

# CROSS CURRENTS

Church Newsletter  
January 2009



## THE PRECIOUS NATURE OF TIME

by *Father Peter Salmas, Pastor*

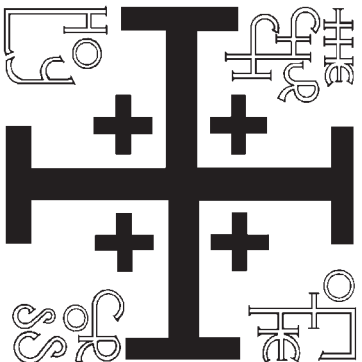


With the beginning of a new year soon upon us, I am sure many of us have thought about the passage of time and how our own use of time has left imprints on the lives of those around us. Holding my grandson at our recent Community Christmas Program, I had such thoughts rushing through my head. How was it possible that enough time has passed since I held my own children at such events to now, as I hold my grandson in my arms. Such were the thoughts as we began yet another celebration of the Nativity of our Lord.

Time is like water. You really don't know how many gallons disappear down the drain unless you plug the drain and let the water run. Time is a little like that except that, try as you will, you cannot contain it. You only see the affects of it; perhaps a slower walk, a few wrinkles, hopefully a little more wisdom, and developed relationships.

As I begin my twenty first year here at Holy Cross. I reflect more and more on the lives that have intersected with mine. The impact of those lives on me and my family and our impact on them are what enrich our existence and what life is really all about; relationships developed over time are reflections of how we have used our time.

We would all agree that Christ's impact on our world is immeasurable and in Scripture He speaks about His presence in our world and its impact on us. He says, "I came that you may have life and have it abundantly." Many of the things that Christ initiates, occur at a chosen moment in time, and even get their meaning because of time. He recalls seeing Satan fall from Heaven. He takes His time in reaching Bethany, after the burial of his friend Lazarus. He picks a special point in time to bring Peter, James, and John to a high mountain for His transfiguration. Finally, after His Resurrec-



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tion, Christ says to Peter, When you are young you walk where you will, but when you get older others will take you where you do not wish to go, referring to Peter's crucifixion. Each of these events or ideas occur or are said at the right time. Time is considered and this is important because each of these events or sayings teaches us something about Jesus as Christ, about our own human condition, and about how the Kingdom of God is the prism through which we should understand things that happen to us or others in our world.

Take note: within our world, time moves forward, it ticks away, second by second. Whereas in God's Kingdom there is no ticking of a clock, counting of minutes, or hours, or days...years. In the place where God dwells time is eternal, only here on earth in the universe that He has created is time finite. Our time is limited for a reason so that sickness and death, evil and hatred, only exist for a period of time and then they will exist no more . . . only His kingdom is eternal and without limits.

As we celebrate our Lord's Nativity and remember once again His time with us, let us give great attention to our relationship with Our Lord who is born for us. Based on this, our relationship with Him, let us develop each of our relationships to His glory and never take for granted the time He gives us. I pray that we will understand that, though use of our time is a given, to use our time wisely requires our conscious acknowledgement of our relationship with God. May we be up to the task and treat time as a great gift, living each moment remembering His love. I am reminded of how precious is our gift of life, of our time on earth, each time I hold my grandson and pray for him and those in this His world. May 2009 be for you and yours blessed and meaningful, every moment.

*Father Peter entertains Holy Cross children (including Peter Daniel) at our annual evening of "Songs and Stories of Christmas."*



## HAPPY RENEWAL YEAR!

*by Fr. Pete Sotiras, Assistant Priest*

Growing up, whenever I got upset with a comment my mom made, she would always ask me, "Why are you upset? Is what I'm saying not true?" As much as I hated to admit it then, and now, 99% of the time she was right. When she called me out for not having good grades, or blaming someone else for my mistake, she was right—and that's why I would get upset. The truth hurts sometimes, and when it does, we have a tendency to get mad or snap back at somebody. Either I could refuse to accept the truth, or I could embrace it and change for the better. I could use this opportunity to renew my attitude, to renew myself and to adopt a new approach to comments that made me upset.



The New Year is upon us and I challenge all of us to use it is a time of renewal, a time of change, a time of new resolutions. How appropriate then that on January 6, the Church commemorates the Theophany of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, which is all about newness, renewal and a new approach to life. Through Jesus' baptism we are, among other things, enlightened, and no longer in darkness. We are purified and made new. We are heirs of God's Kingdom, and should no longer subject to passions, such as anger!

