



THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

1923 · EIGHTY-ONE YEARS OF MINISTRY · 2004

Our Mission: To proclaim and live the Orthodox Christian Faith in its fullness as faithful members of the Body of Christ

September 2004

www.HolyTrinityPgh.org

Volume 12 – Issue 8

Monthly Parish Newsletter
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Fr. John Touloumes, Economist

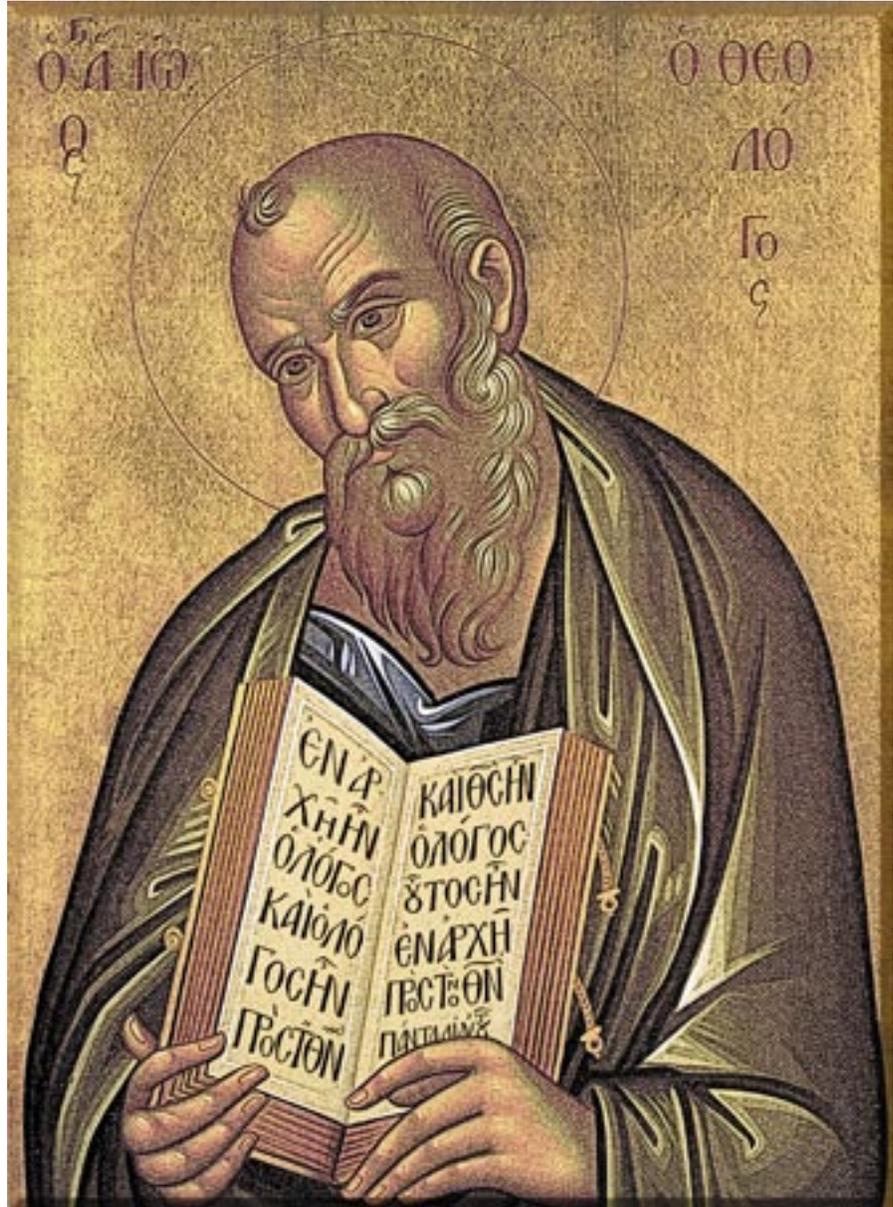
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Saint John the Evangelist & Theologian - Sept. 26



This Apostle was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and was the son of Zebedee and Salome, and the brother of James the elder. First a fisherman by trade, he became an Apostle and the beloved Disciple of Christ. Only he of all the Disciples followed Him even to the Cross, and was entrusted with the care of our Saviour's Mother, as it were another son to her. After preaching throughout Asia Minor and suffering much persecution, he was exiled to the island of Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation. Later, he wrote his Gospel (after the other Evangelists had already written theirs) and his three Universal Epistles. In all, he lived ninety-five years and fell asleep in the Lord during the reign of Trajan in the year 100. He was called Theologian because he loftily expounded in his Gospel the theology of the inexpressible and eternal birth of the Son and Word of God the Father. His repose is celebrated Sept. 26.

