

CHRIST IS JOY! — by Saint Porphyrios

CHRIST IS JOY, the true light, happiness. Christ is our hope. Our relation to Christ is love, eros, passion, enthusiasm, longing for the divine. Christ is everything. He is our love. He is the object of our desire. This passionate longing for Christ is a love that cannot be taken away. This is where joy flows from. Christ Himself is joy. He is a joy that transforms you into a different person. It is a spiritual madness, but in Christ. This spiritual wine inebriates you like pure unadulterated wine. As David says, “Thou hast anointed my head with oil, and Thy cup which filleth me, how excellent it is!” (Psalm 22:5/23:5) Spiritual wine is unmixed, unadulterated, exceedingly strong, and when you drink it, it makes you drunk. This divine intoxication is a gift of God that is given to the pure in heart. Fast as much as you can, make as many prostrations as you can, attend as many vigils as you like, but be joyful. Have Christ’s joy. It is the joy that lasts forever, that brings eternal happiness. It is the joy of our Lord that gives assured serenity, serene delight, and full happiness. All-joyful joy that surpasses every joy. Christ desires and delights in scattering joy, in enriching His faithful with joy. “I pray that your joy may be made full.”

This is what our religion is. This is the direction we must take. Christ is Paradise, my children. What is paradise? It is Christ. Paradise begins here and now. It is exactly the same: those who experience Christ here on earth, experience Paradise. That’s the way it is, just as I tell you. This is right, it’s true, believe me!

Our task is to attempt to find a way to enter into the light of Christ. The point is not to observe all the outward forms. The essence of the matter is for us to be with Christ; for our soul to wake up and love Christ and become holy. To abandon herself to divine eros. Thus He too will love us. Then the joy will be inalienable. That is what Christ wants most of all, to fill us with joy, because He is the well-spring of joy. This joy is a gift of Christ. In this joy, we will come to know Christ...

These are the things our soul desires to acquire. If we prepare ourselves appropriately, grace will bestow them on us. It is not difficult. If we acquire grace, everything is easy, joyful, and a blessing from God. Divine grace is constantly knocking at the door of our soul and waiting for us to open, so that it can enter our thirsty heart and fill it. The fullness is Christ, our Holy Lady, the Holy Trinity. What marvelous things!

If you are in love, you can live amidst the hustle and bustle of the city center and not be aware that you are in the city center. You see neither cars, nor people, nor anything else. Within yourself, you are with the person you love. You experience her, you take delight in her, she inspires you... Imagine that the person you love is Christ. Christ is in your mind, Christ is in your heart, Christ is in your whole being, Christ is everywhere.

Christ is life, the source of life, the source of joy, the source of the true light, everything. Whoever loves Christ and other people, truly lives life. Life without Christ is death; it is hell, not life. That is what hell is—the absence of love. Life is Christ. Love is the life of Christ. Either you will be in life or in death. It is up to you to decide.

One thing is our aim—love for Christ, for the Church, for our neighbor. Love, worship of, and craving for God; the union with Christ and with the Church is Paradise on earth. Love towards Christ and towards one’s neighbor, towards everyone, including enemies. The Christian feels for everyone, he wants all to be saved, all to taste the Kingdom of God. That is Christianity: through love for our brother to arrive at love for God. To the extent that we desire it, to the extent that we wish it, to the extent that we are worthy, divine grace comes through our brother. When we love our brother, we love the Church and, therefore, Christ. And we too are within the Church. Therefore, when we love the Church, we love ourselves.

Let us love Christ, and let our only hope and care be for Him. Let us love Christ for His sake only. Never for our sake. Let Him put us wherever He likes. Let Him give us whatever He wishes. Don’t let’s love Him for His gifts. It’s egotistical to say, “Christ will place me in a fine mansion which He has prepared...” What we should say rather is, “My Christ, whatever Your love dictates; it is sufficient for me to live within Your love.”

...When there is love for Christ, loneliness disappears. You are peaceable, joyous, full. Neither melancholy, nor illness, nor pressure, nor anxiety, nor depression, nor hell.

