



# THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

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HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH • PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

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## QUICK NEWS



On August 4, 2007, members of Holy Trinity GOYA, their families and other and community members offered their labors of love to remodel the home of a local widow and her son in Carnegie. The project was done in cooperation with Hosannah Industries, a local charitable work project ministry. For photos and information on this and other events in the life of Holy Trinity Church, see the Community Life Photo Journal, on pages 8 and 9 of this issue.



## "CROSSES OF MOUNT ATHOS"

A MONTAGE OF CROSSES FROM THE CHURCHES,  
CEMETERIES, DOMES, WALLS, GATES, RELIQUARIES,  
COURTYARDS AND FOOTPATHS OF THE HOLY MOUNTAIN

PHOTOGRAPHED DURING THE 2007 MOUNT ATHOS PILGRIMAGE

OFFERED IN HONOR OF THE FEAST OF THE ELEVATION OF THE HOLY CROSS, SEPT. 14

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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### About the Parish

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Holy Trinity Church is a parish of the  
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh  
([www.odpgh.org](http://www.odpgh.org)) and Greek Orthodox  
Archdiocese of America ([www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org))  
under the Spiritual Jurisdiction of the  
Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

### 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

Nikki Marsh

John Phillips

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



## Save, O Lord, Your people, and bless Your inheritance."

From the Apolytikion of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As this article is being written, it is that special time of year at Holy Trinity Church called festival week. As such, everything is being set up so we can invite friends and neighbors from near and far to come to share and enjoy our "traditions." By that we often mean (and they often expect) baklava, gyros, souvlakia and Greek dancing. Indeed, these are all part of the history of the parish and its people, and our cultural heritage is and should be treasured. As both a priest and a father, I am often moved deeply to hear our children use the language of their grandparents and revel in the dances I danced as a child. Greece is indeed a wonderful treasury of history and culture, and having been there this past spring on a pilgrimage, I can affirm there is nothing like it.

But do we, sometimes, use our ethnic culture as the "outward treasure" that is so easily shared and keep the eternal inheritance somewhere less accessible to the public? What does that say about our own perceptions of what our most precious inheritance is? And what does it say about our calling to serve others in the name of Christ, if we reserve the "best part" for ourselves alone? Do we as naturally offer someone a prayer as we do a pita, our faith as easily as our finikia? Does that truly fulfill our apostolic and missionary calling?

There is no need in this generation to have faith and culture at odds with one another. Our Church in America has matured beyond that. They must work together to serve Christ. To respect both is to honor the fullness of the lives of our parents and grandparents who built these churches for us. They sacrificed everything they had to give us everything they were given and more; they were determined to be sure we received our "inheritance." But as the "night schools" that preserved faith and heritage during the Turkish occupation of Greece witness, it was the Church that was the constant source of life through the promise of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit that saved them.

When I was in Constantinople in the spring, it was a painful thought to realize that the Greek population (and, thereby, the Orthodox Christians) have been reduced from millions only a few generations ago, to just a few thousand today. If you can remember the scene out of the Ten Commandments movie when the Jews packed everything and left the slavery of the Egyptians, that is probably close to the expulsion experience our ancestors of Asia Minor went through, many of them dying on the way, forced from their ancestral homes by their persecutors. Yet even though only earthly ruins remain, one thing those few remaining faithful have preserved: the things most precious that were written in their hearts as their eternal inheritance, "treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matt. 6.20).

If we pass on less, we have not been the stewards we are called to be. Yes, our Greek food is delicious, but we have something better and more rewarding to offer. And we must be ready to tell them: we have "an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you" (1 Peter 1.4). So, as the hymn of the Cross says above, "Save, O Lord, Your people, and bless Your inheritance."

Herald Personal Sponsor for this Issue:

**Father Radu and Presvytera Loredana Bordeianu**  
in honor of the Baptism of their daughter, Rebecca Theodora

## WORSHIP LIFE

### Weekday Liturgies . . . . . September

Please take note of the following upcoming liturgical dates. Unless otherwise indicated, Orthros starts at 8:30 a.m., followed by Divine Liturgy at 9:30 a.m..

