

# Holy Cross



# Crossroads

**“Let all mortal beings keep silent, and stand in fear and trembling, giving no thought to earthly things. For the King of kings, the Lord of lords, comes forth to be sacrificed, and given as food for the faithful. Before Him go the choirs of the angels, with all the principalities and powers, the many-eyed Cherubim and the six winged Seraphim, covering their faces as they sing the hymn: Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.”**

*(They hymn of the Great Entrance, from the Vespereal Liturgy of St. Basil celebrated on Holy Saturday morning)*

Beloved Members and Friends of Holy Cross,

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

At the time of receiving this newsletter, we will be almost halfway through the Great Fast. At the end of the month, April 25<sup>th</sup> (Palm Sunday), we will begin Holy Week. The holiest time of the year is upon us! We continue preparing ourselves physically and spiritually for the Feast of Feasts, Holy PASCHA! If you have delayed in entering the Great Fast, do so in these remaining weeks. These sacred days are given to us each year that we might put aside the cares of the world for a few short days and moments and enter into the great mystery of Christ's final days upon the earth, in the flesh.

*Continued pg. 4 →*

**APRIL 2021**

# **Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church**

## **Holy Week 2021– Schedule of Services**

### **Lazarus Saturday – April 24**

8:30 am – Orthros and Divine Liturgy

*Followed by Palm Cross Making, Confessions, Church Cleaning*

5:00 pm – Vespers of Palm Sunday

### **Palm Sunday – April 25**

8:15 am – Orthros and Divine Liturgy

5:00 pm – Orthros of Great Monday (First Bridegroom Service)

### **Great and Holy Monday – April 26**

9:00 am – Presanctified Liturgy

6:30 pm – Orthros of Great Tuesday (Second Bridegroom Service)

### **Great and Holy Tuesday – April 27**

9:00 am – Presanctified Liturgy

6:30 pm – Orthros of Great Wednesday (Third Bridegroom Service)

### **Great and Holy Wednesday – April 28**

9:00 am – Presanctified Liturgy

3:00 pm – Sacrament of Holy Unction (Ἱερόν Εὐχέλαιον)

6:30 pm – Orthros of Great Thursday (with second anointing)

### **Great and Holy Thursday – April 29**

9:00 am – Vespers of Divine Liturgy of St. Basil (The Institution of the Eucharist)

6:30 pm – Orthros of Great Friday (Service of the Passion and Twelve Gospels)

10:00 pm – Vigil by the Cross, and GOYA making sandwiches for the homeless

### **Great and Holy Friday – April 30**

9:00 am – Royal Hours

3:00 pm – Vespers (Taking down from the Cross/Ἀποκαθήλωσις)

6:30 pm – Orthros of Great Saturday (With Praises at the Tomb of Christ (Ἐγκώμια), and Procession of the Epitaphios)

### **Great and Holy Saturday – May 1**

9:00 am – Vespers of Divine Liturgy of St. Basil (“First Resurrection”)

11:00 pm – Midnight Office and Canon of Great Saturday

11:30 pm – New Light Procession, Paschal Orthros/Divine Lit. of the Resurrection

### **Great and Holy Pascha – May 2**

12:00 Noon – *Agape* Vespers (Reading of the Gospel in various languages)

### **Renewal (“Bright”) Monday & Feast of St. George – May 3**

9:30 am – AT ST GEORGE CATHEDRAL, OAKLAND:

Paschal Orthros and Divine Liturgy

*We fervently request the entire Holy Cross parish family to share fully in the fasting, prayer, and liturgical observance of Holy Week and in the celebration of the Lord’s Resurrection on Pascha night.*

No other parish activities will take place during Holy Week.

Please keep this schedule of services posted for easy reference.

# Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church

123 Gilkeson Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15228

*Crossroads, published monthly Volume 21 Issue 4*

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: [holycrosspgh.org](http://holycrosspgh.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 Carahalıs	(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
Wednesdays:	7 pm Bible Study <i>via Zoom</i>
Weekdays:	8:30am Orthros
	9:30am Divine Liturgy
Saturdays:	Vespers 5pm

\*See monthly calendar for all services.

2021

## Parish Council

Dean Stambolis, President  
 Jordan Nicholas, Vice President  
 Nicholas Chakos, Financial Secretary  
 Jennifer Liokareas, Treasurer  
 Constance Zotis, Secretary  
 Dena Galie  
 John Hoenig  
 Frank Kalogeris  
 Rachel Kartofilis  
 Bob Kirschner  
 Deno Pappas  
 Christine Picard  
 Bill Poutous  
 George Sokos  
 Donna Staub

**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.



Our Holy Week begins on April 24<sup>th</sup> with the most amazing miracle witnessed by the followers of Jesus. Lazarus who had died, was buried, and in the tomb for four days, is raised from the dead. Four days is significant because it signifies that body begins to decay and return to its earthly elements. Jesus proclaims, "I am the Resurrection and the Life, he who believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live." (John 11)

This sign (miracle) leads to the entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem (Palm Sunday) and His reception as a Messianic figure.

"Hosanna in the Highest, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord." As the confrontation between the Jewish Temple authorities and Jesus heightens, we experience the tension between Jesus and those who are "in authority." The Jewish authorities are threatened by Jesus' very presence and seek to expose Jesus as some sort of lunatic who claims to be the Son of God. However, because the Jews cannot deny the miracles and authority that Jesus possesses, all must be done by stealth, to eliminate the God-man, Jesus the Christ.

We stand in awe of the Lord's patience and obedience to the will of the Father. Shortly after the Mystical Supper where the Lord gave us the sacrament of His Kingdom, Christ is betrayed by one of His chosen disciples. The beatings, whippings, mockery of a crown of thorns, the trials, Pilate, then Herod, then Pilate again; all leading up to the Crucifixion. Jesus on the Cross, asking the Father to forgive us, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." The great moment of forgiveness granted to the thief "stealing" paradise by his defense of Jesus and confession on the Cross, "Remember me O Lord, when you enter into Your Kingdom." Finally, the darkness over the entire earth, Jesus' death and burial in the tomb. The Soul departs from the body and descends into Hades, destroying the power the devil. This Sabbath day, the day that God created for man to rest from his work and glorify God. The fourth commandment that God gave to Moses and to us, keep the Sabbath Day holy. This is the day that the Lord rested (in the flesh) in the tomb. His Soul descended into Hades and released the souls that had been waiting for His coming. The prayer that is offered after the Proskomedie (preparation of the Holy Gifts), "In the tomb with the Body, In hades with the Soul, In paradise with

the thief, on the Throne with the Father and Holy Spirit, were You O Christ fulfilling all things.”

On Saturdays throughout the year we remember the departed faithful. The Church has designated Saturdays for us to celebrate memorials for our loved ones. During the beginning of the Triodion and throughout Lent we celebrate “Saturday of the Souls”. The Church also designates the Saturday before Pentecost to call attention to our departed love ones. Each day, each week, and each year we experience God’s plan of salvation.

**On a daily basis:** service of the 1<sup>st</sup> hour –sunrise (theme of creation) & Matins (morning service), 3<sup>rd</sup> hour-9am (Pentecost – descent of the Holy Spirit), 6<sup>th</sup> hour – 12noon (Christ hanging upon the Cross -Crucifixion), 9<sup>th</sup> hour -3pm (Jesus dying on the Cross), Vespers (the Evening Service) and after the meal - Compline.

**On a weekly basis:** Monday – we remember the Holy Angels, Tuesday – St. John the Baptist, Wednesday- the Panagia – also the betrayal of Christ, Thursday – Holy Apostles & St. Nicholas, Friday – the Crucifixion, Saturday – the departed, and on Sunday – The Resurrection.

Having been blessed to travel through another Lent, we come to the holiest of celebrations (of the year) that shape our world and the lives of all faithful Christians.

St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Cyprus wrote:

“Something strange is happening. There is a great silence on earth today. The whole earth keeps silence because the King is asleep. The earth trembled and is still because God has fallen asleep in the flesh and He has raised up all who have slept ever since the world began. God has died in the flesh and Hell trembles with fear!

He has gone to search for our first parent, as for a lost sheep. Greatly desiring to visit those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death, He has gone to free from sorrow the captives Adam and Eve, He who is both God and the Son of Eve. The Lord approached them bearing the Cross, the weapon that had won Him the victory. At the sight of Him Adam, the

first man He had created, struck his breast in terror and cried out to everyone, "My Lord be with all of you." Christ answered him, "And with your spirit." He took him by the hand and raised him up saying, "Awake O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light."

