

THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Why Troy Polamalu Fasts by Scott Baker

There is a great deal to contemplate in a recent profile of Polamalu and his wife by Ann Rodgers, a perceptive religion reporter for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette:

He and Theodora converted to Orthodoxy about five years ago. His background was Catholic and Protestant, hers Muslim and Protestant. They were Christians in search of a deeper, more consistent experience of God.

Orthodoxy is like an abyss of beauty that's just endless," he said. "I have read the Bible many times. But after fasting, and being baptized Orthodox, it's like reading a whole new Bible. You see the depth behind the words so much more clearly.

His [regimen] consists of a "fast from dairy, from meat and from oil for 40 days—as well as from [marital relations]," he said. Fasting doesn't affect his football fitness, he said. "When you fast, you can eat extremely healthy by eating a lot of light food, like fruits and vegetables."

There are other aspects to fasting. "Maybe not watching as much TV, or not getting caught up in idle talk or different things, in order to keep you spiritually healthy," he said.

The most important Orthodox fast is Great Lent, for 50 days before Easter. When he has kept longer fasts "I have never felt more spiritually strong," he said. Referring to great theologians of the early church, he said, "The church fathers have said that

when you eat gluttonously or you eat a lot of meat, your passions get stronger, so your inclination toward sinning becomes stronger. ... [Fasting] really does soften your passions. It gives you spiritual insight." ■

EDITOR'S NOTE: *Scott Baker is a veteran broadcast journalist and commentator. He is also the Managing Editor of The Blaze, where this article first appeared.*

Next Iconography Phase Set to Begin

With your generous financial support, Holy Trinity will be ready to begin an important next step in completing our church's iconographic program. Bids have been acquired by master iconographer Dmitry Shkolnik to write a large mural of Christ *Pantocrator* (Greek: "Ruler of All") directly above worshippers in the Nave (\$8,000); the Dormition of the Mother of God icon to encompass much of the rear (west) wall (\$13,000); and full-length figures of the *Deësis* (Christ, Theotokos, St. John, angels, and the four liturgists) to complete our Sanctuary's East Wall (\$15,800). These will be accomplished in three separate stages, one for each location. Work on the icons will only begin once each stage is fully funded; Installation can take place as early as Summer 2011.

Information on the icons available for subscription can be found in special books located in the Narthex beginning March 12 or by calling the Parish Office. Donors will be able to pledge support in full or in partial increments (\$50, \$100, etc.). ■

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

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Schedules

	Coffee Hour	Greeters	Altar Servers*
March 6	Judy Fyncko and Holly Torbic	Megan Leathers and David Swisher	Team B
March 13	Megan Leathers and Leslyn Radomsky	Beth Roberts and Ed Miranda	Team A
March 20	Russian Ladies	Leslyn and Mark Radomsky	Team B
March 27	Elaine Files and Dee Patel	Melody Thompson and Mark Fedkin	Team A
April 3	Julianne Vaughan and Beth Roberts	Megan Leathers and David Swisher	Team B
April 10	Ellen George and Maria Stevens	Beth Roberts and Ed Miranda	Team A

* Team A: C. Doty, N. Fedkin, M. Haupt, A. Miranda, S. Oleynik, and Jo. Stickers
Team B: J. Cattel, M. Doty, P. Doty, J. Miranda, S. Pelikan, and Je. Stickers.

■ ORTHODOX NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

The Parish: Our Life in Christ

by Father Thomas Hopko

EDITOR'S NOTE: *We conclude our multiple-part series examining the characteristics of a healthy parish according to Fr. Hopko. 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).*

Structure and Administration

A parish community must have the proper Christian structure and administration. The head of the parish in its total life is the presbyter, who is ordained and assigned by the diocesan bishop. He is also embraced and accepted by the parish as the community's spiritual and sacramental leader, father and pastor.

The parish priest, properly understood in Christian Orthodoxy, is neither domineering nor servile. He is neither an authoritarian "stand-in" for an absent hierarchy, nor a hired underling at the beck and call of a secularized board of trustees. He is rather a called, trained, tested and ordained teacher, pastor and priest who guarantees the presence and action of Christ in the community. His God-given task, confirmed and supported by the faithful, is to empower every parishioner to find and fulfill his or her calling as a member of Christ's Body. He is the servant of servants, for God's glory and the good of all people. When functioning properly in love, this structure maintains its identity and integrity as Christ's Body, the household of God. through the pastors and those with the charisma and training for teaching and preaching.

Unity and Variety

Until God's Kingdom comes with power and the end of the age, Orthodox Christian parishes around the world will be struggling to be Christ's holy Church. These parishes, certainly in the

Church Health Team Update

The Church Health Team (CHT) is continuing to implement the initial four-point plan it set forth at an action planning workshop late last year. Identifying key themes from the feedback offered at all of our focus groups, the CHT has put into motion several measurable objectives to improve the overall health of our parish.

