



Crossroads

The Monthly Newsletter of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross

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CROSSROADS

Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross
Medford, NJ
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PRAYER AND THE SCRIPTURES: TALKING AND LISTENING

by Fr. John

“In praying, we speak to God—offering Him our love, thanks, praise, and concerns. In reading the Scriptures, He speaks back to us.” (Fr. Eugen Pentiu)

Over the past few issues of *Crossroads*, I have shared with you materials and points that have been discussed during our Parish Council Meetings on supporting and encouraging the faith of our children. We have been working hard in providing a consistent and organized Church School program and offering more activities for our youth. But as the research has shown, particularly the *National Study of Youth and Religion*— all of our efforts might have little success, unless certain other factors are in place. As expressed in Seraphim Danckaert's article, “*Losing our Religion: On ‘Retaining’ Young People in the Orthodox Church*”:

The practical conclusion is rather straightforward: For most people, and when viewed as a sociological trend, unless there is a specific *adult* in a teenager's life who shows the teenager by example and in the context of a meaningful, long-term relationship how an *adult* incorporates Christian faith *into daily life*, no program, camp, mission trip, youth group, worship style, musical trend, Sunday school, church reform, updated pastoral style, modernization, or even catechetical class will make a statistically significant difference. Further, to retain their faith into adulthood young people need to experience God's grace for themselves, preferably before the latter part of high school.

Another characteristic noted in the *National Study of Youth and Religion* among those young people who were most “devoted” to their faith was that they “prayed a few times a week or more” and “read Scripture

once or twice a week or more.” So, if it’s true that our young people are counting on us—parents and parishioners—to model how a Christian incorporates his/her Christian faith into daily life, then they will also need to observe how prayer and the reading of Scripture have been incorporated into their lives.

In his recent book, *Acquiring the Mind of Christ*, Archimandrite Sergius (Bowyer) presents “*A Prayer Rule*.” Of special interest are the ways he has incorporated the “*Jesus Prayer*” and the reading of a chapter from the Gospels:

- 1) **The Trisagion Prayers** (O Heavenly King—Our Father):
- 2) **Psalm 50/51**: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your great mercy...”
- 3) **The Creed**
- 4) **Saying the Jesus Prayer**: “**O Lord, Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.**”
- 5) **Then, for at least 5 or 10 minutes, audibly but quietly saying the Jesus Prayer.**
- 6) Saying **Prayers** from the Prayer Book/Prayers for Communion/Prayers of Intercession for others
- 7) **Read a chapter from the Gospels**
- 8) Then, if desired, a **prayer** for the morning or evening
- 9) Conclusion

He notes in the introduction, “when using a rule of prayer we must be flexible and do what works for us; our goal is to maintain the connection with God and cultivate a real relationship, not just fulfill our ‘rule’ of prayer” (p. 157).

Here are Fr. Thomas Hopko’s “*55 Maxims for Christian Living*,” that we read together before starting our *Healthy Choice Sessions*. Consider them again from the perspectives of prayer, the reading of Scripture, and how these can be incorporated into daily life:

55 Maxims for Christian Living

by Fr. Thomas Hopko

1. Be always with Christ.
2. Pray as you can, not as you want.
3. Have a keepable rule of prayer that you do by discipline.
4. Say the Lord’s Prayer several times a day.
5. Have a short prayer that you constantly repeat when your mind is not occupied with other things.
6. Make some prostrations when you pray.
7. Eat good foods in moderation.
8. Keep the Church’s fasting rules.
9. Spend some time in silence every day.
10. Do acts of mercy in secret.
11. Go to liturgical services regularly
12. Go to confession and communion regularly.
13. Do not engage intrusive thoughts and feelings. Cut them off at the start.
14. Reveal all your thoughts and feelings regularly to a trusted person.
15. Read the scriptures regularly.
16. Read good books a little at a time.

