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**Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church**  
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**January – March 2018 Newsletter**



### **A Word from Our Council Vice President, George Yurchak**

Wishing y'all the best in 2018. We started the year with the Feast of Saint Basil on January 1 and the feast of Theophany on January 6. We had the Blessing of the Waters and the Blessing of many parishioner's homes. We had a Luncheon to celebrate St Basil as well as Russian Orthodox Christmas on January 7. In this Newsletter we will profile a couple of new parishioners: Constantine Denas, who is at Keesler AFB for school and Margarita Lopareva, who is at Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College on a tennis scholarship from Moscow, Russia. Some of our parishioners supported our sister church and attended St Athanasios's Greek Night in Foley Alabama. Haylie Waldrop, a member of our choir was recognized for her beautiful singing in the choir this past year. The new Parish Council was sworn in by Fr Dean. Natalya Gray had a baby girl, Charlize Marie, who will get baptized in April. Several of our parishioners attended a meeting at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Mobile to meet the Honorable Ms. Alla Ginak, Mayor of Belgorod-Dnestrovskiy, Ukraine who was sharing information about some of the challenges her city and country face with emphasis on orphan girls and human trafficking and ways that we as a church could help. Holy Trinity again participated in the Gulf Coast Historical Society's Cultural Exposition and the Armed Forces Retirement Home Cultural Day. Holy Trinity continues to be involved and donates to several charities. Holy Trinity recognized all the women of our parish as part of the International Woman's Day Celebration by presenting them with roses and a fabulous luncheon in our Fellowship Hall. Several of our parishioners attended the 2018 Lenten Retreat at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral in New Orleans. Some of our parishioners attended the opening of a new Russian Cultural/Community Center in New Orleans. Also, as a result of Holy Trinity's International Christmas Festival we are becoming well known on the coast and this year have been invited to participate in local libraries upcoming Children Summer Programs called Libraries Rock focusing on our ethnic cultures dance and music. Also, the Disability Connection Office contacted me and said Holy Trinity's International Christmas Festival is the largest event of the lower six counties and want to include us and our festival in their Gulf Coast Cultural Heritage Program. We have also been invited to participate in the Biloxi Cemetery Tour that takes place in October.

## Meet Constantine Denas



I am Constantine Denas from Campbell Ohio where I've been a resident there for fourteen years. I am currently 19 years old. I attended Campbell Memorial High School where I played soccer, baseball and track. My father is an Orthodox priest who contacted George Yurchak to let him know I was at Keesler and would like to attend Holy Trinity liturgy. I am currently in the Air Force National Guard and acquiring my training to be a Radio frequency transmission specialist at Keesler AFB. In September of this year, I will attend Youngstown State University to pursue a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. I enjoy the fellowship Holy Trinity has offered me and I will miss the friends I have made here.

## Meet Margarita Lopareva

All my family is from capital of Russia - Moscow! I was born in 1999 year there. Russia is my native country, where I was raised and where I spent all my childhood,



where I did my first step, where I make first smile, where I met my first friend, where I received my first A and D in school :) and where I achieved my first goal! I have a lot of good memories concerning my country! I love Russia very much, and I miss it a lot! I respect the place where I was born because it helped me to be where I am now - getting American education and playing in tennis team for college! It's exciting experience for me!

Since I was 3 years old I was involved in sport and had the goal to be successful sportsman. Since I was child I knew that you must have a goal that you are going to achieve to be successful in life! Tennis was my passion! I loved it from all my soul! I was working a lot during the practice, also I was participating in Russian competition and it took all my time in life! Sometimes I didn't go to school because I had practice 2 times in a day! When I was 15 years old my dream and goal was to go to study in America and I was trying to realize it in my life. It was hard and long way! But I did it despite all barriers in my way. While you have attempt you don't lose!

One way to study to come here was to find tennis scholarship. Sport scholarship is when university or college offers you contract that says that you are going to play sport for college's team and to study at school at the same time. In this way you can study for free because scholarship provides money for your tuition, dorm, food even sport uniform. There is an agency in Russia that helps sportsmen to get scholarship in American universities, so I went there and they helped me to find my college. I made video how I play tennis and put it on YouTube. Some coaches wrote me and offered scholarships. I had different offers from different states, but my choice was Mississippi!

