



THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

FEBRUARY 2016 VOLUME 24 • ISSUE 2

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH • PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA
OUR VISION: "FAITH. FAMILY. COMMUNITY."

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QUICK NEWS



Two of our GOYA Girls Basketball Team members at the first tournament of the year. Want to see more photos of this event and others in the life and ministries of Holy Trinity Church? See the Community Life Photo Journal on pages 8-12 or visit our growing online photo gallery site at photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org.

SAINT PHOTIOS THE GREAT - FEAST DAY: FEBRUARY 6



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

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church Parish Administration

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Tom Germanos Alex Trilivas

Marios Kritiotis Gerri Valliant

Ministries

Please visit the Holy Trinity website at 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!



God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through Him... Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

1 John 4.8-9,11

My Beloved Spiritual Children in Christ,

Welcome to yet another "season of love" as we enter the Valentine's Day holiday. Rooted in the life and subsequent secular legends of a third century Christian martyr named Valentine, the industry known by his name has become the second-largest card-selling event of the year, with over 1 billion commercial greeting cards sent and over \$19 billion spent on gifts in the U.S. And many of those hawking their goods lay claim to having the key to expressions of "true love." Does that not make one wonder how the world survived until the "love industry" was born?

Now, before anyone jumps to the mistaken thought that all of this leads me to be "anti-Valentine" (or worse, runs to Presvytera and warns her not to expect a card or gift this year!), allow me to say: traditions and celebrations that encourage expressions of love and strengthen the sacred bond of relationships can be wonderful when they are celebrated in perspective. And what would that perspective be? Just a little farther down the passage quoted above is 1 John 4.19: "We love, because He first loved us." Our very ability to love and the encouragement to do so is rooted in the creative love of God, Who made us in His "image and likeness," which includes at its root "love." So the seed sewn into us by our Creator ("the image") blossoms into its fullness ("likeness") when we love. And this is not limited to romantic or marital love, but rather the divine root of the love we have for all. According to 14th century writer Kallistos Cataphygiotes, "The greatest event between God and the human soul is to love and to be loved." (Evdokimov, *The Sacrament of Love*).

That love is not always easy, whether between husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, friend and enemy or anyone whom God has brought into our life to teach us love. In the Greek language, there are five words for and types of love, the first four of which are friendship, philanthropy, nurture and romance. They are often motivated by the "good feelings" we receive because in sharing those kinds of love, we are rewarded in return. But the love rooted in Christ goes both deeper and higher, all the way to the Cross. According to Christian therapist and author Gary Chapman, When an action doesn't come naturally to us, it is a greater expression of love." Ultimately, those greater expressions, where we seek nothing in return, lead us to "the greatest of these" (1 Cor. 13.13) forms of love: the sacrificial and divine "Agape" love to which we are all called.

So go ahead and celebrate love this Valentine's Day. But don't let it end where the world stops. After the Valentine displays have been put away and the after-the-holiday sales on chocolate have finished, keep loving. Keep reaching out. Keep sacrificing. Keep encouraging. Keep giving. And don't count the cost. Love as God Who loves you loves. This is difficult, but not impossible, for according to St. Maximos the Confessor, "The love of God and the love of man are not two loves, but two aspects of the same unifying love." If "theosis" is to become like God, then we become like God when we love. And no matter how hard the struggle is sometimes, that will lead us back to God, "Faith is the beginning of love; the end of love is knowledge of God" (*The Philokalia*). Know love and you will know God. Know God and you will know Love.

Paternally yours in the love of Christ,

Herald Personal Sponsor for this Issue:

Presvytera Louella Kostopolos

"In Loving Memory of Father John Kostopolos"

WORSHIP LIFE**Weekday ServicesFebruary**

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.. Guide to locations of services: "HT"=Holy Trinity Church, 985 Providence Boulevard, Pittsburgh; "SG"= Saint George Chapel, 8941 Ringeisen Road, Allison Park.

- **Mon. Feb. 1, 7:00pm:** Great Vespers of the Presentation of the Lord at the Presentation Church ("Ypapanti") in East Pittsburgh.

- **Tue. Feb. 2, 9:00am Orthros/10:00am Liturgy:** The Presentation of the Lord at the Presentation Church ("Ypapanti") in East Pittsburgh.

- **Wed. Feb. 10:** St. Haralambos the Great Martyr (SG)

Faith and Family Wednesdays. February 3, 10, 17, 24

Of course, don't forget the mid-week worship opportunity every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. at Holy Trinity Church.

