ascend to God through divine contemplation, turning of all things to the glory of God, and frequent crying to God from the heart. We pray in the morning and the evening: there is a great distance between them. If we only turn to God at these times, then even if we pray whole-heartedly, during the day or night, everything will fall apart, and when it is time again to pray, the soul will feel cold and empty, as before. One can pray again whole-heartedly, but if you become cold and fall apart again, what use is it? This is just building and destroying, building and destroying; it is only labor. If now we resolve not only to pray with attention and feeling in the morning and the evening, but also to spend every day in contemplation of God, doing all things to the glory of God, and frequently calling to God from our hearts with short words of prayer, then this long period between morning and evening prayers and from evening to morning prayers will be filled with frequent turnings to God and pure prayerful actions. Although this prayer is not yet unceasing, it is still prayer repeated very frequently, and the more often it is repeated, the closer it comes to being constant. All of this work is towards this final and necessary goal. For if we resolve to do this work every day, without fail, without hesitation, look, what will become of our souls?

The fear of God is born from divine contemplation. For the fear of God is in and of itself the attainment of pious thought and the perception of God's eternal perfection and action. From turning all of our works to the glory of God, we obtain a constant remembrance of God, or in other words, walking before God. Walking before God consists of doing nothing without remembering that you are in the presence of God. Finally, from frequent calling out to God, or from frequent pious movements toward God in our hearts we will constantly call upon the name of God with warmth and love. When these three things: the fear of God, the remembrance of God, or walking before God, and this turning of the heart toward God with love (loving repetition of the sweet name of the Lord in the heart) then certainly the spiritual

(Continued on page 9)

Project Mexico

Dear Parishioners,

I knew that I had to write something about this unbelievable experience! I knew that it was going to be life changing but I didn't realize how much it was going to impact my spiritual life. Upon arriving to the ranch (the orphanage), I wasn't sure what to expect, but I easily fell in love with the boys at the orphanage and the caretakers and it set the tone for the whole week. With my little knowledge of Spanish, I was able to communicate with the boys just fine.

From the first day, we all prayed together – all of the volunteers, all of the children and all of the staff at the ranch. We had morning prayers, and prayers before meals, and prayers before we began our work on the house, prayers before leaving the work site, and of course evening prayers. All of the prayers were in Spanish, but that didn't matter at all. On our work site, we worked closely together with a group from Salt Lake City and we immediately bonded on our journey. Each and every day we had an optimistic attitude that we could do anything to get this house done. It was amazing to see that the young family

we were building the house for pitched in, working along side us to complete this amazing gift that our Nativity Community was able to offer to them!

I'm so glad that Elaine shared her experience with us last year, and that my dad knew the value of this mission trip and encouraged all of us to do it. It was an extraordinary blessing to be a part of this trip and to serve this beautiful family!

As the final day came and the priests were doing the house blessing, the father – Juan Carlos, said something that was so touching and that I'll remember forever. He said, "remember that my house is your house, and if you ever return you will always be welcomed to stay with us!" We all arrived as strangers, but left as family!

I encourage everyone to think about joining a mission trip, it really changes your perspective on life. It's an unforgettable experience! I can't wait to go again next year to see all the kids and the staff, or maybe even intern for the summer!

Anna Marcus



Georgia Theophelis and Theodora Bageris were honored to attend the Metropolis Clergy/ Laity Conference in Buffalo, New York this past September with Father Nick.

Larry Stassinis and Theodora Bageris received awards for their long-standing service to the Nativity of the Virgin Mary Church and community.

The Festival Appreciation Luncheon was well attended and well deserved. Philoptochos ladies was honored to serve the endless array of volunteers that help all year long to make our festival a success. Special thanks to:

- Maria Rifat – donating the baklava
- Hellenic Bakery – donating the bread
- George's Senate – donating the delicious food with all the extras he always provides

October 15th was our annual Hot Diggity Dog Luncheon to support Breast Cancer. We raised \$500.00 that will be donated to a local organization. Thank you to everyone that helped to make it a success. Special thanks to:

- Keros Koney Island – Seven Mile and Middlebelt Rd
- Honey Tree Grille Northville – Five Mile and Sheldon Rd for donating the hot dogs, chili, and onions

The Philoptochos Kick-off meeting was a fun night of food, friends and Philoptochos planning. We are off to a great start.

