



# THE LOGOS

## Nativity of The Virgin Mary

Aug/Sept 2017, Volume 1, No. 6

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Nativity Parish Council in the late 1970's

### Fr. Metallinos's Message - 40 Years Later...

My beloved in Christ,



On the Feast-day of Saint Panteleimon, July 27th, I was finishing up my message for our LOGOS monthly publication. It was after celebrating the Divine Liturgy in the morning and I was not very content with the message I had written. I glanced down at my desk and after looking at a photo I have under the desktop glass of one of the first parish councils (I look at this photo every day when I come into my office), I started to think about the founding priest of this parish Fr. Efstathios Metallinos who is also pictured there (see above).

to the side and it got mixed up with other papers.

While going through papers I found the photo of the message. The photo was in a simple old glass frame and I was intrigued to see what was behind the frame itself. To my surprise, granted this is the Feast-day of St. Panteleimon, was an icon of St. Panteleimon! I have taken this as a sign to put the letter in this month's LOGOS:

“To all the Good and Blessed Parishioners of our Greek Orthodox Community Nativity of the Virgin Mary Plymouth, Michigan.

My Dear Friends,

This April, through the blessing and Grace of our Triune God, through the fervent protection of the Theotokos, and all the prayers of our church, our blessed Community already celebrates the Second Anniversary of its founding.

This joyous celebration of our Community gives me the opportunity to affirm that  
(Continued on page 8)

I recalled a photo I found in the Education Center of a message that Fr Metallinos had sent to the parishioners on April 15th, 1977. It was in Greek. Some months before, after a regular Bible Study we have on Tuesdays, I had asked Cleo Demetriou to translate the message. I had hoped to put it in the LOGOS that month but as things happen, I put it off

### Project Mexico Team Heads South

In Mid-August, See Page 9

### A Taste of Greece Festival is here!

Call Georgia Koumariotis to volunteer 248-767-0214

### St. Theophan the Recluse - On Prayer

Part 1 of 4 homilies.

A must read! See Page 7



## Parish Priest

Rev. Father Nick Marcus

Cell (616) 328-3143  
frnickmarcus@gmail.com

## Services

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

Wednesday  
7:00pm Paraklesis

## Office

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

## Nativity Bookstore & Fr. George Vaporis Library Summer Hours

Tues - Sat, 10am to 2pm  
Tuesday, 6pm to 8pm  
Sunday, 12noon to 2pm  
Closed Monday and Thursday

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

The Logos - Volume 1, No. 6

# Letter from the Editor

Dear Brothers & Sisters in Christ,

August and September have become an extremely busy time of year for our parish. Starting this year with the Nativity Men's Club 1st Annual Cigar Social Night on August 19th (see ad on pg 6) and our 13th Annual Taste of Greece Festival, followed by our Feast Day on September 8th, continuing with a gyro booth in the Plymouth Fall Festival September 8-10th, and finishing with our 4th Annual Basketball Golf Outing fund raiser on Sunday, September 24th! So much happens that I am grateful the Lord gives us the strength year after year to see it through.

Furthermore, it takes the efforts of everyone in this community to for these events to succeed, especially the festival where no contribution is too small. Please take a moment to pick up the phone and contact Georgia Koumariotis to schedule your festival volunteering, 248-767-0214.

With the above in mind, this issue of *The Logos* combines the months of August and September since there will be little time to prepare a separate September issue. We will pick up again in October with much to report.

Additionally, this issue highlights some early parish history with the reprinting

of Fr. Metallinos's message from 1977, the interview with founding member John Vardouniotis, and photos from the early days of our parish. These photos were taken from a collection of albums donated to the church by the Vardouniotis family; many thanks for the invaluable historical photo records. Further, reading Fr. Metallinos's inspirational message is relevant to us even 40 years later. Thanks to Fr. Nick for choosing to share it, possibly at the coaxing of St. Panteleimon who's paper icon was amazingly found behind the framed letter!

Also, this issue marks the beginning of a wonderful four part series of homilies on prayer given by St. Theophan the Recluse in 1864 Russia. Metropolitan Kallistos Ware states in the introduction to *The Art of Prayer* that, "Theophan represents much of what is best in the ascetic and spiritual teaching of the Orthodox Church."

Last, I would like to make a correction from last months edition where I stated that Kosta Kassapis was past president of the seniors group, he is actually the current president as well. We look forward to printing his interview in the next edition of *The Logos*!

*Email the editor, Louis Poulos at [navitymvoice@gmail.com](mailto:nativitymvoice@gmail.com)*



Congratulations to the newly illumined twins, family and friends (from left): Koumbaro George Gounakis, Rev. Fr. John Moutafis, Rev. Fr. Nick Marcus, Rev. Fr. Evangelos Aravantinos, Melina Apostolakis, Paul Apostolakis, Tiffany Apostolakis, Aristides Apostolakis, Koumbaro John Marakis, Koumbara Dimitra Gounakis.

# Our Unsung Heroes: An Interview with John Vardouniotis

by Irene Melabiotis



As I waited at the front of Mama Mias Restaurant to be seated for my interview with Mr. John Vardouniotis, I browsed the wall near the bar which was adorned with pictures. They say a picture is worth a thousand words—I figured the stories those pictures told most certainly could fill a book. My thoughts were interrupted by the voice of the waitress inviting me to follow her to the table at which Mr. Vardouniotis and his wife, Catherine, were seated. They greeted me warmly and asked if I wanted something to drink. “Just water,” I replied and took my seat across from them. I was looking forward to this interview because, from what I understood, Mr. and Mrs. Vardouniotis were involved in founding our beloved parish of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church in Plymouth, Michigan.

## What part of Greece are you from?

I’m from the village called Kandyla, Tripolis.

## When did you come to America?

I came here June the 4th, 1952.

## How did you come to America?

By boat.

## How long did the trip take?

Fourteen days. On the New Hellas.

