



THE HOLY TRINITY

HERALD

Faith. Family. Community

May 2024
Volume 32 | Issue 5

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PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Smiling Holy Trinity Church School students honor their faith and carry their icons in the Sunday of Orthodoxy procession. See more photos on pages 6-11.



Today, Constantine with his mother Helen present the Cross, the most precious wood. It shames unbelievers. It is a weapon of faithful kings against their adversaries. A great sign has come forth for us which is awesome in battle.

Ss. Constantine & Helen | Feast Day: May 21 | Icon from Holy Trinity Church | George Kordis, Iconographer



Father John Touloumes
Proistamenos

The righteous shall be remembered forever.

Communion Hymn

My beloved Holy Trinity family,

One of the most moving experiences Presvytera Becky and I had during our many visits to holy sites, saints and shrines on our sabbatical in 2021 was the pilgrimage to the Holy Pantokrator Monastery at Ntaou Penteli, about an hour northeast of Athens near the port of Raffina. It was deliberately chosen as a destination because back in 2019 when the Saint George Chapel was consecrated relics of the Holy Fathers of the monastery were among those sent by the Archdiocese to be sealed forever into the Holy Altar table.

Prior to receiving those relics, I was not familiar with the history of that sacred monastery, but after learning more about it, I was determined to go, venerate and receive the blessing of those saints. Briefly told, the monastery dates back to at least the tenth century and at one time held hundreds of monks. In 1680 A.D., the monastery was raided by pirates on Pascha during the Resurrection service. 179 monks were slaughtered and gained their crowns as martyrs even as they chanted "Christos Anesti!" The monastery was eventually lost to time, but in 1963, 283 years after the massacre, 11 nuns were sent to rebuild it. The holy martyrs were canonized by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1992 and their feast day was set as Bright Tuesday, the same day they were buried over 340 years ago. Today the ancient monastery remains and houses the relics of the martyred monks, including the Elder, whose reliquary sits in the Narthex, pictured above. A much larger new monastery is located a few steps away.



Reliquary containing the relics of the martyred Elder of the Pantokrator Monastery.

"As spotless lambs of the Savior, dashing out of various nations, the flock gathers together at Pantokratoros. Having been put to death by the rage of the barbarians, rejoicing you enter into heavenly pastures. Therefore holy martyrs of Christ, intercede on behalf of our souls."

I share all that as a reminder that as we celebrate the first Pascha in our now complete and consecrated Holy Trinity Church, we do so as inheritors of a faith worth dying for and for which many holy martyrs have. As we hold our candles brightly lit in the darkness, may we remember all those from whom we have inherited and learned our faith as a most precious treasure and the "pearl of great price." May we be inspired by the courage and steadfastness of those who have preceded us and not waiver in passing the faith on in its fullness to the next generation and all the generations to come.

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

With paternal love in Christ our Risen Lord,

Now in our 101st year!
1923-2024

OUR VISION
Faith. Family. Community.

OUR MISSION
The mission of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church is to proclaim and live the Orthodox Christian Faith in its fullness as faithful members of the Body of Christ.

WORSHIP LIFE

Weekday Services - May

The following weekday services will be offered this month at 8:30am Orthros/9:30am Divine Liturgy unless otherwise indicated. Please visit HolyTrinityPgh.org/calendar for updates. (Note location: SG=Saint George Chapel.)

- **Bright Mon. May 6: St. George the Great Martyr (SG)**
- **Bright Tue. May 7: The Holy Fathers of the Pantokrator Monastery of Ntaou Penteli (SG)**
- **Tue. May 21: Ss. Constantine & Helen (SG)**

Memorial Day Service for Veterans.....May 27

Please gather in front of the Holy Trinity Cemetery War Memorial at 10:00am on Monday, May 27 for a special service to commemorate veterans. This day is specially set aside for the veterans who have served and even offered the supreme sacrifice that we may live free. May their memory be honored and eternal!

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWS

Church School Graduation & Picnic..... May 19

Attention Church School Staff, Parents and Students: Please note that the last day of Church School for this semester will be May 19. All students are asked to attend and sit with their class during Liturgy. Following the service, the Church School will have a graduation celebration and picnic lunch. Registration will also be available for the 2024/2025 Church School year. Attention parents: Help is needed with the picnic. Please contact Presvytera Becky to volunteer. Thank you!

YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS

Summer Camp Registration Is Open!

Registration for the Metropolis of Pittsburgh 2024 Summer Camp season through June 2 (on a space available basis). **IMPORTANT:** The standard fee for 2024 is \$675, but all active youth participants of Holy Trinity member families may register for camp using code **"SC24HTP"** to receive \$425 off the registration fee. The code **must** be used at the time of registration. Find information and to register for camp, visit y2am.pittsburgh.goarch.org/summercamp.

COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

New "Active Older Adults" Paint Party May 23

Holy Trinity Church is pleased and thankful to offer a new ministry, "Holy Trinity Active Older Adults." This group is designed to engage the 60+ members of our community for fun and interesting activities such as get-togethers and

day trips. For the **"Paint Party,"** come unleash your inner artist and enjoy a glass of wine and appetizers while socializing with your old and newly acquainted friends on Thursday, May 23 beginning at 1:00pm in the Gallery. Take home your masterpiece to display on your wall. The cost is \$36.00 per person. To reserve your spot, please email your reservation to AOA@HolyTrinityPgh.org or see or call Tasy at 724-612-9145. Reservations are due May 7.

Holy Trinity 2024 Golf Outing.....June 10

The annual Holy Trinity Golf Outing will be held on June 10 at Wildwood Golf Club. A registration flyer is enclosed. Deadline for reservations and sponsors is May 31. Info: contact Deacon Passodelis at golf@HolyTrinityPgh.org.

2024 Saint Photios Award Recipients

Congratulations to our 2024 Holy Trinity recipients of the Metropolis Saint Photios Award, Michael Kritiotis and Paula Valliant. Please join the Holy Trinity community in honoring them by attending the annual banquet, to be held May 18 at the Doubletree in Cranberry. Information is available at <https://www.pittsburgh.goarch.org/st-photios-awards-banquet>. Reservations are due April 28.

2024 Pilgrimage: "Greece By Faith" Sep 23-Oct 4

The Holy Trinity Pilgrimage Ministry is pleased to announce its 2024 Pilgrimage: "Greece By Faith." Explore Greece through its Orthodox Christian heritage as we visit famous sites such as Kefalonia (St. Gerasimos), Aegina (St. Nektarios), Meteora (monasteries), and of course we'll visit the Acropolis and many other cultural and historic sites. Whether it's your first trip or you go often, you haven't seen Greece like this before! For information, visit HolyTrinityPgh.org/2024-greece. **Important: There are still a few spots left for members of the Holy Trinity community. Deposits are being accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, so if you're interested, don't wait!**

2024 "Stewardship Independence" - Pledge Today!

The Stewardship ministry reminds that even with that even with our strong 2023 response, we still are not doing everything we can to keep our church opening and ministering without outside financing. As such, we invite all Holy Trinity Stewards to make a **2024 "Stewardship Independence Pledge"** this year. Many have. Will you? Consider adding your now-complete Capital Campaign annual giving to your Stewardship pledge, or increasing your 2023 pledge by 20%. To enter a pledge, visit HolyTrinityPgh.org/pledge. Or you may access your account by visiting HolyTrinityPgh.org/realm and click "Sign in". Never logged in? Just enter your email address and click "Forgot Password." Questions? Send a message to realm@HolyTrinityPgh.org. ❖

I SEE GOD IN YOU

Two men. Two women. Two encounters. One message: "I see God in you."

Thanasi the taxi driver pulled up to the sidewalk and a lady got in. She was quite upset because the previous taxi driver had pulled off to the side of the road and told her, "I cannot take you. Get out!" "Please," the woman had pleaded, "this is a hard place to find another taxi and my mother is sick at the hospital." But he insisted, "Get out."

"I recorded his license number," she told Thanasi, "and I'll take him to court." "Do whatever God enlightens you," he responded. Then, when she had calmed down, he said, "I would like to take a moment of your time to offer you my humble opinion." "I will listen to you," she said, "as long as you don't try to justify him."

"One thing I try to do every morning before I venture out into my field of work is to kneel and ask God to grant me the virtue of patience and forbearance. [Later, when a customer] begins grumbling, treating me unjustly, accusing and insulting me for no reason at all, I soon find myself becoming angry ...however, I hear Christ mystically telling me, 'Hey, Thanasi, why are you so upset? Didn't you ask Me this morning to grant you forbearance? So I allowed this customer to get into your taxi to serve as your spiritual mirror.' And do you realize, my good lady, who this customer was that sat down in my taxi?"



