



# THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

FEBRUARY 2013

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HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH • PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

## Saint Haralambos the Hieromartyr - February 10

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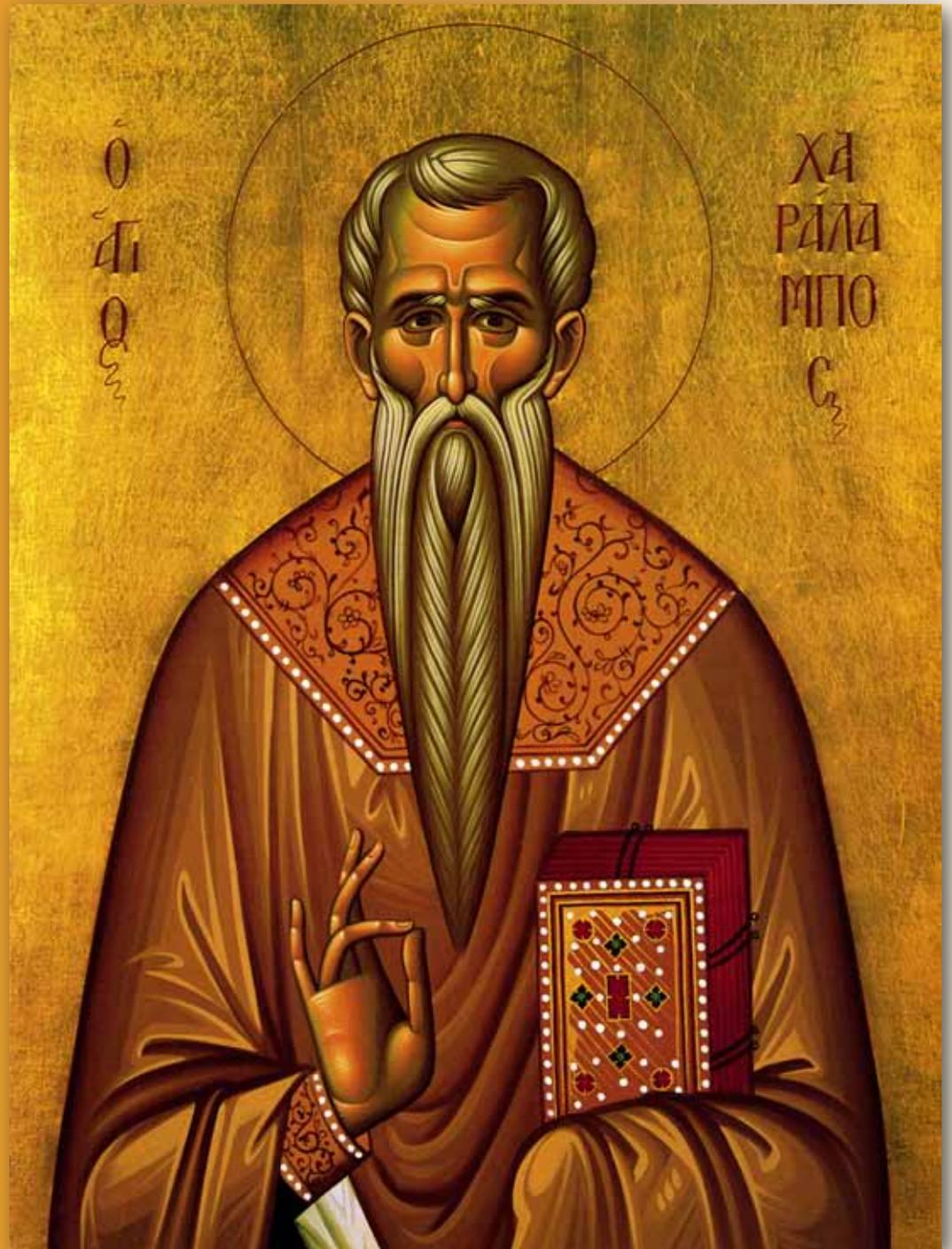
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**NEW CHURCH  
OPENS IN  
FOUR MONTHS!**

### QUICK NEWS



Almost a year from the date when the first dirt was moved, the Cross is lifted and placed on the dome of the new church! Want to see more scenes from the life and ministries of Holy Trinity Church? See the Community Life Photo Journal on pages 8-12 or visit our online photos and videos at [www.HolyTrinityPgh.org](http://www.HolyTrinityPgh.org).



**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

#### 2013 Parish Council

George Dickos, President

Dean A. Balouris

Marios Kritiotis

George Danis

Charles Petredis

Andrew Janis

Joyce Athanasiou

Jason Farmakis

Stephanie Sedor

Louis Kort

Alex Trivilas

Leo Loomis

Gerri Valliant

#### Ministries

Please visit the Holy Trinity website at [www.HolyTrinityPgh.org](http://www.HolyTrinityPgh.org) for descriptions and contact information on Holy Trinity Church's ministries, including educations, youth, senior, family and cultural opportunities. There is something for everyone, so please get involved today!



A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.

John 13.34-35

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Christ,

On the front page in the "Quick News" section and on the "New Church Construction Update" (page 12), you will find photos of the exciting and momentous event of the placing of the Cross on the dome of the new Holy Trinity Church. One reason we are enthusiastic about it finally being placed is that it marks the building with perhaps the most clearly identifiable symbol of Orthodoxy: a Cross on top of a dome on top of a church! After all, from the Great Church of Hagia Sophia (see picture, page 5) to thousands of Orthodox churches around the world and right here in the area, nothing shouts "This is an Orthodox Church!" like a dome with a Cross, right?

Well, speaking from an architectural point of view, this is certainly true. But our Lord Jesus Christ offers another look at our identity today in a way we should give even more attention. If there is one identifiable mark, He says, that proclaims we are disciples of His, believers in Him, faithful Christians, it is not the Cross on our domes, but the love in our hearts for one another. This should sound quite familiar, not only because it is a well-known verse from the Gospel of Saint John, but because from the very start of this decade-long planning and building process, we have affirmed: we may be building a building, but more importantly we are building a community. And because communities are built with relationships and not bricks, the primary element which constitutes communities is precisely that stated by the Lord above: LOVE.

I take the time to mention this here because a number of other articles in this issue of *The Herald* address the issue of love because it is the month of February, when we celebrate Valentine's Day. While that provides an opportunity to address the topic of love, it focuses on just one form of love without speaking of the others. In the Greek language there are five forms of love: *philia*, *philanthropia*, *storge*, *eros* and *agape*. The last and highest of them is the very word used by Jesus in the Gospel: *agape*. "Love (*agapate*) one another," He says. It is worthy to note that the very first time the word "*agape*" appears in the entire Bible is from the very mouth of Jesus Himself in the above passage.

That "sets the bar," as the expression goes, even higher than the Cross on the dome as we prepare to open our doors to the world. According to the Lord, the doors are not enough. We must open our hearts. So much so that when people leave, they will want to come back, not because they have seen Orthodoxy in the building or on the dome or even in the icons, but because it is a place where they have experience love and therefore know that we are His disciples.

The wonderful thing is that this idea is not new to Holy Trinity Church. It is a very large part of what has gotten us where we are today. As your priest (and I know I speak for Father Radu as well), it is such a joy and honor to be serving in a community where love lives. So this is not a new teaching. It is a reminder during the month of love that the future of this community will reside in a beautiful new set of buildings, but our calling is to be best known for our love. May God enable us to live up to it daily.

