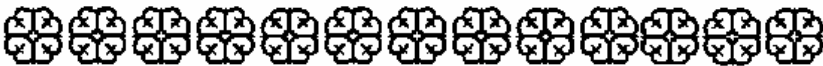
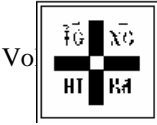




# THE FORERUNNER

VOL. XXV NO. 1  
January 2009



ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST  
GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

303 Cullum Drive  
Eules, TX 76040-4625

Return Service Requested



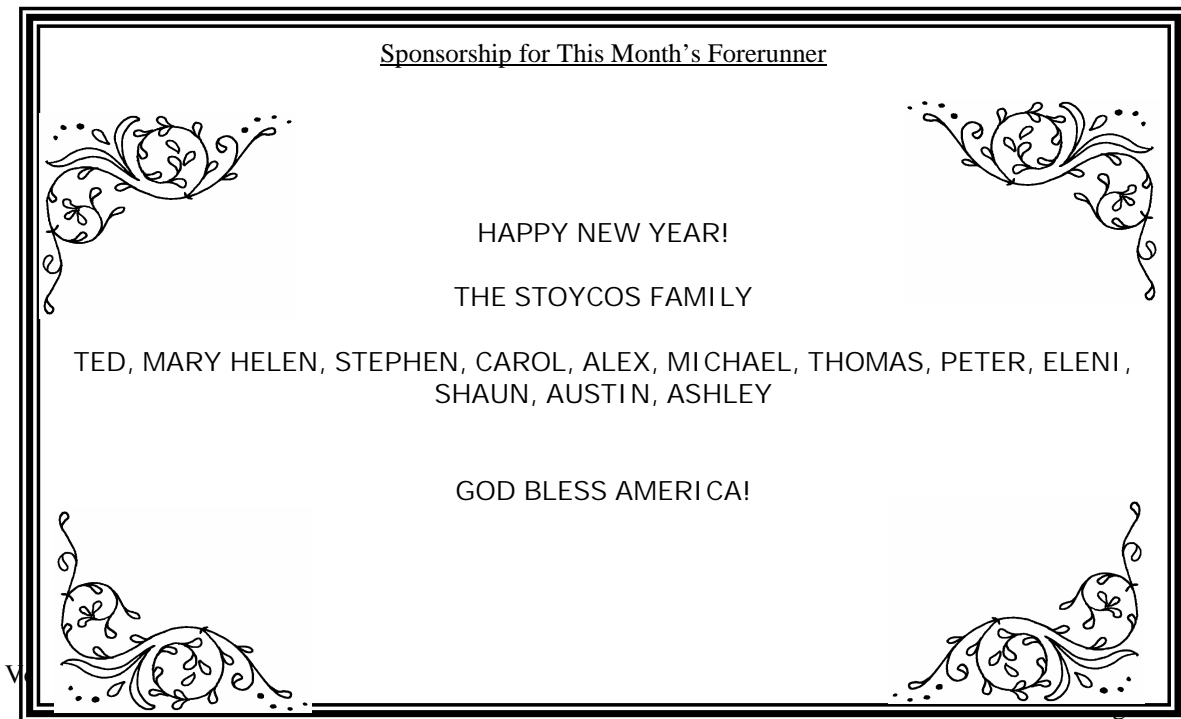
Sponsorship for This Month's Forerunner

HAPPY NEW YEAR!

THE STOYCOS FAMILY

TED, MARY HELEN, STEPHEN, CAROL, ALEX, MICHAEL, THOMAS, PETER, ELENI,  
SHAUN, AUSTIN, ASHLEY

GOD BLESS AMERICA!





# THE FORERUNNER

Monthly Bulletin of  
St. John the Baptist Greek Orthodox Church  
303 Cullum Drive ▪ Euless, TX 76040-4625  
Church (817) 283-2291 or (817) 545-9644 ▪ Fax (817) 545-0302  
Web Site: [www.stjohndfw.info](http://www.stjohndfw.info) ▪ E-mail: [parish@stjohn.tx.goarch.org](mailto:parish@stjohn.tx.goarch.org)  
Volume XXV ▪ Number 1

*January 2009*

## *Schedule of Regular Services at St. John's*

v Sunday,	Jan. 4:	Holy Liturgy,	10 A.M.
v Sunday,	Jan. 11:	Holy Liturgy,	10 A.M.
v Sunday,	Jan. 18:	Holy Liturgy,	10 A.M.
v Sunday,	Jan. 25:	Holy Liturgy,	10 A.M.

