

THE ORTHODOX MESSENGER

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WE ARE THE ICONS OF GOD

A homily given by the Most Reverend Benjamin, Archbishop of San Francisco and the West, Sunday of Orthodoxy, 2015

TODAY WE CELEBRATE the restoration of the Holy Images, the Icons, in the Orthodox Church. We do so at the time of the year when the Church, our Mother, calls us to renew the image of Christ within ourselves, through prayer, fasting, and acts of charity towards our neighbors. Central to this entire enterprise is the understanding that Christ Jesus is not only the perfect image of the Father wrapped in our humanity, but he is also the image of the perfect human being. He is what, and who, our father Adam was, and we have been called to be. We might also say that the spiritual life is nothing less than the process of growing in the likeness of Christ, becoming increasingly like Him.

On Tuesday, of this first week of the Great Fast in Compline, we hear these words of Saint Andrew of Crete, “I have discolored with the passions the first beauty of Thy image, O Savior, but seek me as once Thou hast sought the lost coin, and find me.” These two very brief lines from the Great Canon refer to two fundamental principles in our Orthodox understanding of the divine economy: 1) Our father Adam and his children were created in the image and likeness of God; and 2) It is God Himself Who searches for us, reaching down from heaven, as it were, to lift us up.

As I get older, I find myself turning again and again to the first chapters of Genesis and realizing how important they are in the understanding of what is to be found in the rest of the Bible. We read that God brought all of creation into being on the first five days through a word with the formula, “And God said, let there be... And it was so...” This is repeated five times, but on the sixth day, when God creates Adam, the man, the entire grammar changes. God says these very significant words, “Let us make man according to Our image and likeness,” and continuing, “and God made man, according to the image of God He made him, male and female, He made them. Clearly, from the text, there is something different about the man. He is the only one of God’s creatures that is created in His image and likeness; no other animal, fish, or bird is created specifically to reflect God. And His

divine likeness is something possessed by both males and females. Expressed another way, human beings were created to be the living images, or Icons, of God. Adam has reflections in the flesh of God Himself, having dominion over God’s creation. The story of Adam and Eve continues: The man and the woman were placed by God, in what the *Septuagint* [the Greek translation of the Old Testament] calls, the “Garden of Delight,” and they were to cultivate it and keep it. They were given the freedom to eat of the fruit of every tree in the Garden except one: the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Its presence in the Garden, and their observance of this one commandment of God, was an expression of Adam and Eve’s freedom, their ability to choose, to obey or disobey. It also represents our own ability to choose to obey God or to disobey Him. It is important for us to understand that the man and the woman, and those of us who call ourselves Christians, obey God’s commandments not because we are afraid He will somehow torment us or punish us if we did not follow them, but instead because we love Him and we want to please Him. Love, even the love of God, is something that cannot be compelled or demanded; it can only be freely given. And then, if you will, this primal fast of Adam and Eve was a simple, and yet fundamental, expression of our first parent’s love for God.

Genesis expresses the innocence and freedom of Adam and Eve in a unique way, “...and the two were naked, both Adam and his wife, and they were not ashamed.” But as we all know, that first fast was broken through the guile of the serpent. And when they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the Garden in the cool of the day, “Adam and Eve hid themselves,” it is written, “because they were afraid and they knew they were naked.” In eating of the fruit of the tree that was forbidden to them, the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Adam and Eve indeed gained knowledge. They learned that they were now separated from God and had lost the closeness to Him that they had once possessed. Made both in the image and likeness of God, they were no longer like God. Their likeness to Him was darkened



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through sin, and they lamented not just the loss of Paradise, but much more because they had grieved and offended God's love. And through eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they knew one more thing: they knew shame and they hid themselves from the loving Lord Who had only shown them friendship and kindness. They lost their intimacy with God and became afraid. Through sin, the image of God within the man and woman, indeed in each one of us, is obscured, and our likeness to Him is diminished and sullied and masked.

