



# THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

NOVEMBER 2015

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HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH • PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA  
OUR VISION: "FAITH. FAMILY. COMMUNITY."

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### IMPORTANT NOTICE:

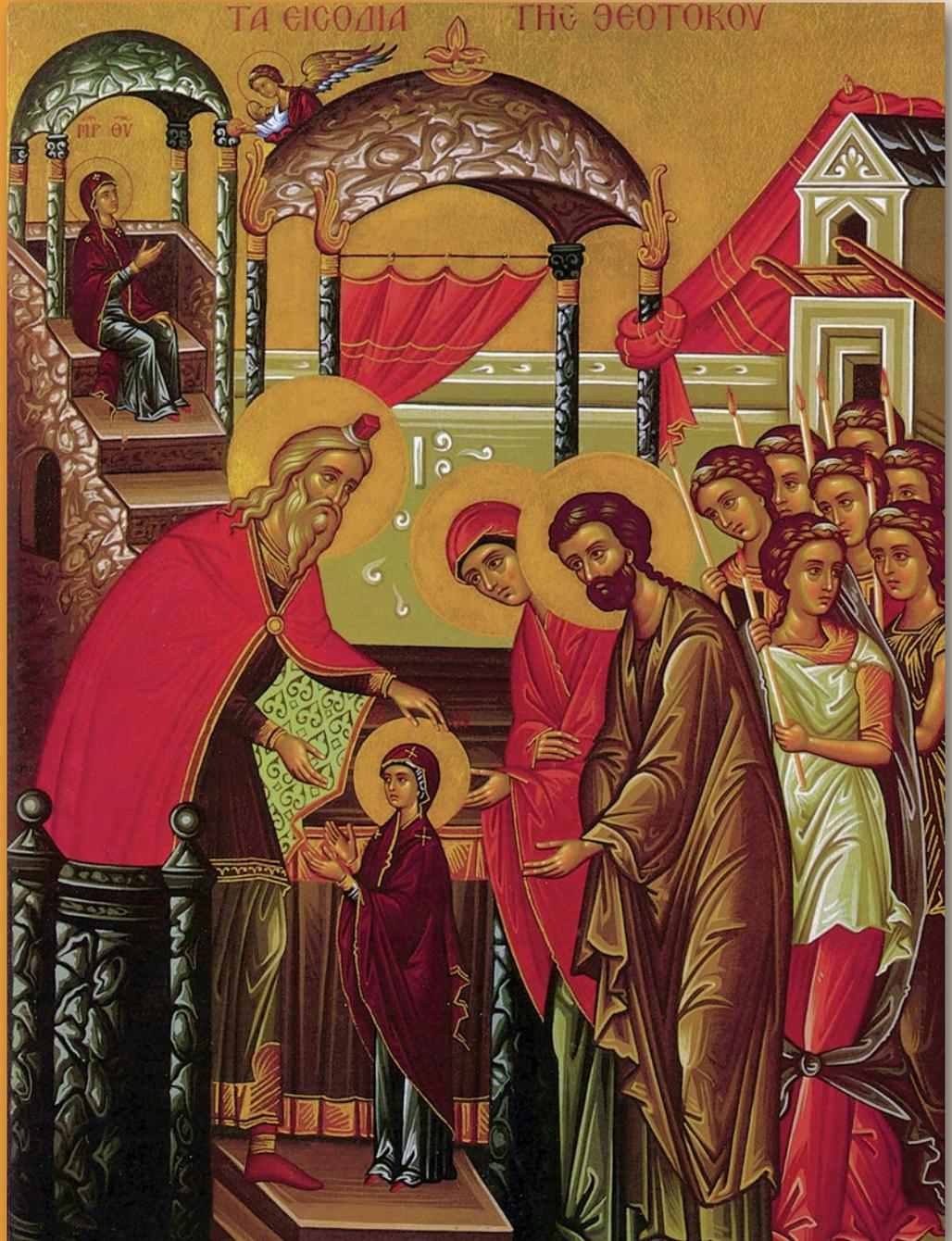
**NOVEMBER 22, 2015  
FALL GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
NOTICE, AGENDA & PARISH  
COUNCIL NOMINATIONS  
FORM ENCLOSED**

## QUICK NEWS



HOPE and JOY ministry children enjoy pumpkins and a colorful fall visit to Shenot Farm in Wexford. Want to see more photos of this event and others in the life and ministries of Holy Trinity Church? See the Community Life Photo Journal on page 7 or visit our online photo gallery site at [photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org](http://photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org).

## ENTRANCE OF THE THEOTOKOS - FEAST DAY: NOVEMBER 21



Today is the prelude of God's pleasure and the proclamation of man's salvation. The Virgin is clearly made manifest in the temple of God and foretells Christ to all. Let us also cry out to her with mighty voice, "Hail, fulfillment of the Creator's dispensation."

**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](http://www.odpgh.org)) and Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America ([www.goarch.org](http://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

#### 2015 Parish Council

George Dickos, President  
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George Danis Joyce Athanasiou  
Andrew Janis Stephen Stearns  
Jason Farmakis Stephanie Sedor  
Tom Germanos Alex Trilivas  
Marios Kritiotis Gerri Valliant

#### Ministries

Please visit the Holy Trinity website at [www.HolyTrinityPgh.org](http://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!



**We praise You, we bless You, we give thanks to You, and we pray to You, Lord our God.**

Consecration Hymn

The Divine Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom

My Beloved Spiritual Children in Christ,

Having just passed through the month of October, we once again encountered the Feast of Saint Iakovos (James) the Apostle, and for anyone who grew up in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America in the 20th century, October 23rd that day also meant

one thing: the Nameday of Archbishop Iakovos (now of blessed memory). This giant of the faith in America shepherded the flock of the Archdiocese from 1959 to 1996. For the younger crowd that may not have personal memories of this great man, the New York Times wrote upon his repose, "In his stewardship, Archbishop Iakovos became an imposing religious figure and a champion of social causes, and the Greek Orthodox Church moved into the mainstream of religious and political life."

During the month of November, when so much focus is on Thanksgiving, why evoke the memory of this beloved hierarch? Take a look at the hymn at the top of the page. You will recognize it from the Divine Liturgy as the hymn sung during the consecration of the Holy Gifts (Greek: "Se imnoumen, Se evlogoumen..."). It was the favorite hymn of Archbishop Iakovos, and he sang it often to open and close events and ceremonies. And he offered it with such deep conviction and, well, true thanks, that once you heard him offer it, you knew how this thanksgiving hymn was meant to be offered from us to the Lord. Having lived the first 15 years of my ordained ministry under him and having been around him many times to hear him singing that very hymn, just writing about it evokes powerful memories and feelings. May his memory be eternal.

So I offer this simple thought during this month of Thanksgiving, inspired by the hymn. It is the simple, short list of how we as Christians should respond to the Lord for all His blessings:

- **Praise Him**
- **Bless Him**
- **Give thanks to Him**
- **Pray to Him**

Note that this is an unconditional and even non-specific command. It isn't "give thanks for family" or "give thanks for good health" or any of the other things we often think of as gifts of God. Indeed, they are, but if we condition our thanks based on what pleases us, makes us "feel good" or matches our expectations, we make our prayer about us, not about Him. It needs to be about Him just because "He Is." Psalm 136.1 also commands, "Give thanks to the Lord for He is good, for His mercy endures forever." That is enough of a reason.

