



THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

JUNE-JULY 2012

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HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH • PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

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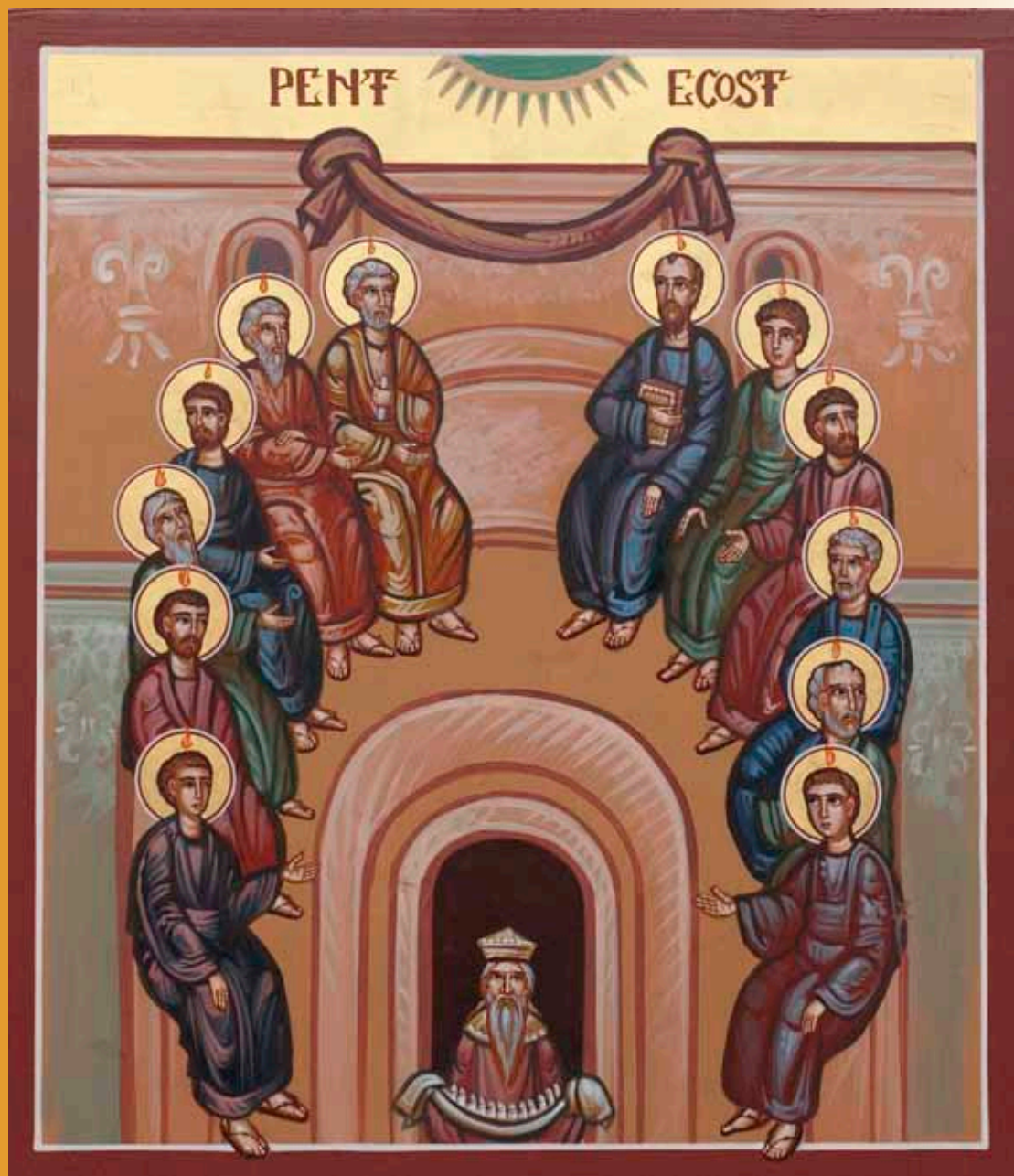
**HOLY TRINITY
GOLF CLASSIC:
JULY 2, 2012
DIAMOND RUN**

QUICK NEWS



May 30, 2012, was another historic day for Holy Trinity Church: the pouring of the pad on which the Community Center will be built. Want to see more scenes from the life and ministries of Holy Trinity Church, including construction progress and the Greek Festival? Check out the Community Life Photo Journal on pages 5-12.

