

"You will be exceedingly sorrowful but your sorrow will be turned to joy ..." (St. John 16:20)

SHEPHERD

PASTIR



Monthly newsletter of the Serbian Orthodox Church of the Assumption Fair Oaks, California

God be with you!



MARCH 2020

SHEPHERD



A monthly publication of the Serbian Orthodox church Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary 7777 Sunset Ave, Fair oaks, CA 95628

Mailing Address P.O. Box 383 Fair oaks CA 95628

V. Rev. Protopresbyter Stavrophor Dane Popovic

V. Rev. Protopresbyter Stavrophor William Weir

Church: 916-966-5438 Email: sacserbchurch.org

Fr. Dane 916-966-6276 Cell: 916-606-8808

Editor: V. Rev. Dane Popovic

Written contributions are welcome. Editorial Discretion reserved. Please submit articles and ideas to;

V. Rev. Dane Popovic P.O.Box 383 Fair Oaks, CA 95628



Love God Totally

Love God Totally

As our Lord Jesus Christ said to love God with our whole being r (Matthew 22:37) and following the Tradition of the Fathers to "stand before God with the mind in the heart" (Theophan the Recluse), let us try to learn to pray and live with our entire person, with our body, with our but rather leavens and transforms it in the Risen Christ through the graces offered by the Holy Spirit."

SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR SHEPHERD YEAR \$ 30:00 Monthly \$ 2:50

TURN TO ME TRUE REPENTANCE



Brothers and Sisters in Christ!

Every Lent should become for us a further striving for holiness, for purification, a wrestling and struggling for the soul's improvement. The various Lenten exercises are only means and prerequisites for a richer forgiveness: "Who by fasting of the body dost curb his vices, dost lift up his mind, dost give him strength and reward."

First of all, we must through our efforts, united with the workings of grace, remove the obstacles from our soul. We must renew our incorporation with Christ and with the communion of the Saints; only then can Christ work in us, sanctify us and transform us.

During the Great Lent, we are urged by the Church to sacrifice by going into the desert for 40 days and nights in imitation of our Lord. It is a time to decrease many of the usual worldly activities and distractions and concentrate on our spiritual life.

A desert experience means drawing closer to the Lord by attending divine services, fasting and abstinence, immersing ourselves in the reading of Scripture and the Holy Fathers, along with the frequent reception of the sacraments. All of these spiritual exercises may seem difficult and exhausting, but they are really avenues to

producing a feeling of spiritual exaltation and joy.

The son of God, Jesus Himself, found beneficial and worthwhile to seek isolation by going into the mountains to fast and pray. The penitential practice of a fruitful Lenten season is one that feeds the soul instead of the body. Lent encourages us to get away from worldly distractions and to concentrate on more vital spiritual matters.

For to many people Lent interferes with their personal lifestyles and eating habits. It seems like a bother and a pain. Denial of some pleasure is seriously questioned. Taking on more spiritual exercises in this modern world is difficult and strenuous to some. Many think of Lent as being a liability instead of an asset to one's spiritual life and growth.

Lent invites us to substitute or take in spiritual pleasures for physical ones. Concentration on fasting, prayer and almsgiving increases our receptivity to God and the things that are of God.

Lent is a time for renewal, sacrifice, struggle, increased effort, repentance, and discipline with God's grace to regain the lost paradise which was lost through sin and separation.

In a poll conducted by a religious magazine, the following positive aspects for a more productive Lenten season were given: "praying more often"; "doing more good for others"; "periodic fasting and abstinence from meat"; "attending services more often"; "going to the sacrament of confession"; "giving up something"; "doing

more spiritual reading"; and "giving money to charity and other good causes."

Some of those people felt the need to go on a retreat and to increase their time for spiritual reflection during Lent. One said, "I feel that making a sacrifice helps us to reflect on Jesus and the fact that He gave up his life for us. Is that asking so much to give up junk food, meat and anger during Lent? I think this enhances the quality of our Christianity."

Lent can become a new genesis of a genuine spiritual effort exerted by the conscientious Christian. It presents a unique opportunity for us to consider the meaning that Jesus' life, death and resurrection have for us. The Church urges to simplify our lives and to concentrate on the questions: Am I drawing nearer to God? Am I following His divine will? Am I growing spiritually? Do I pray and fast enough? Is my soul benefitting from the Lenten pilgrimage? Does it really make a difference in my life?

The great season of Lent exists to change us permanently. The spiritual practices exist to create an environment whereby the gospel faith can grow and nourish. In the early Church, the primary purpose of Lent was to prepare the "catechumen" (the newly converted Christian) for baptism, which was performed during the Paschal (Easter) liturgy. Lent is the time for conversion, a changing of our life, as well as for the catechumens.

Individuals are received into the church through baptism and chrismation, but they might not have made this faith a vital part of their lives. Lent encourages us to

begin the journey towards the celebration of the Resurrection (Easter). The catechumens lead us on this pilgrimage, for the practice of Lent originated in the Church as a time of preparation. The Church attempts to revive and renew this ancient practice and tradition for us to share in the joy and fervor of the conversion of the catechumens by the renewal of our own baptismal vows and promises.

The traditional practices of Lent, prayer, fasting, self-denial and almsgiving help us on our sacred journey. Through prayer, we desire to communicate with God in a special way. Through fasting, we make our bodies alert and proclaim our independence of life's necessities and renew our dependence on the Lord.

Through self-denial, we "fast" from entertainment, amusements, pleasures and dancing, in order to deny ourselves worldly things and embrace heavenly thoughts. Through almsgiving, we share with those in need, the poor, and volunteer our time and talents to serve, instead of being served, as the Lord commanded in His ministry.

The Church has not changed these traditional Lenten observances and practices. They are urged and encouraged for all so that something new and fresh will revitalize our faith. It is hoped that through these "holy" practices, that a last-ing change will occur with the grace of God in our lives. If Lent is faithfully observed, a new life in Christ will victoriously emerge at Easter when we joyfully celebrate Christ's Resurrection with a greater awareness of the Risen Lord in our personal lives.

Protopresbiter Dane Popovic

Vratite se kmeni kroz Pokajanje!



Draga Braćo i sestre u Hristu.

Svaki post treba da bude borba za svetost, očišćenje, borba za poboljšanje stanja duše.

U postu upražnjavamo suzdržavanje i više se molimo za oprostaj grehova: "Ko postom ukročava telo svoje, podiže um svoj, dobija snagu i nagradu".

Kao prvo moramo kroz naš trud da se sjedinimo sa Božjom blagodat, i tako otklonimo nepoželjno za dušu. Moramo da obnovimo jedinstvo sa Hristom i svetima, samo tada Hristos može da radi u nama, da nas prosveti i preobrazi.

Za vreme Velikog Posta naša crkva apeluje na nas da kao što je Hristos otišao 40 dana u pustinju i mi sebe žrtvujemo da smanjimo svakodnevne aktivnosti zabave i da se posvetimo duhovnom životu. Pustinjsko iskustvo za nas je, da se približimo Bogu kroz prisustvo crkvenih bogosluženja za vreme posta, *uzdržavanje od hrane, čitanje Svetog pisma i život svetih otaca, primanje*

svetih tajni. Sve ovo navedeno može izgledati teško i zamarajuće ali svako ovo donosi duhovno uzvišenje i duhovnu radost.

Sin Božiji, Isus Hristos je pronašao za dobro, da se izoluje od ljudi otišavši u pustinju da posti i da se posveti molitvi. Uzdržavanje i samokritičnost za vreme posta hrane dušu umesto tela. Post nas podstiče da se udaljimo od svetskih zabava i posvetimo se duhovnim stvarima.

Za mnoge ljude post se ne uklapa sa njihovim stilom života i načinom ishrane. Post im izgleda kao nešto bolno i dosadno. Odstupanje od nekih uživanja je ozbiljno.

Upražnjavanje duhovnih stvari je veoma teško u ovom modernom svetu. Mnogi misle da je post štetan umesto koristan za duhovno uzrastanje.

Post nas poziva da zamenimo telesna uživanja za duhovna. Da se skoncentrišemo na molitvu i dobra dela i svega što je Bogu ugodno.

Post je za obnovu, žrtvu, pojačan rad na sebi, pokajanje i disciplina i sve to uz Božju blagodat da se povrati izgubljeni raj koji smo izgubili kroz greh i odvajanje od Boga.

U jednim religijskim novinama

objavljena su mišljenja ljudi o pozitivnosti Posta. "više se ljudi mole, čine dobra dela drugima, uzdržavaju se od masne hrane, prisustvuju više svetim Bogoslužjenjima nego obično, ispovedanje, spremnost na odricanje, više čitaju Sv. Pismo, novčano pomažu onima kojima je potrebna pomoć itd.."

Neki ljudi misle da je potrebno pohađati religiozne seminare u toku posta. Neko kaže: "Kada se žrtvujemo to nam pomže da se setimo Hrista i činjenice da je On žrtvovao svoj život za nas. Pa zar je moguće da je teško za nas da se odrekemo određene hrane (kao mesa i mleka itd...) i ljutnje za vreme posta? Post poboljšava kvalitete našeg Hrišćanstva.

Post je izražaj duhovnog truda Hrišćana da sagleda značajnost Hristovog života, smrti i vaskrsenja za nas. Crkva nas uči da uprostimo naš život i da postavljamo sebi pitanja: Dali ja pripadam Hristu? Dali poštujem i pratim Njegovu Božansku volju? Da li uzrastam duhovno? Da li postim i molim se dovoljno? Sta moja duša dobija kroz post? Da li post zaista čini razlike u mom životu?

Veliki post postoji da nas promeni za svagda. Citanje Svetog Pisma nas duhovno hrani. U davna vremena glavni razlog posta bio je da se Katihumeni (Oglašeni) oni koji se pripremaju za krštenje pripreme za Krštenje koje je vršeno za vreme Vaskršnje Liturgije. Post je vreme za promenu našeg života na bolje.

Novokrštene osobe su primile veru ali možda ne i praksu posta. Post nas podstiče na put ka proslavi Vaskrsenja Hristovog. Katihumeni se uvode u ovu praksu koja je vršena od početka u ranoj crkvi. Crkva nas podseća da obnovimo radost našeg krštenja i obećanja tada datih.

Tradicionalni post: Molitva, uzdržavanje od hrane, odricanje naslada, pomoć drugima nas void na sveti put. Kroz molitvu mi žlimo da se približimo Bogu. Kroz uzdržavanje od hrane jačamo naše telo i pokazujemo da je Bog važniji od hrane.

Kroz discipline i uzdržavanje od užitka ovoga sveta uzdižemo sebe ka nebeskim mislima. Kroz novčanu pomoć pomažemo siromašnima, služimo drugima umesto da oni služe nama a to je sve što Gospod traži kroz svoju Misiju.

Crkva nije promenila post i njegovo upražnjavanje. Post je tu da nas podstakne na nešto novo što će obnoviti našu veru. Veruje se da ce kroz ove "svete" radnje doprineti promeni našeg života naravno uz Božju pomoć.

Ako se post prati pravilno osetićemo novi život u Hristu na dan Njegovog Vaskrsenja i cenićemo više Vaskrslog Boga u naših ličnim životima.

Protojerej-stavrofor Dane Popovic

POMOZITE VAŠU CRKVVU

Forgiveness Sunday!

The evening of Forgiveness Sunday marks the beginning of the season of Great and Holy Lent. In the preceding weeks, the Church alerts us to the nearness of the Lenten season by providing us with a series of four preparatory Sundays, including Cheesefare Sunday, which is also called the Sunday of Forgiveness. If we have been attentive to the appeal of the Church in the Sundays preceding Lent, then we have been preparing ourselves to fast. If we prepare ourselves properly for Lent, and if we submit to the disciplines that it proposes to us, then every Lenten season should be fresh and different from the last because of the advancement in the spiritual life we have experienced.

