



# THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

NOVEMBER 2019

VOLUME 27 • ISSUE 9

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

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## QUICK NEWS



The Holy Trinity GOYA officers are installed in Youth Sunday, September 22. 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 5 or browse through thousands more pictures online at [photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org](http://photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org).

## Saint John the Merciful - Feast Day: November 12



In your patience you have won your reward, O righteous Father. Thou persevered unceasingly in prayer; you loved the poor and provided for them in all things. Wherefore, intercede with Christ our God, O blessed John the Merciful that our souls may be saved.

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 ([pittsburgh.goarch.org](http://pittsburgh.goarch.org)) and Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America ([www.goarch.org](http://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

### 2019 Parish Council

George Danis, President

Alvin Backeris Dean A. Balouris

George Dickos Tom Germanos

Karen Georgiadis Richard Paese

Michael Passodelis Stephen Stearns

Ted Stewart Alex Trilivas

Gerri Valliant Jeanne Willow

### Ministries

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

**"FAITH. FAMILY. COMMUNITY."**



## You are the light of the world."

Matthew 5.14

My, beloved spiritual family,

How amazing! In preparing for last Sunday's homily on the feast of Saint Gerasimos, I was reflecting back on a time in the life of the Church and my own life as a child when saints seemed to be just from the past. The idea of "new" saints just didn't enter my mind. That's why the visit to the island of Aegina and the tomb of Saint Nektarios during my childhood time at the Ionian Village summer camp in Greece was such a milestone moment in my life. Here was a saint who lived recently enough to actually have a photograph taken of him! It somehow made saints so much more real in our own lifetime. In the mind of a 12-year-old, that meant saints were still possible today.

How amazing a confirmation of that message it is, then, that the very next day we all received the press release from the Archdiocese (see back page of this issue) that the Ecumenical Patriarchate is preparing to recognize not just one, but four new saints! The news was announced by His All-Holiness during a visit to Mount Athos while preaching in the Church of Protaton. All four were elders and spiritual luminaries from the Holy Mountain: Elders Ieronymos of Simonopetra, Daniel of Katounakia, Joseph the Hesychast and Ephraim of Katounakia.



But besides living in the time of the announcement of those saints, we at Holy Trinity Church are blessed by them in some interesting and timely ways. When that announcement was made, a group of pilgrims from Holy Trinity Church was already scheduled to visit the spiritual homes of two of them during the week of November 4-11: the Monastery of Simonopetra (our first stop) and the Brotherhood of the Danilaioi, which was founded by the soon-to-be canonized Daniel. And you may remember that it is that very same monastery on Mount Athos that was the source of the original icons from the old Holy Trinity Church on North Avenue. What blessings! And, according to His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros, America has been blessed by the presence of the relics of Elder Joseph at Saint Anthony's Monastery.

How interesting it is, then, that during the revelation of all those blessings, only a few days before all this news, on October 17th, the Pew Research Foundation released a new study titled, "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at Rapid Pace." It is filled with many gloomy statistics and charts, like the one included in last month's column on this page, which demonstrate: 1) rates of religious affiliation, rates of religious attendance are declining; 2) there are now fewer Christians as a share of the US population; and 3) since 2009, the number of religiously unaffiliated adults in the U.S. has grown by almost 30 million.

Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house." (Matthew 5.14-15). In the midst of this spiritual darkness and abandon, the torchbearers of the Holy Spirit, such as the newly-revealed holy fathers, continue to bear witness that the life and light in Christ is still possible for those who truly seek Him. As Orthodox Christians our lives are guided by sanctification, not statistics. We are blessed to be in an age when access to the lives, writings, preaching and miracles of holy men and women is more readily-available than ever. One of the ways we constantly do that here at Holy Trinity Church is through our "Ask the Elders" column, a regular feature of the *Herald*. It is my continuing hope that we are all inspired by them in ways that keep that light of Christ brightly in each of us, thus bringing blessings to all those around us.

With prayers for a blessed and truly thankful Thanksgiving holiday for you and your loved ones,

Paternally yours in Jesus Christ,

## WORSHIP LIFE

### Weekday Services ..... November

Please take note of the following weekday Liturgies for the feast days this month. Orthros is at 8:30 a.m., followed by Divine Liturgy at 9:30. Guide to locations for services: Holy Trinity Church = **HT**; St. George Chapel = **SG**.

**Nov. 1:** Ss. Cosmas & Damian the Wonderworkers (SG)

**Nov. 13:** St. John Chrysostom (SG)

**Nov. 16:** St. Matthew the Evangelist (SG)

**Nov. 21:** Entrance of the Theotokos (SG)

**Nov. 25:** St. Katherine the Great Martyr (SG)

**Nov. 30:** St. Andrew the Apostle (SG)

## YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS

### GOYA FOCUS Bag Lunch Outreach ..... November 8/9

GOYA will be making and distributing bag lunches for the needy of the FOCUS ministry. See the GOYA email for details.

### GOYA Meeting ..... November 17

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

### Metropolis GOYA Fall Retreat ..... Nov. 22-24

The 2019 Metropolis GOYA Fall Retreat will be held at Camp Nazareth from Friday, Nov. 22 through Sunday, Nov. 24. GOYAns will receive information on the Holy Trinity reduced fee code through the GOYA email system.

### HOPE and JOY Thanksgiving Celebration ..... Nov. 22

Join us for a pasta dinner and bring a Lenten side or dessert to share. We will eat a meal together and watch "A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving" on the big screen in the Grand Room (bring a pillow or blanket if you like!). Popcorn and movie snacks provided. RSVP to Irini Zeliznik at [ihazaton@yahoo.com](mailto:ihazaton@yahoo.com) or Nicole Steiner at [littlefieds@yahoo.com](mailto:littlefieds@yahoo.com) to indicate what you are bringing to share and how many are attending.

