



THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

SEPTEMBER 2017

VOLUME 25 • ISSUE 7

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

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QUICK NEWS



Iconographer Florin Vlad works on the Saint George Chapel with Metropolitan Savas observing. 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 page 6 or visit our online photo gallery site at photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org.

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

THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

About the Herald

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

Editor

Father John Touloumes, Prototypesbyter
Church: 412-366-8700

Home: 412-831-3574

E-mail: fjt@HolyTrinityPgh.org

Production

Mary Portellos, Office Administrator

E-mail: office@HolyTrinityPgh.org

Contributors

Rev. Fr. John Androutsopoulos

Rev. Fr. Radu Bordeianu

Photographers

Mary-Magdalene Welsh

Peter Gagianas Theanne Gagianas

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About the Parish

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church

985 Providence Boulevard

Pittsburgh, PA 15237

Phone: 412-366-8700 • Fax: 412-366-8710

Web site: www.HolyTrinityPgh.org

Email: office@HolyTrinityPgh.org

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

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church Parish Administration

Clergy

Rev. Fr. John Touloumes, Proistamenos

Rev. Fr. Radu Bordeianu, Assistant Priest

2017 Parish Council

Gerri Valliant, President

Dean A. Balouris Michael Passodelis

George Danis Joyce Athanasiou

George Dickos Stephen Stearns

Van Backeris Karen Georgiadis

Tom Germanos Alex Trilivas

Marios Kritiotis Jean Willow

Ministries

Please visit the Holy Trinity website at www.HolyTrinityPgh.org for descriptions and contact information on Holy Trinity Church's ministries, including spiritual life, education, youth, senior, family and cultural opportunities. There is something for everyone, so please get involved today!

"FAITH. FAMILY. COMMUNITY."



Christ our God, Your kingdom is an everlasting one and Your lordship is over all. You have made all things with wisdom and have established proper times and seasons for our lives. We give thanks to You in all circumstances and for all things. Lord, bless the beginning of our Church year with Your goodness. Grant that this liturgical year be for all of us a year of grace. Make us worthy with purity of heart always to praise you. Lord, glory to You!

From the Orthros of September 1, "The Indiction"

Dear Holy Trinity family,

"New Year? In September?" It's not a typo. The above hymn is from the Feast of "The Indiction," which marks the beginning of the new ecclesiastical year. Why September instead of the better-known January 1st celebration? From biblical times, the old year was concluded with the harvesting of the crops and offering of thanksgiving during the late summer season, while the new year was ushered in with hope and a dedication: "Bless, O Lord, the crown (the beginning) of the year with Your goodness!" (Psalm 64/65). This also reflects the Old Testament foundations of the Church, as the Jewish feast of "Rosh Hashanah," held around the same time, translates as "head of the year."

So as Church School and other ministries of the parish get ramped up for the season and new ecclesiastical year, we also offer the hope and prayer, "Bless, O Lord, the crown of the year with Your goodness!" And as always, it looks to be quite a year!

- On September 1, we will be in the middle of what is shaping up to be another record-breaking "Taste of Greece" Festival.
- Our new Parish Development Committee is working on plans to pay off our mortgage (with **your help**) and re-energize our Mission Statement.
- The Spiritual Life Ministry is introducing the 2017/2018 version of this ever-evolving offering of mid-week ministry and worship opportunities (see page 7 for details and dates).
- Holy Trinity Church has been selected as one of 14 parishes around the country to launch a new young adult ministry as part of the Telos Project (see page 9).
- The Hospitality Ministry is heading up a brand new way to extend the impact of the Festival by adding a nightly brief worship service during the Festival and inviting our Festival patrons to return to Holy Trinity Church in October for "A Second Helping of Holy Trinity," where they will be able to hear more about the life and ministries of our church.
- Our Visitation Ministry is expanding its work to include bereavement care and support for those who have lost loved ones.
- Our "Journey to Fullness" teaching series is expanding to two seasons (one series in the fall and one in the spring) to serve the growing number of people seeking to become Orthodox and members of the Church (over a dozen and growing).

These are just a few of the efforts underway, and there is a place for **you** to get involved. Back in 2008, our Vision Committee, whose leadership and work was instrumental in getting us to where we are today, had as a central goal of its efforts, "Offer an environment and physical structure that supports and motivates everyone involved in the life of community to make it **the crossroads of their daily life**." With thanks to those faithful servants of Christ and with all glory to God, we now have the environment; we are in a beautiful structure; it is now up to us to make the living of our Faith in the life of the Church the center, the focus and the crossroads of our daily life as we continue to worship, serve and love our Lord Jesus Christ, Whose blessings on this new ecclesiastical year we ask with hope and faith.

