



*Assumption of the Blessed  
Virgin Mary Greek  
Orthodox Church*

*PO Box 4567  
Pocatello, ID 83205  
(208) 232-5519*

*Fr. Constantine A. Zozos  
(805) 570-6525*

*EMAIL  
assumptiongo-  
church@gmail.com*

*WEBSITE  
www.assumptionpocatello.net*

*PARISH COUNCIL  
Tressa Rockwood-President  
Gregory Painter-Vice Pres.  
David Harmer-Treasurer  
Goldie Homan-Secretary  
Vicky Fullmer, Tony Hoskin,  
Tom Hugie, Vivian Close  
Ron Sims, Jacque Swanson.  
Kade Schmalz*

*IN THIS ISSUE  
Father's Message .....p1-2  
Schedule of Services.....p 2  
Feast of Epiphany.....p 3  
Home Prayer for Vasilopita  
Cutting Vasilopita.....p4  
-Home Vasilopita Blessing  
Vasilopita Recipe .....p 5  
Philoptochos News.....p6-7  
Christmas Appreciation..p8-9  
-Parish Council..... p8  
2026 Stewardship .....p10-11  
Journey to Orthodoxy.p12-13  
Prayer Requests .....p15  
-Personal New Year Prayer  
The Acceptable Time of the  
Year.....p14  
Christmas Pageant ....p15-21  
Happy New Year.....p22  
-Church Freecycle*

# The Epistle

VOLUME 15, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2026

## *A Pastoral Message as We Look Forward to 2026*

Dear Faithful,

As we stand at the threshold of a new year, I write to you with a heart full of gratitude for our shared journey in the faith that has been handed down to us from the Apostles. The question that faces every generation of Orthodox Christians remains ever ancient and ever new: ***What does God expect of us***, and how do we live out our calling as members of His Body?

Our Orthodox faith teaches us that God became man so that man might become god—not in essence, but by grace. This journey of ***Theosis***, of union with God, is not reserved for monks on distant mountains or saints of bygone ages. It is the inheritance and calling of every baptized Orthodox Christian. God expects of us nothing less than our transformation, that we might bear His image ever more clearly in this world.

This ***transformation*** begins not with great feats but with small faithfulness: attending the Divine Liturgy not out of obligation but hunger, standing before the icons not merely to ask but to listen, approaching the chalice not as a ritual but as the most intimate encounter possible with our Lord.

The rhythm of our Church, the fasts and feasts, the daily cycle of prayers, the liturgical calendar, is not meant to constrain us but to shape us. In a world that asks us to fragment ourselves, to be one person at work, another at home, and yet another online, the Church calls us to integration and wholeness. As we move through **2026**, I encourage you to let the liturgical life of the Church become truly central. Fast not just from food, but from the noise that drowns out God's voice. Feast not just at table, but in thanksgiving for every breath. Let the Psalms become your own words, the hymns of the Church your heartbeat. In church sing along with the Choir, allow the words to lift you up.

God expects of us what He has already given: ***love***. Not sentiment, not emotion alone, but the sacrificial love that mirrors His own. This love is made concrete in our presence to one another. In an age of digital connection and physical isolation, simply being present at services, at parish events, in times of joy and sorrow, is itself a ministry.

Look for the newcomer who stands uncertainly at the back of the pew. Seek out the elderly parishioner who no longer drives. Embrace the struggling family, the doubting youth, the lonely widow. The Kingdom of God is built not through programs but through persons who become ***living icons of Christ's compassion***.

May we live as Orthodox Christians not by withdrawing from the world, but by refusing to let the world dictate our values. Our witness is not primarily in words but in

*Message continued page 2*

*May each day of your life turns out  
to be a wonderful blessing.*



the quality of our lives, in integrity that cannot be purchased, in forgiveness that defies human logic, in hope that persists despite circumstances.

Let us not be discouraged by our failings or by how far the journey seems. Our God is not a God of condemnation but of *infinite mercy*. Every morning is a *new Pascha*, every breath a gift, every moment an opportunity to begin again. The Church does not expect perfection from us, but it does expect persistence. We are not called to succeed by worldly measures, but to remain faithful. Get up when you fall. Return when you wander. Come back to confession, to Communion, to prayer, to community—again and again and again.

As we look toward **2026**, let us not approach it with anxiety about what we must accomplish, but with anticipation for how God will continue to transform us. Let us gather more faithfully, pray more honestly, love more sacrificially, and forgive more readily. The world needs what we carry—not because we are better than others, but because we have been entrusted with a treasure: *the unchanging truth of Christ* in an age of confusion, the peace that passes understanding in a time of anxiety, the hope of the Resurrection in the face of every death.

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Blessed New Year!

*Father Constantine*

## DIVINE SERVICES & MINISTRIES MONTH OF JANUARY

### Sunday, January 4th, HOLY EPIPHANY

Divine Liturgy and the Blessing of the Holy Water, Orthros 9am, Divine Liturgy 10am

### Sunday, January 11th, Sunday after Epiphany

Orthros, 9:00am, Divine Liturgy 10:00am

Memorial: Servant of God Maria Katsilometes

♦ **PARISH COUNCIL OATH OF OFFICE**

♦ **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING**

### Sunday, January 18th,

Orthros 9:00am, Divine Liturgy 10:00am

**Blessing and CUTTING OF THE VASILOPITA & Live Auction: Support St Basil Children's Home**

### Sunday, January 25th

Orthros 9:00am, Divine Liturgy 10:00am

**Ladies Philoptochos Meeting-Conference Room**

**CATECHISM CLASS: Tuesdays 11:00am**

**BIBLE STUDY: Tuesday Evenings**

(January 13, 20, 27 at 5:30pm **In-person/Zoom**)

**CATECHISM CLASS: Tuesday Evenings**

(January 13, 20, 27 at 6:30pm **In-person /Zoom**)

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87525594697?](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87525594697?pwd=TI1KV2pkcmFTdStza0RLMXkvNC9ydz09)

[pwd=TI1KV2pkcmFTdStza0RLMXkvNC9ydz09](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87525594697?pwd=TI1KV2pkcmFTdStza0RLMXkvNC9ydz09)

**Zoom Invite:**

**Meeting ID: 875 2559 4697, Passcode: 477296**

## VOLUNTEERS MONTH OF JANUARY

### Sunday, January 4th

Orthros Reader, Epistle Reader - Greg Painter

Ushers - Goldie Homan Sophie McCurry

Prosphoron (Holy Bread) - Sophie McCurry

Agape Fellowship— Afton and Jamie Carlson

### Sunday, January 11th

Orthros Reader, Epistle Reader - John Speck

Ushers - David Harmer, Ron Sims

Prosphoron - Terri Pliley-Owen

Agape Fellowship-George Katsilometes in

Memory of his mother Maria.

