



THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

FEBRUARY 2007 VOLUME 15 • ISSUE 2

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QUICK NEWS



The installation of the duly-elected Holy Trinity Church 2007 Parish Council took place on Sunday, January 7, following the Divine Liturgy. Pictured with Father John are (l-r): George Dickos, Nikki Marsh, Steve Hodge, Dean J. Balouris, Vasilios Scoumis, Nick Sarandou (Secretary), Alex Trilivas (Treasurer), Leo Loomis (President), James T. Balouris, Lou Zozos, Troy Geanopoulos and Chris T. Balouris (Vice-President). Not pictured: Gerri Valliant.

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH • PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA



Saint Theodore the Commander, 4th Century Martyr. Feast Day: February 8
(Mural Icon from the Church of the Protaton, Mount Athos, Greece. Early 14th century)

Our Mission: To proclaim and live the Orthodox Christian Faith in its fullness as faithful members of the Body of Christ

THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

About the Herald

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

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Publication Schedule

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About the Parish

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Holy Trinity Church is a parish of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh (www.odpgh.org),

& Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (www.goarch.org)

under the Spiritual Jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople. (www.patriarchate.org)

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church Parish Administration

Clergy

Rev. Fr. John Touloumes, Proistamenos

Rev. Fr. Radu Bordeianu, Assistant Priest

Parish Council

Louis T. Loomis, President

Chris T. Balouris

Dean J. Balouris

James T. Balouris

George Dickos

Troy Geanopoulos

Steve Hodge

Nikki Marsh

Nicholas Sarandou

Vasilios Scoumis

Alex Trilivas

Gerri Valliant

Louis G. Zozos

Ministries

Philoptochos..... Esther Ladakos, Pres.

GOYA..... Pres. Becky Touloumes, Advisor

Choir..... John Nychis, Director

Over 50..... Stella Athanasiou, Pres.

St. Lydia Study..... Stacy Dickos, Coordinator

Cemetery..... Bill Fiedler, Chairman

Greek School.... Effie Kilantonis, Coordinator

Social Hall..... Kathy Romanias, Coordinator



“God is our provider. He takes thought for us and cares for us. He gives us our food, clothing, and home. His sun, moon, and stars give us light. His fire warms us and we cook our food with it. His water washes us and refreshes us. His beasts serve us. His air enlivens us and keeps us alive. In a word, we are surrounded with His blessings and love, and without them we are not able to live for a moment. Then how can we not love God Who loves us so? We love a man who does good; all the more should we love God Who does good, Whose we are and everything we may possess. All creation, and man himself is God’s possession. ‘The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof’ (Ps. 23:1). [Above all,] He sent us His only-begotten Son to save us and to gather us to Himself. ‘For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have ever-lasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved’ (Jn. 3:16-17). How then shall we not love God, Who loves us so? As we all call Him, God is the Lover of Mankind; then man must be a lover of God. For nothing can be given in return for love but love and gratitude.”

From “Journey to Heaven” by St. Tikhon of Zadonsk

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is the month of February, and a very important event is coming up! Yes, it involves our relationship with a special person; Yes, there will be gifts; Yes, we should spend time getting ready for it; Yes, it will require sacrifice; Yes, it will be wonderful. And No, it’s not Valentine’s Day! It is none other than the start of Lent, “Pure Monday,” which takes place this year on February 19.

Why compare it in such a way with a holiday like Valentine’s Day? Mostly because, in the model of teaching the Jesus Himself used, it takes an important spiritual message and puts it in terms of our daily life that helps us understand through familiar examples. Which of us who have been involved in a personal relationship with a beloved has not experienced the anticipation of the things mentioned in the previous paragraph when getting ready for Valentine’s Day? And why not? Especially in the case of marriage, is this not a special gift of a relationship that God has blessed and given us the desire and ability to enjoy? Has not a love been planted in our heart for special people that we want to share thoughts and feelings of care and love for?

Keep that thought in mind ... and multiply it a hundred-fold. Now we are beginning to approach what the holy fathers of the Church call “*Theion Eros*”, or “Divine Love.” It is a term used to describe the yearning, longing and desire for God that captures our heart and soul in a way even the deepest human love cannot. Yes, God has blessed us with the ability to love one another in incredibly powerful, even sacrificial ways. He even tells us in John 13:15: “Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Yet Jesus goes beyond that in our relationship with God, for He also says in Matthew 10:37, “He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”

More than anything else, Lent is a season for us to grow in our love for God. If that happens, all sense of gloom, self-denial, sacrifice and limitations that the world likes to use to portray it evaporate in the embrace of Divine Love. It is not a time of darkness, but a time of the light of God’s love. Saint Tikhon shares various reasons above why we must love God in return. Strive for them as a start, then let prayer and the divine sanctification of the holy services hold you in their arms.

Nobody approaching Valentine’s Day should sit and wonder why a person he or she has never developed an intimate, personal and loving relationship with does not love them. How would that person know you need their love if they do not even know you? Likewise, even though God loves us without limit, Lent is a great time to remind Him how much we love and need Him, too! Have a blessed Lent!

In Christ,

Herald Personal Sponsor for This Issue:

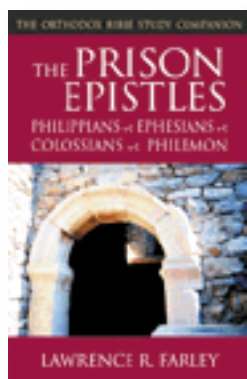
**Happy Birthday to my beloved son, Jimmie Regakis
I Love You! From your mother, Olga**

EDUCATIONAL MINISTRIES

St. Lydia's Orthodox Women's Ministry Feb. 8, 22

The St. Lydia Women's Study Ministry is for women to share in fellowship and to study scripture, the Orthodox Faith and family life in today's world. The meetings take place every other week on Thursday mornings at 9:30 a.m. at the home of Jan Petredis in Wexford. New participants are always welcome! The fellowship is enjoyable and the approach is casual, but the subjects are important for today's women and families. All Holy Trinity women are welcome and invited to bring a friend!

This year's theme will continue the Bible Study of Saint Paul's Epistles. Having recently completed the First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians, the group will now move on to the Epistle to the Ephesians. The study guide being used is a new publication, "The Prison Epistles," from Conciliar Press. It approaches the study with an easy-to-understand method intended for all people. For further information on this worthwhile and informative group or for directions to the meetings, call Stacy Dickos at 412-367-0925. A complete schedule for the year is available at www.HolyTrinityPgh.org.



WORSHIP LIFE

Weekday Services February

Please take note of the following weekday Liturgies for the feast days in the month of February. Please note that we are currently on the time schedule for "Winter Hours:" Orthros is at 9:00 a.m., followed by Divine Liturgy at 10:00.

