

THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

David Smith Ordained to Diaconate



(From left to right:) Bp. Melchisedek prays over the newly ordained Deacon David Smith; After assisting with Holy Communion, Dn. David chants the Litany of Thanksgiving for the first time; Dn. David and Mka. Brenda are honored at a celebratory luncheon.

At the first ordination to take place at Holy Trinity, Rdr. David Smith of the Chapel of the Holy Spirit was elevated to the Holy Diaconate by Bishop Melchisedek. The Hierarchical Divine Liturgy took place the morning of Saturday, June 29 on the Feast of Ss. Peter and Paul, with Vigil being celebrated the night before. Visiting to witness the event were all of Dn. David's grown children—Joshua, Kaleb, and Rachel—as well as Fr. James and Mka. Nancy Chuta and several members of the Chapel. A celebratory lunch followed at Duffy's Tavern in Boalsburg, where those who attended gifted Dn. David and Mka. Brenda with a beautiful desk clock.

The newly ordained Deacon David went on to celebrate the next three Sunday Divine Liturgies at Holy Trinity as first deacon, giving him valuable experience in service to our Lord at His Holy Altar. Our prayers go out to him and his family as they enter this new phase of public ministry. *Axios!*

Worthy of a Blessing

by Fr. John Reeves

When people miss the Divine Liturgy, I am frequently asked whether it is necessary to go to Confession before receiving Holy Communion once more. I ask in return, "Was your absence worthy of a blessing?"

That is, was the reason that one might miss liturgy, truly, a "good reason"? That would include personal illness or caring for the sick, or even unavoidable employment, for example. But other reasons would not be: laziness, recreation, or the very vague and questionable "I had other things to do."

Why? Why is worship so important that the failure to do so regularly, i.e. weekly and corporately, without a "good reason" renders it necessary for a

(continued—see last page)

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH
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Schedules

	Coffee Hour	Greeters	Tellers	Servers**
August 4*	E. Files and K. Oleynik	M. Thompson and M. Fedkin	R. Patel and B. Haupt	Team A
August 11*	M. & V. Anthony and D. Patel	M. Leathers and D. Swisher	S. Stevens and G. Cattell	Team B
August 18	Russian Ladies	B. Roberts and E. Miranda	M. Stevens and L. Rush	Team A
August 25	K. Cattell and D. Van Duin	L. Radomsky and M. Radomsky	B. Haupt and M. Fedkin	Team B
September 1	E. George and M. Stevens	M. Thompson and M. Fedkin	G. Cattell and R. Patel	Team A
September 8	C. Strauss and P. Doty	M. Leathers and D. Swisher	L. Rush and S. Stevens	Team B

* Denotes Fast ** Team A: M. Doty, A. Miranda, N. Pelikian, S. Oleynik., D. Stickle, Jo. Stickle, J. Torbic, and J. Swisher
Team B: J. Cadman, P. Doty, N. McFarland, J. Miranda, B. Oleynik, S. Patel, L. Torbic, and Je. Stickle.

■ SUNDAY SCHOOL SCOOP

Parenting with Unconditional Love by Diane Farah

Just as we use the family of the Church as a forum to work out the tension of our faith in the world, we, as parents, use the family we've been ordained to establish as the most natural place to teach our children about Christian living. It becomes our priesthood. We are called to be of service. We are the witness-bearers from the time our first tiny baby is entrusted to our care. If we stop to think about it, we realize that we've already been teaching our children religion all along, from the time they asked us where Grandpa with the false teeth went when he died... I believe we can actively pursue ways to teach our children about God's unconditional love, His initiative, His will for His children. How?

In *Mother's Almanac*, the writers suggest the "influences you give your child in the early years will be as much a part of his structure as the bones in your body. The holy Scriptures tell us "train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (*Prov. 22:6*) What are some of the influences we can provide our children?