That perspective grounds us well in our relationship with the One Who loves us above all. As St. John says in his first Epistle, "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 John 4.10). Some days we can "feel" that; other days it's harder. Fortunately, His love for us is not based on feelings but on His essential love, and our response should not be based on feelings, either.

So as you sit down with loved ones at the Thanksgiving table, it is a appropriate to bring to mind the many ways we are aware of God's blessings in our lives, but it is better to do so just because "He Is." As Psalm 92.1 exhorts, "It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High." Sing them forever: "We praise You, we bless You, we give thanks to You, and we pray to You, Lord our God. "

Paternaly yours in Christ,

Father John Touloumes

**WORSHIP LIFE**

**Weekday Services . . . . . November**

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).

**Nov. 9:** St. Nektarios the Wonderworker (SG)

**Nov. 13:** St. John Chrysostom (SG)

**Nov. 21:** Entrance of the Theotokos (HT)

*Also celebrating the Ordination of Deacon Anastasios Athanasiou to the Priesthood at Holy Trinity Church*

**Nov. 25:** St. Katherine the Great Martyr (SG)

**Nov. 30:** St. Andrew the Apostle (SG)

**SPIRITUAL LIFE MINISTRY**

**“Faith and Family Wednesdays” . . . . . November 11, 18**

Holy Trinity Church’s “Faith and Family Wednesdays” ministry has resumed and continues



through May. Building on the fruits of our last two years 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). **Important note:** Meetings will not be held on November 4 (National Clergy Retreat) or 25 (Thanksgiving).

**New “Prayer and Panera” St. Nikodemos Fellowship**

The Saint Nikodemos Men’s Fellowship is back! This time, we are meeting on the Third Thursday of each month for morning prayers and Christian fellowship (with coffee and bagels, too!). The group meets at Holy Trinity Church promptly at 7:00 a.m. for a 15-20 minute morning prayer and scripture, then move up the hill to Panera for 30-45 minutes of coffee and breakfast and Christian men’s conversation. Questions? Email at SaintNikodemos@HolyTrinityPgh.org. Change up your morning routine - and change things for the better! The next meeting is Thursday, November 19.

**YOUTH MINISTRIES**

**GOYA Meeting . . . . . November 8**

The GOYA teen ministry will hold a brief meeting following Church School on Sunday, November 8, in the Conference Room. All GOYAs are asked to attend.

**GOYA Turkey Bowl . . . . . November 29**

The GOYA will hold its annual Turkey Bowl Thanksgiving Weekend Football Game on Sunday, November 29, following Divine Liturgy. This is a fun and friendly GOYA tradition, and everyone is invited: players, non-players, cheerleaders, parents and fans! The game will be played on the main lawn at the church. Players should bring a change of clothes and

shoes for play. Sign up at the November GOYA meeting. The flag football game will be followed by hot chocolate, meatless “walking tacos” and other goodies. Yum!

Not into football? We have something fun for you, too! We will also be preparing cards for troops, sending holiday greetings to our brave men and women on the front lines of freedom. What a great way to send love and thanks to those who will not be home for the holidays because they are out there keeping us safe. All materials will be provided.

**PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS AND EVENTS.**

**Philoptochos Sunday . . . . . November 1**

Holy Trinity Church and Philoptochos will join parishes and Philoptochos chapters throughout the Archdiocese in celebrating Philoptochos Sunday. A memorial service will be offered for the departed Philoptochos members and a special tray will also be passed on that day to benefit the Ecumenical Patriarchate, of which the National Philoptochos is a major benefactor. The ladies will also be selling their traditional homemade Loukoumathes for everyone to enjoy. Thank you for your support of our Philoptochos members, their chapter and their important philanthropic work!

**Philoptochos Meeting . . . . . November 15**

The Ladies Philoptochos will hold their regular meeting on the third Sunday of the month, Nov. 15, following Divine Liturgy.

**COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENTS**

**Dn. Anastasios Athanasiou Priesthood Ordination . . Nov. 21**

It is with great joy that we announce the ordination to the Holy Priesthood of Deacon Anastasios Athanasiou, son of Harry and Joyce Athanasiou, at Holy Trinity Church on November 21, the Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple. Orthros starts at 8:30am, followed by Divine Liturgy at 9:30am. His Eminence Metropolitan Savas will preside over the services and by the grace of the Holy Spirit and the laying on of hands will elevate this beloved son of Holy Trinity Church to the Holy Priesthood. A lunch is being hosted by Holy Trinity Philoptochos and Parish Council immediately following. RSVP required for lunch. Sign up at [www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/events](http://www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/events). See the enclosed flyer. All are invited. AXIOS!

**Community Christmas Card Form . . . . . Due Dec. 6**

If you would like to include your name in this annual community tradition, please be sure to submit your form and donation to the Church Office by December 6. Thank you!

**Holiday Poinsettias Form. . . . . Due Dec. 6**

The current issue of the *Herald* contains a form for the sponsoring of holiday poinsettias for use in the church during the Christmas and Theophany season. If you would like to donate one or more flowers in memory of a loved one or in honor of a special person or event, please complete the form and return it to the Church Office with your donation by December 6. And remember: we have a lot bigger church to decorate this year, so please be generous. Thank you!

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

**NOVEMBER 2015 – "THE VOICE OF HOLY TRINITY CHURCH"**



**Father John Androutsopoulos**

**B**eloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Rejoice in the Lord always, as I am rejoicing in the Lord always because on Sunday, November 20, 1960, I was ordained a Deacon at the Assumption Church in Chicago by Archbishop Iakovos, of blessed memory. Happy Name Day to those who celebrate this month.

**November Feasts**

Among the feast days in November is the Fast of the Nativity: November 15 – December 24. On Sunday, November 15th, the Nativity Fast begins. "Advent" is a Latin word that means "the coming." Here it is used to signify the visible coming of the Son of God into the world. Advent is a time of spiritual preparation, a time of getting ready for Christmas, the great and Holy Feast of the Nativity of our Savior Jesus Christ. We can be ready to meet our Savior through prayer, fasting, through the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion and by attending Church services during the Advent.

Another Feast Day occurring in November is Thursday, November 26: Thanksgiving Day: "In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1 Thessalonians 5: 18). Let us not forget to thank the heavenly Father for His blessings. We are deeply in debt to Him. Always be thankful. Make every day a Thanksgiving Day.

**Thankful For Others**

**We give thanks to God always for you all. (1 Thess. 1:2)**

What would we do without other people? Let us thank God for others! Paul, in writing to the Church at Thessalonica said, "We give thanks to God always for you all." Beloved, let us learn to thank God for all kinds of people, those who are easy to love and those who are not. Let us learn to accept people as they are, and not try to change them. We thank God for those who police our city and protect our homes, for doctors and nurses who care for us in illness and whose long hours are spent in dedicated services. Love is the greatest thing in the world, and we are meant to love and to be loving. Our Heavenly Father, keep us loving and thankful.