## PHILOPTOCHOS NEWS

### Philoptochos Sunday ..... November 10

Holy Trinity Philoptochos will host "Philoptochos Sunday" here at Holy Trinity Church on November 10. In honor of that event, the Philoptochos will host a memorial for departed members, coffee hour, and a special collection for the benefit of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. Thank you for your support!

### Philoptochos Meeting ..... November 24

The Philoptochos will hold a meeting on Sunday, Nov. 24, in the Fireside Room following Divine Liturgy (Note: this is a rescheduled date). All members are invited to attend.

### Philoptochos Holiday Bake Sale

The Ladies Philoptochos will be offering frozen 9x13 pans of Spanakopita and Tiropita for \$35/pan that are ready to bake for the holidays! We will also have ready to serve pans of Baklava for \$40/pan (baklava is not individually cupped).

Impress your friends and family this Thanksgiving with home-made baked goods and help the Ladies Philoptochos continue their philanthropic work! Visit our table in the Gallery after Liturgy on Sun, Nov. 24 to get started on your holiday baking, and pick up an order form for your Christmas baked goods too!

## COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS

### "Drop-N-Shop" Child Care Night ..... November 15

GOYA is hosting a "Drop-N-Shop" night where they will watch your children so you can shop for Christmas or just enjoy a night out together. See the enclosed flyer.

### Military Appreciation Day ..... November 17

Please see the enclosed flyer about this special event. Military Appreciation Day will honor of parishioners, family, and community members who have served and are still serving our country in the military. God bless and protect them!

### New Women's Book Club Ministry ..... Tuesdays

The new "Women's Books Club" ministry takes a "for women, by women" approach to providing time for prayer, fellowship and discussion that is geared toward the lives and hearts of women. The group is studying "Redeeming Love" by Francine Rivers. All women are welcome. It meets on the first and third Tuesdays of the month, 9:30am-11:00am at church. Remaining Fall dates are Nov. 5 & 19 and Dec. 3 & 17.

### Bereavement Ministry Meeting ..... November 4

Our Bereavement Support Ministry Team provides spiritual care to our parishioners and their extended family & friends in time of grief and loss. If you would like to learn and share conversation, please attend the next session on Monday, Nov. 4, in the Conference Room. Fellowship begins at 6:30 p.m., then facilitated group learning and sharing is from 7:00-8:30 p.m. Feel free to bring family or friends. Questions? Contact Amy Armanious at [visitation@holytrinitypgh.org](mailto:visitation@holytrinitypgh.org).

### Holy Trinity Holy Land Pilgrimage ..... Nov. 4-13, 2020

Father John will be leading a Holy Land Pilgrimage from November 4-13, 2020 as part of our Holy Trinity Pilgrimage Ministry. Information on the itinerary, pricing and a reservation form are forthcoming, but save the dates if you are interested. Space is limited and not confirmed until a deposit is received.

### Stewardship Reminder

Hard to believe, but our 2019 stewardship campaign is nearing its end! Please check the status of your 'Treasures' contributions, in comparison to your pledge. Our church and its ministries depend on us to fulfil--and hopefully exceed--our pledged amounts; and now is the time to catch up! In late August you received a stewardship statement showing all activity to date. Review it carefully and please make any catch-up contributions before the year ends so that we can apply them against our budgeted expenses. If you have still not submitted your 2019 pledge card, it may seem late, but trust us, it is not! Please submit it ASAP! The 2020 stewardship cards will be distributed soon. Thank you!

**For the latest updates and schedule of parish events, visit [www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/calendar](http://www.HolyTrinityPgh.org/calendar)**

**ENGAGE YOUR SPIRIT BETWEEN SUNDAYS! SEE YOU THIS WEEK!**

# FAITH AND Family WEEKDAYS

AT HOLY TRINITY CHURCH

Sometimes once a week is just not enough to satisfy your yearning for what really matters in life, answers on how to face daily challenges and simply a deeper experience of your faith. “Faith and Family Weekdays” is your opportunity to live your life in the Church between Sundays! From worship to fellowship to learning to sharing to serving, these faith and growth experiences provide rewarding points of encounter with your Church and Church family. Check it out this week and every week! There is something for you!

“Every day in the temple and at home they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.” (Acts 5:42)

