

# THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

## Holiday Fantasies and Expectations

From Thanksgiving through Christmas, the typical American finds himself attempting to live up to the fantasies of others. He might be attempting to recreate a homey Thanksgiving, as in a Norman Rockwell painting. He might hope to experience a white Christmas, just like the ones he “used to know”. It might be replete with visions of sugarplums dancing in his head, courtesy of Clement Clarke Moore. And certainly, with homage to Tchaikovsky, there are Nutcrackers and mirlitons, twirling mirlitons at that.

However, attempting to live up to the fantasies of others is a good way to bring on dashed expectations. The wallet may feel the pinch with families’ over-spending: the credit card maxed to the limit to usher in a New Year of increased debt. If spending is cut back for reasons of economy, there may be attendant sentiments of guilt: “It won’t be much of a Christmas this year.” The family gathering itself may well occasion the raw nerve of issues unresolved between relatives from years gone by. Dashed expectations easily become nightmares.

It is not that man does not attempt to live up to the fantasies of others throughout the year. He does. The market knows that he does. Whether it is the car he drives or the toothpaste he buys, fantasy plays a large role in the purchase year round. But at this season, there is more of a concentrated effort to make fantasies come to life, in the guise of merriness and good cheer. Sugarplum fantasies sugarcoat the frenzy.

(continued—see EXPECTATIONS, last page)

### Tips for Christian Living

1. Prayers are said morning and evening, either together as a family or individually.
2. A blessing is said by the head of the family before a meal, and a prayer of thanks afterward.
3. On entering a room where there is an icon, cross yourself before it and say a brief prayer.
4. When leaving one’s dwelling, make the sign of the cross over the door and pray for its protection.
5. On seeing a priest...or even when phoning [him] or writing [him], always ask [his] blessing.
6. Before going to bed, make the sign of the cross over it and pray for protection during sleep.
7. When you hear of anyone’s death, immediately say a prayer for their eternal memory.
8. If...planning the future say, “As God wills.”
9. If you offend or hurt anyone, say as soon as possible, “Forgive me”...[T]ake the blame yourself.
10. If something turns out well, say “Praise be to God.”
11. If [it] turns out badly, if there is pain, sickness or any kind of trouble, say “Praise be to God for all things,” since God is all good and, though we might not understand the purpose of these things, undoubtedly they have been permitted by God.
12. If you begin some task, say, “God help me,” or of someone else’s working: “May God help you.”
13. Cross yourself and say a brief prayer before even the shortest journey by car.
14. When you receive a blessing, always remember to thank God... **Never neglect to give thanks.**

— Mother Pelagia of Lesna Convent

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## Schedules

	Coffee Hour	Greeters	Altar Servers *
December 5	Melody Thompson and Jean Miranda	Melody Thompson & Mark Fedkin	Team A
December 12	Judy Fryncko and Holly Torbic	Megan Leathers & David Swisher	Team B
December 19	Bob Schrauf and Mat. Jennifer Cadman	Beth Roberts & Ed Miranda	Team A
December 26	Russian Ladies	Leslyn & Mark Radomsky	Team B
January 2	Elaine Files and Dee Patel	Melody Thompson & Mark Fedkin	Team A
January 9	Julianne Vaughan and Beth Roberts	Megan Leathers & David Swisher	Team B

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

## ■ SUNDAY SCHOOL SCOOP

# On Receiving Holy Communion

by Dn. Mark Oleynik

One of the great joys of the clergy is being in the nearness of the Body and Blood of our Saviour. The clergy are responsible for the preparation of the Gifts, leading the invocation of the Holy Spirit to descend upon the gifts offered, to receive the Gifts at the Holy Altar, and to distribute the Gifts to the faithful. It is this last point that I would like to share a few thoughts.

Fr. Thomas Hopko writes, “Christians live from Sunday to Sunday, and, throughout the year, from Pascha to Pascha. We also live from liturgy to liturgy, from Eucharist to Eucharist, from communion to communion. Our lives are measured and tested by this sacred event. All that we are and do finds its beginning and end, its meaning and fulfillment, in God’s gift of Holy Communion through Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Church.”

