



THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

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

December 2002

www.HolyTrinityPgh.org

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Monthly Parish Newsletter
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Fr. John Touloumes, Ekonomos

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"Bethlehem has opened Eden: come, let us see. We have found joy in secret: come, let us take possession of the paradise that is within the cave...There, the Virgin has borne a Babe and made the thirst of Adam and David cease straight-away. Therefore, let us hasten to this place where now is born a young Child, the pre-eternal God." (From the Oikos hymn of the Nativity of Christ)

Father John's Message

THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

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The Cultural Side

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Publication Schedule

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month. If you would like to assist with mailing
the Herald, please contact the church secretary
at 412-321-9282 to volunteer your help.

Sponsor
an issue of
The Herald
in memory of or in
honor of a
loved one or
special family event.
See the inside back
page for a
sponsor form.



Dear Brothers and Sisters in
Jesus Christ, our Newborn
Savior,

To the right is a partial but
significant list of the various
names given to the small Child
Whose birth in the cave in
Bethlehem we celebrate in this
holy season. I offer it here as
a reminder—in purely scriptural terms—of what
names should come to mind during this season and
always. Why? Because names mean something.

Growing up in the surroundings of school,
families and friends, everyone has experienced
either the flattery or the humiliation of having a
name attached to us. We are taught by our parents
to address our elders, teachers and other with the
properly respectful names, and we are also warned
how unfair names can be when making fun of
someone. All these admonitions are given because
our parents realize that the names by which we
address people go far in forming our relationship
with them and our attitude toward them.

If that is the case, how important it is for us
as Christians to come to know Jesus not by the
assumptions we draw about Him, but by the names
He gives Himself in order to help us come into the
forgiving and saving relationship we all need.

If we buy into the commercial world's buy-
and-spend approach toward the season, we will
take a lot of time to go over lists and names and
make sure everyone knows how we really feel
about them by what we buy them. In truth, does
any of us really measure the worth of our relation-
ships by the price of those gifts?

Christmas is not really—in the deepest
sense—a season of *giving*. It is a time of *receiv-
ing*, that is, receiving the free gift of the grace of
God and the salvation He brings in Jesus Christ.
According to our recent Notable Speaker guest,
Fr. Demetrios Constantelos, "the purpose of Chris-
tian Orthodox spirituality is to help human beings
'become partakers of divine nature' (2 Peter 1.4)." May that be our focus at Christmas and through-
out our lives. God gives. Know
Him—by name!—and be always
ready to receive Him. Christ is
born! Glorify Him!

Son of God

Mark 1:1

Son of Man

Matt. 8:20

Son of David

Matt. 15:22

Logos (Word)

John 1:1

Lamb of God

John 1:29

Christ

Matt. 16:16

Savior

John 4:14

Teacher

John 1:38

Author of life

Acts 3:15

Alpha and Omega

Rev. 1:8

King of Kings

Rev. 19:16

Lord of Lords

Rev. 19:16

Bright Morning Star

Rev. 22:16

Emmanuel

Isaiah 7:14

Prince of Peace

Isaiah 9:6

Counselor

Isaiah 9:6

Mighty God

Isaiah 9:6

Eternal Father

Isaiah 9:6



News & Events

YOUTH MINISTRIES

JOY Homeless Shelter Feeding December 15

Our JOY (8-12 year-old) children's ministry will be preparing and serving a meal for the residents of the Pleasant Valley Shelter on Sunday, December 15, as part of their Christmas outreach. The meal will be prepared by the JOY children and parents following Divine Liturgy, then served later that evening by those able to return later that evening. Please contact JOY Coordinator Penny Georgiadis at 724-935-2383 to find out what to bring to help with the meal.

GOYA Turkey Bowl Football Game December 1

It's the biggest (and only) GOYA football event since the Fall Kickoff! Don't miss the annual GOYA Turkey Bowl Football Game on Sunday, December 1. The morning starts (as all football mornings should) with Divine Liturgy at Holy Trinity Church, followed by "tailgating" at Coffee Hour, then the game at the field down the street in the park. Parents, fans and cheerleaders are all invited, too! (Bring a lawn chair if you want a seat!) For information, contact George Athanasiou at 412-322-6002.

GOYA Fireside Chat December 8

The GOYA will hold its annual Fireside Chat on Sunday, December 8, from 5:00 to 8:30 pm at the home of Elena Erdeljac. All our GOYAns are invited to attend and set aside some special time preparing for the Nativity of the Lord. In addition, there will be a "Questions and Answers with Father John" session. Details will be mailed to the GOYA homes. To confirm your attendance, please contact the Erdeljac family at 412-367-6290.

