

Cyprus: the Island of the Saints



Reflections on a Pilgrimage

Pilgrimage is a very foreign concept in the modern West. Even the very idea that certain places or times are in some way holier than others is rather strange to us, and something that I think we are culturally predisposed to disbelieve. Yet surely it was not always so for our religious forbearers. For ancient Israel, the Temple was uniquely holy and in the classical period all Israelite men were expected to travel there three times a year for the high feasts of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. We learn from the gospels that Jesus himself was involved in the cycle of festal pilgrimage, both in his childhood and as an adult. And while the Temple was the “holy place” *par excellence* in ancient Judaism, it was not the only holy place in the Jewish mind, and many other places such as Mount Sinai and the tombs of the

prophets came to be revered and travelled to. This pattern of pilgrimage to holy sites continued on in early Christianity as well. For Christians, Jerusalem, as the home of the old Temple, the place of the resurrection of Christ, and the place where the Holy Spirit was poured forth, remained uniquely and especially holy. But as the Church spread throughout the world, many other holy places came to be recognized and celebrated, most especially the places where the martyrs fought their contests and were buried. The actions of the martyrs were seen as extensions of the passion of Christ, and so in a sense to visit the site of Paul’s beheading and to touch his chains was in some way a visit to Golgotha and a touching of the precious Cross of Christ.

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Schedules

	COFFEE HOUR	GREETERS	TELLERS
June 7	Men's Group	A. & J. Cassar	M. Fiori & G. Cattell
June 14	Russian Ladies Group A (Katya F.)	Mka K. Oleynik & R. Patel	K. Cattell & B. Haupt
June 21	H. Torbic, A.T. Pelikan, Mka. K. Oleynik	M. & K. Fedkin	H. Torbic & M. Fedkin
June 28	M. Leathers, L. Georgiou. D. Patel	Mka A. Stickle, C. Pellock	M. Fiori & G. Catell
July 5	Russian Ladies Group B (Elena G.)	M. & K. Fedkin	K. Cattell & B. Haupt

■ FROM THE RECTOR’S DESK

Reflections (con’t)

For my part, my recent trip to Cyprus as a pilgrim was basically the first serious and intentional pilgrimage I ever took in my life. I have, of course, visited monasteries and other holy sites in the States. And I also took an intensive class in Jerusalem many years ago that ended up having quite a “pilgrimage” flavor to it. But my trip to Cyprus was my first ever sustained visit to a far away place for the principal purpose of prayer, retreat, and encountering God in holy things and people. Overall, I think the trip was very fruitful and I look forward to sharing some deeper reflections with our parish family in the future.

But to begin to speak about my experience I would like to say that I think the very act of pilgrimage gives the prayer of a pilgrim a certain weight and power. I took certain intentions on my pilgrimage, and there were, in a sense, certain persons and situations that the whole journey was dedicated to. I frequently had a profound feeling that God was in some way particularly attentive to me and that my prayers carried a certain weight simply because I was a pilgrim. I felt free to pray, and I recalled and prayed for many people, both those from back home and those I met along the way on my trip. This, in and of itself, was a great blessing.

I don’t know if it was because I was a priest or a pilgrim or both, but people very frequently told me intimate stories of their lives and asked me to pray for them. From the Roman Catholic HR Director of Geisinger with whom I shared my initial flight out of State College to the Ethiopian Orthodox United agent who interviewed me in Frankfurt, people asked for prayer. At one point, I had a woman begin to confess very serious sins to me in public on a bus, and of course, she also wanted me to pray for her.

Another thing I should say about my particular pilgrimage is that I was almost always dependent on the *philoxenia* – the love of the stranger – of the people I was with, and I generally had an abiding confidence that God would protect me and get me where I needed to be.

When I first arrived in Cyprus, a man who I had never met arranged for me to stay at the Machairas Monastery for six days. The monks of Machairas were very kind to me, even in ways I didn’t understand at first. Particularly, they honored me by sitting me in a special seat next to the bishop’s chair and having me read the parts of the service that in their custom are reserved for the bishop or abbot. And while I could probably have read a number of these parts in Greek, they actively wanted me to read them in English. This was, for them, an extension of hospitality.

When I was at Machairas a few days, two men, each on a successive day, invited me to come stay at their home. I initially took up the elder of the two men, and I



Machairas Monastery

stayed with him and his wife and enjoyed their food and company for a number of days. In their love for me as a stranger, they even took me on a bus trip to some of the holy sites of occupied northern Cyprus, including the original tomb of St. Barnabas and a monastery built on a site where St. Andrew briefly landed on Cyprus. While I was with them I also visited the tomb of St. Heracleidios, the first bishop ordained in Cyprus, who was ordained

(continued, see REFLECTIONS, facing page)

■ NEWS & NOTES

Hunter Family on Vacation

Fr. Ignatius and his family will be on a short vacation from June 8-14. They will be travelling locally, and Father will remain available to address any emergencies that might occur at that time. For non-emergencies, please contact Pdn. Mark at pdnmark@holytrinity-oca.org or 814-380-6031.

