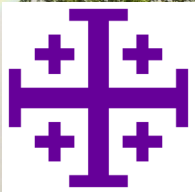


# Holy Cross



# Crossroads

Beloved Members and Friends of Holy Cross,

**Christ is Risen! Truly the Lord is Risen!  
Χριστος Ανεστη! Αληθως Ανεστη!**

As you receive this May Newsletter, we will have entered the Bright Period of our celebration of our Lord's Resurrection. We have been blessed to experience another Lent, Holy Week, and Pascha! Glory to God!!!

The Disciples of Christ were overwhelmed and shocked by the Resurrection. Simply, they could not believe that Jesus was alive! Even though Jesus had taught them that all these things must come to pass – the arrest, the trial, the whipping and scourging, the Cross, the burial, the tomb, and now the Resurrection! No other person in history has come back from the dead. Not only did Jesus return and walk and talk with His disciples, He taught them (*These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me. And He opened their minds that they might understand the Scriptures. Luke 24:44-45*), Jesus also ate with His disciples, and He promised them that He will be with them until close of the age. We now, two thousand years after these incredible events, still proclaim the truth and reality of these events. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Scriptures and the Life and Resurrection of all who believe in His Name. The Church is here to proclaim this truth and to welcome all who are seeking Christ's love, mercy, healing, and forgiveness of



# **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 and 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 and Divine Liturgy of St. Basil (“First Resurrection”)

10:00 pm – Midnight Office and Canon of Great Saturday

10:30 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**

9:30am – 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 5*

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.



body and soul. Truly we are blessed to experience this Grace of God in our lives. The sacraments of the Church that we partake of on a regular basis, especially Holy Confession and Holy Communion are life giving. Even when we are suffering and experiencing the Cross that God places upon us, we are very aware of God's mercy, love, and presence in our lives.

Jesus taught us *"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out his heart will flow rivers of living water."* (John 7:37-38) This thirst to know God and experience Him is imbedded in all our souls. We live to know and have a relationship with our Creator and Redeemer. God Himself comes to us and makes Himself known to us, if we desire Him.

There are many places in the world that are places of Grace. One example is The Tomb of Christ. Every year the Patriarch of Jerusalem enters the Tomb on Holy Saturday with an unlit candle. By God's grace and mercy the Holy Spirit descends upon the Tomb and lights his candle. The Patriarch brings out the Light of Christ so that all may receive it and bring it back to their homes and churches. Many times various authorities have tried to stop the Light from coming or keep the Patriarch from receiving this Divine Light. However, all these attempts failed and the Holy Spirit always manages to light the candle of the Patriarch, even if he is prevented from going inside the Tomb. This Light is taken all over the world as a reminder of the missionary work of the Church.

Another example that we celebrate during the Bright period is on Bright Friday and it is called the miracle of the Life -Giving Fountain (Zo Dochos Pegi). Located outside the walls of Constantinople near the Golden Gate, not far from the district of the Seven Towers, Makelles (also to be known later as the Emperor Leo of Thrace) was walking in this particular area. While Makelles was walking he came upon a blind man who was wandering about. Taking the blind man by the hand, Makelles comforted him as they went on their way. Drawing near the place where the Spring was, the blind man became thirsty and begged Makelles to give him some water to quench his thirst. Makelles (Leo) went deeper into the woods to look for water. Finding no water, he began returning to the blind man. While on the way he heard a voice from above saying, "Leo, you do not need to tire yourself for there is water nearby." Leo began again searching for water but still found none. Then a second time the voice came, "Emperor Leo, enter into the deepest part of the woods and you will find a lake; draw some of the water from it with your hands and give it to the blind man to quench his thirst, then anoint his darkened eyes with the clay and you will immediately know who I am, for I have dwelt in

this place for a long time.” Leo obeyed the voice and did as it commanded him. Immediately after Leo anointed the eyes of the blind man, he regained his sight. After a short time, as the Mother of God had foretold, Leo was enthroned as emperor. At his own expense, Leo built the first Church near this Spring in 454. Many miracles were worked daily in this Church.

After many years, the Emperor Justinian the Great (527-565) sought and received healing in this Church from kidney stones which were tormenting him. Being grateful for his cure, he rebuilt the Church to the Mother of the Word, making it larger and more ornate. This building was destroyed by several earthquakes. It was again rebuilt by the Emperor Basil the Macedonian (867-886) and his son Leo the Wise (886-912). Throughout its history this Spring has been the source of many, many miracles. The Empress Zoe was healed of barrenness (1042-1050) and gave birth to a son, the Emperor Constantine Porphyrogentius.

A man from Thessalonica was on his way to Constantinople to receive healing from this Spring. When he realized that he would not get there before he died, he asked that the sailors throw three buckets of water from the Spring on him before they buried him. His companions brought his body to the Spring and did as the man requested. He immediately was raised from the dead.

Numerous miracles throughout the centuries have been performed at this Life-Giving Fountain under the protection of the Mother of God. When Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453, the Moslems built a mosque over the sight. In 1835 a new Church was consecrated over the site of the Life-Giving Fountain. Again, it was destroyed in 1955 by the Moslems. Today there is a small chapel on this site and one can access the Spring by descending into the lower level of the chapel.

Every Bright Friday we remember this “Life-Giving Fountain” as we remember the Life-Giving Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We never get tired of proclaiming the Resurrection of our Lord and the unwaning Light that knows no diminishment or night. As a candle can light a million other candles and suffer no change, so the Light of the Resurrection continues to grow, and we receive it and bring it to those who have yet to come to the Light. May our Risen Lord and Savior Jesus Christ abide in hearts now and forever.

Christ is Risen!

With love and prayers,

Fr. Michael



## THE GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE OF AMERICA

### ARCHIEPISCOPAL ENCYCLICAL

Prot. No. 105/2021

#### Archiepiscopal Encyclical on the Feast of Great and Holy Pascha

May 2, 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.

My Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

*Ἴδὸν σκοτία καὶ πρωῒ... (ΕΩΘΙΝΟΝ Ζ', Ἦχος βαρὺς )*

*Behold the darkness yet the dawn... (EOTHINON VII, Grave Mode)*

How far we have come since Easter of last year! Those were dark days, when our passing of the light of the Resurrection had to be virtual, even if no less heartfelt. But as we all know, it is always darkest before the dawn. Thus, we behold in the hope of the recovery of our world from the pandemic, the glimmer of the dawning of faith and confidence for our collective future. This year, we will celebrate our Holy Pascha – perhaps not in the fullness of the pre-pandemic days, but certainly with a greater degree of freedom and in-person community. But let this not be an excuse for relaxing our vigilance. Our responsibility to be our brothers' and sisters' keeper and guardian abides.



