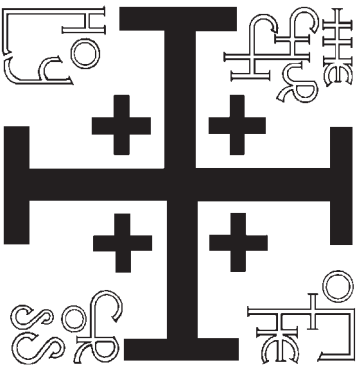
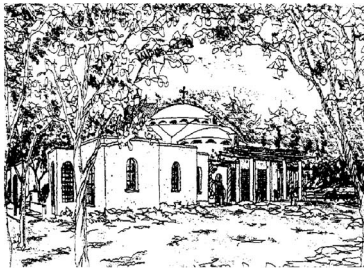


CROSS CURRENTS

Monthly Newsletter
JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2005



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CROSS CURRENTS

The Monthly Newsletter of the Church of the Holy Cross
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Articles and ads for *Cross Currents* are due on the 26th of the month prior to the month of desired publication.

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Your 2005 Board of the Parish Council wishes you a very Happy New Year! May we all prosper and grow in the Lord.

At our Board meetings, we begin by reading Bible verses selected by **Father Peter**. The verses we read last week are particularly relevant to our church's health and our spiritual growth. They were from the book of Romans - Chapter 12, verses 1-11. These words, written by St. Paul to the Romans, are as true today as they were then. Below are some excerpts from these verses:

1. Be honest in your estimate of yourselves, measuring your value by how much faith God has given you.
2. Just as there are many parts to our bodies, so it is with Christ's Body. We are all parts of it, and it takes every one of us to make it complete, for we each have different work to do. So we belong to each other, and each one needs all of the others.

3. God has given each of us the ability to do certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, then prophesy, as often as your faith is strong enough to receive a message from God.
4. If your gift is in serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, do a good job of teaching. If you are a preacher, see to it that your sermons are strong and helpful.
5. If God has given you money, be generous in helping others with it. If God has given you administrative ability and put you in charge of the work of others, take the responsibility seriously. Those who offer comfort to the sorrowing should do so with Christian cheer.
6. Don't pretend that you love others, really love them. Hate what is wrong. Stand on the side of the good. Love each other with brotherly affection and take delight in honoring each other. Serve the Lord enthusiastically.

We must all work as one body to form a strong Christian community. Presently, only a small fraction of our members are working together on church projects and ministries. Our works will be truly fruitful if all our talents are engaged. There are many organizations and activities where you are particularly well suited. We all have talents that are vital to our church.

We can look forward to many happy events: Godparents Lunch, Crab Feed, Glendi, and Cheese Fare Lunch. Afterward, we enter into the Holy Pascha days.

Yours in Christ's love,
Jenny Cladis, Parish Council President

SUNRISE, SON RISE

by *Chris Canellos, Parish Council Treasurer*

=== JANUARY ===

At the December Parish Council meeting, **Tanya Spirtos**, our Stewardship chairman, asked each of us to write in “fifty words or less” what motivates us to support our Church financially. Never one for brevity, especially on this topic, I decided to devote this month’s column to that effort.

There are many facets to my response. First, and foremost, is the spiritual dimension. When **Eva** and I support Holy Cross, we are gratefully returning to God a portion of the great blessings he has given to us – our good health, our beautiful son, our wonderful friends, our parents and others who nurtured us, the wherewithal to live our lives in this great land of liberty and opportunity and most important, His love and redemption. The Bible gives us the example of Abraham who prospered greatly and then gave ten percent of everything he owned as a thank offering to God.

The words of Paul to the Church at Corinth are so true! “Whoever sows generously, will reap generously . . . God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work.” (2 Cor 9:6-10) Or said another way by my dear mother “whatever you give to God is returned to you one hundredfold.” And how true that has been in our lives!!

There are many who are far better equipped to make this spiritual case, so I will devote the rest of the piece to more earthly reasons. In my professional life, I am aware if the difference between day-to-day expenses and investments. Expenses, sometimes necessary and sometimes frivolous, represent money going out for goods and services that benefit only the current moment, like groceries, utilities, entertainment and rent. The item you have purchased is fully consumed in the present and has no future benefit. Investments, on the other hand, have the future in mind, like education, saving for retirement and buy-

ing income property. A good investment returns many times its original amount to its owner and a truly great investment continues its returns forever!

Every gift we make to our Church is an investment in the future of our faith! Nothing can be more important to us than to “keep our faith alive.” The gifts we give make possible all the wonderful programs that the Church offers. The greatest investment we make is in the religious education of our young people. As I taught **Christian** the Lord’s Prayer, I remembered my mother kneeling next to me each night leading me in the *Pater Imon* before bedtime. And so each night, Christian, Eva and I recite the prayer in the two languages, in our deep gratitude and love for God and in the loving memory of “*Yia Yia* Mary.” And as Christian grows, I want his best friends to be Orthodox Christians, so that each can affirm and strengthen the faith of each other.

While each of us, parents, grandparents, *nounas*, *nounos*, uncles and aunts must take primary responsibility for the upbringing of our children, the Church provides the vital infrastructure for this to happen. Sunday School instruction gives our children basic lessons in the faith in a supportive environment. I believe it is critical for the child to have as much positive reinforcement of his faith as possible. He gets that when he sits in a classroom with twenty or so of his fellow Orthodox peers and an enthusiastic teacher.

She gets that in the activities of JOY, Junior and Senior GOYA, where she can make new friends sharing a common bond of discovering their Orthodox faith. He has the opportunity to participate in service at the altar, to see up close much of what he has learned in the classroom and share in the brotherhood of his fellow acolytes. She can play on a team of fellow Orthodox and learn that her faith can be fun and learn other valuable lessons about teamwork in our athletic program. He can learn the great traditional Greek dances and she can come to afternoon Greek School and they will also keep the culture and traditions of their ancestors. He can learn drama skills and she can learn to sing praises to God. And with all those Church lessons and experiences in their hearts, they will decide to live out their lives as dedicated Orthodox Christians, establishing their own families and finding their

rightful place in the service of their Church, to “keep our faith alive” in the next generation. Now, that’s what I call good return on an investment!!

