

ORTHODOX MESSENGER

APRIL 2013, Vol. 22, Issue 4

Protection of the Holy Virgin Mary Parish • Santa Rosa, CA. 95407

FIFTH THURSDAY OF LENT—A PARISH RETREAT (APRIL 18)

On almost every morning of Lent Matins is served. Near the beginning of this service we hear six Psalms—the same ones each and every day—and we take special care to listen to them closely, as they symbolize the Lord’s Second Coming (which is why we do not sit, or even make the sign of the Cross during these Psalms). And Matins continues after that with the daily hymns, done simply and quickly. However, on the fifth Thursday of Lent, there is a radical change in the service. On that special day we sing the extraordinary “Great Canon of St. Andrew of Crete” — a very long hymn of repentance—260 verses leading us deeper into repentance. About half way through we read the Life of St. Mary of Egypt. Matins concludes almost three hours later, and we begin the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts. One might ask, why such a service, and why this particular Thursday; what is the purpose of such a spiritual marathon of Liturgical prayer? We find it difficult today to understand the purpose of these long services, prayers, many prostrations and so forth, maybe because for some of us, we expect immediate feedback and experience. We’ve forgotten, perhaps, that these long services take us on a spiritual journey, and that the architecture, the icons, the movements, the prayers, the readings, singing, prostrations, the fasting, reveal to us that Church time and place are multi-dimensional. We need time to “get there.” The Canon on the fifth week serves such a purpose; it “summarizes” all the struggles of Lent for us, bringing it all into focus and climax. It’s one last push before Holy Week. We will hear how St. Andrew uses Old Testament stories as allegories for the spiritual life—the service assumes we know the stories. We will sit and listen to the Life of St. Mary of Egypt, her years of sin and redemption, the fornication, prostitution, lies, deceits and evil, and her amazing conversion to the Savior through the mediation of the Theotokos; we hear of her life, alone in the desert for forty years, and the encounter that St. Zossima has with her. Hopefully this story will not only move us to repentance, love of God and of His saints, but also serve as a way to participate in her life, struggles, her victory and glory. St. Mary is made present in our assembly, guiding us toward repentance by her prayers. The Presanctified will begin immediately following Matins. Expect the entire experience to last from 9 AM —1:15 PM.



FIFTH FRIDAY OF LENT—AKATHIST (APRIL 19)

On the day after we pray the Canon of St. Andrew of Crete, we are invited once again to Church in the evening, Friday April 19 at 6 PM, to sing the beautiful and moving *Akathist Hymn/Matins to the Theotokos*, praises to the Mother of our Savior, in its entirety (we have been singing only a small portion of it each Friday evening of Lent). Having made a last “push” towards repentance the day before, the *Akathist Hymn* expresses our love for the Mother of God, and gives us in return a consoling gift of her intercessions, and somehow through that, a taste of the coming joy of Pascha. The *Akathist* is undoubtedly one of the most beloved hymns of the Church. As we sing it, we remember, *we become present to*, all of the events related to our Lord’s Incarnation: the Archangel Gabriel marvels at the Divine self-emptying and the renewal of creation which will occur when Christ comes to dwell in the Virgin’s womb; the yet unborn John the Baptist prophetically rejoices in his mother’s womb; the shepherds recognize Christ as a blameless Lamb, and rejoice that in the Virgin “the things of earth join chorus with the heavens.” The pagan Magi following the light of the star praise Her for revealing the light of the world, and so on. The hymn is comprised of 24 stanzas, arranged in an acrostic following the Greek alphabet. The stanzas alternate between long and short. Each short stanza is written in prose and ends with the singing of “Alleluia.” Each longer stanza ends with the refrain: “Rejoice, O Bride Unwedded” (the word *akathistos* means “not sitting,” i.e., standing; normally all participants stand while it is being prayed). Unfortunately, this Akathist of the Fifth Friday has been poorly attended in past years, so I encourage you this year to come to this glorious hymn in honor of the Theotokos, under whose protection we have placed our parish. — *Fr. Lawrence*

INFORMATION

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

Our Parish Secretary may be reached at the Church office
Tuesday–Saturday, 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 Tues-
day–Saturday, from noon onwards each day.

