



THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

JANUARY 2008

VOLUME 16 • ISSUE 1

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH • PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

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January Parish Calendar



QUICK NEWS



The joy of children and the hope of faith filled the Holy Trinity Community Center on Sunday, December 16, as the Church School offered its annual Christmas Pageant. Dozens of children of all ages participated in a lively presentation filled with traditional carols, Orthodox Nativity hymns, readings from Holy Scripture and even some fun as the children shared creative ways to spread the Good News of the birth of the Savior of our souls, Jesus Christ.



"I baptize you with water; but he who is mightier than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire." (Luke 3.16)

Second Century Icon of Saint John the Baptist and Jesus Christ from the Hellenic Institute Museum of icons, Venice

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

THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

About the Herald

The Herald is the Monthly Newsletter of
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church

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About the Parish

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Holy Trinity Church is a parish of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh (www.odpgh.org) 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

Rev. Fr. Radu Bordeianu, Assistant Priest

Parish Council

Louis T. Loomis, President

Chris T. Balouris

Dean J. Balouris

James T. Balouris

George Dickos

Troy Geanopoulos

Nikki Marsh

John Phillips

Nicholas Sarandou

Vasilios Scoumis

Alex Trilivas

Gerri Valliant

Louis G. Zozos

Ministries

Philoptochos Esther Ladakos, Pres.

GOYA.....Pres. Becky Touloumes, Advisor

ChoirJohn Nychis, Director

Over 50.....Stella Athanasiou, Pres.

St. Lydia Study.....Stacy Dickos, Coordinator

Cemetery.....Bill Fiedler, Chairman

Greek SchoolEffie Kilantonis, Coordinator

Social Hall.....Kathy Romanias, Coordinator



Beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; wait for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

(Jude 1.20-21)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Glory to God in all things! Reflecting back on the year 2007 here at Holy Trinity Church is truly enough to boggle the mind. During the course of the past year, we received the ownership of our new property, engaged the architect and other necessary professionals, designed a preliminary master plan for the new church, engaged discussions with buyers of our current property and unanimously voted to commit substantial funds for the continued development of the new church.

In one paragraph it sounds like a lot happening very quickly, but as many members of the Parish Council, Vision Committee and the community at large have experienced, this year was much less like a roller coaster and much more like a waiting room. Indeed, this community is hard at work on very important tasks, but the Lord has used various and continuing experiences to remind us of three things: 1) this is all happening according to His plan; 2) it is all happening on His schedule; 3) our main responsibility continues remains the same: to be the Church of Jesus Christ and the ark of salvation for all.

I recently had a wonderful spiritual encounter, simple but powerful, which offers us all a reminder of the just how important it is to seek, honor and obey His plan and His timing. I attended a rather lengthy service at which a holy elder from Greece participated. After the service, a number of clergy had the blessing of visiting with him as we waited for the crowds to dismiss, and he, knowing that we were all hungry after hours of services, held out a small bag of grapes. Not wanting to impose on him, we first tried to respectfully decline. Seeing this, he pulled off a few grapes and went around the group, handing us each a single grape, along with a holy smile and gentle nod of the head that let us know it was time to accept the gift without question. We each did, reverencing his hand as we received it. Some time later, he offered yet another grape to each of us as an additional treat and blessing. Reflecting back, despite our hunger and exhaustion, it was both refreshing and fulfilling; it was just what we needed. It also seemed to have a sense of a divine gift about it, almost sacramental.

Likewise, as we gather around the Lord as a community, we have at one and the same time been "busy at work," yet at the same time waiting for the mercy of the Lord as described in Saint Paul's Epistle to Jude above, like one grape at a time from the hand of that holy elder. And that is a good thing. It keeps us responsive to His invitations without disregarding His will. It allows us to continue moving forward, yet gives us the time "in the waiting room" to remember that the real task at hand is the "work of salvation" found in the daily life and ministries of the Church as the Body of Christ.

So this year, stay involved. Answer when called upon by your Church. Be ready to get to work. Be ready to wait on the Lord. And while we're waiting, may we use the time to give serious heed to the advise of Saint Paul: "Build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God."

And enjoy the grapes! ☺

Yours in our loving Savior,

Herald Personal Sponsor for this Issue:

**In loving memory of Michael Morris
from his wife, Angela Morris**

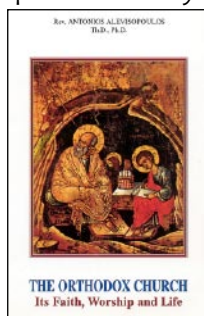
RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

No Church School Class December 23, 30

Attention, parents: there will be no Church School class on December 23 and 30 due to the holiday celebrations, so please plan on being in church together as a family for the entire service on those days.

St. Lydia's Orthodox Women's Study ... January 3, 17, 31

The St. Lydia Women's Study Ministry is a place 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 the home of Jan Petredis in Wexford. New participants are always welcome! The fellowship is enjoyable and the approach is casual, but the subjects are important for today's women and families. The source text for this year's study is: "The Orthodox Church: Its Faith, Worship and Life" by Fr. Antonios Alevisopoulos. Books will be available at the meetings. Remaining dates for the Winter/Spring are: Jan. 3, 17 & 31; Feb. 14 & 28; Mar. 13 & 27; Apr. 10; May 8. All Holy Trinity women are welcome and invited to bring a friend! For further information on this worthwhile and informative group or for directions to the meetings, call Stacy Dickos at 412-367-0925.