**Sept. 5, 6:00pm:** Monthly Paraclesis Service

**Sept. 7/8:** Nativity of Theotokos Vespers & Liturgy

*These services will be held at the Nativity of the Theotokos Monastery in Saxonburg, PA. See the enclosed flyer.*

**Sept. 13/14:** Exaltation of the Holy Cross Vespers & Liturgy

*These services will be held at the Holy Cross Church in Mount Lebanon. 7pm Vespers/9am Orthros & Liturgy*

**Sept. 17:** Saint Sophia and her Daughters

**Sept. 26:** St. John the Theologian

## FUNERALS & MEMORIALS

### Gus Passadis

The servant of God, Gus Passadis, fell asleep in the Lord on August 12, 2007. The Funeral was held at Koimissis Tis Theotokou Church in Aliquippa, followed by interment at Woodlawn Cemetery in Aliquippa. May his memory be eternal!

### Upcoming Memorials . . . . . September

Sept. 9 - Achilles Kourouklis (1 yr.) ; Sept. 16 - Gus Passadis (40 days); Koula Roomeliotis (5 yrs.)

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### Church School Begins . . . . . September 9

If you missed advance registration in August, don't worry: there's still room! Simply sign up at the Church School office before taking your child to class. Classes start with three-year-olds. The first day of classes for Church School is Sunday, September 9 at 9:30 with Divine Liturgy and the children's sermon, followed by classes after Holy Communion. See you there!

### St. Lydia's Orthodox Women's Fellowship . . . . . Sep. 13

The St. Lydia Women's Study Fellowship is a ministry 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! For further information on this worthwhile and informative group or for directions to the meetings, call Stacy Dickos at 412-367-0925.

### St. Nikodemos Men's Fellowship . . . . . Sept. 25

The St. Nikodemos Men's Study Fellowship is an Orthodox men's fellowship, study and discussion group which meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. at the office of TriadUSA, Suite 1600, Three Gateway Center, downtown. The group seeks to provide a

regular meeting for working men to discuss issues of faith, work and family. It is open to all interested men and has been centrally located downtown to accommodate easy access for the lunchtime meetings. For directions, call Gus Georgiadis at 412-880-4999.

### Orthodox Studies Forum . . . . . September 19

Now in its second year, the Orthodox Studies Forum is designed for adults who are interested in learning more about the Orthodox Christian Faith. It is led by Father Radu Bordeianu and is for both those who have been Orthodox all their lives and want to learn more as well as those seeking to embrace Orthodoxy from another background and grow further in their faith. The group is currently studying the book, "The Orthodox Church" by Bishop Kallistos Ware. Copies of the book are available from Father Radu.

The group meets on the first and third Wednesday of each month from 7:00-8:30 p.m. starting Sept. 19 at the La Roche College campus, 9000 Babcock Blvd., Pittsburgh (next to UPMC Passavant Hospital). The room is in the A.J. Palumbo Science Center, Room SC107. See the enclosed flyer for details.

## YOUTH MINISTRIES

### New Ministry: HOPE

This year, Father Radu will be working with the parents of our young children to energize and strengthen our "young people ministries." A new opportunity, HOPE, will be available to all children Kindergarten through 2nd grade, with special activities oriented toward helping the very young develop in their faith and have fun! If you have children in that age group, please see Father Radu (724-933-0117) or Yvonne Balouris (724-934-4850) for information on how to get involved. This is a great way to get your young ones involved in church. The group will meet monthly.

### Continuing Ministry: JOY

JOY is the ministry for 3rd through 6th grade children. The goal for this group is that by laying a foundation of faith at this age, the young people will have something that will guide and strengthen them as they progress into junior high and high school. Please don't let them wait until they are old enough to join GOYA. Plant the seeds now and they will blossom in good time as teens into that older ministry. Contact Father Radu or Penny Georgiadis (724-935-2383) for info.

### Teen Ministry: GOYA

The GOYA is the youth ministry to teens in grades 7-12. It is filled with faith learning and growth opportunities, monthly fellowship meetings, sports and fun! For information, see Father John or Presvytera Becky (412-831-3574).

### Youth Ministries Kick-off . . . . . September 16

The Kick-off for all three youth ministries will be held on Sunday, September 16. Details will follow shortly. Please save the date from now, however, and most important of all ... save your children! Your Church and the Holy Trinity youth ministries are there to help. Please stay involved!



