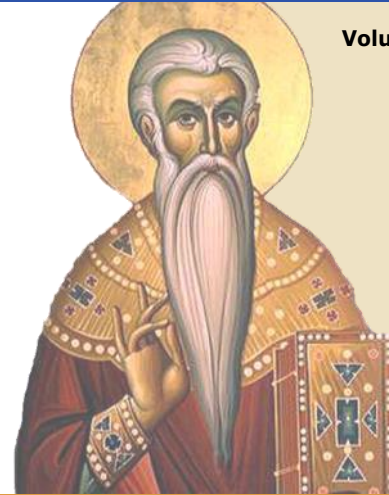


in Touch

Volume 21, Issue 4

April 2013



The Official Publication of St. Haralambos Greek Orthodox Church

Rummage

Sale • 2

**The Blessings of
God's Good Gifts • 3**

**Sunday Evening
Lenten Services • 4**

**Family
Fellowship • 8**

**Youth
Group • 11**



The Beginning of the
Passion Week of our Lord Jesus Christ
Sunday, April 28



Lord, You know that men are flesh and blood; forgive them their sins and pour out Your blessing on all. — St. Haralambos



St. Haralambos
Church
7950 W Pinnacle
Peak Road
Peoria, Az. 85383
623-486-8665

Saturday
April 6, 2013
8am — 2pm

Refreshments Will Be Available

Together with an
Art Show!





The Blessings of God's Good Gifts

The ultimate expression of rebelling against God is not the conscious decision to remove Him from our lives, but rather the intentional distortion of His many gifts and blessings. It's the old game of Man attempting to play God, the creation trying to improve upon the work of the Creator. Sad to say, a healthy percentage of our society has fallen for this corrupting deception.

Take, for example, human sexuality; a gift of God for the perpetuation of our race, and a means of expressing physical intimacy between husband and wife. It is meant for our own good, from our Creator who truly knows what is good for us, but has been perverted into something for self-gratification. If we do not intend to keep God's gifts as they were originally intended, and choose instead to play God (to the best of their extremely limited capability), the end result will always be rooted in self-gratification and egotism.

It's the same with alcohol, drink to enjoy, in moderation, at festive occasions. Remove God's boundaries and replace them with man's bottomless desire for self-gratification and the result is drunkenness, violence, disease and the destruction of countless relationships.

Finally, because we are in the period of Great Lent, take the example of fasting, another gift from God for our benefit, both spiritually and physically. How have we distorted fasting? Not by refusing to fast, but by making our fast a means of showing others how it's done, and how holy we are.

Who cares how you fast? It should be kept only between you and God. Are you worried (not in a caring way, but in a nosy way) about your brother or sister's ability to keep the fast? Are you shocked to see someone eating meat or dairy or eggs during the fast? You've then fallen to the sin of judging.

Fasting is truly beneficial for us – provided we know and maintain God's intention for fasting.

Does our Lord expect us to fast? St. Matthew the Apostle and Evangelist gives us the answer when he recorded the words of Christ spoken at the "Sermon on the Mount." The Lord said, "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your

Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly." (Matt. 6:16-18)

Our Lord speaks as though fasting is understood as an accepted religious practice. His point is not about whether or not to fast, but rather the state of our heart when fasting. If we are more concerned about showing others that we are fasting, we've lost it's meaning completely.

Fasting is, first and foremost, about growing closer to God. It takes work, it takes a decision, it takes our desire. But the decision to fast during Lent should not be practiced apart from other spiritually beneficial tools. How can we expect to grow closer to God without prayer, without having love and forgiveness in our heart, without asking for God's guidance and help?

All of God's gifts are still good and holy, and for our benefit. The fact that some have distorted them into something for their own gratification and egotism does not mean that they are no longer of any benefit for the rest of us.

But the decision to fast during Lent should not be practiced apart from other spiritually beneficial tools.

(Continued on page 5)



**St. Haralambos
Greek Orthodox
Church**

Rev. Michael Pallad

www.stharalambos.org

Sunday Worship

Matins: 8:45 a.m.
Divine Liturgy: 10 a.m.

