

THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

He Has Given His Angels Charge Over You



Father's Annual Address

God's Grace and Growth in the Midst of Challenges

B To say it succinctly, 2023 has been a whirlwind of a year. The parish has fully revived from its covid-induced slumber, and there is much that can be said about what has happened in the past twelve months and our direction going forward. Some highlights include:

- Like many Orthodox parishes throughout the country, we have seen an upsurge in inquirers, catechumens, and converts in the past year. Since last November, we have received eight converts into the faith. We presently have five catechumens, and it seems abundantly likely that we will have additional catechumens soon as well. Providing adequate catechism for these folks has been a challenge for me for many reasons, not least of which has been the constant difficulty of trying to construct a "book list" of

things I expect catechumens to read. I am extremely thankful to the OCA for releasing this year its first-ever catechism, which I hope will eliminate the need for me to employ an outside booklist and help me in constructing a standardized outline for catechesis in the parish.

- The internet continues to be both a difficulty and a land of opportunity for us. I am extremely thankful to the parish council for being willing to permit the unbudgeted hiring of Amber Ashmore to manage the somewhat-dormant webpage and the completely dormant Facebook page. It is very gratifying to be able to see current parish events or priorities directly publicized on the main website. There is much work still to be done, but I am very happy with what we have accomplished to this point.

(continued, see RECTOR'S DESK, following page)

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH
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State College, PA 16801
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Schedules

	COFFEE HOUR	GREETERS	TELLERS
Nov 5	Russian Ladies Group B (Elena G)	M. & T. Chambers	G. Cattell & M. Fiori
Nov 12	Pre-Nativity Fast Potluck	M. Fedkin & K. Bazilevskaya	M. Fedkin & B. Haupt
Nov 19	C. Swisher, T. Chambers, C. Pellock	M. Leathers & A. Stickles	H. Torbic & M. Stickles
Nov 26	Russian Ladies Group A (Katya F)	Mka. K. Oleynik & J. Houser	K. Cattell & M. Fiori
Dec 3	A. Stickles, M. Leathers, L. Georgiou	M. & T. Chambers	G. Cattell & B. Haupt
Dec 10	H. Torbic, A.T. Pellikan, Mka. K. Oleynik	M. Fedkin & K. Bazilevskaya	M. Fiori & H. Torbic

■ FROM THE RECTOR'S DESK

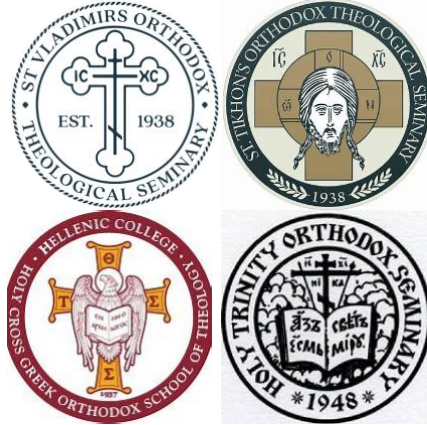
Annual Address

➤ The livestreaming of services and certain events has continued throughout the last year at a greatly reduced cost to the parish. Our streaming quality is not nearly at a professional level, of course, but it seems like this is the medium-long term form streaming will take for our parish. I am thankful for the many benefits of streaming, including the ability of inquirers to “lurk” a little before they take the plunge and attend a service, and also the ability of parishioners who are disabled to participate in this way. However, the presence of streaming is not without its drawbacks, and clearly for some it has become an excuse not to actually attend services. Yet our faith is a sacramental faith, and any able-bodied parishioner is expected to attend in person, prepare themselves, and receive the body and blood of Christ unto their salvation. Christ gave us the sacraments as a means of grace; He did not give us vicarious participation through audiovisual technology. And that is simply the truth of the matter.

➤ The property discussions of previous years have been relatively muted this year, and the parish council elected to focus instead on reducing the current mortgage and setting up the Chapel of the Holy Spirit as an independent parish rather than continuing to focus quite so intensively on the property question. The status quo from the prior year remains: we know we can rebuild/reconfigure our present property for somewhere in the neighborhood of three to four million dollars. We also know that such a reconfiguration will not accomplish certain important parishioner aspirations, including outdoor space, a sizeable parking lot, and a cemetery. It is also my continuing sense that when we are presented with a “stay or go” option, the parish is deeply divided on the question, and divided for reasons (on both sides) that I believe to be of merit. Therefore, it is my suggestion that we look to acquire land suitable for a parish church in the near outskirts of State College and build a cemetery there, with the hope and eventual aim of creating a second parish church on that site in the future which can minister more to the

needs of growing families whilst our continued presence in the downtown provides us with an opportunity for further evangelism to students and young professionals.

