

THE ANNUNCIATION OBSERVER



GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE ANNUNCIATION

3022 F Street ☞ Sacramento, CA 95816 ☞ (916) 443-2033

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Another Opportunity to Grow

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Great and Holy Lent comes very early this year. Clean Monday is February 19th! In this season, the church, through the yearly calendar, provides us with another opportunity to grow, to make, by God's grace, perhaps just a little progress along the spiritual path. So, I would ask you to embrace Lent this way. Don't we all need to change? Don't we all need to be closer to Christ in some way? We can view this season of fasting as a burden; we can and do sometimes become weary of making this journey. God knows our weaknesses. The wise Apostle Paul exhorts the Thessalonians: "Do not grow weary of doing good!" (2 Thess. 3:13) Let us not be weighed down by discouragement or fatigue; instead, let us enter into this season of Lent with joyful anticipation of what God will do with and in us, individually and as a community. In this brief life, God is always calling us to a higher life, to a better devotion, to more love, to deeper repentance, to change. He loves us, and He knows this is what we need, and He has the best in mind for us. This has always been our calling, and it will continue to be until the Lord returns and the kingdoms of this world become the Kingdom of God. A good Lent to you all!

—Fr. Timothy

I include below the brief words about how Christians lived in the second century. Apologist Saint Aristides of Athens wrote to the Emperor Antonius Pius in response to the continued persecution of Christians (circa 150 AD). In this period, Christians were slandered, accused of being immoral and atheistic! These are extracts from his longer work:

Christians know and believe in God as the Creator of heaven and earth in whom and from whom all things exist. They have learned God's commandments and they live by them in hope of the world to come! For this reason, they do not commit adultery or engage in sexual immorality; they do not give false testimony in court or withhold someone's deposit or envy another person's possessions. They honor their father and mother; they are helpful to their neighbors, and as judges, they make decisions with justice and mercy.

Christians do not worship idols. Anything they do not want others to do to them, they do not do to others. Christian men do not enter into illegal marriages or engage in sexual promiscuity. Out of love for their slaves and children, if they have any, they encourage them to become Christians, and if they do so, they are called brothers and sisters without distinction.

Christians do not lie. They love one another and take care of their widows; orphans are protected from those who would harm them. They willingly share what they have with those in need. They bring strangers into their homes and welcome them as true brothers and sisters. Christians, as they are able, provide for the burial of their poor when they die. They provide help to those among them who are imprisoned or oppressed because of their faith in Christ.

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When there is a person in poverty or need among them and they do not have the resources at hand to help, they will fast for two or three days in order to provide the food needed. The good works they do are not made public to impress others. But rather, are done unnoticed so that they may hide their deeds as one who finds treasure and hides it.

Every morning and at all hours they give praise and thanks to God for the gifts they have received; for food and drink also they give thanks to God. This is the content of the Christian's law and the way they live their lives.

2007 STEWARDSHIP PLEDGES. . .

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PARISH COUNCIL PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE . . .



OUR 2007 PARISH COUNCIL

Happy New Year! I am proud and honored to serve as Parish Council President. We, as a community, have a lot to look forward to with the continued efforts of our new building campaign, the youth activities director on board "George Landis" and all of our new committee chairmanships that have been appointed within our Parish

Council leader our children, family and friends. As ship for 2007. Deacon Euthym Kontaxis said, while

I am he visited our parish for Thanks-committed as giving liturgy, "Have any of us ever Parish Council asked God what we can do for him? President to be We always ask God to do for us". The progressive, com- Deacon's comment stayed with me passionate and and obviously impacted me enough to maintain a high remember and quote him. This is level of enthu- another reminder of our commit- siasm as my pre- ment to the church and our Orthodox decessor John Christian faith.

Demas. Again, thank you for your confidence in this honorable leadership position and let us all continue to come together and build more bridges in 2007!

I am certain this board will serve our community in a leadership role and continue our efforts as one community striving for the same long term goals as Fr. James has set before us. The key to a successful community is the ability to build bridges and always have Christ in mind first. We come as his servants to help our Orthodox Christian faith grow and build upon our faith with

God Bless you and your families,

Manny Balalis
Parish Council President

PARISH COUNCIL RECOGNITION DAY
OVER 65 PAST AND PRESENT PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS!



STEWARDSHIP NEWS...

At this writing the Stewardship Committee would like to thank the 196 families who have returned their 2007 pledge cards. Of course, this represents a comparatively small percentage of the members of our parish, but the trend is showing significant increases over last year....a very promising sign indeed. In fact, as of this writing the average pledge has doubled to over \$1,220.00 per family, per year.

Looking at the "top levels" of questions about the above possibilities. annual pledges helps us see how God is working in the lives of others. One family has pledged \$9,100.00, another \$8,000.00, two families at \$7,500.00, two at \$6,500.00, and three families at \$6,000.00. Thanks to this kind of support our church can realize and carry out its many ministries and financial needs. Again, as a reminder, there are many methods we can utilize for our gifts: credit card, EFT's, automatic withdrawal, checks or use of the weekly gift envelopes. Norine, our financial administrator, will be happy to answer your questions about the above possibilities. In closing, we are working diligently to conclude and finalize our 2006 stewardship year. In order to do so, it is very important for all church members to fulfill their 2006 pledge. If you have not done so, it is not too late! We look forward to receiving these outstanding pledges in order to move forward and shift our focus on the 2007 stewardship year.

Sincerely in Christ,
George Dariotis and Jerry Wright
Stewardship Committee, Co-Chairmen