This Christmas season many us finally awakened to the progress that non-Christian society has made in its efforts to drive our faith “out of the public square.” Did you see any “Merry Christmas” signs at Macy’s? And where have the beautiful school Christmas pageants gone, that I remember from my school days? A school orchestra in New Jersey was banned from playing religious carols and another school in Seattle banned Charles Dickens’ *Christmas Carol* from being performed. A teacher in Cupertino is being harassed by his principal for teaching the Declaration of Independence because it has references to God. A cross has been removed from the seal of Los Angeles County. How soon will the ACLU sue to make the City of the Angels change its name to something “less offensive”? And how many schools and organizations disrespect the faith by scheduling activities on Sundays?

And yet our faith quietly endures. A recent poll showed that 80% of Americans are worshipping Christians and nearly 70% fully believe the Bible accounts of the birth of our Lord.

I believe the best answer to those who would erode our faith is to have a strong and vibrant Church where we come together on Sundays for worship and fellowship. They say the Church is divided into two camps, the Church triumphant (those who have fallen asleep in the faith) and the Church militant (that’s us!) The Christian journey is not an easy; it never has been. Our Church brings us together so that we can share each others burdens and reinforce each others faith. We are militant in our fervent faith which is shown in our good works, the numerous projects of the Philoptochos, Family Sharing Program and fellow Orthodox joining hands to benefit the greater community. All of these activities, these laying up of “treasures in heaven”, are made possible because Holy Cross exists, not only the buildings, but the community of faithful.

Can you imagine where we would be without the Church of the Holy Cross? How would we set our young on the right path? Where would we be without the friends we had met there? Who would give us

comfort when we were ill or had lost a loved one? Who would preserve the great treasures of our faith and heritage?

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Well, I could never imagine that and you couldn’t either. So, each of us needs to be generous toward our Church. To keep the faith alive for ourselves and for those who will follow. Compare this investment to others you have made or to those day-to-day expenses. I think you will agree that the value of all the benefits we receive from Holy Cross far, far exceeds what we each put in. And if you do agree, then please, join me in offering more to the Church this year. To bring us to a point where our collective Stewardship pledges pay for all of the expenses of our Church, we all need to raise our pledges by 50%. That is an extra-large challenge. So,

- o Consider your current pledge.
- o Add on half again as much.
- o Think of that new number in comparison to the year’s cable bill, or the cell phone bill, or the amount we spend at Starbucks in a year.
- o Now think of all you will receive from the Church as a good and faithful steward. It’s an investment that keeps on giving for you all the way through eternity!
- o Now, write that new number on a pledge card or a check and mail it to the Church.
- o Yes, I know it may hurt a bit, but we can share that burden together next Sunday.

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One who is truly a good and faithful servant at Holy Cross is **Gary Brenner**. While the Olympics were being held in Athens last summer, Gary brought home the gold medal in the 1500 meter swim at a Masters Swim Competition near his hometown in Georgia. It was his first individual gold, although he has been on winning relay teams before. More important are the hundreds of young people in our community that have benefited from Gary’s leadership and guidance as GOYA advisor and Chairman of our Youth Council. He also serves as Secretary of the Parish Council and on its Executive Committee. He is everywhere, coordinating events, working hard in the kitchen, producing

comprehensive minutes of our Parish Council and General Assembly, always offering solid advice on the complex issues the Church faces, working with our kids and parents, and being the best MC at all our Church events. And should you ever find yourself needing surgery at Stanford Hospital, you most likely will receive comfort and encouragement from his lovely wife **Arleen**, an ER nurse. Gary delivers a **Michael Phelps**-like performance at Holy Cross year in and year out. He is truly golden. *Axios!* I hope you'll take a moment to congratulate and thank Gary personally and, if you can, offer to help him in the great work he leads for our youth. About this time each year Gary and his Youth Council members put on a triathlon of events for the Church, a New Year's Eve Dinner, the much-beloved Godparents Luncheon and the Apokreatiko Glendi, featuring our young dance groups. Please make every effort to attend these events. You'll have a great time and you will be supporting a most important mission of our Church, the programs and activities of our Youth.

=== **FEBRUARY** ===

Christmas 2004 was punctuated by the tragic events in Southeast Asia and the passing of two irreplaceable pillars of our community.

As many sat transfixed to the cable news reports from Indonesia and Sri Lanka, the generous hearts of Holy Cross parishioners opened in so many ways. Leading the merciful response were the wonderful ladies of Philoptochos who immediately contributed \$2000 to the Red Cross. Soon, we were all involved from the oldest to the youngest members of Holy Cross. An ORA luncheon netted \$600, and weekly Church collections added to the total. Noteworthy were the efforts of our very youngest Sunday School kids who sponsored a "Kids' Cookies for Charity" coffee hour. These Nursery through Second Graders helped make and serve cookies and sang "It's a Small World" in English, Greek and Spanish for all of us and we responded with another

\$500 for the stricken families. Four-year-old **Christian Canellos** put the tragedy and his colleagues' response in his own words. "There was a tsunami, which is a humongous wave. It wiped out many towns. A lot of children lost their homes and their parents. And we made cookies to help them." Thank you to all the children and parents who baked delicious cookies and to all of you who supported the special coffee hour. Thanks also to Khara Salmas for her able choral direction, to **Thalia Hohenthal** who brought delicious chocolate for the hot cocoa, to **Sarah Haddad, Elaine Breeze** and **Don** and **Kathy Craighead** for their help setting up and serving, and to Sunday School Director **Anastacia Stamates**, teachers **Vickie Buonocore, Tina Cardaris, Irene Fotinos, Gina, Jim** and **Olivia Bagis** for their amazing cooperation and support of this very special day.