**BUILDING TOWARD
THE FUTURE**
starting TODAY

Father John's Message

THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

Parish Newsletter of
Holy Trinity
Greek Orthodox Church
302 W. North Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15212
Phone 412-321-9282
Fax 412-321-7272
www.HolyTrinityPgh.org

A Parish of the Greek Orthodox Diocese of
Pittsburgh and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese
of America under the Spiritual Jurisdiction of the
Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.
For information, visit: www.goarch.org

Editor

Father John Touloumes, Economos
Church: 412-321-9282
Home: 412-831-3574
E-mail: ftj@HolyTrinityPgh.org

Production

Josephine Stofko, Parish Secretary
E-mail: office@HolyTrinityPgh.org

The Cultural Side

Michael Kritiotis Voula Hareras
Maria Kraniou Vickie Bellios

Publication Schedule

The Herald is published monthly.
The information deadline is the 15th of each
month. If you would like to assist with mailing
the Herald, please contact the church secretary
at 412-321-9282 to volunteer your help.

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The Herald

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cover of this issue.



"The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again because there is no effort without error and shortcoming; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotion, spends himself in a worthy cause; who at best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement; and who at worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who have never tasted victory or defeat."

Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the United States

"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing."

Saint Paul, Second Letter to Timothy 4.5-8

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

In the generation of my parents and before, when someone needed an address to use in the story about a typical American family, "Main Street" was the first choice, because it seemed to represent the average American well. That address meant more than a house: it meant a way of life, a type of dedication, a willingness to work, an understanding of sacrifice and a promise of reward. Ask anyone from the Depression era through at least the Fifties and they will tell you.

One of the inspiring things about seeing the Olympics every two years (Summer/Winter) is being reminded of all those values and virtues that get these athletes where they are. It is a good lesson about the need for dedication, commitment and striving for "the goal" in whatever area of we find ourselves. In fact, when we see the two quotes above, we are easily reminded of the inspirational effect of athletic competition and its analogy to the deeper struggles in life,

The question for this generation is, "Are we ready for the struggle? Can we maintain the effort? Will we endure to the end? Can we make it to the goal?" The growth in material wealth and technology, as well as the changing attitudes of Americans on many issues formerly thought essential for character and living "right" instead of living "well" make one wonder. Perhaps we have our residence from "Main Street" to "Easy Street?" That is not to say that the proverbial streets are lined with gold; rather it reveals the desire to enjoy the fruits without tilling the fields; the expectation that someone else will do the work and we do not need to.

This is a danger potentially permeating not only society in general, but our Church and personal spiritual lives, too. But our parents never sat and waited for someone else to do their work. They expected no one else to sustain their Church. And of course, no one else would say their prayers, attend church for them or teach their children these things and lead them to Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Our various ministries and committees need the active participation of many people to grow; you know what you can do. The Festival Committee needs workers of every kind; you know how you can help. The Stewardship Committee and Parish Council need the ongoing support of all parishioners to keep the Church running; you know what you can give. The Vision Committee is closing in on an opportunity to present the parish with concrete opportunities for the future; you know much you are needed. Please, do not stay on the sidelines.

And most importantly, there is the one "race" that counts, referred to by Saint Paul. Next time you enter your Church, take a good, hard look at the "finish line" up front. Stretch; breathe; work; sweat; the contest is on; get there; seize the prize that awaits you!

News & Events

EDUCATIONAL MINISTRIES

Church School Begins September 12

Advance registration for the 2003/2004 Church School was held on Sundays, August 17 & 24. If you didn't sign your children up yet, don't worry: there's still room! Sign up at the Church School office if you missed registration.



Parents are reminded that classes start with the two-year-old Toddlers Class. **The first day of classes for Church School is Sunday, September 12 at 9:30 with Divine Liturgy and the children's sermon, followed by classes after Holy Communion.**

The Church School is also collecting its annual Parents and Volunteers Survey forms at registration time. Please take the time to complete one of these forms and offer your stewardship of time and talents in helping the Church School ministry this year.

St. Lydia's Women's Fellowship . . . September 16, 23

The St. Lydia Women's Study Fellowship is a ministry for women to share in fellowship and to study scripture, the Orthodox Faith and family life in today's world. The meetings take place every other week on Thursday mornings at 9:30 a.m at a home in the North Hills. New participants are always welcome! The fellowship is enjoyable and the approach is casual, but the subjects are important for today's women and families. The first two meetings of the season will be: September 16 (Jewell house) and September 23 (Petrides house). For further information on this worthwhile and informative group or for directions to the meetings, call Stacy Dickos at 412-367-0925.