On this Sunday, when we celebrate the restoration of the Holy Icons to the Church, we are reminded of our need to restore the image of God within each one of us. One could say the spiritual life, the Lenten journey, the life-long struggle to repent, is all about the restoration and cleansing of that original image within each of us, about making ourselves transparent so-to-speak, so that God can once more shine through men and women into this world. Are not the Saints those men and women who have, in their lives, removed all that is not God-like in them, and in whom the image and likeness have been restored to the point that God can be encountered in them once more?

Great Lent has been called the School of Repentance, and schools are about education. I think it is interesting to note that the Russian word for education is *obrazovaniye* (образование) which has as its root the word *obraz* (образ) which can mean icon or image. It is as

though there is some basic understanding that education involves more than just a transfer of information from one person to another. Real education entails the development or nurturing of an image of one sort or another. In a spiritual sense, this is exactly what our journey to Pascha is all about. The Lenten School of Repentance is nothing less than the restoration of the image of God in us, an uncovering of what in us is really human, it is a re-dedication to our primal calling in the Garden to be the friends of God.

Metropolitan Anthony (Bloom) once pointed out that our tendency during the time of the Fast is to dwell on all that is wrong within ourselves, all that makes us Prodigals and obscures the Divine Image within us. To be sure, it is necessary to come to terms with our distance from God in our process of repentance; however, it is not the entire story, but only the first step. When a specialist in art restoration looks at a damaged painting, he has first to make an assessment of the damage that has been done to it. What did it look like originally? Where are the cracks? Are there tears in the canvas? What is the state of the varnish? How much dirt and grime is there obscuring the image? If he were to stop there, the painting would remain a piece of damaged art and no better. We cannot be renewed if we only concentrate on the damage we have done to the image of God within us. If all we do is catalog what is unworthy, dead, and sinful in us, and dwell on it, are we any better? We must allow the Master, the One Who is the Author of the image to bring life and healing to our souls. The Lenten effort then is also, and perhaps even mainly, about a search for the divine beauty that is within us. Those who restore paintings have their tools and techniques and the Church has also given us tools that we can use to restore the image of God within us, to help us become more like Him: prayer, fasting, confession, and alms-giving. We need to understand them to be what they are: tools. They are not the goal, but the means by which we can achieve our goal. And as tools, they are applied to the whole human person, soul and body. Let us not be shy or slow about taking them up.

Adam and Eve, you and I, were created to be the objects of God's incomprehensible love. Remember, an image makes the prototype present. We were lovingly fashioned in His image and likeness, and placed here on this earth to make God present in His beloved creation. Let us make the rest of our Lenten journey an effort to comprehend, in even the smallest way, how dear we are to God, how much He cherishes and desires each one of us. There is not one person here, or even on this earth, that is

not without value and is not sought by God's love. But equally, there is not one of us who has arrived. We are all either moving toward the One Who loves us, or away from Him. We are all either in the process of restoring the image of God within us, our likeness to Him, or we are actively engaged in marring it. Let us also not forget that God is constantly searching for us. I love the story of the Prodigal Son. I imagine that father of the wretched boy going out each day and looking down the road for the return of his beloved child. And when, at last, he saw him returning home, he ran and embraced him with tears of joy. Let this be our image of repentance, as we set about to restore our likeness to God.

I would like to close with these words of Metropolitan Anthony Bloom. "Stand with a clear vision of our wonderful vocation of the love of God, of what we mean to Him, because His power is made visible through weakness. He requires not our strength, but our surrender." Amen. —*Archbishop Benjamin*

On the Incarnate Dispensation of our Lord Jesus Christ, and That We Should Celebrate Spiritually

by St. Theodore the Studite, reposed 826 AD (sermon given on the day of the Annunciation)

BRETHREN AND FATHERS, the Annunciation is here and it is the first of the Feasts of the Lord, and we should not simply celebrate as most do, but with understanding and with reverence for the mystery. What is the mystery? That the Son of God becomes son of man, using the holy Virgin as the means, dwelling in her and from her fashioning for Himself a temple and becoming perfect man. Why so? "That he might ransom those under the law," as it is written, "and that we might receive sonship" [Gal. 4:5]; that we may no longer be slaves, but free; no longer subject to the passions, but free of passions; no longer friends of the world, but friends of God; no longer walking according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

