



THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 Father John's Message
- 3 News & Events
- 4 Gheronda's Corner
- 5 The Cultural Side
Η Πολιτιστική Πλευρά
- 6-7 Highlights from the
42nd Biennial Clergy-
Laity Congress
- 8 On Beeswax Candles
- 9 2014 Stewardship Roster
- 10 Ask the Elders
- 11 Herald Sponsors
- 12 Preserving the Teachings
of the Church

- INSERTS -

September Parish Calendar
2014 "Taste of Greece" Flyer
FOCUS Emergency Food Drive
Monastery Feast Day
"A Sampling of Holy Trinity"

QUICK NEWS



Holy Trinity campers and staff participated in the Metropolis Summer Camp ministry in great numbers again this year and are seen here in the beautiful Ss. Cyril and Methodios Chapel. Want to see more photos of the life and ministries of Holy Trinity Church? Visit our online photo gallery site at photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org.

Saints Joachim and Anna - Feast Day: September 9



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
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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!



“God’s providence shines with greater strength than the light of this world. Your very existence has been given you out of pure generosity. God had no need of help from us. Let us rather marvel and give Him glory.”

St. John Chrysostom, “On Providence.” (4th c.)

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

As we sit here in our still-new home on Providence Boulevard across from our new neighbors, the Sisters of Divine Providence, it could be said we are simply surrounded by “Providence.” But no matter where we are or who are neighbors are, the same can be said of us all: we are surrounded by the Providence of God, for according to St. John of Damascus, “Providence is Divine will which maintains everything and wisely rules over everything.”

It is that same “Divine will” that continues to guide, bless, grow and challenge this holy community of faith, and we testify to our firm belief in that when we stand together in the Divine Liturgy each Sunday and pray in the Lord’s Prayer, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done.” In other words, help us to see, understand and do Your will, Lord. We are lost without You.

“We,” however, starts with “me.” The fathers teach us that it is impossible and unproductive for each of us to claim to discern the will of God for an entire group by our own insights and then even more impossible to change their behavior. Rather, we need to start with ourself. “He who busies himself with the sins of others, or judges his brother on suspicion, has not yet even begun to repent or to examine himself so as to discover his own sins,” says St. Maximos the Confessor. This is a beautiful and somewhat more gentle, patristic explanation of the seemingly harder words of Jesus, “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?” (Matt. 7.3).

So Providence starts by wrapping itself around each of us individually, and into each heart it shines with the divine revelation or all that is necessary for our salvation. And the workshop for understanding it is the Church. As we are guided to the discernment and accomplishment of that divine will through the scriptures, the holy mysteries (sacraments), the lives and writings of the holy fathers and mothers of the Church, the guidance of our spiritual fathers and mothers, and our participation in worship and prayer, each of us has the potential to grow “from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor. 3.18), and as the light of Christ shines more brightly in each of us, we truly become beacon of light, faith, hope and love, “that those who enter may see the light” (Luke 11.33). As those beautiful beeswax candles (see page 8) are lit one at a time, the light grows as each one grows to its potential. And as each candle is placed next to another, their light and warmth work together to bless everything around them.

As we stand at the footsteps of the “Taste of Greece”, may that be our goal. As we plan the new season of ministries and events, may that be our goal. As we encounter one another on the streets, on the phone, at the table or wherever we may find the opportunity to interact with brothers and sisters, friends and strangers, may that be our goal.

As August 1 marks that start of my 22nd year in this holy vineyard, I truly marvel at the love you have for Christ and the sacrifices you make for Him and His Holy Church and I thank God for the privilege of being blessed by that love for the past 21 years. Let us press forward and burn brightly together, and “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5.16).

With sincere paternal love in Christ,

WORSHIP LIFE

Weekday Services September

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).

Sept. 7, 6:00pm: Nativity of Theotokos Vespers & Vigil

Sept. 8, 9:00am: Nativity of Theotokos Divine Liturgy

The above two services will be held at the Nativity of the Theotokos Monastery in Saxonburg, PA.

Sept. 13, 7:00pm: Exaltation of the Holy Cross Vespers

The above service will be held at the Holy Cross Church in Mount Lebanon.

Sept. 17: Saint Sophia and her Daughters (SG)

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Church School Begins. September 7

The first day of classes for Church School is Sunday, September 7 at 9:30am with Divine Liturgy and the children's sermon, followed by classes after Holy Communion. Please be sure to register your child(ren) during Coffee Hour on that day or on the following Sunday, September 14.

"Faith and Family Wednesdays" To Resume in October

Holy Trinity Church's "Faith and Family Wednesdays" ministry will resume starting in October and continue through May. Building on the fruits of last season's premier and taking into account the constructive feedback of the participants and session leaders, it is our hope that it will become an even more effective opportunity for growth in Christ for all. To submit ideas or feedback, please see Spiritual Life Ministry Chairperson Joyce Athanasiou (412-292-4205).

FESTIVAL NEWS

Holy Trinity's Taste of Greece Labor Day Weekend

It's here! From Wednesday, August 27, through Sunday, August 31, join us for second "Taste of Greece" Festival at our new location. The Festival Committee is asking everyone, new members and old hands, young and young at heart, to pledge a donation of their time and talents so that we can achieve our two big goals: 1) another "most successful festival ever", and 2) fellowship with all of our new Holy Trinity church family members! This is truly a whole community effort, and you are an important part of it. Come, serve, eat, dance and enjoy. See you there!

