

THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Back in the Saddle Again

Gene Autry's lyrics both date me and locate me, but I am back in the saddle again. I've had a wonderful respite for body, soul and mind during the months of my sabbatical. I have walked in the footsteps of saints and martyrs. I've traversed the breadth of Russia and much of Alaska. And I have left the ministry of the parish in capable hands in my absence.

For me, I suppose the most important thing I've learned is how much can get done without me. It is humbling, but more importantly it is freeing, both to me and to the church. I've often said that work in the parish, which does not require a collar around one's neck, are not the priest's to do. In fact, the priest finds himself doing much which is not necessarily his to do; but he does it anyway. And, the laity can be content with his doing it, too.

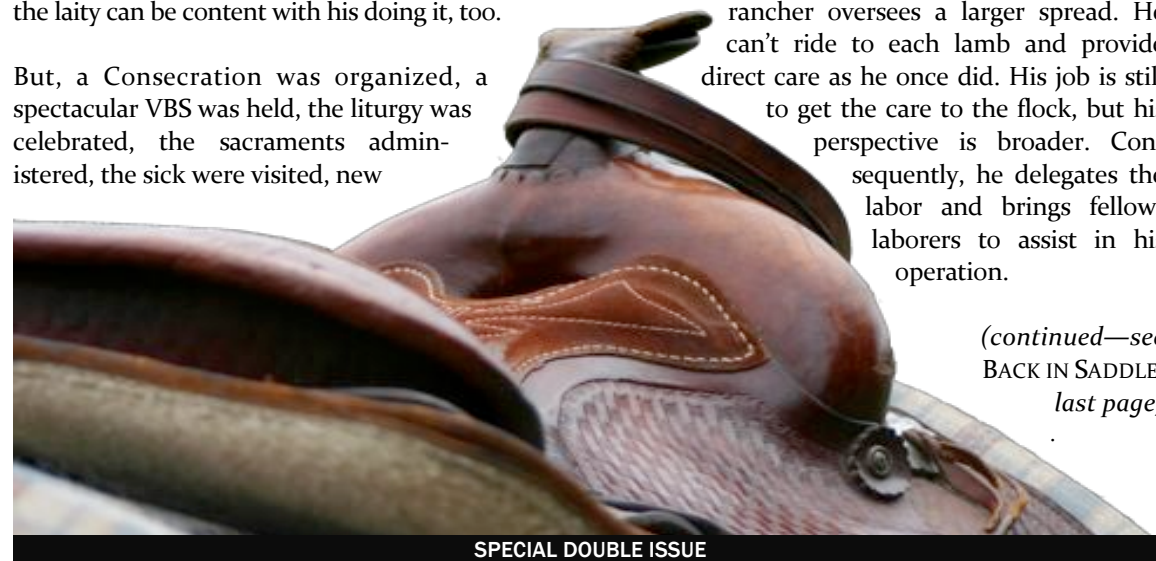
But, a Consecration was organized, a spectacular VBS was held, the liturgy was celebrated, the sacraments administered, the sick were visited, new

catechumens were enrolled, others were received, newcomers were reached out to. Parish life continued to blossom and bear fruit.

Now, I will reassume those roles which are properly mine but attempt to avoid those which I perhaps lapsed into in the past. It is my hope to continue to equip saints for the work of ministry, but to let the saints do that work of ministry themselves. They have done so in my absence and I have every hope that they will continue in the future.

Back home, it might be said that I am moving from shepherding to ranching. A shepherd spends most of his time with his flock, providing direct "pastoral" care, in the pasture, no less. But his flock is, by definition, a rather small one. A rancher oversees a larger spread. He can't ride to each lamb and provide direct care as he once did. His job is still to get the care to the flock, but his perspective is broader. Consequently, he delegates the labor and brings fellow-laborers to assist in his operation.

*(continued—see
BACK IN SADDLE,
last page)*



SPECIAL DOUBLE ISSUE

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH
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Schedules

	Coffee Hour	Greeters	Altar Servers*
October 24	Eileen George and Maria Stevens	Beth Roberts & Ed Miranda	Team A
October 31	Anne and Coene Swisher	Leshyn & Mark Rudensky	Team B
November 7	Mrs. Dea Ebersdorf and Kelly Oeyrik	Melody Thompson & Mark Fedun	Team A
November 14	The Russian Ladies	Megan Leathers & David Swisher	Team B
November 21	Karen Cattell and Diana Van Durn	Beth Roberts & Ed Miranda	Team A
November 28	Leshyn Rudensky and Megan Leathers	Leshyn & Mark Rudensky	Team B

* Team A: C. Dory, N. Fedun, M. Haupt, A. Miranda, S. Oeyrik, and Jo. Stoklos
Team B: J. Casse, M. Dory, P. Dory, J. Miranda, S. Peisan, and M. Swisher.

