



THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

MAY - JUNE 2015 VOLUME 23 • ISSUE 5

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QUICK NEWS



Two precious Holy Trinity girls participate in decorating the Tomb of Christ on Holy Friday. 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 6-11 or visit our online photo gallery site at photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org.

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

The Ascension of the Lord



You have ascended in glory, Christ our God. You have made glad the disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit and have confirmed them through the blessing that You are the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

ἀπολυτίκιον of the Ascension of the Lord

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) 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

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Rev. Fr. John Touloumes, Proistamenos

Rev. Fr. Radu Bordeianu, Assistant Priest

2015 Parish Council

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George Danis

Joyce Athanasiou

Andrew Janis

Steven Stearns

Jason Farmakis

Stephanie Sedor

Tom Germanos

Alex Trilivas

Marios Kritiotis

Gerri Valliant

Ministries

Please visit the Holy Trinity website at 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!



When the priest proclaims, "Blessed is the Kingdom," he is not so much talking of the destination of the Church at that moment, but rather making eternal life present and available to everyone there."

From Bread & Water, Wine & Oil by M. Webber

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

Waiting. Waiting. Waiting. Our world today is full of it.

We wait for traffic, for web pages to load, for our turn at the gas pump, for the elevator, in lines at the grocery store and bank ...

seemingly for everything. According to ask.com, "Human beings spend approximately six months of their lives waiting in line for things. That equates to about three days a year of queuing up." Six months of our lives! And most of it feels like it's wasted!

Even in the Faith, it feels like we get caught up in waiting. We wait for feast days to come, for Lent to end and for Pascha to come. And, according to the older translation of the Creed, "I await the Resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come." Even the Psalms tell us to wait: "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; yea, wait for the Lord!" (Psalm 27.14). Time spent with God, however, is never wasted.

But there's more to life than waiting. And this great and living Faith is about much more than waiting, because according to Saint Paul in 2 Corinthians 6.2, "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation." How can we tell those seemingly opposing commands apart? How do we know when to wait and when is "now?"

Perhaps they both serve the same purpose: to live in the moment for Christ. We call God "Pre-eternal" because the Holy Trinity is, indeed, outside time, which is a created dimension by which we measure days and lives. "He appointed the moon for seasons; the sun knows its going down. You make darkness, and it is night" (Psalm 104.19-20). As we anticipate the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, we know He is, according to the prayers of the Church, "Everywhere present and filling all things." So in this case, by liturgical tradition we wait to celebrate the Feast, but the Lord is with us now as He always is. In other words, the creation of time benefits and regulates our lives as creatures, but it does not contain or constrain the Creator. And He created it for us to live in it for Him.

So even while we are waiting, He is acting and we can be looking, preparing, praying. that is why the current translation of the Creed says, "I look for [Greek: *prosdoko*] the Resurrection of the dead and the life of the age to come." There is a sense of purpose and active anticipation there, not just passing the time, checking our texts and mentally checking out.

This season between Pascha and Pentecost gives of a deep sense of that purposeful and active waiting. We walk in the Resurrected Lord as we actively move toward the Feast of Pentecost and the fulfillment of His promise of sending the Holy Spirit in that special blessing and spiritual anointing as He did to the Apostles. The time is coming. Yet time is here for us to use even while we wait. The Lord is coming, yet He is also here and calling us. It is not an occasion to sit around and passively tap our fingers. It is our call to actively "look for" the Lord in our life, as St. Paul says. "making the most of the time" (Eph 5.16).

What are you waiting for? What are doing while you wait? Don't waste "now" just waiting for "then." According to Fr. Meletios Webber, "The sanctification of time occurs when we offer the present moment to God. We are not able to offer the past or the future, only the present moment."

May every moment of your life be blessed and offered to God, walking in His grace now and looking for His eternal blessings to come.

With sincere paternal love in the Risen Christ,

Herald Personal Sponsor for this Issue:

Mary-Magdalene Welsh
"To the glory of God"

WORSHIP LIFE

Weekday Services May/June

Please take note of the following weekday Liturgies for the feast days in May and June. Unless otherwise indicated, Orthros is at 8:30 a.m., followed by Divine Liturgy at 9:30 at the St. George Chapel (SG).

