

MOSAIC

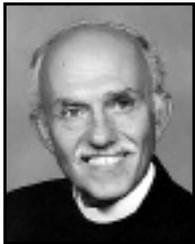
Coming together, we form an icon of God's Kingdom

Vol. 19, No. 6

Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church 2501 S. Wolf Rd. Westchester, IL
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October 2014

From Father Bill



Giving Thanks, To and For

The advertising agents are immersed in planning to give the economy a boost with Christmas decorations. Trees, tinsel, competition for goods have all escalated. We haven't yet begun to make plans for our Thanksgiving dinner and we are told 'get into the Christmas spirit.'

Checking my calendar, I acknowledge the theme for this month's Mosaic should focus on Thanksgiving. Yes, that's right. Thanksgiving and the true spirit of thankfulness does not begin in November, but is one that is constant. Taken from St. Basil's Liturgy we read: "O our God of salvation, do thou teach us how we may worthily give thanks unto thee for thy benefits, which thou hast ever bestowed and yet dost bestow upon us."

The art of being thankful does not begin spontaneously, but is learned in a continuous daily process.

A favorite biblical verse expressing thanks to God is "We give thanks to God always for you..." (1 Thess. 1:2). There's a natural two-point outline in this text: giving thanks to, and giving thanks for. Gratitude isn't gratitude unless it is directed to someone and for something or someone. In the case of our text, it is to God and for others.

Someone made this analogy: living unthankful to God is living with a low-grade fever. Not dangerous in itself, but a sign that something is wrong. Living grateful to God, on the other hand, is the glow of health that comes as we turn to God. For the truly grateful do not think of themselves, they think of God, and are thankful.

Secondly, thanks must be directed outward in a positive manner. Thanks must be for, not



Alexandra plays with one of the boys at the St. Innocent Orphanage in Mexico.

Project Mexico: A Humbling Experience

By Alexandra Drechsler

The ninth kontakion in the Akathist of Thanksgiving begins with, "Why does all nature smile mysteriously on feast days?" The first work day in Mexico fell on the feast of the Transfiguration of Christ, so we began our house building journey with a beautiful Divine Liturgy. The priest who celebrated reminded us that the

...See Mexico on P. 4

against. Not as the man in the Bible said, "God, I thank thee I am not as other men are" (Luke 18:11). That's negative gratitude, being thankful for what isn't, instead of for what is. We yearn for a more uplifting feeling of gratitude, one that fosters genuine joy, not just some sort of relief. The kind Paul speaks of is positive, directed to God and outward to others. We should be giving thanks for what is rather than what isn't.

Searching scripture we discover Jesus set a positive example in giving thanks. He didn't wait. He gave thanks before an event. A case in point was where he gave thanks before he raised Lazarus from the dead. He was giving thanks for what is instead of for what isn't. He proved that his thanks weren't "in spite of"

death, but for the Life that is eternal and that restored his good friend. (Jn 11:4-44).

May I make a suggestion? Like most who become easily tired reading the depressing accounts of crime, war, accidents and bad economic news in newspapers and magazines in addition to the nightly news, why not pick up the Bible and read the Psalms for a half an hour or so? I find that Old Testament readings are full of praise and thanksgiving that will lift your spirits.

The Psalms give us the highest expression of gratitude. It isn't thanksgiving of the material: the Psalmist doesn't add up the fruits and vegetables and compare the harvest with the previous year's. Therefore, he should be more

...See Fr. Bill on P. 4

From Father Nicholas



Dealing With Distractions

This year's dynamic Book Week presenter, Fr. Maximos of Siminopetra Monastery, began his talk by stating: "Every depth has a surface; but not every surface has a depth."

Distractions keep our lives from becoming spiritually deeper. Our human minds can become disordered and confused. This makes focusing difficult.

Distractions take us away from ourselves. Our society has built an entire culture of distractions. Hi-tech gadgets and devices are all around us. Television screens are in cars, restaurants, doctor offices, elevators, gas stations and even restrooms. No image lasts more than three seconds.

According to a 2011 Barna family report, some people are spending up to eight hours per day in the digital world. Only 10% of parents and 6% of teenagers try to take one day off from digital usage. With all these distractions, finding five minutes of free time is challenging. This creates restlessness and fragmentation. Constant distractions can keep us from knowing ourselves and ultimately knowing God. If we are distracted, God can only be an external reality to us.

