

HOLY TRINITY ORTHODOX CHURCH

Parish Newsletter

RESTON

May 2015

MAY—DAY 14 HOURS, NIGHT 10

- 17 Sun SUNDAY VI: GOSPEL CONCERNING THE MAN BORN BLIND
10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Morrow**
- 20 Wed Eve of the Ascension
7:00 p.m. Vespers with the Divine Liturgy—*followed by a pot-luck meal*
- 21 Thu Ascension of Our Lord Jesus Christ
- 24 Sun SUNDAY VII: GOSPEL CONCERNING THE MESSAGE ENTRUSTED
10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Mosholder**
- 29 Fri *562nd anniversary of the Fall of Constantinople to the Turks.*

- After 10 days of the [Ascension], when the 50th day from the first Sunday arrives, you are to have a great feast; for on it, at the third hour, the Lord Jesus sent us the gift of the Holy Spirit....
—Apostolic Constitutions, Syria (ca. 380 A.D.)
- "I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, for a wide door for effective work has opened for me, and there are many adversaries."
—1 Corinthians 16.7-8 (57 A.D.)
- Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus... for he was hastening to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the day of Pentecost [58 A.D.].
—Acts 20.16

- 31 Sun **FIFTIETH DAY: PENTECOST SUNDAY—PARISH FEAST**
10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—*followed by a festive luncheon*
No Vespers of Pentecost Evening this year.

JUNE—DAY 15 HOURS, NIGHT 9

- 1 Mon *Begin the Weeks of Matthew—through the end of the Church Year.*
■ After having celebrated Pentecost, **keep a feast** for one week, and after that **keep a fast** for a week: for it is right to rejoice over the Gift of God [meaning the Descent of the Holy Spirit—Ed.], and then to keep a fast after the time of relaxation [of fasting during the 50-day Paschal/Pentecost season].
—Apostolic Constitutions, Syria (ca. 380 A.D.)
- 7 Sun FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST: **FEAST OF ALL SAINTS**
10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Smith**
- 14 Sun^{2•1•M12} **9:45 a.m. Common Confession Rite in conjunction with the post-Pentecost penitential season** followed by the Divine Liturgy at ~10:30—**Coffee Hour: Warden**
- 20 Sat ↓ *St. Nicolas Kavalas of Thessaloniki (+ca. 1385)*
- 21 Sun^{3•II•ME3} 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Wayland**
- 28 Sun^{4•III•M14} 10:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy—**Coffee Hour: Williams**
- 29 Mon ↑ *Saints Peter and Paul, Leaders of the Apostles*

Common Confession Rite.

As we have been doing these many years, in conjunction with the post-Pentecost penitential season, we will have a Common Confession Rite leading into the Divine Liturgy. It will begin at 9:45 a.m., Sunday, June 14. Be sure to come.

And come on time. In the right frame of mind. Note that the Divine Liturgy will start at around 10:30.

¹⁹ My friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²² let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful.
—Hebrews 10

Study: Americans becoming less Christian, more secular—Christian Share of U.S. Population Plunges

by Rachel Zoll

NEW YORK (AP)—The number of Americans who don't affiliate with a particular religion has grown to 56 million in recent years, making the faith group researchers call "nones" the second-largest in total numbers behind evangelicals, according to a Pew Research Center study released Tuesday.

Christianity is still the dominant faith by far in the U.S.; 7 in 10 Americans identify with the tradition. However, the ranks of Christians have declined as the segment of people with no religion has grown, the survey says.

Between 2007 and 2014, when Pew conducted two major surveys of U.S. religious life, Americans who described themselves as atheist, agnostic or of no particular faith grew from 16 percent to nearly 23 percent. At the same time, Christians dropped from about 78 percent to just under 71 percent of the population. Protestants now comprise 46.5 percent of what was once a predominantly Protestant country.

Researchers have long debated whether people with no religion should be defined as secular since the category includes those who believe in God or consider themselves "spiritual." But the new Pew study found increasing signs of secularism.

Last year, 31 percent of “nones” said they were atheist or agnostic, compared to 25 percent in 2007, and the percentage who said religion was important to them dropped.

Greg Smith, Pew’s associate research director, said the findings “point to substantive changes” among the religiously unaffiliated, not just a shift in how people describe themselves. Secular groups have become increasingly organized to counter bias against them and keep religion out of public life through lawsuits and lobbying lawmakers.

The growth of “nones” has political significance as well. People with no religion tend to vote Democratic, just as white evangelicals tend to vote Republican. The Pew study found a slight drop—about 1 percent—in the evangelical share of the population, which now comprises a quarter of Americans. But the overall number of evangelicals rose to about 62 million people.