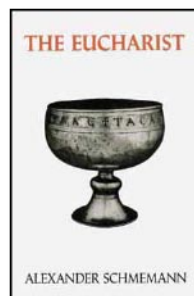
St. Nikodemos Men's Fellowship January 15

The St. Nikodemos Men's Study Fellowship is an Orthodox men's fellowship, study and discussion group which meets on the first and third Tuesdays of each month at from 12:00 noon to 1:00 p.m. at the office of TriadUSA, Suite 1600, Three Gateway Center, downtown. The group seeks to provide a regular meeting for working men to discuss issues of faith, work and family. It is open to all interested men and has been centrally located downtown to accommodate easy access for the lunchtime meetings. The remaining dates for Winter/Spring are: Jan. 15, Feb. 5, Feb. 19, Mar. 4, Mar 18, Apr. 1, Apr. 15, May 6 & May 20. Everyone is welcome. Meetings start at 12 Noon and finish at 1:00 pm. For directions, call Gus Georgiadis at 412-880-4999.

Orthodox Studies Forum January 2, 16

Now in its second year, the Orthodox Studies Forum is designed for adults who are interested in learning more about the Orthodox Christian Faith. It is led by Father Radu Bordeianu and is for both those who have been Orthodox all their lives and want to learn more as well as those seeking to embrace Orthodoxy from another background and grow further in their faith. The group is starting a new book in January: "The Eucharist" by Fr. Alexander Schemmann.

This ministry meets on the first and third Wednesday of each month from 7:00-8:30 p.m. September through May at the La Roche College campus, 9000 Babcock



Blvd., Pittsburgh (next to UPMC Passavant Hospital). The room is in the A.J. Palumbo Science Center, Room SC106.

YOUTH MINISTRIES

GOYA Fireside Chat January 13

The GOYA will hold its annual Christmas Fireside Chat after the feast this year, since it was re-scheduled due to weather. It will be held at the home of Maria Georgiadis on Sunday, January 13 from 5:00 to 8:30 p.m. Please call Maria at 724-935-2383 to let her know you are coming.

HOPE and JOY Monthly Gathering January 20

The HOPE and JOY ministries for young children will hold their monthly gathering on the third Sunday of January following Liturgy with Father Radu. Parents, please plan on bringing your little ones.

GOYA Basketball Events January

Thu. Jan. 3, 6:30 pm: Basketball practice
 Thu. Jan. 10, 6:30 pm: Basketball practice
 Thu. Jan. 17, 6:30 pm: Basketball practice
 Fri. Jan. 18-Sun. Jan. 20: Tournament - Canton, OH
 Thu. Jan. 24, 6:30 pm: Basketball practice
 Thu. Jan. 31, 6:30 pm: Basketball practice
 For information contact Presvytera Becky (412-831-3574) or GOYA President Maria Valliant (412-487-3977).

GOYA Superbowl Hoagie Sale February 3

The GOYA will be pre-selling hoagies during January for Superbowl Sunday on February 3. Please support our teens in this effort, which helps raise funds for the various events of the GOYA, outreach projects, trips and the Metropolis basketball tournaments. Thanks!

WORSHIP LIFE

Weekday Services January

Please take note of the following weekday Liturgies for the feast days in the month of January. Please note that we are currently on the time schedule for "Winter Hours:" Orthros is at 9:00 a.m., followed by Divine Liturgy at 10:00.

Sat. Jan. 5, 9am/10am . Forefeast of the Theophany of our Lord

This is the first of two Theophany Divine Liturgies and services of Great Blessings of the Waters. Orthros and Divine Liturgy will be followed by the Great Blessing of the Waters service. Please note that this is a STRICT FAST day in preparation for Theophany.

Sun. Jan. 6, 9am/10am The Theophany of our Lord

This is the main Orthros and Divine Liturgy of this great Feast, this year held on a Sunday. We will offer the Great Blessings of the Water at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy.

Mon. Jan. 7, 9am/10am The Synaxis of St. John the Baptist

This feast of the "greatest of the prophets" and Forerunner of Christ is held on the day after Theophany.

Wed. Jan. 9, 6:00 pm Paraclesis to the Theotokos

This service of supplication to the Mother of God is held on the second Wednesday of each month.

Thu. Jan. 17 St. Anthony the Great

Note: Liturgy for St. Anthony will be held at St. Anthony Church in Clairton for its feast day.

Wed. Jan. 30 The Three Hierarchs

Note: Liturgy for the Three Hierarchs (St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom and St. Gregory the Theologian) will be held at the new location of the Three Hierarchs Eastern Orthodox School (THEOS) in Heidelberg, which celebrates its feast day on January 30. The school is located at 1819 Ellsworth Avenue. Phone: 412-278-3333.

COMMUNITY NEWS

New Year's Eve at Holy Trinity Dec. 31

Tickets are still available to attend New Year's Eve at Holy Trinity Church. Vespers Liturgy for the Feast of Saint Basil will start at 6:00 p.m. Dinner will begin at 7:30pm, followed by the Dance and New Year's celebration. See the table at Coffee Hour for details and reservations or call Jim Balouris at 724- 934-4850 or Nikki Marsh at 724-625-2729. Please call today!