St. Thomas, remembered and celebrated this month, was also distracted. He did not see Christ when He initially appeared after rising from the dead. Later, when Thomas heard all ten disciples enthusiastically share that they had seen the risen Lord, he said, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

Thomas did not want to blindly accept what the disciples said. Hearing was not enough. He wanted to personally experience the evidence. A week later, all of the disciples were in the house again. We should realize that God deals with us in His time. Thomas waited for a week for the Lord to come back. This waiting created more desire and prepared him to believe. Here, we see the loving kindness of the Lord. For the sake of a single soul, Jesus showed Himself with His wounds.

The Lord knows our human frailty. He knows us better than we know ourselves. Before Thomas could even ask, Jesus came and stood with him. The Lord of Glory, risen from the dead, miraculously appeared in bodily form to offer a personal inspection of the marks on his hands, feet and side. Jesus does not want to reject anyone who seeks Him.

The Lord came to restore and strengthen.



Gavel to Gavel



Highlights of the June Parish Council Meeting

By PAUL KALLIS, SECRETARY

Parish Council members in attendance:

Fr. Bill Chiganos, Fr. Nicholas Georgiou, George Alex, Peter Bell, George Chechopoulos, Cindy Clark, James Fotopoulos, Tom Gregory, Paul Kallis, James Kapolas, Louis Katziaris, Nick Kirkeles, George Mannos, Jr., Peter Poteres and Steven Savas

Financial/Treasurer's Report:

✦ No report was presented this month. The finance committee will meet and provide an update at the next meeting.

Stewardship Report:

✦ Louis Katziaris reviewed the Stewardship Report for May 2014. Pledges to date for 2014 are 676 which is 7 better than this period last year. Total amount pledged to date for 2014 is \$628,004.13, which is \$11,234.88 more than the same period last year. The average pledge of \$929.01 is \$6.08 more than this period last year. Percent paid to date is 75% vs. 74% for the same period last year.

Correspondence:

- ✦ Thank you from Alexandra Dreshler for our contribution toward her Oratorical Festival travel costs.
- ✦ Thank you from IOCC for our support of its banquet.
- ✦ Thank you from Hellenic College for our \$1,500 and \$500 donations.
- ✦ Thank you from Metropolitan Ambrosios of Korea for our \$1,425 donation.
- ✦ Thank you from OCMC for our gift to missionary Pamela Barksdale of Albania.

Building & Grounds:

- ✦ George Alex asked for approval to seal coat and stripe the parking lot. Jim Fotopoulos made the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- ✦ Jim Fotopoulos gave an update on maintenance activities. We will need a tree service to remove some dead trees.

✦ George Chechopoulos mentioned that we need to remove the carpet in the Philoptochos room and replace it with tile. Jim Fotopoulos made a motion to tile the Philoptochos room. The motion passed unanimously.

Old Business:

- ✦ Nick Kirkeles provided an update on Fanari Camp. They had a record of 485 campers, 50 more than last year. Next year they will be going to the retreat center and will have a different multi-week format.
- ✦ George Mannos provided an update on the 55th Anniversary Luncheon. The committee met on June 4. They selected the theme "We Remember". The chairs are: George Mannos, Sandy Fiascone and Peter Poteres. Kiki Liston will be the emcee. Prices are \$55 and \$25 for children under 12. The event is Sunday, Nov. 30.

New Business:

- ✦ Father Nicholas provided an update on Vacation Bible School. They had about 80 children attending this year. Father thanked Presbyteria Michelle and Tina Karagiannis for directing the program.
- ✦ George Alex handed out a financial report from HARC.
- ✦ Peter Poteres made a motion to renew our insurance. Motion passed unanimously.
- ✦ George Alex made a motion to have a video recording made of all the items in the church for insurance purposes. The motion passed unanimously.
- ✦ George Chechopoulos asked to have the walls by the candles cleaned.
- ✦ Father Bill complimented Peter Poteres for his extraordinary fundraising for the golf outing.

He told Thomas: "Put your finger here, see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Don't be without belief, but believe". Thomas cried out; "My Lord and my God."

