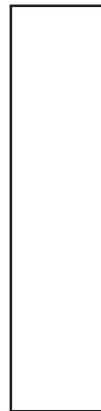




# CROSS CURRENTS

Church Newsletter  
Jan / Feb / Mar 2010



## REMEMBER THE SABBATH, TO KEEP IT HOLY . . .

by *Father Peter Salmas, Pastor*



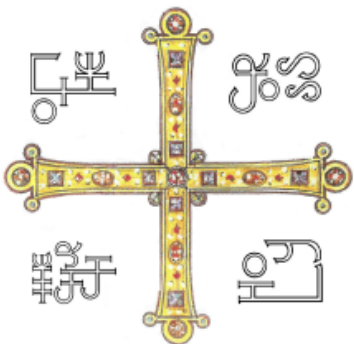
There is an ongoing debate regarding climate change, about global warming and, in general, there is much discussion about man's relationship to the environment. Though these may be concerns of some import, they pale in comparison to the significance of our understanding of our relationship with our Creator, with God.

Yes, we conserve energy and we recycle. I suspect that we give more attention to such tasks than we do to the task of nurturing our relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ and His Holy Church, which is the very Body of Christ.

It is of great concern to me, as it should be to each of us as Orthodox Christians, that we all too often disregard the teachings of the Church because we either ignore them, take them for granted, or find them inconvenient and not in keeping with the times in which we live. Sadly, our children, whose care has been entrusted to us, will suffer great harm from our neglect and idolatry.

There was a time, not too long ago, when Sunday was the time for the worship of God and the gathering of His people for that worship, when Sunday was the day of acknowledging that, as Christians, we chose to honor His request, to benefit from His Guidance. In so doing, we acknowledged the reality of His Existence, of His Presence, of His Love for His Creation, of His Love for us.

...Alas, that time has past...Sunday mornings is now more often the warm-up period before a football game, the time to catch up with our mall



**900 Alameda**

BELMONT CA 94002-1604

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The Monthly Newsletter of the Church of the Holy Cross  
900 Alameda / Belmont, CA 94002-1604  
(650) 591-4447 / fax (650) 508-9846  
office@goholycross.org / www.goholycross.org

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shopping, the second day for AYSO soccer and other sporting events and so-called “family gatherings”...wedding and baby showers. In short, we have replaced the sacredness of Sunday for the mundane reality of our world.

Rarely do I hear a family say they will not be able to accept an invitation for a breakfast or lunch because of church worship on Sundays. The “other” event comes first because there is always next Sunday...so we say. We do not want our children to “miss out” on an opportunity for their future as an athlete or CEO, giving little regard to the future of their lives as Orthodox Christians.

I do not know why we put God last on the list of priorities, but, all too often, we do. Everything else comes first in hopes that God will understand. Yet, God through the Holy Scripture tells us something different. Our Lord tells us in the Gospel of Matthew “but seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all things will be added to you.” Instead of moving closer to Him, we move further away...sadly, many of us are fine with this approach to life.

As we contemplate the new year before us, I ask that we give careful consideration to recommitting ourselves and our families to worshipping together on Sunday mornings and not giving into the temptations that keep us from giving God His proper place in our lives, giving God first place, keeping Him above all else.

Once again we have an opportunity to deal with things that are real. My relationship with God is more important than the debate over global warming. The spiritual environment that I seek for my family is more important than the ever-changing environment in which I live. And I know that seeking

first His Kingdom and His Righteousness will benefit more than just me and my family but will in a very real way benefit the world in which I live.

It is my fervent prayer that we not neglect the lifestyle to which we are called as Orthodox Christians. May the teachings of His Holy Church, the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, guide us to a new or renewed understanding of who God Is and of who we are in relationship to Him. May this be the foundation for each of us of a healthy and spiritually rewarding new year.

## REFLECTIONS REFLECTIONS

### FLANNELS

by *Konstantine Salmas*



Aside from the kisses and cards, Yiayia gives us flannel pajama bottoms every year. She passes them out to all the grand kids on Christmas night. I love that she shares with us like this. When I look at the folded stack of bottoms I’ve gathered over the last ten or so years, it is a symbol of how powerful sharing is. This is an extension of Yiayia. If a stack of pajamas affects me in such a personal way, I can only think of how much more powerfully I am affected by gestures that don’t get lost when people sit to write histories. We should share our thoughts in a much more liberal way than we share gifts. I am affected by receiving the pajama bottoms and Yiayia is affected by giving them. Holding back is unnatural. If we are that powerfully affected by giving and receiving pajamas, sweaters, and objects, think how much of a disservice we do to ourselves emotionally by not sharing our thoughts and practicing the reception of thoughts of others. Words, in a much deeper way than pj’s, are reflections of what the soul feels most comfortably doing.

### 11:30 AM BLIP

by *Konstantine Salmas*

For me, the Sunday high school religious education class is a litmus test. For the teenagers, it is a blip, I am sure. Good morning, I say. In response, Where are the snacks. Yia is supposed to get the snacks. Yia is getting the

snacks. Where's Yia? Is Yia supposed to get the snacks? Everyone tunes at their own pace.