Saturdays of Souls March 5, 12, 19

In the two weeks preceding the start of Lent and during the first week of Lent, the Church offers the "Saturdays of the Souls" to commemorate those who have fallen sleep in the Lord. Services are held at the Saint George Chapel located at Holy Trinity Cemetery. See the enclosed flyer to submit names for commemoration.

Upcoming Lenten Dates.March-May

Wondering about Lenten and Paschal dates? They are much later than usual this year! Here's a helpful guide to some of the important events coming up:

Meatfare Sunday (Last day of eating meat) Mar. 6

Cheesefare Sunday (Last day of eating dairy) Mar. 13

Pure Monday (Lent begins) Mar. 14

Sunday of Orthodoxy Mar. 20

Godparent SundayApr. 3

Palm SundayApr. 24

Holy Friday (schedule off work & school)Apr. 29

The Great and Holy Pascha May 1

SPIRITUAL LIFE MINISTRY**"Faith and Family Wednesdays" ... February 3, 10, 17, 24**

Holy Trinity Church's "Faith and Family Wednesdays" is a valuable mid-week spiritual and educational "recharge." Check out page 5 in this issue for this month's schedule.

"Prayer and Panera" St. Nikodemos Fellowship. ...Feb. 18

The Saint Nikodemos Men's Fellowship meets on the Third Thursday of each month for morning prayers and Christian fellowship (with coffee and bagels, too!). The group meets at Holy Trinity Church promptly at 7:00 a.m. for a 15-20 minute morning prayer and scripture, then move up the hill to Panera for 30-45 minutes of coffee and breakfast and conversation on living as a Christian man in today's world. Ques-

tions? Email at SaintNikodemos@HolyTrinityPgh.org. Change up your morning routine - and change things for the better!

YOUTH MINISTRIES**GOYA MeetingJanuary 31**

There will be a meeting for all GOYA members on January 31 following the Divine Liturgy.

GOYA Basketball Practice February 2, 16, 23

GOYA will hold basketball practice Tuesdays, February 2 and 16 from 6:30-8:30pm at Hosack Elementary School, and on Tuesday, February 23 at N.A.I. from 6:30 to 8:30pm.

GOYA Basketball TournamentsFebruary

Our Holy Trinity GOYA families will be participating in two Metropolis Basketball Tournaments this month. They will travel to Annunciation Cathedral in Cleveland, OH, from February 5-7 and remain local for the third tournament at St. Nicholas Cathedral on February 26-28. May God grant them good skills, safe travels, protection from injury and the joy of fellowship in Christ with their friends in our sister churches near and far. God bless you all!

HOPE and JOY Sledding. February 14

The HOPE and JOY ministries will enjoy an afternoon of sled riding to take place on Feb. 14th. First there is a GOYA Community Valentine's Lunch in the Grand Room after Liturgy. Then, the HOPE and JOY activities will take place from 2pm-5pm at Treesdale Community Park. They will begin with sledding and regroup in the community center for some pizza and hot cocoa. Please respond to Jenna Kratsas (jlg2488@gmail.com) if you plan on attending so that we can appropriately plan for food and beverages.

HOPE and JOY Vincentian Home Visit March 20

The HOPE and JOY children will offer a seniors service project on Sunday, March 20 following Liturgy, with a visit to the Vincentian Home. Our young children will visit with the seniors residing there and assist with social activities. This is a great way to share the energetic love of children that brings so much joy into the hearts of senior citizens who are truly uplifted by such visits. Contact Kelley Kaparakos at kelley@hamptonbanquethall.com to confirm your attendance.

COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENTS**Visitation Ministry News**

The Visitation Ministry Team is looking to expand their ministry outreach in the New Year 2016. This ministry of compassion is an important part of our parish life. Team activities include: prayer meetings, baking cookies, delivering small gifts to the homebound, mailing cards to those who need an encouraging word, home and hospital visitation, regular phone calls to those who live alone or are grieving loss, and much more. If you would like to know more about our Visitation Ministry, then please contact Amy Armanious 412.628.0973 or email visitation@HolyTrinityPgh.org.

For the latest updates and schedule of parish events, visit www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/calendar

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

FEBRUARY 2016 – "THE VOICE OF HOLY TRINITY CHURCH"



**Father John
Androutsopoulos**

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

The Feast Days of February

Our Church—the Eastern Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church—celebrates the Presentation of our Lord on February 2nd. For more information on this feast day, please read Hebrews 7:7-17 and Luke 2:22-40.

On February 10th, our Church celebrates the feast of St. Haralambos, the Patron Saint of priests. Happy Nameday to those who celebrate (in English: "Harry"). St. Haralambos was a priest. No other priest in the history of Christianity suffered so much in one lifetime for his religious convictions. He was beheaded in 192 A.D.