New On-line Sign-Up for Festival Volunteers

The Festival Committee is looking for parishioners to fulfill a variety of roles—there is something for everyone and everyone's help will be needed! This year, they have made it easier than ever with on-line sign-up and automatic reminders! Simply visit www.HolyTrinityPgh.org and click on the "Sign Me Up!" link. You will be taken to a site where you can see what spots and time slots are available and choose the ones that work for you. Please do it today. Thank you!

COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENTS

Installation of Philoptochos & GOYA Officers Sept. 7

The new officers of the Philoptochos and GOYA ministries will be installed at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, Sept. 7. May our Lord guide and strengthen them!

Holy Trinity Combined Youth Ministries Kick-Off. . . Sep. 14

Holy Trinity will host a combined Youth and Family Ministries Kick-off on Sunday, September 14 following Divine Liturgy at the Church. This picnic and kick-off event will be the start the new youth ministries season for HOPE (Kindergarten through 2nd grades), JOY (3rd through 6th grades) and GOYA (7th-12 grades). Information will be sent to each youth family regarding how to support the event by bringing food, drinks and supplies. Parents, please be sure to be there with all your children, from kindergarteners through seniors!

Seniors Ministry News: Driver Safety, Theater Trip

The Senior Fellowship Ministry will resume regular meetings in September with a program for senior drivers on Monday, September 15, 2014 and Wednesday September 17, 2014 that will update and enhance their driving skills as well as reward those who attend the 2 sessions (from 10:00am to 2:30pm) with a discount on their car insurance for 3 years for senior drivers 55 yrs and older. You may register for this program by calling the church office at 412-366-8700. The cost is \$15 for AARP members or \$20 for non-members and must be paid prior to the first session. Each session will be informative and casual. There will be no tests. You may invite a friend or neighbor to participate in this program. Refreshments and a lunch break will be provided. A flyer is enclosed in this issue.

The other next official group activity will be a trip to the Mountain Playhouse-Restaurant in Jennerstown, PA on October 1. We will enjoy a good lunch and a play entitled "Midlife: the Crisis", a musical comedy. The cost of bus, lunch, and play, including all taxes and tips, will be \$80 per person. Reserve your seats and select your luncheon offering early, as seating is limited and must be confirmed by September 1 by calling Georgiann Bounos (412-761-6953), Tina Fiedler (412-364-1545) or Joyce Countouris (412-366-1498).

Summer Camp Photos Online

Lots of photos of the Metropolis Summer Camp Ministry are now available online, including many of our Holy Trinity campers and staff. Visit pittsburgh.goarch.org and click on the Summer Camp photos link.

Reminder: How to Submit Herald and Bulletin Notices

Have announcements the Holy Trinity community needs to hear? Putting on a special event? Official ministries and parish events of Holy Trinity Church may send information to be placed in our parish communications by sending requests to the following addresses: For inclusion in the *Herald*, please send announcements via email to "herald@HolyTrinityPgh.org" by the **15th of the month** for the following month. For the Sunday Bulletin, please send info via email to "bulletin@HolyTrinityPgh.org" by the **Wednesday** for the following Sunday. Thank you!

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

SEPTEMBER 2014 – "THE VOICE OF HOLY TRINITY CHURCH"



Father John Androutsopoulos

September 1st marks the beginning of the Ecclesiastical New Year. What does God say to us for this day and every day? "Turn to me and be saved." (Isaiah 45: 22)

Jesus, Our Lord and Savior

The Church, which is the earthly bride of Christ, must mirror the splendor and beauty of Jesus. Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior, made

present to us in His Body, which is the Church, is the one mediator of the unique way to salvation. Our Lord understands the needs of our human nature. On the evening before He died, He presented us with a single vision of life. He offered us all an attractive goal.

It happened during His farewell banquet with His closest friends and co-workers – the Apostles. Our Savior had just revealed some of His deeper secrets to these dedicated men.

Then we hear the following sentences recorded in the 14th chapter of St. John: "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." The last sentence prompted an interruption by the Apostle Thomas, it seemed, always wanted things spelled out: "Lord, we know not whether thou goest; and how can we know the way?" Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Many of us are like Thomas. We have been given a sharing in the life and mission of our Lord Jesus Christ at Baptism. We have been exhorted to be Christ-bearers bringing His light and love and compassion to the world. He has been presented to us, as the Light of the world, and the only Way to eternal life. And yet, we still say with St. Thomas: "Lord, how can we know that way?"

Christ: the Only Way to God and Salvation

Our Lord Jesus Christ IS the unique way to God, and eternal salvation. He is not one of several ways – He is the ONLY WAY. He alone is the Beloved Son in whom His Father is well pleased. There can be no real progress in the Christian life without the constant and loving study of the character of Jesus. This is the foundation and the first means.

A second means of taking the way that leads to eternal life

is to seek out Jesus in the Gospels. This Book of books is God's own revelation of Himself. Should we ask, "What is God like?" The answer would be: Discover the Heart of God in the words and actions of the God-man. Let us not forget, that before all other truths, we find Him who is the way, the truth, and the life in the Gospels.

