

Christian Light

December 2020 — Vol. 32



Fr. Philip's Nativity Message: Inviting Christ in Christmas

Why did the people of Bethlehem refuse to provide shelter for the Panagia Theotokos on the eve of that first Christmas? There wasn't one person in that whole village who could provide some hospitality to a young pregnant woman? This refusal to accept the Panagia actually conceals something deeper. This actually logically follows from the world's refusal to embrace purity, innocence and integrity. By rejecting the person of the Panagia, people in fact reject the miracle of God in their life.

This should not amaze us, for this denial is ours also. Every day we deny Christ's birth in us. We slam our doors on Him. We exclude Him from our life. We don't want to incur the cost of welcoming Him, i.e., the changes that must occur in our life. On that night in Bethlehem it wasn't just some bad people of that village that refused the Panagia. No. It's so easy to say, "how bad those people were, if I were there then I would have given her the best room of my house....." That's not true though. It's a lie. Because Christ never stopped seeking a haven in human souls from then till this day, and who among us is really ready and willing to provide Him with that shelter He requests?

Every real meeting with God is a kind of crisis of our attitudes, thoughts and worldview, really of our whole life.

When we are emotionally charged we tend to make highfalutin declarations such as, "Oh Christ, if only You were to be born in me this Christmas....," but we are not really internally ready to welcome Him. It is not enough to invite someone to your house, you need to be somehow brought out of your normal routine in order to offer real hospitality. Only in as much as you are willing to lose your life can you find your life in Christ.

Assumption of the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church 97 Walcott Street, Pawtucket, RI 02860

Reverend Dr. Philip Zymaris Protopresbyter



E-mail: pzymaris@hchc.edu (401) 725-3127 Phone (401) 725-9270 Fax (857) 204-9021 Emergencies Web Site: www.assumptionri.org

SUNDAY SERVICES

Orthros 8 A.M. and Divine Liturgy 9:30 A.M. ALL CHURCH SERVICES LIVE STREAM ***RESERVATION IS REQUIRED for Sunday Services*** **RESERVATION NOT REQUIRED for Weekday Services**

OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday 8:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. Elizabeth Lazouras secretary@assumptionri.org NO ACCESS TO CHURCH OFFICE UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

PARISH COUNCIL MEMBERS

President Vice President Treasurer Asst. Treasurer Secretary

George Foussekis Dr. Nicholas Nikolopoulos Angelo C. Limnios Donna Gerace Peter Papavasiliou Nickolas Vellopoulos Triantafillio Foussekis Vasileios Papavasiliou George Karalis Eleni Katsios

ORGANIZATIONS

Brian Gerace

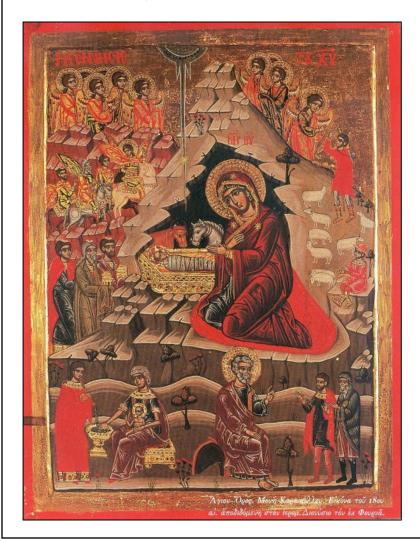
AHEPA: Ioannis Apostolakis John Lyssikatos Cantors: Nick Vellopoulos Virginia Skodras Dr. Vasili Amfilo Marion Manickas, Director Choir: Cultural Society: John Lyssikatos Greek Pride: Andrea Vastis Nancy Georgitsis George Microulis Greek School: Panagiota Vastis, Principal Sophia Augoustakis Stavroula Papavasiliou Elizabeth Lazouras, Director Sunday School: Stavroula Papavasiliou Seminarian James Harritos Charikleia Campos Stephanie Dokos Sophia Augoustakis GOYA: Sharon Turk, Gail Manickas, Anna Dafulas, Helena Lambrakis Over 50 Club: Ursula Michalopoulos Philoptochos: Patricia Panichas, President PTO: Ourania Stefanopoulos, President Visitation: Tina Demopulos Sophia Balamas-Young James Harritos Seminarian:

The Panagia is the best symbol and standard of the Church, and therefore the first large icon we see when we enter an Orthodox Church is the "Platytera" above the altar. She signifies that our role is to become like her: to give birth to Christ in our families, community and society, in other words to make Him a presence in our world today so we can transfigure our lives and those of the people around us.

