Editor’s Desk

Debora Scatuccio

Dear Friends in Christ,

With great sadness I must share with you the passing of our friend Ronald R. Montecalvo. Ron passed away unexpectedly on October 10, 2017.

Ron had taken over my position as Newsletter Editor about five years ago. He gave his time and talents to help the people of Our Lady of Grace and our community will be forever grateful. He will be dearly missed.

Please keep Ron and his family in your prayers. May his memory be forever eternal!

In addition I must also inform our members of the passing of our beloved spiritual advisor, Bishop Sotir Salvatore Ferrara, Bishop emeritus of the Eparchy of Piana degli Albanesi.

Archdeacon John DeMeis and Patrick Foley have had a wonderful relationship with the Bishop, and the people of his community, for several years. While I did not personally know Bishop Ferrara, I had the privilege of meeting his nephew, Giuseppe Ferrara, when he came to visit Archdeacon John a few years ago.

Officers of the Society will be offering up prayers in honor of Bishop Ferrara and Ron Montecalvo. Please join us.

For the next few issues I will be the acting Newsletter Editor. I am asking Society members to prayerfully consider the possibility of being the next Newsletter Editor of OLOGS. If you feel you have the right qualifications and wish to volunteer to help Holy Mother Church, please call Archdeacon John DeMeis at 718-987-8098. Leave a message with your name and telephone number, along with he best time to contact you. Thank you!

Please remember to send in your 2018 donation in order to continue as a society member and to receive the newsletter. This is the only donation requested during the year. Additional donations are appreciated and can be made at anytime thought the year.

Wishing you a blessed Christmas and a happy New Year.

Sia lodato Gesu Cristo!

Debora Scatuccio

Byzantine Prayer for the Deceased

God of the spirits and of all flesh, who have trampled death and annihilated the devil and given life to your world, may you yourself, O Lord, grant to the soul of your deceased servant N., rest in a place of light, a verdant place, a place of freshness, from where suffering, pain and cries are far removed. Do You, O good and compassionate God forgive every fault committed by him in word, work or thought because there is no man who lives and does not sin. You alone are without sin and your justice is justice throughout the ages and your word is truth. Since you, O Christ our God, are the resurrection, the life and the repose of your deceased servant N., we give you glory together with your un-begotten Father and your most holy, good and life-creating Spirit, now and always and forever and ever. Amen.
Letters

My Dearest Deacon,

It’s with a heave heart that I send obituary and prayer card to you. Please know that Ronnie loved you and the work he did for you. He loved every minute of the time he put into that newsletter. Please keep in touch and please stay well. I am praying for you and Ronnie's soul.

Best regards,
Phyllis

This heartfelt letter was written to Archdeacon John DeMeis by Phyllis, the wife of Ronald Montecalvo. Please keep the entire Montecalvo family in your prayers.

Via Facebook

To Our Lady of Grace Italo-Greek Catholic Mission and Society,

Thank you for reminding our members that the American Italian Heritage Museum has an exhibit of the Italo/Greek/Albanian Byzantine Church and the Mission.

You are invited to visit the largest Italian American museum in the East at, 1227 Central Avenue, Albany, NY. Visit our web site at www.americanitalianmuseum.org Facebook link https://www.facebook.com/groups/1375508519434198/

Sincerely,
Prof. Philip J. DiNovo

Prof. DiNovo is a long time supporter of OLOGM/S and the Italian-American community in the USA. He is a former OLOGS newsletter editor and has been a member of our Advisory Board.

Dear Reverend,

Hope you and Rita are well on this Feast of St. Jude. I must once again ask you to remember me in your prayers. It seems after 10 years that my transplanted kidney is wearing out. The anti-rejection medications take their toll. Most likely I will need to go on the list again looking for another gracious donor.

I have to believe that God will provide. I am asking that I remain positive and hopeful in my quest.

Be well. I pray for both to remain healthy and happy. God bless.

Sincerely,
Regina Lutz

Questions & Answers

Q. I am a Roman Catholic and my future husband is Ukrainian Catholic. We want to get married in the Ukrainian Church but my mother insists the custom is to marry in the woman's parish. My future mother-in-law insists it is the opposite. The family agrees to abide by your answer. If a couple of two different Catholic Churches/Rites marry, do they marry in the husband’s church or the wife’s church? Also are the children raised Roman or Ukrainian Catholic? Sophia J. Brooklyn, NJ.