Paternaly yours in Christ,

WORSHIP LIFE

Weekday Services September

Please take note of the following weekday Liturgies and services this month. Unless otherwise indicated, Orthros is at 8:15 a.m., followed by Divine Liturgy at 9:30 at the St. George Chapel (SG).

Sept. 7, 6:00pm: Nativity of Theotokos Vespers & Vigil

Sept. 8, 9:00am: Nativity of Theotokos Divine Liturgy

The above two services will be held at the Nativity of the Theotokos Monastery in Saxonburg, PA,

Sept. 13, 5:00pm: Exaltation of the Holy Cross Vespers

Sept. 14, 8:30am: Holy Cross Orthros/10:00am Liturgy

The above services will be held at the Holy Cross Church in Mount Lebanon.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Church School Classes Begin/Kickoff Picnic. Sept. 10

The first day of classes for Church School is Sunday, September 10 at **9:30am** with **Divine Liturgy and the children's sermon**, followed by classes after Holy Communion. Please be sure to register your returning child(ren) during Coffee Hour in the Gallery or new students may register online at www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/register. Following class on that day, there will be a picnic for all the students on the lawn.

Church School/Youth Ministries Parent & Volunteer Signup

All Church School families are asked to sign up for hosting one Church School snacks Sunday. Even if there are multiple children in a family, each family is asked to pick just one Sunday. A list is available in the Gallery following Divine Liturgy. Also, help is still needed in the area of assistant teachers and volunteers for special events and projects for Church School and other youth ministries. Sign up in the Gallery after Liturgy. Thank you!

YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS

GOYA Kick-Off September 10

The GOYA teen ministry will hold its annual Fall Kick-Off at the home of Jim and Yvonne Balouris on Sunday, September 10, at 3:00pm. Parents are asked to also attend for a parents' meeting at 4:00pm. See the GOYA email listserv for info.

GOYA Meeting September 17

The GOYA teen ministry will hold a general meeting for all members following Church School on Sunday, September 17.

COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENTS

"Faith and Family" Ministry To Resume September

Holy Trinity Church's expanded "Faith and Family" ministry for 2017/2018 will resume starting in September and continue through May. Building on the fruits this ministry since 2014 and taking into account the constructive feedback

of the participants and session leaders, it is our hope that it will become an even more effective opportunity for growth in Christ for all. Have ideas to help make this valuable ministry even more fruitful? Want to learn about something new? See a great idea somewhere else you would like to try here? To submit ideas or feedback, please see Spiritual Life Ministry Chairperson Joyce Athanasiou (412-292-4205) or Father John. Please see the 2017/2018 guide on page 9.

Reminder: How to Submit Herald and Bulletin Notices

Have announcements the Holy Trinity community needs to hear? Putting on a special event? Official ministries and parish events of Holy Trinity Church may send information to be placed in our parish communications by sending requests to the following addresses: For inclusion in the *Herald*, please send announcements via email to

herald@HolyTrinityPgh.org

by the **15th of the month** for the following month. For the Sunday Bulletin, please send info via email to

bulletin@HolyTrinityPgh.org

by the **Wednesday** for the following Sunday. Organizations and ministries are responsible for writing and submitting any news or information they would like included by those deadlines. Questions? Call the Church Office. Thank you!

AARP Smart Driver Courses

Please join the Holy Trinity Senior Fellowship Ministry Group as they host two different "AARP Smart Driver" Courses. On Tuesday, September 19, the Smart Driver Refresher Course will be held for those who have previously taken the course within the last 3 years. Then on Tuesday September 26 and Thursday September 28, the full course will be offered. Refresh your driving skills and learn strategies to help you stay safe behind the wheel. Upon completion of the course, you may be eligible to receive an auto insurance discount. Consult your insurance agent for details. You can register for these programs by calling the church office at 412-366-8700 or by email to Office@HolyTrinityPgh.org or online at www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/events. The cost is \$15 for AARP members or \$20 for non-members. Be sure to register early, as these classes are open to the public and seats may fill up quickly. New BOGO announcement from AARP: Take the full two-day course (Sept 26 & 28) and Bring a Friend for Free! Both participants will need to register for the two-day course, but only one fee will be paid.