THE GREAT AND HOLY PENTECOST



The Holy Spirit supplies all things: He pours out prophecies, He perfects priests; He taught wisdom to the unlettered, He showed fishermen to be theologians; He welds together the whole institution of the Church. "O Comforter, You who share the same essence and throne with the Father and the Son, glory to You!" (Vespers of Pentecost)

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
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(www.odpgh.org) and Greek Orthodox
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Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

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Rev. Fr. Radu Bordeianu, Assistant Priest

Parish Council

Chris T. Balouris, President

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George Danis Charles Petredis

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Ministries

Philoptochos..... Kay Balouris, Pres.

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

Choir..... John Nychis, Director

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

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

Cemetery..... Bill Fiedler, Chairman

Bookstore..... Bill and Linda Areheart



“That was nothing ... just wait!”

(John 1.50)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Ascended and Glorified Christ,

You may put down your Bible concordances and close your Google search windows now: the above is not actually a direct quote from the Gospel of John. The real verse reads: “Because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You shall see greater things than these.” So what’s the big deal? They

were the words of Jesus to Nathaniel after Nathaniel realized that one of the most amazing things he had ever experienced in his life (a direct revelation of God) had, unbeknownst to him, actually been done by Jesus. When it finally hits Nathaniel that the one responsible for this divine grace was standing right in front of him, he exudes with jaw-dropping amazement, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel.” And finally, as if to raise him to new levels of faith, understanding and expectation, Jesus responds essentially, “That was nothing ... just wait!” (Again, my paraphrase.)

So, how does that connect with us today, especially here at Holy Trinity Church? Well, we have had our fair share of jaw-dropping moments lately around here. Two of the most recent incidents have been the announcement late Sunday night of the results of our most just-finished Greek Festival—the largest ever in Holy Trinity Church history—and the sight of the foundation of the new church being poured yesterday, cementing the long-standing dream of this community into reality. Yet in both cases, it would not be inconceivable to be caught by Jesus, just like Nathaniel, standing around with our jaws wide open in amazement, and hear Him respond, “That was nothing ... just wait!” I would like to file these and a few other things under another great scripture reference: “What is impossible with men is possible with God” (Luke 18.27).

Please join me for a moment in considering just a few amazing aspects of life at Holy Trinity Church lately:

- In many area churches, membership is declining; ours is growing ... notably.
- While preparing for Church School graduation recently, I walked into a Christian bookstore and asked for gifts for 20 teachers. The clerk responded, “Wow...you are blessed! We don’t have many parishes coming with 20 on their teaching staff.”
- So many communities struggle to keep their youth, especially college students. Anyone attending the recent festival could not help but notice the dozens of young people around, some of whom came home from college just to serve their church.
- The papers are filled with stories of controversies and contentions over building projects, even those of churches. Our project has been received with enthusiasm and warmth by the community around us from top to bottom.

So, on their own, each of these could be a “that’s nice” moment, not so grand as to make headlines but important enough for us to take notice. And we might easily fall into the trap of taking each one for granted, imagining it “just happens.” But step back and look: God is doing some amazing things, yet every time we scratch our heads in wonder or drop our jaws in amazement, He responds as He did to Nathaniel, “That was nothing ... just wait.”

I caution us all, however, that all this is not about money, it is not about numbers and it is not about bricks. **It is about grace.** Absolutely nothing above would be possible without that continued life-sustaining blessing from God, who calls us to **amazing faithfulness** as he continues to bestow on us His **amazing grace**. And not every drop of the jaw to come will be because of **what God has done**; some will be out of awe and even fear of **what God has called and empowered us to do**. But He will, because He is with us, even to the end of the age!

“Hronia Polla” for our parish Feast Day. May God grant us all many years!

Herald Personal Sponsor for this Issue:

Sponsored by Helen Chapas “In memory of the departed dear ones of the Chapas and Bukes families”

WORSHIP LIFE

Weekday Services June/July

Please take note of the following weekday Liturgies for the feast days in June and July. Unless otherwise indicated, Orthros is at 8:30 a.m., followed by Divine Liturgy at 9:30 at the St. George Chapel.

Sat., June 2: Saturday of the Souls

Pentecost Sunday, June 3: Pentecost Sunday Liturgy at our Browns Lane location, followed by the "Kneeling Vespers" of the Holy Spirit. This is the Feastday week-end of our parish.

Mon., June 4: Feast Day of the Holy Spirit. This is the Nameday Liturgy of our parish.