If we begin in the womb, we could provide the influence of a healthy body surrounding this little bundle of synergy. If we begin in the hospital we could write a Christian name on that blank birth certificate staring us in the face. This Christian name links the child directly to his first hero, the story of whom he will ask you many times. If we begin in the home, we can provide "trust born of care" which establishes our child's fundamental disposition toward a benevolent world. This trust is the rock upon which we build the foundation of our Christian household. Francois D'Arcy writes, "Each of us needs an adult to help us find God." The trust a child has in the presence and caring of his parents is the beginning of later trust in a "Father" who loves him.

If we begin at the Baptism, we provide our child with a family he'll be happy to be related to later on. In Her wisdom, the Church invites our child to full membership during infancy, indicating that Christ is not to be contained by intellectual pursuit. Instead He beckons our children to grow with Him present.

The community publicly accepts trusteeship of the baby's faith by renouncing the devil and accepting new life in Christ, for him. The child is chrismated, then receives communion. This, too, is no accident. The child's first awareness of familial love comes as he is offered food when he is hungry. His first awareness of God's love for His family members is again when he is offered 'food,' the food Christ invites us all to share. It is as unnatural to be denied the gifts God so freely and deliberately offers, as it would be to sit down at the family table and be denied a meal.

Our attitudes toward our young children shape their attitudes toward God. If we are able to love them unconditionally, they will know that God never withdraws his love. If we make our children 'earn' our love, they will suspect God only loves little boys and girls if they don't sin. This latter idea is foreign to Christian growth. We love the sinner, but hate the sin. The story of the prodigal son shows our children that God actually 'runs' toward us with arms outstretched to welcome us back. Is this a model asserting parental power? Is this a model of love withdrawal? As parents we have the right and the responsibility to integrate the gospel message, to make it our own. As we do that, ways to interact in the family will become clearer and clearer to us. ■

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is excerpted from the Fall 1981 issue of *The Orthodox Educator*, a periodical formerly published by the OCA's Department of Religious Education.



Holy Trinity ministry leaders participate in the July 24 session of the Archdiocese's "Building Vibrant Parishes" series.

Parish Health Series Concludes

The third webinar in the Archdiocese of Western Pennsylvania's three part series "Building Vibrant Parishes" will occur Wednesday, August 7 at 8 p.m. and be broadcast in the Parish Hall. Having already defined challenges and examined qualities of healthy parishes during two sessions in July, the final session will help participants identify obstacles and lay out a framework for action. Holy Trinity clergy, ministry leaders, and Strategic Growth Team members are particularly encouraged to attend.

Parish Represented at Conference

Michael Stickle joined more than 100 clergy and laity at the 2013 Parish Ministries Conference held July 10-14 at Marymount College. He participated in the "Liturgical Music and Translations" track, which featured eight workshops in beginning conducting, the eight tones, and vocal development. Photos from the conference and summaries of each day's events can be found at oca.org.

Chapel Supports School Fair

As part of their outreach to Snyder County, the Chapel of the Holy Spirit provided several items for the Children and Youth "Back to School" Fair. (Mka. Brenda Smith serves on the organization's advisory board.) This month, Holy Trinity's *Matthew 25* ministry will conduct a similar drive. See the Weekly Bulletin to learn how you can help.

Altar Society to Hold Meeting

The Altar Society, whose members bake prosphora and decorate the church on feastdays, will hold a meeting September 3 at 10 a.m. All are welcome.

■ RECTOR'S KEYNOTE

Worthy of a Blessing (cont.)

person to confess and repent of that failure prior to receiving Holy Communion once more? (In fact, three consecutive absences from church, for whatever reason, is cause for Confession.)

It is essential because we fracture our communion relationship with God when we break our worship relationship with Him. Sure, we can still pray alone, read Scripture alone, even fast alone, and should--although all of these are difficult. But to enter into communion with, and remain in communion with, God requires the Presence of His Body, the Church. This makes absence from the Body a serious issue, (*cf. Hebrews 10:25*) not in juridical terms but deeply spiritual ones.