"I am your God, who for your sake have become your son. Out of love for you and for your descendants I now by My own authority command all who are held in bondage to come forth, all who are in darkness to be enlightened, all who are sleeping to arise. I order you, O sleeper, to awake. I did not create you to be held a prisoner in Hell. Rise from the dead, for I am the Life of the dead. Rise up, work of My hands, you who were created in My image. Rise, let us leave this place, for you are in Me and I am in you; together we form only one person and we cannot be separated.

For your sake I, your God, became your son; I the Lord, took the form of a slave; I whose home is above the heavens, descended to the earth and beneath the earth. For your sake, for the sake of man, I became like man without help, free among the dead. For the sake of you, who left a garden, I was betrayed to the Jews in a garden, and I was crucified in a garden.

See on my face the spittle I received in order to restore to you the life I once breathed into you. See there the marks of the blows I received in order to refashion your warped nature in My image. On My back see the marks of the scourging I endured to remove the burden of sin that weighs upon your back. See My hands, nailed firmly to a tree, for you who once wickedly stretched out your hand to a tree.

I slept on the Cross and a sword pierced My side for you who slept in Paradise and brought forth Eve from you side. My side has healed the pain in yours. My sleep will rouse you from your sleep in Hell. The sword that pierced Me has sheathed the sword that was turned against you.

Rise let us leave this place. The enemy led you out of the earthly Paradise. I will not restore you to that Paradise, but I will enthrone you in Heaven. I forbade you the tree that was

only a symbol of life, but see, I who am Life itself am now one with you. I appointed cherubim to guard you as slaves are guarded, but now I make them worship you as God. The throne formed by cherubim awaits you, its bearers swift and eager. The Bridal Chamber is adorned, the banquet is ready, the eternal dwelling places are prepared, the treasure houses of all good things lie open. The Kingdom of Heaven has been prepared for you from all eternity.”

My brothers and sisters in Christ, as we approach these holy days let us hasten to the Church and heed these beautiful words. Certainly this past year has challenged us and kept us away from the Church. There are now many services and many opportunities to be present and receive the great grace of God’s forgiving mercy and love. Holy Confession, Holy Communion, and Holy Unction, all will be available and we pray that you will seek out the opportunity to receive them all.

Christ has come to save us!  
Christ is with us!  
Christ is looking for us!  
Christ is risen!  
Salvation is given to all who desire and seek it!!!  
May God grant us strength and courage to enter into these mysteries of salvation!

With love in the Risen Lord,  
Fr. Michael



Emmanuel Maginas's sermon on Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee:  
February 21, 2021

Today is the first Sunday of the *Triodion* preparatory period, which comprises the four Sundays that lead up to Great Lent and prepare us for its spiritual challenges. Each of these Sundays has a theme based on a specific Gospel reading appointed for that day. Today's theme focuses on the parable that we heard in this morning's Divine Liturgy: that of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Luke 18:10-14).

So we begin our journey to Lent today. But why do we start our preparation with *this* story of the tax collector and the pharisee? Listen to the last sentence of the parable. The Lord told his disciples that "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 18:14 RSV). One of the hymns from today's Orthros says: "Every good deed is made of no effect through foolish pride, while every evil is cleansed by humility. In faith let us embrace humility and utterly abhor the ways of vainglory" (Canon of the Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee, first ode, third *troparion*. Cf. *The Lenten Triodion*, trans. Mother Mary and Metropolitan Kallistos Ware, p. 102). In other words, if we do good deeds but are prideful of them – like the pharisee was – we make our good deeds worthless; however, if we commit evil deeds but repent with humility, our sins are cleansed.

It is clear that humility is a necessary virtue. But why humility to *start us off* on the greatest spiritual season of the year? Because humility is the mother of all other virtues (St. John Climacus). Every good deed is nullified when pride is involved. Pride is a poison that infiltrates all the good we try to do. If like the Pharisee we pray, fast, tithe, give alms, and do everything else that God asks of us, but we do those things on our own effort, while despising and condemning those around us, then our efforts are not only in vain – they are worse than vain: they are unto our condemnation.

The Pharisee did all the things he was supposed to do, but he boasted about them and ignored his own failings and vices. He lacked humility and the ability to see himself as he truly was. The tax collector, on the other hand, knew his sins, confessed them, and repented. He was able to repent because he admitted his own failings and asked God for mercy. This humility, this honest self-appraisal, is what justified him before God. Numerous times, in reading the Scriptures, the hymns of the Church, and the lives of the Saints (e.g. St. Anthony the Great; St. Macarius the Great), we learn of the importance of humility.

One of the hymns of last night's Vespers tells us, "Almighty Lord, I know how great is the power of tears. For they led up Hezekiah from the gates of death; they delivered the sinful woman from the transgressions of many years; they justified the Publican above the Pharisee. And with them I also pray: Have mercy upon me" (*Doxastikon* of Vespers. *The Lenten Triodion*, p. 99).



In this short but magnificent hymn, we are presented with three positive examples from Scripture; three examples that show the value of tears of repentance. Hezekiah was a righteous king of Judah in the Old Testament, who reigned during the late 8<sup>th</sup> and early 7<sup>th</sup> centuries, B.C. Hezekiah fell sick, and the Prophet Isaiah went to him to tell him a message from God: Hezekiah was going to die. Then Hezekiah “turned his face toward the wall and prayed to the Lord, ... and ... wept with a great wailing” (4 Kingdoms / 2 Kings chapter 20 SAAS). The Lord saw his tears and heard his prayer, and through Isaiah then sent word to Hezekiah that he would add fifteen years to his life.

The story of the sinful woman is hopefully a little more well-known than that of Hezekiah. We read this story in chapter 7 of the Gospel according to Luke, and it is expounded upon in many of the hymns of Holy Wednesday that we chant in church, since it took place shortly before the Passion of Christ. A sinful woman came to Jesus and poured a flask full of fragrant oil on his feet, wiping them with her hair, and weeping continuously for her sins. With these sincere tears, her sins were forgiven.

And while we are not told specifically in today’s story of the publican and the pharisee that the publican wept, it is not unreasonable to assume that he would have – after all, he stood in the back of the Temple, beat his breast in contrition, and repeated the prayer, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner” (Luke 18:13 NASB) He was the one who was justified before God, on account of his tears of repentance.

However, it is not the mere flowing of water through our tear ducts that justifies us before God – otherwise we could simply cut a lot of onions every day, and we would be all set. No, rather, it is tears of *repentance* that justify us before God. It is through *contrition* that we are forgiven for our many sins. If our tears are merely ones of self-pity – “woe is me, I’m the worst” – and we have no intention of correcting our life, then we are proceeding very much in the wrong direction. God does not want our self-pity, our crocodile tears, or anything else of that nature. He wants true repentance, a *change of mind* (which is what the Greek word for repentance, *metánoia*, means). If we repent from our heart, and tears of contrition accompany our repentance, then we are justified in God’s sight. Then we are following the road of Hezekiah, of the repentant sinful woman, and of today’s tax collector.

I could give many other examples from the hymnography of the *Triodion* period and the writings of the holy fathers of the Church, but I will simply ask us all today to examine ourselves and to be honest about our spiritual state. This honesty is the hallmark of the humility and abasement to which Christ calls us at all times, and especially as we begin this journey to the Great Fast and eventually to the Holy Pascha of the Lord. May we do what is asked of us, embracing the time given us for repentance, looking to God for help, and cultivating that soul-saving wonderful mother of the virtues: divine humility.

Amen.