Fri., June 29: Ss. Peter and Paul the Apostles

YOUTH MINISTRIES

JOY/HOPE End of Year Picnic June 3

The JOY and HOPE ministries will hold an "End of Year Picnic" on our Pentecost Feast Day, June 3, at Treesdale Commons under the tent, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. All HOPE and JOY families are invited to join in for a fun-filled afternoon of outdoor games and activities! Bring your bats, balls, & gloves! Call Nikki Marsh to RSVP By this Friday, June 1, at 412-370-8000. Contributions for beverages, side dishes and desserts are welcomed and appreciated.

GOYA Summer Activities June/July

Our teens have an exciting season of activities coming up. Please watch GOYA email information on the following:

June 27/28: Cedar Point/St. Gregory Palamas Mission trip

July 8-14: Metropolis Summer Camp

Summer Camp Dates June 17-23/July 8-14

Information about the Metropolis of Pittsburgh Summer Camp Ministry is available on the Metropolis Web Site, pittsburgh.goarch.org. Please note the deadline for registering without a late fee and for receiving the Holy Trinity grant was May 15, 2012, and a waiting list is currently in effect for our sessions. Have you been wait-listed?

Don't wait - act this week! Please note the designated Holy Trinity weeks for our Metropolis Summer Camp dates in 2012: JOY is Week 1 (June 17-23) and GOYA is Week 4 (July 8-14).

COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

New Holy Trinity Website Launched!

Our new Holy Trinity website has launched and offers a wealth of new features that will be completed and explained in the coming weeks. Look for more information in the August edition of *The Herald*. In the mean time, please check out these new features:

- An on-line calendar (select "Calendar" from the menu bar) with event information from all Holy Trinity ministries. If available, also provides contact information and location mapping.
- The Photo Gallery (select "Gallery" from the menu

bar) with photos of Holy Trinity life and regularly updated photos of the exciting progress of our new church project.

All these features and more are wrapped in a whole new look designed to make news more accessible and information about many aspects of Holy Trinity Church life and the Orthodox Christian Faith more available. Thank you for your patience as we complete this important step forward in the life of our community.

Holy Trinity Golf Classic July 2



The Million Dollar Shootout and Silent Auction

**Monday
July 2nd, 2012**

**Diamond Run Golf Club
132 Laurel Oak Drive
Sewickley, PA 15143
(412) 741-2020**

It's not too late to sign up! Please contact Anthony Loomis at anthonyloomis@gmail.com. Benefits HT Capital Campaign.

Sign Up For the Holy Trinity Email!

Want to receive the Sunday Bulletin directly via email? Want to keep up to date with the latest Holy Trinity news, including changes of events, changes due to weather, etc.? Go to www.HolyTrinityPgh.org and sign up today!

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

JUNE 2012 – THE VOICE OF THE GOSPEL



**Father John
Androutsopoulos**

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ: On Sunday, June 3rd, we are going to rejoice in the Lord by celebrating the great Feast and Holy Day of Pentecost, that is the birthday of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church.

The Great and Holy Pentecost – The Coming Of The Holy Spirit

"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And, they were all filled with the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2: 1-4).

On this day was founded the Ark (New Testament), which is the Church. If the Day of Pentecost was missing, the work of Jesus Christ in this world would lose its meaning. Just as the flood saved Noah's Ark, the people and every other living existence from death, so does the Church and it will continue to be the way. The only way of man's salvation from the middle of the spiritual flood that exists in society is the Church. The builder of this Ark is Jesus Christ and the governor or captain is the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Holy Trinity. On this day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down from the heavens in the form of tongues of fire to the apostles and since then remains in the church which He enlightens and sanctifies.

Peter's Pentecost Message

The following are a few remarks and conclusions from the address of the Holy Apostle Peter to the crowds at Pentecost. They can be found in Acts 2:1-42. Please read it to learn more.

The tulip that bloomed this spring was planted last fall. The Church bloomed on Pentecost, but had been in the mind of God from the beginning, and was nourished in soil fertilized by the blood of martyrs, and the Lord Jesus Himself.

1. It was the 50th day since resurrection. It was a great day in a great city with a great past history. Here God had recorded His name.
2. It was a great crowd. Seventeen nations were represented.
3. A great preacher addressed the crowd. Fifth-three days before, he had denied knowing Jesus. Now he boldly proclaimed Him Lord of life.
4. Peter preached a great sermon. All fear was gone. Although his Lord had been slain by wicked hands, God had raised Him from the dead. They believed.

5. The eager crowd stopped the sermon with a great question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

6. Peter gave them the great answer, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins."

7. There were great results. Three thousand accepted Christ and were baptized. The Church was on her way! Beginning in Jerusalem, it soon spread into Judea, Samaria, and out into the uttermost parts. It is a great Church, with a great message of salvation through the risen Lord. Jesus loved the Church and gave himself for it (Ephesians 5:21-32). Do we love the Church? Will we give ourselves for her?