Otherwise, we hear the Deacon call the faithful to Chalice: "With fear of God (i.e. respect), with faith and love, draw near," but can drink judgment: not respecting Him, or being faithful to Him, or loving Him, enough to worship Him as His Church every week.

The next time another "opportunity" awaits you some Sunday morning ask yourself: Is it worthy of a blessing? If not, isn't it time to reconsider priorities and put God at the top of the list? ■

For the Record

MARRIAGE

- **Paul Konstantine Petrogeorge and Larissa Diane Moser** were crowned in marriage on June 30, sponsored by Nicholas Petrogeorge. *Many years!*

ORDINATIONS

- **Reader David L. Smith** was ordained to the subdiaconate on June 29 by Bishop Melchisedek.
- **Subdeacon David L. Smith** was ordained to the Holy Diaconate on June 29 by His Grace Bishop Melchisedek. *Axios!*

■ ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

Former Taliban Baptized at Mount Athos

GREECE [via johnsanidopoulos.com] – Ahmed was born and raised in a village in Afghanistan in the middle of war. His childhood memories are dust, poverty, and compulsory Islamic education in the sacred writings and war. “I do not remember anymore who fought whom, however there was constant warfare,” he recalls.

For years he worked for the Taliban doing various things. He was a fanatical Muslim who belonged to so-called radical Islam. At some point he could no longer bear this sort of life—misery, poverty, violence, pain, and death which he saw everywhere.

At 23 he journeyed through the impassable mountains into Pakistan and then to Iran. His only “passport” was the common language of Farsi. He worked for two years there “without documents” and eventually arrived at the coast of Asia Minor in Turkey, which for him was the gate to the paradise of the West.

One winter evening nine years ago, with an inflatable that children play with on the beaches, two oars and four to five bottles of water, he along with a friend jumped into the sea across from Lesbos, which seemed so close: “The sea was pitch black, it was a moonless night in the winter and very windy. We did not know how to swim. The waves looked like mountains to us. Somewhere in the distance a red light was flashing. The boat was like a nutshell in the waves. I soon realized that the journey to paradise was neither near nor easy.”

After a ten-hour trip, Ahmed and his friend were eventually found and helped by an Orthodox woman. She gave them all she had—a few coins—so they could take a bus into Athens and seek political asylum. It was there that Ahmed found employment and eventually Jesus Christ Himself.

Insights on True Repentance

Repentance is the renewal of baptism. Repentance is a contract with God for a second life... Repentance is constant distrust of bodily comfort... Repentance is the voluntary endurance of all afflictions.

Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously... While a wound is still fresh and warm it is easy to heal, but old, neglected and festering ones are hard to cure, and require for their care much treatment...

Nothing equals or excels God's mercies. Therefore he who despairs is committing suicide. A sign of true repentance is the acknowledgment that we deserve all the troubles, visible and invisible, that come to us, and even greater ones... Whoever has known contemplation will never despair of himself.

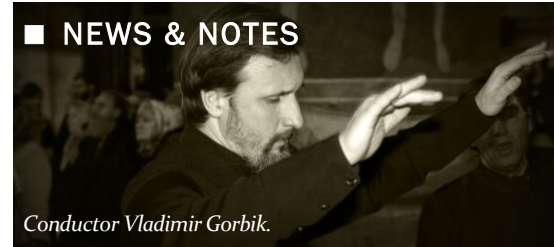
The forgetting of wrongs is a sign of true repentance. But he who dwells on them and thinks that he is repenting is like a man who thinks he is running while he is really asleep. God gives His rewards not for abundance of gifts and labors, but for ardor of purpose.

— St. John Climacus of Sinai

“All these years after work I would go to the outside of the churches in the beginning—something was pulling me there—and afterwards I began to enter within. I would become calm. As my Greek was getting better, I wanted to know more about Christ... Eventually I found a [New Testament Bible] in the Greek I had learned. I began to read it. I decided that I wanted to become a Christian.”

