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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  
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## UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT: THE ELECTION OF METROPOLITAN JONAH

The election of Metropolitan JONAH (Paffhausen) will be seen arguably as one of the most decisive moments of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in American Orthodoxy when histories are written, long after we have departed this scene. Only eleven days a bishop when the votes were counted on November 13, he had risen to the occasion the evening before his momentous election.

In a Church racked by three years of revelations of financial scandals, Bishop JONAH stood to answer questions submitted by delegates to the Holy Synod of bishops at the All American Council. The delegates had waited. The bishops had waived. Then, Bishop Jonah strode to the podium and spoke as the Church had needed someone to speak. As the newest bishop (Auxiliary of Fort Worth) it was a breach of expected protocol. But it was a breath of fresh air.

Yes, the Church had been looted. It had been raped. It had suffered from lack of leadership at the highest levels. For the previous thirty years, abdication of responsibility was coupled with personal corruption. Of course, the Holy Synod was dysfunctional, compromised by a culture of corruption. What could we expect? He said what we all knew. But he said it, publicly, without flinching, without mincing words.

Then he declared calmly, "It's over... Authority is about accountability. Authority is about responsibility. It's not about power." One man spoke the truth in love. One man turned the page of OCA history to a new chapter. "Trust will be restored," he said, "when we choose to love."

Looking back, it was not astounding that Bishop JONAH led the voting on both ballots by lay and clergy delegates. What was astounding was that the Holy Synod acclaimed him their choice, breaking a long standing "tradition" of choosing the less favored candidate for Metropolitan. They could have chosen to preserve power a little longer. But perhaps they knew that they were not up to the task of leadership. Perhaps they knew that new wine needs new wineskins. Perhaps they understood their own failures and inadequacies and were willing not to stand in the way of a paradigm shift. Perhaps they heard the voice of the Holy Spirit speaking through the people of the Church: *Vox populi, vox Dei!*

(continued, page 3)

**THE ORTHODOX CHURCH IN AMERICA:  
VISION, VOCATION, MISSION, IDENTITY**

EDITOR'S NOTE: *This month we begin a four-part series on Metropolitan JONAH's vision for the Orthodox Church in America. This article was first published in Divine Ascent, the journal of the Monastery of St. John of San Francisco.*

**Part I: Taking Responsibility and Repenting**

The Holy Spirit gives the Church her vision, which comes from our identity in Christ as His Body. This vision is identical with the vision of all those who have gone before us precisely because it is the same Body, with the same vocation, mission, and identity: to be the Body of Christ: the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church. Whenever we add elements to that vision, we distort it, no matter how noble our qualifications and agendas may be. Whenever we subtract from or diminish it, we do likewise. If we change the vision in any way, we exclude ourselves from it and from the Body which it constitutes.

There is a lot of interest in the sad scandals that are plaguing the Orthodox Church in America... Dire warnings of doom, betrayals, and speculations of perverse motives are all over the Internet and discussed widely. In particular, much is being said and written to the affect that the OCA lacks vision and that this, in turn, is due to a lack of good leadership.

Such talk points to a truth: it is certainly the task of our ecclesiastical leaders constantly to announce and renew the Church's vision. But how, exactly, is this to happen? Is there a specifically churchly way to go about this task? For we are not a corporation or secular organization, and in this instance we cannot take recourse to secular models. Our identity, vocation, and mission—both as individual members of the Church and together as the one Body of the Church—derive from the Church's vision. Her vision is not that of any particular leader but is shared by the whole Body of the faithful.

Our task is to turn away from our own petty individual worlds, causes, and dreams—the delusions of our own reasoning. And our leaders' task is constantly to call us back to this repentance. This they must do so that we can share the vision given by the grace of the Holy Spirit and accept our calling from Christ to be the Church, His Body, which constitutes the very core of our personal and corporate identity.

But when this leadership fails to occur—when our leaders do not call us to repentance by word and example, but instead cause scandal, sorrow, and pain—what then? For undoubtedly there has been egregious wrongdoing, and these matters are serious and profoundly affect the lives of many. Thus there is a tremendous need for healing and for restoration of confidence.

**UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT** *(continued from page 1)*

Whatever it was, the OCA is definitely under new management. Things will not remain the same. A worthy successor to St. Innocent, first bishop in our land has been elected, one not tainted by scandal, one up to the task, one humble enough to speak truth to power. A river cannot rise higher than its source and OCA leadership had no way to go but upwards. Surely, many tasks await us on a long road to recovery. But now we have hope of recovery.

This is a turning point in Orthodox history. We have been privileged to witness it. God has heard the cries of his people. This must be the ultimate lesson to us all: God always will hear his people! They must cry unto Him. They must wait patiently on Him, but He ultimately will hear them.

— Fr. John

**FROM THE DESK OF DEACON ALEXANDER**

In his first major archpastoral address following his election, Metropolitan JONAH in an instant raised the bar for everyone involved in campus ministry:

This is a critical ministry of our church. OCFs are not simply places where "...nice [Orthodox] boys find nice [Orthodox] girls and get married."... OCFs are one of the foremost opportunities for evangelical outreaches to people who are at a point where they are making radical decisions about their lives and who are looking to change their lives. There are so many kids who are living in university campuses as in *Animal House*. It's sex, and drugs, and alcohol, in despair. It's all from despair, and it's bitter. We, by reaching out to them, can give them hope in Jesus Christ and the Gospel.

