

WHO IS JESUS TO US?

WHO IS JESUS TO US? A person who lived ages ago whom we are told to love, respect and imitate? An Ideal of something we are not? A “semi-god” who permits tragedies to happen to us? These are some of the “ideas” our secular-minded culture projects and distills for our consumption. These are the “safe” ideas, that regrettably, we may ingest if we are not sufficiently aware of what the Scriptures, Old and New, have to say to us about God.

Who is Jesus to us? We do not have to search our mind for an answer, or fabricate some feelings. Jesus tells us Who He is, and why he came and what He has done for us. “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I Am.” (John 8:58) By these words “I Am” Jesus claims He is eternal, not limited, not able to be fully described, circumscribed or analyzed. He uses the phrase that God spoke when Moses asked His Name at the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:1ff). He is saying that He is the Word of God that was spoken; that Life in Him is the Life of God, for in Jesus, the Eternal God revealed Himself to mankind. As a visual reminder of this the icons of Jesus Christ always have, written in Greek, those words that Moses heard: “I am Who I Am.”

Jesus claimed: “I Am the Door; by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and shall find pasture.” (John 10:9) Jesus the door of salvation, the door to peace, the door to God the Father, the door of the Church. Again, Jesus claims: “I Am the Bread of Life; he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst.” (John 6:35) The Lord claims that He is the most basic necessity of life—He is the Food for a life that has eternal meaning, purpose, that can be transfigured from earthly hunger to hunger for the divine life; a life refreshed by receiving the Bread of Life in Holy Communion each and every week.

“I am the Light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” (John 8:12) To walk in the Light is to walk to the divine way of Wisdom—and Christ is the Wisdom of the Father; to walk in salvation—for in Christ we are born again as a new creation; to walk in safety though life and to share in part even now the glory of His Eternal Kingdom, as far as we are able and our hearts and will desire it.

“I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh unto

the Father but by Me.” (John 14:6) Jesus not only gives us advice, direction and counsel, but leads us, strengthens us and guides us as we journey though life. He is the way to the knowledge of God and communion with Him. Not *one way among many* but *the only way*, since He is Himself God’s Son incarnate, all that the Father is, which is why we worship Him.

I am the resurrection, and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he love, and whosoever believeth in me shall never die.” (John 11:25) He is Himself the reality of the eternal life of the Kingdom. This is a life that is not simply unending, but is one that passes from “glory to glory” without death, sickness or sorrow, always in the presence and love of God Himself.

Jesus is not primarily the teacher, or a founder of a religion, doctrine or philosophy. He didn’t write a book to teach us Godly things. Other religions don’t stand or fall on who and what the founder is. With Jesus, His teaching cannot be separated from His person. St. Justin of Serbia (died 1979) wrote the following: “...the reality of all realities upon which the Person of Jesus of Nazareth is founded is His Divinity. Take God away from Jesus and he becomes the most tragic and pitiful of all creatures under the sun, then he would not even really be a being, for he would have been created to demonstrate an illusion. It is God that makes His Person incomparably real, incomparably lasting, incomparably eternal. The Lord Christ’s divinity is the foundational truth that alone can answer a thousand questions about His actions, about His words, and about His life. How did He heal the lepers of their leprosy? How did He heal the centurion’s servant by a word? How could He forgive sins? How did He feed the five thousand? How did He walk on water? How did He raise the dead? How could He fulfill the law? How could He ask His disciples to love Him more than father, mother, wife, children and their own soul? How could He declare that all is possible for those who believe in Him? How could He say, ‘I and the Father are one’? How could He say of Himself, ‘I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life’? How could He say, ‘He who sees Me sees the Father, for I am in the Father and the Father in Me’? The answer to these questions and a thousand more is one: the Lord Jesus Christ is ‘the Son of God, the Only-begotten, Begotten of the Father before all ages, Light of Light,

INFORMATION

Protection of the Holy Virgin & St. Seraphim of Sarov Church
90 Mountain View Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95407
Parish office phone: 707-584-9491 / fax: 585-9445
website: www.saintseraphim.com

Our Parish Secretary—Bobbi Griovski—may be reached at the Church office Mon., Tues. and Wed., 9 AM to Noon, at 584-9491. Fr. Lawrence Margitich may be reached at the Parish office phone, or at Lmargitich@sbcglobal.net. He is available Tuesday–Saturday, from noon onwards each day.