Thu. Feb. 1, 7:00pm....Presentation of Christ Vespers

Fri. Feb. 2.....Presentation of Christ

(NOTE: Both the above services will be held at the Presentation of Christ "Ypapanti" Church in East Pittsburgh, which is celebrating its feast day. Note that Orthros is at 8:30/Liturgy at 9:30.)

Sat. Feb. 10 St. Haralambos the Hieromartyr

(NOTE: This feast will be observed at the Saturday of Souls service at the St. George Chapel)

COMMUNITY LIFE

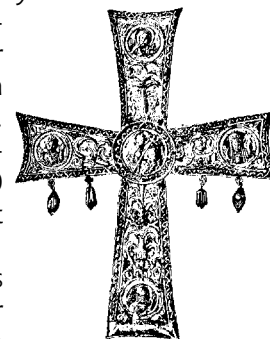
Stewardship Pledges Due

The Stewardship Committee and Parish Council thank all our Holy Trinity Stewards who have submitted pledges for the 2007 Stewardship year (see listing on page 17). Please remember that your pledge is important in helping your parish make its financial plans for the year, and it is necessary as part of maintaining your membership in good standing each year. If you have not yet submitted your pledge, won't you please do it today? Thank you!

LENTEN INFORMATION

Saturday of Souls Services Feb. 10, 17, 24

Last year, the very first Saturday of the Souls Divine Liturgy and Memorial Service was held at the Saint George Chapel at Holy Trinity Cemetery on Saturday, February 25, 2006. Continuing that tradition, all Saturdays of the Souls services are held at the new chapel. Therefore, please be present to honor our departed loved ones this year on Saturday, February 10, 17 and 24. Orthros will begin at 9:00 a.m., followed by Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m. and the Memorial Service at the end of the Liturgy.



Please use the memorial names list enclosed in this issue to list your loved ones who have fallen asleep in the Lord; and don't just send them in without being there yourself ... if possible, please bring them to experience the beauty and the meaning of the Saturday of Souls in its most appropriate context - at the place where so many of the beloved members of Holy Trinity Church have been laid to rest. Please keep this important tradition alive. Teach your children the importance of prayer for their departed grandparents and loved ones as well by having them write down the names, possibly help with the "kollyva" (memorial wheat) and attend the service as well.

Lenten Soup & Sauces Sales Weekly During Lent

The GOYA will resume its very popular Lenten soup and sauces sales during the Sundays of Lent. Among the many good reasons to buy some to take home are that they are strict Lenten recipes, they provide fund-raising support for our GOYA ministry ... plus they taste great and they are good for you! Please visit the Lenten Soup and Sauces table in Coffee Hour each week! Thank you for supporting our youth as you strive to maintain your spiritual discipline!

Lenten Schedule of Services

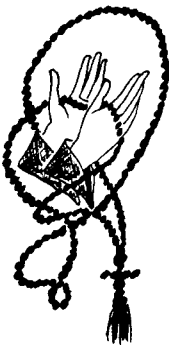
This issue of The Herald contains a complete schedule of service for Lent. Please post it in a conspicuous place in your home. Circle the services you are able to attend and place them on your schedule. Talk about them and make plans with your family. As the hymn from the Book of Psalms tells us during the Great Compline service, "God is with us." Lent provides us a special time to be with Him. See you there!

Lenten Coffee Hour Reminder February 19-April 1

Please keep in mind that during the Lenten season our Coffee Hours following the Divine Liturgy will be observing the Orthodox Lenten fasting schedule. Anyone sponsoring a memorial coffee hour or providing Church School snacks is asked to take care that non-meat and non-dairy items are provided. The Philoptochos and the Church School can provide a list of suggestions for good alternatives. Thank you for helping our community grow in this proper and helpful Orthodox spiritual practice and discipline.

Lenten Fasting and Confession

In addition to the special services being held, please remember that the main focus of Lent is a personal one, with increased attention to our spiritual life through prayer, fasting and Holy Confession. Since spiritual discipline is also required, the Holy Canons of the Church prescribe the guidelines for the Great Lenten Fast, beginning this year on Pure Monday, February 19. Orthodox Christians are called to refrain from eating meat (including red meat, poultry, etc.), dairy (milk, eggs, cheese), fish and other animal products through Pascha. We are also to abstain from wine and olive oil during weekdays (Monday through Friday). Shellfish, vegetables, pastas and the like are permitted at all times. If you have any questions—especially if you are new to fasting or have special health conditions—please see the Fasting Guidelines on page 8 or speak with Fr. John about specific questions. Please also see Fr. John to set up a time for Holy Confession during the Lenten season. *Kali Metanoia!* (May your repentance be good!)



Orthodox Studies Forum TUESDAYS During Lent

Please note: The Orthodox Studies Forum will move to TUESDAY evening during Lent instead of Wednesdays, due to the Lenten Liturgies of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts. Please note that this will affect the following dates: February 20, March 6 and March 20. It will not meet during the first week of April due to Holy Week.

Upcoming Lenten Dates February-April

Wondering about Lenten and Paschal dates? Here's a helpful guide to some of the important events coming up:

Pure Monday (Lent begins)	Feb. 19
Sunday of Orthodoxy	Feb. 25
Godparent Sunday	Mar. 11
Palm Sunday	Apr. 1
Pascha	April 8
St. George Chapel Feast Day	April 23
Pentecost	May 27

Looking for information on Orthodoxy?
Check out the award-winning site of the
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese:

www.goarch.org

Want to see local Orthodox television programming? Comcast On-Demand customers can see it on Channel 95, or visit the 'Net:

www.OrthodoxyNowTV.com

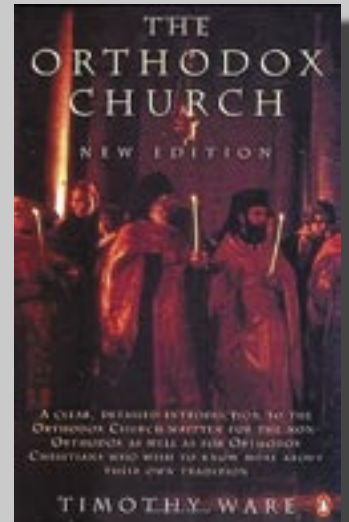
Looking for a New Way to learn about your Faith in the New Year?
Don't Miss the New Learning Series from Holy Trinity Church:

THE ORTHODOX STUDIES FORUM

Now Underway! Rave Reviews! Don't Miss It!

About the Book

This book is probably the best introduction to the Orthodox Church, written in an accessible, though rigorous style. It deals with the history, Liturgy, and teaching of the Orthodox Church. It brings an ecumenical perspective in the sense that it compares the teachings and history of the Orthodox Church with those of other Christian Churches. It also presents our Tradition in a language that you could use when discussing your faith with people who are not Orthodox.



