



THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

1923 · EIGHTY-TWO YEARS OF MINISTRY · 2005

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

February 2005

www.HolyTrinityPgh.org

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

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Rejoice you who are full of grace, O Virgin Theotokos, for from you has risen the Sun of Righteousness, Christ our God, enlightening those in darkness. Rejoice, also, O you righteous Elder, for you received in your arms the Redeemer of our souls, Who also grants to us the Resurrection.

Father John's Message

THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

Parish Newsletter of
Holy Trinity
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The Cultural Side

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the Herald, please contact the church secretary
at 412-321-9282 to volunteer your help.

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in memory of

Tim Brouker

by the Stepp,
Kolxylos, Wagner and
Regakis families

AND

in memory of

John Chapas

by Helen Chapas



"For two thousand years, the Spirit never has ceased to pour out His blessings upon the Church in abundance, ever making a way for those who entreat the Savior and Lord with their whole heart (Ps. 118:58). Carefully, over the centuries, the Holy Spirit crafted the Divine life into a vibrant grove of fruit-bearing trees, types of those trees which will line the street of the New Jerusalem, "each yielding its fruit every month...for the healing of the nations" (Rev. 22:2)."

(From "Orthodox Dynamis," January 14, 2005)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

A British psychologist has recently released results of a study which he says calculates the "most depressing day of the year." In reaching this conclusion, he factors in issues such as holiday credit card bills coming due, gloomy winter weather and the early failure of many New Year's resolutions. His conclusion: January 24 is the most depressing day of the year.

Using this form of worldly wisdom, should we look at the life of Holy Trinity Church and conclude: there are too many bills to pay, miserable weather is ruining our community life and no matter what we resolve to accomplish this year, it probably won't last? God forbid! In fact, God *does* forbid such an attitude, especially for His Holy Church. Even from the depths of his failure, David sees this when he says that the Lord: "put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord." (Psalm 40.3). Indeed, Saint Paul reminds the Thessalonians that he remembers in prayer "your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ. For we know, brethren beloved by God, that he has chosen you" (1 Thess. 1.3-4). And, when undertaking that special calling of building the temple of God, the Prophet Haggai reassures us with God's word: "Take courage, all you people of the land, says the Lord; work, for I am with you, says the Lord of hosts" (Haggai 2.4).

So no matter what the worldly prognosticators say, we know the answer: "As for me, I will look to the Lord" (Micah 7.7). And in that faithfulness, the Lord is now calling us to action. Over the next few weeks, there will be important information forthcoming, asking the community for approval to commence construction on the long-awaited Cemetery Chapel, a project that has been in the hearts and dreams of this community for many years. There will also be a flurry of information and meetings regarding the also long-awaited information on the new church property. The Vision Committee will be holding special meetings following Divine Liturgy on February 13 and 20 to bring everyone in the community up to date. Our architect, Christ Kamages, one of the finest Byzantine architects in the country, will guide us through a special weekend of workshops and meetings to answer the needs and concerns of every parishioner and ministry group.

When Jesus appeared in the temple in Luke 4.18, one of the purposes He gave for His teachings was to "proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." For Holy Trinity Church, 2005 is that year, His year. May we be ready, with hearts and souls open to the Holy Spirit He will send, that this year may indeed bear much fruit!

News & Events

EDUCATIONAL MINISTRIES

St. Lydia's Orthodox Women's Fellowship Feb.

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. in Wexford. This year's theme is "Growing in Christ." For further information on this worthwhile and informative group or for directions to the meetings, call Stacy Dickos at 412-367-0925. A complete schedule is also located on our web site, www.HolyTrinityPgh.org. Topics for Dec./Jan. are:

Feb. 10 Liturgy (St. Haralambos) at Holy Trinity

Feb. 24 Philanthropy

St. Nikodemos Men's Study Fellowship Feb.