Herald Personal Sponsor for this Issue:

**Sponsored in memory of Jimmy Regakis on the occasion of his birthday, February 8, from his mother, Olga Regakis. May his memory be eternal!**

**WORSHIP LIFE**

**Weekday Services .....February  
Wed. Jan. 9, 6:30 pm: Paraclesis to the Theotokos**

This service of supplication to the Mother of God is held on the second Wednesday of each month. Please note that the time has changed to 6:30pm. (SG)

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

**Saint Lydia Women’s Study .....February**

The St. Lydia Women’s Study Fellowship is now in its 13th year! If you have missed out on this wonderful time with fellow sisters in Christ sharing, learning and growing in faith, maybe this is the year you can join in!

This year the women are studying selections of spiritual guidance topics from Elder Paisios of Mount Athos (+1994), one of the most read and beloved elders of the contemporary Orthodox world. His works have only recently been translated into English. The materials will be distributed at the meeting. As always, participants are also encouraged to bring an Orthodox Study Bible as well. All women of any age are welcome. If you can’t make every session, don’t worry. Each topic is independent. Please try to attend as many as you can! Meetings are held every other Thursday beginning September 13 at St. George Chapel, 8941 Ringeisen Road, Allison Park. 9:30 - Coffee and Fellowship; 10:00 - 11:15 Study. For more information contact Stacy Dickos at 412-367-0925.

Topics for this month are: February 14 - “The Benefits of Good Fellowship”; February 28 - “Faith and Trust in God.” Give it a try...attend this month!

**YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS**

**Project Mexico Meeting ..... February 3**

The GOYA will hold an informational meeting for all teens, parents and chaperones interested in participating in the 2013 Project Mexico Mission Trip. See the information and form on page 13 of this issue for details.

**Holy Trinity Greek Dancers Meeting ..... February 3**

Attention all Holy Trinity Greek Dancers, ages Pre-school (3-4 year olds) through GOYA (18): There will be a parents meeting on Sunday, February 3, following the Divine Liturgy. The dance practice schedule for the year will be discussed. Questions? Contact Yvonne Balouris at ybalouris@zoominternet.net. Opa!

**GOYA Basketball Practices.....February**

The GOYA basketball teams will hold practices on the following dates during the month of February. Please note the locations and times, as they are different each date.

**Feb. 6, 7:00-9:00pm:** At St. Nicholas in Oakland

**Feb. 11, 6:30-8:30pm:** At Peebles Elementary

**Feb. 25, 7:30-9:00pm:** At North Allegheny Intermediate

**HOPE and JOY Snow-Tubing ..... February 10**

The HOPE and JOY ministries will hold their annual Snow-Tubing outing on the afternoon of Sunday, February 10.

Please watch the email list for details.

**GOYA Hoagie Sale ..... February 10**

Holy Trinity GOYA will hold its annual Hoagie Sale on Sunday, February 10. Orders are being taken now, with pickup available on the 10th. Thank you for supporting our teens!

**GOYA Dinner and Movie Night ..... February 23**

The GOYA teen ministry will host a dinner and movie night at the home of Melina and Amalia George on Saturday, February 23. Watch the GOYA email list for details.

**HOPE and JOY Conducts Chapel Iconography Tour**

The HOPE and JOY ministries hosted a tour and educational session at the Saint George Chapel on Sunday, January 27. Presvytera Loredana Bordeianu, a trained iconographer, explained the beautiful icons to the children and parents.



**COMMUNITY NEWS**

**Holy Trinity Choir Looking for New Members**

Attention everyone: the Holy Trinity Choir needs your help recruiting new members. Who are they looking for? 1) People who would like to sing with the choir every Sunday; 2) People who would like to contribute their singing talents during the special services of Lent and Holy Week; 3) People who would like to have the special and historic honor of singing for the June 22 Grand Opening of the new Holy Trinity Church. To

prepare properly for all those offerings, rehearsals are a must. They will begin Sunday, February 10 in the choir room as follows: 1) New members should exit with current choir members and go directly to choir room; 2) Rehearsals will be 15 minutes in length; 3) The choir will work on 5-10 pages at a time until they learn the entire Liturgy, then they will also work on special hymns and Lenten music closer to Pascha. And no worries, after the 15 minute rehearsal there will be plenty of time to join the rest of the congregation for coffee hour! Questions? Please see Choir Director Harriet Valliant.

### 2013 Parish Council Installed



The newly-elected 2013 Parish Council was installed at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy and Great Blessing of the Waters on January 6, Theophany. They then convened to elect the officers for the year. The following members will be serving on the Council for the 2013-2014 term: Joyce Athanasiou, George Danis, Andrew Janis, Leo Loomis, Charles Petredis, Stephanie Sedor and Gerri Valliant. Continuing on for the remainder of their two-year term through 2013 are: Dean A. Balouris, George Dickos, Jason Farmakis, Louis Kort, Marios Kritiotis and Alex Trilivas. Elected as officers were: President - George Dickos; Vice-President - Gerri Valliant; Treasurer - George Danis; Secretary - Stephanie Sedor. May God bless and guide them all in their service to the ministry of the Holy Church!



### Holy Trinity Hospitality: Welcome to the Team!

Anyone attending Holy Trinity Church services in the past year could not have helped but notice the continual influx of visitors and guests, each one a potential new member! We are thankful for our active and constantly present Hospitality

and Visitors Ministry as they stand ready to welcome these friends, introduce them to Holy Trinity Church and identify them with the now-familiar felt "Yellow Cross." Welcoming these brothers and sisters into the life of Holy Trinity Church is, however, everyone's calling. Please know that as a Holy Trinity parishioner you are called to share in welcoming them with open arms and hearts filled with the love of Christ. Find them at Coffee Hour and introduce them to the people and ministries of our parish. There is a place for everyone at Holy Trinity Church!

### Sign Up For the Holy Trinity Email!

Want to receive the Sunday Bulletin directly via email? Want to keep up to date with the latest Holy Trinity news or weather cancellations? Sign up at [www.HolyTrinityPgh.org](http://www.HolyTrinityPgh.org).

## NEW CHURCH PROJECT NEWS

### Keep Up With Construction Progress Online!

Want to keep up with the construction progress of the new Holy Trinity Church? Simply visit our website, [www.HolyTrinityPgh.org](http://www.HolyTrinityPgh.org), and click the Gallery link for lots of photos. There are also links to up-close walking tour videos with descriptions about construction progress and features of the new facilities. For direct access to the videos or to "Like" and post comments about them, visit [Facebook.com/holytrinitypgh](https://www.facebook.com/holytrinitypgh).

### OPENING OF THE NEW CHURCH: JUNE 22, 2013!

It's only around four months away, so, keep the weekend of June 22-24 clear for the "Thyranoixia" (Official Opening) of the new Holy Trinity Church! His Eminence Metropolitan Savas will preside over a weekend including the Opening of the Doors service and Liturgy on Saturday, Pentecost Liturgy on Sunday and our Feast Day Liturgy on Monday. There will also be a Gala Fund-raising Dinner-Dance on Saturday evening, so keep your calendar clear and make it a Holy Trinity Weekend from start to finish!



## REGIONAL NEWS

### Hellenic College/Holy Cross 75th Anniversary . . . March 3

His Eminence Metropolitan Savas invites you to attend and support a special evening in celebration of the 75th Anniversary of Hellenic College and Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, to be held Sunday, March 3, 2013, at Holy Cross Church in Mount Lebanon. The guest speaker will be Rev. Fr. James Katinas, Director of Institutional Advancement at HC/HC. The evening begins at 5:00 with hors d'oeuvres, followed by a 6:00 dinner, then a program, silent auction and dancing. RSVP deadline is February 15. Reserved seats are \$75 each, and many sponsorship opportunities are also available. For either, please see Joyce or Harry Athanasiou or contact them at 412-322-6002. See enclosed flyer and invitation for more.

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

FEBRUARY 2013 – "THE VOICE OF HOLY TRINITY CHURCH"



Father John Androutsopoulos

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Rejoice in the Lord Always!

