

THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Why Koinonia?

by Fr. Basil Biberdorf

“And they continued in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers... So continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart, praising God and having favor with all the people” (Acts 2:42, 46-47).

This is how Luke describes the earliest Christian gatherings, as described to him by the people who actually attended them. The earliest Christians still self-identified as Jews. As a result, they regularly attended services at the Temple in Jerusalem, thereafter adjourning to private homes of the followers of Christ, perhaps in rotation based on “from house to house,” in order to partake of Christ’s Body and Blood in the Eucharist (breaking of bread) celebrated there according to a specific order of service (“the prayers”). Thus, the earliest Christian communities were defined by their practice of Holy Communion performed according to a specific liturgical rite.

However, this gathering didn’t really end there, because there was a further eating of “their food with gladness and simplicity of heart.” In other words, the meal did not end with the Body and Blood, but progressed to the physical food needed by the created bodies of the men and women gathering together. It was for *koinonia* (Greek for communion, pronounced “kih-noh-NEE-ah”) not only with Christ but with each other. It was already a service for the wealthier members of the community to offer their homes for the celebration of the

(continued—see KOINONIA, penultimate page)



Fr. John poses with Mka. Linda at the Lewistown train station before departing on his four-month, 27,000-mile pilgrimage in 2010. His route retraced the late 18th-century journey that Orthodox missionary saints took from Finland to Alaska.

Sabbatical Benefits

Continue by Fr. John Reeves

There are several benefits to a sabbatical: Some, such as rest and renewal for a pastor, are more immediate. Other benefits are residual. During my sabbatical three years ago, the parish was charged to develop a more self-reliant model of ministry in my absence. Administrative matters had to be dealt with in the absence of the priest and a working model of collaborative decision-making came into existence during that time.

In the ensuing time, this model has been maintained and expanded. Deacon Alexander Cadman now serves the parish as its full-time ministry coordinator, continuing to hone his skills which were greatly on demand while I had been away. The Parish Council continues to work together as a single unit, furthering our goals and looking forward to our future.

(continued—see ONGOING BENEFITS, last page)

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Schedules

	Coffee Hour	Greeters	Tellers	Servers**
July 7	A. Swisher and C. Swisher	M. Thompson and M. Fedjin	B. Haurz and L. Rush	Team A
July 14	J. Cadman and L. Rush	M. Leathers and D. Swisher	G. Carrel and M. Fedjin	Team B
July 21	J. Miranda and M. Leathers	B. Roberts and E. Miranda	L. Rush and R. Patel	Team A
July 28	P. Doby and M. Thompson	L. Radomsky and M. Radomsky	M. Fedjin and M. Stevens	Team B
August 4*	E. Files and K. Olynsk	M. Thompson and M. Fedjin	R. Patel and B. Haurz	Team A
August 11*	M. & V. Anthony and D. Patel	M. Leathers and D. Swisher	S. Stevens and G. Carrel	Team B
* Deacons Fast	** Team A: M. Doby, A. Miranda, N. Puzan, S. Olynsk, D. Soskis, J. Soskis, J. Toric, and J. Swisher Team B: J. Cadman, P. Doby, N. McFarland, J. Miranda, B. Olynsk, S. Patel, L. Terbic, and M. Soskis.			

■ CHAPEL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Koinonia: Lessons from the Chapel (from cover)

Eucharist, as not many people had “homes” with rooms such as could accommodate a gathering. It was also the opportunity for the group to care for the poorer members, particularly widows and orphans, by providing them a much-needed meal.

Just as importantly, these gatherings punctured the walls separating the social classes of the Roman world. The eating of a meal was *intimate*. Those dining came together in close quarters, and hosts didn’t dine with just anyone. (Consider the indignation of Christ’s enemies in Luke 15:2 and Mark 2:16.) This meal was different. The rich host not only gave food to the poor, but invited them into the home, along with the merchants (which were not terribly respected), butchers, weavers, and other believers. They came together not in some kind of Christian “commune,” but because they were “in one body,” in recognition of their humanity regardless of whether they were slaves or free men, Jews or not (1 Cor. 12:12-13).

This was a time to be together regardless of the way of life each of them experienced in other times. Indeed, without such a gathering, how would any of them have any perspective on the lives as lived by their Christian brethren? We know it is true for us in our own time as well.

