

MOSAIC

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

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Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church 2501 S. Wolf Rd. Westchester, IL
(708) 562-2744 www.holyapostleschurch.com

February 2017



From Father Nicholas

Freeing ourselves

A few years ago a TNT show titled "The Great Escape" premiered. Teams were locked in a prison-like setting. After struggling through and completing four grueling stages, they assembled the Great Escape Key to identify their final destination and reach a Transport Zone. The first team to successfully arrive at this destination with the completed Escape Key was freed and awarded the \$100,000 prize.

Some of us may feel like prisoners trapped in our current lifestyle. We want to transform our lives but struggle to make a change. What if we could simply present a key to the Lord to be freed of our sins and improve our relationship with Him? Some Christians believe that good works are a key to heaven. We are not saved or condemned solely by the things we do. The relationship we share with the Lord determines our eternal destiny. This relationship with God in our earthly life will continue to eternity. Those close to the Lord in this life will be close to Him eternally. However, a person far away from our Lord in this life will be far away from Him in the next. If we are far away from the Lord, we are more likely to sin.

We read in St. Paul's letter to the Romans: "There is none righteous, no, not one. There is none who understands. There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside, they have together become unprofitable. There is none who does good, not one." (Romans 3:10-12)

Disobedience comes at an early age. Most children defy their parents at some time. This is part of maturing and testing adult guidelines and boundaries. Mom tells Junior: "Don't touch" the hot stove. A few seconds later the toddler is defiantly reaching for something that will hurt him. His desire to do what he

Plan to attend HARC's 33rd Annual Celebration of Books

The Celebration of Books is a Metropolis of Chicago event, open to all, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, so invite all your friends. It will take place from Sunday March 12 through Sunday March 19.

A wide selection of books, icons, gifts, etc. will be available for browsing and purchase in the multi-purpose room after Liturgy on both Sundays. It will also be open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. each day of that week.

In addition, three distinguished evening speakers will lend their perspectives to the theme: "Navigating God's Holy Word."

The speaker Sunday, March 12 will be Rev. Dr. Eugen J. Pentiu.

On Tuesday, March 14 it will be Dr. Alexis Torrance.

And on Thursday, March 16, the speaker will be Dr. Bruce Beck.

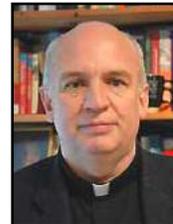
Each presentation will be preceded by Vespers at 6:30 p.m., after which Lenten refreshments will be served. The presentations will begin at 8:00 p.m.

pleases is stronger than his desire to please his mother. As they stretch their independent wings, children discover the boundaries of parents' rules and their own self control.

We adults also struggle with the desire to rule ourselves and do what we want. Complying with the Lord's authority is a choice we learn to make. We have a rebellious nature. St. Paul writes: "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

We are reminded in St. Paul's letter to the Ephesians that until the moment of our salvation, we were dead in our sins and trespasses. None of us can save ourselves. We need to be rescued.

The Epistle reading on the Second Sunday of Lent warns: "Pay close attention to what we have heard lest we drift away from it. How



Dr. Eugen J. Pentiu

Understanding the Old Testament



Dr. Alexis Torrance

Hearing and keeping the Word of God



Dr. Bruce Beck

Reading scripture with the Orthodox Church

shall we escape if we neglect such salvation?" (Hebrews 2:1,3) Our Holy Orthodox Church realizes our fallen condition. We remember the expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise on the Sunday before Lent begins. Initially we were in communion with God. As we moved away from the Lord's grace, we alienated ourselves from Him. We used to live in a beautiful palace. Now we are banned from the palace, look at it and weep. We suffer when we are distant from the Lord. Hell or condemnation is a separation from God. People distanced from God in this life will be in constant pain. They will experience this same pain in the next life.

Fr. George Florovsky wrote: "Passions are the place, the seat of evil in the human person.

...See Fr. Nicholas on P. 2

Fr. Nicholas from P. 1

Spring is 'spring cleaning' for our souls

Impassioned persons do not act on their own, rather they are acted upon. They lose their personality and personal identity. They become chaotic, with multiple faces or masks. Persons of passions are not free. They can give the impression of activity and energy." This may be a picture of us - far away from the Lord.