Why We Worship God In Churches

"Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." Psalm 91:13 (King James version 92:13).

"In places of congregation (churches) bless God, the Lord, from the springs of Israel. O Son of

God, who didst rise from the dead, save us, who sing unto Thee: Alleluia." (Entrance verse of Pascha)

Worship is an experience in fellowship which enriches life. The regular gathering of Christ's people in a Church dedicated to the worship of God is indispensable to a Christian's determination to live close to Christ. The constant inspiration of meeting with others who are striving to live as Christ would have us all live is one of the great sources of power in every Christian life.

People who worship in Churches understand the dynamic spiritual principle of putting first things first. For the devoted Christian, the Church is symbolic of the highest aspirations, deepest loyalties, and largest commitments of life. In the Church we receive the Holy Sacraments. We become Christians in Baptism. We grow in Christ through the Sacraments of Holy Confession and Holy Communion. We hear God's word in the Church. We listen to inspired sermons, and receive spiritual nourishment in participating in the Divine Liturgy. We are part of the family of God when we come into the Church to thank God for His many blessings: to praise His Holy Name; and offer ourselves to Him in dedicated service.

Where Two Or Three Are Gathered Together In My Name, There I Am In The Midst Of Them" (Matthew 18:20)

Those who wish to attend Church regularly but are unable to do so keenly appreciate the need for Church services. Just as the body gradually wastes away if insufficient food is available, so the spirit is gradually weakened when it is cut off from the company of other Christians.

Worshipping in Church refreshes our faith in God through the teaching of the Scriptures. As St. Paul wrote, "Faith must come from what is heard, and what is heard comes from the word of Christ." Through worship, our faith, continually challenged by temptations to serve lesser gods, is lifted and reinforced.

Worshipping in Church strengthens our resolution to live better lives. In fellowship with other believers, we realize again and again that we are not alone in our strivings. We renew our vows and accept forgiveness for our shortcomings. We leave the service of worship with a consciousness of God's blessing going with us. "I was glad when they said unto me, "Let us go into the house of the Lord."

"As his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day" (Luke 4:16).

Jesus was a churchgoer. On the Lord's Day, he found his way into the Lord's house He could have worshipped in the hills, by the sea, or in the quiet of a friendly home. And he did. But when the Sabbath came, He went to the neighborhood synagogue to worship. We, too, are called upon to assemble for worship in Church on the Lord's Day.

We worship in Church to let go of other things in order that God may have His way with us. The sanctuary provides atmosphere and environment which helps us to turn to God with expectant and receptive hearts. The iconostasia, the icons on the walls, the candles, the

vigil lights, the incense, the living presence of Christ is within the Church when the Divine Liturgy is being celebrated. Here we are with God and His is with us. And we join with others to proclaim the glory and the majesty and the power of the Almighty, worship imparts courage and wisdom to us. We are uplifted in mind, body, and spirit. Those who worship go out in Christ's name and come to grips with the problems of the week ahead.

The Church is the place most conducive for God to do something for us, to us, and with us.

Happy Nameday on February 10th to those who have the name Haralambos (Harry or Bob)!

With His love, Rev. Fr. John H. Androutsopoulos, Protopresbyter

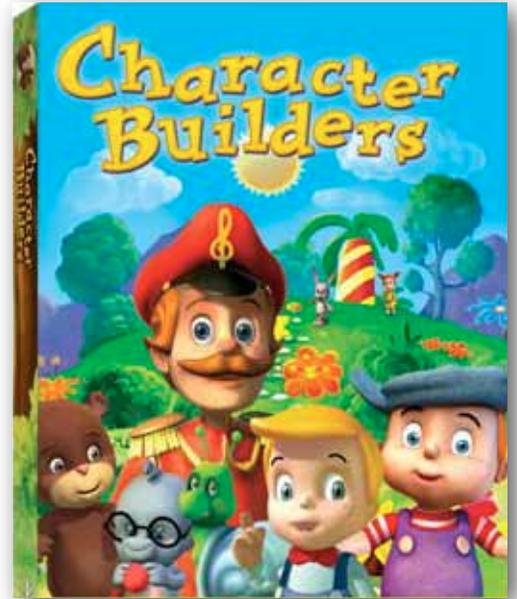


The Great Church of Hagia Sophia (The Holy Wisdom) in Constantinople

Hi! It is me, Spero! It is February and I'm here to wish all of my precious children a very, very Happy Hearts Day! I love red. It is my favorite color. There are many, many holidays in red. I can even have red candy! I also love to collect paper hearts with all of my special friends names on them. So.o.o.o, please bring me your favorite red heart, with your name on it, for me to decorate my home, your can add glitter and ribbon, and oo..o..ppp..ps! I'm getting carried away again! Well all my little ones know what I mean. Also, don't forget to tell your loved ones (that includes me) that you love them too! After all I they love and care for you everyday!



In one of the videos from the series, "The Character Builder Storybook", you will learn about politeness and joy. The first episode is "Bouncer and the Carrot Princess." In this AgapeLand adventure, Bouncer the rabbit learns the value of politeness when he meets the beautiful—but not so well mannered—Carrot Princess. You will learn that thinking of others before acting is a lesson we should all know about politeness. Yiayia teaches us little ones that it is important to be polite. It is only right to be kind and polite, for good manners say a lot about what you are like. When I was very young, I had bad manners and when I nibbled on my food, I forgot to close my choppers and that was very rude. When I wanted something I didn't remember to say please and I forgot to say "excuse me" whenever I sneezed. However, I learned to be thoughtful and let others go first. Two of my favorite words, which Yiayia taught us, are the magic words of "please" and "thank you". Now I like to be polite to every one that I see. Good manners make everything fun! Be respectful, kind, confidant, and responsible but, most of all my little ones, PLEASE BE POLITE!



The second episode on this video is about "The Rabbit That Lost His Hop." In this AgapeLand story, Stevie and Nancy help Bouncer the rabbit find the joy he lost in Sunless Valley. My precious little ones, you will learn with Bouncer that joy is the happiness that comes from giving or receiving good things. Remember, whenever you frown, turn that frown upside down, and in a while you will see a smile. Try it when you're sad: it will turn your world around. When you give joy away, your heart will be glad again. For in the end you will come to sing "Alleluia". Always sing it: "Alleluia" to Our Heavenly Father, dear boys and girls. Never lose your joy. Turn what is wrong into a song. Never, never lose your joy, for it is one of the fruits of the spirit!

Love in Christ

Spero

P. S. See you on Happy Hearts Day!

An original composition in Greek on the victory of love at Valentine's Day.



Voula Hareras

### Happy Valentine's Day

Ο Κύριος Ιάκωβος, γεμάτος χαρά, άποτελείωσε τό διάβασμα τού γράμματος πού κρατούσε. Όλες οί πληροφορίες πού ζητούσε, σχεδόν ένα χρόνο τώρα, ήταν γραμμένες μέ κάθε λεπτομέρεια.

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

χαρτί σ'ένα φάκελο καί φώναξε τήν γραμματέα του - «Σέ παρακαλώ πολύ, Ελενα, νά πάρεις στό τηλέφωνο τόν Κύριο Ανδρέα Φυλαυτόν, καί νά τού πής ότι είναι άπόλυτη ανάγκη νά περάσει άπό τό γραφείο κατά τής 5 τό άπόγευμα. Θά τόν περιμένω.» Η Ελενα ξαναγύρεσε καί τού είπε, «όλα έντάξη. Ο Κύριος Ανδρέας θά είναι έδώ στής πέντε.»

Εύχαριστημένος, ό Ιάκωβος έκαμε δύο τρία τηλεφωνήματα καί κάθησε άνετα στήν πολυθρόνα του άνάβοντας ένα τσιγάρο καί συλογιζόταν τήν ύπόθεσι τού Ανδρέα, καί τήν χαρά πού θά έπερνε όταν θά τού έδινε τό γράμμα πού προολίγο διάβασε.

