

# HOLY CROSS CROSS ROADS



Beloved Members and Friends of Holy Cross,

**Christ is in our midst! He is and shall always be!**

August is a month of transition. We are quickly leaving the summer and approaching the fall. This year we have been challenged in many ways in that our normal routines and schedules have been up-ended by the uncertainty of the Coronavirus. We presume that we will be returning to school and “regular” academic instruction and await to see what transpires. Amidst all this uncertainty, there are certain feasts and celebrations that will continue as scheduled. Our attendance in Church might be limited, however, we are blessed to have a regular and consistent schedule of services provided for us. Whether in person or through the live-stream, let us be present before God.

***St. Paul writes in Chapter 12 to the Romans:***

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. 3 For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. 4 For as we have

# HOLY CROSS ORTHODOX BOOKSTORE

## FEATURED BOOKS OF THE MONTH

Every  
Time  
I Do My  
Cross

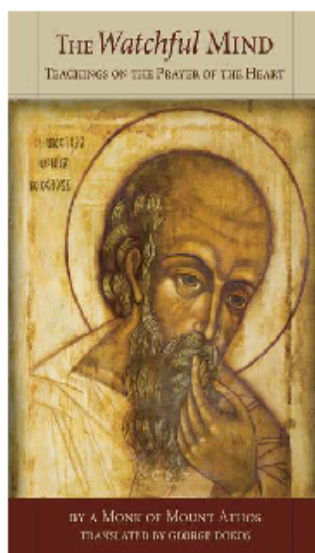


### EVERY TIME I DO MY CROSS

"Every time I do my cross, I am thankful for all that I have; the food I eat, my family and all of my blessings." With simple, yet charming text and illustrations, "Every Time I Do My Cross", by Presvytera Angela Alatzakis, shares with children the practice of making the "sign of the Cross" over their bodies as they pray. The story follows James through his Sunday: waking up, going to Liturgy, Church School, a soccer game, riding his bike, eating with his family, and then going to bed. For young children ages 2-8 years.

### THE WATCHFUL MIND: TEACHINGS ON THE PRAYER OF THE HEART

Written by an anonymous priest-monk living in asceticism on the Holy Mountain of Athos, "The Watchful Mind" is the fruit of a life of deep prayer. The unknown writer was a hesychast, a practitioner of stillness and the Jesus Prayer, and in these pages, he shares with readers his hidden life, a life filled with spiritual struggles, ecstatic experiences, and mystical revelations. This work is a deeply personal account of one holy man's unique journey in the life of contemplation. It touches on many aspects of the spiritual and ascetic life, particularly the themes of watchfulness, spiritual warfare, and prayer of the heart.



Our Holy Cross Orthodox Bookstore is located in the carpeted area of the Community Center. Please be sure to stop by any Sunday following Divine Liturgy. We offer a great selection of Orthodox Greeting Cards and Books for all ages. For additional information, please contact Mary Portellos at 724-941-8699 or [maryportellos@comcast.net](mailto:maryportellos@comcast.net)

# Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church

123 Gilkeson Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15228

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Under the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I, His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and His Eminence Metropolitan SAVAS of Pittsburgh

The mission of Holy Cross is to keep and proclaim, pure and undefiled, the Orthodox Christian faith and traditions in conformity with the doctrine, canons, worship, discipline and customs of the Church.

**Fr. Michael Kallaur, Economos**

**Fr. Daniel Korba, Presbyter**

**Dn. Frank Dickos, Deacon**

**Emmanuel Maginas, Pastoral Assistant**

Nena Jovonovich, Secretary

Website: [holycrosspit@mail.goarch.org](mailto:holycrosspit@mail.goarch.org)

Office (412) 833-3355 FAX (412) 833-3357

Community Center Phone: (412) 854-6001

**Office Hours** Monday-Friday 9am-5pm

## Organizations & Committees

Church School	Jennifer Moorcroft	(412) 626-9143
Philoptochos	Elaine Sofis	(412) 344-7046
Philoptochos	Connie Carahalos	(412) 561-4783
Membership		
Circle of Angels	Carol Halkias	(412) 276-5002
Angels	Christine Peters	(724) 693-9290
Garden of Love	Stacie Metrose	(412) 833-5164
	Didra Kirschner	(412) 561-2892
Greek School	Dena Yamalis	(412) 343-8355
Junior Dance	Kristina Gzikowski	(412) 257-5015
Senior Dance	Georgia Yamalis	(412) 728-2259
Choir	Thespina Christulides	(412) 608-6418
First Steps	Denise Sokos	(412) 257-1610
JOY	Christine Chapas	(724) 986-2082
Young Professionals	Thespina Christulides	(412) 608-6418
GOYA	Denise Melis	(412) 341-9264
Golden Club	Cynthia Kostelnik	(412) 833-9423
	Rene Koett	(412) 831-3142
Bookstore	Mary Portellos	(724) 941-8699
House Committee	Konrad Mayr	(412) 877-7780
Building Comm.	John Conomos	(412) 831-7997
Sts. Mary & Martha	Adrienne Dickos	(412) 833-4980

## \*Services:

Sundays:	8:15am Orthros
	9:30 am Divine Liturgy
Mondays:	6:30pm Paraclesis
	7:30 pm Bible Study
Weekdays:	8:30am Orthros
	9:30am Divine Liturgy
Saturdays:	Vespers 5pm

\*See monthly calendar for all services.

2020

## Parish Council

Stephanie Kladakis, President  
 Konrad Mayr, Vice President  
 Nicholas Chakos, Financial Secretary  
 Jennifer Liokereas, Treasurer  
 Joy Palonis, Secretary  
 Dena Galie  
 John Hoenig  
 Frank Kalogeris  
 Bob Kirschner  
 Jordan Nicholas  
 Emanuel Panos  
 Deno Pappas  
 Bill Poutous  
 George Sokos  
 Georgia Yamalis

**Funeral/Memorial information:** Use of the Community Center is available for parishioner funeral lunches at no charge. Parishioners may contact any caterer they choose to purchase and prepare their **Makaria** (Mercy Meal). Contact the church office for suggestions if you need a referral.  
 For **Kollyva**, you may bring your own or contact Denise Melis directly (412) 341-9264.



**Coffee Hour** fellowship is an extension of our Divine Liturgy! Please gather with family, koumbari or friends to sponsor/prepare one Sunday. See the calendar on website for open dates, and call the church office to confirm.



many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. 6 Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith; 7 if ministry, let us use it in our ministering; he who teaches, in teaching; 8 he who exhorts, in exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

9 Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. 10 Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; 11 not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; 12 rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; 13 distributing to the needs "of the saints, given to hospitality.

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. 16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord. 20 Therefore "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

We are called to be transformed by God's grace and mercy. Lights to the world, saints set apart for the good works God expects of us. The Feast of the Transfiguration (celebrated August 6<sup>th</sup>), was a revelation to the disciples; Peter, James, and John. They were able experience Jesus the Christ as He truly is and as much as the disciples were able to endure, the Awesome Divinity of God. Jesus shone with such radiance, He was brighter than the sun. Moses and Elijah appeared talking with Christ about the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophecies. The Suffering Servant, the Obedient Son, The Lamb who takes away the sins of the world, was now going to Jerusalem to offer Himself voluntarily for the life and salvation of the world. This miraculous experience prepared the disciples to understand that Christ's Passion was voluntary and necessary for the life and salvation of the world. This Feast of the Lord's Transfiguration is a

reminder to all the faithful that we must be transformed by God's grace. Sickness, suffering, the crosses that we experience in this life, all serve to draw us closer to Him. The Church challenges us to use our gifts and to help one another, to serve and love one another, not to judge and condemn one another. We endure the present circumstances of our situation with both the confidence and knowledge that evil will not prevail. God will use whatever is plaguing us to strengthen our faith and place our trust in Him.