In short, the *koinonia* of those first century believers was nothing but the expression of what it meant to be *Christians*. Which brings us to our current situation, where, following the Divine Liturgy, we are often rather focused on returning to our daily activities, even on Sunday. In so doing, we often break the fullness of our *koinonia* too quickly.

Those of us familiar with our Chapel practice are aware of the potluck meal that follows our Sunday gatherings. Some may even find it odd, wondering,

“You do that *every* Sunday?” Well, yes, and it is a highlight for most who come. It is an opportunity to sit down for a few minutes to break more bread and to rejoice in the “horizontal” communion we have with each other, having received the “vertical” Communion that comes from Christ. It is an opportunity to hear of the joys and sorrows of our brothers and sisters in Christ. We can hear news directly, without risk of gossip.

Each of you is encouraged to pray with us at the Chapel, and to join us afterward for our meal. I also extend a special invitation to you to join us on July 7 for our annual “Close to Independence Day” gathering. After the Divine Liturgy that Sunday, we will be going to the Tall Timbers natural area near Troxelville (from State Route 235, take Timber Road and Swift Run Roads into the park), for a nice afternoon among trees and streams, and with plenty of food and fellowship. We are also organizing a short hike this year. It’s cool under the trees, even on a hot day.

Bring a change of attire, plus shoes for hiking (if you want to join in), and “getting wet clothes” (including water shoes or flip-flops) for wading. Bring some folding chairs, too, as you’ll want to sit, relax, and enjoy the summer afternoon. ■

For the Record

BAPTISM

➤ **Bridget Marie Wagner**, daughter of Andre and Megan Wagner, baptized June 1, sponsored by David and Brenda Smith. *Many years!*

WEDDING

➤ **Alexandra Radomsky** and **Josh Morrison** were crowned in marriage May 26, sponsored by John Radomsky and her sister, Katherine. *Many years!*

Parish Ministries Conference to be Held July 10-13 Near D.C.

Four departments of the Orthodox Church in America will offer workshops and presentations at the 2013 Parish Ministries Conference to be held at Marymount University in Arlington, Virginia this July 10-13. Topics include music composition and choral conducting, parish-based outreach ministry, hospital and prison chaplaincy, ministry via social media, and parish educator training, and feature a workshop offered by Metropolitan Tikhon entitled “Teaching Scripture in the Parish.” Protospesbyter Thomas Hopko will deliver the keynote address.

Mentors Trained; Await Funding

Staff from Bridge of Hope, an organization that partners with churches to end family homelessness, prepared eight Holy Trinity parishioners last month to minister to a single mother in our area. At a lovely dinner meeting hosted by the Dotys, a team of men and women learned how to be supporting, non-judgmental role models. While our group awaits the assignment of a candidate (funding must be totally raised before we can proceed), those unable to attend the training and others still willing to help may email bridgeofhope@holytrinity-oca.org for more information.

Many Gather For “Thursdays”!

Turnout continues to increase for “Thursdays in the Park,” a weekly playgroup for kids that provides valuable companionship for parents and caregivers. Stop by 10 a.m. to 12 noon each week (locations vary; see calendar centerfold) and meet new people!

July Bookstore Feature

The Parish Bookstore is now featuring *The Feasts of the Lord* by Metropolitan Heirotheos of Nafpaktos. The book offers interpretative keys to enable understanding of the central Christological points taught over the Church year and stresses the importance of Christology in Orthodox teaching. It is available in the “new arrivals” section of the bookstore.

■ RECTOR’S KEYNOTE

Ongoing Benefits (from cover)

Such harmonious administration in the parish also means that when the priest now takes a vacation, things that need to be done don’t simply get put on hold until he returns. Lay leadership has taken stock of its own responsibilities and continues to press ahead.

Consequently, after three weeks in my Texas homeland—a time spent visiting families, attending reunions, co-officiating at a wedding for a former student in Houston (Jab Tannous), and capped off by a visit to New Orleans *en route* home (an homage to Matushka’s Cuban and French ancestry)—I could return without dreading a mound of unfinished work or unattended situations.

I could come back, rested and renewed a bit knowing that Vacation Bible School would be wrapping up another successful summer thanks to Deacon Mark and those that volunteered; that we would soon celebrate our parish feast of Pentecost together and go picnic in the park afterwards; and that we could then have the double joy of David Smith’s ordination on the Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul and the wedding of Paul Petrogeorge and Larissa Moser the next day.