Prior to being ordained to the diaconate, my nearness to the Holy Gifts was in receiving the Eucharist and occasionally holding the communion cloth. However, as great as this joy was, my perspective was elevated when I fully realized my new responsibility to “care” for the Gifts as far as my office would allow. Part of this care is to assist the priest in distributing the Gifts during the Liturgy—that is, giving Communion to the faithful. As such, being on the “frontline” each week I provide the following practical reminders as you and your children approach the Chalice:

- Preparation every time you receive the Holy Eucharist should be the rule (e.g., regular prayer, fasting, reading the Scriptures, confession, forgiveness, love of neighbor).
- It is essential to come to the church by the beginning of the Liturgy, and on an empty stomach, i.e., having abstained from all food and drink since at least midnight.

## Extra “Scoops”

### LITURGY OF PREPARATION DEMO

*As part of our Sunday School curriculum, our primary school students are studying the parts of the Divine Liturgy. As part of this course, Fr. John will celebrate the Liturgy of Preparation in the center of the church this Sunday (December 5) at 9 a.m. All students, along with their parents, and all parishioners are invited to gather around to hear the prayers and observe how the Gifts are prepared. As this part of the Liturgy is usually celebrated in the sanctuary, it will be wonderful educational opportunity for our parish.*

### MIDDLE SCHOOL RETREAT

*During the weekend of December 10-12, many of our middle school students along with a few chaperones will participate in a winter retreat at the Antiochian Village. This year’s theme is “Walking in the Footsteps of St. Herman.” (Sounds familiar!) The tuition for Holy Trinity’s participants will be provided through our Sunday School. It promises to be a great weekend of learning and fellowship for our youth.*

### YOUTH TO PERFORM NATIVITY PLAY

*On Sunday, December 19 following the Divine Liturgy, our Sunday School children will act in a play presenting the humble story of our Lord’s birth. The students will become a “living” icon with angels, wise men, shepherds, Mary and Joseph. Children who are interested in participating should attend a simple “rehearsal” on Saturday, December 18 at 4 p.m.*

- The Prayers of Preparation should be read each time you receive Communion and can be found in the back of the Divine Liturgy book. You should arrive a few minutes early so that these may be read in the church. If necessary you can read these prayers at home prior to arriving at the church.
- During the Divine Liturgy we corporately recite the final prayer of Preparation (“I believe, O Lord, and I confess...”). At the conclusion of the prayer, it is

## Expectations (continued from page 1)

The irony is that this season commemorates, ostensibly still, not fantasy but the Incarnation: not myth and legend, but fact. “In the reign of Caesar Augustus...” the Gospel recounts. “In the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman,” the Apostle teaches (*Gal. 4:4*). This is not fantasy but hard cold reality: God takes flesh.

Rather than attempting to live up to others’ fantasies, our challenge as Christians is always to live up to God’s reality in our midst: the hope; the expectation of the ages; the desire of the nations for redemption; the One who will redeem us from our delusions, fantasies, nightmares, and our sins.

As we make ready for Christmas—and we do make ready, in one way or another—let us ponder deeply the mystery of God-Incarnate, and seek not to live up to others’ expectations. We will always be the worse off if we do the latter.

Instead, let us ground ourselves in the reality of Emmanuel’s birth, for us and for our salvation: “Understand ye nations and submit yourselves, for God is with us” (*cf. Isaiah 7:14 ff*). He is far more real than a Norman Rockwell; far more substantive than “a white Christmas”; far more a cause for joy than sugarplums and Nutcrackers.

— Fr. John

## Parish Holds Annual Meeting

At the Holy Trinity Annual Meeting held after Liturgy on November 14, a quorum of parishioners voted to approve and support a balanced modest growth budget of approximately \$198,000 in annual income and expenses (see the January *Trisagion* for the final 2010 figures and complete 2011 budget). Chuck Beechan, Robert Schrauf, and Shane Stevens were elected to fill Council positions of President, Assistant Treasurer, and Vice-President—Grounds, respectively. The new officers will be installed following the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, January 16.

