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Holy Trinity Orthodox Church  
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# ***THE TRISAGION***

The Monthly Newsletter of Holy Trinity Orthodox Church  
119 S. Sparks Street, State College, PA 16801 814-231-2855  
August 2008 Volume 13, Number 8

## **HALF-WAY THROUGH THE YEAR, ALREADY!**

**T**he Transfiguration of Our Lord on Mount Tabor was a fearful occurrence. Peter, James and John looked on the Face of God and lived, against all anticipation to the contrary. Since the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise, man had feared to look upon God's face lest he die. Yet here, Jesus is transfigured in their presence, his face shining with the splendor of the Uncreated Light but the Apostles do not die.

Peter and the others throw themselves to the ground, covering their faces. Peter wishes to stay where he is, on the mountain. "It is good for us to be here. Let us build ourselves tabernacles," he says.

This in itself is an interesting choice of words. In Hebrew, the word for tabernacle is based upon the word for God's glory, "shekinah." It has a technical meaning as the place where God's glory dwells. The Tabernacle in the wilderness, where ritual sacrifice was conducted, was filled with the glory of God at its dedication, a heavy, visible cloud descending into it, shrouding His presence. The Temple in Jerusalem would likewise become the place where God's glory dwelt, replacing the Tabernacle in location and permanence but not in function.

When Peter declares that they should build themselves tabernacles and remain on the mountain, the Lord redirects him: "No, Peter. You must go down with me to Jerusalem where my earthly tabernacle will be offered to the Father on the cross." Instead of having reached the pinnacle, as Peter thought, Christ indicates that the abyss awaits, not the mountain top. The Transfiguration was vouchsafed the Apostles to prepare them for what lay ahead. Man is allowed to look upon the Face of God and live, provided he follow his Master to the Cross and Grave.

"And the word was made flesh and dwelt (lit. tabernacled) among us... And we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father." St John writes. (Jn 1:14)

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The Feast of the Transfiguration confronts us with the reality, once more, of Christ's Incarnation, the Apostles beholding his glory, a spiritual apprehension not merely a physical sight. God was tabernacled in their midst. They thought they understood. Yet they still did not comprehend why. Only as they traveled with him, to his death, resurrection and ascension, would they truly understand. Still it would take the Power come down at Pentecost to send them into the world with this proclamation: God's glory has filled the Tabernacle, the Temple, which is the Church, and each member in particular.

In short, this feast reminds us that Christ was Incarnate, and revealed as God on Mt Tabor, not to lead us to spiritual rhapsodies, but so that He might put death to death and send us forth as the new Tabernacle of his glory, his Church, to be witnesses of his Resurrection. We travel to the top of the mountain, not to stay there, but to be able to go down off the mountain to do what God has for us to do, facing whatever we must face, knowing that the ultimate enemy, Death, has been vanquished. We are changed and strengthened, having beheld Christ's glory as far as we are able to bear it.

**Coffee Hour**

July 6—Anissa Ilie, Anne and Corene Swisher  
July 13—Karen Cattell and Melody Thompson  
July 20—Anne-Therese Pelikan and Lina Eid-Saleeby  
July 27—Alla Israelian, Tamara Bakaeva

**Greeters**

July 6—Leslyn and Mark Radomsky  
July 13—Melody Thompson and Mark Fedkin  
July 20—Anne and David Swisher  
July 27—Beth Roberts and Ed Miranda

**DEACON ALEX EXPANDS HIS MINISTRY**

In merely a few months, Deacon Alexander has expanded his ministry greatly in our parish. From pre-teens, to college-aged, to graduates and young professionals, Deacon Alex is quite busy. He'll be guiding OCF into some exciting changes in ministry this fall, as well as working with the Matthew 25 Ministry. And then there are his liturgical responsibilities. Way to go, and thank you, Deacon!

**FROM THE DESK OF DN. ALEXANDER**

With deep gratitude, I want to formally thank the parish family of Holy Trinity for granting me the privilege to attend the 2008 Diaconal Liturgical Practicum at St. Vladimir's Seminary earlier this summer. During an intensive four days of workshops and training, I had the unique opportunity to celebrate many divine services, including the Festal Vigil and Hierarchical Divine Liturgy with His Grace Bishop Kallistos (Ware) for the Feast of Ascension. More importantly, however, was the opportunity to be closely mentored by Protodeacon Kirill Sokolov, who teaches newly-ordained deacons and future priests liturgical practice at the seminary.

Even though I entered my fourth year of ordained service to the Church last month, attended classes on Liturgics, and have studied many texts concerning the movements of deacons, I cannot overstate the benefits of this coaching to my spiritual and professional development. This came as no surprise to me: Throughout my Christian journey, I have been blessed immeasurably by teachers and role models who were willing to share their time, love, and experience and disciple me to a deeper understanding of Christ and His Church.