Christmas card registration has started. Forms are available at the church office or during coffee hour. Cost is \$10 per family.





Nativity of the Virgin Mary
Greek Orthodox Church
39851 Five Mile Rd, Plymouth, MI 734-420-0131

26th Annual Christmas Auction

Friday, December 8, 2017

6:30pm

Church Fellowship Hall

Silent & Live Auction
Raffle

Fish Fry
Hors D'oeuvres
Cash Bar



Hope/Joy/GOYA

In October we had such a fun time with our Nativity HOPE and JOY groups! We began the month with our annual outing to Three Cedars! It was a beautiful warm fall day just perfect for a hayride and the corn maze! There were a lot of bees this season, but we were still able to eat our cider and donuts in a safe area far from most of the bees! Our Family Night meeting was a very fun time! Again beautiful weather for outdoor games and of course bon fire with smores! We had a fall clothing drive for Focus Detroit and for a craft we made beaded cross key chains to put in the pockets of the clothing for the children! Our November meeting will be on Friday, November 17 at 6 pm. Please join us for a lot of fun and great fellowship! Everyone is invited to Family Night!

GOYA had an awesome time at the Dodgeball tournament. It was so much fun getting together with each other and the other churches! HalloWeekend Cedar Pointe was AWESOME!!! Thanks to Fr Nick and the parents who chaperoned!! We have a quick GOYA meeting 12:30 pm November 5 to discuss Holiday Hoops and the dance at St. John's on November 18th and also the dance at Mama Mia's on November 25 (which is benefiting our Nativity Church!) All teen kids are encourage to join us!! We have so much fun! If you have any questions please contact Fr. Nick.

(St. Theophan from page 7)

fire of which I spoke earlier will catch in the heart, and it will bring with it profound peace, constant sobriety, and living boldness. At that point, a man enters into that state where he needs no longer to desire anything greater or unnecessary on earth, and which is truly the beginning of the blessed state which awaits all in the future. Here, in fact, that which the apostle said is fulfilled: "our life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col 3.3).

Add these three things to your prayerful work. They are at the same time the reward for labor and the key to the hidden temple of the Kingdom of Heaven. Having opened the doors, go inside, approach the foot of the throne of God and you will be vouchsafed a good word and an embrace from the heavenly Father, and from the depth of your being you will say: "O Lord, O Lord! Who is like Thee?" Pray about this in your work of prayer, and let each one cry out, "when will I come and appear before Thy face, O Lord? My face has sought Thee; I seek, O Lord, Thy face."

I will briefly answer him who wants to know how these three things: fear of God, remembrance of God, and this loving, constant calling on the name of God, are perfected: begin to seek them, and the work itself will teach you how to find its perfection. Hold to only one law: cast aside everything that gets in the way of these things, and earnestly seek out that which aids them. The work itself will teach you how to tell which things are which. I add to this only the following instruction:

When you begin to be contained in your heart as you are contained in your body, surrounded by warmth on all sides, or when you begin to conduct yourself as you conduct yourself around some important person, that is, with fear and attention so that you would not offend him, regardless of your desire to walk and act freely, or if you see, that your soul is beginning to remain with the Lord as a wife with her beloved husband, then know, that the Visitor of our souls is near, at the doors, and He will enter in and feast with you within yourself.

And these few signs, I think, are enough for zealous seekers. All of this is said only with the goal that those of you who pray wholeheartedly would know the limit of prayer, and having worked only a little and obtained only a little you would not think that you have obtained everything. Do not weaken your labor because of this, and thus put a limit on your further progress in the steps of prayer. Just as markers are placed on the sides of large roads so that those passing by them would know how far they have gone and how far remains, so in the spiritual life there are certain signs which indicate the degree of perfection of a life, which are also there, so that those who are zealous for perfection do not stop halfway and deprive themselves of the fruits of their labor, because they know how far they have come and how far remains to go. The fruit may be only a few turns away.

