



THE HOLY TRINITY HERALD

FEBRUARY 2020 VOLUME 28 • ISSUE 2

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QUICK NEWS



"Top Chef" Tony Balouris serves up soup at the "Men Who Cook" event. Want to see more photos of this event and others in the life and ministries of Holy Trinity Church? See the Community Life Photo Journal on pages 7-10 or browse through our thousands of pictures in the online Photo Gallery at photos.HolyTrinityPgh.org.

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church • Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
Our Vision: "Faith. Family. Community."

The Presentation of the Lord in the Temple: February 2

Icon from Stavronikita Monastery, Mount Athos. By Theophanes the Cretan, 1546 AD



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) 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

2020 Parish Council

George Danis, President
Alvin Backeris Anthony Balouris
Ashley Bournias George Dickos
Tom Germanos Karen Georgiadis
Richard Paese Michael Passodelis
Dean Passodelis Stephen Stearns
Gerri Valliant Jeanne 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."



Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God.

1 John 4.7

My beloved Holy Trinity family,

Here we are again in the Valentine month of February, where commercials, store displays and publications often focus on "love." It can be a wonderful opportunity to focus on the building of relationships and affirming our marriages. But during this "month of love," to limit love to its romantic form or reserve it for couples falls far short of the high call given to us throughout the scriptures and found throughout our Orthodox Christian Faith. Jesus Himself uses it as the criteria for Christian identity: "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13.25).

One of the problems with the word "love" in the English language is that it is one word with many meanings. In Greek, for example, there are many ways to say "love," and each of them carries a very different interpretation. For example, "filia" is a friendship form of love; "filanthropia" is a general love for mankind; "eros" is romantic love; "storge" is a nurturing love, especially of parents and children; but the highest form, "agape," is the unconditional love God has for us, and He calls us to have it for one another. Perhaps that is why it is used over 200 times in the New Testament, including our Savior Jesus Christ turning His living model of "agape" into a command for all those who follow Him: "My command is this: Love ("agapate") each other as I have loved you" (John 15.12).

One of the most popular Orthodox Christian books in recent times, "Wounded By Love," was compiled from the reminiscences, conversations and words of guidance of Saint Porphyrios of Kafsokalivia (+1991). The quote to the right captures the essence of that book. And it captures the essence of the life we are called to live here at Holy Trinity Church. I am so blessed to witness that in so many ways through the generosity, care and overall fellowship of "agape" that lives here.

One thing is our aim: love for Christ, for the Church, for our neighbor. Love, worship of, and craving for God, the union with Christ and with the Church is Paradise on earth. Love towards Christ and towards one's neighbor, towards everyone, including enemies. The Christian feels for everyone, he wants all to be saved, all to taste the Kingdom of God. That is Christianity: through love for our brother to arrive at love for God.

Saint Porphyrios, "Wounded By Love"

Whether we are serving meals to the homeless, providing gifts to needy children, offering ourselves to serve Christ on the Parish Council, in the Choir (see the Feature Article on page 11), through the Philoptochos, by teaching our youth or in the many other ministries, they are all ways of looking at "the other" and saying, "You are loved." And the heart of that love, as Saint Porphyrios says, is the love for the God, Who loved us first. That is indeed "agape."

May your marriages, your friendships, your service to Christ, His Church and others, all be richly blessed with "agape", this month and always.

Paternally yours in Christ,

WORSHIP LIFE

Weekday ServicesFebruary

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

- **Feb. 1: Great Vespers for the Presentation of the Lord** (Service to be held at *Ypapanti Church, E. Pgh.*)
- **Feb 10: St. Haralambos the Great Martyr (SG)**

Saturdays of Souls.....Feb. 22, 29; March 7

Preceding the start of Lent and during the first week of Lent, the Church offers the "Saturdays of the Souls" to commemorate those who have fallen sleep in the Lord. Services are held at the Saint George Chapel located at Holy Trinity Cemetery. See the enclosed flyer to submit names for commemoration and be sure to attend and commemorate your departed loved ones.

YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS

Ten Minutes of HOPE and JOY.....Feb. 9, 23

Our children in HOPE (grades K-2) and JOY (grades 3-6) will continue to meet with Father Radu once a month for ten minutes after their Church School lesson. To have more personal interaction and a meaningful dialogue, please help your children formulate questions about our faith, and they will be addressed during a combined "Ten Minutes of HOPE" on February 9 and "Ten Minutes of JOY" on February 23.

GOYA Basketball PracticeFeb. 10

GOYA will hold its last basketball practice in preparation for the 2020 basketball tournament season on February 10 at Hosack Elementary. Girls 6:30-7:30 and Boys 7:30-8:30.