Our Father who art in Heaven, we invoke your blessings on Your Holy Church on this day we celebrate its birthday. May we worthily magnify your Holy Name through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A Poem Dedicated To All Fathers for Father's Day, June 17th

A father is his family's strength and guide, a source of hope and light, the one his family looks up to because he makes things go right.

A father is a companion whose loyalty has no end. For he is more than just a father, he's the finest kind of friend.

A father will hold his family close and keep watch over all, and he's the one the family knows will answer when they call.

Though father never seems to get the praises that he is due, the world's a better, happier place because of fathers like you.

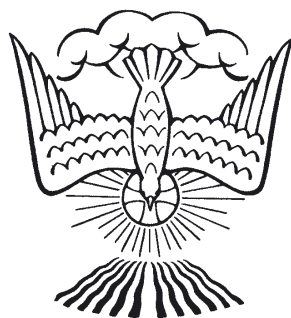
*For all of our fathers who are resting in eternity in Christ,
"Eternal Be Their Memory!"*

Protecting Our Inheritance?

A miser said that he didn't believe the old saying, "You can't take it with you." At his death he left his estate of \$800,000 to be divided equally between his two close friends. However, in his will he asked them to each place his share of \$400,000 in an envelope in cash, and to throw the envelope into the grave just before his coffin was covered with dirt. At the graveside funeral, each threw in his envelope. Later, one of them confessed that hating to see all that money buried uselessly in the ground, he had kept out \$350,000 for a good cause, enclosing only \$50,000 in his envelope. The other expressed great shock. "Keeping that money was shameful. I threw in my personal check for my full amount." (Source: *Humorous Incidents and Quips for Church Publications*)

Fellow Christians, are we faithful with the inheritance God has given us or have we buried it, too?

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



“The primary lesson for life must be implanted in the soul from the earliest age. It is for children to know the eternal God, the One Who gives everlasting life.” *(Saint Clement)*



Pre-School Class



Kindergarten Class



First-Second Grade Class



Third-Fourth Grade Class



Fifth-Sixth Grade Class



Seventh-Eighth-Ninth Grade Class



Tenth-Eleventh Grade Class



Graduating Seniors and Their Families



May 6, 2012: Father John was received for a question-and-answer session by Church School grades seven through twelve. The classes had been discussing death and resurrection during the Paschal season and wanted an opportunity to talk about the issues directly with Father.

May 6, 2012: Holy Trinity GOYA took its turn feeding the homeless men of the Pleasant Valley Shelter, an outreach project of Northside Common Ministries. A number of Holy Trinity ministries and families have prepared and served these meals over the past few months. After dinner, the teens also received a tour of the shelter to get an idea of life in a shelter.



May 6, 2012 (above and left): The Building Committee hosted a guided on-property tour of our new church project. Chairman Bill Fiedler used maps and charts to explain what had been accomplished.

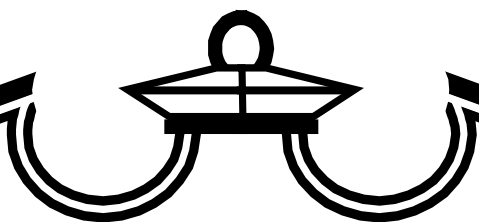
May 22, 2012 (above and left): Church staff and Parish Council members received training on the use of the new AED (Automated external defibrillator) recently purchased by the church for emergencies.





May 21, 2012: Holy Trinity GOYA hosted its annual Senior Recognition Dinner at the Chadwick in Wexford. Honored this year were seven graduates (above L-R): Michael Countouris, Melina Mermigas, Anna Valliant, Niko Touloumes, Yianni Gagianas, Katie Sarandou and Philip Georges. Congratulations and God's blessings on all our graduates, and well done, good and faithful parents!





HOLY TRINITY CHURCH CLASS OF 2012

Please join us in celebrating the talents and God-given gifts of the students from Holy Trinity Church who are graduating from high school this year. We also thank God for the families, relatives and community which have nurtured them in the rich soil of the Holy Orthodox Faith. May God be with them always!

Michael Countouris Sewickley Academy



Michael graduated from Sewickley Academy, where he has been a multi-year High Honors student. He played on the JV Golf, JV Basketball and Varsity Baseball teams and in the Jazz Band. He has been a member of GOYA for six years, participating on the GOYA basketball and volleyball teams and serving on the Saint Gregory Palamas Monastery mission trip.

