

The Messenger

ST. DEMETRIOS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWSLETTER

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE

Beloved in the Lord,



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!

- January 10th:
First Day of Sunday School in 2010
- January 26th:
First "Re-Catechism" Session
- January 30th:
Feast of the Three Hierarchs

With the beginning of 2010, we have finished celebrating Christmas (the birth in the flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ) and have begun celebrating Theophany (the baptism of Jesus Christ and - more importantly - the revelation of the Holy Trinity). These great feasts show how God has revealed Himself to humanity and how He wants to have a relationship with us.

Together with these feasts, we celebrated New Year's Day on January 1st. It's a time when so many of us make "New Year's Resolutions". They're usually things like "I'm going to lose 10 pounds" to "I'm going to study more."

As Christians, we are called to become better every single day, every moment of our lives. As we've said many other times, we are called to not only be 'good people' but we're called to become 'saints' or 'holy by Grace'. So we need to ask ourselves: *in 2010, what New Year's Resolution are we going to make for ourselves in order we become better Christians?*

This resolution for all of us - Sunday School students, parents, grandparents - can be as simple as "I'm going to learn about Jesus and my faith by reading a bit more of my Bible, download an *iEcclesia* or other Orthodox Christian podcast to hear it on my iPod or read another religious book with my family" or even "I'm going to say an extra prayer for someone every single day".

These resolutions can also be a little more difficult. For example, we can say, "I'm going to leave my Xbox or Wii as a type of 'fasting', showing Jesus He matters more than any game of New Super Mario Brothers". It can be deciding to serve as an Altar Boy at our Church or helping to do charity work with family and friends. It can be anything at all.

We should remember that whatever we do, we should do for God and His Church. We should want to make a difference in the world with everything we do. We should want to act just like Jesus Christ and the Saints - the greatest role models in our lives. This *Change for Christ* is a change that's the best thing we can do.

All of us at St. Demetrios Sunday School wish you and yours "Καλή Χρονιά"! May God bless us in 2010 and always!

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Another Successful Christmas Pageant!

On December 20th, our Sunday School put on its annual Christmas Pageant. The children and youth sang carols, recited poems and put on a short play about Christmas. The Sunday School would like to thank organizer Linda Hudson and everyone who assisted in making this day successful!



ON THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST

BY ST. GREGORY OF NYSSA



Christ was born as it were a few days ago — He Whose generation was before all things, sensible and intellectual. Today He is baptized by John that He might cleanse him who was defiled, that He might bring the Spirit from above, and exalt man to heaven, that he who had fallen might be raised up and he who had cast him down might be put to shame. And marvel not if God showed so great earnestness in our cause: for it was with care on the part of him who did us wrong that the plot was laid against us; it is with forethought on the part of our Maker that we are saved.... Christ assumes manhood in its fullness, and saves man, and becomes the type and figure of us all, to sanctify the first-fruits of every action, and leave to His servants no doubt in their zeal for the tradition. Baptism, then, is a purification from sins, a remission of trespasses, a cause of regeneration.... And this gift it is not the water that bestows (for in that case it were a thing more exalted than all creation), but the command of God, and the visitation of the Spirit that comes sacramentally to set us free. But water serves to express the cleansing.... For You truly, O Lord, are the pure and eternal fount of goodness, Who justly turned away from us, and in loving kindness had mercy upon us. You banished us from Paradise, and recalled us; You stripped off the fig-tree leaves, an unseemly covering, and put upon us a costly garment; You opened the prison, and released the condemned; You sprinkled us with clean water, and cleanse us from our filthiness. No longer shall Adam be confounded when called by You, nor hide himself, convicted by his conscience, cowering in the thicket of Paradise. Nor shall the flaming sword encircle Paradise around, and make the entrance inaccessible to those that draw near; but all is turned to joy for us that were the heirs of sin: Paradise, yea, heaven itself may be trodden by man, and the creation, in the world and above the world, that once was at variance with itself, is knit together in friendship, and we are made to join in the angels' song, offering the worship of their praise to God. For all these things then let us sing to God that hymn of joy, which lips touched by the Spirit long ago sang loudly: Let my soul be joyful in the Lord, for He has clothed me with a garment of salvation, and has put upon me a robe of gladness, as on a bridegroom He has set a mitre upon me, and as a bride has He adorned me with fair array. And truly the Adorner of the bride is Christ, Who is, and was, and shall be, blessed now and for evermore. Amen.

~ St. Gregory of Nyssa is a Church Father who lived in the 4th century AD. He is one of the "Cappadocian Fathers", a younger brother of St. Basil the Great and defended the Church against the Arian heresy.