A third source of a loving knowledge of Christ, is prayer. Here the Divine Master Himself assumes the role of our teacher. To read the Gospel is like receiving a letter from God Himself, telling us about Himself, and what He expects of us; but these illuminations of prayer are like receiving a visit from Him, and speaking face to face with our God. Our study of Jesus, no matter how loving, is like the lighting of a candle, in the darkness of our soul. But the slightest revelation of Himself is like the brilliant light of the rising sun.

September Feasts: Opening of the Ecclesiastical New Year, Nativity of the Theotokos and Elevation of the Holy Cross

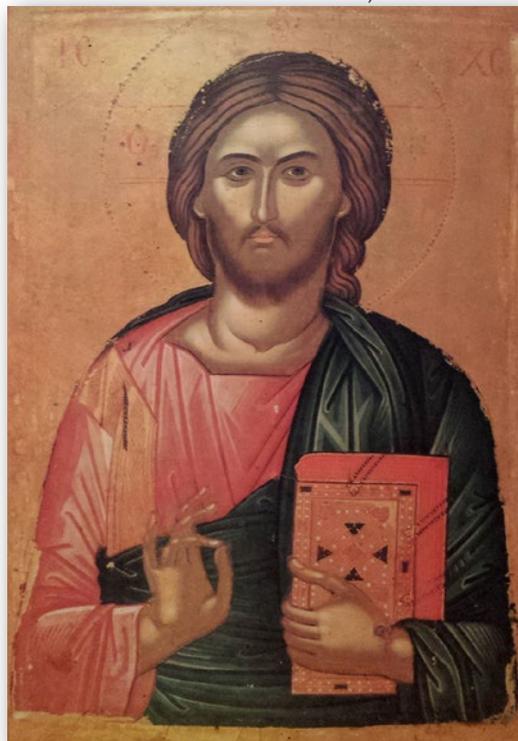
Beloved, regarding the ecclesiastical New Year (September 1st), the Nativity of the Theotokos (September 8th) and the Exaltation of the Holy Cross (September 14th), I have written about all three of these in past issues of the Herald. Previous issues can be found on the website at www.HolyTrinityPgh.org. The first topic would be found in the archives from September 2012; the last two from September 2013.

Congratulations and a Prayer

My beloved Brother in Christ, Father John: I read in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese's *Orthodox Observer* that you were elected by our brother priests as the new President of the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council. Congratulations and "always worthy!" I personally thank you for the love and respect with which you have embraced me in your parish since my retirement in 1997. The following is my prayer for you, Fr. John, and your assistant, Father Radu:

May the Holy Trinity grant you the grace to labor for salvation of the souls entrusted to your care and give you wisdom and prudence, patience and firmness to oppose wickedness with courage and fortitude, and to lead the weak in mildness to Him. Let them expect the result of their endeavors in humility, prayer and mortification, and to seek alone His Glory. Amen.

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



A Greek language offering on Saint Silouan of Mount Athos from the greek language pe

Ο Άγιος Σιλουανός ο Αθωνίτης



Voula Hareras

Κανείς δέν περίμενε ότι ο Συμεών, αυτό τό ζωηρό και τόσο όρμητικό παιδί, θά γινόταν μοναχός και μάλιστα θά έφτανε σέ ύψηλά μέτρα αγιότητας. Ο όσιος Σιλουανός ο Αθωνίτης (κατά κόσμον Συμεών Ιβάνοβιτς Αωτόνωφ) γεννήθηκε τό 1866 στό χωριό Σόβσκ τής περιοχής Ταμπώφ τής Ρωσίας και μεγάλωσε σέ μία εύσεβή πολύτεκνη οικογένεια μέ έπτά παιδιά, πέντε άγόρια και δύο κορίτσια. Από τά παιδικά και νεανικά του χρόνια τό άνήσυχο πνεύμα του έζησε τήν άμφισβήτηση τού Θεού και τούς έντονους πειρασμούς τής κοσμικής ζωής. 'Ωστόσο ή χάρη τού Θεού δέν τόν έγκατέλειψε.

Ηταν μόλις τεσσάρων χρονών, όταν άκουσε τή συζήτηση πού είχε στό σπίτι ο άγράμματος αλλά σοφός πατέρας του μέ ένα πλανόδιο πωλητή βιβλίων, ο όποιος ήταν άθεος.

Όταν έφυγε ο ξένος, τό μικρό παιδί είπε στόν πατέρα του, 'Εσύ μέ διδάσκεις νά προσεύχομα. Νά όμως, πού αυτός ο άνθρωπος λέει ότι δέν ύπάρχει Θεός!

Παρά τήν άμεση αντίδραση τού πιστού πατέρα, ή άμφιβολία δέν έφυγε από τό μυαλό τού μικρού παιδιού. Σκεπτόταν μέσα του, «Πού είναι αυτός ο Θεός, 'Όταν μεγαλώσω, θά γυρίσω όλη τή γή για νά τόν άναζητήσω!»