This year, on the Feast of Mid-Pentecost, on the balcony of the Athonite Cell of Marouda over Karyes, looking towards the Skete of Saint Andrew and the same sea he once crossed from the opposite direction, under a beautiful sky and brilliant sun, Ahmed became a Christian. He took the name Alexander. ■

■ NEWS & NOTES



Conductor Vladimir Gorbik.

Patriarch Tikhon Choir to Perform at Nearby Locations

WAYMART, PA – The Patriarch Tikhon Choir, a unique choral ensemble made up of professional singers from Russia and North America, under the direction of renowned Moscow conductor Vladimir Gorbik, will perform their premiere concert series of Orthodox sacred choral works entitled “Their Sound Hath Gone Forth,” Monday, September 16 at St. Malachy’s – The Actor’s Chapel, in New York City, at 7:30 p.m.; Tuesday, September 17, at the First Baptist Church of Pittsburgh, at 7 p.m.; and Wednesday, September 18, at St. Peter’s on Capitol Hill, Washington, D.C., at 8 p.m. Tickets can be purchased in advance at patriarchtikhonchoir.com.

The program includes works from the Orthodox All-Night Vigil and Divine Liturgy ranging from Znamenny Chants to polyphonic works by Russian masters Dmitry Bortniansky, Alexander Kastalsky, Pavel Chesnokov, Sergei Rachmaninoff, and Sergius Trubachev. Also featured on the program are compositions and arrangements by contemporary American Orthodox composers Nicholas Reeves, Kurt Sander, Benedict Sheehan, and Nazo Zakkak; several will be concert premieres.

The recently formed Patriarch Tikhon Choir is a 35-voice mixed choir that brings together, for the first time, professional vocalists and choral musicians from the United States, Canada, and Russia. The singers, who, in addition to performing on the concert stage, routinely sing Orthodox liturgical services, impart an essential spiritual element to their interpretation of Orthodox sacred music.

TRANSFIGURATION MONASTERY TO HOST ANNUAL PATRONAL PILGRIMAGE

ELLWOOD CITY – The Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration will host its annual pilgrimage and patronal feast day celebration this August 5 and 6. Vigil for Transfiguration will take place at 6 p.m. on Monday, August 5 followed by Supper at 9 p.m. On Tuesday, August 6, the Procession and Hierarchical Liturgy will take place in the Outdoor Pavilion Chapel at 9:30 a.m., followed by the blessing of fruit and the blessing for the new bell tower foundation. Lunch will be served at noon, with time to shop in the store (proceeds will support the building fund). At 2 p.m. there will be a presentation by IOCC. The service of Holy Unction will follow at 2:30 p.m. Directions and more information can be found at OrthodoxMonasteryEllwoodCity.org.

PENNSYLVANIA GOVERNOR SIGNS BILL STOPPING TAXPAYER-FUNDED ABORTIONS

HARRISBURG [via lifeneews.com] – Last month Governor Tom Corbett signed into law a bill that stops taxpayer funding of abortions. HB 818 ensures that Pennsylvania opts out of abortion funding under the health insurance exchange created by the federal health care law, also known as Obamacare. The measure passed the state House in April and Senate in June.

The Affordable Care Act includes a provision allowing states to opt-out of abortion coverage in the health insurance exchanges. Pennsylvania joins more than 30 other states that have, or are in the process of, enacting opt-out legislation.

OCMC UGANDA MISSION TEAM FORMING

ST. AUGUSTINE, FL – The Orthodox Christian Mission Center is seeking members to offer workshops on Christian Stewardship to both clergy and laity in four regions of Uganda from September 23 to October 7. People with skills in teaching development, fundraising, and self-sustainability concepts are encouraged to apply. If you feel called to serve on this team, contact teams@ocmc.org.