

THE HOLY TRINITY

HERALD

Faith. Family. Community



March 2021
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PHOTO OF THE MONTH



Page 8: Evangella and Stefania Bounos join other Holy Trinity GOYAns to "Find a Way" to prepare and host the annual GOYA Community Valentine's Brunch. Well done, faithful teens!



We venerate Your pure icon, O Good One, begging forgiveness of our sins, O Christ our God. Of Your own will You condescended to ascend upon the Cross in the flesh and deliver those You created from the bondage of the enemy. Wherefore, with thanks, we cry out, "When You came to save the world, You filled all things with joy, O our Savior."

Icon and Hymn of the Restoration of the Holy Icons - "Sunday of Orthodoxy"

THE NEWS MAGAZINE OF HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH, PITTSBURGH, PA



Father John Touloumes
Proistamenos

“FIND A WAY”

Holy Trinity Church Lent 2021 Theme

My beloved Holy Trinity family,

Of all the treasures of the liturgical life of the Orthodox Church, some of the most beautiful are found in the priestly prayers of the Divine Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great. It is used during the Sundays of Lent and a few other select feasts of the year. One of those prayers is offered as the hymn, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord of Sabaoth” (Άγιος, Άγιος, Άγιος, Κύριος Σαβαώθ) leads up to the consecration of the Holy Gifts. In essence it traces the relationship of God and man from the time He made us “by taking dust from the earth” then placed us ‘in a garden of delight’ with the promise of eternal blessings. But something went wrong. As the prayer continues, “When he disobeyed You, the true God, Who had created him, and was led astray by the serpent, becoming subject to death through his own transgressions, You, O God, in Your righteous judgment, expelled him from paradise into this world.”

We all know that story. But here is the amazing thing: The very next phrase of that prayer reveals that even after we rejected His love, **God did not give up on us: He found a way to bring us back!** The Creator’s love and desire for us to be with Him in a relationship of love did not cease for a second. “You visited him in various ways: You sent forth prophets; You performed mighty works by your saints; You appointed angels as guardians” and ... (wait for it!) ... “when the fullness of time had come You spoke to us through Your Son Himself.” Revealing the complete plans, it goes on, “He gave Himself as ransom to death...He loosed the bonds of death. He rose on the third day, having opened a path for all flesh to the resurrection from the dead.”

When we disobeyed, **God found a way.** When we rejected His prophets, **God found a way.** When we persecuted His saints, **God found a way.** And when we refused every other offer, **God still found a way by sending us His Son to die for us so by Him we might rise out of death and sin into eternal life with Him.**

Our Lenten theme, “**FIND A WAY,**” honors that determination and reminds us it is not God’s plan that failed, but it was our failure to respond in love, thanksgiving and obedience to Him. It was not about what God didn’t do; it was about what we didn’t do. We knew we were no longer in Paradise, but when we did not come around by any other means, “He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life” (John 3.16).

If that’s how much God loves us and has found a way, how can we not do everything to find a way back to Him? After an unthinkable Lent last year, when civil and ecclesiastical rules kept us from attending the sacred services, how can we not **FIND A WAY BACK** this year? Maybe not everyone is fully ready yet, and that’s ok. Use your best God-inspired discretion and make safe choices, for sure, but know this: the Holy Light of the Resurrected Christ is waiting for you. So no matter what, **FIND A WAY** to hold it tall and bright this year!

Yours with paternal love and prayers in Christ,

MARCH

WORSHIP LIFE

Weekday Services - All at Holy Trinity Church

Weekday Divine Liturgies and certain Lenten services are normally held at the Saint George Chapel, but due to current Metropolis COVID safety regulations, all services are being held at Holy Trinity Church. On Sundays and feast days, Orthros is at 8:30am, followed by Divine Liturgy at 9:30. For all other services, please see the online parish calendar at HolyTrinityPgh.org/calendar or see the Lenten Services Schedule.

Saturdays of the Souls..... March 6, 13, 20

Preceding the start of Lent and during the first week of Lent, the Church offers the "Saturdays of the Souls" to commemorate those who have fallen asleep in the Lord. Orthros is at 8:30am followed by Divine Liturgy at 9:30am and the Memorial Service. Download the names form at HolyTrinityPgh.org/documents/worship to submit names for commemoration and be sure to attend and commemorate your departed loved ones. All those able to bring "kollyva" memorial wheat for offering during the memorial prayers are asked to do so. Thank you!

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWS

Church School Continues In-Person

Reflecting changes in local civil and school guidance regarding recent restrictions, we are glad to announce that



Coffee Hour, in-person meetings and Church School classes are continuing – with appropriate precautions in place. Physical distancing, masks and capacity limits of 50% remain in place. Hopefully this crisis is beginning to end ... let's stay the course and not let down

our guard! Thank you to the staff, families and students for your cooperation, understanding and desire to keep this community and all who participate in its worship and life safe. May all we do in His Holy Name honor the Lord and proclaim His might!

