



Winter 2026  
Volume 34 | Issue 1

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## PHOTO SPOTLIGHT



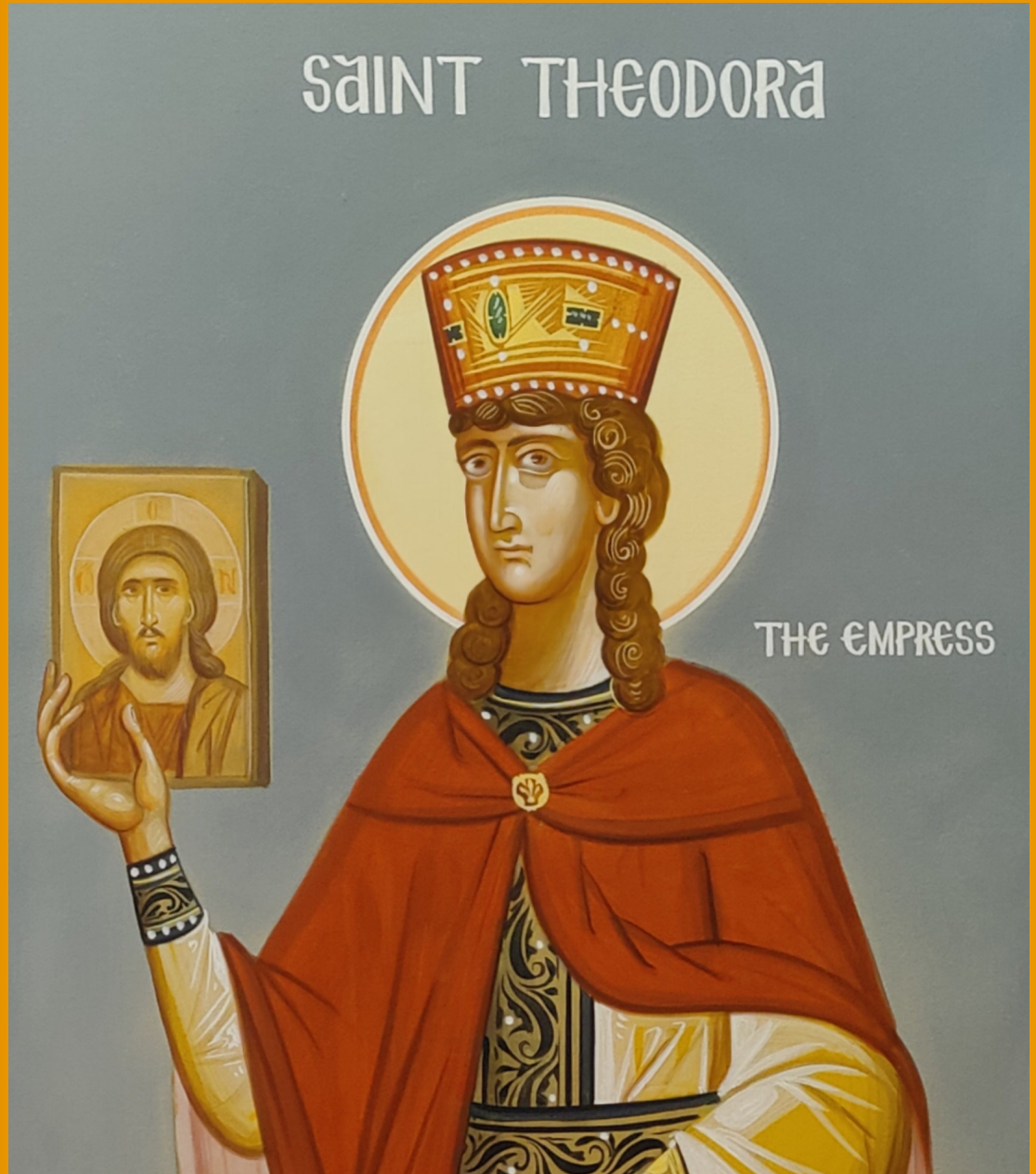
His Eminence Metropolitan Savas joins our Holy Trinity Greek Dance Troupe for a group photo during the Folk Dance Festival. See many more Community Life Journal Photos on pages 14-29.

THE HOLY TRINITY

# HERALD

QUARTERLY *Faith. Family. Community*

**Saint Theodora the Empress - February 11**



Saint Theodora came to power in 842 as the regent for her son, Michael, and ended the iconoclastic policies of her husband, Theophilus. With the support of Patriarch Methodios I, she convened the Seventh Ecumenical Council in 843 that formally condemned iconoclasm and restored the veneration of holy images in Orthodox churches. This event is celebrated as the "Triumph of Orthodoxy" each year on the first Sunday of Lent. She reposed in peace in 867.

**Icon from the wall of Holy Trinity Church. Iconographer: Dr. George Kordis**



Father John Touloumes  
Proistamenos

## Keep looking straight ahead, without turning aside.

Proverbs 4.25 (CEV)

My beloved Holy Trinity family,

In the previous issue of *The Herald*, I wrote about the transition from a monthly publication to a quarterly one. As we produce the second quarterly edition, I am noticing a side-effect of that change I should have seen coming. When this community news magazine was being published monthly, the focus was relatively short-term: what's coming up this month. But now the quarterly format has required a more long-term view—like the one described above in the Book of Proverbs: straight ahead without looking aside.

That strikingly occurred to me as we prepared the 2026 Lenten Services schedule...before Christmas! That was definitely a new experience, one that even felt a bit disorienting. The positive side-effect of it all is that for it all to work well, it trains one for the long view. That's helpful in planning a publication; it's essential in living a Christian life; and in many ways it what has got ten Holy Trinity Church where it is today: Growing, thriving, living our mission, pursuing our vision. Becoming day by day what God has created us to be. The long view.

As we enter our 103rd year of ministry as a parish, I am so thankful that Presvytera Becky and I have been blessed to be with you and serve you for the past 33 of those years. So much has happened over that time. In fact, as new children are born into this community or new members walk through the beautiful doors of this church looking for a deeper faith experience, they are encountering a faith that has remained unchanged for two millennia, but a community that is very different in many ways from the Holy Trinity Church of 60, 30 or even 10 years ago. It's hard to believe where we've come, from where we were.

Like many immigrant churches in the old days, so much of parish life was inward-focused: creating a parish, building a church, establishing ministries and so many other basics. It's what it took to survive. It was in many ways the short view, but it worked in laying foundations on which we still stand today.

We grew, matured and eventually had to face the reality of demographic and cultural shifts. That caused us to first look inward to embrace who we were as a faith community, and then look ahead to how we were going to survive those challenges and more. Powered by the grace of God more than anything else, we as a community were compelled to take the vision-driven long view.

And that, glory to God, has gotten us to where we are today, led by His divine hand and will. As one bishop described that process for churches, "We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities. It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest."

May our merciful Lord continue to bless and Holy Trinity Church to continue to follow our God-inspired mission and vision. May we keep our hand on the rudder to keep things running smoothly in the short-term, and may our eyes always be looking for the long view, "looking straight ahead, without turning aside."

Yours in Christ,  


Now in our 103rd year!  
1923-2026

**OUR VISION**  
Faith. Family. Community.

**OUR MISSION**  
The mission of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church is to proclaim and live the Orthodox Christian Faith in its fullness as faithful members of the Body of Christ.

**WORSHIP LIFE**

**Weekday Services - January-March**

The following weekday services will be offered this quarter at 8:30am Orthros/9:30am Divine Liturgy unless otherwise indicated. Please visit HolyTrinityPgh.org/calendar for updates. (SG=Saint George Chapel.)

- **Mon. Jan. 5, 6:30PM: Vespertal Liturgy of Holy Theophany/Great Blessing of the Waters (HT)** - *Note that this is an evening service.*
- **Tue. Jan. 6: Divine Liturgy - Holy Theophany/Great Blessing of the Waters (HT)**  
This is the main Orthros and Divine Liturgy of this great Feast along with the Great Blessing of the Waters. (HT)
- **Wed. Jan 7: Synaxis of St. John the Baptist (SG)**
- **Tue. Jan. 13, 6:30pm: Paraclesis to St. Paisios (SG)**
- **Sat. Jan. 17: St. Anthony the Great**  
*Note: This service is being offered at Saint Anthony Church in Clairton (424 Miller Ave.) as part of the outreach ministry of Holy Trinity Church. 9:00am Orthros/10:00am Divine Liturgy.*
- **Fri. Jan 30: The Three Hierarchs (SG)**
- **Sun. Feb. 1 - 5:00pm Great Vespers - Presentation of the Lord (Ypapanti)**
- **Mon. Feb. 2 - 9:00am Orthros/10:00am Liturgy - Presentation of the Lord (Ypapanti)**  
*The above two services will be held at the Presentation of Christ Church in East Pittsburgh for its nameday.*
- **Tue. Feb. 10: St. Haralambos the Hieromartyr (HT)**  
*Note location: Relics of the Saint are in the Holy Altar Table of Holy Trinity Church.*
- **Tue. Feb. 10, 6:30pm:** Paraclesis to St. Nektarios (SG)
- **Sun, Feb. 22, 6:30pm: Forgiveness Vespers (SG)**  
*This service opens opens a beautiful and solemn entry into the sacred season of Lent. It is the best way to begin your Lenten journey of repentance and renewal.*
- **Sat. Feb. 21 - Saturday of the Souls (SG)**
- **Lenten Weekday Services (Feb.-Apr.)**  
*See the Lenten Schedule of Services for complete information on weekday services from Feb. 22 onward).*

**Saturdays of the Souls..... Feb. 21, 28**

Preceding the start of Lent and during the first week of Lent, the Church offers the "Saturdays of the Souls" at St. George Chapel to commemorate those who have fallen asleep in the Lord. Orthros is at 8:30am followed by Divine Liturgy at 9:30am and the Memorial Service.