The St. Nikodemos Men's Study Fellowship is an Orthodox men's fellowship, study and discussion group which meets **on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month at from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m.** at the office of TriadUSA, Suite 460, Two Gateway Center, downtown. The group seeks to provide a regular meeting for working men to discuss issues of faith, work and family. For directions, call Gus Georgiadis at 412-880-4999. A complete schedule of dates and topics can be found on our web site at www.HolyTrinityPgh.org. The topics for February are:

Feb. 8 How to be a Philanthropist

Feb. 22 Breaking the Bonds that Hold Us Back

Adult Bible Study: Gospel of John February

Last chance! Holy Trinity's exciting new adult education Bible study for adults will wrap up this month. This new educational offering is open to all, both "beginners" in Scripture study as well as those who are well-read. It will be based on an excellent new DVD production of "The Gospel of John" and will go through the entire book in segments, watching the selected section on DVD, then discussing it together. The group will meet from 7:00 to 8:30 pm on February 1 & 15 at the home of Cliff and Sondra Brubaker, 123 Foxwood Dr., Wexford. (724-940-3445). More information and directions can be found in the 2004/2005 Religious Education Ministries brochure or on our web site, www.HolyTrinityPgh.org.

YOUTH MINISTRY

GOYA Hoagie Sale February 6

The GOYA will be pre-selling hoagies during January for Superbowl Sunday on February 6. Please support

our teens in this effort, which helps raise funds for the various events of the GOYA, outreach projects, trips and the Diocese basketball tournaments. Thanks!

GOYA Fellowship Night February 13

The GOYA will hold its February fellowship night on Sunday, February 13 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. These casual meetings provide an opportunity for discussion, time with friends, questions for Fr. John and other GOYA matters as needed.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Snow Line. 412-321-9282, Option "6"

Please keep in mind over the winter months that the Holy Trinity "Snow Line" is available to check for the cancellation of events in the case of snow or inclement weather. Call the church office after hours, then select option "6" to hear announcements of any cancellations.

LITURGICAL LIFE

Paraclesis Service. February 2

On the first Wednesday of each month, Holy Trinity Church offers a Paraclesis service to the Theotokos for the well-being of our community, her parishioners and others whose names are offered. Please also bring a list of the names of people you would like prayed for during the service. The service is at 6:00 p.m.

Weekday Liturgies February

Please keep in mind the following festal celebrations during the month of February. Unless otherwise noted, each listing indicates Orthros at 9:00 am, followed by Divine Liturgy at 10:00 am.

Tue. Feb. 1, 7:00pm Presentation of Christ Vespers

Wed. Feb. 2 Presentation of Christ

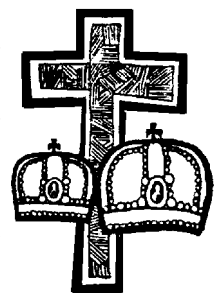
(NOTE: Both the above services will be held at the Presentation of Christ "Ypapanti" Church in East Pittsburgh, which is celebrating its feast day.)

Thu. Feb. 10 St. Haralambos the Hieromartyr

WEDDINGS

Phaturos

The servants of God, Timothy Phaturos and Melissa Corson, were united in marriage through the Holy Mystery of Crowning on Sunday, January 23, 2005. The Koumbaro was Frank Phaturos. May God grant them many years of blessed life together!





2004 Nativity Flowers Donor List



Many thanks to the following parishioners and friends for sponsoring the beautiful poinsettias for the decoration of the church during the Christmas holidays. May the Lord remember them and those whom they have honored!