Από τότε πέρασαν χρόνια πολλά. 'Ο Συμεών σταμάτησε τό σχολείο, μόνο δυό χρονιές τό παρακολούθησε, και άρχισε νά εργάζεται ως ξυλουργός. Εκεί στή δουλειά, δεκαεννιάχρονο παλληκάρι πιά, άκουσε μία μέρα νά συζητούν για τά θαύματα πού γίνονταν στόν τάφο ένός σπουδαίου ρώσου άσκητή, τού άγίου Ιωάννη Σαζένωφ. Οί είδήσεις για τά θαύματα στήριξαν στήν πίστη τήν ψυχή τού καλοδιάθετο Συμεών, «Αφού αυτός είναι 'Άγιος», σκέφθηκε μέ άπλότητα, «άρα ο Θεός ύπάρχει και είναι μαζί μας. Δέν χρειάζεται νά γυρίσω όλο τόν κόσμο νά τόν βρώ». Τί παράδοξο! Ο λογισμός άμφιβολίας, πού παρέμενε μέσα στά βάθη τής ψυχής του επί τόσα χρόνια, διαλύθηκε μέ αυτό τόν τόσο άπλό τρόπο! Θαύμα τής χάριτος τού Θεού! Ο νεαρός Συμεών άρχισε τώρα νά ζει συνειδητή πνευματική ζωή, προσευχόταν για ώρα πολλή, μελετούσε άχόρταγα τούς βίους τών Αγίων και μέσα του φούντωνε ή φλόγα τής αγάπης του πρός τόν Θεό. Τότε ήταν πού έκμυστηρεύθηκε στόν πατέρα του τόν πόθο του νά γίνει μοναχός, τού άπάντησε κοφτά, «Πρώτα θά ύπηρετήσεις τή στρατιωτική σου θητεία και ύστερα είσαι έλεύθερος νά πάς όπου θέλεις.»

Τά πράγματα έδειξαν ότι ο νεαρός Συμεών δέν είχε ακόμα ώριμάσει για νά πάρει τέτοιες μεγάλες αποφάσεις. Δέν πρόλαραν νά περάσουν τρείς μήνες από τότε πού έδειξε τή θαυμαστή στροφή πρός τήν πίστη και οί κακές παρέες τόν παρέσυραν πάλι στήν κοσμική ζωή και τίς άμαρτωλές

διασκεδάσεις. 'Ηταν νέος, ώραιος, δυνατός και άρκετά εύπορος πλέον. Ωστόσο, όλα αυτά τά προσόντα του έγιναν παγίδες, πού παρ' όλίγον θά κατέστρεφαν τή ζωή του.

Ενα από τά ιδιαίτερα χαρίσματα του ήταν ή φυσική δύναμη πού διέθετε. 'Ηταν γεροδεμένος και μπορούσε μόνο μέ τή γροθιά του νά σπάει πολύ εύκολα σανίδες μεγάλου πάχους. Αυτή ή δύναμη όμως τόν έφερνε συχνά μπλεγμένο σέ δυσάρεστες καταστάσεις. Μιά μέρα σέ μία άγρια συμπλοκή ο Συμεών κτύπησε στό στήθος μέ τόση δύναμη τόν αντίπαλό του, ώστε παρ' όλίγον νά τόν σκοτώσει. Τό έπεισόδιο αυτό τόν συνεκλόνησε. Παρ' όλίγον φονιάς, λοιπό! 'Όσο τό σκεπτόταν, δέν μπορούσε νά ήσυχάσει. 'Υστερα από λίγο καιρό είδε στόν ύπνο του ότι κατάπτε ένα φίδι. 'Η φοβερή άηδία πού αισθάνθηκε τόν έκανε νά ξυπνήσει άπότομα. Τότε άκουσε τή φωνή τής Θεοτόκου νά τού λέει μέ γλυκύτητα, «Κατάπιες στό όνειρό σου φίδι και δέν σου άρεσε. Τό ίδιο δέν άρέσει και σέ μένα νά βλέπω τά έργα σου.»

'Η επέμβαση τής Παναγίας, μέ τό θαυμαστό αυτό γεγονός, έγινε άφορμή ώστε ή ζωή του νά αλλάξει πλέον ριζικά. 'Εκοψε κάθε σχέση μέ τήν άμαρτία και μετάνιωσε είλικρινά.

Τίποτε άλλο δέν σκεπτόταν παρά μόνο τό Άγιον Όρος και τήν μέλλουσα κρίση. Τό 1892, μόλις τελείωσε τή στρατιωτική του θητεία, ζήτησε τήν εύχή τού άγίου 'Ιωάννου τής Κροστάνδης κι άνεχώρησε για τό Περιβόλι τής Παναγίας. Πήγε στό ρώσικο μοναστήρι τού Αγίου Παντελεήμονος, πού τότε άριθμούσε 2000 περίπου μοναχούς. Εκεί έζησε για σαράντα έξη ολόκληρα χρόνια μέ βαθιά μετάνοια, έντονη άσκηση και αδιάλειπτη προσευχή. Τήν ήμέρα εργαζόταν στό μύλο, μία πολύ βαριά και κοπιαστική δεακονία, και τή νύκτα τήν πενούσε μέ θερμή προσευχή. Συνολικά κοιμόταν μόλις 2 ώρες τό 24ωρο! Μέσα όμως στόν κόπο τής σκληραγωγίας και τής άσκησης αισθανόταν τή γλυκύτητα τής παρουσίας τού Θεού και αυτό γέμιζε τήν ψυχή του μέ μία άνείπωτη χαρά και ειρήνη.