## What made you want to come?

Like anybody else. We went through rough times. I lost my dad when I was only six years old, so there wasn’t much for us there. There are a lot of people from my village in America. My dad had two first cousins. So they’re the ones that petitioned for me and I came here.

## And you left family behind?

I left my mother, two brothers, and sister.

## How did you feel when you boarded the boat?

Like everybody else you feel sad leaving your country behind. You’re crying. You’re hurt. But time heals everything.

## You went to high school for English lessons?

For English and then I finished high school. Afterwards, I attended Wayne State to study Mechanical Engineering, but yes, I didn’t like it so I quit.

## How long have you been in the restaurant business?

I’ve been on my own since January 3rd, 1959. I bought a place down by Wayne State University. You know, I worked in the restaurant business while going to school. It was easy to get a job. And I always enjoyed being with people and liked to be on my own. So, 1959, I bought my first place by Wayne, which is still there now. I had that with my family for 41 years. It used to be called Johnny’s Dining Room, now it’s called the Olympic Grill.

## How many children and grandchildren do you have?

We have four kids: three daughters and one son. And we’ve got eight grandchildren: seven boys and one granddaughter.

## Have you ever held an office within the Parish Council at Nativity?

I was the President for fourteen and a half years, from 1974 to September of 1996. There were other people in between. We bought the



property in 1975.

## Did you have any other offices at the Parish Council, aside from being President?

I was on the Parish Council since day one. I was Vice-President for three or four years. In 1996 I had moved to Florida for personal reasons and that’s when I resigned.

## What is your favorite memory of Nativity?

My favorite memory is when we started the church, all of us, it was like one big family. We met in my house, downstairs in the basement. All of us—it was about thirty-three couples—we all put on a piece of paper how much can we give, without any names on it. And when we totaled everything, it was about \$28,000, and that’s how we bought the property. We gave \$25,000 down and we paid \$100,000 for the piece of property.

## And that was just the property with the Education building that’s there right now?

That little house that’s on there, that was our church.

## What was it before?

It was a Lutheran church. And they couldn’t get enough support, and then, they decided to sell it in order to move to Northville with another existing parish. That’s how we bought it.

## And at the time you said thirty-three couples. How did you find each other?

Because, see, we were part of Sts. Constantine and Helen and we were having services at the Seventh-Day Adventists at Middlebelt and Six Mile. They were letting us use their facilities for three years.

## Do you have any founding stories? You told me one about how you met at your basement. Any other founding stories?

After we bought the piece of property we had festivals, dances, and everything else to raise the money. We built the church without a general contractor. We had a building committee and we built it ourselves. When we had the drawings done and everything else, we sent it out to seven different contractors. The cheapest one came in at two million four-hundred and eighty—and we built the church for a million forty, without the hall and the bell tower. Those were on the original plans for over two million, so there is no way we could’ve built it. So when we decided to build it we all were very cautious and very nervous about it, you know, because we were taking a big risk. But I was the President and we had Harriet Demetriou—she was an attorney—as an advisor. Then we formed the building committee which several of the Parish Council members were part of. We did a lot of research and put in a lot of hard work, and a lot of love. Pete Tzilos was our architectural advisor. Andy Perakis was acting as our contractor. When we wanted to have the ground compacted—just to give you an idea—the company

(Continued on page 10)

## Parish News Reel

- Sponsor a 12"x18" sign for the festival to be hung under the main tent! For individuals, families, or your business. Sign up sheets available in the church office
- The festival committee is still requesting donations of canned coke, sprite and bottled water for this years festival.
- The Tigers game on Friday, June 30th versus the Cleveland Indians was canceled due to rain and rescheduled for Sept. 1st. Tickets are still available, call the office to reserve yours today!
- Nativity Greek Dance ministry sponsored a viewing of the movie, "The 11th Day" on Sunday, July 30th after coffee hour. The movie chronicles the story of men, women, and children of the Cretan resistance against the Nazi occupation from 1941-1945
- Festival baking is almost done! Thank you to everyone who helped make pastitsio, dolmathes, spinach pie and cheese pie!
- The festival is fast approaching and we need many volunteers to help

### Festival Schedule

Sat, Aug 12..... Souvlakia Meat Cutting  
 Mon, Aug 14..... Souvlakia Skewering  
 Wed, Aug 16..... Baklava  
 Aug 19-24th.....Set Up Week  
 Aug 25-27th.....A Taste of Greece Festival  
 Sept 8-10th.....Plymouth Fall Festival  
 Booth Fund Raiser

Please call the church office for more info.

### Nativity Choir Practice

The Nativity Byzantine Choir will be holding monthly practices, the next practice will be August 16th at 6:30pm. Please consider joining the choir if you enjoy singing and would like to give it a try! Come to practice or contact Demetri Tzelepis for more information (586)-489-7978.

make it a success. Please contact Georgia Koumariotis as soon as possible, 248-767-0214

- Festival set up begins on Saturday, August 12th at 10am. Please come help set up the fence and clean the grounds.
- Sunday School will be having a teachers/advisors meeting at 6:30 on Monday, August 28th at Mama Mia's restaurant.
- Nativity will host a booth for the 3rd straight year at the Plymouth Fall Festival downtown on Sept 8-10th. Selling Gyros, Spinach Pie and Pastries. Call the office to volunteer.
- The Upcoming Council of Ministries meeting will be held at Karl's Cabin on Sept. 12th, 6:30pm. Please bring your 2017/2018 ministry schedules.
- Hope/Joy will be hosting family night on Friday, Sept. 22nd at 6pm. Everyone is invited to attend an evening of fun and fellowship!

