

# THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

## The Cross is Exalted and the World is Sanctified



### Faithfulness, Sacrifice, and Tithing

**B**rethren, we have come to the end of one liturgical year and the beginning of another. We have left off the contemplation of the state of the world as it now is – with Christ exalted and reigning in glory, with the saints, full of the Holy Spirit, experiencing a foretaste of the glory of the coming age, with the revelation of the divine economy made manifest – and we turn back to the beginning of the story. We reflect now on the time before Christ was incarnate and manifest as the Savior of the world. We reflect on the lives of many in Israel, on Joshua the son of Nun (Sept 1), on Moses and his Law (Sept 4), on Zechariah and Elizabeth (Sept 5), on Joachim and Anna (Sept 8/9), and on all the forefathers together (Dec 17). And certainly we reflect greatly on Mary the Theotokos as well (Sept 8, Oct 1, Nov 21, Dec 9, etc.). And as we reflect, we find that if there is one word that can

encapsulate the character of all of these diverse holy people together, it is surely the word “faithfulness.”

The Scriptures present us with pictures of faithfulness and infidelity from their very first pages. Adam and Eve present an image of faithlessness and unbelief when they rebel and are expelled from paradise. Noah presents an image of faithfulness when he resists the evil of his generation and builds an ark for the salvation of the world. The children of Israel present an image of infidelity in the wilderness when they incite Aaron to make a golden calf and call it their god. Daniel presents an image of fidelity when he chooses to continue to pray to his God, even though it seems to mean certain death.

So we are surrounded in the biblical witness and in the history of the Church by images of the faithful and the faithless. And one thing that we can say about

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## Schedules

	COFFEE HOUR	GREETERS	TELLERS
Sept 3	<b>Potluck - Church New Year</b>	M. & T. Chambers	K. Cattell & H. Torbic
Sept 10	A. Stickle, M. Leathers, L. Georgiou	M. Fedkin & K. Bazilevskaya	G. Cattell & M. Fedkin
Sept 17	H. Torbic, AT Pelikan, K. Oleynik	J. Houser & A. Stickle	M. Flori & M. Stickle
Sept 24	Russian Ladies, B (Elena G)	J. Johnson & K. Oleynik	H. Torbic & B. Haupt
Oct 1	<b>Potluck - Holy Protection</b>	J. Houser & A. Stickle	K. Cattell & M. Fedkin
Oct 8	C. Swisher, T. Chambers, C. Pellock	M. & T Chambers	G. Cattell & M. Stickle

## ■ FROM THE RECTOR'S DESK

# Faithfulness

the faithful, is that they understand that it is their duty to offer sacrifice to the Lord. As Christians and imitators of Christ, we see especially clearly that sacrifice is a part of our calling, because this is something we find Christ Himself doing in a profound way: He offers Himself as a perfect sacrifice to the Father (Heb 9:14).

Now true sacrifice, brothers and sisters, is ultimately an expression of love. Sacrifice is about taking good things – things we are tempted to love – and giving them over to the one we actually love. A human example of this might be a man who buys expensive Swiss chocolate with the intention of giving it to his wife. But when his wife is delayed in coming home, he finds himself thinking about the chocolate and passionately craving it in his heart. He is tempted to love the chocolate, and is surely within his rights to eat it. But because he loves his wife he goes through with his intention to offer it to her. This is what sacrifice is like: to offer something truly worthy and good to another out of love.

When we are speaking about God, true sacrifice must always be accompanied with thanksgiving. God is unique, and offering Him a gift is distinct from offering a gift to any created being. When we offer sacrifice to God, we acknowledge before Him that the things we love are ultimately His anyway. He made them and placed them under our authority, but ultimately everything that exists belongs to God, even our souls themselves.

This is why we say during the prayers of the consecration at the liturgy, “Thine own of Thine own, we offer unto Thee.” We acknowledge that there is nothing we could add to God, and nothing that we could transfer into or out of His possession. But we offer up gifts to Him anyway as an expression of our love: in this case, we are offering bread and wine and prayer and incense and all the rest of the liturgy. But the ultimate action that we are supposed to be making is very much in parallel to Christ’s action on the cross. When the priest says, “let us lift up our hearts” at the beginning of the consecration,

he is calling us to re-sacrifice our hearts themselves to God, to rededicate ourselves to God, to rekindle our love for God.

