

A MESSAGE SIGNED IN BLOOD

I AM NOT A FAN of horror movies. I don't enjoy feeling frightened by suspense and terror as a means of entertainment. But back in February I forced myself to watch a video that was about as horrifying as anything I have ever seen. It was so awful that I could not bear to watch it to the end. What made it especially horrifying was that it did not feature actors following a script but was a real-life documentary. The video was titled: "A Message Signed in Blood to the Nation of the Cross." It was the gruesome video of twenty-one Orthodox Christians of Egypt beheaded by Islamic terrorists on a beach in Libya.

The video was designed to send a message filled with fear and terror to the world, especially Christians "the Nation of the Cross." The terrorists who murdered these men did send a message to the world, but the message was the opposite of what they intended. The video included a subtle message of triumph, victory, courage, and faith. The unintended message has encouraged and united Christians around the world. One of the captions their murderers wrote said "these insisted to remain in unbelief." Do we understand what this simple sentence means? It means these Orthodox men were given the choice to deny their faith in Jesus and to recite the Muslim confession of faith. It means these men refused to deny Christ and embrace Islam. With a knife at their throats they were given the chance to be rewarded and be returned to their wives, children and families. Each of them refused! What faith! What courage! And as they were being simultaneously slaughtered they were seen to be whispering prayers and some were heard to cry out "Lord Jesus!" No wonder, then, the Coptic Orthodox Church of Egypt has already honored these men as holy martyrs and included them in their calendar of saints. This video gives us an illustration, in living color, of the words of Jesus:

But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. This will give you an opportunity to testify. So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; for I will give you word and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name. But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your souls (Luke 21:12-19).

Our Church has always honored the martyrs: From the earliest days of the Faith we have documentation of how the early Christians honored the memories of those who died for Jesus. Our church calendar is filled with the commemoration of martyrs who are remembered on the day of their martyrdoms. We know the stories of some of these better known martyrs such as St. George and St. Demetrios. But with this video "A Message Signed in Blood..." for the first time in Christian history we can see for ourselves the courage, faith and witness of individuals laying down their lives because of their love for Jesus. We can now see for ourselves why we honor men and women like them throughout history. We can see for ourselves why we have icons of martyrs in our churches. We can see for ourselves why we honor them on their feast days.

Why would these men make such a choice? Why did they not choose the easy way out, deny their belief in Jesus and return home? They were not priests, monks or theologians but simple men from impoverished Egyptian villages who went to Libya to find work to support their families. But these men were Orthodox Christians and knew the promises of Jesus:

Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:11-12).

To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne (Revelation 3:21).

Those Muslim terrorists never learned the lesson learned by the Romans and the Communists: Persecution and the killing of the followers of Jesus only leads to a flowering of the Faith. Love and forgiveness always eventually triumph over hate and violence. As the ancient Christian writer Tertullian noted "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church." The release of the gruesome video has united Christians all around the world: Orthodox, Catholic and Protestants in praise and admiration of these men. Even the Muslim majority population of Egypt, often hostile to the Coptic Orthodox minority, have expressed widespread sympathy and support for their Christian neighbors. Rather than suppressing the Christian Faith this awful video has strengthened and reinforced the faith of Christians around the world.

Parish of the Protection of the Holy Virgin
St. Seraphim of Sarov Church
90 Mountain View Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95407
Parish office phone: 707-584-9491
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, Second Priest	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

How does the Christian Faith in America compare to the Faith exhibited by these new martyrs? Churches in America—Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant—often try to make Christianity appealing to people and to fill the pews by making the Faith comfortable, easy and convenient. Fasting is eliminated or made easy. Hard pews replaced with padded seats or theater style chairs. Sermons have to be upbeat, uplifting and humorous. Worship has become entertainment with rock style “praise bands,” live dramas, and video clips to illustrate the sermon. Pastors have to “watch the clock” and not extend worship too long or people will grow restless and not come back. Christianity in America is a mile wide but an inch deep. Few American Christians are willing to undergo any kind of self denial, self sacrifice or inconvenience for the sake of Christ.