I conclude my word with the serious prayer, that the Lord would give you reason in all things, that you may become a perfect man, in the measure of the age of the fullness of Christ. Amen.

Troparion of St. Theophan

O guide of Orthodoxy, teacher of piety and purity,
ascetic of Vysha, divinely wise and holy hierarch Theophan:
By thy writings thou didst explain the Word of God,
and hast shown the way to salvation unto all the faithful.
Entreat Christ God, that our souls be saved.

This homily was reprinted from Monachos.net, a web site dedicated to the study of Orthodox Christianity through its patristic, monastic and liturgical heritage.

Our Unsung Heroes: An Interview with Freda Nicozisis

by Irene Melabiotis



As Mrs. Freda Nicozisis invited me to sit in her living room area, I asked how she was feeling, and, with a humbled disposition, she shared briefly that her health could be better. Her face lit up letting me know that she was warming up some spinach and cheese pies for us to enjoy. Having heard that Mrs. Nicozisis's spinach and cheese pies were exceptional, I was excited at the thought of tasting them, but I indicated that I didn't want to put her through the trouble. "It's no trouble," she assured me in Greek as she walked carefully over to her oven to check on how the pies were doing. I looked through my interview notes and, after returning to her recliner, Mrs. Nicozisis announced that they needed another five minutes. Like all the other interviews before hers, I was captivated by the fortitude of her survival story prior to immigrating to America and her resilience in striving to make a life for herself and her family in a new land she called home.

What part of Greece are you from?

I am from a village inside Albania. Our village was at the border with Greece. At that time, they extended the border and our village became part of Albania.

And what is your village called?

Sopik (Σωπική).

Do you still have relatives there?

Some cousins, like that, and the sister of my mother-in-law. We have gone to the village two, three times with my husband, and I saw them all then. But now [after the death of my husband] I don't have the heart to go. The only thing that I liked a lot is that when my niece went [back to the village] recently, she said that the church was very nice. We have Panagia's church there. But, at that time, when the Albanians and resistance fighters (αντάρτες) came, they ruined it. They used it as a stable for animals. Someone, at that time, from our people took the icon of Panagia to hide it. It was all gold, so he took it and hid it in his house and dug [a hole] in his basement and he placed it down in his basement so that the resistance fighters wouldn't find it. Later when things changed [and the borders into Albania were opened], he dug it out and he brought it back [to the church, next to the altar]. And when I had gone with my husband, I saw the icon, and I prayed nicely. But, then, however, they stole it and no one knows where it is. It was so nice. It was ancient, very nicely carved, and hand-made. This church, now, they're saying to make it into a museum so people can see it. And next to the church, my uncle built a small church dedicated to the Holy Trinity, in memory of my husband, and I went to see it. I cried, and I was satisfied. I brought things there. We made koliva, and we did a memorial service for my husband. What can you do? That's life.

Was your husband also from Sopik?

Yes, yes.

Did you know him in Sopik?

No. I met him in Canada.

How did you meet him?

His father lived here in Seattle, Washington, where he worked to support his family back home. His mother lived in Sopik. He lived with his mother in the village, so he never met his father [until he moved to America]. Before he [immigrated to Seattle], he asked his uncle in Ioannina, "How will I recognize my father?" and his uncle said, "You will recognize him because he has a big nose, he's short, and his name is Gregory." And, in this way, he found him. Later, my mother-in-law escaped from Albania. She climbed the mountains barefoot [to enter into Greece]. She got blisters on her feet, you



know. Then, she came to America after [her son did]. Later, they all lived in Detroit and rented a house. Then, [my husband] went to the army and served for two years. But the day before he went—he was young, 21 years-old or something—he went out with his friends to drink. He was thinking, "Tomorrow, I'll be in the army. Today, I will go out with my friends." The army sent him to New York. There he met an older Jewish person who asked him, "What work do you do?" He was going to school at that time to be an electrical engineer. And he tells [my husband], "Don't tell them that you're an electrical engineer, because they will send you to Korea, and they will place you in the front lines." He said, "What? Am I going to lie?" My husband never lied. He was always honest. [The person] told him, "No. Listen. Say that you're a cook. All Greeks cook." Then, my husband said, "I'm a cook," and they put him in the kitchen. He didn't know how to cook anything. And, in this way, he was spared and served in New York. When I came [to Canada], I got to know my husband there.