Wed. May 20, 6:30pm: Evening Liturgy of the Ascension of the Lord/Ss. Constantine and Helen (SG)

Wed., Jun. 24: Nativity of St. John the Baptist (SG)

Mon., Jun. 29: Ss. Peter & Paul (SG)

Pentecost/Parish Feast Day Services May 30-June 1

Please plan on celebrating Holy Trinity Church's Feast Day weekend by attending the following services:

Sat., May 30: Saturday of the Souls (SG)

Sat., May 30, 6:30pm: Great Vespers of Pentecost (HT)

Pentecost Sunday, May 31: Pentecost Sunday Liturgy at Holy Trinity Church, followed by the "Kneeling Vespers" of the Holy Spirit. This is our Feast Day weekend.

Mon., June 1: Feast Day of the Holy Spirit. This is the Nameday Liturgy of our parish (HT).

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Church School Graduation Date May 24

Attention Church School Staff, Parents and Students: Please note that the last day of Church School for this semester will be May 24. Church School Graduation will be held on that day, and all students are asked to attend and sit with their class during Liturgy. Following the service, the Church School will have a graduation celebration and picnic lunch.

COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

Memorial Day Service for Veterans May 25

The tradition of Memorial Day started in 1866 as local observance of honoring those who died in the Civil War. After World War I, observances also began to honor those who had died in all of America's wars. In 1971, Congress declared Memorial Day a national holiday to be observed on the last Monday of May to honor our heroes who gave their lives in battle. Please join together in front of the Holy Trinity Cemetery War Memorial at 9:30 am on Memorial Day (May 25) as we hold a special ceremony to honor those who defend our country and remember those who have given their lives in defense of the United States, the Constitution and the cause of freedom they so cherished. Please note: this service is to commemorate veterans; it is not a general memorial service for all the departed — that will be held according to Orthodox tradition on the Pentecost weekend Saturday of Souls (May 31 this year) with a Divine Liturgy & Memorial at the Saint George Chapel at Holy Trinity Cemetery. May their memories be eternal!



GOYA Meetings and Events June

The GOYA teen ministry will hold a meeting on Sunday, June 7, following Liturgy. All teens are asked to attend. Watch for information on the June 15/16 Cedar Point/St. Gregory Palamas Mission trip. And all teens should be there for GOYA elections and the picnic on June 28!

Holy Trinity Golf Classic June 29

It's time once again for the annual Holy Trinity Golf Classic, to be held this year on June 29 at Diamond Run Golf Club. The event features a "Million Dollar Shootout" and a Silent Auction. Proceeds benefit the Holy Trinity Capital Campaign. Contact Anthony Loomis for information at anthonytloomis@gmail.com. See the enclosed flyer/sign-up form.

FESTIVAL NEWS

Holy Trinity's Taste of Greece Labor Day Weekend

Please mark Wednesday, September 2, through Sunday, September 6 on your calendar for the next "Taste of Greece" festival. The Festival Committee is asking everyone, new members and old hands, young and young at heart, to pledge a donation of their time and talents so that we can continue to grow both the success of the festival and the fellowship with all our Holy Trinity church family members!

Festival Volunteers Needed by the Day, Not Just the Hour!

The Festival Committee is looking for parishioners to fulfill a variety of roles—there is something for everyone and everyone's help will be needed! Please consider donating your day (or days!) as your offering of stewardship to Holy Trinity Church. Many of our stewards even take vacation to do so. To learn about how to help, please email festival@holyltrinity-pgh.org or contact one of the following festival chairpeople: Harry Athanasiou, Leo Loomis, Stephanie Sedor, Marianne Stearns, Stephen Stearns, Gerri Valliant, or Dan Willow. Thank you for your sacrificial offerings of love!

Food & Pastry Cooking Every Tuesday, June 9-Aug. 11

Want to share your Greek food and pastry cooking talents with the Church? Don't know how to cook awesome Greek goodies but want to learn how? Have we got an opportunity for you! Be there for food and pastry preparation on Tuesdays from 9:00am-9:00pm (or as much of it as you are able to do each week!) in starting June 9 and continuing through August 11. No experience necessary. On-the-job training available. Flexible hours. Non-cooking positions also available. Requirements: Positive attitude and willingness to do whatever is needed! Here is the list of dates and items. Pick your favorite—or better yet—be there for them all!