The victory that we seek in Christ is revealed most beautifully in the Feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God. The Virgin Mary, Panagia (the All Holy One), dedicated her life to serving God. From the very beginning of her life, she was dedicated to God and then raised in the Temple, serving out her time in prayer and obedience. She was betrothed to Joseph as a protector and someone who would take care of her. When she became of age, she was called upon to be the Mother of God. Her response to God's call should be etched in our hearts and minds, "Behold I am the Handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to your word." This was her response to the Archangel Gabriel who came to bring the good news of her high calling. It was not without fear and trepidation that she accepted such a calling, yet she trusted in God and believed that all would be revealed in time. Her time of death was no different from the rest of her life. She trusted herself completely into the hands of her Son and our God. We too must aspire to such faith and obedience. The Theotokos is our great example and fervent intercessor before her Son. We call upon her assistance at all times, especially in times of trial to help us and deliver us from the perils that seek to destroy us.

My brothers and sisters, let us walk with humility, love, and obedience. Let us not judge one another and express hatred. Rather let us be transformed by the current circumstances to people of faith, fearless before evil and deceit, looking for opportunities to serve and help one another as we all strive to be transformed by God's grace and mercy.

A blessed conclusion to the Church year and much strength and courage as we begin a new liturgical year in whatever challenges we may encounter.

With love and prayers,  
Fr. Michael



**A NEW WAY OF SEEING**  
**THIRD SUNDAY OF MATTHEW- HOLY CROSS (6/28/20)**

What's it like to walk in the footsteps of Jesus? I've had this blessing 6 times in the course of my ministry. Not only does the historical Jesus of the Gospel come alive for me, but also the very places which He sanctified by His presence. Indeed, the landscape itself takes on a significance that lifts me beyond myself to a higher plane of reality. To me it's like walking into the Holy Altar for the beginning of the Liturgy. It makes every Liturgy special. Even here, in a gymnasium where we have social events, basketball tournaments and coffee hours, I feel that something changes inside of me during the Liturgy. It becomes the Holy Land for me all over again. I see things differently because I have walked in the footsteps of Jesus.

Tracing the beginning of Jesus' ministry through Matthew's Gospel, three locales, in particular, stand out- a river, a mountain, and a grassy hill that gently slopes upwards from the sea of Galilee. The river represents the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus. It was here that He was baptized in the Jordan by John. After the river comes the mountain in the Judean wilderness. The Mount of Temptations is where Jesus was tempted by the devil, the place that He deliberately chose the methods He would use to carry out His task. There would be no appeasing the masses, no spectacular signs, no grasping for power, wealth and earthly kingdoms.

Then Matthew places Jesus on the summit of a grassy hill, from which vantage point He could give His famous "Sermon of the Mount." In order to complete a great task, a person needs his helpers, his assistants, his staff. But if they are to be of one mind with the Master, they must first have the right message, which they could then take to the world.

Today, I want to take one of the great teachings from the Sermon on the Mount, so that we can learn how Jesus wants us to see reality. Jesus taught, "The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is sound (*aplous*), your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is not sound (*poniros*), your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness" (Math. 6: 22,23).

One thing Jesus did not want to do was to send His disciples into the mission field with distorted vision. Therefore, He spoke of one special virtue which fills the eye with light, and one special fault which fills the eye with darkness. So we have two types of eyes, one that is *sound* and one that is *not sound*. That is the literal meaning of the Greek, but these words have a special twist to them as used in Scripture.

The word for sound is *haplous*. Regularly in the Greek Bible this word means generous. James speaks of God who gives *liberally* and the adverb he uses is *haplous*. Paul urges his friends to give liberally (*haplous*). Also, Paul reminds the Corinthian Church of the generosity (*haplotes*) of the churches in Macedonia, and talks about their own liberal (*haplous*) distribution to all men (2 Cor. 9:31). To get the real meaning of this we must translate *haplous*, not sound, but generous. It is the generous eye which Jesus is commending.

St. Paisios shares an example of a high school student whose eyesight shone with innocent clarity. He came to the Elder's monastic cell, knocking on the door, asking to see him. Paisios, hiding his true identity, answered,

"...he's not here, he went to buy cigarettes." The boy, thinking positively, answered back: "it looks like he went to help someone." No," the scandalous answer came back, "He went to buy cigarettes for himself. He smoked them all and was desperate for a cigarette. He left me here alone, and I don't know when he will be back. If he takes too long, I'll just leave." The student's eyes teared, and with another generous thought he said, "We torment Father Paisios." "Why do you want to see him," the Elder asked. The boy responded, "I just want to receive his blessing." The Elder mockingly shot back, "What blessing do you expect to receive from him, you fool? He's deluded. I know him well. There's no grace in him. Don't waste your time waiting for him to return. He'll be grouchy; he may even be drunk, because he drinks, too." In spite of all this, the young man still held out hope. So Fr. Paisios, still hiding his identity, told him, I will wait for him a little longer, what do you want me to tell him?" The boy, still with good thoughts, replied: "I have a letter to give him, but I will wait so that I can receive his blessing."

Paisios was amazed at the boy's clarity of spiritual vision and kind thoughts. No insult, no hint of scandal, no shaming remark kept him from losing faith in the Elder. Every time the Elder tore down the good of his own reputation, the boy immediately created a better thought and drew an even better conclusion. Why? Because there was no cunning in him, only light.

Now we come to the eye filled with darkness, the one that Jesus called evil or *poneros*. Again that is the normal meaning of the word in Greek. But in the Bible this word regularly means *stingy* or *grudging*. In the book of Proverbs we read: "Eat not the bread of him who has an evil eye" (Proverbs 23:6). That is to say, "Don't be the guest in the house of a man who grudges every bite you eat." To get the real gist of what Jesus meant, we must translate *poneros*, not evil, but grudging and stingy in our dealings with others.

This negativity pollutes our opinion of others. We only see their faults. In a certain village in Scotland lived a half-witted man whose coat presented a curious appearance. Down the front, it was covered with patches of various sizes, mostly large. When asked why the coat was configured so haphazardly, he answered that the patches represented the sins of his neighbors. He pointed to each patch and told the story of the sin of someone in the village, then went on to another and another, until he told the sins of everyone in the village. On the back of his coat was a patch, no bigger than a small coin. When asked what that one represented, he said, "That's my own sin, and I cannot see it." Here was a man who saw only the worst in others and the best in himself. His eye was truly grudging and stingy.

So what is Jesus saying from that grassy plain on the Mt. of Beatitudes? "There is nothing like generosity for giving you a clear and undistorted view of life and of people; and there is nothing like the grudging and ungenerous spirit for distorting your view of life and people." To be generous, to allow the poverty of others to affect us even more than our own, to stretch toward the other with a helping hand is to begin to see people and things clearly. It is then that our eye is flooded with light. Is this not how Jesus want all of us to see? May it be so. Amen.

~Fr. John Chakos



**CONGRATULATIONS**  
 to  
**Zachary,**  
 son of Greg and Dina Hartlep,  
 and  
**Apostoli,**  
 son of Rev. Father Michael  
 & Presvytera Eleni Kallaur,  
  
 who have both attained  
 the rank of  
**Eagle Scout.**





## Holy Cross Philoptochos August News Letter

There was no Philoptochos meeting in July, and there will be no meeting in August. I hope that you have been well and safe this summer!