REGIONAL NEWS & EVENTS

Monastery Dinner September 9

On September 9, the fourth annual fund-raising banquet for the Nativity of the Theotokos Greek Orthodox Monastery in Saxonburg will be held at St. Nicholas Cathedral. The event is once again being held in memory of Gherontissa Taxiarchia, the founder of the Monastery. Vespers is open to all at 3:00 pm and tickets for the 4:00 pm Dinner Banquet are \$100. Call 724-352-3999 for more information or RSVP online by September 1 at www.2017dinnerbanquet.eventbrite.com

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

SEPTEMBER 2017 – "THE VOICE OF HOLY TRINITY CHURCH"

The "HolyDays" of September

Rejoice, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. Rejoice in the Lord always!

September 1: The Indiction

September 1st marks the beginning of the Indiction or the Ecclesiastical New Year. We pray that during this New Year of



Father John Androutsopoulos

our Church, with the Blessings of our Heavenly Father, we will all be spiritually regenerated and become faithful and fruitful servants and good stewards in the vineyard of our Lord Jesus Christ!

September 8: The Nativity of the Theotokos

On September 8, our Church honors the birth of the Theotokos, the Virgin Mary. This is one of the 12 Major Feasts of the Church. The Theotokos was the chosen vessel of God. She was destined to bear the Savior of the World. There are many beautiful hymns written to honor the Theotokos. At every Church service there is a hymn to honor Her.

The Troparion Of The Feast

Thy Nativity O Theotokos, has proclaimed joy to the whole universe; for from You did shine forth the Sun of justice, Christ our God, annulling the curse, and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting

September 14: The Elevation of the Holy Cross

On September 14, our Church celebrates the Feast of the Elevation of the Precious Cross of the Lord. This is also one of the twelve major feasts of the Church. This feast day, is equal to the Holy and Great Friday (It is also a strict fast day).

To the Christian the Cross is a sacred symbol of his faith in Jesus Christ. We Orthodox Christians honor the Cross of Christ during the Great Feast of the Elevation of the Cross. It is through the Cross of Christ—the formerly hated and ignominious instrument of a cruel death—that we are saved. He who was slain on the Cross for our iniquities brought to life us who are not worthy. He has made us worthy of God's great mercy for He is good and compassionate. We on the Feast Day of the Elevation of the Cross rejoice and exalt His Holy Name.

Our Holy Church emphasizes the greatness of the Cross

with these words: "The Cross is the guardian of the Universe; the Cross is the "beauty of the Church; the Cross is the might of kings; the Cross is the affirmation of the faithful; the Cross is the glory of angels and a plague to demons."

Another hymn from the Feast: "Thy Cross, our Master, we adore, and thy Holy Resurrection do we glorify."

Blessings Through Stewardship

Some think of their income whether large or small should be used to gratify their own desires. This is a selfish point of view.



The early Christians had little; yet they sold what they had and gave it to the Church. And they did it with grateful hearts because they knew—as some of us refuse to know—that our worldly possessions and our money is simply lent to us by our Creator and it is to be used not selfishly, but to promote His Kingdom on earth. We should accept this challenge of bringing our tithes and offerings into the storehouse. Then we too can be assured that God will carry out His promise to open the windows oh heaven and pour out His blessings upon us.

If we look up the word steward in the dictionary we will find that it means a person who takes care of things for someone else. Are we being good stewards of what God has entrusted to us? Do the ways we use our talents and possessions please Him? It is important that we do His will and try to please Him. The sacrificial gift is one most precious in God's sight. This type of steward will be the one of whom the Lord says. "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou

has been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of the Lord." Our God given talents or gifts must be used. If we never use them, they will not develop and may disappear altogether.

It is through faithful stewardship of those who are devoted to Christ, that our Churches came into being. It is through stewardship that they continue to grow. Each one of us must give of our money, our time, and our talents so that we Joyfully fulfill our responsibilities as Christians who are worthy in our stewardship.

Remember what the Holy Bible says: "It is more pleasant to give than to receive" and "God loves a cheerful giver."

*With His Love and Blessing,
Rev. Fr. John K. Androutsopoulos
Protopresbyter and Internal Missionary*



Assembly of Bishops photo from Assembly VII, Detroit 2016

The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America Response to Racist Violence in Charlottesville, VA

Friday, August 18, 2017

The Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of the United States of America stands with all people of good will in condemning the hateful violence and lamenting the loss of life that resulted from the shameful efforts to promote racial bigotry and white supremacist ideology in Charlottesville, Virginia.