Lent was given to us as a gift by the Lord through His Holy Church. The Lord gave it to us because He loves us too much to leave us the way we are. He sees in us everything that we can become as a holy people and invites us to press forward and lay hold of the fullness of the Resurrection Life of His Son. Lent is one of the important means that the Lord uses to bring about the complete transformation of His people into the image of Christ. What God does not see in Lent is the simple rehearsal of the outward aspects of Lenten disciplines year after year with no resulting spiritual progress. If we experience this kind of "Lent" as boring and alienating, then imagine for a moment what the Holy Spirit thinks of it. The Holy Spirit is certainly capable of being grieved or disappointed; Scripture is very clear about this. If, however, we embrace the Lenten disciplines as a way to resist sin in our lives and to become more attentive to the quiet voice of the Holy Spirit, then Lent becomes anything but dull.

Called To Fast As A People

We might be tempted sometimes to think of

Lent as a private affair. Even if we recognize the value in it, we still may say to ourselves, "If I do not live Lent to the fullest, it is my loss, and nobody else's concern." This kind of thinking has started to affect a number of people in our parishes because of the strong influence of individualism in our North American culture. The truth of the matter is that we are called to pass through Lent as a people, not as a society of individuals. When we choose not to participate in the transforming life of Lent, we make a choice that has a concrete negative impact on our local parish and, in some deeper way, on the whole Church. If fasting were a question of individual choice, then the Church would not have prescribed seasons and days of fasting for the whole People of God. The Holy Spirit led the Church to institute these seasons and days precisely because we are called to fast as a people. Having understood the necessity of fasting together, we must also be aware of exactly from what we must fast.

From What Are We Fasting?

On this Sunday of Forgiveness, the Church is asking us to fast from unforgiveness and bitterness. This of course is an ongoing process, both because we are hurt often, and because our forgiveness must continually be deepened. Fasting from bitterness does (not imply deliberately placing ourselves in positions in which we know we will get hurt. It does mean, however, seeking the highest degree of reconciliation possible in any situation. It also entails having a spiritual life that is rich enough to supply the grace needed to forgive unconditionally in cases where only limited outward reconciliation is possible. The Church reminds us of [this kind of fasting at the very beginning of Lent because, if we do not submit to this particular discipline, then everything else we do in Lent can be lost very easily.

We may be only too familiar with the impli-

cations Lent has both for the amount and the type of food we consume. "Consume" is the key word here, since that is exactly what we need to stop doing. The Fathers of the Church remind us to get up from the table knowing we could have eaten more and in a state of readiness for prayer. The change which our bodies feel instantly when we begin a Lenten diet reminds us that there is something special happening on a spiritual level. The hunger that we feel when we eat less or when we fast in preparation for the celebration of the Liturgy of the Pre-Sanctified Gifts can be transformed into a hunger for God's grace and a longing for our heavenly home. Of course, we experience our heavenly home already in the context of liturgical worship. This is why there are more services during Lent, and they are usually longer: we are being invited to become more familiar with our home, which is the Church. Embracing the Church as our true home is often a struggle, since it necessarily involves the purification of the heart. When the heart is wounded by sin, it cannot clearly remember that its home is in God and that the Church is the natural place for us to know and experience Him. Lent is one of the most powerful medicines prescribed by the Lord for the healing of the heart. Only a healed heart can have the constant memory of God of which the Fathers so often speak and to which we are all called.

What is the sorrow that Jesus speaks of here in the Gospel of St. John? It is the fact that man has rejected his Creator and Saviour and crucified Him. This should not surprise us. The original sin of mankind was to disobey God the Creator in a vain attempt to make himself "equal to God." Having been disobedient in the beginning it is not surprising that mankind should crucify God who comes to him now not as the Creator but as the Saviour. The presence of Christ on earth threatened and still threatens the veiy notion that

has been instilled in fallen human nature from Adam and Eve to the present: the notion that mankind is equal to God and able to pass judgement upon Him. Fallen man does indeed pass judgement: the judgement of the Cross. In our pre-occupation with symbols we often forget that the death of our Lord on the Cross is a very real death in every sense of the word. We may often be tempted to see Jesus as an actor in a divine play of which he knows the script and the outcome. But we must realize that in the Incarnation the Lord takes on our relationship the Father; a relationship based on faith - the promise of things hoped for - to quote the Apostle Paul - not on certain knowledge. To be sure the faith of Christ is perfect but it is still faith that the Father will not abandon Him that leads Him to the Cross.

The Apostle Paul speaks of this to the Philippians: *"though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross."* (Phil. 2:6-8) St. John Chrysostom describes the Lord Jesus; *"emptying"* of Himself as a King laying aside his royal purple garment - he remains a king still but appears as one of his subjects. St. Isaac of Nineveh tells us that when God loves us. He does not remove temptations and suffering but provides that which is necessary to prevail over them and make our sorrow ultimately the source of our joy. Think of the Hebrew children cast into the fire by the evil King Nebuchadnezzar because they refused to worship the golden idol he had set up. God had seemingly abandoned them to their fate but in his love He visits them, sending the "fourth man with

Liturgy of the Presanctified gifts

The As we already have seen, the Eucharistic Divine Liturgy is not celebrated in the Orthodox Church on lenten weekdays. In order for the faithful to sustain their lenten effort by participation in Holy Communion, the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is served. The service is an ancient one in the Orthodox Church. We officially hear about it in the canons of the seventh century, which obviously indicates its development at a much earlier date.

On all days of the holy fast of Lent, except on the Sabbath, the Lord's Day, and the holy day of the Annunciation, the Liturgy of the Presanctified is to be served. (Canon 52, Quinisext, 692).

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is an evening service. It is the solemn lenten Vespers with the administration of Holy Communion added to it. There is no consecration of the Eucharistic gifts at the presanctified liturgy. Holy Communion is given from the Eucharistic gifts sanctified on the previous Sunday at the celebration of the Divine Liturgy, unless, of course, the feast of the Annunciation should intervene; hence its name of "presanctified."

The Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts is served on Wednesday and Friday evenings, although some churches may celebrate it only on one of these days. It comes in the evening after a day of spiritual preparation and total abstinence. The faithful who are unable to make the effort of total fasting because of weakness or work, however, normally eat a light lenten meal in the early morning.

During the psalms of Vespers, the presanctified gifts are prepared for communion. They are transferred from the altar table where they have been reserved since the Divine Liturgy,

and are placed on the table of oblation. After the evening hymn, the Old Testament scriptures of Genesis and Proverbs are read, between which the celebrant blessed the kneeling congregation with a lighted candle and the words: "The Light of Christ illumines all", indicating that all wisdom is given by Christ in the Church through the scriptures and sacraments. This blessing was originally directed primarily to the catechumens, those preparing to be baptized on Easter, who attended the service only to the time of the communion of the faithful.

After the readings, the evening Psalm 141 is solemnly sung once again with the offering of incense. Then, after the litanies of intercession and those at which the catechumens were dismissed in former days, the presanctified Eucharistic gifts are brought to the altar in a solemn, silent procession. The song of the entrance calls the faithful to communion.

Now the heavenly powers (i.e., the angels) do minister invisibly with us. For behold the King of Glory enters. Behold the mystical sacrifice, all fulfilled, is ushered in. Let us with faith and love draw near that we may be partakers of everlasting life. Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

SUPPORT YOUR CHURCH

SVETI 40 MUČENIKA U SEVASTIJI



Svi ovi behu vojnici u rimskoj vojsci no verovahu tvrdo u Gospoda Isusa. Kada našta gonjenje u vreme Likinija, oni behu izvedeni na sud pred vojvodu, i ovaj im zapreti oduzeti čast vojničku, na što odgovori jedan od njih, Sv. Kandid: "ne samo čast vojničku no i tela naša uzmi od nas; nšta nam nije draže i časnije od Hrista Boga našega". Posle toga naredi vojvoda slugama da kamenjem biju svete mučenike. No kada sluge bacahu kamenje na hrišćane, kamenje se vraćase i padaše na njih same, te ljuto ih izudara. Jedan kamen pade vojvodi na lice i skrši mu zube. Mučitelji, ljuto kao zverovi, vezaše svete mučenike i baciše ih u jezero, i postaviše stražu unaokolo, da nijedan ne iziđe. Beše strašan mraz, i jezero se ledaše okolo tela mučeničkih. Da bi muke bile jače, Mučitelji zagrejaše i osvetliše kupatilo ukraj jezera, na dogled zamrznutim stradalnicima, ne bi li kako prelestili koga od njih da se odrekne Hrista i prizna idole rimske. Zaista, jedan se prelesti, iziđe iz vode i uđe u kupatilo. No gle, noću pade neobična svetlost s neba, koja razgreje vodu u jezeru i tela mučenika, a s tom svetlošću

spustiše se s neba 39 venaca na glave njihove. To vide jedan stražar s obale, pa se svuču, ispovedi ime Gospoda Isusa, i uđe u jezero, da bi se on udostojio onog četrdesetoga venca mesto izdajnika. I zaista na njega siđe taj poslednji venac. Sutradan iznenadi se ceo grad kad vide mučenike žive. Tada zle sudije narediše, te im prebiše golene, i baciše tela njihova u vodu, da ih hrišćani ne uzmu. Trećega dana javiše se mučenici mesnom episkopu Petru i pozvaše ga da sabere po vodi i izvadi mošti njihove. Iziđe episkop po tamnoj noći sa krilom svojim, i videše na vodi gde se svelte mošti mučeničke. I svaka kost koja beše odvojena od tela njihovih, ispliva na površinu i svetljaše se kao sveća. Pokupiše ih i časno sahraniše. A duše ovih mučenika odoše Gospodu Isusu, namučenom za sve nas, i vaskrsлом sa slavom. Časno postradaše i neprolaznom slavom se uvenčaše 320. god.

Stewardship Can Help!

The following tragic but true story occurred on October 17, 1985.

On Sunday morning, it was reported that a certain man was driving down I-20 near Shreveport, Louisiana. As he drove he noticed a vehicle in distress. He decided to be a good Samaritan and stop to help this driver push his vehicle onto the shoulder of the road and out of danger. As he began to assist the driver of this vehicle, the good Samaritan was suddenly side-swiped by another car that came up behind him, knocking him into the highway, where a third car hit him and fatally injured him.

The reason I began with this tragic story is because, two days before this accident happened, I shared a friendly conversation with this good Samaritan. Moreover, during this conversation he intimated to me how, "after a string of hard luck incidents, things were beginning to look up", and he was beginning to feel good about his life. So, you can imagine, when I saw his picture in the obituary column several days after that conversation, I was utterly speechless. Quite frankly, I could not believe my eyes.

I am certain that every one of us who has spent any length of time on this earth can relate to this story. I am certain that everyone of us has lived through similar sobering experiences. In some cases such incidents must have functioned to make us take a long look at who we are and where we are going. Most all of us live as if we were indestructible; most all of us live as if we were going to be here forever; most all of us live as if we will never die; most all of us are like the captain of the Titanic who on its maiden voyage is reported to have said, "I can't imagine any condition which would make this ship flounder". Alas, as we all well

know, the Titanic tragically sank on its maiden voyage, serving to effectively remind the entire world that everything is temporary on this earth.

"COMES ONE FELL STROKE"

In the funeral service, during the chanting of one of the eight troparia, the priest sings the following very powerful verse: "Comes one fell stroke and death in turn prevails over all". In St. James' Epistle, James admonishes the rich and arrogant in a similar message: "Because like the flower in the grass he will pass away," (JM 1:10) meaning of course, that as marvelous as life seems sometimes, and as indestructible as we may feel, life is unpredictable; life is temporary; life is short; life is abundantly saturated with tragedy. Nothing anyone of us can do can efface the tragedy and temporal nature of life. In the end, as the poet Walt Whitman once wrote, "The grass will cover it all".

THE VICTORY OF LIFE

Obviously, that is the tragedy of life. But there is a conquest, a victory and mastery over the thoroughly depressing, tragic reality we know as death. Man begins to find it as he understands two simple yet profound words: "Jesus Christ". An understanding of these two words, and their personal application can free man from the oppressive, overbearing reality of his mortality, and vanquish the seemingly hopeless, mind-boggling thoughts that come to mind when something tragic touches his life. Writing to his Church in Philippi, St. Paul wrote, "I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. I can do all things in Him (Jesus Christ) who strengthens me." (Phil 4:12-13)

STEWARDSHIP CAN HELP

Unfortunately, most of us have not personally apprehended the wisdom that fills St. Paul's joyful proclamation. Most of us have not under-

stood what Jesus Christ can do for us. As I suggested above, most of us tend to live as if we were indestructible.