The kids actually find their way to substantive theological topics. There are quizzical faces, Did Jesus really do that? An answer is offered by a student: Jesus didn't really do that. The Bible is stories, like myths. People were agricultural so the stories helped them to trust that they could overcome nature. I go to Catholic school and they teach us that, of course, Noah's Ark isn't real. The people, they just related to those stories really well. I don't say too much because most of the other students don't know what to say, they are all quiet. I say, as the beginning of a response: That's really what they teach as the Catholic position on the Bible? Really? Really? The students, I think, were taking her side. Lots of silence. A cell phone drops. They know I don't like those. This is the beginning of their minds being used, and already they believe that the past isn't true. I repeat in my mind, This is what is taught as the Catholic position? I often hear, We're very close, the Catholics and the Orthodox. Catholic Mass, Orthodox Liturgy. We're very close. Practically the same. That's what I hear. I say to the class, The Orthodox position is very very different from the Catholic position on the Bible. When the Church reads on Sundays, Jesus said Jesus did Jesus healed, the Orthodox actually believe, Jesus said Jesus did Jesus healed. We're not practically the same. Be careful parents, your children may run right through you, carrying positions on things you never needed positions.

For me, the Sunday high school religious education class is a litmus. For the teenagers, it is a blip, I am sure. I do my best to make sure, that when they look back, the blip is dark and loud, blaring, round as the bell of a tuba, not a pinhead.

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT AND NOURISHMENT

[A parishioner wanted to share the following]

God wants spiritual fruit, not religious nuts  
There is no key to happiness...The door is always open  
Silence is often misinterpreted, but never misquoted  
Do the math, count your blessings  
Faith is the ability to, not panic  
If you worry, you didn't pray...if you pray, don't worry

As a child of God, prayer is like calling home, every day  
The most important thing in your home, are the people  
When we get tangled up in our problems, be still...God wants us to  
be still so He can untangle the knot  
A grudge is a heavy to carry  
Be kinder than necessary, for everyone you meet is carrying some  
burden and fighting some kind of battle  
O Lord...restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation and Thy governing  
Spirit, establish in me.

## YOUTH & PARENTS

### NEW MOON - ARE YOU OBSESSED?

by *Fr. Pete Sotiras, Assistant Priest*

*Spoiler Alert—The following article mentions aspects of New Moon (The DVD comes out **March 20**). Chances are, you've seen the movie but if you haven't, I wanted to give you a heads up.*



*New Moon*, as many of you already know, is part of the extremely popular Twilight franchise. More sequels are already in the works. Everywhere you turn there are posters, magazines, and books about the film. For those who haven't seen the movies or read the books, the main characters include Bella Swan, a 17-year old teenager who moves to Forks, Washington to be with her father Charlie. It is at her new high school where she meets and falls in love with Edward Cullen, a vampire, who only drinks the blood of animals. Jacob Black, an old childhood friend of Bella's who discovers that he's able to turn into a wolf, is also a main character of the series. Despite the vampire and wolf storylines, the heart of the movie and books is the love story between Bella and Edward and it is that which I want to focus on for this article.

After seeing the movie with **Presvytera Angie**, I was especially concerned with how Bella obsessed over Edward. Bella tells Edward that

she is willing to give up her soul for him. She totally freaks out and becomes depressed when Edward breaks up with her and leaves her in the beginning of the film. The film shows Bella sitting in her unlit room while she stares out the window for months. She no longer has any interest in hanging out with her friends. Her longing for Edward causes Bella to have nightmares and scream in the middle of the night. Worst of all, Bella acts recklessly because she thinks it will get Edward's attention (Edward appears to her every time she is about to do something dangerous). She ends up jumping onto a motorcycle with a totally random guy at night. She also ends up diving off an extremely high cliff. Ultimately, Bella feels like she has a hole inside of her because Edward is gone. She believes that life cannot possibly go on or be good without him. Things start to get better for Bella when she hangs out with Jacob, but even that doesn't last long. Basically, Bella thinks that her life is over.

Hopefully, most of you realize that Bella's reaction to Edward leaving her and how she dealt with it is a bit over the top. However, the movie still provides us with a good springboard for discussion. Some of you may have had your hearts broken. Most of us want to have a relationship with someone. The problem lies in obsessing over someone. When interest in someone turns into obsession, then you've entered unhealthy territory. Obsession is never a good thing. Obsession is unhealthy because it replaces God as the One to be worshipped with a person or thing. When we obsess about someone or something, we are saying that a person or thing can give us our ultimate happiness and fulfillment rather than God. All human beings are made in God's image and likeness, which means that only Jesus can really fill the emptiness inside of us. It's one thing to be interested in someone, to like someone and to love someone. It's quite another thing to be obsessed. Obsession leads to unhealthy behavior and feelings, just as those Bella exhibited when Edward broke up with her.

The important question we need to answer is: how can we keep from obsessing over someone we like so that we can avoid having emotional and physical meltdowns? The following points will hopefully help you answer this question.

**1) Take care of the really important parts of your life.**

One way to avoid becoming obsessed with someone is to make sure we don't forget about the important parts of our life. Bella ends up ignoring two very important aspects of her life because of her obsession over Edward—her God-given gifts

and her friends. Figuring out what your God-given gifts and talents are and having them as hobbies and/or extracurricular activities is one of the joys of life. God has given you these gifts and talents to use. If you don't know what your gift or talents are, you should really find out because God has definitely blessed you with them! Make sure you make time to cultivate these gifts rather than obsessing over someone. Also, by knowing what your gifts are, you may also be able to determine what college you want to apply to and what job you may want. These are important decisions you start discovering now.