### FINANCE CENTER as of July 1st, 2017

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

#### Parish Offerings\*

June: \$19,810  
 YTD: \$162,784

#### Stewardship

Pledged: \$189,178  
 Pledges: 159  
 Families 261  
 Members: 538

#### Mortgage (4% APR)

Paid Monthly: \$1557  
 (\$1057 + \$500 principal)  
 Balance: \$110,875.88

\*includes candle offerings

## Additional Services

9am Orthros  
 10am Divine Liturgy

- Tues, Aug 1st.....Procession of the Cross - Dormtion Fast Begins
- Tues, Aug 15th.....Dormition of the Theotokos
- Tues, Aug. 29th.....Beheading of John the Baptist
- Thur, Sept 1st.....Beginning of Ecclesial New Year
- Fri, Sept 8th.....Nativity of the Theotokos

## Small Paraklesis

Tues, Aug. 1st.....7pm  
 Wed, Aug 2nd.....7pm  
 Thurs, Aug 3rd.....7pm  
 Fri, Aug 4th.....7pm  
 Mon, Aug 7th.....7pm  
 Tues, Aug 8th.....7pm  
 Wed, Aug 9th.....7pm  
 Thurs, Aug 10th.....7pm  
 Fri, Aug 11th.....7pm

## Great Vespers

Mon, Aug 14th.....Dormition of the Theotokos, St. Clair Shores, 7pm

Thurs, Sept. 7th.....Nativity of the Theotokos, 7pm

Wed, Sept. 13th.....Exaltation of the Holy Cross, 7pm Farmington Hills

## THE LOGOS

Nativity of The Virgin Mary

Next Deadline: Sept. 15

Please submit all schedules, events, information and photos by **September 15, 2017** for October 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 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**

## ‘Ο Ἐξάψαλμος Ψαλμὸς PB’ (102)

Εὐλόγει, ἡ ψυχὴ μου, τὸν Κύριον, καὶ πάντα τὰ ἐντός μου, τὸ ὄνομα τὸ ἅγιον αὐτοῦ. Εὐλόγει, ἡ ψυχὴ μου, τὸν Κύριον, καὶ μὴ ἐπιλανθάνου πάσας τὰς ἀνταποδόσεις αὐτοῦ. Τὸν εὐλατεῦοντα πάσας τὰς ἀνομίας σου, τὸν ἰώμενον πάσας τὰς νόσους σου. Τὸν λυτρούμενον ἐκ φθορᾶς τὴν ζωὴν σου, τὸν στεφανοῦντά σε ἐν ἐλέει καὶ οἰκτιρμοῖς. Τὸν ἐμπιπλῶντα ἐν ἀγαθοῖς τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν σου, ἀνακαινισθῆσεται ἰσχυρῶς ἀετοῦ ἡ νεότης σου. Ποιῶν ἐλεημοσύνας ὁ Κύριος καὶ κρίμα πᾶσι τοῖς ἀδικουμένοις. Ἐγνώρισε τὰς ὁδοὺς αὐτοῦ τῷ Μωϋσῆ, τοῖς υἱοῖς Ἰσραὴλ τὰ θελήματα αὐτοῦ. Οἰκτίρων καὶ ἐλεήμων ὁ Κύριος, μακρόθυμος καὶ πολυέλεος· οὐκ εἰς τέλος ὀργισθήσεται, οὐδὲ εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα μνησθεῖ. Οὐ κατὰ τὰς ἀνομίας ἡμῶν ἐποίησεν ἡμῖν, οὐδὲ κατὰ τὰς ἀμαρτίας ἡμῶν ἀνταπέδωκεν ἡμῖν, ὅτι κατὰ τὸ ὕψος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ἐκραταίωσε Κύριος τὸ ἔλεος αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ τοὺς φοβουμένους αὐτόν. Καθ’ ὅσον ἀπέχουσιν ἀνατολαὶ ἀπὸ δυσμῶν, ἐμάκρυνεν ἀφ’ ἡμῶν τὰς ἀνομίας ἡμῶν. Καθὼς οἰκτῖρει πατὴρ υἱούς, ὥκτιρῆσε Κύριος τοὺς φοβουμένους αὐτόν, ὅτι αὐτὸς ἐγνώ τὸ πλάσμα ἡμῶν, ἐμνήσθη ὅτι χοῦδος ἐσμεν. Ἄνθρωπος, ὡσεὶ χόρτος αἱ ἡμέραι αὐτοῦ· ὡσεὶ ἄνθος τοῦ ἀγροῦ, οὕτως ἐξανθήσει. Ὅτι πνεῦμα διήλθεν ἐν αὐτῷ, καὶ οὐχ ὑπάρξει, καὶ οὐκ ἐπιγνώσεται ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον αὐτοῦ. Τὸ δὲ ἔλεος τοῦ Κυρίου ἀπὸ τοῦ αἰῶνος καὶ ἕως τοῦ αἰῶνος ἐπὶ τοὺς φοβουμένους αὐτόν, καὶ ἡ δικαιοσύνη αὐτοῦ ἐπὶ υἱοῖς υἱῶν, τοῖς φυλάσσουσι τὴν διαθήκην αὐτοῦ καὶ μεμνημένοις τῶν ἐντολῶν αὐτοῦ τοῦ ποιῆσαι αὐτάς. Κύριος ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ ἰτοίμασε τὸν θρόνον αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἡ βασιλεία αὐτοῦ πάντων δεσπόζει. Εὐλογεῖτε τὸν Κύριον, πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι αὐτοῦ, δυνατοὶ ἰσχυροῦ, ποιοῦντες τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ, τοῦ ἀκοῦσαι τῆς φωνῆς τῶν λόγων αὐτοῦ. Εὐλογεῖτε τὸν Κύριον, πᾶσαι αἱ δυνάμεις αὐτοῦ, λειτουργοὶ αὐτοῦ, ποιοῦντες τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ. Εὐλογεῖτε τὸν Κύριον, πάντα τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ, ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ τῆς δεσποτείας αὐτοῦ· εὐλόγει, ἡ ψυχὴ μου, τὸν Κύριον.