Our anticipation of the rising of the Sun of Righteousness is within our hearts, like the little sun that Saint Symeon the New Theologian speaks of, which dawned inside of him. The darkness of night that is dispelled at first gradually gives way, shade by shade, until the brilliant solar orb overpowers the horizon. Every other star fades in the light of the one. This is also how the fullness of God Almighty overwhelms every shadow in our souls. Like a sleepless night of worry and troubled thoughts, the dark night of the soul can be very long indeed. But as the Psalmist says, “joy comes in the morning” (Psalm 29:5, LXX). And in the dawning of the Day of the Lord, every concern of this world pales before the glory of the world to come.

The Resurrection of our Lord is the triumph of light over darkness, of good over evil, of love over hate, and of life over death. Moreover, it is the dawn of a new humanity, the potential of every human being to become divine. As Saint Athanasios the Great says: “For He became a human being, so that we might made divine” (Αὐτὸς γὰρ ἐνηνθρώπησεν, ἵνα ἡμεῖς θεοποιηθῶμεν). The Lord did not rise from the dead only for Himself. He arose so that we might rise with Him, in this life and the next.

Therefore, my beloved Faithful, let us embrace the dawn that rises within us. Let us live in the light of Christ, a light filled with love and compassion for every creature. A light that passes no judgment on anyone. A light that is clear and transparent with honesty and humility. Let us witness to the truth that indeed: Christ is risen from the dead, by death trampling down upon death, and to those in the tombs He has granted life!

Χριστὸς Ἀνέστη! Ἀληθῶς Ἀνέστη!

Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!

† Ὁ Ἀμερικῆς Ἐπιτοφῶρος

† ELPIDOPHOROS  
Archbishop of America

# One-day Greater Pittsburgh Area Invitational GOYA Basketball Tournament











GOYAnS are grateful to clergy, advisors, coaches and chaperones for committing to come, as difficult as it may have been to organize teams in less than a few weeks during this global pandemic.

## GOYA Seniors



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)





REALIZE | REPLACE | RELEASE | RECEIVE | REJOICE

"MY GRACE IS SUFFICIENT FOR YOU,  
FOR MY POWER IS MADE PERFECT IN WEAKNESS"

2 CORINTHIANS 12:9

**GOYA Week 1:** June 20 - June 25

**GOYA Week 2:** June 27 - July 2

**GOYA Week 3:** July 4 - July 9

**JOY Week (Online):** August 1 - August 6



**Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh Summer Camp**  
at Camp Nazareth, Mercer, PA

For more information, please visit [y2am.pittsburgh.goarch.org/summercamp](http://y2am.pittsburgh.goarch.org/summercamp)  
Need-based scholarships are available thanks to the generosity of Leadership 100

Half-\$325 21HCPH

Full-\$650 21HCPF



# Cultivating the Love of Scripture

FR. STEPHEN DE YOUNG

Tues, 18 May 7:00–8:30 pm • via Zoom

Advanced registration: [tinyurl.com/LoveOfScripture](https://tinyurl.com/LoveOfScripture)

*From the Series:*

*"Cultivating the Fundamentals  
of Christian Life"*



Presented by  
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh  
Religious Education Commission



## ❧ Holy Cross Philoptochos May News Letter ❧

- ♥ Sixteen members attended the April 6th Zoom General Philoptochos meeting.
  - ♥ The next General Philoptochos meeting will be Tuesday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 7pm in the Community Center and on Zoom, if you cannot attend in person. The link will be sent to members. I hope that you can attend.
  - ♥ Christine Peters reported for Circle of Angels that 17 parishioner shut ins will receive Easter baskets of goodies. *Thank you* to Carol Halkias, Christine Peters and ALL the Angels who share their time with the shut ins.
  - ♥ There are currently 111 members who have paid their 2021 dues. The 2021 Membership campaign is concluded.
  - ♥ *Thank you* to Dena Yamalis for chairing the Bake Less Bake Sale.
  - ♥ Over \$4,000 and counting has been donated. Philoptochos is grateful to our generous parishioners.
  - ♥ *Thank you* to Kathy Pyros and helper Dina Hartlep for their time devoted to NRP and to ALL who donate to Neighborhood Resilience Project with food and clothing donations.
  - ♥ The Mt. Lebanon High School and church Philanthropy Award recipients will be announced at a later date.
  - ♥ Reminders, Announcements and Updates will be sent via-email to our members.
- Elaine Sofis, Philoptochos President

*Dear Parishioners,  
The Circle of Angels  
is very grateful for  
the abundance of  
koulourakia, assorted  
cookies, paximadia,  
chocolates and bread that  
were donated for our  
Pascha Ministry.*



*Thank you for your help in putting together the baskets and making the visitations. Thank you also to Emmanuel, GOYA and the Church School children for making the beautiful Easter cards for our shut-ins. Have a Blessed Holy Week and Pascha.*

*-Christine and Carol*



Please join us for a general Philoptochos meeting on Tuesday, May 11 at 7pm in the Community Center and on Zoom, if you cannot attend in person. This will be our first in-person general meeting in 14 months. The Zoom link will be provided to members. There will be an announcement of board members for 2021-2023. This will NOT be an election. Thank you to Election chairpersons, *Cynthia Kostelnik, Jane Kokanos and Christine Peters* for securing this new Philoptochos board.

On behalf of Kathy Pyros, thank you to our Holy Cross Family for their generosity to the Neighborhood Resilience Project Pascha Food Drive. You may continue to donate *non-perishables* outside the inner office doors. There is a great deal of food insecurity. Also, spring and summer clothing will now be accepted. NO winter clothing is needed at this time.

Thank you to *Kathy Pyros* and helper *Dina Hartlep* for taking the much needed items to NRP.

Thank you to retiring Philoptochos Membership Chairperson, *Connie Carahalis*. Your years of dedication and time in securing members to Philoptochos will not be forgotten!

The Philoptochos Bake Less~ Bake Sale was a huge success! *Thank you* to our Holy Cross parishioners for supporting Philoptochos in this fundraising endeavor. Your generosity exceeded our expectations! Thank you to *Dena Yamalis* for her time and dedication in chairing and creating this fundraiser for many years!