**A Thanksgiving Prayer**

**"In everything give thanks for this is the will of God, in Christ Jesus concerning you." (1 Thess. 5:15).**

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Rejoice in the Lord Always! On Saturday, November 15th, we have the Nativity Fast, followed by Thanksgiving on November 26th.

**PRAYER:** Our Heavenly Father, we worship you with thankful hearts, for Thou are our God, our Creator, and giver of every good and precious gift. All that is within us today cries out to bless and magnify your Holy Name. In the midst of Thanksgiving, we do not forget our sin and shortcomings.

May your great love and goodness ever lead us to repentance. We thank you that you have made us so that our hearts are restless till they find rest in You. Amen.

**The Blessings Of Prayer**

**Continue in Prayer. (Colossians 4:2). Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. (James 4:8)**

"It takes effort to pray well. It takes preparation to pray meaningfully. It takes diligence to pray faithfully. Yet prayer is no burden, but a glorious opportunity that brings rich rewards to those who walk its sacred path of blessing." Amid the trials and temptations of life, we often forget to "continue in prayer". We raise a weak petition now and then, but do not pause long enough to draw near to the comforting heart of God. Because the cares of this world distract us, and the sorrows of life depress us, we often neglect this sacred duty. Then we lose the power of the Holy Spirit that is generated in the soul when we wait on the Lord. Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ, don't miss the blessings that prayer and communion with God can bring. **Prayer is profitable whenever it is practiced.**

**An Evening Prayer**

**Abide with us; for it is toward evening. (Luke 24:29)**

Almost everyone brought up in a Christian home is taught to pray before retiring. After a day of toil and pressure, we feel a special need to commune with the Savior before we lay our head on our pillow. We thank Him for the blessings received and ask Him to guard us as we slumber. Brothers and Sisters in Christ, before you close your eyes in sleep tonight, don't forget to bow before the Lord. Reverently ask the Savior as the disciples did on the road to Emmaus, "Abide with us; for it is toward evening." He will surely heed your invitation. Then, relaxing in the joy of His fellowship, you will find that "he giveth his beloved sleep" (Ps. 127: 2). When the golden sun is setting, and the day fades fast away, Don't forget to count your blessings; Don't forget to kneel and pray.

**Prayer should be the key with which you open the gates of day and close the door of night.**

**Sayings Of St. Ephrem The Syrian On Repentance**

"How powerful are the tears we shed. They help us approach the Holy throne of the Almighty God. Tears carry a great power. They put you in the Divine presence and grant you all your wishes by God, Who answers joyfully and forgives you."

"Since now we have time for repentance, let us shed tears to heal our brokenness and sins. The time for repentance is short, but the life in the kingdom of heaven is everlasting."

*May we all have a happy and holy Thanksgiving Day!*

*With the love of the Lord,  
Rev. Fr. John K. Androutsopoulos  
Protoperbyter and Internal Missionary*

WORSHIP — BYZANTINE MUSIC — LITURGICAL COOKING — ICONOGRAPHY — OUTREACH PROJECTS

# FAITH AND Family Wednesdays AT HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

Feel like you don't know enough about your Faith? Want to understand the Bible better? Like to learn more about living an Orthodox life? The "Faith and Family Wednesdays" ministry offers guides, teachers and practical experience in all these areas and more. It also provides a great opportunity to spend time around your Holy Trinity family and enjoy worship, fellowship, growth and sometimes just fun! It's a great way to live and learn your faith between Sundays!

## ABOUT THE SERIES

The most important thing about the schedule is simple: be there at 6:30 and there will be both a blessing and an opportunity for you. And bring the entire family, because there is something for them, too! The worship service goes from 6:30-7:15pm. After a brief fellowship break, there is a choice of two sessions to attend, from 7:15-8:30pm, each focused on learning a facet of the faith or spiritual activity. All sessions will take place in the various facilities of Holy Trinity Center. There two tracks each week: Studies and Orthodox Life. Topics and specific activities will vary from month to month, and information will be published in the Herald, the Bulletin on the email list and on the website.

As we continue the third year of this wonderful spiritual life and growth ministry, many thanks are due to all the teachers, contributors and special guests who have made this series possible. Welcome back to all the participants as well, whose feedback from last season was essential to making adjustments that the Spiritual Life Ministry hopes will make this experience even better this year. Questions: See Father John, Father Radu or Joyce Athanasiou.



## COMPLETE GUIDE THE TO NOVEMBER 2015 "FAITH AND FAMILY WEDNESDAYS"

TRACK	WORSHIP	STUDIES	ORTHODOX LIFE
DATE/TIME	6:30pm	7:15-8:30pm	
<b>Nov 4</b> First Wednesday of the month	<b>No Session Tonight - National Clergy Retreat</b>		
<b>Nov. 11</b> Second Wednesday of the month	<b>Vespers Service</b>	<b>Bible Study:</b> "A Panoramic Overview of Holy Scripture" Father John	<b>Byzantine Chanting</b> Peter Papadakos
<b>Nov. 18</b> Third Wednesday of the month	<b>Service of the Hours / Confession also available</b>	<b>Orthodox Book Club</b> St. Basil: "On the Human Condition" Father Radu	<b>Understanding Orthodoxy</b> Ted Cherpas
<b>Nov. 25</b> Fourth Wednesday of the month	<b>No Session Tonight - Thanksgiving</b>		

BIBLE STUDY — BOOK CLUB — JOURNEY TO MARRIAGE — UNDERSTANDING ORTHODOXY — CONFESSION

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU?

Over the course of this year we have discussed the many aspects of Stewardship and how they should apply individually and collectively in fulfilling the life of an Orthodox believer. Specifically, we looked at how our time, talents and treasures should be utilized overall to sustain the parish's mission. In our last discussion we focused on how "Truth" which is a fourth component of Stewardship is the fiber that connects all the other elements of Stewardship together and should motivate us to give our best to God.

A recent analysis on "Orthodox Church Giving" revealed some interesting facts when comparing the three main jurisdictions (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese, Antiochian Archdiocese and the Orthodox Church in America). One interesting fact revealed both the Antiochian Archdiocese and Orthodox Church in America households made the highest contributions to their parishes in 2014. By comparison, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese households contributed only "half" of what the other two Archdioceses did.

When looking at the major reasons on what motivated people to give: Sixty percent of parishioners gave to the Church because it is part of their religious convictions and they believe "it is what God expects of us." The remaining forty percent gave because they felt it was the practical thing to do so the Church could pay bills and take care of needs relating to their parish communities.

In essence, people "gave" generously so the life of the Church could continue.

So one would ask, why is giving in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese parishes half of what the other Archdioceses receive? Well it appears the underlying themes for "giving success" that a parish experiences are: (1) Members are vested in the "life of the parish" by caring and supporting members in times of difficulties and needs, (2) the members are engaged in various volunteer positions and tasks and (3) the members are involved in discussion, deliberation and actual decisions the parish needs to make. The bottom line is that we all need to be "more generous" of our time, talents and treasures because it will enhance the Church's mission and create more opportunities for spiritual growth inside and outside of the Church.

