



Crossroads

The Monthly Newsletter of the Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross

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At Any Given Moment You Can Learn

by Fr. John

This year I received a wonderful Christmas present – the book - *Tony Bennett in the Studio: A Life of Art & Music*. Though many would know him for his music, this is a collection of Tony's paintings. It also includes his reflections on the various famous people he has met over the years. When once asked about the wisest person he ever knew Bennett mentioned his encounter with the cellist, Pablo Casals, at a café in Puerto Rico. "At any given moment you can learn," Casals told him that night. Tony Bennett now in his 80's and singing perhaps as well as ever understands what Casals was saying. He knows himself that he still has "so much to learn."

As I move into my 22nd year in our parish this is one area that continues to surprise and disappoint me: there often appears to be so little interest within our community for learning more. I say "appears" because maybe I am just not seeing it. While one could argue that it might be nice to offer more classes to our youth or other kinds of bible and adult studies, we find that given what we now offer - our church school teachers are frustrated with the lack of consistent attendance both from our children and our adults. How for example can we hope for our children to be interested in their faith both within high school and certainly beyond if we as parents don't encourage their and our own education when we have the chance? We certainly worry enough, no doubt, our their high school and college educations. But this is not just about our children or whether we even have children at all. This reveals the nature of our own willingness to learn and to know our own faith. It also concerns what we do with our faith, how we live and speak within our families and especially how we speak about God and the Church (and I understand especially now how difficult that might be at times).

"Growing in life, and faith, and spiritual understanding" is not just for parents of school age children. It is not just for young people, or those interested in converting to the Orthodox Faith. It is certainly not just for certain people – the "holy" or "spiritual" ones within our community who are "into" that kind of thing, as if there were others within our parish who are not "spiritual" or are not called to be "holy." It also does not necessarily mean just the understanding and memorization of certain facts and intellectual materials (although some of that will obviously need to take place). It does mean that what we learn needs to be worked out and truly understood in the context of knowing who we are in relationship with God. It has to do with a real experience, made possible by the Holy Spirit, of coming to know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent.

We might not know where or how to begin. We might be afraid or uncertain of the direction we may be led. There may be things we wish we did not learn because it may force us to live in a different sort of way (that is what I think is going on!). It may require more of us than we have ever offered to God before, especially if we do so with no strings or conditions attached: "God, if you do this for me then I'll think of You more."

What we have come to know about God and Jesus Christ, made real to us by the power of the Holy Spirit, has everything to do with our we worship and how we pray generally. Metropolitan Anthony Bloom once wrote,

I think that worship can mean nothing at all to someone for whom there is no object of worship. You cannot teach worship to someone who has not got a sense of the living God; you can teach him to act as if he believed, but it will not be the spontaneous attitude which is real worship....One of the reasons why communal worship or private prayer seems to be so dead or so conventional is that the act of worship, which takes place in the heart communing with God, is too often missing. Every expression, either verbal or in action, may help, but they are only expressions of what is essential, namely, a deep silence of communion.

So, where and how do we begin? I would suggest that it at least must start with the realization and desire to know more and to do so until the end of one's life. We are never too young to begin or too old to stop. We will be providing many opportunities throughout this year for experiencing how the many aspects of faith – coming through worship, the Scriptures, prayer, the Sacraments and realized in Christian living are interwoven and resonate – words and images bouncing back and forth around each other, encouraging deeper and broader meanings. All of these things can reveal to us how it is that truly we can learn “at any given moment.”

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- **COMMUNITY LUNCHEON – SATURDAY January 5:**
- **ST. HELENA'S GUILD MEETING – SUNDAY January 6 AT 9:15.**
- **PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – WEDNESDAY January 23 at 7 PM.**
- **INREACH/OUTREACH MEETING – TUESDAY JANUARY 29 at Forno's in Cherry Hill – 7 PM.**
- **FIRST FRIDAYS – FEBRUARY TEEN GATHERING – FRIDAY FEBRUARY 8: We are looking to go ice skating (on January 4 we went to a Phantoms Hockey game in Philadelphia).**

WEDDING BANNES: Ann Moroz & Andrew Duncan to be married in our parish on Saturday February 9.

FROM KATHY BISAGA:

Dear Holy Cross Family,

I wish to express my deep appreciation to all of you. First and foremost to Fr. John for his many visits and keeping me spiritually healthy. To all of you, my brothers and sisters in Christ, for the many wonderful cards, phone calls, food, visits and prayers you have extended to me during all of my recent surgeries. I have been truly blessed with the many friendships I have made at Holy Cross. Please know that you are all in my thoughts and prayers. I wish all of you a happy healthy New Year.

With love in Christ,
Kathy Bisaga

LILLIAN LANE is also very grateful for the cards and kind expressions of support she has received since the death of her husband, George.

THE CORRECT PHONE NUMBER FOR KATHY & JIM PIERMAN SHOULD BE: 856-845-7656

Adult Education, January, 2008

Beginning at 9:20 in the church

The following topics with related readings from Sweeter than Honey by Peter Bouteneff will be the subject of the Adult Education classes on Sunday mornings in January.

January 6: No class

January 13: Inspiration; the Gospel and its inspirations

Reading: page 88 bottom (“For Orthodox, then, the Old Testament...”) to page 96.