PHILOPTOCHOS MINISTRY NEWS

Philoptochos Meeting.....March 21

The next Ladies Philoptochos Meeting will be held on

Sunday, March 21, beginning at 6:30pm via Zoom. The Philoptochos hopes that you will attend this meeting. Topics include important items related to the essential work of this philanthropic ministry. Thank you!

Philoptochos "Unbake Sale"

Due to the current pandemic environment, the Philoptochos will not be offering its traditional spring bake sale, but the need to support the important philanthropic work of the ministry continues both locally and nationally, from assisting those in need to sustaining our monasteries to supporting prison ministry. The ladies have mailed their "Unbake Sale" donation form to all our parishioners.

YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS

GOYA MeetingMarch 7

Holy Trinity GOYA will hold its monthly meeting on Sunday, March 7, in the Conference Room following Church School. All teens are invited to attend.

GOYA Lenten Soup Sales March 21-April 25

The GOYA is once again offering its very popular Lenten soup sales during the Sundays of Lent. Among the many good reasons to buy some to take home are that they are strict Lenten recipes, they provide fund-raising support for our GOYA ministry ... plus they taste great and they are good for you! Please visit the Lenten Soup Sales table in Gallery during Coffee Hour each week! Thank you for supporting our youth as you strive to maintain and grow your spiritual discipline of fasting during Lent!

OTHER MINISTRY NEWS

Bereavement Support Ministry April 13

Join us for our upcoming monthly group gathering on April 13th Tuesday evening. The Holy Trinity Bereavement Support Ministry Team provides spiritual care to our parishioners and their extended family & friends in times of grief and loss of a loved one. We are returning back to our in-person meetings beginning on Tuesday, April 13th. However, during this challenging time, we are opening up our ministry to helping those in dealing with other losses too. Loss comes in many forms such as loss of a job or family business, loss of identity and purpose when family caregiving changes, loss of a pet, loss of independence and mobility when one ages, loss of one's mental alertness with dementia and chronic illness, and loss of a role when children leave home and go to college.

These are only some losses. Everyone's grief and loss journey is unique. It may be a recent loss or one from

many years ago. Grief is a reality and takes time to better understanding when the journey is accompanied by someone who cares. Our monthly bereavement support group gatherings will resume on the first Monday evening of the month after our April 13th meeting. Our session is 7:00-8:00 p.m. Feel free to bring a photo of your loved one. If you are not grieving a loved one, then bring a photo of yourself with family or friends at an event that brings a special memory. All are welcome to participate in group sharing or observe through quiet time with others who care. To learn more about our Bereavement Support Ministry and/or our private support sessions, please contact Amy Armanious at visitation@HolyTrinityPgh.org

Saint Lydia Women's Study Ministry is Back!

Ladies, are you ready to share in some good fellowship and spiritual growth with your sisters in Christ? The Saint Lydia Women's Study Ministry is there for you. It is open to women of all ages both in-person and online. Upcoming sessions will be held Mar. 9, Mar. 23, April 6 and April 20 both in-person and online! The women are studying the book, "Renewing You" by Father Nicholas and Presvytera Roxanne Louh. For information contact Stacy Dickos at SaintLydia@HolyTrinityPgh.org. Hope to see you there!

Saint Nikodemos "Prayer and Panera" Men's Prayer and Fellowship Ministry is Back!

Men, are you tired of just working on work and are you ready to recharge working on your spiritual life as husbands and fathers? It starts with prayer. The Saint Nikodemos Men's "Prayer and Panera" Fellowship has resumed its morning prayer and fellowship meetings for the Spring. All men in the parish are invited to participate. The group meets at church promptly at 7:00am for morning prayer, scripture and breakfast fellowship. Upcoming meetings are Mar. 4, Mar. 18, Apr. 1 and Apr. 15.

2021 Holy Land Pilgrimage Flyer/Form Enclosed

The Holy Trinity Pilgrimage Ministry's Holy Land Pilgrimage has been rescheduled from last year to this November 4-13. All those who previously reserved for last year and have confirmed with the agency for this year do

not need to take further action. There are spaces still available, however, for anyone still desiring to take this sacred journey in the footsteps of Jesus. Of course, the entire trip is dependent on travel being safe and open by then, and all those who have reserved will be kept up to date on that essential information. Please see the enclosed flyer/form or visit HolyTrinityPgh.org/pilgrimage.

LENTEN NEWS

2021 Lenten Theme: "Find a Way!"

Each year we offer a theme for Lent which builds on our Orthodox Christian tradition in a way that helps us grow and connect with Christ in today's world. This year, the theme is "Find a Way!" During the Lenten journey, you will hear lessons on the many opportunities the Church helps us "find a way" to better connect with God, clean up our lives, purify our souls, grow in our faith, work through our struggles, improve our relationships and more. We will also learn from the many great models of holiness and repentance celebrates during this sacred time, as they say to us from the Book of Isaiah, "This is the way. Walk in it." (Isaiah 30.21). Look for this theme throughout the Lenten lessons, sermons, writings and more. And most importantly, let nothing stop you. Let's "Find a way!"

