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April 2017 Easter Newsletter

A Word from our Council President, George Yurchak

Christ is Risen! Sheila Yurchak writes an article “Broken Hearts” a true story where she tells of missing many holidays with her mother, including Easter. George Yurchak writes an article about a homeless man who came into our church during the Bridegroom Tuesday Service. This newsletter will show Holy Week Services through the many photos taken of our Orthodox family. Then we will highlight the many ethnic traditions of Orthodox Easter. As part of our Pop Culture series, Sheila Yurchak will review the movie, “The Case for Christ.”

“Broken Hearts” by Sheila Hemenway-Yurchak



My mother died way too young, in my opinion. I wasn't ready for her to go. I believed she was healthy and enjoying her life, active in her line dancing club, traveling with friends, and seeing “someone special.”



Fact is, I had only recently reconnected with Mama. We had been estranged for over twenty-five years, prior to my Dad getting sick and dying. Twenty-five years wasted, when I should have taken an interest in her life instead of only my own. I had deliberately cut her out, choosing instead to live an ungrounded, chaotic life in search of a utopia that was not to be found. I moved locations constantly, sometimes not even letting her know my new address. She'd call my phone number only to find it had been disconnected. Repeatedly, I'd promise to visit her and Dad at Easter, Christmas, Thanksgiving, or their birthdays, then cancel at the last minute with some flimsy excuse. She barely knew my stepchildren because I kept them apart from each other.

It was cruel of me to neglect my relationship with my Mama and I know that I broke her heart.

So when Mary Hemenway died, my heart broke. I wanted to still make amends to her, to ask her “forgiveness”, to enjoy her company more. She had a sudden pulmonary embolism that killed her before she could be airlifted to a hospital. It happened soon after Hurricane Katrina when she had evacuated from New Orleans with her “someone special” to an RV Park near St. Francisville, Louisiana, close to my sister's house.

My sister couldn't reach me to tell me because the hurricane had destroyed the Mississippi Coast where I lived. I had no phone service, electricity or water; I was truly isolated from the outside world. My sister finally in desperation contacted the Ocean Springs Police Department to have an officer come to my house to tell me Mama Had. Died. No more making amends, asking for "forgiveness" or enjoying her company. She was gone from my life.

What's the point of my lament? I will never recapture those twenty-five lost years with my mother and father, due to my own selfishness. My choice, my regret. So please, love your parents while you have them. Don't neglect them. Let them know you appreciate the sacrifices they made. Pray for them. Ask for God's mercy and forgiveness, it is accessible to each of us every moment of our lives.

Bridegroom Tuesday Service and the Homeless Man by George Yurchak

I was reminded of Fr George Tshakis's recent article about church members skirting around a man whose clothes were in shreds and a hat concealing his face as they walked into church. He was homeless, asleep and ignored. As he came into the church and changed into his priestly garments the people gasped as they recognized that the homeless looking man was their priest and no one offered help.

Well during the Bridegroom Tuesday service a homeless man in torn clothes, wearing a hat and carrying a backpack walked into our church, Holy Trinity. I did not think anything of it because one of our members was talking to him. The next thing I know he had left. Another of our parishioners, Maria, who saw the man leave went outside to talk to him. She came back in to tell me the man wanted to say a prayer and I should go get him. I looked for him but he was gone.

However, during Wednesday's Holy Unction Service, the man came back into our church. I told him he could stay and pray but he had to remove his hat. He stayed for a while and then left. When he left, I went out to talk with him and he said he was on his way back to Florida. I gave him a couple bags of food which we give to the homeless and I invited him back in. He did come back in and stayed for a while listening to the service.

Then on Easter Sunday morning while I was in our Fellowship Hall filling Easter eggs for our Youth Easter Egg Hunt the homeless man walked in. He asked if he could go sit in the church and pray for a little while. I allowed him to pray before he departed. We need not turn away our homeless, as most need our help and a place to pray.

Words from Fr. Paul and Presvytera Joanie

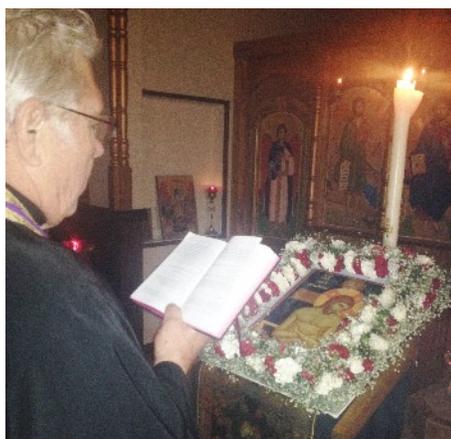
No words can truly express our joy of being invited to minister to you during Holy Week and Pascha. Your love for Presbytera and I will always be in our hearts. The Holy Trinity Church Community demonstrated to us a firm devotion to God and love of the Orthodox Church. We are so proud to be asked back each year and be allowed



to be with you for Pascha. Thank you! God Bless you! Christ is Risen! Indeed He is Risen!