### Sunday, January 18th

Orthros Reader - Jacob Denton

Epistle Reader - Alex Tarasau

Ushers - Kade Schmalz, Vicky Fullmer

Prosphoron (Holy Bread) - Hala Dib

Agape Fellowship Vasilopita - Philip Homan

### Sunday, January 25th

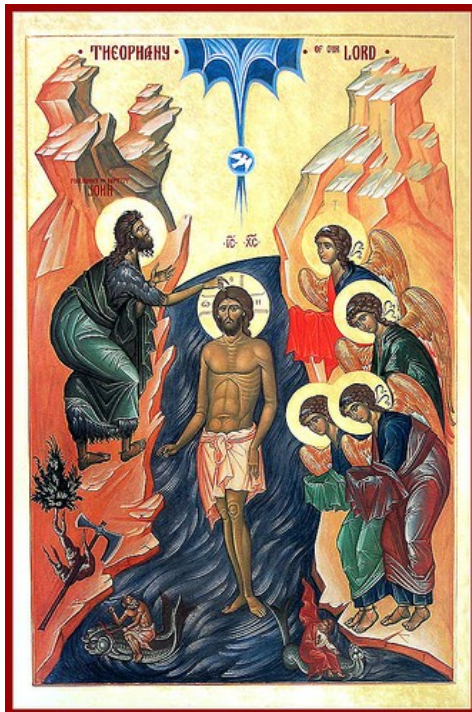
Orthros Reader, Epistle Reader - John Speck

Ushers - David Harmer Tony Hoskin

Prosphoron (Holy Bread) - Sophie McCurry

Agape Fellowship-

**EPIPHANY CELEBRATION, SUNDAY, JANUARY 4TH**  
**The Blessing of the Waters will be celebrated following the Liturgy.**  
**Everyone will be blessed with the Holy Water.**



The official day of Epiphany is January 6th, the parish though will celebrate the sacred day of Epiphany also known as Theophany on **Sunday, January 4th**. The word Theophany means the appearance of God. Hence, the feast of Theophany is dedicated primarily to the commemoration of God's appearance to humanity. *At other times the feast is called Epiphany, which means divine appearance.*

At the conclusion of the Liturgy, we will celebrate the Blessing of the Waters. God has appeared precisely to restore us to that perfect life of unity and peace that prevails among the divine persons of the Holy Trinity. The son of God, Jesus Christ, became man so that we might participate in the life of the Trinity; that is, to lead us to the life of many living in oneness, in harmony and love. Central to this feast is the Great Blessing of Water through which all creation is renewed and sanctified.

Following the blessing everyone present will receive the blessed water to take home to be used throughout the year. We encourage the faithful to attend and to receive the Lord's

Blessing. Every year it is a wonderful Orthodox Christian practice to ***invite Father Constantine to bless your home***. Bring the Spirit of renewal into your home by bringing Christ's radiant light into your family's life. Please contact Father Constantine if you would like your home to be blessed.

When the Church blesses the water on Epiphany, it is not merely a symbolic act. Through the prayers of the Church and the descent of the Holy Spirit, the water truly becomes holy (agiasma). It bears the ***grace of God***, reminding us that Christ entered the waters to cleanse and restore the entire world. By blessing the waters, the Church proclaims that God's grace is not limited to the church building but flows into our homes, our daily lives, and all of creation.

For us as Orthodox Christians, receiving holy water on Epiphany is both a gift and a responsibility. The holy water calls us to ***remember our own baptism, our renunciation of sin, and our commitment to live as children of God***. It invites us to continually seek purification of heart and mind, and to renew our faith in Christ who sanctifies all things.

Parishioners should treat the container of holy water with reverence and care. It is customary to keep it in a clean and respectful place in the home, often near the icon corner. Many Orthodox Christians drink a small amount of holy water in the morning, especially when facing illness, temptation, or spiritual struggle, usually accompanied by prayer. ***Holy water may also be used to bless one's home, family members, or personal space, asking God for protection and peace.*** You may continue to fill the container with water as long as some of the blessed water still remains in the container.

Holy water should never be treated casually or disposed of carelessly. If it must be discarded, it

***Epiphany continued page 4...***



***Epiphany continued ...***

should be poured onto clean ground or at the base of plants, not down a drain. Above all, its presence in our home should remind us to live holy lives, to seek God's grace daily, and to bear witness to Christ in all that we do. Through the blessing of holy water on Epiphany, the Church

proclaims a powerful truth: Christ has entered the world, sanctified creation, and continues to offer His grace to all who receive Him with faith and humility.

***Icon of the Feast***

In the center of the icon is Christ being baptized in the Jordan. He is standing in the water wearing a waistcloth, and with His right hand He is blessing the waters of the Jordan. Above His head is the Holy Spirit descending as a dove upon Him. At the top of the icon, a semicircle depicts the opening of the Heavens and the voice of the Father. On the right side of the icon, angels are shown with their heads bowed in reverence to Christ. They are prepared to receive Him as He comes out of the water.

**VASILOPITA BLESSING PRAYER**

GLORY TO THE FATHER, AND TO THE SON AND TO THE  
HOLY SPIRIT, NOW AND EVER, AND FOREVER. AMEN.