Thank you to a dedicated Philoptochos member who kindly baked Pascha bread as a Philoptochos fundraiser in April. Your time and efforts are deeply appreciated.

Thank you to Circle of Angels Chairpersons, *Carol Halkias* and *Christine Peters* and ALL of their Angels who visited our Holy Cross shut-ins with Easter baskets of goodies, made phone calls and cards. Thank you to ALL who baked cookies and assembled the bountiful Easter baskets. Your thoughtfulness is appreciated!



~~Elaine Sofis  
Philoptochos President

## **Palm Sunday April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021 ~ Deacon Frank Dickos**

We humans are a fickle bunch, and as Socrates discovered in ancient Athens, the tide from admiration to disgrace can run very quickly indeed. And perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than in the contrast between the events of today and later this week. For today the crowds lay palm branches before the Son of David, while in a few days they will lay their contempt before Him as He carries the Cross to Golgotha. And so on this Palm Sunday, we turn our attention to the crowd, to find out what went wrong, and to see if there is anything we can learn from it.

Before you judge the throng, remember that it is easy for us to look at today's feast in retrospect. We have the benefit of two thousand years of Christian history, of rejoicing in the uncreated light of the Resurrection. But Jerusalem did not have the convenience of this perspective. They saw their hopes literally ride in before their very eyes. The rumors of a prophet who had just raised a man that had lain in the tomb for four days were now given a face and a name. And they projected upon him all their desires for a restored Davidic kingdom, for freedom from the yoke of Roman tyranny, and for the people of God to take their rightful place among the sons of men. It did not seem to them an unreasonable expectation; after all, a man who could work such miracles had to have God with him, and if God was with him, who could stand against him? Where is the flaw in that reasoning? How could it be otherwise?

The problem lies in the crowd itself. When we are in groups, we are inclined to create heroes, and to project our hopes and expectations upon them, however unrealistic. Yes, He is the Son of David. Yes, God goes with Him. Yes, the hopes not only of Israel, but also of the whole world go with Him. But the crowd did not go out to meet Jesus. They went out to project their desires upon someone they did not try to know. They constructed a false Jesus, one who could fulfill their wildest dreams, and when he did not, became the fulfillment of their wildest contempt.

Although the old adage claims that "familiarity breeds contempt", it is only through familiarity that true admiration can develop. It is only after you deepen your understanding of an individual that genuine respect emerges. Until then, you project upon an imaginary individual, whom you will mold into an image of what you expect, rather than who they truly are.

And this is where the crowd went wrong. But if they only had tried to encounter Him as He is, rather than how they imagined Him to be, they would have discovered the deeper truth of God's love and purpose

for man. They would have seen that God became man so that man might become God, and Jesus truly was there lead people to the kingdom of which David's was a mere foreshadowing, for freedom not just from Rome, but from the yoke of death itself, and for all people to take their rightful place among the sons of the Most High. Instead, their hopes and dreams were dashed, and so they rejected the one upon whom those hopes were projected.

The signs were there, but the crowd chose not to see them. To say that Jesus received a hero's welcome into Jerusalem is no understatement. To cover the path of someone is an ancient middle eastern sign of the highest honor. We even call it the triumphal entry of Christ into Jerusalem. And yet did he come in riding a white steed, or perhaps a chariot? No, He came in on the humblest of riding stock, a young donkey. Did He come with spoils of victory? Perhaps, but only if we consider Lazarus the first spoil of victory over death. But then they would have seen that Jesus was no ordinary King. But they loved their concept of God more than they loved God Himself. And what they went out to meet was not what their hearts wanted.


And what of us? Do we love God? Or do we love the concept of God? There are many interpretations of Jesus in many different churches or philosophies. But many of them project their own desires on Him just like the crowd did. They want to justify their lifestyles or prejudices by claiming them to be part of Jesus's message. In stark contrast, Orthodoxy stands as a beacon, preserving the same message unspoiled for over two millennia. We desire and strive to encounter God, not as we imagine Him to be, but as He truly is.

My brothers and sisters, our God is not a concept any more than you are. He is a person; one who can be encountered and known. Do not be like the fickle crowd. We must not be people who mould God to our image; rather, we must strive to encounter Him, through prayer, through the Eucharist, through scripture, through the fathers, through study and fellowship, all with the purpose of getting to know Him as He truly is, not as we imagine Him to be. Live not in the darkness of misconception and falsehood, but in the light of knowledge and truth. We embark on a journey this week, one that leads us through tragedy to triumph, from the Passion to the Resurrection, but ultimately it is a journey of discovery, where we encounter the Living God. Join us for as much as you can, inasmuch as you are able. For in the events of the week, God reveals Himself to us like never before, and if you would believe it, He Himself is present here for you to encounter Him. Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord! To Him be all Glory, now and forever. Amen.

# Holy Cross

SUN	MON	TUE
<i>25 Palm Sunday</i>	<i>26 Holy Monday</i>	<i>27 Holy Tuesday</i>
8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy  5pm Bridegroom Service	9am Presanctified Liturgy  6:30pm Bridegroom	9am Presanctified Liturgy  6:30pm Bridegroom
<b>2</b> <b>PASCHA</b>  <b>Noon</b> <b>Agape Vespers</b>	<b>3 BRIGHT MONDAY</b> <i>Office closed</i> 9:30 am – AT ST GEORGE CATHEDRAL, OAKLAND: Paschal Orthros and Divine Liturgy	<b>4 BRIGHT TUESDAY</b>  7pm GOYA Meeting 7pm Philoptochos <i>Meeting</i>
<i>9 Thomas Sunday</i> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy <div style="background-color: yellow; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">No Memorials</div> <i>Mother's Day</i> 	<i>10</i>  6:30pm Paraclesis	<i>11 Sts. Cyril &amp; Methodius</i>  7pm Church School (9th-12th grades)
<i>16 Sunday of Myrrhbearers</i> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	<i>17</i>  6:30pm Paraclesis	<i>18</i>  7pm Church School (9th-12th grades)
<i>23 Sunday of the Paralytic</i> 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	<i>24</i> 6:30pm Paraclesis	<i>25</i>
<div style="text-align: right; font-weight: bold;">30</div> Samaritan Woman 8:15am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	<div style="text-align: right; font-weight: bold;">31</div> <i>Memorial Day</i> <b>Cemetery Visitations</b> 9-11am Jefferson Cemetery 12:30-2pm Mt. Lebanon Cemetery	7pm Church School (9th-12th grades)