Michael Kritiotis

### Discipleship: The True and Lasting Stewardship

Three kinds of souls, three prayers:

- 1] I'm a bow in your hands, Lord.  
Draw me lest I rot.
- 2] I'm a bow in your hands, Lord.  
Do not overdraw me, I shall break.
- 3] I'm a bow in your hands, Lord.  
Overdraw me and who cares if I break.

(From "Report to Greco" by Nicos Kazantzakis)

This famous prologue has been interpreted in many ways as a spiritual or physical metaphor. The question that immediately comes to mind as one reads this is "Which soul represents me?" Kazantzakis, known for his Cretan defiance and courageous spirit, left no doubt which one he would choose. But, can we answer this question within ourselves with sincerity?

We have been shown God's love and providence for us as individuals and as a community. We are indeed blessed. Can we really be...

[1] So idle in our ways with the consequent danger that we atrophy and become marginalized? Or perhaps

[2] So content in our state-of-our-soul that we are unwilling to go the extra mile, convincing ourselves we've done enough already? Or

[3] The dreamers and risk-takers – the faithful souls, already bent in the Lord's hands but still seeking a higher level of stewardship?

### Time To Re-evaluate our Soul

This is the time, my brothers and sisters in Christ, to re-evaluate our soul's identity. Besides the routine but rewarding Christian work we continue to do here at Holy Trinity, we now have the chance of a lifetime to create something great that will grow from our faith in Christ and leave a legacy for future generations. Yes, it is a great challenge. But what a greater blessing it also is?

This extraordinary moment must be grasped and cherished. Don't allow it to pass you by, to leave you in the margins or feeling complacent, or frightened to step out in faith. And, especially, don't allow this moment to pass feeling that you have nothing much to give – for we all know that the pas-

sionate steward desires to be generous with his or her time, talent and treasure, and acting upon that desire by giving freely and without expectation of reward or recognition is what enriches them. Have you ever seen a miserable generous person? I didn't think so. Because generous stewardship giving is an act of love, freedom and generosity – not an act of obligation, duty, or social expectation. Ours is asset-based stewardship – not obligation-based; it is the road to discipleship – not a single program. Like Christian life itself, stewardship is a journey. It takes time, we stumble, we fall, and we rise again to pursue our Christian vocation. We progress as stewards even as we progress as pilgrims.

### Making the Impossible Possible

Eventually, the dreamers prevail because they are blanketed with God's grace. They won't break, no matter how hard they are drawn. Impossible dreams will become reality and we will praise God for His gifts.

W. H. Murray was part of an expedition to the Himalayas in 1951 and wrote about what he calls "providence," when we commit ourselves to something bigger than we think we can accomplish:

"Until one is committed, there is hesitancy, the chance to draw back, always ineffectiveness.

Concerning all acts of initiative (and creation), there is one elementary truth the ignorance of which kills countless ideas and splendid plans: that the moment one definitely commits oneself, then providence moves too.

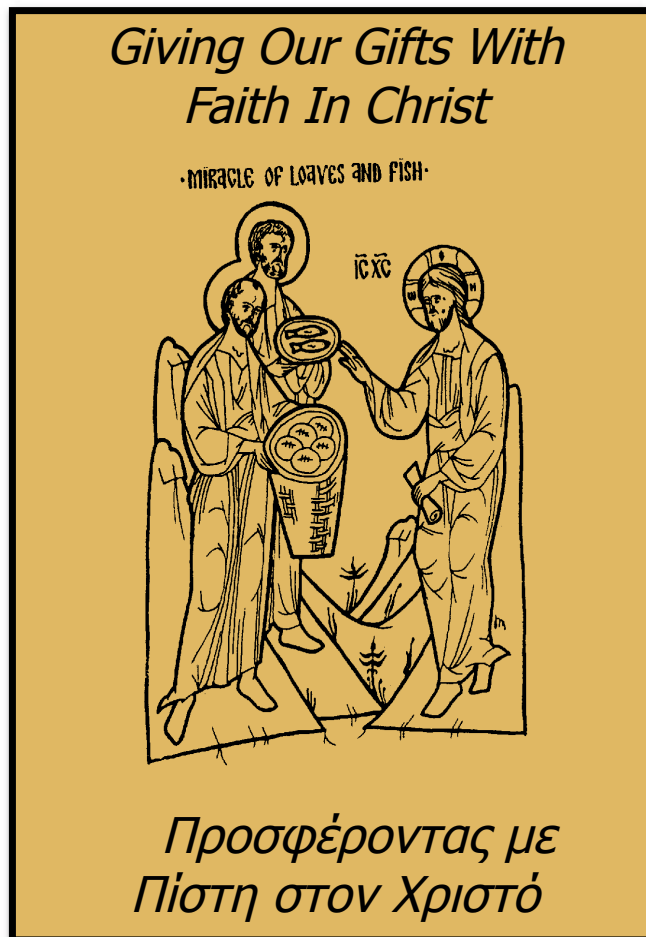
A whole stream of events issues from the decision, raising in one's favor all manner of unforeseen incidents, meetings and material assistance, which