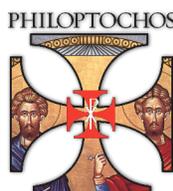
GOYA Basketball TournamentsFebruary

Our Holy Trinity GOYA families will be participating in one more away Metropolis Basketball Tournament this year and hosting one in February. They will play in the Annunciation Church tournament in Akron, Ohio, from January 31-February 2, and then the final tournament of the season is being hosted right here at Holy Trinity Church from February 14-16. May God grant them good skills, safe travels, protection from injury and the joy of fellowship in Christ with their friends in our sister churches near and far. God bless you all!

PHILOTOCHOS NEWS AND EVENTS

Philoptochos Meeting.....February 23

The Philoptochos will hold a meeting on Sunday, February 23, in the Fireside Room following Divine Liturgy. New members are always welcome!



2020 Philoptochos Stewardship

It is time for current Philoptochos members to renew their memberships for 2020.

Suggested annual stewardship donation is \$30.00. Checks should be made payable to "Holy Trinity Omonia." Please return your Stewardship form and your Stewardship donation to Pam Bolkovac, Membership chairperson, or mail to Holy Trinity Philoptochos, Attn: Membership, 985 Providence Blvd, Pittsburgh, PA, 15237. Copies of the form can be found in the January edition of the Herald and at the church office window. If you aren't a member, we would love for you to join us! It is only through your generous commitment of time, talent and support that we are able to pursue our philanthropic mission.

COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENTS

Parish Council Installed & Officers Elected for 2020



Following the installation of the 2020 Parish Council on January 5 (above), the election of officers was held in the Conference Room. Congratulations to the 2020 Executive Officers, all elected to continue their terms from the previous year: President - George Danis; Vice-President - Stephen Stearns; Secretary - Jean Willow; Treasurer - Michael Pasodelis. May God's blessings inspire and empower them in this calling as servant leaders of our community!

Bereavement Ministry MeetingMarch 3

Our new Bereavement Support Ministry Team will provide spiritual care to our parishioners and their extended family & friends in time of grief and loss. If you have questions about grief and want to learn and share conversation, then please attend our next Bereavement Support Group session on Tuesday, March 3, in the Fireside Room. Light refreshments and relaxed fellowship begin at 6:30 p.m. for those who choose. Then 7:00-8:30 p.m. is group learning and sharing with our Bereavement facilitators. Feel free to bring a family member and/or friend. Contact Amy Armanious, Visitation Ministry Coordinator with any questions at email Visitation@holytrinitypgh.org.

Reminder for Church Facilities: Reservations Required!

If your ministry or committee is planning a meeting or activity to be held at the church, please note that reservations for rooms and event spaces are required. Please contact Office Administrator, Mary Portellos (412-366-8700 or office@HolyTrinityPgh.org). Your cooperation helps ensure every group that needs a place has one. Thank you!

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

Holy Land 2020 Pilgrimage Information and Reservations Now Available!

This issue of *The Herald* contains the long-awaited brochure with information, pricing and a reservation form for the Holy Trinity Pilgrimage Ministry's 2020 "Journey of Faith: Pilgrimage to the Holy Land." Please see the brochure for details.

Important note: Reservations will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis, but because this is a community ministry, first priority will be offered to Holy Trinity parishioners and families, who will have the opportunity to register starting immediately. Then, if space is still available, reservations will be open to the public starting April 2. All reservations must be made using the reservations form and mailed to Cloud Tours at the address indicated. See the enclosed itinerary, terms and conditions for more.

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Pittsburgh, PA
Pilgrimage Ministry Presents



**A Journey of Faith:
Pilgrimage to the Holy Land**

10 Days – November 4-13, 2020



For More Information Contact:
Fr. John Touloumes - 412-366-8700
pilgrimage@HolyTrinityPgh.org

IC XC
NI KA

Tour planning by Cloud Tours, Inc.
Reservations via attached form only.
800-223-7880 x210 (Stephen)



ITINERARY

✚ **Wednesday, November 4 (Day 1) – DEPART USA**
Depart from Pittsburgh to Tel Aviv via Newark on United Airlines. In-flight meals.

✚ **Thursday, November 5 (Day 2) – ARRIVAL TEL AVIV/TIBERIAS**
Upon late afternoon arrival in Tel Aviv, our group is met by our Greek Orthodox English-speaking Tour Guide, who will accompany our group for the entire trip in the Holy Land. Check in to Nof Ginosar Hotel. Buffet dinner at the hotel. (D)

✚ **Friday, November 6 (Day 3) – TIBERIAS/CAPERNAUM/RIVER JORDAN**
Buffet breakfast. Enjoy a boat ride on the Sea of Galilee. Visit Capernaum and the Church of the Holy Apostles. Continue to the Mountain of the Beatitudes and after visit the Church of the Multiplication of Fishes and Loaves. After, stop at the Yardenit on the River Jordan for a blessing in the river. Buffet dinner and overnight at the hotel. (B, D)

