



THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD



DECEMBER 2015

VOLUME 23 • ISSUE 10

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

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 2 Father John's Message
- 3 News & Events
- 5 Gheronda's Corner
- 6 Faith and Family Wednesdays
- 7 Stewardship Update
- 8-11 Ordination Photos and Address of Father Anastasios Athanasiou
- 12 Community Life Photo Journal
- 13 The Cultural Side Η Πολιτιστική Πλευρά
- 14 Ask the Elders
- 16 Why God Came to Us

- INSERTS -

New Year's Eve Gala Flyer
FOCUS Christmas Concert
GOYA Christmas Bread

- IMPORTANT NOTICE -

**PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS
ARE SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6**

QUICK NEWS



His Eminence Metropolitan Savas presents the newly-ordained Father Anastasios Athanasiou. 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 8-12 or visit our online photo gallery site at photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org.

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!



"Rejoice, O Bethlehem! Christ, the Shepherd of Israel, who rides on the shoulders of the Cherubim, has come forth from you for all to see." (Canon of the Nativity)

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

Clergy

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2015 Parish Council

George Dickos, President

Dean A. Balouris	Michael Passodelis
George Danis	Joyce Athanasiou
Andrew Janis	Stephen 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!



You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide.

John 15.16

My Beloved Spiritual Children in Christ,

It has been an historic month at Holy Trinity Church. And this one is not about the new building or the biggest festival or anything like that. With the Ordination to the Holy Priesthood of a son of Holy Trinity Church, we have had the blessing of witnessing a moment of generational and historic importance.

As our beloved Deacon Anastasios Athanasiou knelt before the Holy Altar table under the "Omophorion" and the hand of His Eminence Metropolitan Savas on November 21, 2015, this community offered back to the Church of Christ a precious gift for the first time in two generations: a young man raised in this community, responding to the calling to the ministry and preparing to offer ministry and the Holy Mysteries (sacraments) back to the people of God for the next generation. It was the first ordination at the new Holy Trinity Church facility, and it was the first ordination to the Priesthood in the Holy Trinity community in nearly 40 years. The last time that happened was with the Ordination to the Priesthood of the late Father John Kostopolos, and it was a wonderful blessing to have Presvytera Louella Kostopolos with us on November 21 to connect and honor both those dates (see photo with Father Anastasios, page 8 top left).

It is important to realize that, like every tree that bears good fruit, blessings such as this do not just happen. It is first and foremost an act of the will and grace of God that provides the calling, as testified by the quote from the Gospel of John above. He chooses; we respond. But that happens in a context, one that grows faith in young people through the fertile ground of Christian love, respect for the Church and models of true service to the Lord, His Holy Church and those around us. You need only read the ordination address of Father Anastasios to realize how important a role many people in this community played throughout his life by modeling those things. So just as in the Divine Liturgy bread and the wine are brought forth by the people of God proclaiming, "Your own gifts from Your own gifts we offer to you," likewise the community has prepared and offered what is needed not just for one Liturgy, but for a lifetime of them in presenting a new priest for the future of the Church. And best of all, this was not a pre-planned notion (how could it be?), but rather the fruit of simply being faithful and doing what the Lord calls us to do as a community. It's what can happen when we simply "are the Church." May the Lord bring forth much more of such holy fruits. "Axios! Axios! Axios!" to Father Anastasios and Presvytera Lena. May God grant you many years of blessed and faithful ministry and marriage. Many thanks to all who attended the service and the reception, and we offer much gratitude to the Philoptochos and the Parish Council for coordinating and hosting those events.

As we move into the last month of 2015, please also allow me to take a moment to thank the Parish Council and all the ministries and people who make life at Holy Trinity Church possible. When the clock strikes midnight and opens 2016, we will enter the fourth calendar year in our new facility, having opened in 2013, and things have certainly not slowed down. As our Parish Council President, George Dickos, reported at the November General Assembly, our ministries are growing, Stewardship is on the rise, the mortgage is on the decline and we are embracing the challenges of the future with anticipation and engagement. These are wonderful gifts to offer the Lord at His Holy Nativity, because they all constitute "a place in the inn" for the Lord in our hearts, our community and our homes. May God bless our every effort in His Holy Name.

Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Herald Personal Sponsor for this Issue:

Spero the Orthodox Church Mouse

"For the health of All Our Heavenly Father's Precious Children"



WORSHIP LIFE

Weekday Services.....December

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. Locations of services: "HT" = Holy Trinity Church, 985 Providence Boulevard, Pittsburgh, PA 15237; "SG" = Saint George Chapel, 8941 Ringeisen Road, Allison Park.

Dec. 4: St. Barbara the Great Martyr (SG)

Dec. 5*, 10:00am: St. Savas the Sanctified

**Services for St. Savas held at the Metropolis Chapel*

Dec. 5*, 6:00pm: Great Vespers of St. Nicholas

Dec. 6*, 10:00am: Liturgy - St. Nicholas

**Services for St. Nicholas held at St. Nicholas Cathedral*

Dec. 12*, 10:00am: Liturgy - St. Spyridon

**Services for St. Spyridon held at St. Spyridon, Monessen*

Dec. 24/25: The Nativity of Christ (see schedule below - HT)

Dec. 31, 6:00pm: Divine Liturgy of St. Basil the Great (HT)

Services for the Nativity of Christ

Please remember these festal celebrations for the Nativity of Christ and participate in them with your family. Please note that all Christmas services will be held at Holy Trinity Church.

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

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

Thu. Dec. 24, 6:30pm.....Vesperal Liturgy of the Nativity

This service "opens the liturgical day" and begins the celebration of the Nativity. This is a combination of Great Vespers and the Divine Liturgy of St. Basil. Those wishing to receive Holy Communion should abstain from food and drink from noon until the service. Also, the Holy Trinity Choir will be offering a selection of beautiful Christmas carols following the service.