DONORS

COMMEMORATIONS

Anonymous	
Anonymous	In memory of Anthony Lakes
Harriet Amurgis	In loving memory of my husband, William Amugis
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Athansiou	For the health of our families
Anthony & Helen Balouris	In memory of our departed loved ones and for the health of our families
Gabe & Johanna Cocheres	For the health of the Cocheres & Capetan families
George & Lenore Constantine	In memory of Emmanuel & Sophia Papakonstantinou
George & Lenore Constantine	In memory of George & Bernice Parros
Miss Betty Dickos	In memory of Frank & Fannie Dickos
Frank & Katina Erdeljac	In memory of Michael & Theologia Alexiades
Judith Fulton	In memory of my parents, Robert & Bella (Fortes) Fulton
Tessie Frankos	In memory of my daughter, Demetria Frankos
Anna Festas	In memory of Peter Festas and Kalliope & Steve Alexander
Connie Fries	For the health of Fries family
Andrew, Maria & Christian Georgiadis	For the health of our grandparents, Mary and George Kalodikis
Andrew, Maria & Christian Georgiadis	For the health of our grandparents, Mary & Pete Georgiadis
Dr. & Mrs. Mark Georgiadis	In memory of Rick Palazzi and for peace in the Middle East
Mrs. Eugenia Graser	In memory of my husband, Robert Graser
Mrs. Eugenia Graser	In memory of my parents, Michael & Mary Patsalos
Paul & Sally Hionedes	In memory of Kay Hartig & James Hartig
Brian & Debbie Jewell & family	In memory of our sister-in-law and aunt, Marsha Booras
Brian & Debbie Jewell	In memory of our aunt, Phyllis Maggos
Antonia Karas	In memory of the departed members of the Vlahakis family
James & Bettina Kermes	In memory of departed family and friends
Irene Karavolos & Fanny Kostos	In loving memory of our father, Steve Karavolos
Irene Karavolos & Fanny Kostos	In loving memory of our cousin, Demitria Frankos
Stella Kourakos	In memory of Stanley, Irene, George, Chris & Marie
The Kritiotis Family	For the health of our families and friends
George & Canella Lalikos	In memory of our beloved departed loved ones
Kelly Manning	In memory of Nellie & Catherine Learos
Helen & Stanley Morris	For the health of our family
Mr. & Mrs. Tom Morris	For the health of the Morris family
Bob & Harriet Navarro	In memory of Michael, Catherine, James & Andrew Karras
Bob & Harriet Navarro	For the health of the Navarro Family
Michael Panos	In memory of Yiayia and Papou Peters
Peter & Mary Panos	
George & Marian Pantelas	In memory of Helen Pantelas
George & Marian Pantelas	In memory of George & Helen Georges
Olga Regakis	In loving memory of family and friends
Sophia Regas	In memory of John Regas
Angie Roman	In memory of Gus Roman
Steve & Electra Roman	In memory of our parents
*Joan E. Roman	In memory of John G. Roman
*Joan E. Roman	In memory of Mrs. Metexia Roman
James Steve Statheas	In memory of Steve and Demetra Statheas
Bessie Cocheres Sicalias	Merry Christmas to all!
Anthony & Susan Zikos	In memory of Michael Sfanos
Anthony & Susan Zikos	For the health of the Zikos & Lutkevich families
Anthony & Aspasia Zissis	In memory of our parents

IN ADDITION, THE FOLLOWING CHRISTMAS CARD DONATIONS WERE RECEIVED AFTER PUBLICATION:

Mary Kokoros

Irene S. Karavolos & Chales E. Siebott

Greg & Kelly Pefferman

Stewardship: A Lasting Investment



Mike Kritiotis
Stewardship Chairman

A prosperous businessman became very much interested in the church. The congregation felt that they needed a new organ, so this man offered a gift of \$25,000. Then came the time of the Great Depression. This man's business collapsed, and in desperation he set out to look for some kind of a new job. He ended up by becoming caretaker of the church to which he had

given this organ. When visitors came to the church to worship he would always tell them the story and then would say, "It proves that all the things I have kept, I have lost; that which I have given away is still here - still a part of my church. Though most things I held in my hands are no longer here, whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess."

Any investment we make in God's kingdom is never a losing proposition. It pays greater dividends than any other investment.

The good news is that you, the Holy Trinity Stewards, have been responding to the Stewardship Committee's appeal for meaningful commitment through your Stewardship pledge. You understand that the investment in our church is truly an everlasting spiritual act of thanksgiving for all of God's gifts; one that cannot be lost by bad times, but is instead strengthened with the passage of time. Of our faithful stewards, 122 have already submitted their 2005 pledge for a total of approx. \$80,000 and an average pledge of \$650.00. We thank you for your generous offerings, which so far show an increase over last year's pledges. This great start needs to be sustained and in fact improve even further. Remember that this

average still covers less than one day of church expenses (which is about \$800)! Thankfully, some of you took notice of the simple challenge to increase your pledge beyond the \$800, or "One-Day-Sponsor" mark, and responded! Another landmark achievement this year is that we have the first ever \$10,000 pledge! These trends show that Holy Trinity Stewards are indeed faithful to their commitment to see their church flourish and are motivating each other to take the same approach.