I'm sure we've all experienced times when we've gotten "bent out of shape" and snapped back when someone made a comment about us. The question we need to ask ourselves is why. Why have we gotten upset? Is it because the comment was hurtful and without cause? Or, did the comment strike a nerve because it was true? It is the latter scenario which I wish to address. Rather than getting angry or upset at comments that are true, we need to learn to not be fazed, not be shaken or angered by such comments. We need to take a new approach to such comments. In order to respond without anger to truthful comments made to us, as befitting heirs of God's Kingdom, we need to determine if such comments require change. There are three approaches we can take: 1) change those things about us that we have control over and that God would want us to change; 2) do not change those things which we have control over because we don't need to, and 3) embrace those things about us which we do not have control of changing.

If we feel someone's comment challenges us to change, and if this is a change God wants, then we should do it. For example, if your spouse, wants you to listen more, or not to be arrogant, then you're spouse is asking for legitimate changes, because God too wants us to be people who are quick to hear and people who are gentle and kind, not arrogant. If your friends or parents are concerned that you party hard and want you to stop, then that's a legitimate change, because God wants you to experience life sober, not "smashed".

However, there are times we might be teased about things that are true of us but don't require change. For example, some of us may not be sports fans or into cars, and when a conversation of sports or cars comes up we may get a bit apprehensive and embarrassed that we don't fit in with the guys. Or, we may not be able to relate with people who constantly watch certain TV shows, or movies. Sure, we could watch more TV or movies to be able to be part of the discussion, or learn more about sports or cars to fit in with the guys. But, if we'd rather spend our time reading books, or playing music or being involved with community service, then we don't need to change even though we could.

Lastly, we sometimes get angry or frustrated by people who make fun of us because of qualities that are true of us but that we can't change. Some examples include but are not limited to: not being pretty enough according to society, being too short, not being quick witted, not being the funniest person at the party, not being athletically inclined, not having a good voice, not being super smart, etc. If you've gotten upset because people have made comments towards you based on things that you can't control, then you need to learn to accept these qualities about yourself. God made you who you are—so what that you're not the funniest person, or not the smartest. God has blessed us all with something. He created us for a purpose. Don't get mad or get fazed when people's comments about you bring you down to reality. Accept it; embrace it and start searching for those qualities and abilities that God has blessed you with.

My hope and prayer is that we will make 2009 a year of change, a year of renewal, a year to be more true to our Orthodox identity and baptism than we were in 2008. One way of doing that is responding to truthful comments with acceptance, peace and a willingness to change if change means being true to our identity as people of God. God Bless and Happy ReNEWal Year!

*Father Pete, Santa Claus, and a few of our guests → pose during a fun evening as Holy Cross hosted children from the Receiving Home of San Mateo County and helped them decorate festive Christmas trees to take home. We again thank Tom & Pete's Produce (of Half Moon Bay) for their generous donation of trees for this ministry, AND for the trees which decorate our grounds.*



# ATHLETES FOR CHRIST

by **Deacon Niko Bekris**, *Metropolis Youth Director*



It seems like year after year I find myself in the same situation during the month of January. I welcome the New Year and the time off of school or (these days) work that comes with it, then after going through my usual routine each week, I welcome a restful sleep on Friday night, and a day off on Saturday. On the first Saturday of the month, I wake up and come to the startling and very welcome realization: “Football.” If you’re a football fan you know that the NFL starts its playoffs every January on Saturdays and Sundays, all of which culminate at the end of the month in the largest spectacle in all of American sports, the Super Bowl. What this means for avid NFL fans like myself is high excitement, high entertainment, and a celebration of human athleticism that people have enjoyed since the contests and battles of the ancient world.

Legends and superstars are created during Super Bowls and other championship games, and rightfully so. These legends often become our role models, too, in many cases, because we admire what they do during their games and we want to be like them. Often they have very good traits to imitate- their ambition, their determination, perhaps even their good will towards their teammates or the other team. However, often these same athletes possess qualities that make them very poor role models. This is where our “Christian lens” comes in that I’ve talked about before.

One year ago, Plaxico Burress of the New York Giants caught a beautiful, over-the-shoulder touchdown catch that defeated the New England Patriots in one of the greatest Super Bowl upsets ever. One month ago, Plaxico Burress was arrested in a night club, where he was found possessing an illegal firearm and a gunshot wound in his leg (he was suspended from the team for the rest of the season). Although we’re not clear on all the details, it became apparent that this man was in a place he wasn’t supposed to be, and he clearly wasn’t acting like a responsible role model. As you probably already know, he isn’t the only one who doesn’t. Whether it be Kobe Bryant cheating on his wife, Jose Canseco making money off a book about steroid usage in baseball, or any number of other stories, there are many athletes in sports who don’t act like role models or even like adults.