Fri. Dec. 25. 8:30am Orthros/9:30am Liturgy.....The Nativity

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

New Year's Eve Liturgy and Dinner-Dance

Want to start the New Year out "on the right foot?" Well, point that foot toward Holy Trinity Church and start your evening with the first Divine Liturgy of the New Year by celebrating the Feast of Saint Basil at 6:00 p.m. Be sure to prepare as usual for an evening Liturgy, with no food or drink following your noon meal, and of course the appropriate prayers of preparation for Holy Communion. There is no better way to sanctify yourself, your family and the entire New Year. "Kali Hronia!" Happy New Year to all!

And don't forget to make reservations to stay for the Holy

Trinity New Year's celebration following the service, too! Tickets are going fast but can still be obtained by contacting Harry Athanasiou at 412-292-4205.

SPIRITUAL LIFE MINISTRY

"Faith and Family Wednesdays"..... December 2, 9, 16

Holy Trinity Church's "Faith and Family Wednesdays" is a valuable mid-week spiritual and educational "recharge."

Check out the "Faith and Family Wednesdays" page in this issue for this month's schedule and offerings. Give it a try!

FAITH AND Family Wednesdays

"Prayer and Panera" St. Nikodemos Fellowship... Dec. 17

The Saint Nikodemos Men's Fellowship is back! This time, we are meeting on the Third Thursday of each month for morning prayers and Christian fellowship (with coffee and bagels, too!). The group meets at Holy Trinity Church promptly at 7:00 a.m. for a 15-20 minute morning prayer and scripture, then move up the hill to Panera for 30-45 minutes of coffee and breakfast and conversation on living as a Christian man in today's world. Questions? Email at SaintNikodemos@HolyTrinityPgh.org. Change up your morning routine - and change things for the better!

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Christmas Pageant Rehearsals..... Dec. 6, 13, 18, 19

This year's Christmas pageant will once again be "all new" as we take advantage of new facilities, so everyone will need to be there to find out what to do. It's going to be exciting, so please don't miss out!

Sun. Dec. 6 & 13: Rehearsal will take place for grades 7-12 following Divine Liturgy and Church School. Please plan on staying until 12:30pm after Liturgy to make sure everything is completed. Teachers will have specific information for their classes.

Fri. Dec. 18: Rehearsal for grades 7-12 will take place during the GOYA Bread baking evening. All teens are asked to be there to help bake and rehearse.

Sat. Dec. 19: The complete cast rehearsal for the Holy Trinity Church School Christmas Pageant will be held on Saturday morning, December 19, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Please note: All grades are asked to be present at 9:00 a.m. sharp for rehearsal. "Bonus" attendance credit will be given for all students who participate that day.

Church School Christmas Pageant..... December 20

The Holy Trinity Church School ministry will be offering its annual Christmas Pageant this year on Sunday, December 20. ALL the students of the Church School will be involved in this event. On that day, following Holy Communion, all Church School students and staff will depart for their classes and final

For the latest updates and schedule of parish events, visit www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/calendar



preparations for the pageant. All our parishioners are asked to stay for the pageant and coffee hour in the social hall. Also, please note: Coffee Hour that day is sponsored by the Holy Trinity Church School Alumni. Any alumni—parents, graduates of any age, former staff—that would like to help, please contact Presvytera Becky.

SPECIAL NOTE: Please bring a canned or boxed food item for donation to the FOCUS Pittsburgh Outreach Ministry as your “admission” to the Christmas Pageant! Let’s celebrate our children in the Pageant while sending a blessing to the needy children of the area in their homes.

No Church School Class Dec. 27

Attention, parents: there will be no Church School class on December 27 due to the holiday celebrations, so please join together to worship as a family on that day.

YOUTH MINISTRIES

GOYA Basketball Practice December 1, 7, 14, 21

GOYA will hold basketball practice in preparation for the 2016 basketball tournament season on Tuesdays, December 1, 7, 14 & 21 from 6:00-8:00pm at North Allegheny Intermediate High School (NAI), 350 Cumberland Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15237.

GOYA Fireside Chat December 6

The GOYA teen ministry will hold its annual Christmas Fireside Chat at the home of Hank and Luci Morris on Sunday, December 6 from 4:00-7:00pm. Information is being sent directly to GOYA families.

GOYA Christmas Bread Baking December 18

All GOYA teens and any available parents are asked to be on duty for GOYA Christmas Bread baking on Friday, December 18. Parents are asked to come during the daytime starting at 9:00am. Teens are asked to be there after school and through to the end of the job in the evening. There will also be Christmas Pageant rehearsal for grades 7-12 that evening.

Young Adult Christmas Caroling December 13

The new Pittsburgh Orthodox Young Adults (“POYA”) ministry will be getting together to sing Christmas carols at the Kane Regional Center in Glen Haven on Sunday, December 13 at 2:00pm. This group comprises young adults of all Orthodox jurisdictions in the Pittsburgh region. For information, contact Lisa Ryan on Facebook at POYA.

HOPE and JOY Winter Sleepover January 8/9

The HOPE and JOY ministries will be holding their annual Winter Sleepover on January 8 at Holy Trinity Church. See the HOPE and JOY email news for details.

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS AND EVENTS.

Philoptochos Turkey Fundraiser Thank You

It is with grateful hearts Holy Trinity Ladies Philoptochos thanks you for your donations to our Annual Thanksgiving

Fundraiser. Your generosity has made it possible to send gift cards for groceries to 22 families, donations to the Women’s Shelter of Pittsburgh, 3 local food banks, and 2 local school’s Backpack Programs (which send food home with students in need for the weekend). Your dollars have gone far and brightened the lives of many. Thus far we have collected \$2,600 from this year’s Turkey Fundraiser. Our Philoptochos donations, for the holiday season, will exceed \$7,000. Additional contributions are always appreciated. May God’s blessings be with you and your loved ones.

COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENTS

Community Christmas Card Form Due Dec. 6

If you would like to include your name in this annual community tradition, please be sure to submit your form and donation to the Church Office by December 6. Thank you!