# May 2021

WED	THU	FRI	SAT
<b>28 Holy Wednesday</b> 9am Presanctified Liturgy 3pm Holy Unction 6:30pm Orthros of Holy Thursday	<b>29 Holy Thursday</b> 9am Vespereal Liturgy 6:30pm Passion of Our Lord/ Reading of 12 Gospels 10pm-6am Vigil by the Cross & Sandwiches for Homeless	<b>30 Holy Friday</b> <i>Office Closed</i> <b>9am Royal Hours</b> 3pm Vespers/Taking down from the Cross 6:15pm Trisagion by tomb 6:30pm Praises/Orthros of Holy Saturday	<b>1 May Holy Saturday</b> 9am Vespereal Liturgy (First Resurrection) 10pm Nocturnes 10:30pm Receive the Light 11pm Orthros /Liturgy of the Resurrection
<b>5 BRIGHT WEDNESDAY</b> <b>No fasting</b>  4:30pm Greek School 7pm Bible Study <i>via Zoom</i>	<b>6 BRIGHT THURSDAY</b>	<b>7 BRIGHT FRIDAY</b> <b>No fasting</b> <i>Theotokos of the Life Giving Spring</i> 8:30 Orthros 9:30 Div Liturgy	<b>8 BRIGHT SATURDAY</b> <b>St. John the Theologian</b> 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy 4pm Church School (PreK-8th grades) 5pm Vespers
<b>12</b>  4:30pm Greek School 7pm Bible Study <i>via Zoom</i>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>  4pm Church School (PreK-8th grades) 5pm Vespers
<b>19</b>  4:30pm Greek School 7pm Bible Study <i>via Zoom</i>	<b>20</b>	<b>21 Sts. Constantine and Helen</b> 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy	<b>22</b>  4pm Church School (PreK-8th grades) 5pm Vespers
<b>26 Mid-Pentecost</b> 8:30am Orthros 9:30am Divine Liturgy  4:30pm Greek School 7pm Bible Study <i>via Zoom</i>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>  4pm Church School (PreK-8th grades) 5pm Vespers

## **April 4th Sermon (3rd Sunday of Lent) ~ Elias Diamond**

Many of us wear crosses around our necks, or on our wrists, or maybe we have one hanging from our car's rear-view mirror. To us, it is a symbol of victory. But, for a moment, I'd ask you to consider what it would be like if the symbol hanging around your neck, or on your wrist, or in your car, was not shaped like a cross, but instead was shaped like a revolver, like the kind you might find in an old picture of one of the firing squads in the Soviet Union. Or what if it was shaped like a gas canister containing Hydrogen Cyanide, the kind of gas used in the chambers at Auschwitz. Or what if it was even shaped like a noose, that could be used to hang someone for being a Christian in a country like Iran. I say this by no means to demean the cross - far from it. I say this because it can become easy for us, who continue the legacy of bearing witness to the Resurrection, to lose sight of exactly what Christ is asking His disciples when we read what he says in the Gospel, when He asks them to take up their cross and follow Him.

The disciples had not seen the Resurrection when Christ asks them this. What they had seen, however, was crucifixion. Those who were considered enemies of the Roman Empire were often subject to this brutal form of execution. Christ's time was an age of unrest, when many in the occupied kingdom of Judea were calling for an overthrow of Roman rule, often by violent means. People like this were condemned by the Roman state, and so the disciples would have been familiar with the sight of these revolutionaries, brutalized, bloody, and left up on the cross as a sign of derision. When Christ asked them to take up their cross and follow Him, the disciples very well would have understood that such a road could end with them in the exact same circumstances as these enemies of Rome.

Christ was not only asking them to die for Him and the Gospel, to suffer for Him and the Gospel - He was also asking them to be willing to be completely and utterly shamed by the world of humanity. Crucifixion was a particularly humiliating and shameful form of execution. It sought to make an example of those who it was done to, to make them a scorn in the eyes of all

those who were there to witness. So Christ was asking His disciples to not only be willing to suffer physical pain, but also emotional and social tortures as well. In effect, He was asking them to seek nothing else, not to seek comfort in this world, not to seek approval of humanity, to seek nothing else other than to have their names written in the Book of Life, to seek nothing else than the Kingdom of Heaven.

These examples I brought up earlier - of the revolver, of the gas, of the noose - I brought up because I believe that the same kind of visceral reaction that us modern folk feel when we hear of those things, would be similar to the visceral reaction that the disciples would have had when they heard Christ ask them to take up their cross and follow Him. Perhaps this can help us recognize the gravity of our calling as Christians, for while we in this country, at this particular moment in time, are in a period of relative safety to practice our faith, things can always change in the blink of an eye, and we must always be prepared. Fortunately for us, Lent is a kind of training ground, a time to prepare ourselves spiritually to seek the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Kingdom of Heaven alone.

The cross, before Christ sanctified it with His precious blood, symbolized all the horrible, cruel people things have done to each other over the ages. One doesn't have to dig far into the pages of history to recognize how true this is. The cross didn't just mean death. The cross was a tool of humanity, made to inflict terrible suffering and cruelty and mockery upon fellow human beings. However, brothers and sisters, the tremendous power of God, the tremendous beauty of His revelation through Christ Jesus, is that something made for the purposes of only the ugliest, meanest, basest impulses of the human race, could be turned into a symbol of victory, victory over the forces of sin, death, and the devil. What a miracle that is! And so with that all in mind, at this halfway point in Lent, let us recommit ourselves to carrying our crosses, and if we see our brothers or sisters struggling, let us bear one another's burdens, so that we may all bear witness to the sacred Pascha at the end of the fast.

## Emmanuel Maginas's sermon: Sunday, April 18 - Fifth Sunday of Lent

Today I'd like to talk about the Epistle reading that we heard today (Hebrews 9:11-14). Often we don't think too in-depth about the Epistle readings we hear in church, and this one might be particularly confusing for many of us. After all, it talks about *sprinkling with the blood of goats and bulls*; and what does it mean by *the ashes of a heifer*—What is *the greater and more perfect tent, not made with hands*? I'll get to all of that in a moment, but please allow me to give a little bit of background to help us understand what is going on here.

