

THE ORTHODOX MESSENGER

September 2018, Vol. 27, Issue 9



SERMON FOR THE END OF THE CHURCH YEAR

THE CHURCH NEW YEAR begins on September 1, which is also the day appointed by the Patriarch Demetrios of Constantinople in 1989 as the day of Thanksgiving and Care for the Creation. Entering into the Church New Year, having just celebrated Dormition—the Falling Asleep—of the Theotokos on August 15—and the Beheading of St. John the Baptist on August 29, we are led to ponder the end of our own life. An excerpt from a sermon of St. Justin (Popovich) of Serbia, who reposed in 1979, elevates our understanding as we leave the old year and enter the new:

THE HOLY FORERUNNER appeared in death's kingdom as the first Evangelist, in order to preach the Good News of Christ to all of the souls in the kingdom of death. He appeared as well to all of them as the first Martyr, to show that people will joyously go to their deaths for True God, the Lord Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, until death is defeated and destroyed. They will not fear death, for they will be more powerful than death. Through his bodily Resurrection, the Lord grants the body victory over death.

When the Lord was crucified, He descended into the nether regions, into Hades, into the kingdom of death, with His human Soul. His Body lay in the tomb, but His Soul, the fullness of his Divinity, descended into death's kingdom. And how astonished must have been all of the human souls in Hades, on seeing God in a human soul, shining with ineffable light, light impossible for a human

being to imagine. He appears as conqueror over death. And as death's kingdom could not hold God, could not hold God in its hands, it fell apart because of Christ's Divinity, because of His Most-holy Soul, in which was the fullness of God. And the Lord led out of death's kingdom all those who had earlier come to believe the Forerunner, and those who had come to believe in Him, the Lord Jesus Christ... This is why the Lord Jesus Christ did not resurrect St. John the Forerunner and Baptizer of Jesus.

Brothers and sisters, whenever you are in great sorrow, turn to that first Apostle of Christ, and he will help you with all of your burdens. And should some kind of misfortune happen, turn to that first Evangelist. No matter what bitterness might fill your soul, he will sweeten it with Christ's grace, which he will mystically send down to your tortured soul from the World on High. And when you find yourself in temptations, sorrows or horrors of this earthly life, run to him, to the Holy Confessor; tell him what is in your heart, pour out your sorrows and spiritual needs and rest assured that in a mystical, divine manner, he will come down into your soul and will save you, and will deliver you from all temptations and woes, and you will be restored.

A COMMON LABOR

...you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5)

THE MODERN ELDER Father Sophrony of Essex, England (reposed 1993) wrote that the "Divine Liturgy is the way we know God and the way God becomes known to us... Every Divine Liturgy is a Theophany. The Body of Christ appears. Every member of the Church is an icon of the Kingdom of God. After the Divine Liturgy we must continue to *iconify* the Kingdom of God, keeping His commandments. The glory of Christ is for Him to bear His fruit in every member."

Our presence at the Sunday Divine Liturgy each and every week is essential: each person is beloved by God, the Theotokos and the saints, and by his or her fellow members, and we are united together in Christ. While my individual absence from the Liturgy does not diminish the Divine gift to the Church, my absence does mean a loss of human communion with each other in the worship. And, if I am not present to "offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God..." then I am not there to support my brothers and sisters who are present, I am not there to join in the Liturgy, which is "common labor" of the Church to glorify the Holy Trinity. Also, my absence means I am not being spiritually recharged, renewed and sanctified by prayer, repentance, worship and Holy Communion. This is a great loss indeed and to be

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avoided at all costs. A great deal of regret is expressed by Orthodox Christians for not attending Church on Sundays. They express regret that they had to work or had some social commitment that kept them from the Sunday Divine Liturgy, or perhaps a feast day Service. Look at the issue from another view point: If we frequently missed family celebrations or a favorite recreational activity, our family and friends would eventually ask us if we were serious about our relationship with them. In our efforts to be transfigured according to the Image of Christ, we must ask the same question of ourselves when it comes to attendance at services, especially Sunday morning. Don't miss the celebration. The numbers usually do not matter to those who attend, but they do impact profoundly on the relationship each of us has with Christ and His Church. Our growth in the Orthodox Christian Faith is a gradual thing; we do not start off by saying 10,000 Jesus Prayers each morning and attending all the church services every day. But neither should we settle on a point where we are very comfortable, where our spiritual life is "enough," and we feel that our efforts are quite sufficient.