## 2021 Holy Week items needed

*Anyone wishing to donate one or more of the following Holy Week items in loving memory of, for the health of, or in honor of a loved one, please contact the church office at [holycrosspit@mail.goacrh.org](mailto:holycrosspit@mail.goacrh.org).*

Palms for Palm Sunday \$100

Flowers for the Nymphios (Bridegroom) Icon \$100

Seven candles, Olive oil, flour, Cotton Balls, Q tips for Great & Holy  
Wednesday \$100 TAKEN

Three candles for procession with crucified one (Stavromeno)  
On Great & Holy Thursday \$50

Wreath for the Holy Cross on Great & Holy Thursday \$50

Crown of Thorns (Stefani) for Holy Thursday \$50

Purple Mums at the Foot of the Cross \$50

Winding Sheet for Body of Christ \$50 TAKEN

Epitaphion Candles \$100 TAKEN

Rose Petals and Lemon Leaves for First Resurrection Service  
and Epitaphion Services \$100

Rosewater for Great & Holy Friday \$30

Roses for distribution at the 3pm Good Friday Service \$100

Mirafora baskets \$100

Decorated Pascha Candles for the Clergy \$500

Incense for Great and Holy Week \$100

Olive Oil for Perpetual Light throughout Holy Week \$100

Communion Wine—Bottle \$35 or Case \$210

**Order an Easter Lily to beautify our church for Pascha.**

**Circle ONE per plant:**

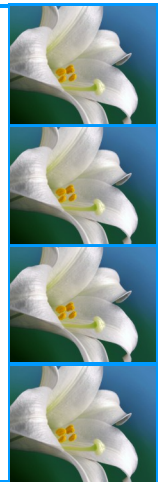
**In Honor of OR For the health of OR In memory of**

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**From** \_\_\_\_\_

**\$20 per plant.**

**Please return to church office by Friday, April 23.**



# Greek Easter Bread (Tsoureki) Cooking Class Featuring Pittsburgh Dynamo Chef, Domenica Merante

**Saturday - April 10<sup>th</sup> 2:00-4:00 PM (In your kitchen)**

This class will be filled with fun as you spend some time with Pittsburgh's own, Chef Domenica Merante. Chef Domenica will guide even the most inexperienced bakers along the journey of a long-lasting Greek tradition of creating sweet Greek Easter Bread.

Discover why bread has been an important staple food product to many cultures throughout history, during this interactive class that is perfect for all levels of bakers!

When you purchase a ticket for this **zoom class**, the access link will be sent to you within 24 hours of the start of the class. You will also be sent a list of ingredients and full recipe one week before.

This class is being sponsored by the Holy Cross Ladies Philoptochos in Pittsburgh. All monies raised will be used for the philanthropic efforts of Philoptochos (Friends of the Poor).

Tickets are \$25 and can be purchased through Eventbrite or by sending a check to: Holy Cross Philoptochos c/o  
Thea Manos – 489 Marietta Place, Pittsburgh, PA 15228  
([thea.manos@comcast.net](mailto:thea.manos@comcast.net))



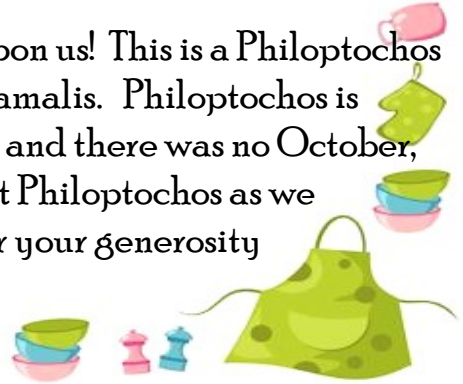
Save the date: There will be a general Philoptochos meeting on Tuesday, May 11 at 7pm on the carpeted area of the Community Center and on Zoom. This will be our first in person meeting in 14 months. A Board Election announcement will be held that evening. There will not be an actual board election. We hope that you can attend in person. If not possible in person, please attend with the Zoom link provided to members. Thank you to Election chairpersons, Cynthia Kostelnik, Jane Kokanos and Christine Peters for their time and efforts in securing this new slate of board members.

Please join us for an exciting, educational sweet Greek Easter bread Zoom cooking demonstration by Domenica Merante on Saturday, April 10, 2pm.



The Zoom link will be provided. This is a Philoptochos fundraiser for a nominal cost of \$25 per household and chaired by Thea Manos. Please see flyer (page 11) for more details.

The **NO Bake - Bake sale** is upon us! This is a Philoptochos Fundraiser chaired by Dena Yamalis. Philoptochos is having no in person May event and there was no October, 2020 Food Fair. Please support Philoptochos as we **"BAKE"** for you! Thank you for your generosity and to Dena Yamalis for her time and dedication.



The annual Neighborhood Resilience Project Pascha Food Drive dates are Sundays, April, 4, 11 & 18. Please place your non-perishables in the vestibule. Thank you for helping those with food insecurity and to Kathy Pyros for her commitment to NRP.



## Holy Cross Philoptochos April News Letter

Twenty members attended the March 9 Zoom General Philoptochos meeting. The next Zoom General Philoptochos meeting will be Tuesday, April 6 at 7pm. The link will be sent to members. The May 11 election meeting will both in person or on Zoom. *(Details left.)*

Christine Peters reported for Circle of Angels that cards and phone calls were made to our shut-ins. Easter plans are being made. *(See box below.)* Thank you to Carol Halkias, Christine and ALL Angels who share their time with the shut-ins.

There are currently 95 members who have paid their 2021 dues.

Thank you to Dena Yamalis for chairing the NO Bake - Bake sale. Thank you to ALL who generously support Philoptochos in this fundraising endeavor.

Thank you to Kathy Pyros and ALL who donate to Neighborhood Resilience Project with food donations. Kathy is accepting non-perishable food outside the office door for NRP because of continued food insecurity. The Pascha food drive dates are Sundays, April 4, 11, 18. Please contact Kathy Pyros if you can volunteer to take donations to NRP.

There will be a Zoom sweet bread cooking demonstration by Domenica Merante on Saturday, April 10 at 2pm. This is a Philoptochos fundraiser for a nominal cost of \$25 per household and chaired by Thea Manos. Thank you to Domenica and Thea for devoting their time and talents to this fundraiser. Please see flyer for additional information.

Thank you for sending birthday cards and email wishes to Helen Chakeres for her 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday on March 16. She was truly touched by your endeavors.

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

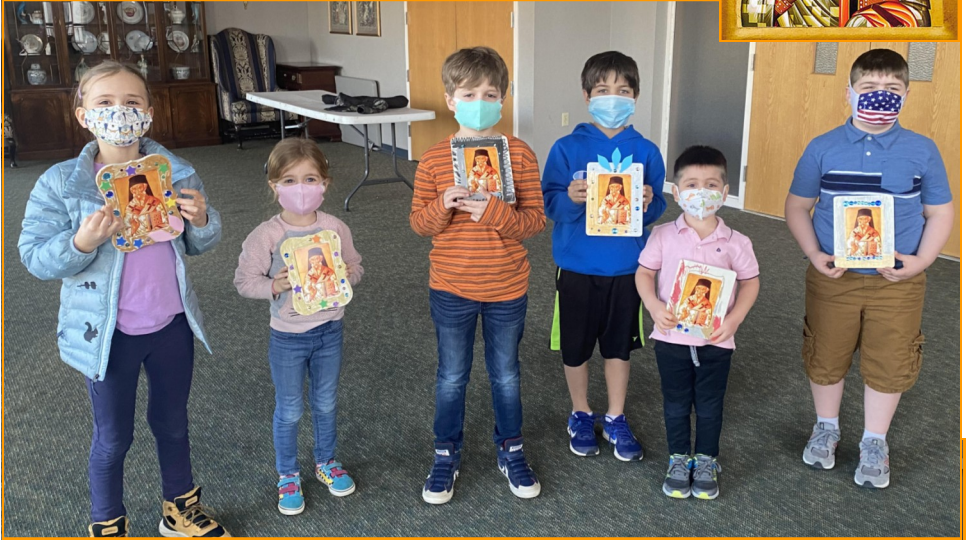
**Circle of Angels** requests for our Pascha Outreach for our shut ins **homemade cookies, paximadia and candies** for our Goodie baskets. Please no nuts or powdered sugar. Please bring to church office by Monday, April 19th.



Thank you,  
Christine and Carol



During Church School on a Saturday afternoon, children decorated icons of St. Dionysios, the “*Saint of Forgiveness*,” in preparation for Forgiveness Sunday.



Sunlight  
hits in  
just the  
right  
place...





Greek School Independence Day Program









# Greek School Independence Day Program



Dear Camp Family,

We are so excited to share with you the first pieces of information for Summer Camp 2021! This summer will be one like no other! We are anxiously awaiting the opportunity to offer the youth of our Metropolis a more personalized, fun, safe, and spiritual Summer Camp experience in a variety of modified environments, that accommodate the needs of our ever-changing world.

**Thank you** for the feedback from our parent survey, support and patience over the last few months! Working together, we can accomplish our mission of leading young people to Christ in an Orthodox Christian environment.

With the blessing of His Eminence Metropolitan Savas, below are the current details for Summer Camp 2021 and camper registration! Please be advised, due to the fluid nature of the current COVID protocols, this information is subject to change as we head into camp. We continue to stay up-to-date on best practices and guidelines that will determine if, and how, we are able to operate safely this summer. In addition, we will be hosting a parent informational webinar, which all interested families are encouraged to attend. Dates and registration for that to soon follow!

