



THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

DECEMBER 2016

VOLUME 24 • ISSUE 10

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

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IMPORTANT NOTICE

**PARISH COUNCIL ELECTIONS
TO BE CONDUCTED ON
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4,
FOLLOWING DIVINE LITURGY.**

INSERTS

GOYA Christmas Bread Sale
Holy Trinity Movie Night
FOCUS Christmas Concert
Pan-Hellenic Scholarship Info
New Year's Eve Gala Flyer

QUICK NEWS



Military Appreciation Day honored our Holy Trinity veterans for their service to our country. Want to see videos and more photos of this event and others in the life and ministries of Holy Trinity Church? See the Community Life Photo Journal on pages 6-7 or visit our online photo gallery at photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org.

CHRIST IS BORN! GLORIFY HIM!



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

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church

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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

Rev. Fr. John Touloumes, Proistamenos

Rev. Fr. Radu Bordeianu, Assistant Priest

2016 Parish Council

George Dickos, President

Dean A. Balouris Michael Passodelis

George Danis Joyce Athanasiou

Andrew Janis Stephen Stearns

Van Backeris 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 education, youth, senior, family and cultural opportunities. There is something for everyone, so please get involved today!



Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace.

Luke 2.14

My Beloved Spiritual Children,

When giving Church tours during the festival or for visitors throughout the year, the icon most obviously portraying the image of the world-changing event of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ coming into the world is that of the Nativity, located in the lower dome on the front right side. With the newborn Christ child at center, it offers the Theotokos, angels, animals and many other parts of the story of the Birth that saved the world. Even the youngest of our Church School students are able to identify it when asked about the Nativity, the Christmas icon.

It is not, however, the only proclamation of that Good News event. Emblazoned around the ring at the base of the dome in Holy Trinity Church is a large inscription in Greek (pictured here): Δόξα σοι τῷ δείξαντι τὸ φῶς. Δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις Θεῷ, καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς εἰρήνη, ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκία. Ὑμνοῦμέν σε, εὐλογοῦμέν σε, προσκυνοῦμέν σε, δοξολογοῦμέν σε, εὐχαριστοῦμέν σοι, διὰ τὴν μεγάλην σου δόξαν. (Translation: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will among men. We praise You, we bless You, we worship You, we glorify You, we give thanks to You for Your great glory.")



This phrase, known as "The Great Doxology" is based on the very proclamation of the angels to the shepherds in the Nativity story found in Luke 2.14. And it is at once an announcement and a prayer, affirming the prophecy of Isaiah 9.6: "And his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Peace on earth. It is at the core of the prophecy and the announcement of the Nativity of the Incarnate Son of God. Yet in the modern post-9/11 world, however, it sometimes seems a fleeting reality. But perhaps this is one of the touchpoints where we enter the icon of the Nativity. If the first icon described above portrays and image, and the second proclaims the message, then we as Christians need to become the living models of how that peace can be real. As expressed by His All-Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew in a previous Christmas Encyclical:

All the proclamations of the Angels during the birth of the Lord are realities that exist and are experienced today in fullness by those who believe in Jesus Christ as the Divine-Human Savior of the world. Let us begin from this year to live Christmas in a way that pleases God, the giver of all good things, so that we might experience in our hearts the transcendent peace and the loving good will of God toward us...And let us fulfill our destiny in the likeness of God by practicing our faith in Him. Let us, too, proclaim the angelic song to humankind, which is suffering terribly and cannot discover Peace and Good Will through its conventional ways.

As we continue to offer prayers for peace here and throughout the world, during the Nativity and at all times, may you and your loved ones be blessed with the peace of God in your hearts, your homes and wherever the Lord sends you as models of that Good News. Christ is born! Glorify Him!

Herald Personal Sponsor for this Issue:
Spero the Orthodox Church Mouse
For All of 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. 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. 8: Forefeast of the Conception of the Theotokos (HT)

Followed by the Philoptochos Seniors Christmas Lunch

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

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

Dec. 23/24/25: The Nativity of Christ (see schedule below - HT)

Dec. 31, 6:00pm: Great Vespers 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.