YOUTH MINISTRY

GOYA Officers for 2004/2005

Congratulations to the GOYA and their new officers for the 2004/2005 year: President - Nick Balouris; Vice-President - Peter Dickos; Treasurer - Andrew Athanasiou; Corresponding Secretary - Rebecca Dickos; Recording Secretary - Eleni Valliant; Activities Coordinator - Victoria Andromalos-Dale. Please support our young people in their faithful service of the church this year!

GOYA Kick-Off September 11

The annual GOYA Kick-off will be held at the Kritiotis house at "Limni" (north, near Mercer, PA) on Saturday, September 11. The family event will include a barbecue, a meeting, fun and, of course, the annual football game! Information is being mailed directly to the GOYA families. Questions? Call Victoria Kritiotis at 412-766-5002.

LITURGICAL LIFE

Feast Day of the Monastery Sept. 7 & 8

The Monastery of the Nativity of the Theotokos in Saxonburg, PA, will be celebrating its Feast Day on Tuesday, September 7 and Wednesday, September 8. Great Vespers and a vigil will be held on Tuesday evening, September 7, and Divine Liturgy will be held the next day. Please see the schedule on page 10.



Holy Cross Vespers & Liturgy Sept. 13/14

Our sister parish of Holy Cross in Mount Lebanon invites us to attend their annual feast day Great Vespers on September 13th at 7:00 p.m., followed by a lenten reception. Also, we will be joining them as a parish on the next day, September 14, for their Feast Day Liturgy of the Holy Cross on the 50th Anniversary of the parish. Orthros is at 9:00, followed by Divine Liturgy at 10:00.

BAPTISMS

Beckas

The servants of God, Rebecca Sarah Beckas, daughter of Nicholas and Cheryl Beckas, was received into the Orthodox Christian Faith through the Holy Mystery of Baptism on August 22, 2004. Her sponsor was Georgia Beckas. May God grant her many years!

FUNERALS & MEMORIALS

George Limberis

The servant of God, George Limberis, fell asleep in the Lord on August 12, 2004. The Funeral service was held on August 16, followed by interment at Holy Trinity Cemetery. May his memory be eternal!

Upcoming Memorials

Memorial or Trisagion services have been scheduled for the following souls during the coming weeks:

August 29: Carol Araviakis (2 years)

News & Events

(upcoming Memorials, continued:)

September 5: George Fescanin (6 months)
September 12: George Limberis (40 days)

Note About Scheduling Memorials

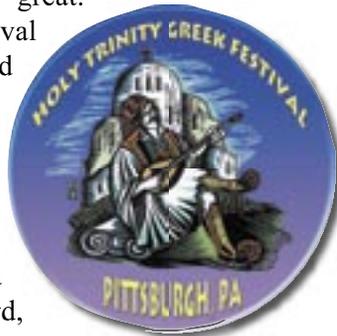
In order to have Memorial or Trisagion services listed in the *Herald* or the Sunday Bulletin, it is necessary to contact Father John well ahead of time. Because of the *Herald* publication schedule, advance notice of at least **8 weeks** may be needed for information to be listed there. Lists of names and years commemorated should be submitted in writing to help eliminate errors. Sunday Bulletin listings will include a notice on the week before and the week of the service if advance notice of at least **3 weeks** is provided. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

FESTIVAL NEWS

Festival Dates September 1-5

Don't forget to keep September 1-5 free to work at, eat at, bring your friends to and enjoy the Holy Trinity Greek Festival. The hours for the Festival are Wed.-Thu. 11am-8pm; Fri.-Sat. 11am-9pm; Sun. 11am-7pm. If you have not yet signed up to work, please see the sign-up table at Coffee Hour on Sunday.

With everyone pitching in, the burden will be light and the rewards will be great. Remember, during our Festival we provide not only food and drink, but a witness to the outside community of the bond of love and fellowship we as a Church have in Christ. Please be there to step up to your calling as a laborer in His Holy Vineyard, the Church!



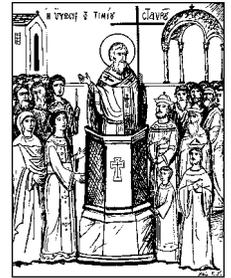
Festival Setup Final Setup August 30

IMPORTANT REMINDER: The Festival Committee is calling "all hands on deck" for the final setup day, Monday, August 30 starting at 5:00 p.m. This is the big day for setting the tables, chairs and booths, stocking the stations and all the other final preparations to make the event run smoothly. Please stop by after work with a change of clothes, ready to do whatever you can: lifting, moving, cleaning, decorating, etc. There will be something for everyone to do! Call Leo Loomis at 412-563-2323 with questions.

