



THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

OCTOBER 2013

VOLUME 21 • ISSUE 9

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IMPORTANT NOTICE:

**NOVEMBER 3, 2013
FALL GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NOTICE & AGENDA
ENCLOSED ALONG WITH
PARISH COUNCIL 2014-15
NOMINATION FORM**

QUICK NEWS



Smiling volunteers from the first "Taste of Greece" Festival at our new location greet the thousands of guests. Want to see more photos of the life and ministries of Holy Trinity Church? See the Community Life Photo Journal on pages 7-10 or visit our **new** online photo gallery site at photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org.



The Prophet Joel - Feast Day: October 19
Icon from the Prophets level of the dome of the new
Holy Trinity Church. George Kordis, Iconographer

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

2013 Parish Council

George Dickos, President

Dean A. Balouris

Marios Kritiotis

George Danis

Charles Petredis

Andrew Janis

Joyce Athanasiou

Jason Farmakis

Stephanie Sedor

Louis Kort

Alex Trilivas

Leo Loomis

Gerri Valliant

Ministries

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



Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another. As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace

1 Peter 4.9-10

My Dear Spiritual Children,

A few weeks ago, Father Radu delivered an inspiring and illuminating homily explaining one of the keystone icons of our new temple: the "Holy Trinity" or "Hospitality of Abraham" icon in the front of the lower dome. Not only was it an explanation of an icon, it was an image of life at Holy Trinity Church as it has been, as it is, and I pray as it will be for "many generations," because it focused on the God-inspired calling, gift and cornerstone of this Faith, this Family and this Community: Hospitality.

I offer my deep thanks to our gifted iconographer, George Kordis, for the placing of that emblematic icon at the front, center and strategic focal point in our new home. It is truly impossible to walk into the Church and not be immediately engaged by its beauty and its message, also found in the passage from 1 Peter above: "practice hospitality."

When a child opens a new gift, a parent enjoys a great amount of happiness in seeing the excitement in the child's eyes, but what really fills the heart of a parent with joy beyond description is when that child shares that new gift with a brother, sister or friend. When, instead of taking off in the corner to his own, he takes it to another and says, "Look! Let's play! Let's both enjoy this gift!", it is the seed of hospitality and stewardship that the child will be able to build on faithfully for a lifetime. It is a moment that fills a parent's heart with joy and thanks beyond description.

Perhaps that gives us a glimpse into the joyful heart of our Heavenly Father as, after having bestowed on us this magnificent new gift of a new Church, along with its new life, He waits and watches to see what we will do with it. I believe I can say with full assurance that we have had plenty of opportunities of late to take those gifts and say to the ~~many/~~ hundreds/thousands of visitors and newcomers, "Let's ALL enjoy this gift together!"

Until this past month, I was referring to this summer as the "Triple Header" - the Thyra-noixia, the Community Open House and the "Taste of Greece" Festival, thinking that was the one-two-three sequence the Lord had laid out to test our hearts and intentions about this new place, but then came the "Extra Inning", the Metropolis Clergy-Laity Assembly, held last week. And through it all, you kept working, smiling and rejoicing in it all!

If there is a way to find out how we did, let's not look to one another or at the numbers. Rather let's look into the eyes and experiences of the recipients of that hospitality and hear the enthusiasm that God has placed in their heart to bless them and encourage us. That is why the first desire in my own heart when we started receiving the phone calls, emails and letters of thanks from all those events was to share it with you, the faithful members of this blessed family. Please be sure to read the letters on page 11 of this issue and join me in thanking God that we have been so blessed to be able to share His love with others so completely. Yes there was fantastic food, lively music and great times at all those events, but shining out of the center of them all through you was the love of God!

I am so thankful to have been blessed by this community for the past 20 years. Your steadfast love and dedication to the Lord and your sacrificial willingness to share it not only shines outward, it illuminates and inspires inward. As we have experience, it takes a lot of "work" ahead of time to be able to "play" later, but that is part of this wonderful journey of faith, too. Saint James reminds us, "let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing" (James 1.4). So let us go forth in thanksgiving, filled with the dedication, love and hospitality that has gotten us here thus far.

With paternal love and prayers in Christ,

WORSHIP LIFE

Weekday Services October

Please take note of the following weekday Liturgies and services this month. Unless otherwise indicated, Orthros is at 8:15 a.m., followed by Divine Liturgy at 9:30 at the St. George Chapel (SG).

Oct. 26: St. Demetrios the Great Martyr (SG)

Holy Trinity Church Services Now Live on the Internet

One of the wonderful new outreach opportunities our new facilities provide is the ability to stream our services live on the Internet. We are now officially listed on the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese list of live broadcasts and are the first parish in the Metropolis of Pittsburgh to be listed there. The official list can be found at www.goarch.org/chapel/live.

How to access Holy Trinity live: Unable to attend Sunday services because of travels, illness or otherwise home bound? To follow the services online go to:

www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/live

If that link does not work due to server traffic, try directly accessing the Archdiocese streaming server at:

realserver.goarch.org/live/index_pittsburgh.html

Legal Notice: "Holy Trinity Church now broadcasts its Sunday services live on the Internet. Your presence in the Church is subject to audio and video recording."