A. Dear Sophia,

Congratulations on your upcoming nuptials. The Catholic tradition is that the couple get married in the church/rite of the husband to be. In turn the children are raised in that church. In the United States the custom is not always followed.

Q. Please explain what the Troparion is and how it is used in the services of the Catholic church.

A.

The Troparion is a short hymn in Byzantine Hymnology. We generally refer to it as the APOLYTIKION. It is usually a thematic hymn. It would refer to a holy day, saint's day etc. The Christmas Apolytikion is “I gennisis Sou.” Other apolytikia are “Christ is risen” for Easter, “O Lord, save your people” for the Holy Cross, “In giving birth” for the Dormition of the Theotokos. The apolytikion is sung at the end of Esperinos, the beginning of Orthros, for feasts after the Doxologia. During the Divine Liturgy, it is sung (three times for major feasts) during the Entrance with the Gospel Book. After, It is repeated by the priest. On great feasts, it is sung after communion.

Byzantine Hymnologists include St. Justinian, St. Romanos, St. Andrew of Crete, St. John of Damascus, St. John Koukouzeles.
and talents we have are gifts from God to be used in the church and of the scriptures remind me daily of the purpose of my life. Any gifts God is the most important person in my life. Prayer and the reading What's religion's role in your life?

I have a great interest in the ecumenical movement and am so happy to see people of faith talking and working together. The American Italian Heritage Organization has members from many different traditions. When I was in college I was asked by Methodist landlady to go to her a supper at her church, I said, “I am Catholic.” She said, “You can eat, can’t you?” In those days we did not to go to other faiths' places of worship. Thank God things have changed. Several weeks ago I was invited to a Jewish Shabbat service at Congregation Beth Israel in Schenectady, which was honoring a young member who was going to spend a year in Israel.

How did growing up in Albany shape your view of history?

I was raised in Arbor Hill in Albany. It was a mixed ethnic and racial neighborhood, and being there was just wonderful. No matter how old I am or where I’ve lived, I will always have great memories of the place where my grandparents and their many children lived. I keep reminding our members to learn more about their history and heritage, to appreciate and pass it on to future generations.

What inspired you to create an organization for Italian Americans?

My father’s father, Philip DiNovo, came to the United States in 1901. Later, his wife, my grandmother, came to this country later as did my maternal grandparents, all of them from the same town in Sicily. They had a great influence on my life, but like most young people it was only later that I fully understood that my Italian heritage and culture were a treasure. In 1978, after reading “Blood of my Blood” by Richard Gambino, who is considered the father of Italian-American studies, I put into action a desire to preserve my Italian heritage. I called some fellow professors and we formed the American Italian Heritage Association. As time went on, I saw the need for a museum and we opened ours in Utica, which had a large Italian-American population. The mission is to honor Italian immigrants throughout history and tell the story of the contributions of Italian Americans. The first Italians came to Albany in 1624, and Italian Americans have had a prominent place in local history. In 1998 our association was looking for a new home in the Capital Region. We found the old and beautiful Our Lady of Mercy Church in Colonie. It was built in 1922 and had been an office building since 1975. It needed a lot of work and it took us five years to raise the money and meet the requirements to open to the public in 2009. Since then, we have had visitors from 32 countries. We are important resource for the community. We have a dedicated group of volunteers. This year marks my 39th as a volunteer.

What role does Columbus play in Italian-Americans' understanding of their heritage?

Millions of Italian immigrants at the turn of the 20th century were the target of prejudice and discrimination. In some places they were not considered white but a mixed race. In 1891, 11 immigrants in New Orleans were taken out of a jail and lynched. That same year, President Benjamin Harrison proclaimed Columbus Day a national holiday. Americans agreed that Columbus was worthy of the honor. Italian immigrants back then could point to Columbus who made the New World known to the old and changed the world in such a way as has rarely happened in human history. Italian Americans today take pride in Columbus’ momentous accomplishment. Like all our heroes he felt short, but what he did for the world far outweighed his faults. We acknowledge the suffering of indigenous people after European exploration, but Columbus is not guilty of genocide, which is an attempt to kill a whole people as happened in the 20th century in the Armenian and Ukrainian genocides and the Nazi Holocaust. There is so much good about the man that most people do not know. We will honor him at our museum on Monday at 11 a.m. and we would be happy to honor native Americans on another day.