no man could have dreamt would have come his way."

Let us become pilgrims with Christ and take on this journey together. He will show us the way.

Sincerely in Christ,

*Michael A. Kritiotis*  
Stewardship Chairperson



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



**Father John  
Androutsopoulos**

## THE HOLY DAYS OF SEPTEMBER

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ,

During the month of September our Orthodox Church celebrates some of the Great Feast Days of our Church.

**September 1st:** Marks the beginning of our Ecclesiastical New Year. May the New Year bring peace to the much-desired and blood-stained Humanity, and as

Orthodox Christians to be more faithful and fruitful in the New Vineyard of our Lord. Concerning the old vineyard (The people of Israel) and the New Vineyard (The Christian Church) read the Gospel of Matthew 21: 33-42 the parable of the Tenants in the Vineyard.

**September 8th:** We celebrate the Nativity of Theotokos. On this day the Church honors the birth of the Theotokos, the Virgin Mary. This is one of the 12 Major Feasts of the Church. The Theotokos was the chosen vessel of God. She was destined to bear the Savior of the World. There are many beautiful hymns written to honor the Theotokos. At every Church service there is a hymn to honor Her.

**September 14th:** Is the Elevation of the Life-Giving Cross. To the Christian the Cross is a Sacred Symbol of his faith in Jesus Christ. The symbol of our *salvation* and *redemption*. We Orthodox Christians honor the Cross of Christ during the Great Feast of the Elevation of the Cross. It is through the Cross of Christ, the hated and ignominious instrument of a cruel death, that we are saved. He who was slain on the Cross for our iniquities brought to life us who are not worthy. He has made us worthy of God's great mercy for He is good and compassionate. We on the Feast Day of the Elevation of the Cross rejoice and exalt His Name. This Feast Day is *equal* in solemnity to our Great and Holy Friday: *a strict fast*.

**September 26th:** We commemorate the Translation (Falling Asleep) of John the Evangelist and Theologian) beloved Apostle of Jesus, to whom Jesus from the Cross entrusted His Mother. Five books of the twenty-seven of the New Testament are written by St. John:

- 1) The Gospel of St. John.
- 2) The First Epistle of St. John
- 3) The Second Epistle of St. John
- 4) The Third Epistle of St. John

## 5) The Revelation (Apocalypse)

### Peace and Repentance

**Question:** What Does The Lord Require Of Me During The Ecclesiastical New Year?

**Answer:** Peace And Repentance.

"He has showed thee, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord re-quire of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God. (Micah 6:8)

What does the Lord require of me? This is a challenging question. I have the privilege of being a fellow worker with Him. This is not only a privilege, but also a serious responsibility.

It is no easy task to live so that others may find it easier to believe in God and dedicate their lives to Him. No, it is not easy; but it is a glorious possibility.



What does God require of me? We can learn the truth of this Divine requirement through reading the Bible, prayer and fellowship with Jesus our Lord. He makes clear what God requires of us.

### For Sinners Only

Our Lord's mission is summed up in the words "for sinners only." Jesus said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." ( Luke 5: 32)

Who of us does not qualify for this saving ministry of Christ? We are all sinners.

When we have done everything we can to honor our Lord, we still have a sense of unworthiness. This gift of forgiveness, this warm friendship of our Lord, is our very life. How precious were His words to the ears of the sinful woman: "Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more."

When we feel defeated and forsaken, and then lift our eyes to meet Christ's piercing, searching, yet sympathetic look, there comes understanding and peace. He knows what we are and why we behave as we do. He alone knows the unseen struggle. Others do not understand, and they condemn us. Jesus understands, and He forgives and strengthens.

