

ORTHODOX MESSENGER

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

ON PARISH LIFE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

THE SUCCESS OR FAILURE of a parish is dependent upon God, and how the members—clergy and laity alike—respond to the Lord and to each other. Successful parishes aren't dependent upon any one person (this includes the priest!) for their success. In a successful parish the parishioners (and the clergy are certainly “parishioners”) cooperate with each other, they fulfill their own obligations, and contribute what they can into the common treasury of deeds, wisdom and finances.

I used to work in a restaurant. It was a nice place with good food, a pleasant ambience, and class. We had many “regulars,” but one of them stood out. The owners called him the “four-star customer.” He would visit often. He'd bring business clients and family there. He was a good tipper. He was always pleasant to be with, and a pleasure to serve. I'm sure you see where this is going. What do *Four-Star Parishioners* look like?

Four Star Parishioners:

...pray. The whole point of being a member of the Church is to know God. Union with Christ—Who has revealed God the Father to us, and brings us to union with Him by the Holy Spirit—is the goal of all Christian endeavor. We must therefore seek to have God always in our thoughts and on our lips. This is prayer. Four-star parishioners pray (privately or with their families) upon arising in the morning, before retiring in the evening, and before meals during the day. They might do more, but they won't do less.

...worship God. If we know God we will worship Him. We are created to worship Him, and it is our joy to worship Him. He commands us to worship Him and He “energizes” our worship of Him. Worship creates unity amongst the worshippers; it spiritually feeds us; it teaches us who we are and who God is. All human beings worship—either the one True God, or an idol—and every idol is fundamentally a false image of something we consider worthy of honor and obedience, or something that resembles ourselves! God, or me? Which will it be? In the end, we become like what we worship. Four-star parishioners attend the divine services of the Church. Unless it

is impossible to do so, they're in Church every Sunday and Great Feast Day, and on as many lesser holy days as is feasible.

...partake of the Holy Mysteries. The Church exists (among other things) in order to make the Holy Mysteries—Baptism, Chrismation, Confession, Communion, Marriage, Ordination and the “Oil of Prayer” (anointing of the sick)—central to the faithful. The Mysteries are given to us so that we can be touched by God Himself. His power—His dynamis—sanctifies, heals and deifies. Four-star parishioners live a sacramental life: they approach to make Confession and Holy Communion as often as possible. Having heard the words of Jesus about how we have true life when we partake of His Body and Blood, they approach to make Confession and Holy Communion as often as possible. Four-star parishioners consider marriage as something that God gives—He marries us; He baptizes us, He anoints us. He receives us at the burial.

...support their parish generously. If the Church cannot pay the bills it is a sign either that the bills are not managed well, or that the members do not consider themselves responsible for the financial well-being of the Parish. A Parish that has the money to do outreach work or educate the children is one in which the members are not self-oriented, but salvation oriented. Four-star parishioners treat their parish financial obligations with the same seriousness they treat their families.

...help the poor. Before God we are all poor; so, this is a case of the poor helping the poor. At the Last Judgment Jesus is going to ask us “did you feed me? Did you clothe me? Did you visit me when I was sick?” Mt. 25:36) All our “religious” acts should lead us to acts of love and mercy on behalf of the suffering, the poor, and the needy. A quick reading of the First Epistle of St. John or the Epistle of St. James will underline this point better than I ever could. Four-star parishioners give their whole life to God—not just two hours on Sunday morning. This includes sharing wealth with God's beloved—the poor.

...respect their leaders. The days are gone when men became priests because they sought some type

INFORMATION

Protection of the Holy Virgin & St. Seraphim of Sarov Church
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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	861-9974
Deacon Nicholas Carr	588-8753
Sub-Deacon Marc Richardson	545-4047
Nicolas Custer, Choir Director	584-9491
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Serge Anderson, Parish Council Warden	291-7452
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of “status” in the world. People don’t serve on the parish council because they’re seeking recognition. So we respect those who lead our communities. Even when we disagree with them, we should do so respectfully. They’re not perfect—but neither are we. Four-star parishioners always speak respectfully to and about their parish and Church leaders. The words of Abraham Lincoln bear paraphrasing: “No one should criticize unless they’re willing to help.”

...respect their fellow parishioners. I once heard this riddle: “What happens when a member of the Church is wounded (either spiritually, emotionally, or personally)?” Answer: “Someone from the parish comes along and finishes them off!” It’s a terrible riddle, because it’s sometimes true. Let us not listen to gossip, or delight in the troubles of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Let us not imagine evil motives to the actions of others. If we do love each other we should speak positively and respectfully about each other, and help pick each other up when we’re down.

