



# THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

FEBRUARY 2015 VOLUME 23 • ISSUE 2

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

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## QUICK NEWS



These loving couples, each married over 60 years, received Vasilopita together on January 11. Want to see more photos of this event and others in the life and ministries of Holy Trinity Church? See the Community Life Photo Journal on pages 7-10 or visit our online photo gallery site at [photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org](http://photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org).

## Saint Polycarp of Smyrna • Feast Day: February 23



This second century bishop is one of the most famous martyrs of the early Church. Having been brought to trial under pagan Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius, St. Polycarp firmly confessed his faith in Christ and was condemned to be burned alive. After he was tied to a post, logs beneath him were set afire, but the flames that encircled the saint did not touch him. Seeing this, the pagans stabbed him with a dagger. So much blood flowed from this wound that it extinguished the flames.

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

# THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

## About the Herald

The Herald is the Monthly Newsletter of  
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church

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### About the Parish

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Holy Trinity Church is a parish of the  
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh  
([www.odpgh.org](http://www.odpgh.org)) and Greek Orthodox  
Archdiocese of America ([www.goarch.org](http://www.goarch.org))  
under the Spiritual Jurisdiction of the  
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### Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church Parish Administration

#### Clergy

Rev. Fr. John Touloumes, Proistamenos

Rev. Fr. Radu Bordeianu, Assistant Priest

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Joyce Athanasiou

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#### Ministries

Please visit the Holy Trinity website at [www.HolyTrinityPgh.org](http://www.HolyTrinityPgh.org) for descriptions and contact information on Holy Trinity Church's ministries, including educations, youth, senior, family and cultural opportunities. There is something for everyone, so please get involved today!



**“Blessed is He who gave us fasts, the sheer wings by which we fly to Him.”**

Hymns on Fasting by St. Ephraim the Syrian

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Museums can be wonderful, educational places that help us learn, grow and expand our horizons. Or they can be boring, meandering experiences without purpose or direction. The first kind is usually made rich and rewarding by proper guidance designed to enrich our experience and help us get the most out of the tour;

the second kind can leave us wondering why we even bothered showing up.

In some ways, standing at the door of the Great and Holy Lent can be like standing at the door of those two museums. Which one would you like to experience? Are you interested in a Lenten journey that, like Museum #1, has good directional signage, attentive personal guides, informative and educational handouts and an overall sense of purpose and focus? Or would you like to be told, like Museum #2, to make the most of it and figure it out on your own?

Every about Orthodox Christianity's approach to Lent says that for centuries, the Church has put a lot of care into being like Museum #1:

- There is a well-marked path all the way through, from the Pre-Lenten Sundays starting with the Sunday of Zacchaeus all the way through to Pascha.
- There are lots of supplemental guides and information, including the daily scripture readings, the hymns of the services and the lives of selected saints, all progressing from the beginning of the journey to the end with a clear path and purpose.
- Trained guides (clergy, monastics and others) are on hand to give us the personal attention we need and to answer questions along the way.

In the end, for those who truly engage, we are left with the freedom to pour ourselves into the experience without the pressure of having to “invent it” from scratch or design a self-guided experiment. It allows us to trust the proven guides and resources and walk the path of the people of the Church who have preceded us in this journey of spiritual growth and faith. And it avoids us getting lost in a labyrinth of confusing spiritual futility filled with worldly theories and self-therapies being sold as the latest religious phenomena.

In other words, the Orthodox Lenten journey in its wisdom, experience and centuries-old advice frees us from spiritual confusion and gives us, as stated by St. Isaac the Syrian above, “the sheer wings by which we fly to Him.”

So, this Lent, trust in the Lord, trust in the Church and remember: even though the example above used museums to demonstrate the two paths, nothing about the Church, Lent or our spiritual journey is intended to be locked behind a museum glass case or left on a shelf for show. It is a dynamic encounter with the Holy Spirit, Who “prays within us” and gives us those sheer wings. And the only way to use them is to spread them and jump into the spiritual wind, in-breathing the life of the Church: worship, scripture, Holy Confession and Communion, and the three essentials of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.

Please post the enclosed Lenten services schedule in a visible place in your home and plan on attending. Participate in the Faith and Family Wednesdays. And don't forget to look for the “special exhibits” the Church provides along the way. Father Radu and I look forward to sharing that journey with you and seeing you emerge victorious in Christ at the end.

With sincere paternal love in Christ,

**Herald Personal Sponsor for this Issue:**

**Helen J. Chapas**

**For the health of all the members of the Chapas families**

## WORSHIP LIFE

### Weekday Services .....February

Please take note of the following upcoming liturgical dates. Unless otherwise indicated, Orthros starts at 8:30 a.m., followed by Divine Liturgy at 9:30 a.m.. Guide to locations of services: "HT"=Holy Trinity Church, 985 Providence Boulevard, Pittsburgh; "SG"= Saint George Chapel, 8941 Ringeisen Road, Allison Park.

- **Sun. Feb. 1, 7:00pm:** Great Vespers of the Presentation of the Lord at the Presentation Church ("Ypapanti") in East Pittsburgh.

- **Mon. Feb. 2, 9:00am Orthros/10:00am Liturgy:** The Presentation of the Lord at the Presentation Church ("Ypapanti") in East Pittsburgh.

- **Tue. Feb. 10:** St. Haralambos the Great Martyr (SG)

### Faith and Family Wednesdays .....February

Of course, don't forget the mid-week worship opportunity every Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. at Holy Trinity Church. See the schedule for the month on page 6 of this issue.

## LENTEN SERVICES & INFORMATION

### Saturday of Souls Services .....February 21 & 28

All Saturdays of the Souls services are held at the Saint George Chapel at Holy Trinity Cemetery, 8941 Ringeisen Rd., McCandless Township. Two services will be offered this year on February 21 and 28. Please submit the names of your loved ones who have fallen asleep in the Lord; and even better, be there yourself to experience the beauty and the meaning of the Saturday of Souls in the place where they have been laid to pious rest. Please also consider preparing and bringing "kollyva" (memorial wheat) for use during the service as well.

### 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 March 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's calendar! 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. See you there!

### Sunday of Orthodoxy Service ..... March 1

The Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood of Greater Pittsburgh is hosting its annual Sunday of Orthodoxy Service and Celebration on Sunday, March 1, at 4:00pm at Holy Cross Church in Mt. Lebanon. Bishop Gregory of Nyssa of the Carpatho-Russian Diocese will be the speaker.

### Lenten Soup & Sauces Sales ..... Weekly During Lent

The GOYA is once again offering its very popular Lenten soup and sauces 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 and Sauces 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!