I love how so many of the hymns in our Orthodox worship that refer to martyrs talk about how they are “athletes of Christ.” Many of these

hymns (mostly sung during Orthros or Vespers) use terms like “winning the prize,” “running the race,” “being crowned,” and many other images that relate to athletics. If you’re wondering why the hymns have this kind of language, it’s because in reality, life is a contest- it requires endurance, perseverance, strength, and patience- the same things that we admire about professional athletes. But what’s different about the martyrs’ victories is that they won prizes that are eternal and are truly more important than any other trophy- salvation. Our relationship with Christ is more important than any championship ring, cool-looking tattoo or highlight reel. The saints of our Church often endured fierce competition, often coming from lions, Roman soldiers or Soviet concentration camps. Let’s make sure that in our love of sports and other heroes of our culture, we don’t lose sight of those heroes who have achieved something really meaningful. Sports are great, but just because someone’s great at sports doesn’t mean they’re great.

When we follow sports stories, let’s try to remember those athletes who do good things with their fame- Kurt Warner thanking Jesus after his Super Bowl victory in 2000, Jamie Moyer’s charity organizations, or Michael Redd of the Milwaukee Bucks who bought his dad (a pastor of a church) a new church building with his first contract. Let’s also remember the real athletes of our world, the saints and martyrs, who have won victories for God and have provided us with true examples of role models. We need to always make sure salvation in Christ is our ultimate goal. Let’s keep our eyes on the prize, and become athletes for Christ.

# FROM THE JANITORS CLOSET

by **Tyke Stamates**, *Facilities Manager*



December! My, my, where does time go? What a year! It seems like it was yesterday when I broke my neck. It was actually March 13, 2008 a date I will remember for a long time. I have found that we as people and individuals can get used to anything. I have a broken neck. It will not heal, so the doctors’ say, but (and this is the funny part) the Dens, the part I broke, is being held in place by invisible fibrous connections. I hope those connections are strong. My accident, as bad as it was, could have been much worse. I look back at

what I went through and then I look at others with real handicaps or in situations where they will not survive and I thank God how fortunate I am, and that I was given a second chance.

When I compare my problems with others, I know nothing really happened to me.

Hopefully the doctor will release me soon and I can get back to work at Holy Cross.

As we look forward to Christmas and the New Year, look around you and really observe your surroundings, your loved ones and the strangers you meet, in other words “stop and smell the roses” then thank God for your good fortune.

I would like to make an observation and a suggestion. We custodians are sometimes amazed at what we find when we are cleaning, especially cleaning the Church. The custodians have reported to me they have found Gum stuck under the pews. I started watching our young people to see how many were chewing gum. Not many, it was mostly the adults who were chewing. These adults are not very good role models or teachers.

When we approach the Church we should be preparing ourselves for the Liturgy. We should not be chewing gum; it should be disposed of before entering the Narthex. Not on the grounds but wrapped up in paper placed in your ashtray, purse or garbage can. We approach the Church with Humility and Dignity. We are Humble, our minds should be clear ready to pray and take part in the Holy Liturgy.

When one takes any Martial Arts, the first thing you learn is how to approach the mat. No chewing gum, your mind should be clear, you should be clean and your uniform should be clean and neat. Once on the mat your concentration and focus is on learning and practicing. All your worldly thoughts are left outside the mat.

If we do this for a Martial Art why can't we do this for the Lord?

**Jim Stephanos** is going to donate his time to enhance the front of the Church. We need a new fence along the front of our property with a moving gate for security.

All of you have seen the excellent work Jim does. He has a design and a plan; all we need is donations to make our dream come true. Please help us complete this project and donate what you can.

I would like to wish everyone a Healthy and Prosperous New Year. And remember “We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give”.

## YOUTH AND PARENTS

### REFLECTIONS ON I.V. (third of a series)

by *Konstantine Salmas*

Staff Orientation takes eight days. Our time is divided between many areas and in many activities. But the primary goal of staff orientation is staff unity. This can be a difficult thing because Ionian Village is always a test for people on the staff. Most people will never work harder than they do during a summer at Ionian Village. The combination of heat, travel, long hours, and being responsible for hundreds of teenagers pushes people to their limit, beyond the days they will experience in the professional realm. This is a great thing and most people who have served on staff refer to it as a miraculous experience. I think this is a testament to the willingness of the staff to serve the kids who came for the summer and to Greek *gyro* (yee-ro).