Our next general Philoptochos meeting will be Tuesday, September 1 at 7pm via Zoom. The Zoom link will be sent to Philoptochos members via email prior to the meeting. Under the current guidelines, only 25 may be present indoors at one time for non-liturgical events. If permitted to meet, it will be in the community center with proper distancing protocols.

Stephanie Myers, Parish Council President, will be the Zoom administrator.

As stated in the July News Letter, **there will be NO Philoptochos Autumn Food Fair this October.** The health and safety of our members and parishioners takes precedence.

\$1000 was donated to Camp Kesem in July as part of our annual budget. This is a camp for children whose parent suffers from cancer. This year it is a virtual camp.

Thank you for your continuing support of Philoptochos.

We hope to "see" you on Tuesday, September 1, 7pm at our Zoom General Philoptochos meeting. The October Philoptochos meeting date will be determined.

**Reminders, Announcements and Updates will be sent via-email to our members.**

**Elaine Sofis, Philoptochos President**



GREEK  
DANCE

SENIOR  
RECOGNITION



# Something' s cooking...at last!

There has been much discussion among all of us regarding this year's Food Festival and how to protect our parish-ioners and customers with a safe environment. After careful deliberation and research, Parish Council has decided to cancel our cherished Food Festival with on-site dining for 2020.

With the ever changing circumstances in the world, we have decided to do an "internet order only" Food Sale on Friday and Saturday, September 11-12 that will offer a limited menu with take-out only. This event will not replace our very popular and loved tradition, but certainly can satisfy cravings for our Greek food specialties.

As details are still being finalized, please hold these dates in your calendar. We will also be asking for a small number of volunteers in the near future to prepare limited food items and pastries. More information will follow shortly.

Regards,  
€ Takis Kontoulis

This is the first of a series of projects that the joint groups of the Greek Room Committee, the American Hellenic Foundation of Western Pennsylvania, cultural organizations and colleagues in Greece are spearheading to commemorate and celebrate the 200th Anniversary of the start of the Greek Struggle for Independence here in Western PA. Our activities are in synergy with the "Greece 2021" Committee and we hope that all of you, together with the membership of the Greek-American cultural organizations you are part of, come to join us so that we can, together united, commemorate and celebrate this once in a lifetime milestone in \*\*\*unity\*\*\*.



## **"Bridges of White and Blue"**

### **A Celebration of Western Pennsylvania's Greek-American roots in the Greek Revolution of 1821**

**March 2021 marks a milestone in the history of Greece and its Diaspora.  
Together, we will celebrate the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the beginning of the Greek Struggle for Independence.**

Every town and village in Greece, small or large, is known to have participated in some fashion, on land and sea, in the Liberation in the years immediately preceding the Revolutionary period as well as during the decade-long struggle, that resulted in the founding of the Greek nation. Many individuals and families offered sacrifices of every kind – including their lives – to win their freedom. These "unknown" heroes are only now beginning to be discovered.

With the objective of unearthing the undiscovered facets of the Greek Revolution, leveraging a synergy between organizations in Greece and our region, we have begun a unique and novel legacy project that informs our region's contribution to the "Greece 2021" Initiative as part of our celebration of the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary milestone.

The first handful of immigrants who settled in Western Pennsylvania as early as 1830 eventually grew to a large and diverse community that, at its peak, is estimated to have consisted of approximately 37,000 individuals. Today, descendants of these pioneers can count at least one ancestor, if not more, from areas in Greece where the Revolution was launched and from where it progressed and grew. We have discovered descendants of "unknown" heroes of the Greek Revolution who immigrated to the greater Western PA region, eventually planting the seeds of what, today, constitutes a Greek base of radiant colors on the regional immigrant American canvas.

*This legacy project is slated to be completed in time for March 2021. It will be the basis of a historic celebration of those ancestors, their descendants and their families here in Western Pennsylvania.*

*The celebration will unveil a historic exhibit (that will travel to Greece, especially to those towns and villages) as well as an audiovisual memorial to be on permanent display, freely accessible by the public, as an attestation to the Greek struggle for independence. As a reminder and challenge to future generations of Americans to embrace the universalizing ideals of Hellenism in making America a more perfect country.*

We have begun collecting data from public and private resources here and in Greece (e.g. at the University of Pittsburgh, and in the records of the "League of the Descendants of the Revolutionary Families of 1821 and Historic Families of Greece") assisted by our colleagues at the European Art Center of Greece. However, in order to obtain and present as complete a record as possible, we are asking all individuals in Western Pennsylvania who can claim Greek ancestry to send us as much information as feasible in terms of the following:

- Surnames, names, and any "nicknames" of your Greek-origin grandparents, great-grandparents, and village/town/city/region of origin in Greece;
- Year in which grandparents, great-grandparents left Greece and/or arrived to the USA (and port of entry if known);
- Any information (anecdotal or documented) or stories that you remember, passed down from your parents/grand-parents, that link your ancestors to facets of the Greek Revolution;
- A picture of your grandparents and/or great-grandparents (scanned at a minimum resolution of 300 dpi).

Please submit the information requested above and picture(s) to the American Hellenic Foundation of Western Pennsylvania ([contact@pahellenicfoundation.org](mailto:contact@pahellenicfoundation.org)) with your contact details (name, email, telephone #) no later than the 30<sup>th</sup> of October, 2020.

*"Through our ancestors, their lives and dreams, all of us have – inside of us – a part of the Struggle for Greek Independence, 200 Years ago"*

*"A celebration of our common roots, to remember where we started from, to realize where we stand, and to decide where we want to go"*

A project by:  
The Greek Room Committee of the Nationality Rooms Program at the University of Pittsburgh,  
The American Hellenic Foundation of Western Pennsylvania  
&  
The European Art Center of Greece (Peania, Attica, Greece)

## **The Second Adam Brings the New Eve into Real Life: Homily for the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos in the Orthodox Church**

*Fr. Philip LeMasters*

There is much in our culture that tempts us to think of faith and religion as arbitrary matters of personal preference or antiquated tradition that are not nearly as important as matters of “real life.” Even a few moments’ thought about the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos, however, reveals that this great feast calls us to embrace the fullness of life, the deepest reality of what it means to be a human being in the world as we know it.

At the end of the Mother of God’s earthly life, the Apostles were miraculously assembled in her presence. St. Thomas, however, arrived three days late. When her tomb was opened for him to pay his last respects, her body was not there. Even as she was the first to accept Christ into her life – and in a unique way into her womb as His virgin mother – she was the first to follow Him as a whole, complete person into the Kingdom of Heaven. She is the first and greatest example of one who receives, loves, and serves Jesus Christ with every ounce of her being.

When we think of the Theotokos, we are immediately reminded of how God creates us male and female in the divine image and likeness, and uses both sexes together to bring salvation to the world. The Church knows the Theotokos as “the New Eve” through whom the Son of God became “the Second Adam.” The first Eve came from the body of the first Adam, while the Second Adam becomes a human being through the body of the New Eve. The imagery of male and female continues with the Church as the Bride of Christ, which is born from the blood and water which flowed from the Lord’s body at His crucifixion, for they symbolize the Eucharist and baptism through which we share in the life of our Lord. He is the Groom and we, the Church, are His bride. The biblical drama of salvation culminates in the wedding feast of the Lamb in Revelation, which fulfills so much imagery from Christ’s teaching and ministry about the marriage banquet as a sign of the Kingdom of God.