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Holy Trinity Church Announces New Church School Director

Holy Trinity Church School is pleased to welcome its new Director, Pam Wright. Pam, a professional school administrator, is married to Steve Wright and they have two children, Henry and Lilly. We are thankful to have her talents on our Church School ministry team. Please be sure to offer her and our entire Church School staff of volunteer stewards your support, which starts with having your children at worship services on time and allowing them time to complete their Church School classes each Sunday.

Notice About Church School Dismissal Times

A message from our Church School Staff to all parents: Please assist us in offering our children the time to fully participate in their lessons each Sunday by allowing them to remain in class until the end of the session. Classes for Pre-School and Kindergarten will end each Sunday at 11:15am. Parents of those students may pick up their children on the second level Education Center by using the Education Center stairs at in the Gallery near the Bookstore. All other classes will dismiss at 11:30 and parents are asked to wait for their children downstairs in the Gallery or Grand Room during Coffee Hour. Thank you.

Saint Lydia Women's Study Ministry Starts October 10

Attention women of all ages: you are invited to participate in the exciting 15th year of Holy Trinity Church's St Lydia Women's Study. This growth and study ministry, dedicated to the concerns and spiritual needs of women, will begin on October 10 with Fellowship and Coffee at 9:30am. The study

portion takes place from 10:00-11:15am. the group will continue to meet every other Thursday. NEW THIS YEAR: Since we have our wonderful new facility, we will be gathering in the Fireside room! This year's study topic is "Women of Faith," and will look at many inspiring examples of women in the life of the Church and the Bible through scripture readings, stories of saints, spiritual writings and hymns, all with an eye toward applying their examples in our own lives. We will attempt to offer child care if there is enough interest. Please come and bring a friend, sister, koumbara, etc!

The complete schedule of meetings for 2013/2014 is: October 10 & 24, November 7 & 21, December 5, January 9 & 23, February 6 & 20, March 6 & 20, April 3 and May 1 & 15. For more information contact Stacy Dickos 412-298-9409 or StLydia@HolyTrinityPgh.org.

YOUTH MINISTRIES

GOYA Meeting Oct. 20

The GOYA teen ministry will hold a brief meeting following Church School on Sunday, October 20, in the Fireside Room. All GOYans are asked to attend.

Community Fall Bake Sale. Oct. 27

GOYA will host a Fall Bake Sale in the Gallery on Sunday, October 27, following Liturgy. Please support our teens by purchasing some of their homemade goods. Thank you, good stewards!

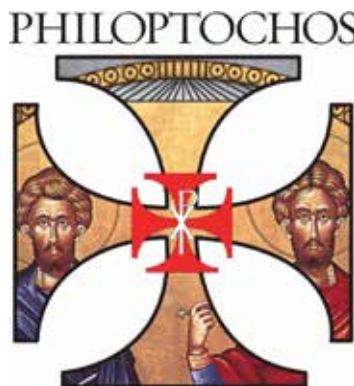
Metropolis GOYA Fall Retreat Nov. 22-24

The 2013 Metropolis will sponsor its annual GOYA Fall Retreat from November 22nd - 24th at Camp Nazareth in Mercer, PA. The theme is "Orthodox on Purpose," and the main speaker is Fr. Barnabas Powell, from Cumming, GA. You may find more info on Fr. Barnabas at OrthodoxOnPurpose.org. Information and an online registration link will be sent directly to all GOYans shortly. ALL Holy Trinity GOYans are asked to attend as part of their overall commitment to the youth ministries of our parish and Metropolis.

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

Philoptochos Children's Medical Fund Luncheon... Oct. 12

On Saturday, October 12, 2013, the Metropolis of Pittsburgh Philoptochos will be hosting the National Philoptochos' Children's Medical Fund Luncheon at the Fairmont Pittsburgh Hotel. This fund gives hundreds of thousands of dollars to hospitals and medical institutions and initiatives to benefit children. This is the Philoptochos' largest event besides their national convention, and this will be the first time that the Pittsburgh Metropolis has ever hosted it. This major luncheon is held every other year in



varying places throughout the country, and since 1989 over \$1 million has been raised to contribute to hospitals, medical institutions and initiatives that benefit children. All the funds that are raised this year will remain in the Metropolis of Pittsburgh and will benefit those hospitals, institutions and children in our Metropolis. Tickets are \$150 each. For information or to make luncheon reservations, please contact Kay Balouris at 412-766-1263 or Joyce Countouris at 412-366-1498. Thank you!

Philoptochos SABIKA Fall Sale & Fundraiser Nov. 3

Our Holy Trinity Ladies Philoptochos invites you to a special afternoon Fundraiser featuring SABIKA Austrian Crystal Jewelry, on Sunday, November 3, from 11:00am-1:00pm. The Fundraiser will showcase the New Fall/Winter 2013 Collection and the Classics Collection. Please come and enjoy refreshments while you shop the Beautiful Collections. Create your own style! Begin your Christmas Shopping Early!! Our own Alexandra Mayr-Gracik, Vice President of Design at Sabika, will be there to help you select a timeless design. All proceeds benefit the Philanthropic work of our Philoptochos. Call Jan Petredis at 724-935-0805 for more information.

COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENTS

Light the Night Walk in Memory of Jimmy Hartig. . Oct. 10

The 15th annual "Light the Night Walk" sponsored by the Leukemia & Lymphoma Society will be held on Thursday, October 10 at 5:30 p.m. The walk funds treatments that are saving the lives of patients today. The LLS is making cures happen by providing patient support services, advocacy for lifesaving treatments and the most promising cancer research anywhere.

"Jimmy's Team" will once again be participating and raising funds in memory of Jimmy Hartig, a Holy Trinity parishioner of blessed repose. Want to help? You can join the team or donate funds by visiting:

pages.lightthenight.org/wpa/Pttsbrgh13/JimmysTeam

Thank you!



Facilities Reservations Requirements for All Ministries

Important news for all Holy Trinity ministries and organizations! Want to hold a meeting or an event at Holy Trinity Church? You must reserve the facilities you need through the Church Office ahead of time! Whether it is a special event or a regularly-scheduled meeting, you must contact our Office Administrator, Mary Portellos, at 412-366-8700 or office@HolyTrinityPgh.org to reserve your space. This is important for a number of reasons:

- The heating and air conditioning utilities are on programs to conserve energy and must be set to accommodate your event. On-site controls are not available to unauthorized users. Your event will be programmed ahead and the facility will be ready when you arrive.
- Our buildings have security-controlled access and you must be sure that an authorized ministry or organiza-

tional representative has access for your event.

- Even though the new campus is large and has many usable spaces, our ministries and organizations are growing and someone else may have the same space in mind, so advance reservations will guarantee your desired time and space. In addition to the larger spaces such as the Grand Room and Gallery, this includes all meeting rooms and cooking facilities!
- The caterer has many bookings and even though church ministries come first, we must avoid situations of conflict of use as we work together cooperatively.

Our Church Office is maintaining a centralized calendar for the Church and Center, so thank for your cooperation in helping make sure everyone has use of this wonderful new facility when needed and nobody conflicts with one another.

God's House - Our Responsibility!

Father John has been offering the "God's House - Our Responsibility" message to the students of our Church School, but that lesson is not just for kids! Please remember that every corner of the building - in the Church or not - is a part of God's house. And we are the good stewards God has blessed to take care of it. So remember:

- When you use it, leave it as you found it (or better!)
- If you create or see trash, pick it up and throw it away.
- Be gentle! Careful not to dent and knock things up.
- Treat the place better than you own...it's God's!

So whether that means clean it up, put it away, put it back, lock it up, wipe it off, close it or throw it away, don't give away the honor of taking care of God's house to someone else: do it yourself! Leave it as you found it or better, because when we moved in we committed to keeping the entire place in "Like New" condition. Only you can help make that happen. Thank you, good and faithful stewards of Christ!

Welcome to Holy Trinity Church!

In the past few months we have welcomed many new members and prospective members into the Holy Trinity family. If you are one of them, we'd like to help you get to know your way around the place! Please look for a New Members Welcome event to be held in the Fall. It will contain information on the ministries and opportunities that await you here at Holy Trinity Church and what is needed from you to support them.

Also, if you would like information on how to invest yourself in the life of Holy Trinity Church by supporting the Capital Campaign and helping us return our new \$2.5 million mortgage, please see Capital Campaign Chairman Jim Balouris or Vision Committee Chairman Jim Balouris. They'll be glad to help you!

Sign Up For the Holy Trinity Email!

Want to receive the Sunday Bulletin directly via email each week and keep up to date with the latest Holy Trinity news or weather cancellations? Sign up at www.HolyTrinityPgh.org.



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

OCTOBER 2013 – "THE VOICE OF HOLY TRINITY CHURCH"



Father John Androutsopoulos

God Is Love: God's Love For Us

"Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love" (1 John 4:8).

"And we ourselves know and believe the love which God has for us" (1 John 4:16).

Beloved, would you like to know more than the above two verses? Please read from the first Epistle of St. John the Theologian, Chapter 4: 7-21. You will love it. By reading it,

we can all be better Christians.

The history of humanity is a history of our rejection of God's love. It is a history of the consequences of sin: division, suffering, death. Although God offered us life, we chose death. Although God gave us His love, we turned our backs on Him.

God did not abandon us, however, despite our abandoning Him. He provided a way for fallen humanity to return to Him through His son, Jesus Christ. The Bible is the record of God's efforts to reclaim His creatures for Himself. It is the record of His healing love being sent to us, through the creation of the chosen people and the coming of Jesus Christ, through the creation of the Church and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

The greatest testimony of God's love is not his work of creation or even his revealing of himself to us; it is His work of redemption. God so loved the world that He sent His only Son into the world, so that the world might find salvation. God so loved the world that he gave up His Son to death on the cross, so that we may have eternal life. The ultimate love is the love that lays down its life for another. This Jesus did for us. This is our proof of God's love for us.

We believe that God is love – but somehow doubt that He loves us. We know that there could be no greater proof of God's love than his sending His Son to die for our sakes while we were still sinners – but somehow feel anyway that we are unworthy of God's love. "God Loves Us" is a truth we have a hard time fully and completely accepting.

Jesus the Good Shepherd

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd is willing to die for the sheep" (John 10:11).