REGIONAL NEWS

Holy Cross 50th Anniversary. Sept. 14-19

Our sister parish of Holy Cross in the South Hills is celebrating her 50th anniversary with various events from September 14-19. Please call their office at 412-833-3355 for contact information or to make reservations for any of the events. Congratulations on 50 years of ministry, Holy Cross!



"Light the Night" Walk October 6

Last year, our parish participated for the first time in the Leukemia Society's National "Light the Night" Benefit Walk in memory of Jim Hartig. "Jimmy's Team" will once again be participating on Wednesday, October 6. Sponsor and registration information is available from team coordinator Pam Bertos at PanagiotaB@aol.com or 412-421-1477.

Walk For Missions 2004. October 10

The Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood of Greater Pittsburgh will once again sponsor its annual Walk for Missions on Sunday, October 10 at 2:00 p.m. at the South Park Fair Grounds. Proceeds from the Walk will benefit the Orthodox Christian Missions Center (OCMC), which sends Orthodox Christian missionaries throughout the world: 35 long-term missionaries and over 800 short-term missionaries to 21 countries. OCMC also supports the ministries of indigenous (local) clergy in mission areas of over 12 countries, with over 240 clergy in areas such as Cameroon, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Tanzania. The registration and sponsor flyer is available from the church office and should be brought to the Walk. Please notify Holy Cross Church at 412-833-3355 if you plan to participate.

ONE MORE CHURCH SCHOOL NOTE

In case our parents need one more reminder about how important it is for our children to attend Church School and learn their faith, try this little story:

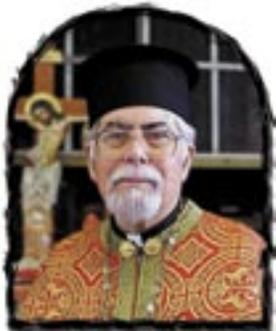
The Ten Commandments were the subject of Miss Barbara's Church School third grade class that day. After explaining "Honor thy father and thy mother," the teacher asked, "Is there a commandment that teaches us how to treat our brothers and sisters, too?"

Without hesitating, little Jimmy answered, "Thou shalt not kill?"

Church School starts September 12. See you there!

Gheronda's Corner

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



Father John
Androutsopoulos

The "HolyDays" of September

Rejoice, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. Rejoice in the Lord always!

September 1: The Indiction

September 1st marks the beginning of the Indiction or the Ecclesiastical New Year. We pray that during this New Year of our Church, with the

Blessings of our Heavenly Father, we will all be spiritually regenerated and become faithful and fruitful servants and good stewards in the vineyard of our Lord Jesus Christ!

September 8: The Nativity of the Theotokos

On Wednesday September 8, our Church honors the birth of the Theotokos, the Virgin Mary. This is one of the 12 Major Feasts of the Church. The Theotokos was the chosen vessel of God. She was destined to bear the Savior of the World. There are many beautiful hymns written to honor the Theotokos. At every Church service there is a hymn to honor Her.

The Troparion Of The Feast:

Thy Nativity O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole universe; for from thee did shine forth the Sun of justice, Christ our God, annulling the curse, and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting.

September 14: The Elevation of the Holy Cross

On Tuesday, September 14, our Church celebrates the Feast of the Elevation of the Precious Cross of the Lord. This is also one of the twelve major feasts of the Church. This feast day, is **equal to the Holy and Great Friday (It is also a strict fast day).**

To the Christian the Cross is a sacred symbol of his faith in Jesus Christ. We Orthodox Christians honor the Cross of Christ during the Great Feast of the Elevation of the Cross. It is through the Cross of Christ—the formerly hated and ignominious instrument of a cruel death—that we are saved. He who was slain on the Cross for our iniquities brought to life us who are not worthy. He has made us worthy of God's great mercy for He is good and compassionate. We on the Feast Day of the Elevation of the Cross rejoice and exalt His Holy

Name.

Our Holy Church emphasizes the greatness of the Cross with these words: "The Cross is the guardian of the Universe; the Cross is the "beauty of the Church; the Cross is the might of kings; the Cross is the affirmation of the faithful; the Cross is the glory of angels and a plague to demons."

Another hymn from the Feast: "Thy Cross, our Master, we adore, and thy Holy Resurrection do we glorify."

Blessings Through Stewardship

Some think of their income whether large or small should be used to gratify their own desires. This is a selfish point of view.

The early Christians had little; yet they sold what they had and gave it to the Church. And they did it with grateful hearts because they knew—as some of us refuse to know—that our worldly possessions and our money is simply lent to us by our Creator and it is to be used not selfishly, but to promote His Kingdom on earth. We should accept this challenge of bringing our tithes and offerings into the storehouse. Then we too can be assured that God will carry out His promise to open the windows oh heaven and pour out His blessings upon us.