### Lenten Coffee Hour Reminder ..... Through Pascha

Please keep in mind that starting March 1 and throughout Lent our Coffee Hours following the Divine Liturgy observe the Orthodox Lenten fasting schedule. Anyone sponsoring a memorial coffee hour or providing Church School snacks is asked to take care that non-meat and non-dairy items are provided. The Philoptochos and the Church School can provide a list of suggestions for good alternatives. Thank you for helping our community grow in this proper and helpful Orthodox spiritual practice and discipline.

### Upcoming Lenten Dates ..... February-April

Wondering about Lenten and Paschal dates? Here's a helpful guide to some of the important events coming up:

**Meatfare Sunday (Last day of eating meat) .. Feb. 15**

**Cheesefare Sunday (Last day of eating dairy) Feb. 22**

**Pure Monday (Lent begins) ..... Feb. 23**

**Sunday of Orthodoxy ..... Mar. 1**

**Godparent Sunday ..... Mar. 15**

**Palm Sunday ..... Apr. 5**

**Holy Friday (schedule off work & school) ..... Apr. 10**

**The Great and Holy Pascha ..... Apr. 12**

## YOUTH MINISTRIES

### GOYA Meeting ..... February 8

The GOYA teen ministry will hold a meeting following Church School classes on Sunday, February 8. All teens are asked to attend.

### GOYA Basketball Practice ..... February 9, 17

GOYA will hold the final basketball practices of the 2015 basketball tournament season on Monday, February 9 and Thursday, February 17 from 6:30-8:30pm at Hosack Elementary School, 9275 Peebles Road.

### GOYA "Parents Night Out/Kids Night In" .... February 13

The teens of Holy Trinity GOYA are offering a special opportunity for all Holy Trinity parents to enjoy a night out during Valentine's Day weekend by hosting a Game and Movie Night for children of all ages so parents can have the night out.

This event is free to parents of any Holy Trinity children and runs from 6:00pm to 9:00pm. Parents are asked to drop their children off at Holy Trinity Church promptly at 6:00, where they will have dinner, a movie and games until 9:00. Parents will have three hours to use any way they want. Reservations are required by February 11 via email to GOYA@HolyTrinityPgh.org or call 412-874-5195 with the names and ages of the children. Happy Valentine's Day from GOYA!

### GOYA Community Valentine's Breakfast ..... February 15

Holy Trinity GOYA is hosting their annual Valentine Breakfast on Sunday, February 15, following Divine Liturgy. This year, the event benefits our local FOCUS Pittsburgh ministry. See the enclosed flyer.

## PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

### Seniors Ministry Meeting..... February 19

The next meeting of the Senior Fellowship Ministry will be held on Thursday, February 19, in the Gallery at 11:30 am. Attendees will be discussing potential activities for the year. Possibilities include trips, special events, speakers or anything else that the group could enjoy as friends together. So everyone who is interested is welcomed and encouraged to come for lunch and share ideas. Bring a new friend, make a new friend and meet a lot of nice people. And everyone is asked to please contribute something for lunch (a small salad, casserole, fruit, dessert). Coffee, water and paperware are provided by Philoptochos. (Note: In case of bad weather, the meeting will be cancelled. If there is any question about that, call Joyce Countouris between 7:00am and 10:00am on meeting day.

## COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENTS

### Visitation Ministry Meeting..... February 16

Would you like to invest just a little of your time and make a big difference in someone's life? The new Holy Trinity Visitation Ministry is a great way to do just that. Everybody who may be interested in Visitation Ministry is encouraged to attend a meeting on Monday February 16 at 7:00pm in the Conference Room. What is the Visitation Ministry? While Father John, Father Radu and many in the parish have been visiting and caring for those who are ill and confined to their homes, this new offering is seeking to greatly expand and organize additional visitations by members of the parish to those in hospitals, nursing homes, situations of special need or simply those who otherwise sit in situations of loneliness and isolation. It will include opportunities for visiting, calling, cooking, praying, and/or writing and so much more. There are many ways to help, and no matter who you are, there is a place for you and some way for your to use your God-given gifts to brighten the lives of others on behalf of Christ and His Church and to bring hope, faith and love to others.

### IOCC Syria Relief Dinner..... March 29

On Sunday, March 29, 2015 the IOCC Pittsburgh Metropolitan Committee is holding a prayer service and fund raising dinner that will benefit our Syrian brothers and sisters in Christ. This "Syrian Relief" gathering will be held at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church in Mount Lebanon. All area Orthodox Christians are asked to attend and support IOCC's aid efforts in Syria. The recent conflict has been devastating. It has resulted in the displacement of numerous Orthodox Christians that are now hungry, homeless, and lacking essential items. (Please see attached flyer and information sheets.)

The Syrian Relief Dinner & Prayer Service will be held on Sunday, March 29, 2015, with a Prayer Service at 4:30pm & Lenten Dinner/Reception from 5:30 to 7:30pm. Tickets are \$50 per person (Children 18 and under are \$20 and children 6 and under are free). Additional donations would be appreciated. Net Proceeds will Benefit Syrian Relief. Register online at [ioccc.org/pittsburgh](http://ioccc.org/pittsburgh) During the past two years, the IOCC has held two similar Syrian Relief gatherings that have

grossed \$27,000 and \$37,000, respectively. They are able to be extremely efficient with these gathering, because the community made/donated almost all of the food and supplies for the events. They were able to send \$25,000 and \$36,000, respectively, to IOCC from these events. As a reminder IOCC is typically able to obtain \$7 worth of grant/other money for each \$1 they raise, so this is equivalent to approximately \$427,000 of total aid in Syria from our community's efforts!

### In the Hospital? Home-Bound? Let Us Know!

In today's age of information privacy, churches are not notified when parishioners are admitted to hospitals, nursing homes or other care facilities. Both those facilities and your church depend on having the church notified by friends or family member so pastoral care and outreach can be offered. The same goes for those home bound. If you or any of your loved ones are in any of these situations, please contact the Church Office at 412-366-8700 to request a visit from our priests or visitation ministry.

### Online Giving Reminder

Holy Trinity Church's new online giving program is now available! That means it is both possible and easy to make contributions of various kinds to Holy Trinity Church online. Our secure system allows you to conveniently make donations online. You can choose to make a one-time contribution or establish a recurring weekly or monthly contribution. Best of all, you don't need to remember to write a check or bring your offering to church - it's already taken care of! Payments can be made via checking account, savings account, credit card or debit card. Visit [www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/give](http://www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/give) to get started!