Among the goals currently in progress is the "Ministry Expo" taking place each Sunday in the Narthex. This weekly event is an opportunity for all existing members and newcomers alike to learn more about—and how to get involved in—our many outreaches. This month, the CHT will also be mailing you a "Profile and Talents Survey" complete with a self-addressed stamped envelope you can return to help us get to know you better and give you an opportunity to discover others in our community who have similar interests and skills.

U.S. and Canada, will be of a great variety of sizes, shapes and styles, though each one, theologically and mystically, will be the very same Church of Christ. The parishes will be composed of different kinds of people. They will be of different cultures and traditions. They will have different emphases and possibilities in worship, education, pastoral care, and philanthropic and evangelical activity.

None of them will claim that they can do everything by themselves. They will acknowledge that they need each other, that they are constrained by truth and love to cooperate with each other, that they must complete each other, but must complete each other in Christian service and ministry. They will know that the only way in which they should strive to outdo each other is in expressing godly zeal, brotherly affection, due honor and mutual respect. (*cf. Romans 12:9-13*)

The Parish *(continued from page 2)*

Whatever confusions and difficulties confront Orthodox Christianity in North America today, whatever their origins and causes, and whatever temptations and trials they bring to believers, there is no good reason why an Orthodox Christian parish in the United States or Canada cannot be Christ's holy Church. All that is required is that its members, beginning with its leaders, be firmly resolved to have it so. Their afflictions will be great, as Christ has promised, but their successes are assured by His victory. "In the world you have tribulation," Jesus says to his apostles, "but take courage, I have overcome the world." (*John 16:33*). "For what is impossible with men is possible with God." (*Luke 18:27*). ■

2010 Church Audit

In compliance with the parish bylaws, the annual Holy Trinity audit was conducted in-house on February 1, 2011 by Mark Fedkin and Leslyn Radomsky. For the period dating January 1 to December 31, 2010, 12 deposits and 30 accounts payable were randomly chosen and checked for accuracy. No discrepancies were found.

The Council, Clergy, and Staff remain committed to openness of the financial records, fiduciary responsibility and faithful stewardship of the church's funds. The 2010 financials were reported in the January 2011 *Trisagion* and monthly reports are posted on the bulletin board in the Parish Hall for inspection.

TLC Springs Into Action

Whether it is new births or sickness rearing its ugly head, TLC and TLC-2 stand ready to minister to our hospitalized and homebound parishioners. If you know of someone who needs assistance or would like to join our ministry teams, you can use our convenient online form. Simply select "TLC" under the "Contact us" link on holyltrinity-oca.org.

Good Neighbor *(continued from page 3)*

and voice our hate of any man we are liars when we say we love God. It isn't enough to say we love, we have to prove it. When we speak of others in bad ways, we lie to God. For if we cannot love the brother before our eyes, how can we love God, whom we cannot see?

Love is something you do. Love is action, not a creed. Love is the way we live, or do not live. If we love God, we do as He commands—and, whether we like it or not, He commands us to love and never hate. Love is a commandment, yes, but a commandment that brings the joy most of us long for and never attain. When we realize that we are the children of God's love, then His every will is our delight to perform. So it seems that there are a few attitudes we can have regarding our neighbor:

- *He is weaker than I, therefore I will exploit him.*
- *He is a stranger to me, therefore I will ignore him*
- *He is in need, therefore I will comfort him.*

As parents, we love our children but it is essential for us to teach our children love through action. Which of the above attitudes above will you choose to demonstrate to them? ■

Gertrude Hawk Candy Orders Can Now Be Placed Online

ATTENTION CHOCOLATE LOVERS: Now it's even easier for you to support Holy Trinity's Sunday School Program! From now until March 20, you can place your Gertrude Hawks order online and have your goodies shipped directly to your home. While Holy Trinity's operating budget fully funds our Christian Education program, all proceeds from your Pascha candy purchase go to support special Sunday School activities such as field trips. Simply visit gertrudehawkchocolates.com, click "Fundraising", and enter "Holy Trinity" under "Searching for a Fundraising Site?". Need help? Contact Leslyn at domskyo6@comcast.net.

Chapel of the Holy Spirit to Add More Services During Lent

Just two months after adding a second Divine Liturgy to their service schedule, the Chapel of the Holy Spirit—Holy Trinity’s outreach to Snyder County—will pray a weekly Akathist during each of the Fridays of Lent. These Akathists will take place in a different home of one of the Chapel’s members each week. The community will also have an opportunity to seek and receive mutual forgiveness during the Sunday Vespers of Cheesefare on March 5.

An open invitation is extended to you to join the faithful of the Snyder County region in worship. All Sunday services are held at the Smith’s residence at 350 Old Orchard Drive in Beavertown. For a complete schedule, including the locations of the Lenten Friday Akathists, visit holyspirit-oca.org.

Choir Rehearsals Resume

The Choir is looking for people who know how to sing or would like to learn as they ready their voices for Pascha. The group practices on Thursdays from 7 to 8:30 p.m. in the Nave and is open to all parishioners, including catechumens, ages 12 and up. For information, contact choir@holytrinity-oca.org.