What's religion's role in your life?

God is the most important person in my life. Prayer and the reading of the scriptures remind me daily of the purpose of my life. Any gifts and talents we have are gifts from God to be used in the church and the community. I often had to convince my students they had talents they did not recognize. My Catholic faith and the role of lay ministry are important to me to be present and active in the world. The laity have a distinct role in bringing the divine message to every aspect of life. I have also been influenced by the Christopher Movement, a Catholic organization that stresses the strength of people to do good in the community. Its motto is a Chinese proverb: “It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness.” My wife Mary and I are active members of a wonderful parish, All Saints Catholic Church in Albany where I am a Eucharistic Minister, lector and altar server.

Editor’s Note: Prof./Cav. Philip DiNovo is a long time member of Our Lady of Grace Italo-Greek Mission and Society. For a number of years he held the position of OLOGS Newsletter Editor, and has been a well respected member of our Advisory Board.

His contributions to OLOGM/S have been invaluable. Prof. DiNovo is a past awardee of the Staten Island Council of Churches’ “Outstanding Services Award” for Our Lady of Grace, as well as receiving OLOGS’ “Certificate of Excellence Annual Award.”

Prof. DiNovo also holds the title of Cavaliere (abbreviated Cav), one of the five orders of knighthood awarded in recognition of service to the Italian Republic. Prof. DiNovo was awarded the title in recognition of his work on behalf of Italian culture in America.

A copy of the Nursing Madonna, the Official Icon of Our Lady of Grace Italo-Greek Catholic Mission & Society is on display at the American Italian Heritage Museum.
A Guide to Praying with an Icon

Jim Forest

From the archives: Icons are not just beautiful paintings. The purpose of icons is to help us pray. Jim Forest offers instructions for putting them to good use.

“In the beginning was the Word,” wrote St John. “He is the image [ikon in Greek] of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation,” wrote St. Paul. We meet him still in both word and image.

Both have figured in the worshiping life of followers of Christ from the church’s beginning, as visitors to the catacombs in Rome are reminded. The bones are mainly gone, but icons remain on the walls and ceilings of those underground places where Christians prayed and celebrated the Eucharist.

In the eighth century, when the emperor of Constantinople outlawed icons and initiated a 55-year wave of destruction of sacred images in the East, many iconographers fled to Italy for safety and continued their work under the pope’s protection.

Fashion can destroy even more thoroughly than imperial edicts. Through never banned in the West, icons gradually fell out of favor during the Renaissance. Increasingly religious paintings moved toward natural lighting, the illusion of three dimensions, and the ever more vivid portrayal of emotion—all qualities carefully avoided in iconography, which aims for silence and stillness. Icons are not emotionally manipulative. They are less a display of individual talent than the creation of a zone of prayer using artistic minimalism.

Early in the 20th century a slow recovery of appreciation of icons began. Today icons can be found not only in Orthodox and Catholic churches but also in Protestant churches and homes. It is a form of ecumenism without words or arguments.

Icons may be beautiful, but they do not exist just to add a little color or a special atmosphere to the rooms they happen to be in. They’re there to help us pray. An icon that isn’t being used in prayer is like a musical instrument not being played or a cookbook that never gives birth to a meal.

But just how can you use them in prayer? First of all, identify a place in your home—such as a corner of a room or a fireplace mantel—that provides a place where you can stand for short times slightly apart from the busyness of daily life. This will be your “icon corner.”

At the beginning you probably won’t have any hand-painted icons, but in religious bookstores or online you can easily find good, inexpensive printed icons mounted on wood.