## UPDATED “FAITH AND FAMILY WEEKDAYS” MINISTRIES GUIDE: FALL 2019

DAYS	MINISTRY	SCHEDULE	ABOUT
DAILY	“Prayer Partners” Prayer Support Ministry	<b>Every Day:</b> 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	“Discover Orthodoxy” Introduction and Refresher Series on the Orthodox Faith	<b>Mondays:</b> Fall Series Oct. 14, 21. Nov. 18, 25, Dec. 2 (Will repeat in the Spring)	An all-new teaching series for anyone who wants to learn more about the “fullness of the faith” found in Orthodox Christianity, whether as inquirers, catechumens or life-long members. Interested in becoming an Orthodox Christian? This is for you. Just want to refresh your knowledge of the Faith? This is for you, too! Informative, interesting and interactive.
SECOND TUESDAY 7:00pm	“Journey of Marriage” Marriage Prep Ministry	<b>2nd Tuesday</b> Sep.-May Oct. 1, Nov. 12, Dec. 10, Jan. 14, Feb. 11, Mar. 10, May 12	Marriage preparation for couples using the excellent and interactive “Journey of Marriage” materials developed by Dr. Philip Mamalakis. From “Hello!” to honeymoon, this series educates and equips couples for fruitful Orthodox Christian married life. It’s fun, interactive and a great way to prepare.
FIRST & THIRD TUESDAY 9:30am	“Women’s Book Club” Reading and Discussion	<b>1st &amp; 3rd Tuesday</b> Oct.-May Oct. 1, 15, Nov. 5, 19, Dec. 3, 17	This new “Women’s Books Club” ministry takes a “for women, by women” approach to providing time for prayer, fellowship and discussion that is geared toward the lives and hearts of women. The group will be studying “Redeeming Love” by Francine Rivers. All women are welcome.
WEDNESDAYS 6:30pm Worship 7:00pm Study	“Explore the Word” Worship and Bible Study Ministry	<b>Wednesdays</b> Oct.-May Sep. 18, 25; Oct. 2, 9, 16, 23; Nov. 6, 13, 20; Dec. 4, 11	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 Gospel of St. Matthew led by Father Radu Bordeianu.
THIRD THURSDAY 7:00am	“Prayer and Panera” Men’s Ministry	<b>3rd Thursday</b> Sep.-Apr. Sep. 19, Oct. 17, Nov. 21, Dec. 19, Jan. 16, Feb. 20, Mar. 19, Apr. 30	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.
THIRD THURSDAY 6:30pm St. George Chapel	“Monthly Paraclesis Service” Worship	<b>3rd Thursday</b> Oct.-May Oct. 17, Nov. 21, Dec. 19, Jan. 16, Feb. 20, Apr. 30; May 21	The Paraclesis, also known as the Service of Supplication, is offered monthly at St. George Chapel. It contains hymns and prayers asking the Lord for guidance, personal strength, and healing. The most popular form invokes the prayers of the Holy Theotokos. We will alternate that service with two others, one for St. Nektarios and the other for St. Paisios.
THURSDAY 7:00pm	“Orthodox Movie Night” Special Feature Edition Entertainment/Fellowship	Watch for announcements for dates and titles in the Fall and the Spring	This ministry is transitioning from a monthly show to a “Special Feature” format, with limited screenings in the fall and the spring. Watch for dates and titles. As before, it’s free to all, a relaxing and uplifting alternative to the “same old stuff” and a great night of Holy Trinity fellowship.

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



**September 22:** Holy Trinity Church celebrated Youth Sunday with our young people stepping to a number of parish responsibilities for the day, including offering the youth sermons after the Gospel. Oliver Paese (left) offered the HOPE sermon on "Why I Love My Church." JOY member Nicholas Kaparakos (center) spoke on "How I Honor God in My Life." Finally Katerina Balouris (right) spoke about "What Being An Orthodox Christian Means to Me." Bravo!



**September 22:** GOYA installed its officers for the 2019/2020 year on Youth Sunday following Divine Liturgy. Pictured along with Father John and Father Radu and serving this term are (L-R): Katerina Balouris, President; Ekaterini Balouris, Outreach Co-Coordinator; Ana Bordeianu, Outreach Co-Coordinator, Luci Morris, Recording Secretary; Christian Georgiadis, Vice-President. Not pictured: Petros Balouris, Treasurer; Chloe Germanos, Corresponding Secretary.

**October 6:** (Below left) Marc McMullen was received into the Holy Orthodox Church through Holy Chrismation. His sponsor was Vasili Rizos. Welcome, and AXIOS!

**October 20:** (Below left) Frank Blakemore was received into the Holy Orthodox Church through Holy Chrismation. His sponsor was Vasilios Sofilas. Welcome, and AXIOS!





When I was only twelve years old, I had the blessing of attending the Ionian Village Summer Camp in Greece. I believe almost all of you know that is a Greek Orthodox religious travel camp run by our Archdiocese. It is a journey of faith and culture that truly changes lives. Campers travel across Greece, walk in the footsteps of the Apostles and visit significant sites of Greek history and culture.

There were many experiences on that trip I remember like they were yesterday. Some of them were so powerful I have no doubt in hindsight that they played a role in me being here with you today, serving as an ordained Orthodox priest. As an introduction to today's message about how wondrous God is in His saints, please allow me to share two of those experiences.

First, growing up in the church all my life, we heard about stories of saints, seeing their icons and chanting their hymns. But to actually see a saint? Never crossed my mind. I never thought of the idea because everyone knows saints are long ago and far away. I thought it was really cool, then, that when we went to the Church of Saint Nektarios on Aegina, they gave us reprints of something I had even never imagined: a photograph of a saint, Saint Nektarios!

Then, that was actually surpassed by another type of encounter with two saints: Saint Dionysios of Zakynthos and Saint Gerasimos of Cephalonia. After sailing from a port near the camp to those islands, I found myself face to face with the relics of two actual saints, each of which God had preserved incorrupt – meaning their bodies had not dissolved into dust like most people. I knew that because I saw them with my own eyes, as they were each displayed in their churches in reliquary caskets with glass fronts, laying in repose in their

vestments. Amazing!

To this day I'm not sure I can recapture that same innocent awe and wonder, having now travelled to many countries and having been able to reverence the relics of many wondrous saints. But later as a chaplain at Ionian Village, I was witness to another young man experiencing the same thing when we visited the Monastery of the Great Cave in 2009. We found this young camper standing in the middle of a chapel in the monastery, tears streaming down his cheeks. When we asked what was wrong, he pointed to one of the many reliquaries in that chapel and said, "I saw my saint! That's my patron saint's relics!"

So let's bring that experience home. Please come with me to join the pilgrims at Cephalonia who are this very day gathering at the church of one of God's wondrous saints – Saint Gerasimos — and gather close to him, as if we were bowing before his very relics like they are, and hear about his life and miracles as the Orthodox Church celebrates his feast day this day.

Saint Gerasimos was born in 1509, in the village of Trikala in the Peloponnese. From a young age, he was given to learning sacred letters, which became for him a second nature (Parents: note that is what we ask you to provide your own children by keeping them close to the Church!). As a young adult he became a monk on the island of Zakynthos, interestingly, only about 20 years before Saint Dionysios, patron saint of that island, was born.

From there he traveled throughout the whole of Greece, Constantinople and Asia Minor, after which arrived at the Holy Mountain of Athos. After some time, he received the blessing from his elder and visited Jerusalem, Mount Sinai,





Antioch, Damascus, Alexandria and Egypt. He returned to Jerusalem at the end, where he became a lamp-lighter at the Holy Sepulcher of the Lord, the Tomb of Christ. Patriarch Germanos ordained him first Sub-deacon, then Deacon, and then Presbyter. After serving there for a dozen years, he traveled to Mount Sinai, Alexandria, Antioch and Damascus, and then went on to Crete, arriving finally back on the island of Zakynthos.