Our sins are mightier than we are. We cannot handle them by ourselves. We are grateful that God has provided a way of our forgiveness. If we are truly repentant, we can feel or sense the presence of Christ our Savior, the friend of sinners, and He gives us the blessed assurance of forgiveness through Him.

With His Love,

*Rev. Fr. John K. Androutsopoulos*



**August 4, 2007:** Members of the Holy Trinity Church, coordinated by GOYA, gathered to work with Hosannah Industries, a local charitable organization, to put new siding on the Carnegie home of a widow and her seriously-ill son. The decades-old compressed cardboard siding was replaced with brand new vinyl siding at no cost to the family. Volunteers learned on the job as they measured, cut and installed the siding. The entire job took a full day, lots of sweat and most of all, and endless supply of the love of Christ, which calls us to reach out to those in need around us. Pictured above is the team departing early in the morning from Holy Trinity Church, then working throughout the day, and finally, gathering in thanksgiving for a job well done in Christ. Many thanks to Paula Valliant for coordinating the effort!



After a long, hot Pittsburgh summer day, "there is joy in the Lord" as the job is finished and the gift of a newly-remodeled house is presented to the recipient as a gift of love.

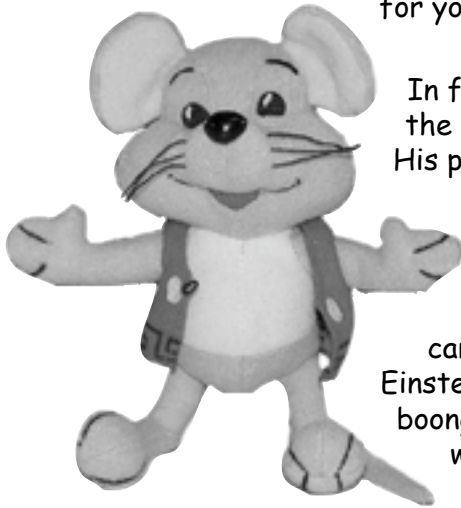




**August 12-14, 2007:** Holy Trinity Church took significant steps forward in August with our new church project during a three-day workshop with our architect, Chris J. Kamages (above) of CJK Design, Inc. from San Francisco. Christ met with the entire community for an open forum (upper left), then conducted extensive interviews and discussions with representatives of each of the parish ministries. Finally, he presented preliminary concepts for a master plan to the Vision Committee and Parish Council. Below, he explains one of those plans to Leo Loomis, Parish Council president.

Hello to All My Precious Children!

Well, I'm back from my summer travels, and I have an important question for you: Do you know that God loves you?



Well, in case you're not sure, the answer is a great big YES HE DOES! In fact, God's love for you is bigger and wider than any ocean, taller than the tallest skyscraper in the whole wide world! And He is watching out for all His precious children, especially when they are afraid, feel all alone or when they have their feelings hurt. He is always there for us.

If you would like to know more about this, I will tell you a story from a new DVD I have in my library called "In Search of the Great White Tiger." In it, Big Billy the panda and his friends live happily at a carousel called the Gnool Zoo in the land of Gnool. Here, he and his friends—Einstein, an intelligent elephant; Miss Marbles, a vain ostrich; and Chatta-boonga and Boongachatta, the tomboy chimps—bring great joy to the children who visit each day. But one horrible night the evil dragon Reptillion tries to take over the Gnool Zoo. He tries robbing the gentle creatures of their music, lights, and joy. He wants all the gentle animals to follow him. But they resist and say there must be some great mistake. Instead, they all follow the Great White Tiger. Reptillion does not even want to hear that name; he actually becomes angry whenever he is around. He threatens the other animals, "If you do not follow me, then you shall be my prisoners forever! No more music, no more fun! No one can save you now!" So Big Billy asks the Great White Tiger for help, and the tiger helps them make an amazing escape. They come to learn that the Great White Tiger loves them more than anything else in the Gnool Zoo. He will always find a way to help them overcome the temptations that Reptillion throws at them. When the Great White promises to lead them, anything is possible.