Thankfully, there is no knife at our throat—yet—but faith is being slowly killed by an American culture which preaches a gospel of secularism: There may be a God, but it doesn’t matter, life is fine without Him. We are being martyred by a *gospel of relativism*: “there are many paths to God and they’re all the same,” or as I was recently told “Church is church, they’re all the same.” We are subtly being asked to deny Christ and His gospel and if we do not we are mocked, considered weird, bigots, close-minded, ignorant, homophobes, fundamentalists. The command of Jesus is to follow Him in ways that are uncomfortable, hard and inconvenient:

If anyone would come after Me, let Him deny Himself, take up His cross and follow Me (Mark 8:34).

The call of Jesus is a call to a radical faith, a faith that is challenging and often inconvenient and uncomfortable. This message in blood from these new martyrs challenges me. Would I be willing to remain faithful to Jesus with a knife at my throat? Honestly, I’m not sure. But at least for today I am encouraged by this video to respond to the call of Jesus with new willingness to take the hard way, the uncomfortable way, the inconvenient path. Do I rather tend to respond in ways that are comfortable, convenient and that make few demands on me? What small steps can I take in the coming weeks to respond to Jesus in ways that are directed towards a more radical faith? By the prayers of the Holy New Martyrs of Libya, may we be strengthened and renewed in our love and commitment to the Lord Jesus!—*Father Edward Pehanich, Pittsburgh, PA*

FEAST OF SAINT SERAPHIM—JULY 18 & 19:

THE ANNUAL COMMEMORATION of Saint Seraphim is right around the corner. This is the summer feast day of our patron Saint, a day of great Paschal joy. Orthodox Christians do indeed ask for the prayers of the righteous ones of God in daily prayer. But on July 18/19 we will gather, not as individuals, but as the Eucharistic Parish Community which has been mystically identified with St. Seraphim—through Christ—to specifically ask for St. Seraphim to intercede for us, and to glorify God “who is wonderful in His saints.”

Since the feast falls on a Sunday, and Vladyka Benjamin will be in Atlanta preparing for the All American Council, we will not have a Hierarchical Liturgy. However, we will have a Lesser Blessing of Water at 8:45 AM, prior to the Liturgy, and a Cross Procession at the end of the Liturgy, followed by a festal meal in the Parish Hall.

The Vigil will be served at 5 PM, on Saturday, July 18. On Sunday, Blessing of Water at 8:45 AM, and the Divine Liturgy at 10 AM.

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **FORT ROSS:** The Divine Liturgy will be served by Vladyka Benjamin and area clergy at Fort Ross, July 4th, 10 AM. Pack a picnic lunch. Meet at St. Seraphim parking lot 8:30 AM to carpool.
- **WELCOME TO OUR GUESTS:** On Sunday, July 5th, we welcome Archpriest Jerome and Matushka Wendy Cwiklinski and family from San Diego. We also welcome Deacon Mark Hoeplinger, of Buffalo, NY; Subdeacon Mark Anders Harrison, also from San Diego; and Kendra Meshnik from Corvallis, OR, here on pilgrimage at the Kazan Skete.
- **PRESENTATION ON ST. TIKHON'S SEMINARY:** Following our Agape Meal on Sunday (July 5), Deacon Mark Hoeplinger, who serves on the Board of Trustees at St. Tikhon's Seminary in South Canaan, PA, will give a short presentation with photos on work of the Seminary. All are invited.
- **THE FORTY DAY PANIKHIDA** for Kathie Franotovich will be served on Tuesday, July 7 at 6 PM, in the Protection Church.
- **DIVINE SERVICES AT KAZAN SKETE:** God willing, the Divine Liturgy is planned to be served at the Skete on the Monastery feast day of the Kazan Icon of the Mother of God on Tuesday, July 21 at 9:30 AM.
- **PREPARATION FOR FREQUENT RECEPTION OF HOLY COMMUNION:** What is the norm? Abstain from meat and dairy on Wednesdays and Fridays (truly, it is not so difficult!); keep a total fast from midnight Saturday until Communion on Sunday; pray the "Prayers before Communion" in the prayer book during the week, and confess at least once a month. Naturally, we will also want to be praying daily to give thanks to God, to ask for His divine mercy and help; to read the Holy Scriptures regularly, so we may be familiar with His divine acts and laws, and to forgive everyone. There is also the important issue of faith, which is trust in Jesus Christ and the Church, which is His Body (we do profess that we "believe in...one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church). We ask Him to increase our faith.
- **ATTENTION SENIORS AND RETIREES:** Our July luncheon (pizza party) will be on Thursday, July 16th at 12:00 noon. Hope to see you all there. As promised last month, our schedule for the rest of the year follows, so mark those calendars (all Thursdays at noon): August 20, September - none - for obvious reasons; October 15; November 12; December 17. If anyone is interested in preparing a meal...or providing entertainment, please let Barbara Owens know. Also, be sure to spread the word to your Senior or Retired friends in the parish. We always have a great time.
- **PARISH INTERN:** The long-awaited pastoral intern, Father Theodor Svane, will arrive in Santa Rosa sometime during the second week of July, and his wife Matushka Hanne and two children, Simon and Filip Alexander, will arrive the following week. As most of you know, Fr. Theodor just graduated from St. Vladimir's Seminary, and will be with us for a year. At the conclusion of the internship, the family will return to Norway to begin missionary work. We are grateful to all those who are regularly contributing funds for the internship salary. We are not relying on outside funding for this internship (although some money has been given from those outside the parish, for which we are thankful). We are grateful to the parishioner who has supplied his condo at a reduced rent, and to the Sisterhood for preparing the condo for the family.