## **GOMOP SUMMER CAMP 2021!**

**JOY Campers:** This summer we will be offering one week of an online experience for our JOY campers. During this week, our JOY campers will interact with their friends and experience their Orthodox faith with fun activities led by our trained Staff members! God willing, our JOY program will resume its usual programming in the summer of 2022.

**GOYA Campers:** This summer we will be offering an in-person program for our GOYAnS! We remain committed to keeping our camper's safety a priority. Adaptations, such as the ones listed in the paragraph below, will be implemented in order to be compliant with the recommendations from the Center for Disease Control, the American Camping Association, Camp Nazareth Administration and various medical professionals, who we have consulted regarding the best practices to operate Summer Camp 2021.

**\*Please Note:** Summer Camp at the campsite will accommodate half the normal capacity of campers for each session, due to safety protocols. Each week of camp will begin Sunday and conclude Friday before noon, to allow for proper cleaning and sanitizing in between sessions. We remain in constant communication with various medical professionals and the Camp Nazareth facility and are committed to offering a Christ-centered program that is safe, healthy, and fun for all of our campers!

## **CAMPER REGISTRATION**

Registration for all campers will open this spring!

Camper registration for our JOY campers will operate as normal.

Camper Registration for our GOYAnS will open for one camping week at a time, starting with Week 3 and moving backwards. Once that week is full, registration will close and the prior week will open. Registration will be open on a grade-level basis, allowing our 12th grade campers the opportunity to register first, then 11th graders, then 10th graders, then 9th graders and so on.

Typically, we offer the choice to our 7th graders to attend a week with older or younger campers. Although not a guarantee, it is our hope that 7th graders, along with 8th and 9th graders will attend camp in-person this year. If the camp fills up for any age group, we are prepared to offer another session of alternative, online programming!

## **CAMP DATES**

**Week 1: Sunday, June 20 – Friday, June 25 (GOYA)**

**Week 2: Sunday June 27 – Friday, July 2 (GOYA)**

**Week 3: Sunday July 4 – Friday July 9 (GOYA)**

**JOY Week: Sunday, August 1 – Friday, August 6 (online)**

This summer will be a unique opportunity to gather more personally at the camp, and maintain elements we love about our program for those not physically on-site. We continue to work diligently toward gathering to know Christ better, being safe and having fun! More safety information regarding this summer will be updated on our website in the coming days. Please look out for our next email with information regarding our upcoming parent informational webinar!

Wishing you all a blessed Lenten journey!

In Christ's love,

Marina  
Camping Ministries Coordinator  
Metropolis of Pittsburgh  
[y2am.pittsburgh.goarch.org](http://y2am.pittsburgh.goarch.org)



# Holy Cross

**SUN**

**MON**

**Tue**

The **2021 Holy Cross Drive thru Food Fair** Committee is excited to announce that we will host our annual Food Festival as a modified event during our traditional time frame in June. The dates are **June 16th (W), June 17th (Th), and June 18th (F)** from 11:30 am to 8pm. Once again, we will execute the event as a drive-thru due to COVID restriction and the unpredictable nature of what will be happening in June.



<p><i>4 Sunday of the Holy Cross</i></p> <p>8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>5</p> <p>6:30pm Great Compline</p>	<p>6</p> <p>7pm GOYA Meeting 7pm Philoptochos Meeting via Zoom</p>
<p><i>11 St. John Climacus</i></p> <p>8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>12</p> <p>6:30pm Great Compline</p>	<p>13</p> <p>7pm Church School (9th-12th grades) 7pm Parish Council</p>
<p><i>18 St. Mary of Egypt</i></p> <p>8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy</p>	<p>19</p> <p>6:30pm Great Compline</p>	<p>20</p> <p>11am Circle of Angels packing baskets 7pm Church School (9th-12th grades)</p>
<p><i>25 Palm Sunday</i></p> <p>8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy</p> <p>5pm Bridegroom Service</p>	<p><i>26 Holy Monday</i></p> <p>9am Presanctified Liturgy</p> <p>6:30pm Bridegroom Service</p>	<p><i>27 Holy Tuesday</i></p> <p>9am Presanctified Liturgy</p> <p>6:30pm Bridegroom Service</p>



# April 2021

Wed	THU	FRI	SAT
	1  7pm Bible Study <i>via Zoom</i>	2  9am Presanctified Liturgy  6:30pm Salutations III	3  <b>GOYA Basketball in Canonsburg</b>  3pm Confessions 4pm Church School (PreK-8th grades) 5pm Vespers
7  4:30pm Greek School 6pm Presanctified Liturgy	8  7pm Bible Study <i>via Zoom</i>	9  9am Presanctified Liturgy  6:30pm Salutations IV	10  2pm Philoptochos Virtual Fundraiser 3pm Confessions 4pm Church School (PreK-8th grades) 5pm Vespers
14  4:30pm Greek School 6pm Presanctified Liturgy	15  7pm Bible Study <i>via Zoom</i>	16  9am Presanctified Liturgy  6:30pm Akathist Hymn	17  10am Family Lenten Retreat  3pm Confessions 4pm Church School (PreK-8th grades) 5pm Vespers
21  4:30pm Greek School 6pm Presanctified Liturgy	22  7pm Bible Study <i>via Zoom</i>	23  9am Presanctified Liturgy  6:30pm Palm Cross Prep	24 Lazarus Saturday  8:30 am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy -Palm Cross Making -Confessions -Church Cleaning -Acolyte Preparation for Holy Week  5pm Great Vespers
28 Holy Wednesday  9am Presanctified Liturgy 3pm Holy Unction 6:30pm Orthros of Holy Thursday w/ second anointing	29 Holy Thursday  9am Vespers Liturgy 6:30pm Passion of Our Lord/Reading of 12 Gospels 10pm-6am Vigil by the Cross & Sandwiches for	30 Holy Friday Office Closed  9am Royal Hours 3pm Vespers/Taking down from the Cross 6:15pm Trisagion by tomb 6:30pm Praises/ Orthros of Holy Saturday	1 May Holy Saturday  9am Vespers Liturgy (First Resurrection)  10pm Nocturnes 10:30pm Receive the Light 11pm Orthros/Liturgy of the Resurrection



METROPOLIS OF PITTSBURGH AND  
THE GOA CENTER FOR FAMILY CARE



# Jesus – the Resurrection and the Life of the Family

A FAMILY LENTEN RETREAT



Saturday, April 17th, 10-11:30 am

Zoom registration link:  
[tinyurl.com/GOMoP-FamilyRetreat](https://tinyurl.com/GOMoP-FamilyRetreat)

## Retreat Schedule

- 10:00 am - Welcome
  - Opening Prayer
  - Comments
- 10:15 am - Keynote Address-  
Fr. Alex Goussetis
- 10:30 am - Guided Discussion
- 10:45 am - Breakout Groups
- 11:15 am - Wrap-up Discussion
- 11:30 am - Closing Comments

More info? Fr. Joseph DiStefano  
Email: [frjdistefano@yahoo.com](mailto:frjdistefano@yahoo.com)  
Phone: 724.304.1230





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## March 14, 2021 Sermon ~ Elias Diamond

In Dante Alighieri's *Divine Comedy*, there comes a moment where Dante describes the souls entering Paradise. At the threshold of God's Kingdom, he writes, there is a river, where the souls pass through on the way, and this river washes the penitent souls clean, not just from their sins, but from the very remembrance of their sins. Imagine that. Even we, who sin and repent, still bear the scars of our transgressions, for as the 50th Psalm states, I know my lawlessness, and my sin is ever before me. Now, Dante was not a theologian and we should not read him as such. This image of the river should not be taken as a literal truth, however, there is a symbolic truth to it. Dante was a poet, and the poetic truth of that image, of the souls at Heaven's threshold being washed clean of the very remembrance of their sin, came to me recently, because we too stand now at a threshold, the threshold of the great forty day fast. If we approach this Lenten period in the appropriate manner, we too can be cleansed, if not of the full remembrance of our sins, then at least of much of the lingering shame and influence these sins have within our souls, which is a great enough gift in itself. But how then, should we try to approach Lent?