Office

623-486-8665
7950 W. Pinnacle Peak Rd., Peoria, AZ 85383
Office@StHaralambosAZ.com
FrMichael@StHaralambosAZ.com
Hours
Monday - Friday 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Parish Council

Roy Christian
David Durgam
Dennis Georgen
Timothy Harvey
Dean Milonas
Russel Skocypec

Tony Panousopoulos
Peter Vardalos
Dorothy Vordos
Lee Vordos
Ken Wrona
Russell Zook

A Lesson Learned at Weight Watchers

By Dennis Georgen, Parish Council President

A few weeks ago, members of our Parish Council addressed the Congregation and spoke of what St. Haralambos Church meant to them and why they choose to be members of our Parish. I was truly humbled by the words of my fellow Council Members.

During my talk, I shared a story about a lesson I learned at a recent Weight Watchers meeting. One of the women attending that morning shared how she had lost over 50 lbs. in the past year. We all applauded her accomplishment!

The meeting leader then pointed out that this woman had not missed one single weekly meeting during the past year. Congratulations were again offered for her dedication to achieving her personal wellness goals.

When asked, this woman shared the importance of staying focused. She shared how important regular attendance at a Weight Watchers meeting was in helping her to avoid temptation and to stay focused on her goal.

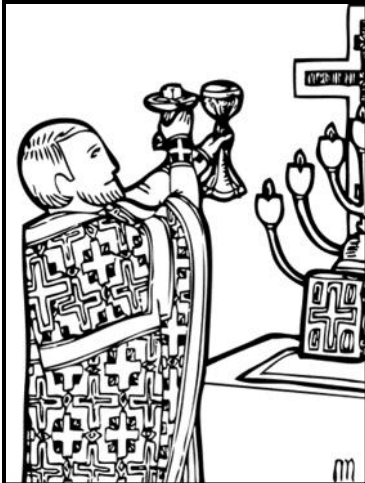
Imagine that.

I sincerely believe in the importance of Wellness, not only personally, but also as a Human Resources professional. However, I was stunned that someone could prioritize weight loss to the point of not missing one single Saturday morning meeting in over a year! There are so many other activities and distractions.

How much more important is our Salvation? How much more important is our spiritual well-being? This woman believed that she needed the support of her Weight Watchers group and the meeting leader's encouragement so she would stay the course!

Is life in general less difficult than choosing to lose weight? Can any of us truly say that we can avoid sin, grow in our faith, and achieve salvation on our own without regularly attending services?

Seems to me that it is easier to navigate the challenges of life when we make time to encounter Christ every week. And, yes, it also helps to attend meetings if you want to lose weight.



Lenten Vespers Services

A reminder that everyone is invited and encouraged to attend the Sunday Vespers hosted by various Orthodox parishes.

The Third Sunday of Lent

April 7, 2013

St. Sava Serbian Orthodox Church
4436 E. McKinley St., Phoenix
602-275-7360

The Fourth Sunday of Lent

April 14, 2013

Ss. Peter & Paul Orthodox Church
1614 E. Monte Vista Rd., Phoenix
602-253-9515

The Fifth Sunday of Lent

April 21, 2013

Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Cathedral
1973 E Maryland Ave., Phoenix
602-264-7863

All Vespers Services Begin at 6pm

More Info: www.AZOrthodox.org

Youth Group

By Lindsay Vardalos

Thank you to everyone who donated to our Pancake Breakfast! Your donations will help up have a great Holy Friday Retreat.

Our Youth Group met on Mar. 9 and had a great time! The kids learned about Lent and how we add things during Lent (prayer, attending church more) as well as remove things during Lent (certain foods as well as anything that moves you farther from God). Father also spoke with the kids and showed them the tomb and epitaphios and explained in wonderful detail what everything represents. The kids asked amazing questions and really loved learning up-close. Our kids also colored our Pascha card and did a wonderful job! Congratulations to Eva Vardalos and Anna Kurilova—your colorings have been chosen for this year's card! Youth Group will meet next on Apr. 13 from 4 pm-7 pm

in the Social Hall. We will have a small lesson, activity and a Lenten potluck dinner. Everyone is welcome, even if you've never attended.

Plan to join us for our 3rd annual Holy Friday Retreat on Friday, May 3 from 10:30 am-2:30 pm. Please sign-up as soon as possible for planning purposes. Also, volunteers are needed for helping at the various stations, making lunch, and much more. Please see Lindsay Vardalos if you would like to volunteer.