PARISH CONTACTS

Fr. Michael Margitich, Pastor Emeritus	473-0314
Fr. John Schettig, Assistant Pastor	318-1559
Fr. John Ramos, Attached	570-9849
Deacon Jeremiah Crawford	823-5878
Deacon Nicholas Carr	588-8753
Sub-Deacon Marc Richardson	545-4047
Nicolas Custer, Choir Director	584-9491
Nilus Veenis, Sacristan	526-2284
Serge Anderson, Parish Council Warden.....	291-7452
Petar Griovski, Treasurer	762-4742
Bonnie Alexander, Recording Secretary	778-8528
Lisa Moroz, Sisterhood President.....	360-5119
Parmenas Davis, Church School Coordinator.....	823-2921
Shenina, Scrip Manager.....	321-7417
Eleni Rose, Agape Meal Coordinator	480-6106

HOLY WEEK SCHEDULE

- April 27, Lazarus Saturday
Baptisms and Divine Liturgy, beginning at 9 AM. Reception for the newly-illuminated to follow the Divine Liturgy.
Vigil for Palm Sunday 5 PM, with blessing of palms
- April 28, Palm Sunday: Festal Divine Liturgy & Procession, 10 AM
- April 29–May 1, Holy Monday–Holy Wednesday
Each day Matins at 6:30 AM; Presanctified at 6:15 PM
- May 2, Holy Thursday
Vespers Liturgy, 11:30 AM, the commemoration of the Last Supper, institution of Holy Communion
Matins with the Reading of the Passion Gospels at 7 PM
- May 3, Holy Friday — Strict Fasting Day
Royal Hours at 9 AM
Vespers with the bringing out of the Holy Shroud (*Plaschanitsa/Epitaphios*) at 3 PM
Matins with the Lamentations and Procession around the Church at 7 PM
- May 4, Holy Saturday
Vespers Liturgy with Fifteen Old Testament readings
Prophecies at 1 PM
Midnight Office at 11:30 PM
Paschal Matins and Liturgy
- May 5, Pascha
Agape Vespers at 1 PM followed by the **Pot-luck**
Paschal BBQ
- Bright Monday
9 AM, Matins and Liturgy. Expecting our Bishop

He That Eateth My Flesh And Drinketh My Blood, Dwelleth In Me And I In Him (John 6:56)

What can be loftier and more desirable than these most comforting words of our Saviour in which He expresses all His love, all the boundless abyss of His compassion which is given to man in the Mystery of Communion! With what can we compare the state of a man who is united with the Lord Himself! This is the Mystery of Mysteries, so exalted that it can only be grasped in part by man's limited mind. It is sufficient for us to know that in the Mystery of Communion we are vouchsafed the greatest of God's gifts, and therefore we must by all means try to live in such a way that we may more often approach this most Holy Mystery, which the ancient Christians were vouchsafed daily...Each of us knows from experience that frequent repetition of any thing forms a habit in us. He that repeats a sin often makes himself a slave to sin; he that strives for virtue becomes a struggler of piety. Thus, the person who partakes of Communion often necessarily acquires the disposition to serve the Lord with fervor, for he truly believes in the power of this Divine Mystery; he praises God with gladness and hope, for he truly trusts that the Lord is his helper and defender; he submits to Him with humility and love, because he truly loves the Lord Who has loved him and bestowed upon him every heavenly gift.

—*Russian Orthodox Hieromonk Arsenius of Mount Athos, reposed 1846*

WORK AND THE CHURCH

WE OFTEN HEAR about working for the church, about those who work for the church, and especially about those who ought to work for the church. There is, however, a basic misunderstanding about what it means to “work for the Church.” It is all too often forgotten that the **primary understanding of the church about work** has to do with attendance at the Liturgical Services of the Church, prayer and the acquisition of virtues bestowed upon us by God’s grace. The very word “liturgy” is derived from the Greek word *liturgia* which has several related meanings. In ancient Greece, it was first of all the service of a citizen at a public office at his own expense. What is emphasized is the service of public duties of the state. Later it came to mean the performance of the public religious services. But, the primary meaning has never been totally lost. The word liturgy, understood in its most complete sense is the public service of members in the church. It also relates to our Lord Jesus Christ and his work as the celebrant of the Divine liturgy, His service—liturgy—of salvation. The Church has always held that the performance of its liturgical rites is primary, because these actions in prayer focus on what is primary and what justifies all of the other “works” in the church. It is the liturgy of the Church as experienced in Vespers, Matins, and the Divine liturgy, which focuses us on Jesus Christ, the Son of God, what he has done for us and how He enables us to become as He is. This is a gift of grace, not of works.

