



THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

DECEMBER 2010 VOLUME 18 • ISSUE 11



HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH • PITTSBURGH, PENNSYLVANIA

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 Father John's Message
- 3 News & Events
- 5 Gheronda's Corner
- 6 Stewardship Perspectives
- 7 Community Life Photo Journal
- 8 Philoptochos Report
- 9 The Cultural Side
Η Πολιτιστική Πλευρά
- 9 Mouse Tales
- 10 Ask the Elders
- 18 Notable Speakers Series:
Frederica Mathewes-Green
- 20 Why We Need to Pray

Also enclosed:

December Parish Calendar
GOYA Christmas Bread Flyer

**CHRIST IS BORN!
GLORIFY HIM!**

QUICK NEWS



The Holy Trinity Notable Speakers Series was honored to host nationally-known speaker and author Frederica Mathewes-Green on Nov. 5th for a presentation to college students and Nov. 6th to the public. For more photos of community events during the month of November see the Community Life Photo Journal on page 7.



"Our God and Creator has clothed Himself in created flesh, and He Who with His strong arm fashioned the creation reveals Himself in the womb of her that He formed.

O, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God!"

From the Service of the Royal Hours of the Nativity of Christ, December 24

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

Editor

Father John Touloumes, Economos

Church: 412-321-9282

Home: 412-831-3574

E-mail: fjt@HolyTrinityPgh.org

Production

Josephine Stoffko, Administrative Asst.

E-mail: office@HolyTrinityPgh.org

Contributors

Michael Kritiotis

Voula Hareras

Maria Kraniou

Vickie Bellios

Rev. Fr. John Androutsopoulos

Rev. Fr. Radu Bordeianu

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About the Parish

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church

302 West North Avenue

Pittsburgh, PA 15212-4626

Phone: 412-321-9282 • Fax: 412-321-7272

Web site: www.HolyTrinityPgh.org

Email: office@HolyTrinityPgh.org

Holy Trinity Church is a parish of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh (www.odpgh.org) and Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (www.goarch.org) under the Spiritual Jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church Parish Administration

Clergy

Rev. Fr. John Touloumes, Proistamenos

Rev. Fr. Radu Bordeianu, Assistant Priest

Parish Council

Chris T. Balouris, President

Anthony Loomis Alex Trivilas

Jason Farmakis Yvonne Balouris

George Danis George Dickos

Troy Geanopoulos Joanne Germanos

Louis Kort Andrew Athanasiou

Vasilios Scoumis Gerri Valliant

Ministries

Philoptochos Kay Balouris, Pres.

GOYA Pres. Becky Touloumes, Advisor

Choir John Nychis, Director

Over 50 Club Stella Athanasiou, Pres.

St. Lydia Study Stacy Dickos, Coordinator

Cemetery Bill Fiedler, Chairman

Greek School Effie Kilantonis, Coordinator

Social Hall Vas Scoumis, Coordinator

Bookstore Bill and Linda Areheart



I came that they may
have life, and have it
abundantly.

John 10.10

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Newborn Christ,

Christmas and the New Year are a time many have grown up with as a time of excitement and hope, of new things and new possibilities. This year, as our economic challenges continue, our military continues to be pressed into action around the world, our very safety is threatened by terrorists and our cherished personal freedoms are challenged by the very authorities trying to protect us, it is tempting to soak it all in and resign ourselves to a dark and worsening view of life ... or so at least we're being told by some that's our lot.

Our worldly struggles are indeed serious challenges at times, but they can only truly darkened our world view when they are our world. Christians, who live in the world but are "not of the world" (John 15.19) are not limited by such eternal myopia. Generations of believers have suffered persecutions, poverty, illness and even martyrdom, yet they continue to press forward to the future, not one measured in comparison to the previous generation, but one promised by God, "laying up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life which is life indeed." (1 Timothy 6.19).

So, can an economic downturn steal our joy? Can geopolitical unrest negate our hope? Not if we appreciate the abundance of life in Christ and "live simply." St. John Chrysostom, one of the greatest Fathers of the Church, advises us to do so in a writing bearing that title: "On Living Simply":

Do I possess the house in which I live? No, it is only on loan to me from God while I remain in that place. Do I possess the clothes I wear? No, they are on loan to me until I wear them out, or until I give them away to someone in greater need. Do I possess this body that you see before you? No, it was lent to me by God when I was born and he will take it back when I die. Do I possess the mind that is composing the words that I speak? No, that too was lent by God at my birth and will go when I die. So do I possess anything? Yes, I possess the virtues which during my life have grown and flourished within my soul. Inasmuch as I have grown in love, I possess love. Inasmuch as I have grown in faith, I possess faith. Inasmuch as I have grown in gentleness, I possess gentleness. These things are immortal; they are divine gifts which God will not take away, because he wants heaven itself to be filled with virtue. And, of course, I possess my soul, in which these virtues have their roots.

This Christmas, no matter what is or is not under the tree, on the table or in the bank, remember that no one can take your most precious, divine gifts. They cannot be stolen...but they can be abandoned and forgotten. With all we have and with all we have been given, may we truly glorify Christ, for He is born!

Herald Personal Sponsor for this Issue:

**Helen J. Chapas—For the health of the members
of the Chapas & Bukes Families**

WORSHIP LIFE

Weekday Services December

Please take note of the following upcoming liturgical dates. Unless otherwise indicated, Orthros starts at 9:00 a.m., followed by Divine Liturgy at 10:00 a.m.