## *Orthodox Calendar*

*See enclosed calendar for dates, times, and places for the Special services  
and other events this month*

## Council Capsule

My Fellow Parishioners,

On 7 December we held elections to fill five Council positions. This was followed by the Council election of Officers for the upcoming year.

Based on the results of the actions mentioned above, the following are the Church Council Officers for the year 2009:

President: Harry Karegeannes  
Vice President: Bill Wright  
Secretary: George Moutafis  
Treasurer: Larry Leeders

We are very pleased to announce that Peter Talleos was elected to the Council. Peter will be a great asset to us and the Church.

We look forward with great anticipation to serving you and St. Johns during the new year.

Harry Karegeannes

## Fr. Vasile's Message

### *The Blessing Of The Waters - A Perennial New Beginning*

Each year at Theophany we perform the service of the Great blessing of the waters. With this blessed water or *Agiasmos*, as we call it, the priest blesses the people and their homes in a "pilgrimage" through their homes lasting sometimes more than a month. For the modern person that, under the influence of the protestant theology and the secular society, has lost any sense of the sacred, all these seem a rather odd habit to say at least.

But even for the secular man the water has tremendous importance. According to the evolution theory life has started in the water. It is also an essential component of the life cycle, without it nothing can grow or survive. Man himself is made 50-65% from water and although one can survive

weeks without food, without this essential liquid man surely dies in a matter of days.

So how do we respond to the raised eyebrow of the secular man when we bring the Holy Water into discussion?

The first and obvious answer lays the very meaning of Theophany that incorporates the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ in the River Jordan. The entrance of the Lord Himself into the water and all the events that followed, the flowing back of the river and the revelation of the Holy Trinity should be for us a good enough explanation.

But this is not the first time when water plays a central role in the Holy Scripture. Since the beginning of times water was used by God in various occasions. At the very creation of the world we read that "*the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.*" (Gen 1:2). We learn afterwards about the Great Flood that prevailed upon the earth drowning a mankind that was already sinking into un-repentant sin. We see again Moses parting the Red sea with his staff so the people of Israel can be freed from the slavery of the Egyptian Pharaoh, while the pagan armies are destroyed by the same waters. We also acknowledge water as an essential part of the purification rituals of the Mosaic Law.

But the true meaning of its importance is revealed in the water of Baptism. The key is the hymn we joyfully sing as we joyfully walk around the Gospel at the end of the service: *As many of you have been baptized in Christ you have put on Christ.* As we are baptized in the water by a thrice immersion in the name of the Holy Trinity, we become Christ like. By dying as sinners in the water like in a tomb - three times, like three days - we are able thereafter to rise like Christ into incorruption, as members of the Church now and citizens in potentiality of the Kingdom of Heaven. Christ the New Adam, through the water of Baptism, is re-creating us in the Spirit, giving us again the choice that our forefathers failed so lamentably: a life in grace or a life in sin.

We recognize here the creation power of Genesis, the wrath of the Lord during the Flood and the

liberating power of the Red Sea commanded by the wood of the Cross.

*“Creation, Fall and Redemption, Life and Death, Resurrection and Life Eternal: all the essential dimensions, the entire content of the Christian faith, are thus united and hold together”*

Through the descent of the Holy Spirit during Baptism and in the similar way during the Great Blessing of the Waters, the water regains its full potential and is transformed in a vehicle of renewal, a vehicle of change leading everything it touches toward the meeting with our Lord Jesus Christ.

This is possible because the Sacrament of Baptism is not to be understood as separated from Communion and Holy Liturgy, although the current liturgical practice does not really help in this respect, but the two should be considered as they really are: intimately linked. As Fr. Alexander Schmemmann accurately states :

*“Baptism is a personal Pascha and a personal Pentecost, as the integration into the laos, the people of God, as a passage from an old life into a new one and finally as an epiphany of the Kingdom of God.”*

The Holy Communion is the earnest of the very goal of the Christian life: the Kingdom of Heaven. Each person that enters through baptism into the body of the Church lives for this promise that is pre-tasted during the Holy Liturgy in the partaking of the Eucharist. The water of baptism make all of this to happen by giving back to man his original potential. Each year at Theophany we partake again and again in the reactivation of the spiritual properties of water by witnessing the river Jordan running backwards to its source, to its origins, symbolically reverting our lives to our true sacred roots. The *Agiasmos* consecrated at Theophany has the power to take us back where we belong, to renew into us the true Spirit of God and, paradoxically, instead of extinguishing, fueling the flame of our faith.