Year-End Stewardship Donations Due Dec. 31

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 2007 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 2007 pledge (to pay the balance) or the 2008 pledge (to pay ahead) and your pledge balance will be accurately calculated no matter when the offering is made. Year-end statements will be sent out at the end of January. Thanks!

Vasilopita Celebration January 13

The Philoptochos will sponsor the annual Vasilopita Celebration on Sunday, January 13, following Divine Liturgy. Representatives from all parish ministries are asked to be present. In addition to commemorating the Feast of St. Basil, a collection will be taken to benefit St. Basil Academy, the young people's philanthropic institution run by the Archdiocese in Garrison, NY. Thank you for your participation!

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.

Parish Council Installation December 30

Thank you to all those who submitted their names for the Parish Council elections this year, as well as to the Board of Elections and to everyone who voted. The following people were elected to serve a two-year term (2008/2009): Sondra A. Balouris, George Dickos, Anthony Loomis, Robert Marsh, Nicholas Sarandou and Alex Trivilas. Continuing their terms (through 2008) are: Chris T. Balouris, Dean J. Balouris, Leo

Loomis, John Phillips, Vasilios Scoumis, Gerri Valliant and Lou Zozos. The 2008 Council will be installed on Sunday, December 30 at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy.

Many thanks go to the entire 2007 Parish Council for all their love, dedication and sacrifices during a year which was wrought with challenges and filled with blessings. Special thanks to departing members James T. Balouris, Troy Geanopoulos and Nikki Marsh, whose terms expire at the end of the year. On behalf of the entire community, "thank you, good and faithful servants of Christ, for all your fine and dedicated work!" Please be sure to offer your personal thanks to them as well.

House Blessings January

Services for Holy Theophany and its surrounding feasts will be held as usual on January 5-7. An important part of that celebration is the Great Blessing of the Waters service. In order to bring the blessings of the feast and the Lord into our homes, Orthodox Christians traditionally invite the priest to bless their home with the Holy Water from the feast. Please see the enclosed information and schedule your visit by January 5. A House Blessing Request Form can be found on the back page of this issue. Please note that dates of your area and be available at that time. Rescheduling will only be done for cases of inclement weather.



Saint George Chapel Items Still Available

The newly-produced brochure on the Iconography Master Plan and Ecclesiastical Items List for the Saint George Chapel at Holy Trinity Cemetery was included in the last issue of the *Herald* and is also available on our web site at www.HolyTrinityPgh.org. If you or your family are interested in donating one or more items, please review the brochure and return the form on the back page as soon as possible. Various items are still available, including many of the liturgical items listed on the back page. The iconographer is scheduled to begin his work immediately.

Please understand that many items are needed and all donors will be appropriately acknowledged. If your first choice for a donated item has already been offered by someone else, please either consider choosing another item or allowing your gift to be applied wherever it is needed. In this way, all our offerings are made with the common goal of completing this sacred work to the glory of God and in honor of those laid to rest at our holy cemetery.

Looking for information on Orthodoxy?
Check out these great Internet resources:

www.goarch.org

and

www.OrthodoxyNowTV.com

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

JANUARY 1ST, 2008



Father John Androutsopoulos

A triple celebration: New Year's Day, the Feast of our Lord's Circumcision and the memory of St. Basil the Great.

Why is this day called "New Year's Day?" Because with this day the civic year begins, and we wish each other "Happy New Year" to show our good will toward our fellow men.

REMINDER: A recipe for a Happy New Year consists of three "R's": Repent of our sins, Resolve to be better Christians and Remember what Jesus has done for us.

Some New Year's Resolutions from the Gospel of St. Luke The Gospel

The Boy Jesus In The Temple (Luke 2:41-52): "Every year Jesus' parents went to Jerusalem for the Feast of Pass-over. When Jesus was twelve years old, they went to the feast as usual. When the days of the feast were over, they started back home, but the boy Jesus stayed in Jerusalem. His parents did not know this; they thought that he was with the group, so they traveled a whole day, and then started looking for him among their relatives and friends. They did not find him, so they went back to Jerusalem looking for him. On the third day they found him in the Temple, sitting with the Jewish teachers, listening to them and asking questions. All who heard him were amazed at his intelligent answers. His parents were amazed when they saw him, and his mother said to him, 'Son, why did you do this to us? Your father and I have been terribly worried trying to find you.' He answered them, 'Why did you have to look for me? Didn't you know that I had to be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he said to them. So Jesus went back with them to Nazareth, where he was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart. And Jesus grew up both in body and in wisdom, gaining favor with God and men."

What Should We Learn From This Gospel?

We should learn from Jesus, Who, in order to adore His Father in Jerusalem, made a journey of nearly four days, readily and cheerfully to overcome the difficulties of distance or other obstacles in order to attend Church and adore our Lord and God. (See the article on Page 12 of this issue for

more on this.)

What Should Parents Learn And Resolve From This Gospel?

From Mary and Joseph, who brought the Holy Child Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem they should learn that it is their duty to bring their children to the House of the Lord, that is our Church. They are, moreover, bound to teach children their prayers, especially "The Trisagion Prayers" ("Holy God, Holy Mighty, Holy Immortal..." followed by "All Holy Trinity" and the Lord's Prayer) ...The Creed ... Morning and Evening Prayers, Before and After Meal Prayers and the like.

Reminder to All the Mothers: The "makaristos" (blessed, departed) Panagiotis Trebelas, Professor of the Theological School of the University of Athens, known as "The Rock Of Orthodoxy," who was my Professor, writes in one of his books, The "Agalia tis Manas," that is the arms of a mother holding her baby that are the first school and the first Church for the child!