"Who?", she responded. "My best benefactor! He did the greatest service to me without realizing it. He brought my old, evil, and deeply rooted passions to the surface. For this reason, I must not forget to thank God sincerely during my evening prayer and to tell Him, 'My God, I thank You for this man because without meaning to, he acted as a spiritual mirror to help me see the filth that lurks inside me.'"

Suddenly Thanasi heard a noise in the back seat. The lady had just ripped up the paper with the number of the other taxi driver. Lips trembling with emotion, and tears on her cheeks, she asked me, "Do you know what the strange thing is, Mr. Thanasi? I am a teacher of theology. Throughout my career, I have given thousands of hours of religious lessons, but today I received the most beautiful lesson ever. This is a lesson that I have never given to my students. What a shame! Thank you."

"Don't thank me, thank God, my dear," he responded, "but now that we have arrived, I want to ask you for a small favor." "Whatever you want, Thanasi,

whatever you want." "Before you go to see your mother, as you enter the hospital, on your left you will find the hospital chapel. Go, and please light a little candle—not for me, nor for your mother, but for the taxi driver who kicked you out. He was the reason we met today. This is what we should do as Orthodox Christians, and no one knows this better than you theologians." Eyes wet with emotion and a trembling voice, she told me, "I'll do it, Mr. Thanasi. I promise you that I will definitely do it. I thank you from the bottom of my heart because today turned out to be one of the most beautiful days of my life."

He saw God in her. She saw God in him. And he taught her to even see God's purpose in the one who had wronged her.

Many centuries earlier, an old monk named Zosimas was wondering in desert in Palestine when he was taken aback by a strange vision of another person. It was naked, the skin dark as if burned up by the heat of the sun, head covered with white hair and not long, falling just below its neck. Zosimas was so overjoyed at beholding a human form that he ran after it in pursuit, but the form fled from him. "Why do you run from an old man and a sinner? Wait for me, whoever you are, in God's name I tell you, for the love of God for Whose sake you are living in the desert."

"Forgive me for God's sake, but I cannot turn towards you and show you my face, Abba Zosimas. For I am



a woman and naked as you see with the uncovered shame of my body. But if you would like to fulfill one wish of a sinful woman, throw me your cloak so that I can cover my body and can turn to you and ask for your blessing." He at once did as he was asked. He took off his old, tattered cloak and threw it to her, turning away as he did so. She picked it up and was able to cover at least a part of her body.

Zosimas then threw himself on the ground and asked for her blessing. She likewise bowed down before him. And one thing alone could be heard from both: "Bless me!" She related to the elder that she was a woman with a deeply sinful past who had come to Jerusalem 47 years earlier for unholy purposes but God used the opportunity to transform her life for Him. She spent the rest of her life in the desert repenting.

"I implore you," she continued, "for the sake of the Incarnate word of God, to pray to the Lord for me who am such a sinner" and she requested that he return next year to bring her Holy Communion. With these words she vanished in the depths of the desert and Zosimas returned to the monastery. At her request, he returned to the desert a year later, found her and communed her with the Holy Gifts. Yet another year later, he again went into the desert and

reached the same spot but could see no sign of anyone. So, raising his eyes to heaven as before, he prayed: "Show me, O Lord, Your pure treasure, which You have concealed in the desert." Then on the opposite bank of the river, he saw the saint lying in repose. Her hands were crossed according to custom and her face was turned to the East. Running up he shed tears over the saint's feet and kissed them, not daring to touch anything else. Then he saw words traced on the ground by her head: "Abba Zosimas, bury on this spot the body of humble Mary. Return to dust that which is dust and pray to the Lord for me, who departed in the month...called April by the Romans, on the first day, on the very night of our Lord's Passion, after having partaken of the Divine Mysteries."

Taking stock of all these characters, we might all say it's easy to see God in a holy old monk. But a rude taxi driver? A kind one? A customer? An emaciated old desert dweller? Let's take a look back and see what these people saw:

- Thanasi the taxi driver saw God every day in the first person who irritated him.
- He also saw God in the woman theologian who was going to sue the other driver.
- That woman saw God in Thanasi

as he provided his deep spiritual insights.