Lenten and Holy Week Schedules of Services

This issue of The Herald contains a complete schedule of services for Lent. A Holy Week schedule will be included in the April issue. Please post them in a conspicuous place in your home. Make a family plan and circle the services you are able to attend and place them on your schedule and on your phone and computer calendars! As the hymn from the Book of Psalms tells us during the Great Compline service, "God is with us." Lent provides us a special time to be with Him. This year seems an especially good time for us to use that opportunity well, having been denied it last year during the pandemic restrictions. In 2020, we were restricted from attending by outside forces. It's now 2021, so let's be motivated by the desires of our hearts and souls to let nothing keep us from worshiping our Lord together as the Holy Church of Christ! "Find a way!" See you there!



Bible Study is back! After a long hiatus due to the pandemic, our "Explore the Word" Bible Study has resumed, now available both in-person and online. All are invited to attend as Father Radu completes our study of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on March 3, 10 and 17.



The blows of life's trials are essential for the salvation of the soul, for the soul is refined through them.

Saint Paisios

Faithful Stewardship In Troubled Times

Michael Kritiotis, Stewardship Ministry

Last Spring, your Stewardship Committee had drafted a message for the Herald, an issue that would not ever be printed. The message began with "We have many challenges ahead of us..." Wow, was that the understatement of the year...maybe the century! Exactly a year later, this has been a time of dramatic disruption, as COVID-19 continues to take lives, upends the global economy, and prevents us from coming together in response to the crisis.

The challenges to our faith and religious practice have also been very real. Most of our ways of being a faith community together had to be rearranged, or even paused. Even with the vaccines being here, we find ourselves contemplating an uncertain future... returning to "normal" seems

nostalgic. Yet, we cannot help but look ahead to a time when we resume activities of daily life. How can we be faithful stewards in this season of uncertainty?

Christian theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer recently wrote: *"I discovered later, and I'm still discovering right up to this moment, that it is only by living completely in this world that one learns to have faith. By this-worldliness I mean living unreservedly in life's duties, problems, successes and failures. In so doing we throw ourselves completely into the arms of*

God, taking seriously, not our own sufferings, but those of God in the world. That, I think, is faith."

What does it mean for us, in this sense, to have faith? How can our living in the world, which leaves us hungry or furious or gasping for breath, be an expression of faithfulness that honors God's care for us, without relying first on our own understanding?

Our commitment to the Lord calls us to be faithful because God is faithful to us first. "Living completely" also means for better or for worse. Faithful stewardship may require patience, endurance, and sacrifice, and it may not always match our ideals or ambitions. Faithful stewardship can also be dynamic and responsive to external challenges, recognizing the oppor-

tunity in difficulty, and opening us to unexpected gifts. Faithful stewardship in a time of uncertainty can allow us the time and freedom to see the purpose God has for every aspect of our lives. Many monastics and Saints have taught us that. *"The blows of life's trials are essential for the salvation of the soul, for the soul is refined through them"* (St. Paisios).

During this past year, perhaps the most challenging year of our lifetime, our constant beacon has been God and His Church. Our faithful stewardship not only sustained us as Christians with hope, prayer and trust in God, but as His faithful servants, we continued to come together to sustain His Church during this most atypical and "inconvenient" time.

Faith has kept our parish actively functioning, when many had a hard time surviving. How else could we explain the fact that you generously continued to give of your treasures, making 2020 the second most successful year in contributions? Or, that you not only kept pace with your donations to our neighbors in need, but exceeded any other time in recent memory? Or that so many of you have been attending and participating, first online, and now gradually more and more in-person? Or, that you embraced and are enthusiastically supporting the call to complete and consecrate our church in the next three years?

Stewardship of all that we have is distinct from the selfishness that can follow from fear. We dare say that our people are fearless and faithful stewards!

We look forward to seeing you all back in church as each personal situation permits. May the Lord continue to draw us all closer to Himself now and in the days ahead. Thank you for all you do, with Faith in the Holy Trinity and love for Holy Trinity Church! ❖

Stewardship 2021 Roster

Rev. Fr. John & Pres. Becky Touloumes
Rev. Fr. Radu & Pres. Loredana Bordeianu

Ms. Alexandra Abboud
Mr & Mrs Victor Amurgis
Mrs Beatrice Andromalos
Presvytera Ethel Androustopoulos
Mr. and Mrs. H. William Areheart
Mr & Mrs Mark Armanious
Mr & Mrs Vasilios Athanas
Mr & Mrs Harry Athanasiou
Mrs. Tessie C. Athens
Ms. Andrea R. Athens
Mrs. Desi Anthou Austin
Mr & Mrs Alvin Backeris
Dr & Mrs Christ A. Balouris
Mr & Mrs James T. Balouris
Mr. Anthony C. Balouris
Lynn and Ethel Barker
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Barron
Mrs Georgia Beckas Miller
Mrs Olga Beckas
Victoria and Maurice Bedel
Mr. & Mrs. Chris Berexa
Ms. Constance Bistolas-Walters
Mr. Michael J. Bober Jr.
Mrs. Athena Bober
Mr. Todd Bogdanovich
Ms. Pamela M. Bolkovac
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Bounos
Dr. & Mrs. Alexander Bournias
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Bournias
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Brewer
Clifford Brubaker & Sondra Balouris
Mr & Mrs James Buldas
Alexandra and Anthony Cameron
Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan Caromano
Mr. Peter J. Castellano
Mr & Mrs Charles Chapas
Mr & Mrs James Chapas
Mr Thomas Chapas
Mr & Mrs William Chapas
Mr Louis Cherpes
Mr. John Clayton
Mrs. Elenie Cocheres
Mrs Afrodite Condos
Ms. Cynthia Morris Criss
Mr & Mrs George Danis

