



SAINTS PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH
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BULLETIN OF MAY 13, 2007

CHRIST IS RISEN! INDEED HE IS RISEN!

SUNDAY/MAY 13th 6th Sunday of Pascha:

The Blind Man (Tone 5)

9:10a.m. 3rd and 6th Hours

9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy; Coffee Hour;
Church School & Teen Discussion

TUESDAY/MAY 15th

7:00p.m. Paschal Matins

WEDNESDAY/MAY 16th

Leave-Taking of Pascha

9:30a.m. Paschal Liturgy

7:00p.m. Vigil for the Ascension

THURSDAY/MAY 17th

ASCENSION OF OUR LORD INTO

HEAVEN (The 40th Day of Pascha)

One of "the 12 Great Feasts of the Year"

9:10a.m. 3rd & 6th Hours

9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY/MAY 19th

9:30a.m. Akathist; Confessions

2:30p.m. Church School

5:30p.m. Vigil; Confessions

SUNDAY/MAY 20th

**7th Sunday of Pascha: The Holy Fathers
of the First Ecumenical Council (Tone 6)**

9:10a.m. 3rd and 6th Hours

9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy; Coffee Hour

7:00p.m. Vespers

MONDAY/MAY 21st

**Ss. Constantine & Helen, Equal-to-the-
Apostles**

9:10a.m. 3rd & 6th Hours

9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy

Fasting Days

Wednesday, May 16th - Wine & oil permitted

Friday, May 18th - Wine & oil permitted



The Feast of the Ascension

This feast, held on the 40th day of Pascha is always on a Thursday. We celebrate the final Ascension of our Lord into Heaven. The feast is of 9 days duration, ending on the Friday before the divine Pentecost – May 25th, this year.

During the postfeast the tropar and kontakion of Ascension are sung/said at times of prayer as well as at meals. The tropar before a meal and the kontakion after a meal.

Tropar Tone 4

Thou hast ascended in glory, O Christ God, granting joy to Thy disciples by the promise of the Holy Spirit. Through the blessing they were assured that Thou art the Son of God, the Redeemer of the world.

Kontakion Tone 6

When Thou didst fulfill the dispensation for our sake, and unite earth to heaven: Thou didst ascend in glory, O Christ our God, not being parted from those who love Thee, but remaining with them and crying: I am with you and no one will be against you!

The Paschal Season of the 50 Days

- The hymn "Christ is Risen" is sung or said at the beginning and ending of all services and prayers.
- There is no kneeling or making of prostrations either in our homes or at church services until the divine Pentecost (May 27th).
- Wednesday and Fridays remain fasting days, but wine and oil are permitted.
- The prayer "O Heavenly King..." is omitted until Pentecost.
- The scriptural cycle for this paschal period is the Acts of the Apostles and the Gospel of John.
- Orthodox Christians greet each other for the 40 days until Ascension Thursday with the expression: "Christ is Risen!" and the response, "Indeed he is Risen!"

A Memorial Service at the Cemetery

Will be held for all the departed on May 27th, Pentecost Sunday at 4:00p.m. Please pass the word along.

Annual Cemetery Care Envelope

Is attached to today's bulletin. Every Spring a free will collection is made for the maintenance and beautification of our parish cemetery. Extra envelopes are on the vestibule stand.

2 Assessment Envelopes Remain

There are 2 envelopes, one for May and one for June of the 2007 Assessment Envelopes. For the remainder of the year, assessment envelopes are not provided. All adult parishioners are asked to fulfill this obligation by June 30th. To be credited, be sure that your offering is marked "assessment. Questions or concerns may be addressed to the parish rector.

Reminder About Hospitalization

Federal Privacy Laws (HIPAA) mean that the only way a clergyman can know if you are in the hospital is if he is told by you or a family member. Access to the census is not allowed.

The Parish Synodicon

May 13, 1933	Maria Yaskovsky
May 13, 1958	Jacob Popko
May 14, 1933	Peter Chromoho
May 14, 1953	Della Marchisin
May 14, 1956	Pelagia Carko
May 14, 1965	Metropolitan Leonty
May 15, 1925	Maria Barna
May 15, 2005	Olga Shemansky
May 16, 1953	Michael Hobora
May 16, 1962	Theodore Janushenko
May 18, 1975	Wasil Kosticz
May 19, 1939	Gregory Halkovich

12th Annual Church Run – Sat. June 2nd

Last year our parish joined other local parishes in this Run. Reserve the date more information will be

Two of the 12 Great Feasts of the Year

Are celebrated in this month of May:

The Ascension of our Lord (May 17th)

The Divine Pentecost (May 27th).

