

# THE MESSENGER

ST. DEMETRIOS  
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWSLETTER



## MISSION STATEMENT

To bring all children, youth and young adults closer to Christ and His Church through religious education, fellowship and various other events on a parish and national level.

## DATES TO REMEMBER!

- **DECEMBER 5TH**  
Sunday School Pageant  
("Birthday Party for Jesus")
- **DECEMBER 12TH:**  
Youth Sunday
- **DECEMBER 25TH:**  
Christmas—  
The Nativity in the flesh  
of our Lord Jesus Christ

## CHRISTMAS REFLECTIONS

BY TIM PRATTAS

### Beloved in the Lord.

The Christmas season is once again upon us, with trees adorning our city filled with decorations, television specials and little children visiting Santa Claus at the mall, eager to ask for their 'gift from the North Pole'. Although a bit hectic (especially with the sales and "buying the right gift" for family and friends), people are eager to celebrate this very special holy day. Even with the recent trend to affix everything with the word "holiday" instead of Christmas (trees, music, concert, etc.), there's always many voices to defend the sanctity of Christmas (be it in person, or by creating a group on *Facebook*). "Christ is born," as the hymn states...and we all do glorify Him!

Although all the aforementioned things are a staple of the Christmas holiday, all Christians are called to remember the real "reason for the season". This meaning is so beautifully defined for us by St. Athanasios the Great in his famous discourse, *On the Incarnation*. St. Athanasios states: "God became man so man could become god".

While no person is divine by nature—nor can no one become completely holy in their essence — St. Athanasios points to a fact that many of us miss: *we are called by God to become saints, to become 'holy by grace.'* This, in fact, is why Jesus Christ was born for our salvation—to make us holy! This process of sanctification has the opportunity to be intensified during the holy days of Christmas through two very simple ways: *loving God and loving our neighbours.*



## In this Issue...

Road Trip to the Kingdom	2
This Month, we Celebrate... St. Barbara the Great Martyr	2-3
Website of the Month	3
Coming Soon... Re-Catechism 4!!	4

When people asked Jesus what the greatest commandment was, He answered them: "love the Lord God with all your heart, strength, mind" and to "love your neighbor as yourself." (cf. Luke 10:27) This was a step above many people, who merely thought the commandments were written on the stone given to Moses on Mount Sinai; rather, the commandments were (and are) to be written on the hearts of every person who loves God and wishes to have a relationship with Him. In today's day and age, we can accomplish both and show God our love for Him.

We show God that we love Him by worshipping Him. Be it at Church, home, school, work, or anywhere else, "His praise should be forever on our lips" (Psalm

## ROAD TRIP TO THE KINGDOM

BY: MARIA-FOTINI KAPSALIS

I am sure many of you have gone on road trips with your family, either up at a cottage somewhere, or to Niagara Falls, or even to another city. In many ways, getting closer to God is like taking a road trip. But instead of trying to reach a place on earth, this trip's destination is the Kingdom of God, and our life is the long journey to get there.

When we go on big road trips, we understand that the journey will be long and that we will need things to keep ourselves and our passengers comfortable and occupied along the way. We will probably pack some food, bottled water, a good book, some music to listen to, or maybe even a DVD player and some movies for those in the back seat. We take things that will make our trip more enjoyable. These things that we pack are like the things we have in life to make life enjoyable: our house, our cars, our clothes, our electronics, our stuff. But our stuff, (no matter how entertaining) are not enough to get us to our destination.

On every road trip we have to make stops, very important stops: Rest Stops. At these rest stops, we put gas in our car so that it can keep going. If our vehicle runs out of gas, our trip is over and we never get to our destination. The rest stop tells us that we are on the right road, or points us to the right road if we got lost. It is like a check-point. We also might need to wash up and clean up, and this makes our bodies feel better. We walk around and stretch our legs to get the blood flowing again, because we get cramped sitting in the car for so long, and we might buy some treats and food to give us a lift and some energy before we get back in the car. The rest stop is really, really important on a road trip.



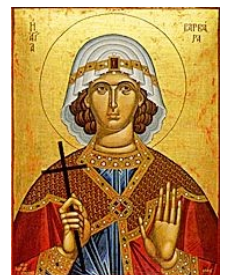
The journey of life to God's Kingdom also has a rest stop...the Church. It is so important to come to Church every Sunday, because this is where we are refuelled. This is where we check our direction for our journey to the kingdom of God. And you may not realize this, but that is the whole point of the Sunday Sermon and Sunday School. The Sermon and Sunday school is like a GPS or a map that tells us how to get to the Kingdom of God. But church is so much more than a GPS. This is where we wash our sins away through the sacrament of Holy Confession, and come out feeling better. This is where we stretch our souls and hearts and get our faith flowing again. This is where we receive the best food in the world, Holy Communion, to feed our souls and get our energy to continue our journey towards the kingdom of God. Church is really, really important on our journey to God's kingdom.

Imagine a long road trip and there are no rest stations to stop at. How do you feel? Worried, stressed, uncomfortable. What would eventually happen if you never find one? You will be stranded on the road going nowhere. And when you do find a rest stop, you are relieved, thankful, and calm down. Life without the Church is like a road trip without any rest stops. Thank God that we have found together on our journey to God's Kingdom this wonderful Rest Stop, our Orthodox Church, where we can rest our souls and recharge ourselves together on the greatest journey of all... the journey to the Kingdom of God.