*What is Bouteneff’s view on how to read the Scripture?
What are the two senses of inspiration connected with Scripture?
How does the story continue? Do you have examples of your own?*

January 20: Doing theology

Reading: pages 99 to 106

*How do we receive God?
How does God communicate himself to us?
What is theology and why should we do it?*

January 27: “Checks and balances”

Reading: pages 106 to 115

*How is theology the “Spirit-led pursuit of the truth?”
What role does asceticism play in the “Spirit-led pursuit of the truth?”
What role does conciliarity play in “Spirit-led pursuit of the truth?”*

February 3: No class.

I still have two copies of the book Sweeter than Honey.

PARISH CHRISTMAS CARD: We collected nearly \$1,000.00 in support of our Card! Thanks to **Anastasia Shimchick** for the cover design (based on the photo of Tom Grimes), to **Lee Ann Detwiler** for formatting the card and for getting it printed, and to **Wally Loza** for coordinating the project.

We have cards and envelopes available with blank insides – 10 for \$2.00, while supplies last. See Fr. John

BETTY CASEY’S NEW ADDRESS: 3307 Saxony Dr., Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054 (856) 235-4865

ST. HELENA’S GUILD:

- **ST. NICHOLAS VESPERS** – Many thanks to all of you who provided light refreshments and fellowship. Despite the weather it was a wonderful gathering.
- **COFFEE HOUR - *Back to the Basics*** – We are asking everyone to please keep it simple when you are hosting. We greatly appreciate all that you do- but please stick to the basics. Bagels/bread/cookies/veggies/fruit – it’s just to help us refuel our bodies after the fast- it’s not meant to be a full meal. We don’t want anyone to feel put out and or feel they have to compete. There are a few openings during the year. If you would like to host one of those weeks contact Donna Woodhull, if you cannot find a replacement for your coffee hour. ****Special note:** we have a few parishioners that are highly allergic to nuts, please label items if possible or keep all ingredient labels if purchased. Please don’t be offended if we ask you to remove certain items from the table.** As always your generous donations are greatly appreciated as they help defer the cost of the supplies for coffee hour.
- **ACME GROCERY RECEIPTS** – Remember to save your grocery receipts from **ACME only**. Place them in the little bag on the bulletin board. We do all the leg work and get “cash” back from participating ACME stores. **NEXT MONTHS GUILD MEETING – February 4, at 9:15 am.**

2008 HOUSE BLESSING SCHEDULE

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

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

- January 7-9: Cherry Hill / Maple Shade / Pennsauken / Somerdale
- 10: Haddonfield/Deptford/Collingswood
- 11-12: Marlton/Mt. Laurel
- 13: Medford/Tabernacle
- 14: Cinnaminson / Delran
- 16 Willingboro/Burlington
- 17: Leisuretown
- 20: Elm/Folsom/Atco
- 21: Make up

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

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

TROPARION

When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan
the worship of the Trinity was made manifest.
For the voice of the Father bore witness to You
and called You His beloved Son.
And the Spirit in the form of a dove
confirmed the truthfulness of His word.
O Christ, our God, who have revealed Yourself
and have enlightened the world, glory to You.

**Orthodox Church of the Holy Cross
Parishioner Needs Survey
January 6, 2008**

Dear Brother or Sister in Christ:

The Inreach group at Holy Cross is conducting this survey to assess the needs of our parishioners so we can determine a way to help. We also want to find volunteers who would be able to assist. Please take a few minutes and fill out this form. If you are a person in need and would like help, please let us know by filling out parts A and B. If you are a person who can volunteer to help others, please let us know by filling out parts A and C. When you are finished with this form, please place it in the "Needs Form Box" located in the church vestibule. Please remember that all information given in this form is confidential and will not be shared with others unless we have your permission.

Thank you for your time.

The Holy Cross Inreach Group

Part A: Parishioner Information

Name _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Telephone _____

E-Mail Address _____

Part B: Parishioner Needs

1. Transportation: Example -- I need transportation to and from church, food shopping, doctor's office, etc.
Please describe: _____

2. Personal/Household Needs: Example – I need help with shopping, cleaning, cooking, haircut, etc.
Please describe: _____

3. Fellowship: Example – I would like someone to visit, deliver a meal, someone to pray or read with.
Please describe: _____

4. Other:
Please describe: _____

Part C: Parishioner Willing to Volunteer

1. Transportation: Example – I'm willing to help someone with transportation to church, food shopping, doctor's office, etc.
Please describe: _____

2. Personal/Household Needs: Examples – I'm willing to help someone with shopping, cleaning, cooking, etc.
Please describe: _____

3. Fellowship: Example – I'm willing to visit someone, deliver a meal, pray or read with someone.
Please describe: _____

4. Other:
Please describe: _____

RESPONSIBILITIES for January, 2008

COFFEE HOUR

January 6: Lillian Castley
13: Jessica Sirgusa
20: Bonnie Flanagan
27: Margaret Little

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READERS

January 6: Bob Flanagan
13: Julia Mosser
20: Donald D'Ercole
27: Diana Pasca

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ALTAR SERVERS

January 6: Ethan Detwiler & Paul Giovanni
13: Nicholas Zanghi & David Hamaty
20: Robert Graham & Matthew Brook
27: Paul Clifton & Anatoly Lane
February 3: Stephen Shimchick & Brendan Detwiler

COMMUNION USHERS

January 6: Julia & Lauren Mosser
13: Faye Nugent & Julie Skuby
20: Yvette Abdallah & Christina Zanghi
27: Anastasia Handwerk & Alexandra Plachuta
February 3: Julia & Lauren Mosser