After five years he was inspired to go the island of Cephalonia, where he lived in a cave. He restored a church at Omala, and he founded a women's monastery where he lived in constant toil and vigil for thirty years. Having reached deep old age the saint foresaw the day of his death and gathered his nuns around him to pass on his final instructions and teachings. Then he blessed them and surrendered his soul into the hands of God on August 15, 1579. We honor his memory on October 20, the date when the relics of the Saint were translated. His holy body remains whole and incorrupt, always preserving the signs of holiness, namely a sallow color and inexpressible fragrance and astonishing miracles, which he works for those who approach him with faith.

There are many, many stories of miracles done by God to those who have venerated this venerable saint's relics or call on him for prayers. Here are just two of them:

A woman was visiting the monastery of the saint years after his repose, and she fell down the well while it was night time. The Saint appeared and yelled out with his accustomed voice, and grabbed hold of the woman not allowing her to be hurt or sink into the water. When the nuns heard the voice of the Saint, they arose from their beds and went from one place to another, hoping to hear for a second time the sweet voice of their teacher. They also looked for the woman, but could not find her, and finally bent over to look into the well. And, oh the miracle! - they saw her above the water, as if she was being held by someone invisible. Taking her out of the well, they learned from her that the Saint appeared in the well, grabbed hold of her, and he did not allow her to sink into the water. Having seen and heard this astonishing miracle, they glorified God and thanked the Saint.

The powerful witness of the incorrupt relics of Saint Gerasimos also had a particular effect on a young Australian nun, Anna, who now lives at St. Stephen's Monastery on Meteora. She related the following: "I came to Greece in 1988, hoping to get work as an English teacher. I wasn't of Greek parentage, nor did I have any particular interest in classical culture or the arts, but came because Greece sounded interesting. I had not been raised with any religion nor was I looking for one, but

soon after I arrived I met some people who were planning to go to Cephalonia, to St. Gerasimos, and invited me along. It seemed a good way to begin seeing the country, and I agreed. When I entered the church and stood before the saint's coffin, I was stunned by what I saw - the incorrupt relics were so obviously a miracle that I knew in myself that there must be a God, and that Orthodoxy was how you worshipped that God. I was baptized and a year later I came to the monastery."

Today and each October 20th, a major celebration is held on Cephalonia for this saint's feast. A festal Liturgy and veneration of the sacred relics take place, attended by clergy, nuns, monks, officials and thousands of Christians who come to pay their respect to Saint Gerasimos during the two-day feast, from Vespers and a vigil on the 19th to Liturgy on the 20th. A highlight of the feast is a procession with the saint's incorrupt relics standing upright, accompanied by bands, an army honor corp and boy scouts. It starts in the church and ends up at a large tree, which was planted by the saint, where prayers and hymns are chanted and a bishop offers a feast day homily.

I wanted to share all this with you today because even though some of us have been to Greece, Romania, Russia, Serbia or other traditionally Orthodox countries and have seen such things, many have not and this is a foreign concept to Americans, with saints, miracles and faith front and center in public life. This is quite far from the experience of most Christians in America today. Yet for hundreds of years before most of the denominations and independent

churches in this country were even founded, God has continued to do wonders through the lives, stories and relics of wondrous saints like Gerasimos of Cephalonia.

Will there someday be relics of saints in America? I believe there already are.

Will God allow us to rejoice in our own feasts of incorrupt saints on these shores as He has in many countries throughout the world? If He wills it beneficial to our salvation for the glory of His Holy Name, He certainly will. Perhaps one of those saints is in our midst right here and now, yet to be revealed.

For now, though, there are countless already-revealed saints and many miracles to share. Today has been a day we can point to and give thanks for Saint Gerasimos, the "protector and champion of Orthodoxy," as his hymn calls him. May his prayers be with us, may we all have the blessing of venerating his holy relics and those of other saints, in who God is indeed wondrous! Amen. ❖

*Homily by Father John Touloumes  
October 20, 2019*







July 14, 2011: Holy Trinity GOYAns and camp staffers gather outside the Chapel at Camp Nazareth in Mercer, PA

### **"Youth Ministries: Keystone of the Present and the Future"**

#### **Holy Trinity Church's Active Focus on Youth Ministries at the Local, Metropolis and Archdiocesan Levels**

*A Holy Trinity Herald Feature Article by Anita Sinicropo-Maier, MSW*

**O**ur children are our future." We may have heard this saying a countless times, but in our Metropolis and our parish, our children are very much the present focus of significant and powerful ministries. At Holy Trinity Church, children are treasured as precious gifts of God that must be cherished and nurtured for who they are now, while also looking to educate them as future leaders and families that will comprise and guide the Church of tomorrow. In a culture where God is being taken out of our schools and public places at an increasing rate we, the faithful, must persevere to keep His Word alive and our Orthodox Christian beliefs and guidance in the forefront of our children's lives. It is a sacred trust we take seriously.

#### **Youth Ministries for Every Age**

The path begins in our children's early years. Through the experienced guidance of administrators and volunteers who lead and facilitate youth ministries at the Archdiocese, Metropolis and parish levels, we have a well-trodden path of love and service to follow when it comes to nurturing our youth. Working in conjunction with our Church School ministry, which begins during the preschool years, the ministries of HOPE and JOY, GOYA, Summer Camp and Retreats are thriving

in our parish. Creating a continuation of service from kindergarten through high school provides our youth with an ongoing education and opportunity to lay a foundation of faith which can give them a means to guide and strengthen them through life. Lifelong friends are often made in this process, and they are able to grow up with a community of other Orthodox youth who are also shaped in a Church-centered experience of the total person.

