

The Feast of the Meeting of the Lord

A FEAST AND LITANY procession in honor of Jesus' Presentation in the Temple was celebrated by Jerusalem Christians at least as early as the late 4th century. It took place forty days after the feast of the Lord's birth since the Jewish law required a mother to undergo a rite of purification forty days following childbirth. In Luke's account of the Presentation, Simeon is recorded as proclaiming Jesus "a light of revelation to the Gentiles." And so at the beginning of the eighth century, Pope Sergius inaugurated a candlelight procession on this day; several years later the blessing and distribution of candles were added to the celebration. Hence this day came to be known as Candlemas. From the sermon below, delivered in the 7th century, it seems the tradition of holding candles on this feast may be earlier than thought and may have originated in the East.

A Sermon by St. Sophronius of Jerusalem

Our lighted candles are a sign of the divine splendor of the One who comes to expel the dark shadows of evil and to make the whole universe radiant with the brilliance of His eternal light. Our candles also show how bright our souls should be when we go to meet Christ. The Mother of God, the most pure Virgin, carried the true light in her arms and brought Him to those who lay in darkness. We too should carry a light for all to see and reflect the radiance of the true light as we hasten to meet him.

The Light has come and has shone upon a world enveloped in shadows; the Dayspring from on high has visited us and given light to those who lived in darkness. This,

then, is our feast, and we join in procession with lighted candles to reveal the Light that has shone upon us and the glory that is yet to come to us through Him. So let us hasten all together to meet our God.

The True Light has come, the Light that "enlightens every man who is born into this world." Let all of us, my brethren, be enlightened and made radiant by this Light. Let all of us share in Its splendor, and be so filled with It that no one remains in the darkness. Let us be shining ourselves, as we go together to meet and to receive with the aged Symeon the Light whose brilliance is eternal.

Rejoicing with Symeon, let us sing a hymn of thanksgiving to God, the Father of the Light, who sent the True Light to dispel the darkness and to give us all a share in His splendor. Through Symeon's eyes we too have seen the salvation of God which He prepared for all the nations and revealed as the glory of the new Israel, which is ourselves. As Symeon was released from the bonds of this life when he had seen Christ, so we too were at once freed from our old state of sinfulness.

By faith we too embraced Christ, the salvation of God the Father, as He came to us from Bethlehem. Gentiles before, we have now become the people of God. Our eyes have seen God incarnate, and because we have seen Him present among us and have mentally received Him into our arms, we are called the new Israel. Never shall we forget this presence; every year we keep a feast in His honor.

(Orat. 3 de Hypapante 6.7: PG 87, 3, 3291-3293. St. Sophronius died 638 AD)

The Lenten Journey Begins

THE PASCHAL SEASON of the Church is preceded by the season of Great Lent, which is also preceded by its own liturgical preparation. The first sign of the approach of Great Lent comes five Sundays before its beginning. On this Sunday the Gospel reading is about Zacchaeus the tax-collector. It tells how Christ brought salvation to the sinful man, and how his life was changed simply because he "sought to see who Jesus was" (Luke 19:3). The desire and effort to see Jesus begins the entire movement through Lent towards Pascha. It is the first movement of salvation. Our lenten journey begins with a recognition of our own sinfulness, just as Zacchaeus recognized his. He promised to make restitution by giving half of his wealth to the poor, and by paying to those he had falsely accused four times as much as they had lost. In this, he went beyond the requirements of the Law (Ex. 22:3-12). The example of Zacchaeus teaches us that we should turn away from our sins, and atone for them. The real proof of our sorrow and repentance is not just a verbal apology, but when we correct ourselves and try to make amends for the consequences of our evil actions.

