

THE TRISAGION

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Let Us Begin the Fast With Joy



The Expulsion of Adam and Eve as depicted in the Junius Manuscript, a 10th century Old English collection

New Media and the Impoverishment of Spiritual Life

The following is a selection from Jean-Claude Larchet’s book “The New Media Epidemic: The Undermining of Society, Family, and Our Own Soul,” published in English by Holy Trinity Press. These selections come from pp. 137, 145-147 of the print edition. The following is taken from orthodoxlife.org.

The new media have ... led to the impoverishment of spiritual life. More and more, they have taken the place of traditional religions and spiritual practices, and at the same time they are changing and partly destroying the inner and outer conditions that favor the practice and development of spiritual life.

Communication: A Substitute for Communion

Through emails, text messages, and social networks, the new media are credited with helping to forge relations between humans, and even, especially through Facebook, to give them friendship ... One might think that these ideas are at one with modern personalist philosophy as found in Judaism (Buber, Lévinas), or Catholicism (Mounier), or even Orthodoxy (Berdiaev, Yannaras, Zizioulas), where a person is defined as a being in relation to others, the relationship being the only way this can come about.

But as we saw in a preceding chapter, the relationships that are created through the new media are very superficial. The so-called friends of Facebook,

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Schedules

	COFFEE HOUR	GREETERS	TELLERS
Feb 1	J. Cassar, N. Shaub, M. Stevens	C. Pelllock & A. Suresh	M. Fiori & G. Cattell
Feb 8	N. Troyan, R. Nissly, S. Parkhill	M. & K. Fedkin	K. Cattell & B. Haupt
Feb 15	Meatfare – HTOC/Potluck	J. & A. Cassar	H. Torbic & M. Fedkin
Feb 22	Cheesefare – Pancakes/Potluck	T. Chambers & A. Stickers	M. Fiori & G. Cattell
March 1	E. Emigh, E. Al-Sulaimani, E. George	R. Patel & Mat. K. Oleynik	K. Cattell & B. Haupt

■ ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

New Media (con't)

gained at the click of a mouse, are friends but in name. It is risky to reduce one's neighbor to a Facebook "friend" or a Twitter "follower." As Peter Pilt has shown, this replaces the love of one's neighbor, which always implies concrete action along with effort and sacrifice, with "likes" produced by the simple click of a mouse. In this way, Christianity is replaced by what he calls "Clickstianity." Pilt emphasizes that there is a similar risk in confusing activity on the social networks with spirituality. A cartoon shows a man who has just died arriving in Heaven. When God asks him: "What did you do with your life?," he replies with surprise: "What! Didn't you read my tweets?"

We have shown that relationships created by the new media have a virtual dimension. They are abstract, bodiless, lacking depth, and complexity. The nuances and all the visual and emotional richness of concrete relationships are lacking. Even those connections where the faces are present on screen cannot provide the feeling of a real presence. This is shown by the remark that users of Skype often make without realizing: "I miss you!"

Paradoxically, such relationships can be formed between lonely individuals who have never met, and often, who would never want to meet for fear of exposure or disappointment. The social media tend to replace real communities with virtual communities. Some are happy with this change, but it is clear that the virtual, by its very nature, has not the human or spiritual density of the concrete.

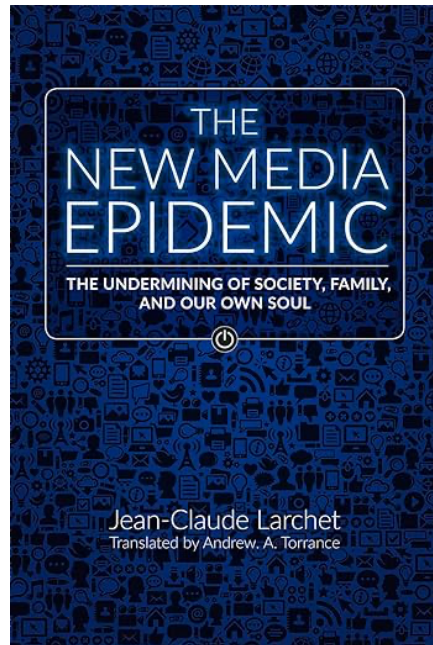
In fact communication has become a substitute for communion, which, in its spiritual reality, rests on the participation in one Body and one Spirit in a concrete community

A Connection Competing with Connection to God

The facts show that connection to the new media competes with connection to God, which is made through participation in Liturgical services and through personal prayer. As we have said many times, the new

media eat up time. The television does so and even more so the Internet. Through its links it entices the user to navigate further and further, capturing his attention and making him forget the passage of time. Anyone who has used the Internet has often found that a search that should have been quick took far longer than intended.