Holiday Poinsettias Form. Due Dec. 6

The current issue of the *Herald* contains a form for the sponsoring of holiday poinsettias for use in the church during the Christmas and Theophany season. If you would like to donate one or more flowers in memory of a loved one or in honor of a special person or event, please complete the form and return it to the Church Office with your donation by December 6. And remember: we have a lot bigger church to decorate this year, so please be generous. Thank you!

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 homebound. 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. Interested in helping reach out to fellow parishioners in those situations? Please contact the Church Office and offer your time as a visitation volunteer.

Hearing Assist Receivers Now Available

Holy Trinity Church’s sound system is excellent, but for those with hearing issues, sometimes discerning the words of the sermon, the chanters or the choir can be difficult. Not anymore! Each Sunday, there is now a basket of “Listen” hearing assist devices available for those with challenged hearing. It’s simple: just check one out, take it into the service, turn it on and place the earpiece comfortably on your ear! Don’t like the provided earpiece? You can bring your own standard earbuds if you like (the kind used with music players and mobile phones). Or, if you have a hearing aid that is “T-coil” compatible, ask for a T-coil loop and the device will broadcast the service directly to your hearing aid. It’s just another way we are trying to serve the needs of the entire Holy Trinity family and show “we care.”



For the latest updates and schedule of parish events, visit www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/calendar



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

DECEMBER 2015 – "THE VOICE OF HOLY TRINITY CHURCH"



Father John Androutsopoulos

Counsellor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

CHRISt IS BORN, GLORIFY HIM. Christ has come from the heavens. Receive him. Christ is on earth, elevate him. Sing unto the Lord, all the earth; and you nations, praise him with joy; for he has been glorified.

He Is Wonderful!

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful,

Everything about Christ is remarkable. Of Him it was said, "He hath done nothing amiss" (Luke 23:41). "Never man spoke like this man" (John 7:46). "I find no fault in Him" (Luke 23:4). And, "Certainly this was a righteous man" (Luke 23:47). God himself declared from Heaven, "This is my beloved Son; hear him" (Mark 9:7). Yes, Jesus is unique and amazing because He is the only One who is both truly divine and sinlessly human.

"Christ came from the bosom of the Father to the bosom of a woman. He put on humanity that we might put on divinity. (See 2 Peter 1:4). He became a man that we might become the sons of God. He never wrote a book; yet the libraries of the world are filled with volumes that have been written about Him. Great men have come and gone; yet He lives on. Herod could not kill Him, Satan could not seduce Him, death could not destroy Him, the grave could not hold Him. With Isaiah and millions of redeemed souls, we can testify that Jesus is truly WONDERFUL!

Prepare To Meet Thy God

Prepare to meet your God, O Israel! (Amos 4:7-13, Verse 12b). "Jesus Christ Is Coming! Prepare!" "Get Ready to Meet Thy God!"

How do we prepare to meet God? Perhaps we can do this by trying to understand what Christmas is really all about. We couldn't—we can't—come to God. He comes to us. He comes not in condemnation, but in love. He became man and lived among us and taught us and died for us. Not to scold us or show us up for the miserable creatures we are, but to love us with a sacrificial, forgiving love that saves us. Perhaps during the Nativity Fast—Advent Season—we can prepare our hearts to meet God with prayer, fasting, church attendance, confession and Holy Communion. Beloved, Holy Communion is fire which burns our sins, but, it is also fire which burns those who are unworthy who approach to receive Holy Communion. We can do it by putting less emphasis on gifts and tinsel, and concentrating more on what God did when he invaded our world and walked among us. Then, after Christmas, we can continue to prepare by studying his Word and going often to him in prayer.

No Vacancy

And she gave birth to her first son, wrapped him in cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2:7)

I shall never forget an experience I had some years ago trying to find a motel for my family. It was getting late, the children were tired and fidgety, and everyone was ready for a

good night's sleep. As we drove along the highway, we found no room available. Time and again, our hopes were dashed by the flashing of NO VACANCY signs. How much worse it must have been for Joseph and Mary when they arrived in Bethlehem long ago and learned that the hotel was full. It was bad enough to have made the difficult journey from Nazareth, for they had to travel the entire distance by donkey. I can imagine Joseph pleading with the manager, telling him of Mary's condition and their need for a suitable place where she could give birth to her child. But there was "no room for them in the inn."

Today, a similar situation is being repeated in the lives of many people. Patiently Jesus pleads, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20). But the "no vacancy" sign of self-will is prominently displayed by thousands who have closed their hearts to the Savior. How He longs for all who have been turning Him away to replace the words NO ROOM AVAILABLE with an inviting WELCOME. On that memorable night almost 2000 years ago, there was no place for Jesus in the inn. May it not be said of us today, that there is no room in our hearts for Christ! Let Him come in right now! Have we any room for Jesus, He who bore our load of sin? As He knock and asks admission, will we let Him in? If we have no room for Jesus in our hearts now, there will be no room in Heaven for us later!

Who Are We?

But when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons (Galatians 4:4-5). This verse is from the reading of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians on Christmas Day.

Paul's letter to the Galatian Christians reminds them that, in the fullness of time, God revealed himself by sending to them his Son. The revelation had everything to do with our human identity. Its purpose was to bring us to receive our own inheritance: adoption as children of God. The Galatians thought meanly of themselves – that was the secret of their moral confusion. They did not see themselves as royalty, sons and daughters of God, for whom Christ had come to die. So Paul reminds the Galatians, as he reminds us, that we are children and heirs of the eternal God.

Beloved, what do we offer the Christ Child on the day of His Nativity? Each of us should ponder this in our hearts. We have much to offer Him even though all comes to us from our heavenly Father. The most important things we can offer Him is ourselves – that is our clean hearts. We can live the life that He wants us to live. He gave us the guidelines for a good Christian life. It is up to us. We can accept Him or reject Him. The gain or loss is ours. Think what Christ means to us! Is His Nativity a glorious and joyous event in our lives?