Ο όσιος Σιλουανός αγαπούσε μέ όλη τή δύναμη τής ψυχής του τόν Κύριο και προσυχόταν μέ πύρινα δάκρυα για όλο τόν κόσμο. Τελείωσε ειρηνικά τήν επί γής πορεία του στις 24 Σεπτεμβρίου 1938 και πλέον αυτή τήν ήμέρα τιμάται από τήν Αγία μας 'Εκκλησία ως ένας από τούς 'Οσίους και Θεοφόρους Πατέρες τής. Μέ τή μετάνοια και τήν άσκητική ζωή του έγινε οδηγός για πολλές ψυχές στό δρόμο τής πνευματικής ζωής. Οί διδαχές και οί προσευχές του 'αποτελούν πολύτιμη παρακαταθήκη για τό σύγχρονο κόσμο. Ας κλείσουμε αυτή τήν ταπεινή άναφορά μέ τά δικά του λόγια προσευχής: «Διψά ή ψυχή μου τόν Κύριο και μέ δάκρυα τόν ζητώ. Πώς νά μή σέ ζητώ, Σύ πρώτος μέ ζήτησες και μου έδωσες νά γευθώ τή γλυκύτητα τού Πνεύματος τού Αγίου, και ή ψυχή μου σέ αγάπησε ολοκληρωτικά...Κι άν'σέ γνωρίσω μέ τό 'Άγιο Πνεύμα, Σέ ίκετεύω, Κύριε, νά δώσεις νά Σέ γνωρίσει και όλος ο κόσμος. Αμήν.»

Από τό περιοδικό Προς Τήν Νίκη



What is the Clergy-Laity Congress?

As described in the Archdiocese Regulations, the Biennial Clergy-Laity Congress is ‘the highest legislative body of the Archdiocese in matters other than dogmatic and canonical’ and is required to meet every two years as a gathering of the entire leadership of the Archdiocese, both ordained clergy and lay representatives.

It is charged with specific duties in the Regulations: “Except for dogmatic and canonical matters, the Congress is concerned with all other matters which affect the life, mission, growth and unity of the Archdiocese and especially the uniform administration of the Archdiocesan District, the Metropolises and the Parishes. It is also concerned with the educational programs, financial programs and philanthropic concerns of the Archdiocese as well as the participation and role of the Archdiocese in the life of America.”

Who Attends the Clergy-Laity Congress?

Per the Regulations, “The Congress is comprised of the Archbishop, the members of the Synod, Auxiliary Bishops, the voting members of the Archdiocesan Council, the Chancellors of the Metropolises, the Vice Presidents of the Metropolitan Councils...and clergy and lay representatives of each Parish in the Archdiocese. Each Parish, which is current in its financial obligations to the Archdiocese for the year preceding the Congress, shall be represented by the Parish Priest, the Parish Council President and in his or her absence the Vice President or in his or her absence any member of the Parish Council designated by it, and two (2) persons elected by the Parish Assembly.” Also meeting during the Clergy-Laity Assembly are the members of the National Philoptochos Society, the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council (APC), the National Sisterhood of Presvyteres (NSP), the Retired Clergy Association (RCA), Leadership 100, the Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and other official Archdiocesan organizations and ministries.

In 2014, Holy Trinity Church was represented by our *Proistamenos*, Father John Touloumes, our lay delegate, Harry Athanasiou, and Presvytera Becky Touloumes as part of the NSP.



Holy Trinity Parish Delegate Harry Athanasiou (L) with His Eminence Metropolitan Savas and other Pittsburgh area delegates at the Clergy-Laity Congress in Philadelphia.

The 2014 Theme: The Family

The theme for the 42nd biennial event was “The Orthodox Christian Family: A Dwelling of Christ and a Witness of His Gospel” and centered on the verse from Ephesians 3:15, “From God every family in heaven and on earth is named.” Hence, many of the presentations and workshops focused on this core element of life and faith. The following are excerpts from presentations by His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America and His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew.

Excerpts from the Keynote Address of Archbishop Demetrios: “The Orthodox Christian Family: A Dwelling of Christ and a Witness of His Gospel”

It was not long ago that the word “family” evoked a particular image in the minds of most Americans. In this mental picture we saw a man and a woman, not just living together but joined legally and in most cases through a religious ceremony, in a lifelong bond of marital commitment and deep mutual love. We saw children, usually more than one or two, who belonged to both their parents by birth or adoption. For many of us also, that family portrait included one or more members of the previous generation, a grandmother and/or grandfather who lived in the home of their adult son or daughter, rather than in a retirement community or a nursing home.



His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios of America officially opens the Clergy-Laity Congress with a prayer and keynote address.

Today, there is a movement in our society to change and redraw this portrait completely. We hear about the “modern family,” which in essence means everything and anything. It seems that in many cases any two people who share an address are to be considered a family, whether or not they are married or have children together. So, the family is under heavy pressure, because its very sense of identity and uniqueness is being eroded by this huge change in public sentiment. If everybody and everything is a family, then nobody is truly a family in any meaningful sense.

Today’s family is under pressure in another



way, too. The demands of the modern world find itself a family,” but even “Why is to say, of developing children no longer find own family and neighborhood sports and activities away ing the norm. The real work is to say, of developing children and life-skills in classrooms and teachers. Then, it is modern world finds itself a family,” but even “Why

To this question, our Bible, the Ecumenical Synod old Tradition gives an answer: the family is a divine institution of God, one that bears the dignity. Saint Paul articulates this precisely addressing the Christians 3:14-19). He says: “before God the Father, from heaven and on earth is named.”