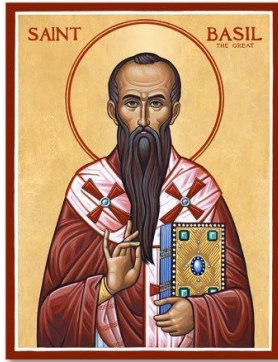
LET US PRAY TO THE LORD. LORD HAVE MERCY.

O Lord, King of the Ages and Creator of all things; You are abounding in mercy and plenteous in goodness! You accepted the gifts of the Wise Men in Bethlehem. You are the Bread of Life Who came down from heaven. You put times and years under Your authority and hold our lives in Your hands. Hear us on this auspicious day of the beginning of this New Year of 2024 and bless + this sweet bread which is offered for Your glory and honor and in memory of our Father among the Saints, Basil the Great. O Generous One, look down from heaven and send down Your heavenly gifts upon us, those who prepared this bread and all who shall partake of it, because we have placed our hope in You, the Eternal Living God! Bless our coming and going, enrich our lives with Your abundant blessings and direct our steps in the working of Your Divine commandments, because we shall not live by bread alone. Through the intercessions of your all-pure and holy Mother, of our Father among the Saints, Basil the Great, and of all Your Saints, who have pleased You over the ages. Amen.

Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy. Lord have mercy.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and forever. Amen.





## THE VASILOPITA BLESSING SUNDAY, JANUARY 18TH

One of the most beautiful and inspiring traditions and customs of the Orthodox Church is the observance of Vasilopita. It is an annual observance, together with many other traditions of our Church, which joins our Orthodox Faith with the history of the Christian religion itself.

The word *Vasilopita* is a compound Greek word which means the *sweet bread of St. Basil*. The annual observance of the Vasilopita originated from the Feast Day of St. Basil on January 1st and the Baptism of Christ on Epiphany Day on January 6th. During the first three centuries, the birth of Christ and Epiphany were celebrated on the same day. St. Basil was the first person to establish a children's orphanage, in addition he founded the first Christian hospital in the world. He was considered one of the wisest and most compassionate clergymen in the entire history of the Orthodox Church.

According to tradition, St. Basil would ask every baker in his province to insert a gold coin in the bread that was to be given to poor families. No one knew of this great deed until he fell asleep in the Lord. This tradition of baking sweet bread and including a coin is prepared both in parishioner's homes and for the parish. The powdered sugar is added to the bread to symbolize the sweetness and joy of life everlasting. It also symbolizes the hope that the Year will be filled with the sweetness of life. When the bread is cut and distributed, the person who finds the coin is considered blessed and fortunate for the coming year.



## PARISH CUTTING OF THE BLESSED VASILOPITA & LIVE AUCTION SUNDAY, JANUARY 18TH

The Cutting of the Vasilopita will take place on **Sunday, January 18th**. In keeping with tradition, everyone is invited to bake a Vasilopita to be auctioned off to raise funds for the **Saint Basil Academy Children's Home**, an institution of the Archdiocese. This year the Blessing and Cutting of the Vasilopita will take place in church at the conclusion of the Liturgy.

**IF YOU PLAN ON BAKING A VASILOPITA BREAD FOR AUCTION MAKE SURE TO INCLUDE A COIN IN EACH VASILOPITA AND LET FATHER KNOW.**

**Also at the conclusion of the Liturgy a Special Offering will be taken for the St Basil Academy for Children.**

If you are unable to attend services you may offer a donation for the St Basil Academy by making a **check payable to the ASSUMPTION** in the Memo write **(Ladies Philoptochos)** and mail to **Assumption PO BOX 4567, Pocatello, ID 83205, or bring it to church.**

### VASILOPITA RECIPE FOR YOUR HOME

#### Instructions:

- Cream butter and sugar for 10 minutes, add yolks and flavorings.
- Add remaining ingredients, except egg whites.
- Beat egg whites until stiff in a separate bowl.
- Fold in stiffly beaten egg whites. Blend well.
- Grease and add parchment paper on bottom and around inside edge of 12 by 2 ¾ -inch baking pan.
- Pour in batter half way. Thinly wrap coin in aluminum foil and drop on top of batter. Continue to pour in rest of the batter.

#### Ingredients:

- 1 cup butter
- 2 1/4 cups sugar
- 7 eggs, separated
- 3 teaspoons almond extract
- 2 teaspoons pure vanilla extract
- 3 cups flour
- 2 1/4 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 1/4 cups milk
- 1 cup almonds, crushed
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons orange zest



## LADIES PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

### PARISH CHRISTMAS GIVING TREE -Ladies Philoptochos Project

The **Parish Philoptochos Society** found two worthy giving projects on which we could focus our efforts. and reach out and help those of us who are less fortunate in our community. This year the Philoptochos selected two local agencies to contribute necessary items to help the day-to-day needs of its clients and its agency:

**AID FOR FRIENDS SHELTER and FAMILY SERVICE ALLIANCE OF SOUTHEASTERN ID.**

Much appreciation to all those who were able to assist this year.

### THANK YOU!

...to the **Ladies of Philoptochos** for preparing gift baskets for our seniors and home bound: Thank you to those who assembled the baskets:

**Goldie Homan, Tressa Rockwood.**



### THE POWER OF COMMUNITY GIVING

Our parish Ladies Philoptochos Ministry recently demonstrated the power of community giving by distributing **\$6,000 to six nonprofit institutions serving Pocatello and Idaho Falls**. This generous outreach reflects the organization's longstanding commitment to philanthropic service and their dedication to supporting those in need throughout Southeastern Idaho. Each of the six organizations (**Aid for Friends, Valley Mission, Family Services Alliance, Idaho Food Bank, St. Vincent DePaul and Idaho Falls Rescue Mission**) received **\$1,000 each** to further their vital work in the community, touching lives across a diverse range of needs and services.