Jesus is calling himself the good shepherd, because his teaching was true and divine, and enlightening those who were living in darkness under the error. His teachings were

leading them into eternal life. He says that the true shepherd is dying if necessary for the salvation of the reasonable sheep. That is where Jesus speaks about His death on the cross. Truly Jesus, as a true shepherd, died for the salvation of all the people.

Everyone who heard Jesus teaching knew full well what sheep were like and what the duties of a shepherd were. They could instantly grasp what Jesus meant by referring to Himself as the good shepherd – something that takes a little more thought and imagination for us today, who rarely see sheep and have probably never talked to a shepherd.

The central point that Jesus wished to make was that He took a special concern for His followers, even to the point of sacrificing Himself for their good. Just as a conscientious shepherd watches over his sheep, so Jesus watches over us, protecting us from danger and providing for our needs. Jesus wants us to have abundant life, full life, eternal life; he wants us to begin experiencing it here and now, and to enjoy it for all eternity. He wants to lead us to this new life, just as a shepherd leads his flock to a place of safety where he may feed them.

Jesus knows each of us personally, better than a shepherd knows the sheep that he cares for. Jesus knows us as His Father knows Him. Jesus also loves us as His Father loves Him, for He came to bring His Father's love into the world. Jesus expends His life so that we might experience God's love for us.

Beloved, read Psalm 23 and read it slowly as a prayer of praise and thanksgiving. Reflect on the love that Jesus the good shepherd has for us.



Psalm 23: A Psalm Of David

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou prepares a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou annointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: If you suffer from insomnia, do not count sheep. Talk to the Good Shepherd with the Jesus prayer: Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have Mercy on me. And, continue praying until you fall asleep!

*With His Love,
Rev. Fr. John K. Androutsopoulos, Protopresbyter*

Hello to All My Precious Children!

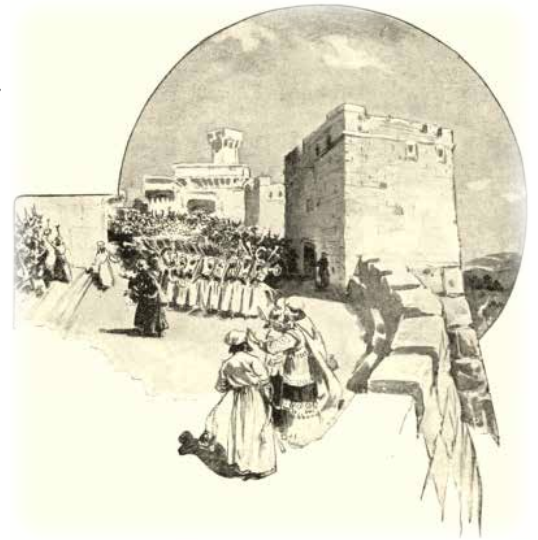


Today, I would like to chat with you about prayer. Every morning I schedule a quiet time with God. I learned this at summer camp. It is a time when I pray, talk with God or read the Bible. This is my quality time with my Heavenly Father. I know God is always with me and I can pray to Him anytime, day and night. Yiayia teaches us little ones the Jesus Prayer, which we try to use all the time. She says our prayers are like incense rising up to God.

What is prayer and why do we pray? Well, Saint Paul says we are supposed to pray all the time, but Jesus warns us not to just mindlessly repeat the same empty words over and over. Instead, we should make it a sincere conversation with Him; sometimes we talk, sometimes we listen. God is everywhere and He hears our prayer instantly. Talk about instant messaging ... He invented it! In fact, Jesus says during the Sermon on the Mount that the Father knows what we need even before we ask!

I asked Yiayia this: If God already knows what we need, then why should we pray? She said it is to build good relationships and to spend quality time together with Him. Time with our God gives us strength, courage and peace. Also, another good reason to pray is that it teaches us humility. It allows us to receive direction from God. It is what Jesus told us to do. It also reminds us of how great our awesome God is and how much He loves us.

There are a lot of good stories on prayer in the Bible. I like to tell the story of Nehemiah's prayer, which saved the city of Jerusalem by rebuilding the holy city's broken walls. Nehemiah's family had been taken prisoners by Judah. It was Nehemiah's job to serve King Antaxerxes and to protect him, especially by checking his food to make sure it wasn't poisoned. Finally, God had mercy on His people and they were allowed to return to Jerusalem. One day, one of his friends came to visit Nehemiah. When he heard that the walls of Jerusalem were still broken down, he was very sad and worried that the city had no protection from enemies. At first, he felt helpless. But then, he started to pray (maybe not with these exact words, but it's my mouse-like way of saying it!), "Oh Lord, I pray to you day and night for my people. Oh, I know we messed up big time and our whole country would not listen to you. Lord, I have a plan. I need the king's permission to travel to Jerusalem to rebuild the walls of the city. Lord, please make the king's heart to be full of kindness when I ask him about the plan." Well, God answered his prayer by softening the heart of the Persian king, for he got not only permission, but also building supplies. In Jerusalem, the Sanballat and Tobiah weren't making it easy for the Hebrews. They made fun of them. They threatened to hurt them (has this ever happened to you?) and tried to make them stop building the wall. But instead of giving in, Nehemiah and the Israelites chose to find new strength and determination by trusting in God and praying for Him to help them .. and He did!



So remember, our Heavenly Father hears every word we say and every word we pray. Especially try to remember that whenever it seems like it takes a long time for Him to answer. God will always answer us, even if it is not the answer we think we should be getting!