When and how did you come to Canada?

Fall 1945 [we made it to Ioannina in Greece]. We tried three times to leave from the village [of Sopik in Albania]. My mother was a very smart woman. The first two times, the dogs caught us. The dogs were barking, so we returned home again. My father with two of my brothers had escaped first. He told my mother not to say anything to anyone [about his whereabouts], to stay in the village, and to tell others that he went to Tirana [which is a large city in Albania] for work. He was a carpenter (μαραγκός) and did ceilings and things like that. And my father said, "When it is easy for you to escape, I will shoot three times [in the air]. Boom, boom, boom. If you hear them, then, start to leave." My mother waited to hear the boom, boom. Because they were at the border, it wasn't [far away], so you could do that. Anyway, we began our escape twice, and both times my mother had two other families with her [trying to escape], as well. We passed through the mountains, high up. I was six years-old, and they had given me a bag of walnuts so I would be quiet. The third time, we were successful in escaping. Because my father left first with my [two] brothers, the Albanians were always keeping an eye on us. "Where's your husband? Where are the others?" And we couldn't say anything. Anyway, the third time we began our escape [at night time], we stopped up high on the mountain top, and everyone had gotten tired, saying "I can't walk anymore!" My [paternal] grandmother carried me on her back. We couldn't leave her behind. My mother would say, "No, I will die if we leave her behind." And she helped raise us. And she said to us, "Let's go and sleep there." And we went into an area [that was fenced in] where the animals grazed to sleep. At dawn, around 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning, my mother and the older woman said, "We're still in Albania. If they catch us here, they will kill us here." And straight away we got down [from the mountain]. We all ran down [towards the Greek border] and left quickly. We got into Greek [territory]. No one bothered us.

Why did you want to leave your village?

What could we do in the village? We didn't have work. We were hungry. We were eating gruel (κουρκούτι, χυλός). My mother had many children—sixteen children, but, after miscarriages and sicknesses,

only six of us survived. Every time my father returned [to the village] from a carpentry job at Tirana and [my mother] was pregnant, she was embarrassed to tell him, “I’m pregnant again.” And whenever he would return again, he found her with a little one, and he would ask her, “Why didn’t you tell me anything?” She would reply, “I was embarrassed, Tassi, to tell you.” My father was smart. Afterwards, he said, “Listen, next time you write me back and you’re pregnant again, draw me a cross at the top of the letter. I will understand that you’re pregnant.” Anyway, after we crossed the Greek border, they took us to the police to interrogate us. “Why did you leave?” they asked. My mother replied, “We left because my husband left first with my children and we want to be together as a family.” So they let us go, and we left Drymades (Δρυμάδες) [the first town we reached after crossing the border into Greece], and we went to Ioannina where my father was. We spent a few years there [in Ioannina]. We went to Thessaloniki (Θεσσαλονίκη) for a year. Then, we returned to Ioannina.

What is your fondest childhood memory of Greece?

At my sister’s wedding, I did her hair. From a little girl, I liked to style hair, which is why I became a hairdresser. And we went to Sunday School (κατηχητικό) each week. And I liked the games that we played with my friends. I had good friends and everything, and I, still, keep in contact with my friends from Ioannina.

How did you come to America?