### Holy Trinity Now Broadcasting Services on TV!

Since December of last year, Holy Trinity Church has partnered with Cornerstone Television Network's new "Pittsburgh Faith & Family Channel" in an exciting new outreach opportunity that has selected churches from around the Pittsburgh region to provide 24-hour-a-day local religious broadcasting, with an emphasis on worship services. Now, our Sunday services will be re-broadcast three times each week on the Pittsburgh Faith & Family Channel: Sundays at 2:00 p.m., Wednesdays at 5:00 a.m. and Fridays at 10:00 p.m. to the entire Pittsburgh region. Due to programming constraints, the broadcasts are edited down to fit into an hour-long broadcast, but each one features the homily or homilies of the day. Subscribers to Armstrong Cable Armstrong Cable can find it on channels 95 or 413; those with digital TV antennas can find it on Channel 40.2; others can find it on the web at [www.ctvn.org/pff](http://www.ctvn.org/pff). Are you a Comcast subscriber? Call Customer Service and ask that the Pittsburgh Faith and Family Channel be added to the Comcast lineup. (Note: This broadcast supplements the live Internet streaming of services at Holy Trinity Church, which can be found on our website at [www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/live](http://www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/live).)



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

## FEBRUARY 2015 – "THE VOICE OF HOLY TRINITY CHURCH"



**Father John Androutsopoulos**

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ: Rejoice in the Lord always!

### The Pre-Lenten Season

Sunday, Feb. 1st, the Pre-Lent Season begins. Monday, Feb. 23rd, the Great Lent begins. Our Church—which is the Eastern Orthodox Catholic and Apostolic Church -- in preparing us for the Great Lent, designates four Gospel Readings:

1. **The Publican and the Pharisee** - Luke 18: 10-14
2. **The Gospel of the Prodigal Son** - Luke 15: 11-32
3. **Meat-Fare Sunday** - Matthew 25: 31-46
4. **Cheese-Fare Sunday** - Matthew 6: 14-21

### The Lesson of the Publican and the Pharisee

The Lord said this parable: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank Thee that I am not like other men, extortionists, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get." But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted."

"Two men went up into the temple to pray." We like that. People go to the Church for many different reasons. But the main reason for going to Church is to pray. Jesus said, "My house shall be called the house of prayer (Matthew 21: 13).

The lesson of the parable is so vital that it is stated distinctly by Jesus Christ – "everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled; but he who humbles himself shall be exalted." The Pharisee ostensibly talked to God, but really "prayed with Himself." He was his own audience. It is the same spirit as when one prays to be seen of men. (Matthew 6: 5). Such talk does not reach God. The Pharisee was content with his own state and spoke only of his own works. He was self-incensing himself with his prayer.

The Publican who was a tax-gatherer realized that only God in His infinite mercy could forgive him. Abased in his own eyes because of his guilt and unworthiness, he dared not even look toward God. Beating his breast as an outward sign of his intense shame, he cast himself wholly upon the Divine mercy and cried, "God be merciful to me a sinner." He felt his guilt, confessed his sinfulness, relied on the atonement that grace had provided, appealed for pardon, and—note well the definite assurance of the Redeemer-Judge—he "went down to his house justified," that is, declared righteous in law, acquitted of his guilt, discharged from its penalty.

Beloved Orthodox Christians, we have a better and more distinct lesson in repentance and forgiveness. Each of us has the privilege and the opportunity to make such a sincere

confession of guilt as did the Publican. We, too, are assured of forgiveness, if we approach the Sacrament of Penance or Confession with contrition and with the belief that our sins are forgiven. Those who approach this Sacrament with hearts half-filled with doubt and suspicion are guilty of the sin of PRIDE, just as the Pharisee was when he boasted of his virtue.

### Humility Offers Hope

Let us learn that humility offers hope. This good news was one of the main promises of our Lord. PRIDE shuts the doors but humility keeps them open. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of God." This is the first evangelical beatitude from Jesus' sermon on the mount (Matthew 5: 3-12). Who are the "poor in spirit?" The humble-minded, not self-seeking, nor over-confident.

Remarks and conclusions from the parable of the Publican and Pharisee: the unjust and sinner Publican, with his humility, was justified. The Pharisee, who thought he was virtuous, was condemned for his PRIDE. The humility is the foundation of the virtuous, the guardian of good works and the fountain of heavenly graces. St. Augustine said that, "humility is the first virtue." This virtue is necessary, because if it is missing, the other virtues are destroyed. Above all, God is merciful to the sinner, especially to the sinner who repents and acknowledges that he is a sinner.

The Parable of the Publican and the Pharisee was my first sermon that I gave 54 years ago as a deacon at St. Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church in St. Louis, MO.

**HAVE WE DIED TO PRIDE? He died for all men so that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but only for him who died and was raised to life for their sake. (2 Corinthians 5: 15)**

PRIDE dies hard and self-love is our most stubborn foe, but God has assured us that we can overcome them through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul wrote that we should no longer live unto ourselves, but unto Christ who died for us and bought us with His precious blood. "The 'self' is given to us that we may sacrifice it – not that we should torment it but that we should deny and completely disregard its carnal inclinations. We must abandon our EGO altogether as a ruling or determining element in us." In other words, our self-life must not dominate our actions. We must no longer ask, "What do I want?" but "What would my loving Savior require of me?" To be pleasing to God, we must come to realize that we are "crucified" with Christ and allow His indwelling Spirit to take full control of our lives (Gal. 2: 19,20).

Beloved, are we doing everything for the glory of God? Remember, we cannot fully live for Him until we have died to PRIDE!

*With humility and His blessings,,  
Rev. Fr. John K. Androutsopoulos  
Protopresbyter and Internal Missionary*

My Precious Children,

This month, instead of writing about books, I, Spero, am writing about my big Ohio adventure. This should be a pretty special letter, because it's filled with lots of excitement and Valentine's wishes! Besides, I am sure that you don't get very many letters from mice in Ohio. Why was I in Ohio? Well, I just couldn't miss the first GOYA basketball tournament of the year! Let me tell you about it.



First of all I was so happy to be able to make the trip, even though it was a bit risky for me to go. While Father Radu was packing his vestments after Liturgy, I slipped into the bag while he wasn't looking. I knew if I asked Father John to go, he would tell me it was best for me to stay home. He has tried to tell me that it is not easy for mice to travel, since people are sometimes afraid of mice and he must protect me, but I really wanted to be with my precious children to see their basketball games. I used the same trick to stow myself away in Father John's luggage to Project Mexico. Maybe I should have listened about

that trip, since I did not understand a single word of what the mice there said, and, worse, the food they gave me had so much hot spice in it that I had an upset tummy! Besides that, Mexico was very nice. It was warm and I was able to slip into Father's tool box and go out and see them build a house to help other precious children of God!