If we are failing, or frustrated and even obstructed in our efforts to attend church or pray more frequently, then we beseech the Savior to assist us, to help and inspire us in our efforts to be present at the

corporate prayers of the Church whether they be Sundays or other days. —Fr Lawrence

COME JOIN US FOR CAMP GLENDI

- When:** Friday, September 14 – Saturday, September 15
Where: Protection of the Virgin Church property
What: A fun camping time for all. Come, pitch your tent on the lawn or bring your trailer to the parking lot, or set up a sleeping bag in the Hall. Come for part or all of the fun.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY

- 5 PM:.....Arrive and set up
 6 PM:.....Dinner (provided, but bring some beverages and snacks)
 6:45–9 PM:.....Games, campfire, songs, s'mores, brief Prayers before bed, in Church
 9:30 PM:.....Lights out

SATURDAY

- 8 AM:Breakfast
 9 AM:activities, games, more fun ("fun" also includes some parish projects)
 Noon:Lunch
 12:45 PM:.....more activities, games, and yes, even more fun
 4 PM:.....Great Vespers (the 5 PM Vespers is moved to 4 PM)
 5:30 PM:Dinner and break-down (of camp, not minds)

RSVP to Vicky Basch - vbach@sonic.net or text at 707-291-2369

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- PLEASE KEEP IN YOUR PRAYERS George Kielczynski who suffered a stroke on Friday morning. He has been taken to UCSF for observation and therapy.
- VESPERS ON SATURDAY, September 15 will take place at 4 PM.
- THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK distribution will take place on Wednesday, September 12. Volunteers are asked to arrive no later than 5 PM. This Food Bank is the primary way in which our parish does outreach to the community. Come and participate in this worthy endeavor.
- THE FEAST of the Nativity of the Theotokos is celebrated each year with Vigil on September 7 at 6:15, and the Divine Liturgy on September 8 at 9:30 AM. Our Children's Choir will sing the hymns of the Divine Liturgy.
- THE SECOND FEAST of September is that of the Exaltation of the Precious and Life-Giving Cross: Vigil with the solemn bringing out of the Cross on September 13 at 6:15 PM and the Divine Liturgy the following morning at 9 AM. On this feast of the Exaltation we keep a strict fast from morning until 3 PM.
- FR JOHN AND MATUSHKA XENIA will be away on vacation from September 8 until 18, so please be advised that there will be limited time for Confession before the Sunday Divine Liturgy. I encourage you to come on Saturday evening to confess after the Vespers, or during the week by appointment. If there is enough interest, I will set aside time each Friday for confessions. Please let me know. —Fr. Lawrence
- FATHER ALEXANDER from Sts. Peter and Paul broke his heel bone quite seriously last weekend. He is unable to serve, and has asked area clergy to serve Liturgy while he recovers. I will serve the Divine Liturgy at Sts. Peter and Paul on Sunday, September 9 (as well as on the Old Calendar feasts on 9/21 and 9/27), and Fr. Nicholas on Sunday, September 16. Fr. John served last weekend, and after he returns from vacation, will probably help out again. —Fr. Lawrence
- CONCERT HERE: The vocal ensemble, Carmina Chromatica, conducted by Nicolas Custer, will sing a concert for us on Sunday, September 16, at 2:30 PM. This free concert will consist of a series of Renaissance choral motets for Holy Week and the Resurrection.
- PIROSHKI WILL BE made and distributed for sale on Saturday, 9/22. Orders should be placed by Sunday, 9/16. Preparation of fillings will take place during the week of 9/17. Help is needed, particularly from 9/19–21. Contact Bobbi Griovski to volunteer: 707-477-8418 or by email at bgriovski@sbcglobal.net.
- VESPERS, POTLUCK and TALK: Join us for the 6 PM Wednesday Vespers, potlucks and talks (September 5, 19, 26 and October 3). On Wednesday, September 5, Andrew Vernon from San Anselmo will give part 2 of his excellent talk on the Orthodox doctrine of the Holy Trinity. On the other Wednesdays, Fr. Lawrence will be reading and speaking about the book "For the Life of the World" by Fr. Alexander Schmemmann, followed in two weeks by Metropolitan Tikhon's essay "The Four Pillars."
- UNFORTUNATELY, the three poplar trees on the south side of the Protection Church had to be cut down (costing us \$5000) due to rot. While we will certainly miss the shade provided by the trees, their absence reveals a very nice view of the Church.
- RESURRECTIONAL MATINS is being served on Sunday mornings beginning at 8:45 AM. The Service does not yet appear in the Monthly Calendar, since we are still working out who logistics of the chanter and substitutes.
- MEMORY ETERNAL: News came this week of the falling-asleep in the Lord of our former parish member Elizabeth Forsaith in Montrose, CO. This is very sorrowful news, even if it is tempered by the expectation of the resurrection. May the Lord grant her forgiveness of sins and the paradise of the Kingdom of Heaven.
- THE PARISH FEAST DAY—Protection of the Theotokos on October 1—is quickly approaching (unfortunately, our hierarchs cannot attend).