- She then began to see God even in the taxi driver who threw her out.
- Abba Zosimas saw God in the haggard and emaciated old woman wandering in the desert.
- Saint Mary saw God in a humble old monk named Zosimas and bore her soul to him in her life confession.

Are there three people in your life in whom you can say you see God? If not, let's think of it like the trip to the eye doctor to get our vision adjusted. It's there, we just need a new prescription. Now let's focus on something harder. Flip the lens. Are there three people you can't imagine seeing God in? Like the first taxi driver the lady was going to sue? Or others you are at odds with? And with those faces in mind, remember, He is in them, too, and in fact He may be using them for our sake and making them our "best benefactors" as Thanasi said. Then we can see Jesus Christ in them. That changes every relationship we have. That changes us. That changes the world.

Today, on the fifth Sunday of Lent and the annual commemoration of Saint Mary of Egypt, the Church offers us a model that hopefully inspires us all to become what God has made us to be. But today we have also seen how it is possible—no necessary—to see God in others and understand that even in our unworthiness, sinfulness and selfishness, He can work in us, too, all to reveal Himself to others. Like Abba Zosimas and Saint Mary, we are called to look at one another, whoever the other may be, find the image that has been divinely gifted to us all and say...

"I see God in you." Amen.

Delivered April 21, 2024 ❖

Top row: (March 11) The Parish Development Committee convenes to discuss the ministries and working together for the future of Holy Trinity Church. Middle row: (March 10) Representatives from North Hills Committee Outreach receive a \$5,000 donation from Holy Trinity Church; (March 31) 2024 Holy Trinity Saint Photios Awardees Michael Kritiotis and Paula Valliant are announced. Bottom row: (April 13) Another great fun-filled day of festival cooking! There are more to come...don't miss out!









SUNDAY OF ORTHODOX/ANNUNCIATION

HIS GRACE BISHOP ANDREI



HIS GRACE BISHOP ANDREI AN



ION GREAT VESPERS - MARCH 24, 2024

AND THE SERVING CLERGY

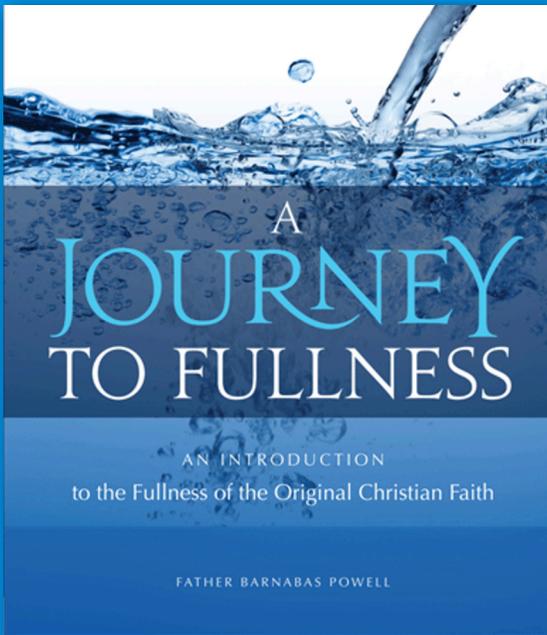


AND THE PAN-ORTHODOX CHOIR



A
JOURNEY
TO FULLNESS

The Holy Spirit's goal is to remake us into being like Jesus Christ.



New to the Orthodox Faith? Ready to dive in and learn how to live it fully?

Born and raised Orthodox? Ready to deepen your understanding of the Church you love?

Either way, please join us for a 6-week series of video lessons, live Q&A and engaging discussions about the Orthodox Christian Faith. This series is for everyone who wants to learn more about the “fullness of the faith” found in the Orthodox Church. Father Barnabas Powell is sincere, straight-forward and he is not afraid to raise and speak to the tough questions. Come. Learn. Grow.

**MONDAYS AT 7:00PM - HOLY TRINITY CHURCH
CONFERENCE ROOM
MAY 13, 20 ; JUNE 3, 10, 17, 24**



AOA PAINT PARTY

When: Thursday, May 23, 1:00 PM

WHERE: Holy Trinity Church Gallery



Active Older Adults (60 & above)-Unleash your inner artist and create your masterpiece to display in your home.

Sip some wine and have appetizers!