This Holy Water however does not work magically without our participation, but it demands  
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involvement and requires a renewal of our dedication to Christ and His Church. It is for us a remembrance and a reaffirmation of our baptismal vows, it is a perennial new beginning that we embark in every time we use it. Without this understanding the sprinkling of *Agiasmos* is nothing else but an unwanted cold shower, devoid of any true significance.

Let us therefore receive the water of Baptism in our homes in the hope that the New Year will bring us closer to Christ and to one another. Let us all pray that the Holy Spirit that fills all things will also fill our lives with His peace and grace and that at the end of our lives we will be found worthy to join the rightful flock at the right hand of the Father.

I pray that you all will have a spiritually rewarding New Year and may the grace of the Lord be with you in everything you do.

## ***Stewardship 2008 Final Thoughts***

As of 11/18/08 we have **123 stewards** for a **total of \$140,383** or **100%** of our goal. Thanks to all of you - WE MADE IT!!

As we enter 2009 we ask that you take the time to review your stewardship statements from 2008 and **make every effort to fulfill your 2008 pledge as soon as possible.** As discussed at the General Assembly, it is important, for accounting purposes, that all pledges be completed by the end of the year, if at all possible.

Thank you again for your continued support and commitment to our church. We have a wonderful community and we are looking forward to another great year.

## ***2009 Stewardship News***

Well, here we are again, back at the beginning. The beginning of a new year and the beginning of a new

stewardship campaign. Hopefully, we will begin to meet our church expenses through stewardship this year. This is a challenging goal and it means that we will need to raise \$178,000.

We are off to a good start. As of 12/13/08 we have **38 pledges** for a **total of \$58,860**. We are a third of the way there, however, we still have a very long way to go.

Please seriously consider increasing your pledge this year. We are a very unique community filled with love for our church and each other, but we must start thinking in terms of fully supporting the church by giving back according to what we have been given.

Thank you in advance for your continued support and commitment. We are looking forward to another great year.

### **2009 Stewards**

Alexander, Leo & Teresa  
Antahades, Dr. Lou & Judyth  
Arapis, Minoli & Marsha  
Ballas, Andy & Pat  
Berca, Sorin & Carmen  
Brandon, Roberta  
Blake, John & Harriett  
Cline, Tim & Angela  
Demetriades, Gus & Andi  
Dempsey, Margaret  
Fox, Mike & Kathy  
Gigliotta, Leonard  
Hoe, Jane  
Karegeannes, Harry & Ginny  
Kerbow, Joe & Maria  
Leeders, Larry  
MacPherson, Doug & Andi  
Matheson, Trevor & Sherri  
Mavias, Michael & Mary  
Medvic, Allison  
Medvic, Nancy  
Molhoek, Mike & Tina  
Moutafis, George & Khanh

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Pachares, Tony & Athena  
Papadopoulou, Olga & Theoni  
Papaliadis, Georgia  
Petercsak, Steve & Esther  
Poletes, Bill & Rena  
Pursley, Peter & Cynthia  
Rafailedes, Connie  
Ruppel, John & Joanie  
Samaras, Johnny  
Sardos, George  
Talleos, Peter  
Tudora, Fr. Vasile & Presvytera Mirela  
Vittas, George & Barbara  
Wright, Bill & Christine  
Yiantsou, Dr. Chris & Margo

### ***Building Committee***

The Building Committee has been formed and members include: Joe Sullivan, Mirela Tudora, Ted Stoycos, Stacia Leeders, George Moutafis, Mitch Chokas, Buck Kinman.

Planning meetings have begun with short term goals to select a design team for implementing the detailed design of the Church Building based upon the existing building concept plan and to establish an overall budget and schedule for the detailed design effort. We are planning to present this information for review and approval at next month's General Assembly meeting.

If you are interested in keeping up with the latest developments of the Building Committee, all published meeting minutes will be posted on our website under "New Church / Documents".