On Saturdays and Sundays during Lent, we hear sections from the Epistle to the Hebrews, and from the Gospel according to Mark. Hebrews is a very liturgically-centered epistle. If we think about the name, Hebrews – this was a letter written either by St. Paul or by one of his disciples, to a group of Greek-speaking Jewish Christians. It is thought that perhaps what occasioned this letter was some members of this Jewish Christian group starting to abandon faith in Christ, and to slide back to their Jewish roots (Orthodox Study Bible, introductory page to Hebrews, p. 1652). Thus, a major theme woven throughout this letter is the continuity and superiority of Jesus Christ's priesthood and of Christian worship, as opposed to, and ultimately in fulfillment of, the priesthood and the worship of the Old Testament: the Levitical priesthood, and the Old Covenant's animal sacrifices.

[To this point, the Epistle readings the past few Sundays have referenced the Old Testament figure of Melchizedek. While Melchizedek is not mentioned today, he is a major theme in this epistle, since he was both priest and king of the Lord God, and he offered bread and wine to God, in prefiguration of Christ (Genesis 14:18-20). His priesthood is presented as being superior to that of the Old Testament Levitical priests in the Temple. Christ is said to fulfill the priesthood of Melchizedek, in that he is a priest forever, "according to the order of Melchizedek." This was also prophesied in the Psalms (Ps. 109:4 LXX).]

Today we heard in Hebrews, about Christ appearing *as a high priest of the good things that have come* (or, perhaps more accurately, *of the good things [which are] to come [in the Kingdom]*) (9:11 RSV and NKJV, respectively). We also heard *about the more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation* (NKJV). The *more perfect tabernacle* here is the flesh of Christ (St. John Chrysostom, Homily 15 on Hebrews), which was not made by human hands but by the Holy Spirit. With these comparisons, St. Paul is comparing Christ's flesh to the tabernacle and the Temple of the Old Covenant, and saying that Christ is superior; Paul is showing that Christ returned to the bosom of his Father, entering *once and for all* into the true *Holy Place*. This contrasts with the Jewish high priest, who had to enter the Holy of Holies year after year, on the day of atonement. Christ took his human flesh and blood to his Father, *thus securing [our] eternal redemption*.

But what is this about the blood of goats and calves, and sprinkling with the ashes of a heifer in order for the flesh to be purified? Two things are going on here: blood and ashes.

First, blood: perhaps we have been taught that the idea of *sacrifice* is synonymous with *killing*; in other words that the central element in a sacrifice is the death of what is sacrificed – usually the animal. But that was not actually the case: sacrifice in the ancient world was understood as sharing a meal with your god. Often sacrifices consisted of wheat cakes, or other plant-based foods, which would be burnt in an offering to the deity, and then the people would share in part of the meal as well. When the sacrificed food was part of an ani-



mal, that necessitated killing the animal first, but the killing of the animal was only a necessary step in preparing it for being eaten, for sharing the meal with the god. And this, by the way, is what makes human sacrifice so especially repulsive. Because not only would that involve killing people, but in most cases it involved drinking their blood, and sometimes cannibalism too. Because sacrifice is a meal, shared with your god.

In Jewish worship in the Tabernacle and subsequently in the Temple, another part of sacrifice, particularly on the Day of Atonement, was the sprinkling of the space with the blood of the sacrificed animal or animals. Blood was considered sacred, since the life of the animal was in the blood (Leviticus 17:11). This is why it was forbidden to drink blood. (If any of you are familiar with the concept of Kosher meat, this is part of the requirements to be considered kosher – all the blood must be drained out of the animal, because blood is life and is forbidden to be consumed.) The life of these animals was offered to God and thus the blood could cleanse the space and allow the flesh of the participants to be cleansed (cf. the episodes of *The Lord of Spirits* podcast titled “Eating with the Gods,” “The Sacrifices of Righteousness,” and “The Priest Shall Make Atonement:” <https://www.ancientfaith.com/podcasts/lordofspirits>).

Next, ashes: It was commanded in the Torah (Numbers chapter 19) that a pure red heifer would be killed and burnt. The ashes from this heifer were mixed with water and used to purify people and things that had become ritually unclean. These ashes could do this because they came from an animal that had been offered to God. It was this connection with the divine that allowed the ashes, once mixed with water, to cleanse people or things.

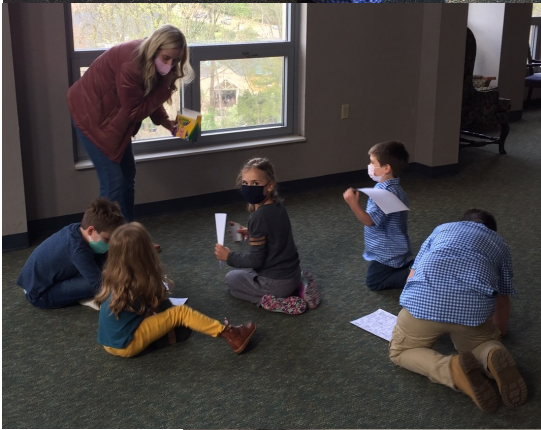
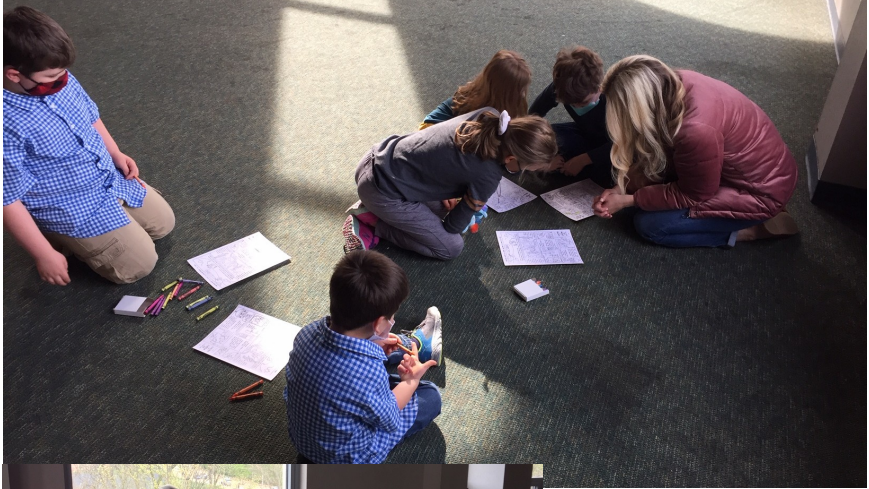
In the passage from Hebrews that we heard today, St. Paul is conflating the actions of the blood and the ashes, since both purified things in the old covenant. He affirms that the blood of these sacrifices could indeed cleanse the participants, but he then takes it to the next level. If it was true that *the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer*, when sprinkled on unclean persons, cleanse their flesh, *how much more shall the blood of Christ cleanse [our] conscience[s] from dead works, to serve the living God?* In other words, the blood and ashes did their job under the old covenant, but now we have something higher, greater, deeper, and more lasting: the blood of the God-Man, that will cleanse not only our flesh but our souls as well.