What Other Lesson Is Here Given To Parents?

They should learn from Mary and Joseph, who for three days sought the lost child, the duty incumbent on them to watch carefully over their children, lest, by bad company, they be lost for time and eternity.

What Can Children Learn And Resolve From This Gospel?

That they should follow the example of the Child Jesus and go to Church with the greatest delight; and they should behave there with true devotion; also, that they should respectfully question their teachers and Spiritual Father on matters which they do not understand so they can learn and grow.

What Should All Christians Learn And Resolve From This Gospel?

Obedience to the commands of God, of the Church, and of their parents. It is more than unnatural for grown-up children blessed with this world's goods to neglect the parents that gave them life, or to be ashamed of them in their old age. It is unbearable to see children dare to act in opposition to their parents, when God Himself (Jesus) became subject and obedient to His poor mother, and to an humble carpenter, His Foster-father. By reading the above verses from the Holy Bible, we see it is much better and blessed to keep the Fifth Commandment: **"Honor your father and your mother."**

Wishing You a Healthy and Happy New Year With His Love

Rev. Fr. John K. Androutsopoulos



Voula Hareras

ΝΕΟΣ ΧΡΟΝΟΣ 2008

Τά Χριστούγεννα είναι ή γιορτή που Φθάσαμε στο τέλος του 2007 Ε. Καί λοιπόν;...

Άς κάμουμε έναν μικρό υπολογισμό τί κατάφερε να κάμει για την ανθρωπότητα. Τί έφτιαξε, από τα μεγάλα προβλήματα που του άφησε ο παλιός, καί σέ τί βοήθησε να καλητερέψει ή ζωή στον πλανήτη μας.

Δυστυχώς τίποτα ..τίποτα απολύτως....Οχι μόνον δέν κατάφερε να έπουλώσει τίς βαριές πληγές που κληρονόμησε από τον 2006 αλλά άνοιξε μεγαλύτερες.

Καμιά προσπάθεια Ειρήνης για την ταλαίπωρη ανθρωπότητα.

Τά φέρετρα μέ τά νιάτα έξακολουθούν να έρχονται από τον βλακωδέστερο πόλεμο που άνοιξε ή χώρα μας στο Ιράκ..άνθρωποι φορτώνονται έκρηκτικές ύλες καί αυτοπυρπολούνται ως ένδειξη άπελπισίας ή φανατισμού.

Η οίκονομία έφθασε σέ άπελπιστική κατάσταση μέ τό δολλάριο να κατρακυλά δυστυχώς σέ μεγάλο βάθος... Τρομερές πυρκαγιές Εύρώπη καί Καλιφόρνια άλλαξαν την οίκολογική πλευρά του πλανήτη μας, καί άν δέν φροντίσουν οί ίδιοί να λάβουν τά μέτρα τους θα φθάσουμε στην καταστροφή...Τά ναρκωτικά προχωρούν σχεδόν έλεύθερα, καταστρέφοντας τά δύστυχα νιάτα. Για

νά πλουτίζουν μερικοί άσυνείδητοι που νομίζουν ότι θα ζήσουν αιώνια σέ τούτη τη Γή.

Γιατί αντί να χαλάνε τά τεράστια ποσά οί Κυβερνήσεις των Μεγάλων, για άνακάλυψη φαρμάκων, καί άνακούφιση των φτωχών Λαών. Τά χαλάνε για πολεμοφόδια τελευταίας τεχνολογίας για την έξόντωση των ανθρώπων καί του Πλανήτη μας.

Καί όλα αυτά Γιατί;.. να τό μεγάλο έρώτημα...

Η άπάντησις είναι μία καί μοναδική,..Γιατί δυστυχώς όλοι μας άνεξερέτως έχουμε φύγη από τον δρόμο του Θεού,. του ενός καί Μοναδικού Θεού, ήτε λέγετε Θεός, Αλλά ή ότι άλο όνομα του δίνουν οί Λαοί της Γής. Πάντως είναι ένας καί αντί να άκολουθούμε τον δρόμο του, ξεστράτισαμε, πιάσαμε τον δρόμο του Σατανά καί της καταστροφής.

Δέν βλέπουμε μέ τά μάτια της ψυχής μας τί θαυμάσια πράγματα μας έχει δώσει ό Θεός καί τά μοίρασε δίκαια για πλούσιους καί φτωχούς τό ίδιο μερτικό, σηκώσαμε τά χέρια να πιάσουμε τά άστρα καί χάσαμε την όμορφιά των Λουλουδιών.

Εστειλε τον Μοναχογιό του να μάς διδάξει Αγάπη, Συγγώμη, Αλληλοβοήθεια, καί έμείς τον Σταυρώσαμε σαν κακούργο.

Άς τά σκεφτούμε όλλα αυτά καί άς προσευχηθούμε μέσα από την καρδιά μας τό 2008 να δώσει φωτίσει στους Αρχηγούς της Γής να φέρουν Ειρήνη καί Ηρεμία στον ταλαιπωρημένο Κόσμο.

Βούλα Χαρερά

ΤΑ ΝΕΑ

Στής 3 Δεκεμβρίου ή Φιλόπρωχος έδωσε Χριστουγεννιάτικο Γεύμα για τους ήλικιωμένους, είχε καί πρωινή Λειτουργία, πραγματικά ήταν υπέροχα.