Ο Ιάκωβος είχε άρκετά χρόνια άνοιξη γραφείο ιδιωτικών ύποθέσεων στήν Astoria, New York. Μετά τόν πόλεμο τού 1940, καί τήν μεγάλη συμφορά τού Εμφυλίου Πολέμου, τό τρομερό παιδομάζωμα, καί γενικά ό άφανισμός χιλιάδων ανθρώπων, πού χάθηκαν ώς άγνοούμενοι, καί απελπισμένα έψαχναν νά βρουν τά άγαπημένα τους πρόσωπα, τό γραφείο τού Ιάκωβου έφερε πολλούς καί πάλι μαζί, άδέρφια, συγγενείς, παιδιά, άνδρόγυνα, καί άγαπημένους. Ετσι είχε άποχτήση καλή φήμη, πώς όταν άναλάμβανε μιάν ύπόθεσι κινούσε Γή καί Ούρανό νά τήν φέρει εις πέρας, καί τής περισσότερες φορές, τά κατάφερνε.

Ο Ανδρέας είχε άκούση τυχαία γιά τό γραφείο τού Ιακώβου έτσι άφού αυτός χρόνια έψαχνε νά βρή τήν άγαπημένη του άρραβωνιαστικά Ανούλα. Όταν φεύγοντας γιά τό Αλβανικό Μέτωπο τής είχε ύποσχεθή νά γυρίση νά παντρευτούν, πέρασε όμως τόσες πολλές περιπέτειες, καί όταν κατάφερε νά σταθή στά πόδια του άρχισε νά ψάχνει γιά νά τήν βρή. Μέσα στήν καρδιά του πίστευε πάντα ότι ζούσε, καί ότι καί αυτή τόν άγαπούσε πάντα.

Ετσι πήγε βρήκε τόν Ιάκωβο καί τού έξιτόρισε τήν ύπόθεσι. Αυτός τόν άκουσε προσεχτικά. Τελικά τού είπε, «δύσκολα τά πράγματα άφού τόσες ένέργειες δέν έφεραν άποτέλεσμα καί κοντεύουν 20 χρόνια. Τώρα τί νά σου πω. Δώσε μου όλα τά στοιχεία καί ό Θεός βοηθός.»

Ο Ανδρέας περνούσε συχνά άπό τό γραφείο, πάντα όμως άρνητικές άπαντήσεις έπερνε, καί νά τώρα σχεδόν ένα χρόνο μετά τόν φώναξε ό Ιάκωβος νά περάση άπό τό γραφείο, γεμάτος περιέργεια καί άνυπομονισία βρέθηκε 5 ή ώρα στό γραφείο.

Ο Ιάκωβος χαμογέλασε βλέποντας τό ύφος του. Τού είπε νά καθήση καί χωρίς περιστροφές τού λέγει «Λοιπόν Ανδρέα, έγινε τό θαύμα. Βρίκαμε τελικά τήν Ανούλα σου.» Ο δύστυχος ό Ανδρέας άναπήδησε λές καί δέχτηκε ήλεκτρισμό στό κορμί του. Τί είπες. «Ναί, νάί τήν βρήκαμε. Δέν ήταν εύκολο, φίλε μου, γιατί είχαν χαθή τά ίχνη της στήν Ελλάδα, όμως τά λαγωνικά μου τά κατάφεραν. Δέν θά σου πώ περισσότερα, προτιμώ νά σου τά πή ή ίδια. Ναί, σου έχω κλείση ραντεβού αύριο τό μεσημέρι νά άνταμώνετε στό σπίτι της. Οσο καί νά σου φανή άπίστευτο, ή Ανούλα σου γιά δέκα χρόνια

τώρα είναι εδώ, μένη μόνη, καί θά περιμένη έναν συμβολιογράφο αύριο τό μεσημέρι γιά κάτι σπουδαίο πού έχει νά της πή, όμως θά πάς έσύ γιά νά έχει τήν έκπληξι νά σέ δή. Τά κανόνισα μαί χαρά, φίλε μου. Λοιπόν, μήν καθυστερήσ, καί άκουσε αύριο είναι Valentine's Day, μήν άμελήσης νά πάρεις σοκολατάκια. Είμαι χαρούμενος γιά σένα.»

Οσο καί νά επέμενε ό Ανδρέας, δέν τού είπε τίποτε άλο ό Ιάκωβος. «Τί τά θέλεις, άστα νά τά πήτε οί δύο σας, έχετε μιά ζωή όλόκληρη μπροστά σας.»

Ο Ανδρέας έφυγε συνγκλονισμένος, δέν πίστευε ότι ήταν άληθινά ότι άκουσε. Πήγε σπίτι καί άνυπομονούσε πότε νά

έρθει τό μεσημέρι τήν άλη ήμέρα.

Τό πρωί σηκώθηκε, έτοιμάστηκε καί κύταξε τόν εαυτό του στόν καθρέφτη. «Ε, δεν είμαι καί γέρος, μόνον 42 χρονών, μερικές γκρίζες τρίχες στους κροτάιφους, όμως είμαι γερός καί δυνατός. Αχ, πώς περνάν άργά οί ώρες.»

Τέλος πέρασε άπό ένα ζαχαροπλαστείο, άγόρασε μιά μεγάλη καρδιά γεμάτη σοκολατάκια, πήρε καί δωδεκα ύπέροχα τριαντάφυλλα, καί χτύπησε τό κουδούνι. Η πόρτα άνοιξε καί βρέθηκε μπροστά στήν Ανούλα. Τόν κόνιταξε καί τά μεγάλα καστανά μάτια της γεμάτα άπορία έδειχναν σάν νά έβλεπε φάντασμα. Τήν κοίταξε καί ό Ανδρέας καί δεν χόρτενε νά τήν βλέπει. Η Ανούλα ήταν όμορφη όσο ποτέ, καί τά γεμάτα δάκρυα μάτια της έδειχναν πόσο τόν άγαπούσε άκόμα. Τελικά, ό Ανδρέας έσπασε τήν σιωπή καί δίνοντας τά λουλούδια τής είπε «Happy Valentine's Day, Ανούλα μου!»

Ετσι γιά νά εύχαριστήση καί τόν καλό Άγιο Βαλεντίνο, τόν Άγιο της Αγάπης καί προστάτη τών ερωτευμένων, πού τούς έσμιξε.

Εύχομαι νά ζήτε πάντοτε μέ αγάπη.

Βούλα Χαρερά



# Community Life Photo Journal | Vasilopita

**January 13:** Holy Trinity Philoptochos sponsored its annual Vasilopita celebration for the Feast of Saint Basil. After the blessing, representatives from each ministry of the parish were brought forward to receive a slice of the blessed bread. A collection was also taken that day in support of the Saint Basil Academy in Garrison, New York, a Philoptochos-supported ministry that serves children in need.