The word "disciple" is probably the most common way Our Lord described our relationship with Him—the term is used more than 200 times in the Four Gospels and the Book of Acts alone. As followers and imitators of Christ, not only are we commanded to be disciples, but also to disciple others. This is why I am excited to be working with the OCF Alumni Association of Holy Trinity to develop a pilot program that will link former Penn State students in all walks of life to members of this year's Orthodox Christian Fellowship.

I ask for your prayers for the success of this new endeavor. When enough people opt in, student participants can be connected with an alumnus mentor working in their same field of study. They can then receive valuable guidance and insight about living an Orthodox Faith in the "real world" and discover how a deep spiritual experience at college can prepare them to follow Christ in their daily lives.

### THE DORMITION OF THE MOTHER OF GOD

The Church's Year nears its close with the celebration of the Dormition of the Mother of God. It is one of three of the Great Feasts of the Theotokos that are not found in the Scriptures. (Her Nativity and her Entry into the Temple are the other two.) This is not difficult to explain, however. The purpose of writing the New Testament Scriptures, especially the Gospels, was to bear witness to the work of Christ. It was not to provide a complete history of Christ much less that of his disciples.

Rather, the Scriptural testimony to the Virgin Mary is related to her role as Theotokos, at the Annunciation, the Nativity, the first Miracle, then at only a few times during Christ's ministry, until the Cross and Pentecost. At the Cross, Christ reveals a special relationship for her and his disciple, John the Beloved. John will be her guardian until the end of her life, which is what we celebrate on August 15. At Pentecost, the Theotokos is specifically mentioned as one in the Upper Room, a strange notation considering the scant mention of her during the three years of Christ's ministry.

"Woman, behold thy son. Son, behold thy mother." Christ's use of the word "behold" is important. It is not as if he had only said, "John, take care of my mother for me." "Behold" is used in the Scriptures to denote a higher level of apprehension. It refers to spiritual insight or vision, not merely physical sight.

That Christ makes special provision for His mother's care is worthy of note. She is not cast aside or forgotten about. Christ specifically asks that someone who had no responsibility for her to care for her. At the same time, Christ's beloved disciple John is graced by the maternal care of one who is not his mother but Christ's own. John's own mother is presumably alive.

As we celebrate the Dormition of the Mother of God, we should be mindful that our relationship with the Theotokos is like unto the Apostle John's. She is not our biological mother. We are not her biological children. But we care for her as if she were, just as she cares for those who are not her children.

Christ has established a radical new kinship for the human race, one based not upon nature but upon grace wherein, by extension, His mother has become our mother as well. Indeed, this is why the Church ultimately commemorates her Falling Asleep.

### OYA RETURNS WITH TWO EVENTS IN AUGUST

The Orthodox Youth Association (OYA) will be offering middle and high schoolers entering grades 7 through 12 two terrific opportunities for fellowship and spiritually-meaningful fun this month.

The first opportunity will be a "Bowling and Pizza Night" on Friday, August 15 at 6:30pm at Northland Lanes on its regular night (the third Friday night of each month). We will also be celebrating the end of summer with a trip to Hershey Park on Tuesday, August 26. Transportation and lunch will be provided by the Church (bring your own money for snacks, games, and souvenirs). We'll depart from Holy Trinity at 7:30am.

### POLICY CHANGE IN REGARD TO CHURCH USE

As we have grown in size, it has become necessary to revisit our previous policy in regard to use of the building. Out of concern for safety and liability issues, the Parish Council has adopted the following.

1. Keys will be held only by staff and ministry leaders.
2. All other outstanding keys need to be turned into the church office now.
3. Use of the church itself must have Fr John's blessing and be scheduled at least one week in advance.
4. Use of the hall must have been authorized by either Fr John or the Council President and scheduled at least one week in advance.
5. In all cases, those using facilities are responsible for locking the building, cleaning up afterwards as necessary, and turning off all utilities.

Your cooperation and understanding are appreciated.

### HOLY DAYS AND FASTS DURING AUGUST

**Dormition Fast**—August 1-14

**Transfiguration of Our Lord**

Vespers, August 5, 7:00pm

Liturgy, August 6, 9:00am

Blessing of Fruit

**Dormition of the Theotokos**

Vespers, August 14, 7:00pm

Liturgy, August 15, 9:00am

Blessing of Flowers

**Beheading of the Forerunner**

Vespers, August 28, 7:00pm

Liturgy, August 29, 9:00am

*Strict Fast*—In certain regions of Eastern Europe, no food is eaten from plates this day nor are large round vegetables eaten such as melons. Why? It is because the head of the Forerunner was served on a charger. This is a local custom that served as a reminder in the home as to why this fast was kept and this day observed.