Εύχαριστούμε τον Father John καί τον ψάλτη μας που τά είπαν όλα Ελληνικά. Όποιος δέν ήρθε πράγματι έχασε.

Επίσης καί τά παιδιά του Σχολείου από τό North Hills που μάς έπαιξαν ώραία κομάτια καί νοιώσαμε ότι έρχονται Χριστούγεννα.

Ενα μεγάλο μπράβο στην δασκάλα τους —που τυγχάνει καί Ελληνίδα— ήταν σπουδαία, έξυπνη καί μέ την αγάπη της μάς γέμισε την καρδιά άς είναι όλοι τους καλά καί μέ υγεία τό νέο χρόνο. Εύχομαι σέ όλους σας χαρούμενες γιορτές καί μέ υγεία τό νέο έτος.



HOPE/JOY Christmas

Dec. 1: Holy Trinity HOPE and JOY children gathered for a Christmas preparation day as they attended the live musical production of "Madeline's Christmas" at the Little Lake Theatre in Canonsburg. They later gathered at the home of Georgia and Dimitri Gagianas to enjoy treats and to make gifts and cards for Father John to take to the shut-ins during his Christmas visitations.



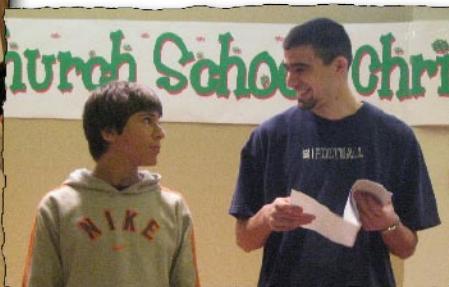
"Feed the Homeless" Project

Dec. 1: Holy Trinity Church was blessed once again with the opportunity to host the "Feed the Homeless" Outreach event in December. This was the fifth year of the Greater Pittsburgh Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood hot lunch outreach for the needy of the area. Parishioners from Holy Trinity and other area churches served the event.





Dec. 16: Dozens of children participated again this year in the annual Holy Trinity Church School Christmas Pageant. This year's "Church School Musical" features traditional carols, Orthodox hymns and Holy Scripture telling the story of the Nativity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. As a special feature this year, a cast reunion brought back many Church School alumni who had played characters in the pageant over the past 20 years, including most of those who played the live Baby Jesus (see lower right, next page).





2007 Choir Christmas Concert

Dec. 17: Members of Holy Trinity Choir once again participated in the annual Christmas Concert at Heniz Hall as part of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh Choir, directed this year by our own Holy Trinity Choir Director, John Nychis. The concert was attended by hundreds of area choir members and audience participants. His Eminence Metropolitan Maximos also participated in the readings for the event program. This annual concert is sponsored by the Pittsburgh Christian Leaders Fellowship.



Philoptochos Annual Senior Citizens Christmas Luncheon

Dec. 3: The annual Holy Trinity Philoptochos turned out to be quite an event this year, with many of our beloved seniors attending and treated to a live musical performance by the North Hills Junior High Jazz Band. See the Philoptochos Report on page 13 for more information about the event.



An opening message to all members for the 2008 Holy Trinity Stewardship Ministry from its Chairman, Michael Kritiotis.



Michael Kritiotis

“Let us commit ourselves and one another and our whole life to Christ our God”

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we consider God's blessings, we are in awe of His immense goodness toward us. The greatest gifts to us are His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior and the constant presence of His Holy Spirit working in the Church and in our lives.

Over the years, as each of us continues to mature in participating in Orthodox Christian Stewardship, we go through various stages of understanding and reach our own mileposts along the way. In simple terms, I believe that there are three basic realizations that we must form internally for true stewardship to take shape in our lives:

1. God owns everything. “The Lord's are the earth and its fullness; the world and those who dwell in it. For he founded it upon the sea and established it upon the rivers.” (Psalm 24:1-2) How can we take credit for the good things in our lives when Psalm 24 reminds us that God created absolutely everything and everyone on the earth? Surely we all have an obligation to return a portion of our good fortune to the Lord, for without Him nothing would be possible.

2. We are called to give back. “And how could a thing remain, unless you willed it; or be preserved, had it not been called forth by you?” (Wisdom 11:25) These words from the Book of Wisdom, remind us that the incredible abundance that surrounds us is all given to us by our heavenly Father for a reason. These gifts are not given for us to hoard but rather for us to share.

3. Be cheerful and thankful. “For God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7) - “And be thankful” (Colossians 3:15) These short phrases can be the key to a life of great peace and joy. When we take time to be joyful and thankful we realize that we have been abundantly blessed. When we take time to be grateful we are more open to enjoying and sharing the many blessings in our life. As the old year ends and a new year begins, resolve to be a thankful and cheerful giver.