Deservedly His Beatitude's comments on OCF received some of the loudest applause of the night by the All American Council delegates. But as inspiring as these words are, they must also convict us as well.

Thanks in no small part to the unwavering support of the Holy Trinity parish family, Penn State has rightfully earned its reputation as one of the premier OCFs in the country. But in light of Metropolitan JONAH's compelling vision, this is not a time to rest on our laurels. As we plan for next semester and make preparations to receive the Class of 2014 this Fall, now is an excellent time to closely examine our campus outreach and compare everything we do—and plan to do—against His Beatitude's benchmark. We cannot assume that the ministry methods that have been utilized in the past are adequately reaching the students who are desperately in need of the Gospel.

Please pray for me and the OCF Executive Committee as we, in the words of our new Metropolitan, renew our focus on evangelism in an "act of self-denial and an extension of love" and see what God inspires us to do.

## DECEMBER SCHEDULES

### Coffee Hour

December 7 — OCF

December 14 — Leslyn Radomsky and Beth Roberts

December 21 — Jean Miranda, Holly Torbic, and Jenny Anthony

December 28 — Judy Fryncko and Ellen George

### Greeters

December 7 — Anne and David Swisher

December 14 — Beth Roberts and Ed Miranda

December 21 — Mark and Leslyn Radomsky

December 28 — Melody Thompson and Mark Fedkin

## HOLY DAYS AND FASTS DURING DECEMBER

### St. Nicholas the Wonderworker

Vespers, December 5, 7:00pm

Liturgy, December 6, 9:00am

### Circumcision of Our Lord

Vespers, December 31, 7:00pm

Liturgy, January 1, 10:00am

### Nativity of Our Lord

Vespers, December 21, 7:00pm

Vespers, December 22, 5:30pm

Vespers, December 23, 5:30pm

Royal Hours, December 24, 10:00am

Vigil, December 24, 7:00pm

Liturgy, December 25, 10:00am

Vespers, December 25, 7:00pm

Liturgy, December 26, 10:00am

**Nativity Fast**—Continues through December 24. *Omit meat and dairy (all days). Omit meat, dairy, and fish December 14-24.*

**Fast Free Week**—December 25 through January 4.

## ARCHIMANDRITE MELCHIZEDEK NOMINATED ON FIRST BALLOT

On November 15 Archimandrite Melchisedek (Pleska) was decisively selected by Special Assembly delegates to become our next bishop (of Pittsburgh and Western Pennsylvania), receiving two-thirds of the votes on the first ballot. The Holy Synod is expected to hold an election to confirm or reject our nominee when it meets this month.

## OCF WINTER RETREAT

OCF is hosting its annual Advent retreat December 5-6, entitled “Serving God by Serving Others.” The retreat is free, open to all, and begins at 7pm at Holy Trinity with Great Vespers for the Feast of St. Nicholas. Fr. Michael Dahulich, Dean of St. Tikhon’s Seminary, will be the guest speaker.

## POINSETTIAS FOR NATIVITY

You may offer poinsettias for the Nativity by signing the list in the narthex. Each plant is \$10.00.

When one is suffering, all suffer together. When one member is honored, all rejoice. This is the basic principle of our communion in Christ. The bishops have a particular kind of responsibility, but they are not the Church by themselves; nor are the clergy, nor the rest of the laity... Christ is calling us to take the responsibility for the Church that is already ours by virtue of our baptism and chrismation. It’s not about how “they” deal with it. It’s about us. It’s our life, our union in Christ with one another.

If there is a lack of accountability and transparency in the hierarchy, is it not our responsibility to correct it? How would it have arisen, had we not abrogated our responsibility to demand integrity from the very leaders we put into office? If we judge those in positions of authority who have fallen, we only accuse and judge ourselves. It is easier to blame hypocritically than simply to accept the responsibility of cleaning up the mess. We should grieve over our brothers’ sins, not judge them. And in so doing, we come together in compassion. This strengthens our unity and welds us together in a common task: to take responsibility for the life of our Church.

Authority is responsibility. When authority degenerates into power, egoism, and position, it destroys the image of Christ which those positions of responsibility are meant to depict. “Whoever would be first among you must be slave of all”. The chief pastors of the Church are called to be that image of Christ, as are all of us the faithful.

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*We should grieve over our brothers’ sins, not judge them. And in so doing, we come together in compassion.*

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They fall short; we fall short. But we must constantly return in repentance, and encourage our fathers and brethren in that same repentance, supporting those who bear the responsibility for our souls. It is a heavy burden. But if we all bear it together, in a synergy of love and communion, it becomes the easy yoke and light burden of Christ, in Christ, by Christ. When we try to bear it by ourselves in isolation, we will inevitably fall, because it becomes something outside of Christ, about our own ego.

Thus, we must not become despondent or fearful. Instead, we must repent as a body. We must turn towards God and away from the abstractions of petty personal agendas, which can include a vindictive and worldly desire for the punishment of those who have offended us. We must not be blind to our own sin and corruption. “Let him who is without sin cast the first stone.” We must open our minds and hearts to Jesus Christ and to one another. Then we will see with great clarity the vision of the Church of Christ, and this will show us how to set our house in order, cleaning up the mess that we as a body have allowed.