■ NEWS & NOTES

The Orthodox Church Beyond Our Parish

OVER ONE THOUSAND ATTEND PREMIERE
NEW YORK CITY – On February 7 over 1,000 people packed the Church of St. Paul the Apostle to witness the English-language U.S. premiere of *St. Matthew Passion* composed by Metropolitan HILARION of the Moscow Patriarchate. Greg Hobbs conducted the performance that featured the Salomé Chamber Orchestra and the New York Virtuoso Singers. The concert, which was produced by Holy Trinity’s Nicholas Reeves, raised funds for St. Vladimir’s Seminary located in nearby Yonkers.

Holy Trinity Designates March 20 as “Mission Sunday”

On Sunday, March 20, Holy Trinity will recognize organizations and members from our community who have answered the call to domestic and foreign missions, including Gary Cattell, Maria Roeber, and the Chapel of the Holy Spirit. An offering envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Parish Work Day Scheduled

Mark Saturday, April 9 from 9 a.m. to noon on your calendars for our annual *Matthew 25* Work Day. The yearly event is an opportunity for parishioners to create a more beautiful and welcoming environment—interior and exterior—for all of our guests and visitors at Pascha. More information on the various work projects being coordinated as well as a complete list of all of *Matthew 25*’s Lenten outreach activities will appear in Holy Trinity’s weekly printed and electronic bulletins.

Coming in Next Month’s Issue

Some of the features you will see in the April 2011 *Trisagion* is a letter from Abbot Nikon on Lenten spirituality and an article highlighting the use of technology in the parish coinciding with the release of our redesigned Web site. Be sure to check it out!

BE A PART OF A FAMILY MISSION TEAM

ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA – This year the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) will collaborate with the Center for Family Care to create family mission teams. Families will travel to Albania in mid-July for two weeks to participate in this outreach. The primary focus is to offer a “family witness” while sharing the faith and growing as a family in Christ. Visit teams.ocmc.org, or e-mail teams@ocmc.org, for more information or to apply.

■ SUNDAY SCHOOL SCOOP

Being a Good Neighbor by Deacon Mark Oleynik

Several years ago I was talking with a friend and he said that good neighbors don’t put up fences. Now, it is understood that fences do have purpose such as ensuring children are kept from wandering into the street, keeping farm animals, and protecting pets. However, I have often pondered his statement when passing through neighborhoods and communities wondering why all the fences were there? Are they really needed? Could it be these people don’t like or want to associate with each other? Are they not good neighbors? Hopefully, the answer to all of these questions is, “no”.

As we approach the Great Lent, we will hopefully rededicate ourselves to God and to our brothers and sisters. In other words, put God first and then our neighbors—before ourselves. The Bible is full of neighbors, and it is made clear there that all people everywhere are our neighbors. Cain was, in a sense, “neighbor” to Abel; he had a duty to that brother that he ignored. Jesus was neighbor to the Samaritan woman, and the good Samaritan was neighbor to the unknown man on the Jericho road, neighbor even to the thieves who left the man for dead. We have neighbors in all areas of our lives—at home and at work, nationally and internationally. The real challenge for us (and for parents to teach their children) is, how shall we live with them, how shall we treat them?

God told the Hebrews through Moses how to treat their neighbors; read carefully Leviticus chapters 6 (the first verses) and 19 for that. Read Luke 10:25-37 to find out just who your neighbor is, and 1 John 4:16-5:3 to find out how God through Christ expects us as Christians to behave toward our neighbor—who may be living next door, or in the next town, or on the other side of the world. You will see that the instruction is built around one word—love.

Extra “Scoops”

FIRST CONFESSION

Children in the second grade (7- or 8-years-old) traditionally make their first confession during Great Lent. This year, we have six children who have already begun to receive instruction (this course will run about eight weeks in total). Please pray for these students as they enter into this holy sacrament.

“SOUP-ER SUNDAY” TO BENEFIT CHARITIES

Our students will be hosting a Lenten luncheon on March 27 following the Divine Liturgy. Students will be responsible for preparing, serving, and hosting the meal. All proceeds from the free-will offering will be given to the local charities of Housing Transitions and the Food Bank of the State College Area, which were selected by our children. See you there!

There is an old axiom that “love makes the world go round,” which is another way of saying that God makes the world go round, for love is only another name for God. His very essence is love. And the person who lives in love toward his neighbor actually lives in God.

This is the basis of the whole Christian attitude toward their neighbors, be they good or bad. Because he knows that the love of God lives in him, he knows that the same God and love live in his neighbor. We may not like actions or words of a neighbor but in obedience to God, we will hate the sin and love the sinner in the hope that the love of God may come to rule his life. We are to love—and leave the final judgment to God.

In 1 John 4:20 we read, “If a man say, I love God, and hates his brother, he is a liar.” Here is the practical application of love. It is all right to sit in church and feel our hearts strangely warmed as we meditate on God’s love—but if we go out of church