17. Cultivate communion with the saints.
18. Be an ordinary person.
19. Be polite with everyone.
20. Maintain cleanliness and order in your home.
21. Have a healthy, wholesome hobby.
22. Exercise regularly.
23. Live a day, and a part of a day, at a time.
24. Be totally honest, first of all, with yourself.
25. Be faithful in little things.
26. Do your work, and then forget it.
27. Do the most difficult and painful things first.
28. Face reality.
29. Be grateful in all things.
30. Be cheerful.
31. Be simple, hidden, quiet and small.
32. Never bring attention to yourself.
33. Listen when people talk to you.
34. Be awake and be attentive.
35. Think and talk about things no more than necessary.
36. When we speak, speak simply, clearly, firmly and directly.
37. Flee imagination, analysis, figuring things out.
38. Flee carnal, sexual things at their first appearance.
39. Don't complain, mumble, murmur or whine.
40. Don't compare yourself with anyone.
41. Don't seek or expect praise or pity from anyone.
42. Don't judge anyone for anything.
43. Don't try to convince anyone of anything.
44. Don't defend or justify yourself.
45. Be defined and bound by God alone.
46. Accept criticism gratefully but test it critically.
47. Give advice to others only when asked or obligated to do so.
48. Do nothing for anyone that they can and should do for themselves.
49. Have a daily schedule of activities, avoiding whim and caprice
(*caprice: an impulsive change of mind*)
50. Be merciful with yourself and with others.
51. Have no expectations except to be fiercely tempted to your last breath.
52. Focus exclusively on God and light, not on sin and darkness.
53. Endure the trial of yourself and your own faults and sins peacefully, serenely, because
you know that God's mercy is greater than your wretchedness.
54. When we fall, get up immediately and start over.
55. Get help when you need it, without fear and without shame.

Developing and reinforcing a life of prayer and the reading of Scriptures, for our sake and for our children, will be goals we will encourage throughout 2016.

UPCOMING MEETINGS & EVENTS

- **COMMUNITY LUNCHEON: SATURDAY, JANUARY 2 at 9 AM.**
- **ST. HELENA'S GUILD MEETING: SUNDAY JANUARY 3 at 9:15 AM.**
- **INREACH MEETING: SUNDAY, JANUARY 3, following the Divine Liturgy.**
- **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: MONDAY, JANUARY 18, at 7 PM.**
- **PRE-ANNUAL MEETING: SUNDAY JANUARY 24, following the Liturgy.**
- **WOMEN2WOMEN GATHERING : THURSDAY JANUARY 28 AT THE HOME OF JUDY CLYDE, 7 PM.**
- **NEXT YOUTH SUNDAY: SUNDAY, JANUARY 31.**
- **YOUTH ICE SKATING PARTY: SUNDAY JANUARY 31—see info below.**
- **FAMILY FUN NIGHT: SATURDAY FEBRUARY 20.**

CHURCH ENVELOPES have arrived and are available in the vestibule.

WEDDING BANNES: *Martha Skuby* and *Stephen Aiello* will be married in our church on January 30.

PRE-ANNUAL MEETING—SUNDAY JANUARY 24, following the Divine Liturgy. We have realized over the past few years that our *Annual Parish Meeting*, while complying with the responsibility of sharing through various Reports a review of our community's life, has not provided a satisfactory opportunity for imagining what our parish could be doing and become. This year in addition to the *Annual Meeting* which will take place on *February 14*, we will have a "Pre-Annual" Meeting on *Sunday January 24*, during Coffee Hour in the fellowship area. This Meeting will last for only 1 hour and be concerned particularly with the sharing of ideas from our Fall Parish Survey and the presentation and planning of upcoming programs and activities. **PLEASE PLAN ON ATTENDING!**

ICE SKATING PARTY JAN 31 @ 12:30 after Divine Liturgy / Youth Sunday This 2 hour event, at The Igloo Ice Rink, is for all ages & abilities and includes skate rental, pizza, drinks and dessert. \$12 per skater. Free to watch the fun.

RSVP by Jan 17th to Mimi Jacobs mimijacobs10@hotmail.com

FAMILY FUN NIGHT—COMING UP—SATURDAY FEBRUARY 20!—DETAILS COMING SOON.

PARISH COUNCIL MEETING—DECEMBER 17, 2015—MINUTES by Carol Ann Curry, Parish Secretary.

Treasurer Dan Dowiak presented the Financial Report. The account balances as of 12/13/15 are as follows: **General Fund** \$21,519.01; **Memorial Fund** \$44,268.48; **Capital Improvement Fund** \$22,385.69; **Food Coupon Fund** \$4,409.60; **Choir Fund** \$2,756.52.

2015 FINANCIAL PICTURE:

<u>Month</u>	<u>Income</u>	<u>Expenses</u>	<u>Difference</u>	<u>Year To Date</u>
November	\$27,749.00	\$20,899.44*	\$6,849.56	\$(7,777.24)

***Notable Expenses for November: \$1829.83(PSE&G-2 months), \$1049.33(Building Insurance), \$425.95(Lawn Care/Sprinkler), \$260.75(Diocesan Assembly).**

The Mortgage Balance as of 12/1/15 is \$303,541.42.