Realizing this, our Church has adopted a program known as "Stewardship" to assist its faithful in developing a fuller understanding of these two blessed words: "Jesus Christ". The Church comprehends that life in the fast lane, the lane where many of us spend most of our time, is not exactly conducive toward nurturing a humble, contrite Christ-centered heart.

"Stewardship" is a means toward an end. The Church has employed the concept of "Stewardship" to remind its faithful that "man does not live by bread alone" (Deut 8:3). Instead, man is called to live a Christ-like existence, above the bland, the mediocre, the mundane, and the tragic. . . conditions he has grown to accept as normal.

"Stewardship" assists man in developing the kind of mind-set that influenced James to write, "Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the father of lights ... Of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of His Creatures." (JAM 1:16-17) God calls us to use our time, talents and treasures towards His glory and our salvation. As man apprehends this wisdom, and makes it his own, he becomes a good steward and is enabled to "do all things in him who strengthens me."

THINKING AHEAD

The story is told of a certain passenger on the famous ship, the Queen Mary, who was overheard to ask the captain, "How long would it take this ship to stop?" To this question the captain is said to have responded, "If you were the captain of this ship, you would have to think at least two miles ahead, because it takes at least two miles distance to stop this ship." Like the captain in the above story, whose training had taught him to always think ahead,

Stewardship helps us look ahead. It helps us plan for the predictable and unpredictable, the tragic and not so tragic, the good and the bad. The Bible teaches that one day each of us will stand before the judgment seat, and God will ask us: "What did you do with my time, talents and treasures: that same time, talents and treasures that I gave you?" And according to how we respond, we may hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant . . . enter into the joy of your master" (MT 25:21) or "cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; where men weep and gnash their teeth". (MT 25:30)

I pray that we all hear the former. Stewardship can help.

Fr. Charles Joanides

Continued from page 13,

On the night of the Last Supper our Lord Jesus Christ told His Disciples, "In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." St. John 16:33.

When we experience these tribulations, these sorrows, in our lives, let us run to the Cross of the Lord through which we have been bound by the mystery of Holy Baptism. Beneath it let us beseech the Saviour not to remove our sorrows but to help us pass through them through the mystery of His Cross. Let us seek His grace and mercy while it may be found through repentance. And through repentance may our sorrow be turned into joy. Amen

"Your Sorrow Will Turn To Joy"

What is the sorrow that Jesus speaks of here in the Gospel of St. John? It is the fact that man has rejected his Creator and Saviour and crucified Him. This should not surprise us. The original sin of mankind was to disobey God the Creator in a vain attempt to make himself "equal to God." Having been disobedient in the beginning it is not surprising that mankind should crucify God who comes to him now not as the Creator but as the Saviour. The presence of Christ on earth threatened and still threatens the very notion that has been instilled in fallen human nature from Adam and Eve to the present: the notion that mankind is equal to God and able to pass judgement upon Him.

Fallen man does indeed pass judgement: the judgement of the Cross. In our preoccupation with symbols we often forget that the death of our Lord on the Cross is a very real death in every sense of the word. We may often be tempted to see Jesus as an actor in a divine play of which he knows the script and the outcome. But we must realize that in the Incarnation the Lord takes on our relationship the Father; a relationship based on faith - the promise of things hoped for - to quote the Apostle Paul - not on certain knowledge. To be sure the faith of Christ is perfect but it is still faith that the Father will not abandon Him that leads Him to the Cross.

The Apostle Paul speaks of this to the Philippians: "though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross." (Phil. 2:6-8) St. John Chrysostom describes the Lord Je-

sus; "emptying" of Himself as a King laying aside his royal purple garment - he remains a king still but appears as one of his subjects.

St. Isaac of Nineveh tells us that when God loves us. He does not remove temptations and suffering but provides that which is necessary to prevail over them and make our sorrow ultimately the source of our joy. Think of the Hebrew children cast into the fire by the evil King Nebuchadnezzar because they refused to worship the golden idol he had set up. God had seemingly abandoned them to their fate but in his love He visits them, sending the "fourth man with the face as the Son of God" into the fire with them and transforms the fire into refreshing dew. Thus their sorrow was turned into rejoicing.

So also with the Lord Jesus Christ on the Cross. Although in His agony the Saviour cries out "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachtani" - *My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?* - the first verse of Psalm 22 - the Father does not abandon Him. Rather because of the obedience of Christ to death the Father acts on the Faith of the Son and raises Him from death - turning the sorrow of the Cross into the joy of the empty tomb. The Cross becomes for all time not the symbol of sorrow but the sign of victory from which the Lord reigns as the "King of Glory."

Again to quote the Apostle Paul, "Therefore God has highly exalted him and given Him the name which is above every other name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2:9-11)

Continued on page 12,

DA BI SE HRIŠĆANI UDOSTOJILI NEBESKIH POHVALA OD BOGA I ANĐELA, MORAJU BRIŽLJIVO I PAŽLJIVO VODITI BORBU U ARENJI OVOGA SVETA

Nastavak...

Ako, dakle, telesna ljubav tako odvaja od svake druge ljubavi, koliko će se onda oni, koji su se udostojili da stupe u zajednicu sa onim nebeskim i željenim Svetim Duhom, odrešiti od svake ljubavi prema svetu, i sve će im se činiti suvišnim, jer su nadvladani nebeskom željom i najtešnje zavise od nje; tamo su njihove želje, tamo su njihove pomisli, tamo oni žive, tamo odlazi njihova misao, tamo svagda obitava njihov um, nadvladan božanskom i nebeskom ljubavlju i duhovnom čežnjom. Posle toga, ljubljena braćo, kada nam predstoje tolika dobra i kada je toliko obećanja koja nam je obznanio Gospod, udaljimo od sebe sve teškoće, odvratimo se od svake ljubavi prema svetu i posvetimo se traganju i čežnji za onim jedinim blagom, da bismo dospeli u takvo stanje, da zadobijemo tu neizrecivu ljubav Duha, za koju nam je blaženi Pavle savetovao da joj pohitamo, govoreći: *Držite se ljubavi* (1. Kor. 14; 1), da bi nam bilo moguće da se, posle svoje okorelosti, izmenimo desnicom Višnjega i da budemo ranjeni ljubavlju božanskog Duha, da dospemo u krotkost i duhovni spokoj. Gospod sa velikim milosrdem čovekoljubivo brine o nama čim se u potpunosti obratimo k Njemu, istrgnuviši iz sebe sve što je tome protivno. Čak i ako se mi, usled svog velikog neznanja, nezrelosti i poroka ukorenjenih u nama i odvrćamo od života, i ako samima sebi postavljamo mnoštvo prepreka i ne želimo da se uistinu pokajemo, On je dugotrpeljiv prema nama i pokazuje nam veliko milosrđe, čim mi, obrativši se, pristupimo k Njemu i prosvetlimo našeg unutrašnjeg čoveka, da se naša lica ne bi postidela na dan suda. Ako nam ovo izgleda teško – usled surovosti vrlinskih

podviga ili, bolje rečeno, usled nagovora i saveta protivnika – Gospod je i dalje milosrdan i dugotrpeljiv, očekujući naše obraćanje, i ako grešimo, On to podnosi, očekujući naše pokajanje; ako padamo, ne stidi se da nas ponovo prihvati, kao što je i rekao prorok: *Ko padne, ne ustaje li? Ko zađe, ne vraća li se* (Jerem. 8; 4)? Mi, pak, čim se razbudimo, zadbivši dobru misao, neposredno pohitajmo da se obratimo Njemu tražeći Njegovu pomoć, a On je spreman da nas spase, jer, srazmerno našim snagama, očekuje da naša dobra volja, koja potiče od vere i usrdnosti, bude plameno usremljena ka Njemu, i svaki napredak On sam stvara u nama. I zato ljubljeni, postarajmo se da kao čeda Božija, svukavši svako predubedenje, nerad i lenjost, postanemo odvažni i spremni da koračamo Njegovim tragovima; ne odlažimo to iz dana u dan, na šta nas navodi prorok, jer ne znamo kada ćemo izaći iz tela. Velika su i neizreciva obećanja data hrišćanima, tako velika da se sa verom i bogatstvom same duše ne mogu uporediti ni sva slava i lepote neba i zemlje, ni svi ostali njihovi ukrasi i raznolikosti, i bogatstvo, i krasota, i naslađivanje vidljivim. Prema tome, pored takvih podsticaja i obećanja Gospodnjih, kako da ne poželim da u celini pristupimo Gospodu i da Mu posvetimo same sebe, povrh svega ostalog, tako što ćemo se, prema Jevanđelju, odreći i svoje duše i zavoleti jedino Njega, ne ljubeći pri tom ništa drugo? Eto, sve nam je to darovano, ali i kakva još slava pored toga! Koliko je bilo Gospodnjih promišljanja o nama u vreme Otaca i Proroka! Koliko nam je obećanjaobznanjeno! Koliko podsticaja! Koliko je bilo Gospodnje milosrđe prema nama od samog početka! Najzad, u vreme Svog dolaska, On je neizrecivu dobrotu prema nama pokazao i Svojim raspećem da bi nas, kada se obratimo, vratio u život. Mi se, međutim, još ne rastajemo sa svojom samovoljom, sa ljubavlju prema svetu, sa rđavim predubedenjima i navikama, i posredstvom toga pokazujemo se kao maloverni, pa čak i kao neverni! I pored svega toga, Gospod ostaje milostiv prema nama, nevidljivo nas čuvajući i

uspokojavajući, do kraja nas ne prepuštajući, prema našim grehovima, poroku i svetovnim zabludama, ne dopuštajući nam, po Svojoj velikoj blagosti i dugotrpljenju, da propadnemo, budno motreći hoćemo li se jednom obratiti k Njemu.

Plašim se, međutim, da će se na nama koji živimo tako što sve zanemarujemo i rukovodimo se predrasudama, vremenom ispuniti apostolska izreka, odnosno: *Prezireš bogatstvo Njegove dobrote i krotkosti i dugotrpljenja, ne znajući da te dobrota Božija na pokajanje vodi* (Rim. 2; 4)? Ukoliko, pored Njegove dobrote, dugotrpljenja i krotkosti, umnožimo broj grehova, i svojim neradom i nipoštaštvom pripremimo sebi najtežu osudu, na nama će se ispuniti apostolske reči: *Svojom upornošću i nepokajanim srcem sabiraš sebi gnev za dan gneva i otkrivanja pravednoga suda Boga* (Rim. 2; 5). Velika je i neopisiva dobrota Božija, neizrecivo je Božije dugotrpljenje prema ljudskom rodu, samo ukoliko poželimo da se probudimo i ako se potrudimo da se u potpunosti okrenemo Bogu, da bi nam bilo moguće da zadobijemo spasenje. Ako, pak, želiš da poznaš Božije dugotrpljenje i veliki dobrotu Božiju, tome možemo da se naučimo iz bogonadahnutih Pisama. Pogledaj Izrailjce, od kojih potiču Oci; njima su bila data obećanja, *njihovo je bogoslužjenje i zavet, od njih je Hristos po telu* (v. Rim. 9; 4-5). Koliko su oni grešili? Koliko su se puta odvrćali? Bog ih, međutim, na kraju nije ostavio, nego ih je, radi njihove koristi, na kratko vreme prepuštao kaznama, želeći da patnjom umekša njihova otvrdla srca. On im se obraćao, budio ih, slao im proroke. Koliko je vremena bio dugotrpeljiv prema njima, kada su grešili i žalostili Ga? One koji bi se preobratali prihvatao je sa radošću, a kada bi ponovo otpali, nije ih napuštao, nego ih je kroz proroke pozivao da se opet preobrate. I mada su mnogo puta otpadali od Njega i ponovo Mu se vraćali, On ih je svaki put blago-

naklono susretao i čovekoljubivo prihvatao, dok najzad nisu pali u veliki greh i položili ruke na svog sopstvenog Gospodara Kojega su, prema predanju Otaca i svetih proroka, očekivali kao svog Iskupitelja i Spasitelja, Cara i Proroka. Međutim, kada je On došao, nisu Ga prihvatili; naprotiv, izložili su Ga velikim porugama i najzad, na krstu, predali Ga smrtnoj kazni. Ovim velikim ogorčenjem i prekomernim prestupom, njihovi preumnoženi grehovi dostigli su svoju punoću. Stoga su na kraju bili ostavljeni, jer se od njih udaljio Sveti Duh, kada se pocepala zavesa. Zato je i njihov hram bio predat neznabošcima, bio srušen i pretvoren u pustoš, prema odluci Gospodnjoj *da neće ostati ni kamen na kamenu koji se neće razmetnuti* (Mt. 24; 2). Na taj način su konačno bili predati neznabošcima i razvevani po čitavoj zemlji, postavši tada zarobljenici careva, i beše im zapovedeno da se više ne vraćaju u svoju zemlju.