June 9: Baklava/Choc. Baklava	July 7: Apricot Rolls
June 16: Spanakopita	July 14: Finikia, Koulourakia
June 23: Galaktoboureko	July 21: Kourambietes
June 30: Diples	July 28: Moussaka (it's back!)
July 1: Diples (Wed.)	August 4: Pastitsio
July 2: Diples (Thu.)	August 11: Make-up day

Questions? Contact Joyce Athanasiou at 412-292-4206.

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

MAY 2015 – "THE VOICE OF HOLY TRINITY CHURCH"



Father John Androutsopoulos

After Pascha, What?

Christ is Risen! – Truly He is Risen!

"Jesus said to them, "Come and dine". And none of the disciples dared ask Him, "Who art thou?", knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then came and took bread and gave it to them, and so with the fish. This is now the third time that Jesus showed Himself to His disciples, after He was risen from the dead." John 21: 12 -14.

There may have been one misconception in the way we celebrated the Feast of Feasts – the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Surely it was a beautiful and glorious festival, with its joyous mood of worship and its happy spirit. The choir sang with inspired power. The sermon resounded with extra joy and uplift. The family spirit within the Church broke through with new meaning as we gathered to worship and celebrate the glorious Paschal services. It was a day of all days. And each of us came to its close with the feeling that it had been a rare experience.

Important questions must be faced. What did we do with those rare experiences? Did we meticulously wrap them up at the end of the day, enclose the message of the Risen Lord, and then carefully store the package away to be opened next Pascha morning? Or did we take the great Event and let it play upon the events of the common weekdays that followed a beautiful Sunday?

The meaning of Pascha to you and me depends on the answers to these questions. We have much to learn from the disciples, who had known the early morning radiance of the Resurrection announcement, but who also had met the Master another morning when He approached them on the lakeshore where they were in their work clothes and where the smell of fish was in the air.

It was a mundane setting. "Come and dine," the Lord invited. He took the bread and fish and gave it to them. It was His third appearance to them after He had risen, and a nec-

essary one. In the same way the Spirit of Jesus comes to the believer today and adds fullness to the meaning of the Resurrection: in the morning at breakfast when we are dressed in working clothes, at school, in the family circle, when we are fishing for fun or for the market. Pascha is meant for a beautiful Sunday service, but for all these other times too.

Beloved, Pascha is much more than a historical event. It is an ongoing experience. The facts of the empty tomb were evident to the two Marys' who brought spices early that morning for what they thought would be a ritual for the dead. But the significance of the morning hardly dawned upon them until later. Likewise, the disciples and the two men of Emmaus did not immediately understand; the meaning of what happened slowly dawned on them after the Resurrection.

There is a divinely inspired purpose evidenced in the

Church Year that gives seven weeks to the celebration of Pascha. One day, or one week, would not have been enough time to absorb the tremendous mystery of the Risen Lord.

Regulations of the Celebration of Holy Easter

1) The first regulation, "that Easter must always be celebrated on a Sunday", was adopted because at that time there were Christians who celebrated Easter on Friday, that is on the day of "Crucifixion", rather than on the day of the Resurrection.

2) The second regulation, "that Easter must never be celebrated on or before the Jewish Passover", was adopted because according to the Holy Gospel, Christ was crucified during the week of the Hebrew Passover, and was taken down from the Cross on the eve of the Sabbath, and arose on the following day,

after the Jewish Sabbath.

3) The third regulation, "that Easter should never be celebrated on or before the vernal equinox", was adopted because otherwise Easter might be celebrated twice in one year, and when this happened, it would naturally not be celebrated at all in the following year.

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



Hello, my precious children!

Christ is risen! Before I get to this month's chatting, I want to offer a BIG hug (see it over there on the right?) to all the mommy's and yiaia's for Mother's Day. We all love you so..o..o much! Thanks for all you do for us, your precious children!

Pascha was on April 12 this year, and that mean's Pentecost is on May 31. It takes place 50 days after Pascha, since Pente-cost actually means "50th" in Greek. Pentecost, all my precious children know, is the very special day in the life of the Church when the Holy Spirit came down and blessed the Apostles in an amazing way which gave them the gifts they needed to preach the Good News of Jesus, His Resurrection and His Holy Church throughout the world.