For Reservations: email AOA@HolyTrinityPgh.org

or see or call Tasy 724-612-9145

Reservations Due May 7 Cost \$36.00



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Founded in 2004 by a group of visionary Greek American leaders and philanthropists, *FAITH: An Endowment for Orthodoxy and Hellenism* is an independent 501(c)(3) organization that supports the development of innovative educational, cultural, and scholarship programs that promote Hellenism, an understanding of the Greek Orthodox faith, and the relationship of the two to America's history and multicultural landscape for young people. FAITH has proudly awarded over 1,950 grants and scholarships to our community's brightest young leaders.

For questions, contact: info@thefaithendowment.org • (212) 803-9363 • facebook.com/faithendowment

HOLY TRINITY SCHOLARSHIPS FOR INCOMING COLLEGE FRESHMEN & SOPHOMORES



LOCAL SCHOLARSHIP OPPORTUNITY EXCLUSIVELY FOR HOLY TRINITY STUDENTS

THE VLAHAKIS SCHOLARSHIP "MY SISTER PENNY AWARD"

APPLICATION DEADLINE: JUNE 15, 2024

Established: By Nick & Kimi Vlahakis – January, 2022

About Penny: My sister, Penny Vlahakis Cherpes, passed away in 2020 at the age of 81. She was a smart, beautiful, funny, and caring sister who had a huge influence on my life and whatever success I may have achieved. Our dad died in 1952...I was 4, my other sister, Georgia, was 6, and Penny was 13. Penny helped our mom maintain during those difficult years, with all the family needs with 3 young children, even though she was only in her first year as a teenager. I will never forget that!

About the Award: This Scholarship (administered through Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Pittsburgh, PA) is intended to memorialize her and to advance many of her strongly held values, particularly regarding education. The Scholarship will be awarded annually in July for the ensuing academic calendar in the fall of that same year in the amount of \$2,500.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- Be a high school senior entering college freshman year or a college freshman entering college sophomore year.
- Have a current high school or college GPA of 2.75 or greater.
- Submit an essay (400 words minimum, 500 words maximum) with reflections on the positive and specific personal impacts that their family and the Orthodox Christian faith have had on their life.
- Be a member in good standing of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Pittsburgh, PA, for a minimum of 2 years.

APPLICATION INFORMATION

Visit HolyTrinityPgh.org/scholarships for an application form and instructions. Deadline: June 15, 2024

How to Live a New Life

Everything related to the ordering of external life according to the spirit of new life can be called "leaving the world," or casting out the spirit of the world from the entire course of our lives. "I have chosen you out of the world" (John 15.19) is what the Lord said to the Apostles. He does the same thing through His divine grace and with all the faithful. Whoever seeks the Lord must remove himself from the world.

Gheronda, what is meant by "the world?"

By "world" is meant everything passionate, vain or sinful that enters into personal, family and social life, and which becomes there the custom and rule. Therefore leaving the world does not mean running away from the family or society, but abandoning the morals, customs, rules, habits and demands that are entirely antithetical to the Spirit of Christ which has entered and ripens within us.

Citizenship and family life are blessed by God; therefore we should not turn away from them or have contempt for them, nor for anything belonging to their essential good order. But everything that has come into them like a malignant tumor that tempts them should be held in contempt and renounced. Running away from the world means establishing yourself in the true family and citizenship.

Why is "the world" so problematic for Christians seeking salvation?

The vain, passion-soaked world is inevitably transmitted to our souls, and arouses or infuses passions. Just as one who walks near soot turns black, or as one who touches fire gets

burned, so does the one who participates in worldly things become imbued with passions hateful to God. Therefore, when the penitent comes back to the world he falls again, and innocently becomes depraved. This is almost inescapable. The mind is immediately darkened; he becomes forgetful, weak, captive and plundered. Then once the heart has been wounded there follows passion and action, and the man has fallen.

What exactly do we need to abandon and how is it done?

Abandon everything that is dangerous to the new life, whatever ignites passions, brings vanity and extinguishes spirit. And how many such things there are! Let the measure of this be each person's heart, sincerely seeking salvation without deceit and not only for show. The measuring stick is always the same: Abandon what is harmful and dangerous to life, whatever extinguishes the spirit. But what exactly is this? For some it may be the most petty thing, like a stroll around some familiar area with a familiar individual. "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient" (1 Cor. 6.12).