If we look up the word steward in the dictionary we will find that it means a person who takes care of things for someone else. Are we being good stewards of what God has entrusted to us? Do the ways we use our talents and possessions please Him? It is important that we do His will and try to please Him. The sacrificial gift is one most precious in God's sight. This type of steward will be the one of whom the Lord says. "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou has been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord." Our God given talents or gifts must be used. If we never use them, they will not develop and may disappear altogether.

It is through faithful stewardship of those who are devoted to Christ, that our Churches came into being. It is through stewardship that they continue to grow. Each one of us must give of our money, our time, and our talents so that we Joyfully fulfill our responsibilities as Christians who are worthy in our stewardship.

Remember what the Holy Bible says: "It is more pleasant to give than to receive" and "God loves a cheerful giver."

With His love,

Rev. Fr. John K. Androutsopoulos

The Cultural Side • Η Πολιτιστική Πλευρά

Our well-rounded "Cultural Side" contributors write about many different facets of Greek culture and Orthodox life. This month, our "roving reporter", Michael Kritiotis, brings us the story from Greece of the Holy Monastery of Saints Raphael, Nicholas and Irene, who were martyred in the year 1463. Their monastery and church, built after the miraculous revelations described below, were built in the 1960's. They have become greatly revered places of pilgrimage for faithful Christians from the whole world.

For many years a monk had been seen walking on the hill at Karyes in Lesvos, Mytilini in Greece. Many Christians and Turks had seen him. The hill was also called Kaloyeros after the monk, who was seen holding a censor and would disappear in a splendor of light.

In 1917 the Turk who owned an estate with olive trees on the hill at Karyes commissioned the police officer of Thermi to solve this mystery. The short investigation was soon abandoned as the belief was held that these visions were of a supernatural nature.

There was a small chapel there in the name of Panayia. Residents of Thermi held a service there every Easter Tuesday without hindrance from the Turkish owner of the property.

Many saw the monk. Shepherds grazing their flocks heard singing and bells from the chapel. Tradition said the monk was killed by the Turks but when this had happened, no one knew. There had also been a female monastery there, but had been destroyed by barbarians. There was a strong belief that the place had Divine Grace and was Holy.

After the destruction in Asia Minor, the Turkish olive tree property was given to a Greek family. The strange visions continued, therefore they sought permission to build a church.

On 3rd July 1959, excavations began for the foun-

datations of the church, guided by the saints as to the location. A grave was found containing a human skeleton and giving off a sweet fragrance. The head of the skeleton was resting on a round stone, much like a pillow. The head was about 30cms away from the body. The lower jaw was missing. The excavators also found a ceramic tile from the Byzantine era with a Cross engraved on it.

After the discovery of the grave, amazing phenomena started to occur. The bones were put in a sack by a Mr. Doukas Tsolakis. He was in charge of the excavations. He could not lift the sack up due to the excessive weight. Noises were heard from the bones. They were also producing fragrant incense. One of the workers, a Mr. Leonidas Sideras kicked the sack and his leg went numb. Tsolakis' hand remained motionless. He could not lift the sack. The priest was asked to do a Trisagion—a prayer for the departed. The night before he was due to conduct the service, he was wondering what name he should use. During the night Saint Raphael appeared to the Priest. He told him who he was, and that he was born on the island of Ithaca.

Since then, St Raphael has appeared many times to different people and revealed how they were cruelly tortured at the monastery, calling it a "second Golgotha" (in the words of St Raphael). Their martyr-

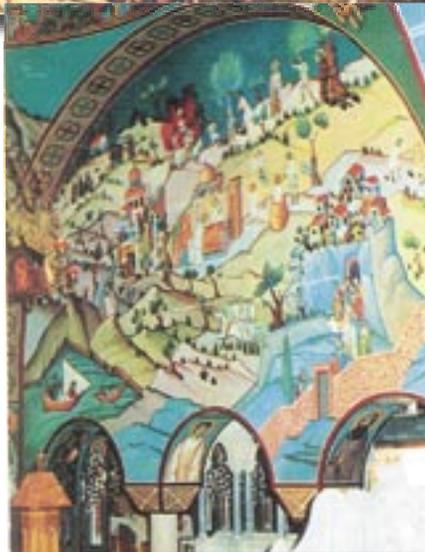
dom was suffered on 9th April 1463.

St Raphael was born Georgios Laskaridis. His father was called Dionysios and his mother Maria. They were a devout family. St Raphael served in the army. He then became a monk and clergyman taking the name of Raphael. He served as parish priest in the parish of St



Above: The Church of Saint Raphael, completed in 1969, was built on the spot where the relics of the saint were revealed.