Dec. 2: Prophet Habakkuk (Senior Citizens Christmas Lunch)

Dec. 5*, 7pm: Great Vespers of St. Nicholas

Dec. 6*: St. Nicholas the Wonderworker

**Services for St. Nicholas held at the Cathedral in Oakland*

Dec. 8, 6pm: Monthly Paraclesis to the Theotokos

Dec. 11, 7pm: Great Vespers of St. Spyridon the Wonderworker (at Monessen)

Dec. 24, 10am: Royal Hours of the Nativity

Dec. 24, 7pm: Vespers of the Nativity of the Lord

Dec. 25: The Nativity of the Lord

Dec. 31, 6pm: Vespers of St. Basil the Great

Christmas Services December

Please remember these festal celebrations for the Nativity of Christ and participate in them with your family:

Fri. Dec. 24, 10 am Royal Hours of the Nativity

This special service offers readings, prophecies and hymns which point to and interpret the Divine Incarnation.

Fri. Dec. 24, 7pm Vespers of the Nativity

This service "opens the liturgical day" and begins the celebration of the Nativity. This is a combination of Great Vespers and the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil. Those wishing to receive Holy Communion should abstain from food and drink from noon until the service.

Sat. Dec. 25 Divine Liturgy of the Nativity of Christ

9:00am Orthros/10:00 am Liturgy. This is the main service of the Birth of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. *Open the best gift first by attending Liturgy with your family and receiving the Holy Mysteries together! Make it a family tradition to keep the most important thing about Christmas the most important thing in your home!*

Fri. Dec. 31 Vespers of St. Basil the Great

This will be a Vespers Liturgy for January 1, held the evening of the feast at 6:00 p.m. A great opportunity to dedicate your New Year to the Lord!

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Christmas Pageant Rehearsals Dec. 12, 17, 18

During the month of December, there will be various rehearsals for the Holy Trinity Christmas Pageant. Please take note of them:

Sun. Dec. 12: Various practices in or after class. Each teacher will have information for their class.

Fri. Dec. 17: GOYA will be preparing Christmas bread from 4:00 to 10:00 pm, during which rehearsals will take place for Grades 7-12.

Sat. Dec. 18: The complete cast rehearsal for the Holy Trinity Church School Christmas Pageant will be held on Saturday morning, December 18, from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m. Please note: Grades 7 to 12 are asked to be present

at 9:00 a.m. to rehearse speaking parts; Grades 6 and under are asked to be present at 10:00 for the complete rehearsal. All students and staff are requested to be present. "Bonus" attendance credit will be given for all students who participate in the rehearsal.

PAGEANT REHEARSAL SCHEDULE FOR SATURDAY, DEC. 18

Grades 7 to 12 9:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

Grades 6 & under 10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

Church School Christmas Pageant December 19

The Holy Trinity Church School ministry will be offering its annual Christmas Pageant on Sunday, December 19. All the students of the Church School will be involved in this event. On that day, following Holy Communion, all Church School students and staff will depart for their classes and final preparations for the pageant. All our parishioners are asked to stay for the pageant and coffee hour in the social hall. Also, please note: Coffee Hour that day is sponsored by the Holy Trinity Church School Alumni. Any alumni that would like to help, please contact Presvytera Becky.

No Church School Class Dec. 25, Jan. 1

Attention, parents: there will be no Church School class on December 25 and January 1 due to the holiday celebrations, so please plan on being in church together as a family for the entire service on those days.

Orthodox Studies Forum December 1, 15

The Orthodox Studies Forum will begin its season on Wednesday, Oct. 6, at 7:00pm, at La Roche College, 900 Babcock Blvd., in the Palumbo Science Center, Room 107. This is in the same building in which the group met last time. The study topic for this year is the book, "Living Prayer" by Metropolitan Anthony Bloom. The book will be available in our Three Hierarchs bookstore during Coffee Hour and at the study. All are welcome. For information, see Father Radu or contact him at FrRadu@HolyTrinityPgh.org.

Saint Lydia Women's Study Fellowship December 9

The Saint Lydia Women's Study Fellowship meets every other Thursday at the St George Chapel, 8941 Ringeisen Road (behind Duncan Manor Plaza) in Allison Park. The meeting starts at 9:30 a.m. with coffee and fellowship, followed by the study and discussion promptly from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. The topic of study this fall is the book, "The Jesus Prayer: The Ancient Desert Prayer That Tunes the Heart to God," by Frederica Mathewes-Green. The ministry is open to women of all ages. Want more info? Contact Stacy Dickos at 412-367-0925 or SaintLydia@HolyTrinityPgh.org. (Note: There will be only one meeting in December due to the holidays.)

YOUTH MINISTRIES

HOPE/JOY Christmas Project December 12

The HOPE and JOY ministries will be organizing a Christmas project for the young people of the parish on Sunday, December 12, starting at 1:00pm. They will meet in the social hall and travel to the Holy Family Institute to meet and give

directly to the needy and less fortunate. To sign up for the donation list or get involved in the event, contact Nikki Marsh at 724-625-2729.

GOYA Christmas Fireside Chat..... December 11

The GOYA will hold its annual Christmas Fireside Chat at the home of Chris & Maria Berexa on Saturday, December 11 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. Please watch the GOYA Facebook page and email list for additional information.