You might start with an icon of the face of Christ. These are usually called Pantocrator icons, from the Greek word for “Lord of Creation.” They show not only his face but the book containing the gospels resting against his heart. If the book is open, it will often show one of the “I am” texts—such as “I am the truth, the way, and the life.” Such icons remind us that God became incarnate, revealing himself not only to our ancestors but to us, and that each person—no matter how well he or she has managed to hide it—is made in God’s image. Finally such icons remind us that one day we will be present for the Last Judgment and will hear Christ say, “What you have done to the least person, you did to me.”

You may also want an icon of Mary holding Christ in her arms. In many of these their faces are touching. These “tenderness icons” vividly remind us that love is at the core of life, and that to follow Christ and to revere his mother inevitable draws us toward the source of love and mercy. Mary’s body language always draws us toward her son, as if she were saying, “Do whatever he tells us.”

Arrange your icon corner so that a candle or vigil lamp can be lit during the periods when you’re praying. Icons are best suited to places that aren’t brightly lit and seem to flourish in candlelight. So there you are in your icon corner. But how are you praying? You may be praying in silence, simply remembering the crucial fact that God is at the center of everything, that it is impossible not to be in God’s presence even if we’re totally oblivious to this reality.

You may be able to talk to God as comfortably as if you were talking to your very best friend. God made us to communicate and much of that communication is in words. Something terrible may have happened and you may just want to stand there and cry—or complain to God.

If you are at all like me, someone who usually feels embarrassed with attempts at devising my own words of prayer, you may want to use some of the prayers that have arisen during the centuries Jews and Christians have been around: the psalms or canticles in the Old and New Testaments (such as the one by the three young men in the furnace in Daniel, or Mary’s Magnificat). In any religious bookstore you will find collections of prayers organized into periods of the day. Little by little you can learn many prayers by heart.

Your icons don’t have to be suitable for a fine art book. It’s the faith of the praying person that matters most—a lesson I learned from Dorothy Day.

In her early 60s at the time, she was having increasing trouble climbing the five flights to her apartment in Manhattan’s Little Italy. We found another not far away and only one flight up, but in appalling condition. A friend and I went down to clean and paint it. We dragged box after box of debris down to the street, including what seemed to us an awful painting of the Holy Family rendered in bright colors against a gray background on a piece of plywood. We shook our heads, deposited it in the trash along the curb, and went back to our labor.

Not long after that, Dorothy arrived, the painting in hand, “Look what I found! The Holy Family! It’s a providential sign, a blessing.” She put it on the mantel of the apartment’s bricked-up fireplace.

Looking at it again, this time I saw it was a work of love.

This article was originally published in the January 2002 issue of U.S. Catholic. Icon Image: Flickr cc via Randy OHC
Christmas Hymns

Patrick Foley

During this sacred time of year it is important for us to continue the traditions of our faith.

The Katabasia is sung during Othros.

ΧΡΙΣΤΟ’Σ ΓΕΝΝΑ’ΤΑΙ
(Cristos Yennatai)
Christ is born, glorify him!
Christ has come down from Heaven, receive Him!
Christ is now on earth, exalt Him!
O you earth, sing to the Lord!
O you nations, praise Him in joy, for He has been glorified!

Apotitikon is sung at all services, usually three times. During the Liturgy, it is sung as the priest makes Little Entrance, with the Gospel Book and again after Communion.

Η ΓΕ’ΝΝΗΣΙ’Σ ΣΟΥ (I Yennisis Sou)
Your Nativity, Ο Christ our God,
has shed the light of knowledge upon the world.
Through it, those who had been star-worshippers learned through a star to worship you,
Ο Son of justice, and to recognize in You
the One who comes from on high.
Ο Lord, glory to you!

The KONDAKION is sung after the Apotitikon. The Christmas Kondakion is a master piece and is one of the oldest hymns of the Church.

Η ΠΑΡΤΗΝΟΣ ΣΗ’ΜΕΡΟΝ (I Parthenos Simera)
The Virgin today gives birth to the One who surpasses all essences,
and the earth offers a cave to God, the Inacessible One,
Angels sing his glory together with the shepeards.
For to us is born a Child, God in all eternity.

Two of the hymns, Christ is born and The Virgin today, are sung at all services during the preparatory period for Christmas. (After the Feast of the Presentation, 21 November.) You can listen to them on YouTube.