All of the fellowship, all of the educational activities, all of the charitable activities, and all the management activities follow from this. Without this focus on God the Father who made us; the Son, Jesus Christ, who has saved us; and the Holy Spirit, who imparts the life of God in the holy Trinity to us; all of the other activities will inevitably breakdown. When the worship of the Church becomes

something secondary, a duty to perform when we have time, or for those who feel that they may enjoy other things more; than all the other work of the Church breaks down, arguments begin, factions form, and all of those sinful characteristics which divide us from God and each other take the front seat. In the early days of the church people were attracted to the Church not because of street evangelization...but rather it was because of a certain *something* which set Christians apart from those around them. That something was the life of Christ, who is God made man. We must never forget that, otherwise we might just get burned out on “working” for the Church, and no wonder, it being not wrong in itself, but a wrong priority. Before all else, the church invites and arranges for its membership worship that is designed for a very special purpose: not to entertain, not to keep us busy, not to educate us with Sunday morning Bible studies, not to stir up the emotions; none of these things. The prayers, the singing, the psalms and the homilies are given to us, inspired by Holy Tradition, to teach us inner prayer, prayer of the heart, noetic prayer, prayer of standing in the presence of God in the heart, brought together with one another by our Savior Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit, at the Throne of the Almighty Lord and Father. That kind of prayer, that kind of work, which will manifest in our lives, words, and deeds, the divine-human nature of the Church to those around us. St. Seraphim of Sarov, perhaps the greatest saint of the Russian church, said that if someone attains the peace of God, then thousands around him would be saved. The first step, middle step and last step in obtaining this peace is devout prayer and at home, and attentive attendance of the public services of the church, particularly the weekend cycle, vespers and liturgy. May God help us. —Fr. Thomas Pleska (now Bishop Melchisedek of Pittsburgh)

CONFESSIONS

IT IS THE NORM for each Orthodox Christian to confess at *least once* during Great Lent, and especially in the two week period prior to Holy Week in preparation for Pascha. For those **over the age of seven** who would like to receive Holy Communion during Holy Week and Pascha, please make a confession at least once in the weeks before Holy Week. Confessions will not be heard after Holy Wednesday.

ANNUNCIATION

WITH THIS GREAT LENT being my first, each moment of worship and Church life opens my eyes (and slowly, my heart) to a new experience. The first week of Lent (also my first fasting experience), exciting. The second? A bit more difficult. The Annunciation Feast on Monday, March 25, provided some joy and hope to even a “newbie” like myself. I know the story, Gabriel appears to Mary and tells her of God’s plan. What I am finding tremendously helpful though, is how each chapter of God’s story of grace is brought to life, through liturgy, worship, prayer. The icon of Gabriel bringing his message, how the angel appears to almost run to Mary...and her willingness to receive... how thankful I am for this! It all became more than just a passage that was read to me, something quickly passing by, or a side mention to the rest of the story. While I “departed” to the Narthex during communion, I reflected on this, listening to the choir and sketching the candle in front of an icon of Mary. Afterwards we received the cross with oil on our foreheads, and celebrated the Annunciation with an amazingly delicious salmon dinner in the parish hall. — *Tracey Rolandelli*

AM I HAVING AN IMITATION LENT?

Honestly, ask yourself this question. AM I having an “imitation” Lent? You might ask what I mean. Let me explain. What if we had on our Lenten menu such things as spinach salad with “imitation” bacon bits, a casserole with “imitation” cheese, something else with “imitation” sour cream. Well, yes, this is keeping the fast. But is it really? There is a phrase “fake food, fake fast.” Or, the “law of the fast” verses the “spirit of the fast.” What more is there? What is the spirit of the fast?

ALMSGIVING

Are you still stopping by Starbucks and spending \$3.00 on a latte but with soymilk instead of low fat milk with non-fat froth? How about giving that \$3.00 to a needy family instead? Money from a few cups of coffee can add up. Have you once thought “Maybe I won’t put non-dairy creamer, or sugar in my coffee, today” and go without? There are so many others in the world that go without any food everyday. This small sacrifice can bring you a little closer to them. Here’s an idea: Put a coffee cup in your car or at home and fill it up with money. Each week give the money at church and designate it “for the needy”. This way it is given in secret and your Heavenly Father who sees in secret will reward you. (Matthew 6.) Eat less, give more.

