

HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CHURCH – AUGUST NEWSLETTER 2010
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Orthodoxy in any country has the same purpose--to unite everyone in God and to maintain Jesus in our hearts through the Holy Sacraments of the Church. – Fr. Roman Braga

The above quote I came upon in reading about an amazing personality of the Orthodox Christian world, Fr. Roman Braga. Fr. Roman is an older man now, in his eighties I believe, and he lives in Michigan and serves a monastery there in Rives Junction. I want to simply introduce you to Fr. Roman a little and then say a few words about this quote above which he stated in an interview.

Fr. Roman was born of pious parents, his mother in fact always wanted to become a nun, but in those days, you did as your parents wished. Her parents desired for her to marry and have a family and so she did. Her husband was always aware of her spiritual tendencies and her desires, so he used to buy her the various service books of the Church, the Great Book of Hours (Horologion), the Ochoechos (book of the Eight Tones, with hymns for ever day of the week) the Psalter (book of Psalms, laid out in such a way as Orthodox Christians would use them for prayer), the various Paraklesis services and Akathists, especially to our Lady the Theotokos, and so on. He didn't purchase the 12 volume Menaia set, because, as Fr. Roman stated, they were too expensive for him. They lived out in the country in Romania, and their village Church was the local monastery, that's all there was for them. In other words, where they lived there literally was no parish Church, and so all the villagers would go to the Monastery Church for services, praying with the monks and participating in the local cycle of services. The monks would in turn take care of them, celebrating the Sacraments needed by the villagers and providing catechism for the children and spiritual nourishment for the whole village.

Fr. Roman says he remembers his parents were ascetical, meaning they kept the fast days, they did as the monks did pretty

much, but not all the time of course, because the monastic life was too rigid for families, but in as much as they could, they did. When one of the children misbehaved, their mother simply told them to go do some metanias (prostrations) or to read an Akathist – this was her method of discipline, and the children eventually learned to love doing these things with time.

His mother feel asleep with the Psalter in her hands, and woke up with it again, it was her favorite book; both to read and to pray.

In was in this environment that Fr. Roman grew up. Life wasn't always to be so pretty though. Later in life, he would be arrested on two different occasions by the communists on bogus charges. Both times, he, along with many other clergy, monks and pious lay persons were tortured; both physically and especially psychologically, they were treated worse than animals and made to do much harsh labor with very little sleep or nourishment. In these Romanian Gulags they slept so tightly together that if one man turned in his sleep, the whole row had to roll over too, since it was impossible not to do so without, I suppose, crushing the outside guys against the walls and causing even more pain to everyone. He survived, twice! Beatings and the like, he still has the scars on his head that many who have visited him in Michigan have seen. His stories have been emotional, amazing, inspiring and horrifying all at the same time for those who have heard them. It is hard for us to imagine society coming to that. It happened of course, and it could happen again, most anywhere in the world today. Forgive me for saying it, but I don't even think our own country in America is exempt from the possibility. Of course, we pray that such things don't occur, because we all desire that our children have the opportunity to grow up freely, to practice their Orthodox Christian faith and customs without persecution or inhibition.

Having said that, let us remember that it is up to us to pass on those traditions to our children. Only in the Orthodox Church will they learn to be Orthodox Christians. We are about .6% of the total American Population as Orthodox Christians, and that involves all the Orthodox, not just us who are of the Greek Orthodox Church in America. Needless to say our children face many competing ideas, competing world values, visions of life, etc. We can no longer take for granted that the village will help raise our child Orthodox, that they will learn it by osmosis, because the village doesn't exist here.