Download the names form at HolyTrinityPgh.org/documents/worship to submit names for commemoration and be sure to attend and commemorate your departed loved ones. **Important: Is in our Orthodox Christian tradition to offer "kollyva" (memorial wheat) during the memorial prayers. If you are able to bring a dish or small tray for the service and to be shared with the faithful afterwards, please do! We cannot lose this beautiful and theologically significant tradition. Thank you!**

**RELIGIOUS EDUCATION NEWS**

**Church School Starts with Church!**

Remember, **Church School begins with Divine Liturgy.** So please be sure to have all our students there at 9:30 am each Sunday. The youth sermon—a special time for your priests to teach and connect with our youth—takes place early in the service after the Gospel, so they won't want to miss that. Also, parents and young people: please remember that **all youth ministries at Holy Trinity Church begin with Church School.** All HOPE, JOY, GOYA and Greek Dance children start by being regular attendees at worship services and Church School as part of the Holy Trinity family, together in Christ. Thanks for your faithful participation and witness.

**Sunday of Orthodoxy Icon Procession .....March 1**

Church School students will once again participate in the annual Procession of the Holy Icons at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, March 1. All students should bring an icon of their patron saint or other favorite icon to hold in the procession that day. Be sure to have the name of the student on the back of the icon to identify it!



**YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS**

**GOYA Meetings .....January 11\*, 25; March 1, 22**

The GOYA teen ministry holds monthly meeting on Sundays in the Conference Room following Church School. All teens are invited to attend. Upcoming dates: January 11\* & 25, March 1 & 22 (\*Jan 11 for GOYAnS and parents).

**GOYA Basketball Practices ..... January & February**

GOYA will hold basketball practice at North Allegheny Senior High School (NASH), 10375 Perry Hwy, Wexford, on the following Mondays in Gym 3:

- January 12th 6:00 – 8:00 pm
- January 19th 6:00 – 8:00 pm
- January 26th 6:30 – 8:30 pm
- February 2nd 7:00 – 9:00 pm
- February 9th 7:00 – 9:00 pm

**GOYA Bagged Lunch for the Needy Prep..... Jan 9/10**

Our GOYA teens will be prepping 140 bagged lunches for the needy on Jan. 9 and distributing them on Jan. 10. Watch for details on the GOYA email list.

**GOYA Community Valentine Lunch .....Feb. 8**

GOYA will host its annual Community Valentine Brunch on Sunday, February 8, following Liturgy. Watch for details.

**GOYA 2026 Metropolis Basketball Tournaments**

Our Holy Trinity GOYA teens, coaches and parents will once again be representing our community at the 2026 Metropolis Basketball Tournaments. Holy Trinity Church will participate in these three:

- The first will be hosted by Holy Trinity Church in Canton, OH, from January 16-18.
- The second will be at Annunciation Church in Akron, OH, from January 30-February 1.
- The third will be hosted by St. Demetrios Church in Warren, OH, from February 13-15.

Please know that the entire GOYA is so thankful for the many ways this parish supports this vital teen ministry. Funds raised throughout the year assist our youth in attending not only tournaments, but retreats, camps, mission trips and more. And the community is grateful for the faithful witness with which our teams and adults represent Holy Trinity Church through their honorable conduct and good sportsmanship. God bless you all!

**JOY Activities**

The following JOY events are being planned for January through March. Watch the JOY email list for information on signing up and volunteering. JOY@HolyTrinityPgh.org.

- Visit to a local Orthodox Monastery
- Ice Skating

**HOPE & JOY Activities**

Watch out for the following combined HOPE/JOY events in the next few months:

- HOPE & JOY Bowling
- Regional HOPE & JOY Spring Retreat - March 21, Holy Dormition Church, Oakmont
- Parents' Night Out - Hosted by GOYA

**COMMUNITY NEWS & EVENTS**

**Vasilopita Celebration .....Jan. 4**

On Sunday, January 4, the Holy Trinity Ladies' Philoptochos and Parish Council will host the annual Vasilopita celebration. Your generosity will be greatly appreciated when the special collection tray is passed in church following Divine Liturgy to support Saint Basil Academy, an education and philanthropic institution of the Archdiocese.

The entire congregation is then invited to the Vasilopita Blessing and sit-down breakfast in the Grand Room, sponsored by Philoptochos and Parish Council. There is no charge, but free-will offerings will be accepted and proceeds from the Vasilopita celebration will benefit the Saint Basil academy and other youth services.

**Parish Council Election Results**

Thank you to all those whose names were submitted for Parish Council elections this year. The results from the vote have placed the following members on the Council for the 2026-2027 term: Alex Anetakis, Michael Bounos, Evan Danis, Eleni Dedousis, Michael Erdeljac, Christopher Loomis and Dan Willow. Continuing on for the remainder of their two-year term through 2026 are: Anthony Balouris, Penny Balouris, Eleni Balouris, George Dickos, George Mellis and Dean Passodelis.

A special thanks to those Parish Council members who have completed their terms of office after faithfully serving for many years and are taking a well-deserved break: George Danis, Tom Germanos, Michael Passodelis and Jean Willow. You have served well. God bless you all!

For our on-going Council members, many thanks to those whom you have selected to serve in this important ministry, and remember: they serve the Lord and His Holy Church for you and with you, not instead of you, so when they call for support, please answer, "Yes, here I am!" Thank you.

As per the Parish Regulations, the 2026 Holy Trinity Parish Council will be installed following Divine Liturgy on Sunday, January 4. A special meeting for the election of the 2026 officers will be held immediately afterwards.

**Orthodox Dudes on Tap .....February 1**

This new casual men's ministry is for guys, single and married, to just enjoy a few hours of conversation, snacks, brews and great company with other Millennials and Gen X'ers. Laid back. Informal. The next gathering is scheduled for February 1 at Tapville Social Wexford, 5:30-7:30pm. Email OrthodoxDudes@HolyTrinityPgh.org for more information or to be notified of future events.



**Moms and Kids "Playtime and Parea" ..... Jan.-Mar.**

The "Playtime and Parea" ministry is a fun, faith-based playgroup for little ones (ages 0 to 4) and parents (or caregivers) to connect, make new friends, and grow together in Christ. Meets twice a month on Fridays from 10:00am to 11:30am in the Fireside Room. Upcoming dates are Jan. 9, 23; Feb. 6, 20; Mar.6, 20. For information, contact PlaytimeandParea@HolyTrinityPgh.org.

**Stewardship 2026 is Here – Time to Pledge!**

**PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL**

My/Our Personal Stewardship Commitment to "Grow Our Blessings" in 2026!



**FAITH. FAMILY. COMMUNITY**



**HOLY TRINITY**  
Greek Orthodox Church  
Pittsburgh, PA

Thanks to the dedication and offerings of so many faithful stewards, 2025 was a record year for Holy Trinity Stewardship. As we strove together for "Stewardship Independence" we reached levels never seen before. Glory to God and many thanks to the faithful stewards who stepped up to the challenge! This year, let's maintain and grow as our theme for 2026

calls us to be "Grow Our Blessings." There are two ways to pledge: using a 2026 Stewardship pledge card or by going online to your Holy Trinity Realm account (see below). And there are many ways to give: in person via cash; in person or by mail via check; online at HolyTrinityPgh.org/give; via text by texting HOLYTRINITYPGH to 73256; via the Realm app on your phone; and using the giving kiosk in the Narthex. However you choose to support our ministries, thank you!

**LENTEN NEWS & EVENTS**

**2026 Lenten Theme: "The Pilgrimage of Our Heart to Christ"**

Each year we offer a theme for Lent which builds on our Orthodox Christian tradition in a way that helps us grow and connect with Christ in today's world. This year the theme is "The Pilgrimage of Our Heart to Christ" taken from Psalm 84.5: "Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage." During the Lenten journey—or better yet, pilgrimage—you will hear lessons on the many opportunities the Church provides as we restore our relationship with Jesus Christ and His Holy Church and how we can re-evaluate the priorities of our life and live it in as pilgrims to Christ in our hearts. A blessed journey to all!

**Lenten and Holy Week Schedules of Services**

This issue of *The Herald* contains a complete schedule of services for Lent. A Holy Week schedule will be included in the Spring issue. Both are also available online at our website. Please post them in a conspicuous place in your home. Make a family plan and circle the services you are

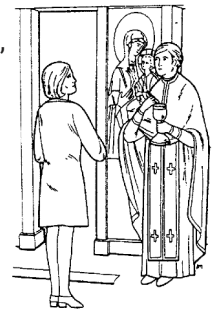
able to attend and place them on your schedule and on your phone and computer calendars! As the hymn from the Book of Psalms tells us during the Great Compline service, "God is with us." He has planted the desire for His peace in our hearts and souls. Let's let nothing keep us from it.

**Sunday of Orthodoxy .....March 1**

All Saints Church in Canonsburg will host the annual Sunday of Orthodoxy celebration sponsored by the Orthodox Clergy Brotherhood of Greater Pittsburgh. The service will feature clergy from Orthodox jurisdictions followed by the annual Procession of the Holy Icons and a Pan-Orthodox Choir singing the hymns of the service under the direction of Fr. Tom Soroka. Following the service, light refreshments will be served during fellowship time. Local representatives from Orthodox philanthropic ministries will be there with information on how to get involved. Also, icons and other Orthodox Christian gifts and handmade items will be available to purchase.