Parish Contacts

Fr. Michael Margitich, Pastor Emeritus	473-0314
Fr. John Schettig, Assistant Pastor	318-1559
Serge Anderson, Parish Council Warden	291-7452
David Winterton, Treasurer	331-9085
Bonnie Alexander, Recording Secretary	338-4962
Kira Staykow, Sisterhood President	(415) 279-0353
Shenina, Scrip Manager	321-7417
Eleni Rose, Agape Meal Coordinator	480-6106
Debbie Buse, Hall Event Manager	696-4986

True God of True God, Begotten, not made, of one essence with the Father, by Whom all things were made.’ And suddenly, all things are filled with light, all things become clear. And the blind sons of Adam and sightless daughters of Eve begin at last to see, healed by Christ, like the blinded multitudes before them.” —*Father Michael Margitich, adapted from 1994*

Entering the Church (Late):

On Sundays in particular (Vespers is different), the time to arrive at church for the Divine Liturgy is before it begins. In that sense, it’s just like going to school, to a movie, to work, or to a good friend’s home for a meal. We make it a point to come on time for those events. How much more important is the Holy Liturgy! We arrive when it begins, and on Sunday we begin at 10 AM. By anyone’s standard, 10 AM is not early in the morning, and it seems reasonable to believe that most people are able to be in Church to hear the exclamation: “Blessed is the Kingdom...” and to give assent with singing “Amen.” If for some unforeseen, unfortunate and/or unavoidable reason you arrive after the Divine Liturgy has begun, I ask that you enter the church quietly, and observe what is happening. If the priests and servers are about to make the procession with the Gospel, or when the Epistle or Gospel is being read, or if a sermon is in progress, stay in the Narthex until it is concluded. I apologize for sounding disapproving. In fact, there would be no need for any comment at all on this matter if we would all simply

pay attention to the Divine Liturgy and the responsibility of each and every member of the congregation for participating in it, so that we begin this magnificent Liturgy to and with our Savior—at the beginning—as the Body of Christ, not a random collection of individuals which arrive whenever is most convenient to them. Fr. Alexander Schmemmann wrote that “...the miracle of the Church assembly lies in that it is not the ‘sum’ of the sinful and unworthy people who comprise it, but the Body of Christ. How often do we say we are going to church to obtain help, strength or consolation? We forget, meanwhile, that we are the Church, we make it up, that Christ abides in His members and that Church does not exist outside us or above us, but we are in Christ and Christ is in us.” There are many reasons why we may become a bit lax and casual in our arrival time, very few of them can be justified, Let us all make an effort to be strict with ourselves

On Reading the Scriptures with Understanding

If you read spiritual books regularly, with eagerness and care, know that this diligence will open up your mind and will make it receptive to spiritual meanings. And what you did not succeed in understanding the first time, you will easily understand when you read it again. For God, seeing your continuous diligence, will illumine your mind to understand even what is difficult... Divine Scripture is the Divine Science that makes us more educated than all the philosophers, more wise than all the moralists and political theorists...—*St. Nicodemus of the Holy Mountain*

One day some eminent visitors came from Syria to question Abba Pimen on purity of heart, but the Elder did not know Greek and could not find an interpreter. Seeing his visitors’ embarrassment, Pimen suddenly began speaking in Greek, saying to them: “The nature of water is soft and that of stone is hard, but a goatskin hung above a stone, letting the water fall drop by drop, will bore through the stone. So it is with the Word of God: it is gentle and our hearts are hard, but the man who hears it often will open his heart to the fear of God.

Questions to Elder Cleopa of Romania (reposed 1998)

Question: Give us a word of advice on prayer. Often I have time to pray but my thoughts impel me to do something useful; then at other times when I don't have time, I feel moved to pray.

Answer: If the enemy of our souls steals prayer from you then he can rob you of anything he wants. That is why St. Isaac the Syrian says: "When you are occupied with other things during the time for prayer, then know that you are a laughingstock to the devil." I advise you never to abandon holy prayers, nor to do something else during the time of prayer, for the devil urges us to do other things, especially during the time for prayer, so that we do not pray.

Question: Have you known monks or laymen who had true prayer of the heart?*

Answer: I knew several hermits who lived in shacks in the forests surrounding Sihastria Monastery, Sihla Monastery, Agapia Vechia Monastery and Pokrov Monastery, but only God knows exactly how advanced they were in prayer... The prayer of the heart is a work done in secret and known only to God. Those who possess this have difficulty telling others about it. In fact, often the person himself does not realize that he possesses prayer of the heart. There are laymen who have this spiritual prayer, surpassing even the monastics. Let me tell you about a wondrous thing that I saw here, in the monastery church, about ten years ago. It was my turn to serve in the holy altar. I arrived at the Church at 4 AM and was saying the Prayers before Holy Communion on my knees before the Altar Table. After a while a woman came into the church to pray. She had arrived at the monastery the evening before. I did not know her. She prayed quietly before all the icons, constantly making prostrations. She did not know that there was someone else in the church. It was dark since it was winter.