On this trip, just like the one to Mexico, I was able to breathe easily in the suitcase because there are spaces around the zipper that admit plenty of air for a mouse, but I couldn't see a thing. There is no customs officer going into Ohio, unlike Mexico, and so no one opened the suitcase on the trip. (For Mexico, I just hid in a pair of folded socks. When they checked the suitcase, the customs officer missed me completely!) I think we went to Ohio in a car because I could hear the door slam and the motor run, but that was all I could tell. I just said my prayers until we got there.

Well, we got there and I made my escape. I found some cheese cracker crumbs under the dresser, enough for a snack until I could round up a proper supper. Everyone left for the tournament without me, and I had no idea where the basketball games were, so I slipped under the door and went exploring. I didn't even make it to the elevator when a maid came after me with a broom! She shrieked and started screaming, "Help! A mouse!" I kept trying to tell her that I was a church mouse, but it did no good. I made it back under the door just before the broom fell and dove through a crack where Father had not zipped the suitcase completely closed. She had a key, opened the door and began to look for me but, thinking the suitcase closed, she soon gave up.

A little while later, someone came and put out a trap baited with cheese. Imagine, a trap!!! I, Spero, am a church mouse, so I don't steal food and I certainly would not like to be caught in a trap. I just pulled my nose back into the suitcase and curled up. It was two days before we came back to Pittsburgh. I slipped out at night to sip some water from the tap in the bathroom and tried to eat little leftovers here and there. The hotel people kept prowling the halls looking for "that Rat", as they called me. Finally, the suitcase was closed again and we came back to Pittsburgh.

When the team unloaded the car, Father John found me there, weak, tired, and very, very hungry. "Spero! Just what are you doing in there? How long have you been there?" I told him that I had been there all weekend. I really had wanted to go to the tournament and that I was sure I would come to no harm. I am after all, only a church mouse!

"Spero," Father John said. "Did I not tell you about prejudice? It is a big word but you need to remember it. When people have it, prejudice, it means that they will not allow themselves to see what a person truly is. They can only see the color of someone's skin, the sound of their accent, or - in your case - the size of their ear and tail! - not how good a person can be. And in your case they only see a mouse. They do not know you are a church mouse who helps me teach children about our Heavenly Father. And now, I think you have learned a lesson about listening to those who love you and want to protect you from harm. It is time for you to go home to Yiayia for a bath, some food, and a good rest."

And so, here I am, writing this letter and telling you that I have learned a lot from this trip. And I learned also to look more carefully at those around me without judging, and to listen to what Yiayia and Father John have to teach me. Happy Valentine's Day to Yiayia, Mommy, Zoe and all my precious children!

Love in Christ, Spero

**January 11, 2015:** Holy Trinity Philoptochos sponsored its annual Vasilopita celebration for the Feast of Saint Basil. After the prayer, representatives from each ministry of the parish were brought forward to receive a slice of the blessed bread. A collection was also taken that day in support of the Saint Basil Academy in Garrison, New York, a Philoptochos-supported ministry that serves children in need.



Metropolis Council

Council of Ministries

Vision Committee

Longest Member Present



Acolyte Ministry

Parish Council

"Faith and Family Wednesdays"

Holy Trinity Choir

St. Lydia Study



Church School Ministry

HOPE

JOY

Outreach Ministries

Seniors Ministry



Philoptochos

College Students/OCF

GOYA Teen Ministry

Young Adult Ministry



Capital Campaign

Greek Festival Committee

Missionaries

Chanters

Agape Fund



Herald Mailing Volunteers

Hospitality Ministry

Longest Married Couples Present

Newest Members Present

Newest Child Present





**January 16-18, 2015:** Holy Trinity GOYA fielded three teams - Boys Senior (top left), Girls Senior (middle left) and Boys Junior (bottom left) - to attend their first Metropolis Basketball Tournament of the season at Ss. Constantine and Helen Cathedral in Cleveland, OH. Many thanks to the coaches and parents who spent their weekend cheering, shuttling and supporting our teens. They couldn't do it without you! Go GOYAns!

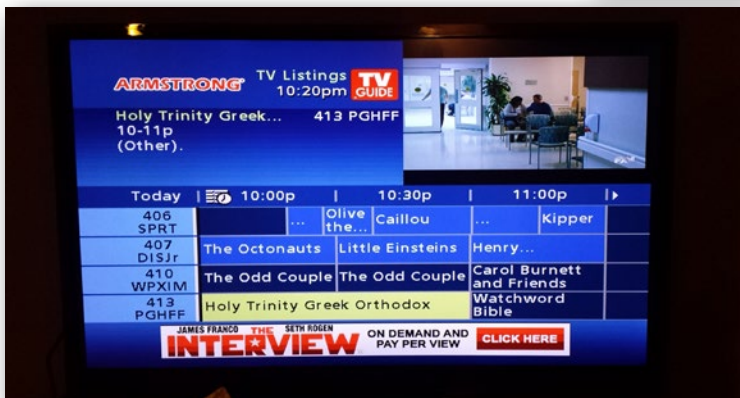




**January 23, 2015:** Parents and young children of the HOPE and JOY ministries gathered at Holy Trinity Church for their annual sleep over. In addition to great company, a movie, a prayer service, an edifying spiritual talk by Father Radu and just a lot of fun, the young people made decorations for the doors of the patients of a house for mentally challenged patients as a service project to the local community and even prepared their own pizzas for dinner.



**January 18, 2015:** The new Visitation Ministry held its second organizational meeting following Liturgy on January 18. Nearly two dozen volunteers attended and participated in getting this vital new ministry off the ground. Coordinator Amy Armanious led the group in various foundational concept overviews and collected information helpful in organizing the body of talent being offered. It's not too late to get involved. Watch for information on upcoming meetings. No need to be a professional: training will be provided. All you need is the ability to donate some of your time and the desire to share the love of Christ!



We're on TV! Pictured to the left is a screenshot from the Armstrong Cable Channel Guide on a recent Friday evening. Visible in the yellow highlighted box is "Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox"—the listing of our Sunday service broadcast on channel 413, the Pittsburgh Faith and Family Channel. As indicated elsewhere, the condensed version (58 minutes and 30 seconds) of our Divine Liturgy is broadcast three times each week on the Pittsburgh Faith & Family Channel: Sundays at 2:00 p.m., Wednesdays at 5:00 a.m. and Fridays at 10:00 p.m. It is pictured here on Armstrong Cable Channel 413, but it is also available on Channel 95, as well as non-cable digital broadcast channel 40.2 and online at [www.ctvn.org/pff](http://www.ctvn.org/pff). Glory to God!

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

# FAITH AND Family Wednesdays

## AT HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

**NOW IN ITS SECOND YEAR!**

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

### ABOUT THE SERIES

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

As we open the second year of this exciting new ministry, many thanks are due to all the teachers, contributors and special guests who have made this series possible. Welcome back to all the participants as well, whose feedback from last season was essential to making adjustments that the Spiritual Life Ministry hopes will make this experience even better this year.