The Orthodox Church emphatically declares that it does not promote, protect or sanction participation in such reprehensible acts of hatred, racism, and discrimination, and proclaims that such beliefs and behaviors have no place in any community based in respect for the law and faith in a loving God.

The essence of the Christian Gospel and the spirit of the Orthodox Tradition are entirely and self-evidently incompatible with ideologies that declare the superiority of any race over another. Our God shows no partiality or favoritism (Deuteronomy 10:17, Romans 2:11). Our Lord Jesus Christ broke down the dividing wall of hostility that had separated God from humans and humans from each other (Ephesians 2:14). In Christ Jesus, the Church proclaims, there can be neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, but all are one (Galatians 3:28). Furthermore, we call on one another to have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to expose them (Ephesians 5:11). And what is darkness if not hatred? The one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness (1 John 2:11)!

Furthermore, in 1872, Hierarchs from around the world assembled in Constantinople and denounced all forms of xenophobia and chauvinism (phyletism). They agreed that the promotion of racial or national supremacy and ethnic bias or dissension in the Church of Christ is to be censured as contrary to the sacred teachings of the Christian Gospel and

the holy canons of the Church. It is formally condemned as heresy, the strongest category of false teaching.

Finally, such actions as we have witnessed in recent days, by self-proclaimed white supremacists, neo-Nazis, and various racists and fascists, betray the core human values of love and solidarity. In this, we pray wholeheartedly for the families of those who lost their lives or suffered in these tragic events. In like manner, we cannot condone any form of revenge or retaliation by any group or individual.

Therefore, we fervently appeal to every person of good will, and especially the leaders of our great nation, to consider and adopt ways of reconciling differences in order to rise above any and all discrimination in our history, our present, and our future.

*The Most Rev. Geron Archbishop Demetrios, Chairman
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*

*The Most Rev. Metropolitan Joseph, First Vice Chairman
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America*

*The Rt. Rev. Bishop John, Second Vice Chairman
Russian Orthodox Church in the USA*

*The Rt. Rev. Bishop Gregory, Secretary
American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Diocese of the USA*

*The Most Rev. Archbishop Michael, Treasurer
Orthodox Church in America*

And the entire Assembly of Orthodox Bishops

Note: For an excellent homily on this current topic, visit our website, www.HolyTrinityPgh.org and click Multimedia-Podcast-Sermons and play the audio of Father Radu's message from August 20, 2017, titled "We Speak Out Against Racism and Anti-Semitism."



August 2017: Accomplished iconographer Florin Vlad of Romania has returned to complete work on the iconography of the Saint George Chapel at Holy Trinity Cemetery. He will remain on site until the project is completed in the next 6-8 weeks. Top to bottom: Florin begins decorative work on columns. His Eminence Metropolitan Savas examines Florin's progress. Volunteers assist in mounting canvases on the walls. The curved sanctuary back wall with the hierarchs and deacons and the Byzantine decorative curtain border.

Stewardship: From Generation From Generation

A main reason for contributing to the church is to provide support for whatever the church needs. It is everyone's responsibility – just like you do with your own home – to take care of its upkeep, to help with whatever it needs to run every day and to provide support that will keep it moving forward. Basically, if you don't have the church in your life then you have nothing.

The church is like a compass on a boat... it points you in the right direction. When you are on a boat in the middle of the ocean and you don't have a compass you will go round and round in circles and eventually be lost at sea. The only thing you would see is the dark sky above and the water that surrounds you. But, if you have a compass you can find your way; it's the same with the church. The church "IS" the compass and if you don't have the church in your life you will get lost.

We must set an example by participating each week in services and reaching out to new people when they come. Another important element of stewardship is giving to the Capital Campaign so that our church can be around for future generations.

Encouraging others to increase their level of stewardship to God and the church is very essential. Although we don't feel that we can tell anyone what to do, we hope that everyone can recognize they have a responsibility to the church.

We feel that it's everyone's duty to give back and support the church just like they would with their own house. If your house needs a new roof, you find a way to fix it and it's the same mindset to have with the church. When the church needs something, it is "everyone's responsibility" to support it and provide what it needs.