"Demetrios" Namedays



"Vasileios" Namedays



Vision Committee



Longest Members Present



Acolyte Ministry



2012 Parish Council



"Protopsalti" & Chanters



Holy Trinity Choir



Church School Ministry



St. Spyridon Library



Cemetery Committee



Capital Campaign Committee



Philoptochos



College Students/OCF



GOYA Teen Ministry



Young Adult Ministry



Missionaries



Greek Festival Committee



Seminarians



Stewardship Committee

Agape Fund



Herald Mailing Volunteers



Hospitality Ministry



Longest Married Couple Present



Newest Members Present

Newborn Children Present



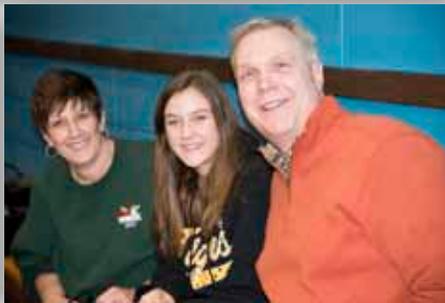
**January 12:** With so much going at Holy Trinity this year, the Parish Council is off to a busy start. On January 12, the Parish Council held a “Strategic Planning Session.” They were blessed to have the consultation of General Gus Pagonis, a world-renowned logistics expert, and Fr. John Touloumes for the meeting. As a result of that session, the Parish Council unanimously adopted the following **“Strategic Plan for 2013”** as we continue to pursue to Vision and Mission of the parish which have, with God’s blessings, successfully led us to this historic moment in the life of the parish.



1. **Maintain and grow parish membership, hospitality and stewardship.**
2. **Maintain and enhance the spiritual and liturgical focus of the Church.**
3. **Develop and host a professional catering operation.**
4. **Successfully transition to our new Church.**
5. **Maintain our new facilities in like-new condition at all times.**
6. **Have our most successful Greek Festival ever.**
7. **Ensure the financial stability of our parish.**
8. **Establish a Council of Ministries where the leaders of all of the ministries of the parish will meet together 3 or 4 times a year to discuss matters of common interest and opportunities.**
9. **Establish a favorable community presence in the North Hills and Pittsburgh areas.**
10. **Work with the Vision Committee to determine long and short-term goals for the parish.**



In order to implement the Strategic Plan, in addition to the standing committees the Parish Council established some new ministries and committees as follows, with the Chairperson indicated for each: a Spiritual Life Ministry (Joyce Athanasiou), a Church Move Committee (Gus Pagonis), a Catering Committee (Mike Passodelis), a Council of Ministries and Community Life Ministry (Charlie Petredis), a Community Relations Committee (Marios Kritiotis), and a (future) Facilities Committee (Jason Farmakis). We will need additional committee members in some of these areas, so if you are interested in helping out, please see the respective Chairperson or Parish Council President George Dickos.



**January 18-20:** Holy Trinity GOYA took four teams and a lot of parents and fans to the first Metropolis Basketball Tournament of the year. The weekend was hosted by the Annunciation Church in Akron, Ohio. In addition to enjoying wonderful Christian fellowship and sportsmanship, our Junior Boys and Junior Girls teams took third place in their respective divisions. Congratulations to all our players and thank you to the parents, coaches and community for all their support for our youth!







**Top two rows:** The Cross is installed on the dome after two attempts. Kirk Pyros of Allegheny Crane and Frank Kalogeris of JKECO Electric celebrate the accomplishment. **Middle rows:** The drywall crew puts the finishing touches on the ceiling of the Grand Room. Painting begins in the storage room. The tile floor is laid in the kitchen. **Bottom rows:** Stone work continues outside. Arches and apse are built in the church.

**WATCH CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS ONLINE! PHOTOS AT [www.HolyTrinityPgh.org](http://www.HolyTrinityPgh.org). VIDEOS at [Facebook.com/holytrinitypgh](https://www.facebook.com/holytrinitypgh).**

“As you did it to the least of these, my brethren, so you did it to Me.” (Matt. 25.40) With these words, Jesus provided both a divine command and moral imperative to do our part to serve the poor and needy.

Project Mexico is pan-Orthodox ministry in which Orthodox missionaries reach out with the love of Christ Mexico’s poor by building homes and supporting the work of the St. Innocent Orphanage and Mission Church in Tijuana, Mexico. Over 10,000 teens and young adults from all jurisdictions across the United States and Europe have participated since its inception, including dozens of team members from Holy Trinity Church from 2002-2011.

Don’t miss out on this fulfilling opportunity to put the Gospel of Jesus Christ into action in your life! Reserve your spot today with the form below! More information can be found on the Project Mexico web site: [www.ProjectMexico.org](http://www.ProjectMexico.org).

**THERE’S A SPOT ON THE TEAM FOR YOU!**



THE HOLY TRINITY 2004 PROJECT MEXICO MISSION TEAM

**Top Ten Reasons GOYans and their Parents Should Be Part of the Project Mexico Team This Summer**

1. **“As you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me.” (Matthew 25.40)**
2. **It beats hanging out on Facebook all summer.**
3. **“Religion that is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” (James 1.27)**
4. **There are more sunny days in Tijuana every week than there are in Pittsburgh all month!**
5. **“Never flag in zeal, be aglow with the Spirit, serve the Lord.” (Romans 12.11)**
6. **It’s a great family project that really helps people.**
7. **“For every person today there is a possibility to do missionary work. Mission is not only for priest or monks.” (Archbishop Anastasios of Albania)**
8. **There’s a waiting line of teams wanting to go and help the orphans and build homes. (Waiting lines always make people want to get in, don’t they?)**
9. **“No one after lighting a lamp covers it with a vessel, or puts it under a bed, but puts it on a stand, that those who enter may see the light.” (Luke 8.16)**
10. **It changes people’s lives ... maybe yours is next!**

**PROJECT MEXICO RESERVATION FORM - DUE DATE MARCH 1, 2013**

**YES! SIGN ME/US UP!** Please reserve space for me/us on Holy Trinity’s 2013 Mission Trip to Project Mexico. I have enclosed a deposit of \$50 per person to hold space.

Name(s)	Age 18 or over	Signature (Parent must sign for those under 18)
1.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
2.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
3.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
Address:		
City:	State:	Zip:
Phone:	E-mail:	

**IMPORTANT NOTES:** This form will reserve a spot on the 2013 team on a first-come, first-served basis and SPACE IS LIMITED!! Additional application information will be required before final approval. Trip duration: one week. Dates: July 31-August 6, 2013 (Arrive/Depart San Diego at noon.) Participants should be capable of performing at least light construction work, though professional skills are not required. Each participant will be responsible for covering his/her per person cost of approximately \$550 (Project Mexico costs & van transportation) PLUS your personal airfare to/from San Diego. These costs can be underwritten by fund-raising efforts (individual and community). Information on fundraising will be provided by GOYA. Cancellation: Individual cancellation after April 1 will result in your deposit being applied to the general trip fund-raising. AGE Qualifications: This trip is recommended for ages 14 & above. See Father John for exceptions. Parents and chaperones will be needed for the trip as well. Additional questions? See Father John.

Mail with check payable to “Holy Trinity Agape Fund” to: Holy Trinity Church, Attn: Project Mexico, 495 Browns Lane, Pittsburgh, PA 15237

## Stewardship | 2013 Holy Trinity Stewardship Roster To Date

*Thank you to the following faithful stewards who have submitted their pledge cards for the 2013 pledge year as of this publication.  
Please join them in their support for the ministries of Holy Trinity and complete your 2013 pledge commitment today!*