Staff orientation is a time for the administrative team to get a sense of our potential. Fr. Constantine, his wife Anastasia, and myself spend the week getting a sense of the personality of the staff. This all happens while

*IV Staff  
beginning  
to come  
together  
→*



we are running sessions, setting up the grounds, going on trips, eating together, and catching up on the *Olympiakos* scores. Imagine studying for a test in 39 (100+) degrees weather. One of sessions is Orthodox life, or OL. The first activity for OL, this summer, was the making of a coat of arms. The specific purpose is for the staff to highlight the things they see as honorable. We want to get one step past, "I love Oreos and BMW." We're looking for, "I love Oreos, BMW, and spending all day with 16 year olds."

IV is not college. We hope the staff gets a sense of this early on, primarily because of the tight schedule during orientation. Indications of potential come through doing, so all the activities in the first few days are geared towards the staff having to accomplish things together under a time limit. The making of the coat of arms told us a lot about why people were there, even though this wasn't even a question we asked. OL helps us as an administrative team indicate to the staff that we are expecting them to transition out of college mode, which is largely centered on self-discovery. This initial activity also gives a sense as to who, if anyone, is most likely to be found tanning two miles down the road instead of preparing a your guide for our trip to Patras.

## WE'RE HAVING A "BLAST"

by *Nicki Davis, BLAST Leader*

Our second month of Teen Night brought about some changes. Our format was successfully lengthened to 90 minutes and we also adopted our new name -"BLAST" - which stands for ***Building Lives Around Spiritual Truth***. It is both our motto and our goal. We expect to incorporate our name into our website, our Facebook group, and into our group identity through T-shirts.

We began this month with a game night which allowed the teens to get to know each other better and to have a night where we could just enjoy playing. Fr. Pete has continued our study on handling the challenges that are faced by the teens. The discussions have provided a deeper understanding for our need to embrace our faith in our daily lives.

December marked our first service project. As a group we "adopted" ten backpacks for the Family Sharing project. A group of eight students went shopping with Nicki and Tommy on Saturday to fill the backpacks with the necessities. While it felt really good to be in the business of giving to others, it was a sobering truth to consider the lives of the people who would receive our gift. Reaching out to a world beyond our comfort zone is a great step

toward dedicating our talents to the benefit others. A special thank you to the families who contributed to this project! It is our goal to host a service project every month. Whether it is backpacks for the homeless, or working with a community service group to assist local residents, our aim is to continue to seek out opportunities to help others. We will continue to keep you posted on ways you can encourage this outreach.

The formation of our new group brings with it one formality. We've created a new liability waiver that will cover our students for the year. Hopefully this will streamline the registration process for future events. We will send the new waiver home with the students by the first week in January.

We've enjoyed having several visitors attend our BLAST nights during December! Our students are bringing their friends (Orthodox and non-Orthodox) to enjoy the fellowship and fun!

Following the Christmas season, we will resume our regular schedule on **January 8**, beginning at 7:00 PM and ending at 8:30 PM. There are several opportunities for us to get together in the meantime. We're encouraging the teens to participate in the Christmas eve services through "reading", the Christmas Divine Liturgy, the GOYA Winter Ball at St. Nicholas in San Jose, the New Years Eve Divine Liturgy, followed by the New Years Eve Party! We hope to see everyone there!

## GREEK SCHOOL NEWS

Ὁ Ἀεὶκέειὺ Ὁ-ἰεᾶβι ὁὰὸ ἀύ-ἀὸἀέ Ἐᾶέῤ ἄνεὸὶῃᾶᾶίᾶ!

The holidays are here! With the first trimester just over, students and faculty of Greek School are ready for a well deserved rest. We are getting into the Christmas spirit with songs, crafts, stories, and even recipes! Our wonderful newsletter has holiday recipes that everybody should try. The newsletter can be found at: <http://belmontgreeksschool.com/> under the link "Newsletters -> December 2008".

On Sunday, December 14, our students sang heart-warming Greek Christmas songs during the annual Christmas Program. Thank you to Sunday School for being such a gracious host, to all of you who joined us and to our music teacher, **Dora Zoiopoulos**, for her gift of music to all of us.

Best wishes for joyful and peaceful Christmas from all of us at Greek School.