Every time we drive by this church we are very thankful for being here. As a young man and thinking back to my first Christmas in the old church on Sandusky Street, I wore my very first men's 2 piece suit; I could never have imagined that I would ever see a church like the one we have today.

We thank God every time we see this new church, where our children and grandchildren, and the other families of this church, can continue to live out the faith and traditions of past generations. We are happy that we put down the roots for future generations and hope that this community will continue to grow.

Anthony Balouris

(Thank you to Paula Valliant for her assistance in interviewing her father, Tony, and providing this article.)



Anthony and Helen Balouris
Life-long Holy Trinity Stewards



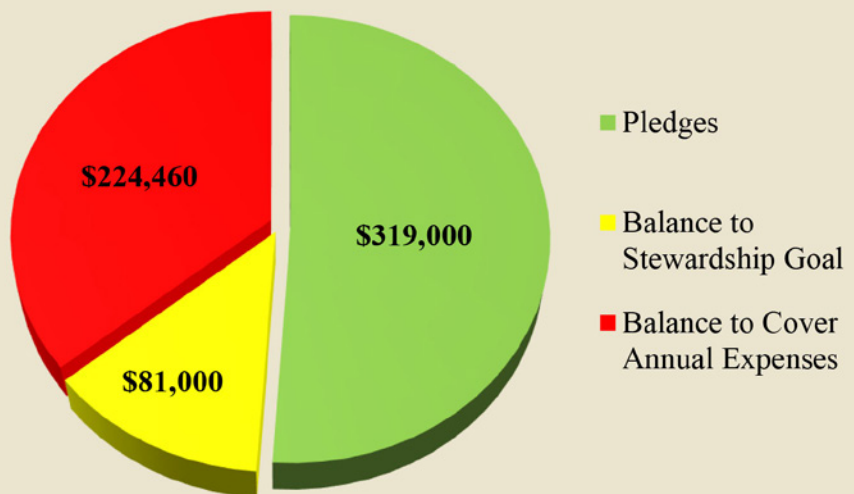
Anthony Balouris and other Holy Trinity parish family members at the original Sandusky Street North Side location.

What This Chart Shows

Our pledges so far are \$319,000. This is \$81,000 short of our 2017 stewardship goal. With your continued help, we can reach this goal. Still, we will be short of our ultimate goal of covering all of our annual operating church expenses by \$224,460. We are making progress each year to get closer to this. How can we make progress toward filling the gap?

In examining our pledges, one area we need to address is the large number of stewards contributing low amounts. All amounts, at any level, given prayerfully and joyfully are received and used with thanks, for the glory of God. Consider, however, that about 4 of 10 stewards are contributing \$1 or less per day; and 6 of 10 are contributing \$2 or less! These are not church-sustaining commitments and we are confident that the majority of these stewards are able and willing to get to the next level of giving. If you find that you are in these categories, please consider exceeding your pledge by 50% this year; and aim for further improvement next year as well.

2017 Stewardship Update



Holy Trinity To Be Part of New Young Adult Ministry Collaboration with Hellenic College Holy Cross

It is a joy to be involved with church ministry on many levels, and Holy Trinity Church has a growing garden of them! It is especially energizing, however, when those who are being served step up to be part of the planning, implementation and sustaining of those ministries. That is the case of our young adults. They don't wait to see who will do it for them; they ask, "How can we make this happen?"

Some time earlier this year, Hellenic College Holy Cross publicized information on a new ministry development effort

aimed at the needs of young adults. They invited parishes from around the country and from multiple jurisdictions to be involved. The caveat: to apply, a parish had to have an energetic and enthusiastic young adult team heading up the effort.

The announcement you see below is the fruit of the work of our Holy Trinity young adults, led by Andrew Abboud and Yianni Gagianias. Also involved are Milt Constantine, Maria Georgiadis, Alexandra Valliant, with more to come. May God bless their efforts!
- Father John

The Telos Project, a five-year initiative at Hellenic College Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology (HCHC) exploring the spiritual and religious lives of young adults ages 23-29, is pleased to announce the fourteen pilot parishes that will assist in field research.

Selected from a large and varied pool of applicants, these Orthodox parishes reflect the jurisdictional and geographic diversity of Orthodoxy in America. The parishes will serve as field research sites for the Telos Project over the next four years, designing and piloting new forms of ministry for (and with) young adults.