An Example Worth Following

This story is dedicated to our parish priest, Fr. John Touloumes. "Remember them who have...spoken unto you, the word of God, whose faith follow" (Hebrews 13:7).

The following is a story of a priest who was assigned a large parish. When he first arrived, a man asked: "How was he assigned to this large parish, since he has served only small congregations before? Certainly we know priests who are prepared?" The answer was, "He has always done what many other spiritual leaders thought they would like to do but somehow neglected. He never failed to write notes of comfort to the afflicted in his area – whether they belonged to his parish or not. He would send a sincere word of praise to the local sheriff or mayor of the city when they performed a commendable act, or write a letter of encouragement to a teacher when she was especially kind and faithful in carrying on her work. Nothing escaped him that might properly receive a priest's attention. This is the real secret of his success. He seems to love everyone for Christ's sake, and he practices what he preaches!" Hebrews 13 speaks of those to whom the Lord has given special assignments in His Church and reminds us not only to remember their Scriptural messages but also to follow in the footsteps of their faith. Why? Because Christianity is more than a set of doctrines to be received, it is a life to be lived. (See Hebrews 13:16). The Lord is pleased when we follow the example of those whose favorable sermons are backed up by fruitful service! A GOOD EXAMPLE IS THE BEST SERMON!

The Triodion

Sunday, February 21st, is the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee – the Triodion begins. What is a Triodion? It is a tri-hymnal book, consisting of services from the Sunday of the Pharisee and the Publican to the Great Saturday of Passion Week. All the hymns of the Triodion are hymns of repentance, emotion and prayer. All the hymns are from the beginning to the end. But three hymns, which are chanted in the matins of every Sunday of Triodion and during the Great Lent, are hymns of repentance

and with Triodion open the door of repentance. Following are the three hymns:

- Open to me the doors of repentance, O Life-giver; for my soul goeth early to the temple of thy holiness, coming in the temple of my body, wholly polluted. But because thou art compassionate, purify me by the compassion of thy mercies.
- Prepare for me the ways of salvation, O Theotokos; for I have profaned myself with coarse sins, and consumed my whole life with procrastination. But by thine intercessions purify me from all abomination.
- If I think upon the multitude of my evil deeds, I tremble for the terrible Day of Judgment. But, trusting the compassion of thy mercy, I shout to thee like David, Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy Great Mercy

The Sundays of Preparation Before Lent

Before Great Lent (Fast) begins, our Church prescribes for the faithful a period of preparation. This year, the Great Fast begins on Monday, March 14th. The first Sunday of the Triodion and preparation this year is Sunday, February 21st, the Sunday of the Publican and Pharisee. From this parable we learn the power of humble prayer, humility. Read Luke 18:10-14.

The second Sunday of preparation, Sunday, February 28th, is called the Sunday of the Prodigal Son or the LOVING FATHER. This parable is a picture of repentance (the younger son), of forgiveness, of envy (the older brother), and of God's love. Read Luke 15:11-32.

The third preparatory Sunday, March 6th, is Meatfare Sunday. The Gospel lesson for this Sunday, Matthew 6:14-21, describes the Second Coming of the Lord and the Last Judgment.

The theme of Cheese Fare Sunday—also called the Sunday of Forgiveness—Sunday, March 13th, is the last Sunday before Great Lent/Fast begins. It is the expulsion from Paradise and ways to regain it: to forgive, to observe the laws of fasting humbly, "to lay up treasures in heaven and not on earth." Read Matthew 6:14-21.

Every Orthodox Christian is called upon to prepare himself during this pre-Lenten period of four Sundays for the GREAT FAST which this year begins on Monday, March 14th.

Sayings Of St. Ephrem The Syrian On Repentance

- Since the doors of repentance are open, hasten before they are shut. The Lord does not tolerate your indifference and negligence. Why do you neglect so much your life, o wretched one? Is there much more venerable than your life? You do not know when the doctor closes His clinic?
- The Lord looks at the tears and sighing of whoever comes to him in devotion. He knows beforehand, for He is our God and Creator. He forgives immediately all your sins and mistakes, whether they are in deed or word, and he orders to bring forth "the best robe" (Luke 15:22), puts a ring on your hand, and commands all His angels to celebrate the return of the sinner. This verse is from the Parable of the Prodigal Son.

