

THE ORTHODOX MESSENGER

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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)

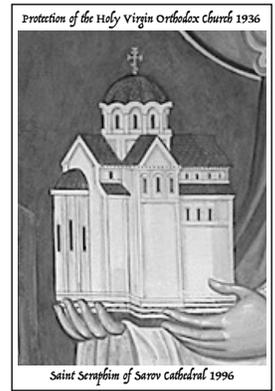
THE MODERN ELDER Father Sophrony of Essex, England (reposed 1993) wrote that the “Divine Liturgy is the way we know God and the way God becomes known to us... Every Divine Liturgy is a Theophany. The Body of Christ appears. Every member of the Church is an icon of the Kingdom of God. After the Divine 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 avoided at all costs. A great deal of regret is expressed by Orthodox Christians for not attending Church on Sundays. Some express regret that

they had to work—remember the Fourth Commandment?—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 in which we think our spiritual life is “enough.”

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 (reprinted from 2018)



ON THE MEANING OF THE CROSS

The feast of the Exaltation of the Precious Cross is celebrated on September 13 and 14th. As we prepare ourselves to celebrate the feast, consider these thoughts from the great 20th century theologian and priest, Fr. Georges Florovsky.

THE DEATH on the Cross is a sacrificial offering. And to offer a sacrifice does not mean only to surrender. Even from a merely moral point of view, the whole significance of sacrifice is not the denial itself, but the sacrificial power of love. The sacrifice is not merely an offering, but rather a dedication, a consecration to God. The effective power of sacrifice is love (1 Cor. 13:3). But the offering of the sacrifice is more than the evidence of love, it is also a sacramental action, a liturgical office, or even a mystery. The offering of the sacrifice of the Cross is the sacrifice of love indeed, “as Christ also hath loved us, and given Himself for us, an offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling fragrance” Ephes. 5:2). But this love was not only sympathy or compassion and mercy towards the fallen and heavy-laden. Christ gives Himself not only “for the remission of sins,” but also for our glorification. He gives Himself not only for sinful humanity, but also for the Church: to cleanse and to hallow her, to make her holy, glorious and spotless (Ephes. 5:25). The power of a sacrificial

Parish of the Protection of the Holy Virgin
 St. Seraphim of Sarov Cathedral
 90 Mountain View Avenue, Santa Rosa, CA 95407
 Parish office phone: 707-584-9491
 website: www.saintseraphim.com

The Rector, Fr. Lawrence Margitich, may be reached at the Parish office phone, or at Lmargitich@sbcglobal.net.

Parish Contacts

Bobbi Griovski, Parish Secretary	584-9491
Fr. John Schettig	318-1559
Fr. Nicholas Carr	318-5391
Serge Anderson, Parish Council Warden	291-7452
Martin Thong, Treasurer	888-7888
Adriel Scarborough, Recording Secretary	479-0837
Eleni Rose, Agape Meal Coordinator	480-6106
Debbie Buse, Hall Event Manager	696-4986

offering is in its cleansing and hallowing effect. And the power of the sacrifice of the Cross is that the Cross is the path of glory. On the Cross the Son of Man is glorified and God is glorified in Him (John 13:31). Here is the fulness of the sacrifice. “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:26). The death of the Cross was effective, not as a death of an Innocent One, but as the death of the Incarnate Lord. “We needed an Incarnate God; God put to death, that we might live” — to use a bold phrase of St. Gregory of Nazianzus. ...Further, the death of the Cross is the cleansing of the whole world. It is the baptism by blood of all creation, the cleansing of the Cosmos through the cleansing of the Microcosm. “A purification not for a small part of man’s world, not for a short time, but for the whole Universe and through eternity,” to quote St. Gregory of Nazianzus again.

—Fr. Georges Florovsky, from the book “Creation and Redemption”

CELL PHONE ADDICTION

Despite usurious “data plans” and preposterous sticker prices, nobody seems to be able to do without their electronic teddy-bears these days. People feel lost without looking at the world through an electrical version of a toilet-paper tube. People fiddle with them incessantly.

The average user has a relationship with his telephonic device not unlike that between Gollum and his “precious.” Our attention span has been seriously injured, and we are spiritually at risk because of our cellphones, to say nothing of the level of intrusion into our lives by the big tech trinity (Google, Apple, Amazon). Please, do not bring your cell phones into Church, or at the very least, turn them completely off. The Lord does not need them to reach us, and invites us to give Him ALL our attention.

COME JOIN US FOR CAMP GLENDI

When: Friday, September 20 – Saturday, September 21
Where: Protection of the Virgin Church campus
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.

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 in Church before bed
 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 (**N.B. Vespers is at 4 PM**)
 5:30 PM:BBQ and clean up

