

THE ORTHODOX MESSENGER

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On Earth as it is in Heaven ~ Three Principles

ALL BAPTIZED Orthodox Christians are given by God a vocation to be “priests of God’s creation.” What does this mean for those of us who live surrounded by secular society? To start, as *priests* we belong to the Kingdom of Heaven, not the secular society. As priests we offer ourselves and everything around us to Jesus Christ, and if the offering is authentic, true and humble, it is sanctified. This principle of Christian belief leads us to look upon the world as Christ’s and, because we are Christ’s, it follows that we are not merely to pick and choose our favorite position on issues as if dining at a Swedish smorgasbord, but we follow the way of Christ in all things. This follows from our vision of Christ and the Holy Spirit, “everywhere present and filling all things.”

When we awaken to this vision, our relationship with nature, for example, becomes an entrance into a living, sacred space where nature, God, and humans meet as one. A *sacramental* awareness of creation emerges. This cultivates an increasingly respectful response to the world, an attitude of thanksgiving and practice of self-discipline. The Orthodox Church has always emphasized these qualities as a proper ethical response to the world.

The theological term for this approach to the world is a *eucharistic ethos*. It implies a cosmically thankful perspective, a conviction that creation is not our possession or property. In this awareness, the world is filled with divine grace, a gift of wonder, goodness and beauty that is to be offered back to God in an act of gratitude and love. In other words, it is to be redeemed. In the process of thankful offering, human beings serve as priests of creation, and become changed by their offering.

In response to God’s presence in all things, the Orthodox Church also calls its faithful to an *ascetic ethos*. This ethic implies a sense of discipline, self-restraint and self-control—in order no longer to consume wantonly and

wastefully, but instead manifest an intentional frugality and personal restraint for the sake of valuing all things.

Respect and restraint then become the doorway to caring for plants and animals, for trees and rivers, for mountains and seas, for all human beings stretching out to the entire cosmos. Everything then takes on new depth of meaning, revealing its divine purpose, as God originally intended for the universe.

The *ascetic ethos* also teaches the futility of the acquisitive mentality that underlies consumerism and is a major driver of climate change. A deliberately cultivated asceticism is essential if we are to limit our desires and increase respect for all creation.

Beyond a *eucharistic* and *ascetic* ethos, the Orthodox Church also gives us a *liturgical ethos*. This teaches cooperation, connectivity and community within creation. This liturgical ethos is an amplification of the song of creation, which continually praises its Maker. It fosters associations that allow Christians to counter society’s structures of sin with structures of virtue, harmony and peace. It fuels new forms of cooperation for food cultivation, economic association, and clean alternative energies.

The *liturgical ethos* stretches out to challenge the lie of individualism as a pillar of the consumer mentality. Individualism isolates people from one another and causes them to seek private gain, separate from and at the expense of other people and creation. Through the liturgical ethos, Orthodox Christians join in an inspirational song of thanksgiving, praising God, holding festivals that celebrate the goodness of life, and acknowledging that we all share the same air, water and earthly resources.

The vision of God’s presence in all things caused the saints of the Church to discern a great cosmic liturgy. The

PARISH MEN’S FELLOWSHIP

The men of the parish—of all ages—are invited to attend a brief organizational meeting on Sunday, December 2, about 12:45 PM, in the Parish Hall. Our goal will be to determine the service, fellowship and pilgrimage activities for the coming year. Any questions, speak with Father Nicholas.

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Scriptures speak of the praise that trees and all creation have for their Creator (cf. Ps. 96.12). As priests of creation, all Christians are called to enter into this cosmic liturgy of praise and worship.

In this enlarged vision of human priestly responsibility, our world becomes part of our spiritual life and aspiration for wholeness and salvation. If we could diagram this vision, we find a great circle of spiritual life and energy shining from God through humanity as priest of creation. Then, as each person commends all things back to our Lord and Creator, a priestly ministry of all believers comes into view. Then Christians can discern their place in the cosmic order. This is the vision which our Church gives us and which provides us with a foretaste of the process of cosmic transfiguration. —*Ted Strat, November 21, 2018*