Pew researchers said Christian losses were driven by decreases among mainline, or liberal, Protestants and Roman Catholics.

Mainline Protestants declined by about 5 million to 36 million between 2007 and 2014. Pew found 13 percent of U.S. adults are former Catholics. The study put the number of Catholic adults at 51 million, or just over one-fifth of the U.S. population, a drop of about 3 percent over seven years. In 2007, Catholics made up about one-quarter of Americans.

However, Pew researchers acknowledge those conclusions differ from those of some other major studies that found only slight declines or even a slight uptick in the numbers of Catholics in the last couple of years. Georgetown University’s Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, which tracks American Catholicism, puts the U.S. adult Catholic population at 61 million.

Regarding other religions, Pew found an increase in membership of

non-Christian faiths, driven mainly by growing numbers of Muslims and Hindus. Despite the increase, their numbers remain small. Muslims and Hindus each comprise less than 1 percent of the U.S. population. The number of Jews rose slightly over the period, from 1.7 percent to 1.9 percent of Americans.

Overall, religious groups have become more ethnically diverse along with the broader population. Latinos now comprise one-third of U.S. Roman Catholics, although fewer U.S. Latinos identify as Catholic overall. One-quarter of evangelicals and 14 percent of mainline Protestants are racial minorities. Membership in historically black churches has remained relatively stable over the period.

The survey of 35,000 people, titled “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” was conducted in English and Spanish from June 4 through September 30 of last year and has a margin of error of plus or minus 0.6 percentage points

Recognition.

In April Susan Matyuf was notified by the Loudoun County Public Schools Special Education Advisory Committee that she has been selected as an award recipient for the 2015 Recognition for Excellence in Supporting Special Education Awards.

She was nominated for this award by someone who recognizes that she is exceptional in her day-to-day interactions with LCPS students and chosen by the award selection committee because she has “exceeded the criteria for excellence in supporting students with disabilities.”

This award celebrates the significant impact she makes in the lives of students with disabilities through motivation, encouragement and support. As Ms. Jodi Folta put it in her missive, “You serve as a role model to your peers because your actions promote inclusion and an environment where every student is valued, welcomed and encouraged to succeed.”

This year’s Award Ceremony will be held on Tuesday, May 19, 2015, at 6:30 p.m. at the LCPS Administration Building.

Small Talk.

The second annual OCA-sponsored Small Parish Forum will focus on the needs and challenges of small Orthodox parishes in North America and will be held in Weirton WV, June 18–20, 2015. Gregory Honshul will attend and let us know what our pundits are saying.

Later in the Summer Susan Matyuf will represent Holy Trinity at the triennial OCA convention in Atlanta. Holy Trinity will also have a table there to peddle a few books, the way we did back in 1986 at the convention Father Kondratick organized in Washington, D.C. in August of that year. (You remember, the one at which Mayor Marion Barry — “I was saving the best for last” — spoke.)

Suffering Assyrian Christians in Iraq.

By John Verling

Assyrian Christians are an ancient race of people hailing from an area around modern northern Iraq. They are ethnically distinct from the other Semitic tribes of Jews and Arabs. Assyrian Christians converted to Christianity in the first century.

Here are some interesting facts:

1. Assyrian Christians trace their beginnings to three Apostles of Christ, St. Thomas, St. Thaddeus, and St. Bartholomew, who founded the church in ancient Mesopotamia. Subsequently, the church spread along the routes of Tigris and Euphrates rivers. [Tradition tells us Thomas reached the West Coast of India by the year 50 A.D. where the Church survives to this day.]

2. Syriac is the official language of Assyrian Christians, though Aramaic, the language spoken by Christ, is still used by some members.

3. Two jurisdictions, with differing rites: the Syrian [=West Syrian] Orthodox Church, with the rest belonging

to the Assyrian [=East Syrian] Church of the East. [Following the Silk Road, Assyrian missionaries reached Western China, only to have the Mongols destroy their work.]

4. The Assyrian Empire was a major power in the ancient Middle East and was composed of parts of modern Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Turkey. It existed as an independent state from 2500 B.C. to 605 B.C.

5. Persecution has been part of Assyrian Christian's lives for centuries, including genocide under the Ottomans during World War I and even today, from groups such as ISIS.

6. There are between three and four million Assyrian Christians in the world, with the majority living in the ancient homeland stretching across Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Turkey.

