



THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

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QUICK NEWS



Michael and Ashley Bournias were part of the kitchen crew for the Philoptochos Lenten Lunch. 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 6-8 or browse through our online photo gallery at photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org.

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

CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY HE IS RISEN!



Scroll inscription from the Resurrection Canon of St. John of Damascus.
 Icon from the walls of the Saint George Chapel. Iconographer: Florin Vlad.

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
(pittsburgh.goarch.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

Clergy

Rev. Fr. John Touloumes, Proistamenos

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Karen Georgiadis Richard Paese

Michael Passodelis Stephen Stearns

Ted Stewart Alex Trilivas

Gerri Valliant Jeanne Willow

Ministries

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

"FAITH. FAMILY. COMMUNITY."



Now all things have been filled
with light, both heaven and
earth and those beneath the earth;
so let all creation sing Christ's rising,
by which it is established.

The Resurrection Canon

My beloved spiritual family,

Christ is risen!

Light. Sunshine. What beautiful thoughts here in our lovely city of Pittsburgh! Sadly, they are sometimes more thoughts than reality because we just don't get enough. One recent study ranked the major cities of the United States by the level of sunlight that actually reaches the ground and the number of clear days per year, and in both cases, Pittsburgh ranked at or near the bottom of the list. So it is natural that Pittsburghers truly appreciate the gift of light when it comes. We simply cannot afford to take it for granted.

As Orthodox Christians, we also have a great appreciation for light, especially as a gift of God. At the dawn of creation, God proclaimed—commanded at the opening of the Old Testament—"Let there be light" (Gen 1.3) and there was light, and "God saw that the light was good." Turning ahead to the parallel opening of the New Testament story as told by the Gospel of John when speaking of the Word (Logos), Jesus Christ, the Evangelist testifies, "In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1.4-5).

There is no better time of year for us to appreciate light than Pascha, shining in the brightness of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Who is the "light of the world" (John 8.12). The theme of Jesus as the light is actually marked notably both at the start and at the culmination of His public ministry on earth. Following His time in the desert, at His appearance in Galilee, we read in Matthew 4.16-17, "the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned." Jesus Christ is that light which casts away the darkness. And at His glorious Resurrection from the dead, the Church offers the bright and beautiful hymn, "Come receive the light, from the neversetting light; and glorify Christ who has risen from the dead." Again, Jesus Christ is the light that never sets.

As we walk through this bright and glorious season of the Resurrection, does that light burn brightly in your heart, your eyes and your life? It is the greatest news ever revealed to humankind: "Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down upon death, and to those in the tombs He has granted life." What do we do with that news? Do we proclaim it beyond the church services? Does the light of our Resurrection candle last only until it burns down, or does the world around us, which is such desperate need of hope, love and light, see it burning brightly in us long after the last "Christos Anesti" is sung? It is a light we cannot and must not hide "under a bushel" (Matt. 5.15).

When we were young, most of us were afraid of the dark. That's why our parents put nightlights in our rooms. Darkness is uncertain, threatening and scary. And no matter how much our parents told us we didn't need to fear it, only the presence of light cast all fear away. St. John the Evangelist comes into the darkness of our lives like a loving father into a child's dark room and consoles us with this promise: "My little children...the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining." (1 John 2.1,8). That true light is Jesus Christ, and we need to testify with the same faith and certainty to those in the world who still sit in darkness that His light is there for them, too, bringing light and into their dark and hopeless world. And there is no better time than Pascha, for..." Now all things have been filled with light!"

Yours in the Risen Christ,

WORSHIP LIFE

Weekday Services May/June

Please take note of the following weekday Liturgies for the feast days in May and June. Orthros is at 8:30 a.m., followed by Divine Liturgy at 9:30. Guide to locations for services: Holy Trinity Church = **HT**; St. George Chapel = **SG**.

April 29: Saint George (SG) - Feast Day of St. George Chapel

May 3: Theotokos the Life-Giving Fountain (SG)

May 3, 7:00pm: Consecration Vespers (SG)

May 4, 8:00am: Consecration of St. George Chapel (SG)

May 21: Ss Constantine & Helen (SG)

June 6: The Ascension of the Lord (SG)

June 15: Saturday of the Souls (SG)

Pentecost Sunday, June 16: Pentecost Sunday Liturgy at Holy Trinity Church, followed by the "Kneeling Vespers" of the Holy Spirit. (**HT**)

June 17, 8:30am Orthros/9:30am Liturgy: Feast Day of the Holy Spirit. This is the Nameday of our parish (**HT**).