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—Fr. John Ramos—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
Fr. John Ramos, Attached	570-9849
Serge Anderson, Parish Council Warden	291-7452
David Winterton, Treasurer	331-9085
Bonnie Alexander, Recording Secretary	338-4962
Lisa Moroz, Sisterhood President	360-5119
Shenina, Scrip Manager	321-7417
Eleni Rose, Agape Meal Coordinator	480-6106
Debbie Buse, Hall Event Manager	696-4986

We are also assured of God's mercy and compassion by Christ's words to Zacchaeus, "Today salvation is come to this house" (Luke 19:9). After the Great Doxology at Sunday Matins (when the Tone of the week is Tone 1, 3, 5, 7) we sing the Dismissal Hymn of the Resurrection "Today salvation has come to the world," which echoes the Lord's words to Zacchaeus. This tax collector was short, so he climbed a tree in order to see the Lord. All of us have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23). We are also short in our spiritual stature, therefore we must climb the ladder of the virtues. In other words, we must prepare for spiritual effort and growth. (*from oca.org*)

The next four Sundays, after we read about Zacchaeus, further prepare us for the beginning of Great Lent as we begin our efforts to also "see" the Risen Christ at Pascha. On Saturday, February 8 at Great Vespers, we will hear the hymns about repentance, humility, pride, prayer and hypocrisy—based on the **Parable of the Tax Collector and the Pharisee** (Luke 18), which we will hear at the Liturgy the following day. In addition, we begin to sing that most compunctionate of hymns: *Open to me, the doors of repentance, O Giver of Life, for my spirit rises early to pray toward Thy holy temple, bearing the temple of my body all defiled, but in Thy compassion, cleanse it by Thy loving-kindness and Thy mercy...* On February 16 we read the **Parable of the Prodigal Son** (Luke 15), which reveals not only man's wasteful prodigality, his self-induced misery and his afflicting misery on others, his exile from God, true repentance, the journey toward God, and again hypocrisy, as seen in the older brother, but more importantly, the love of God for us. On the same day we sing Psalm 136, *By the waters of Babylon, there we sat down and wept*, and meditate on our exile from the Paradise of true life, true

union with God. On Sunday, February 23 we hear the **Parable of the Last Judgement** (Matt. 25), about the Sheep and the Goats, about who sees, and who doesn't see, the image of God in others and what they do about it. On this Sunday we eat meat for the last time until Pascha, so the day is called "Meatfare." The following week, Sunday March 2, **Forgiveness Sunday**, so-called because of the reading from Matthew 6:14 about forgiving our enemies, proper prayer, fasting, and works of mercy, leads us to the doors of Great Lent. The hymns of the day also meditate on the *Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise*, which came about from the misuse of freedom and lack of trust in God, prompted by the evil one. This day is also called "Cheesefare Sunday" because we eat the last of our dairy, eggs and cheese. At 1:15 PM or so, after the Agape Meal, we will enter into Great Lent with the Vespers of Forgiveness: the gold icon cloths are replaced with the darker, royal purple; the chanting is done in the "lenten mode" and we participate in the act of mutual forgiveness at the conclusion of the Service. As we quietly and in an orderly fashion line up, we come to the clergy and then one another and say: "Forgive me" answering "God forgives," and we bow down in humility. Once we learn to forgive others—even unto "seventy times seven"—then we can be free at last to experience God's forgiveness, which is the third step in the process. God's forgiveness is love in its purest form. It heals our hearts, makes us kinder to our fellows, and leads us into union with God. Forgiveness is a form of love—and love is the highest law. As St. Paul wrote to the Romans: "Do not be obliged to anyone for anything, except to love each other; he who loves has fulfilled all the rest of the law."