BAPTISMS

Backeris

The servant of God, Evangelos Backeris, son of Dean and Amanda (DeFazio) Backeris, was received into the Holy Orthodox Christian Faith through the Holy Mystery of Baptism on November 13, 2010 at Holy Trinity Church. His sponsor was Mark Backeris. May God grant him many years!

COMMUNITY NEWS

Sign Up For the Holy Trinity Email!

Want to receive the Sunday Bulletin directly via email? Want to keep up to date with the latest Holy Trinity news, including changes of events, changes due to weather, etc.? Go to www.HolyTrinityPgh.org and sign up today!

Holy Trinity Now on Facebook

Attention Facebook users (all 500 million of you!): Holy Trinity Church is now on Facebook. Log into your account and search "Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church - Pittsburgh, PA" or go to "<http://www.facebook.com/holytrinitypgh>". Click the "Like" icon to make it part of your Facebook account!

Holy Trinity GOYA also now sports a new Facebook page as well. It is a private page (for reasons of youth safety) and is accessible only to Holy Trinity GOYA teens, parents and advisors. The GOYA is trying to sign up all GOYA members and parents, so if you have not yet been added, please contact corresponding secretary Yianni Gagianis on Facebook and let him know so you can keep up on all the GOYA news!



Community Christmas Card Form Due Dec. 6

The November issue of the *Herald* contained a form for the Holy Trinity Community Christmas Card. 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 November issue of the *Herald* contained 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. Thank you!



Year-End Stewardship & Build Fund Contribution Notes

The Stewardship Committee and Capital Campaign thank all our Holy Trinity Stewards for their pledges and contributions this year and ask that everyone brings their offerings up to date for 2010. Please take note that all offerings you would like listed as received during the 2010 tax year (Jan. 1-Dec. 31) for tax deduction purposes must be received at the church by Dec. 31. This is an IRS regulation. You may indicate the offerings to apply for either your 2010 pledge (to pay the balance) or the 2011 pledge (to pay ahead) and your pledge balance will be accurately calculated no matter when the offering is made. Year-end statements will be sent out at the end of January. Thanks! Also, please remember to submit your signed 2011 Holy Trinity Stewardship Pledge Card as soon as possible, as they were due in November.

Parish Council Elections..... December 5

As indicated in the notice to the General Assembly last month, regular Parish Council elections will be held Sunday, December 5, following the Divine Liturgy. Voting rules as published and explained for prior General Assemblies apply: you must be a member in good standing (stewardship and sacramental) to vote, which includes having a current year signed Holy Trinity Stewardship card submitted and contributions being made toward that pledge.

Note: Even though there is an equal number of candidates for positions, the election process must still be conducted to make the elections official. Balloting will be held open only during coffee hour.

REGIONAL NEWS

T.H.E.O.S. Christmas Concert December 12

A message from the Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood: "The leaves have not yet fallen off the trees, but before you know it, we will be in the Nativity Season. Please mark your calendars to attend this beautiful celebration of the Nativity of our Lord. We look forward to this beautiful event and your participation. More detailed information regarding the concert will be forthcoming. The event will be held at Holy Cross Church in Mount Lebanon on December 12 at 5:00 p.m. and is sponsored by the Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood of Greater Pittsburgh. All proceeds benefit the Three Hierarchs Eastern Orthodox School."



New Year's Eve - Presentation of Christ Church ... Dec. 31

The Presentation of Christ Church ("Ypapanti") in East Pittsburgh will be holding a New Year's Eve celebration from 8:00pm to 1:30am at Olympia Hall, next to the church on Electric Avenue. Music will be by The Greek Company Orchestra. For reservations, contact 412-371-6721. Tickets are \$40 for adults, \$20 for students and \$10 for children under 13. And remember, please celebrate and travel safely!

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

DECEMBER 2010: THE VOICE OF THE GOSPEL CHRIST IS BORN – GLORIFY HIM!



**Father John
Androutsopoulos**

But the angel said to them: Do not be afraid. For I am here with good news for you, which will bring great joy to all the people.

(Luke 2: 10)

God's Invitation: Have No Fear

"The angel said to the shepherds do not be afraid." Some people say they are afraid the war in Afghanistan

will never end. Will the killing go on forever? Others say they are afraid we will not get what we want for Christmas. We are afraid of so many things, we worry much over little. Let's not do it!

Let us concentrate on the good news of Jesus Christ, who brings us peace, the peace that comes from knowing we are right with God, through our belief in His Son. When the right time came, God sent His Son to the world and the Son brought true peace and salvation to this hour.

Man's Response: Confusion and Yearning

What did man bring to this hour? His mind was confused. He was sinful, filled with a sense of guilt – very much in need of a Savior. But man brought something else to this hour. He brought a heart hungry for decency and justice. He longed for God and His way. He listened and heard the angels hymn. He was ready and waiting. And so must we be ready and waiting with spiritual preparation to celebrate the Nativity of our Savior Jesus Christ. To refresh your memory and understand the following remarks of the Gospel reading, Please read all the events of the "Holy Night" before the birth and the events after the birth of our Savior in the Gospel of St. Luke (Luke 2: 1-20).

The Joy of the First Christmas

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Let us rejoice and be happy as we prepared ourselves to celebrate the birth of God's Son.