**"North Hills Orthodoxy" Shared Presanctified Liturgy**

There are now three Orthodox Christian parishes in our North Hills neighborhood, growing the presence of Orthodox Christianity together: Holy Trinity, (Greek Orthodox Archdiocese), St. Alexander Nevsky Cathedral (Orthodox Church of America) and St. John the Baptist (Carpatho-Russian Diocese). In the desire to provide a greater fellowship among our parishes and communities, Holy Trinity Church will be hosting a Shared Presanctified Liturgy on Wednesday, March 11 at 6:30pm. What a wonderful way to build Orthodox fellowship and a stronger connection among our North Hills sister parishes! The service will be followed by a Lenten meal and we are asking for Lenten food donations to help host our friends. See Joyce Athanasiou to volunteer.



**Godparent/Godchild Sunday .....March 15**

Holy Trinity Church will celebrate its annual "Godparent/Godchild" Sunday as is our tradition on the Third Sunday of Lent (March 15 this year). To make this a full spiritual family event, we are asking everyone to invite their Godparents and Godchildren to join us. To assist with that, there will be invitations with envelopes available in the Narthex and at the church office window at the beginning of Lent. Please take one, sign and address it and send it to the one who sponsored you for your Baptism or Chrismation and ask them to join you for this special celebration and for the Hospitality Hour hosted by Philoptochos afterward. If they already entered the joy of eternal life, they will be with us spiritually and in memory,

so celebrate for them here!

### Lenten Soup Sales



Holy Trinity GOYA is once again offering its very popular Lenten soup sales during the Sundays of Lent, starting with Cheesefare Sunday (February 22) and continuing through Palm Sunday (April 5). Among the many good reasons to buy some to take home are that they are strict Lenten recipes, they

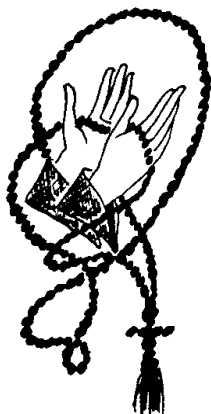
provide fund-raising support for our GOYA ministry ... plus they taste great and they are good for you! Please visit the Lenten Soup Sales table in Gallery during Coffee Hour each week! Thank you for supporting our youth!

### Lenten Hospitality Hours

Please keep in mind that throughout the Lent fast (Feb. 23-April 4) our Hospitality Hours following the Divine Liturgy observe Orthodox Lenten fasting practices. Any families or ministries hosting a Memorial or Ministry Hospitality Hour and any families hosting providing the Church School snacks are asked to take care that non-meat and non-dairy items are provided. The Hospitality Hour and Church School ministries can provide suggestions if needed. Thank you for helping our community grow in this proper and helpful Orthodox spiritual practice and discipline.

### Lent: A Good Time for Holy Confession

In addition to the special services being held in this holy season, please remember that one of the main focuses of Lent is increased attention to our spiritual life through prayer, fasting and Holy Confession. Orthodox Christians should participate regularly, and Lent provides a good reminder to do so. Through this Holy Mystery we receive the gift of God's divine forgiveness (John 20.23) and the opportunity to share our deepest concerns and receive counsel and encouragement toward spiritual growth. If you would like to receive this blessing during Lent—or any time—please speak with Fr. John or Fr. Radu to set up a time for Holy Confession. *Kali Metanoia!* (Good repentance!)



### Lenten Fasting Guidance

**Introduction:** True fasting is not meant to be a set of rules

making for a dismal life; rather, it frees us from the slavery to our own desires, since the fast from certain foods & their quantity harmonizes with spiritual fasting, that is, fasting from sin and harmful passions (things that we allow to control our behavior). We should also remember that it is as important to fast with what comes out of our mouth as well as what goes into it. God does not need our fasting and we do not "earn" blessings or any other other gift of God by fasting; rather, it expresses our desire for a more pure state of communion with Him. Looking for the Church's fasting toolkit? Here is some guidance to get you through Lent and Holy Week (Feb. 23-Apr. 11):

**Weekdays:** During this time, the Holy Canons indicate abstinence of meat, meat byproducts, dairy products, fish, olive oil and wine. There are two exceptions to the above: Fish is allowed on March 25 and on Palm Sunday (April 5 this year) due to the celebratory nature of those great feasts.

**Saturdays and Sundays:** During Great Lent, olive oil and wine are permitted on Saturdays and Sundays except Holy Saturday - a strict fast is kept on this day.

**All Days:** Shellfish (shrimp, crab, scallops, etc), fruits and vegetables, grains, etc., are permitted throughout this period on all days all in appropriate, moderate amounts.

**General Notes:** As with all aspects of fasting, which are designated by the Holy Canons of the Orthodox Church, you are instructed to seek counsel from your Spiritual Father/Parish Priest for your personal guidance on fasting. Fasting is not effective or even spiritual if it is an empty physical exercise; it must be accompanied by prayer, almsgiving, reading of Holy Scripture and other related books and attendance at church services. We must also respect any physical/medical concerns we might have that would require adjustments so fasting does not harm us. To complete the journey, we should strive to attend as many Lenten Services as possible, and it is highly recommended that we participate in the Holy Mystery of Confession at the onset and/or during this period of Great and Holy Lent. Any questions should be directed to your Priest.

### 2026 Lenten Dates

- Meatfare Sunday (Last day of eating meat): Feb. 15
- Cheesefare Sunday (Last day of eating dairy): Feb. 22
- Pure Monday (Lent begins): Feb. 23
- Sunday of Orthodoxy: Mar. 1
- Godparent Sunday: Mar. 15
- Saturday of Lazarus/Palm Cross/Candle prep: Apr. 4
- Palm Sunday: Apr. 5
- Holy Week: Apr. 5-11
- Holy Friday (schedule off work & school): Apr. 10



# How to Read the Holy Fathers

An easy-to-follow guide for anyone wanting to better understand this essential treasury of Orthodox truth.

“The Orthodox Bookshelf” is a *Holy Trinity Herald* column by Rick Paese focusing on books of Orthodox Christian interest for everyone. Many of the books highlighted will be available for purchase at the Three Hierarchs Bookstore in the Gallery.

When I first started seriously exploring Orthodoxy and church history, I came across a well known statement from St. Athanasius that was quoted in a general introductory book on Orthodoxy. The quote was, “God became human that we might become god.” The wording “that we might become god” initially made me uncomfortable. Contrary to what I originally thought, St. Athanasius was not saying we actually become a god. We become like God through a process called “theosis.” I read the words at a superficial level and assumed a certain (incorrect) meaning.

Maybe you’ve had a similar experience. Perhaps you have thought about reading some of the Church Fathers but have felt overwhelmed about where to start or how to understand them. “How to Read the Holy Fathers” by Fr. Joseph Lucas offers an easy-to-follow guide for overcoming these fears and correctly approaching these writings.

## What Writings Are We Talking About?

Fr. Joseph first explains what makes up the writings of the Holy Fathers. In short, these are the writings certain saints have left to the Church that

have gained a certain level of authority. This includes homilies, letters, treatises, hymns, poetry, biographies, biblical commentaries, ascetical guides, liturgical manuals, historical accounts, canons, and more. This is a diverse group of writings written by a diverse group of people from various cultures and time periods. Though their works are diverse, their voices blend together in perfect harmony.

## Why Read the Fathers?

Father Joseph also makes the case for why it is essential for us to read the Fathers. These writings are part of the Holy Tradition. While writing these texts, the Fathers were enlightened by the same Holy Spirit received by the prophets and apostles. Therefore, reading and understanding the Fathers is essential to correctly reading and understanding the Bible. The Fathers are the bridge between the biblical authors and us modern Christians. Without them, we cannot correctly understand our faith.

## Practical Tips

Here are the most useful tips for reading the Holy Fathers I gathered from reading the book:

- Start small, work your way up to more complicated texts.
- Approach the writings with humility. We read the Fathers to grow spiritually, not to win arguments.
- Learn about the author’s life and times. Understand the world in which the author lived.
- Understand who the author was writing to and the purpose of the

work.

- Pick a good translation that provides a background on the author and the writing. An Orthodox translator is the safest option or a translation reviewed by a reputable Orthodox person. Pick the latest translation available.
- Do not impose contemporary concepts upon the writing. The way we perceive the world is completely affected by the scientific materialism that saturates our culture.
- Consider the following two strategic approaches when choosing what to read: 1. Read the entire available corpus of an individual Father or 2. Read several works on a specific theological topic by various authors.

## Additional Resources

The book has a few really useful appendices. My favorite is the one that offers several example texts to read at various difficulty levels.

## Conclusion

“How to Read the Holy Fathers” provides a useful methodology for reading these important works. The goal of the book is to encourage us to read and learn from the Fathers and to avoid misinterpreting them by imposing personal biases and modernist presuppositions upon their works. If you ever wanted to start reading the Holy Fathers, this is a great place to start. ❖

Rick Paese

# TRUE COMMUNITY: VIRTUAL OR SPIRITUAL?



One of the most attractive features of our church is our sense of community. We are one, we are a family in the faith, and we are transformed together. Modeled after today's epistle reading, we are a holy temple that gathers people of diverse backgrounds, for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. But a different kind of community is prevalent in our society, namely virtual communities, online, on social media, and chat groups of like-minded people. Let's try to understand both of these.