## The Six Psalms of Orthros Part 5 - Psalm 102(103)

Bless the Lord, O my soul, and everything within me, bless His holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His rewards: who is merciful to all your transgressions, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from corruption, who crowns you with mercy and compassion, who satisfies your desire with good things; and your youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord shows mercies and judgment to all who are wronged. He made known His ways to Moses, the things He willed to the sons of Israel. The Lord is compassionate and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy. He will not become angry to the end, nor will He be wrathful forever; He did not deal with us according to our sins, nor reward us according to our transgressions; for according to the height of heaven from earth, so the Lord reigns in mercy over those who fear Him; as far as the east is from the west, so He removes our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear Him, for He knows how He formed us; He remembers we are dust. As for man, his days are like grass, as a flower of the field, so he flourishes; for the wind passes through it, and it shall not remain; and it shall no longer know its place. But the mercy of the Lord is from age to age upon those who fear Him, and His righteousness upon children's children, to such as keep His covenant and remember His commandments, to do them. The Lord prepared His throne in heaven, and His Kingdom rules over all. Bless the Lord, all you His angels, mighty in strength, who do His word, so as to hear the voice of His words. Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, His ministers who do His will; bless the Lord, all His works, in all places of His dominion; bless the Lord, O my soul.

## Wisdom of the Saints

“Anyone who is sick should seek the prayer of others, that they may be restored to health; through the intercession of others the enfeebled form of the body and the wavering footsteps of our deeds may be restored to health... Learn, you who are sick, to gain health through prayer. Seek the prayer of others, call upon the Church to pray for you, and God, in His regard for the Church, will give what He might refuse to you.”

*St. Ambrose of Milan*

“You cannot be too gentle, too kind. Shun even to appear harsh in your treatment of each other... Never condemn each other. We condemn others only because we shun knowing ourselves... Instead of condemning others, strive to reach inner peace. Keep silent, refrain from judgement. This will raise you above the deadly arrows of slander, insult, and outrage and will shield your glowing hearts against all evil.”

*St. Seraphim of Sarov*

“When you have done something virtuous, remember Him who says, ‘Without me you can do nothing’ (John 15:5).”

*St. Mark the Ascetic*

“Zealous Christians have a certain technique that they apply to secure the continual remembrance of God more firmly. It is the constant repetition of a short prayer, ordinarily either, ‘Lord, have mercy,’ or ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ If you haven’t heard this, then listen now. If you have never done this, begin now.”

*St. Theophan the Recluse*

“Our salvation and our ruin is in our neighbor. Our salvation depends on how we relate to our neighbor. Do not forget to see the image of God in your neighbor.”

*St. Mark the Ascetic*

## 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  
Aristoile 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 Loisides  
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  
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**NATIVITY OF THE VIRGIN MARY MEN'S CLUB**  
PRESENTS



**SATURDAY, AUGUST 19 @ 6:00PM**

**IN THE BIG FESTIVAL TENT ON THE CHURCH GROUNDS**  
CIGARS • GAMES • AUCTIONS  
LAMB CHOP DINNER AT 7:00PM

Donation of  
**\$75**  
per person  
Includes  
Dinner, Drinks,  
& Entertainment

**SEND CHECKS TO:**  
Nativity of the Virgin Mary Men's Club  
39851 West Five Mile Road, Plymouth, MI 48170

**RESERVATIONS & QUESTIONS:**  
Dennis Ford  
810-422-3751 • [fordnovi1@gmail.com](mailto:fordnovi1@gmail.com)



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## St. Theophan the Recluse: On prayer, Homily 1

Delivered 21 November, 1864

On the feast day of the Entrance into the Temple of the Most-holy Theotokos, I find it timely to give you instruction in prayer - the main work of the temple. A temple is a place of prayer and arena of prayer's development. For us, entry into the temple is entry into a prayerful spirit. The Lord has the kindness to call our hearts His temple, where we enter mentally and stand before Him, ascending to Him like the fragrant smoke of incense. We are going to study how to attain this state.

Gathering in the temple, you pray, of course. And in praying here, you surely ought not abandon prayer at home. Therefore, it would be extraneous to speak to you about our duty to pray, when you already pray. But I do not think that it is extraneous in any way to give you two or three rules about how to pray, if not in the way of teaching, then simply as a reminder. The work of prayer is the first work in Christian life. If in everyday affairs the saying: "live and learn" is true, then so much more it applies to prayer, which never stops and which has no limit.

Let me recall a wise custom of the ancient Holy Fathers: when greeting each other, they did not ask about health or anything else, but rather about prayer, saying "How is your prayer?" The activity of prayer was considered by them to be a sign of the spiritual life, and they called it the breath of the spirit. If the body has breath, it lives; if breathing stops, life comes to an end. So it is with the spirit. If there is prayer, the soul lives; without prayer, there is no spiritual life.

However, not every act of prayer is prayer. Standing at home before your icons, or here in church, and venerating them is not yet prayer, but the "equipment" of prayer. Reading prayers either by heart or from a book, or hearing someone else read them is not yet prayer, but only a tool or method for obtaining and awakening prayer. Prayer itself is the piercing of our hearts by pious feelings towards God, one after another - feelings of humility, submission, gratitude, doxology, forgiveness, heart-felt prostration,



brokenness, conformity to the will of God, etc. All of our effort should be directed so that during our prayers, these feelings and feelings like them should fill our souls, so that the heart would not be empty when the lips are reading the prayers, or when the ears hear and the body bows

in prostrations, but that there would be some qualitative feeling, some striving toward God. When these feelings are present, our praying is prayer, and when they are absent, it is not yet prayer.

It seems that nothing should be simpler and more natural for us than prayer and our hearts' striving for God. But in fact it is not always like this for everyone. One must awaken and strengthen a prayerful spirit in oneself, that is one must bring up a prayerful spirit. The first means to this is to read or to hear prayers said. Pray as you should, and you will certainly awaken and strengthen the ascent of your heart to God and you will come into a spirit of prayer.