I encourage each and every single parishioner to participate in these Services, and especially in the **Vespers of Forgiveness**, on Sunday, March 2, at 1:15 PM. It seems to me that no Orthodox Christian could enter into Great Lent, or celebrate Holy Week and Pascha without the experience of Forgiveness Sunday. The Church gives us such a service precisely because it is the perfect antidote to our self-enclosed, self-centered, excuse-making, other-blaming and critical existence. I wonder why and how anyone could intentionally miss this Service, and would perhaps even ask that person about it. —Fr. Lawrence

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **THE PARISH WELCOMES** Jonathan and Shiloh, our newest Catechumens, being received prior to Liturgy on Sunday, February 2. Many Years to them.
- **ONE OF OUR CATECHUMENS**, Leonard Carl, will be baptized on Sunday, March 8, the first Sunday of Great Lent, at 9 AM. Please keep Leonard in your prayers as he prepares for holy illumination.
- ✱ **CATECHISM CLASS ✱ NEW TIME ✱** Wednesday afternoons at 3 PM, in the Protection Church.
- **THE PARISH ANNUAL MEETING** will be held on Sunday, February 2, after the Divine Liturgy. All parishioners are asked to attend.
- **RETIREMENT DINNER:** Petar Griovski, who has faithfully served as Parish Treasurer for decades, will be retiring on the date of the Annual Meeting on February 2. In honor of Petar Griovski's service to the Church, there will be a dinner on Saturday, February 1, immediately after Great Vespers. More info to follow.
- **SCRIPTURE STUDY:** You are invited to participate in a Wednesday evening class focusing on Holy Scripture in the Church. Before the class, we will have Vespers at 6 PM, then a simple pot-luck, and then a forty-five minute talk on various aspects of the Holy Scriptures. The first class, Feb. 5, will give an overview of the five books of Moses (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy). The following classes, Feb. 12, 19 and 26, will deal with other aspects of the Old Testament. Since we have Presanctified Liturgies on Wednesdays during Lent, we will not have any of these classes at that time, but will pick up our Vespers/Potluck/Class routine after Bright Week, meeting each Wednesday for a month, with a month off before starting again. Topics for future classes will include: a study of the Epistles of St. Paul, Orthodox family life, the Orthodox Funeral, the Divine Liturgy, etc.
- **THE SISTERHOOD MEETING** will take place on Sunday, February 16, at 12:45 PM. The meeting will focus on election of Sisterhood officers: President (Lisa Moroz is stepping down after serving her term), Treasurer and Secretary (Juliana and Cathy Veenis have also completed their terms of office).

The Death of Marriage and Resulting Poverty – National Marriage Week, February 7–14

When President Lyndon Johnson waged his war on poverty in 1964, 93% of children born in the US were born to married parents. As of 2010, that number has now plummeted to 59%, and the percentages of out-of-wedlock childbearing has increased from 6% to 41%. According to Heritage Foundation's Robert Rector: As husbands disappear from the home, poverty and welfare dependence will increase. Today, divorce and cohabiting households (some with children) are the two greatest threats to the institution of marriage. Many are now considering cohabitation as an alternative to marriage and this growing trend is the major reason divorce rates (once over 50% and now 40 – 45%) are not higher. Unfortunately, research indicates cohabiting couples have an even higher chance of divorce. Neither situation provides stability for children nor are what God intended for mankind. Marriage is a covenant based on total trust which is never to be broken. It's no secret the best thing you can do for children is to give them a good marriage. Being raised in a married family reduces a child's probability of living in poverty by 82% and minimizes many high risk behaviors. *(source available)*

♥ FEBRUARY 14 ♥

MUSIC & POETRY EVENING

On that day of love dedicated to St. Valentine, we will hold our yearly **MUSIC AND POETRY EVENING**. From six o'clock on, Eros and Amor will guide our words and actions. Talented Parish members will entertain and enthrall us with their musical and poetic abilities. Spaghetti, salad and parish wine will be abundant, the rest of the evening meal on this Fast-Free Friday will be **POT LUCK**. Everyone is encouraged to attend, and those who have performing abilities are urged to sign up with Vladimir at ursusmjr@sonic.net or 707 479-9437.



