

THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Parishioners Rally to Support Mission

Dozens of Holy Trinity parishioners came together on Saturday, June 30 to serve our community a variety of fine homemade entrees, baked goods, and crafts at the first ever State College Ethnic Food Fest. In addition to the many people who prepared the excellent fare that filled the Parish Hall, several others posted signs, passed out flyers Downtown, and spread the word on radio stations and social media. And everyone had a tremendous time over the weekend raising the more than \$2,100 that will help the Men's Mission Team travel to Marshall, Alaska to finish construction of the Orthodox church there.

Please pray for the health and well-being of our ten missionaries: Nikita Fedkin, Michael Haupt, Samuel Leathers, Ed Miranda, Jonathan Miranda, Michael Stickles, Darren Torbic, Deacon Alex, Deacon Mark, and Father John. (Michael Pelikan, Mark Radomsky, and David Swisher, who planned to participate earlier this summer, are actively supporting the effort from here in State College.)

Immediately after being sent off by the entire parish following Matins and the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, July 22 (which are being celebrated one hour earlier at 8 and 9 a.m., respectively) the team begins their 12-day journey, returning the evening of Friday, August 3. Updated information will be available at holytrinity-oca.org/mission/ where online donations are being accepted. All funds raised beyond the \$1,195-per-person tuition will go directly to fund additional projects in the Yukon River region. Thank you for your support!



Maria Roeber Fulfills First Year of Missionary Service

BUKOKA, TANZANIA [via ocmc.org] - The Feast of Pentecost last month marked the completion of Maria Roeber's first year of medical missionary service here. A former member of Holy Trinity and a Penn State alumnus (Nursing, '04), Maria kicked off her second year as a long-term missionary candidate with the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) after a brief furlough to visit family in Germany. You can read about Maria's work at the health center in Tanzania in her one-year report from the field at holytrinity-oca.org. ■

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Schedules

	Coffee Hour	Greeting	Altar Servers*
July 8	Mha. Jennifer Cadman and Megan Leathers	Mark and Leelyn Radomsky	Team B
July 15	Patty Doby and Holly Torbic	Beth Roberts and Ed Miranda	Team A
July 22	Melody Thompson and Laura Rush	Megan Leathers and David Swisher	Team B
July 29	Jean Miranda and Caryl Szaus	Melody Thompson and Mark Fedkin	Team A
August 5	Elsie Files and Mike and Ginny Anthony	Megan Leathers and David Swisher	Team B
August 12	Dee Patel and Mha. Kelly Oeyrik	Beth Roberts and Ed Miranda	Team A

* Team A: A. Craig, C. Craig, N. Fedkin, A. Miranda, N. Pelikan, S. Oeyrik, D. Stickles, and J. Swisher
 Team B: J. Cadman, B. Craig, M. Doby, P. Doby, K. Kucheryavy, J. Miranda, B. Oeyrik, M. Stickles, and J. Swisher.

■ CHAPEL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Talking About Christianity, Part II

by Fr. Basil Biberdorf

Last month, I began the topic of how to talk about Orthodoxy, and the focus of that first article was on the necessity to love other people. That is, we must avoid the temptation to argue them into the Faith, or to market the Church to them as if it were any other consumer good. Rather, the need is to pursue practical action, forming friendships and relationships of trust, making their burdens and their joys our own. Of course, none of this happens without a lot of listening, and listening is the focus of this month's article.

Listening is not just hearing the sounds from others, but the deliberate engaging of another person in conversation for the purpose of receiving information. It is *not* giving what we know, think, or feel. In our time, this skill is not widely appreciated. Our public figures are known for being able to speak off the cuff, for giving opinions on a regular basis, or for promoting themselves over their opponents. At school and work, collaboration and vocal leadership are often valued over simple listening.

Thus, being an effective listener usually means unlearning bad habits and conditioning. It means allowing our own wishes and desires to be set aside so that another's can be given precedence. As St. James says, "For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits..." (*James 3:16-17*).

Most of us are already familiar with so-called "active listening" skills: paying attention, echoing what has been said, and the like. (Numerous books and websites can provide more details.) These are certainly important. However, I want to emphasize the *spiritual* dimension of listening. We must listen

not only to what is said with words, but by what is being said without them. We often know what people like to talk about, but it's always worth reflecting on what they don't talk about.

Many people take refuge in discussing comparatively harmless topics such as weather and sports (apart from Penn State, of course). Seeking refuge in harmless topics often obscures the real concerns people have: "How will I find work?"; "How will my children turn out?"; "How could God let a child have such an awful disease?"; "What's the point of this daily grind?"

Thus we must learn about the other person. If we are to cultivate our love for individuals (not "people" in the abstract), we have to know what joys and burdens they possess. St. James's words about standing up to Christian difficulties, apply in this circumstance also: "So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger" (*James 1:19*).

We must listen without thinking of a response. We must resist the urge to interrupt, even if only to provide comfort, choosing to let our speech—our response—be slow in coming. ■

Chapel News Briefs

- THE CHAPEL WILL ONCE AGAIN PARTICIPATE in the Snyder County Children and Youth Services' Back to School Book Bag Fair. For a list of items that are being collected this year, please see Rdr. David Smith or email dsmith@holyspirit-oca.org. Items must be received no later than August 3.
- THE THIRD ANNUAL INDEPENDENCE DAY PICNIC was held July 1 at the Tall Timbers State Park near Troxelville. Great food, fellowship, wading, exploring, and hiking were highlights of the day. Remember to join us next year!

It behooves us to recall that God's commandments are life-giving. He has not given us commands simply to rain on our parades; rather, His commands direct us away from sin, the very actions that lead to death. And death, by definition is opposed to God. It is only in Jesus Christ whom we know to have trampled down death by his own death, that we can have victory indeed...

Having made these necessary and numerous dogmatic statements, we must also always remember that every Orthodox Christian, using St. Paul's own words to Timothy, proclaims himself at each Divine Liturgy to be "chief of sinners", whom Jesus came to save. By this weekly verbalization, we profess that none of us is better than anyone else. We are all dying and need Jesus to raise us from the dead. As such, we condemn no one; but this is not to say that we should not condemn immorality, especially when our public leaders (be they secular or sacred) endorse such behaviors and/or relationships, and especially when such a topic increasingly becomes an encouraged cornerstone of our communities. It is one thing to be dying, which we sinners are. It is another thing entirely to call death, life, and to encourage it. We must be clear.

Again, we return to Ezekiel's declaration: God desires not the death of the sinner, but that he should turn from his wickedness and live.

We must finally remember that in Christ there is no condemnation. Each of us who professes Orthodox Christianity knows that we run to Christ for our lives, and when we fall prey to the devil or put ourselves in death's wicked grip, we confess our fall and return to God, to life. In Christ is perfect freedom. But, as St. Paul teaches us: Do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature, but rather serve one another in love. ■

EDITOR'S NOTE: Fr. John E. Parker III heads the Department of Evangelization of the Orthodox Church in America and is the pastor of Holy Ascension Orthodox Church in Mount Pleasant, South Carolina.

In Memoriam: Fr. Peter Gillquist

Well known author and evangelist Archpriest Peter E. Gillquist fell asleep in the Lord on Sunday, July 1, surrounded by family and friends. Father Peter was instrumental in the conversion of hundreds of former evangelicals to Orthodox Christianity, and was no stranger to our parish. After countless visits to Penn State over the years, Fr. Peter travelled to Beavertown in April of 2010 to encourage Chapel of the Holy Spirit faithful to share the Gospel.

New Attendance Record Set

Holy Trinity now has a new record for non-Pascha attendance. This year, 172 people celebrated our parish's patronal feast (the previous high was 160 set at Pentecost 2011). This new high-water mark came as Strategic Growth Team members began analyzing five possible scenarios to accommodate future growth, including adding a Sunday Liturgy, hiving off a new mission, building or buying additional property, and a partial or full relocation.

Parish Planning "Ed Day" Trip

The Orthodox Youth Association (OYA) and Penn State OCF are exploring making a trip to Orthodox Education Day at St. Vladimir's Seminary on Saturday, October 6. Of particular interest to our youth is a workshop featuring not only the works of C.S. Lewis and J.R.R. Tolkien but also the very popular *The Hunger Games*. Save the date and look for information in upcoming issues of *The Trisagion*.

Reminder: Parking Options

On Sundays, you may park in *all* of the numbered spaces behind Holy Trinity as well as the Cancer Society's gravel lot. Questions? Call 814-231-2855.

For the Record

WEDDING

- **Daniel McNulty** was united in marriage to **Katherine Johnson** on June 9 at St. George Orthodox Church in Altoona. Many years!

■ ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

On Same-Sex Marriage, Part II by Fr. John Parker

I wish it were not necessary to say the following, which may be considered going too far, but I am afraid it has to be said simply, however difficult it is to write and to read: Male-to-male homosexual acts are in-and-of-themselves death-giving, in that they violate not only the mechanical biology for which their requisite parts were created, but the human seed produced by one is deposited in the excretory system of the other—a system which purges the body in every instance of material waste which is not only useless to the body, but harmful (if not deadly to it) if not removed. No such union under any condition biological or medical can ever produce life. Sodomy in any circumstance is a selfish, life-contradicting action.

Female-to-female homosexual acts are likewise selfish. Since the female produces no seed, there is no possibility of the procreation of life. At best, one woman must play the role of a male, but for the sole purpose of pleasure, which is not the primary aim of any sexual union.

The diminishing of any importance given to procreation in sexual relationships has certainly made an enormous impact on how our society views marriage in general, as has the associated, widespread, indiscriminant use of contraceptives. Nevertheless, it is still evident to the most casual observer that the biological compatibility of male and female exists for procreation, and it is the expressed teaching of the undivided Christian Church that this is the chief (that is, first) aim of marriage.

The Bible and Church history are indeed inclusive of deep friendships between members of the same sex; however, there is no biblical, historical, or ecclesiastical evidence whatsoever that these were genital relationships. In fact all evidence is to the

contrary. With such friendships in mind, one can easily argue today that the lack of chaste, upright, moral relationships between two men or two women contributes significantly to present moral decline in our society. That is—it is either basically discouraged or denied that two men or two women could be extremely close, but platonic, friends, or encouraged that if they are, they are probably homosexual and should indulge their passions.

In point of fact, it is increasingly difficult for men and women in our society to find any public, wholesome example of any relationship at all that is not motivated by selfish, sexual passions. To the contrary, such selfish sexual passions are flaunted, titillated, and encouraged in every medium, and nearly to all ages.

As far as gay marriage is concerned, it is, to be blunt, a mockery of marriage... God created man and woman, male and female, in His own image and likeness, as complimentary creatures, whom He commanded to be fruitful and multiply, and to be stewards of His creation. [Homo]sexual relationships are fundamentally incapable of bearing fruit and multiplying, and are further incapable of the fullness of complementarity in biological, spiritual, and emotional categories.

Granted, we Orthodox Christians publicly and shamelessly shoot ourselves in the foot and make no good example of marriage by our own rampant divorce rates, our persistent and thoughtless cohabitation, our falsely self-justified use of pornography and the like. These grave sins also make a mockery of the life which God freely gives us. But we cannot justify further evil simply because we justify our own sins, or continue to fall prey to them. If we, too, wish to live, we must cast off our own works of darkness, and turn again to Christ.

Students Ponder the Nativity of our Lord

Nearly forty children enjoyed an exciting week of Vacation Bible School (VBS) last month, exploring the Nativity season, the ancestors of Christ, the life of St. Nicholas, and many other topics. Held in the evening this year, preschool and elementary-aged children ate a hearty dinner together, then spent time focusing on the true meaning of Christmas without its associated December distractions (e.g., Winter Break, parties, and an endless array of commercials). Visit [facebook.com/holytrinitysc](https://www.facebook.com/holytrinitysc) to see photos from this fun and memorable week!



Photos Credit: Laura Rush

Penn State OCF to Join National Campaign

To prevent freshmen from falling through the cracks this Fall, the Penn State Orthodox Christian Fellowship (OCF) is teaming up with the North American OCF Office to reach out to all incoming first-year Orthodox college students at colleges and universities throughout the continent. During the first forty days of the Fall semester, OCF chaplains will make personal contact with each new student. Dn. Alexander is coordinating an effort with the new Youth & Young Adult Director Andrew Boyd to gather student information from all OCA parishes. Please pray for the success of this initiative! ■

Camp Nazareth to Host Second Annual College Student Retreat

MERCER, PA [via ocf.net] – *Camp Nazareth here is hosting the second annual “Overcoming the World” College Student Retreat from August 6-8. There will be guest speakers, group workshops, evening socials, food, fun, and plenty of opportunity for faith enrichment.*

This year's theme is “Lord, Save Me”, based on Matthew 14:22-33. The cost is only \$150, which includes all meals, snacks and lodging. Credit cards accepted. Register by Saturday, June 9 at campnazareth.org.