An Overview of the Nativity Story

To better understand its importance and meaning, let us review some of the significant aspects of the Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

THE STORY: The Christmas story was told by St. Matthew and St. Luke. We are familiar with the trip to Bethlehem, the crowded inn, the humble birth of God's son. God himself was visiting the earth. The Word had become flesh.

THE SHEPHERDS: It was a glorious night on the Judean

hills. The Lamb of God was born, therefore, the appearance of the angels to the shepherds.

THE MESSENGER (THE ANGEL): A great angel brought the good news to the shepherds that first Christmas night. "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord." I bring to you good news, which will bring joy to the human race, because today was born for your salvation the Savior of the world. Beloved, God did not reveal the birth of His Son Jesus Christ to the rich and to the powerful men of that country because they loved gold, silver, luxury and the earthly pleasures. Also, they loved to be honored by the people, and so they were vainglorious. God chose the simple shepherds because of their humility and purity of their hearts to see first Jesus Christ, the son of God.



THE CHOIR OF THE ANGELS: A multitude of the heavenly angels came praising God.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS HYMN: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men." With this hymn, the angels glorified God for the incarnation of

his Son who came to earth to save the human race and to bring peace between them and God.

GOOD WILL TOWARDS MEN: Today is fulfilled God's decision about the Salvation of the human race. Jesus came to this world to bring peace, joy, happiness and above all salvation. He came to reconcile man with God.

THE MOTHER: Mary, the mother of her Son and God's Son, listened carefully, and was keeping all of the words of the shepherds in her heart. Also, she was remembering the words of the Archangel Gabriel who told her that she would become the Mother of God.

PRAYER

"Our Father in Heaven: Christmas is such a wonderful time! Everyone seems to be filled with happy, generous love. We are too, and we do not like to see it end. You have shown us a way to keep the spirit of Christmas alive after the tree is down and it is all over. Help us do it. We know we will forget – do not let us. Amen."

The blessing of almighty God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be with us. Amen.

May we all have a Blessed Christmas ("Kala Xristougenna"),

With the love of Christ,

Rev. Fr. John K. Androutsopoulos, Protopresbyter

A regular report on the Stewardship ministry of Holy Trinity Church, which provides every member a vital opportunity to become involved in supporting the life and ministries of the Church through their God-given time, talents and treasures.



Mike Kritiotis

THE HUMAN SIDE OF STEWARDSHIP

Can You Please Pray for Me?

The petite tenth grader was not a trouble maker, so she was an infrequent visitor to the principal's office. But this was the second time she lingered by in a week's time. She looked over the secretary's shoulder, scanning something that got her attention. She turned to leave, then hesitated and turned back again. Her eyes watered and she looked side to side, blinking the tears away. She approached the desk, her gaze now fixed on the small icons pinned on the wall.

"Miss Julie, I need to ask you something important..." she hesitated, lowered her eyes.

"What do you need, honey?"

"A big favor... Can you please pray for me?"

A girl in trouble, asking a stranger for help through only her prayers.

"Well, of course I can! What's the matter?"

"I'm just having a really bad time and a hard year. I see your icons when I go by and thought maybe your prayers will help me."

Daily, a parade of people cross our path, with hardships in their lives, heaviness in their souls and very little (if any) support to lift them out of despair. You don't need to look too close to find them; they are everywhere – reminds me of one of Fr. Radu's conclusions during his recent sermon: "This is a really messed up world!"

Finding Peace

Do you ever feel at peace? I mean, really engulfed with peace in your whole being. It's getting to be a very rare opportunity these days, don't you think? Here is a personal tidbit I haven't shared with anyone but my wife up to this point: There is a moment of praying in church (especially during an evening service), when I impulsively look up over the altar and imagine the Platytera's arms and veil around me. I fret when I can't see her eyes from where I'm standing, because of the icon screen bars in front. I crane my neck and swing left or right to catch her glance (if you ever notice me doing this, at least you'll know I'm not having a seizure). I close my eyes, the sounds of Church in my ears. That's my total peace moment. A feeling that I hope each of you experiences in your own way at some point, because it is a rare gift—but that's there for us, free for the taking.

The Stewardship Connection

"What does any of this have to do with a stewardship message?", you might ask! Let's look at the antithesis of the two settings above: The many people who, like the desperate teen girl, are crying for help but have no guidance in their lives. No way to find a moment of comforting peace. Their hopes are pinned on somebody's saintly (maybe even strange to

them) icons. Then, let's realize how fortunate we are to have the spiritual luxury of walking into this holy church, with the abundant comfort of family, the support of friends, the soothing embraces of the Panagia, the reassurance of the Saints and the protection of the Holy Trinity.

I submit that our stewardship duty then is not just to pay for the daily expenses of our church. This is our mission headquarters, our safe haven, our battleground and our last hope all in one. This place is, well, everything! As we realize it, we will find that priorities in our lives change and take on a new perspective. No longer do we find ourselves living only for ourselves. We don't look where we are versus the "average pledge"; we don't leave volunteerism to somebody else; we don't say "no" as much. Being good stewards helps us recognize we are part of the most dramatic, exciting and wonderful life possible—life with God and life in service to Him for the sake of others.

As this year draws to an end, let us embrace our rich faith with renewed energy as stewards of His Church. With all the evil in the world today, our call is to do our part so that, as St Paul wrote, we "do not get overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:21).