Having positive friendships and spending time with good friends is another gift from God. God created us to have healthy relationships, not to be alone. So many awesome memories are created with our friends; don't miss out on that because you're obsessed over someone.

Don't forget your family either. Healthy families love unconditionally and sacrifice much time for your well-being. Appreciate all that your family has given you because without them, you wouldn't be where you are. Just because you see your family all the time, doesn't mean you're really spending quality time with them—make sure to talk to them, appreciate them and ask them questions rather than having them always ask you questions and you responding with one-word or two-word answers 😊.

Of course, your relationship with your God is the most important relationship of your life. It's very unhealthy to let someone push God out of your life. If you find yourself not having time to pray, or read the Bible, or go to Church or follow the teachings of the Church because of the person you like, then that's a huge red flag. Your relationship with God is more important than any other relationship in your life because it's through that relationship that you can truly have healthy relationships with others.

**2) Physical intimacy is good, but only with right person and at the right time.**

I believe that one of the causes of obsession is physical intimacy at the wrong time with the wrong person. (When I refer to physical intimacy, I mean anything from kissing to having sex). There's nothing wrong with being attracted to some-

one and with being physically intimate but it has to be with the right person and at the right time. Physical intimacy is something created by God and good. However, God intended for us to be physically intimate with a certain person, not everyone “under the sun”. God created physical intimacy to occur between a man and woman who share the same beliefs and faith, who love each other’s personalities, core values and how they think; who are attracted to each other; and who are thinking about marriage; (of course sex itself should only take place when a couple is married) —if you answer no to any of these, that means that it’s not the right time to be physically intimate.

Also, keep in mind that everyone is made in God’s image and no one should be treated as an object. I know it’s difficult, especially because of the society we live in. Teens are bombarded every day by movies, TV and magazines about sex. We have a culture that is obsessed with sex. I have so much respect for all of you who are trying to choose the narrow path and stay true to your convictions and faith. I commend those of you who take your relationship with God seriously and who refuse to objectify yourselves or others.

3) **God loves you and will provide what you need.**

I believe that one of the reasons we can become obsessed with someone is because we believe that we might be losing the “love of our life” or “soulmate”. Even though she is only 17, Bella obsesses over Edward because she believes he is her “soulmate”. One of the most beautiful aspects of being an Orthodox Christian is the comfort of knowing that God will always provide us with what we need. Jesus wants you to find somebody. He doesn’t want you to be alone. As long as you focus on your relationship with Jesus, He will absolutely bless you with everything you’ll need in life, including finding the love of your life. You just have to be patient. Jesus reminds us in the Gospel of Luke not to be anxious and not to worry about food, or what to drink or what to wear (Luke 12:22-31). Jesus is basically saying not to worry about the basic things of life, the things that we need to survive because God will provide as long as our focus is on Him. One of the basics of life is finding the “love of

our life” and so Jesus would tell us not to obsess over it because

He will make sure we’re not alone.

Liking someone and being attracted to someone is natural. Being obsessed with a person or thing is not. It goes against our very nature as people who have been baptized and united to Christ. Always keep God at the center of your life. Obsession over someone you like is unhealthy and leads to unhealthy behavior. The Church wants you to have a positive experience in middle school and high school. If you put your faith in God, everything else, including meeting the person of your dreams, will fall in place.

## THE GREATEST SEQUEL OF ALL TIME

by *Fr. Pete Sotiras, Assistant Priest*

If you’re a movie buff, you know how difficult it is for a sequel to be better than the original. There’s a few that could qualify: “Twin Towers” or “Return of the King”; “Empire Strikes Back” or “Return of the Jedi”; “Godfather II”. The majority of sequels though never match up to the first one.

There is another story that has a much better sequel than the original. It’s the story of human beings. The original human was Adam. Adam was not created perfect but he had the potential to be perfect. Unfortunately we know that Adam did not live up to his potential. He did not become the human being that God wanted him to be and as a result, Adam’s relationship with God was broken and he no longer lived in Paradise. Adam lost his way and so did every other human being after him. All people after Adam became lost, confused, hurt, in pain and in need of healing and repair.

God could not stand to see his creation broken and separated from Him. So, God came up with a sequel to his original plan. He introduced the second Adam. The second Adam was Jesus Christ. The sequel was way better than the original because the second Adam was God, which is what Christmas was all about. God himself would be the main character of His sequel because only He could show us what it meant to be human. Jesus came down to earth to show Adam what he should have become.

Jesus shows us what a real human being should be like. A real human being should be kind, compassionate, giving and caring. A real human being should be interested in other people. A real human being should look at all humans with respect and view everyone equally because all humans are

made in God's image. A real human should not be selfish or greedy. Ultimately, a real human being should have an active relationship with God and His Church.

Being a real human being also means sometimes doing things that are not popular. For example, a real human should embrace truth. Real humans don't buy the philosophy that "every belief is okay and that every belief is healthy". Jesus did not say that. Jesus said that He is "the way, the truth and the life" (John 14:6). We never hate or disrespect others for believing differently than we do, but we also should not water down or sacrifice our own beliefs.

There are many other examples Jesus gives us of what it means to be a real human. You may be thinking that imitating Jesus means that you can't have any more fun or do the things you normally do. While following Jesus does mean we change our lives, it doesn't mean we stop having fun. It means that we experience real fun, not the kind of fun that harms us. Imitating Jesus means we can still listen to music, just certain types of music☺. Imitating Jesus means we can still watch TV, just certain types of shows of course☺. Imitating Jesus means we can still play sports and still have our hobbies, as long as these things aren't unhealthy. The important thing to understand is that the Church wants you to imitate Jesus, in school, at home, and in your extracurricular activities. The Church doesn't want you to abandon the important things in your life unless those things are hurting your soul.