PRAYER AND CHURCH

So, you are doing okay with what is going into your mouth. You are eating the right foods at the right times, watching the amount you eat. How about what is coming out of your mouth? Are you cranky and blame it on the fact that you haven’t eaten? Are you quick tempered? Snapping at people, yelling at the kids? Gossiping? Truly, if we are to have control over what goes into our mouths, let us make even more effort as to what comes out of our mouths. “What good is it to fast from meat if you devour your brother” says St. John Chrysostom. More prayer is

the answer. If you find yourself getting edgy, say the Jesus Prayer. You can say it anywhere, any time. Out loud or in your heart. Try it. See the difference it will make in your attitude. “Fasting with out prayer is really just a diet.” Less talk, more prayer.

CHURCH ATTENDANCE

How is your church attendance? They are so many wonderful services during Lent to aid us in our journey. We are not alone! Did Frodo complete his mission with out help? No! He had his ever-loving Sam. So, too, do we have the Church to help and guide us through this spiritual journey. The weekday services provide us with warm words of encouragement through beautiful hymnography that guide us each step of the way. On the “Don’t Miss” list are: the Great Canon, the Akathist Hymn to the Theotokos, Bridegroom Matins, and, of course, Pre-Sanctified Liturgies. Not to mention all the services of Holy Week. You can do this! Sunday morning Divine Liturgy is of paramount importance. Each day say morning and evening prayers with the prayer of St. Ephraim. This one prayer in addition to the Jesus Prayer can help get you through Lent if really take to heart. There is much meat in the theology of these church services. One might consider it the Atkins diet of the soul. More church, less distractions.

CONFESSION

What’s the whole point of this fasting thing? To see God! I bet there isn’t anyone out there who wouldn’t want to see Paradise. Adam was thrown out of Eden because he didn’t fast. Leave the darkness of sin and return to the Father. It is for this reason that the Church offers the Sacrament of Confession. Lent isn’t about the food (especially what’s on your neighbor’s plate.) It is about seeing God. The Lenten Triodion calls Lent the “Spiritual Spring which blossoms with the fruits of the Spirit.” (Ga-

latians 5:22) Old sins and evil habits leave an awfully dark jungle in our souls. (Romans 13:12-14) Go to Confession! Clear out the jungle and let the Son shine through and see what beauty will grow, where formerly there were weeds. Allow Christ to forgive you, and He will remove the sins that hide us from the life-giving sun of His Spirit. And, Oh! What a Pascha Paradise you will have! Go to Confession. Leave your cares behind. More confession, less obsession.

Right now, I will confess that I fail all the time. I am “consistently inconsistent.” I mean to prayer every day, morning, noon, and night. I mean not to put milk in my tea...I mean to get up in time for Matins...I mean to help out those who are less fortunate...I mean to go to confession,

no, really, I do, but...

At times like these, we can turn to the Saints for comfort. St. Herman is a very special Saint to us all. When you feel like you can't make it through Lent, when you have blown it, when you feel the sin of despair, as I have before, remember his words: “From this day, from this hour from this very minute, we should love God above all, and fulfill His Holy will.” Each day, each minute we live is a time when we can begin again. So, try not to have an “imitation” Lent. It can only lead to an “imitation” Pascha. You rob yourself of a glimpse of Paradise. Don't settle for plastic flowers. Plant a real garden in your heart. Have a blessed Lent, and I hope you see God.