Mike Kritiotis

2009/2010 STEWARDSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

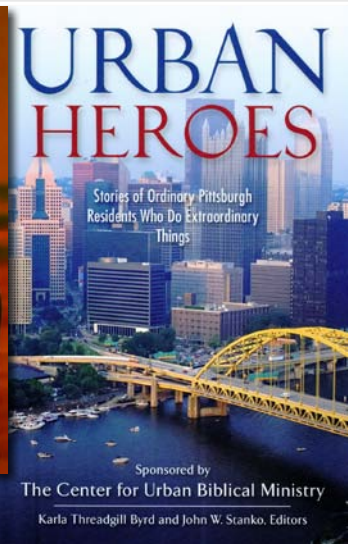
2009 Offerings Received from Stewards Submitting Pledge Card	\$163,070 (229 pledges)
2009 Offerings Received from Donors Without Pledge Card	\$35,204 (38 donors)
2009 Total Stewardship Income	\$198,274 (267 donors)
2009 Average Stewardship Pledge	\$680
2010 Offerings Received from Stewards Submitting Pledge Card	\$118,710 (205 pledges)
2010 Offerings Received from Donors Without Pledge Card	\$12,426 (51 donors)
2010 Total Stewardship Income	\$131,136 (245 donors)
2010 Average Stewardship Pledge	\$684
2010 Stewardship Pledges Total	\$140,163 (205 pledges)



November 5/6: The Holy Trinity Notable Speakers Series honored both Holy Trinity Church and the Pittsburgh area by bringing to the area for the first time nationally known author and speaker, Frederica Mathewes-Green. "Khouria" Frederica is the wife of an Antiochian Orthodox priest in Baltimore and is a wide-ranging author, whose work has appeared in such diverse publications as the Washington Post, Christianity Today, Smithsonian, the Los Angeles Times, First Things, Books & Culture, Sojourners, Touchstone, and the Wall Street Journal. She writes regularly for the multifaith web magazine Beliefnet.com, and writes movie reviews for National Review Online and Christianity Today Movies. She has published 9 books, including the most recent, *The Jesus Prayer: The Ancient Desert Prayer that Tunes the Heart to God*. She spoke to the area college students on Friday evening (bottom left), then addressed the general community at Holy Trinity Church on Saturday morning (top left, middle left). At bottom right she is pictured with other sister Presbyteres from the area who attended the event.



November 20: Holy Trinity Church was blessed to be able to celebrate the 50th anniversary of ordination to the Holy Diaconate of our beloved "Gheronda," Father John Androutsopoulos. Father John offered the homily for the day (upper right) and shared with the congregation stories and wisdom from his many years in the ordained ministry. He is pictured here with Father George Daskalakis (upper left), also a member of the Holy Trinity extended family and a retired priest with family members here. Following the Liturgy, Father John was joined for a photo by his beloved Presvytera Ethel, Father Radu, Father John and Father George. Thank you, Father John, for being a part of our community. May God grant you many more years. AXIOS!



November 15: Holy Trinity's own maintenance manager, Joe Burke was honored at the first annual Urban Heroes wards Ceremony and featured in a new book, "Urban Heroes," published by the Center for Urban Biblical Ministry. The book profiles "stories of ordinary Pittsburgh residents who do extraordinary things." The book contains Joe's inspiring story of personal challenge and victory. That story can also be found on the web at <http://www.pittsburghurbanheroes.com/Heroes/burke.html>. Congratulations, Joe!



An update on the news and activities of our local Holy Trinity chapter of the Philoptochos Ladies Society, a national philanthropic ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, and the Parish Council." Want more information? Visit their web site at www.philoptochos.org or contact a local member.

Philoptochos Report: December 2010

Undies and Socks: Please Help

This is the season to help others. The box in the Narthex of the Church is in need of your help to fill it. Won't you please buy a bundle of undies or socks to donate. They will be given to a home before Christmas and the children who will receive them will be delighted. Some of them only have the undies they are wearing. Please help!

Thanksgiving Turkey Fund-raiser

If you haven't sent in your donation it is not too late. This fund raiser helps the poor in our community and others. So many of us are very comfortable and do not realize that there are families in our community that are in need. With your help we are able to meet our obligations to our charities.

Sweet Voices

Sweet Voices, or "Glykes Fones", is a new activity at Holy Trinity Church. Everyone is welcome to join Sweet Voices and enjoy singing the old Greek Folk Songs. They meet every other Sunday at one of the tables and are lead by Areta Kalageris and Nick Loomis. They sing old favorites like "Samotissa", "Yialo, Yialo", "To Yelekaki", "Psaropoula", and so on. Their sharing and singing time is 30-40 minutes. Please join them to share the joys of our musical heritage. Enjoy!

Γλυκές Φωνές

Η «Γλυκές Φωνές» έχει αρχίσει να μοιράζονται τα αγαπημένα τους τραγούδια ελληνικά λαϊκά μετά καφέ ωρών. Η ομάδα τραγουδάει "Σαμιώτισσα" και μερικά από τα άλλα αγαπημένα μας θα τραγουδήσει—«Γιαλό Γιαλό», «Το Γελακακι», «Ψαροπούλα», και ούτω καθεξής. «Γλυκές Φωνές», θα συνεδριάσει εκ νέου 31 Οκτωβρίου (Αλλαγή σημείωμα της ημερομηνίας!), μετά την ώρα του καφέ στην αίθουσα της εκκλησίας. Επιμερισμό μας και του χρόνου το τραγούδι είναι 30-40 λεπτά. Παρακαλείσθε να ενωθούν μαζί μας να μοιραστούμε τη χαρά της μουσικής μας κληρονομιάς. Όλες οι φωνές είναι ευπρόσδεκτες!