About the Author

Kallistos Ware is one of—if not the—most important living Orthodox theologians. He wrote his dissertation on the Orthodox Church while still a young Protestant student, later developing a fascination with the history, teaching, and Liturgy of our Church. He eventually became Orthodox and was made the bishop of Diokleia, changing his name to Kallistos. He is also a retired professor from Oxford University in Great Britain, whom Pittsburgh will be honored to host in March 2007.

About the Teacher/Facilitator

Father Radu Bordeianu is a full-time professor at Duquesne University with a Doctoral degree from Marquette University and is the Assistant Priest at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church. He has served and taught at several parishes in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

About the Study Series

The Orthodox Studies Forum is designed for adults who are interested in learning more about the Orthodox Christian Faith. It is for both those who have been Orthodox all their lives and want to learn more as well as those seeking to embrace Orthodoxy or grow further in their faith.

How to Get There and When It Meets

The group meets on the **first and third Wednesday** of each month from **7:00-8:30 p.m. from November through May (NOTE: Meeting will be move to TUESDAYS during LENT)** at LaRoche College, 9000 Babcock Blvd., in the North Hills region of Pittsburgh (next to UPMC Passavant Hospital). The room is in the A.J. Palumbo Science Center, Room SC105. There is ample, well-lit parking.

Part of a regular series of contributions by our resident "Gheronda" (respected elder clergy), Father John Androutsopoulos



Father John Androutsopoulos

LOVE; MERCY; FORGIVENESS!

One of the most beloved chapters of the Bible is Luke 15. This chapter contains three parables which teach us of God's love, mercy and forgiveness.

The three parables are:

- 1) The parable of the lost sheep.
- 2) The parable of the lost coin.
- 3) The parable of the lost son ("The Prodigal Son")

What is a parable? A parable is an earthly story with heavenly meaning. To understand the following message, read the Gospel of Luke, chapter 15.

These parables ask us to consider how we would behave in certain situations, in order to explain the greatness of God's love, mercy and forgiveness.

Very few of us own sheep today or would spend a lot of time searching for a lost coin. But what about a fork that was misplaced from our silverware set? Would it bother us until we found it? We would not rejoice over owning a silverware set that had one piece missing as much as we would rejoice if we found the missing piece?

Beloved, God does not want any of His children to be lost. That is why He sent His Son into our midst. That is why Jesus spent time searching out those who were lost. God is not aiming at a 50-50 split of people between heaven and the place of torment. God would not even be satisfied if 99 percent made it to heaven. He would still be concerned for the one percent that were headed to eternal death.

Question: Why are God's hopes for us so high? Answer: Because God loves us and will never forget one of us His children.

"The Forgiving Father"

Sunday, February 4, 2007 is the Second Sunday of The Pre-Lenten Season, on which we read the Parable of the Prodigal

Son. "And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion and ran, and fell on his neck and kissed him" (Luke 15:20).

The familiar parable of the prodigal son is really a parable about the prodigal son's father. Jesus uses this parable to teach us about the love that God our Father has for us.

This parable is one of those texts of scripture that increase in meaning as we read them over and over again. It is a text that must be read slowly, as we use our imagination to make it come vividly alive for us. How would we react if one of our children were impatient for our death and demanded half of all we owned? How would we feel if that child took that money and moved as far away from us as he could and wasted the money we had worked so hard for on luxuries we never permitted ourselves and on sinful living?

When the prodigal decided to return his father saw him from a long way off. Did the father daily search the horizon for the first sign of his return? The father's reaction was one of pity, NOT vengeance. The father cut off his son's confession of guilt with instructions to throw a party to welcome him home.

Beloved, the Father in the story IS GOD. In fact, the whole story is NOT so much about the "Prodigal Son" as it is about a loving and "Forgiving Father!"

Here is the truth in the story. When a sinner realizes his lost condition and starts toward God in repentance and faith, God rushes out to meet him. He throws His arms around him, forgives him and gives him the best He has. And if today repent, make a U-turn toward Him He will hasten to meet us and forgive us.

"The Rest of the Story"

Out of good curiosity, would you like to know what happened to the older brother? Remember to read the Gospel of Luke, chapter 15!

Prayer: "FATHER IN HEAVEN, Thank You for Your love and mercy. Thank You for always being ready to forgive us."

With His Love,

Rev. Fr. John K. Androutsopoulos



He arose and came to his father. But while he was yet at a distance, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.'

Hello and Happy Valentine's Day to All My Precious Children!

I, Spero, have had many children ask questions about what I do during the week, that is, between Sundays. It's a really good question, so please allow me to answer it!



Well, besides daily prayers (which I do every day, just like you!), I spend a lot of time finding and previewing new books, DVD's and videos for my library to share with you. I have to be sure everything I find it good to have in the library ('cause there's a lot of junk out there, and I don't want to pass any of stuff on to you!).

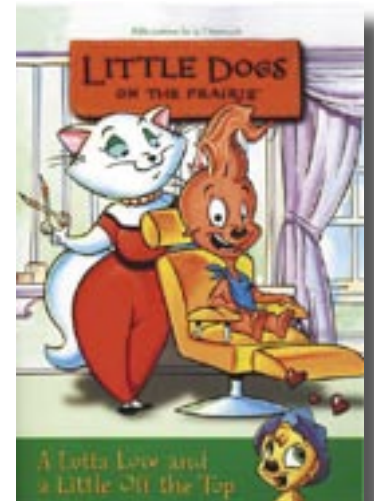
I also have to make sure that the dozens of items you, my precious children, return each week are put back on the shelves in the right order so they are ready for you the following Sunday. It's a really big effort, but I love doing it because I love you!!

And, of course, there are often services during the week for saints, holidays or even Paraclesis prayers. I really like to attend those and I really like it when I see you, my precious children, there praying with me! After all, books and movies are good learning tools, but prayer is the very best way to get to know our Heavenly Father and to learn

how much He loves us!

Speaking of love, February is the month we think of love because on the 14th we celebrate Valentine's Day. In honor of that, I would like to share with you an episode of "Little Dogs on the Prairie," called, "For the Love of Sport." In it, Gilroy tries to help Sport learn that life is not always fair and that sometimes even true love hurts. There is also a really cool song called, "Love Is." My favorite part of the song goes like this: "Loving is caring for someone. Love is believing the best love comes down from our Heavenly Father above." Well, my precious little ones, do not forget that the best thing we can do with all that love is to share it! So today and every day, hug someone and tell them you love them!