➤ Per our discussions with diocesan authorities, the Chapel of the Holy Spirit is expected to become an independent parish in the year ahead. There are still a number of issues to work out, including especially the question of incorporation, but the Chapel has made great strides toward self-sufficiency, and we believe a 2024 separation timeline is both reasonable and feasible.



➤ The issue of vocations remains urgent in my thinking. Speaking beyond the parish, if the Orthodox Church is going to survive and flourish in the decades ahead in this land, she needs competent, spiritually mature, prayerful, and intellectually developed leaders. Although we have sent one seminarian to school this year and the other parishes of our diocese have sent another (reversing a long trend of total barrenness), we need to send many more, and we need to prepare the best among our young men for the priesthood. Fr. John, on the subject of tithing, used to say that our offerings needed to be “our first and our best.” If we give the best of our young men up to the service of Christ’s altar, He will bless us abundantly in the years ahead. If we give Him nothing, He will surely pay us back in kind. I would also note that our women should not think the possibility of advanced theological education is something only for men or only for clergy candidates.

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

■ NEWS & NOTES

Bookstore News

The bookstore will be having an Advent Sale! From Wed. Nov 8th - Sun. Dec 17th - 15% off everything in the store. Please note that the last day to special order for Christmas is December 3rd. Please talk to Anna Stickle for information about where we order from and any special orders you would like to make.

The bookstore has many new icons and new books including devotionals for the Advent Season. We also keep candles, vigil lamps with wicks, music CD's and many other things for your home church stocked in the store. Our new expanded hours are: Monday 2-5pm; Tuesday 10am-2pm & 5-7pm; Wednesday 5-6pm; Thursday 2-5pm; Friday 2-5pm; Saturday 5-6pm; and Sunday 12-1pm.

Photo Update for Online Directory

We're updating our online directory. It's a great way to get to know people and stay in touch! Sunday Dec. 3rd during coffee hour, Anna Stickle will give a presentation covering how to sign into the directory, update and customize your security settings, and also how to access your church giving and pledges. Afterwards there will be an opportunity to have your photo taken and check your info and settings. This will also be available Friday December 8th 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. and December 10th during coffee hour.

■ CATECHESIS

Angels (con't)

C. S. Lewis once pointed out that all human beings were amphibious—part spirit and part animal, just as amphibians were part land animal and part water animal. Our life in Christ therefore partakes of this amphibious nature. We have physical components to our spiritual life—things like prostrations, kissing icons, signing ourselves with the cross, taking a bath and eating bread and wine (i.e. Holy Baptism and Holy Communion), lifting up our hands and singing aloud. We also have more intangible components to our spiritual life, things such as inner vigilance, struggle against

Matthew 25 Thanksgiving Drive

This year's Matthew 25 Thanksgiving Drive is now underway! The drive will provide complete holiday meals to 21 local families (107 adults and children) in need. You may sign up to purchase side dishes on the sheet in the Narthex. Monetary donations to help cover the cost of turkeys are also greatly appreciated and should be made to Matthew 25.

Share the Good News!

All families and parishioners are invited to sing Christmas carols around town on Friday, December 9th from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. A light meal will be served prior to caroling along with hot chocolate to end the evening. Please join us and bring a friend as we share the coming Nativity of our Lord. Don't forget to dress warmly and bring your bells.

St. Elizabeth Convent

For adult education this month, we will be blessed to have some Belarussian monastics come speak to us about the history and social ministries of their monastery, St. Elisabeth in Minsk, on Tuesday, November 7, immediately following Great Vespers. Following their presentation, they will open their traveling bookstore, which sells various icons and handicrafts from their monastery. For those who cannot make it in the evening, the bookstore will also be open after Liturgy the following day.

temptation, repenting with inner tears, and opening our hearts to God. The priest has his role in the former; the angels have their role in the latter. They are always with us, and their unseen influence affects everything we do.

God is the Maker of all things, both visible and invisible, both the world of trees, animals, and human beings that we can see, and the world of angels and spirits that we cannot presently see. The two worlds do not co-exist separately, like oil and water. They are interlocked and interwoven. Everything is both physical and spiritual.

Consistent with this, there is a Jewish tradition that every blade of grass has its own angel which stands over it, saying to it, “Grow!” If you could hear what your guardian angel is now saying to you, I wonder what it is that you would hear him say? ■

■ CATECHESIS

Angels in our Lives

This is the final part in a teaching on angels by Fr. Lawrence Farley, taken from OCA.org.