## The Parish (continued from page 6)

At best it is a bunch of decent people carrying on a bundle of benign activities for their own benefit. At worst, to use apocalyptic words, it is a “synagogue of Satan” perverting God’s gospel by its “blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (which) will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come” (*Revelation 2:9, 3:9; Matt. 12:31-32; Mark 3:28*).

The members of an Orthodox parish must be motivated to keep God’s commandments as their essential and ultimately exclusive reason for being. [The parish’s] life and activity...should be perfectly described by Jesus’ answer to the [scribe’s] question concerning the first and great commandment of the law of God... Jesus answered, “The first is...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your Neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” (*Mk. 12:28-31*)... Jesus teaches that “on these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets” (*Mt. 22:40*)... We can also say that on these two commandments depend the whole being and life of an Orthodox Christian parish.

## Transitions

### BAPTISM

- **Savva Shklyae**, son of Oleg and Olga Shklyae, baptized October 23, sponsored by Mark Fedkin.

### BIRTH

- **Riley Gabriel**, son of Brandon Stodart, born November 18, weighing 7 lbs., 9 oz., 20.5 in. long.

### DEATHS

- **Alexey Belih**, son of Anastasia Belih, on November 26. Memory eternal!
- **Helen Bokach**, beloved friend of our parish, on November 15. Memory eternal!
- **Catherine Maso**, mother of Larry Maso, on October 24. Memory eternal!
- **Marlene Guers**, mother of Manton (Matt) Guers, on November 19. Memory eternal!

## ■ ORTHODOX NATURAL CHURCH DEVELOPMENT

# The Parish: Our Life in Christ

by Father Thomas Hopko

EDITOR'S NOTE: We continue our multiple-part series examining the characteristics of a healthy parish according to 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 we are seeking to improve upon through Orthodox NCD.

### Apostolicity

According to the understanding of Christ's Church in the Nicene Creed, the Orthodox parish that is truly Christian will not only be the same Church of Christ with every other parish—one with God's unity, holy with God's holiness, and catholic with God's fullness. It will also be apostolic with God's own apostolicity which is found in the Church of Christ in all times and places.

An Orthodox parish, if it is Christ's one holy Church, will be apostolic in at least two meanings of the term. It will be apostolic because it is founded upon Christ's apostles and firmly rooted in apostolic doctrine and tradition. It will keep and live "the faith which was once and for all delivered to the saints." (*Jude 3*) It will preserve and pass on the apostolic "deposit" (*paratheke*) which has been guarded and developed by Orthodox Christians, particularly through their bishops, in all times and places, from apostolic times to the present (*cf. 1 Tim. 6:20; 2 Tim. 1:12,14*).

An Orthodox parish is apostolic also because it exists with God's mission, which is the mission of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the apostles of all ages, beginning with Christ's own. The Greek word *apostolo*, from which the words apostle and apostolic are derived, means "to send." So does the Latin word *mitto*, from which are derived the words mission and missionary.

### Church Health Team Meets; Creates Initial Action Plan

After taking all of your feedback into consideration, our Church Health Team (CHT) developed the first stage of an action plan to ensure Holy Trinity remains a growing, robust organization. During a planning workshop on November 13 led by Fr. Jonathan Ivanoff, the CHT adopted tangible goals designed to carefully evaluate and enhance our parish's various ministries. These initial steps will clearly indentify the mission and purpose for all of our fellowship groups, better communicate our ministry offerings to the parish and community, and identify essential skills among our faithful

According to his scriptural testimony, especially the Gospel according to St. John, Jesus speaks the words, does the work, and accomplishes the will "of the Father, the One, who sent Him" (*cf. John 6:29,44; 7:28,33; 17:3,18*). In the same scriptures, the apostles, being filled with the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and is sent by the Son, are themselves sent into the world by Jesus to proclaim the gospel of God's Kingdom. "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you...Receive the Holy Spirit" (*John 20:21*).