The term “Theotokos” means “Bearer” or “Mother of God,” but not, of course, in the sense of her somehow being the mother of the Holy Trinity or a goddess. From as far back as anyone can tell, Christians have honored Mary as Theotokos in recognition of the divinity of her Son. Those who refused to call her Theotokos, such as the heretic Nestorius, denied a true Incarnation and did not

think that the baby born to her was truly God. The Church teaches that the Virgin Mary is every bit as human as the rest of us, but in her purity, obedience, and receptivity to God's will, she freely agreed to become the mother of the Son of God, Who alone is fully divine and fully human. Hers is a unique and glorious vocation. "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb."

By accepting her life-changing calling, that obviously only a woman could fulfill, the Theotokos heals and restores the vocation of motherhood to welcome and nurture new life. In contrast to the mortality and corruption that have been the common lot of everyone born since the fall of our first parents, she gives life to the One who conquers sin and death. In the place of slavery to the passions that so easily makes the circumstances surrounding conception and birth tragically broken, she brings forth the Savior in purity and faith. And when her Son turns water into wine at the wedding in Cana of Galilee, He does so at her request. This miraculous sign reveals the potential of the union of man and woman to become an icon of our salvation, our true participation in the heavenly banquet.

In all these ways, the Theotokos' life is about the fulfillment of our broken and imperfect selves and world. God called her to play a unique role as a woman and a mother in setting right what has gone wrong with all the children of the first Adam and Eve. Her example stands as a powerful reminder that God's salvation is neither an escape from the world as we know it nor an imaginary endeavor of simply pretending all is well. The Theotokos dealt with matters of life and death, challenges as unsettling as a surprising pregnancy, the suspicion of others about the miraculous conception, and the rejection and public execution of her only Son. This is the stuff of real life by anyone's definition.

We celebrate her Dormition, her "falling asleep" at end of her earthly life, because even in death she is a brilliant icon of God's intentions for us all. Even as her Son's tomb is empty on the third day, so is hers. The New Eve joins the Second Adam in the heavenly kingdom, thus showing that the man and the woman who bear God's image and likeness may find together the fulfillment of the gracious purposes for which God breathed life into them in the first place. Together with the Ascension of the risen Christ into heaven forty days after His resurrection, her assumption into the heavenly kingdom presents an icon of the salvation of all humanity, of the entire creation. Not only is eternal life a reality for her



Son, the God-Man, but He shares that blessedness with her and all who like her respond to Him with faith, love, and obedience. He makes us all guests at the heavenly banquet, the wedding feast of the Lamb, where we as the Bride of Christ become true participants by grace in the divine nature. We thereby enter into the eternal life that He shares with the Father and the Holy Spirit as whole, complete persons united in love. By sharing in the Lord's bodily resurrection, we become "one flesh" with Him in the glory of heaven.

It is surely not an accident that the Theotokos' story began with an old Jewish couple, righteous and barren, who prayed to God for a child and dedicated her in the Temple where she grew up. Sts. Joachim and Anna remind us of Abraham and Sarah and of others in the biblical narrative who struggled with infertility. The unique blessing of man and woman, created together in God's image and likeness, to bring new life into the world out of love for one another should remind us of the overflowing love of the Holy Trinity which created all that is and enables us all to become participants in eternal life. To set right all that has gone wrong with man and woman from time immemorial, the Second Person of the Trinity, the Son of God, became the Son of the Virgin Mary. She fulfills the meaning of all humanity in saying "yes" with her whole person to the Lord in ways that the first Adam and Eve did not. In this way, she entered into real life, into true humanity, the fulfillment of the image and likeness of God.

In the icon of the Dormition, Christ holds the soul of the Theotokos as she held Him as a baby. This detail indicates that she has been born anew in the eternal life of the heavenly kingdom. What else would we expect for one who played her unique role in the salvation of the world so faithfully? She welcomed Christ fully into her life and now He welcomes her fully into His. Together they show us the ultimate purpose of our creation as male and female, which is to enter into real life, to find fulfillment for every dimension of our existence in God. So let us celebrate the Dormition of the Most Holy Theotokos by honoring her, asking for her prayers, and — above all else — following her blessed example of responding to the Lord's calling: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." That is how we will become truly ourselves in the image and likeness of God.

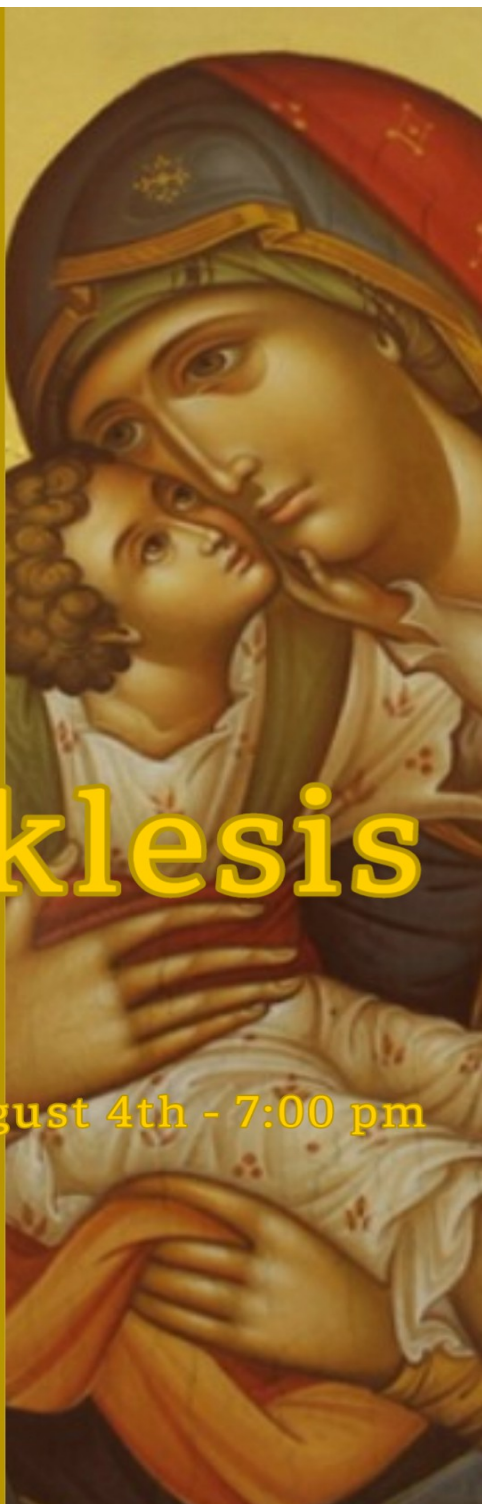
**Metropolis of Pittsburgh Y2AM**



# Paraklesis

**Tuesday, August 4th - 7:00 pm**

**Join virtually  
via our social  
media  
platforms,  
including  
YouTube.**



# HOLY CROSS

SUN	MON	Tue
<b>2</b> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	<b>3</b>  6:30pm Paraclesis	<b>4</b>  6:30pm Paraclesis
<b>9 St. Herman of Alaska</b> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	<b>10</b>  6:30pm Paraclesis	<b>11</b>  6:30pm Paraclesis
<b>16</b> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>  7pm Parish Council Meeting
<b>23</b> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	<b>24</b>  6:30pm Paraclesis	<b>25</b>
<b>30</b> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	<b>31</b>  6:30pm Paraclesis	