Rev Fr & Pres John N. Touloumes	Mr. Jason Farmakis	Mr & Mrs Stanley Morris
Rev. Fr. & Pres. Radu Bordeianu	Mr & Mrs William Fiedler	Mrs. Harriet M. Navarro
Rev. Fr. & Pres. John Androustopoulos	Mr. & Mrs. William L. Fiedler	Mr & Mrs Mark Opacic
	Mrs. Carol Fiffas	Gen. & Mrs. William Pagonis
Mr. & Mrs.. Mark Adamczyk	Mr. & Mrs. Brian Fitzpatrick	Mr & Mrs Robert Pagonis
Mr & Mrs Sotiris Aggelou	Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Fraley	Mr & Mrs William Pagonis
Mr & Mrs Victor Amurgis	Mrs Tessie Frankos	Mr & Mrs Peter Panos
Ms. Georgiana Anargyros	Miss Diana Fries	Mr & Mrs George Pantelakis
Miss Victoria Andromalos-Dale	Mr & Mrs Markos Gambieris	Mr & Mrs Paul Pantelas
Mrs. Christy Andromalos	Ms. Stacy Gambieris	Ms. Christina Pantelas
Mrs Beatrice Andromalos	Mr & Mrs Kevin Garrity	Ms. Loukia Papatheodorou
Ms. Marjorie Andromalos	Mr & Mrs Thomas Geanopulos	Mrs. Joann Pappas
Mr & Mrs Michael Andromalos-Dale	Mr. & Mrs. George Geanopulos	Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Pappis
Mrs Carol Anestis	Mr. Gregory Geanopulos	Mr & Mrs Orestes Paras
Mr. and Mrs. Henry Areheart	Mr and Mrs Troy Geanopulos	Mr. Basil Paschaledis
Mr. and Mrs. Art Avlon	Drs. Leo and Elizabeth Gensante	Mr & Mrs Michael Passodelis
Mr & Mrs Alvin Backeris	Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Georgallis	Mr. James J. Patsilevas
Dr & Mrs Christ A. Balouris	Mr & Mrs George Georges	Mrs. Anna Patsilevas
Mr & Mrs Chris T. Balouris	Mr. & Mrs. Gus Georgiadis	Mrs Pauline Pontikos
Dr & Mrs Constantine A. Balouris	Dr. and Mrs. Mark Georgiadis	Ms Rania Pontikos
Mr & Mrs Anthony Balouris	Mr & Mrs Steven Georgiadis	Mrs Angie Roman
Mr & Mrs James T. Balouris	Mr & Mrs Thomas Germanos	Mr. Bill Roomeliotis
Ms. Elaina Balouris	Ms Lois R Germanos	Mr & Mrs James Scaltz
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Barron	Mr & Mrs Jeremy Gracik	Mr. Vasilios Scoumis
Miss Georgia Beckas	Mrs Eugenia Graser	Ms Stephanie L Sedor
Mr & Mrs John Beckas	Mrs Voula Hareras	Presvytera Eileen Sedor
Mr. Christopher Bonfield	Mrs Sally Hionedes	Mr & Mrs Emmanuel Sideris
Mr & Mrs Reggie Bonfield	Mr. and Mrs. Steven Hodge	Mr & Mrs Greg Spiros
Mr. Jonathan Bonfield	Mr & Mrs Andrew Janis	Ms. Nicole Spiros
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Bounos	Mr. James Janis	Mrs Amalia Stamoolis
Mrs. Georgiann Bounos	Dr. Kristina Johnson	Mr & Mrs Samuel Stepanow
Mrs Georgia Brennen	Mr & Mrs Homer Johnson	Mrs Katina G. Tanner
Mrs Sophia Bridoux	Mr & Mrs Nick Kakavis	Mrs. Penny Tomalski
Clifford Brubaker & Sondra Balouris	Mr & Mrs Gus Kalaris	Mrs Georgia Touloumes
Mr & Mrs James Buldas	Mr & Mrs Dean Kamaras	Mr. & Mrs. Alex Trilivas
Mrs. Georgia Castellano	Mr & Mrs James Kermes	Mr & Mrs Alkiviadis Tsamis
Mr & Mrs Charles Chapas	Mr. John Komninos	Ms. Alexandra Valliant
Mrs Helen Chapas	Mrs Penelope Komninos	Ms. Eleni Valliant
Mrs Anne Chapas	Mr & Mrs Peter Kostopolos	Mr & Mrs Gerri Valliant
Mr & Mrs Louis Cherpes	Presvytera Louella Kostopolos	Miss Mary-Magdalene Welsh
Mrs Joyce Countouris	Mrs Vasso Kourouklis	Mr. Kenneth Whigham II
Ms. Cynthia Criss	Dr & Mrs Dimitris Kraniou	Mr & Mrs Stephen Wright
Mr & Mrs George Danis	Mr & Mrs Michael Kritiotis	Mr. & Mrs. Michael Zagnacky
Mrs Evdoxia Danis	Jan & Wayne Kurtz	Ms. Danielle Zagnacky
Mr. Lucius Delany	Mrs Despina Ladakos	Mr. Demo Zamagias
Mrs. Helen DeMoss	Mr & Mrs George Lalikos	Mrs Effie Zamagias
Mr & Mrs Dinos Dickos	Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Loomis	Mr. & Mrs. George Zappas
Mr. & Mrs. George Dickos	Mr. & Mrs. Chris Loomis	Mrs. Agnes Zappas
Mr & Mrs Bryan Elderkin	Mr. & Mrs. Louis T. Loomis	Mrs. Dorothea K. Zikos
Mr & Mrs Frank Erdeljac	Mr & Mrs Bryan Mackrell	Miss Anna Zissis
Mr. & Mrs. Christian Farmakis	Mr & Mrs Nicholas Mastro	Mr & Mrs Anthony Zissis
	Mr. & Mrs. James Mermigas	Mr & Mrs Louis Zozos

**S**tewardship is our active commitment to use all of our Time, Talent and Treasure for the benefit of humankind, in grateful acknowledgement of Christ's redeeming love.

**C**hristian Stewardship is a Way of Life... it is what the person does after saying "I Believe.." as proof of that belief.

*Oriented Leadership, Williams & McKibben*

The 2013 Stewardship Committee is energized and strengthened to serve the Holy Trinity community. It is comprised of Dean A. Balouris, Chairman, Yvonne Balouris, George Dickos, Steve Hodge, Mike Kritiotis, Jim Statheas, Marianne Stearns, and Fr. John Touloumes. We are mindful that, in this year of exciting progress and incredible blessings for our church, we have each other to be thankful for with every individual steward's generous expression of faith being our strongest asset.

Below are brief updates that reflect just one part of Stewardship at Holy Trinity - the Treasures we offer.



**The budgeted 2013 stewardship amount (\$270,000) will cover 63% of our day-to-day expenses (\$430,260).**

**The church's operating expenses are over \$1,100 per day.**

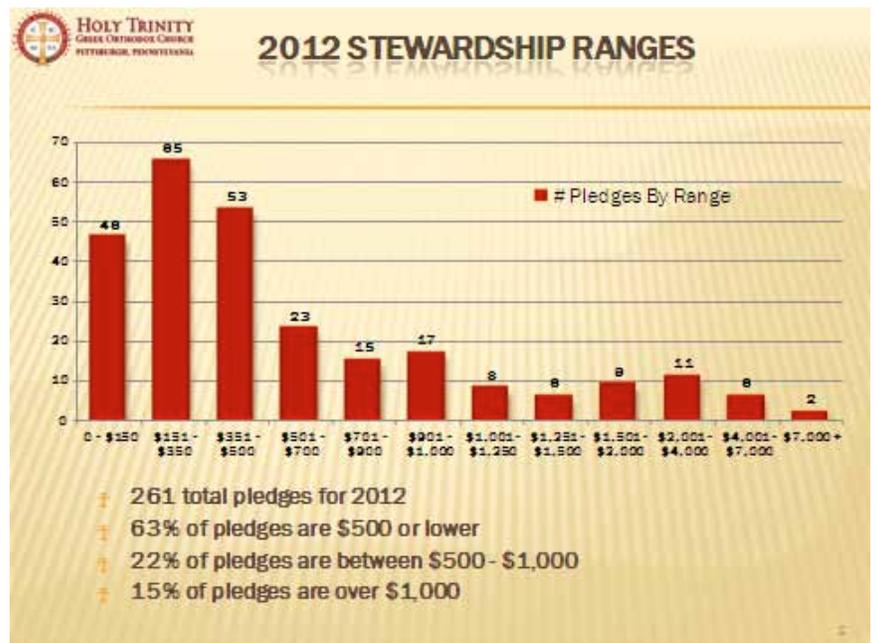
**The community's goal is to fully sustain the work of its ministries through stewardship.**

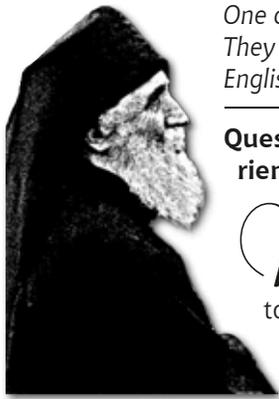
**That is the only way we can grow programs and safeguard Holy Trinity's future by eliminating the need to take funds from our savings.**

**The chart on the right is the breakdown of the Holy Trinity 2012 Stewardship pledges, with some notes on the results.**

**As we move forward, each faithful Steward must decide what to do with the gifts that he or she have been given by God.**

**The offering of both financial support and non-financial offerings for the life of the church and the community combine to make a person a faithful Holy Trinity Steward.**





Elder Paisios

One of the great blessings of Orthodoxy is the presence, prayers and inspired words of the Holy Elders of the Faith. They have been referred to as “precious vessels of the Holy Spirit.” In recent years, many books have been published in English with their writings and talks. This column provides an opportunity for each of us to be blessed by their words.

**Question: Gheronda, what is your experience of young people today?**

Nowadays, both young and old, care only for convenience and comfort. Spiritual people aspire to holiness, but they want to get there the easy way. Those who live in the world want to make more money but work less. Young people want to pass their exams without studying and get their diplomas without ever leaving the coffee shops. And if possible, they would even love to call from there and get their exam scores over the phone! This is how far they will go. Many young students come to my *kalyvi* [ed: Greek for a monastic hut] and tell me, “Pray for me to pass my exams.” They do not study and then say, “God will help me.” “You must study and pray too,” I advise them. “Why,” they answer, “can’t God help me?” They expect God to bless their laziness. That’s not possible. Now, if someone studies hard but he doesn’t get anything out of it, God will help him. There are some young people who have memory and comprehension problems but try hard nevertheless. God will help them become brilliant.

**Question: What is the cause of this laziness?**

Young people of today resemble new engines whose oil is frozen. The oil has to be warmed in order for the engines to restart; there is no other way. Many young men, troubled souls, come to my *kalyvi*—it’s not just one or two — and they ask me, “What should I do, Father? How should I spend my time? I am bored.” “Find a job, my son!” “I have money; I do not need to work,” he tells me. “But,” I reply, “the Apostle Paul says, If any one will not work, let him not eat.” You must work in order to eat even if you have money. Work helps a man thaw out the oil of his engine. To work is to create. It gives you joy and takes away your stress and boredom. So, my son, this is what you should do; find a job that you like enough to get started. Just give it a try, and you will see the difference!”

A young man had gone to serve in the army but one day he took off; later he came to my *kalyvi*. “I want to become a monk,” he said. “You should go finish your military service first,” was my answer. “But the army is not like my home,” he replied. “Thank you for letting me know,” I said, “this way I can warn others about it!” Meanwhile his family had been looking for him. A few days later he reappeared, early one morning. It was the Sunday after Pascha, the Sunday of Saint Thomas. “I need you,” he tells me. “What do you want?” I asked him, “Where did you go to Church?” “Nowhere,” he said. “Today, on Sunday of Saint Thomas, the Monasteries keep Vigils and you did not go to Church? And you want to become a monk! Where were you?” “I stayed at the hotel, where it’s quiet. I find the Monasteries too noisy,” he replied. “And what are you going to do now?” I asked him.

“I am thinking of going to the Monastery at Sinai because I want to live a hard life,” he replied. I said, “Wait a minute.” I went inside and got him some fresh Easter bread, gave it to him and said, “Here, take this soft Easter bread to help you start your hard life and get out of here!” This is today’s youth. They do not know what they want. They will not take any pressure. How can they possibly sacrifice themselves?

I remember, in the army, there were all kinds of urgent needs, and every time this happened, men would say, “Commander, let me go to this mission; this man is married, has children and it will be a pity for these children to be left without a father.” There they were, asking the Commander to send them to the front lines! They found joy in the idea of getting killed so that others with children would not have to die and leave their children alone! I can’t imagine anyone making this kind of sacrifice today! It would be a rare thing!

Once, we had run out of water. The Commander located on the map an area where we could find water, but the guerillas were there. He told us, “There is water somewhere near, but it is very dangerous. Who will go to fill some canteens with water; it will have to be done in the dark.” One man came forward immediately, “I will go, Commander,” and then another, and another. Everybody wanted to go. It was going to be a night mission, in the dark and a dangerous one. “You cannot all go,” the Commander said. What I am trying to say is that no one thought of himself in that situation. You did not hear, “Commander, my foot is hurting,” or “I have a headache,” or “I am tired.” Everybody wanted to go, even though our life was at risk.

**Question: Gheronda, what can parents do to help?**

I have observed that today many children, especially those who are students, are harmed by their families. While they are basically good children, they are rendered useless. They don’t put their mind to work; they have become insensitive. It is the parents who spoil them. Because the parents have gone through difficult years, they do not want their children to be deprived of anything. They don’t cultivate *philotimo* [ed: a sense of good will and honor] in their children so that they can find joy in deprivation. It’s not that parents don’t mean well. It would be cruel to deprive a child that does not understand the reason for the deprivation. But it is right for the parents to try and help their children acquire a sort of monastic conscience, to rejoice when they do not have something they want. Now, with their goodness, their indiscriminate goodness and generosity, parents are spoiling their children. They use no discernment and end up stupefying them.

These children expect to be served at all times; even a glass of water they will not get for themselves, supposedly because they are studying and cannot afford to waste any time. And they end up spoiled, both boys and girls. Even when they are not doing their homework, they still expect to be served. And of course, it’s the mothers who are respon-

sible. “You, go ahead and study, son,” they say, “I will go and get you your socks, and wash your feet. Here’s your coffee, here’s your dessert!” And the children never realize how tired the mother gets from offering so much, because they never have to work for anything. Then they begin using disposable dishes, disposable clothes, eating pizzas and not even knowing how to wrap one up! Thus, they become useless human beings, who find life itself boring and tiresome. When their shoe lace comes untied all they know to say is, “Mother, please tie my shoe lace,” and they go on stepping on it, doing nothing! How can these children ever achieve anything in life? They are incapable of getting married or becoming monks. This is why I tell mothers, “Do not let your children study all day, they will become dizzy. Have them take breaks of a quarter or half an hour to do some work around the house, to clear and rest their mind a little.

**Question: Gheronda, what will become of so many children who grow up today without discipline?**

For them, there will be mitigating circumstances. It is the parents who never understood the nature of discipline that now allow their children such excessive freedom and turn them into little hooligans. You say one word to them and they will respond with five, and with such impudence! These children may one day turn into criminals. Today many children are totally unraveled by too much freedom and no discipline. “Don’t touch the children!” These are the slogans in society. And of course what do children think? “Where else are we going to find a better regime than that?” In other words, they are deliberately turning them into little rebels who do not want to listen to parents, to teachers, or to anyone else. This serves their designs perfectly, for if children are not first taught to be rebellious, how can they end up later destroying everything?

**Question: Gheronda, what kind of guidance will help young people?**

A young person needs a spiritual guide, someone who will advise him and be eager to listen to his concerns, in order to proceed with spiritual security, without dangers, fears and dead ends. All of us, as we grow older, acquire experience from our own life and from the lives of others. But a young person lacks this experience. An older person should use his experience to help inexperienced youth avoid blunders. When young people refuse to take advice, they end up experimenting with their own lives. But if they take the advice given to them, they will have much to gain.

