

SS. PETER & PAUL ORTHODOX CHURCH

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BULLETIN OF FEBRUARY 22, 2009

SUNDAY/FEBRUARY 22nd

Meat-Fare or Judgment Sunday (Tone 3)

9:10a.m. Hours; 9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy
Coffee Hour; Question & Answer Period

TUESDAY/FEBRUARY 24th

1st and 2nd Findings of the Head of St. John the Baptist

9:30a.m. Akathist to the Baptist

WEDNESDAY/FEBRUARY 25th

7:00p.m. Compline

7:45p.m. Adult Study: Part 3

Principles and Areas of Orthodox Church
Human Rights Work

FRIDAY/FEBRUARY 27th

St. Raphael, Bishop of Brooklyn

9:30a.m. Akathist to St. Raphael

SATURDAY/FEBRUARY 28th

9:30a.m. Akathist; Confession

5:30p.m. Vigil; Confession

SUNDAY/MARCH 1st

Cheese-Fare of Forgiveness Sunday

9:10a.m. Hours; 9:30a.m. Divine Liturgy
Coffee Hour; Church School

Book-for-the-Month of Spiritual Reading from
Parish Library

6:30p.m. Vespers and Rite of Forgiveness

PURE MONDAY/MARCH 2nd

Beginning of the Great and Holy 40 Day Fast

7:00p.m. Canon of St. Andrew



When Thou shalt come, O righteous Judge, to execute just judgment seated on Thy throne of glory, a river of fire will draw all men amazed before Thy judgment-seat; the powers of heaven will stand beside Thee, and in fear mankind will be judged according to the deeds each has done. Then spare us, O Christ, in Thy compassion, with faith we entreat Thee, and count us worthy of Thy blessings with those who are saved.

Let us cleanse ourselves, brethren, with the Queen of the virtues; for behold, she is come, bringing us a wealth of blessings. She quells the uprising of the passions and reconciles sinners to the Master. Therefore let us welcome her with gladness, and cry aloud to Christ our God; O risen from the dead, who alone art free from sin, guard us uncondemned as we give Thee glory.



The Annual Easter Candy Sale

Is currently underway. Order forms may be found on the vestibule stand. Please return no later than Sunday, March 15th.

Pussywillows Sought

Please bring them to the lower hall.

Parish Council Notations

The installation of the New Council will take place on Sunday, March 15th at the Divine Liturgy. The next Parish Council meeting will be Thursday, March 19th at 7:00p.m.

OCCM – Orthodox Christian Mission Center Lenten Coin Boxes

These boxes are available on the vestibule stand. Every Great Lent we join with other Orthodox Christians to save our “coins” for Mission Work. (Dollar bills and checks also fit into the boxes.)

Last year, parishes offered \$58,000; our parish contributed \$505. Take a box and return it on Palm Sunday, April 12th. The marvelous work of OCCM check out: www.ocmc.org

Congratulations

To Peter and Dolly Bakaletz on the birth of their daughter, Julianna on Feb. 5th.

Green Tip

When grocery shopping, bring re-usable cloth tote bags. Get away from plastic that doesn't bio-degrade. Also, but a “re-useable” water bottle, instead of plastic ones that stay forever in landfills.

Offerings for the week of February 22nd

Olive Oil – in memory of Michael and Justina; in memory of Vaschen and Emilia; for the health of John and Carol (anniversary); in memory of Joan.

Wine – in memory of Helen and Joseph; for the health of Protodeacon Paul and Zachary (birthdays).

Economic Down Turn

The poor economy affects both individuals, families as well as our parish family. Please be faithful and consistent in your offerings.

Parish Synodicon - Memory Eternal!

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| February 22, 1931 | Stephen Blisak |
| February 22, 1931 | Olga Yaskovsky |
| February 22, 1977 | Stella Honchar |
| February 22, 1989 | Gertrude Huzinec |
| February 23, 1942 | Louis Potapchuk |
| February 23, 1946 | Joseph Wilhousky Sr. |
| February 25, 1941 | Constantine Yushkevich |
| February 25, 1960 | Helen Wilhousky |
| February 26, 1969 | Stephen Woychid |
| February 28, 1969 | John Semoskovich |
| February 28, 1983 | Anna Cimpko |
| February 28, 1992 | John Lapchuk |
| February 29, 1944 | John Marchisin |
| February 29, 1960 | Archpriest Jacob Grigorieff |
| March 01, 1962 | Constantine Bobich |
| March 02, 1917 | George Bekzar |
| March 02, 1919 | Peter Palomar |

OCA Mission Appeal Envelope

In the month of February, a special appeal is made to help mission parishes. This year, we will again forward the funds to Christ the Saviour Mission in Delaware (Fr. John Parsells) and St. Maximus Mission in Texas (Fr. Justin Frederick). Please be generous.