BENEDICTION: O Thou who hast born in a cave, and didst lie down in a manger for our salvation, have mercy on us.

Kala Christougenna! Merry Christmas!

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



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

FAITH AND Family *Wednesdays* AT HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

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 choice of two sessions to attend, from 7:15-8:30pm, each focused on learning a facet of the faith or spiritual activity. All sessions will take place in the various facilities of Holy Trinity Center. There two tracks each week: Studies and Orthodox 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 continue the third year of this wonderful spiritual life and growth 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. Questions: See Father John, Father Radu or Joyce Athanasiou.



COMPLETE GUIDE THE TO DECEMBER 2015 “FAITH AND FAMILY WEDNESDAYS”

TRACK	WORSHIP	STUDIES	ORTHODOX LIFE
DATE/TIME	6:30pm	7:15-8:30pm	
Dec. 2 First Wednesday of the month	Blessing of the Waters/ Blessing of the Loaves	Orthodox Book Club St. Basil: “On the Human Condition” Father Radu	Understanding Orthodoxy Ted Cherpas
Dec. 9 Second Wednesday of the month	Vespers Service	Bible Study: “A Panoramic Overview of Holy Scripture” Father Radu	Byzantine Chanting Peter Papadakos
Dec. 16 Third Wednesday of the month	 Combined Community Service Christmas Project: Christmas Caroling at Sisters of Divine Providence Mother House. This is for all ages, adults and youth and is part of our community service to Divine Providence/La Roche. Please join in! 		
Dec. 23/30 4rd/5th Wed. of the month	No Session Tonight - Christmas Break		

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



The Spiritual Meaning of Stewardship

Over the course of several months we have looked at various aspects of Stewardship as well as multiple components that make up its true meaning. This month we will take a little deeper dive into the spiritual meaning of stewardship.

First and foremost and as stated in previous articles, Stewardship is a way of life and is one of the foundational building blocks that God gave us to help us achieve communion with Him. With all of life's distractions and temptations that try and detour us from what God would have us to do, we must allow God to change our hearts by re-focusing our perspective on the Christian view of life.

This view should be one that we consider to be sacred, that we desire to be fully vested in and that we can offer back to God with thanksgiving. Stewardship is essentially "our service" to God. As we have read in the Holy Scriptures we understand that Christ came to serve rather than to be served by giving His life as a ransom for many (St. Matthew 20:28). He was, and is the perfect example of stewardship, living sacrificially so what makes us think we can offer anything less back to God?

As Orthodox Christianity teaches us, life is a journey that leads us toward the Kingdom of God. One of the problems we encounter on this journey is that we often times approach it in our "humanness" in a contractual manner which is how the "world

view" operates. We do not practice good discernment when we adopt this contractual viewpoint. It teaches us that we should get something in exchange for what we give and unless we can see how this exchange will benefit us, we limit or curtail our giving which ultimately kills stewardship before it gets started.

Operating with a contractual approach means that we are trying to bargain with God and not living in the freedom that He gave us to serve Him. He gave us so much, our life, possessions, gifts, talents and the greatest gift of all... His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is not a time to "bargain" with God since we can never "re-pay" Him for what He has given us. Also don't use this as an excuse not to give but rather take this as an opportunity to give Him our best in all things.

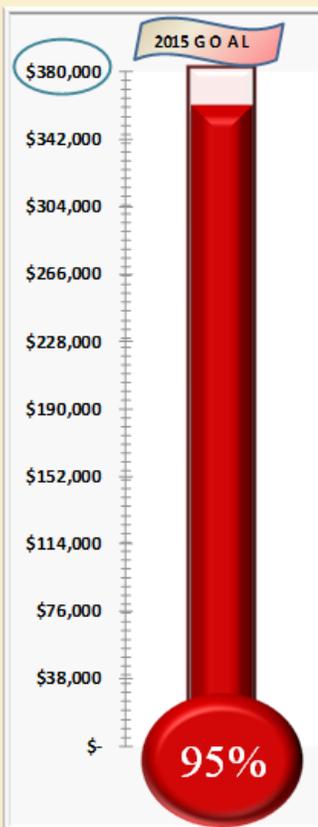
God designed our stewardship as a service to Him and that in turn brings joy in the lives of those we serve by helping them in their time of need. In addition this level of stewardship reflects a higher degree of love that we should exhibit towards God as we continue to actively participate in the sacramental life of the church. Live sacrificially toward God and one another so that our stewardship will continue to be an inclusive way of life.

Your Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
The Holy Trinity Stewardship Committee

Holy Trinity Stewardship Update – November 2015

"Together We Can Do It!"

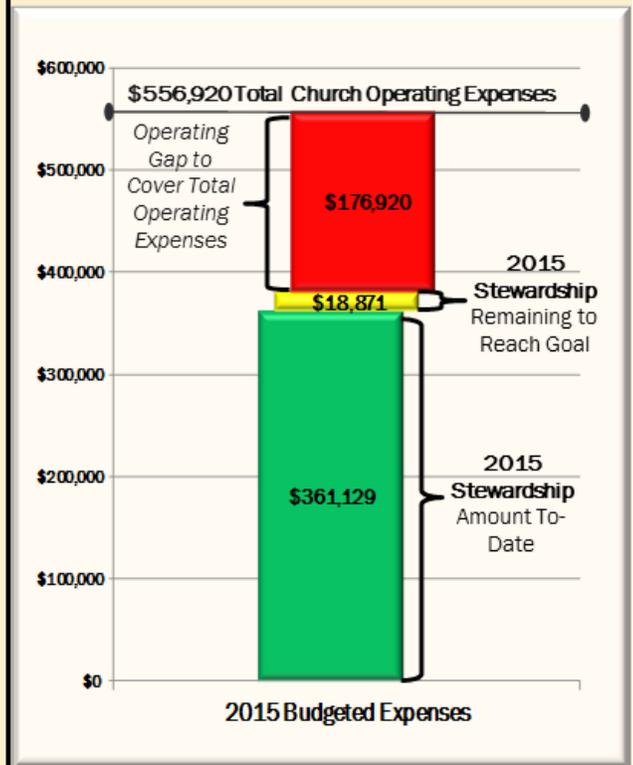
Η Αγία Τριάδα μας χρειάζεται όλους, μικρούς και μεγάλους!