The funds distributed to these worthy causes were made possible through the ministry's highly successful Fall Fest fundraiser. The event brought together parish members to raise funds for these charitable nonprofits. The ladies' overwhelming support from attendees made it possible to exceed fundraising goals and maximize the impact on local nonprofits.

Philoptochos, which means "friends of the poor" in Greek, has a rich history of charitable work within Orthodox Parishes. Our local chapter continues this tradition by identifying organizations that align with their mission of serving the vulnerable and strengthening the fabric of our community. These dedicated women exemplify the spirit of service and compassion that lies at the heart of their ministry.

**Valley Mission** exists to offer hope to hurting people. It is designed to provide support and hope for individuals and families in Pocatello. This inclusive center will house a weekly food pantry, laundromat, emergency shelter, commercial kitchen and dining area, offices for Valley Mission, and space for local agencies to provide on-site support.

**Idaho Food Bank:** During a time of economic uncertainty and high grocery prices, The Idaho Foodbank's programs and services have made a tremendous impact on neighbors across the state.

**St. Vincent de Paul:** Dedicated to providing assistance for those who cannot afford their basic needs: food, clothing, linens, household items and furniture.

**Aid for Friends:** Helps those in need with immediate shelter, services with personal and professional attention. Aids strives to offer hope to individuals and families experiencing or facing homelessness.

**Family Services Alliance** Promotes safe and thriving families work to end physical, sexual and emotional abuse and provide victim support.

**Idaho Falls Rescue Mission:** Is a caring and sharing community-based ministry providing assistance in relieving hunger and food insecurity by providing emergency food to struggling families and individuals without judgment.





**Mission Valley**



**Family Services Alliance**



**St. Vincent DePaul**



**Aid for Friends Shelter**



**The Idaho Food Bank**



**Idaho Falls Rescue Mission**





## 2026 PARISH COUNCIL OATH OF OFFICE JANUARY 11th

The following parishioners were elected at the recent General Assembly in November to serve a three year term on the Parish Council, they include: **Tressa Rockwood, Jacque Swanson, Goldie Homan, and Tony Hoskin.** , the remaining members of the Council include: **David Harmer, Vivian Close, Tom Hugie, Vicky Fullmer, Gregory Painter, Ron Sims and Kade Schmalz.** The Oath of office will be given to all Parish Council Members at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on **Sunday, January 11th.** The Parish Council will then elect its officers for 2026 at their first Council Meeting.

## MUCH APPRECIATION for DONATIONS Poinsettias for the Sanctuary, the Parish Christmas Card and also Christmas Baskets by the Ladies Philoptochos Ministry

**THANK YOU! YOUR GENEROSITY HAS BEEN A BLESSING TO OUR ASSUMPTION PARISH. YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT ALLOWS US TO HELP OUR**



**CHURCH MINISTRIES. DONATIONS WERE RECEIVED FOR POINSETTIAS FROM:**

*Tim and Maria Swore  
Dave Harmer  
Heidi Linehan  
Kayne & Amy Cummins*



**DONATIONS WERE RECEIVED FOR THE CHRISTMAS DONATION AND CARD FROM:**



*Heidi Linehan  
Goldie Homan  
Kade & Devyn Schmalz  
Dave Harmer  
Teresa Pliley  
Mary Frances Cozakos  
John Christ  
Ronald & Julie Kuhn  
Ted Georges  
Scott & Elly MacDonald  
Scott & Tressa Rockwood  
Chris & Naglaa Bargelski  
Ryan Bowlby & Robin Challenger  
Tyler & June Laudenklos  
George & Betty Katsilometes  
Anne Marie Schulze & Family  
Randall & Tamara Lille  
George & Pat Dovas  
Sam & Triantafilia Paloukos  
Annie Semons  
Rocky & Vicky Fullmer  
Les & Helene-Poulos Edmo*

**TO THE LADIES OF PHILOPTOCHOS FOR PREPARING GIFT BASKETS FOR OUR SENIORS AND HOME BOUND:  
*Goldie Homan  
Tressa Rockwood***

**Thank you to all who contributed to the Giving Tree, to help support Aid for Friends and Family Services Alliance of Southeastern Idaho.**



**AS OF 12/23/25**

**CHRISTMAS PAGEANT-THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD****NARRATOR-Father Constantine A. Zozos****JOSEPH -Tristan Laudenklos, THEOTOKOS EVER VIRGIN MARY -Kassie Nyenhuis****CHRIST CHILD -Henry Nyenhuis , ANGEL GABRIEL-Charlotte Tarasau****THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM-Phoebe Schoenrock****SHEPHERDS****LEAD SHEPARD-Torren Harris****Nicholas Hoskin, Eli Mountain, Brayden Nyenhuis, Chase Nyenhuis-Kevin Carroll****SHEPHERD BOY-August Black****HERALD OF ANGELS****Charlotte Tarasau, Chloe Wilhelm,****Emma Mountain, Haley Cummins, Gwendolyn Harris, Olivia Schoenrock, Everlee Walters, Tenley Nyenhuis, Pascal Carlson, Adelaide Schmalz, Keeva Schmalz, Sotiria Carroll, Octavia Paloukos, Freya Walters, Vlada Vasylenko-Weaver, Mia Vasylenko-Weaver****THE THREE WISE MEN****Benjamin Barnhart, Joseph Hoskin, Benjamin Tarasau****NATIVITY ANIMALS****Aidan Carroll, Lucy Blue, Jude Cummins, Marshall Cummins****MUCH APPRECIATION****...to Angela Fullmer, Ashley Tarasau, Devyn Schmalz, Svitlana Hoskin and Melissa Black** for directing and organizing the Pageant and to the parents for their assistance and support with the Parish Christmas Pageant.**...to our singers Olenda Painter, Vivian Close, Andrew Hearne, Sawyer Shaffer, Lionel Weisburg, Corin Lund, Evan Myers, Lionel Weisburg, Moses Autry, John Speck, Clarence Close, Annie (Donahue) Sandy, Jacque Swanson** who added their voices in leading the congregation in singing the carols.**...and a special thank you to Olenda Painter** for her solo of "Mary Did You Know,"**...to Goldie and Phil Homan** for decorating the Parish Christmas Tree.**Also to Angela Fullmer, Devyn Schmalz, Ashley Tarasau and the young Sunday School children** in creating the Ornaments for the Wish Tree.**...to Tim Swore** for bringing St. Nicholas from the North Pole.**...to John Speck** for helping decorate the sanctuary.**...to the Ladies of Philoptochos** for preparing gift baskets for our seniors and home bound: We especially want to thank those who assembled the baskets:**Goldie Homan and Tressa Rockwood****...to all those who selected Christmas Ornaments from the Wish Tree** and brought needed day to day items for**Aid for Friends Shelter & Family Service Alliance of Southeastern Idaho.****...to Alex Tarasau** for managing the live-stream cameras.**...to John Speck** for photographing the Pageant.**...to Dean Harris** for his assistance in the altar.