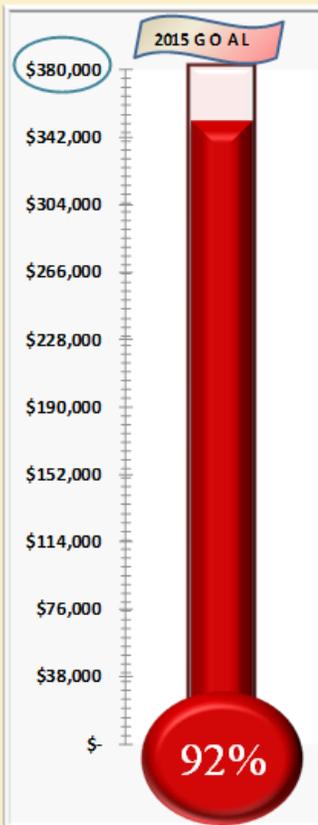
With that being said, ask yourself what motivates me in regards to my Stewardship to God? What area of Stewardship is lacking in my life that I could be doing more with (tithing, volunteering,)? Stewardship Sunday is coming up along with our General Assembly and these are opportunities for you to become more "vested" in the life of your parish, so again please don't wait and put it off, ACT NOW!

Your Brothers and Sisters in Christ,  
The Holy Trinity Stewardship Committee

Holy Trinity Stewardship Update – October 2015

"Together We Can Do It!"

*Η Αγία Τριάδα μας χρειάζεται όλους, μικρούς και μεγάλους!*



**Key Facts and Figures**

- > 2015 pledges received to date (Oct 22, 2015): 283 , pledging \$300,152
  - > Also receiving contributions from donors who have not submitted a pledge card yet (44 donors, giving \$50,852 to date)
- > Our Church's goal is to sustain our church operations and ministries 100% by stewardship.
- > In 2014, stewardship donations covered 66% of the total church operating expenses. So far in 2015, our pledges will cover 63% of expenses.
- > We are all encouraged to increase our 2015 commitment and continue closing our Church's funding gap. We're targeting to reach 315 pledges and raise \$380,000. We've reached 92% of the 2015 goal!
- > If you haven't yet, consider 1% to 3% of your Annual Income as a starting point for your Stewardship Pledge.

And remember: Donations can now be made online at [www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/give](http://www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/give)





**(Clockwise from top left) October 5:** Father John attended the annual La Roche College President's Circle Dinner on behalf of Holy Trinity Church, where the annual Holy Trinity Scholarship was awarded. He is pictured here with La Roche Board member Steve Massaro and President Sister Candace Introcaso. **October 7:** Ladies gathered for the new Crochet Group in the Conference Room, where they enjoyed good company and shared their talents as they produced hand-crafted items to be given away through the Philoptochos philanthropic ministries. **October 16:** Children from the HOPE and JOY ministries enjoyed a beautiful and colorful fall day at Shenot Farm in Wexford. The children and their parents took a walking tour of the farm, harvested pumpkins and wound their way through a maze of bails and stacks of hay. **October 17:** Father John was called upon as President of the Archdiocesan Presbyters Council to assist His Eminence Archbishop Demetrios in the invocation for the annual Archons Banquet in New York, where the Patriarch Athenagoras Award for Religious Freedom was bestowed on Vice-President Joe Biden.



**Christ Is In Love With Us**

**Homily Offered by Father Radu at the Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Monastery, Ellwood City, on October 1, 2015, for Occasion of the Tonsure of a new Monastic - Mother Angelina**

**H**ow can a married person look at what happened today, at this glorious occasion of tonsure into monasticism? Some of us, here, experience our relationship with Christ and with his Church within the context of marriage, so allow me to describe today's profession of a nun as the marriage between Christ and his Church, between Christ and the soul of his servant, mother Angelina.

The service we just witnessed represents the marriage between Christ and the Church, which means that mother



Angelina represents the Church. That means that monastics belong in the Church. Being in the Church, monastics cannot regard themselves as being separate from the community of the Church and even above the Church because of a supposed super-spirituality that far surpasses married life. Monastics are not super-Christians above the Church, but spiritual figures who teach married people a special way of Christian living. Let me explain.

From the beginning of Christianity, all members of the Church were super-citizens who lived a martyred life, a life of testimony to Christ. But in the fourth century Christianity became a comfortable religion, and even a state religion, so many Christians became lukewarm and did not have to put much effort into their Christian life as when they were

persecuted... Or so thought those Christians who decided to be the new martyrs who will find another way to live Christian life to its perfection. Monasticism started out as a protest against the secularization of a Church that became too closely associated with the empire, with power, and with the world. They saw the Church as contaminated with the sinfulness of the world, so monastics escaped into the wilderness, but they remained concerned with the world. First, they continued to pray for the Church that was left in the world; they were like the ten righteous that Abraham invoked when he interceded for Sodom and Gomorrah and it was for the sake of these righteous that God would not destroy the cities that lived in sin. Second, monastics as St. Basil the Great cared for the world in charitable institutions that provided shelter for abandoned women, schools for young girls, and hospitals for the sick. Third, monastics offered to the Church a saint like Maximus the Confessor who was not ordained, and yet remained steadfast against the corruption of Church officials by emperors who imposed theological compromises; the downside is what some have called, "the St. Maximus the Confessor syndrome," according to which some monastics (and not only) criticize the hierarchy and are disobedient in the name of a misplaced zeal. Fourth, monastics strongly defended the veneration of icons when emperors and other clergy persecuted them. Thus, the early monastics of the fourth century were not fleeing only from the world, but also from the worldly Church, so married people count on monastics to care for the world as God's creation, but flee the sinfulness of the world and flee the worldliness that sometimes is manifested in the Church; a monastic cannot be concerned with worldly matters in the world or in the Church. When we come to Ellwood City, we come to be embraced by a community of mothers who pray for us, who help those in need, and who keep the truth of our faith.

We also look at monastics as athletes. We take our kids to all sorts of sporting events, but we come to a monastery to find true athletes. St. Athanasius the Great wrote the life of St. Anthony, and called him an "athlete" for Christ (please note that this term is used by St. Paul in reference to all Christians). Indeed, we see today how athletes rigorously control their food intake, they put their bodies through extreme discipline ... discipline and food regulations that we see consistently in monastic life. That is why your remind us all that we are all athletes for Christ, that we need to adopt the same physical and spiritual discipline, as St. Paul urges us all.

We look at monastics for leadership and guidance: we look up to you as spiritual mothers, spiritual fathers, and we know that our bishops are monks. So we, married people, associate monasticism with leadership, and so do monastics: when St. Photius was selected as patriarch of Constantinople in 858, he was a layman and, as a result, the monastic world all but unanimously refused allegiance to the new patriarch – he was not one of them. Later on he was recognized for his saintly life, but the initial reaction of most monastics is clear:



the entire church associates monasticism with leadership. So be good leaders to us!

Monastics are also perpetuators of culture: throughout history, they have copied manuscripts that contained both the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world: theology and philosophy. We hope that today's monastics will repeat the success of the past, that they will transmit not only religious writings, but also philosophical, cultural works. There are some downsides, as well: when reading Orthodox spirituality, one has the impression that there is no spirituality of married life, but that all Orthodox spirituality is monastic spirituality. There is a practical explanation: Why would monastics write and then copy manuscripts about married life? They didn't. But this monastery of Elwood City has a special charism, of making families feel welcome. Please continue to grow this charism.

We also look at you as missionaries: you go to places where we cannot go. Monasticism is so strongly associated with missions, that, when the sixteenth century Protestant Reformation abolished monastic orders, Protestantism lost its missionary impetus for more than two centuries. Obviously, it later found that same missionary impulse elsewhere, but, as Orthodox Christians, have always had you, monastics, to inspire us to mission.

Dear Mother Angelina, all of these examples are meant to show that, even though you flee the world, the true place of the monastic is in the Church: you got married to Christ so

that you would serve his Church in your newfound ministry, that of the monastic. And if we saw how Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom of the Church, it will now be easier to see how Jesus Christ is the Bridegroom of the Soul.

Today we witnessed the spiritual union between your soul and Christ. It is impressive to read works of monastic literature that present their union with Christ in terms that are very similar to matrimonial union. Of course, there are significant precedents: in the Old Testament book of the Song of Songs, the love between the man and the woman represents the love between God and Israel. In the New Testament, Jesus refers to himself as the Bridegroom, even though he was celibate, so his audience knew that he was not talking about literally getting a wife, but about God having come to his bride, Israel. In the Letter to the Ephesians, the Church is the Bride of Christ, a Bride that Christ is presenting spotless, without wrinkle – she is perfect. You see what is going on here? Christ is in love, that's why the Church becomes his bride. He chose us, we did not earn it. Christ fell in love with us. While this fact is also symbolized in the marriage between a man and a woman, there we might focus exclusively on appearances: the service it about blessing the love between the groom and the bride. But here, today, it was so much clearer: the service is about the love between Christ and our soul, between Christ and the Church.

Christ is in love with us, as a Church. Christ is in love with your soul.

So Dear Mother Angelina, from now on, we, married Christians, might look at you as one of us, not as a super-Christian. But we will also admire you—and your sister nuns—for the way in which you are married to Christ and to his Church in a way in which we are not, but which complements us and fulfills us. You are a very important member in this organism, the Body of Christ, and we count on you to accomplish your role well, for the benefit of the entire Body of Christ. We expect a lot from you because, when we look at you, we are reminded at how much our Bridegroom loves his Church, his Bride. More specifically, today, at your tonsure into monasticism, Christ became the Bridegroom of your soul. Christ is in love with you, mother. Love him well.



## Ordination Address of Deacon Anastasios Athanasiou to His Eminence Metropolitan Savas October 3, 2015 - St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church, Rocky River, Ohio

Your Eminence,

When we first officially met and you became our Metropolitan, I had already been a seminarian at Holy Cross for roughly a semester. As much as I wasn't sure who you were, you were inheriting over fifty parishes and at the time about 10 seminarians, all of which and whom you had known very little about. Yet, you opened your arms and accepted us and accepted me. I have been able to grow so much under the support of the Metropolis and can honestly say that I am a much different individual than I was those 4 short years ago. But this is the Anastasios that you know and have known, but my journey to today began much further back than seminary.



My journey began as all do, in my family. My grandparents set the standard for my life. My Yiayias, who are here today, dedicated much of their lives to the Church, especially in leadership positions. Yiayia Stella served as both the Diocese and Holy Trinity Philoptochos Presidents. Yiayia Becky served on the St. Nicholas Cathedral's Parish Council and continues to work very hard at the festivals, even hand-making loukoumades. My grandfathers were examples of hard work, as one was a successful waiter and the other a very successful restaurateur. I know if Papou George Bertos was here today he would have told me to "be a good boy" as he always did. May his and my other Papou George's memory be eternal. My grandparents and aunts and uncles have played major roles in my life. My Aunts have always been like second mothers, from childhood until now. My family also includes cousins who have loved me and supported me endlessly. Michael and Julie Kritiotis, Mr. and Mrs. K as I know them, and their family has always been my family, even without the blood relation. I can't imagine my life without them and their continual impact and influence on my life is greatly appreciated. Nick Balouris, my dear friend, is here today and he is sort of representing a lot of my friends who couldn't come today. Nick's friendship and his hard-working nature have meant so much to me, even while being roughly the same age. I also had the honor of being the nouno to my godson Steven, who is here with his family. Watching him and his twin brother grow from a little baby into the energetic and smart boy has been a very wild experience.

I am also accompanied here today by my Mother and Father who created a wonderful environment for me to grow up, especially in Orthodoxy. I would be absolutely nowhere without them. Both have taught me so much of what it means to be an Orthodox Christian, what it means to love the Church and what it means to serve. And as I have watched them for

27 years continue to mature, I know that my journey does not end here today, but the journey continues. If it is possible, I would say as a family we grew into the Church together. I remember the year my mom and I decided to fast for Lent together and how tempted I was by my brother's and father's meals. Being married, I now know how difficult it is to cook one meal, let alone two different meals at the same time and that moment I have a glimpse into the mutual compromises that were made and have been continued to be made for the success of my parents marriage. These next few steps that I am taking seem like the first steps I am making that my mother and father can't really give me advice on, it's really the first time I am going somewhere they haven't been, and that's terrifying.

But on the other end of these steps are my Church parents, the clergy. Most of them have been with me for a long time, essentially leading me to this moment and beyond. First and foremost, spiritually, I would be in a wasteland without the leadership and guidance of Fr. John Touloumes. No other priest has made the impact on me that he has. I have been a JOY kid, a GOYA kid, a Sunday School student, a YAM young adult, Sunday school teacher, parish council member, festival chairperson, and seminarian under his supervision for 22 years. I know what the Church is, who Christ is, who a priest is and how a priest is supposed to function because of him. His wife, Pres Becky, though never wanting to take any thanks, is responsible for much of my growth and development through JOY, GOYA, Sunday School, Basketball, and camp. I also want to thank the Holy Trinity community and all those who came here today.



Fr. John and Presvytera, the two of them encouraged many parents, including mine, to allow their kids to attend another program that changed my life forever, the Metropolis Summer Camp. This summer was my 20th year straight at this ministry that is so near and dear to my heart. That program introduced me to so many of those who came here today. Fr. Nick Halkias was my first counselor. He would calm me down every night when I was homesick. He was the first seminarian I ever really

knew and was the first person I personally remember getting ordained. Fr. Costa Keares was also the first priest who ever visited my cabin for cabin talk, which is when the cabin debriefs the day and has the opportunity to focus and learn more, and the fact that I still remember that first one speaks for itself. I now know that Theanne Gagianas and her husband Dr. Peter worked hard behind the scenes as I was younger to

create the camp experience I received as a camper and in a more visible role as I also began to work behind the scenes for camp too. The creativity and enthusiasm that she has for the Church and this particular ministry continues to inspire me and I have been blessed to work for her and beside her. Rhea Ballas allowed for that opportunity and so many more to happen for me. Her heart and her forgiving nature have been lessons that I will absolutely need in this next step of my life. I worked on and off for Rhea for several years at the Metropolis, I can honestly thank her for mentoring me, pushing me to do wonderful things, and allowing me to earn the money to buy my wife an engagement ring. Any group leadership, any speaking capabilities and any conflict resolution abilities that I have were seeded during my time under Rhea, as she continued to trust in me to do the work. Through camp I almost met everyone else who is serving today and began my relationship with them there: Fr. Stephen Callos, Fr. Emmanuel Lillios (besides being my wife's parish priest and spiritual father), Fr. Jerry Hall, Fr. Andrew Lentz, and Fr. Michael Gavrilos. How can someone who grew up at camp in the years prior to your coming not mention Metropolitan Maximos, who we all got to know in such a beautiful way when he would come visit "his kids" at camp? His humble nature hid his impressive resume and I am honored that this was the man who signed off on me to go to Seminary.