And truthfully, the heart is the only thing we have permanent agency over. Everything else in creation that we may own or use or enjoy is essentially “on loan” to us. So the key to appropriate sacrifice and true fidelity is to be trying to offer the whole heart up to God. Bound by sin as we are, this is not an easy thing, but it is nevertheless our calling.



Individual moments of sacrifice – offering the eucharist, lighting a candle before an icon, burning incense, singing a hymn, performing an act of mercy for a neighbor – these individual moments participate in what we intend to be an overarching action: the sacrifice of our hearts to God. Every moment of the earthly life of Christ was lived as a kind of sacrifice to the Lord. Smaller things like obedience to parents, resisting vainglory, quietly praying over a meal, or speaking the truth in the face of pressure to keep silent are all meaningful and intentional acts of sacrifice for Christ. And all of these things participate in and lead up to His final, fulfilled, and saving sacrifice on the Cross.

It is the same for us. The small acts of sacrifice that we do out of love for God lead us up to an existence in which we can be truly called ‘living sacrifices’ who are “dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus” (Rom 6:11). This is the path of the faithful of all ages, those who have loved God and lived for Him.

*(continued, see RECTOR'S DESK, facing page)*

## ■ NEWS & NOTES

### Sunday School Picnic

We would like to extend an invitation to all of our Sunday School families to join us on Sunday, September 17<sup>th</sup>, from 4pm-7pm for a family picnic at Circleville Park (Circleville Rd entrance). Please come and bring a side dish to share. Hamburgers, hot dogs, and 'smores will be provided. We hope to see you there for fun and fellowship!

### Ancient Faith Singles Retreat

The Ancient Faith Singles Retreat 30+ is a gathering of Orthodox Christians who are at least 30 years of age and unmarried (single, divorced, widowed). The weekend will include daily matins and vespers, and Sunday Divine Liturgy. The group will participate in interactive, leader-led discussion sessions, opportunities for community service, games, and social activities, and free time for relaxation and fellowship. When? February 29- March 3, 2024. Where? Antiochian Village. How much? \$250. For more information, visit: [store.ancientfaith.com/singles/](https://store.ancientfaith.com/singles/)



### Sunday School Starts

On Sunday September 11<sup>th</sup> we look forward to welcoming back our returning students and look forward to engaging with all our new students (enrollment is for students in grades K-12). As always, the Sunday school is intended to only supplement the instruction of the parents which takes place in the home each day. Along with weekly instruction from September through May (classes begin at 9:00 AM in the parish hall) there will be additional opportunities for learning and fellowship for both our students and parents. We look forward to a successful year! If you are interested in becoming a teacher (we strive to have 2-3 teachers in each classroom) or if you have questions, please contact Pdn. Mark.

### Orthodoxy 101

With a new slate of instructors, Holy Trinity’s traditional “Orthodoxy 101” fall inquirers class makes its return at 7 pm on Wednesday evenings, beginning on September 20. Sessions will be taught by a rotating cast of Pdn. Mark Oleynik, Anna Stickles, and Gary Cattell, with Fr. Ignatius doing the instruction for the final session. Classes are free and open to all, and can serve as a perfect bridge point for introducing our friends and neighbors to the Orthodox faith. “Come and see!”

- September 20 – The Orthodox Doctrine of God
- September 27 – Introduction to Orthodox Worship
- October 4 – The Saving Work of Jesus Christ
- October 11 – “How do I ‘get saved?’”
- October 18 – The Bible, Scripture, and Tradition
- October 25 – A Timeline of Church History
- November 1 – Mary, the Saints, and Icons
- November 8 – Orthodox Practices of Piety
- November 15 -- Orthodox Ethics

## ■ ORTHODOX LIVING

# Stewardship

*The below article, "How Much Money for the Church," is from the book Belief and Practice in the Orthodox Church and was submitted for publication by a member of the Parish Council.*

The Church...is not a commercial enterprise in nature and mission. But it does take money to operate our temples of worship and to further the work of spreading the Gospel of Christ. Men are corporeal, as well as spiritual, beings. We still dwell in a physical sphere where material needs must be met. Buildings are required for worship; these must be heated and maintained. Educational material is needed for our Church Schools; these take money. The Pastors of the Church must be supported so that they may be free to labor for the feeding of Christ's flock, which requires round-the-clock attention. Then there are the salaries for the cantors, the secretary, teachers, janitors, etc., which have to be covered by the money offerings of the members of the Church.