Fri. Dec. 23, 9:30 am..... Royal Hours of the Nativity

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

Sat. Dec. 24, 8:30am Orthros/9:30am Liturgy....Forefeast of the Nativity

Sat. Dec. 24, 6:30pm..... Great Vespers of the Nativity

This service "opens the liturgical day" and begins the celebration of the Nativity. Also, the Holy Trinity Choir will be offering a selection of beautiful Christmas carols following the service. (Note: This is not a Divine Liturgy. Those wishing to receive Holy Communion need to attend the Liturgy of the Forefeast of the Nativity on Saturday morning or Christmas morning on Sunday.)

Sun. 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 service of the New Year by celebrating the Great Vespers of the Feast of Saint Basil at 6:30 p.m. Note that because of New Year's Day being on a Sunday, this is not a Liturgy, but rather a Vespers service. Still, there is no better way to sanctify yourself, your family and the entire New Year than to begin it in prayer. "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 can still be obtained in the Gallery following Sunday Liturgy by contacting Harry Athanasiou at 412-292-4205.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION MINISTRY

Christmas Pageant Rehearsals.....Dec. 4, 11, 16, 17

This year's Christmas pageant will once again be an "all new" Holy Trinity production, so everyone will need to be there for rehearsals. It's going to be exciting, so please don't miss out!

Sun. Dec. 4 & 11: 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. 16: 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. 17: The complete cast rehearsal for the Holy Trinity Church School Christmas Pageant will be held on Saturday morning, December 17, 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 18

The Holy Trinity Church School ministry will be offering its annual Christmas Pageant this year on Sunday, December 18. ALL the students of the Church School will be involved in this event. On that day, following Holy Communion, all Church School students and staff will depart for their classes and final preparations for the pageant. All our parishioners are asked to stay for the pageant and coffee hour in the social hall. Also, please note: Coffee Hour that day is sponsored by the Holy Trinity Church School Alumni. Any alumni—parents, graduates of any age, former staff—that would like to help, please contact Presvytera Becky.

No Church School Class.....Dec. 25, Jan. 1

Attention, parents: there will be no Church School class on December 25 and January 1 due to the holiday celebrations, so please join together to worship as a family on that day.

YOUTH MINISTRIES

GOYA Basketball Practice.....December 1, 8, 13, 19

GOYA will hold basketball practice in preparation for the 2017 basketball tournament season on December 1, 8, 13 & 19 from 6:00-8:00pm at Hosack Elementary School, 9275 Peebles Road, Allison Park, PA 15101.

GOYA Fireside Chat.....December 10

The GOYA teen ministry will hold its annual Christmas Fire-

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



side Chat at the home of Sam and Jack Passodelis on Saturday, December 10 from 4:00-7:00pm. Information is being sent directly to GOYA families.

GOYA Christmas Bread BakingDecember 16

All GOYA teens and any available parents are asked to be on duty for GOYA Christmas Bread baking on Friday, December 16. 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.

PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS AND EVENTS.

Philoptochos Turkey Fundraiser Thank You

The Ladies Philoptochos would like to thank everyone who has donated to their Annual Turkey Fundraiser so far this year. Your donations will be used to assist needy families, local women's shelters and local food banks during the holiday season. If you have not sent in your donation, there is still time to support this worthy cause. Checks can be made out to "Holy Trinity Philoptochos" and mailed to the Church Office.

Philoptochos Scholarship News

The Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Scholarship is an award established to recognize and honor a high school senior from Holy Trinity who graduated in 2016 and wishes to further their education by attending an accredited 2 or 4 year college or university or trade school in the U.S. This scholarship is in its inaugural year in 2016. The Holy Trinity Ladies Philoptochos Scholarship will grant one \$500 scholarship to an applicant who qualifies based upon their scholastic achievement and a written essay discussing how their experiences and involvement at Holy Trinity influenced them and how they would use those experiences in the future. Award determinations were made by the Holy Trinity Ladies Philoptochos Scholarship Committee, based upon stu-

dents' application materials and other information furnished by the applicant. A \$150 scholarship will be awarded to each of the other applicants to recognize their achievements. The recipient of this year's \$500 scholarship was awarded to Kailey Kaparakos. Dimitri Gagianas, Julie Karabin and Emme Germanos were each awarded a \$150 scholarship in recognition of their achievements. We would like to congratulate our graduates for their outstanding achievements. We wish them continued success in the future!

COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENTS.

Parish Council Elections..... December 4

Elections for the 2017-2019 Parish Council term will be held on Sunday, December 4, immediately following Divine Liturgy. Voting requires membership in good standing, including a signed 2016 Holy Trinity Stewardship Pledge.

"Drop and Shop" Evening for Parents.....Dec. 9

GOYA will be hosting a "Drop and Shop" evening for parents of Holy Trinity children of all ages on Friday, December 9 (note change of date) The GOYans will organize activities so parents can drop off their kids and enjoy a night of Christmas shopping on their own. Reservations are required and can be made online at www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/events.

NHCO Holiday Toy Drive Through December 14

North Hills Community Outreach is accepting new toys, games, sporting equipment, sports apparel and gift cards for children ages birth through 18, through December 14; earlier donations are encouraged. Gifts cards and gifts appropriate for teens are especially needed. Donations can be taken to any NHCO location, including 1975 Ferguson Road, Allison Park, PA 15101, Monday – Friday, 9am-4pm, and at the food pantry behind the building, 9am-noon, Saturday, December 3. For more information or alternate arrangements, please contact NHCO 412-487-6316 opt 1.

"ONE HOLY TRINITY": Make Your Commitment and Submit Your Cards Today!

One Holy Trinity

Stewardship

Church operating costs

My/Our 2016 pledge _____

ANNUAL CHURCH OPERATING COSTS: \$591,666

Stewardship candles & tray 72% (300+ families)

YOUR 2017 Stewardship Update & Planner

PERSONAL & CONFIDENTIAL

Mortgage Payoff

GOAL: Eliminate the Church's mortgage by 2020

My/Our 2016 pledge _____

My/Our 2017 pledge _____

My/Our 2018 pledge _____

My/Our 2019 pledge _____

My/Our 2020 pledge _____

CHURCH MORTGAGE PAYOFF: \$1,957,500

75% Funded (\$1,468,125) 25% Unfunded (\$489,375) (300+ families)

Time and Talents

My time and talents commitment

Check the left box for the husband and the right box for the wife.

YOUR SUPPORT MAKES THIS POSSIBLE

Signature _____

Signature _____

For more information visit www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/stewardship

complete fully

Orthodox? Y N Birthdate _____

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Orthodox? Y N Birthdate _____

It's time to join together in love as members of "ONE HOLY TRINITY" to serve the Church and to provide for its critical mission in today's society. The 2017 pledge card has been simplified with the left panel containing a clear picture of the Operating Budget of Holy Trinity Church, how it is funded, and what your Stewardship pledge will be for 2017. The center panel now comprises a separate section directed specifically to our mortgage obligation, which, with interest included, is \$1.96 million. Finally, the right panel contains spaces to indicate those ministries of Holy Trinity Church with which you would like to participate or receive services. Please check all that apply to you and your family. And please, submit your card as soon as possible in December. Didn't receive one? Call the Church office today.

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 2016 – "THE VOICE OF HOLY TRINITY CHURCH"



Father John Androutsopoulos

Christmas/Χριστούγεννα

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

I greet you with the First Christmas Hymn: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will toward men." The Nativity of Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Who was born of the Virgin Mary in the stable at Bethlehem, is fast approaching. Let me remind you

that the spiritual preparation during this Advent season (the Nativity Fast) is more important than the secular one.

As we know, the sources of our faith are the Holy Scripture and Sacred Tradition. In the Old Testament (which means the Old, First agreement between God and man) Isaiah was one of the greatest of the Hebrew Prophets and the author of the book which bears his name. He is also called the "Fifth Evangelist" by St. John Chrysostom.



What great and glorious person was Isaiah privileged to announce?