✚ **Saturday, November 7 (Day 4) – TIBERIAS/MT. TABOR/CANA/ NAZARETH/JERUSALEM**
Buffet breakfast. Visit Mt. Tabor and the Church of the Transfiguration of our Lord and the nearby village of Naim. Continue to Cana and Nazareth. Visit the Greek Orthodox Church of the Annunciation and Virgin Mary's Well. Continue to Jerusalem. Buffet dinner and overnight in Jerusalem. (B, D)

✚ **Sunday, November 8 (Day 5) – JERUSALEM**
Celebrate Divine Liturgy in historic Jerusalem. Visit the Jaffa Gate and continue to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate for a private audience with His Beatitude Theophilos III (subject to confirmation). After, visit the Church of St. Anna, Via Dolorosa, Prison of Christ (Pratorion), Church of the Holy Sepulcher, Golgotha and free time in the Christian Quarter. Buffet dinner and overnight in Jerusalem. (B, D)

✚ **Monday, November 9 (Day 6) – JERUSALEM/BETHLEHEM**
After buffet breakfast, visit the village of Ein Karem, birthplace of St. John the Baptist. Continue to Bethlehem. Visit Sheppard's Field and the Church of the Nativity. Return to Jerusalem with a stop at the Monastery and Church of the Prophet Elias and Church and Tomb of St. Symeon as well as the Monastery of the Holy Cross. Buffet dinner and overnight in Jerusalem. Midnight Liturgy at the Holy Sepulcher (pending confirmation) (B, D)

✚ **Tuesday, November 10 (Day 7) – JERUSALEM/ JERICHO**
Buffet breakfast. Visit the Mount of Temptation including cable car up to Sarantaron Oros. Stop at the Dead Sea. After, continue to the Church of St. Elias and Zaccheus' Tree. Visit St. George in Lydda. Buffet dinner and overnight in Jerusalem. (B, D)

✚ **Wednesday, November 11 (Day 8) – JERUSALEM**
Buffet breakfast. Visit the Mount of Olives, Church of Our Father and Chapel of Ascension. Continue to Gethsemane and visit the Church of All Nations and the Garden of Agony. Visit the Tomb of the Theotokos. Drive to the Zion Gate and Western Wall. Visit the room of the Mystical Supper, King David's Tomb and the Church of the Dormition of the Theotokos. Buffet dinner at the hotel. Overnight in Jerusalem. (B, D)

✚ **Thursday, November 12 (Day 9) – JERUSALEM**
Buffet breakfast. Visit the Monastery of Saint Theodosius and the Monastery of Mar Saba. Return to Jerusalem and enjoy the afternoon at leisure. Buffet dinner at the hotel in Jerusalem. Depart for the airport for flight home. (B, D)

✚ **Friday, November 13 (Day 10) – RETURN HOME**
Depart Tel Aviv for your flight home on United Airlines via Dulles. (B)

* Itinerary subject to change



JERUSALEM: THE TOMB OF CHRIST

WHAT'S THE COST?

Land and Air (Dbl. Occ.)
\$3,875.00

Land Only (Dbl. Occ.)
\$2,245.00

Single Occupancy Add'l.
\$1055.00

Deposit due by May 19, 2020
Final Payment due by July 31, 2020

**IT'S HOLY TRINITY TOURNAMENT TIME
and YOUR support is needed!**



The GOYA teens of Holy Trinity Church once again have the honor of hosting a Metropolis GOYA Basketball Tournament. It is the third time we have been able to host this event in our beautiful new Holy Trinity Church. Our teens and their families will be working hard to represent our community well as always, but they can't do it alone!

Please take a look at the enclosed Basketball Tournament Donations and Volunteers flyer, and especially the new Gym Sponsorship form. This is community-hosted event, so thanks for inspiring and supporting our youth by helping make this event possible through your examples of love and encouragement!!

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)

“FAITH AND FAMILY WEEKDAYS” MINISTRIES GUIDE: WINTER/SPRING 2020

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 8:00pm	“Discover Orthodoxy” Introduction and Refresher Series on the Orthodox Faith	Mondays: Spring Series Mar. 9, 16, 23, 30 Apr. 7, 28 (Repeated from the Fall)	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	2nd Tuesday Sep.-May Feb. 11, Mar. 17, 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	1st & 3rd Tuesday Oct.-May Feb. 4, 18; Mar. 3, 17 Apr. 7, 21	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 “The Screwtape Letters” by C. S. Lewis to start. All women are welcome.
WEDNESDAYS 6:30pm Worship 7:00pm Study	“Explore the Word” Worship and Bible Study Ministry	Wednesdays Oct.-May Feb. 5, 12, 19, 26; Apr. 29, May 6, 13, 20, 27	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	3rd Thursday Sep.-Apr. 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	3rd Thursday Oct.-May 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.
THURSDAYS as Advertised 7:00pm	“Orthodox Movie Night” Special Feature Edition Entertainment/Fellowship	Watch for announcements for dates and titles	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

Looking Back, Looking Ahead: Stewardship for 2020

Hello Holy Trinity Family! It's that time again. Another year of Stewardship is upon us and we are so happy to report some of the highlights that took place in 2019. First and foremost, thank you to everyone who contributed last year of your time, talents and treasures to ensure the work of Christ continues through the ministries of Holy Trinity Church.