THE DATING OF CHRISTMAS

...DECEMBER 25th as the date of the Christ's birth appears to owe nothing whatsoever to pagan influences upon the practice of the Church during or after Constantine's time. It is wholly unlikely to have been the actual date of Christ's birth, but it arose entirely from the efforts of early Latin Christians to determine the historical

date of Christ's death. And the pagan feast which the Emperor Aurelian instituted on that date in the year 274 was not only an effort to use the winter solstice to make a political statement, but also almost certainly an attempt to give a pagan significance to a date already of importance to Roman Christians. The Christians, in turn, could at a later date re-appropriate the pagan "Birth of the Unconquered Sun" to refer, on the occasion of the birth of Christ, to the rising of the "Sun of Salvation" or the "Sun of Justice." —*William J. Tighe, Touchstone Magazine*

St Caesarius of Arles, On the Coming of Christ

SINCE THE LORD'S birthday is approaching, let us with Christ's help prepare ourselves for the nuptials and heavenly banquet by being clear of all dissipation and adorned with good works. Let us give alms to the poor, attend vigils more promptly, pray or chant the psalms standing in church; observe peace with all men, and recall to harmony those whom you know are at variance. If with the help of Christ you are willing to fulfill these things faithfully, you will be able to approach the Lord's altar in this life with an easy conscience and in the future life will happily arrive at eternal bliss.

The New Martyr St. Hilarion Troitsky, on The Renewal of Humanity

...THE PERFECTION of our humanity, according to the teaching of St. Irenaeus, must be brought to pass by the dispensation of the Incarnation of the Son of God, not by any kind of doctrine, not by the writing of any book. By taking flesh and becoming man, the Son of God, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, made men partakers of the Divine nature. Assuming human nature in the unity of His Hypostasis, the Son of God by taking flesh became the New Adam, the Progenitor of the new humanity. "Beholding him that was in God's image and likeness fallen through the transgression, Jesus bowed the heavens and came down, and without changing He took up His dwelling in a Virgin womb: that thereby He might fashion corrupt Adam anew." St. Irenaeus says that the Son of the Most High became the Son of man in order to make man a son of God. In the new humanity, built upon the foundation of the Incarnation of the Son of God, the unity of our human nature, broken by sin, is restored. Christ Himself named this new humanity the Church. From *Holy Scripture and the Church, Orthodox Word, 2009*

