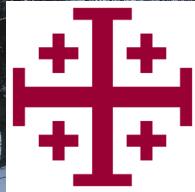


Holy Cross



Beloved Members and Friends of Holy Cross,

Christ is Born! Glorify Him! Χριστος Γενναται! Δοξασατε!

St. Ephrem the Syrian wrote:

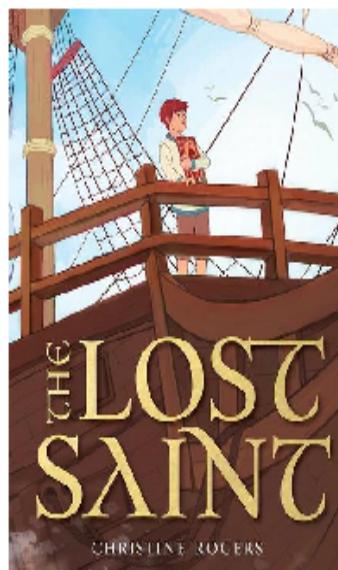
"He who measures the heavens with the span of His hand lies in a manger a span's breath; He whose cupped hands contain the sea is born in a cave; His glory fills the heavens and the manger is filled with His splendor. Moses wished to see His glory but was unable to see Him as he wished; Let us come and see Him today as He lies in the manger in swaddling clothes. Formerly there was none who dared to see God and still live, but today all who have seen Him are saved from the second death."



DECEMBER 2020

HOLY CROSS ORTHODOX BOOKSTORE

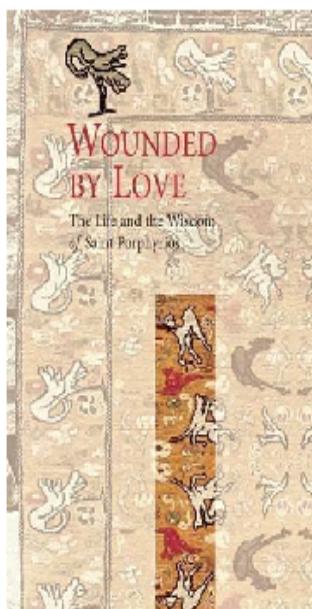
FEATURED BOOKS OF THE MONTH



THE LOST SAINT

Marko's life changes in an instant when he spies an armada of Ottoman ships on the horizon. After a battle separates him from his family, he finds help and guidance with a small group of monks. But when they stumble upon an abandoned church and a mysterious icon, Marko must conquer his own fears in order to make peace with God and to reunite with his family. Journey back to 1522, Rhodes, Greece, and experience with Marko what it means to be lost, then found.

Recommended for ages 10 to 14 years.



WOUNDED BY LOVE: THE LIFE AND THE WISDOM OF SAINT

PORPHYRIOS

Saint Porphyrios, a monk, and priest who died in 1991, stands in the long tradition of charismatic spiritual guides in the Eastern Orthodox Church. In this book he tells the story of his life and, in simple, deeply reflected and profoundly wise words, he expounds the Christian faith for today. This is an exceptional book, one of the most amazing and edifying Lives of modern holy elders ever to be translated into English. (Feast Day: December 2)

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

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church

123 Gilkeson Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15228

Crossroads, published monthly Volume 20 Issue 12

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

Fr. Michael Kallaur, Economos

Fr. Daniel Korba, Presbyter

Dn. Frank Dickos, Deacon

Emmanuel Maginas, Pastoral Assistant

Nena Jovanovich, Secretary

Website: 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 Membership	Connie Carahalilis	(412) 561-4783
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

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.

***Services:**

Sundays: 8:15am Orthros

9:30 am Divine Liturgy

Mondays: 6:30pm Paraclesis

Wednesdays: 7:30 pm Bible Study via Zoom

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 Liokareas, Treasurer

Joy Palonis, Secretary

Dena Galie

John Hoenig

Frank Kalogeris

Bob Kirschner

Jordan Nicholas

Emanuel Panos

Deno Pappas

Bill Poutous

George Sokos

Georgia Yamalis

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.



As we are well into the Nativity Season (Advent), let us take a moment to reflect on the mystery of Christ's "dwelling among us." God came to renew in each of us His divine image. Only God was able to save us from the oppression of sin and the Devil. This saving act is without time or limitation. Since the time of Christ, every generation has had the opportunity to profess this truth. This unique relationship that we are called to embrace as Christians is at the foundation of our hope. "Heaven and earth have today become united, since Christ IS born! God has come down to earth TODAY, and man has gone up to heaven. He Who by nature is invisible, is for the sake of man seen TODAY in the flesh... (Stichera from Christmas Great Vespers).

Knowing Christ and His love for us, the martyrs were like unquenchable flames. They became so emboldened for Christ that even death and suffering for the sake of Christ was considered a blessing. St. John Chrysostom writes of St. Ignatius of Antioch (celebrated December 20th), "He put off his body as easily as a man takes off his clothes." St. Ignatius told the people of Rome, "Citizens of Rome, know that I am not being punished for any wrong doing, neither have I been condemned to death for any transgressing, but for the sake of my God, by whose love I am gripped and whom I desire with an insatiable desire. I am His wheat; may I be ground by the teeth of beasts, that I may be His pure bread." When St. Ignatius had been devoured by the wild beasts, his heart was left among his bones. When the tortures cut open his heart, they found inside the words, inscribed in gold, "Jesus Christ." (Prologue from Ochrid, St. Nicholas Velimirovic)

How could martyrs and saints endure such suffering and withstand persecution? They knew in their very beings the love of God that endures forever. Until we have Christ dwelling in us, we are incapable of understanding how much God's loves us. Can anyone who has never eaten honey have any idea of its taste and sweetness? Once Christ enters our hearts by faith, we experience something inexpressible. St. Nicholas Velimirovic describes it as, "a sweet and intoxicating fragrance and it is utterly all embracing. A person touches the breadth, length, depth, and height of the knowledge of divine wisdom, so their heart touches the endless, rolling ocean of the love of Christ." How inadequate are our words when we try to de-

scribe divine love. God creates us from love, takes flesh from love, endures shame and death from love, and from love opens the heavens and reveals the deathless glory that has been prepared for us. God came in the flesh to reveal to us His love and mercy. What a mystery to behold and contemplate!

“Christmas means that there are two births of Christ: One into the world at Bethlehem. The other birth, into the soul when it is spiritually reborn through the Holy Mysteries of Baptism, Chrismation, and the Holy Eucharist. Christ is born in the second Bethlehem, i.e. our hearts, minds, souls, and bodies. He that is the pre-eternal God becomes a new born babe that we might be converted and become children of God. The Only-Begotten Word of God, One of the Holy Trinity, becomes man, that man might become ‘a communicant (and participant) in the Divine Nature’ through theosis. The dark cave of dumb beasts in Bethlehem becomes heaven and is filled with the unwaning, uncreated light of Divinity. Christ is born that our dark souls may be filled with light... ‘And even as You did deign to lie in a cave and in a manger of irrational beasts, so also deign to lie in the manger of my beastly soul and into my soiled body.’ (Pre-communion Prayers) If Christ was born in the first Bethlehem, it was only that He might come and be born in the second Bethlehem, your soul and mine!”

(Adapted from Daily Meditations and Prayers for the Christmas Advent Fast and Epiphany by Presytera Emily Harakas & Fr. Anthony Coniaris pg. 35)

In the midst of a pandemic (COVID 19) where fear and uncertainty abound, and in the midst of political turmoil where civility and truth is abandoned, where is our hope and our desire? Is our desire for God an insatiable desire? Do we search the Scriptures to know our God and His will for our lives? Do we communicate with Him through prayer and contemplation? Do we adjust our lives in any way to make a place for Him to dwell? May we be smitten with the love of our Lord who never ceases to seek and save ALL of His children.