Tako i sada, milostivi i blagi Bog prema svakome pokazuje Svoje dugotrpljenje. Iako mnogo puta od svakoga vidi ogorčenja, On čuti i očekuje hoće li se čovek vremenom prenuti i promeniti, da Ga više ne ogorčuje, a sa velikom ljubavlju i radošću prihvata svakoga koji se obratio od greha, jer ovako kaže: *Radost biva zbog jednoga grešnika koji se kaje* (Lk. 15; 10) *i nije volja Oca vašega nebeskoga da propadne jedan od ovih malih* (Mt. 18; 14), najmanjih. Međutim, kada neko – i pored velikog dugotrpljenja i milosrđa Božijeg prema njemu, kada ga Bog ne predaje kazni zbog svakog grehovnog spoticanja, tajnog ili javnog, nego, videvši ga, čuti i kao da očekuje pokajanje – sam dospe do velikog nehata, počne da dodaje greh na greh, da pridružuje jedan nedar drugome i da na jednom pregrešenju zida drugo ispunjavajući meru grehova, on najzad pada u takav greh iz kojega ne može da ispliva, nego pada i, prepustivši se nečastivome, na kraju propada.

Tako se dogodilo i Sodomljanima. Oni su mnogo grešili i nisu se kajali, da bi na kraju nečistom pomišlju prema anđelima, pozelevši da sa njima počine muželoštvo, pali u tako dubok greh da više nije bilo mesta pokajanju; na kraju su bili odbačeni, jer su ispunili, pa čak i prevršili meru grehova. Zbog toga su, prema Božijem sudu, bili spaljeni ognjem. Isto se događalo i u Nojevo vreme;

Nastavice se....

Nema greha koji je veći od Nema greha koji je veći od Ljubavi Božje

Iguman NIKON Atonski

Mi ne idemo na Nebo ne zato što grešimo. Znajte da je jedini bezgrešan bio Hristos i niko drugi. Ne idemo na Nebo ne zato što činimo grehe. Sve dok smo živi i dok su nam oči otvorene, grešimo. Otići ćemo na Nebo, jer dajemo sve od sebe da postanemo ono što Hristos želi da budemo, i takav napor će nas spasiti. Da li možemo pobediti iskušenje greha ili ne, to ne zavisi od nas, nego od Božje milosti.

Moramo moliti Gospoda da nam pošalje Svoju blagodat. Ako nam On pošalje Svoju blagodat, nećemo se ljutiti, počinuti preljubu, krasti i tako dalje. Ako Bog ne pošalje Svoju blagodat, nećemo biti u stanju da prevaziđemo svoje grehe. To ne znači da mi nismo ono što Hristos želi da budemo. Borimo se, ratujemo protiv svojih greha. Vidimo svoje grehe i mislimo da ako prestanemo da ih činimo, nećemo grešiti ni razumom, ni očima, ni ušima...

Ne smemo pasti u očaj i reći: „Ja uvek upadam u zamku istog greha. Tako da neću moći ništa postići: ne radim ništa!“ Mnogo radimo: ispovedamo se, smirujemo se, kajemo se... To je ono što nas spasava, a ne vrlina u kojoj smo uspeli. Đavo takođe poseduje vrline. Jednom, učinivši nešto dobro, otišao sam da kažem starcu o tome. Tada sam bio iskušenik. Kad me je ugledao, odmah je shvatio u čemu je stvar i, pre nego što sam mogao da kažem neku reč, rekao je: „Dete moje, zašto bismo se hvalili i bili

ponosni? Time što postimo? Nikada ne možemo postiti više od đavola, jer on nikada ništa ne jede. On je najveći posnik. Ili zato što smo budni i malo spavamo? Ne možemo ostati budni više od lukavog, jer on nikad ne spava. Da li se uzdržavamo, ostajemo celomudreni zbog ljubavi prema Hristu? Imamo li tu vrlinu? Ali nikada nećemo postati celomudreniji od đavola, jer on ne želi telesna zadovoljstva: ne trebaju mu jer nema telo.“

Bio sam šokiran! Bez obzira koliko vrlina imamo, nikada nećemo moći steći one koje đavo poseduje. Ali da li će ove vrline spasiti đavola? Ne; ni nas one neće spasiti.

Šta hoću ovim da kažem? Da ne treba da budemo puni vrlina? Ne. Borićemo se za sticanje vrlina. Pravi hrišćanin je uvek dobrodeteljan, ali nije svaka dobrodeteljna osoba obavezno hrišćanin. Među budistima, hindusima, Jevrejima, protestantima postoje dobrodeteljni ljudi. Ali vrline same po sebi ne spasavaju. Bićemo spaseni pokajanjem i smirenjem. Smirenjem našeg uma.

Ali smirenje nije samo u izgovaranju praznih reči kao što su: „Šta sam? Ja nisam ništa!“ i pretvaranju da si nesrećan samo zato da bi ti ljudi rekli: „Ne, ne, ti si dobrodeteljan; gledaj, imaš takve i takve vrline...“.

Pretvarajući se da smo smireni, teramo druge da nas hvale. Pravo smirenje nije samo izgovaranje smirenih reči, već biti smirenomudra osoba, imati smiren duh i ne

misлити da smo bolji od drugih, jer se svako zlo rađa prvenstveno u našim umovima. Ako duhovno padnemo ponovo i ponovo, ne treba očajavati. Postoji sveštenik, postoji njegov epitrahilj, postoji pokajanje... To će nas spasiti – i ništa više. Pokajanje i smirenje će nas spasiti. Đavo se toga boji. On ima puno vrlina, ali nedostaje mu jedna – smirenje, a to je stvorilo pakao i donelo duhovnu pustoš.

Kako bi pokazao snagu smirenja, kako kaže Sveto Pismo, Hristos je sišao s Neba na zemlju, ponizio se i bio poslušan do smrti (Fil 2, 8). Smirio se do tačke u kojoj je pristao da bude razapet. Ovakvo smirenje nam je potrebno za naše spasenje.

Trudimo se da ne padnemo u greh, ali Bog namerno dozvoljava da padnemo kako bismo stekli smirenje, i dok plaćemo zbog greha koji smo počinili, Bog nas kruniše smirenjem zbog naše borbe sa grehom. Stoga nikada ne smemo očajavati. Postavite sebi pravilo da više ne ponavljate svoje grehe govoreći: „Neću se više ljutiti, neću raditi ovo ili ono...“ A onda recite: „Gospode Isuse Hriste, pomiluj me grešnog!“ I priklonite glavu pod epitrahilj sveštenika.

Šta smo zaista stekli, shvatićemo kada dođe vreme da se predstavimo Bogu. Čovek meri stvari na jedan način, ali Bog meri na drugi način.

Nikada ne treba očajavati. Ako nešto niste postigli, to ne znači da niste uspeli. Nema greha koji je veći od ljubavi Božje; nema greha koji se Božjom ljubavlju ne može nadvladati. Ispovedajte se, pričesćujte se i ne povlačite se iz Crkve. Bolje je biti grešnik u Crkvi, nego dobrodeteljna osoba izvan nje. Bolje je biti huligan, i biti sa Hristom, nego biti dobar

momak, i biti sa đavolom. Naša dobrota nas neće spasiti, ali spasiće nas ljubav koju imamo prema Hristu i duhovna borba koju vodimo radi Njega.

Jednom je neki monah zaspao tokom bogoslužjenja. Monaški život je oštar, duša može težiti visinama, ali telo ponekad nema snage da je sledi. Služba se završila i napustili smo crkvu. Dok smo čekali da budemo pozvani u trpezariju, drugi monah, kako bi zadirkivao svog brata, u šali mu je rekao:

„Oče, video sam kako si zaspao u crkvi.“

A on je odgovorio:

„Bolje je spavati u Nojevoj barci, nego biti budan izvan nje!“

Bolje je da vas Hristos spasi, čak i ako zaspate u crkvi, nego da se tokom poplave probudite na ulici. Pokajanje je ono što će nas spasiti, a ne nešto drugo. Zbog toga se moramo stalno kajati. Zašto je to tako? Zato što stalno grešimo i što ne treba da budemo vezani za grehe koje činimo. Sveti Dorotej kaže da čak možete nekoga uznemiriti načinom na koji ga gledate i tako počiniti greh. Pa, šta onda da radimo? Da se sakrijemo u jamu i nepomično čekamo tamo dok ne umremo?

Čim ujutro otvorite oči, recite:

„Gospode Isuse Hriste, pomiluj me!“ i

„Slava Bogu!“. Radeći tako, otići ćete na Nebo, ne sumnjajte u to. Jer kada osoba kaže: „Gospode Isuse Hriste, pomiluj me!“, to pokazuje da želi biti sa Hristom, da neće grešiti po svojoj volji, a ako greši, onda će to biti protiv njene volje. Kao što kaže Sveti apostol Pavle: Ali vidim drugi zakon u udima mojim, koji se suprotni zakonu uma mojega, i zarobljava me zakonom grjehovnijem koji je u udima mojim. Ja nesrećni čovjek! Ko će me izbaviti od tijela smrti ove (Rim 7,23-24)? *Nastavice se....*

“It is not enough to acknowledge sins and to confess them. Repentance remains fruitless without the desire and decision to change life, to go back to God, to begin the movement of realizing and recovering our spiritual beauty and purity, a movement of trust and love. Repentance is not simply “feeling bad”, but making a decision and acting on it!”

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

POMOZITE VAŠU CRKVVU

SUPPORT YOUR CHURCH

FOURTY DAY DISCOVERY

Lent is a period of time during which our Church prescribes for us to return to God. The Church invites us to participate in this season of awareness and change both spiritually and physically, enlightening and awakening the total person in Christ.

Pascha is on April 19 this year, and we must prepare from now in order to be ready to fully comprehend, embrace and participate in the profound Truth and Joy of the Resurrection of the Lord.

The Church also prepares us for Lent with the Triodion, the four week period prior to Lent. The Triodion invites us to consider fundamental aspects of repentance each Sunday, and sets up limited fasting so that we can train ourselves for the Great Fast.

This season is truly a most challenging time for each of us. In reconciling ourselves to the Lord, we must acknowledge our sinfulness and be willing to change. Through fasting, confession and prayer we will be able to intensely examine our values, standards, judgement and our hearts, and turn towards the Lord (and each other!) with humility and forgiveness as our chief priorities.

We hope that this information will help familiarize you with this vital process of Lent, and guide you to a fulfilling pilgrimage of re-discovery and hope in Pascha, bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. (John 15:4)

May we never forget that as it was with the Prodigal Son, so it is with us; It is within our power to return home. And our loving Father is waiting for us with open arms.

Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete

St. Andrew is one of the most famous of Byzantine orators and hymnographers. He wrote several "canons" for the penitential seasons and various feasts of the ecclesiastical year. His own feast day comes in July, the anniversary of his death.