This will not be an anti-technology sermon, where all technological progress is bad. If we used to worry that religiosity might disappear, nowadays we notice that it is very much alive in apps, forums, and the invisible architecture of data. Technology is no longer just a tool; it has become a habitat for religion. In extreme forms, this means that a robot named Mindar delivers Buddhist sermons in Japan, or that a "digital Jesus" in Switzerland

speaks in a hundred languages. Machines interact with us in unimaginable levels: we speak and machine learning models assign each word a number, they create a graph, and reach conclusions about our attitudes

Algorithmic interactions cannot substitute a .hug of compassion, or sharing a laughter. Human connections and especially spirituality cannot be compressed into code. But these algorithms are so good at getting to know us, that the ads that we get, the feeds on our social media, and all the other recommendations for further reading take who we truly are, feed us information that is sure to keep us hooked online, and draw us deeper and deeper into echo chambers created after our own image. This is a great danger: hyper-personalization. The algorithm shows us only what resembles us, enclosing each of us in a bubble of like-minded opinions. Information becomes a mirror, not a window. Anyone who thinks differently ceases

to be an interlocutor and becomes a threat. In this way, even religious communication can morph into an instrument of exclusion. That is where online influencers and content creators encounter us, accompany us, and guide us further down this rabbit hole, all the while monetizing us – we are the product that they sell. The same applies to Orthodox online influencers.

The Orthodox Church in America (OCA) conducted in 2023 the “Orthodox Convert Survey,” which produced a list of Orthodox online influencers, some of whom are of such dubious pedigree (The Episcopal Assembly had to clarify that Fr. Peter Heers is not a canonical priest in the US, even though he claims to be so). The survey discovered that numerous converts who were initially attracted to Orthodoxy by these influencers affirm that they do not follow them anymore, adding, I “hope that the clergy clamp down on online apologists.” Why? Because online, we find the more reactive wing of Orthodoxy – a wing that has an oversized presence due to an algorithm that promotes them. But the result is the transformation of the Orthodox spirit, especially in their opposition to other churches and societal norms. Some content creators have hundreds of thousands of followers across platforms. They understand how to harness the power of algorithms and AI content moderation to promote their ideas and keep the financial gain coming. They tell their followers, please like, retweet, share, create threads, to increase the visibility of those ideas and thus influencers put us to work so they can game the algorithm. As a result, it is impossible to google “convert to Orthodoxy” without coming across content creators who mesmerize with a certain version of Orthodoxy, symbolized by priests with long beards or young men with huge biceps.

The message of the gospel (namely the love of Christ) should have remained the same regardless of how it is spread – by word of mouth, epistle, personal witness, or in Sunday School. Instead, as the “gospel” is spreading through the internet, its message changes: instead of love of neighbor – suspicion that “they” will attack us. Instead of the authority of our bishops, priests, parishioners, indeed our Tradition – the authority of influencers and content creators. Instead of parish community – virtual community. But this is not the end of the story; I have good news: The more a person is part of a community of a parish, the less time they spend in online communities. Even if some converts initially visited our churches because of online influencers, when they encounter a true community, like ours, they leave behind their online communities, which, it turns out, only had the illusion of being communities. That is where we have to come in – to create a community like the one described in our epistle reading today:

*You are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, in whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. (Eph. 2:19–22).*

Early Christians seem to have longed for a building, but it was impossible to have a Christian church, separate from the Jewish synagogue or the house church within someone’s property. That is why today’s epistle affirms that, by the power of the Holy Spirit believers grow into “a holy temple in the Lord ... for a dwelling place of God” (Eph. 2:21-22), into a “spiritual house” built with “living stones,” namely each member of the Church (1 Pet. 2:5). Also note in the

beginning of the reading how Jesus united people who were previously separated “by the wall of hostility,” making us one. What a contrast with online communities that are gathered together because their algorithmic like-mindedness. A church is very different from an echo chamber.

2000 years later, how are we those believers who are being built together in the Spirit? By being a community that knows no strangers, in which no one is a foreigner or a sojourner. Rather, we form one people or, as our reading says, we are fellow citizens, together with the saints. Moreover, we are all children of God the Father, since God is the head of the household. And since we live in the same household, we are a family.

No such community can be achieved in the online realm, regardless how much influencers try to persuade us to exclude the other or content creators try to build a world in their own image. We need religious communities capable of reminding us that the human is not a function, and that truth is not an output. Salvation cannot be downloaded with a click. In a culture of artificial lights, flashes, and filters, what transforms is not what shines but what burns. Not what seduces but what guides.

Genuine religious practice is the art of listening for what no machine will ever pronounce. It is thus no surprise that people who come to Orthodoxy initially because of algorithms, when encountering a real parish community, stop following their online idols. It is only in the parish that we experience this strong sense of community as children of the Father, members of the Body of Christ, in the Spirit, as fellow citizens and living stones built into a dwelling place of God. Amen. ❖

Delivered November 23, 2025



**What does it really mean to follow the truth? And how do we know how to do it? I know how to follow the truth because the Church shows me the way. The Church is like a living compass. It points us toward Christ through the example of the Saints, the Holy Scriptures, and the Holy Sacraments.**

# Youth Sunday 2025

## MESSAGES FROM OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

### Maritsa Doris (HOPE Ministry)

I love coming to church because we have nice priests. They read us stories from the bible and help me learn about Jesus. I like to stand in church and hear my papou chant the hymns of the service. Sometimes I sing along with him from my seat. I wave to him when I go to communion. I do my cross and take some bread.

I like to see my church friends. We go to Sunday school together and learn how to be good people. Our Sunday school teachers make fun lessons with crafts and games. They teach us things that god has done.

Coming to church is more than just praying, it is like being part of a larger family. A family that helps each other grow with God. Our lord Jesus is good to us. He loves us.

### Matthew Drapas (JOY Ministry)

I know I am a child of God because I was baptized into the Orthodox Church as a baby, and in doing so, I became a member of God's family. This was only the start of my life as a child of God.

When I was little, my parents brought my sister and me to church so that we could worship together as a family and become closer to God by listening to the priest's sermon and learning more about Him. Our priests, deacons, and Church school teachers helped us to learn all about how God the Father loved us so much that He gave His only Son to save the world from sin so that we might live.

Jesus our savior sacrificed Himself on the cross for us and likewise asks us to give of ourselves to others. We

can do this together as God's children in many ways. At Holy Trinity Church, our Hope and Joy groups come together to make bagged lunches for people who are hungry. Our church family also helps people in need in many other ways, including filling backpacks for children who can't afford school supplies so that they can have a successful start to their year, by purchasing gifts for kids so they can have a nice Christmas, and by visiting and singing to the retired nuns across the street from our Church at Christmastime. It is fun to talk with them and to make them happy. I also love to help to prepare the Church for Easter services. This past Easter, I enjoyed preparing the leaves that were used on Holy Saturday to represent the joy of the resurrection.

Each Sunday at Holy Trinity, we come together as a church family. As part of my family at home, I participate by doing my chores. At church, participating in the Liturgy and serving on the altar are very important to me be-

cause these are my contributions to God the Father and to my church family.

As a child of God, I know that He is with me at all times. He watches over me when I am awake and asleep. I can talk with him at any time through prayer and know that he is always there to guide and protect me. It brings me joy to know that I am always God's child.

#### Evangelia Balouris (GOYA Ministry)

**S**aint John the Apostle writes: "No greater joy can I have than this, to hear that my children follow the truth." (3 John 1:4)

Joy comes from the spiritual well being of one's children living a life guided by faith and truth. I believe that true joy comes from investing in others—by helping them to pick up their cross and follow God together. Our church community gives us the perfect opportunity to do just that.

But what does it really mean to follow the truth? And how do we know how to do it? I know how to follow the truth because Jesus is the Truth. Christ Himself said, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life."

I believe this means that the truth isn't just a set of facts or ideas—it's a person. When I follow Jesus, I'm not just believing something to be true; I'm walking with the Truth Himself.

In the Orthodox Church, we learn to follow the Truth through a life of faith, worship, and love. Every time we do our cross, light a candle, or stand in prayer, we are saying, "Lord, guide me in Your truth." These small, faithful actions show us that God is walking with us and leading us down His path.

I know how to follow the truth because the Church shows me the way.

The Church is like a living compass. It points us toward Christ through the example of the Saints, the Holy Scrip-



tures, and the Holy Sacraments. When we participate in our faith with our community, when we hear the Gospel and take it into our hearts, we are learning how to walk in truth.

The Saints show us that following the truth is not always easy. Sometimes the world tells us to follow what feels good or what's popular. In today's world, it is easy to follow the wrong path with social media constantly bombarding us with negativity and distractions. But the truth of Christ calls us to follow what is good and holy, even when it is hard. The ultimate goal in our lives is to follow our faith in our church, but most importantly, outside of it. Following the truth does not stop when we leave church on Sunday, it continues in how we treat others, how we speak, and how we live every single day.

I know how to follow the truth because the Holy Spirit lives in me. Walking in the truth goes beyond belief. It means turning that belief into behavior.

When we pray, when we show kindness, when we forgive, the Holy Spirit guides our hearts and lights our path. We can all say that we agree with Christian beliefs but those are merely words. Walking in truth means to con-

sistently align your words, actions, and choices with your life.

Following the truth means listening to that quiet voice inside that says, "This is the way—walk in it." It means letting love, honesty, and mercy guide our choices.