In our prayer books, there are prayers of the Holy Fathers - Ephraim the Syrian, Makarios the Egyptian, Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, and other great men of prayer. Being filled with the spirit of prayer, they were able to up that living spirit into words, and handed it down to us. When one enters into these prayers with attention and effort, then that great and prayerful spirit will in turn enter into him. He will taste the power of prayer. We must pray so that our mind and heart receive the content of the prayers that we read. In this way the act of praying becomes a font of true prayer in us. I will give here three very simple instructions: 1. always begin praying with at least a little preparation; 2. do not pray carelessly, but with attention and feeling; and 3. do not go on to ordinary work immediately after prayer.

Even if prayer is common for us, it always demands preparation. What is more common for those who can read and write than reading and writing? However, sitting down to read or write, we do not immediately begin, but we calm ourselves before beginning, at least

to the point that we can read or write in a peaceful state. Even more so preparation for the work of prayer is necessary before praying, especially when what we have been doing before praying is of a totally different nature from prayer.

Thus, going to pray, in the morning or in the evening, stand for a moment, or sit, or walk, and strive in this time to focus your thoughts, casting off from them all earthly activities and objects. Then call to mind the One to Whom you are praying, Who He is and who you are, as you begin this prayerful petition to Him. From this, awaken in your soul the feeling of humility and reverent awe of standing before God in your heart. As you stand piously before God, all of this preparation may seem small and insignificant, but it is not small in meaning. This is the beginning of prayer and a good beginning is half the work.

Having stood up in your heart, now stand before your icons, make a few prostrations, and begin with the usual prayers: "Glory to Thee, our God, glory to Thee. O Heavenly King...", and so on. Do not read hurriedly; pay attention to every word and let the meaning of each word enter into your heart. Accompany your words with prostrations. With this effort, the reading of prayers becomes pleasant to God and fruit-bearing. Pay attention to every word, and let the sense of each word enter into your heart; understand what you are reading and feel what you are understanding. No other rules are necessary. These two - understanding and feeling - have the effect of making prayer fitting, and fruitful. For example, you read: "cleanse us from every stain" - feel your stain, desire cleanliness, and ask it from the Lord with hope. You read: "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors" - forgive all in your soul, and having forgiven everyone everything in your heart, ask for forgiveness for yourself from the Lord. You read: "Thy will be done" - completely give up your own will to the Lord in your heart, and honestly be prepared to meet everything that the Lord is well-pleased to send to you with a good heart. If you read each verse of your prayers in this way, then you will be truly praying.

In order to facilitate the development of true prayer, take these steps: 1) keep a prayer rule according to the blessing of your spiritual father - not more than you can read unhurriedly on a normal day; 2) before you pray, in your free time

(Continued on page 9)

(Fr. Nick from page 1)

these two years which have passed have been blessed and productive ones. During this time, both Christ and the Grace of the Holy Spirit have been found and enthroned in the hearts and souls of us all. Without question, it is the unity, harmony, zeal, enthusiasm and power of the love of the Faith and of the prayers of our members that have made them years of such incredible strength and even more so years of exceptional and unprecedented progress. Today, we can see our community as an example to be imitated and even to be envied. These two years have actually proven how brotherly love among members and loyalty to the ideals of our faith and of our culture can work together, along with self-sacrifice to create what is truly great and noble! With these as our tools, we have built a wonderful and incredible achievement and it has been a true labor of love – touching all of our hearts with the most beautiful and sacred of emotions.

At the beginning of our third year, allow me this opportunity to sincerely thank all of our beloved parishioners and coworkers for the great help and cooperation that has been offered both to me personally, as well as to our community. From the bottom of my heart, it is my wish that all of you will make every possible sacrifice in order to preserve – purity and holiness in your souls – all those feelings and qualities which have given this community its life, for this is what makes an outstanding community. United with one soul, one heart and one purpose, let us proceed hand in hand to the realization of the goals of our community and faithful to our ideals. Let us progress steadily to the fulfillment of our dreams and indispensable building complex and the perfection of our Christian mission.

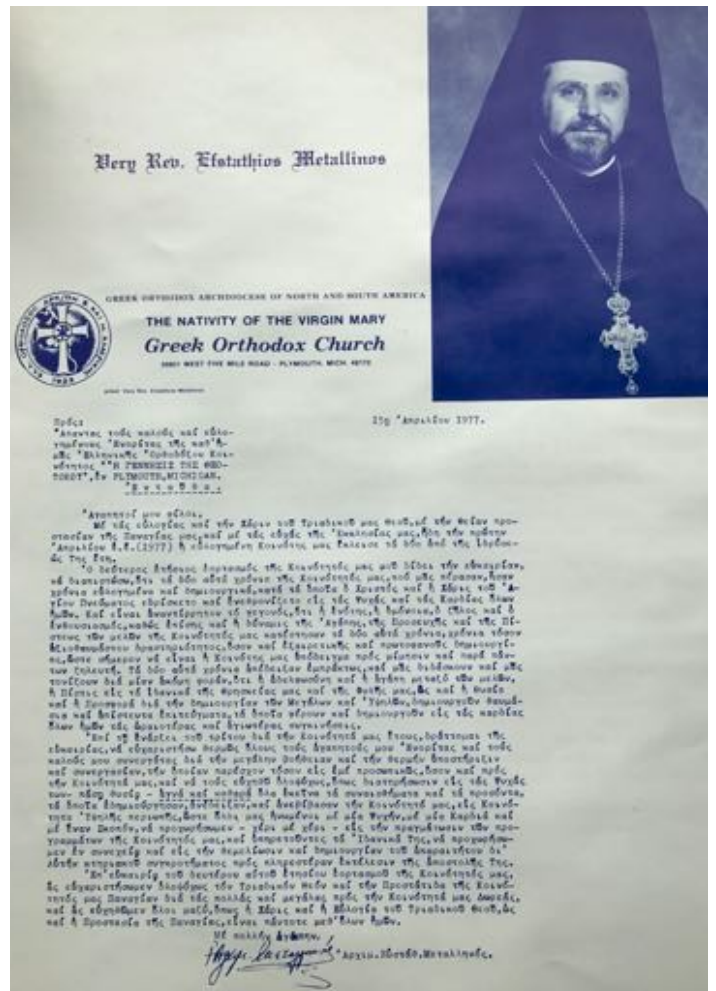
On the occasion of the second anniversary celebration of our community, let us give sincere thanks to the Holy Trinity and also to the Protectress of our parish – the Holy Virgin, for the many and great gifts to us. And let us pray all together so that the grace and blessings of our God-in-Trinity, and the protection of the Theotokos will be with all of us forever.