He was born about the year 660 in Damascus. At an early age he went to Constantinople, where he enrolled in a monastery. Later he became well-known for building homes for orphan, and for taking care of the needy. His good works and wisdom brought his appointment as Bishop of Crete about the year 700. He administered his diocese with vigor, and was very zealous for the welfare of his people, who suffered not only from famine and the plague, but from the visits of marauders as well.

St. Andrew is known today as a great composer of hymns in the ancient Church. His most famous work is the "Great Canon" sung on Thursday of the fifth week of Lent. When celebrated in parish churches, this service is held on Wednesday evening, and is usually abridged because of its extreme length.

This "Great Canon" is sometimes called the "Prostrations" because prostrations or deep bowing is done by the worshippers during its reading. The bowing is

done after each troparion in the Canon, when the refrain "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me," is sung. The Canon itself is made up of more than 250 hymns, all penitential in character. The service is read in a penitential tone, clearly and majestically.

In addition to the refrain: "Have mercy on me, O God, have mercy on me," other refrains are used. One is to St. Andrew: "O venerable father, Andrew, pray to God for us." And another to the great penitent St. Mary of Egypt: "O venerable Mary of Egypt, pray to God for us."

In the first ode, we have this opening hymn: "A Helper and Protector is there unto salvation; He is my God, and I will glorify Him; the God of my fathers, and I will exalt Him; for He hath triumphed gloriously."















"YOU'RE PREACHING- NEXT SUNDAY— STEP OUT THERE AND GEWE THEM PLENTY OF HEAVEN!"

MARCH 2022

Sunday Nedelja	Monday Ponedeljak	Tuesday Utorak	Wednesday Sreda
1 Cheesfar Sunday Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Nedelja Siropusna Gospel. Matt. 6:14-21; Epistle: Rom. 13:11-15;	2 Great Fast Begins Početak Velikog Posta Canon of St. Andrew of Crete at 6:00pm	3 Canon of St. Andrew of Crete at 6:00pm	4 Presanctified Liturgy at 5:00p.m Canon of St. Andrew of Crete 6:00pm
8 1st Sunday of Lent Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. Iva Nedelja Velikog Posta Gospel. Jn. 19:1-10; Matt. 11:2-15; Epistle: Heb. 11:2-26; 32-40; 12:1-2; 2. Cor. 4:6-15; 9-15;	9	10	11 Presanctified Liturgy at 9:00a.m 6:00pm AKATIST
15 2nd Sunday of Lent Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. 2ga Nedelja Velikog Posta Gospel. Mk. 2:1-12; Jn. 10:9-16; Epistle: Heb. 1:10-2:3; Heb. 7:26-8:2;	16	17	18 Presanctified Liturgy at 9:00a.m 6:00pm AKATIST
22 3rd Sunday of Lent Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. 3ca Nedelja Velikog Posta Gospel. Mk. 8:34-38; 9:1; Matt. 20:1-16; Epistle: Heb. 4:14-5:6; Heb. 12:1-10;	23 	24	25 Presanctified Liturgy at 9:00a.m 6:00pm AKATIST
29 4th Sunday of Lent Divine Liturgy 10:00 a.m. 4ta Nedelja Velikog Posta Gospel. Mk. 9:17-31; Matt. 4:25-5:12; Epistle: Heb. 6:13-20; Eph. 5:9-19;	30	31	
			Blessing of Homes If you would like your home to be blessed call Fr. Dane

O M A R T

Thursday Četvrtak	Friday Petak	Saturday Subota
5  Assumption of St. Andrew of Crete at 6:00pm	6  Presanctified Liturgy at 9:00a.m	7  Theodor Saturday 9:00am Divine Liturgy Vespers- Vecernje 6:00pm
12 	13 	14  Vespers- Vecernje 6:00 p.m. Confession—Isповest
19 	20  Presanctified Liturgy at 9:00a.m	21  Vespers- Vecernje 6:00 p.m. Confession—Isповest-
26 	27  Presanctified Liturgy at 9:00am	28  Vespers- Vecernje 6:00 p.m. Confession-Isповest

CHANGING YOUR ADDRESS? - MENJATE ADRESU?
 If you're planning to move, please let us know before changing your address.
 Ako želite da se preselite na drugu adresu obavestite nas pre nego se preselite.
 Write to —Pišite nam na
 Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
 P.O.Box 383 Fair Oaks, Ca. 95628

ALL ALTAR BOYS ARE ASKED TO SERVE WHEN ATTENDING CHURCH

Reader Schedule

Message to all readers:
 Please make note of the days you are to read and make plans to come to church before 10:00 a.

March-Mart 1

Natalie Fitzpatrick

Gospel. Matt.6:14-21;

Epistle: Rom. 13:11-14:4;

March-Mart 8

Reader: **Ethan Livinston**

Gospel. Jn. 19:1-10; Matt.11.2-15;

Epistle: Heb.11:2-26,32-40,12:1-2.;

2. Cor.4:6-15:4:9-15;

March-Mart 15

Reader: **Rade Radulovich**

Gospel. Mk. 2:1-12; Jn.10:9-16;

Epistle: Heb. 1:10-2:3; Heb.7:26-8:2;

March-Mart 22

Reader: **Dimitri Karnoookh**

Gospel. Mk.8:34-38,9:1; Matt.20:1-16;

Epistle: Heb. 4:14-5:6; Heb.12:1-10;

March-Mart 29

Theodor Hadzi—Antich

Gospel. Mk.9:17-31; Matt.4:25-5:12;

Epistle: Heb.6:13-20; Eph.5:9-19;

INFORMATION FOR APRIL SHEPHERD

If anyone has anything they would like to add to the Shepherd, the last day to send information is March 15th.

INFORMACIJE ZA APRILSKI PASTIR

Ako imate nešto da bi želeli da date za mesečni Pastir, zadnji dan za to je 15 Mart
 Nazovite Protu Dana ili pošaljite poštom.

STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM 2020!

Remember that God will hold us accountable for the time, talents, and treasure He has entrusted to our care. Our stewardship indicates what we truly love (God or other things), "for where our treasure is, there will our heart be also.



Please feel your Stewardship card for 2020 and send back to us or bring back to church on Sunday. It is important to be part of Christ Body His Church!

We are grateful to the following Stewards of our parish family for their pledge of support to the Church and her ministries .

Thank you and God bless you all!

- Antovich, Rocky & Deanna
- Atha, Brett & Marisa
- Atkinson, Agnes
- Bosanac, Milos & Suzana
- Bowen, Don & Carmen
- Bradaric, Eli
- Bradaric, Ilija & Anna
- Brown, Nicholas
- Chinn, Joseph & Annette
- Cubriilo, Radomir & Branka
- Cullen, Nina
- Cvjetkovic, Dragoljub & Andja
- Cvjetkovic, Pavo & Bosiljka
- Damjanovic, Daniel & Maria
- Debruhl, Kenneth & Anca
- Delich, Biserka
- Djokic, Dobrosav
- Djukic, Milutin & Hedy
- Dmitrovic, Slobodan & Elenita
- Donahue, Desa & Andre, Robert
- Evasovic, Mark & Susan
- Fitzpatrick, Will & Natalie
- Geottman, Richard & Sandra
- Glazzard, Kim
- Glebov, Leo & Aleksandra
- Gojkovich, Savo
- Gonzales, Brayn & Sonja
- Gvero, Igor & Julia
- Hadzi-Antich, Theodor & Diana

- Hanhan, Isam & Family
- Ivanovic, Vladimir
- Jovanovic, Dragutin & Angelia
- Jovovich, Michael & Trina
- Kapor, Igor & Ariadna
- Karnaookh, Dimitri & Luba
- Katich, Eve & Rudnick, Peter
- Kentera, Ilija & Milena
- Korunoska, Marija
- Kovac, Branko & Marcia
- Livingston, Ethan & Palinee
- Malkovich, Borka Vera
- Marjanovich, Mile & Terri
- Meglemre, Ilinka
- Metzka, Carolyn
- Mihaljcic, Martha McGrath
- Mileusnic, George & Mary
- Mileusnic, Savka
- Milunovich, Dusan
- Mironenko, George & Rimma
- Mojsich, Stanko & Vesna
- Omcikus, Ratko & Snezana
- Otrotskyuk, Ken & Nataliya
- Pejovich, Velika
- Petrovich, Aco & Zorana
- Petrovich, Draginja
- Plamadeala, Liliana
- Popovac, Maria
- Popovic, Fr. Dane & P. Milica

- Radmanovich, Milos & Mileva
- Radulovich, Rade & Adriana
- Rajak, Todor & Milena
- Rey, Aaron & Melissa
- Rudko, Eduard & Larissa
- Senuca, John & Josephine
- Siakov, Pavel (Paul)
- Sipka, Milorad & Bona
- Slavnic, Milorad
- Stevens, John & Anna
- Theodorovic, Bozidarka
- Theodorovic, Zlatko & Kimberly
- Tica, Aleksandar
- Tica, Jovan & Dragana
- Tica, Milan & Betty
- Tica, Nikola & Zorka
- Valashan, Charlie & Anna Lukyanova
- Vickers, Steve & Kathleen
- Vidovich, Dragan & Michelle
- Weir, Fr. William & P. Mary Anne
- Zekic, Gorjana
- Ziacan, Connie

CHRISTMAS DONATIONS

Radulovich, Zagorka	\$ 50.00
Lukic, Lila	\$ 71.00
Petrovich, Draginja	\$ 50.00
Tiemann, Peter & Jelena.....	\$ 200.00
Hadzi-Antich, Theodore & Diana ...	\$ 100.00
Mileusnic, Savka.....	\$ 50.00
Janjic, Jovo	\$ 70.00

Shepherd Donation

Ilic, Miroslav & Zorica.....	\$ 30.00
Popovac, Maria.....	\$ 30.00
Koval, Anna & Butterworth, Joel..	\$ 33.00
Pejovich, Velika.....	\$ 30.00

Slava donation for Jovan Dan

by Pejovich, Velika	\$ 60.00
<i>In Memory of Mane Mileusnic</i> by Mileusnic, Savka	\$ 25.00

PRAYERS OF GREAT & HOLY LENT

PRAYER OF SAINT EPHRAIM THE SYRIAN

Lord and Master of my life, do not permit the spirit of laziness and meddling, the lust for power and idle talk.

Instead, grant me, your servant, the spirit of prudence, humility, patience and love.

Yes, Lord and King, give me the power to see my own faults and not to judge my brother. For you are blessed unto the ages of ages. Amen.

THE JESUS PRAYER

(a prayer of the heart)

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

(This prayer is repeated several times like a meditation.)

A PRAYER OF REPENTANCE

Lord our God, good and merciful, I acknowledge all my sins which I have committed everyday of my life, in thought, word and deed; in body and soul alike. I am sorry I have ever offended You, and I sincerely repent. With tears, I humbly pray to You, Lord; have mercy on me and forgive all my past transgressions, and absolve me from them. I firmly resolve, with the help of your Grace, to amend my way of life and to sin no more; that may walk in the way of righteousness and offer praise and glory to the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A LENTEN PRAYER (MODIFIED FROM PRE-SANCTIFIED LITURGY)

You have brought us to these saving days, for the cleansing of our souls and bodies, for control of our passions, in the hope of the Resurrection . . . Enable us also, O benevolent One, to fight the good fight, to complete the course of the fast, to keep the faith inviolate, to crush underfoot the heads of unseen tempers, to emerge victors over sin and to come, with-out reproach, to the worship of Your Holy Resurrection.

Holy Unction

A Time for Healing, Forgiveness and Salvation

On March 2, we will enter into the Great Lenten Season, which precedes the Great and Holy Week of the Church. As these days are marked by increased prayer, fasting, almsgiving, repentance and confession in anticipation of both the Passion and the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, we will gather on Wednesday evening at 6:00 to pray the Service of Holy Unction. Together, we will ask our Heavenly Father to grant health and healing, forgiveness of sins, and salvation to His servants, the members of our Parish family. Please make every effort to attend.