Recently I was listening to a podcast about an American and his family, all converts to the Antiochian Orthodox Church from an Evangelical-Protestant background, who decided on almost a whim to go to Holy Week and Bright week...in Cyprus! In this podcast the gentleman discusses what he observed in Cyprus. He saw Orthodox culture and life. Even though he didn't speak a word of Greek, he immensely enjoyed the services and all that went into them. It was many little things he noticed though. He noticed how the women baking bread would take a hot coal or two out from under the oven to use to burn their incense for evening prayers. He learned that they would take a bowl of water and leave it in the Church for a period of time to naturally gather yeast from the air, and from this they made their starter for their bread for the year. This connected prayer and work, Church and daily life. The farmers in the villages don't

harvest the edges of their crop, because, in accordance with the Old Testament commandment, those portions were for the poor, the stranger and the needy. There, he found on the island of Cyprus, that if a family was in need of food, they could freely pick an orange or a fig, something they could hold in their hands (not to run off with in a sack mind you) and to eat; that such was expected. This is all part of Orthodox Christian culture; these are parts of Greek Orthodox customs we must not lose living here in America. The young man with his family was so impressed with all these things he witnessed and experienced there, that he told the interviewer that he hoped that some of these things might find root in the Greek Orthodox peoples' living in America of all Orthodox jurisdictions, cradle and convert.

Why do I mention this family here? Because it speaks to what Fr. Roman tells us is the goal of Orthodoxy. He said it is to ***unite everyone in God, and to keep Jesus Christ in our hearts through the Sacraments of the Church.*** By Sacraments it is safe to say that he means all of the Services of the Liturgical Life of the Orthodox Church, because they are all sacramental in one degree or another.

People frequently ask, "What is the mission of our Church?" This is a great quote to start the discussion. May God bless you abundantly in the new Ecclesiastical year to come! ***by Fr. Gregory***



Growing our Church
Submitted by Nick Taras

The reality of expanding our facilities is upon us. Each of us has thought about improving the way we educate ourselves about Orthodoxy. The proposed building expansion provides so many opportunities to create a better learning environment. It will include additional meeting space for the different organizations of our community and establish an office for Father Gregory to be able to conduct church business and meet with you and your family in a private

setting. Let's remind ourselves how many ways have we been blessed. Ask yourself, "How can I participate in the Capital Campaign?" There are many ways to get involved: a lump sum, memorial giving, estate planning, or a 5-year pledge (recommended). Every amount, every gift, every thought is very much appreciated. It's our church and our responsibility to make sure it lasts for future generations as our Pappous and Yiayias did for us.

Stewardship Update
Submitted by Thomas Gaddis

Thank you to everyone who has made their pledge. We're over half way through the year, and Holy Trinity is around 75% to our goal off 100% community participation (118 versus 152 pledges in 2009). This program should begin in earnest in November and be completed by the end of January in order for our Church to have a clear vision of how its fiscal health can support its physical growth and spiritual outreach. Our goal as a stewardship committee is to have everyone

participate, no matter what the amount may be. Therefore, Father and I have sent out letters recently to those who have pledged in the past and/or are giving money without a pledge form. Please also understand that Stewardship is a reflection of your commitment to the Church and your fellow parishioners. Thank you so much to those that have participated in the joy of stewardship. We sincerely hope that those who have not participated will do so.

Philoptochos News
Submitted by Donna Bacon

Just one woman asking another woman to care. This is the theme of Philoptochos. I attended the Philoptochos conference at the clergy laity the beginning of July and learned some amazing things. Philoptochos is the largest Christian womens organization in the country. We had a very succesful clothing and furniture drive to benefit flood victims here in Nashville. The national organization has also contributed money to

help in the recovery. We had a fun Mothers Day tea and meeting. We are now baking for the festival. Check our schedule and if you can help, please join us. Any Emerils or Rachel Rays out there? Please see me if you are interested in joining us. We are looking forward to a great first meeting for the season in Sept. Date has not yet been decided.