...fast. There’s an old saying: “the spiritual life begins with the stomach.” Fasting is a sign of our obedience to the Church; fasting builds unity within the community (just look at the example of the Jews or Moslems); fasting builds discipline (all discipline is fundamentally *self-discipline*); fasting—according to the accounts in Scripture—opens our hearts and minds and bodies to God’s blessings. Four-star parishioners offer their table to the Lord. How we fast may occasionally differ due to individual circumstances, physical needs or illnesses; however, if we wish to be close to God, if we are obedient to God and the Church, we will fast according to the apostolic teaching and practice of the Church.

...work for their parish. In order for a parish to function much needs to be done: singing in the choir; working on the parish council; teaching and modeling faith; visiting the sick; cooking; working with youth; organizing social events; mowing the lawn, cleaning the church and hall kitchen, decorating, ushering, painting the walls, preparing tax receipts, paying bills, and so on.

God has blessed every one of us with talents that can be utilized for the growth and benefit of our parish. Four-star parishioners give of their talents and abilities to the Lord and to the parish, not just when they feel like it, but when called upon, when the need is there.

...read the Bible. The Bible is the record of the revelation of God, words of God, words of man in praise of God, and instruction in how to live. The only condition necessary to successfully read the Bible is to read it in order to put it into practice. Reading the Bible simply in order to discuss it, or even worse, discussing the Bible without having read it, will not help us draw near to God—in fact, the opposite will probably take place. Four-star parishioners read the Bible every day: a passage from the Gospel, a passage from another New Testament book, and a reading from the Psalter as a minimum.

...take responsibility for their children’s souls. Children learn a great deal about the Orthodox faith in church during Liturgy and at Church school. They learn how to actualize—or lose—that faith at home or in the public schools. Parents that *authentically* live the Orthodox faith will most likely have children that live the faith. We should also not assume that religious education begins and ends with Sunday school. A Seventh Grade education in anything will not take a person very far, whether spiritually or socially. Teaching must continue at home. Perhaps many parents do not know that there is an Orthodox Christian elementary school in Santa Rosa (*St. Michael’s*), with a proven track record. Our public schools are not going to teach faith to a child; in fact, we have to do all we can to strengthen a child’s faith in the face of

the constant distractions and attacks on the faith by that system. It must be said clearly: letting your children or yourself participate in Sunday morning sporting events and marathons; taking some “Sundays off” from Liturgy, are proven ways to ensure that children will eventually leave the Orthodox faith. This is not hard to understand.

...never stop learning about their faith. A Ukrainian saying goes: “A man must spend his whole life learning so that he can die an ignoramus.” Bible study classes, religious seminars, spiritual retreats and adult education classes should be just as integral a part of the life of every mature Christian as professional development programs and in-service seminars are for teachers, doctors, auto mechanics, etc. Our goal in life is not to be comfortable, to be successful, or to pursue happiness. Our goal is union with God, in Christ our Savior, by the Holy Spirit, as we read in the Gospel of John: “. . . the glory which Thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one: I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me. Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given me. . .” (John 17) What’s stopping any one of us from becoming a four-star parishioner?

