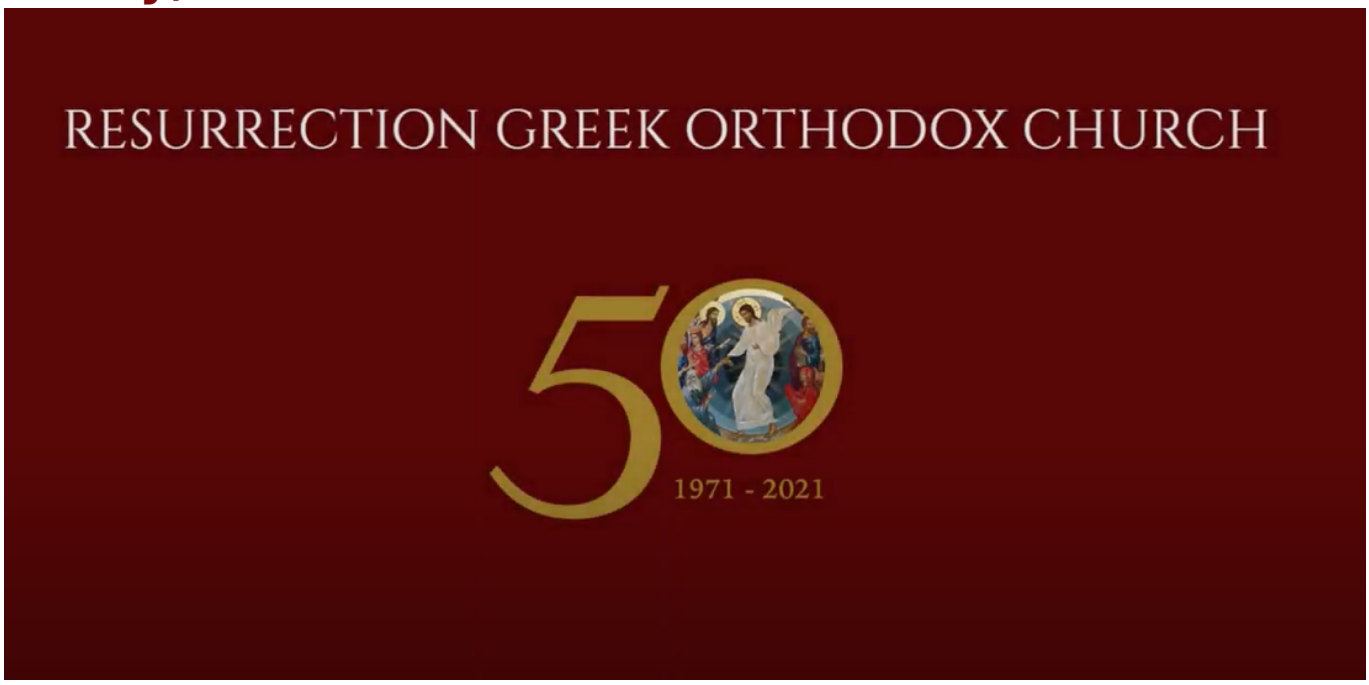
02/12/2021

Resurrection Greek Orthodox Church in Castro Valley, CA Celebrates 50 Years



The Resurrection community came together in love and joy to “honor the past, celebrate the present, and look toward a new and exciting future” with a weekend full of festivities. Under the leadership of Father Nikolaos Bekris and chairman Gary Wallner, the 50th Anniversary Committee planned an immersive weekend for all ages from November 12 – 14, 2021.

The weekend began with a ‘70s-themed Youth Night, led by Youth Director Anna Teodosiadis, where more than 30 young (and young at heart) people boogied-down to the top hits of the decade, played games, broke open a disco-ball pinata, and filled a time-capsule with pictures, current day memorabilia, and their predictions on the legacy they will create over the next 50 years for the Church – to be opened in 2071!

Over 300 people attended the Gala Celebration on Saturday, November 13 hosted by Mistress of Ceremonies Christine Psefteas, and included congratulatory messages by His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco and His Grace Bishop Ioannis of Phocaea. Special guests in attendance included Presvytera Elaine Stephanides, who was the first Presvytera of the parish; Tom Avramis who served as Parish priest from 1983-1991; Lisa Avramis who was Presvytera at that time; Past parish priests Father Photios Dumont (1994-2004); and Father Michael Prevas

(2004-2015), Presvytera Matia and their children. Also present from the parish was Presvytera Stella Bekris, Deacon Justin Bosl and Diakonissa Annemarie Bosl, and their children, and Presvytera Alexandra Diamant.

Parish Council President Rajai Akkawi opened the evening by recognizing the past parish council presidents and honoring the past Ladies Philoptochos Society presidents before Christine Psefteas thanked the various event sponsors and introduced the evening's theme: "Honoring our Past, Growing for the Future." Father Nikolaos Bekris shared his experience Building the Body of Christ at Resurrection, saying "…like the early Christians, the people of our parish have accomplished much over 50 years with three, fundamental qualities: faith, love, and humility," and shared that His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos told him when first arriving at the Resurrection church, "With those people, you will work miracles."

Anniversary committee chairman Gary Wallner took attendees on a walk down memory lane, highlighting the sacrifices and hard work of the parish's founding families, and the impact they made on those who are now "continuing their commitment to the church and the principles of time, talent and treasure." He went on to say that "it's now up to us to inspire a new generation to follow in our footsteps and be the future leaders of the parish – a future where we continue to grow and 'be the Church,' a parish family filled with love for one another, and a place where we all belong."

After a scrumptious dinner prepared by Chef Michael Vitakes, a video produced by parishioner Mark Fridell depicting the history of the parish and testimonials from past clergy and parishioners was well-received and thoroughly enjoyed by all.

Building the Body of Christ Steering Committee Chair, George Psefteas then spoke about how the parish is "Growing for the Future" and shared an animated conceptual model of the envisioned new Resurrection Greek Orthodox Church on property currently being purchased outright, with zero debt in Pleasanton, California. He announced the project's goal of "within 5 years from when we anticipate to start early phases of work on the new site in the spring of 2022, it is our intent to witness the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ at the Pascha of 2027 at the Greek Orthodox Church of the Resurrection in Pleasanton, California!" Thanks to the generosity of those who sponsored or attended the Gala, and additional donations received from within the parish, over $100,000 was raised for the Building the Body of Christ project.

On Sunday, His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos celebrated the Hierarchical

Divine Liturgy, along with His Grace Bishop Ioannis of Phocaea and visiting clergy, with memorial prayers offered at the conclusion of the service for those in the parish who had fallen asleep in the Lord, before turning the program over to next-generation parish leaders to talk about their plans for the future over a delicious champagne brunch.

Sunday's message was one of Hope. Mistress of Ceremonies Stavroula Psefteas and Master of Ceremonies Jacob Wallner, along with three future leaders inspired the parish with their experiences growing up in the church.

Altar Boys Peter Psefteas and Joseph Bosl spoke of their love for the liturgy and how they were welcomed by their older peers to serve in the Altar. Peter shared that through service, he "was able to see what was happening at each stage of the liturgy and understand what we really celebrate every Sunday." He reflected on how he was able to form tight bonds with "…my best friends, my closest friends for more than 10 years…my family. Our connection is so strong because it is rooted in our faith."

Altar Boy Alex Holton ended the presentation by talking about one man who has inspired him the most – his grandfather, Fawaz Khanachet of blessed memory. Those who knew Fawaz well knew of his conviction and passion for the growth of this parish. He was involved in many aspects of the parish life, but nothing was closer to his heart than the dream of relocating our parish, expanding orthodoxy, and bringing the community in the Tri-Valley closer to Christ.

Alex's grandfather was his strongest connection to the church. "His dedication to our church was unwavering and ever-stable…his legacy will live on through me and as we progress through the next 50 years, I will never lose his fun and loving spirit, creative but grounded vision, and outstanding dedication to the church."

His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos praised the young leaders for "speaking from their minds and from their hearts," and told those in attendance, "I am inspired by these young people, because I see the hope for tomorrow is happening TODAY. Today, with the immense talent and commitment of these young people, the dreams of the parish will become reality. May God inspire you all to do the work of God in the Resurrection community."

As the weekend festivities came to a close, one parishioner remarked, "…this was the best event in our 50 year history. From the '70s night on Friday to the last emotional goodbyes on Sunday, it was a weekend full of positive energy. The speeches, the video, the food, and the audio/video production were first-class. Most

importantly, seeing the kids and young adults getting involved and talking about the next 50 years shows that we are in good hands for the future. We must help them to achieve that success!”

To view the Resurrection 50th Anniversary video, Youth slideshow, In Memoriam Tribute, and Animated Walk-through of the future Resurrection church in Pleasanton, CA. visit: https://bit.ly/50thAnnvPlaylist

Renee Taylor is the Communications Coordinator for the Resurrection Greek Orthodox Church, bringing with her years of experience in strategic communications and employee engagement.

(photo credit: Courtesy of the Resurrection parish)

Current and former parish clergy with Metropolitan Gerasimos. (Left to Right: Rev. Father Photios Dumont, His Eminence Metropolitan Gerasimos of San Francisco, His Grace Bishop Ioannis of Phocaea, Rev. Father Michael Prevas, Rev. Father Nikolaos Bekris)

1/12/2021

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