We are extremely grateful and proud to report a 10% increase in offerings over 2018. There was also an increase of ten (10) additional Stewards that were added to the ranks in 2019! Looking at the chart to the right you can see the trend in Stewardship from 2017 through 2019.

Our Goal: Full Stewardship

As a reminder we are praying and actively working toward the day that our Stewardship income will fully fund the daily operating expenses of the church so that other additional support the church receives can fund other areas such as capital expenditures, repairs/updates, ministries of the church and charitable donations to other local, regional and global initiatives. Currently Stewardship contributions only currently fund about 70% of the church's operating expenses, so unfulfilled pledges severely impact our ability to meet our financial obligations.

Our Stewardship Commission

So why the fuss about Stewardship every year? Well other than being an integral part of church life, the caption to the right sums up Stewardship Ministry very nicely:

Basically, God has com-

missioned each person to function as a Steward over all He has blessed us with. This encompasses our bodies, possessions, time, talents and treasures. Most importantly we also need to demonstrate exceptional Stewardship in our relationship with God.

What Stewardship Means

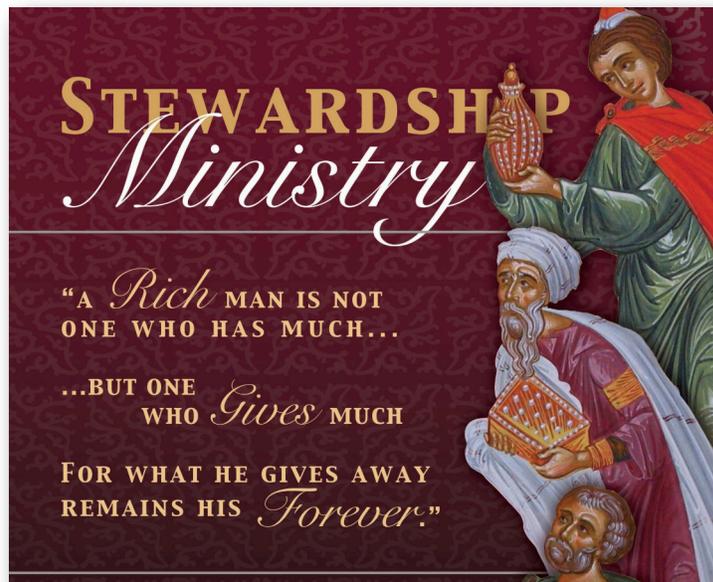
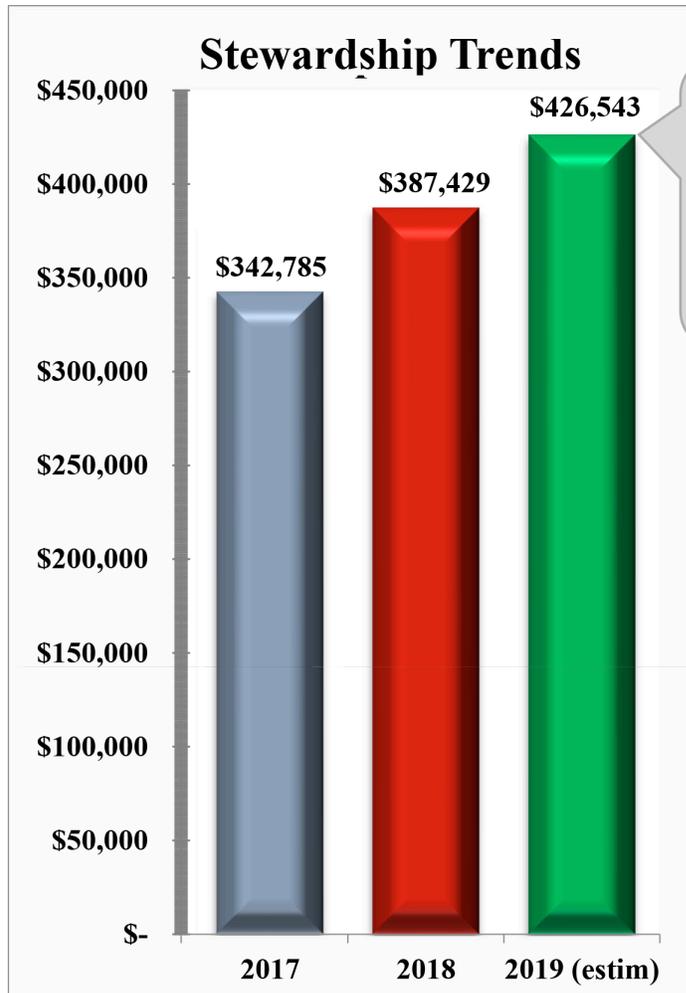
What does that mean? It means staying true/faithful to our commitments made to

Him. God is ALWAYS faithful in what He says and does, He never fails to complete what He said He is going to do so we need to do the same with Him. Since Stewardship encompasses every aspect of our lives then it begins there. All we need to do is ask Him for His help. If you haven't done it then the time to start is now. Psalms 61:8 states "In God is my salvation and my glory; He is the God of my help, and my hope is in God."