As I approach my senior year, I can reflect on all my experiences here at Holy Trinity that have helped me to follow the truth. One example that comes to mind is the Gospel lesson each Sunday. One of the most impactful Gospel lessons that I live by is the Parable of the Sheep and the Goat. This meaningful parable teaches me to demonstrate compassion to others. The parable lists specific actions such as: feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, and welcoming strangers. The parable explains that when you show kindness to the least of these people, you are showing kindness to God. These lessons are a reminder of ways we can follow the truth. I also think about what I have learned in Church School. Church school has provided me with the educational and spiritual aspect of my faith. On a weekly basis, it is a time where we learn what and why we believe in our faith, helping us to have a firm foundation in our faith that grounds us. GOYA has gifted me with the opportunity of connecting with others with our shared love of our faith. Together, we can help guide each other in following the truth. This community has mentored me and invested in both me and my fellow GOYA, JOY, and HOPE members. Just as Jesus's disciples carried on and spread his love, this community has set that example for me to follow. With all of this, I am ready to enter a new chapter in my life with my church's ideals at my back. I can thank my church community for that in their role of helping me to pick up my cross and follow God no matter what. ❖

**A GUIDE TO UNDERSTANDING THE LENTEN SERVICES**

**Forgiveness Vespers [SG]**

**Description:** The first service of Lent, it combines a Solemn Vespers of Lent with a special “Forgiveness Service” at the end.

**When & Where Offered:** 6:30 pm on the first evening of Lent (Feb. 22 this year) at St. George Chapel.

**Special Features:** Kneeling in repentance during the changing of the colors from the bright gold and white of the Resurrection to the solemn purple of Lent, listening to the deeply moving hymn preparing us for both Lent and for our final encounter with the Lord,

**Why You Should Attend:** To start out the spiritual journey of Lent on the right foot. Attending this service marks a clear start of Lent both in our soul and on our schedule.

**I/My family will be there:**  Feb. 22

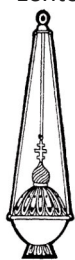
**Great Compline [SG]**

**Description:** Used only during Lent, this larger version of the Compline or “After Dinner” service contains many special penitential prayers and hymns.

**When & Where Offered:** 6:30 pm on the Monday evenings of Lent at St. George Chapel.

**Special Features:** The chanting of the beautiful Lenten hymn, “Lord of the Powers, be with us, for in times of distress, we have no other help but You, Lord of the Powers, have mercy on us!”

**Why You Should Attend:** At Holy Trinity Church, all those who attend are able to participate in the many readings of this service if they desire. This is a great way to start each week as we re-enter the depths of Lent following Sunday’s bright celebration.



**I/My family will be there:**  Feb. 23,  Mar. 2,  Mar. 9,  Mar. 16,  Mar. 23,  Mar. 30

**Presanctified Liturgy [HT]**

**Description:** Every Sunday or feast day Divine Liturgy is resurrectional and celebratory in nature, which is “out of harmony” with the solemn and penitential character of Lent. Rather than exclude any form of Liturgy during the weekdays of Lent and deny the faithful the ability to receive Holy Communion—the “food of immortality,”—in the seventh century the Church approved the use of the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts as a way of offering the Holy Gifts between Sundays during Lent. It is typically an evening service which comprises the solemn Lenten Vespers with the distribution of Holy Communion at the end. This year we will also host a Presanctified

Liturgy at Holy Trinity on March 18 for our sister North Hills Orthodox parishes to grow our parishes’ fellowship.

**When & Where Offered:** 6:30 pm at Holy Trinity on Feb.25, Mar. 11, Mar. 18, Apr. 1. Note: No Presanctified Liturgies on March 4 (Metropolis Clergy Retreat) and March 25 (morning Liturgy for the Feast of the Annunciation instead).

**Special Features:** The Entrance with the *consecrated* Holy Gifts, which is accompanied by a special hymns. **Many Psalms and other scripture readings for the service are done by the Church School students (grades 5-12).**



**Why You Should Attend:** Provides a mid-week spiritual guidepost which encourages us to prepare both spiritually and physically for Holy Communion, thus deepening our awareness of Lent and strengthening us in our struggles.

**I/My family (including our children) will be there:**  Feb. 25,  Mar. 11,  Mar. 18,  Apr. 1

**Salutations to the Theotokos [HT]**

**Description:** The Akathist Hymn is a beautiful treasure of theological poetry set to music in honor of the Most Holy Theotokos. Its main hymn, “O Champion General” (“*Ti Ipermacho*”) commemorates the rescue of the Byzantine imperial city of Constantinople from attack, which the faithful attributed to the intercessions of the Mother of God. The first four Fridays each contain only one segment of the larger poem and are called “Salutations,” from the greeting of the Archangel Gabriel to the Theotokos. The “Akathist Hymn” refers to the entire service with all the stanzas and is offered on the fifth Friday of Lent.



**When & Where Offered:** 6:30 pm on the first five Fridays of Lent. (Note: moved to Holy Trinity Church.)

**Special Features:** The poetic proclamations of respect and love intoned by the priest on behalf of the faithful as he stands in front of the icon of the Theotokos.


**Why You Should Attend:** With these services, there is a sense of “being there” when that first proclamation was made by the angel as the hymn says: “An angel, and the chief among them, was sent from heaven to cry to the Theotokos, ‘Rejoice!’”

**I/My family will be there:**  Feb. 27,  Mar. 6,  Mar. 13,  Mar. 20,  Mar. 27

# Faith & Family Weekdays

## Grow Your Knowledge and Practice of the Faith!

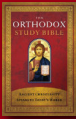
### JOM



**Journey of Marriage**  
1st Tuesday, 7:00pm

Marriage seminar aimed at preparing couples for their wedding. Based on the "Journey of Marriage" course by Dr. Philip Mamalakis. Conducted as group sessions with couples to share and grow together. Remaining Spring sessions: Feb. 3, Mar. 10 (2nd Tues.), Apr. 31, May 5.


### ETW



**Explore the Word**  
Wednesdays, 6:30pm

Father Radu continues his exploration of the Holy Bible with the greatest adventure book of the New Testament: The Book of Acts. Learn about the history of the early Church and how the Good News was spread. Jan. 14, 21, 28; Feb. 4, 11, 18; Apr. 29, May 6, 20, 27

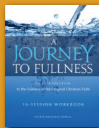
### MPS



**Monthly Paraclesis Service**  
Tuesdays, 6:30pm

Join in hymns and prayer, to honor the Theotokos, Saint Nektarios and Saint Paisios of Athos at our beautiful Saint George Chapel. Ask for the prayers of these powerful saints. Pray for those in need. Tue. Jan. 13, Feb. 10, Jun. 9


### JTF



**Journey to Fullness**  
Mondays (6-week series), 7:00pm

What is the Orthodox Church? This overview of the Faith is for inquirers, newcomers interested in joining or life-long members yearning to deepen their understanding of the Church. Format: Videos, Q&A/discussion. May 4, 11, 18; June 1, 8, 15.


### P&P



**Prayer & Panera**  
1st & 3rd Thursday, 7:00am

Prayer and Christian fellowship for men. Meets at church promptly at 7:00 a.m. for a 15-20 minute morning prayer and scripture, then moves up the hill to Panera for 45 minutes of coffee & conversation. Fall dates: Jan. 25; Feb. 5 & 19; Mar. 5, 19; Apr. 2, TBD.

### ODT




**Orthodox Dudes on Tap Meets Periodically**

This new casual men's ministry is for guys, single and married, to just enjoy a few hours of conversation, snacks, brews and great company with other Millennials and Gen Z'ers. Laid back. Informal. Next meeting Feb 1. Want to be notified? Email [OrthodoxDudes@HolyTrinityPgh.org](mailto:OrthodoxDudes@HolyTrinityPgh.org).

Orthodox Christian life happens every day, not just Sunday! Faith and Family Weekdays offers many ways during the week to grow in our faith and share in the community life of the Church. Ready to learn more about the Bible, about your Faith, about navigating life's challenges as a Christian, a women or a man? Want to enjoy fellowship with others in your Christian family and community? It's all there. Watch the bulletin and check the online calendar at [HolyTrinityPgh.org/calendar](http://HolyTrinityPgh.org/calendar) for details and locations.

## BCC - NEW!



**Byzantine Chant Classes with Dr. Stephen Esper**  
First Session: Saturday, January 10, 10:30am

Want to learn the sacred Byzantine Chant of the Orthodox Church? Either to sing along during services or to become a church chanter? As the generations go by, we must preserve this musical tradition, which is so filled with beauty, meaning and theology. Expert director, instructor and chanter Dr. Stefan Esper will be teaching this centuries-old foundation of Orthodox worship. No prior experience needed. Sign-up via email is required. Send your contact info to [chant@HolyTrinityPgh.org](mailto:chant@HolyTrinityPgh.org). First class will meet January 10 at 10:30am, and the class will determine a future meeting schedule, which will be announced.



Two long-time parishioners were received into the Faith in October: Salvatore Re (Oct. 5, Left, Above) and Reggie Bonfield (Oct. 12, Left, Below). Also on October 12, Valori and Andreas Fournaridis celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary and two sets of twins (Davia & Gia Gross, and Alex and Luke Tomalski) celebrated their 16th & 21st birthdays, respectively. Many years to them all! Congratulations!





(October 12) The children of the HOPE and JOY ministries enjoyed a beautiful Pittsburgh Fall day with an old-fashioned hayride at Yeck Farms in Freedom, PA. Afterwards they shared some games, hot chocolate, snacks and lots of good fun with friends.



(October 12) Holy Trinity Church celebrated its annual Youth Sunday with a number of special features. Top three rows: The fine young men who serve as Acolytes faithfully fulfilled their duties serving during the Divine Liturgy. Other GOYA ladies and young men assisted the Parish Council in other duties during the service, including serving as greeters and passing the offering baskets.

Bottom row and right page: GOYAs hosted their annual FallFest goodies sale, with seasonal hot foods, drinks and desserts for the community.