He also attended Holy Trinity Church School and has helped with the Greek Festival. He will be attending Embry Riddle Aeronautical University in the fall to major in Mechanical/Aerospace Engineering.

Yianni Gagianas Peters Township High School



Yianni graduated Summa Cum Laude from Peters Township High School as an NHS member and PT Scholar. He received the Academic Excellence Award and lettered in Track and Cross Country. He has been actively involved at Holy Trinity as an Acolyte, Reader, Greek dancer and Church School student. In GOYA he served as Vice-President and attended summer camp and mission trips. Yianni will attend the Honors College of Engineering at the University of Delaware where he will study Biomedical Engineering.

Philip graduated from Eden Christian Academy,

where he achieved Honor Roll status for four years. He played on the soccer and basketball teams for four years and served as captain of both for two years. He also participated in photography club and helped start the school store. At Holy Trinity he has participated in Church School, Greek dancing and the Greek Festival. He is a six-year member of GOYA, during which he played on the GOYA basketball team and participated in summer camp and GOYA mission trips. He plans to attend Duquesne University in the fall.

Philip Georges Eden Christian Academy



Melina Mermigas North Allegheny High School

Melina graduated from North Allegheny High School as a

four-year Honor Roll student, a Scholar Athlete, NHS member, Student Council officer and Varsity soccer captain. She was also a member of Students Against Destructive Decisions. Melina has been a member of Holy Trinity GOYA for three years, playing on the basketball team for two years and serving as an Corresponding Secretary for one. She plans to attend the University of Pittsburgh in the fall and major in Pre-Pharmacy.



The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

(Proverbs 9:10)





CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR GRADUATES!

"The family should strive to be that image of godliness that will preserve the holiness that is intended to be its identity. Surrounding the child with the Holy Sacraments and sacred images, a regular life in the Church, and strengthening the good in the child are what instill this life of grace. This grace acts as a powerful hedge of protection around the family." (Margaret Hock, "Blessed Are the Pure In Heart For They Shall See God.")



Katie Sarandou Shaler Area High School



Katie graduated as an AP Scholar from Shaler Area High School, where she was in NHS and vice president of National Latin Honor Society. She was also a four-year member of the Marching and Concert Bands, serving as section leader her senior year. Katie has been in the Fall Play, the orchestra pit for the school musicals and the Allegheny Valley and PMEA District 1 Honors Bands. At Holy Trinity she participated in GOYA mission trips, Greek School and Church School. She also assists with the St. Cyril Food Pantry. Katie will attend Chatham University.

Nikolas graduated from Bethel Park High School as a member

Nikolas Touloumes Bethel Park High School

of the National Honor Society and the Varsity soccer and track teams. He has been a six-year member of Holy Trinity GOYA, where he is currently treasurer and has participated in mission trips, basketball, volleyball and outreach projects. He has been an Acolyte, Greek dancer and Greek Festival volunteer as well as a Church School student and summer camp and retreat attendee. He will attend Villanova University in the fall and major in Business.



Anna graduated from Hampton High School as a High Honor Roll student

Anna Valliant Hampton High School

and was Vice-President of the Student Council, a member of the Lend Our Hands club and captain of the Varsity volleyball team. She is a six-year member of Holy Trinity GOYA and is currently its President. Anna has been on the GOYA basketball team and participated in mission trips and coordinated local outreach projects. She is a seven-year member of Holy Trinity Choir, a Holy Trinity Church School student and Greek dancer. She will attend the University of Pittsburgh in the fall.



Keep my words and treasure up
my commandments with you;
keep my commandments and live.

(Proverbs 7.1-2)



Community Life Photo Journal | "A Taste of Greece" Festival

Scenes from the biggest-ever Holy Trinity Greek Festival, May 24-27, 2012: "A Taste of Greece at Northway"



"A Taste of Greece" Festival | Community Life Photo Journal

Scenes from the biggest-ever Holy Trinity Greek Festival, May 24-27, 2012: "A Taste of Greece at Northway"





Above: In the glowing sunset of a glorious and sunny day for Pittsburgh and an historic day for Holy Trinity Church, the concrete pad for the Community Center rested and cured after being poured and finished. It would be only a matter of weeks until walls and beams would grow out of it to form the shell of the first new building on the property.

Left and Below: Skilled laborers from the cement subcontractor began their work at 5:00 a.m., pouring the concrete slab over the rebar for the community center, offices and lower level classrooms. After leveling the mixture and allowing it to partially cure, it was smoothed and finished by various pieces of specialized equipment.