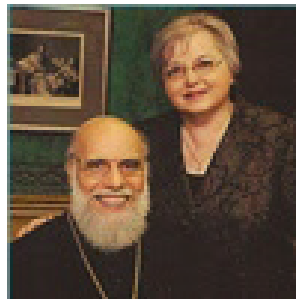
The Word from Guatemala.

Who'da thunk....

This article first appeared on Fr. John Chakos and his wife Alexandra's blog. Check out <http://www.thewordfromguatemala.com/> to read more.

Christianity among the Mayan Indians is undergoing a dramatic change in places like Guatemala and southern Mexico. This shifting of religious identity is part of a larger trend that is enveloping much of Latin America. According to the Pew Research Center report published in November of 2014, "Historical data suggests that for most of the 20th century, from 1900 through the 1960's, at least 90% of Latin America's population was Catholic." Remarkably, however, in just one lifetime, the Pew survey indicates that only "69% of adults across the region identify as Catholic." Up until recently, Orthodox Christianity did not play much of a role in this changing landscape. Most of the Orthodox parishes consisted of immigrant colonies, established mainly to perpetuate the customs, languages, and traditions of their respective ethnic cultures and mother churches in Europe. The title of a recent article in the Huffington Post by Carol Kuruvilla, however, announces a major shift in this approach to the church's mission: "The Greek Orthodox Church in Latin America Is Not Very Greek." Embracing this change and

adapting to this new reality, His Eminence Archbishop Athenagoras, since his 1996 appointment by His All Holiness Patriarch Bartholomew to shepherd the Central American churches, has reached out to the indigenous people of this vast region, encompassing Mexico, Central America, Columbia, Venezuela, and the Caribbean islands. Of his 52 active clergy, only 3 are of Greek descent. The enthusiastic reception by His Eminence Athenagoras of many thousands of Mayan Christians into the Orthodox fold has transformed this Church into a unity of diverse people, sharing one faith, but speaking many native dialects, as on the day of Pentecost. On a recent visit to the village of Aguacate, His Eminence was able to begin Holy Week with the Mayan faithful, who now comprise the vast majority of his growing flock in Central America.



About Father John and his wife Sandy, from their blog.

As a retired clergy couple from the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, we have heeded the call of God to serve as missionaries to the newly emerging Guatemalan Orthodox Church. The journey to this point in our lives, has been long, but steady in its focus on the will of God. Shortly after our marriage in 1965, we (John, a high school English teacher, and Alexandra, a hospital food service manager) accepted a Peace Corps assignment to serve in the slums of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Spending the next 30 months of our lives in this service, (John, teaching in a university, and Alexandra, teaching sewing and pattern drafting in vocational schools) heightened our sensitivity to the poverty and suffering of so many in the world.

Upon returning to the U.S. we realized that we could no longer live comfortably, knowing that so many of our brethren had to struggle each day just to survive. After a great deal of soul-searching and

prayer, we made the decision to commit our lives entirely to Christ, promising to go wherever He would send us. This led us to the Holy Cross Seminary in 1971 (John, studying for the priesthood, and Alexandra, sewing cassocks for the seminarians). After Fr. John's ordination, we served in three parishes over the course of 38 years.

For 31 of those years, we served Holy Cross Church in Pittsburgh, PA, where our four children and eleven grandchildren continue to be members. Never losing sight of our original purpose of serving the poor, we organized many parish clothing and food drives, fed the homeless, aided refugees, furnished homes, housed missionaries from Indonesia, Africa, India, and Latin America, and led mission teams to Africa, Upper Galilee, and Guatemala. In 1997, we took a six-month sabbatical from our parish to serve the church in Tanzania (Fr. John, teaching theology, Alexandra, teaching sewing).

We have had a long and warm relationship with the nuns and children of the Hogar Rafael Ayau orphanage in Guatemala, having led many mission teams there. In fact, our youngest child, Jennifer, was adopted from there. It was through Abbess Ines Ayau of the Hogar and the Holy Trinity Lavra Mambre Monastery that we were brought to our current mission.

She introduced us to Monsignor Andres Giron de Leon, leader of the 300 Mayan communities which were accepted into the Orthodox Church by Metropolitan Athenagoras of Mexico.

Now, in Guatemala, Fr. John is helping to establish a seminary, train catechists, coordinate the arrival of mission teams, support orphans and needy children, and aid the clergy in ministering to the sacramental needs of the communities. Alexandra (a.k.a. Sandy) is teaching the sewing of priestly vestments, cassocks, robes for altar boys, and other ecclesiastical necessities. We feel both honored and blessed to be a part of this tremendous growth in the Orthodox Church. As long as God gives us strength, we will continue to serve Him wherever He sends us.