May the grace, peace, and love our Lord, who willed be born in a cave and lie in a manger for our salvation, have mercy upon us and save us!

Καλα Χριστουγεννα!
Fr. Michael

November 15th, 2020
Priest Report to the General Assembly - Youth Sunday
Sts. Gurias & Confessors of Edessa
St. Thomas, Archbishop of Constantinople

Holy Cross Mission Statement

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.

HOLY CROSS CHURCH VISION

The Holy Cross Parish, an extension of the Body of Christ and a microcosm of the Orthodox Faith, incorporates into itself all that reveals the Good News of Salvation to a fallen world. The spiritual power and dynamic energy that gives life to the Body of Jesus is our worship, whose center is the celebration of the Eucharist. To apprehend the mystery of our Faith that is found in Jesus, our lives are both Christ-centered and Spirit-inspired. After going within through worship and Christ centered living, we reach out to the whole "oikoumene" (universe) through active missions and philanthropic outreach to the "least of the brethren." To go beyond ourselves to the other means that ours is a fellowship that is friendly, hospitable, and always seeking the one that is "lost."

As witnesses for Christ, His very presence in the world, we always proclaim and embody Gospel values in all aspects of our mission, even when the outside world is not always in sympathy with such values. *Believing that a church on a hill cannot be hid, we always let our light shine before the world, so that it may see our good works and give glory to our Father Who is in Heaven.*

Today we enter into a new liturgical season and begin our journey to the birth of Christ. The Nativity of our Lord is an awesome miracle to reflect upon. Our God, coming in the flesh of our humanity, elevates our humanity to divinity. The words of St. Athanasius ring in our ears, "God became man so that man could become god." Who could imagine such a destiny, such a calling, such potential. Nevertheless, in spite of our sinfulness, in spite of our ingratitude, in spite of our fallen condition, our God comes to us, to save and redeem us.

Today's Gospel of the Good Samaritan is the very parable that expresses this rescue effort of our God. Jesus is the Good Samaritan, He comes to bind up our wounds, He comes to heal us with the wine and oil, and bring us to the inn, the Church. It is here that we must faithfully be attentive to the call of our God. We too are called and commanded to go and do likewise. We must not ignore our neighbor! We must be willing to break with social and political prejudices and go and seek out those who are suffering and in need of help. To this end, we continually seek out ways to serve those who are in need and those who are suffering. Much of our philanthropy and ministries to those in need is not advertised. We do not look for accolades or draw attention to what is required of us by the Gospel. It is important to remind and report to our brothers and sisters in Christ that we as a community are striving to fulfill the command to love our neighbor. To this end, a new committee dedicated to the Philanthropic work of Holy Cross has been established. It first reviewed all the various organizations from Philoptochos to the many youth groups to the Agape Fund and sought to find out what is actually being done in the way of Philanthropy. This report is available to all.

Secondly, it made a recommendation to the Agape Committee, to disburse \$50,000.00 to the Neighborhood Resilience Project, to enable them to complete their medical clinic. This medical clinic serves over one thousand un-insured residents of the Hill District. Since the NRP moved to a new location in January of 2020, it was critical to get their medical clinic up and running. These funds were part of the Agape Investment Account and had been maturing for several years. The Philanthropic Committee is chaired by Robert Kirschner and we welcome recommendations and suggestions from our parishioners regarding local charities that fulfill the mission of the Gospel. I am grateful to have such a committee to help with research and due diligence. There are many worthy organizations and it is our hope to be able to assist them as we are blessed by you.

I wish to note the passing of two important people in the life of our Holy Cross Community. In October (16th), Mary Chakos departed this life at young age of 98 (and 10 months). Mary Chakos has been a devoted member of our community since its inception in 1954. She was a fixture at every church service, event, and social activity. She served as a member of the Philoptochos and worked tirelessly for the up-building and strengthening of our Church. We will miss her physical presence but we have no doubt that she rejoices with the righteous. On November 2nd, Metropolitan (retired) MAXIMOS of our Metropolis departed this life. Met. MAXIMOS served over thirty years as our hierarch and shepherd. Met. MAXIMOS was no stranger to Holy Cross and would frequently celebrate the divine services with us. His accomplishments as a theologian, arch-pastor, founder of monasteries, founder of missionary churches and movements are extensive and I am unable to list them all. We rejoice that we were blessed for so many years to be under His Eminence's omophorion. May our beloved hierarch enjoy the reward of His blessed ministry.

In conclusion, I wanted to say a word about the Pandemic. Since mid-March of this year we have experienced a number of anomalies. Restrictions in all aspects of our lives including the Church. This has been a difficult time for all. As the numbers of the virus are on the upswing, I encourage all of us to remain vigilant and take whatever necessary precautions you feel necessary. I also encourage all of us to be gracious, have patience, and be loving toward one another. Many of us have different comfort levels regarding the virus and we must resist the temptation to impose our anxieties and fears upon one another. We pray for one another and we look at one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. We bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Gal. 5) This is what Christ's love asks of us. I am very grateful to all of you at Holy Cross for being a witness of God's love to one another and to the community at large. May God help us during these difficult days!

GOALS (Short term) 2020 into 2021

#1. To aggressively address the necessary maintenance issues facing our community. After the celebration of the 50th year on the hill, we are blessed to be able to actively take on several of the pressing projects that have been put off for various reasons. Since the Spring General Assembly in February of 2020, and the approval of the Assembly to address these projects, we were subject to a global pandemic. Once the COVID 19 pandemic forced a lockdown of all "non-essential" work, the Parish Council postponed the authorized work until such time that we would be able to do so. The pandemic also caused concern regard-



ing the financial stability of the Church. A spending freeze was implemented by the Parish Council until a clear path forward to cover all expenses was established. I am pleased to say with the implementation of the Matching 2020 and the two day take out, mini festival, we are able to keep our financial obligations.

#2. We continue to offer the Liturgical life of the Church in a safe and respectful manner. We have two divine liturgies on Sundays to accommodate the number of parishioners. We have asked all members to please follow the directives of the Metropolis by wearing masks and allowing appropriate distancing. We also ask parishioners to sign up for services so that we can anticipate any significant changes in numbers.

#3. In person Church School, Greek School, and youth activities, again following the proper safety guidelines and recommendations of the Metropolis and local school practices.

GOALS (Long term - not necessarily in this order)

- #1. Finish the iconography of the Church.
- #2. To cover the entire budget of the Church through our annual Stewardship
- #3. To add an adult baptismal font (expand the narthex into Chapel).
- #4. To have a place for our Holy Cross history to be viewed and displayed.
- #5. Senior Day Program / Housing for Seniors
- #6. Preschool/Kindergarten at Holy Cross

UPCOMING EVENTS

November 15th -YOUTH SUNDAY/GENERAL ASSEMBLY/Beginning of ADVENT

November 26th - Thanksgiving

December 12th - St. Spyridon - Matins / Liturgy in Monessen, PA

December 24th Christmas EVE - 5pm

December 25th - Christmas Day - 8am Matins / 9:30am Divine Liturgy

December 31st - New Years Eve - 4pm Vespers/ 5pm Matins/ 6:30pm Divine Liturgy of St. Basil

Statistics for 2013

Baptisms - 14
Weddings - 8
Funerals - 12
Chrismations - 4

Statistics for 2014

Baptisms - 14
Weddings - 7
Funerals - 15
Chrismations - 3

Statistics for 2015

Baptisms - 14
Weddings - 8
Funerals - 21
Chrismations - 2

Statistics for 2016:

Baptisms - 15
Weddings - 10
Funerals - 12
Chrismations - 4

Statistics for 2017

Baptisms - 19
Weddings - 5
Funerals - 18
Chrismations - 3

Statistics for 2018

Baptisms - 11
Weddings - 10
Funerals - 16
Chrismations - 2

Statistics for 2019

Funerals - 20
Weddings - 9
Baptisms -14
Chrismations - 10

Statistics for 2020 (As of November 14th)

Funerals - 13
Weddings - 5
Baptisms - 9 (3 more scheduled for 2020)
Chrismations - 1

My gratitude to all the Ministries and Committees for their devotion and service to Christ and His Holy Church:

Clergy: Fr. John Chakos (always assisting and present when not in Guatemala), Fr. Daniel Korba and Deacon Photios Dickos

Pastoral Assistant - Emmanuel Maginas

Secretary - Nena Jovonovich

John Klimko and Jason - for their efforts to **maintain our facility**

Parish Council President - Stephanie Kladakis Myers - Our First Woman President at Holy Cross

Out-going Parish Council Members - Stephanie Kladakis Myers, Joy Palonis, Georgia Yamalis, Jordan G. Nicholas, Konrad Mayr

and New In Coming Parish Council Members

To be determined by the Elections on December 13th.