Mr. & Mrs. Evan Danis
Mr. & Mrs. Peter Dedousis
Mrs. Helen DeMoss
Mr. & Mrs. George Dickos
Mrs. Christine Dickos
Mr. & Mrs. Nikolas Doris
Mr & Mrs Frank Erdeljac
Ms. Theodora Fakles
Dennis Bossick & Penny Fakles-Bossick
Mr. & Mrs. Christian Farmakis
Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Ferrari
Mr & Mrs William Fiedler
Mrs. Carol Fiffas
Mr & Mrs Andreas Fournaridis
Mr. Andrew Fournaridis & Ms. Anna Mamo
Mr. & Mrs. John Franciscus
Mrs Tessie Frankos
Miss Diana Fries
Mrs Constance Fries
Mr. & Mrs. Josh Skrba
Mr & Mrs Markos Gambieris
Mr. & Mrs. George Geanopulos
Mr and Mrs Troy Geanopulos
Mr. & Mrs. Nicholas Georgallis
Dr. and Mrs. Mark Georgiadis
Mr & Mrs Steven Georgiadis
Mr & Mrs Thomas Germanos
Mr. & Mrs. Spiros Giannoutsos
Mr & Mrs Peter Giannoutsos
Mr. & Mrs. Jason Gidas
Mr & Mrs Peter Glyptis

Have you prayed
about, completed,
signed and sub-
mitted your 2021
“One Holy Trin-
ity Pledge Card”
yet? Please do it
today. Be there
for your Church
so your Church
can always be
there for you!



Thank you to the following faithful stewards who have submitted their pledge cards for the 2021 pledge year. Please join them in their support for the ministries of Holy Trinity and complete your "One Holy Trinity" 2021 pledge commitment today!

Mrs Eugenia Graser
Miss Pennie Hareras
Mrs Voula Hareras
Mr. & Mrs. John Anthony Hastings
Mr. & Mrs. Charles Henigin
Mr. & Mrs. George Hulse
Dr. Kristina Johnson
Mr & Mrs James Johnson
Mr & Mrs Nick Kakavis
Mr. Gus Kalaris
Mr. & Mrs. Evangelo Kaparakos
Dr. & Mrs. Gregory Karabin
Mrs. Irene Karavolos
Mr. & Mrs. George Karpakis
Dr & Mrs James Kermes
Mr & Mrs Lazarus Kirifides
Mr. Jonathan Kohan
Mr. and Mrs. James Kolovos
Mr. & Mrs. Doug Lupnacca
Mrs. Fanny Kostos
Dr & Mrs Dimitris Kraniou
Mr. & Mrs. Jonathan Kratsas
Mr & Mrs Michael Kritiotis
Mr. & Mrs. James Kukunas
Mr. Stephen Kukunas
Mrs Irene Kukunas
Mr. James L. Lakes
Mr. & Mrs. Philip LeDuc
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Leist
Antonia and David Lesser
Mr. & Mrs. Chris Loomis
Mr & Mrs Nicholas Loomis
Brett and Eleni Lucido
Ms. Margo Machuga
Mr. Curtis B. Magnuson
Elizabeth Manis Stiger
Mr & Mrs Gregory Manis
Marc McMullen and Alexandra Valliant
Mr. & Mrs. George Mellis
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Mr & Mrs Jeff Mercadante
Mr. & Mrs. James Mermigas
Mrs. Arlene Metropulos
Christine Metropulos and Dave Steiner
Dennis and Susan Michaels
Mr. Gregory Morris
Mr Stanley Morris
Mr & Mrs Mark Opacic

Mr. & Mrs. Richard Paese
Gen. & Mrs. William Pagonis
Mr & Mrs William Pagonis
Mr & Mrs Matthew Palamara
Ms. Thespina Palka
Mrs. Veroniki Panagiotou
Mr & Mrs Robert Panagulias
Mr. & Mrs. George Pandelios
Mr & Mrs George Pantelakis
Ms. Eleni Pappas
Mr. & Mrs. Anthony Pappis
Mr & Mrs Orestes Paras
Mr Eleftherios Parikakis
Mr & Mrs Nicholas Passaretti
Mr & Mrs Michael Passodelis
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Mr. & Mrs. John S. Petropoulos
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph P. Phaturous
Mr & Mrs John H. Phillips
Mr & Mrs Stephen Pickios
Ms. Christine Pusateri
Katina and Salvatore Re
Mr & Mrs Stephen Roman
Dr & Mrs Dean Scoumis
Mr. & Mrs. Stephen E. Sedor and Valya
Ms. Theone Stateson
Mr & Mrs Robert Stearns
Mr. Stephen D. Stearns
Mr. & Mrs. Craig Steiner
Dr & Mrs Samuel Stepanow
Mr. & Mrs. Kirk Stephen
Mr & Mrs Jon Stipanovich
Mr & Mrs Nicholas Terezis
Mr. & Mrs. James Thomas III
Mrs Georgia Touloumes
Mr. George Triantafillos
Mr & Mrs Gerri Valliant
Joseph and Christina Waters
Mrs Elaine Weaver
Miss Mary-Magdalene Welsh
Mr & Mrs Eric White
Mr & Mrs Daniel Willow
Mr. & Mrs. Michael Zagnacky
Mr. & Mrs. George Zappas
Mr & Mrs Anthony Zissis
Ms Anna Zissis
Mr & Mrs Louis Zozos