Journey to Pascha

We were very grateful to have Fr Paul Mayernick and Presbytera Joanie take the time to come over from Florida to help us with the Holy Week Services. Members of Holy Trinity helped ready the church for Holy Week with placement of palms for Palm Sunday. Craig Henderson, the master chef, again fried the fish for the Palm Sunday Luncheon. Several members helped clean the church for Holy Week services, decorating the Kavouklion with flowers for the Good Friday service for the procession around the church with the embroidered icon of the entombed Christ, which is not only a funeral procession, but also the Son of God, the Immortal One, proceeding through darkness of Hades pre-announcing the joy of Resurrection. Following the Resurrection Service where Christ is Risen, we had the blessing of over 25 Easter baskets and the red Easter eggs. On Easter Sunday we had the Agape Feast for everyone. The Easter Egg Hunt was a success for the youth.





Holy Trinity's Easter Choir

The men and women of Holy Trinity Choir sang beautifully during Easter Holy Week Services. They practiced before each service and led the congregation in the devotional hymns of our Orthodox religion. A special thanks goes to those choir members for their efforts. Also, Natalia Martin, a Ukrainian from Pensacola and her friend Alla Klymenko came for our Saturday evening and Sunday services. Natalia sang beautifully, especially "Our Father" in Russian.



Blessing of Easter Baskets – A Russian and Ukrainian Tradition

The blessing of the Easter baskets started at Holy Trinity many years ago when a few families brought Easter baskets to be blessed. Each year this tradition continues as more and more baskets are blessed by all ethnic groups, after the Resurrection Service. This blessing stems from the Christian communities desire to ask God's blessings on the foods that will break the Lenten Fast from which they have abstained for 40 days. The religious significance attached to the foods eaten are symbolic of Christ Himself, our true Passover. One of the most special of the Russian foods that many bring to be blessed is Kulich, a rich sweet bread baked in cans and a centerpiece for every Russian family table.



Agape Feast – A Greek Tradition

Following the celebration of Christ's Resurrection at Pascha (Easter), an Agape Feast is held on Easter Sunday. At dawn, a handful of men will arise early and roast the lamb on a spit to represent the Lamb of God. As the lamb roasts more lamb is prepared in the oven along with Greek potatoes and green beans. All families bring a favorite ethnic dish for the Agape Feast and all will partake in an abundant feast. Ouzo, wine and other drinks flow during the Agape Feast celebration. ***Christ is Risen! Truly He is Risen!***



Youth Easter Egg Hunt

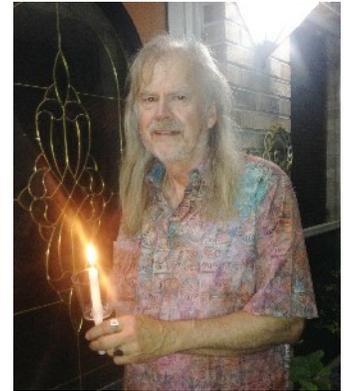


During the Agape Feast, George Yurchak took charge of the Easter Egg Hunt for the youth of our church. The kids had a great time hunting all of the eggs on this beautiful day.

*Christ is Risen –
Truly He Is Risen!*

The Easter Candle

At the conclusion of Resurrection Service, it is customary to take the lighted Easter candle home. It is considered a good omen if one manages to keep the Easter candle illuminated until they reach home without letting it go out.



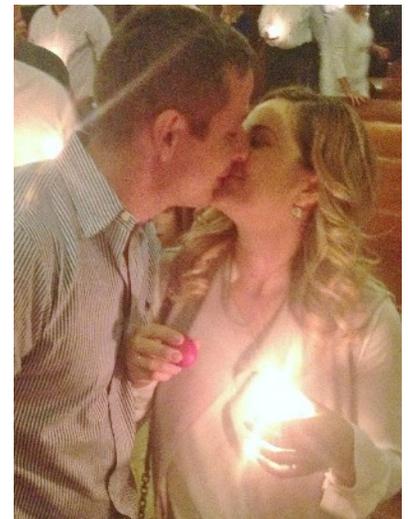
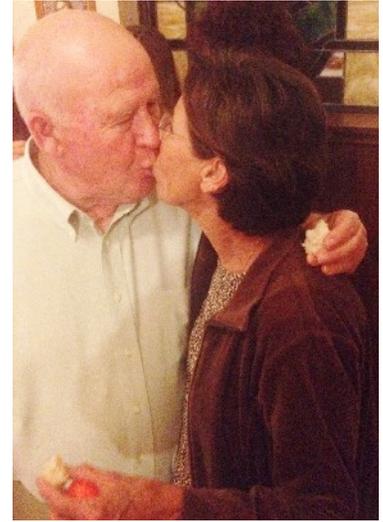
Red Eggs