So, keeping that in mind, I thought this would be a good time to share some stories from an animated series in my library called, "The Fruits of the Holy Spirit." In the episode, "Lost in the Woods," we learn about the gift of faith and how it teaches us that our Heavenly Father will indeed do what He has promised to do.

When Stevie loses his way in the forest, he realizes important it is to do what the conductor has told him by using a special little song. I, Spero, would like to share that song with you, since it helps Stevie overcome his fears in the dark woods.

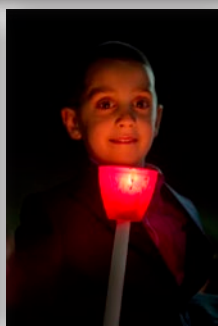
David was a little boy, Goliath looked so big
That the warrior giant thought he won the fight against the scrawny boy.
But God is so much bigger than the earth, sea & sky.
David knew that him and God would surely win the fight.
He put his faith in God and won the fight!
Daniel in the lion's den knew he was there for lunch!
The hungry lion could finish him in one great munchy bite.
But Daniel trusted in God to make the lions nice and tame,
So Daniel lifted up his voice in prayer and praised God's name, putting his faith in God.
Sarah had put her trust in God that she would have a son.
The others laughed and said it was impossible for she was ninety-one!
But that is what the Lord would do, she had the baby before she was ninety-two!

Stevie thinks, "I want my faith to be as strong as those in my song." Through his example, you will also learn that we need to trust God every step along the way. That kind of faith is a promise and it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. Remember, my little ones, faith is trust in our Heavenly Father, even when we do not understand everything about how it works!

Love in Christ,
Spero











April 18: The Metropolis of Pittsburgh hosted its Second Annual Saint Photios Awards Banquet at the downtown Pittsburgh Wyndham Hotel. Two recipients from each parish in the Metropolis were honored. From Holy Trinity Church, **Leo Loomis** and **Mary-Magdalene Welsh** were the worthy honorees. They were presented with a special plaque and a Saint Photios lapel pin. The event was celebrated by a large group from Holy Trinity Church (left). Even Baby Penelope was there to cheer on "Papou!" Please be sure to congratulate our recipients! "AXIO!"



April 18: The HOPE and JOY ministries parents and children made a Bright Week pilgrimage to the Holy Transfiguration Orthodox Monastery in Ellwood City, PA. The children and their parents were given a tour of the newly-expanded Monastery, including the new Chapel that was added last year. We are blessed to have two holy monasteries within a half-hour of our new church. Visitors are always welcome.





Above: Father Christopher Metropulos, Executive Director of the Orthodox Christian Network, travelled to Pittsburgh as part of the 20 year anniversary celebration of OCN. A wine and cheese reception was hosted by Holy Trinity and other Orthodox parishes of the area, followed by a multi-media presentation on "Spreading Orthodoxy in the Digital Age." Father Chris encouraged the attendees to become "digital media evangelists" in spreading the Gospel and the Orthodox Christian Faith through new media technologies.

Below: Dr. Cliff Brubaker was honored at an event celebrating his nearly 25 years of service as Dean of the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh. According to the Vice-Chancellor for Health Sciences, "Dr. Brubaker's activities in the scientific community have brought him and the University of Pittsburgh substantial recognition, nationally and internationally." Congratulations, Cliff, and may a blessed and productive retirement lie ahead! Clockwise: Dr. Brubaker addresses guests with an overview of the growth of the school under his tenure. Cliff and his wife, Sondra. Father Radu and Father John join in the celebration.



Original Greek language poetry honoring the celebrations of Mothers Day in May and Fathers Day in June.



Voula Hareras

Τόν Μάιο τιμούμε την έορτή της Μητέρας, καί τόν Ιουνίο τόν Πατέρα. Αλήθεια τί μπορεί κανείς νά γράφει γιά τά αγαπημένα αὐτά πρόσωπα. Μόνον ἄς εὐχυθούμε ἀπό τήν καρδιά μας Χρόνια Πολλά Μανούλες καί Πατέρες μας.