EDUCATIONAL MINISTRIES

Church Christmas Pageant December

The Holy Trinity Church School ministry will be offering its annual Christmas Pageant on Sunday, December 22. All the students of the Church School will be involved in this event. Preparations are being made by each teacher for the students in their class. In addition to their in-class preparations, please take note of these special practice times:

Sunday, Dec. 1, 8 & 15 5th-12th Grades
Practice following Divine Liturgy. Specific information will be provided by the teacher in each class.

Saturday, Dec. 21 All students & staff
10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Full cast rehearsal for everyone. Extra attendance credit is offered for everyone who attends this rehearsal.

Sunday, Dec. 22 Christmas Pageant
Following Holy Communion, all Church School students and staff will depart for their classes and final preparations for the pageant. All our parishioners are asked to stay for the pageant and coffee hour in the social hall

No Church School Class December 29

Attention, parents! There will be no Church School class on December 29 due to the holiday celebrations, so please plan on being in church together as a family for the entire service on those days. Instead of teaching your children to think of these times as "days off from church," give your children the gift of faith and dedication by bringing them to Liturgy and helping them understand the importance of worship and prayer in the Orthodox life. Thanks, parents!

St. Lydia's Women's Fellowship . . . December 5, 19

The St. Lydia Women's Study Fellowship is a ministry for women to share in fellowship and to study scripture, the Orthodox Faith and family life in today's world. The meetings take place every other week on Thursday mornings at 9:30 a.m. at a home in the North Hills. New participants are always welcome! The fellowship is enjoyable and the approach is casual, but the subjects are important for today's families.

The topic for this year is "Studies of Scripture and Faith in Everyday Life." A complete schedule for the year is now posted on our Holy Trinity web site (www.HolyTrinityPgh.org) under the "Ministries" section. For further information on this worthwhile and informative group or for directions to the meetings, call Paula Valliant at 412-487-3977.

St. Nikodemos Men's Fellowship December 12

The St. Nikodemos Men's Study Fellowship meets on the second and fourth Thursday each month at the office of TriadUSA, Suite 460, Two Gateway Center, downtown from 7:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. The group features prayer, Bible study, topics of interest to Orthodox Christian men and how to live our Faith in the working world. It is open to all interested men and has been centrally located downtown to accommodate those who need to be at work early. The theme for this year's studies is "God's Promises for Men." A complete schedule for the year is now posted on our Holy Trinity web site





News & Events

(www.HolyTrinityPgh.org) under the "Ministries" section. For directions, call Gus Georgiadis at 412-880-4999. (Note: No meeting 12/26 - Christmas)

COMMUNITY NEWS

Year-End Stewardship Donations

The Parish Council thanks all our Holy Trinity Stewards for their pledges and contributions this year. Please take note that all offerings you would like listed as received during the 2002 tax year (Jan. 1-Dec. 31) for tax deduction purposes must be received at the church by Dec. 31. This is an IRS regulation. You may indicate the offerings to apply for either your 2002 pledge (to pay the balance) or the 2003 pledge (to pay ahead) and your pledge balance will be accurately calculated no matter when the offering is made, but if you desire a 2002 tax year receipt, the offering must be received by Dec. 31. Year-end statements will be sent out at the end of January. Thanks!

Acolyte Robes Thank You!

Thank you to the Philoptochos and to our parishioners all who personally responded and made it possible to purchase the six new larger robes needed for our older acolytes. May God reward your generosity!

Christmas Card and Poinsettias Forms Due

Don't miss out on your chance to honor the Nativity by being listed on the Holy Trinity Community Christmas Card and sponsoring Poinsettias to adorn the Church for the Feast. Christmas Card forms and donations are due December 6. Poinsettia forms and donations are due December 14

Our Big Fat Greek New Year's Eve Dec. 31

This issue of *The Herald* contains a flyer for Holy Trinity's unique New Year's Eve celebration, to be held this at the East Club Lounge of Heinz Field. In addition to other highlights, the magnificent view of the fireworks at the Point will offer a spectacular show. Please make your reservations early by visiting the reservation desk at Coffee Hour or by calling Kathy Balouris at 412-635-0482.