Right: The interior of the church contains a series of icons portraying the martyrdom of the holy saints. According to the revelation from Saint Raphael, who appeared to a priest as the church was being built, these martyrs suffered many cruel tortures before being received and crowned by the Lord.



The Cultural Side • Η Πολιτιστική Πλευρά

Demetrios of Loumbardiari in Athens. He then became Archimandrite and Bishop at the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

It was when he traveled to France that he met Nicholas, a young student from Thessaloniki studying at a French university. Nicholas was moved by the teaching of St Raphael and they became firm friends.

They lived in the monastery for nine years. In 1462 Mohammed the conqueror captured Lesvos after a seventeen day siege. It fell on 17th September 1462. The Turks did not disturb the Monastery immediately. After 6 months, in April 1463, during Holy Week, a movement occurred in Thermi, causing some agitation. The Christians went up to Karyes to hide. The teacher Theodoros and the Community Chief Vasillios together with his family went up to the Monastery. St Raphael conducted the Divine Liturgy for the last time on Holy Thursday. On Good Friday the Turks came to the Monastery seized Abbot Raphael, Deacon Nicholas, the family of the Community Chief and the Teacher Theodoros. Everyone else had fled to the mountains. The Turks started torturing them to find out the hideout of the others.

Irene, the twelve year old daughter of the Community Chief had her hand cut off in front of her parents, who were tied to a tree. She was then put in a big earthen pot and burned to death. Her father, mother, and the teacher Theodoros were all murdered. St Raphael's horrible torture ended when his head was sawn off in front of Saint Nicholas. St Nicholas died of heart failure, on seeing his mentor murdered and due to his own torture.

The Monastery was then torched and the Turks fled. The next night some devout Christians buried the Holy Martyrs secretly.

When St Raphael started to appear to people he

revealed everything - where the bones of the Martyrs were buried, the pot where little Irene was burned, the grave of the Teacher Theodoros, and the graves of Irene and her father.

At the site of the Ancient Church, icons were found, holy water, sheets from handwritten Gospels, an icon of Jesus and St Raphael's round metallic encolpion with a low relief of Christ Pantocrator on it. Orthodox Bishops wear encolpions externally on the breast. St Raphael also revealed the spot where his jaw was.



This icon of the three holy martyrs was brought back from Greece and donated to Holy Trinity Church by the Kriotiotis family. Many thanks to family, and may the prayer of the saints be with all of us!

The grave of Igoumene Mother Superior Olympia who suffered Martyrdom in 1235 when pirates destroyed Panayia's Old Monastery and killed the nuns was also found. Three large nails were found in her skull. More nails were found on her body.

In 1963 at the place of the holy martyrdom a Convent for Ladies was established. The church of the Saints has become a favorite pilgrimage destination from all over Greece and the world. St Raphael has performed and still performs many miracles to this day. Volumes of books were written on the lives of the saints, the history of the monastery and especially the miracles people have experienced. Most of them are in the form of thankful and God-praising letters by the recipients of the healing from devastat-

ing diseases when all hope seemed to be lost. Usually we celebrate their day on the first Tuesday after Easter.

Apolytikion Hymn of the Saints

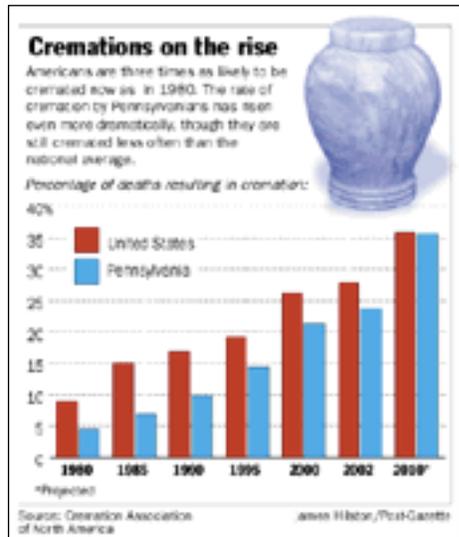
Having contended on Lesvos for the sake of Christ God, you have sanctified the island since the discovery of your sacred relics, O blessed ones; for what reason we honor you, O God-bearing Raphael, together with Nicholas and virgin Irene, as our divine protectors and intercessors with the Lord.

Why Orthodox Christians Are Not Cremated

Every year on August 15, the Holy Orthodox Church commemorates with great honor the repose of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. In the icon of the feast, Jesus Christ is seen receiving the soul of his mother as the Apostles gather with great reverence and honor around her body. It is also a traditional teaching of the Church (although not a dogma) that on the third day after her death, she was received bodily into Heaven, in response to her prayer that her body would not be subject to corruption, as it was in her womb that our Savior was incarnate and from her body He was born in the flesh to save the world.