How to Sustain Body and Soul

Saint Macarius Notaras was born in Corinth in 1737. He became an Orthodox Mystic and renowned spiritual writer serving as the Metropolitan Bishop of Corinth. His tenure was during the rule of Turkish occupation and he struggled to maintain the Orthodox faith with the people of Corinth. He is also known for his work with Saint Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain in the writing of the Philokalia. This famous work led to the revival of Hesychism, prayer of the heart, within the monastic community and the Orthodox world. In occupied Corinth he noticed that the people were not receiving Holy Communion frequently and he wrote treatises and delivered sermons to encourage his flock to return to the practice of frequent participation in the Sacrament.

The following message was inspired by his writing on this important part of our lives and the maintaining of our faith. As a side note, our Church By-Laws enumerate “frequent communicant” as a requirement for Board membership. What is meant by “frequent” is not defined with any specificity. It is our hope that this may inspire many to make a strong effort to engage in frequent receipt of Holy Communion.

The question to be answered is: Someone who receives Communion one to four times a year is doing a good thing. The receive Communion more frequently is a much better thing. The closer a person comes toward a light, the more light is received. Christ is the Light of our lives and the closer we are to Christ, the better our lives will be. The closer a person moves to a fire, the warmer he becomes. The more one moves closer to God in Holy Communion, the more light, warmth and holiness are received. Some people may give as a reason for not receiving Holy Communion more than a few times a year is “I am not worthy.” This is not true. If a person is worthy to receive Communion even

once a year, they are worthy of a greater frequency. The excuse that the preparation “is just too much work, or too difficult with my life as it is, etc.” is also fallacious.

The real impediment is our own carelessness and laziness. We surrender to these faults so much that we are not sufficiently prepared to receive Communion.

There is an abundance of material written on the subject of Communion. I have never seen or read anything that says we are limited to commune once or twice a year, or any other such limitation. If there is a command or directive relative to the receipt or participation in Communion, it is in the words of the Celebrant Priest or Bishop when he intones the words: “In fear of God and with faith, draw near.” This then becomes the time and the proper moment for us to receive this great Sacrament.

If we think about each day of our lives, one could say that we eat frequently to maintain our physical bodies, to live and to grow. The definition of “frequently” thus becomes two-four times per day, not two or three times a year. I fail to see how the meaning of “frequently” could be so different. The food that provides bodily life enables us to live a spiritual life. Holy communion is food for our body and soul. How can we sustain our body and not our soul? We should not dilute, or “water down” our spiritual needs, growth and life by a distorted and erroneous interpretation of what is mean by “frequent”. Holy Communion is offered three times a week during Great Lent. It is served every Sunday at Divine Liturgy and Wednesdays and Fridays at Presanctified Liturgy either here at our Church as well as the other Orthodox Churches in Sacramento.* The “bonus” days are feast days like Annunciation or Soul Saturdays. We should all make

a persistent effort to increase our participation in Communion during Great Lent, not as a temporary event, but as a training opportunity to become greater participants in this Holy Sacrament throughout our lives. To do so will be accepting God's invitation to participate in the Holy Sacrament and serve our personal spiritual growth.

*It is a courtesy to call the Priest at another Orthodox Church to announce your visit and receive their blessing to participate in the Holy Sacrament.

Very Rev. *Fr. Bill Weir*

Lenten Prayer of Saint Ephrem, The Syrian

**O Lord and Master of my Life!
Take from me the spirit of
sloth, despair, lust of power,
and idle talk.
(Prostration)**

**But give rather the spirit of
chastity, humility, patience,
and love to Thy servant.
(Prostration)**

**Yea, O Lord and King! Grant me
to see my own transgressions
and not to judge my brother,
for blessed art Thou, unto ages
of ages.
(Prostration).**

On The Lighter Side

A man was driving his car when he saw a flash of a traffic camera. He figured that his picture had been taken for speeding, even though he knew he wasn't. Just to be sure, he went around the block and passed the same spot, driving even more slowly. But again the camera flashed. Thinking this was pretty funny, he drove past even slower three more times, laughing as the camera snapped away each time while he drove by it at a snail's pace. Two weeks later, he got five tickets in the mail for driving without a seat belt.

Hospital regulations require a wheel chair for patients being discharged. One day a student nurse found one elderly gentleman already dressed and sitting on the bed with a suitcase at his feet, who insisted he didn't need her help to leave the hospital. After a chat about rules being rules, he reluctantly let the nurse wheel him to the elevator. On the way down, she asked him if his wife was meeting him. "I don't know," he said. "She's still upstairs in the bathroom changing out of her hospital gown."

An elderly gentleman had serious hearing problems for a number of years. He went to the doctor and the doctor was able to have him fitted for a set of hearing aids that allowed the gentleman to hear 100 percent. A month later he went back to the doctor and the doctor said, "Your hearing is perfect. Your family must be really pleased that you can hear again. The gentleman replied, "Oh, I haven't told my family yet. I just sit around and listen to the conversations. I've changed my Will three times already."

Da zemlju razgrneš litije stati neće – ne hodi Crna Gora zemljom već prti nebom, očajniče!

Ne igraj se sile, budalo, gde Srbin iznese ikonu s ognjišta sebe je prežalio

Mihajlo Medenica 05/02/2020

Veliš da su mošti Svetog Vasilija kosti, i to državne.

Mošti su, valjda, tvoji i bratovljevi trezori, fukaro?!

Mošti koje niko osim vas ne celiva i koje ćeš čuvati po cenu da svaka kost u Crnoj Gori pukne na pola, je li?

Nema te sile kojom nećeš udariti na litije, ludače, a nema te sile koje se neće raspršiti pred litijama, jer nema kosti što nosi ikonu da nije čivotna!

Da zemlju razgrneš litije stati neće- ne hodi Crna Gora zemljom već prti nebom, očajniče! Nisu to "državne kosti" već kosti države- Crna Gora je riza na njima pa kud se ona krenula "kosti" je nose...

Gledaš li iz kakvog prikrajka ludila litije i molebane?

Gledaš, kako ne bi gledao, jer šta drugo da vidiš sve i da oči ne otvaraš?

U koju god rupu da se skriješ eto i mraka i tišine u litiji.

Vidiš li gde preplašene mrce što hode u strahu od tebe, ili te je strah kostiju što ih prebiti ne možeš?

Niko ne brani ognjište što je prađedovsko, već što je svaka kuća Srbinova priprata crkvena, metoh manastirski, dom ikoni a ne dom u ko-

jem samuje ikona.

Nije prađed izabrao planinu da na njoj svije kamen na kamen, no ga je planina dozvala da Gospoda ugosti.

Nije nam kamena isposnica daleko od ljudi no bliže Bogu, svakome od nas!

Ustale su kosti da brane mošti jer što su kosti Srbinove do čeda moštiju?

Ne bi se Srbinu trag znao da nije u čivote povijan, a ti misliš, pustahijo duševna, da nam je više do života stalo no do traga kojim će nas potonji poznati?!

Da se Srbin plaši mreti, gore bi nam bile zbegovi a ne Golgote.

Da vapije za životom ne bi se vaskrsenju radovao, a ko za vaskrsenje živi pred njim je sila ništavna!

Ne brani Srbin svetinje što se gneva gosponjeg plaši već što se nebrojeno puta u milost gospodnju uverio!

Nije crnina, rekoh ti, barjak žalosti no beleg večnosti pa se ne usuđuj, ništarijo, crninom Srbinu da pretiš!

Da jedan Srbin korača Crnom Gorom više će biti srpska nego da se more tvoji bauljina neznarodskih razmile njome!

Dok je naših ognjišta- vazda će biti kamena za manastire!

Dok je gusala- vazda će biti oltara!

Dok je četiri ocila na kapama- vazda će biti zvonika!

Dok je sinjavine mora- vazda će Crna Gora biti obala Jordana!

Dok je moštiju- vazda će ponosnica naša biti riza na njima!

Dok je kostiju naših- nad mošti se, pogani, nadvići nećeš!!!

Ti životom, Đukanoviću, život braniš – bedno!

Srbin životom svedoči o milosti Boži-

joj- zemlju da razgrneš sebi ćeš izmaći stope, Srbin nebom prti...

Ne igraj se sile, budalo, gde Srbin iznese ikonu s ognjišta sebe je prežalio!

Gde je sebe prežalio svak se o njegove kosti sapleo...

Košćati su dani osvanuli Crnoj Gori, ne

prizivaj noći u kojima mošti nabrojati nećeš moći...

Mihailo Medenica

Ne igraj se sile, budalo, gde Srbin iznese ikonu s ognjišta sebe je prežalio

Mihajlo Medenica 05/02/2020

2020 Hall Rental Fees

Hall Rental (includes hall/bar with table/chair set up, cleaning and security)

\$3000 general customer
\$1500 parishioner
\$1000 steward

Linens

\$15 per tablecloth
\$2 per seat covers

Memorials/Funerals (includes kitchen use, cleaning and tablecloths)

\$250 plus donation
(75 guests or less)

For more information about hall rentals, please call
Hall Manager, Heidi Dorfmeier at 916-220-9721.

THE BLESSING OF THE HOMES

The homes of thousands of Orthodox Christian have been blessed during the Epiphany seasons. Let your homes be blessed as they are like small churches. Prepare a candle, bowl of water, and a list of your living family members. Call Father Dane to bless your home with the sanctified water of Epiphany starting on this day.

OSVEĆENJE DOMOVA

Hiljade Pravoslavnih domova se osvećuju u vreme Bogojavljenja I posle. Osvetite svoje domove jer domovi su vaše male crkve. Pripremite sveću, činiju sa vodom I spisak živih članova porodice. Nazovite Protu Dana da unese krst u vaš dom I blagoslovi sa Bogojavljenkom vodicom. Osvećenje domova počinje na dan Bogojavljenja.

Parish Statistic

BAPTISM: NO

**WEDDING: February 1,2020 Oleg Olarescu & Elena Rotari
February 22, Valeriu Birsa &Liubov Ungurean**

CHARGES FOR RELIGIOUS RITES - TREBE

	Steward	Non-Steward
Wedding	\$50	\$500
Baptism	Donation	Donation
Church Funeral	Donation	\$300
Chapel	\$50	\$300
Parastos—Panihida	\$25	\$100
Pomen	\$15	\$ 50
Certificates	\$10	\$ 20



Should an Orthodox Christian receive communion in a Catholic Church if there is no way for him to get to an Orthodox Church? T. J., Minneapolis, MN.

The answer to your question is “no.” It is important for you and every reader to understand why the answer is negative. The Sacrament of Communion is the primary and chief way we experience and manifest our unity with the Church. In the canon law practice of the Church, Christians are prohibited from receiving communion until they show signs of repentance over a period of time, when they have committed a serious sin. Also, those who break communion with the Church by marrying outside the Orthodox Church (that is, in a civil ceremony or in another church) are not permitted to receive communion until the situation is

corrected. Receiving communion is a sign and expression of a person’s membership in the Church. To receive communion in another church is essentially to try to declare oneself a member of two churches — each with different faith, leadership, moral principles, worship patterns, etc. As you can see, it is a contradiction which creates confusion and, in fact, impossible to do with full honesty.

An Orthodox who lives far from a church should, on Sundays, read the prayers of the Orthodox Church, including the text of the liturgy, sing the liturgical hymns with family and read the Bible readings set for the day. A special effort should then be made at regular intervals (once a month, or every two months) to go to the nearest Orthodox Church, whatever the national background. Each time, prepare properly for the Sacrament of Communion and receive faithfully and devotedly in your own Orthodox Church.

Calendar of Events

We are publishing a calendar of events so that you and your family can join us for these events. All are welcome and we hope to see you at Church, as well as these events. More details will follow.

March 2 Great Lent begins

March 8, Sunday of Orthodoxy

April 17, Good Friday

April 19, PASHA-Easter—Vaskrs

June 28, Vidovdan Commemoration

July 19, Drazin dan commemoration

August 30, Church Slava

POMOZITE VAŠU CRKVVU

SUPPORT YOUR CHURCH

pravoslavni brak

Sveštenik ALEKSEJ Jang

Muževljeva odgovornost *Muž je glava ženi...*

Nastavak....