It was certainly fitting that on Christmas Day the Lord called home His faithful servant and Hierarch, Metropolitan Anthony. Appointed as the first Bishop of San Francisco under the newly minted 1977 Charter, a young and vibrant Anthony served notice to us all in 1979 that he had an ambitious vision for our diocese. He selected a very good man, our own Fr. George Stevenson, to be his first chancellor and replaced him here at Holy Cross with a saint, in the person of Fr. Leonidas Contos. He led in the acquiring and development of the St. Nicholas Ranch and Retreat Center and had the foresight to greatly expand the number of parishes in the diocese, particularly in small, but rapidly growing communities, such as those served by two former Holy Cross assistants, **Fr. Dino Pappademos'** Elk Grove community and **Fr. Chris Flesoras'** Roseville parish. He also led us to build monasteries and convents in the diocese. Perhaps his achievement with the most impact on the lives of the diocese members may have been the rise of the annual Folk Dance Festival attended by thousands of young people and their families each year. I know the Metropolitan had a special place in his heart for our young people. He always enjoyed being around them. An accomplished golfer, he would play occasionally in the Holy Cross tournament. I'll never forget one morning when he drove up to the Peninsula Golf and Country Club. Before I could

greet him, he had pulled out his clubs, put down a golf ball next to the side of the road, some 35 yards away from the 18th hole. He pulled out his wedge and knocked that ball to within one foot of the pin, truly a miraculous shot that even our club pro can't match to this day. He leaves a rich legacy and extra large shoes to fill.

As we greeted the New Year, we bid a fond farewell to Dr. Constantine Glafkides. I often tell my son that the greatest measure of a man is the number of lives that he makes better.

If that is so, Con is the genuine San Francisco giant. He was the most trusted *yatros* for the San Francisco Bay Area Greek Orthodox community. I was privileged to be one of his patients and he truly had a profound beneficial impact on my life. I think the best instrument in Con's medical bag was his own optimistic spirit. His greeting alone, "*Kali mera, Maria*" was often enough to lift Mom's spirit. He encouraged his patients to believe that their faith was an important part of the healing process. It's like you were family to him. A throwback to a time before HMOs! When you needed him, he was always there. He walked with the most famous people in the world and with the most common and was always the same. He was the archetype of success, academically, professionally and at home with his family. Through it all was a quiet, but deep faith in God, which was reflected in his optimism and his love for anyone he met. He was a consummate leader; he challenged the status quo, because he always believed he could improve upon it. A young man today would do well to study this man's life and emulate his many qualities, for rarely has any man achieved so much in so many areas of his life. To **Mary**, his lovely wife, **Sia**, **Gigi** and **Cathy**, his daughters and son **Michael**, our heartfelt thanks for sharing Con with us. May his memory be eternal.

With those solemn thoughts, we close this month's edition. May God continue to bless us all, the good people of Holy Cross.

STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

by *Dr. Tanya Spirtos, Stewardship Chair*

Together with the entire Parish Council, I extend thanks to the many parishioners who fulfilled their 2004 pledges in December and also to those who have submitted their pledge cards for 2005. Just as all of you at home keep track of the monthly budget and worry if the income is enough to cover the expenses, the Parish Council (especially its treasurer **Chris Canellos**) agonizes over the same issues facing our Church family. The pledges, as an indication of your commitment to help financially, are an item that all of us deeply appreciate in our planning and paying on behalf of the entire community. Just think: something as simple as you sending in a pledge card makes so many Council members breathe and sleep easier!

This past year the average pledge was \$800 and so far in 2005 it is \$846. I remember, when we first joined, asking my husband "well, how much should we pledge?" and that simple question started a very long discussion on the meaning of stewardship in all its facets of time, talent and treasure.

I challenged the Parish Council to answer another question: "why do you pledge what you pledge?" Here are several answers:

- *As has been described on many occasions, Stewardship is a 3 legged stool. You can't have one without the other and contributing of time, talent and fortune has been a significant part of my family's commitment to God. A result of which is God's gift of love, respect and personal growth for me and my family. Riches cannot replace this gift, a gift of God's grace - **Bob Nemchik***
- *We pledge to maintain the church, the buildings and grounds. Not only for the Church's beauty and sound structures but also to have a place to worship, teach our children and parish gatherings. We should not forget how close we come to God when we attend all services, Easter, Christmas and all Holy Days throughout the year. We are blessed with such good fortune.*

- **Frank and Helen Valavanis**

- *We pledge out of love for the Church that provides for the spiritual growth of my family and helps the needy by family-to-family sharing and other charities. In deciding what to pledge each year, we start by looking at our “fair share” or the budget divided by the number of families (about \$1,100 this year). Then we add extra to help compensate for those less able to pay.*
- **Nick and Mary Peros**
- *We give as much as we can to Churches, Orthodox Institutions and outside charities, but never less than the tithe called for in the Bible. Our pledge to Stewardship is our major contribution.*
- **Jenny and John Cladis**
- *Good question. It’s not one reason but a combination of instinct, knowing what’s morally right, allegiance to the Church, and need and want to help others in need — all based on Christian teachings.*
- **Peter Bibbes**

I will continue to ask this question of others active in the Philoptochos, choir and religious education and plan to share their answers during the next few months. Many thanks to all who are helping in stewardship efforts!

May the Lord bless all of us in countless ways this coming year, and may we recognize and appreciate those blessings!

STEWARDSHIP COMMENTARY

by *Ella Stamates, Parish Council*

We started out as ineffective givers to Stewardship. Some years we really struggled to complete our pledge because of poor planning. Embarrassingly, we even had to ask to be excused one year because of financial reverses.