In Christ,
Love, Spero

Top-Bottom: Young Adults gather for a tailgate Pirates before a Pirates game. Seniors Ministry visits shops in Volant, PA. Special General Assembly unanimously approves \$2.5 million permanent mortgage for new church project. Youth Ministries Kick-Off Day: Father John teaches the sign of the Cross; young ones enjoy the picnic; Father Radu and Presvytera Becky work with youth ministry groups.









September 26-28, 2013: Over 100 delegates participated in the three-day Metropolis of Pittsburgh CLergy-Laity Assembly hosted by Holy Trinity Church. Representatives from around the Metropolis attended meetings, workshops and enjoyed worship services and meals in our new church and center. Their comments about our new facilities were gracious and complimentary.



Thousands of friends and neighbors visited during the five days of the first "Taste of Greece" Festival at the new Holy Trinity Church. Some of them actually took the time to call, email or write to express their appreciation for our hospitality and great food. Here are two:

Dear Father John,

On Wednesday, August 28, a group of thirteen residents from Cumberland Crossing came to visit your festival. Several of us were in wheelchairs while others used walkers. We were met by a marvelous group of workers who assisted us in many ways and helped us with food and purchases. The afternoon was a great success and we had a splendid time, although I think our activities director grew many new gray hairs worrying about us! A group of us especially enjoyed the three o'clock tour of the church. I enjoyed seeing your magnificent architecture and hearing some of your parish history. Oh, what a beautiful and wonderful group of people make up your church! You must have been very proud of all of them this past week. They worked their tails off! They certainly did everything possible to accommodate us. I hope the entire event was a financial success for Holy Trinity. Sometime soon, I'm going to visit your church on a Sunday because I was totally impressed with everyone and everything. If the church by definition is a group of the faithful worshipping together, I'd like to participate and feel the Holy Spirit at work among you.

Thank you, Father John, for your informational tour and invitation. Also, please thank your workers for us. They were a glorious example of God's people working together in joy and cooperation...God bless them all.

God bless the work you do for God's people... You have worked miracles to accomplish the building up of a new church and a loving cooperative group of people. Congratulations!

Sincerely,
J. E.
Pittsburgh, PA

Dear Father John,

On Monday, August 26, my wife, our daughter and I were fortunate to have a tour of your church. Our daughter lives with her family in one of your parishioner's neighborhood.

On our visits to Pittsburgh, we observed the various phases of Holy Trinity's construction. So, we decided to visit the church on Monday. As we entered, we were greeted by one of your Parish Council members. Although he was deeply involved with a plethora of issues involving the festival, he was most hospitable, answered our questions and took us on a tour of the church. He introduced us to another busy Parish Council member, who was pleased to give us some of the church's history as it related to its move to the new location.

We were very impressed with the knowledge, interest and enthusiasm both of the above gentlemen exhibited about the clergy, church, parish and church activities. It was very obvious to us that they are devoted Orthodox Christians and genuinely interested in furthering the church's mission. All too often the contributions and commitments of these unsung church heroes go unheralded, so we just wanted to bring to your attention how we were treated, as unannounced outsiders, by these two kind gentlemen when we visited your church.

From what we could observe, the church was well on its way to accommodate the forthcoming festival crowds from Wednesday through Sunday. We prayed for a successful festival.

Love in Christ,
J. C., Ph.D.
Mentor, OH

A personal testimony of a Holy Trinity parishioner about his path to Orthodox Christianity and his life in the Holy Orthodox Church



Bill and Lynda Areheart

I was born and raised in the rural South. I was christened as a Methodist as a child (so I am told) and attended a non-denominational Protestant church until I married and moved away from home. My wife had been raised as a Lutheran so it was a natural move to join the Lutheran church. We remained Lutheran until many years later we, as a family of four, converted to Roman Catholicism. Our next, and final move, was years later, after the children had married and left home, when my wife and I made what was the last move: We became Orthodox.

It's as far upstream as we can go as Christians. Let me make one thing perfectly clear: We have no bad feelings toward Roman Catholicism or Protestantism. On the contrary, we have many good memories. We met some wonderful ministers and priests during those years. As one Lutheran minister friend said, they fostered our souls while we were making this journey.

So what caused us to make this move? What factors entered into our decision-making process? Here are a few of the main things my wife and I think it's important for you to know. They may be the very things that are attracting others to Holy Trinity Church right now.

The Beauty of the Liturgy: Long before we ever considered converting, we attended several Easter services with Orthodox friends and were impressed with the solemnity and beauty of the Divine Liturgy. It is reverent and prayerful from beginning to end. Prior to the Divine Liturgy, we have prayers ("Orthros") which are attended by the priest(s), chanter, and sometime a handful of the most faithful. As you near the new church, you can hear the prayers being chanted out of the rocks! I analogize it as stepping into a warm bath. It is a comforting feeling as you step into church and into your seat. I thought early on that I would miss the congregational-only singing of the Protestant and (to a lesser extent) Roman Catholic churches, but I don't. Our choir sings the responses and the congregation is asked to join them. It more than replaces the congregational-only model and is a wonderful community experience.