LITURGICAL LIFE

Weekday Liturgies December

In addition to the regular Sunday services please make note of the following weekday services for

the month of December. Unless otherwise indicated, Orthros is at 9:00 a.m., followed by Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m.:

Wed. Dec. 4..... St. Barbara/St. John of Damascus

Thu. Dec. 5, 7pmGreat Vespers of St. Nicholas

Μέγας Εσπερινός του Αγ. Νικολάου

Fri. Dec. 6..... St. Nicholas the Wonderworker

Του Αγ. Νικολάου του Θαυματουργού

Note: Vespers and Liturgy for St. Nicholas will be held at St. Nicholas Cathedral in Oakland.

Mon. Dec. 9..... Conception of the Theotokos

Wed. Dec. 11, 7pm Great Vespers of St. Spyridon

Μέγας Εσπερινός του Αγ. Σπυρίδωνος

Note: Vespers for St. Spyridon will be held at St. Spyridon Church in Monessen.

Thu. Dec. 12 St. Spyridon the Wonderworker

Του Αγ. Σπυρίδωνος του Θαυματουργού

Note: Liturgy for St. Spyridon will be held at Holy Trinity Church, followed by the Philoptochos Senior Citizens' luncheon.

Tue. Dec. 31, 6:30 pmVespers Liturgy of St. Basil

Note: Vespers Liturgy for St. Basil will be held at Holy Trinity Church, followed by the New Year's Eve event at Heinz Field's East Club Lounge.

Services for the Nativity of Christ Dec. 24/25

Christ is Born! Glorify Him! This jubilant proclamation is not one of words only, but of worship. The following is the schedule of services with which we will celebrate the Birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ this year.

Service of the Royal Hours of the Nativity

Tuesday, December 24, 10:00 am

This special service offers readings, prophecies and hymns which point to and interpret the Divine Incarnation of the Savior.

Vespers Liturgy of the Nativity

Tuesday, December 24, 7:00 pm

This service "opens the liturgical day" and begins the celebration of the Nativity. This is a combination of Great Vespers and the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil. Those wishing to receive Holy Communion should prepare by abstaining from food and drink from noon until the service.

Divine Liturgy of the Nativity of Christ

Wed. Dec. 25, 8:45 Orthros/10:00 am Liturgy

This is the main service of the Birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Open the best gift first by attending Liturgy with your family and receiving the Holy Mysteries together! Christ is born!



Mouse Tales: The St. Spyridon Church School Library Update



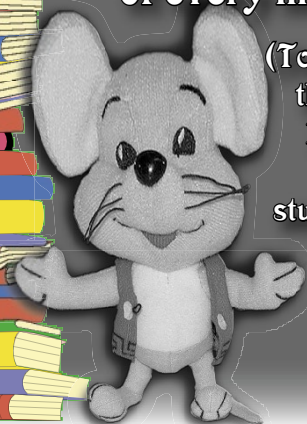
December is one of the most wonderful times of the year. It is the time when we have many celebrations. We celebrate the Eve of the coming of Jesus, then we celebrate His birth. My great-great-great-great Papou was there the night that Jesus was born! What a great moment! Imagine, he witnessed the coming of Our Savior. Well, there are so...o...o many good books and videos in my library to help you learn about this great event. Here are my recommendations for the month:

It's the night before Christmas and all through the house one creature is stirring. No, it is not a mouse! It is Oscar Charlie's bright green iguana. He discovers that Charlie forgot to shut his cage door right before going to bed. He was free! With no one stirring it was a perfect time to go on an adventure. On his journey he found a glittering tree. Oscar stopped and thought to himself, how did a tree grow in the living room? Being a curious little Lizard, Oscar climbed the trunk of the shimmering tree. On his way Oscar met the most astonishing ornaments, a Nutcracker, elves, and a shy keepsake. They talked and each told Oscar their version of what Christmas really is about. So, my precious children, join Oscar on this adventure on one of the most unforgettable Christmas Eves, and discover with him the wonderful message an angel shares with this very, very special "Christmas Lizard" by Cory Edwards.



Hey, children!
Don't miss my new
adventure this year:
"Spero's Library
Club," on the
Second Sunday
of every month!

(Toddlers
through
Fourth
Grade
students)



The second book I, Spero, recommend is, "Zeek the Christmas Tree Mouse," by Richard Schneider. It is a delightful holiday story that teaches all my precious children 6 to 10 years old about God's forgiveness. Once again, "T'was the night before Christmas and all through the house, not a creature was stirring, except for ... Zeek the mouse! When he disobeys his mother and leaves his snugly nest to visit the humans that live upstairs, he discovers for himself what the wonderful sounds and smells of Christmas mean. First, the big bite of the ginger bread man proves a disappointment. The fear of being chased by the cat drives him to find a creative way out of his predicament. Then he learns of the story of the first Christmas gift, the gift of our Heavenly Father—His son, Jesus—and in his little heart he learns the true meaning of Christmas.