May we all, to the best of our ability, really accept Christ in our hearts so this Christmas can truly be a celebration of the birth and real presence of Christ here and now.

Merry Christmas! Fr. Philip Zymaris

(Inspired by a blog of Fr. Charalambos Papadopoulos: "Closed Hearts....")







Γιατὶ λέτε νὰ ἀρνήθηκαν στὴν Παναγία κατάλυμα οἱ ἄνθρωποι τῆς Βηθλεέμ; Όλόκληρη πόλη δὲν βρέθηκε κάποιος νὰ πάρει στὸ σπίτι του μία μικρὴ ἔγκυο γυναίκα; Νομίζω ὅτι αὐτή ἡ ἄρνηση φιλοξενίας, κρύβει κάτι βαθύτερο. Κρύβει τὴν ἄρνηση αὐτοῦ τοῦ κόσμου, νὰ φιλοξενήσει τὴν ἁγνότητα, τὴν ἀθωότητα καὶ καθαρότητα. Στὸ πρόσωπο τῆς Παναγίας, οἱ ἄνθρωποι ἀρνοῦνται τὸ θαῦμα τοῦ Θεοῦ στὴν ζωή.

Μὴν μᾶς προκαλεῖ ἐντύπωση, διότι αὐτή ἡ ἄρνηση εἶναι καὶ δική μας. Καθημερινὰ ἀρνούμαστε στὸ Χριστό νὰ γεννηθεῖ μέσα μας. Τοῦ κλείνουμε ὅλες τὶς πόρτες κατάμουτρα. Τὸν πετᾶμε ἔξω ἀπὸ τὴν ζωή μας. Δὲν θέλουμε νὰ ἀναλάβουμε τὸ κόστος τῆς φιλοξενίας, δηλαδὴ τῶν ἀλλαγῶν ποὺ πρέπει νὰ γίνουν στὸ βίο μας.

Έκείνη τὴν νύχτα στὴν Βηθλεἑμ δὲν ἀρνοῦνται μονάχα κάποιοι κακοὶ ἄνθρωποι τῆς πόλεως καὶ ἐποχῆς ἐκείνης. Ὅχι. Εἶναι πολὺ εὔκολο νὰ πεῖς, «πόσο κακοὶ ἦταν αὐτοί οἱ ἄνθρωποι, ἐἀν ἤμουν ἐγὼ θὰ τῆς ἔδινα τὸ πιὸ ζεστὸ δωμάτιο τοῦ σπιτιοῦ μου…». Δὲν εἶναι ἀλήθεια. Εἶναι ψέματα. Γιατί ὁ Χριστὸς δὲν σταμάτησε νὰ ζητάει κατάλυμα αἰῶνες τώρα στὶς ἀνθρώπινες ψυχές, καὶ δὲν ξέρω πόσοι ἀπὸ ἐμᾶς εἴμαστε ἕτοιμοι καὶ διατεθειμένοι νὰ τοῦ τὸ

Κάθε συνάντηση μὲ τὸν Θεὸ εἶναι μία κρίση, τοῦ τρόπου, τῶν ἀντιλήψεων, τῶν σκέψεων καὶ λογισμῶν μας, ὁλάκερης τῆς ζωῆς μας.

Συναισθηματικὰ φορτισμένοι μπορεῖ νὰ λέμε μεγάλα λόγια, «ἄχ Χριστέ μου, νὰ γεννιόσουν μέσα μου...», ἀλλὰ δὲν ξέρω κατὰ πόσο ἐσωτερικὰ εἴμαστε ἕτοιμοι νὰ τὸν ὑποδεχθοῦμε. Δὲν φτάνει νὰ προσκαλεῖς κάποιον στὸ σπίτι σου, πρέπει νὰ χάσεις κάτι ἀπὸ σένα, ἀπὸ τὴν βόλεψή σου, γιὰ νὰ τὸν φιλοξενήσεις. Καὶ μονάχα στὸ ποσοστὸ ποὺ εἶσαι ἕτοιμος νὰ χάσεις μπορεῖς νὰ βρεῖς τὸν Χριστό.