In other words, I stopped working during vacation. I rested though it sounds like I was very busy. In short, I relaxed. But the parish did not slow down a bit. That’s a great stress reliever, an ongoing benefit of that sabbatical three years ago which keeps paying dividends even now. ■



Follow Fr. John Again... For the First Time.

A link to his poignant and often funny sabbatical travelogue—complete with maps, photos, and daily reflections—is available for a limited time from the homepage of holytrinity-oca.org.

■ CAMPUS MINISTRY

The Trap of Summer: Staying Faithful

by Rachel Contos,
President,
Marquette U. OCF

This year I had the most spiritually rewarding Pascha of my life! Honestly, I felt ready to experience the Resurrection of Christ in a way I never have before. I attribute this readiness to OCF, the people I met there, joining my Church choir, fasting, and taking more time to pray. I still have lots to work on, and I always will, but I never want to have Pascha without this feeling again...

Now that summer has started, there are no more services five minutes away, someone won't be picking me up for Church, there isn't summer choir practice, College Conference is a long way off, and fasting at home is hard because I am not just cooking for myself. It's as if Pascha came and said, "Here is the Joy of God," but now I am home not carrying on with any of the things I did at school! What is going to happen to me this summer—will I be able to stay faithful?

We must remind ourselves that summer is not a break from God. It is a break from school, stress, nagging professors, and the impending doom of paying off debt. Part of being in college is coming home during break and part of being Orthodox is maintaining the knowledge that the Church is also our home. Summer does not mean we get a break from needing God in our lives.

So for those of us, like me, who lose our Faith motivation in the summer, here are some important things to remember:

- *Church does indeed go on in the summer, and it is important to be there.*
- *If you want something fun and free to do with friends, volunteer!*
- *Listen to God and follow the path that leads to Him. Even though it's summer, the love of Christ should still shine through your works.*

- *Find small quiet moments throughout the day to say a prayer.*
- *Take your excuses of laziness and spin them into a way of showing love for God.*

Keep God in your hearts, don't lose motivation, and have a blessed summer.

Penn State OCF Speakers Featured at Conference

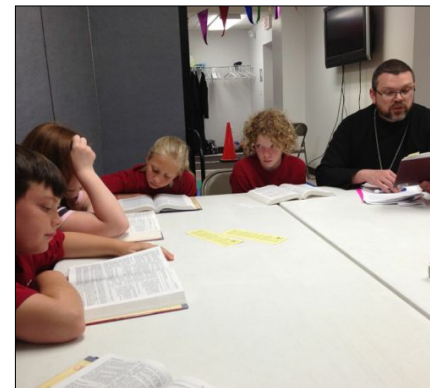
PRINCETON, NJ [via [ocf.net](#)] – In an effort to inspire clergy, college students, and laity of all jurisdictions to become involved with college ministry, clergy, laity, and college students from New York and New Jersey gathered June 8 at Princeton University.

Mr. Evan Bittner, Vice President of Penn State's Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF), was the first to speak: "When I arrived at college, attending church was the last thing on my mind, but my experience in OCF at Penn State has deepened my faith and given me answers to questions on contemporary issues such as war, politics and entertainment" said Mr. Bittner. Dn. Alexander Cadman, Secretary of the Board of Directors for the OCF North American office, and Chaplain of the Penn State OCF then shared information about "The Effects of Campus Ministry on a Parish." Dn. Alexander cited examples of parishes involved with campus ministry. "The vital work of OCF is to bring college students to a real experience of Christ through the local parish church," he said.

Other conference speakers included Fr. John Diamantis, Chairman of the Diocese of New York and New Jersey's Department of College Ministry, and Mr. Andrew Boyd, Director of OCA's National Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry Department.

Students Sprint to the Finish of a Week Full of Learning, Fun

Two dozen children aged 3-12 enjoyed an exciting week of Vacation Bible School (VBS) last month, learning, understanding, and applying the vivid racing imagery of St. Paul that encourages us all to win imperishable crowns of righteousness. Through dozens of activities, songs, and small group instruction conducted by a team of dedicated volunteers, students learned about the lifelong self-discipline necessary to reach the goal of continual spiritual growth in Christ.



View more pictures from Vacation Bible School at holytrinity-oca.org!