Dear Parishioners,

We talked in the last *Trophybearer* about the current state of our parish, and the importance of four fundamental points in our Christian life, if we wish to sustain the dedication of our children to our Faith and heritage and to secure the future of our parish community. Those four points are 1) Daily Family Prayer in the home, 2) Weekly & Timely attendance in the Divine Services, 3) Regular participation in the age-based ministries of the Church (HOPE/JOY, GOYA, OPA, YA, etc), especially once a month at Saturday Vespers, and 4) Some additional participation in the life of the community, whether it be in the choir or at the chant stand, in the Greek School, serving in the Altar Group, attending the weekly Bible Study, etc.

These are things that take time and commitment from us - and this becomes a challenge, because our time and commitment are in high demand in this world of ours. It is difficult to find a balance that leaves room for the Church, especially because every other commitment we have (whether work, or school, or sports) considers itself to be the most important thing, and whatever grudging respect they may give to one another, they do not (usually) recognize that Church is a priority as well. There is a common assumption that it’s not a big deal if we miss Sunday services, or arrive late, or leave early, in order to fulfill the “obligation” we have to the firm, or the school, or the team. This puts us in the center of a conflict that cannot be resolved, but all too often, we accept their idea of what is important, and let the Church slide into the bottom slot on the priority list.

It is tempting to criticize this trend, to pass judgment on those who arrive late, or leave early, to point out that it was not always this way, and there is no reason for things to have changed - but I do not think this is the right response. For one thing has changed, very much indeed. In decades past, the society at large granted a value and a respect to Sunday morning and the worship conducted at that time. Sports games, or work, or school, would never be scheduled on Sunday, and certainly not Sunday morning. But that respect is now long gone, and since it is gone, the truth is that every family that still attends Church *at all* is swimming upstream, holding a line that all too many have simply abandoned. That effort is a good, and blessed, and beautiful thing, and it needs to be recognized and honored for the struggle that it is.

That said, we need to consider whether the line we have chosen to hold is indeed the right line, and whether we are doing all that we can and should to...
support our families in this vital struggle. And what I have observed about our community is that the place we have chosen to make our stand is Sunday School - for, however empty the Church may be at 10 am, or even 10:30, by the time Sunday School is about to begin, the Church is full.

Sunday School is, I think, the right place to make our stand. It is the educational ministry of the Church, that which teaches our young people what it is to be Greek Orthodox Christians, that which is designed to change and transform hearts and minds and priorities, and to transmit to the next generation the love for the Lord and His Church that will sustain them as the burden of this struggle passes to them.

The problem is that Sunday School is more than the classroom time after Holy Communion. In fact, it is impossible for that classroom time to even begin to accomplish what needs to be accomplished. So as we discuss the struggle facing our families, and what the Church can do to support and facilitate that struggle, we need to be clear about what Sunday School at St. George actually is.

There are five parts to it. It begins with 1) the Sunday Scripture readings, and 2) the Children’s Sermon, it includes 3) participation in the Anaphora (the Consecration of the Gifts) and 4) Holy Communion, and concludes with 5) the Classroom Time upstairs. These five pieces are a cohesive whole - anything less than all five of them is NOT Sunday School.

As we continue, then, past Christmas and into the New Year, we need to consider what we can do to ensure that all of our young people are participating fully in our parish’s Sunday School program. Part of this will have to come from the parents - and part of it, I think, needs to come from the Church itself.

The part that has to come from the parents is a shift in how we feel about Church. Right now, we feel that we are late when we are going to arrive at 11 am or later - because we know that that is when the Children’s Sermon and Holy Communion happen, and if we miss that, our kids will miss Sunday School. We need to learn to feel that we are late when we are going to arrive later than 10:15 am, when we are about to miss the Sunday Scripture Readings. But this, I know, will be very hard - both because habits are hard to break, and because our late arrival is often an adaptation to the fact that Sunday morning at St. George is, in truth, very unpredictable.