Christ is in all your thoughts, in all your actions... When Christ enters your heart, your life changes... When Christ enters your heart, your passions disappear. You are unable to swear, or hate, or seek revenge or anything. How could there be hatreds, dislikes, censures, egotisms, anxieties, depressions? What holds sway is Christ—and longing for the unsetting light. This longing makes you

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feel that death is a bridge that you will cross in an instant in order to continue the life of Christ. Here on earth you have an impediment and so you need faith. That impediment is the body. After death, however, faith is abolished and you see Christ as you see the sun. In eternity, of course, you will experience everything more intensely.

When you don't live with Christ, however, you live immersed in melancholy, affliction, anxiety, and vexation. You don't live aright. ... They tell you, "In order to be healthy, have a full breakfast of milk, egg, butter and toast." But if you live properly, if you love Christ, you are fine with an orange and an apple. The great medicine is for you to devote yourself to the worship of Christ. ... The love of God transforms everything; it sanctifies, amends, and changes the nature of everything. —from the book *Wounded by Love: The Life and the Wisdom of Saint Porphyrios*, pages 96-100

THE FEAST of the PROTECTION

IT MAY SURPRISE us that we would celebrate a feast based on a vision seen by a man, known as a fool-for-Christ, so very long ago, in a land so far away, in a city no longer Christian. Of course, there have been many visions of the Mother of God praying for the world. Our own St. Seraphim saw the Theotokos on three separate occasions.

However, on this feast of October 1 we do not celebrate the vision of

St Andrew-the-fool-for-Christ seeing the Virgin holding her veil over the City, we celebrate the fact that what he saw was something about the church, the Body of Christ, something that we too experience when we pray together, or venerate a myrrh-streaming or miracle working icon of the Theotokos, or simply pray before any of her icons: we experience the unbreakable and unending bond of the Church both visible and invisible, all the faithful as members of the Lord's Holy Body, the Church. And it is also a confirmation that until the Coming of our Lord—and the resurrection and healing of all creation—all existence beyond the grave, of the righteous and the saints, is one untiring prayer, one ceaseless intercession and mediation, in love. When we sing at the Funeral and Panikhida that "their souls shall dwell with the blessed" this is what we mean. We have become used to imagining that the Holy Theotokos, and all the saints, all the deceased, the entire spiritual world in general—are somewhere over there, far away in the heavens, somehow "upstairs" while we are "downstairs." It is unusual and even difficult for us to believe and the Mother of God and all the saints are so close to us that they can pray together with us in our churches. Do not let go of the chance, dear brethren, to make use of the Theotokos' nearness, and to pray to Her with childish simplicity, loyalty and sincere faith, calling out to Her: "Rejoice, O our Joy, protect us from all evil with Thy most precious veil." (*adapted*)

PARISH FEAST OF THE PROTECTION OF THE VIRGIN

Our Parish will celebrate its Altar Feast, and the 80th Anniversary since the founding, with Vigil on Friday, **September 30, at 6:15 PM, and the Divine Liturgy at 9:30 AM on Saturday, October 1.** I've received word that neither Archbishop Benjamin nor Bishop Daniel will be able to be with us. In any case, this feast remains a significant day in the life of our Parish.

AND WAS INCARNATE...

“THE WORD BECAME FLESH”...in this is the ultimate joy of the Christian faith. In this is the fulness of Revelation. The Same Incarnate Lord is both perfect God and perfect man. The full significance and the ultimate purpose of human existence is revealed and realized in and through the Incarnation.

He came down from Heaven to redeem the earth, to unite man with God for ever. “And became man.” The new age has been initiated. We count now the “*anni Domini*.” As St. Irenaeus wrote: “the Son of God became the Son of Man, that man also might become the son of God.” Not only is the original fulness of human nature restored or re-established in the Incarnation. Not only does human nature return to its once lost communion with God. The Incarnation is also the new Revelation, the new and further step. The first Adam was a living soul. But the last Adam is the Lord from Heaven (1 Cor. 15:47). And in the Incarnation of the Word human nature was not merely anointed with a superabundant overflowing of Grace, but was assumed into an intimate and hypostatical unity with the Divinity itself. In that lifting up of human nature into an everlasting communion with the Divine Life, the Fathers of the early Church unanimously saw the very essence of salvation, the basis of the whole redeeming work of Christ. “That is saved which is united with God,” says St. Gregory of Nazianzus. And what was not united could not be saved at all. This was his chief reason for insisting, against Apollinarius [an ancient heretic who taught that Jesus did not have a human mind], on the fulness of human nature, assumed by the Only Begotten in the Incarnation.