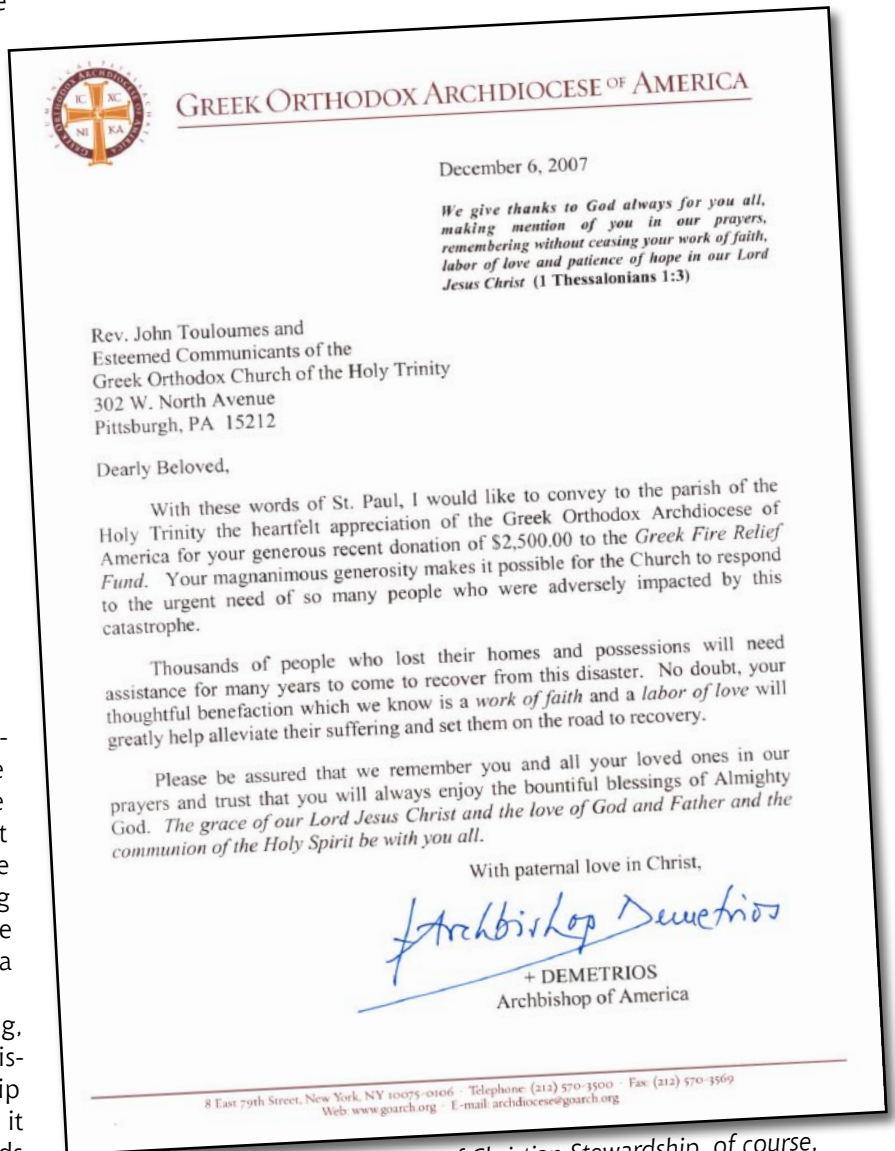
Directly related to our understanding about giving, our drive to cover more of Holy Trinity's annual Ministries and Operating Budget by way of its Stewardship Program has been gaining speed! We are confident it will continue to improve because as faithful stewards we accept direct responsibility for the financial support and progress of our Church and its mission.

Before completing and mailing the enclosed Pledge Card and Family Information Form to the Church Office, please give the matter of your Orthodox Christian Stewardship Pledge for next year your most serious and prayerful consid-

eration. The financial level at which you arrive should be a spiritual expression of gratitude and love to God for all you have received.

This year's theme prompts us to keep in mind one necessary ingredient in our stewardship commitment: Let us Commit Ourselves and One Another and Our Whole Life to Christ our God.

Yours in Christ,
Michael A. Kritiotis
Stewardship Committee Chairperson



A truly complete sense of Christian Stewardship, of course, involves taking into account more than our own needs; it is also sharing God's blessings through the opportunity to serve others as well. Holy Trinity Church recently did so in responding to the Greek Fires emergency appeal from the Archdiocese. Above is a letter received from His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios, thanking the community for their response.

Important guidance for all Holy Trinity families and parishioners on maintaining our commitment to worship in the coming year!

The Necessity of the Church

The Holy Scriptures view the Church as absolutely necessary to salvation. It is as important to our spiritual life as it is to have a head being attached to a body (in the words of St Paul's analogy). The advice is clear: "When you all come together... When you all assemble as Church..." (1 Corinthians 11.17, 19, 20) assumes the Church as an already existing and essential reality to one's being a Christian, just the same as being married assumes that one has a spouse.

Avoiding Active Life in the Church

Scripture sees avoidance of gathering together as Church in a negative light. "Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near" (Heb. 10.19–25). The patterns of "love...doing good works...encouraging one another" point to more than casual attendance. It meant a regular and serious commitment.

How strict was this commitment in the early Church? Most Orthodox Christians have heard of the canon wherein one excludes oneself from membership by missing Divine Liturgy three Sundays in a row (for no valid excuse). This meant that a Christian in such a state was, by definition, self-excommunicated, because he/she had removed him/herself from active communion with the Church. Consider the marriage analogy again: if one were to avoid coming home for no apparent reason for three weeks, it would clearly be a statement regarding the very nature of the relationship between the spouses.

The Importance of the Communal Connection

The communal connection to the Church must be at its heart a personal one, meaning it begins with our personal calling of faith in Christ, lived within His Body, the Church. One's attendance is a personal matter and it reflects the nature of that personal relationship. Learning about the spiritual life and applying it to one's self is also a deeply personal experience and challenge. These are matters which must be lived within the life of the Church community; this means our own commitment has both a personal and communal impact.