The Telos Project received multiple applications for every spot available. Narrowing this abundant pool to only fourteen parishes was extremely difficult. (To get a sense of our review process and criteria, visit our website.) Despite regret at not being able to include every parish in this research project, there was true joy in reading the applications: it is clear that reaching young adults is a top priority for many Orthodox parishes and leaders across the country. The young adult voices themselves give a strong sense of hope.

"All of the applicants give us incredible optimism for the future of the Orthodox Church," said Fr. Christopher Metropoulos, HCHC President. "We wish we could have selected every parish that applied. These selected pilot parishes will lead us in discovering many new ways of connecting Orthodox young adults to Christ's Church. In so doing, they will be sharing

their learning with all of us who care deeply about reaching our young people. And through this, they will in turn help Hellenic College Holy Cross prepare a new generation of leaders to shepherd the Church well into the 21st century."

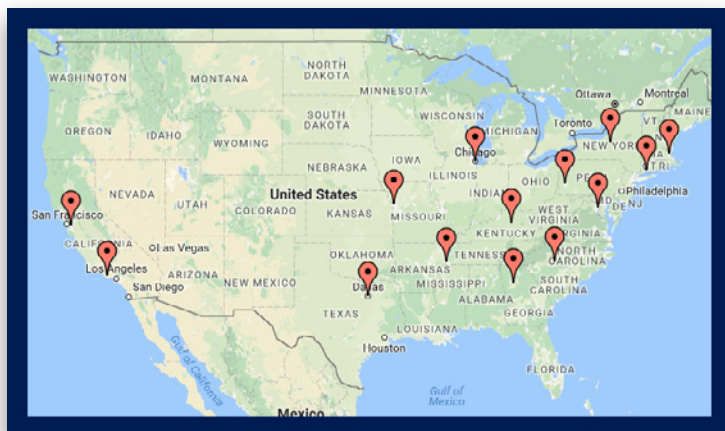
For the first year of the project, the pilot parishes will focus on building and deepening relationships with the young adults in their communities. In May 2018, teams from each parish will travel to a Telos Project conference in Boston, where they will be led through ministry design activities and begin brainstorming unique ways of reaching young adults.

The goal of this research project is to be 'open source' learning for the Church. Throughout the project, research findings about young adulthood and ministry—both pilot parish failures and successes—will be shared with the Orthodox community through an online newsletter, social media, and other multimedia outlets.

The fourteen parishes are:

- Annunciation Orthodox Church (GOA, Kansas City, MO)
- St. Athanasius Orthodox Church (OCA, Nicholasville, KY)
- St. Barbara Orthodox Church (GOA, Orange, CT)
- St. Demetrios Orthodox Church (GOA, Camarillo, CA)
- St. George Greek Orthodox Church (GOA, Chicago, IL)
- Holy Trinity Orthodox Church (GOA, Dallas, TX)
- Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church (GOA, Pittsburgh, PA)
- St. John Orthodox Church (Antiochian, Memphis, TN)
- St. John the Wonderworker Church (OCA, Atlanta, GA)
- St. Mary Orthodox Church (OCA, Falls Church, VA)
- St. Mary Orthodox Church (Antiochian, Cambridge, MA)
- St. Nektarios Orthodox Church (GOA, Charlotte, NC)
- Resurrection Orthodox Church (GOA, Castro Valley, CA)
- St. Sophia Orthodox Church (GOA, Syracuse, MO)

To learn along with Telos project leaders and pilot parishes, visit the Telos Project website at www.teloscommunity.org or email telos@hchc.edu.



☑ **WORSHIP** ☑ **LEARN** ☑ **GROW** ☑ **PRAY** ☑ **SERVE**

FAITH AND Family WEEKDAYS

AT HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

“Every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” (Acts 5.42)

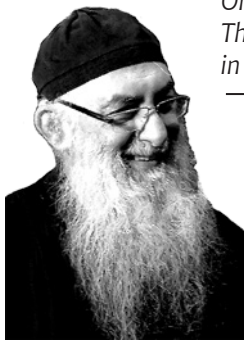
NEW FORMAT! NEW SCHEDULE!

Four years ago, Holy Trinity Church introduced an innovative series of educational programs under the title of “Faith and Family Wednesdays.” Since then, dozens of presentations, hands-on-learning sessions and worship services provided a way for Christians to grow and progress in the knowledge and understanding of their faith. In active pursuit of growing ministries that are relevant and accessible to our faithful parishioners, this ministry has now adapted and grown into “Faith and Family WEEKDAYS!” Check it out!