As we stand on this threshold, looking ahead at these forty days, in which the Church encourages us to abstain from meat, from fish, and dairy and eggs and wine, and many of the things which give us physical sustenance, it can be intimidating, especially since the Church is simultaneously encouraging us to rededicate ourselves to our prayer lives, to beseech God with tears and prostrations for the cleansing of our souls. Now these two things can seem at odds. We're asked to do more, while consuming less. So, even if the spirit is willing, the flesh may feel much weaker. Looking ahead at the forty days with this in mind, it may all seem too much, we may think we can't do it. But I imagine that the Israelites standing at the edge of the Red Sea, thought it an impossible thing that they could cross that sea without being overtaken by the armies of the Pharaoh. But God made a way for them, doing the impossible and parting the sea, leading them out of their captivity. If we trust in God, He will give us the strength to cross through these forty days, and leave the captivity of our own sins, drawing us ever closer to the promise of salvation.

But why fast? What's the point? Christ Himself said that it is not what a man puts into the mouth that defiles him, but rather, what comes out of his mouth. And there is certainly truth in this, inasmuch as fasting from food without also fasting from angry words, from slander, from gossip, and lies, and pride, is not productive, something we learned from the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee just three weeks ago. However, Christ by His own example, fasted for forty days in the wilderness, doing battle against the temptations of the flesh and the temptations of Satan. Surely, we are not better than Christ. Surely, we can not put aside fasting.

Today, the Church commemorates, and I say commemorates, because celebrates is not quite the right word, the Church commemorates the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise. If we consider how Adam and Eve fell from Paradise, the answer comes down to what seems like a



small enough thing - they could not exercise self-control over what they put in their mouths. They ate of that forbidden fruit, and the Gates of the Earthly Paradise closed behind them. Yes, what comes out of our mouths, the blasphemies, the lies, the words of hate, these do ultimately defile a man. But if we cannot even say no to something as simple as a cheeseburger, how much harder will it be for us to say no the hard things, to those things that are truly able to defile our hearts?

A lamentable part of the human condition is that we are born into a world so thoroughly mired in its sinful ways, that many of us are conditioned to not even recognize how distorted our ways of being are. We seek satisfaction in the things of this world, food being but one prime example, to little or no avail. Blaise Pascal, who you might remember from math class for "Pascal's triangle" was also a prolific writer on the life of faith, and he eloquently expressed this painful reality as follows. He wrote, ""What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him... though none can help, since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite and immutable object; in other words by God himself."

This is a hard truth. But if we seek to cleanse ourselves, and our hearts, we may begin to recognize the beauty of beauties, the Creator of All, who, through the grace of Holy Baptism we have received, has come to rest in our hearts. This is what Lent is about - it is about renewing that commitment, it is about redoubling our efforts, with our fasting, with our prayer, with our care for the least amongst us, as we heard in the Gospel passage from last week, pertaining to the Last Judgement. These efforts lead us to repentance, and that baptismal commitment which we all received can be renewed through this repentance, for the waters of such repentant tears can become like a second baptism, like the metaphorical river which Dante described. They are an invitation to God, like that we hear in the 50th Psalm, to wash us so that we may be whiter than snow, and to create within us all a clean heart.

The tragedy of Adam and Eve's Fall was that we were cut asunder from our Creator and Source, God Himself. Yet, Christ's intervention has allowed us to be reconciled with God, if we so choose, just as the Prodigal Son was reconciled to his own Father. It is fitting then, that we begin this process of reconciliation tonight, with forgiveness Vespers. Like with fasting from what we put into our bodies, forgiveness Vespers is an opportunity to leave behind what is unnecessary, to discard the baggage of anger and resentment and ill-will, for if we try to cross that Red Sea of the Lenten season still weighed down with all the Earthly cares we have carried with us, we will not be able to outspeed Pharaoh's armies. So, as the Cherubic hymn tells us, Let us now lay aside all Earthly cares, that we may receive the king of all. Kali Sarakosti to all.

Today we celebrate a Feast that has a wonderful name: “The Triumph of Orthodoxy.” Doesn’t that just have a nice ring to it? However, I want us to be careful here. The name of this Feast is not about a prideful triumph of the Orthodox “denomination” against another Christian group (Catholics, Lutherans, Presbyterians, etc.). Rather, it is the triumph of the Orthodox Faith – the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3), and which was found all over the Christian world for the first 1000 years of Christianity. I want to make sure I communicate this – that the word “Orthodoxy” does not mean the Eastern Christian world necessarily, or – worse – merely one more of the three thousand “Christian” denominations in existence today. Rather, it denotes the fullness of the true Christian Faith, preserved in the Orthodox Church to the present day.

Today’s Feast is specifically about the Restoration of the Icons after the battle with iconoclasm. This is why you all brought icons to church, and why we process each year with the icons, to commemorate this occasion. We celebrate triumphally today the “Feast of Orthodoxy,” for two reasons:

First, and most specifically to the historical events of the iconoclastic controversy, this is a triumph of the truth of the Incarnation of the Son of God. The Church consistently affirms, not only the permissibility, but the *necessity*, of holy images as aids in its worship. In the Old Testament we could not depict God because he had not become incarnate – no one could see him and live. The Son of God *has* become incarnate now. He has a human body like ours. People saw him. They touched him. They spoke with him (1 John 1:1-3). He can be depicted. This is the truth of the incarnation that we affirm when we triumphantly carry the icons.

Before going on to the second reason for this Feast, I’d like to tie in today’s Gospel reading for a moment. Before the fixing of this Sunday as the Triumph of Orthodoxy, there was a more ancient commemoration of Moses, Aaron, Samuel, and all the prophets. This can be seen in the Epistle reading (Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-40), and the Alleluia verses for today (Psalm 98:6 LXX). The Gospel reading (John 1:43-51) also appears to be related to this older commemoration, since Philip tells Nathanael, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” While this reference to Moses and the prophets here does not seem to be intentionally related to the Triumph of Orthodoxy, everything in the Church is related. I think we can find a deeper meaning here in the calling of Philip and Nathanael than meets us on the surface.

Philip's assertion that Jesus of Nazareth is the one whom Moses wrote about, is another affirmation of the truth of the incarnation, that we celebrate today with holy icons. The prophets prophesied that God would visit his people, that he would send a Messiah. Philip recognized in Jesus the promised Messiah, the one who was written about in the prophets. He shared this truth with Nathanael, who was a bit skeptical: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" But Philip's response to Nathanael was not to try to convince him with rational arguments, or to "proof-text" him from the Old Testament. Instead, he invited him to "come and see" the incarnate Son of God, the Messiah, the God-Man. Nathanael was converted on coming face to face with Jesus: "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel." All it took was being in the presence of the God-Man for Nathanael to be converted, to be convinced of the reality of the incarnation, and to follow Jesus.

So the first, and most direct, meaning of this Feast of Orthodoxy is the affirmation of the incarnation of the Son of God.

However, the second meaning of this Feast is broader than the specific battle against iconoclasm. It is the Triumph of Orthodoxy against every heresy that has fought against her over the years. In the complete service of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, the martyrs and confessors for the Faith throughout the ages are lauded (with "Memory eternal" sung for all of them), while all the heretics whose teachings have been condemned by the Church are ritually anathematized.

This broader meaning of the Triumph of Orthodoxy serves to remind us that the true Faith of Christ will always triumph in the face of any threat that comes against it – that Christ is with us always (Matthew 28:20) and that the Church is founded on the confession of him as the incarnate Son of God (Matthew 16:16-18). Let us treasure our Orthodox Faith, hold fast to it, and stay firm in our devotion – our devotion in the form of concrete actions that the Lord and his Church ask of us. Let us continue the struggle of Lent – praying at home, fasting, coming to church as much as possible, and most of all remembering the poor and less fortunate, and helping them through concrete actions of charity (not *merely* through good thoughts or well wishes).

Let us remember the gentle but firm approach of Philip when he called Nathanael to follow Christ. May we be witnesses of the truth of the incarnation of God, and may we not be ashamed of testifying to the reality of this incarnation, and to the soundness of all the Orthodox doctrines. May we gently but resolutely invite those around us to "come and see" the beauty, truth, and goodness found in the holy Orthodox Church of Christ.

Amen.

Deacon Frank Sermon ~ Sunday of St. Gregory Palamas March 28, 2021

There is an old saw among those who study comparative Christianity that goes as follows: Protestants think in terms of decades; Catholics in terms of centuries, and Orthodox in terms of millennia. We have a reputation, not entirely undeserved by the way, of being very slow to change. And yet today's celebration is a notable exception; indeed, the dedication of the Second Sunday of the Great Fast to Gregory Palamas occurred with astounding speed within the Church, and without any indication of anyone ever questioning the decision. So it behooves us today to look at bit deeper into why the Church would have made such a change with such rapidity, and what impact it has on us today, centuries after the fact.