When I realized that someone was praying so fervently, I looked out through the Royal Doors to see who was praying with such faith. The woman was on her knees in the middle of the church with her hands raised in prayer. She was saying with her whole heart, "Lord, do not abandon me, Lord, do not abandon me." I saw a yellowish light around her and was struck with fear. Then the woman bowed her head to the floor and prayed silently. The light around her became stronger and stretched upward. After a while the light slowly faded, the woman stood up and left the church. She was a village woman. So look at who it is that has the gift of prayer! See how laypeople surpass us monks! As I was doing the *Proskomedia* I felt overcome with emotion at what I had beheld and wept with the holy spear in my hand. Only God knows how many of the chosen are in this world.

**Prayer of the heart*, also known as *noetic prayer*, is a gift from God, activated by His Grace, when the words of prayer (often the Jesus Prayer) are no longer done only with the lips and the mind, but descend into the heart, and the *nous* is fully caught up in the presence of God. Elder Joseph of Mount Athos (reposed 1959) wrote that "...the manner in which Grace is manifested to initiates is by spiritual joy, by quiet and joy-producing tears, or by a peaceful and awe-inspiring fear due to the remembrance of sins, thus leading to an increase of mourning and lamentation. Gradually Grace becomes the sense of the love of Christ, at which time the roving about of the mind ceases completely and the heart becomes so warmed in the love of Christ that it thinks it can bear no more. Still at other times one thinks and desires to remain forever exactly as one finds oneself, not seeking to see or hear anything else."

Your most powerful testimony is how you treat others after the CHURCH SERVICE is over

MEMORY ETERNAL

On Sunday, August 30, the *Forty Day Memorial* for Julia Talar, wife of Joseph Talar, will be served at the conclusion of the Divine Liturgy. Normally, Memorials are not served on Sunday, but since this will be the Fortieth Day, and Mr. Talar is not able to come to the church during the week, we will be serving the Trisagion of the Departed. Why is it that the Church asks us to not serve Memorials on Sunday? The Sunday Liturgy is a "little Pascha" and a taste of the day of the eternal Kingdom. Jesus said to St. Martha: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." On Sunday the Church bids us to not mourn for our sins or for the dead, since they are alive in Christ. —Fr. Lawrence

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **OUR PARISH IS PARTNERING** with the Redwood Empire Food Bank to distribute food to low income and needy families on the second Wednesday of each month, from 5:30 to 6:30 PM. The next distribution is on Wednesday, September 10. Volunteers, please come by 5 PM to set up. See Denise Pellizzer if you would like to volunteer to help the poor.
- **IMPORTANT FEAST DAYS THIS MONTH:** While all the activity for Glendi is taking place, let's not forget that our primary vocation as humans is worship and thanksgiving to God. The Liturgical New Year's first feast is that of the birthday of the Theotokos. Vespers at 1:15 PM, Sunday, September 7 and the Matins/Divine Liturgy, Monday, September 8, starting at 8:30 AM. This is a splendid spiritual celebration of the Mother of God, our spiritual Mother. All are invited. The second feast of the Liturgical year is that of the Elevation of the Holy Cross. Vigil on Saturday evening at 5 PM, September 13, at which the Cross will be carried in procession from the Altar to the middle of the Church. The Sunday Liturgy on September 14 will be entirely devoted to the Feast of the Cross. In addition, September 14 is a fast day. Since it falls this year on a Sunday, the fasting is considerably lessened, with wine and oil allowed.
- **CELL PHONE ADDICTION:** Despite usurious "data plans" and preposterous sticker prices, nobody seems to be able to do without the doofus things these days. People feel lost without looking at the world through an electrical version of a toilet-paper tube. People fiddle with them incessantly. The average user has a relationship with his telephonic device not unlike that between Gollum and his precious. Our attention span has been seriously injured. Please, do not bring your cell phones into Church, or at the very least, turn them completely off. The Lord does not need them to teach us, and bids us give Him all our attention.
- **FROM THE BOOKSTORE:** Responding to requests and suggestions, Saint Seraphim Bookstore has several new titles in stock. Among them is "Born to Hate - Reborn to Love" by Klaus Kenneth. Subtitled "A Spiritual Odyssey from Head to Heart," it is the story of a disenfranchised Catholic searching for the solution to his lonely and tortured existence. His road takes him through the chaos of worldly distractions and ends with him finding truth in the Orthodox Church.