June 24: Nativity of St. John the Baptist (SG)

June 29: Ss. Peter & Paul (SG)

Memorial Day Service for Veterans May 27

Please gather in front of the Holy Trinity Cemetery War Memorial at **10:00am (note time)** on Memorial Day as we hold a special ceremony to honor and remember our veterans. Please note: this service is to commemorate veterans; it is not a general memorial service for all the departed — that will be held according to Orthodox tradition on the Pentecost weekend Saturday of Souls (June 15 this year) with a Divine Liturgy & Memorial at the Saint George Chapel at Holy Trinity Cemetery. Memory eternal!

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Church School Graduation/Open House/Picnic May 19

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

YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS

GOYA Elections. June 2

The GOYA teen ministry will hold its elections for 2019/2020 at a meeting in the Conference Room following Divine Liturgy on Sunday, June 2. All GOYAs are asked to be present.

GOYA Carwash. June 9

GOYA will repeat their successful fundraising carwash following Divine Liturgy on Sunday, June 9. The free-will offering event will take place in the front circle of the church and

will last as long as it takes to get all the cars done, so be sure to bring any cars you need washed to church that day!

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

Philoptochos Fashion Show at Holy Cross May 18

The Holy Cross Philoptochos (123 Gilkeson Rd, Pittsburgh, Pa 15241) has invited us to join them for a Fashion Show and Luncheon on Saturday, May 18, 2019, 11:00am Cocktails, 12:00 noon Luncheon and Fashion Show. Tickets are \$40.00 per person. If you are interested in attending, please contact Marianne Stearns at philoptochos@HolyTrinityPgh.org.

COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

New Bereavement Ministry Meeting May 6/June 3

Our new Bereavement Support Ministry Team will provide spiritual care to our parishioners and their extended family & friends in time of grief and loss. If you have questions about grief and want to learn and share conversation, then please attend our Bereavement Support Group sessions on Monday, May 6 and June 3 in the Conference Room. Light refreshments and relaxed fellowship begin at 6:30 p.m. for those who choose. Then 7:00-8:30 p.m. is group learning and sharing with our Bereavement facilitators. Feel free to bring a family member and/or friend. Contact Amy Armanious, Visitation Ministry Coordinator with any questions at email Visitation@holyltrinitypgh.org

Festival Ad Book Volunteers and Ads Needed!

The Festival Ad Book provides tremendous support for this annual event, and we are seeking sponsors to advertise and volunteers to join the 2019 Festival Ad Book committee. Please contact Al Backeris or Connee Bistolas or email inquires and interest to festivalads@HolyTrinityPgh.org.

Festival Food & Pastry Preparation May Through July

Want to share your Greek food and pastry cooking talents with the Church or learn how it's done? Have we got an opportunity for you! Be there for food and pastry preparation throughout the Spring and Summer, May through July. On-the-job training available. Flexible hours. Non-cooking positions also available. Pick your favorite—or better yet—be there for them all! Check them out on the enclosed flyer or find them on our website.

Holy Trinity's Taste of Greece Labor Day Weekend

Please mark Wed., Aug. 28, through Sun., Sept. 1 on your calendar for this summer's "Taste of Greece" Festival. The Festival Committee is asking everyone, new members and old hands, young and young at heart, to pledge a donation of their time and talents so that we can continue to grow both the success of the festival and the fellowship with all our Holy Trinity church family members!



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



**Father John
Androutsopoulos**

The Solemn Festival: Pascha/Easter

CHRIST IS RISEN! TRULY HE IS RISEN!

What is the Festival of Pascha/ Easter?

It is the celebration of the day on which our Lord and Saviour

Jesus Christ rose from the dead. "Jesus, having risen from the grave, as He foretold, has given to us Eternal Life and the Great Mercy" (from the Orthros of the Resurrection).

The Holy Gospel Of The Divine Service Of The Resurrection is According To Mark, Chapter 16:1-8:

THE GOSPEL: "And when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might go and anoint Him. And very early on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb, when the sun had just risen. And they were saying to one another, "Who will roll the stone back from the entrance of the tomb for us?" And looking up they saw that the stone had been rolled back, for it was very large. But on entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting at the right side, clothed in a white robe and they were amazed. He said to them, "Do not be terrified. You are looking, for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified? He has risen, He is not here. Behold the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples and Peter that He goes before you into Galilee; there you shall see Him, as He told you." And they departed and fled from the tomb, for trembling and fear had seized them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid."

The Explanation Of The Gospel

The crucifixion was past, the Sabbath had drawn to a close. This Holy Gospel shows us the devotion of the three holy women, whose love for Jesus did not end with His death, as they sought to honor Him after death by offering the spices for His anointment.

We also can anoint Christ by assisting those in spiritual or temporal need. How acceptable the devotion of the three women was to God, was shown by the fact of an angel being sent to comfort them.

The angel said, "He has risen!" (Mark 16:6)

Our Church proclaims these words today because they gather up in three words all that God has said to us in the Old Covenant and the New.

The meaning of life is disclosed in these words. They call us away from all cringing before evil and death. Christ's victory has overcome the power of evil and death. Eternal life becomes a present reality, not a vague, future hope.

We celebrate the Resurrection because Christ has revealed God's power and His love, power and love which are triumphant over death. We celebrate the Resurrection because we are new creatures in Christ who believe passionately in the future life. We look forward in hope.

The angel expressly commanded the women to go and tell His disciples and Peter of the resurrection of Christ. This should be a cause of great consolation for penitent sinners, because it proves that God does not despise a humble and contrite heart.

St. Augustine remarks: "The day of Christ's resurrection caused life for the dead, pardon for sinners, joy for the heavens."

Forgive To Obtain Forgiveness

Jesus said, "But if you forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses." He also said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." It is clear that forgiveness and mercy from God

depend on our own willingness to extend mercy and forgiveness to our fellowman. If we withhold mercy and forgiveness, then God withholds it from us. Jesus told Simon Peter to forgive 490 times, if someone came asking forgiveness. Forgiveness is important in our approach to God as repentance. Love must precede true forgiveness. It is easy to forgive those we love.

Beloved, let us remember Christ's prayer from the Cross for His crucifiers: "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do." He prays for all of His enemies!

May the Risen Lord on this most radiant Feast of Pascha fill our hearts with joy and grant each and everyone in our family at Holy Trinity good health and many, many years! Kalo Pascha—Happy Easter!

Christ is risen! Truly He is risen!

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



Understanding Stewardship

Stewardship. The word can make people nervous, cringe, or just generally feel uncomfortable. When you think of stewardship, what other words come to mind? Donations? Card? Money? Giving? What emotions or feelings?

It is not uncommon to have an awkward or uncomfortable relationship with stewardship. But you don't have to feel that way – and in addition to your Stewardship Committee, this information can help!

Stewardship vs. Generosity?

“Stewardship,” “generosity,” and “giving” are not synonymous. Using these terms interchangeably can make them seem as though they all have the same meaning, but they do not. Stewardship is a role. Giving is an act. Generosity is an attitude.

In biblical times, the steward was a respected person and was entrusted with his master's possessions, managing them how the master wanted him to manage. God created and will always own all that we have. Stewardship is recognizing that God is the master and we are His “managers,” responsible for using His possessions in accordance with what He wants.

Generosity is the willingness to sacrifice for the benefit of others – with no benefit to you. This is different than giving. Giving is something that you can do without generosity, as it is simply the act of “releasing” something of value. However, you cannot be generous without giving. Again, looking back at the biblical steward, he managed his master's resources that were not given away.

The Dangers of Poor Stewardship

Poor stewardship is dangerous for you, and rich stewardship is for your benefit. When one of us on the Stewardship Committee talks about pledging, signing your stewardship card, etc., we do not want something from you. We want something for you.

Why is poor stewardship dangerous for you? Well, it is more of a spiritual problem rather than a financial one. God is a giver and gives to us. Our willingness to give – whether to others or back to God – reveals our relationship with Him. A harmful relationship with wealth can be the root of spiritual blindness.

In Luke 12:15–21, a rich farmer is blessed with an abundant crop. He gives no credit to God, nor does he give thought to being a steward. He thinks only about himself. Jesus calls him a fool, not because he had great possessions, but because his possessions had him.

Stewardship and Money: Three Approaches

We need more teaching about money, not less. Money is an emotional topic. If people have financial struggles, more than likely, they will want to hide it and feel as though they are not in a position to be generous. Avoiding the topic of money may only deepen the problem. Talking about money – whether it is with a spouse, a family member, a financial advisor – can generate a greater willingness to address financial health.