In this competition between connections, the new media win hands down. In spite of all the love we may have for Him, to connect with God we must make an effort to withdraw from our environment and from our own thoughts in the widest sense (reasoning, imagination, memories, desires, etc.) and be vigilant and attentive; navigating the Internet is easy. It is enough to let oneself go to plunge into a pleasant world that always assuages our desires and passions. Moreover, there is a sense of total freedom, whereas to relate to God within the framework of serious and sincere



(continued, see NEW MEDIA, facing)

■ NEWS & NOTES

Adult Ed: Uniatism

Where do "Eastern Rite" Catholics come from? What is their history? What might distinguish them from Orthodox Christians? How might Uniatism be related to the history of American Orthodox jurisdictions like the OCA? If these are questions you've ever wondered about, please join us for a special lecture on the history of Uniatism with Fr. Mark Meholick on Wednesday, February 18, at 7 pm. Fr. Mark knows Slavic Uniatism particularly well, as this was the tradition he was raised in. Come join us for an interesting and insightful talk!

Women's Psalter Group

Women of the parish are invited to join our 2nd annual parish Psalter group for Lent. Those of you who participate will pray Psalms privately and on your own time according to a daily Psalm assignment which unifies you with the other women in the group. We will also pray for and encourage each other, knowing we are all in this journey to the Cross and Resurrection together! Please talk to Dee Patel or Stacey Wallace with any questions. A sign up will be in the narthex. You may also email Dee at deannapatel@gmail.com.

Lenten Beneficiary Meeting

Our Matthew 25 team is pleased to announce that our 2026 Lenten beneficiary will be the Orthodox Christian Deaf Association (OCDA). The OCDA is a pan-Orthodox organization that exists to "connect Orthodox deaf Christians of all jurisdictions together in order to foster fellowship, create useful resources, both educational and liturgical, plan special events, and to introduce the greater deaf community to the Orthodox faith." One of their most ambitious projects is a standardized ASL edition of the divine liturgy, to which our own Dee Patel has been contributing. To learn more about the OCDA, speak with Dee or visit orthodoxdeaf.org. All donations given to Matthew 25 by check, online, or by cash collection from February 15 to the end of Lent will go to support the OCDA and its work.

OCF Interviewing Candidates

We are pleased to announce that OCF National has posted the Penn State Campus Missionary job position and is now accepting applications and beginning to interview candidates. If you know someone you think might be qualified for the job, please encourage them to visit ocf.net/about-us/join-our-team/ to look over the job description and consider applying.

Priestly Ordination: Dn. Evan Ashmore

By the grace of God, Dn. Evan Ashmore has been approved by the Holy Synod for ordination to the priesthood. The ordination liturgy will occur on Saturday, March 21 at 10am. A reception will follow. Please pray for Dn. Evan and his family as he prepares to take this momentous step in service to Christ and his Holy Church.

Many Years: Bradley & Jennifer Kennedy

Congratulations to our now-former parishioner Jennifer Kennedy (née Amato) and her husband Bradley on their wedding on January 11 in Columbus. May God bless them and grant them many happy years!



■ ORTHODOX SPIRITUALITY

While We Think About God

We are living in favorable times: we can go to church and take communion without the risk of being shot to death or thrown into jail. In spite of that, the inner struggle increases. We attempt to defeat the sin inside us but it pushes back. It's hard to say whether the struggle inside is better than pressure from the outside. Anyway, God will never abandon us if we put our hopes on him.

We often expect to defeat the sin by sheer willpower, and we sometimes even succeed for a while. However, a person who relies on his or her own strength will lose the battle. When you read biographies of saints, you see them struggling with sin for decades on end, day after day. The steps that they used to take were tiny but at least, they were invariably moving forward. Of course, they had their own failures, too; God who is able to see a person's heart sees something we cannot recognize. We see a sinner and condemn him or her. For instance, he keeps smiling and having a good time but we are at a loss: we saw him commit a sin why doesn't he weep for it? What we don't know is that he repented a while ago. There was a young novice who came to a monastery. He was just an ordinary guy, at least as far as observers could tell from his outward appearance. After he died, the monks of that monastery saw him in a dream. He was shiny and elated. They were surprised: How could that be? It turned out that he had never judged anyone in his entire life. Each person has his or her own measure to shoot for.

Sin is when we are away from God. As soon as we call upon God and begin to repent, the broken connection is restored, and the sin is devoid of its power. It has no place in the hearts of those who stay with God and take communion, thus accepting him into their hearts.

How not to lose the connection with God and not to break that union? You've got to work hard but it'll make you happy. Some people recite the Jesus Prayer, while



others just think about God. As long as you keep reconnecting with God in your thoughts, it's your prayer. While we think about him, we are with him. As soon as we go away from him, we lose the connection. Of course, there are so many times in our lives when we lose that connection. In spite of that, the Lord has given us the opportunity to come and say sorry and accept him in our hearts again, to be filled with him and move on towards the Light, step by step. Of course, we're in for quite a few storms and downfalls but we'll win if we stay true to him.

Christ rose from the dead and showed us the entry into the Kingdom of Heaven: a road of love, which He grants to all in abundance and which He teaches us to share, preserve, and be grateful for all things. •

Priest Valery Zakharov, St. Elisabeth's Convent, Minsk. From <https://obitel-minsk.org/while-we-think-about-god-we-are-with-him>

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New Media (con't)

religious practice implies permanent regularity and discipline.