You know, that Russia is very cold country where it is cold from September until May that is why my dream was to live in summer the whole year. So I was trying to find

university in the south. I had a lot of different offers in Kansas, Arkansas, and Michigan and also in Mississippi. Mississippi College realized the best variant to me, near the water and very good climate, tennis team and everything that I wanted!

First of all I had to pass a Toefl (which is English exam) to come to university, I was working hard to pass exam that would let me come here. This exam is very hard to pass even though I've been learning English for 8 years, because it includes specific vocabulary and grammar that I didn't know well at this time! So it took me 2 attempts to successfully pass this hard exam and receive appropriate score. And I did! Then I signed a contract with a tennis coach and then the last steps. In August we bought a ticket to America and I began preparing myself to my long way journey! I've never been to America before so I didn't know what to expect and how it would be for me! I was really nervous because it was my first trip alone so far from home and my family! I was scared a little bit, but I knew that it's going to be good for my future, because there are a lot of opportunities in America that could help me be successful in sport and education! And I knew that I had to have successful career in order to have opportunity to travel the whole world (p.s now my 6 years old cousin wants to come to America to too). I was living with American family during the Christmas break, I was missing home and I found out that there is Orthodox Church in Biloxi. The woman that I was living with found out that our neighbor is George Yurchak, who is president of our church. We contacted him and he invited me to come there. So George and Sheila took me first time to our church. Also they helped me to meet other Russians and took me to New Orleans to meet with Russian community. My dream is to be engaged in charity when I will be able to do this. That's how tennis and English helped me to come here and to make my dream to come true.



*Note: Margarita was just named MGCCC Student Athlete of the Week, March 19-25. She won all of her singles matches, and has not lost a singles match all spring.*

### **St Athanasios Greek Night in Foley Alabama**



George and Sheila Yurchak and Fr Dean and his family attended St Athanasios's Greek Night in Foley Alabama. It was a great evening enjoying fellowship with our sister church, listening to Nick Trivelas and Megan Jensen on the bouzouki and keyboard, dancing the Greek dances, enjoying the delicious cuisine of Grecian food and watching the Kefi Dancers from Birmingham, Alabama perform. During the course of the evening, the Kefi Dancers came and talked with me about performing at our International Christmas Festival on December 8, to which I agreed.

### **Haylie Waldrop Recognized for her Choir Singing**

Haylie Waldrop was recognized for her choir singing and received her award as part of the National Forum of Greek Orthodox Church Musicians. She was absent when the awards were presented in October.

### **2018 Parish Council**

Fr Dean swore in the 2018 Parish Council: Craig Henderson (President), George Yurchak (Vice President), Rodney Bridges (Treasurer), Brandi Donohoe (Secretary) and Cristian Ionescu (Member). Congratulations to the new Parish Council.



### **Natalya Gray has New Baby Girl**

Natalya Gray gave birth to Charlize Marie, a 6 lb 1 oz baby girl in January. Charlize will be baptized by Fr Ezekiel in April.



### **Meeting with Ukrainian Mayor at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church**

George and Sheila Yurchak, Karen Komenko and Nataliya Petrovska were invited by Fr Elias to attend a meeting with the Honorable Alla Ginak, Mayor of Belgorad-Dnestrovskiy, Ukraine. She shared information about some of the problems and challenges her city and Ukraine face, particularly with regard to orphan girls and human trafficking and ways that our churches could help. This was followed up at a separate Lenten dinner at Annunciation with a presentation by Roads of Hope and Emanuel House regarding the orphan girls and

human trafficking problem. Sometime after Pascha, Holy Trinity/Ladies of Agape will be having Roads of Hope/Emanuel House come and give a presentation on ways that these orphan girls can be helped in Ukraine, Moldova and Romania by our church (just like Annunciation) or by interested parishioners from our church.



### **Gulf Coast Historical Society Cultural Exposition**

Holy Trinity again participated in the Gulf Coast Historical Society Cultural Exposition held at the Biloxi Civic Center. We set up our ethnic tables to showcase our church, Greek, Russian, Ukrainian and Romanian ethnic cultures. Our Ukrainian and Greek dance groups put on a spirited dance display of ethnic folk dances. We were well represented by our parishioners in helping with the ethnic displays. I received many laudatory comments on our dancers as they were the hit of the Exposition.