Sharing is also an important part of loving others. My little sister, Zoe, asked me the other day how she can tell if someone is her friend. I told her there are many ways you can tell. One way is that they call you on the phone, send you an email or visit you. They might ask you to play games with them. And they could also include you in doing other things together. Sharing is another way to tell. In fact, sharing is an important part of friendship. I like to share and I like it when others share their stuff with me, too! Mommy sometimes scolds Zoe and me when we do not share with each other. And, (wouldn't you know?) , there's also a good video in the library about sharing, called "To Share or Not to Share." It's in the Hermie collection. In it, everyone goes crazy putting together the big "Garden Talent Show and Tell." But Hermie is sad because he wants more nuts for his "show and tell" collection. First, they meet Lucky, who wants to make a nut pie, but she does not have enough nuts. They then pass by the ants, who want to lift weights for their exhibit, but they need just one more nut to balance their weights. Wouldn't you know, everyone's talents for the show involve nuts! They all go to the squirrels to ask them to share the nuts from their tree, but those squirrely little squirrels just refuse to share their winter food with the talent show contestants (imagine!). But one nut actually does fall to the ground and it causes a fight between the bugs. Friends turn into enemies and it's a mad dash to see who grabs the nut. You can imagine that this behavior does NOT please our Heavenly Father, and there are good lessons to be learned. Besides, like a lot of the other great books and DVD's in the library, they're really fun, too, so be sure to stop by every week!



And don't forget ... I LOVE YOU!

Love in Christ, Spero



Voula Hareras

“Happy Valentine’s Day!”

Ο Κύριος Ίακωβος, γεμάτος χαρά, άποτελείωσε τὸ διάβασμα τοῦ γράμματος πού κρατούσε. Όλες οἱ πληροφορίες πού ζητούσε, σχεδόν ένα χρόνο τώρα, ήταν γραμμένες μέ κάθε λεπτομέρεια.

Μπράβο στά παιδιά τοῦ Γραφείου μου σιγοψυθύρισε, πολύ καλή δουλειά έκαμαν. Έβαλε

τὸ χαρτί σ’ένα φάκελο καί φώναξε τήν γραμματέα του – «Σέ παρακαλώ πολύ, Έλενα, νά πάρεις στοῦ τηλεφώνου τὸν Κύριο Άνδρέα Φυλαυτὸν, καί νά τοῦ πῆς ὅτι εἶναι ἀπόλυτη ἀνάγκη νά περάσει ἀπὸ τὸ γραφεῖο κατὰ τῆς 5 τὸ ἀπόγευμα. Θά τὸν περιμένω.» Ἡ Έλενα ξαναγύρεσε καί τοῦ εἶπε, «ὅλα ἐντάξη. Ὁ Κύριος Άνδρέας θά εἶναι ἐδῶ στῆς πέντε.»

Εὐχαριστημένος, ὁ Ίακωβος έκαμε δυὸ τρία τηλεφωνήματα καί κάθησε ἀνετα στήν πολυθρόνα τοῦ ἀνάβοντας ένα τσιγάρο καί συλογιζόταν τήν ὑπόθεσι τοῦ Άνδρέα, καί τήν χαρά πού θά έπερνε ὅταν θά τοῦ ἔδινε τὸ γράμμα πού προοίγιο διάβασε.

Ὁ Ίακωβος εἶχε ἀρκετά χρόνια ἀνοῖξη γραφεῖο ἰδιωτικῶν ὑποθέσεων στήν Astoria, New York. Μετά τὸν πόλεμο τοῦ 1940, καί τήν μεγάλη συμφορὰ τοῦ Ἐμφυλίου Πολέμου, τὸ τρομερὸ παιδομάρζωμα, καί γενικά ὁ ἀφανισμὸς χιλιάδων ἀνθρώπων, πού χάθηκαν ὡς ἀγνοοῦμενοι, καί ἀπελπισμένα ἔψαχναν νά βροῦν τὰ ἀγαπημένα τους πρόσωπα, τὸ γραφεῖο τοῦ Ίακωβου ἔφερε πολλοὺς καί πάλι μαζί, ἀδελφια, συγγενεῖς, παιδιά, ἀνδρόγυνα, καί ἀγαπημένους. Ἔτσι εἶχε ἀποκτήσῃ καλή φήμη, πῶς ὅταν ἀναλάμβανε μίαν ὑπόθεσι κινούσε Γῆ καί Οὐρανὸ νά τήν φέρεῖ εἰς πέρας, καί τῆς περισσότερες φορές, τὰ κατάφερνε.

Ὁ Άνδρέας εἶχε ἀκούσῃ τυχαία γιὰ τὸ γραφεῖο τοῦ Ίακωβου ἔτσι ἀφοῦ αὐτὸς χρόνια ἔψαχνε νά βρῇ τήν ἀγαπημένη του ἀρραβωνιαστικιά Ἀνούλα. Ὅταν φεύγοντας γιὰ τὸ Ἀλβανικὸ Μέτωπο τῆς εἶχε ὑποσχεθῇ νά γυρίσῃ νά παντρευτοῦν, πέρασε ὅμως τόσες πολλές περιπέτειες, καί ὅταν κατάφερε νά σταθῇ στά πόδια του ἀρχισε νά ψάχνει γιὰ νά τήν βρῇ. Μέσα στήν καρδιά του πίστευε πάντα ὅτι ζούσε, καί ὅτι καί αὐτὴ τὸν ἀγαπούσε πάντα.

Ἔτσι πῆγε βρῆκε τὸν Ίακωβο καί τοῦ ἐξιτόρισε τήν ὑπόθεσι. Αὐτὸς τὸν ἀκουσε προσεχτικά. Τελικὰ τοῦ εἶπε, «δύσκολα τὰ πράγματα ἀφοῦ τόσες ἐνέργειες δὲν ἔφεραν ἀποτέλεσμα καί κοντεύουν 20 χρόνια. Τώρα τί νά σοῦ πω. Δώσε μοῦ ὅλα τὰ στοιχεῖα καί ὁ Θεὸς βοηθός.»

Ὁ Άνδρέας περνοῦσε συχνὰ ἀπὸ τὸ γραφεῖο, πάντα

ὁμως ἀρνητικές ἀπαντήσεις ἔπερνε, καί νά τώρα σχεδόν ένα χρόνο μετὰ τὸν φώναξε ὁ Ίακωβος νά περάσῃ ἀπὸ τὸ γραφεῖο, γεμάτος περιέργεια καί ἀνυπομονισιά βρέθηκε 5 ἡ ὥρα στοῦ γραφείου.