There are three approaches to money for you to consider that may help you grow as a steward.

The Practical Approach

As logical as its name, this approach encompasses organizing your finances and managing your money. We all have heard the story of the Good Samaritan, but have you thought about it from a financial perspective? In Luke 10, the Good Samaritan not only gave of himself, but he was also a good steward. He saved money in advance for an unknown and unforeseen need. Because he was a saver, he had a surplus and was generous to the wounded traveler.

The Emotional Approach

Money is emotional. When rarely addressed, it can lead to poor financial decisions. Your heart may overrule your head. If you think emotionally, pause your financial decisions, and pray. God will show you the right way.

The Spiritual Approach

The most important approach – in order to be a good steward of the church, you must align your financial decisions with the wisdom of God's Word. Not sure how to do that? Pray about it. Talk to Fr. John or Fr. Radu. Ask for more information from one of us on the Stewardship Committee.


Rather than running for the hills when you see someone approaching you with a Stewardship card, think about the importance of being a Good Steward of the Church. Sure, you may need to reconsider your daily Starbucks stop. But when you look at the big picture, your relationship with God greatly outweighs your coffee or other material items.

If the word “Stewardship” still gives you a sense of nervousness, reach out to one of us on the Stewardship Committee. We are happy to answer any questions you may have and want to put your mind at ease when it comes the practicalities and the blessings of Stewardship at Holy Trinity Church!

*Your Co-Workers in Christ
The Holy Trinity Stewardship Ministry Committee*





 <p>HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH 95TH ANNIVERSARY PAVER PROJECT 985 PROVIDENCE BLVD. PITTSBURGH, PA 15237</p>		<p>WESBANCO BANK 69-3/434 143</p>	<p>3686</p>
<p>PAY TO THE ORDER OF</p>		<p>HOLY TRINITY CAPITAL CAMPAIGN</p>	<p>03/31/2019</p>
<p>ONE-HUNDRED-THREE-THOUSAND-THREE-HUNDRED-SEVENTY-SEVEN-AND-00/00</p>		<p>\$ 103,377.00</p>	<p>DOLLARS</p>
<p>VOID AFTER 90 DAYS</p>		<p>VOID AFTER 90 DAYS</p>	
<p>95th Anniversary Paver Project Proceeds for Mortgage Reduction</p>		<p><i>George D. Panir</i> AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE</p>	
<p>MEMO</p>		<p>Details on Back</p>	
<p>⑈001686⑈ 1013100016⑈ 2900516⑈</p>			



Lent at Holy Trinity Church (Clockwise from right) March 29: Three generations of the Daskalakis family participate in the Salutations Service. **April 12:** Young Adults gather for dinner and fellowship following the Akathist Hymn Service. **April 1:** Visitors from the women's group at St. Ferdinand's Roman Catholic Church in Cranberry visit a Compline Service. **April 17:** Guest speaker Alex Corkos on "Relationships" following the Compline Service. **April 10:** Father John Chakos speaks following the Compline Service on "Missions." **March 31:** Young Adults tally up their "Grounded in Faith" Coffee House totals; Godparent/Godchild Sunday photos.



☑ **WORSHIP** ☑ **LEARN** ☑ **GROW** ☑ **PRAY** ☑ **SERVE**

ENGAGE YOUR SPIRIT BETWEEN SUNDAYS! SEE YOU THIS WEEK!

FAITH ^{AND} Family WEEKDAYS

AT HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

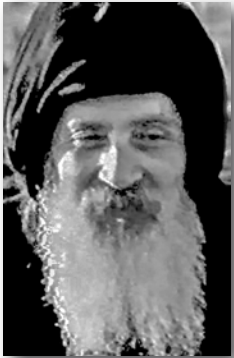
Sometimes once a week is just not enough to satisfy your spiritual yearning for a deeper experience of God. “Faith and Family Weekdays” is your opportunity to live your life in the Church between Sundays! With presentations, hands-on-learning sessions and worship services, there are opportunities for Christians to “grow in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3.18). These faith and growth experiences can even make your Sunday Liturgies more powerful. Check it out this week and every week!

“Every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” (Acts 5.42)

“FAITH AND FAMILY WEEKDAYS” MINISTRY UPDATE: SPRING 2019

DAYS	MINISTRY	SCHEDULE	ABOUT
DAILY	“Prayer Partners” Prayer Support Ministry	Every Day: In your personal prayers	EVERYONE can participate in this vital ministry. On the first Sunday of Jan., Apr., July and Oct., prayer cards are distributed after Liturgy to ask parishioners to exchange names and become Prayer Partners. Pray and be prayed for daily!
MONDAYS 7:00pm	“Journey to Fullness” Faith Growth Ministry	Mondays: Spring Series May 13, 20; Jun 3, 10	This excellent video teaching series is for everyone who wants to learn more about the “fullness of the faith” found in Orthodox Christianity, whether as inquirers, catechumens or life-long members. Each segment offers an interactive question and answer period. Same series repeated in fall and spring.
SECOND TUESDAY 7:00pm	“Journey of Marriage” Marriage Prep Ministry	2nd Tuesday Sep.-May May 14	Marriage preparation for couples using the excellent and interactive “Journey of Marriage” materials developed by Dr. Philip Mamalakis. From “Hello!” to honeymoon, this series educates and equips couples for fruitful Orthodox Christian married life. It’s fun, interactive and a great way to prepare.
WEDNESDAYS 6:30pm Worship 7:00pm Study	“Explore the Word” Worship and Bible Study Ministry	Wednesdays Oct.-May May 8, 15, 22	Prayerfully read the Bible! In Deuteronomy 11, it says, “Lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.” Each Wednesday, come and open your heart in prayer in the Church and then meet in the Conference Room for the study of the Gospel of St. Matthew led by Father Radu Bordeianu.
THIRD THURSDAY 7:00am	“Prayer and Panera” Men’s Ministry	3rd Thursday Sep.-June May 23 Jun. 20	The Saint Nikodemos Men’s Fellowship hosts this morning session of prayers and Christian fellowship (with coffee and bagels, too!). The group meets at church promptly at 7:00 a.m. for a 15-20 minute morning prayer and scripture, then heads to Panera for 30-45 minutes of fellowship & breakfast.
THIRD THURSDAY 6:30pm St. George Chapel	“Monthly Paraclesis Service” Worship	3rd Thursday Sep.-June May 23; St. Paisios Jun. 20: St. Nektarios	The Paraclesis, also known as the Service of Supplication, is offered monthly at St. George Chapel. It contains hymns and prayers asking the Lord for guidance, personal strength, and healing. The most popular form invokes the prayers of the Holy Theotokos. We will alternate that service with two others, one for St. Nektarios and the other for St. Paisios.
SECOND THURSDAY 7:00pm	“Orthodox Movie Night” Entertainment/Fellowship	2nd Thursday Sep.-June May 9: “Wonder” Jun. 13: “Swing Away”	A monthly offering of inspirational movies with snacks and good company in the Fireside Room. Free to all, it’s a relaxing and uplifting alternative to the “same old stuff” on cable TV. Why sit around alone and watch that when you can enjoy a night of Holy Trinity fellowship and entertainment? Watch for the monthly flyer with a description of each offering.

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 inspired by their wisdom, formatted in a question-and-answer interview approach.



**Father Matthew
the Poor**

In the popular wedding ceremonies of the East, it was the custom for the friends of the bridegroom to parade the groom through the city on horseback or by automobile, and the joyful pageant was usually accompanied by the sounds of strings and trumpets. Everyone’s face would light up with joy. St. John the Baptist entered the world at this critical moment in world history to be the first of those friends to lead the bridegroom in the parade, and he did it with ecstatic shouts and cries. When his task was completed, the bridegroom appeared to announce the fullness of time and the start of the acceptable year. This appearance was the happiest day of John’s mission, for when he heard the bridegroom’s voice, he said, “My joy is fulfilled.” With the coming of Christ came the revelation of the door, the way, and the bride, all at the same time. And the bride and bridegroom are now together in their wedding chamber, the Church. Joy has filled the entire household.

Father, the wedding celebration seems to be a good way to understand the joy of the Resurrection also?

The Christian servant of the New Testament is not just the bridegroom’s friend—that is, one who is happy to hear His voice, who leads Him in the parade up to the door of the wedding chamber, then takes his leave—but he is also the object of the bridegroom’s own joy, for he is in the place of the bride and is a part of her. Every priest or servant also shares in the bridegroom’s joy over His bride; he rejoices for the bridegroom and with the bridegroom.