#### **Metropolis Level**

I began the process of researching these programs with an interview of the Metropolis Youth and Young Adult Director. Rhea Ballas is a busy woman! I tracked her down in New York City, where she was attending a Youth Safety Conference. She graciously was able to talk to me late at night even while away. Rhea has been in youth ministry for 13 years. Raised as a child of the very same youth ministries she oversees today, she moved from Columbus, Ohio, to Pittsburgh to assume the job. She reminisces that she was warmly welcomed upon her arrival in our city. "Your parish is very special", she told me, and she considers Holy Trinity Church her Pittsburgh spiritual home.

To get a better overview of her responsibilities and what



our Metropolis youth ministries are all about, Rhea referred me to the Metropolis of Pittsburgh's Y2AM website (y2am.pittsburgh.goarch.org). There it states "The Metropolis Department of Youth & Young Adult Ministries coordinates programs that benefit young people spiritually, physically, and socially. Through its Summer Camp, Retreat, GOYA, JOY, Athletic, Folk Dancing and other programs, we engage our youth to encounter Christ every aspect of their life." As a result, Rhea coordinates and provides resources for all the youth and young adult programs in all the parishes of our Metropolis, which sounds like a pretty big job! Over the years its has all been made possible by the prayers and blessings of our hierarchs, starting with Bishop Gerasimos of blessed memory, continuing with Metropolitan Maximos, whose dedication to youth laid the foundations on which this work continues today, and our current hierarch, Metropolitan Savas, whose love for and connectedness to young people continues to empower this work. Rhea is also assisted by our Summer Camp Director, Marina Papafil, the Metropolis Youth Commission and many volunteer parents and young adults who fill the many roles that make it all possible.



**November 23, 2003: The annual GOYA Turkey Bowl game**

## Holy Trinity Church's Role in Metropolis Youth Ministries

Over the years, Holy Trinity Church has played a significant part in supporting the Metropolis youth ministries, with our clergy and parishioners involved as chaplains, camp and retreat counselors, medical staff, Youth Commission and Camp Committee members, office staff and youth participants in every ministry. Our parish has hosted seminars, Metropolis basketball tournaments, retreats and the regional, Metropolis and Archdiocesan levels of the St. John Chrysostom Oratorical Festival. That connectedness provides a rich body of resources to share and it creates relationships among the adults and youth as members of one Faith and One Holy Church.

## Archdiocese Youth Ministries

At the national level, our local and Metropolis youth ministries are also connected to the Archdiocese Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, whose Director, Steve Christoforou, has produced an extensive volume of media resources, including the youth-oriented 'Be the Bee' video series. In one, Steve eloquently describes the core mission of bringing Christ and our Orthodox Christian Faith to the young people of today. "Sixty percent of young American Christians fall away from the church as they transition from



**November 22, 2017: HOPE and JOY children and their parents serve a meal to the needy at FOCUS Pittsburgh**

teenagers to young adults", Christoforou says. He goes on to say, "Why young people get separated from the church is that they are corrupted by culture". He believes we must acknowledge the changing world as it is today and speak that cultural language. "It is impossible to help people until we get to know them through also knowing the culture in which they live and how people think in the present day", he believes. Furthermore, we must recognize that we are in an "Age of Authenticity" which entails us to change our approach of presenting our faith from how it was presented in the ancient times. The language, forms and times of the era mandate the changes. Everyone, at times, is caught in the cross-pressure of faith and doubt. How do we wrestle with doubt and arrive in a place of faith? We must arm our youth with facts about the Church, but this also requires creating an "Act of Translation" to address translating the "truth" as it is while living in a secular world. An "active" participation in that world through Christ is the answer. In other [my] words, it is teaching our children to not only talk the talk but walk the walk through action.

## Focus on Youth Safety: Protecting Our Children

Youth ministry is constantly evolving, and over the years various focal points take center stage. One area that has garnered top-level attention is that of protecting every young person in every youth ministry of the Church. Rhea was especially excited to talk about the new Youth Safety Program that is going to bring all workers associated with the youth of every parish to become compliant with new and youth safety practices. This is a very salient topic in today's religious communities, and it only takes a brief perusal of news articles to realize how important this topic is: these policies are being developed to assure that our children will be safe from abuse and predators. As a result, all clergy, youth workers and youth-involved volunteers will undergo a criminal background check (as is done in schools and with people working with youth in other venues) but, in addition, they will complete an online training program that was professionally commissioned for the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

This effort is being required and embraced at every level: Archdiocese, Metropolis and parish. At the local level,



Presvytera Loredana Bordeianu has been designated Holy Trinity's Youth Protection Parish Administrator. All adults with youth ministry contact in the parish must register with Presvytera Loredana and complete the training by the end of this year or they will not be able to work in direct contact with our youth. The policies will create quality standards, establish clear guidelines for reporting abuse, suspected abuse, or inappropriate behavior and provide the best practices to tailor policies and procedures that protect our children. This is an immensely important program that is necessary to assure our children and their parents that participating in church activities is safe in every way.

## HOPE and JOY at Holy Trinity Church

Returning to the ministries themselves, Holy Trinity's life cycle of youth ministries starts with the HOPE (Hellenic Orthodox Primary Education) ministry for children in Kindergarten through 2nd grade, and the JOY (Junior Orthodox Youth) ministry for children in 3rd through 6th grades. These groups are spiritually guided by Father Radu, who describes the purpose of the ministries as "offering a sense of community while providing the opportunity of spiritual pastoral care." By laying a foundation of faith at this age, our children will have something to guide and strengthen them through life. Most of the activities of these two groups are done together but discussions are done in two separate groups. One of the regular offerings to these groups provides the young people direct contact with Father Radu for brief discussions. "Ten Minutes of HOPE" and "Ten Minutes of JOY" occur two times a month right after Church School. Father Radu's regular helpers for these sessions are Nicole Steiner and Jeanne Willow. Parents are also welcome to participate.