Impressions on the Pro Life rally/march in San Francisco 1-25-2014

The statistics are appalling; over 52,000,000 legal abortions have been performed in the United States since legalization forty years ago, currently 4,000 per day. How does one make sense of such numbers? I have often pondered the meaning of the harsh and cynical statement of a 20th century political leader; “The death of one person is a tragedy; the death of millions is an abstraction.” I began asking, “How can I prevent myself from reducing this inescapable reality to an abstraction?” So last weekend I set aside a day and traveled to San Francisco with six other people from St. Seraphim’s. We stood in the sun together for hours, listened to dozens of speakers and marched in a rally with tens of thousands of people of widely varied political persuasion. I hadn’t participated in an act of mass public protest since I had been a student at Berkeley in the late 1960s. Back then somehow, perhaps naively, we had all seemed to be of one mind on issues that were so much more clear. I was hoping to gain some degree of clarity on this extremely divisive and rancorous issue by attending the rally and march.

Ultimately the words of the women themselves were the antidote for abstraction. We listened to very compelling stories of confusion, fear, isolation, abandonment, recklessness, shame, over-whelming loss, and finally the acceptance of the forgiveness of God. At the end of each story the speaker repeated her name and the phrase, “...and I will be silent no more.” It was an extraordinarily powerful moment, and I admired the courage of each those women, marveled at their willingness to very publicly share their experiences of nearly inexpressible sorrow with thousands of onlookers. It suddenly seemed essential to be there, encourage these women to speak out about the trajectory of their post-abortion lives, to help break the deadly syndrome of shame and silence, to walk with tens of thousands of others in the streets, to be engaged.

While the legality of abortion is being challenged in our country I find my own ideas on the issue evolving. As an American I believe that the inalienable rights of all “the people” must be defended. As an Orthodox Christian I believe that God’s will must be done on earth as it is in heaven. I believe a woman must not be coerced into bearing a child she neither wants nor can provide for, while the words of one of the speakers continue to echo in my ears. She said, “I would never have gotten the abortion if it had not been legal. Somehow, the fact that it was legal made it okay.” Clearly the viable alternatives to abortion need to be better articulated and promoted, and, most importantly, financial support in both the public and private sectors of the country must be provided. The overarching impression of the rally/march was that this immense national and yet very personal tragedy would not ultimately be decided in the courts but rather in the hearts of the many individual women caught in this complex and cruel dilemma. I have no great optimism that *Roe v. Wade* will soon be overturned. But during the last four decades the opposition movement has not gone away and is in fact certainly gaining momentum. Whether it will to grow to the point of critical mass and provide a legal reversal is yet to be determined.

I encourage each member of our parish to consider going to the rally and march next year and help provide a more complete Christian witness and Orthodox presence in this great national debate. — *Deacon Jeremiah*

The Lord is not tired of hearing us complain all the time. He is tired of our sins, not our turning to Him for help. He wants us to call upon Him all the time and to pour out our hearts to Him. Prayer should not be something that is said and forgotten. You stand in front of an icon, recite your prayers, and go about your business. That is not prayer. — Elder Thaddeus, from the book *Our Thoughts Determine Our Lives*

Please join us for our traditional

Blini Brunch

Complete with sour cream, lox, herring, and caviar...and of course, butter, syrup and bacon!!

Church Hall

Sunday, February 23, 2014 ~ Noon

We will be honoring this tradition with our family and friends, so make sure to invite them!

Please come enjoy Blini with us as we prepare to enter that wonderful time of Lent. Prices for the Blini Brunch will be ala carte. Wine, juice, coffee and tea will be available for a small additional charge. Children’s plates are available.