An Orthodox Christian parish, however it was founded and for whatever purpose it was organized, must understand itself to be an apostolic community with a missionary purpose. Its members, especially its leaders, must be conscious of themselves as people sent by Christ from God and empowered by the Holy Spirit to bring God's unity, holiness and fullness to all human beings in this divided, sinful and fragmented world. If a parish has no awareness and consciousness of being "sent" by God to speak His words, to do His work, and to accomplish His will in this world, then it is not an Orthodox parish.

(continued—see THE PARISH, last page)

typical for the altar servers to receive communion first followed by small children and their parents. Communicants should quietly get in the line that extends closest to the area where they are standing.

- When approaching the chalice, you should cross your arms over your chest—right hand over left hand. This rule was canonized at the Sixth Ecumenical Council: "Whosoever wishes to partake....let him form his hands into the shape of a cross, and thus approaching, let him receive the communion of grace."
- It is okay (even encouraged if you see a puzzled look on the face of the priest or deacon) to say your name aloud to the clergy (or the name of your children) when you approach the Chalice.
- Move forward to the chalice and "open wide." Your mouth should be between four to eight inches from the Chalice so as to minimize the possibility of spilling the Body and Blood. Tilting your head back a little can also be helpful to avoid spillage.
- Upon receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, swallow them with reverence, and after your lips are wiped, kiss the rim of the Chalice as the actual rib of Christ from which flowed blood and water.
- Minimize your movements when near the Chalice as to make certain that you do nothing that might accidentally tip or knock the chalice from the priest's hand (e.g., do not cross yourself when you are near the Chalice before or after receiving Communion).

- If you are holding a child, place the child in your **right** arm. This enables a natural movement from the priest's right arm to the mouth of the child. If you are holding an infant, cradle the child in your right arm (so the child is "laying" in your arm) with his/her head slightly tilted back. Don't forget to hold the child's arms and legs firmly so that he/she does not accidentally reach for the Chalice or kick it.
- After receiving Communion, gently move away from the chalice and take a piece of the antidoron (which means "instead of the Gifts"). Since it is blessed, the antidoron should be carefully handled and no particles of it should be allowed to fall on the ground. Carefully watch your children while they consume it and teach them to treat it with pious reverence..
- After returning to your place, you may read with gratitude the Post-Communion Prayers (also in the back of the Divine Liturgy book) or stay in the church after the Liturgy and listen to these prayers as they are read aloud.

Most of these reminders are based on common sense and help us show the proper respect in the presence of the Holy Mysteries. We hear the deacon intone, "In the fear of God and with faith and love, draw near" when bringing the Gifts out of the altar. If we do this, we can have the correct frame of mind and honor our Lord with proper etiquette.

### Wanted: Your Hospitality!

The Coffee Hour ministry is looking for volunteers (new and experienced) to fill slots for a new schedule that will be created in mid-December. If you are interested in having your name added, please see Ellen George after church or call her home number (861-5328) and leave a message.

### Society to Decorate for Nativity

The Altar Society will decorate the church for our Nativity services on Saturday, December 18 at 10 a.m. (If you would like to participate, see Joanne Takarchek.) Daily services begin December 20. See the attached calendar for a complete schedule.

### Women Grow Crucial Ministry

Over 50 women enjoyed a morning of decadent food and fellowship last month. Special thanks to all who attended, especially our Matushki for hosting the event (check out the pictures posted in the Gallery on [holyltrinity-oca.org](http://holyltrinity-oca.org)). The ministry plans to build on this momentum at a Lenten Luncheon this Saturday at noon in the Parish Hall.

### HTOC to Host Missionary

PSU OCF alumnus Maria Roeber will join us on Sunday, December 12 to offer a presentation on her upcoming long-term mission. She plans to provide health care to the people of Tanzania in early 2011.