Joe Sullivan  
Building Committee Chairman

## *Philoptochos News*

Ladies,

I pray each and every one of you had a happy holiday season with all of Christ's blessings.

Below is a list of --

"Philoptochos Dates to Remember"

- January 3, 2009 - Vasilopita Bake Day
- January 4, 2009 - Vasilopita Auction following Liturgy (Benefiting St. Basil's Academy)
- January 18, 2009 - Monthly Philoptochos Meeting (with a presentation)
- Our annual Philoptochos Christmas Party was held Sunday, December 14, 2008 at Café Italia in Grapevine. All that attended had a great time.

Thanks to Joanie Ruppel who once again coordinated the "Adopt a Family" gift program. We had an overwhelming response this year and are so very blessed to see so many supporting hands in our parish.

Thank you to those that participated in our Christmas Bake Sale. As always, Baklava, Bread and all our other items make wonderful gifts for family and friends during the holidays. Thank you to the gracious ladies who gave up their Saturday to prepare all these delicious items.

Our 2nd annual ornament exchange was wonderful. Many chose to participate and as a result took home a part of their church family. I hope the participation level grows each and every year as our community grows.

With Christ's Love,  
Bertha

## *Youth Ministries On the Move*

Is quiet time setting in at your house? A bit in ours, too....but our youth certainly are not finding "nothing to do!" period! After a hectic holiday period, they are now preparing for the trip to N.M. for the Basketball Tournament. At the same time they are working on their topics for the Diocesan Oratorical Festival which is being hosted by our parish. We wish the participants well in both events!

Thanks to Joanie Ruppel and the church school teachers for presenting the annual Christmas program in church amid all those beautiful poinsettias! Love filled the church that day.

St. John will need lots of parishioner assistance with the Oratorical Festival on March 26, 27, 28. Please be thinking about how you can help....drivers, cooks, bakers, paperwork, activity planners, greeters, etc. More to come!

Thank you all for your unlimited support of our youth activities. God Bless you all this New Year 2009!

Athena Pachares, Y.M. coordinator  
([pachares@sbcglobal.net](mailto:pachares@sbcglobal.net))

## *GOYA*

Thank you! We appreciate all of you who have contributed to our fundraising events. Because of your support, we look forward to attending the annual GOYA basketball tournament in Albuquerque later this month.

If you are 12 years old and are interested in joining GOYA, please contact one of the following officers:

Patrick Sullivan, President  
Nick Papadimitriou, Vice President  
Jenna Wright, Treasurer  
Maggie Molhoek, Secretary

## *Choir Notes*

### *2009 Food Festival*

Yes, it's already time to start thinking about this year's Festival, to be held on October 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 11<sup>th</sup>. The signup sheet is in the Hall for Committee Chairs; please support our largest fundraiser with your time!

### *Gladsome Light Dialogues*

Our new Cycle of dialogues debuts on Jan 24th: *"The Liturgies of the Orthodox Church: What's in it for me?"* The cycle will continue until the beginning of the Great Lent.

Please find below the discussion topics for the month of January/February:

1/14/2009: The Liturgies of the Orthodox Church:  
an Overview

1/21/2009 Preparatory Services: Vespers, Matins,  
Vesting and Prothesis

1/28/2009 Evening Film Dialogues

2/4/2009 Liturgy of the Catechumens

2/11/2009 Liturgy of the Faithful

2/18/2009 Preparation for the Liturgy and  
Communion

2/25/2009 Evening Film Dialogues

The Evening Film dialogues will continue on  
January 21<sup>st</sup>. and February 25<sup>th</sup>

Don't forget to join us also online at  
<http://dialogues.stjohndfw.info>

During the past year my family and I found ourselves transferred to the metroplex from suburban Detroit. We first attended St. John on our weekend house-hunting trip. When we returned to Michigan we were repeatedly asked how our trip was. The string of questions usually went something like this: "How was Texas? Did you find a house? Where did you go to church?" Being the choir director at our church in Michigan for over 11 years, the last question was quickly followed by "how was the choir?" I was happy to answer ... "impressive!"

The number of voices singing the Doxology from the pews first struck me. I was not expecting a full four-part choir to beautifully resonate from the choir loft, as well. What a pleasant surprise.

I am sure many of you share this sentiment with me. As a newcomer, however, and especially as we begin a new year, I would like to say how fortunate I feel the St. John community is to have such a great choir! They are a very dedicated group of individuals who beautifully sing the hymns of the Church from the heart!