Sunday School Teachers and its Director - Jennifer Moorcroft, and to all the teachers and parents who assist in this weekly effort

Philoptochos (President Elaine Sofis and all the officers & board members)

Community Night Coordinator - Carol Halkias/ Sophia Milinkovic

Building Committee under the direction of John Conomos (numerous projects that being undertaken and executed)

Greek School - Dena Yamalis and the teachers

Choir - under the direction Thespina Christulides

GOYA/JOY - Denise Melis / The Parents of the JOY & Emmanuel Maginas

First Steps of Christ - Denise Sokos

Book Store - Mary Portellos

Acolytes - Our Captains

Reader/ Chanter - Philip Yamalis

Greeters/ Coffee Hour Participants

Walk for Missions - Faith Williard and company

FOCUS (now the Neighborhood Resilience Project) - Kathy Pyros

Saturday Lunch Program - Cindy Heddaeus

Also we have **two students from Holy Cross Seminary** with us this fall and possibly spring - **Elias Diamond** (final year as seminarian - MDiv.) and **Katie Andrews** (Youth Ministry Program). Both have been helping Holy Cross in various capacities.

And many, many others who step forward every week to fulfill the mission of Holy Cross.



†Metropolitan Maximos

Obituary from the Orthodox Observer:

New York, NY - Archbishop Elpidophoros of America conveys with great sadness the passing of Metropolitan Maximos, formerly of Pittsburgh, who fell asleep in the Lord. The late Metropolitan retired due to failing health in August 2011 but continued to be a beloved and much respected figure in the Metropolis, which he served for over thirty years.

Born to Father and Presvytera Evangelos Aghiorgoussis in Chios on March 5, 1935, the future Metropolitan attended the Patriarchal Theological School of Halki, where he received his degree in Orthodox Theology in 1957. He was ordained a deacon at Halki on April 28, 1957 and ordained a priest on his native island on July 26, 1959. He pursued graduate studies at the University of Louvain, Belgium, where he received a Doctorate in Theology and Baccalaureate in Philosophy in 1964.

From 1966 to 1979 (his election as a Bishop) he taught at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology as Professor of Systematic Theology. During his tenure at the school, he also served as Vice President of Hellenic College and Academic Dean of the Holy Cross School of Theology. On April 11, 1978, the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate elected him Bishop of Diokleia. Archbishop Iakovos consecrated him to the Episcopacy on Pentecost Sunday, June 18, 1978, at the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New York City. He was as elected in March 1979, and enthroned as the first bishop of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis (then Diocese) of Pittsburgh on April 27, 1979. In 1997, He was elected a Metropolitan of the Throne of Constantinople to preside in Pittsburgh, and later in 2003 became Metropolitan of Pittsburgh.

Archbishop Elpidophoros, commenting on the passing of the beloved Metropolitan, said:
"I was deeply grieved to learn of the passing of Metropolitan Maximos, a beloved spiritual father of so many clergymen of our Archdiocese, who studied with him at our Seminary, and indeed a beloved spiritual son of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. I know that I express the condolences of the Holy Eparchial Synod to his surviving family members and in-



deed to all of the Faithful of the Metropolis of Pittsburgh, which he shepherded for thirty-two years. As Chairman of the Board, I also wish to express the sympathies of Hellenic College and Holy Cross, which knew his daily presence and wisdom in his time there as a Professor. He was among the best and brightest who emerged from Halki in the 1950's and became leaders in the Ecumenical Movement. His ministry in Rome as young clergyman and theologian was instrumental in renewing the relationship of the Sister Churches, and his pastoral perspectives were always considered the world over for their sagacity. As we grieve the loss of this great Hierarch and scholar, we also acknowledge that he is worthy of the rest in God, into which he has now passed after a lifetime of service to Christ and His Holy Orthodox Church. May his memory be eternal."

Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh also stated:

"Metropolitan Maximos served the Church of Christ with all his heart, all his mind, all his strength, and all his being. He was a theologian's theologian, a pastor's pastor, a liturgist's liturgist, and man of God for the people of God. Though not the first hierarch of what was to become the Metropolis of Pittsburgh, he was the longest serving by decades, and he will long be remembered as its spiritual father. May God grant him a place at His heavenly altar, and may his memory be eternal!"

From the Pittsburgh Post Gazette:
Metropolitan Maximos (Aghiorgoussis), of Pittsburgh, fell asleep in the Lord on Monday, November 2, 2020. Born to Father and Presvytera Evangelos Aghiorgoussis in Chios on March 5, 1935, the future Metropolitan attended the Patriarchal Theological School of Halki, where he received his degree in Orthodox Theology in 1957. He was ordained a deacon at Halki on April 28, 1957, and ordained a priest on his native island on July 26, 1959. He pursued graduate studies at the University of Louvain, Belgium, where he received a Doctorate in Theology





and Baccalaureate in Philosophy in 1964. From 1966 to 1979 (his election as a Bishop), he taught at Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology as Professor of Systematic Theology. During his tenure at the school, he also served as Vice President of Hellenic College and Academic Dean of the Holy Cross School of Theology. On April 11, 1978, the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate elected him Bishop of Diokleia. Archbishop Iakovos consecrated him to the Episcopacy on Pentecost Sunday, June 18, 1978, at the Archdiocesan Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in New York City. He was elected in March 1979, and enthroned as the first bishop of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis (then Diocese) of Pittsburgh on April 27, 1979. In 1997, he was elected a Metropolitan of the Throne of Constantinople to preside in Pittsburgh, and later in 2003 became Metropolitan of Pittsburgh.

Lovingly called "Metro Max" by his flock, the Metropolitan put special emphasis on youth ministry, religious education, monasticism, and spiritual life and renewal. He was instrumental in establishing the youth camp, nurturing new generations of clergy, lay leaders, and theologians, promoting Orthodox Christian mission work around the globe, and founding St. Gregory Palamas Monastery, The Holy Nativity of the Theotokos Convent, and The Holy Protection of the Theotokos Convent. With great love he spread the Word, establishing a ministry of ecumenism and building bridges across faiths. In his retirement he was served by local clergy and continued to participate in the Divine Liturgy up until the beginning of Great Lent 2020.

He received excellent care by the wonderful staff at Asbury Place in Mt. Lebanon who will greatly miss him. He was preceded in death by his sister, Helen (Panos) Zaloumes. He is survived by his brothers, John (Agiro) Aghi-

orgoussis of Boston, Kostas (Jenny) Aghiorgoussis of New York, sister, Ploumi (Rev. Alexandros) Iossifidis of Lausanne, Switzerland and niece and caretaker, Linda Hages. He is also survived by his nieces and nephews, Angelo Aghiorgoussis, Maria Parasirakis, Spyro Zaloumes, George Zaloumes, Maria Tejada, Evangelia Apostolakis, Alexandra Iossifidis, Dimitri Iossifidis and Christos Iossifidis. Also by many cousins, great-nieces and nephews.