Also, donations are greatly needed for our Holy Friday Retreat. We need the following:

- Costco gift card for groceries
- Spring cookie cutters
- Salt dough
- Blue cardstock
- Paper plates, napkins and cups
- Michael's gift card for supplies

Greek Festival

By Pam Lemons,
Festival Chairman

Planning is underway for the Greek Festival and once again we have the opportunity to share the Greek food, dance and culture with our friends, neighbors and surrounding communities. As the major fundraiser for our Church, the involvement of our entire parish is key to our success. Volunteers are needed not just during the Festival weekend, but during the planning stages as well. You don't have to be a booth chairman to be involved. If you are interested in helping in the pre-Festival planning/preparation or during the Festival, please let me know. More information on the Festival activities will be available in the next InTouch. OPA!



Clergy Column

(Continued from page 3)

Human sexuality, expressed within God's boundaries, remains a gift between a husband and wife to strengthen their relationship and makes possible the gift of creating new life. Medical studies over decades and throughout various countries have described the benefits of alcohol in moderation. Fasting, as intended by God, as practiced by our Lord, Jesus Christ, and as prescribed by the Orthodox Church, is still a gift meant to help us grow closer to

God not by denying our bodies necessary nutrition, but by cutting back on our excess desire for physical gratification.

God always desires what is best for us. The teachings of Christ, handed down to the apostles and saints, and maintained in the Orthodox Christian Church help us realize, when practiced as originally intended, that those teachings provide a way of life that is blessed by God, and beneficial to our souls.

Name Days

Many years/*Chronia Polla* to those named after the following saints:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| St. Mary (of Egypt) (1st) | St. George (23rd) |
| St. Joseph (the Hymnographer) (3rd) | St. Mark (25th) |
| St. Alexandra (21st) | Sts. Jason and Sosipater (29th) |

Birthdays



Paula Sallas (4)
Chris Fredericksen (7)
Stefanos Macrides (12)
Barbara Savaidis (12)
Dennis Germenis (14)
Paula Farr (15)
Lee Vordos (16)
Steve Harrington (17)
Dorothy Vordos (17)
Kimon Ayan (18)
Chrissy King (18)
Jackson Savoy (18)
Jeff Farr (20)
David Rodriguez (20)
Georgia Trakas (20)
Katelyn Pritchard (22)
Melanie Singleton (22)
Roy Christian (28)
Katherine Janofsky (28)
Eve Devolites (30)
Elisabeth Rodriguez (30)

If you don't see your name, or those of family members, and would like to be included on the monthly birthday listing, please send the information to the church office.

St. Christopher's Bookstore

Unseen Warfare edited by Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain and revised by Theophan the Recluse

This book is a spiritual classic but it is not for the faint-hearted. Surrender may occur while reading it as one is stripped of any notion of self-empowerment.

Unseen Warfare is a translation of the original work titled **Spiritual Combat** by Lorenzo Scupoli which was first published in 1589. Scupoli's work was edited and translated in Greek by the monk Nicodemus and then translated again in Russian by Bishop Theophan the Recluse.

The book writes of "invisible ... foes, which are the varied passions and lusts of the flesh, and of the evil demons who hate men and never cease to fight against [them]....This book teaches that the warriors who take part in this unseen war are all who are Christians, and their commander is our Lord Jesus Christ....the arena, the field of battle, the site where the fight actually takes place is our own heart....The time of battle is our whole life."

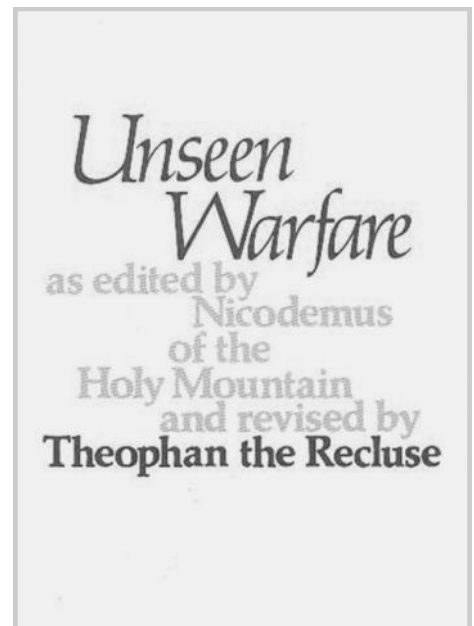
The author believes that "No man can escape this warfare, either in life or death." This statement alone can create despair causing one to ask why has God created such a state of constant warfare? Scupoli has many answers for this, one of which is "so that we should get accustomed to warfare during life and so not fear it in the hour of death."