Ironically, on Sunday, August 15, 2004, the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette ran a prominent article on the topic of cremations. Though the article was mainly concerned with cremation business practices, there was a chart (pictured here) which highlighted the growing number of cremations in the United States. The juxtaposition of these two events on the same day could not make more clear the divergent attitudes of the world versus the Church on how to approach this issue.

Since one of the responsibilities of the spiritual father of a parish is the ongoing education of the flock on important matters such as this, I am taking an opportunity here to re-print information on this issue as a refresher for those who are familiar with it and as a teaching moment for those who still have questions. In understanding why the Church takes such a position, we not only grow in our own knowledge of the Lord and His Church, but we are better prepared to answer questions others ask us about our Orthodox Christian Faith. The following passages are drawn from the Orthodox journal, "Life Transfigured," a publication of the Holy Transfiguration Monastery in Ellwood City, the book "Contemporary Moral Issues" by Father Stanley Harakas, and the 2004 Yearbook of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese.



Cremations are a growing trend in many places ... but not in the Orthodox Christian Church.

Father John

Cremation: A Growing Practice & Problem

In our country, cremations are increasing in number. In part this is due to the influence of Oriental religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism, and to the rise of neo-paganism. But it is also a result of the departure from traditional beliefs among non-Orthodox Christians. In many Christian denominations - or at least among their liberal preachers - it is no longer necessary to believe in the "empty tomb", in Christ's physical Resurrection. These teachers call the "empty tomb" a myth and reduce all the post-Resurrection appearances of Jesus to merely spiritual experiences. The Orthodox conviction that the Son of God was also truly Man and was raised in His whole human nature - body and soul - explains the Church's traditional rejection of cremation, a practice which is diametrically opposed to the expectation of the resurrection of the dead in Christ. If the Resurrection is merely a legend, then as St. Paul writes, "If Christ be not raised, your faith is in vain" (1 Cor. 15:17).

The Church's Historical Foundations

The Church, throughout her entire history, has stressed the importance of understanding that Jesus was born with an actual human body with the same attributes and needs of any other human body, which upon being crucified died the same death that every other body has died. Three days later, the Resurrection included His human body. Through all this Jesus makes abundantly

clear that the whole of our humanity - body as well as soul - has been called to salvation and eternal life. All of human nature has been raised by Christ's Ascension to the right hand of the Father.

Jesus gave us many proofs of this, but it is seen most clearly in Christ's appearance to Thomas. In his "Commentary on St. John," St. Cyril of Alexandria writes:

"What need was there for the showing of His hands and side, if in accordance with the depravity of some, He did not rise with His own flesh? If He wanted His disciples to believe differently concerning Him, why did He not rather appear in a different and by putting the form of the flesh to shame, draw them towards a different understanding? But it was more important that He show Himself carefully at that time so that they should believe in the future resurrection of the flesh."

St. Cyril adds that the Body of Christ had to be raised in order to vanquish death and destroy the power of corruption. Christ's body, which St. Thomas proved through touching to be real, gives clear witness to the future resurrection of our own bodies.

In God's Image

The human person is created in the image and likeness of God. When we are baptized it is not only the soul which becomes the temple of the Holy Spirit, but also the Body. When we receive Holy Communion, we take the real Body and Blood of Christ into our bodies. In

Why Orthodox Christians Are Not Cremated

the mysteries of Chrismation and Holy Unction it is our bodies which are anointed with Holy Chrism. Particularly clear proof of the sanctity of the body is given by those saints such as Saints Spyridon, Paraskevi, Savas, Gerasimos and Dionysios, whose bodies remain incorrupt centuries after their physical deaths. The Church knows innumerable accounts of healings occurring upon being blessed with the relics of a saint. These men and women lived the life in Christ so fully that not only were their souls taken to heaven but their bodies retain sanctity and healing power through the Holy Spirit.

The Example of Holy Friday

The future resurrection of the believer's soul and body, according to the truth which Christ revealed, dictates the nature of Orthodox traditions concerning the body at death... In an Orthodox funeral, "the mourners gather...to be myrrhbearers...to provide the last ministry to the Christian body in preparation for the Resurrection."

Anyone who has attended the Orthodox Holy Friday services knows the sequence following Christ's death. Joseph of Arimathea asks Pilate for the body of Jesus, then the Theotokos, Nicodemos, John the Apostle and the Myrrhbearing Women help Joseph, anoint and bury the Most Precious Body with tears.

How We Care for the Body

The Church has unequivocally taught since Christ's Crucifixion that the proper way to treat the dead is a reverent burial of the body in the context of a proper Church funeral and prayers for those who have fallen asleep in the Lord. We sing hymns and psalms to escort the dead on their way and to express gratitude to God for their life and death. We wrap the body in a new shroud, symbolizing the new dress of incorruption the person is destined to receive. We pour myrrh and oil on the body as we do at baptism.