*With the love of the Lord,
Rev. Fr. John K. Androutsopoulos
Protopresbyter and Internal Missionary*

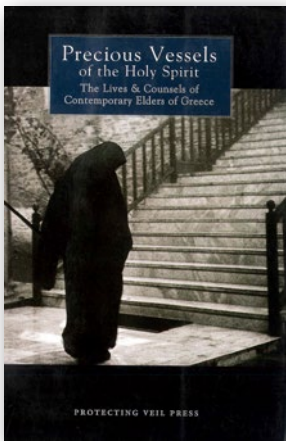
WORSHIP — BYZANTINE MUSIC — LITURGICAL COOKING — ICONOGRAPHY — OUTREACH PROJECTS

FAITH AND Family *Wednesdays* AT HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

Feel like you don't know enough about your Faith? Want to understand the Bible better? Like to learn more about living an Orthodox life? The “Faith and Family Wednesdays” ministry offers guides, teachers and practical experience in all these areas and more. It also provides a great opportunity to spend time around your Holy Trinity family and enjoy worship, fellowship, growth and sometimes just fun! It's a great way to live and learn your faith between Sundays!

ABOUT THE SERIES

The most important thing about the schedule is simple: be there at 6:30 and there will be both a blessing and an opportunity for you. And bring the entire family, because there is something for them, too! The worship service goes from 6:30-7:15pm. After a brief fellowship break, there is a choice of two sessions to attend, from 7:15-8:30pm, each focused on learning a facet of the faith or spiritual activity. All sessions will take place in the various facilities of Holy Trinity Center. There two tracks each week: Studies and Orthodox Life. Topics and specific activities will vary from month to month, and information will be published in the Herald, the Bulletin on the email list and on the website.



With Father Radu having finished the Orthodox Book Club's “On the Human Condition” and teaching in Rome this spring, Father John will take up a special book, “Precious Vessels of the Holy Spirit,” on the holy contemporary elders of Greece, such as Saint Paisios, Saint Porphyrios, Elder Joseph and the lives and sayings of other modern spiritual “Precious Vessels.”



COMPLETE GUIDE THE TO FEBRUARY 2016 “FAITH AND FAMILY WEDNESDAYS”

| TRACK | WORSHIP | STUDIES | ORTHODOX LIFE |
|---|---|--|---|
| DATE/TIME | 6:30pm | 7:15-8:30pm | |
| Feb. 3 First Wednesday of the month | Blessing of the Waters/ Blessing of the Loaves | Orthodox Book Club Precious Vessels: The Contemporary Elders Father John | - N/A - |
| Feb. 10 Second Wednesday of the month | Vespers Service | Bible Study: “A Panoramic Overview of Holy Scripture” - Book of Psalms Father John | Byzantine Chanting Peter Papadakos |
| Feb. 17 Third Wednesday of the month | Service of the Hours / Confession also available | Orthodox Book Club Precious Vessels: The Contemporary Elders Father John | Understanding Orthodoxy Ted Cherpas |
| Feb. 24 Fourth Wednesday of the month | Paraclesis Service to the Theotokos | Bible Study: “A Panoramic Overview of Holy Scripture” - Proverbs Father John | The Orthodox Kitchen: Liturgical Cooking - “Kollyva” Joyce Athanasiou |

BIBLE STUDY — BOOK CLUB — JOURNEY OF MARRIAGE — UNDERSTANDING ORTHODOXY — CONFESSION

An original Greek language story about Valentine's Day by Voula Hareras



Voula Hareras

Ο Άγιος Βαλεντίνος: Ο Άγιος της Αγάπης

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 από 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 δυό τρία τηλεφωνήματα καί κάθησε άνετα στήν πολυθρόνα του άνάβοντας ένα σιγάρο καί συλογιζόταν τήν υπόθεσι τού Ανδρέα, καί τήν χαρά πού θά έπερνε όταν θά τού έδινε τό γράμμα πού προολίγο διάβασε.

Ο Ιάκωβος είχε αρκετά χρόνια άνοίξη 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 ως άγνοούμενοι, καί απελπισμένα έψαχναν νά βρούν τά άγαπημένα τους πρόσωπα, τό γραφείο τού Ιάκωβου έφερε πολλούς καί πάλι μαζί, άδελφια, συγγενείς, παιδιά, άνδρόγυνα, καί άγαπημένους. Ετσι είχε άποχτήση καλή φήμη, πώς όταν αναλάμβανε μιάν υπόθεσι 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 άρραβωνιαστικιά 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 υπόθεσι. Αύτός 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 μού όλα τά στοιχεία καί ό Θεός βοηθός.»