Thankfully, through the years our understanding of Orthodox Christianity has grown not to mention a more serious commitment in keeping our yearly pledge. Better giving habits have been established, and we’ve reached a greater point of stability in our giving. Today, our

Stewardship pledge is above 4% (\$3,000) of our income (one of us is retired). It’s still a humble offering and quite short of tithing at 10% but still more substantial than the considerably less amounts we used to give. Incidentally, the above amount includes Stewardship giving only; it does not include special projects (e.g. Iconography, holiday card greetings, dinners and other events sponsored by the church) or other charitable giving outside the church.

I present these candid comments in the hope that they may be helpful because I believe that many of us fall into the same trap we did; mainly, that of not being disciplined and committed in support of our church. In that light, I’d like to offer a couple of suggestions:

- 1) Carefully set your giving for the year from your budget considering your desire to offer the best to God in your love for Orthodox Christianity and the multitude of services (spiritual and otherwise) received here that you will not find anywhere else. You may also check the Stewardship brochure for guidance.
- 2) Decide from which pay check your pledge will be made and establish the date during the week or month that you will send a payment. It really helps to send the payment on the same day you receive your paycheck.
- 3) Once the routine is established and you make this payment a priority, all else will fall into place and the pledged amount will be easy to fulfill.
- 4) In addition, during each pledge campaign increase the amount pledged and you will eventually find yourself giving more than you ever imagined in a very organized manner.

It’s okay to struggle through this process. It is a challenge but also extremely satisfying to find oneself able to give more and flourish as a result. May you also find yourself in a position to meet the challenge and strengthen your ability to offer your best to God’s holy church.

BEGIN THE NEW YEAR WITH PHILOPTOCHOS!

The Philoptochos ladies had fantastic fun at their last meeting. Looking around the table, there were smiles all around. It wasn't a party or a tea. It was the final meeting of the year and the ladies were giving away a large part of their fundraised money to local organizations. Samaritan House, Receiving Home, CORA, Shelter Network and Project Mexico were each sent \$1,000. In addition, the Philoptochos has made an ongoing commitment to help support a young girl in Greece who is in great need. We have asked that she keep in contact with us and let us know how the help we are sending her is making a difference in her life. As we voted to send these monies, it is hard to explain the exhilaration we felt. This is what this organization is all about.

We would like to share highlights of three events from the past year. The Shopping Spree held in late November brought in over \$2,000, which goes directly into the Cosmas and Damianos Icon fund. When this icon is completed it will not only add to the beauty of our Church, but also be an educational focus for the study of these two healers, patron saints of the Philoptochos. We have a long way to go to the pledged \$50,000 needed for these beautiful icons, but we will get there. Memorial donations to this fund are greatly appreciated.

The Metropolis Holiday Brunch is an annual event, which supports the seminarians of Holy Cross in our Metropolis. Our Philoptochos presented a fabulously decorated tree for the raffle. It was called the "Sounds of Christmas." It was covered with beautiful musical ornaments and held beautiful gifts underneath. Our tree helped to make the day's raffle a huge success. Last year from this fund 12 students from Holy Cross College received \$4,000 each.

Our Christmas Tea on December 12 was a great success. We collected over \$1,200 in donations, more than any other year. These monies offset the \$2000 that we always give to Family-to-Family Sharing.

As we welcome in the New Year, please take a moment and send in your 2005 pledge to Philoptochos. The average pledge in 2004

increased to \$50 per year. Unfortunately only 130 ladies pledged. If all the 600 women in our parish pledged that \$50, our donations could increase five fold. Consider participation in our events. Step up if you are invited to join the Board. Sponsor a Coffee Hour. Remember that this organization is the largest Christian women's organization in the world. During the month of January you will be reminded to make a pledge to Philoptochos for 2005. We are planning a directory of all members. It does not matter if you did not pledge last year. We are looking ahead. Don't let another year go by without joining us.

The best to you in the New Year!

PHILOPTOCHOS AGAPE BEAR CARE PROJECT

Thank you to all the parishioners who continue to make blankets for this project. We have many more teddy bears ready to find good homes with hospitalized children.

If you can help, please knit, crochet or sew crib-size blankets (about 32"x42"). Blanket donations may be left at the Church office or contact **Sarah Haddad** at 650-596-8414.

Blankets and bears are donated to Lucile Salter Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford. The hospital staff is very grateful and the bears and blankets will be given to gravely ill children. They were particularly delighted to receive our donations at Christmas, but the need continues. Thank you for your assistance.

CHOIR SPORTS NEW LOOK

Have you noticed our choir's new look? The Holy Cross Choir is now wearing beautiful new purple robes, replacing the turquoise ones that had been showing a lot of wear and tear from 20 years of use. The choir donned the new robes for the first time at the Christmas Eve liturgy.

Choir members raised the money for the new robes by holding an annual luncheon on **Cheesefare Sunday** the past several years and by seeking donations during a special fund-raising drive last year.

Thank you to all the friends and parishioners who contributed toward the new robes, to **Loula Anaston** for leading the fund-raising effort, and to **Helen Valavanis** who handled the ordering and purchasing.

CHOIR TO HOLD CHEESE FARE LUNCHEON ON MARCH 13

You're invited to a delicious pasta luncheon sponsored by the Holy Cross Choir on **Cheesefare Sunday, March 13**, immediately after liturgy.

We hope you will attend! There will be special surprises!

Those who cannot attend but would still like to support Choir activities can make a special donation by contacting **Loula Anaston**, 968-7238.

PRESCHOOL NEWS

by Irene Fotinos, Preschool Teacher

The 2004 school year went off with a terrific start. Our director **Carlene Scheidtmann** and I welcomed two new teachers. **Chris Shreve**, teaching our Tuesday and Thursday class, and **Vanessa DeGrazia** teaching our Monday, Wednesday and Friday class.