Voula Hareras

ΕΣΥ ΠΟΥ ΞΕΚΙΝΑΣ (Στούς αποφοίτους μας)

Τό ρυάκι του χρόνου τί γοργά πού κυλά! Πόσο γρήγορα πέρασαν τά πρόσχαρα, τά ξέγνοιαστα παιδικά χρόνια. Μαθητής τής τελευταίας τάξεως του Λυκείου χθές, αφήνεις σήμερα τά μαθητικά θρανία, γιά νά κάνεις πραγματικότητα τά σχέδιά σου γιά τή ζωή.

Τώρα ή καρδιά χτυπάει διαφορετικά. Μπροστά σου ανοίγονται άπέραντες οί έκτάσεις τής ζωής. Μύριες μυστικές φωνές σέ καλούν νά τίς κατακτήσεις. Ξεκινάς κι έσύ από τό γαληνό μουράγιο. Σέ παρακολουθούν μέ στοργή πολλά μάτια. Κάποιων τό βλέμμα έχει σφραγίσει ή πείρα χρόνων πολλών, πού ανταμώνει μέ τήν αγάπη και άντιφεγγίζει στά μάτια ενός πατέρα, μιάς μάνας, ενός δασκάλου. Είναι και τά μάτια τών μικροτέρων. Τά άδέλφια και οί φίλοι σέ βλέπουν μέ θαυμασμό.

Κι έσύ φεύγεις! Πρωτοτάξιδος ανοίγεις τά πανιά και λύνεις τά σκοινιά, θάμβος γιά τούς καινούργιους όρίζοντες αλλά συνάμα κι ένα παράξενο δέος, ένα άγγιγμα πόνου γιά κάποιους άποχωρισμούς, όραματισμοί και λαχτάρα όπως τό τραγούδησε κι ό ποιητής. Και λαχταράς, άμποτε άχ, νά φύγεις/στού πελάου τήν τρίσβαθη καρδιά. Γιατί Οί κάβοι οί γαλανοί μέ τ'άσπρα σπίτια/και τά μικρά λιμάνια άπανεμιάς/καλά δέν είναι γιά κείνον πού στά στήθεια/πνοή νοώθει μιάς θάλασσας πλατιάς!

Λοιπόν, καλοτάξιδος! Εύχή μου τήν πορεία σου νά μή τήν παράξει θύελλα καμμία. Ομως κι άν έρθει μή τήν φοβάσαι. Θά συναντήσεις σίγουρα τά δύσκολα, όμως μπορείς νά κρατήσεις άμετάθετη στήν πυξίδα σου τή γραμμή πλεύσεως. Μπορείς άρκεί μόνο νά έμπιστευεσαι και νά ακολουθείς τόν Αρχηγό τής πίστεώς μας, τόν λυτρωτή και σωτήρα Κύριο Ιησού Χριστό. Κι άν βρεθείς ποτέ σέ στιγμές δυσκολίας, άμφιβολίας, κοπώσεως, μήν αφήσεις τήν ψυχή σου νά ταραζεται μές'στό σκοτάδι. Επικαλέσου Τον, όπως ένα παιδί τρομαγμένο φωνάζει τόν πατέρα του.

Στάσου ξύπνιος και μή γελαστείς! Στό έπώνυμο και στό άνώνυμο πλήθος, είτε ζητάει νά σου έπιβληθή, είτε περνά άδιάφορο δίπλα σου, στό μωσαϊκό τών χαρακτήρων, τών συνειδήσεων και τών ιδεολογιών, πού σέ κυκλώνει, είσαι σύ ό κυρίαρχος, γιατί έσύ και μόνο μπορείς νά έπιλέξεις.

Επιλέξε! Καί οί έπιλογές σου άς είναι μέ κριτήριο άλλανθαστο αυτό πού σέ δίδαξε ή παιδική και έφηβική σου πίστη, ή άδολη αγάπη τής οίκογένειας, ή ιστορία τής γαλανόλευκης πατρίδας.

Επιλέξε! Είναι ή ώρα σου. Δέν έχεις τίποτε νά φοβάσαι. Ισα'ίσα, μένεις έτσι αυτό πού είσαι, και ξεδιπλώνεις τήν προσωπικότητά σου μέσα στήν άπαιτητική έποχή πού τάχθηκες νά ζήσεις. Και πραγματώνεις τόν ύψηλό σκοπό του άνθρώπου μέσα σ'αυτή και πάνω ά'αυτή. Οπως ταιριάζει στόν έλεύθερο άνθρωπο.

