



CHRIST THE SAVIOR ORTHODOX CHURCH

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BULLETIN OF MARCH 22, 2009

Please Remember in Prayer

Carole Boris (critical), Kathy & Bill Parrish, Diane Evanusa, Marie, Raymond, Thomas, Judith Kocinski, Jane Koshutko, Robert Evanusa, Nicholas & Linda, Nicholas, Anna, Yvonne, Katherine, Michael, Gregory, Todd & Olga Leisure, Nina Gordon, Fr. Christian, Constantina & Christos. If you have a request, let Fr. John know.

Choir Practice for Pascha - Today

There will be a choir practice for Pascha following the coffee hour. This practice will be a somewhat lengthy one but a light lunch will be offered for coffee hour. If you are a choir member please do your best to stay for the practice. Thank you!

SUNDAY, MARCH 22ND

SUNDAY OF THE HOLY CROSS

8:40a.m. Hours
9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy
Coffee Hour
Choir Practice

TUESDAY, MARCH 24TH

7:00p.m. Matins

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25TH

ANNUNCIATION

9:00a.m. Vespers & Divine Liturgy

SATURDAY, MARCH 28TH

MEMORIAL SATURDAY

5:30p.m. Memorial Service
6:00p.m. Great Vespers

SUNDAY, MARCH 29TH

SUNDAY OF ST. JOHN CLIMACUS

8:40a.m. Hours
9:00a.m. Divine Liturgy
Coffee Hour



Annunciation – Wednesday, March 25th

On this day, we celebrate the visit to the Virgin Mary by the Archangel Gabriel, who announced to her the good news that, if she so willed, God Himself would take up His abode within her womb. The Feast of the Annunciation is one of the Twelve Great Feasts. We will have services on Tuesday night and Wednesday morning.

Orthodox Movie Night – Monday, March 30th

Next week's movie will be "America's Holy Mountain – St. Tikhon's Monastery" This film (runtime 88 minutes) offers a glimpse into the past of the first Orthodox Monastery in the Americas. The film will be shown on Monday, March 30th at 7pm at the church. All invited!



Reading Group – April 6th

The next Reading Group will meet on Monday, April 6th at 7pm at the church. The texts will be the Life of St. Mary of Egypt and Selections from the Ladder of Divine Ascent. Copies are available for pickup at the candle stand. All are encouraged to pickup the reading, even if you cannot make the discussion group.

The Mysteries of Confession and Communion

should be received by all Orthodox Christians on a regular basis and at the very least during the Great Fast and Pascha. If you have not availed yourself of these life-giving sacraments, please be sure to do so. Likewise, frequent communicants should make a confession during this and all lenten periods, as well as whenever the conscience is burdened.



He who has become aware of his sins has controlled his tongue, but a talkative person has not yet come to know himself as he should.

St. John of the Ladder

READER SCHEDULE

Sunday, March 29th

Jen Alexion

Sunday, April 5th

Sandy St. Germain

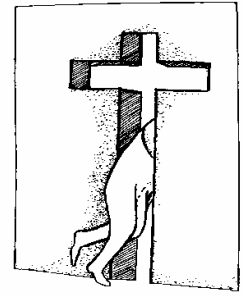


Church Readers Sought

If you are interested in helping to read the Hours and Epistle, please let Fr. John know. This is an important ministry and we are always looking for more Readers. If you do not know how to chant, don't worry, it is easy to learn.

HAVING COME TO THE MIDPOINT OF THE 40 DAY GREAT AND HOLY FAST... LET ME REFLECT...

- ❖ Have I accepted Great Lent as a "gift" from God, with thanksgiving?
- ❖ Have I spent the last three weeks in a meaningfully different way?
- ❖ Have I participated in the lenten services that are held during the week, Monday through Friday?
- ❖ Have I used the lenten prayer of Saint Ephraim in my morning and evening prayers, and at other times throughout the day?
- ❖ In addition to the Holy Scriptures, what kind of spiritual reading have I done? Have I learned more about my Faith? Have I read spiritual works which can help me in my prayers, dealing with others, and spiritual faults and needs?
- ❖ Am I preparing myself to make a good, honest, and humble Confession? Do I really believe that I am confessing my sins to Jesus Christ? Am I aware that the Lord sees my inner heart and will know if I only recite my sins, instead of being truly sorrowful and deeply committed to avoid repeating them?
- ❖ In what ways will I struggle in the second part of Great Lent, that I have so far left unattended?
- ❖ What price am I willing to pay in order to die and live in Christ? Am I willing to trade the earth for heaven? Am I willing to deny myself, take up my cross and follow Him to His heavenly Kingdom?



FINDING GOD AGAIN IN THE CHURCH

From OrthodoxyToday.org / By John Kapsalis



It is said in our tradition that the church did not begin some two thousand years ago, but rather the church started in Paradise when God had intimate conversations with Adam and Eve. It must have been awesome! Sadly, so much has changed in the millennia since that first talk. So much from that first love has soured. The familiarity and the mystery now seem faded, almost too distant to ever have been real. And though that break was restored once again on Pentecost, our scars never really left, leaving scabs of brokenness, inadequacy and yes, sinfulness. How then is the church to live?

In the Bible, the word "church" means "to be called out;" that is, called out by God to be a holy people, because our God is holy. And that means that we pursue holiness not as an idea but as a lifestyle, where we say yes to becoming the house of God. We say yes to relating to each other as if to Christ. We say yes to loving God above everything else. We say yes to Jesus Christ as our eternal salvation.

The church is not the building or the icons or the candles or even the religious services. The church is the people of God. The church is the community that believes in Jesus Christ as their savior, their lover, their God. The church is that unique family that is meant to live, to love, to care for, to support and yes even to die for each other. In the church

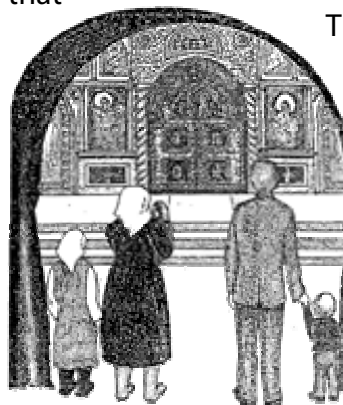
everyone counts. Each one of us that has been baptized is a part-an important and vital part-of this family. To the extent that if one person no longer is involved with the church, then the church misses something and becomes, in a way, handicapped. It mourns and does everything to bring that lost son and daughter back into the family.

Authentic Communities

There can't be any pretending in a church-in a true community. Relationships have to be real. There has to be a strong sense of belonging, where everyone knows they will be listened to and supported by all the others, where everyone shares in each other's joys and struggles as if they were their own. This is what people always wanted from church, and I think probably want that sense of belonging now more than ever because it is community that defines who we are.

We can look at it this way. We know that when Jesus calls us to enter His kingdom, He calls us first to enter into a new relationship with Him. But by entering this new kingdom, God then calls us to community, because even God is community. God is three in one -Father, Son and Holy Spirit- each so distinct yet also so completely related to one another through pure and deep love that they are

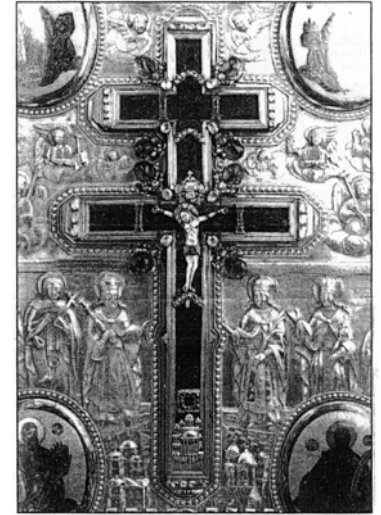
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WHAT HAPPENED TO THE CROSS ITSELF?

St. Cyril, Bishop of Jerusalem, in a letter written around 350 AD to Emperor Constantius, the son of Constantine the Great, states that the true Cross was found in Jerusalem during the reign of Constantine. From the beginning of the fifth century, church writers and historians attribute the finding of the true Cross to St. Helena, the mother of St. Constantine. In his *Catecheses*, theological discourses which Cyril delivered in Jerusalem beginning in 347 AD, he frequently mentions the sacred Cross. St. Cyril briefly describes a tradition that was followed in Jerusalem on the morning of Holy Friday. The bishop, the clergy and the faithful would gather in the Chapel of the Cross which had been constructed by Constantine near Golgotha, and there they would venerate a large relic of the true Cross which was kept in a beautiful silver and gold reliquary.

St. Cyril is the first writer to comment on the fact that relics of the true Cross had been distributed all over the world. By the beginning of the fifth century, fragments of the true Cross were found in churches, monasteries and even in homes. In fact, St. John Chrysostom (d. 407) observed that many individuals in his day wore small gold reliquaries containing particles of the Cross around their necks. The expression "knock on wood" comes from the time Christians touched their reliquary crosses in times of trouble.