St. Gregory Palamas reposed in the mid-fourteenth century, or roughly one hundred years before the fall of Constantinople. This means he lived not only three hundred years after the Great Schism, he also lived three hundred years before the Protestant Reformation began, just before the final century of the Byzantine Empire. At that time, the Second Sunday of Lent was dedicated to Polycarp of Smyrna, a great Saint, Hierarch, and Martyr of the Church, who reposed in the second century. Of the three saints dedicated to Sundays in Lent, Polycarp was the earliest, with Mary of Egypt having struggled in the fifth century and John Climacus in the seventh. This means that by the time of Gregory Palamas, there over a millennium between Polycarp and his life, although only half a millennium between him and the resolution of the Iconoclast Controversy commemorated last Sunday. In any case, there was a lot of precedent, and a lot of tradition. Yet Gregory's life and writings had such a profound impact on the Church, that a mere nine years after his repose he was canonized; moreover, around the same time the second Sunday of Lent was rededicated to him. Nine years! That's unimaginable speed for such a change. To put that in perspective, it took forty one years to canonize St. Nectarios, even though miracles of healing occurred on the very day of his repose. And to go so far as to replace a second century pillar of early Christendom with him after only nine years, well that boggles the Orthodox mind. We don't do anything that quickly, not even close.

So this begs the question, why so quickly? We have no records that directly address this question, but at least part of the answer is in the core message of Palamite theology: that God is truly accessible to man in this life. Curiously, this is a variation on the exact same message that forms the focus of last week's celebration. In distinguishing between idolatry, which is an imagination of things unseen, and iconography, which is a connection with things which we have seen, the Church expresses something unique and distinct from every other message of

every other belief system; namely, that God does not desire a separation between heaven and earth; rather, He seeks to unite it.

This is a profound message, and it is a distinguishing message of Christendom. Other systems either disavow one or the other, or they seek to keep them separate. In the first camp, we have Science, Humanism, and Secularism, which marginalized if not outright reject any real existence of the Metaphysical. But we also have some sects of Eastern Religions and Dualists, which say that the perceived world is actually the fake one, and the spiritual world is the only real one. In the other camp we have Eastern and Western faith systems that see the physical and spiritual worlds as separate, acknowledging the fallen nature of creation and suggesting that this world is to be escaped; that something better awaits us on "the other side." But Orthodox Christianity, and the key message of Gregory Palamas is that God is not seeking to separate Heaven and Earth; rather, He seeks to unite them. Icons are not pictures, only meant to evoke a metaphorical connection with who or what they depict; they are windows seeking to unite us with those who have departed this life before us, or with events from salvation history in which we actually participate. In a similar way, Palamas argues that the ascetics actually encounter and experience God in His uncreated energies, thereby keeping God's essence transcendent and intact. The message is profound: We as humans can experience the heavenly. We neither disavow earthy things as inferior, nor do we fictionalize heavenly things by making them inaccessible to the world. And this understanding of the world is critical to our Paschal journey. For if Heaven and Earth are separate, then the Resurrection can be nothing more than a metaphor, its true power dissipated. Christ is real. Christ as the θεάνθρωπος is the union of the Human and the Divine, and our union with Him is equally real. And if He unites heaven and earth, then we do too. And the Church's struggle is just that: to constantly unite the things of heaven with the things of earth, and thereby to transform them into what was intended from the beginning. Yes, there is an end to this world, but that is beside the point. Until God declares that this creation is finished, we are still here to unite it with heaven, as temples of the Holy Spirit.

My brothers and sisters, we live in a world that does not truly believe that heaven and earth can be connected. If the world believes in God at all, it believes He is "up there somewhere." That is not the faith of the Orthodox. We believe that he is "everywhere present, and fills all things." And we believe in a very real way that He stands at the door to our soul and knocks. Come then, and use the remaining time to make our souls ready, that the King of Glory may enter in. To Him be all Glory, now and forever. Amen.

## ARMS TO CARRY ME TO CHRIST

Holy Cross- Second Lent Sunday- 3/28/21 ~ Fr. John Chakos

Having arrived at the second Sunday of Lent, I pose a question to you: Are we kittens or monkeys? This may seem a strange question. But bear with me a little longer. Kittens and monkeys relate to their mothers in uniquely opposite ways. The kitten, when lost or in need, cries out “meow, meow,” and its mother comes and carries it to safety. But when a band of monkeys is streaking through the jungle, the baby monkeys can be seen hanging on to their mothers for dear life; whether they make it or not is up to them. There are times when we must be kitten people and rely utterly on God for help, but there are other times when we ourselves must make the effort. Both of these types are found in Mark’s Gospel account of the paralytic carried to the feet of Jesus through a rooftop for him to be healed. Today, let us see which type best represents us.

Let’s begin with the ones in our reading that best depict the monkeys. They would be the tenacious stretcher bearers. They knew what it was to hang on and struggle with the challenges that life threw at them. They were not deterred by obstacles. They were determined to carry their helpless friend to Jesus, but were stopped at the door by the crowd of people. We have all been there at some point in our life. All reasonable solutions to a problem have been exhausted. Life is taking us where we do not want to go, whether it be an illness, a broken relationship, a financial setback or some other problem. We have to find a way to hang on in this blur of distress that is spiraling out of control.

While living in Africa, I was deeply moved by the collective faith and endurance of the people I met. Life for them was a daily struggle. There seemed to be no end to their misery. Yet, they never gave up. They carried heavy burdens to help each other survive. On every dirt road and path or by some stream or banana grove, something or someone has to be transported by foot. One cannot help but be impressed by seeing a woman balancing a container of water on her head with a child strapped to her back while carrying firewood or some other object by hand over long distances. I stood in awe of these remarkable feats of endurance, accustomed as I am to moving things for myself by car, shopping cart, dolly or wheelbarrow. People who have to carry things by hand all their life experience life differently than we do. From an early age they are trained to endure, to hang on, and to help each other survive. What must Jesus think when he looks upon the circumstances of their life? It should not surprise us that Jesus rewards this kind of “heavy lifting” with a miracle.

Often, we, too, are called upon to struggle, to hang on or to carry heavy burdens, but of a different kind. Our hands may be free, but our hearts are very heavy with the daily anxieties of life in the modern world. Psychoses and neurosis, a rarity in the remote villages of Africa or Guatemala, are common to all of us. Our hectic pace exacts its own price on our sanity. Who is the person among us that does not feel burdened by some problem or difficulty? We are always on the run, but we don’t feel that we are getting in life.

I see it in our children, and I see it with adults. Ours is a world that is overstimulated with gadgetry and under stimulated by loving relationships. The TV, computers, cell phones have replaced human contact. And now with Covid, we

are isolated from each other more than ever. We don't have enough time for each other. Husbands and wives complain that the flame of love is flickering. Children pine for more attention. Nowadays friends get together less frequently or not at all because of the protocols of the pandemic. We don't know how to sit down and look at each other in the face and enjoy each other's company. Our world is about things, not people. Few are the friends who are carrying the paralyzed to Jesus. A call to 911 is our only way out. What must Jesus think when He looks upon our way of life. Today, who will carry the paralyzed among us to Christ or be a healing presence to a friend who needs us. Our lenten effort calls us to this kind of struggle.

This brings us to the second type- the kittens who are carried to safety by their mothers. Maybe we are the paralyzed ones who need to be carried to Christ. At one time, all of us had this need, whether carried by our mothers to Church, our Godparents to the baptismal font, our priest into the waters of baptism or around the marriage table. Also, parents, relatives and friends accompany us to receive Holy Communion, until we can walk on our own. They all represent the many arms of Christ, showing us the way to Him.

We cannot fail to mention the stretcher bearers par excellence, the saints of the Church. They carry us to Jesus on the stretcher of our faithlessness, indifference or despair. When we can't transport ourselves, they are there to do the heavy lifting for us. My own experience in life bears this out. Prior to going to Africa for my 6 month sabbatical, we organized a prayer chain to cover us while we were there. We enlisted volunteers to pray for us throughout the 24 hour day, with each person assigned to an hour. On many occasions, we felt the benefit of these prayers. They carried us each day. Once, when we were traveling to a very remote region, along cow paths, our SUV, aptly named the Fore-runner, sunk very deep into the mud after a heavy rain. We were desperate and lost. Suddenly, within minutes, 6 men appeared, lifted the SUV out of the mud and sent us on our way with the right directions. To me, they were guardian angels, as were all those who were praying for us over the 6 months. At that moment we were the ones that needed to be carried to Christ.