St. Gregory Palamas said that Thomas could not see the Lord because He was away. He was distracted. If we miss church, we may suffer the same fate! Thomas was hesitant and considered Christ's Resurrection impossible. Remember that Thomas was not a pagan but a disciple, a follower of Christ. Just a few days earlier, when the disciples received

death threats, Thomas boldly and courageously said, "Let us go and die with Him." Now, he did not even believe the resurrected Christ appeared. St. Theophylactos wrote that Thomas had not reached the spiritual condition to see the Risen Christ. He was not ready or prepared.

Thomas was distracted. So, Christ, in His great love, postpones His appearance for an entire week! All for the sake of Thomas' spiritual readiness! Once he was prepared, Christ could manifest Himself to Thomas for his sal-

...See Fr. Nicholas on P. 3



The new St. Peter's Orthodox Church in Loupwala, Kenya was built by missionaries.

By Andrew Maragos

My recent mission trip with OCMC to Lokichar, Kenya provided a humble perspective of my life by immersing me within the beauty of the Turkana tribe. Their joy and purity of faith generated in me a new and beautiful understanding of the global Orthodox Church.

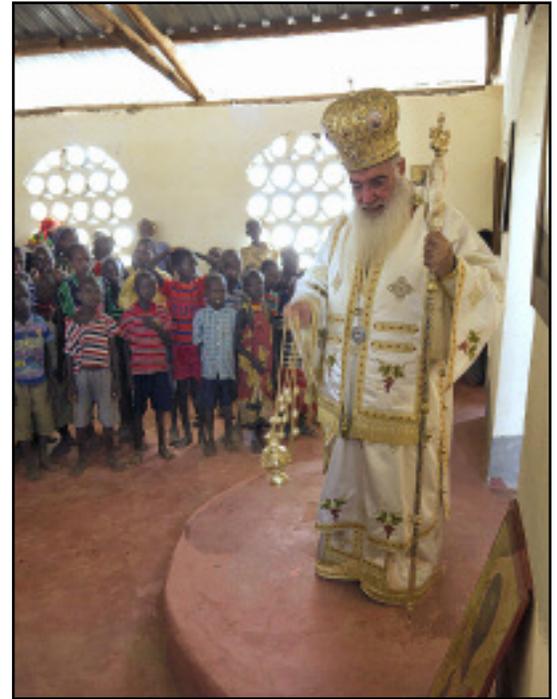
This experience has revealed that my travels have barely scratched the surface of the issue at hand. Far too many Orthodox communities around the world

require our help in resurrecting their parish and spiritual sanctuary.

Missionaries of all ages and skill sets are at work in almost every continent, eager to accept a helping hand from our congregation.

I greatly encourage the future endeavors of our Greek Orthodox community to include aiding OCMC in its international mission of spreading and renewing our faith. I greatly appreciate your prayers and financial support for this journey.

Holy Apostles parishioner takes part in OCMC mission trip to Kenya



Archbishop Makarios consecrates the Orthodox Church while young parishioners watch.

A look at Islam from an Orthodox Christian perspective

What is the history of the Islamic faith? Do Muslims worship the same God as we do? What do they believe about Jesus Christ? Why are they often associated with violence? If you have ever pondered these or other questions, join us as Barbara Pappas explores this topic. This timely series will be offered on Wednesday evenings from 7:15 to 8:30 pm through November 12 in the multi-purpose room. Spread the word!

Fr. Nicholas from P. 2

Creating a distraction-free Godspace

vation. Thomas unjustly gets a bad name. He was not an unbeliever, but simply distracted and unprepared. He sees Christ, overcomes his distractions and enthusiastically confesses his faith in Christ! Thomas radically followed the Lord and eventually became a missionary to India.

If we are distracted, what should we do? St. Matthew's Gospel provides the answer: "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28)

People are tired, worn and burned out. We easily waste time pursuing digital information and neglecting what really matters. Jesus invites us to come with Him, away from all the noise.

We are challenged to create a Godspace.

This is a sacred place, disconnected from technology for meeting God with no distractions.

Some Christians today are living off others' spiritual experiences by reading about them. Some are scattered, distracted, uncentered and settling for one inch deep spirituality. We can become rich with information and spiritually poor.