Parental involvement is a key to all our youth ministries, and HOPE and JOY are no exception. Activities throughout the year are created and organized by them. So what kind of activities do these younger children do and enjoy? They may do fun activities that promote fellowship such as going to a trampoline park, participating in a "Charlie Brown Thanksgiving," visiting the Carnegie Museum or having sleepovers at the church (a favorite!). Or they may do acts of service such as caroling for the elderly at Christmas, making sandwiches for the homeless, or playing Bingo with the residents at Vincen-tian nursing home. In October, there was a hayride at Shenot Farms which provided a good time for all.

Father Radu especially loves answering the questions that the children may pose to him during the "Ten Minutes" series. One never knows what may come "out of the mouths of babes and children" and sometimes the depth and curios-

ity they demonstrate are quite surprising. They often bring up topics that he would not have thought of addressing and that experience teaches him about what he might include next time. He observes that the children easily learn through stories and love to learn more about the Liturgy. The sleepovers are a great opportunity to learn more about the liturgy and our church. Father Radu may take them into the church to show them everything that is used in the service or go over to the baptismal font and learn all about what transpires in a baptism. There are special services and prayers in both the morning and evening during sleepovers which also allows for discussion. "As parents, we want our children to have friends in the church", says Father Radu, and there is no better time than starting these friendships at a young age.

## GOYA Teen Ministry

When the children grow beyond JOY, their next stop is the GOYA (Greek Orthodox Youth of America) ministry. This program goes from 7th through 12th grades. As stated by the Archdiocese GOYA guidelines, mission of this ministry is "to strengthen the relationship of young Orthodox Christians with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." As such, all GOYA activities and interactions with other youth should always reflect our Christian faith. Presvytera Becky Touloumes is the GOYA Advisor. She loves teaching and working with this age group of young people. When I asked her what is most rewarding in her work with this group, she said, "Everything is rewarding. I especially love to

see the enthusiasm and love for the church and for God these young people demonstrate. It is exciting watching them learn how to keep Him in their lives."

The GOYA activities are divided into four categories: Worship, Witness, Fellowship and Service. "All of our activities are an extension of church programs and Church School. We still stress that attending Liturgy on Sunday is the main thing. We want them to see that attending church is a part of who we are supposed to be," says Presvytera Becky. "Our activities are a place where the kids can feel safe and where they can learn to be Orthodox and practice that life in real life, she goes on to say.

GOYA allows the participants the opportunity to volunteer, engage in enterprising activities, make lifelong friendships and express their faith. There are officers in the group: President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Corresponding Secretary and Recording Secretary. There is also an Outreach Coordinator who helps the group focus on something outside themselves. Holding these positions helps the teens understand and develop leadership skills and responsibilities they will need later in life.



October 16, 2005: The JOY Fall Mini-Retreat





**June 15, 2015: GOYA teens take their annual summer trip to Cedar Point, then head to St. Gregory Palamas Monastery.**

There is prayer before and after all GOYA meetings and activities. Most participate in readings at church services—especially at the Lenten Pre-Sanctified Liturgies. Philanthropy is a central theme as they engage in fundraisers that aid either the church or outside agencies such as FOCUS and IOCC (International Orthodox Christian Charities). This year they had a backpack drive where they provided local children in need with necessary school supplies. In June, they participated in an IOCC mission by going to Houston to do disaster recovery work on a home that was submerged under water during Hurricane Harvey. What an ambitious and amazing act of love for teenagers!! Back home, they learn the art of Greek cooking with the soup they provide for parishioners during Lent, bake sales, Palm Sunday luncheon and their annual Fall Fest. Once time a month they attend the GOYA Fellowship, where they may have dinner, enjoy a pastoral session with Father John or watch a movie. Our GOYAns also participate in the Spring and Fall Metropolis GOYA retreats, the next of which is coming up from Nov 22nd-24th at Camp Nazareth in Mercer, PA.

## Active Youth: Athletics Ministries

When speaking of our teens, we can't forget athletics and participation in the Metropolis GOYA Basketball and Volleyball tournaments. The teenagers compete with enthusiasm and a drive to win for their home parish, but it's about much more than that. Learning sportsmanship and especially getting to meet and know Orthodox teenagers from other cities and parishes are the real rewards of these events. Many of the young people who participate in the tournaments are those that they may have met and befriended previously in Summer Camp, which is the next topic in this comprehensive overview of youth ministries.

## Summer Camp: Transforming Lives

A special component of youth ministries at all levels is the Summer Camp ministry. In our Metropolis, that happens at Camp Nazareth in Mercer, PA, and is a highlight of the year for many JOY and GOYA participants. It is without question a place where campers and staff make lifelong memories. They come from all the parishes in the Metropolis, including Holy Trinity Church. "The camp is very Orthodox based, focused on teaching the campers to live the faith, not just learn it," says Theanne Gagianas. "Kids crave this type of atmosphere in comparison to secular camps. It is simple but effective", she says. Many campers and staff alike say that their "real" friends are here—not in school.



**May 19, 2013: The HOPE and JOY children have an exciting visit to the C&G Ranch in Evans City and get to ride horses.**



Theanne has been volunteering in the Metropolis camp ministry for 30 years. She started out as a camper herself when her brother (Father John) was a counselor. Her first year of camp was when she was in high school. She made a life-long commitment to serve this ministry as a result of her own life transforming experience on those sacred grounds, in 1988, when she and countless others witnessed the miraculous weeping icon of the Panayia at camp, that began in her cabin. That year, 19 icons were weeping at Camp Nazareth. "People are still talking about it", she says. In 1989, she even got engaged while at camp!! Husband and wife team Dr. Peter and Theanne Gagianas continued serving there together, with Peter in the position of camp doctor and medical program coordinator while Theanne focused on the rest of overall program. Damon Halkias, the first diocesan Youth Director, and his wife Carol, were their role models. Theanne served on the Summer Camp Executive Committee for many years focusing most of her work on leadership, staff development and writing curriculum. Her hope is to develop staff to carry on this work with longevity and fulfill the calling of all Orthodox "to remember His Holy Name... from generation to generation."