Our story of the stretcher bearers, as we know has a beautiful ending. The friends take apart the thatched roof and lower the invalid right in front of Jesus. What a powerful image, placing our burdens at the feet of Christ. Is there a message in this for us? Can we still carry one another to Christ. Can we make the time to do the little things that show that we care? If so, then we are like the tenacious monkeys who won't let go of their mothers, or us for that matter. Or perhaps we need a friend to do the heavy lifting for us, in which case we are more like the kittens. Whether we are the type to hang on for dear life or meow for help, one thing is clear- we all need Christ and His helpers- the saints- to carry us to heaven's door. Today, let us pray that, we, too, will hear these words from Jesus: "Arise, take up your bed and walk." Inspired by such examples, let us all walk together, and be there for each other, at a time when our humanity is being degraded by sin. The Cross that is so heavy for one to carry, becomes much lighter when we "bear one another's burdens," and in "this way fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). Kali Sarakosti! Have a blessed Lent!



THE GREEK ORTHODOX  
ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

Prot. No. 57/2021

**Archiepiscopal and Synodal Encyclical  
for the Feast of the Annunciation and the  
200th Anniversary of the Greek Revolution**

March 25, 2021

*Unto the Most Reverend and Right Reverend Hierarchs, Pious Priests and Deacons, the Monks and Nuns, Presidents and Members of Parish Councils, Honorable Archons of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, Members of Leadership 100, the Day and Afternoon Schools, Philoptochos Societies, the Youth, Greek Orthodox Organizations, and the entirety of the Christ-named Plenitude of the Holy Archdiocese of America.*

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The glorious Feast of the Annunciation of the Theotokos is the annual, joyful, commemoration of the Rebirth of the Greek Nation. This year, on the very day we praise the incarnation of the Son of God, we celebrate the Bicentennial of the Greek Revolution of 1821, the beginning of the War for Independence, and the restoration of freedom after four centuries of oppression.

The glad tidings of the Archangel Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, “Rejoice, O Full of Grace,” were the beginning of the liberation and redemption of every human person, the invitation into communion with God. For the Heroes of 1821, this day was the rallying cry to freedom, for if ever there was a People full of God’s grace, it is the Nations of the Hellenes.

Greece has been blessed for thousands of years to be a most precious repository of treasures of wisdom, spiritual knowledge, and the enlightened giants upon whose shoulders the rest of the world has raised its horizons. This noble country is the womb from which Western Civilization was born: Philosophy, Politics, Reason, Drama, Music, Athletics, and the whole host of virtuous human endeavors. The renewal of Democracy that began in Athens, five



hundred years before the Birth of our Savior, was born again in Greece. The Rebirth of the Nation in 1821 was a cause for worldwide rejoicing, as it coincided with other nations throwing off their own yokes of tyranny.

We turn the eyes of our hearts, with deep emotion and gratitude, to the Nation whose titanic struggle and blood soaked sacrifice redounded to the benefit of every Greek today, whether of Greece itself, or the Diaspora. As we bend our knees before the Holy Icon of the Virgin, we bend the knee of our heart before the sacred offering of our spiritual and National forebears. The immortal martyrs of 1821 understood fully what their forefathers, the Heroes of the Battle of Salamis knew 2,300 years before, that Νῦν ὑπὲρ πάντων ἀγών – “Now is the fight for everything!” (Aeschylus, *The Persians*, 405). The Twenty-fifth of March is not only the anniversary of the Rebirth of the Nation, it is the symbol of the immortality of the Greek People. It is a shining star in the constellation of illustrious achievements of the Greek People throughout their glorious history.

Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

With gratitude to the Ὑπέρμαχος Στρατηγός of the Nation and of the Church, today we offer up a special prayer and doxology all across our Holy Archdiocese of America. These have been specifically composed for this Two-Hundred Year Anniversary, in gratitude to God for the rich mercies with which He has so abundantly graced us. Therefore, let us weave a wreath of victory from the valiant deeds of our warrior ancestors, and crown their sacred memory. May we always be worthy of the freedom they gained with their lives, and give thanks unto God, for His mercy endures forever.

Long live Greece! Long live the Greek Nation!

With paternal love in Christ Jesus,

- † Elpidophoros of America
- † Methodios of Boston
- † Isaiah of Denver
- † Alexios of Atlanta
- † Nicholas of Detroit
- † Savas of Pittsburgh
- † Gerasimos of San Francisco
- † Nathanael of Chicago

## Sacraments ~

### Funerals

March 24~

†Angela (Pikras) Houmis, 92

Daughter of the late Constantine (Gus) and Sophia Pikras. Wife of the late George J Houmis. Beloved mother of Mark G Houmis of Mt Lebanon

and Sophia (Martin) Smith of Marshall Township. Sister of Daniel Pikras, John Pikras, and the late Mary Kakitsis. She is also survived by 6 grandchildren, Angela (Justin) Nadi, Annika (Troy) Geanopoulos, Maria (James) Buldas, Jeanne Houmis, Nicholas (Elisha) Smith, Alexis Smith, 8 great grandchildren and many nieces and nephews.



### **Blast from the past....**

What year?? Years that Oct 6 was on Tuesday: '81, '87, '92 or '98 ???



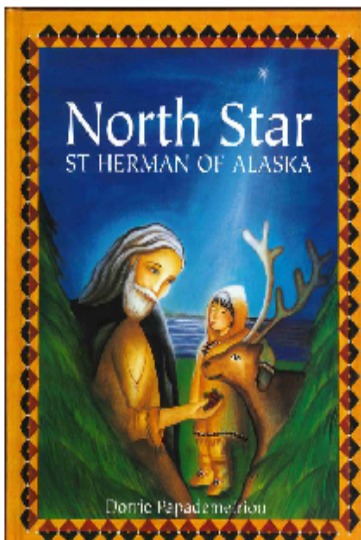
## **Greek Food Festival**

The Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Ladies Philoptochos Society is having its annual Autumn Greek Food Fair and Bake Sale on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, Oct. 6, 7, and 8, in our Community Center at 123 Gilkeson Road, Mt. Lebanon (across from the Galleria). "Kali Orexi" (good appetite) will be your greeting at lunch which is served from 11:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., dinner is 4:30 to 8 p.m. The menu includes extensive Greek food fare of soups, Moussaka, Tiropita,

Spanakopita, Patitso, meat entrees and seasonal vegetable dishes, as well as Rice Pudding and other desserts. The bakery will feature Greek pastries and varied breads, other pastries and sweets. Take-out service will be available from 11:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. Preparing for the festival from the left are: Angeline Portellos, Niki Aronson, Mary Chakos, Calliopi Hagelios, Christine Peters, Harriet Mitchell and Becky Danielides.

# HOLY CROSS ORTHODOX BOOKSTORE

## FEATURED BOOKS OF THE MONTH



### NORTH STAR:

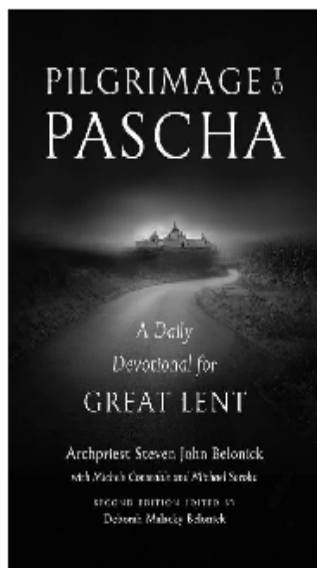
#### ST HERMAN OF ALASKA

In 1774, a group of Russian Orthodox missionaries landed on Kodiak Island, Alaska. Of this initial effort there survived one monk, Father Herman, who lived among the Aleut people for more than forty years. Author and illustrator Dorrie Papademetriou captures the divine spark that shone in the monk Herman and reflects it in vibrant illustrations while readers are warmed by the words of this human heart aflame with divine love.

### PILGRIMAGE TO PASCHA:

#### A DAILY DEVOTIONAL FOR GREAT LENT

This unpretentious little book of meditations based on Scripture, ancient hymns, and writings from Church Fathers will nourish the souls of reflective seekers during the forty-day period of Great Lent. Authors of each meditation have delved deeply into the sins and shortcomings of their own hearts, enabling readers to share in a collective human experience - from darkness to light, from despair to hope, and from isolation to commonality in the body of Christ - as they move steadily toward our Lord's Resurrection.