Great Lent is our manual of how we become a real human being. Fasting, praying, reading the Bible and giving to the poor are things we do for Great Lent so we can grow closer to Christ and become a healthy human being. I encourage you to pray more than you have been, to fast more than you have been, to read the Bible more than you have been and to give more to the Church than you have been. Teenagers love a challenge. I challenge you to be real by imitating Jesus. The sequel to the story of human beings is better than the original because Jesus has shown us what Adam should have been. In other words, Jesus has shown us what we should be. Great Lent is the manual that shows us how.

## A HOLY GIFT - Part 3 of 4

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



I'll admit I'm a huge baseball fan, but I never understood what bases had to do with dating. People refer to first, second, etc. when it comes to dating, and I guess the further you go with someone physically, the further you go along the bases, right? It seems there are a lot of messages floating around in our society about relationships, specifically about physical relationships- how far you're allowed to go, how everything's okay as long as both people consent, how it's okay as long as it doesn't affect your happiness, etc. When a person hears these kinds of messages, you almost say to yourself, "Yeah, I know that the Church teaches to wait until marriage to have sex, but is that even realistic today? Does anyone even do that?"

Two months ago, I shared that true romantic love is just as much a function of the soul as of the body, and some thoughts about what our understanding of love should be. Last month I shared some thoughts about the next step, dating, and how any romantic relationship is fulfilled when it is centered around God and our being selfless, not selfish. This month, I'd like to share some thoughts about another dimension of relationships- physical relations- and to seriously look at this question, because it is something we're faced with today, and not just in high school. Given the fact that messages about physical relations are thrown around today in TV, movies, music, billboards, everywhere, I feel it's important that we bring an awareness to our Church's message about this topic, and ask ourselves, Is this even possible anymore?

First, I would ask the following- Have you ever dated someone, not done anything physical with them, and then stopped seeing them after things didn't work out? How hard is it to stop seeing that person? Now consider how hard it is to stop seeing someone you have done something physical with, even just kissed? ***It is much harder to stop seeing someone who you have done something physical with, because physical relations create an even deeper connection between two people.*** It's true, and yet we barely ever consider it. When your love- not lust- grows for someone romantically, you want to share something with the person beyond just a hello or a hug. This is something very natural and human that God has given us. And yet, God

knows that physical relations between a man and a woman do bring them closer together, and *He wants us to experience this in a safe, healthy way, and not get hurt.*

If you have sex with someone, or do anything physical with someone, and later that person decides they don't want to see you anymore, it is very, very hurtful. On the other hand, if two people share physical intimacy within the context of a married relationship, there is safety, security, and commitment there that allows that love to be fulfilled - especially if two people in a marriage do their best to emulate Christ's love in their love for one another. In other words, *God wants you to guard your heart.* God has given us something tremendously special, a holy gift, and He doesn't want us to emotionally burn ourselves out, or disrespect our bodies by treating sex as if it weren't a blessing. It is not about how many "bases" someone gets to. It's not about "getting with someone." If you allow God to guide your relationship with someone- your body and your soul- and you wait until marriage to have sex, you will experience a healthy relationship and God won't let you down. Dating is a time to just focus on getting to know more about yourself and about what kind of person you gel with, and God willing, who you ultimately will marry.

And that leads me to next month's topic...

## BLESS THEM, O LORD - Part 4 of 4

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

*"Everlasting God, those who were divided You brought into oneness, setting for them an unbreakable bond of love; You blessed Isaac and Rebecca and made them heirs to Your promise. Bless these Your servants, guiding them into every good work."*

About a month ago I had the rare pleasure of going to a movie with my wife and two other friends of ours. I'll just come out and say it- the movie was "New Moon" (the sequel to the ultra-popular "Twilight" movie and book series, in case you've been living under a rock the last year). There, I said it. Even though I can also say that it was definitely not tailored towards my target audience, I am still amazed at how popular this movie is with female fans of all ages (not just high school, as it turns out), and how this series is

capturing American teenagers imaginations. The biggest reaction from these teenagers, though, was at the end of the movie (**\*\*\*\*stop reading here if you don't want to know what happens\*\*\*\***) when Edward says to Bella, "Marry me, Bella." Like any successful teenage romance movie, love is *the* central theme of the movie, and much to the delight of everyone in the theatre, the perfect "happy ending" of many movies is mentioned at the end of this movie- marriage.

People love weddings. We love seeing two friends or family members tie the knot. We love seeing two characters that we're attached to in a book, movie, TV show, song, etc, get married when they fall in love with each other. In every culture, in every country, in every time period, few events are more joyful than a wedding. The same held true for Jesus' time, when His first miracle was turning the water into wine at the wedding of Cana, (John 2) which once again affirmed the holiness of marriage in God's eyes. The same is true in our time and in our faith today. It is a celebration of life and love. Marriage, in its purest form, is two people committing their lives to one another, before God, and allowing God to sanctify them and guide them through life- joy, sorrow and everything in between- to the Kingdom of God.