## **“RISE UP AND BUILD” Nehemiah 2:18 Building Up the Body of Christ I**



In the Old Testament we read about Nehemiah. After seeing the crumbling walls of Jerusalem, he called the people to “Rise up and build.” Nehemiah doesn't do it alone. He inspires the people, sharing his vision. And the response of the people? “Let us rise up and build.”

This story and the words of Nehemiah (2:19) call us today, not just to building and rebuilding with bricks and mortar, but also to a deeper, spiritual building – the rebuilding and renewal of our faith. As Orthodox Christians, we are called to respond to God's gifts with faithful stewardship. Like Nehemiah, we are called to “rise up and build,” carrying on God's work in our parish our community and in the world.

This call of Nehemiah to “rise up and build” invites us to become active members of the Church, the Body of Christ, to join in ministry and contribute according to our abilities. As

Orthodox Christians, we understand that stewardship is a joint effort of all the members of the community. Every member has a role to play.

**How much is it?** Stewardship is not a matter of “how much is it?” or “how much is needed?” Stewardship and generosity are aspects of spiritual discipline and an indication of our spiritual maturity. In stewardship we acknowledge that all we have is a gift from God and we are to use His gifts in ways that honor Him. This transforms our understanding of the blessings in our life. It prompts us to use our blessings for the good of others and for the glory of God.

Just as the walls of Jerusalem were broken through neglect or indifference, a neglected spiritual life can also become dilapidated and broken. The words of Nehemiah call us to renew and rebuild our commitment to our faith, and our dedication and support for our Church and her ministries.

**Compassion and faith** Nehemiah's response is a great example for us. He was moved by compassion and faith. He saw the need, and his heart was stirred. He didn't ignore the problem; he embraced it as his own. This is the first step in true stewardship: seeing the needs of God's Church and responding with love and sacrifice. Nehemiah prayed. Before any action, Nehemiah turned to God. He understood that true rebuilding, both physical or spiritual, begins and ends with God. Stewardship is not about our own strength, but about God working through us.

**Practical and intentional** Nehemiah planned and acted. Prayer without action is just empty words. Nehemiah meticulously planned, secured resources, and then courageously led the work. Stewardship is practical; it is intentional, requiring wise planning, and diligent use of our God-given abilities and resources.

Nehemiah inspired others. He didn't just command. He shared his vision. He ignited a spark in the hearts of the people, reminding them of their importance in this process. This is crucial for our parish stewardship ministry. We lead by example, inspiring one another to participate, to offer their unique gifts for the good of our Church. This is our call today. We are called to be like Nehemiah in our own lives and in our parish. We can rise up and build the walls of prayer by dedicating time each day to personal prayer, Scripture reading, and participation in the liturgical life of the Church.

**Receive the presence of Jesus** We can rise up and build the walls of worship by being present in Divine Liturgy, offering our time, our worship and our gratitude for His blessings. We offer our whole being to God in worship, and we receive the presence of Jesus Christ within us. We can rise up and build the wall of generosity. Stewardship is not just about money, though it is vital for our Church's mission. Stewardship is offering our time, serving in ministries, being ready to help, wherever we are needed. It is about offering our talents and our unique skills – whether in music, administration, hospitality, or technology – for the glory of God. It is about offering our treasures, giving a proportional and sacrificial portion of our income, recognizing that all we have comes from God. We can rise up and build the wall of Christian love, seeing Christ in all people, forgiving with patience, and compassion. In Christian love, we serve those in need, both within and outside our parish family, in our neighborhood and around the world. To rise up requires effort, dedication, and perseverance. Building and rebuilding is not easy. But when we commit ourselves fully and sacrificially, God will bless our efforts.

The story of Nehemiah reminds us that stewardship is not only a financial obligation; it is a response of gratitude and love to God for His blessings. It is about actively participating in the ongoing work of building up the Kingdom of God, starting with the walls of our own souls and extending to the life of our parish and the world around us.



**ASSUMPTION CHURCH CONFIDENTIAL PLEDGE AND FAMILY INFORMATION FORM***Please complete both sides and return this form to the Church Office***TREASURE:**

**IN GRATITUDE FOR GOD'S BLESSINGS, I/WE COMMIT TO CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH THE FOLLOWING **PLEDGED AMOUNT FOR 2026** \_\_\_\_\_**

Family Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Hm Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

|             | Member | Spouse | Children Age  |
|-------------|--------|--------|---------------|
| Name:       | _____  | _____  | _____ / _____ |
| Mobile Tel: | _____  | _____  | _____ / _____ |
| E-mail:     | _____  | _____  | _____ / _____ |
| Occupation: | _____  | _____  | _____ / _____ |
| Work Tel:   | _____  | _____  | _____ / _____ |

**ASSUMPTION GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH CONFIDENTIAL FAMILY INFORMATION FORM****FAMILY NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

Families should mark "H" for husband, "W" for wife or "C" for children.