■ ORTHODOX NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

The Parish: Our Life in Christ

by Father Thomas Hopko

EDITOR'S NOTE: *In this issue, we begin a multiple-part series examining the characteristics of a healthy parish as presented by Fr. Hopko to the All-American Council in 2002. These factors—holiness, catholicity, apostolicity, liturgical worship, spiritual life, education, mission, and unity—closely mirror the quality areas of church life that Holy Trinity is seeking to improve upon through Orthodox Natural Church Development (NCD).*

Holiness

An Orthodox parish has only one God-given reason for being. It exists to be the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ. Whatever the original reasons and conditions for its founding, whatever other services and activities it may provide, whatever other desires and needs it may fulfill for its members, a community of Orthodox Christians must be Christ's one holy Church. If it is not, then it is neither Christian nor Orthodox, whatever else it may be and do.

A parish must be the Church of Christ, and not simply a church, because, according to the Orthodox faith, every local community of Orthodox Christians with a priest must be, and theologically understood actually is the one Church of Christ. Theologically speaking, there are not many Orthodox Churches; there is only one. An Orthodox parish is this one Church or it is not an Orthodox church at all. Each parish, therefore, must be the one and only Church of Christ. The parish must be holy because Christ's Church is holy. Everything in the parish, and everything about it, must be holy because God and Christ are holy.

There can be no part of a parish that is not sanctified by the holiness of God and His Son Jesus Christ, "the holy One of God." There can be

Parishioner Focus Groups Finished... What's Next?

Over the course of three weeks last month, Holy Trinity conducted a total of six focus groups. These moderated sessions gave members of the parish an opportunity to hear the results of August's survey and offer insights into the factors contributing to our scores. Special thanks go out to the dozens of parishioners who participated!

The Church Health Team (CHT) will next meet on Wednesday, November 3 at 7 p.m. to process all the comments presented at the focus groups, arranging them into common themes. Then on Saturday, November 13 from 12:30 p.m. to 5 p.m., Orthodox NCD representative Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff will lead the CHT in a planning workshop to plot a course of action for each theme. Everyone will be able to comment on and weigh in on the committee's suggestions before they are put into effect.

no aspect of a parish not inspired and empowered by God's Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of God and of Christ. Everything in and about a parish—its organization, structure, administration, finances and properties, as well as its theological and moral teachings and practices, and its liturgical and sacramental rites and services—must be of God. They must be determined by God, inspired by God and submitted to God for His glory and the good of His people.

Catholicity

The Christian parish must also be catholic. For the parish to be "catholic" means that it is full, complete and whole, lacking nothing in its mystical and sacramental being and life as Christ's holy Church. In an Orthodox Christian parish the whole fullness of God must dwell, as in Christ's body, with all the fullness of life and grace and truth, by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

(continued—see THE PARISH, last page)

Back in Saddle *(continued from page 1)*

This summer offered us all a taste of that ranching experience. It is one I am eager to embrace and it is one which the parish/ranch has already.

*"I'm back in the saddle again,
Out where a friend is a friend..."*

*Whoopi-ty-aye-oh
Rockin' to and fro
Back in the saddle again."*

— Fr. John

N.B.: As you may have heard by now, the church was robbed during the Consecration weekend. Items from the altar as well as the kitchen were taken. Additional security measures are being taken. Please commend to your prayers the one responsible, for his or her repentance and salvation.

The Parish *(continued from page 2)*

The word *catholic* literally means full or whole or complete. It does not, in the first instance, mean universal or worldwide. Thus every local Christian community, every "parish" in the contemporary American meaning of the word, theologically, mystically and sacramentally is, in apostolic words, "Christ's body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (*Ephesians 1:23*). It is the "household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and bulwark of the truth" (*1 Timothy 3:15*). Everything expresses this. Everything testifies to this. This obviously does not mean that a parish will not be particular and limited in its human empirical, cultural and sociological forms. It has to be, since it is made up of human beings.

But all of a parish's particular aspects, with all of its teachings, services and activities, if they are Orthodox and Christian, will be open to the boundless fullness of God and will thereby be inclusive to everyone and everything that is good and holy and true.

Fear the Lord *(continued from page 3)*

in their Christian opportunities, be spiritually lazy and have no fear of the Lord.