The Faith of our Fathers: I am a traditionalist. Ask my wife. That feature appealed to me. We are worshipping in the same manner as the early Church and the Fathers. We have not changed since the first Pentecost in the first century A.D. The Church Fathers—and the Church along with them—have subscribed to the axiom, "if it ain't broke, don't fix it."

Community and Family: We have one regular service during the week. During numerous holy days during the year, e.g., Lent and feast days, we have other weekday services, but normally only one. This fosters a family feeling. If a family member or friend belongs to your parish and attends the services, you will see him/her. After Liturgy we have a coffee hour where friendships and family ties are nurtured.

The Joy of Life: God has granted us so many gifts, I'm sure He meant for us to enjoy them. I can't speak for the other branches of Orthodoxy, but most Greek Orthodox churches have an annual festival where the food and wine are in ample supply, accompanied by traditional music and dance. We believe in making a joyful noise unto the Lord. Such festivals are "kicked off" and concluded with a brief prayer service to give thanks. It's just one of the many ways we experience joy here.

In conclusion, I can only say that if you are happy where you are as a Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Baptist or even a non-Christian, great, but if you are not happy where you are and are still searching, visit your nearest Orthodox Church and see what it has to offer. We're so glad we did.

Bill Areheart

billlynda1516@gmail.com



Voula Hareras

Η ΜΟΝΗ ΣΕΚΟΥ: ΓΙΑ ΝΑ ΜΗΝ ΞΕΧΝΑΜΕ

28η Οκτωβρίου 1940, Ένας Ελληνικός θρίαμβος τότε που θα μένει στην ιστορία άθνατος για πάντα.

Τά δάφνινα στεφάνια που καταθέτουν στο μνημείο του άγνωστου Στρατιώτου είναι ένας μικρός φόρος τιμής προς τους άφανείς ήρωες, που έχυσαν τό αίμα τους στά χιονισμένα άλβανικά βουνά, για την τιμή και την

δόξα της Πατρίδος μας.

Καί τώρα όπως πάντοτε όταν ή Πατρίδα τό καλεί τά ήρωικά νιάτα βρίσκονται μπροστά καμάρι και λεβεντιά των προγόνων τους υπερασπίζοντας μέ υπερηφάνεια την βαριά κληρονομιά, έτσι ακούστηκε βροντερό τό μοναδικό τό ιστορικό, συνταραχτικό ΟΧΙ ...

Καί τώρα άς διαβάσουμε μία από τις άμέτρητες θυσίες τών Έλληνων πολεμιστών όλων τών αίωνων.

Τό όλοκαυτωμα τής Μονής Σέκου.

[Μάς ήρθε ή άνοιξη πικρή
Τό καλοκαίρι μαύρο
Μάς ήρθε κι' ό χινόπωρος
Πικρός φαρμακωμένος]

Φθινόπωρο τού 1821. Η Επανάσταση έχει σημειώσει τις πρώτες της σημαντικές επιτυχίες στη στεριά και στη θάλασσα, κι' ένα κύμα ένθουςιασμού και αισιοδοξίας κυριεύει και τούς πιο διστακτικούς και έπιφυλακτικούς. Η έξεγερση όμως που άρχισε ό Αλέξανδρος Υψηλάντης, ό άρχηγός τής φιλικής εταιρίας στη [Μολδοβλαχία] σημερινή Ρουμανία, τό φεβρουάριο έφθανε στο τέλος της.

Οί έλπίδες για βοήθεια από την Ρωσία και για συνεργασία μέ τούς ντόπιους κατοίκους γρήγορα διαψεύστηκαν. Ο ήρωικός Ιερός Λόχος καταστράφηκε στο Δραγατσάνι και ό ίδιος ό Υψηλάντης στην προσπάθειά του να φθάσει μέσω τής Εύρώπης στην Ελλάδα, βρέθηκε φυλακισμένος στην Αυστρία. Γι' αυτό και ό δημοτικός μας τραγουδιστής μιλάει επιγραμματικά για άνοιξη πικρή καλοκαίπι μαύρο και πικρό φαρμακωμένο φθινόπωρο.

Καθώς τελείωνε τό καλοκαίρι τού 1821 έλάχιστοι πολεμιστές άγωνίζονταν ακόμα στη μολδοβλαχία έναντίον τής πολυάριθμης στρατιάς τών Τούρκων που είχαν κατακλύσει την περιοχή άποφασισμένοι να διασχίσουν πολεμώντας τή Βαλκανική και να φθάσουν στην επαναστατημένη Πατρίδα.

Ανάμεσά τους ξεχώριζε για την παλληκαριά και την τιμιότητα του ό Γεωργάκης Ολύμπιος ό έμπιστος και ίκανός συνεργάτης τού Αλέξανδρου Υψηλάντη, την βαθιά πίστη και τό άλύγιστο ήρωικό του φρόνιμα δείχνει ή προκήρυξη που εξέδωσε εκείνες τις δύσκολες ήμέρες.

Ανδρείοι Έλληνες.. από τούς όμόδοξους γειτονές μας εκείνοι που μάς ύποσχέθηκαν βοήθεια μάς έγκατέλειψαν, οί άλλοι μέ συκοφαντίες χαρακτήρισαν σαν έγκλημα τούς αίματηρούς άγώνες μας για τή θρησκεία και την ύπαρξή μας.. Ψηλά τό κεφάλι άδέλφια..