We accompany this with incense and candles, showing our belief that the person has been liberated from darkness and is going to the true Light. We place the body in the grave towards the east, denoting the Resurrection to come.

The Process of Death

"O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15.55). Death is neither a finality nor it is merely an evolutionary step. The Church in her wisdom commemorates saints on the day they died in this life, calling it their day of birth into eternal life in heaven. A Christian death means eternal life with Christ, where at the Last Judgment body and soul will be reunited and glorified together.

The Broad Picture

Acceptance of cremation, therefore, would represent a radical departure from an established practice for which there seems to be no adequate reason to institute a change. The argument that cemeteries waste space does not stand in a nation as immense as our own, especially when the universality of modern transportation makes burial sites away from urban centers easily accessible. The skyrocketing cost of burial is also not a compelling reason to sanction cremation, for the Church does not ask that funerals be extravagant and costly, but rather that a certain amount of respect be maintained for the human

body that was once the temple of a human soul.

Thus the Church, due to a pastoral concern for the preservation of right beliefs and right practice within the Tradition of the Fathers, and out of a sense of reverence for its departed, must continue its opposition to this practice. Each Orthodox Christian should know that since cremation is prohibited by the canons, those who are cremated will not be permitted a funeral in the Church. Naturally, an exception occurs when the Church is confronted with the case of some accident or natural disaster where cremation is necessary to guard the health of the living, but in these rare situations, the Church allows cremation of Orthodox people with *prior episcopal permission* and only *by extreme exception*.

[Note from Father John: If anyone has additional questions, please call and I will be glad to discuss them. Nobody ever wants to be in the position of dealing with this sensitive issue after it's "too late!"]

The Church's Policy on Cremation

"Because the Orthodox Faith affirms the fundamental goodness of creation, it understands the body to be an integral part of the human person and the temple of the Holy Spirit, and expects the resurrection of the dead. The Church considers cremation to be the deliberate desecration and destruction of what God has made and ordained for us. The Church instead insists that the body be buried so that the natural physical process of decomposition may take place. The Church does not grant funerals, either in the sanctuary, or at the funeral home, or at any other place, to persons who have chosen to be cremated. Additionally, memorial services with *kolyva* (boiled wheat) are not allowed in such instances, inasmuch as the similarity between the 'kernel of wheat' and the 'body' has been intentionally destroyed."

*Pastoral Guidelines of the 2004 Yearbook,
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*

Ἡ Ἱερὰ Μονὴ τῆς Γεννήσεως τῆς Θεοτόκου
 μὲ τὴν εὐλογία τοῦ Σεβασμιωτάτου Μητροπολίτου κ.κ. Μαξίμου
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Τρίτη 7η Σεπτεμβρίου
 6.00 μ.μ.- 11.00 μ.μ. Ἀγρυπνία
 Μεγάλος Ἑσπερινός
 Ἄρτοκλασία
 Ὅρθρος

Τετάρτη 8η Σεπτεμβρίου
 9.00 π.μ.-12.00 μ.μ.
 Ὁρὸς
 Θεία Λειτουργία
 Ἀκολουθεῖ Τράπεζα

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Tuesday, September 7
 6:00 pm - 11:00 pm Vigil:
 Great Vespers
 Blessing of the Loaves
 Matins

Wednesday, September 8
 9:00 am -12:00 pm
 Hours
 Divine Liturgy
 Lunch Follows



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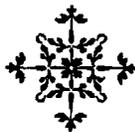
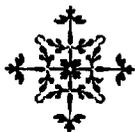
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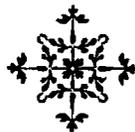
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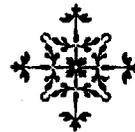


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SPIRITUAL ADVICE FROM A HOLY ELDER

If a person is to change, the grace of God must come, but in order for the grace of God to come, man must be humbled.



Let us be humble, but not pretend to be humble. Pretension to humility is a trap of the devil, which brings despair and inertia, while true humility brings hope and the fulfilling of the commandments of Christ.



Confession is a way for man to come to God. It is the offering of love of God to man.

Today people want to be loved and for this reason they are unsuccessful. The correct way is to not be interested in whether or not people love you, but whether or not you love Christ and people. This is the only way that the soul is fulfilled.

The truth is in Orthodoxy. I have lived it and I know it by the grace of God. There are many lights which man sees and which make an impression on him, but only one is the true light.



*Sayings from the Holy Elder Porphyrios (1906-1991)
From "Precious Vessels of the Holy Spirit" (Protecting Veil Press, 2003)*