My second brother was the first to leave. He came to Windsor, Canada. He married a woman from St. Louis [Missouri] who was from the same village [of Sopik]. They moved to Detroit, and they had three kids. Afterwards, my father [left with my two other brothers and came to Windsor]. He filed the paperwork for us to come over. [At that time, my mother, my grandmother, me, and my youngest sister] were living in Ioannina. In Ioannina, I was going [to school] to learn English. I understood some words and learned how to say [some things in English]. My father in Canada was working for \$22 a week. Imagine, \$22 a week! On the one hand, he wanted us to come [to Canada] and, on the other, he didn’t want to us come. My father said, later, “You will come here with the stipulation that Aphrodite”—that’s me—“will work to help me [financially]. I can’t support the whole family with \$22 a week.” We all agreed. [My father] submitted the paperwork. It was a process, with the tests and doctors, to see if we were healthy. Then, we got on the ship, Nassau, [which was] an Italian ship. [The trip was] twelve, thirteen days long from Athens to Ellis Island in New York. We got off there. We were all Greeks on the ship. We were all [seasick] and couldn’t eat. I was 17 or 18 years-old at the time. It was the end of 1957. When we came from Greece, my [future] mother-in-law, along with my father-in-law and my husband, came to Canada to welcome us. I was tired, you know, from the long trip, so I had gone to bed, but I got up to say hello to them. And when my mother-in-law came here, she said to her son, “She is a nice, good girl. Get to know her.” Then, he came [another time] with two of his friends to meet me. And, then, later he came another time on his own to see me. In the meantime, I was looking for work. Since my father wanted me to work, I told my brother, “You’re going to find me a job.” He found me a job in a beauty shop. I went to the beauty shop, but I didn’t know the American language very well. She would ask me for a brush, and I would bring her a comb.

That’s my next question. What career did you have and how long were you involved in your career?

I was a hairdresser. I liked to style hair in Ioannina. I had gone to school for a bit [there]. In my head, I was a hairdresser, and I told my [youngest] brother to find me a job at a hairdressing salon (κομμωτήριο), and he found me a job in [one]. But I didn’t know [how to speak] American. I couldn’t communicate. [The boss] asked another lady to explain [to me] that “The boss thinks you are very good, but you have to go and learn English, so you can talk to the people.” Later, I went to school [to learn the language]. Then, I said [to my youngest brother], “I want a job to bring money to our dad.” He took me to Big Boy, where he worked. “Since you want a

job,” he told me, “I’m going to bring you to Big Boy to wash dishes to make some money.” The day before I was getting engaged, however, [my youngest brother] told me, “You know, you have to come to work tomorrow. You have to wake up early.” “But tomorrow I am getting engaged,” [I told him]. [He told me,] “If you don’t come tomorrow, you will lose your job. They won’t want you [later]. They need you tomorrow.” At that time, Big Boy was [responsible for] preparing the breakfast trays for the airplanes. [On my first day], I washed whatever dishes I washed there. After a little time, my brother made a big batch of scrambled eggs and sausages for the breakfast trays, and they had a table with the trays [laid out]. And I saw the bosses [who I didn’t know were the bosses, at that time] with a ladle (κουτάλα) filling the trays slowly, and the plane was leaving in 30 minutes. The breakfast trays had to be ready by that time to go on the plane, and my brother tells me, “Freda, they better hurry up!” When I saw the bosses [slowly filling the trays], I thought, “The plane is going to leave before they are finished!” So [not knowing they were the bosses], I told [one of them] “Give me!” and I took his ladle from his hand and he looked at me [startled]. And I began filling the trays quickly [with eggs, sausages, and toast], and they were all ready in time. When they were about to take the trays to the plane, I asked, “How about water or coffee?” The bosses said, “Oh, we forgot the water and coffee!” And, later, when they took everything to the plane, they told my brother, “Listen, Jovani, from now on your sister will not wash dishes. She will be in charge of breakfasts.” Later that same day, we had our engagement and, then, we organized our wedding, and my husband brought me here [to Detroit]. We did the wedding here [in 1958]. In Detroit, my sister in those years worked downtown at the hairdressing salon inside of the Book Cadillac hotel. In the meantime, I got my hairdressing license here in Lansing. My sister took me to work there with her [at the hairdressing salon she worked at]. And, then, I told my sister, “Why don’t we open up our own store?” She said, “Alright.” Then, we found a place and opened up a hairdressing salon on Plymouth Road. And we thought, “What are we going to call it?” We thought, Fredina’s, and we had it for four years. We would have kept it, but the children of the owner of the building sold it when their mother, the owner, had passed away, so we left. Afterwards, I opened up my hairdressing business here at home. I had a good clientele [from our hairdressing salon].



How long have you been coming to Nativity?