First, a word of cultural clarification: the angels in the Orthodox tradition are not the angels as often portrayed in our western culture. A quick Google search of images for angels will reveal a tradition that has suffered debasement and distortion. Those angels look either like beautiful women who model for a fashion company or cute plump toddlers who might model for Pampers (try the experiment yourself: Google “angels” and check the images. How many of the modern images of angels are young females?) In the Orthodox iconographic tradition angels are always portrayed as soldiers—i.e. as adult males. They look more awesome than they do attractive or adorable. Their “official” iconographic designation is “the holy bodiless powers”. No one would imagine that they might be fashion models in their spare time.

The presence and protection of angels begin in a Christian’s life very early indeed. In fact, it begins on the very day of arrival: in the priest’s service book are prayers to be used “For a Woman on the First Day after Childbirth”...It has been my joy and privilege to pray with the newly-delivered mothers of the parish within the first hour or so after childbirth, either in the hospital room or at home, and so most of the babies born within the parish experience the Church’s protective prayer when they are about an hour or so old. Part of one of those prayers reads, “Grant [the mother] health and strength of body and soul, and surround her with bright and radiant angels”. Since her precious little newborn bundle is then lying within her arms, the angels surround the child as well. I usually refer to this time as the child’s “Welcome to this world prayers”. As you see, as soon as the child arrives, the angels are there to guard and protect.

The next time angels are mentioned are in the prayers of the baptismal service. In the case of those born into the Orthodox Church, this service usually takes place a few weeks after the child is born. As part of the catechumenal approach to the baptism itself, there is one final exorcism prior to the candidates’ renunciation of Satan and adherence to Christ. At the beginning of that prayer the priest prays that God will “assign to his/ her life an angel of light who shall deliver him/ her from every snare of the

adversary, from encounter with evil, from the demon of the noonday, and from evil thoughts”.

This is, of course, what the Church refers to as one’s “guardian angel”, the messenger from God whose military job it is to accompany the Christian throughout life. The angel’s task is to pray for us (a thankless task!), to defend us from demonic assault, and to protect us generally from harm. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews referred to this role when he wrote of the angels in passing, “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14)...



The angels then are a part of our life in Christ. That is why they feature in the Church’s calendar and on the doors of the icon-screen of every church. All things being equal, the icons of the archangels Michael and Gabriel adorn the deacons’ doors.

And of course the angels feature in the prayer rule that we pray every day. Orthodox prayerbooks contain prayers to God (naturally), but also include a prayer or two to the Theotokos, to one’s patron saint—and to one’s guardian angel. In these latter prayers we ask our angel to pray for us, to guide us, and to protect us. We also ask the angel to forgive us. I often think that this last petition is necessary and apt because the task of protecting sinners like us must be no treat. The angels are holy and we are not. Really not. Staying with us all the time must feel to them a little like baby-sitting problem children, brats prone to misbehaving, tantrums, breaking things, getting filthy, meanness, spite, and absurd posturing and boasting. Add to this our human predilection for lust in all its horrible forms (a problem happily not found in children), and one begins to see how thankless their task really is. The least we can do is to say sorry from time to time.

(continued, see ANGELS, next page)

■ RECTOR’S DESK

Annual Address

There are many ways in which non-clergy can serve the Church and we need educated and developed leaders to be scholars, teachers, missionaries, leaders of social ministries, musicians, liturgists, composers, iconographers, textile artists, and so on. I am proud of our parish for sending and supporting Evan Ashmore this past year and I am thankful to His Eminence and to our Lord for the ordination of Dn. John Kerstetter, but we need to have the thought “and who is next” in our minds as well, even as we continue to see Evan through his education.

➤ In the past year there have been many engagements in the parish and (at the time of this writing) two weddings. Certainly this is a joyous thing and portends future growth, but I must confess that the counselling materials I have used with the couples (one by SVS Press and one published by the GOA) have been of very poor quality and I continue to search for practical and theologically rich materials to use in the counselling process.

➤ Finally, I want to make note of a few things that I wish I had done in the past year or that I think we can do better. First of all, it had been my intention to try to give serious consideration to the curriculum of our Sunday School program this past summer. Due to Matushka’s illness, I was unable to do this as I had planned. Secondly, while I am very pleased with my own interactions with the OCF in the 2022-2023 school year, I feel that I have been too distant from them so far this year and I hope for more time and ability in the coming semester. While I have been quite involved with event scheduling and planning, nothing can replace personal, boots-on-the-ground pastoral attention. Thirdly, I very much regret watching certain people drift away from active participation in the life of the Church. This is an ancient problem, going back to the first century and the pastoral calls to “stand fast” and “abide” or to “finish the race,” and so forth. Nevertheless, given all of the pressures on me and on my time, I feel as though I do not have it in me to pursue every straying sheep. Further, I do not have even remotely the ability to

attend to the home-bound elderly that I would desire. While an ideal solution to these problems might be found in establishing a second priest for the parish, I also think that the reinvigoration of a lay ministry such as “TLC1” is in order. On a personal level, I do care very much about every single parishioner. On a practical level, there is no way I can reach out to everyone with the attention they need to show them that their pastor and their parish do indeed care about them. My primary piece of advice to those who feel pastorally neglected would be: reach out to me. “The squeaky wheel gets the grease.” And to those who are straying more generally, I can only refer you back to the words of the Lord: “remember from what you have fallen; repent and do the works you did at first” (Rev 2:5). Pray daily, come to church, confess, receive the sacraments, keep the feasts, love and serve your neighbor, walk in the expectation of the kingdom. “Forsake foolishness and live” (Prov 9:6). “Take words with you and return to the Lord” (Hos 14:2)!