2. Praštanje. Praštanje je ključno za srećan brak. Kada me parovi pitaju: “Da li naš brak može opstati?“, moj je odgovor uvek: “Naravno, pod uslovom da ste spremni da praštate jedno drugom.“ A to opraštanje ne treba da postoji samo posle većih potresa unutar porodice. Ono treba da bude svakodnevno. U uspešnom braku, muž i žena neprestano traže oprostaj jedno od drugog. Kada to ne činimo, rane ne zaceljuju. Samo se sve više međusobno udaljavamo. Bivamo sve hladniji jedno prema drugom i ne primamo blagoslov koji Bog šalje na muževe i žene koji praštaju jedno drugom.

3. Vreme. Uspešan brak potrebuje vreme. To se ne dešava preko noći. On mora da uzrasta. Dugačak je i naporan to proces; kao i sve prave stvari u životu, to se ostvaruje kroz stalan trud i odricanja. Oni među vama koji još niste venčani ili nameravate da to učinite, zapamtite ovo: živimo u svetu koji traži momentalno zadovoljenje potreba – hoćemo ono što mi hoćemo i to kada nam se prohte a to je odmah! To nestrpljenje sa naše strane je pogubno po brak, čak i u Pravoslavnoj Crkvi. Ako nemamo strpljenja jedno

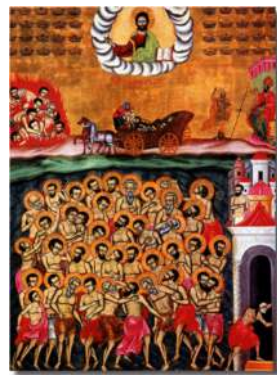
za drugo i ako nismo spremni da se mnogo godina provedemo radeći na njemu, onda nam je brak unapred osuđen na propast.

Nijedan brak nije dovoljno dobar da ne bi mogao biti bolji i nijedan nije toliko loš da se ne može poboljšati – pod uslovom da su oni od kojih to zavisi, spremni da Božjom blagodaću zajedno uzrastaju ka punoti Hristovoj, koji je i došao “ne da mu služe, nego da služi.“

Osnovni i ključni preduslov za dobar brak jeste sposobnost napredovanja. Nezrelost je jedan od najvećih problema zbog kojih propada brak. Sigurno je, mi svi ulazimo u brak sa ličnim asortimanom nezrelosti i loših navika. Ali moramo naučiti da ih prevazilazimo. Kada sam bio dete, poučava Sveti Apostol Pavle, razmišljao sam kao dete. Govorio sam kao dete, shvatao kao dete. Ali kada sam odrastao, odbacio sam detinjarije. I koliko je zaista zarad srećnog braka potrebno odbaciti detinjarije: neodgovornost, tvrdoglavost, samoživost, nesaosećajnost, ćudljivost, ljubomoru. Koliko je važno moliti se svakoga dana: “O Bože, pomози mi da uzrastam... da se preispitujem...da sagledavam potrebe i osećanja moje žene/muža, i da prihvatim odgovornost koju je Bog naložio na mene.“

THE HOLY FORTY MARTYRS OF SEBASTEA

All of them were soldiers in the Roman army and steadfastly believed in the Lord Jesus. When the persecution of Christians began during the reign of Licinius, they were brought to trial before the commander. When he threatened to strip them of their honor as soldiers, one of them, St. Candidus, responded, "Not only the honor of being a soldier, but take away our bodies, for nothing is more dear or honorable, to us than Christ our God." After that, the commander ordered his servants to stone the holy martyrs. While the servants were hurling stones at the Christians, the stones turned and fell back on the servants, severely striking them. One of the stones struck the commander's face and knocked out his teeth. The torturers, angry as wild beasts, bound all of the holy martyrs and tossed them into the lake and stationed a guard around it so as to prevent any of them from escaping. There was a terrible frost and the lake froze around the bodies of the martyrs. So that their pain and suffering would be worsened, and in order to persuade one of them to deny Christ and acknowledge the idols of Rome, the torturers heated a bath by the side of the lake in sight of the frozen martyrs. Indeed, one of them was persuaded. He came out of the water and entered the bath. And behold, an extraordinary light appeared from heaven which



warmed the water in the lake and the bodies of the martyrs. With that light, thirty-nine wreaths descended from heaven over their heads. Upon seeing this, a guard on the shore removed all his clothes, confessed the Name of the Lord Jesus and entered the lake so that he could become worthy of the fortieth wreath in place of the betrayer. Indeed, the last wreath descended upon him. The next day the entire town was astonished when they saw that the martyrs were still alive. Then, the wicked judges ordered that the lower part of their legs be broken and their bodies thrown into the water so Christians could not recover them. On the third day the martyrs appeared to Peter, the local bishop, and summoned him to gather their relics and remove them from the water. The bishop with his clergy went out into the dark of night and beheld the relics of the martyrs shining brightly in the water. Every bone which was separated from their bodies floated to the top and glowed like a candle. Bishop Peter gathered and honorably buried them. The souls of these martyrs, who suffered for all of us, went to the Lord Jesus, resurrected with glory. They suffered honorably and were crowned with unfading glory in the year 320 A.D.

NO SIN CAN SURPASS THE LOVE OF GOD

Igumen Nikon of Mt. Athos

It's not because we sin that we don't go to Heaven. You have to know that the only sinless one was Christ and no one else. It's not because we commit sins that we don't go to Heaven. While we're still alive and our eyes are open—we sin. We will go to Heaven because we are trying with all of our strength to be what Christ wants us to be, and that kind of effort will save us. Whether we can overcome the temptation to sin or not depends not on us, but on God's grace.

We must ask the Lord to send us His grace. If He sends us His grace, then we will not be angry, commit adultery, steal, and so on. If God does not send His grace, we will not be able to overcome our sins by ourselves. This does not mean that we are not what Christ wants us to be. We fight, we wage war against our sins. We see our sins and think that if we stop committing them, then we will not be sinning anymore... But what about sinning in our minds? Or with our eyes? Or with our ears?

We should not despair and say, "I always fall into the trap of the same sin. Therefore, I won't be able to achieve anything; I'm not doing anything!" We do a lot: we confess, humble ourselves, repent... This is what saves us rather than the virtue in which we have excelled. The devil also possesses virtues. Once, having done something good, I went to tell my elder about it. I was a novice monk then. When he saw me, he immediately realized what the matter was, and, before I could say a word, he said:

"My child, why should we boast and be proud? Because we fast? We can never fast more than the devil, because he never eats anything. He is the greatest faster. Or is it because we keep vigil and do not sleep much? We cannot be more vigilant than the evil one, because he never sleeps. Do we abstain, remain chaste out of love for Christ? Do we have this virtue? But we will never become more chaste than the devil, because he does not want carnal pleasures: he does not need them, for he has no body."

I was shocked! No matter how many virtues we have, we will never be able to acquire those that the devil possesses. But will these virtues save the devil? No; and they will not save us either.

What do I mean by that? That we shouldn't be virtuous? No. We shall continue struggling in order to acquire the virtues. A true Christian is always virtuous, but not every virtuous person is necessarily a Christian. There are virtuous people among Buddhists, Hindus, Jews, Protestants. But virtues in and of themselves are not "salvific". We will be saved through repentance and humility.

But humility is not just about saying empty words such as: "What am I? I'm nothing!" and pretending to be miserable just to make people say to you: "No, no, you are virtuous; look, you have such and such virtues..."

By pretending to be humble, we make others praise us. Real humility is not just say-

ing humble words, but being a humble-minded person, having a humble spirit and not thinking that we are better than others, for all matter of evil is born first of all in our mind.

If we fall again and again spiritually, we should not despair. There are priests, the epitrachelion, repentance... This is what will save us and nothing else. Repentance and humility will save us. This is what the devil fears. He has many "virtues", but he lacks one—humility; and this is what has given birth to hell and has brought about ruin.

To show the power of humility, as Scripture says, Christ descended from Heaven to earth, humbled Himself, and was obedient to the point of death (Phil. 2:8). He humbled Himself to the point where He agreed to be crucified. This is the humility that we need for our salvation.

We try not to fall into sin, but God deliberately allows us to fall so that we may acquire humility, and while we weep over the sin we have committed, God crowns us with humility for our struggle with sin. Therefore, we must never despair.

Make it a rule for yourself not to repeat your sins again, saying: "I won't be angry anymore, I won't do this or that..." And then say: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me, a sinner!" And then bow your head under the epitrachelion of the priest.

We will understand what we have truly gained when the time comes to stand before God. Man measures things one way, but God has His own way of measuring them.

You should never despair. If you have not achieved something, it does not mean that you have failed. There is no sin that is greater than God's love; there is no sin that cannot be overcome by God's love. Confess, receive Communion, and do not withdraw from the Church. It is better to be a sinner in the Church than to be a virtuous person outside of it. It's better to be a hooligan, but to be together with Christ, than to be a good guy, but to be together with the devil. Our goodness will not save us, but what will save us is the love we have for Christ and the spiritual struggle that we engage in for His sake.

One day a monk fell asleep during service. Monastic life is harsh, the soul may aspire to the things on high, but sometimes the body does not have the strength to follow after it. The service ended and we left the church. While waiting to be invited to the refectory, another monk, in order to tease his fellow brother, jokingly said to him:

"Father, I saw you fall asleep in church."

And he answered:

"Better to be asleep inside Noah's Ark than to be awake outside of it!"

It is better to be saved by Christ, even if you fall asleep in church, than to be awake out on the street during the flood. Repentance is what will save us and not something else. This is why we must constantly repent. Why is that so? Because we sin all the time, and because we should not be tied to the sins we commit. St. Dorotheos says that you can even upset someone by the way you look at them and thus commit a sin. So, what are we supposed to do then? Hide in a pit and wait there motionlessly until we die?

As soon as you open your eyes in the morning, say: "Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy on me!" and "Glory to God!" Doing so, you'll make it to Heaven; don't have doubts. For when one says: "Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy on me!" he shows that he wants to be with Christ, that he won't sin by his own will, and that if he does sin, then it'll be against his will. As St. Paul says: *I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?* (Rom. 7:23-24). And if we see that even St. Paul—he who could raise the dead—could not overcome sin, then will we overcome it? No. Then how will we be saved? We will be saved by praying: "Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on

**BROTHERS IN
CHRIST:
METROPOLITAN
ONUPHRY'S WORD TO
THE FAITHFUL OF
MONTENEGRO**

Yesterday, February 27, His Beatitude Metropolitan Onuphry of Kiev and All Ukraine arrived at the Cathedral of the Resurrection of Christ in Podgorica, Montenegro, to a great outpouring of love from the faithful of Montenegro. Together with the local hierarch, His Eminence Metropolitan Amfilohije of Montenegro, he led the latest weekly cross procession in defense of the Serbian Church against the machina-

me!" and through humility.

Often when we ask God for something, He does not give it to us simply in order to keep us praying, and, when we are finally given what we had asked for, we find that we have benefited more from the prayers that we had sent up to God rather than from what He has given us. This is why the Lord sometimes delays in giving us what we repeatedly ask Him for.

He often puts us in difficult situations or sends us sufferings—for example, an illness—in order to prevent us from sinning. If we had ended up in a different situation instead, we would have been content and would have sinned. As they say, "no one is happy where they are..."



tions of the government, which seeks to confiscate Church property.

His Beatitude also spoke at a press conference in Podgorica today, offering words of encouragement to the Montenegrin faithful, borne out of his own experience of facing persecution from the state in Ukraine. He also emphasized that the great displays of faith in Montenegro in recent months are, in turn, an inspiration to the Ukrainian faithful.

We offer below the text of Metropolitan Onuphry's initial remarks

at the press conference:

Recently, events in Ukraine and Montenegro have been at the epicenter of the attention of the entire Orthodox world. We understand the situation your holy Church is in perfectly well, because our Church has experienced something similar and continues to experience it in part. In Church history, there have been times both of quiet growth and of martyrdom and confession. However, the Lord has always been with His people and has never abandoned His Church. We are confident that the Lord will not abandon His Church now and will help in the trials it is undergoing both in Montenegro and with us in Ukraine.