Metropolitan Maximos will lie in state at St. Nicholas Cathedral, Pittsburgh, PA, on Friday, November 6, where visitation will be from 2-8pm. His Eminence Archbishop Elpidoforos of America will preside, assisted by Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh and other clergy, over services on Saturday, November 7, where Orthros will begin at 8am followed by Divine Liturgy at 8:30am. The funeral service will begin at 11am. Interment will take place on Tuesday, November 10 at St. Gregory Palamas Monastery in Perrysville, OH at 11am. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, masks and social distancing are required. In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to St. Gregory Palamas Orthodox Monastery, 934 Co Rd. 2256, Perrysville, OH 44864 or to the Metropolitan Maximos Endowment for Youth & Young Adult Ministries, which will carry on the Metropolitan's legacy and love for the youth and young adult programs of the Metropolis of Pittsburgh. Please make checks payable to the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh with "Metropolitan Maximos Endowment" in the memo line.



Holy Cross Philoptochos December News Letter

Seventeen members attended the November 10, Zoom General Philoptochos meeting.

Our next general Philoptochos meeting for January will be determined sometime in December. The executive board and board must meet in person to determine the 2021 budget. There is NO December meeting. The board will decide if we will meet in person in January.

Thank you to Stephanie Myers, Parish Council President, who has been our Zoom administrator and a fabulous Parish Council President during this tumultuous year.

Carol Halkias reported that the Circle of Angels continue to send cards and make phone calls to those in nursing homes and homebound. No visitations are permitted during the pandemic. Thank you to Carol Halkias, Christine Peters and their crew of Angels.

Thank you to Kathy Pyros, our Neighborhood Resilience Project representative and to all who donate to NRP. Thank you to ALL who generously donated to the Thanksgiving Food Drive. There will be a Christmas Food drive on December 6, 13 and 20. Please place your non-perishable items in the vestibule. NO glass, please. There is a Christmas Angel sign up on November 22 and 29 in the Narthex and Community Center. The gifts must be returned by December 6 to church for distribution at NRP. Fall and winter clothing continue to be accepted for NRP. Thank you for your continued generosity.

The Philoptochos membership drive continues thru March 2021. Membership will be encouraged thru Philoptochos emails, church eblasts and a monthly Cross Roads membership form. Checks should be payable to Holy Cross Philoptochos and mailed to Connie Carahalis, 224 Mount Lebanon Blvd. Pittsburgh, PA 15234. \$15 is the National membership dues and \$10 is the Pittsburgh Metropolis dues. Anything over \$25 remains in the Holy Cross account for Philanthropy. Thank you to Connie Carahalis for her dedication as our membership chairperson for many years.

The Philanthropy Award applications will be available on December 13 for Holy Cross graduating high school seniors in 2021. The application is due on March 14. The families of the high school seniors MUST be 2021 PLEDGED Holy Cross Church members. See box for further details.

There are completed blankets from Blanket Ministry if anyone would like one. Please contact Georgina Callas if you would like material to make a blanket. Georgina and Ria Kartsonas are making chemo caps for St. Clair Hospital. The blanket Ministry will try to meet in person in January.

Presvytera Eleni reported that the college care packages will be sent to the homes this year because the students will not be returning to college

after Thanksgiving. GOYAN'S, Katie Andrews and Elias Diamond will be assembling the packages.

Mediterra Bakehouse will be generously donating 300 loaves of bread to Philoptochos to sell as a fundraiser this month. The Christmas bread, \$10 a loaf, will be sold on Thursdays, December 10 and 17 from 1-3pm, lower Community Center doors and Sundays, December 13 and 20 after Divine Liturgy. Thank you to Mediterra Bakehouse! Please see box for further details.

Philoptochos voted to donate \$300 to the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Musicians. The donation supports many projects.

Philoptochos is donating \$2000 to the annual Nativity of the Theotokos Monastery Benefit. It is a virtual event this year. This amount was budgeted and Philoptochos has supported this Monastery Benefit for many years.

Thank you for your continuing support of Philoptochos. Please join or renew Philoptochos during our membership drive.

We hope to resume in person meetings. You will be informed in the January News Letter and emails.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to our beloved Holy Cross members.

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

Elaine Sofis

Philoptochos President

Please join or renew your 2021 Philoptochos membership.
We are a wonderful philanthropic society. Your membership is valued! See membership form below:

TO RENEW OR JOIN PHILOPTOCHOS for 2021,

please complete and return to church or to

Connie Carahalis, 224 Mt. Lebanon Blvd, Pittsburgh 15234

Name _____

Address _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

*From your Philoptochos Stewardship donation, \$15 is sent to National Philoptochos in NYC and \$10 is sent to the Pittsburgh Metropolis Philoptochos. Anything over \$25 goes to Holy Cross Philoptochos. **Or see any Board Member to pay your dues!**

CHRIST AND THE PLAGUE OF UNTOUCHABILITY:

LIVING OUR FAITH IN A PANDEMIC

~Fr. John Chakos

What does it mean to be an untouchable? How does it affect our faith? I believe that these questions have a direct impact upon our faith as Orthodox Christians and our identity as persons created in the image of God.

Let's begin with the woman with the flow of blood who dared to touch the hem of Christ's garment. Here was a woman who, according to the Jewish law, was ritually unclean. This meant that she could never attend a synagogue service; no one could lie on the same bed as her or even sit in the same chair, such was the stigma. She was cut off from all religious and social life. So this woman not only had to deal with the pain and trouble of her illness, she had to contend with an even greater disease- the loneliness caused by rejection- the rejection of her faith, family and friends. This is what it means to be untouchable? Could there be a disease worse than this?

Up until recently, this account of untouchability would have been nothing more to us than a footnote in the Bible, interesting, but irrelevant. Fast forward to today, and oh how all of that has changed. Now we have become the untouchables to each other, and even to Christ, or so it may seem. To a certain degree it has shaken our faith. Imagine the paradox caused by the cancellation of the Holy Unction service because sick people might actually show up to be healed. Then there was the prohibition against receiving Holy Communion, the medicine of immortality, with a common spoon for fear that it would transmit something other than Life. And so we ask, is this from God? Even coming to Church, where two or more are gathered in His name, suddenly became risky behavior.

And what can we say of the online streaming of the Liturgy? Yes, it's convenient and readily accessible like watching your favorite TV program. But is it the same as being in Church, where we are called upon to be participants, rather than mere spectators? A photo of honey will never convey the sweetness, and the pixels of "online Orthodoxy" can never impart the very essence of the Divine Liturgy. In the Orthodox Church we have to touch and taste things. We have to kiss icons, because in so doing the reverence and love we feel is transferred to the prototype. We have to smell the sweet incense and be within earshot of the tinkling of the censer bells. Ours is a faith that engages all the senses, and not just the intellect. Within the Church we taste and see that the Lord is good. It is a foretaste of heaven.

And what about the wearing of masks? Is this not also another form of untouchability? When St. Makarios the Spirit-bearer chanced upon the

skull of a pagan priest, the wise Elder asked, “What is it like where you are?” The pagan priest replied, “Hell is a place where we cannot see each other’s faces.” To a certain extent, masks can be dehumanizing, somewhat of a distortion of who we are. Children wear them for halloween to provoke terror or amusement. Masking makes us uneasy, even when it is deemed necessary- as in surgery or during a pandemic. What are the deeper implications of covering our faces in worship for fear of sickness or death? The fact is that we come to church to stand naked and exposed before God. Like Moses, we want to speak to Him- face to face- beholding His glory. Every aspect of our worship reflects a theological reality. Have we lost something when we conceal our true identity?