## CHURCH SERVICES

*subject to change* - please check your Sunday Bulletins

**Sunday Services are 8:30 AM, Orthros, 10:00 AM, Divine Liturgy;**  
**Saturday Vespers are at 5:30 PM**

Saturday, January 3 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

**Sunday, January 4** – Sunday

Monday, January 5 – Eve of Holy Theophany – 8 AM, The Royal Hours;  
9 AM, Vespers Liturgy of Saint Basil (Lesser Agiasmos)

Tuesday, January 6 – Holy Theophany – 8:00 AM, Orthros; 9 AM, Divine  
Liturgy of Saint Basil (Greater Agiasmos)

Wednesday, January 7 – John the Forerunner, 8 AM, Orthros; 9 AM,  
Divine Liturgy

Saturday, January 10 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

**Sunday, January 11** – Sunday following Holy Theophany – 8:45 AM,  
Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy

Saturday, January 17 – Anthony, 8 AM, Orthros; 9 AM, Divine Liturgy

Saturday, January 17 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

**Sunday, January 18** – Sunday; Athanasios & Cyril

Saturday, January 24 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

**Sunday, January 25** – Sunday; Saint Gregory the Theologian

Friday, January 30 – Three Hierarchs, 8 AM, Orthros; 9 AM, Divine  
Liturgy

Saturday, January 31 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

**Sunday, February 1** – Sunday

Monday, February 2 – Presentation of the Lord - 8 AM, Matins and 9  
AM, Divine Liturgy

Friday, February 6 – Photios, 8 AM, Matins and 9 AM, Divine Liturgy

Saturday, February 7 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

**Sunday, February 8** – Sunday (Triodion Begins)

Tuesday, February 10 – Haralambos, 9 AM, Divine Liturgy

Saturday, February 14 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

**Sunday, February 15** – Sunday

Saturday, February 21 – Saturday of Souls, 9 AM, Divine Liturgy

Saturday, February 21 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

**Sunday, February 22** – Sunday

Saturday, February 28 – Saturday of Souls, 9 AM, Divine Liturgy

Saturday, February 28 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

## EVENTS & MEETINGS

Please check your Sunday Bulletins for the dates and times of all meetings.  
Group leaders : Be sure to get your organization's meetings on the calendar! PLEASE NOTE : Some of this schedule will change because of the summer -- contact your committee leaders to double check your meetings.

first Tuesdays of the month - 11 AM, ORA

first Tuesdays of the month - 7 PM, Philoptochos Board

first Wednesdays of the month - 7 PM, Youth Council

second Monday of the month - 7:30 PM, Executive Council

third Tuesdays of the month - 7:30 PM, Parish Council

third Fridays of the month - service at the Samaritan House Kitchen

Tuesdays, 10:00 AM, Bible Study

Tuesdays, 6:00 PM, Hope/JOY

first three Wednesdays of the month, 7:30 PM, Choir

Thursdays, 7 PM, Studies in the Faith

Thursdays, 7 PM, GOYA

first Thursdays of the month, Daughters of Penelope

Dance - please check with your Directors

## COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARDS

We missed including some names in this year's Christmas Card, and include them here along with all our hopes that you had a wonderful Christmas and

our wishes for a happy and healthy New Year.

The Bangs Family  
Argero Chrisafis  
Bill, Jayn & Veronica Feyling  
Joe, Marina and Casey Fitzgerald  
Marjorie Mandanis  
John G. Mathrusse  
Litsa Melas  
Steve & Tulla Monolakis & Family  
Pete, Stacey and Vicki Samaras  
Anthony and Demetra Sperow  
Jim & Diane Stephanos  
Mr. & Mrs. Harry Thodos & Family  
Tamara & Fred Zerebinski

## CRAB FEED



*This crab is smiling  
because we've just  
invited him to dinner.*

### SAVE THE DATE!

# **CRAB FEED 2009**

## **Saturday, March 7** *details soon*

## HOUSE BLESSINGS

Each year, after the celebration of Epiphany (**January 6**), it is the Orthodox tradition to bless our homes with the Holy Water of Epiphany. Please fill out the form and return it to the Church Office if you would like to have Father bless your home.

=====

Use (a) this slip, (b) transfer this info to a separate sheet of paper (or, c) e-mail the information below, and submit it to the Church Office in January. **Yes**, I would like to have Father bless our home :

**DAY :** (a weekday after Jan. 6) : January \_\_\_\_\_, 2009

**TIME :** \_\_\_\_\_ AM / PM (between 10 AM & 5 PM)

**Name :** \_\_\_\_\_

**Phone (s) :** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address :** \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions from church** (please indicate cross-streets / draw a simple map if you think that would help) :