Ὁ Ίακωβος χαμογέλασε βλέποντας τὸ ὕψος του. Τοῦ εἶπε νά καθῆσῃ καί χωρὶς περιστροφές τοῦ λέγει «Λοιπὸν Άνδρέα, ἐγινε τὸ θαῦμα. Βρίκαμε τελικὰ τήν Ἀνούλα σου.» Ὁ δῦστυχος ὁ Άνδρέας ἀναπήδησε λές καί δέχτηκε ἡλεκτρισμὸ στοῦ κορμὶ του. Τί εἶπες. «Ναί, ναί τήν βρήκαμε. Δέν ήταν εὐκολο, φίλε μου, γιατί εἶχαν χαθῇ τὰ ἴχνη της στήν Ελλάδα, ὁμως τὰ λαγωνικά μου τὰ κατάφεραν. Δέν θά σοῦ πῶ περισσότερα, προτιμῶ νά σοῦ τὰ πῇ ἡ ἴδια. Ναί, σοῦ ἔχω κλείσῃ ραντεβού αὔριο τὸ μεσημέρι νά ἀνταμώσετε στοῦ σπιτί της. Ὅσο καί νά σοῦ φανῇ ἀπίστευτο, ἡ Ἀνούλα σου γιὰ δέκα χρόνια τώρα εἶναι ἐδῶ, μένη μόνη, καί θά περιμένη ἕναν

συμβολαιογράφο αὔριο τὸ μεσημέρι γιὰ κάτι σπουδαῖο πού ἔχει νά της πῇ, ὁμως θά πᾶς ἐσύ γιὰ νά ἔχει τήν ἐκπηλξί νά σέ δῇ. Τὰ κανόνισα μαί χαρά, φίλε μου. Λοιπὸν, μὴν καθυστερῆς, καί ἀκουσε αὔριο εἶναι Valentine’s Day, μὴν ἀμελήσῃς νά πάρεις σοκολατάκια. Εἶμαι χαρούμενος γιὰ σένα.»

Ὅσο καί νά ἐπέμενε ὁ Άνδρέας, δέν τοῦ εἶπε τίποτε ἄλο ὁ Ίακωβος. «Τί τὰ θέλεις, ἄστα νά τὰ πῆτε οἱ δυὸ σας, ἔχετε μιά ζωὴ ὁλόκληρη μπροστὰ σας.»

Ὁ Άνδρέας ἔφυγε συγκλονισμένος, δέν πίστευε ὅτι ήταν ἀληθινὰ ὅτι ἀκουσε. Πῆγε σπιτί καί ἀνυπομονοῦσε πότε νά ἐρθεῖ τὸ μεσημέρι τήν ἀλῆ ἡμέρα.

Τὸ πρωὶ σηκώθηκε, ἐτοιμάστηκε καί κύταξε τὸν ἐαυτὸ του στον καθρέφτη. «Ε, δὲν εἶμαι καί γέρος, μόνον 42 χρονῶν, μερικές γκρίζες τρίχες στοὺς κροταίφους, ὁμως εἶμαι γερός καί δυνατός. Αχ, πῶς περνᾷ ἀργὰ οἱ ὥρες.»

Τέλος πέρασε ἀπὸ ένα ζαχαροπλαστεῖο, ἀγόρασε μιά μεγάλη καρδιά γεμάτη σοκολατάκια, πήρε καί δωδεκα ὑπέροχα τριαντάφυλλα, καί χτύπησε τὸ κουδούνι. Ἡ πόρτα ἀνοῖξε καί βρέθηκε μπροστὰ στήν Ἀνούλα. Τὸν κοίταξε καί τὰ μεγάλα καστανὰ μάτια της γεμάτα ἀπορία ἔδειχναν σάν νά ἔβλεπε φάντασμα. Τήν κοίταζε καί ὁ Άνδρέας καί δὲν χόρτενε νά τήν βλέπει. Ἡ Ἀνούλα ήταν ὁμορφὴ ὅσο ποτέ, καί τὰ γεμάτα δάκρυα μάτια της ἔδειχναν πόσο τὸν ἀγαπούσε ἀκόμα. Τελικὰ, ὁ Άνδρέας ἔσπασε τήν σιωπὴ καί δίνοντας τὰ λουλούδια τῆς εἶπε «Happy Valentine’s Day, Ἀνούλα μου!»

Ἔτσι γιὰ νά εὐχαριστήσῃ καί τὸν καλὸ Ἅγιο Βαλεντίνο, τὸν Ἅγιο της Ἀγάπης καί προστάτη τῶν ἐρωτευμένων, πού τοὺς ἐσμιξε.

Εὐχομαι νά ζῆτε πάντοτε μέ ἀγάπη!

Βούλα Χαρερά



FASTING GUIDELINES FOR LENT AND HOLY WEEK

(Note: All the dates below refer to 2007 specifically. These change each year due to the varying date of Pascha, April 8 this year.)

Fast Free Pre-Lenten Week: (Jan. 29-Feb. 4)

The week of the Publican and the Pharisee—which is the beginning of the Triodion Period—is a fast-free week, which means no fasting the entire week (even Wednesday and Friday of this week are fast-free).

Meatfare Week (Feb. 5-11)

Meat Fare Week is the week that follows the Sunday of the Prodigal Son. During this week, the normal Wednesday/Friday fast prevails on these two days. All other foods are permitted the other days of this week.

Cheesefare Week (Feb. 12-18)

Cheese Fare Week is the week that follows Meat Fare Sunday. During this week, there is abstinence of meat and meat byproducts the entire week, but dairy products (milk, eggs, cheese, etc.), fish, olive oil and wine are allowed the entire week (up until sundown of Cheesefare Sunday, February 18).

Great Lent and Holy Week (Feb. 19-April 7)

Weekdays: During this time, the Holy Canons indicate abstinence of meat, meat byproducts, dairy products, fish, olive oil and wine. There are two exceptions to the above: Fish is allowed on March 25 and on Palm Sunday (April 1 this year) due to the celebratory nature of those great feasts.

Saturdays and Sundays: During Great Lent, olive oil and wine are permitted (Except on Holy Saturday - a strict fast is kept on this day.)

All Days: Shellfish (shrimp, crab, scallops, etc), fruits and vegetables, grains, etc., are permitted throughout this period on all days.

General Notes

As with all rules of fasting, which are designated by the Holy Canons of the Orthodox Church, you are instructed to seek counsel from your Spiritual Father/Parish Priest for your personal guidance on fasting.

Fasting is not effective or even spiritual if it is an empty physical exercise; it must be accompanied by prayer, almsgiving, reading of Holy Scripture and other related books and attendance at church services. We should strive to attend as many Lenten Services as possible.

It is also recommended that you participate in the Sacrament of Confession at the onset and/or during this period of Great and Holy Lent. Any questions should be directed to your Spiritual Father/Parish Priest.

Remember, true fasting is not meant to be a set of rules making for a dismal life; rather, it frees us from the slavery of sin since the fast from certain foods & their quantity harmonizes with spiritual fasting - a fasting from sin and passions. We should also remember that it is as important to fast with what comes out of our mouth as well as what goes into it. God does not need our fasting and we do not “earn” blessings or any other gift of God by fasting; rather, it expresses our desire for a more pure state of communion with Him.

From Hymns of the Church

“Let us begin the fast with joy. Let us give ourselves to spiritual efforts. Let us cleanse our souls. Let us cleanse our flesh. Let us fast from passions as we fast from foods, taking pleasure in the good works of the Spirit and accomplishing in them love.”