In ancient times pagan priests were supported from public funds. Such was the importance attached to their work. In the Old Testament times the Jews were commanded by God to give one-tenth of their income for the support of the temple and the priests. "And the Lord spoke unto Aaron. Behold, I have given the children of Levi [the priests] all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation."

Giving our money to the Church is an inseparable part of the life of a true Christian believer. It proves our love for Christ and our loyalty to His Holy Church. It provides us with the opportunity of expressing our faith. Giving cannot be separated from the Christian commitment. To love God and to believe in His only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, apart from the practice of giving our money for the work of His Church is inconceivable. To think that you are pleasing God simply by having faith without giving part of your income to the Church, is self-deception. For, to give is to manifest the spirit of self-denial which Christ

demands of His followers. It is to demonstrate that we obey our Lord who gives us spiritual blessings in return for the material offerings we make for His glory.

Giving according to our income is an explicit injunction of the word of God. Every Jew in the Old Testament times was expected to give one-tenth (tithe) of his earnings to the temple. The practice of paying tithes is very ancient. Abraham gave tithes to Melchisedek, a Priest. Jacob vowed to the Lord the tenth of all the possessions he would acquire in Mesopotamia. "Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee." The law of Moses ordained: "All the tithes of the land whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord."

In the New Testament, which is the fuller revelation of God, Christ teaches us also to give, but not in terms of a percentage of our income. He commands us: "Sell all that you have, give it to the poor, come and follow me." Our Lord sets no limit to our giving. There can be no limit to our giving in a life of complete self-surrender to Him. If it is unreserved self-denial, then it only follows naturally that one must give without reservation or restriction. We can never give enough to Christ, if we truly believe in Him as our Redeemer. Giving our soul to Him is giving of our material possessions to promote His Kingdom upon earth.

During Apostolic times the teaching of Christ was practiced to the letter. There was no private possession of property. Each Christian would lay all his possessions before the feet of the Apostles...

How can we confirm to the New Testament command of Christ, when we cannot obey the minimum demand of the Old Law of Moses? A follower of Christ is a person who is regenerated in the grace of the Holy Ghost and elevated far above the spiritual level of the Jew who had only the Law of Moses to live by. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

According to the teaching of the Gospel, man is a steward of the blessings received of God. He really does not own what he possesses. Everything belongs to God. Since everything is God's, it is only natural that we should be generous in offering our money for His purposes. We are simply returning what He has granted us. ■

## ■ RECTOR'S DESK

# Faithfulness

As we are in the season of administrative and budgetary planning, the parish council has asked me to speak to the parish about a very important type of sacrificial offering that Orthodox Christians are called to make to the Lord: tithing. To "tithe" means to give the first ten percent of one's earthly income as a gift to God. Tithing is one of the most basic types of sacrifice Orthodox Christians are called to, alongside things like regular participation in worship, personal prayer, fasting, and almsgiving. Tithing is an act of love for God; it is a rejection of the damning love of money; it is an expression of placing our hope in God and our rejection of placing our hope in personal power in this age.

Like fasting, tithing is something that can be abrogated for a time in life due to certain circumstances. But like fasting, it is something one really needs to ask a blessing from one's priest to forgo. It is a basic spiritual discipline of Orthodox Christian life, and just like with things such as prayer or attendance at divine services, neglecting to tithe is harmful to the soul; it leads us toward greed, self-centeredness, ingratitude, covetousness, lust of power, and similar sins. When we neglect to tithe, just like when we willfully neglect to

attend services, we are expressing a truly unhealthy self-love, and not the love of God.

In and of itself, tithing is not salvific, just like almsgiving or prayer is not intrinsically salvific. Only the union of the heart with Christ can save us. However, tithing is a mark of faithfulness. Its presence in our lives is a sign that we are truly seeking to "commend ourselves... and all our life unto Christ our God." Dear brethren, if tithing has not been a practice in your life out of rebellion or of ignorance, repent of this. Confess it, and walk differently. If it is something you are attempting to do but legitimately struggling to bear, speak with me about it in confession. To a priest is given the power to "bind and loose," and any good priest knows there are appropriate times to loose his spiritual children from their responsibilities for their welfare. In the end, Paul speaks for God, when he says, "I do not seek what is yours, but you" (2 Cor 12:14). In other words, God is not after our property, He is after our heart. But in a paradox, the man who loves God with his heart will gladly surrender all his property, his health, and even his life itself as an expression of his love.