In Christ, Love, Spero



Community Life Photo Journal

An on-going photo journal of scenes from the active parish life of Holy Trinity Church.

Notable Speakers Event

Scenes from our Notable Speakers weekend, November 16 and 17, 2002, with this year's honored guest, Rev. Dr. Demetrios Constantelos, distinguished author, scholar and Greek Orthodox clergyman.



See these photos and more in full-color at our website: www.HolyTrinityPgh.org!



Parish Council Update - October 2002

This abbreviated review of the Parish Council minutes is provided as a way of keeping our Holy Trinity parishioners informed of the active work of the Parish Council. Want to get involved? Contact any Parish Council member. Thank you to our Parish Council secretary, Maria Kraniou, for provided these condensed minutes for the Herald.

Call To Order

The regular monthly meeting of the Parish Council of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church was held on Tuesday, October 8, 2002, at the Church Library, pursuant to notice duly given to all members. A quorum being present, and the meeting therefore being competent to proceed, the meeting was opened with a prayer at 7:30 p.m.

President's Welcome And Correspondence

Dr. Christ Balouris circulated some correspondence received, including information on the College Year in Athens.

Approval Of Minutes

George Papadopoulos made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 10, 2002, meeting. The motion was seconded by Bill Fiedler. Unanimously approved.

Father John's Report

The Diocese Clergy-Laity Assembly dinner will take place October 24-26 at Holy Cross Church, with the Diocese Dinner on Thursday, Oct. 24 in the evening. The JOYfest is scheduled for Nov. 2 – the theme is “The Joy of Life”. The Diocese Regional Parish Council Seminar will be held on Nov. 19 at St. Nicholas Church and is required for all Parish Council nominees. The speaker for the upcoming Notable Speakers Series, Rev. Fr. Demetrios Constantelos, is coming to our church to talk on Hellenism and the Roots of the Christian Faith.

Committee Reports

Social: New Year's Eve will be held at Heinz Field. Details are forthcoming.

Cemetery: A subcommittee was created to take on next year's maintenance of the flower circle as their stewardship. The Cemetery Chapel plans are 80% complete with preliminary designs received from the architect.

Maintenance: A freezer needs to be purchased to accommodate Festival cooking for 2003.

Stewardship: So far pledges have reached a record level of about \$105,000. Reminder letters are being sent.

Vision: A Special General Assembly will be held on October 20 to address funding for properties, specifically requesting authorization to spend money for preliminary funds, like the contingencies and architectural designs for the Gorman property. In order to acquire this land, the authorities responsible for the utilities want to see the plans earlier. The architect, Christ Kamages will come back with a process. Discussion continues with the proper authorities.

Festival: Final figures are forthcoming.

Old Business/New Business

Parish Council Elections: Nominating Committee members Mark Georgiadis and Paul Balouris are the contact people regarding Parish Council elections. Anyone with names of interested people should contact them.

Other: The freezer will be added to the Action Item List and Budget.

Nest meeting

The next Parish Council meeting was set for Tuesday, November 12, 2002. No further business appearing, the meeting adjourned with a prayer at 10:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Maria Kraniou, Secretary



Gheronda's Corner

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



**Father John
Androutsopoulos**

The Fast of Christmas (Advent)

The Preparation for the Nativity

Advent is a Latin word which means "The Coming." It is used in the life of the Church to signify the visible coming of the Son of God into this world.

The Two Comings of Christ

Holy Scripture bears witness to that "coming" of the Son of God taking place at two different times.

The first coming of Christ took place when the Son of God was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of the most pure Virgin Mary, and born of her in the stable of Bethlehem according to the flesh and was made man, sanctifying the world by His coming, for which many kings and prophets had been waiting.

The second coming of Christ will take place at the end of the world, when Christ shall come in great majesty to judge the living and the dead.

The Purpose of the Fast

The Fast of Christmas (Advent - the Season of Hope), which begins on November 15, is a time of anticipation, a time of hope, a time for reflection, a time of preparation, a time of getting ready for Christmas the great and Holy Feast of the Nativity of Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The world may not know what "Advent" means or when it begins, or even that there is; such a season in the Christian year; but it does know that there is something called "Christmas" coming, and that if we want the most of it, now is the time to get ready for it.

How We Prepare

Stores, radio and television commercials, city officials make sure that decorations go up and the announcers hammer away with the "hard sell." Advent or no, the secular world is sure that the season of joy and goodwill is fast approaching and to cash in on it they have to start getting ready for it now.