Key Facts and Figures

- > 2015 pledges received to date (Oct 22, 2015): 291, pledging \$305,657
 - > Also receiving contributions from donors who have not submitted a pledge card yet (45 donors, giving \$55,472 to date)
 - > Grand Total: \$361,129
- > We're targeting to reach 315 pledges and raise \$380,000. We've now reached 95% of the 2015 goal!
- > Still, our goal is to sustain our church operations 100% by stewardship so we can grow ministries and worthy causes.
- > We are all encouraged to increase our 2015 commitment and continue closing our Church's funding gap. In 2014, stewardship donations covered 66% of the total church operating expenses. So far in 2015, our pledges will cover 65% of expenses.
- > If you haven't yet, consider 2% to 3% of your Annual Income as a starting point for your Stewardship Pledge.

And remember: Donations can now be made online at www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/give







See more beautiful Father Anastasios Ordination photos at photos at photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org



Ordination to the Priesthood Address of Deacon Anastasios Athanasiou to His Eminence Metropolitan Savas November 21, 2015 - Holy Trinity Church - Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Your Eminence,

Today we gather here for the celebration of the Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple, one of the twelve great feasts of the Orthodox Church. It is today that the promise made by Joachim and Anna was fulfilled and that the three year old Mary was brought to the temple to serve. How fitting is this for a day to be ordained a priest? A day to be welcomed into the Church to serve in the manner that I was trained to do, a promise I made to the Lord when attending Seminary.

The other blessing I draw from today is that this ordination is here at my home parish, my beloved Holy Trinity. It is the first time that I am experiencing any of the role-changing sacraments that are prayed and served by the Church in Holy Trinity, and I don't just mean this building, but within this community. I wasn't baptized in this community, nor sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit here, nor married or ordained here until today. I was brought into the Church at St. Nicholas Cathedral, I was married at Holy Trinity in Ambridge and ordained at St. Demetrios in Rocky River. And yet, not having experienced the descent of the Holy Spirit on my person through these sacraments, I know that He has been with me and with this parish. This is the parish in which I grew in my faith and in my relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. This parish taught me what to know about God, how to love Him, and how to serve Him. I am truly thankful to be a son of Holy Trinity Church and have to thank all those who impacted my life here in the way that they did. I had Sunday School teachers who I can still picture their classes: Alice Kapnis, Penny Georgiadis, Mary-Magdalene Welsh, Nick Sarandou, Chris Balouris, Jimmy Balouris, George Dickos, and Presvytera Becky. Most of them probably don't even know that I remember their classes, but as someone on the other spectrum of ministry now, I appreciate their time of sacrifice and thank them for their teaching. The same is the way I remember all those who conducted themselves in a holy way as parent volunteers—chaperones and coaches, Festival Chairpeople who allowed me to work as a kid in several capacities, those who trusted me with the GOYA finances and everything else. I wasn't a perfect child, and I have made many mistakes, even

here at church and I'm deeply sorry to any of those I offended and will continue to ask for everyone's prayers.

My friends here at church were my backbone. In school, I participated in the magnet program in Pittsburgh Public schools during Elementary, Middle and High School, and never consistently attended school in the same neighborhood. Thank God I had my church friends. Everyone here at church was important to me, this was the most stable peer group I had and it was an amazing peer group. I always felt welcome and I hope I made others feel welcome too. Our group was so good due to the inspiration of Fr. John and Presvytera Becky who allowed us to encounter the Church in a meaningful and fun way, whether it was a JOY activity, a GOYA fireside chat, a flag football game, basketball tournaments, or camp. And there was more than this, especially ecclesiastically. Its impossible to explain how foundational reading psalms during Presanctified Liturgies was and being asked to chant along and lead during Paraklesis. I don't know if our friends realized how blessed we were that the Church cared and wanted us there. I look around and see out of my GOYA friends active Sunday School teachers, choir members, dedicated festival workers, and parish council members. It's easier to find your place in the Church when its made available, and that's a testament to this community that is not afraid to put trust in its kids and Young Adults. The vast majority of this has to do with the leadership and love of Fr. John. Much like a child sees the world through their parents' eyes, I can only see the Church through Fr. John's eyes. I see the professionalism and liturgical accuracy he displays, His fun-loving nature, I see his want to drive people in their faith, I see his care, I see his desire and his enthusiasm for the life of the Church, especially the youth, but to all the people who have been under his care, and I see his love for God and his thanksgiving for all his blessings. I hope this parish realizes the blessings that were imparted on us when Fr. John was assigned here by Metropolitan Maximos.

And yet, unlike my friends, I have been called to a different mission, one that takes me from my support system here. Much like how I'm sure Joachim and Anna were on the occurrence of this feast, it has a melancholy feeling to it.



as it is a letting go of familiarity. As a seminarian you have to let go of your home parish to an extent, knowing that the reality is that most likely you don't go home, and the ordinations are in some way a reaffirming of that. But there is another letting go that I am experiencing today and that is the letting go of the protection of the diaconate. As a deacon you answer to the priest, get permission from the priest and cannot really serve liturgically without a priest being present. Not that being a deacon is not important, but I have a greater pressure moving forward, a pressure of knowing the reality that you, your eminence, will entrust me do the services and sacraments of the Church fully and wholeheartedly—for the times that I am without Fr. Jim Doukas my proistamenos and for whatever road lies ahead. Joachim and Anna expected the Theotokos to look back to her parents and yet she didn't, she was comfortable in her new place in life. I ask for her, the Mother of our Lord, to intercede on my behalf that I may serve with the deep respect that serving at the altar of the almighty God deserves as seamlessly as she did. I will miss my short time as a deacon, but I thank you for allowing me to serve for as long as you did, as I had to really engage the liturgical actions and rubrics of the deacon, which I know will come as wonderful tool in my life.