The sacrament of marriage is where love between two people finds its richest fulfillment in this life. I've shared some thoughts these last few months about love, dating, and physical relationships, and the underlying theme I hope I've conveyed is that in all of these, God needs to be the central focus. In Jesus Christ, Who is God, and Who is love, our love for another person is strengthened and made full. Even though we don't hear this message too often these days, I would urge all of us who are not yet married to focus ourselves on this beautiful sacrament. Allow God to guide you in His love to the right person He knows is best for you, even if it is a few years down the road. By doing so, you won't have to worry about feeling loved or feeling valued, because you will know you are. If we allow God to guide us to that right person, and center our relationship around Him, we will have that "unbreakable bond of love" in our life with our spouse.

During that time, you'll probably have to go to a movie you don't want to see at some point, too, but hey, no one said it was going to be easy.

But it will be blessed.

## FROM THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION STAFF

by *Adrienne Roberts*



Happy February from the Religious Education Staff! We're all looking forward to 2010 and spending our Sunday mornings with your kids. With that in mind, this might be a good time to highlight a couple of things that are critical to making our Religious Education program the great thing that it is.

The first most important thing is that you bring your kids to Church! Embarrassed because you're late, or because you missed a couple of Sundays in a row? Nobody here is judging you: we just want you and your kids to come in and be a part of our Orthodox Family. That is the most important thing: this Church is your Church, it is my Church, it is all OUR Orthodox Family. Having said that, we are continuing with our OTEC program, which has proven to be quite popular among the kids. For your child to collect an OTEC card, (s)he needs to arrive at Church by 10:15 AM. This is really when we should all try to arrive at Church, the OTEC program just incentivizes the kids to actually help their family get out the door.

Another tool that helps our Religious Education machine run smoothly, is that at Communion time, we like to have the Religious Ed. Teachers be among the first folks to receive Communion. This is so that they can beat their students to their classrooms-it is just practical. Some of us do take our own kids with us up for Communion, and that may cause a bit of confusion, but again, it is for the simple, and practical reason that ... well, they're our kids and, try as we might, we just can't seem to get away from them...(ha ha). Finally, a facet of the Religious Education program that is quietly building up steam is our Tithing Program. Based on the Program started by the Antiochian Church, (<http://www.antiochian.org/christianeducation/tithing2009>) the Tithing program teaches our children about the concept of tithing: having a goal of giving to the Church of your time, treasure and talent every week. While tithing is defined as giving 10% of one's earnings to the Church, we encourage our students to bring whatever they feel comfortable bringing. We encourage the kids to put their offerings (in an envelope) in the multi-colored box (decorated by our own 2nd and 5th graders) in the Narthex.

These monies are collected each Sunday and tallied up. At the end of the year, the money is donated to the Church for use in the work going on with the Mosaic Icons around the Altar.

Finally, in honor of Great Lent, we will be raising money for the children at the Hogar Rafael Ayau Orthodox Orphanage in Guatemala. Each student will receive a mission coin box to take home. The box should be placed in a special place in the home, and filled with coins as the child comes across them. All boxes need to be returned to Church by Good Friday, and optimally at the Good Friday Retreat.

In addition, we will be having an "adopt an orphan" program where the kids can "adopt" a child by donating a dollar. A little paper doll will be placed on display in the classroom to represent each child the class adopts. Similar to our Tithing program, this will be an Orthodox Family effort. Nobody will know how much money each child donates, nor how many 'orphans' each child adopts. It is about what we can do if we come together as a group, one community helping another. If we get really ambitious, you may see small items made by our Religious Ed. Students for sale during coffee hour.

If you have any questions or suggestions about the Religious Education program, we would love to hear from you. Rest assured that any feedback you give your child's teacher will be brought up and discussed! Happy New Year!

## HOLY CROSS DANCERS PARTICIPATE IN FDF

by *Kathy Roque-Albert, Dance Program Director*

The Metropolis of San Francisco held its 29th Annual Folk Dance & Choral Festival in San Jose in January. All four of our dance groups attended this year. *Ta Asteria*, directed by **Alexandra** and **Gabby Nemchik** participated in the exhibition portion of the program. *Dynami*, directed by **Andreas Najjar** and **Irene Koulouris**, *Epitihia*, directed by **Maria** and **Lia Farantos** and *Enomenoi*, directed by **Peter Kalafatis** also participated in the competition. All of our dance groups had outstanding performances and we are very proud of our dancers.

Congratulations to our dancers for all of their hard work and to all who gave so much of their time and talent.

# GREEK SCHOOL NEWS

A brilliant celebration of the “Three Hierarchs” took place at the Holy Cross by the Greek School, honored with the presence of **His Eminence Archbishop Nikitas**.

The life and the boundless work of the Three Hierarchs, the mellifluous luminaries of the Letters and Education, were presented by the students: **Stamatis Papadopoulos, Melina Stavropoulos** - Δ' Grade, teacher **Mrs. Tonia Spyridi; Anastasia Breeze** - Δ' Grade, teacher **Mr. Kleon Skourtis**; and **Yiannis Gardner** - B' Grade, teacher **Ms. Dora Zoiopoulos**, with a special respect and devoutness. Also, students of programs *Phevos* and *Koraes*, and Ms. Dora Zoiopoulos, in charge, sang beautifully the Hymn of the Day.