Ή Παναγία εἶναι τὸ καλύτερο σύμβολο γιὰ τὴν Ἐκκλησία καὶ γι' αὐτὸν τὸν λόγο εἶναι στὴν πρώτη εἰκόνα ποὺ βλέπουμε καθὼς μπαίνουμε σὲ μία Ὀρθόδοξη ἐκκλησία. Ἡ «Πλατυτέρα τῶν Οὐρανῶν» στὴν ἀψίδα πάνω ἀπὸ τὴν ἁγία τράπεζα μᾶς ὑπενθυμίζει ὅτι ὁ ρόλος μας εἶναι νὰ γίνουμε σὰν αὐτήν: δηλαδὴ νὰ γεννᾶμε τὸν Χριστὸ στὶς οἰκογένειές μας, στὴν κοινότητά μας καὶ στὴν κοινωνία μας γενικά – δηλαδή, νὰ τὸν δεχθοῦμε ὡς παρουσία στὸν κόσμο μας σήμερα ὥστε νὰ μεταμορφώνουμε τὴ ζωή μας καὶ τὴ ζωὴ τῶν γύρω μας.

Ό Θεὸς νὰ μᾶς δώσει, ὅσο τὸ δυνατόν, τὴν θέληση καὶ τὴ δυνατότητα νὰ δεχθοῦμε πράγματι τὸν Χριστὸ στὶς καρδιές μας αὐτὰ τὰ Χριστούγεννα ὥστε στὰ φετινὰ Χριστούγεννα ὄντως νὰ γιορτάζουμε τὴ γέννα καὶ τὴν παρουσία ἀνάμεσά μας τοῦ Χριστοῦ!

Καλὰ Χριστούγεννα!

π.Φίλιππος Ζυμάρης

(Ἐμπνευσμένο ἀπὸ ἀνάρτηση στὸ Μπλόγκ τοῦ π. Χαραλάμπους Παπαδοπούλου: «Καρδιές ερμητικά κλειστές...»)



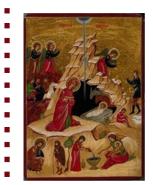
December 2020



Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 7 P.M. Parish Council	2	3	4	5
6 NO CHURCH SERVICE TODAY DECEMBER 6TH	7	8	9	10	11	12
13 11TH SUNDAY OF LUKE 8 A.M. Orthros 9:30 Divine Liturgy LIVE STREAM and Limited In-Person Church Attendance - Reservation Required Email Church Office	14	15 4:30 P.M. GREEK SCHOOL	16 4:30 p.m. greek school	17	18	19
20 SUNDAY BEFORE NATIVITY 8 A.M. Orthros 9:30 Divine Liturgy LIVE STREAM and Limited In-Person Church Attendance - Reservation Required Email Church Office	21	22 4:30 P.M. GREEK SCHOOL	23 4:30 P.M. GREEK SCHOOL	24 THE FOREFEAST OF THE NATIVITY 8 A.M. Orthros 9 A.M. ROYAL HOURS OF NATIVITY 8 P.M. NATIVITY VESPERAL LITURGY OF ST. BASIL LIVE STREAM and In-Person Attendance	25 NATIVITY OF OUR LORD AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST 8 A.M. Orthros 9 A.M. Divine Liturgy LIVE STREAM and In-Person Attendance	26
27 SUNDAY AFTER NATIVITY 8 A.M. Orthros 9:30 Divine Liturgy LIVE STREAM and Limited In-Person Church Attendance - Reservation Required Email Church Office	28	29	30	31		

14

GOYA CHRISTMAS CARD



Every year, the Assumption GOYA (Greek Orthodox Youth of America) sends out a Christmas Card with a beautiful icon to all the members of our church family. Anyone who would like to add their name or family's name to this Christmas Card should contact Sharon by **Sunday, December 6, 2020.**

If you would like to be included in this year's card, call Sharon at 508-261-1221 and give her the spelling of your name(s) on the phone. Then mail your \$10 donation to Assumption GOYA, 97 Walcott Street, Pawtucket RI 02860.

Please make your check in the amount of \$10 payable to Assumption GOYA Mail to Assumption GOYA, 97 Walcott Street, Pawtucket RI 02860



WATCH LIVE STREAM OF OUR CHURCH SERVICES

Visit the homepage of our Assumption of the Virgin Mary Greek Orthodox Church website:

https://www.assumptionri.org/

You will find the following options on our website homepage:

- 1. To watch live stream of church services, click button that says: "WATCH NOW"
- 2. To light a red glass candle, click button that says: "VIRTUAL CANDLE"
- 3. To make an offering, click button that says: "VIRTUAL TRAY"
- 4. To make a Christmas Offering click on the LINK below:

https://www.paypal.com/donate?hosted_button_id=EZ35VEJVSVGCW

Contributions are crucial to the survival of our church. Despite the pandemic, these contributions can still take place thanks to options made readily available on our website. On the home page of our website, there are buttons that make such donations very easy. Please avail yourselves of this opportunity while following the services online or any time you wish so that this year can be just like any other year despite the pandemic. Thank you to our Parishioners for your continued support.