Wishing you all a Blessed New Year!

Kirsten Shah

### *Church School News*

I'm sure you've enjoyed this year's Christmas musicale. Every child had an opportunity to shine. It was fun to see our youths' perform. Mrs. Joanie Ruppel was the creative conductor and producer for this pageant. Thank you, Mrs. Ruppel.

I send heartfelt thanks to our Church School teachers for their dedication to our children.

\* Nursery: Mrs. Marsha Arapis



- \* Pre-K and Kindergarten: Mrs. Maria Kerbow, Ms. Allison Medvic, Mrs. Tina Molhoek
- \* First and Second grades: Mrs. Theresa Alexander
- \* Third and Fourth grades: Mrs. Esther Petercsak
- \* Fifth thru middle school: Mrs. Pavlina Feichtinger
- \* Teen-age: Ms. Demi Gianulis

Church school will resume on January 4<sup>th</sup>.

Happy New Year.  
Khanh Moutafis

## *Ageless Wonders*

The January meeting of the Ageless Wonders will be on Tuesday, January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2009 at the church hall. We will meet at 11:00a.m. for lunch and a program. The Seniors from St. Demetrios will be our guests. Please save the date and join us for a fun afternoon and don't forget to bring your dues. Details? Call Margaret at 817-354-7731

## *Blessing of Homes for Theophany*

As it is customary in the Greek Orthodox Tradition on January 6<sup>th</sup> the priests starts visiting the homes of the faithful and bless them with the Agiasmos, or the Holy Water from the Theophany Service.

The sprinkling with Holy Water brings peace and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit in our homes as we enter into 2009.

This year the blessing will last until 15<sup>th</sup> of February. In order to have your house blessed please contact Fr. Vasile as soon as possible and set an appointment.

## *The Tradition Of The Vasilopita*

(pronounced "vä-se-LÖ-pe-tä")

The tradition of baking and cutting a special "pita" (which can mean a loaf of bread, cake, or even a pie!) each year on January 1<sup>st</sup> is observed in honor of our Holy Father Basil the Great, archbishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia - hence its name "Vasilópita" meaning "St Basil's Bread." This tradition is observed in both parish churches and in the homes of the faithful. What is the meaning of this tradition and how did it begin?

For centuries upon centuries parents, grandparents and Godparents have related the following to Orthodox children about St Basil and the "Vasilópita." One year, during a time of terrible famine, the emperor levied a sinfully excessive tax upon the people of Caesarea. The tax was such a heavy burden upon the already impoverished people that to avoid debtors' prison each family had to relinquish its few remaining coins and pieces of jewelry, including precious family heirlooms.

Learning of this injustice against his flock, St Basil the Great, the archbishop of Caesarea, took up his bishop's staff and the book of the holy Gospels and came to his people's defense by fearlessly calling the emperor to repentance. By God's grace, the emperor did repent! He cancelled the tax and instructed his tax collectors to turn over to St Basil all of the chests containing the coins and jewelry which had been paid as taxes by the people of Caesarea.

But now St Basil was faced with the daunting and impossible task of returning these thousands of coins and pieces of jewelry to their rightful owners. After praying for a long time before the icons of our Lord Christ and His All-holy Mother, St Basil had all the treasures baked into one huge "pita."

He then called all the townspeople to prayer at the cathedral and, after Divine Liturgy, he blessed and cut the "pita," giving a piece to each person. Miraculously each owner received in his piece of "Vasilópita" his own valuables. They all joyfully returned home, giving thanks to God who had delivered them from abject poverty and to their good and holy bishop, St Basil the Great!

In remembrance of that miracle wrought by God as a result of St Basil's love and defense of his people, Orthodox Christians have observed the tradition of the "Vasilópita" each year on January 1st - the date on which St Basil reposed in the Lord in the year 379.

In some places the "Vasilópita" is prepared as a loaf of rich bread (like that used for Artoklasia), while in other places it takes the form of a spicy sheet cake (without frosting). But no matter what form a "Vasilópita" may take, they all have one thing in common - each contains a single coin.

After placing the bread dough or cake batter in the proper baking pan, the baker makes with the foil wrapped coin the sign of the Crossover it, closes his/her eyes, and then secretly places it into the unbaked "Vasilópita."

While any coin is appropriate, a gold electroplated "Vasilópita Coin" (with an image of St Basil on the obverse and the inscription "Blessing of the year from the Vasilópita" on the reverse) is available from various Orthodox supply sources

After the "Vasilópita" is baked and cooled, it is blessed and cut following Divine Liturgy for the feast of St Basil on January 1st. At churches it is blessed and cut in the parish fellowship hall by the bishop or priest, and in homes it is blessed and cut by the head of the household.

The blessing of the "Vasilópita" usually begins with the Apolytikion of St Basil the Great (chanted in tone 1 or said):

*"Thy sound hath gone forth into all the earth that received thy word. Thereby thou hast divinely taught the Faith; Thou hast made manifest the nature of things that be; Thou hast adorned the ways of man. O namesake of the royal priesthood, our righteous Father Basil, Intercede with Christ God that our souls be saved."*

The head of the household makes the sign of the Cross over the "Vasilópita" with a knife while saying, "In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." All respond "Amen." Then pieces of the "Vasilópita" are cut in the following order:

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A 1st small piece, cut from the very center of the "Vasilópita," is for Christ.

The 2nd small piece is for the Theotokos.

The 3rd small piece is for St Basil.

The 4th larger piece is for the poor.

Then large pieces are given to all present, beginning with the eldest and ending with youngest. He or she who receives the "Vasilópita Coin" is traditionally considered to be especially blessed for the New Year. In Greek the name Basil means "royal" or "kingly."

## *Usher Schedule*

*1<sup>st</sup> Sunday:* George Moutafis, Cynthia Pursley

*2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday:* Harry Karegeannes, Peter Talleos

*3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday:* Bill Wright, Tim Cline

*4<sup>th</sup> Sunday:* Barbara Vittas, Larry Leeders

*5<sup>th</sup> Sunday:* Nancy Medvic, Lou Antahades

## *Nursery*

The Nursery is accepting children 3 years old and under. Attendants will be ready and waiting to take care of your little ones. The attendants will leave and go to the service if children do not arrive by 10:30.

In His Service,  
Marsha Arapis

## *Nursery Attendants Schedule*

Jan. 4: TBA

Jan. 11: Elizabeth Popescu

Jan. 18: TBA

Jan. 25: TBA

Please thoughtfully consider becoming a Nursery Attendant. Contact Marsha Arapis [marshaarapis@yahoo.com](mailto:marshaarapis@yahoo.com)

### ***Acolyte Schedule***

**1st Sunday :** Patrick Sullivan, Phillip Sullivan, Peter Pursley, John Molhoek

**2nd Sunday :** James Seals, Ovidiu Berca, Patrick Sullivan, Phillip Sullivan

**3rd Sunday :** Jackson Wright, Joey Basiliadis, Ovi Berca, Alex Shah

**4th Sunday :** Bennett Kerbow, Ovi Berca, James Seals, Alex Shah

**5th Sunday:** Patrick Sullivan, Phillip Sullivan, Jackson Wright, Ovi Berca

### ***Coffee Hour Schedule***

1st Sun.: Dr. and Mrs. Chris Yiantsou

2nd Sun: Philoptochos

3rd Sun: Parish Council

4th Sun: Ageless Wonders

5th Sun: Parish Council (If Applicable)

### ***CLEAN UP***

- Wash all dishes soiled, including coffee pots.
- Return sugar tray to kitchen and replenish it.
- Wash off hall tables and kitchen counters.
- Donation money will be collected by the

Parish Council.

Thank You Very Much

### ***Names Day Luncheon***

Join us in a celebration of our church's Name Day on Sunday, Jan. 11, 2009 directly after church services. Tickets are adults \$20 children 12 and under \$10. All proceeds will benefit the building fund. Support your parish and enjoy a wonderful luncheon

***ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST NAME DAY DINNER***  
***SUNDAY, JANUARY 11, 2009***

Directly after services

**APPETIZERS**

Keftethes

Tiropitas & Spanikopitas

**SALAD**

Mixed Field Greens with Gorgonzola,  
Apples & Walnuts

**ENTREE**

Beef Tenderloin in a Cabernet Reduction  
Garlic Mashed Potatoes  
Sugar Snap Peas in Garlic & Olive Oil

**DESSERT**

A Selection of Pies

Tickets \$20 Adults  
\$10 children 12 & Under