The Annual Meeting Reports of 2009

May be found on the vestibule stand. Hopefully all parishioners – even if they did not come to the Annual Meeting – will take the time to read the Reports and be appraised of our Parish Life.

Seeking Preparers for Boiled Wheat or Boiled Rice

For St. Theodore Feast (Mar. 6) 6:30p.m. and for Memorial Saturdays (Mar. 14, 21, 28) 9:30a.m. Please let Fr. James know if you are willing to prepare this offering and for what date.

Celebrating the Nation of Georgia: Its Faith, People and Culture

On Saturday May 2nd, our parish will hold a special celebration celebrating the Georgian Peoples. Future announcements will provide the program for this mid-day celebration. Mark your calendar now and be sure to invite friends.

Glory to Jesus Christ! Glory Forver!



GENERAL RULES OF FASTING

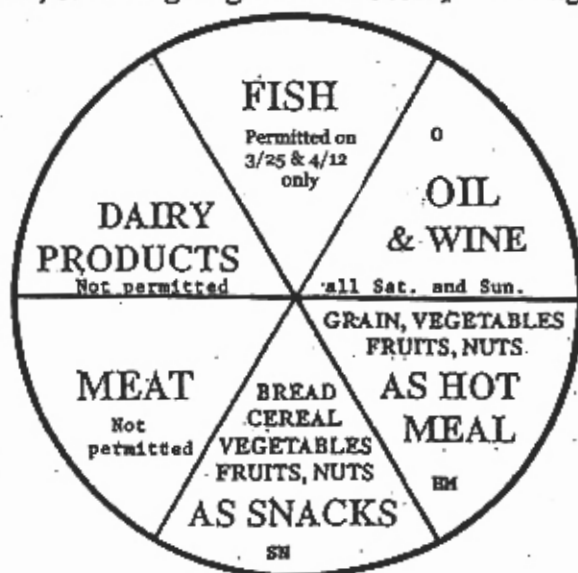
In the booklet *Great Lent, a School of Repentance*, Father Alexander Schmemmann writes:

The Orthodox idea of fasting is first of all that of an ascetical effort. It is the effort to subdue the physical, the fleshly man to the spiritual one, the "natural" to the "supernatural." Limitations in food are instrumental; they are not ends in themselves. Fasting thus is but a means of reaching a spiritual goal and, therefore, an integral part of a wide spiritual effort. Fasting, in the Orthodox understanding, includes more than abstinence from certain types of food. It implies prayer, silence, an internal disposition of mind, an attempt to be charitable, kind, and—in one word—spiritual. "Brethren, while fasting bodily, let us also fast spiritually..."

And because of this the Orthodox doctrine of fasting excludes the evaluation of fasting in terms of a "maximum" or "minimum." Every one must find his or her maximum, weigh his or her conscience and find in it his or her "pattern of fasting." But this pattern must necessarily include the spiritual as well as the "bodily" elements. The Typicon and the canons of the Church give the description of an ideal fast: no meat, no dairy products, total abstinence on certain days. "He that is able to receive it, let him receive it" (Matt. 19:12). But, whatever is our measure—our fasting must be a total effort of our total being.

Keeping this in mind we should fast in order to achieve the goal of prayer, repentance, and forgiveness. To fast means abstaining not only from certain foods, but most importantly from passions, bad habits, overindulgence, rudeness, and selfishness. It means also that we should abstain from everything that might take the focus of our life away from the spiritual effort. Among these things are every kind of entertainment, such as going to the movies, watching TV, or going on trips. For married couples it will also imply abstaining from intimacy.

The fundamental meaning of the fasting effort is to discover the true values of our life, to discover that we live not for our own sake but in the context of our relationship with each other and with the living God. So we fast not in terms of our individual piety but by linking our life with that of the Church. In essence, fasting is an exercise in being faithful: to each other in observing the same rules and sharing in the same hardship, and to our Lord Himself who has given us fasting as a school of love.



From *IN OUR MIDST*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1997

| | MON | TUE | WED | THU | FRI | SAT | SUN |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| GREAT LENT | | | | | | | |

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Russian physicist is the first to register electrical discharges during the descent of the Holy Fire

Moscow, February 17, Interfax – Section on "Christianity and science" of the 17th Christmas educational readings carried out on Tuesday in Moscow first voiced the results of scientific experiment held by Russian scientists on Great Sunday 2008 in the Church of Lord's Sepulcher in Jerusalem.

