

November 19, 2015
Fr. Nikolaos Galanopoulos
Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church,
30 Huntington Blvd NE, Roanoke, VA 24012

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ.
Faithful parishioners and attendees of the Holy Trinity Church of Roanoke, VA

I am addressing this letter to all the parish body members in order to officially announce that through the Grace of our Lord, His Eminence Metropolitan Evangelos has appointed me as the presiding priest at the Holy Trinity Church of Roanoke. My name is Fr. Nikolaos Galanopoulos and I will serve the Holy Trinity parish from 12/1/2015 onward. This is my first formal opportunity to communicate with you and I wish to express my joy for having the responsibility to unite my prayers with yours in asking the Lord for His peace upon all and His lead towards the fulfillment of His will.

Personal details concerning myself are the following: I have been married to my wife, presvytera Mary for thirty years and we both have been blessed with five children Eleni, Christos, Georgia, Magdalini and Zoe. I was ordained in Lamia, Greece in 2008 by His Eminence Metropolitan Nikolaos as deacon and presbyter. Metropolitan Nikolaos also granted me the offikion of protopresbyter, and I received my D. Phil (Doctorate of Philosophy) from Oxford University for my studies on Byzantine canon law.

As the presiding priest of the Holy Trinity parish I wish to assure all that I will be forthcoming in all issues requiring attention and/or solutions. I am encouraging all parishioners to approach me with any concerns they might have and I hope to build their trust and comfort level towards me. I often address issues through the recounting of stories or through the enumeration of facts and opinions. With these comments in mind I wish to underscore a rather important point: as a presbyter of the Church my function is to promote the sanctification of space and time for the people of God during their formal Church gatherings and to facilitate the sanctification of every Orthodox Christian. Solutions to social, psychological or financial issues of the parish or its members, which I hope you will allow me to involve myself with and towards which I will devote my efforts, will have to reflect the Church's perspective.

The Church is not simply a collection of individuals but it is also a body, an entity in itself. The persons belonging to it are "team members" and they have to carry with them the "team spirit" especially in matters which effect attitudes towards life. This is illuminated through the story about the old woman and the onion found in Theodore Dostoyevsky's Brothers Karamazov which will, hopefully, elucidate my point concerning the importance of team cooperation and team spirit within the parish which I want to establish as the working principle of our relations. The story is as follows:

"Once there was an old woman and she died. And somewhat to her surprise, she woke to find herself in a lake of fire. Looking out she saw her guardian angel walking on the shore.

And she called out, "There has been some mistake. I am a very respectable old lady and I should not be here in this lake of fire."

"Oh," said the guardian angel, "do you ever remember a time when you helped someone else?"

And the old woman thought for some time and she said, "Yes. Once I was gardening and a beggar came by and I gave her an onion."

"Excellent," said the angel, "I happen to have that very onion with me now." And he reached into his robes and he produced it. And he said to her, "Let us see what the onion will do. You take the other end and I will pull." Perhaps it was not an onion but a shallot.

Gradually then, the angel, with the help of the onion, began to pull the old woman out of the lake of fire. But she was not the only person there. When the others saw what was happening they crowded round her and hung on in the hope of being pulled out as well. This did not please the old woman at all. She began to kick and to cry out, "Let go! Let go! It's not you who's being pulled out it's me! It's not your onion, it's mine!"

And when she said, "It's mine!" the onion split in two and she fell back into the lake of fire and there, so I'm told, she still is.

If the woman had perceived the onion as "it's ours" many would have been saved. My purpose will be to promote that point of view. May the Lord have mercy on us, oversee all our works and cleanse our hearts.

In Christ
Fr. N. Galanopoulos