Spring 2025 Graduates

Congratulations to our high school graduates! **Noah Patel** is heading to Penn State University to study kinesiology, **Miley Hubler** is heading to Lock Haven University and plans to major in psychology, and **Ezra Swisher** will be majoring in Engineering at the University of Pennsylvania following a gap year. We wish them all the best in their future academic journeys. May God grant them all many years!

Many Years!

May God richly bless the newly-illuminated Arcadius Colson, his sponsors, Matthew Wallace and Svetlana Khapilina, and his parents, Clayton and Sierra Colson. He was baptized on May 31, Pentecost Day, and the one-year anniversary of his parents' wedding. Many years!

Reflections on Cyprus

On Thursday, July 2, at 6 pm Fr. Ignatius will offer some reflections on his pilgrimage to Cyprus, on Cypriot history, and on the distinct and unique Cypriot Orthodox Church. His reflection will be accompanied by a slide show and various pictures from his pilgrimage.

Congratulations Abby

Congratulations to Abigail Swisher on her graduation from Mount Aloysius with her Associates of Science in Physical Therapist Assistant. Many years!

Do Thou, O Plenteously Merciful One and Lover of mankind, hearken unto us in the day when we call upon Thee, and especially on this day of Pentecost, whereon after the Ascension of our Lord Jesus Christ into the heavens, and His sitting at the right hand of Thee, God and the Father, He sent down upon His holy disciples and apostles the Holy Spirit, Who rested upon each of them, and all were filled with His inexhaustible grace, and spake in other tongues of Thy greatness and did prophesy. Now, therefore, do Thou hearken unto us who pray unto Thee, and remember us the lowly and condemned, and turn again the captivity of our souls, having Thy loving-kindness interceding for us. Accept us who fall down before Thee and shout: We have sinned; on Thee were we cast from the womb, from our mother’s womb, Thou art our God. But inasmuch as our days were consumed in vanity, we were bereft of Thy help, we deprived ourselves of any defense; but presuming upon Thy compassions, we cry: The sins of our youth and ignorances remember not, and from our secret sins cleanse us, and cast us not away in the time of our old age, when our strength faileth; forsake us not even until we return again into the earth, vouchsafe us to return unto Thee; attend to us through Thy good favor, and grace; measure our transgressions with Thy compassions, set the abyss of Thy compassions against the multitude of our sins.

-From the First Kneeling Prayer of the Vespers of Pentecost

■ CATECHESIS

What Does Pentecost Do?

If our Orthodox life is not permeated with the presence of the Holy Spirit it is all in vain! Consider first that the Holy Sacraments or Mysteries of the Church are all dependent completely upon the Holy Spirit. Baptism saves us because we are not born of the water alone, but of water and the Spirit (St. Jn. 3:3-5). Chrismation itself is an individual's personal Pentecost. The seal of the gift of the Holy Spirit. Ordination is the special bequeathal of the Holy Spirit to men, and the substance of the priesthood is that priests bear the Holy Spirit in the community. This is why our Lord gathered the twelve together and breathed upon them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. Whoever's sins you remit are remitted. Whoever's sins you retain are retained" (St. John 20:23). Marriage is simply temporal and earthly if it is not consecrated by the Holy Spirit and bound together in His love. Holy Unction without the Holy Spirit is simply a complex skin treatment! It is the Holy Spirit in the sacred oil healing our souls and bodies! Confession is insincere and pointless unless it is a Spirit-inspired compunction and a Spirit-empowered absolution. And think of the Mystery of Mysteries and the Sacrament of Sacraments: the Holy Eucharist. The existence of the Holy Eucharist is completely dependent upon the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit Whom the priest calls down upon the Holy Table in the epiklesis: "changing them by Thy Holy Spirit."

This liturgical reality is beautifully evidenced in many different saints' lives, especially those saints who were bishops or priests responsible for the celebration of the eucharist. The story is told of St. Basil the Great that he had hanging over his altar a beautiful oil lamp made in the form of a golden dove. Always at the time of the transformation of the gifts the dove would begin to swing. A similar story is told about our Holy Father John of San Francisco and Shanghai. St. John would see the Holy Spirit descend as fire into the holy chalice at the epiklesis as he served liturgy. On one occasion the liturgy was delayed because St. John would not go on since he saw no fire. Wondering why he turned to his deacon and saw his face was covered over in a black cloud. Asking



A golden dove hangs above the altar in the Kykkos monastery, Cyprus

the deacon what was wrong the deacon confessed that he had not prepared for the liturgy properly. Once the deacon divested and left the altar the fire came and liturgy could continue.

All of the Holy Mysteries are empty forms without the Holy Spirit, and this may be said about all matters of our faith and practice. Fasting is simply dieting if it is not an attempt to acquire the Holy Spirit. It is not a coincidence that our Lord went into the desert to fast for forty days "led by the Holy Spirit" (St. Lk. 4:1). Sin is not overcome except by the Holy Spirit. He is One Who enables us to "mortify the deeds of the body" (Rom. 8:13). We could go on and on. There is no prayer without the Holy Spirit praying in us. There is no church without the Holy Spirit. There is no Church Temple without the Holy Spirit. This is why when we erect a true church temple the bishop chrismates the altar and the temple itself. The Temple has its own Pentecost for it truly becomes not simply a functional gathering place, but the House of God and Temple of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit lives there. If He does not then the Temple become a Temple of Satan (Rev. 2:9).