The branch head of the Kurchatov atomic energy institute Doctor of Physics and Mathematics Andrey Volkov spoke about his own attempt to measure low-frequency long-wavelength radio signals in Jerusalem church during annual descent of the Holy Fire.

The scientist used special equipment to make measurements in the church during 6,5 hours of waiting for the fire and it took him the next few months to decipher it.

Volkov considers "absolute miracle" the difference between indices received on the descent day and the day before. Besides, according to him, analysis of cracks in the column before the entrance to the church really makes him think they could appear only in result of electrical discharge.

According to Volkov, his counterpart, leading expert on mechanics of destruction, Yevgeny Morozov, proves the same things.

Though he believes that "measures taken only once cannot be evident enough from the strictly scientific viewpoint," Volkov also states he bears full responsibility for the received results and is ready to present them.

"However, if you ask me as a scientist if there was something (a miracle - *IF*) or not, I'll tell you I don't know," he said.

Deputy Chairman of the Moscow Patriarchate Commission on miraculous events, lecturer of St. John Russian Orthodox University Alexander Moskovsky said Volkov "made a scientific achievement as he carried out the first in history serious, trustworthy and responsible scientific research of the Holy Fire."

The Holy Fire has appeared at the Lord's sepulcher for many centuries shortly before Orthodox Easter. Eastern Christians are convinced that the miracle of the Holy Fire proves the truth of the Orthodox faith as every Easter the Holy Fire appears at the Lord's Sepulcher. The believers think the descent of the fire disapproves of any atheistic views.

Head of the Russian Church Diocese in Britain warns against atheistic ads on London buses

London, February 18, Interfax – Head of the Moscow Patriarchate Sourozh Diocese (Great Britain) Bishop Yelisey expressed his concerns with the London "No God" bus campaign.

"Atheistic propaganda in London is especially painful for us, members of the Russian Orthodox Church. We have a unique experience of life in atheistic state and we can prove that true atheism is not as joyful as they try to present it," the Bishop told *Interfax-Religion* on Wednesday.

Thus, Bishop Yelisey reacted on the recent ad action of the British Humanist Association, which launched several dozens buses running on the streets of London with the slogan "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life."

According to the interviewee of the agency, "the appeal "to enjoy your life" without God is unattainable as existence without supreme truth and justice inevitably lead to losing moral orientation and the very meaning of life."

He also backed up the "contra-campaign" unfolded by the Russian Hour TV. Twenty-five buses with depictions of the Holy Trinity St. Sergius Laura, cupolas of Russian Churches and slogan "There IS a God, BELIEVE. Don't worry and enjoy your life." will appear on London streets on March 1.

Activists of the Christian Party, who run for the European Parliament, backed up the Orthodox initiative.

They made posters, also to be placed on London buses. They read, "There definitely is a God. So join the Christian Party and enjoy your life."



A LETTER TO A SPIRITUAL CHILD FROM A MONK OF MOUNT ATHOS

This letter is from Elder Ephraim of Katounakia on Athos. The Elder spent 65 years on Mount Athos, reposing on February 14, 1998, at the age of 86.

Like many elderly people, he was afflicted with illnesses - ulcers on his legs, loss of eyesight, severe eczema, ischaemic strokes and allergies. In the last years of his life, no standing, lying or sitting position gave him comfort.

Yet, as we see in the letter, the Elder was able to profit from his suffering.

May we also learn to be strong when we are weak and see God's love at work.

You wrote to me that you pray to God to relieve me from all my pains and so, I want to ask you to not pray for me like this. Instead, I want you to plead with God to give me patience, not relief. The Holy Fathers teach us many things but our poor experience teaches us much more, and more powerful things.

So, I confess to you:

Six years ago, I was in the Clerical Hospital in Athens due to my eczema. When I was released I went on a pilgrimage to St. Nektarios, in Aegina. When I knelt and kissed his holy skull I sensed a fine scent emanating from it and I took it to mean that many more afflictions awaited me and this is exactly what happened.

When we returned to Kallithea, Athens, I lay down on the bed to rest and I told Father J. who was with me: 'I feel as exhausted as if a hundred men have thrashed me.'

Ever since, all these years, I have been bedridden; you know all of this.

Many years ago I suffered from a cyst on the coccyx, which was unbearably painful. Due to my long stay in bed my behind hurt very much, they were stinging, which was a sign that sores were about to open.

Those sores were even more painful than the first ones.

I couldn't lie down on my right; the pain was horrible.

The wound on my leg, the eczema, was at its worst.

And while in this ocean of affliction, at this dead end, I saw myself completely alone, fighting desperately against those bitter and unbearable waves. I realized that despair had gotten hold of me and suffocated me. Even thinking about this makes me tremble with horror.