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME FOR ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING MINISTRIES PLEASE COMPLETE THE FORM**

**LITURGICAL**

\_\_\_ Sanctuary & Altar Care  
 \_\_\_ Altar boys / Acolytes  
 \_\_\_ Baking Holy Bread  
 \_\_\_ Choir  
 \_\_\_ Reader  
 \_\_\_ Greeter/Usher

**EDUCATION**

\_\_\_ Bible Study  
 \_\_\_ Intro to Orthodoxy  
 \_\_\_ Publications  
 \_\_\_ Bookstore

**COMMUNICATIONS**

\_\_\_ Website  
 \_\_\_ Bulletin & Newsletter  
 \_\_\_ Public Relations

**YOUTH**

\_\_\_ Church School Teacher  
 \_\_\_ Youth Leader  
 \_\_\_ Vacation Church School

**PHILANTHROPIC MINISTRY**

\_\_\_ Ladies Philoptochos Ministry

**MINISTRIES & PROGRAMS**

\_\_\_ Welcome Team  
 \_\_\_ New Member Events  
 \_\_\_ Stewardship  
 \_\_\_ Sunday Agape Fellowship  
 \_\_\_ Visitation – Hospital  
 \_\_\_ Visitation – Shut-ins  
 \_\_\_ Seniors Ministry  
 \_\_\_ Couples Ministry  
 \_\_\_ Singles/Young Adults Ministry

**BUILDING & GROUNDS**

\_\_\_ Garden & Landscape  
 \_\_\_ Plumbing  
 \_\_\_ Electrical  
 \_\_\_ Clean-up  
 \_\_\_ Interior Repairs  
 \_\_\_ Exterior Repairs  
 \_\_\_ Roofing

**ADMINISTRATION**

\_\_\_ Development / Fund-raising  
 \_\_\_ Office help  
 \_\_\_ Computer / Technical  
 \_\_\_ Data Entry

Return at Candle Stand or Mail to: Assumption GOC, PO Box 4567, Pocatello, ID 83205

*Over these past six years, our parish has had an influx of families and individuals migrating from the Northwest and California. We have also been blessed with many who have come seeking the Historic Christian Church, and thus found themselves here in Southeastern Idaho and the parish of the Assumption. Once a month The Epistle will feature a family or individual who has embraced the Faith and how they came to Orthodoxy.*

**JACOB DENTON'S JOURNEY INTO ORTHODOXY by Jacob Denton,**

**March 24, 2024**

**Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church,  
Protopresbyter of the Ecumenical Throne Father Constantine A. Zozos**

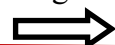


Center Jacob Denton, left Godparent Johnathan Harris and on right High School friend.

My story isn't anything crazy or even all that scholarly as I didn't come out of initial research because Orthodoxy was the "True Church." I actually came first as someone filling an obligation to a significant other. It sounds strange but I came because my girlfriend invited me. After we had split up I started attending to try and see and talk to her again because of how big the hole in my heart was. I really was just lost, angry, and heartbroken, I wasn't able to navigate anything as I should have, I led with my heart that was already broken and I continued to break it, but I broke my Savior's heart far more. I kept distancing myself from God but I still went to Church hoping that I would see the woman. It would be in vain, and I was left empty more and more. After some time though, things began to click into place, and I started seeing Holy Orthodoxy on my social media pages without seeking them out, Father Spyridon Bailey was really my first experience with online Orthodoxy, and he guided me so much in the spiritual aspects of the faith, the general questions I had were being answered by other priests on "Roots of Orthodoxy" and apologetics were there as well. The more I learned the more I started to enjoy the faith and knowing more about it.

I started to listen to the "Bible in a Year" podcast with Father Mike Schmitz, and the Old Testament started making sense. I would listen to the prayers and novenas of the Roman church and would generally just get a little closer bit by bit. After an experience I had as a "look how this will help you," drug I began going further and further into Orthodoxy just because of how terrible that experience was, and it drove me deeper and deeper into prayer and things, eventually leading me to having my first ever prayer book (thank you Steven) and I would continue to struggle, doubt, and stumble my way into catechism and when the time actually came for baptism I initially declined because I saw myself as "unready."

My unreadiness was because I was heartbroken and didn't understand how to use the feelings I was carrying. When Orthodoxy finally, truly clicked for me was at, of all places, a Roman Catholic Mass. The Christmas service was held late in the night and the church was encompassed by four massive white walls and silence. The altar was a cloth covered table that faced the people, the crucifix hung above the priests as they began the prayers for the service. As I sat in the front row with my mother and older brother, I completely blanked out, the liturgy was going through my mind constantly, hearing the Kyrie Eleison of the Liturgy against the quiet and uniformed prayers of the church I sat in was something I couldn't describe. The feeling and desire for Christ in the place I had seen His body grew more and more, and I hadn't felt that way about the Liturgy before. It was just a place I went in order to try and see a girl, and that bench next to my family was the place where it became the place I needed to be because Christ was there. Whatever emptiness I had felt before that moment was gone because I now knew where Christ was, and where he would offer me His Body and Blood for me of all people, a sacrifice so grand that I



couldn't help but burst into tears right then and there.

Father Constantine pulled me into his office in about February of 2023 after a half a year of Catechism and asked me, "are you ready to be baptized?" I replied back quickly, "Father, I don't think I'm ready." He looked at me in almost confusion, and asked "why?"

"I don't think I'm ready Father." Father looked even more confused, "are you not committed?" I felt ashamed immediately because I never really told him why I was there. "That's the thing, I think I'm committed but I just don't know." Father laughed slightly and told me, "if you aren't committed then why have you come to catechism?" I thought about it and I couldn't answer him. I left and went back home thinking about what he had said. Eventually Father told me that I was ready to be baptized, and despite my initial objection, Father calmly told me that I was ready. So when he asked me about who my patron saint was to be he said, "you'll be baptized as Prophet Jacob of the Old Testament." I quickly corrected Father (to my detriment) that I wanted to be baptized under Saint Joseph the Betrothed. Father looked at me and with a calm gentleness, smiled and told me while nodding his head, "Prophet Jacob of the Old Testament." I left a little confused but also understanding that Father probably wanted a name he could remember so I just stuck with it.

