

THE DESERT NEWS

Your *online* monthly news & updates

Desert News is published online, every month, for a quick glimpse of the goings on at St. Anthony's and with our parishioners. Desert News editors are Claudia Bogris, Nike Bach, and Stratos Mandalakis. If you have parish organization or personal news to share, please email information to [Claudia Bogris](mailto:claudia@stanthony.org).

With so many of our parishioners now vaccinated and back at Church, the Sunday Bulletin is the main source of weekly information.

February Feast Day



PRESENTATION OF OUR LORD, FEBRUARY 2

A Message From Fr. Michael

Fr. Michael delivered this message at our Annual Meeting

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

“Happy New Year” to all,

I say “happy”, and I know very well that most of the people are not. Most of them are still uncertain of tomorrow. No one to blame because I know that the cloud of fear and panic is still looming on the horizon.

But the good news is that we, as Christians, believe that after death there is Resurrection; behind the darkness there is light. If we could survive the years 2020 and 2021, we could easily survive 2022.

And the truth is, we did. Together we did, as a parish and as one family.

Tomorrow will be better. Tomorrow will be brighter.
Together we can wipe out our sorrows and pain.
Together we can defeat our fear and panic.
Together we can create better tomorrow.

The year 2020 was very tough. We were strangled. Last year was a little bit better but still we could not do much. We could not achieve much as a parish. This year must be better. We must make it better. Together we can do that.

Today we come to the conclusion that we need God more than any other time. Without God we can do nothing. Today, we need to know that the Holy Scripture is God's love letter to us.

We need to be together to overcome our troubles. We need to forgive and love each other. Love is the thermometer that can take our spiritual temperature. We need to stay one. We become one when we pray for each other. Prayers change things but loving one another, most of all, changes us. We may not always love perfectly but we need at least to try.

We need to lift one another up and help each other through this difficult time. We need to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Our behavior tells the world what our “Father” is like. Our behavior should tell the world that our God is the God of peace and of harmony, not disorder and confusion. He created man to work in unity as we read in the book of Job (Job 10: 8). No accomplishment will be achieved unless we are together. We need to work together in unity of mind and heart.

Remember that when Jesus sent out His disciples, He sent them out two by two. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, this year, 2022, although it still looks vague, but we need to move on. Life should not stop here. We need to start doing more. I want to thank all the committees at St. Anthony for their hard work and their sacrifices for the glory of our God, the chairs, and the members of all the committees. But, most importantly, I really want to thank all the parishioners of St. Anthony, each one of you, for your love and continuous support you have shown to your church. Truly, there is not enough words to appreciate

your support, especially financially. Without this support St. Anthony could not survive. And as I thank all of you for your continuous support, I would like to remind those of you who are less fortunate, that we are here for you. If you need help, please do not hesitate to call me, my cell phone number is available to all, and be assured that your call will remain confidential. And remember, Holy Water is available all year round too. Also, Holy Oil is available whenever you need it. God bless you all.

Your servant in Christ,
Fr. Michael Ibrahim

Annual Meeting

Parish Annual Meeting Held January 9

(These are not the official minutes of our annual meeting; this is just a brief recap of what was discussed).

After Fr. Michael opened the meeting (see his message to the parish, above), Nike Bach, our Parish Council chair, gave her opening remarks – again with much gratitude to those who serve – and brought us up to date on the many things that have occurred during the past year in the parish. She shared the structural improvements, both underway and completed, and the humanitarian work done, from the walk-in dinner program, pajama drive, food pantry, to the multi-church International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC) virtual wine tasting that raised over \$10,000.

Nike, and then Ed Assile as Treasurer and Jim Bach, heading the Capital Plan, all spoke about our current finances – and needs for the future. Despite everything, including missing two years of important fundraisers, our finances are stable thanks to the steadfastness of our parishioners. Members voted on and approved a “balanced and conservative” budget for 2022.

We have big fundraisers planned for this year! In addition to the Tricky Tray (rescheduled to April) and Yard Sale (May), Bergen Street Fest will be FOUR days and include the best of BSF, the very successful rides Carnival held in September and our own Festival casual foods, like gyros and shish-kebob.

During the past year the parish borrowed money to refinance our existing mortgage and obtain funds to undertake much needed capital improvements, such as for the air conditioner (which was \$65,000) and the roof, which we had hoped to repair, but need, instead to replace.

But there is much more to be done. Jim Bach shared some of

the many things that have had deferred maintenance and that can no longer be deferred, including replacing the roof over the dome. The list is long and it's going to be expensive, so House and Grounds will be creating a capital plan to fund these improvements so that our dear St. Anthony will stay standing for another 60 years. Jim Vagias shared a video of original members talking about what they did to create this home for us. It's now our turn to maintain and protect our common home for the next generation.

Based on term limits identified in our by-laws, Daria Incorvaia will be leaving the parish council this year. Thank you, Daria, for your service on the council and as Recording Secretary. The parish unanimously voted to re-elect Nike Bach and Isaiah Vallejo-Juste and newly elect James Tweel Jr and Stephen Petrick to the Council. Congratulations to all.