"Those who walk according to the flesh, think the things of the flesh; those who walk according to the spirit, the things of the spirit; for the thought of the flesh is death; but the thought of the spirit, life and peace. And so the thought of the flesh is hostile to God, for it is not subject to the law of God. Indeed it cannot be. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God" [Rom. 8:5-8]. In brief this is the power of the mystery, and this is why we should celebrate spiritually and behave spiritually, with holiness and justice, with love, with gentleness, with peace, "with forbearance, with goodness, with the Holy Spirit" [2

Cor. 6:6], so that as far as we ourselves are concerned we do not render the dispensation of our Lord Jesus Christ empty and ineffectual.

Not only that, but we should both pray and grieve for the world. Why so? Because the Son of God came to save the world, and the world rejects Him. Tribes and languages reject Him; the barbarian nations reject Him, those who have had his holy name invoked upon them reject Him, some through abandoning the faith, others through their evil lives. What should He have done and did not do? Being God He became man, "He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, the death of the cross" [Phil. 2,8.]; he gave us His body to eat and His blood to drink; He allowed us to call him Father, Brother, Head, Teacher, Bridegroom, Fellow-heir and all the other titles which there is no time to mention now. And still He is rejected, and still He bears it. "For," He says, "I have not come to judge the world, but to save the world" [John 12:47]. 🍷

*The joyful feast of the Annunciation—the announcement of the Good News to the Virgin Mary—is celebrated each year during the Great Fast on March 25. It is a taste of Pascha before Pascha. We will serve the **Vigil for the Feast on Sat., March 24 at 5 PM**, and the **Liturgy on Sunday, 10 AM**.*

ON REPENTANCE – St. John of the Ladder

REPENTANCE is the renewal of baptism. It is a contract with God for a second life. Repentance goes shopping for humility and continually distrusts bodily comfort. Repentance is critical awareness and a sure watch over oneself. . . . Repentance is reconciliation with the Lord by the practice of good deeds contrary to the sins. Repentance is purification of conscience. Do not be surprised that you fall every day; do not give up, but stand your ground courageously...A fresh, warm wound is easier to heal than those that are old, neglected, and festering, and that need extensive treatment, surgery, bandaging, and cauterization. 🍷

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **WE WELCOME** Vladyka Daniel, Bishop of Santa Rosa, for the feast of the Triumph of Orthodoxy, the first Sunday in Great Lent. We will greet Bishop Daniel at 10 AM, and proceed with the vesting and Divine Liturgy. At the conclusion of the Liturgy we will have an icon procession around St. Seraphim. Bring your icons.
- **ANGELS UNAWARES:** Our guests arrive about 6 PM on Thursday, March 1. Volunteers are asked to come about 5 PM to assist with setting up the Hall for dinner. Any questions call Rachel (799-4117) or Michael Dovey (618-6585).
- **ATTENTION PARENTS!** Parents or adult guardians are responsible for the safety and supervision of their children before, during and after Services, while playing in the Hall, the playground or the property. Young children may not roam the property without parental supervision. In addition, children are not allowed to play in the vineyard, behind the Church School or Hall, or in the parking lots.
- A **LENTEN RETREAT** will be held Saturday March 3, 2018, at the Monastery in Calistoga. Mother Abbess Melania will speak on "Marriage, Love, and Sexuality: A Cultural Crossroads." 9:00 AM—Session 1; 10:30 AM—Session 2; 12:15 PM—Akathist; 1 PM—Lunch; 2 PM—Session 3.
- **HOLY TRINITY CATHEDRAL** in San Francisco will host a Lenten Retreat—Saturday, March 10—with Archbishop Michael of NY, on "The Gospel and the Gospels." The retreat will begin with the Divine Liturgy at 8:30 AM, followed by registration and a lenten breakfast. Archbishop Michael will begin his reflections at 11 AM, break for lunch, and continue from 1:30–3:30 PM. [Pre-register here at SignUpGenius](#) with a suggested donation of \$20.00. Registrations will be accepted at the door as space permits (suggested donation of \$25.00). Contact Father Kirill Sokolov, Dean, at 415-673-8565 or frkirill@holy-trinity.org with questions or to register by mail or phone. Please pre-register regardless of your ability to contribute. Parking available at St. Brigid School (Enter on Broadway between Van Ness & Franklin).
- **SACRED REALMS: THE ETERNAL CITY** – The Green Mountain Singers (part of Sonoma Bach) will give a concert of 15th century sacred choral music at St. Seraphim Church on Saturday, March 17, 8 PM and Sunday, March 18, 3 PM. For more info visit: <http://www.sonomabach.org>