In May we celebrate Mothers Day, and in June we celebrate Fathers Day. Truly, what can anyone write about those beloved people? Only let us pray with all our heart for "Many years!" for our dear mothers and fathers.



Η Αγάπη της Μάνας

Σ' αυτή την άστατη που ζούμε εποχή,
ο κόσμος όλος λές και νά' άβρει κάτι τρέχει.
Πούχουν αλλάξει της ζωής μας οι ρυθμοί,
μόνο η αγάπη σου, Μανούλα μας αντέχει.

Όλα τ' αστέρια του ουρανού τα λαμπερά,
δεν έχουν Μάνα μας τη λάμψη των ματιών σου.
Κι' από όσες γλύκες μας προσφέρει η ζωή,
καμιά δεν είναι σαν την γλύκα των φιλιών σου.

Δεν λές ποτέ για το παιδί σου δεν μπορώ,
στέκεσαι πάντοτε κοντά του σαν ασπίδα.
Κί αν τύχει κάτι στη ζωή μας θλιβερό,
εσένα έχουμε Μανούλα μας ελπίδα.

Εσύ θα τρέξεις κάθε δύσκολη στιγμή,
να μας βοηθήσεις με την ίδια τη ζωή σου.
Εσύ θα φτάσεις ως τα πέρατα της γής,
αρκεί μονάχα να γλυτώσεις το παιδί σου.

Ω, Μάνα τί να γράψω δεν μπορώ,
με ποιάν Αγία να συγκρίνω τη μορφή σου,
με πόση αγάπη μας κρατάς στην αγκαλιά,
κί όλη την ώρα μας χαρίζεις την ευχή σου.

Γί αυτό κί αν άλλαξαν τα σύνορα στη γη,
μπορεί οι άνθρωποι να άλλαξαν θρησκεία,
εσύ, κί αν είσαι μαύρη ή λευκή,
είσαι Μανούλα, και αυτό έχει αξιά.

Βούλα Χαρερά

Στον Πατέρα Μου

Πατέρα μου πολύ σε αγαπώ,
κί αν σαν παιδί κάποια στιγμή σε φαρμακώνω,
μου φέρεσαι με τέτοια αγάπη και στοργή,
που Πατερούλη μου αμέσως μετανοιώνω.

Όταν, παιδί μου, με φωνάζεις,
νοιώθω απέραντη χαρά,
και η δική σου η αγάπη,
μου δίνει δύναμη, φτερά.

Καθώς σε βλέπω μες το σπίτι,
πως με κυττάζεις με στοργή,
και προσπαθείς να με μορφώσεις,
όσο μπορείς και πιό πολύ.

Γί αυτό και γω σαν μεγαλώσω,
θε να σου μοιάσω, όσο μπορώ.
Στη καλωσύνη της ψυχής σου,
στο έργο σου το ιερό.

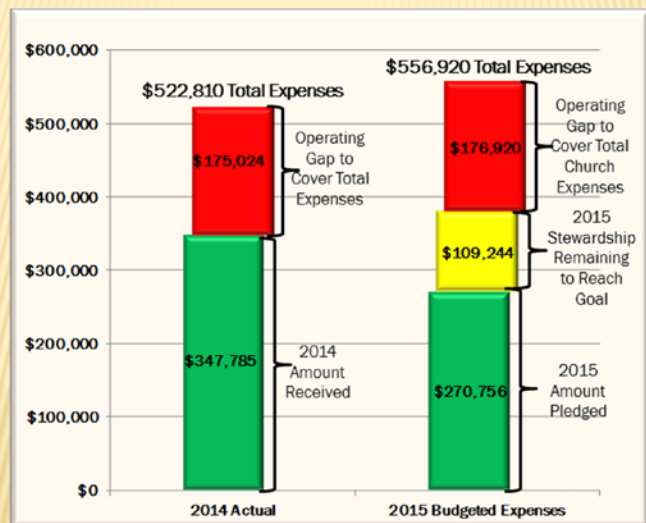
Βούλα Χαρερά



Below is an update from our energetic and active Stewardship Committee. Thank you to the many faithful stewards who have submitted their pledge cards for the 2015 pledge year. Please join them all in their support for the ministries of Holy Trinity and complete your pledge commitment today! Questions? See Chairman Charlie Petredis or email stewardship@HolyTrinityPgh.org.