The Date of Christmas and the Greek Orthodox Church

Article written by Fr. Andrew Athanasiou

'Tis the season folks! We are all counting down the days until December 25th, but do we even know when Jesus was born? If we look in the Gospel



accounts of the Birth of Christ, we never find a date or season or any such clue to learn the timing of Christ's birth. So why is December 25th the official date of Christmas?

There is a suggestion that the earliest Christians did not celebrate the birth of Christ, as birthdays were considered a pagan holiday. As such, those in the Church strictly tried to avoid said holidays (they even didn't use incense for a while because it was associated with pagan worship).

Once the stigma of avoiding these pagan holidays ceased, many Christians had different dates for Christmas, with none of them being December 25th, but there was also no day that everyone agreed upon. The first mentioning of Christmas being on December 25th came in 336AD, during the time of the Emperor Constantine.

There are two theories to why December 25th was chosen as the date of Christmas. One was that there was an early Christian tradition of March 25th being the Annunciation of the Good News from Archangel Gabriel to the Theotokos. If you add 9 months to that date, you get December 25th. In 386AD, St. John Chrysostom confirms this date and gives his calculation based on the birth of St. John the Baptist, which is related to Christ's birth as the Theotokos had visited her cousin Elizabeth (mother of St. John the Baptist) in the 6th month of her pregnancy. Another later thought is that the celebration of the Winter Solstice is around this date and that there were Roman festivals. These festivals were called 'Saturnalia' and 'Dies Natalis Solis Invicti' meaning "Birthday of the Unconquered Sun."

Regardless of who is right (or if anyone is right), we Christians celebrate Christmas on December 25th. All Orthodox Christians celebrate Christmas on December 25th. Okay, before you start bringing out your pitchforks to tell me that our Slavic brethren celebrate on January 7th, let me tell you why both are actually December 25th. There is a difference between the Julian and Gregorian calendar of 13 days. We all used to be on the Julian Calendar, but noticing that the days and the events (hours of light, day of equinoxes, etc.) weren't matching up, some Orthodox Christians jumped to the Gregorian Calendar.

The modern world follows the Gregorian Calendar, so for the Orthodox that switched calendars, if today is December 1st, we are celebrating December 1st in the Church Rubrics (our brethren are 13 days behind, so on our December 1st they are celebrating November 18th in the rubrics). From what I understand, Mount Athos remains on the Julian Calendar, and even though many monasteries are Greek, they are celebrating Christmas on what we know as January 7th (but they still call it December 25th). In case you were wondering, the 12 days of Christmas are not the days in between December 25th and January 7th, but rather the 12 days celebrating Christmas before the great feast of Epiphany (Jan 6th).

About Fr. Andrew Athanasiou

Fr. Andrew is the parish priest of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church in Ambridge, Pennsylvania. A recent graduate of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Fr. Andrew is originally from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His sources for this article are his own research, his professors at the seminary, his experience in ministry and Greek Orthodox Summer Camp.



Note by Fr. Philip: According to research that I cited in last year's Christmas message of this Newsletter, the most ancient sources show that the actual reason Christmas is celebrated on December 25th is that the first Great Saturday, when Christ was in the tomb, was March 25th. His entry into the tomb is the beginning of life for us, so his tomb is also a "womb." Thus the whole salvation story for us begins with Christ's passion, burial and resurrection so this is the "beginning," i.e., this is the actual "conception" that allowed "the rest of the story" to unfold. Nine months after Christ's "conception" in the tomb that is actually a "womb," is His physical birth on December 25th. This was the original reason we celebrate the Nativity in December and this came about before the feast of the Annunciation later (in the 5th century) took over the date of March 25th which is nine months before the Nativity. So there were deep theological reasons for this date rather than a mere "taking over" of the pagan sun feast in December.