“FAITH AND FAMILY WEEKDAYS” MINISTRIES GUIDE: 2017-2018

DAYS	MINISTRY	SCHEDULE	ABOUT
DAILY	“Prayer Partners” Prayer Support Ministry	Every Day: In your personal prayers	EVERYONE can participate in this vital ministry. On the first Sunday of Jan., Apr., July and Oct., prayer cards are distributed after Liturgy to ask parishioners to exchange names and become Prayer Partners. Pray and be prayed for daily!
MONDAYS 7:00pm	“Journey to Fullness” Faith Growth Ministry	Mondays: Fall and Spring Series Oct. 2, 9, 16, 23; Nov. 6, 13, 20, 27; Apr. 23, 30; May 7, 14, 21; Jun. 4, 11	This excellent video teaching series is for everyone who wants to learn more about the “fullness of the faith” found in Orthodox Christianity, whether as inquirers, catechumens or life-long members. Each segment offers an interactive question and answer period. Same series repeated in fall and spring.
TUESDAYS 9:00am	“Hearts of Faith” Women’s Ministry	4th Tuesday Oct.-May Oct. 24, Nov. 28, Dec. 19, Jan. 23, Feb. 27, Mar. 27, Apr. 24, May 22	The Saint Lydia Women’s Fellowship meets for a monthly women’s morning session of conversation with God and each other. The group meets at church at 9:00 am for a 30 minute morning prayer, then gathers in the Fireside Room for an hour of sharing and discussion about the matters a woman’s heart.
TUESDAYS 7:00pm	“Journey of Marriage” Marriage Prep Ministry	2nd Tuesday Sep.-June Sep. 12, Oct. 10, Nov. 14, Dec. 12, Jan. 9, Feb. 13, Mar. 13, May 10, Jun. 8	Marriage preparation for couples using the excellent and interactive “Journey of Marriage” materials developed by Dr. Philip Mamalakis and Fr. Charles Johannides. From “Hello!” to honeymoon, this series educates and equips couples for fruitful Orthodox Christian marriage. It’s lots of fun, too!
WEDNESDAYS 6:30pm Worship 7:00pm Study	“Explore the Word” Bible Study Ministry	Wednesdays Oct.-May Oct. 4, 11, 18, 25; Nov. 8, 15; Dec. 6, 13, 20, Jan. 10, 17, 24, 31; Apr. 18, 25; May 2, 9, 16, 23, 30	Prayerfully read the Bible! In Deuteronomy 11, it says, “Lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul.” Each Wednesday, come and open your heart in prayer in the Church and then meet in the Conference Room for the study of the New Testament led by Father Radu Bordeianu.
THURSDAYS 7:00am	“Prayer and Panera” Men’s Ministry	3rd Thursday Sep.-June Sep. 21, Oct. 19, Nov. 16, Dec. 21, Jan. 18, Feb. 15, Mar. 15, Apr. 26, May 17, Jun. 21	The Saint Nikodemos Men’s Fellowship hosts this morning session of prayers and Christian fellowship (with coffee and bagels, too!). The group meets at church promptly at 7:00 a.m. for a 15-20 minute morning prayer and scripture, then moves up the hill to Panera for 30-45 minutes of coffee, breakfast and Christian men’s conversation.
THURSDAYS 7:00pm	“Orthodox Movie Night” Entertainment/Fellowship	2nd Thursday Oct.-June Oct. 12, Nov. 9, Dec. 14, Jan. 11, Feb. 8, Mar. 8, Apr. 12, May 10, Jun. 14	A monthly offering of inspirational movies with snacks and good company in the Fireside Room. Free to all, it’s a relaxing and uplifting alternative to the “same old stuff” on cable TV. Why sit around alone and watch that when you can enjoy a night of Holy Trinity fellowship and entertainment?

Watch for weekly updates, special events, guest speakers and youth activities in the Bulletin. Find more info at www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/ffw



**Archimandrite
Zacharias
of Essex**

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.

Father, is grace limited to only a few?

All men are equal in God’s sight, for the grace of our calling is bestowed equally upon all. God summoned mankind to life through His creative Word and gave each man the privilege of potential resemblance to God. This high honour is equal for all. Hence, God addresses the same commandments and promises to all. The whole of man’s existence is a gift of God’s goodness; so

too, is the first grace of His visitation freely given of His good pleasure. This divine gift is great—but man must continually do justice to it in his life by a hard and sustained struggle, thus offering as a “pleasing sacrifice” the perfect submission of his will to the inscrutable providence and wisdom of God.