In his warm speech, His Eminence, congratulated the students for their performance and pointed out, that, it is a high achievement to speak and chant in Greek in front of a big audience! The well-known Greek academic and linguist **Mr. George Babiniotis**, in his speech about Letters Day emphasized that “Hellenism and Orthodoxy are complementary to one another and we are asked to keep them intact as the pupil of our eye”, furthermore, “Greeks are fortunate to speak a language so rich and wide, the mother of all major languages.” The students worthily were congratulated by everyone!

Finally, the **Rev. Father Panayioti Sotiras** blessed the cutting of Vasilopita. All people present enjoyed the unique buffet exceptionally organized by **Mrs. Rika Tsitsinia**. We express our thanks to our Priests, Directors, Mrs. Tsitsinia, **Mrs. Kavatzas, Mrs. Maheras**, the ladies of Philoptohos for their help and all teachers, parents and friends who honoured our event!

## ❖ Certificate of Attainment in Greek – Important Dates

The test for the certificate of attainment in Greek will be conducted in **May**. Those interested in taking the test should submit an application. Application forms are available at Holy Cross Greece School. For additional information please contact **Theodora Kounalakis** at 594-9585.

Test application due date: **March 20**

Test date - levels A and B: **May 11**

Test date - levels C and D: **May 12**

## ❖ Certificate of Attainment in Greek – Classes offered by Greek School

Greek School is offering a class that prepares students for the Examination to achieve the Certificate of Attainment in Greek. Class will be held weekly on **Wednesdays**, 5:30 to 6:30 PM. The classes are free of charge for Holy Cross Greek School current students and graduates. For details, contact **Theodora Kounalakis** at 594-9585.

## ❖ Greek Independence Day Celebration

Join the Greek School in celebrating Greek Independence Day and the Annunciation of the Virgin Mary on **Sunday, March 21**, with a delicious Lenten luncheon and presentations by the students. For information and reservations please see the attached flyer.

## ❖ Greek School Summer Camp - June 21-25

Greek School invites you to join our third annual summer camp. Previous summer camps have been a great success and we anticipate this year's camp to be equally memorable!

For more information please visit: [www.belmontgreeksschool.com](http://www.belmontgreeksschool.com) or call **Theodora Kounalakis** at 594-9585.

## ❖ Metropolis Summer Camp - June 12-19

The Hellenic Greek Education and Culture committee invites you to join the first Annual Greek Immersion summer camp for a week full of memories of a lifetime.

For additional information please visit: [www.belmontgreeksschool.com](http://www.belmontgreeksschool.com) or call **Theodora Kounalakis** at 594-9585.

*For more Greek School News, please see the latest edition of our FULL COLOR newsletter, on-line, at [www.goholycross.org](http://www.goholycross.org) -- click on the mini-banner at the top of the page.*

## NEWS

### HAPPY NEW YEAR!

*from the The Ladies of the Philoptochos*

As we look forward to the New Year the ladies of the Philoptochos would like to wish all of you a healthy, happy and blessed New Year. And with the New Year we are welcoming three new ladies to our Board. **Tula Kourtoglou, Marian Peris** and **June Droutsas** have all joined and will be wonderful assets to our Philoptochos.

There are two events that we would like you to know about. On February 6, we held our annual Membership Tea at **Father Peter and Pres. Nikki's** home. The tea began with a light luncheon followed by a Health Talk by **Dr. Tanya Spirtos**. Tanya addressed health issues specific to the ladies, such as Cardiac Health, Stress and Healthy Diet. We all had a wonderful, informative after noon..

On **February 28** after Liturgy we will sponsor a Kids'N' Cancer coffee hour. The Oaks will be decorated in pink and red and white. A special coffee hour will be enjoyed by all. The donations from that day go directly to the Kids'N' Cancer program which holds camps for terminally ill children and their families. For a week these children enjoy being out of the hospital, are away from needles and tests, and have fun with other children in beautiful outdoor settings.

We would like to thank all of you who attended our Christmas Tea and Vasilopeta Luncheon. *Xronia Polla!*

## GREETINGS & NEWS FROM YOUR FRIENDS @ O.R.A.

by *Vice-President Virginia Coppock*

Attention all Holy Cross Seniors (age 55+)! You're invited to come and join O.R.A., the Organization of Respected Adults! We are a social group that meets once a month for companionship, fellowship, and just fun socializing! Meetings are held in The Oaks Hall at 11 AM on the first Tuesday of each month, and always at Noon we serve a wonderful hot lunch catered by Nob Hill. The yearly dues are \$12 per person or \$24 per couple.

O.R.A. is the one of the most popular clubs here at Holy Cross and the largest Greek Orthodox Seniors group in the Bay Area. The O.R.A. group is very happy, active, and energetic. Each month we have raffles, sing-a-longs, guest speakers, and go on many day trips. At our January meetings, we cut the Vasilopita that some of our lady members bake for us. It is always great fun to see who wins the coins. At our annual Christmas party, O.R.A. members made a very generous donation of \$1,025 to Family to Family. You can always see O.R.A. members working at our festival, Outreach, Samaritan House, and wherever we are needed.

O.R.A. just celebrated its 30-year anniversary. In 1979, twenty Holy Cross members started this wonderful organization and throughout the years it has grown to over 200 members. We are extremely proud of our O.R.A.

So, on behalf of our President, **Peter Economus**; Vice President, **Virginia Coppock**; Secretary, **Daisy Fernando**; and Treasurer, **John Dracopoulos**, we invite you to come join us and be a part of this wonderful organization! Happy new year, *Xronia Polla*. Hope to see you at our next meeting!