What are our Advent preparations? How are we getting ready for Christmas? To make the most of

Christmas, we have to get ready for it. Hopefully, let us begin, to make the most of our time, realizing that the more we use the Advent days to listen to what Advent says, the more we will profit from our Christmas celebrating when it comes. Christmas this year is going to be, as it always is, another reenactment of the greatest event in history; and we can't come up to something like that without careful preparation.

The Greatest Thing

My beloved, "The greatest thing that could happen is going to happen. God is going to visit His world. The Promised One is coming. Get ready to meet Him."

We can be ready to meet our Savior through prayer, fasting, through the Sacraments of repentance, confession and Holy Communion, by attending Church Services during Advent.

Christmas is coming. Get ready for it!
Have a Blessed Christmas Season!

*Christ is born! Glorify Him!
Father John Androutsopoulos*

Do You Get Or Give On Sunday?

"I didn't get much out of the church services last Sunday," a church member said to another.

"What do you mean?" the man asked.
"I do not go to Church primarily to get something. I go to give God the gratitude, adoration, and praise that I, His child, should give Him."

Thought: Anyone is able to distinguish in a moment the man of worship and the man who develops into the constant critic. One goes to get ... the other goes to give himself in gratitude, in praise, in adoration, and returns home satisfied.

Question: Which type of person are you? Do you get or give on Sunday?



The Cultural Side • Η Πολιτιστική Πλευρά



Voula Hareras

ΤΟ ΘΑΥΜΑ ΤΩΝ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥΓΕΝΝΩΝ

Ὁ Καπετάν Νικόλας ὁ Παριότης ἦταν ξακουστός θαλασσόλυκος, σ'όλες τὶς ναυτιλιακές ἑταιρίες, Ἀφοβος στὶς κακοκαιρίες, κατὰφερνε νὰ βγαίνει παληκάρι στὴν μάχη μὲ τὰ κύματα, μέχρι τὴν ὥρα σ'όλες τὶς δύσκολες στιγμές πού τοῦ παρουσιαζόταν. Γι'αὐτό ὅλοι τὸν προτιμοῦσαν καπετάνιο στὰ καράβια τους.

Ἐτσι ὅμως βρισκόταν συνέχεια σὲ μακρινὰ ταξίδια καὶ πολὺ λίγο ἔβλεπε τὴν οἰκογένεια του, ἰδικὰ γιορτές χρόνια εἶχε νὰ κάνει μαζί τους. Μά'φετος τ'ἀποφάσισε ὁ κόσμος νὰ χαλάσει, θὰ κανόνιζε τὰ ταξίδια του, καὶ τὰ Χριστούγεννα ὅπως δὴποτε θὰ τὰ περνοῦσε μὲ τὴν οἰκογένεια του στὸ νησί. Τὸ ἔστειλε μήνυμα καὶ στὴν καπετάνησα νὰ τὸν περιμένει παραμονὴ Χριστουγέννων, κ'αὐτὴ ἄρχισε τὶς προετοιμασίες μαζί μ'ἄλλες γυναῖκες τοῦ νησιοῦ πού τα παιδιά τους καὶ οἱ ἄνδρες τους ἦταν στὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ καπετάν Νικόλα.

Τώρα λοιπὸν τὸ καράβι ξεφόρτωνε σ' ἓνα λιμάνι τῆς Τουρκίας καὶ κατόπιν ὀλοταχῶς γιὰ τὴν Πάρο, αὐτὰ σκεφτόταν γεμάτος χαρὰ, ὅμως ἀλοιῶς τοῦ τ'ἔφεραν τὰ μαντάτα ἀπὸ τὸ ράδιο. Ὁ καιρὸς χάλαγε καὶ προμυνιόταν δυνατές θύελλες στὸ Αἰγαίو, στὴν ἀρχὴ δὲν ἔδωσε μεγάλη σημασία ὅμως ἡ κατάσταση χειροτέρευε κ'ἔδιναν ἔντολές νὰ μὴν ταξιδέψουν τὰ πλοῖα μέχρι νὰ κοπάσει τὸ κακὸ π'ερχόταν.

Ὁ καπετάν Νικόλας εἶχε ἐμπιστοσύνη στὸ γερὸ σκαρί τοῦ καραβιοῦ του καὶ στὴν δική του πείρα, καὶ ἱκανότητα, ὅμως δὲν ἤθελε νὰ βάλει σὲ κίνδυνο καὶ τὴν ζωὴ τοῦ πληρώματος, γι'αὐτοὺς τὸς κάλεσε καὶ τοὺς εἶπε τι σκέφτονταν καὶ ἄς περιμένουμε νὰ φύγουμε τὴν ἄλλη μέρα.