If we feel constrained in the expression of our faith in these difficult times, it is understandable. We were meant to commune with our God openly and freely. Made in His image, we are like seeking like, trying to soak up as much of God as we can. To become like God or Godlikeness is our true destiny.

Let us return to the woman with the flow of blood. She felt cut off from God because of her infirmity. For all of her negatives, she, the untouchable one, dared to touch a man from whom God’s love radiated. She sensed that He was not a man to rebuff her. She said to herself, “If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made whole” (Mark 5:28). And so she touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately the fountain of her blood dried up. She no longer felt untouchable. She suddenly discovered that she was worth a great deal to Jesus. Here He is in the midst of the crowd, giving all His attention to one poor woman. At that moment the crowd ceased to exist, and she was the one person who mattered. She was just one person, an untouchable at that, rejected by every metric of society, but He gave all of Himself to her.

In the midst of a pandemic, cut off from loved ones, wearing masks, not able to smile, keeping our distance, feeling alienated, even abandoned by God and kept at arms length from the life-giving sacraments, is it any wonder that we feel ill at ease, afraid and terribly alone at times. Some have referred to this condition as “God-foresakeness.” But when we are at our wit’s end, when all else fails us, when there is no light in our darkness, these are the very conditions that favor the fullest expression of our faith. This is the very time that God chooses to act on our behalf. Today, like the woman with the flow of blood, let us reach out and touch, not only the hem of His garment, but the entirety of His being. Doing so, may we also hear these words as did the woman, “go in peace, your faith has made you well” (Luke 8:48).

Holy Cross

SUN	MON	TUE
29 NOVEMBER	30 Apostle Andrew the First-Called 8:30 Orthros 9:30 Divine Liturgy NO Paraclesis	1 DECEMBER 7pm GOYA Meeting
Nativity fast thru December 24		
6 St. Nicholas 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy GOYA Soup and Bake sale	7 6:30pm Paraclesis	8 6:45pm GOYA basketball open gym (girls only)
Nativity fast thru December 24		
13 St. Herman of Alaska 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	14 6:30pm Paraclesis	15 Hieromartyr Eleutherius 8:30 Orthros 9:30 Divine Liturgy 7pm Parish Council
Nativity fast thru December 24		
20 Sunday before Nativity St. Ignatius 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	21 6:30pm Paraclesis	22 St. Anastasia 8:30 Orthros 9:30 Divine Liturgy
Nativity fast thru December 24		
27 Sunday after Nativity Protomartyr Stephen 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	28	29

December 2020

WED	THU	FRI	SAT
2 4:30pm Greek School 6:45pm GOYA basketball open gym	3 <i>7pm Effective Christian Ministry via Zoom</i>	4 Great Martyr St. Barbara 8:30 Orthros 9:30 Divine Liturgy	5 St. Savas the Sanctified <i>7pm St. Nicholas Cathedral Vespers</i>
9 Conception of St. Anna 8:30 Orthros 9:30 Divine Liturgy 4:30pm Greek School 6:45pm GOYA basketball open gym 7pm Bible Study via Zoom	10 <i>1-3pm Christmas bread sale, lower level Community Center</i> <i>7pm Effective Christian Ministry via Zoom</i>	11	12 St. Spyridon in Monessen 9am Matins 10am Divine Liturgy 5pm Vespers/Confessions
16 4:30pm Greek School 6:45pm GOYA basketball open gym 7pm Bible Study via Zoom	17 Prophet Daniel 8:30am Matins 9:30am Divine Liturgy <i>1-3pm Christmas bread sale, lower level Community Center</i> <i>7pm Effective Christian Ministry via Zoom</i>	18	19 5pm Vespers/Confessions
23 10am Royal Hours 4:30pm Greek School 6:45pm GOYA basketball open gym	24 Christmas Eve <i>5pm Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil</i>	25 Christmas 8:00am Matins 9:30am Div Liturgy	26 Synaxis of the Theotokos
30 4:30pm Greek School 6:45pm GOYA basketball open gym	31 4pm Great Vespers 5pm Matins 6pm Divine Liturgy of St. Basil	1 JANUARY 2021 St. Basil the Great	2 5pm Vespers

Christmas bread is coming in December! Mediterra Bakehouse is generously donating 300 loaves of Christmas bread to Philoptochos to sell as a fundraiser. There will be four selling days: December 10,13,17,20, \$10 per loaf. Bread will be sold on Thursdays December 10 & 17 from 1-3pm in the lower community center entrance and Sundays, December 13 & 20 after Divine Liturgy.



Neighborhood Resilience Project Christmas Food Drive

will be held Sundays, December 6th, 13th, and 20th.



Christmas Angels for Neighborhood Resilience will be distributed in the Narthex of the church and in the Community Center following Divine liturgy on November 22nd and 29th. All Gifts must be returned to the church no later than Sunday, December 6th with the angel tag attached to the gift. As always your generosity is appreciated.

Thank you, *Kathy Pyros*

Saints Mary & Martha Women's Fellowship

He made everything beautiful in its time... (Ecc. 3:11a)

A Historical Perspective of the Arts in the Orthodox Church

Hello Beloved Ladies,

Our fellowship is alive and well in these unusual times! We have five meetings schedules for this season. Hopefully, two more will come in the Spring. Here's what we have so far. All meetings will be via ZOOM. The link will be sent a few days before the meetings.

January 26, 2021

Architecture Speaker: Fr. George Callos

How lovely is Your dwelling place, oh Lord of Hosts. (Ps. 83:11)

February 23, 2021

Iconography Speaker: Diane Hoenig

He is the image of the invisible God. (Col. 1:13a)

March 23, 2021

Vestments Speaker: Presbytera Sandy Chakos

You shall put the holy garments on Aaron and anoint and consecrate him, that he may minister to Me as a priest. (Ex. 40:11)

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Love, Adrienne Dickos 412-833-4980

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros of America Inaugural National Philoptochos Sunday

Archiepiscopal Encyclical: Inaugural National Philoptochos Sunday

His Eminence Archbishop Elpidophoros has declared this Sunday to be the Inaugural National Philoptochos Sunday, to celebrate the rich legacy of this important organization of our Archdiocese. National Philoptochos Sunday will be celebrated every year to honor the thousands of women throughout our Archdiocese who are a part of this vibrant ministry.

Prot. No. 210/2020

November 15, 2020

"Δανείζει Θεῷ ὁ ἔλεσθν πτωχόν, κατὰ δὲ τὸ δόμα αὐτοῦ ἀνταποδώσει αὐτῷ."
(Παροιμῶν 19:17)

"You lend to God when you show mercy to the poor; He will repay you according to His reward."
(Proverbs 19:17)

To the Most Reverend Hierarchs, the Reverend Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, the Presidents and Members of the Parish Councils of the Greek Orthodox Communities, the Distinguished Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Day, Afternoon, and Church Schools, the Philoptochos Sisterhoods, the Youth, the Hellenic Organizations, and the entire Greek Orthodox Family in America,

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

On this Sunday of the Good Samaritan, we are inaugurating National Philoptochos Sunday, in recognition of their decades of good works on behalf of the Church and the entire human family. The Greek Orthodox Church in America is truly unthinkable without the Philoptochos. Every Parish is supported, nourished, and enriched by its Ladies Philoptochos Society. They are, for all of us, a sisterhood of Martha and Mary, dedicated servants of the Church and the wider community, and living icons of reflection on the teaching of our Lord Jesus Christ.

They are called "Friends of the Poor" for a reason. The charitable and eleemosynary deeds of the Philoptochos sustain all manner of life in our communities, both near and far. They provide us all an opportunity to do well in our lives by doing good. We should generously support their philanthropy in every way possible.