This last year has been a whirlwind and a challenge. The furnace broke. Appeals were made and met with generosity. A mortgage drive was initiated. Refugees here harbored. The homeless were sheltered. A seminarian was sent. A deacon was ordained. By-laws were crafted for our daughter parish. Matushka came close to death, and the parish ministered to her profoundly in her hour of need. Marriages. Births. Baptisms. Engagements. Funerals. Converts and inquirers. A betrothal in Kansas. An active campus fellowship.









Truly, we are blessed, but all of this is a lot of hard work. Please pray for me, for my family, for Pdn. Mark, for our parish council and for all who faithfully minister in our parish. And more than that: offer yourselves to the Church for the work of ministry as an act of service to God and your brethren. We are offering a common sacrifice to God. Let us offer Him our utmost, our best, our greatest, and our highest, that He might bless us and save our souls.

With Deep Love in Jesus Christ,
— Fr. Ignatius

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

Chapel Calendar

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

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
29 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am)	30	31	 November 1 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Orthodoxy 101, 7pm	2	 3	4 Archdiocesan Assembly Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
5 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am)	6	7 Great Vespers, 6pm Adult Ed, "St. Elisabeth Convent, Minsk," 7pm St. Elisabeth Traveling Bookstore, 7:30pm	 Archangel Michael Divine Liturgy, 8am St. Elisabeth Traveling Bookstore, 9:30am Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Orthodoxy 101, 7pm	9	 10	11 Holy Matrimony: Welch/Parkhill, 1pm (St. Nicholas Cathedral, 3500 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington, DC) Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
12 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Holy Matrimony: Willbanks/Cattell, 2pm	13	14	 15 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Orthodoxy 101, 7pm	16	 17	18 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
 19 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Parish Annual Meeting, 12 noon	 20 Vigil for Entrance of the Theotokos, 6pm	 Entrance of the Theotokos Divine Liturgy, 8am	 22 Akathist – Glory to God for all Things, 6pm	 23	 24	 25 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
 26 Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am)	 27	 28	 29 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	 30	 December 1	 2 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
 3 Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Online Directory Presentation, 12 noon	 4	 5 Great Vespers, 6pm	 St. Nicholas Divine Liturgy, 8am Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	 6	 7 Online Directory Photos/Updates, 1:30-5:30pm Sunday School Caroling, 5:30-7:30pm	 8 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following

- 11/4/23 Archdiocesan Assembly, Allison Park
- 11/4/23 6:00 p.m. Reader's Vespers (*DST ends; fall back one hour tonight*)
- 11/5/23 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; fellowship immediately following; catechesis @ 1:30 p.m.
- 11/7/23 6:00 p.m. Synaxis of the Archangel Michael and the Other Bodiless Powers of Heaven Vespersal Divine Liturgy
- 11/11/23 5:00 p.m. Akathist to the Theotokos, Healer of Cancer (*please submit names for anyone in need of healing from cancer or other disease*)
- 11/11/23 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers; Confessions following
- 11/12/23 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; fellowship immediately following; catechesis @ 1:30 p.m.
- 11/14/23 6:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal

NATIVITY (ADVENT / ST. PHILIP'S) FAST BEGINS

- 11/15/23 6:00 p.m. St. Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist Great Vespers/ Litya
- 11/18/23 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers; Confessions following
- 11/19/23 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; fellowship immediately following
- 11/19/23 12:00 p.m. Annual Parish Meeting
- 11/20/23 6:00 p.m. Entrance of the Most Holy Theotokos into the Temple Vespersal Divine Liturgy
- 11/25/23 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers; Confessions following
- 11/26/23 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; fellowship immediately following; catechesis @ 1:30 p.m.
- 11/27/23 6:30 p.m. "Hats and Blankets for Babies" Knitting/Crocheting
- 11/28/23 6:00 p.m. Choir rehearsal
- 12/2/23 6:00 p.m. Great Vespers; Confessions following
- 12/3/23 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy; Hours 9:40 a.m.; fellowship immediately following; catechesis @ 1:30 p.m.

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.

November 2023