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

FEBRUARY 2014

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Baptism (Zachary) • 3:30 PM, Catechism, <i>On Confession</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers, Confessions • 6 PM, Retirement Dinner
2 - Meeting of the Lord <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Receive Catechumens • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • 12:30 PM, ANNUAL MEETING 	3	4	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck and Scripture Study 	6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Liturgy for St. Photios of C'ople 	7	8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vigil, Confessions
9 - Publican and Pharisee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9-10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	10	11	12 - Fast Free <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 PM, Catechism, <i>On Great Lent</i> • 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck and Scripture Study 	13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Liturgy for St. Symeon the Myrrhgusher 	14 - Fast Free <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Poetry and Music Evening 	15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM Great Vespers, Confessions
16 - Prodigal Son <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9-10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 12:45, Sisterhood Meeting 	17	18	19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 PM, Catechism, <i>On the Eucharist</i> • 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck and Scripture Study 	20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noon, Senior Lunch Fellowship potluck • 7 PM, Master Planning Meeting 	21	22 - Memorial Saturday <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Liturgy • 5 PM Vigil, Confessions
23 - Last Judgement / Meatfare <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9-10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, BLINI pancakes at Agape 	24 <i>Begin meat fast</i>	25	26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 PM, Catechism, <i>Creed, Part 1</i> • 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck and Scripture Study 	27 - St. Raphael <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Liturgy for St. Raphael of Brooklyn • 6 PM, Vespers • 7 PM, Parish Council 	28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, <i>Santa Rosa City DINE event here</i> 	March 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM Great Vespers, Confessions

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

MARCH 2014 (PROVISIONAL)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 • 5 PM Great Vespers, Confessions
2 - Forgiveness Sunday • 9-10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 1:15 PM, <i>Vespers of Forgiveness</i>	3 - Clean Week <i>Beginning of Lent</i> • 8 AM, Matins • Noon, 6th Hour • 7 PM, Canon of St. Andrew	4 • 8 AM, Matins • Noon, 6th Hour • 7 PM, Canon of St. Andrew	5 • 8 AM, Canon of St. Andrew • Noon, 6th Hour • 6:15 PM, Presanctified and Meal	6 • 8 AM, Matins • Noon, 6th Hour • 7 PM, Canon of St. Andrew	7 • 10 AM, Presanctified and Canon to St. Theodore the Recruit • 6 PM, Akathist to the Theotokos	8 • 5 PM Vigil, Confessions
9 - Sunday of Orthodoxy • 9 AM, Baptism of Leonard Carl • 10 AM Liturgy and Procession • Noon, Agape Meal	10	11 • 8 AM, Matins <i>[Fr. L. in SF for Diocesan Council Mtg, all day]</i>	12 • 8 AM, Matins • 3 PM, Catechism. <i>Creed, Part 2</i> • 6:15 PM, Presanctified and Meal	13 • 8 AM, Matins	14 • 10 AM, Presanctified • 6 PM, Akathist to the Theotokos	15 • 5 PM Vigil, Confessions
16 - St. Gregory Palamas • 9-10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	17	18 • 8 AM, Matins	19 • 8 AM, Matins • 3 PM, Catechism, <i>Creed, Part 3</i> • 6:15 PM, Presanctified and Meal	20 • 8 AM, Matins • Noon, Senior Lunch Fellowship potluck	21 • 10 AM, Presanctified • 6 PM, Akathist to the Theotokos	22 • 5 PM Vigil, Confessions
23 - Veneration of the Holy Cross • 9-10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	24 • 6:15 PM, Vigil for Annunciation	25 - Annunciation • 5 PM, Vesperal Liturgy for the Feast	26 <i>No Matins</i> • 3 PM, Catechism, <i>The Holy Mysteries</i> • 6:15 PM, Presanctified and Meal	27 • 8 AM, Matins • 6 PM, Vespers • 7 PM, Parish Council	28 • 8 AM, Matins • 6 PM, Akathist to the Theotokos	29 • 5 PM Vigil, Confessions
30 - St. John Climacus • 9-10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	31	1 • 8 AM, Matins (<i>for St. Innocent, moved from previous day</i>)	2 • 8 AM, Matins • 3 PM, Catechism, <i>Holy Week in the Orthodox Church</i> • 6:15 PM, Presanctified and Meal	3 • 8 AM, Matins	4 - AKATHIST FRIDAY • 6 PM, Matins and Akathist to the Theotokos	5 • Choir Rehearsal, TBA • 5 PM Vigil, Confessions