Such is not a mature religion, but a childish religion. Our Orthodox Christian religion is a mature religion—our wills can be overruled by God. He is not a God whose eternal business it is to coddle us, but One whose eternal business it is to promote our spiritual growth. Search the scriptures and you will be hard pressed to find anywhere a God who pampers.

We read in Hebrews (*12:6*), "For whom the Lord loves He chastens." All of us should love God, worship God, and discuss God. But it is the parent's responsibility to instill into their children both the love and the fear of God because their child's character depends. As the Psalmist put it, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Why Church? *(continued from page 8)*

purpose and one purpose only: to bring us into closer communion with our Lord, to prepare us for eternity. This is where knowing God and living in His Church comes together.

The Church...is a living, breathing being, literally the Body of Christ. This means that our life in Christ can only be lived within the life of the Church His Body. All aspects of this life nurture and form and protect our spirit. The boundaries set by the Church are not there to restrict us but to give us freedom. Within these walls, our spirits can soar. When we stay within the embrace of our mother the Church, we can know that we are with our Lord. We can fully open ourselves to Christ's love, to the blossoming of our spiritual lives in limitless joy and peace.

From "Life Transfigured: A Journal of Orthodox Nuns," (vol. 40, no. 3, Nativity 2008) by the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania.

■ FROM THE DESK OF DEACON ALEXANDER

Ten Great Dates and Tips For Spouses

According to Mitch Temple, a noted author, speaker, and expert in marriage and family, “successful couples are savvy: They read books, attend seminars, browse Web articles and observe other successful couples.” Perhaps that explains the appeal of *Ten Great Dates*, a simple, yet effective approach to enrich and energize existing marriages now being conducted in our area by participating *MarriageSavers* communities, of which Holy Trinity is a co-founding member.

My wife and I went on our “first date” last month. After checking Josiah, Rebekah, and Zachariah into the free child care, our date began with a short, insightful—and perhaps a little bit corny—video presentation discussing the ensuing date’s theme. Then using the workbook (sold there at cost for only \$10), we embarked on our night out: enjoying dinner at a restaurant, answering the questions, reminiscing on our life together so far, and actually learning about each other in the process.

Mat. Jennifer and I recommend the program. There will be nine more opportunities to participate over the next four months (we expect we’ll have time to take advantage of half of them or so). And the dates are self-contained so you don’t have to have been to the previous one to benefit from it. Holy Trinity actually hosts Date #3 on Friday, November 12 at 6:30 p.m. if you’re looking for a good place to start.

Whether or not you go out on one or more of the “Ten Great Dates,” Mr. Temple offers spouses his own ten principles of success gleaned from working with and observing hundreds of couples:

- **Happiness is not the most important thing.** *Everyone wants to be happy, but happiness will come and go. Successful couples learn to intentionally do things that bring happiness when life pulls it away.*

- **Couples discover the value in just showing up.** *In tough times when couples don’t know what to do, they need to hang in there and be there for their spouse.*
- **If you do what you always do, you will get same result.** *Wise couples have learned that you have to approach problems differently to get different results. Often, minor changes in approach, attitude and actions make the biggest difference in marriage.*
- **Your attitude does matter.** *Changing behavior is important, but so is changing attitudes. Bad attitudes often drive bad feelings and actions.*
- **Change your mind, change your marriage.** *How couples think and what they believe about their spouse affects how they perceive the other. What they expect and how they treat their spouse matters greatly.*
- **The grass is greenest where you water it.** *Successful couples have learned to resist the grass is greener myth— i.e. someone else will make me happy. They have learned to put their energy into making themselves and their marriage better.*
- **You can change your marriage by changing yourself.** *Veteran couples have learned that trying to change their spouse is like trying to push a rope— almost impossible. Often, the only person we can change in our marriage is ourselves.*
- **Love is a verb, not just a feeling.** *Everyday life wears away the “feel good side of marriage.” Feelings, like happiness, will fluctuate. But, real love is based on a couple’s vows of commitment: “For better or for worse”— when it feels good and when it doesn’t.*
- **Marriage is often about fighting the battle between your ears.** *Successful couples have learned to resist holding grudges, bringing up the past and remembering that they married an imperfect person – and so did their spouse.*
- **A crisis doesn’t mean the marriage is over.** *Crises are like storms: loud, scary and dangerous. But to get through a storm you have to keep driving. A crisis can be a new beginning. It’s out of pain that great people and marriages are produced.*

■ SUNDAY SCHOOL SCOOP

Fearing the Lord

by Deacon Mark Oleynik

One of the two thieves who were being put death at the same time as Jesus, turned to Him and said, “If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us” (*Matthew 23:39*). To which the other thief, Dismas by name, replied, “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?” Perhaps St. Dismas was thinking of the words of the Psalmist, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” In any event he puts one of the most searching questions any man can ask another: Do you not fear God?