This is the part that the Church can do something about. After much thought and prayer, I am considering making the following changes to the Sunday Service, in order to make it predictable and accessible for families, and to limit the commitment to an hour and forty-five minutes.

1. Our parish is a bilingual community, and as a result I am currently doing many elements of the service in both Greek and in English. If I do each element in only one of the two languages, it will shave several minutes off the total time of the Divine Liturgy. This will mean, for example, that we will do the Creed in Greek one Sunday, and in English the next, with that alternation continuing each week. The one element of the service that should remain multi-lingual each Sunday is the Lord’s Prayer, which we should always do in at least Greek and English, and in as many other languages as are appropriate for those present in the Church each Sunday.
2. Currently I preach to the adults following the Gospel, and to the children immediately before Holy Communion. If I move the Children’s Sermon to immediately after the Gospel, and the adult sermon to after Holy Communion, it will shorten the portion of the Liturgy between the Readings and Holy Communion by 12-15 minutes.

3. Currently, when parents come for the 40 Day Blessing for their child after childbirth, or when a family brings the Five Loaves for the Artoclasia service, those services are done after Holy Communion, further extending the length of the Service. If I instead insert these services between the Orthros and the Liturgy (where they traditionally belong), then the Dismissal of the Liturgy will be consistently very soon after Holy Communion. In addition, the new mothers will be able to commune on the day of their 40 Day blessing, and the Artoclasia bread can be cut during the Liturgy, removing that delay as well.

4. After consultation with the Sunday School teachers, I am considering shortening the classroom time on Sunday from the hour to which we had extended it to something closer to 40 minutes. Many of the classes already struggle to fill the full hour, and on “normal” Sundays without additional services, the classroom time is lasting far longer than the Church services themselves.

5. Following the Dismissal, I tend to highlight the most important announcements that need to be made. I am considering reducing this significantly, and only announcing the Church services for the coming week.

All these changes together would result in the following Sunday Schedule:

- 10 am - Liturgy begins
- 10:15 - Scripture Readings (Sunday School begins)
- 10:25 - Children’s Sermon
- 10:35 - Great Entrance & Anaphora
- 11:00 - Holy Communion
- 11:10 - Holy Communion ends, Classroom Time begins
- 11:15 - Tray passing, adult sermon
- 11:25 - Liturgy ends, announcements begin (no extra services)
- 11:30 - Antidoron begins
- 11:40 - Antidoron ends
- 11:50 - Classroom time ends. (Sunday School ends)

The only frequent exception to this would then be Memorial Services, which add 10 minutes to the service. With these changes, then, Sunday School would begin at 10:15 and end at 11:50, for just over an hour and a half time commitment.

Making these changes would additionally require that I begin the Orthros earlier in the morning on those Sundays with 40 Day Blessings or Artoclasia Services, but that is something that we have done frequently, when necessary, over the past several decades here at St. George. The greatest change it would require would be for the families to arrive in time for all of Sunday School, no later than 10:15.

What I do not know is how realistic this is. I am certain that the current Sunday morning schedule is fairly firmly established in each of your families, and that asking you to change that is not a small thing. There is therefore one more thing we can change - if we were to start the Liturgy later, either by 15 or 30 minutes, then no one will need to change their schedule at all, and services would just end a little bit later.

I would very much appreciate input from the entire community on this question. Would you prefer to come earlier, but be able to go home earlier? Or would you prefer to come and go home at the same time you are already coming and going? Please make a point to speak with me and let me know your thoughts over the next few weeks. If we are to make any or all of these changes, I am considering the resumption of Sunday School after the New Year as the appropriate time to do so.

In the meantime, may every blessing of the Lord’s Nativity be with you and your families. Merry Christmas! Καλά Χριστούγεννα!