Camp News

Submitted by Fr. Gregory

St Nicholas Camp was held this year June 28-July 2, 2010. It was a great success. Though it was warmer this year than last, and the bugs for some reason had their ire up against us, we prevailed! The campers learned about God's creation, it's original beauty, the fall of man and how it affected creation, as well as the restoration of all creation with the glorious and second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. As you can imagine we ended up discussing many topics along the way, including the theory of evolution and how the Church views modern scientific thought and discovery, along with other philosophical topics. As always, our youth surprised us with their sharpness and their ability to discuss these topics in some depth. The activities were great as well, as the youth also helped participate in small camp projects, since camp NaCoMe, like so many others, had been damaged by the flood. The campers were supervised on these projects, which were only small ones, but helpful none the less to the camp staff. This gave the campers an opportunity to positively affect the camp site with their hands and hearts. Fr. George Wilson, Fr. Larry Legakis, Fr. Stavros Ballas and I all participated in the activities and instruction at the camp. Mark Davis help serve as a nurse at the camp, providing medical aid to various bee stings and what nots. He even had a few times to pull out some of the old down home remedies, which worked wonders! Stella Kamm, Daniel Taber and George Spanos worked as counselors at the camp; we couldn't have done it without them. Nicholas Davis, Katrina Kennedy, Slyvia and Timothy Coutras, Joseph, Isabella & Nicholas Horner, Nick Adamopoulos, Hayden Richard, Luke Boonstra, John &

Tommy Pagonis were all camp participants, along with Sophie Owen and Elena Dikova. Nashville was so well represented this year at camp. Sara Spanos and Stephanie Davis were also present as day workers. We look forward to our future GOYA outings, Fall Creek Falls and Summer Camp probably being the two most important. We hope to have more of our youth participate in these future events, and we always need counselors. Even though we have no official dates yet, I encourage you to mark that last week in June with a pencil on your calendars at home. It is likely camp will be that week, if not close to it. God bless you all.



2010 Summer Camp Group Photo



Isabella Horner making a St. Brigid Cross

Dear Parents,

Greetings in Christ. It is hard to believe that summer is almost over. Schools will be starting for many of our children in the next couple of weeks. With so much going on in our parish, least of which is Greek Festival preparations, we wanted to remind everyone that the beginning of Church School is around the corner as well. **We will be registering children after the Liturgy on August 8th, 15th, and 22nd.** Please look for a table set up in the Church Hall. Please note that registering your children each new school year helps us keep track of changes in class assignments and contact information. **Classes will begin on September 19th with a Teacher Meet and Greet and Blessing of the classrooms by Father Gregory.**

Last year, Father Gregory created our Church School Mission statement. It is set forth below:

- 1.) To Gain a Sense of God's Presence in our lives;
- 2.) To Realize our place in the Body of Christ, which is the Church;
- 3.) To grow and progress in the faith; or said another way, to "acquire the Holy Spirit."

The mission statement provides a framework for all of us to follow in our daily lives. We welcome your involvement in Church School to help us achieve the goals set out in the Mission Statement. We strongly encourage regular attendance to Church School. As we know from our own educational experiences, consistency is the cornerstone to learning. Please help us to make the most of our school year by bringing your children to class on a regular basis.

Please feel free to talk with Father Gregory, the teachers or us about any questions or concerns you have about our Church School program.

In Christ,

David Chagas and Elena Xoinis Rollins
Church School Co-Directors

Church School Registration 2010 - 2011

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church

Please fill out the form below for all children attending church school.

Name(s)	Patron Saint	Birthday	Grade
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Parent's/Guardian's Name:

Address:

(city) (state) (zip code)

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Are there any allergies, concerns or issues that the Church School should know about your child? Please explain _____

Please check one or two ways that you could and would be willing to offer your time and talents to assist the Religious Education Program:

- Teach Church School
- Substitute Teach. If so, what grade(s) _____
- Provide Snacks
- Help with Christmas Pageant
- Youth Choir
- Vacation Bible School

Please return completed form to Church School Directors, David Changas or Elena Rollins. If you have any questions please call Church School Directors, Elena Rollins at 665-8660 or David Changas at 790-4639.