Godspace needs time. The Psalmist reminds us: "Be still and know that I am God." (Psalm 46:10) St. Poeman wrote: "Any trial that comes to you can be conquered by silence: go sit in your cell (room) and your cell will teach you everything.

When Thomas was finally free of distractions, he personally experienced the Risen Lord and joyfully confessed his deep faith in Christ. We can do the same!

Baptisms

Alexia, daughter of Mary & Sammy Spyridoulis
Sponsors: Eleni & Costa Koufidis

Tessa Rose, daughter of Anna & Daniel Tondelli
Sponsor: Jason Tondelli

Alexandra, daughter of Angela & David Neboyskey
Sponsor: Sarah Areti Karones

Nefeli, daughter of Rhea & Felipe Tendick-Matesanz
Sponsor: Zaharoula Asimos

Weddings

None

Mexico from P. 1...
**Simply talking
 by the campfire
 was a blessing**

Light of Christ was not a momentary appearance on Mount Tabor, but it continues to shine brightly for the whole universe. Our home base was St. Innocent Orphanage, which is located just south of Tijuana, Mexico. The worksite was in a nearby neighborhood. There, we met Cynthia, a single mother, who owned the empty triangular lot we would be building on. Guided by the meticulous Project Mexico staff, almost all of whom were volunteers, we started leveling the dirt and building the wood form for the foundation. After lunch, we hand mixed and poured concrete that would become the family's floor. When we finally

cleaned up and concluded with the Lord's Prayer in Spanish, it felt as if the whole Mexican landscape was smiling, just like the words of the Akathist hymn.



Alexandra works on installing a window on the house.

On day two, it was amazing to see the power of teamwork as each group placed their wall on the foundation. On the third day, we nailed chicken wire on the entire frame and put the first coat of stucco on top of that. Although the house was only a rectangular 11' by 22', the size of a single car garage here, it would provide the family much needed protection from the elements. When it was finished two days later, our group of twenty-five volunteers and Cynthia crammed inside for the house blessing. Father Dimitri celebrated the service in Spanish, so the family could understand this important Orthodox tradition. He explained to Cynthia, "By blessing the house, we understand that it's a gift from God, not from us, because God has given us everything we have." After the blessing, we enjoyed fellow-



The team poses in front of the house's frame which they put up on the second day.

ship around the new home, along with gracious hospitality.

The best part of Project Mexico for me was the opportunity to be fully present in every moment of the day, whether we were at the worksite or playing with the boys. Conversations are easier when we're not distracted by technology. Since all of us had the same Orthodox faith, it was easy for us to connect with one another. Every night, we just sat around the campfire and talked. It was also humbling to live in such simple conditions, and it became obvious that our lives are somewhat marred by comfort, convenience, and the unnecessary extravagances of everyday life in the United States. I came to the realization that it is our obsession with all the stuff that separates us from truly loving God and our neighbor. Coming home, I had a renewed determination to live a life free from distraction. God's presence is found in stillness and in silence. When we choose to embrace the joy of His presence, there is nothing in the world that can compare to that fulfillment.

I want to extend a heartfelt thank you to the entire Holy Apostles community that supported our trip with food, financial gifts, and so many prayers. The orphanage is incredibly grateful for all the supplies we collected, and I know they will be put to very good use. Somewhere on a hill in Mexico, a family has a home now, thanks to the love of our church family. I am so grateful to God for the opportunity I had to serve in Mexico, and I am grateful to everyone who helped make my trip a reality. Please keep Cynthia and her family as well as the boys and staff of St. Innocent Orphanage in your prayers.

Fr. Bill from P. 1

The Psalms remind us that God is a God of Mercy

thankful. He names all the various things God has done in the human race for which he is thankful: he forgives, heals, redeems, crowns, satisfies, and renews. He is a God of mercy and grace who cleanses our sinful nature. Saint John Chrysostom in one of the

silent prayers during the Liturgy reminds us to offer our thanks "to Thee and to Thine only begotten Son and Thy Holy Spirit, for all the things we know and do not know, for the seen and the unseen benefits we enjoy."