Δείξτε πώς είστε άντάξιοι τών προγόνων σας... Εμπρός άδέλφια,, άς πεθάνουμε κοιτάζοντας άφοβα τόν θάνατο στά

μάτια.. Ζήτω ή Θρησκεία και ή έλευθερία τής Ελλάδος...

Τίς πρώτες ήμέρες τού Σεπτεβρίου ό Γεωργάκης Ολύμπιος ό όπλαρχηγός Γιάννης Φαρμάκης και 350 περίπου άγωνιστές βρίσκονταν στη Μονή Σέκου, εκεί μέσα σε μία στενή κοιλάδα τριγυρισμένη από κατάφυτα βουνά, λίγο έξω από τό Ιάσιο, γράφτηκε ο ήρωικός και τραγικός επίλογος τής Επανάστασης στη Μολδοβλαχία.

Εξί χιλιάδες Τούρκοι κινήθηκαν έναντίον τους και όδηγημένοι από ντόπιους προδότες μέσα από όρεινά δύσβατα μονοπάτια βρέθηκαν στο έσωτερικό τής κοιλάδας και πολιορκήσαν την Μονή.

Ο Γεωργάκης Ολύμπιος όχυρώθηκε μέ έντεκα συντρόφους του στο καμπαναριό τής μονής. Όταν οί τούρκοι μπήκαν στην αύλή και άρχισαν να άνεβαίνουν στο καμπαναριό μπροστά στον κίνδυνο να πιαστούν ζωντανοί ό Ολύμπιος έβαλε φωτιά σ' ένα βαρέλι μέ μπαρούτι και άνατινάχτηκε στον άέρα μαζί μέ τούς συντρόφους του και όσους Τούρκους βρέθηκαν κοντά.. Ο Φαρμάκης έξακολούθησε την αντίσταση για 14 ακόμα ήμέρες. Είχαν απομείνει μαζί του 235 πολεμιστές, οί περισσότεροι πληγωμένοι 'όπως και ό ίδιος. Τά τρόφιμα έξαντλήθηκαν τά πυρομαχικά έφθαναν στο τέλος, όταν οί Τούρκοι έφεραν και άλλες ένισχύσεις και μέ τά κανόνια τους έσπασαν την κεντρική πύλη τής Μονής.

Η αντίσταση στη Μονή Σέκου, έπομένως και ή επανάσταση στη Μολδοβλαχία, τερματίστηκε στις 23 Σεπτεβρίου την ίδια ήμέρα που στην Πελοπόννησο οί Έλληνες έμπαιναν νικητές στην Τρίπολη. Όσους Έλληνες έπιασαν ζωντανούς τούς όδήγησαν στο Ιάσιο και τούς θανάτωσαν μετά από βασανιστήρια. Τό στεφάνι τού έθνομάρτυρα περίμενε και τόν Γιάννη Φαρμάκη άφού πρώτα τόν μετέφεραν δεμένον στην Κωνσταντινούπολη.

Ο Γεωργάκης Ολύμπιος και ό Γιάννης Φαρμάκης δέν κατόρθωσαν να φτάσουν πολεμώντας στην Ελλάδα. Εμειναν όμως μέχρι τέλος πιστοί στον άγώνα και έκπληρωσαν την ύποσχεσή τους όπως την είχε διατυπώσει ό Γ. Ολύμπιος ένα χρόνο πριν από την θυσία τους.

[Υπόσχομαι να άγωνιστώ ως τή στερνή ρανίδα τού αίματός μου χωρίς ποτέ να με δειλιάσει καμμιά ανθρώπινη περίσταση.]

Η προσφορά τών άγωνιστών τής Μολδοβλαχίας στην έπιτυχία τής Επανάστασης ήταν καθοριστική καθώς για έπτά μήνες άπασχολούσαν μεγάλο μέρος τού Τουρκικού στρατού μακριά από την κυρία επαναστατική έστία προκαλώντας του συγχρόνως και σημαντικές άπώλειες.

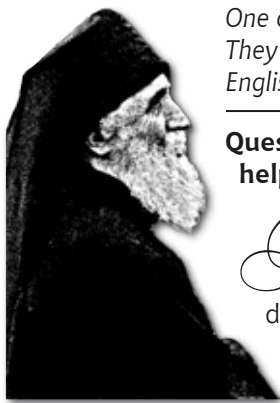
Η Αγωνιστικότητα τους αλλά και ό ήρωικός τους θάνατος προκάλεσαν συγκίνηση και θαυμασμό και ένίσχυσαν την άπόφαση τών επαναστατημένων Ελλήνων να άγωνιστούν [ως την στερνή ρανίδα τού αίματός τους] Για τού Χριστού την Πίστη την Αγία και της Πατρίδος την Ελευθερία].

Αλήθεια ξεφυλλίζοντας την Ελληνική ιστορία μένεις έκθαμβος μπροστά στα ήρωικά κατορθώματα τής τιμημένης Γενιάς μας.

Ας προσπαθήσουμε λοιπόν να μεταδώσουμε μία μικρή σπιθα στα παιδιά μας, για να είναι περήφανα που γεννήθηκαν Ελληνόπουλα... Καί προπαντός μην πετάμε στα σκουπίδια τις Εθνικές μας Εορτές, άς τιμούμε τά άθάνατα ήρωικά παιδιά που έχυναν μέχρι ρανίδα τό αίμα τους για την ΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΙΑ.