(Forgiveness Sunday Vespers)



TIPS ON MAINTAINING A HEALTHY LENTEN FAST

- 1) Reduce all “empty calorie” foods (i.e., cookies, cakes, candy, soda/pop, etc.) and replace them with nutrient-dense foods, such as whole grains, legumes [Legumes include: chickpeas, beans (black, red and navy), lentils, peanuts, peas, soy and bean sprouts], nuts, seeds, fruits and vegetables.
- 2) Use a variety of fruits and vegetables in meals. Add a vitamin C source to each meal. Vitamin C is highest in fruits and fruit juices, but is also plentiful in red sweet peppers, kohlrabi, broccoli, pod peas, sweet potatoes, cauliflower and kale, just to name a few.
- 3) Provide vitamin D by daily exposure to the sun or by foods fortified with vitamin D (for example, certain breakfast cereals and milk alternatives).

Note: These are helpful tips, not medical advice! Please consult your doctor for special medical needs. There is also plenty of vegetarian/fasting info on the Internet.





All the Parish Council Past Presidents who were present on New Year's Eve joined current Parish Council President Leo Loomis in a toast honoring the accomplishments of the past and looking forward to a bright future for Holy Trinity Church following the signing of the contract to purchase the property for a new church in the North Hills at the corner of Babcock and Cumberland.



December 31, 2006/January 1, 2007: Many members of the Holy Trinity community joined for a joyous celebration ringing in the New Year. From seniors to adults to teens to toddlers, it was truly a great start to a new year and new future!





January 2007: Holy Trinity Church was represented by its GOYA in two tournaments in the month of January. The first took place at Saints Constantine and Helen Church in Cleveland, Ohio, on the weekend of January 12-14. Three teams participated: Senior Boys, Junior Boys and a combined Girls team. The second tournament was held at Saint Nicholas Cathedral in Oakland on the weekend of January 26-28. Both Boys teams went again, this time accompanied by a Girls Senior team and a Girls Junior team.







January 7, 2007: The installation of the duly-elected Holy Trinity Church 2007 Parish Council took place on Sunday, January 7, following the Divine Liturgy. Pictured with Father John are (l-r): George Dickos, Nikki Marsh, Steve Hodge, Dean J. Balouris, Vasilios Scoumis, Nick Sarandou (Secretary), Alex Trilivas (Treasurer), Leo Loomis (President), James T. Balouris, Lou Zozos, Troy Geanopulos and Chris T. Balouris (Vice-President). Not pictured: Gerri Valliant.

An update on the news and activities of our local Holy Trinity chapter of the Philoptochos Ladies Society, a national philanthropic ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. and the Parish Council." Want more information? Visit their web site at www.Philoptochos.org or contact a local member.

Happy New Year!

ΧΡΟΝΙΑ ΠΟΛΛΑ! HAPPY NEW YEAR! This is a new year and a new beginning for everyone, including Philoptochos! Let us make it the best year yet!

Angel Tree

Our sincere thanks to everyone who donated gifts for a child from the Angel Tree. The response was overwhelming. There were 122 names from the Auberle Home and 35 names from the Parental Center. Thank you notes were received from the students at Auberle. They will be on display at the coffee hour for several weeks for all to see.

Daffodil Luncheon

The Ladies Philoptochos Society of Campbell, Warren, Ohio, and Youngstown, Ohio, on behalf of the Metropolis Philoptochos of Pittsburgh are hosting a Luncheon on Saturday, March 10th. There will be a Social Hour starting at 11:00am followed by Lunch at 12:00pm. Proceeds benefit the Metropolis Special Care Fund and the Rich Center for Autism in Youngstown, Ohio. Tickets are \$40.00 (\$15.00 is tax deductible). If you are interested in going, please see Esther Ladakos.

Philoptochos Cookbook

We are planning on a Philoptochos Cookbook. Please submit any good recipes from your Yiayia, mother, yourself or anyone other favorites you may have. Forms will be mailed to your homes and they will be available every Sunday at the coffee hour.

Prayers

Please pray for our beloved Philoptochos members and all our loved ones who are ill. Prayer is a very powerful.

Warm Up Squares

We have been asking for Knitters or Crocheters for 7 x 9 inch squares so they can be assembled as "warm-up" blankets for the elderly. If you have made any, please bring them to church by February 14th.

We will meet at the center to put them together so they may be distributed to the nursing homes. Thank you for taking the time to make as many as you can. Every square counts!

Letter To The Ladies Of Holy Trinity

This letter was sent by the Philoptochos President to the Members of the Philoptochos in October to share some concerns about the organization. It is being sent here to the entire

community in the Herald with modifications to bring it up-to-date:

Dear Ladies of Holy Trinity,

I am writing this letter to express concerns about the future of our Organization as we approach the observance of our 75th Anniversary.

Notice was sent to all the members about the meeting on October 8th, indicating two specific items, the 75th Anniversary and the upcoming wine tasting. Cards were sent to over 80 members, 13 attended the meeting. At the meeting help was requested for both functions by the formation of committee (program, kitchen, decorating etc.). Two members volunteered. I was disheartened.

In response to members who do not come to the meeting and say how can they help if they don't know what is going on, I started writing a newsletter for each Herald sent out to our homes and current news in the Sunday bulletin.

What must we do? We can't get coffee hour volunteers. If each family would take one Sunday they would only have to take a turn one every 2 or 3 years.

Wednesday Lunch is carried out by the same few women each week. May God bless them for their dedication, but we need more help.

The Craft Fair held in September was attended by very few of our own members and parishioners. How can we survive as a viable organization when we don't support our own activities?

I realize that some of our members have health concerns, work, or other obligation. Young mothers have commitment to their families, especially their children's sport activities each and every day. We are asking for your commitment few hours every 2 or 3 months. **YOUNG MOTHERS, YOU ARE THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH AND THE PHILOPTOCHOS. PLEASE JOIN!**

Yours truly,
Despina Ladakos



A Note From Father John about this Message:

One of the most sacred responsibilities of the priesthood is the consecration of, distribution of and care for the Holy Eucharist—the Body and Blood of Christ, which is for the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, but can also be unto our judgement (1 Cor. 11.30). This message from His Eminence highlights that calling and reminds us that it is also the responsibility of the priest as spiritual father to educate parishioners on the dangers of receiving the Holy Gifts while living lives that do not demonstrate proper spiritual preparedness. While



GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF PITTSBURGH

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TO: The Reverend Clergy of our God-kept Metropolis of Pittsburgh
FROM: Metropolitan Maximos
RE: Reception of the Holy Eucharist

Dear Co-Workers in Christ,
I am not telling you anything new by denouncing the co-habitation outside the Christian marriage and the coming to receive Holy Communion by these same people as if nothing happened, and as if so doing does not violate the ethical principles and teachings of our Holy Orthodox faith.