# AUGUST 2020

Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			<i>1 Dormition fast begins</i> 5pm Vespers
5  <i>Vigil for Transfiguration</i> 4pm Vespers 5pm Matins 6pm Divine Liturgy	6 <i>Holy Transfiguration Monastery</i> Services online <b>*See below*</b>	7  6:30pm Paraclesis	8  5pm Vespers
12  6:30pm Paraclesis	13  6:30pm Paraclesis	14  5pm Vespers at Holy Cross	15 <i>Dormition of the Theotokos</i> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy
19  7pm Bible Study via Zoom	20	21	22 11am Calendar Meeting  Wedding/ NO Vespers
26  7pm Bible Study via Zoom	27 <i>St. Phanourios</i> 8:30 Orthros 9:30 Div Liturgy	28	29 <i>Beheading of St. John the Baptist</i> 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy  5pm Vespers
<p><b>***Hierarchical Divine Liturgy live stream***</b>  from Holy Transfiguration Monastery begins at 10am, Thursday, August 6</p> <p><a href="http://www.orthodoxmonasteryellwoodcity.org/chapel">http://www.orthodoxmonasteryellwoodcity.org/chapel</a></p>			

## HEAVEN ON A PIECE OF DRY BREAD

Holy Cross Church- 7-12-20 by Fr. John Chakos

Once an American went to Mt. Athos to visit Elder Paisios, whose feast day we celebrate today. The Elder asked him, "What has this great nation of yours accomplished?" "We went to the moon," he replied. "How far is that," Paisios continued. "About a half a million kilometers away," he responded. "How many millions of dollars did you spend to get there?" Paisios, asked next. "Since 1950," the American answered, "we spent rivers of dollars." "Did you get to God? How far is He?" the Elder added. "God is very, very far," came the answer. "Well," Paisios replied, "it only takes us a dry piece of bread."

Imagine, a piece of dry bread and we can go to heaven and see God. This was a trip that Paisios made many times in the course of his holy life. Surely, we should want to get acquire those ingredients. According to Isaiah the Solitary, two things are needed: **"placing all our hope in God and being filled with compassion for all."**

Let's start with the **first ingredient- placing our hope in God**. *Today, you came to the Liturgy, perhaps with some trepidation and surely wearing your mask, but you came. Yes, it's easier to watch online, but it's not quite the same. The underlying motive to our hope is reaching the Kingdom of Heaven, and there finding God. Why? He fulfills our deepest yearnings for wholeness and holiness. Alone, and without him what are we in ourselves? Nothing!*

It was wisely said by Thomas Merton, that *"if we follow nothing but our own natures, our own philosophies, our own level of ethics, we will end up in hell."* What a depressing thought, if it were true. But in reality God gives us a nature that is oriented towards Him. He created us with a soul that was made to find its perfection, not in itself, but in Him in a way infinitely beyond our reach. Therefore with hope, and a piece of dry bread, our soul, which is a free gift given to us, can be enhanced with another free gift that perfects our nature. We call it grace. Without it, God's work would not even be half done. Therein lies our hope.

We can see this hope manifested in today's Gospel, as Jesus enters the disordered world of two screaming demoniacs living among the tombs. The Lord showed us that there is no place beyond the pale of His love. Even in this foreboding place of torment, this place of death, hope was to be found. Jesus expelled the legion of demons, consigning them to a watery demise. Amidst all this decay, He brought hope.

At times our world feels like a place of torment. Today, we wear masks and hide in our homes for fear of the pandemic. The young want to play, but their elders hide for fear of dying. Morgues are filling up. The air reeks with the smell of blood. Black clouds of hate block the light of heaven from our eyes. Our country is divided. The economy is in free fall. Have we made our own hell?

During the volcanic eruption of Mt. St. Helen, intense heat melted away the soil, leaving bare rock coated with a thick mantle of ash. Naturalists of the Forest Service wondered how much time must pass before any living thing could grow there. Then one day a park employee stumbled across a lush patch of wildflowers, ferns, and grasses rooted tenaciously to a strip of the desolation. It took a few seconds for him to notice an eerie fact: this patch of vegetation formed the shape of an elk. Plants had sprouted from the organic material that lay where an elk had been buried by ash. From then on, the naturalists looked



for such patches of luxuriance that led to a resurgence of life.

Such patches of luxuriant green are still at work in the world through the teachings of Jesus about the kingdom in our midst. He described this secret force in terms of sheep among wolves, treasure hidden in a field, the tiniest seed in the garden, wheat growing among weeds, a pinch of yeast worked into bread dough, a sprinkling of salt on meat- all of which hinted at a movement that works within society, changing it from the inside out. We do not need a shovel-ful of salt to preserve a slab of ham; a dusting will do. Even a dry piece of bread can take us to heaven.

This leads us to the **second ingredient, *having compassion for all***. *This requires more from us than a pious hope. In the words of Thomas Merton, "our time needs more than devout, Church-going people who avoid serious wrongs...but who seldom do anything constructive or positively good." He goes on to say, "It is not enough to be outwardly respectable...without deeper or more positive moral values." The experience of twenty-first century life has shown us that it is possible for us to live in a shockingly immoral society with our own compartmentalized life of piety, closed off from everything else on the face of the earth. The Church is not supposed to be our private Neverland, but a place of spiritual ferment that inspires us to go out among the poor and possessed of this world.*

Let me finish with the story that St. Porphyrios shares about an elder who had two disciples. He wanted to help them grow spiritually, but had some doubts as to their progress towards heaven. He prayed for a sign from God, but got none. A scheduled vigil many hours away saw the two disciples leave in the morning, so that they would get there early. The elder would leave in the afternoon.

After the two disciples had traveled a considerable distance, they heard the groans of a seriously injured man who begged to be taken to the first village. They, however, were unmoved by his pleas, saying: "We can't. We are under strict orders to prepare for the feast. We have to fulfill our duty," and they left. In the afternoon the Elder left to meet up with them, traveling along the same road. He came to the place where the wounded man was, and seeing him, he approached, saying: "What happened to you man of God? What's wrong? How long have you been here? Didn't anyone see you?"

The man answered, "Two monks passed by here in the morning, and I asked them to help me, but they were in a hurry to go to the feast." Then the elder responded, "Don't worry, I will take you." "You can't," the man replied. "You're elderly and it is impossible for you to carry me." The elder was undeterred, saying: "I will bend down so that you can grab hold of me and little by little I will take you to some neighboring village. A little today, a little tomorrow and I'll get you there."

And with great difficulty he trudged through the desert sand. The sweat poured down his face like a river and he thought to himself: "Maybe I can make it in three days. After many hours, he began to feel his load becoming lighter, until a certain point when he felt nothing at all. Then he looked over his shoulder to see what was going on, and to his surprise he realized that he was carrying an angel. The angel told him: "God sent me to tell you that your two disciples are not worthy of the Kingdom of God, because they don't have love."

Are we worthy of the Kingdom of God? Will we go the extra mile for someone who needs us? Are we willing to take on someone else's problem as our own? Do we place all our hope in God? If so, we have the right ingredients. No space shuttle is needed. We can get to God on a piece of dry bread.

## Sacraments

### Funerals

**May 29- †John Nick Alexiades (87)** survived by his loving wife Sophia of 57 years, his daughters Anna, and Irene (Yango), and his son Nick (Rinoula). John had 7 wonderful grandchildren.