— *With edits, from Fr. Bohdan Hladio, January 2004*

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **AROUND THE PROPERTY:** The Rectory was re-roofed this week, as was planned and budgeted. Next to the handicap parking spots in front of St. Seraphim there are now two “Guest Parking” spots. A small gate is being installed along the Mountain View Ave fence, to make getting to the mail box less of a gymnastic effort.
- **GLENDI ORGANIZING BEGINS:** A preliminary meeting of the Glendi leaders will take place on Tuesday, May 28, after the 6 PM Vespers.
- **BLESSING OF WATER:** The Feast of Mid-Pentecost, also called Midfeast, since it is halfway between Pascha and the fifty days of Pentecost, will be celebrated with the Blessing of Water.
- **PIROSHKI:** We will be making and selling piroshki again on Saturday June 8th. Orders are due by Monday June 2nd. We will need workers on June 5th, 6th, 7th & 8th. Please reply to bgriovski@sbcglobal.net if you are able to help. Order forms will be available at the Candle Desk. Orders may also be sent via email. If you have questions please call 707-762-4742 or email at bgriovski@sbcglobal.net — Bobbi Griovski
- **CHURCH SCHOOL PARTY:** The Church School Teachers invite all students and parents to join them in an end-of-the-school-year BBQ after Divine Liturgy, on Sunday, June 9th. Yes... there will be a bounce house!
- **YOU ARE INVITED** to the Thursday afternoon study of the Epistle to the Hebrews led by Vincent Rossi. We meet in the Parish Hall from 1:45–2:45.
- **VACATION:** Fr. Lawrence will be gone from June 10–21.
- **LEAVE-TAKING OF PASCHA and ASCENSION:** The joyous Paschal hymns will be sung one last time on Tuesday, June 11, at 7 PM at the Matins of Leave-taking of Pascha. The following evening, June 12, we will celebrate the Feast of the Ascension of Christ, 6:15 PM, and then the Liturgy on Thursday at 9 AM.
- **THE SENIOR LUNCH Fellowship** is scheduled for Ascension Thursday, June 13, at Noon.
- **THE CATHEDRAL OF THE HOLY TRINITY** in San Francisco, on Green Street and Van Ness, invites us to its Patronal Feast of Pentecost (June 22 at 6 PM and June 23 at 9:30 AM). His Beatitude, Metropolitan Tikhon, will preside at the Divine Services. Parking will be available at St. Brigid Elementary school, on Broadway and Franklin.
- **HIS EMINENCE, Archbishop Benjamin,** will be here to celebrate the Liturgy for the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, Saturday, June 29, 9:30 AM.
- **WEDDING:** The Parish eagerly awaits the day of holy matrimony for Kira van Hall and George Staykow, on Sunday, June 30, 2 PM.
- **ST. SERAPHIM WEEK:** Our annual St. Seraphim Week (SSW) of activities for children will take place Monday, July 15 to Thursday, July 19, ending with the Liturgy for the Feast of St. Seraphim of Sarov. The SSW is open to all children and their friends, age 3 to teen. Parish teens are invited to assist in teaching. See Father Lawrence or Gloria Collins if you are interested.

NICK NICHOLSON TO BEGIN REGULAR CLASSES IN SYSTEMA

MOST PEOPLE HAVE NEVER HEARD of the Russian Martial Arts called *Systema*. You are invited to see www.russianmartialart.com to become more familiar with it. For those interested in *Systema's* philosophy and relation to Orthodoxy, we recommend the website: www.russianmartialart.com/main.php?page=philosophy. This martial art is ideal for those interested in physical fitness, learning how to relax, how to breathe for health, and lastly, to develop martial arts skill. The class is primarily for adults, however, young people sixteen and older are invited and encouraged to participate with a signed parental consent. Classes will usually be held from 10:30 AM to 12 Noon, Saturdays at the Parish Hall. Additional classes will occasionally be held in Petaluma at Schallenberger Park in Petaluma from 4:30 to 6 PM on a Tuesday or Thursday. Class schedule time(s) will be subject to change if there are conflicting Church activities. The fee for the class will be a donation to the Church building fund. Those interested in learning the Russian Martial Arts *Systema* should contact Nick Nicholson at nickddg@comcast.net or 707 322-9736. New students should contact him for an introductory session prior to joining the regular class. Interested students will be added to an e-mail distribution list for class announcements.

ST. LEO OF ROME ON ASCENSION DAY

...throughout this time which elapsed between the Lord's Resurrection and Ascension, God's Providence intended to teach and to impress upon the eyes and hearts of His people that the Lord Jesus Christ is to be acknowledged to have risen, just as truly as He was truly born, suffered, and died. And thus the blessed Apostles and all the disciples who, filled with fear at His death on the Cross and with uncertainty whether to believe in his Resurrection, were so fortified by the obvious truth, that when the Lord went up into heaven's heights, not only were they not affected with sadness, they were even filled with great joy.

And truly great and beyond words was their cause for joy, when, in the sight of the holy gathering, the nature of humankind ascended above the dignity of all the creatures of heaven, to pass above the ranks of angels and to be raised beyond the height of the archangels, and to have no upward limit set to its ascent until it was received to sit

enthroned with the Eternal Father, to share the glory of Him, to whose nature it was united in the Son.