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

TRACK	WORSHIP	STUDIES	GROWTH	ORTHODOX FAMILY LIFE
DATE/TIME	6:30pm	7:15-8:30pm		
<b>Feb. 4</b> First Wednesday of the month	Blessing of the Waters and Blessing of the Loaves (Artoclasia)	Orthodox Book Club Father Radu	Understanding Orthodoxy Ted Cherpas	"Making Marriage Better" (Marriage Enrichment for Married Couples) Father John
<b>Feb. 11</b> Second Wednesday of the month	Vespers Service	Bible Study: A Panoramic Overview of Holy Scripture Father John	Byzantine Chanting Peter Papadakos	(Teen Service Project moved to Friday 2/13: "Parents Night Out/ Kids Night In")
<b>Feb. 18</b> Third Wednesday of the month	Service of the Hours/ Confession also available	Orthodox Book Club Father Radu	(Free week: Attend the Orthodox Book Club!)	"Journey to Marriage" (Preparation for Pre-Marriage Couples) Father John
<b>Feb. 25</b> First Week of Lent	Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts (Evening Communion Service)	SPECIAL LENTEN SERIES: A SPECIAL PRESENTATION EACH WEEK! THIS WEEK: FATHER DEMETRIOS CARELLAS OF THE NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS MONASTERY IN SAXONBURG. TOPIC: "FAITH." Covered Dish Dinner after Liturgy (bring a Lenten dish if you can) and Lenten Topic Presentation during dinner in the Grand Room.		

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

*In the Holy Trinity logo, one of the six foundations of ministry listed around the circle is "Outreach." In its faithfulfulness to this essential command of Christ (Matthew 25.40) to love and care for those in need, Holy Trinity Church has been involved at every level of outreach, from the local Pittsburgh area to many areas of regional, national and international mission and ministry. We are deeply grateful to the seemingly endless generosity of the members of this community, as well as to Mike and Julie Kritiotis for their overall coordination of these efforts. Want to get involved? There is something for everyone. Contact Mike and Julie at [outreach@HolyTrinityPgh.org](mailto:outreach@HolyTrinityPgh.org).*

**FOCUS Pittsburgh:** It was another successful Christmas season at FOCUS. With everyone's help, hundreds of children and seniors received gifts, a meal and had good fellowship, including a visit with Santa. Thank you all for your generosity.

**Let's BAG Hunger:** Holy Trinity joins local churches in providing 140+ bag lunches each Saturday throughout the year. We'd like to cover at least one lunch per month and we're halfway there! Sign up your family or group today. Email [outreach@HolyTrinityPgh.org](mailto:outreach@HolyTrinityPgh.org) or call Mike Kritiotis at 412-766-5001.

**Wednesday FOCUS Center Dinners:** Did You Know? FOCUS Pittsburgh serves 100-150 hot meals each Wednesday evening? They are always looking for volunteers to cook and serve the meal or even just donate the funds to do so. Let Mike know if you can help!

**No Child Left Hungry:** The Backpack Program provides weekend food for 590 schoolchildren. Volunteers to assist in the process, and financial support, are needed. For details please call Maria Berexa at 412-585-6261.



**North Hills Community Outreach:** NHCO served 5,606 local families in need last year. Our relationship with them is still young but already yielding fruit. Your support over Christmas helped provide gifts and gift cards to 60 needy families. The GOYA also completed a successful coat drive, just in time for the bitter cold weather.

**NHCO's Annual Citrus Sale** is underway. NHCO will take orders through February 5 for its annual Citrus Sale. Boxes are grapefruit, oranges, tangerines and pears are hand-checked by volunteers and are available for pickup March 7 and 8 in St. Paul's United Methodist Church, 1965 Ferguson Road. Purchases benefit NHCO. Boxes of fruit can also be donated to NHCO's food pantries. To order online, please visit [nhco.org/fruit](http://nhco.org/fruit).

cfm or call 412-487-6316 for more information.

**Tax Prep Help:** NHCO offers free tax prep for low-income individuals - NHCO and the United Way will offer free tax preparation at its sites in Bellevue and Millvale for low-income individuals. Call 888-553-5778 to make an appointment.

**Community Auto** seeks vehicles for waiting working families! Community Auto, a program of North Hills Community Outreach, accepts vehicles in any condition, has them repaired, and sells them at below market value to local working families who need them to get to work. You could change a life and get the maximum tax deduction. FREE pickup, towing and notary! Call 724-443-8300 or visit [www.communityauto.org](http://www.communityauto.org).



**Pleasant Valley Shelter Dinners:** Through your love of giving, all the dates given to us to provide dinners at the Pleasant Valley shelter in 2015 have been filled. The Shelter has informed us, though, that they still have no volunteer to provide the dinner on Christmas Day (December 25) or the day after (December 26). Anyone interested, please call Mike.

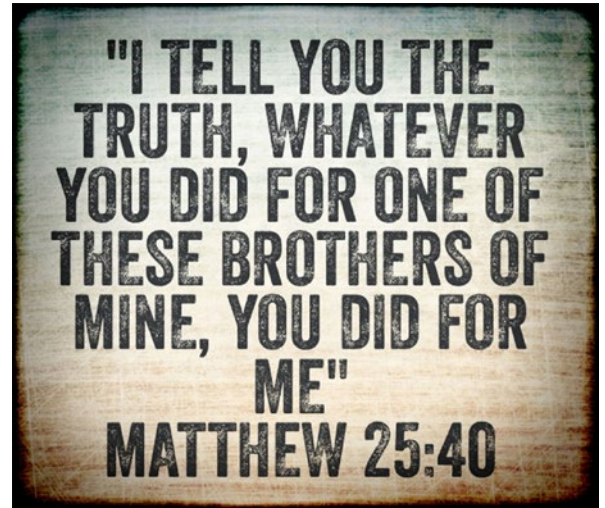


**The Fourth Annual Food Pantry Brunch Challenge:** Northside Common Ministries Community Food Pantry once again challenged 10 local restaurant chefs to test their skills—can they prepare a delicious brunch appetizer item from only the food found in a local community food pantry? The event took place on Saturday, January 31, on the stage at the New Hazlett Theater (former Pittsburgh Public Theater) at Allegheny Center. This year's event featured the music of local Rockabilly band the Millbillys and an auction. All proceeds went to the Northside Food Pantry. It's not too late to donate: go online at [www.northsidefoodpantry.org/](http://www.northsidefoodpantry.org/) Go to the big red 'donate cash' button and fill in the payment info. If your company qualifies, your donation may even be subject to a matching grant. And, of course, you can always support this ecumenical ministry by bringing a bag of non perishable items to help fill up the food pantry.