The "bad" news is that we haven't heard from over half of our stewards yet! The remaining 2005 Stewardship Pledge Cards are now due. If you have not yet completed yours, please take a moment this week to read the

material, prayerfully consider how the Lord is calling you to support and serve His Holy Church, complete the card and send it to the Church Office. Above all, please do not simply fill it out with the same number you have been doing for the past few years; neither the growing needs for the daily maintenance and operation of the Church nor a growing faith can be sustained in that way.

If you need help completing the card, or need a replacement card, please call the church office. You may also call me, Mike Kritiotis (Stewardship

Committee Chairperson), directly at (412) 665-3200 and I will be glad to assist you.

Thank you for the love and support which truly reflect the reality that we are not just paying a bill or reluctantly giving money, but rather offering back to the Lord "His Own Gifts from His Own" as the most lasting investment during our time on Earth.



He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.
2 Corinthians 9:6-7

Community Life Photo Journal

On Sunday, December, the Holy Trinity Church School ministry held its annual Christmas Pageant. The theme for this year was, "A Greek Christmas Carol," an adaptation of the Charles Dickens classic story ... with a distinctly Greek flavor! Shown below are (left to right, top to bottom): the angels; Becca and Eleni at practice; the carolers; the shepherds; party guests; the wise men; the Kalanta singers; more shepherds; "Vasili" receiving a mysterious visitor; the restaurant.



Community Life Photo Journal

Holy Trinity GOYAns and parents attended the Metropolis Basketball Tournament on January 14-16. The girls brought home the First Place trophy for the Girls' bracket; the Boys B team captured the Boy's B Consolation bracket trophy.



On Sunday, November 21, Leo and Luci Loomis received a special anniversary blessing in celebration of 25 years of marriage. They are pictured here with Father John and their two sons, Anthony (L) and Chris (R). Congratulations!

Gheronda's Corner

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



**Father John
Androutsopoulos**

NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS

Beloved Brothers and Sisters
in Christ:

Our Heavenly Father is the giver of many wonderful new things. Now to you and me God is giving a New Year. The old year is behind us; a New Year is before us.

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3: 13, 14).

Here we see Paul looking two ways. He looked backward and thought of all that he had suffered for Christ and all that he had accomplished for Christ. Then he said, "I am going to turn my back upon all of that, for there is something more important ahead." Then looking forward he said, "I am going to rededicate my life to Christ and redouble my efforts for Him."

In like manner, it behooves us to look back over the past for a time we are to turn all of that over to God and leave it with Him. Then we are to look toward the New Year, resolving in our hearts that with God's help we will make it a better year for Him. New Year's resolutions are good if they are backed up with earnest prayer for help in keeping them.

A salesman tried to sell a farmer a book on how to be a better farmer. The farmer said that he did not want the book, for he already knew how to be a better one than he was. Most of us know how to be much better Christians than we are.

Beloved, each faithful member of the Orthodox Church should make an honest and sincere effort to rededicate his life to Christ and His Church. We all have need for spiritual rededication. Each of us can and should revitalize our spiritual life by frequent reception of the Sacraments of Holy Confession and Holy Communion.

Also, we should determine to follow in the footsteps of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. "Not my will but Thine be done", should be the key words in following Christ.

Each of us who call ourselves Orthodox Christians is requested to witness for Christ and His Church. This is

a Divine command of Christ Himself. We can witness by word and by deed. our lives should be a witness for Christ. The things we say, the things we do, the way we treat our neighbor, all these are ways of witnessing for Christ.

Let us begin the New Year with Christian intentions which we will try to follow.

A LITTLE CHURCH HUMOR: SMILE!

A man came into the Church Service late and sat by a friend, of whom he inquired, "How long has he been preaching?" "About fifteen years, I think," said the friend. The fellow scooted down in his seat and said, "I guess I can stick it out then. He ought to be stopping pretty soon."

A LITTLE MORE CHURCH HUMOR: SMILE AGAIN!