The answer most of us today would give to that question would be, “No, not particularly.” We think about God, argue about God, sing about God, but we are emancipated from any fear of God. For as Jesus taught us, our God is not a God of terror but a God of love—a love that is limitless and infinite.

Of course, such an answer presupposes that we have nothing to fear at all from someone who loves us. In a profound sense that is true. Whatever He does will be for our good. But see also, sometimes what is for our good is not exactly pleasant medicine. It is a stern discipline that we do not welcome, but fear.

Most of us were brought up by parents who loved us. That fact, however, does not mean that we never feared our parents no matter what lie we told, what mean thing we did, what trouble we got into. As such, we can put forward this fundamental premise: the person who loves us intelligently is primarily concerned about the development of our character. This person then must be a person whom we sometimes fear.

Now too much fear can paralyze character but it is also true that no fear at all undermines that same character. A love that is concerned with the

Extra “Scoops”

THANKS FOR A GREAT START TO THE YEAR
Kudos to the children, parents and teachers for a terrific start of the new school year. The attendance has been great and the learning level has been high. Keep up the great work!

CONSECRATION BANNERS ON DISPLAY
The new banners which were made for to help celebrate our altar table consecration are now hung in the stairwell leading to the Parish Hall. Did you know that the first use of a “banner” by the Christian Church was by the Roman Emperor Saint Constantine as he entered into battle in the year 312? He saw a vision of the Cross of Christ appear in the sky, and beneath it the words “In this, be victorious”. Aftering ordering the symbol of the Cross be placed on the imperial standards, Constantine was victorious in the battle. As a result he legalized the practice of Christianity in the Empire, and was himself baptized before his death.

RETREAT TO BE HELD THIS MONTH
*Don’t forget to mark your calendars for our second retreat, “Sex: What’s Love Got to Do with It?” on Saturday November 18 beginning at 9 a.m. This retreat will be for high school students. **Both parents and students** should plan to attend.*

development of our character is something to fear when we do wrong, act foolish, or yield to temptation. That our God is a God of infinite love is all the more reason why we should fear Him when we fail of our best selves because He is a God of intelligent love.

For some people, their “religion” is one of trying to meet God in a minimalist way—going to Church now and then, going through the form of prayer now and then, giving some time or money to those in need whenever they have some extra themselves—all so that they can live selfishly, fail

(continued—see FEAR THE LORD, last page)

The Altar Consecration of Holy

On October 16, 200 people gathered to witness the dedication of Holy Trinity's altar. Presided by His Grace Bishop MELCHISEDEK and concelebrated by a dozen clergy, the highlights of the day included a procession led by our altar servers and children from the bishop's hotel, the traditional greeting of His Grace, the assembly of the altar, the procession around the church with the relics of St. Herman that were placed inside the altar, its ceremonial vesting in a beautiful new tapestry, the tonsuring of three readers, the Hierarchical Divine Liturgy, and a celebratory banquet at the Nittany Lion Inn.



Now Is A Great Time to Join Our Homeless Shelter Ministry

The homeless ministry here at Holy Trinity allows us to act upon what God says in Matthew 25 when He tells us to feed the Hungry: "Assuredly, I say to you, in as much as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me." I have been told many times by the staff at the shelter that the residents there look forward to our visits and even ask when we are coming. Not just because of the good food that we bring, but for the fellowship as well. Currently, we need two volunteers for November as well as the following few months. It only takes a couple of hours out of an evening to help those in need. The sign up sheet is in the basement near Judy's office. If you have not had the opportunity to cook for the shelter, it truly is a blessing and one I hope you have the chance to experience. If you have any questions or need any help, please don't hesitate to ask!

— Josh Cattell

Parish Potluck This Week!

When His Grace Bishop MELCHISEDEK provided us with an unexpected joy of staying through Sunday following the Consecration, the faithful of Holy Trinity rose to the occasion and came through with a truly wonderful lasagna potluck following the Divine Liturgy. This week, we will have an opportunity to experience that wonderful sense of community again when we have a parish potluck on Thursday, October 28 at 6 p.m. As a added bonus, Fr. John will share with us a slide presentation of his pilgrimage through Finland and Russia to Alaska. Simply bring a dish to share. See you there!