**June 20 ~†Helen Florent (88)** Surviving are her husband of 67 years Daniel Florent, and children Gus (Barb) Florent, Sophia (George) Omiros and Harry (Kathy) Florent, grandchildren, great grandchildren , siblings, cousins, nieces and nephews.

**July 17- †Chrysanthé (Chrys) Panos** Proud of her Greek and Cretan heritage, she was a member of Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church where she sang in the choir, taught Greek dancing and was a member of the Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society. She also held various leadership positions including a seat on the Board of Directors of the Pancretan Association of America's (PAA) local Arcadi-Maleme chapter. She was famous for her spanakopita, baklava and chocolate chip cookies. But her true passion through life remained the love of dance, especially Greek. She said, "As long as I'm on my feet, I'm fine." She served as president of the Assumption Greek Orthodox Church Philoptochos Society (Erie). A Sunday school teacher, she was also an advisor to the Junior Greek Orthodox Youth Association (GOYA) and Greek dance instructor to both children and adults while a member of the Assumption parish. Chrys was preceded in death by her parents Emmanuel and Anna (Apostolakis) Bolaris of Dormont, PA, originally from Chania, Crete, Greece. In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by her former husband, Nick Panos of Erie. She is survived by sons, George Panos (Kim), Emanuel (Angela) and John (Christina); and grandchildren, Nicholas, Alexander, Chrysann, John, Patricia and Elias. She is also survived by a sister and two brothers, and many nieces and nephews.



## Baptisms

**December 28, 2019** ~ **Dimitra Theresa**, daughter of Maria (Houmis) and James Buldas. Godparents are George and Alisia Geanopoulos.

**January II, 2020** ~ **Georgia (Anastasia)**, daughter of Erin (Maskiewicz) and Rudolph Hudale. Godparent is Jamie (Argyro) Miller.

**June 8** ~ **Laurel (Markella)**, daughter of Paulette (Lowe) and David Podlesnik, Godparents are Nicole and Garrett McLean.

**June 21** ~ **Niko (Nikodemos)**, son of Ashley (Knapil) and Nicholas Aspiotes. Godparent is Christine Aspiotes.

**June 27** ~ **Reagan Anne (Anna)**, daughter of Michelle (McClellan) and Dean Sappas. Godparents are Alexander Hanna and Stephanie Sappas.

## Chrismations

**June 27** ~ **Michelle K. Sappas**. Sponsor is Maria Hanna.

## Sympathy to the families of :

† **Amalia Stamoolis** (90) April 4 She is survived by her son Peter (the late Renee), and daughter Effie (Gus) Kilantonis. and Yia Yia of many.



† **Mary Sockos** (89) passed away June 22 survived by her loving husband of 65 years George Sockos; beloved daughters Cindy (Peter) Gidas and Betty (George); cherished Yia Yia of Jason (Laura) Gidas, Maria (Kevin), Michael (Katie) Gidas, Dena (Quinn), and Laurie (Jordan) Roorback; loving GiGi of many great grandchildren.

† **Christopher Conway** (30) passed away suddenly July 13 Beloved husband of Xanthia (Saganis); loving son of Timothy P. and Kim M. (Dugas) Conway; dear brother of Laurie (Joshua May) Conway; grandson of Jean (late Daniel G.) Conway and Jean (late Donald Joseph) Dugas; son in law of Theodore (Tonni) Saganis; sister in law to Aleah (Joseph) Streiff.



† **Michael Aristocles James** (50) passed away suddenly July 20, preceded in death by his mother, Lee Kristakis James. He is survived by his loving wife, Lisa Lanigan James; his children, Ellie and Colby James; his father, George James; his sisters, a brother, and many nieces and nephews.

Emmanuel Maginas's sermon from Sunday, July 19, 2020  
Sunday of the Holy Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council  
(Chalcedon, 451)

Many of us have heard the devastating news that has exploded recently in various news outlets: namely, that the Great Church of Christ, Hagia Sophia (the Holy Wisdom of God) in Istanbul (Constantinople) is going to be turned into a mosque once again. While it has functioned as a museum – and thus a neutral space, accessible to all – for over 80 years, the Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, has decided to revoke its museum status and turn it into an active mosque. This brings great weight to the hearts of so many Christians around the world – myself included – and I’m sure this is on the minds of some of us today, weighing us down and bringing sorrow to our hearts. While this transformation of Hagia Sophia will not be the focus of today’s homily, I would, however, like to begin there: at the Great Church of Christ. Let us travel back in time for a minute, and envision ourselves in Constantinople 1500 years ago.

The date was Sunday, July 15, in the year of our Lord 518. Although the Great Church of the Holy Wisdom of God (Hagia Sophia) that we know today had not been built yet (it was completed in 537), an older version of the church existed there; it, too, was dedicated to Christ, the Wisdom of God, and was the Patriarchal Cathedral. Historical sources tell us that a grand Divine Liturgy was being conducted there on this day. The city had been divided for a while between allegiants to the Orthodox Faith, and those who were partial to the Monophysite heresy. Church leaders had taken different sides, and even though the Council of Chalcedon had met and proclaimed the Orthodox teaching 67 years before, in 451, there was still uncertainty as to whether it would be accepted by the whole Church as an Ecumenical Council.

Sunday, July 15, 518, was the date of the enthronement

of the new Patriarch of Constantinople, John II. As the new Patriarch made his way through the crowd to the center of the church, the people started shouting spontaneously, "Declare the holy council already! Declare the holy council! Let the holy council be declared already! Declare the Council of Chalcedon already! Let it be declared today and celebrated tomorrow!" Thus the new Patriarch was constrained to announce to the people, through his deacon, that the Feast of the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon would be celebrated the following day: Monday, July 16.

This Feast of the Fourth Ecumenical Council came to be celebrated annually on July 16. Over time, this Feast along with other commemorations of the different Ecumenical Councils were eventually transferred to the nearest Sunday, so that they could be observed and celebrated by as many people as possible. Thus, the current rubrics of the Church call for this commemoration of the Fourth Ecumenical Council to be made on the Sunday that falls from the 13<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> of July. Whichever Sunday falls during this period is when we celebrate the Holy Fathers of the Fourth Ecumenical Council. This year, it is today – July 19.

(Sources: Henry Wace and William Coleman Piercy, *Dictionary of Christian Biography and Literature* [available online at WikiSource [here](#), or by searching the keywords above]; and Basileios Giannopoulos, "The Ecumenical Councils in Orthodox Worship" [in Greek: Αἱ Οἰκουμενικαὶ Σύνοδοι εἰς τὴν Ὁρθόδοξον Λατρείαν].)

But what is it exactly that are we celebrating today?

There have been many councils of bishops convened by the Church over the course of its history, but only seven have borne the title "Ecumenical." This means that the council in question had representatives from all over the Christian world, and that it proclaimed the unadulterated Apostolic Faith, reaffirmed at each Council against different groups of heretics. Each Ecumenical Council dealt with a dogmatic controversy that had arisen in the Church – meaning that the issue at stake had to do with fundamental teachings of the Church, most having to do with who Jesus Christ is.

Continued next page... →



Perhaps, of the seven Ecumenical Councils, we may be most familiar with the Seventh Council, convened in 787, which affirmed the use of icons as good and even necessary for Christian worship. This council's decision is celebrated in full force on the First Sunday of Great Lent, the Sunday of Orthodoxy.

But on this Sunday in July we celebrate the Fourth Council. The Fourth Council took place in the year 451 A.D., in the city of Chalcedon, which is across the water from Constantinople, on the other side of the Bosphorus Strait. The Fathers who gathered in Chalcedon affirmed both the complete divinity and the complete humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ.