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- THE HOLIDAY FESTAL CRAFTS FAIRE was a great success, thanks to the hard work of so many of our parish members. Congratulations to all, and especially to Emma Anderson for organizing the event.
- ANGELS UNAWARES: On the first Thursday of the month (December 6, St. Nicholas Day!) our parish welcomes guests from the Redwood Gospel Mission, hosting about twenty or so folks for dinner and providing a place to sleep for the night. Guests will arrive about 6 PM, departure about 6:30 AM the next morning. Michael and Rachel Dovey coordinate the program. You are invited to participate in helping serve and welcome our guests. Any questions, call Michael or Rachel Dovey at (707) 799-4117. "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them who suffer adversity..." (Hebrews 13)
- THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK is held on the second Wednesday each month. Volunteers, please arrive around 5 PM to help set up. This Food Bank is an important way in which our parish does outreach to the community. Come and participate in this worthy endeavor.
- THE SENIOR AND RETIRED LUNCH fellowship will meet this month on Thursday, December 13, St. Herman Day at Noon.
- CHRISTMAS PLAY: Our parish children are rehearsing their annual Christmas play, scheduled for Sunday, December 16. Festivities start with St. Romanos' Kontakion of the Nativity at 5 PM in the Protection Church, then the play, dinner, and a visit by St. Nicholas and Christmas Carols.
- SAINT SERAPHIM DAY, JAN. 2: We celebrate the second of our Annual Parish Feast Days on January 2, the repose of St. Seraphim. Services: Vespers and Akathist, January 1 at 5 PM; Liturgy with His Eminence, Archbishop Benjamin and His Grace, Bishop Daniel, Jan. 2, at 9:30 AM followed by a festal meal.
- HOLY THEOPHANY: January 6—the Feast of the Baptism of our Lord in the Jordan—is on a Sunday this year. We will begin the Theophany celebration with the Royal Hours on Friday, Jan. 4 at 6 PM. Vigil on Saturday evening, January 5 at 5 PM. After the Sunday Divine Liturgy we will serve the Great Blessing of Water. The Blessing of Homes will begin that day as well.
- HOUSE BLESSINGS THIS YEAR: Beginning about 2 PM on Sunday, January 6, and then on the following Saturdays and Sundays, I will plan on blessing homes—one day in Rohnert Park/Cotati, another day in Petaluma, then in the various sections of Santa Rosa and environs, all according to a master list/times posted in the next few weeks. I will assume that you will be expecting me and if not, then I will ask that you let me know you will not be home. Of course, those who would like to schedule a house blessing for another time are invited to do so as well.
- THE THANKSGIVING DINNER PROJECT fed 100 families! Many thanks to Serge Anderson and Amy Ramirez Margitich and their families and the host of helpers and contributors who made it happen. One hundred complete dinner boxes for the needy were delivered to a couple of different organizations for distribution on the day before Thanksgiving. The boxes included a turkey, all the trimmings, vegetables, dessert and Martinelli's sparkling cider.
- The week before Christmas, while filled with many activities, is also a time—was once a time?—of spiritual preparation for the coming feast of the Nativity. Obviously, the spiritual focus is the historically original focus. All our other preparations are inspired and in service to that. These days are something of a winter "Holy Week" with the morning Matins and the evening Vespers hymnography which guides our thoughts and our souls to meditate upon the incarnation and mankind's diverse response to it. Take some time to spiritually prepare yourself by attending some—or even all—of the Pre-Feast Services (see the calendar). Put first things first.
- To respond to the needs of our Parish Members, the Parish Council approved three digital ways to make your financial offerings.
 - (1) iPad—transactions can be made very simply on the Candle Desk iPad (an attendant can assist you if needed).
 - (2) Text Giving—enter 707-701-5052 on your cell phone, indicate an amount you want to give. A prompt will open your browser and you indicate which giving category (tithes, icons, charity, etc.) you would like, enter your card info, and you're done.
 - (3) Phone App. Download the "ConnectNow Giving App" on your cell phone. <https://itunes.apple.com/us/developer/parishsoft/id1244158208> or just Google the words "ConnectNow Giving App."

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

DECEMBER 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
November 25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:40 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy <i>No Church School</i> • Noon, Agape Meal 	26	27	28	29	30 - St. Andrew Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy and Trisagion for K. Sakovich • 8 PM, <i>Cantiamo Christmas Concert</i> 	December 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3:30 PM, Catechism <i>On Jesus Christ the Savior</i> • 4 PM, Children's Choir • 5 PM, Great Vespers • 6 PM, 40th Day, Daria Jorgenson
2 - Prophet Habbakuk / St. Miropi <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:40 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 12:45 PM, Men's Group Mtg 	3	4	5	6 - St. Nicholas Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, <i>Divine Liturgy in San Anselmo</i> • 5 PM, <i>Angels Unavares</i> hosting 	7	8
9 - Conception of the Theotokos <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:40 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	10	11	12	13 - St. Herman of Alaska <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • Noon, Senior Lunch 	14	15
16 - Holy Forefathers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:40 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 5 PM, <i>Kontakion of St. Romanos</i>, Children's Play, Dinner 	17	18	19	20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 AM, Matins • 4-6 PM, Confessions • 6 PM, Prefestal Vespers • 7 PM, Parish Council 	21	22
23 - Sunday before Nativity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:40 AM, Matins • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal 	24 - Christmas Eve <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11:30 AM, Vesperal Liturgy for Nativity • 6 PM, Festal Matins for Nativity 	25 - Christmas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy for Nativity 	26 - Synaxis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy 	27 - St. Stephen Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy in San Anselmo 	28	29
30 - Sunday after Nativity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8:40 AM, Matins • 9:45 AM, Receiving Catechumens • 10 AM, Liturgy • Noon, Agape Meal • 4 PM, <i>Regan/Soot Wedding</i> 	31	1 - St. Basil Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy and prayers for the New Year • 5 PM, Vespers and Akathist for St. Seraphim 	2 - St. Seraphim Day <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9:30 AM, Hierarchical Divine Liturgy (Archbishop Benjamin and Bishop Daniel will be with us) 	3	4	5
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vespers for St. Basil, Circumcision of Christ and the New Year 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 PM, Royal Hours for Theophany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 PM, Vigil for Theophany