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## July 2018 Newsletter

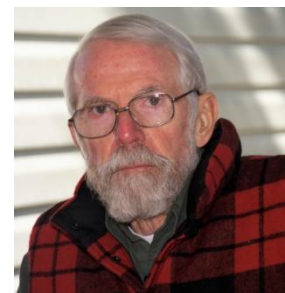
### **A Word from our Vice-President George Yurchak**

It has been a great summer so far. Holy Trinity's International Christmas Festival has given Holy Trinity recognition up and down the coast. John Collins church tours at the festival are instrumental in bringing people back to attend an Orthodox service on Sunday to see what Orthodoxy is about and some come back and become Orthodox. Also, several ask to get Holy Trinity Bulletins and Newsletters, email or just stopping by the church to pick one up. In this newsletter, we will highlight Mike Bodisch on "His Journey to Orthodoxy" as we see more and more converts at Holy Trinity. Fr Dean blessed Holy Trinity's new Children/Cry Room. Each year in July Holy Trinity supports "Scoops for Hope" during National Ice Cream Month. We provide ice cream at our Fellowship Hour each Sunday in July and ask parishioners to make a donation which goes to Kids-Make-A-Wish Program for kids that have terminal illnesses and want to make a wish come true. George Yurchak was interviewed at Holy Trinity by Walt Grayson for the Disability Connection's Gulf Coast Heritage "Culture" Program. We were selected because our International Christmas Festival is the biggest ethnic cultural event of the lower six coastal counties. Again, Holy Trinity helped the Gulfport Public Library with their Summer Program – theme Libraries Rock – dedicated to music and dance. We showcased our ethnic dancing (Greek and Ukrainian), music (Scottish, Irish), song (Ukrainian), as well as displaying items from Greece, Russia and Romania. All the kids enjoyed our program of ethnic culture and we enjoyed doing it. Christopher Van Alstyne and Elen Ifantis had their baby girl Athena Victory Van Alstyne baptized by Fr Dean.

### **My Journey to Orthodox y– Mike Bodisch**

I was raised in and around the Roman Catholic Church. My father was career military and an agnostic. He seldom attended church even though his parents were Catholic. My mother was also Catholic and did her best to guide us. After high school I joined the military and made it a career. Most of my life I attended services at a military chapel or whatever church was convenient. I was a "part time" Christian.

After living in Greece for a number of years I developed a close friendship with George Vasilakis, a Greek American living there. He is a former deacon of the Greek Orthodox Church in Cleveland. We spent many hours drinking ouzo and debating all



aspects of life. George later became my daughter Korina's God Father. I was also blessed with the opportunity to participate in a pilgrimage to Mount Atos. It moved me deeply.

When Korina was young we spent a month with George in Greece. She celebrated her tenth birthday there. Of course, we attended church with him. After returning to America, I decided to become a full time Christian. We went to churches of many denominations. I asked many priests and ministers what the purpose of the church was. The only satisfactory answer came from Father Nabil Fino of Holy Trinity in Biloxi. He said: "Why the purpose of the church is to bring you closer to Christ, of course." My decision was made.

### **Holy Trinity's Children/Cry Room is Blessed**

The Ladies of Agape President, Nancy Malek, saw her Children's/Cry Room Project finally come to fruition. The cry room will help mothers with babies and infant children to sit in the cry room and observe and hear Divine Liturgy through the new window and sound system. Fr Dean blessed the cry room and several parishioners take advantage of this room.

### **"Scoops of Hope" Program**



Holy Trinity continued with its "Scoops of Hope" Program in conjunction with the National Ice Cream Month in July. We served ice cream during our Fellowship Hour after each Divine Liturgy during the month of July and asked Holy Trinity parishioners to donate to this program. All donations go to a charity that supports terminally ill children. That charity is Kids-Make-A-Wish Foundation. These kids come and help us at our International Christmas Festival and work with our kids at various booths our kids run. Their organization said their kids really enjoy coming and helping and being with our youth at the International Christmas Festival. They also said that through Holy Trinity's generosity that "Make-A-Wish" works to make sure children experience the hope, strength and joy of a wish. They appreciate all that we do through our "Scoops of Hope" Ice Cream Program to help them grant wishes that leave a lasting and positive impact on our Mississippi children.

### **Disability Connection's Gulf Coast Heritage Culture Tour Program**

Holy Trinity was called by the Disability Connection Office because they heard we had the biggest ethnic cultural event of the lower six Gulf Coast counties – the International Christmas Festival. They want to promote the quality of life of the local community – to present, preserve, promote and celebrate the diverse cultural, ethnic heritage by expanding the knowledge and appreciation of the area. They want to study the cultural history and traditions that make up the coast: including the churches, festivals that celebrate their heritage and foods that continue those traditions. They asked me to send several pictures of our International Christmas Festival along with the ethnic pastries and foods.

Walt Grayson of the Mississippi Roads Magazine came and filmed/interviewed George Yurchak, Parish Council Vice President and International Christmas Festival Chairman. George Yurchak gave a history of Holy Trinity's 50 years on the coast, on Orthodoxy and why people are converting and coming to Holy Trinity, the icons, the International Christmas Festival, the Greeks, the Russians, Ukrainians, Romanians and so on.

Walt Grayson spent time taking pictures of the outside and especially the inside of Holy Trinity. They were planning to return for our festival in December and I said I would give them a copy of our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Commemorative Album.



### Holy Trinity Rocks for Local Libraries



Holy Trinity members put on another spectacular dance, song, music and table display for the Mississippi Gulf Coast Libraries Summer Program for the kids. The theme was "Libraries Rock" with emphasis on dance and music. This performance concludes the libraries summer youth program.



Our Greek and Ukrainian dancers performed a variety of ethnic folk dances. George and Sheila Yurchak performed the Ukrainian folk dance. The Gulf Coast Hellenic Dancers Steve and CoCo Collins, Soula Kiessling, Chrisanthi Beach and Kristen Beddoe performed three Greek folk dances with the kids totally wanting to learn some of the Greek dances. Nataliya Molsbee performed a Ukrainian song for them and then they wanted to hear her sing another song which she did (a children's song in English). Meri Ionescu worked the Romanian display table, George Contas the Greek table and Karen Komenko and Robert Brouillette the Russian/Ukrainian table. The kids enjoyed looking and seeing all the items, the boys trying on the hats and the girls the coin



scarves. They kids also enjoyed Steve and CoCo Collins and their friend playing the bagpipes, flute, harp, drum and tambourine, with music from Scotland and Ireland. We all had a good time participating in the program.







### **Summer Library Program a Success for Holy Trinity**

At this last performance there was an Elementary School teacher with her kids in attendance. She was so impressed she asked George Yurchak to take our performance into the public school system. As of now she is working the approval for us to come to Bayou View Elementary to perform for 200 kids in September. Additionally, from seeing George Yurchak's Facebook postings on our Summer Library Program he was asked if we could do something like this in New Orleans. And, Sheila and George Yurchak have been asked to do their Ukrainian dance at "Yarmarka 2018", a Slavic Festival at Annunciation Greek Orthodox Church in Mobile, Alabama on September 8. Holy Trinity is becoming known up and down the coast through our ethnic cultural performances.

### **Elen Ifantis' Daughter Baptized**

Christopher Van Alstyne and Elen Ifantis had their baby daughter, Athena Victory Van Alstyne, baptized into the Orthodox faith by Fr Dean on July 22.



*God Bless America!*



*Independence Day!*