Parish Pre-Annual Meeting – The meeting is scheduled for Sunday, January 24th, 2016 during coffee hour. The purpose of the meeting is to focus on Parish Life and not financial aspects of the church which generally dominate the Annual Meeting.

Parish Photo Directory – This project is not yet finalized. We are waiting for the proof to be returned for review. There were some issues with how *LifeTouch* altered some of the pages submitted and did not follow instructions received from OCHC. This is what caused the delay with this project.

Parish Christmas Card – The card has been completed and will be mailed out this week.

Special Collections –The 50 stockings for Covenant House and the packaged cookies for Ancora Hospital have been delivered. Cookie trays from the Women2Women cookie exchange were delivered to the Medford Fire Department, Medford Police Department, and Medford EMT’s. Thanks to everyone who participated.

Parish Charity Donations for 2015 – Council approved a donation of \$350.00 to the following charities: *St. Innocent Orthodox Mission Church*, Oneonta, NY; *Medford EMS*; *Burlington Community Services*; *IOCC*; *OCCM*; and *Zoe For Life*. This money comes from the *Monthly Charity Envelope*. Charities are reviewed by Fr. John and Diana Pasca and are then presented to Council for approval.

Emergency Phone Notification – OCHC will establish a phone tree through an automated system called *Call Multiplier* which will enable us to quickly send out phone and text messages. This will allow OCHC to send out automated messages, such as service cancellations due to weather, to all parishioners via land line, cell phone and/or text message. We will be asking all parishioners to give us the number they would like to be contacted at so we can input it into the system.

Parish Committee Updates – (1) *St. Helena’s Guild* – The account balance as of 11/23/15 is \$10,872.00. (2) *Stewardship Committee* – Pledge cards for 2016 are available in the vestibule. Please remember that a new pledge card must be filled out each year even if you are an established pledge participant. (3) *Inreach/Outreach Group - The Active Listening Workshop* was held in November. Those in attendance felt it was helpful in improving their listening skills. Many events (Family Fun Night, IOCC Mission Dinner, Healthy Options Series, Spaghetti Dinner, Crop Walk, etc.) are either already planned or being worked on for 2016. (4) *Youth Activities* – The Christmas Pageant is scheduled for Sunday, December 20th following liturgy and a Youth Skating Party is scheduled for Sunday, January 31st, 2016.

Ongoing Council Activities – Council is also working on other projects which include reviewing and updating the Parish By-Laws, looking into a possible sound system, improving our signage, reviewing Parish Survey results, and preparing a survey geared toward our Young Adults.

The next Council Meeting is scheduled for Monday, January 18th, 2016 at 7:00 PM..

Calendar Year (2016) Upcoming Events

January 17th, 2016—Novogodny Ball
January 24th, 2016 —Pre-Annual Meeting (note the changed date)
January 31st, 2016 – Youth Skating Party
February 14th, 2016 --Annual Meeting
February 20th, 2016 – Family Fun Night
February 26-27, 2016 – Pirohi Sessions
March 6th, 2016— Pre-Lenten Lunch
March 13th, 2016 – Forgiveness Sunday
March 20th, 2016 – Healthy Options Session #1
April 3rd, 2016 – Healthy Options Session #2
April 9th & 10th, 2016 – Archbishop Michael’s Visit
April 17th, 2016 – Healthy Options #3
May 14th, 2016 – Spaghetti Dinner
May 21st, 2016 – Fantasy Auction
June 12th, 2016 – OCHC Parish Picnic

COFFEE HOUR LIST FOR JANUARY & FEBRUARY:

January

3 Maureen Sapnar / 10 Carol Ann Curry
17 Barbara Mosser & Nellie Kuzmenchuk / 24 Marie Clifton
31 Val Olesnovich

February

7 Mary Stosuy / 14 Genie Skuby
21 Jessica Siragusa / 28 Ellie Kuzma & Daughters

+

An Altogether Different Language

by Anne Porter

There was a church in Umbria, Little Portion,
Already old eight hundred years ago.
It was abandoned and in disrepair
But it was called St. Mary of the Angels
For it was known to be the haunt of angels,
Often at night the country people
Could hear them singing there.