Ο Ανδρέας περνούσε συχνά από τό γραφείο, πάντα όμως

άρνητικές άπαντήσεις έπερνε, καί νά τώρα σχεδόν ένα χρόνο μετά τόν φώναξε ό Ιάκωβος νά περάση από 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, νά 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 άνταμώσετε στό σπίτι της. Οσο καί νά σου φανή άπίστευτο, ή Ανούλα σου γιά δέκα χρόνια τώρα είναι εδώ, μένη μόνη, καί θά περιμένη έναν συμβολαιογράφο αύριο τό μεσημέρι γιά κάτι σπουδαίο πού έχει νά της πή, όμως θά πäs 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 δυό σας, έχετε μιά ζωή ολόκληρη μπροστά σας.»

Ο Ανδρέας έφυγε συγκλονισμένος, 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 από ένα ζαχαροπλαστείο, άγόρασε μιά μεγάλη καρδιά γεμάτη σοκολατάκια, πήρε καί δωδεκα ύπεροχα τριαντάφυλλα, καί χτύπησε τό κουδούνι. Η πόρτα άνοίξε καί βρέθηκε μπροστά στήν Ανούλα. Τόν κοίταξε καί τά μεγάλα καστανά μάτια της γεμάτα άπορία έδειχναν σάν νά έβλεπε φάντασμα. Τήν κοίταζε 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 ακόμα. 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 έσμιζε.

Εύχομαι νά ζήτε πάντοτε μέ αγάπη!

Βούλα Χαρερά



STEWARDSHIP RESOLUTIONS

Well February is upon us and we have had one month to start implementing our resolutions we made at the beginning of the year. Fr. John recently shared with us "14 New Year's Resolutions for Orthodox Christians." The question we must ask ourselves daily is, did we make any progress and if not how do we correct it?

One important thing to remember is that all 14 resolutions correlate with what it means to be a good steward! It just doesn't talk about our finances but it also addresses our time, talents, attitude and—most importantly—our relationship with God. Let us examine this "relationship" element for a moment. God is the source or origin for "EVERYTHING" and He has graciously provided "EVERYTHING" for us to carry out HIS plans on the earth. We are either a participant to that plan or we are an obstacle with our own plans and goals. If you are or have been a parent, remember what it is like when your child or children said "no" to what you have instructed them to do? This isn't something you would tolerate since you have ensured all their needs have been taken care of (love, food, clothing, medical care, housing, etc). Many of us can remember our parents helping us to understand this fact in more "creative but effective ways." The bottom line is we must truly understand it is God who provides and also instructs us on how to express our thanks by returning that love and those gifts in ways that continue to bless.

Do you wonder why some are put off by the idea that "The church is always asking for money, volunteers or assistance?" Well there are many appropriate and valid answers but essentially it comes down to this... because we have not all accepted the full challenge to offer the Lord the "first fruits" of our blessings. If each of us were to do so, the church would be able to fully implement its mission of love and ministry to all *without*

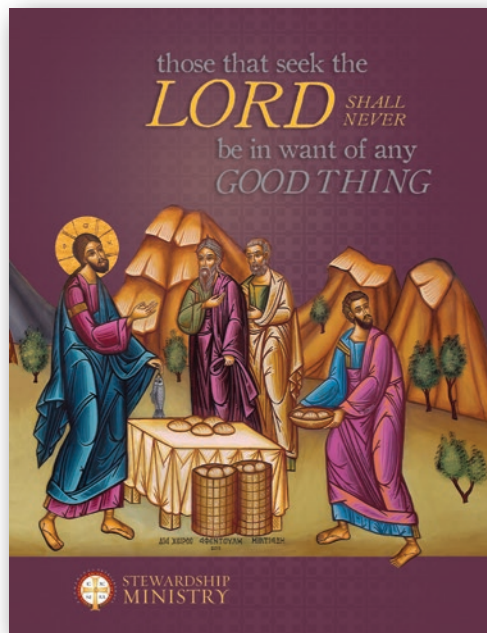
asking, and everyone who invested themselves in that mission would see it as an opportunity to *bless* and *be blessed*. Are you maybe denying yourself those opportunities?

It cannot be left to the "80/20" rule or any other fraction. God calls 100% of His people to commit 100% of their heart—and at least 10% of their treasures—to Him. How can we respond with anything less to the Lord Who has given us everything? It is well expressed in one of the hymns of the Sunday Orthros service here:

What shall we give to the Lord in return for all that he has given us? For our sake, God lived among us. On account of our corrupt nature the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. He became the benefactor of the ungrateful, the liberator of those in captivity. He is the sun of righteousness for those sitting in darkness. He who is impassible is on the Cross. He is the light in Hades. He is life in death. He is the resurrection of the fallen, and we cry to him: Glory to You, our God.