THANK YOU TO ALL! TO GOD BE THE GLORY! ❖

GOYA Finds a Way

1

THE GOAL:

Host the annual GOYA Valentine's Day Brunch and donate proceeds to the Metropolitan Maximus Youth Endowment



3

THE SOLUTION:

Make it "Brunch-to-Go" instead of sit-down/dine-in and modify cooking plans to allow safe preparation for the GOYAns.



2

THE CHALLENGE:

Working under current COVID restrictions to safely prepare and provide the brunch to Holy Trinity parishioners



A Holy Trinity Herald Feature Article by Ana Bordeianu, Ekaterini Balouris & Sophia Mellis

During this past year, many things in our lives have been disrupted in many ways. However, my fellow GOYAns and I decided that GOYA would not be put on pause. Equipped with this attitude, we have been determined all year to "Find a Way" to make our GOYA ministry activities possible. This slogan, "Find a Way", has become our motivator and reminder throughout the year that although things are hard right now, with

a little bit of creativity and a lot of community effort, anything is possible.

GOYA has been there for me and other GOYAns since we first got involved at Holy Trinity Church. It has become like a second family for us and a place where we are able to bond through our shared experiences and love for each other and for God. Because of Holy Trinity Church's per-

sistence in maintaining our community life during COVID, we "found a way" to keep GOYA as normal as we can. While the GOYAns as a group have put in the effort to make this work, it would not have been possible without the love and support from our head priest, Father John Touloumes, and our GOYA Advisor, Presbyteria Becky. We thank them for their unwavering support and the love that has fueled the youth ministries of our

community for so long. With the help of everyone in our church, the Holy Trinity family has found and will continue to find ways to keep the spirit of GOYA alive this year.

Even though it didn't look like a normal senior year for us, we were still able to connect with other GOYAns

and participate in some of the activities that we enjoyed so much before the pandemic. While this seemed impossible to pull off in the beginning, we have found ways to accomplish it through zoom meetings, emails, socially distant GOYA meetings, and more. For example, we were able to

put together a COVID-friendly movie night outside on our church lawn. We held our annual Youth Sunday Fall Festival. We prepared and distributed bagged lunches for the homeless, and our Church School even managed to put on a special "Virtual Christmas Pageant!" So what was



GOYA has been there for me and other GOYAns since we first got involved at Holy Trinity Church. It has become like a second family for us and a place where we are able to bond through our shared experiences and love for each other and for God.





The morning of the brunch, Father John invited GOYAns up to the front to lead the Youth Sermon and share with the entire congregation their “Find a Way” message.

stopping us from our annual Valentine’s Day Brunch? Nothing, because we really had all we needed: the love and support of our parish, parents, fellow GOYAns, and our GOYA advisors.

Knowing all that, we knew we could “find a way!” So we said, “What has worked so far?” and we found a good model in our last Fall fundraiser, an annual event during which we sell comfort food and baked goods to our parish members. This fundraiser was important to us, so not long ago we found a way to make it happen while still following CDC guidelines. We decided to make it a tailgate-to-go event, with food separated into boxes that had different themes, GOYAns at different tables handing them out, and a place for donations at each table.

Since this fundraiser worked so well for us in the Fall, we chose to have our Valentine’s Day Brunch take on the same basic format, with a Valentine’s theme. We divided up the jobs so everyone could contribute safely and we split the cooking up so we could get smaller groups in the kitchen for less time. While this year may not have been what we expected, with faith and a bit of creativity we were able to enjoy each other’s company, work together to serve GOYA and the Church...and have a lot of fun along the way!

In addition to the Pres. Becky, Father John, and our parents, one of the other great influences on our youth ministries at Holy Trinity Church has been our beloved, Metropolitan Maximos, who recently reposed. Though we were only children when he was in “full swing” as our Metropolitan, his heart for youth continues to shine forth in everything we do as a GOYA teen ministry. Metropolitan Maximos wanted the best for the Greek Orthodox Youth. He wanted us to be able to explore our faith, our relationships and our culture. He created lots of opportunities for that to happen, the greatest of which in our lives is the Metropolitan Summer Camp ministry. Today that happens at a place called Camp Nazareth. Metropolitan Maximos defined what it meant for young people to “find a way”, even before we GOYAns knew we needed too!