Ὅλοι ὅμως ἄρχισαν τὶς φωνές, καὶ μὲ μιά φωνὴ τοῦ λένε <καπετάνιο ἔμεις περάσαμε τόσες καὶ τόσες φουρτούνες καὶ τώρα ἔξω σχεδὸν ἀπὸ τὸ νησί μας θὰ δειλιάσουμε?> Ὅχι τράβα καὶ ἔμεις μαζί σου. Τελικὰ ἀποφάσισαν καὶ τὸ καράβι ξεκίνησε ἀνάλαφρο γιὰ τὸ νησί.

Εἶχαν προχωρήσει μερικὲς ὥρες μὲ κάπως ἀνεκτὴ τρικυμία, σὲ λίγο ὅμως τὰ κύματα θέρειψαν βουνὰ ὀλόκληρα, ἀνεβοκατέβαζαν τὸ καράβι σὰν καριδότσουφλο καὶ μὲ πάταγο ξανάπεφτε στὰ ἄβυσθα.

Ὁ καπετάνιος προσπαθοῦσε νὰ κρατήσει κάποια ἰσοροπία ἀλλὰ τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς φύσεως κάνανε πολὺ δύσκολο τὸ ἔργο του.

Ἐνα τρομερὸ κύμα σήκωσε τὸ καράβι καὶ ἓνα δεῦτερο τὸ χτύπησε μ'ἀφάνταστη ὀρμὴ, αὐτὸ ἔτριξε λές καὶ ξεβιδώθηκε ὀλόκληρο καὶ ἀπὸτομα πέφτοντας μὲ κρότο δυνατό σίστηκε ὀλόκληρο καὶ ἔσβυσαν οἱ μηχανές. Ὁ καπετάνιος μὲ τὰ χέρια του σὰν ἀτσάλινες τανάλιες προσπαθοῦσε νὰ τὸ φέρει στὰ ἴσα, ὅμως γρήγορα κατάλαβε ὅτι μάταια προσπαθοῦσε, τὸ καράβι σχεδὸν ἀκυβέρνητο βροντοχτυπιόταν ἀλύπητα. Τότε βάρεσε συναγεμρὸ, μαζεύτηκαν ὅλοι καὶ μὲ δυνατὴ

συγκίνηση τοὺς ἔδωσε διαταγὴ ν' ἀρματωθοῦν τὰ σωσίβια καὶ νὰ μποῦν στὶς βάρκες γιατί ὅπως φαίνεται τὸ καράβι δὲν μπορεῖ ν' ἀντέξει πολὺ. Ἐγὼ θὰ μείνω καὶ θὰ καλῶ ρ.ο.ρ.ς γιὰ νὰ σὰς περιμαζέψουν.

Τὰ παλικάρια ἄρχισαν τὶς φωνές. Καπετάνιο δὲν θὰ πάμε πουθενὰ θὰ καθήσουμε στὶς θέσεις μας μαζί σου, ἂν εἶναι ἀπὸ θεοῦ νὰ χαθοῦμε θὰ χαθοῦμε ὅλοι, ἀλλὰ δὲν θὰ μὰς ἀφήσει ὁ Θεός, ὁ Ἅγιος Νικόλας θὰ μας λυπηθῇ.

Ὁ καπετάνιος ἔκαμε τὸ σταυρὸ τοῦ ουρκομένους, ἔψαλαν τὸ τροπᾶριο τοῦ Ἁγίου Νικολάου καὶ πήγαν στὶς θέσεις τους. Γιὰ μιά ὀλόκληρη ὥρα τὸ καράβι χοροπήδαγε ἀκυβέρνητο ἔτοιμο νὰ καταποντιστῇ ὥσπου ἓνα θεόρατο κύμα τὸ σήκωσε σὰν πούπουλο καὶ μὲ μεγάλη δύναμη θὰ τὸ πέταγε στὰ ἄβυσθα νερά.

Ὁ καπετάνιος καὶ τὰ παληκάρια νόμιζαν ὅτι ἔφτασε ἡ τελευταία τους ὥρα καὶ μὲ δυνατές φωνές καλοῦσαν τὴ Παναγία νὰ βάλῃ τὸ χεῖρ της.