Stewardship is a team effort with many individual components. Each individual component is dependent on the other to carry out their responsibilities so that the team mission and goals are achieved. If one individual component fails to carry their own weight it places an "undue hardship" on the other components that in the long term can have detrimental effects on goals being achieved.

HOLY TRINITY STEWARDSHIP: 2014-2015



- 2015 pledges received to date: 257 vs. 290 in all of 2014
- Our Church's goal is to 100% sustain our church operations by stewardship.
- In 2014, our stewardship donations covered 66% of the total church expenses.
- We are all encouraged to increase our 2015 commitment to continue closing our Church's funding gap. We're targeting to reach 315 pledges and raise \$380,000.
- Consider 1% to 3% of your Annual Income for your Stewardship Pledge.

The goals may appear lofty or even unattainable but remember we serve a mighty God who has told us that "All things are possible to him that believe." He is able to take our contributions and multiply them beyond human comprehension. Since it is God who called us to Stewardship we can trust that He will assist us to complete the task. We must be willing and obedient to follow Him as He leads. Everyone has a part to play and each one can make a contribution no matter how great or small.

One of the goals at Holy Trinity is to eliminate the existing debt so the church can further fulfill its mission to the local, national and international communities at large in a greater capacity. This goal will require each and every person to give faithfully and with a positive attitude as God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9: 6-8 provides a positive framework on how we should approach this: "Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed."

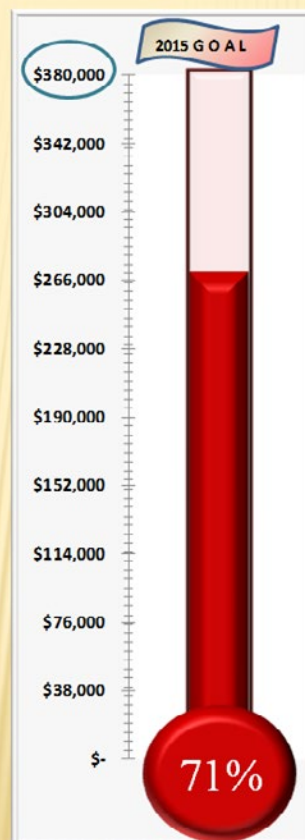
CONTINUED IMPROVEMENT!

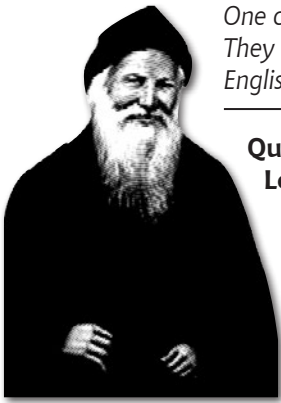
Our Stewardship Treasures Over 3 Years



Every contribution is essential in realizing the completion of this goal. If you have made a vow or pledge to God now is the time to fulfill it. If you haven't made a vow or pledge now is also the time to do so. As God increases your provisions remember to set aside a portion of that increase for the work of Holy Trinity so that together we can present our "best offering" to God and watch Him multiply to perform the miraculous.

2015 STEWARDSHIP: TOGETHER WE CAN GET THERE!





St. Porphyrios

One of the great blessings of Orthodoxy is the presence, prayers and inspired words of the Holy Elders of the Faith. They have been referred to as “precious vessels of the Holy Spirit.” In recent years, many books have been published in English with their writings and talks. This column provides an opportunity for each of us to be blessed by their words.

Question: Geronda, how does the Lord teach us how to pray?

Prayer is made only with the Holy Spirit. It teaches the soul how to pray. For we know not what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit itself makes intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. It's not necessary for us to make any effort. We should address ourselves to God in the manner of a humble servant with a voice of entreaty and supplication. Then our prayer will be well-pleasing to God. Let us stand devoutly before the Cross of Christ and say: 'Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.' That says everything. When the mind moves in prayer, divine grace comes in a split second. The person then becomes full of grace and sees everything with different eyes. The important thing is to love Christ, prayer and meditation on His words. In prayer human effort represents only a tiny millionth part.