Teacher Chris comes to us fresh out of Notre Dame de Namur University with a B.A. in Liberal Studies. She also has an Associate Degree in Early Childhood Education and has taught preschool for three years. Teacher Vanessa is working towards her Bachelors in Child Adolescent Development at San Francisco State University, which she hopes to complete in June 2005. She has worked with children for over 10 years. All together the Holy Cross Preschool teaching staff offers over 50 years of experience!

Our "Back to School Day" was a huge success. It was wonderful to see our returning families and meet our new ones. We are happy

to announce that for the first time, our classes are filled AND with a waiting list! The children settled in quickly and appear to be very comfortable with our school and teachers. During the month of September we spent a lot of time getting to know each other. In October we went on a field trip to Lemos Farm and had great fun dressing up for Halloween. We prepared for Thanksgiving by talking about all the special blessings in our lives. We celebrated Christmas with a party and a special visitor dressed in red!

It is hard to believe that 2004 is over and we have already begun our new year. (A happy, blessed New Year to everyone!) The children are all settled back into the school routine and seem very pleased to be back at school. We are talking about our community and all the special workers in it. We are also spending a lot of time on our letters and their sounds.

Registration for the 2005-06 school year will begin **February 15**. We encourage anyone interested to come by and visit our school at anytime. We will be happy to answer your questions and show you around. I feel very blessed to be part of this wonderful preschool at the Church of the Holy Cross.

HOLY CROSS DEPOSIT PLAN ACCEPTING NEW DEPOSITS

Want the highest possible interest rate on your savings? Want to be able to help the Church at the same time? Consider opening a Certificate of Deposit account with the Holy Cross Deposit Plan. Here are the benefits:

- o Higher interest than any bank or savings and loan will pay
- o Flexible terms (we offer terms of 1, 2½ and 5 years, as well as daily access)
- o Security - peace of mind in the knowledge that we have handled over \$1 million of parishioner funds and have returned each deposit with interest

- o Knowledge that your deposit is also helping the Church by reducing the amount of interest we would otherwise have to pay of borrowed funds from the bank.

If you have questions or are ready to make a deposit, please contact the Church office.

From the **JANITORS' CLOSET**

Another year gone by. “Where did it go?”

It was a good year! There were a few bumps in the road but all in all, a good year!

I take this time in the new year to reflect on the old year. Did we do a good job? Were we timely in our duties? Was our quality of work average or above? These questions can be measured and answered, but there were other questions, nagging questions that I asked myself over and over, again and again. These questions became apparent after my first year at Holy Cross. I would ask myself, while doing the many duties of a maintenance technician, i.e., janitor, why, why do these things happen, and then it hit me I must seek wisdom and knowledge, I must travel to the top of the mountain and ask the OLD SAGE, the keeper of all that is CUSTODIAL.

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After a long journey up the mountain I finally arrived at what looked like an old junkyard, old vacuums, brooms, mops, buckets lying all around and then I saw it, a Palace made from old trashcans and carts, I knew that I was here at the **LAND OF THE USED TOOLS**, the home of the OLD SAGE.

As I entered the palace I saw a jolly old guy, clean-shaven, pressed blue uniform with beady eyes, eyes that you knew that had seen all that there was to see. He was sitting on a new purple and gold

self-cleaning, low- flow power flush throne. I’ve heard about the purple and gold but I had never seen one till now. Magnificent!

I’ve been expecting you; find a bucket and sit, “he said.” I found a bucket, sat and offered him a new micro-dust cloth. “A gift (you always bring a gift to an old sage) for you old sage.” He looked at it and said, “Another gimmick,” as he blew his nose in it.

“What is it you seek I don’t have all day you know?”

“I seek Wisdom and Knowledge, I have many questions to ask you and with your help and insight I hope to become a better maintenance technician.”

“You mean janitor,” he said. “I will answer three questions and three questions only. Your first question is?”

“Oh MAGNIFICENT SAGE, why do adults open doors by pushing on freshly cleaned glass, instead of using the push-handles or push plates?”

“I know I know,” he said wearily, “this is an age-old problem.” Since they first invented glass this has been the case, it has made our job more time consuming and more costly to the consumer. (Or Parishioner I muttered). In fact at our OLD SAGE convention this topic was discussed in detail and all sages agreed that we could not prevent this. Next question quick, Quick! As I started to ask my next question I spotted a new Smart-Vac, self-cleaner with a frequency work program, onboard charger and a vacuum shut-off.

“WOW!” I said, “could I give this a spin?”

His beady eyes got beadier; “You seek knowledge but can’t focus on learning. How can you put the dustpan before the broom? he asked angrily.” This brought me back to reality and I asked my next question.

Oh BRILLIANT SAGE, why does everyone who chews gum dispose of it by sticking it under a table, under a pew, against the wall or on the carpet?

“Ah! He said I have two answers try a new product called Janitors Dream.” Follow the instructions. It should help solve the problem.

“And what if it doesn’t?” I asked pessimistically.

Then dropping his eyes and head he sadly said, “the only other answer is to follow the advise of the GREAT EASTERN SAGE “*CAN-ING*.” I was shocked. We are a civilized people, how can we do such a thing? And yet it made sense.

“Your third and last question” he said.

“OH GREAT SAGE, I’ve always wondered why people ask me questions when they can go directly to the person in charge of that project or event and get the information they need.”

Yes, this is good. This is the first step in becoming a sage. As you know janitors know every thing.

“You mean maintenance techs,” I interrupted.

“OY-Vey! Call us vhat you vant he replied, You must answer all questions and you must have patience. Remember knowledge is power and may the power be with you.”

“Wait one more questions! I blurted. Why do people leave lights on, doors unlocked? Why don’t they take responsibility and secure the rooms and buildings when they leave. I hurriedly asked. I knew I had overstepped my welcome, his eyes got beadier as he said “**three questions only**.” He hit the power flush and in a cloud of water spray he disappeared.