Serving the bridegroom is total joy, total elation, and total delight, especially when the servants themselves are co-participants with the bride and bridegroom in the wedding. The bridegroom’s servants are also the leaders of the marriage feast; and so there is absolutely no excuse for a hint of melancholy or gloom to be found in them, lest they offend the groom. And the bridegroom is always present in our midst in the Church: “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).

The bridegroom’s task as overseer of His Church is eternal, mystical, and immutable: “You now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you” (John 16:22). Indeed, when Christ showed Himself to the disciples after His Resurrection, they were filled with a joy that itself became the essence and substance of the Gospel. For it was the joy of that revelation that inspired them to go out and spread the joyful news—that is, to preach Christ, the living and visible bridegroom.

What if we struggle with the truth of the Resurrection?

St. Peter strives to reassure our doubting eyes of the truth

when he says, “Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory” (1 Pet. 1:8). The people of the Old Testament waited for the joyful news—the message of hope and salvation—with much patience, and they repented upon hearing it. “How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things” (Rom. 10:15; Is. 52:7). The power in the priest’s evangelism and the servant’s teaching is directly drawn from their joy in the bridegroom. For rejoicing in God is the Gospel, and the Gospel is rejoicing in God.

I understand the calling and work of the Apostles in teaching and spreading the faith after the Resurrection, but what can I do as a layperson to fulfill my calling to serve Christ out of love for Him?

When St. Paul makes the statement, “This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of a bishop, he desires a good work” (1 Tim. 3:1), he establishes that Christian service in and of itself is a good deed. Therefore, if we seek it on the basis that it is work, a series of deeds, this is good. But if we seek to join the service without our mind and conscience being focused on the idea that we must do good, then our desire is a poor, lifeless ambition.

The salient point in St. Paul’s words is that Christian service (that is, the act of laboring in the Church) is in itself a very desirable thing. It is something to be sought after and loved with all the heart, because a Christian servant serves Jesus Himself. For we love Jesus, and our love for Him surpasses our natural limitations and transcends our natural minds. Our love for Him reaches to the very borders of death itself, and death can never separate us from His love. He rejoices in our love for Him and expects it of us. In this exchange of love, we are the true winners. Christ indicated that the vital sign of our sincere love for Him is our readiness to serve Him and to tend His sheep: “Do you love Me? Tend My sheep” (John 21:16).

Any person called to serve Christ—whether because of his personal love for Christ or by the inspiration of God or others—must simply accept the burden of service as a consequence of his love. If he does so, God will stamp His seal on the authenticity of the calling and on the certainty that it will lead him to divine joy: “Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matt. 25:23).

If we focus on what is of real value in our service—the glory that accrues to Christ as a result of our words and deeds, and the liberation from the devil’s slavery that it brings to people—we will immediately realize that the joy that springs from our service is not the joy of this present world. For the glory that is due Christ is better than the accolades of a thousand angels. “What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance” (Phil 1:18,19).

Excerpted from “The Communion of Love”

*by Matthew the Poor, Spiritual Father of
the Monks at St. Macarius Monastery in Scetis (Egypt)*



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How God Reveals Our Inner Beauty

According to ancient theory of art, the practice of sculpting has less to do with fashioning a figure of one's choosing than with being able to see in the stone the figure waiting to be liberated. The sculptor imposes nothing but only frees what is held captive in stone. The practice of contemplation is something like this. It does not work by means of addition or acquisition, but by release, chiseling away thought-shackled illusions of separation from God. We emerge from the debris of separation and stand up, "set free from the snare of the fowler" (Ps 91:3). The third-century spiritual master Plotinus speaks of contemplation and sculpture in his treatise "On Beauty": "If you do not find yourself beautiful yet," he advises, "act as does the creator of a statue that is to be made beautiful: he cuts away here, he smooths there, he makes this line lighter, this other purer, until a lovely face has grown upon his work. So do you also, cut away all that is excessive, straighten all that is crooked, bring light to you from it the godlike splendor of virtue." The Orthodox monk Amphilochios of Patmos proclaims, "You should be joyful Jesus holds a chisel in his hands. He wants to make you into a statue for the heavenly place."

Martin Laird
"A Sunlit Absence"

Scripture of the Month: "Your hands have made me and fashioned me." (Psalm 119.73)