In setting aside this particular Sunday, that of the "Good Samaritan," we are recognizing the compassion and generosity that Philoptochos provides every day in the life of the Church. We thank them for their labors of love for all people, and for the example they set in our Parishes from coast to coast. May they all hear the words of the Lord as were voiced by the Samaritan we call "Good": "Ἐγὼ ἐν τῷ ἐπανέρχεσθαι Με ἀποδώσω σοι. When I come again, I will repay you." (Luke 10:35).

With paternal love in our Lord Jesus Christ,

St. Nektarios Feast Day



GOYA Officers on Youth Sunday

Forty day blessing for Elias Joseph, son of Garrett and Nicole (Ambeliotis) McLean



November GOYA Meeting



I've been thinking about the word "health" a lot lately. Maybe some of you have as well. To this day, in the medical field, the word health is designated as absence of disease, since medical science is itself disease focused. And yet, the root of our English word health, comes from an ancient proto-Germanic word, *hailaz*, which is interesting to me because the root of our English word "health" is a word which once meant wholeness. And this brings up the point that, just because we might be free of disease does not by any means imply we are whole. On the contrary, the Gospel lesson for today, is a parable of Christ's found only in the Gospel of Luke, a parable which teaches us to look beyond the body at the true measure of health, that of the soul.

The parable offers us two men. One, a rich man, who often feasted sumptuously, and Lazarus, a beggar who often begged at the doorstep of this rich man for even a scrap of food from his table. With these two men, Christ is showing us two radically different visions of what can befall humanity. On the one hand, there is a rich man, whose table overflows. In our society, with its obsession with diet fads and calorie counting, we might think of this man's "sumptuous feasting", a phrase which we read in the gospel passage, and think it a sign of gluttony. However, we must consider that in Christ's time and place, and in many times and places throughout history, and even to this day, the real threat to health was not obesity, but rather, it was starvation, and thus this rich man, often feasting, was probably one of the healthier men in his time and place.

Not so with Lazarus, sickly, starving, and miserable. The Gospel passages provides us with even the graphic descriptions of dogs licking this man's sores. The image of Lazarus is in its description like that of the longsuffering Job, reduced to the lowest rung of humankind's earthly existence. And yet, both Lazarus and the rich man inevitably shuffle off this mortal coil, and in that final rendering of the lives, we witness that the health of their bodies does not correspond to the state of their souls. Lazarus, in the end, resides in Paradise, while the rich man is consequently condemned.

St. Paul, at one point, wrote that Bodily excercise profits little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to. This is not to say that the body and its health is unimportant - after all, the body, in many ways is like

the chariot of the soul, and it can become much more difficult to praise God and serve our fellow people when the body is subject to pain. To kneel with joint pain, is more difficult than without joint pain. To sing praises is more difficult when one has a cold.

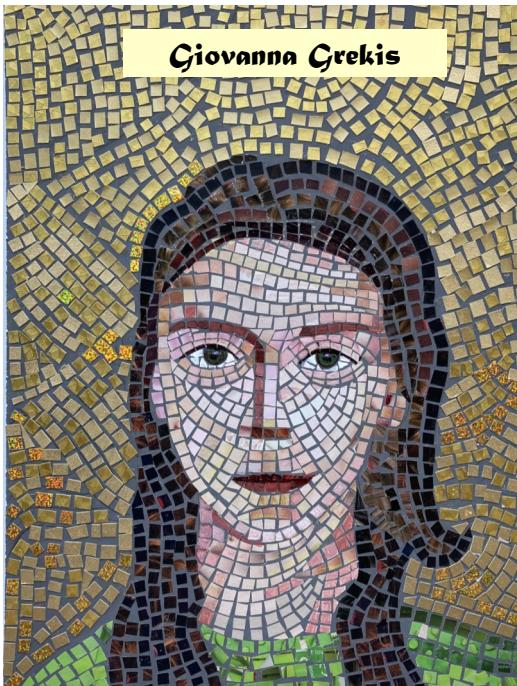
No, the health of the body is important, because as Christians we understand disease as an abberation, something come about from the Fall of humanity. Our bodies were not intended for disease and death, which is why Saint Paul's epistles make so much of the fact that at the end of time, our bodies will be Ressurrected and reunited with our souls, as part of the final judgement and restoration of humanity. Yet, compared to godliness, bodily excercise does indeed profit far less, because the inescapable fact of this life is that no one gets out alive. Even Christ tasted death for us. But because of him, we can hope in Resurrection for ourselves.

Today we celebrate two beloved saints, the Holy Unmercerary healers, Kosmas and Damian. Now these saints were trained as physicians in their day, and for that reason, they have become highly besought for intercessions in cases of physical illness. Especially, in these days of coronavirus, when many people's health care has been affected, they have been besought even more than usual. I myself have a small icon of them on my nightstand, and I make sure to reverance it often. Yet, it is important to reminder ourselves, that these Holy Unmercenaries always practiced their physician's arts in tandem with prayer, because health, wholeness consists in the health and body and soul.

The rich man's material success and health were not enough to save the part of him which lasts, and Lazarus's place in Paradise stands in contrast to his painful station in life. The thing about illness, about physical disease, is that while it can take much from us, it can never infect our souls. It can make it more difficult for us to do the things we need to do to excel in the Christian life, but it, in and of itself, can not take away our closeness to God. In fact, for many, illness sometimes is something which brings them closer to God. Many saints endured painful afflictions of the flesh, which they saw opportunities to grow closer to God. However, illness is a great weight upon humanity, and there is a reason in so many of our Church services we pray for health. Yet, if we have our health, we must use it for the glory of God, and to be diligent, for to those to whom much has been given, much will in expected.

The Mosaics of the Holy Cross Greek School by Magdalini Paleos

A mosaic (psifidoto), is a picture or a pattern, produced by arranging together small coursed pieces of hard materials such as stone tile or glass. This art technique is unique. Humans were inspired by nature and used its materials.

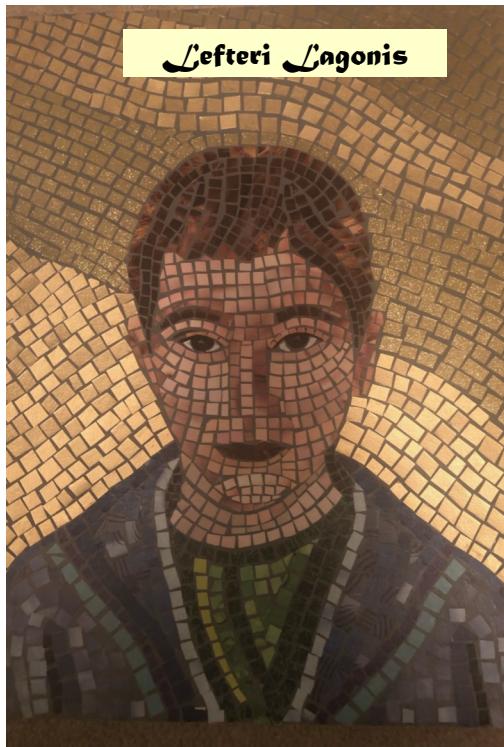


The Holy Cross Greek School kids innovated and utilized paper (recycling materials) from magazines for this time consuming, hard and tedious work. Armed with great patience, focus and perfection was their goal.

The mosaic art has eclipsed over the years. Its origin is primarily linked with the Mediterranean area and the creation of floor mosaics for durable use.