Right page bottom row: The 2025/2026 GOYA officers were installed at the end of Liturgy. (L-R) Ilya Peregoncev (Communications Coordinator), Anna Dedousis (Treasurer), Daniel Willow (Vice-President), Evangelia Balouris (President), Nick Kaparakos (Outreach Coordinator), Hari Bouzos (Outreach Coordinator) and Gia Gross (Activities Coordinator).







(October 13) The Holy Trinity "Omonia" Ladies Philoptochos Chapter was well-represented at the Metropolis Philoptochos Assembly. Pictured with His Eminence Metropolitan Savas are: Penny Balouris, Sandy Schall, Sherry Clayton and Marianne Stearns.





(November 9) Holy Trinity Church honored our veterans on Military Appreciation Day with a memorial, photos and names list. In person were (L-R): Lynn Barker, Deacon Ted Stewart, Christopher Welch, George Maier, Lynda Areheart and Dr. Dean Balouris. God bless you all!





# The Holy Trinity Christmas Pageant -



# Church School December 21, 2025









(December 17) Holy Trinity parishioners of all ages gathered to visit and sing Christmas Carols to our good neighbors, the retired nuns of the Sisters of Divine Providence across the street. This has been an annual tradition since purchasing the land our church sits on from the Sisters back in 2007. (Bottom right) Just a portion of the 120 gifts donated to needy youth of the area in 2025.





(November 15-16) Greek dancers from around the Metropolis were hosted by Holy Trinity Church for the 2025 Metropolis of Pittsburgh Folk Dance Festival. Professional instructors from New Jersey came and conducted classes teaching new steps and routines. The dance troupes then offered performances on Saturday evening, followed by a lively dance. The next morning the Festival invited all participants and our Holy Trinity Church parishioners to a complimentary breakfast, following which all three of our Holy Trinity Dance Troupes (HOPE, JOY, GOYA) offered their full performance for the community, Bravo! Well done!





# Stewardship 2025 Roster

Rev. Fr. John & Presvytera Becky  
Touloumes  
Rev. Fr. Radu & Presvytera Loredana  
Bordeianu  
Rev. Fr. George & Presvytera Evangelia  
Daskalakis  
Dn. Matthew & Diakonissa Nina  
Palamara  
Dn. Theodore & Diakonissa Mary Ellen  
Stewart

Dr. Andrew & Mrs. Anna Abboud  
Fayez & Maria Abboud  
Eleni & Joseph Abdalah  
Mark & Teddi Adamczyk  
Mr. Sotiris & Mrs. Amy Aggelou  
Victoria & Justin Ambrose  
Mr & Mrs Victor Amurgis  
Georgiana Anargyros  
Christy Andromalos  
Mr. Michael Andromalos-Dale  
Ms Victoria Andromalos-Dale  
Alexander & Katherine Anetakis  
Ms. Tiffany Ann  
Mrs. Lynda Areheart  
Mr. & Mrs. Mark Armanious  
Mr. & Mrs. Vasilios Athanas  
Mr & Mrs Harry Athanasiou  
Desi Austin  
Mr & Mrs Alvin Backeris  
Mr & Mrs Van Backeris  
Mr. Douglas & Mrs. Jessica Baker  
Anthony & Alexandra Balouris  
Chris & Kathy Balouris  
Dean Balouris  
Dr. & Mrs. Constantine Balouris  
Eleni Balouris  
Mr. & Mrs. James T. Balouris  
Mrs. Katherine Balouris  
Ms. Polyxeni Balouris  
Lynn & Ethel Barker  
Anastasia & Joseph Barron  
Olga Beckas  
Ephraim Berexa  
Mr. & Mrs. Chris Berexa  
Adam & Christina Bishop  
Constance Bistolas-Walters  
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Mrs. Helen Bonaros  
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Drs Clifford Brubaker & Sondra Balouris  
Alexandra & Anthony Cameron  
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George & Stacy Dickos  
Mrs. Christine Dickos (\*)  
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William & Jennifer Dickson  
Mr. & Mrs. Nikolas Doris  
Theodore & Jennifer Drapas  
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Mr. Brian & Mrs. Angie Fitzpatrick  
Thomas Fitzpatrick  
Todd Fleming & Melissa Karidis  
Penny Folino

Andreas and Valori Fournaridis  
Mr. Andrew Fournaridis & Ms. Anna Mamo  
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Tessie Frankos  
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Diana Fries  
John Fries  
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Mr & Mrs Markos Gambieris  
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Gregory Geanopulos  
Mr & Mrs Thomas Geanopulos  
Mr. & Mrs. George Geanopulos  
Effie Geanous  
Fabiola Georgallis  
George & Arnette Georges  
Dr. and Mrs. Mark Georgiadis  
Mr & Mrs Gus Georgiadis  
Mr & Mrs Steven Georgiadis  
Mr & Mrs Thomas Germanos  
Alex & Marina Giallonardo  
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Spiros & Stacy Giannoutsos  
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Eugenia Graser  
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George & Anna Halkias  
Pennie Hareras  
Voula Hareras  
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George & Amanda Hulse  
Mr & Mrs Carlo Iasella  
Dr & Mrs Brian Jewell  
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Mrs Bettina Kermes  
Dr Imad Alizray and Ms Zelfa Khalil  
Gus & Effie Kilantonis

Thank you to the following faithful stewards who have submitted a 2025 Stewardship pledge. Please join them in the coming year to support the many active ministries of Holy Trinity and complete your **2026 StewardshipPledge** today by card or using Realm online or in the Realm app! Or click the QR code below.

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 Dr. & Mrs. Dean Scoumis  
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 Eric White  
 Daniel & Jeanne Willow  
 Bradley & Nickey Zafiris  
 Mr. & Mrs. Michael Zagnacky  
 Mr & Mrs George Zappas  
 Katrina & Nick Zbur  
 Dr & Mrs Antonios Zikos  
 John & Leann Zotis  
 Mr & Mrs Louis Zozos  
 Deborah Zuniga

(+) = Reposed



**PLEDGE NOW!**

The only-begotten Son is seen as a mortal, lying in a spare manger; and He, the Lord of glory, is wrapped in swaddling clothes.

Christmas Eve Service  
of the Royal Hours



# 2025 Nativity Poinsettias

Thank you to the many parishioners and friends who offered donations to adorn the Church with beautiful poinsettias for the celebration of the Nativity of Christ. May those you have honored be blessed and remembered always!

- Fayez & Maria Abboud..... In memory of James & Chrisoula Morris (2 plants)
- Fayez & Maria Abboud..... In memory of Demetri & Eva Abboud (2 plants)
- Victor Amurgis & Family ..... In memory of their loving parents, Harriet & William Amurgis (5 plants)
- Lynda Areheart ..... In memory of her husband Bill Areheart
- Mark & Amy Armanious.....For the health of the Armanious Family
- The Athanasiou Family ..... In memory of Stella Athanasiou
- The Athanasiou Family ..... In memory of George Athanasiou
- The Athanasiou Family ..... In memory of George Bertos
- The Athanasiou Family .....For the health of the Athanasiou and Bertos Families
- The Athanasiou Family .....In appreciation for the overwhelming love and support of their Holy Trinity Family
- Art & Christina Avlon..... In memory of Gus & Stella Kalaris
- Art & Christina Avlon..... In memory of Alexander & Helen Avlon
- Art & Christina Avlon..... In memory of Gus & Panagiota Bistolas
- Art & Christina Avlon..... In memory of George & Pauline Kalaris
- Chris & Kathy Balouris ..... In memory of Rev Fr John Androustopoulos (2 plants)
- Chris & Kathy Balouris ..... In memory of Anthony & Helen Balouris (2 plants)
- Chris & Kathy Balouris ..... For the health of Presvytera Ethel Androustopoulos (2 plants)
- Chris & Kathy Balouris ..... For the health of Marielena, Julio & Evia Alarcon (2 plants)
- Chris & Kathy Balouris .....For the health of Antonios, Sarah, Yanni & Leah Balouris (2 plants)
- Ethel & Lynn Barker ..... In memory of the Kalogeras and Geanous Families
- Joseph & Anastasia Barron..... In memory of Makryna/Sophie & Eleftherios/Lou Parikakis
- Joseph & Anastasia Barron In memory of the Parikakis, Anargyros, Barron, Mousadis, Zagnacky and Fiedler Families
- Pamela Bolkovac ..... In memory of her parents Nick & Mary Bolkovac (3 plants)
- Reggie & Marianne Bonfield ..... In memory of John & Helen Chapas
- Reggie & Marianne Bonfield .....In memory of John & Mary Bonfield
- Reggie & Marianne Bonfield ..... For the health of family & friends
- The Bonfield & Chapas Families .....In memory of Frank & Anne Chapas (4 plants)