Merry Christmas Καλά Χριστούγεννα and Happy New Year to our Assumption Community from Fr. Philip Zymaris and the Parish Council





AMERICAN HELLENIC EDUCATIONAL PROGRESSIVE ASSOCIATION

A121 Chapter, Pawtucket , RI - Established 1926



Καλά Χριστούγεννα! Καλή Χρονιά! On behalf of our AHEPA, A121, Pawtucket Chapter we would like to wish you a Blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year, 2021!

New Year, 2021, and New Challenges!



As we will soon be heading into the New Year, 2021, let us take a bit of time to reflect upon all the things your AHEPA Chapter, here at Pawtucket, has accomplished with your help! We have been re-instated in our community for *6 years in the row!*

- We have sponsored a youth team for the Hellenic History Tournament for next year!
- We have been active in our communications, bringing you information and news regarding matters that concern all of us like Hagia Sophia, Eastern Mediterranean, Greek border attack, Aegean Sea tensions, AHEPA National News, AHEPA actions to Defend Hellenism!
- We have been contributing to our parish newsletter giving you important updates!
- We have been contributing to the AHEPA District 7 award winning publication, Yankee News, for a variety of crucial topics and areas!
- We have supported our AHEPA District 7 (CT, RI) Scholarship fund and activities!
- We have participated in the Hellenic Affairs Committee of the District 7 (CT, RI) AHEPA Lodge!
- We have recognized our community's High School graduates!
- We have completed our AHEPA Cares drive to support COVID research (Dr. Walsh's work) and we have supported our neighbors (Pawtucket Soup Kitchen)
- We have sponsored CASA clothing and supply drive for people in need!
- We started online meetings to keep our Chapter active, even amid a pandemic!



Next year, we will be celebrating **200 Years of Greek Independence** as well as moving towards the **100 years of AHEPA** celebration! Next year will find us battling the pandemic and the economic downturn. On top of these challenges, we will still need to **Defend Hellenism** in view of a rising militant Muslim campaign by Turkey and its allies which has placed Greece, Cyprus and the values of the Western civilization and Christianity under imminent threat. **Greek, Greek Americans and Philhellenes** will need to take upon this challenge and defend the countries, ideals, values, and faith that have contributed across the centuries in what we call today Western Civilization!

We Must Defend Hellenism!

We need you to join our AHEPA A121 (Pawtucket) Chapter!

We ask all of you to join and support your AHEPA Pawtucket chapter. You can get as much involved as you have time or desire. Please keep in mind, that just by becoming a member and through your yearly membership fee you help us to ...

- Defend Hellenism
- Support AHEPA activities and publications and scholarships
- Support our Pawtucket Chapter's activities and representation
- Give strength to our Pawtucket chapter though membership counts
- Make our voice heard for things that matter
- Make a difference in every community and in the country as well

This is an invitation to everyone – we need all of you! Your opinion will always count, whether you are attending our meetings in person, or you are submitting your ideas via email, phone, text or personal conversation. For membership information, applications please see Yianni Apostolakis, Tom Andrikopoulos or Nick Bitsakis. For more information, please visit www.ahepa.org.



Thank you for helping us with our clothing and supplies drive (CASA)!!

To all of you who supported our clothing drive (CASA) thank you so much! We were able to collect 50 boxes of clothing and supplies that were given to those in need! We would like to thank our own Brother, Dr. Walsh and his wife Marie for their lead on this effort, as well as our Brother Tom Andrikopoulos for helping us with his truck to transport the donations. We also thank the Parish Council for all their support!

Thank You, Veterans!



November 11th is Veterans Day! The Order of AHEPA is grateful to our veterans who have served to protect our freedom and to keep peace. We ask the community, including all our chapters, to take a moment to observe this incredibly special day. It is a day to express appreciation and gratitude to all those individuals who served in the United States .



INSPIRED BY FAITH. DRIVEN BY PURPOSE.

At IOCC, we've helped people in more than 60 countries across the world.

DIOCC A Holiday Message!

It only takes just a bit of giving from all of us to give hope to so many!

Let's make this Christmas special by giving the joy of hope



to those who need it the most!

As we are preparing for Christmas, right after Thanksgiving, let us take the opportunity to give thanks in an incredibly special way. Let us reach out and touch somebody who is in need and let us make known to him or her that they are not alone. It does not take that much, just a good heart and willingness to help. In return, there are no words to describe the satisfaction that we all feel knowing that we reached out and helped someone in need. Please take the time to visit the IOCC web link (<u>http://www.iocc.org</u>) and find the opportunity to help that touches your hearts.