After high school, I attended the University of Akron for a year and being in the Young Adult group there opened my eyes to St. Paisios and monasticism through its book studies of the Mountain of Silence and Elder Paisios of the Holy Mountain, which still remain some of my favorite books to this day. Being able to learn about a modern saint who had seen the world as my grandparents did, offers much hope for all of us and the guidance to navigate this modern world. After one year, I transferred to the University of Pittsburgh, which allowed me to return to Holy Trinity.

While I was gone, the Church had brought on a second priest, who ended up being the priest who has pushed me the most intellectually and whom is also serving today, Fr. Radu Bordeianu. The phrase that best suits him is "work hard and play hard," and that's saying a lot for a man with a Ph.D. who at all the same time teaches and seems to be around the Church and with his family constantly. And yet he is one of the funniest individuals I have ever met and displays true balance of these two aspects. I hope to continue to expand my knowledge of the Church, my experience of the Church and my ability to live in the joy of the Resurrection as Fr. Radu easily seems to do.

At the University of Pittsburgh, I was able to attend OCF for the first time in my life, but not without my Koumbara Marina Tripodis, who cannot be here today, after she forced me go



to College Conference. It was a new experience of Orthodoxy for me, seeing multiple jurisdictions present and everyone having the same faith. Once back home, when I attended the Pitt OCF, I had entered a world with other College-aged who were Orthodox Christians who cared about their faith and who knew more than me, which was an appropriately humbling feeling and a nice preparation for seminary. Our chaplain there was Fr. David Sedor, who was such a wonderful mentor and leader for a group of college students. He knew exactly how to talk with our age group. His wife, Presvytera



Eileen and daughter Stephanie are here, who are such wonderful and giving people, who have become like family. My first two Anderia were given to me upon my entering seminary from Pres Eileen. I am forever humbled to have worn Fr. David's anderia.

After receiving my Bachelors of Science in Civil Engineering, I entered Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology. It wasn't my first time on campus, as I had spent two college spring breaks there, had attended the National Altar Boy retreat in 2005 and later that year attended the CrossRoad program. I am glad to be joined here today here by three fellow 2015 graduates, my dear friends Fr. Theodore Ehmer, Anthony Ruggiero, and Jonathan McClish. All three of these men are wonderful examples to me and wonderful friends. They can attest to the struggles and successes that I encountered at the seminary: Anthony being my dorm neighbor, Fr. Theodore being one of my 2-hour-a-week car buddies to Worcester, Massachusetts, and McClish for being my Metropolis compatriot and fellow back-of-the-classroom-sitter. Ultimately these three helped shape me by their close proximity to me and their friendship and understanding with whatever what was going on. I also have to mention Theodore Cherpas, who graduated a year before me, but has been and is someone who I can speak frankly about life with and whose advice I take seriously. Our time at school only intensified that. And when entering the School, I thought I never wanted anything to do with politics there, which was sort-of a rebellion to my brother's tenure there. I eventually became the president of the Student Government my senior year.

My brother George, who I haven't mentioned until now, has been there for 95% of my life's journey. Being a huge sports fan, church goer, Greek dancer, fun guy and the only other grandchild in the family and my only sibling, I don't know how I ever wanted to avoid him, but I did. And after years of sibling rivalry, I thank God that he allowed us to go

to school together for that one year. From that moment we reconnected and George and I became my best friend again, well second next to Lena. He has become one of my closest confidants and a shoulder I can lean on, even if its help on writing on ordination speech.

Fr. George Callos, who was initially my camp counselor, then my friend, and now my spiritual father, he has always been someone I looked up to and whose opinion I appreciated. His constant prayers for me have supported me throughout seminary and through the transitions of my life. The first time I went to confession with Fr. George, and it seemed to be by coincidence at camp. I think we both happened to be at the right place at the right time. I remember being distraught about moving to Boston and Holy Trinity moving from its former location (even when I dream sometimes, I think of that original Holy Trinity that I grew up in), and somehow and somehow his presence and words calmed me down and helped me to see straight. I know that I have needed him before today, but I will need him even more after today.

My whole life I had many people who told me I would be a priest or bishop, especially an older woman at the church, Sophie. For years I would laugh and dismiss any of those thoughts. I believe when I was twelve and had taken a GOYA trip to Boston, Fr. John had graciously given Holy Cross my name and they send me a pamphlet about maybe going to seminary there. I was twelve. I didn't think much about it. When George went to seminary, I felt that it wasn't for me. I ran from the Lord's call as often as he rang. He almost had me after the CrossRoad program, but once back in daily life, I felt engineering was my better answer. And then he brought Lena into my life to act as both a messenger angel and a prophet. My beautiful and awesome wife. She played the biggest role in my being here today. Not everyone knows this, but this all of this, and anything that happened up to this point, it really started with me answering an initial call from her, who essentially delivered the Lord's calling to me. She told me that I would be, and I quote, "a good engineer but a great priest." And rather than laughing it off as I had with others, I got upset with her, and asked her why she would say that. She had stirred up things that had been buried at least for a few years. This was one of those conversations that changes lives. I can't remember how long we were on the phone or what exactly we discussed, but I almost remember essentially having made the decision to check out seminary that day. We had maybe been dating for two years ... heavy stuff. It is also my relationship with Lena that has made me a harder worker. When we first started dating my grades in college spiked up and I had a purpose and a reason for learning. For many reasons she is my inspiration and I know that together we can do the things God has planned for me and for us. I thank God for her presence in my life and for her patience with me.

The wonderful woman that my wife is, is merely a testament to her family. I have had the blessing to know her family, her parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and siblings from the beginning of our relationship, and they have not only accepted me but I honestly feel like a child of their family as well. Her family's dedication to the Church and their faith

has enhanced the things I learned from my family. How else to better prepare a man to become a clergyman than to surround him with dedicated believers in God?

Over the last three months I have been able to experience this parish: St. Demetrios. And though it has been brief so far, I am looking forward to the ministry that is laid before me here. The people have welcomed me and this has already become like a new home for me. I cannot thank Fr. Jim Doukas enough for his support and am looking forward to serving with him in this vineyard of the Lord, not to mention Presvytera Goldie and all those who labor in this parish. I pray that St. Demetrios continues to intercede for this parish and protect it.

I would also like to thank Dn. Ryan and Dn. John, and Dn. Orestes, for being examples of how to properly serve as a deacon at the altar of the Lord. I will need their help today very much and am honored to join their rank.