SUNDAY OF THE CROSS

THE THIRD SUNDAY of Lent is dedicated to the veneration of the Precious Cross. We will serve the Vigil at 5 PM, Saturday, March 10, and conclude it with the solemn procession with the Cross from the Altar to the Nave. The cross stands in the midst of the church in the middle of the lenten season not merely to remind men of Christ's redemption and to keep before them the goal of their efforts, but also to be venerated as that reality by which man must live to be saved. "He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Mt.10:38). For in the Cross of Christ Crucified lies both "the power of God and the wisdom of God" for those being saved (1 Cor.1:24). *Now the flaming sword no longer guards the gates of Eden; it has mysteriously been quenched by the wood of the Cross! The sting of death and the victory of hades have been vanquished; for Thou, O my Savior, hast come and cried to those in hades: "Enter again into paradise."* (Kontakion of the Feast)

Teen Outreach Event

an email from Catherine Golitzin, San Anselmo

AFTER SOME DELIBERATION about increased youth activities at St. Nicholas Orthodox Church in San Anselmo, we are looking to begin an effort to do some outreach. Specifically, we are looking to have the teens do outreach to our community and its neediest members. Please join us for an informational session for teen participants on Friday, March 2, at St. Nicholas Parish at 5:00 pm. All teens ages 13-18 (or a mature 12) are welcome. Parents are not required or expected to attend. Catie Golitzin will be leading the session and there will be other Orthodox adult chaperones. We plan to have some icebreaker activities, followed by a discussion of what it means to serve God and our neighbor, followed by a reader's service in the church and an informal dinner. The event will last until about 9:30 or 10 PM. A signed permission slip, which will be forthcoming, will be required in order to participate in the event. Please contact me with any questions. Catherine Golitzin <cgolitzin2015@gmail.com> or Vicky Basch at <vbasch@sonic.net>