Angel Tree

If you have taken a name tag from the tree, please remember to return the gift it to the church as soon as possible. This way a child will not be forgotten. You may buy a gift or give a gift card. Cards are available from Kathy Warren at the Scrip (Gift Cards) Table. The children from Auberlie will be delighted with the gifts they receive. It is a known fact that everyone from Holy Trinity is so thoughtful and generous. Thank you.

Holiday Prepaid Bake Sale

Our bake sale order forms were in the Herald last month. They are also available at the coffee hour. Please remember to order as soon as possible so the ladies will be able to fulfill everyone's order. The money from this bake sale is used to support all the charities that we support from Christmas until May. Please place an order. Your support is so important.

Visitation Ministry to Shut-Ins & Nursing Homes

Stacy Dickos and Esther Ladakos made their first hospital visit to AGH on November 7, 2010. We cannot tell you how the lady's face lit up when she saw us. She was very glad to have someone to sit with her and she told us many stories. We will be visiting more people as their names are give to us. Please call the church office at 412-321-9282 and give the names to Josie who will pass the name on to us. Thank you.

Get Well Cards

If you know someone who is ill, in a nursing home or a hospital and would benefit from receiving a get well card, please call Esther Ladakos at 412-761-3977 or tell her after church so that she may send one

from the Philoptochos. If you did not feel well, wouldn't you like to have someone remember you? Please help us by letting us know.

Upcoming Events

- Thanksgiving "Turkey Fund-Raiser": It's not too late - please send in your donation today!
- Christmas Angel Tree: The names for the Christmas gifts are on the tree during Coffee Hour. When you take a name, please complete the tear off and put it in the box on the table.
- Prepaid Bake Sale: Forms are in the current Herald. They are also available at the coffee hour or by calling Joyce at 412-366-1498 or Esther at 412-761-3977
- Philoptochos Senior Citizens Christmas Party: Save the date - December 2, 2010. Liturgy will be offered, followed by the luncheon.

We wish everyone a very blessed Christmas!

Respectfully submitted,
Esther Ladakos, Secretary



Reflections in Greek on the Great Feast of the Holy Nativity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.



Voula Hareras

ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥΓΕΝΝΑ

Φώς Μέγα. Ο πρώτος λόγος του Δημιουργού Θεού ή πρώτη Του θέληση κι απόφαση ήταν για τό Φώς [Γενηθήτω φώς] είπε, κι έλαμψε τό φώς.

Ύποχώρησε τότε τό σκοτάδι πού τύλιγε τό σύμπαν. Κι όλα έγιναν ορατά, όλα φωτεινά.

Άρχισε πλέον ή ζωή. Μέσα στο ύπεροχο αυτό δώρο του Θεού, τό Φώς, μέσα στη φωτιστική καί θερ-

μαντική του παρουσία έγιναν όλα όσα θέλησε ό Δημιουργός Θεός.

Έγινε ό πανέμορφος κόσμος μας. Δημιουργήθηκε κι ό άνθρωπος, πού μπορούσε νά βλέπει καί νά χαίρεται καί νά απολαμβάνει τά θαυμάσια του Θεού.

Ήρθε όμως καί ή τραγική ώρα. Ή ώρα της παρακοής στη θεική έντολή, από τούς πρώτους ανθρώπους, Αδάμ καί Εύα στον κήπο της Εδέμ, καί μετά ...Μετά άπλώθηκε σκοτάδι, ένα άλλοιώτικο σκοτάδι, πνευματικό. Εχασε τη χάρη του Θεού ό άνθρωπος, καί άρχισε νά πλανιέται άναζητώντας νόημα καί σκοπό στη ζωή του.

Ποιός μπορούσε νά διαλύσει τό σκοτάδι, μεγάλα ανθρώπινα πνεύματα πάσχισαν νά ρίξουν κάποιο φώς.

Όμως καί οι πιό μεγάλες έμπνεύσεις τους, τά πιό μεγάλα πετάγματα του νου τους ήσαν άδύναμα. [Ήσαν φώτα, χίλια φώτα] όπως τό είπε στοχαστικά ό ποιητής μά δέν ήτανε τό φώς, καί ό άνθρωπος άναζητούσε [Φώς περισσότερο Φώς].

Μέσα σ' αυτό τό άδιέξοδο καί όταν τό σκοτάδι έγινε πολύ

βαθύ, [΄'ότε ήλθε τό πλήρωμα του χρόνου, έξαπέστειλεν ό Θεός τόν Υιόν αυτού]. Καί τότε όπως τό είχε προφητεύσει ό Ησαΐας, [ό Λαός ό καθημένος έν σκότει είδε φώς μέγα, καί τοίς καθημένοις έν χώρα καί σκιά θανάτου φώς άνέτειλεν αυτοίς] ό Ηλιος της Δικαιοσύνης Χριστός ό Θεός ό ένανθρωπήσας Θεόν ήμών.