The monasteries themselves have managed to escape the invasion of the television, but find it harder to resist the new media. More and more monks, for various more or less valid reasons, now have access to a computer. More and more of them have a portable phone, which nowadays is a device that includes all the other media. In a coenobitic monastery, the rule may forbid or limit the use of portable media; but solitaries escape such control. Many hermits pass time on the Internet that could better have been given to prayer, and many monks spy through that small window every day on the world that they left through the front door.

Self-exposure and Overexposure: A New Terrain for the Practice of Self-love, Vanity, and Pride

The television has strongly encouraged the desire for media exposure, not only among those in public life (actors, singers, and politicians) but also among ordinary folk, fascinated by the fame that comes from simply taking part in a television program. The Internet, through YouTube and Facebook, allows anyone to show movies of his most trivial words and actions to a huge mass of users, or to boast about his wildest behavior, his absurd and even suicidal exploits.

The social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, and the discussion blogs and forums encourage self-exposure and even over-exposure. Many users of the Internet blithely describe their most trivial acts. They emit a stream of consciousness carrying their impressions, sentiments, and thoughts of the moment in complete disorder. Through videos and photos they expose their personal and family life without the least modesty or reserve. This reveals their desire to attract the attention of others to themselves. It manifests the narcissism that we have already described. One of its main expressions is the *selfie*, a photo of oneself taken with a smartphone, which is contemplated, as in a mirror, or posted on the social networks before the public gaze. How strange that these postings of photos

or videos on the social networks should be called "sharing," when they are acts based on egotism, linked to vanity and pride. This attitude is reinforced by what follows when the success of these "shares" is judged by the number of "likes" they attract.

What might be seen in a child as a means of learning to become conscious of his personal existence is in an adult an expression of untamed primary narcissism. Long before Freud, the holy ascetics of the Christian East identified this behavior and gave it the name of "philautism," or egotistical love of self. They considered it to be a deep-seated passion, the mother of all the others, like vanity and pride with which it is closely linked, and which are also among the worst passions. Hiding behind ideas of "communication" and "sharing" makes them even worse, for it gives them a false appearance of altruism.

Pride and vanity are reinforced by counting the "likes" received, and by showing that one can collect more *followers* on Twitter, or "likes" from the so-called friends of Facebook than the next man. Those who use Facebook tend to show a flattering image of themselves, which surpasses reality. Their faults are erased and their qualities exaggerated. They even claim qualities that they never had. This has a bad effect not just on themselves, but on others who may feel put down by the outrageous exaggeration they see in the images that they take to be true. Psychologists have even found that it is a cause of depression, which concords with the teaching of the holy ascetics who saw pride and vanity as sources of sadness and acedia, two states that resemble what we now call depression.

The new media have found their place in that modern Western culture that Christopher Lasch called "the culture of narcissism." They have strongly encouraged its development, opposing the Christian culture of self-effacement through modesty and humility and esteem of one's neighbor through charity and love. •

Holy Trinity Calendar

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.

All services at Holy Trinity are currently being live-streamed. To watch them online, please visit holytrinity-oca.org/YouTube

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
F E B R U A R Y 2026	February 1 Publican and Pharisee Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Vigil of the Meeting of the Lord, 6pm	2 Meeting of the Lord Divine Liturgy, 8am	3 OCF Paraklesis, 6pm Catechesis, 7pm	4 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	5 Great Vespers, 6:30pm	6 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	7
	8 Prodigal Son Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am)	9 OCF Paraklesis, 6pm Catechesis, 7pm	10 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Parish Council Meeting, 7pm	11 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Parish Council Meeting, 7pm	12 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	13 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	14
	15 Last Judgment Baptism, Clayton Colson, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am)	16 Vespers of Cheesefare Wednesday, 6pm Catechesis, 7pm	17 Confessions, 4pm Vespers of Cheesefare Thursday, 6pm Adult Ed: Uniatism, 7pm	18 Vespers of Cheesefare Friday, 6pm	19 Vespers of Cheesefare Saturday, 6pm	20 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	21
	22 Forgiveness Sunday Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Forgiveness Vespers, 6pm	23 Great Canon of St. Andrew, 6pm	24 Confessions, 4pm Presanctified Liturgy, 6pm Lenten Potluck, 7:30pm	25 Great Canon of St. Andrew, 6pm	26 Confessions, 4pm Presanctified Liturgy, 6pm	27 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	28
	1 Sunday of Orthodoxy Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am) Icon Procession, following	2 OCF Great Compline, 6pm Catechesis, 7pm	3 Confessions, 4pm Presanctified Liturgy, 6pm Lenten Potluck, 7:30pm	4 Confessions, 4pm Presanctified Liturgy, 6pm Lenten Potluck, 7:30pm	5 Confessions, 4pm Presanctified Liturgy, 6pm	6 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	7
	8 St. Gregory Sunday School, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am (Hours, 9:40am)	9 Catechesis, 7pm	10 Confessions, 4pm Presanctified Liturgy, 6pm Lenten Potluck, 7:30pm	11 Parish Council Meeting, 6pm	12 Confessions, 4pm Presanctified Liturgy, 6pm	13 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	14