

PASTOR'S PULPIT: A CROSS TO WEAR AND BEAR



Rev. Economos Basil C. Gikas

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

HOPE and JOY	2
GOYA	3
Summer Camp	4
Acolytes	4
Philotochos	5
Ladies Prayer Group	5
Charity Golf Classic	5
Festival	6
Daughters of Penelope	6
Church Registry	7
Youth Corner	7
September's Calendar	8
Newsletter Ads	9-14

Special Points of Interest

- GOYA Mtg: September 15
- Greek Festival: September 25-27

Enclosures/Flyers

- Golf Outing Thank You flyer
- Festival Volunteer Form
- Flea Market Flyer

Every September 14th we mark the end of the summer with a major solemn feast, the Elevation of the Precious and Life Giving Cross.

In my days as a seminary student, this holy day was commemorated with much pageantry as the Archbishop of America, other hierarchs and dignitaries would attend worship services on campus. The members of the senior class of the School of Theology received their cross and an exorasson (large black flowing robe) as they entered their final year of studies. The September 14th worship service is marked by the feast day hymn "*Save O Lord Your people and bless Your inheritance, grant victory to the faithful over the adversaries of Your Cross and protect Your commonwealth by the power of Your Cross.*" It is a strict fasting day that commemorates the Lord's sacrifice on the former instrument of capital punishment, which is now our instrument of salvation-the Cross.

As the milestone is reached by the senior class members, a new blessing and burden is placed upon these upperclassmen that worked, struggled, studied and prayed through several years of academic and spiritual preparation on the Holy Hill. The Holy Cross day event marks the senior seminarians' privilege and charge to preach the Gospel to others. Indeed as unprepared or inexperienced as they may be, they had received the Great Commission to go and preach the Gospel to all nations- a blessing to them indeed and a burden to them as well. This new cross "to wear and bear" would involve even more prayer, study, preparation, and effort than they might be accustomed to. This time the preaching would be to a more critical audience- their own peers of course, but also to the weary and wary parish congregations in the New England

area or back home.

What is the new blessing and burden these students carry? It is the Cross that is borne. It is the Cross of sacramental ordained ministry that I refer to here. It is *precious* because it anticipates achievement and has beauty and value as fine jewelry or ornamentation but mainly because it is life-giving. *The life* it gives is not the one that might be fully appreciated by its bearer or wearer though, as it is *the life that is not earth bound.*

Once these students are ordained as clergy, the *Cross to bear* weighs heavier than the *Cross to wear*. A clergyman can wear a cross physically as part of his "clerical uniform" if the office (offikion) of *stavroforos* has been bestowed upon him by his hierarch. *Yet the priest of the Lord is to bear his cross in his daily yielding of his human will to God's plan.* Even the unworthy pastor is the image of Christ. Imagine trying to live up to the divine Personhood of the Son of God! Although there are no nails or spears or public sentencing to death, this *cross* can be painful too. The pastor sacrifices personal time he has tried to carve out for himself and/or his family. He subjects his time to unexpected demands or even trivial conflicts or conversations. The Cross is ever before him when he is frustrated by what he wants to do versus what is expected or demanded of him to do for others-immediately. That "cross to bear and wear" is not always bearable or wearable with merely his human grace, so the clergyman waits on divine Grace for sustenance and strength. Otherwise, his human frailty, his passions, or his own brokenness will overtake him or forsake him. He bears "marks or stripes or stigma" when he is stared at in public, mocked secretly, criticized openly, second guessed regularly, lonely frequently, put upon, at times, relentlessly, and ignored conveniently when he makes unpopular decisions.

(continues to page 2)

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(continued from page 1)

The “Cross” is not comfortable. The Cross he bears has splinters and hardships.

Yet what other instrument is salvific and leads to the eternal glory that is promised by God Himself? The triumph of the Life Giving Cross is the heavenly life in communion with God in His glory, forever. Jesus said, “If anyone would come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and come, follow Me.”

Save O Lord Your people and bless Your inheritance- the seminary students and the clergy who bear and wear Your precious and life giving Cross and their flocks of laypeople.