Theanne's former position on the Youth Commission as Summer Camp Chairperson was passed on to our own Holy Trinity parishioner, Father Anastasios Athanasiou, who was born on the day of the miraculous weeping icon at camp and who has been a life long camper, counselor and now clergyman in this ministry. This is a revealing example of how this ministry can impact the lives of our young people and raise up leaders for the future.

## A Day in the Life of a Camper

The camp runs for four weeks with each age group assigned one week. The breakdown of the sessions is as follows: one week for elementary students, one for middle school, one for junior high and the last for high school. The mission of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh Camp Ministry is "to lead young people to Christ in an Orthodox Christian environment where they can learn and experience their faith through education, recreation, worship, fellowship and fun." Participants experience fellowship in Christ through many means, including singing, prayer, campfires and lots of great activities, including hikes, "Olympics", Greek dancing, music and more. Importantly, the campers are not allowed to have electronics during this week. They are collected and put in a technology box. Most kids do not mind this rule as it is a valuable respite from social media and intrusive outside connection.

There are many prayer services during camp week both morning and evening. Campers learn about the Orthodox Christian life through lessons called "Orthodox Life" sessions.

The curriculum changes its theme every year but always encompasses a core tenet of the faith. Last year the theme was 'Mercy'. The campers actually have an opportunity to influence the curriculum on a special day called "Witness Wednesday." There is confession and spiritual counseling available. Stations are set up concerning different topics and they may invite a guest speaker to attend. "When we go through a week at camp with these kids," said Theanne, "we see a transformation of their lives. Forgiveness, God's grace and mercy are unveiled before our eyes."

Counselors must be graduates of high school so some may start at age 18 or 19 and become teachers of the younger kids. Most counselors, however, do not start until they are about 21—especially those who supervise the older campers.

A large majority of counselors were campers themselves in the past. They often profess, "I want to give back to the program that gave so much to me".



October 20, 2019: The GOYA monthly fellowship gathering

Camp Nazareth is described by some as "heaven on earth." Why do our kids keep coming to camp year after year? Our youth return to camp for the friendships they form and will continue to form and for the wonderful sense of peacefulness and a connection to God that they feel while there. Most of the campers think of returning to camp as "coming home," and indeed it is a home filled with love, friendships and

warm fellowship.

## An Essential and Fruit-Bearing Mission

In a day and age when young people are trending away from religious affiliation and participation in church life, Holy Trinity's youth have opportunities at every stage of their young life through young adulthood to learn, grow and experience the love of God and love for one another. This article has highlighted many of those ways. Where does all that lead? In John 15:8, Jesus says, "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples." The youth of previous generations who had those seeds of faith planted in them years ago are now serving as Parish Council members, ministry leaders, faithful parishioners and even ordained clergy. That is indeed "much fruit" to the glory of God! So, you may still ask, why should we get our children involved as early as possible in the youth ministries of the Metropolis and the parish? No one said it better than Father John during his sermon on October 20th: "Beginning this journey at a young age ensures that [participating in church activities and services] will become second nature to them throughout their lives." ❖

*Comments, feedback or thanks about this article?  
Contact Anita Sinicrope-Maier at pened1@aol.com*



## An Air of Renewed Optimism and Hope at Archbishop Elpidophoros' First Archdiocesan Council Meeting

### Archbishop Pledges Transparency, Accountability, and Responsibility

News Release

Contact: PRESS OFFICE

Stavros Papagermanos

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Date: October 19, 2019

**NEW YORK** – His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America presided at the first Archdiocesan Council meeting following his election and enthronement as Archbishop. The meetings of the Council were held over the span of two days, Thursday Oct. 17 and Friday Oct. 18, at the New York Hilton Hotel, and the prevailing feeling and tone of the meetings was one of renewed optimism and hope for the affairs of the Archdiocese and the future of our Church.

The Executive Committee with its new Vice-Chairman John Catsimatidis, and new Secretary Judge Theodore Bozonelis, as well as the Standing Committees of the Council, met on Thursday. The Council convened as a body Thursday afternoon for its first session and Friday morning for the second and final session.

The Archbishop opened the plenary session with prayer and his Keynote Address that followed set the tone: "I can promise each of you that our beloved Archdiocese of America is back on course and headed to the safe harbor of stability, progress and growth," he said while at a later point stated: "What we genuinely want and need for our Archdiocese is transparency, accountability, and responsibility." (Read full text at [www.goarch.org/-/keynote-address-of-his-eminent-archbishop-elpidophoros-at-the-archdiocesan-council-meeting](http://www.goarch.org/-/keynote-address-of-his-eminent-archbishop-elpidophoros-at-the-archdiocesan-council-meeting)).

Archbishop Elpidophoros reiterated his three main priorities outlined in his enthronement address, namely Youth, Hellenic College Holy Cross, and the completion of the Saint Nicholas Greek Orthodox Church and National Shrine.

"The Shrine will be a shining City on a Hill, and a beacon of hope for all people of good will, and it will be the most observed and visited Orthodox Church in the world, as long as we are faithful to its mission. We must re-commence the

building of the Church immediately, and open the doors by September 11, 2021, as a tribute to those who perished that fateful day, and as a lead off to the centenary year of our Holy Archdiocese," he said.

Following the Archbishop's address, the Vice-President of the Council, John Catsimatidis conveyed his optimism and said that as a community we have the people and the resources to do the job well and we will succeed as long as we work hard all together and in unity. He also recommitted that Saint Nicholas will be completed by September 11, 2021.

The proceedings were presided over by the new Secretary of the Council Judge Theodore Bozonelis. He thanked the previous Secretary Catherine Bouffides-Walsh for her assistance during the transition and her long dedicated service to the body.