St. Paisios' sayings captured in the book *With Pain and Love* draws an analogy with smelly farm animals living in a dirty stable. They smell the stench but stay. Someone entering the stable for the first time would be sickened by the smell. The animals are accustomed to it. They are not bothered by it anymore. We may feel the comfort and security of sin and not have the strength to leave.

Sins keep us from the peace, love and joy that only the Lord can offer. Inside we may be tormented. Constant noise and entertainment ease the pain. These distractions help us forget our guilty conscience.

We all get distracted. Our Holy Orthodox Church offers Lent as a time to return to the Lord. The Prodigal Son parable, read during the Lenten warm-up period (Triodion), is about a son travelling to a foreign land far away from his father. After much struggle and

The Prophet Zechariah – A call to return and rebuild

"Return to me," saith the Lord of the powers, "and I shall return to you." (Zechariah 1:2)

By Peter Hasiakos

As we make our way through the month of February, we will encounter the feast of the Prophet Zechariah on February 8. Though the words above were given by the Lord to Zechariah for his kinsmen in Jerusalem, they are also for us, and they offer a powerful message as we begin preparing for Triodion and Great Lent.

When the Lord says "return" in this verse, it is not meant in a literal sense, but in a spiritual one. At the time of Zechariah's prophetic ministry, the Jews had recently returned from exile to Jerusalem under the Persian King Cyrus. The geographical return had already occurred, but a fuller spiritual return to God was still lacking.

A similar thing happens in our life in the Church, since we often have to take the first step of doing the physical or "mechanical" action even though the spiritual depth has not yet come. For this reason, in Great Lent, there are statistically more opportunities to come to church; there are more Psalms being read; and there are more Scripture readings (three per day instead of two). When we embrace this increase in quantity of spiritual activities, we are inviting God to also increase their quality. That is to say, we are inviting Him to help us

feel the inner spiritual depth that is contained underneath the externals. In a sense, we cannot control the quality, whether we will experience the words of our prayers and readings in a deep way—this depends on the grace of the Holy Spirit. The verse from Zechariah captures this idea, because it has two parts: "Return to me" and "I will return to you." We will be diligent in doing our part to return to God by attending the services, praying and reading at home, partaking in the sacrament of Holy Confession, etc. But all of this also has to be done in a hopeful spirit of waiting, trusting that we will feel a renewed sense of the Lord's presence and joy, but without expecting it on our own timeline. Helpful during this time of waiting is one of the verses in Psalm 50 (51): "Restore to me the joy of Thy salvation, and with Thy governing Spirit establish me."

torment, he comes to his senses and returns to his father. The father, just like our Heavenly Father, races to his son to embrace and welcome him home. He hosts a huge party because his son who was lost has returned and is found. This is what our loving Lord wants to do for us.

The World Champion Chicago Cubs will begin spring training in a few weeks. Christian spring training begins this month. The Lenten spring is our opportunity to return to the Lord. Spring is a time to clean our homes, windows, garage and cars. Lent is spring cleaning for our souls. The Church offers many additional services and tools to help us slow down our lives, cleanse and free ourselves and help us grow closer to the Lord. Tools are only effective if they are utilized.

As we free ourselves by returning to the Lord, the joy of God's pleasures and Lent will be obvious. We will be able to exclaim: "Receive Lent with gladness, O people! The beginning of spiritual warfare arrives. Forsake the indulgences of your flesh that the gifts of the Spirit may abound in you." (from Cheesefare Tuesday Orthros)

A good set of Psalms to read through during the month of February are the so-called "songs of ascent," Psalms 119-133 (120-134). These Psalms form a "Kathisma" (a group of Psalms designated for reading in liturgical services), and they are read at the beginning of the Presanctified Liturgy. They convey a sense of expectant waiting while also proclaiming that the Lord has already answered us and come to our aid. The more experiences we have of our prayers being answered, the more we will identify with the Prophet David's conviction, "Unto the Lord in mine affliction have

I cried, and He heard me" (Ps 119[120]:1).

The Psalms express our many human emotions and experiences while also placing them in a more grounded, spiritual perspective. If we are able to study those Psalms from the Presanctified Liturgy before the Fast begins, we will already feel a certain closeness with the words, and they can begin to be filled with meaning during our Lenten journey.