They were "facing off," so to speak, against the *Monophysite* heretics Eutyches and Dioscorus, who taught that Christ had only *one* nature (the word *monophysite* comes from the Greek words for one nature – *μόνος* + *φύσις*). These heretics taught that when humanity encountered divinity in the person of Jesus Christ, the divinity swallowed up the humanity, since it was so much greater. But the Holy Fathers affirmed instead that the Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully Man; that he is *one* Christ and Lord, known in *two* natures, fully human and fully divine. These *two* natures operate in his *one* person in a manner such that they are unconfused with each other. They remain unchanged, indivisible, and inseparable (paraphrase of the Chalcedonian Definition).

That's some heavy theology. His natures may be unconfused, but our heads may very well be confused trying to grapple with all of this. What does it mean for us? Let's imagine for a moment the thinking of the heretics. *If* Christ is only divine, and if he is not also human, then our entire salvation is false (St. Ephraim the Syrian, *Sermon on the Transfiguration*). We cannot reach out and touch God in his naked divinity, because God is wholly other. He is entirely different from us creatures. But God became a creature. He became consubstantial with us humans. As a man in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God created a bridge of sorts between us and God

the Father. It is through Christ that we have access to God the Father. Because Christ is fully human, we can reach out and touch him. And because Christ is God with exactly the same divinity as his Father, Christ unites us to the Father (Fr. Thomas Hopko). Thus, by reaching out and touching the fully human and fully divine Christ, we also touch our God.

As you may imagine, the arguments for or against Monophysitism were quite heated, and were not easily settled with debate. At the church in Chalcedon where the Council was meeting the relics of a universally recognized Great Martyr were enshrined – those of the all-praised Euphemia (Εὐφημία). So, at the suggestion of the then-Patriarch of Constantinople, St. Anatolius, both sides wrote their respective confessions of faith and placed them inside the reliquary of St. Euphemia. They subsequently sealed the reliquary and devoted themselves to prayer and fasting for several days. At the end of this time, when they opened the reliquary, the Orthodox confession of Faith was being held tightly in the Saint's right hand, pressed to her heart, while the Monophysite confession of faith was beneath her feet. This miracle is celebrated every year on July 11, right before this Sunday of the Holy Fathers (we served Liturgy here this year on July 11, to commemorate this miracle).

By her miracle at the Council, St. Euphemia affirmed that we are saved by the true incarnation of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Our fully divine and fully human Savior still speaks to us through his saints, even down to the present day. They make present to us the reality of Christ and the confession of the correct doctrine. St. Euphemia's miracle underscored the importance of the Orthodox confession of the natures of Christ, and that one cannot say that both ways are blessed by God. May we also realize the treasure that we have in our Orthodox Faith, and may we allow ourselves to reach out and touch Christ, thus touching our most high God and becoming united with him for all eternity.

Amen.

It is a common, and even an expected aspect of human behavior to look for explanations for current events, and part of this is a tendency to fabricate what are known as conspiracy theories. Somehow it seems more comforting to our psyche to believe that some cabal of powerful people are pulling strings to accomplish their personal agendas than to accept that there are truly things that are beyond the capabilities of 21<sup>st</sup> century humanity. While we may not be in control, at least someone is, and even if they have self serving motives, that's still more acceptable to this mindset than accepting that we are at the mercy of mere circumstance. And the current pandemic bears witness to this tendency. There are many ideas circulating concerning the origin of COVID-19, and the focus this morning is not to articulate or refute any of them; rather, it is to provide us an opportunity to look at ourselves and see that the condition of man, in spite of all of our advances, has not fundamentally changed at all. And the aspect of the human condition that concerns us this morning is something we might call "the blame game."

When confronted with a situation outside of our comfort zone, we often succumb to an unfortunate temptation to find an alternate explanation that somehow fits into our current framework of understanding, even if it stretches the imagination to the breaking point. Consider this morning's gospel. Jesus astounds the crowds by performing miraculous healings, so much so that the people exclaim "Never was anything like this seen in Israel!" The Pharisees could not grasp how a man who did not meet their expectations could be God's Chosen One. He came from the wrong town, he violated what they considered to be a sacrosanct practice when he healed on the Sabbath. It was difficult to accept that in all their study they might have miscalculated. It was much easier for them to blame the devil, for he would certainly want to trick them into accepting a false prophet, so they fabricated a conspiracy theory that Jesus cast out demons by the prince of demons. And so instead of looking inward and questioning themselves and their understanding of God, they found someone else to blame that would remove any accountability they might have had.

In doing this, they echoed another man who came before them. Way before them in fact. For Adam could not accept his accountability in eating the fruit he had been commanded not to eat; instead, he found someone to blame; namely, Eve. And Eve for her own part was no better, for she also found someone to blame; namely, the serpent.

It's what we've been doing for as long as we have existed. We find someone else to blame for our misfortune, instead of accepting responsibility for our actions, or simply accepting that in many circumstances

there is no need to blame anyone at all. Even now, we as Christians find opportunities to blame the devil for our mistakes, or misfortune. We say the temptation was too strong. We say the demons were jealous and caused this tragedy. We deny any responsibility. We blame everyone except ourselves.

And yet even blaming ourselves is misplaced. Our growth as children of the Kingdom is not to wallow in self-accusation when we've suffered a defeat against one of our passions, it's to get back up and continue the fight. In this way, we can even thank God for allowing the enemy to show us our weaknesses that we might correct them with His grace and become even stronger. The passions do not need the demons to be strong, they only need our own desires to feed them. We are responsible for our own weakness. But God has promised us that we need not struggle alone. It is a pattern so very common in the Christian life that when we accept our Cross, we seemingly suffer defeat only to find that through God's Grace we transcend it and find victory instead. It may be that the Cross leads to Death, but after that comes the Resurrection.

It is this understanding that underscores Reinhold Niebuhr's famous Serenity Prayer, used by Alcoholics Anonymous, but meaningful for all who struggle against the darkness: "God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference." There is no blame here, no self-justification, no hidden conspiracy; only a desire to endure the struggle and move past it. For most of the time, it is others we cannot change, and to change the darker side of ourselves takes true courage. And it is only then that we can truly hope to find and acquire virtue for our souls. And it is the struggle for virtue that marks the Children of God.

Brothers and sisters, all around us we see people playing "the blame game." It goes all the way back to the beginning of mankind. But we are not forced to play it, and even if we have chosen to do so, we can stop. There is no benefit to attributing our shortcomings to anyone but ourselves, and no benefit in ascribing our misfortunes to anyone at all. They are ultimately distractions from the real task at hand: to examine our souls to find our weaknesses, and to struggle against them, asking for God's help. Like the blind men in this morning's Gospel, who saw with spiritual eyes what the Pharisees could not see; that while our adversities may come from many sources, we need not be preoccupied with that at all; rather, we should focus our attention on who will help us. And that is written in the Psalms, "I lifted up my eyes to the hills from where my help comes. My help comes from the Lord our God, who made heaven and earth." To Him be all Glory, now and forever. Amen.

~Deacon Frank Dickos

# *A glimpse at Holy Cross' past, submitted by Ted & Elaine Sofis....*

PAGE 14 PITTSBURGH SUN-TELEGRAPH SATURDAY, MAY 11, 1957

## **Parishioner to Be Its Godfather**

## **RELIGION**

# Greek Orthodox Parish To Consecrate Church

By ZORA UNKOVICH

A godfather—a gold key—and relics of saints all will play an important part in the ancient and impressive ceremony with which the Rt. Rev. Polyefktos, Bishop of Tropaïou, will consecrate the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church tomorrow.