## Armed Forces Retirement Home Cultural Day

At the request of the Armed Forces Retirement Home (AFRH), Holy Trinity was asked to perform our Ukrainian and Greek folk dances and have Russian, Ukrainian, Romanian and Greek ethnic table displays. The residents of the AFRH really appreciate Holy Trinity and Holy Trinity appreciates AFRH. They come to so many of our events/activities.



## **Holy Trinity Participates in Several Charities**

Holy Trinity has continued to become involved with several charities. We support “Feed the Hungry” on the Mississippi Gulf Coast where we give monetary donations, collect food to give to special food kitchens and bags of love (we pass out to people we see in need on the streets and those that come to Holy Trinity’s doors). Some Holy Trinity people bought our remaining International Christmas Festival foods and pastries (approximately \$1500) which were then donated in Holy Trinity’s name to First Responders on the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Holy Trinity youth participated in Souper Bowl Sunday in February and took a monetary collection which they donated to the “Kids-Make-A-Wish Program” for terminally ill kids who have a wish they would like to fulfill. We also donated to Give Kids the World which supports terminally ill kids whose sole wish is to visit Disney World in Florida and provides a week of enjoyment for them with their parents. We also support the Diakonia Retreat Center through the Guardian Angel Program and the International Seaman Center helping Orthodox seamen who are away from home. We helped a fellow Orthodox man who recently got out of the hospital after a heart attack and contacted Holy Trinity, asking if we could purchase a bus ticket for him to visit his mother in Texas who was in hospice. He was referred to us from a North Carolina Orthodox Church.

## **International Woman’s Day, March 8**

Holy Trinity recognized all the women of our parish as part of the International Woman’s Day Celebration by giving them roses and treating them to a wonderful Lenten luncheon in our Fellowship Hall. They were honored for their support to Holy Trinity, their community, their country and most importantly their family.

## **2018 Lenten Retreat in New Orleans**

Cristian and Meri Ionescu, Natalia and Nicolai Percy, Robert Brouillette, Karen Kohl and Akaterina Vamvakas attended the 2018 Lenten Retreat at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral in New Orleans. Fr Elias Stevens from Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Mobile was the guest speaker on “The Orthodox Family: Cultivating your Relationship with Christ in a Modern World.”





### **Opening of New Russian Cultural/Community Center**

George and Sheila Yurchak, Margarita Lopareva, Jerry Strickland and Marina Lucangeli attended the opening of a new Russian Cultural/Community Center in New Orleans.



### **Holy Trinity Becoming Well Known on the Gulf Coast**

As a result of Holy Trinity's International Christmas Festival we are becoming well known on the coast and this year have been invited to participate in local libraries upcoming Children Summer Programs called Libraries Rock focusing on our ethnic cultures dance and music. Also, the Disability Connection Office contacted me and said Holy Trinity's International Christmas Festival is the largest event of the lower six counties and want to include us and our festival in their Gulf Coast Cultural Heritage Program. We have also been invited to participate in the Biloxi Cemetery Tour that takes place in October.

### **“Do This in Remembrance of Me”**

The most sacred act of the Christian faith is the Lord's Last Supper. For over 2,000 years the Church has been faithful to the command of Christ at His Last earthly meal: “Do this in remembrance of Me.” This act of taking bread, blessing and breaking it, then partaking of it, and of the cup of wine, consuming them as the Body of Christ, has been the mark of believing Christians since the Mystical Supper.

Down through the centuries the Church has embellished this simple act with a rich mantle of prayer, praise and hymn. Today, the Divine Liturgy represents the crowning act of worship, the splendor of the Church's ritual.

In Communion we remember the Lord. We not only recall the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ, but we think of His ministry. And we apply them to our own daily living, remembering that we are His disciples in this generation.

In Communion we receive the Lord. Jesus once said that whoever partakes of his Body and Blood “abides in Me, and I in him.” Here we come into intimate union with Christ. No wonder the faithful through the centuries with “faith and love” have come to the Lord's Table to be fed with the Bread of Life.

--The Orthodox Weekly Bulletin