I thank God to be joined here today by my Parents, my brother, aunts and uncles, grandmothers, In-laws, whose prayers have led me here and their dedication to their Church and their God continue to inspire me. My wife and best friend Lena is on this journey with me and I need her by my side today and everyday, her blessing for all of this came first and I appreciate all the sacrifices she has made for our life and all the joy she brings. I am also extremely humbled by the amount of people who cared to be here today: My koumbaro, Fr. Sampson from Tarpon Springs; my koumbaroi Marina and Nico who came from DC; my Koumbaroi Vicki and Justin; my beloved school mates, Fr. Vikentios, Nick and Dena, Steve and Nick from Boston, and Jon and Ted; my Nouna Kelly and Greg; all of the cousins and family and all the friends; and all the clergy who came, so that seemingly all of Pittsburgh and other people could be here today—my spiritual father and beloved Chancellor of your Metropolis, Fr. George Callos; Fr. Polycarp Romeas; Fr. Sarantos Serviou, the priest who baptized me and is always a joy to see; Fr. George Daskalakis; Fr. Jim Doukas, my proistamenos, who's love and crucial tutelage is unending; our beloved Fr. Emmanuel Lillios, my wife's spiritual father; Fr. Chris Bender; Fr. George Livanos; Fr. Polycarp Steve; Fr. Radu Bordeianu; Fr. Michael Kallaur; Fr. Nicholas Halkias; Archdeacon Ryan Gzikowski; Dn Frank Dickos; Dn John Pantelis from Florida; Dn Harlambos Lykos; and Dn Vassilios Legoas. I have known these dedicated men of God and have been able to do God's work underneath their watch for quite some time (Fr. Radu from here at Holy

Trinity, Fr. Michael Kallaur from Vacation Church School out at Holy Cross, the majority at camp, and being allowed to serve or try to chant at many of their parishes) and they have inspired and molded me, taught me skills for Church ministry and made me focus on the Church in ways in which I would not have previously looked.

It is truly a blessing to be here surrounded by my Church family, every single one of them, the new Holy Trinity member I barely know, to my friends, my family, and my acquaintances. We do nothing alone in the life of Church besides private prayer. As you know, our priests and bishops need at least one other person to conduct the liturgy, as when two or three are gathered in Christ's name He is present there with



them. We serve a liturgy that is call and response, a dialogue between all of us and between us and God. Every liturgy we ask for the Holy Spirit to come down and transform the Bread and Wine into Body and Blood and for it to be for the forgiveness of our sins and life everlasting. During holy baptism we ask for the Holy Spirit to bring the person into the Body of Christ and to remain with the person. During holy unction, we ask for the Holy Spirit to heal our infirmities of soul and body. During holy matrimony we ask for the Holy Spirit to mystically make the two people one. We do none of these things on our own and we do not impart the holiness, but God does. Today marks the 50th day of me having been ordained a deacon. I see today as another Pentecost for me, I wait here in the upper room, and much like the Apostles, I am worried and nervous and unsure how to lead. And we will pray for God to send His

Holy Spirit upon me to take this weak and broken person, this weak and broken deacon, and to make me a priest. I am not worthy to even receive communion, yet alone be allowed to dispense it to others. Fr. John had given me an icon of Christ which has stayed by my door since I moved to Brookline and now it is still there in Cleveland that quotes John 15:16, "You did not choose me, but I chose you." And even though I would tell God to choose others before me, I know from Isaiah that God says, "my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways." And this is how God appoints those who would on their own choose otherwise, like Moses, Jonah, John Chrysostom, and Basil the Great, just to name a few. God is not unaware of our weaknesses, but knows them better than we do. God is not afraid of our human weakness because He transforms it. He takes fishermen and makes them the most-wise. Today the Amno, the Lamb of God, will be placed in my hands to protect and keep it, not just until we dispense the gifts, but for all time. I pray that he takes this simple Pittsburgh boy with a love for His Church and make me the priest He desires and a priest who cares for the Body of Christ, His Church, until the end of the age.

Many years master! Eis Polla eti Despota!





November 7, 2015: The Holy Trinity Ladies Philoptochos Society held a well-attended benefit Fashion Show with the support of many women from the local area. The models (pictured left and below) were all volunteers and Holy Trinity parishioners, and they fulfilled their duties with professionalism, style and humor! Fashions were provided by Ann Gregory for the Bride. Many thanks to all who planned for, supported and attended this event, and may the Lord continue to bless the loving work of our Philoptochos!



Article from the journal "Pros Tin Nikin" on "The Night of Great Love" and an original poetry composition by Voula Hareras



Voula Hareras

Η Νύχτα Τής Μεγάλης Αγάπης

Ο κόσμος ήταν βυθισμένος στον πόνο, τό μίσος, τήν άπανθρωπία καί τό φόβο. Η άμαρτία είχε χωρίσει τόν άνθρωπο άπό τήν πηγή τής χαράς, τής εϊρήνης, τής έυτυχίας.

Τό κατάντημα αυτό του προχριστιανικού κόσμου δέν μπορούσε νά τό γιατρέψει παρά μιά μεγάλη αγάπη. Μιά δυνατή μεγάλη αγάπη, πού θά μπορούσε νά κάνει ξανά τό ώραιότατο δημιούργημα του Θεού, πού είχε γίνει τόσο δυστυχισμένο καί φτωχό, ό, τι ήταν πρίν τό φθονήσει ό μισάνθρωπος Εωσφόρος, πρίν το ρίξει στό χάος καί στό θάνατο.