And this is part of the reason that we receive Holy Communion. When Christ came *as a high priest of the good things to come*, he entered with his body, which is *the more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands*, into heaven, that great *Holy Place*, where he took *his own* flesh and *blood*, sitting down at the right hand of God. When we participate in the Eucharist, the “accomplished mystical sacrifice” (Cherubic Hymn of the Presanctified Liturgy), we drink the Blood of Christ – we are cleansed from the disease of sin. Because when we are caught up in *dead works*, we are defiled in our *conscience* and cannot *serve the living God* (St. John Chrysostom). However, through the Blood of Christ, we are *purified in our conscience* and thus are made capable of truly serving him. By drinking his Blood, we participate in his life.

Let us remember this participation in the Blood – the Life – of Christ, every time we receive Holy Communion. Because in Communion we do something fearful and awesome – we reach out and touch the life-giving Blood of Christ our God. May we allow it to cleanse our souls, and to *purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God*.

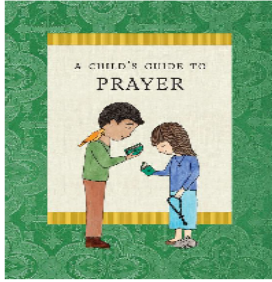
Amen.

# Saturday afternoon Church School



# HOLY CROSS ORTHODOX BOOKSTORE

## FEATURED BOOKS OF THE MONTH

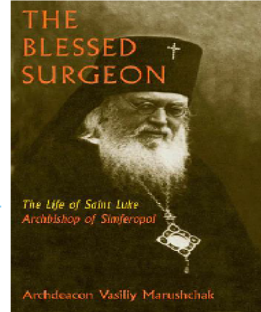


### A CHILD'S GUIDE TO PRAYER

A Child's Guide to Prayer is a beautifully illustrated prayer book for Orthodox Christian children aged 5 to 10 years who are just developing a habit of prayer. The selection includes morning and evening prayers, prayers during the day, at mealtimes, for family and friends, and prayers of and to the saints - along with psalms to pray and prayers that have to do with communion and confession. The guide also includes brief instructions on how to pray, why we pray, and a list of different ways to pray.

### THE BLESSED SURGEON: THE LIFE OF SAINT LUKE, ARCHBISHOP OF SIMFEROPOL

World-famous pioneering surgeon, tortured confessor, Archbishop, and miracle-worker - Saint Luke is one of the most intriguing victims of Soviet oppression. Outspoken regarding his faith, he would lecture on surgery in universities wearing his cassock and cross. He was exiled and tortured multiple times. Yet the authorities could not deny his exceptional medical skills: he was appointed chief surgeon overseeing the treatment of injured soldiers during World War II. This book documents his personal spiritual struggles, his self-sacrificing love for patients, his miracles, and his bold spiritual guidance.



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)



Please use link below or contact Dean directly at: [deanstambolis@verizon.net](mailto:deanstambolis@verizon.net)  
[http://support.iocc.org/site/TR?px=1003362&pg=personal&fr\\_id=1410&et=XcLdrt2sygCyyragThWRVA](http://support.iocc.org/site/TR?px=1003362&pg=personal&fr_id=1410&et=XcLdrt2sygCyyragThWRVA)

**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) 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.**

# Holy Cross Oratorical Festival

## April 2, 2021



## **Nina Paliouras, Metropolis Oratorical Festival, Senior Division**

In the Psalms, we read, "If you, Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you." (Psalm 130:3-4, NRSV). Discuss how an Orthodox Christian understands sin, forgiveness, mercy, and repentance.

Since the beginning of time, we have been struggling with sin and passions. Sin is more than just a "bad deed." Rather, it is a disease that overcomes us, and the passions make us spiritually blind and lead us to darkness. Through the grace and love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, He gives us endless opportunities to repent and receive His boundless mercy.

In Psalm 130:3-4 it says, "If you, Lord, should mark iniquities, Lord, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with you." Sin has been a part of humanity throughout time, and it is part of our fallen nature. The West calls it original sin, but to us Orthodox Christians, it is called the sin of our forefathers or ancestral sin. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, disobeyed God and were condemned to a life of sin and death. Not only were they cast out of paradise, but they were not able to live in direct communion with God. Our sins and passions are what prevent us from drawing closer to God. Many years later, Christ took on flesh through the Theotokos to become one of us. As the Second Adam, He experienced all of the struggles we go through in our lives and He shows His mercy. Mercy is a godly love that is beyond comprehension and never ceases. Jesus loves us SO MUCH. He would give up His own life on a cross for our sake to set us free from the bondage of death. No matter how much pain and shame Christ experienced, He forgave His people for their deeds.

Through Christ's examples of love and humility, we must also forgive others and fall down in repentance. The church shows many examples of repentance like the sinful woman who fell down at Jesus' feet, washed them with her tears, and dried them with her hair. That is what Holy Confession is like. We are to get down on our knees and pour out all of the sins we

have committed. This allows us to be free and be the living icons of Christ made in the Image and Likeness of Him. Forgiveness is one of the most powerful things, and it can change many lives. It has also changed the lives of the saints such as Saint Mary of Egypt. If you may recall, she spent her life seducing men for pleasure until she decided to go on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to seek the Holy Cross. When she was about to enter the Holy Sepulchre, an invisible force blocked her and she could not enter the church. In the corner of her eye, she saw an icon of the Theotokos. She saw purification. In that moment, a deep shame overcame her, and she saw the true horrors of herself. She made a vow to the Theotokos that if she entered the church and venerated the Holy Cross, she would spend the rest of her life in the desert to work on her salvation. Because of her efforts to repent, she is considered the mother of the desert and is commemorated twice on the liturgical calendar.

In my own life, I have many times experienced others being hurtful towards me. I thought they were my friends and people with whom I could share my time and thoughts. I then learned they would say hurtful things about me. No matter how much pain I endured, I knew I must forgive them. It is better to forgive than to hold grudges. Forgiveness to me is healing and restoring. In the Trisagion Films production, The Human Transformation through Repentance, we hear, "Repentance is more than just a decision to forgo the transgression of some moral law or code of conduct. It is a movement, a turning away from sin and death and a turning toward life and communion with God in others...who through His love and grace can transform our very mode of existence."