Και μή ξεχνάς: Μείνε έλεύθερος. Θέλει άρετή και τόλμη ή έλευθερία!

Προς Την Νίκη

ΜΗΝ ΕΙΣΑΙ ΑΧΟΡΤΑΓΟΣ ΣΤΗΝ ΖΩΗ ΣΟΥ

Ενας από τους μεγαλύτερους συγγραφείς που εμφανίστηκαν ποτέ στη Γη ήταν ο Λέων Τολστόι. Ο Τολστόι ήταν βαθύς γνώστης της ανθρωπίνης φύσης.

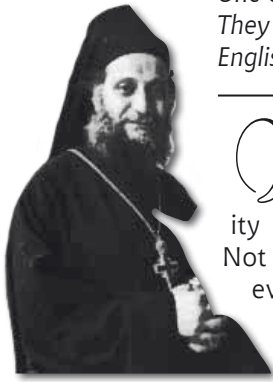


Σ'ένα από τα συγγράματά του γράφει για έναν Ρώσο αγρότη. Κάποιος πλούσιος γαιοκτήμονας υποσχέθηκε στον αγρότη αυτόν πως δική του θα γινόταν η γη που θα μπορούσε να διατρέξει σε μια μέρα, από την ανατολή του ήλιου μέχρι το ηλιοβασίλεμα. Αν ήσουν έσύ στή θέση εκείνου του αγρότη, τι θα έκανες; Εκείνος, το άλλο πρωί, μόλις είδε τον ήλιο να προβάλλει, χωρίς νά χάσει ούτε δευτερόλεπτο άρχισε να τρέχει αντί νά βαδίζει κανονικά. Γιατί, τρέχοντας θα μπορούσε να καλύψει περισσότερη έκταση γης παρά βαδίζοντας. Ομως ο πλούσιος γαιοκτήμονας είχε θέσει έναν όρο. Επρεπε ο αγρότης νά γυρίσει στο σημείο του ξεκινήματος πριν από το ηλιοβασίλεμα.

Ετρεχε λοιπόν λέγοντας συνέχεια: Ας καλύψω λίγη ακόμα έκταση γης, λίγη ακόμα, λίγη ακόμα. Στο γυρισμό θα βάλω τα δυνατά μου και θα τρέξω περισσότερο, για να προλάβω. Πέρασε το μεσημέρι. Ηρθε το απόγευμα. Ο αγρότης ακόμα έτρεχε χωρίς να πάρει το δρόμο της επιστροφής.

Οταν τελικά αποφάσισε να γυρίσει πίσω τα βρήκε σκούρα. Είδε ότι δε θα πρόφταινε. Αρχισε να τρέχει όσο μπορούσε πιο γρήγορα. Τελικά κατάφερε να φτάσει λαχανιασμένος ακριβώς την ώρα που είχε αρχίσει ο ήλιος να κρύβεται πίσω στον ορίζοντα. Μα τη στιγμή που άγγιζαν τα πόδια του στην αφετηρία, έπεσε νεκρός. Η καρδιά δεν άντεξε στην κούραση.

Τι κέρδισε τελικά: Δυο μέτρα γης για το νεκρό του σώμα.



Elder Aimilianos

One of the great blessings of Orthodoxy is the presence, prayers and inspired words of the Holy Elders of the Faith. They have been referred to as “precious vessels of the Holy Spirit.” In recent years, many books have been published in English with their writings and talks. This column provides an opportunity for each of us to be blessed by their words.

What are the signs that God is active within us? How, in other words, does our capacity for God reveal itself in our lives? Not just in our spiritual lives, but in our everyday life, our daily routine? How is the Spirit manifested in us, and how do we project the life of the Spirit to others? When can we say that we’ve really received the Holy

Spirit?

It may be that, after many years, we’ll discover that we have not received the Holy Spirit. That’s terrible, but true. And that’s precisely why I want to stress that, on the basis of our external behavior, on the basis of our everyday routine, we can judge whether or not we have the Spirit. Thus I’d like to mention three or four things, not especially profound or complicated, but actually very simple. They are stages of the spiritual life, each connected to the other. In order to describe them, I’ll use words and expressions from Holy Scripture, because that is always the best thing to do. Let’s begin. One sign of the Holy Spirit’s presence within us is what Scripture calls joyfulness of heart (Ps. 12.6).

Question: What does the “joyfulness of heart” mean?

In the first place, it signifies outward, external joy, happiness, and rejoicing, such as rejoicing in the festive joy of the first-born. But joyfulness of heart also expresses the spirit of a man who longs for God, and who, within that longing, feels God’s touch, and that touch makes him rejoice, because it is communion with God.