All should strive to participate in the divine services on the eve and day of these great feasts. See the monthly calendar for the times of the services.

Congratulations!

To all those celebrating the civil holiday of "Mothers Day" – mothers, grandmothers, mothers-in-law, godmothers – Many Blessed Years!

Offerings for the week of May 13th

Olive Oil – in memory of Emilia; in memory of Michael; in memory of Joan; in memory of Gheorghe, Floarea, Eleana, Petre-Grigore, Alexandru and Sasinca; for the health of Vera and John.

Wine – for the health of Vincent; for the health of Mary; in memory of Catherine.

Flowers – for health and safe travel.

Mini-Series of Adult Education Classes

On Thursday evenings, May 24th, 31st and June 7th. From 7-8:30p.m. in the Conference Room.



ON THE ASCENSION OF CHRIST

By Metropolitan Hierotheos of Nafpaktos

** Ascension Day – May 17th **



The Lord's events are not separate from one another, nor are they rationalised. All the feasts of the Lord are saving events of the divine Economy, for it was by them that Christ arranged the salvation of the human race. Christ became man, He taught, He suffered, He was resurrected and ascended into heaven. ~~There is a remarkable oneness among them. The Ascension is the last feast of the Lord, it is the end of the Annunciation and the Nativity.~~

Yet in the Fathers there is a slight parallel, by economy, among the feasts. We say by economy, because if Christ had not become incarnate, the Resurrection and the Ascension would not have taken place. And if He had not risen from the dead, the incarnation would have appeared to be in vain.

St. Epiphanius, Bishop of Cyprus, analysing the greatness and the value of the feast of the Ascension, says that many people who do not know the greatness of this feast regard it as lower than the others. However, just as the head is the jewel of the body, so also the feast of the Ascension is an embellishment of all the feasts. It is the fullness of all the feasts of the Lord. A first feast is the awe-inspiring and wonderful Nativity of Christ in the flesh. Second is the feast of the Theophany, which has a greater vision of God than the first. The third feast is the Resurrection, which was shown to be more glorious than the preceding ones, because death was conquered, but even this did not have the fullness of joy, because Christ was still on earth. However, the feast of the Ascension filled the world with rejoicing, because when Christ opened the heavens, He showed us an extraordinary sight, "our flesh lifted up on the kingly throne" at the right hand of God the Father. So the value of the Ascension is in the fact that the human flesh which was deified by its union with the divine nature of the Word, is seated on the kingly throne, at the right hand of God the Father.

By His incarnation Christ deified human nature, but men did not have much knowledge of the greatness of His glory, and that is why they misunderstood him, slandered him and finally crucified him. But when Christ ascended into heaven, then men gained perfect knowledge of Christ. Thus the incarnation, with the Ascension which followed, filled the world with the knowledge of God (St. Diadochos of Photike).

But St. Athanasios the Great, referring to the two feasts of the Lord, those of the Resurrection and the Ascension, says that the feast of the Resurrection grants to men the prize of victory over death, while Christ's Ascension lifts man up to heaven, and since it changes man's way of life on earth, it makes heaven accessible to him. Therefore victory over death is one thing and another is the ascent of human nature to the throne of God. This is precisely why through this event one can see the superiority of the Ascension, or to express it better, the perfection and fullness of the divine Economy.

Another difference between the Resurrection and the Ascension is that the Disciples did not see the beginning of the Resurrection, but only the end, for no one saw Christ at the moment when He came out of the tomb, but He was only seen afterwards, when He manifested Himself to them. By contrast, at the Ascension, the Disciples saw its beginning, that is to say, they saw him taken up to heaven, and they looked towards heaven to be informed of its end (Macarios of Philadelphia).

Of course again we must observe that all the happenings of the Lord are unique and no one can evaluate one above the other. However, with respect to man's participation in them, we see some differences. For, with regard to advance in spiritual life and degree of imitation of Christ, there is an ascent upward. First we are born with Christ, then we suffer with Christ, then we conquer the power of the devil and are resurrected, and lastly we can even experience deification. It is precisely the feast of the Ascension which the Fathers connect with the deification of man.

In this perspective St. Gregory Palamas says that the Resurrection is connected with all men, but the Ascension only with the saints. This is said from the point of view that by His Resurrection Christ conquered death and gave the gift of Resurrection to all. All will be resurrected on the day of Christ's Second Coming, both the righteous and sinners, but not all will be taken up. Only the righteous, the deified will be found worthy of this great experience. The Apostle Paul confesses: "And those who have died in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thes. 4, 16-17).