The Lord Himself will teach us how to pray. We won't learn prayer on our own, nor will anyone else teach us it. Don't let's say to ourselves, "I have made such-and-such a number of prostration, so now I have secured divine grace," but rather let us make entreaty for the pure light of divine knowledge to shine within us and open our spiritual eyes so that we may understand His divine words.

In this way, without realizing it, we love God without contorting ourselves and without exertion and struggle. What is difficult for man is easy for God. We will love God suddenly when grace overshadows us. If we love Christ very much, the prayer will say itself. Christ will be continually in our mind and in our heart.

Question: What else is necessary for true prayer?

We require divine eros—divine, burning love for Christ. Eros directs itself to a higher being. The Lover, God, desires the beloved, and the beloved strives to reach the Lover. The Lover loves His beloved with a divine and perfect love. God, who loves mankind, is selfless.

Love towards God is a higher love when it is expressed as thanksgiving. It is necessary for us to love not as a duty, but just in the way that it is necessary for us to eat. Often we approach God out of necessity to lean on Him because we find no repose in all the things around us and we feel deserted.

Divine grace teaches us our own obligation. In order to attract this grace we need love and craving. The grace of God requires divine eros. Love is sufficient to bring us into a suitable frame of mind for prayer. Christ will come on His own and He will stoop over our soul as long as he finds certain little things which gratify Him: good intention, humility and love. Without these things we cannot pray the words,

"Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me."

Let's assume, for example, that we have a radio. When we turn the aerial to "position one," in the direction of the greatest number of transmitters, we hear the program loud and clear. At "position two" there aren't so many transmitters, and so the signal is somewhat less clear. At "position three" the program is virtually inaudible. The same is true for our communication with God. When our soul is turned facing "position one," communication is excellent. And that is due, of course, to two basic prerequisites: love and humility. With those prerequisites, the soul communicates with God, hears His voice and accepts His word. It receives strength and divine grace and is transfigured. It turns towards God in a natural way and feels compunction. When there is less love and humility—our "position two"—we have a correspondingly inferior communication with God. When our soul assumes "position three," communication breaks down almost completely, because we are filled with passions, hatreds and enmities and our soul cannot ascend.

Question: Geronda, what interferes with true prayer?

For Christ to enter within us when we invoke Him with the words "Lord Jesus Christ," our heart must be pure and free from all impediments. It must be devoid of hatred, egotism and malice. We must love Him and He must love us. If, however, our heart does harbor some thought of censure or ill will, there is still something we can do about it. The secret is to ask forgiveness or to make confession. But that, of course, as we said, requires humility. If you put the words of God into practice and are not troubled by pricks of conscience, you are calm and do good works, then you enter naturally into prayer without realizing it. Then you simply wait patiently until grace comes.

On every occasion when something happens to you, place the blame on yourself. Pray with humility and don't seek to justify yourself. If, for example, you find yourself the object of enmity, pray with love so that you pour love over the enmity. If you hear a slander against you, then pray and be careful, because the noise of murmurings shall not be hidden. The slightest murmuring against your neighbor affects your soul and you are unable to pray. When the Holy Spirit finds the soul in this state it does not dare to approach.

Turn your mind towards Him continually. Learn to love prayer, familiar converse with the Lord. What counts above all is love, passionate love for the Lord, for Christ the Bridegroom. Become worthy of Christ's love. In order not to live in darkness, turn on the switch of prayer so that divine light may flood your soul. Christ will appear in the depths of your being. There, in the deepest and most inward part, is the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God is within you.

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



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“Follow Me!”

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ clearly proclaims that He is no longer in the tomb. In His glorious victory, He continues to speak, teach and invite us into the company of the Apostles and the saints by following Him. The season of the Resurrection is not a time to sit back and say, “His work is done,” but rather, “Our work has just begun.” The passage below reminds us of that most vividly. The Risen Lord has invited us to follow Him. He is waiting for our answer, not just in words, but in actions, in choices and in every part of our life.

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Under a tree, Jesus found Philip and said to Him, “Follow me!”

“Follow me!” Jesus says to each of us, to me and to you, to make our Orthodox Christian Faith a living, vital, moving force in our lives.

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Excerpted from *Of Life and Salvation*, by Father Stanley Harakas

Scripture of the Month: “Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.’” (Mark 1.17)