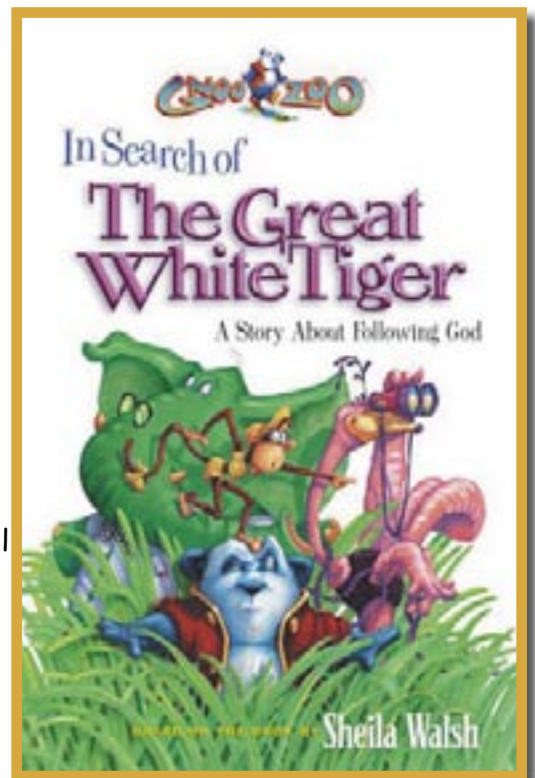
There is an important lesson in this, my precious little ones. Things are not always as bad as they seem. Inside each of us is a child who dreams of a better world. It is a place where every heart is free. For the animals, the one who can take them there is the Great White Tiger. But, of course, you know who the Great White Tiger symbolizes for us? Of course, it is our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ. If you believe in Him, you will always find the way.

What did the animals learn in this story? They learned that God's way is the best way, and that He loves us more than anyone or anything else! They also learned how important it is to always love and trust our Heavenly Father, and to obey Him and stay on the right path.

But maybe the most important lesson is that when you make a mistake or choose something foolishly, the Lord still loves us and will always be there for us!

And I'll be there and waiting for you, too, this school year at the St. Spyridon Lending Library. Don't forget to stop by and check out books, DVDs and videos for two weeks ... free! We have hundreds and hundreds of stories and adventures to help you learn about God, the Bible and lots of great lessons for children of every age!

Love in Christ,  
Spero





Maria Kraniou

**T**his summer, our trip to Greece distinguished itself from the others, as we traveled with two other couples, (co-workers), who had never before visited Greece. We were proud and excited to introduce them to our culture, and needless to say, they devoured every moment, falling in love with the people, the landscape and beaches, the food and wine, the music, and the journey through thousands of years of historical myth and reality. By the end of our trip, one friend enthusiastically shouted, "In my second life, I want to return as a Greek!" The beauty of Greece lies in the fact that it combines so many themes all in one vacation: history, religion, swimming and recreation, culinary delights, archaeology... Coincidentally, our itinerary on land was almost exactly the same as the one described in the following article in the *New York Times*. Read how one family visits Greece to enjoy and reap the full benefits for themselves and their children, and how we all may be enriched on our next trip to Greece.

[This summer's plans included visiting] Athens and then the Peloponnese, a region many consider the most unspoiled in Greece, with steep mountains, charming coastal towns, beautiful beaches and more ancient ruins than we could possibly see in a week — though we planned to try. This was also going to be an educational trip, with stops at Olympia, Mycenae, Epidaurus and Corinth. By the time we returned, my children would not just have a tan, they would have a newfound knowledge of the differences between gods and heroes and the origins of Greek democracy. If I was going to cram a little ancient history into the brains of my three children, why not do it on a sun-kissed beach on the Mediterranean, where the academic lessons could be broken up by body surfing sessions, and where a day of archaeology could end with a meal of fresh fish and souvlaki at a cafe overlooking the water. [So] I drew up a lesson plan of "course objectives" for our trip, hoping it might lead to a more edifying educational experience for all of us. And then, like any good pushy mother, I forced my family to follow it.

**Lesson One:** Visit the museums, no matter how much the children might initially object. I knew that nearly every site on our itinerary had one and thought it might help the children mentally transform what often looked like a landscape of rocks into an ancient civilization. It did. At the Acropolis museum, Charles was fascinated by the segments of the Parthenon frieze on display — particularly one showing Hercules fighting off different monsters. This, in turn, led to a lively family discussion about whether the Elgin Marbles, which came from the Parthenon and are now held at the British Museum, should be returned to the Acropolis ... At the National Archaeological Museum of Athens, we saw various excavated artifacts from some of the sites we would later be visiting — the mask of Agamemnon, Mycenaean daggers and Bronze Age jewelry. Even the kids acknowledged that it made them more engaged when we finally toured those ruins later.