What was it like, to listen to the angels,
To hear those mountain-fresh, those simple voices
Poured out on the bare stones of Little Portion
In hymns of joy?
No one has told us.
Perhaps it needs another language
That we have still to learn,
An altogether different language.



CROSSWALKS

The Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross Youth Activities Newsletter
January 2016



SHARING CHRISTMAS JOY

On December 5, 2015, fourteen of our youth visited Ms. Dorothy Phillips and her friends at the Granville Place Assisted Living Facility. They joined Fr. John and members of the OCHC Choir for a brief prayer service; the Youth Choir sang hymns and carols; yummy cookie treats were shared and we were blessed with a surprise gift – a Granville Place resident shared his talent on the harmonica!



EPIPHANY ~THEOPHANY: THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD JAN 6th

This Feast celebrates the Baptism of Christ by John the Baptist in the River Jordan. The Gospel reading is Matthew 3:13-17. The main feature of this feast is the Great Blessing of Water. Bring containers to take Holy Water to sanctify your home or to save for times of adversity and illness. Share photos and stories from the children's own baptism. Take a moment to find the Jordan River on a map. Think of other Bible stories about water such as Noah's Ark, the people of Israel crossing the Red Sea and Jesus walking on water.



ICE SKATING PARTY JAN 31ST @ 12:30 after Divine Liturgy / Youth Sunday

This 2 hour event, at The Igloo Ice Rink, is for all ages & abilities and includes skate rental, pizza, drinks and dessert. \$12 per skater. Free to watch the fun. RSVP by Jan 17th to Mimi Jacobs mimijacobs10@hotmail.com



Mark your calendars:
SATURDAY FEB 20th is FAMILY FUN NIGHT!
Details coming soon

THE ANNUAL NATIVITY PLAY PRESENTED BY OUR YOUTH IS ALWAYS A HIGHLIGHT OF THE CHRISTMAS SEASON



2016 HOUSE BLESSING SCHEDULE

As has been the usual practice, Fr. John will assume that he will be visiting all parishioners. If, for any reason, someone would not want to be visited please give him a call or leave a message in the church office.

Each home will be called in advance and those who are home during the day may be called on a different day. Homes not included in the general areas listed below will be contacted to set up a time.

Jan 6-7: Cherry Hill
8: Haddonfield / Collingswood
9: Marlton/Mt Laurel
10: Medford/Tabernacle
11: Leisuretown
12: Moorestown
14: Folsom
15: Willingboro
16: Atco/Egg Harbor
17ff: complete missed visits

Here are some ways of preparing for the blessing of your home:

- * Set aside a place for the service (usually a table in the dining room or kitchen).
- * On the table place an icon, a candle, a bowl for Holy Water, and a list of names to be remembered – divided into two lists, living and departed.
- * A person holding the candle may lead Fr. John throughout the home.

TROPARION

When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan
the worship of the Trinity was made manifest.

For the voice of the Father bore witness to You
and called You His beloved Son.

And the Spirit in the form of a dove
confirmed the truthfulness of His word.

O Christ, our God, who have revealed Yourself / and have enlightened the world, glory to You.

Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross – JANUARY, 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2 <i>Community Lunch—9 AM</i> <i>NO Great Vespers:</i>
3 <i>St. Helena's Guild—9:15 DIVINE LITURGY: 10:00 Inreach Meeting</i>	4	5 <i>Vesperal Liturgy for Epiphany with Blessing of Water: 7 PM</i>	6	7	8	9 <i>Great Vespers: 5</i>
10 <i>DIVINE LITURGY 10:00 2nd Blessing of Water</i>	11	12	13 <i>Burlington Nursing Home— 1:30</i>	14	15	16 <i>Great Vespers: 5</i>
17 <i>DIVINE LITURGY: 10:00 Novogodny Ball</i>	18 <i>PARISH COUNCIL MEETING: 7 PM</i>	19	20	21	22	23 <i>Great Vespers: 5</i>
24 <i>DIVINE LITURGY: 10:00 Pre-Annual Meeting</i> 31 <i>DIVINE LITURGY: YOUTH SUNDAY</i>	25	26	27	28 <i>WOMEN2WOMEN GATHERING at Judy Clyde's: 7 PM (Book Study: Women in the Bible)</i>	29	30 <i>Wedding of Martha Skuby & Stephen Aiello 1:30</i> + <i>Great Vespers: will follow</i>