I don’t think His Eminence knew when he created it all that someday the world would be seen wearing masks, standing six feet apart, with everything seemingly upside down, but he definitely taught us more than enough to get us through this global pandemic.

As a GOYA we wanted to give back to the man who gave us so much, and what better way than to share our love for Metropolitan Maximos than through a COVID-friendly Valentine’s Day “Brunch-To-Go?” We created brunch boxes that we presold online and after Liturgy, then prepared them safely ahead of time and distributed them after church on Valentines Day! Thanks to the tremendous support of the Holy Trinity community, we prepared and sold 128 boxes, received additional donations and raised a total of \$1,700 for the “Metropolitan Maximos Endowment for Youth and Young Adult Ministries!”

In no way was this easy for us, and we had to make a lot of adjustments to our usual program, but as a group – as a GOYA family - we came together for a great cause and to honor a great man: His Eminence Metropolitan Maximos. Yes, indeed, we GOYAns “found a way!” ❖

THE FUTURE VALUE OF MY PRESENT FAITH

Father John's Homily - February 7, 2021



I had an entirely different sermon in mind today. Then I got the phone call. It was the third such call in nine days. Another death in the parish. Of course, when you say that these days, the first thing people ask is, "Was it COVID?" and for all three, the answer was "No." In fact, we've only had one COVID-related death in the parish, thank God, during this entire time.

But in these times when fear of our own mortality is more palpable than probably any time in most of our lives, it's still very real. And it's a bit unsettling.

"But you're a priest," you may say. Well, may I please bring you into the inner world of a priest for a few minutes? These calls are hard. And they are getting harder, not easier. After 27 years here, each call comes with a history, and a lot of memories. Years

of ministering to so many people in so many joyful times. Memories of couples worshipping in this or the old North Side church together. Memories of doing their children's baptisms and weddings. Memories of watching their kids play GOYA basketball or weave Palm Crosses for Holy Week. Sometimes memories of laying their husbands or wives to rest before them. Now and then the families and friends of those in mourning overlap, passing from one funeral to the other, with so many interwoven relationships in a parish as family-oriented as ours. That's really hard when they affect people in multiples, and I can see the heaviness on their faces and in their hearts.

At the crossroad of all those end-of-life events is someone they continue to hit, over and over in waves. One grieving family moves on and another

takes it place, but joining them all in their sorrow and loss is the priest. You might think, "Father, it's your job, isn't it?" To which I must answer, "It's never a job. It's a privilege, an honor, a sacred duty...and but for the grace of God, it's an impossible challenge." Sure, in seminary they teach us how to do a funeral service, but not what it means to hold the hand of someone taking their last breath in this life as you read the prayer of the separation of soul and body. Or how to enter the home of a family in shock when they've just lost their father, mother...or child.

Believe me, my friends, I'm not looking for sympathy. Those are pastoral moments that bind in a way nothing else can replace, and I am so thankful for the families whose love for and relationship with their Church reminds them to call the priest in times like



that. As Saint John Chrysostom said, "Our parents give birth to us through the body for this present temporary life, while priests are the ones who regenerate us spiritually in the eternal life."

So why do I share all this with you today? It's really about a golden thread, one that ties these three calls together. It's one that has pierced my own heart of faith and I hope and pray will pierce yours also, like the thread that ties the beautiful pearls of a priceless necklace together, for we are all one in Jesus Christ.

I won't mention names this morning, even though some of you have mourned the very deaths of which I speak, but they each are different, yet so much the same in perhaps the only way that counts. First was a 61 year old man, born only 11 months before me in 1959. Let me tell you, standing over a man your own age and doing his funeral does something to you. Second was an 89 year-old widow whom I knew through her children even before coming to Holy Trinity Church, whose love and respect for me as her priest never ceased to

affect me. And finally, a 58 year-old man whose house I had visited on Christmas day three years ago when he suddenly and unexpectedly lost his wife, and now I was called to sit in the same house with the same children now reeling from the sudden and unexpected loss of their father.

What's the connection? The lesson they, not I, have to teach us, one echoed in today's Gospel, and the reason I abandoned my original idea for today's message. Each of these wonderful, faithful souls received the calling of faith at various times in their life and responded. Whether in-person at services with their family surrounding them or privately at a hospital bedside, they not only affirmed their faith in Jesus Christ and His Holy Church, they acted on it. I had the blessing of being able to offer the Holy and Sacred Body and Blood of Christ, Holy Communion, to each of them. And had I said to them, especially as some of them knowingly looked at death so closely in the face with courage and faith, "Don't you think it would be better to wait?", they would have said to me, "No!" with the

same conviction Saint Paul has in today's Epistle: "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6.2). The is the golden thread of the "now" of our faith.

Each of these faithful three souls represents a possibility for each of us. One was a long-term nursing care situation, with years to prepare. Another was feeling just fine at Christmas and was told by the doctors just a few weeks ago, "You have 5 or 6 days at the most." And the other had no warning at all, just like my own father. And none of them got to choose the timing. But bound to Christ by that golden thread of "Faith, now," they didn't need to.