As I returned to my custodial duties I had to ask myself, will I ever become a great sage?

SAMARITAN HOUSE

Thanks to the parishioners who volunteered at the Samaritan House in 2004 : **John and Vivi Sarantitis, Daisy Fernando, Yvonne Gavros, Fro Sclavos, Helen Valavanis, Mary Zongus, Edie Christoforidis.**

Please join us if you can. A group of Holy Cross volunteers visit Samaritan House a minimum of one day a month. Interested parishioners should call Vivi Sarantitis at 697-3739.

A LOVE STORY

One day, I woke early in the morning to watch the sunrise. Ah the beauty of God's creation is beyond description. As I watched, I praised God for His beautiful work. As I sat there, I felt the Lord's presence with me.

He asked me, "Do you love me?"

I answered, "Of course, God! You are my Lord and Saviour!"

Then He asked, if you were physically handicapped, would you still love me?"

I was perplexed. I looked down upon my arms, legs and the rest of my body and wondered how many things I wouldn't be able to do, the things that I took for granted.

And I answered, "It would be tough Lord, but I would still love You".

Then the Lord said, if you were blind, would you still love my creation?"

How could I love something without being able to see it? Then I thought of all the blind people in the world and how many of them still loved God and His creation. So I answered, "Its hard to think of it, but I would still love You".

The Lord then asked me, if you were deaf would you still listen to my word?"

How could I listen to anything being deaf? Then I understood. Listening to God's Word is not merely using our ears, but our hearts. I answered, "It would be tough, but I would still listen to Your word".

The Lord then asked, "If you were mute, would you still praise My Name?"

How could I praise without a voice? Then it occurred to me: God wants us to sing from our very heart and soul. It never matters what we sound like. And praising God is not always with a song, but when we are persecuted, we give God praise with our words of thanks. So, I answered, "Though I could not physically sing, I would still praise Your Name".

And the Lord asked, "Do you really love Me?"

With courage and a strong conviction, I answered boldly, "Yes Lord! I love You because You are the One and True God!"

I thought I had answered well, but God asked,

"THEN WHY DO YOU SIN?"

I answered, "Because I am only human. I am not perfect".

"THEN WHY IN TIMES OF PEACE DO YOU STRAY THE FURTHEST? WHY ONLY IN TIMES OF TROUBLE DO YOU PRAY THE EARNEST?"

No answers. Only tears.

The Lord continued: "Why only sing at fellowships and retreats? Why seek me only in times of worship? Why ask things so selfishly? Why ask things so unfaithfully?"

The tears continued to roll down my cheeks.

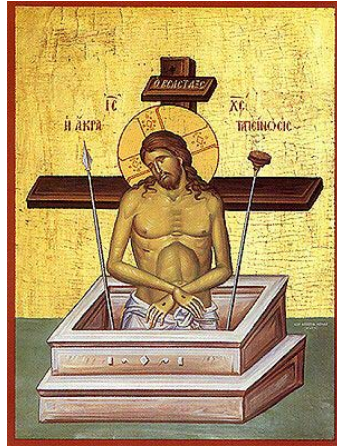
"Why are you ashamed of me? Why are you not spreading the good news? Why in times of persecution, you cry to others when I offer my shoulder to cry on? Why make excuses when I give you opportunities to serve in my name?"

I tried to answer, but there was no answer to give.

"You are blessed with life. I made you not to throw this gift away. I have blessed you with talents to serve me, but you continue to turn away. I have revealed my word to you, but you do not gain in knowledge. I have spoken to you but your ears were closed. I have shown my blessings to you, but your eyes were turned away. I have sent you servants, but you sat idly by as they were pushed away. I have heard your prayers and I have answered them all".

"DO YOU TRULY LOVE ME?"

I could not answer. How could I? I was embarrassed beyond belief. I had no excuse. What could I say to this? When my heart had cried out and the tears had flowed, I said, 'Please forgive me Lord. I am unworthy to be Your child.'



The Lord answered, " That is my grace, my child".

I asked, " Then why do you continue to forgive me? Why do You love me so?"

The Lord answered: 'Because you are My creation. You are my child. I will never abandon you. When you cry, I will have compassion and cry with you. When you shout with joy, I will laugh with you. When you are down, I will encourage you. When you fall, I will raise you up. When you are tired, I will carry you. I will be with you till the end of days, and I will love you forever'.

Never had I cried so hard before. How could I have been so cold? How could I have hurt God as I had done?

I asked God, 'How much do You love me?'

The Lord stretched out His arms, and I saw His nail-pierced hands. I bowed down at the feet of Christ, my Saviour. And for the first time, I truly prayed.

Author Unknown. from The Orthodox Messenger, v. 9(5-6); published bi-monthly by the SA Central Youth; PO Box 269, GLENELG SA 5045 AUSTRALIA

LATE CHRISTMAS CARDS

We missed printing some names in the recent Community Christmas Card and present them here with our wishes for a happy and prosperous NEW YEAR!

Angelo Charonis

The Danigelis Family

Bill, Jayn & Veronica Feyling

George and Thelma Giannakaras

John, Sarah, Marcella, Sophia and Matthew Haddad

Evangelos Hytopoulos

Pat Lagiss

George and Mary Liviakis and Family

Mary Liz & Jim Maletis

Mary Athens Orginos, Christina and Katina

Eugenia Verbeckmoes

SPOTLIGHT

Congratulations to **James Dean Zongus**, for a sensational performance in “Seussical - The Musical” and “A Christmas Carol”. And break a leg (or a teacup) in your upcoming performance as “Chip” in “Beauty and the Beast”.

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*We offer our warmest congratulations to parishioner **Geri Mayers** on being named . . .*

CITIZEN OF THE YEAR : **REDWOOD CITY BESTOWS HONOR**

by Josh Wein, Staff Writer, San Francisco Examiner

Published: Monday, January 31, 2005

REDWOOD CITY -- Geri Mayers doesn't actually live in Redwood City.