More than thirty years ago, after the fall of the communist regime, before the declaration of independence, a schism appeared in Ukraine, which, with the support of some government officials and politicians, exists to this day. Unfortunately, this schism has now gone beyond the bounds of Ukraine and threatens to divide all of world Orthodoxy. The Ukrainian schismatics, who were received into communion without repentance by a unilateral decision of the Patriarch of Constantinople, do not have Apostolic Succession. This not only makes Eucharistic communion with them impossible, but also profanes the Church of Christ.

The holy apostle Paul teaches us that *Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it; That He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or*

any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).

It is regrettable that such unlawful actions violate not only the principles of Church conciliarity and Apostolic Succession, but also defile the moral image of the Church of Christ. In this regard, on behalf of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church, I would like to express gratitude to your holy Serbian Orthodox Church for the canonical and Patristic position you have taken on the non-recognition of the schism in our country.

Despite the trials of recent years, our Ukrainian Orthodox Church not only survived, not only remained the largest Church of Ukraine, but became yet stronger. Today our Church numbers 53 dioceses, around 12,300 parishes, and 250 monasteries. More than 100 hierarchs, 12,400 clerics, and 4,600 monastics carry out their obediences in the fold of the Ukrainian Church, nurturing the multi-million-strong Ukrainian flock.

It has often happened, and it happens in our time, that politicians succumb to the temptation to interfere in Church life and to use the Church to their advantage. Politicians want to rule the Church, but the Church must not yield to these attempts. The Church cannot change to meet human demands. We understand that the Church is inconvenient for the sinful man who is used to live according to his passions. However, it's not the Church that should change and adapt itself to the demands of sinful human nature, but the man himself should change, should try to become better, purer, and like unto Christ. The holy apostle Paul says: "Be ye imitators of me, as I am of Christ" (cf. 1 Cor. 4:16).

Dear Vladykas, brothers and sisters, all faithful of the holy Orthodox Church of the Montenegrin lands! We are pleasantly



surprised by your numerous cross processions, which have already encompassed about half of the country's population and which you hold to strengthen your spirituality and to defend your shrines. We are pleasantly surprised by your standing in the faith, your solidarity, and the rebirth of the Orthodox faith in Montenegro. For us, Orthodox Ukrainians, your example is very inspiring. We are here with you today not only to share in the joy of the feast, but also to confirm once again the truth of the Biblical words that say: *A brother helped by a brother is as a strong and high city* (Prov. 18:19).

The Precious Cross of Christ!



The Cross is more precious to us as believers than the entire universe'. Everywhere it is present in my view. I find it among princes and subjects, men and women, virgins and married people, free men and slaves. All continually trace it on the noblest

part of the body, their forehead, where it shines like a column of glory. It is made over the sick, over persons possessed by demons, 'in war, in peace', by night and by dayj in pleasant reunions and in perennial assemblies. It is a question of who shall seek first the protection of this admirable sign.

What is there surprising in this? The sign of the Cross is the type of our deliverance, the monument of liberation from sin for all mankind, the souvenir of the forbearance of our Lord. When you make it, remember what has been given for your ransom, and you will be a slave to no one. Make it, then, not only with your fingers, but with your faith. If you engrave it on your forehead, no impure spirit will dare to stand, before you. He will see the blade with which he has been wounded and defeated, the sword with which he has received the deathblow. " St. John Chrysostom

Question: Dear Father, *recently at the Divine Liturgy our pastor began to pour hot water into the chalice before Holy Communion at the Divine Liturgy. He explained this as the "Teplota" and said that it was the practice of the Orthodox Church. We never had this before in our church. Could you explain the reason behind it and why we never had it?*

Answer: The ceremony of "Teplota" or "Zeon" (its Greek name) consists of the following: After the priest has placed the part of the "Lamb," the large square of bread on the diskos, marked "IC" in to the chalice, the deacon brings up to him a small vessel containing boiling water. (In the Russian tradition this vessel looks something like a "porrigger;" in the Greek tradition a small pitcher with a lid.) The deacon says:

"Bless, Master, the warm water."

The priest says as he blesses the vessel with the water:

"Blessed be the fervor of your saints, now and ever and forever. Amen."

The deacon then pours a small amount of the water crosswise into the chalice saying:

"The fervor of faith, full of the Holy Spirit. Amen."

If there is no deacon the priest himself both blesses the water and then pours it in the chalice himself.

Origins Of The Teplota Rite

The origins of the "teplota" ceremony are shrouded in Christian antiquity. Many explanations have been put forward for its existence. One of the most popular seems to have been that this practice originated to keep the wine

from freezing in the Cappadocian Mountains and from there spread to other areas of the Church. Since the alcohol in the wine is a natural anti-freeze it is difficult to imagine that this ceremony would be needed. Another explanation looks to the table practices in the ancient world, where at least one document mentions tempering the table-wine with warm water before it is served. The practice of the ceremony of “teplota” can be dated with certainty to the sixth century. A bishop of Ephesus at the end of that century writes that the monks of Syria customarily “tempered the cup of the living blood with hot water.” About the same time the Byzantine Emperor Maurice (582-602 A.D.) invited the Catholikos (Patriarch) of Armenia, a Monophysite, to a conference with the Orthodox of Constantinople. The Catholikos, Moses II, refused in no uncertain terms, saying, “God forbid that I should ... be compelled to eat leavened bread and drink hot water...” (The Armenians use unleavened bread for their Eucharist.)

It would seem that the origin of this ceremony, unlike some other ceremonies in the Divine Liturgy, is to be found in symbolism rather than in any practical function that the “teplota” ritual may have had. In the middle of the sixth century a group called Aphthartodectae existed in Constantinople. This group believed that even in death the Body of Christ never lost its warmth. The addition of warm water to the chalice was a way of symbolically expressing this belief.

Later Byzantine writers, such as Nicetas Stethatos, explained the warm water added to the chalice as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the Lord’s Body, which continued after his death, similar to the thought of the group mentioned above. St. Nicholas Cabasilas, in his famous Commentary on the Divine Liturgy, saw the warmth of the teplota as expressing the Holy Spirit descending upon the Church. Many of the Church Fathers saw in the blood and water that flowed from the pierced side of

the Lord the origin of the Church and the remarks of Cabasilas are in accord with this thought:

“Since this warm water is not only water, but shares the nature of fire, it signifies the Holy Spirit, who is sometimes represented by water, and Who came upon the Apostles in the form of fire. This point in the Liturgy represents that moment in time, for the Holy Spirit came down after all things had been accomplished pertaining to Christ. In the same way, when the holy offerings have attained their ultimate perfection, this water is added.”

This thought of St. Nicholas Cabasilas is reflected in the current formula used as the water is placed into the chalice: “The fervor of faith, full of the Holy Spirit.” The ceremony of teplota, the pouring of the warm water into the chalice just before Holy Communion is distributed, serves to symbolically illustrate both the presence of the Holy Spirit in the dead body of Christ on the Cross, that it retained its warmth, as well as the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Apostles, a descent was made possible through the outpouring of the blood of Christ on the Cross.

Interestingly the ceremony of “teplota” does not appear in all of the surviving liturgical manuscripts. It is most likely that the rite was originally performed in silence, and since most handwritten manuscripts have very sparse directions for celebrants, the rite is not recorded.

**Gods Stewards.
“For God is not unjust;
He will not forget your work and
the love you have shown him as
you have helped his people and
continue to help them.”
(Hebrews 6:10)**

Lord Have Mercy The Prayer of Great Lent

The holy season of the Great Fast is a time when Orthodox Christians are called to intensify their life of prayer and spiritual reading. It is prayer that brings us closer to God. It is prayer that strengthens us for the unseen warfare against the evil one and his minions. Without a disciplined life of prayer, every day of the year, the spiritual life of Orthodox Christians can never grow. Great Lent is the most appropriate of times to honestly examine the quality of our personal prayer lives.

The most repeated prayer in Orthodox liturgical worship is Lord have mercy – Gospodi pomiluj! It is sung again and again: once, three times, 12, 40, 70, 100. In the evening and in the morning, at noon and at midnight, it is always the same: “Again and again, in peace let us pray to the Lord.” Lord have mercy!

What is the meaning of this constant prayer for mercy? It is an indication of the Church’s obsession with sin, a self-absorbed cry to the fearful judge for pardon and pity? Some suggest that the Orthodox liturgy became filled with “Lord, have mercy” under the influence of the monks who, as professed penitents, spend every waking hour begging God not to condemn them for their sins!

While it is true that all people sin and thus require the mercy and forgiveness of God, the prayer “Lord, have mercy!” is not at all a neurotic plea for pardon and acquittal. In its literal meaning, it is not that at all. The very fact that the Church sings “Lord, have mercy!” as a response to all of her prayers and petitions, including those for peace, good weather, as well as for those of praise and thanksgiving, demonstrates another meaning completely.

It is the word “mercy” that leads to a wrong understanding of the *Kyrie eleison*. We tend to think of mercy today almost exclusively in terms of justice. The opposite of being justly judged and therefore condemned, is to receive mercy. So the “Lord, have mercy!” gets interpreted as “Lord, grant us pardon,” or “Lord, let us off!” In Sacred Scripture, however, mercy is not primarily an antonym of justice. It is rather a word for kindness, goodness, generosity, and love. Saint John the Merciful, for example, was not a just judge who had mercy on criminals. He was a bishop who distinguished himself as a servant of the poor, the lowly, and the afflicted. This same saint is sometimes called John the Almsgiver.

The Greek word *eleos* which means “mercy” comes from the Hebrew word *hesed* which has a number of meanings in English. Some biblical translations render it “mercy”. Others use “steadfast love”. Still others translate the word as “tenderness” or “loving-kindness”. In

the prayer “Lord, have mercy” the word *eileison* is a verb not a noun, so we are actually saying “Lord, be gracious, loving, kind, bountiful, compassionate”. As God Himself is indeed all these things, we are actually praying “Lord, be to us who you are”.

If God is anything, He is compassionate and merciful. Mercy is at the heart of what being God is all about. No matter how far away we roam or how fiercely we defy God to be kind to us – He is there, eternally compassionate and tender. The Psalmist knew this well. Again and again in the psalms we read: “Gracious is the Lord and merciful; slow to anger and abounding in kindness,” or “Steadfast is the love of the Lord; His mercy endures forever”. There seems to be no lesson in Sacred Scripture in our life of faith so hard for us to learn as this one: God tenderly loves us and has compassion on us. So wedded are we to an idea of strict justice, that we actually seem more comfortable with the idea that God should punish us for our sin, than forgive us.

Yet this is precisely what our Orthodox liturgy, and the many times we sing “Lord, have mercy” are meant to convey: God is never worn down by us. There is no limit to His compassion and loving-kindness. While we are to avoid sin and darkness, and never make excuses for pushing God or others out of our lives, we must know that the Lord **IS** gracious and merciful. He **IS** slow to anger. He **IS** abounding in kindness. If we can come to realize that

simple yet incredible truth during this Great Lent – we will have made a worthwhile journey.

Let each member of our God-blessed parish look into his or her heart during these weeks of Great Fast. Have we *allowed*. God to forgive us? Do we believe we are beyond His mercy? Do we have a false humility which maintains that we are so great a sinner, the worst, that God could not possibly look with compassion on us? While we are to be rightly “fearful” of the Lord’s justice for our deliberate and unrepentant sinning, have we discovered in our hearts God’s tenderness? His gentleness? His meekness towards us?

As we repeat again and again *Gospodi pomiluj!* – Lord have mercy! – let us look to the God of all creation, the Lord of Glory who, in His words through the holy Prophet Jeremiah, speaks also to us: “I have loved you with an everlasting love, and with lovingkindness I have called you to myself”.



Subscriptions for
Shepherd
Year \$30:00
Year 2020

If you would
like to be the
sponsor of the
next
issue of the
Shepherd
please let us
know!

Blessings to your house

Serbian Orthodox Church of the Assumption
P.O. BOX 383
Fair Oaks, California 95628

NONPROFIT ORG.
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT NO. 576