The illusion of this life is that every day we think it's not our time. And so we wait. Wait to attend church. Wait to repent. Wait to accept God's invitation to cleanse our souls through Holy Confession. Wait until a governor, mayor or nameless bureaucrat in a windowless office says it's safe to receive Holy Communion, even though we have been receiving all our life. Because it's not our time. As if we know. Because we're afraid. Afraid to trust even God.

In today's Gospel, we see very clearly how the Lord views that attitude. In the Parable of the Talents, we hear about three servants, each given a certain amount of money according to his ability, with the expectation from the master that they would do something with it. Later, the master called them all back to see what they had done. When the one given the most, and who had the most to lose, returned with double his money, the master was pleased. When the second one, who was given less, but still

ran the risk of making more money with it, returned with double his investment, the master was also pleased. But when the third one showed up with exactly what he was given, he said, "Master... I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here have what is yours." You heard the end of that parable today in the Gospel. It didn't go well for him.

What struck me so much this time around was his admission, "I was afraid." And that fear not only paralyzed him, it robbed him of his future, because his master was waiting to reward him.

Here is the real motivation behind this message: you are faithful servants of Christ, and your Master is waiting to reward you. You are beloved sons and daughters of the Heavenly Father, and He is waiting to forgive you. We are all weak, wounded or fallen in one way or another, and Jesus Christ, Whose arms were stretched out on the Cross for you, is waiting to bless you, heal you, anoint you, comfort you and fill you with His grace through His Holy Church and seal it with His Holy Body and Blood which He gave for us, of which He said, unless you eat and drink of it, you have no life in you. Dear ones, now is not the time to say, "Not now."

Here's why, and I'll end by tying a headline from the recent news into all this. You have all probably heard about the Gamestop stock controversy from last week. I'm not going to get into the details, but let me just say that the stock manipulation that made or cost millions and even billions of dollars was the result of conflicting views of the time value of money. Present value versus future value. There are financial wizards in this parish that can explain it better than me, but let's just say that the Gamestop investors tried playing a really high-risk game, each thinking they

knew what today's actions would be worth tomorrow.

It's not the highest risk game, however. There is a greater one. The Lord Jesus warned us, "do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body" (Matt. 10.28). Jesus Christ is the Physician of our bodies and our souls, and He waits for us to simply ask for healing. Our accepting that is what separates us from those who have no hope. Saying "Not right now" is perhaps the riskiest bet of all. Because it hedges salvation on the bet that we have more time than we might. Are you willing to stand before the Lord with your only defense being the present value of your future faith? ("If I only had more time I would have..."). I'm not. Weak and sinful though I may be, my eternal investment of the Master's gifts is in the future value of my present faith.



I love you all so much and pray for you always, but that pales in comparison to how much God loves you and is waiting to bless you, forgive you and prepare you for the day only He knows.



We are all weak, wounded or fallen in one way or another, and Jesus Christ, Whose arms were stretched out on the Cross for you, is waiting to bless you, heal you, anoint you, comfort you and fill you with His grace through His Holy Church and seal it with His Holy Body and Blood which He gave for us, of which He said, unless you eat and drink of it, you have no life in you. Dear ones, now is not the time to say, "Not now."

Maybe this message would have been better on the Sunday of the Last Judgment, which is coming up in four weeks, but my heart could not wait. And I thank you for allowing me to share a glimpse into that priestly inner world. Your love and prayers truly help.

So whether we allow the three beautiful models of faith I shared to motivate us, or whether we are willing to seriously re-evaluate our own faith investments today, let's put the fear of the third servant behind us and leave today with the beautiful promise from Saint John the Evangelist in his first Epistle, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." God loves you. Love Him back. Trust Him. Today. Because for each of us, "Now is the acceptable time;...now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6.2). Amen. ❖

Anger: The Enemy of the Peace of God

Try to be angry only with the devil and to direct your anger against your passions.

Geronda, I want to be delivered from anger.

Anger, pure anger, is a power of the soul. If a person who is meek by nature is helped by his character in his spiritual progress, the quick-tempered person is helped twice as much by the power of his character, as long as he directs this power of anger against the passions and the evil one. If he doesn't take advantage of this power of his, then the devil will certainly do so.

So I should be angry with the devil, not with others around me?

Look, in the beginning one gets angry with others: later on, if he struggles, he will be angry with the devil; and in the end, he will come to the point of being angry only with the old man within himself and his passions. So try to be angry only with the devil and to direct your anger against your passions.

Geronda, are my anger and stubbornness childish passions?

No, my blessed child! It is understandable for a small child to get angry, stomp his feet and yell "I don't want to; no, I won't!" But when the child has grown up, he will have to let go of these tantrums and retain the simplicity and innocence of childhood, rather than the childish foolishness. And later on, you can see how some of them end up! Others tear their clothes! There was a man who, out of anger, tore up a shirt a day. He

tore it to pieces. He let out his anger on the shirt so that he would not harm others.