**Question: What kind of spiritual challenges do young people face today?**

Various trends have come to us today from all directions. Hinduism and other occult religions have come from the East, communism from the north, various theories from the West; from the South, from Africa, we get magic and other forms of “cancer”. A young man wounded by such beliefs came to my *kalyvi* once. I understood that it was his mother’s prayers that brought him to

me. After we had conversed for a while I told him, “Look, son, you must find a Spiritual Father so that you may go to confession, receive the Holy Chrism and get some help in the beginning. You must be anointed again with the Holy Chrism because you have renounced Christ.” The poor child was crying, “Father, please pray for me,” he was pleading, “I cannot get rid of all these ideas, they have brainwashed me. I know that my mother’s prayers have brought me to you.” Oh! How a mother’s prayers can help us! These poor children are ruined, they get trapped and then they panic, they become anxious and turn to drugs, and go from one evil to another. May God help them!

**Question: How should we approach young people who have gone astray?**

Love is the answer. Where there is true and noble love, young people will sense it; they will be informed right away and feel disarmed. Young men, who come to my *kalyvi*, come from all walks of life, with all kinds of problems. I welcome them, I give them a treat, we start a conversation and soon enough we become friends. They open their heart to me and accept the love I give them. Among them are some who are so deprived of love! Poor souls, they are thirsty for it! You can tell right away those who have never felt a mother’s or father’s love. If you care for them, if they sense your love, they forget all their problems, even their drug use, all their ills disappear, they stop getting in trouble and end up coming to the Holy Mountain as pious pilgrims. You see, they somehow come to sense God’s love.

**Question: Gheronda, when should parents start attending to these lessons?**

What I have come to realize is that; if we don’t take advantage of the opportunities offered to us when we are young, the devil will exploit this situation. Don’t we have the saying “Strike while the iron is hot”? When iron smiths wanted to join two pieces of iron together —this was before modern welding—they would put the iron in the fire, pour hot water and borax on it, and then, the moment they removed it, while still spewing sparks, they would join it to another piece. But this would not work, if the iron got cold. It’s the same thing with a young person. When opportunities present themselves and he shows no interest, he will concern himself with other people, judging them, criticizing their ways, and thus slowly losing the Grace of God. But if he is full of divine fervor, he will prosper. This is why parents should help their children as much as they can when they are still young. Children are like empty cassette tapes. If we fill them with Christ, they will stay close to Him forever. If we don’t, it will be easier for them to go astray when they become older. But if we help them when they are young, even if they later stray a bit, they will eventually come to their senses. Wood soaked in oil does not rot. Youth soaked in the “oil” of piety and the fear of God will have nothing to fear later.

*Excerpted from Elder Paisios of Mount Athos, “Spiritual Counsels, Vol. I: “With Pain and Love for Contemporary Man””*

It's February, and that means Valentine's Day. It can certainly be a romantic and sentimental time for some, but for others it may be a time of challenges and questions. One reason that Christians suffer from such marital struggles is that we allow the world to re-define the God-inspired and sanctified gift of marital love to the point where we wonder if we should even stay married. Thinking about it? Think again.

## Work A Little Harder At It

Unless there are serious reasons to end your marriage, you might want to work a little harder at maintaining your relationship. In an age when instant gratification is the norm, divorce seems like the quick solution to marital woes. Without any social stigma, religious constraints or financial limitations, it's all too easy to walk away from a troubled marriage rather than spend the emotional effort to fix it. But there are compelling reasons to try.



## Happier Children

If your marriage is chronically hostile, then the kids could be better off in a more peaceful, emotionally stable home environment but many marriages aren't in that situation. Your kids will gain much from seeing their parents experience conflict, learn how to resolve them, and continue to love each other despite any differences. Kids observe what loving relationships are all

about through their parents' marriage. What divorcing couples don't realize is that they're subconsciously sending a message to their kids: "Look, I will stop loving a person if I don't like what he or she does/how he behaves/etc." We offer unconditional love to our kids; why can't we offer the same unconditional love to our mates? Unconditional love works miracles.

## Divorce Is Not The "Easy Answer"

Emotions magnify our perception of marital problems, and when we're in the midst of conflict, all we know is that we need relief. Fast. Divorce offers the illusion of an easy out. But what many young and newly married couples don't realize is that many seemingly dire relationship problems get remedied over time without having to split.

## Stronger Financial Stability

Unless your spouse is a source of financial problems, staying married will be better for your finances. Divorce is not only expensive, but it forces you to split your assets and lose an income stream.

## Most Marital Troubles Are Temporary or Minor

Crises pass. Conflicts resolve. Marginal discontent can be reversed with communication and effort. It doesn't seem so at the time. In the past, when divorce was not so accepted, married couples stayed married through the bad times and many of them learned that commitment meant "for better or for worse." Fortunately, they found that enduring the bad times was worth it because better times often returned.

## True Love

You might discover that you married your true love after all. Living with your true love does not mean that there won't be times of disappointment, frustration, or anger. You can love the same person who can hurt you, disappoint you, or otherwise make your life difficult at times. True love is not finding a person with whom you experience only comfort but with whom you can experience true life in all its vast range of emotions and situations.

## What You Could Gain By Staying Put

There are good reasons to stay put other than hope for better times. Studies show that divorce often causes even more stress and trouble for unhappy couples. In addition to avoiding more pain, hanging in there can bring you:

### Personal Growth

Experiencing conflicts with others forces you to face your own demons. We all have shortcomings. We all need others to accept us for who we are, but that means we must be able to offer that same acceptance to others. Being intolerant is not such a great characteristic to hold onto. Neither is being selfish or needing to control the behavior of others. Why does your happiness depend upon what others do and think?

If you're questioning whether you should stay or go, allow yourself some time to reflect. No good decision is ever made during an emotionally-charged moment. Let your feelings settle. Try not to wallow in the worries or "what if's." Your happiness does not depend on your mate, so pursue your interests and what brings you joy. Focus on living a happy life while you stay in your marriage. Seek help from a therapist, counselor or pastor, individually or together as a couple.

Source: Lori Phillips, *Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage*.  
Used with permission.

*Happy Valentine's Day to all our couples!*



*Research indicates that couples who divorce have nine areas of major difficulties.  
Couples who are successfully married also have nine areas of major difficulties.  
Successfully married couples attend to these difficulties.  
Couples in failed marriages do not attend to these difficulties.*

*"The Journey to Marriage in the Orthodox Church" by Philip Mamalakis and Charles Ioanides*



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## LOVE IS ABOVE EVERYTHING

**A**bove everything is love. The thing that must concern you, my children, is love for the other person, for his soul. Whatever we do, whether it is prayer or offering advice or pointing out some error, let us do it with love. Without love prayer is of no benefit, advice is hurtful and pointing out errors is harmful and destructive to the other person who senses whether we love him or not and reacts accordingly. Love, love, love! Love for our brother prepares us to love Christ more. Isn't that perfect?

Let us scatter our love selflessly to all, without regard to the way they act towards us. When the grace of God enters us, we will not be concerned about whether they love us or not or whether they speak to us politely or not. We will feel the need to love all people. It's egotism on our part to wish for others to speak to us politely. If they don't, we shouldn't be upset. Let them speak to us as they wish. We needn't become beggars for love. Our aim should be to love them and pray for them with all our soul. Then we will become aware that all people love us without our seeking it and without our begging for their love. They will love us freely and sincerely from the depths of their heart without our blackmailing them. When we love without seeking to be loved, people will gather around us like bees. This is true for everyone.

You come to knowledge of truth when you love with the love of Christ. Then you no longer ask to be loved. You love; you give your love.

From *Wounded By Love* by Elder Porphyrios (+1991)

Scripture of the Month: "So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor. 13.13)