## THANK YOU!

Many thanks for the beautiful cards, thoughts, and phone calls. A special thank you to friends who drove up for a visit. I cherish every friendship. Again, thank you and I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a healthy, Happy New Year. *Ann Pappageorge*

# COMMUNITY CHRISTMAS CARDS

We missed printing a few names in this year's Community Christmas Card. We include them here with our hopes that you had a wonderful Christmas with your family and friends, and with our wishes that your new year is happy, healthy, and prosperous.

Peter & Jeannette Angelides  
The Bangs Family  
Cunningham Family  
Mrs. Pearl Delis  
Chuck & Janice Donegan  
Lefty & Eleftheria Eliopoulos  
Helen Ernst  
Elias & Laura Jadelrab  
Michael, Thalia & Jonna Hohenthal  
Vickie Joanou  
Ann Konstantelos  
Pat Lagiss  
Presbytera Betty Limbeson  
Serge, Merry Ann, Natasha & Alisha Loukianoff  
D.G. Marinos  
George, Anthie and Elizabeth Mitropoulos  
The Orth Family  
Sophia Pappageorge  
Pavlidis Family  
Ross Ritterman  
Michael & Marina Sage  
Pete, Stacey & Vicki Samaras  
Nick & Harriet Siacotos  
Mark, Kathryn, David & Alexander Simon  
Nick & Bess Singares  
Anthony & Demetra Sperow & Family  
Jim & Karen Vandarakis  
Kurt & Garifalia Zeissig  
Fred & Tamara Zerebinski

## SERVICES

*subject to change* - please check your Sunday Bulletins

**Sunday Services are (regular schedule) 8:30 AM, Orthros, 10:00 AM, Divine Liturgy; (summer schedule) 8:15 AM, Orthros, 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy; Saturday Vespers are at 5:30 PM**

Wednesday, February 24 - 6:00 PM, Presanctified Liturgy

Friday, February 26 – 8:30 AM, Presanctified Liturgy

Friday, February 26 - 7 PM, Salutations

Saturday, February 27 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

Sunday, February 28 – 8:30 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy -

Sunday of Gregory Palamas

Monday, March 1 - 7 PM, Great Compline

Wednesday, March 3 - 6:00 PM, Presanctified Liturgy

Friday, March 5 – 8:30 AM, Presanctified Liturgy

Friday, March 5 - 7 PM, Salutations

Saturday, March 6 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

Sunday, March 7 – 8:30 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy - Sunday of the Holy Cross

Monday, March 8 - 7 PM, Great Compline

Tuesday, March 9 – 9 AM, Divine Liturgy – 40 Martyrs

Wednesday, March 10 - 6:00 PM, Presanctified Liturgy

Friday, March 12 – 8:30 AM, Presanctified Liturgy

Friday, March 12 - 7 PM, Salutations

Saturday, March 13 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

Sunday, March 14 – 8:30 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy - Sunday of John Climacus

Monday, March 15 - 7 PM, Great Compline

Wednesday, March 17 - 6:00 PM, Presanctified Liturgy

Friday, March 19 – 8:30 AM, Presanctified Liturgy

Friday, March 19 - 7 PM, Akathist Hymn

Saturday, March 20 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

Sunday, March 21 – 8:30 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy - Sunday of Saint Mary of Egypt  
 Monday, March 22 - 7 PM, Great Compline  
 Tuesday, March 23 – 7 PM, Salutations to the Holy Cross  
 Wednesday, March 24 – no services here  
 Thursday, March 25 – 9 AM, Divine Liturgy – The Annunciation  
 Friday, March 26 – no services  
 Saturday, March 27 - 9:00 AM, Divine Liturgy - The Raising of Lazarus  
 Saturday, March 27 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers  
 Sunday, March 28 – 8:30 AM, Orthros; 10 AM, Divine Liturgy - Palm Sunday  
 Sunday, March 28 – 7 PM - The Service of the Bridegroom  
 Monday, March 29 – 7 PM - Great and Holy Monday - The Service of the Bridegroom  
 Tuesday, March 30 – 7 PM - Great and Holy Tuesday - The Service of the Bridegroom  
 Wednesday, March 31 – 6:30 AM - Great and Holy Wednesday - Liturgy for Workers  
 Wednesday, March 31 – 3 PM - The Sacrament of Holy Oil  
 Wednesday, March 31 – 7 PM - The Sacrament of Holy Oil  
 Thursday, April 1 – 9 AM - Great and Holy Thursday - Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great  
 Thursday, April 1 – 7 PM - The Service of the Holy Passion  
 Friday, April 2 – 9 AM – Holy Friday - The Vigil of the Royal Hours  
 Friday, April 2 – 3 PM - Vespers of the Descent from the Cross  
 Friday, April 2 – 7 PM - The Service of the Lamentations  
 Saturday, April 3 – 9 AM - Great and Holy Saturday - Divine Liturgy  
 Saturday, April 3 – 11 PM - Resurrection Matins, the Paschal Liturgy  
 Sunday, April 4 – 11:30 AM - Easter Sunday / Vespers of the Resurrection, “Agape”  
 Friday, April 9 – 9 AM, Divine Liturgy – Life-Giving Spring  
 Saturday, April 10 – 5:30 PM, Great Vespers

## MEETINGS

Please check your Sunday Bulletins for the dates and times of all meetings.