Let us take a moment with the above hymn in mind to reflect on our 2016 Stewardship Resolutions by aligning them to our commitment to and relationship with God. As God's children let us all make a better response to Him this year by being faithful and good stewards with and "for ALL that He has given us." Let us say "Glory to You, our God" by stepping up to those resolutions by doing and giving more than we did last year, coming to church more often and on time, serving in the various ministries of our church, teaching our youth, visiting those in need, going to confession, praying at home, encouraging our priests and reading the Bible. The Lord is waiting for you as He continues to bless you. Today would be a good day to respond.

Your Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
The Holy Trinity Stewardship Committee



Orthodox Christian Stewardship is a way of life, which acknowledges accountability, reverence, and responsibility before God. A primary goal of Stewardship is to promote spiritual growth and strengthen faith. Becoming a Steward begins when we believe in God, to whom we give our love, loyalty and trust and act on those beliefs. As Stewards, we affirm that every aspect of our lives comes as a gift from Him. Stewardship calls on the faithful to cheerfully offer back to God a portion of the gifts with which they have been blessed.

Fear not: you will not be left wanting when you give. Saint Gregory the Theologian writes, "You will never overcome God's generosity, even if you give away all that you have. And however much you bring to him, always more remains. Nor will you give anything that is your own; for all things flow from God (Or 14.22).

The question is not, "How much do I give to stay in the club?" or "What are the dues?" The real question we need to ask ourselves is "How do I thank God for my many blessings?" As Orthodox Christians, we are called to a new way of seeing things—a new way of life. Stewardship is obedience to the greatest commandment to "love the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind and strength."

From the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese Department of Stewardship

January 17-19, 2016: Holy Trinity GOYA fielded three teams - Boys Senior (top right), Girls Senior (middle right) and Boys Junior (bottom right) - to attend their first Metropolis Basketball Tournament of the season at Saint Paul Church in North Royalton, OH. Many thanks to the coaches and parents who spent their weekend cheering, shuttling and supporting our teens. GO GOYAns!





Community Life Photo Gallery | New Year's Eve 2016





January 10, 2016: Members of the Holy Trinity 2016 Parish Council take the oath of office by placing their right hand on the Holy Gospel being held by Father Radu and repeating the official Archdiocesan oath offered by Father John.



December 24, 2015: The Holy Trinity Choir offered a beautiful selection of Christmas hymns in the softly-lit church on Christmas Eve. The highlight was a candlelit carol offered under the dome. Well done, good and faithful servants of Christ!



January 10, 2016: Fr. John, Fr. Radu and Parish Council President George Dickos present a symbol of "Faith" as a gift of thanks to Holy Trinity's Theanne Gagianas as she retires from over 20 years of service as chair of the Metropolis Summer Camp Committee. Congratulations!



January 8, 2016: Holy Trinity JOY and HOPE children hold an over-night sleepover, with fun activities like pizza cooking and card making. Father Radu also offered a brief lesson for the children. Many thanks to the parents for all their help running the event!



January 10, 2016: Holy Trinity Philoptochos sponsored its annual Vasilopita celebration for the Feast of Saint Basil. After the prayer, 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.



Metropolis Council

Council of Ministries

Capital Campaign Committee

Longest Member Present



Acolyte Ministry

Parish Council

"Faith and Family Wednesdays"