**The
 HARC
 Corner**

**Special Agents of Christ
 A Prayer Book for Young
 Orthodox Saints**

by Annalisa Boyd

You are never too young to be one of the "special agents" God uses to accomplish His will in the world. This book serves as a training manual to prepare children for serving Christ in the real world, with sections for daily prayers, prayers for life's challenges, preparation for confession, and much more.

\$11.00

**Hear Me
 A Prayer Book for
 Orthodox Teens**

by Annalisa Boyd

Do you know you have a God who hears you? "Receive the voice of my prayer when I call upon Thee. Hear me, O Lord." (Psalm 140 (141):1)

\$9.00

**Thirty Steps to Heaven
 The Ladder of Divine Ascent
 for all walks of life**

by Vassilios Papavassiliou

Many laypeople have attempted to read the great spiritual classic, *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, but have been frustrated in attempting to apply the lessons of this monastic text to their everyday lives in the world.

Archimandrite Vassilios interprets the Ladder for the ordinary Christian without sacrificing any of its beauty and power.

\$19.00

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<p><i>He who seeks the forgiveness of his sins loves humility. But he who judges another strengthens his own evil deeds against himself.</i> St. Mark The Ascetic</p>						
8:00am Orthros 9:15am Awaken To God 9:30am Divine Liturgy Jr. GOYA Bake Sale	5:15pm The Way	10:00am TOTIS 4:30pm Greek School	1:00pm Adult Christian Fellowship & Bible Study 7:30pm Catechism 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	4:30pm Greek School 5:00pm Greek School PTO Meeting	4:30pm Adventure Theater	7:00pm Synaxis Hayride In Naperville
8:00am Orthros 9:15am Awaken To God 9:30am Divine Liturgy Fellowship Hour Fanari Reunion Dance		4:30pm Greek School	1:00pm Adult Christian Fellowship & Bible Study 7:30pm Catechism 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	4:30pm Greek School 7:30pm Parish Council Meeting	4:30pm Adventure Theater	11:00am Philoptochos Luncheon & Fashion Show
8:00am Orthros 9:15am Awaken To God 9:30am Divine Liturgy General Assembly Meeting	5:15pm The Way	PAREA TRIP TO CANTIGNY 10:00am TOTIS 4:30pm Greek School	1:00pm Adult Christian Fellowship & Bible Study 7:30pm Catechism 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	4:30pm Greek School	4:30pm Adventure Theater	
FEAST OF ST. DEMETRIOS YOUTH PROCLAIM CHRIST 8:00am Orthros 9:15am Awaken To God 9:30am Divine Liturgy GOYA Fall Festival		4:30pm Greek School	1:00pm Adult Christian Fellowship & Bible Study 7:00pm Jr. GOYA Meeting 7:30pm Catechism 7:30pm Choir Rehearsal	4:30pm Greek School	4:30pm Adventure Theater	

Memorials

*Julis Stavropoulos
Lynette Hoppe
John Kinmas
Ann Kinmas
Kay Sarantopoulos
James Alexander
Michael Pihos
Andrew Tomaras
Kyriaki Stratigos
Theodoros Lostarakos
Mary Karr
Nicolette Chrisopulos
Arvie Mary Athas
George Athas
Pauline Athas
James Athas
Sophia Carres
James Carres
Margaret Athas
Ernest Carres*

Funerals

*Mary Karr
Peter Sfikas*

What is it like to be a Christian?

Being a Christian is like being a pumpkin.

God picks you from the patch, brings you in and washes all the dirt off of you. He then cuts the top off and scoops out all the yucky stuff.

He removes the seeds of doubt, hate, and greed. Then He carves you a new smiling face and puts His light inside of you to shine for all the world to see.

Parish Council

Nominations for the 2015-2016 parish council will be accepted at the general assembly meeting on Sunday, October 19

Weekday Services

None

Mosaic Deadline

The deadline for the November Mosaic is Wednesday, October 8.

Church Directories

Directories are now available for pickup after The Divine Liturgy or weekdays in the church office.

Synaxis Hayride

Couples and families of all ages are invited to a Fall Hayride on October 11 from 7:00 - 9:00 pm. at Knoch Knolls Park in Naperville. Riding in a hay wagon, roasting marshmallows and hot apple cider are some of the highlights of the evening. For more information or to RSVP, call Christine at 630.922.0089 or go to HolyApostlesSynaxis@gmail.com.

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