ΖΗΤΩ ή 28η ΟΚΤΩΒΡΙΟΥ 1940!

Βούλα Χαρερά



Elder Paisios

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.

Question: Geronda, does fellowship help in difficult times?

In difficult times, a strong fellowship is formed among people. During the war, we lived as soldiers for two years in the platoon and were closer than brothers, because we shared the difficulties and the dangers. We were so close-knit that we called each other "brother".

They were people of the world, with worldly mentalities, and yet they did not want to be separated from each other. They had not read the Gospel, nor any spiritual books. They only had a simple worldly education, in the good sense; but they also had the most important thing of all: love, a sense of brotherhood, a spirit of fellowship with one another. Recently, one of our comrades from the army died, and all the others gathered at his funeral from all over the country. A fellow army man also came to see me here. How tightly he embraced me! I could not break loose from his warm brotherly embrace. Now we are fighting the devil. So, try to become more brotherly and to have a brotherly fellowship. That's how we will all be able to walk together on the steep path of ascent toward sweet Golgotha.

Question: Geronda, yesterday you told us that you felt all the people you saw recently to be your brothers; how are we to understand spiritual kinship?

We are brothers and sisters in the flesh with all people. We are all brothers and sisters, and servants of God, and the faithful are also by Grace children of God, redeemed by the divine Blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In the spiritual life, we are related in the flesh to Adam and in the spirit to Christ. Those who live spiritually experience this spiritual kinship. They think the same way and have the same aims and goals. But if you had, for example, a sister in the flesh who followed her own routine and lived a worldly life, you would not feel a spiritual kinship with her.

Question: Is spiritual kinship ever dissolved?

When someone ceases to live spiritually, he ceases to have a relationship with the other who continues to live spiritually. This separation is self-imposed; he is not distanced by the other. The more someone lives according to God, the more closely he can approach Him; and the more he distances himself from a godly life, the more he is isolated from Him. God does not send him away; it is he who distances himself from God's presence. And just as divine Grace is a power that acts from afar and is transmitted to people, the devil's evil power is also activated from afar and transmitted. For example, two souls who are in a spiritual state and think of each other, share a spiritual contact that transfers divine energy to one another. By the same token, two souls who are living in sin and happen to have

some communication, exchange demonic influence even from afar, like a telegraph being sent back and forth to one another.

Question: If we have regular contact with someone who has passions, but are not swayed by them, can we influence that person's character?

If we happen to have a spiritual condition, a little sanctity, we can be of much help, because the divine Grace of God influences our fellow human being. When we tolerate our brother through love, he senses it. And by the same token, when there is hatred in us, even when it is not expressed, again he senses it. A soul transmits that which it possesses. Passion transmits passion, anger transmits anger, rage transmits rage. Whereas, when the soul is filled with virtues, virtue will transmit virtue.

Question: In other words, if someone keeps company with virtuous people he'll be helped?

Of course he'll be helped. If you enter a monastic cell where incense is burned on a regular basis, you will come out smelling of incense. If you enter a stable, you will pick up the smell of the stable. If you visit a worldly home, you will smell of secular perfumes when you leave.

During the German Occupation, we had a little over an acre of various melons that we cultivated. We had the American type from the Agricultural School that were white and this big and very sweet; we also had the native melons from Argos, and so on. If pumpkins happened to be planted close to the sweet American melons, the sweetness left the melon and went into the pumpkin. The pumpkin was sweetened and the melon became tasteless. This is what happens with the cross pollination which the bees carry out by going from one flower to another. The sweet melon will lose its sweetness, but at least that sweetness will go to another melon. But if a pumpkin is close to a good melon, the sweetness will go to the pumpkin and, if you go and cook it, then it will need a lot of salt. The melon loses, but at the same time the pumpkin doesn't gain. Whereas if it is a melon, the good melon may lose but at least the other melon will gain; it will become sweeter.

What I want to say is that if a Christian who is not very advanced goes near one who is spiritually advanced, the more advanced person may grow weary and lose something, but the less advanced person will benefit. But if a non-believer goes near a spiritual person, the spiritual person's time and effort will be wasted. At most, the secular person might be slightly moved by some of the things the spiritual person may say to him, and consider them from a secular, philosophical point of view. That is, he will understand them in a secular way and will not be able to benefit from them spiritually. In other words, what we'll have is a slightly sweeter pumpkin.

Excerpted from Elder Paisios of Mount Athos, "Spiritual Counsels, Vol. II: Spiritual Awakening"

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THE JOY OF THE DIVINE LITURGY

Every Divine Liturgy is a festal event, a celebration by all the people of God gathered in the same place. The Divine Liturgy was celebrated as a joyous event since the beginning. The Christians assemble to celebrate together the breaking of the bread with "glad and generous hearts. "Thus it was a joyous service of thanksgiving," notes Archbishop Paul of Finland, and, we add, it must continue being one. The Divine Eucharist expresses the joyous anticipation of those who are already experiencing the Kingdom: "and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

E. Hatzidakis, "The Heavenly Banquet"

Scripture of the Month: "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (Psalm 23.6)