Matthew 1:18-23

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came to be: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.” All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

SAVE A BABY-SAVE THE WORLD!
Abortion kills more than 6,000,000 babies every year. Pray for Life!

Our Lady of Grace Italo-Greek-Catholic Society 2018 Membership Form


Make your check out to OLOGS and send to:

Our Lady of Grace Society
51 Redgrave Avenue
Staten Island, New York 10306-3620 - U.S.A.

Please Print Clearly. Feel free to copy form. Thank You For Your Donation!

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Obituary

Ronald R. Montecalvo, Age 79.


He was the son of the late Ralph and Frances (Solitro) Montecalvo; husband of Phyllis A. (Mannarelli) Montecalvo; father of Gian Montecalvo (Robin); and brother of Roberta Turcone (John).

Ronald graduated from Providence College in 1960 with a Bachelor of Arts degree. He was the chairman of the North Providence Zoning Board and was a Charter and Lifetime Member of the Rhody Fly Rodders. He was also the executive editor of Our Lady of Grace Italio-Greek Catholic Mission and Society. During his lifetime he had numerous hobbies including fly-tying, love of the opera, a voracious reader and known in the fishing community as “the fisherman with the white hat”. He also leaves his granddog Bosco as he was known as his beloved Poppi and predeceased by his beloved dog Nikki.

Ronald was a member of our Lady Of Grace Italio-Greek Catholic Mission and Society. For the past five years he held the position of Newsletter Editor. In February of 2015 Ronald was awarded the Staten Island Council of Churches Annual Community Service Award for Our Lady of Grace.

Visitation was held on Friday, October 13th in the PONTARELLI-MARINO Home, 971 Branch Avenue, Providence. Relatives and friends were invited to attend a Mass of Christian Burial on October 14th at St. Basil the Great Melkite Church, 15 Skyview Drive, Lincoln, Military Honors followed.

Matthew 8,5-17

When Jesus went into Capernaum a centurion came up and pleaded with him. ‘Sir,’ he said, ‘my servant is lying at home paralysed and in great pain.’ Jesus said to him, ‘I will come myself and cure him.’ The centurion replied, ‘Sir, I am not worthy to have you under my roof; just give the word and my servant will be cured. For I am under authority myself and have soldiers under me; and I say to one man, “Go,” and he goes; to another, “Come here,” and he comes; to my servant, “Do this,” and he does it.’

When Jesus heard this he was astonished and said to those following him, ‘In truth I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found faith as great as this. And I tell you that many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the kingdom of Heaven; but the children of the kingdom will be thrown out into the darkness outside, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth.’ And to the centurion Jesus said, ‘Go back, then; let this be done for you, as your faith demands.’ And the servant was cured at that moment.

And going into Peter’s house Jesus found Peter’s mother-in-law in bed and feverish. He touched her hand and the fever left her, and she got up and began to serve him.

That evening they brought him many who were possessed by devils. He drove out the spirits with a command and cured all who were sick. This was to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah: He himself bore our sicknesses away and carried our diseases.

Prayer Requests

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:6)

Please remember in your prayers:

- Patrick Foley, personal intentions.
- Christopher Ditolla, healing.
- Cuchiarra family, personal intentions.
- Romano family, personal intentions.
- Prof./Cav. Philip J. DiNovo, intentions.
- Marie Gulmi, personal intentions.
- Intentions of the Scatuccio family.

- For the people of the United States and our elected officials.
- Archdeacon John and Rita DeMeis, pray for healing.
- For the safety of our military members and first responders.
- Deacon Joseph Pasquella, personal intentions.
- Regina Lutz, personal intentions.
- Staten Island Council of Churches intentions of members.
- Janet Jemec, healing & personal intentions.
- Montecalvo family, personal intentions.
- Intentions of Pope Francis.
- Intentions of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.
- Intentions of Bishop Donato Oliverio of Lungro.
- Intentions of Archbishop Timothy M. Dolan of New York.

Thank you for your prayer support.
If you have a prayer request or update send it to OLOGS at ItaloGreek@aol.com.

Office of the Vicar General
Archdiocese of New York

Procedure Relating to Abuse and Misconduct

It is required that we publish this announcement. In keeping with the Archdiocesan policy regarding sexual abuse of minors, this information is provided to ensure that our children remain safe and secure.