Since then Christ's Ascension is our elevation, and the body's hope is summoned to where the glory of the head has already gone, let us exult, best beloved, with fitting celebration and rejoice to offer dutiful thanks. For today not only are we confirmed as possessors of paradise, but in Christ we have even penetrated heaven's height, and by Christ's ineffable grace have gained abundantly, far beyond what we lost through the devil's envy. The poisonous enemy drove us from the bliss of our first home, but the Son of God has incorporated us in Himself and placed us at the right hand of the Father, with Whom He lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

A BRIEF WORD ON PENTECOST: As a prefiguration of what was to come, the Jews of old kept the feast of Pentecost, which took place fifty days after Passover. Here are the names which the Jews used for this day:

"The Feast of Weeks"—*Shavuot*—since a week of weeks (7 weeks of 7 days + 1) divides *Pesakh*, Passover, from *Shavuot*. 7 weeks of 7 days, + 1 day, is an image of the Eighth Day, which stands for the Eternal Day of God's Kingdom, the day beyond the time of this world.

"The Feast of First-Fruits"—*Hag ha-Bikkurim*—on which the first fruits of the early harvest were brought to be offered in the Temple. The seven weeks from *Pesakh* to Pentecost are just enough for a new crop of wheat to be planted, nurtured, tended and harvested in time to be offered. An ancient Christian prayer sees the grain gathered together and transformed into bread as a symbol of the Church, gathered into unity from all the nations.

"The Feast of the Giving of the Law"—*Hag Matan Torah*—celebrating the giving of the Law (not the receiving of the Law). The Law was given to Moses on a particular day in a particular year, and Pentecost celebrates that unique event, but, as the Jewish teachers point out, the receiving of the Law is something that should happen every day. The Christian Pentecost celebrates the giving of the Holy Spirit, sent to the Disciples as "tongues of fire" descending from Heaven, uniting earth and heaven in them.

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

JUNE 2013

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9–10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • 3:30 PM, Belonick Wedding 	27	28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers for Mid-Pentecost • 7 PM, Glendi Organizational Meeting 	29 - Mid-Pentecost <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Blessing of Water for Mid-Pentecost 	30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:45 PM, Study of Epistle to the Hebrews • 6 PM, Akathist to St. Seraphim 	31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vespers for St. Justin Martyr 	JUNE 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM, Great Vespers, Confessions
2 - Samaritan Woman <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9–10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • 2 PM, Wedding & Reception (Holy Dormition parishioners) 	3	4	5 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers 	6 <i>Fr. L. in SF all day for Diocesan Council Mtg</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:45 PM, Study of Epistle to the Hebrews 	7	8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM, Vigil, Confessions
9 - Blind Man <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9–10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School Party and Agape Meal 	10 Fr. Lawrence on vacation until June 21	11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Paschal Matins for Leave-taking 	12 - Leave-taking of Pascha <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6:15 PM, Vigil for Ascension of Christ 	13 - Ascension <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Liturgy for Ascension • Noon, Senior Fellowship Lunch • 1:45 PM, Study of Epistle to the Hebrews 	14	15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Baptism for Alexa Dechant • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM Great Vespers, Confessions
16 - Holy Fathers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9–10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • 12:45, Sisterhood Meeting 	17	18	19	20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1:45 PM, Study of Epistle to the Hebrews 	21	22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 Noon, Baptism of Isaac Nectarios Brodeur • 2 PM, <i>Decoration of Church</i> • 5 PM Vigil for Pentecost
23 - Holy Pentecost <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9–10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy / Kneeling Vespers to follow • Noon, <i>Agape Pot-luck Meal</i> 	24 - Holy Spirit Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metropolitan Tikhon in <i>San Anselmo</i> 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy • Metropolitan Tikhon here for dinner, time to be announced 	25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting 	26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Vespers 	27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Orthodox Choir Master Class</i> 	28 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Orthodox Choir Master Class</i> • 6:30 PM, Vigil for Sts. Peter and Paul 	29 - Sts Peter and Paul <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Hierarchical Liturgy with Archbishop Benjamin • 5 PM Great Vespers, Confessions
30 - All Saints Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9–10 AM, Confessions • 10 AM Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • 2 PM, van Hall/Staykow wedding 	JULY 1	2	3	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 AM, Hierarchical Divine Liturgy at Fort Ross 	5	6 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3:30 PM, Catechism • 5 PM Vigil, Confessions

• The Parish will host the west coast *Orthodox Church Singing Master Class* led by the esteemed Maestro Vladimir Gorbik from Moscow, Russia, from June 27–29. The class will culminate in the Vigil and the Hierarchical Liturgy for the Feast of Sts. Peter and Paul, Friday and Saturday, June 28/29. His Eminence Archbishop Benjamin will be here for the Liturgy.