The Messiah; especially in Isaiah 7:14; 9:1-7; 11:1-10; 53. "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, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever" (Isaiah 9:6,7).

These verses contain some of the many names given to Jesus Christ of Nazareth. To us, these names present great attributes of the life of the Son of God. Although He has many names, "there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." He is a wonderful Lord revealed in a wonderful Book. He is both Son of God and God, the Son. He is our counselor in whom we have utmost confidence. He has shared our own experiences from His

humble birth until He returned to the throne. We know He is interested in us for He gave Himself for us. We are partakers of His body, His blood, and His sufferings.

What prophesy of Isaiah's is quoted in Matthew 1:23?

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a Virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel [which means 'God with us']" Isaiah (7:14).

In the New Testament (which means the New agreement between God and man) in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians 4:4,5, we read, "But When the right time finally came, God sent His own Son. He came as the son of a human mother, and lived under the Jewish Law, to set free those who were under the Law, so that we might become God's sons."

Beloved, we are familiar with the Christmas story, with the trip to Bethlehem, the crowded inn, the humble birth of God's Son. God Himself was visiting the earth. The Word had become flesh. It was a glorious night on the Judean hills. The Lamb of God was born, hence the appearance of angels to the shepherds.

A great angel brought the good news to the, first congregation of shepherds that first Christmas night. The message was proclaimed: "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

Some Christmas Questions and Answers

Q: Why did God choose to make known the birth of His Son to poor shepherds, rather than to King Herod and the other great ones of the land?

A: To show the world that He disdains the proud (Proverbs chapter 16), but raises up the lowly and humble.

Q: In what special manner has God made known to us His Love and mercy?

A: In the Incarnation and birth of Jesus Christ, our Lord, and by His life of kindness and humility amongst us.

Q: Why is Christ called the first-born of Mary?

A: Because He was indeed the first child born of Her, but was also the only one. (Note: The English word "firstborn" usually—though not always—implies the existence of subsequent children, but with the Greek word "prototokos" there is no such implication.)

Q: What did Christ teach us when on earth?

A: He taught us to deny ourselves of ungodliness and worldly desires, instructing us by His example how to love God and Divine things, and also our neighbor, even though he be our enemy. Thus, by a pious life, we must prepare ourselves for the second coming of Christ.

May the love of the new-born Savior, our Lord Jesus Christ be born anew in our hearts this Christmas Day, and every day!

Christ Is Born! Glorify Him! Χαρούμενα Χριστούγεννα! Merry Christmas!

*With the love of the New-born Savior,
Rev. Fr. John K. Androutsopoulos*





October 26th, 2016: A full-house crowd attends the "Journey to Fullness" Faith Growth video series, one of the "Faith and Family Weekdays" offerings at Holy Trinity Church. The series is being offered in two parts, with 8 sessions during October/November and 8 sessions during January/February. Each evening starts with a brief prayer service, then a 20-minute video presentation by Father Barnabas Powell, producer of the "Journey to Fullness" program. The evening continues with a 45-minute question-and-answer session with open discussion on the topic of the evening or other related issues. The last session of the first series, to be held on November 30, will feature a live video conference call-in with Father Barnabas himself. Come and see!



November 12, 2016: Holy Trinity Church's Grand Room was selected by the Orthodox Church in America's (OCA) Archdiocese of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania as the site for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of their Archdiocese. Right: During the visit our Church was honored with the presence of the head of the Primate of the OCA, His Beatitude Metropolitan Tikhon (center) and His Eminence Archbishop Melchisedek (right). Above: His Eminence Archbishop Michael delivers the Keynote Address at the Centennial Banquet in the Grand Room.