Although we sin every day, God continues to love and forgive us for our deeds no matter how despicable we can be. Instead of feeling angry at others, we should practice showing acts of mercy just as Christ does for us. It is never too late to seek God's healing mercy. If we continue to show kindness and love towards others, we restore the Image and Essence of God within us. Jesus calls all sinners saying, "Come unto Me all you who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest." May God forgive us and may He strengthen us always. Thank you.

## John Urso, Metropolis Oratorical Festival, Junior Division

Topic: During the pandemic, people noticed that our natural environment became cleaner. What can this teach us about our care for the natural world?

Reverend fathers, honorable judges, fellow speakers, ladies and gentlemen, good evening! The COVID-19 pandemic left its mark on 2020. It did not take long for the world to be confronted with the challenges that it presented. The relentless coronavirus spread throughout China and quickly came to America. A virus that has caused over half a million deaths and forced us to stay isolated from our loved ones. Looking at the news and seeing all that has happened in our world, it can make you wonder, Where is God? Why did God let this happen? But we forget that God does everything for a purpose. This pandemic has given humanity the opportunity to realize that we must take care of one another and the world that God has entrusted to our care. One example that I would like to highlight is the positive impact that the global shut down has had on the environment. For decades, we have been taking and taking from the environment. We are taking our beautiful planet and tearing it apart.

However, the past year has brought hope, with the environment showing signs of recovery as a result of the global shut down. The bible story that illustrates this best, is the story of Noah's Ark. One verse in particular speaks to me. "Thus the Lord God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh corrupted their way on earth".(Genesis 6:12). One could argue this is what we were like, corrupt, taking God and his creation for granted, including the environment. Let's take a look at our world before the pandemic. Global warming continued to be a reason for concern for many due to CO2 emissions degrading the earth's protective ozone layer. Wildfires raged throughout California and in parts of the Amazon rainforest.

With changes in our lifestyle, the environment can gradually rebuild itself. During the pandemic, carbon pollution fell



nearly 20% in just one year. Do you know what we stopped doing during the pandemic? Driving. Automobiles are one of the largest contributors to air pollution. Additionally, large factories were shut down as a result of government mandates that were put in place to flatten the curve. Once factories were cleared to reopen, production was sluggish as they struggled to obtain critical raw materials. This slowdown in manufacturing also had a significant positive impact on global air pollution. Again, these are everyday things that we do that contribute to the destruction of our planet. There appears to be a parallel to what we have experienced in 2020 and the story of Noah's Ark. God saw how wrong we were treating what he gave us so he took it away and showed us through these events what life would be like without these things, and how to fix them.

Air pollution is only part of the problem, over 70% of our beautiful planet is covered in water, holding over 250,000 different species of aquatic creatures. It is clear that even a little bit of pollution would affect thousands of these animals. In 2017 over 100 million aquatic creatures died from water pollution, however in 2020 the amount of pollution decreased roughly 16% saving a substantial amount of our marine life. If we can keep improving and finding alternate ways to dispose of waste, we can continue decreasing the amount of pollution, so that for the glorious descent of Christ from heaven, we leave the earth presentable for Him.

As Orthodox Christians, we need to remember that the earth is a gift from God; this is still God's home and so we need to do our best to take care of it. When we protect our environment we also glorify God. We are reminded to be good stewards in Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world and those who live in it." We must continue to take steps to preserve our beautiful planet as God intended. I encourage you all to look at what you can do for the environment, even if it's as little as recycling, to biking one mile instead of driving, or conserving natural resources.

If we all do little things, we will see an extraordinary impact.

THANK YOU

## Noah Urso, Metropolis Oratorical Festival, Junior Division

Topic: Discuss the challenges and opportunities of watching a church service that is live streamed.

The Covid-19 pandemic has had a tremendous impact on our society over the past year, not only affecting our lives on a global scale but a very personal one too. In a matter of weeks, we went from immersing ourselves in the Divine Liturgy within a fully packed church, to participating in services through an unorthodox way--live streaming. Even though watching church online has been a drastic change to how we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, there have been opportunities, and also challenges that have come with it.

The Covid-19 pandemic caused isolation and disruption to our church routines, but live streaming created opportunities for many. When attending church was not an option, live streaming allowed people to be a part of the liturgy from their homes. For many families, their living rooms transformed into small churches. For example, when our family's only choice was to live stream church, we created a mini altar in our family room by using icons, candles, and even brought out our mini censer and censed our home. Jesus tells us, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." (Matthew 18:20) More than a year after the onset of the pandemic, live streaming continues to be an option for parishioners who can't attend liturgy and Lenten services due to health and physical ailments.

There are many opportunities that live streaming church presented, but it also brought with it many unique challenges. In my opinion, the biggest obstacle of watching church at home is the inability to receive Holy Communion. Holy Communion is the sacred gift that our Lord has given to us for our salvation which we are not able to substitute in our homes. Also, when watching church from home, you can become too comfortable in your surroundings. For example, the temptation is much greater when watching church from your couch to stay in your pajamas and eat breakfast while tuning into Liturgy. This is not how we are taught to present ourselves to our Lord. As well as being too comfortable, one can

become easily distracted by their surroundings. When you are at home, there may be more interruptions to your concentration that interfere with maintaining a spiritual mindset.

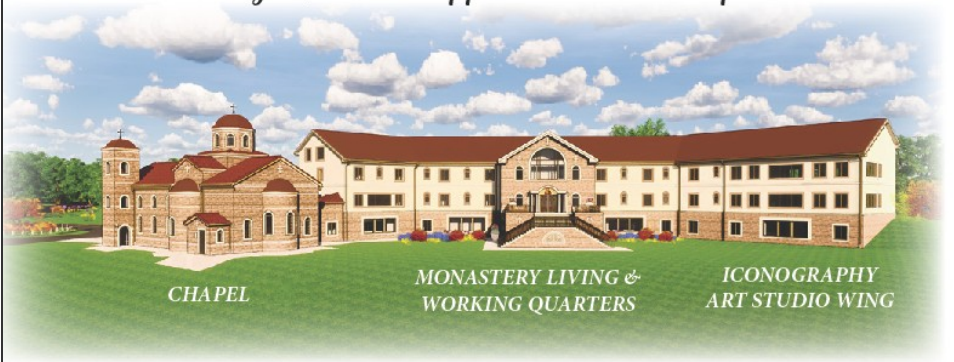
The capability to live stream church gave our community the opportunity to experience the Divine Liturgy and other church services when attending in person was not an option. Even today, when limitations on social and religious gatherings have eased, this resource of online streaming of church services continues to allow parishioners to participate when they can't physically be in church. People that have come back to the church to celebrate the divine liturgy have likely realized the fulfillment one can only get from being there in person. Worshiping in community in the presence of a priest, deacon, and chanters while being surrounded by the beautiful iconography and smell of incense in the air is irreplaceable. Personally, when I came back into the church, I felt that I returned to being a more active participant in the liturgy—serving in the altar, receiving Holy Communion and praying with my church family.

