

9/1/13

To the parents and participants of the Saint George GOYA/Youth Group, Bakersfield;

RE: Welcome/Introduction

*It is with anticipation that we are looking forward to continuing our GOYA activities for 2013-2014. Our predecessors, Danny and Mary Andrews, have left us a wealth of knowledge, experience, memories and wisdom to fuel our directorship of this awesome and worthy Church Ministry. It is only by the grace of God, His love for all of us and the efforts of many faithful leaders both local and at the Metropolis and Archdiocesan levels that we have such an opportunity to work, learn, grow and have fun under such an establishment as the GOYA. It is with gratitude that we move forward with this group of youthful Orthodox Christians to better help prepare them for confronting and interacting in our world. As always, Father Joseph will continue to lead, guide, advise, and supplement our GOYA/Youth activities, as well, we will have prior graduates from within our parish, and possibly members from our Metropolis Youth Ministry; volunteer their time as guests to help us accomplish our mission.*

*To start, communication is paramount to our success; we really need our GOYA parents to help us with their children's participation in this ministry experience. We are having a GOYA meeting 9/24/13, Tuesday night, to discuss and establish fundraising ideas, outings, scheduling of events and participation in the various activities we traditionally are involved with. The GOYA meetings at the Strategos home will officially start October, 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013. Our topic for October will be peer pressure. As an example, other topics that we will cover this year will include stewardship; through serving God, Our Church and others. In addition, we will be covering subjects such as gossip, substance abuse, relationships and many other important topics. We have a goal to reach out to our community through volunteering locally, organizing outings and engaging fellowship activities. For our planned lessons we are integrating worship, fellowship, service and witness as our core elements. The Department of Religious education and our Archdiocese of America have provided the ingredients found within each lesson we will be presenting.*

*We would like to present some basic rules and guidelines that will sound familiar to all of us. First, arrival time will be at **6:30pm**, as our lesson starts promptly at **6:45pm**. On rare occasion we understand if someone is a little bit late, but in general we must start our lesson **on time** for a positive experience. Pick up time is by **8:30pm**; please be prompt. The basic schedule will be as follows: **6:30pm-6:45pm**, arrival, **6:45pm-8:00pm**, lesson and activities, **8:00pm-8:30pm**, fellowship, **8:30pm**, pickup. As a family of seven, our motivation for timeliness relates to our*

*household need to clean up, put our kids to bed, prepare ourselves for the next day, and serve as an example to our youth that being on time is important. Due to unpredictable illnesses that may occur in any of our children, GOYA may be subject to cancelation, if any of the participants should become ill; fever, cough, sore throat, congestion, etc. . . please remain home and seek the proper medical attention. During lesson time the participants will be placing any and all communication devices, cell phones, I-pods, etc. . . into a basket during lesson time to minimize distractions. All participants will receive their cell phones back after the lesson is complete, if during this time parents have urgent need to reach their children, please call our home line. As is customary and most practical these days, we will use email (we are hoping to establish an email address for regular use through our parish website) as our main method of communicating basic information. At times, as needed, we will make phone calls as well. Our GOYA group will have a presence on the Church Website, we are in the process of developing this link; this will serve primarily to "identify us" as a ministry and perhaps serve additional functions in the future. Thank you in advance for reading this letter and placing value in its content, ultimately this will help us make GOYA a spiritually positive experience for our youth.*

*Great are the achievements of faith! In the fountain of flame, as by the water of rest, the Three Holy Children rejoiced. And the Prophet Daniel proved a shepherd of lions as of sheep. By their prayers, O Christ God, save our souls.*

*Apolytikion of Daniel the Prophet and the Three Holy Youths*

*Sincerely In Christ,*

*Stephen and Nicole Strategos*

*GOYA/Youth Group Directors*