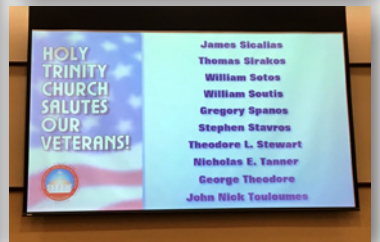
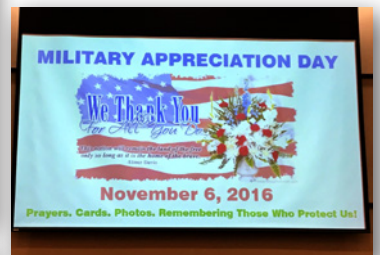


November 27, 2016: The teens of Holy Trinity GOYA gathered on the lower field of the church for the annual GOYA Thanksgiving Turkey Bowl flag football game. Parents and family provided cheers during the game and snacks afterwards. The day was a magnificent, sunny Pittsburgh fall day. It was just another of the great opportunities our teens have through the GOYA ministry, along with retreats, camp, outreach project, athletics and more.





November 6, 2016: In observance of Veteran's Day, the Cards and Phone Calls Ministry Team coordinated Holy Trinity Church's first-ever "Military Appreciation Day" in honor of parishioners, family, and community members who have served and are still serving our country in the military. The tribute included a memorial service for departed veterans and heroes and special recognition of living veterans and active military service members. Our gratitude was further demonstrated by a card signing event by all parishioners during Coffee Hour. The cards created through our labor of love will be distributed in care packages to Deployed Troops, Veterans, First Responders, and Wounded Warriors by Operation Gratitude. Thank you to all the event coordinators and God bless our troops!



Editor's note: During a recent visit to an Archdiocesan meeting, I received a thankful comment from a long-time friend and faithful servant of the Church, now in his 80's. He had been recuperating from an injury and watching the Divine Liturgy at Holy Trinity online when he heard a comment about the important role Greek grandparents have in raising children in the Faith. He was kind enough to send the article below, which he had written years before. It touched me deeply and personally with memories of my own “Yiayia.” Perhaps it will you, too!

Recently I was privileged to hear a keynote address at a Clergy-Laity Assembly by the Reverend Father Constantine Sitaras on the subject of “The Family as Church.” In this enlightening address, Father Sitaras commented on the life of St. Basil the Great as a phenomenon which occurred because of the home into which St. Basil was born and the family within which he was nourished.

Strongly influencing the upbringing of St. Basil was his Grandmother, Macrina, a disciple of St. Gregory the Wonderworker. Her profound intellect and resolute piety preserved the traditions of faith and family and inculcated in Basil a strong sense of faith, hospitality and almsgiving.

As the presentation moved on, I could not help but reflect on the influence of my maternal grandmother on my life and how her simple faith and spirituality left an indelible imprint on my formation and growth as a Greek Orthodox Christian. For in her unadorned ways she was a classic model of charity, graciousness and prayer.

Widowed at an early age, she was a tower of strength and virtue, raising her family with dignity and self-sufficiency, always maintaining the strong sense of Church, place and legacy, which was to become the foundation for her family. Her admonition to her children and grandchildren was always for the protection of the Theotokos on our going out and coming in. How many times I think back to her love and care of her grandchildren and the quiet paradigm of fidelity which she provided to us.

It is the values of Church, home and family which need to be nurtured, invigorated and transmitted to our children and their children and their children's children if we are truly to be witnesses to the Word of God growing in the image and likeness of Christ. Critical to this is the importance of grandparents in the spiritual development of children's lives. For it is parents, grandparents and god-parents that are the role models for our children.

In the simplest of ways, the burning of incense in the home, the prayer of a grandparent at dinner—even at a fancy restaurant—the veneration of the icon and lighting of a candle or votive light; all are images of abiding faith and strength of values which are ours to honor and embrace.

It is not enough to go to Church or “study” church. It is axiomatic that the family and home are the Church. Our first duty is to begin at the fireside, in the kitchen, in the family room. True ministry begins within the family unit and it is best taught in the simple paradigm of the Yiayia's faith.

Witnessing a Yiayia light a candle, venerate an icon or meditate in prayer provides the strongest lesson in faith. It is in the visual, palpable experiences that our deepest recollections are developed.

It is Yiayia who can without any difficulty or awkwardness

embody and articulate the Church, the teaching of Christ and the respect for God in the home.