WORSHIP SERVICES FOR SEPTEMBER

SUNDAY SERVICES

SEPTEMBER 6TH, 13TH, 20TH, 20TH and 27TH*

8:30am Orthros & 9:30am Divine Liturgy

SEPTEMBER 8TH: NATIVITY OF THE THEOTOKOS

9:00am Orthros & 10:00am Divine Liturgy

SEPTEMBER 14TH: EXALTATION OF THE HOLY CROSS

9:00am Orthros & 10:00am Divine Liturgy

*** SEPTEMBER 27TH: NO CHURCH SERVICES IN WYCKOFF**

HOLY CROSS CELEBRATION AT ASBURY PARK, NJ

HOPE AND JOY

VACATION CHURCH SCHOOL 2015

Vacation Church School was a great success! The theme this year was “Behold the Light!” Throughout the week we learned about four feast days from the life of Christ: His Nativity, His Entrance into the Temple, His Baptism and His Transfiguration. Each day included a morning prayer service, a religious education lesson, a craft, music (Liturgical & camp songs), games, and snack. On Friday, we learned how to make kollyva, and we concluded the week with a potluck meal for all of the families. VCS 2015 had five days this year and there were 29 children between the ages of 5 and 10 years old in attendance. A special thank you to our VCS Ministry Team members (Dee Bouloukos, Zoe Kominos, Teri Limperopulos, Brigid Nonas, Jackie O’Neill & Agapi Schmarge) who gave of their time to help plan, organize and make the week possible. Thank you also to our young adults (Christina Eliades, Ryan Griffin, Nick Kominos, Evi Manoussakis & Niko Savas), numerous GOYAns, parents, and other parishioners who volunteered their time throughout the week.



Each day included a lesson, which gave the youth the opportunity to ask questions and engage their faith.



Here are our 29 campers along with our excellent volunteers for VCS 2015.



VCS included games and time each day to have fun as a group.



One of the most popular activities was show-and-tell in the church. On Wednesday, we learned about our own baptism by looking at the baptismal font.

HOPE & JOY NEWS

We will be going Apple-Picking one weekend in September and Pumpkin-Picking in October. Stay tuned for dates!

GOYA

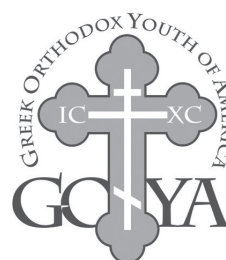
Hello Saint Nicholas GOYA!

It's that time of year again. Our year of events will officially start on Tuesday, September 15th 2015. This will be our first meeting of the year.

The meeting will begin at 7:30pm in the Parish Center.

All new GOYANS are welcome to attend.

If you have any family members or friends in the 7th-12th grade (ages 12-18 years old) please bring them along so they can experience all the great times we have planned for the upcoming year. Remember, tell a friend, bring a friend. All new GOYANS are welcome to attend. Be sure to make it. We can't wait to see you there!



SUMMER CAMP

CAMP GOOD SHEPHERD (CGS)

We would like to thank all who have supported CGS through offering financial support, prayers and sending their children to camp. Our parish sent 12 JOY (8-11 years old) campers and 16 GOYAns (12-18 years old) this year and 11 of the GOYAns are attending both GOYA weeks. CGS is a wonderful ministry of our Metropolis, and we are blessed to have so many of our young people attend each year! In fact we sent the most kids in total for CGS-NJ. Bravo Sam Williams, our Director of Youth & Young Adult Ministries and nice going parents! (CGS has sites now in Maryland & Virginia!)



CGS: GOYA WEEK 2



Fr. Bill, Fr. Anastasios Kousoulas and campers are preparing the campfire for s'mores

JOIN OUR ACOLYTE MINISTRY !

"The role of the altar boy remains a genuine and vital one in the Eucharistic Assembly of the faithful, as well as in other services. He stands ready to serve God in this capacity. It is a stewardship of young men; a service that they offer to God as their regular Sunday offering of talent and ability."

Source www.goarch.org

If you are interested and would like to join this important ministry, contact Fr. Bill Gikas at frbill@stnicholasnj.org

PHILOPTOCHOS

The Saint Nicholas Philoptochos held elections this past June. The board members are as follows:

- Alexandra Pflager President
- Caroline Kalliotzis 1st Vice President
- Aggie Tsadilas 2nd Vice President
- Renate Lainis Treasurer
- Claire Melissas Recording Secretary
- Betty Pappas Corresponding Secretary
- Eleanor Kolovos Advisor
- Peggy Goulet
- Rea Hunter
- Margaret Kolovos
- Pat Konogeris
- Genny Manuel
- Chrys Panakos
- Tammy Spyropoulos
- Demi Thomas

I would like to thank all the board members and Philoptochos members for their continued support and generosity throughout the year.

Baking and preparing for the upcoming Festival has been taking place throughout the summer. Although a lot of work goes into the preparation and execution of each recipe, we all had a good time. For those of us that speak some Greek we tried to brush up on the language by speaking to each other in Greek. The ladies who did not speak any Greek learned a few new words.