**Lesson Two:** Try to make learning fun, so that the children forget to complain. An hour outside Athens in the Peloponnese, we visited Epidaurus, where there is a nearly perfectly preserved amphitheater from the fourth century B.C. that still plays host to Greek drama in the summer. We sat for nearly an hour watching school groups, tours and other visitors sing arias, pop songs and musical comedy favorites from the circular stage.

**Lesson Three:** Take study breaks to stem revolts before they start. One afternoon in Athens we focused on retail rather than ruins in the pedestrian Plaka district. The girls spent hours choosing loose beads at a store where you could make your own jewelry, and Charles began a collection of 2004 Athens Olympic pins at a shop that had a map of Greece made from Olympic pins. Near Pylos, a charming harbor village in the south, we visited what might be one of the world's most spectacular beaches — Voidokoilia — a giant lagoon where the seawater streams into a circular pool between two large rocky land foundations. And in Nafplio, a seaside city that many consider to be one of the most beautiful on the entire mainland, we spent two early evenings wandering through the enormous pedestrian zone filled with cafes and shops, stopping for ice cream and crepes and the occasional purchase.

**Lesson Four:** Help children eat up the local culture, literally. Though most of our meals never exceeded \$50 for the five of us, including a carafe of wine, we splurged our first night in Athens and treated ourselves to an elegant dinner on the terrace at Orizontes, a restaurant on top of Lycabettus Hill, reached by a funicular. Overlooking the ethereally lighted city, the children had their first taste of Greek food and decided they liked it (braised lamb, chickpea balls and even shrimp wrapped in phyllo). Not always the most adventurous eater, Charles fell in love with squid, eating it grilled, sautéed, breaded, fried and stuffed. By far the best calamari he ordered was in the village of Epidaurus, where it had been freshly unloaded that very day from a boat in the marina next to our table. Florence discovered she liked spinach pie, and Harriet became addicted to hummus and fried Haloumi cheese, ordering them at every taverna.

**Lesson Five:** Push to see the extra site; it could be the best one. On the fifth day, driving through the lush Messenia district in the south, an area where terra cotta-colored mountains sweep down into deep valleys, we nearly decided not to stop at Ancient Messene. Tired and hot, I promised the kids we would make it quick, but in the end we spent nearly three hours at the empty archaeological site.

Though when we returned home six weeks ago, no one signed up for Greek lessons or wrote a paper on Pericles, the kids now know that Hermes is not just a maker of luxury goods, and that Nike is not only a sporting brand but the winged Greek goddess of victory. Which, to me, felt like victory indeed.

*Excerpted from "The Zeus Trip"*  
by Jennifer Conlin  
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## A Letter To Your Soul | Saint Seraphim of Viritsa

*Saint Seraphim of Viritsa (1866-1949) is one of the about 1200 saints whom the Hierarchical Synod of the Orthodox Church of Russia proclaimed in the year 2000 A.D. The following text comprises a letter sent by Father Seraphim to a spiritual child of his, a bishop, who was in prison. It is a homily of consolation and counsel that the Creator, God, addresses to man's soul.*



**H**ave you ever thought that everything that concerns you, concerns me also? Things that concern you concern the apple of my eye. You [he is speaking to the soul] are precious in my eyes and I have loved you; for this reason, it is a special joy for me to train you. When temptations and the opponent come upon you, like a river, I want you to know that ...

This was from Me.

**M**y strength, and your safety lies in allowing Me to protect you. I want you to know that, when you are in difficult conditions, among people who do not understand you, they do not consider the things that are pleasing to you, and cast you away ...

This was from Me.

**I** am your God, the circumstances of your life are in my hands; you did not end up by chance in your position; it is precisely the position I have appointed for you. Weren't you asking me to teach you humility? And there, I placed you in precisely the atmosphere, the school where they teach this lesson. Your environment, and they who live around you, are merely performing My will. Do you have financial difficulties and just barely make it? Know that ...

This was from Me.