**This Month, We Celebrate...**  
**St. Barbara the Great Martyr**

**The 411...**

Feastday	December 4th
Lived	3rd century A.D.
Type of Saint	Great Martyr



# CHRISTMAS REFLECTIONS (CON'T FROM PG. 1)



34:1). Trusting Him in those difficult moments and thanking Him when we see His blessings a little more easily are opportunities we have to better our relationship with our Lord, Redeemer and Saviour.

Yet, we can only praise God in as much as we love our neighbour! St. Anthony tells Christians that, “our life and death is with our neighbor,” for all people are made in the image and likeness of God. In the parable of the Final Judgment, those entering the Kingdom of God are those that showed mercy on their neighbor, treating them as they would treat the Lord. This Christmas, as we prepare to worship the great *economia* of God, becoming incarnate for our sakes, let’s not forget to be merciful to our brothers and sisters in need. It can be feeding the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting those in prison and those who have no one here with them. Our connection with God will be that much greater this Christmas season when we realize that the “Christmas buzz” might feel great for a while...but making a difference in a person’s life will not only bless the person who offers the help, but will bless the life of the person receiving this much needed help. Let us all make a pledge this Christmas to help our neighbor in need and, in this way, see the face of God in the face of our brothers and sisters in need.

It is our fervent prayer that this Christmas is filled with many blessings for our entire congregation and all those who will come to worship the Nativity in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ—in their parishes, at their homes and throughout their lives, as they praise God by showing love to their neighbours in need.

**The entire Religious Education Team of St. Demetrios Toronto wish you and your families a Very Merry Christmas! Καλά Χριστούγεννα!**

## Website of the Month:

[www.spgm.goarch.org/ematins/main.htm](http://www.spgm.goarch.org/ematins/main.htm)

St. Gregory Palamas Monastery is located in Ohio and is under the canonical jurisdiction of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. This particular part of their site provides the Matins (or “Orthros”) service in both Greek and English. Download the text for every Sunday or great feast by going to their website and participate in this spiritually-fulfilling morning service!

You can also find Byzantine Music in English on the website, along with great Orthodox links!



## ABOUT HER LIFE...

The daughter of a devout idol worshipper (pagan), St. Barbara became a Christian in her teen years. After telling her father that she would never reject Christ, he subjected her to various tortures. She died for the Faith when her father beheaded her, as he realized that she would never become a pagan again. She is the Patron Saint for soldiers.





**St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church**  
**Religious Education Newsletter**

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**WANT THIS NEWSLETTER IN  
YOUR INBOX? E-MAIL US!**

**[STDOMETRIOSTORONTO@](mailto:STDOMETRIOSTORONTO@)**

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The third Greek Orthodox Church in Toronto, St. Demetrios Church was founded in 1962. Since then, our Church has been the spiritual home of thousands of Orthodox faithful from Toronto and vicinity. It is one of the four Churches of the Greek Community of Toronto. The Religious Education programs have been attended by many children, youth and young adults. Our tireless staff works to promote the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Parish Priests

Rev. Fr. Konstantine Pavlidis

Rev. Fr. Triantafillos Porfiris

Religious Education Director

Basile Polidoulis

Religious Education Advisor

Komissa Polidoulis

Homiletic Speakers

John Kapsalis, Tim Prattas

5-and-Under Class Teachers

Linda Hudson, Georgia Vlahos, Patty Tsiolis

JK-SK Class Teachers

Despina Epaminondas, Chrysoula Kapogiannis

Gr. 1 Class Teachers

Kathe Bouzios, Eleni Skandalakis

Gr. 2 Class Teacher

Kassiani Logotheti

Gr. 3 Class Teachers

Vicky Nikolaos, Vasilis Papagiannis

Gr. 4-5 Class Teachers

Elena Qirjazi

Gr. 6-7 Class Teachers

Georgia Panagiotopoulos-Grivogiannis,

Eftila Qirjazi

Gr. 8-9 Class Teachers

Kiki Zourbanos, Fotini Kapsalis

Gr. 10-12 Class Teacher

Chrysostom Makropoulos

Young Adult League Leaders

Vicki Vokas, Niko Sotiropoulos

# Re-Catechism 4

## Praying Together: The Divine Services

### Where?

*St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church  
(30 Thorncliffe Park Drive, Toronto, 416-425-2485)*

### When?

*Every other Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.*

### The Sessions

**Tuesday, January 25th, 2011**

*Holy Water Everywhere: Agiasmos & House Blessings*

**Tuesday, February 8th, 2011**

*Peace and Health. Artoklasia & St. Phanourios Blessings*

**Tuesday, February 22nd, 2011**

*May their memory be eternal: Funerals, Memorials & Trisagia*

**Tuesday, March 8th, 2011**

*Singing God's Praises in the morning: Matins & Hours Services*

**Tuesday, March 22nd, 2011**

*An Evening Sacrifice: Vespers & Compline Services*

**Tuesday, April 5th, 2011**

*Ask Us: Services Q and A*

**All Are Welcome! Come and Join Us!**

*"Free Babysitting offered at each session"*

*For more information, e-mail us at*

**[stdemetriostoronto@gmail.com](mailto:stdemetriostoronto@gmail.com)**