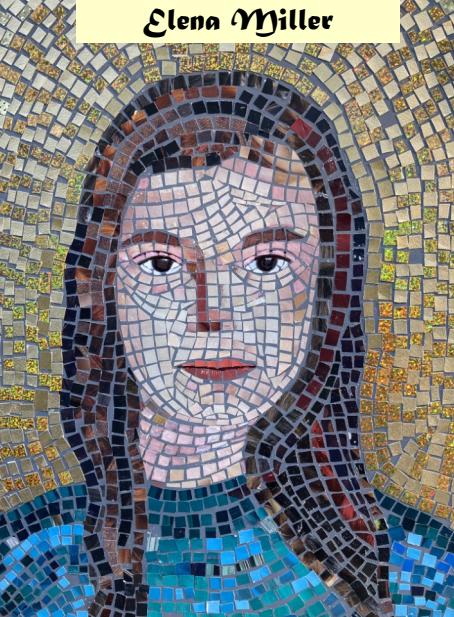
The first Greek mosaic artist we are aware of is Gnosis, who created the Hellas mosaic in the 4th century BC. Mosaic art reached Rome via the Mediterranean and from there to the whole Roman Empire. The

Romans were the first who used mosaics for wall applications in the middle of the 1st century BC for the artificial caves they dedicated to Muses, the nine daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne in Greek mythology.



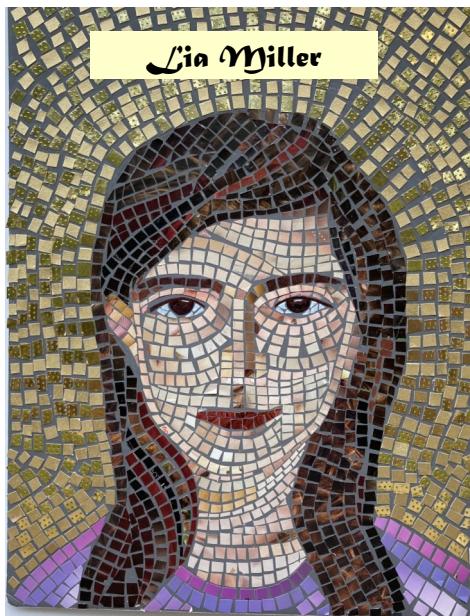
With Christianity prevailing, the mosaic themes were initially from nature but obtained a different Christian symbolism. With the Byzantine empire rise in the 5th century AD, mosaics become masterpieces such as St. George in the Thessaloniki Rotunda (4th -6th century AD) and Pammakaristou in Constantinople (14th century AD).

The Byzantine mosaics were away from floor areas so they don't risk wearing down from the faithful walking on them. The lowest surfaces were covered with marble plates. They used glass mosaics that highlighted wonderful colors and brought nature brightness to churches. They made the famous enamels in furnaces, mosaics with added mixed metals. Other times, mosaics were covered with thin layers of gold or silver. The gold and silver mosaics were used in the saint shines or to decorate their clothes but primarily to highlight the



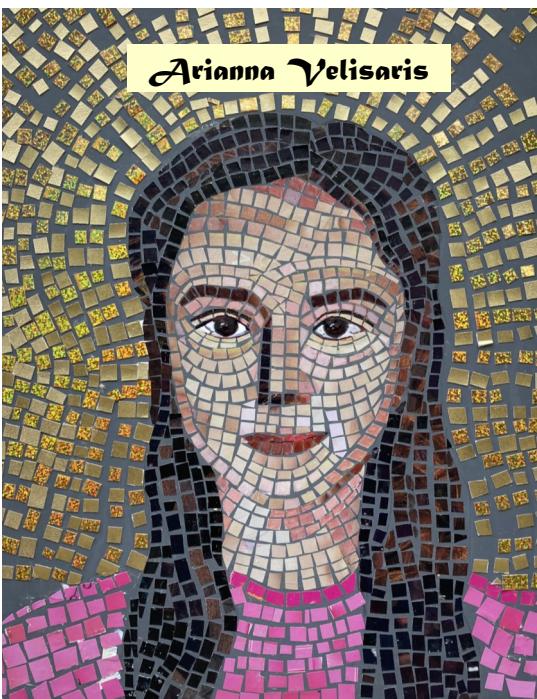
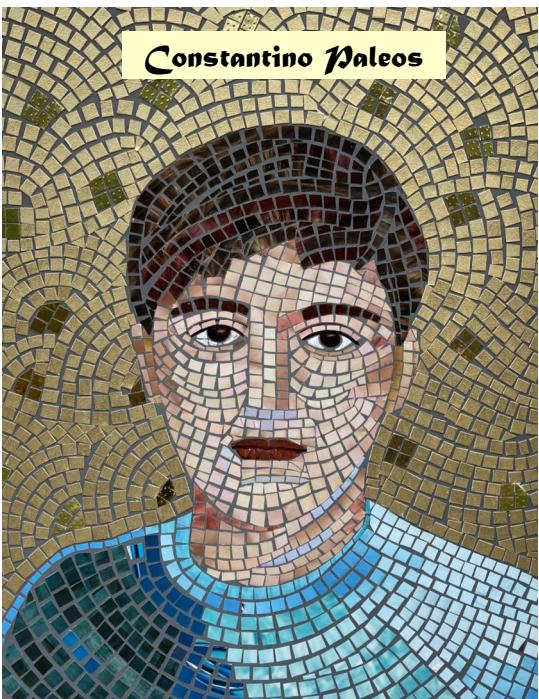
Elena Miller

religious backgrounds with an out of this world character in order to stress the theme holiness. The background mosaics were installed one by one in different slopes, a technique that allows the best possible use of outdoor light. In essence, capturing the outdoor light in an indoor environment.



Lia Miller

During the Byzantine years, many mosaic icons were created in addition to wall and floor mosaics. The large ones were installed in churches while the smaller ones were used for private worship. Very few of these are still around with most of them at Mount Athos. The Byzantine museum in Athens hosts the 13th century AD Panagia Glyko filousa. Mosaic art declined in post-Byzantine years but it is finding again its place in the 20th century starting with popular pebbles that decorate churches and public places.



Today I want to talk a little bit about the Ark – no, not the boat built by Noah, filled with animals happily walking in two by two. I mean the Ark of the Covenant, the wooden box covered with pure gold inside and out, adorned with statues of Cherubim standing guard at the seat of God. The Ark which contained the ten commandments, a jar of manna, and Aaron’s staff that budded, proving him to be chosen by God as his priest.

This Ark was built by the Jewish artisan Bezalel under Moses’s supervision (Exodus 38:1-8 LXX). Moses had been given specific instructions by God on the details of the Ark’s construction, along with instructions for building the Tabernacle (Exodus 25:10-22). When the Tabernacle was constructed, Moses consecrated it to God, placed the Ark within it, and a cloud of glory immediately covered and filled the Tabernacle, so much so that Moses could not enter it. Later, when King Solomon completed the construction of the first Temple, the priests brought the Ark into the Temple and Solomon consecrated the Temple to God (3 Kingdoms [1 Kings] chapter 8). And again, a cloud of glory filled the Temple of God, so intense that the priests could not enter it. This cloud of glory is how God manifested himself to his people.

The Holy of Holies was the most sacred area at the heart of the Temple, where no one was allowed to enter except the High Priest, and he but once a year, on the Day of Atonement. Why? Because God dwelt there. When the Temple was dedicated, his presence filled the Temple, but eventually he contained himself to the mercy seat that sat on top of the Ark. Although invisible, God’s presence was palpable to the people of Israel. This is what made the Temple so special – there was *one* Temple; only *one* place where God’s presence was made manifest. Synagogues were for prayer and reading Scripture, but the Temple was for sacrifice and worship of the one true God.