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)



## A GOOD WORD—Λόγον Αγαθόν

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE  
GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF PITTSBURGH  
VOLUME 4 NO. 3 (ISSUE 33) — MARCH 2021



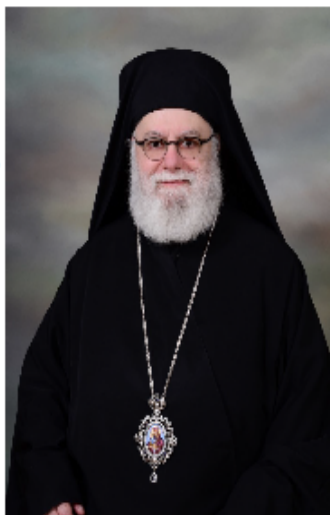
### **METROPOLITAN'S MESSAGE:**

Over the course of my long life in the Orthodox Church, I've heard my fair share of sermons. Not all, I confess, were memorable, but some were impossible to forget. Among the unforgettable was one I heard delivered nearly half a century ago, in my home parish of Sts. Constantine and Helen, which was transitioning at the time from its original site in Gary, Indiana, to its current location in Merrillville. The priest who delivered it was Fr. Evagoras Constantinides of blessed memory, and it was about stewardship. So strong was its impact on me that, to this day, whenever I hear a stewardship appeal, I measure it against that sermon of Fr. Ev's.

Fr. Ev had only been our proistamenos for a few years by that time but he certainly knew his parishioners well. He knew who worked at what steel mill, what their job was, and he had a good idea about what their hourly wages were. He challenged his people to give, in an approximation of his words, 'not ten percent, as the people of Israel were directed to do by God in Old Testament times. I'm not even asking for five percent. I'm asking for your first hour's pay. Not the change you put in the jar when you come home. The first hour of the week. Monday morning, whenever you punch in. Make the sign of the Cross, ask God to bless your work, and promise him the next hour's pay. From the top. Not the leftovers. God didn't want diseased animals or rotten vegetables. He wanted the best, the first-fruits. When you give him from the top, you demonstrate your love for God. You demonstrate your faith. You consecrate your day. You make holy the time. That's one hour out of forty. Not ten percent, not five percent, but two percent! And I know what you make, Costa. I know what you make, Manoli.' (Here, he actually pointed!) 'Your first hour's pay! Give it to God. Tell yourself clearly: it's not yours, it's his. Put it aside that day, put it in an envelope, bring it to church on Sunday.'

To tell the truth, I don't know how effective that sermon was at the time. The habit of paying dues - so much for an individual, so much for families - was still deeply ingrained in the parishioners' consciences. But I believe I wasn't the only one who took Fr. Ev's words to heart, and that, over time, people began to dare to do it (and even to exceed it).

There's something powerful about beginning or renewing something. We make an extra effort at the beginning of a year, a season, a month, a week, a day. We are at another beginning in our lives as Orthodox Christians with the coming of Great Lent, which provides us with a convenient point to more deeply engage in the practice of our faith: prayer, stewardship & almsgiving, fasting, and a stronger commitment to spiritually supporting family and friends. If we're starting from zero in these areas, we can begin as Fr. Ev encouraged the community—not at the pinnacle or the hardest level, but a modest start, deliberate and dedicated to God. And if we are accustomed to that kind of commitment, then we can instead seek to push our progress to a higher level. May Christ strengthen and enlighten you in this coming Lenten season, and may your efforts—the "first hour" that you offer—be multiplied for God's glory and your salvation. + Metropolitan Savas



### **SUPPORT HIS EMINENCE AND THE METROPOLIS MINISTRIES**

It costs approximately \$1,000 per day to operate our Metropolis—including Metropolitan Savas's pastoral visitations, preparations for Summer Camp and GOYA retreats, our vital registry (tracking marriages, baptisms, chrismations, and deaths), and more. Please consider sponsoring a day in the life of the Metropolis. To contribute, visit <https://pittsburgh.goarch.org/support>

## WELCOMING THE "STRANGER"

A portion of Matthew 25: 35-45 reads "I was a stranger and you received me into your homes."

The church is our home. The Triodion and many services of Great and Holy Lent offer the chance to

receive people who may only participate in Pre-Sanctified Liturgies, Salutations to the Virgin Mary, Saturday of the Souls, and other services offered this time of year – services that hold a special place in their hearts. And Lent leads to Palm Sunday (and ultimately, Pascha) the most attended Sunday of church during the calendar year.

Does your parish have a **welcoming ministry**? Now is the time to make sure people on that team are in place to warmly welcome people to Lenten services. Instead of asking "where have you been?" say to parishioners "It's wonderful having you in church," ask about their well-being, their family and if there is anything the parish can do for them.

Are welcome ministry folks equipped to answer questions about the life of the parish, about stewardship, parish outreach and more? Is your parish offering texts for people to follow along? Better still, is your parish offering opportunities for people to be *involved* in services – making kolyva or prosphora, serving as readers, and more.

How we receive people into our homes during Lent (and every day) leaves a lasting impression, offers an opportunity to re-engage lapsed parishioners and share the care and warmth of our parishes. Let us put forth our best effort, so that our guests—whether returning members or new visitors—encounter Christ in our presence, and through His Church find their salvation. A blessed Lent to all!



## THANKS TO OUR

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5201 Ellsworth Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15232 - <http://pittsburgh.goarch.org> - [info@pittsburgh.goarch.org](mailto:info@pittsburgh.goarch.org)

412-621-5529 (Main) - 412-465-0460 (Camp) - 412-621-8543 (Youth) - 412-621-1522 (Fax)

**His Eminence Metropolitan SAVAS of Pittsburgh, Presiding Hierarchy**

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Stacey Stathulis, Stewardship Ministries Coordinator

ADn. Ryan Gzikowski, Asst. to Metropolitan & Registrar

Marina Papafil, Camp Ministries Coordinator

Maria Stamoolis, Director of Greek Education and Culture

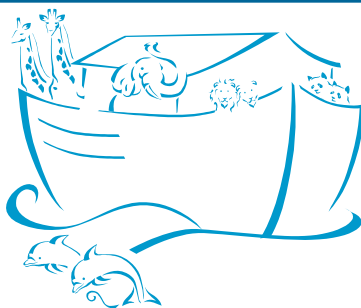
# 2021 Orthodox Christian Vacation Church School

at Holy Cross

Bring your Children to learn God's word @VCS!

VCS is Dedicated to teaching our young children about Orthodox Christianity in a fun and exciting atmosphere. It's an extension of the Sunday School experience that can greatly enhance a child's sense of belonging to the church, while providing our children with an opportunity to make lifelong friends in the church community.

Activities include daily skits illustrating lesson, brief classroom instruction, religious music lessons, hands-on crafts relating to lesson, recreation time, snack & social time.



This year's theme is:

## Journey to the Promised Land

Monday, July 26, 2021 ~ Friday, July 30, 2021

9:00 am to 12:00 Noon

*\*Monday, July 26, Children should arrive at 8:30 am*

Holy Cross Greek Orthodox Church, 123 Gilkeson Road, Mt. Lebanon, PA 15228

If you have questions, or in case of emergency during VCS, call (412) 833-3355

Welcoming all children age 3 years through entering 6th grade

High school students, parents, interested adults needed to volunteer.

Nominal registration fee of

\$20 per student is due by June 30th

\$30 if received by July 15th,

\$40 if received after July 15th

Please register early so we can prepare  
nametags, snacks & crafts!

Make checks payable to Holy Cross VCS and send to:

123 Gilkeson Road, Mt. Lebanon, PA 15228

Should you need financial assistance, please contact

Fr. Michael Kallaur (Holy Cross) at (412) 833-3355

## Orthodox Christian Vacation Church School at Holy Cross

2021 Registration Form - Please print.

Child's First & Last Name	Age on July 30	Grade Entering Fall 2021	Allergy information (Food, Medicine, Other)

Parent's Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Church Parish you belong to: \_\_\_\_\_

Mother's Cell Phone/Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Father's Cell Phone/Work Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

### Emergency information, OTHER THAN parents

1st Emergency Contact: Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

2nd Emergency Contact: Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Parental Consent: \_\_\_\_\_

I give my child(ren) listed above permission to participate in the Vacation Church School held July 26 - 30, 2021. I understand that my child(ren) will be responsible for obeying the rules and regulations of VCS as enforced by the directors, teachers, and staff. I hereby release Holy Cross church, its VCS teachers and staff from liability for the safety and/or conduct of my child (ren). I also give permission for emergency medical care to be administered to my child(ren) if necessary.

Signature of Parent \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

For administrative use:

**HOLY CROSS GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH  
123 GILKESON ROAD  
PITTSBURGH, PA 15228**

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**HOLY WEEK 2021**



**SCHEDULE  
OF SERVICES**  
Page 2