



HOLY TRINITY GREEK ORTHODOX CATHEDRAL

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This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it. (Ps. 118:24, NKJV)

Behold, I make all things new. (Rev. 21:5, NKJV)

Beloved Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I pray this finds you well as we begin the New Year. At times like these—times of transition from things old to things new—we may have a tendency to fixate on those things which were worse rather than those things that were better. For many, this bias towards negativity is a way of life—in fact many argue that it is part of being human. We are more likely to remember the bad, the traumatic, the unpleasant, than the joys of our life. There is a wisdom in this, but that wisdom can easily lead us to folly, or worse, despondency, if we are not cautious. It is important for us to remember that despite the many ways in which we might experience suffering, we have a great hope.

This past year, 2020, started out like any other year, with much promise, and anticipation. Nevertheless, we soon found ourselves engulfed by many sorrows, pains, fears, and uncertainties. By March we found ourselves in the midst of a global pandemic. There were lockdowns. Businesses suffered. We at Holy Trinity, came to the realization that a central aspect of our community's life, the Greek Festival had to be cancelled. More painful than that, we had to close the church to parishioners, limited to watching online—even deprived of the opportunity to celebrate the Resurrection of our Lord together as a church family. What pain of heart we suffered in all of this.

Simultaneously, as the year continued, the already divisive public square was plagued by hostility and anger around issues of race, prejudice, and racism, while the issues that divided us politically seem to further drive us—already socially distant due to the virus—further apart. A difficult election process only served to heighten these divisions. Worst of all, many of us lost loved ones and dear friends.

For lack of something more eloquent to say, this was a hard year for all of us—in ways that only each of us can bear witness to for ourselves, we have suffered.

This perhaps would be the description that we would use of 2020 if we wanted to give priority to our own tendency and bias towards negativity. However, with the eyes of faith, I truly believe that this year was one filled with many blessings. Distant socially, we were confronted with our own complacency to really appreciate, even treasure, our relationships with family. Unable to live our daily routines, we were grateful at the simple things that we were able to do.

Many of us relearned how to talk and how to listen in response to our physical separation. We saw miracles happen and real-life heroes in action! Within months a not one, but three vaccines were produced to fight off this terrible virus. And ultimately, we remembered God, even longed for Him, in ways that perhaps we have never before. We were reminded of what it means to be a true disciple, to love God with all our hearts, minds, souls, and strength; and our neighbor as ourselves. We are able to return again to service, albeit, in a somewhat restricted manner—and we do so with the wisdom that comes from the experience of being deprived of the services for so long. We remain steadfast and hopeful that in the new year we will again be able to celebrate the feasts of our church fully together—to bask in the share joy of the celebration of these holy days as one body.

It is with these triumphs, these miracles, these blessings in mind that I pray we enter the new year 2021. We have a great hope as we enter upon this new chapter of our collective and personal stories. We will be confronted with challenges, pains, fears, uncertainties, and even sufferings, but we have hope in the Lord. For “This is the day the Lord has made; We will rejoice and be glad in it.” (Ps. 118:24, NKJV)

On behalf of the clergy of Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral in Charlotte, I wanted to wish you a blessed, happy, and healthy new year.

In Christ,



Rev. Fr. Vasileios Tsourlis, Dean