Election Day at Holy Trinity

Once again, the Holy Trinity Parish Hall will serve our community as a polling place on Tuesday, November 2. As a reminder, our parish offices will be closed and unavailable for appointments. Be sure to vote!

Your Generosity is Requested this Thanksgiving for Matthew 25

This Thanksgiving, we again will be teaming up with Strawberry Fields to provide full holiday meals for needy families in our area. We are collecting everything from stuffing to mashed potato mix to canned cranberries—anything that goes into a Thanksgiving dinner is greatly appreciated. Donations (including monetary offerings) will be accepted through Sunday, November 21. Strawberry Fields is a private nonprofit agency committed to providing quality services for individuals with developmental disabilities and with mental illness in Centre County.

Matushki Host Womens' Social

Our Holy Trinity matushki (Linda, Dea, Kelly and Jennifer) will host a "Women's Coffee and Tea" for all parish women on November 13 at 10 a.m. at the Oleynik residence (125 Wildercrest Lane in Port Matilda). For more information or directions, contact Mat. Kelly at ohkellyoh@hotmail.com.

Thank You to Our Choir!

Thank you to our Holy Trinity Choir for beautifully praying all of our services in song. Rehearsals continue on Thursdays at 7 p.m. through the end of the year as a way to build community and develop voices among current members, and allow new and interested parishioners and catechumens ages seventh grade and up to give this ministry a try. You can email choir@holytrinity-oca.org for more information.

For the Record

CATECHUMENS

- **(Mary) Anne Cramer** enrolled in the Holy Catechumenate on September 19.
- **Ginny Anthony**, enrolled in the Holy Catechumenate on October 17.

■ ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

Why Do We Need the Church?

A frequent question we hear is “Why do we need the Church?” People want to know why they must go to a particular church, attend services they may not understand, obey rules that feel constricting to their lifestyle, and spend time with others they do not know or want to know. They say it is enough to talk to God in their own way, where and when they are in the mood to do so...

Why do we need church? So that we can know, experience and live within God, here on earth as well as in eternity. How can we possibly make such an incredible claim?... Scripture is very clear that knowing God is precisely what He has in mind and to know God is to live in Him. He created each and every one of us deliberately, on purpose, for the sole aim of living with us and in us throughout all of eternity.

When [our Lord] actually came to dwell among us in the flesh, knowing Christ was not an option for the Apostles. They were blessed to actually experience the God-man with their five senses. St. John describes this most clearly: “That which we have looked upon and touched with our hands... that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you” (1 John 1:3).

However, the strongest language in Scripture about knowing Jesus as both God and man comes directly from our Lord Himself. He says such words as these: “I am the good shepherd. I know my own and My own know Me” (John 10:9); “Abide in Me, and I in you” (John 15:4); “And this is eternal life, that they know You the only true God, and Jesus Christ Whom You have sent” (John 17:3).

How do we come to know Jesus? He Himself tells us that He will send His Holy Spirit to teach us all we need to know, including how to pray to Him.

On Worthy Communion

We must not avoid communion because we deem ourselves to be sinful. We must approach it more often for the healing of the soul and the purification of the spirit, but with such humility and faith that considering ourselves unworthy, we would desire even more the medicine for our wounds. Otherwise it is impossible to receive communion [infrequently] as certain people do, considering the sanctification of heavenly Mysteries as available only to saints. It is better to think that by giving us grace, the sacrament makes us pure and holy. Such people [who commune rarely] manifest more pride than humility, for when they receive, they think of themselves as worthy. It is much better if, in humility of heart, knowing that we are never worthy of the Holy Mysteries we would receive them every Sunday for the healing of our diseases, rather than, blinded by pride, think that we [have] become worthy of receiving them.

— St. John Cassian

And the Spirit will not only reveal Jesus to us but will actually live within us: “the Spirit of Truth Whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; you know Him, for He dwells with you, and will be in you” (John 14:17).

This teaching about knowing God is not just for early Christians, an opportunity somehow not fully available in our own time. St. Silouan, who reposed just seventy years ago, witnesses to this: “...yet it has been given to me, a poor sinner, through the Holy Spirit to know that Jesus Christ is Lord... The soul suddenly sees the Lord, and knows that it is He...”

When our Lord chose to create us, He gave us everything to make us His own, worthy of eternal life with Him. He grafted us into His very Body, which on earth is manifested as the Church... Everything concerning the Church has one

(continued—see WHY CHURCH?, last page)

Trinity Orthodox Church...