Obstacles to Good Connections

We must always be on guard, however, not to judge others even as we hold ourselves accountable. Absence from or tardiness to worship may more often be for reasons other than lack of spiritual concern. It might be a result of lack of opportunities for real personal/congregational participation in and understanding of worship. How many of past generations of Greek Orthodox children in America grew up sitting passively in church each week and not understanding what was going on for two hours or more? Many are no longer here; with no personal connection, they simply left. And parish politics, social intrigues, disrespectful attitudes toward clergy and parish leaders did not help the growth of our Church in America either.

The challenges, however, do not all lie in the past. We must always be on guard still today for issues which alienate us from true worship: Liturgies that are "performances" rather than worship; homilies in which the Gospel is not communi-

cated clearly and with depth and the expectation that it is lived out; fragile feelings that undermine our commitment when we allow others to come between us and Christ; violations of spiritual and ethical boundaries which can stretch from the top of church administration all the way to parishioner households and businesses; these all undermine an inviting Church environment and they can cause those we should be reaching to flee rather than find the truth of Christ.

Three Keys: Attendance, Involvement, Commitment

Having said all of this, there are parishes that are working hard to reverse these patterns and build healthier environments that proclaim the Gospel and expect commitment to it tied to membership. Despite the surging success of "feel good" churches, studies show that the religions that really grow are those that expect real, serious commitment. People—clergy as well as laity—seem to connect to Church on three levels: 1) attendance; 2) involvement; and 3) commitment.

Attendance is the starting point. It can be sporadic or regular. Sunday is the "standard," but for Orthodox Christians it must grow beyond that to fully experience life in the Church, including the great feasts of the Church, honoring saints' days, celebrating namedays and other special liturgical events. Except for those unable to attend due to illness, age or other unavoidable circumstances, without attendance at worship, we risk becoming "absentee members."

Involvement is a natural outgrowth of attendance. As our love for Christ and His Church grows, we want to get involved and serve Him. There are many opportunities for this, and for them to remain healthy, they must always remain rooted in the "attendance" (at worship) issue above. If we get "involved" but stop "attending," we risk spiritual death. Being "around" the Church is not the same as being "in" the Church! Also, those who do not follow Christ cannot lead others to Him.

Commitment seals both our attendance and involvement in a deeply personal way. Commitment to Christ within the local Church explicitly understands what it means to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling." It allows us to genuinely examine personal issues and allow Christ to be the agent of the real healing of our soul. Without genuine "commitment," even "involvement" on almost every level of parish life can suddenly disintegrate at any type of conflict. As the Gospel is applied, we can learn to have relationships that can distinguish between unhealthy enmeshments of personal agendas and the revealed Truth of Christ.

The Gospel As Good News for All

Healthy communities clearly understand that worship involves the whole congregation. They see communal environments that invite and integrate outsiders into the life in Christ, regardless of backgrounds, finances, etc. Where the Gospel is proclaimed and challenges us to deeper repentance and change, further growth of the parish and her people will happen. As Philip said to Nathaniel: "Come and see!"

Adapted by Father John Touloumes from the "Dear Abbot" column of Father Demetrius Nicoloudakis, St. Matthew Greek Orthodox Church, Reading, PA

An update on the news and activities of our local Holy Trinity chapter of the Philoptochos Ladies Society, a national philanthropic ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. and the Parish Council. " Want more information? Visit their web site at www.Philoptochos.org or contact a local member.

December 2007/January 2008

*May Everyone Have A Very Blessed Christmas
And a Healthy, Happy New Year!*

Sorry I missed you last month. We have a little bit of catching up to do!

75th Anniversary

On November 4, 2007 we celebrated our 75th Anniversary as a Philoptochos Chapter. Our thanks to everyone who came to celebrate the day with us.

Metropolis Philoptochos President Pam Lagios and Georgia Antinopolis, Chairman of the Emergency Care Fund, came to celebrate with us. Unfortunately Pam had laryngitis and could not speak, but we appreciate her presence and the information Georgia spoke about the Care Fund.

Turkey Fund

We have had a Turkey Fund Raisher for many years. At the start, we used to give turkeys to people whose names were drawn. After a few years, instead of turkeys we were giving \$10.00 gift cards. It was later transformed into a fully philanthropic project by dedicating the proceeds toward the support of needy families. The results were tremendous. More money than ever came in, and it was decided that we would raise the amount donated to each family to \$50.00. Two years ago we once again reviews food cost and we raised the gift card to \$100.00. Believe it or not, we do have needy families inn this community. Because of your generosity the Turkey Fund Raisher collected \$3,045.00. We distributed \$3040.00 to needy families. You will have to agree that, with your help, we are all doing our job – helping the needy. "Thank you" and "God bless you!"

Senior Christmas Party

On Monday, December 3, 2007, the Philoptochos sponsored their annual Senior Citizens Christmas Luncheon. Sixty of our honored seniors attended. Everyone had a great time. The food was good and the entertainment was wonderful. The North Hills Junior High Jazz Band performed a live concert, including Christmas carols. It was directed by Areta Kalegera (pictured at right), who is Greek and sang in our choir many years ago. She knew so many of our seniors since many of their children played in the band. It was a pleasure to see so many young, polite and talented children. Thanks to Joyce Countouris for contacting Areta and arranging the concert. And thank you one and all for a great party!