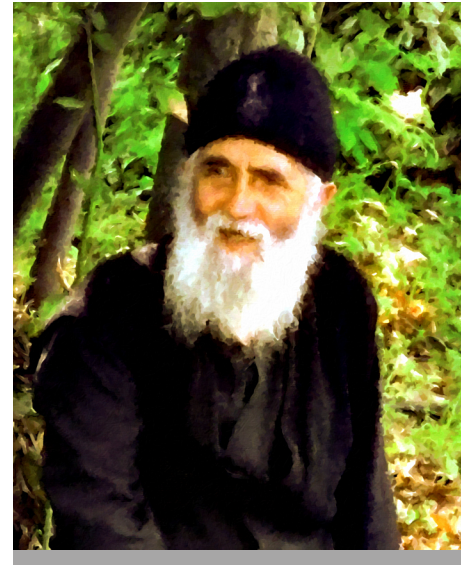
In other words, Geronda, is anger an outburst?

Yes, it is, but isn't it better to direct the outburst against the old man within and not against others?

Sometimes I think that I do not become angry, but simply annoyed.

How does this happen, my child? If you get annoyed, you need to find out if you perhaps have the passion of anger. It is, of course, different if one gets annoyed and says something because he is tired and is struggling with some problem, a nagging pain or such. At such times, all one has to say is a simple "good morning" to get the abrupt response of "why don't you leave me alone!" Although he was only told "good morning" and not something bad, he was nonetheless tired and trying to deal with his pain, which is why he reacted as he did. You see, even the most patient donkey will kick when he's been overloaded.

If you are not reconciled with your own self, it means that you have some spiritual unsettledness, and it is therefore, natural to react. Just as when one is physically ill and sometimes gets cranky and is tired of listening to other people talking, so too, when one is not in a good spiritual state, he lacks vigilance, patience, forbearance.



Saint Paisios of Athos (+1994)

Geronda, what is causing me to get angry with the slightest provocation?

The cause is your belief that it's always the others who are at fault. The anger in you begins with the negative thoughts you have about others. If you have positive thoughts about them, you will not examine what they said or how they said it; you will assume the responsibility and not become angry. Oftentimes a person is vexed by various external factors and has an angry outburst because he is not at ease with what he is doing and actually wants something else. But these reactions are simply external dust that goes away once a person finds that which brings him solace.

How will I be able to overcome anger?

A spiritual person may become angry and speak out with indignation, but only on important, spiritual matters. He has no evil in his heart nor does he harm anyone. In the Psalms, David reminds us, "Be angry, but do not sin."

The goal is to anticipate it and not come to the point of anger. Even when you're warming milk, if you don't remove it from the heat on time, it will overheat and spill over. ❖

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THE HOLY TRINITY

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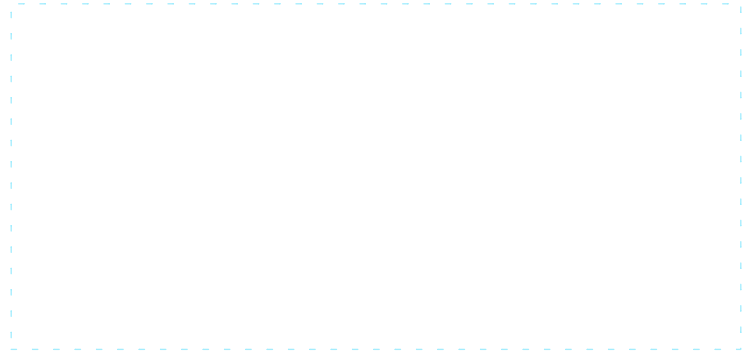
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PRAYER ADVICE FOR LENT: KEEP IT SIMPLE, BRIEF, FOCUSED

People often ask: how should we pray, in what words, and in what language? Some even say: "I do not pray because I do not know how; I do not know any prayers."

You do not need any specialized skill for prayer. You can simply talk with God.

KEEP IT SIMPLE: Prayer should be very simple. St Isaac the Syrian said: "The whole fabric of your prayer should be succinct. One word saved the publican, and one word made the thief on the cross heir to the heavenly kingdom."

BE BRIEF: Prayer can be extremely brief. If you are just starting out on your path of prayer, begin with very short prayers, such as can allow you to focus. God does not need words; he needs men's hearts. Words are secondary; of paramount importance are the feeling and disposition with which we approach God. To approach God without a feeling of reverence or with distraction—when during prayer our mind wanders—is much more dangerous than saying the wrong words in prayer.

STAY FOCUSED: Distracted prayer has neither meaning nor value. A simple law is at work: if the words of prayer do not reach our heart, they will not reach God. As it is sometimes put, such prayer does not reach above the ceiling of the room in which we are praying, and it should reach the heavens? Therefore it is very important that each word of prayer should be felt deeply by us.

If you are incapable of focusing on the long prayers contained in the prayer books of the Orthodox Church, try your hand at shorter prayers: "Lord, have mercy," "Lord, save," "Lord, help me," "God, have mercy on me, the sinner." One ascetic struggler said that if we could, with the full force of our feelings—with all our heart and soul—just say the prayer "Lord, have mercy," then that would be enough for salvation.



Excerpted from "Prayer: Encounter with the Living God" by Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk