

# THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

## Making Time for Action by Dn. Mark Oleynik

We now are in the midst of preparing for the great feast of the Nativity of Christ. This is an especially busy time of the year—a time of much activity but not always action.

Activity is necessary, looks outwardly good, and is usually rooted with good intentions, but can often overwhelm our day and eventually get in the way of what really needs to be done. Action, on the other hand, means taking control of something which can move one closer or result in achieving one's ultimate goals and dreams.

When contemplating how to act during this season we can look upon Jesus' mother Mary. Let's remember what she did during the events of Jesus' birth—the most momentous happening to have come to pass on the face of the earth at the time. Even though our Lord's Advent involved eternal and infinitesimal consequences, St. Luke writes that "*Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart*" (2:19). Here we have a model of action that we can emulate.

Picture the relative simplicity of Palestine in Mary's day. Compare that with our life, our mode of living, and our environments. Perhaps the comparison represents two extremes, neither one of which might seem ideal, but between the two, so far as taking time to live, we are left to ponder in our hearts no other choice than that of the ancient life. To the people of the modern world, it would seem that Mary was demonstrating a mode of inaction. This is because we tend to live in a world that is

*(continued—see last page)*



orthodoxwayoflife.blogspot.com (Chora Monastery)

## More Cheer in the New Year by Fr. John Reeves

At our annual meeting in November, I spoke of the many opportunities which await us over the next few years: to build the Chapel of the Holy Spirit in Snyder County; to make far reaching decisions to accommodate the continuing growth of Holy Trinity in State College; and to continue to develop new ministries to reach more people in Christ's name, at home and abroad.

The one way each and every member of the parish can and does respond to these opportunities is through sacrificial giving by means of the general offering and special appeals. Approximately 90 percent of every general offering dollar stays in the parish (roughly 10% goes to support the Archdiocese and the OCA.) In addition, every dime of special appeal offerings goes to the various ministries we support in and outside of the parish:

*(continued—see last page)*

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH  
119 S. Sparks Street  
State College, PA 16801  
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
STATE COLLEGE, PA  
PERMIT NO. 289

## Schedules

	Coffee Hour	Greeters	Tellers	Servers**
December 9	K. Oleynik and J. Miranda*	L. Radomsky and M. Radomsky	M. Fedkin and M. Stevens	Team B
December 16	J. Vaughan and B. Roberts*	M. Thompson and M. Fedkin	S. Stevens and A.T. Pelikan	Team A
December 23	E. George and M. Stevens*	M. Leathers and D. Swisher	G. Cattell and B. Haupt	Team B
December 30	B. Schrauf and L. Radomsky	B. Roberts and E. Miranda	M. Fedkin and R. Schrauf	Team A
January 6	A. Swisher and C. Swisher	L. Radomsky and M. Radomsky	G. Cattell and M. Stevens	Team B
January 13	J. Cadman and M. Leathers	M. Thompson and M. Fedkin	M. Fedkin and A.T. Pelikan	Team A

\* Denotes Fast  
\*\* Team A: C. Doty, N. Fedkin, A. Miranda, N. Pelikan, S. Oleynik, D. Stickers, Jo. Stickers, and J. Swisher  
Team B: J. Cadman, M. Doty, P. Doty, K. Kucheryavyy, A. Malobabich, J. Miranda, B. Oleynik, and Je. Stickers.

## ■ ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

# Another Salvation Opportunity by Fr. John Bakas

It seems like yesterday when the summer heat was upon us. [Now we have entered] the transformative period called Thanksgiving and Christmas. It is a marvelous and sacred time in our church calendar. Advent is a forgotten 40 days of invitation to renew our commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ. It is forty days to inventory the quality and direction of our lives. It is forty days to avail ourselves of the opportunity of saving our souls. By the Grace of God it is a time to bring balance, holiness, peace and purpose to our lives.

Thanksgiving and Christmas become meaningless and devoid of joy if we only see it as a time of just feasting. Indeed, we ought to also fast, according to our church guidelines. We ought to learn self-denial and bodily self-discipline. But if we only center the Holy season on our stomachs, eating or not eating we miss the whole spiritual purpose.

A saying attributed to the Holy Fathers of the church says: *“The devil does not eat, he does not drink and he does not marry and this great ascetic formally is not less a devil”*. We must put this into the proper context. Fasting should be a means to draw us closer to God by focusing on Him. In addition to food considerations, the holidays should be a time of spiritual growth and personal life changes.

Let us pray for positive attitude adjustments and habit rehabilitation that brings out the good in all of us and reconciles us to God and to one another. Do you want to make your holidays really count? Do you want to greet Jesus the new born babe with a joyous **“Christ is born, Glorify Him”**? Consider the following ten “unofficial” Commandments as part of personal renewal. Put them on your refrigerator door, read them frequently and practice them with conviction and prayer:

1. *Keep skid chains on your tongue; always say less than you think. Cultivate a low, persuasive voice. How you say it, often counts more than what you say.*
2. *Make promises sparingly, and keep them faithfully, no matter what it costs.*
3. *Never let any opportunity pass to say a kind and encouraging word to or about somebody. Praise good work, regardless of who did it. If criticism is needed, criticize helpfully, never spitefully.*
4. *Be interested in others, their pursuits, their work, their homes and families. Make merry with those who rejoice; with those who weep, mourn. Let everyone you meet, however humble, feel that you regard them as a person of importance.*
5. *Be cheerful. Don't burden or depress those around you by dwelling on your minor aches and pains and small disappointments. Remember, everyone is carrying his own cross.*
6. *Keep an open mind. Discuss, but don't argue. It is a mark of a superior heart to be able to disagree without being disagreeable.*
7. *Let your virtues speak for themselves. Refuse to talk of another's vices. Discourage gossip. It is a waste of valuable time and is extremely destructive.*
8. *Be careful of another's feelings. Wit and humor at the other person's expense are rarely worth it and may hurt when least expected.*
9. *Pay no attention to ill-natured remarks about you. Remember, the person who carried the message may not be the most accurate reporter in the world. Simply live so that nobody will believe them.*
10. *Don't be anxious about the credit due you. Do your best and be patient. Forget about yourself, and let others remember. Practice forgiveness and charity.*

Happy Advent! ■

EDITOR'S NOTE: *The Rev. John Bakas is Dean of St. Sophia's Cathedral in Los Angeles, CA. The article appears courtesy of the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of San Francisco.*

## ■ SUNDAY SCHOOL SCOOP

# Making Time for Action (from page 1)

purely sensory. We hear and see and smell and feel. We hardly ever stop to reflect, and if we do, it is only because we have been forced to, and thus reflection, as a means of salvation, comes too late.

We haven't time to think deeply. We have gone so long without exercise in that direction that countless of us have never been able to think seriously and will never feel any inclination to do so. Everything is in motion. The day is of speed, of rush, of hurry. The only one who knows rest and quiet is the one in the grave. Our countless sacrifices laid on the altar of speed have denied us the real joy of life. We haven't time to live, say nothing of experiencing its joys.

Let us strive to cultivate the peculiar grace which shone in the Theotokos. This is not something that only parents need—it is vital that we teach our

## More Cheer in '13 (from page 1)

**Matthew 25, Penn State OCF, and the Dn. Jason Scholarship** to name but a few.

Our 2013 budget forecasts a modest increase of 6.7% in expenses. To meet this, each of us needs to consider his personal stewardship commitment for the coming year. We won't ask for pledge cards, and we certainly don't have dues. But God does love a cheerful giver, and a cheerful giver gives generously. So pray about the proportion of your income you will cheerfully, not grudgingly, give to the parish's general offering in the New Year. Set it aside and offer it the first day of every week or month in the parish collection. God has so many more opportunities for us in the future. Our regular offerings are our way to thank Him for the many opportunities

## Extra “Scoops”

### LIGHTS! CAMERA! ACTION!

*The Sunday School will present a Christmas play following the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, December 23. Everyone is invited to stay and join in the retelling of the Nativity story and sing along with the students. (Children will practice on December 22 at 4 p.m.)*

**NEW BANNERS** for Nativity were created by our Sunday School and are now hanging in the Narthex. Many thanks to Patty Doty for leading the students.

children to take time to meditate upon God as well. We must become families of this action.

If we read little, let us keep it well. If we hear little, let us keep that which is worth pondering upon. Let us practice keeping and pondering, especially in those things pertaining to the health of the soul. One moment of solemn contemplation with the windows of the heart wide open towards God can be so full of hope, so full of promise, so full of blessing, that it may lead us to realize that the Lord is indeed in this place. ■

## December Opportunities

- *Holy Trinity's annual St. Nicholas Gift Tree to bring joy to struggling families in our area.*
- *St. Nicholas Vespers and Liturgy (Dec. 5 & 6) to celebrate his transcending love of Christ (with a special surprise for the children).*
- *Daily Worship with Confessions begin Dec. 17 at 5:30 to prepare for the Nativity. A diocesan “40-day” liturgy will also be served Dec. 21 at 9.*
- *Holy Supper and Vigil will take place at an earlier time (4:30 and 6 p.m., respectively) to allow families with smaller children to attend.*
- *Synaxis Divine Liturgy (Dec. 26, 10 a.m.) to continue our festal celebration of Christ's birth.*

to serve Him He has already provided us, and to prepare us for the many more which await us. ■

## ■ CHAPEL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

# What Christ's Church is Really About

*“Every time that we gather as church, we celebrate the Divine Liturgy, the Holy Eucharist, it's always essentially the same... [St. John Chrysostom elaborates] ‘no Liturgy is less holy or more holy than any other.’”*

Fr. Thomas Hopko began his homily at the recent extraordinary All-American Council with these words. In the context of our worship life in Beavertown, they ring particularly true.

Our vision of “Church” is often conditioned on what can, at best, be described as the “trappings” of church. We like thinking of “Church” in terms of our buildings: the icons, the iconostasis, the smell of the incense, the tables and stands, and even the location and purpose of the parish hall. We also like thinking of the kinds of music we sing, and the way we sing it. We often have opinions about which groups a proper parish needs: choir, altar guild, church school, etc. We consider our fasts, and the way people should dress when coming to services. We look forward to holy suppers, home blessings, Paschal baskets, and the like. But, as I said, these things are all trappings of the Faith. They express and reflect our belief, but do not, in themselves, constitute the Faith. If they do for us, we have it all wrong.

All of which brings us to Fr. Thomas's words. We gather in order to celebrate the Divine Liturgy, which exists for us to join our thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) to the Body and Blood of Christ in His Eucharist. Everything we do at Church is in preparation for that: for the acquisition of the One who is Himself Life. Since God does not change, and His holiness does not increase or decrease, there is no way to say that one Liturgy is more or

less holy than any other. Christ's gifts to us are as unchanging as He is. They come to us in our holiness and our unholiness, in our dignity and in our abasement.

This is vitally important for our Chapel. We cannot look to our lack of building and say, “We're not really Church yet,” as though our “churchhood” is dependent on a structure. The Church is built on Christ, the Son of the Living God (*Matthew 16:18*), not upon bricks or timbers. The foundation of our chapel is the same as that of any parish church, any monastery, and any cathedral anywhere: Christ Himself, who redeems the world, feeding and sanctifying those who believe in Him with His own precious Body and Blood.

Nope. We are Christ's Church, and we have the blessing of sojourning as our earliest brethren did, praying and gathering in a home, giving witness to our God to those whom we encounter, giving of ourselves to those in spiritual and material need, studying the Scriptures, caring for each other, both in and out of the Church. We have the same opportunities to live and pray as Christians as the faithful in a large parish do. Indeed, we even have the opportunity to become targets of ridicule and ostracism by seeking to be in Christ's Church.

These facts must dominate our thoughts especially in seasons like this one. It's easy to become distracted by all the Christmas “stuff” (both in and out of the Church) and, in the case of the Chapel, distracted by our pursuit of a building that enables us to do even more. Regardless of those things, we are Church because we possess Christ and He possesses us. No liturgy is less holy or more holy than any other. May this reflection shape us in these holy weeks, and guide our efforts as we continue building in Snyder County. ■

## New HTOC Partner Ministry?

In the coming weeks Holy Trinity plans to gauge interest among parishioners of the possibility of forming a new partnership with Bridge of Hope, an organization that helps newly-single mothers avoid homelessness. Bridge of Hope partner churches enlist teams of volunteers who befriend, support, and counsel women struggling to work and raise children. If you might be interested in joining a new ministry such as this, please contact Dn. Alex ([dnalex@holytrinity-oca.org](mailto:dnalex@holytrinity-oca.org)) or see Maria Stevens.

## Christmas Cookie Exchange

The Women's Ministry will host a “Cookie Exchange” on Friday, December 21 at 11:30 a.m. To participate, bring a minimum of three dozen homemade holiday cookies and the recipe. A light lenten lunch will be provided and a portion of the baked proceeds will be donated to Housing Transitions. See the sign up sheet in the Parish Hall to participate—the more that do, the greater the variety of cookies/recipes to take home and share.

## Liturgy Schedule Change in 2013

Based on your feedback, weekday liturgies will take place at 8 a.m. beginning in January. (Saturday, Christmas, Theophany, and next day “Synaxis” liturgies will not change.) In 2013, the parish will be polled for the preferred start time of Festal Vespers.

## Help People Where They Live

Always Best Care of Central Pennsylvania is looking for compassionate and caring individuals willing to help area seniors in their homes. Paid positions with flexible scheduling from two hours a day to 24-hour live-in assignments are available. Learn more at [AlwaysBestCareofCentralPa.com](http://AlwaysBestCareofCentralPa.com).

## Go Online for Maria's Latest

Visit the newly redesigned [holytrinity-oca.org](http://holytrinity-oca.org) to read the latest update from medical missionary Maria Roeber. A 2004 Penn State graduate, Maria finishes her two-year term to Tanzania early next year.

## ■ MISSIONS AND EVANGELISM

# OCMC Sets 2013 Mission Team Dates; Locations

ST. AUGUSTINE, FL – On November 20, the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) here announced their line up of Orthodox mission teams for the year 2013. Next year, team members will have the blessing to share the Orthodox Christian faith by offering the talents of evangelism, catechism, healthcare, construction, and youth ministry on 12 teams in 7 countries around the world. Destinations are Alaska, Albania, Guatemala, Kenya, Mongolia, Uganda, and Tanzania, with departure dates for the multi-week trips ranging from early March to mid-October. Opportunities are available for individuals as well as families. For information or to apply, visit [ocmc.org](http://ocmc.org) or email [teams@ocmc.org](mailto:teams@ocmc.org).

## For the Record

### YOUR GENEROSITY

- *Supplies for 135 health kits were donated to Matt. 25, assembled by OCF, and sent to IOCC on November 4 for Sandy victims. Thank you.*
- *336 lbs. of turkeys and hundreds of food items were donated to Matt. 25 and assembled by volunteers from Strawberry Fields to feed 28 area families this Thanksgiving. Thank you.*

### BAPTISM

- *Catherine Troyan, daughter of Brian and Nina Troyan, baptized November 3, sponsored by Shane and Maria Stevens. Many years!*

### BIRTHS

- *Stavros Dimitrios Diamantis, son of Fr. John and Mka. Andrea Diamantis, born November 9 measuring 8 lbs. 10 oz., 20.5 in. long. Many years!*
- *Erika Mae Nelson, fourth grandchild of Judy Fryncko, born November 27 measuring 6 lbs. 4 oz., 21 in. long. Many years!*

### ELECTION

- *Abp. Tikhon (Mollard) was elected Primate of the Orthodox Church of America at the 17<sup>th</sup> All American Council on November 13. Axios!*