The Incarnation of the Word was an absolute manifestation of God. And above all it was a revelation of

Life. Christ is the Word of Life...“and the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare unto you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us” (1 John 1:1). The Incarnation is the quickening of man, as it were, the resurrection of human nature. But the climax of the Gospel is the Cross, the death of the Incarnate. Life has been revealed in full through death. This is the paradoxical mystery of the Christian faith: life through death, life from the grave and out of the grave, the mystery of the life-bearing grave. And we are born to real and eternal life only through our baptismal death and burial in Christ; we are regenerated with Christ in the baptismal font. Such is the invariable law of true life.

“That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die” (1 Cor. 15:36). “Great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh” (1 Timothy 3:16). But God was not manifest in order to recreate the world at once by the exercise of His omnipotent might, or to illuminate and transfigure it by the overwhelming light of His glory. It was in the uttermost humiliation that this revelation of Divinity was wrought. ...Love does not impose the healing by compulsion as it might have done. There was no compelling evidence in this manifestation of God. Not all recognized the Lord of Glory under that “guise of the servant” He deliberately took upon Himself. And whosoever did recognize, did so not by any natural insight, but by the revelation of the Father (cf. Matt. 16:17).

The Incarnate Word appeared on earth as man among men. This was the redeeming assumption of all human fulness, not only of human nature, but also of all the fulness of human life. —*Fr. Georges Florovsky*

To have faith is to trust yourself to the water. When you swim you don't grab hold of the water, because if you do you will sink and drown. Instead you relax, and float. —*Alan Watts*

Pride does not allow the soul to set out on the path of faith. Here is my advice to the unbeliever: let him say, “Lord, if you exist, then illumine me, and I will serve you with all my heart and soul.” And for this humble thought and readiness to serve God, the Lord will immediately illumine him... And then your soul will sense the Lord; she will sense that the Lord has forgiven her, and loves her, and you will know this from experience, and the grace of the Holy Spirit will be a witness in your soul of your salvation, and you will want to cry out to the whole world: “The Lord loves us so much!” —*St. Silouan*

MANY OF YOU have already commented on the ambiance of Glendi and the *esprit de corps* as we worked together. A number of our guests expressed their astonishment about the peace they felt here at the parish and in Church. Many told me they felt God's presence in that peace (well, when God is present, there is peace—especially in repentance and tears). Overall, Glendi felt far more relaxed (yet, not always or for everyone) than in past years. There were many people that told me they were deeply touched by the “ethereal singing” of our Choir at the two concerts and Vespers service. I heard many people speak about how wonderful it was to see the frescoes and listen to the presentations by Fr Patrick. Many remarked on how they were welcomed by the clergy, their helpers and the greeters, the entrance booth staff, the token booth staff and the booth workers. Many raved about the quality and reasonable pricing of the food and the excellent service provided to them, and the wonderful dancing and music (especially this year as we enjoyed Safwan Daya and his incredible Syrian songs). Many also remarked that there were no yellow-jackets and very few flies!

Most gratifying were the many comments from guests about the obvious love among the members of the Church. That love for God and one another is what motivates each of us to offer our devotion, zeal, hard work, talent, fortitude and faith. Very moving to me was that all of our parish shut-ins, as well as those who are sick or not physically able to work Glendi, told me they were praying that God would bless our efforts.

I am grateful to God for all of you, for the young and the old; for those who came from far way, the friends of parish members, and our neighbors. I congratulate each and every booth head and member for the hard work, talent and ingenuity and imagination in decorating, managing and running your booths. A number of exciting innovations were implemented this year, with excellent results. I hope to thank each of you personally for your work, to let you know that I saw the care and love for what you were doing that was so evident.

Preliminary accounting shows we grossed just short of \$82,000. This year, prior to Glendi, a number of parishioners asked that we simplify operations. This we did in a number of areas. In particular, the counting office did not keep separate ledgers for income of every booth—that's very complex and time-consuming. Accordingly, there will be no booth totals available (we do track booth expenses).