Additional presentations were made by George Cantonis who presented a detailed report on the state of Hellenic College Holy Cross and the actions taken to secure its future. Followed by Treasurer Elaine Allen and Lazaros Kircos, Chairman of the Finance Committee

who presented the Financial Report and the 2020 Budget, while several resolutions concerning financial matters were discussed.

National Commander Dr. Anthony J. Limberakis of the Order of Saint Andrew Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate presented the Order's Annual Report on the Order's continuing efforts to promote religious freedom for the Ecumenical Patriarchate and all Orthodox Christians worldwide.

The work of the Council continued on Friday morning and included reports and presentations on the following: Pension Plan, Audit Committee report, Saint Nicholas Shrine, Youth Safety, Saint Photios Shrine and Spanish Ministry resources by His Grace Bishop Demetrios of Mokissos, and a report by Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh, on the 2020 Clergy Laity Congress to take place in Cleveland.

At the conclusion of the session, Archbishop Elpidophoros said he was very pleased and thankful from his first Archdiocesan Council meeting and expressed his gratitude to all the members of the Council for their dedication. ❖



**Archdiocese Council Meeting, October 17-18, 2019. Photos by Dimitri Panagos.**



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 inspired by their wisdom, formatted in a question-and-answer interview approach.



**Saint Paisios**

**Geronda, in my mind, I sometimes understand that I should love the other person, but I do not feel love within me.**

Little by little, it will go from the mind to the heart and you shall feel the love. In order to love the other person, the heart must also get to work; the mind is not enough. With only the mind working, you will reach the point of saying, “Now I have to tolerate this person” or “I must be careful not to tell him this, not to do that,” and so forth. This means that you do not love the other person. You see him as a stranger; you do not see him as a brother in order to feel pain for him or to feel your heart leaping for him.

**Sometimes my mind and my heart do not agree on love.**

All of the spiritual work is done by the mind together with the heart. The mind is the transmitter and the heart is the receiver. The receiver will work on whatever frequency the transmitter has been tuned to. If the mind is working in a worldly manner, it sends worldly telegrams to the heart; if it works spiritually, then the heart is spiritually moved and pained.

**How do I get the heart to work?**

Don’t you know? Nowadays, the doctors pierce the chest and put a battery in (a pacemaker) to make the heart work. We, too, must put our mind to work, so that it can pierce our heart and get it going, so that it can start working.

**How will this happen?**

In my opinion, this can happen in three ways: One feels a tremendous gratitude for God’s blessings such that he melts away and glorifies God. Or one feels the weight of his sins and pleads, in pain, for forgiveness from God. The third way is for one to put himself in the position of another person who is undergoing hardships and feel physically pained for him.

**Geronda, how can I soften my heart?**

In order to soften our heart we must put ourselves not only in the place of other human beings, but of animals too, even the snake. We should think, “Would I like to be a snake, going out into the open to warm myself in the sunshine only to have someone come along and strike me on the head? No, of course not.” We can feel sorrow and even come to love the snake. You see, unless a person puts himself into the place of

others, including animals and insects, he cannot become a “human being”.

It is within pain where more than usual love is found, because when you feel pain for another, you love him a little more. Love with pain means to embrace your demon-possessed brother so tightly that the demon is driven away. Such “snug” love, that is, spiritual love with pain, provides divine consolation to the creatures of God; it strangles demons; it delivers souls and heals wounds with the balsam of its overflowing love of Christ.

The spiritual person is entirely given over to feeling pained for others. He melts away with pain for them, constantly praying for and consoling them. And even though he takes the pain of others upon himself, he is always joyful, because Christ alleviates the pain and spiritually consoles him.

**When my heart is right, then, how will I show love?**

How to show love? I do not understand what this means. This is something false, hypocritical. To have love within us and for it to give us away, yes, this I understand. True love informs the other without outward displays. Love is to listen

with pain to the worries of the other. Love is also a concerned, pained glance and a word spoken with pain for and to the other when he is facing hardships. Love is to participate in his sorrow, to comfort him in his trouble. Love is to bear the onerous



thing another may say to you. All of these help far more than many words and any outward displays.

When you are inwardly pained for the other person, God informs him of your love so that he perceives it without external displays from you. The same is true about our evil will; even if it is not evident and remains hidden within us, the other person can sense it. You see, the devil creates turmoil even when he appears as “an angel of light,” whereas a real Angel conveys a sense of delight, gentle and ineffable.

**Geronda, what is it that prevents me from being informed of the love of others?**

Could it be that you have not cultivated love? He who loves is informed not only of the love of others, but also informs the others of his own love. The other person understands if you are being hypocritical or if you truly love him, because love is transmitted like a telegram. For instance, if we go to visit an orphanage, the children will immediately perceive our disposition. If you do not feel pain for them, do not even start to do anything. ❖

*Excerpted from “Saint Paisios of Mount Athos, The Spiritual Counsels, Volume V: Passions and Virtues”*





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## Torchbearers for Our Times: New Saints Announced

**GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA**  
**PRESS RELEASE: OCTOBER 21, 2019**

The faithful of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America glorify God as they receive with great joy the news from Mount Athos and our spiritual father, His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, who announced the forthcoming canonization of four Athonite fathers: Elders Ieronymos of Simonopetra, Daniel Katounakiotis, Joseph the Hesychast and Ephraim Katounakiotis.

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America, commenting on the forthcoming canonization of Elder Joseph, the Hesychast, said: "We are grateful to our Patriarch and spiritual father because he proved once again that he knows how to listen to the feelings of his flock. We are especially blessed in America because the founder of monasticism here, Elder Ephraim, made sure that he would bring us the sacred skull of Elder Joseph, who is also his spiritual father. I look forward to the time when I will visit Arizona and venerate this relic, and it would be the relic of a saint of our Church in America."



Elder Joseph



Elder Ieronymos



Elder Ephraim



Elder Daniel

Scripture of the Month: "Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God" (Heb. 13.7)