Anyone who needs to report an alleged incident of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest, deacon, religious or lay person serving in the Archdiocese of New York is asked to contact Sr. Eileen Clifford, O.P.

Phone: 12-371-1000 Ext. 2949
Email: victimsassitance@archny.org
Web Site: http://archny.org/victims-assistance-coordinators

Victims Assistance Coordinators are individuals designated by the Cardinal to receive and coordinate the handling of allegations of child abuse by Archdiocesan personnel. Please visit the Victims Assistance Coordinators section of the website to learn more, or report a complaint.

OLOGS President, Patrick Foley, visiting with Bishop Ferrara at his home in Italy.

Office of the Vicar General

Archdiocese of New York

Note: Since the Bishops of the Italo-Greek Rite are in Italy and Greece, Our Lady of Grace Italo-Greek Catholic Mission and Society is under the omophor of the Roman Archbishop of New York, Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan.

Obituary

Bishop Sotir Salvatore Ferrara, Age 79.

Sotir Ferrara the Bishop emeritus of the Eparchy of Piana degli Albanesi, a diocese of the Italo-Greek-Albanian Catholic Church in Sicily, Italy passed away on November 25, 2017.

He was born in Piana degli Albanesi on December 5, 1937. After studying in preparation for the priesthood on November 19, 1960, he was ordained priest. On October 15, 1988 Fr. Ferrara was elected by the Pope John Paul II to the bishopric of Eparchy of Piana degli Albanesi. He received episcopal consecration on January 15, 1989 by Archbishop Miroslav Stefan Marusyn. Bishop Ferrara retired in April 2013 upon reaching the age limit of 75.

The Bishop was a beloved friend, mentor and spiritual advisor to the members of Our Lady of Grace. He honored and supported the Italo-Greek Catholics of the United States in so many ways. Bishop Ferrara lived a life of humanity, humility and holiness. He will be forever in our hearts.

Bishop Sotir Ferrara is survived by his nephew, Giuseppe Ferrara, family, parishioners and many friends world wide.

Eterno riposo dona a lui o Signore la luce perpetua! Eterna Memoria!

The Funeral Liturgy of Bishop Ferrera may be viewed on line at https://www.facebook.com/amarcordhora/videos/248561832342355/?fref=mentions&pnref=story

Archdiocese of New York

TIMOTHY CARDINAL DOLAN

9/27/2017

Dear friends,

Can you imagine a Middle East, the very lands where our Lord started his ministry and from where the apostles led the Early Church, without Christians?

One century ago, Christians composed 20% of the Middle Eastern population. Today, discrimination, genocide, and terrorism have lowered that numbers to 3-4% of the region’s inhabitants. Still, many Christian families remain, and seek to protect their communities, churches, and history.

It is my privilege to serve on the Religious Advisory Board for In Defense of Christians, a nonprofit and nonpartisan organization advocating for the U.S. Government to stand with the persecuted Christians of the Middle East.

This October 24-26, Eastern Catholic patriarchs and their Orthodox counterparts will come from the Middle East to raise awareness about the plight of our fellow Christians in the home of Christianity at the 2017 IDC Summit in Washington, D.C. I invite you to join them in prayer and then on Capitol Hill in action.

Register for the IDC Summit at https://indefenseofchristians.org/idc-2017-summit/

Faithfully in Christ,

Faithfully in Christ,

Timothy Michael Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York

Eastern Christian Stamp Album

Vincent Romano

May 1, 2017 marked the one hundredth anniversary of the founding of the Congregation of the Oriental Church. To celebrate this milestone the Vatican Post Office issued a commemorative Souvenir Sheet (a souvenir sheet is a small group of stamps still attached to the sheet it was printed on). The Oriental Congregation was founded to assist the Oriental churches develop and protect their rights.