Thank you.

## *Foundation Blessing Service May 15, 2021*

*Please join us on **Saturday, May 15th** at 10:00 a.m.*

*Your Prayers, Love & Support have made this possible!*



His Eminence Metropolitan Savas of Pittsburgh presiding  
Gerontissa Theophano & the Sisterhood invite you to this Sacred event - lunch follows

with Mosites Construction Company & MCF Architects & Planners

**RSVP: [info@NativityoftheTheotokosMonastery.org](mailto:info@NativityoftheTheotokosMonastery.org)**

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121 St. Elias Lane ■ Saxonburg, PA 16056 ■ (724) 352 3999



# A GOOD WORD—Λόγον Αγαθόν

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE  
GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF PITTSBURGH  
VOLUME 5 NO. 1 (ISSUE 35) — MAY 2021



## ARCHPASTORAL MESSAGE

“Tradition,” a wise man once said, “is not the worship of ashes, but the preservation of fire.” As Orthodox Christians, we’ve all experienced the joy of receiving the Paschal light at the midnight Resurrection Service, and have seen the effort it necessary to bring it home, especially under challenging weather conditions. We cup our hands around our candles and try our best to guard it from the wind and rain, because the flame has been given to us to transmit to the world, from our hands and homes.

The severe restrictions under which we celebrated Pascha last spring and the long months of loneliness that followed have understandably increased in us a desire for the light Christ came to shine on the world: the light of true life, experienced in loving fellowship with God and one another. For many, they felt that the flame was challenged, flickering, losing fuel – even dying.

But what we saw was that God had not abandoned us during this pandemic – He preserved us and, paradoxically, strengthened us. He has provided fuel for the flame in our hearts by many means – improving our commitment to personal prayer, speaking to us as always through our daily Scripture readings, inspiring us with the lives of his saints, and offering us opportunities to interact in ways that previous generations would never have dreamed possible. We have gathered for spiritual instruction and even attending, via internet technologies, worship services in our own parishes and throughout the world! And He has shown us, in the absence of physical presence, how important so many things were that we’ve taken for granted – in-person worship, meetings, social gatherings, and the like.

Of course, digital engagement is no substitute for gathering as the Body of Christ in church, but it kept His fire - and in some cases, our loved ones - alive. We made these sacrifices, after all, not for ourselves, but to protect our most vulnerable – the elderly and those with chronic health conditions. We approach Pascha with a growing awareness that in God’s good time we will emerge from this pandemic. Thanks to God’s gift of scientific engagement, an increasing number of people – myself among them – are now vaccinated against the Coronavirus and have begun experiencing the joy of worshipping together.

I pray that in the end of this Lenten Season, with Holy and Great Week and the celebration of Pascha, we will experience the full joy of worship, walking in Christ’s footsteps – and that we will bring with us the flame of His love that we have better learned to kindle in our hearts, more prayerfully and grounded in the Scriptures, and more ready to share with those in need in the world. If so, then we will feel an extra swell of joy when we together hear the words of St. John Chrysostom on Pascha: “O death, where is thy sting? O Hades, where is thy victory? Christ is risen! And death has been despoiled.” May the joy of the Resurrection and the eternal flame of Pascha always burn within our hearts!



## 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>



## METROPOLIS ORATORICAL FESTIVAL HELD A NEW WAY

The Metropolis of Pittsburgh held its Oratorical Festival on April 10. Twenty-six Junior and Senior Division speakers presented in a virtual environment, which will help the finalists as they prepare for the virtual National Festival, June 11-13. Congratulations to Junior Speaker, Evan Jordanides and Senior Speaker, Stavros Spanakis, both from Holy Trinity in Canton, OH. Alternates are Kristina Chronos, Holy Trinity Cathedral in Camp Hill, PA and Athanasios White, Sts. Constantine & Helen Cathedral, Cleveland Heights, OH.

*Pictured are Senior Speakers with Ann Ariano, Metropolis Oratorical Festival Chair, also of Holy Trinity in Camp Hill. Special thanks to judges: Elizabeth Bartz, Steven Christoforou, Sundry Gulu, Maria Markakis, Spero Lappas and Zachariah Swanson.*



## Cultivating the Love of Scripture

FR. STEPHEN DE YOUNG

Tues, 18 May 7:00-8:30 pm • via Zoom

Advanced registration: [tinyurl.com/LoveOfScripture](https://tinyurl.com/LoveOfScripture)

From the Series:

"Cultivating the Fundamentals of Christian Life"



Presented by  
Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh  
Religious Education Commission



## METROPOLIS-WIDE PHILOPTOCHOS FUNDRAISER

In place of the annual Daffodil Luncheon, the Philoptochos chapters of the Metropolis of Pittsburgh are holding a fundraiser to benefit 11 different foodbanks throughout the Ohio, Pennsylvania and West Virginia. All donations – 100 percent of monies contributed – will be given to food banks.

"Among the most devastating outcomes of the pandemic has been the increase in individuals and families facing food insecurity," said Joyce Spanakis, chair of the Daffodil Luncheon. "Hunger in America is on the rise. Now, more than ever, people are turning to food pantries and food banks for help. Our Metropolis is poised and ready to help with this increased need."

You can click on the QR code or visit [tinyurl.com/DaffodilVirtual](https://tinyurl.com/DaffodilVirtual) to donate. Donations are being collected through May 31.



## GREEK ORTHODOX METROPOLIS OF PITTSBURGH

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**

Fr. George Callos, Chancellor

Rhea Ballas, Youth & Young Adult Ministries Director

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

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: \_\_\_\_\_

### 2021 Registration Form - Please print.

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**  
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