The officers for this year are:

Nike Bach, Chair
Jim Vagias, Vice Chair
Ed Assile, Treasurer
Isaiah Vallejo-Juste, Assistant Treasurer
Christeen Scarpa, Secretary

We thank them in advance for their service!

Upcoming Events

*The Luck of
St. Anthony*
TRICKY TRAY

New Date for Tricky Tray! Friday, April 29

The Parish Luck of St. Anthony's Tricky Tray is in full swing and the team is already assembling baskets of great



gifts! **We have a new date: Friday, April 29.** It will be a fun night for all who attend as there are over 200 prizes, Lucky Lady 50/50, door raffles, great food and more! **Please bring your**

donations in by February 15. What's especially needed now are **gift cards for restaurants and experiences** to add to the already awesome list of prizes. **Also very much needed are baskets.** It would be so helpful if you could drop them off at church this Saturday (February 5) at 10am. If you have baskets but can't drop off, let Claudia know - someone will come to you to get them!

Donation Forms are available in the Fellowship Hall to take to businesses you frequent for gift cards. Or you may contact Leslie or Hanneh to obtain one. Don't forget to call/email Leslie with what will be donated so it can be included in the program and our donor's list.

Some of the great gifts we already have include an overnight New York Experience, Crystal Springs Resort overnight with golf, Tiffany sterling silver jewelry, Waterford crystal, Nora Fleming whimsical ceramics, designer handbags, Ettinger men's and women's leather goods from England, Jersey Mikes Sub for 7, Diners Night Out, gift cards to restaurants for dine in or take out from area restaurants.

See the (new) flyer and invite your friends and make a table. Tickets are on sale now for what is sure to be an evening of fun (plus music and food). See Pam Scarpa.

This is an all-parish event, and an extremely important and needed fundraiser for our Church. All hands on deck!

Giant Yard Sale, May 12, 13 and 14, 2022

It's cold. We're home with literally nothing to do... it's the *perfect* time to start that spring cleaning and finding (a couple of years) worth of items to donate to the Yard Sale. Pro tip: Set up boxes, and label them: accessories, Christmas decor, housewares; costume jewelry, etc. and then as you sort through your things, drop them in the labeled box. They will be already sorted and ready to drop off on Sunday, May 8, when Valerie Joseph and her team create a department store for bargain shoppers in our church hall. **See the flyer** with all the details. And mark your calendar from May 8-14 for set up, sales and take down.





Summer camp registration opened January 8 and sessions are already filling up!

Scholarships are available to any St. Anthony's child who would like assistance to attend the Antiochian Village Camp this summer. Please speak with Fr Michael.

ShopRite Gift Cards

Reminder: ShopRite supermarket gift cards are available for purchase For \$100, you get \$100 of gift cards; and the Church earns 5%. Cost-free fundraiser! **We are still looking for a volunteer to take over this program.** Please see Betty Gakos, who has run this for many years, or Fr. Michael.

Annual Pledge Reminder

As the year begins, we also make our annual pledge to God's Altar. What would it mean to our parish if everyone gave just one hour of their weekly salary? If everyone were to contribute 2.5% of their income—1 hour out of a 40-hour week?

Weekly contributions are what have helped us survive these past two years, when we have had little fundraising. Please make your annual pledge and consider contributing one hour of your weekly wages.

Sign up to Host Coffee Hour

(And many thanks to all the parishioners and organizations who already have.)

We have simplified the process to be both safe and make it easier for every parishioner to host at least one coffee hour a year. A schedule and guidelines are posted in the coffee room. To



sign up or learn more, please email **Alice Ziemba** or call Alice at 201-644-8068.

Milestones

Memory Eternal

We mourn the loss of our dear Fran DeBellis, who departed this life on January 12, 2022. For decades, Fran was at the very heart of what made St. Anthony's so special. Whether writing songs, putting on shows, dancing in costume, working with church school students on Creative Arts, working a booth at the Festival or singing in the choir, she brought her creativity, warmth and dedication to the life of the Church. We send our deepest sympathy to her children, Rob and Stacey. Memory Eternal!



We mourn the loss of our parishioner Nicholas Andrews, who departed this life on January 12, 2022, and send our deepest sympathy to his wife Valyce. Our sympathy extends to his whole family, including his son Peter and daughter Denise, who grew up here in Teen SOYO. Memory Eternal!



Calendar

Tuesday, February 1 at 7pm
Divine Liturgy for the Feast of the Presentation of our Lord in the Temple

Wednesday, February 16 at 7:30pm
Parish Council Meeting in the Fellowship Hall

Monday, March 7
Clean Monday, Lent Begins

Looking Ahead

Friday, April 29, 2022
Tricky Tray (see story above)

Thursday, Friday, Saturday

May 12, 13 and 14, 2022

Giant Indoor Yard Sale (*see story above*)

Saturday, May 21, 2022

IOCC Wine Tasting

Save the date; more info to follow

Tuesday, June 14, 2022

Don DiNovi Memorial Golf Outing

Save the date from now!

Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday

September 8, 9, 10 and 11, 2022

Bergen Street Fest and Carnival - Combined!

Planning for the combined BSF and Carnival has started. If you are interested in helping with the planning or working the event, please see Brian Scarpa or Ed Assile.