THE DIVINE LITURGY for the Feast of St. Vladimir will be served on Wednesday, July 15, at 9 AM, in the Protection Church. This year marks the 1,000th anniversary of the repose of St. Vladimir (born 956, reposed 1015 AD). The following comes from www.oca.org:

The name and deeds of the holy Equal of the Apostles St Vladimir, whom the people called the Splendid Sun, is interwoven with all the successive history of the Russian Church. "Through him we too have come to worship and to know Christ, the True Life," testified St Hilarion. His deeds were continued by his sons, and grandsons and descendants, rulers of the Russian land for almost six centuries, from Yaroslav the Wise, who took the first steps towards the independent existence of the Russian Church, down to the last of the Rurikovichi, Tsar Theodore Ioannovich, under whom (in 1589) the Russian Orthodox Church became the fifth independent Patriarchate in the dyptichs of Orthodox Autocephalous Churches. The festal celebration of the holy Equal of the Apostles Vladimir was established under St Alexander Nevsky, in memory of the intercession of St Vladimir on May 15, 1240, for his help in gaining the renowned victory by Nevsky over Swedish crusaders. But the first veneration of the holy prince began in Rus rather earlier. The Metropolitan of Kiev St Hilarion (+1053), in his "Word on Law and Grace," spoken on the day of memory of St Vladimir at the saint's crypt in the Tithe church, calls him "an apostolic sovereign," like St Constantine, and he compares his apostolic evangelization of the Russian Land to the evangelization by the holy Apostles.

GLENDI is September 19 and 20.

We are grateful to Alexander Stameroff for his leadership. This is now his second year serving as the Glendi Chief. We are also very grateful for those working as organizational assistants, especially Esther Schau and Bobbi Griovski. A full organization chart will be provided to our parishioners in the next few weeks, along with a sheet of areas needing help. ***There will be a Glendi organization meeting on Sunday, July 5, about 1 PM or so, in the new library room (used to be the parish office).***

GLENDI BAKING SCHEDULE

Here's your chance to contribute to the strongest fundraising element at Glendi: the Bakery! We'll be baking Glendi cookies every Monday and Tuesday from July 13 through August 18, starting at 3 PM and hopefully finishing by 8 PM. Come for an hour or two in the afternoon, be home by dinnertime. Or stop by after work to help package cookies for freezing. The work is easy, no baking experience needed. And it's fun, too! Even an hour's help is most welcome. Please plan to come. Thanks in advance for your help. —*Catherine Ostling*