What St. Paul says is the institution of divine origin and social arrangement that a family of earthly affairs. From God and on earth is named. A family through his creative act and the first woman as fulfill each other as “or the first family on earth and meaningful work in granted them the God-like so that together they co are formed in their own mony, the first family for the other.

It is, however, in the encounter a tremendous tension of the family. Among speaking of the Christian that the bond of husband to the bond of Christ and the mutual love of husband like the love of Christ for even offered Himself to o

We have, therefore, the supreme value and irre

2nd Biennial
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CONGRESS

of the modern life weaken family members, between siblings, between children. Economic con- out of the home and into and more hours each ing birthrates mean that playmates easily in their hood, so that organized y from home are becom- work of parenting – which character, religious convic- children – falls to coaches not unreasonable that the asking not only “What is y is a family?”

r Church based on the ods, and the 2000 years nswer with clarion voice: titution, a special creation His own holy name and ulate this thought pre- istians in Ephesus (Eph- to them: I bow my knees om Whom every family in amed.

his: The family is an insti- d character, not merely a arises from the exigencies od every family in heaven according to Genesis, God on formed the first man equals who balance and e flesh” and constitute . He gave them a home t the Garden of Eden. He ke power of procreation, ould enjoy children who image. In love and har- und joy, each member in

New Testament that we emphasis on the institu- g other examples, St. Paul marriage and family says d and wife is analogous nd the Church, and that and and wife should be His Church for which He death (Eph. 5:21-33) to be fully aware of the placeable nature of the

family. We must be fully conscious of the fact that the family belongs to the unique items of the universe created directly by God Himself and shared personally by Jesus Christ, the incarnate God in His earthly life. This awareness and consciousness of the sacredness of the family is our antidote against the constant poisoning of the institution of the family today by all kinds of theories, mentalities and attitudes.

Excerpts from the message of His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew, delivered by Metropolitan Stefanos of Kalioupolis

Our Lord, through His first miracle in Canaan, Galilee, blessed the holy sacrament of marriage, in which two persons of different sexes come together to unite into one body: and the two shall become one flesh. This mystery is a profound one and I'm saying that it refers to Christ and the Church (Eph. 5: 31-33).

Human life is certainly a serious matter, a spiritual battle and a course toward a goal that is heaven. Marriage is the most critical and most important vehicle of this course; the marriage in Christ and the marital bond, the undefiled marriage (Heb. 13, 4), the profound sacrament (Eph. 5, 32). It has also been shown that the success or failure, the progress or destruction in spiritual life begins with the marriage.

We all realize that in the society we live, the God-sanctified institution of the family suffers serious blows from the prevalent climate of contemporary blissfulness, which does not favor the total offering of one spouse to the other and of both to the children, but nurtures fleeting, personal relationships aiming at the release from the duties of the communion of the marriage and the egotistical self-gratification of man, rendering man essentially empty, miserable and isolated, deprived of the blessing of God.

The institution of Marriage and the Orthodox Christian family is foremost a course of love, secondly a course of common spirit and common exercise, thirdly a course of creativity, common creativity and continuation of life, and, fourthly a common course toward heaven, toward the heavenly kingdom. It is a calling of God, it is a joining of diversity that leads to perfection, and, therefore, the spouses become also joint heirs of the grace of life (1 Peter 3, 7). As deacons of the Church and her salvific work, we ought to keep always a



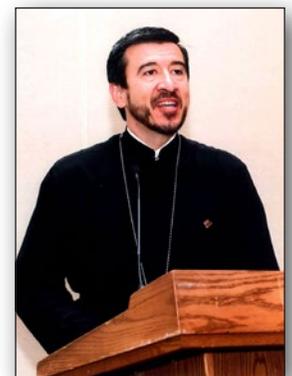
His Eminence Metropolitan Stefanos of Kalioupolis

clear and unambiguous stance on this subject that resurfaces constantly, because only where there is husband and wife and children and concord and people connected by the bonds of virtue there, in their midst, is Christ, says St. John Chrysostom (On Genesis, Homily 6, P.G. 54, 616).

We know, brothers, sisters and children, that you live in a materialistic society that is continually distancing itself from the Orthodox morals and traditions and not favoring the traditional life; a society where faith and devotion to the principles of our Orthodox tradition often seems or is deemed by some as something anachronistic and foreign to the demands of the modern social life. It is here where the responsibility of both the shepherd and the flock lies. You, our spiritual children in America, on free will and choice and after much toil you possess the treasure of the genuine apostolic faith and tradition, of the truth and genuineness in the Grace of the sacraments, the treasure of tradition and family, despite environmental and societal limitations, as pure as the Mother Church of Constantinople has preserved it throughout the centuries. Thus, by lifting the cross of life may you offer witness of the truth of Christ, from Whom every family in heaven and on earth is named.

Father John Elected President of the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council at Clergy-Laity

In addition to participating in the Clergy-Laity Congress via representation of our delegates at meetings, events and the Plenary Session, Holy Trinity Church was especially honored through the election of our own Father John as President of the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council (APC), the official organization representing the over 550 clergy of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The APC's mission is to serve the Archdiocese of America through supporting, enhancing and promoting the mission and brotherhood of our priests on all levels of their ministry, providing opportunities for spiritual growth and continuing education of the clergy and encouraging clergy wellness on a personal level, thus resulting in clergy who are better prepared to serve the needs of their flock.