With love in Christ,
+Fr. Anthony Cook
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 JANUARY</td>
<td>HOLOCAUST: Circumcision of Our Lord and Footwear of the Theophany of Our Lord and St. Euphemia</td>
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2020 New Year’s Eve Party

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2019
DOORS OPEN-7:30 PM

Saint George Greek Orthodox Church
GRECIAN CENTER
16200 Dix-Toledo Road Southgate, MI 48195

Entertainment by DJ
Greek & American Music
PHOTO BOOTH

8:00 PM Hors d’oeuvres-9:00 PM Dinner
Featuring a Gourmet Dinner Buffet to include:
Filet Mignon, Atlantic Salmon,
Chicken Champagne, Premium Bar,
The GC Famous Pastry Table,
Champagne Toast at Midnight w/Party Favors
12:30 AM Breakfast

TICKETS
ADULT $50  CHILDREN under 12 $10
POST-DINNER $30 after 10:00 PM

FOR TICKETS
CALL THE CHURCH OFFICE
134.283.8820
OR RESERVE TICKETS ON OUR WEBSITE
STGEORGESOUTHGATE.ORG

PLEASE PURCHASE TICKETS BY
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2019
Vasilopita Dinner

Our Ladies of Philoptochos will hold their Annual Vasilopita Dinner on

Sunday, January 19, 2020
immediately following the Divine Liturgy

Come join us for spiritual fellowship and breaking bread together.

Donation:
12 years and up: $15
11 years and under: free

Please make reservations in advance BEFORE WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 15, at the Reservation Table, on our website (stgeorgesouthgate.org), or by calling the Church Office 734/283-8820.
When you support the Friends of the Metropolis campaign, you are part of a greater outreach that proclaims with one universal voice that God is truly our hope and our rock of salvation. Because of your devotion to the Friends program, ministries and programs are implemented on a Metropolis-wide basis which strengthen and enhance our faith and our joint ministry of service. I would like to invite you to join forces with the faithful throughout the Metropolis of Detroit in support of the ministries which are part of the Office of the Metropolitan.

Thanking you for your kind and generous response, I remain, with paternal blessings and prayers,

+NICHOLAS
Metropolitan of Detroit

MORE INFO AT: WWW.DETROIT.GOARCH.ORG/FRIENDS

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**GENERAL SUPPORT**

Fully fund the general expenses of the Metropolis office, including programs and travels.

**CLERGY/PARISH SUPPORT**

Develop and provide instructional seminars and services for clergy and parishes.

**OUTREACH/MISIONS**

Create opportunities to introduce our faith to society. Participate in inter-Christian and interfaith activities. Provide quick responses to national and international disasters.

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Support the youth & young adult ministries, including our summer camps, as well as the activities of a full-time Metropolis Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries.

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Enhance various scholarship opportunities, adult education programs, and support Metropolis students at Hellenic College/Holy Cross.

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Organize Clergy-Laity Conferences, Oratorical Festivals, Youth Worker and Religious Education Training, and Adult Education Seminars.

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Develop programs for Hellenic Cultural Outreach, including language, history, and arts.

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Continued website development, hospitality to visiting dignitaries, charity and philanthropy.

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Exp. Date   CVC No.

Total in $

Signature

Make checks payable to Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Detroit. Fill out this card and send it with payment to Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Detroit 2560 Crooks Road Troy, MI 48084
Saint George Bake Sale
December 22, 2019
**Now Taking Orders**

From the Monastery:
- Granola Bars…$3
- Tsoureka…$10
- Christmas Cakes…
- Gift Items…

Plus these items from St. George Parishioners:
- Spanakopita…Large Tray-$50; piece-$3
- Baklava…Large Tray-$50; piece-$3
- Tiropitakia…Large Tray $50; piece $3
- Galaktoboureko…Large Tray-$50; piece-$3
- Kourabiethes (price varies according to package)
- Melomakarona (price varies according to package)
- Brownies, Assorted Desserts, Greek and American

**Place Orders by Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2019**

Kyriaki Makarounas – 734/210-2171
Saint George Church, 16300 Dix-Toledo Road, Southgate

All Proceeds to Holy Trinity Monastery
Thank You for Your Support!