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

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **THERE WILL BE A** work party on Saturday, August 31 from 9 AM–Noon. Seraphim Ranney invites us to help him to trim the redwood trees at the south end of the campus, by the vineyard. His goal is to open up the view between all the trees and to dispose of the trimmings.
- **THE CHURCH NEW YEAR** begins on September 1. This is a day of thanking God for His blessings, the glorious creation and how the “firmament proclaims His handiwork.” (Ps. 19)
- **THE REDWOOD EMPIRE FOOD BANK** is held on the second Wednesday of each month—September 11. Volunteers, please arrive around 5 PM to help set up. This Food Bank is an important way in which our parish does outreach. Come and participate.
- **AFTER RECEIVING HOLY COMMUNION** the faithful partake of a little bread and wine, mixed with hot water, to break their fast and cleanse the mouth. Three comments about this: the bread marked “Antidoron” (which means, “instead of the Gifts”) is for those Orthodox Christians who did not receive Holy Communion that day (we’ve discussed the meaning of “Antidoron” many times). Secondly: please do not dip your bread into the cups—this is not a wine and bread pairing. Besides, the next person will have to consume your crumbs. Thirdly, parents are asked to monitor their children at the table(s). I’ve been told that some children are visiting the different tables to eat and drink at each.
- **THE FEAST of the Nativity of the Theotokos** is celebrated each year with Vigil on September 7 and the Divine Liturgy on September 8. This is the first feast of the Liturgical Year. “O ye that are barren and without posterity, O ye unfruitful souls, make haste, for Ann has many children now and she is full of joy. O ye mothers, dance and exult with the Mother of God.”
- **THE SECOND GREAT 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.
- **SENIOR LUNCH:** Our retired and senior parishioners are invited to enjoy lunch with each other at Noon on September 19.
- **OUR PARISH IS NAMED** after the Protection of the Theotokos, celebrated on October 1. Vigil will be served on Sept. 30 at 6:15 PM in St. Seraphim Cathedral, and the Divine Liturgy will be served on October 1 at 9:30 AM in the Protection Church. Neither Archbishop Benjamin nor Bishop Daniel will be with us for this feast.
- **ALTAR SERVERS:** You are invited to a brief workshop on Altar Serving on Saturday, October 5, from 11 AM until 1 PM. Lunch will be included.
- **FATHER NICHOLAS** will give two talks about the book “The Soul’s Longing: An Orthodox Christian Perspective on Biblical Interpretation” by Professor Mary Ford of St. Tikhon’s Seminary: Wednesday, Sept. 18 and 25. Vespers at 6 PM, Potluck and talk at 6:45 PM.

REJOICE, FOR GREAT IS YOUR REWARD

WHEN ST PAUL WROTE that the “wages of sin is death” he meant that sin kills our soul and body by shutting down the relationship between us and God. The “wages” are not a punishment from God—Who did not create death—but a result of sin. Without exception, the Holy Fathers of the Church refuse to blame God for death. If God created death, well, he could just as easily have abolished it by the same type of divine command. But no divine command from God in his holy heaven could change the fact that man preferred himself to God. Yes, God permitted death, and He did that out of mercy, so that “evil would not be eternal” to quote one of the Holy Fathers. Before the death and resurrection of Christ, death was a terrible and rotten fruit of sin, and for each person the complete alienation and exile from God Himself and His Kingdom. Since the Lord’s victory over sin and death on the Cross and Tomb, now OUR death becomes—if we desire to be with Him—an entry into His Presence. Our death is also the “seed” of the resurrection of our body which we eagerly await. I remind you: we were not created to be disembodied souls, or angels. Our resurrection on the Last Day will be the restoration of human life—soul and body—as God intended. “...and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (1 Cor. 15:53). St Paul also wrote that the “last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” And Christ has already accomplished this victory over death in Himself, and we that are “in Christ” by Baptism, Chrismation, Communion and the sharing of His Divine Uncreated Energies enter into the Kingdom now, even before our death, and become bearers of the Holy Spirit, rather than bearers of death. “...if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away: behold, all things have become new.” (2 Cor. 5:17) —*Father Lawrence*

PROTECTION OF THE HOLY VIRGIN MARY ORTHODOX CHURCH

SEPTEMBER 2019

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 - Church New Year • 8:30 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	2	3	4 • 6 PM, Vespers	5	6	7 • 5 PM, Vigil for the Nativity of the Theotokos
8 - Nativity of the Theotokos • 9:40 AM, Hours • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 3 PM, <i>Wedding of Zlata and Landis</i>	9	10	11 • 5 PM, Redwood Empire Food Bank • 6 PM, Vespers	12	13 • 9 AM, Memorial Liturgy (<i>Sakovich</i>) • 6:15 PM, Vigil for the Exaltation of the Cross	14 - Exaltation of the Cross • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy • 5 PM, Great Vespers
15 - Great Martyr Nikita • 8:30 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 3 PM, <i>Wedding of Anabi and Alejandro</i>	16	17	18 • 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck and Talk on Scripture by Fr. Nicholas*	19 • Noon, Senior Lunch • 7 PM, Parish Council Meeting	20 • 5 PM, Camp Glendi	21 - Camp Glendi • 8 AM, Morning Prayers, breakfast, activities • 4 PM, Great Vespers, BBQ to follow
22 - Martyr Phocas • 8:30 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal • 1 PM, Sisterhood Meeting	23	24 • 6 PM, Vespers for St. Sergius of Radonezh	25 • 6 PM, Vespers, Potluck and Talk on Scripture by Fr. Nicholas*	26 - St. John • 9 AM, Divine Liturgy	27	28 • 5 PM, Vespers
29 - St. Kyriakos • 8:30 AM, Matins • 10 AM, Divine Liturgy • 11:45 AM, Church School • Noon, Agape Meal	30 6:15 PM, Vigil for the Protection of the Theotokos	1 - Protection Feast 9:30 AM, Divine Liturgy Festal Lunch to follow	2 • 6 PM, Vespers	3	4	5 • 11 AM-1 PM: Altar Server Workshop • 5 PM, Great Vespers

- Camp Glendi, Sept. 20/21. Please note that Vespers will be celebrated at 4 PM on Saturday, September 21.
- On Wednesday, Sept 18 and 25, Fr Nicholas will speak on the book by Professor Mary Ford, *The Soul's Longing*.
- Fr. Lawrence will be in serving in Santa Maria September 28/29.