Φώς Μέγα άνέτειλε, από την Φάτνη της Βηθλεέμ, από τό Θείο Βρέφος, πού γεννήθηκε ταπεινά, για νά πλησιάσει τόν άνθρωπο, νά ζήσει τη ζωή του καί νά του την αλλάξει.

Νά του δώσει τη δύναμη νά πετύχει τό σκοπό πού του όρισε ό Δημιουργός του. Νά όμοιάσει στο Θεό.

Ο Χριστός είναι τό Φώς. Καί όσοι πιστεύουμε δυνατά ότι είναι [Φώς έκ Φωτός, Θεός Άληθινός] όπως διακηρύτουμε στο Σύμβολο της Πίστεώς μας, μπορούμε νά έχουμε άπλετο φώς στις στράτες της ζωής μας. Νά βλέπουμε καθαρά ως τό βάθος του ορίζοντα της ζωής. Νά γεμίζουμε μέ την αίσιοδοξία κι τό θάρρος πού δίνει τό φώς. Νά πολεμάμε καί τά σκοτάδια πού άπλώνει γύρω μας ό σκοτεινός διάβολος.

Αυτό τό φώς τό μοναδικό, τό αιώνιο καί ζωοποιό, άς πλησιάσουμε καί τά φρετινά Χριστούγεννα. Βρίσκεται στην Έκκλησία καί στά ιερά Μυστήρια. Αυτό τό Φώς, ό Χριστός,θά κάνει καί μάς καί καθένα πού Τόν πλησιάζει Φωτεινούς όλόφωτους.

Έλπίζω νά σάς εύχαρίστησε τό ύπεροχο αυτό άρθρο από τό περιοδικό Πρός την Νίκη

Εύχομαι σέ όλους Καλά Χριστούγεννα καί μέ ύγεία καί Ειρήνη ό νέος Χρόνος.

Ας προσευχηθούμε από την καρδιά μας νά μάς βοηθήση ό Θεός στις Δύσκολες μέρες πού περνά ή ανθρωπότητα. Καλή Χρονια.

Βούλα Χαρερά

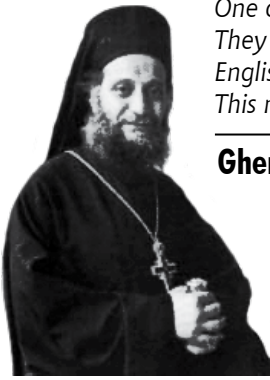
Spero | Mouse Tales: The St. Spyridon Church School Library Update

Hello, my precious children!

What do you think it was really like that special night two-thousand years ago when Jesus was born? You will find out, my precious little ones, in a Christmas book by Chris Molan titled, "The Journey to Bethlehem." In it, he weaves cultural, geographical and historical details together to imagine what it was like. You will travel the very long road with Mary and Joseph, discovering their world as it really was. Travelling through the hills of Galilee and down the Roman Road to Jericho. Hurry with them through the wilderness, pause before the splendor of Jerusalem, and seek room in a very crowded Bethlehem. You will see everyday life in Roman-ruled Palestine. Then, after the wondrous birth of Jesus, you will hurriedly travel with the newborn child and his family as they flee to Egypt, trying to escape Herod. After Herod dies, you will see the angel appearing in a dream to Joseph, saying, "Get up and take the child and his mother and go into the land of Israel, because those who were seeking the child's life are dead." The nice thing is, my precious children, you don't have to be content with just imagining Jesus. He is with you always, including at your own celebration of Christmas. He is waiting for you on Christmas day at Liturgy, and so will I be! Open the best gift first - come and receive Holy Communion ... and THEN enjoy a wonderful and blessed day of fun and family!

Love in Christ, Spero





Elder Aimilianos

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. This month we continue the series based on the topic, "Communion with God"

Gheronda, what is joy?

Perhaps all of us, at one time or another, have brought joy to somebody. You may not know how or why, but you can feel it. Now, at this stage, you begin to sense that God rejoices over you, which causes a shoot of joy and gratitude to spring up within you. Such joy is a foretaste,

an awareness that God is near, that He is coming. It is also a feeling of gratitude, because before you receive God's gifts, you see Him emptying His pockets to give them to you.

What happens to us when we experience this joy?

Together with the joy that the soul feels, there comes a second feeling, which is always bound up with it: a feeling of pain. This is the pain of a soul which is so rich and yet so poor. It is the pain of a soul which, in the face of God's mercy, understands its own hardness, its tragic failure, the dreadful state that it's in. It understands how small and petty it is, and it begins to feel pain. This pain is caused primarily by the soul's consciousness of its distance from God. Such a soul asks: "Why are You so far away from me, my God? Even though you give me joy, why don't I understand You? I know You rejoice in me, but why can't I take You in my arms? I am here, and You are somewhere else, infinitely far away."

Is there hope for us when we realize our sinfulness?

The soul is in pain because of its fall and exile. When we reach this point, when our soul begins to feel this pain, we come to the second, extremely critical stage in our communion with God. It's what the Church Fathers call the "highest intellection."

What does that mean? It's as if you were standing on some great height, from which you could fall into an abyss, but from where you can also see all there is to see. You're conscious of having been seized and raised up to a place where you can look into the abyss of your transgressions and understand the depth of your fall. Just as you can look down from the window of an airplane and see the world you've left below, so now you look down on the self you've left behind, while your intellect ascends to the heights.