Στὴν δυνατὴ χτυπιὰ τὸ καράβι ξανάτριξε μουγκρίζοντας θαρεῖς καὶ σὰν θαῦμα, ὅπως μὲ τὴν πρώτη φορὰ σβύσαν τὰ φῶτα καὶ οἱ μηχανές, μὲ τούτη ἄναψαν ὅλα. Τώρα ὁ καπετάνιος ἔνοιωσε τὸ τιμὸν ἑλαφρότερο τώρα μποροῦσε νὰ τὸ κουμαντάρῃ καὶ μὲ τὴν τέχνη του ἀπόφυγε τὸ χειρότερο. Σιγὰ σιγὰ τὸ ἔφερε σὲ ἰσοροπία, καὶ ὁ καιρὸς ἄρχισε νὰ καλμάρῃ.

Ὁρres πάλευαν μὲ τὸ χάρο νὰ περιμένῃ, ἀλλὰ τώρα ἔνοιωθαν ὅτι τὸν νίκησαν καὶ μὲ τὴν βοήθεια τοῦ Θεοῦ ἠρέμησε κάπως ἡ ἀγριεμένη θάλασσα.

Ὁ καπετάνιος χαρούμενος ἔβαλε πλῶρη ὀλοταχῶς γιὰ τὸ μησί νὰ προλάβουν ὅπως τοὺς εἶπε τὴν λειτουργία τῶν Χριστουγέννων.

Ἡ καπετάνησα καὶ ὅλοι στὸ νησί ἀναρωτιόντουσαν τι νὰ ἔγινε μὲ τὸ καράβι, θὰ ἐρχόντουσαν ἢ θὰ περίμεναν νὰ περάσῃ ἡ θεομηνία, ὁπότε μάλλον αὐριο θὰ ἐρχόντουσαν. Ἡ καπετάνησα ξέροντας τὸν ἄνδρα τῆς εἶχε καὶ τὴν ἀγωνία μὴπως ξεκίνησαν μέσα σὲ τούτη τὴν κοσμοχάλαση.

Ὅταν χτύπησε ἡ καμπάνα γιὰ τὴν λειτουργία, ὅλοι ἀνεξέρετως, πήγαν νὰ προσευχηθοῦν νὰ τοὺς βοηθήσῃ ὁ Θεός ὅπου κι' ἂν βρίσκονται.

Κόντευε νὰ τελειώσῃ ἡ λειτουργία ὅταν σιγὰ σιγὰ ἄνοιξε ἡ πόρτα τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ μπῆκε ὁ καπετάν Νικόλας ἀκολουθούμενος ἀπὸ τὰ παληκάρια τοῦ βρεγμένου καὶ κατάκοποι ἀπὸ τὸν ἀγῶνα τους μὲ τὰ στοιχεῖα τῆς φύσεως.

Ὅλων ἡ χαρὰ ἀπερίγραπτη, ὁ παπὰς διάβασε καὶ μιά εὐχαριστήρια προσευχὴ στὴν Θεοτόκο, καὶ πήγαν ὅλοι στὰ σπῖτια τους.

Τὴν ἄλλη μέρα στὸ σπῖτι τοῦ καπετάνιου ἔγινε γλέντι τρικουβερτο μὲ ὅλους μαζί, πού δὲν σταματοῦσαν νὰ λένε γιὰ τὸ θαῦμα τῶν Χριστουγέννων.

Καὶ ὅτι αὐτὰ εἶναι τὰ καλύτερα Χριστούγεννα πού εἶχαν στὴν ζωὴ τους.

*Ἡ Γέννησις τοῦ Σωτῆρος μας νὰ φέρει εἰρήνη
στὸν ταραγμένο κόσμο καὶ ὑγεία σὲ ὅλους ἑσάς*

Βούλα Χαρερά ας

Peace on Earth? Not in Today's Holy Lands

Maria C. Khoury is the author of "Christina's Favorite Saints" and other Orthodox Christian children's books published in Jerusalem. This writing tells of her experience living as an Orthodox Christian in today's Holy Lands.

The Islamic call to prayer wakes me daily at 4 am or sometimes at 4:20 am. I don't complain when it is an extra 20 minutes later but than again after seven years of listening to the loud speakers' blasting in Arabic "God is great" from the two Muslim villages that sandwich our little Christian village there is no point in complaining about traditions and customs in a land that is sacred to Christians, Muslims and Jews. We don't have a government, we don't have a police department, and we don't have law and order, just total military occupation to protect the hundreds of illegal Israeli settlements that surround our small village of Taybeh known as Biblical Ephraim in one of the highest mountain regions in Palestine between Jerusalem and Jericho. However, what we do have here in the land of Christ's birth is the responsibility and the moral obligation to keep our Christian presence. Unfortunately, the mere existence of only 2% Christians among three million Palestinians is a number constantly dwindling due to the awful military occupation that deprives people of their basic human rights and human dignity.