Όμως αύτή ή αγάπη δέν βρισκόταν στή γή. Επρεπε νά 'ρθή άπό πολύ ψηλά, άπό τήν καρδιά του ίδιου του Θεού Πατέρα. Καί ήρθε. Ήταν ό Υϊός Του ό αγαπητός. Μέσα στό σκοτάδι τής νύχτας του κόσμου ζήψε (άναψε) φώς τήν αυτού σάκρα}. Μέ τήν ένανθρώπησή Του μάς έφερε τό μεγάλο φώς, τό Φώς. Καί μάς έδειξε τόν δρόμο του γυρισμού στήν άγκάλη του Θεού Πατέρα.

Ταπεινώθηκε. Στή φάτνη τής Βηθλεέμ άνακλίθηκε φτωχότατο βρέφος, Θεός καί άνθρωπος άνάμεσά μας! Ηρθε καί ύψωσε τό νού μας, μαλάκωσε τήν πέτρινη καρδιά του

άνθρώπου. Μάς συγχώρησε, μάς έφερε τή λύτρωση άπό τήν όδύνη, τό θάνατο, τά χαμένα μας όνειρα...Μάς άνέβασε ξανά στήν πρώτη μας δόξα.

Όμως θά πούν πολλοί σήμερα {Πού είναι τά μεγάλα δώρα τής μεγάλης Αγάπης στίς πολιτείες μας καί στίς καρδιές μας.}. Δικαιολογημένο τό έρώτημα. Γιατί ύπάρχει ένας όρος, μιά προυπόθεση. Τό γράφει ό Εύαγγελιστής Ιωάννης, {όσοι δέ ελαων αυτόν έδωκεν αυτοις έξουσίαν τέκνα Θεού γενέσθαι} (Ιω. α 12). Όσοι τόν δέχτηκαν, τόν πιστεψαν Θεό τους, τό παν κρίνεται άπ αύτο, όσοι έκλεισαν στήν καρδιά τους τό λόγο Του καί άκολούθησαν τό παράδειγμα τής αγάπης καί τής ταπεινώσεώς Του, αυτοί πήραν τό μεγάλο δικαίωμα νά γίνουν παιδιά του Θεού. Υπάρξεις όλοφώτινες, άκατάβλητες, άθάνατες, αγαθοποιές, χαριτωμένες, περιζήτητες, κήρυκες καί μάρτυρες τής μεγάλης Αγάπης.

Νύχτα τών Χριστουγέννων. Ο Εμμανουήλ στή φάτνη τής Βηθλεέμ περιμένει τήν προσωπική μας άνταπόκριση στον έρχομό Του. Ανοίγοντάς Του τήν καρδιά μας ξαναγινόμαστε Θεοί μαζί Του μέ τή χάρη Του. Τότε οί καμπάνες θά άντιλαήσουν χαρμόσυνα καί για τόν θλιμμένο κόσμο μας τό {...έπί γής εϊρήνη, έν άνθρωποις εύδοκία} καί οί άγγελιοι θά τονίσουν τά πιο άρμονικά (ώσαννά) στή μεγάλη Αγάπη, πού μάς έπισκέφθηκε!

Εύλογημένα Χριστούγεννα, φίλοι μας!

— Πρός Τήν Νίκη

Χρόνε Που Φεύγεις ;

Χρόνε πού φεύγεις θέλω νά τό ξέρεις
Κανείς δέν θά βρεθεί για Σένα νά δακρύσει
Εσκόρπισες μ'άμλοχεριά, στον κόσμο δυσ*χία
Μόνον πολέμους, σκοτωμούς, αυτά έχεις αφήσει

Οί τρομοράτες βρίσκοντε σ'όλην τήν Οίκουμένη
Κί'άν δέν τούς πιάσουν τίποτε όρθιο δέν θά μένη
Εβαλαν τής Αμερικής τό πένθος στήν καρδιά της
Αφού χιλιάδες έθαψαν κάτω απτά κτίρια τής

Πόλεμος τό Αφχανιστάν καί βόμβες τό θερίζουν
Αθώα κί'ένοχα κορμιά, τους δρόμους του γεμίζουν
Η Παλαιστίνη, τό Ισραήλ, σκοτώνοντε ακόμα
Πάνω σ'ένα κομμάτι γή, ποτάμι ρέει το αίμα
Αύτήν τή γή πού πάτησαν, Χριστέ, τά βηματά σου
Σ'άγαπη καί Εϊρήνη ημίν, δίδασκες στα παιδιά σου
Κί'άντί ν'ακούσουν καί να ζούν σε γή έπαγγελίας
Σέ σταύρωσαν λες κί'είσυνα κοινός έγκληματίας

Σεισμοί, πλημμύρες, πυρκαγιές τα δάση μας καήκανε
Στής Ετνας τό ύφαιστιο, πολλά χωριά
Καί άνθρωποι μέ λάβα έθαφτήκανε
Χρηματηστήρια έρρι*ες τόν φετεινό τό χρόνο
Καί αυτοκτόνησαν πολλοί πού μείνανε στό δρόμο

Χρόνε παληέ άν πέρασες
Από τήν Αφρική
Για πές μου σε παρακαλώ

Ποιά λύση έδωσες εκεί,
Μήπως βρήκες τό φάρμακο
Τό Εϊτζ νά γιατρέψουνε
Πού τόν μισό τους πληθυσμό
Κοντεύουνε νά θάψουνε

Μήπως τούς έδωσες ψωμί
Νά φάνε νά χορτάσουνε
Όπου πεθόνουν τά παιδιά
Πρωτού νά μεγαλώσουνε

Απ'ότι ξέρω χρόνε μου
Καμιά λύση δεν έδωσες
Κί'ότι δεινά είχε ό παληός
Διπλά μας τά παρέδωσες

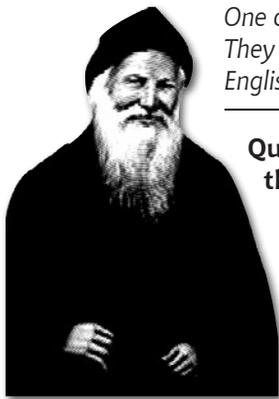
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Νά μπη ό Νέος Χρόνος
Μέ τήν βοήθεια του Θεού
Νά φύγη κάθε πόνος

Νά φέρει Εϊρήνη καί Χαρά
Σ'όλην τήν Οίκουμένη
Νά *ήσουμε άδελφικά
Καί πάντα Εύτυχισμένοι



— Βούλα Χαρερά





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: Gheronda, how can I use the Jesus Prayer?