In summary, the Prophet Zechariah comes to us in the month of February, calling us to return to the Lord, and to rebuild the temple of the soul. With this in mind, all that Great Lent brings to us will feel more like an opportunity than a burden. But we can begin from the present moment; nothing we do will be wasted. It will only strengthen us, making our heart ready to receive the Lord when He "returns" to us humbly on Palm Sunday, which the Prophet Zechariah foretells magnificently.

The HARC Corner

Noah's Two by Two

Illustrated by Sarah Vince

"The animals came two by two, Let's meet Noah's noisy crew!"

Count the animals as they climb aboard Noah's boat, two by two. Use the tabs to help turn the pages and revisit your favorite animals.

\$6.00

The Gospel in Tolstoy

Selections from His Short Stories, Spiritual Writings, and Novels

Artwork by Fritz Eichenberg

This anthology vividly reveals Tolstoy's lifelong fascination with the life and teachings of Jesus- in a way none of his novels, stories, or essays could on its own. In the hands of a master storyteller, the gospel themes come to life: betrayal and forgiveness, sacrifice and redemption, death and resurrection. His essays on Christianity, nonviolent resistance, and justice profoundly influenced many including Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Gandhi.

\$18.00

At Play in God's Creation

An illuminating coloring book

By Tara M. Owens

Illustrated by Daniel W. Sorensen

Introducing a quiet, sometimes playful way to engage with God through coloring and prayer. Journey through arched passageways, intricate mazes, and open fields as you find your place in this wordless art of co-creation with the Creator of All.

\$17.00

Women's retreat speaker brings message of spiritually healthy living

By Ellen Dimas

On the back of Cynthia Damaskos' business card, the following verse appears: "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Cynthia, a certified Holistic Health Coach, helps people, especially women, learn how to "live healthy, well-balanced, and Christ-centered lives." This was her central theme at the Chicago Metropolitan Family Synaxis' fifth annual Women's Retreat. 32 women, ranging in ages 21-early 80's, gathered at the St. Iakovos Retreat Center on January 13-14 to pray and ponder how they could honor God holistically, with mind, body and soul.

Shortly after introductions that Friday evening, Cynthia asked participants to name ways in which a parent raises a child. One of the top answers was to love them. Cynthia reminded the women that we are all children of God and that we must love ourselves as God, our heavenly Father, loves us. She finished the evening's presentation by giving attendees an assignment: to write 3-5 SMARTER (specific, measurable, actionable, risky, time-keyed, exciting and relevant) goals. Before retiring, the women held a Small Compliance Service in the Tomaras Lodge.

Saturday commenced with morning prayers in the intimate, log cabin chapel. After the morning meal, Cynthia shared her daily ascesis routine, including dietary and other practical techniques to manage stress and set the tone for the day. She stated that no one lives without stress but how it is handled is of significance. Excess stress leads to inflammation in our bodies, which, in turn, is the root



Cynthia spoke about items we ingest, inhale or absorb and how they lead to disease-causing, inflammation in our bodies. Her emphasis was that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit and that God created everything we need to live healthy lives.

of disease. Our diets today contain numerous toxins such as bad fats, preservatives, and sugar, which also contribute to inflammation and increase the risk of illness. Strongly urging the retreat participants to vigilantly read food labels, she stressed that the only essential information on a label is the ingredient list. Her afternoon presentation highlighted food, environmental, personal care, and cleaning product toxins, their impact, and changes that the women could make in their daily consumption of these items. When offering healthier alternatives derived from God's creation, Cynthia cited Genesis 1:29, "...I have given you every herb...to you, it shall be food" and Genesis 9:3, "Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything."

Following this, she conducted a shopping exercise. The women were to examine the labels on a variety of food items and determine which would be the healthiest or best to buy. Much to the ladies' surprise, some of the natural or organic products were not deemed worthy of purchase as they contained

unhealthy ingredients.

Throughout her presentation, Cynthia answered participant's questions about health-related topics such as consumption of seafood or probiotics and sleep, centering her responses on Scripture and the teachings of the Fathers. For anyone interested in exploring healthy lifestyle topics more deeply, Cynthia suggested additional resources, including Sister Gavrilia's *The Ascetic of Love* and Rita Madden's *Food Faith and Fasting*.