By this time I was already acclimated with some of the parishioners and I had been invited to someone's house for fellowship. So I went, it was a really nice time getting to pray with everybody and enjoy some food and talk with people who are FAR more knowledgeable than me. The one thing that kept catching my eye though was an icon of an angel, the angel wore white and blue robes with its hands crossed over its chest. In the halo of the icon there were seven thorn shapes, there were four blue ones that formed an "X" shape around the head of the angel while three of them were bright red. The tallest of the red thorns went up while the other two went out to the sides. I asked after contemplating it for a minute, "what's this icon?" The person who's house I was at stood up and came over to observe which one I was seeing, he pointed at it, "that one?" I answered yes quickly. "That's the Angel of Great Counsel," I sat confused for a moment because I had no idea what he was talking about. "Do you know the story of Jacob?" A chill shot down my spine quickly, "yeah?" I asked quietly. "This is the Angel that Jacob wrestled with, when he said, 'I've seen the face of God,' this is what he was talking about. This isn't just an angel, this is a prefigurement of Christ." That statement immediately sent me searching. I began reading about the Prophet Jacob, working through his story, while thinking about how horrible he was to those around him, especially Rachel and Esau. I started listening to "Bible in a Year," again so I could figure out what was going on, and when I heard that the story of Jacob and Esau was the first example of forgiveness in the entirety of scripture it blew my mind. For me this was enough of a sign, and so I continued on my journey.

The night before my baptism though, I was struggling a lot with having Prophet Jacob represent me, because I wanted to be anybody but myself. I rotted in my bed that night, scrolling through videos on instagram when I had the thought, "I don't think I could be Prophet Jacob of the Old Testament." A video came onto my feed with no likes, no shares, no comments, not even a title, I thought it was weird, especially because it was a clip of Jordan Peterson (a modern philosopher) whom I don't watch and most times ignore. The clip starts out like this, "When Jacob is wrestling with God that's worship, that's true worship, that's why he's awarded the name Israel." I couldn't break the smile that practically forced my lips apart from pure joy and love. Jordan continues, "he's the leader of the chosen people because he wrestles with God. So, that's a mana for the suffering. Because it means that if you're genuinely suffering then God's there, in your grasp, right there with you. That's a good way of thinking about it. Everyone wrestles with God, now the question is in what spirit should you wrestle with God? I would say remember who you're wrestling with, have a little humility, or a lot... plenty, enough to strip you of your deadwood." I wept at these words and laughed. Each laugh was forcing more of me out of myself, all I could say was "thank you" each and every time I was able to work up some kind of word to express my gratitude. Any doubt I had was forcibly melted away, making a place for gratitude and thankfulness day on to take over. I was baptized the next March 23, 2024.





Fred Bradford, Steven Swanson, Dean Harris, Ron Sims, Jacque Swanson



Nate Mountain



Dean Harris



Scott Eames



Cormick Christensen, Jacob Denton, Andrew Hearne, John Speck

### PARISHIONERS CLEANING-UP AFTER INSTALLATION OF DRYWALL IN THE ORTHODOX CENTER

### THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD - Food for Thought - Fr Georges Massouh



New Year's Day, according to the Orthodox Church, does not fall on the first of January, but rather on the first of September. The Church has her own calendar that contains the seasons, feasts and celebrations along with the rites, prayers and fasts connected

with them. The purpose of this calendar is to help people to reach holiness by reminding them daily of the importance of spiritual struggle in order to arrive at "life in the continuous presence of God".

On this occasion, the Church chooses to read a text from the Gospel of Saint Luke, where Christ says at the beginning of His ministry, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19).

How will our coming year be a year acceptable to the Lord? How will the days and nights that we amass be acceptable? Christianity says that God, the Creator of time and space, became fully man in order to make man into a god by grace, not substance. On the other hand, those humans who desire to heed this divine call should strive to sanctify their life by consecrating their time to anticipating God's good things to come and living them in their present moment. Holiness is not complete without uniting the spiritual life with the active life incarnate in daily reality.

Christianity does not believe in luck, fate or chance. It is people who make their own luck, not psychics, prognosticators or fortune-tellers... It is in people's own hands and their own power to make their year acceptable to the Lord, since no one determines their fate besides God.

Saint Irenaeus of Lyons (d. 202) says that the time falling between Christ's becoming man and His second coming at the end is the time in which God causes the fruits of history-- that is, the saints-- to ripen. How can we turn our coming evil days into a year acceptable to the Lord? This is our hope.

## PRAYER REQUESTS

Please offer names (first name only) to Father Constantine of those who are suffering from illnesses or challenges in life so they can be included in our prayers during the divine services. The prayer list will be published in The Epistle Newsletter monthly so that our parishioners can include the names in their personal prayers as well. Contact Father Constantine (805) 570-6525 to submit your names.

### PRAYER FOR THEIR HEALTH AND SALVATION

Heavenly Father, physician of our souls and bodies, who sent Your only begotten Son and Lord Jesus Christ to heal every sickness and infirmity, visit and heal also your servants: servants: *Heath, Larisa, Stella, Venetia, Jon, Gary, Ahmad, Jason, Tommy, John, Natalia, Svitlana, Ivanna, James, Pam, Christoforos, Hosea, Richard, Sotirios, Fr. Achilles, Kathy, Mary Frances, Lavada, Steven, Alicia, Christopher, Barbara, Georgia, Vlasios, Vivian, Thomas, Sienna, James, Casi, Jim, Scarlett, Zachary, Sara, Martha, Anna, Kieran, Valentin, Valentina, Rose Mary, Patricia, Anthony, Maria, Michael, Krista, John, Bobby, Eric, George, Martin, Gayle, Alicia, Dianna, Chelsea, Dell, Gregory, Dimitri, Oleg, Tania, Ocey, Ethel, Carol, Robert, Casi, Jack, Carol, Roger, Anna, Steve, Christopher, Freda, Larry, Maria, Judy, Ignatius, Elaine, George, Barbara, Nicholas, Matthew, Jeff, Jacqueline, Dianna, Alton, Anna, Larry, Paula, Stacey, Orestes, Helen, Catherine, Andrew, Mary, Steve, Nicholas, Scarlett, Marie, Demetrios, George, Melissa, Galina, Sofia, Cheryl, Christ, Carolyn, Paul, Mary, Nick, John, Elaine, Nicholas* from all physical and spiritual ailments through the grace of Your Christ. Grant them patience in this sickness, strength of body and spirit and recovery of health. Lord You have taught us through Your Word to pray for each other that we may be healed. I pray that You heal these, Your servants, and grant to them the gift of complete health. For You are the source of healing and to You I give glory. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.