I congratulate the Glendi organizational team: Alex Stameroff, Esther Schau, Barbara Owens, Vladimir Baer, Debbie Buse, Daphne Russell and the incomparable Denise Pellizzer who ordered supplies, shopped for them, sorted them, wrote checks for them, organized our runners throughout the day, and spent two additional days cleaning up. I congratulate the set-up team, and the take-down crew, the “back office” folks, the parking team, and the kitchen crews who don't really see the Glendi. Your efforts are appreciated and valued. I offer thanks for the *Anderson Fine Woodworking* crew that came in on Monday and Tuesday—to collect and pack away the equipment. I give thanks to God for bringing us so many guests. Well done, dear friends.

I include here an excerpt from what was written last year after Glendi:

Glendi is here to stay (frequency and size are other questions), that's pretty clear, not because we need the money for operating expenses—***please note:*** not a penny of Glendi income is used for the operating expenses of the parish!—we don't need Glendi to keep our parish going! Rather, funds go towards the building costs, iconography, charity and capital expenses of Glendi equipment and repair. Glendi is here to stay not because of money, but because it is outreach to our community and an introduction to something about the Orthodox Church.

Is the outreach effective? Our greeters, who during Glendi greet every person they can, right there outside the doors of St. Seraphim, tell me that hundreds of our visitors came in the festival happy, and left feeling welcomed and edified by the congregation here. Positive and grateful remarks were offered to the greeters about the food, the dancing, the grounds, the holiness of the church building and iconography, the talks by the docents and clergy and various conversations, the Vespers, concert and atmosphere of spiritual warmth and kindness of the workers. So, yes, outreach is working. We are investing in spiritual capital.

The Glendi is a marvelous coming together of the incredible talent (decorative, culinary, artistic, relational, organizational, muscle, visionary, theological, etc. etc), energy, color, ethnicity and personalities of our parishioners and their friends who worked. It's a joy to behold, and maybe we get a little tired, frustrated, cynical or jaded about it all, maybe at times we were not feeling all that spiritually warm—just physically hot, overcooked, tested—nevertheless, faith shone out even through all that, and I can assure you, our guests sensed that and the extraordinary nature of the event. To God be glory and thanks. My gratitude to each and everyone of you. —*With pride in our Parish and love for all, Fr Lawrence*

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **MEMORY ETERNAL:** Svetlana Labankoff, who was living at a nursing home in Petaluma, reposed in the Lord on Wednesday evening, September 21. May the Lord grant her the Kingdom of Heaven. Funeral plans are being arranged now and will be announced.
- **OUR NEW PARISH VINEYARD MANAGER** is Norman Vachon (husband of Sohier). Norman learned about the work that Gabriel Griovski had put into the vineyard, and was inspired to volunteer to succeed him, and I have asked God's blessing upon the endeavor. Norm brings certain skills to the work, and has connections with winemakers in the County. Norm alerted us last week on the SSPF that there is some immediate work that needs to be done to preserve the vines and two barrels of wine. FIVE people are needed Sunday afternoon, September 25, for hard labor in the Vineyard. Please see Norm or me if you'd like to be part of helping Gabriel's labor come to fruition. Help will also be needed on Saturday, October 1, after our Parish Feast and lunch, to bottle the wine we have in barrels. A crew of at least SIX are needed to for this work. Please contact Norman Vachon at 484.6939, email normanvachon0@gmail.com –Fr. Lawrence.
- **THE FORTY DAY PANIKHIDA** for Gabriel Griovski will be served at the Oak Mound Cemetery in Healdsburg on Monday, October 3, at 4:30 PM. All are welcome to attend.
- **TRIP TO THE MONASTERY OF ST. JOHN:** Fr. Theodor, Garret Hamner and a couple of others are planning a pilgrimage to St John's Monastery in Manton, CA, October 16th–18th. We want to invite anyone who is interested. Contact Fr. Theodor or Garret if you would like to join the pilgrimage.
- **SENIOR LUNCH FELLOWSHIP:** We've not had a Lunch with the seniors and retired parishioners for a couple of months due to events here. We plan to get back on track in October with a lunch on 10/13/2016 at Noon.
- **THE ANNUAL GATHERING** of the Diocesan clergy and lay delegates, known as the Diocesan Assembly, will take place at Holy Virgin Cathedral in Los Angeles, from October 11–13. Your delegates, joining Frs. Theodor and Lawrence, are George Barsi and Ambrose Inlow.
- **PARISH MEN'S GROUP WORK PARTY AT CALISTOGA MONASTERY:** The women's monastery of the Assumption, in Calistoga, has asked our parish men's group to help out with some work around the monastery grounds. A work party has been scheduled for Saturday, October 15, starting at 10 AM. Lunch will be provided. If you'd like to help at the work party, please email or call Fr. Lawrence.
- **AN EIGHT PART SERIES** for catechumens and inquirers on the basic teachings of the Orthodox Church will begin on Saturday, October 29, at 3:30 PM. Classes will take place in the Library every Saturday afternoon (except as noted).
- **HONORING THE SAINTS:** On Sunday, November 5, the Church School of St. Seraphim's will host an evening of "Honoring the Saints" for our church community in the Parish Hall. The youth (of all ages!) are encouraged to read about the life of a saint of their choice—could be their patron saint, could be another—and come dressed as that saint (common sense, piety and good taste are assumed). More info to come.
- **FRESCO WORK:** The monks will be taking a two-week break from painting, so they can prepare drawings for the south clerestory (where the scaffold now sits against). The plan is for them to work until early December, and then remove the scaffold until after Theophany (Old Calendar, Jan. 19) and paint until Lent begins.
- **JUST RELEASED:** The excellent choral ensemble, Cantiamo, conducted by Carol Menke, has just released a recording of Orthodox liturgical music composed by Nicolas Custer. The compositions are wonderful—many of which you have heard in church, and many more you have yet to hear—the choral singing is beautiful and of an extremely high level, and the recording quality is crystal clear and crisp (recorded here at St. Seraphim last year). Nicolas will have CDs available for sale. We congratulate him and Cantiamo.