Your eminence, I stand before you a weak and faulted man. All of these previously mentioned people can attest to times where I haven't lived up to my end of the bargain, and for whatever reason they still are here to support me and I ask for their forgiveness. Being ordained is not a prize for accomplishments, as some may see it, or a testament to holiness, or merely a function mandated by the Church, or a wiping away of a man's personality, or the erasure of his life, or the creation of a magician or something else, but something else entirely. When God became Incarnate, when the Logos took on flesh and became the person of Jesus Christ, He wasn't born a King of Wealth or Power or Knowledge, but simply a regular baby boy, seemingly unnoticeable to the naked eye. Vestments might be placed on me, yet my flesh and blood do not cease to exist and especially to those who have known me, I will probably not seem "changed." And yet, we are going to pray for the Holy Spirit to make me something that I am not currently. And I will become that. God can and has worked wonders in grandiose ways, but I think God prefers to take the weak and make them strong, to take the humble and lift them up, to take the meek and make them leaders, to take the broken and make them well. We will pray for God to make me what he needs me to be, and at least for the next month or so, that's a deacon.

Thank you for your Archpastoral guidance and love that you have continued to show me throughout our time of knowing one another. I hope to serve His flock that you have been charged with in a manner that brings glory to God. I humbly offer my service to you. Many years master! Eis Polla eti Despota!



Article from the journal "Pros Tin Nikin" on the Holy Angels and two original poetry compositions by Voula Hareras



**Voula Hareras**

### Οι Άγγελοι

Ερχονται μέ τις δροσιές του φθινοπώρου πάνω στα άγγελικά τους φτερά, νά μάς κάνουν συντροφιά οί άγγελοι του Θεού, πού γιορτάζουν μαζί μας ιδιαίτερα πρίν νά μπη ό χειμώνας.

Τό ήμερολόγιο τής Έκκλησίας μας σημειώνει '8 Νοεμβρίου. Η Σύναξις τών άρχιστρατήγων Μιχαήλ καί Γαβριήλ καί τών λοιπών 'Ασωμάτων Δυναμέων. Μαζί τους

είναι κι ό Ραφαήλ ό Αρχάγγελος. Τό όνομα του 'Αρχαγγέλου Μιχαήλ δηλώνει τήν παντοκρατορική δύναμι του Θεού (τίς ώς ό Θεός ήμών).

Ο Γαβριήλ μέ τό όνομά του σημαίνει (ήρωας του Θεού). Καί Ραφαήλ δηλώνει ότι ό Θεός (άται) (θεραπεύει) πάντας. 'Ιδιαίτερα ό 'Αρχάγγελος Ραφαήλ φανερώνει στον Τωβίτ, (πρόσωπο τής παλαιάς διαθήκης) ότι είναι ένας από τούς έπτά άγγέλους πού μεταφέρουν τίς προσευχές τών ανθρώπων στον θρόνο του Θεού.

Είναι ιδιαίτερα τιμητικό γιά μάς τούς ανθρώπους νά ύπηρετούν τίς ανάγκες μας οί άσώματοι Άγγελοι. Καί λέμε άσώματοι διότι οί Άγγελοι δέν έχουν σώμα ίδιο μέ τό δικό μας (ύλικό) γι 'αυτό δέν πεθαίνουν όπως έμεις. Είναι πνευματικά

όντα. 'Ονομάζονται (Λειτουργικά πνεύματα εις διακονίαν άποσταλλόμενα από τον Θεό γιά νά μάς εύεργετούν).

Οί Άγγελοι είναι δυνατοί, γεμάτοι αγάπη γιά μάς τούς ανθρώπους, είναι σοφοί συγκριτικά μέ μάς, εύεργετικοί, άγιοι καί ύποταγμένοι στό θέλημα του Θεού, τον όποιον αγαπούν, ύμνολογούν, καί λατρεύουν αιώνίως. Οί άγιοι Άγγελοι κατά τήν γέννησιν του Κυρίου, τήν άγια νύχτα, πλημμύρισαν τά ούράνια μέ τήν χαρά τους καί τους ύμνους τους, στρατιές όλόκληρες πού γέμισαν τήν νύχτα καί τήν γή μέ τον άγγελικό τους ύμνο, πού άκόμα τον ψέλνει ή Έκκλησία μας σέ κάθε θεία λειτουργία. (Δόξα έν ύψιστοις Θεώ).

'Όταν όμως μιλάμε γιά Άγγέλους, δέν πρέπει νά ξεχνάμε ότι αυτά τά έκλεκτά πλάσματα του Θεού πέρασαν τήν δοκιμασία τής ύπακοής στό θέλημα Του. Καί όσοι από αυτούς στάθηκαν άσάλευτοι πλάϊ στον 'Αρχάγγελο πού έδήλωσε ανεπιφύλακτα τήν ύπακοή του στό θείο μεγαλειό, έστερεώθηκαν στην άγιότητα.

Καί τήν μακαριότητα του ούρανού Βασιλέως Θεού..ένώ οί άλλοι.. έγιναν διαβόλοι. 'Όμως στην γιορτή τής μνήμης τους άς μή μιλάμε γιά σκοτάδια καί γιά πτώσεις. Στο χέρι μας είναι νά πάρουμε θέσι στα δεξιά του 'Αγίου Θεού, καί ποτέ, ποτέ, άπεναντί Του. Καί όσοι αισθάνονται τον πειρασμό νά τούς ταλαιπωρή καί νά τούς φοβίζη, άς φέρνουν ζωντανό στη συνείδησί τους τών άγιών Άγγέλων τό πρόσταγμα (Στώμεν καλώς).

— Πρός Τήν Νίκη

### Για Σένα Ελλάδα

Υπάρχουν στην υδρόγειο, νησιά,  
'όπου παράγουνε πολύτιμα κοράλια,  
'όμως κανένα τους Πατρίδα μου καλή,  
δεν έχει των νησιών σου τ'ακρογιάλια.

Υπάρχουν χώρες στον πλανήτη μας πολλές,  
που'χουν αδάμαντες, χρυσάφι, ορυχεία,  
'όμως καμιά τους Ελαδίτσα γαλανή,  
δεν έχει τη δική σου ιστορία.

Κράτη υπάρχουνε στον κόσμο δυστυχώς,  
που υπερέχουν από σε, σε πανοπλία,  
κανένα τους Ελλάδα μου μικρή,

δεν έχει των παιδιών σου την ανδρεία.

Κι'άκόμα ξέρω πως υπάρχουνε λαοί,  
που αγωνίζονται για έρευνες, σοφία,  
ας θυμηθούμε πως τους δίδαξες Εσύ,  
το τι θα πεί Ελευθερία, Δημοκρατία.

Τα ξέρεις όλα και γι'αυτό χαμογελάς,  
και προπαντός που τα παιδιά σου είν'ενωμένα,  
και είναι έτοιμα σε κάθε μια στιγμή  
να χύσουνε το αίμα τους για σένα.