*Our Holy Trinity Philoptochos Ladies Society is a chapter of the national philanthropic ministry of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America. The mission of the Philoptochos is: "to aid the poor, the destitute, the hungry, the aged, the sick, the unemployed, the orphaned, the imprisoned, the widow, the handicapped, the victims of disasters, to undertake the burial of the impoverished persons and to offer assistance to anyone who may need the help of the Church through fund raising efforts; to promote the charitable, benevolent and philanthropic purposes of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, through instructional programs, presentations, lectures, seminars and other educational resources; to preserve and perpetuate Orthodox Christian concepts and the Orthodox Christian Family, and through them, to promote the Greek Orthodox Faith and traditions, in accordance with its doctrines, canons, discipline, divine worship, usages and customs; and to promote the participation in the activities of the Greek Orthodox community, with the cooperation of the Parish Priest and the Parish Council." Want more information? Visit their web site at [www.Philoptochos.org](http://www.Philoptochos.org) or simply attend a meeting!*

## Philanthropy Offered by Holy Trinity Philoptochos in 2014

The following list of charitable contributions and philanthropy was made possible through the donations and support offered by the parishioners and friends of Holy Trinity Church. The "National Ministries" are a collection of priorities and agencies supported by the National Philoptochos. Our Philoptochos also supports a collection of ministries on the Metropolis level and reaches out on the local level in these and other direct, personal ways. Please be sure to continue to support this wonderful and loving ministry in every way possible. And ladies, if you are not yet a member, please sign up and become part of extending the love of Christ to those in need in the local area and throughout the world! Contact Philoptochos President Yvonne Balouris at 724-934-4850 or email [philoptochos@HolyTrinityPgh.org](mailto:philoptochos@HolyTrinityPgh.org).



### NATIONAL MINISTRIES

- 75th Anniversary Founders Fund
- Autism Assistance Fund
- Cancer Fund
- Ecumenical Patriarchate
- Emergency Fund
- General medical fund
- Hellenic College/Holy Cross (HC/HC) Lenten Offering
- HC/HC Scholarships Fund
- International Orthodox Christian Charities
- National Sisterhood of Presvyteres
- Orthodox Christian Fellowship (College Ministry)
- OCMC/SAMP (Missions Funds)
- Retired Clergy/Widowed Presvyteres Benevolent Fund
- Social Services
- St. Basil Sisterhood
- St. Photios Shrine
- UNICEF
- Vasilopita Fund (Benefits Saint Basil Academy)

**TOTAL NATIONAL DONATIONS ..... \$2,455.00**

### METROPOLIS AND LOCAL DONATIONS

- Allegheny Valley School
- FOCUS Pittsburgh
- Holy Trinity Capital Campaign
- Holy Trinity Cemetery Fund
- Holy Trinity Festival
- Holy Trinity GOYA (Basketball Tournament)
- IOCC Syrian Fund raiser
- KDKA Turkey Fund
- Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
- Metropolis of Pittsburgh Summer Camp
- Nativity of the Theotokos Monastery
- North Hills Community Out Reach
- North Hills Food Bank
- North Hills Foundation (Backpack Initiative)
- Salvation Army
- Shaler Area Middle School (Backpack Initiative)
- USO
- Women's Center & Shelter of Pittsburgh

**TOTAL METROPOLIS AND LOCAL DONATIONS \$11,443.84**

**TOTAL 2014 DONATIONS.....\$13,898.84**

## LENTEN SERVICES: A SPECIAL EXPERIENCE FOR ALL

Lent brings with it a wonderful selection of special worship services offered only this time of year. Here is a helpful overview of each.

### Forgiveness Vespers

**Description:** The first service of Lent, it combines a Solemn Vespers of Lent with a special "Forgiveness Service" at the end.

**When & Where Offered:** 6:30 p.m. on the first evening of Lent (February 22 this year) at St. George Chapel.

**Special Features:** Kneeling in repentance during the changing of the colors from the bright gold and white of the Resurrection to the solemn purple of Lent, listening to the deeply moving hymn preparing us for both Lent and for our final encounter with the Lord, "Turn not away Your face from Your servant, for I am in trouble; hear me speedily. Hearken unto my soul and deliver it."

**Why You Should Attend:** To start out the spiritual journey of Lent on the right foot. Attending this service marks a clear start of Lent both in our soul and on our schedule.



### Great Compline

**Description:** Used only during Lent, this larger version of the Compline or "After Dinner" service contains many special penitential prayers and hymns.

**When & Where Offered:** 6:30 p.m. on the Monday evenings of Lent at St. George Chapel.

**Special Features:** The chanting of the beautiful Lenten hymn, "Lord of the Powers, be with us, for in times of distress, we have no other help but You, Lord of the Powers, have mercy on us!" It is a offering of deep humility and faith.

**Why You Should Attend:** At Holy Trinity Church, all those who attend are able to participate in the many readings of this service if they desire. This is a great way to start each week as we re-enter the depths of Lent following Sunday's bright celebration.



### Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts

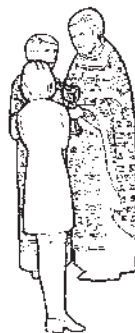
**Description:** Every Sunday or feast day Divine Liturgy is resurrectional and celebratory in nature, and early on the Church came to regard this character as "out of harmony" with the solemn and penitential character of Lent. So rather than exclude any form of Liturgy during the weekdays of Lent and deny the faithful the ability to receive Holy Communion—the "food of immortality,"—the Quinisext Council in the seventh century A.D. approved the use of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts as a way of offering the Holy Gifts between Sundays during Lent. The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is an evening service which comprises the solemn Lenten Vespers with the distribution

of Holy Communion at the end. There is no consecration of the Holy Gifts during the service. Holy Communion is offered from the reserve gifts consecrated on the previous Sunday at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy.

**When & Where Offered:** 6:30 p.m. on the Wednesdays of Lent (except March 4) at Holy Trinity Church. Now part of the weekly "Faith and Family Wednesdays."

**Special Features:** The Entrance with the *consecrated* Holy Gifts, which is accompanied by a special hymns used only during this service: "Now the Powers of Heaven minister invisibly with us. For, behold, the King of Glory enters. Behold, the mystical sacrifice, fully accomplished, is ushered in. In fervent faith let us draw near, that we may become sharers in everlasting life. Alleluia."

**Why You Should Attend:** Provides a mid-week spiritual guidepost which encourages us to prepare both spiritually and physically for Holy Communion, thus deepening our awareness of Lent and strengthening us in our struggles.