Fast forward a couple hundred years. Jerusalem was taken captive and the Temple destroyed by the Assyrians. The Jews were taken into captivity in Babylon, and the Assyrians removed the Ark from the Temple. God promised the Jews that he would deliver them from their captivity and rebuild their Temple for them. They were indeed delivered from captivity, and they rebuilt the Temple when they returned to Jerusalem. But there was no Ark of the Covenant – it was lost. They consecrated the Temple without it, but the glory of God that had appeared for Moses in the tabernacle and for Solomon in the first Temple was conspicuously absent from the second Temple. Although the people were restored to the land, it seemed that God had not come back to visit his people.

There is an interesting extrabiblical story that confirms what the Old Testament tells us about the Ark of the Covenant being absent from the second Temple. When the Roman General Pompey captured the city of Jerusalem in the first century B.C., he wanted to know what was so holy to the Jews – what was the amazing secret kept in the Holy of Holies that no one was allowed to see? He had his generals seize the priests, and he barged right into the Holy of Holies to see for himself. To his surprise, it was empty. There was nothing there. To the surprise of the priests, however, he was not struck dead for walking into the presence of God. Something was missing: God did not seem to be with his people, even though the Temple had been rebuilt.

Why am I talking about the Ark of the Covenant and the Jewish Temple? Well, yesterday we celebrated one of the major Feasts of the Church year – the Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple. The Theotokos was born during the period of the second Temple, as an answer to the earnest prayer of her parents, Saints Joachim and Anna. In thanksgiving to God, her elderly parents dedicated her to the Temple when she was three years old. Her uncle, the priest Zacharias, led her into the Holy of Holies – the place where only the High Priest went, once a year. No one else was allowed there. But remember, the Holy of Holies was empty at this point in history. There was no Ark there – no mercy seat.

Thus when the Mother of God entered the Holy of Holies, this was a sign that God was beginning to return to his people, that the Ark of the Covenant, where the presence of God had rested, was being fulfilled in the person of the Theotokos, who would contain and give birth to the Son of God in the flesh.

This is the reason why the Feast of the Entry is placed here, during the Nativity Fast. Yesterday we began to chant the first of the Christmas hymns. Why this connection between the Entry of the Theotokos and the Nativity of Christ? Because at Christmas God returns to his people. The Theotokos's Entry into the Temple is one of the first heralds of this visitation.

The Ark of the Covenant was a wooden box overlaid with pure gold. The Theotokos, the living Ark (ninth ode of the Entry) is a human being who is overshadowed, made golden, by the Holy Spirit (Akathist).

The Ark contained the manna bread, which sustained the Israelites in the desert. The Theotokos held Christ, who is the Bread of Life.

The Ark contained the stone Tablets on which were written the Ten Commandments. The Theotokos contained Christ, the Word of God written in flesh.

The Ark contained the rod of Aaron, a dead piece of wood that miraculously flowered. Through the Son of the Theotokos, the dead wood of the Cross miraculously flowers forth incorruption and resurrection.

The Ark's mercy seat was filled invisibly by God's presence. The Theotokos had God incarnate sit in her lap, visible to all.

The Ark was overshadowed by the images of two cherubim. The Theotokos is honored and served by all the angels, since she is more honorable than the cherubim and more glorious than the seraphim.

When the Ark came to Jerusalem, the Prophet King David exclaimed, "How shall the ark of the Lord come to me?" (2 Kingdoms/2 Samuel 6:9, my own translation from the Greek LXX: πῶς εἰσελεύσεται πρός με ἡ κιβωτὸς Κυπίου;). When the Theotokos visited her pregnant cousin Elizabeth, Elizabeth exclaimed, "Why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke 1:43 NKJV. In the original: πόθεν μοι τοῦτο ἵνα ἔλθῃ ἡ μῆτηρ τοῦ Κυπίου μου πρός με).

Indeed, in the Theotokos, God has begun to visit his people. She is the true, rational Ark of the New Covenant. In her the prefigurations of the Old Covenant find their fulfillment. She is the fulfillment of God the Creator's dispensation (οἰκονομία). She is the mercy seat that holds God incarnate. And with the Feast of her Entry into the Temple, she heralds his coming Incarnation (Dismissal Hymn of the Entry). Let us honor her as the true Ark of the living God, and let us remember that God has visited his people (Luke 1:68, 7:16).

Order your poinsettia for the church

- ♥ in memory of or
- ♥ in honor of or
- ♥ for the health of

a loved one by returning the form below with your payment.

Plants are \$15 each.

Please order by Friday, December 11.

Order a poinsettia to beautify our church for Christmas.

Choose one

In Honor of _____

For the health of _____

In memory of _____

From _____

\$ 15 per plant

Please return to church office by

Friday, December 11

Total # of plants requested _____



**Collection of new/unused warm socks, hats,
gloves & scarves benefitting the Holiday Project.**

November 1—

December 15, 2020

Drop off locations:

- * Holy Cross Church
(123 Gilkeson Road,
Pittsburgh, PA 15228)**

- * 209 Twin Oaks Drive,
Pittsburgh, PA 15237**



The Allegheny County Holiday Project provides new/unused holiday gifts for children and youth (babies—18 years old) who have experienced child abuse or neglect.

Visit: www.allegenycounty.us/Human-Services/News-Events/Events/Holiday-Project.aspx
for more information.

MATCHING 2020

at HOLY CROSS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

December, 2020

"The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little."
2Corinthians 8:15

To Our Holy Cross Family:

We are pleased to update you that MATCHING 2020 is going well, and we are hopeful that we will meet our financial goal of \$200,000 by December 31st, 2020.

Our heartfelt thanks to everyone so far who has pledged their personal contribution. We are so close to our goal and know that our momentum must take us across the finish line. We want very much to announce the successful completion of this campaign by Christmas with only a few weeks to go...

In case you have missed it - here is the information:

MATCHING 2020 has secured 20 individual Holy Cross donors willing to donate a total of \$100,000 (\$5000/donor), to support this emergency fundraiser - provided that the rest of our community matches their donations. These matching funds will roll in as community donations are received to whatever total amount is brought in, up to \$100,000.

In other words: for every dollar donated by our community, the individual matching donors will donate the same amount, therefore doubling every single donation! If you can give \$250, for example, then the true donated value will really be \$500.

If our entire community participates as their own means allow (in addition to their annual stewardship pledge), we will most certainly achieve our emergency financial goal of \$200,000.

Enclosed is your MATCHING 2020 Donor Card. You may also contribute by credit card on our website: www.holycrosspgh.org. Look for the MATCHING 2020 option.

But we do really need everybody. Our elders. Young families. Empty-nesters. Young adults. Even JOY & GOYA kids. We are all members of the Holy Cross family, and we must support each other in need.

**We thank you so much for your prompt response and generosity!!
May God continue to richly bless us all!**

MATCHING 2020 Steering Committee

Stephanie Myers John Conomos Konrad Mayr Ponny Jahn Father Michael Kallaur

MATCHING 2020

at HOLY CROSS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH

DONATION FORM

"The one who had much did not have too much, and the one who had little did not have too little."
2Corinthians 8:15

YES! We would like to contribute to the MATCHING 2020 Emergency Fundraiser

Please accept our donation as follows:

Donation Amount: \$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 \$1000 \$2500

Other Amount: \$_____

Name: _____

Address: _____

House/Cellphone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Checks should be made out to: Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church - memo: MATCHING 2020.

Please return this form and payment to the church office ASAP.

Church Address: 123 Gilkeson Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15228
attn: MATCHING 2020

The sooner we receive your gift, the sooner we can double it!!

THANK YOU so much for your additional support above and beyond your stewardship pledge during this unusual time.

The MATCHING 2020 Steering Committee

HOLY CROSS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH
123 Culkeson Road
PITTSBURGH, PA 15228

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 2412
Pittsburgh, PA

Thursday, December 24

Christmas Eve 5pm

Vesperal Divine Liturgy of St. Basil

Friday, December 25

Christmas

8:00am Matins/9:30am Div Liturgy