We had a fabulous group of women who made sure that we were well taken care of, by providing us with lunch and refreshments. Women of different generations worked side by side and learned from each other so that our traditions can continue.

Let us not forget the wonderful men who helped in the kitchen. They showed up each day and took care of the baking and the washing.

People coming together and supporting each other to fulfill a common goal is what makes us a wonderful community.

Alexandra Pflager

LADIES PRAYER GROUP

A handful of ladies meet regularly in the Theotokos Chapel of our Church on the 2nd and 4th Thursday of each month. The quiet time has proven to strengthen our faith. We welcome and encourage all ladies who are interested in a time of dedicated prayer and fellowship to join us. The answered prayers we are witness to are countless. If you have any prayer requests, please call the parish office or Irene Ayvas at 201-803-2307, and the ladies will gladly add the requests to our ongoing list.

CHARITY GOLF CLASSIC

The Golf Outing Committee would like to thank all the Golfers, Benefactors, Sponsors, Donors, Volunteers, Parishioners and Friends for making our 19th Saint Nicholas Charity Golf Classic a great success!



**This year's honoree Mr. Jordan Issackedes.
Congratulations!!**



To all the Golfers Thank You for your support!



**Thank You to all our
Golf Ministry Team members
(including those not in the picture)**

FESTIVAL: VOLUNTEERS NEEDED !!

After a four-year break, preparations are well under way for the Saint Nicholas Festival. It will be held on the weekend of September 25th, 26th and 27th, 2015.

We are counting on this year being our best festival ever! However, this can only happen with your helping hand. Join the Saint Nicholas team and put your talents to work. There are numerous positions that need to be filled. Our volunteer schedulers are ready to answer your questions and find a special spot for you. To volunteer simply fill out a Volunteer Registration Form located in the fellowship hall and mail it to the church office.

The festival is a fun time for you, your friends and the entire family. Get involved and contribute to our parish's success.

We look forward to seeing you at the Saint Nicholas Festival. For more information call Ted Vittas at 973-513-3672.

DAUGHTERS OF PENELOPE

Summer months provide the Daughters of Penelope a brief respite from our normal fundraising and operational efforts and provide a time to enjoy the warm weather and take some vacation time. We are preparing, however, to commence with our work in September. Many of our Sisters are already working on preparations for the St. Nicholas Festival and all are anxiously awaiting September 25th.

In July, our **Book Club** members discussed *The Light Between Oceans* by M.L. Stedman ... a riveting, yet un-

settling book about a child and her two mothers (biological and adoptive). Then, on August 25th, we met about our 'summer's beach-read' by Susan Mallery, *The Girls at Mischief Bay*. (I made a mistake and got ahead of myself in the last newsletter ... my apologies!). The end of this month, we will be talking about Jeanette Wall's very touching memoir, *The Glass Castle*.

"Knitting is the new yoga," according to Vickie Howell of *Yarnspirations*. In a recent blog, she writes, "... knitting is just another, wonderful weapon in our arsenal of mind and body health maintainers" and then gives 5 tips for using knitting to de-stress!

- 1. Choose a small project that you can finish quickly. A finished item equals a small, endorphin-releasing triumph!** We, in the **Knitting Crowd**, are doing just that! We work on making individual squares that are put together to make lapghans for the wheel-chair bound.
- 2. Use a mega bulky yarn so even short, knitting sessions produce progress you can see.**
- 3. Choose patterns with simple repeats. For a meditative effect chant them to yourself as you knit.** For new knitters/crocheters, our patterns are simple. As we become more comfortable, we adopt new stitches to incorporate into our creations.
- 4. With every stitch or two, breathe in and out.** Apparently, breathing deeply sends a message to your brain to relax.
- 5. Knit a gift. Making someone else's day is surprisingly therapeutic!** Our preemie hats, baby blankets and lapghans all make someone happy as we distress in the process!

The **Knitting Crowd** continues to meet every other Tuesday afternoon from 1:30pm to 3:30pm in the Conference Room. In September, we will meet the afternoons of September 1, 15 and 29. Lessons are available as are patterns. Please let Athena Katsaros know if you would like to join the **Knitting/Crocheting Crowd** or if you would like to knit/crochet for us in the comfort of your own home. Also, let Athena know if you need yarn or if you have yarn to donate.

Her phone number is: **(201) 261-0809**.