The sheet, shown on the right, reproduces the apse of the Congregations Byzantine Chapel. which was written by the Dutch Benedictine Jerome Leussink between 1940 and 1943. The actual stamp is on the bottom of the sheet and shows the Communion of the Apostles, St. Peter on the left and St. Paul on the right. It is not an attempt to describe the Last Supper as historic even, but rather to present the Sacrament of the Eucharist as a monument of the faithful with the Body and Blood of the Lord. Above the Apostles are the inscriptions in Greek, “This is my Body” and “This is my Blood.” Above the Stamp is an image of Our Lady of the Sign which would be found behind the Altar of most Byzantine Churches.

Editor’s Note: Vincent Romano is a long time philatelist. One of his main interests as a stamp enthusiasts is collecting international stamps highlighting Eastern Christian Art, including icons and historical events. Vincent has been collecting stamps since childhood.

Feast Days of December Saints

December is the Month of the Divine Infancy

❖ St. Barbara the Great Martyr. Virgin & martyr.
❖ Maternity of St. Anne (Mother of the Theotokos) Dec. 9th.
❖ St. Spiridon, the Wonderworker. Dec. 12th. Widower, shepherd, Bishop of Tremithus, Cyprus.
❖ St. Lucia (Lucy) of Syracuse in Sicily. Dec. 13th. Patron of the eyes, blindness.
❖ St. Adelaide. Dec. 16th. Patron of abuse victims; brides; empresses; exiles; in-law problems; parenthood; parents of large families; princesses; prisoners; widows, and second marriages; step-parents.

Your Name Day is important. It is the date of the canonized Saint with who’s Feast Day you share. It is customary to celebrate it with family and friends. We extend best wishes to those who have a Name Day.
Archdeacon’s Door

Very Rev. Archdeacon John F. DeMeis

At a recent flea market, in New Jersey, I had the good fortune to purchase a statue of George Kastrioti Skanderbeg. The vendor had no idea that it was Skanderbeg. He assumed it was a knight from some kingdom in Europe. I purchased the statue at a great price. The statue is almost 3 feet tall.

The Skanderbeg statue is holding a sword in his right hand and a lance in his left hand. The lance is missing the spear head. I will remedy that. The breast shield is the double headed eagle in black with a red background, with silver cross in center. Skanderbeg was an Albanian hero who was considered a second Alexander the Great.

Skanderbeg was born Gjergj Kastrioti on May 6, 1405, in the Principality of Kastrioti, part of modern-day Albania. He died on January 15, 1468 in the then, Lezhë, Republic of Venice, now Albania.

Skanderbeg is the most prominent figure in the history of Albania and among the most prominent figures of Europe.

Skanderbeg’s military skills were of the highest caliber. For over twenty-five years Skanderbeg and his army protected the Albanians from the invasion by the Ottoman Empire. He was considered by many Western Europeans to be a model of Christian resistance against the Ottoman Muslims. In 1463, he became the chief commander of the crusading forces of Pope Pius II. He was honored not only by the Pope, but by the Italians as well as the Albanians. Skanderbeg joined with the Venetians he fought against the Ottomans during the Ottoman–Venetian War, which lasted from 1463 to 1479. He remained with the Venetians, as a military officer, until his death in January 1468.

The coat of arms of Albania and the flag of Albania are based on the flag and seal of Skanderbeg.

The emblem above the head of the two-headed eagle is the helmet of Skanderbeg, surmounted with billy-goats’ horns. Skanderbeg’s personal seal include the six pointed star.

(Seal image from albanism.com)
Christmas Blessings 2017
Buon Natale e Benedetto Anno Nuovo!
Καλά Χριστούγεννα και Ευλογημένο το Νέο Έτος!
Gëzuar Krishtlindjet dhe Vitin e Ri i bekuar!
Merry Christmas and Blessed New Year!

The members of Our Lady of Grace Italo Greek Catholic Mission and Society extend our greetings to you all as we celebrate the Nativity of our Lord, God and Savior Jesus Christ!

We humbly ask the Lord’s blessing upon you and your families for a joyous, peaceful and grace-filled Christmas and a blessed New Year.

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Thy Nativity, O Christ our God, has shone to the world the Light of wisdom! For by it, those who worshiped the stars, were taught by a Star to adore Thee, the Sun of Righteousness, and to know Thee, the Orient from on High. O Lord, glory to Thee! Troparion (Tone 4)

"And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing that is come to pass, which the Lord hath unto us." Luke 2:15