### A PERSONAL 2026 NEW YEAR PRAYER

O Heavenly Lord, as I stand at the beginning of this new year I confess my need of Your presence and Your guidance as I face the future.

I have my hopes and expectations for the year that is ahead of me—but You alone know what it holds for me, and only You can give me the strength and the wisdom I will need to meet its challenges. So help me to humbly put my hands into Your hand, and to trust You and to seek Your will for my life during this coming year.

In the midst of life's uncertainties in the days ahead, assure me of the certainty of Your unchanging love. In the midst of life's inevitable disappointments and heartaches, help me to turn to You for the stability and comfort I will need. In the midst of life's temptations and the pull of my stubborn self-will, help me not to lose my way, but to have the courage to do what is right in Your sight, regardless of the cost.

And in the midst of my daily preoccupations and pursuits, open my eyes to the sorrows of our hurting world, and help me to respond with compassion and sacrifice to those who are in need.

As I look back over this past year I thank You for Your goodness to me—far beyond what I have deserved. May I never presume on Your past goodness or forget all Your mercies for me, but may they instead lead me to repentance, and to a new commitment to make You the foundation and center of my life this year.

And so, O Lord, I thank You for the promise and hope of this new year, and I look forward to it with expectancy and faith. This I ask in the name of Our Incarnate Lord and Savior, who by His Death and Resurrection has given us hope both for this world and the world to come. Amen.



# ASSUMPTION CHRISTMAS PAGEANT 2025





*ST. NICK ARRIVES WITH PRESENTS FOR ALL THE CHILDREN!*



*Fall on your knees, Oh hear the angel voices! O night divine! O night when Christ was born.  
O night, O holy night, O night divine*





## *JOY TO THE WORLD*

*Joy to The world! the Lord  
has come*

*Let earth receive her King  
Let ev'ry heart prepare him room  
And heaven and nature sing  
And heaven and nature sing  
And heaven and nature sing*

*He rules the world with truth and  
grace  
And makes the nations prove*

*The glories of His righteousness  
And wonders of His love  
And wonders of His love  
And wonder wonders of His love*

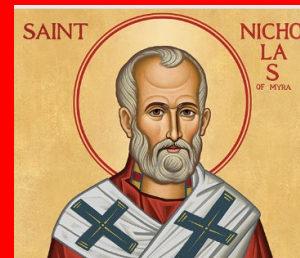








**THANK YOU IS EXPRESSED TO ANGELA FULLMER-RELIGIOUS EDUCATION DIRECTOR AND TEACHERS ASHLEY TARASAU , DEVYN SCHMALZ, MILISSA BLACK FOR ORGANIZING THE CHRISTMAS PAGEANT.**



**Silent night, holy night, All is calm, all is bright Round yon virgin mother and child! Ho-ly Infant so tender and mild, Sleep in heavenly peace, Sleep in heavenly peace.**





*Your nativity, O Christ our God, has caused the light of knowledge to rise upon the world. For therein the worshippers of the stars were by a star instructed to worship You, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know You as Orient from on high. Glory to You, O Lord*





-Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary  
Greek Orthodox Church  
P.O. BOX 4567, Pocatello, ID 83205

**Email**

assumptionchurchpocatello@gmail.com

**-Parish Organizations & Ministries**

-Parish Council: Tressa Rockwood, Pres.

-Philoptochos Society: Goldie Homan

-Church School: Angela Fullmer, Ashley Tarasau, Devyne Schmalz, Kade Schmalz, Melissa Black, Brandon Black

-Choir: Olenda Painter

-Acolytes: Dean Harris

-Bible Study: Fr. Constantine A. Zozos

-Chanters: Olenda Painter, Andrew Herane

-Catechism Class: Fr. Constantine A. Zozos

-Orthros Readers: Gregory Painter, John Speck, Jacob Denton, Steven Swanson, Alex Tarasau

-Prosphoron: Sophie McCurry, Hala Abou Arraj, Terri Pliley-Owen

-Greek Festival: Tressa Rockwood, Phil Homan

-Youth Dance Group: Angela Fullmer

-Agape Fellowship: Goldie Homan

-Maintenance: John Speck

-Live-stream: Alex Tarasau

# Happy NEW YEAR

*You crown the year with Your goodness,  
And Your paths drip with abundance.*

PSALM 65:11

*"The path of God is a daily cross. No one has ascended into Heaven by means of ease, for we know where the way of ease leads and how it ends. In Truth, without afflictions, there is no Life." St. Isaac the Syrian*



## CHURCH FREECYCLE

**Parishioner Kim Sims** would like to implement and manage a **CHURCH FREECYCLE TYPE GROUP** (via email) where individuals can post items they have but no longer need, and that may be helpful for someone else.

We all have those items that are in great shape that we don't use or need and hate just dropping them off at the donation center. However, trying to find someone else who might need it isn't easy. This group is intended to facilitate that.

1) You email in with a description (and photo) of the item and others in the group can contact you directly.

2) Anyone interested can let Kim know and she'll add you to the group.

It could also be used to help parishioners if they need a certain item

◇ they could post to see if anyone has that.

◇

**Kim's Cell/text: 1-208-223-3755**

Group is: [Assumptionsharing@googlegroups.com](mailto:Assumptionsharing@googlegroups.com)