Alexandra Cameron .....	In memory of Sava Macut and Bill & Irene Petredis
Bill & Sophea Chapas.....	In memory of John & Helen Chapas
Jim & Bobbie Chapas .....	In memory of John & Helen Chapas
Jim & Bobbie Chapas .....	In memory of their niece Samantha Stroehlen
Gregory Cherpes .....	In memory of Penny V. Cherpes
Gregory Cherpes .....	For the health of Louis T. Cherpes
Sherry Clayton .....	For the health and happiness of her Holy Trinity Family
Cindy Morris Criss.....	For the health of the Morris Family (5 plants)
George & Sophia Danis .....	In memory of Demetrios & Evdoxia Danis
George & Sophia Danis .....	In memory of George V. Gatsiopoulos & Vasiliki Gatsiopoulos
George & Sophia Danis .....	In memory of John & Sophia Regas
William & Jennifer Dickson.....	For the health of family and friends (2 plants)
Frank & Katina Erdeljac.....	In memory of Mike Alexiades
Frank & Katina Erdeljac.....	In memory of Theologia Alexiades
Frank & Katina Erdeljac.....	In memory of Mary Alexiades
Frank & Katina Erdeljac.....	In memory of Alex Alexiades
Bill & Tina Fiedler.....	For the health of family and friends
Bill & Tina Fiedler....	In memory of Lou, Sophie, Bill, Josephine, grandparents, Danielle, aunts, uncles, cousins & friends
John & Georgia Franciscus and Family .....	In memory of George & Betty Beckas, John Beckas and Vasiliki Petropoulos
John & Georgia Franciscus and Family .....	In memory of Demetra Kastanis and Peter Katsafanas
Tessie Frankos .....	In memory of her beloved daughter Demitria Frankos
Connie Fries.....	For the health of family & friends
Connie Fries.....	In memory of George & Margaret Lemberopoulos
Connie Fries.....	In memory of Mary & Peter Panos
Connie Fries.....	In memory of Konstantinos & Fanie Athanasopoulos
Connie Fries.....	In memory of John & Toula Giannoutsos
Connie Fries.....	In memory of Spiros & Catherine Giannoutsos
Connie Fries.....	In memory of Lou & Marge Parikakis
Connie Fries.....	In memory of Georgiann Bounos
Connie Fries.....	In memory of James Statheas
Connie Fries.....	In memory of Alex Trilivas
Diana Fries.....	In memory of Olga Regakis (2 plants)
Diana Fries.....	In memory of Marion Pantelas (2 plants)
Diana Fries.....	In memory of Peter Panos (2 plants)
Diana Fries.....	In memory of Mary Panos (2 plants)
Diana Fries.....	In memory of Milita Mellis (2 plants)
Diana Fries.....	In memory of Kit White (2 plants)
George & Phyllis Geanopulos .....	In memory of Harry & Helen Geanopulos
George & Phyllis Geanopulos .....	In memory of John & Erma Haas
Gus & Penny Georgiadis .....	In memory of George & Mary Kalodikis (2 plants)
Gus & Penny Georgiadis .....	In memory of Peter & Mary Georgiadis (2 plants)

## NATIVITY FLOWER DONATIONS

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Dr. & Mrs. Mark Georgiadis..... In memory of their parents (2 plants)  
Eugenia Graser .....In memory of her husband Robert Graser and parents Michael & Maria Patsalos  
The Damon Halkias Family..... In loving memory of Damon G. Halkias  
George & Anna Halkias ..... For the health of family & friends  
George & Anna Halkias .....In memory of Nondas & Ella Halkias  
George & Anna Halkias ..... In memory of George N Kontos  
George & Anna Halkias ..... In memory of Nick & Anna Kontos  
George & Anna Halkias ..... In memory of John & Angela Condoleon  
Pennie Hareras .....In memory of Gus & Voula Hareras and Angelo & Athena Hareras  
Pennie Hareras ..... In memory of Jim Statheas and Eleftheria Koutsouflakis  
Brian & Debbie Jewell ..... In memory of Samuel & Georgia Booras  
Brian & Debbie Jewell ..... In memory of Marsha Booras  
Brian & Debbie Jewell ..... In memory of Kathy Gage  
Brian & Debbie Jewell ..... In memory of Ralph Jewell  
Brian & Debbie Jewell ..... In memory of Jodi Menni  
James S. Johnson and Kristina Johnson.....In memory of their parents Homer J. & Stella Johnson  
James S. Johnson and Kristina Johnson..... In memory of their grandparents George & Augustina Makris  
Irene Karavolos .....For the health of her family  
Irene Karavolos ..... In memory of Charles E. Siebott  
Irene Karavolos ..... In memory of Steve & Kelly Karavolos  
Mrs. Bettina Kermes ..... In memory of her husband Dr. James Kermes  
Vaso & Elenie Kourouklis.....In memory of Achille Kourouklis  
Vaso & Elenie Kourouklis .....In memory of Georgios Kourouklis  
Vaso & Elenie Kourouklis ..... In memory of Stavroula Repana  
Vaso & Elenie Kourouklis ..... In memory of Dimitris Repana  
Angela Leist.....In memory of the Phaturos family  
Nicholas T. Loomis .....In memory of his beloved wife Joy (2 plants)  
George & Anita Maier .....For the health of all their family  
Maria Mason ..... In memory of her beloved husband Jeff  
John & Tasy McCann ..... For the health of Connor & Alyssa Mackrell  
John & Tasy McCann ..... For the health of Henry & Cora McCann  
Jeff & Penny Mercadante .....In memory of Elaine Christ  
Jeff & Penny Mercadante .....In memory of George Christ  
James & Judith Mermigas ..... For the health of Douglas Olson  
James & Judith Mermigas .....In memory of Theodore Mermigas  
Arlene Metropulos ..... In memory of her beloved husband, Dean  
Arlene Metropulos ..... In memory of her beloved friend, Milita Mellis  
Christine Metropulos & Dave Steiner ..... In memory of their loved ones  
Meno & Jean Mitaras and Family ..... In memory of the Mitaras & Condos families  
William J. Pagonis .....In memory of James & Mary Pagonis (2 plants)  
Deacon Matthew & Diakonissa Nina Palamara ..... For the health of the Palamara family & the Anh family

## NATIVITY FLOWER DONATIONS

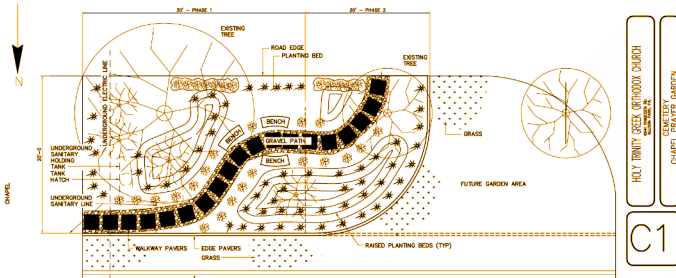
George Pantelakis..... in memory of his beloved wife Rhea  
Danny & Athina Papakalos .....In memory of John Papakalos  
Danny & Athina Papakalos ..... In memory of Kiriaki Gianakakos  
Orestes & Arlene Paras.....In memory of John & Maria Paras and Michael & Diana Paras  
Orestes & Arlene Paras.....In memory of Albert & Rose Russell and Arthur Russell  
Doug & Ramona Patterson..... In honor of their grandchildren, Mauro and Maeve  
Elizabeth Pickios.....In memory of her husband Anthony Pickios  
Elizabeth Pickios..... In memory of her brother John Corolis  
Elizabeth Pickios.....In memory of her sister Sophia Corolis  
Elizabeth Pickios..... In memory of her father Panayioti Carolis  
Elizabeth Pickios..... In memory of her mother Maria Corolis  
Sal & Katina Re..... For the health and well-being of their families and friends (2 plants)  
Afaf Saikaly .....In memory of her dearly departed family  
Joanna Sideris .....In memory of Mary Constantino  
George Zappas.....In memory of Paul Zappas  
George Zappas.....In memory of Agnes Zappas  
George Zappas.....In memory of William Zappas  
Antonios & Susan Zikos.....For the health of Timothy  
The Zissis Family ..... In memory of Anthony & Aspasia Zissis  
The Zissis Family ..... In memory of Frank & Anezo Zissis  
The Zissis Family .....In memory of George & Vasiliki Christodoulos  
The Zissis Family ..... In memory of Thea Kiki, Thea Fofa, Thea Tasoula & Theo Sam

*"Lord, I have loved the beauty of your house  
and the dwelling place of your glory." (Psalm 26.8)*



# ON THE WINGS OF AN EAGLE

Holy Trinity GOYAn Christopher Ramaley moves Holy Trinity Cemetery Prayer Garden Project forward by completing Phase One as his Eagle Scout Project. Well done!



On my honor I will do my best to do my duty to God and my country..." Those words at the beginning of the Boy Scout Oath signify the importance of God in scouting. Similarly, one of the 12 points of the Boy Scout Law is reverence towards God. Because of the important relationship between scouting and faith, I knew that I wanted to use my Eagle Scout project as an opportunity to serve the Church and fulfill a need for Holy Trinity. Several months ago, I met with Fr. John to discuss this goal, and he recommended phase one of the prayer garden project at Holy Trinity Cemetery. With several family members buried there, I immediately felt a connection to this project.

To begin to process, Fr. John directed me to Bill Fiedler, Cemetery Chairman. As both the Cemetery Chairman and a Boy Scout leader, Mr. Fiedler was the ideal project coach, and he was a dedicated partner throughout this project. An Eagle Scout project requires a combination of hard work, leadership, and fundraising. For several weeks, I asked members of the Church for contributions, and both parishioners and Parish Council responded tremendously. Then, it was time to put the plan into action. After multiple weekends of work, what started as a 30-foot by 20-foot plot of grass outside of St. George Chapel, transformed into a landscaped garden with a stone path and three benches. Two rhododendrons adorn the garden, with more plants to be added in the spring.

I want to thank Fr. John, Presvytera Becky, Mr. Fiedler, and Parish Council for their support throughout this project. Likewise, I want to thank the Holy Trinity parishioners who graciously donated their time, talents, and treasures to support this project. I hope the Holy Trinity community finds this prayer garden a place of peace, solace, and comfort for many years to come. ❖

Christopher Ramaley



Christopher Ramaley and Cemetery Chairman Bill Fiedler





THE FESTIVAL IS COMING...AND THE COOKING IS HERE!  
 MARK THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR — TELL YOUR FRIENDS — EVERYONE IS WELCOME!