From day one. We were [originally] going to St. Nicholas, but since we moved here, we learned that a church had opened up here [called] Sts. Constantine and Helen. They were renting a [Seventh-Day Adventists] church on Middlebelt and Six Mile, [so we were going there]. And, then, we said, “Why [not have our own place]?” Then, John [Vardouniotis] said, “Let’s look for a property in this area. We are so many Greeks.” And a few men got together and they were looking [for potential properties]. My husband worked at Ford [in maintenance] starting at around 4 or 5 in the morning, so he couldn’t help look for anything. It so happened that Aleko Baggeris had found a property here [in Plymouth] and he brought it to the board. And they said, “Okay, let’s get it.” And we got together one Sunday, all of us, and we all put in as much as we could, and we raised \$25,000 [to purchase the property]. In one week, we did the paperwork and the church was ours.

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(Unsung Heros from page 11)

How soon afterwards did you have the first Divine Liturgy after getting the building?

Right away. I was in the choir, too. Through the choir, we, also, did fish lunches. [Originally,] the fish lunches were done by the Parish Council. But, then, I asked John [Vardouniotis], "Can the choir organize it?" And John said, "Okay, Freda. If you can, do it." I think for two years we did [the fish luncheon] at our church's [basement]. Sometimes John did the fish. Sometimes Bobby [Sakellaris] fried the fish. [The first fish luncheon we did was] full. The next year, even more people [came]. They sat near the garage [of our church building]. I went to Bobby the third year, and I said to him, "Bobby, I want to do the fish luncheon here, since you don't have parties." He said, "I do have parties on Saturday. Come on Sunday [for the fish luncheon]. But Freda," he said, "when are we going to set up the tables? I have a party [that Saturday] until 12 midnight." I said, "At 12 midnight, once the people leave, we will be here to set up the tables." I said [to one person involved with the luncheon set-up], "You will bring the centerpieces." I said to another person, "You do this. You do that." And that's it. It happened. We all went there at 12 midnight [to set up for the fish luncheon the next day]. And I did a bake sale there, too. I made about 30 tsourekia. I made some baklava and some other [desserts]. Because it was Pascha, people wanted to get them for Pascha, so everything sold. Then, later, in church I gave John a check for \$3,000 [that we raised from the third fish luncheon].

Have you ever held an office at Nativity, such as on Parish Council?

No, not on the Parish Council. My husband started the Men's Club. [The club] was going on for a while, but afterwards, the men weren't getting involved. I was only involved in the Philoptochos and Festivals. For the Philoptochos, I was President for two years. [And, then, I was involved in] the Welfare committee [of the Philoptochos]. Listen to how the Festivals started. We were talking, and my husband was saying we should do a festival. He asked, "Where are we going to do it?" We did it over there, outside of the garage, in the corner. And it was the first festival. The men had the souvlakia in the basement. I brought my [food] trailer for three years. We worked it with my children and other parishioners. We had french fries, we had gyros, we had sausages, and we did saganaki and all that. After a while, they stopped doing the festivals. Then, Presvytera [Kalliope] Vaporis came and we started doing festivals again.

What is your favorite memory of Nativity?

I was involved in decorating the Epitaphio [for Holy Friday] until a few years ago. I liked it because I would order the flowers, and I was trying to find them [fresh and at a good price]. And [another] favorite [memory] was when I took [the icon of] Christouli, with Father Michael, to bring it from the small church [to the icon screen of our newly-built church]. I, also, remember working with other parishioners on our knees to clean the marble [of the soleya in the newly-built church]. Another favorite memory is that St. Nicholas was holding the 'Festival of Tables,' and all the churches [had a table]. Theodora [Baggeris] and I worked on a table for Nativity, and we baked a lot of stuff and everything was nice. I remember the Bishop came to our table and asked, "What is this bread here? Is it fake?" I said, "No. When I cut it, I'll bring you a piece." And we got the first place.



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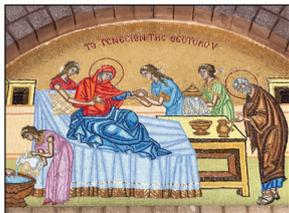
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