Thus all will be resurrected, but only the righteous will be taken up, will be caught up in the clouds to meet Christ coming from Heaven. This shows a greater communion and unity with Him. That is why, from the soteriological point of view, the Ascension is regarded as a greater feast, precisely because he who has a share in the Ascension has a share in deification.





Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner.

INSTRUCTIONS OF ST. BARSANUPIUS OF OPTINA (+1913)

I received a letter: "Batiushka, I'm suffocating! Afflictions are pressing in from all sides, there's no way to breathe, nothing to look back to; I see no joy in life, I've lost the very meaning of it." What do you say to such an afflicted soul? That he needs to endure? But afflictions, like a millstone, oppress a man's soul, and he suffocates under their weight.

Take note that I'm not speaking now of unbelievers and atheists, nor of those who are depressed that they have lost God. No, it happens that believers who have set forth on the path of salvation, souls who are under the influence of Divine grace, lose the meaning of life. They don't know that this is a temporary condition which passes, which one must wait out. They write: "I've fallen into despair, something dark has surrounded me." I'm not saying that such an affliction is legitimate, but I am saying that it is the lot of every man. This is not a punishment, this is a cross; and one must bear this cross. But how does one bear it? Where is the support? Some seek this support and consolation from people—they think to find peace in the midst of the world, and they don't find it. Why? Because one must not seek it there. One must seek peace and light and strength in God through the Jesus Prayer. When it becomes very hard for you and gloom surrounds you, stand before the icon, light the lampada if it hasn't been lit, kneel if you're able, or else just say "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." Say it once, again, a third time—say it so that it's not just your lips that are pronouncing it, but in such a way that it reaches your heart. And then, the sweetest Name of the Lord will without fail reach your heart, and little by little the melancholy and grief will subside and your soul will become bright. A quiet joy will reign in it.

Only those who have come to know it experientially can comprehend this wondrous action of the Jesus Prayer. Some man has never tried honey in his life and begins to ask, "What is it?" How do you explain it to him? You tell him, "It's sweet, it's made by bees, you get it from a hive, you slice the honeycomb into pieces...." But he still won't understand what it is. Isn't it simpler to say, "Do you want to know about honey? Well, try it!"... Has he tried it? Is it sweet? "It's sweet." "Now do you know what honey is?" "Now I know." Was it necessary to come running for some kind of scientific explanation? No. The man tried it and understood it himself. That's the way it is with the Jesus Prayer. Many, having come to know its sweetness and

meaning, have left all, have given their whole life over to it, to come close to it, to merge with the sweetest Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For you in your educational or other occupations it's impossible to fill your whole life with the Jesus Prayer, but each of you can go through, some twenty, some forty, some fifty, some even a hundred prayers a day. Each, according to his strength, can acquire the habit of it. Let one succeed in an inch, another in a yard, another in a fathom, and another, perhaps, will go forward a mile. It's important to go, if only an inch, but go—and glory be to God! For everything, glory be to God.

The Paschal Canon was composed by John Damascene—and so wondrously, majestically composed. It elevates the soul and fills it with spiritual joy, to the measure of the receptivity of each. But the question arises: where is the key to the opening up of spiritual joys? To this there is one answer: in the Jesus Prayer. There is great power in this prayer. It has varying degrees. The very first is the simple utterance of the words, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner." At the highest degrees it attains such power that it can move mountains. Of course, not everyone can attain to this, but to utter this great prayer is not difficult for anyone, and the benefit is enormous. This is the most powerful weapon for the struggle against the passions. One woman, for instance, is proud. Another is overcome by lustful thoughts; it would appear that she doesn't even see a man, but a thought keeps telling her to fornicate. A third is envious and has no strength to fight against it—where does one get this strength? Solely in the Jesus Prayer. The enemy distracts us from it in every way: "Well, what is this nonsense of repeating the same thing when neither the mind nor the heart takes part in the prayer? Better to replace it with something else...." Don't listen to him, he's lying; continue laboring in the prayer, and it will not leave you fruitless.

St. John Climacus was asked if there are reliable signs by which it's possible to know whether a soul is drawing near to God or moving away from Him. After all, regarding ordinary things there are clear signs as to whether they're good or not. When, for instance, cabbage, meat or fish begins to rot, it's easy to notice it, since the rotting object begins to give off a foul odor, the color and taste change, and its external appearance witnesses to its deterioration. Well, and what about the soul? After all, it's bodiless and can't give off a bad smell or change its appearance. To this question the Holy Father replies, "A sure sign of the deadening of the soul is the avoidance of church services."

A man who is growing cold towards God begins first of all to flee attending church. At first he tries to come to services later, and then he ceases altogether to visit God's temple.