GLENDI NEWS

1. **Glendi Set-Up and Take Down:** Did you know that the Friday before Glendi - September 19th is a very big and critical day for set-up. (And so is the day after, Monday September 22nd). Several parishioners have already committed to being there. All are welcome. Work will be taking place from 9 AM-9 PM. Work will be done throughout the Grounds, the Booths (final set-up and preparing supplies), decorating the hall, the churches, setting up the parking lots, food prep and so on. Just show up anytime —before or after work.
2. **Part-time Booth Workers Needed:** You only need to commit to a few hours —not the full day; ask your friends, neighbors, relatives and co-workers to volunteer. And remember, teenagers will receive Community Service Credit. Please speak to the Booth Chairs or Lydia Nicholson on Saturday or Sunday morning. Workers are always needed for Booth Chairs to take breaks and during: Saturday Vespers (4-5 pm) and Choir Concert (starts 7:30 PM this year).
3. **Ushers** are needed before & during Vespers and the Choir Concert on Saturday. Contact Lydia Nicholson. —*Esther Schau, Glendi Co-Chair*

INDOOR BAKERY

The **Indoor GLENDI Bakery** relies heavily on a myriad of donated homemade items that give our customers a wide variety from which to choose. We are asking that you make your favorite sweets to help supply our Bakery! Special cakes and quick breads always sell well too, as well as, anything unique like rum or carrot cake. Please make enough for Saturday and Sunday, and package separately for each day. We need things in/on disposable containers whenever possible, or mark your name clearly on the container. Please contact me by email: kristinet@sonic.net if you will be bringing something. **We need all the baked goods no later than 9 AM on September 20th.** —*Kristine Tellefsen, Chair, Inside Bakery*

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

SEPTEMBER 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Liturgical New Year's Day	2	3 <i>7 PM, San Francisco, Talk by Klaus Kenneth NO VESPERS HERE</i>	4	5	6 • 9 AM–1 PM, Glendi Work Party • 5 PM, Great Vespers
7 – Martyr Sozon • 9 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • 1:15 PM, <i>Great Vespers</i>	8 - Nativity Theotokos • 8:30 AM, Matins and Divine Liturgy for the Nativity of the Theotokos	9	10 • 5 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank • 6 PM, Vespers	11	12	13 • 9 AM, Memorial Divine Liturgy • 10 AM–2 PM, Glendi Work Party • 5 PM, VIGIL
14 – Elevation of the Holy Cross • 9 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal (<i>Fasting Day: wine and oil allowed</i>)	15	16	17	18	19 • 9 AM, Glendi Set Up All day	20 - GLENDI • 10 AM, <i>Opening Prayer</i> • 11 AM–9 PM, Glendi • 4 PM, Great Vespers
21 – GLENDI • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy (note time change) • Noon – 6 PM, GLENDI	22	23	24 • 6 PM, Vespers for St. Sergius of Radonezh	25 • 6 PM, Vespers for St. John • 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting	26 • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy for the <i>Repose of St. John the Theologian</i>	27 • 5 PM, Great Vespers
28 – St. Chariton the Confessor • 9 AM, Baptism of Samuel Hamner • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45, Church School begins • Noon, Agape Meal	29	30 • 6:15 PM, Vigil for the Protection of the Theotokos	OCTOBER 1 Protection of the Holy Virgin • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy and festal meal	2	3	4 • 5 PM, Great Vespers

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

OCTOBER 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			October 1 <i>Protection of the Holy Virgin Mary Parish Feast</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy, Festal Meal 	2	3	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 PM, Baptism • 3:30, Catechism, <i>the Mystery of Holy Baptism</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers
5 - Holy Hierarchs of Moscow <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 PM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 1 PM, <i>Meley/Yonas Wedding</i> • 3 PM, <i>Delamonica Wedding</i> (Sacramento parish) 	6	7	8	9	10	11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>No Catechism</i> * At Sts. Peter and Paul: Vigil at 6 PM
	Fr. Lawrence at Diocesan Assembly in Phoenix					
12 - Holy Fathers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Akathist <i>Nurturer of Children</i> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 PM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	13	14	15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers 	16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noon, Senior Lunch Fellowship 	17	18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>the Mystery of Holy Chrismation</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers
19 - Prophet Joel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, <i>Baptisms of Martin Thong and Scott Brown</i> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 PM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	20	21	22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers 	23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting 	24	25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Memorial Divine Liturgy • 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>the Mystery of the Holy Eucharist</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers
26 - Great Martyr Demetrios <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 PM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 12:45 PM, Sisterhood Mtg. • 3 PM, <i>Wedding: Suha & Scott</i> 	27	28	29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers 	30	31	November 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>the Mystery of Confession</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers

* On Saturday, October 11, Fr. Lawrence and Nicolas will be participating in a music workshop at Sts. Peter and Paul on Stony Point Rd. Because of this, there will be no Vespers here, but Vigil will be celebrated there at 6 PM. Fr. Lawrence will be at Sts. Peter and Paul for the 9:30 AM Sunday Liturgy on October 12. Our own parish will celebrate as usual.