Easter Eggs are dyed red to represent the Blood of Christ, with further symbolism being found in the hard shell of the egg, symbolizing the sealed Tomb of Christ – the cracking of which symbolized His Resurrection from the dead. The red eggs are blessed and passed out to all the parishioners at the end of Resurrection Service. Donna and John Collins are tapping their eggs to see who has good fortune.



The Resurrection Kiss – A Greek Tradition

After exchanging the Easter greeting it is customary to exchange the kiss of the Resurrection or “Kiss of Love” (Agape) symbolizing the love of Christ among his followers.



Decorating Eggs – A Russian and Ukrainian Tradition

In the Russian Orthodox Church, decorating eggs is an artistry. These eggs are given to relatives and friends, and some are placed on the graves of family members. Pictured is an example.



Pop Culture – Review of the Arts

Here we focus on the varieties of cultures, from movies, music, books, etc. Sheila Yurchak provides a review of the movie “The Case for Christ.”

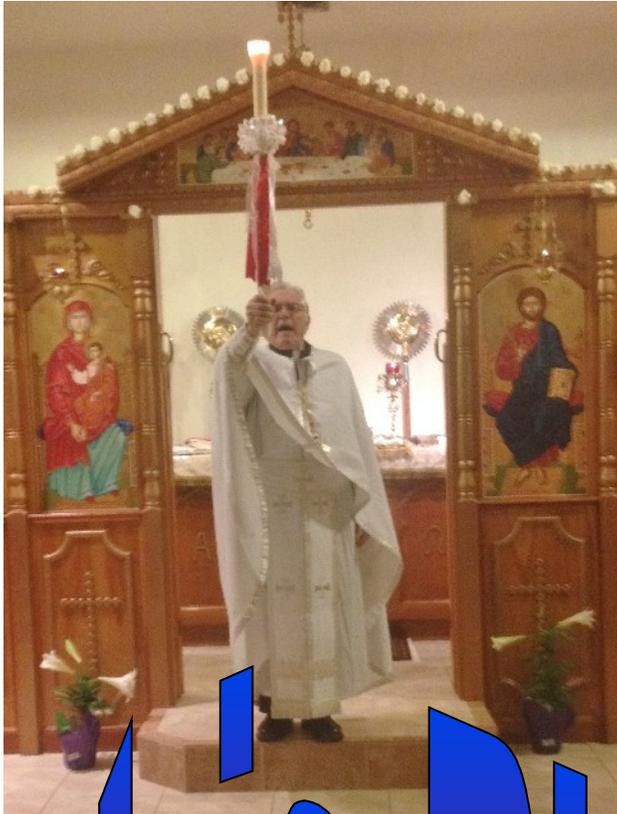
“The Case for Christ”

This movie is the true story of Lee Strobel, a journalist and atheist, on a mission to disprove that Christ existed. His wife was also an atheist. When their young daughter was saved from choking to death by a Christian lady that decided to come to their restaurant instead of going to the one she first chose, the wife believed this was a sign from God. His wife then started moving closer to God and prayer, even going to church with the Christian lady. Her atheist husband disapproved and believed she was losing her mind.

This started him on his quest for truth. The more people that he interviewed and were experts in their field, the more the answers that he got were not the ones he wanted. His journey to disavow Christ did not turn out how he had planned. His editor told him to quit blaming Christ, to follow the truth, write the story and take a “Leap of Faith.” As he stared at his board of facts he eventually came to his conclusion and said “God, you win.”

Another part of the movie concerned Lee's relationship with his father. This took me back to my article at the beginning of this newsletter about the relationship I missed out on with my mother. When his father came to visit their granddaughter he was not happy to see him and hadn't spoken to him in a long time. He essentially forced his father to leave his house. Later in the movie his father dies. When Lee and his mother go through his father's things he sees all the newspaper stories he wrote and that his father had collected, because he was so proud of his son's accomplishments. That is when he realized that his father cared a great deal about him and how he had missed out on all those years he could have had with his father, and breaks down in tears, as I did.

As an aside, the true story of Lee Strobel is that he became a pastor and his whole family became involved in Theology.



christ is Risen!