It is too dark and I can't get up so early in the morning. The minute I will look out my kitchen window I will see the new expansion of the Israeli settlement of Ofra, the largest settlement in the West Bank that has just practically reached my front door. Finally when the sunlight hits my room, I will get up and stare out my bay window at the beautiful hills and valley of biblical Judea and recall this is the village that Christ visited before his crucifixion "Jesus... went thence unto a country near the wilderness, into a city called Ephraim..." (John 11:54) Each and every day I feel I truly live in a sacred and holy place. But I believe there is a high price to pay as a Christian living in the Holy Land under Israeli guns and struggling to teach my children their Palestinian Christian roots.

After a little screaming and yelling at the boys to try and leave the house on time by 7 am, we finally pass up the Latin Church in the village center and the Orthodox Church down on the right while the Melkite Church is on the left as we pray to arrive to school safe for another day. However, the most magnificent site of all is the extraordinary ruins of St. George Church from the fourth century built by St. Constantine and Helen. And daily as I see this historic site, I am reminded of the great faith and deep commitment these two great

saints had to help preserve the Christian faith and value the spots that Christ walked by building shrines and churches all over the Holy Land. As a matter of fact, it was Constantine the Great that called Palestine the "Holy Land." At every Christian event and holiday we are reminded that this land was indeed made holy by Christ Himself because He walked among the people teaching salvation and He is the truth, the way and the Light in this world of darkness. "In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." (John 1:4)...

After climbing over a dirt bump on this bright autumn morning we drive for at least 45 minutes on the settlement roads listening to church tapes...Taped and emailed sermons have kept my sanity the last few years. I must mention that prayers from others have also saved me and given me inner peace. If suicide was not forbidden by my religion I would have taken my own life years ago. Now I have placed my life in God's hands and pray daily for a peaceful passing without suffering and without pain. By the time I finish this prayer, I have passed up two empty checkpoints that have been uplifted from the main road and the soldiers stand on the mountain tops with their full gear and American paid weapons ever since June when seven soldiers were killed at a nearby checkpoint on a Sunday morning...

The true meaning of serving Christ is to sacrifice our life so that we may gain eternal life in God's kingdom. If truly we accept God as our savior, we must accept the cross he hands us to carry. No one can understand how Christians and Muslims possibly live under such horrible and awful daily conditions while most of them have known the freedom and life in the western world. However, as a Christian living in the Holy Land, the challenge is to see God in each and every human being under these tragic and brutal conditions and at any risk to give witness to Christ our Savior in the land of His birth by believing and practicing peaceful resolutions. Truly Christ is in our midst and we are one body because the prayers of people everywhere are powerful and justice will one day prevail in the Holy Land. If we can not have peace in our world right now, let us at least have peace in our souls: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (John 14:27). ☩

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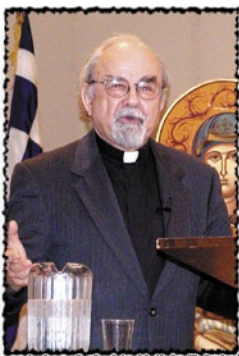


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The Relationship of the Bible and the Church



"The biblical character of the Greek Orthodox Church is not difficult to discover...Because of the central position accorded to the Gospel, the *evangelion*, the Orthodox Church is an evangelical church par excellence.

Orthodox piety and spirituality, sacramental mysticism and patristic theology are based in the belief of the living presence of Christ not only in the Eucharist but also in the gospels, which constitute the record of Christ's teachings. God's manifestation in history, God's revelation in the earthly life of Christ, His work through the Apostles, His presence in the history of the Church all constitute a living reality unfolded in the prayer life of the Church and involving each of the faithful.

The Bible is viewed not simply as an antiquarian 'history' but as 'holy history' which manifests the acts of God in the past, lives on into the present and forms a guidepost for the future.

While Greek cultural and intellectual tradition played a paramount role in the life of the Church, the inner strength and real source of Orthodox theology must be sought in the Bible.

As the Church is biblical in her essence, likewise the central theme of the Bible is the Church...that is, the Bible speaks of the Church as the living Body of Christ and as the Christ perpetuated throughout the ages."

**From "Understanding the Greek Orthodox Church" by Rev. Dr. Demetrios Constantelos,
2002 Guest Speaker at the Holy Trinity Notable Speakers Series**