From this it follows that leaving the world is nothing other than cleaning up your entire external life, removing from it everything passionate and replacing it with something pure, which will not disrupt the spiritual life, but rather aid it. Be it in family, personal or social life—completely re-order your outward behavior in and outside the home, with friends and associates, as the spirit of your new life requires it. Establish rules and



Saint Theophan the Recluse

order in every part of the home, at work, with acquaintances, and when, how and with whom you spend your time.

Gheronda, is this really necessary?

The thought that you could live like a Christian while holding on to the world and worldliness is an empty, deluded thought. Whoever lives by this thought will be a Christian only in his own opinion, and not in fact. At first he will destroy with one hand what he created with another, that is, what he gathered while away from the world will be stolen from him at his first re-entrance into it. From this it is a direct path to opinion, for what was stolen from the heart may still remain in the memory and imagination.

Now, remembering and imagining how it was before, the man might think that it is still that way; meanwhile it has evaporated and only traces of it are left in the memory. He will think that he has what he has not. The judgment upon him is this: "But from him that has not shall be taken away even that which he has (Matt. 25.29). ❖

Excerpted from
The Path to Salvation

THE HOLY TRINITY
HERALD
Faith. Family. Community

About the Herald

The Herald is the Monthly Newsmagazine of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church

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About the Parish

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Web site: HolyTrinityPgh.org | Email: office@HolyTrinityPgh.org

Holy Trinity Church is a parish of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh (pittsburgh.goarch.org) and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (goarch.org) under the Spiritual Jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

**Parish Administration
 Clergy**

Rev. Fr. John Touloumes, Proistamenos
 Rev. Fr. Radu Bordeianu, Assistant Priest
 Deacon Matthew Palamara, Deacon

2024 Parish Council

Anthony Balouris, President (pcpresident@HolyTrinityPgh.org)

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------|--------------------|
| Alexander Anetakis | Evan Danis | Dean Passodelis |
| Andrew Fournaridis | George Dickos | Michael Passodelis |
| Ashley Bournias | Tom Germanos | Chris Sarandou |
| George Danis | George Mellis | Jeanne Willow |

Ministries

Please visit the Holy Trinity website at HolyTrinityPgh.org for descriptions and contact information on Holy Trinity Church's ministries, including spiritual life, education, youth, senior, family and cultural opportunities. There is something for everyone, so please get involved today! Everyone is welcome!

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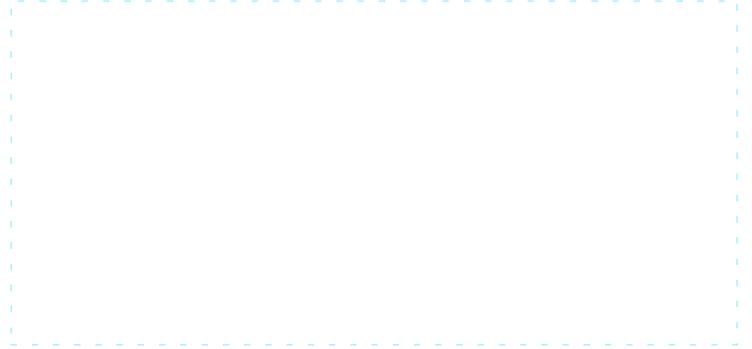
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DO NOT BE AFRAID

“It is I, do not be afraid,” was our Lord’s response to the petrified disciples as He approached their boat on the storm tossed sea (John 6:20). Likewise, this same response is given to us as that hope, whenever we feel like we too, are being tossed to and fro, because of the storms of life. Quite often these tempests can be so strong and violent, that they might have us questioning our faith asking, “Where are you Lord, during this storm that I am experiencing?”

Yet, notice that the disciples were together in the boat, when this appearance occurred. Likewise, the Church, which is referred to as the “Ark of Salvation,” is where we find comfort and solace that comes from God Himself, and from each other as the Body of Christ. In the same way, through our participation in the sacramental life of the Church, we too can have that same consolation and encouragement because the Church—the “Ark of Salvation”—is where we can gather together and draw strength from Christ through prayer and the Eucharist, as well as from our Christian brothers and sisters. After all, He tells us, “Where two or three are gathered, I am there.”

From “Keeping the Light Burning”
by Father Aristotle Damaskos