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

MARCH 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Feb. 25 - Sunday of Orthodoxy • 10 AM, Greeting of Bishop Daniel and Divine Liturgy, Icon Procession • Noon, Agape Meal • 5 PM, <i>Vespers in SF at Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church</i>	26 • 6 PM, Sisterhood organizational meeting, Parish Hall	27 - St. Raphael • 8 AM, Matins	28 • 8 AM, Matins • 5 PM, Confession • 6:15 PM, Presanctified Liturgy / Meal	March 1 • 8 AM, Matins • 5 PM, Angels Unawares (welcome guests at 6 PM)	2 • 8 AM, Matins • 6 PM, Small Compline/Akathist	3 • 3:30 PM, Catechism <i>On the Holy Priesthood</i> • 4 PM, Children's Choir • 5 PM, Great Vespers
4 - St. Gregory Palamas • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	5	6 • 8 AM, Matins	7 • 8 AM, Matins • 5 PM, Confession • 6:15 PM, Presanctified Liturgy / Meal	8 • 8 AM, Matins • 6 PM, Vespers for the 40 Holy Martyrs	9 - 40 Martyrs of Sebaste <i>10:30 AM, Presanctified in SF at Holy Trinity</i> • 6 PM, Small Compline/Akathist	10 • 8:30 AM, <i>Retreat at Holy Trinity in SF</i> • 3:30 PM, Catechism <i>On Marriage</i> • 5 PM, Vigil for the Veneration of the Cross
11 - Veneration of the Cross • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 12:45 PM, Sisterhood Mtg	12	13 • 8 AM, Matins • 6 PM, Panikhida for Joseph Gumper	14 • 10 AM, Funeral for Joseph Gumper • 5 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank	15 • 8 AM, Matins <i>Senior Lunch has been cancelled</i>	16 • 8 AM, Matins • 6:15 PM, Presanctified Liturgy	17 • 3:30 PM, Catechism <i>On Holy Unction</i> • 4 PM, Children's Choir • 5 PM, Vespers <i>Sonoma Bach Concert, 8 PM</i>
18 - St. John Climakos • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal <i>Sonoma Bach Concert, 3 PM</i>	19 • 5 PM, <i>Holy Unction at Sts. Peter and Paul</i>	20 • 8 AM, Matins	21 • 8 AM, Matins • 5 PM, Confession • 6:15 PM, Presanctified Liturgy / Meal	22 • 9 AM, Matins, Great Canon of St. Andrew and Reading of the Life of St. Mary of Egypt	23 • 6:15 PM, Matins of the Akathist Hymn	24 • 3:30 PM, Catechism <i>On Reading the Scriptures</i> 5 PM, Vigil for Annunciation
25 - ANNUNCIATION • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	26	27 • 8 AM, Matins	28 • 8 AM, Matins • 5 PM, Confession • 6:15 PM, Presanctified Liturgy / Meal	29 • 8 AM, Matins	30 • 8 AM, Matins • 6:30 PM, Matins for Lazarus Saturday • 7:30 PM, Final Catechism	31 - Lazarus Saturday • 9 AM, Baptisms • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy with the Children's Choir • Agape Meal • 5 PM, Vigil for Palm Sunday, blessing of palms

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

APRIL 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 - Palm Sunday • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy and Procession ^a Noon, Agape Meal	2- Holy Monday • 6:30 AM, Bridegroom Matins • 5 PM, Confessions • 6:15 PM, Liturgy of the Presanctified	3 - Holy Tuesday • 6:30 AM, Bridegroom Matins • 5 PM, Confessions • 6:15 PM, Liturgy of the Presanctified	4 - Holy Wednesday • 6:30 AM, Bridegroom Matins • 5 PM, Confessions • 6:15 PM, Liturgy of the Presanctified	5 - Holy Thursday • 11:30 AM, Vespereal Liturgy, institution of the Eucharist • 5 PM, Angels Unawares • 7 PM, Matins for Holy Friday	6 - Holy Friday • 9 AM, Royal Hours • 3 PM, Great Vespers • 7 PM, Matins of Holy Saturday and Lamentations Reading of Psalter	7 - Holy Saturday • 12:30 PM, 9th Hour • 1 PM, Vespereal Liturgy with the 15 Readings • 11:30 PM, Nocturn • Midnight: Paschal Matins and Liturgy
8 - PASCHA • 1 PM, Paschal Vespers • 2 PM, Potluck BBQ	9 - Bright Monday • 9 AM, Paschal Matins and Liturgy (Archbishop Benjamin present) • Agape Meal	10 - Bright Tuesday • 6 PM, Paschal Vespers	11 - Bright Wednesday • 5 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank • 6 PM, Paschal Vespers	12 - Bright Thursday	13 - Bright Friday • 6 PM, Paschal Vespers	14 - Bright Saturday • 9:30 AM, Paschal Liturgy • 5 PM, Great Vespers
15 - Thomas Sunday • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	16	17 - Day of Rejoicing Blessing of Graves <i>(10 AM—Sebastopol, 11 AM—Forestville, Noon—Healdsburg, 2 PM—Santa Rosa) approx.</i>	18 • 6 PM, Vespers • Pot-luck and Movie Night (<i>Silence</i>)	19 • 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting	20	21 • 5 PM, Great Vespers
22 - Holy Myrrhbearers • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • Vespers, 1:15 PM	23 - St. George • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy	24	25 • 6 PM, Vespers • Pot-luck and followup to movie	26	27	28 • 5 PM, Vespers
29 - Paralytic • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	30	May 1	2 • 6 PM, Vespers	3	4	5 • 5 PM, Great Vespers