Father John addresses the Synod of Bishops and over 300 clergy from around the country as the newly-elected President of the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council.

The APC also works closely with the National Sisterhood of Presvyteres (NSP) in caring for clergy families in crisis. Presvytera Becky has served on the NSP board for a number of years.

Valuable information on not just the “how and what” but the “why” of the many beautiful practices and traditions of the Orthodox Church

ON THE USE OF BEESWAX CANDLES IN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

You may have noticed that there is something different about the candles being used at Holy Trinity Church these days. They are no longer white, brittle and a smoky, but honey-golden in color, somewhat softer to the touch and beautifully aromatic. That is because, after careful consideration, the Holy Trinity Parish Council has switched the candles used at Holy Trinity Church from paraffin (a petroleum-based candle product) to beeswax. As a practical choice, beeswax offers a natural, clean-burning candle as opposed to the odor and soot produced by paraffin, which has had a destructive impact on the wall of the Narthex in only one year, requiring us to re-paint it already. But there are various other reasons beeswax candles have been the candle of choice in Orthodox Christian churches throughout the world for centuries. This article offers just a few insights in them.

Candles in the Church

Candles have always had a vital role in the life of the Church; both in the corporate cycle of divine services and in the private prayers and piety of the Faithful. The spiritual meaning of the candle was beautifully expressed by Metropolitan Vitaly when he said: “By lighting a candle, each Christian enters into closer contact with the church and the service, participating in it more actively and invisibly warming his soul by the visible light of the candle. The burning candle represents the entire life of the faithful, from birth to death. It stands for the inner flame of love for and devotion to God. A Christian should burn like a candle before God, and his whole being should gradually be consumed by this divine flame thus marking the end of his earthly life.”

Why Beeswax?

In the service of the “Blessing of Bees” in the Orthodox Church, the priest asks the Lord to “bless and sanctify these bees by Your own deep compassion, that they may abundantly bear fruit for the beauty and adornment of Your temple and Your holy altars.” Pure beeswax, like wine, wheat, and olive oil, is an important element of worship in the Orthodox Church, and pure beeswax candles are used both in private and liturgical worship not simply to illumine dark spaces, but to symbolize the Eternal and Uncreated Light of Christ.

Beeswax candles have always been the traditional candle of choice of the Orthodox Church, partly for their purity and beauty, but also because of their cleanliness. Paraffin candles, a popular (and cheaper) alternative, are made from petroleum and other chemicals, and they create smoke and fumes that are not only unhealthy for people, but over time can destroy icons and frescos. The use of beeswax candles ensures

the longer life of icons and the beauty of the church.

A Sweet, Pure, Spiritual Offering

On one level, a spiritual level, beeswax is a pure substance which burns cleanly and leaves behind the slight, sweet aroma of honey; ergo it is a pure offering. As St. Symeon of Thessaloniki writes, “Beeswax, as a most pure substance, represents our pure and sincere offering; beeswax as a soft substance represents our obedience and readiness to repent of our sins of our life; beeswax gathered from fragrant flowers represents the grace of the Holy Spirit; beeswax produced from a multitude of flowers represents an offering made by all Christians; beeswax as a burning substance represents our nature being purified by divine fire; and beeswax, which the fire consumes while the light burns continually, represents the unity and strength of our mutual love and peace.” On another level, a practical level, because beeswax burns cleaner, it does not deposit the oily, sooty film throughout the church that paraffin candles do. Therefore beeswax, on all levels, has been the candle of choice for centuries.



“For You will light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.”

Psalm 18:28

The Symbolism of Candles

When the Fathers of the Church speak of the Orthodox use of candles, they are referring to pure beeswax candles. With this in mind, we can better understand the six symbolic representations of lit candles handed down to us by Saint Symeon of Thessaloniki:

1. As the candle is pure, so also should our hearts be pure.
2. As the pure candle is supple, so also should our souls be supple until we make it straight and firm in the gospel.
3. As the pure candle is derived from the pollen of a flower and has a sweet scent, so also should our souls have the sweet aroma of Divine Grace.

4. As the candle, when it burns, mixes with and feeds the flame, so also we can struggle to achieve Theosis.

5. As the burning candle illuminates the darkness, so must the light of Christ within us shine before men that God’s name be glorified.

6. As the candle gives its own light to illuminate a man in the darkness, so also must the light of the virtues, the light of love and peace, characterize a Christian. The wax that melts symbolizes the flame of our love for our fellow men.

Our Own Offerings

Because, as noted above, beeswax candles are slightly more expensive than the petroleum-based products, the Parish Council thanks you for always being attentive and generous in your donations when lighting candles and making your own “sweet offering” to the Lord.

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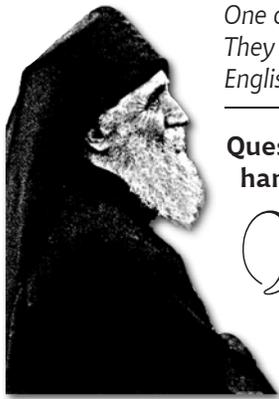
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Elder Paisios

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, how does one handle an angry person?

With patience!

Question: And what if you do not have any?