For current Sister's—please keep a lookout for the September meeting date. If you would like to join our **Agape** Chapter, please contact our Vice President, Thalia Kalamarides, at thaliacleo@aol.com. If you would like to know more about the **Daughters of Penelope** or any of our charities, kindly contact President Effie Stratis at dopagapepresident@gmail.com.

CHURCH REGISTRY

WEDDING

On July 30th 2015, Costas G. Hoppas and Karen L. Steinhoff were married. Marina Hoppas was the koumbara (sponsor).

FUNERAL

On August 13th, 2015, John Komninos beloved husband to Cleo and father Marie Foti and Thomas Komninos fell asleep in the Lord.

Eternal be his memory.

YOUTH CORNER



Sam Williams

DIRECTOR OF YOUTH & YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES

THE NEW YEAR & THE ENVIRONMENT

The New Year symbolizes, for many people, a new beginning. It is a moment to reevaluate where we have been and check to see where we are headed. Although most of the world celebrates January 1st as the start to the New Year, the Orthodox Church celebrates the New Year on September 1st. In addition, this day was chosen in 1989 by Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios to be an annual “Day of Prayer for Creation” or the “Protection of the Environment Day.” This summer, Pope Francis followed the lead of the Ecumenical Patriarch and wrote an encyclical on the Environment “*Laudato si*” and also proclaimed September 1st the “World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation” for the Roman Catholic Church. So why is September 1st the start of the new year for the Orthodox Church, and why would this day be chosen as a day to remember the environment? September marks an important time of the year where we as a Church can look back at the year and thank God for all that He has provided us, and recommit and offer our lives and all of creation to the Lord.

For the Orthodox Church, the New Year is not just about new commitments and new promises; it is about giving thanks to God by offering up our lives and our work to Him to bless. This giving thanks to God is precisely what the Divine Liturgy is all about. Liturgy means the “work of the people”; we come together as the Body of Christ, as the People of God to do the great work of giving thanks with one voice. Our thanksgiving to God, Eucharistia in Greek, is the same word as Eucharist (Holy Communion). We receive Holy Communion because we are

offering “ourselves, one another and our whole life to Christ our God,” as we pray in the Liturgy.

Before we can share in Holy Communion, someone has to first offer up bread (prosforo – an offering, in Greek) and wine to be blessed. We don’t bring wheat and grapes, but products of our hands – bread and wine – products of our own labor and work. God blesses us with sun and rain so we are able to grow wheat and grapes. We take this and make something of it and then offer it back to God. God, in return, gives this offering back to us as His Holy Body and Blood in the Eucharist to share. We then go out from the Divine Liturgy to be the presence of Christ in this broken world and to bring the world back to Him. This understanding of the Eucharist, Holy Communion, can help us to better understand why September 1st was chosen as the “Protection of the Environment Day.”

The Church teaches that God has made man the “priest of creation”. We are not here to dominate and exploit nature, but to make it holy to God. “In a variety of ways - through the cultivation of the earth, through craftsmanship, through the writing of books and the painting of icons - humanity gives material things a voice and renders the creation articulate in praise of God” (Bishop Ireneos of Romania). In other words, just like we offer bread and wine in the liturgy, humanity is meant to give back all of creation to God as an offering through our responsible use of it.

In his 1989 message, the late Ecumenical Patriarch Dimitrios wrote, “Man is destined not to exercise power over creation, as if he were the owner of it, but to act as its steward, cultivating it in love and referring it in thankfulness, with respect and reverence, to its Creator.” This reminds us that as Orthodox Christians, we are called to have good stewardship not only of our time, talents and treasure, but also of the natural environment. The current Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, nicknamed the “Green Patriarch,” continues the work of his predecessor in being the preeminent Church leader involved in the environmental movement today.

The most important and sacred part of the Divine Liturgy is when we receive Holy Communion. It is telling that Orthodox leaders have used the Church’s teaching about the Eucharist as the most important reason to commit to caring for the environment. At the start of the New Year, the Church calls us to be inspired by the Eucharist by offering ourselves and all of creation to God. For the Church, caring for the environment is not about politics or even “environmentalism” as such; rather, it is about being truly responsible stewards of the world given to us by God.

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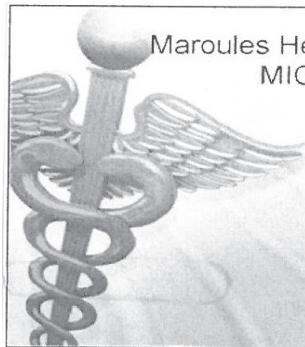
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