Does grace stay with us always?

Initially it is given to man to rejoice in the sweetness of God’s presence, to have an impression of paradise, to partake of incorruptibility and heavenly consolation, to be “a participant in His Being, and this there are no earthly words to describe.” But afterwards the strength of this life and the love it inspires depart. There remains only the memory, and the mind’s awareness testifying to desolation, emptiness, death, and the loss of grace. This period of Christian life is extremely significant, and to go through it legitimately, according to God, spiritually enriches man’s existence.

The reason for this phenomenon may not always be understood at first. So some explanation about the three stages of spiritual life, about their meaning and their final aim, is necessary.

What are the stages of spiritual life?

The state of paschal joy and happiness in the first period of spiritual life is not a stable or permanent condition. It is simply a “capital sum” that the Creator entrusts to His reason-endowed creature out of goodness and love for mankind. Just as we have existence on loan to us by God, so we are given this capital or “talent,” which we are to multiply and thus become “rich towards God.”

After a certain period of time—whose length depends solely on God’s initiative—this wealth of preliminary grace is taken away from man [during the second state]. The main explanation for the Christian’s loss of the first and great grace, freely given to him, lies in the fact that his nature is not yet conformed to the spiritual vision revealed to him. The withdrawal of grace and the period of “fiery trials” [1 Pet. 4:12] are arranged by God so that man’s nature can be reworked, and thus be conformed to the human will such as it is intended to be. Many people have received a great measure of grace at the beginning of their lives, even reaching the grace of the perfect, but they have all gone through the trial of the second spiritual period, when the feeling of grace is lost or diminished.

[Finally,] by his suffering man fulfils all the righteousness of God’s chastening and determines himself freely and perfectly on the eternal plane, the Heavenly Father receives him and honours him by bequeathing him “all that He has.” Man becomes unshakable in his faith, a stable vessel of “the fire of the Father’s love.” This stage is exceptionally creative. It inspires fervent prayer, accompanied by extreme pain in all man’s being. Such prayer restores in man the primordial inbreathing of God when He made man in His image. Man becomes a collaborator with God in the process of re-creation that renders him like the only-begotten Son of the Father. In this cooperation man discovers his spiritual freedom from every alien power, every phenomenon in the created world.

Is there a purpose in experiencing the loss of grace?

The man who is undergoing abandonment by God is given the privilege of demonstrating his wisdom and fidelity to God who first called him into His eternal kingdom, and of working out his own destiny in personal communion with his Maker in a relationship of love. The extreme suffering, the unbearable pain and the agonized trials of this stage open man’s heart and empty him of all that constitutes his “self,” to make room for the fullness of divine love and life, which ever increases in accordance with God’s call, with His will and His good pleasure.

The stage when grace is taken away is, more than any other, a period of crucifixion for the disciple emulating His teacher Christ. The cross that the believer “takes up” as he follows Christ and is taught by the Holy Spirit is both visible and invisible.

The visible cross consists of the whole series of various sufferings... for example: the inequality and injustice which try man in the social sphere and lay waste all his greatest natural talents; his hereditary impairments and physical ailments; the tyranny of psychological and bodily weaknesses.

The invisible cross is the inner pain created by placing himself under the light of Gospel teaching, and the bitter awareness of his spiritual poverty—his dreadful sense of the truth of the psalmist’s words: “salvation is far from sinners” [Ps. 118/119:155].

For man to love God when grace works palpably in him is congenial and natural. But if someone is faithful and committed to the same love whilst he is enduring the crucifixion of Godforsakenness, it means that his love is approaching the fullness of perfection and becoming stronger than the death he is experiencing through *kenosis* [emptying] and the loss of grace. Fr Sophrony writes: “The more total our self-emptying, the more absolute is our spirit’s ingress into the bright realm of Eternal Divinity.”

*Excerpted from “Christ, Our Way and Our Life”
by Archimandrite Zacharias (Zacharou) of the
Saint John the Baptist Monastery in Essex, England
(Note: Father John had the great blessing of visiting Father
Zacharias in person at the Monastery in Essex in May)*



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Excerpted from
Longing for God: Orthodox Reflections on Bible, Ethics and Liturgy
by Father John Breck

Scripture of the Month: "Ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you.." (Deut 32.7)