The pursuit of holiness, which is the goal of our Christian lives, has always been understood as union with Christ, which is the healing of all aspects of our lives, as well as the healing of our inner selves. Participation in this process involves full union and communion with God, or the life of *theosis*. The Holy Orthodox Church understands God and His definition of life, healing and love, as participation in the life of Christ, by receiving the Holy Eucharist. It is this participation which is the criterion of true life in Christ, and, therefore, participation in the life of the Church.

Human society and secular people of all ages have not always agreed with "the ways of the Lord." Current secular teachings do not view physical intimacy as belonging solely to the committed couple in marriage. Even certain so-called Christians ignore the teaching of the Gospel for fear that they may offend someone. Those same people prefer to live together as if they were married, choosing secular corruption against Christian marriage. However, the Church has always understood that physical intimacy is an expression of Christ's love for His Bride, the Church. Serious studies have exposed the fallacy of the assumption that living together before marriage better prepares one for marriage. This is clearly exposed by the many marriages of those who live together which end in divorce soon after. Physical intimacy before the blessing of the marriage by the Church frequently suppresses serious issues that need to be addressed and resolved before the marriage. The physical intimacy has to follow the blessing by Christ of the Mystery of Marriage. To reverse this order, is to celebrate Christian sacraments outside the Church.

All the sacraments of the Church are given for healing; therefore, by receiving them we commit to aligning our lifestyles and behaviors to facilitate this healing. Receiving the Body and Blood of Christ is the expression of our participation in the life of the Church and our personal commitment to live the full Orthodox Christian life. Physical intimacy outside of marriage is not consistent with participation in the Holy Eucharist. The Holy Scripture (1 Corinthians 11:226) speaks of the danger of receiving the Eucharistic gifts unworthily. This is not because the Lord is punitive; but, because receiving the Holy Eucharist while practicing sin, is like mixing medications

this sometimes goes "against the grain" of life in the world, it is a reminder that we, as Christians, are in the world but "not of the world," as Jesus has said (John 15.19). Please receive this important message as a sign of the true care for the souls of the flock that a godly shepherd must have, whether as a bishop or as a priest. Please also accept it as encouragement to reach out to those who could benefit from this information. As the Lord said, "the gate is narrow and the way is hard, that leads to life" (Matt. 7.14). It is our calling as clergy to help you be prepared to enter it and our challenge as Christians to encourage one another on the path to salvation! - Father John

which are intended for healing with an illegal drug which can result in severe damage, or even, death.

Our clergy are expected to speak directly to the people involved in these situations, asking them to refrain from receiving the Holy Eucharist until they repent with a firm resolve to follow the teaching of the Church including the cessation of all sexual activity outside the Christian Mystery of marriage. Some people in these situations, not getting what they want from one clergyman, join another parish. This is why it is important for the clergyman of this second parish to talk with the new members regarding their situation, and to confer with their previous pastor to help them acquire a real understanding of the teaching of the Church and a change of mind and life (*metanoia*) by avoiding any sexual activity outside the Christian Mystery of marriage.

Participation in the sacrament of repentance and confession is necessary in these situations, so that the Orthodox members may be healed from any brokenness in their spiritual lives because of their sin. It affirms the teaching that not only Christ is the One Who gives true meaning to life, but also that His love for us and His bond to us remain in spite of our sin. Knowingly giving Holy Communion to those who live overtly sinful lifestyles disrespects the words of the Gospel and ignores the challenge to repent. Knowingly giving communion to those in these situations is equal to blessing their sin. This is the reason that many people do not take seriously the need for repentance and spiritual growth. It also causes problems in the case of those who aspire to holding leadership positions in the life of the Church, like being parish council members, since they receive the sacraments regularly, as the UPR require; however, they are at odds with the teaching of the Church. They believe it is their "right" to seek these positions, without realizing that their sin is increased by seeking a leadership position that they not deserve. Receiving of the holy sacraments without being prepared by repentance can in fact, make one's soul more calloused to the grace of God. Keeping silent and never confronting people in these situations, can be seen as making light of any, and even affirming and blessing sins that seriously endanger the salvation of the human soul.

Being pastors entrusted with the caring and healing of the souls of our parishioners, means that we are accountable to the Lord Himself, Who will call us to account for the lost souls entrusted to us. Like physicians we must clearly and firmly affirm the need for repentance, in order to obtain forgiveness of sins and authentic spiritual health. The commitment and effort to stop damaging the soul with an inappropriate lifestyle will, then, allow the Holy Eucharist properly received to have its full effect for healing the human soul and prove itself as the Medicine of Immortality. With this I remain, yours in the service of Christ,

+MAXIMOS
METROPOLITAN OF PITTSBURGH

Thank You | 2006 Nativity Flowers Donor List

Many thanks to the following parishioners and friends for sponsoring the beautiful poinsettias for the decoration of the church during the Christmas holidays. May the Lord remember them and those whom they have honored!

DONORS

COMMEMORATIONS

Anonymous.....	For the health of our family
Harry, Joyce, George and Andrew Athanasiou.....	For the health of our family
Harry, Joyce, George and Andrew Athanasiou.....	For our Armed Forces
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Gabe & Johanna Cocheres.....	For the health of our families
Shea Danis	In memory of Demetrios Danis
Miss Betty Dickos.....	In memory of Frank and Fannie
Frank & Katina Erdeljac.....	In memory of Michael & Theologia Alexiades
Anna Festas	In memory of our loved ones
The Fiedler Family	In loving memory of our grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins
Tessie Frankos	In memory of daughter, Demitria, and husband, James Frankos
Connie Fries	For the health of family and friends
Judith Fulton	In memory of my parents: Robert & Bella (Fortes) Fulton
Louise Garrity	For the health of Sam & Georgia Castellano
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Irene S. Karavolos and Fanny Kostos.....	For the health of our family
Irene S. Karavolos and Fanny Kostos.....	In loving memory of our father, Steve Karavolos
Presvytera Louella Kostopolos	In memory of Father John Kostopolos
Stella Kourakos	In memory of Stanley, Irene, George, Chris and Marie
Vaso Kourouklis	In memory of Achille Kourouklis
Vaso Kourouklis	In memory of Stavroula Repana
Mike & Julie Kritiotis.....	For the health of Agapios and Maria Kritiotis
George & Canella Lalikos	In memory of our beloved departed
Gregory and Susan Manesiotis	In memory of Gregory and Rose Manesiotis
Gregory and Susan Manesiotis	In memory of Victor and Audrey Mus
Gregory and Susan Manesiotis	In memory of Susan Will
Gregory and Susan Manesiotis	In memory of Robert Black
Gregory and Susan Manesiotis	In memory of Michael Manesiotis
Kelly Manning.....	In memory of all my family
Robert & Nikki Marsh, Niko, Demitri and Nia.....	In memory of Nick and Lorraine Kanakis
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Peter & Mary Panos.....	In memory of George and Mary Panos
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George and Rhea Pantelakis	In memory of our beloved departed
George and Marian Pantelas, Sr.	In memory of Helen and Paul Pantelas
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Orestes and Arlene Paras.....	In memory of John and Maria Paras
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Olga Regakis.....	In memory of all the deceased
Mr. & Mrs. Evan Rigas & Family	In memory of John Rigas
Angie Roman	In memory of Gus Roman
Christina K. Sfanos.....	In memory of Michael N. Sfanos
James Steve Statheas	In memory of Stavros and Demetra Statheas
Mary Magdalene Welsh.....	In memory of my beloved mother, Julia Welsh
Marcus and Theresa Zamagias.....	In loving memory of Gusty Zamagias
Anthony and Aspasia Zissis	In memory of our parents

2007 Pledges Received | Holy Trinity Stewardship

Thank you to the following faithful stewards who have submitted their pledge cards for the 2006 pledge year as of this publication. Please join them in their support for the ministries of Holy Trinity and submit your pledge card today! Remember, a current, signed pledge card is required each year as part of maintaining your membership in good standing at Holy Trinity Church.