— *Matushka Esther Carr*

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- WE WELCOME Jennie Zimmerman from **Project Mexico** who will be telling us about the work of Project Mexico during our Agape Meal. I encourage all of you to listen to her short presentation.
- WE THANK THOSE WHO provided funds to purchase new chairs for the Church. We also thank the high school guys who awoke early, on their day off, to unload, unpack and set up the new chairs.
- PARENTS: Please be sure to pick up after your child on Sundays. Quite often there are cups, plates, utensils, and personal items on the playground, the gazebo or elsewhere. We thank you for your attention.
- HIS EMINENCE, Archbishop Benjamin, will be here to celebrate the Liturgy of the Presanctified Gifts on Wednesday, April 10. The Service begins at 6:15 PM promptly. A Lenten meal will follow. We also customarily expect His Eminence at the Paschal Liturgy of Bright Monday, 9 AM.
- THE MONASTERY in Calistoga invites you to the monthly **Friends Meeting**, Sunday, April 14, at 4 PM. Our choir master Nicolas Custer will give a talk on the Lenten hymnography of the Church. Vespers will be sung at 5 PM, followed by a Lenten pot-luck—please bring a dish to share.
- ON LAZARUS Saturday, April 27, the following Catechumens will be joined to the Church through Holy Baptism: Ryan, Meghan and Honor Inlow and Lahana Singer. Those who were baptized last year will prepare a reception breakfast to follow the Divine Liturgy.
- CLEANING AND SET-UP FOR PASCHA: April 27, starting about 1 PM, we will clean the church, polish whatever needs it, decorate for Palm Sunday, and prepare the grounds for the Paschal BBQ.
- FOR YOUR INFORMATION: The Parish Council approved the installation of an alarm system for St. Seraphim Church, going in presently. While being conscious of security in the Church, we also want, on the other hand, to be more “seeker friendly.” Accordingly, three “Guest Parking” spots will be designated in our lot, reserved for visitors. We are also forming “Usher Teams” for the Sunday Liturgy. The Ushers will welcome worshippers, keep the entrance way open, help find seating for the elderly and those needing seats, and assists guests by finding them a place to stand and/or sit, and making sure that if they wish they are brought to the Agape Meal. Your new ushers will have a short training session this Sunday, and be introduced to you next week.
- CHOIR MEMBERS: the usual Lenten rehearsal to prepare for Holy Week and Pascha will take place on Saturday, April 20 from 10:30 AM–2:30 PM, lunch included. This rehearsal is **required** if you wish to sing during Holy Week and Pascha.
- THE SENIOR LUNCH Fellowship is scheduled for Thursday, April 11, at Noon.

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

APRIL 2013

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
March 31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:30 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • <i>Presentation on Project Mexico</i> 	1	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins • 6:15 PM, Liturgy of the Presanctified, Meal to follow 	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins 	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Liturgy of the Presanctified • 6 PM, Akathist 	6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3:30, Catechism, on Baptism, part 1 • 5 PM, CROSS VIGIL
7 - Veneration of the Cross <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Baptism, Duval Baby • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:30 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	8	9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins 	10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins • 6:15 PM, Liturgy of the Presanctified, Archbishop Benjamin to preside 	11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins • Noon, Senior Lunch 	12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins • 6 PM, Akathist 	13 - Memorial Saturday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Liturgy • 3:30, Catechism, on Baptism, part 2 • 5 PM, VIGIL
14 - St. John Climacus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:30 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 4 PM, Friends Meeting at Monastery in Calistoga 	15	16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins 	17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins • 6:15 PM, Liturgy of the Presanctified, Meal to follow 	18 - PARISH RETREAT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Matins with Canon of St Andrew and Life of St Mary • Noon, Presanctified 	19 <p>No AM Matins</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Matins with the Akathist 	20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10:30 AM, Choir Rehearsal • 3:30, Catechism, on Holy Week • 5 PM, Great Vespers
21 - St. Mary of Egypt <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:30 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	22	23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins 	24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins • 6:15 PM, Liturgy of the Presanctified, Meal to follow 	25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins 	26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins • 7 PM, Matins for Lazarus Saturday, Catechism to follow 	27 - Lazarus Saturday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Baptisms • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy & reception • 1 PM, Clean & decorate Church • 5 PM VIGIL
28 - Entrance into Jerusalem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Confessions • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy for Palm Sunday • Noon, Agape Meal 	29 - Holy Monday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:30 AM, Bridegroom Matins • 6:15 PM, Presanctified Liturgy 	30 - Holy Tuesday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:30 AM, Bridegroom Matins • 6:15 PM, Presanctified Liturgy 	May 1 - Holy Wednesday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:30 AM, Bridegroom Matins • 6:15 PM, Presanctified Liturgy 	2 - Holy Thursday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM, Vesperal Liturgy (Mystical Supper) • 7 PM, Matins for Holy Friday 	3 - Holy Friday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Royal Hours • 3 PM, Burial Vespers • 7 PM, Matins with the Lamentations 	4 - Holy Saturday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 PM, Vesperal Liturgy • 11:30 PM, Nocturn, Matins and Liturgy

• **Of special interest:** *Sunday, April 7*—Baptism of Duval baby; *Sat., April 7*—bringing out of the Precious Cross at Vigil; *Thurs., April 18*—Parish Retreat, Great Canon of St. Andrew (see note in bulletin); *Friday, April 19*—Magnificent Akathist and Canon for the Fifth Friday, in honor of the Theotokos at 6 PM; *Sat., April 20*—Extended Choir Rehearsal for Holy Week and Pascha; *Sat., April 27*—Baptism of Catechumens; Vigil at 5 PM with blessing of Palms