And while you're there, you want nothing to enter into your mind, and thus you think no thoughts, you form no concepts, you shun all mental representations. You divest the intellect of its contents: every feeling, every idea, every expression, along with the very activity by which ideas and expressions are formed.

Why? Because all of our language and all of our thoughts are taken from, and belong to, the finite, created order. Whether you offer thanks to God, or supplicate Him, or confess to Him, or ask Him for anything at all, you can only do so in the human language of this world, of which you, too, are an inseparable part.

How can I overcome the passions that rule me?

As a result, you experience an ultimate, supreme form of intellection, that is, a spiritual understanding of the ultimate reality: the One God. This is a mode of perception absolutely exclusive to the intellect, in which the intellect has renounced all things, leaving them behind for the sake of its movement towards God. It follows, then, that your entire being must abandon everything and remain alone at the summit.

When the intellect reaches this point in its mystical progression towards God - which is the most important place in human existence, situated at the spiritual center of our being - you will discover something remarkable: your passions, your faults, and, above all, the things most deeply-rooted within you that torment you, have all vanished. When you're there, beholding God, where is your anger? Where is your egotism? Where's this, where's that? They have all disappeared.

What a wonderful thing! Uproot your passions! Isn't that what we say? But that's incorrect, because it is God who does that. Someone who is tied down can't get up by himself. If you're tied down, you're stuck there. And the passions are terrible bonds from which you need to be liberated, and that is a task that God alone can undertake and accomplish.

Gheronda, is God really with us no matter what?

God is with us at every stage in our progression. He helps us to renounce the world; He helps us sever our bonds; he assists in the purification, initially of our intellect, and then of our heart and conscience. When this purification is complete, we arrive at a condition of agnosia, a state of unknowing: we no longer dwell on things from the past, neither are we absorbed by things in the pre-sent. All that we've learned now seems like so much rubbish, not worth hanging onto, and thus not worth knowing. Now I want to avoid every temptation, and thus I must be on my guard with respect to any memories that come to mind. A single memory, a single thought, a single mental image can topple me from the heights and hurl me back down into the dark places my soul once haunted.

Above all, I must avoid every form of abandonment. What do I mean by "abandonment"? People often have the feeling that they've been abandoned. "God's abandoned me," you hear them say; or "everyone has abandoned me; nobody cares about me," and things like that. When you feel that way, you're good for nothing. Anyone who thinks like that needs to take a good look at himself. Such a person needs to discover who he really is, and rid himself of this feeling, because what he is experiencing is essentially a division within himself. This kind of abandonment is not a rift between the self and God, or between the self and other people, but a division within one's own soul, within one's own intellect. And the divided elements have to be unified before they can ascend to the Lord. The intellect must reject every thought of, and refuse to ascribe any truth to, feelings of abandonment and isolation. When it rises above such feelings, it stands like the prophet Habakkuk upon his watch-tower (Hab. 2.1).

Excerpted from "The Way of the Spirit" (to be continued)

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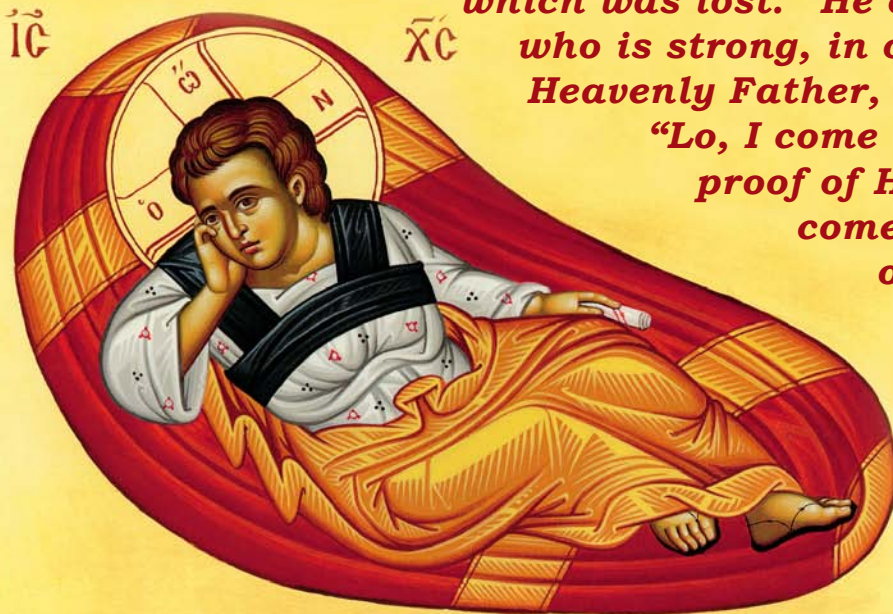


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Why Jesus Came Into the World



God the Word incarnate came “to seek and save that which was lost.” He came with the sense of one who is strong, in obedience to the will of His Heavenly Father, in order to save the world. “Lo, I come to do the will of God.” It is proof of His almighty power that He comes and conducts Himself as one who is weak, meek and lowly in heart. It is proof of the authenticity of His truth that He teaches it through love.

Archimandrite Vaseilios
from “I Came That They May Life
and Have It Abundantly”

Scripture of the Month: “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10.10)