Go and buy some; they sell it at the stores! Look, when someone is steaming with anger, no matter what you say, it will come to nothing. It is better to keep quiet and say the Jesus prayer. With prayer, he'll calm down, and you can then communicate with him. You see, even fishermen don't go fishing unless the sea is calm; they wait patiently for the storm to pass.

Question: What makes people so impatient?

God has hung the salvation of man on the hook of patience. The Gospel says, “But he that endures to the end shall be saved.” This is why He presents hardships and various trials—so that people will develop the virtue of patience. Patience stems from love. In order to endure the other person, you must feel deep compassion and pain for him. And I see that the family is saved with patience. I have seen beasts turn into lambs. With trust in God, everything evolves normally and spiritually.

Once when I was in the Monastery of Stomion, I saw in Konitsa a woman whose face was just full of light. She was the mother of five children. Then I remembered who she was. Her husband was a carpenter, and he often took work together with the skilled carpenter who had once trained me. A single word spoken to him, for example, “Master John, can this be done this way?” was enough to make him very angry. “You're going to show me my work?” he would scowl, and he would break his tools, throwing them, and leave. Since he broke things up like this in strangers' homes, imagine what he did in his own home!

Well, this woman was the wife of Master John, the carpenter. No one could stand to be around that man for a single day; yet this woman lived with him for years. She suffered everyday living with him, but she had learned to face everything with kindness and forbearance. Because I knew the situation in their family, I would ask each time I saw her, “How is Master John? Is he working?” “Well, sometimes he works, and sometimes he relaxes a little!” “How are you getting along together in the family?” “Very well, Father!” she would reassure me. And she said it from her heart. Do you see with what patience, with what kindness and with what a noble spirit she faced her many adversities! Nor did she criticise him at all! And for this, God shed His grace on her, which made her face shine with inner light. She raised her five children to be outstanding individuals and kept the family together.

As I have come to understand, the greatest scandals, not

only in the families but also in the state authority, stem from the most insignificant things. In the family one person must be humble before the other; one must imitate the other's virtues and also be patient and endure the other's peculiar idiosyncrasies. To make this possible, it helps to think of how Christ sacrificed Himself for our sins and that He bears with us all—billions of people—even though He is without sin. However, when we suffer from the idiosyncrasies of the others, we are paying off the debt of our own sins. God in His goodness has arranged things perfectly, so that with our gifts, we can help each other, and with our faults, we can be humbled by each other. For every person has some gifts; but everyone also has some faults which one must struggle to overcome.

Question: Geronda, doesn't it take more than patience to heal a broken marriage sometimes?

A man once came and told me he had problems with his wife. They were heading for divorce. They couldn't stand to see each other. They were both teachers and had two children. They never ate at home as a family. They ate at separate restaurants after school, and they brought sandwiches home for the children to eat. It was a real drama. The father even served as a chanter in church. His wife attended one church and he chanted in another! So he told me, “What can I do, Father, I'm bearing a heavy cross, a very heavy cross. We constantly fight.” “Have you gone to your Spiritual Father?” I asked him. “Yes, I have,” he replied, “and he told me to be patient, for I'm bearing a heavy cross.” So I started on him: “Let's take things from the start and see who's bearing a heavy cross. When you got married, did you argue like this?” “No,” he said. “For eight years we loved and cared for each other. I worshiped my wife more than God! But then she changed. She started to complain and became very fussy ...” Can you believe that? He worshiped her more than God!

“Come over here,” I told him. “You worshiped your wife more than God! Is it your wife's fault, or is it yours that your family is now in this condition? Don't you see that you are really the one at fault? First, you must ask God to forgive you for worshiping your wife more than Him. Then go and ask forgiveness from your wife. Tell her: ‘Forgive me; I am at fault for creating the conditions we have at home and for causing the children to suffer.’ Then go to Confession, and be sure to worship God as God and to love your wife as your wife, and you'll see, everything will be all right.” I think I shook him up a little. He started to cry. He promised that he would follow my advice.

He came back after some time had passed and he was very happy. “Thank you, Father, you saved us,” he said. “My wife and I and the children are all doing very well now.” Do you see? He was the one who was at fault, but he thought he was the one bearing a heavy cross!

Excerpted from “Spiritual Counsels, Vol. IV: “Family Life”



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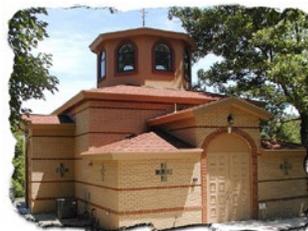
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LOVE EVERYONE

Do your best to love everyone.

If you are not able to, at the very least don't hate anyone.

Yet you won't even manage this if you have not reached detachment from the things of the world.

You must love everyone with all your soul, hoping, however, only in God and honoring Him with all your heart.

Christ's friends are not loved by all, but they sincerely love all. The friends of this world are not loved by all, but neither do they love all.

Christ's friends persevere in their love right to the end. The friends of this world persevere only so long as they do not find themselves in disagreement over worldly matters.

A faithful friend is an effective protector. When things are going well, he gives you good advice and shows you his sympathy in practical ways. When things are going badly, he defends you unselfishly and he is a deeply committed ally.

Many people have said many things about love. But if you are looking for it, you will only find it in the followers of Christ. Only they have true Love as their teacher in Love.

Saint Basil the Great, "The Greater Rules", 4th c.



Scripture of the Month: “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13.35)