I couldn't lie down on my left; the pain was terrible. I tried to lie on my back I couldn't; it hurt too much. 'What should I do? What will become of me? How will I end up?'

I was disturbed and pressed by disgraceful thoughts, terrible ones.

I even thought that God abandoned me.

I said nothing to my brotherhood. Outwardly, I appeared to be calm and peaceful but inside I was experiencing hell itself. That's what I had been taught by my elder: whether we experience heaven or hell we should never externalize it; we should appear impassive.

I was in this state for about six or seven minutes and then it was as if I heard a faint voice, that could barely be heard, telling me: 'That's how God wants you to be' and at once I came to my senses.

I replied to that voice: 'Since this is God's will, let this be blessed. Just give me the patience needed to deal with it.'

I then went, feeling more dead than alive, up to a small oil-lamp hanging in front of the icon of the Theotokos, I took some oil and smeared it twice or three times on the places that hurt most and I was healed.

However, the years went by and I was constantly in pain. Many times I clenched my teeth and stifled my groans of pain. I try to bear the pain, and I cannot sleep.

I believe this was an ordeal sent by God.

And now I move on to my main theme—listen to what I have to say carefully, my dear little teacher.

It's been seven or eight months now since God approached me from the right side. He opened the eyes of

my soul and I realized how much profit I have gained from this wound, how much reward is waiting for me, how much I have gained.

'I thank you God a thousand times.

I will never cease praising You as long as I live in this world; I will never stop chanting to You, kneeling before You, thanking You for this wound that You gave me.

Your boundless love, inconceivably deep and high, was revealed to me by this wound.

Thanks to Your glory - thanks to Your love - thanks to Your compassion - thanks to Your infinite mercy.

Thanks to You - Thanks to You - Thanks to You.

You are hidden there, in that wound.

Did you really love me, this dirt and stink, that much? Me, this dirt, this stink?

What good did I do to make you love me so much that you gave me this wound as a token of Your great love?

This wave of gratitude lasted three days and three nights and then disappeared. After that I was soared with unutterable joy, I was in an ocean of spiritual happiness and other such feelings.

This I keep as a cornerstone, as a bedrock in my various sorrows, in the various afflictions of this bogus earthly life.

And so I tell you that whenever I am in pain, I am always happy deep down inside me. And when my pains are lessened I feel sad. Still, I am not indifferent to their cure.

It's only now that I understand why all the saints were happy about their sorrows. And I also now realize why the highest of the Apostles boasted of his sufferings, his illness, his cross.

And I also realize why St. John Chrysostom praises Job more when he suffered all the ordeals and while he was patient during his afflictions than when in his earlier life when he was righteous and pious and charitable and hospitable.

Now I understand by experience why all the saints suffered various ordeals of affliction and were tested through these whether they love God. God himself says: 'For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life' (Mt. 7:14).

.....
Our late elder used to tell us that his entire life was a daily martyrdom. He was seldom happy; he was in sorrow night and day, and he was sad, and he cried.

Let me tell you something else as well. I think—at least this is what has been revealed to me—that God offered me a great gift by giving me this wound and these pains. Because the joy has no rewards, but sorrow does. 'Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things' (Lk. 16:25).

So, aiming at that reward, I am patient with the help of God. It's true, physically I might suffer, hurt, be in pain, but deep in my soul joy is what I feel.

Still, I don't neglect the care of my wound, with the help of various medicines, and doctors, and diets, and any reasonable way I think I might be cured.

Yesterday, while the Divine Liturgy was being celebrated, a first-class cantor came to our church and chanted. While he was chanting I said to myself: 'Father, you chant and this you offer to God and thus you are happy. I, on the other hand, have nothing but my pain and suffering to offer to God in order to be shown His mercy.'

Whatever each one of us has to offer, this he will offer to God. Still, joy is very different to sorrow, health from illness, day from night.

Since you claim that you love God, wait for the proof of His love, meaning His Cross. This He will give you during this life, this gift, which is His love.

That is how you understand that God loves you: from the sorrows He gives you.

If we truly want to be His disciples, not only in word but also in deed, we must ascend the Cross just as He, our leader, did.

'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me' (Mt. 16:24).

By the cross He means afflictions and tears.

Whatever each one of us has suffered in his earthly life for Christ's sake, will be revealed on Judgement Day.

And blessed will be he who has many sufferings and a heavy cross to reveal.

May God forgive me for this verbosity of mine.

Blessed be His name now and forever.

With paternal wishes,
Father Ephraim from Katounakia
July 20th, 1989

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