Mr. & Mrs. Mark Adamczyk
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2007 STEWARDSHIP QUICK LOOK

2007 Pledges received: 148

Total amount pledged: \$87,132.00

Donated as of 1/31/07: \$34,309.00

Average pledge: \$589.00

Maximum pledge: \$12,000.00

Expenses to operate Holy Trinity Church in 2007: Over \$800 per day

Last of a special series of educational features designed to provide "continuing education" to our parishioners. Taken from the publication, "Our Worship," which examines and explains the main elements of worship in the Orthodox Christian Church.

The Great Fast: a time of "bright sadness"

With Adam we lament over the loss of Paradise even as we anticipate the brightness of the resurrection of Christ, the New Adam.

The great **Prayer of St. Ephrem the Syrian** sets the tone and mood:

"O Lord and Master of my life
Take from me the spirit of sloth, despair, lust of power and idle talk.
But give rather the spirit of chastity, humility, patience and love
to Your servant.
Yea, O Lord and King
Grant me to see my own fault and not to judge my brother
For blessed art Thou unto ages of ages. Amen"

Four Sundays before the Great Fast give directions to our turn around from one spirit to another:

- **Sunday of Pharisee and Publican** — humility, the necessary attitude of repentance
- **Sunday of the Prodigal Son** — return to the Father, the goal of repentance
- **Sunday of the Last Judgement** ("Meatfare") — the urgency of repentance
- **Forgiveness Sunday** ("Cheesefare") — the essential condition of repentance: our willingness to forgive

The first Sunday in the Great Fast is the **Sunday of Orthodoxy**, celebrating the restoration of icons as fitting objects of veneration for they are windows into the Life of the Kingdom. On each of the following Sundays during the Fast, we celebrate a hero of the ascetical struggle of repentance such as St. Gregory Palamas, St. John Climacus, and St. Mary of Egypt.

In the middle of the Great Fast, on the **Sunday of the Veneration of the Cross**, a lavishly decorated cross is brought into the center of the Temple. We venerate the cross as the means by which we attain the Life of the Kingdom. Through the cross of repentance and dying to our old self, the "Old Adam" is crucified in us so that our new self might be raised to live together with the Risen Christ, the "New Adam," in purity and holiness (Ephesians 4:22-24).

On weekdays during the Great Fast we fast even from the Divine Liturgy, for the Liturgy is always a celebration of the joy of the Risen Christ and the participation in His Eternal Kingdom. We receive spiritual nourishment for our ascetic struggle in the "wilderness" by means of the Eucharist at the **Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts**.

The events of the Great and Holy Week rush from darkness toward the brightness of the resurrection.

- As a prelude to Holy Week, the **raising of Lazarus** shows Jesus' power over death and stirs up his enemies against him.
- The **Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday** begins the week. The "Hosannas" praising Jesus as the successor to King David will soon be turned into shouts of "Crucify Him!"
- From **Monday through Wednesday**, the Scripture readings urge us to prepare for the coming of the "Bridegroom," the coming King.
- On **Holy Thursday**, we "sit at table" with the Lord and all His disciples in the Eucharistic Banquet of the Kingdom of God, the eternal Kingdom realized and fulfilled in the death and resurrection of Christ our Lord
- On **Holy Friday**, we read twelve Gospel selections about the suffering and death of Christ up to the sealing of the tomb.
- On the eve of Pascha, the Tomb of Christ is set up in the middle of the Temple and we venerate a special icon of the dead Savior called the Holy Shroud (Epitaphios or Plaschanitsa).

At midnight on **Pascha**, in the darkness of the tomb we share the Light of Christ's resurrection and process around the Temple. We enter into a Temple now brightly adorned with the Glory of the Risen Christ. We sing:

*"Come all ye faithful, Let us venerate Christ's Holy Resurrection.
For behold through the Cross joy has come into all the world...
For by enduring the Cross for us, He has destroyed death by death."*

God's Business

Some things are meant to be shared openly... things like the Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. But other things are meant to remain hidden. When it comes to personal prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, the Lord Himself said that we best keep our practices to ourselves (Matthew 6:16-18). Practicing our piety "in secret" helps us avoid pretense and pride. God knows where our hearts are and that is all that matters in the spiritual life.

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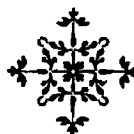
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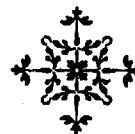
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Churches Are Spiritual Ports

Churches resemble ports in the ocean, which God has placed in cities—spiritual ports, wherein whoever of us takes refuge finds indescribable calmness of soul, made dizzy from worldly business. And precisely as a calm and waveless port offers safety to the boats docked there, so also the Church saves from the storm of earthly cares whoever hastens to it, and grants the believers to stand securely and listen to the word of God with great calmness.

The Church is the foundation of virtue and the school of spiritual life. Just cross its threshold at any time, and immediately you forget daily cares. Pass inside, and a spiritual ray will surround your soul. This stillness causes awe and teaches the Christian life. It raises up your train of thought and doesn't allow you to remember present things. It transports you from earth to Heaven. And if the gain is so great when a worship service is not even taking place, just think, when the Liturgy is performed—and the prophets teach, the Apostles preach the Gospel, Christ is among the believers, God the Father accepts the performed sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit grants His own rejoicing—what great benefit floods those who have attended church as they leave the church.



The joy of anyone who rejoices is preserved in the Church. The gladness of the embittered, the rejoicing of the saddened, the refreshment of the tortured, the comfort of the tired, all are found in the church. Because Christ says, "Come to me, all who are tired and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). What is more longed for than [to hear] this voice? What sweeter than this invitation? The Lord is calling you to a banquet when He invites you to church. He urges you to be comforted from toils and He transports you to a place of comfort from pain, because He lightens you from the burden of sins. He heals distress with spiritual enjoyment, and sadness with joy.

Saint John Chrysostom, 4th century

Scripture of the Month: "Rejoice in your hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer." (Romans 12.12)