DATE	TIME	PROJECT(S)	LEAD BAKER(S)	DOUGH PREP
Mon., July 13	3 PM	Ginger Cookies	Catherine Ostling	Bobbi (on Sunday)
Tues., July 14	3 PM	Rainbow Chocolate Chip Cookies	Jeanie Carl	Jeanie (on Monday)
Mon., July 20	3 PM	Chocolate Crackle Cookies	Jeanie Carl	Jeanie (on Sunday)
Tues., July 21	9 AM	Poppy Seed Strudel	Vicky Basch	N/A
Tues., July 21	3 PM	Ginger Cookies	Catherine Ostling	Bobbi (on Mon. eve or Tues. AM)
Mon., July 27	3 PM	Rainbow Chocolate Chip Cookies	Catherine Ostling	Catherine & Greg
Tues., July 28	3 PM	Ginger Cookies	Bobbi Griovski	Bobbi (on Monday)
Mon., Aug 3	3 PM	Greek Twists	Catherine Carpenter	Catherine C. (on Sunday)
Tues., Aug 4	3 PM	Bourbon Balls	Bobbi Griovski	N/A
	5 PM	Shortbread (indoor)	Kristine & Jeanie	N/A
Mon., Aug 10	3 PM	Greek Tea Cakes	Catherine Carpenter	Catherine C. (on Sunday)
Tues., Aug 11	3 PM	Bourbon Balls	Bobbi Griovski	N/A
	5 PM	Lemon Bars	Kristine & Jeanie	N/A
Mon., Aug 17	3 PM	Chocolate Crackle Cookies (?)	Jeanie Carl	Jeanie (on Sunday)
Tues., Aug 18	3 PM	Banitsa (no bake)	Catherine Ostling	N/A
	5 PM	Shortbread	Kristine & Jeanie	

GLENDI PIROSHKI PREP

Glendi Meat Piroshki Production July 23-25: It's that time of the year again. This year we will be making meat and cabbage piroshki at separate times. This will make for an easier Saturday for all concerned. The plan for meat production is to condense the preparation process into 2+ days. Eggs to be hard boiled before Thursday, and the rest on Thursday and Friday. Thursday morning, July 23, we will be chopping eggs and herbs. Meat filling will be made on Thursday afternoon or evening depending on crew availability. Set up of hall, kitchen and dough-making will happen on Friday, July 24. Production day will be July 25th. We need all hands on that day especially because the Basch family will be out of town (they usually manage the process). Stay tuned for the dates for Cabbage Piroshki production (in August) to be announced later this month. To volunteer, please call Bobbi Griovski at the office 707-584-9491 or 707-477-8418, or email at bgriovski@sbcglobal.net.

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

JULY 2015

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 • 6 PM, Vespers	2	3	4 - Fort Ross Pilgrimage • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy and Picnic at Fort Ross • 5 PM, Great Vespers
5 - St. Sergius • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • Presentation on St. Tikhon's Seminary • Glendi Org meeting	6	7 • 6 PM, 40 Day Memorial for Kathie Franotovich	8 • 5 PM, Food Bank • 6 PM, Vespers	9	10	11 • 4:30 PM, Panikhida for Sakovich family • 5 PM, Great Vespers
12 - St. Veronica • 9:30 AM, Akathist "Nurturer of Children" • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, POTLUCK Agape Meal	13 • 3 PM, Glendi Baking	14 • 3 PM, Glendi Baking	15 • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy, St. Vladimir • 6 PM, Vespers	16 • Noon, Senior and Retired Lunch Fellowship • 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting	17	18 • 5 PM, Vigil for St. Seraphim of Sarov
19 - St. Seraphim of Sarov • 8:45 AM, Water Blessing • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy and Procession • Noon, Festal Meal	20 • 3 PM, Glendi Baking	21 - KAZAN SKETE FEAST • 9 AM, Glendi Baking • 9:30 AM, Feast Day of Kazan Skete, Liturgy • 3 PM, Glendi Baking	22 • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy, St. Mary Magdalene (and Sakovich Memorial) • 6 PM, Vespers	23	24	25 • 5 PM, Great Vespers
[Fr. Lawrence leaves for Atlanta on Sunday evening to attend the All American Council, returning late Friday]						
26 - St. Jacob of Alaska • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • 12:45 PM, Sisterhood Meeting	27 • 3 PM, Glendi Baking	28 • 3 PM, Glendi Baking	29 • 6 PM, Vespers	30 • 7 PM, Master Planning Meeting in Hall	31 • 6:15 PM, Great Vespers for Procession of the Cross	August 1 <i>Beginning of Dormition Fast</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers