



Holy Cross Greek School Newsletter January - April 2023



«Τη γλώσσα μου έδωσαν ελληνική Το
σπίτι φτωχικό στις αμμονδιές του
Ομήρου... Μονάχη έγνοια η γλώσσα μου
στις αμμονδιές του Ομήρου...»
(Οδυσσέας Ελύτης, Άξιον Εστί)

Dear parents & students

Even though there have been a few months since January, I would like to officially welcome everyone back and wish you all a Happy New Year!

Since our last newsletter in December the children have been progressing really well and have been engaging in the work their teachers have planned for them.

Our older students who are studying Ellinomatheia with Mrs Vana on Friday afternoons have been working really hard towards their exams which are fast approaching (23/05/2023) I am sure they will do exceptionally well, we are proud of them no matter what the outcome.

The following months brought with them some important dates for our diaries both culturally and religiously in which our children have found very interesting.

They have been learning about the different cultural customs and events such as the celebration of The Three Hierarchs, the Carnival, The Greek Revolution of 25th of March 1821, the Cyprus conflict of 1st April 1955 and they also got engaged in marking The International Greek Language Day.

January

On our first day back from The Christmas half term Father Vasileios blessed our school by performing the sanctification prayer and cutting the Vasilopita which is a New Year's Day bread/cake.

In Greece and in many other areas in eastern Europe and the Balkans the Vasilopita traditionally contains a hidden coin or trinket which gives good luck to the receiver – this year Father Vasileios was the lucky winner of the coin!



Dates for your diary

3rd academic term

Tuesday 18/04/2023 –

Saturday 08/07/2023

Easter Half Term

Saturday 08/04/2023 –

Saturday 15/04/2023

Summer Half term

Monday 29/05/2023 –

Saturday 03/06/2023

Last academic day for Greek school

Saturday 08/07/2023

Every year on the 30th of January, our Greek Orthodox Church celebrates The Three Hierarchs, they are Basil the Great (also known as Basil of Caesarea), Gregory the Theologian (also known as Gregory of Nazianzus) and John Chrysostom.

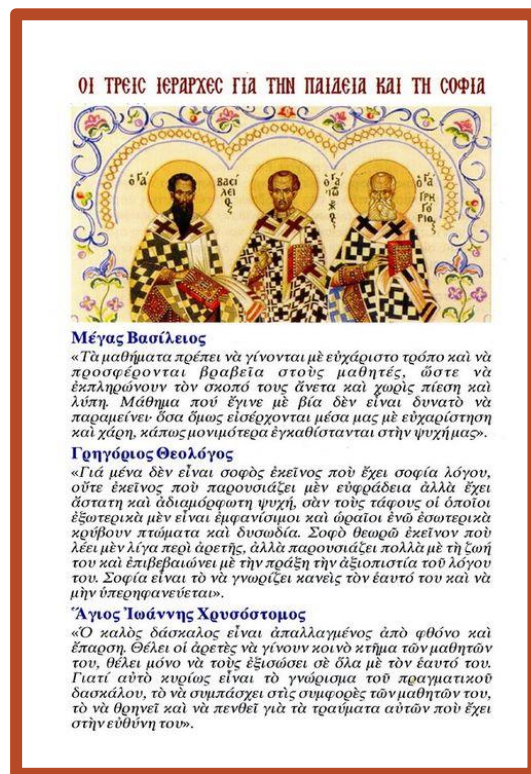
They were highly influential bishops of the early church who played pivotal roles in shaping Christian theology. In Eastern Christianity they are also known as the Three Great Hierarchs and Ecumenical Teachers, while in Roman Catholicism the three are honoured as Doctors of the Church.

Their work is so vast and it is not possible to fit into a few lines such as their writings on the education of students which are diachronic and are applied to modern teaching and pedagogical principles for the choice of material, the rhythm of teaching, differentiated teaching, penalties and communication in the classroom.

The Three Hierarchs were great men of letters who were not only defenders of Orthodox Christianity, but supporters of Greek learning.

The three are venerated as saints in Eastern Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Anglicanism, and other Christian churches and have been celebrated since 1100 A.D.

Since 1842 the feast of the "Three Hierarchs" is also called the Festival of Letters. It is the celebration of teachers and students, books and learning. This usually includes special events which are dedicated to the preservation and promulgation of the ideals of Orthodox Christianity and Hellenic education.



February

On the 9th of February we celebrated International Greek Language Day, it was also the day of remembrance for our national poet Dionysios Solomos.

The value of the Greek language is reflected in its historicity and timelessness.

It is the language through which great philosophers, poets, writers and scientists left us their work. It is where man developed philosophy, science and art, where Homer recited his teachings and where ancient theatre and tragedies were taught.

It is the language which paved the way and embellished the words of some iconic and modern poets, a language which even to this day we use on a daily basis when we need to refer to certain subjects in philosophy, science and art. Indeed, it has been claimed that as many as 150,000 words in Modern English have their roots in the Ancient Greek language, now that is something!

"This is a language that has been spoken continuously for 40 centuries. While for 28 centuries it has been written with the same script and using the same Greek alphabet and for 24 centuries it has been written with the same spelling"
(G. Babiniotis, Professor of philology and former Minister of Education and Religious Affairs of Greece)

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It is the language in which man tried to make a system of law, for all people to coexist together, and thus democracy was born, and it is in Greek, that the most important texts of Christianity were written and then disseminated throughout the world.

Greek has "haunted the history of human civilization" and "separates all pre-Hellenic from post-Hellenic civilizations" according to Professor of Philosophy at Harvard and Yale, Eric Havelock.

The Greek language, Greek education and culture, with the values they contain, can contribute positively to the creation of a productive and peaceful universality. Therefore, we owe the celebration of the International Greek Language Day, first of all to the Greek language itself and to what it has offered to humanity.

We also owe this day to those who brought it this far, 40 centuries now, either by cultivating it or simply by speaking it.

The preservation of the Greek language in the Diaspora is a matter of the utmost national importance. It is the means not only of elementary philological communication, but also of preserving the national identity of our children, who through coming in contact and learning the language they acquire the awareness of their Greek historical and cultural heritage as well as their origin, of which they can feel proud of.

Looking back on the day.....



Mrs. Sophia is reading to the children the story 'The Lighthouse Mouse'

Mrs. Elena is reading to the children, tales by Aesop 'The Hare and the Tortoise'



With the help of their teachers, the children found words with Greek origin, they then wrote them on their cards and created their own drawings depending on the words e.g. diamond, theater, telephone, mathematics etc.



Did you know...

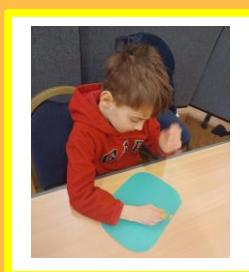
The national anthem of Greece consists of the first two verses of the poem "Hymn to Liberty" was written in May 1823 in Zakynthos by the poet Dionysios Solomos.

On the 4th of August 1865, by royal decree, the "Hymn to Liberty" was established as our national anthem.

And since the 18th of November 1966 the "Hymn to Liberty" has been established as the national anthem of the Republic of Cyprus.

The poem "Hymn to Liberty" consists of 158 four-line verses, of which the first 24 were established as the national anthem.

Of these, the first two are those that are recited and always accompany the raising and lowering of the flag, they are also sang at official moments and ceremonies.



This year February was also the month that brought with it another special event in the Greek calendar, the Apokries!

The word Apokries in Greek comes from the word apochi & kreas (abstinence + meat) in other words avoiding meat for a certain amount of time. The Carnival that follows marks the days before the fasting begins.

The Apokries (Greek Carnival) is a family celebration with street parties, parades, and masquerades. The weekend of the 25th & 26th of February saw many Greeks take the roads dressed in colourful, amazing and fun costumes to celebrate this cultural and social event, in other words Paaartyyy!

And this year our Greek school did just that!

On Saturday the 25th of February our school hosted its first Carnival party, it was an amazing event which brought the community together. The food and the company we shared was wonderful and we managed to raise a good sum, that will go towards the schools' supplies.

I would like to thank everyone that came to support our school, the parents and the children the PTA team who did an astoundingly amazing job planning and preparation for this even - we couldn't do it without you! As well as our church (Father Vasileios, the church committee and its volunteers) who are always by our side every step of the way.

Looking back on the day....



Did you know...

"Genitsaroi and Boules" in Naoussa and "Ragoutsaria" in Kastoria

The custom of "Giannitsaroi and Boules" is the most renowned happening in Naoussa. Participants include exclusively unmarried men who dress-up as "Genitsaroi". "Boula", the bride, is also performed by a man. Children, together with musicians playing traditional instruments, also take part in the event.

"Ragoutsaria", as the Carnival of Kastoria is called, refers to the revival of the ancient Dionysian ceremonies and aims to help the locals forget the troubles of the year. Beyond its symbolic interpretations, Ragoutsaria give the city's festivities a playful touch, attracting visitors from all over Greece.



Have a look at our booklet:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_cdF6y6iqOrqgEtqEksZoISuV1iPsy64/view?usp=share_link

Food was provided by The Life Goddess:
<https://www.thelifegoddess.com/>

Music by provided by DJ Andera Nicolaou:
<https://www.nolimitevents.co.uk/>

Holy Cross Greek school would like to thank all the sponsors and their generous donations that made this evening possible, your support is greatly appreciated!

March

March came along and with it brought two more celebrations which our school embraced.

We began with Mother's day which in the UK is celebrated annually, this year it fell on Sunday the 19th of March.

Our children had fun creating beautiful cards decorated with their precious drawings and embellished with assorted stickers.

Mothering Sunday in the UK

Mother's Day in the UK has its origins in the 16th century custom of 'Mothering Sunday', which fell on the fourth Sunday of Lent. That's three Sundays before Easter, and the tie-in with the church calendar is why it's always a bit confusing trying to work out when it is each year. The tradition was that you paid your 'mother church' a visit - either the church where you were christened, or your parish church, or the nearest cathedral - and you were said to be 'going a-mothering' when you did so.

On this day, which came to be known as Mothering Sunday, servants were given the day off to go back to the parish they were born, with children and other family members also joining in. Because this occasion was a rare opportunity for a family get-together, the focus of the day gradually shifted to visiting not just the mother church, but one's own mother.

On the way to the church, people gathered wildflowers to leave in the church and to present to their mothers. And, although the day fell during Lent, the austerity was relaxed for Mothering Sunday and people treated their mothers to edible gifts such as Simnel cake, 'mothering buns' or fig pie.

Mothers's day in Greece

The first references to Mother's Day and motherhood come from ancient Greece. Mother Earth (Gaia), wife of Uranus, is the personification of nature, who gives birth to the whole world and is worshipped as the supreme deity. The tradition then passes to her daughter, Rhea, wife and sister of Cronus.

Rhea is worshipped as the "Mother of the Gods", as she seems to be the first to give birth and raise her children with her own milk. The ancient Greeks paid homage to Rhea every spring, as she was also the goddess of the earth and fertility. Mother's Day is considered a good reason to show sincerity about the love and appreciation we have for the person who gave us life.

Today in Greece, Mother's Day was associated with the feast of the Ypapanti (2nd of February), it is when the Greek Orthodox church celebrates the Virgin Mary with Joseph who took the 40-day old Jesus to the Temple for his first blessing, a move that Christian mothers still make today.

The equivalent celebration of Mother's Day began in 1929 with obvious symbolism. But in the 1960s, this celebration deteriorated and the Western-style custom of celebrating the second Sunday in May was reinforced.



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Greek war of Independence (25th March 1821) & Cyprus EOKA Campaign (1st April 1955).

Each year on the 25th of March whether Greeks are in Greece, Cyprus or all over the world we celebrate The Greek Revolution of 1821 which marked the historical course of our modern history.

The Anniversary of March 25th is an important day for Hellenism. It is a celebration that unites all Greeks and stimulates their sense of patriotism and faith.

The choice of this day is not a coincidence either, it marks an important day in the Greek Orthodox calendar. It coincides with the day Archangel Gabriel brought the happy news to the virgin Mary that she would be giving birth to the Son of God. Therefore, the revolution was associated with this important celebration of the Greek Orthodox Church, the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary.

The Greek Revolution of 1821, sealed the national course of the Greeks, since the successful final outcome of the Greek War of Independence (1821–1829) was fought to liberate and decolonise Greece from four centuries of Ottoman occupation.

After nine years of war, Greece was finally recognized as an independent state under the London Protocol of February 1830. Further negotiations in 1832 led to the London Conference of 1832 and the Treaty of Constantinople (1832); these defined the final borders of the new state.

The Greeks of 1821 opened the way of the Resurrection of the Nation with their struggles and sacrifices and this same spirit captivated the heroic children of Cyprus in 1955, who created the heroic epic of the struggle of EOKA (Ethniki Organosis Kypriou Agoniston).

On April the 1st, 1955, the liberation struggle was officially launched by the National Organisation of Cypriot Fighters (EOKA) of the Greeks of Cyprus with a vision of freedom from British rule, national self-determination and union with Greece.

It was a logical development, as the referendum that had been held a few years earlier, demonstrated the unquenchable desire of the vast majority of the island's inhabitants for union with Greece.

This followed a mass mobilisation between the four years of 1955-1959 with armed struggle and demonstrations. After the heroic efforts of the Greeks of Cyprus and the involvement of international politics, the independence of Cyprus was secured in 1959.

Greek war of Independence: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-pcY9b3dasg>

Cyprus conflict/EOKA: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jb7DG-XlDb0>



Well done to all of our children as always, they did us proud!!!



April Greek Orthodox Easter

Pasha or Lambri (Easter) as they refer to it in Cyprus is one, if not the most important date in the Greek Orthodox calendar. It is deeply theological and especially all-encompassing, it is a source of renewal and mental purification for all Christians, participating in the sacred services during Holy Week, experiences' the mystery of the redemption of the human race.

The Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Christ symbolises the exodus from darkness in to light, Christ delivers us from spiritual and physical bondage to the ultimate tyranny of death, with which our race was plagued since the fall of our forefather Adam right down to that very first Easter Sunday some two thousand years ago.

It is no secret that Holy Week, is the week which takes us through a spiritual process. It leads the worshippers to experience the Passion of Christ, the reading of the vespers and the hymns that are said during Holy Week transport us through the difficult and gruesome time Christ endured before his resurrection for the salvation of Mankind.

During Easter we also come to acknowledge a series of customs and traditions, deeply embedded within Orthodox traditions, an inheritance from the older generations to the younger ones, which sees everyone preparing for the glorious day of the "Christ's Resurrection".

Speaking of customs and traditions, during the Easter Holy Week, is when we start preparing for the delicious homemade baked goods which fill the atmosphere of each household with familiar and tempting delights.

Along with the colouring of the eggs, the delicious Tsoukeri bread and the Koulouria. In Cyprus they make "Flaounes" the filling, the "foukos", is prepared from grated special Cypriot cheese, called Pafitiko, made specifically at this time of year, using eggs, raisins and various herbs, such as mehlepí, mastic, mint and cinnamon the mixture is surrounded by a sourdough pastry. These delights are traditionally eaten on Holy Saturday after the Resurrection.

In several villages of Pafos along with the "Flaounes" they make the "Paskies", which took their name from Easter. These Easter pies are filled with lamb or goat meat, which is mixed with the filling that is used for the Flaounes.

There are so many Greek and Cypriot Easter traditions that I would love to share with you but I am sure you will all get to experience them whether you had the opportunity to spend Easter surrounded by family and friends back home or here in the UK.

And on that note, from myself and the teaching staff we hope you all had a lovely Easter & wish you Xronia Polla (Χρόνια πολλά) & Christos Anesti (Χριστός Ανέστη)!!!

This year the children had fun decorating their own Easter eggs using non-toxic paints, traditional Lambathes & Easter cards, using a variety of art and craft materials....