Equipped for Stewardship

There are various other opportunities on the horizon for us to encounter as we journey through this life. We need to maintain a positive attitude towards all of them as they cross our paths. Remember God has given us all the resources to meet these opportunities of Stewardship. Just as He equipped the Apostles and Disciples for the ministry they faced He does the same for us, so please keep these words close in your heart as you prepare for the work ahead: "God doesn't call the equipped, He equips the called." ❖

*With love and blessings,
The Holy Trinity
Stewardship Ministry Team*





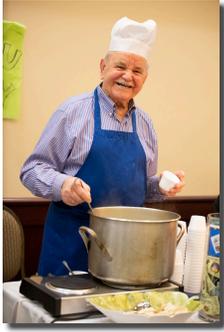
Above/Right: The teens of Holy Trinity GOYA participated in the first Metropolis basketball tournament of 2020, in Campbell, Ohio. The girls team and junior boys teams each took first place.

Below: Mary Ellen Stewart, Paula Valliant and Katina Tanner prepare handmade Orthodox religious gifts for the Visitation Ministry to delivery to those in hospitals and homes.

Bottom left: It's Festival cooking time again already! Over 30 people showed up and amazingly produced over 270 pans of baklava in one day on January 18. Thank you everyone!

Bottom right: HOPE and JOY children went ice skating on January 25.





January 26, 2020: The Holy Trinity Social Committee hosted a very successful and exciting first-ever “Men Who Cook” event, a friendly competition among the men of the parish to see who is Holy Trinity’s “Top Chef.” Over 300 people attended, sampling delicious foods and desserts prepared by 24 chefs. There were even two breweries and an ice sculptor adding to the fun, and the whole evening was made complete with great music provided by our own Holy Trinity Jazz Band. Besides donating to attend the event, everyone present was asked to “tip” their favorite chefs using special “Men Who Cook” dollars, deposited in collection jars at each station. Funds from the event benefited the Holy Trinity Capital Campaign and a local charity. At the end of the night, the tips were counted and the winner was...Tony Balouris with his homemade Avgolemono Soup! Thank you to everyone who cooked, helped, attended and donated and especially to event organizers Kathy Balouris and Karen Georgiadis for all their work!





Community Life Photo Journal | Vasilopita 2020

January 12, 2019: Holy Trinity Philoptochos sponsored its annual Vasilopita celebration for the Feast of Saint Basil. After the prayer, representatives from each ministry of the parish were brought forward to receive a slice of the blessed bread. A collection was also taken that day in support of the Saint Basil Academy in Garrison, New York, a Philoptochos-supported ministry that serves children in need.



Longest Members Present Holy Trinity Clergy Holy Trinity Philoptochos Parish Council Choir



Chanters Acolytes Church School St. Spyridon Library Journey to Marriage



Bible Study Saint Nikodemos Fellowship Women's Book Club Pilgrimages Ministry Joy Ministry



GOYA Ministry Young Adult Ministry Three Hierarchs Bookstore Festival Committee Social Committee



Seniors Ministry Catering Committee Stewardship Ministry Diaconate Candidates Bereavement Ministry



Holy Trinity Herald Volunteers Holy Trinity Herald Photographers Visitation Ministry Holy Trinity Greek Dancers



Holy Trinity Choir - 1964

“Angels We Have Heard Nearby” — The Holy Trinity Choir

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

In the Greek Orthodox faith, singing in the choir is a sacred duty and commitment. It is a part of stewardship to the church whereby a Christian offers their God-given talents and time to the faith. Every Sunday, choir members play an integral part in the Liturgy, along with the priest and chanters.

The choir's role is to lead—not replace—the laity and respond to the liturgical dialogue offered by the priest. Orthodox choral music is central to the to the Liturgy and other services, and not a performance. This helps create a prayerful environment of worship. We as Orthodox Christians experience the Divine Liturgy as “heaven on earth,” with the clergy standing before the Holy Altar vested with the apostolic grace of ordination as leaders and celebrants of the mysteries of God, who is their Divine Author. Those who sing represent the angels who stand around the throne offering the same Lord hymns of praise.

To sing in the choir, members must not only be knowledgeable of the various hymns and responses, but also the correct order in the worship services. They are entrusted to be well-prepared participants in the worship service so they can lead the rest of the worshipers in prayerful hymns in good order. St John Chrysostom wrote, “Singing in the choir requires singers who are inwardly committed not just to the music but also, and primarily, to the faith.”