### Salutations to the Theotokos/Akathist

**Description:** The Akathist Hymn is a beautiful treasure of theological poetry set to music in honor of the Most Holy Theotokos. Its main hymn, "O Champion General" ("*Ti Ipermacho*") commemorates the rescue of the Byzantine imperial city of Constantinople from attack, which the faithful attributed to the intercessions of the Mother of God. The service is offered in two forms. The first four Fridays each contain only one segment of the larger poem and are called "Salutations," from the greeting of the Archangel Gabriel to the Theotokos. The "Akathist Hymn" refers to the entire service with all the stanzas and is offered on the fifth Friday of Lent.



**When & Where Offered:** 6:30 p.m. on the first five Fridays of Lent at St. George Chapel.

**Special Features:** The poetic proclamations of respect and love offered by the priest on behalf of the faithful as he stands in front of the icon of the Theotokos at the front of the church. They are an exclusive feature of this service.

**Why You Should Attend:** With these services, there is a sense of "being there" when that first proclamation was made by the angel as the hymn says: "An angel, and the chief among them, was sent from heaven to cry to the Theotokos, 'Rejoice!'" It is not just the Church honoring her Most Holy Mother: it is me honoring her, too.

Original Greek language poetry compositions by Voula Hareras. "On St. Valentine's Day" and "The Boat"



Voula Hareras



### Στον 'Αγιο Βαλεντίνο

Συνέχεια με ρωτάς αν σ'αγαπώ,  
και δεν τιστεύεις,  
'οσους όρκους κι' αν σου δίνω.  
Χωρίς εσένα,  
δεν την θέλω την ζωή,  
σ'ορκίζομαι,  
στον 'Αγιο Βαλεντίνο.

Θα σε λατρεύω,  
ως τα βαθιά μου γηρατιά,  
και το νεράκι,  
στην αγάπη μας θα πίνω.  
Θα σε γεμίζω με λουλούδια και φιλιά,  
σ'ορκίζομαι,  
στον 'Αγιο Βαλεντίνο.

Θέλω στα χείλη σου,  
πολλά φιλιά να δώσω,  
σα μια υπόχηση,  
ποτέ δεν θα προδώσω.  
Λευκή η αγάπη μας θα μέινει, σαν το κρίνο,  
σ'ορκίζομαι,  
στον 'Αγιο Βαλεντίνο.

Θα σ'αγαπώ  
'οπως η μάνα το μωρό,  
και ότι θέλήσεις στη ζωή  
θα σου το δίνω.  
Μακριά σου είναι αδύνατο να ζώ,  
σ'ορκίζομαι,  
στον 'Αγιο Βαλεντίνο.

Βούλα Χαρερά

### Το Καράβι

Κάποιο καράβι περιμένω στο γιαλό,  
που θα σε φέρει αγαμημένη από τα ξένα.  
Να ζήσω μόνη στο νησί μας δεν μπορώ,  
δεν έχει νόημα η ζωή μαρκριά από σένα.

Κάθε πρωί το αεράκι απ' το βουνό,  
φέρνει στ'αυτιά μου σαν τραγούδι τ'ονόμά σου.  
Και η γαρδένια η ζηλιάρα και κακιά,  
Σαν την αγγίζω μου θυμίζει τ'άρωμά σου.

Το βράδυ βλέπω τ'αστέρια τ'ουρανού,  
από ψηλά να με κυττάζουν λυπημένα.  
Και το φεγγάρι, λές και κρύβεται κι'αυτό,  
γιατί δεν θέλει να με δεί χωρίς εσένα.

Ως κι' η αγράμπελη στο φράχτη σαν περνώ,  
που έχει αγκαλιάσει το ψηλό το κυπαρίσι,  
έλα στον ίσκιο μου, μου λέει απαλά,  
και μη φοβάσαι, όπου νάναι θα γυρίσει.

Βούλα Χαρερά

**Το μέτρο της αγάπης είναι  
η αγάπη χωρίς μέτρο.**

(Ανγουστίνος)



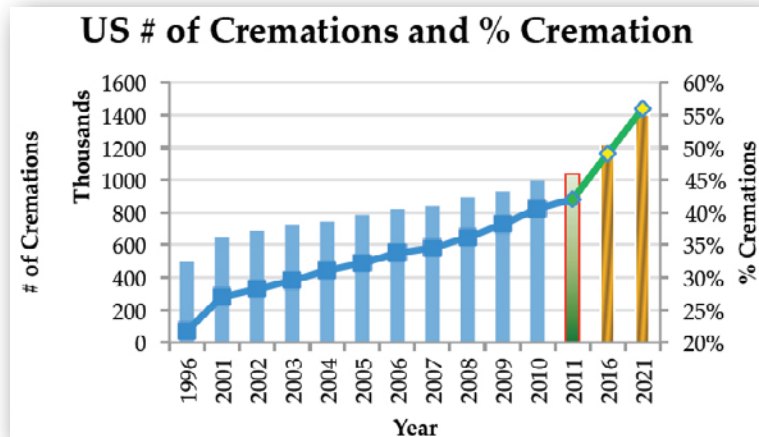
Every year on August 15, the Holy Orthodox Church commemorates with great honor the repose of the Theotokos and Ever-Virgin Mary. In the icon of the feast, Jesus Christ is seen receiving the soul of his mother as the Apostles gather with great reverence and honor around her body. It is also a traditional 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.

The reverence and care for the body of the Mother of God offered by the Apostles is a model of respect we see reflected in the Church's care for the departed following separation of the soul from the body after death, and that care continues to be exercised each time we offer the funeral and burial for the departed.

Though cremation offers little regard or respect for the practices and teachings of the Church, it is being sold as an alternative to traditional burials these days for many reasons, resulting in the trend pictured to the right, with rate of cremation nearing 50% according to the Cremation Association of North America. The chart also demonstrates that the growing popularity of cremation will pose a rising challenge as even our own Orthodox Christian faithful are confronted by funeral directors, crematory officials and friends promoting it as an alternative to traditional funerals and burial.

Since one of the responsibilities of the spiritual father of a parish is the on-going education of the flock on important matters such as this, I am taking an opportunity here to provide 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 Pastoral Guidelines of the Yearbook of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America ([www.goarch.org/archdiocese/yearbook](http://www.goarch.org/archdiocese/yearbook)).