Brethren, let us be faithful, let us love God, let us offer sacrifices, let us offer tithes, let us do good works, and let us grow into the likeness of our Maker and Creator: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen. ■

— Fr. Ignatius

## Prayer for the New Year

O Master, Lord our God, the Fountain of Life and immortality, the Creator of all things visible and invisible, Who governs the seasons and the years and guides all things with Thy wise providence, we thank Thee for all the blessings Thou hast poured out upon us during the past years of our lives, and we beseech Thee, O all-bountiful Lord: Bless this coming year with Thy goodness, direct our civil authorities in the path of goodness, bestow Thy heavenly blessings upon all Thy people: health, salvation, and growth in virtue. Deliver Thy Holy Church from every assault of the evil one, and grant us peace and tranquility; and grant that we may always offer thanks to Thee: the Father who is from everlasting, together with Thine only-begotten Son, and Thy most-holy, good, and life-giving Spirit -- God glorified in three Persons, and that we may joyfully praise Thine all-Holy Name. Amen.

# Holy Trinity Calendar LIVE Please note that at this time, all services at Holy Trinity are being live-streamed. To watch them online, please visit [holytrinity-oca.org/YouTube](http://holytrinity-oca.org/YouTube)

## Chapel Calendar

All events take place at 145 North Kern Street in Beavertown, unless where noted.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
27 Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am)	28	29	30 Vespers, 6pm	31	<b>September 1</b>	2 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm
3 Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am)	4	5	6 Vespers, 6pm	7	8 <b>Nativity of the Theotokos</b> Divine Liturgy, 8am	9 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm
10 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am)	11	12	13 Vigil of Elevation, 6pm	14 <b>Elevation of the Holy Cross</b> Divine Liturgy, 8am	15	16 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
17 Chrismation of Sophia Welch 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Sunday School Family Picnic, 4pm @ Circleville Park	18 Parish Council Meeting, 6pm	19	20 Vespers, 6pm Orthodoxy 101, 7pm	21	22 Great Vespers, 6pm	23 <b>Conception of St. John</b> Baptism of the Chambers Family, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
24 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am)	25	26	27 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following Orthodoxy 101, 7pm	28	29	30 Great Vespers, 6pm
<b>October 1</b> Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am)	2	3	4 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following Orthodoxy 101, 7pm	5	6	7 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following

### ECCLESIASTICAL NEW YEAR BEGINS (9/1/23)

- 9/2/23 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers; Confessions following
- 9/3/23 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; fellowship immediately following
- 9/3/23 5:00 p.m. Summer End Outing at the Hoffmans (remember to bring lawn chairs; all else provided)
- 9/5/23 6:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal
- 9/7/23 6:00 p.m. Nativity of the Theotokos Vespersal  
Divine Liturgy
- 9/9/23 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers; Confessions following
- 9/10/23 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; fellowship immediately following
- 9/10/23 12:00 p.m. Review/adoption of 2024 Proposed Budget
- 9/13/23 6:00 p.m. Exaltation of the Precious Cross  
Vespersal Divine Liturgy
- 9/16/23 5:00 p.m. Akathist to the Precious Cross
- 9/16/23 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers; Confessions following
- 9/17-23/23 Beaver Community Fair
- 9/17/23 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; fellowship immediately following
- 9/19/23 6:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal
- 9/23/23 8:00 a.m. Selinsgrove Street Fair Outreach (All hands on deck!)
- 9/23/23 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers; Confessions following
- 9/24/23 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; fellowship immediately following
- 9/25/23 6:30 p.m. "Hats and Blankets for Babies"  
Knitting/Crocheting
- 9/26/23 6:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal
- 9/30/23 5:00 p.m. Akathist to the Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos
- 9/30/23 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers with Litya
- 10/1/23 10:00 a.m. Protection of the Most Holy Theotokos Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; fellowship immediately following

All events take place at 119 South Sparks Street in State College, unless where noted.  
Events listed at **Trinity House** take place at 123 South Sparks Street, in State College.

September 2023