— Βούλα Χαρερά

### Ηθελα Ναμουν

Ηθελα νάμουν τό άστέρι τό λαμπρό  
Πού φώτιζε Χριστέ μου τή Σπηλιά σου  
Νάμουν τό άκακο άρνάκι τό λευκό  
Πού πρώτο θάβλεπα, από άλλους τή ματιά σου

Ας ήταν νάμουν λουλουδάκι ταπεινό  
Στήν άκρη τής Σπηλιάς νάχα φυτρώσει  
Θάμουν τό μόνο λουλουδάκι εις τή Γή  
Πού πρώτο τ' άρωμά του νά σου δώσει

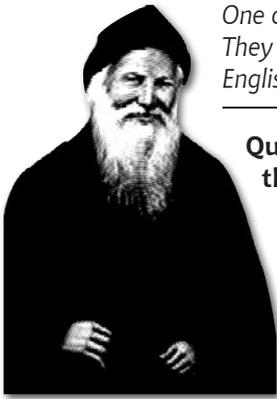
Ας έγινόμουνα νιφάδα του χιονιού  
Στό βάθος τής Σπηλιάς νά είσχωρήσω  
Νά γίνω μιά μικρή δροσοσταλιά

Καί τά χειλάκια σου Χριστέ μου νά δροσίσω

Φλογέρα άς ήταν νάμουν του βοσκού  
Τήν νύχτα τήν Αγία τήν Μεγάλη  
Μέ τούς Αγγέλους πούνε πάνω άπ'τήν Σπηλιά  
Τό Ωσαννά έν τοίς Υψίστοις νά σου ψάλει

Καμπάνα άς ήμουν νά χτυπούσα δυνατά  
Χριστός Γεννάτε νά φωνάξω πέρα ως πέρα  
Γιά νά δοξάσουν όλοι, ανθρωποι στη Γή  
Τήν Αγια καί Μεγάλη τούτη ήμέρα

— Βούλα Χαρερά



St. Porphyrios

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: Gheronda, how can we find the presence of Christ in our prayer?**

**F**or Christ to enter your heart you must love Him. In order to love Him, He must first love you. God must first know you and then you Him. He will stoop to you, if you first seek Him. In order for Him to love you, you must be worthy. In order to be worthy, you

must prepare yourself.

First of all, you must shun all self-interest. Prayer must be entirely selfless. Everything must happen mystically and without self-interest. That is, don't think that if you concentrate with your mind then grace will come into your heart also and you will experience that leap of joy. Don't pray with that motive, but with simplicity and humility. Aspire always to the glory of God. What did I tell you about the nightingale? It sings without anyone seeing. Be like that — selfless. Give yourself over to the worship of God in secret.

But be careful! As we said, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Don't let your malicious self know what's going on. Live in Paradise and don't let your evil self know and envy it. Don't forget that there exists the envy of the evil one.

Preparation is also to learn to keep the commandments of God. To expel the passions—condemnation, anger, etc.—in a subtle way. That is, do not strike at the evil directly, but, disdaining the passion, turn with love to God. Occupy yourself with singing hymns, the triumphant hymns of the saints and martyrs and the Psalms of David.

**Question: How will we know when our heart is prepared?**

**G**radually grace will visit you. You will enter into joy. You will begin to live in peace and then you will become stronger by virtue of the divine grace. You will not become angry, or irritated, you will not be offended, you will not judge others, but rather receive everyone with love. You will have that which Saint Paul describes: love does not boast...it does not behave in an unseemly manner... it does not rejoice in injustice, but rejoices in truth; it covers and protects all things, it believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails. The prayer purifies the soul and keeps the mind in check. The most perfect work is done in the depths of the human soul, which is hermetically sealed and known only to God. And so we witness something extraordinary: people who are transformed into children of God, even though they had reached the very depths of their self-destructiveness.

And I, too, wretched and crooked-up fellow that I am, make this effort. I don't give myself over openly in prayer, but secretly I pray. Do you understand? The grace of God comes and overshadows you too. It brings a freshness and joy to you

also as we live together, eat together, talk and pray and simply keep company with one another. Do you understand? Only someone who is thoughtless, someone who is “thick-skinned” and cannot be moved by prayer, remains a stranger to grace. Pray for God to reveal to you the “unseen” things. There is much that we do not know. Say to Christ, “Whatever You want. Whatever Your love desires.” He will lead you. Look to Him.

**Question: Are there any dangers along this road of developing a practice of truly spiritual prayer?**

**T**he most dreadful delusion can be created by spiritual prayer. Other prayers are prayed to a large extent by our mind. We simply say them and our ears hear them. They are said in a different way. But spiritual prayer is something else. And if in this spiritual dimension desire is enkindled, not by your good self, but by the other self, the egotistical self, then undoubtedly you will begin to see lights, but not the light of Christ, and undoubtedly you will begin to experience a pseudo-joy. But in your outward life, in your relations with other people, you will be ever more aggressive and irascible, more quick-tempered and fretful. These are the signs of the person who is deluded. The person who is deluded does not accept that he is suffering from delusion.

He is fanatical and does harm. This is what happens with zealots, those who act with a zeal that is not tempered by divine knowledge. Listen to an example of this:

Saint Makarios, the famous Desert Father, had decided to go to a church festival along with the monk who was subservient to him. The young monk had gone on ahead. He was a beginner and had a beginner's zeal. As he was walking along he met an idolater, a priest of a pagan temple. He spoke harshly to him and said: “Where are you off to, you deluded soul?” The priest was enraged and attacked the novice, leaving him virtually unconscious.

A short time later the priest met the elder. When Abba Makarios, blessed as he was by divine grace, saw the man in a state of shock and aggravation, he said to him: “Good man of God, where are you going to?”

As soon as the priest heard these words his heart softened, he stopped in his tracks, and said: “Your words have calmed me down.” “Yes,” said Abba Makarios. “I see you're in a hurry, only you don't know where you're hurrying to.” But he said it in a humble and brotherly tone of love.

Abba Makarios spoke to him in such an inspired way, that the idolater gradually changed his beliefs, became a monk and was saved. With his good words and manners he communicated the good spirit. He communicated the uncreated energy and entered the soul of the idolater. The novice, on the contrary, communicated a spirit of anger and aggression from the spirit he had within him.

*Excerpted from “Wounded By Love,” a 2005 book compiled after the repose of Saint Porphyrios (+ 1991) from an archive of notes and recordings of his reminiscences, conversations and words of guidance. He was canonized in 2013.*



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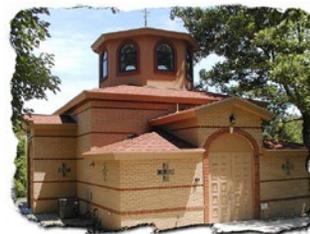
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**True Thanksgiving for the Most Precious Gift**

**T**here are three things required to make a gift most precious: 1) that the gift itself be great; 2) that the person giving the gift have love; and 3) that the person receiving the gift be benefited by it. These three things are wondrously found in the Mystery of the Divine Eucharist.

Saint John of Damascus said, "This Mystery is called 'receiving' because through it we receive the Divinity of Jesus. And it is called 'Communion' because through it we enter into communion with Christ and are made partakers of both His flesh and His divinity."

It is also named "Thanksgiving" [Eucharist] because its very name prompts us to give thanks to God for the many blessings and graces He has given us through this Mystery, which is of the greatest importance. Saint John Chrysostom taught, "The best preservative of any blessing is the remembrance of the blessing, and continual thanksgiving."

Make a promise to give your whole self to the Lord, for He gives His whole Self to you. Thank Him from your heart for granting you such a great and exceeding gift, and ask Him to add a new spirit and a new heart to the many blessings He has given you, so that you may reckon His blessings properly and offer them back with proper thanksgiving and reciprocation, both through words and works.



Excerpted from *Concerning Frequent Communion*, by St. Nikodemos the Hagiorite (18th c.)

Scripture of the Month: "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise." (Ps. 100.7)