Choir members in the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America must attend rehearsals and any conferences which they may be able to attend, such as the annual conference sponsored by the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Musicians. Holy Trinity Choir is a member of this organization. It was chartered in 1976 as an Archdiocesan

ministry responsible for liturgical music activities and the development, support and recognition of church musicians. It serves to be a liaison among local church musicians, Metropolis church music, federations and the Archdiocese. Their support also extends to the chanters and the preservation of the Byzantine chant as well as clergy and youth church music programs.

So, you might say to yourself, “I’d like to sing with the choir, but I do not have any musical experience,” or, “I do not know Greek.” Do not let that stop you from having a wonderful spiritual experience with a group of terrific people. Not all choir members need to be trained musicians or have the skill of singing with a group. With love and practice, all can grow in their knowledge of the music and create a sound that matches the beauty of our services. Choir members will be given phonetic versions of pronunciation of the Greek words and other choir members will lovingly help to guide and mentor you in the process of learning the music.

Longtime choir member, Carol Fiffas, does not read music. She sings by memorizing the sound (by ear) that she hears. “You just learn,” says Carol. She has taken many people under her wing by allowing them to stand next to her during the liturgy and follow her lead until they become comfortable in memorizing the sound and words. Singing with the choir is such a natural part of her life that she couldn’t even remember when she first began singing! She did remember that it was after the time her children got older. Her daughter, Dana, also sang with her for a while in the former church on the North Side. An old church bulletin, written in 1992 commemorating the choir, was recently given to Eleni

Valliant, our choir director. It mentioned Carol as a four year member of the choir. That puts her commitment to her role in the church one of 32 years this year!

An even longer former member, Nick Loomis, started singing with the choir when he was 14 years old. Julie, who was later to become his wife, also started at the same time. A year or two before that he started “holding tones” (Greek: “ison”) for the church chanter, George Christ, who was also his Greek school teacher and secretary of the church. He then ‘graduated’ to the choir. Another mentor was George Sedor who was also a Greek school teacher. “He had such an influence on us kids,” says Nick. “After all, in those days we attended Greek school 3 days a week from age 5 to 14.” Nick reminisces that George went on to become a priest in Shreveport, Louisiana. Another close friend was John Nychis who, as an adult, received a Masters degree in music from Duquesne University then went on to teach music in the Pittsburgh Public Schools. Nick’s commitment to the choir was steadfast. He is no longer able to sing in the choir due to family responsibilities, but he misses it a great deal. He fondly remembers some of the last times singing with his wife, Joy, in the St. George Chapel before the icons of Jesus and the Theotokos during the Lenten Friday Salutation services. His favorite church service is Holy Tuesday. He believes the Hymn of Kassiani is the most beautiful—but difficult—hymn to sing. “Singing gives you a calming feeling,” he says, “and I thoroughly enjoyed it.”

There could not be a choir without a choir director. The director has the final word on the music and works with the priest to plan and coordinate it. The director is responsible for teaching new music and special hymns that are sung during holy days as well as the hymn of the day. Members must keep their eyes on the director for timing, direction and cues. In addition to the early directors mentioned above, we have been blessed in the last 30 years with the leadership of John Nychis, Harriet Valliant, Georgia Touloumes, and now both Eleni Valliant and Steve Cole.

Steve joined the choir about 3 ½ years ago. He is not of Greek heritage, but first started singing in Butler as a chanter at St. Anthony’s Antiochan Church when he was received into the Faith. He was a classical guitar major at the University of Pittsburgh. After graduation, he began performing at parties and events while also teaching students. As with most musicians, he found that work to be “too spotty” so he took a job with Volkweins Music where he has continued to work for 32 years. Steve is a quiet, humble and modest man who underestimates his knowledge and talents. He calls himself

“an amateur” director who does not have formal training in that area. He credits Georgia Touloumes, who has also filled in as director over the years, as his mentor and an inspiration to the choir. She knows all the parts of the Liturgy and has been singing for so long that she can guide members in the correct inflection and emphasis of the words. She is especially helpful in rehearsals during Holy Week since she has so much experience singing the hymns—especially in Greek. Georgia has been singing in Greek Orthodox choirs for over 75 years!