Joyfulness of heart is the undiminished sense you have that God is with you. It is a feeling of complete assurance, a total entrusting of your self to God. It’s that magnificent sense of openness, such as we experience in states of rest and relaxation, a feeling of renewal that a person has when he is certain that, where he is, God is too. As such it is the feeling of a man who realizes that he is no longer alone, that there is not even a single moment when he is on his own. Joyfulness of heart, then, is the feeling, the deeper experience, that a person has when he knows that God is with him at every moment. As the Psalmist says: Our help is of the Lord, the Holy One of Israel, our king (Ps. 88.19).

How beautifully the Psalmist presents this. The Lord is with me, the Lord is here! Why? Because Israel is here, and where Israel is, there you’ll find the king—our king. What pride, what honor, what certitude! David is so overwhelmed by this that he wishes he could die, because death itself no longer means anything in the face of such certitude (cf. Rom. 6.9). Nothing, not even death, can separate us from God (cf. Rom. 8.35), because we are within Israel, and Israel is within God.

Question: Geronda, what must happen to the heart to receive this great joy?

In speaking of joyfulness of heart, we should say a word about the nature of the heart in question. What sort of heart is it that feels this joyfulness? A broken heart: a heart that breaks itself open because of the majesty that it feels. When a person lives as a true member of the Church, against which the gates of Hell cannot prevail (Mt 16.18); when he lives in the state of majesty that is proper to him, then he attains his fulfillment, his authentic self-expression, the revelation of his own true self. True self-discovery occurs only within the consciousness of the Church. Becoming one with the Body of the Church, and living within its assurance and certitude, enables you to be free from changes, anxiety, and sadness. Troubles simply come and go, passing by like waves, but they will never be able to drown you. You have become like the shore, unmoved by the pounding of the sea. The waves will come and crash all around, but you no longer fear them. Instead, they remind you of the endless waves of the Holy Spirit rising and falling within you.

Your afflictions point towards Him Who is beyond all afflictions (cf. Jn. 16.33). And your joys—which are also waves—point to Him Who is the source of joy, and so all things reveal God to you. Thus the heart rejoices, because, whatever happens, whatever it touches, wherever it finds itself, it discovers everywhere and in all things the king Himself, Israel itself, the Lord. All things become an opportunity to find and discover God anew.

Question: Once we find this joyfulness, can we lose it?

This sense of joy remains stable and well-grounded. It can’t be lost. If it is lost, it means estrangement from God, a resurgence of the self, and thus the loss of God. And that would be a kind of negative martyrdom, which has another, opposite momentum. It would be a movement to hell, which God would allow us to undergo, so that we might recall the paradise we’d lost, the paradise of joyfulness that we had before. A single sin is capable of sending us into this hell, subjecting us to this kind of martyrdom, depriving us of our joyfulness. This is why, as we’ve said on other occasions, the heart rejoices when it says: Restore to me the joyfulness of Your salvation (Ps. 50.14).

In losing this joyfulness, a person loses sight of God, along with the feeling of His help. He loses, in other words, the consciousness of his place in the Church, his sense of membership in the Body of Christ. When this happens, he immediately becomes a nothing, something that has been divided, isolated, non-existent in the eyes of God. God can’t reach a person in such a place, for he has fallen into the deepest darkness, shrouded by a dreadful cloud. But when a man is able to pass through such a martyrdom, remaining mindful of God and worshipping Him, it will always bring him directly to God Himself.

Excerpted from Elder Aimilianos of Simonopetra, “The Way of the Spirit”

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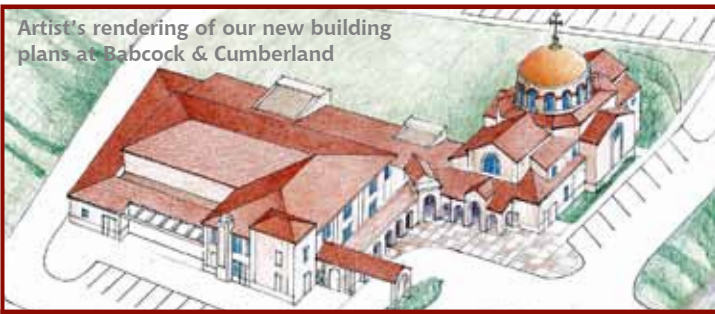
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Augustinos of Florina (20th c.)

Scripture of the Month: "I give thanks to You, O Lord my God, with my whole heart." (Psalm 86.12)