*His All Holiness Ecumenical
Patriarch Bartholomew blessing
the waters in Tarpon Springs,
Florida, USA.*
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Have a question?

E-mail us at

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

and see your question
in one of our upcoming issues!

Q & A CORNER — ON "BLESSING THE WATERS"

Q: I've seen it in Greece but never here... why do they go out to the sea and bless the waters?

A: On the Feast of Theophany, the "Great Blessing of the Waters" (Gr. Μεγάλος Αγιασμός) is celebrated in Orthodox Churches worldwide. On January 6th, it is a custom to bless the waters of the city by the sea, reciting the prayers of the Great Blessing of the Waters. This shows how God blesses all of creation on Theophany, remembering St. John Maximovitch's words: "When we bless waters of lakes, rivers and streams, we ask God to send His blessings upon the waters of creation so that even though humanity has spoiled the world through sin and abused the environment over many generations, God has not forsaken the world." At the time of the main hymn of the Feast (called the *Apolytikion*, Gr. Απολυτίκιον), the Bishop or Priest will toss in a wooden Cross to bless the waters and various people (usually teenagers or young adults) will dive in after it. The "winner" will be the person who gets to the Cross first and receive a blessing from the Bishop or Priest. You have probably never seen this happen in Toronto for practical reasons — that is, it usually *snows* in January and therefore it would be impossible to dive for the Cross. Having said that, this tradition was done in the past on September 14th in our city, and still takes place in various other cities today on or around January 6th (including Winnipeg, Victoria and Tarpon Springs, Florida).

ΑΞΙΟΙ !! THEY ARE WORTHY!! TWO ALTAR BOYS AT OUR CHURCH BECOME READERS!

The title of "Reader" (Gr. Αναγνώστης) is one of the minor orders of the Orthodox Church. This honour is bestowed by the local Bishop to people who usually read the Epistle and other Biblical readings throughout the services, along with serving as chanters and having other leadership roles in the Parish.

On December 6th, before His Grace Bishop Christoforos celebrated the Divine Liturgy at our Church, he bestowed the honour of "Reader" to two of our Altar Boys who have been helping both in the Altar and at the "Analogion" (Chanter's stand): **Jordan Phillip Fiuza** and **Nicholas Zourbanos**. At the end of the service, the entire congregation wished the new Readers be «Άξιοι», or worthy, of their new honour.

All of us at St. Demetrios Church, and especially the Sunday School, pray that God blesses them and their families. ΑΞΙΟΙ!



CELEBRATE 2010 WITH IECCLESIA!

Our first podcast of 2010, airing Friday, January 8th, has host Patricia Rakopoulos interviewing Roy and Lisa Khan, parishioners of our Church, as they discuss "Baptizing all Nations: Converts and Cradle Christians."

Our second podcast of the month has Fr. Phillip Philippou, Parish Priest of St. John the Baptist Church in Toronto, sitting down with Tim Prattas as they discuss "Greek Education: Is it Needed?"

To hear our podcasts, visit us at www.iecclesia.com. To contact us, e-mail us at feedback@iecclesia.com.



All of us at iEcclesia wish you a Blessed New Year!

iEcclesia... from Canada to the World!

HIS ALL HOLINESS ECUMENICAL PATRIARCH BARTHOLOMEW ON CBS NEWS PROGRAM "60 MINUTES"

On Sunday, December 20th, His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew was featured on the CBS News Program *60 Minutes*. Reporter Bob Simon detailed the difficulties of the Ecumenical Patriarch, the Patriarchate (which is based in Constantinople/Istanbul, Turkey) and Orthodoxy across the globe. While he is the leader of 300 million Orthodox Christians worldwide, find out why His All Holiness feels as a "second-class citizen" and "crucified" in Turkey.

To see the interview online, go to www.cbsnews.com and type "The Patriarch Bartholomew" in the search bar, or go to our Facebook page, "St. Demetrios Toronto is my Church!" and follow the links!





*St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church
Religious Education Newsletter*

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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	Maria Douvis, Jenny Economou
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

Our Sacramental Life



Where?

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

Who?

Everyone is Welcome!

When?

Every two weeks on Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m.

The Sessions

Tuesday, January 26th, 2010

A New Beginning: Baptism and Chrismation

Tuesday, February 9th, 2010

The Sacraments of Love: Marriage and Priesthood

Tuesday, February 23rd, 2010

Finding Healing in Suffering: Holy Unction

Tuesday, March 9th, 2010

Feeling New Again: Repentance and Confession

Tuesday, March 23rd, 2010

The Medicine of Immortality: Holy Communion

"Free Babysitting offered at each session"

For more information, e-mail us at

stdemetriostoronto@gmail.com