With much love,

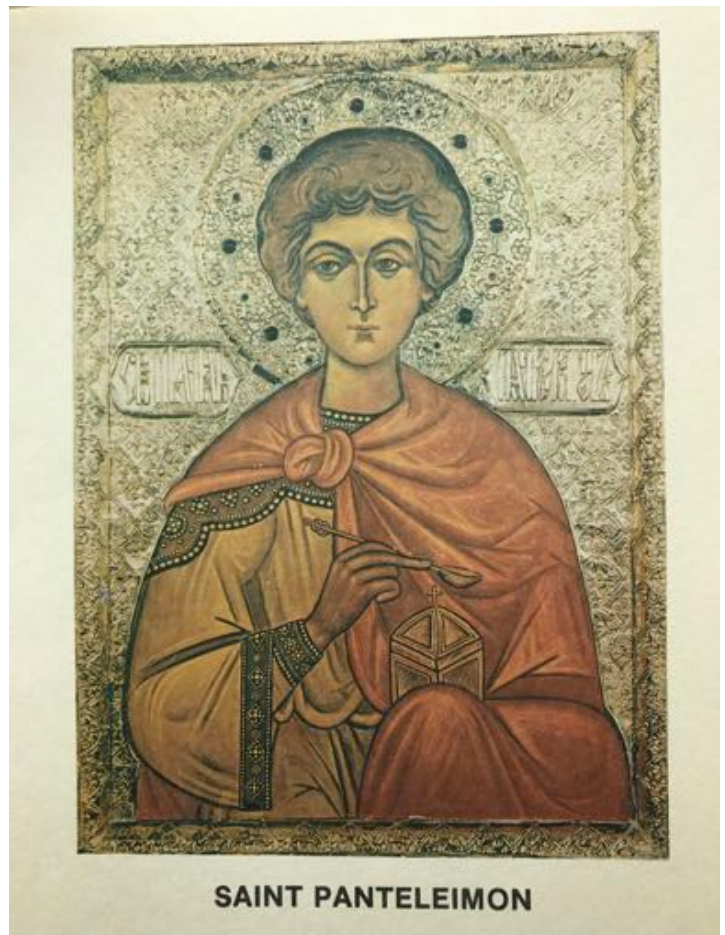
Very Rev. Efsthathios Metallinos”

May Fr. Metallinos continue to pray for the community he loved so much!

Fr Nick



Above: Fr. Efsthathios’s letter in Greek that Fr. Nick removed from the frame to find the icon of St. Panteleimon (below). It was found on the Saint’s Feast-day, July 27th.





## O Lord, Bless our Project Mexico Team!

Fr. Nick Marcus  
 Pres. Liza Marcus  
 Elaine Hamilton  
 Michael Randall  
 Carlos Randall  
 Anna Marcus  
 Irene Marcus  
 Thomas Dalton  
 Zoe Homyak  
 Fotini Michalak

### Project Mexico

Our Church has a team who will represent our Nativity Church on a MISSION TEAM TO PROJECT MEXICO to serve our Lord Jesus Christ and His Church in a cross-cultural setting! This will be the very first time our Church will have a group of 10 people to participate in this exciting mission! We ask that you please keep our team in your prayers!

We will travel to Mexico and work with PROJECT MEXICO, while staying at the St. Innocent Orphanage in tents provided by the orphanage. We will be going August 16-22, 2017. Our primary goal will be to help construct a home for a needy family in Rosarito. The week we are there, we will work with other Orthodox Christians from around the country, and together we will be building simple homes. We will also spend time with the teenage orphans at the St. Innocent home, as well as share our faith and spend time with the local people we meet.

In order for our group to participate in this mission trip, each participant needed to raise \$1,000. This money will pay for the supplies and materials needed to build the house, our food and lodging at the orphanage, our flights to San Diego and the van we must rent for Mexico.

Would you prayerfully consider becoming a spiritual and financial partner with us on our mission? As a financial partner, you can send a tax-deductible donation to Nativity of the Virgin Mary. Please write Project Mexico in the memo line of the check. You can learn more about Project Mexico on their website: [www.projectmexico.org](http://www.projectmexico.org). Thank you for helping our Church fulfill its part in our Lord's global mission and outreach!!

In Christ's love,  
 Elaine Hamilton and the Nativity PROJECT MEXICO team

(St. Theophan from page 7)

become familiar with the prayer in your rule, fully take in each word and feel it, so that you would know in advance what should be in your soul as you read. It will be even better if you learn the prayers by heart. When you do this, then all of your prayers will be easy for you to remember and feel. There is only one final difficulty: your thoughts will always stray to other subjects, therefore: 3) you must struggle to keep your attention focused on the words of your prayer, knowing in advance that your mind will wander.

When your mind does wander during prayer, bring it back. When it wanders again, bring it back again. Each and every time that you read a prayer while your thoughts are wandering (and consequently you read it without attention and feeling,) then do not fail to read it again. Even if your mind wanders several times in the same place, read it again and again until you read it all the way through with understanding and feeling. In this way, you will overcome this difficulty so that the next time, perhaps, it will not come up again, or if it does return, it will be weaker. This is how one must act when the mind wanders. On the other hand it may happen that a particular word or phrase might act so strongly on the soul, that the soul no longer wants to continue with the prayer, and even though the lips continue praying, the mind keeps wandering back to that place which first acted on it. In this case: 4) stop, do not read further, but stand with attention and feeling in that place, and use the prayer in that place and the feelings engendered by it to feed your soul. Do not hurry to get yourself out of this state. If time cannot wait, it is better to leave your rule unfinished than to disturb this prayerful state. Maybe this feeling will stay with you all day like your guardian Angel! This sort of grace-filled action on the soul during prayer means that the spirit of prayer is becoming internalized, and consequently, maintaining this state is the most hopeful means of raising up and strengthening a spirit of prayer in your heart.