Weapons for this invisible battle are many, the greatest of which is prayer. The author describes "real prayer" and how to develop it. He warns that until a person learns to pray from the heart he will constantly be in torment. Scupoli also offers a process to battle the passions and encourages us to recognize which of our

core passions to fight. Following are some of the recurring themes throughout the book:

- Never rely on yourself, trust in God alone.
- We battle three enemies our entire life: the flesh, the world and the devil.
- The enemy passions are self-love, self-indulgence and self-pity.
- Constantly realize your nothingness and avoid all excesses.
- Do nothing but that which pleases God.

Although difficult to take in, this reading is incredibly powerful and is a teaching in spiritual perfection-of becoming a Christian warrior. It is for those who are dedicated toward courageous suffering and pureness, seeking ultimate joy in nearness to God.



Philoptochos

By Reni Milonas, President

As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord. Joshua 24:15

As we continue our Lenten Journey, I pray everyone is having a blessed and humbling Great Lent. The Philoptochos invites you to join in the many activities planned for the month of April and for Holy Week.

Wednesday Pre-Sanctified Liturgies: Due to fasting after 12 pm to prepare for Holy Communion on 4/3, 4/10, 4/17, and 4/24, The Philoptochos will be hosting a Lenten dinner following the Pre-Sanctified Liturgy.

Apr. 6: St. Haralambos will be having a rummage sale. The Philoptochos will sell popcorn, soda, and water to benefit the Philoptochos Ministries.

Palm Sunday - Apr. 28: The Philoptochos will host The Palm Sunday Fish Dinner; \$12 for adults and \$6 for children 12 and under. Reservations will be taken during coffee hour and are needed by Apr. 14.

Holy Friday - May 1: We need volunteers to decorate the Epitaphios, and

provide red dyed eggs for our Resurrection Service.

Pascha Midnight Service - May 2: The Philoptochos will host a reception following the Divine Liturgy celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

April National Commitments

- **Sisterhood of St. Basil Academy** (Amount determined by chapter.) Provides for the physical needs of the children of St. Basil Academy as well as graduation costs, awards, and gifts.
- **International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC)** (Amount determined by chapter.) Provides food, shelter, and economic self-sufficiency to those in need.

Philoptochos membership is due

- National dues: \$15
- Metropolis dues: \$10
- St. Anna's dues: \$10
(Dues are payable in one check for \$35 written to the St. Anna's Philoptochos.)

**Next meeting is Apr. 1 at 7 pm
Kali Sarakosti! Have a good Lent!**



Sunday School

By Martha Stithem, Sunday School Director & Teacher

It's always a blessing to have our youth in attendance for both Divine Liturgy and Sunday School. Being diligent in coming to church each week may be difficult at times, but in doing so, we parents set the right example for our children by showing that we value our Orthodox faith and church. To prepare for the Sunday Gospel

Readings, families can read the following bible verses together in April:

- Sundays of Lent
- 3rd Sunday of Lent – Veneration of the Holy Cross (Mark 8:34-9:1)
- 4th Sunday of Lent – Sunday of the Ladder of Divine Ascent (Mark 9:17-31)
- 5th Sunday of Lent – Sunday of St. Mary of Egypt (Mark 10:32-45)
- Palm Sunday (John 12:1-18)

Also, for everyone who wants to participate, the Archdiocese Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministries continues to offer a Lenten blog, "40 Days: A Journey to Pascha" (www.orthodoxyouthministry.blogspot.com).

ORGANIZATIONS

Parking Lot Maintenance Required

As reported in last month's issue of In-Touch, we need to raise \$5,000 before we can begin needed maintenance of our parking areas.

We have been in our new Church home for three years, and up to now, we have focused on making improvements to our property. Some of these improvements include installing lighting at the east entrance and over parking areas, equipping the kitchen and installing the cooler and freezer, and adding trees in front of the building. It is now time for us to seriously consider the maintenance and upkeep required to keep our property beautiful.

Your Parish Council has developed a general maintenance schedule, as well as identified a list of longer term maintenance priorities. We will soon announce quarterly

maintenance days when more routine work will be scheduled, and everyone interested in assisting will be invited to help.

This year's capital maintenance priority is re-sealing our parking areas. It is important that this work is done this year. Unlike concrete, asphalt deteriorates over time. If not periodically re-sealed, spidering begins and cracks develop, which, if not addressed, result in pocketing and crumbling of the surface. Where re-sealing is a fairly minor expense, repairing, repaving, and/or replacing large asphalt surfaces becomes quite expensive.