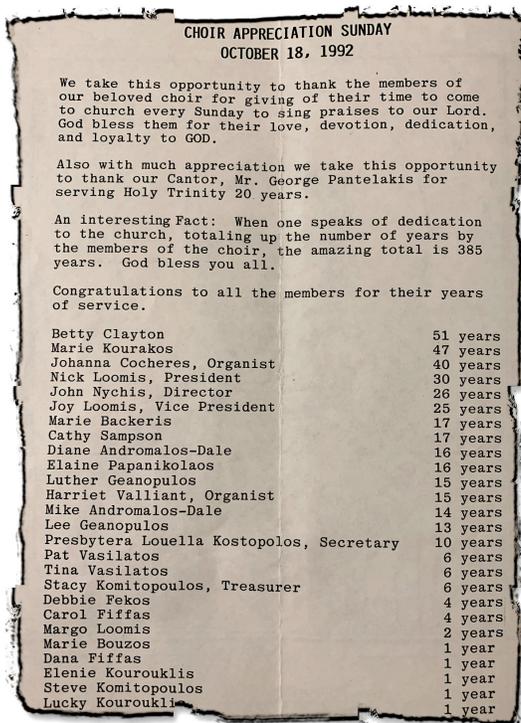
When they began to hint at asking him to help direct, Steve said that “I was afraid that was going to happen. I felt I was way too green with the Greek. I couldn’t imagine being able to direct others in a language I really didn’t know. Eleni was a longtime member of the church and choir who knew both the service and Greek. Plus she had a very beautiful voice and a good rapport with the choir.” Steve worked with Eleni on developing an understanding about what he was doing so he finally told her he would fill in for her when she was away.

Why does he love the choir? He talked about Vladimir Morrison, who has a publishing company for Orthodox sheet music. Morrison calls it “Icons in Sound”. Steve, in measured speech, describes his passion for the choir as “The music speaks to me. The living, breathing people amongst us “living icons,” joining the saints and angels in offering praise and worship to Almighty God who is so worthy of our life and salvation.” He goes on to say, “The choir lends beauty and significance to our faith while helping the congregation sustain it during the service.”

Do you ever feel like you would like to sing along with the choir but feel self-conscious or think it is not proper? Think again! Church members are encouraged to sing along. “We like when other

people sing along with us,” says Carol. “From where I stand, I can see the people who are singing along, and I feel it is a good thing.” Steve agrees. “Some may feel they do not have a good enough voice or that they may not want to be ‘on task’ during the service. Some may sing one hymn here and one there at other times while reflecting on the things in their prayers.” Eleni also agrees that all can and should participate and help fill the church with music.

Eleni was always in orchestras since the time she was a child. She played percussion in the wind ensemble and symphony orchestra and was trained in conducting but not as a choir director. She was 13 or 14 when she joined the choir in 1999. She had always sung, and she loved music. She was fortunate that she can read Greek and, as a plus, she had friends in the choir. Carol was a real mentor to her. “She was so welcoming and probably is a reason that I stayed with the choir.” She enjoys being a part of a group who really wants



to pray and to help others who want to focus on the service. "The choir really helps to support prayer," she says.

When asked to help with conducting, "Yiayia Georgia", as she calls her, helped Eleni in that transition. "It was a warm hand-off," says Eleni. She arranged that she would "get her feet wet" when Georgia went to her summer home. Then she stepped up to the job. "Steve is more talented for it," says Eleni (who is also modest of her talent) "so it was good to create a team."



Holy Trinity Choir - 1960

Eleni extends an open invitation to anyone who may wish to join the choir. She welcomes all ages. She even invites people to "try it out" for a few sessions to learn some of the music. "In rehearsal, we read through the music and think about what we are saying." Steve helped to rework some of the doxology into English. "It's important to know the meaning of both the Greek and English," she says, "so Steve helped to rework the Greek into English to provide the meaning for all." The choir has seen changes in the past years in the percentage of choir members who are converts. Not many grew up hearing the Greek language, but still, choir members tend to learn the hymns quickly in both languages.



Holy Trinity Choir - 1990's

Eleni attributes her passion for choir starting at Camp Nazareth. "I never thought I would find myself conducting the choir one day!", she says. "But learning the music at camp and then hearing the camp so full of sound by the end of the week really produced in me a wonderful opportunity to appreciate the hymns."



Holy Trinity Choir - 2003

She hopes that she will be able to go to the Church School rooms in the future to teach some of the choir music to the students. She also wishes to give them the opportunity to learn that special part of the church service at an early age so they may gain the appreciation of it as she did.



Holy Trinity Choir - Thyranoxia 2013

Next time you are attending and participating in the Liturgy, why not take some time to really listen to the choir and recognize all the effort that is put into providing that beautiful angelic part of the service? Let them know how you appreciate the wonderful melodious sound they create with just a handful of people. And don't forget to sing along. Or better yet, join! ❖

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



Holy Trinity Choir - 2019

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 Theophan
the Recluse

Gheronda, what is it that makes our spirit resistant to God's grace?

The most immediate fetters on the spirit are those of self-indulgence of all kinds...These bonds of self-indulgence are also the point of contact for other bonds which come from the world and the devil. That is why it is very important to break them.

Why is it so hard to defeat self-indulgence and free our spirit?