Excerpted from a sermon by Archpriest Josiah Trenham, June 6, 2009.

From <https://stpeterorthodoxchurch.com/christianity-without-pentecost/>

■ FROM THE RECTOR'S DESK

Reflections (con't)

by St. Barnabas. At that time I was also able to travel and see a monastery called Stavrovouni which was established in the fourth century by St. Helen, and a place in Paphos where tradition tells us St. Paul was tied to a pillar and whipped.

When I then left the house of my benefactor, I spent a night in a small village called Kalopanayotes where there is a non-functioning monastery dedicated to the rather obscure Cypriot saint, John Lampadistis. From there I travelled to the famous Kykkos monastery, where I received hospitality for two days. During that time I visited another monastery called Trooditissa, where I quietly watched a foreign (perhaps Russian) couple stand in prayer in a church for over an hour. Somehow I came to realize that they were struggling with infertility, and so I prayed greatly for them as I looked on, praying that God would grant their request. Later, they saw me and mistook me for a monk of the place and told me of their problem; it was exactly what I had already suspected (or known) it to be. I pray even now that God will grant them mercy and the fulfillment of their desire.

When I left Kykkos, I accepted hospitality from the parish church of the second man who had offered me a place to stay when I was at Mahairas. His church was in a place called Hagia Napa in the southeast. They have a "Trinity House Guest Suite" equivalent which is in an arguably stranger building than our own. The priest at Agia Napa asked me to serve liturgy with him on Sunday, and I am glad I had the chance to meet him. St. Seraphim of Sarov once said, famously, "if you desire it, you can become all flame." It is clear to me that the priest at Agia Napa has become all flame, and it was a great blessing to me to find a married priest of such exceeding holiness that he continuously manifests heavenly gifts and converts the hearts of the people he meets on a daily basis.

On this leg of my trip I was also able to visit the (second) tomb of St. Lazarus, and in his church I was able to venerate substantial portions of his relics. I was overcome by the thought, "this man kissed and



An ancient icon of the Theotokos from Larnaca

embraced Jesus Christ, and what a blessing it is that I can touch the remains of his body." Lazarus is full of grace, and it is almost palpable when one is in the presence of his relics.

There is much more I can say or could say about my trip, of course. Cyprus is a unique place. It's very close to Israel and in some ways is the last Christian country in the Middle East. It is truly a place where saints have walked, and tradition places not only Paul, Mark, Barnabas and Lazarus there, but also (as I have said) Andrew and John and even the Holy Theotokos herself. It is truly an "Island of Saints," and its history is extremely layered. I hope one day to return there, but more than that, I hope one day to be a pilgrim again, for there is a great grace in it. The Lord says in the gospel, "he who seeks, finds," and I think this is very much true of pilgrimage. To become a pilgrim is to seek to meet and to worship God. To some extent, it may not matter where exactly we go, so long as our destination is tied to Christ. But the going forth, the setting aside of our time and life to try to know God and to express our love for him, this is something that he is sure to honor.●

~ Fr. Ignatius

Holy Trinity Calendar

All events take place at 119 South Sparks Street in State College, except 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](https://www.holytrinity-oca.org/YouTube)

	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
J U N E E 2026	31 Pentecost Baptism of Arcadius Colson, 9am Divine Liturgy, 10am Annual Parish Picnic, Holmes-Foster Park, 1pm Kneeling Vespers, 6pm	June 1 Day of the Holy Spirit Divine Liturgy, 8am Vespers, 6pm	2 3rd Day - Holy Trinity Divine Liturgy, 8am	3 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	4	5	6 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
	7 All Saints Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	8 ✝	9 🍇	10 ✝ Vespers, 6pm	11 🍇	12 ✝	13 🐟 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm 40 day memorial for Joanne Tacarchek, 5:30pm Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
	14 🐟 All Saints of North America Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	15 ✝	16 🍇	17 ✝ Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Parish Council Meeting, 7pm	18 🍇	19 ✝	20 🐟 Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
	21 🐟 Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	22 ✝	23 🍇 Great Vespers, 6pm	24 🐟 Nativity of St. John Divine Liturgy, 8am Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following	25 🍇	26 ✝	27 🐟 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
	28 🐟 Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i> Great Vespers, 6pm	29 Sts. Peter & Paul Divine Liturgy, 8am	30	July 1 ✝ Confessions, 4pm Great Vespers with Litya, 6pm Confessions, following	2 St. John of San Francisco Divine Liturgy, 8am Adult Ed: "Reflections on Cyprus," 6pm	3 ✝	4 Molieben of Thanksgiving, 9am Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following
	5 Divine Liturgy, 10am <i>(Hours, 9:40am)</i>	6	7 ✝	8 Confessions, 4pm Vespers, 6pm Parish Council Meeting, 7pm	9 🍇	10	11 Choir Rehearsal, 4pm Great Vespers, 6pm Confessions, following