Father John



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

## 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 some 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

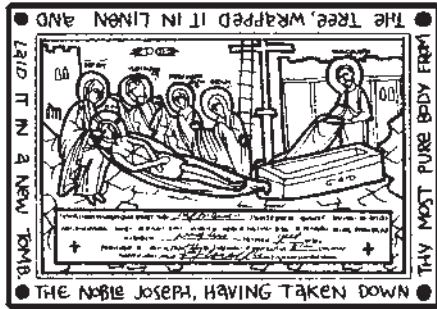
The human person is created in the image and likeness of God. When we are baptized it is not only the soul which

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 the mysteries of Christ-mation 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, Nikodemos, 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 maintained throughout its history 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 cover the body in a special shroud, symbolizing the new dress of incorruption the person is destined to receive. We also pour 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 signifying "the end," nor it is merely an evolutionary step, transferring us from one "state" to another. 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.

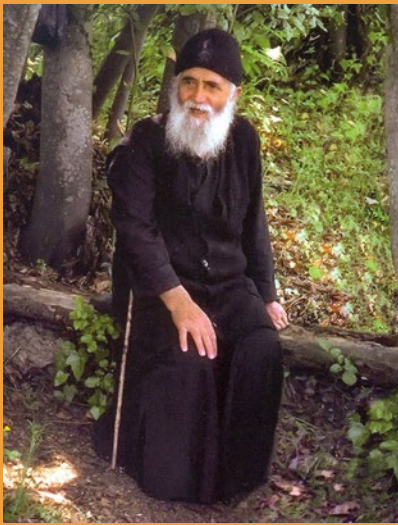
Thus the Church, due to a pastoral concern for the preservation of right beliefs and right practice within the Tradition of the Fathers, and out of a sense of reverence for its departed, continues its opposition to this practice. Each Orthodox Christian should know that since cremation is prohibited 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*.

Anyone with questions on these issues or thinking about cremation should address the topic with your parish priest—prior to any decisions or arrangements. The Church's desire is to provide a respectful, honorable and Christian funeral and burial for all its departed members, and your priest depends on family members assisting in making arrangements for proper Orthodox Christian funerals and burials.

## 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 *kollyva* (boiled wheat) are not allowed in such instances, inasmuch as the similarity between the 'kernel of wheat' and the 'body' has been intentionally destroyed."

Source: Pastoral Guidelines - 2015 Yearbook of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America ([goarch.org/archdiocese/yearbook](http://goarch.org/archdiocese/yearbook))



## OFFICIAL NEWS RELEASE OF THE ECUMENICAL PATRIARCHATE

*The Holy and Sacred Synod convened today, Tuesday, January 13, 2015, with His All-Holiness presiding for its regular monthly meeting, for the purpose of examining various items on its agenda.*

*During this session, the Holy and Sacred Synod ... unanimously accepted the proposal of the Canonical Committee to incorporate the monk Paisios of Mt. Athos into the registry of the Saints of the Orthodox Church.*

At the Ecumenical Patriarchate  
the 13th of January, 2015  
From the Chief Secretariat of  
the Holy and Sacred Synod



### Our Newest Saint: Paisios of Mount Athos

As announced at Divine Liturgy on January 18 and as proclaimed above, a new saint was officially proclaimed by the Greek Orthodox Church in January: Saint Paisios of Mount Athos. Stories and sayings of this saint have become generally more available and popular in recent years throughout the Orthodox Christian world, but here are Holy Trinity Church in particular, you have been reading excerpts from the teachings and saying of this wise and holy man in this very "Ask the Elders" column since September, 2009. If fact, it you have actually taken the time to read this monthly column, you have been blessed 29 times over the last five years like the pilgrims who travelled to his small hut on Mount Athos and simply sat and listened as he answered questions and offered spiritual guidance.

### The Life of Saint Paisios

In celebration and honor of his official canonization, please allow me to share just but about the life of this holy man and use his example to encourage us today that saints are around us and minister to us as sign of hope and faith in a dark and corrupt world.

Saint Paisios was born on July 25, 1924, in Farasa of Cappadocia, Asia Minor. His father, Prodromos, and his mother, Eulambia, were deeply faithful people and he had nine brothers and sisters altogether. He was baptized on August 7, 1924, by a priest who later was himself proclaimed a saint, Saint Arsenios of Cappadocia. The boy was supposed to be named Christos, after his grandfather, according to the old Greek custom. However, Fr. Arsenios refused to name him so, as he wished to give him his own name. He said to his parents: "I understand you wish to leave someone in the grandfather's shoes. Shouldn't I wish to leave a monk in my shoes, too?" Then,

he turned to the godmother and said: "Arsenios will be his name!" Thus, St. Arsenios had predicted the young boy's calling who, since his early childhood, was chosen to become a receptacle of the Holy Spirit.

Young Arsenios and his family spent a year and a half on the island of Corfu and then moved around Greece until they settled in the town of Konitsa in Epirus. Young Arsenios' heart and mind were totally devoted to Christ and his strong desire to become a monk dominated his life. He loved to walk in the woods and pray all day long holding a wooden cross he himself had made.

After completing elementary education, he worked as a carpenter, in Konitsa, until the time of his military service in 1945, when he was drafted in the army. He was distinguished there for his ethos and bravery. He was especially concerned about his fellow soldiers who were married and had children. He used to tell them: "You have your wife and children waiting for you, whereas I have no one; I am free." Many times, he nearly lost his life in order to save someone else's.

In 1954, he entered the Monastery of Filotheou on Mount Athos, where his uncle was also a monk. In 1979, he moved to his final home on the Holy Mountain, the hermitage Panagouda, which belongs to the Monastery of Koutloumousiou, where his fame as a God bearing elder grew, drawing to him the sick and suffering people of God.

On July 11, 1994, he received Holy Communion for the last time. The next day, Elder Paisios gave his soul into God's keeping. He was buried, according to his wishes, at the Monastery of St. John the Theologian in Souroti.

Many of his talks were recorded and have been transcribed, translated and published. Watch for much more insightful and powerful spiritual teachings right here in the future. May his words and prayers strengthen us in our life in Christ!

The Apolytikion of Saint Paisios  
of Mount Athos  
Feast Day: July 12

The offspring of Farasa, and the  
adornment of Athos, and the  
imitator of the former righteous,  
equal in honor, O Paisios let us  
honor O faithful, the vessel full of  
graces, who hastens speedily to  
those who cry out: glory to Him  
Who gave you strength, glory  
to Him Who crowned you, glory  
to Him Who grants through you  
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## The Lenten Prayer of Saint Ephraim



Icon of Jesus Christ from the museum of  
Simonopetra Monastery, Mount Athos, Greece

O Lord and Master of my life,  
do not give me the spirit of laziness,  
idle curiosity, love of power and vain talk.

But grant me, Your servant,  
the spirit of moderation,  
humility, patience, and love.

Yes, Lord and King,  
grant me to see my own faults  
and not to judge my brothers and sisters.

**For You are blessed forever. Amen.**

Scripture of the Month: "Create a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit in me." (Psalm 50/51:10)