Because her house sits about two blocks west of Alameda de las Pulgas in the unincorporated area of the county, Mayers, 78, doesn't get to vote for city council. And she has to pay non-resident rates for all of the city's parks and recreation classes.

So it was somewhat of a surprise when she was named Redwood City's Citizen of the Year for 2004 by the American Legion for service to others.

"I was shocked," Mayers said.

Mayers has been a presence in the community for decades. As the owner of Mayers Jewelers, first on Veterans Boulevard and now at the corner of Broadway and Hamilton streets, she has been active working to improve the downtown business community.

Mayers' history of public service predates her arrival in Redwood City in 1969.

As a teenager, Mayers lied about her age to enlist as a nurse in the U.S. Navy. It was World War II, and her job took her around the

globe. After graduating from Brigham Young University in 1949, she moved to Tehran, Iran with her husband, who was raised there.

She lived in Tehran for five years, learning the language, before leaving her husband and fleeing the country with her two children in 1955. Since then, she has used her language skills as a translator for the American Red Cross.

More recently, Mayers has been battling with breast cancer. She'll begin chemotherapy Wednesday.

On Saturday night, the awards dinner at the American Legion hall was a gathering of Mayers' friends and community members. Among the audience were many of the award's previous winners.

Mayers said she felt honored to join a list that includes some of the city's most dedicated public servants.

"I feel like I'm walking in the halls of kings and queens," Mayers said.

YOUTH CURRENTS

January /February 2005 edition

Grow in the Grace and knowledge
of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

2 Peter 3:18



GREAT ARE YOU O LORD . . .

. . . AND WONDERFUL ARE YOUR WORKS,
AND NO WORD WILL SUFFICE TO PRAISE YOUR WONDERS”

Dear Friends,

The Orthodox Church celebrates the Baptism of our Lord on the sixth day of January every year. It is an important feast in our church because by His baptism, Jesus set the pace for us, dedicating his life and his ministry to the glory of God and the good of humanity.

In this Holy Epiphany season, it is the Tradition of the Holy Orthodox Church to Bless Water in the Church. This “Blessed” or “Holy Water” is then sprinkled on everything, so that all creation might receive the sanctification that the River Jordan received at the time of the Baptism of Our Lord by St. John the Baptist.

The Greek meaning of the word Theophany is “the appearance of God.” Epiphany in Greek means “to show forth” or “to manifest.” That is why these two words are used interchangeably for this feast of the Orthodox Church.

The Greek word “*epiphany*” means manifestation and applied by the Christians to the life of Our Lord Jesus Christ, it specifically meant the manifestation of His divinity. St. John Chrysostom elucidates: “Why do we call this day Epiphany? Because Jesus Christ manifested Himself to all people, not when He was born, but, rather, when He was baptized. Until that time He was unknown to the people, as testified by St. John the Baptist, saying, : ‘There stands among you One, Whom you don’t know!’ .” (cf. *Homily on the Epiphany*, 2)

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The most characteristic feature of the Orthodox day of Epiphany, or Theophany, is the sanctifying of waters by invoking the Spirit that appeared in the form of a dove over Christ at the time of His Baptism. The Holy Water is the means by which the Church, through the Holy Spirit, by the hands of the Priest, goes to sanctify the homes of its Faithful members. For just as Christ came into the world and sanctified it, so the Church has been given the responsibility to continue this sanctification of all creation, that was begun by Our Lord, Himself, in the Flesh. Any time we receive a Blessing and a Sanctification from the Church, this Sanctification carries with it many duties and responsibilities. In the case of the Blessing of our Homes, or any object with Holy Water, we must promise God that this Holy Water is a means by which we consecrate ourselves, our homes, and our possessions to the Glory of God.

It is a custom among our people to drink of the Holy Water for the “purification of their souls and bodies and cure of their weakness.” This custom is very ancient and came to us with the ritual itself. The taking of the Holy Water to their homes is to have in it a fount of continued blessings and protection against all evil. In St. John Chrysostom’s Homilies, he stated, “The heavens were opened to show us that our baptism will open the heavens for us. God is made accessible to us. We can know the Unknowable. We can be changed. A good work is done in us, and we have the means to have the promise fulfilled in us.”

MAY GOD GRANT ALL OF YOU A TRULY FRUITFUL,
HEALTHY, AND HOLY NEW YEAR!

Father Silviu Stanculescu

TROPARION OF EPIPHANY: “*Lord, when You were baptized in the Jordan, the veneration of the Trinity was revealed. For the voice of the Father gave witness to You, calling You Beloved, and the Spirit, in the guise of a dove, confirmed the certainty of His words. Glory to You, Christ our God, who appeared and enlightened the world!*”



FIRST ANNUAL NATIONAL ALTAR BOY RETREAT

This event is to be held on the grounds of Hellenic College/Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology from **April 7** through **10**.

The Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America and the Office of Admissions of Hellenic College/Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology are coordinating the retreat. It promises to be a valuable opportunity for our young men not only to learn more about their service in the Altar but also to visit the Seminary. Various speakers, workshops, opportunities for fellowship, and hands-on training, will be offered for Altar Boys of GOYA age (12-18).

HOLY CROSS FOLK DANCE

by *Kathy Roque-Albert, Dance Program Coordinator*

Our Dance Program is in “full swing”. We currently have four dance groups who are hard at work preparing for the Annual Folk Dance Festival to be held in Ontario, California in February. Our youngest dance group *ANGELOUDAKIA*, directed by **Andreas Najjar** and **Chrysann Zongus** will also be attending FDF this year along with our middle school group *EPITIHIA*, directed by **Kristina Dimmit**, **Dean Angelis** and **Effie Zaharoudakis** and our high school group, *ENOMENI*, directed by **Vicki Najjar** and **Nicole Tsardoulias**. Each of the groups are hard at work with dance practices and costume preparations. They are also working with **Khara Maria Salmas** to participate in the choral competition.