The 300-family South Hills congregation first began meeting at 620 Washington Rd., Mt. Lebanon, on June 13, 1954.

They shared a structure with the Mt. Lebanon United Lutheran Church. The Lutherans had the earlier service. The Rev. N. Michael Vaporis started services for his parishioners at 11 a. m.

WHILE THE SHARING was under way, the Greek Orthodox Church could not move its Byzantine altar, ikons and other religious objects into the church building.

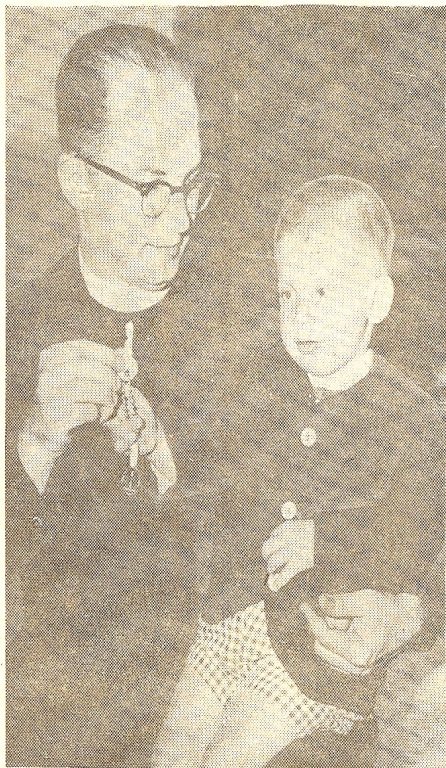
Tomorrow marks their formal occupation of the church.

As part of the ceremonial the congregation will gather for its regular Sunday mass at 9 a. m. About 9:45 a. m. the Bishop will enter the church.

Then the building will be emptied and the congregation and visitors will join the Bishop in a processional around the church property.

THREE TIMES they will circle the grounds, stopping each time at the entrance for the singing of hymns and the reading of the Gospel. The third time, the Bishop will ask the congregation:

"Who is going to be godfather of this church?"



**THE REV. N. MICHAEL VAPORIS AND MICHAEL JR.**

**... looking at key to be used in consecration**

Sun-Telegraph Photo by Bill Herman

The person who makes the largest pledge or donation to the parish will become the official godfather of Holy Cross.

Then follows a dialogue between the Bishop and Sexton Steve Argiris within the

church. After this the Bishop and godfather will open the church door with a golden key and will enter for the consecration, accompanied by the congregation carrying lighted candles.

**RELICS FROM** the saints

will be deposited on the altar table, symbolic of the tomb of Christ. Names of living and dead parishioners who have aided in starting the church also will be placed in the crypt with the relics.

Another part of the consecration, based on ancient church customs, will be the peuring of oil into vigil lamps by the parishioners.

The entire congregation of the Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, East Stockton Ave., will come from the North Side with its priest, the Rev. John Pitses, to take part in the service.

Other special events of the weekend include a Vesper Service at 7:30 p. m., tonight, which Greek Orthodox priests from the Tri-State Area will attend.

A CONSECRATION banquet in the Horizon Room of the Greater Pittsburgh Airport at 6 p. m., tomorrow, will close the observances.

Arrangements are under the direction of the following committee chairmen; dedication, Dr. Thomas P. Birris; album committee, Peter Gidas and Michael G. Kousaleous, co-chairmen and Alex Gemelas, vice chairman; dedication, Gus Harris and Peter H. Cardiges, co-chairmen.

The officers of the board of directors include: president, Dean G. Manesiotes; vice president, George Venturatos; executive secretary, Michael Kousaleous; financial secretary, Socrates Zacharias and treasurer, Louis P. Kontos. Thomas B. Savas is president of the board of elders.



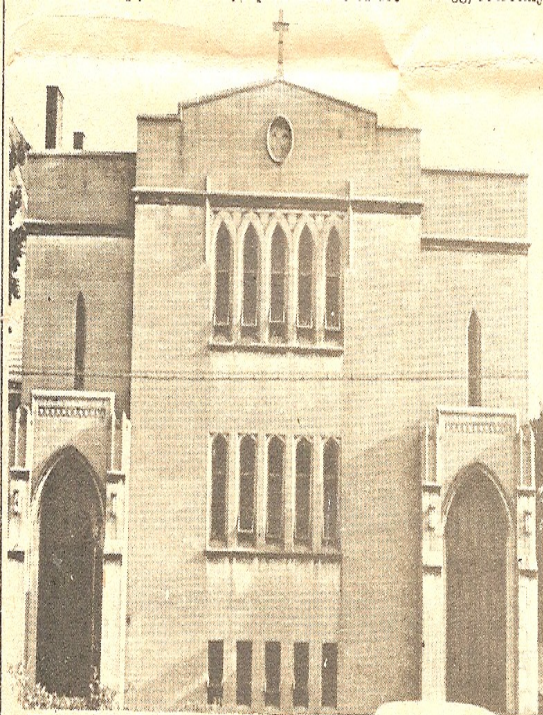


Board members and clergymen who officiated at the dedication services for Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church last month gather outside the church after the ceremonies.

William J. Sofis is the vice-president of the board of directors, George N. Aspiotis is president, Rev. Stephen Katsaris, representative of the

Ambridge church, stands beside Rev. M. Kestikides and The Right Reverend Bishop Demetrios.

M. G. Mosites is honorary president for life of the board of directors, Rev. Michael Vaporis, new pastor of the church, is accompanied by Louis P. Kontos, treasurer of the board, and James E. Trigg, secretary.



Over 250 South Hills residents are enrolled in the newly dedicated Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church, located at the corner of Washington Road and Academy Avenue.

Seating capacity in the upper part of the imposing new church is 450 with additional space in the first floor for study halls, offices and Sunday school classrooms.



**DEDICATION LUNCHEON PLANS** are reviewed by three committee members of the Ladies' Philoptothos Society of Holy Cross Church. Planning the program at Gateway Plaza, May 2, are, left to right, Mrs. George Meimaris, Mrs. William B. Conomos and Mrs. Jerry Kokalis.

## A beautiful story....

*Shared by Denise Melis, GOYA Advisor 7/12/2020*

Hello everyone,

I hope this email finds everyone well. I sending to share with you a story.

Back in February on the bus ride home from a basketball tournament, Tommy Gallagher lost his baptismal cross. We searched the bus. A couple of adults search the cushions. They looked and look high and low. Nowhere to be found. His mom put out an email asking people to check their bags. She was heartbroken because it was it baptismal cross. (I know how she felt; I lost my baptismal cross 3 years ago, and I still have not been able to replace it.). She looked at many jewelry stores looking to replace it.

Last week a got a text form our bus driver Jeannie. They found the cross. They were doing deep cleaning because of Covid 19. When I called to tell Tommy's mother it was found, she was speechless. She said has been praying for it to be found. Friday it came in the mail. Tommy is now wearing his baptismal cross.

Take care,  
Denise



*Myrna Hronakes would like to thank her Holy Cross church family for the outpouring of love, cards and donations to the Agape Fund and other funds in loving memory of her beloved husband ✠Peter.*





*Most Holy Theotokos save us!*

**First names for the commemoration during the**

## **Paraclesis Services**

**during the Dormition Fast, August 1-14.**

**For the health and salvation of the servants of God:**


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