**I** want you to know that I dispose of your money, so take refuge in Me and know that you are dependent upon me. I want you to know that my storehouses are inexhaustible, and be assured that I am faithful in My promises. Let it never happen that they tell you in your need, "Do not believe in your Lord and God." Have you ever spent the night in affliction? Are you separated from your relatives, the people who you love? I allowed it to affect you so you to turn to Me, and in Me to find eternal consolation and comfort. Did your friend or someone, whom you have opened your heart to, deceive you? ...

This was from Me.

**I** allowed this frustration to touch you, so that you may learn that your best friend is the Lord. I want you to bring everything to Me and to tell Me everything. Did someone slander you? Leave it to Me; be attached to Me, in Me your refuge, so that you can hide from the contradiction of the nations. I will make your righteousness shine like light and your life like midday noon. Your plans were destroyed? Your soul yielded and you are exhausted? ...

This was from Me.

**Y**ou made plans and have your own aims; you brought them to Me to bless them. But I want you to leave it all to Me, to direct and guide the circumstances of your life by My hand, because you are the orphan, not the protagonist. Unexpected failures found you, and despair overcame your heart, but know ...

This was from Me.

**W**ith this tiredness and anxiety I am testing how strong your faith is in My promises and your boldness in prayer for your relatives. Why is it not you who entrusted their cares in my providential love? You must leave them to the protection of My All Pure Mother. Serious illness found you, which may be healed or is incurable, and nailed you to your bed ...

This was from Me.

**B**ecause I want you to know Me more deeply, through physical illness, do not murmur against this trial I have sent you. And do not try to understand My plans for the salvation of people's souls in various ways, but without murmuring humbly to bow your head before My goodness. You were dreaming to do something distinct and special for Me and, instead of doing it, you fell into a bed of pain ...

This was from Me.

**B**ecause then you were sunk in your own works, and I would not have been able to draw your thoughts to Me. But I want to teach you the most deep thoughts and My lessons so that you may serve Me. I want to teach you to sense that you are nothing without Me. Some of my best children are those who, cut off from active life, learn to use the weapon of ceaseless prayer. You were called unexpectedly to undertake a difficult and responsible position, supported by Me. I entrust these difficulties to you, and for this reason, the Lord your God will bless all your works, in all of your paths. In everything, I, your Lord will be your guide and teacher. Remember always that every difficulty that you will come across, every offensive word, every slander and criticism, every obstacle to your works, which could cause frustration and disappointment, every revelation of your weakness and incapability ...

This was from Me.

Know and remember - always, no matter where you are - that whatsoever stings will be dulled as soon as you will learn in all things to look at Me. Everything was sent to you by Me, for the perfection of your soul.

All these things were from Me.

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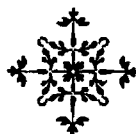
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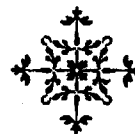
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## On the Importance of Persistence in Prayer

*Lessons to be learned from St. Anna, Mother of the Virgin Mary, on the Feast of the Nativity of the Theotokos, celebrated September 8.*

**S**aint Anna was married at the age of twenty. She had her child when she was sixty! For forty years she had prayed to God to give her a child, yet most of us expect an answer from God the first time we ask. If He doesn't reply, we give up our struggle and turn against Him, because He hasn't worked a miracle for us. When this happens, our position is like the man in the following story:

An invalid from a mountain village went down to the nearest town to see a doctor. When the latter had examined him, he said, "You must go swimming in the sea at least twenty times."

The sick man didn't want to leave his village, his house and his routine, but he did want to regain his health. He was in a difficult situation but eventually came up with his own solution: he went to the seaside and jumped in and out twenty times!

He then went back to his village, expecting to be healed, although of course he wasn't. And then he complained about the doctor

This is what we often do. When we pray for something, we try to have done with the prayer as quickly as possible. And we demand that God should work a miracle for us 'here and now.'

But given such a disposition on our part, God is not going to answer. He wants, He requires, that we persist in prayer (See Luke 18:1-7).

The more we persist, the more we hope. "God may be slow, but He never forgets" (for those who persist).

*Excerpted and adapted from "The Mother of Christ: The Mother of God" by Archimandrite Vassilios Bakoyannis*

Scripture of the Month: "Be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." (1 Cor. 15:58)