Cookbooks

Cookbooks are still available. They make great gifts for Christmas, birthdays, housewarming or "just

because!" They are available every Sunday at Coffee Hour and on Wednesdays at the luncheon. Each purchase supports Philoptochos.

Angel Tree

The Auberli Home for Children sent us 86 name for our tree. In the fine tradition of Holy Trinity generosity and love, all the names were taken. If you have a name, please return the gift or the card as soon a possible, at the latest Friday, December 21st. Thank you!

Lap Blankets

The knitted or crotched squares are put together and are very nice lap blankets. They are available to anyone in a nursing home or homebound. If you know someone that would like to have one, please contact me at 412-761-3977.

Upcoming Events

Vasilopeta: We will celebrate Vasilopeta Day for St. Basils Academy on Sunday, January 13, 2008. We will have the blessing of the Artoclasia (blessing of the 5 loaves of bread). As we have done forever we will pass a tray in church. We will have Loukoumathes at the coffee hour and we will be selling them. We will send \$500.00 to St. Basils even if the proceeds from the tray and the Loukoumathes is less. Please come and support St. Basils.

Next Meeting: Sunday, February 3, 2008 after church in the Library. Please attend.

Lenten Luncheon: Sunday, March 30, 2008.

Pascha Bread: We will also be baking Easter Bread for Pascha during the spring.

Esther Ladakos
Philoptochos President



The Feast of Theophany and the Blessing of Homes and Businesses

"At Your Epiphany, the whole creation sang Your praises. For You, our God, have appeared on earth and dwelt among men. You have sanctified the streams of the Jordan, sending down from on high the most Holy Spirit."

From the Service of the Great Blessing of the Waters



"What is Theophany?"

Every year on January 6th, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Feast of Holy Theophany, which is the baptism of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is one of the Twelve Great Feasts of the Church and is also known by the name, "Epiphany." The Baptism of Christ in the River Jordan at the hand of St. John the Baptist sets the example for our own baptism by water in the Holy Spirit.

"How do we celebrate Theophany?"

The main celebration is, of course, found in the Church with the holy services on January 5th (the Forefeast), January 6th (Theophany) and January 7th (Synaxis of St. John the Baptist). We also take the feast home with us by having our homes blessed with the Holy Water.

"What happens during a House Blessing?"

You will receive a call to confirm your appointment a day or two ahead. When the priest arrives, he will conduct a brief service either in your dining room or at the place where your family usually offers its prayers. It is best to have the entire family present if possible, especially children. Please be sure to have an icon and a list of the first names of all the members of your household. If you have a home censer, you may prepare it also. A bowl of water is not necessary, as the priest will bring the holy water sprinkler from the church.

The priest will offer the blessing service and offer the names of the people present and those contained on the family names list in prayer. As the service concludes, please lead the priest throughout the house to sprinkle the holy water while chanting the hymn of Theophany. He will bring a copy of the service so you can follow along and chant the hymn. When the service is over, please understand if your priest needs to keep the visit brief in order to cover all the homes scheduled on that day.

"Should I Have Our House and Business Blessed Every Year?"

Yes! In the Orthodox Christian tradition, homes should be blessed each year to bring the blessings of the Feast of Theophany into the home and to rededicate ourselves and our family to the Lord. It is an annual commitment, celebration, thanksgiving and family prayer. It is also a pious way of asking God's blessings on our business and livelihood as good stewards of all His gifts.

2008 House Blessing Schedule

Date	Time	Area	Zip Codes
Tue. Jan. 8	2pm-6pm	Northside, Perrysville	15212, 15214
Wed. Jan. 9	7pm-9pm	South Hills (all areas)	15102, 15216, 1522X, 1524X
Fri. Jan. 11	4pm-9pm	Cranberry, Mars, Gibsonia, Treesdale	15237, 160XX
Sat. Jan. 12	12pm-6pm	Wexford	15090
Mon. Jan. 14	4pm-9pm	North Hills (McKnight area), Allison Park	15101, 15237
Tue. Jan. 15	4pm-6:30pm	Bellevue, Westview	15202
Thu. Jan. 17	4pm-9pm	All other areas not listed/Make-up date/Snow date	Various

Important note: Please be available at the time scheduled for your area. Re-scheduling will only be done in cases of inclement weather. Thank you for your help!

PLEASE RETURN THE FORM ON THE BACK OF THE HERALD BEFORE JAN. 5 TO SCHEDULE YOUR HOME. YOU WILL RECEIVE A CALL TO CONFIRM YOUR TIME.

Reminder: Please schedule your House/Office Blessing by January 5th! See Form on p. 16

*This space available
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information.*

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*Call Kathy Romanias at 724-934-3915
for booking information. Thank You!*

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2008 Holy Trinity House/Business Blessing Request Form



Name

Address

City, State, Zip

Daytime phone:

Evening phone:

Notes, directions or special information

(NOTE: You may also EMAIL this information to: fjt@HolyTrinityPgh.org)

A schedule and description of the House Blessing tradition can be found inside this issue of The Herald. If you would like this special blessing for your family, home or business, please mail or deliver this form to the church office by January 5. Your date and time will be confirmed the day before your visit. Note: Please be available at the time indicated on the schedule. Re-scheduling will only be done in cases of inclement weather. Thanks!

Scripture of the Month: “If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink.” (John 7.37)