When Yiayia censes the house with the smoldering fragrance it is not because someone “is sick or has died” but because it is a spiritual visual fragrance symbolizing our ascending prayer and asking in return the grace of the Holy Spirit to be with us at all times and under all circumstances.

When Yiayia fasts as a means to strengthen her spiritual life and not as an example of outer piety, she manifests Christ's teaching: “And whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show

others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you” (Mt. 6:16-18).

Yiayia's quiet, reserved almost unobtrusive application of her faith in her daily life will be perceptively discerned by children.

Teaching our children the love of the Lord, the witness to His gospel and the *phronema* (the mindset), the wisdom, the propriety of the Greek Orthodox Faith is the personal duty of the parents and family. A duty which cannot be delegated to teachers in Sunday

School and others who may assist us but cannot acquit us from the sacred obligation.

The virtues extolled in a Yiayia's living faith are those of fasting, almsgiving and prayer. They are the same virtues demonstrated by St. Basil's father and grandmother. Virtues that were imbued into nine of the ten children of Basil and Emmelia that survived into adulthood. Virtues that gave to Christianity three Saints: Macrina, Basil and Gregory and of the sons, Basil, Gregory and Peter who attained the dignity of the episcopate.

As children of Christ and as family, we live in relationships. As Orthodox Christians our relationships are strengthened and enhanced by example. In the 1800's a prominent Protestant pastor in London, Charles Spurgeon, commented on a pericope from the Book of Joel:

“Tell your children of it and let your children tell their children, and their children another generation.” (Joel 1:3) In this simple way, by God's grace, a living testimony for truth is always to be kept alive in the land—the beloved of the Lord are to hand down their witness for the Gospel, and the covenant to their heirs, and these again to their next descendants. This is our first duty...”

We are born in the image of Christ. What we do to embellish, grow and nurture ourselves and others in the faith is to shape us in the image and likeness of Christ.

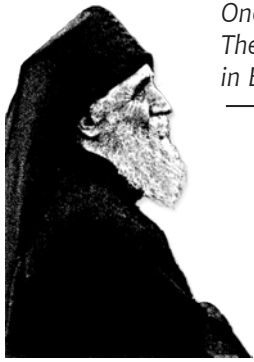
Harold A. Peponis (Chicago, IL)



Thank you to the following faithful stewards who have submitted their pledge cards for the 2016 pledge year, 274 as of this publication. Please join them in their support for the ministries of Holy Trinity and complete your 2016 pledge commitment today! Remember, a signed pledge card is required as part of maintaining your membership in good standing at Holy Trinity Church each year.

Rev. Fr. & Pres. John Androutsopoulos	Mrs Afrodite Condos	Mr. Gus Kalaris	Mr & Mrs Michael Passodelis
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Saint Paisios

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.

Gheronda, is being in church truly supposed to be an “other-wordly” experience?

Who among us, upon entering a church, does not sense that there is something special here? Who does not know that to come here means to leave all else behind? And this can be seen by the fact that, if an inappropriate thought enters our mind while we’re here, we immediately want to dismiss it. And even if we’re unable to, we recognize it as something foreign, something that has intruded into the space of our soul, something that has slipped past our guard and entered into us.

We enter the church, then, when we go forth from ourselves in power, in substance, and in truth, leaving behind all our sins, our inclinations, and our aspirations. To enter the church means to leave outside all those things that make up our life in the world. That which exists is God (Exodus 3.14), but that which is ours, and which alone belongs to us, is our sin, our self will, and our desire. Apart from God, the self is something non-existent, even though it is, and remains, the creation of His hands, the breath of His first blessing (Gen. 2.7).

When we enter the church, we leave behind, not simply the things we see, but even the things for which we hope, because the latter in particular occupy a central place in our lives. Even though the things we hope for are not currently in our hands, we live as if they already were, feeling them intensely, as if we could run our fingers through them, lay hold of them, and possess them. In general, the intensity of our feelings about such things assumes the character of an actual experience, and we must leave that behind, along with all that we see.

