



From Father Anthony

Christ is Born! Glorify Him!

Christmas is a time that we give gifts to one another to reflect God's gift to us, His Only Begotten Son. We emulate the desire God has to bless us, by blessing one another with gifts. This balance and focus can be lost however if we get too far removed from the essential significance and basic tangible gut level understanding of what Christ's Nativity means for us personally and for humanity as a whole. This year I would like to give you a gift, a short but intensely beautiful snapshot of this reality taking place in a communist prison camp in the dead of winter, under harsh and freezing conditions. Fr. Arseny has been in camp for a number of years. He is a renowned art historian, but hides his identity and appears to most as an uneducated village priest. It was the example of his love and Christian service in prison camp that brought hundreds of people to faith in God. Here is a story of one of the people he touched while in camp.

The confession of the dying Mihail brought Father Arseny to see how even under the unbelievably complicated circumstances of modern life, with its political upheavals, its complex human relations, the officially supported atheism, the trampling of the faith, the fall of moral values, the constant suspicions and false reports, and the lack of any spiritual guidance, a man of deep faith could overcome everything which came between him and God. The Monk Mihail had not traveled towards God from inside a monastery or a skete, but out in the harsh conditions of life, during the harshest of times, in a bitter battle against the forces of evil, against aggressive atheism. He had had almost no support or guidance; he had met two or three priests and had had the joy of a year in contact with Bishop Theodore, who had tonsured him; later Mihail had received two or three brief letters from him. But mainly he had been moved by his indestructible, burning desire to move nearer and nearer to God.

“Did I walk the right path, did I walk as I should have? Or did I take a wrong path? I do not know,” said Mihail.

But Father Arseny saw that Mihail had not only not strayed from the path shown him by Bishop Theodore, but that he had walked this path far, very far, further than his spiritual guides ever had themselves. The life Mihail had led was like a battle for spiritual and moral perfection and this amidst the everyday life of this century. Father Arseny understood that Mihail had won this battle, a battle engaged one on one with the evil all around him. Out among people he was doing good in the name of God and carried in his soul the words of the apostle like a burning flame: “Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

Father Arseny understood the perfection and greatness of Mihail and acknowledged his own nothingness. He prayed fervently, almost aggressively, that God grant him, Father Arseny, the strength to ease the final minutes of the dying man. At times, Father Arseny felt utterly helpless but at the same time he felt great joy at feeling so close to Mihail, whose confession was

opening for him the mysterious ways of God, teaching him about and setting him on the path to deepest faith.

And then the time came when Mihail had given all he had in his soul to Father Arseny and through him to God. He looked at Father Arseny with a question in his eyes. Taking the burden of Mihail's sins and holding it in his hands, Father Arseny took it all upon his own priestly soul, and trembled. He trembled again as he realized his human nothingness and helplessness. Having said the prayer of absolution over Mihail, he at first sobbed internally, and then wept uncontrollably in full view of the dying man.

Mihail raised his eyes and, looking deeply at Father Arseny, he said, "I thank you! Be calm again! The hour of God's will has come. Pray for me while you are on this earth. Your life's journey is still long. I beg you to take my hat; a note addressed to two people is sewn into it. They are people of great faith. Very great faith. Their addresses are there. When you are out of this camp, when you are free—give the note to them. They need you, and you need them. Sew your own zek (prisoner) number into my hat. Pray to God for the Monk Mihail." Fr. Arseny Priest, Prisoner, Spiritual Father SVS Press 1998

The deep meaning of Christmas is seen in the deep need all around us. If we are open to it, if we are sensitive to the moment, if our heart and mind are focused on serving God, no matter what the circumstances of our life are, then we will experience the profound meaning of the Nativity of Christ, all year long. May God bless us with this knowledge. Merry Christmas.

Fr. Anthony

Sunday Epistle & Gospel Readings

<u>December</u>	<u>Epistle</u>	<u>Gospel</u>
December 5	Galatians 5:22-26; 6:1-2	Luke 13:10-17
December 12	Ephesians 5:8-19	Luke 14:16-24 Matthew 22:14
December 19	Hebrews 11:9-10, 32-40	Matthew 1:1-25
December 26	Galatians 1:11-19	Matthew 2:13-23

Church Etiquette- Attire

Since you are meeting God at church, it is respectful to present yourself in a clean and neat manner. For church services, dresses and skirts are preferred for women and jackets for men. In American Greek Orthodox churches, head and shoulder coverings for women are no longer required, but modesty is strongly recommended. If you plan to take communion, do not wear lipstick. Remember that when we come to church we dress to honor God and His holy people.

-Taken in part from *A Guide to Greek Traditions and Customs in America*, M. Rouvelas

Parish Happenings

Trim The Tree

We will be decorating for the Christmas season December 1 at 6 p.m. All are welcome to come decorate a Christmas tree for our hall. Come join in the fun!!

OCAF Holiday Market

OCAF HOLIDAY MARKET Fundraiser will be December 4-5 (10:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m.). We will be selling Greek pastries to raise money for Philoptochos. Volunteers are needed to work minimum two hour shifts on Saturday and Sunday. The Market is delightfully fun with beautiful handcrafted gifts, minstrel singers, exquisite jewelry, and original artworks of all kinds. Our booth has become an expected standard as well. If you are interested email or call Presbyteria Christine or sign up during coffee hour. (ph: 310-1304, email: prchristine@mindspring.com)

Also, we will be packaging the sweets for the OCAF Market on December 1 at noon at the church.

Holiday Piano Concert

George Skaroulis will hold a solo piano concerto benefit WUGA on December 15 at 8pm. Tickets are \$10 and the doors will open at 7pm for a silent auction to benefit WUGA. The concert will be held at Ramsey Concert Hall at the Performing Arts Center at UGA. For tickets call 706-542-4400.

Loaves and Fishes

The Pan-Orthodox "Loaves and Fishes" Christmas program will be held on Saturday, December 18. See flyers at the church for more information.

Christmas Day Ministry

Christmas Day volunteers will be serving a meal at St. John the Wonderworker Orthodox

Church from 11:00am-2:00pm. We did this last year and it was a very special way to celebrate Christmas and join with our Pan-Orthodox community in fellowship and ministry.

OCF

OCF will have its next meeting December 7th. We will be going out to dinner, so stay tuned for times and location. Good luck on exams everyone!

The Nursery

THE NURSERY will be available from 10:40 until the end of the Divine Liturgy. You may drop off your little ones (5 and under) during this time and pick them up in the chapel during the distribution of Antidoron. Please indicate if you also want your child brought into the Liturgy to receive Holy Communion.

If you are interested in helping with "Nursery Duty" please see the sign up sheet posted in the classroom.

Parish Council Meeting

Next Parish Council Meeting: December 15. Also, we are holding a **parish council election** for two vacant spots for 2005 on Sunday, December 5, during our covered dish luncheon.

Covered Dish Luncheon

Our monthly covered dish luncheon will be on Sunday, December 5, following the Divine Liturgy. Remember that this is a fast period, although fish is allowed. Please join us to enjoy great food and fellowship.

Marswood Hall

Now that we are in our beautiful new facility, it is our responsibility to promote the rental of Marswood Hall. Feel free to take some of the Marswood Hall flyers and share them with others if you have the chance. The success of this wonderful facility in part rests in our hands!

Parish Council Meeting Highlights

November 17

Income received for the month of October were \$8,542 and expenses \$8,425. So far 33 pledges have been received totaling around \$51,000.

Lee Epting has hired Mari Iakovou to market Marswood Hall.

A Greek Night is planned for January 29, 2005. This will be a fundraising event for our Church with Greek food, pastries and entertainment. Please plan to attend.

We have received our permanent Certificate of Occupancy!

There are a lot of little things that still need to be done around the Building. If you can help, please see Rick Volk.

The next parish council meeting is Wednesday, Dec. 15, 7:00 p.m.



St. Philothea Directory

Father Anthony Salzman,
Presbyter

Phone: 770-725-5035

E-mail: frantonios2@mindspring.com

Parish Council

President: Bill Herrington

Vice President: Peter Gess

Treasurer: Bill Mahoney

Secretary: Stacey Cramer

Members:

Frieda Dekazos, Alex Johns, Dean Kimbaris,
Karen Kimbaris, Kurt Knisely, Nina Lamson,
Angie Shih

Sunday School

Angie Shih

Dana Johns

Music Director

Mari Iakovou

Philochochos Board

President: Karen Kimbaris

Vice President: Mari Iakovou

Secretary: Nina Lamson

Treasurer: Tara Mahoney

Marketing and Maintenance Chair

Rick Volk

Hospitality Chair

Georgia Parthemos

Communications Chair

Tammy Andros

Liaisons to the Caterer

Dean and Karen Kimbaris

2005 Stewardship Drive Update

A special thanks to the thirty-eight individuals and families who have pledged their time, talents and treasures for the coming year. We are especially proud of our **student stewards**:

Monique Constantaros

Ada Hatzios

Mary Hondros

Stella Hondros

Vicky Kouloumberis

Atanas Nikolou

Rebecca Showalter

Koumbaros Letter Update

Our blessed brothers and sisters around the country have begun to respond to the letters you have sent. The following people have graciously donated treasure in support of our building project:

Athena Andris

Zorana Bjelicic

Angeliki Damalas

Betty S. Gibhardt

Maria K Hatzios

Kleomenis A. Kliosis

Mary Panos

Mr. and Mrs. Gus J. Pappas

Robert B. Pease III

Ways to Help

As we all know, 2005 will be an important year for the St. Philothea Family. Our new house of worship and Marswood Hall present real-world opportunities and challenges. In order to be successful spiritually and financially, we need to work together. There are several ways that each and every one of us can contribute:

1. Make a pledge of time, talent and treasure.

Making a financial pledge now for 2005 allows the parish council to plan for the coming year. This is especially important as we acquire a new mortgage.

Just as important are time and talent pledges. With the new building, and as we expand our parish ministries, there are opportunities for all to contribute.

2. If you have already made a pledge, consider increasing it by 10%.

For example, if you have pledged \$200/month, consider \$220/month. In order to cover what at this point may seem like overwhelming mortgage payments, we need to increase revenue from a variety of sources. Please prayerfully consider if you can dig a little deeper and increase your pledge.

3. Send out Koumbaros letters.

Send letters to friends and family. You will be surprised how many of our brothers and sisters in Christ will joyfully support our endeavor here in Athens. See Father for more copies of the letters.

4. Sell Marswood Hall.

We all belong to or know of organizations and individuals who are looking for an attractive, full-service venue for meetings, parties, weddings, or other gatherings. Spread the word about Marswood Hall. Carry brochures with you to hand out at the proper moment. If every family can bring in one or two events in 2005, we will be in great shape!

5. Bring a friend or family to Church.

As Orthodox Christians, we are all called to be evangelists for our faith. Invite a friend to come with you to St. Philothea to learn more about Orthodoxy. Or maybe you know of an Orthodox family that is "unchurched" at this time. Of course our primary motivation for increasing our parish family is not financial, but rather to share and spread our beautiful faith. Time, treasure and talents come naturally as we grow as stewards.

2004 Approved Operating Budget and 2005 Proposed Operating Budget

Expenses	2004 Budget	2005 Budget	
Liturgy/Worship	4,039	1,100	
Youth and Senior Ministry	2,317	1,600	
Charity	1,015	1,015	
Building Utilities/Maintenance	12,020	31,200	Note 1
Building Mortgage	23,232	96,000	
Personnel Expenses	40,360	39,020	
Church Office	4,736	3,350	
Church Commitment	12,150	7,300	
Fundraisers	300	0	
Total Expenses	\$100,169	\$180,585	
Income			
Pledges	48,074	58,000	
Candles and Cash Donations	3,500	8,000	
Marswood Hall Rental	14,198	48,000	Note 2
Fundraisers (OCAF)	2,500	0	
Income from Door Opening Reserves, new pledges, add't. rentals of Hall	7,500	0	
		66,585	Note 3
Total Income	\$75,772	\$180,585	
Excess/Deficit	\$24,397	\$0	

Notes:

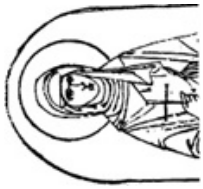
1. Gas + elect = \$1100/mo; telephone = \$200/mo; water = \$200/mo; lawn maintenance = \$350/mo. Plus \$750/mo for increased use of Marswod Hall

2. Agreement with Lee Epting calls for 8 bookings per month. Assuming that we won't reach this rate until the beginning of March and using our experience of \$600/event, this is \$48,000.00 income.

3. This represents required income to balance budget.

Bill Mahoney, Treasurer
21 November 2004





St. Philothea Greek Orthodox Church Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta

December 2004

	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy and Sunday School	28	29	30 St. Andrew the Apostle	1 6:00p Greek School, Mens Group, Catachumen Class, 6:00p Philoptochos Tree Decoration	2	3	4 10:00a OCAF Holiday Market
9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy and Sunday School 10:00a OCAF Holiday Market 12:00p Covered Dish Luncheon and Parish Council Election	5	6 ST. Nicholas the Wonderworker	7 6:30p OCF Dinner out to celebrate the end of the year	8 6:00p Greek School, Mens Group, Catachumen Class.	9 Conception of St. Anna, mother of the Theotokos	10	11
9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy and Sunday School 12:00p Christmas Pageant	12	13	14	15 6:00p Greek School Mens Group serving dinner at the homeless shelter 7:00p Parish Council	16	17	18
9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy and Sunday School	19	20	21	22	23	24 9:00a Great Hours 8:00p Orthros 7:00 p.m. Christmas Divine Liturgy, 8:00 p.m. followed by Champagne reception	25
9:00a Orthros, Divine Liturgy and Sunday School	26	27 St. Stephen the First Martyr WYR	28 WYR	29 WYR	30	31	1



**St. Philothea Greek Orthodox Church
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Atlanta**

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