In order to understand how these bonds are destroyed, one must take into consideration that there is something with which this [worldly] life joins, on which it feeds...It stands so firmly that it does not fear defeat; it does not even think about it or expect it. For example, when someone has given himself over to the discipline of art, or to worldly matters, or even to learning, and lives in it with all his being, then he is supported by it and rests in it with all his faculties, thoughts, and hopes. This foundation of self-indulgence becomes as it were the point to which all these bonds are attached. Therefore, in order to release the spirit from the bonds of self-indulgence, the divine awakening-grace usually destroys the supports upon which self-indulgent selfness rests. Having shaken these supports at their foundation, grace loosens the fetters and gives to the exhausted and weary spirit an opportunity to hold up its head a little.

What are the signs of self-indulgence?

There are many supports for our self-indulgence. They are in our being, that is, in our body and soul, in our outward life, and in the whole order of our life. The indulgence of the flesh comes in many different forms. It includes the love of pleasure in food, luxury, lust and carnality, the love for idleness, the passion for amusements, the care and regard for many worldly things, ambition, the love of power, visible success in affairs of all kinds, prosperity, an attractive daily routine, the value of important connections with others, a state of peace in outward relations, passion for artistic skill and beautiful things, for learning, for different activities, and for business. All these modes of self-indulgence, in their many and diverse kinds, form a firm foundation for our selfishness. Our selfishness—with confidence in the trustworthiness and solidity of its support—rests quietly upon it and, heartily feeding on it, grows and increases with every passing day.

How do we break our bonds of self-indulgence?

In order to awaken a sinner from his sleep, the divine saving-grace directs all its power towards the destruction of the main support upon which a man rests with all his selfishness. The destruction of the supports of our careless self-indulgence comprises the turning-points of our life. These destructions act in a striking and salutary way because they are always un-

expected. The feeling of fear for one's own life acts most powerfully in this respect. This feeling of fear loosens all the bonds and kills selfishness at its very root; a man does not know where to go. The constriction of life circumstances and the feeling of complete abandonment have the same property as the feeling of fear for one's life. Both leave a man alone with himself, feeling that he is worthless and insignificant. Immediately this sends him up to God, or converts him from self-centeredness to God.

Gheronda, how do we replace our self-centeredness with a focus on God?

Here are the ways and means by which God's grace influences the spirit of a man, delivers it from the bonds which are unnatural for the soul, and face-to-face shows it a different, better life: one in which there is joy and peace. But obviously, all these means in themselves are incomplete; it is as if something is held back. For example, a thirst for that which is better is born—but where is this better life and how does one attain it? Or someone is shaken by fear of death or judgment—but what is one to do in order to avoid this misfortune? It is the same in every case; the answers are not clear. To all of these means must be added one more, which is complementary and consummates the task. This is the Word, or preaching.

The Word of God, in its various forms, truly accompanies all the above-mentioned means, elucidating them and indicating their ultimate purpose. Without the Word, these means leave a man still in an uncertain and vague state, and consequently they do not produce everything they are supposed to. For example, the Apostle Paul was brought to his senses by a heavenly appearance, but the Lord had not yet accomplished everything in him. He said, "Enter into the city, and you will be told what you are to do." Justin Martyr, St. Barbara, St. Joasaph, who was the son of an Indian king, all had seen Satan's lie. But in order to know the truth, they needed special instructors and interpreters. That is why the Lord, who providentially cares about all creation, has established as law the following: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation so that all men everywhere repent" (Acts 17:30). So faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the Word of God (Romans 10:17). This Word from the Apostles through their successors is now proclaimed to all the ends of the earth.

Because of its universal suitability for awakening sinners, the Word of God goes forth on the earth and reaches our hearing in various diverse forms. It is constantly heard in our churches at every divine service, and at every religious ceremony that is held outside of the church. It is in the chants and hymns of the church. It is in the homilies of the Fathers and in every book which is useful for the soul. ❖

Excerpted from "Turning the Heart to God"

By Saint Theophan the Recluse
Bishop of Tambov in Russia (+ 1894)



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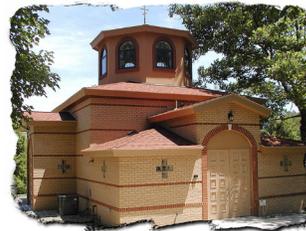
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The Supreme Purpose of Marriage



Marriage is called by many the “Sacrament of Love.” When we understand that God is Love, (Jn. 4:8), we understand that this love is not self-love, or single-love, but the love expressed in God as Trinity. This love is shared. Human love—to express the image and likeness that we are created for—must also not be selfish, but shared. Marriage offers this opportunity..

Metropolitan Kallistos Ware says, “The supreme purpose of marriage is that husband and wife should each help the other to enter the Heavenly Kingdom. Through their mutual love and their shared life, the two of them—together with their children, if God has given them offspring—are called to bring one another closer to Christ. As an eternal union between two unique personalities, the sacrament of marriage has no other end than this.”

Excerpted from “Building and Orthodox Marriage”
 By Bishop John Abdallah

Scripture of the Month: “Let marriage be held in honor among all” (Heb. 13.4)