Pray to God with love and yearning, in tranquility, with meekness, gently and without forcing yourself. And when you repeat the prayer, ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, say it slowly, humbly, gently and with divine love. Pronounce the name of Christ with sweetness. Say the words one at a time: ‘Lord... Jesus. .. Christ...have mercy on me’, smoothly, tenderly, affectionately, silently, secretly, mystically, but with exaltation, with longing, with passion, without tension, force or unbecoming emphasis, without compulsion and pressure. In the way a mother speaks to the child she loves: ‘my little boy...my darling girl... my little Johnny... my wee Mary!’ With longing. Yes, longing. That’s the whole secret. Here the heart is speaking: ‘My little child, my joy!’ My Lord, my Jesus, my Jesus, my Jesus!’ What you have in your heart and in your mind, that is what you express with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind.

Question: Is it better to pray aloud with words or silently in our heart?

Sometimes it is good to say the prayer, ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, out loud so that you hear it with your ears. We are body and soul and there is interaction between the two. But when you have fallen in love with Christ you prefer silence and spiritual prayer. Then words cease. It is inner silence that precedes, accompanies and follows the divine visitation, the divine union and co-mingling of the soul with the divine. When you find yourself in this state, words are not needed. This is something you experience, something that cannot be explained. Only the person who experiences this state understands it. The sense of love floods through you and unites you with Christ. You are filled with joy and exultation which shows that you have the divine, perfect love within you. Divine love is selfless, simple and true.

The most perfect form of prayer is silent prayer. Silence. ‘Let et a mortal flesh keep silence.’ Amid the mystery of silence the assimilation to God takes place. It is here too that truest worship takes place. To experience this, however, you have to attain to a certain level. Then words fall silent. Remember: ‘Let all mortal flesh keep silence.’ This manner of silence is the most perfect. This is how you are assimilated to God. You enter into the mysteries of God. We must not speak much, but leave grace to speak.

I repeated the prayer, ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, and new horizons would open up. Tears of joy and gladness would flow from my eyes on account of Christ’s love and His sacrifice on the Cross. Insuperable longing! In this

the whole greatness is concealed, Paradise itself. Because you love Christ, you repeat this prayer, these seven words, with craving and with your heart. And gradually the words are lost. The heart is so replete that it suffices to say two words, ‘My Jesus!’, and ultimately no words at all. Love is better expressed without words. But when a soul truly falls in love with the Lord, it prefers silence and spiritual prayer. The flood of divine love fills the soul with joy and exultation.

Question: Gheronda, what happens to the soul immersed in prayer?

The soul has previously progressed though, and exercised itself day by day in the Psalter and the service books of the Church. Now words have come to an end. The soul experiences divine humility very profoundly. Christ has descended into it and it senses the divine voice. It is both in the world and out of the world. It is in Paradise, that is, in the Church, in the uncreated Paradise. Ignatius Brianchaninov says: “Prayer of the heart is highly desirable. It is highly desirable to live in the most remote desert, because these circumstances are especially favorable for prayer of the heart and silence of the heart.” “Silence of the heart” is for nothing to distract you — to live alone for God alone.

God is everywhere present and fills all things. I try to take wings to infinity and fly amidst the stars. My mind is lost in the magnificence of God’s omnipotence as I contemplate the distances of millions of light years. I feel this omnipotent God before me and I open my arms and I open my soul to be united with Him, to participate in the Godhead...

Question: How long should we pray?

In prayer what is important is not the duration but the intensity. Pray albeit for five minutes, but abandoning yourself to God with love and longing. One person may pray all night long and another person only for five minutes and yet the five-minute prayer may be superior. This is a mysterious matter, of course, but that’s the way it is...The secret lies in our devotion, our prayer to God for what is best for our brethren to come about through the grace of God. That is the best. What we are unable to do will be done through His grace.

In my life, prayer occupies the first place. I do not fear hell and I don’t think of Paradise. I ask only for God to have mercy on the whole world and on me. If I repeat ‘Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me with intensity, even when I have people around me, I am not distracted from the prayer. It is just the same as when I am on my own. I pray, I receive everyone in the Spirit of Christ, and I am eager to pray for all the people. I try to love Christ. That is my aim. Because of my many illnesses, I’m not able to speak much. But prayer helps more than words.

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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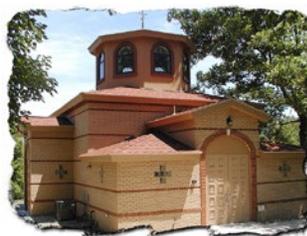
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Why God Came To Us

The care of the Creator for his creatures is well known to us, and it explains why the Redeemer became incarnate.

It was consistent with his love not to leave the human race to go to perdition... The Lord of the world did not consider it right to allow human beings, for love of whom everything had been made, to be besieged by sin and to be sold like slaves to death.

For this reason he assumed human form, hid his invisible nature under visible guise, and kept the visible nature free from the stain of sin.

Undoubtedly, it would have been easy for him to save the human race without assuming the garment of the flesh. He could have overthrown the power of death by a simple act of will. He could have made the father of that power—sin—disappear by exiling it from the earth in such a way that no trace of it would remain on earth.

Instead of that, he chose to demonstrate the holiness of his providential care. He preferred to build for himself a chamber in the womb of the Virgin and from there to come among us. For this reason we think of him as man and adore him a God. Begotten of the Father before the beginning of time, he took of the Virgin a visible body. He is the Being who is both new and pre-existent.

Excerpted from *The Cure of Pagan Diseases*, by Theodoret (3rd c.)