Please support the humanitarian mission of our Orthodox Church by donating directly to iocc.org or sending a donation by check, **payable to IOCC**, to the following address: Ioannis Apostolakis, 770 Ware Street, Mansfield, MA 02048.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year from IOCC!



Helping Ugandan Children Pursue Their Dreams

The gift of education can change the course of a child's life. Together with the St. Nektarios Education Fund, IOCC has built and updated three schools run by the Uganda Orthodox Church in Butembe, Gulu, and Lwemiyaga. The schools are helping children realize their dreams.

Whether they want to be engineers, doctors, lawyers, or journalists, these children have that opportunity thanks to your support.

During a pre-pandemic trip to Uganda, I had the pleasure of speaking to His Eminence Metropolitan Jonah of Kampala and All Uganda and to the children about the impact of the schools on their lives. I am happy to share a **video** of that trip, so you can see the people you've helped. Their lives have been forever changed because of the generosity of IOCC donors.

One educated child could make an impact on his or her entire community, raising the quality of life for everyone. I hope you will consider helping to make that difference — and so much more — with your gift to

IOCC. In this season of thanks, we're thankful for your generosity. And we hope that you will support IOCC's programs in Uganda and worldwide.



Picking Up the Pieces in Iowa

"They were a Godsend to us," said Eleonora, 68, of Cedar Rapids, Iowa, after an IOCC-led team cleared six downed trees from her yard. "They did a beautiful job . . . I cannot believe what they were able to do." On August 10, 2020, derecho windstorms — straight line hurricane-force winds — crossed the Midwest, damaging homes, crops, and farm buildings, leaving millions across the region without electricity. Cedar

Rapids was especially hard-hit. Roofs blew open; fallen trees blocked roads and tangled in power lines. Eleonora and her husband, Randall, sheltered in their basement for 45 minutes, praying as trees bent to the ground.

After first responders and emergency managers ensured the area was safe, IOCC organized a cleanup response in the Cedar Rapids area. First steps can be overwhelming after a disaster, so IOCC helps people like Eleonora and Randall — who connected with IOCC through their Orthodox parish — get started. Eleonora told staff, "I cannot thank you guys [enough]. That's a wonderful organization . . . Keep doing the good work." IOCC's site supervisor, along with two IOCC emergency response team leaders, spearheaded cleanup, and local Antiochian and Greek Orthodox parishes partnered in response. Working alongside IOCC's trained team leaders were volunteers from AmeriCorps NCCC and NECHAMA Jewish Response to Disaster. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues, IOCC has taken steps to protect the health and safety of everyone responding, as well as of the people they serve. Circumstances may be unpredictable, but IOCC's commitment to effective service remains constant.

Here is How YOU Can Help More!

- Become a monthly donor to IOCC
- Send a donation to IOCC for a cause that touches your heart!
- Give a donation to Ioannis Apostolakis, payable to IOCC, for any occasion you would like to make a difference!

Help Us Provide for Those in Need!

And remember, 92 cents of every dollar you give goes to our humanitarian work. The other 8 cents is for administration and fundraising costs. Charity Navigator gives IOCC a 4-star rating (highest possible) for financial health, accountability, and transparency. Plus, every dollar you give helps us secure \$7 more in support from governments, foundations, and other sources.

Yiannis Apostolakis

Stewards in Good Standing as of 11/1/2020

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A ssumption Church is in the process of having work performed by landscapers on our grounds at Walnut Hill Cemetery on Armistice Boulevard in Pawtucket. It would be greatly appreciated if you would consider making a donation to help with the upkeep and beautification of the grounds where so many of our deceased loved ones are buried. If you have not already done so, please contribute to the Cemetery Fund so that completion of the work can take place. Special thanks are expressed to the following parishioners for their generous donations:

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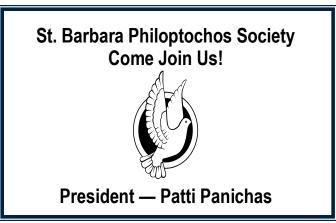
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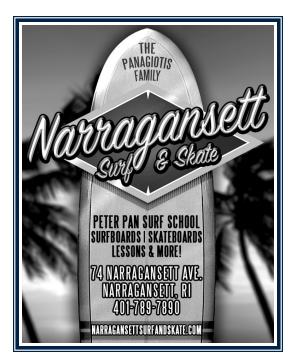
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