Based in NW Indiana, Cynthia coaches private and corporate clients on holistic health and wellness. She is the author of *The Holistic Christian Woman*, writes a blog, and has created two, inspirational and guided programs for journeying through Orthodox fasting periods entitled *My Beautiful Lent* and *My Beautiful Advent*. For more information, go to: www.holisticchristianlife.com

Cynthia also serves as the Director of the Orthodox Speakers Bureau. This organization represents numerous Orthodox Christian speakers who speak on a variety of topics. For the blog, latest news, reviews, and updates on

Philoptochos Happenings

Sunday, February 5 Godparent's Sunday

Luncheon following Liturgy. This is a wonderful opportunity for godparents, godchildren, friends and family to share a meal in the multi-purpose room as one Holy Apostles community.

Call Cynthia Stathopoulos at 630.336.2012 or cstath11@comcast.net. to make your reservations.

Thursday, February 16 General Meeting

Our get together will begin at 7 pm. We are excited to have a Zumba presentation featured at our meeting.

Wear comfortable clothes and join for us a fun workout! Refreshments will be served.

RSVP with Aleka Ernst at 630.561.1660 or email at alekaernt@aol.com.

Reminders

Blankets of Love Service Project

We will be collecting blankets through the end of February and then will donate them to a local children's hospital. Knitted, crocheted or fleece blankets are welcome. For more information, contact Faye Adams at 630.517.8097.

Philoptochos Membership

If you have not paid your membership for 2016-2017, it is not too late. Your membership fair-share dues help fund our many obligations and projects. Membership envelopes are available in the church office. If you would like more information, call Alyssa Petropoulos 630.790.9701.

Baptisms

Oliver, son of
Kara & Angelo Paleothodoros
Sponsor: Natasa Paleothodoros

Constantine, son of
Sarah & William Loulousis
Sponsor: James Loulousis

Eleni, daughter of
Alexis & Brandon Miller
Sponsors: Alicia and Joe Micele

Theodore, son of
Nicole & Martin Keller
Sponsor: George Chiampas

Wedding

None



Fr. Nicholas blesses the faithful on the eve of Epiphany, above, and at right, he blesses James Clohessy, one of the young participants diving for the cross.



The New Year in Pictures

Near right, Aleka Ernst was the lucky recipient of the coin during the Vasilopita celebration. At far right, Fr. Nicholas and Fr. Jim Gordon, distribute the bread to Chris Chakonas, representing GOYA.



Photos by Peter Bell and Toni Milak



Jr. Goya members enjoy the Progressive Dinner left, and bowlers relax at the YAL bowling party held at Stripes on Jan, above.

Memorials

*Helen Alex
George Aravosis
Demetra Regas
John Regas
Theodora Dorner
Vivian Giannopoulos
Pauline Hamalis
Georgia Spiropoulos
Chrisy Banakis*

Funerals

None

Deadline

The deadline for the March Mosaic is Wednesday, February 8.



The new Parish Council is sworn in, including new officers; President - Peter Bell, Vice-President - Paul Kallis, Treasurer - Nick Kouchis, Secretary - Norman Pomrening, and Advisor - Steve Savas.

Humble Glory is subject of men’s retreat

The Chicago Metropolis Family Synaxis will host its annual Men’s Retreat at the St. Iakovos Retreat Center (SIRC) on Friday, February 10 at 6:30 pm through 3:00 pm on Saturday, February 11.

Fr. Timothy Sas, presbyter of the Twelve Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church in Duluth, MN, will lead the retreat, Humble Glory: Stories of Men Yearning for God.

For the past six years, volunteer men from Holy Apostles have organized and helped to run this retreat for the Metropolis Family Synaxis ministry. These men include: Mark Drechsler, George Vasilakopoulos, Ted Karamaskos and Jim Clohessy. Registration is free. For more details, visit: www.gocfamilysynaxis.org/mens-retreat.

Postmaster: Please deliver by the 3rd of February

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Holy Apostles Greek Orthodox Church
2501 S. Wolf Rd.
Westchester, IL 60154
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