The largest fragment of the True Cross in existence – Mount Athos, Greece



THE ANNUNCIATION – CELEBRATED MARCH 25TH

From the Prologue of St. Nikolai Velimirovich



When the All-Holy Virgin completed the fourteenth year after her birth and was entering her fifteenth year, after having spent eleven years of living and serving in the Temple of Jerusalem, the priests informed her that, according to the Law, she could not remain in the Temple but was required to be betrothed and enter into marriage. What a great surprise to the priests was the answer of the All-Holy Virgin that she had dedicated her life to God and that she desired to remain a Virgin until death, not wanting to enter into marriage with anyone! Then, according to Divine Providence, Zacharias, the high priest and father of the Forerunner, under the inspiration of God, and in agreement with the other priests, gathered twelve unwed men from the Tribe of David to betroth the Virgin Mary to one of them to preserve her virginity and to care for her. She was betrothed to Joseph of Nazareth who was her kinsman. In the house of Joseph, the All-Holy Virgin continued to live as she did in the Temple of Solomon, occupying her time in the reading of Sacred Scripture, in prayer, in Godly-thoughts, in fasting and in handiwork. She rarely went anywhere outside the house nor was she interested in worldly things and events. She spoke very little to



anyone, if at all, and never without special need. More frequently she communicated with both of Joseph's daughters. When the fullness of time had come, as prophesied by Daniel the Prophet, and when God was pleased to fulfill His promise to the banished Adam and to the Prophets, the great Archangel Gabriel appeared in the chamber of the All-Holy Virgin and, as some priestly writers wrote, precisely at that same moment when she held open the book of the Prophet Isaiah and was contemplating his great prophecy: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son!" (Isaiah 7:13). Gabriel appeared in all of his angelic brightness and saluted her: "Rejoice, highly favored one! The Lord is with you" (St. Luke 1:28), and the rest in order as it is written in the Gospel of the saintly Luke. With this angelic annunciation and the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the Virgin, the salvation of mankind and restoration of all creation began. The history of the New Testament was opened by the words of the Archangel Gabriel: "Rejoice, highly favored one" This is to imply that the New Testament was to signify joy to mankind and to all created things. It is from this that the Annunciation is considered not only a great feast, but a joyful feast as well.

Finding God Again continued from page 2...

one. It is this mystery of God—so completely one, yet also so completely community that we are called to represent and to be in the world. In other words, the church is nothing but a people who are so closely united that our own communion with each other is like that of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. So much so, that as St Gregory of Nyssa said, if anyone then looked at the church, he would look at Christ.

And I think that sums it all up. You know, Church is radical. It is insane and crazy, according to the world's standards, to live like this. It calls for a depth of relationship where we cover each other's back; that we help each other stay away from sin; that we become the hands and feet of Jesus to each other; that we model God to the world because the church is the new model for humanity.

But this love has to be real. It is a love that makes great demands on us. It is a love that demands respect for every person. It is a love that demands care, kindness, patience, active concern for others, and giving of one's self— one's life to and for others because that's what Jesus did—He loved us and was delivered up for us.

Seeing God in the Church

If we saw the church this way, then the world would see God in us. We know that no one on the planet has ever seen God. But if we love each other; that is, if the church really lived like the people of God — then the world would get a picture of God through us (cf 1 John 4:11). Or as the nuns at the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City, Pennsylvania put it: "When [we] love each other in the spiritual sense... [we] actually recognize God dwelling within the other. As we greet someone, we worship God, for man is the icon of God. Man is a living icon." So we, the people of God are the church. We, the people are the true icons. I don't believe God wants us to spend our time and money just trying to make a building beautiful, but rather He wants us to build up people — people who are the real church buildings — the real houses of God. But I'm afraid we've gone so far away from this understanding of what the church is, that it's no wonder that people say they are bored with it, that they no longer get anything out of church.



Back to the Past

So where do we go from here? Above all, we need to go back to our real calling which is the mission given us by Christ, the work of Christ himself: "to preach the good news to the poor, to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to captives and the recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to announce, 'This is God's year to act!'" (Luke 4:18). We also need to show people how remarkable it is to be in love with God—to treasure Him and to want nothing more but to be with Him. In order to do that, though, we have to live as though our citizenship is not here on earth but is in heaven.

Another thing we must be aware of is that so many people walk into our church buildings on Sunday, carrying silent but heavy burdens of hopelessness, of fear, and of pain and no one reaches out to them. We have to work harder at loving each other. We need to find ways to be more hospitable. We tend to be too focused on our personal spirituality, not understanding that our faith, our Christianity cannot be lived in isolation.

It is expressed, validated and lived out in relation to others.

I think this is why the church in the early centuries grew by leaps and bounds. The gospel explodes all our prejudices, our hatred, and our greed and replaces it not only with a peace beyond all understanding but also with a love that is extravagant. Where we take on each other's burdens. Where we sacrifice our wants and maybe even our needs. Where we become ready to fight for justice, to fight against child sexual slavery and hunger, to help unwed mothers, and to stop the disintegration of the family. And I think once we start doing that, then the world will begin to see the church—the people of God—as relevant and meaningful, as something they want to be a part of.

This is after all what church is. God calls us to follow Him and love, as He loves. And if we do that—if we live knowing that our own happiness, our own peace and our own joy depend on whether we live for others— then we will finally have true communion with God and with each other. Then we will at last live as the church of God—as a people living in the light and power of the coming Kingdom. And I know that when we can achieve that, then the world will have come one step closer to seeing God.