**PASTITSIO**  
 Thu., Jan. 29 9am-9pm

**TIROPITA**  
 Wed., Feb. 11 9am-9pm

**KOULOURAKIA/  
 FINIKIA**  
 Sun., Feb. 15 After Liturgy

**SPANAKOPITA**  
 Tue., Feb. 24 9am-9pm  
 Wed., Feb. 25 9am-5pm

**FINIKIA DIPPING &  
 KOURAMBIETHES**  
 Sat., Mar. 21 9am-6pm

**GALAKTOBOUREKO**  
 Tue., Apr. 21 9am-9pm

**BAKLAVA &  
 CHOC. BAKLAVA**  
 Tue., May 5 9am-9pm

**APRICOT ROLLS**  
 Tue., May 19 9am-9pm

**APRICOT ROLLS 2  
 /PORTOKALOPITA**  
 Tue., May 26 9am-9pm

**PORTOKALOPITA**  
 Tue, June 10 9am-9pm

**DIPLES**  
 Tue, June 23 9am-9pm

**SOUZOUKAKIA**  
 Wed., Aug. 12 9am-9pm

**YOUR CHURCH NEEDS YOUR HELP! BE THERE! BRING A FRIEND!  
 OUR GOAL IS TO GET AT LEAST 30 PEOPLE EACH DAY SO THAT WE MAY FINISH ON TIME!**

Can YOU give at least a few hours of time for YOUR community's festival? Look over the dates and times listed here. You'll see both evening and daytime hours, during the week and on the weekends. Everyone's help is needed! No experience needed...we train on the job! Think of it as free cooking lessons. Questions? Contact Joyce Athanasiou (jcbathanasiou@aim.com or 412-292-4206) or Paula Valliant (paulavalliant@gmail.com or 412-445-4119).



**SPREAD THE WORD! TELL YOUR FRIENDS! DON'T MISS IT!  
 THE 2026 "TASTE OF GREECE" - THU. SEP. 3-SUN. SEP. 6**

# On Divine Love

When people are in love, they experience an irresistible attraction: they can think of nothing else; they want to speak to their beloved and be with them constantly. It is the same with God. Man can only be saved if he is in love with Christ.

**Q: Geronda, Can you say a word on the love of God?**

Lord, have mercy! Where can one begin? There is nothing more holy and more powerful than the love of God; in order to acquire it, man must truly purify himself from every stain of sin. The love of God will not inhabit us by chance. Just as the uncreated Light is visible only to those who are pure in heart, so will the love of God dwell only in those who have purified themselves with fierce repentance for many years until no blemish remains in them.

If even repentance of this kind is not enough, God in His wisdom may provide a trial in their life, taking them to the threshold of death, the end of their existence. And when the limits of human endurance are exhausted, the Lord will extend His helping hand. Where the human factor ends, the hand of God comes to save man.

**Q: If earthly life without the love of Christ is devoid of all good, how much truer is this of the life to come?**

One cannot live with God if one is not in love with Him. However, the only way to express it was to liken it to human love. When people are in love, they experience an irresistible attraction: they can think of nothing else; they want to speak to their beloved and be with them constantly. It is the same with God. Man can only be saved if he is in love with Christ. In this state, man sighs unceasingly; he feels as if his heart were tied with a rope that is constantly pulling him upwards. These are the "unutterable

groanings" of his heart (Romans 8.26). If we want to be with Christ, we must attain to this kind of divine Eros: we must feel at all times that our heart is sizzling with a pure, luminous, sweet pain that makes it impossible for anything to separate us from the love of Christ.

**Q: How can we acquire the right kind of love?**

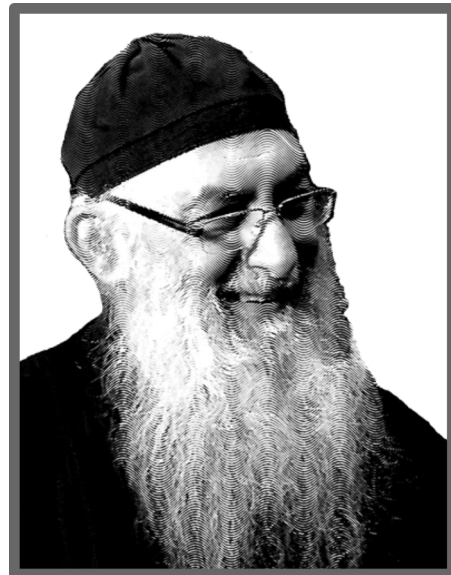
Saint Silouan says that when we meet the Lord, He will ask us only this: "Do you love me?" Our heart will inform us if we possess that love for Him, so that we can be with Him eternally.

**Q: Geronda, How can we love a fellow man when we do not feel like loving him?**

The worldly perspective is enmity to God; there we can find no redemption. The only perspective that offers salvation is the way of God; and Christ Himself is the Way. It is not always easy to love our fellows, and we often fail. But because love is given to us as a commandment, grace is at work from the moment we set our hand on the plough. We meet Him in His commandments, and He works the miracle in our place.

**Q: With what words should I pray to ask God for strength to love?**

We must not expect automatic results. In the spiritual life, we cannot press a button to change our state. In the world we have become accustomed to pressing a button and instantly having light; to pressing a button and cooking a meal in the microwave in a matter of seconds.



Archimandrite Zacharias of Essex

In the way of God, we are taught a different way. He says: "By your endurance you will gain your souls" (Luke 21.19). We need patience; we need to persevere day by day for years because the gift of God is so great. It is not like turning on an electric light or boiling water for a cup of tea; it is the gift of eternal life.

If we are to redeem our temporal existence and receive an inheritance of eternal life, we must offer all the time we have, and even that is not enough. God's life is eternal and endless, whereas we are finite, insignificant and weak.

Nevertheless, if we endure patiently, God will honour our effort and our suffering. Life in the Church is a discipleship; it is not something that happens spontaneously or once and for all. It grows slowly, by degrees.

The Kingdom of God comes without observation (Luke 17.20) in this world as we perfect holiness in the fear of God day by day. ❖

Excerpted from  
*"The Ineffable Folly  
of Divine Love"*  
(Newly published in 2025)

**THE HOLY TRINITY**  
**HERALD**  
*Faith. Family. Community*

**About the Herald**

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**About the Parish**

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Web site: HolyTrinityPgh.org | Email: office@HolyTrinityPgh.org

Holy Trinity Church is a parish of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Pittsburgh (pittsburgh.goarch.org) and the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (goarch.org) under the Spiritual Jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople.

**Parish Administration**  
**Clergy**

Rev. Fr. John Touloumes, Proistamenos  
 Rev. Fr. Radu Bordeianu, Assistant Priest  
 Deacons: Dn. Matthew Palamara, Dn. Theodore Stewart

**2026 Parish Council**

Anthony Balouris, President (pcpresident@HolyTrinityPgh.org)  
 Alexander Anetakis                      Evan Danis                      Christopher Loomis  
 Eleni Balouris                              Eleni Dedousis                      George Mellis  
 Penny Balouris                              George Dickos                      Dean Passodelis  
 Michael Bounos                              Michael Erdeljac                      Dan Willow

**Ministries**

Please visit the Holy Trinity website at HolyTrinityPgh.org for descriptions and contact information on Holy Trinity Church's ministries, including spiritual life, education, youth, senior, family and cultural opportunities. There is something for everyone, so please get involved today! Everyone is welcome!

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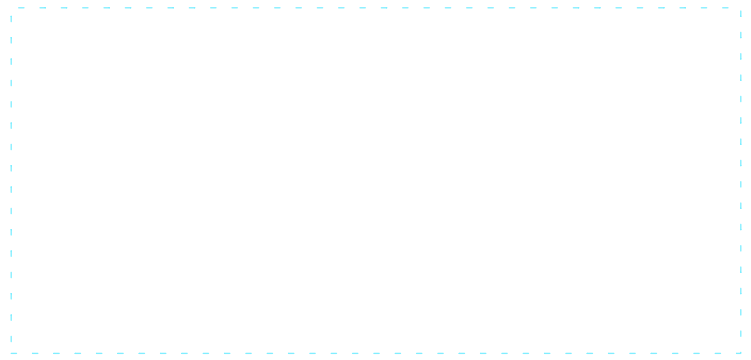
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## THE BEAUTY OF THE BOOK OF PSALMS

The Psalter [Book of Psalms] is a most beautiful bouquet of one hundred and fifty flowers. Unlike other natural flowers, that wither quickly, these spiritual flowers, the Psalms, maintain all of their fragrance and their freshness even though thirty centuries have passed. The psalms, those unfading and immortal poetic flowers, adorn paradise. And, according to the holy fathers, Holy Scripture is a spiritual paradise.

In the Psalter there are all kinds of prayers; and praises, thanksgivings, and supplications. By opening the Psalter, everyone can find an appropriate psalm which fully corresponds to his or her spiritual and material need, in whatever spiritual state he or she might be in. The person who opens the Psalter, not to read it as he reads other collections of poetry but to pray, this person is elevated to spiritual experiences, feels a deep contrition, his heart is moved, and his eyes fill with tears. The Psalter becomes his most beloved prayer book.

The Psalter is an astonishing book. Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself referred to the psalms repeatedly in His sermons. In addition, after His resurrection, He rebukes His disciples for forgetting that what happened to Him was written in the law of Moses, by the prophets, and in the Psalms.

Excerpted from "A Panoramic Overview of Holy Scripture"  
by Bishop Augustinos Kantiotēs