In order to reseal and re-stripe our parking lot, we must raise a minimum of \$5,000 before proceeding with the work. Please consider making a specified donation to assist with this work. If you have any questions, please see one of your Parish Council Members or speak with Fr. Michael.



Family Fellowship Dinner

Everyone is invited on Saturday, Apr. 20 at 5pm to the Family Fellowship Dinner. This is a family fun night that includes dinner (Soup and Salad, roll, beverage and dessert), music, games and prizes! Advance ticket sales only,

no tickets sold at the door! Adults: \$10; Children 12 and under: \$5. Deadline to purchase tickets is Sunday, Apr. 14. Tickets available during Coffee Hour on Sundays or by returning the form below (must be received by Tuesday, Apr. 16)

Family Fellowship Dinner Saturday, April 20, 5pm

Name _____ Phone _____

Number Attending:

_____ Adults: \$10 _____ Children 12 and under: \$5

_____ Total Amount Enclosed (Please make checks payable to St. Haralambos Church)

Choice of Soup: _____ Fire Roasted Tomato _____ Lentil

Must be received by Tuesday, April 16, 2013

APRIL 2013

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 7:00pm Philoptochos	2 7:00pm Compline Service Film on Life of St. Paul 7:30pm Men's Choir	3 6:00pm Pre-Sanctified Divine Liturgy Followed by Lenten Dinner	4 10:30am Lenten Class 7:00pm Choir	5 7:00pm Akathist Hymn (3rd stanza)	6 8:00am Rummage Sale
7 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy 3rd Sunday of Lent 2:00pm Young Adult Lenten Class 6:00pm Lenten Vespers St. Sava	8 7:00pm Parish Council	9 7:00pm Compline Service Film on Life of St. Nicholas 7:30pm Men's Choir	10 6:00pm Pre-Sanctified Divine Liturgy Followed by Lenten Dinner	11 10:30am Lenten Class 7:00pm Choir	12 7:00pm Akathist Hymn (4th stanza)	13 4:00pm Youth Group Lenten Potluck
14 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy 4th Sunday of Lent Spring General Assembly 2:00pm Young Adult Lenten Class 6:00pm Lenten Vespers Sts. Peter & Paul	15	16 7:00pm Compline Service Film on Life of St. Athanasios 7:30pm Men's Choir	17 6:00pm Pre-Sanctified Divine Liturgy Followed by Lenten Dinner	18 10:30am Lenten Class 7:00pm Choir	19 7:00pm Akathist Hymn (complete)	20 5:00pm Family Fellowship Dinner
21 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy 5th Sunday of Lent IOCC Offering Tray 2:00pm Young Adult Lenten Class 6:00pm Lenten Vespers Holy Trinity Cathedral	22 7:00pm Executive Council	23 7:00pm Compline Service Film on Life of St. John Chrysostom 7:30pm Men's Choir	24 6:00pm Pre-Sanctified Divine Liturgy Followed by Lenten Dinner	25 10:30am Lenten Class 7:00pm Choir	26	27 9:00am Divine Liturgy Saturday of Lazarus 11:00am Lenten Breakfast Palm Crosses
28 8:45am Matins 10:00am Divine Liturgy Palm Sunday Fish Luncheon 6:00pm Christ the Bridegroom Service	29 Holy Monday 7:00pm Christ the Bridegroom Service	30 Holy Tuesday 7:00pm Christ the Bridegroom Service				

YOUTH GROUP

Holy Friday Youth Retreat

Friday, May 3 - 10:30 am to 2:30 pm

Games, Lessons, Activities and Lunch

Please fill out the following registration form and return it to the church office by April 28.

Letters excusing students from school for this religious holiday are available at the church office.

Holy Friday Youth Retreat Registration Form

Child's Name	Age	Food Allergies
		yes no
		yes no
		yes no
		yes no

Are you able to help at the retreat? Yes ___ No ___

Community Pascha Card

The time has come again for our annual Youth Group Community Pascha Card.

The proceeds of the card will go to benefit our Youth Group Holy Friday Retreat, which will be held on May 3 from 10:30pm to 2:30pm.

If you would like to add your name to the card and support the youth group, please fill out the form below and return it to the church office no later than Apr. 15.

The cost is \$10 per family.



Community Pascha Card

Please include my family's name in this year's Community Pascha Card.

Enclosed is my \$10.00 payment.

_____ name as you would like it to appear on the card

The Youth Group THANKS YOU for your support!