Finally, when you finish your prayers, do not immediately go off to any sort of work, but remain and think at least a little about what you have just finished and what now lies before you. If some feeling was given to you during prayer, keep it after you pray. If you completed your prayer rule in the true spirit of prayer, then you will not wish to quickly go about other work; this is a property of prayer. Thus our ancestors said when they returned from Constantinople: "he who has tasted sweet things does not desire bitter things". So it is with each person who has prayed well during his prayers. One should recognize that tasting this sweetness of prayer is the very goal of praying, and if praying leads to a prayerful spirit, then it is exactly through such a tasting.

If you will follow these few rules, then you will quickly see the fruit of prayerful labor. And he who fulfills them already without this instruction, of course, is already tasting this fruit. All praying leaves prayer in the soul - continual prayer in this manner gives it root, and patience in this work establishes a prayerful spirit. May God grant this to you by the prayers of our All-pure Mistress, the Theotokos!

I have given you initial basic instruction in the ways of raising up in yourselves a prayerful spirit, that is, how to pray in a way appropriate to the meaning of prayer - at home in the morning and the evening, and here in the temple. But this is not yet everything. Tomorrow, if God helps, I will teach you a second method. 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.*

(Irene Melabiotis from page 3)

wanted \$22,000 to do that. So we, as a committee, we came up with the idea, “Well, what if we call a company who does that?” So we called a company and we talked to somebody and I said, “How much do you charge an hour, with a man and a big roller?” And he says, “A hundred dollars an hour.” I said, “Oh, okay.” So, I brought it to the committee and we decided—we called. It cost us \$900 instead of \$22,000. And when it came to build it, I mean, actually we did a lot of work and we got it done for a million forty. All the people, they were all there. They all helped. They all did things.

**I didn’t realize that you guys literally built the church.**

Okay, when it came time to put the bricks on, there was a brick installer which we contracted. He said, “John, I have thirty-three employees, and I’m just finishing a big job, but I don’t have anything for three months.” I asked, “Can you come out and give us a price? What would it cost us to install the bricks?” So we were able to have the edge of the church built with the bricks for \$237,000 instead of \$900,000. For three months he just said, “I just wanna get enough money to pay my employees, because I don’t wanna lose them.” And, then, when it came time, we sold the bricks \$5 each.

**So that’s the only professional help that you had, putting the bricks in?**

The bricks, then I hired another guy who built my banquet room here. So I brought him and he built the church inside. The Platytera, he was the one who did it. He helped us out a lot. All the doors and all the wood was from Canada—all expensive oak wood. So it was a lot of fun and a lot of love. Each and every one of us was involved and they all were there. Whatever was needed, it was everybody there and ready to go.

**And how many years of fundraising would you say?**

We were raising money from the day that we started it. You know, different ways, with festivals, dances, and stuff like that. We used to have the Plymouth Fall Festival. We used to go to the Livonia Spree for years to sell shish kabobs and pastries and stuff like that. Also, we used to host a couple of dances throughout the year. Even all that, we only had about \$380,000 when we started building. That’s all we had. When we started building, that’s when the money started coming in.

**So have there been any challenges that maybe made things difficult?**

Well, let me tell you. The whole thing, building the church, was a challenge. I mean, taking responsibility, all of us, it isn’t only on one person. I’m talking about all of us, the ones that we decided to build the church. And we all put in a lot of time and made a lot of sacrifices with our families, our businesses, and our jobs. A lot of us took a lot of time off to do that.

**But it’s worth it in the end.**

Yes. I don’t go to church as much as I used to. I was there every Sunday before, but now, you know, I come down here to help the kids.



When I go in to church, I see all these young people—I say, “Thank you God,” you know, for enabling to give something to the younger generation. But the forty, fifty families that we started with, they were all dedicated people. Actually the two people that found the piece of property were Alex and Theodora Bageris. They told us that these properties were for sale. I remember I took the Bishop out there and when he saw the piece of property, he knelt and he crossed himself and said, “This place is going to be a church.”

**Which Bishop is this?**

Bishop Demetrios. He was the Bishop of Detroit at that time.

**Okay. And he knew?**

When I took him, he came to my place for dinner that night. He was the one who gave us the direction on how to start a church. It was his guidance and Fr. Metallinos—he was actually the number one. Fr. Metallinos gave us the advice, the directions, and with the Bishop, they were very good friends. There were a lot of dedicated people. It took a lot of work and a lot of effort to get all these things done.

**Are there any interesting stories while you guys were actually physically building the church?**

We had a lot of love, respect, a lot of fun doing it.

**Did you spend days, or just whenever you could do it?**

Sure, we spent days. I was there every day 7 o’clock in the morning. I saw all that construction going through. And not only me, most of us.

**And how about the equipment? Aside from getting those people to pack the soil and then getting the brick set up, I’m sure you needed other equipment. How did you get that?**

The electrician had to have his own equipment. The plumber had to have his own equipment. What we did, we sub-contracted piece by piece. Not the whole thing out. So there was a decision to make it between ourselves. “Are we going to do it or not?” And because most of us being in business and all that, we said, “We can do it. All we have to do, we’re going to have to sub-contract everything.”