A pastor dropped into the barbershop for a haircut, but also to visit with the talkative barber, who seldom came to Church. "Why don't you attend Church?" the pastor asked. The barber replied, "Now, you want me to be perfectly honest, don't you? I'm the kind of fellow who doesn't go behind another fellow's back when I have something to say. I'm a straight shooter, and no hypocrite. Every time I go to Church they are always asking for money, money, money. That's all they seem to think about. I don't believe in Churches asking for money. I believe they should be willing to take just what a fellow feels he is able to give." When the pastor got out of the chair, he gave the barber one dollar. The barber said, "Haircuts are ten dollars." The pastor said, "I don't believe in barbers making a charge; I think they should take whatever a fellow feels he is able to give."

When one says that he does not go to Church because of the hypocrites, he is referring to others, but the truth is that he is the hypocrite who is keeping himself away.

Beloved, Our Church the Lord's House, the Ark of our salvation it is not a museum of saints, but a hospital for sinners. God loves sinners, God hates the sin. Jesus came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. A great joy will take place in Heaven, if during this coming New Year we repent of our sins, resolve to be better Christians and remember what Jesus did for us.

Have a Blessed, Healthy and Happy NEW YEAR

With K.I.S love,

Rev. Fr. John K. Androutsopoulos

Mouse Tales: The St. Spyridon Church School Library Update

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



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

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

Love in Christ

Spero

P. S. See you on Happy Hearts Day!

The Cultural Side • Η Πολιτιστική Πλευρά



Voula Hareras

Η ΝΥΧΤΑ ΤΗΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΗΣ ΑΓΑΠΗΣ

Πολύ πριν ερθει ο Χριστος στην γη, ο κοσμος ηταν βυθισμενος στον πονο, το μισος, την απανθρωπια και τον φοβο.

Η Αμαρτια ειχε Χωρισει τον ανθρωπο απο την πηγη της Χαρας, της Ειρηνης, της Ευτυχιας.

Το καταντημα αυτο του προχριστιανικου κοσμου δεν μπορουσε να το γιατρευει παρα μια μεγαλη αγαπη. Μια δυνατη μεγαλη αγαπη, που θα μπορουσε να κανει ξανα το ωραιότερο δημιουργημα του Θεου, που ειχε γινει τοσο δυστυχισμενο και φτωχο απο καλα αισθηματα, οτι δηλαδη ηταν πριν το φθονισει ο ελεεινος Σατανας, πριν το ριξει στο χαος και στον Θανατο.

Ομως αυτη η μεγαλη αγαπη δεν βρισκοταν στη γη επρεπε να ρθη απο πολυ ψηλα, απο την καρδια του ιδιου του Θεου Πατερα και ηρθε. Ηταν ο Γιος του ο αγαπητος. Μεσα στο σκοταδι της νυχτας του κοσμου αναψε φως τη αυτου σαρκα.

Με την ενανθρωπηση του μας εφερε το μεγαλο Φως, το Φως. Και μας εδειξε τον δρομο του γυρισμου στην αγκαλια του Θεου Πατερα.

Ταπεινοθηκε στην φατνη της βηθλεεμ γεννηθηκε φτωχοτατο βρεφος, Θεος και ανθρωπος αναμεσα μας. Ηρθε και υψωσε το νου μας, μαλακωσε την σκληρη πετρινη καρδια του ανθρωπου.

Μας συγχωρησε, μας εφερε τη λυτρωση απο τον πονο,

απο το φοβο του θανατου, απο τα χαμενα μας ονειρα... μας ανεβασε ξανα στην πρωτη μας δοξα.

Ομως θα πουν πολλοι σημερα: που ειναι τα μεγαλα δωρα της μεγαλης αγαπης; στα Κρατη, και στις καρδιες αυτων που τα κυβερνουν.

Δικαιολογημενο το ερωτημα, γιατι υπαρχει ομως ενας ορος μια προυποθεση το λενε ολα τα εκκλησιαστικα βιβλια και Ευαγγελια.

Οτι, οσοι τον δεχτηκαν και τον πιστεψαν Θεο τους, οσοι εκλεισαν την καρδια τους το λογο του, και ακολουθησαν το παραδειγμα της αγαπης και ταπεινοσεως του αυτου πηραν το μεγαλο δικαιοωμα να γινουν παιδια του Θεου. Υπαρξεις ολοφωτεινες, χαριτωμενες, περιζητητες κηρυκες και μαρτυρες της μεγαλης αγαπης και με την δυναμι του Χριστου θα νικησουν και παλι τον αντιχριστο που παλευει για την καταστροφη του κοσμου.