In preparation for FDF, our dancers performed at our Annual Godparents Luncheon on February 6. A delicious buffet was served followed by wonderful performances by each of our dance groups. This

was an especially happy event as our long-supportive Parents, Grandparents and Godparents were able to see our talented dancers in dress rehearsal mode. Thank you all for coming to the luncheon and showing your support!

YOUTH COUNCIL NEWS

The Holy Cross Youth Council has some exciting news! We’ve just joined the **eScrip Recycling Program**. This program is FREE and provides convenient locations for collecting laser, inkjet cartridges and used cell phones while raising funds for our Youth Ministry.

How the program works: A collection bin, clearly marked and accessible during normal office hours, will be placed in the lobby. You can drop off your recyclable cell phones and cartridges whenever it’s convenient for you. Periodically, we will mail the empty cartridges collected at church to the **eScrip Recycling** offices. **eScrip Recycling** will then deposit funds electronically in our Youth Council account!!!

(If you cannot come by at office hours, the cell phones and cartridges should fit into the mail slot by the office door. Just drop them off there and we’ll take care of it.)

Did you know that EVERY second of EVERY day NINE ink cartridges are thrown away? Help us turn this waste into CASH! Please donate your cell phones and cartridges by placing them in the collection bin found at church.

Not only is this an easy way to raise funds, it also teaches our youth valuable lessons about the variety of materials that can be recycled and it helps them develop life long patterns.

This program will not be successful without the support of the community and people like you. Thank you for your help in recycling.

CALENDAR

subject to changes - please check your Sunday Bulletins

UPCOMING SERVICES

Saturday, February 19 – no Great Vespers
Sunday, February 20 - 8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy
Saturday, February 26 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers
Sunday, February 27 - 8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy
Saturday, March 5 – Saturday of the Souls - 8 AM, Matins; 9 AM, Divine Liturgy
Saturday, March 5 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers
Sunday, March 6 - 8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy
Wednesday, March 9 – 40 Holy Martyrs of Sebasteia - 8 AM, Matins; 9 AM, Divine Liturgy
Saturday, March 12 – Saturday of the Souls - 8 AM, Matins; 9 AM, Divine Liturgy
Saturday, March 12 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers
Sunday, March 13 - 8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy
Monday, March 14 – LENT BEGINS, Great Compline, 7 PM
Wednesday, March 16 - Presanctified Liturgy, 7 PM
Friday, March 18 - Presanctified Liturgy, 9 AM
Friday, March 18 – Salutations to the Theotokos, 7 PM
Saturday, March 19 – Saturday of the Souls - 8 AM, Matins; 9 AM, Divine Liturgy
Saturday, March 19 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers
Sunday, March 20 - 8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy
Monday, March 21 – Great Compline, 7 PM
Wednesday, March 23 - Presanctified Liturgy, 7 PM
Thursday, March 24 – Annunciation, Vespers in Modesto
Friday, March 25 – Annunciation - 8 AM, Matins; 9 AM, Divine Liturgy
Friday, March 25 – Salutations to the Theotokos, 7 PM
Saturday, March 26 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers
Sunday, March 27 - 8:45 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy
Monday, March 28 – Great Compline, 7 PM
Wednesday, March 30 - Presanctified Liturgy, 7 PM

MEETINGS & UPCOMING EVENTS

26th of the Month, 4 PM - Articles and ads due for *Cross Currents* and *Youth Currents* (church office)

Weekdays, 9-Noon – Preschool
Weekdays, 4:30-6:30 PM – Greek School (Classrooms)
Tuesdays, 10:30 AM - Bible Study (Fireside Room/Contos Library)
First **Tuesday** of the month, 11 AM – ORA (Oaks)
First **Tuesday** of the month, 7:30 PM, Philoptochos Board (Contos Library)
First & third **Tuesdays** of the month, 7:30 PM, OCF at Stanford (Stanford)
Second & Fourth **Tuesdays** of the month, 7:30 PM, Youth Groups (Classrooms)
Second & Fourth **Tuesdays** of the month, 10:00 AM, Toddler Play Group (Oaks)
First three **Wednesdays** of the month, 7:30 PM, Choir (Loft)
Wednesdays, 5:00 PM – Adult Greek School (???)
Wednesdays, 7:00 PM – Studies in the Faith (Contos Library)
Wednesdays, 7:30 PM - Volleyball (Gym)
First **Thursdays** of the month, 6:30 PM - Technology Committee (Contos Library)
Third **Tuesdays** of the month, 7:30 PM – Parish Council (Contos Library)

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Mon, Feb 21 - **OFFICE CLOSED** – in observance of Presidents' Day.
Thurs, Feb 24- **YOUTH COUNCIL**, 7 PM (Contos Library).
Wed, Mar 2 - **FINAL INTERNMENT OF METROPOLITAN ANTHONY** – will take place at the Monastery of the Theotokos the Life-Giving Spring at Saint Nicholas Ranch. Divine Liturgy will be celebrated at 10 AM followed by a luncheon and the internment around 1 PM. Please call the Ranch for details – 559-338-2103
Sat, Mar 5 - **APOKREATIKO GLENDI** - Save the date for a night filled with dinner and dancing! This year come in a masquerade costume and join us for our annual Glendi. For reservations, call Erma Najjar 593-2747 or Carole Angelis 592-2754.
Thurs, Mar 10- **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHERS AND STAFF**, 7 PM (Contos Library)
Sun, Mar 13 - **CHEESEFARE LUNCHEON** - The Holy Cross Choir invites you to our Cheesefare Sunday Luncheon and Show, immediately after Liturgy, in The Oaks. Enjoy a delicious pasta lunch and a special show. You might even find yourself singing along! Please support our choir!

if necessary, remove this page from Cross Currents for reference