**Is there a story with the naming of the church?**

Well, there were several people who came up with the idea. Actually, even the Bishop. Nick and Rose Kopanakis, they came up with the name of Nativity of the Virgin Mary. It was up to the Parish Council to decide. Everything was done by writing. Nobody said, “I want it done.” I tell you, most of us were from the old country. At the beginning we had a rough time because we didn’t know how to conduct business and all that. But we became very professional, and we had a lot of respect and love for each other. After the meetings, we used to go out and have coffee, ice cream, whatever it was. You know, like good friends. I’m very proud to say that everything we did, we did it like a big family.

**Any stories about your fondest memories about Fr. Metallinos?**

Fr. Metallinos? Actually, he was the main driving force to see the church built. He was the one that actually gave us direction how to go about it, what we need, and he was always the first in line when we needed to raise funds. He would be the first one to go out and do what was required.

**And then you started having services in the house?**

Alex Bageris, he converted it. With few helpers, he converted the little house to a church.

**Is there anything else that you would want to share and want people at Nativity to know about the church?**

I say that each and every one of us, we did a great job and we all contributed, we all worked together, and we all had respect for one another. All of us were there. It wasn't only one person. A lot of people say, "If it wasn't for you . . ." No, I don't want that.

**It was a team effort.**

Team effort. Not only the men, but the women too. Anytime we decided to have an affair so we could raise money, they were always there. Going out to sell tickets, or going to set up the rooms. Whatever we needed. I mean, we ran it like our own personal business. But Fr. Metallinos, he deserves the recognition.

**I find that Nativity is a loving community.**

That's what church is all about. We made sure that the church door was open to each and every Christian Orthodox. No matter what they could give, God Bless them. That's what the church is there for. It isn't there to show how much you're going to contribute. We started it, and that's the way it should continue. If the Greek people know there's a need for anything, they'll go out of their way to help. But don't tell them what they have to do. Just bring it up and say, "This is what we need. If we can do it, God Bless us." That's it, leave that up to them. I remember one Sunday, when we decided to build the bell tower, there was no bell tower on the plans. When I brought it up to the attention of the church on a Sunday after the services, the forgiven Pete Peluras says, "Move forward John and don't be afraid." And the following Sunday, we brought a charge machine to the church, and we raised almost fifty or sixty thousand dollars. We had started it, but the plans for the bell tower weren't there. The whole thing was \$110,000, you know. It was donated, it was covered, it was no problem. When we informed the congregation about the Platytera—we had a quote for the iconography for \$240,000. By the time we got done we had more than enough in pledges. We brought the iconographer from Greece, with Fr. Metallinos.

**How about the marble?**

We had several quotes from up to \$136,000. Jim Kanellopoulos had some connections and it cost us about \$11,000 for the marble. He did the marble, all around the church. And for the Altar, Bishop Timothy came and told us how he wanted it. Because we had given him dimensions, he said, "I don't know dimensions. I want to come and see. Put a chair there and a chair here to see what the distance is." It was done the right way. I mean, you know, the approval of the Bishop, the approval of the Church. The cost of installation for the marble was only \$14,000—so a total of approximately \$25,000.

**That's wonderful. Well, thank you for all the stories.**

God bless you, and whatever you do, do it from your heart. Always remember what we're there for.

*Irene Melabiotis is an active member of the Nativity Parish Council and teacher with our Three Hierarchy Greek School (a joint ministry with our sister parish Sts. Constantine and Helen). With Father Nick's blessing, she will be interviewing past and present members of our parish to share their stories, record their history, and honor their experiences and sacrifices made to begin life anew in the United States of America.*



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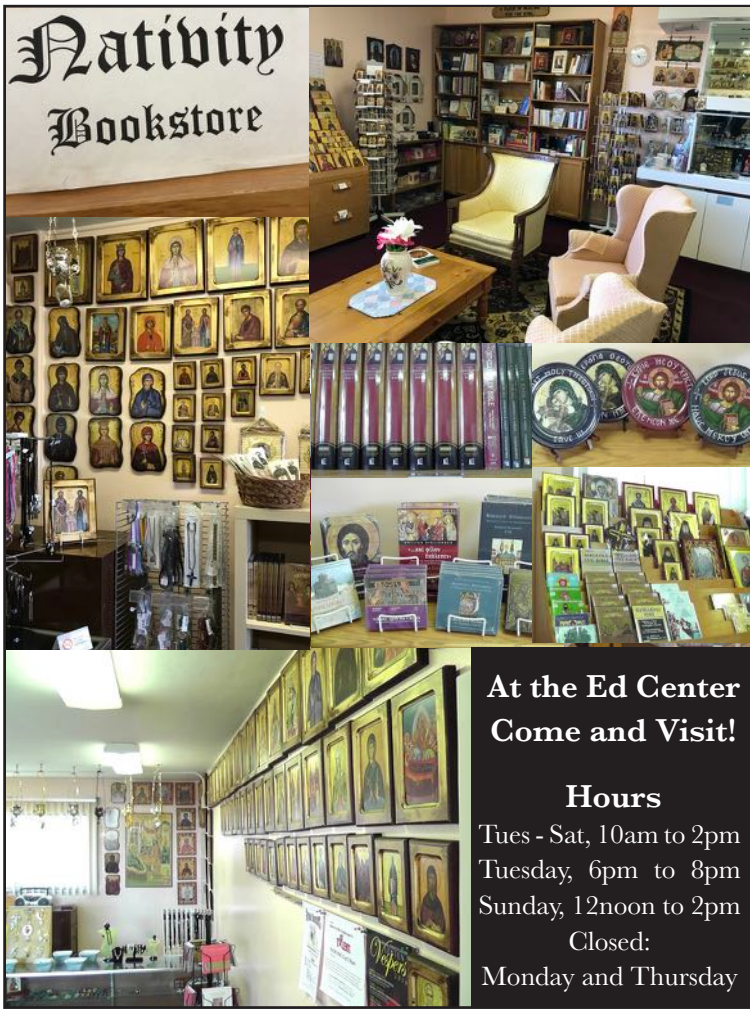
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**JUNIORS** (Grades 3-5) 7:00-7:30 pm

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