Weekdays - Preschool  
 Weekdays - Greek School  
 Mondays - 10 AM, Bible Study  
 Mondays - 7-8 PM, College Night  
 second Monday of the month - 7:30 PM, Executive Council  
 first Tuesdays of the month - 11 AM, ORA  
 first Tuesdays of the month - 7 PM, Philoptochos Board  
 second & fourth Tuesdays - evenings, Hope/JOY  
 second Tuesday of the month - 7:00 PM, Youth Council  
 third Tuesdays of the month - 7:30 PM, Parish Council  
 Wednesdays, 7 PM - Studies in the Faith  
 First three Wednesdays of the month - Choir  
 Thursdays - 7-8:30 PM in The Oaks - BLAST  
 first Thursdays of the month, Daughters of Penelope  
 third Fridays of the month - service at the Samaritan House Kitchen  
 every other Saturday, after Vespers - Young Professionals

## EVENTS

### SPIRITUAL ODYSSEY 2010 – MARCH 5-7

We are told that we live in the world, but that we are not of the world. This brings a certain tension to our lives, as we are caught between two worlds: the world around us and the Kingdom of God. The lines that separate these two realms, however, are not always clear. This year’s Spiritual Odyssey lectures will examine several texts from the New Testament in order to see in them people who are caught in precisely the same tension, and who, therefore, provide insight into our contemporary circumstances. Join us :

**Friday, March 5:**

7:00 PM 3rd Salutations to the Theotokos (followed by Potluck Supper and **Fr. Peter Salmas** with Opening Remarks)

**Saturday, March 6:**

9:00 AM Registration with light snack  
 10:00 AM Lecture 1 by **Dr. George Parsenios**  
 Noon Lenten Lunch  
 1:00 PM Lectures 2 and 3 by **Dr. George Parsenios**  
 5:00 PM Vespers

**Sunday, March 7:**

8:45 AM Orthros  
 10:00 AM Divine Liturgy  
 12:00 PM Coffee Hour

**Dr. George L. Parsenios** is Associate Professor of New Testament at Princeton Theological Seminary. He holds degrees in Classics from the University of Cincinnati and Duke University, a Master's of Divinity from the Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, and a PhD from Yale University. His scholarly publications and teaching focus on the interaction between early Christianity and classical literature and culture. He has spoken in Greek Orthodox Churches throughout the country in sermons and public lectures, and lives in Princeton, New Jersey with his wife **Maureen**, and their children, **Nicholas, Julia** and **Constantine**.

For reservations for Dr. Parsenios talks and Lenten luncheon on **Saturday March 6** call the church office at 591-4447 or purchase tickets at the door : adults, \$30.00 and 17 and under \$10.00.

**“These Things Were Written for Our Instruction...”  
 (1 Cor 10:11): The Bible and Orthodox Life**

**Lecture 1 - The Book of Life**

Before we can use the Bible to see how to live as strangers in this world, we have to be honest about the fact that the Bible itself is a strange and foreign land to most of us. It is made even more remote and strange when we hear in the popular press and popular culture – especially at Christmas and Easter – reports and opinions that make it difficult to see this book as the Book of Life. In this lecture, therefore, we will engage some of these popular

images of the Bible, as well as reflect on the place of the Bible in the Orthodox Church, and especially on what it means to speak about the relationship between Scripture and Holy Tradition, and how we understand the Bible not merely as a collection of writings from the past, but as something that was “written for our instruction.”

**Lecture 2 - Between Two Worlds: 1 Corinthians**

The Corinthian Christians struggle to be the Body of Christ while continuing to live each day within the body politic of 1st century Corinth. Paul told them that Christ has made them new, but they live these new lives in the same old city of Corinth. As they navigate between their new lives and old, they are divided on such issues as whether or not they can remain married to non-Christian spouses, or still attend public dinners where they might eat food that had been blessed before a pagan altar, and many similar issues. Basic historical and archaeological insights about life in ancient Corinth will help us to read First Corinthians and understand better what the problems were in this fledgling Church, as well as what Paul prescribes to heal them. But our task is not merely historical. Modern believers have very similar questions and we will surely see that, as Paul speaks to them, he also speaks to us.

**Lecture 3 - World Turned Upside Down: The Acts of the Apostles**

Paul's ministry in the Greek cities of the Roman Empire is described in the Book of Acts. In Thessalonica, those who oppose Paul say that he is “turning the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). It was really the world, however, that was upside down and Paul was working to set people on the right course by announcing the message of salvation. We will look at specific texts from Acts, as well as the social and political realities of the Greek cities of the Roman Empire in order to see more clearly how and why Paul has turned the world upside down.

25th OF MARCH 1821

# GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

AND THE  
ANNUNCIATION OF THE HOLY THEOTOKOS

Holy Cross Greek School  
invites you to celebrate this special day

**Sunday, March 21**

Immediately following Divine Liturgy  
Lenten Luncheon - Program

Adults \$25, Children \$15

Family (Parents with two or more children) \$70.00

For more information, please call Cathy Pereira at (650) 631-9952 or Tonia Spyridi at (650) 941-2845. Tables of 10 will receive assigned seating. Reservations are made in order of payment and form received. Please indicate :

*Name, Phone Number(s), Number of Adults in your party; Number of Children in your party, if you'd like the Special Family Rate (see above), and how much you have enclosed (checks made out to GREEK SCHOOL). Also, if you are coordinating a table of 10, please also list all 10 names.*

and send to :

*Cathy Pereira / 9 Willow Lane / Belmont, CA 94002*

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