



HOLY MOTHER QUEEN OF ALL (*PANAGIA PANTOVASILISSA*) GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

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For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD,
thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.

[Jeremiah 29: 11]

January 1, 2020

Feast of the Circumcision of Christ

Feast of St. Basil the Great

Rev. Fr. William J. Redmon, to the parishioners, Parish Council, Ladies Philoptochos Society, FiftyUP Fellowship, Sunday Church School families, GOYA youth and parents, Committee and Ministry Team volunteers, and all of the faithful of the Holy Mother Queen of All/ *Panagia Pantovasilissa* parish family: Greetings in Christ Jesus, in whom all things are made new!

It has been almost three years now. Three years since Presvytera and I were blessed to become members of our common church family. Three years since we found out about the then forthcoming arrival of our beautiful daughter. Three years since you welcomed us into your church home. Presvytera and I have found ourselves thankful for many things since then. We were just remarking on New Year's Eve about how the 2010s were the best decade of our lives, in no small part because of our placement in this community. Thank you. Thank you! Again, I say: Thank you!

We are also thankful for all of the work we have been able to undertake together in those three years. We have seen our community grow. We have often seen the church filled to the Mezzanine with worshippers. We have seen the faithful in joyful attendance at the various weekly services. We have seen our Adult Study classes filled with those yearning to learn more about Christ. And we have seen many led to the Gospel by our efforts. But most of all, my friends, we have seen the solemn respect for the past and earnest hope for the future which exists here in Lexington!

Our theme for the 2020 Stewardship campaign is *Past and Present: Faithful to Our Tradition While Investing in Our Future*. And wow, is that ever a mouthful of words! That said, we might sum the whole concept up with one word—"tradition"—as it encompasses past, present, and future. The Greek work for tradition is παράδοσις (to pass on; lit. "to give beside"). It simply means that the same faith and practices that were given *to* us by those who were beside us in our youth are to be given *by* us to those whom we shall find ourselves beside when we, ourselves, are well along the path of the sacred race of which the Apostle speaks. It is the sacred task of every Christian to take part in this ministry, both individually and collectively. And it is a task that we have *made* sacred here in our God-guarded city.

In this community, in the past two years, we have not limited this to simply passing the traditions amongst ourselves. We have undertaken an outreach ministry that has reached more people and yielded more converts than at any prior time in our history. In this community, we have instituted a year-round Adult Study program—without any substantial breaks—where we cover a variety of topics at the request of the faithful. In this community, we have established a full and growing cycle of weekly worship, where services are offered by the priest and the people four times each week, rather than simply on Sundays. All of this puts us at the forefront of spiritual and institutional growth within the Archdiocese as a whole. And none of this could have taken place, nor could it continue to take place, without the support of you, our faithful parishioners.

We need that support to continue if *we* are to continue succeeding in our mission and exceeding expectations. Indeed, we need more of it! There are areas where we need more people to volunteer their time and talents. The Choir is in need of people to offer their voices to God in praise. The Altar is in need of those who would serve with the angels at the divine services. The Sunday School is in need of instructors to rear our children in the faith of their fathers. The various ministries stand in need of devoted servant-leaders to heed Christ's call. And we could always use more volunteers at our Bake Sales!

And yes, beloved faithful, we need your financial support as well. For the fact is that if we are to continue to grow in our mission, financial growth needs to be a part of the picture. If you are a current steward, I would ask you to pray humbly and in gratitude before God. Ask Him if you are able to sacrifice more for Him and his Ministries. And do not feel guilty if, having prayed on it, the answer is no! The Lord values whatever we are able to give, and asks only that we give it freely and in love for Him, as well as our brothers and sisters.

Yet the majority of growth, if it is to come, will come from those who have not pledged recently. If you are not a steward of the Church, or have not been for some time, I would humbly ask you to prayerfully consider how much you value her presence in your life. I would ask you to consider that your active expression of the answer to that question is what allows the church to continue to *be* present in our lives. Without active stewardship of her ministries, we shall certainly fail: Though the church will always continue to exist throughout the world, our little parish here in Lexington will not. And while we are growing now, we need to continue to build on that momentum if we are to secure the future of this community, that our sacred traditions may be held by our children's children, and that we may continue to sow the seeds of the Gospel throughout the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

On a final and more celebratory note, there is a rather substantial and objective target which looms before us this year: the number 100. We have never, in our history, had 100 pledged stewards. We have never, to put it simply, been a 100-family Church. We came close years ago, but we have always missed that mark. My friends, it is a target that is very much within our reach if we sanctify the coming year to God. I pray that, together, we triumph in this task!

With every pastoral blessing and thanksgiving for the faithful offerings of the people of God, I remain,



Rev. Fr. William J. Redmon
Presiding Priest