FREEDOM IN GOD

MANY INITIALLY believe that the commandments of God are a limitation of human freedom, possibilities, and desires without thinking about the fact that it is a sin that enslaves human's will and leads to eternal destruction. The commandments of God are exactly the means that limit the influence and weaken the effect of a sin. When we accept them as our natural necessity, keeping them becomes easy and joyous. —*Metropolitan Anthony of Boryspil and Brovary*

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

SEPTEMBER 2018

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 - Church New Year • 9 AM, WORK PARTY • 4 PM, Children's Choir • 5 PM, Great Vespers
2 - St. John the Faster • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School Begins • Noon, Agape Meal	3	4	5 • 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck and Talk by Andrew Vernon, <i>Holy Trinity Pt 2</i>	6	7 • 6:15 PM, Vigil, Nativity of the Theotokos	8 - Nativity Theotokos • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy (Children's Choir) • 5 PM, Great Vespers
9 - Sts. Joachim and Anna • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal <i>[Fr. Lawrence at Sts. Peter and Paul, Stony Pt Rd.]</i>	10	11	12 • 5 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank Distribution • 6 PM, Vespers	13 • 9 AM, Memorial Liturgy (<i>Sakovich and others</i>) • Noon, Senior Lunch • 6:15 PM, Vigil, Exaltation of the Cross	14 - Exaltation of Cross • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy <i>Strict Fast Day</i> • 5 PM, Parish Camp	15 <i>Parish Camp, all day</i> • 4 PM, Great Vespers • 5 PM, Dinner
16 - Great Martyr Euphemia • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 2:30, Carmina Chromatica Concert in St. Seraphim <i>[Fr. Nicholas at Sts. Peter and Paul, Stony Pt Rd.]</i>	17	18	19 • 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck and Talk on the book <i>For the Life of the World</i>	20	21	22 • 9 AM, <i>Piroshki production</i> • 5 PM, Great Vespers
23 - Conception of St. John • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 12:45 PM, Sisterhood Meeting	24	25	26 - Apostle John • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck and Talk on the book <i>For the Life of the World</i>	27 • 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting	28	29 • 5 PM, Great Vespers
30 - St. Gregory of Armenia • 10 AM Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, <i>Agape Meal outside</i> • 5 PM, VIGIL	OCTOBER 1 <i>Protection of the Virgin</i> • 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy, Festal Meal	2	3 • 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck and Talk on the book <i>The Soul's Longing</i>	4	5	6 • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy, Feast of St. Innocent • 5 PM, Great Vespers