Νυχτα των Χριστουγεννων Ο Εμμανουηλ στην Φατνη της Βηθλεεμ περιμενη την προσωπικη μας ανταποκριση στον ερχομο του.

Ανοιγοντας του της καρδιες μας ξαναγινομαστε Θεοι μαζυ του, με τη Χαρη του. Τοτε οι καμπανες θα χτυπουν χαρμους και για τον πονεμενο σημερινο μας κοσμο, και θα ψαλουν το επι γης Ειρηνη εν ανθρωποις, Ευδοκια και οι αγγελοι θα τονισουν με τα πιο αρμονικα Ωσαννα στη μεγαλη αγαπη, που μας επισκεφθηκε!

Σας ευχομαι ευλογημενα Χριστουγεννα και ο Νεος Χρονον να φερει Ειρηνη και αγαπη μεταξυ των Λαων.

Βουλα Χαραρα

ΕΓΩ ΕΙΜΙ Η ΖΩΗ



Vickie Bellios

Ειναι φορες που καθως προσεγγιζουμε γεγονοτα οπως αυτο των Χριστουγεννων η ψυχη μας μενει αδιαφορη. Ειναι το πνευμα του κοσμου που μαχεται το πνευμα της Εκκλησιας που σκληραίνει την ψυχη μας. Οπως το χερια του ζωμάχου έτσι κι η ψυχη

μας οταν δεν εξαγγιζεται με την προσευχη γινεται τραχεια και χανεται η εθαισθησια της, η τρυφεροτητα, η ειρηνη. Οπως λεγει ο ποιητης:

«Χαλινώθηκα με ηνία σταυρωτά,
Ιδρωσα και πάλεψα ακόμα κι'απελπισμένα,
Ηξερα να πολεμώ μόνο,
Να μοχθώ μόνο,
μα δεν ήξερα να ζώ..»

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Καλως ώρισες, Κύριε! Σε λάτρεψαν απλοί άνθρωποι. ταπεινοί δούλοι Σου, ανα τους αιώνες, ψαράδες, γεωργοί, που «περιήλθον εν μηλωταις, εν αιγείοις δέρμασιν .. ών ο κόσμος ουκ ην άξιος.»

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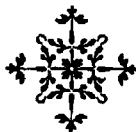
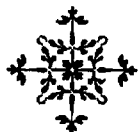
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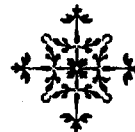


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HOW TO APPROACH THE HOLY SACRAMENTS

The need for faith as we approach Christ in the personal encounter of the sacraments is obvious. In answer to the question whether those who approach the sacraments without sufficient contrition and faith are absolved from their sins, Bishop Innocent of Cherson says, "Without them (faith and contrition), you will not receive absolution from God, no matter how often the priest repeats, forgiven, absolved."

There were many people in the crowd that day who jostled about Jesus and touched Him. Yet it was only the sick woman who managed to get close enough to touch the hem of His robe who was healed. Of all the people in that crowd she was the only one who touched Jesus with faith. The touch of Jesus in the sacraments is not magical or mechanical. It is just as personal as the touch established by that sick woman in the crowd. Jesus knew that someone had touched Him with faith, and so did the sick woman. She felt a surge of healing power go through her body.

In addition to faith, there is need for obedience and surrender as we approach the sacraments. If a straw is placed in line with the current of the Gulf Stream, all the essential quality of the Stream will flow through it. So it is with human life. If we place our life in the direction of God's will through obedience and surrender, it is not unreasonable to expect that the very life of God with its great healing power will flow through our life, as does the Gulf Stream through the straw.

Thus, we must approach Jesus in the Sacraments with faith, obedience, and deep penitence for our sins. Through the grace of the Sacraments we come to share in the very life of God. Yet, we come not just to be takers but also givers. We give ourselves to God and to our fellow humans with a deliberate act of love without which the sacraments themselves would be worthless. In the words of the Apostle John, "... love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God; for God is love . . . No man has even seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:7,8,12).

Father Anthony Coniaris, "These are the Sacraments"