Holy Trinity Choir

Visitation Ministry



Church School Ministry

HOPE

Cemetery Committee

Outreach Ministries

Seniors Ministry



Philoptochos

College Students/OCF

GOYA Teen Ministry

Young Adult Ministry



St. Spyridon Library

Greek Festival Committee

Missionaries

Chanters

Agape Fund



Herald Mailing Volunteers

Hospitality Ministry

Longest Married Couples Present

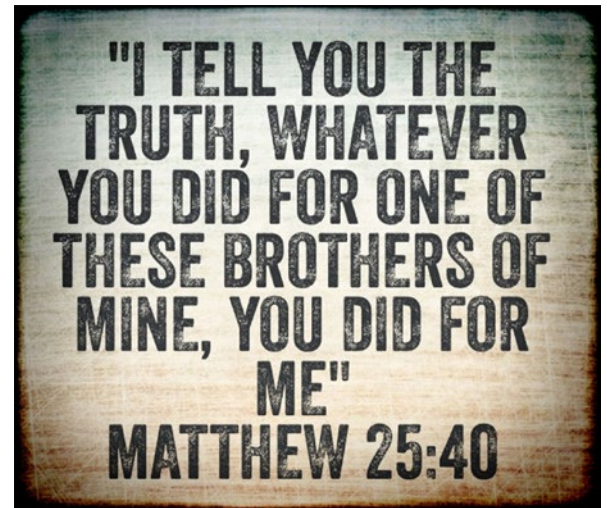
Newest Member Present

Photographers

Our Holy Trinity Philoptochos Ladies Society is a chapter of the national philanthropic ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The mission of the Philoptochos is: "to aid the poor, the destitute, the hungry, the aged, the sick, the unemployed, the orphaned, the imprisoned, the widow, the handicapped, the victims of disasters, to undertake the burial of the impoverished persons and to offer assistance to anyone who may need the help of the Church through fund raising efforts; to promote the charitable, benevolent and philanthropic purposes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, through instructional programs, presentations, lectures, seminars and other educational resources; to preserve and perpetuate Orthodox Christian concepts and the Orthodox Christian Family, and through them, to promote the Greek Orthodox Faith and traditions, in accordance with its doctrines, canons, discipline, divine worship, usages and customs; and to promote the participation in the activities of the Greek Orthodox community, with the cooperation of the Parish Priest and the Parish Council." Want more information? Visit their web site at www.Philoptochos.org or simply attend a meeting!

Philanthropy Offered by Holy Trinity Philoptochos in 2015

Holy Trinity Philoptochos offers its sincere thanks to the parishioners and friends of Holy Trinity Church whose constant and generous support makes these donations possible. The "National Ministries" are a collection of priorities and agencies supported by the National Philoptochos. In addition to the many donations listed below, the Holy Trinity Philoptochos sponsors the annual Senior Citizen Christmas Party, which is free to the attendees, provides gifts for shut-ins delivered during the holidays and hosts the weekly Sunday Coffee Hour. Ladies, if you are not yet a member, please sign up and become part of extending the love of Christ to those in need in the local area and throughout the world! Contact Philoptochos President Yvonne Balouris at 724-934-4850 or email philoptochos@HolyTrinityPgh.org.



NATIONAL MINISTRIES

- 75th Anniversary Founders Fund
- Autism Assistance Fund
- Cancer Fund
- Ecumenical Patriarchate
- Emergency Fund
- General Medical Fund
- Hellenic College/Holy Cross Lenten Offering
- Hellenic College/Holy Cross Scholarships Fund
- IOCC (International Charities)
- National Sisterhood of Presvyteres
- OCF (Campus Fellowship)
- OCMC/SAMP (Mission Work)
- Retired Clergy/Widowed Presvyteres Benevolence
- Social Services
- St. Basil Sisterhood
- St. Photios Shrine
- UNICEF (Children's Fund)
- St. Basil's Academy (Vasilopita Collection)

TOTAL NATIONAL DONATIONS \$2,530.00

METROPOLIS AND LOCAL DONATIONS

- Allegheny Valley School
- FOCUS – Pittsburgh (Food Bank)
- Holy Trinity Capital Campaign

- Holy Trinity Cemetery Fund
- KDKA Turkey Fund
- Mars Home for Youth
- Metropolis Philoptochos Emergency Fund
- Metropolis Philoptochos Good Samaritan Fund
- Metropolis of Pittsburgh Summer Camp
- Nativity of the Theotokos Monastery
- North Hills Community Out Reach
- North Hills Food Bank
- North Hills Foundation (Backpack Initiative)
- Salvation Army
- Shaler Area Middle School (Backpack Initiative)
- Social Services Special Care Fund
- USO
- Women's Center & Shelter of Pittsburgh
- Women's Shelter of Beaver County
- Scholarship for LaRoche College student
- John & Katina Nikas Endowment Fund
- Youth Ministries
- Local families in need (Giant Eagle & Walmart gift cards; other donations)

TOTAL METROPOLIS AND LOCAL DONATIONS \$13,819.00

TOTAL 2015 DONATIONS.....\$16,349.00



Elder Aimilianos

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.

Gheronda, Why does marriage seem to be under so much attack?

Nobody would dispute that the most important day in a person's life, after his birth and baptism, is that of his marriage. It is no surprise, then, that the aim of contemporary worldly and institutional upheavals is precisely to crush the most honorable and sacred mys-

tery of marriage. For many people, marriage is an opportunity for pleasures and amusements. Life, however, is a serious affair. It is a spiritual struggle, a progression toward a goal—heaven. The most crucial juncture, and the most important means, of this progression is marriage. It is not permissible for anyone to avoid the bonds of marriage, whether he concludes a mystical marriage by devoting himself to God [celibacy], or whether he concludes a sacramental one with a spouse. We know that marriage is an institution established by God. It is “honorable” (Heb 13.4). It is a “great mystery” (Eph 5.32). An unmarried person passes through life and leaves it; but a married person lives and experiences life to the full.

How are Christians to create successful marriages?

In order to have a successful marriage, one must have the appropriate upbringing from an early age. Just as a child must study, just as he learns to think, and take an interest in his parents or his health, so too must he be prepared in order to be able to have a successful marriage. But in the age in which we live, no one is interested in preparing their children for this great mystery, a mystery which will play the foremost role in their lives. Parents are not interested, except in the dowry, or in other such financial matters, in which they are deeply interested.

What can parents do to prepare their children for a good marriage?

The child, from an early age, must learn to love, to give, to suffer deprivation, to obey. He must learn to feel that the purity of his soul and body is a valuable treasure to be cherished as the apple of his eye. The character of the child must be shaped properly, so that he becomes an honest, brave, decisive, sincere, cheerful person, and not a half, self-pitying creature, who constantly bemoans his fate, a weak-willed thing without any power of thought or strength. From an early age, the child should learn to take an interest in a particular subject or occupation, so that tomorrow he will be in a position to support his family, or, in the case of a girl, also to help, if this is necessary. A woman must learn to be a housewife, even if she has an education.

Once we reach a certain age, moreover, the choice of one's life partner is a matter which should not be put off. Neither should one be in a hurry, because, as the saying goes, “quick to marry, quick to despair”. But one should not delay, because

delay is a mortal danger to the soul. As a rule, the normal rhythm of the spiritual life begins with marriage. An unmarried person is like someone trying to live permanently in a hallway: he doesn't seem to know what the rooms are for. Parents should take an interest in the child's social life, but also in his prayer life, so that the blessed hour will come as a gift sent by God.

Gheronda, how should a child choose a spouse?

Naturally, when he comes to choose a partner, he will take to account his parents' opinion. How often have parents felt knives piercing their hearts when their children don't ask them about the person who will be their companion in life? A mother's heart is sensitive, and can't endure such a blow. The child should discuss matters with his parents, because they have a special intuition enabling them to be aware of the things which concern them. But this doesn't mean that the father and mother should pressure the child. Ultimately he should be free to make his own decision. If you pressure your child to marry, he will consider you responsible if things don't go well. Nothing good comes from pressure. You must help him, but you must also allow him to choose the person he prefers or loves—but not someone he pities or feels sorry for. If your child, after getting to know someone, tells you, “I feel sorry for the poor soul, I'll marry him”, then you know that you're on the threshold of a failed marriage. Only a person whom he or she prefers or loves can stand by the side of your child. Both the man and the woman should be attracted to each other, and they should truly want to live together, in an inward way, unhurriedly. On this matter, however, it is not possible to pressure our children. Sometimes, out of our love, we feel that they are our possessions, that they are our property, and that we can do what we want with them. And thus our child becomes a creature incapable of living life either married or unmarried.

How should we face challenges in marriage?

You will have many difficulties in life. There will be a storm of issues. Worries will surround you, and maintaining your Christian life will not be easy. But don't worry. God will help you. Do what is within your power. Can you read a spiritual book for five minutes a day? Then read. Can you pray for five minutes a day? Pray. And if you can't manage five minutes, pray for two. The rest is God's affair.

When you see difficulties in your marriage, when you see that you're making no progress in your spiritual life, don't despair. But neither should you be content with whatever progress you may have already made. Lift up your heart to God. Imitate those who have given everything to God, and do what you can to be like them, even if all you can do is to desire in your heart to be like them. Leave the action to Christ. And when you advance in this way, you will truly sense what is the purpose of marriage. Otherwise, as a blind person wanders about, so too will you wander in life.

Excerpted from “The Church at Prayer: The Mystical Liturgy of the Heart” (Ormylia, Greece. 2005)



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The Temple of the Heart

The heart is more than a physical organ. It is a temple, where the Holy Spirit dwells with grace and power. Our task is to enter the space of the heart, to descend into its sacred depths, and to stand in humble awe before Him.

To make that inner journey, it is sometimes necessary to put aside books, liturgical tapes, even the Bible, and to spend a few moments in silence. The early morning or the evening after dark are good times to go into our room, close the door, and light a candle before an icon. There in that stillness we can collect ourselves and focus on what is most important in our life. We can make our confession, begging God's merciful forgiveness for our sins and shortcomings. We can offer up in thanksgiving the gifts of family and friends, of achievements and healings that we have received by His grace. We can make intercession, begging His mercy and healing for ourselves and for those we love, for our enemies and for all the people of His world. In that silence we can also allow Him to speak to us and to make Himself known.



Excerpted from "Longing for God: Orthodox Reflections on Bible, Ethics, and Liturgy"

Scripture of the Month: "A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you" (Ezekiel 26.36)