And what we “see” is everything we encounter in the course of the day: things seen by the eyes of the body as well as those of the soul—which are much more perceptive. The things we “see” are all the things we experience, which stir us up, unsettle us, occupy our minds, give us pleasure, and lift our spirits. When our eyes fall upon them, they elevate us, but only to a place within the visible world: never beyond it.

In leaving behind everything we see, we come forth from that which constitutes our place of exile. This is the new exodus undertaken by the children of God every time they assemble and unite themselves to Christ in the sacred space of the church.

How do we know when we are truly experiencing that moment?

Having left everything behind, where do we find ourselves? In the open air, as befits people close to God. Why do I say in the open air? Because, looking around the church, we feel that we’re standing in heaven,

and heaven cannot be considered a closed space. And this is why Christ chose the desert as a place for prayer: precisely because its endless expanses and tremendous openness symbolize heaven itself. The desert, moreover, stands in contrast to the world: it contains no worldly pleasure, it gives you no earthly delight, and it offers you no fleshly repose. Heaven is something like that.

Gheronda, what does it mean to be close to God?

Think for a moment: can you be close to an icon and not be moved to venerate it? Can you be close to a fire and not be warmed? Can you be close to the light and not be illumined? Of course not. How, then, can you be close to God and not become godlike? How can you stretch out on God’s open spaces and not be raised up to the heights of His grandeur?

It follows, then, that after our exit from the world, we find ourselves close to God. We do not, however, find ourselves before the face of God (Exodus 33.11). Why? Because, for the most part, the eyes of our soul and body (which are both earthly) do not see God: they only seek Him. In the darkness broken by the brazen lamps, we seek Him, but we do not see Him. And that is the tragedy of human existence: we see everything except that which truly exists. All creation, which had a beginning and which will come to an end, falls under our gaze, which means we see things that, in reality, have no independent existence. The tragic figure of man does not see that which alone truly exists: the One Who Is (Exodus 3.14), and Who is always with us.

That is what it means to be close to God. And when we enter into the open spaces of the church, we immediately experience a particular feeling, a feeling which confirms for us that here, in this place, our Helper is at hand. He is invisible, but you feel Him, as if He were rushing toward you, as if you could hear the sound of His breathing. He is your Helper, the One Who can deliver you, Who can redeem you, Who alone can satisfy your insatiable soul, which is forever being gnawed by hunger. You are close to God, and God is invisibly present. But, you may ask, where is He? Who can see Him?

If you wish to see God, my beloved children, there’s only one thing to do: go to church filled with longing to see His face, filled with divine and heavenly desire to be able, somehow, to feel the presence of your Helper and Defender. When you do this, your soul will experience an initially strange feeling: it is God touching your heart. And what will the heart do in response? Will it laugh and rejoice? No. It will be filled with a blessed, godly grief, and begin to weep and lament. In the presence of the Lord, you’ll feel your heart—which is like a useless sack—filling to the brim with the sense of its own emptiness and thereby overflowing with tears. And these tears will be its secret cry, saying: “Where are You, Lord? Have mercy on me.”

Excerpted from Elder Aimilianos of Simonopetra, “The Way of the Spirit”





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The Wonder of the Nativity

We are so accustomed to the story of the Nativity that it is easy to forget how strange and amazing it is for God to be born. Christ is eternally begotten of the Father, but as a Person of the Trinity He cannot be born, since there was never a time He was not.

Yet there is more to the Nativity than the paradox of God's birth. The Church also calls us to wonder at the manner of His arrival upon earth...He chooses to be born as a little child, a defenseless baby.

That same God of almighty power, whose presence, if manifested, would be a disaster of biblical proportions, comes to us in complete meekness and humility. The One whose face "no man shall see...and live," (Ex. 33.20) becomes a baby for us, revealing to us all that is pure and good in humanity, and, at the same time, the humility of God.

Only in a baby could the image of God be revealed to the world, inducing not fear and terror, but love and tenderness, revealing to us both the humility of God and the goodness and purity of God's creation.

Archimandrite Vassilios Papavassiliou
 "Meditations for the 12 Great Feasts"



Scripture of the Month: "He delivers and rescues, He works signs and wonders in heaven and on earth." (Dan. 6.27)