PARISH NEEDS:

- Return yellow security posts in front parking lot to their place
- Sweep walkway around St. Seraphim (stop kids from throwing pebbles)
- Scrap wax off church floor
- Clean and polish brass candle stands in St. Seraphim
- Vineyard help: Sunday, September 25 (five people needed); Saturday, Oct. 1, after lunch (six people needed for bottling).
- Fix choir door in St. Seraphim (door closer detached)

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

OCTOBER 2016

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					30 • 6:15 Vigil for the Protection of the Theotokos (in St. Seraphim)	1 – Feast of the Protection • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy (in Protection Church) • Festal luncheon • 5 PM, Great Vespers
2 - Sts. Cyprian and Justina • 9–10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 12:45 PM, Glendi Mtg in Library	3	4	5 • 6 PM, Great Vespers for St. Innocent Day • 6 PM, Church School Teacher Meeting	6 – St. Innocent of Alaska • 7 AM, Divine Liturgy	7	8 • 4 PM, Children's Choir • 5 PM, Great Vespers • 6 PM, Young Adult Group get-together
9 – St. Tikhon of Moscow • 9–10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	10	11	12 • 5 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank distribution No Vespers	13 • Noon, Senior and Retired Lunch Fellowship	14	15 • 5 PM Great Vespers
16 – Martyr Longinus the Centurion • 9–10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	17	18 - St. Luke the Evangelist • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy	19 • 6 PM, Vespers	20 -	21	22 - St. Demetrios Saturday • 9 AM, Memorial Divine Liturgy • Playground Clean-up • 4 PM, Children's Choir • 5 PM, Great Vespers • 6 PM, Young Adult Group get-together
23 – Holy Apostle James • 9–10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	24	25 • 6 PM, Great Vespers for St. Demetrios	26 - St. Demetrios • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • 6 PM, Vespers	27	28	29 • 3:30 PM, Catechism, in Library • 5 PM Great Vespers
30 – Sts. Zenobius and Zenobia • 9–10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	31	November 1	2 • 6 PM, Vespers	3	4 <i>At Kazan Skete, 9:30 AM Divine Liturgy for Kazan Feast Day</i>	5 • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 4 PM, Children's Choir • 5 PM, Great Vespers • 6 PM, All Saints Party

- CATECHISM/INQUIRERS CLASS: starts up on Saturday, October 29, at 3:30 PM. The class will meet in the Library
- Fr. Lawrence and Matushka Ann will be on a pilgrimage to the country of Georgia from October 15–29.